



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Norton, MA

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



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

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

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

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Acknowledgements



Norton, MA

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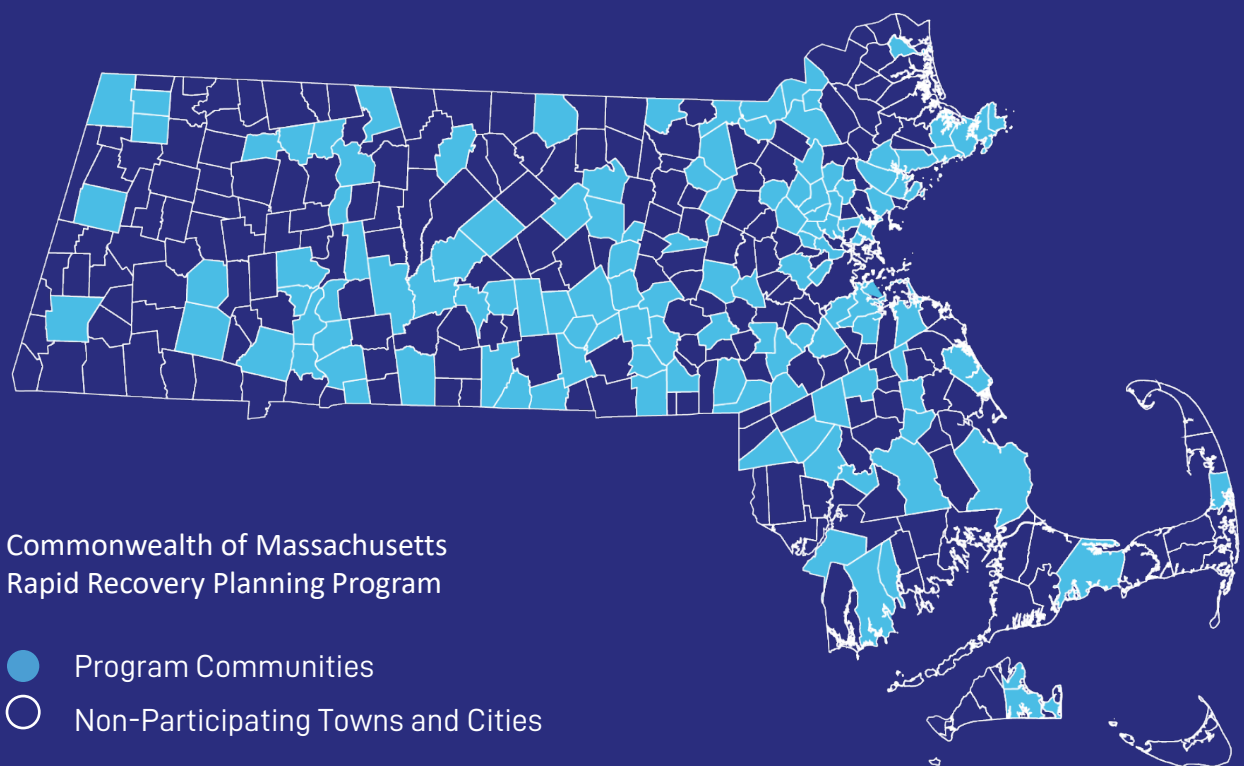
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



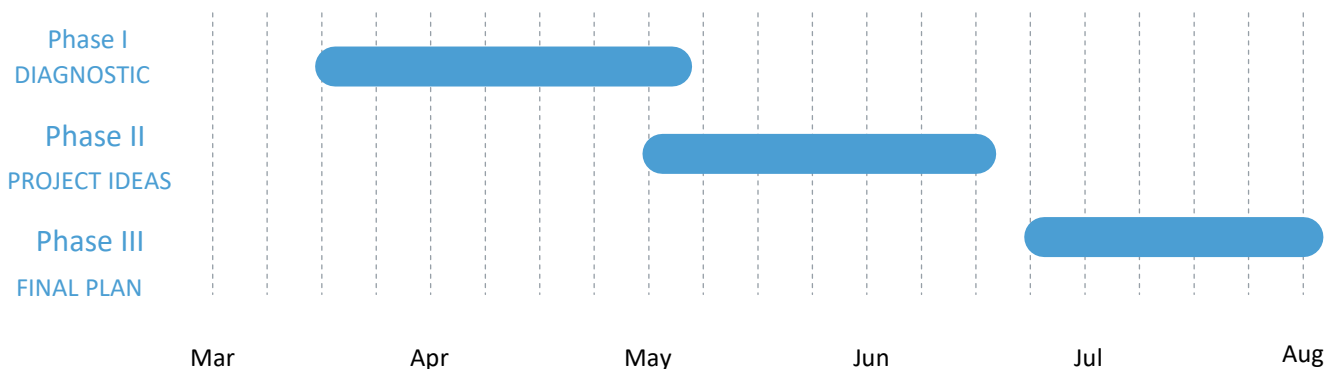
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue/Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

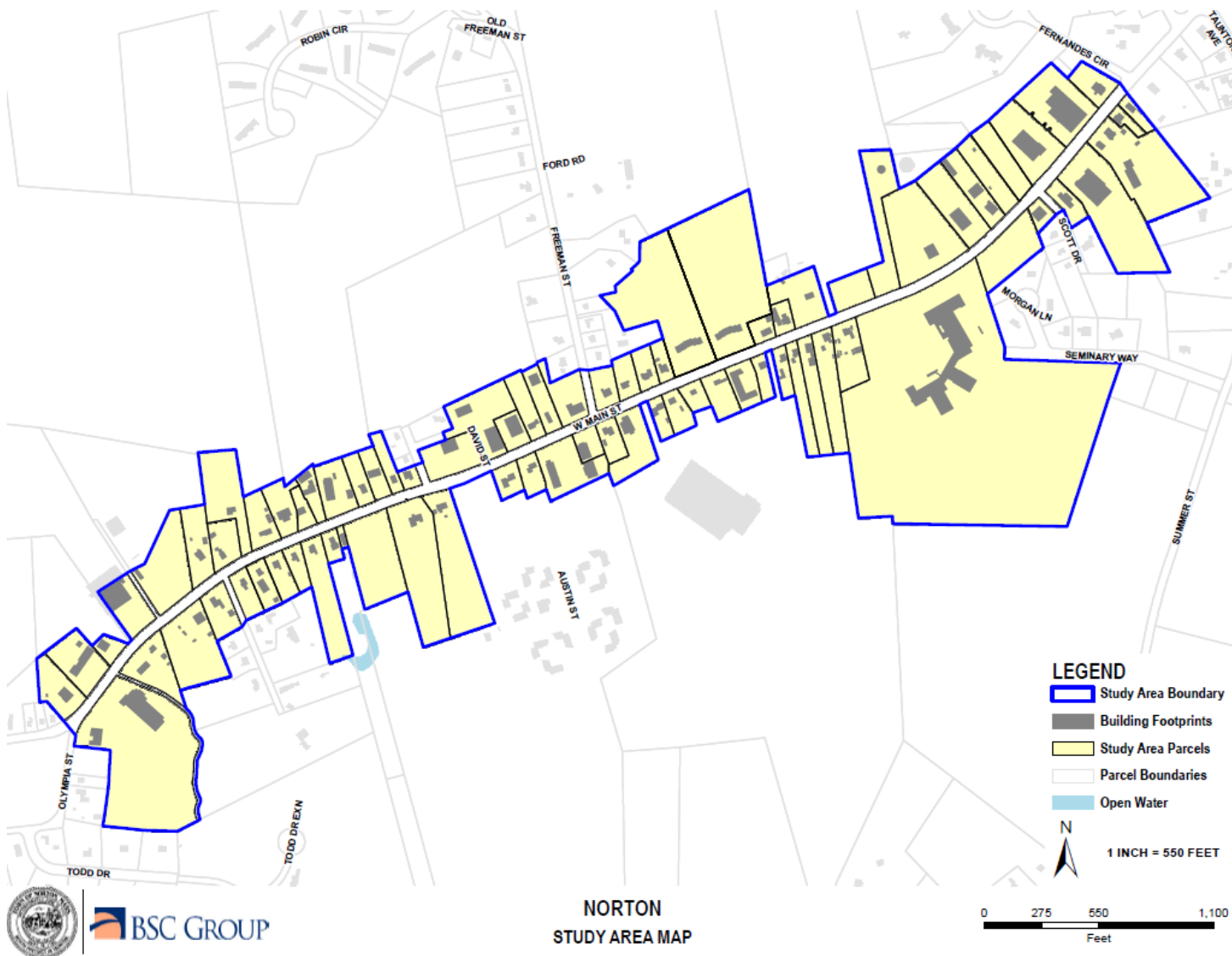
Executive Summary

A vehicular oriented commercial corridor with limited public space

The West Main Street business district is an approximately 1.8-mile corridor stretching west from Norton's Town Common at the intersection of Routes 140 and 123. The district contains 62 businesses. Retail and services (e.g., personal care services, auto repair) are the dominant business types each comprising 21% of businesses in the district. 14% of West Main Street storefronts are currently vacant. While two business closures since March 2020 were identified, it is unclear whether these were a direct result of COVID-19 or whether they occurred for other reasons. An assessment of the corridor's physical environment in spring 2021 included the following observations:

- The roads are well-maintained but designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently. Crosswalks and sidewalks are limited and not pedestrian/cyclist friendly.
- Street trees, benches, pedestrian wayfinding, and similar amenities are generally lacking. Since West Main Street/Route 123 is a state-controlled highway directly abutting private property, there is limited opportunity for the Town to make public realm improvements to enhance the comfort and feel of the district without considerable coordination with the state or private property owners.
- The majority of commercial building facades are well-maintained, and signs effectively communicate the visual brand of the business to customers. However, there remains an opportunity with many businesses to enhance storefronts, signage, awnings, and lighting as well as to create a more cohesive district look and feel, especially in the newly established Village Center Core.
- Outdoor dining and retail are very limited with only a handful of businesses engaging. Space and public infrastructure have been cited as challenges here. There is no on-street parking in the district and only one public lot (established summer 2021) which may create challenges if parking spaces are claimed for other uses. Septic systems on lots also constrains business expansion.
- Related to parking, there is limited residential development and public transit in the immediate area of the business district. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that new customers will have to arrive in the district by car. Ensuring adequate parking in the district will be important as the district grows. This challenge has been noted especially by food/dining establishments in the district.

Data collected through business owner surveys, community meetings, and one-on-one interviews revealed the impacts of COVID-19 on the West Main Street business district. First, businesses reported that they received good support during COVID, both from the Town as well as the community at large. Town officials were proactive in reporting major updates from the state and federal government and worked with businesses, as much as possible, to navigate temporary operational and regulatory changes. Many businesses along West Main Street participated in the Paycheck Protection Program. A majority of businesses in the district saw revenue decline during COVID-19 and about half of West Main Street businesses responding to the Rapid Recovery Program business survey ("the survey") reported a decline in foot-traffic. More than a quarter of survey respondents reported a business closure (temporary or permanent) and as of spring 2021, more than 60% of businesses continued to operate a reduced capacity, reduced hours, or were closed. Businesses were required to quickly respond to COVID and nearly all reported incurring expenses to implement safety measures while two-thirds established alternative modes to sell and deliver products.



West Main Street Business District

Norton, MA

The Town's Recovery will depend on a mix of infrastructure improvements and building organizational capacity

Through the survey and stakeholder discussions consistent priorities to support and spur West Main Street businesses and the district's recovery from COVID-19 centered around:

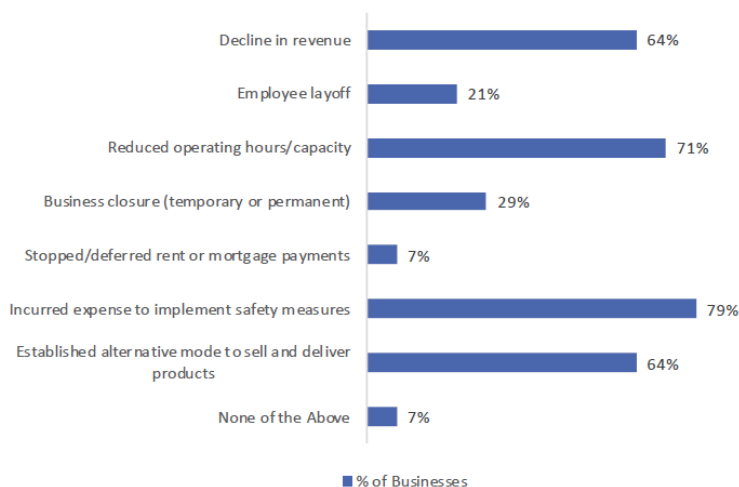
1. Recruiting additional businesses and customers, and
2. Implementing marketing strategies for the district.

When further exploring how these would be accomplished, stakeholders identified related tasks that would need to occur to make the district more attractive for new businesses and customers. These include public infrastructure improvements such as the proposed sewer extension, improvements to parking management and regulations, and pedestrian improvements. On the private side, financing for façade improvements was the highest requested technical assistance need followed by assistance marketing businesses and conducting online marketing/sales. These forms of business assistance are especially important given lost revenue incurred due to COVID and the need to bring customers back after COVID-19 may have diverted customers to online stores, delivery services, and curbside pickup.

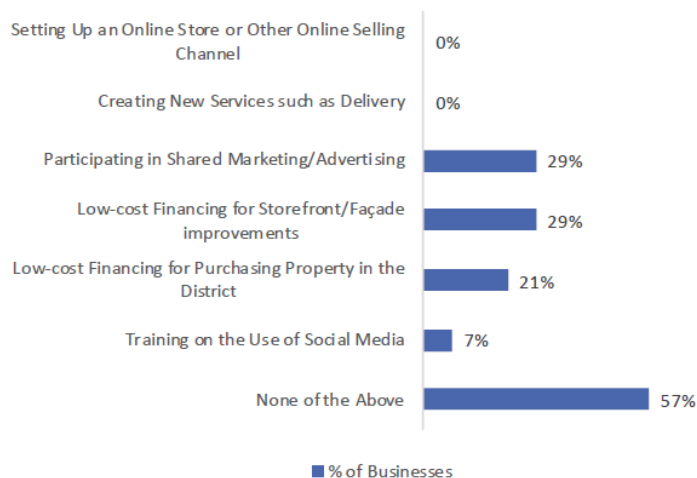
For district marketing, needs were identified on two levels, first, businesses would benefit from individual assistance and training to market their own businesses. Second, the district would benefit from shared marketing that includes promoting the district through online channels, PSAs/billboards, and events. In order to accomplish these objectives, a level of organizational capacity that does not currently exist is needed. Engaging businesses around peer best practice sharing, sourcing and promoting available trainings, developing and administering new programs, and developing a vision and identity for the district to be marketed all require business engagement and capacity to manage these activities.

Norton, along with many business stakeholders, have been making steady, incremental progress toward developing and supporting the success of the West Main Street business district. It is the community's goal that businesses and the district emerge from COVID-19 stronger than when the pandemic began. By implementing recommendations outlined in this plan and continually developing relationships and engagement with the West Main Street business community this goal can be achieved.

COVID Impacts Reported by Businesses



Businesses Interested in Receiving Assistance



Source: Norton Rapid Recovery Program Business Survey Report, 2021

Diagnostic

Key Findings



CUSTOMER BASE

A small community near popular destinations

Norton is home to 19,202 residents. Approximately 40% of residents age 25+ have earned a bachelors degree or higher, just below the statewide average. Median household income is \$111,042 placing it roughly in the middle of neighboring communities of Mansfield and Easton, both with higher median incomes, and Attleboro and Taunton, both with lower median incomes. The median age is 39.9. 25% of the population is under age 20 and 16% is 65 years or older. (Source: ESRI Demographic Indicators, 2020; US Census, 2020)

Anchor institutions in and around the West Main Street commercial district include:

- Wheaton College, a private liberal arts college, with just under 1,800 students enrolled. The college conducted hybrid learning during the 2020-2021 academic year and is planning a fully in-person 2021-2022 academic year. Wheaton College is adjacent to the commercial district.
- Norton High School and Henri A. Yelle Elementary School, both located on West Main Street, serving over 1,000 students plus faculty, staff, and student families.
- The Xfinity Center, a 19,900-seat outdoor amphitheater, located approximately 4 miles from the West Main Street commercial district.
- The Players Club (TPC) Boston is located approximately 2 miles from West Main Street. The TPC golf, amenities, and exceptional member benefits make it one of the most coveted private club memberships on the East Coast. Named by Golf Digest magazine as one of the "Top 10 Best New Private Clubs in the U.S." when it debuted in 2002. TPC has been host to numerous PGA Tour events that draw the top golfers in the world and thousands of fans.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A busy, vehicular oriented corridor

The West Main Street study area is an approximately 1.8-mile commercial corridor following Route 123, a state-numbered and managed highway that bisects Norton from east to west. The corridor has a vehicular orientation and approximately 13,882 vehicles travel the route daily (*MassDOT, 2019 Traffic Counts, West Main Street at Mansfield Ave*).

Single story commercial buildings are the predominant building type in the corridor; however, residential, school, and other town buildings, such as the senior center, are also present. All commercial buildings maintain private parking lots as there is no on-street parking. There are 1,138 parking spaces in the study area serving approximately 262,600 square feet of non-residential use floor area providing 4.3 spaces per 1,000 sq feet. In the summer of 2021, the Town created an unpaved, 30 space public parking lot at 47 West Main Street to provide additional parking for nearby businesses.

Pedestrian movement through the study area is challenging. While there are sidewalks along both sides of West Main Street, the sidewalk on the southern side of the street ends about a third of a mile before the western end of the study area. There are only two crosswalks in the study area, possibly linked to the limited number of intersecting streets with this section of West Main Street.

Overall, the corridor lacks a sense of cohesion. A lack of public signage, as well as amenities such as street trees and benches, result in the absence of a cohesive brand or sense of place. Given that private properties abut the state-owned road and there is only one small public park in the study area, there is limited opportunity for Norton to address this issue on its own. State, local, and private coordination will be essential in creating a commercial district that invites people to stay.



A predominately small-business and services-oriented district

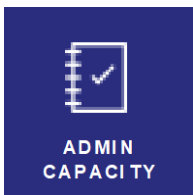
Norton's West Main Street commercial district includes 62 storefronts including retail, restaurants, banks, and offices. This represents nearly 127,800 square feet of ground floor commercial space according to the Town's Assessor's database. Nine of the 62 storefronts were vacant and two vacant lots, with planned development, were identified during April 2021 site visits. There have been two business closures since March 2020; however, it is unknown how COVID-19 affected these closures, if at all.

62 businesses operate along the West Main Street commercial district. The predominant business types in the district are retail and services (e.g., salons, repair/maintenance) which represent 21% of total businesses each. These are followed by healthcare and social assistance (18%) and accommodation and food service (11%).

23% of businesses participated in a survey in March 2021 to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the business community and priorities for recovery. The survey revealed that the majority of the businesses in the community rent their space and over half employ between 6-20 people. There are no businesses along West Main Street with more than 50 employees. 71% of businesses reduced hours and operating capacity as a result of COVID-19 and 29% experienced at least a temporary business closure. At the time of the survey, 64% were still operating at reduced hours/capacity. Stakeholder interviews and field observations show that hiring continues to be a factor impacting business recovery given current competition for employees, especially in food establishments.

In the same survey, businesses felt that safety and access for customers and employees was good; however, they were least satisfied with the condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs as well as public spaces, streets, and sidewalks. 43% of businesses identified obstacles posed by the Town's regulatory environment including signage, licensing/permitting, parking, and outdoor dining.

Improvements in the streetscape, development of public spaces and seating areas, and renovation of storefronts/building facades were identified by West Main Street businesses as the top three preferred strategies to improve the district and support business recovery.



The town has no business organization overseeing recovery efforts

Norton has an active Planning and Economic Development Department with one full-time employee, the department director. The Norton Economic Development Commission was formed in 2019 and is a nine-member advisory commission appointed by the Select Board.

Norton is part of the Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce which serves Norton, Foxboro, and Mansfield. Only two businesses in the West Main Street study area are members according to the Chamber's member directory. Otherwise, there is no other formal means by which businesses in this district coordinate.

Based upon key stakeholder interviews, businesses felt the Town of Norton was very responsive and supportive throughout the COVID-19 state of emergency. The Norton Planning Director has noted that maintaining good communication with businesses is a priority; however, it is challenge, especially working with businesses one on one. Organizing businesses and expanding their capacity to take on collective actions to advance this commercial district within the town could be an important step in COVID-19 recovery efforts.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

A DISTRICT LACKING COHESION

The West Main Street study area struggles from a lack of cohesion. At the east end, near the village green and Route 140, businesses are denser and there is a slightly more pedestrian-feel in this auto-oriented commercial district. As one moves west, many businesses become further set back from the road. Further, there are no amenities such as signage, lighting, benches, or similar that unify the district. Route 123 stretches across the entire town and it is difficult to know when one has arrived at the West Main Street commercial district, especially when approaching from the west. Without any linking elements, it is difficult to establish West Main Street as a destination where people will spend time and visit multiple businesses in a single trip.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, BUT LIMITATIONS REMAIN FOR BUSINESSES

Economic development and good infrastructure are inextricably linked. Two chief constraints on businesses' size and capacity are septic and parking.

Business owners along West Main Street have noted how important the recent public sewer extension has been, especially for food service establishments such as Bog Iron Brewing. The public sewer extension relieves pressure on food service establishments for indoor capacity as well as easing the ability to add outdoor dining, an offering that became essential during COVID-19 and that will likely remain a preference for many diners. For those businesses at the west end of the district that remain without public sewer service, capacity is dictated by private septic capacity. Some businesses have noted that wetlands adjacent to the commercial district present limitations on septic or other types of expansion in the area.

Regarding parking, as a state highway, there can be no on-street parking on West Main Street/Route 123. Each business relies on its own private lot which again restricts business size and capacity. While the Town added a 30-space public lot this year, there is no other public land in the district for future public parking additions. Nor is there public land available to add additional public open space or public realm features.



A Variety of Business Storefront and Sign Styles comprise the West Main Street district including shopping plazas and converted residential buildings for small local businesses and national chains. Source: BSC Group



Norton Common Source: Google Maps Contributor: Micah Cole

Attracting Customers and Businesses

CREATING THE VILLAGE CENTER

Norton has taken recent steps to create a more walkable commercial district including the recent addition of the Village Center Core zoning district which includes nearly all of the West Main Street commercial district.

The Town and business owners have additionally explored events as a way to bring customers into the area such as a concert with food and beer tents on the Norton Common, just adjacent to the district. While the Town is supportive of these kinds of events and was prepared to issue all necessary permits to allow the planned activities, the event was not able to proceed due to public health concerns in 2019 (due to high risk from Eastern Equine Encephalitis "EEE") and in 2020 (due to COVID-19).

In general, there is a lack of open space and side streets in the vicinity of the West Main Street commercial district to host events that could bring more customers into the area. A high school and elementary school in the area may have adequate space and parking for festivals and events, but scheduling around school activities and regulations related to allowable activities on school grounds may restrict the types of events that are held.



Highlights from the Business Environment

A VISION FOR THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

Nearly a quarter of West Main Street's business district is services oriented with healthcare/social services, food services, and other sectors following. With current vacancies, and discussions of COVID recovery including public realm enhancements, stakeholders began to discuss what the future of the district should and could be. This includes how the district will look, how it will market itself, and what kinds of customers and businesses it wants to attract.

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

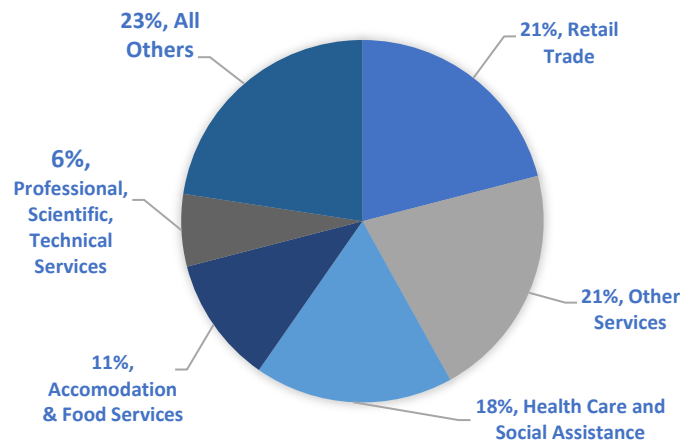
One theme in Town and stakeholder discussions for the Rapid Recovery Project was relationships and engagement. A top priority for the Town is building relationships with the business community and working together on initiatives that will support the existing and future West Main Street Business community.

Two community anchors stand out in their relationship with the community. Bog Iron Brewing frequently works with the town to identify obstacles to doing business and work on solutions. Information from Bog Iron regarding led to the development of a new public parking area on West Main Street. Bog Iron founder has also reached out to business owners across the district to initiate discussion and assess interest in shared business activities from technical assistance to beautification programs.

Wheaton College emerged as another anchor with significant potential. Despite being adjacent to the West Main Street commercial corridor, there is opportunity to bring more students in as patrons of local businesses. Additionally, students and faculty bring knowledge and new perspectives and energy that could be further leveraged to support recovery and improvements in the business district.

These kinds of relationship building and engagement opportunities are discussed in several of the recommendations in this plan.

WEST MAIN ST BUSINESSES



Mix of business by NAICS category. Source: US Census Bureau



Wheaton College located in Norton, MA Photo: Wheaton College, <https://wheatoncollege.edu/news/show-of-generosity/>

Project Recommendations

Recommendations	Project Category	Page
Complete a Parking Management Study	Public Realm	21
Organize and Build Capacity of the West Main Street Business Community	Administrative Capacity	23
Increase Local Administrative Capacity	Administrative Capacity	27
Establish Technical Assistance Program to Support Business Recovery	Revenue/Sales	29
Improve Pedestrian Safety and Crossings	Public Realm	32
Implement Façade Improvement Program	Private Realm	37
Create a District Identity and Marketing Campaign	Revenue/Sales	42
Support Continued Outdoor Dining	Revenue/Sales	48
Identify and Correct Zoning/Permitting Impediments	Administrative Capacity	51
Extend Public Sewer Service	Public Realm	54

Complete a Parking Management Study

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Planning & Economic Development
Budget	 Medium Budget – approximately \$50,000 for consultant to complete study, public engagement, and recommendations report; Sources of Funding: Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, One Stop for Growth, Mass Planning Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term – approximately 6 months to complete study plus additional time to prepare and submit grant for funding
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Completion of study; # of recommendations implemented
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning and Economic Development, Norton Economic Development Commission, Norton Highway Department, Norton Police Department, West Main Street stakeholders (businesses, property owners, public)



Map of West Main Street and new, municipal parking lot. Photo: Norton Planning & Economic Development

Diagnostic

COVID-19 made significant impacts to driving behavior including need for dedicated curbside pickup, decreased use of public transportation, and impacts to parking as businesses and organizations moved dining, retail, and activities outside into parking lots and streets taking up valuable spaces. Norton's LRRP business survey responses indicated a need to examine parking, including parking regulations. Respondents indicated it was important to make changes in public parking availability, management or policies. Norton has heard from businesses such as Bog Iron Brewing and Norton House of Pizza that their customers have difficulty finding parking due to their popular businesses having inadequate parking spaces. To alleviate some of these challenges, in early 2021, Norton established a free, municipal parking lot at 47 West Main Street. The lot is currently unpaved and can accommodate 30 vehicles.

As businesses grow and attract more customers, parking must address this growth. The Town is trying to promote redevelopment within a portion of the District between a recent sewer expansion and a rezoning to a more intensive zoning district. Norton may look to extend the sewer and new zoning district further into the district. Parking management is a must in order to fulfill Norton's redevelopment goal.

Action Item

Assess parking utilization and demand. The assessment should review parking utilization at different times of the day and week to identify areas with a surplus or deficit of parking. The assessment should also consider future parking demand based on anticipated growth and/or redevelopment in the in the area.

Engage key stakeholders. Business, property owners, and visitors to the district should be consulted to understand parking preferences and challenges. Businesses and property owners can also provide insight on preferred parking management approaches. Key municipal stakeholders (e.g., Planning Board, Highway Department, Police Department) should be engaged to ensure buy-in and facilitate implementation of identified improvements following the study. As a state-owned road, MassDOT District 5 may also need to be engaged for implementation items that involve Route 123.





Assess opportunities and obstacles for shared parking. Parking utilization and demand analysis as well as public engagement should inform assessments for shared parking opportunities and obstacles. With no on-street parking in the district, businesses rely on private parking lots. Given the diversity of business types, it is likely that peak utilization will vary across businesses and present opportunities for shared parking if legal and other obstacles can be addressed.

Assess and improve parking regulations. The study should review current land uses and zoning requirements and use this information, in addition to the data collected in the action items above, to propose new parking strategies as well as changes to parking requirements in the Town's zoning. Additional strategies may include, but are not limited to, guidance for property owners to reconfigure parking to create additional spaces, updated wayfinding, and off-street interconnections of adjacent parking lots.

Process

1. Develop scope and objectives for parking management study.
2. Secure grant funding for study and engage transportation consultant.
3. Brief municipal stakeholders (e.g. Planning Board, Highway Department, Police Department) on project scope and timeline. Discuss roles for implementation following study recommendations.
4. Conduct assessments, stakeholder engagement, and recommendations development as described in Action Items.
5. Work with municipal and private stakeholders to implement proposed parking amendments.

Organize & Build Capacity of the West Main Street Business Community

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Study Area
Origin	Business survey; LRRP program application; Brian Shurtleff of Bog Iron Brewing
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) to Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) depending on scope of activities chosen – Sources of funding will vary based on types of activities undertaken: events, beautification/landscaping (Sponsorships from private companies), district management entity/BID (Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, Mass Development Real Estate Technical Assistance Program, ARPA funds (if tied to implementing COVID recovery activities)), small business training (ARPA Small Business Assistance)
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years) plus ongoing work
Risk	 Low Risk – long-term sustainability; will benefit from business and property owner participation/engagement and will be at risk without it
Key Performance Indicators	List of property owner & business concerns/priorities for district; # of activities completed by business association; # of businesses/property owners participating in association activities; Staff/contractor in place to manage activities on behalf of businesses
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning & Economic Development, Norton Economic Development Commission; Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce, Local business owners and property owners
Diagnostic	<p>The COVID pandemic significantly impacted commercial districts. Norton's business survey confirms that most West Main Street businesses experienced loss of revenue and foot traffic. They also incurred expenses to implement safety measures, and some suffered business closures and employee layoffs. Downtowns with active downtown organizations demonstrated their ability to pivot and respond to this crisis to help their small businesses weather the storm. They also provide capacity to conduct preliminary planning for identified district improvements so that when funding opportunities become available, they are poised to take advantage of them. Many downtowns have realized that a sustainable district management entity or similar organization is positioned to help downtowns recover from COVID and prepare for the future.</p> <p>Businesses and Town stakeholders have identified several opportunities to support recovery of the West Main Street corridor including district landscaping, façade/signage improvements, marketing, community events, shared parking arrangements, and coordinated communication with the Town. However, there is no mechanism to organize these efforts. Business stakeholders have also asked about the vision for the corridor, what types of businesses the Town hopes to attract, and what kinds of public realm amenities will best serve those businesses. A better organized business community could more readily engage in these kinds of planning discussions with the town. As the Town and business community pursue this objective, it is likely that it will take an incremental approach toward building capacity.</p>

Action Items

Capacity Building – Engaging businesses requires staff capacity and funding. While business leader involvement is important, communities should not assume that merchants will or can volunteer; prioritize assigning a paid person to tasks or a paid person to manage volunteers. Identify an organization that can serve as a short-term fiscal conduit for grant money such as local cultural non-profits, civic groups, etc.

Business Data Collection – Creating a database of businesses along West Main Street is the first step to engaging them. Norton already has a database that can be updated.

Engage Property Owners and create a database of property owners contacts along West Main Street - If Business Improvement District is desired, property owners need to be engaged and on-board. Take this opportunity to survey property owners on their top concerns in the district and discuss desired outcomes for the district.

Establish Internal Communication Platforms – A dedicated communications platform provides a forum for business operators and key stakeholders to engage. This platform can be used to share pertinent information in real time, request assistance of peers, share success stories, etc.

Event Planning – Rally businesses around a specific shared concern or objective (district marketing, commercial attraction initiative, beautification, district clean up day). Successful event execution builds district awareness, reinforces district identity, and supports organizational foundations that can be leveraged for commercial attraction.

Create/Formalize Business Association – Similar to district marketing, a formalized organization can be a space to address opportunities and threats to the West Main Street Corridor. This action should include developing a steering committee and establishing a purpose and goals for the association. In summer 2021, the Bog Iron Brewing founder circulated an email to businesses in the area to assess interest and suggested potential early activities of a loosely organized association as an initial step.

(Alternate to above) Form a Business Improvement District – BIDs are a proven model that provide sustainable capacity and revenue to maintain priority focus on desired outcomes. The primary stakeholders in BIDs are property owners, as opposed to business owners. However, a BID may be a better long-term goal once the initial business association builds momentum. Detailed information on forming at BID can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-revised-business-improvement-district-manual/download>

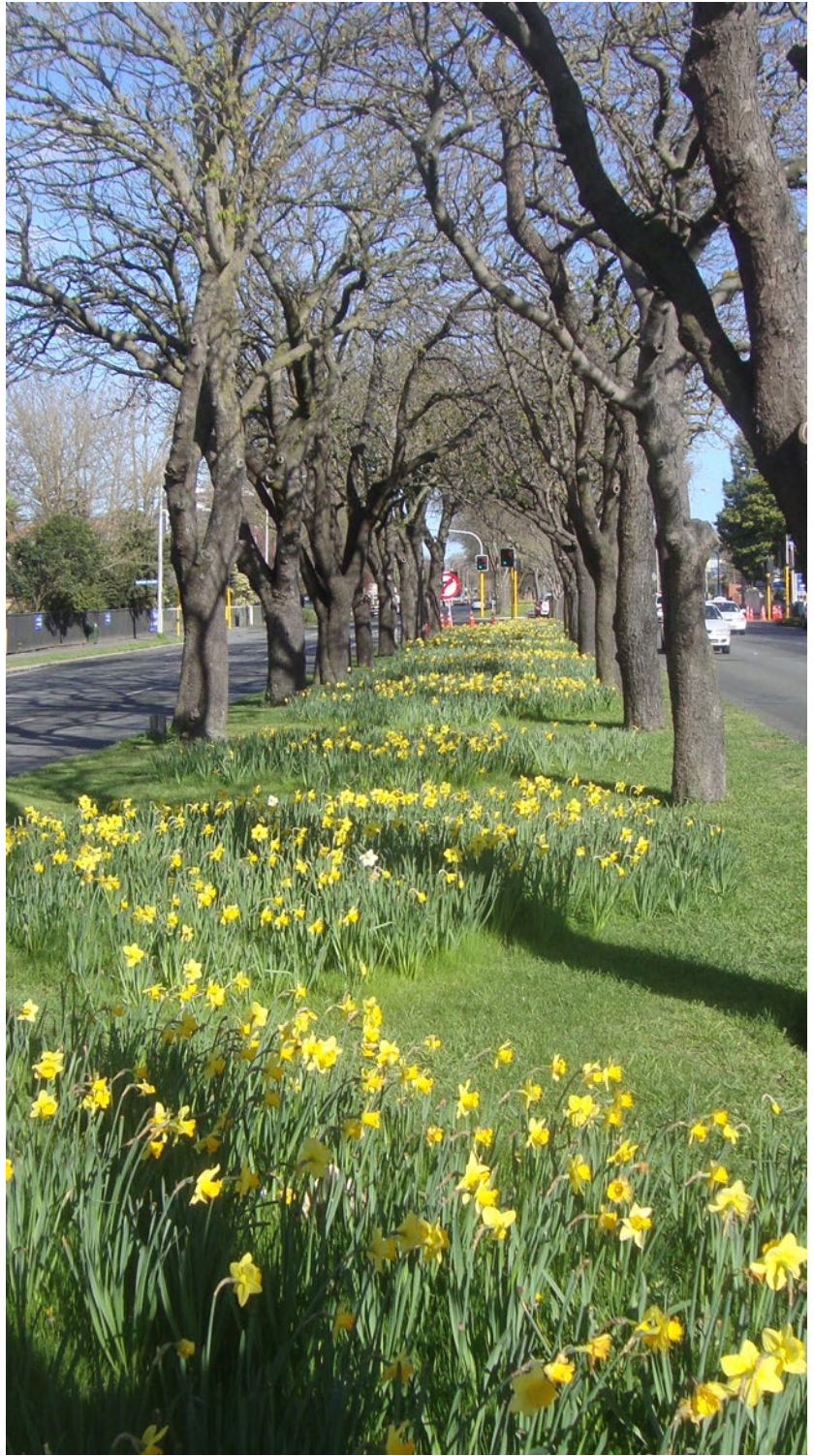


Photo of daffodils along street

Photo: Wikimedia Commons, ShareAlike3.0

Process

Short-Term (3-6 months)

- Develop partners, short-term goals and corresponding funding/staffing plan to conduct shared activities
- Identify an organization that can serve as a short-term fiscal conduit to support a staff person to manage tasks. The staff person can be part or full-time depending on the scope of activities and funding received. Develop MOU with organization.
- Create internal communications platform for business owners/property owners

Intermediate (6 months – 1.5 years)

- Create database of property owners; survey property owners on concerns/priorities for district
- Rally businesses around an event that addresses a shared concern or objective (e.g., marketing campaign, beatification project, etc.)
- Form steering committee to explore business association models; maintain regular check-ins and engagement

Longer-Term (1-5 years)

- Gain familiarity with Massachusetts BID formation process; begin exploratory conversation with property owners



Performers at Norton Founders Day Picnic Photo: Norton Founders Day Picnic Facebook Page

Additional detail on this recommendation, including considerations/challenges and key performance indicators, is available in the appendix.

Forming a BID: “Reimagine Reading”

Location

Reading, MA

<https://www.readingma.gov/public-services/economic-development/pages/reimagine-reading-survey>

About

Reimagine Reading is a privately lead, Town & state supported initiative to create a public/private partnership and non-profit organization that will provide supplemental services and continued investment for a more vibrant Town.

Collectively, the initiative has identified the following key initiatives:

- Placemaking
- Business support and development
- Marketing and branding
- Downtown Access
- Advocacy
- COVID-19 business support and economic development recovery



Planning Process/Timeline

2018 Town Economic Development Forum - Public identified the need for multi-stakeholder group to be a champion for downtown.

Spring 2019 - Town applied for and received a technical assistance grant, from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program through the Department of Housing and Community Development, to hire a consultant to provide technical assistance in the exploration of a downtown district management organization to provide supplemental services to the community.

Summer/Fall 2019- Town provided staff support to build community capacity, strengthen partnerships, and lead a robust and on-going public engagement process.

September 10, 2019- Presentation on District Management Types - On September 10, 2019, technical consultant, Ann Burke, presented to the working group to talk about different kinds of organization models and considerations for each type: [Finding the Right Fit-Structures of Downtown Organizations](#)

September 18, 2019- Ice Cream Social Event - On September 18th, the Town sponsored a Pizza and Ice Cream Social at the Pleasant Street Center. Over 100 people came including many new faces. We were also excited to have some really great participation from families and kids in the community. [Reimagine Reading Ice Cream Social Presentation.](#)

September 9-October 15, 2019 - Community Survey- The Town provided staff support, marketing, and coordination for a community wide-survey. The purpose of this survey was to gather information from the public to help share the future of this future organization and its initiatives and was one of many public engagement tools used to gather information. Thank you to business partners, organization members, and residents for spreading the word! We had 1,538 respondents!

November 11, 2019- Community Survey Results [Reimagine Reading Downtown Initiative Survey Results 2019](#)

Winter 2019- Working group meetings, peer-to-peer conversations, analysis of public engagement data to develop a vision and preliminary action plan for a future organization.





Spring/Summer 2020- Town applied for and received a second technical assistance grant, from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program through the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide technical assistance in support of ongoing public/private partnership and development of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Update to Select Board by Town staff at the September 15, 2020 Select Board meeting. [See document for more detailed background information HERE.](#)

Fall/Winter 2020- Town continues to provide grant supported technical assistance to support ongoing public/private partnership and development of a [business improvement district](#) organization.

Spring-Fall 2021- A private group of property owners, business owners, and residents are actively working together with a grant supported technical consultant to continue to develop a business improvement district organization.

Increase Local Administrative Capacity

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Study Area
Origin	Town stakeholders
Budget	 High Budget (>\$200,000) – assumes total cost over multiple years for part-time or full-time position; this recommendation is not likely to have standalone budget but rather be a component of other recommendations' budgets
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years) – if position exists to carry out COVID recovery projects that are funded through ARPA, funds must be obligated by 2024 and spent by Dec. 2026. During this time, Town/partners may seek to find alternate sources of funding to continue supporting additional capacity for these and similar activities.
Risk	 Medium Risk – must secure approval and funding for new position
Key Performance Indicators	Position (staff/intern) approved and hired; Clear goals for position and progress toward those goals (e.g., business relationships, grants written, programming/marketing activities completed)
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning & Economic Development; Economic Development Commission; Town Manager; Select Board
Diagnostic	<p>The Norton Planning and Economic Development Commission is currently staffed with two full-time employees: a director of planning and an administrator. Prior to COVID, this limited capacity constrained the ability to work toward multiple objectives including planning, zoning, economic development, and more. Through the Rapid Recovery Program planning process, numerous additional COVID recovery needs and projects have been identified; however, the Town lacks capacity to administer these additional programs. Even when consultants are hired for certain projects, local capacity is required to conduct initial stakeholder engagement, write grants, and more. As seen during the COVID-19 emergency, those municipalities with sufficient capacity have been better able to support their business community through response and recovery (e.g., see Lowell Business Recovery Task Force best practice on page 44).</p> <p>Several recommendations in this plan have similar action items and process steps that may be most efficiently carried out by a single person who can serve as a single point of contact for stakeholders and minimize duplication of effort for common tasks. These are identified in the action items on the following page.</p>

Action Items

The table at right identifies common project administration/delivery tasks associated with COVID recovery recommendations included in this plan.

As an immediate source of funding, the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) has provided funding to states, counties, and local governments to respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts. Additional competitive funding opportunities are also available through ARPA.

The cost of administering an eligible project under ARPA is an eligible expense, therefore, payroll costs for programs and projects that respond to the negative economic impacts of COVID would be eligible. Expenses must be obligated by December 31, 2024, but actual payments can lag to December 31, 2026. For short-term projects, ARPA funds may cover payroll costs through completion of the project. For ongoing projects, ARPA may provide the initial payroll costs. Norton or other project partners can then use this time to secure ongoing funding through municipal, private, or other sources of funding so that sustainable ongoing funding is in place by the end of 2026. These may include continuance of the façade improvement program and outdoor dining. Other activities, such as district marketing, business technical assistance, business associations/capacity may be transferred to another new entity such as a district management entity or business improvement district, if they are established.

Recommendation	Pedestrian Safety	Sewer Extension	Façade Improvement Program	District Marketing	Business TA Program	Outdoor Dining	Business Association / Capacity / Zoning / Permitting Updates
Project Administration/Delivery Tasks							
Conduct Initial Planning Required Prior to Securing Funding	✓	✓	✓				✓
Seek Funding/Write Grant	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Manage Steering Committee and/or Consultants/Contractors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Data Collection/Maintenance (e.g., business database, conduct interviews/surveys)			✓	✓	✓		✓
Community Engagement Activities (e.g., host forums/ public meetings/events)		✓		✓		✓	✓
Develop program guidelines/administer program to participants			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promotion/Outreach (e.g., social media, PSAs, etc.)			✓	✓	✓		

Process

1. Confirm and document project eligibility under available grant programs (e.g., ARPA, CDBG, others).
2. Develop detailed program scopes and budgets including program delivery/payroll costs.
3. Seek to build a full-time staff position by combining program delivery/payroll costs for 2 or more projects. In some cases, where a staff position is “substantially” (>50%) committed to program delivery, the entire position can be funded. The addition of a Planner Assistant may be beneficial to focus on Planning Board activities and allow the Director to focus on economic development.
4. Apply for/allocate relevant funding programs for each project.
5. Following program implementation, develop plans to transition payroll costs to sustainable, longer-term funding streams once grant funds expire or to new entities that may be formed by these recovery projects, such as district management entities.

Establish Technical Assistance Program to Support Business Recovery

Category	 Revenue/Sales
Location	Study Area
Origin	LRRP Best Practices; Business Survey
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) – over the course of two years, the program will require staffing (or consultant) to lead information gathering tasks and to coordinate programming. Program offerings will also have associated costs (e.g., instructor fees, materials, etc.). Sources of funding: ARPA Small Business Technical Assistance
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years) – tasks can be completed in 3 months – 2 years
Risk	 Low Risk - dependent upon funding; will benefit from business participation/engagement and will be at risk without it
Key Performance Indicators	# of classes/workshops/coaching sessions offered; # of businesses participating; change (increase) in sales/receipts for participating businesses
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning & Economic Development, Norton Economic Development Commission; Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce, Local business owners and property owners

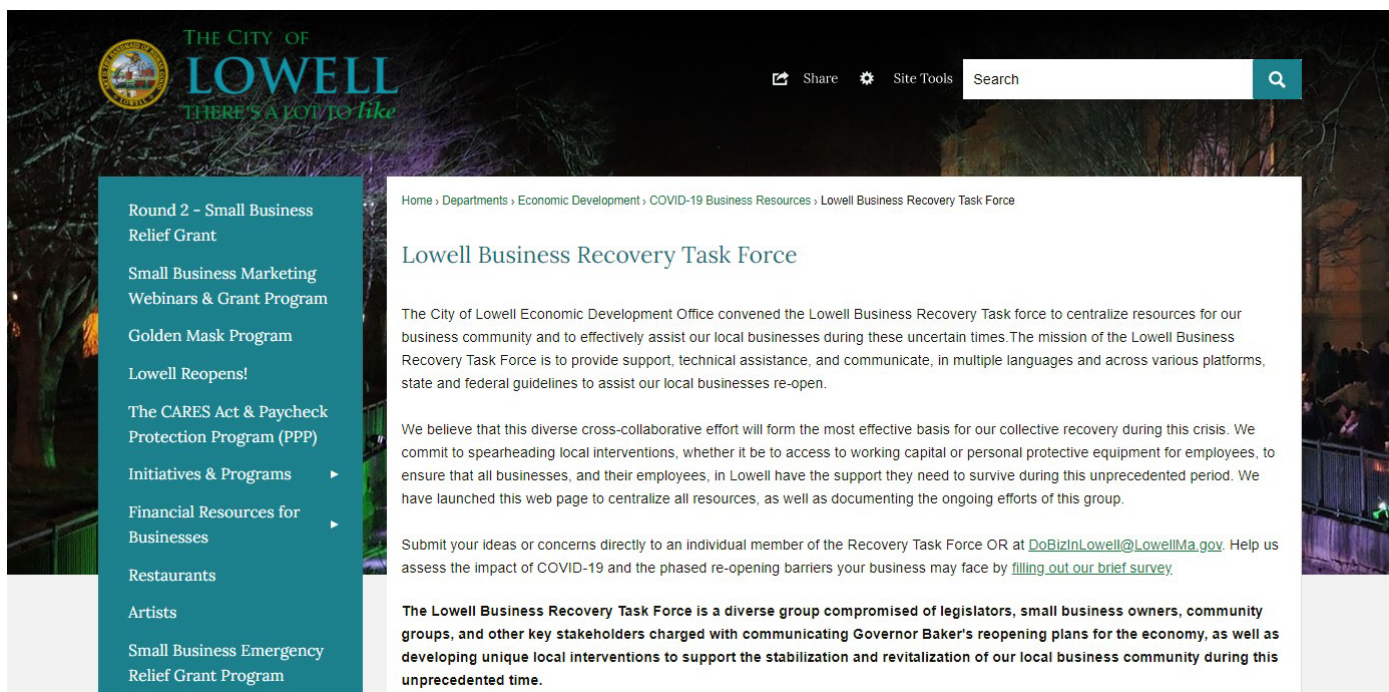


Image of Business Task Force at Lowell, MA

Diagnostic

West Main Street businesses are mostly small (56% have 10 or fewer employees) and were impacted by less revenue (57% of businesses) and foot-traffic (49% of businesses) as a result of COVID-19. While not always the case, small, independent businesses frequently lack the time or resources to adapt their business practices as economic conditions change even if they have the requisite skills. Post-COVID, these changes could include customer marketing and outreach, expanding to online retail, or changes in physical layout, as examples.

Technical assistance requested through the Phase I business survey included (1) shared marketing/advertising (29%), (2) financing for storefront/façade improvements (29%), (3) financing for purchasing property in the district (21%), and (4) training on the use of social media (7%). Marketing strategies, improvements to the private realm, and providing goods and services that would attract customers were among the additional challenges identified for downtown businesses. In summer 2021, Norton Planning and Economic Development conducted an additional survey of West Main Street businesses regarding technical assistance needs, marketing, including social media marketing, emerged as the most popular request. Other topics related to the digital world including IT security and online sales were also requested.

As a complement to other recommendations included in this Rapid Recovery Plan, technical assistance could assist business owners in adapting to new economic conditions and recovery.

Action Item

Assess business needs – Based on the two surveys completed, Norton could begin offering trainings focused on marketing and other digitally focused topics. These findings can also be a starting point for the Town and partners to dig deeper into specific needs. Focus groups, including groups broken up by sector or theme (e.g., hospitality, social media, accessing funding, etc.), may be beneficial in offering programs that are responsive to business needs.

Conduct a resource audit – Conducting an audit of existing resources or strategic partners would aid in increased efficiencies and cost-savings, build alliances and partnerships, and streamline execution. Results of this audit would be a publicly available database of resources to guide coordinated efforts as well as to allow businesses to access resources on their own. Consider resources outside of the region that can be accessed online.

Create programming to fill gaps in technical assistance offerings - Programming can come in many forms including formal programs, one-on-one coaching, peer-to-peer best practice sharing, and more. Programming will also have to consider access. For example, will digital or in-person offerings be more effective, will programs offer dynamic or static content, what timing, frequency, or platform is best, and whether there are other barriers to access such as language.

Outreach/Awareness Strategy to share capacity building resources – An outreach program with dedicated personnel to engage businesses in programming and resources can maximize participation and results. The RRP business survey showed a desire among businesses to draw more customers but relatively low interest in technical assistance. This suggests that businesses don't know what they don't know and would benefit from targeted outreach.

Consider synergy with merchant alliance formation – Elsewhere in this Rapid Recovery Plan is a recommendation to create a merchant alliance. Implementing projects/programs in tandem with other initiatives can give value to effort and provide opportunity for an "early win" thereby creating interest and participation.

Consider regional partnerships – Given the size of the West Main Street business district, expanding the scope to all of Norton and/or surrounding communities with

Process

- 1) Update existing database of all businesses along West Main Street and their contact information.
- 2) Host focus group(s) with businesses to better understand challenges and brainstorm how technical assistance might help.
- 3) Create database of existing technical assistance resources available and build relationships with local TA providers. Assess gaps between business needs and available resources.
- 4) Work with local nonprofit/small business development center/other subject matter expert to create programming that addresses identified gaps.
- 5) Leverage previous findings to determine best messaging/process to connect with businesses, dedicate personnel to do outreach, and possibly incentivize businesses to participate in TA programs.

Additional detail on this recommendation, including considerations/challenges and key performance indicators, is available in the appendix.

Lowell Business Recovery Task Force



REVENUES
& SALES

Location

Lowell, MA

Lowell Business Recovery Task Force:
Small Business Marketing Webinars and
Grant Program

<https://www.lowellma.gov/1457/Lowell-Business-Recovery-Task-Force>

The City of Lowell Economic Development Office convened the Lowell Business Recovery Task force to centralize resources for our business community and to effectively assist our local businesses during these uncertain times. The mission of the Lowell Business Recovery Task Force is to provide support, technical assistance, and communicate, in multiple languages and across various platforms, state and federal guidelines to assist our local businesses re-open.

One component of the Task Force's work includes the Small Business Marketing Webinars and Grant Program (webinar slides available at: <https://www.lowellma.gov/1471/Small-Business-Marketing-Webinars-Grant->).

The City of Lowell's Economic Development Office created a marketing grant program available to Lowell's small, independently owned businesses that were most significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant awards of up to \$2,000 were available to eligible businesses until funds were depleted. Eligible applicants were required to participate in at least 2 free webinars (up to 4 total) in order to receive funding.





The Task Force additionally launched a website to provide a central resource for businesses with information about financial resources, provide information for specific sectors, and link to other programs organizing small business assistance and marketing campaigns.

Online Marketing Strategy



Screenshot from Small Business Marketing Webinar Source: Tomo360 and Lowell Business Recovery Task Force

Improve pedestrian safety and crossings

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Field visits; Community meeting; Business survey
Budget	 Variable (<\$50,000 to > \$1,000,000) – This recommendation includes improvements that encompass various types of projects that are low-cost, short-term improvements to high-cost, long-range improvements.
Timeframe	 Variable - Some recommendations will be implementable within a couple of years and others may have a much longer timeline.
Risk	 Variable – Significant coordination required given that W. Main Street is a state-owned road; Some recommendations will have few barriers for completion and others may require complicated design, permitting, and local and state approvals.
Key Performance Indicators	Increased number of pedestrian crossings; addition of new sidewalk; reduction of curb cut widths; improved safety for pedestrians; number of new pedestrians in the corridor; reduction in vehicular speeds; reduction in number of vehicle trips between nearby land uses; improved access to and creation of public open spaces.
Partners & Resources	<p>Norton (Planning and Economic Development, Highway Department, Planning Board, Select Board, Alternative Transportation Board, Police Department, Town Manager); MassDOT District 5, Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GARTA)</p> <p>Funding Resources: MA Complete Streets Program, State Transportation Improvement Plan, Massachusetts Shared Streets and Spaces Grant, MassWorks funding (in conjunction with any future development projects), ARPA, MA Office of Disability Municipal American with Disabilities Grant, AARP Challenge Grant, local funding sources and development agreements</p>



171 West Main Street looking west. Photo Credit: BSC Group

Diagnostic

The West Main Street corridor serves a mix of commercial and residential uses in a typical suburban-style development pattern. Most uses are located within single lots and have individual driveways, creating a vehicle-dominated corridor. Pedestrian connectivity is poor throughout the corridor. Marked crosswalks are not provided, the existing sidewalks are interrupted by many wide curb cuts, and there is no sidewalk present on the south side of West Main Street west of the Norton Housing Authority property.

The Town of Norton is currently reviewing the entire corridor and identifying improvements to various characteristics including updating zoning regulations toward the east end of the corridor that has the potential to attract investment in redevelopment of some parcels. The Town is also looking to develop a comprehensive parking strategy plan for the corridor that should also be taken into consideration when implementing new pedestrian improvements.

When surveyed for this Rapid Recovery planning process, business owners were least satisfied with the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks in the corridor's physical environment. Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks was rated the most important physical realm improvement to help the district recover from COVID-19 revenue losses and other impacts. As observed in COVID, safe, outdoor spaces are critical to maintaining community and individual health. Stakeholders have noted that Norton Center and Wheaton College are located immediately east of the corridor, which have the potential for generating significant pedestrian activity. Better pedestrian connections between Norton Center and the east end of the West Main Street are a priority for the Town in order to serve the existing businesses in the area and to accommodate future development.

The Town desires to enhance the pedestrian facilities by improving connectivity and safety to promote a safer environment and to reshape the nature of the corridor from an automobile-centric place to one where patrons of the local businesses can park once and walk to several destinations, especially in the eastern end of West Main Street.



*Continental Style Crosswalk with Rapid Flashing Beacon
Source: Oregon Department of Transportation via Flickr*

Recommendations to Consider

Improvements to the pedestrian facilities and pedestrian safety along West Main Street should consider the following recommendations. Due to the jurisdiction of West Main Street, MassDOT will likely need to be involved in any changes to the corridor:

Construct new sidewalk: Construct a new sidewalk along the south side of West Main Street west of the Norton Housing Authority property.

Install new crosswalks: There are only two crosswalks currently serving the West Main Street corridor. Identify appropriate locations for new crosswalk locations throughout the corridor. Locations should look to connect pedestrian desire lines and points of interest. Crossings should be considered in locations where residential properties exist and at bus stop locations. The evaluation of crosswalk locations should be an ongoing practice as new development occurs throughout the corridor.

Improved pedestrian signage and markings: Warning signage should be placed in advance of and at crosswalks. The need for additional measures such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) and curb extensions should also be reviewed when installing a new crosswalk. Crosswalks should include vertical striping (i.e. “continental”) or other highly visible markings.

Evaluate existing curb cuts and side streets: Curb cuts should be a standard width and improvements to wide curb cuts should be implemented. New curbing should be added to West Main Street to provide better definition to reduce the potential for pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. Side streets should be better defined and crosswalks should be installed at each location.

Create development standards: New development standards should be created to ensure that any new projects are required to have properly designed curb cuts and pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding infrastructure. Development toward the east end of the corridor should look to implement parking strategies that promote patrons to park once to visit multiple businesses in the area.

Upgrades to street lighting and streetscape: Street lighting throughout the corridor consists of highway-style luminaires mounted on utility poles. Upgrades to street lighting to provide pedestrian-scale decorative lighting will create a more walkable environment at night. Additional improvements to the streetscape, such as pocket parks, green spaces, and wayfinding elements can also enhance the pedestrian environment.

Improve bicycle facilities: Review the feasibility for the installation of bicycle lanes along West Main Street. A minimum shoulder width of five feet can accommodate bicycles. If additional width is available, consider installing buffered bicycle lanes. Install bicycle racks at key locations throughout the corridor. The Town should use existing design standards or develop new ones to provide consistent bicycle racks at locations with easy access to commercial properties and public open space.

Identify publicly owned parcels to create more open space: The addition of accessible open space throughout the corridor can make West Main Street more attractive for residents and pedestrians and will promote walking.

Consider parking strategies: The eastern portion of the corridor is dominated by commercial businesses, each with their own parking lot, which promotes patrons to drive between businesses. Should any economic redevelopment occur in this area, the Town should consider opportunities for shared parking between parcels. The Town should also consider using publicly owned parcels to create public parking, since on-street parking is prohibited and unable to serve the adjacent businesses. This recommendation should be viewed as a long-term goal that will require new zoning regulations in the district and a planning vision that is in place to help inform future development.

Accessibility Upgrades: A review of existing curb ramps throughout the Project area should be conducted and new curb ramps with detectible warning panels should be installed where they are missing. New curb ramps with detectible warning panels should be installed at future curb extensions and new crosswalk locations.

Action Items

See “Recommendations to Consider” (previous page) for specific pedestrian improvement recommendations.

Assess appropriate locations and styles for pedestrian safety improvements:

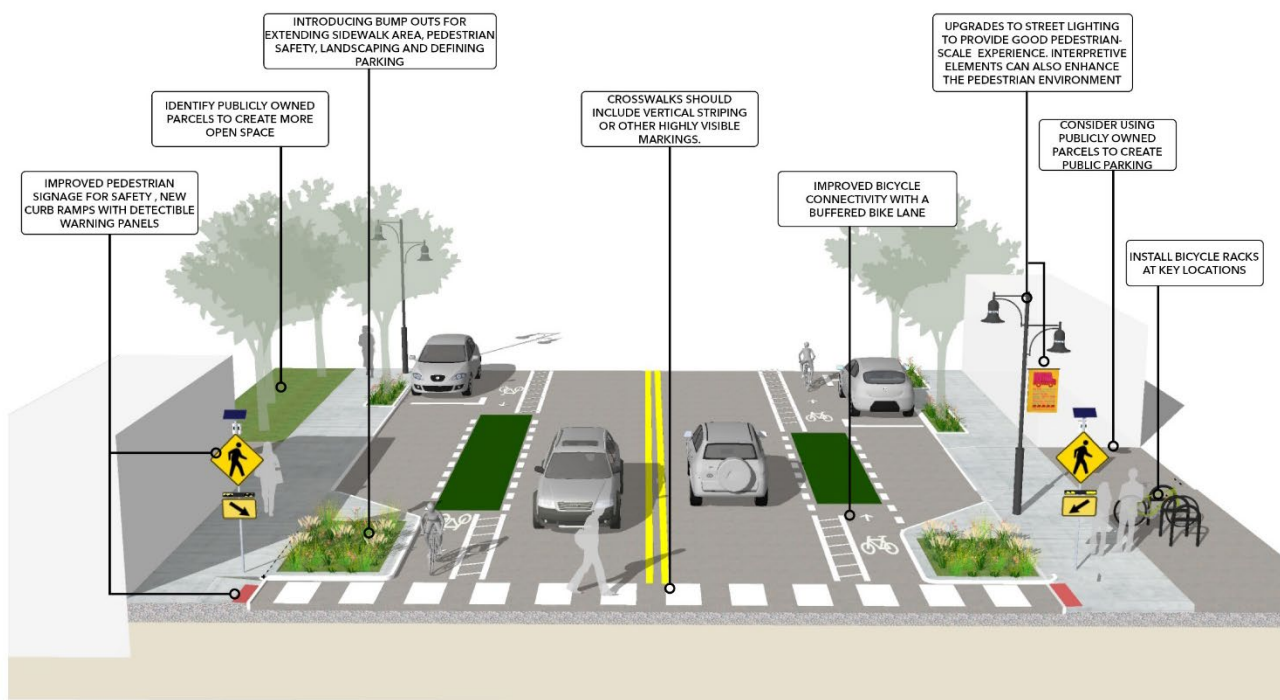
This plan provides general direction on the types of improvements that would benefit the pedestrian experience in the corridor. Broad input (businesses, residents, town departments, SRPEDD, MassDOT) on location and design should occur. This phase could also include piloting new crosswalk locations or designs before making permanent installation.

Coordinate with SRPEDD and MassDOT to place desired pedestrian improvements on the Transportation Improvement Plan.

Install priority improvements, specifically:

- **Extend sidewalk on south side of West Main Street** to provide safer pedestrian access from the Norton Housing Authority to the western extent of the study area,
- **Install additional crosswalks throughout the study area** to connect businesses and create a safer pedestrian experience. The Town should conduct an assessment to identify appropriate locations and features of crosswalks. This assessment should include public engagement and potential pilots of crosswalk locations and styles. While designing crosswalks, Norton should work with MassDOT to design them in a way that provides additional public realm features such as including bump-outs which, in addition to slowing traffic, could **create space for parklets, benches, or outdoor dining**.
- **Install vehicle calming measures** such as lights, brightly colored crosswalks, or similar to enhance safety on the vehicular oriented road.

Coordinate installation/construction with other projects such a future road repaving, stormwater improvements, or a potential sewer extension to minimize disruption and make efficient use of funding.

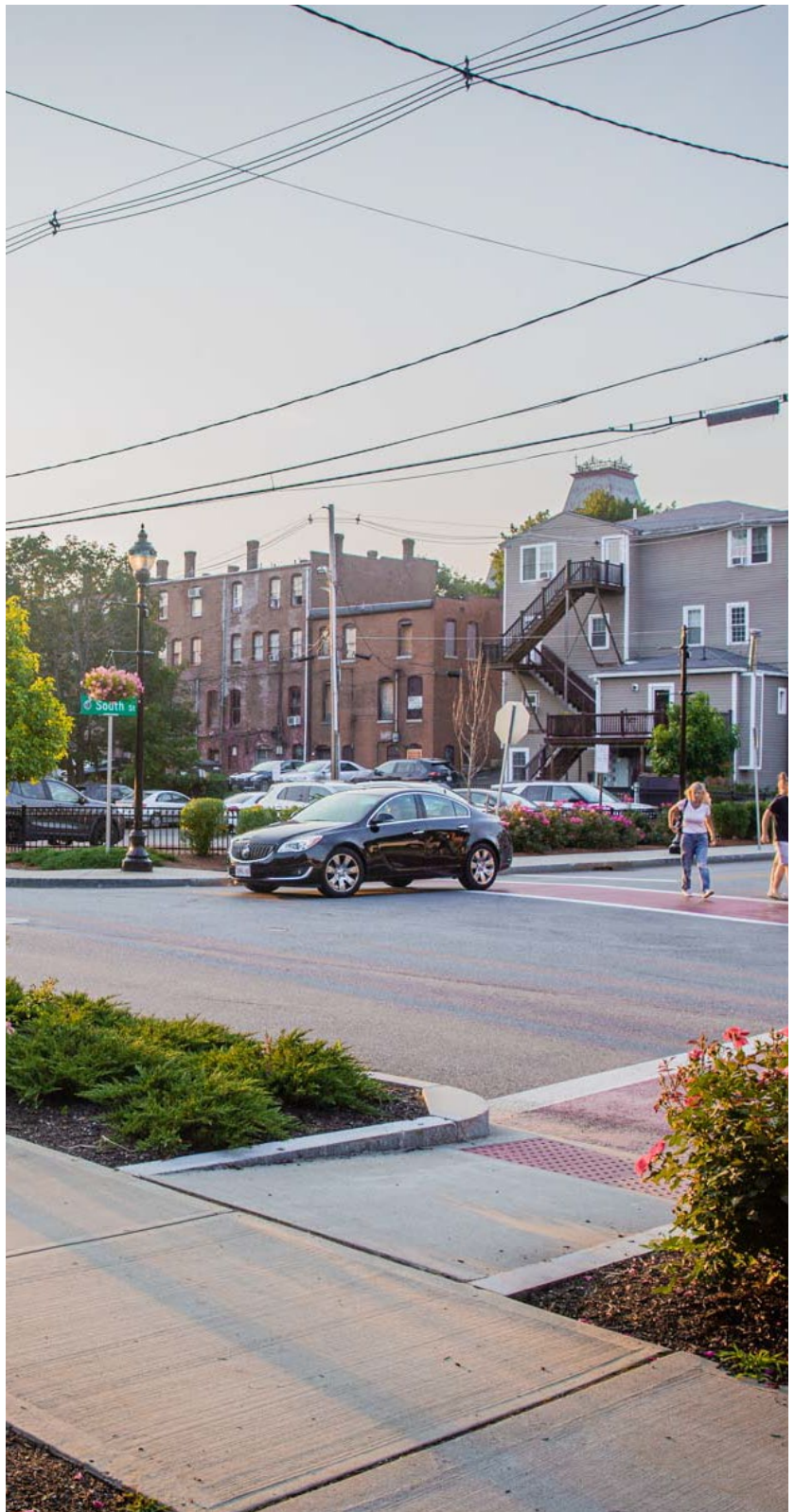


Mockup showing a variety of potential pedestrian safety improvements for West Main Street. All improvements may not be possible or appropriate for West Main Street. Source: BSC Group

Process





This section is intended to be used as a general roadmap to successfully implement pedestrian improvements. Depending on the size and scope of any selected project, some steps may not be necessary.

1. Create a steering committee to discuss existing concerns, visions, and needs for pedestrian improvements in the corridor. The committee should have one person acting as the chair and should consist of local stakeholders such as business owners, residents, public safety and public works officials, and a representative from MassDOT.
2. Use in-house staff or a consulting firm to provide an assessment of West Main Street to help facilitate the planning process.
3. Develop an assessment report to document existing issues and input from stakeholders. This report should clearly state well-defined objectives for improving pedestrian facilities (e.g. provide safer crossings between businesses, reduce vehicular speeds, etc.)
4. Develop a list of conceptual ideas to implement. The “Recommendations to Consider” section provides general direction that can be incorporated into this step of the process.
5. Select the preferred concepts that will be moved forward into the design stages.
6. Develop conceptual plans and supporting documentation with an appropriate level of detail that can be used for grant applications. This step will vary based on the level of funding and the funding source that will be pursued.
7. Determine how the project will be funded. Potential funding sources are provided on the first page of this recommendation.



*Planted bump out at crosswalk in Hudson, MA
Source: BSC Group*

Implement Façade Improvement Program

Category	 Private Realm
Location	West Main Street Commercial Corridor
Origin	Business Survey, Norton Planning & Economic Development
Budget	 <p>Low Budget (<\$50,000) - One-time costs: staff/consultant to conduct engagement, develop program guidelines, and conduct advertising.</p> <p>Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) - On-going costs: staff to manage program, design assistance (if provided), program funds for projects</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short-Term (< 5 years) – Can be implemented in less than 12 months</p>
Risk	 <p>Medium Risk – ability to secure and sustain program funding; relationship between property owners and town; businesses/property owners may be concerned about rise in property values and subsequent rise in rent/property taxes</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Adoption of program guidelines; Program advertising; # of applications; # of completed projects; # of projects maintained over time; Increase in business sales; Increase in property values; Increase in visitors to the target area
Partners & Resources	<p>Town of Norton (Planning & Economic Development, Select Board, Planning Board, Economic Development Commission, Building Inspector), Property Owners, Business Owners</p> <p>Funding – see box on page 33</p>
Diagnostic	<p>A common theme identified in stakeholder discussions is a lack of cohesiveness of the West Main Street district and a desire for no/low-cost financing to complete storefront/façade improvements. With declines in revenue (64% of businesses), reduced operating capacity (71%), and additional costs incurred to implement safety measures (79%) due to COVID-19, businesses are more resource constrained than ever to take on these kinds of projects. However, as a state-controlled road with almost no Town-owned/controlled public space along West Main Street, private realm improvements are a vital pathway to improving the physical environment and visitor experience in the commercial district. Renovation of storefronts/building facades was the second most important physical environment recovery strategy for the district, falling behind only streetscape/sidewalk improvements. Depending on the scope of the program and eligible improvements, a façade improvement program can also support business to implement COVID-19 safety improvements such as new doors, walk-up service windows, outdoor seating, and more.</p>

Storefront Improvement Program Highlights

As Norton explores development of a Façade Improvement Program (FIP), the following highlights can inform decision makers.

Benefits

Successfully implemented storefront/façade improvement programs have been found to:

- Strengthen locally owned businesses – Increase sales and attract new businesses and customers
- Contribute to area revitalization – Increase property values and higher tax bases, improve marketability of a space, motivate other property owners/businesses to make improvements
- Contribute to a sense of community/enhance character of community – Improve the public realm, increase safety, accessibility, pedestrian comfort
- Provide a more attractive retail environment/commercial corridor and stimulate additional private investment

Key Features

- Administration – most of developed and managed by organizations with a vested interest in civic improvements, including municipalities, business district management entities, community development corporations, chambers of commerce, and others
- Funding structure – depending on the source of funding, the program can be structured as a grant or a loan. There are various options including: Matching grant (e.g., 1:1 grant is a dollar-for-dollar match), Grant with set dollar amount per improvement (e.g., \$1,000 allowance for signage), Loan (low/zero-interest establishes revolving fund to enable future funding cycles upon payback, forgivable loans create incentives to maintain improvements over time), mixed funding options.
- Funding amounts – vary based on program, but programs researched ranged from \$2,500 - \$35,000.
- Types of Improvements – most programs allow for improvements to signage, lighting, windows, doors, entryways, roof, awning/canopy, and paint. Other eligible improvements may include design fees, landscaping, and parking lot improvements. HVAC, interior renovation, non-permanent fixtures, security systems, and equipment purchases are generally ineligible. Some funding programs allocate additional monies for improvements to historic restoration.



Vacant Storefront with damaged façade on West Main St. Photo: BSC Group

Best Practice	Percentage of best practice utilization
Community Provides 1-1 to 1-3 Match grant	83%
Provide Design Services as Needed	78%
Ensure Good application Design Choices	83%
Communicate 1-on- 1	33.3%
Easy Application	89%

Source: Sherrill, Scott (2014). More than face value: façade improvement grants in North Carolina. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Factors	Communities' issues
Bad Economy	88.9%
Lack of Knowledge	55.6%
Businesses Undertake Improvements on Own	50%
Facades Redone Already	50%
Grants Too Small	33.3%

Source: Sherrill, Scott (2014). More than face value: façade improvement grants in North Carolina. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Façade Improvement Program Best Practices (top) and Factors that Might Prevent Business Participation (bottom) Source: Sherrill, Scott. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Action Items

When developing the Façade Improvement Program, program proponents should strongly consider:

Build Community Support – Seek to build relational capital to gain credibility and community support as program enhancements are developed. Stakeholders should be involved early in the process and the program should take into consideration small business' needs and identify specific ways the program can help.

Determine Program Funding – Explore and secure funding for the program. Also consider funding amounts for projects. Funding amounts must be adequate such that the cost to participate does not outweigh the funding provided. Diversifying the funding stream can increase and sustain the total funds available to the program which will allow for a higher funding limit to be offered for projects.

Provide Design Services – While a FIP should include specific design guidelines, some also require participants to engage design professionals. Many programs include design services as a benefit of program participation. During this period of COVID recovery, funds may be available to include this type of small business assistance. Collaboration with local artists or Wheaton College/area design students may provide mutual benefit to artists/designers and program participants. Atlanta's BeltLine façade improvement program partners local artists/makers with businesses to complete capital improvements.

COVID-19 Impacts – Improvements to help reduce the transmissibility of the virus should be considered as eligible for funding. The flexibility could afford improvements such as replacement of doors or window systems, outdoor seating structures, the installation of a walk-up service window, and additional signage, markings, or partitions needed for social distancing and directional purposes.

Art Inclusion – The inclusion of art into the FIP can enhance the overall character and experience in the public and private realm. External, art-focused improvements visible to the public right of way may be considered for inclusion. In Turners Falls, MA, a publicly supported mural program is available for artists and businesses to participate in.

Advertising the Program – PSAs, social media, and a prominent location on the Town's/partners' websites can increase awareness of the program and participation. Word of mouth has been shown to be one of the most important ways to promote these programs.

Options to Diversify Storefront Improvement Program Funding

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

For additional funding options, see best practice sheets and resources attached to this recommendation.



BEFORE



AFTER

Before and After at 988 Main Street, Springfield, MA Photo: Develop Springfield Corridor Storefront Improvement Program

Process

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

Top 10 Important Features of a Façade Improvement Program

Stage 1: Plan

1. Develop a budget for the program
2. Dispense funds recommended by reimbursement
3. Pilot in a target area
4. Easy understandable application & include measurement indicators
5. Free design assistance with application

Stage 2: Advertise & Implement

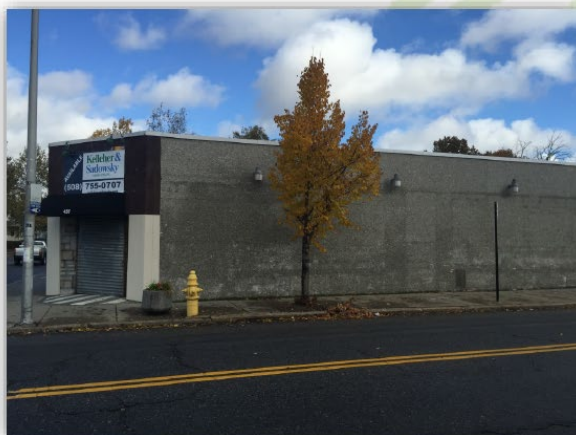
6. Marketing e.g. flyers, chamber of commerce, grocery store, utility bill
7. Implementation Plan:

Stage 3: Evaluate & Decide Future

8. Gather data each month before and after implementation: Multiple-time series evaluation design; alternate Time series evaluation design
9. Analyze possible long-term impact e.g. every 4-5 years
10. Decide on future of the program

Recommended Stages and Features of a Façade Improvement Plan Source: Osunbunmi O., Gula M., Elahmr N. (2016) Façade Improvement Programs: A Report to Centerville, OH. Wright State University.

455 Pleasant Street



Before



After



Cleaning Brick, Repainting, Window Addition, Awnings, Signage

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

Storefront Improvement Programs



Location

Various - Springfield, MA; Cambridge, MA; Central Point, OR

Corridor Storefront Improvement Program, Springfield, MA

Program details available at:
<https://www.developspringfield.com/csip-developspringfield.html>

Storefront Improvement Program, Cambridge, MA

Program details available at:
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/ecomdev/smallbusinessassistance/smallbusinessprograms/storefront>

Façade Improvement Programs, Central Point, OR

Program details available at:
<https://www.centralpointoregon.gov/urbanrenewal/page/facade-improvement-programs>

The CSIP is a program designed to provide grants of up to \$10,000 to eligible property owners and business tenants for improvements to ground-floor storefronts located on Main and State Streets with the goal of improving the physical appearance of buildings along these two important corridors. Funds can be used to make exterior improvements such as:

- Lighting, Windows and Doors, Signage and Awnings,
- Repair/Restoration of Finishes or Architectural Detailing
- Masonry Repair
- Removal (or conversion) of Solid Roll-Down Grates
- Landscaping

Cambridge property owners or tenants can access financial resources to renovate or restore commercial building exterior facades through the Storefront Improvement Program. The Program improves the physical appearance of independent businesses and enhances Cambridge's commercial districts.





This program provides:

- 90% matching grant up to \$20,000 for ADA improvements to entrance, including ramps, lifts, doors hardware and automatic openers, accessible parking, and signage.
- 50% matching grant up to \$15,000 for other façade improvements, including better windows, paneling, architectural details and restoration of historic features.
- 50% matching grant up to \$2,500 for signage, lighting and awning improvements.

As part of The Downtown & East Pine Street Corridor Revitalization Plan, an urban renewal plan for the City of Central Point, the City approved two storefront improvement programs designed to encourage the rehabilitation/restoration of commercial building facades within the Downtown Area:

1. **The Building Façade Loan Program (Loan Program)** is a downtown revitalization incentive program designed to encourage the rehabilitation/restoration of building facades. Through the Loan Program loans between \$1,000 and \$10,000 are available to owners of commercial buildings within the Loan Programs boundaries. The loan is a zero percent loan with a five-year amortization period.
2. **The Historic Building Façade Grant Program (Grant Program)** is a downtown revitalization incentive program designed to encourage the rehabilitation/restoration of commercial historic building facades within the Downtown Area (see map). The objective of the Historic Building Façade Grant Program is to encourage the preservation of commercial historic buildings, particularly along East Pine Street, that represent the history of the City of Central Point. The Grant Program provides \$1,000 to \$10,000 in grants for qualifying historic rehabilitation/restoration work. Qualifying work is similar to the Building Façade Loan Program, but limited to activities that focus on the historic rehabilitation/renovation of the storefront.

Create a District Identity & Marketing Campaign

Category	 Revenue/Sales
Location	W. Main Street Study Area
Origin	Business Survey Results; Stakeholder Meetings; LRRP Application
Budget	 Low to Medium Budget – estimate \$40,000 - \$200,000 depending on scope of work and materials purchased/installed. Funding Source: ARPA Travel, Tourism, & Outdoor Recreation or ARPA Small Business Technical Assistance
Timeframe	 Short-term – estimate 12-18 months
Risk	 Medium risk – dependent upon securing fundings; will benefit from business participation/engagement and will be at risk without it
Key Performance Indicators	# of businesses participating in marketing activities/technical assistance; published business directory; digital presence for West Main Street; development of a district brand/campaign templates
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning & Economic Development, Norton Economic Development Commission; Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce, Local business owners and property owners
Diagnostic	<p>COVID-19 resulted in a loss of foot traffic and revenue to West Main Street businesses. Norton businesses identified customer/business attraction and retention as well as shared marketing campaigns as their top preferred business strategies to support success of the W Main Street business corridor following COVID-19.</p> <p>Currently, businesses in the study area are not organized in any way to conduct a shared marketing campaign. There is an Economic Development Commission in Norton; however, marketing for the study area is not part of their current work.</p>

Action Items

Stakeholders discussed a two-pronged marketing effort that marketed the district as well as support for businesses to market themselves or conduct cross-marketing activities. These action items include recommendations that address both. This recommendation is also related to the business technical assistance and district capacity recommendations included in this Rapid Recovery Plan.

Data Collection – Knowing what businesses exist along West Main Street is the first step toward marketing the corridor. Norton Planning and Economic Development maintains a list of West Main Street businesses and should ensure this is complete, up-to-date, and contains business contact information.

Publish Business Directory – A business directory is a simple, easy way to let visitors and locals know what businesses are on West Main Street. An online guide is a low-cost option while printed guides distributed at local attractions, hotels, and institutions with paid advertisements is also possible.

Help West Main Street businesses market themselves – Businesses marketing themselves is an important part of drawing customers to the corridor, and goes hand in hand with a collective marketing strategy for West Main Street. Activities could include workshops, peer to peer best practice sharing, and helping businesses own their listings in the digital sphere (e.g., Google Map location, Yelp!, etc.). See recommendation for business technical assistance program for more detail in this area.

Asset Mapping* – To determine what element of West Main Street would be most successful to market, a process to identify district/regional assets will aid in prioritizing a unique selling proposition that may differentiate it from other locales. This step should engage stakeholders (community events, board meetings), surveying businesses, residents, and visitors for perceptions of the area, and a market analysis to understand what others are doing and whether they are successful.

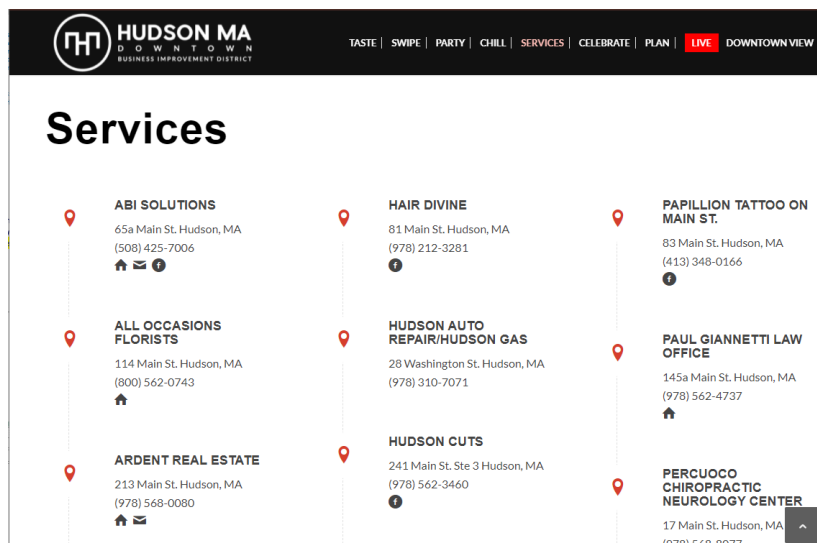
Create Branding Campaign* – A consistent visual identity for West Main Street helps create a sense of coherence and community that maximizes the value of marketing. The campaign should include imagery and target audience based on prior stakeholder feedback.

Create Outreach Strategy and Templates for Branding* – A dynamic visual brand is only effective if it reaches its target audience.

Create Digital Presence for West Main Street – Establishing an on-line presence dedicated to the commercial corridor as a whole will allow for communication, direct to consumers and area stakeholders. Listings/platforms may include Google Map Location, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Efforts should aim for broad and inclusive reach so as not to overlook any potential user-base/population/demographic/community.

Event Planning/Campaign – Rally stakeholders to work together to build relationships and achieve immediate desired outcomes. Successful event execution builds organizational foundations that can be leverages for further merchant organizing. See [“Make Music New York”](#) as an example.

*Consider hiring a designer/brand consultant to guide these steps.



Screenshot of Downtown Hudson's Online Business Directory. Source: [discoverhudson.org](#)

Process

Initial actions (3-6 months)

- Create/update database of West Main Street businesses
- Convene stakeholders or attend established meetings to understand businesses', residents', and visitors' perception/attitude of the region. Engagement can include surveys. Goal is to identify which assets will aid in marketing the district.
- Allocate federal COVID recovery funds or secure grant funding to hire designer/brand consultant

Intermediate actions (6 months – 1 year)

- Create digital, public-facing business directory
- Provide business marketing technical assistance to West Main Street businesses
- Engage designer/brand consultant
- Form marketing committee, with designer/brand consultant, to develop brand campaign, outreach strategy, and templates
- Create digital presence for West Main Street including social media pages, Google Map location, and more

Longer-term actions (3 months - 1 year +)

- Conduct events as an opportunity to engage with consumers
- Utilize partnership with Carroll Advertising to run West Main Street business district marketing/PSAs on I-495.
- Connect seasonal and annual events to West Main Street using sponsorships and activating public spaces
- Maintain branding activities and determine long-term ownership and sustainability of marketing activities and platforms

MA#16: I-495, 1 Mile S/O EXIT #10 - RTE 123/Route 140 (F/S)—Norton/Mansfield, Massachusetts



Digital Billboard on I-495 available for Norton PSAs Photo: Carroll Advertising

7 Must-Haves on Your Website

- Mobile compatibility
- Address, phone number, hours
- Photos
- Menu
- Online ordering
- Your story
- Secure website
- Social media links

Screenshot from Restaurant Marketing Training Source: Lowell Business Recovery Task Force;
<https://www.lowellma.gov/1457/Lowell-Business-Recovery-Task-Force>

Additional detail on this recommendation, including considerations/challenges and key performance indicators, is available in the appendix.

Citywide Small Business “Sweethearts” Campaign



Location

New York City

Goal

Objectives

A quick-implementation, low-cost, replicable marketing strategy to support New York City neighborhood businesses for Valentine's Day in 2021, as the city emerges from COVID closures.

1. Create/Expand neighborhood affinity/loyalty

- Shout out spotlight business or have community pick their Business Valentine and encourage Social community to “post their purchase and tag”
- Neighborhood dropbox that people can send valentines to their favorite business
- “Spread Love...It’s the Brooklyn Way!” messaging

2. Keeping local business top of mind

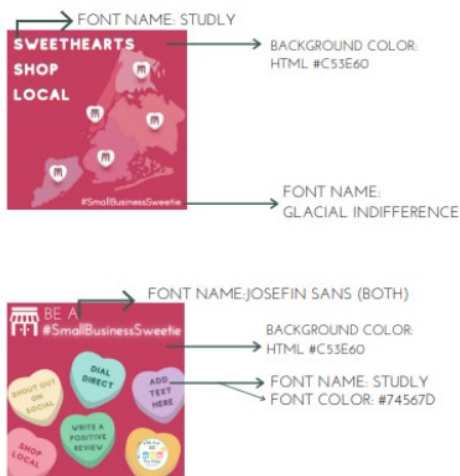
- “Five (or more) ways you can support your local business right now” lists
- Love letter to business.

3. Easy way to drive revenue for businesses

- “In this together” Party kits, packaging multi biz products in one purchasable product that can be delivered by restaurant infrastructure
- Cash Mob-pick a selection of businesses or singular business and organize a Cashmob whereby participants spend \$\$\$ in that store
- Gift card for commercial corridor

4. Communicating specials/sales opportunities

BRANDING KIT



Source/Consultant: Perch Advisors



Best Practice

Rockaway ConneX

Location

Rockaway Peninsula, New York Ci



About

Rockaway ConneX was an innovative technology project that Perch Advisors lead in partnership with the Rockaway Business Alliance in 2017-2018. The project was funded by the Neighborhood Challenge Grant, a grant put forth by the New York City Department of Small Business Services and the New York City Economic Development Corporation, which challenged neighborhood based groups to propose a technological solution to a commercial corridor challenge. Rockaway ConneX sought to address the challenge of lack of connectivity between the various commercial corridors on the Rockaway peninsula by deploying QR codes and bluetooth beacons connecting residents and visitors with desired information, goods and services of the peninsula.

The Rockaway ConneX branding campaign was developed by Perch Advisors in partnership with graphic designer Lauren Peters-Collaer. Says Lauren:

"Rockaway ConneX is a digital platform designed to connect the visitors and inhabitants of Rockaway with desired information, goods and services of the peninsula. It was important to the creators of this product that ConneX be spelled with an "X" to allude to the crossroads, connecting functionality of their platform. This ultimately inspired the concept for the logo, as two arrows intersecting to create the X further visualizes its intended meaning, as well as the fundamental purpose of the platform."

Both the arrows and the X then became central elements of the larger identity, often being combined with images and illustrations of the physical things this platform connects users to: food, fun, activities, beach needs, and other people."

Themes and inspiration for design elements:

- A carefree, breezy day at the beach, conveyed through bright, fun colors
- Beach iconography: beach umbrella, surfboard, popsicle
- Connectivity: bold, intersecting lines and shapes

Supporting local business: Citisticks is a Rockaway local brand of uniquely flavored custom-made popsicle, so incorporating a Citisticks pop into the campaign furthered the theme of promoting Rockaway local businesses





Themes and inspiration for copy:

- Chummy, welcoming
- Accessible
- Informative



Brand Materials from the Rockaway ConneX campaign. Source: Perch Advisors

Support Continued Outdoor Dining

Category	 Revenue/Sales
Location	West Main Street – Study Area
Origin	Stakeholder discussions, Planning & Economic Development
Budget	 Low – No additional cost to Town; cost for outdoor dining amenities (e.g., tents, tables) varies by business
Timeframe	 Short-term – Implementation can begin immediately
Risk	 Low Risk – recommendations describes measures meant to lower investment and risk to interested businesses
Key Performance Indicators	# of additional businesses offering outdoor dining; # of permits approved at first attempt
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning & Economic Development, Building Inspector, Fire Department, Board of Health Funding: MOTT Travel, Tourism, & Outdoor Dining; MassDOT Shared Streets
Diagnostic	<p>Outdoor dining provided a safer environment for customers to enjoy restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as an important source of revenue for businesses. In 2020, Norton officials hosted a meeting with local food establishments to provide information and answer questions regarding outdoor dining opportunities; approximately one dozen businesses attended.</p> <p>The Commonwealth and local governments adopted temporary provisions to make it easier for food establishments to provide outdoor dining during the state of emergency. However, some of these provisions are not practical to continue post-state of emergency. For example, for restaurants that are not on public sewer and rely on septic systems were able to add outdoor capacity with minimal problems because indoor capacity was reduced during the COVID-19 state of emergency. Similarly, it was less consequential to eliminate parking spaces to make room for outdoor dining because overall visits to restaurants remained lower than pre-pandemic levels. Returning to full indoor capacity with additional outdoor capacity provides new challenges.</p> <p>Parking is expected to continue to be a challenge if businesses seek to expand capacity by adding temporary or permanent outdoor dining. A lack of on-street parking restricts businesses to their existing parking lots and the newly added municipal lot at 47 West Main Street. The outcomes of the proposed parking management study, included as a recommendation in this plan, will be consequential to outdoor dining.</p>

Action Item

Outdoor dining is not prohibited in any part of the study area provided it meets existing building, fire, and health codes. Norton is supportive of additional outdoor dining and seeks to help businesses safely and efficiently obtain the necessary approvals.

Key action items for this recommendation include:

Planning session with Health Agent: Implement an initial step in the outdoor dining approval process where businesses will be encouraged to conduct a planning session with the Health Agent to discuss desired capacity, layout concepts, and food safety topics. The business and health agent can collaboratively address anticipated issues prior to the business investing money in a certified plot plan. This step is applicable for businesses seeking to add temporary or permanent outdoor dining.

Amend zoning bylaw for recurring, temporary outdoor dining: Amendment should address process for yearly permit and administrative review for temporary outdoor dining that is installed year after year. This also includes amendments to the business' license agreement to accommodate outdoor seating between certain dates.



Temporary Outdoor Dining, Bog Iron Brewing Photo: BSC Group



The following information is being provided for the **2021 Outdoor Dining Season in Nashua** which begins March 15th and continues through November 15, 2021.

Process

- 1) Norton Building, Fire, Health, and Planning and Economic Development Departments draft zoning bylaw language for annual approval of temporary outdoor dining.
- 2) Provide public comment period.
- 3) Zoning bylaw amendment reviewed/approved by Select Board.
- 4) Norton Building, Fire, Health, and Planning and Economic Development Departments develop tools and information to assist with efficient annual permitting for seasonal outdoor dining in temporary structures. This information should be easily accessible on the Town of Norton website. [See example from Nashua, NH.](#)

Due to COVID-19, the process, rules and regulations have been adjusted to reflect New Hampshire's protocols and guidance. Nashua's local rules and regulation have been adjusted as well.

Permits are currently being issued for the upcoming season and we want to help you navigate the process should you have an interest in outdoor dining. We understand a one size fits all approach is not going to work for all applicants and will do our best to work cooperatively with you while always adhering to the latest guidance and recommendations from Public Health professionals.

Below are resources and contacts to assist you, including the Outdoor Dining Permit application and rules and regulations from the various departments with authority over this matter. You may also email OutdoorDining@nashuanh.gov.

For ALL Outdoor Dining Establishments on Public, Private or Commercial Property:

- [Outdoor Dining Permit Application - Updated for COVID-9](#) (pdf)
- [Fire Marshal's Outdoor Dining Requirements](#) (pdf)
- [Public Health Department Rules for Outdoor Dining](#) (pdf)
- [Public Health Restaurant Signage](#) (pdf)
- [Guidance for Canopies](#) (pdf)
- [Building and Land Use Permit Application](#) (pdf)

For Outdoor Dining on PRIVATE or COMMERCIAL Property:

- [Checklist for Admin Review of Outdoor Dining on Private Property](#) (pdf)
- [Application for Administrative Review](#) (pdf)

Enable Google Translate

Seasonal Outdoor Dining Information Page, City of Nashua, NH Website
<https://www.nashuanh.gov/1389/Outdoor-Dining>

Outdoor Dining/Retail Community Toolkit



REVENUES
& SALES

Toolkit made available by MA Department of Housing and Community Development, MA Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and prepared by Civic Moxie

Toolkit available at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/outdoor-dining-retail-toolkit/download>

Outdoor dining and retail options in local commercial districts blossomed during the early days of the COVID-19 Pandemic as towns and cities made a quick pivot to respond to the needs of businesses and residents. Understanding potential benefits to long-term community and economic development, many businesses and communities now seek to make permanent the temporary outdoor dining and retail options that have sprouted up in their commercial areas.

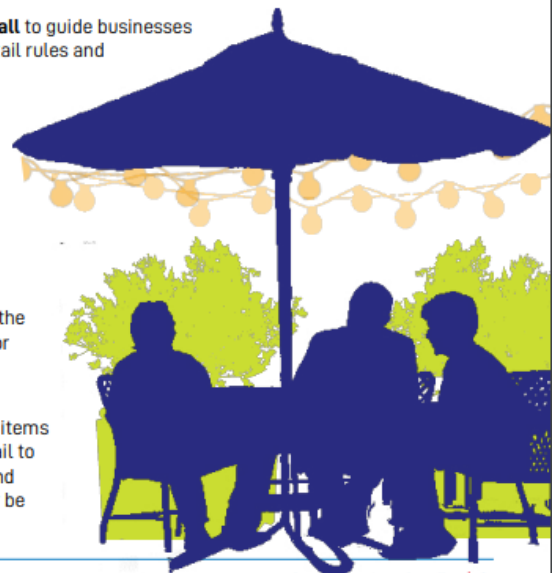
This Toolkit responds to this need. In the Local Rapid Recovery Program, questions of outdoor dining and retail – enacting permanent ordinances, providing clear design guidelines, offering assistance on use of materials and perhaps even bulk purchasing, compliance with ADA, and navigating local and state regulations – have been among the most common issues raised during the planning process. Businesses want certainty before investing capital in furniture, construction, and equipment. Communities want to ensure outdoor dining and retail options are created with some semblance of aesthetic order and that they meet safety standards. This Toolkit presents the most common questions in the LRRP and provides a guide for each community to move forward in creating its own set of guidelines for businesses and internal streamlining of requirements.

We want to...

STREAMLINE THE PROCESS FOR BUSINESSES TO CREATE OUTDOOR DINING/RETAIL UNDER EXISTING STATE REGULATIONS.





When we say "streamline the process," it can include all or some of the following goals:

- (A)** Offer a **single application** for businesses to apply for permits and licenses to provide outdoor dining and retail.
- (B)** Offer an **online application** to help businesses save time.
- (C)** Provide a **checklist of all requirements**.
- (D)** Provide a **liaison at City or Town Hall** to guide businesses through the outdoor dining and retail rules and requirements.
- (E)** Create a **short-track or condensed timeline** for permitting and approvals by coordinating Town or City inspections and reviews.
- (F)** Provide **clear design guidelines and other requirements** that take the guesswork out of providing outdoor dining and retail.
- (G)** Offer **bulk purchasing** of common items needed for outdoor dining and retail to get better prices for businesses and standardize select items that may be hard or confusing to source.



Outdoor Dining/Retail Toolkit | 9

Identify and Correct Zoning/Permitting Impediments

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Town of Norton
Origin	Diagnostic
Budget	 Low budget (< \$50,000) – consultant to review and rewrite bylaws; Funding sources include: Local Funding, Mass Planning Grants, ARPA Economic Adjustment
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Reduce time to issue permits; change in # of permits issued; change in # of new businesses opened in a year; increased revenue stream, increased number of customers served, reduction in vacant storefronts
Partners & Resources	Norton Planning & Economic Development; Norton Planning Board; Norton Building Department; Norton Board of Health
Diagnostic	<p>COVID-19 required that businesses adapt quickly to a changing environment, whether outdoor dining, to-go alcohol sales, curbside pickup, implementing physical changes to accommodate safety measures, or something else. In Norton, approximately two-thirds of West Main Street businesses report adapting the way they sold and delivered to customers. Local zoning and by-laws that support flexibility and streamlined permitting processes were important during the pandemic and will continue to be as local economies recover.</p> <p>Upon reviewing Norton zoning and bylaws as well as the current business environment, the following observation were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor dining is not prohibited in any part of the study area provided it meets existing building, fire, and health codes. Norton is supportive of additional outdoor dining and seeks to help businesses safely and efficiently obtain the necessary approvals which do not require renewal on an annual basis. • Off Street Parking – The Norton Village Center Vision Plan prepared in 2019 identified the off-street parking requirements for certain nonresidential uses (business and office) at 5 spaces per 1,000 SF of building are “unreasonably high and excessive for basic services and retail in a more compact area”. • Multi-family mixed use development could be examined in Village Core Center district. • Traditional retail uses in small downtown locations are finding it difficult to compete outlying commercial strips and big box retailers. The area is in need of destination uses that will attract customers and bring vibrancy to the area to support and create a synergy other area businesses. Consider targeting alternative business uses such as artisanal manufacturing uses (e.g., bakery, printer, leather-shop, brewery) and small-scale indoor recreation.

Action Items

- **Convert Temporary to Permanent Outdoor Dining**

The Select Board should support the appropriate approvals from ABCC to convert Temporary Outdoor Dining and Serving of Alcohol on a temporary basis to full time.

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

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

Planning Session with Board of Health/Health Agent: Implement an initial step in the outdoor dining approval process where businesses will be encouraged to conduct a planning session with the Health Agent to discuss desired capacity, layout concepts, and food safety topics. The business and health agent can collaboratively address anticipated issues prior to the business investing money in a certified plot plan. This step is applicable for businesses seeking to add temporary or permanent outdoor dining.

Amend zoning bylaw for recurring, temporary outdoor dining: Amendment should address process for yearly permit and administrative review for temporary outdoor dining that is installed year after year. This also includes amendments to the business' license agreement to accommodate outdoor seating between certain dates.



Indoor Rock Climbing Source: Getty Images

- **Consider expanding the permitted uses in the Village Commercial and Village Center Core to include artisanal manufacturing, artisanal food and beverage, and small-scale fitness and recreation uses. (Note: This is also identified in Norton's Master Plan).**

Smaller businesses in this category are more likely to be found in a commercial space (such as in a downtown business district). They will use a variety of means to sell their products, from community markets to a "front of store" retail space and external vendors. An example would be a small yet successful bakery that sells goods, both on a retail and wholesale basis.

- **Artisan Food and Beverage:** Small-scale production or preparation of food made on site with limited to no automated processes involved and may include direct sales to or consumption by consumers. This definition includes uses such as small-batch bakeries, micro-breweries (manufacturing 15,000 barrels per year or less) artisan distilleries (manufacturing 10,000 barrels per year or less) as regulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, small-batch candy shops, and local cheese makers. This use may or may not have outdoor seating or patio as an accessory use depending on the zoning district in which it is located.
- **Artisan Manufacturing:** Application, teaching, making, or fabrication of crafts or products by an artist, artisan or craftsman either by hand or with minimal automation and may include direct sales to consumers. This definition includes uses that employ activities and processes such as small-scale fabrication, welding, and coating, that are typically not permitted in non-industrial zoning districts. This definition shall not include Artisan Food and Beverage preparation or sales
- **Small Scale Indoor Recreation** An Indoor Recreational Facility is an establishment that provides amusement, entertainment, or physical fitness services that occur indoors for a fee or admission charge. Said uses may require membership and/or cater to walk-in customers. They may also include food and beverage service.

While it is recommended specific types of such facilities be identified, indoor recreational facilities could include:

- Arcades
- Art/dance/exercise studio
- Bowling alleys
- Drama/voice/instrument instructional studio
- Health club/fitness center
- Ice skating and roller skating
- Rock climbing facility
- Indoor soccer or hockey facility
- Laser tag
- Martial arts studio
- Indoor swimming pool
- Tennis, handball, badminton, racquetball
- Indoor Golf Simulation
- Ax Throwing

Process

1. Determine whether zoning amendments are to be prepared in house or with outside consultant.
2. Planning Board to establish a working/advisory group to guide the process.
3. Articulate the purpose, need, and origin of the proposed zoning amendment.
4. Prepare draft amendments and vetting with working group, stakeholders, and community.
5. Planning Board prepares the final draft of zoning amendments and submits to the Board of Selectmen for inclusion in the Town Meeting Warrant.
6. Planning Board hold required public hearing and makes recommendation to Town Meeting.
7. Town Meeting approval requires a vote of 2/3 for passage.



Public Engagement Session Photo: BSC Group

Extend Public Sewer Service

Category



Public Realm

Location

West Main Street from David Street to Olympia Street

Origin

Business stakeholders at Community Presentation

Budget



High Budget – estimate > \$5M; Sources of Funding: MassWorks; Town Appropriations; ARPA Water/Sewer

Timeframe



Medium-Term (5-10 years)

Risk



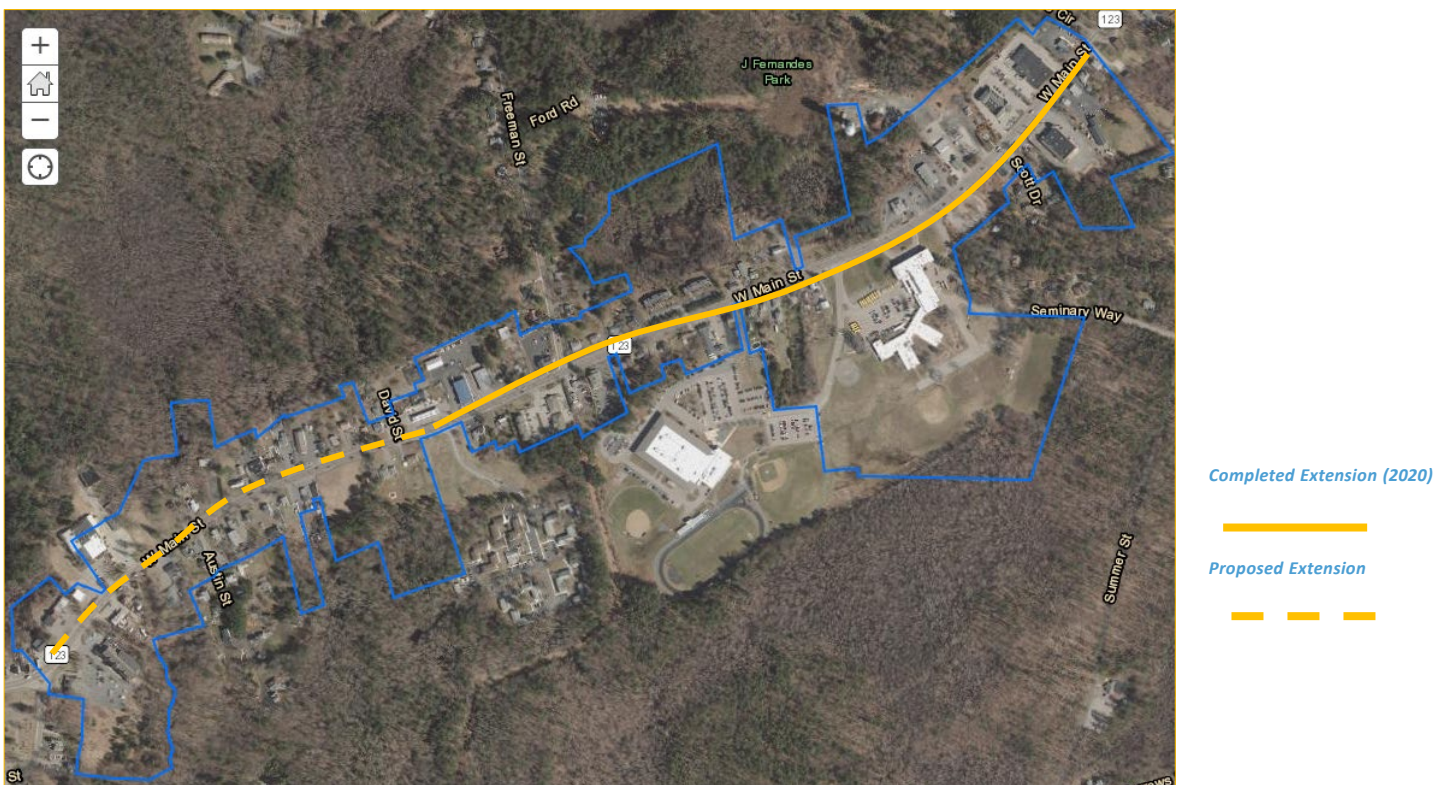
High Risk – potential challenge to obtain community support and funding after recently completing sewer expansion on eastern portion of the study area

Key Performance Indicators

Commercial Customer Tie-Ins; Growth in Commercial Units/Sq Ft. in 5 years following expansion

Partners & Resources

Norton Planning and Economic Development; Norton Water & Sewer; Norton Economic Development Council; Norton Select Board; Norton Highway Department; MassDOT District 5



Diagnostic

Business owners note that expansion, for new and existing businesses, within the West Main Street commercial district is a challenge due to the presence of private septic systems and of wetlands immediately adjacent to many of the commercial parcels. This creates financial, space, and regulatory obstacles, especially as businesses seek to add outdoor dining, retail, and event space due to the pandemic, space and financial constraints relating to on-site septic tanks present multiple obstacles for business and property owners.

Community stakeholders have discussed the potential for a hotel in the area due to its proximity to Wheaton College and the Xfinity Center or possibly mixed-use development. Both would bring more people into the West Main Street commercial district but would also require public sewer. The Town of Groton realized the benefits for more commercial and residential development in a previously underused commercial district following a sewer extension in their community (see best practices).

Recently, Norton completed a sewer extension along West Main Street from Route 140 to Davis Street. However, some feel that the public sewer should extend to the end of the commercial district.

Action Item

Establish W. Main Street as a Sewer Priority. Given the time and cost associated with a sewer extension project, the Town should first confirm the benefits (economic, environmental, health) of this project over other potential sewer expansions. See Stoughton Park Street sewer extension project in best practices.

Examine current capacity to accommodate sewer extension. This item includes initial engineering assessments to understand scope and potential obstacles with extending the sewer through the end of the study area.

Secure community approval and funding for sewer extension. Norton is familiar with the public engagement process required for a project of this type given that they recently completed a sewer extension for the eastern portion of the study area. Property owners along the project area and potential developers should be engaged to confirm their level of interest in the project and to provide other input. Eventually, the project must be raised at Town Meeting for approval and to secure town funds, for example to complete the design or to provide any town match required if the project is grant funded.

Coordinate with MassDOT. As the extension would occur along a MassDOT road, Norton must coordinate with MassDOT through planning and construction. Efforts should be made to coordinate this project with other desired improvements along the same stretch of road.

Process

1. Conduct sewer prioritization assessment to confirm benefits of W. Main Street sewer extension.
2. Engage property owners, businesses, and developers with a stake in the project area to assess interest and collect other feedback.
3. Conduct assessment (engineering; permitting) assessment to examine capacity for and obstacles to completing sewer extension.
4. Explore funding models for the project (e.g., betterment tax, state or federal grant funds, etc.).
5. Develop project proposal for review/approval at Town Meeting.
6. Secure town funds for project design.
7. Engage MassDOT and contractor for construction.

Sewer Extension Projects



Location

Stoughton, MA

Park Street Sewer Extension Project, Stoughton, MA

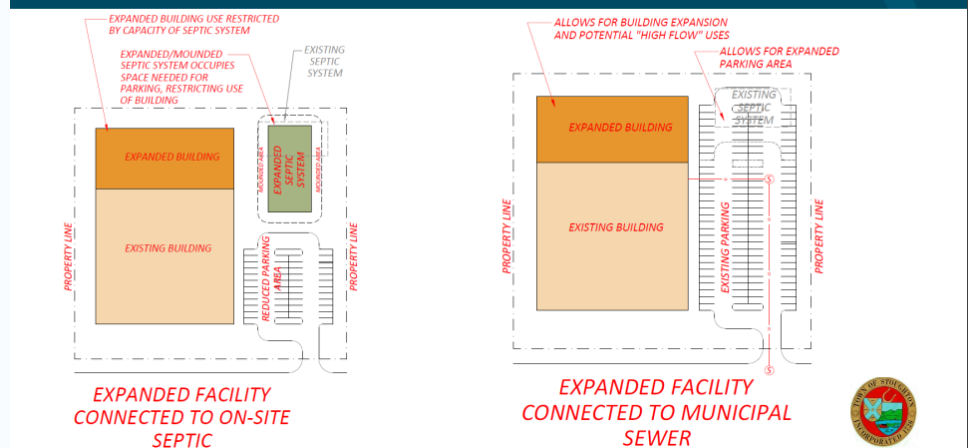
More information:

https://www.stoughton.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif3866/f/pages/park_street_sewer_march_2019.pdf

The Town of Stoughton conducted a series of studies including a town-wide sewer priority plan which identified the Park Street area as a top option for public sewer. Further analysis established economic and environmental benefits to extending sewer in this area. The project was found to provide economic growth for the entire town, open new opportunities for improved land use, and increased commercial/industrial land value. The extension would also increase town revenues through a tax level and water/sewer use fees. By expanding sewer, capacity restrictions could be lifted and commercial building footprints and parking area could expand where septs were once needed.

New Growth Analysis

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Graphic of Sewer Extension New Growth Analysis Source: Kleinfelder for Town of Stoughton

Four Corners Sewer Extension, Groton, MA

More information:

<https://www.lowellsun.com/2017/07/27/grotons-four-corners-state-grant-makes-more-than-sewer-line-possible-video/>

This project, funded by town appropriations and a \$2.1M MassWorks grant, allowed for the development of vacant commercial lots. Prior to installing sewer, the commercial district included several vacant storefronts. While business were interested in operating in Groton, septic tanks would not work for their businesses. Initial projects following the sewer extension include a 7,500 s.f. commercial building housing food, medical offices, and a bank as well as a new housing development bringing more people closer to the commercial district.

Appendix



Introduction

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program (LRRP) is providing the municipality of Norton the opportunity to develop an actionable, project-based recovery plan tailored to the town's unique economic challenges and its COVID-19 related impacts. Norton has determined that organizing and building capacity of the business community along the W.Main Street corridor is essential to its recovery plan.

Norton LRRP -- Organizing and Building Capacity of Business Community

Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Capacity Building Cost: \$ Timeline: Short-Term (3 - 6 months) Rationale: Engaging businesses requires staff capacity and funding	<p>A. Identify an organization that can serve as a short-term fiscal conduit for grant money (suggestions: local cultural nonprofits, civic groups, other community/ economic development orgs)</p> <p>B. Identify sources of funding/ resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seed money/ community development grants from local banks, Utility companies Sports teams Other local corporate businesses (Grocery Chains, Starbucks) 	<p>Don't assume that merchants will volunteer, prioritize assigning a paid person to tasks OR a paid person to manage volunteers</p> <p>Consider what tasks can be easily handed off to volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating databases Distributing brochures Plugging content into already-existing digital templates <p>C. Recommendations may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A designer to create branding visuals 	<p>A. Memorandum of Understanding in place</p> <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target partnership list created Amount of funds raised <p>C. Consensus built goals articulated</p> <p>D. Staffing plan articulated</p>

	<p>C. Create a list of funding priorities.</p> <p>D. Identify a short term and long term staffing plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscriptions to expedite digital promotions, aka Mailchimp, Hootsuite, etc • Freelancers and vendors to manage relative & time consuming activities-- distributing flyers, • Reference previous activities, survey results, and stakeholder priorities <p>D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal to eventually have a full time staff member dedicated to business outreach, creating a business technical assistance program, and heading up a marketing campaign? • Consider sharing staff with another municipality, ie one person is in charge of leading business outreach in 3 different towns • Consider sources of volunteers: Local high schools or colleges, Church groups 	
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Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Engage Property Owners and create a database of property owner contacts along West Main Street</p> <p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Short (Immediate to 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: If BID formation is desired, property owners need to be engaged and on board</p>	<p>A. Initiate database creation with property owner focused survey and determine most valuable data points and survey property owners to get a better understanding of property owner concerns in district</p> <p>B. Convene property owners in conversations to determine commitment to desired outcomes (Business District development)</p>	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider using data/ research software/platforms like Zillow, Street Easy, Property Shark, Co-Star Consider access (language, digital v. physical, etc) Determine proxies if applicable (management companies, property brokers, etc) Create ancillary list of related contacts: real estate, key finance programs, etc 	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive property owner contact list (goal 100%) Number of surveys distributed <p>B. Number of convenings</p>
Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators



Business Data Collection Cost: \$ Timeline: Short-Term (3-6 months) Rationale: Creating a database of businesses along W Main Street is the first step to starting to organize and engage them	A. Create a database of all businesses along W Main Street and their contact information.	Sources of volunteers or interns for door to door data collection and data input Inclusive of second floor, shared, or non-public facing businesses? Who has access to the database, and how often does it get updated? Perhaps it's a shared spreadsheet among the economic development committee, who can update in their own time as they see new businesses come in	A. Completeness of database, accuracy of business contact information
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Establish Internal Communication Platforms Cost: \$ Timeline: Short term 3-6 months Rationale: A dedicated communications	Create internal communications platform for business owners/ property owners/real estate industry leaders to communicate freely with each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook Page • Instagram message group • Text chain • Email chain • Corridor Listserv • Whats App 	Consider a separate channel for each stakeholder group (business owner, property owner, real estate/ industry leader) General: Access to technology; Digital infrastructure capacity/broadband access Time and skill may be required in bringing individuals online;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine platforms • Set goals for # of users • Post frequency • Success stories • Ad-hoc committee to oversee process • Nominate stakeholder channel leads for different stakeholder groups

platform provides a forum for business operators and key stakeholders to engage. This platform can be used to share pertinent information in real time, request assistance of peers, share success stories, etc.		building consensus on platform choice	
Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Event Planning/ Media Campaign</p> <p>Cost: \$\$</p> <p>Timeline: Short-Term (6 months - 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: Rally event/Flag bearer--Successful event execution builds district awareness,</p>	<p>Rally businesses around a specific shared concern or objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Marketing • Commercial attraction initiative • Increased engagement with local institutions/potential partnerships • Needed physical improvements <p>Connect Seasonal and Annual events in the Norton area to downtown using sponsorships and opening public spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study: Make Music New York 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek synergies among clusters of businesses (food, clothing, recreation, family-oriented, etc) • Plan and host events that leverage merchant participation with community involvement benefitting both businesses and residents. • Events should highlight the added services that are available to the community residents/target audience through the merchants in the commercial corridor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show engagement with national and regional retailers who will sponsor events, anchor the corridor and compliment smaller independent retail. • Plan, organize and market a full calendar of events (Holiday Caroling, Shakespeare in the Square etc.) • Four different Street Banner types, installed at the beginning of each season, using local artists for design and retailers to



reinforces district identity, and supports organizational foundations that can be leveraged for commercial attraction.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan of external media (think hashtags on your event locations, public spaces, businesses) - what does the external world use to describe your town? • Artist recruitment • Engagement with local institutions/regional partners • Target regional banks, utility companies for funding support 	advertise and sponsor (if local ordinances allow). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tally attendance at public events • Number of partners engaged • External funds raised
Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Create/Enhance/ Formalize Downtown Business Association Cost: \$ Timeline: Short/Medium (6 months to 1.5 years)	A. Develop Steering Committee and identify leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders capable of playing an active role in the formation and committee leadership B. Establish a purpose for the merchants association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a set of goals that respond to the identified corridor needs and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure input from businesses, property-owners, stakeholders • Broad based stakeholder inclusion, not just most engaged • Sustaining leadership • Consider Cloud files for virtual access by multiple users 	A. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engaged stakeholders that have/maintain active role in the information gathering and decision making processes; • Creation and seating of interim/permanent Leadership (ie, Advisory Committee, Board of Directors)

<p>Rationale: Similar to district marketing, a formalized organization can be a space to discuss opportunities and threats to the commercial corridor. Information and relationship sharing (ie, with property owners and real estate brokers) can aid in filling retail gaps best poised to respond to consumer needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidify goals into a purpose or mission statement which can be communicated <p>C. Create an information database</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage committee to assist in the development of a database containing property and business owners inventory, commercial vacancies, and other relevant data points (see previous recommendation) <p>D. Maintain regular check-ins and points of engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider communications vehicles agreed upon by business operators to gain maximum participation and input toward meeting dates (such as email, WhatsApp, Facebook Group, etc) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a Retail Attraction Committee <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate achievable goals; • Create Vision and Mission Statements; • Creation of standing and ad-hoc committee as determined <p>C. Completed business and property survey with contact information and key data points (ie, key retail groups and organizations, regular vacancy updates, property transactions, partner organizations with synergy)</p> <p>D. Calendared meetings (ideally quarterly); Agendas, Attendance records, Meeting minutes</p> <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of organization by-laws • Determination and creation of a formal organization structure (501c3. 501c6, etc) dedicated to
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			<p>independently marketing and promoting the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of an organization with the capacity to independently raise funds for marketing, promotion and other activities related to the health of Downtown Andover. • Join with a larger network of retail centers / downtown district associations that focuses on retail attraction and retail mix <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • ICSC • IDA
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Business Improvement District (BID) Formation</p> <p>Cost: \$\$</p>	<p>Gain familiarity of Massachusetts BID formation process</p> <p>Engage relevant stakeholders to begin exploratory conversation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This process appears to be property owner driven with little to no support of business stakeholders needed. • Create an inclusive process 	<p>Access to Commonwealth of Massachusetts BID formation protocols</p> <p>Create and execute process to determine pros and cons of BID formation for this stakeholder group</p>

<p>Timeline: Mid-Term (1-5 years)</p> <p>Rationale: BIDs are a proven model that provides sustainable capacity and revenue to maintain priority focus on desired outcomes.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit relevant ancillary stakeholders (Real estate, etc) • Determine synergies between property owners and business operators • Identify key priorities/outcomes of BID formation that speak to other project goals (capacity building, district marketing, commercial attraction, etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider that BIDs must be renewed in Mass. Include long-term goals/outcomes to ensure viability/purpose of org. 	
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Introduction

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program (LRRP) is providing the municipality of Norton the opportunity to develop an actionable, project-based recovery plan tailored to the town's unique economic challenges and its COVID-19 related impacts. Norton has determined that scoping and implementing a business technical assistance (TA) program for the West Main Street corridor is essential to its recovery plan.

Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Data Collection Cost: \$ Timeline: Short-Term 3-6 months Rationale: Knowing what businesses exist along West Main Street is the first step toward supporting the corridor	A. Create a database of all businesses along West Main Street and their contact information. (SEE CAPACITY BUILDING AND DISTRICT IDENTITY RECS)	A. Sources of volunteers or interns for door to door data collection and data input Inclusive of second floor, shared or non-public facing businesses? Who has access to the database, and how often does it get updated? Perhaps it's a shared spreadsheet among the economic development committee, who can update in their own time as they see new businesses come in	A. Completeness of database, accuracy of business contact information
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Focus Group with Businesses Cost: \$	A. Host focus group(s) with businesses to better understand business challenges, and brainstorm how technical	A. Consider industry-specific/thematic focus groups: Hospitality, service, social media, accounting, HR	A. Number of events/engagements

<p>Timeline: Short-Term (6 months - 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: It's important to get a better understanding from businesses as to where they could use support in order to create a technical assistance program responsive to their needs.</p>	<p>assistance might support</p> <p>Draw on survey responses to dig deeper into specific needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media/ marketing • Selling online • Customer acquisition • Accessing funding • Pivoting your business model • Legal support • Workforce 	<p>Audit regional partners/third party organizations that can bring existing resources and aid in execution</p>	<p>Attendance/participation numbers</p> <p>Identified partners</p>
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Resource Audit -- create clearinghouse of resources</p> <p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Short-Term (3 - 6 months)</p> <p>Rationale: Conducting an audit of existing resources or strategic partners would aid in increasing efficiencies and cost-savings, build alliances</p>	<p>A. Audit what technical assistance resources are available to businesses on West Main street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tri-Town Chamber is official SBDC outreach center • Massachusetts Office of Business Development • HERE is a good place to start • Others? <p>B. Build relationships with local technical assistance providers -- set up intro call/ zoom, discuss any resources providers have for targeted</p>	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since much technical assistance is now online, also consider resources outside the region • Identify and market clearinghouse as resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to host listings? • How to share information? • What are other regions doing? Are they successful? <p>B. Identify challenges and obstacles of Norton business engagement</p>	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Content ◦ Frequency ◦ Access (digital-static, digital-dynamic, in-person, webinars, workshop series, language, locations, etc) <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploratory meetings held • Engaged stakeholders who have previously accessed resources

and partnerships and streamline execution.	<p>programming and/ or targeted outreach on W. Main street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request data for W Main street businesses currently engaging with TA resources (ex: how many businesses participate in programming from Chamber of Commerce?) 		
Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Identify gaps in technical assistance offerings and create programming to fill these gaps</p> <p>Cost: \$-\$\$</p> <p>Timeline: Mid-Term (6 months to 2 years)</p> <p>Rationale: Technical resources can take a number of different tacts. Ensuring that available resources answer the needs of stakeholders will improve success and</p>	<p>A. Analyze needs of businesses (survey results, focus groups), and identify any gaps in programming -- what services do businesses need that are not being provided already?</p> <p>B. Partner with a local nonprofit/ small business development center or other resource to develop programming that speaks to a specific need OR ...</p> <p>C. Create mechanism for pairing peer/volunteer with businesses based on skills and identified needs of businesses</p>	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One on one coaching versus group Digital versus in person Dynamic versus static Archive resources for future access Timing/Frequency/Platform: When (day/eve), How Often (series, ongoing?), in person, webinars, on-demand? Are there other barriers to access (language, site-selection, inclusion) <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there professionals who would teach workshops in exchange for exposure? 	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement responses/report Priority topics Priority execution(s) <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directory of resources or potential providers Engaged partnerships Program brief created with purpose, outcome, process <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanism for scoping volunteer/ business engagement (how long,

<p>engagement. Many businesses may have the necessary skills to grow their business, but lack the capacity to do so (ex: staff members know how to create a social media presence, but no one has the time to manage it)</p>	<p>D. Host peer to peer best practice sharing forums. Designate one or two businesses who are experienced in the topic as “subject matter experts”</p> <p>Case study: Consider software for matching businesses to volunteers: Chronus</p>	<p>(local-based professional service providers, financial institutions, other private resources)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is funding necessary? <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer counseling has increased value if appropriate partner is selected. • Identify sources of volunteers to support business capacity in executing a specific project for a business (ie: setting up social media account, building basic website, etc) • Youth-led social media or other support: Local high schools and colleges with internship/ volunteer requirements for students • Perhaps grant funding could be allocated for small stipends to student volunteers • Corporate partners with volunteerism programs <p>D. Consider diverse topics to engage multiple stakeholders</p>	<p>how many touchpoints, etc)</p> <p>D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and engage providers • Topics to provide • Program brief created with purpose, outcome, process • Number of forums hosted • Create mechanism for evaluating success of engagement • Follow-up survey
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Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Outreach/ Awareness Strategy to share capacity building resources</p> <p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Mid-Term (6 months to 2 years)</p> <p>Rationale: Preliminary business survey results show a desire to draw more customers, but lack of interest in technical assistance (businesses don't know what they don't know).</p>	<p>A. Leverage other findings to determine best messaging/process to connect with business</p> <p>B. Dedicate personnel to do outreach/intake/evaluation of businesses.</p> <p>Case study: NYC Small Business Resource Network</p> <p>C. Incentivize businesses to participate in TA programs</p>	<p>A. What was identified as best practice? Digital, in-person, static/dynamic resources</p> <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach is both digitally and door to door • Staff person does quick assessment of business needs, then follows up to connect them to appropriate resources • Staff capacity -- see "Capacity Building" section in "Organizing/ Building Capacity of Biz Community" recommendations <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind contributions (free legal support, free coaching, etc) • Grant opportunities-regional, State, Federal, private, etc 	<p>A. Employ previously identified best practice</p> <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing plan • Number of businesses connected to technical assistance <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources identified • Partner relationships created • Number of businesses connected to volunteers • Completed grant applications
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Consider synergy with merchant alliance formation</p>	<p>See recs in "Organizing/ Building Capacity of Biz Community"</p>		



<p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Mid-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Rationale: Implementing projects/programs in tandem with other initiatives can give value to effort and an provide opportunity an “early win” thereby creating interest in participation</p>			
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Introduction

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program (LRRP) is providing the municipality of Norton the opportunity to develop an actionable, project-based recovery plan tailored to the town's unique economic challenges and its COVID-19 related impacts. Norton has determined that marketing and building its West Main Street district identity is essential to its recovery plan.

To Create District Identity/Marketing:

Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Data Collection Cost: \$ Timeline: Short-Term (3-6months) Rationale: Knowing what businesses exist along West Main Street is the first step toward marketing the corridor	A. Create a database of all businesses along West Main Street and their contact information. (SEE CAPACITY BUILDING RECS)	Sources of volunteers or interns for door to door data collection and data input Inclusive of second floor, shared, or non-public facing businesses? Who has access to the database, and how often does it get updated? Perhaps it's a shared spreadsheet among the economic development committee, who can update in their own time as they see new businesses come in	A. Completeness of database, accuracy of business contact information



Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Business Guide Cost: \$- \$\$ Timeline: Short-Term (6 months - 1 year) Rationale: A business directory is a simple, easy way to let visitors know what businesses are on West Main Street	A. Create a unified guide for categorizing businesses (ex, by business type) B. Create a public-facing business directory CASE STUDY: North Flatbush Avenue C. Sell advertisements in printed guide to raise funds to cover printing, design, distribution D. Distribute business guides at local attractions, cultural institutions, hotels, parks and rec, etc	What format (digital, print)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where does digital directory live -- town website, social media, etc? Perhaps eventually West Main street has its own digital presence Does it include a map? Resources for design, printing, distribution C. Consider how to market events/ discounts/ specials at individual businesses	A. Determined Categories-retail, dining, services, etc B. Number of engagements with public-facing assets (website clicks, directories/ maps distributed, etc) C. Number of ads sold, revenue collected D. Number of locations, quantity of physical maps distributed
Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
Help West Main Street businesses market themselves (ties in with technical assistance)	A. Host workshops and webinars to help businesses create a brand for themselves, increase their digital presence, and learn to sell their products online.	Are workshops/ peer groups online or in person? No need to duplicate efforts -- consider what types of small business technical assistance	A. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of workshops/events scheduled



<p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Short-Term (6 months - 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: Businesses marketing themselves is an important part of drawing customers to the corridor, and goes hand in hand with a collective marketing strategy for West Main Street</p>	<p>B. Help businesses own their listings in the digital sphere (ie, Google Map location, Yelp!, other mapping platforms)</p> <p>C. Host peer to peer best practice sharing forums. Designate one or two businesses who are experienced/ successful at marketing as “subject matter experts”</p>	<p>already exists (i.e. through the local chamber, local small business development centers, etc). How to best create awareness among businesses about these opportunities? (leverage contact list, see above)</p> <p>Are there professionals who would teach workshops in exchange for exposure?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses attending workshops and peer groups <p>B. Number of businesses on West Main street with an online presence</p> <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of workshops/events scheduled • Number of businesses attending workshops and peer groups • Number of social media followers of businesses on West Main Street
Recommendation:	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Asset Mapping</p> <p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Short-Term (3 - 6 months)</p> <p>Rationale: To</p>	<p>A. Identify and convene stakeholders for inclusive participation and consensus building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID opportunities for feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community events ○ Town board meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on diversity and inclusion: age, tenure (legacy/new biz), resident status (new/generational) • Consider access barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Digital literacy/physical access 	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants, engagements • Number of assets identified <p>B. Number of survey responses collected</p>

<p>determine what elements of West Main Street to be most successful to market, a process to identify district/regional assets will aid in prioritizing a unique selling proposition that may differentiate it from other locales.</p>	<p>B. Survey businesses, residents, visitors for perception/attitude of town/region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create digital visitor/ resident survey • Create digital business survey • Offer incentives for survey participation - raffles (free event tickets, locally donated goods, etc) • ID opportunities for survey collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At busy business locations ○ Arts, culture, rec locations <p>C. Market Analysis: What are others (municipalities/regions) doing? Are they successful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Font size 	<p>Findings report with both qualitative and quantitative data</p>
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Create Branding Campaign</p> <p>Cost: \$\$</p>	<p>A. Identify key imagery based on resident/ visitor engagement and asset identification</p> <p>B. Identify target audience -- "who do we want to attract?"</p> <p>C. Identify assets and placement opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical signage -- banners, 	<p>Who makes final decision on branding?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene "marketing committee" of local businesses/stakeholders <p>Reference asset mapping report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of members of convened ad-hoc committee to steward effort • Surveys completed • Number and variety of stakeholder groups engaged (visitors, residents, regional, etc)



<p>Timeline Short (immediate to 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: A consistent visual identity for West Main Street helps create a sense of coherence and community that maximizes the value of marketing</p>	<p>trash can wraps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital • Social media 	<p>Consider hiring designer and/or brand consultant to guide brand visioning, leverage community feedback to develop draft imagery (Case Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rockaway ConneX • North Flatbush Ave BID "Open for Business" campaign • "Hate Has No Business Here" campaign • Small Business Sweethearts Campaign <p>Other branding considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local industry/ history (what is Norton known for?) • Personal business owner stories -- would audiences respond well to seeing faces of local business owners • Start simple, with a unified color scheme, font, or other common visual identity while you build support/funding for a proper 'branding' effort • Slogans and wordmarks can also help create a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset file(s) that are user accessible/distributed -- could contain logo, qr codes, design templates, hashtags, etc.
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		<p>sense of shared identity and might be cheaper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign should/could be scalable to provide opportunity for folks to buy in over time, aka don't dump thousands into a branding campaign that no one is going to use 	
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Create Outreach Strategy + Templates for Branding</p> <p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline Short (immediate to 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: A dynamic visual brand is only effective if it reaches its target audience</p>	<p>A. Identify all potential uses of the branding (signs, banners, swag, website, etc.) to ensure needed deliverables</p> <p>B. Identify assets and placement opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical signage -- banners, trash can wraps • Digital • Social media <p>C. Create a digital media "toolkit" with templates for social media, newsletters, etc</p> <p>D. Sell ads for revenue & cover costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can this be done w/outside vendor? • What physical assets can be leveraged to generate revenue 	<p>Who makes final decisions on strategy/execution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene "marketing committee" of local businesses/stakeholders • Who is in charge of ongoing posting, website updates, etc? • Consider investing in scheduling software like Hootsuite <p>B. Determine competitive rate schedule for assets and campaign durations</p> <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should be included • How to access/share with users 	<p>B. Inventory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of digital assets • Number of physical assets <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset file(s) that are user accessible/distributed -- could contain logo, qr codes, design templates, hashtags, etc. <p>D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Partners engaged • Revenue raised

	<p>through advertising sales? (Big Belly wraps, banners, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity with Carroll Advertising -- billboard on I-495 (up to 15 hours/month for public service announcements to promote W. Main St District businesses) 		
Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Create Digital Presence for West Main Street</p> <p>Cost: \$</p> <p>Timeline: Short-Term (6 months - 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: Establishing an on-line presence dedicated to the commercial corridor as a whole will allow for communication direct to consumers and area stakeholders.</p>	<p>A. Leverage newly created organizational identity to create listing in digital sphere (ie, Google Map location, Yelp!, other mapping platforms)</p> <p>B. Determine best platforms for messaging and create accounts (ie, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)</p> <p>C. Create internal communications platform for businesses to communicate freely with each other</p> <p>Facebook Page Corridor Listserv Whats App</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage ad-hoc marketing committee • Costs: Staffing-Paid, Volunteer, Intern, Committee • Reach and Inclusion: Aim for widest reach; do not overlook any potential user-base / population / demographic / community 	<p>A. Engaged platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals for # of businesses signing on to social media <p>B. Engaged platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals for # of Followers over specific timelines (30 days, 90 days, 1 year) • Set goals for # of likes, comments, other responses <p>C. Engaged platform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of Businesses engaging with digital media (who posted the most) • Success stories of use/engagement



Recommendation	Action Items	Considerations/Challenges	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Event Planning/Campaign</p> <p>Cost: \$-\$\$ (depending on scale and number of projects selected)</p> <p>Timeline: Short-Term (3 months - 1 year)</p> <p>Rationale: Rally stakeholders to work together to build relationships and achieve immediate desired outcomes. Successful event execution builds organizational foundations that can be leveraged for further merchant organizing.</p>	<p>A. Leverage an already-existing West Main Street event as an opportunity for businesses to engage with consumers</p> <p>B. Connect Seasonal and Annual events in the West Main Street area to downtown using sponsorships and activating public spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Case Study: Make Music New York) 	<p>Plan and host events that leverage merchant participation with community involvement benefitting both businesses and residents.</p> <p>Consider both events that transform physical space (pedestrianized streets, town square, etc), and events that move participants throughout the corridor (bar crawl, fitness crawl)</p> <p>Consider incentives for businesses to participate in events (staffing support, sponsorship and branding opportunities)</p> <p>Seek synergies among clusters of businesses (food, clothing, recreation, family-oriented, etc)</p> <p>Artist recruitment and engagement with local cultural institutions/regional partners</p> <p>Develop strategic partnerships to underwrite event costs</p>	<p>A. Measure social impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of event participation(business sponsors, schools, local non-profits, elected officials funding) <p>B. Measure Economic Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds Raised • Local Multiplier Effect (funds used within the local economy)



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