



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Town of Sturbridge

Acknowledgements



City of Sturbridge



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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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Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Local Rapid Recovery on a Statewide Scale

Like thousands of communities across the United States, Massachusetts' towns and cities experienced months of significant financial loss during the COVID-19 pandemic as business districts had to temporarily close and then face extended periods of safety-related measures that limited visitation. For many businesses, this meant permanent closure. Others were aided by federal and state programs, working diligently to keep their livelihoods intact during a very difficult period. These difficulties were particularly notable in New England where historic village centers have defined communities for generations. Over 350 distinct jurisdictions make up the Commonwealth, and nearly every place has at least one village business district greatly impacted by COVID-19. Every one faces serious challenges recovering from the pandemic. Fortunately, the LRRP is a tremendous opportunity to leverage upcoming stimulus dollars for downtown benefits across the state.

While hundreds of distinct districts are a challenge to address systematically, this diversity is a natural strength for Massachusetts. Every affected downtown is the crossroads for its broader community—typically a compact and walkable place where vacancies may be readily visible but where every business knows each other and has come together to face the pandemic. The interdependencies are quickly evident when talking with local stakeholders who take ownership of their village centers. Working with municipal officials, LRRP Plan Facilitators have quickly leveraged the energy of downtown merchants, engaged residents, vested landowners and village organizations to create the solutions within this plan—solutions tailored to the unique character of this place. Sturbridge, like over 120 other communities in Massachusetts, now has a comprehensive recovery strategy and the momentum to implement lasting change, collectively supporting the entire Commonwealth.

What are Sturbridge's primary goals for this process?

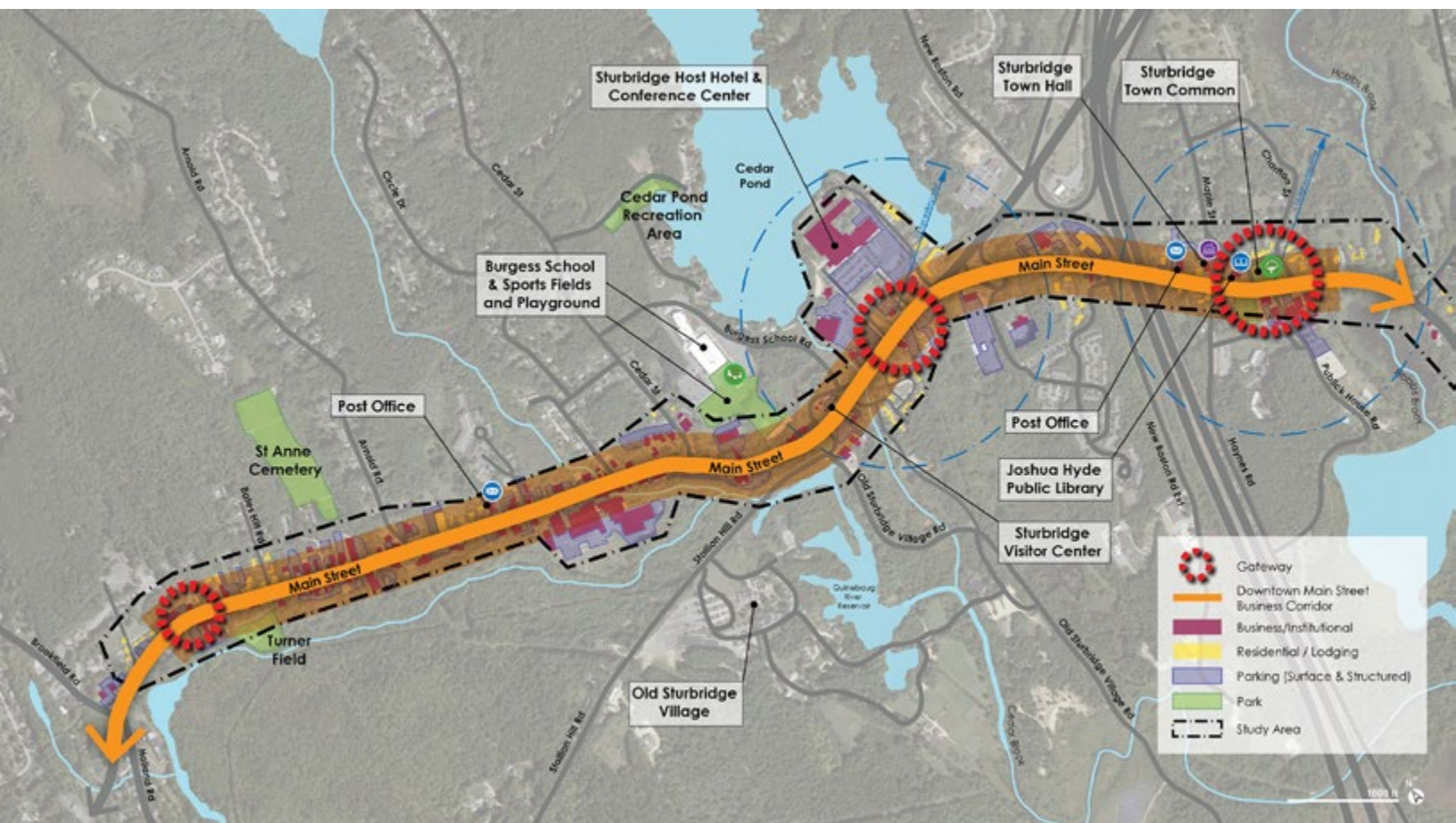
Sturbridge's project goals focus on reinforcing local businesses' ongoing recovery from Covid-related disruptions and building the local economy back stronger and more resilient than before the pandemic. These goals were directly informed by this planning process' assessment of needs and engagement with the Town to develop responses.

Introduce technical assistance for businesses

The pandemic recovery offers an opportunity for owners and operators to tune up their businesses and adopt new technologies, systems, and practices that might help accelerate their recovery and improve their market position moving forward. One of the community's goals for plan implementation is to pursue technical assistance programs that might help area businesses.

Advance the Commercial Tourist District Plan

The Town has been gradually implementing this 2014 plan since its adoption and points to many of its recommended strategies and projects as important ingredients in a stronger economic foundation for Sturbridge. As such, this process considers realizing the Commercial Tourist District Plan an important goal for post-Covid recovery.

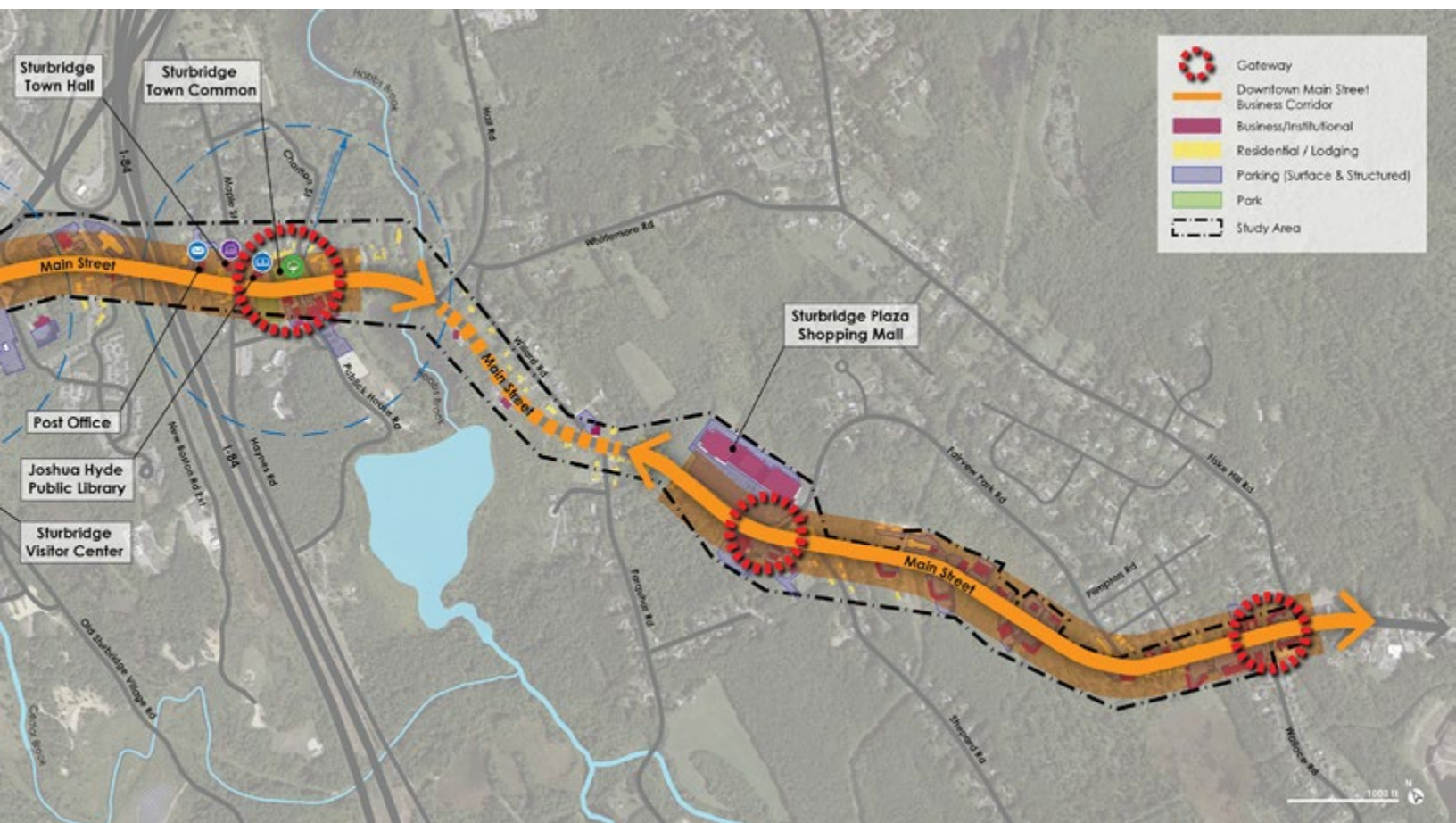


Improve the Route 20 corridor appearance and experience

As the community's most important and prominent commercial corridor, the Route 20 right of way and its flanking businesses should present a consistently attractive and inviting face to locals and visitors alike. This planning process has identified several opportunities to improve the roadway and upgrade commercial property along the corridor.

Rebuild and expand the local workforce

Stakeholders noted challenges rehiring labor as business picked back up after the pandemic's economic trough. There are a variety of forces behind this issue and the community has identified mitigation and intervention as a goal of this process.



What are the Priority Projects That Came from the Plan?

The planning process ultimately translated diagnostics findings, stakeholder engagement, past planning documents, and community representatives' insight into a set of project recommendations specially tailored to support rapid recovery from COVID-19 impacts to the local economy and business environment:

- 1. Technical assistance for businesses**
- 2. Establish façade improvement program**
- 3. Route 20 Traffic Calming**
- 4. Wayfinding improvements**
- 5. Route 20 Intersection Improvements**
6. Small business development strategy
7. Route 20 Pedestrian Crossing
8. Parking management plan and implementation
9. District branding strategy
10. Workforce development

The first five projects on list were identified by community representatives and other stakeholders as having the most significant impact in counteracting the impacts of COVID-19 on the study area. Therefore, they have been highlighted for priority consideration for funding and implementation through future DHCD programs and other programs and initiatives.

What are the Next Steps for Sturbridge to Implement This Plan?

This planning process has identified a set of project recommendations designed to make a positive impact as the community's economy and business environment continues to recover from COVID-19 setbacks and regains its momentum.

Next steps include pursuing implementation for all projects where near-term capacity and/or funding are available to assign or pursue. To get started, the community may choose to focus first on the five priority projects first as they were identified as offering the largest positive benefits.

The project recommendation pages in this document include action items, processes, funding suggestions, and other details that can support the implementation process. Additionally, DHCD will follow-up this planning effort with technical assistance for grant writing and other essential tasks associated with project start-up and execution.

Introduction



Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

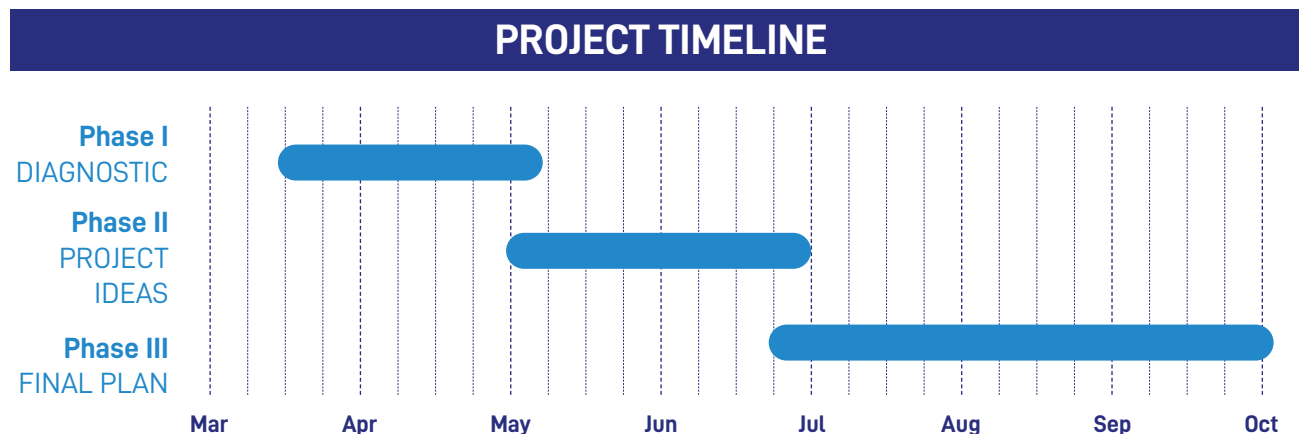
Introduction

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-October 2021. Phase 1 - Diagnostic, Phase 2- Project Recommendations, Phase 3 - Plan.



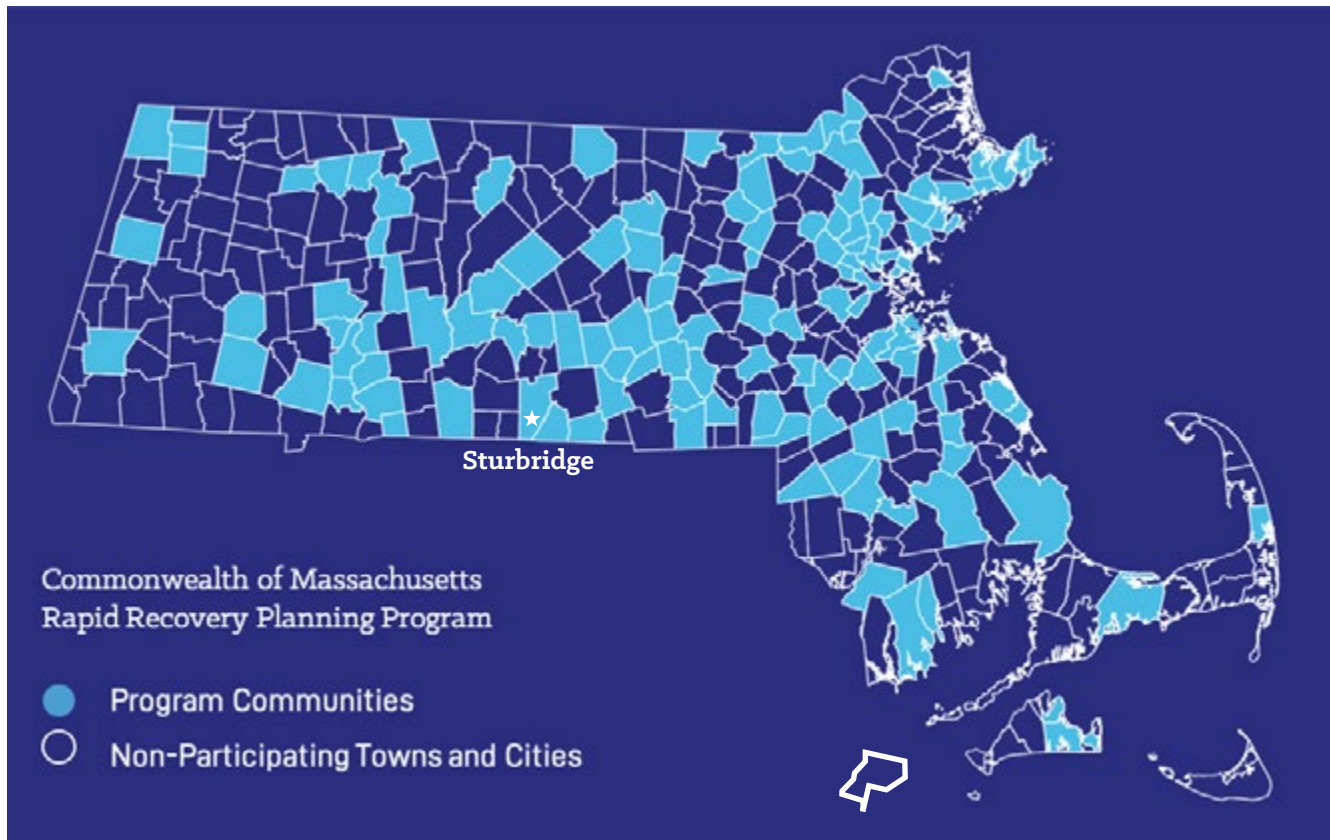
In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", and authored by Larisa Ortiz,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

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, City centers, and commercial districts.



Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



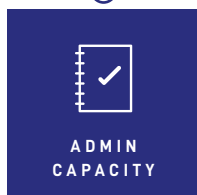
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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

Diagnostic Data Collection Methodology

Data Collection Goals

Baseline data collected will be used by the Commonwealth to communicate overall program impact and to support future funding and resource allocations that may be used toward implementation of final projects across participating communities.

Baseline data sets a minimum expectation for data collection and only reflects what the Commonwealth is requesting from all Plan Facilitators such that it will enable the measurement of COVID impacts at the State level for all participating communities. Beyond the baseline data outlined in this guide, it was expected that Plan Facilitators (PF's) would glean additional insight from their analysis, observations and feedback from the community and businesses. Plan Facilitators ensured that additional information collected through their own discretionary methods and processes would be integrated into the Diagnostic section of each final Rapid Recovery Plan and were used to inform the unique Project Recommendations that emerge through this process.

Diagnostic Asset Breakdown

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) worked with Larissa Ortiz, the Managing Director at Streetsense, to adapt the "Commercial DNA Framework" as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) and Streetsense. The framework uses four major components – Market Demand (Customer Base), Physical Environment (Public and Private Realm), Business Environment, and Administrative Capacity – to assess the vitality of a commercial district. The Local Rapid Recovery Program team tailored this framework to align with the vision to develop plans and a comprehensive dataset that analyzes economic challenges to downtowns and town centers.

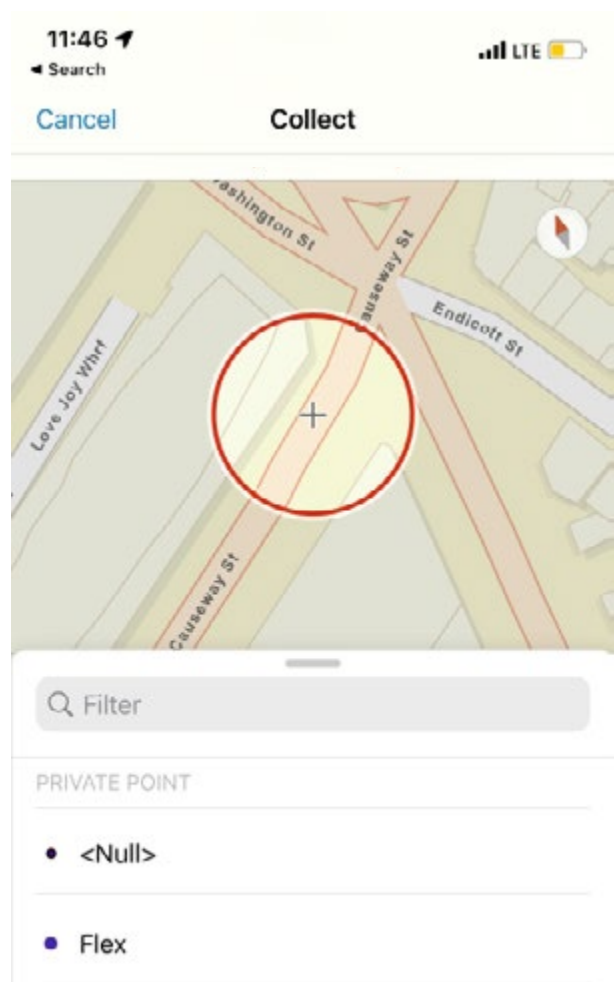
Data Collection Process

In order to effectively capture public and private infrastructure, market demand data, and business environment statistics within the Sturbridge study area, the Plan Facilitator team developed a robust data collection structure. The team utilized platforms such as ArcGIS Field Mapping and Spatial tools, ESRI Business Analyst, and Co-Star Market Data software to collect data for their community and adhere to the Rapid Recovery Program requirements.

To gather the public and private realm physical environment data, the team deployed field collectors utilizing ArcGIS Collector software and hardware to conduct site visits lasting between four to eight hours to spatially record all physical environment assets. The field collectors used the ArcGIS Collector tool to record field observations, take imagery for each public and private realm asset, and document various characteristics and assets within the defined LRRP study area. The ArcGIS Collector platform compiled all field data alongside other spatial information on business environment details such as vacancy rates and annual average rent into a geodatabase that could be analyzed and mapped remotely.

Public and private realm characteristics collected in the field included elements such as the condition, width, placement/location, and presence of streetscape amenities, lighting, seating areas, and ADA-compliant infrastructure. Based on the observations and characteristics for each diagnostic category, the data collector determined an objective grade for each public and private realm asset,

such as a crosswalk, sidewalk, awning, or façade. The collectors adhered to the grading system developed by the DHCD LRRP team, which ranged from A (highest grade) to Fail (lowest grade). More details on the field categories and type of data collected can be found on pages 21-23.

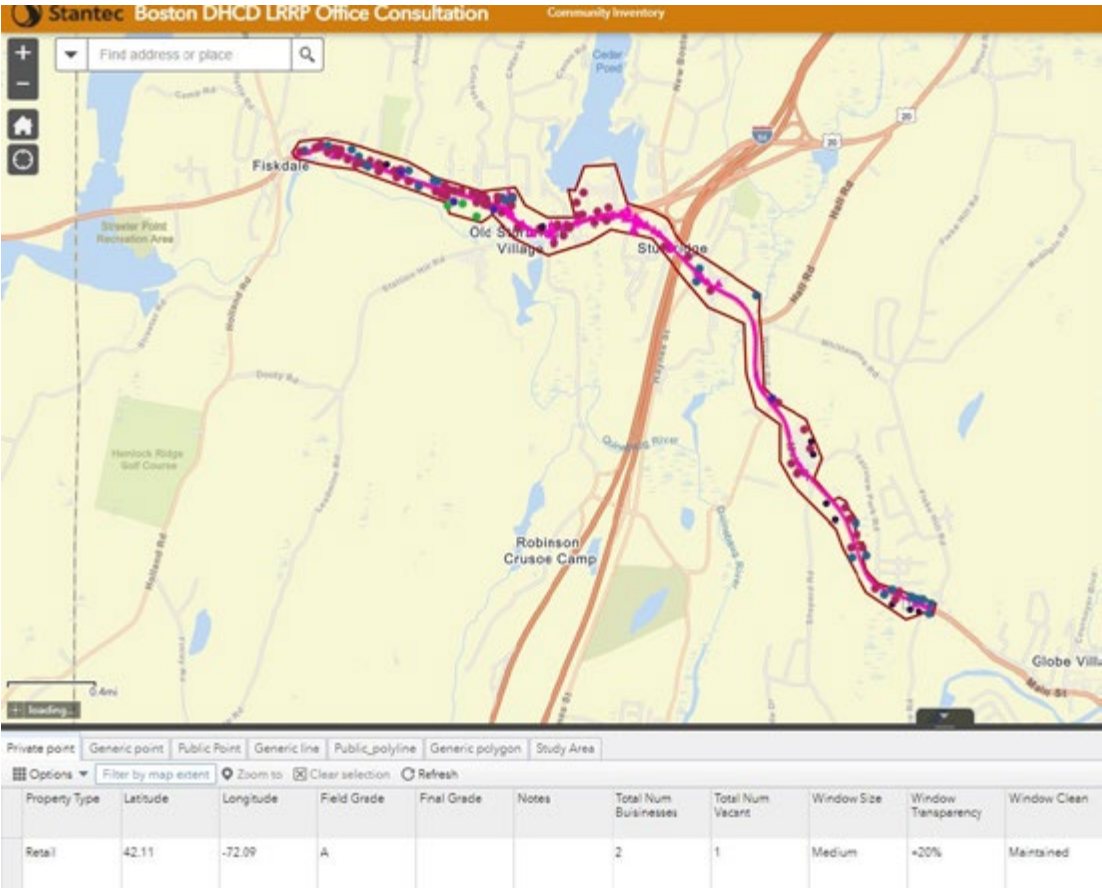


The ArcGIS Collector tool allowed data collectors in the field to develop an online database for public and private realm data

Data Analysis & Outputs

Upon completion of data collection efforts for the public and private realm physical environment assets, Plan Facilitators used the spatial database and ArcGIS WebApp platform (as seen in the image below) to assess collected assets and their associated attributes and characteristics. The Plan Facilitator also reviewed each field grade determined by the data collector by comparing to the field imagery. Each asset received a final grade once the Plan Facilitator conducted a thorough review of each asset characteristic, image, and observations. For example, a crosswalk asset that received a "C" field grade could have a width between four to six feet, poorly maintained paint, and lack a detectable panel and/or curb ramp on either side. The Plan Facilitator confirmed or changed this grade after a final review of the asset attribute data and documented field image.

Developing a database for the spatial elements of the diagnostic data highlights major gaps within the commercial fabric of the business district and identifies areas that lack adequate streetscape amenities or connectivity infrastructure. Ultimately, the data gives communities the opportunity to capitalize on these challenges and promote projects that enhance their downtowns or town centers.



The ArcGIS database platform allows Plan Facilitators to query data based on asset type, final grade, or condition/maintenance level.

Final Diagnostic Grade

The final stage of the data collection process included developing an aggregate score for each physical environment element. Plan Facilitators conducted an analysis that created an average score of "A" (highest score), "B", "C", or "Fail" (lowest score) for diagnostic components based on the collective grades for each individual asset. For example, the public realm category "Sidewalks" received one final, overall grade for the study area, and the private realm category "Building Facades" received a study area grade as well (as seen in the image below).

Example



As required by the Program, all Plan Facilitators presented the final diagnostic results to their communities during a public meeting. This forum allowed municipal representatives and the public to provide input on the program approach, diagnostic framework, and final results. Each Plan Facilitator ultimately submitted the entire database of all diagnostic categories to DHCD to be compiled with the results from all LRRP communities.



Diagnostic Asset: Physical Environment (Public Realm)

Physical Environment: Public Realm Diagnostic Geodatabase Fields	
Field	Field Description
Indicator Type	Wayfinding/Signage Park Open Space Other
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Image	Data Collectors took imagery of each asset
Signage Condition	Wayfinding/general signage condition/maintenance
Signage Icon	Presence of icons on signage (pedestrian for walking, arrows for direction, bus for transit stop)
Signage Point of Interest	Directions or distance of current location to Downtown points of interest
Signage Distance	Presence of walking/driving distances on signage
Signage Map Presence	Presence of Downtown map on signage
Signage Technology	Presence of smart technology/interactive screen on signage

Physical Environment: Public Realm Diagnostic Geodatabase Fields	
Field	Field Description
Indicator Type	Sidewalks Crosswalks Pedestrian Signals Roadbed Streetscape Amenities Lighting
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Image	Data Collectors took imagery of each asset
Sidewalk Assets	Width, condition, material type
Crosswalk Assets	Width, condition, presence of a detectable panel and ADA ramp, material type, crosswalk type, presence of sign (s)
Pedestrian Signal Assets	Presence of pedestrian signal
Roadbed Assets	Material type, condition, paint condition
Streetscape Amenities	Trees: number of trees, tree health, tree pit maintenance, tree shade cover Benches: number of benches, bench age, condition, cleanliness of bench
Lighting Assets	Condition of lighting structure, extent of light brightness

These tables provide details on the physical environment elements collected during site visits to the LRRP study area. Data collectors created assets for each public realm component, and populated the fields with characteristics such as asset condition or dimensions. Each asset then received a grade (A, B, C, or Fail) based on field observations.



Diagnostic Asset: Physical & Business Environment (Private Realm)

Physical & Business Environment: Private Realm Diagnostic Fields	
Field	Field Description
Property Type	Retail Office Industrial
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Occupancy	Number of businesses and number of vacant storefronts
Window Assets	Window size, transparency of window, maintenance/cleanliness
Outdoor Display & Dining	Storefront Displays: presence of storefront display, cleanliness of display, condition of display Storefront Dining: presence of outdoor dining facilities (chairs, benches, tables), outdoor dining protection from vehicles, canopies present, accessibility infrastructure (ADA ramps, detectable panels)
Storefront Signage Assets	Exterior signage present, visibility of signage from 10-feet away, condition/maintenance, signage branding (integration with storefront design)
Storefront Awning Assets	Storefront awning present, retractable capabilities, condition/maintenance, protection from weather events, awning design (integration with storefront design)
Storefront Facade Details	Building façade condition/maintenance, building façade material, building facade paint condition/maintenance
Storefront Lighting Assets	Exterior and interior lighting fixtures present, lighting present/turned on after standard working hours
Business Characteristics	Average asking price, average rent, average unit square footage, number of units, percentage vacant, property address, annual rent by square footage, zoning classification

This table provides details on the physical environment elements collected during site visits to the LRRP study area. While in the field, data collectors provided edits to the existing storefront assets that assessed storefront infrastructure such as lighting, outdoor displays, and windows. Each asset then received a grade (A, B, C, or Fail) based on field observations. The private realm database later incorporated business characteristics (for each storefront) such as average rent, number of units, and vacancy information.



Diagnostic Asset: Business Environment (Business Survey)

The DHCD LRRP program included a survey of local business owners located in the targeted Sturbridge LRRP study area. The purpose of the survey was to obtain business input to help guide strategy development, garner buy-in from the local business community and provide data from all LRRP participating districts for DHCD to inform programs and policy.

The LRRP team administered the survey online and via printed hard copies to representatives from for-and non-profit businesses (including temporarily closed businesses). The Plan Facilitator (PF) and Sturbridge LRRP team promoted the survey to local businesses and distributed the link to encourage response. The business survey opened on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, and closed on Monday, April 12, 2021. DHCD developed the survey in both English and Spanish, and additional languages were accommodated through oral interview methods (with translators).

The DHCD LRRP team worked with FinePoint Associates to finalize the design of the survey. After the survey closed, FinePoint developed a summary results report for each LRRP community. The report produced provided results in aggregate form only so that the results will be anonymous. These results contributed to the diagnostic phase data collection efforts and helped inform project idea and plan development.

The business survey included questions that addressed the following topics areas:

- Business characteristics and satisfaction with location
- COVID-19 impacts on businesses and their operations
- Potential strategies to support businesses and improve the commercial district



Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has launched a program to help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for their downtowns and commercial districts.

The business survey was distributed online and via paper hard copies in each LRRP community. The Sturbridge PF team worked with the Sturbridge staff to distribute and promote the survey.

Sample Questions:

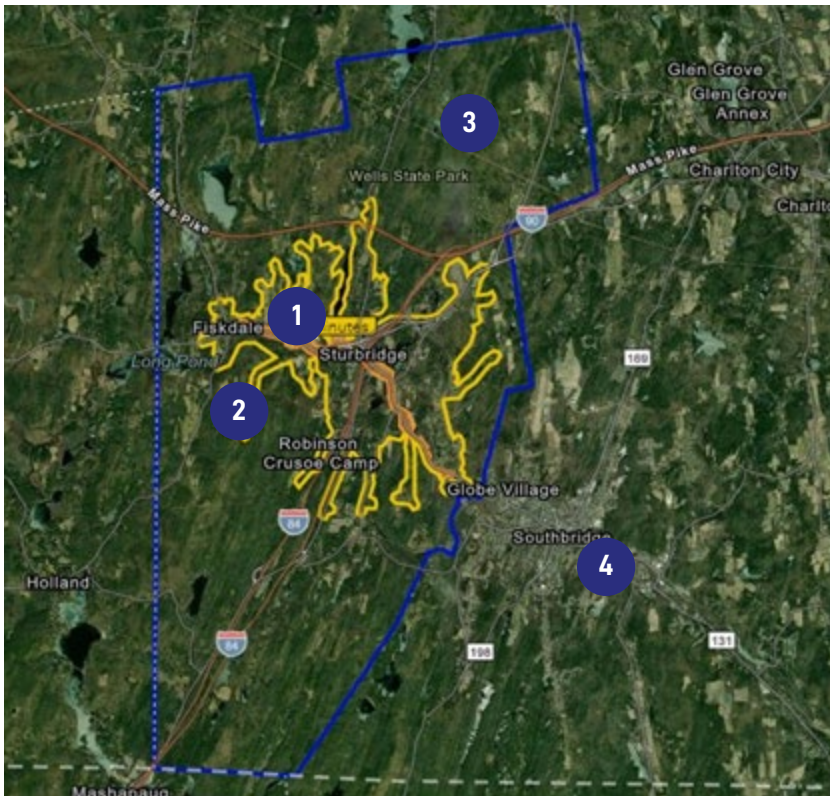
- **Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle for your business operation?**
- **How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?**
- **Considering the conditions in your commercial area, how important to you are each of the following strategies that address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses? (Strategies included more opportunities for outdoor dining, creation of a district management entity, and recruitment programs to attract businesses)**



Diagnostic Asset: Customer Base

To supplement DHCD's diagnostic data, the LRRP Plan Facilitator team extracted market demand data (customer base data) from ESRI's Business Analyst tool to understand demographics, customer statistics, and market profiles. The data looked at customer base profiles for four regions: statewide, municipal-wide, "locality" (1.5 mile radius), and the LRRP study area. The following table below summarizes the specific data collected for this diagnostic category.

Customer Base Data	
Data	Data Description
Demographics	Population Trends Age Distribution
Education	Educational Attainment
Customer Statistics	Average Household Size Employment and Income Statistics Jobs-to-residents ratio Median Home Value Home Value Growth
Retail Market Profile	Retail Leakage (total retail surplus) Grocery Store Leakage (total surplus) Restaurant Leakage (total surplus)
Other Statistics	Crime Index Vehicle Ownership Poverty - unemployment status



- 1 **LRRP Study Area Boundary - Downtown area/commercial district**
- 2 **Local Market Area - 1.5 mile radius, which includes a 30-minute walk and 10-minute bike ride**
- 3 **LRRP Communitywide - encompasses all of the municipality**
- 4 **Statewide - encompasses all of Massachusetts**

The above map highlights the four regions included in the Customer Base analysis

Diagnostic Key Findings



LRRP Study Area

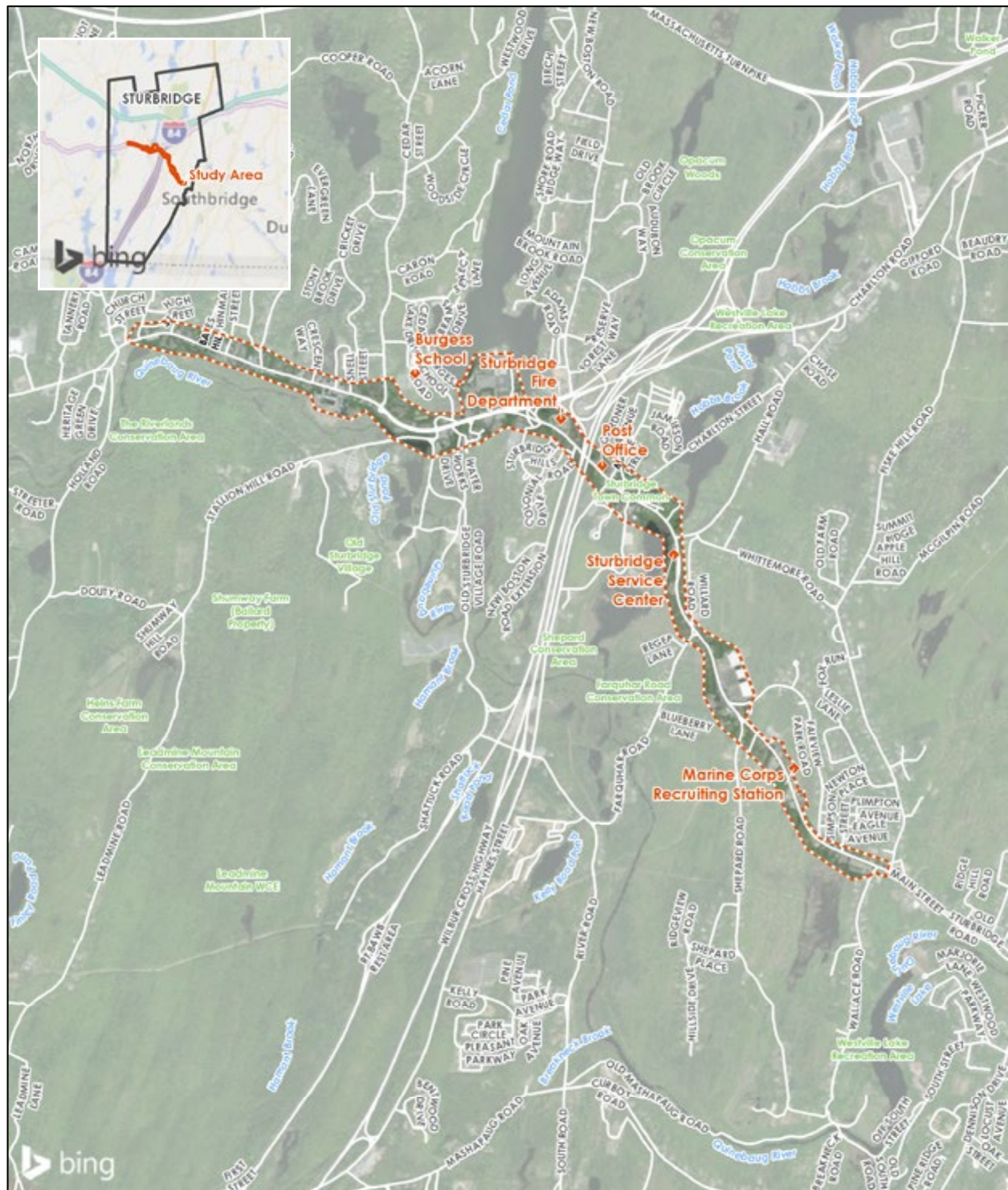
Why Focus on the Commercial Core?

The Local Rapid Recovery Program targets downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts in order to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on local businesses and downtown activity. LRRP study areas include concentrated areas of commercial and retail activity (i.e., "Nodes, Corridors, Town Centers or Commercial Areas"), therefore excluding significant areas of non-commercial, non-retail uses. This program did not look at residential zones or collect data related to residential infrastructure or local residential statistics. By focusing on the commercial/retail core, communities can use the LRRP plans and diagnostic data to implement data-driven, easily implementable solutions to revitalize a downtown. Sturbridge's LRRP boundary was developed to encompass the Town's primary commercial corridor.

Sturbridge LRRP Study Area

Sturbridge's LRRP study area encompasses most of the town's primary commercial corridor. The area includes the majority of Sturbridge's hospitality, restaurant, retail, and tourist destinations as well as connections to the Interstate Highway system.

LRRP Study Area



DHCD Rapid Recovery Program

STURBRIDGE

0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet



Key Findings & Diagnostic Data Overview



Sturbridge's residential population provides an important customer base for local businesses.

Though a relatively small community, area residents have relatively strong incomes and a commitment to patronizing local businesses.

Tourism remains a central part of Sturbridge's economic development history and future

Major destinations such as Old Sturbridge Village and the area's event and convention facilities generate substantial business for local retail, restaurants, and hotels.



The corridor is primarily an auto-oriented environment.

Sturbridge does not have a traditional downtown center - instead, its business and community assets extend along the Route 20 highway corridor. While it would be unrealistic to suggest the roadway could be made walkable and pedestrian friendly from end to end, there are numerous opportunities for improved walking and cycling connections at strategic locations and intersections.



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Much of the study area's economy is driven by tourism and similar leisure activity

Most business establishments are focused on hospitality, restaurant, and retail activities, serving the region's many tourists as well as regional and local residents.

Business diversification and increased public services and amenities could support economic resilience.

The recent Sturbridge Economic Assessment and Strategy report recommends broadening the local economic base and expanding or adding amenities and services that would make Sturbridge a more attractive place, live, work, and/or start a business.



ADMIN CAPACITY

The local business community needs stronger organization and centralized leadership

The business community does not currently have a centralized organizing and leadership structure to help coordinate planning and collaboration. Addressing this issue is a primary goal of this plan and the focus of a key project recommendations.



CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights from the Customer Base Data

What is the Customer Base Diagnostic?

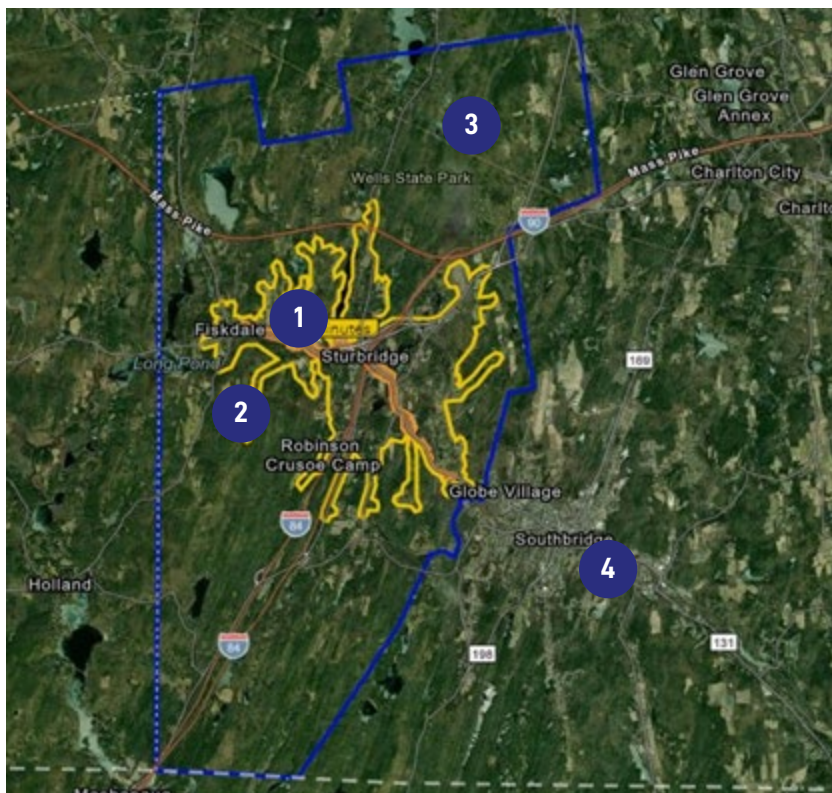
Demographic data from ESRI's Business Analyst software helps us to understand the local customer base, their spending habits, and the degree to which businesses are capturing customer dollars. Data such as a community's population trends, age and education profiles, household statistics, vehicle accessibility, and employment and income profiles help to tell a story on who is frequenting the town or a commercial district. It also highlights the demand for certain retail or commercial uses, therefore assisting in community-wide economic development efforts.

The Customer Base Diagnostic poses the question: *who are the customers of businesses in the LRRP Study Area?*

Customer Base Results in Sturbridge

The study area's extent is limited to the primary commercial corridor.

To understand the local market this analysis also looks at a 1.5-mile ring (30-minute walk, 10-minute bike ride) around downtown, the entire municipality, and statewide.



1 LRRP Study Area
Boundary - Downtown
area/commercial district

2 Local Market Area -
1.5 mile radius, which
includes a 30-minute
walk and 10-minute bike
ride

3 LRRP Communitywide -
encompasses all of the
municipality

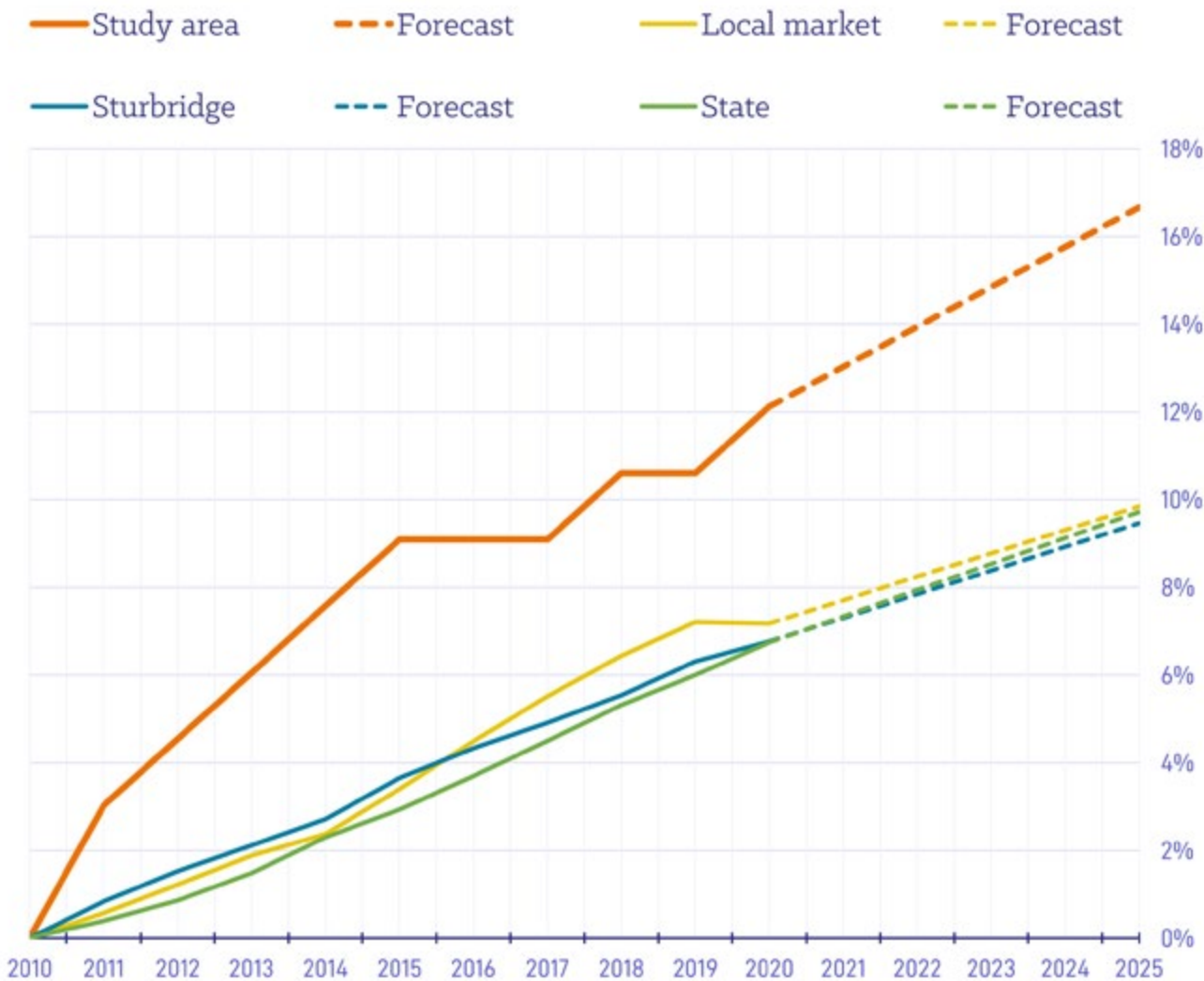
4 Statewide -
encompasses all of
Massachusetts

The above map highlights the four regions included in the Customer Base analysis



DEMOGRAPHICS

The study area surpasses the state's growth rate, while the surrounding area is on par with the state.



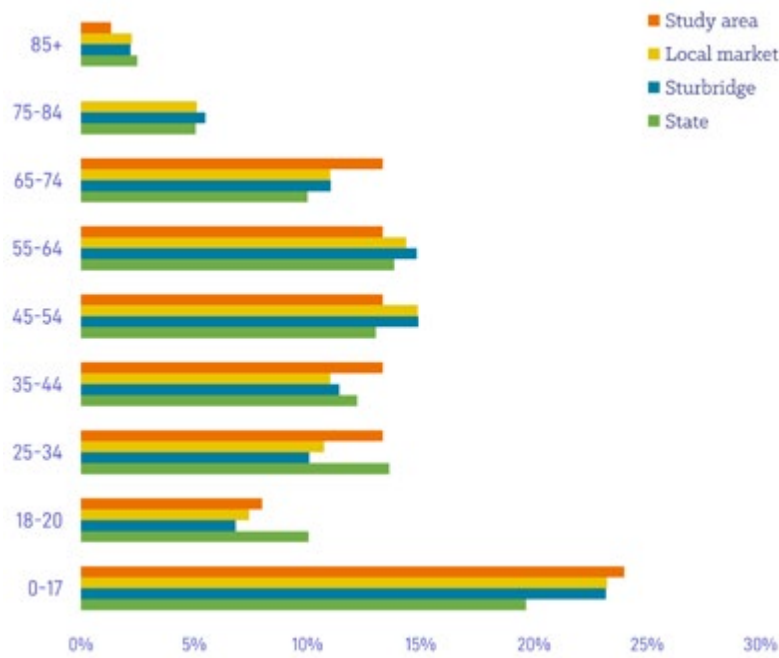
Population trend in the study area
Source: ESRI Business Analyst



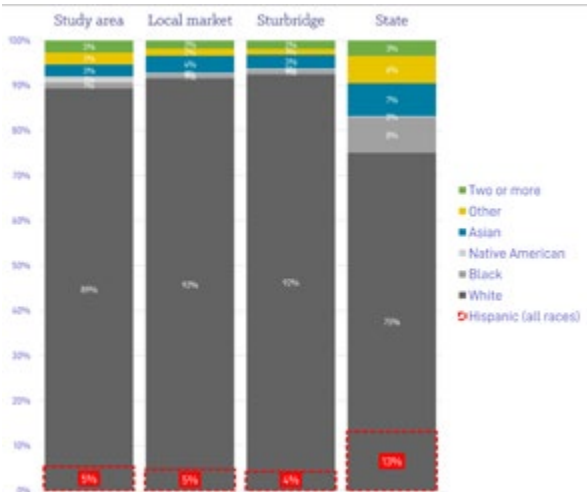
DEMOGRAPHICS

The local area's age distribution approximately matches the state's, with some variation in numbers of older adults. The local community is less diverse than the state. The area has a relatively lower proportion of people with Hispanic origin. The study area and the community approximately match the state average for educational attainment.

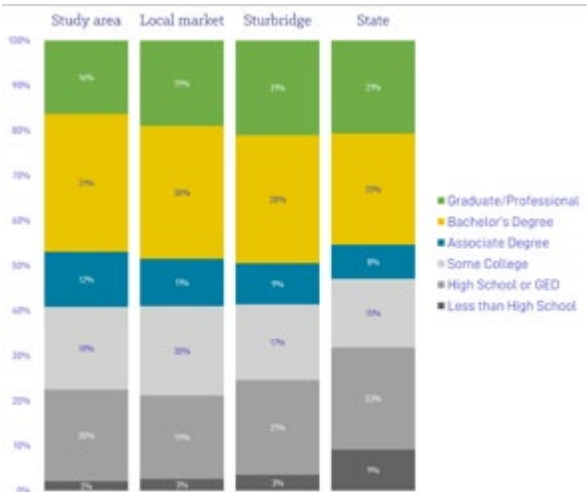
Age Distribution



Education



Race and Ethnicity



Source: Esri Business Analyst



CUSTOMER STATISTICS

The local area is expected to add an additional 32 households in the coming 5 years. The number of jobs in the study area is more than triple the residential population. Housing in the study area is predominantly owner-occupied.

Population	Study area	Local market	Sturbridge	State
Residential population	74	3,344	9,907	6,993,463
Households	29	1,355	3,858	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	3	83	250	194486
5-year forecast, household change	1	32	96	73332
Median age	39	43	44	40
Avg. household size	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.5
Employment and income				
Median household income	\$ 77,396	\$ 101,207	\$ 92,945	\$ 80,643
Employees	270	2,580	4,728	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	5	295	926	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	3.6	0.8	0.5	0.5
Housing				
Median home value	\$ 328,571	\$ 335,828	\$ 342,458	\$ 414,992
5-year forecast, home value growth	15%	19%	19%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	69%	76%	80%	61%

Source: Esri Business Analyst



CUSTOMER STATISTICS

The study area has a surplus of all retail categories. The study area has a lower rate of crime than the national average. Most study area residents have access to a vehicle. The proportion of households below the poverty level and unemployment in the study area is lower the statewide average.

Retail	Study area	Local market	Sturbridge	State
Total retail surplus/leakage	-89.4	-45.5	-17.5	5.8
Grocery store surplus/leakage	-92.4	-53.9	-27	2.4
Restaurant surplus/leakage	-94.4	-55.7	-25.6	-0.7
Crime				
Crime index	62	77	66	67
Other indicators				
Have a smartphone	89%	89%	89%	90%
Carry health insurance	80%	81%	81%	77%
Own or lease any vehicle	97%	92%	93%	83%
Poverty				
Unemployed (age 16+)	11%	13%	13%	15%
Households below poverty level	7%	9%	7%	11%
Households w/ food stamps/SNAP	14%	14%	10%	12%

Source: Esri Business Analyst



PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT

Highlights from the Physical Environment

What is the Physical Environment Diagnostic?

The integrity of public infrastructure and private buildings and storefronts plays an important role in the experience of a downtown, town center, or commercial district. Accessibility from a parking lot to the sidewalk, comfortability while using streetscape amenities, and an inviting storefront window all have an impact on the vitality of a town center. It is important to bifurcate the physical environment into the public and the private realm to acknowledge the fundamentally different nature of the tactics and funding mechanisms available for each. The following public and private elements of the Sturbridge's physical environment have been analyzed:

- Public Realm: Sidewalks, street trees & benches, lighting, wayfinding and signage, roadbed and crosswalks
- Private Realm: Storefront windows, outdoor display and dining, signage, awning, facades, and lighting

The Physical Environment Diagnostic poses the question: *How conducive is the physical environment to meeting the needs and expectations of both businesses and customers?*





SIDEWALKS

Where Sturbridge has sidewalks, they are of good quality, but many parts of the long auto-oriented study area are missing them or at least have long curb cuts to cross, resulting in an overall B grade.

A

More than 75% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities.



B

About 50% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well-maintained.



C

More than 25% of sidewalks in the study area pose challenges to the pedestrian experience (including narrow sidewalks and lack of cleanliness/maintenance).



F

There are no sidewalks in the study area.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate both the flow of customers and spillover retail/dining activity. In addition, sidewalks should be clean and well-maintained to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians.



STREET TREES AND BENCHES

Due to the auto-oriented nature of the study area, there are almost no street trees or benches, resulting in an overall C grade.

A

Street trees and benches are readily available throughout the study area. They are well-designed, well-maintained, and offer shade and comfort to pedestrians.

**B**

Although street trees and benches are available, these amenities have not been cleaned or well-maintained, and require improvements.

**C**

Limited availability of street trees and benches creating uncomfortable pedestrian experience.

**F**

There are no street trees and benches in the study area.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Sidewalks should facilitate a variety of activities, including resting, people-watching and socializing. Street trees and benches are key amenities that support such activities and should be made available without disrupting the flow of pedestrians.



LIGHTING

Lighting along Route 20 is purely designed for automobile traffic. Many areas have poor lighting, and none is pedestrian-oriented, resulting in an overall C grade.

A

More than 75% of the study area utilizes a range of lighting strategies to ensure safety of pedestrians and motorists, as well as highlight the identity and history of an area.

B

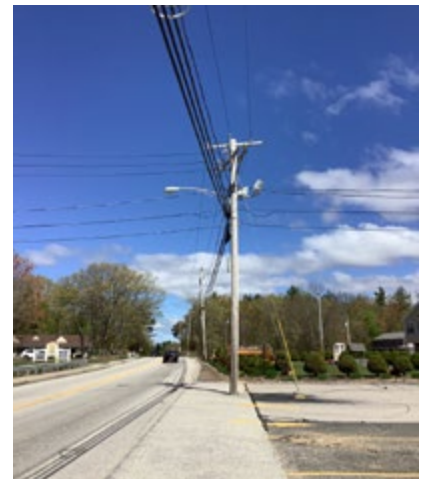
About 50% of the study area is serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.

C

Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety.

F

There is no street lighting in the study area.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Street lighting improves pedestrian visibility and personal safety, as well as aids in geographic orientation.



ROADBED AND CROSSWALKS

Sturbridge's auto-oriented roadways score a B grade for general accommodation. No bike facilities or special walking amenities are present.

A

Roads are designed to balance the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians and create a safe environment for all users.



B

Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.

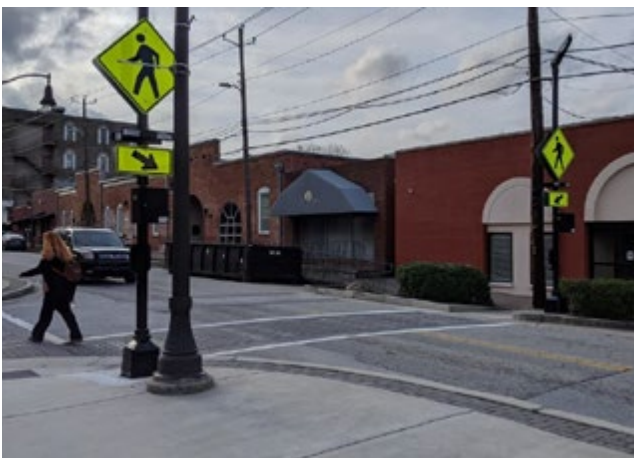


C

Roads are hazardous to all users.

F

The study area is not connected by any major roads.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Roads should be well-maintained to ensure safety of drivers and pedestrians. Crosswalks that are unsafe or inconvenient to customers may undermine accessibility between stores and overall shopper experience.



WINDOW

Due in part to Route 20's auto orientation, most buildings are not suited to pedestrians and have limited transparency, scoring a C grade overall.

A

More than 75% of storefronts maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.

B

About 50% of storefront windows maintain at least 70% transparency.

C

More than 25% of storefronts have windows with limited transparency.

F

All storefronts are boarded up and/or have limited transparency.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Storefronts that maintain a minimum of 70% transparency ensure clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of storefront, as well as improve safety for the business, customers, and pedestrians.



OUTDOOR DISPLAY AND DINING

Businesses readily advertise and decorate to attract passers-by, including outdoor dining spaces, scoring an A grade overall—even if access is mostly anticipated to be by automobile.

A

More than 75% of storefronts feature an attractive window display and/or spillover merchandise and dining areas that align with the brand and identity of the district.

B

About 50% of storefronts maintain an attractive window display with limited spillover merchandise and/or dining areas.

C

Only about 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining limiting the pedestrian experience.

F

There is no spillover retail/restaurant activity in the district.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Attractive window displays and spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks or adjacent parking spaces can help contribute to overall district vibrancy.

SIGNAGE

Clear signage is prevalent along Route 20, though fine-grain information tailored to pedestrians is absent, scoring a B overall.

A

More than 75% of storefront signs reflect the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from more than 10 ft distance.

B

About 50% of storefronts have clear signage that reflect basic business information and can easily be seen from adjacent sidewalks.

C

More than 25% of storefronts have signage that does not communicate names of business or types of products/services being offered.

F

Storefronts in the study area do not have signage.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Signage can help customers identify the location of storefronts and businesses from a distance. Signage should also reflect the visual brand and identity of tenants to help attract new customers.



AWNING

With a lack of sidewalk-orientation, few awnings exist in the study area, scoring a C overall.

A

More than 75% of properties in the study area have retractable awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

B

About 50% of properties in the study area have functioning awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

C

More than 25% of properties in the study area do not have awnings and/or have awnings that are unusable or have not been cleaned and maintained.

F

Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Awnings can provide shade during warmer months, enabling comfortable outdoor dining arrangements for customers. However, they must be well-maintained and designed in coordination with other elements of the storefront.



FACADE

Facades are generally well-maintained along Route 20, scoring a B overall.

A

Storefronts that use high-quality materials, and paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district.

B

Most properties have clean and well-maintained façades, but at least one significant property requiring structural façade improvements.

C

More than 25% of properties require significant building façades improvements, including power washing, painting, and structural enhancements.

F

All properties in the study area require significant façade improvements.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

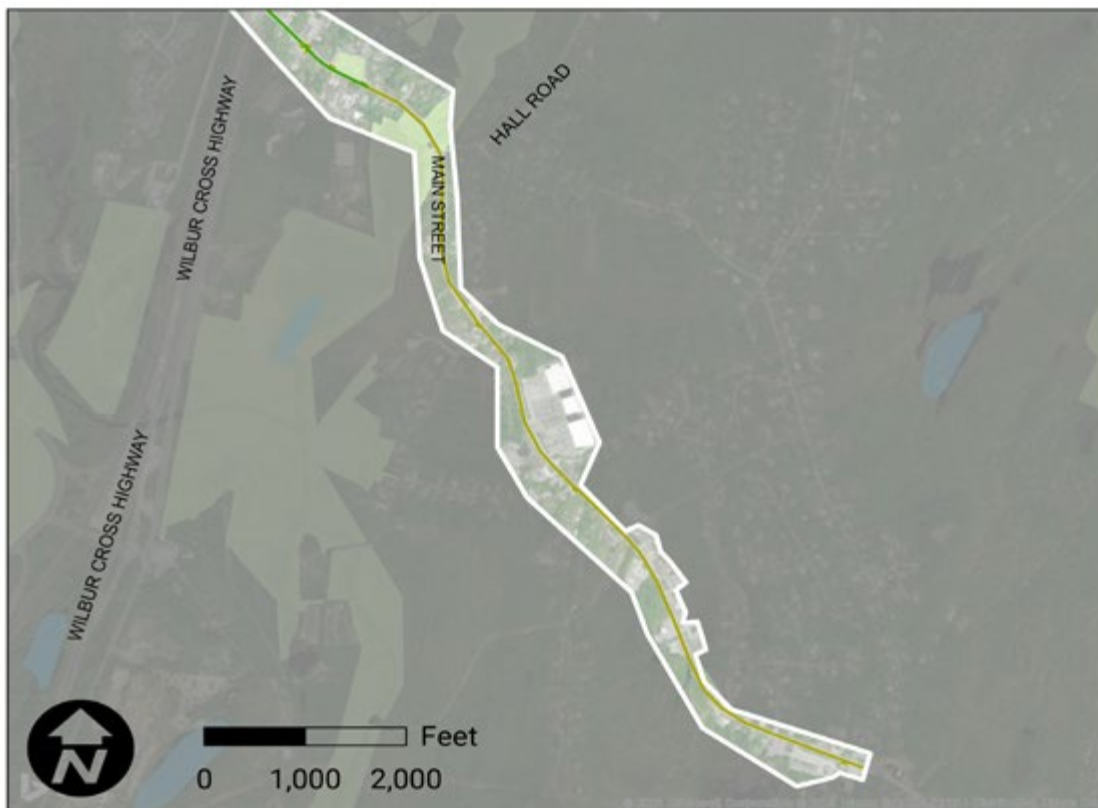
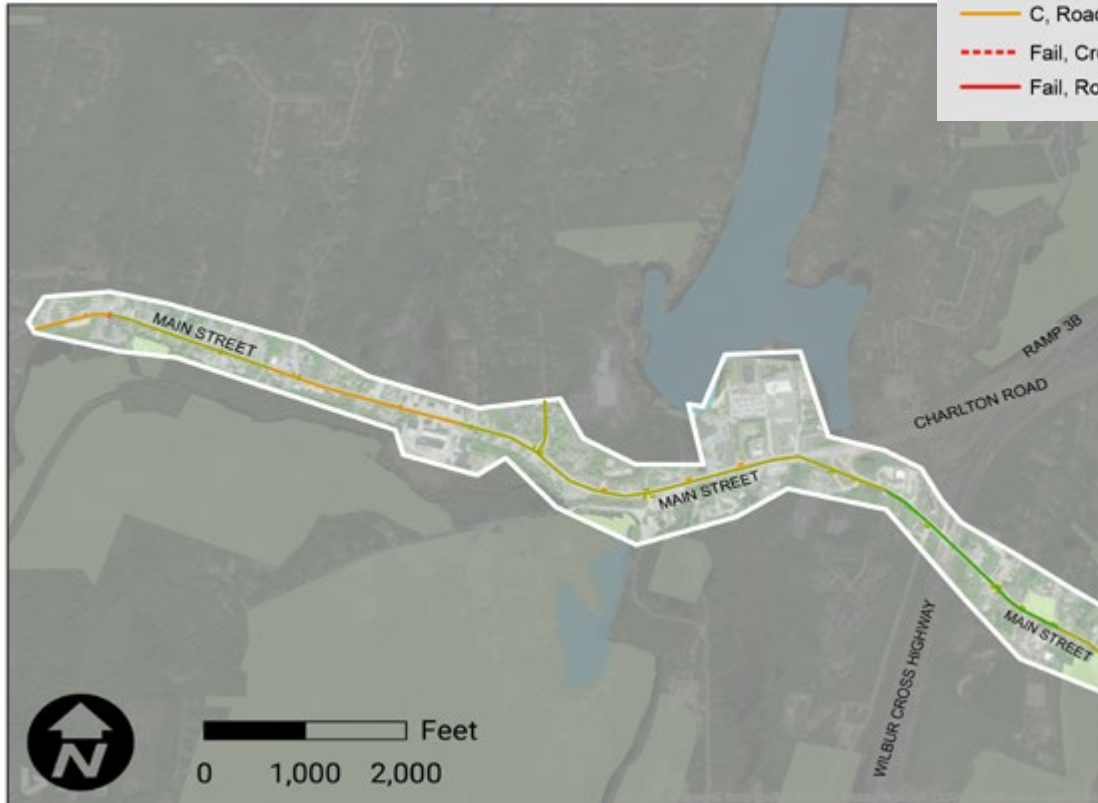
Storefronts that use high-quality and durable building materials, as well as paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district to potential customers.

SIDEWALKS AND CROSSWALKS

Legend

Field Grade, Indicator

- A, Crosswalk
- A, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- B, Crosswalk
- B, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- C, Crosswalk
- C, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- Fail, Crosswalk
- Fail, Roadbed/Sidewalk





STREETSCAPE INFRASTRUCTURE

Legend

Trees/Lights/Benches

Field Grade

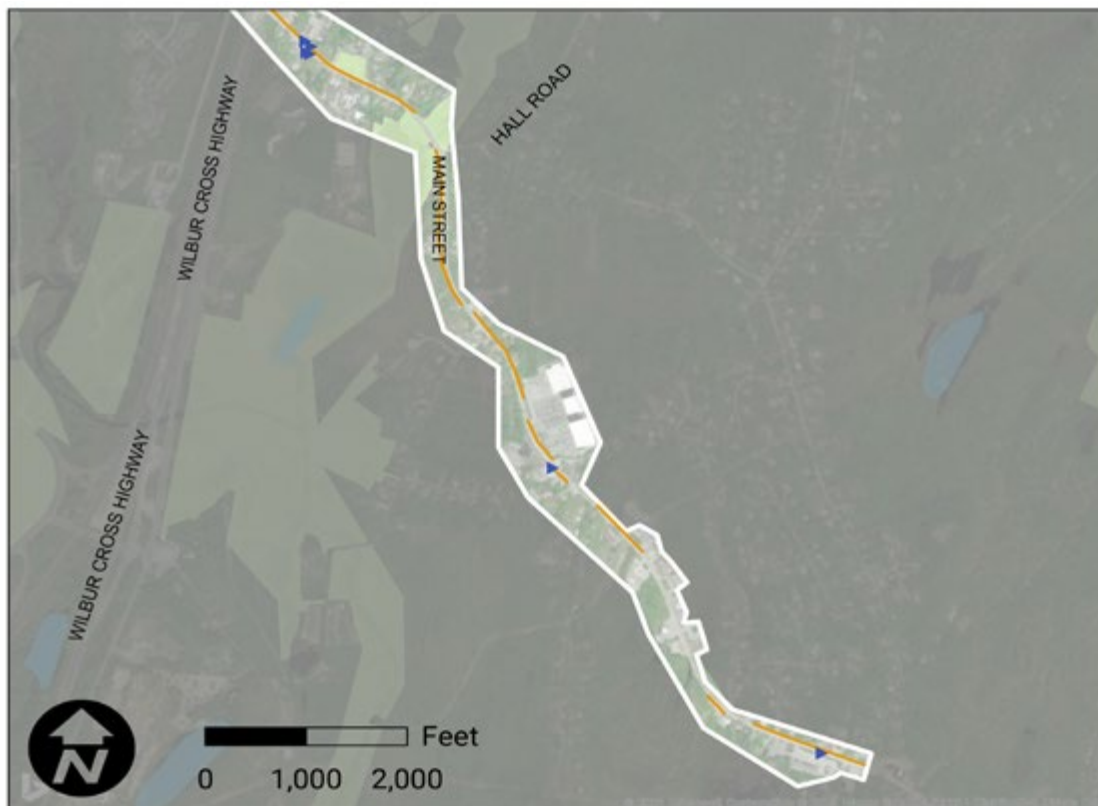
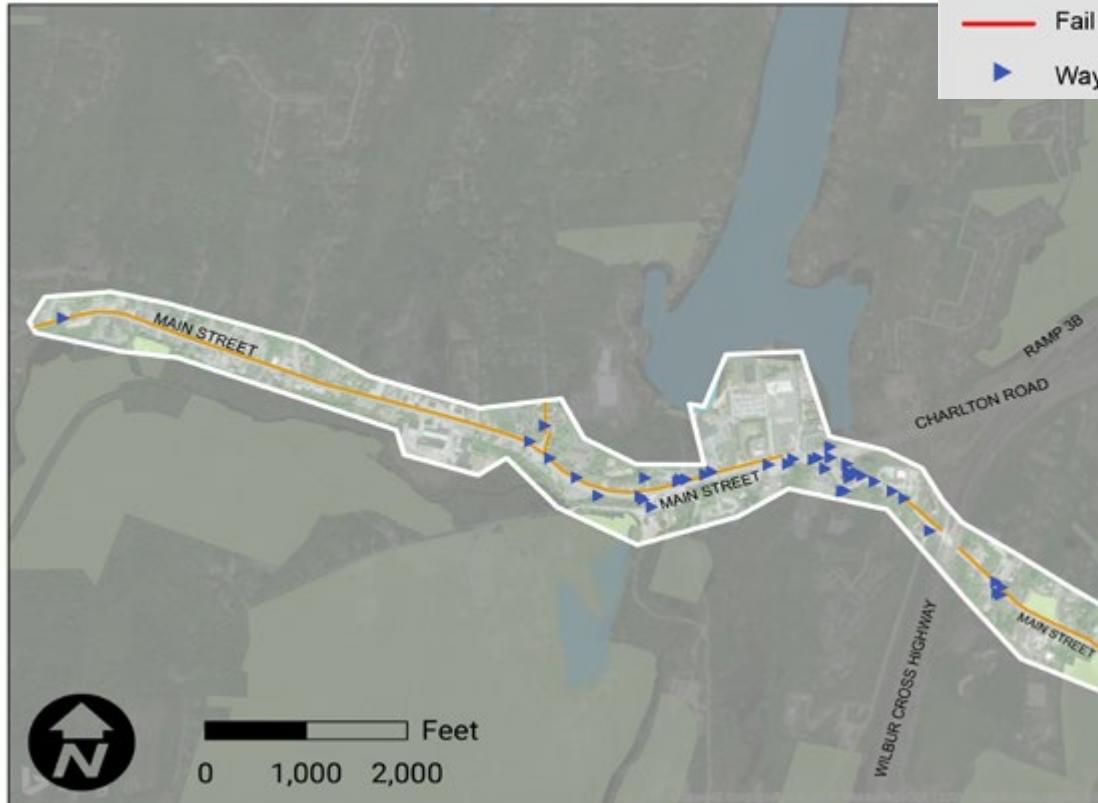
A

B

C

Fail

Wayfinding/Signage

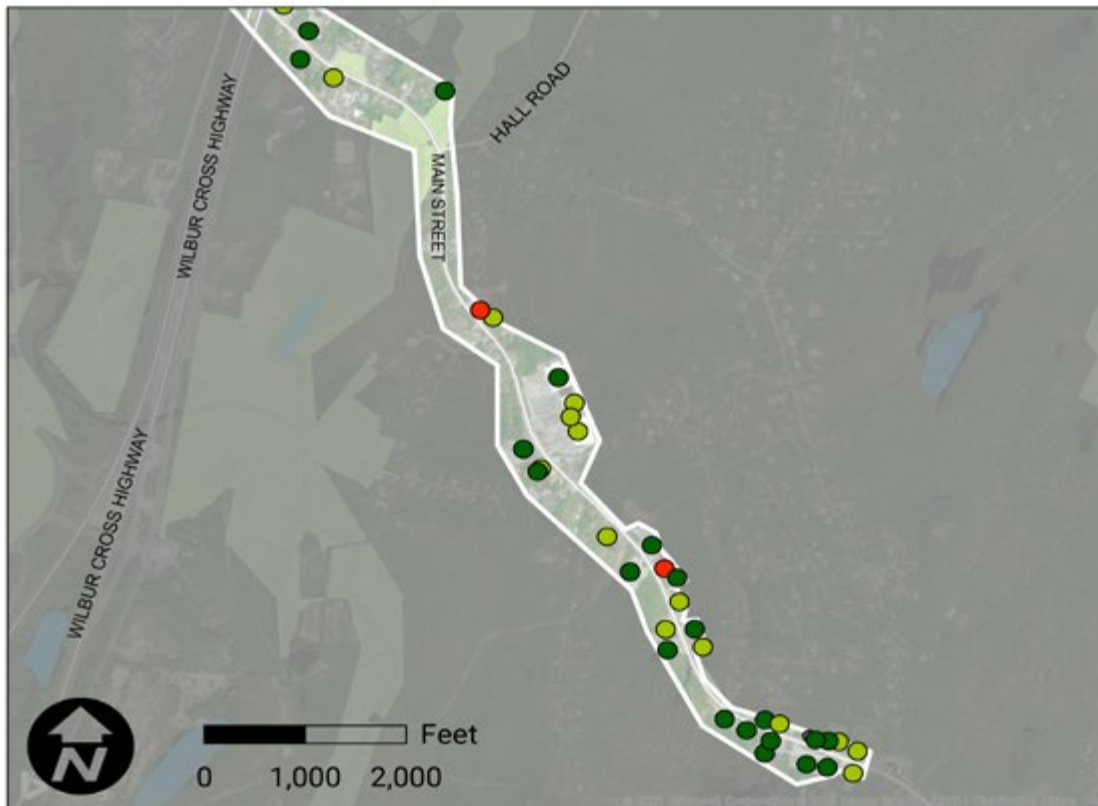
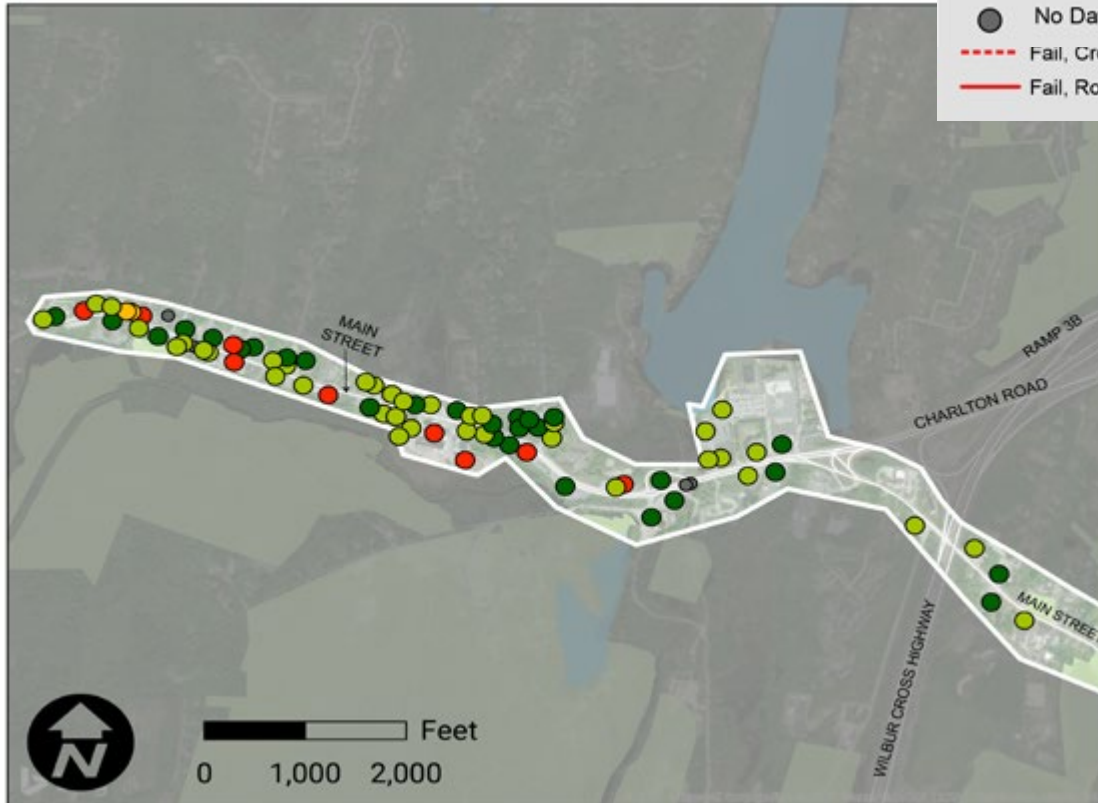


FACADE CONDITION

Legend

Facade Condition

- Maintained
- Adequately Maintained
- Deteriorating
- Poorly Maintained
- No Data Available
- Fail, Crosswalk
- Fail, Roadbed/Sidewalk





Highlights from the Business Environment

What is the Business Environment Diagnostic?

The conditions of the local business environment - including business density, quality, and type of offerings - play a critical role in how successful businesses are meeting the needs of the district's customers. Collecting data related to the tenant mix and concentration of stores provides an insight into the health of local businesses, as well as highlights the presence (or lack of) major anchors and drivers that attract visitors and residents to frequent businesses in the district. In support of this diagnostic, the State sent out business surveys at the beginning of the LRRP and shared results with Plan Facilitators.

The Business Environment Diagnostic poses the question:

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

Business Environment Results in Sturbridge

The Sturbridge business community represents a variety of sectors with particular concentrations in hospitality, retail, and restaurants which serve tourists, business travelers, and locals alike.

The current state and future prospects for the local business environment are best summarized by the timely Sturbridge Economic Assessment & Strategy report completed in June 2021 by McCabe Enterprises. This report focused on the impacts of Covid-19, tactics for near-term recovery, and strategies for longer-term growth and diversification.





Key findings from this report include:

- Number of business and local economy continues to grow, but slowly.
- Sturbridge's economy is evolving into a more diverse economy. Leisure & Hospitality continues to be an important sector.
- Revitalizing Sturbridge's Commercial Tourism District/ Route 20 has widespread support amongst residents & businesspeople.
- Parking & Traffic continue to be key concerns of businesses and residents.
- Sturbridge's commercial Tourism District and the Town's Historic Common area have low walk scores, indicating car-dependent environments, with few, if any resources for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Sturbridge is facing increased competition as a hotel and meeting place destination.
- Sturbridge has significant number of self-employed persons & entrepreneurs –11.2% of Town residents are self-employed, over twice the rate of Worcester County, and nearly double statewide rate.
- Sturbridge has a low labor force participation rate of women with children at home.
- Sturbridge has few child care resources for working parents.
- Sturbridge has made significant investments in developing an outdoor trails system through Sturbridge. This is an opportunity to broaden the appeal and amenities for visitors to Sturbridge.
- Sturbridge has few entertainment, arts and cultural options for residents and visitors.
- There is a general perception that Sturbridge does not have sufficient commercial land to grow and sustain its tax base.

The Town of Sturbridge is actively applying this study's findings and recommendations to its economic development planning activities.





Highlights from the Administrative Capacity

What is the Administrative Capacity Diagnostic?

Administrative capacity refers to a combination of leadership, organizational capacity, resources, and regulatory and policy frameworks that enable catalytic investments and improvements to take root. Understanding leadership roles and champions as well as funding mechanisms and existing partnership are critical components to assessing the administrative capacity of a community.

The Administrative Capacity Diagnostic poses questions such as:

- Who are the key stewards of the LRRP Study Area? Are they adequately staff and resourced to support implementation of projects?
- Are the regulatory, zoning, and permitting process an impediment to business activity? Why or why not?
- If lack a stakeholder entity, is a discussion needed on District Management?

Administrative Capacity Results in Sturbridge

Sturbridge's municipal resources offer strong experience and capabilities. The Town of Sturbridge includes planning and economic development staff capable of shaping strong economic policy and leading its implementation. The municipality has formulated and executed ambitious plans in the past that are supporting overall economic development goals, such as the 2014 Commercial Tourist District Revitalization plan which continues to inform key public investments along major corridors.

The local business community needs stronger organization and clarified leadership to support overall growth and prosperity. The business community does not currently have a centralized organizing and leadership structure to help coordinate planning and collaboration. There are multiple candidate entities that could fill this role, or a partnership of multiple entities could take the lead. Addressing this issue is a primary goal of this plan and the focus of a key project recommendations.

Project Recommendations



Identification & Prioritization of Projects

Integration of Project Goals & Recommendations

All project ideas developed through the LRRP program integrate the overarching goals of supporting business competitiveness, building vibrant communities, creating a trained and skilled workforce, and using technical assistance to create a defined and actionable project list.

The RRP goals build upon the goals and priorities identified in previous and concurrent planning initiatives taking place in Sturbridge. The following sources, analyses, and processes informed how project recommendations were identified and prioritized.

Project Identification

The project recommendations list was informed by a synthesis of the following stages of this planning process:

- *Business assessment*: provides insight into the experience and priorities of local entrepreneurs and operators downtown.
- *Physical diagnostic assessment*: highlights areas of need for potential future public and private realm investment.
- *Community demographics analysis*: indicates trends that projects might help channel to strengthen revitalization progress.
- *Stakeholder engagement*: provides a sounding board to test ideas and clarify priorities.
- *Subject Matter Expert guidance*: injects deep experience and insight to shape ideas into proven project models.
- *Alignment with existing plans, initiatives, and opportunities*: highlights existing programs and resources that could be leveraged to advance new project ideas more efficiently.

The plan's project list was developed to reflect and respond to the key findings, priorities, opportunities, and ideas generated and ranked through the above steps and processes.

Prioritization Process

The recommendations that most clearly aligned with project goals were the ones prioritized. The prioritization process was a product of regular meetings with the LRRP steering committee and public feedback via the diagnostic presentation, project proposal open house, and display of project proposals (and solicitation of feedback via comment cards and sticky notes) at City Hall.

The steering committee included representatives of the City of Sturbridge, Viva Sturbridge, MassDevelopment, the Sturbridge Redevelopment Authority, and One SouthCoast Chamber.

Subject Matter Expert (SME) Guidance

Based on the planning process's analysis, diagnostics, and stakeholder engagement, the community's top needs and priorities emerged, informing which areas of focus and intervention might have the most significant impact for economic recovery.

DHCD provided a roster of "Subject Matter Experts" (SMEs) available to consult with communities and help develop their highest priority project ideas.

For Sturbridge, the following SMEs were engaged for specialized support to help define and plan's most potentially significant project recommendations:

Dr. Lomax Campbell from **Third Eye Network** provided guidance and resources informing the plan's recommendations for workforce development and small business development.

Ann Burke from **Ann McFarland Burke** provided insight and examples to support overall organizational and administrative capacity to support recovery.

Michael Aparicio from **Revby** helped develop strategies to extend technical assistance to businesses.



Project List

The planning process ultimately translated diagnostics findings, stakeholder engagement, past planning documents, and community representatives' insight into a set of project recommendations specially tailored to support rapid recovery from COVID-19 impacts to the local economy and business environment:

Category	Project
Public Realm	Route 20 Traffic Calming (PRIORITY PROJECT)
	Route 20 Pedestrian Crossing
	Parking Management Plan and Implementation
	Route 20 Intersection Improvements (PRIORITY PROJECT)
	Wayfinding improvements (PRIORITY PROJECT)
Private Realm	Establish facade improvement program (PRIORITY PROJECT)
Revenue and Sales	Technical assistance for business (PRIORITY PROJECT)
	Workforce development program
	Small Business Development Strategy
	District branding strategy

Projects Overview

Project Categories

The LRRP planning process concludes with a set of project recommendations tailored to respond to each community's needs, opportunities, and resources. Each project falls into one of the following diagnostic categories:

Physical Environment: Public Realm

Projects for the public realm enhance streets and public spaces in communities to spur other investment and create opportunities for business activity and gathering that lead to community vitality. The recovery of Massachusetts downtowns, town centers, and business districts has relied on public spaces like these to extend the areas in which business communities and public life can operate.

Physical Environment: Private Realm

These project focus on enhancements on private properties and buildings, improving the aesthetics and attractiveness of existing buildings but also helping new buildings to contribute to a commercial district's recovery in a positive way.

Business Environment: Revenue and Sales

Projects intended to increase revenue and sales can include strategic organizations such as task forces and business improvement districts, but also include more creative approaches that draw on attributes of the physical environment and special events to promote businesses in a downtown district and encourage increased visits and spending.

Business Environment: Tenant Mix

These project efforts are intended to diversify the types of businesses in communities. This can not only respond more closely to community needs, but also work toward a more resilient commercial fabric in business centers so that major disruptions like COVID-19 do not result in disproportionate closures and a lack of activity.

Administrative Capacity

Capacity-building projects help make local governments and their partner agencies more able to take on the other kinds of project efforts recommended in this Local Rapid Recovery Plan.

Implementation / Next Steps

Project Action Plan

The Local Rapid Recovery Program gives communities a defined and implementable compilation of projects that have been vetted by the community, as well as a data-driven plan that can alleviate the impacts from COVID-19 pandemic. This report provides detailed information on the budget ranges, timeframe, funding sources, action items, and key processes required to properly execute and implement the project ideas. The project ideas developed through this program serve as opportunities for communities to rapidly implement capital improvements and address administrative and economic development challenges. Municipal departments and planning entities can use the project ideas as a resource for internal or external funding opportunities.

Obtaining Funding

Considering the vast number of project ideas and differing budget ranges (less than \$50K or greater than \$400K), it can be overwhelming and overly time consuming for communities to seek assistance and find funding opportunities. The Department of Housing and Community Development provides extensive resources that contain information on existing local, state, and federal grant programs, organized by the diagnostic categories including physical environment, business environment, administrative capacity, and customer base.

The table on the following page organizes the 12 projects for the Sturbridge LRRP plan by implementation timeframe (short, medium, or long-term), as well as budget range (less than \$50K or greater than \$400K). Organizing projects by potential budget and timeframe can act as a resource for communities to assess projects that could be implemented quickly and cheaply, and which projects should be addressed at a later date due to funding, political, or administrative setbacks.

Project Profiles



Technical assistance for business

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget		<p>Low (less than \$50k) for initial planning and program development; Medium to high for program administration and funding activities</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Development Initiative Program (DHCD) • Build Back Better Regional Challenge (EDA) • Planning Assistance grants from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs • Economic Adjustment assistance from the Economic Development Administration • Community Development Block Grants
Timeframe		Short (less than 5 years)
Risk		<p>Low Risk</p> <p>Lack of business interest or engagement</p> <p>Limited funding to execute program ideas</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader adoption of digital tools by businesses • More widespread online presence across business community • Broad engagement in programs and participation in activities
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Sturbridge</p> <p>Local businesses and organizations</p>

Relevant Diagnostic Results

As observed in many municipalities, businesses without the ability to market and sell online were more likely to have significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Sturbridge small businesses include hospitality, food service and restaurants, antique shops, wedding venues, and other consumer goods / retail businesses. These business types are among the small businesses that are more susceptible to business interruption and may need assistance to increase business resilience.

Action Item

Identify a point person within the Town or business support community and identify programs in the "Process" section of this rubric to investigate as possible first projects.

It might be worthwhile to engage a consultant to help navigate the process, assess local gaps and needs, and develop a technical assistance plan.

The following questions might help guide project selection/development:

In terms of a Technical Assistance initiative, might the project include a combination of micro-grant and Technical Assistance (TA)?

- A grant may help a business to fund platform subscriptions, contractors, digital materials, ongoing maintenance
- TA to create a digital marketing / eCommerce plan and help with initial implementation
- TA may include one-on-one consulting, workshops, digital material / toolkit content, or a combination of approaches.

- TA may also include assistance on applications for other TA and funding programs at the state and federal level. For example, the MGCC Empower Digital grant.

What does the current level of engagement/ interaction between Town and business owners look like right now? How do you plan to connect with the business community to begin creating trust in advance of a program offering? Be mindful of the pitfall, "if you build it, they will come." Program design and language should incorporate language used by business owners to describe their needs and desired outcomes, not just business jargon descriptions.

How can small business technical assistance be customized to reflect the business types and the current "day trip" trend in Sturbridge? Topics may include strategies to support hospitality businesses on their marketing to encourage overnight visits. This may include strategies that leverage the unique aspects of Sturbridge, including the historical attraction of Old Sturbridge Village and seasonal events throughout an annual calendar.

Who will coordinate the RFP process and small business owner TA application process? What criteria will you use to select businesses? How will you keep track of businesses accepted into programs and their outcomes?

Process

Small Business Technical Assistance Programming:

Begin with outreach and engagement to provide them with a voice; provide an opportunity to listen before there is any perception that you are “pushing” something to them that is not relevant considering their current mindset. Workshops can help business owners understand the subject matter and help them define what “online” and “eCommerce” can mean for them, on their terms, for their brand, and their comfort level.

One-on-One TA to work on a customer acquisition, retention, and online presence plan. Attention should also be spent on helping the business owner establish a plan to maintain activity, either through in-house staff support or through delegation to freelancers / contractors. Empower the business owner to not take everything on their own.

Subject matter categories to consider:

- Business operations resilience and growth planning; this includes staffing/ hiring and supply chain resilience
- Digital tool capabilities, including POS systems and bookkeeping (strategy and/or implementation)
- eCommerce platform setup (e.g., Shopify, WooCommerce, connection to online marketplaces)
- Digital marketing (to support in-person commerce, not just eCommerce):
- Website design, development, and maintenance planning
- Social Media management (organic and paid)
- Google My Business profile setup and optimization plan

- Review sites (e.g., Yelp, TripAdvisor, industry specific sites)

Technical Assistance format may be in workshop format, one-on-one format, and/or a combination of workshop and one-on-one TA.

Ideally, the technical assistance will provide tangible deliverables so the business owner feels it was worth their own time investment. For example, a new website, a collection of social media posts, help with an updated Google My Business profile, set up a new POS system, etc.

Also see the best practice examples from Arlington MA, Arlington VA and Boston MA in the Best Practice Appendix at the end of this report.

Additional notes regarding the program design used by the Town of Arlington, MA.

Information source: Town of Arlington, CDBG Administrator

Retention or creation of at least one job held by an individual who earns a low- to moderate-income is required to access funds or technical assistance in this program. Job retention is defined as total full-time equivalent (FTE) positions retained at 30 hours per week, or any combination of part-time positions combining for 30 hours per week, including owners. At least 51% of the positions your business retained or created must be held by employees who earn a low- to moderate-income.

The grant is a working capital assistance grant.

The grant is a reimbursable grant, so selected businesses will be required to incur expenses before being reimbursed. If the Review Committee approves your application, we will issue a grant agreement. It will be the responsibility of the business owner to submit eligible expenses to the Department of Planning and Community Development for reimbursement. Ten percent of the grant will be held until the time that the job creation/ job retention certification form is received.

Most grants will not exceed \$10,000

A points-based scoring rubric was created to review and prioritize qualified applicants. Assessment criteria included:

- Business Health
- Business Location
- DBG Eligibility
- Community Impact
- COVID-19 Hardship

- Recovery Plan
- Technical Assistance (likeliness of positive impact)

The Review Committee assigns applicants a technical assistance provider who will distribute services as determined by the contract with that provider, and can include but is not limited to: One-on-one technical assistance for businesses on the following topics: website development, e-commerce, live commerce, digital/traditional marketing, search engine optimization, and bookkeeping/ accounting; and Group workshops or session.

Budget overview:

- \$10,000 working capital grants to 25 eligible businesses (number of businesses can be scaled down to match the community's needs and budget).
- Approx. \$20,000 budget for one-on-one technical assistance for 6 selected businesses and 4 workshops for all 25 grant recipients. (Low budget range when considering just the one-on-one TA and workshops, much of which focused on digital marketing)

The following is the project description included in an RFP for similar work for the Cape Cod Commission. Sturbridge may decide a smaller subset of services based off of the Cape Cod Commission example as deemed appropriate for the scale, subject matter priority, and budget. For example, given Sturbridge's small business profiles, workshops and toolkits for the following sectors may be appropriate:

- 1. Hospitality, including wedding venues
- 2. Food Service and Restaurants
- 3. Retail and other brick & mortar product and service businesses

Project description that was included in the original RFP documentation:

TASK 1. REVIEW EXISTING DATA AND LITERATURE ON ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CAPE COD.

Commission staff will review existing data with the consultant, including reviewing the two economic impact surveys completed earlier in 2020. Commission staff has also begun identifying best practices from other region's economic resiliency planning efforts, reviewing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plans in comparable regions in the U.S., and collecting examples of technical assistance resources for business recovery planning from natural and man-made disasters.

The consultant will participate in a virtual meeting to review this information, set milestone dates, and assign project management tasks.

Deliverable: Virtual meeting to review goals, materials, and project schedule.

TASK 2. DEVELOP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WORKSHOPS FOR BUSINESS RECOVERY PLANNING.

The consultant will work with Commission staff to develop a series of virtual technical assistance workshops around business recovery planning. The consultant will facilitate two workshops per industry group (with 5 total industry groups anticipated). Industries of particular interest given survey results and percentage of total employment in Barnstable County may include: Retail, Accommodations, Food Services/Restaurants, Arts/Culture/Recreation, Professional/Technical Services, and Personal Care Services. The Commission and consultant will work together to outline the workshop agendas but the Commission generally anticipates the overall framework for the workshops to be:

- a) Workshop 1: Confirm business/industry needs and challenges identified through economic impact surveys and literature review research and provide an overview of business recovery planning, including walking through steps of planning efforts for individual businesses.
- b) Between workshops: Leverage research from Task 1 and feedback from Task 3 to create technical assistance workshop materials and toolkits that business owners can use in facilitating their economic recovery (Task 4).
- c) Workshop 2: Present the toolkits and ensure participants are familiarized with local, regional, state, and federal resources for economic recovery and resiliency (Task 5).

Through this process, the Commission is interested in learning about ways in which businesses successfully adapted to COVID-19, and what attributes facilitated adaptability and resiliency, as well as key barriers and challenges to adapting from businesses' perspective.

Deliverables: Written framework for stakeholder engagement including workshop frequency, goals, structure, content, outreach plan, and timeline. Include outreach plan to disseminate workshop materials to broader audience following meetings.

TASK 3. FACILITATE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WORKSHOP 1

The consultant will host a workshop during which they learn about the business needs in the economic recovery context by industry group and provide an overview of business recovery planning, including walking through steps of planning efforts for individual businesses. Outreach is anticipated to be conducted by both Commission staff and the consultant primarily through email and will leverage existing contact lists at the Commission. In both Workshop 1 and 2, the Commission anticipates 10-30 attendees per industry session.

Deliverable: Up to 5 workshops, development of associated meeting content, and meeting summaries/minutes.

TASK 4. DEVELOP TOOLKITS FOR EACH INDUSTRY SUBJECT AREA

The consultant will develop an accompanying digital toolkit, including, when applicable, business recovery plan templates, checklists, worksheets, or lists of relevant

local, state, and federal resources, for each industry-specific workshop. At the end of the workshop series, the consultant will use participant feedback to refine the toolkit for future use by local partners facilitating comparable workshops and by the Commission in its economic recovery and resilience plan.

Deliverable: One toolkit per industry group (up to 5 total)

TASK 5. FACILITATE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WORKSHOP 2.

In collaboration with Commission staff, the consultant will facilitate virtual technical assistance workshops. The content will be determined at the planning stage (Task 2), but the Commission anticipates presenting the toolkits and guiding small business owners on their recovery planning efforts. In both Workshop 1 and 2, the Commission anticipates 10-30 attendees per industry session.

Deliverable: Up to 5 workshops, development of associated meeting content, and meeting summaries/minutes.

TASK 6. MEMO ON PRIORITY RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY STRATEGIES.


Based on the economic impact survey results, feedback from the technical assistance workshop process in Task 5, best practices research in Task 1, and the expertise of the consultant, the consultant should present recommendations on prioritized recovery and resiliency strategies that address the unique challenges of Cape Cod's regional economy, and ensures businesses can best adapt to an uncertain economic climate.

Commission staff will share the memo with stakeholders for review and will eventually integrate the recommendations into an Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan into the CEDS.

Deliverable: Memo on key priority recovery and resiliency strategies for Cape Cod's economy.

Overall project Budget:
Low-Medium, Approximately \$50,000

Establish facade improvement program

Category		Private Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget	 	Low-Medium (less than \$200,000). Potential Funding Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Development Initiative Program (DHCD) • Community Development Block Grant (DHCD)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) to get the program started, and for the development of design guidelines required for the program
Risk		Medium. Reliant on collaborative property owners and businesses. Town could mitigate by assigning a staff member (or hiring business liaison) to develop in-depth relationships with property owners as the program is developed.
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Creation of program Number of applicants over a specific timeframe Number of facades, storefronts, and/or sites improved Increase in customers, foot traffic, sales If anti-displacement measures are included in the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local businesses within improved properties that are still there after set number of years • Number new businesses that have started or relocated to the target area within a set number of years
Partners & Resources		Town of Sturbridge Community property owners and businesses

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Distressed properties can have a negative impact on people's impressions of the viability of a business district. Storefront upgrades can convey vibrancy and help downtowns appeal to more users.

Sturbridge's commercial corridor has some buildings with deteriorating facades and infrastructure. A facade/storefront improvement program could involve upgrades intended to specifically address the transmissibility of COVID-19, such as new windows or doors, may be unaffordable to small business owners and/or may have a negative impact on the facade if improperly sourced and/or installed.

Broader storefront and facade upgrades, though not exclusively motivated by COVID-19, could serve to encourage visitors back downtown after COVID-19-related restrictions and closures slowed foot traffic.

Action Item

Establish a robust facade improvement program that the Town can administer.

Process

- Establish program structure and processes
- Identify funding streams (in addition to CDBG)
- Engage the businesses, property owners, and community early on to get buy-in for the program
- Designate top priority properties/businesses for funding
- Develop an appropriate level of design guidance/guidelines, and scope the focus of the program: Does it include signage, lighting, awnings, other smaller elements?
- Develop the criteria for application, approval, installation, and maintenance
- Develop the funding and oversight structures. The program could provide grants or loans to property owners/businesses for the improvements. If uptake is slow, Leominster could consider offering grants to the first 3-5 to sign up (depending on resources), or through a lottery process, transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This would allow the municipality to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area. This would be a highly transparent process.
- Manage implementation

Also see the best practice examples from Ashland MA, Cambridge MA, and national organizations in the Best Practices Appendix at the end of this report.

Potential Funding Sources

In addition to municipal funds, the following could be potential funding sources:

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA):** Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds should cover assistance with the design of façade, storefront, or site improvements when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Possible impacts are addressed in the sections on Key Performance Indicators and Diagnostic.
- **Hometown Grants (T-Mobile):** This program will fund up to \$50,000 per town and may be used to rebuild or refresh community spaces, including historic buildings.
- **Local Banks and other Community Development Financial Institutions:** Local banks with a community development financing program for small businesses may be able to help provide low or no interest loans to small businesses for their share of the improvements, especially for a storefront or sign upgrade. The focus of the program at each bank is different; contact your local bank(s) and discuss how they could participate in investing in the community.
- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (project limit \$25,000):** All communities are eligible to apply. Some of the funding for this program is reserved for non-entitlement Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) communities. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which could include creating the program, developing the design

guidelines, and providing conceptual designs for improvements, depending on the complexity of the project. This program could be used to develop the design guidelines for the façade improvement program.




The following sources can work in tandem with a façade improvement program to address buildings with larger needs:

- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth: Underutilized Properties Program MassDevelopment:** As with the historic tax credits below, this funding source is for a much larger project. It could be used to help address larger buildings in a target area that have more significant issues. Bundling this program and a few of the other more specialized grants could help a municipality address smaller properties with the façade improvement program and larger ones with these more targeted funds.
- **Municipal Vacant Storefronts Program Economic Assistance Coordinating Council:** This program will not fund façade improvements. The municipality would form a district. Businesses the district then apply for the funds to address vacant storefronts. This could help reduce the number of vacant storefronts while the façade improvement program addresses accessibility, deferred maintenance, and design issues on the exterior or the site
- **Collaborative Workspace Program MassDevelopment** This grant provides another option to address both the exterior and the interior of this space while also helping to support local jobs and job creation.
- **Community Preservation Act** This source only applies in those

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

- **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund** Massachusetts Historical Commission (project limit \$3,000-\$100,000, depending on project type): This is a 50% reimbursable matching grant for preserving properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Preservation. Applicants are limited to municipalities and nonprofits. Many downtown and village centers include nonprofit and municipal anchors. This grant could be used to ensure that all properties in a target area are brought, over time, to the same standard of repair. The program does have limitation on allowable costs. A preservation restriction is required
- **Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit** Massachusetts Historical Commission: This is available for significant rehabilitation of historic buildings and may help supplement a larger project in a downtown. This is included in this best practice sheet because the guidelines developed for the municipal façade/storefront improvement program could be incorporated into the review of larger project

Route 20 Traffic Calming

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Economic Development Department
Budget	<p>Costs will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement and installation of temporary barriers • Stakeholder & public engagement • Completion of concept and detailed design, if pilot deemed a success and permanent enhancements are desired • Installation / construction of permanent enhancements, if desired • Depending on municipality's capacity, consultant may be brought on-board to support design and engagement <p>Traffic / pedestrian counts and observations can be conducted using municipal staff, interns, or volunteers.</p> <p> Low Budget (Under \$50k) – Temporary pilot measures</p> <p> Large Budget (\$200k +) – Staged construction of permanent enhancements; Cost estimates for the various phases, according to the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Gateway (Route 148 to Cedar Street): \$6.9 million • Eastern Gateway (Cedar Street to Route 131): \$3.5 million • Route 20 & Route 131 Intersection: \$2.9 million <p>It is recommended that updated cost estimates be obtained, given the figures quoted above are from 2013 and based on concept-level planning.</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MassWorks Infrastructure Program (EOHED) • Competitive Tourism Grants (EDA) • Hometown Grant Program (T-Mobile) • Commonwealth Places grant from MassDevelopment • Shared Streets and Spaces grant from MassDOT • Community Development Block Grant • Upcoming funding from the ARPA (TBD)

Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 	<p>Low to medium risk.</p> <p>If initiated as a temporary pilot, the risk level is expected to be low:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary installation can be modified or removed if desired impacts are not achieved • Low cost of materials required for installation <p>Permanent enhancements may present a higher level of risk if support is not achieved during temporary pilot. A pilot can also serve to test and validate feedback received in the development of the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan. Building consensus is critical. Risks here may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns raised by public • Impacts to businesses during construction • Conflicts between user groups in terms of vision, use, and sharing of limited space
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersection enhancements / traffic calming at strategic locations and in alignment with the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan can: • Improve the perception and accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for residents, visitors, and tourist • Improve accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for people of all ages and abilities • Improve driver, pedestrian, and cyclist safety • Increase pedestrian and cycling trips to the Commercial Tourist District • Reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions • KPIs for this project could include the following: • Increase in visitors to the Commercial Tourist District • Increase in sales at businesses within the Commercial Tourist District • Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance • Increased pedestrian / cyclist counts • Reduced vehicle speeds • Reduced number of vehicle collisions and vehicle collisions with pedestrians / cyclists • Reduced severity of vehicle collisions and vehicle collisions with pedestrians / cyclists (e.g. serious injuries, death) • Improved intersection performance • Reduced vehicle congestion • Improved air quality metrics • Linear feet of public infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks, boulevards, roads, etc.) enhanced
Partners & Resources		Town of Sturbridge MassDOT

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Building off working completed in 2011 with the Sturbridge Town Master Plan and in 2009 with the Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Study, the Town of Sturbridge developed a conceptual corridor design plan (Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan) in 2014 to improve the corridor's "livability." The Commercial Tourist District (Route 20 Corridor) is a 1-mile long corridor along Route 20, extending approximately from the Brookfield Road intersection at its western boundary to Cedar Street on the east. The Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan extended this area to include an additional 1-mile long segment that extends from Cedar Street to New Boston Road on the east. Layout plans and the approved Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan are available on the Town's website.

Intersection enhancements / traffic calming at strategic locations as identified in the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan can help address negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing the number of residents, visitors, and tourists who visit the Commercial Tourist District. Enhancements in alignment with the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan can beautify the corridor, make it more accessible, and drive more business to local shops, restaurants, and hotels. Improving the quality of experience through these improvements may also increase the frequency of visits or length of stay by tourists.

These measures can improve the perception of the Commercial Tourist District as a safe and welcoming destination for pedestrians

and cyclists by providing a more comfortable environment to walk and bike. Traffic calming measures also reduce vehicle speeds, improve visibility of pedestrians for drivers, and improve safety.

Key benefits include:

- Encourage visitors and customers to find and visit key sites of interest and support local businesses
- Improve accessibility to the Commercial Tourist District for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclist
- Improve accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District in alignment with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Reduce vehicle speeds and create a safer environment for drivers and pedestrians
- Reduce fuel consumed by making walking or cycling to and through the Commercial Tourist District safer, more attractive and more viable, thereby reducing air pollution from vehicle emissions

Action Item

Key actions include the following:

- Meeting with key department officials to confirm project goals
- Establish a steering committee
- Decide which funding source is appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds.
- If a consultant is deemed appropriate, go through the Commonwealth's procurement process (unless the grant program has an on-call consultant)
- Identify the people/organizations who need to be part of this process.
- Develop an engagement process appropriate for the municipality and the required approval process.
- Update site analysis baselines

from Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan (e.g. traffic analysis, market assessment, etc.)

- Complete additional detailed analysis (e.g. Utility Relocation Study)
- Detailed design options and visualization
- Update costing based on detailed design options
- Public / stakeholder engagement, document preferred alternative, and promote temporary pilot
- Pilot testing and observations
- Confirm longer-term / permanent design, phasing, and installation, if applicable

Process

A temporary installation or demonstration pilot of planned improvements at one or more key locations can be used to test assumptions, achieve quick wins, and build support or consensus. Temporary installation and piloting can take six (6) months or less. If the temporary installation / pilot proves successful, the interventions can remain in place or permanent enhancements can be explored, designed, and constructed.

Depending on community engagement, the extent of enhancements / traffic calming measures, and the municipality's procurement requirements permanent installation may take 18 months. The following process outlines a comprehensive planning and implementation program and should be adjusted to suit the scope, municipality's needs, goals, and existing plans. Timelines and sequencing may vary by project and municipality.

Month 1 – Project Initiation:

- Discuss need and locations for interventions

- Prepare project plan, engagement plan, and business case for any grant funding requests
- Field visits, observations, pedestrian counts, traffic counts, documentation
- Measure key dimensions

Month 2-3 – Concept Development, Planning & Design:

- Prepare concept options
- Engage with business / property owners and public on options and concerns
- Develop preferred improvements and concept based on engagement feedback
- Refine the temporary pilot installation based on public feedback

Month 4 – Approvals & Temporary Pilot Testing:

- Seek approvals from relevant authorities (municipality and/or State)
- Temporary pilot materials acquisition (e.g. planters, flexible posts / bollards, paint, etc.)
- Temporary pilot materials installation

Month 5-6 – Evaluation & Removal / Modification:

- Field visits, observations, pedestrian counts, traffic counts, documentation, surveys
- Removal / modification – Based on observations or at end of pilot, remove or modify installation as necessary

Month 7-18 – Permanent Implementation

- Complete any additional background studies required (e.g. utility studies)
- Complete detailed design based on pilot findings, results, and surveys
- Engage with business / property owners and public
- Refine detailed design based on public feedback

-
- Procure contractor to proceed with construction / installation of improvements
 - Materials acquisition
 - Materials installation

Also see the best practice examples from Florence, Whatley, and Wayland/Natick, MA in the Best Practice Appendix at the end of this report.

Wayfinding Improvements

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget		<p>Low Budget (Under \$50k)</p> <p>Costs may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, procurement, and installation of additional signs • Design, production, and installation of sidewalk map kiosks • Web updates and online / interactive map • Print map design, production, and printing <p>Costs may be able to be partially offset through grant funding, partnership with local / State tourism organizations, and /or offering advertisement / sponsorship opportunities for local businesses.</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Development Initiative Program (DHCD) • Build Back Better Regional Challenge (EDA) • Hometown Grant Program (T-Mobile)
Timeframe		Short term (less than 5 years)
Risk		<p>Low Risk.</p> <p>Since wayfinding signage is already designed and installed in part of town, risk is expected to be low. Project is low cost, requires no major construction, and would require no or limited stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Primary risk source with installing signage along Route 20 might be gaining MassDOT approval.</p>

Key Performance Indicators

Improvements to wayfinding for parking can:

- Improve the perception and accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Increase visits to the Commercial Tourist District and capture visitors / tourists who might otherwise pass through Sturbridge

KPIs for this project could include the following:

- Number of additional wayfinding signs installed
- Number of visits / interactions to online map, if applicable
- Number of printed maps distributed, if applicable
- Revenue from advertising / sponsorships, if applicable
- Increase in visitors to the Commercial Tourist District
- Increase in sales / hotel bookings at businesses within the Commercial Tourist District
- Increase in pedestrian / cycling trips to and through the Commercial Tourist District

Partners & Resources

Town of Sturbridge

Relevant Diagnostic Results

The Town of Sturbridge has established a wayfinding program and is seeking to expand it through additional signage. Wayfinding signage and other wayfinding resources such as printed and online maps can help address negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by improving the accessibility and perception of the Commercial Tourist District and other parts of Sturbridge as a friendly, welcoming, and caring destination that is helpful to visitors and residents alike. It can also demonstrate a commitment by the municipality to supporting its local businesses and attractions.

In addition, wayfinding resources in multiple formats (e.g. signage, maps, etc.) in a clearly presented manner can help visitors and residents:

- Plan their trips before they arrive;
- Navigate the Commercial Tourist District and other destinations while they are visiting; and
- Capture visitors who might not otherwise stop or stay.

Overall, the benefits of a strong wayfinding program include:

- Building recognizable and memorable branding for the municipality and districts
- Improved overall awareness and image of the municipality
- Improved driver, pedestrian, and cyclist

experience while visiting and travelling through the municipality and districts

- Advertising, sponsorship, and partnership opportunities with local businesses, artists, and other vendors / institutions
- Reduced time spent searching for destinations and parking
- Increased visitors and customers to key sites of interest and local businesses

Action Item

Since a wayfinding program has already been established for Sturbridge, key actions to expand it include:

- Identify additional installation locations
- Identify additional wayfinding improvement opportunities (e.g. sidewalk map kiosks, printed maps, online map, etc.)
- Prepare grant funding applications, if applicable
- Communicate and engage with local / State tourism organizations and local businesses
- Design sidewalk map kiosks, printed maps, and/or online map, if applicable
- Seek MassDOT approvals, as necessary
- Procurement / production, installation
- Deploy printed maps at municipal facilities, tourism agencies, and local businesses / institutions, if applicable



Existing Sturbridge wayfinding signage

Process

Timeframe will vary depending on municipality's capacity, participation of local / State tourism organizations and local businesses, and any required MassDOT approvals. Ideally, installation of additional signage should take three (3) months or less. If wayfinding is expanded to include sidewalk map kiosks, printed maps, and or an online / interactive map the project may take as much as six (6) months.

Month 1 – Planning:

- Establish a working committee to guide decision-making on wayfinding
- Establish goals and scope of the program (i.e. will this project be limited to adding additional signage based on established wayfinding design standards or will the program be expanded to include maps or other wayfinding resources?)
- Identify locations where additional signage is required
- Prepare cost estimates and grant funding applications
- Prepare business case / application for signage permit to MassDOT
- Prepare communications and engagement plan for key stakeholders (e.g. local / State tourism organizations and local businesses) and residents
- This may be as simple as soliciting ideas for locations of additional signs or communicating planned signage locations or could be more complex and include identifying opportunities for advertising / sponsorship

Month 2 – Design, Approvals, Procurement:

- Initiate design processes for enhancements, if applicable (e.g. sidewalk map kiosks, online / printed maps)
- Design process can be streamlined by aligning with established branding and design standards
- Engage with key stakeholders and

residents on design of enhancements (if applicable) such as key elements or destinations to include

- Seek approvals from MassDOT for installations
- Procure additional signage

Month 3 – Installations, Sponsorship / Advertising Agreements:

- Install additional signage
- Seek and negotiate sponsorship, advertising or other partnership agreements with local / State tourism organizations and local businesses, artists or institutions (if applicable)

Month 4-6 – Finalize Wayfinding Enhancements (if applicable):

- Finalize design of wayfinding enhancements
- Procure / deploy enhancements (e.g. sidewalk map kiosk, printing, website updates)
- Install / distribute enhancements (e.g. sidewalk map kiosk installation, distribute printed maps to municipal facilities and other partners or local destinations, web updates "go live")
- Consider dedicating resource to monitor feedback during first month of deployment and update wayfinding strategy as necessary

Also see the best practice examples from Wakefield MA, Boston MA, Worcester MA, and Wells ME in the Best Practice Appendix at the end of this report.

Route 20 Intersection Improvements

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget		<p>Large Budget (\$200k +)</p> <p>Costs will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder & public engagement • Completion of detailed design • Installation / construction of improvements • Depending on municipality's capacity, consultant may be brought on-board to support one or more elements of the project • Land acquisitions for improvements <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MassWorks Infrastructure Program (EOHED) • Competitive Tourism Grants (EDA) • MPO/TIP process
Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk		<p>Medium risk.</p> <p>Permanent enhancements may present a higher level of risk if support is not achieved or performance improvements are not realized. Building consensus and updated baseline performance measurement and modeling is critical.</p> <p>Risks for this project may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns raised by the public • Impacts to businesses during construction • Conflicts between user groups in terms of vision, use, and sharing of limited space • Delays and cost overruns associated with land acquisitions process

Key Performance Indicators

Improving the intersection on Route 20 at Old Sturbridge Village/Stallion Hill Road aligns with the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan and can:

- Improve the perception and accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for residents, visitors, and tourists
- Improve accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for people of all ages and abilities
- Improve wayfinding for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Improve driver, pedestrian, and cyclist safety
- Increase pedestrian and cycling trips within the Commercial Tourist District
- Reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions

KPIs for this project could include the following:

- Increase in visitors to the Commercial Tourist District
- Increase in sales at businesses within the Commercial Tourist District
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance
- Increased pedestrian / cyclist counts
- Reduced vehicle speeds
- Reduced number of vehicle collisions with pedestrians / cyclists
- Reduced severity of vehicle collisions with pedestrians / cyclists (e.g. serious injuries, death)
- Reduced vehicle congestion and improved intersection performance compared to baseline measurements
- Improved air quality metrics

Partners & Resources

Town of Sturbridge
MassDOT

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Building off work completed in 2011 with the Sturbridge Town Master Plan and in 2009 with the Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Study, the Town of Sturbridge developed a conceptual corridor design plan (Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan) in 2014 to improve the corridor's "livability." The Commercial Tourist District (Route 20 Corridor) is a 1-mile long corridor along Route 20, extending approximately from the Brookfield Road intersection at its western boundary to Cedar Street on the east. The Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan extended this area to include an additional 1-mile long segment that extends from Cedar Street to New Boston Road on the east. Layout plans and the approved Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan are available on the Town's website.

According to the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan, "the intersection of Main Street (Route 20) and the access to Old Sturbridge Village Road / Stallion Hill Road is perhaps the most important entry / navigational experiences for tourists to Sturbridge."

Improving the intersection at this location is in alignment with the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan and can help address negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by improving wayfinding in the district, making it more accessible to residents, visitors, and tourists. Improvements can make it easier for people to find their way around the district and key destinations and drive more business to local shops, restaurants, and hotels. Improving the quality of experience through these improvements may also increase

the frequency of visits or length of stay by tourists.

In addition, these measures can improve the perception of the Commercial Tourist District as a safe and welcoming destination for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists by providing a safer and more predictable environment to navigate.

Key benefits include:

- Improve the ability of visitors and tourists to find and visit key sites of interest and support local businesses
- Improve accessibility to the Commercial Tourist District for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improve accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District in alignment with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Create a safer environment for drivers and pedestrians
- Reduce fuel consumed by making walking or cycling to and through the Commercial Tourist District safer, more attractive and more viable, while also improving intersection performance, thereby reducing air pollution from vehicle emissions

The Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan identifies a roundabout concept option at this location. There is also a standard four-way intersection concept option (see Concept Plan 10). A critical initial step will be to determine the preferred option to proceed with detailed design.

Depending on budget / grant funding availability, capacity, and available resources, this project could be combined with Route 20 Traffic Calming, Route 20 Pedestrian Crossings, and/or Commercial Tourist District Wayfinding.

Action Item

Key actions include the following:

- Meeting with key department officials to confirm project goals
- Establish a steering committee
- Decide which funding source is appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds.
- If a consultant is deemed appropriate, go through the Commonwealth's procurement process (unless the grant program has an on-call consultant).
- Identify the people/organizations who need to be part of this process.
- Develop an engagement process appropriate for the municipality and the required approval process.
- Develop detailed design options and visualizations.
- Public / stakeholder engagement and document preferred alternative.
- Confirm detailed design, phasing, and construction.

Process

Depending on community engagement, grant funding, procurement, and construction processes, this project may take 12 months. Extensive land acquisitions to support the intersection improvements may extend timelines. Some form of direct investment or subsidy by government may be required to overcome land acquisition challenges.

The following process outlines a comprehensive planning and implementation program and should be adjusted to suit the scope, municipality's needs, goals, and existing plans.

Timelines and sequencing may vary by project and municipality. For example, since concept planning for this section of Route 20 was completed with the Commercial Tourist Corridor Improvement plan, a temporary pilot

crosswalk installation could take three (3) months or less since project initiation and planning could be limited to site selection, communications, approvals, installation, and testing.

Month 1 – Project Initiation:

- Prepare project plan, engagement plan, and business case for any grant funding requests
- Field visits, observations, pedestrian counts, traffic counts, documentation
- Measure key dimensions

Month 2-3 – Planning & Design:

- Prepare detailed design options
- Engage with business / property owners and public on options and concerns
- Develop preferred improvements
- Refine detailed design based on engagement feedback and report back
- Initiate land acquisitions processes, if applicable

Month 4-9 – Approvals and Land Acquisitions:

- Seek approvals from relevant authorities (municipality and/or State)
- Secure required land, if applicable

Month 10-12 – Construction:

- Engage with business / property owners and public to provide information about construction process, impacts, and timelines
- Procure contractor to proceed with construction / installation of improvements
- Materials acquisition
- Construction

Small Business Development Strategy

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget	 	Low to high (lower for initial assessments; higher for eventual program establishment and funding) Potential funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Development Initiative Program (DHCD) • Build Back Better Regional Challenge (EDA)
Timeframe	 	Short-term to long-term (brief initial assessment phases; longer-term program development and administration)
Risk		Medium Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of engagement from businesses and entrepreneurs • Lack of sufficient funding and sponsorship to reach critical mass of benefits and impact
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful business and entrepreneur engagement • New business formation • Existing business adaptation • New program formation • New business investment attracted to Sturbridge
Partners & Resources		Town of Sturbridge Local businesses and employers Regional economic development, community college, and higher-ed institutions

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Sturbridge's economy has historically focused on tourism, hospitality, conferences/ events, and food service. These sectors were among the hardest hit during the pandemic. As the community builds back its economic foundation, it hopes to add diversity and resilience to the local business landscape by expanding underrepresented sectors, fostering new entrepreneurship, and helping existing businesses strengthen their operations.

Action Item

Conduct an assessment of the current business and employment environment in Sturbridge and determine the most effective starting point for deeper investigation and program development based on areas of greatest need. The following provides perspectives and prompts to guide this assessment. The community might also consider hiring a consultant to support the assessment process and develop a plan for small business capacity building that best serves the Sturbridge community. There are a considerable number of alternatives for building small business capacity. Some significant things to determine include the nature of services and resources to offer; the clusters of entrepreneurs and small businesses to focus on; the number stages of the business development lifecycle of interest; if the municipalities' efforts should prioritize working directly with small businesses or convening and coordinating the network of business support organizations serving entrepreneurs (e.g., whether or not to offer business programs and resources in house or invest in their cultivation among select

community partners).

Services and Resources Offered: This first alternative refers to the offerings mix such as the decision to provide business development workshops and classes, technical assistance (e.g., helping with completing financial assistance applications or writing business plans) and resource navigation (e.g., serving as a concierge and making referrals to the appropriate sequence of support services), low-to-no-cost office space (e.g., incubators, co-working) and business centers with special programs (e.g., accelerators), coaching and mentoring services, business pitch competitions, procurement-readiness certification and vendor pipeline development series (e.g., one-on-one, group, and cohort programs focused on helping businesses obtain minority and women-owned business, HUD section 3, disadvantaged business enterprise and other business certifications; also, cultivating prime and subcontractors).

Business Clusters Served: This aspect of business support decision-making refers to choosing what kinds of entrepreneurs and small businesses to support. Our national network partner SourceLink has prepared a short video that outlines four fundamental clusters of businesses regardless of industry or sector. Each cluster generally requires different kinds of support tailored to their distinct contexts. The innovation-led cluster refers to tech, high tech, and science-based businesses. The microenterprise cluster encompasses small businesses with 10 or fewer employees, often operating in the "gig" economy. This includes freelance photographers, event planners and promoters, consultants, pursuing their craft for personal income full-time or as side jobs. The main street cluster, or "mainstreeters,"

corresponds to doctor's offices, law firms, restaurants, retail shops and the like that bring vibrancy to commercial corridors and neighborhoods, but whose firms are unlikely to grow too much. Lastly, the second stage cluster encompasses established firms with 10 to 100 employees capable of achieving high-levels of growth and scale.

Business Development Lifecycle: Like living organisms, businesses go through a lifecycle. In our public sector work, we have adopted the terms "start up," "stay up," "scale up," and "split up" to broadly characterize the phases of the entire lifecycle. Within each phase, one would find the traditional stages of business development commonly taught in a Business 101 course. This includes the "seed," "concept" or "idea" stage interchangeably; the "launch" or "start-up" stage; the "growth," "shakeout," and "maturity" stages; the "expansion" stage; and the "decline," "succession," and "exit" stages within the phases, respectively. Businesses wrestle with distinct challenges, pursue different milestones, and require different kinds of support along this continuum. It would serve municipalities well to be cognizant of how support is configured to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses along this journey. There is no effective one-size-fits-all approach to small business support.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building: In addition to working directly with small businesses to build their capacity, municipalities can alternatively assume the role of convener and connector across local and regional resource networks of entrepreneur or business support organizations—interchangeably called ESOs and BSOs. ESOs tend to include government, nonprofits (e.g., public charities, foundations,

community development financial institutions, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, etc.), and academic institutions that provide any of the kinds of offerings described above. In some special cases—like coworking facilities, incubators, and accelerators—ESOs can be forprofit enterprises that offer their resources at low or otherwise moderate costs. But, ESOs do not include professional services providers like accountants, lawyers, insurance agents, commercial banks, or technology companies. The entire network of ESOs in a community are referred to as the small business ecosystem. Uncoordinated, these actors struggle to meet businesses where they are in culturally and contextually congruent ways capable of helping them achieve their goals and objectives. This reality has given rise to the emergence of entrepreneurial ecosystem building, which entails the active pursuit of inclusive coordination and systematic enhancement of the local or regional ESO network. Subsets of ESOs in these networks focus on or specialize in particular small business clusters and stages of the business development lifecycle. Ecosystem building is a team sport, and municipalities can play essential leadership roles in mapping, realigning, augmenting, and investing in the improvement of their small business ecosystems to scale business capacity building and growth activities through cooperation—realizing collective impact.

Process

Based on the needs assessment process introduced in the "Action Item" section of this rubric, program development could follow one or more of the following paths. Planning considerations can be as nominal or as expansive as the array of resources

available and capacity building strategies pursued by a given community. To that end, here are a few high-level parameters by selected activity category:

- Workshops and Classes:
- Unless developed in-house, budgets may span \$15,000 to \$45,000.

Costs can include curricular asset acquisition with onboarding and year one licensing fees, course/event registration (e.g., Eventbrite, Sign-up Genius, etc.) and data system subscriptions (i.e., learning management systems, customer relationship management systems, etc.), collateral and digital design, marketing and promotions, and supplies.

Curricula licensing and technology subscriptions may require annual renewal fees in addition to the range above.

Resources can include programs and assets offered by regional, national, and international ESOs with proven programs such as EforAll, Rising Tide Capital (e.g., Community Business Academy), Kauffman (e.g., FastTrac, 1 Million Cups), CO.STARTERS, Digital Main Street, Next Street, Forward Cities, and Mass Challenge. This is not intended to be a complete list.

These activities should take less than six months to identify vendors and launch the first cycle of workshops and classes. Offerings may be administered annually, semiannually, by trimester, or quarterly

Key performance indicators can include the enrollment and program completion rates, participant satisfaction rates, net promoter scores, the amount of funds raised in support of the program, the number of businesses

achieving their goals (i.e., by goal area). It can also include the number of training hours provided and amount of funds awarded.

Risks for this offerings category is low and primarily concerns low adoption/participation rates and unfavorable reviews. These programs can also be labor intensive to effectively develop and administer.

Actions include determining what kind of training to offer and the target categories and stages of small businesses to serve—deciding whether to develop a bespoke program or to adapt/adopt an existing model(s).

The process should begin with an environmental scan of existing business support workshops and classes and an assessment of what is missing. Community engagement should allow the municipality or community partner to elicit the kinds of developmental content most desired and/or needed by the small business community. Once the need has been determined, program development and resource acquisition begin. If developed in-house, the provider will need to outline and develop materials and the sequence and modes of delivery. Subsequently, marketing and promotions is an essential means for driving enrollment with such considerations as requiring advanced registrations versus allowing walk-ins. Program administration follows along with options for personal office hours and post-program engagement (e.g., surveys, check-ins, and exit interviews) to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Also see the best practice example from Haverhill, MA in the Best Practice Appendix at the end of this report.

Technical Assistance (TA) and Resource Navigators:

- If performed in-house, an ideal budget may span \$56,589 to \$92,651 per staff member.

This is the annual median cost range for salaries plus 30% for benefits for full-time Training and Development Specialists (\$71,270), Social and Community Service Managers (\$67,310), Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other (\$43,530) based on the following Standard Occupation Classification Codes 13-1151.00, 11-9151.00 and 21-1099.00, respectively for the State of Massachusetts.

Figures obtained from www.onetonline.org, our nation's primary source of occupational information.

Sample job titles include, but is not limited to: Business Instructor/Advisor, Program Coordinator, Business Specialist, Small Business Development Manager, Site Coordinator, and Network Navigator.

Key performance indicators include the number of small businesses served (i.e., new and retained), and targeted milestones and goals achieved to mark their progression along the business development lifecycle (e.g., viable proof of concept, entity formation, capital raised, sales volume and average size, customer size and repeat rates, number of jobs created/retained, certifications attained, growth and expansion). Internal metrics include the number programs under management, partnerships formalized, and funds raised to support new and existing programs.

Risks are generally low to moderate and may include accessibility, low morale, burnout, and turnover if employees are under resourced, feel unappreciated, or are over allocated (i.e., "stretched too thin"). It is also important to align employee interests and skills to the scope and nature of the work. Training and additional staff may be necessary steps for mitigating these risks.

Regarding timing, technical support staff should be hired as early in the process of rendering service as possible to ensure effectiveness, making it a short-term prospect. Staff hired in the midst of program administration face steeper learning curves and shorter onboarding support. Additionally, business support staff should be in empowered to contribute to the development and refinement of the offerings portfolio.

Actions include the decision to allocate staff resources to small business support activities and initiating the hiring process once the requisite budget is obtained.

The process involves framing the specific small business need(s), determining the sources of funds, portfolio of work, and operating resources needed to ensure success. This includes resources for marketing the new available resources and services and whether community partnerships are needed for augmentation.

Office Space and Business Centers:

These costs can vary significantly based on a number of factors, but may include property acquisition (\$750,000 – \$3,000,000), buildout of new or existing municipally-owned facilities (e.g., \$50,000 – \$200,000), staffing (see above), and operating costs.

Key performance indicators here include occupancy rates or the number of subscribing members or participants; profitability and efficiency measures (e.g., low costs); number of programs offered, funds raised and number of partnerships formed in support of programmatic efforts.

Risks can be medium to high depending on whether or not new or existing facilities are acquired and developed, accessibility, the total cost for development, staffing, and ongoing operations; in addition to adoption rates since the presence of a new center does not automatically mean that businesses will take advantage of the resource.

Timelines will also vary with this approach based on the above decisions. However, retrofitting an existing facility or space can range from a few months to a year.

These actions and processes vary, but are commonly understood by most municipalities as these falls within the scope of general municipal operations.

Specialized Events and Pipeline Programs:

Whether in-house or outsourced, budgets may span \$5,000 to \$75,000 per year.

These costs can comprise program materials, facility rentals, catering, event supplies, instructor/trainer fees, entertainment fees, audio visual and technology services (e.g., sound systems, projectors, and screens), event insurance, awards, small business grants.

Refer to "Workshops and Classes" above for general resource options, key performance indicators, risks, actions, and processes.

In the case of annual pitch competitions and small business galas, specialized resources may involve procuring the assistance of an event planner, cater, emcee, deejay or band.

In the case of organizational pipeline programs, specialized resources can require the services of quality consultants or software vendors that offer solutions designed to clarify and streamline organizational processes for increased efficiency and performance.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building:

These resources can be procured for \$25,000 to \$150,000 per year.

Refer to the enclosed Best Practice Sheet titled, "Facilitating Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building and Enhancement" for actions and process steps associated with the development of www.Nexusi90.org (powered by SourceLink) in Greater Rochester (NY)/Finger Lakes Region.

The costs above may cover platform implementation, training, two to five years of technology and data system fees, collateral and digital ad design, printing, event planning and hosting, marketing and promotions, network research and development, and a hotline.

Qwally is another one of our national network partners that offers certification compliance and inclusive procurement "GovTech" solutions to municipalities. Their solutions are ecosystemic because their base platform implementation allows municipalities to refer businesses to selected local and regional ESOs for technical assistance at different places along the user journey for zoning and permitting, certification, licensing, funding,

and procurement activities.

Ecosystemic enhancements to network partners can cost an additional \$375,000 to \$1,500,000 for three to 6 ESOs to deepen their collaboration and improve their relevance and organizational capacity to assist small businesses, making them ideal referral partners. This is based on one of our own proprietary ESO capacity-building programs.

The time to build, launch, market, expand, and possibly enhance the network should take place over three to five years as this is a social transformation program that takes time to shift the local/regional culture.

Regarding resources, Kauffman Foundation has convened an annual global ESHIP Summit to advance entrepreneurial ecosystem building as an emerging industry sector and occupational field of practice. They have culminated the summit community's collective learning and progress into a phenomenal and instructive playbook for ecosystem builders. In addition, in March 2021, the International Economic Development Council announced its new certification on entrepreneur-led economic development, which focused on entrepreneurial ecosystem building. For what it is worth, a case study on our work in Rochester is featured in the best practice appendix.

Route 20 Pedestrian Crossing

PROJECT #7

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Economic Development Department
Budget	<p>Costs will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procurement and installation of temporary barriers and ramps• Stakeholder & public engagement• Completion of detailed design, if pilot deemed a success and permanent enhancements are desired• Installation / construction of permanent enhancements, if desired• Depending on municipality's capacity, consultant may be brought on-board to support design and engagement <p>Traffic / pedestrian counts and observations can be conducted using municipal staff, interns, or volunteers.</p> <p>Low Budget (Under \$50k) – Temporary pilot measures</p> <p>Medium Budget (\$50k - \$200k), Large Budget (\$200k +) – Permanent installations, depending on number of crossings added and level of enhancements (e.g. bump-outs / curb extensions, raised crosswalks, pedestrian push-buttons, additional lighting / signalization, etc.)</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MassWorks Infrastructure Program (EOHED)• Competitive Tourism Grants (EDA)• Commonwealth Places grant from MassDevelopment• Shared Streets and Spaces grant from MassDOT• Community Development Block Grant• Upcoming funding from the ARPA (TBD)
Timeframe	 Short term (less than 5 years)

Risk



Low to medium risk.

If initiated as a temporary pilot, the risk level is expected to be low:

- Temporary installation can be modified or removed if desired impacts are not achieved
- Low cost of materials required for installation

Permanent enhancements may present a higher level of risk if support is not achieved during temporary pilot. A pilot can also serve to test and validate feedback received in the development of the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan. Building consensus is critical. Risks here may include:

- Concerns raised by public
- Impacts to businesses during construction
- Conflicts between user groups in terms of vision, use, and sharing of limited space

Key Performance Indicators

The addition of pedestrian crossings at strategic locations and in alignment with the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan can:

- Improve the perception and accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for residents, visitors, and tourists
- Improve accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District for people of all ages and abilities
- Improve driver, pedestrian, and cyclist safety
- Increase pedestrian and cycling trips within the Commercial Tourist District
- Reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions

In combination with a parking strategy and wayfinding program, added crossings can encourage people to travel between destinations on foot rather than taking several short drives between destinations within one trip.

KPIs for this project could include the following:

- Increase in visitors to the Commercial Tourist District
- Increase in sales at businesses within the Commercial Tourist District
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance
- Increased pedestrian / cyclist counts
- Reduced vehicle speeds
- Reduced number of vehicle collisions with pedestrians / cyclists
- Reduced severity of vehicle collisions with pedestrians / cyclists (e.g. serious injuries, death)
- Reduced vehicle congestion
- Improved air quality metrics
- Number of crossings added or enhanced

Partners & Resources

Town of Sturbridge
MassDOT

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Building off work completed in 2011 with the Sturbridge Town Master Plan and in 2009 with the Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Study, the Town of Sturbridge developed a conceptual corridor design plan (Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan) in 2014 to improve the corridor's "livability." The Commercial Tourist District (Route 20 Corridor) is a 1-mile long corridor along Route 20, extending approximately from the Brookfield Road intersection at its western boundary to Cedar Street on the east. The Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan extended this area to include an additional 1-mile long segment that extends from Cedar Street to New Boston Road on the east. Layout plans and the approved Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan are available on the Town's website.

Adding or enhancing pedestrian crossings at strategic locations as identified in the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan can help address negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing the number of pedestrians and cyclists who visit the Commercial Tourist District. Enhancements in alignment with the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan can make it more accessible and drive more business to local shops, restaurants, and hotels. Improving the quality of experience through these improvements may also increase the frequency of visits or length of stay by tourists.

These measures can improve the perception of the Commercial Tourist District as a safe and welcoming destination for pedestrians and cyclists by providing a more comfortable environment to walk and bike. Adding

or enhancing pedestrian crossings is an effective traffic calming measure that can reduce vehicle speeds, improve visibility of pedestrians for drivers, and improve safety.

Key benefits include:

- Encourage visitors and customers to find and visit key sites of interest and support local businesses
- Improve accessibility to the Commercial Tourist District for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improve accessibility of the Commercial Tourist District in alignment with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Reduce vehicle speeds and create a safer environment for drivers and pedestrians
- Reduce fuel consumed by making walking or cycling to and through the Commercial Tourist District safer, more attractive and more viable, thereby reducing air pollution from vehicle emissions

The desire for a crossing with a safety median / pedestrian refuge on Main Street (Route 20) near the former Friendly's (367 Main Street) was identified in the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan. A crossing at this location may be a good candidate for a temporary pilot or demonstration project. Concept Plan 11 shows this crossing and could be used to guide the design of the temporary pilot.

Depending on budget / grant funding availability, capacity, and available resources, this project could be combined with Route 20 Traffic Calming, Route 20 Intersection Improvements, and/or Commercial Tourist District Wayfinding.

Action Item

- Key actions include the following:
- Meeting with key department officials to confirm project goals
- Establish a steering committee
- Decide which funding source is

appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds.

- If a consultant is deemed appropriate, go through the Commonwealth's procurement process (unless the grant program has an on-call consultant).
- Identify the people/organizations who need to be part of this process.
- Develop an engagement process appropriate for the municipality and the required approval process.
- Design options and visualization
- Public / stakeholder engagement, document preferred alternative, and promote temporary pilot
- Pilot testing and observations
- Confirm longer-term / permanent design, phasing, and installation, if applicable

Process

A temporary installation or demonstration pilot of an added pedestrian crossing or enhancement at one or more key locations can be used to test assumptions, achieve quick wins, and build support or consensus. Temporary installation and piloting can take four (4) months or less. If the temporary installation / pilot proves successful, the interventions can remain in place or permanent enhancements can be explored, designed, and constructed.

Depending on community engagement, the extent of enhancements / traffic calming measures, and the municipality's procurement requirements permanent installation may take 12 months. The following process outlines a comprehensive planning and implementation program and should be adjusted to suit the scope, municipality's needs, goals, and existing plans.

Timelines and sequencing may vary by project and municipality. For example, since concept planning for this section of Route 20 was completed with the Commercial Tourist Corridor Improvement plan, a temporary pilot crosswalk installation could take three (3) months or less since project initiation and planning could be limited to site selection, communications, approvals, installation, and testing.

Month 1 – Project Initiation:

- Discuss need and locations for interventions
- Prepare project plan, engagement plan, and business case for any grant funding requests
- Field visits, observations, pedestrian counts, traffic counts, documentation
- Measure key dimensions

Month 2-3 – Concept Development, Planning & Design:

- Prepare concept options
- Engage with business / property owners and public on options and concerns
- Develop preferred improvements and concept based on engagement feedback
- Refine the temporary pilot installation based on public feedback

Month 4 – Approvals & Temporary Pilot Testing:

- Seek approvals from relevant authorities (municipality and/or State)
- Temporary pilot materials acquisition (e.g. planters, flexible posts / bollards, paint, etc.)
- Temporary pilot materials installation

Month 5-6 – Evaluation & Removal / Modification:

- Field visits, observations, pedestrian counts, traffic counts, documentation,




surveys

- Removal / modification – Based on observations or at end of pilot, remove or modify installation as necessary

Month 7-12 – Permanent Implementation

- Complete detailed design based on pilot findings, results, and surveys
- Engage with business / property owners and public
- Refine detailed design based on public feedback
- Procure contractor to proceed with construction / installation of improvements
- Materials acquisition
- Materials installation

Parking Management Plan and Implementation

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget	 	<p>Medium Budget (\$50k - \$200k), Large Budget (\$200k+)</p> <p>Costs will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of parking study / parking management plan • Stakeholder & public engagement • Design (branding and parking signage standards), if applicable • Advertising and communications • Land acquisitions, if necessary • Construction costs associated with lot consolidations, access reconfigurations, and construction of additional parking <p>Costs can potentially be offset through grants and/or the establishment of a parking benefit district that collects and manages fees for parking and operates public lots / public parking.</p> <p>Land acquisition and construction costs are anticipated to be the largest budget item and will be dependent on type and extent of parking improvements implemented</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MassWorks Infrastructure Program (EOHED) • Competitive Tourism Grants (EDA) • Commonwealth Places grant from MassDevelopment • Shared Streets and Spaces grant from MassDOT • Community Development Block Grant • Upcoming funding from the ARPA (TBD)

Timeframe



Short-term (Less than 5 years)

Risk



Medium risk.

The risk level depends on the community, relationships of the property owners with the municipality, and scope of the project. Parking is a topic that tends to bring out strong feelings in people. A robust communications and engagement plan is essential.

Risk sources include:

- Political buy-in
- Support from residents and businesses
- Perception issue related to implementation

Risks to certain implementation measures can be mitigated through temporary, demonstration pilot projects. For example, altering existing accesses could be tested through the installation of temporary barriers and signage.

Key Performance Indicators

Improvements to the Commercial Tourist District parking program can:

- Improve the perception and accessibility of the district
- Improve driver and pedestrian safety
- Reduce vehicle congestion
- Reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions

KPIs for this project could include the following:

- Increase in visitors to the district
- Increase in sales at businesses within the district
- Increase in paid-parking revenue
- Ratio of reinvestment of parking revenue into the district vs cost recovery for parking maintenance and operations
- Increase in parking space turnover
- Improved intersection performance
- Increased pedestrian counts
- Reduced vehicle miles traveled
- Improved air quality metrics

Partners & Resources

Town of Sturbridge
DPW
Planning Department
Police Department
Parking Department
Business Community Stakeholders

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Building off work completed in 2011 with the Sturbridge Town Master Plan and in 2009 with the Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Study, the Town of Sturbridge developed a conceptual corridor design plan (Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan) in 2014 to improve the corridor's "livability." The Commercial Tourist District (Route 20 Corridor) is a 1-mile long corridor along Route 20, extending approximately from the Brookfield Road intersection at its western boundary to Cedar Street on the east. The Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan extended this area to include an additional 1-mile long segment that extends from Cedar Street to New Boston Road on the east. Layout plans and the approved Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan are available on the Town's website.

Parking in the district was identified as a key area for improvement in the Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan. Completing a parking management plan and implementing any recommended measures arising from such a plan can help address negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parking that is easier to find and presented in an organized manner can improve the perception that the district is a friendly, welcoming, and caring environment that is helpful to visitors and residents alike. It can also demonstrate a commitment by the municipality to supporting its local businesses, sites of interest, and attractions.

Depending on the measures recommended and implemented, a parking management plan can help visitors and residents:

- Plan their trips before they arrive;
- Navigate the Commercial Tourist District and other destinations while they are visiting; and
- Capture visitors who might not otherwise stop or stay.

Overall benefits of implementing a parking management plan include:

- Reduced time spent searching for parking
- Reduced vehicle circulation as people search for parking, thereby reducing congestion and creating a safer environment for drivers and pedestrians
- Reduced fuel consumed while searching for parking, thereby reducing air pollution from vehicle emissions
- Reinvestment of parking revenues collected back into the district and/or parking lot maintenance and operations
- Improved district aesthetics by ensuring parking lots contribute to, rather than detract from the built environment
- Encouraging walking between destinations by improving pedestrian connectivity between lots and destinations
- Encouraging visitors and customers to find and visit key sites of interest and support local businesses

Action Item

Key actions include the following:

- Identify capacity within the municipality to develop and implement the parking management plan internally and bring on additional capacity or external expertise, as required
- Establish steering committee, working group, or advisory board
- Prepare grant funding applications, if

- applicable
- Prepare communications and engagement plan
- Complete parking management plan
- Prioritize parking management plan recommendations or implementation actions
- Seek funding for implementation
- Action implementation plan
- Landowner negotiations and land acquisitions for any lot consolidations, access relocations, or development of new lots, if applicable
- Collaboration with private parking lot owners, if applicable

Process

Timeframe will vary depending on municipality's capacity and number / scope of implementation actions. Completion of a parking management plan can take 12 months or less. Timeframe for implementation actions is highly dependent on actions pursued. For example consolidation of lots, relocation of parking accesses, and development of new lots may require negotiation with landowners and/ or land acquisitions which may take several months to resolve.

The following is an outline of a process that can be used to complete a parking management plan. The process for implementation will be highly dependent on the actions pursued.

Define study area: Determine boundary for data collection. Should include primary public parking areas associated with commercial activity and extend a block beyond the limit of associated activity to determine if spill-over parking exists.

Identify a working group: An oversight committee comprised of municipal staff,

volunteer board members, the business community, merchants and residents is recommended to define study goals, focus analysis, support outreach activities, and review recommendations.

Amass available data: Amassing information about parking activity, parking demand, land uses, multi-modal conditions, etc. in advance of beginning a study will help reduce costs by more clearly defining the need.

Scope study: A study sufficient to understand supply, demand and the regulatory, land use and network factors influence parking patterns should include the following steps (outlined in greater detail separately):

- Detailed parking inventory
- Parking activity analysis
- Operational & financial management analysis
- Parking demand & zoning analysis
- Pedestrian Connectivity/wayfinding analysis
- Parking enforcement analysis
- Public engagement process
- Strategies & recommendations
- Final plan

Identify study lead: While typically a consultant is hired as an outside, objective and professional resource, a parking study can be done by the municipality or a local organization if objectivity and sufficient capacity is available.

Study advertising & initiation: For consultant studies, an RFP with the recommended scope should be prepared and advertised, followed by an approved selection process. The start of a study by a consultant or in-house resources should be advertised and promoted to get broad input, especially if public surveys, interviews, etc. are expected.

Study Outcomes: A variety of possible outcomes may help Uptown address its parking issues, all of which may be on the agenda for a committed champion. These may include:

- Changes to on-street regulations, such as adjusting/removing time-limits, adjusting span of regulation/pricing, or changes to pricing;
- Wayfinding improvements, including static and electronic signs, as well as online mapping for lots, walkways, remote parking, and short & long term options;
- Parking permit changes, including modifications to on- and off-street residential programs, employee permits, and commuter parking;
- Supply enhancements, including re-striping on-street spaces, new on-street spaces, lot reconfigurations, and parking garages;
- Enforcement changes, including adjustment of hours, routes, staffing, handheld technologies, and protocols;
- Payment technologies, including pay-by-cell, kiosks, smart meters, reservation systems, parking gates, and more;
- Demand management solutions, such as parking cash-out programs, market-rate parking pricing, transit & bikeshare subsidies, traveler information programs, etc.
- Integration of future development into parking system, that promotes shared parking and revisits parking standards/requirements
- Parking access solutions, such as improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, landscaping, security features, etc.;
- Parking design improvements, such as landscaping, screening, garage fenestration, walkways, plantings, green infrastructure, and more.
- Phased supply strategies, including

a short-term approach to increasing remote parking lot use through attractive programming and a full-time ambassador on each level of the garage to overcome security concern; followed by a long-term strategy to begin design development, funding strategies and construction of parking demand numbers demonstrate its need.

District Branding Strategy

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget		<p>Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) - with brand deployment</p> <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Development Initiative Program (DHCD) • Competitive Tourism Grants (EDA) • Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program • TDI Creative Catalyst Program of MassDevelopment • Commonwealth Places grant from MassDevelopment
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – Any investment in district branding will move the needle in the right direction.
Key Performance Indicators		Increase in number of visitors, businesses, and employers downtown
Partners & Resources		Town of Sturbridge Local businesses and stakeholders

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Sturbridge's commercial corridors include distinct segments or clusters of similar types of businesses and destinations but this organizing structure is not readily apparent to visitors or passers-by and therefore not leveraged as an economic driver for the community.

There is an opportunity to "brand" these distinct segments into "districts" which could take on attractive and memorable identities such as "Restaurant Row," strengthening their appeal to potential customers and patrons and therefore supporting the collection of businesses that comprise each.

Action Item

Building on the "Experience Sturbridge" platform, Sturbridge should expand its branding strategy focused on several user/interest groups. This would involve:

- Identifying funding
- Developing overall strategy
- Place branding (physical interventions), graphic design/signage, wayfinding
- Implementing recommendations

Process

Data Collection

- Create a database of all businesses in along the corridor and their contact information.
- Create a unified guide for categorizing businesses.
- Consider what a public-facing business directory might look like:
 - What format (digital, print)?
 - Does it include a map?
 - Will there be space for ads?

Asset Mapping

- Identify and convene stakeholders for inclusive participation and consensus building
 - ID opportunities for feedback
 - Community events
 - Town board meetings
- Survey businesses, residents, visitors for perception/attitude of town/region
 - 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
- Market Analysis: What are others (municipalities/regions) doing? Are they successful?
- Finalize definition of the corridor's distinct districts

Create Branding and Outreach Strategy for each district

- Identify key imagery based on resident/ visitor engagement and asset identification
- Identify target audience -- who do we want to attract?
- Identify assets and placement opportunities: Physical signage -- banners, trash can wraps
- Digital: Social media presence for each district

Create Digital Strategy

- Leverage newly created organizational identity to create listing in digital sphere (ie, Google Map location, Yelp!, other mapping platforms)
- Determine best platforms for messaging and create accounts (ie,

- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Create internal communications platform for businesses to communicate freely with each other
- Consider a basic website or offshoot of city website to promote local businesses.
- Purchase relevant domain and use template website (squarespace, wix) to create simple landing page with links to social and relevant websites.
- Use content from any print collateral as well.
- Can crowd source or allow for self listing and/or promotion.
- Provide technical support to businesses to help them get online - easy starts are google maps pages with accurate information (location, hours, events, etc.)

Leverage Draw of Local Attractions and Cultural Institutions to Market Local Businesses

- Leverage newly created districts brand identity to develop a brochure or other marketing asset advertising local businesses. Can be sorted by business type (places to eat, places to stay, etc).
- Distribute brochures at local attractions (apple picking, hiking sites).
- Consider also including local events in brochures.

Co-market Regional Attractions with Local Businesses

- Leverage newly created districts brand identity to develop a brochure or other marketing asset advertising local businesses and local attractions in tandem.
- Consider cross-promotional discounts (eg, "get 10% off your dinner with proof of apple picking ticket purchase)
- Distribute in-person outside of region

to promote tourism (New Hampshire, Vermont, etc)

- ID tourism and visitor center locations.
- Consider partnerships with hotel/ AirBnbs

Event Planning/Campaign

- Leverage an already-existing Sturbridge event as an opportunity for businesses to engage with consumers
- Connect Seasonal and Annual events in the Leominster area to downtown using sponsorships and activating public spaces

Workforce development program

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		Study Area
Origin		Economic Development Department
Budget	 	<p>Low to high (lower for initial assessments; higher for eventual program establishment and funding)</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Development Initiative Program (DHCD) • Urban Agenda Grant Program of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development • Community Development Block Grants • Upcoming ARPA funding (TBD) • Build Back Better Regional Challenge (EDA)
Timeframe	 	Short-term to long-term (brief initial assessment phases; longer-term program development and administration)
Risk		<p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer disengagement • Workforce disengagement • Unsatisfactory results despite significant effort and funding
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful employer engagement • Increased hiring for employers in need of staff • Increased labor pool overall, especially for hardest hit sectors like food service and hospitality
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Sturbridge</p> <p>Local businesses and employers</p> <p>Regional economic development, community college, and higher-ed institutions</p>

Relevant Diagnostic Results

Like many communities across the country, Sturbridge is experiencing a worker shortage across a variety of sectors. In particular, food service and hospitality were impacted by a workforce that was cut during the pandemic's earlier stages and has been difficult to rebuild. During the early stages of the recovery in Sturbridge, it has become apparent that the local labor market has fundamentally changed in terms of its composition, wage/benefits expectations, and skillsets.

A combination of workforce development and employer counseling is needed to rebalance employment dynamics in many sectors and businesses in Sturbridge.

Action Item

Most immediately, Sturbridge could benefit from solutions and successful models for workforce development.

On a longer term basis (and potentially informed by more immediate solutions and feedback), the community could conduct an assessment of current employment and workforce conditions in Sturbridge and determine the most effective starting point for deeper investigation and program development based on areas of greatest need. The "Process" section of this rubric provides perspectives and ideas that might help guide this assessment. The community might also consider hiring a consultant to support the assessment process and develop a plan for workforce development that best serves the Sturbridge community.

Process

Based on the needs assessment process introduced in the "Action Item" section of this rubric, program development could follow one or more of the following paths:

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Workforce R&D

This actionable alternative refers to partnering with local employers in developmental ways. For example, initiating a business district research project focused on the lodging and food services sectors and related occupations along surrounding the Route 20 corridor can yield mutually beneficial externalities for local employers, the city, and the workforce. The study can assess workforce skills needs from employers' perspectives and the business climate to inform subsequent workforce training, district marketing, and business development strategies.

The budget for this facet of the work can span \$15,000 to \$35,000 and the risks would be low (e.g., low survey response rate, poor focus group participation).

The process involves deciding whether to perform the study in-house or procure professional service; defining primary occupation clusters of focus; obtaining secondary baseline data; administering the study; and preparing a report based on the findings.

Business Development

A second actionable alternative includes providing education and training for business owners on strategies for making their employment opportunities more attractive. The federal website www.onetonline.org is a useful resource for benchmarking selected

occupational profiles (e.g., knowledge, skills, and abilities, job context, typical education levels, salary information, etc.) against the profiles and resources provided by local employers. Ideally, to be competitive, employers would be well served to keep their wages competitive by staying within five percent of the average salary statistics for their area based on the mix of education and experience they are expecting employees to have. So, for fairly inexperienced workers with middle skill credentials—more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree—employers may want to align to the 25th percentile wage, adding an average of 30 percent to the compensation package to cover benefits and perquisites. For more hire skilled labor, employers would be better served by using the 50th and 75th wage percentiles as benchmarks for the area. A final thought on this might be to help employers rethink target workforce demographics as vulnerable populations such as seniors and people with disabilities might be ideal worker segments to pursue through identity-based means (e.g., posting openings to AARP's job board).

Risks associated with paying higher wages amid low margin environments can be mitigated by leveraging other mechanisms, based on worker values, needs, and interests. Thus, organizational and worker context matters. Some workers are motivated by autonomy (e.g., freedom to do their job without being micromanaged), recognition, positive reinforcement, discounts, a quality work environment, profit sharing, collegiality, conveniences, cross-training on the job (e.g., job enlargement), or the ability to work remotely.

Marketing Mix

According to the community representative that joined our last call, Route 20 has 10 hotels, a conference center, and a handful of gift shops. In view of this, a final actionable option might be repositioning existing structures along Route 20. Some key questions to explore with employers include: Is the market ripe for sustaining 10 distinct hotels? Can some businesses pivot to address alternative market needs like affordable housing, extended stay accommodations, private or public clubs, small business centers and incubators, and shopping destinations? As well as what role(s) might the city play in these efforts? Since weddings and events are the major draw for the hotels and conference centers, the city may decide to partner with employers to promote tourism and retail activation.

WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS

This actionable alternative refers to partnering with area colleges (e.g., in Worcester) to identify hospitality management, communications, travel and tourism, and marketing/public relations students for paid internships and initial post-collegiate employment opportunities. This can help employers keep labor costs low while securing a stable pipeline of workers.

The risks associated with this approach is periodic turnover and the loss of institutional know-how. These risks are low, because the undergraduate to graduate continuum presents six to seven years of employment opportunity to collegiate workers. A few additional years may extend to post-academic employment. Today's workforce trends put the average length of employment with a firm between 2 and 4 years.

The process entails performing outreach to local academic institutions and soliciting their preferred for methods for making employment opportunities accessible for students. Employers would be able to provide standard job openings to designated college personnel that work with students seeking employment opportunities. And costs may approximate standard labor costs unless employers and colleges elect to develop a special workforce program with program-specific resources.

Also see the best practice example from Rochester, NY in the Best Practice Appendix at the end of this report.

WORKFORCE TRANSPORTATION

This final actionable alternative center the workforce and transportation constraints that may exist for some residents. During our call, it was noted the Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority maintains quality regional partnerships with municipalities throughout the region. Since there is currently no equivalent in Central Massachusetts, an opportunity may exist to address transportation issues via public-private partnerships. The gist would be to identify possible new routes to increase access to employment for opportunities for residents lacking reliable transportation.

Risks here may entail political risk, time requirements, or the high costs to subsidize the transportation authority. The process will include establishing a transportation coalition, framing the problem and proposed solution with multiple categories of evidence, assessing the small business ecosystem, and working to secure buy-in for the effort from the transportation authority and the community. Finally, costs and sources of funds may have to be negotiated based on the statement of work.

Project Rubric Best Practices



Provide Funding and Technical Assistance to Enable Business Viability During COVID-19



Provided by SME Consultant

Revby LLC

Location

Arlington, MA

Origin	Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development; Arlington Economic Development Recovery Task Force; Arlington Community Development Block Grant Subcommittee
Budget	 <p>Medium (\$200,000) - \$180,000 of direct assistance to businesses via working capital grants and \$20,000 to a technical assistance program with two contracted consultants.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (< 1 year) - TA contract to end of 2021. One-on-One TA: 10 hours to be completed within that timeframe. Workshops completed before end of June 2021.</p>
Risk	 <p>Low Risk - A challenge for the Technical Assistance program was limited capacity on the part of the small business owners. Must follow CDBG requirements; subject to be returned to HUD should use of funds be deemed ineligible.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Business vitality (sales performance) through the pandemic and into the post-pandemic world.
Partners & Resources	Town of Arlington, MA Dept. of Planning and Community Development; Small businesses (grant recipients); Contracted consultants (technical assistance providers), including Revby LLC
Diagnostic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for working capital was identified as the most urgent need in the business community; thus, the majority of funds for the program were dedicated to direct assistance. CDBG funding entails reporting requirements that must be explained to business recipients. The technical assistance program was a pilot initiative.

BEST
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PROJECT #1

Action Item

The Department of Planning and Community Development Action Items:

- Administering a relief program for Arlington businesses with twenty or fewer full-time-equivalent employees, including the owner.
- The program provides short-term working capital assistance and technical assistance to enable the viability of the business during the severe economic interruption related to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions.

Technical Assistance project Action Items (by Revby, a TA provider):

- Build trust with the business owner during the first sessions and collaboratively work on a plan on how the technical assistance time allotted may be used to support the business owner in the best way possible.
- Conduct several TA sessions over Zoom
- Provide a final project deliverable that outlines the work completed and provides resources and recommendations for the business owner's ongoing use.
- Provide workshops on topics including business resilience and digital marketing.

Process

Process by the Town of Arlington:

1. Conduct analysis of current needs that align with eligible use of CDBG funds.
2. Complete a substantial amendment of CDBG Annual Action Plan, including public comment period and citizen participation process.
3. Open application period December 2020-January 2021 (including information session).
4. Review of applications by 4 members of DPCD team.
5. Notify applicants and execute grant agreements (February).
6. Complete procurement process for Technical Assistance providers (January-February).
7. (Ongoing) Complete reimbursement requests.
8. (Ongoing) Technical Assistance sessions and workshops: Topics include digital marketing, website assistance, eCommerce, SEO, Bookkeeping, and business resilience.
9. Collect reporting documentation and close out award requirements with HUD.

Process by Revby, a TA Provider:

1. Conduct first meeting introduction over a Zoom call; identify needs; create plan for time allotted.
2. Conduct interactive working sessions to build capacity and improvements around the identified topics. Facilitate brainstorming sessions so the business owner can create their own content and action items. Provide tools, examples, recommendations to support the sessions.

ReLaunch

A Collaborative Small Business Technical Assistance Effort to Drive Business Resilience and Opportunity to Diverse Communities



Provided by SME Consultant

Revby LLC

Location

Arlington, VA

Origin

BizLaunch, Arlington Economic Development Team (Internal group of 5)

Budget



Medium (\$200,000) - CARES Act Funding (Committed Funding) through December 31, 2021. Funding to be used for technical assistance and the development of digital technology tools.

Timeframe



Short Term (1 year) - October 2020 Funding earmarked; November - December 2020 Project Development; January - February 2021 Procurement process and selection of vendors; March 2021 Informational Meetings and Call for Applications; April - December 2021 - Rolling applications and delivery of services.

Risk



Low Risk - Budget losses; participation of legacy businesses and hard to reach business populations; funding elimination; staffing; lack of overall participation.

Key Performance Indicators

Positively impact and successfully sustain Arlington's small business ecosystem. Particularly a positive impact to those businesses most in need due to the negative effects of the pandemic. Mitigate risk of business closures. Business closures will be monitored in key industries

Partners & Resources

Arlington County Government (Office of Economic Development); Commissioner of Revenue; Purchasing Office; Police Department (Office of Nightlife); Revby; Amazon Web Services (AWS) & Nub8 (Cloud Provider); Treasurer's Office; County Attorney's Office; Communications Team for Arlington County and AED.

BEST
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PROJECT #1

Diagnostic

ReLaunch is a collaborative effort to drive business resilience and opportunity in 2021. Companies will receive tailored tools and professional assistance to revitalize, strengthen and transform their businesses. For detailed information please visit: www.relaunch.business

ReLaunch is designed to provide service to diverse communities, particularly those that have limited digital infrastructure, making them more exposed to the business decline during COVID-19 business disruptions.

It serves business owners whose primarily language is Spanish; service business owners who are immigrants or people of color.

Action Item

Community Action Items:

- Identify partners/providers to implement program in a timely fashion
- Identify marketing tools to reach the target market
- Identify what microentrepreneurs need the most help with in solidifying their organizations
- Ensure there are enough resources to meet the need
- Consider CARES Act Funding to help with impact
- Ensure quick turnaround with Purchasing Office to Select consultants

Revby (the TA provider) Action Items:

- Create a system to approach small business technical assistance topics, such as digital marketing, eCommerce, financial, and strategy with empathy, patience, and encouragement acknowledging that the topics are difficult for many of the diverse audiences that suffer from a digital divide disadvantage.
- Provide materials that can be referenced following time the one-on-one TA sessions.

Process (by the Community)

1. Research needs of hard impacted small businesses
2. Interview organizations which are currently doing work to assist businesses during the health pandemic. Identify best practices and improve deliverables
3. Design framework for ReLaunch program. (ReVitalize = Technical Assistance & ReNew = Technology Assistance)
4. Develop working Budget
5. Work with purchasing office to develop criteria for vendor's who can provide assistance
6. Advertise for assistance with formal RFP process
7. Hire Vendors
8. Training of Vendors
9. Training of Staff
10. Develop CRM system to keep track of businesses accepted/rejected or pushed forward.
11. 10-month Communications plan designed - yard signs, direct mail campaign, blogs, social media strategy etc.
12. Select businesses eligible for ReLaunch program
13. Communicate with vendors. Repeat for the next 10 months
14. Program ends December 31, 2021

Process (by Revby, the TA provider)

1. Meet with the BizLaunch team at least once a month to discuss any logistics topics or feedback on the TA activity with the current cohort of business owners.
2. For each monthly cohort of approximately 15 businesses, send out an introduction email with a link to schedule a first meeting within the next 2 weeks.
3. Identify which meetings should be conducted in Spanish. Identify with business owners need special accommodations to participate in a virtual meeting (i.e., need access to a laptop)
4. Conduct introduction meetings (virtually, over Zoom) with each business owner. Goal of the first call is to build rapport and a shared understanding of the TA format, confirm the need and objectives the business owner identified in their application, and mutually agree upon a plan for their working session.
5. Spend time researching and preparing for the TA working session. Prepare a multi-page document to aid the discussion during the working session.
6. Conduct a 1-hour virtual working session on the topic(s) agreed upon. Ensure to conduct the session with empathy and patience while providing a high quality and effective session in terms of content and business & marketing best practices.
7. Provide a document that the business may use for ongoing guidance. Provide a total of 3 – 4 hours of TA work per business.

Budget overview:

- Approx. \$800-1600 per business for one-on-one TA to review and help improve a business's online presence (other business and marketing topics are also part of the program)
- Depending on number of businesses targeted, this could be a low or medium budget range.
- Additional budget used for

Retail & Restaurant Technology Initiative






Provided by SME Consultant

Cambridge Retail Advisors

Location

Boston, MA

Origin	Established in 2019, the Retail and Restaurant Technology Initiative has piloted, vetted, and implemented its mission in partnership with Boston Main Streets Foundation, the City of Boston, and Citizens Bank. During the COVID-19 crisis we have quantified the significant impact of our program and are proud to promote the great diversity of participants.
Budget	 <p>Projects can be customized to work within a range of budgets. The typical configuration per location cost is ~\$5,200, outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment (iPad, cash drawer, scanner, receipt printer) ~ \$2,000 • First Year POS Subscription Fees ~ \$1,200 • Project Management and Implementation - \$2,000
Timeframe	 <p>4-6 weeks is the average time frame for a new retail or restaurant implementation, this would include: candidate vetting, enabling eCommerce, setup of POS hardware and software, and establishing cost savings best practices. Business coaching is conducted throughout the engagement with the entrepreneur. Surveys are completed periodically to validate that all steps were completed, and provide feedback to better the program.</p>
Risk	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Participant Limitations</u> – Project timelines are dependent on participant involvement. We use a screening process to make sure those chosen have the time and ability to commit. • <u>Language Barriers</u> – Language can present a challenge, but this may be overcome with translation services to keep the program accessible to businesses owners of different races and creeds. • <u>Internet Access or Cell Service</u> – Internet is required to support the POS system, hence it's useful to build a partnership with a provider such as Comcast.
Key Performance Indicators	Implementation time, eCommerce, online ordering revenue, operating cost reduction, stakeholder reporting, surveys and program evaluation
Partners & Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Cambridge Retail Advisors</u> – Program Management 2. <u>Comcast</u> – Internet, Voice, Security 3. <u>Lightspeed POS</u> – Technology Partner (retail sector) 4. <u>Toast POS</u> – Technology Partner (restaurant sector) 5. <u>Quantic POS</u> – Technology Partner (retail sector) 6. <u>SCORE</u> – business coaching/support

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PROJECT #1

Diagnostic

With the COVID-19 pandemic came an acceleration of digital commerce dependency. Unfortunately, small businesses were hardest hit, as many lacked the knowledge or capital to adapt to the changing behaviors of their consumers. Through our initiative we empowered local small entrepreneurs with industry leading technology and best practices to be able to compete in an ever-evolving economy. Through our survey research we've been able to quantify that businesses involved in our program fared better than the national average, and that they were in a far better position to thrive long-term.

Action Item

The Retail & Restaurant Technology Initiative would fund the following deliverables to the end user business:

- Payment of POS subscription fees for one-year
- POS Hardware
- Access to reduced credit card processing rates and internet
- Business coaching/mentorship

We provide expertise that has been refined through working with over 350 national retail and restaurant chains on thousands of engagements. Our Retail and Restaurant Technology Initiative leverages our proprietary tools and thought leadership developed from those engagements. The program has been honed and vetted and has proven to deliver immediate impact to your community.

Below are the key actions:

- Meet with the representatives from a given municipality to better understand their goals, and find ways in which our program meets those goals
- Solicit, interview, and select candidate businesses for the program
- Start the implementation process
 - Define individual business requirements
 - Order and deploy hardware and software
 - Establish cost savings measures (Credit Card Fees/Internet Fees)
 - Start business coaching
 - Survey participants to quantify progress

Process

Discovery Phase (1 week)

- 1.CRA schedules an individual consultation with business owner, used to understand business and technology requirements (30-60 minutes)
- 2.Following the meeting, business will be extended a Program Offer to formally participate in the program

Onboarding & Implementation Phase (4-5 weeks)

- 3.Once accepted, CRA will introduce owner to the Technology Onboarding Team to finalize POS requirements
- 4.CRA Internet Partner will evaluate if there are ISP savings available
- 5.CRA and Technology Partner will begin to gather retail inventory or restaurant menu information, set-up payment processing and complete other onboarding tasks
- 6.CRA and Technology Partner will jointly install the Point-of-Sale and eCommerce solutions
- 7.CRA and Technology Partner will test the system and train the retailer
- 8.Introduction to SCORE and/or CRA Mentor

Summary

4-6 total weeks including multiple interviews and onboarding/installation will net industry leading POS tech and multiple cost saving and training opportunities. Candidates will receive follow-up contact to validate the results, and provide feedback to better the program

Ashland Sign and Facade Improvement Program

Town Contact

Beth Reynolds
Economic Development Director
breynolds@ashlandmass.com

Funding By

Ashland Economic Development Incentive Program; funds appropriated by Town of Ashland

Structure

50% match up to \$5,000

Characteristics

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

Cambridge Storefront Improvement Program

City Contact

Christina DiLisio
Project Manager
cdilisio@cambridgema.gov

Funding By

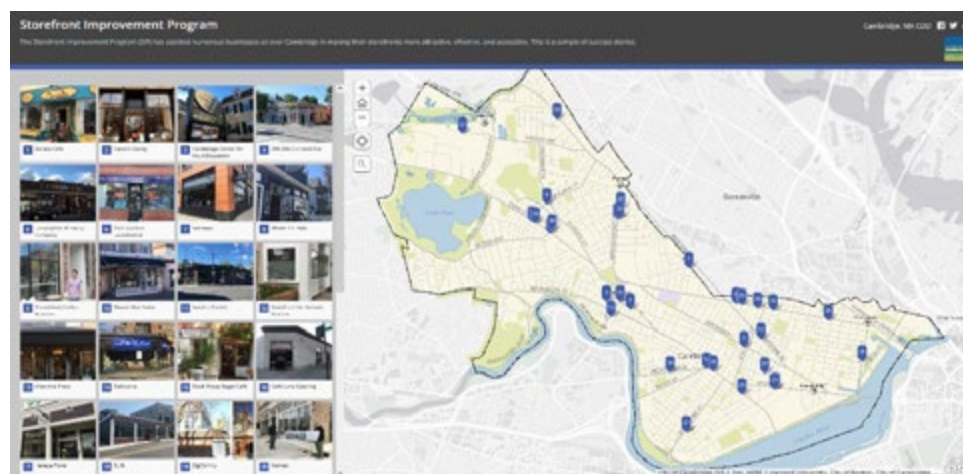
Municipal capital funds

Structure

Tiered matching grants based on improvement type

Characteristics

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



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PROJECT #2

Local Sign, Facade, and Storefront Improvement Programs

Location: Ashland and Cambridge, MA

NPS Main Street Facade Improvement Grant

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

Historic Commercial District Revolving Fund

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

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PROJECT #2

Leveraging Historic Revitalization Funds for Facade Improvement

Location: Main Street America



Undertake a Public Planning and Visioning Process for the Public Realm



Provided by SME Consultant

Dodson & Flinker

Location

Florence, Massachusetts

Origin

Planning and visioning is a common function of community planning departments, regional planning agencies, and their consultants, and there are many great examples. Those included here are drawn from the experience of Dodson & Flinker and our client teams in Northampton, Turners Falls and Williamsburg.

Budget



Low Budget: (Under \$50k) depending on size and extent of project area and the goals of the project.

Timeframe



Short term: (less than 5 years) a typical master-planning and visioning process can be accomplished in less than a year, but the time frame needs to fit the community's specific needs and challenges relative to outreach, public involvement and consensus-building.

Risk



Low to Medium: With careful preparation and inclusion of all interests and community stakeholders, most people can be brought to the table. Forging a consensus among them is the point of the process.

Key Performance Indicators

Public support for necessary zoning and regulatory changes; increased funding and public investment in improvements and infrastructure; physical and policy changes adopted to implement the vision.

Partners & Resources

Downtown residents, landowners, businesses, government agencies, boards and commissions, non-profits, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association.

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PROJECT #3

Diagnostic

The typical public realm planning process starts with a desire to improve physical and aesthetic conditions to bring people downtown, to make the area safer and more accessible, to accommodate new uses, or all of the above. Often there is a real or perceived conflict that arises when different groups of people need to share a limited space. Landowners and businesses that have invested in a place may need parking and amenities for their tenants and customers, while residents and visitors may have other needs.

Often the varied stakeholders in a village or downtown setting have little to do with each other until there is a conflict, or when that conflict comes before a local board, commission, council or town meeting. Along with creating a physical plan and action strategies, the purpose of the planning and visioning process is to bring diverse stakeholders together to have a conversation about the future; to build a shared understanding of the facts of the matter; to evaluate alternatives and their resulting costs and benefits; and to forge a consensus in support of that alternative that will achieve broad and lasting improvement for the whole community.

Action Item

The actions required to develop a plan or vision for the public realm follow the traditional planning process of inventory, analysis, exploration of alternatives and selection of a preferred approach. Each step requires a level of public involvement and review appropriate to the specific location and issues at hand, but the most durable plans are usually rooted in a shared consensus that cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Typical steps in the planning process include:

1. Define the specific study area and its planning context.
2. Establish a steering committee and determine the means of organizing the public process, either through a representative working group, a series of open public meetings, or some combination of the two.
3. Collect and review all relevant topographic surveys, GIS data, publicly available and proprietary data, previous reports and other materials relevant to the project area.
4. Prepare a detailed survey and analysis of existing conditions, including dimension of streets and sidewalks, architecture, use patterns, materials, etc. as appropriate to the scope of the effort.
5. Prepare an analysis of trends and likely future conditions, based on zoning, demographics, real estate market, business conditions.
6. Develop and visualize alternatives for redesign and redevelopment of the public realm within this larger physical, economic, social and environmental context.
7. Evaluate alternatives within a robust public discussion and build consensus in support of a preferred alternative.
8. Document the preferred alternative within a final masterplan and/or design strategy and prepare an action plan to implement it.

Process

Implementing the plan begins with a detailed action strategy that should be part of the plan itself. The best action plans detail realistic and achievable objectives and list the specific actions necessary to achieve them. The description of each action includes the time frame, needed resources (whether funding or staff time), and most importantly, the party responsible for carrying out that action. If that party has not accepted that responsibility, at least on a preliminary basis, that action should not be included in the final plan.

Implementation of a typical public realm plan includes using staff or volunteers to identify and apply for grant funding (or secure town funds) to pursue detailed design and construction, but it can also include zoning and regulatory changes, establishment of formal or informal improvement organizations, and partnerships with local institutions, landowners, non-profits and developers. Even after changing zoning to enable redevelopment, in many places the potential rental rates will not support private redevelopment efforts. Some form of direct investment or subsidy by government or institutions may be required to overcome these inherent economic challenges.

Get Public Input Early and Often

Getting public input on existing conditions, problems and opportunities in the study area sets a strong foundation for further planning. Establishing a shared understanding of facts and asking residents and businesses to weigh in on “what’s working well” and “what needs to be fixed,” builds trust in the process and ensures that the planning and design process addresses the most important issues.

Getting public input on existing conditions, problems and opportunities in the study area sets a strong foundation for further planning. Establishing a shared understanding of facts and asking residents and businesses to weigh in on “what’s working well” and “what needs to be fixed,” builds trust in the process and ensures that the planning and design process addresses the most important issues.



Images from public workshops in Florence and Williamsburg

Ask “What’s Working?” “What Needs to be Fixed?”

Given the right tools, local residents and business owners can quickly identify the most important issues – saving time and ensuring the focus is on the key problems and opportunities.

Given the right tools, local residents and business owners can quickly identify the most important issues – saving time and ensuring the focus is on the key problems and opportunities.



Participants used stickers and notes to identify positive and negative aspects of existing buildings and streetscape elements in Florence.

Reach out to Town Staff, Residents and Business Owners

Walking the study area with residents, business owners and town staff is a great way to gather information while forging the connections that will be critically important for further planning and implementation.



Document How the Public Realm Works Today

Streetscape design and other planning concepts can be confusing to a layperson. Simple maps, photos and diagrams help to communicate key concepts using examples that are familiar to local residents and business owners.



Celebrate What's Working Well

There are usually some successful elements within the existing public realm, or as in this case, within the private frontage adjacent to the sidewalk. These examples illustrate the goals of the planning process and can serve as models for continued investment in other parts of the study area.



Take Stock of What's Not Working So Well

Without pointing fingers, it's useful to analyze why some uses need to be improved or replaced. Often, as in this case, the approach succeeded in providing parking or meeting other needs but failed to account for how that use impedes the success of the surrounding area.



Test Alternatives and Get Public Feedback

The growing popularity of Tactical Urbanism strategies demonstrates the value of testing out potential improvements on a temporary basis. Whether applying paint striping for a period of months, or demonstration projects lasting a day or a week, this method of testing alternatives is guaranteed to prompt immediate engagement and feedback from those most affected by the potential changes. As in the Williamsburg example, temporary installations can be combined with local festivals and other events that bring people downtown.



Images from Park[ing] Day in Florence, involving taking over a parking space for a day to create a "parklet." This is an annual event started by Rebar in San Francisco in 2005 and sponsored locally by members of the American Society of Landscape Architects.



"Burgie Revelation Day" in Williamsburg, combined a festival atmosphere with temporary markings for a new multi-use path and a "ribbon-cutting" ceremony to celebrate envisioned future improvements (project by Dillon Sussman while at Pioneer Valley Planning Commission).

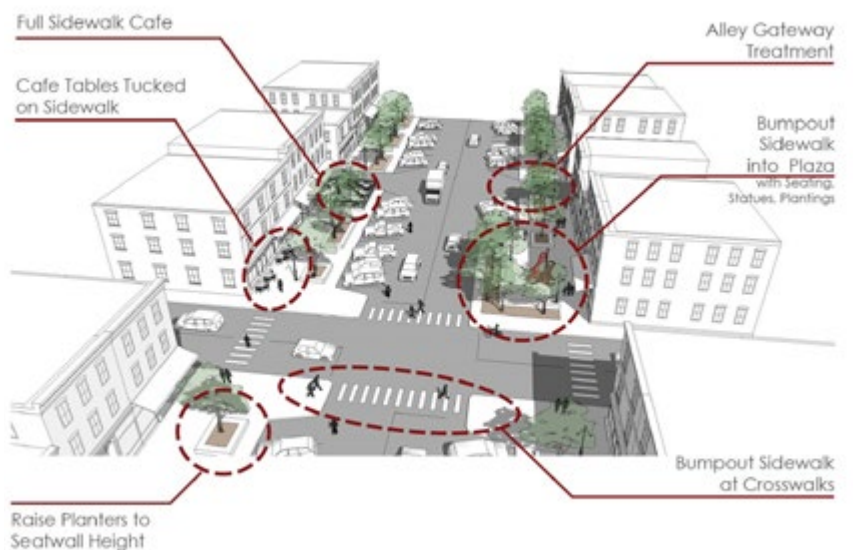
Visualizing Alternatives

Sketchup and other modeling tools allow for the creation of simple models and diagrams that help participants understand how various streetscape improvements fit together. In these views from the Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan, a view of existing conditions on Avenue A is contrasted with a diagram showing a range of potential Complete Streets improvements and pedestrian amenities. The project laid the groundwork for creation of a sidewalk plaza, lighting upgrades, rebuilt sidewalks and other improvements.

https://www.montague-ma.gov/files/Downtown_Turners_Falls_Livability_Plan_2013.pdf



Digital model showing existing conditions along Avenue A in Turners Falls.



Digital model showing potential Complete Streets improvements and streetscape amenities.

Visualizing Alternatives

Rendered models helped stakeholders in Florence understand alternatives for redeveloping Main Street, including the potential for new mixed-use buildings within the private realm and potential improvements to the public realm.

A key benefit of the digital approach is allowing for multiple alternatives to be turned on an off. This helps make choices clear, while showing how public and private realm improvements can be coordinated within an overall masterplan. It also helps show the potential phasing of improvements over time – allowing participants to see how public investment in new sidewalks and street trees can help set the stage for private redevelopment efforts.



Digital model showing existing conditions on Main Street in Florence.



Model view showing potential Complete Streets improvements and tree plantings in the Public Realm.



Model showing potential infill development and a new park within the private realm.



Creating Safe Pedestrian Access in a Rural Village Center



Provided by SME Consultant

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Location

Whately, MA

Origin

The project was envisioned in a master plan for the Whately Center Historic District.

Budget



Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) for construction
Design and engineering funded by the Town of Whately
Additional public participation process and construction funded through Massachusetts Complete Streets grant

Timeframe



Short Term (Less than 5 years)

Risk



Medium Risk

Key Performance Indicators

Measures of the positive impacts of the improvements are an increased number of events, visitors, and restaurant receipts as well as a reduction in traffic speeds.

Partners & Resources

Municipal committees focused on the target area and technical assistance providers, including a landscape architecture school and the regional planning agency.

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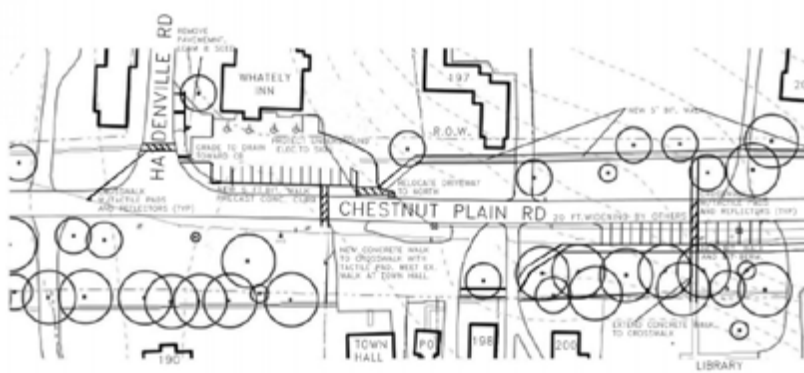
PROJECT #3

Chestnut Plain Road has a wide linear town common layout and is an integral part of the character and landscape of the town center historic district.

Therefore, to move forward, this project needed to have broad and strong community support. The project was successfully implemented because public outreach and an engaged planning process had taken place during the town center master planning process before the initiation of the final design and implementation of the improvements.



BEFORE: Google Maps aerial image of the Whately Inn at the corner of Chestnut Plain Road and Haydenville Road. A major renovation of the old Town Hall completed in 2019 resulted in a new community center and history museum across the street from the Whately Inn. With no crosswalks or sidewalks, the pedestrian pathway connecting these two attractions was not well defined.



Engineering plan created by Sara E. Campbell, PE, consulting civil engineer, for the project area of Chestnut Plain Road near Haydenville Road.

Action Items

The The Whately Historic District Complete Streets project included the construction of new sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure on the town's main street, Chestnut Plain Road – e.g. construction of a new section of sidewalk in front of the Whately Inn, a vibrant local restaurant, where there was no sidewalk. Some of the parking for the Whately Inn was located next to the road in the space where a sidewalk would be located. The town worked cooperatively with the Whately Inn to redesign and relocate the parking area to allow for the construction of a sidewalk. By relocating the entrance to the parking area, additional parking was created and the sidewalk was constructed. Site ownership at a location where there was no sidewalk has the potential to pose an obstacle to the successful implementation of a continuous sidewalk through a project area. By the town and the Whately Inn communicating and working collaboratively this project was a success.

The project also improved pedestrian connections between the Whately Inn and the recently renovated old Town Hall, which is now a community center and local history museum. As in-person events begin to be held again at the old Town Hall, residents and visitors can safely and easily park and walk to and from the Whately Inn and the event.



AFTER: With new crosswalks and sidewalks, pedestrians have safe access to the Whately Inn as well as the new community center and history museum, Post Office and public library across the street.



AFTER: The well defined parking area in front of the Whately Inn provides space for both parking and a seasonal tent for outdoor dining.

Process

- Completion of a conceptual design process that included broad participation.
- Adoption of a Complete Streets Policy.
- Development of a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, facilitated by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.
- Approval of Complete Streets Prioritization Plan by the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program so that the community is eligible to apply for complete streets implementation funding.
- Application to the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program for project implementation funding.
- Approval of implementation funding through the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program for the project.
- Completion of the final design for the project which includes collaboration with businesses and abutters so as to address needs for parking, outdoor dining, and pedestrian facilities.
- Temporary construction or permanent easements were identified and sought
- Conduct procurement process to hire contractor.
- Contractor completes project construction.

Importance of Public Engagement

Early in the project development the interests, concerns, and perspectives of many residents were considered through a master plan development process. Concerns related to the preservation of the historic streetscape while updating the sidewalks and crossings to improve accessibility for pedestrians was a challenge. Specifically, a robust public outreach process was completed that included a solicitation of input from those who would be impacted by the project. Two major considerations/challenges to implementation were making sure to preserve the historic double row of trees and to avoid damaging the root systems and also making sure that any signs did not detract from the historic character of the neighborhood. The project involved balancing pedestrian and motorist safety while also not detract from the historic qualities and feel of the area.

With the approval of the Select Board, the Whately Historical Commission formed an ad hoc committee to focus on the Whately Center Historic District. The ad hoc committee included a broad range of representation. They engaged the Conway School of Landscape Design to facilitate a visioning process and create conceptual designs for a Whately Center Historic District master plan. Since the visioning took place early in the project development, many interests and concerns were considered and incorporated into the conceptual designs that helped communicate proposed improvements.

Later, during the development of the design plans for the Chestnut Plain Road sidewalk, representatives of the Whately Inn were also consulted to discuss and brainstorm a solution to the parking issue. The solution was developed that improved the access to the parking lot and the configuration of the parking to allow for the construction of the sidewalk. The Inn donated towards the construction costs to compensate for a portion of the project that was on their property.



Route 30 Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Separated Bicycle and Shared-Use Lanes



Provided by SME Consultant

BETA Group, Inc.

Project Location

Wayland, MA
Natick, MA

Origin	Sarkis Sarkisian, Planning Director, Town of Wayland, MA; Jeremy Marsette, Director of Public Works, Town of Natick, MA; Marianne Larossi, Open Space Planner & Conservation Agent, Town of Natick, MA
Budget	 \$40,000
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years) – project has been completed
Risk	 Low Risk -post-pandemic outlook on outdoor recreation appears strong
Key Performance Indicators	Number of pedestrians and bicyclists using the facilities and reduction of vehicle speeds
Partners & Resources	Towns of Natick and Wayland, MassDOT, DCR

BEST
PRACTICE

PROJECT #3

Diagnostic

Route 30 is a wide two-way arterial street with wide shoulders and no on-street parking which encourages high traffic speeds with no protection for pedestrian and bicyclists. Traffic volumes and speeds are moderate to high along the corridor. Demand for pedestrian and bicycle use along the corridor is moderate to high as it connects with businesses and the Cochituate Rail Trail on the west end with recreational opportunities in Cochituate State Park to the east.

Action Item

The Rt. 30 (Commonwealth Road) Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Project provides separated bicycle and shared-use lanes that improves safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and reduces vehicle speeds along the corridor. The project corridor is approximately 2/3rds of a mile long and is located in both Natick and Wayland, MA. The project links the Cochituate Rail Trail and an office development on the west side with Cochituate State Park and the Snake Brook Trail on the east side.

The project was initially developed as a Pilot Project but was ultimately planned as a permanent installation. Coordination between the Towns of Natick and Wayland, MassDOT, and DCR was a critical element of the project.

Process

The Route 30 Separated Bicycle and Shared-Use Lane Project was planned, designed, and implemented during the Fall of 2020 in Natick and Wayland, MA. Town of Wayland staff led the effort to obtain funding through the MassDOT Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Program while Town of Natick staff led the implementation and construction effort.

The project included the installation of vertical flex posts within the buffer area between the travel lanes and the separated bicycle and shared-use lanes. The flex-posts were installed with anchor cups that allows them to be screwed into the anchors for the Spring, Summer and Fall seasons, and unscrewed during the winter to allow for snow plowing. The next Actions of the project will include:

Monitor and record pedestrian and bicycle volumes along the project corridor and measure vehicle speeds using video cameras.

Maintain flex posts, pavement markings and signage as needed.

The Town of Wayland is studying the feasibility of extending the bicycle and shared-use lanes to connect with Route 27 one-half mile to the east.



Route 30 Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Separated Bicycle and Shared-Use Lanes



Create a way-finding system to help reinforce the downtown experience



Provided by SME Consultant Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location Wakefield, MA

Origin	Town of Wakefield
Budget	 Medium-- approximately \$80,000 (kiosk only; additional elements to cost \$30,000)
Timeframe	 Short – planning and implementation in 3-1/2 months
Risk	 Medium --political will, lightning caused devastating fire, unjustified NIMBYism and lack of community transparency
Key Performance Indicators	Continued use by visitors and residents
Partners & Resources	Wakefield Main Streets, Town of Wakefield, Mass Legislature, Wakefield Police Department, Wakefield Public Library, Wakefield Historical Commissionand Wakefield DPW



PROJECT #4

Diagnostic

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

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

On the edge of Wakefield Center, Lake Quannapowitt is a popular setting for walkers, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters off Route 128 in Middlesex County. It is the site of many organized races from 5Ks to Ultra Marathons. However, rarely do outside visitors travel beyond the lakeside the 200 yards to the Town of Wakefield's Downtown. This is a lost opportunity to support restaurants and shops in the Downtown.

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

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

Action Item

The two overlapping programs took two different paths.

- Over an eight-month period, the branding and wayfinding design process went through a series of group meetings with a large Advisory Group of 24 representatives.
 - A month after the town landscape-based brand was approved by the Advisory Committee and presented in the local daily newspaper and to the Town Council, a devastating lightning-induced fire burned down the majestic church steeple. The loss of the church set back the discussion of whether or not the approved image should be brought forward as a historical image or changed to reflect the current conditions.
 - The designs and branding and wayfinding program were put on hold.
- Overseen by the Wakefield Main Streets Board of Directors and invited Town officials, the kiosk design program was mandated to have only 3.5 months to complete design, design review, put out for bidding and start implementation.
 - The kiosk program went fully ahead.
 - However, some community members felt left out of the design and placement of the project elements. Their concerns had to be integrated.



Joggers and runners around Crystal Lake, a target audience of non-residents as potential patrons to the downtown.



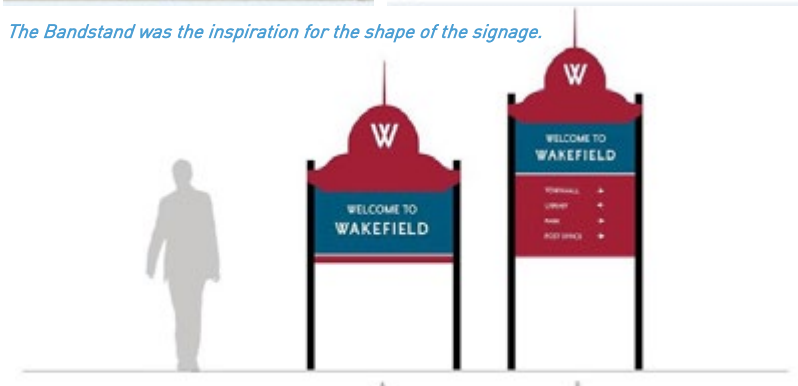
Old Band Stand adjacent to Lake Quannapowitt in Wakefield, MA

Process

- After a number of kiosk design alternatives were presented to the Wakefield Main Streets Board, one design was chosen to develop, locate and specify.
- Three (3) of the kiosks were to be two-sided and analog; the fourth was to be digital and four-sided. The digital one would be set closest to the lake.
- Historical town images and commentary was developed to fit around as a border around a business directory for one side of the directory.
- Set in an airtight locked Plexiglas window, this information could be easily changeable on the two-sided kiosks. On the opposite side was space for timely event posters and community announcements.
- The digital kiosk was designed to have a screen/monitor that was programmable from the town hall.
- There was much criticism around the placement and look of the digital kiosk. The town council eventually addressed the public and took a stand that the location, size and look of the kiosk was the best possible solution.
- Kiosk-opposing residents were invited to an expanded Branding and Wayfinding meeting to assist with eventual sign element placement on maps.
- Favermann Design was then hired by the Town administration to create a style guideline to reflect the iconic kiosk toppers.
- After a period of about four months the guidelines have resulted in the establishment of a consistent Town of Wakefield visual brand for internal communication, the official website, e-mails, business cards, interior town hall signage, newsletters and even drop boxes.
- These guidelines were in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and further thought was given to the on-hold wayfinding program. It was decided that a new approach should be taken that abandoned the problematic landscape and instead visually reflected the kiosk and style of the Town of Wakefield.
- Utilizing the new design approach, plans are going ahead for a new directional sign for the Greenwood neighborhood. A test will take place during the Summer of 2021 to see how wayfinding can connect the Lake with downtown.



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



Besides interested citizens, town officials including the Town Planner, Police Officer, City Counselor, and Main Street board member are making decisions regarding locations.

Local Press Coverage of Controversial Town Council Meetings Occurred due to Kiosks

- Though carefully announced by the Main streets Board, controversy was caused by residents feeling left out of the process.
- Several Town council meetings addressed the size, content and location of the kiosks, especially the proposed digital one adjacent to the lake.
- All kiosk locations are on Town property and are at the best decision-point locations possible.
- The “waters” were eventually calmed and the process continued until a successful implementation of the program.

Previous Historical Landscape Design for Wakefield’s Branding and Wayfinding Shelved

- Below is an image of the previous design that was affected by the destructive church fire.
- The “new” simpler design has found favor in the community.
- The Town of Wakefield is now creating a fully consistent “look” for all its official elements.



Sailboat with cherries



A BLACK CHERRY tree (according to the Audubon Field Guide: New England) along the shore of Lake Quannapoit. (Robert Puskas Photo)

Community Meeting and Open House: Hurd School future options

WAKEFIELD — The Town Council and Town Administrator discussed at 27 Gordis Street in the “Lakeside” neighborhood. The public is invited to a second Open House and Community Meeting.

The first floor will be open for public viewing at 6:15 p.m. followed by the community meeting in the auditorium at 7 p.m. on Wednesday June 20 at the school.

Stolen credit cards reported

WAKEFIELD — A Winsip Drive woman called police at about 11 a.m. yesterday to report that her credit cards had been stolen. The woman noticed that the cards were missing over the weekend but was not sure when they were taken. Police said that fraudulent charges were made using the credit cards at Home Depot in Danvers and Target in Somers. The cards have been cancelled.

At about 3 p.m. yesterday, a caller reported that a UPS truck took down power lines at the corner of Lake Street and Concord Avenue. Police confirmed that they were cable wires and made sure they were replaced.

POLICE Page 9

HURD Page 7

Kiosks coming to downtown

Town Council notebook

By MARK SANDELLA

WAKEFIELD — As part of the ongoing effort to revitalize the downtown area, four new kiosks will be installed at various locations offering “way finding” and other useful information for visitors and residents. The Town Council approved the installation of the signs, one of which will have a digital component, at their meeting last week.

Bob Malhotra, president of Wakefield Main Streets, appeared before the Town Council along with Mark Fawcett of Fawcett Design to discuss the project. The kiosks will be paid for by Wakefield Main Streets through their private fundraising efforts. Fawcett Design has been retained by the town to develop a branding and wayfinding program for the town’s business districts.

Two of the free-standing, two-sided kiosks will be located on sidewalks in the Square and will be placed at Main and Water streets and Main and Allen streets. A third two-sided kiosk will be placed near Veterans Field on North Avenue. The digital kiosk will be three-sided and will be placed at the southern end of the Lower Common, near the corner of Common Street and Lake Avenue. One side of this kiosk will be digital and have a changeable screen. Fawcett talked about the design of the kiosks, which will incorporate the look of the iconic Bandstand, including a red top that

KIOSKS Page 7



KIOSKS LIKE THIS ONE will be installed at four key locations around town to help promote the downtown area. Conceived by Fawcett Design, the kiosks will incorporate the look of the iconic Bandstand.



Kiosks back before Council tonight

WAKEFIELD — A plan to install two-sided kiosks as a way to help drive visitors to the downtown area was presented to the Town Council last night. The kiosks will be placed at various locations around town to help promote the downtown area. The plan was presented by Mark Fawcett of Fawcett Design, who has been retained by the town to develop a branding and wayfinding program for the town’s business districts.

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Kiosk Debate Dominates Town Council Meeting

WAKEFIELD — A debate over the location and design of four new kiosks dominated the Town Council meeting last night. The kiosks will be placed at various locations around town to help promote the downtown area.

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UPGRADED DROP BOXES AT TOWN HALL



With safety a top priority for Town Hall employees and guests, residents are strongly encouraged to conduct their Town transactions virtually. Payments can be made online at www.wakefield.ma.us/online-payments for many services, including taxes, water bills, white-goods stickers, refuse bags, cemetery services, and more. Many forms and applications can also be accessed on the Town's website www.wakefield.ma.us.

Town Hall has installed new drop boxes to make submitting documents so staff quick and easy. These boxes are clearly marked and located near the accessible parking spaces and sidewalk ramp, to the left of the Town Hall entrance.

DATES TO NOTE

Tax Collector

Third-quarter actual real estate bill due:

February 1, 2021

Third-quarter actual personal property bill due:

February 1, 2021

2021 motor vehicle excise bill commitment #1
Issued February 4, 2021 | Due March 8, 2021

Assessing Department

Abatement applications due:

February 1, 2021

Statutory exemptions due:

April 1, 2021



In 2015, Wakefield lifted its December-to-April on-street parking ban and now enforces parking limitations on an emergency basis.

When preparing for a snow event, the Town often initiates a temporary restriction of on-street

parking. This allows plowing crews and public safety vehicles to safely access the roads and perform curb-to-curb cleanup. Parking ban announcements and other emergency notifications are made via our CodeRED e-alert system.

All parked cars must be removed from the roadways during a parking ban. If your residence does not have a driveway, connect with your landlord for parking options or coordinate with a neighbor who has extra driveway space. Vehicles that interfere with snow operations or emergency-vehicle access may be towed.

1 Lafayette Street Wakefield, MA 01880 | wakefield.ma.us

The Town of Wakefield "branded" elements and strictly adhered to style guidelines demonstrate how programs can build upon and even improve each other to reinforce a sense of place, a sense of arrival and a sense of shared experience.

BEST
PRACTICE

PROJECT #4



Wayfinding on Fairmount Greenway




Provided by SME Consultant

Civic Space Collaborative

Location

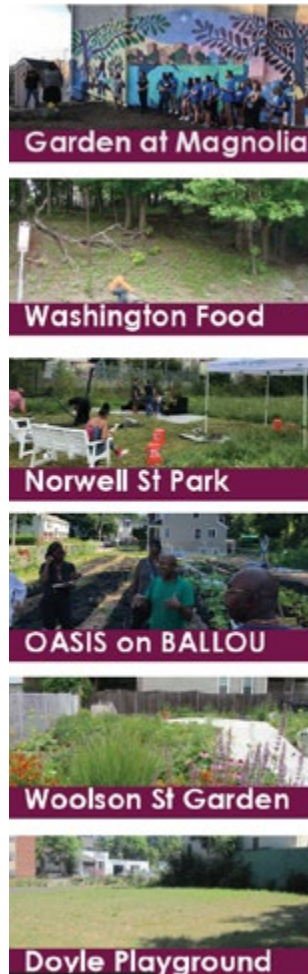
Boston, MA

Origin	Fairmount Greenway Task Force
Budget	 Low Budget (approximately \$10,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (approximately 10 weeks)
Risk	 Low Risk: Temporary installation requiring no major construction, low cost, no City approvals needed
Key Performance Indicators	Installation of twelve wayfinding signs to mark 1.5 miles of the Fairmount Greenway route. Increase usage of bike share programs, pedestrian walkways, and T-ridership.
Partners & Resources	Fairmount Greenway Task Force, Neighborhood Associations, DotBike, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, City of Boston Transportation Department, The Trust for Public Land, Civic Space Collaborative
Diagnostic	<p>The Fairmount Greenway is an on-street cycling and walking route, also known as a “neighborhood greenway” or “neighborway”, that links MBTA stations, business districts, open space, and other developing neighborhood amenities along the MBTA’s Fairmount/Indigo Rail Line. Currently, along the Fairmount Corridor in Dorchester residents fear cycling and walking in their neighborhoods due to a lack of safe infrastructure. Wayfinding signs, combined with on-street improvements part of the Boston Transportation Department’s Slow Zone program such as shared lane markings (“sharrows”), district signage, speed humps, and bulb-outs, comprise the treatments for the Greenway. In addition, Blue Bike Stations have been installed further south in Dorchester with four stations along this 1.5-mile stretch.</p> <p>During the pandemic, we have seen a rise in cycling across the nation, in Boston, and especially among Black and Brown people. With the increase in people cycling and walking, the Fairmount Greenway route signs are incredibly timely. This summer, we anticipate seeing an increase in walking and cycling along the Fairmount Greenway to reach business districts, the Fairmount Line, and recreation to reach regional parks and greenways, such as the Neponset River Greenway, Franklin Park, the Emerald Necklace, and Southwest Corridor.</p>
Action Item	<p>Boston’s nine-mile Fairmount Greenway is a life-changing development, connecting Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park with a route that links parks, green space, on-street bike routes, trails, transit stations, and city squares. Since 2008, the Greenway’s 10-member task force have been working with the City of Boston and multiple other organizations on this long-term vision to connect the Fairmount communities to the heart of Boston. More than 1,000 residents have joined in planning, designing, and implementing Greenway park, streets, and greenway projects.</p> <p>In 2021, the Fairmount Greenway installed wayfinding signs to mark a 1.5-mile on-street route of the Fairmount Greenway in Dorchester near Four Corners and Codman Square. The wayfinding signs were updated to include key neighborhood destinations and mark the on-street route in February 2021. Twelve signs were printed on corrugated plastic and installed with residents in May 2021.</p>

Process

Planning + Design

- Fairmount Greenway concept development (2008 – 2010):** The Fairmount Greenway concept first emerged in 2008 for an on-street walking and biking route that loosely follows the MBTA Fairmount Rail Line. In 2011, the Fairmount Greenway Concept Plan was published, outlining 10 to 20 years of phased developments, portions of which were incorporated into the Mayor's Go Boston 2030 plan.
- Signage branding, design, and placement (2013 – 2014):** The Fairmount Greenway Task Force (FGTF) worked with MAPC to create a wayfinding system, utilizing existing street poles to attach signs. The FGTF worked on branding the Greenway sign design process and solicited feedback from the City of Boston's transportation department. Based on the City's comments, additional destinations were added to the signs to create wayfinding signs.
- Approval Process:** The original request to the City was to install metal signs, but due to lack of funding for the required CAD drawings, the signs were not installed.
- Finalizing wayfinding sign design (2021 – 4 weeks):** In 2020, the FGTF received funding for temporary signs through a grant from The Trust for Public Land. The temporary signs did not require approval from the City as they were made of corrugated plastic. The wayfinding signs design were updated for 1.5 miles on Fairmount Greenway to include the route directions, Fairmount Station, and local parks.



Key spaces to connect and a Fairmount Greenway map



A photo of Michelle Moon with the test print, final signage design

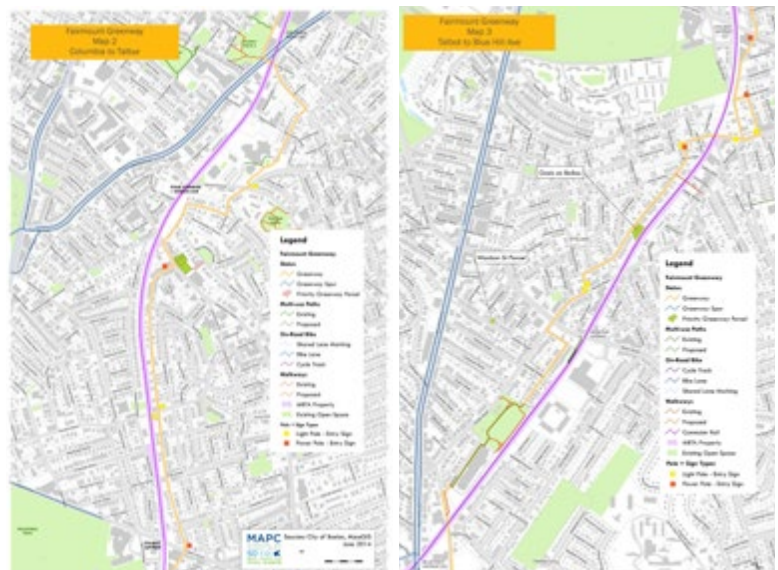
Installation

-

Neighborway on Mamelon Circle, Mattapan



Play street programming concept along Fairmount Greenway Route in Dorchester



Rapid Recovery Plan

BEST
PRACTICE

PROJECT #4



Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Provided by SME Consultant

Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Worcester, MA

Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Provided by SME Consultant

Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Worcester, MA

Origin	City of Worcester, MA
Budget	 High Budget (\$200k+) - with full build-out
Timeframe	 Medium Term (5-10 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Ownership and longevity of brand/system, amount of development/investment
Partners & Resources	Mayors, City Planning Departments, Marketing & Communications Departments
Diagnostic	<p>SPD created a unified brand identity and wayfinding master plan for the City of Worcester, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City-wide Logo• District Identity• Storytelling and Interpretive Elements• Signage Design• Art Opportunities <p>SPD collaborated with the project team to increase awareness and tourism, and to improve the overall image of the City by creating an iconic brand and functional wayfinding system for visitors and residents.</p>

BEST
PRACTICE

PROJECT #4

Diagnostic (continued)

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

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

Action Item

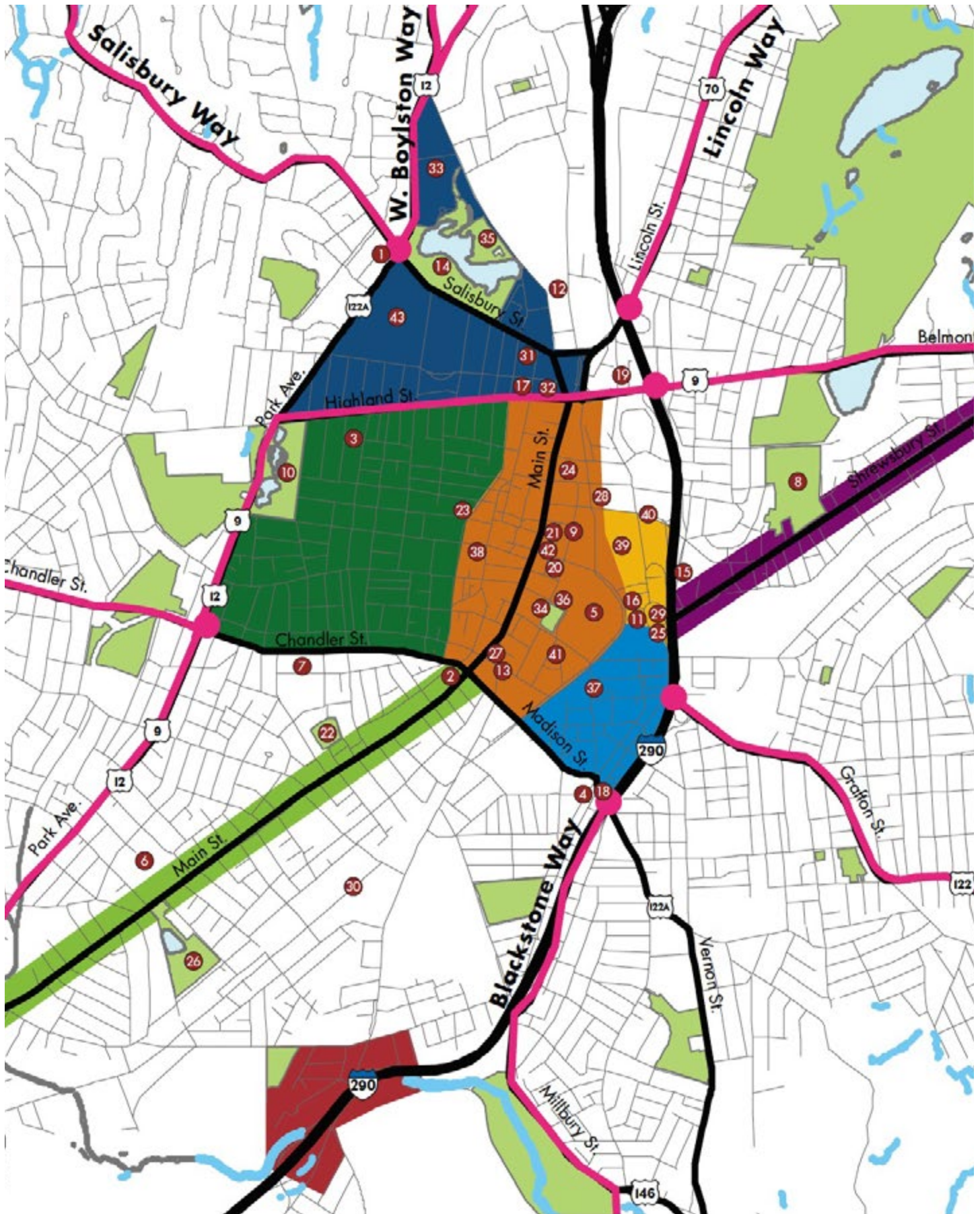
As this project continues to roll out it will be important to look at it in light of current development, updating locations and messages as-needed.

Things to consider adding in the future:

- Dynamic signage
- Walking distances
- Sculptural landmarks
- Integrated elements to reinforce District stories
- Revenue generation

Process

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



Districts and Wayfinding analysis




Create a way-finding theme based on the community’s seaside location



Provided by SME Consultant Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location Well, ME

Origin	Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen
Budget	 Medium—\$30,000 design fee + \$80,000 for implementation
Timeframe	 Short- 8 months for design and planning
Risk	 Low
Key Performance Indicators	Installation and use of signage, Functionality of signage
Partners & Resources	Town of Well, Maine



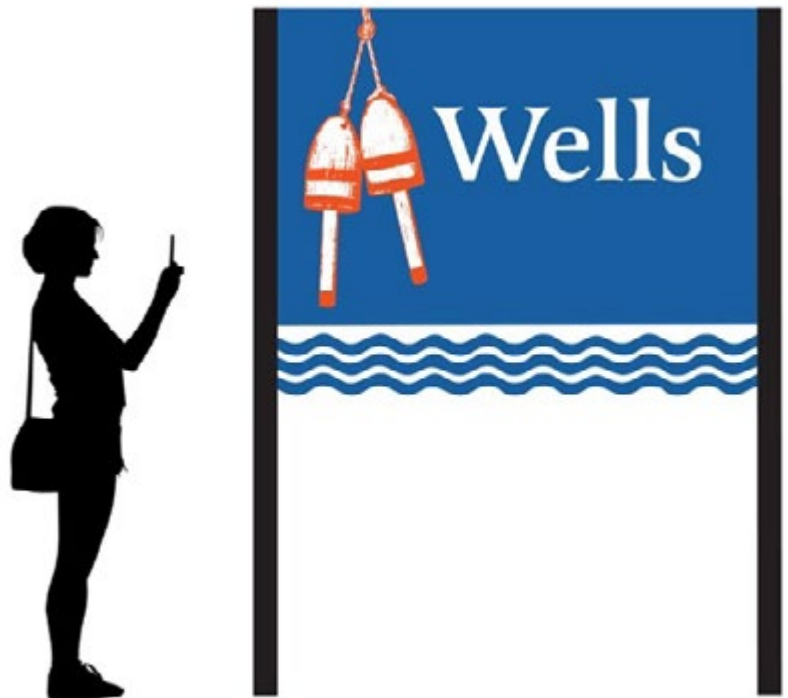
PROJECT #4

Diagnostic

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

Action Item

- Meetings with the Advisory Committee were scheduled over the next four (4) months.
- Utilizing existing conditions, community history and natural areas, each meeting looked at another aspect of the program.
- Locations were explored in terms of decision points and directional element considerations.
- After accessing needs, street furniture design versions were explored.
- Public art was looked at as potential focal point and visual markers.
- Local capability for fabrication was reviewed and discussed.
- New and existing public buildings, signage needs were considered
- Colors were tested and explored



Precedent: Lobster buoys.

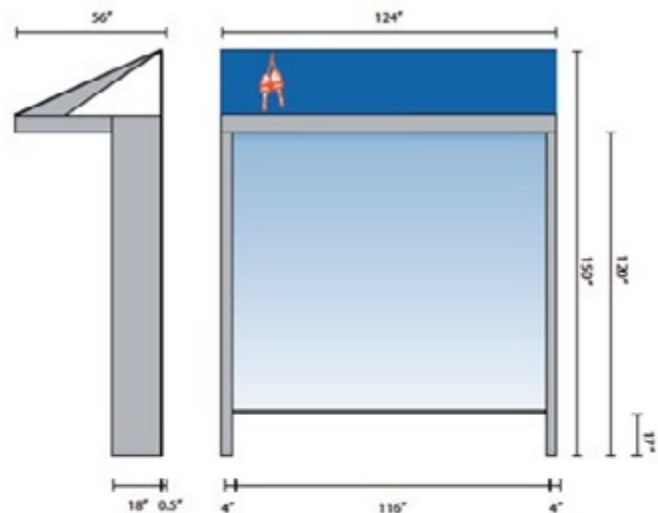
Process

- After photo documentation, a comprehensive community design alternative element presentation was made to the advisory committee.
- This was followed up a few weeks later with a presentation of past case studies created and developed for other communities.
- An *Ideation Exercise* followed a few weeks later that thoughtfully looked at ways to describe the “brand” of Wells by words and phrases.
- The Advisory Committee fully participated in this ideation exercise. It fostered a sense of ownership by the participants.
- From the *Ideation*, a number of alternative designs were created. These were then presented to the Advisory Committee for review and refinement.
- Once a couple of design directions were approved, Creative development proceeded for a number of sign element examples including for “beach rules” and a number of studies for street furniture.
- Beach Rules included pre-season regulations that restricted activities that could endanger the threatened Plover bird who lays their eggs on the Wells’ beaches in the Spring.
- Dog regulations and horseback riding rules were also included in Beach Rules. Symbols were set parallel to word descriptions.
- Photoshop versions were set in place for discussion of signage, street furniture and public art markers.
- Street furniture explorations included themed benches, kiosks, bike racks and trolley stops.
- Design options were developed into families of elements.
- A vendor list was developed based on appropriate fabricator/installers in both Maine and Massachusetts.
- Cost estimates were developed in collaboration with fabricators/installers.
- Public art suggestions were scrutinized by the Advisory Committee.
- A map of locations for sign element placement was created in collaboration with the Advisory Committee.
- A full set of sign element and street furniture pieces fabrication specifications were created for bidding.



Favermann Design 11 March 2009

Plowing Plover bird on Wells Beach in the springtime next to the beach rules on the sign.



The trolley stop between Ogunquit and Kennebunkport.

Process – Strategic Decisions

- The decision by Town of Wells to start the process
- The appointment of strategic stakeholders to the Advisory Committee representing a cross-section of strategic interests
- Review of commercial sign program sponsored by State of Maine found program uneven, not maintained and detracting from the environment/landscape
- The graphic design chosen by the advisory Committee was two lobster buoys set on the left side of the panel.
- The colors chosen for the system of wayfinding elements were a turquoise and a Cadmium Red.
- Street furniture and gateway/entrance sign elements was to have wavy elements symbolic of the ocean.
- Sculpture was to be made from polished aluminum or steel.
- The designs were shared in the Town administrator's weekly newsletter to residents and businesses.
- A presentation was made to the Wells Select board for discussion and tacit approval of the total design package.
- Recommendations were made for branding to be applied to Wells internal communication including newsletter, stationery, agendas, etc.
- A decision was made to develop elements that connected with the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and significant historic structures in town.
- Discussion was held about a phased implementation of the Wayfinding and signage system.
- A thoughtful decision was made to use Maine-based vendors.



J INSTRUCTIONAL

GRAPHICS

Dimensions: 48" x 60"

Material: Aluminum panel .001" thick (or per suggestion of fabricator)

Print: Full color print on adhesive vinyl

All major white vinyl lettering is reflective

Anti-graffiti coating

Colors: Red (Pantone 232C), Blue (Pantone 300C), Light Blue (Pantone 305C)

Font: Latiene Pro Medium, Bicycleette Bold

STRUCTURE

Posts: 3" square posts metal capped

Baked Enamel Finish: Pantone Black C

Paint applied to all sides; must have 6 year guarantee

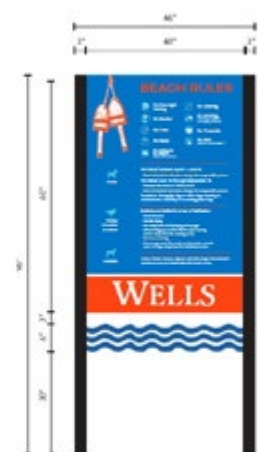
Sign fabricator to make recommendations on installation

to adhere to MaineDOT standards and specifications

Must verify overall dimensions and orientation in the field

Vendor will make recommendations to affix panel to posts

Footings to be recommended by installer



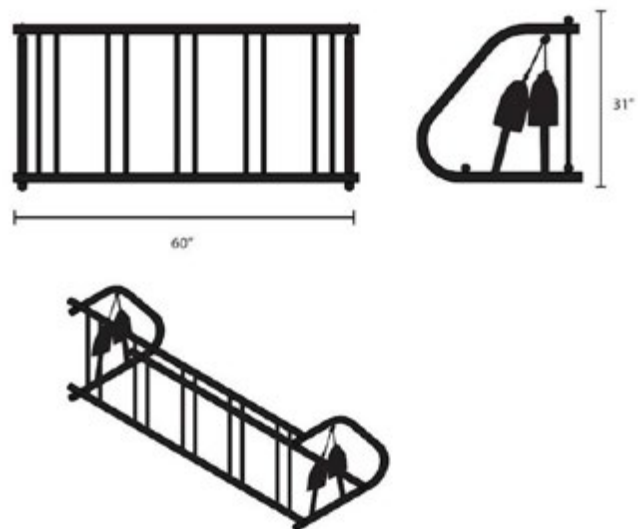
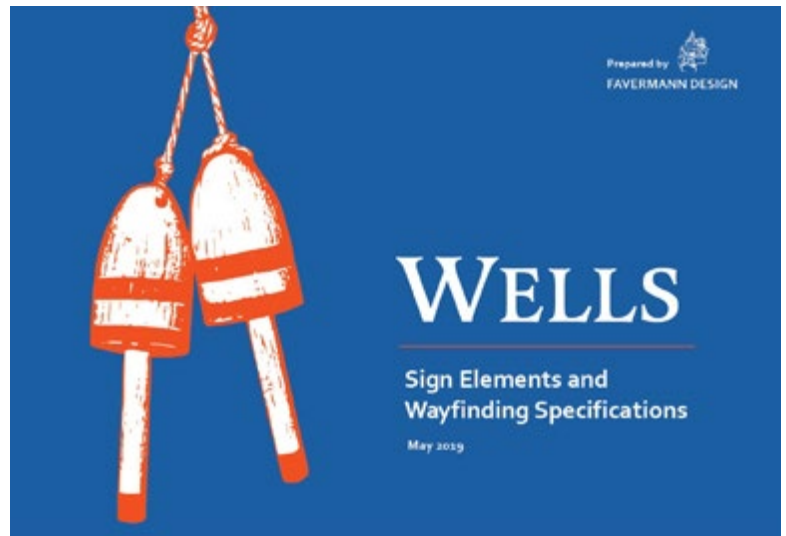
To meet overall activation goals downtown, two locations were targeted for public space events and activities.

Desired Outcomes

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

Add-ons

- The “brand” could be applied to many saleable objects such as T-shirts, mugs, sweatshirts, caps, etc.
- Revenue from the sale of these items could pay for the system of wayfinding and sign elements and/or maintenance.
- An expensive, but “brand” reinforcement piece could be a “Beach Pass” for residents. This would replace existing less colorful beach passes.
- Signs recognizing the line between Kennebunkport and Ogunquit and Wells could be strong identifiers for the community.
- A gateway sign leaving the Maine Turnpike and entering Wells would welcome and visually embrace visitors.
- The Wells branding and wayfinding and sign element program is only constrained by budget and community follow-through.





Helping Main Street in the Long Term After COVID-19



REVENUES
& SALES

Provided by SME Consultant

Levine Planning Strategies, LLC

Location

Flint, MI; Haverhill, MA; Lansing, MI; Portland, ME; Nashua, NH; and Youngstown, OH

Origin	Department of Urban Studies & Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology	
Budget		Medium Budget – varies by actions taken but may exceed \$100,000
Timeframe		Medium Timeframe – 5 to 10 years
Risk		Medium Risk – requires political and funding stability to implement
Key Performance Indicators	Sales and/or economic activity downturn; percentage of occupied storefronts; number of businesses open in 2019 still open 5-10 years later.	
Partners & Resources	Municipal government; downtown business groups; state & federal partners	



PROJECT #6

Diagnostic

Even before 2020, many downtowns businesses struggled. The shutdown of local businesses in the past year simply revealed the weaknesses in existing support systems for local economies. Some businesses survived through quick adaptation and embracing new tools such as enhanced social media and additional delivery services. Other businesses struggled to make those transitions, either because their business model did not work well remotely, or because the owners lacked the skills to make such transitions. Regardless of whether a business was able to pivot, most likely its overall revenue was down in 2020, raising the question of how to pay for its (largely vacant) physical space and employees.

Large federal and state programs helped take the edge off of these issues, but there remains a large backlog of rent and mortgage payments. At the same time, small property owners are in danger of losing their properties to lenders because their tenants cannot make rent payments.

At the same time, there were some forced innovations, such as changes to public spaces, that were popular among many customers. While the overall affect of the pandemic was negative for downtowns, it would still be wise to learn from those efforts and potentially retain the best of them.

There has been a fair amount of attention paid to what small businesses will need in the near term to recover from the pandemic. However, not as much work has been done on how COVID-19 will affect downtowns in the long term.

These case studies and survey, funded by the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning, were designed to explore the changes communities should consider for the next five to ten years to ensure their commercial districts can thrive. What do businesses want and need from local government to survive in the long term? What will they need if there is another significant disruption to business? What do local economic development officials think would help in their community? While this study didn't offer all the answers, it outlined areas to think more about.

Study Findings

This study was designed to understand the long-term needs of local businesses from their perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of local economic development officials. Businesses were asked about their short-term priorities, but the focus of the study was on their long-term needs. The results of the study reflected the views of a variety of local businesses. Approximately half of the responding businesses were minority-owned or woman-owned, and almost half had five or fewer employees prior to COVID-19.

While there was a wide range of views from local businesses and officials, a few long-term priorities emerged:

- A top priority for local businesses was for government to provide financial incentives to help them remain competitive as the pandemic recedes. *For example, the sign & façade improvement grant program run by the City of Gardner, offers 5 year forgivable loans for up to \$2,500 for signs, or \$15,000 for façades. This program is funded through the City's CDBG program;*
- Another high priority for local businesses was the provision of rent or mortgage relief so they could remain in their locations. *For example, the Small Business Relief Program run by the Local Initiative Support Corporation has provided up to \$25,000 in funding for rent and similar expenses for small businesses over the past year. To date, that program has had 12 rounds, totaling \$215 million;*
- A third priority was for communities to develop a thoughtful and consistent program for public space based on which business owners could make long term investment. There was a concern that changing priorities, such as annual changes to open streets programs or outdoor dining rules, would add uncertainty to future business decisions. *For example, after a successful pilot project in 2015, Halifax, Nova Scotia, redesigned Argyle Street in their downtown as a permanent shared street, allowing businesses to make long term investments for outdoor dining;*

Study Findings (Continued)

Finally, local businesses were interested in changes to health, licensing and zoning codes that would allow their operations to respond quickly to business opportunities. For example, the Town of Freeport, ME, exempts conversions between most restaurants and retail trade uses from site plan review to allow for rapid changes in downtown spaces. Similarly, the City of South Burlington, VT, “flipped” its table of uses in 2016. In their City Center form based code, there is a list of prohibited uses rather than a list of permitted uses, allowing businesses to change between any use that is not explicitly prohibited.

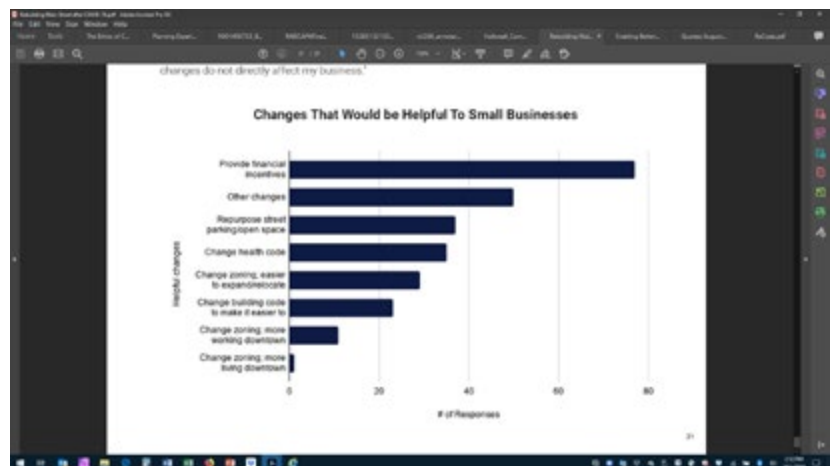
Process

The study used the following methodology:

1. An initial list of about 15 communities was developed, based on community size and built form. In order to control for weather and built form elements, only communities in New England and the Upper Midwest were part of that initial list;
2. Of those 15, six responded with an interest in participating in the study. Those six had a wide range of median household income levels and demographics;
3. Researchers compiled summary sheets about each of the communities for background information (see sample sheet for Haverhill below);
4. Study researchers interviewed local economic development officials, ranging from the Mayor of Youngstown, OH to the head of the Portland, ME, downtown improvement district;
5. With the assistance of these local officials, researchers distributed a survey to local businesses asking questions about their size and ownership; use of federal and state COVID relief programs; short-term needs; and long-term needs;
6. Researchers compiled the results into a summary report outlining business responses and interview summaries, as well as their recommendations for public actions based on those findings.



Argyle Street in downtown Halifax, NS, has been an outdoor dining spot for 25 years. In 2017, following a planning process & pilot program, the street was reconstructed as a permanent shared street, allowing local businesses to make long term investments based on the redesign (Source: Steven Lee under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license)



In the long run, businesses were still looking for financial help, but also changes in how public realm spaces were managed; changes to health codes; and simplification of zoning requirements

Haverhill, Massachusetts

Racial demographics

- White: 73% Black: 3%
- Latina/o: 20% Other: 4%

Household median income

- \$67,579

"There is strong local leadership on diversity and inclusion because it leads to a stronger workforce, better education, and better healthcare. We need to continue to embrace and welcome Latino community."

– Dougan Sherwood,
President & CEO, Greater
Haverhill Chamber of
Commerce

H AVERHILL IS A CITY THAT IS HOME TO 64,000 PEOPLE located 35 miles north of Boston on the border of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. One of the state's oldest historic communities, Haverhill has seen several industries come and go from lumber mills and flour mills in the seventeenth century to shoe manufacturing in the nineteenth century. By the mid-twentieth century, the shoe industry had declined and the city embraced urban renewal, demolishing swaths of historic buildings downtown. In recent decades, the city has invested in major downtown revitalization including the Haverhill Riverfront Boardwalk and the conversion of abandoned factories into loft apartments and condominiums.

Organizations working to strengthen the economy of Haverhill's downtown include the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and the City of Haverhill Office of Economic Development and Planning. For this report, we interviewed Dougan Sherwood, President and CEO of the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. We received survey responses from a total of **22 small businesses** in Haverhill.



Washington Street in downtown
Haverhill, MA, 2017.
Photo credit: Jim Davis.

Our mission is to help small businesses thrive across the Finger Lakes Region. We provide entrepreneurs and small businesses with the vital assistance, resources, and information they need. Nexus i90 makes support more accessible to foster equitable growth and inclusiveness and spur economic prosperity for our region.



The Gateway for Entrepreneurs

We are dedicated to helping connect and grow the entrepreneurial community of the Finger Lakes region.

[Learn more](#)

Facilitating Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building and Enhancement



Provided by SME Consultant

Third Eye Network, LLC

Location

Rochester, New York/Finger Lakes Region

Origin

City of Rochester – Mayor's Office of Community Wealth Building
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Center for Urban Entrepreneurship
Rochester Economic Development Corporation (REDCO)

Budget



\$417.5k Digital Infrastructure; \$1.5M Ecosystem Enhancement

Timeframe



28 Weeks *[SourceLink Pro Implementation]*; 12 Months *[Regional CRM Expansion]*; 24 Months/cohort *[Ecosystem Enhancement]*

Risk



Requires public and philanthropic investment, socio-political will and actively engaged collaboration among the entrepreneur support community

Key Performance Indicators

Network Collaborations *[# of partners & referrals, funds raised, engagement rates]*, Community Commerce *[# of businesses/jobs created/retained, # and % of goals achieved]*, Ecosystem Enhancements *[# of new offerings/improvements, impact of policy changes]*

Partners & Resources

Collaborators: City of Rochester Mayor's Office of Community Wealth Building, RIT Center for Urban Entrepreneurship, REDCO, Rochester Public Library Business Insight Center, JustCause, Monroe County Economic Development Dept., Urban League of Rochester, IBERO-American Action League, M&T Bank Foundation, ESL Foundation, Rochester Downtown Development Corporation, SCORE Greater Rochester, PathStone Enterprise Center, Small Business Administration Rochester Chapter

Sponsors: Living Cities – City Accelerator Catalytic Capital Grant (\$100k); JPMorgan Chase – Matching & CRM Expansion Grants (\$137.5k, \$180k); Empire State Development/New York State – Ecosystem Enhancement Grant (\$1.5M)

BEST
PRACTICE

PROJECT #10

Diagnostic

Strategy Feasibility Planning

- Biennial small business climate and needs assessment survey; allot three to four months for planning and execution at \$10k – \$15k
- 4 – 5 culturally-specific, peer-led focus groups (*e.g., Black-owned, Latinx-owned, and women-owned businesses, businesses earning over \$100k annually, and those who had prior dealings with the "Organizational Hub"*); 6 to 10 participants per group at \$15k – \$20k total
- Findings: Bureaucracy was a barrier; universal monocultural approaches fail; support resources and pathways were unclear, decentralized, and disjointed; little capital access and know-how

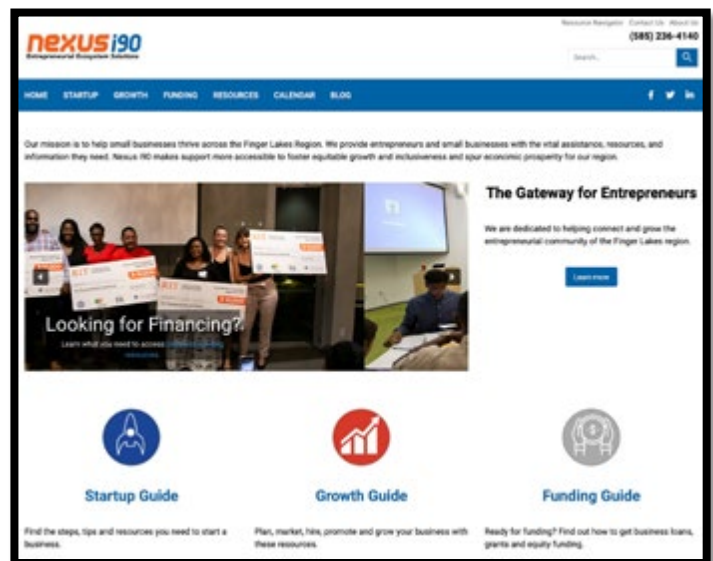
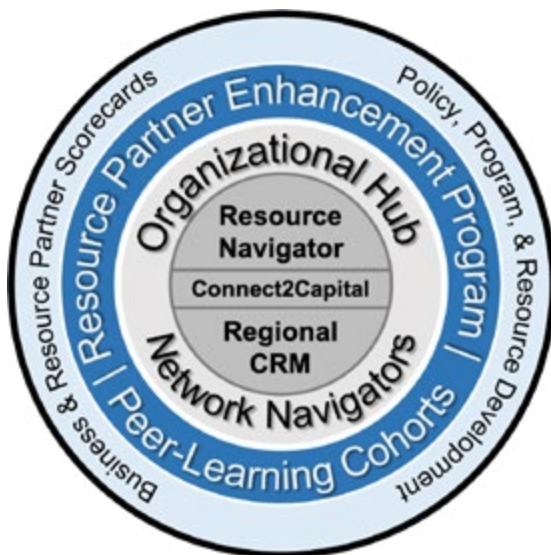
Anti-Racist Community Building

- Host 3 – 5 three-day Undoing Racism® Workshops with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (www.pisab.org) for resource partners, small businesses, influencers, and other stakeholders; allot three to four months for planning and execution at \$13.5k/workshop, when hosting 2 or more
- Attend Kauffman Foundation's ESHIP Summit, join networks, and invest in related learning materials to plug into the global entrepreneurial ecosystem movement; allot up to \$2k/person
- Co-created the scale of proposed digital asset development activities (consider hyper-local versus regional approaches) with REDCO
- Spearheaded SourceLink implementation with key collaborators
- Hosted resource partner gathers during project kick-off and launch events
- Prepared and released resource partner enhancement program RFPs
- Selected cohort participants by committee
- Publicly launched and currently administering the inaugural cohort

Action – Facilitating Nested “Hub and Spoke” Model Development

Campbell's Nested “Hub and Spoke” Model for Inclusive Ecosystem Building and Enhancement

Nexusi90.org home page



Process - Digital Asset Development *(phased)*

Resource Navigator Implementation (Nexusi90.org)

Select a vendor like SourceLink (joinsourcelink.com), establish a project team, and maintain a weekly meeting schedule to identify and map resources, develop site content, create social media pages and a hotline, participate in train-the-trainer workshops, and convene regional resource partners for project kick-off and pre-public launch meetings; allot four to six months at \$75k for implementation and \$15k for annual maintenance *(prices may vary by vendor, number of counties, population size, and/or features)*

Custom CRM Development and Platform Integration

Determine the scope of work based on community needs *(Rochester was interested in expanding access to SourceLink's CRM so any resource partner in the region that wanted to adopt the platform as a system of record or integrate their organizational system with the shared platform)*; allot 12 months of planning and execution at \$180k *(future SourceLink clients would not incur this expense)*

Connect2Capital is a collaborative online lending network created by Community Reinvestment Fund USA; allot four months for planning and execution *(in progress)* at an unknown cost due to a third-party sponsor

Process – Resource Partner Enhancement Program

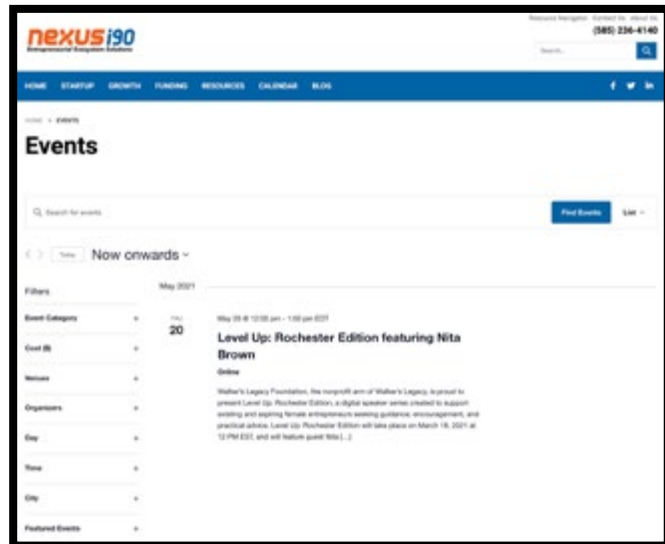
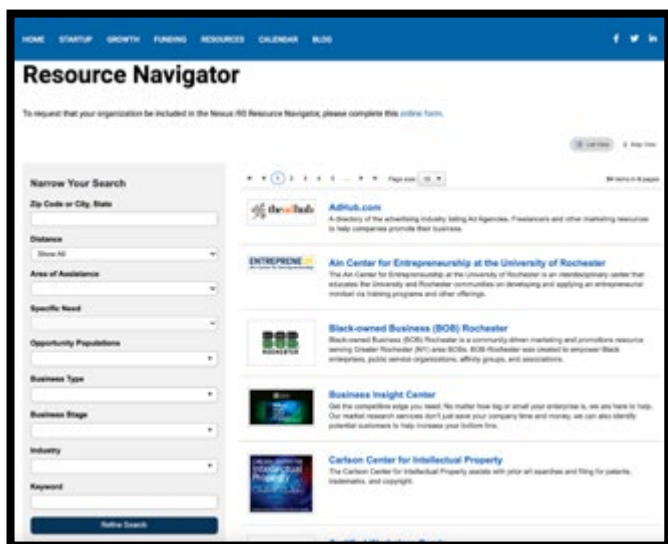
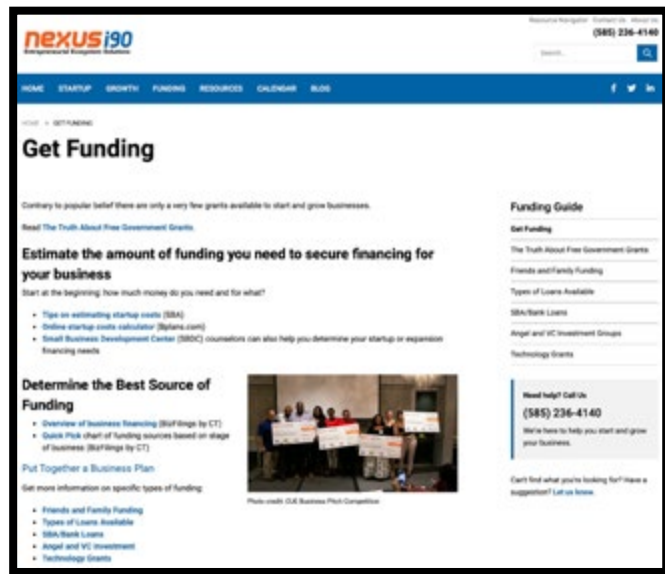
Peer-learning Cohort Program

Program Planning: Determine target cohort size based on funds raised for the program; prepare requests for proposals for prospective resource partner and organizational coaches cohorts; responses should articulate proposed enhancement plans from resource partners, and demonstrate coaches' expertise and commitment to support the cohort and program; and establish a selection committee and develop scoring rubrics before releasing both requests for proposals, conduct candidate selection and matching processes, and notify program participants; allot six months at \$750k – \$2M total for three to six resource partners *(\$150k – \$200k grants each)* and three to six organizational coaches *(\$100k – \$150k grants each)*

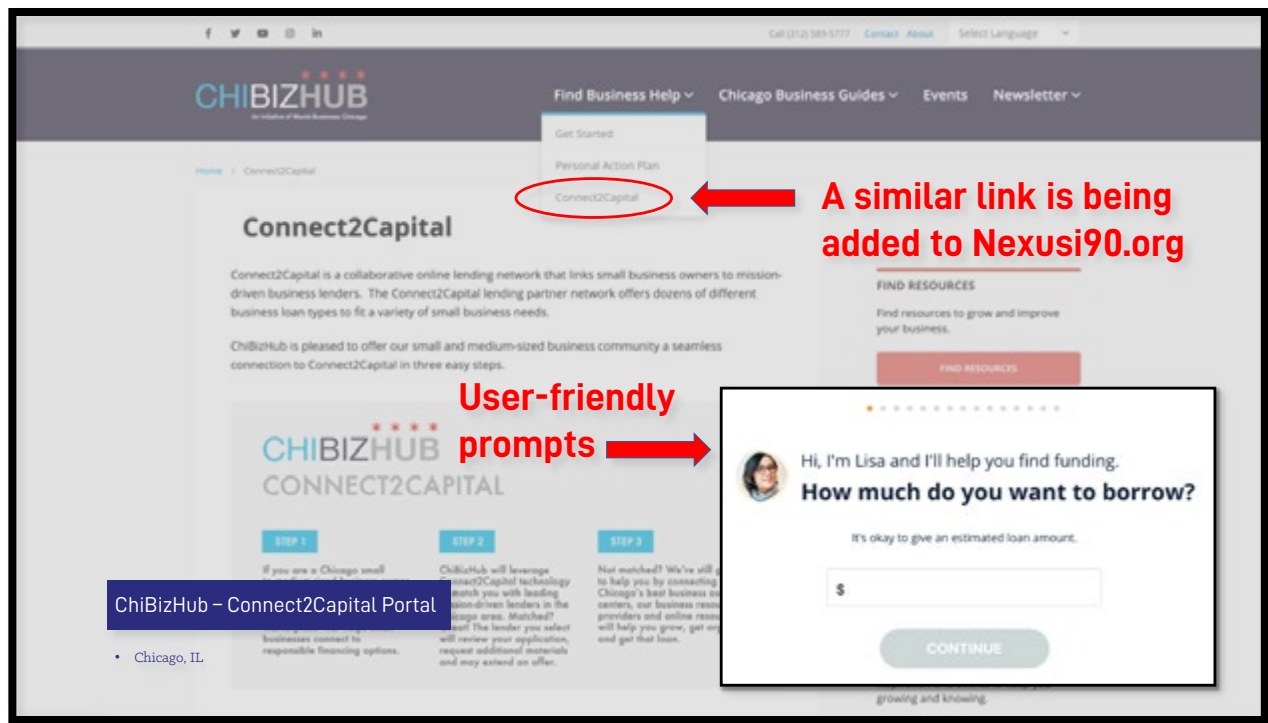
Program Convenings: Host two day convenings *(virtual or in-person)* to kick-off and receive major progress updates at the beginning, middle, and end of the program; these events should include culturally-relevant music, soul checks *(check-ins)*, opening remarks from dignitaries and program administrators, a keynote speaker, relevant panels, team presentations, engaging activities, and breakout rooms/groups; allot six to nine months for planning and execution at varying costs based on delivery format *(virtual vs. in-person)*, refreshments and parking fees according to the number of participants, insurance requirements, interpretation and translation service needs, entertainment, decorations, and honorariums; these costs should be equitably deducted from the funds awarded to the resource partners and organizational coaches cohorts

Program Management: Resource partners should meet with their assigned coaches at least bi-weekly throughout the program, all coaches should meet with program administration at least once monthly for check-ins, an "all-cohort" meeting should be conducted monthly with both cohorts for updates and cohort collaboration, and resource partners should meet with program administration for an individual onboarding session at the beginning of the program and periodically as warranted throughout the program

Program Workshops: All cohort members should be required to participate in an Undoing Racism® Workshop early in the program to inform their work, and principals and tools should be regularly revisited; two to three months for planning and execution at costs equitably deducted from the funds awarded to the resource partner and organizational coaches cohorts



Nexus i90 screenshots



SourceLink affiliate ChiBizHub demonstrates how the Connect2Capital portal will integrate into Nexusi90.org

Resource Partner Enhancement Program – Cohort I Member Organizations



Each Cohort I member above focuses on different entrepreneurial cultural communities: Black-owned, Latinx-owned, Women-owned businesses, low-to-moderate income residents, previously incarcerated and justice system involved residents, and food-based businesses (including new ventures and those who previously operated informally)