



Rapid Recovery Plan

October 2021

Town of Walpole

Acknowledgements



Town of Walpole

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

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

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

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



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Rapid Recovery Program	6
Introduction	8
Diagnostic Framework	9
Diagnostic Key Findings	14
Community Map	16
Key Findings	17
Customer Base	19
Physical Environment	26
Business Environment	36
Administrative Capacity	38
Project Recommendations	40
Project List and Map	44
Public Realm	47
Private Realm	62
Revenue and Sales	69
Tenant Mix	81
Cultural/Arts	86
Administrative Capacity	96

Executive Summary





Executive Summary

Local Rapid Recover 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. Walpole, 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.

Why Develop a Local Rapid Recovery Plan for Downtown Walpole?

Walpole is a growing town of over 25,000 people that takes pride in its Downtown and wants to identify specific projects that can help improve it. The Town has already invested close to \$1.5 million in infrastructure projects Downtown in the past five years, and during the pandemic responded quickly to allow outdoor dining by-right. Two new multifamily residential buildings demonstrate Downtown's growing appeal, adding over 300 housing units between Main Street and the MBTA commuter rail station. And small business owners have invested to open new shops or add outdoor dining during the pandemic.

Despite all this, there's a lingering feeling that Downtown can be further improved to realize its full potential. Walpole's Town Common is an attractive and centrally located gathering space but it is separated from local businesses by busy streets. While public parking is available just behind Main Street businesses, many people perceive parking to be difficult in part because wayfinding and signage is minimal. Sidewalks are in generally good condition but too narrow in many places to support pedestrian amenities like benches, street trees, or outdoor dining space.

The Rapid Recovery Plan program provides an opportunity to amplify the growing momentum and seize a unique opportunity to enhance Downtown Walpole as a beloved community destination and gathering place. Improvements to Downtown will benefit local businesses, residents, and help attract new visitors to explore Walpole.



What are the Greatest Needs and How Do They Align with Project Goals?

Downtown Walpole is generally an attractive, well-maintained Main Street retail corridor. However, several areas were identified that could better support the pedestrian experience, mix of businesses, and general appeal of Downtown. Sidewalks are in generally good condition but too narrow in many places to support pedestrian amenities like benches, street trees, or outdoor dining space. Nighttime lighting is designed for vehicles, not people. Wayfinding signage is limited which makes Downtown less inviting for people to explore.

Downtown Walpole has a diverse set of businesses, some of which support a lively, interesting pedestrian experience and others which do not. Many storefronts lack a visually engaging display which creates gaps of closed window blinds along the sidewalk and blank walls. Several vacant buildings, including the prominent former Town Hall, are in need of repairs and new use so they contribute to the Downtown environment again.

The zoning in the Central Business District needs to be audited to better understand how regulations encourage or discourage certain types of development. Recent mixed-use projects have required multiple variances and waivers, indicative of this need. Signage regulations and permitting processes should also be reviewed to create a more user-friendly application process and a higher quality public and private realm.

How Did the LRRP Process Engage with the Community?

The project team spoke with Town leaders, staff, and the Economic Development Commission to learn about current issues and opportunities. The Town hosted two public meetings to introduce the LRRP program, solicit ideas, and gather feedback on potential priorities. A business survey was distributed in April 2021 to businesses in the Downtown Walpole study area.

What are the Priority Projects That Came from the Plan?

Based on the identified needs, guidance from Destination Downtown and Town staff, and public input, several projects emerged as priorities. Funding opportunities and partnerships will ultimately direct project implementation.

- Increase mix of active storefront businesses to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Improve pedestrian corridors with lighting, street trees, benches, and/or public art.
- Improve building facades, business signage, and storefronts.
- Improve Main Street sidewalks to better support outdoor dining and pedestrian amenities.
- Provide technical assistance to Downtown businesses.

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

A set of recommended projects has been developed that addresses Downtown vitality and business community support. Each proposed project description provides key information on project budget, potential timelines, partners and performance indicators, as well as critical action items and processes. Funding sources noted in the project rubrics are resources for the Town and community groups to seek external funding and commence the next phase of project design and implementation.

These project recommendations provide both short-term recovery efforts for Downtown Walpole and longer-term solutions to address physical needs, business conditions, and the overall appeal of Main Street. Walpole is encouraged to pursue funding opportunities immediately for many of these projects to help Downtown overcome COVID-19's impacts and continue its evolution into a community destination for everyone.



Rapid Recovery Plan Background



125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

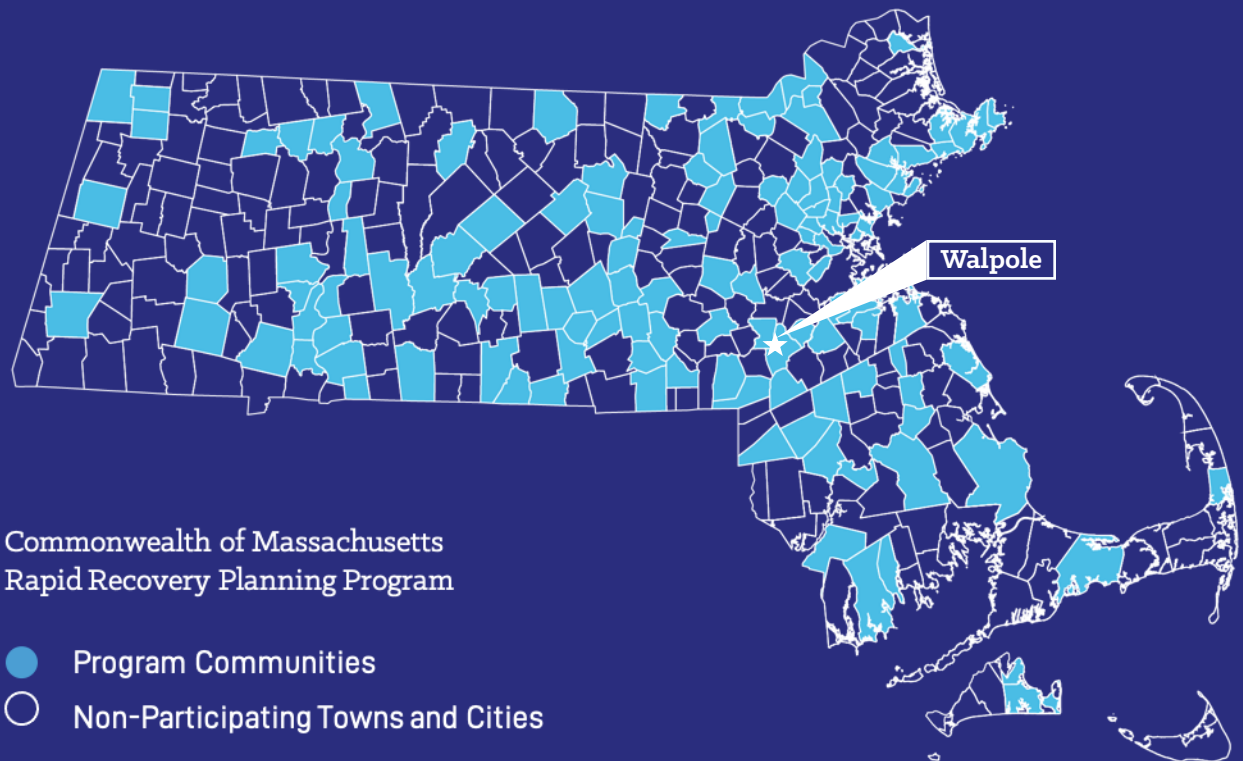
52 Small Communities (Walpole)

51 Medium Communities

16 Large Communities

6 Extra Large Communities

The 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 these downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts.



Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

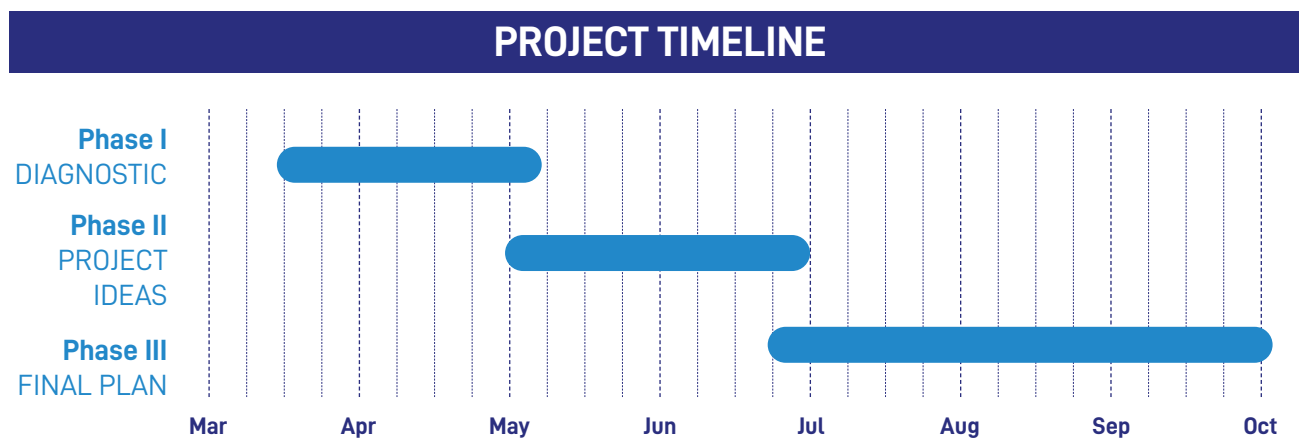
Introduction

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 March and 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.

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



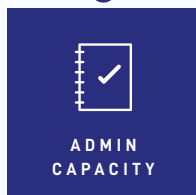
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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.

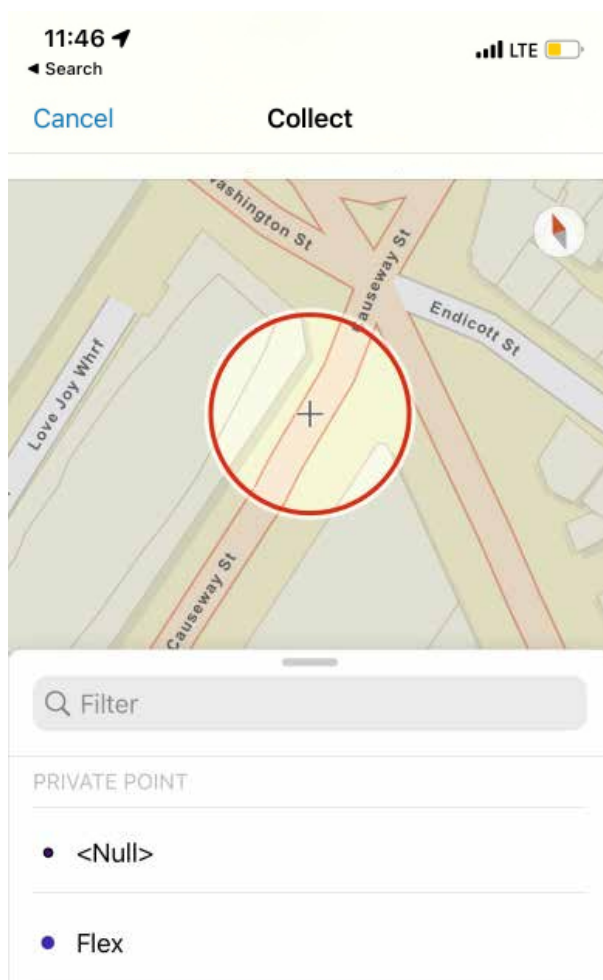
Data Collection Process

In order to effectively capture public and private infrastructure, market demand data, and business environment statistics within the Walpole 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.

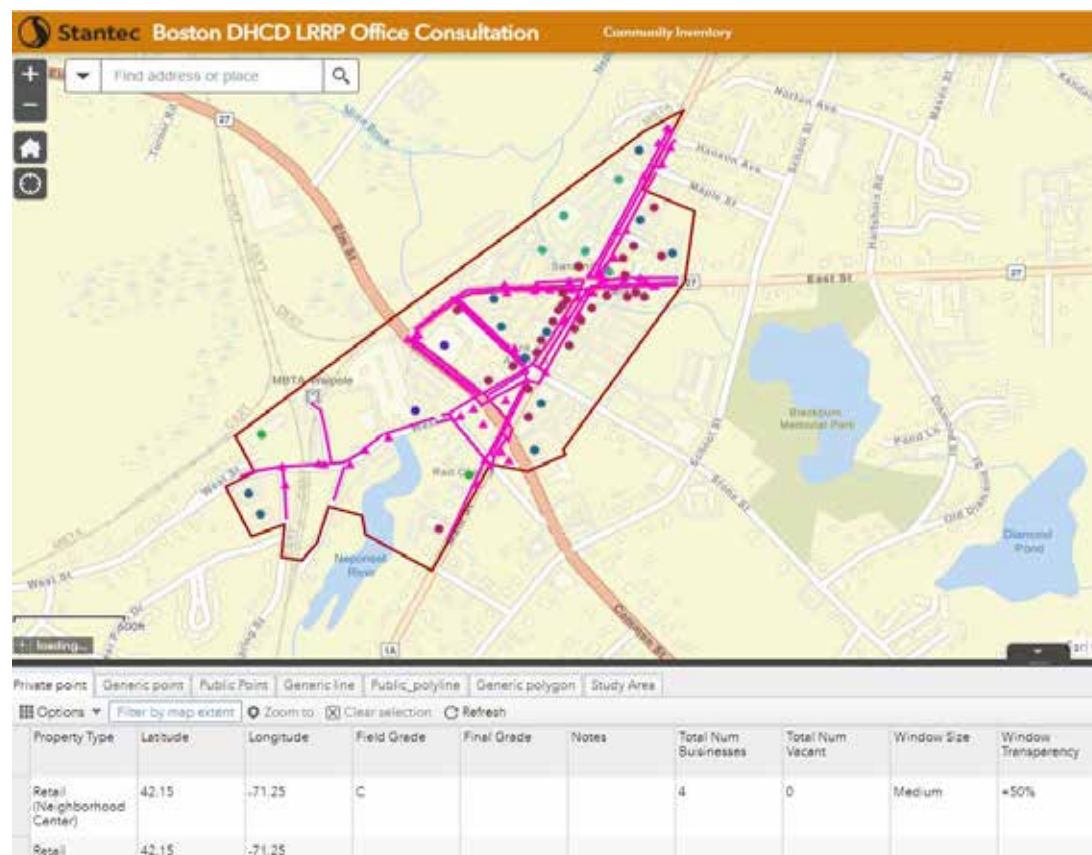


The ArcGIS Collector tool allowed data collectors in the field to develop an online database for public and private realm data

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 Analysis

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

ELEMENT: FACADE



Renovation of storefronts/
building facades



How Downtown Walpole ranks:

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.

Example diagnostic grade for Walpole's "facade conditions" for all businesses within the LRRP Study Area.

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 Key Findings



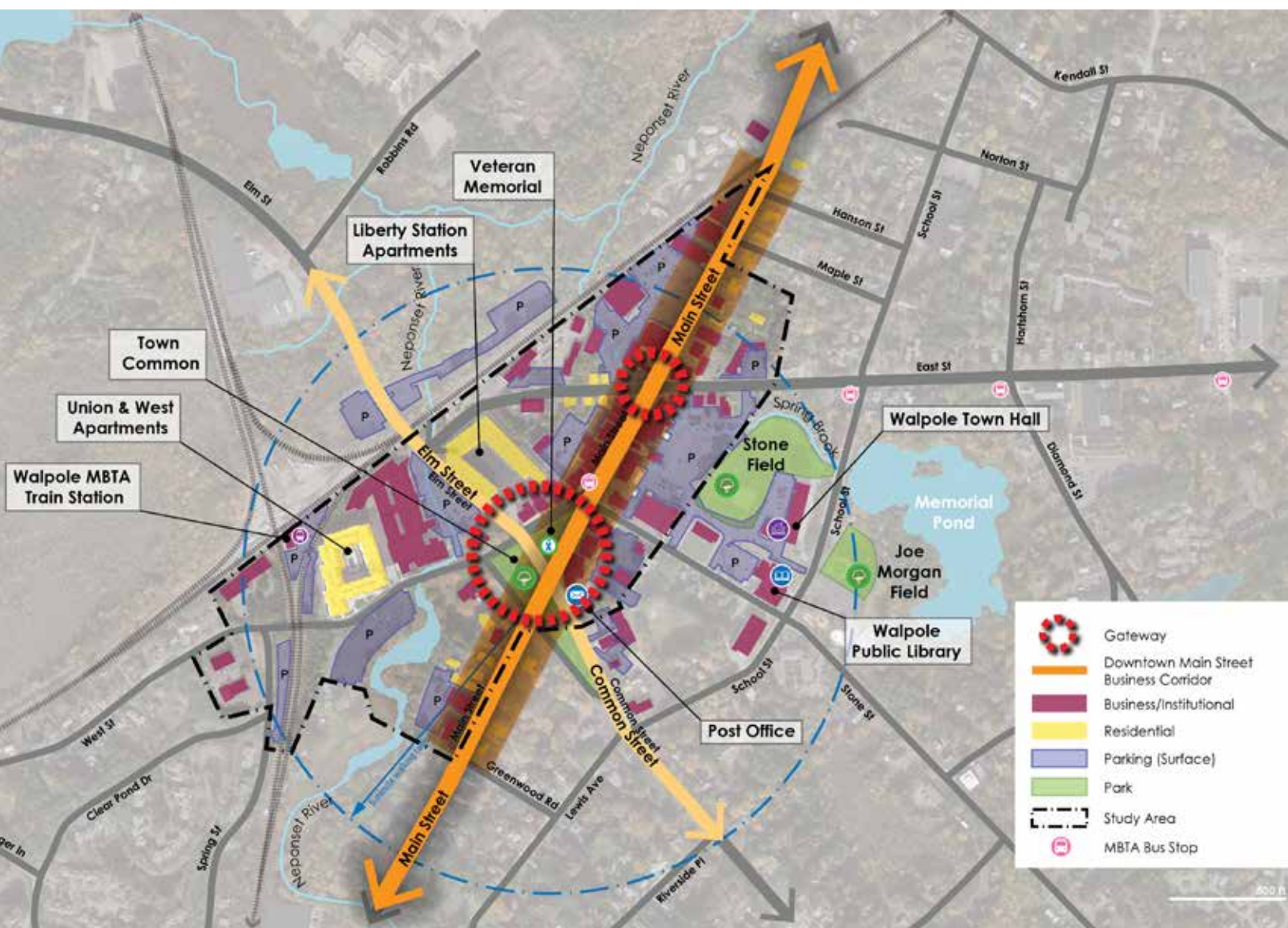
LRRP Study Area

Why focus on the commercial/retail 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 zones 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.

Walpole LRRP Study Area

The Walpole LRRP study area corresponds to the Central Business District (CBD) zoning district. Main Street (Route 1A) is the primary commercial corridor. Elm/Common Street and East Street (Route 27) are secondary corridors through the study area. The MBTA commuter rail station is located a short 5-10 minute walk from Main Street businesses. Walpole's Town Common, comprised of three green spaces separated by Main and Elm/Common, anchors one end of the business core on Main Street. The Main Street Shopping Center known locally as "the CVS Plaza," sits on the opposite end. In between, the former Town Hall building at the corner of Main and Stone Street is a notable structure in need of a new use.



Existing Conditions & Project Orientation Map of Walpole LRRP Study Area Source: Stantec



Walpole Town Common / Source: Stantec



930 Main Street / Source: Stantec

Key Findings & Diagnostic Data Overview



Who lives and works here?

Downtown Walpole's residential population is growing rapidly after two new apartment buildings opened near the MBTA station in the past 18 months. The population is well-educated and slightly more diverse than the Town. Median household income Downtown is comparable to the State but lower than the Town, and average household size indicates that most households are one- or two-person households.



What are physical conditions like?

The public realm is in generally good condition but there are several areas for improvement. Narrow sidewalks do not feel particularly welcoming to pedestrians. Along Main Street, they are too narrow to support sidewalk dining or outdoor retail display, or even to permit benches and other street furniture. Nighttime illumination is not inviting to pedestrian activity either. Tall street light poles are meant for cars, not people, and alleys to public parking areas are poorly lit. The private realm is also in generally good condition, but again has several features to improve. Storefronts and business signage could be better designed to support an interesting walk down Main Street. Several vacant buildings need repairs and new users to bring life back to these spaces.



What are businesses like?

Downtown Walpole has a diverse mix of service commercial and retail businesses. Several popular restaurants, a few retail stores, and a variety of service uses such as hair and nail salons, a dance studio, tutoring, veterinary clinic, and real estate agent populate the most walkable core of Main Street. The Walpole Station Business Center at 55 West Street and CVS Plaza on either end host a variety of office and retail businesses. Most businesses except the restaurants effectively “go dark” in the evenings detracting from a welcoming sense of place.



How do things get done?

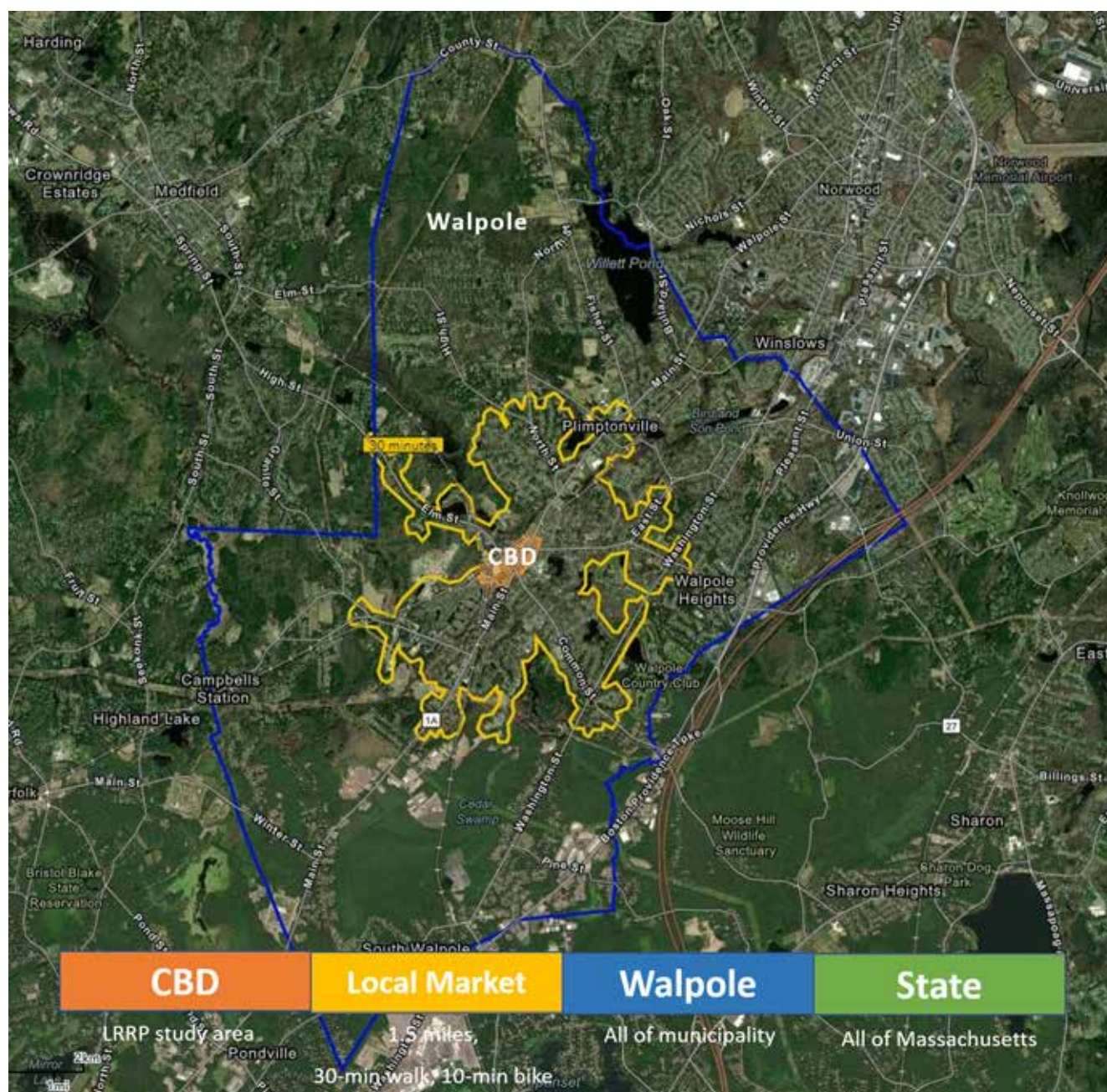
The zoning in the Central Business District needs to be carefully reviewed to identify changes needed to promote the type of development the Town wants to see. Town staff has a track record of success but their capacity to take on additional projects is limited. The Community and Economic Development Department has one full-time staff member. Destination Downtown is a recently formed advocacy organization to promote Downtown businesses that will play an important role supporting future projects but has minimal capacity to lead them.



Highlights from the Customer Base Data

Customer Base Comparison Areas

The customer base analysis compares the CBD study area (Downtown) to the local market (defined as a 1.5-mile area around the CBD i.e. a 10-minute bike ride or 30-minute walk), all of Walpole, and statewide.

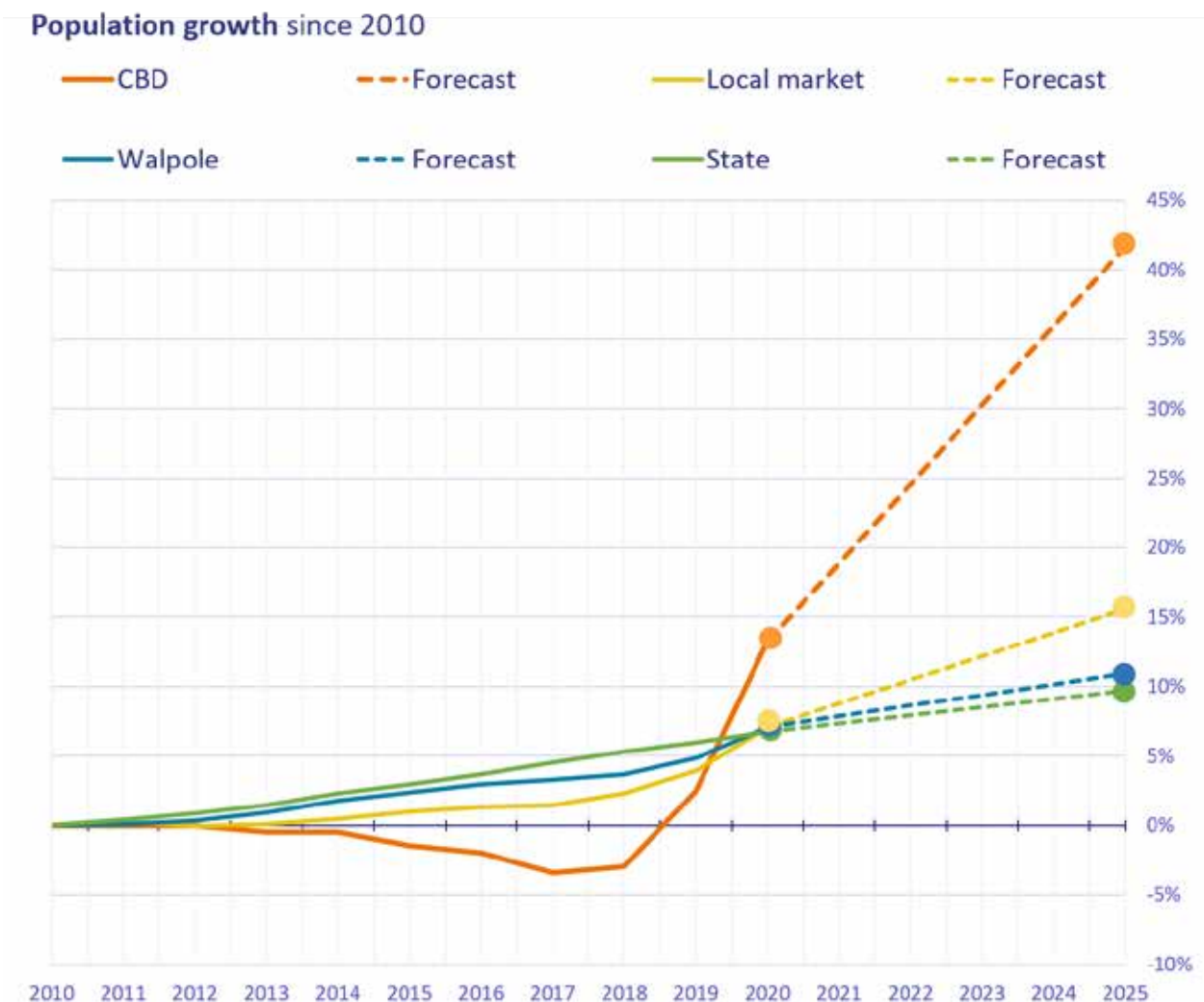
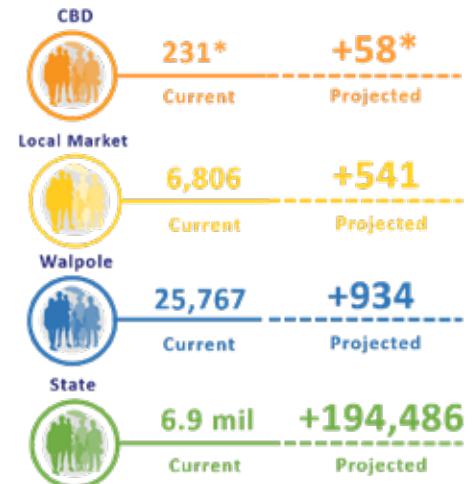




POPULATION TREND FROM 2010 TO 2025

Downtown's population is growing, especially with the recent addition of 344 new apartments. The CBD study area surpasses the state's growth rate while the Town's growth is on par with the state.

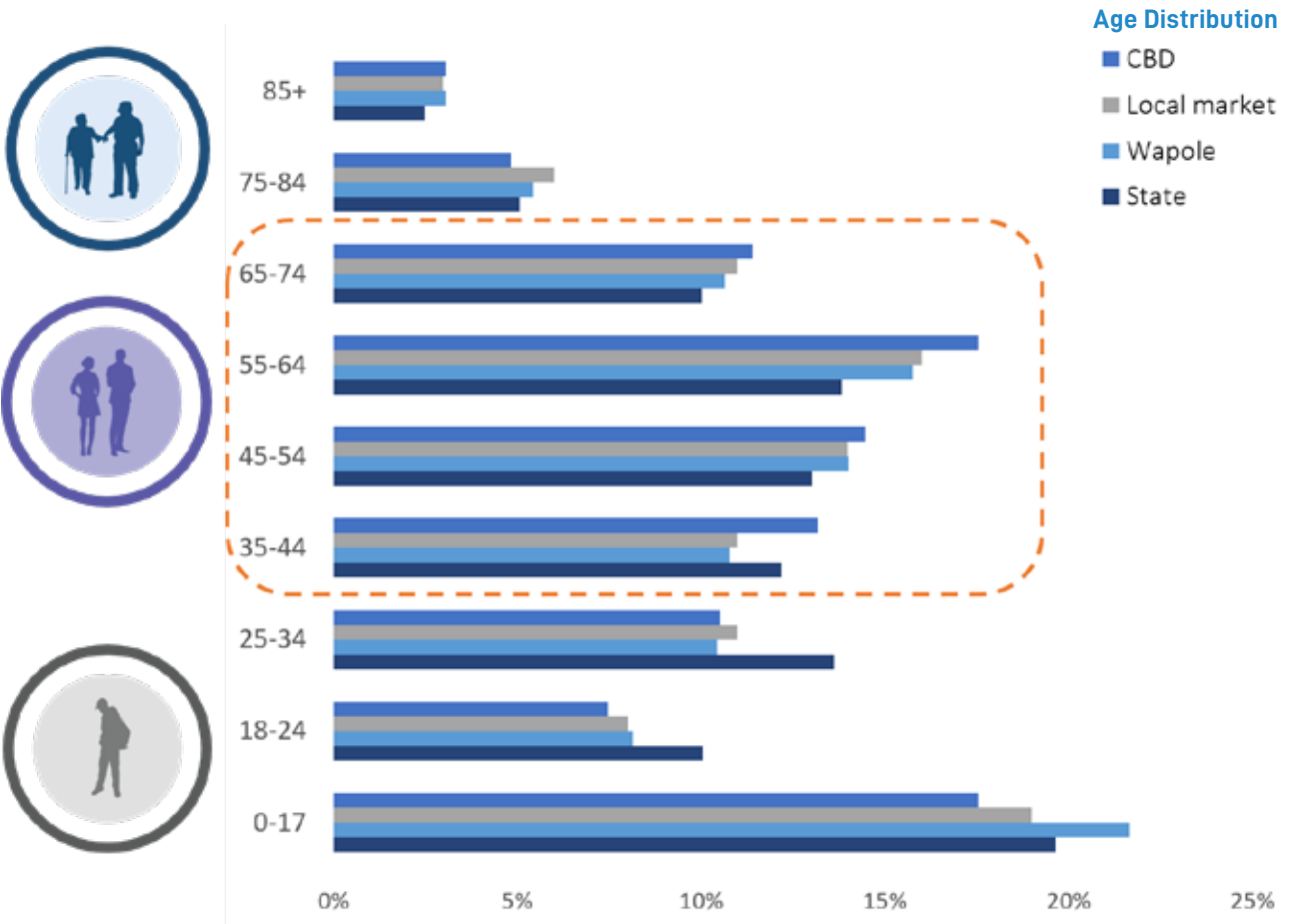
NOTE: Demographic information in this section pre-dates occupancy of the new housing units.





DEMOGRAPHICS

The impact of the new housing units on demographics is unknown at this time, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the median age will decline. The local area's age distribution has a high share of people between the ages of 35 and 74, and relatively fewer people under 34.



CBD



46

Median Age

Walpole



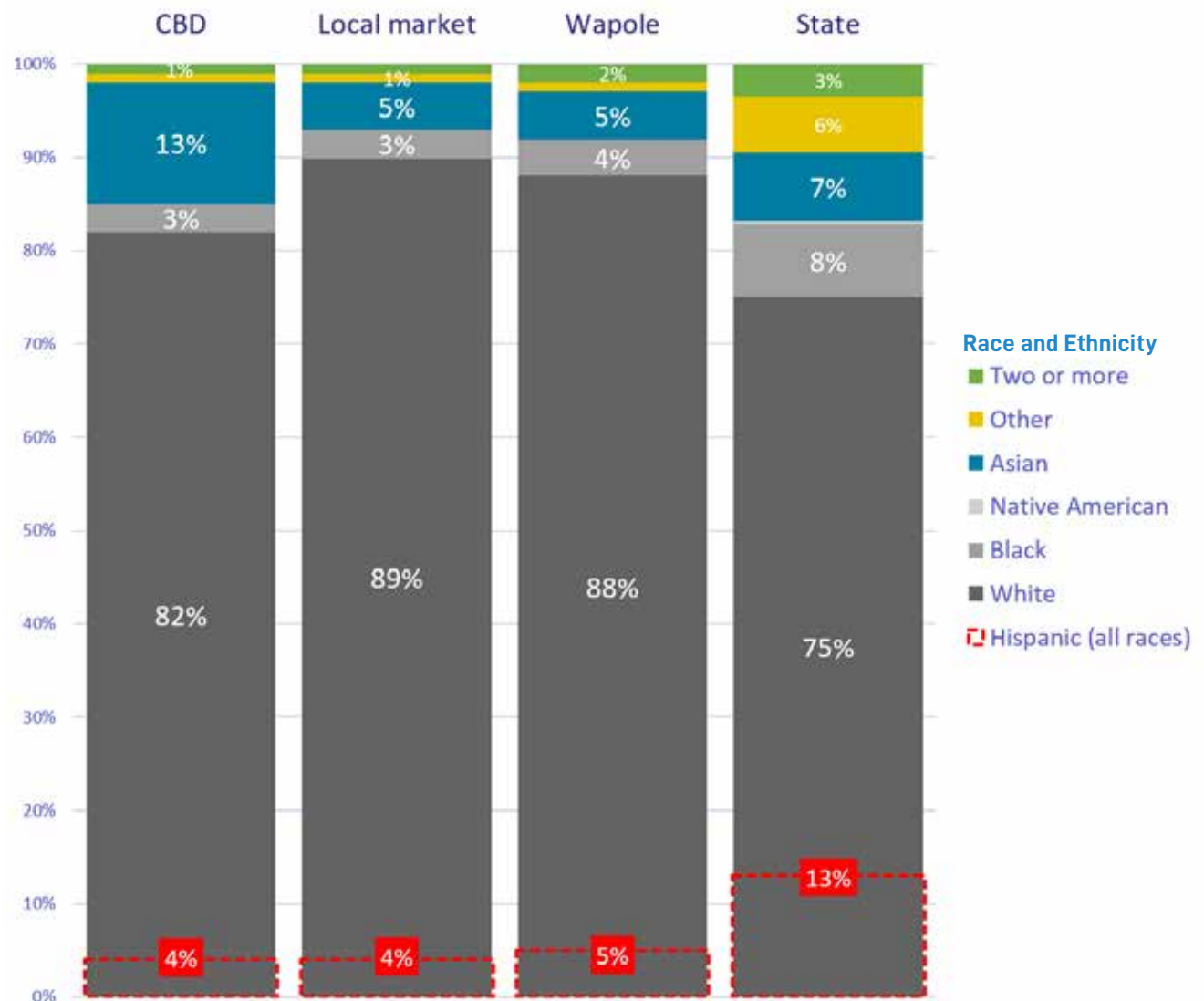
44

Median Age



DEMOGRAPHICS

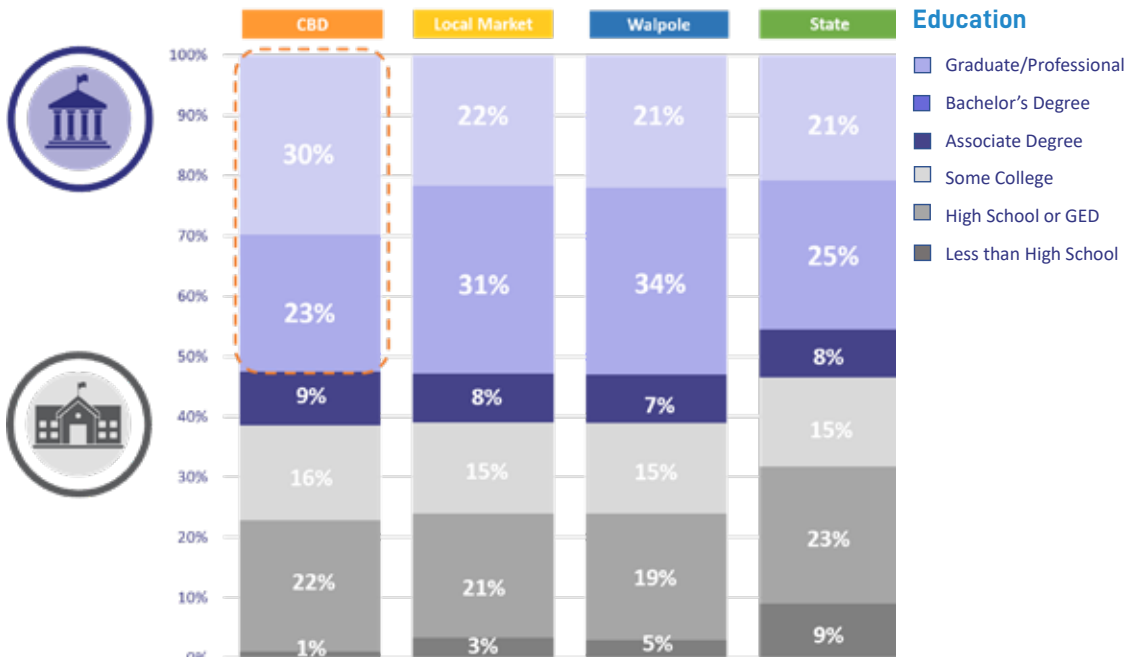
The Downtown population is slightly more diverse than the Town but less diverse than the state. The study area has a relatively lower proportion of people with Hispanic origin.





EDUCATION

More than 50 percent of CBD residents have a bachelor degree or higher, comparable to the Town overall and higher than the state.



CUSTOMER STATISTICS

The CBD and local area are expected to add an additional 500+ people* in the coming 5 years.

Population	CBD	Local Market	Walpole	State
Avg. household size	1.6	2.4	2.7	2.5
Residential population	231	6,806	25,767	6,993,463
Households	142	2,820	9,309	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	+58*	+541*	+934	+194,486
5-year forecast, household change	+36*	+254*	+386	+73,332
Median age	46	46	44	40

* based on ESRI projections



JOBS AND HOUSING

The number of jobs in the CBD was more than double the residential population prior to the two new apartment buildings opening. This contrasts with the Town overall which has significantly more residents than jobs.

New housing projects in the CBD study area and local market will add to population growth. Increasing interest in downtown living presents business opportunities. Liberty Station added 152 1- and 2-bedroom units and Union & West added 192 units. This could mean 400-500+ new residents when they are fully occupied.



Employment and income

	CBD	Local Market	Walpole	State
Median household income	\$78k	\$104k	\$114k	\$81k
Employees	572	3,578	12,222	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	17	726	3,032	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	2.3	0.5	0.5	0.5



Housing

Median home value	\$444k	\$472k	\$528k	\$415k
5-year forecast, home value growth	10%	13%	15%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	68%	77%	80%	61%



ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

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.

	CBD	Local Market	Walpole	State
Other indicators				
Own or lease any vehicle	91%	91%	92%	83%
Have a smartphone	91%	91%	91%	90%
Carry health insurance	84%	83%	82%	77%
Poverty				
Households w/ food stamps/SNAP	3%	5%	4%	12%
Unemployed^ (age 16+)	12%	12%	13%	15%
Households below poverty level	8%	5%	4%	11%

^ as of mid-2020.

Town of Walpole preliminary unemployment rate: 5.1% in April 2021 (latest available)

Massachusetts preliminary unemployment rate: 5.9% in April 2021 (latest available)

Recent estimates for CBD and local market unavailable.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

The visual appearance and condition of public infrastructure, private buildings and storefronts plays an important role in the visitor and customer experience of a downtown. Accessibility from parking to the sidewalk, comfort while walking on sidewalks, and inviting storefront windows all have an impact on the vitality of a commercial district. It is helpful to look at the physical environment as two closely related but distinct elements: the public realm typically controlled by the municipality and the private realm controlled by individual property owners. Each of these requires fundamentally different tactics and funding mechanisms to make improvements.

PUBLIC REALM

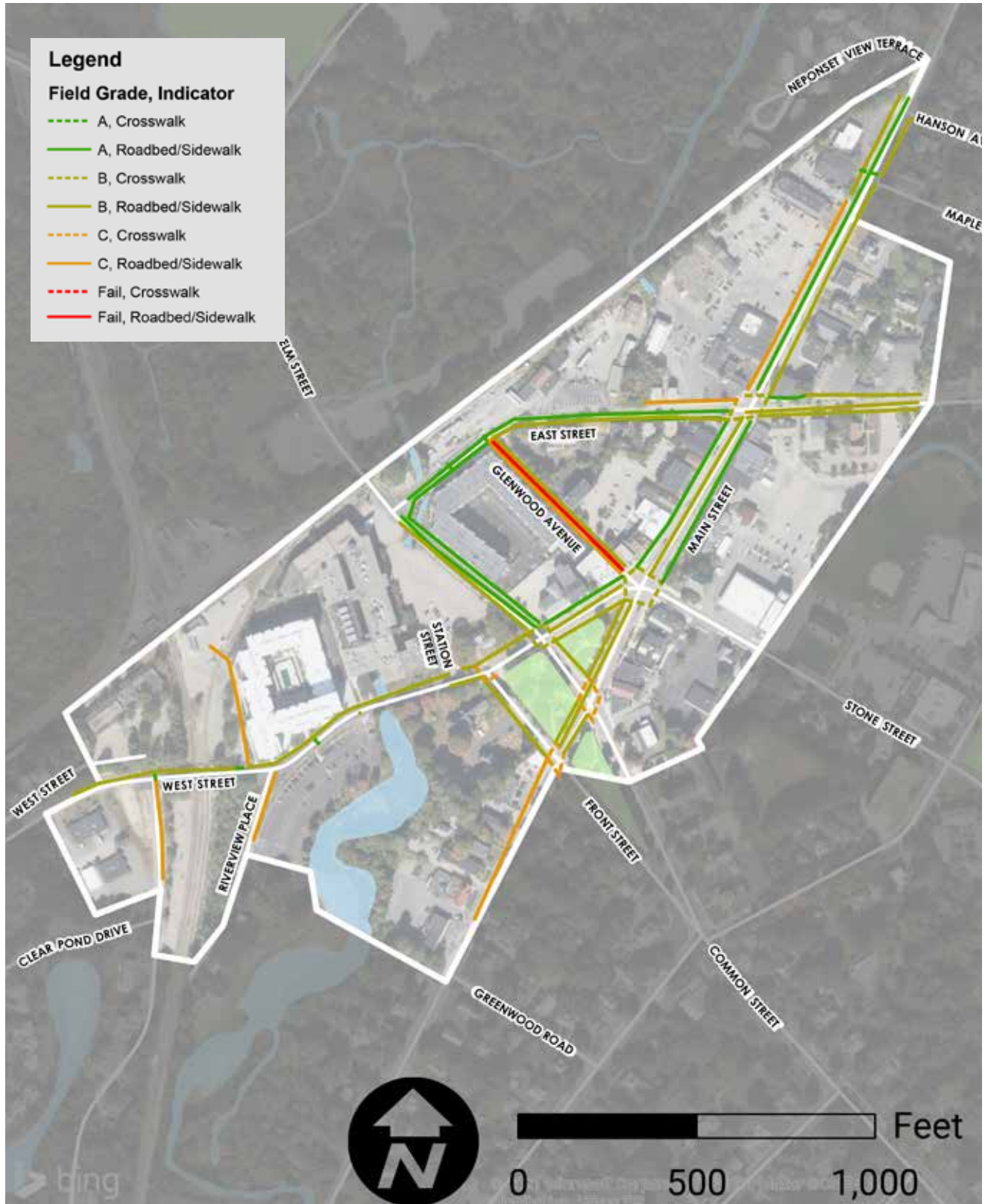
- Sidewalks lack pedestrian amenities and are generally too narrow for sidewalk dining. Existing sidewalks are generally in good repair but are too narrow to permit outdoor dining or display, or even amenities like benches or street trees. Sidewalks between the commuter rail station and Main Street businesses could also be more welcoming to encourage pedestrian activity.
- Additional wayfinding is needed. Small signs for public parking areas exist, but overall there is a lack of pedestrian wayfinding Downtown. A comprehensive system is needed to connect destinations and encourage people to explore.
- Street lighting does not create a welcoming nighttime environment. While lighting exists in the study area, it is primarily directed to the roadway and does not support pedestrian visibility, safety, and the beautification of buildings within the study area.

PRIVATE REALM

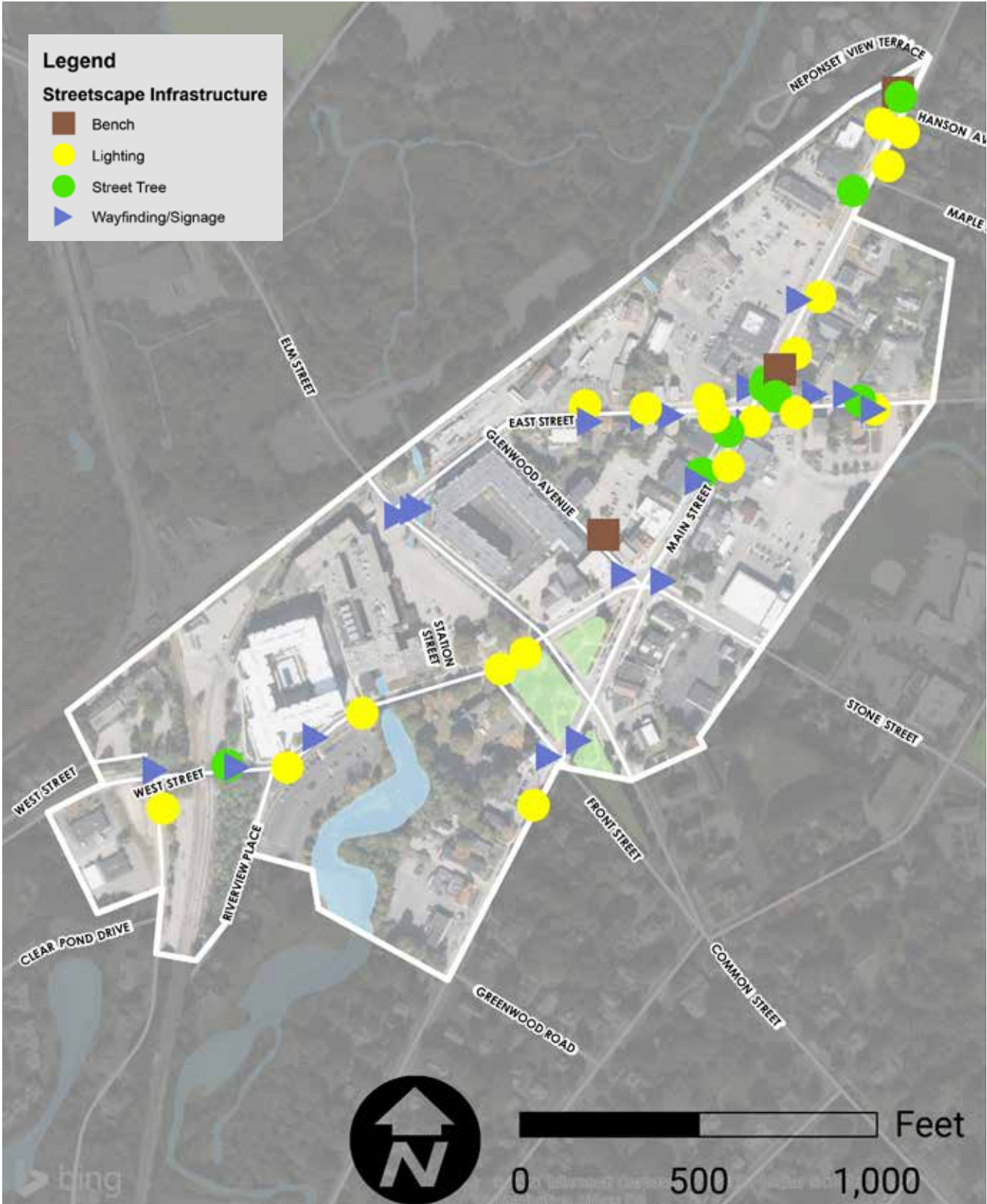
- Business storefronts need improvements. Many storefronts lack attractive retail displays, awnings, or lighting to highlight features and enhance the evening environment. Several ground floor businesses are not conducive to inviting storefronts.
- Business signage needed for pedestrians. Most businesses have clear signage, but it is directed more for drivers than for pedestrians walking on the sidewalks. Few businesses have projecting or blade signs that attract pedestrian attention.
- Vacant storefronts and buildings detract from appeal. Many of the buildings in the study area are in good condition. However, several notable buildings need renovations in order to improve the look and feel of the area. Vacant storefronts and blank facades create gaps in the pedestrian environment that deters walking. Many businesses effectively "go dark" at night by being closed and poorly lit.



STREETS, SIDEWALKS, AND CROSSWALKS



STREETSCAPE AMENITIES





PUBLIC REALM: SIDEWALK GRADE



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



Existing
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PUBLIC REALM: STREET TREES & BENCHES GRADE



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



Existing
Source: Stantec Field Imagery



PUBLIC REALM: LIGHTING GRADE



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



*Existing lighting structures in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery*

PUBLIC REALM: WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE GRADE



Limited to no signage available throughout the study area.



*Existing wayfinding and signage Infrastructure
Source: Stantec Field Imagery*



PUBLIC REALM: ROADBED & CROSSWALKS GRADE

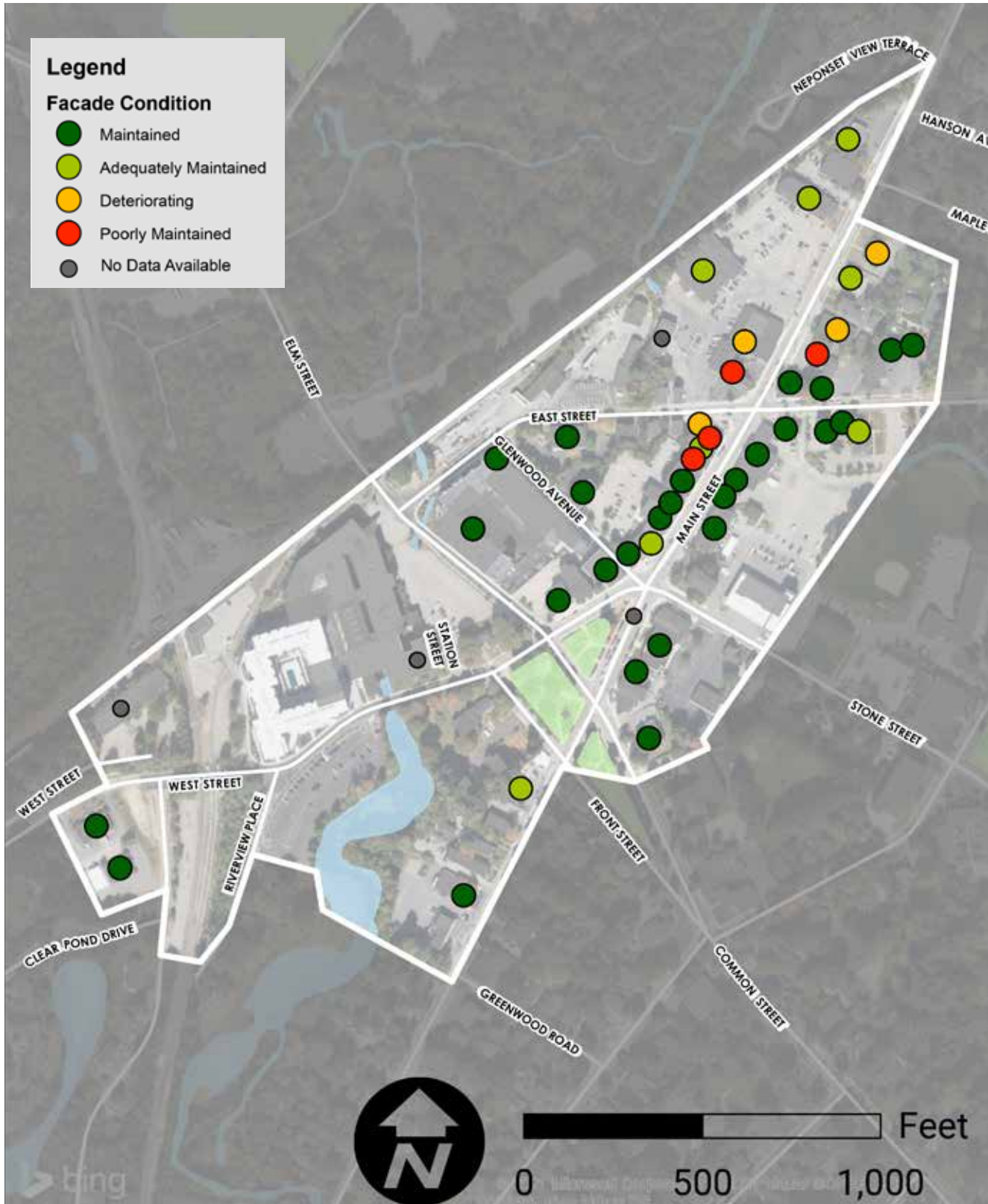


Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.



Existing roadbed and crosswalks in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

BUILDING FACADE CONDITIONS





PRIVATE REALM: WINDOW GRADE



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

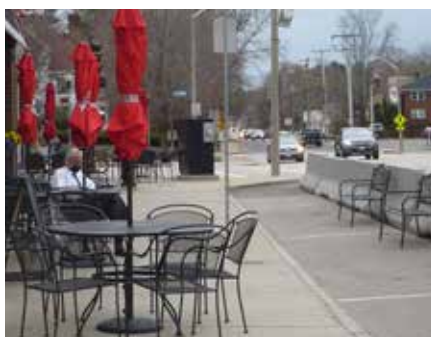


Existing windows in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PRIVATE REALM: OUTDOOR DISPLAY & DINING GRADE



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



Existing outdoor displays and dining in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery



PRIVATE REALM: SIGNAGE GRADE



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



Existing signage in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PRIVATE REALM: AWNING GRADE



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.



Existing awnings in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery



PRIVATE REALM: FACADE GRADE



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



*Existing facade conditions at
Source: Stantec Field Imagery*

PRIVATE REALM: LIGHTING GRADE



About 50% of storefronts have some interior lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.



*Existing lighting fixtures at
Source: Stantec Field Imagery*



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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 Downtown Walpole

There are approximately 120 businesses located Downtown. Only about 16 percent are classified as either retail trade, food service, or arts and entertainment—businesses that typically create an interesting, welcoming downtown environment. Business classified as 'other services (except public administration)' comprise the largest share Downtown at 15 percent.

Total Number of
Businesses
(CBD study area)

120



Number of Businesses closed
since COVID
(temporary or permanent)

0



Number of Vacant
Storefronts

10



Source: ESRI Business Analyst, Site Visit



BUSINESS SURVEY

The RRP Business Survey aimed to obtain input to guide plan development, gain feedback from the local business community, and collect data across all LRRP communities to inform statewide programs and policy. The survey addressed topics including business satisfaction with various aspects of Walpole's Downtown, business conditions and the impacts from COVID-19, and input from the business community regarding potential strategies and types of assistance.

Among business survey respondents (of which about 40 percent self-identified as a retail or food service business):

- More than a third are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the condition of building facades, storefronts, and business signage, and over half rated the renovation of storefronts or buildings as important or very important.
- Two-thirds rated implementing marketing strategies for the district as important or very important. Over half would like to see recruitment programs to attract new businesses.
- Approximately 60 percent rated sidewalk and streetscape improvements as important or very important.
- Three-quarters would like to see changes in public parking availability, management, or policies.

The top 3 business impacts due to COVID-19 were:

- Decline in revenue
- Incurred expenses for safety measures
- Established alternate mode to sell/deliver products

86%
of businesses
had fewer on-site
customers

81%
of businesses generated less
revenue in 2020 than they did in
2019, and **43%** saw revenues
decline by 25% or more



ADMIN
CAPACITY

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 Walpole

The Town of Walpole's municipal staff has a track record of success. While they have capacity to take on new projects, prioritization and phasing will be needed to work within staff time and funding constraints. For example, the Community and Economic Development Department has a single staff person working on initiatives town-wide. The Town's Economic Development Commission is aware of these issues as well.

Supplementing the Town's capacity, Destination Downtown is a two-year-old organization advocating for and promoting the Downtown area. It is led by an Executive Director and volunteer Board of Directors.

The Central Business District (CBD) zoning regulations are generally adequate but need careful review to identify areas to revise or change. These improvements should facilitate walkable mixed-use development and allow a variety of active retail and commercial uses. Permitting processes could also be streamlined to be more user-friendly and less time-consuming.

Summary of Needs

Key Findings

Downtown Walpole is a successful small commercial area with the opportunity to continue growing and developing into more of a local and regional destination. The diagnostic inventory and conversations with Town staff, Destination Downtown, and the Economic Development Commission revealed several priority areas for improvement. Improving pedestrian amenities, helping existing businesses, and updating zoning are some of these priorities. The diagnostic grades and data-driven analyses give the Town the opportunity to seek funding for capital investments and encourage the development of resources to promote economic development in Downtown Walpole.

Translating Needs into Project Recommendations

Based on the identified needs for Downtown Walpole and previous studies like the Downtown Parking and Economic Development Report (2019), and the Downtown Action Plan (2015), the project team worked with Town staff and Destination Downtown to develop a list of potential projects. These projects, described in the next section, address the primary challenges facing the LRRP study area.

Project Recommendations & Implementation



Identification & Prioritization of Projects

Project Identification

The project development phase built on the findings from the diagnostic phase to create a list of potential projects. Many project ideas emerged from conversations about how best to address a need. Several came from previous plans such as the Downtown Parking and Economic Development Plan (2019). These ideas were discussed with Destination Downtown and Town staff to refine them to the unique characteristics of Downtown Walpole today.

Subject Matter Expert (SME) Guidance

The project team worked with three SME's to take a focused look at three projects. These experts provided insights and advice from their specialized experience, recommended best practices to consider, and strengthened elements of the project rubrics.

Project Prioritization

Based on the identified needs, guidance from Destination Downtown and Town staff, and public input, several projects emerged as priorities. Funding opportunities and partnerships will ultimately direct project implementation.

- Increase mix of active storefront businesses to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Improve pedestrian corridors with lighting, street trees, benches, and/or public art.
- Improve building facades, business signage, and storefronts.
- Improve Main Street sidewalks to better support outdoor dining and pedestrian amenities.
- Provide technical assistance to Downtown businesses.
- Increase use of Walpole's Town Common by improving amenities.
- Create comprehensive wayfinding and branding system for Downtown.

Public Engagement Efforts



Stakeholder Engagement

The project team spoke with Town leadership and staff, property owners, Destination Downtown, and the Economic Development Commission (EDC) to better understand the issues and opportunities in Downtown Walpole. These conversations informed the planning process and provided on-the-ground insights about public realm needs, private building conditions, and local economic development.

Kick-off and Diagnostic Data

Public Meeting

Early in the planning process, the Town hosted a virtual community meeting to introduce the LRRP process. The meeting was recorded and broadcast on local Walpole Media as well. The project team presented the program goals and schedule, diagnostic approach, and key findings. Participants discussed several topics including hosting more events to draw people Downtown,

providing more outdoor seating and places to spend time, addressing vacant buildings and storefronts, and assisting local businesses.

Project Recommendations

Public Meeting

As the project team was finalizing project recommendations, the Town hosted a second community meeting to present the draft recommendations. This hybrid in-person and virtual meeting provided an opportunity to discuss potential priorities among the projects.

Community Survey

An online survey was publicized to complement the meeting presentation. Posters of the recommended projects were also displayed at a Downtown arts festival to gather additional input from residents.

Project Overview

Project 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

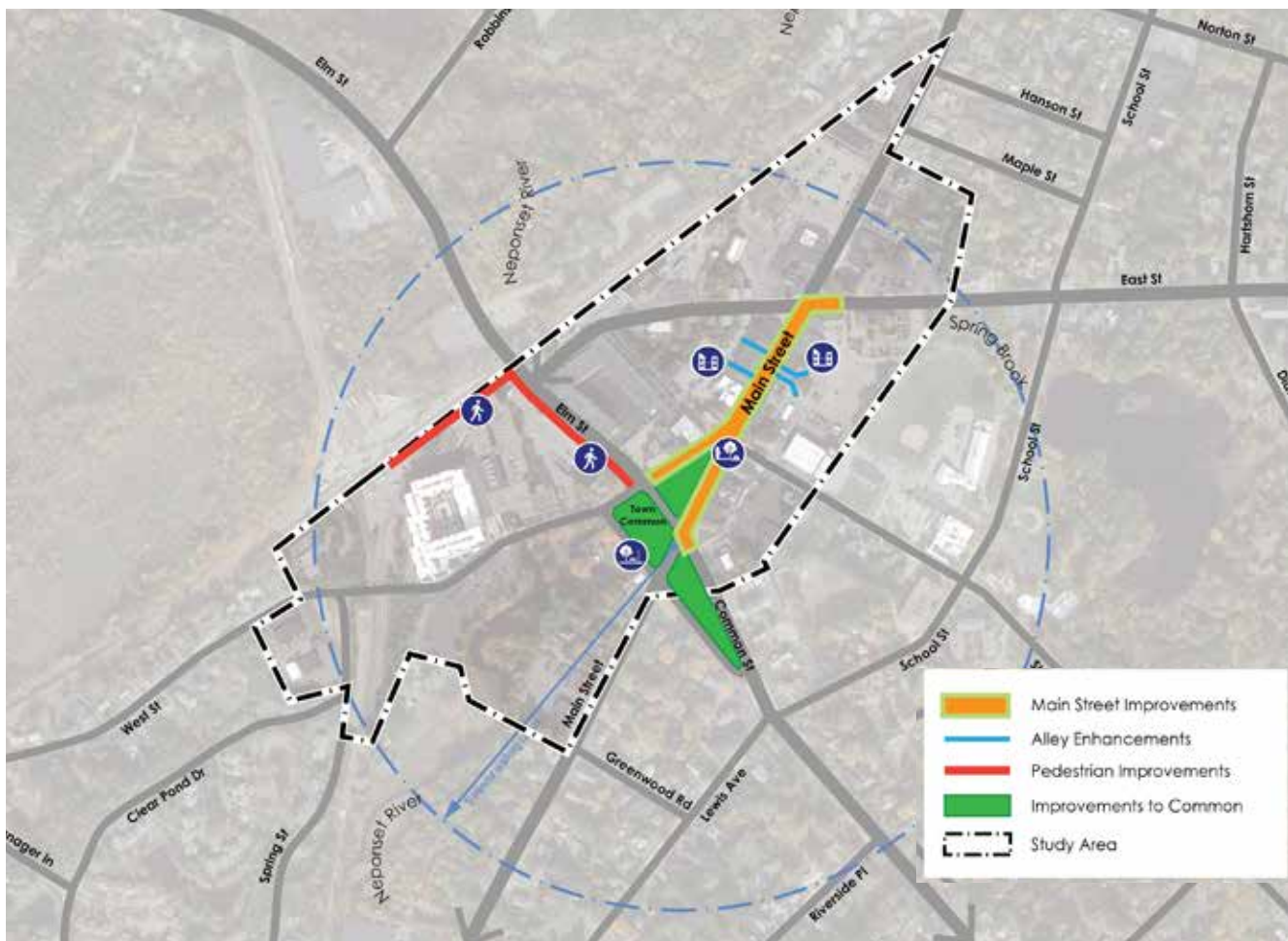
Capacity-building projects help make local governments and their partner agencies more able to take on the other kinds of project efforts recommended in this Local Rapid Recovery Plan.

Walpole LRRP Project List			
Project Idea	Description	Project Theme	Budget
Improve Key Pedestrian Corridors Downtown	This project will assess the feasibility of streetscape improvements to key pedestrian corridors, design those improvements, and construct them.	Public Realm	Large Budget (>\$200K)
Improve Main Street Sidewalks to Better Support Pedestrian Amenities and Outdoor Dining	This project will assess the feasibility of streetscape improvements on Main Street to support pedestrian activity and local businesses, design those improvements, and construct them.	Public Realm	Large Budget (>\$200K)
Increase Use of Walpole's Town Common by Improving Amenities	This attractive landscaped open space anchors one end of Main Street downtown and is an important community space.	Public Realm	Medium Budget (\$50-200K)
Improve Building Facades, Storefronts, and Business Signage Along the Main Street Corridor	Building and business owners to upgrade their facades, storefronts, and business signage along Main Street to support a more pedestrian-friendly environment.	Private Realm	Medium Budget (\$50-200K)
Provide Technical Assistance to Downtown Retail and Restaurants	This technical assistance program will include two parallel initiatives offering one-on-one consulting, seminars, and funding assistance.	Revenue/Sales	Small Budget (<\$50K)
Create Comprehensive Wayfinding and Branding System for Downtown Walpole	This initiative will develop a new brand identity for downtown Walpole and a wayfinding program to improve the visitor experience. The goal is to raise downtown Walpole's profile regionally and to improve the visitor experience by making it easier to find parking, businesses, and other attractions.	Revenue/Sales	Medium Budget (\$50-200K)
Increase Mix of Active Storefront Businesses	This project will develop a targeted recruitment program to market Downtown Walpole as an attractive place to do business. As a short-term strategy, it will also create a short-term pop-up activation strategy for vacant storefronts.	Tenant Mix	Medium Budget (\$50-200K)
Add Public Art to Improve Alley Connections to Parking Lots	These functional pedestrian alleys connect public parking areas located behind Main Street buildings to the shops, restaurants, and businesses along Main Street sidewalks. Turning these into eye-catching, creatively designed spaces that offer enhanced lighting, seating, landscaping, and public art will add to Downtown's character while encouraging use of the public parking areas.	Culture/Arts	Medium Budget (\$50-200K)
Expand Downtown Programming and Leverage Visitors to Boost Local Businesses	This project will work with community and business partners to expand the Downtown events calendar to include more regular programming and new events that will enliven Downtown and support local businesses.	Culture/Arts	Small-Medium Budget (< \$200K)
Review Zoning and Permitting in the CBD and Implement Recommended Changes	This review of local zoning and permitting will streamline approval processes for local businesses and property owners in the CBD. Zoning and permitting changes are intended to address shortcomings in the physical environment, create a more user-friendly application process, and provide greater flexibility for local businesses.	Administrative Capacity	Small Budget (<\$50K)
Expand Destination Downtown's Capacity and Consider Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID)	Destination Downtown is a recently-formed, community-led non-profit dedicated to improving downtown Walpole. It is founded on the four pillars of the national Main Street America program: design, promotion, organization and economic vitality. This project will explore opportunities to expand its organizational capacity to increase its positive impact downtown.	Administrative Capacity	Small-Medium Budget (<\$200K)

Project Map & List

Project Locations

Recommended projects with a specific location in mind are mapped below. These are primarily public realm projects. Other projects such as business assistance and administrative projects would apply throughout the study area and are not mapped.



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, time frame, 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 to more than \$200K), it can be overwhelming and 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 in the previous pages organizes the 1 projects for the Walpole LRRP plan by implementation time-frame (short, medium, or long-term), as well as budget range (less than \$50K or greater than \$200K). Organizing projects by potential budget and time-frame 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.

Improve Key Pedestrian Corridors Downtown

Category



Public Realm

Location

- MBTA walkway from station to Elm Street
 - Elm Street from East Street to Main Street
 - Alleys between Main Street and public parking lots
- Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project idea generated from:

- Destination Downtown
- Walpole Community and Economic Development
- Downtown Action Plan (2015)
- Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)

Project would be led by Department of Public Works in partnership with Community Development.



Conceptual rendering of potential streetscape improvement ideas along Elm Street walking toward Downtown.

Budget



Large Budget (>\$200K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/administrative time to develop RFP, complete procurement, and administer project
- Design/Engineering costs
- Construction cost

Potential Funding Sources:

- MAPC Technical Assistance Program (concept design)
- MassDOT Complete Streets or Shared Streets and Spaces
- MassWorks Infrastructure Program
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Town General Fund

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

- 2 months: Analyze corridors to identify dimensional constraints, key issues and opportunities
- 6 months: Engage residents and stakeholders including business and property owners
- 6 - 24 months: Complete design, approvals, and contractor procurement
- 2-18 months: Construct improvements

Risk



Medium Risk

Risks include:

- Physical constraints: Both the MBTA walkway and the Elm Street sidewalk have limited widths. An initial feasibility analysis can mitigate risk by identifying what options are possible.
- Community support: Planning for improvements will need to accommodate a variety of interests within a constrained physical space. An inclusive, transparent planning process can build support and mitigate this risk.
- Business support: Business and building owners will be impacted during construction. Involvement in the planning process and a mitigation plan during construction can mitigate this risk.
- Funding: A significant streetscape project will require substantial funding. Competitiveness of the funding application, local matching requirements, and timing of funding sources add uncertainty.

Key Performance Indicators

- Increase in pedestrian counts along improved routes
- Perception of improvements collected via intercept surveys
- Reduced traffic counts in study area along improved routes

Partners & Resources

- Department of Public Works
- MBTA
- Private property owners

Diagnostic

Walkability improvements downtown have been recommended in several recent planning studies. Narrow sidewalks and limited pedestrian amenities make walking a less attractive option.

Diagnostic:

- The MBTA walkway is narrow and unattractive but the most direct route to Main Street.
- The Elm Street sidewalk is ~5' wide and lacks pedestrian-scale lighting. It is located next to on-street parking with ~5' grass strip between pedestrians and a private parking lot.
- Sidewalks and crosswalks generally were rated a B. Street trees, benches, and lighting were rated a C.
- Half of business survey respondents rated the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks as neutral or dissatisfied.

Covid impacts:

- Covid greatly reduced pedestrian foot traffic downtown and use of the commuter rail station. As people return to work and to downtown, attractive walking routes will better connect the MBTA station to local businesses and connect public parking to Main Street.

Action Item

This project will assess the feasibility of streetscape improvements to key pedestrian corridors, design those improvements, and construct them.

1. **Determine Feasibility of Streetscape Improvements:** Conduct preliminary feasibility analysis to determine realistic improvement options.
2. **Implement Streetscape Improvements:** Advance preliminary ideas from conceptual design through construction documentation. Improvements may include pedestrian-scale lighting, seating, planters and hanging baskets, green infrastructure, or other elements to enhance the pedestrian experience.



Elm Street sidewalk between MBTA and Downtown.



MBTA walkway between the platform and Elm Street.

Process

Action: Determine Feasibility of Streetscape Improvement

- Confirm key pedestrian corridor locations for further study.
- Contact alley-adjacent property owners to confirm participation and discuss ideas.
- Contact MBTA to discuss walkway, cooperation, restrictions, etc.
- Conduct a feasibility analysis to understand opportunities and constraints re: available space in the public ROW, availability of electrical for lighting, etc.
- Measure pedestrian activity in key corridors and conduct intercept surveys to understand existing use patterns.

Action: Implement Streetscape Improvements

- Develop conceptual design for potential improvements with preliminary Opinion of Probable Construction Costs (OPCC) and share for feedback.
- Develop final design and revise OPCC.
- Secure construction funding.
- Prepare bid package for public improvements.
- Select contractor.
- Construct improvements, punchlist, and closeout.
- Measure pedestrian activity after improvements and conduct intercept surveys.

Improve Main Street Sidewalks to Better Support Pedestrian Amenities and Outdoor Dining

Category



Public Realm

Location

Main Street from Common to East Street
Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project idea generated from:

- Destination Downtown
- Walpole Community and Economic Development
- Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)
- Shared Streets and Spaces grant application (2020)

Project would be led by Department of Public Works in partnership with Community Development.

Budget



Large Budget (>\$200K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/administrative time to develop RFP, complete procurement, and administer project
- Design/Engineering costs
- Construction cost

Potential Funding Sources:

- MAPC Technical Assistance Program (concept design)
- MassDOT Complete Streets or Shared Streets and Spaces
- MassWorks Infrastructure Program
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Town General Fund



Main Street sidewalks in Downtown Walpole

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 yrs)

- 2 months: Analyze Main Street's physical and functional characteristics and uses to identify key issues and opportunities.
- 6 months: Engage residents and stakeholders including business and property owners, Walpole Fire and Police
- 6 - 24 months: Complete design, approvals, and contractor procurement
- 2-24 months: Construct improvements

Risk



Medium Risk- A reconstruction of the streetscape is disruptive to adjacent businesses and residents and impacts parking, building access, traffic, and utilities. Timing for construction should take into consideration how businesses are recovering from the impacts of the pandemic.

Other risks include:

- Physical constraints: Main Street experiences competing demands for limited right-of-way. Desired improvements may not be feasible within the constraints. An initial feasibility analysis can mitigate this by identifying what options are possible.
- Emergency services: The Fire Department uses Main Street as a primary access route from the Stone Street station to local emergencies. The center lane allows emergency vehicles to bypass traffic congestion especially in the morning and evening peak periods. Coordination with the Fire Department during design will ensure an acceptable service level can be maintained.
- Community support: Planning for improvements will need to accommodate a variety of interests within a constrained physical space. An inclusive, transparent planning process can build support and mitigate this risk.
- Business support: Business and building owners will be impacted during construction. Involvement in the planning process and a mitigation plan during construction can mitigate this risk.
- Funding: A significant streetscape project will require substantial funding. Competitiveness of the funding application, local matching requirements, and timing of funding sources add uncertainty.

Key Performance Indicators

- Increase in pedestrian and bicycle counts
- Increase in outdoor dining capacity and/or usage
- Business survival during construction
- Increase in retail sales after construction

Partners & Resources

Department of Public Works
Walpole Fire Department
MBTA
Business and property owners

<p>Diagnostic</p>	<p>Narrow sidewalks and limited pedestrian amenities make walking a less attractive option. Outdoor dining and display opportunities are limited by the narrow sidewalk width. Some dining space has been created in on-street parking spaces and other space has been located in rear parking lots.</p> <p>Diagnostic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Main Street sidewalk is ~8-10' wide with limited space for both pedestrian amenities and outdoor dining. • The Walpole Fire Department is located on Stone Street and uses Main Street as a primary travel route to service calls. • Sidewalks and crosswalks generally were rated a B. Street trees, benches, and lighting were rated a C. • Half of business survey respondents rated the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks as neutral or dissatisfied. <p>Covid impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid greatly reduced pedestrian foot traffic downtown and use of the commuter rail station. Outdoor dining could only be created in on-street parking spaces or rear parking lots.
<p>Action Item</p>	<p>This project will assess the feasibility of streetscape improvements on Main Street to support pedestrian activity and local businesses, design those improvements, and construct them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine Feasibility of Streetscape Improvements: Conduct preliminary feasibility analysis to determine realistic improvement options. 2. Design and Implement Streetscape Improvements: Advance preliminary ideas from conceptual design through construction documentation. Improvements may include lane narrowing or reconfiguration, sidewalk widening, crosswalk curb extensions at corners, pedestrian-scale lighting, seating, planters and hanging baskets, green infrastructure, or other elements to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Process

Action: Feasibility of Main Street Streetscape Improvement

- Conduct a feasibility analysis to understand opportunities and constraints. Constraints include: available space in the public ROW, fire and police usage of Main Street, adjacent property owner interest, etc.
- Conduct mobility study to assess existing and future conditions and to support evaluation of design alternatives. May include data and analysis about traffic movements by mode, speeds, crashes, roadway layout, rights of way, property lines and local and State regulatory environment. Include a parking supply and demand evaluation to demonstrate project value

Action: Design and Implement Streetscape Improvements

- Draft likely project list (roadway modifications, sidewalks, crosswalks & ramps, curb extensions, lighting, etc) and score based on key performance metrics derived from community feedback on desired outcomes. Ensure metrics can evaluate before and after conditions in line with community goals.
- Develop conceptual design for potential improvements with preliminary Opinion of Probable Construction Costs (OPCC) and share with Town staff and members of the public for feedback.
- Develop final design and revise OPCC.
- Secure construction funding.
- Prepare bid package for public improvements.
- Select contractor .
- Construct improvements, punchlist, and closeout
- Measure pedestrian activity after improvements and conduct intercept surveys.



Main Street through Downtown Walpole



**BEST
PRACTICE**

Increase Outdoor Dining and Safe Bike/Pedestrian Connections



**PUBLIC
REALM**

Provided by SME Consultant

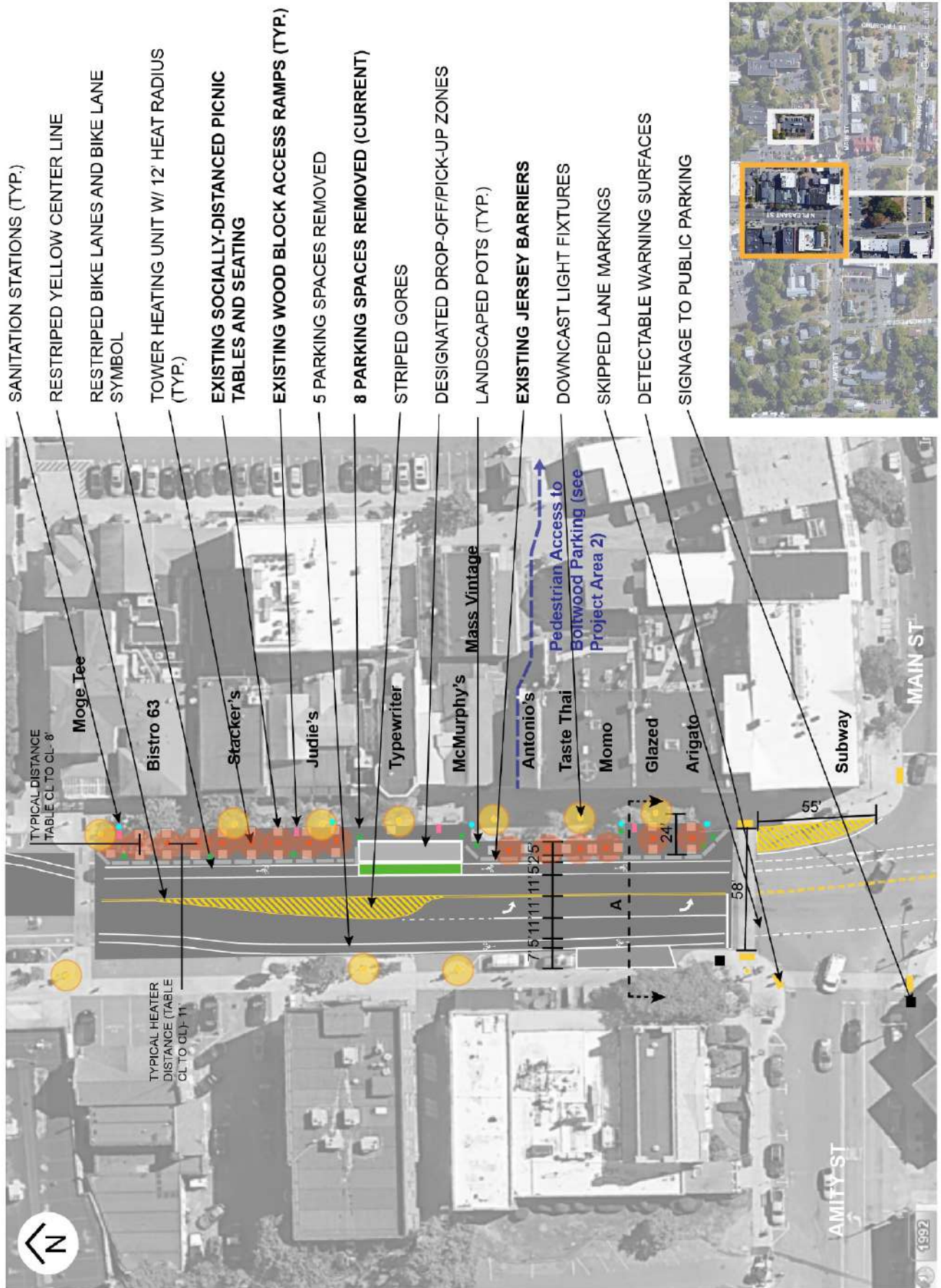
Stantec Consulting, Inc.

Location

North and South Pleasant Streets- Town of Amherst, Massachusetts

Origin	Town of Amherst Planning Department, Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, and Amherst Business Improvement District (BID)	
Budget		Medium (\$129,000) – All costs financed through the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program (e.g. \$46,000 heating towers, \$36,000 bus shelters, \$12,000 road/re-stripping work, \$2,600 picnic tables)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) – Project required rapid implementation within 30 days (full installation or procurement initiated) to guarantee funding
Risk		Medium Risk – Pandemic impacted procurement of materials, management/maintenance of some materials required negotiation between the Town and local businesses
Key Performance Indicators	<p>Number of outdoor dining seats; Restaurant sales/patrons</p> <p>Daily boardings at the two bus stops with new shelters</p>	
Partners & Resources	Chamber of Commerce, Amherst Business Improvement District, Downtown Restaurants and Businesses, Department of Public Works, Amherst Planning Department, Amherst Inspectional Services Department	
Diagnostic	<p>This project was crucial in preserving economic activity and multi-modal access during the winter months following the pandemic. The Town hosts a large population of university students that were not in physical attendance during the fall 2020 semester due to COVID-19 protocols. The normal numbers of regional visitors and local residents to downtown also dropped. Restaurants located along North and South Pleasant Street were particularly vulnerable to this impact on their businesses.</p> <p>The project focused on a group of solutions that, together, facilitated socially-distanced outdoor dining and extended business activity into the evening and cooler months, increased space for those walking and biking in downtown, and enhanced the experience of transit riders during the colder months.</p> <p>The key project elements included: installing expanded on-street dining areas and designated rideshare/pick-up areas by removing on-street parking; adding propane heating towers for diners; preservation of bicycle facilities by removing a turn lane; adding detectable warning surfaces for crosswalk ramps; adding new picnic tables in the Town Common; adding new pedestrian-scale streetlights; and installing heated bus shelters at two downtown stops.</p> <p>The final awarded amount was approximately \$70,000 less than was requested, so the number of light fixtures and heating towers in the original concept were reduced.</p>	
Action Item	<p>Upon receipt of the grant, the Town was responsible for procuring or purchasing all items, materials, and labor that were identified as part of the proposed concept within the grant application.</p> <p>Key action items included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a detailed concept plan that could be used for installation as part of the grant application (aided by a Technical Assistance grant from the Barr Foundation); • Obtaining letters of support from affected businesses; • Identifying roles and responsibilities for the procurement, installation, and maintenance of various components of the project; • Working with the TA provider (Stantec) to ensure grant criteria were met and designs complied with local and State regulations; • Procuring and installing the project components; and • Developing a summary report for MassDOT as part of the requirements of the grant. 	

TOWN OF AMHERST PROPOSED MASSDOT SHARED STREETS CONCEPT- PROJECT AREA 1



Process

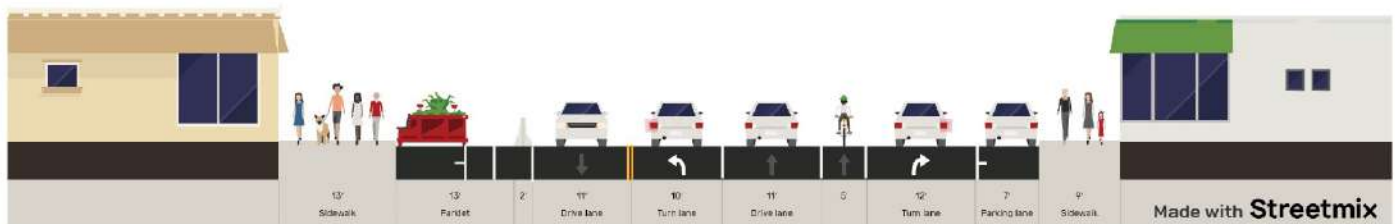
The general implementation steps identified for the project included:

- Initial team coordination meeting
- Developing a detailed concept plan (see excerpt, previous page)
- Developing a list of materials required for purchase/procurement according to party responsible for purchase and/or implementation
- Creating a traffic management plan
- Submitting and receiving grant funding
- Conducting "before" speed study
- Removing a median on South Pleasant Street, making roadway realignments and re-striping
- Obtaining Fire Department approval for outdoor heaters
- Installing other remaining elements
- Conducting "after" speed study

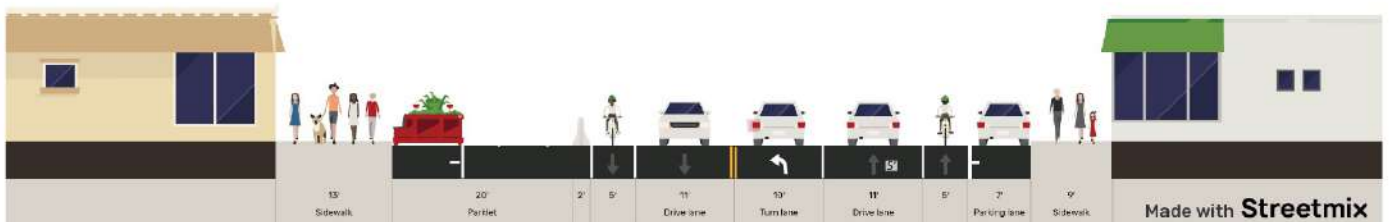
Within 15 days of the award, the South Pleasant Street median was removed, travel lanes were re-aligned and re-striped, detectable warning surface were installed, and safety barriers placed. Picnic tables, landscape pots, parking sandwich board signs, and sanitation stations were also purchased and placed.

Within 30 days of the award, the Town installed heating towers and had begun procurement of the upgraded bus shelter. (The shelter is being installed in May 2021 due to procurement and manufacturing delays.)

Existing (Looking south)



Proposed (Looking south)



Sections demonstrating the removal of the right-turning lane to be able to expand outdoor dining areas while maintaining bicycle lanes on both sides of the street.

Increase Use of Walpole's Town Common by Improving Amenities

Category



Public Realm

Location

Town Common, Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project Idea generated from:

- Destination Downtown
- Walpole Community and Economic Development
- Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)
- Downtown Action Plan (2015)

Project would be led by Department of Public Works in partnership with Community Development.

Budget



Medium Budget (\$50-200K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/Administrative time for public and stakeholder outreach
- Equipment and installation

Potential Funding Sources

- Massachusetts Cultural Council's Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program
- ARPA (Covid-related impacts)
- Community One Stop
- Barr Foundation
- AARP Community Grant



Walpole Town Common

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 yrs)

- 2 months: Conduct outreach process to identify needs and desired improvements
- 1 month: Estimate costs of potential improvements
- 2 months: Prioritize improvements
- 3 months: Select final improvements and install

Risk



Low Risk

- Concerns about historic character of Common
- Concerns about pedestrian access to Common across busy streets
- Cost of improvements

Key Performance Indicators

- Increase number visitors to Town Common
- New events held on Common

Partners & Resources

- Select Board
- Recreation Department
- Police
- Public Works
- Arts and Cultural organizations

Diagnostic

Diagnostic:

- Street trees and benches received a C grade.
- Half of business survey respondents rated the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks as neutral or dissatisfied. About the same rated improvement of public spaces and seating areas as important or very important.
- About half of business survey respondents rated 'more cultural events/ activities to bring people into the district' as important or very important.

Covid impacts:

- Covid significantly increased the use of outdoor spaces during the pandemic. Some improvements were made to the Common to support this but more can be done to accommodate a range of outdoor gatherings, from small informal to larger organized events.

Action Item	<p>This attractive landscaped open space anchors one end of Main Street downtown and is an important community space.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance the Town Common to better support daily use of the Common: The Common can be better planned for casual meet-ups and gatherings. Potential improvements include providing additional seating options, offering public WiFi, adding interpretive and/or interactive signage and features, and improving pedestrian crosswalks to the Common. 2. Enhance the Town Common to support a wider variety of outdoor gatherings and events: An enhanced space will encourage more community events to enliven downtown and attract visitors. Potential improvements include installing a speaker system for ambient background music, concerts and events. The Town will also assess options to temporarily close street segments to increase the amount of public space.
Process	<p>Action: Enhance the Town Common to better support daily use of the Common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct public outreach effort to solicit ideas for improvements. • Generate initial cost estimates and identify funding resources to refine options. • Identify top shared priorities among stakeholders and public that align with available funding. • Make final selections. • Install improvements. • Promote new features on social media and in Town communications. • Monitor usage and adjust as needed. <p>Action: Enhance the Town Common to support a wider variety of outdoor gatherings and events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene Town Common stakeholders to discuss ideas and priorities, including previous event organizers who used Town Common. • Generate initial cost estimates and identify funding resources to refine options. • Identify top shared priorities among stakeholders and public that align with available funding. • Make final selections. • Install improvements. • Collect feedback from event sponsors on what works well and what needs improvement.

Improve Building Facades, Storefronts, and Business Signage Along the Main Street Corridor

Category



Private Realm

Location

Main Street, Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project Idea generated from the following sources:

- Destination Downtown
- Walpole Community and Economic Development (lead)
- Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)
- Downtown Action Plan (2015)

Budget

Medium Budget (\$50-200K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff time for administering program and monitoring compliance
- Capital funding for private improvements

Potential Funding Sources:

- Town general fund
- American Rescue Plan Act (Covid-related impacts)
- Community One Stop for Growth
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Local banks
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)



Main Street buildings - the building at right sits vacant at a prominent corner and needs investment.

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

- 1-3 months: Identify properties in need of improvement and engage local property owners to identify priority needs
- 6 months: Advertise program to the community
- 1-2 years: Completion of private façade and building improvements

Risk



Low Risk

- Business owner interest
- Program cost and funding sources
- Zoning and permitting process
- Lack of design guidelines for coordinated approach to improvements

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of program applicant
- Number of improved building facades
- Number of improved storefronts
- Number of new blade signs
- Amount invested by property/business owners
- Increase in downtown foot traffic
- Change in business revenue
- Change in vacancy

Partners & Resources

- Private property owners
- Business owners
- Planning Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals

Diagnostic

Main Street has an eclectic mix of architectural styles and storefront designs. Some are more pedestrian-friendly and well-maintained than others. A few poorly maintained buildings need investment and others would benefit from maintenance and improvements to enhance the appearance of the district. In addition, most Main Street businesses lack projecting blade signage oriented to pedestrians on the sidewalk. Instead they have wall signs that are easier to read from passing vehicles or from across the street. More blade signage would help pedestrians recognize what stores are ahead of them on the sidewalk and create a more walkable downtown environment.

Diagnostic:

- Storefront windows and awnings received a C grade. Facades and storefront lighting received a B grade. Business signage received a C grade
- Only 21% of business survey respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the condition of private buildings, facades, storefronts, and signage
- More than half of business survey respondents rated 'renovation of storefronts/building facades' as important or very important.

Covid impacts:

- Covid greatly reduced pedestrian foot traffic downtown. Improved building facades, storefronts, and business signage will help draw visitors downtown and improve their experience once there.

Action Item	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Program to Encourage Facade and Signage Upgrades along Main Street: building and business owners to upgrade their facades, storefronts, and business signage along Main Street to support a more pedestrian-friendly environment. 2. Development of Design Guidelines: Design guidelines will set expectations for quality and character of upgrades, 3. Create Communication and Education Program: a communications and education program to present the benefits of signage and storefront improvements, potentially working with a local fabricator on sign designs and bulk pricing, 4. Create and Implement Financial Incentives Program: Financial assistance, in the form of grants or loans, will assist owners making these repairs, and permitting assistance to expedite the approval process.
Process	<p>Action: Develop a Program to Encourage Facade and Signage Upgrades along Main Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify who will manage the program e.g. municipal staff, existing committee. Convene working group to develop façade and sign improvement program, including representatives from Community and Economic Development, EDC, Building Inspector, Planning Board, and downtown business and property owners. Define application process and evaluation criteria/process. Create forms for program and train staff who will administer. <p>Action: Development of Design Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop design guidelines that establish minimum quality criteria and identify best practices that support community character: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Determine whether guidelines will be created in-house or via design consultant. If consultant, create and issue RFP to select. » Conduct outreach effort with community, property owners, and business owners downtown (benefits, visual preference, etc). » Draft downtown guidelines for review. » Revise guidelines and adopt. <p>Action: Create Communication and Education Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement outreach program to alert downtown business and property owners about program and benefits of participating. <p>Action: Create and Implement Financial Incentive Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine key program parameters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Funding type: grant, loan, or hybrid; matching requirements. » Program eligibility: property and/or business owner requirements. » Eligible projects: façade/storefront, signage, accessibility, site. » Roles: clarify different responsibilities of property owners and business owners participating in program. » Enforcement: required maintenance period for improvements, enforcement for non-compliance (repayment, liens, etc), transfer of enforcement/repayment of funds if property/business transferred to new owner. » Additional incentives: streamlined permitting, etc. Open program applications and select initial participants. Implement improvements. Monitor compliance and adjust as needed.

Action Items

Step 1. Define the area – this has already been done by the Plan Facilitators and the cities/towns.

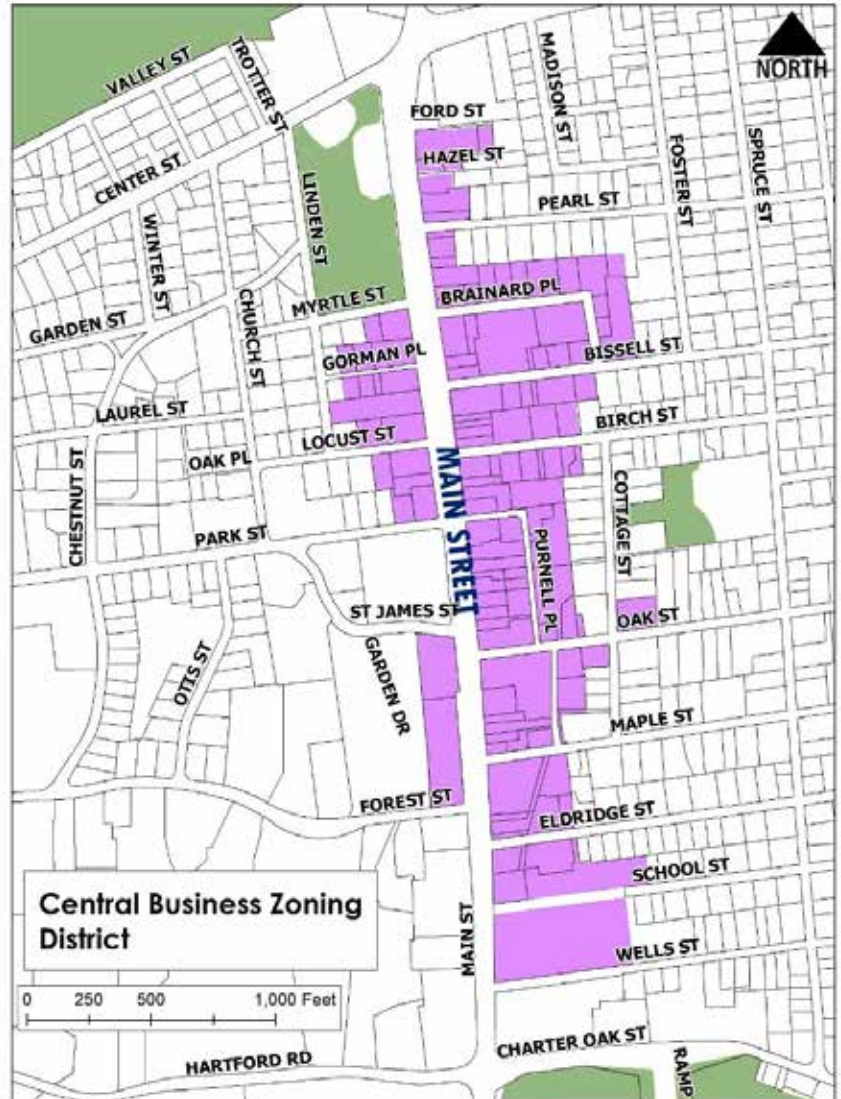
Step 2. Conduct a current conditions assessment –physical, governmental, private, character of the district. Some examples of disruptive alterations include:

- Blocking out windows, which is typically uninviting
- Replacing original architectural detailing with substandard or non-sustainable materials
- Covering original details with aluminum siding or random placement of wood paneling
- Introducing new design elements which were not in keeping with the original design
- Random placement with no coordination of ornamentation, lighting fixtures or signage
- Oversized signage creating visual confusion and blocking architectural details of upper floors

Step 3. Identify main key stakeholders (including but not limited to; Building Owners, Tenants, Residents, Clients and Customers) must preserve and highlight what makes this downtown unique: eclectic structures, public spaces, community facilities, ample parking, and an enjoyable pedestrian experience.

Step 4. Development & Implementation

Reminder: A vibrant, healthy and attractive downtown must be clean, safe and aesthetically pleasing. This relies on quality design and positive public-private relationships.



Define the Downtown Area

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Architectural Design Guidelines

Location: Manchester, CT

Ground Floor Tenant Storefronts

The storefront is the most significant feature of most commercial buildings. Its appearance plays a critical role in how a business is perceived and contributes to the pedestrian experience from the sidewalk. Building owners are expected to acknowledge critical elements of a building when redesigning a storefront.

Traditionally, the storefront is set into an opening in the building, framed by a building's columns or piers on either side, and sometimes includes a cornice or lintel along the top. Decorative elements of the storefront are definitive characteristics that ground the upper portions of the building to the sidewalk. When possible, these decorative elements should be retained in their original material, color and finish. The window area is generally large in contrast to the smaller windows on the upper stories to visually communicate and display the products and services offered within. The entranceway is often asymmetrical and recessed to increase display window area, provide weather protection, and allow clearance for the door swing.

When planning to renovate a storefront, its proportion in relation to the entire façade should be considered. Renovations should be done with durable and sustainable materials and retain existing modules, proportions, and structure.



Urban Lodge Brewery – photo: Patch.com

Lighting: Night lighting is encouraged as it extends the pedestrian experience, makes a building façade more welcoming, and adds consistency to the downtown district. Lighting plans should be sensitive to potential impacts on vehicular traffic.

Cleanliness of windows – interior & exterior – sometimes it's that simple!

Storefront awnings and canopies are both functional and decorative. They are functional because they provide sun protection for merchandise, weather protection for visitors, and signage for the business (see “Signage” section for guidelines). These structures also add decorative color, patterns or graphics to the streetscape.

Both commercial grade, exterior fabric, retractable and permanent awnings have been successfully integrated in the past. The color or stripe chosen for the awning should complement the general color scheme of the building. Building owners are discouraged from using metal awnings because of their susceptibility to weather damage and fading.



Signage

Signage provides scale, color and interest to the streetscape. A sign has a positive effect on business and community atmosphere when it is appropriately placed, well designed, and in scale with its architectural surroundings.

A poorly designed sign results in visual confusion, harming both the streetscape and the value of the sign. While these guidelines provide structure for what signs are appropriate, the Town of Manchester's zoning regulations mandate what signs can and cannot be used in the Downtown district.

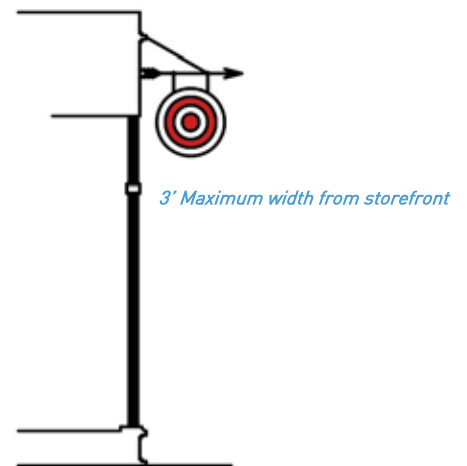
Information on a sign should be simple, clear and concise. The type face and graphic symbols should convey only the name of the business and its main product or service. The color should be coordinated with the building and storefront, and the letters or logo should contrast with the background, so the sign is readable. Light box signs should not be used. In some instances, simpler is better. Channel cut letters or flat metal signs lit with goose neck lighting are encouraged.

Signage to serve multiple tenant storefronts within the confines of a single building should be well coordinated to fit within the pre-described signage area defined by the building's architecture.

Before beginning any signage project, refer to Zoning Regulations for specific restrictions. Special regulations can be adopted for the Downtown district.




Restaurant Menu Boards



Blade or Hanging Bracket Signs

Exterior-Mounted & Painted on Glass

Provide Technical Assistance to Downtown Retail and Restaurants

Category		Revenue/Sales
Location		RRP study area Census Tract 4111.02
Origin		Project idea generated from the Walpole Community and Economic Development department (lead) and Destination Downtown.
Budget		Small Budget (<\$50K) Primary Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$50,000 would support an initial pilot program. Potential Funding Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC)• Small Business Administration (SBA)• Local banking institutions



Source: Adobe Stock

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

- 2 months: Determine business owners' most pressing needs.
- 1 month: Rank order the short and long-term needs of the Walpole small business community to form project goals
- 2 months: Create and distribute a Request for Proposal (RFP) to find a Technical Assistance provider which meets the needs of the Walpole small business community
- 2 months: Evaluate and score RFPs in relation to how they meet the short and long-term needs of Walpole small business community
- 12 months: Implement selected project and develop technical assistance program structure.
- 6 months: Select local restaurants for outdoor dining assistance.
- 24 months: Implement best practices and improvements.

Risk



Low Risk

- Business owner interest and capacity to participate in program

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of participating businesses
- Change in revenue after assistance
- Correlation of approved budget and actual implementation costs
- Business system hardware and software Installed
- Websites developed
- Cost savings over set period after assistance
- Change in revenue after assistance
- Ecommerce and web presence over a set period

Partners & Resources

- Technical assistance provider
- Local business community
- Chamber of Commerce
- Destination Downtown
- IT Program Administrator (Program Management)

Diagnostic	<p>Downtown Walpole restaurants and businesses did their best to quickly transition to take-out and online sales. It was difficult for many of them as they did not have the technical capacity to transition so quickly or the financial means to seek upgrades. The Walpole community made great efforts to support our local businesses but at times were frustrated by long wait times and errors in orders. The restaurants that have continued to maintain strong sales were able to quickly and successfully streamline the transition and make use of outdoor dining. Many downtown businesses and restaurants have experienced loss of sales and many more are struggling to get back to pre-covid conditions.</p> <p>Diagnostic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many businesses lack technical capacity and/or financial resources to develop an effective online presence. • Downtown lacks a single online location for all businesses to advertise (an online complement to printed artist's map) <p>Covid impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of revenue during Covid due to reduced foot traffic in stores and restrictions on indoor dining. • The pandemic created this issue when public health restrictions encourage customers to stay home and prohibited indoor dining and shopping. As restrictions are lifted, many customers are hesitant to fully return to in-person dining and shopping. • Online resources that lessen human interaction are at the heart of minimizing the economic impact of the pandemic.
Action Item	<p>This technical assistance program will include two parallel initiatives offering one-on-one consulting, seminars, and funding assistance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sales and marketing assistance to Downtown retailers: This initiative will help Downtown businesses to build or improve their website or online sales platform, improve their customer relationship management (CRM), enhance physical and digital marketing efforts, upgrade their point-of-sale (POS) system to reduce costs and improve efficiency, or address other needs as identified. 2. Outdoor dining assistance to Downtown restaurants: This initiative will help owners identify adequate physical space and optimum set-up, procure furnishings to equip the space, and assist with local permits to quickly implement outdoor seating areas.





Process

Action: Sales and Marketing Assistance to Downtown Retailers

- Define Project Goals and Resources
 - Define Mission, Goals, Stakeholders, Resources, Budget, and Definition of Done (DoD)
- Objective Setting
 - Rank short term and long term needs of Walpole Businesses
 - Interview Stakeholders
 - Define Requirements
- Program Selection
 - Create and distribute RFP for an IT program
 - Evaluate and scope RFP's
 - Conduct Demonstrations of IT programs
 - Select Final Program
- Program Implementation
 - Engagement Kickoff
 - Solicitation of Candidate Businesses
 - Onboarding the Businesses
 - Implementation
 - Analysis

Action: Outdoor Dining Assistance to Downtown Restaurants

- Defining Project Goals and Resources
- Objective Setting
- Assistance with Bulk Purchasing, Design, Permitting
- Program Implementation

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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Retail & Restaurant Technology Initiative



**REVENUES
& SALES**

Provided by SME Consultant

Cambridge Retail Advisors

Location

Boston, MA

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

Create Comprehensive Wayfinding and Branding System for Downtown Walpole

Category		Revenue/Sales
Location		RRP study area Census tract 4111.02
Origin		Project Idea generated from the Walpole Community and Economic Development department (lead) and Destination Downtown.
Budget		<p>Medium Budget (\$50-\$200K)</p> <p>Primary Costs:</p> <p>Branding: \$15,000 - \$50,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variables include level of stakeholder engagement, deliverable schedule, and implementation costs (variety of print and digital formats) Brand strategy: \$5,000 - \$10,000 Brand guide: \$5,000 - \$20,000 Print or digital collateral: \$5,000 - \$50,000 Stakeholder engagement (interviews, focus groups): \$5,000 - \$15,000 Public engagement (surveys, meetings): \$10,000 - \$20,000 <p>Wayfinding design: \$25,000 - \$150,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variables include level of stakeholder engagement, scale of program, and deliverable schedule. Wayfinding analysis (circulation plan, sign location plan, etc.): \$8,000 - \$18,000 Signage standards/master plan: \$10,000 - \$25,000 Stakeholder engagement (interviews, focus groups): \$5,000 - \$15,000 Public engagement (surveys, meetings): \$10,000 - \$20,000 Bidding and negotiation: \$5,000 - \$10,000 Construction administration: \$10,000 - \$25,000 <p>Wayfinding fabrication: \$75,000 - \$500,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variables include types and number of signs, cost of fabrication and installation. Digital directory: \$25,000 - \$100,000 Mapping: \$5,000 - \$25,000 Illuminated pylon/gateway: \$50,000 - \$200,000 Non-illuminated freestanding signage: \$25,000-50,000 each Simple metal or vinyl signage: \$5,000 - \$25,000 <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town allocation ARPA (Covid-related impacts)

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)



- 4-8 months: Branding effort
 - 4-8 months: Wayfinding program design
 - 3-6 months: Fabrication and installation
 - 2-4 months: Permitting process for signage
- Some overlap of phases can shorten the overall timeframe.

Risk



Medium Risk

- Building consensus for branding and wayfinding visual appearance. An inclusive, transparent stakeholder engagement process can mitigate this but also adds time and cost to the project.
- Installation risks due to unforeseen obstacles. Site surveys with utility identification can mitigate this but not completely eliminate the risk.

Key Performance Indicators

- Resident and visitor perception obtained via intercept surveys about downtown brand and wayfinding signage
- Public sentiment/brand recognition gauged via social media impressions
- Frequency of brand use across mediums - a successful brand will often be supported by local businesses and residents
- Number of new wayfinding signs installed

Partners & Resources

Destination Downtown, Economic Development Commission, signage fabricator/installer, business owners, residents



Parking signage and light pole banners along Main Street will be evaluated and improved.

Diagnostic

A comprehensive wayfinding program for pedestrians and drivers was identified as a need in the 2015 "Downtown Action Plan" and the 2019 "Parking and Economic Development Strategy". Clear directional signage to parking and attractions will improve the visitor experience and make it easier and more inviting to spend time downtown.

Diagnostic:

- Downtown Walpole lacks a distinctive brand, limiting its recognition and appeal within the region.
- Wayfinding signage is limited to small public parking signs - people still comment that parking is difficult to find.
- No evident signage between the MBTA Commuter Rail Station and downtown, a 5-7 minute walk.
- No evident signage for regional Bay Circuit Trail on East Street/Route 27 – a missed opportunity to draw bicyclists downtown and connect downtown to the region.

Covid impacts:

- Covid did not create this issue but further emphasizes the importance of visitor experience and brand recognition to draw people back downtown.

Covid influence:

- The limitations on public gathering and in-person dining/shopping caused by Covid has severely impacted downtown and its businesses. Developing an exciting new brand for downtown can help attract visitors. Clear wayfinding will make the visitor experience easier to navigate and more inviting. Together, these strategies will support local businesses and strengthen downtown post-Covid.

Action Item

This initiative will develop a new brand identity for downtown Walpole and a wayfinding program to improve the visitor experience. The goal is to raise downtown Walpole's profile regionally and to improve the visitor experience by making it easier to find parking, businesses, and other attractions.

1. **Develop a New Brand Identity:** A fresh, distinctive brand identity for Downtown Walpole will raise its profile locally and regionally. Businesses can leverage this brand in their own efforts.
1. **Develop a Wayfinding and Signage System** Using the Brand: A carefully considered wayfinding system will quickly and easily orient visitors to parking, community spaces, businesses, and other destinations to improve the visitor experience.

Process

Action: Form a branding and wayfinding committee to guide the process.

- Identify key players: Project manager, stakeholders, general public, design consultant
- Develop an RFP for design services to assist with branding and wayfinding

Action: Develop a New Brand Identity for Downtown Walpole

- Research and discovery: Identify relevant historical references, landmark features, and other elements that may inform the branding strategy for downtown.
- Concept direction: Design firm will provide a basic idea of potential directions based on the first phase.
- Visual language: Develop a brand palette of colors, fonts, and graphics that express Downtown Walpole's identity. The brand should start to have a feeling that is familiar and/or in line with Town goals.
- User testing and refinement: Share the concept with stakeholders to solicit candid feedback. A successful brand should be embraced by a wide audience.
- Brand guide development: Develop standards for how the new brand will be used in different formats and contexts. Determine how to promote brand: web presence, social media, storefront decals, marketing materials, light pole banners, etc.

Action: Develop a Wayfinding and Signage System

- Identify existing assets: Map existing signage and document type, size, content, Develop a list of points of interest (POI) such as public parking locations, Town Common, local businesses, Town facilities, other attractions, etc. Use the recently-completed artist's map of downtown as a starting point.
- Layer the data: Overlay collected information with key vehicular and pedestrian routes to identify important decision points for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists navigating Downtown. Identify key areas where wayfinding signage would have greatest impact.
- Identify the sign types: Match signage needs with product types to create a signage family. Common types include a directory sign designed for pedestrians and vehicular directional signage to influence arrival paths to parking and Downtown businesses.
- Design signage with new branding.
- Identify fabrication partner: Once the wayfinding package of locations and sign families has been developed, approach potential vendors to provide base pricing. The fabrication team should identify cost saving opportunities, assist with permitting, and provide installation. Request bids from multiple vendors to ensure fair pricing.

The Bandstand was the inspiration for signage shape.
Source: DHCD



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

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Wayfinding System to Help Reinforce the Downtown Experience

Location: Wakefield, MA



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.

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.

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.

Historical town images and commentary was developed to fit 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. 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, emails, 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 pilot project will take place during the Summer of 2021 to see how wayfinding can connect the Lake with downtown.



From wayfinding signage to printed informational materials and the Town's website, 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. Source: DHCD

Increase Mix of Active Storefront Businesses

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		Main Street, Census tract 4111.02
Origin		<p>Project idea generated from the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Destination Downtown• Walpole Community and Economic Development• Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)• Downtown Action Plan (2015)
Budget		<p>Medium Budget (\$50-\$200K)</p> <p>Primary Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff/Administrative time to find funding, develop marketing campaign and target recruitment <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town allocation• ARPA (Covid-related impacts)• Community One Stop for Growth• CDBG• Local banks• Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)



Many storefronts on Main Street lack visual appeal and detract from an inviting pedestrian experience.

Risk



Low Risk

- Business owner interest
- Program cost and funding sources

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of new businesses
- Number of newly active storefronts
- Number of new employees
- Diversity of business owners
- Increased pedestrian activity

Partners & Resources

- Commercial brokers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Property owners
- Business Owners

Diagnostic

The study area has a diverse mix of businesses but only a limited number that have an active storefront presence like retail, dining, or arts. This detracts from creating a pedestrian-friendly environment and limits cross-shopping opportunities.

Diagnostic:

- Approximately 10% of downtown storefronts are vacant
- Of the approximately 120 businesses in the study area, less than 20% are classified as retail trade, food services, or arts and entertainment.
- More than half of business survey respondents rated 'recruitment programs to attract additional businesses' as important or very important.

Covid impacts:

- Covid reduced pedestrian foot traffic downtown, but the lack of active storefronts was a problem before Covid as well.

Covid influence:

- The need for outdoor dining opportunities because of covid helped to promote the existing restaurants and enhanced the vibrancy of Downtown. Taking the positive outcome from an essential change like this we can hope to promote similar techniques for future businesses to enhance/draw interest to their storefronts.

<p>Action Item</p>	<p>This project will develop a targeted recruitment program to market Downtown Walpole as an attractive place to do business. As a short-term strategy, it will also create a short-term pop-up activation strategy for vacant storefronts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop Targeted Recruitment Program: Identify Downtown's competitive position in the region, determine characteristics of desired business types, and create targeted marketing materials to promote Downtown. This will add more active storefront businesses to Main Street to improve the Downtown walking experience. 2. Create a Vacant Storefront Pop-up Activation Strategy: Identify building owners with vacant storefront spaces willing to offer short-term, below-market leases to start-ups and small businesses looking to test a brick-and-mortar location. This will provide temporary activation, increase the draw of downtown, and encourage economic development.
<p>Process</p>	<p>Action: Develop Targeted Recruitment Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of Downtown Walpole's competitive position in the regional marketplace through conversations with commercial brokers, building owners, and analysis of the business environment. • Identify specific business types to target for recruitment and clearly define the benefits of locating Downtown and why they will be successful here. • Develop marketing materials for program. • Share materials with commercial brokers, business associations, and other entities to raise awareness of the opportunities • Identify brokers to facilitate the process of prospective new businesses finding appropriate storefront space Downtown. <p>Action: Create a Vacant Storefront Pop-up Activation Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine insurance and liability needs, utility costs, and other critical elements. • Identify building owners with vacant storefront spaces willing to be part of the program. • Identify businesses and start-up's wanting to test a brick-and-mortar location. • Connect prospective short-term tenants with interested building owners. • Implement pop-up shops and publicize program via social media and other resources. • Follow-up with tenants and building owners to assess what worked well and what can be improved.



One of ChaShaMa's storefronts
Source: ChaShaMa

ChaShaMa's Storefront Startup Program

With an increased amount of vacant space during the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City partnered with ChaShaMa, a not-for-profit that generally offers space to artists, to create short term opportunities for businesses to test out a brick-and-mortar location in commercial areas across the city.

This creates opportunity to liven commercial districts with new, short-term businesses, helping landlords to activate their unused space, make the street feel more alive, create increased opportunities for commerce for small, minority and women-owned businesses, and provide no-cost space to businesses otherwise unlikely to be able to afford commercial rents in high traffic commercial corridors.

Challenges of this program currently being addressed are ensuring businesses have commercial storefront opportunities once the no-cost space has ended; supporting businesses with technical assistance such as access to capital and finding affordable, permanent space, and sustainable resourcing of the project for the long term success of small minority and women-owned businesses.

DETAILS

- Medium budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) – Project required dedicated staff and project subsidies
- Program launched within 90 days; space is generally tenanted for 30 – 60 days maximum

ROLES

Storefront Start-Up is a partnership between a not-for-profit community organization and the Department of Small Business Services to support minority and women-owned businesses in accessing free storefront space (avg 30 days) in high traffic commercial areas.

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Supporting Entrepreneurs and Commercial Landlords with Pop Up Business Activation

Location: New York, NY



Tenant Mix

PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine the strategy to support businesses
 - are you focused on serving a specific demographic (ex. Women-owned businesses) or sector (retail, design)
- Decide on a criteria on how businesses will be selected for space
- Research and identify vacant storefront properties
- Connect with property owners of vacant spaces to determine their interest in short-term no-cost lease opportunities, and if so, their terms of use.
- Create a database with notes and updates on available properties and interested businesses.
- Create a standard Memorandum of Understanding to be used as a baseline of agreement between the organization, the property owner, and the business owner. For example: how long will the space be used? Who will pay for buildout costs (if any)? Who will cover utility costs?
- Begin to match businesses with potential vacant spaces. Determine how far in advance businesses would need to be "occupancy ready" and how long landlords would need for the property to be considered "move in condition"
- Support both the business and property owner with the transition into the space; troubleshoot any issues in real time to mitigate any future problems or miscommunications
- Create social media and marketing opportunities to businesses to let people know they will be in the activated space, with plenty of lead up marketing prior to the move in date
- Determine further support for the business after the space agreement has expired, if any

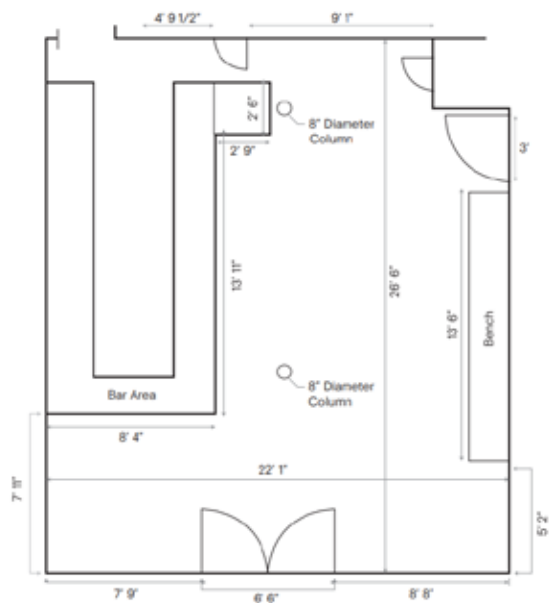
Floorplan

Use:
Presentation Space,
Workspace

Amenities:
24 Hour Access, Air
Conditioning, Heating,
Restrooms, Storefront
Window, Track Lighting,
Viewable 24/7, WiFi



ChaShaMa



220 Front Street

Floor Area
600 Sq Ft
10' ceiling

Key

○ Pillar/Beam

ChaShaMa's website provides profiles of all vacant sites, including photos, floorplans, and details about potential uses and amenities. Source: ChaShaMa

Add Public Art to Improve Alley Connections to Parking Lots

Category



Culture/Arts

Location

Alleys between Main Street and parking areas
Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project idea generated from:

- Destination Downtown, Walpole Community and Economic Development (lead), Downtown Action Plan (2015), Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)

Budget

Medium Budget (\$50-\$200K)

Primary Costs:

- Payment of local artists to produce public art
- Equipment and installation

Potential Funding Sources:

- \$24,000 Shared Streets and Spaces grant (2021)
- Massachusetts Cultural Council's Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program
- Barr Foundation
- AARP Community Grant



Conceptual rendering of potential alley improvement ideas connecting public parking areas to Main Street.

Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (<5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement initial alley improvements with Shared Streets and Spaces grant by end 2021 • Conduct additional outreach as needed – 3 months • Solicit public art partners – 3 months • Develop conceptual designs – 4 months • Review designs and finalize – 2 months • Install murals and other alley improvements – 3 months
Risk	 <p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with private property owners
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in pedestrian counts through alleys • Social media impressions of public art in alleys
Partners & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and regional artists • Keep Walpole Beautiful • Private property owners • Department of Public Works
Diagnostic	<p>Walkability improvements Downtown have been recommended in several recent planning studies. Several alleys that connect Main Street to public parking areas present opportunities to add art, seating, decorative lighting and other creative elements to enliven downtown.</p> <p>Diagnostic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleys provided convenient access to public parking but are missed opportunities for creative, eye-catching lighting, art, seating, etc. • Some Downtown visitors are unaware of the public parking behind Main Street or avoid the alleyways because they are uninviting and poorly lit. • Sidewalks and crosswalks generally were rated a B. Street trees, benches, and lighting were rated a C. <p>Covid impacts/influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid greatly reduced pedestrian foot traffic downtown and use of the commuter rail station. As people return to work and to downtown, attractive walking routes will better connect public parking areas to Main Street businesses.
Action Item	<p>These functional pedestrian alleys connect public parking areas located behind Main Street buildings to the shops, restaurants, and businesses along Main Street sidewalks. Turning these into eye-catching, creatively designed spaces that offer enhanced lighting, seating, landscaping, and public art will add to Downtown's character while encouraging use of the public parking areas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transform Alleys into Attractive, Engaging Pedestrian Corridors: Building from the Town's successful Shared Streets and Spaces grant which is addressing the alley adjacent to the former Town Hall this project will extend to the remaining alleyways to add public art and creative installations to complete the transformation.

Process

Action: Transformation of Downtown Alleys into Attractive, Engaging Pedestrian Corridors

- Implement initial alley improvements by end of 2021 using Shared Streets and Spaces grant.
- Assess remaining pedestrian alley locations for further improvements.
- Contact alley-adjacent property owners to confirm participation and discuss ideas.
- Create public art criteria and develop a call-for-art to identify qualified public artists.
- Release the call for art or bid and select artists/vendors.
- Oversee installation.
- Promote improvements via social media and Town communications.
- Measure pedestrian activity after improvements and conduct intercept surveys.



An alley ripe for improvements.



Budget: \$39,000

Timeframe: 2-3 months to design and install most elements.

Risk: Low investment costs make this a low-risk, high-reward project. Property owner buy-in is crucial.

The intention with Tipton Alley was to develop a space, built on a human scale, that provided a respite from the busy traffic on the street while enticing people to 1) visit downtown safely and 2) extend their stays while visiting downtown, and 3) create community connections.

As with any placemaking project, the process is as important as the outcome. How do you ensure this space will be something that residents embrace and enjoy? Have them engaged in the planning and implementation process as much as possible. Collecting feedback from visitors is important to identify any issues or areas for improvement. Using this input to iterate over time allows the space to be refreshed as needed. Maintenance plans were in place at the start.

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Tipton Alley

Location: Tipton, IN

Expand Downtown Programming and Leverage Visitors to Boost Local Businesses

Category



Culture/Arts

Location

CBD study area, Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project idea generated from:

- Destination Downtown (lead)
- Downtown Action Plan (2015)
- Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)

Budget

Small-Medium Budget (< \$200K)

Primary Costs:

- Smaller, regular programming may be lower cost (outdoor fitness, live music)
- Larger special events may be higher cost (equipment, permits, set-up/tear-down, etc)



Potential Funding Sources:

- Massachusetts Cultural Council's Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program
- ARPA (Covid-related impacts)
- Community One Stop
- Barr Foundation
- AARP Community Grant



Main Street Live Concert Series on the Town Common

Source: Eric Hurwitz

Timeframe	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short Term (<5 yrs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 months: Convene events and programming working group 3 months: Reach out to downtown residents and workers, local businesses, and arts/culture/ community groups to assess interest and needs 2 months: Identify initial programs to implement 3-6 months: Organize and promote events
Risk	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with arts/cultural organizations and community groups
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants in regular programming Number of visitors to special events Social media impressions of events and programming Change in business revenue during events
Partners & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and regional arts and cultural organizations Community groups Local businesses

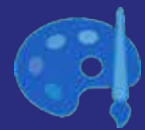
Diagnostic	<p>Diagnostic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About half of business survey respondents rated 'more cultural events/ activities to bring people into the district' as important or very important. The Parking and Economic Development Report (2019) recommends more special events and placemaking to support local businesses. The Downtown Action Plan (2015) recommended additional programming options, including family-friendly events, and more live entertainment to re-energize downtown. <p>Covid impacts/influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covid significantly increased the everyday use of outdoor spaces while canceling most public events. Businesses lost the revenue provided by downtown visitors to these events. As people return to downtown, more outdoor gatherings from small informal to larger organized events will support business recovery and build community cohesion.
Action Item	<p>This project will work with community and business partners to expand the Downtown events calendar to include more regular programming and new events that will enliven Downtown and support local businesses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grow Downtown Events Calendar: More residents are moving into recently completed apartments and workers are returning to the office. These captive audiences provide a base for a regular rotation of after-work programs like outdoor fitness classes, live music performances, and business networking. Weekend events can feature similar offerings as well as larger arts and culture festivals, family events, neighborhood celebrations, and more. Explore opportunities for temporary street closures to support larger events: Consider temporary 1- or 2-day weekend closures to allow larger events and improve pedestrian access to the Common.

Process	<p>Action: Grow Downtown Events Calendar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene working group to address all aspects of special events: permitting and licensing, insurance and liability requirements, street closures, promotion, etc. • Reach out to local residents and workers to learn about their interest in specific types of after-work programming and weekend events. • Identify short-list of initial programs to implement. • Reach out to arts, culture, and community organizations about expanding existing events and/or adding new events. • Reach out to local businesses about participation and sponsorship opportunities. • Confirm event organizers and sponsors. • Organize and promote events. • Conduct surveys during/after events to assess user feedback and identify potential improvements or new event opportunities. <p>Action: Explore opportunities for temporary street closures to support larger events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a baseline traffic study to determine weekend travel patterns. • Review results with staff and members of the working group to discuss pros and cons of temporary street closures. • Develop initial pilot program. For example, start by closing Elm Street between West and Main on Sunday afternoons for a month in the summer, or second Sundays from June through September. Plan events and encourage people to visit the Common. Conduct surveys to understand how people are using the Common. Based on findings, considering expanding pilot to more days or longer periods of time.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish procedures for police, fire and public works to easily review/approve requests to block-off on-street parking spaces or portions of streets to be used for outdoor dining/events • Create requirements describing how to safely block-off portions of a roadway or on-street parking with rigid and visible barriers to allow them to be safely used by pedestrians/customers.

**BEST
PRACTICE**



Host a downtown cultural event to support businesses and show positive change



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Fall River, MA

Origin

Collaborative effort growing out of MassDevelopment TDI project and including other FRACC members involved in Viva Fall River (the Arts, Culture and Creative Economy Master Planning effort for the city)

Budget



Low – \$37,000 plus in-kind donations

Timeframe



Short – planning and implementation in 3-1/2 months

Risk



Low

Key Performance Indicators

Number of attendees, Number of partners working together successfully, Good press

Partners & Resources

One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce, Fall River Arts + Cultural Coalition (FRACC), MassDevelopment TDI, BayCoast Bank, We Love Fall River, Fall River Public Schools, City of Fall River – main partners

Diagnostic

Fall River has many outstanding attributes but is lacking in a collaborative vision and image that can pull all the great things together. There are many different efforts and activities with no central organizing force to advocate, market, and lead the way in business support, tourism development, and arts and cultural coordination across the city.

Key challenges include high turnover and legal issues for City Hall leaders in recent years that have grabbed headlines and stolen the narrative of the good things happening in the city. In addition, there is a fragmented approach to solving problems and building momentum for positive change. The downtown has significant vacancies and the geographic spread of the city, as well as its hilly topography, make connections and focus a challenge. However, the diversity of the city, including its residents and cultural traditions, food and restaurant offerings, and presence of a small but strong “making” economy offer some unique opportunities. The city’s location on the water, proximity to Boston and Providence, and abundance of relatively affordable housing and workspaces, and a sizeable inventory of old mill buildings provide many opportunities.



Live painting was part of the event.

Action Item

The Winterbridge cultural events (running Fridays and Saturdays for six weeks in the Winter of 2021) at Gromada Plaza downtown was planned to build on the MassDevelopment TDI work on South Main Street and to showcase the collaborative power of FRACC, a 40-member diverse group of arts and culture, business, community nonprofit, philanthropic, and public sector stakeholders. FRACC is charting new territory in the scope of its goals and Winterbridge was meant as a way to:

- Bring the community together and engender city pride (begin to take back the narrative of the city)
- Demonstrate the power of collaboration (put the power of FRACC to work)
- Provide community activities and spaces during winter under Covid-19 guidelines

Winterbridge included music, fire pits, evergreen trees, live painting, community partners providing grab n go services, dancing/Zumba sessions, live entertainers (costume characters, singers, and musicians), and a We Love Fall River window display competition.



Source: for all photos: FRACC

There were over 36 businesses, nonprofits and individuals who came together to provide staff, funding, programming, marketing, and other needs for the events.

Process (Continued)

The Winterbridge cultural events grew out of the desire for an early “win” and demonstration of the power of collaboration including the MassDevelopment TDI and FRACC. Planning goals focused on attracting people to downtown and exposing them to music, dance, live painting, and other cultural elements...showing what the future can look like. The steps to plan and execute this type of event include:

- Set goals such as: 1) desired audience; 2) how to help businesses attract customers downtown; 3) change image of downtown; 4) practice collaboration or implement a pilot project to see feasibility, etc.
- Gather parties with similar interests, complementary resources and expertise.
- Brainstorm ways to achieve the core goals. Develop criteria to select one strategy to move forward: 1) Is there someone who has done an event before? 2) Does someone have paid staff that can lend a hand? 3) Who has graphics and marketing expertise? Can this strategy tag onto another event or a milestone in the community?
- Answer these questions: 1) Who is the audience? 2) What message to convey? 3) How does this align with municipal and business district goals? 4) What does success look like? 5) What would cause everyone to smile the day after the event? Keep the answers to these questions in mind throughout planning
- Work back from the goals to identify people, organizations, agencies available to help: chart interests, capacity, resources, contacts.
- What location best supports the goals? Create a plan of the area.
- List and draw activity areas, block party elements
- Link program activities with partners/volunteers.
- Refine event: what happens, time, day, activities
- Create a budget sheet for overall event, each activity area.
- Think carefully about branding...what to call it? How does this fit with overall branding and marketing for the downtown or commercial district?
- Create a detailed implementation plan with timeline of tasks, roles.
- Document what you do and think about how to make the effort sustainable in the long run. How can this event be a pilot project for ongoing programming?
- During the event, try to include ways to capture information the attendees (raffle that requires their zip code, ideas chalk wall that asks what people want to see in the district, etc.)
- Do a debrief immediately after the event to improve efforts for the future. Ask businesses for their input and reactions.



Volunteers helped build the “set” for the weekend activities.



Winterbridge was a success and led to increased “buzz” about what is possible downtown and also the power of collaboration and FRACC’s work.

Review Zoning and Permitting in the CBD and Implement Recommended Changes

Category



Administrative Capacity

Location

Central Business District (CBD) zoning district/RRP study area
Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project idea generated from:

- Walpole Community and Economic Development (lead)
- Destination Downtown

Budget



Small Budget (<\$50K)

Primary Costs Include:

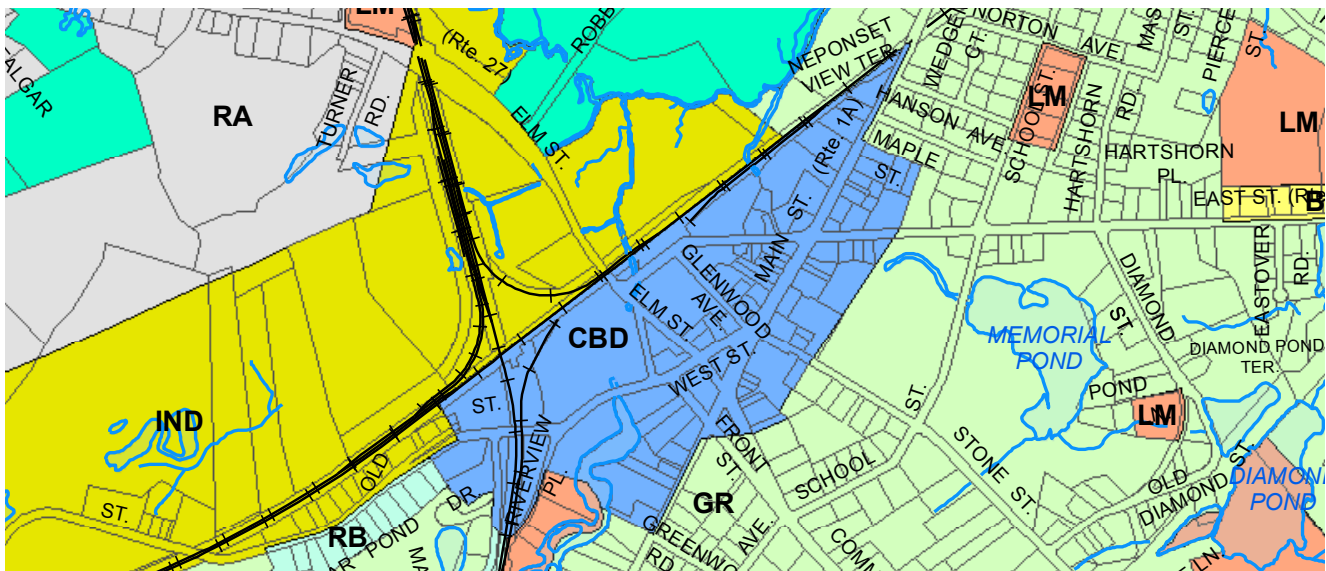
- Staff/administrative time to undertake the planning policy review and implement changes

Costs dependent on:

- The amount of public input desired
- The complexity of the proposed changes—how many topics are regulated and to what level of detail
- The number and complexity of custom graphics required
- The time spent working with various parties to ensure that standards meet local needs (boards, property owners, residents, etc.)
- The number of major rounds of revisions to the zoning bylaw that are required.

Potential Funding Sources:

- Planning Assistance Grant, MA EEOEEA
- Technical Assistance Program, MAPC
- Technical Assistance Grant, MDI
- Planning Board budget or local appropriation at Town Meeting



Central Business District depicted in the Town of Walpole's zoning map
Source: Town of Walpole

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

- 1 month: Form Zoning Review Committee (or assign task to sub-committee of existing Planning Board)
- 1-3 months: Determine need for zoning consultant and contract with as needed.
- 2-3 months: Conduct zoning diagnostic to identify priority areas for change
- 3-4 months: Develop draft zoning text
- 2-3 months: Provide draft for feedback to relevant Boards and Commissions
- 3 months: Finalize zoning text and adopt

Risk



Medium Risk

- Political will to approve zoning and permitting changes
- Support from local business and property owners.

Key Performance Indicators

- Survival and growth of existing businesses
- Number of business expansions

Partners & Resources

- Community and Economic Development Department
- Planning Board
- Destination Downtown
- Economic Development Commission

Diagnostic

Evaluation of the Central Business District zoning and recommendations to revise it are essential to aid recovery from COVID-19 and for the ongoing revitalization of Downtown. In addition, Walpole has a reputation of a somewhat difficult place to seek approvals. Evaluation of average times for various applications and suggested changes that will help town officials make targeted improvements to the permitting process.

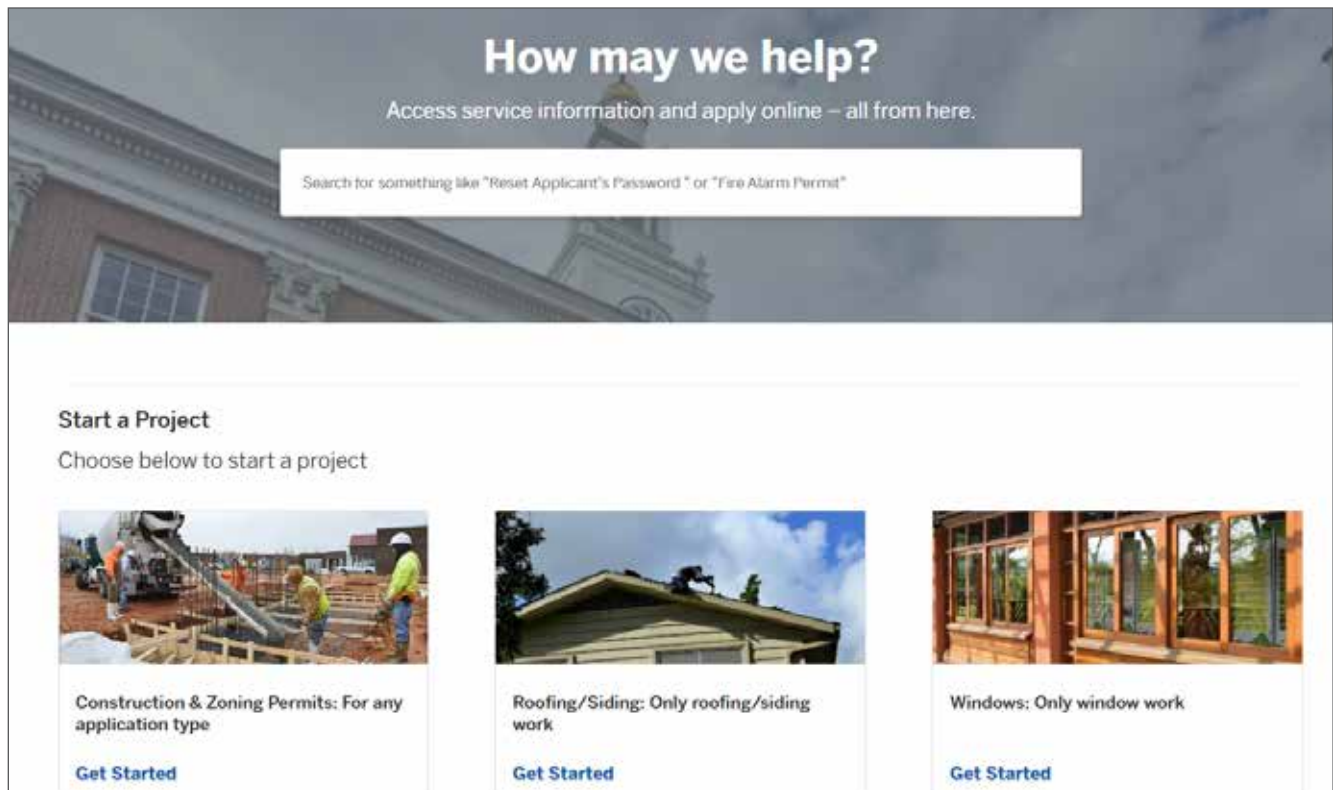
Diagnostic:

- Recently approved mixed-use construction has required variances to height, density, and/or parking requirements.
- Regulatory changes in response to Covid helped local businesses by facilitating outdoor dining; these changes should be made permanent to continue supporting businesses and the Downtown environment.

Covid impacts:

- Covid highlighted the need for flexibility that zoning does not currently allow.
- Covid has exposed the need for businesses to quickly adapt and experiment. Zoning requirements limit that flexibility, and while short-term solutions have been helpful over the past year, permanent changes are needed to support business survival and growth.

Action Item	<p>This review of local zoning and permitting will streamline approval processes for local businesses and property owners in the CBD. Zoning and permitting changes are intended to address shortcomings in the physical environment, create a more user-friendly application process, and provide greater flexibility for local businesses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate Central Business District (CBD) zoning regulations and recommend improvements. Elements that will be evaluated include dimensional regulations including maximum building height, maximum floor area ratio, allowed uses, ideal mix of residential, signage regulations, and parking regulations. 2. Create a streamlined approval process within the CBD. Review current permitting processes and identify areas to streamline, condense timelines, or provide other improvements.
Process	<p>Action: Evaluate Central Business District (CBD) zoning regulations and recommend improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form Zoning Review Committee and determine communication protocols with Master Plan Committee, Planning Board, and other relevant entities. • Audit use table, dimensional requirements, signage, parking, and design guidelines for Central Business District (CBD) zoning. • Identify recommended changes and draft new text for review and approval. • Collaborate with Planning Board to build support and address any concerns proactively. • Promote benefits of potential changes with local business owners to build constituency. • Formally adopt zoning changes. • Publicize changes and encourage businesses and property owners to take advantage of new requirements. <p>Action: Create a Streamlined Approval Process within the CBD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify list of permits to evaluate. • Audit permitting procedures, timelines, and required information to identify opportunities to reduce time, clarify expectations, and enhance the applicant experience. • Identify recommended changes and draft new procedures for review and approval. • Collaborate with Planning Board to build support and address any concerns proactively. • Promote benefits of potential changes with local business owners to build constituency. • Implement new permitting process. • Complete a "Permitting in Walpole" how-to document for ease-of-use. • Publicize changes and encourage businesses and property owners to take advantage of new requirements. • Track new applications to understand how changes are being used.



City of Burlington Central Permit and Zoning Online Resource Page
Source: City of Burlington, VT

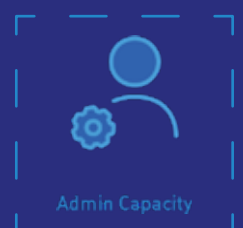
The City of Burlington, VT Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) launched an online business portal designed to support new businesses get started in the City.

Via an online portal, entrepreneurs can visit a "Startup in a Day" website (<https://business.burlingtonvt.gov>). After answering questions regarding their business type, the portal provides a customized list of the permit applications the entrepreneur will need to start their business. In addition, the website provides direct connections to relevant staff for questions. A "Resource Centre" section directs them to information on state- and federal -level requirements, business planning and finance resources.

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Central Permitting Online Resource

Location: City of Burlington, VT



Expand Destination Downtown's Capacity and Consider Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID)

Category



Administrative Capacity

Location

RRP study area
Census tract 4111.02

Origin

Project idea generated from the following sources:

- Destination Downtown (lead)
- Downtown Action Plan (2015)
- Downtown Walpole Parking and Economic Development Strategy (2019)

Budget



Small-Medium Budget (<\$200K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/Administrative time
- Funding research, application, and compliance monitoring
- BID consultant time

Potential Funding Sources:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)
- Destination Downtown
- Town Fund

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

- 2 - 4 months: Assess current capacity and future improvement plan needs
- 3 - 6 months: Identify resources to expand organizational capacity
- Ongoing for lifespan of project: Secure resources and implement projects with expanded capacity
- 3 months: Decide whether to explore BID feasibility
- 3 months: Convene steering group
- 12 - 24 months: Build Town and property owner support
- 2 months: Vote on BID formation



DESTINATION DOWNTOWN
WALPOLE, MA

Risk



Medium Risk

- Downtown property owner interest
- Funding

Key Performance Indicators

- Change in Downtown visitors
- Change in business revenues
- Number of new businesses
- Social media impressions of Downtown
- Number of supportive property owners
- Destination Downtown budget

Partners & Resources

- Downtown property owners
- Downtown business owners
- Local residents
- Economic Development Commission
- Walpole Chamber of Commerce

Diagnostic

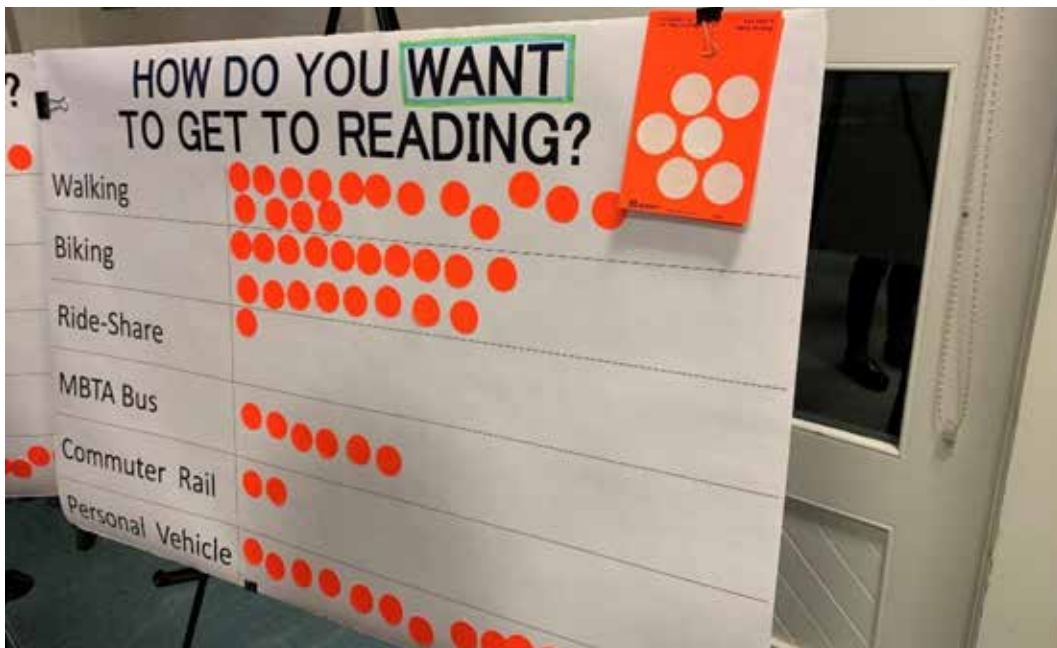
Diagnostic:

- The Downtown Action Plan (2015) recommended increasing the organization capacity within downtown to advocate for revitalization and economic growth. Destination Downtown's formation in 2019 is partly in response to this identified need.
- The Parking and Economic Development Report (2019) recommends collaboration between civic, business, and community entities and long-term consideration of a BID or DIF to support downtown revitalization.
- About one-third of business survey respondents rated 'creation of a district management entity' as important or very important.
- Over half of business survey respondents rated 'improvements in safety and/or cleanliness' as important or very important – a core function of many business improvement districts.

Covid impacts/influence:

- Covid negatively impacted many downtown businesses, reducing revenues and adding new operating requirements. Ongoing uncertainty about remote work, real estate markets, and public health have stalled previously considered projects.

Action Item	<p>Destination Downtown is a recently-formed, community-led non-profit dedicated to improving downtown Walpole. It is founded on the four pillars of the national Main Street America program: design, promotion, organization and economic vitality. This project will explore opportunities to expand its organizational capacity to increase its positive impact downtown.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore opportunities to expand Destination Downtown's organizational capacity. The initial effort is to build the organization's capacity. This includes identifying additional funding or sponsorship opportunities, evaluating staff capacity and the need for new positions, and the roles of the organization for event planning, advocacy, promotion, and more. 2. Evaluate the feasibility of forming a business improvement district (BID): The second phase of this project will assess the feasibility of forming a BID for Downtown Walpole. As Destination Downtown builds a track record of success, business owners may want more services appropriate for a BID. Many communities that successfully establish a BID begin with a community-led organization like Destination Downtown.
Process	<p>Action: Explore Opportunities to Expand Destination Downtown's Organizational Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current organizational capacity • Develop improvement plan for next 3-5 years • Determine organizational needs to implement desired improvement plan • Identify resources to build capacity: sponsorships, grants, in-kind contributions, internships, volunteers, contractors <p>Evaluate the feasibility of forming a business improvement district (BID)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a steering committee to assess feasibility and determine program priorities. • Launch outreach and engagement effort to build support among property owners. • Develop BID improvement plan based on input from steering committee and property owners to address major needs. • Gather signatures for BID support (minimum 60% of property owners representing 51% of assessed value of proposed BID)

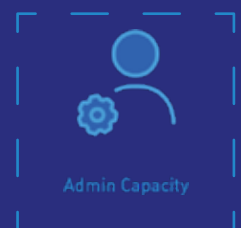


Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Determining a District Management Model for Downtown Reading

Location: Reading, MA



Reading, MA's Process to Choose a District Management Model

The creation of a downtown management organization was intended to establish a dedicated organization that would provide supplemental programs, services and advocacy for the downtown. The downtown organization would undertake activities to attract businesses, investment, customers and residents to downtown. These could include marketing, placemaking, business development and advocacy. Determining the appropriate downtown management organization model was a unique process for the Reading community, downtown property owners and businesses. The process included extensive outreach and community education to explore program priorities, financial sustainability, organizational models and champions from both the private and public sector.

Economic Development Plans for downtown Reading had included the recommendation to establish a sustainable downtown organization to support the economic and social health of the downtown. The Town of Reading spearheaded activity to launch the process of community and property owner engagement to explore what model would be appropriate for downtown Reading.

This included:

- Identification of staff and financial resources
- Creating a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy
- Research to identify community priorities / recommendations
- Peer learning from other communities
- Consensus building among stakeholders
- Transition of leadership to private sector

PROCESS

- The Town of Reading secured Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance funding and committed staff to initiate and support
- A large broad-based community advisory/working group was formed to provide input and feedback
- A survey was widely distributed to community residents, businesses and other stakeholders - 1600 responses were received providing insight into program priorities and community preferences
- Community Outreach Event - A Pizza/Ice Cream Social brought over 150 residents to provide input
- 3 Community Forums – Panels featuring executive directors of different types of downtown organizations described their programs, challenges and models.
- Working sessions with Advisory committee to discuss specific model alternatives / cost and benefits
- One on one conversations with key stakeholders
- Consensus building with stakeholders and recommendation of preferred model and next steps.
- Transition from city led effort to Steering committee comprised of property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to lead organizational effort. City staff continued staff support. TA support continued through additional MDI grant.
- BID Steering Committee. BID organizational process underway