



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

**Town of
West Springfield**

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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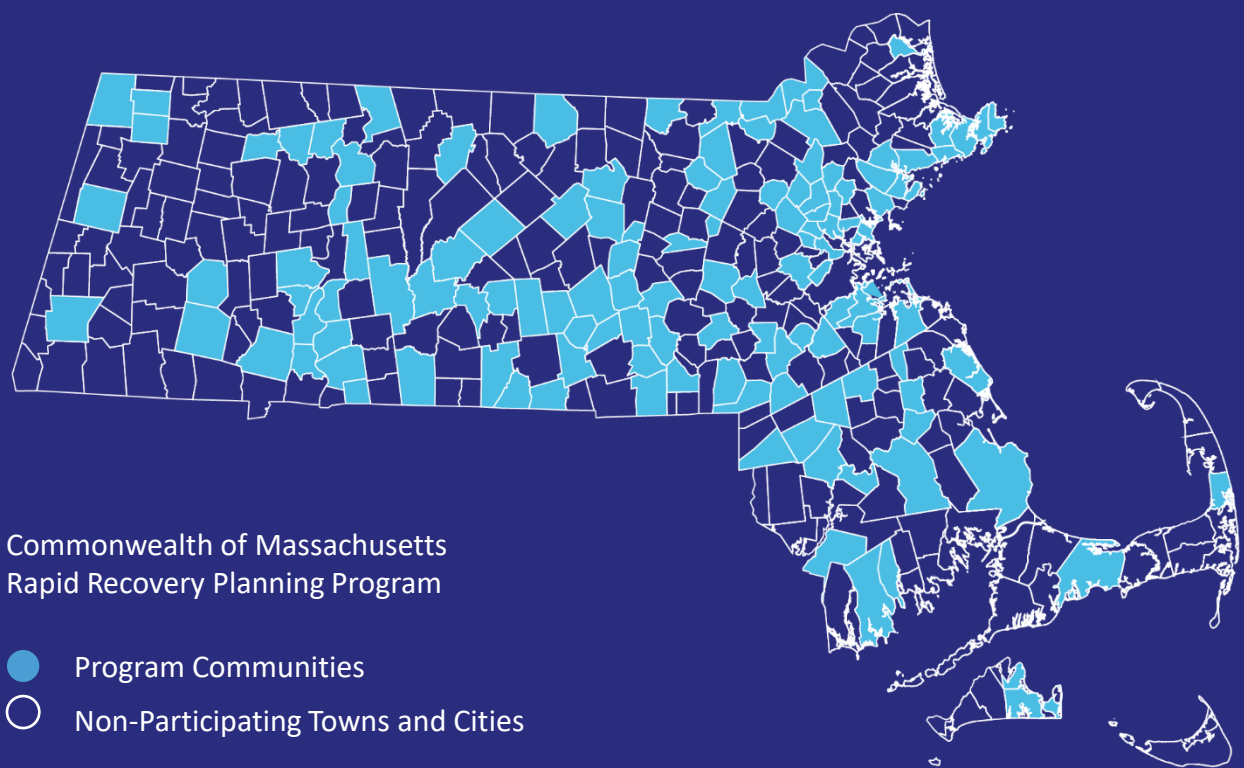
Table of Contents

Rapid Recovery Program	6
Introduction	7
Approach/Framework	8
Executive Summary	9
Diagnostic Key Findings	13
Physical Environment	16
Business Environment	20
Market Information	22
Administrative Capacity	25
Project Recommendations	28
Public Realm	29
Private Realm	47
Revenue and Sales	59
Administrative Capacity	64
Tenant Mix	75
Appendix	79

125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



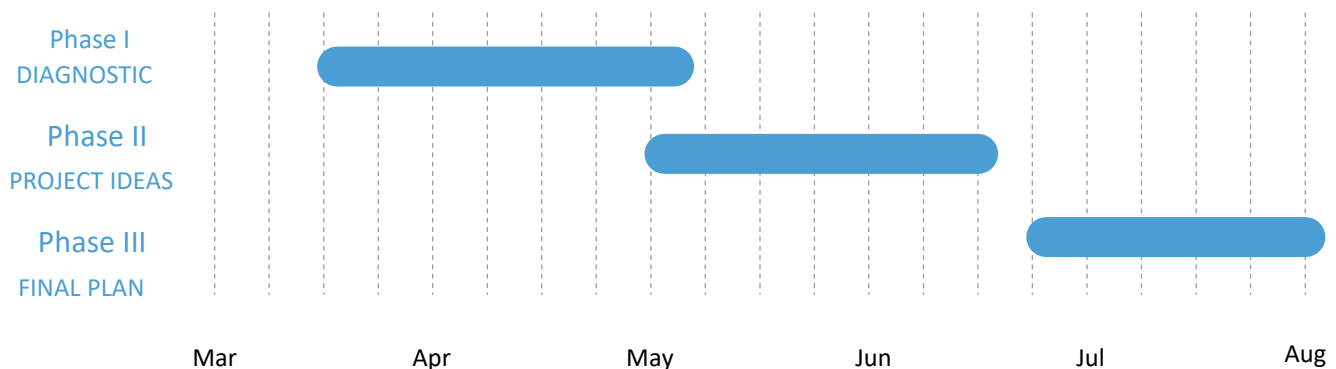
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



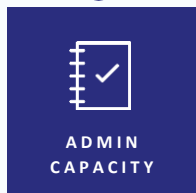
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue/Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

An Economy Driven by Diversity

The Town of West Springfield is a medium-sized community located in Hampden County, Massachusetts. Its history is one of agriculture and industry, but its present is dominated by a continuously evolving diversified economy. The Town is home to a unique international blend of cultures, and the business landscape is equally blended. The Town strives to serve the broad interests of its residents through an economic foundation built on its people, quality of life, and commitment to a prospering community. COVID-19 challenged this foundation. Shifts in business commuting, layoffs, and the resulting reduction in customer traffic undermined the business outlook and continue to challenge the post-pandemic recovery.

The Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) focused on a targeted Study Area in the southeastern portion of the Town and consists of the Central Business District (CBD), Merrick, and Memorial neighborhoods. It is bordered by Kings Highway to the north, Westfield Street, South Boulevard, and River Street to the west, Memorial Avenue to the south, and State Route 5 and the Connecticut River to the east. The Study Area includes a range of land uses, including an industrial core, residential zoning on the periphery, and commercial corridors bisecting neighborhoods.

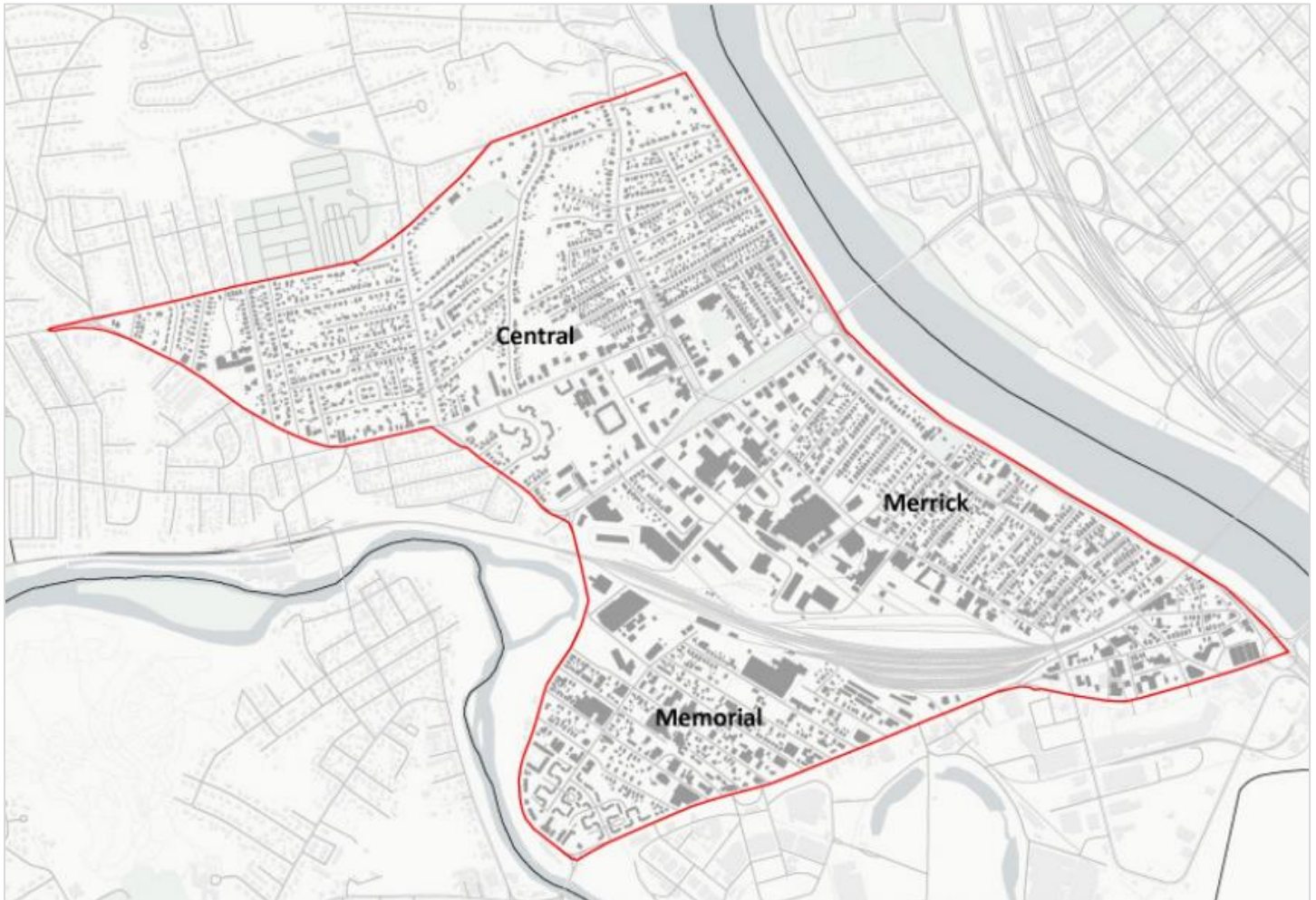
Approximately 9,718 people reside in the CBD, Merrick, and Memorial neighborhoods, representing 33.9% of West Springfield's total population.¹ Additionally, the Study Area aligns with the census blocks designated as low- to moderate-income (LMI) communities by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



Town of West Springfield. Source: West Springfield

1. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

West Springfield Study Area



West Springfield Study Area. Source: ESRI Shapefiles, U.S. Census Bureau Tigerline.

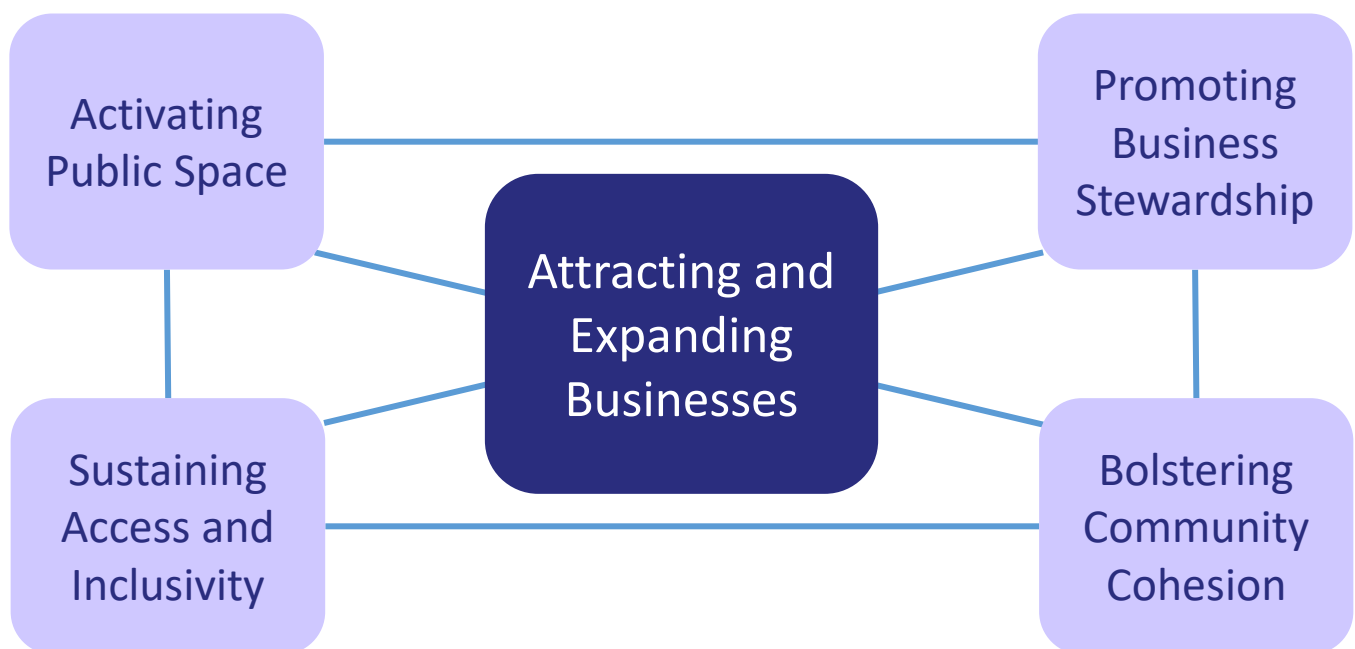
The physical environment of each neighborhood differs. Merrick and the CBD are more residential than the business-focused Memorial. The three neighborhoods are zoned as a mix of low- and high-density commercial uses and have restaurants, professional services, offices, apartments, and industrial uses. The area is intersected by major transportation routes. State Route 20 bisects the area and connects the City of Springfield directly to the CBD. Memorial Avenue provides transportation access from both Springfield and Agawam. The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides public transit access both locally and regionally, as PVTA bus routes P20, R10, and R14 have stops throughout the Study Area.

The Pandemic's Impacts on the Community

Since March 2020, West Springfield has recorded a total of 3,418 cases of COVID-19 representing 11.9% of the population. The case rate is less than Hampden County (13.2%) but greater than the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (10.4%).² At the onset of the pandemic, public schools, government offices, and businesses closed. Much of the local workforce lost employment or worked from home. In addition, closed schools and childcare facilities created burdens on parents and guardians and limited their ability to work. The number of individuals on unemployment insurance (UI) benefits increased significantly. According to the local business survey, businesses were impacted by reduced operating hours, a decline in customer traffic, and a decline in revenue.

Economic Recovery Depends on Addressing Infrastructure and Access, Streamlining Regulations, and Building Community

Economic recovery is rooted in four themes to support existing businesses and attract new ones. These themes outlined directly below were developed based on findings from the diagnostic phase. The diagnostic phase included an analysis of town plans and reports, seven key informant interviews, over 20 baseline data points, 15 site visit data points, and 27 local responses to the statewide business survey. More details regarding this research and analysis phase can be found in the Diagnostic section and Appendix X.

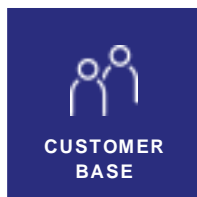


Key Components of Successful Economic Recovery in West Springfield

² Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard - Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report, 2021

Diagnostic

Key Findings



Diverse Customer Base Traveling by Car

West Springfield has over 28,000 residents, with an average population density of 1,670 per square mile. Residents primarily identify as white (79.9%), and the next most significant races and ethnicities are Hispanic or Latino (10.6%), and Asian (4%). Approximately 6,000 individuals over the age of five speak a language other than English at home, representing 22.1% of the population. Prior to COVID-19, most residents drove a personal vehicle to work, and the employment rate of West Springfield residents was 62.6%.³



Three Distinct Neighborhoods with Limited Connections

The CBD is the administrative center of West Springfield, with the Town Hall, Police and Fire headquarters, Council on Aging, post office, and the public library, as well as traditional commercial and residential uses. Merrick is more residential with a mix of single family and multi-family housing, while also offering industrial and more intense commercial uses on Union Street and neighborhood-convenience retail uses on Main Street. The Memorial neighborhood has a varied blend of all different uses, oftentimes with commercial, industrial, and residential uses located adjacent to one another on the same block.

The CSX West Springfield Intermodal Terminal (railyard) partitions Memorial from the CBD and Merrick, and the intensity of traffic on Park Street and Park Avenue creates a pedestrian barrier between the CBD and Merrick. Much of the Merrick population relies on accessibility through walking and biking routes. Sidewalks, roads, and buildings in each neighborhood labor and benefit from varied public and private investment. Certain corners of the Study Area are conducive to multiple commuter types while others require significant investment to create an improved physical environment

3. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates



Density and Variance

West Springfield is home to a diverse range of businesses that reflect the built environment; highway corridors house high-density retail and commercial offerings such as drive-through restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations, and banks; an industrial core offers manufacturing, transportation, and warehousing; and neighborhoods contain strips of low-intensity commercial uses that integrate with single- and multi-family developments. The variation in business offerings is a strength of the economy.

West Springfield has been successful in retaining resident dollars spent on retail. Many industries show a retail surplus, with retailers pulling customers from outside the Study Area. The neighborhoods in the Study Area are characterized by co-located businesses that enable cross-shopping. High vacancy rates have an impact on the overall health, but these vacancies also provide an opportunity to enhance business density and tenant mix through retail attraction and retention efforts.



Dedicated and Supportive Staff and Resources

The Town has multiple departments and boards dedicated to supporting economic recovery and personnel who can support funding grant applications. The Town's economy is additionally supported by various regional partners and community organizations including a local chamber of commerce and regional planning commission. These entities will be key supporters in the implementation and maintenance of the RRP projects. The addition of a dedicated staffer for economic development, along with the associated budget allotment, would further support the administrative capacity to implement economic recovery initiatives.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

PRIVATE REALM

Economic growth is dependent in part on the quality of buildings and storefronts. Many storefronts have clear windows, vibrant signage, and attractive facades that communicate offerings and attract customers. Others have crowded windows, minimal signage, and deteriorated exteriors that do not adequately reflect the quality of offerings. The RRP site visit scorecard included an assessment of the Study Area's storefronts. Storefronts' windows, outdoor displays, facades, and signage were inspected.

A summary of these findings is included in the table below.

ELEMENT	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	EXISTING CONDITIONS
Storefront Windows	Storefronts that maintain a minimum of 70% transparency ensure clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of storefront, as well as improve safety for the business, customers, and pedestrians.	About 50% of storefront windows maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.
Outdoor Displays	Attractive window displays and spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks or adjacent parking spaces can help contribute to overall district vibrancy.	More than 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining that pose challenges to the pedestrian experience.
Signage	Signage can help customers identify the location of storefronts and businesses from a distance. Signage should also reflect the visual brand and identity of tenants to help attract new customers.	About 50% of storefronts have clear signage that reflect basic business information and can easily be seen from adjacent sidewalks.
Facade	Storefronts that use high-quality and durable building materials, as well as paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district to potential customers.	More than 25% of properties require significant building façade improvements, including power washing, painting, and structural enhancements.
Lighting	Storefront interior lighting after business hours help enliven the corridor and boost security on the street.	More than 25% of storefronts do not have lighting.

Source: Site Visit Assessment

MOBILITY PRIORITIES

As in most western Massachusetts communities, residents rely on personal vehicles for transportation. In addition to the rates of car ownership and commuter patterns, the characteristics of roads in the commercial corridors of the Study Area indicate this trend. In the CBD, Elm Street allows for northbound and southbound traffic and is bisected by a median. Elm Street does not have proper stripping to separate parking lanes from traffic lanes. While the width of Elm Street allows for two-lane traffic in both directions, additional alterations would provide extended pedestrian and cyclist access through curb cuts, parklets, and dedicated bicycle lanes. Main Street in Merrick services more residential transportation purposes, although community stakeholders noted that drag racing often occurs on this street. Prioritizing pedestrian infrastructure, such as rectangular rapid flashing beacon crosswalks, high visibility markings, and enhanced lighting, would improve pedestrian safety and comfort in this neighborhood.

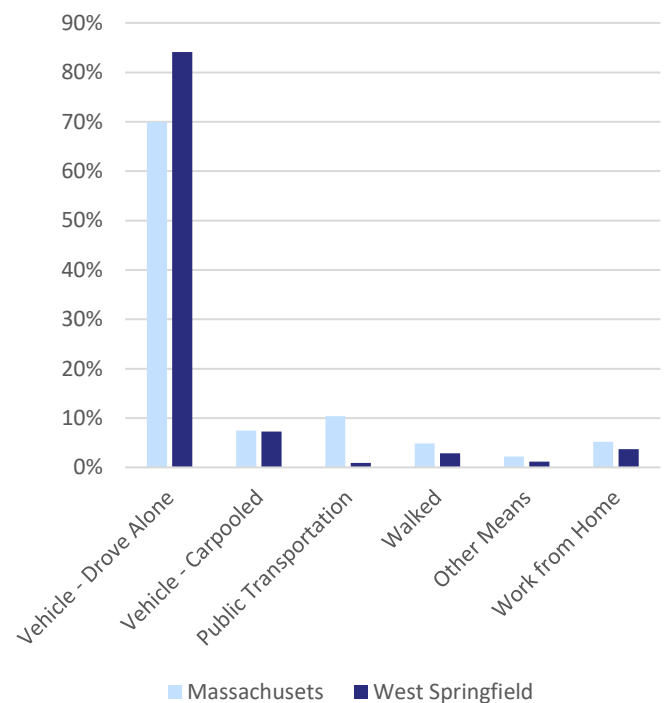
Limitations of the existing transportation infrastructure compound the traffic issues. Railway underpasses on River Street, Union Street, and Main Street provide clearance only up to 12 feet. As many commercial vehicles cannot meet that threshold, large trucks and tractor-trailers utilize State Route 20 to access West Springfield's industrial core, resulting in heavy commercial vehicle uses of Park Avenue, Park Street, and Elm Street. This increased traffic in the CBD impedes pedestrian and bicycle comfort and detracts from the leisure and recreation uses of the Town Commons. Adjustments to the road network to alleviate these challenges are inhibited by the potential impact to commerce and the level of coordination required, as the roads are alternately owned by the Town and State (MassDOT).

CAR OWNERSHIP RATES

West Springfield	89.2%
Springfield	77.1%
Massachusetts	89.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

Commute to Work by Type



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

HIDDEN AMENITIES

West Springfield contains numerous amenities that attract local and regional residents. Bear Hole Reservoir and the West Springfield Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway provide leisure opportunities; Town parks provide space for recreation; the Majestic Theater offers entertainment; the Public Library creates space for education; and commercial districts throughout neighborhoods present customers with culturally distinct shopping experiences. However, these amenities are not always well-known or adequately promoted. Opportunities to have wayfinding and branding signage throughout the Study Area will contribute to better marketing for West Springfield and its unique offerings. Currently, wayfinding signage targets motorists. Signage directing pedestrians and cyclists to culturally and recreationally significant amenities are absent. Wayfinding signage will improve customer interactions with the community by efficiently circulating people, leading people to amenities, and promoting neighborhoods through branding. Additionally, drivers have issues determining what is public parking and what is not. Through wayfinding, the Town would be able to alleviate this issue, as there is a large amount of public parking that has access to walkable sidewalks to see the city.



Town Commons Fountain. Source: West Springfield



Town Commons Gazebo. Source: West Springfield

COMFORT FOR PEDESTRIANS

The RRP site visit scorecard assessed the conditions of West Springfield's mobility infrastructure. The quality of sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian amenities, lighting, wayfinding, and roadbeds was assessed to inform the study's economic recovery solutions. Physical improvements to the public realm are an essential component of recovery, as corridors with accessible public amenities will attract and retain a customer base. West Springfield neighborhoods scored differently in respect to the quality of the public realm. In the CBD, Elm Street houses an attractive median lined with trees and benches and is connected by crosswalks to shepherd people to the green space safely. However, Elm Street trees and benches adjacent to businesses are limited, and sidewalks are sparsely populated with trees along Westfield Street. In Merrick, Main Street contains a lush tree canopy but lacks pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure or quality sidewalks. Union Street has a more modest tree canopy and limited pedestrian facilities, likely due to the industrial character of the parcels to the west. The streets of Memorial reflect a similar context to Union Street with few street trees and modest pedestrian facilities. A summary of these findings is included in the table below.

ELEMENT	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	EXISTING CONDITIONS
Sidewalk	Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate both the flow of customers and spillover retail/dining activity. In addition, sidewalks should be clean and well-maintained to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians.	About 50% of sidewalks in the Study Area are cleaned and well-maintained.
Street Trees and Benches	Sidewalks should facilitate a variety of activities, including resting, people-watching and socializing. Street trees and benches are key amenities that support such activities and should be made available without disrupting the flow of pedestrians.	Limited availability of street trees and benches creating an uncomfortable pedestrian experience.
Lighting	Street lighting improves pedestrian visibility and personal safety, as well as aids in geographic orientation.	About 50% of the Study Area is serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.
Wayfinding	A wayfinding system supports overall accessibility of a commercial district. It benefits pedestrians and bicyclists and directs motorists to park and walk. Without clear visual cues customers may find it difficult to park or may be less aware of local offerings.	Wayfinding in the Study Area is primarily geared towards directing motorists across the Study Area. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations to pedestrians.
Roadbed and Crosswalk	Roads should be well maintained to ensure safety of drivers and pedestrians. Crosswalks that are unsafe or inconvenient to customers may undermine accessibility between stores and overall shopper experience.	Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the Study Area efficiently with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.

Source: Site Visit Assessment

Highlights from the Business Environment

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The Study Area contains multiple commercial corridors that support local and regional customers. These corridors include diverse businesses located on Elm Street, Park Avenue, Park Street, Westfield Street, Union Street, Main Street, and Memorial Avenue. The intensity and density of business uses vary. Main Street hosts a range of neighborhood conveniences, quick-service food establishments, and some heavier commercial activities, such as textiles and auto repair. The cultural and demographic diversity of the Merrick neighborhood contribute to an assortment of business offerings. The international focus of the businesses and the residential backdrop provide a compelling destination for customers outside the immediate community.

Elm Street also provides a comfortable atmosphere given the verdant median, medium density, and historic commercial buildings. The CBD contains commercial offerings that promote consistent activity along Elm Street; the Majestic Theater, restaurants, institutional, civic, and professional services keep the area active at all times of the day. Along Memorial Avenue, a higher intensity of retail and commercial businesses supports regional traffic, including the Eastern State Exposition, Century Shopping Center, strip malls, restaurants, lodging, auto services, and other retail spaces. The diversity of businesses throughout the Study Area and the variation of experiences the corridors offer, create a healthy business environment that can drive traffic to West Springfield.

VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED STOREFRONTS

During the RRP site visit in April of 2021, the plan facilitators conducted a vacant storefront audit in the Study Area. The audit recorded a storefront vacancy rate of 18.6% in West Springfield. All types of commercial buildings experienced vacancies, including a 30,000 square foot office and retail space in the center of West Springfield, industrial parcels between Merrick and Memorial, storefronts along neighborhood commercial corridors, and plazas along Memorial Avenue. Vacant storefronts create a less attractive shopping experience and threaten the vitality of neighboring businesses. While vacancies impose a blight on the community, they also offer an array of opportunities. West Springfield can attract businesses that satisfy local and regional needs, support entrepreneurs with available space, or match the arts community with inexpensive space.



Main Street Corridor. Source: West Springfield



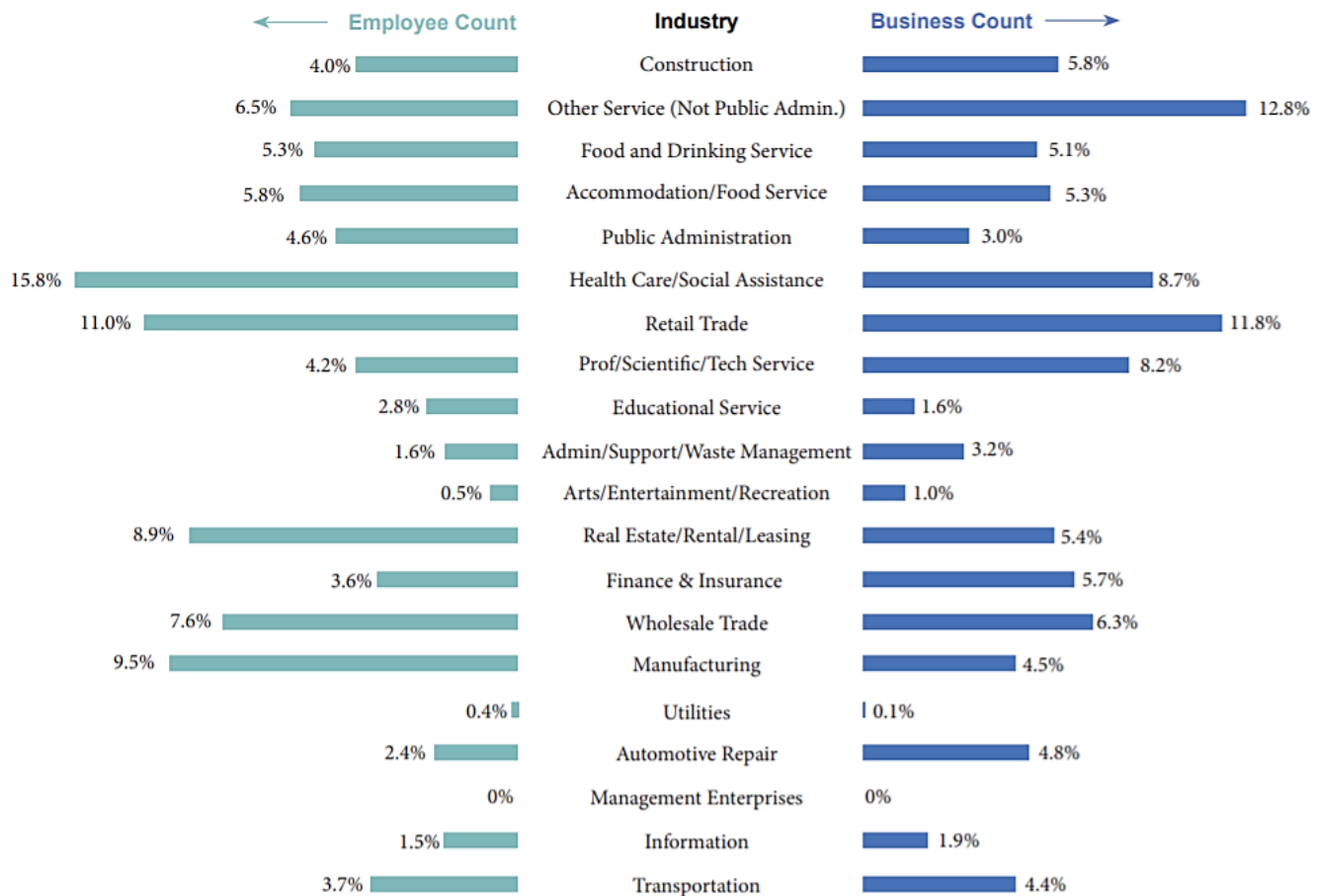
Park Street Corridor. Source: West Springfield



Elm Street Corridor. Source: West Springfield

INDUSTRIAL CORE

The CSX Rail Yard and surrounding freight and manufacturing facilities are West Springfield's industrial core. The industrial center and higher-intensity commercial uses dominate both the Study Area's physical environment and much of the business landscape. In the Study Area, higher intensity uses (e.g., manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade) have a higher share of business representation with 16.4% of the market, while retail contains 11.8%.⁴ The intensity and scale of industrial uses generally do not encourage walkable and bikeable environments. To recover from COVID-19, West Springfield will need to balance the diversity of tenant mixes, the influence of the industrial economy, and the desire to create pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that support retail and light commercial uses.



Business and Employee Proportions in the Study Area. Source: ESRI, August 2017

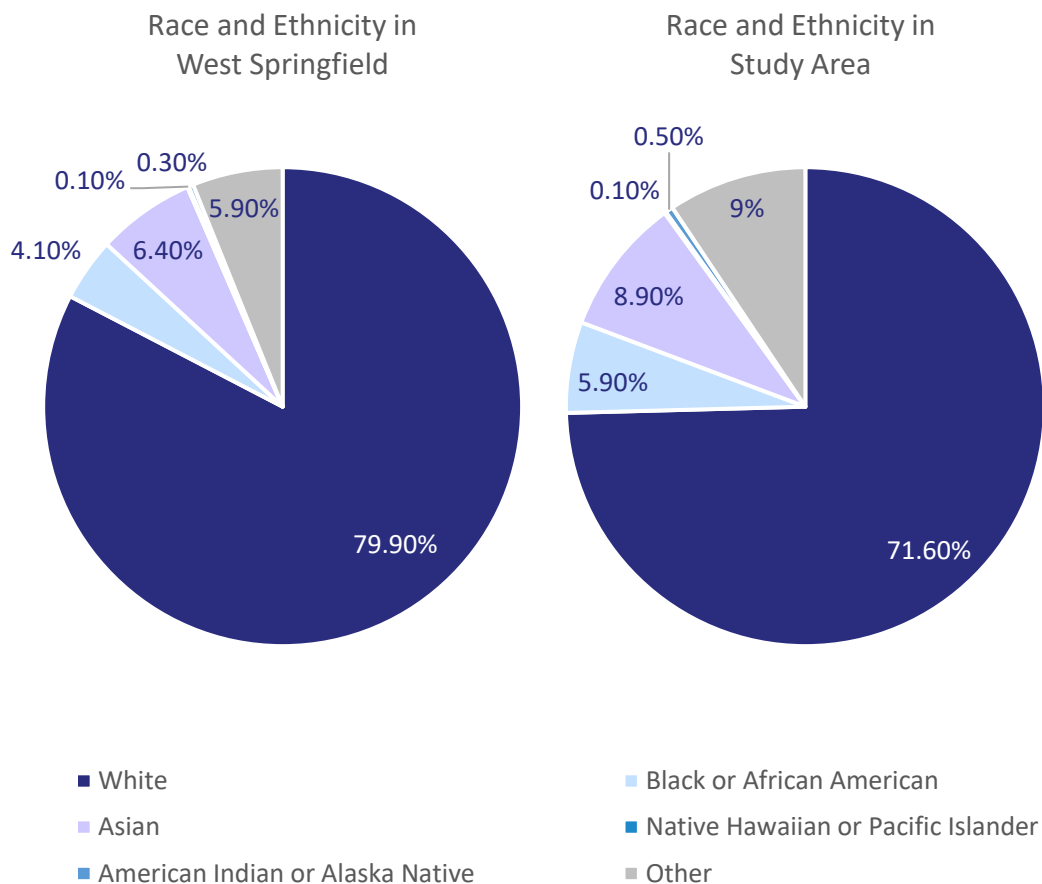


Highlights from the Customer Base

DEMOGRAPHICS OF WEST SPRINGFIELD

The total population is over 28,600 people with an average population density of 1,670 per square mile. The Study Area selected for the RRP has approximately 9,700 residents and a population density of 5,860 per square mile. The population of West Springfield has decreased by -0.42% since 2010. The median age of West Springfield residents is 42 years old. Approximately 89.4% of West Springfield adult residents have a high school degree, and 45.7% of residents have an associate degree or higher. These rates are lower than that of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (91.3% and 52.4%, respectively).

The residents of West Springfield primarily identify as white (79.9%), and the next most significant races and ethnicities are Hispanic or Latino and Asian. The graph on the right shows the distribution of identified races and ethnicities in the Town and the Study Area.⁵



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

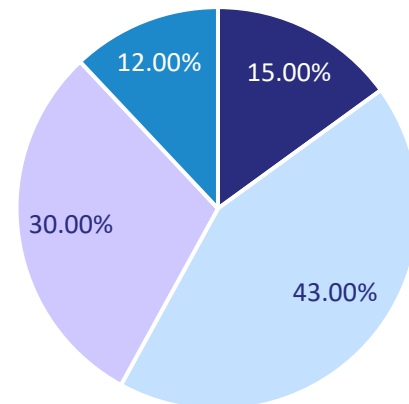
LANGUAGE ACCESS

Approximately 6,000 individuals over the age of five speak a language other than English at home, representing 22.1% of the Town's population. The number of individuals who speak a language other than English at home has decreased since 2019 by 2.1%. There are approximately 2,000 residents of West Springfield, representing 7.2% of the total population and nearly 33% of multilingual speakers, who are able "to speak English less than very well." The most significant population in this category speak an Indo-European language (e.g., Russian, Polish). These statistics indicate the need for COVID-19 economic recovery strategies to be considerate and inclusive of varying languages and English proficiencies.⁶

HOUSING

There are approximately 12,600 households in West Springfield. The average occupancy rate of housing units is 93.15%, which is greater than the rate for the Commonwealth, and approximately 60% of residents own their homes. Of households who are renters, approximately 49% of households are experiencing rent burden (i.e., spend 30% or more of their income on rent). Those experiencing rent burden are represented in the graph below by the solid blue bars.⁷

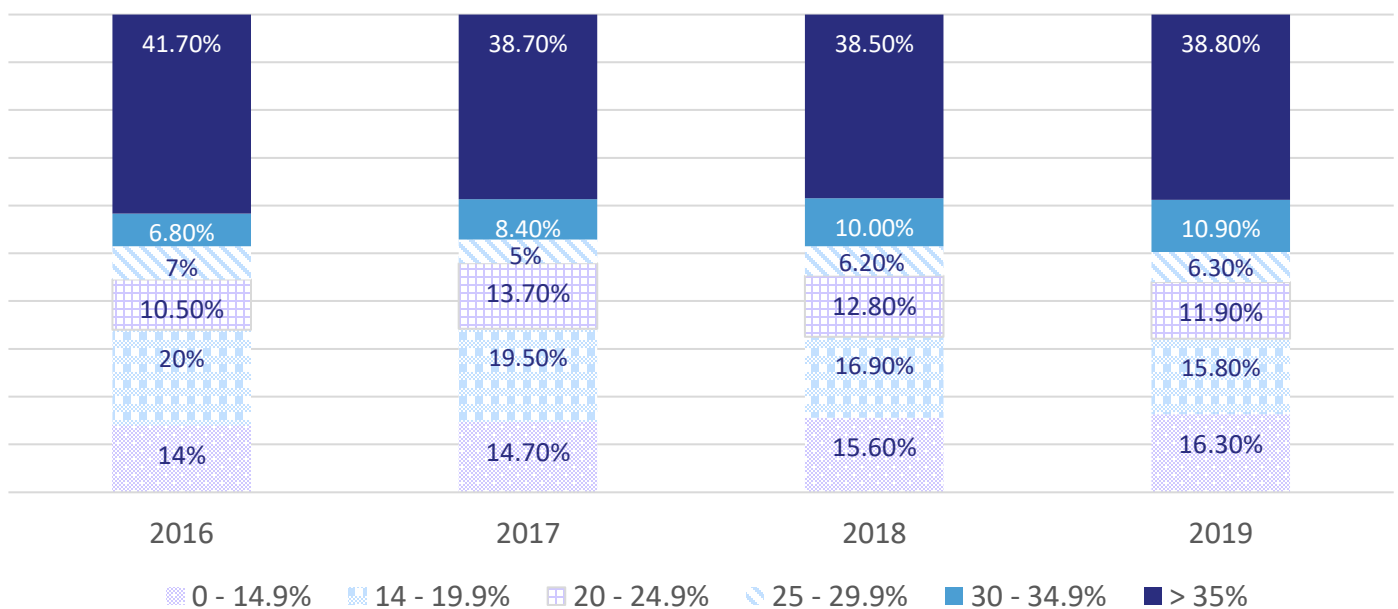
Languages other than English Spoken in West Springfield



- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Indo-European
- Spanish
- Other

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

Rent Burden: Gross Rent as a Percent of Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

6. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

7. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

West Springfield is a commuter town, whether individuals commute into or out of Town for work. Over 51% of local employees commute to West Springfield from neighboring towns, whereas 40.7% of employees live in West Springfield and work elsewhere in the region. The commuting behavior of the customer base likely changed during COVID-19, as more individuals work from home, and businesses will need to adapt to this altered behavior.

Most residents in West Springfield drive to work, with the primary mode of commuting as driving their own vehicle (84%). Over 89% of West Springfield households own a personal vehicle, which is greater than the rate for Massachusetts (87.6%). Over the past five years, West Springfield has seen some changes in the way individuals commute, including a 50% increase in the use of public transportation.⁸

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

As of 2019, the current employment rate of West Springfield residents was 62.6%. This rate was 1.6% greater than Massachusetts's rate and increased by 4.7% since 2014. The median household income is \$53,053, below the national average of \$62,834, and the Town's poverty rate is approximately 11.3%. The rates of unemployment increased significantly during early 2020 and have steadily decreased since summer 2020.

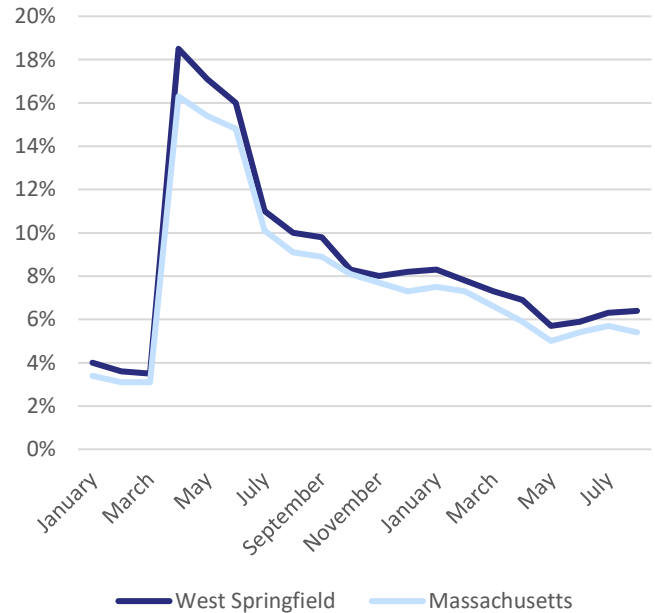
The most prominent industries in West Springfield are Educational Services (30%), Retail Trade (13%), and Manufacturing (12%). The most significant changes in industry in the past five years are in the Wholesale Trades and Public Administration sectors, which experienced a 67% and 37% decrease in employment, respectively. Conversely, the Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Construction sectors have experienced a 22% increase in employment.⁹

TOP INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT

1. Educational services, and health care and social assistance
2. Retail trade
3. Manufacturing
4. Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing
5. Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

Unemployment Rate During COVID-19



Unemployment Rates. Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance, Labor Market Information.

8. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

9. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates



Highlights from Administrative Capacity

DEDICATED TOWN LEADERSHIP

The Town of West Springfield maintains multiple departments and boards that support economic growth, including the Community Development Department, Planning Department and Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, License Commission, and Building Department. These staff members and volunteers have led economic recovery efforts in West Springfield thus far and are key stakeholders for the success of the RRP. However, the Town currently does not have a staff member whose primary purpose is to support the economic vitality of West Springfield. Establishing a viable entity, such as an Economic Development Committee (EDC), as a lead on economic development projects will support creating a vision for economic growth. The Town previously proposed an Economic Development Director (EDD) for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 operating budget. The position was cut because the compensation was perceived to be inadequate to attract a quality candidate to the role.

FISCAL RESOURCES AND GRANTS MANAGEMENT

The Town of West Springfield's annual operating budget is approximately \$105 million. The Town also receives \$825,000 annually from HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), allocated by DHCD, to support communities and advance economic opportunities and quality of housing. In addition, the Town received an allocation from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The Town does not have a dedicated budget for economic development efforts. However, the Town maintains personnel skilled in grant writing (e.g., Community Development Director) who can support applications to access funding needed to implement the projects outlined in this Plan. Local businesses have indicated an interest in financial support to recover from the impacts of COVID-19. In the business survey, over 70% of respondents expressed an interest in financing opportunities that may be used for storefront or facade improvements or other uses.



Merrick Station Mural Making using West Springfield CDBG Funding, Source: [Town Website](#)

STRONG REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

West Springfield is a member of the West of the River Chamber of Commerce (WRC), a group dedicated to advocating and supporting businesses located in both Agawam and West Springfield. Their mission is to deliver value to their members, maintain and improve the region's quality of life, support existing industries, and continue to promote economic development. Additionally, West Springfield is a member community of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), a planning body for the Pioneer Valley region. PVPC writes plans to prepare for and address regional issues, including transportation access, environmental and climate change concerns, hazard response, and sustainable regional development. They maintain a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that aligns with the objectives of the RRP.

There are many organizations in West Springfield who are dedicated to supporting the community by addressing various challenges. A sample of these organizations is included in the graphic to the right, as categorized by community resources, targeted organizations, civic groups, and cultural institutions. These entities will be key supporters in the implementation and maintenance of the RRP projects. They can also help address any barriers to community engagement by leveraging their networks to encourage West Springfield residents to participate and establish trust as community leaders.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Refugee Resource Center
Multicultural Resource Center
Ascentria Care Alliance
CARE Coalition

TARGETED ORGANIZATIONS

Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity
West Springfield Emergency Food Pantry
Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative

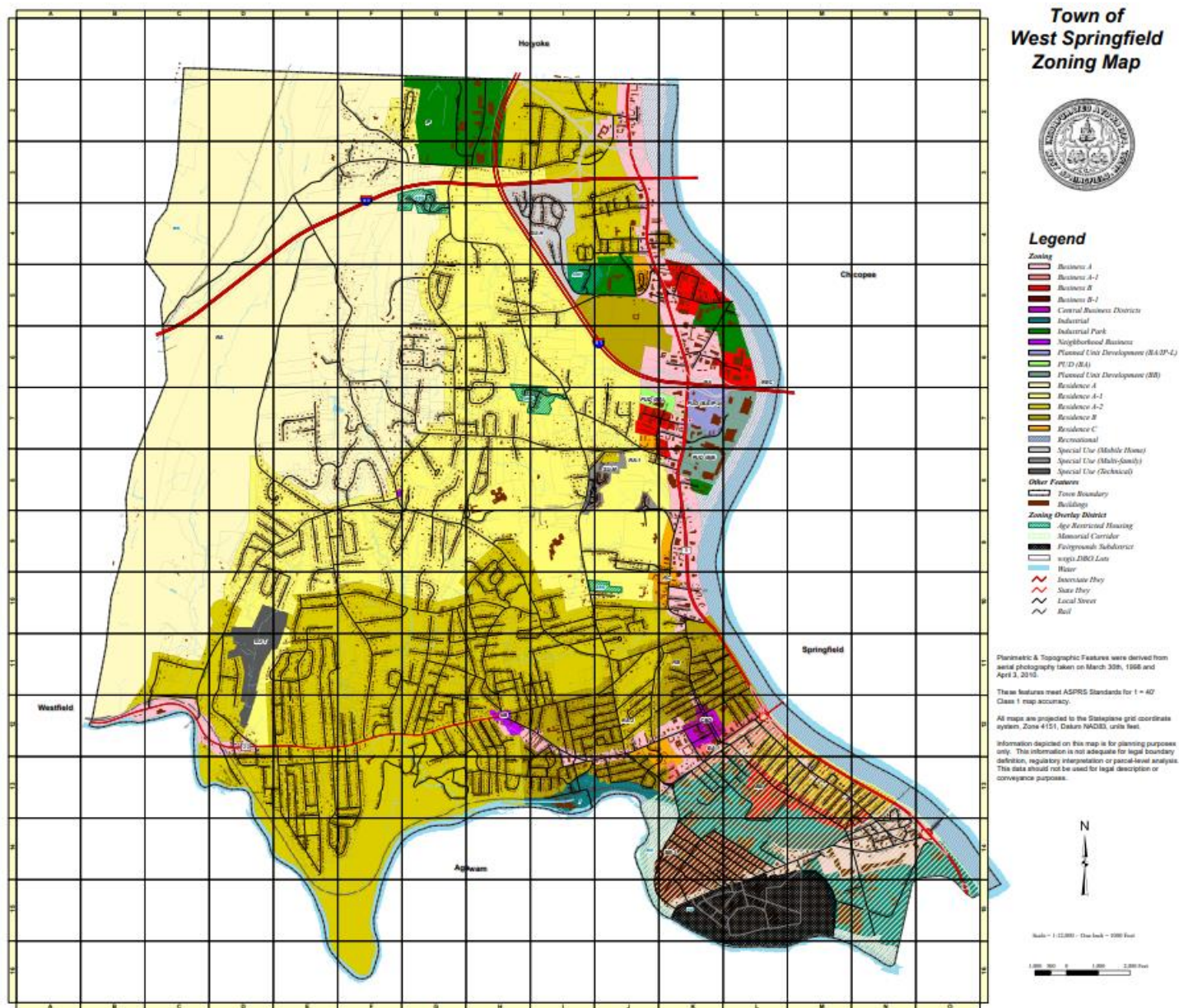
CIVIC GROUPS

Rotary Club of West Springfield
West Springfield Lions Club
Kiwanis Club of West Springfield

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

West Springfield Public Library
Boys and Girls Club of West Springfield
YMCA of Greater Springfield

Community Organizations that support West Springfield




Zoning Map of West Springfield. Source: Town Website

REGULATORY AND ZONING FRAMEWORK

The Town is zoned into 20 different districts. A map of West Springfield's zoning is included above. The zoning for the Study Area primarily consists of the CBD, Business A, Business B, and other business-related zonings. Businesses are not regulated by a business management entity (e.g., business improvement district), although nearly 75% of business survey respondents expressed an interest in establishing such a group. The business survey indicated that over one third of businesses find signage regulations to pose an obstacle to business operations. Key informants noted how recent changes in signage ordinances created more flexibility in the types of signs that businesses may display in their storefront windows or in front of their businesses. Additionally, business survey respondents indicated that parking and allowed-use restrictions are of concern.

Project Recommendations

Create a Comprehensive District Management Plan: Infrastructure

Category	 Public Realm
Location	CBD, Merrick, Memorial, Census Tract 8122.01, Census Tract 8123
Origin	Planning Department and Economic Development Department
Budget	 Low Cost (Less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Linear feet of multimodal trails, sidewalk, bicycle lanes, roads, and utilities installed; Square feet of open space, recreation, non-residential uses developed; Number of trees, planters, and other green infrastructure installed
Partners & Resources	EDC, Redevelopment Authority, Municipal Boards and Committees, Planning Department, Department of Public Works (DPW), Lower Pioneer Valley Career Technical Education Center, West Springfield High School; Residents, Property Owners, and Employers



Streetlighting systems to improve pedestrian visibility and safety. Source: [Google](#)

Funding (continued)

Costs will include:

- Public Realm improvements
- Tree Canopy and Green Infrastructure
- Lighting
- Wayfinding
- Marketing
- Engineering design consultant
- Materials used for a pilot program

Funding Sources:

- [MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program](#)
 - Accepting new applications beginning January 2022
 - Grants range from \$5k to \$200k
- [ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant](#)
- [MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program](#)
- [MassWorks Infrastructure Program](#)
- [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant](#)

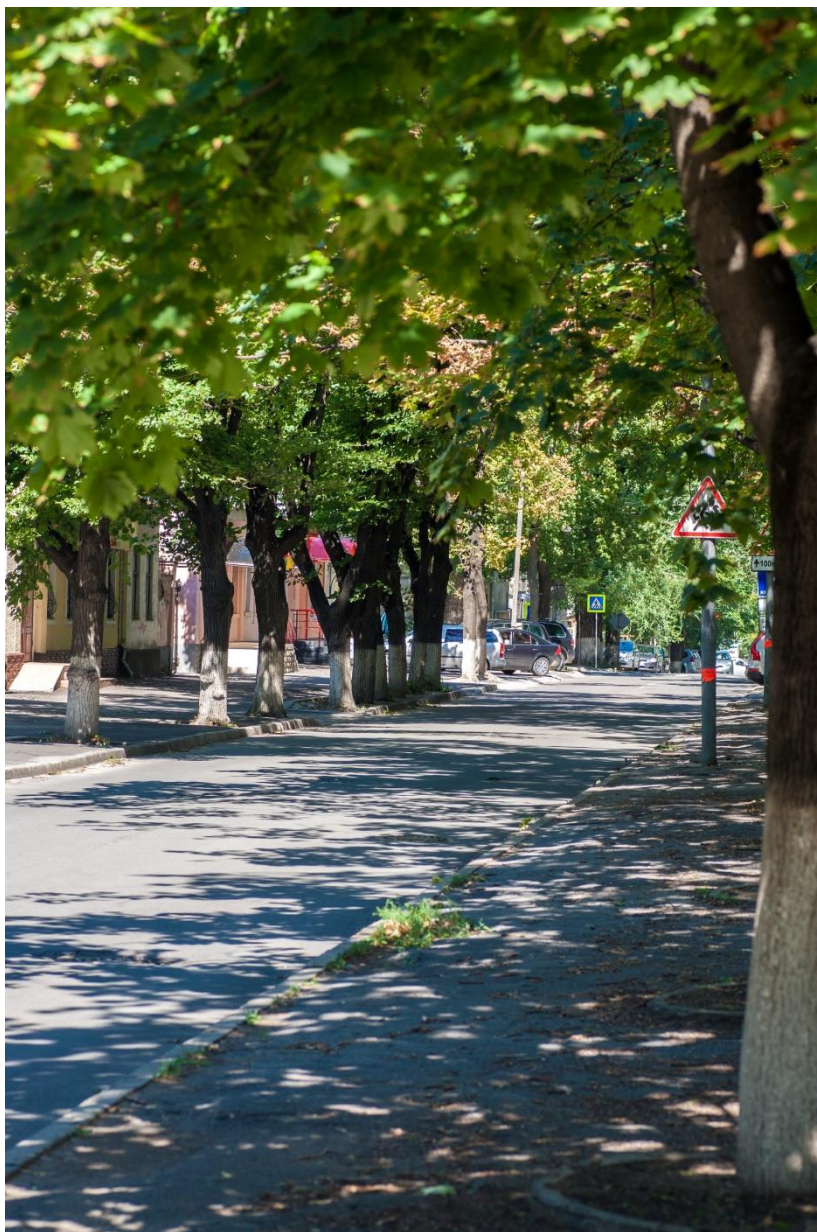
Risk (continued)

Risks are related to regulatory, financial, and political hurdles. Implementing temporary programs can be difficult because of concerns about zoning, capital expenditures for public improvements, and resident concerns about the change in the downtown and potential opportunities for outsiders to alter the character of the community.

The project, while creating improvements near businesses, may temporarily displace individual uses (e.g., curbside parking, dining, accessibility) immediately in front of businesses. The cooperation of the business community is critical. Visitor behaviors may not change as intended with the improvements (e.g., customers are not willing to walk the additional distance to access Town amenities in spite of improvements to pedestrian amenities including shade trees, seating, and convenient curbside drop-off/pick-up point).

Key Performance Indicators (continued)

- Number of partnerships and agreements with private property owners for public infrastructure improvements.
- Increase in pedestrian traffic
- Increase in traffic in nearby ground floor businesses
- Use of on- and off-street municipal parking



Example of a tree canopy. Source: [Google](#)

Diagnostic

COVID-19 greatly impacted commerce in West Springfield. All business survey respondents expressed a negative impact on revenue, labor, and expenses associated with public health protocols. Some businesses closed altogether. However, the pandemic also encouraged resident behavioral changes that present opportunities for recovery. Between 2019 and 2020, West Springfield experienced a 23.5% increase in pedestrian activity and 28.9% increase in bicycle activity. In considering how to accommodate these changes in the customer base, businesses are reassessing their relationship with the built environment. In the business survey, 44% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks, and 85% indicated that strategies to improve streetscapes and sidewalks are important for economic development. Community stakeholders additionally stressed the importance of improving the accessibility, comfort, and character of public spaces by revitalizing underutilized spaces, connecting isolated neighborhoods into a cohesive district, and expanding opportunities to activate space for all demographics. Efforts to improve public infrastructure through a District Management Plan will help businesses recover from COVID-19.

Action Item

A District Management Plan supports the economic recovery from COVID-19 through public infrastructure improvements that will attract customers to key commercial districts. Establishing a program that comprehensively supports the public realm will address the impacts of COVID-19 identified in the diagnostic section. The Infrastructure section of the District Management Plan will address the following areas:

- Administrative capacity to establish and implement the plan;
- Designing and implementing public infrastructure;
- Improvements, including street trees, furniture, and lighting; and,
- Designing and implementing public space connections, including sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

Gradual updates to the built environment allows for community buy-in, incremental funding use, and long-term success.

Process

Administrative Capacity

- Organize a Working Group for a District Management Plan, including the EDD, Town Planner, DPW, Department of Park and Recreation, West Springfield Arts Council, local artist communities (Red Thread Network), West Springfield Gardening Club, and other civic organizations in the community.
- Establish a leadership role (e.g., EDD) and define the responsibilities of members within the committee.
- Create a mission statement that aligns the efforts of the District Management Plan to the needs of the community, emphasizing the impacts of COVID-19 and the direction of recovery.
 - Determine the rationale of creating districts within the Study Area.
 - Decide the boundaries for the districts and how each district integrates into a broader “downtown” West Springfield geography.
- Communicate and promote the mission statement by marketing the District Management Plan to businesses, residents, and local organizations through flyers, social media, the Town website, Town events, the West Springfield Record, and Access West Side.
- Determine the District Management Plan’s budget and the breakdown of allocation by the intervention.
- Consider establishing a sustainable downtown organization to support the maintenance and expansion of improvements that bolster the economic and social health of the Study Area. Creating a process of community and property owner engagement to explore what model would be appropriate for the Study Area.
 - Potential sources relevant to this project may include a Business Improvement District and District Increment Financing.
 - To ensure the right model, the EDD should consider the availability of staff and resources for development, community engagement strategies and prioritization needs assessment of the business community and the process to transition roles and responsibilities to the private sector.



Identify areas throughout the town where green infrastructure can be integrated. Source: [Google](#)

Process (continued)

Public Infrastructure: Street Trees, Furniture, and Lighting

Phase 1: Program Design

- Conduct an audit of the current public infrastructure inventory within the Study Area. Include a grading scale within the audit to determine the quality of the infrastructure based on pre-defined criteria. Counting the number of benches, planters, trees, and lighting, and their relative quality will expose locations prime for improvements and their justification.
- Determine the scope of physical improvements to the public realm.
 - Street Furniture: Benches, shade structures, bike kiosks, trash and recycling receptacles, interactive installations, and art installations.
 - Green Infrastructure: Trees, mobile tree planters, garden planters, rain gardens, and public greenhouses.
 - Lighting: High pole, medium pole, string lighting, garden lamps, and lawn lamps
- If budget and funding allow, align the public infrastructure improvements with Project 2: Branding Campaign. Determine what infrastructure will receive Town branding and begin conceiving the design of the infrastructure.
 - The designs can be based on popular thematic details, like the Terrier design to incorporate in the physical design. Aligning the physical improvements with a design element, the infrastructure can effectively become functional public art pieces.
 - Share the design at public meetings including the Town Council, Planning Board, EDC, and the West Springfield Historical Commission.

Phase 2: Outreach and Coordination

- Use local press outlets (e.g., Access West Side, West Springfield Record, The Reminder, The Republican), Facebook, Instagram, Majestic Playbill advertising, and West Springfield's official website to communicate the project to residents and businesses.
- Coordinate with local businesses to identify opportunities for sponsorship of the infrastructure and/or advertisement on the infrastructure to support the costs and additionally promote businesses.
- Coordinate with businesses to market the new public infrastructure to customers.

Phase 3: Program Implementation

- Determine the installation process by creating a prioritization plan and specification package.
 - Design/Build: As with the wayfinding program, determine if the Town will solicit private vendors for creation, possibly partnering with the Lower Pioneer Valley Career Technical Education Center (LPVCTEC). Locally sourced talent and partnerships will promote the community's buy-in of the process.
 - Installation: Determine the installation needs for the infrastructure (proximity to gas, electric, and water infrastructure). Additionally, identify the installation lead(s), whether it is a private vendor or the DPW.
- Create a specifications package for each infrastructural element so vendors can review and cost proposals.
- Finalize vendor contracts and coordinate the time frame for design, fabrication, and installation.

Process (continued)

Public Space Connections

Phase 1: Program Design

- Hold a planning session with the EDD and the other established stakeholders to identify and prioritize the physical infrastructure and locations for improved pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Identify the location and basic characteristics of public spaces within the Study Area, including access, ownership and suitability for public activities. Create an inventory of public spaces and the extent of their use. The database/inventory of public spaces should include:
 - Accessibility characteristics
 - Amenities
 - Ownership
 - Capacity
 - Connecting spaces/uses (library, park, municipal building)
 - Applicable permits required for activities (implementation and events)
- Identify and prioritize locations for future public space development and determine requirements for development, including easements/lease agreements, desired amenities, and funding sources.
- Identify opportunities to activate spaces that lead to greater connections between amenities and districts within the Study Area. For example, connecting Philip G. Coburn Park to Elm St. and the overall CBD by creating a pedestrian friendly path can create a new public amenity for the community. Other connections include activating space on the Town Common to create a comfortable and cohesive bridge between the CBD and Merrick.

Phase 2: Outreach and Coordination

- Identify and solicit feedback from the community through surveys, listening sessions, information sessions held at businesses or public spaces to understand the strengths and opportunities for improvement concerning public spaces within the Study Area.
- Summarize all community feedback and develop recommendations for reducing friction points.

Phase 3: Program Implementation

- Use Assessor data to identify the property owners of potential public space improvement areas.
- Create an outreach document that details the benefits of partnering with the Town to make improvements on private property that can be used by the public.
- Draft legal documents that address the appropriate agreement on using privately-owned space for public use. The risks associated with agreements differ greatly and may not be viable. Specific agreements may include:
 - Fee Simple Purchase
 - Easements
 - License Agreements
 - Leases
 - Eminent Domain

Create a Comprehensive District Management Plan: Wayfinding

Category	 Public Realm
Location	CBD, Merrick, Memorial, Census Tract 8122.01, Census 8123
Origin	Planning Department and Economic Development Department
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Public perception surveys; Number of wayfinding signs implemented; Increase in pedestrian traffic; Increase in traffic in nearby ground floor businesses
Partners & Resources	EDC and Director; Redevelopment Authority; Municipal Boards and Committees; Planning Department; DPW; Lower Pioneer Valley Career Technical Education Center, West Springfield High School; Community Members



Wayfinding signage installations should direct individuals to key locations (as highlighted by the committee) around the Town of West Springfield. Source: [Google](#)

Budget (continued)

Costs depend on the material used in the pilot program, geographic extent of the wayfinding program, and number and type of signs used. Costs will include:

- Design
- Signage Family
- Installation
- Marketing
- Materials used for a pilot program

Funding Sources:

- [T-Mobile Hometown Grants](#)
- [ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant](#)
- [MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program](#)
 - Accepting new applications beginning January 2022
 - Grants range from \$5k to \$200k
- [MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places](#)
- [Community One Stop for Growth](#)
- [Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation Grants and Loans](#)
- [Community Change Grant](#)
- Mass Cultural Council and West Springfield Arts Council
- Local philanthropies that support the arts, youth, and economic development projects

Risk (continued)

Risks are related to regulatory, financial, and political hurdles. Implementing temporary programs can be difficult because of concerns about zoning, capital expenditures for public improvements, and resident's concerns about the change in the downtown and potential opportunities for outsiders to alter the character of the community. Potential risks to this project also include signage bylaws, permitting challenges, and costs associated with the project.

Diagnostic

COVID-19 greatly impacted commerce in West Springfield. All business survey respondents expressed a negative impact on revenue, labor, and expenses associated with public health protocols, while some businesses closed altogether. However, the pandemic also instigated resident behavioral changes that present opportunities for recovery. Between 2019 and 2020, West Springfield experienced a 23.5% increase in pedestrian activity and 28.9% increase in bicycle activity. In considering how to accommodate these changes in the customer base, businesses are reassessing their relationship with the built environment. In the business survey, 44% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks, and 85% indicated that strategies to improve streetscapes and sidewalks are important for economic development in the community. Community stakeholders additionally stressed the importance of improving the accessibility, comfort, and character of public spaces by revitalizing underutilized spaces, connecting isolated neighborhoods into a cohesive district, and expanding opportunities to activate space for all demographics. Efforts to improve wayfinding through a District Management Plan will help businesses recover from COVID-19.

Action Item

A District Management Plan supports the economic recovery from COVID-19 through public infrastructure improvements that will attract customers to key commercial districts in West Springfield. Establishing a program that comprehensively supports the public realm will address the impacts of COVID-19 identified in the diagnostic section. The Wayfinding section of the District Management Plan will address the following areas:

- Administrative capacity to establish and implement the plan; and
- Designing and implementing a comprehensive wayfinding system to highlight community assets.

Gradual updates to the built environment allows for community buy-in, incremental funding use, and long-term success.

Process (continued)

Administrative Capacity

- Organize a Working Group for a District Management Plan, including the EDD, Town Planner, DPW, Department of Park and Recreation, West Springfield Arts Council, local artist communities (Red Thread Network), West Springfield Gardening Club, and other civic organizations in the community.
- Establish a leadership role (e.g., EDD) and define the responsibilities of members within the committee.
- Create a mission statement that aligns the efforts of the District Management Plan to the needs of the community, emphasizing the impacts of COVID and the direction of recovery.
 - Determine the rationale of creating districts within the Study Area, potentially:
 - “West Springfield’s Merrick, Memorial, and CBD neighborhoods work together to inspire the economic growth of the Town, yet each is fragmented for each other. By highlighting each neighborhood’s unique offerings while promoting a cohesive “downtown” West Springfield, the communities can effectively connect with each other and spur further engagement and growth.”
 - Decide the boundaries for the districts and how each district integrates into a broader “downtown” West Springfield geography.
- Communicate and promote the mission statement by marketing the District Management Plan to businesses, residents, and local organizations through flyers, social media, the Town website, Town events, the West Springfield Record, and Access West Side.
- Determine the District Management Plan’s budget and the breakdown of allocation by the intervention.
- Consider establishing a sustainable downtown organization to support the maintenance and expansion of improvements that bolster the economic and social health of the Study Area. Creating a process of community and property owner engagement to explore what model would be appropriate for the Study Area.
 - Potential sources relevant to this project may include a Business Improvement District and District Increment Financing.
 - To ensure the right model, the EDD should consider the availability of staff and resources for development, community engagement strategies and prioritization needs assessment of the business community and the process to transition roles and responsibilities to the private sector.



Materials from Wakefield, MA's wayfinding system. Source: Best Practice Compendiums

Process (continued)

Wayfinding

Phase 1: Program Design

- Coordinate with the Working Group on the structuring of the West Springfield wayfinding program within the District Management Plan. The working group will determine to conduct an internal wayfinding design and implementation strategy or create a Request for Proposal (RFP) and select a vendor.
 - Typical wayfinding packages, including research and design, cost approximately \$50k.
- Audit existing wayfinding signage to determine the location and extent. Coordinate with the Planning Department to develop a database that determines that type of wayfinding, the population it serves, and the institutions/locations it directs. Determining the decision points experienced by commuters (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, and automotive) and matching those points with destinations and districts will support creating an effective wayfinding program.
 - Additionally, create a master list of Points of Interest (POIs) and categorize this list into groups based on the destination's popularity, type of destination, and distance from other POIs
- Create a comprehensive map of West Springfield that displays major routes for vehicles & pedestrians, POI's, town limits, parking, and points of entry and exit. Begin to decide where signage can be placed to help specific users find their way through the Town, which will inform the design of the wayfinding pilot program.
- Begin creating a wayfinding signage family to design wayfinding to accommodate specific West Springfield districts, their amenities, and the populations served (pedestrian, bicycle, automotive). Some sign examples include:
 - Directory sign: designed for pedestrians, this is placed in high pedestrian traffic situations, normally where most traffic originates. The sign includes a map outlining all POIs within a certain walking distance. A best practice is to indicate the amount of time it would take to walk to each destination, either in time or distance.
 - Vehicular directional signs includes large text and is meant to indicate the direction for destinations that influence wayfinding users that are driving vehicles. These signs should also be placed before users have to make turns in their journey—they should have enough time to interpret the signage, make decisions, and have time to correct their course before an intersection.
 - Gateway Signage: includes signs to direct highway traffic, especially from Route 5 and Route 20. Signage on major highways can point potential visitors into the Study Area from the region. These signs require coordinating with the MassDOT office to identify permitting, design, and installation agreements and processes.
- Create a pilot program that utilizes existing street poles to attach signs. The initial low-cost program supports creating community buy-in and pilots the locations and direction of the wayfinding signage.
- Create an evaluation guide for the wayfinding program to monitor and evaluate the success of the program.
 - Incorporate QR codes into the temporary signage that link to a survey that asks questions about the efficacy of the signage and aspects of the program that will inform the formal signage and wayfinding program



Best Practice: Wayfinding on Fairmount Greenway

Boston, MA

Boston's nine-mile Fairmount Greenway is a life-changing development, connecting Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park with a route that links parks, green space, on-street bike routes, trails, transit stations, and city squares. Since 2008, the Greenway's 10-member task force have been working with the City of Boston and multiple other organizations on this long-term vision to connect the Fairmount communities to the heart of Boston. More than 1,000 residents have joined in planning, designing, and implementing Greenway park, streets, and greenway projects. In 2021, the Fairmount Greenway installed wayfinding signs to mark a 1.5-mile on-street route of the Fairmount Greenway in Dorchester near Four Corners and Codman Square. The wayfinding signs were updated to include key neighborhood destinations and mark the on-street route in February 2021. Twelve signs were printed on corrugated plastic and installed with residents in May 2021.

Wayfinding on Fairmount Greenway



Provided by SME Consultant

City Space Collaborative

Location

Boston, MA

Process (continued)

Phase 2: Outreach and Coordination

- Draft a wayfinding outreach information document and flyer
 - Detail the vision of the program to potential users, the design of the wayfinding and future iterations, and a map of the districts and points.
- Coordinate with Town Council to streamline permitting and approval process for installation of wayfinding points.
- Align the wayfinding pilot program with a Town event and use the location, partners, and details of the event as possible wayfinding content.

Phase 3: Program Implementation

- Implement the wayfinding pilot program to test the locations and types of wayfinding signage based on the initial audit.
 - Use existing poles and infrastructure to attach temporary wayfinding signage.
 - Acquire materials for installation (tape, zip ties)
 - Design and print weather-proof wayfinding signage.
- Evaluate the success of the wayfinding pilot program using community surveys and results from the QR codes.
- Use the evaluation information to finalize the formal wayfinding package and the required elements
 - Sign location plan (where the signs are located)
 - Message schedule (what each sign says)
 - Signage family (what types of signs are used, including, district map, branding signs, banners, directional tools)
- Determine the installation process by creating a prioritization plan and specification package.
 - Design/Build: Determine if the Town will solicit a private vendor for creation. A Suggested partner is the LPVCTEC. Priority should be given to the LPVCTEC to promote the trade school. Additionally, locally sourced talent and partnerships will support the community's support of the process.
 - Installation: Determine installation needs for the wayfinding signage (i.e., right of way, concrete base, existing or new pole). Additionally, identify the installation lead, whether it is a private vendor or the DPW.
- Create a specifications package for each wayfinding sign so vendors can review and cost proposals.
- Finalize the contract with the vendor and coordinate the time frame for design, fabrication, and installation.



Materials from the Fairmount Greenway wayfinding system. Source: Best Practice Compendiums

Create an Outdoor Dining Strategy and Toolkit

Category	 Public Realm
Location	CBD, Merrick, Memorial
Origin	Planning Department and Economic Development Department
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	The number of new outdoor dining and/or retail spots created; The number of new businesses that open and are in business one year and two years out
Partners & Resources	Economic Development Department, Mayor and Town Council, WRC, State Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC), MA Restaurant Association, and Board of Health

Key Performance Indicators (continued)

- Restaurant and retail business retention rates (how many can stay open during various phases and resurgences during the pandemic)
- Results of the business survey indicating improvements in sales and revenue (or not)
- The number of social media impressions or dining and retail spots
- Count of applicants and success rate of applications

Partners (continued)

- Red Thread Network and Local artists
- Fire Chief
- Building Commissioner
- DPW

Resources (continued)

- Lower Pioneer Valley Technical Education Center or construction companies (possible construction of platforms and other common elements).
- Potential business sponsorships for umbrellas and planters
- Lessons learned from businesses in your community that have implemented temporary outdoor dining

Budget (continued)

Costs are low and include dedicated municipal staff time or consultant time to decide what is needed (using RRP Outdoor Dining and Retail Toolkit) and take action to make decisions, instigate necessary changes, and provide clear and concise guidelines and requirements to businesses.

Additional costs include improvements to online permitting capabilities, marketing the program to businesses, instituting a bulk purchasing program, or other program elements.

Funding Sources:

- [MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program](#)
 - Accepting new applications beginning January 2022
 - Grants range from \$5k to \$200k
- [MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program](#)
- [Mass Development Commonwealth Places](#)
- [Community One Stop for Growth](#)
- [Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation Grants and Loans](#)
- Sponsorships from Local Businesses

Timeframe (continued)

The timeframe is estimated to be from 3 – 6 months for most elements of this project, with additional time possibly needed to conduct outreach and education prior to attempting any permanent zoning bylaw changes that are relevant.

The timeframe may vary depending on whether a West Springfield's program will be temporary or permanent, with temporary changes likely being faster to implement. The timeframe for permanent changes will also depend on the continuation or termination of the temporary loosening of State permitting requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Phasing Recommendations

- Weeks 1 – 4: Needs assessment, create a task force or working group.
- Weeks 5 – 8: Research information on focus areas for the program (look at examples in the attached Toolkit).
- Weeks 9 – 12: Research information (costs incurred by West Springfield, bulk purchasing capability), write up draft regulations, prepare educational materials and presentations for relevant boards, commissions, the public, and businesses, and conduct outreach.
- Weeks 13 – 24 (or longer): Institute changes, obtain agreement on concepts, bylaw votes

Risks (continued)

Risks are low for this project and include building political will, weighing the cost vs. benefit of the program, and any financial costs the municipality wishes to incur to support businesses (e.g., lower permit fees, covering the cost of bulk purchases, consultant fees).

Some risks in the program are outside of West Springfield's purview. ABCC regulation on liquor and licensing is dependent on the State and may impact the outdoor dining regulations in the long term. The Massachusetts Package Store Association has been reluctant to support the expansion of liquor licenses to outdoor servicing, creating another bottleneck.



Utilize sidewalk space for outdoor dining purposes. Source: [Mass Live](#)



Increase Outdoor Dining and Safe Bike/Pedestrian Connections

Provided by S&B Consulting

Project Consulting Inc.

Location

North and South Portland, Maine; Town of Kennebunk, Maine; Kennebunk, Maine



Best Practice: Increase Outdoor Dining and Safe Bike/Pedestrian Connections

Amherst, MA

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. 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.

Diagnostic



Utilize extra space (i.e., parklets) for outdoor dining use. Source: Public Realm Compendium

The restrictions on indoor dining during COVID-19 caused restaurants to focus on takeout and outdoor dining to remain in business. The Commonwealth temporarily loosened several permitting requirements for outdoor dining, and municipalities streamlined their local permitting processes to allow businesses to quickly implement these changes. West Springfield implemented an outdoor dining and alcohol temporary regulation to allow local restaurants to adapt quickly to outdoor dining protocols. Transforming these emergency efforts into long-term, standardized policies is a key factor to support economic recovery from COVID-19. Nearly 75% of business survey respondents indicated that expanded opportunities for outdoor dining and retail are important to them. Prior to making permanent investments in construction, equipment, and furniture for outdoor dining and retail, businesses need consistent bylaws and regulations to refer to, including simplified outdoor dining requirements and permitting, clear regulations and shortened review and permitting timelines, and assistance with design elements.

Action Item

Rapid Recovery Plan

Outdoor Dining/Retail Community Toolkit

A guide for communities seeking to assist business owners in creating outdoor dining and retail options



September 2021



Outdoor Dining/Retail Toolkit created for the RRP Program. The toolkit can be found in the Appendix.

The *RRP Outdoor Dining/Retail Toolkit* (see Appendix) will assist municipalities in determining how to maintain and expand upon outdoor dining and retail in their community. The toolkit offers project examples of best practices, space guidelines that adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and recommended strategies, and general guidance on the facilitation of permanent outdoor dining regulations. The Outdoor Dining Strategy will adapt the toolkit to meet the specific needs of West Springfield's business community. The project will require assessing the current state of outdoor dining/retail programs, identifying areas of focus, and then developing a plan for implementation of solutions.

Process

Phase 1: Initial Assessment

- Conduct an internal needs assessment by reviewing the Toolkit, conducting an internal meeting with the planner, DPW, transportation, public health, and others, about the current state of outdoor dining and/or retail, and feedback on the effectiveness and challenges with current status.
- Gather feedback from businesses about their needs and feedback on how any current program is going using one or more of the following:
 - Conduct focus group(s)
 - Issue online survey
 - Conduct a larger meeting
 - Questions should include:
 - The desire for winter dining
 - Storage challenges
 - Permitting process feedback
 - Interest in bulk purchasing
 - Interest in financial assistance
- From internal meetings and business surveys, identify focus areas for making a permanent program.
- Create a Task Force or Working Group representative of the focus areas for your Outdoor Dining/Retail program. Suggested members include:
 - Planner or Economic Development staff, DPW, parks, health dept, transportation
 - Business district representatives (WRC, MA Restaurant Association)
 - Business representatives
 - Others as needed
- Set an overall schedule for this project and regular meeting dates.
- Create a presentation template to use during the project including:
 - History of what municipality has done to support outdoor dining/retail during the pandemic
 - The rationale for current efforts



Outdoor Dining in West Springfield. Source: Town of West Springfield

Process (continued)

Phase 2: Analysis

- Review Toolkit and research info on focus areas for the program. Develop draft guidance for each focus area and list pros and cons.
- Conduct public meetings to get feedback on draft ideas.
- Assess West Springfield's existing temporary outdoor dining/retail program, looking for gaps based on business feedback from Phase 1, the RRP Outdoor Dining/Retail Toolkit, and sample policies from other communities.
- Create a summary of findings to share with internal stakeholders and use feedback to draft recommendations for the updated policy.
- Create a "skeleton" policy that highlights the key elements of the program based on the comparison of the toolkit and feedback from stakeholders.

Phase 3: Draft Requirements

- Revise program elements as necessary based on feedback.
- Write up draft regulations and requirements.
- Prepare educational materials/presentations for boards/commissions/public/businesses.
- Conduct outreach.

Phase 4: Regulatory Changes

- Utilizing the information collected during Phases 1 - 3, identify any additional regulatory changes required to support outdoor dining.
- Confirm language regarding bylaw changes.
- Coordinate with the Mayor and Town Council to institute regulatory changes that will accommodate an expanded outdoor dining program.
- Determine if any of the required regulatory changes will need to go through Planning Board meetings, additional open forums, or if the Mayor and council can directly implement a regulatory change.



Streamline permitting processes to allow for extended use of shared streets for outdoor dining. Source: [Google](#)



Outdoor dining with planters and plastic barriers to buffer pedestrian crossing. Source: [Chicago Tribune](#)

Launch a Sign Improvement Campaign

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Planning Department
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (less than 5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of participants in public meetings; Number of applicants and grant awardees; Percent increase of reported business income compared to 2019 levels; Formal and informal positive feedback gathered from the community
Partners & Resources	EDC, Community Development Department, West Springfield Town Council, Planning Department, Building Department, Historical Committee, PVPC

Before



After



City of Everett Design Guidelines Rendering. Source: Best Practice Compendiums

Budget (continued)

The cost of the program may fluctuate depending on the number of grants awarded each year and the use of external consultants to support community engagement and program administration. Expected budget for the initial round of grants is approximately \$30,000. Funding sources include:

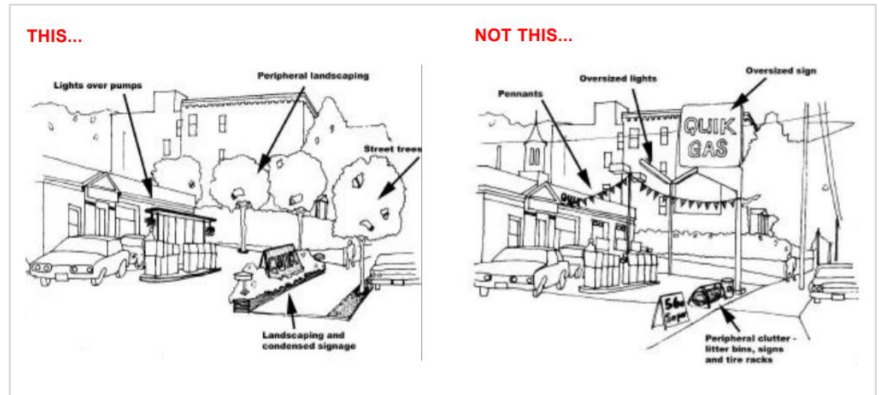
- [CDBG](#)
- [PVPC Planning Services](#)
- [MOBD Regional Pilot Project Grant Program](#)
- [ARPA Economic Adjustment Assistance](#)
- [Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation Biz-M-Power](#)

Risk (continued)

- Identifying a funding source for the program is a high concern and necessary to initiate and sustain the project.
- Business owners may not be engaged in the program because they are uninterested in changing signs.
- Some signage ordinances may not align with best practices or be unclear to the community, further complicating efforts to streamline signage.

Diagnostic

The sign improvement campaign will support businesses in improving their signage and facades to attract more customers to the downtown area. Community stakeholders identified how recent changes in signage ordinances allowed for businesses to display more signs in their storefront windows, which has altered the appearance of the downtown districts. Additionally, community stakeholders noted that the business community perceives that “more is more” (i.e., more signs will attract more business), although this does not align with industry best practices. The sign improvement campaign will need to provide education regarding signage best practices in addition to funding resources. Businesses have indicated an interest in physical improvements to support economic recovery, as over 70% of business survey respondents expressed interest in low-cost financing storefront/façade improvements.



Samples from the Guide to Sign and Façade Design by the Town of Brookline. Source: Town of Brookline

Signs

Signs

Business signage is a very critical element to the storefront. Not only does it provide a first impression to customers, but it also helps convey the business' brand and character.

Signs should clearly communicate the business name, but not be overwhelming. The average person can only process four to seven words while passing by. Therefore keeping text and graphics to a minimum will make the most impact.



City Ordinance/Regulation:
Section 12.54(a) of the City Ordinance further regulates the number and size of signs. See Technical Requirements for more information.

Examples of City of Everett's Storefront Guideline Pages. Source: Best Practice Compendiums

Action Item

Program Administration

The administration of the program will rely on identifying and maintaining a reliable funding source, establishing an impartial committee, evaluating grants, and marketing the program. The funding source selected for the program may evolve over time as the target areas change or expand. If the Town chooses to pursue the establishment of a micro-grant program as outlined in Project 10, the sign improvement campaign could become a component of that program. Additionally, the pilot program target area aligns with the zip codes of the LMI communities in West Springfield, and thus CDBG may be an eligible funding source for these grants. For signage specific improvements, it is recommended that administered grants are a maximum of \$5,000 in value.

The sign improvement campaign will require a dedicated Sign Improvement Committee to establish and maintain the program. The committee should consist of Town staff (e.g., Planning Department, CDBG Director, EDD) and community leaders who are dedicated to supporting businesses while being able to impartially evaluate applicants. The Sign Improvement Committee will be responsible for establishing criteria for eligible businesses, developing a rubric to score and evaluate applications, and awarding grants. It is recommended that each committee member evaluate applications and then the averaged scores be used to determine grant awardees. Grant evaluations should be as transparent as possible to equitably administer the grants, establish confidence in the program, and encourage applicants who are not awarded a grant to apply in the next grant cycle. The Sign Improvement Committee should be prepared to publish clear scoring guidelines for applications and to provide feedback to applicants who were not awarded grants to further improve their application in the future. The Sign Improvement Committee will also support the marketing and community engagement efforts associated with the program.

Awnings

Awnings can be a great addition to a storefront. Not only can they provide an area for signage, but they also help provide a visual cue on where the entrance is located. Awnings also provide shelter for customers in inclement weather and also provide shade for store items being displayed in the window.



City Ordinance/Regulation:

City Council Rule 74.8 further regulates awnings.
Awning signs are also further regulated in City Ordinance Section 12A.



Awning Signs - Material

Awnings should be a solid color and made from a fabric or canvas material. Shiny, high gloss or translucent materials should be avoided.

Lettering and material should be consistent for all awnings on the same building.



This fabric awning is NOT shiny, high gloss or translucent. The awning frame also matches the black fabric.



This awning is made of shiny vinyl and is not encouraged.

Examples of City of Everett's Storefront Guideline Pages. Source: Best Practice Compendiums

Action Item (continued)

Program Components

The sign improvement campaign will provide impetus and access for business owners to update their signs and improve the overall economic vitality of West Springfield. The program will consist of three main components:

- Research to understand business signage best practices and outreach to understand community barriers for sign improvement;
- Create design guidelines to increase understanding of best practices;
- Establish and administer grants to support sign improvements for businesses; and
- Market the program.

The sign improvement campaign will begin with the Central, Merrick, and Memorial businesses and then expand into the broader community in future iterations.

Community Engagement

The community engagement in this program is two-fold: engage the community to understand signage challenges and opportunities for education (Phase 1) and engage the community to market signage best practices and the program itself (Phase 3). The outreach activities conducted under Phase I will ask the community questions such as:

- What are the greatest regulatory challenges for signs?
- What does a perfect signage display look like at a business?
- Are you interested in changing the way signs are displayed in your business? If so, what would you like to change most?
- Are you interested in a sign improvement grant opportunity? If not, what might make you interested?

A Best Practice Design Workshop will be held to educate businesses about signage best practices and market the newly established sign improvement program. The Town may hire an objective third-party expert to conduct this workshop and facilitate conversations, and Town staff who have a vested interest in the signage changes (e.g., Building Commissioner) will be available to answer questions and provide support.

Design Guidelines

The Sign Improvement Committee, in collaboration with key Town staff, will develop design guidelines. The design guidelines are easily understandable illustrated storefront pages that reference the Town of West Springfield regulations and best practices for signage design. The design guidelines may include:

- Photo-documentation of existing business displays in West Springfield;
- Panoramic views of downtown blocks showing “existing” and “proposed”;
- References to individual aspects of storefronts (e.g., wall signs, blade signs, awnings, and window treatments); and
- Illustrations of approved and not approved ways of applying storefront elements.

The design guidelines will align with the Town of West Springfield color pallet and any other visual aspects of the branding campaign effort.

Regulatory Updates

The Sign Improvement Community and engaged stakeholders may identify specific codes or regulations that should be altered to better align with best practices or more clearly reflect storefront criteria. Some changes that may be considered include:

- Create allowances for projecting signs;
- Allow and regulate A-frame signs in the downtown area; and
- Reconsider window sign exemptions.

The Building Commissioner will be engaged throughout the effort to discuss these potential areas of improvement and further refine related codes and regulations accordingly.

Process



Sample Design Guidelines for Display Windows from Manchester, CT. Source: Best Practice Compendium

Phase 1: Establish the Planning Process and Conduct Outreach

- Establish a Sign Improvement Committee who will be responsible for driving the initiation and maintenance of the sign improvement campaign.
- Identify business owners, Town staff, and key community members who have insight on the needs of local businesses to engage during the planning process.
- Create an initial list of known challenges for business owners regarding signs (e.g., education about best practices, cost of signs, knowledge of bylaws, accessibility to information).
- Research best practices for signage in communities with qualities similar to West Springfield.
- Hold community roundtables with businesses to identify perceptions of signage practices in West Springfield and any solutions to address these issues.
- Conduct additional engagement as needed to understand regulatory challenges associated with signs, how to appropriately educate the community on best practices, and key aspects the program should consider.

Phase 2: Establish the Sign Improvement Program

- Based on the conclusions and findings from Phase I, create easily understandable design guidelines that align with best practices and the Town's building code. Confirm these guidelines with appropriate Town staff.
- Market the design guidelines. This may include sharing the document through the WRC and on the Business Resource Center.
- Identify a funding source for the grant program.
- Establish the structure of the Sign Improvement Program, including:
 - Criteria for businesses to be eligible to apply;
 - Amount and value of grants to be awarded;
 - Application collection system;
 - Rubric and method to score applications; and
 - Process to select and distribute awarded grants.

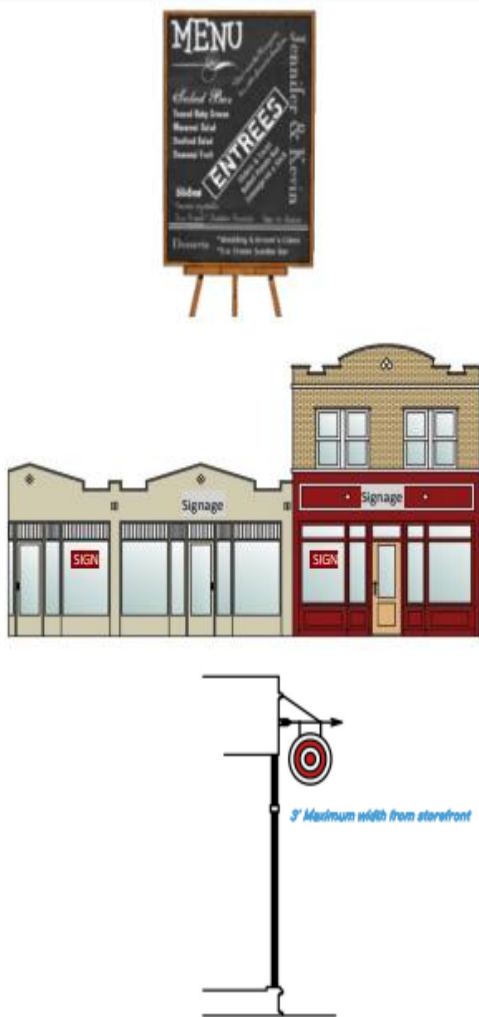


Sample Design Guidelines for Awnings and Windows Manchester, CT. Source: Best Practice Compendium

Process (continued)

Phase 3: Conduct a Pilot Program

- Market the sign improvement program. This may include sharing the document through the WRC and on the Business Resource Center.
- Hold a Best Practice Design Workshop to educate businesses about signage best practices and market the application for sign improvement grants.
- Collect and evaluate applications according to the pre-established rubric.
- Select grant recipients and administer the grants. Provide feedback to businesses whose applications were not selected.
- Monitor grant awardees progress until project completion.



Sample Design Guidelines for various types of signage
Manchester, CT. Source: Best Practice Compendium

Phase 4: Refine and Expand the Program

- Collect feedback from the Sign Improvement Committee and pilot program participants to understand program strengths and areas for improvements, included but not limited to:
 - Value and number of grants;
 - Criteria for evaluating applicants; and
 - Marketing and educational efforts.
- Refine the program according to collected feedback.
- Expand the region of applicant eligibility as appropriate.
- Due to changes in program eligibility, received feedback, or other changes, reconsider the program funding source.
- Repeat the steps outlined in Phase 3 to collect applications and award grants.
- On an annual basis, review the program to note any needed changes or additions to the program.

Implement a Vacant Storefronts Program

Category	 Private Realm
Location	CBD, Merrick, Memorial, Census Tract 8122.01, Census Tract 8123
Origin	Economic Development Department and WRC
Budget	 Low Cost (Less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of businesses, entrepreneurs, and artists applied to the program; Reduction in time to fill vacancies; Reduction in storefront/ground floor vacancy rate; Increased foot traffic to the Study Area; Number of activated storefronts
Partners & Resources	West Springfield Arts Council, Landlords/Property Owners, WRC, Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce, Western Mass Economic Development Council, Local Schools, Red Thread Arts Organization, Library Arts Display Backlog



Activate vacant storefronts through temporary art installations and/or temporary “pop-ups”. Source: [Google](#)

Budget (continued)

Costs will include:

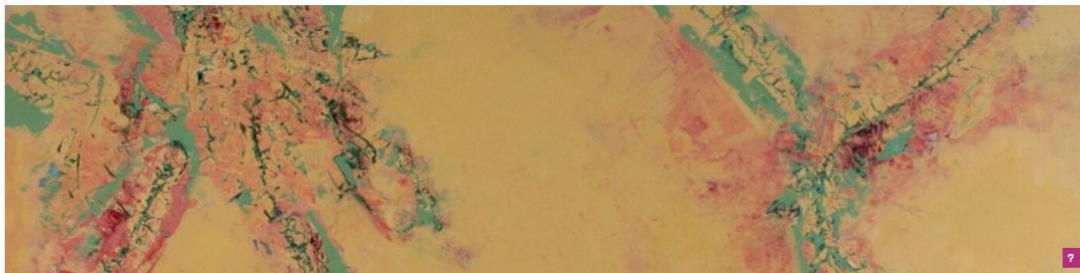
- Staff time to recruit uses, manage the program application, and coordinate with property owners, businesses, and the arts community
- Marketing to highlight storefront program through social media, banners, Access West Side, West Springfield Record, and other mediums (e.g., sidewalk signs, electronic signs, and flyers)
- Insurance costs if the Town decides to take a blanket policy for spaces
- Materials used for the activation of the storefronts.
 - Arts activation: frames, wires, canvas, printing, lighting, and art name cards
 - Business activation: signage, tables, lighting, and other specific items to support retail or professional services
 - Event/Meeting space: chairs, tables, and lighting

Funding Sources include:

- [MOBD Regional Pilot Grant Program](#)
- [T-Mobile Homework Grants](#)
- [ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant](#)
- [MassDevelopment TDI Creative Catalyst](#)
- [Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation Biz-M-Power](#)
- West Springfield Arts Council
- Local philanthropies that support the arts and youth

ChaShaMa

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Chashama helps create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive world by partnering with property owners to transform unused real estate. These spaces are used for artists, small businesses, and for free community-centric art classes.

Creating short term business activations in vacant spaces will help businesses use their temporary spaces as a gateway to establishing a more permanent space within their communities. Source: [Google](#)

Timeframe (continued)



Vacant storefronts can contribute to a lack of vibrancy in the Town's main centers. Source: Private Realm Compendiums

The program can be up and running in 6 months:

- Months 1-3: Identify potential tenants, contact landlords/property managers, assemble sample guidelines (e.g., lease, indemnity agreement, marketing commitment from tenants and landlords), and secure funding.
- Months 4-5: Move tenants into spaces, align with Town events (e.g., farmers markets, holiday stroll) to create activity and raise the visibility of the CBD, Merrick, and Memorial neighborhoods and the storefronts overall.
- Month 6: Implement event plan, evaluate success, plan for moving forward.
- After 9 months an evaluation will be done to judge foot traffic, survey existing businesses and vacant storefront tenants about changes in customers/business.

Risk (continued)



Art installations can be utilized to fill window spaces in empty storefronts. Source: Private Realm Compendiums

Risks are related to political and regulatory hurdles. It can be difficult to implement temporary programs due to concerns regarding zoning, the lease and maintenance of spaces, and overall resident concerns about the change in the community and potential opportunities for outsiders to alter the character of the community.

Additional risks are summarized below:

- Building and Zoning Codes: All tenants may be required to obtain an Occupancy Permit or other zoning approvals. This process may be time-intensive and not conducive to temporary space use. The permitting process may also be challenging to navigate for informal users or business entities. Additionally, signage bylaws may limit the type of marketing and promotion necessary for the temporary spaces.
- Liability and Tenant Removal: Tenant liabilities must be covered in the lease/use agreement. Landlords may be concerned about the procedures for vacating temporary tenants if they are able to secure a long-term tenant or if uses are not consistent with their intended image of the space.

Diagnostic

COVID-19 caused many business closures, expanding the number of vacant spaces that existed prior to the pandemic. Vacant storefronts pose many challenges to the community, including disrupting the character of the district and potentially creating eyesores for customers. When marketing vacancies, landlords traditionally market the commercial space through window signs or advertisements, which further clutter the appearance of the district. In the past, West Springfield's economic vitality was driven by a diversity of commercial activity (e.g., industrial, retail, professional services). However, with the uncertainty of when business and customer activity will "return to normal," West Springfield will consider creative solutions to reimagining vacant space and attracting customers to the CBD.

The availability of vacant space can be used to attract new businesses and diversify the tenant mix of West Springfield. Business owners have emphasized a desire to attract new businesses, as 81% of the business survey respondents indicated that recruiting/attracting new business is important for the Town. Additionally, community stakeholders highlighted West Springfield's broad entrepreneurial community who will likely be interested in and greatly benefit from the vacant storefronts program.

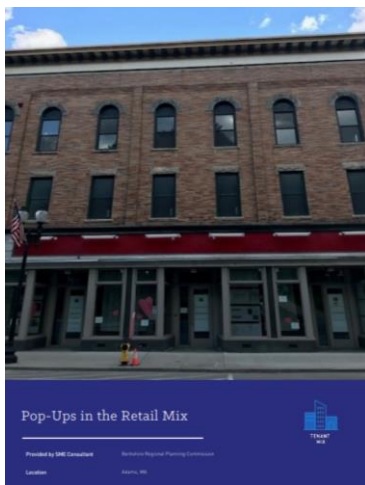
Action Item

The program aims to activate vacant storefronts through a combination of temporary art installations, temporary "pop-ups" for local entrepreneurs, and renderings of possible uses in windows. Establishing a vacant storefronts program in West Springfield addresses two challenges identified in the community: firstly, it increases the aesthetic appeal of the neighborhoods within the Study Area and, secondly, it creates an opportunity for businesses, artists, and civic organizations to utilize neglected and available spaces at a discount. By creating opportunities to showcase the creativity and entrepreneurship of the community, West Springfield will increase in diversity of tenant mix, increase business offerings, and promote stability in the commercial rental market. These opportunities align with the goals of COVID recovery: increasing business opportunities to attract new customers, retaining those customers in a comfortable pedestrian setting, and continuing to grow the business community in West Springfield.

Process

Phase 1: Program Design

- Organize a Working Group for a Vacant Storefront Program including the EDD (Planning or Community Development Director until the position is active), 1-2 local real estate brokers, 1-2 property owners, planning staff, and a WRC representative.
 - Determine if there is an existing entity that can serve as an independent body to:
 - Manage relationships with property owners on legal concerns.
 - Coordinate with the Town on regulatory concerns.
 - Oversee and manage insurance for all of the temporary projects.
 - If no viable entity exists, consider the requirements for creating a new non-profit.
- Conduct an audit of existing storefront vacancies to create a database of available spaces in the target area of the Vacant Storefront Program.
- Coordinate with the Town Planner to discuss the type of temporary uses that do not require zoning amendments or variances. Coordinate with the Building Commissioner to determine potential building code hurdles.
- Develop a storefront typology using assessor data to create categories for storefront types. The categories should group storefronts based on window space, square footage, neighborhood, previous use, zoning/ variance requirements, and additional information to support coordinating the space with the activation use.
- Determine target market for temporary uses and align those uses with the storefront typology. Potential uses may include retail, art spaces, test kitchens, professional services, event space, local crafts, and art galleries.
- Create a Storefronts Landlords Database that tracks ownership of storefronts, contact information, and status of involvement in the program.
- Collect all necessary documentation that may be needed to ensure legal and contractual compliance, which may include:
 - Lease Indemnity Agreement: Ensures that tenants are not held responsible for personal injury or property damage on the leased property. Insurance: Provides coverage to the tenant for personal injury or property damage on the leased property.
 - Rolling 30-day license agreements



Best Practice: Pop-Ups in the Retail Mix

Adams, MA

The project will attract small businesses to Adams that address local's day-to-day needs and provide amenities for visitors who are there to explore the region. To accomplish this, the project will build on local boosterism and capture residents' pride while identifying new and under-represented voices the Town may not have previously engaged. Years of disinvestment have led many to give up hope on Adams' potential to provide good local jobs. By bringing positive attention to Adams, the project hopes to re-inspire residents challenged by poverty. Pop-up stores, while unfamiliar, can build a following, so long as residents take an active role in choosing those selected and see their success as providing benefits to neighbors.

Process (continued)

Phase 2: Outreach and Coordination

- Draft a Vacant Storefronts Program outreach information document or flyer for potential users and landlords, which may include:
 - User Outreach Document: Detail the vision of the program to potential users, including businesses, entrepreneurs, artists, and civic organizations about the opportunity of the program, types of spaces, legal information, financial information, and additional requirements for eligibility. Incorporate best-practice examples for reference.
 - Property Owner Outreach Document: Detail the vision of the program to property owners including the potential benefits the program will have on the commercial area, the possibility of future tenants, marketing of the space, and other additional selling points. Incorporate best-practice examples for reference.
- Begin a Landlord Outreach Campaign and reach out to landlords through cold calls, e-mails, and online and print publications (guidance document).
- Consult landlords on the development of guidance documents for the use of the space, including types of materials used, consent to alterations and repairs, location of installations, and expectations for vacating the space.
- Coordinate with Town agencies to streamline permit and approval processes for storefront improvements and alterations (Building Commissioner and Fire Department process for qualifying a space).

Phase 3: Program Implementation

- Design the Vacant Storefronts Pilot Program. Establish a timeframe for the pilot program, the number of participants and type of uses, the locations of the storefronts, the duration of occupancy (i.e., established timeframe or until a permanent tenant is found), the matchmaking process, and the marketing of the program.
- Begin a Vacant Storefronts Marketing Campaign by using the guidance documents, local media (e.g., the West Springfield Record, Access West Side), other press releases, social media, and the Town of West Springfield's website to communicate the program.
- Align the Vacant Storefronts Program with Town events to ensure increased foot traffic and publicity.
- Create a survey to gather feedback about the program to support marketing materials, identify gaps in retail and business services, evaluate overall impacts, and decide on the next steps for identifying new commercial tenants. Potential survey questions include:
 - What did you enjoy about the Vacant Storefront program?
 - How did you hear about it?
 - What types of businesses or art installations do you want to see?
 - How do you feel about the program's impact on the Study Area?
 - Did you purchase anything?
 - What can be improved?
- Determine opportunities to transition from the pilot program into something longer term. Consider how pop-up users may become permanent tenants and provide the entrepreneurs with the technical assistance needed to make the transition.

Launch a Branding Campaign

Category	 Revenue and Sales
Location	Town of West Springfield
Origin	West Springfield EDC
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years). May be completed within 4-8 months depending on level of community engagement
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of businesses, community organizations, and community members that participate in the project; Number of businesses that adopt the new Town brand and style; Qualitative satisfaction of business owners and the public, as indicated by the public survey
Partners & Resources	Town Planner and Council, Design Review Board, Parks and Recreation Department, West Springfield Public Schools, West Springfield Arts Council



West Springfield Welcome Sign. Source: Town of West Springfield

Budget (continued)



Transformative Development Initiative

Creative Catalyst Grant

December 21-22, 2020



Potential Funding Source: MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative. Source: [Google](#)

Cost for branding will differ depending on the services contracted by an external consultant. Items in this budget will likely include:

- Brand Strategy: \$5,000-\$10,000
- Stakeholder Engagement (interviews): \$5,000-\$15,000
- Public Engagement Survey (online or in person): \$10,000-\$20,000
- Logo/Identity Design: \$15,000-\$25,000
- City/Town Seal: \$15,000-\$25,000
- Brand Extension – Supporting Visuals: \$10,000 - \$20,000
- Print or Digital Collateral: \$5,000-\$50,000
- Brand Guide:

Funding Sources include:

- [ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant](#)
- [Community Planning Grant Program](#)
- [MassDevelopment TDI Creative Catalyst](#)

Risk (continued)



Community buy-in and coordination among departments is critical. Source: [Private Realm Compendiums](#)

Community buy-in is a critical aspect in adopting a brand that communicates the values of various communities within West Springfield. Stakeholders may not participate in the effort or share the same vision for the Town branding. Additionally, this project will require intensive coordination among departments and community organizations, which may strain Town staff capacity and its financial resources.

Diagnostic



The Town Branding will also highlight West Springfield's rich historical and cultural offerings. Source: [Google](#)

COVID-19 impacted West Springfield's business community in reduced operating hours, business closures, and decreases in revenue. To recover successfully from COVID-19, West Springfield will need to retain existing businesses and customers and attract new ones. Establishing a cohesive Town branding will help address this gap. A West Springfield branding campaign will help local businesses attract a larger audience and support overall economic recovery. A branding campaign will increase the visibility of the West Springfield business district and Town as a whole and act as a catalyst for further economic development. Nearly 90% of business survey respondents indicated that developing marketing strategies that promoted business growth and retention was important to them. Community stakeholders noted that the distinct character of West Springfield's "diverse and culturally unique neighborhoods" should be a focal point of a Town branding effort.

Action Item



The branding campaign will aim to attract larger audiences to local businesses. Source: [Google](#)

A West Springfield branding campaign will help local businesses attract a larger audience and support their overall economic recovery. The branding campaign will highlight the Town's history and include the following aspects:

- Centralized Town message and brand for West Springfield;
- Thorough review of the current branding and marketing;
- Outreach and feedback from key stakeholders to identify best practices and areas for improvement; and
- Targeted marketing strategy for potential customers.

Process

Phase 1: Audit of Current Branding

- Determine who will serve as the brand Project Manager. The Project Manager will be responsible for overseeing project development and the other members of the project team. Suggested leads include:
 - Town Planner
 - Historical Commission representative
 - Community Preservation Committee
- Organize a committee to develop and implement the branding campaign. The committee may elect to hire a third-party marketing and advertising agency to support Phase 3 of the project.
 - If using a contractor, West Springfield will create an RFP that identifies a timeline, budget, stakeholders, goals, and deliverables for the branding effort. The timeframe and budget will be adjusted if a third-party contractor is hired.
- Identify a stakeholder group. The stakeholder group will consist of key members of the community or staff who can provide insight as representatives of their department, organization, or community. Suggested stakeholders include:
 - Park and Recreation Director
 - West Springfield Public Schools representative
 - West Springfield Cultural Council representative
 - West Springfield Rotary Club representative
 - Red Thread Network representative
 - WRC
 - Carry out a comprehensive internal assessment of current town branding. The audit will highlight existing brand strengths, best practices, and areas for improvement.
 - The audit will evaluate the Town website, letterhead, street signs, and any other existing structures and programs that support economic development and outreach.

Phase 2: Community Outreach

- Conduct initial outreach to local committees and civic organizations to garner involvement. Outreach can be conducted through public surveys or door-to-door advertising, and/or round-table meeting
- As applicable, hold one (or a series) of round-table meetings amongst group representatives for continued joint coordination.
- Conduct interviews with business owners, Town staff, and local organizations to identify key aspects of West Springfield that should be highlighted in the branding campaign (e.g., history, local landmarks, cultural offerings). Sample questions might include:
 - What is your favorite thing to do in West Springfield?
 - What is your favorite part about West Springfield?
 - What changes would you suggest to improve the Town of West Springfield's business district for residents, pedestrians, and shoppers?
 - What additional types of businesses would you like to see in West Springfield?

Process (continued)

Phase 3: Develop and Implement Branding and Marketing

- Develop a vision and centralized message for the Town’s branding campaign using information collected in Phase 2. Align Town branding with the comprehensive wayfinding system and other projects as applicable.
- Identify the best marketing approach for the branding campaign. Initial efforts will likely consist of displaying banners, flyers, and posters in public spaces.
- Identify any ordinances that regulate displaying marketing materials in public spaces and which permits (if any) are needed.
 - Coordinate with Town agencies to expedite the permitting and approval process for banners, flyers, posters, and other signage.
 - Identify any potential legal constraints that may interfere with the approval and marketing processes.
- Develop and implement a pilot branding program. Initial branding and marketing of the program can be done by updating the Town website and displaying new signage around the Town of West Springfield.
- Hold a stakeholder review period to collect feedback on the pilot branding program.
- Design and implement a marketing campaign to foster greater involvement from members of the Town (e.g., social media campaigns, community newsletters, advertisements on the Town website).
 - Identify a party responsible for maintaining and updating the digital platforms on a regular basis to ensure that the most up to date information is available.
- Evaluate any impacts of the project on business growth, decline, or retention. As needed, adjust the brand and message to tailor towards the current needs of the Town.



West Springfield Town Signage. Source: Town of West Springfield

Create an Online Business Resource Center

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Study Area
Origin	WRC, West Springfield Planning Department, West Springfield Community Development Department
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk. Phase 1 (1-3 months) and Phase 2 (3-6 months)
Key Performance Indicators	Number of page views by online users; Increased attendance at business networking events compared to 2019 involvement; Increased usage of regional resources (e.g., technical assistance) compared to 2019 involvement
Partners & Resources	EDD, Town Planner, Community Development Director, EDC, Local Businesses, Restaurants, and Property Owners, and WRC



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Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network



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Contributing to the economic and entrepreneurial growth in Massachusetts since 1980

Business Resource Centers such as the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network advise, educate, and provide small businesses the tools necessary for success. Source: [UMass Amherst](#)

Diagnostic

Local businesses in the Town of West Springfield experienced detrimental economic impacts from COVID-19. Nearly 80% of businesses who responded to the business survey experienced a decline in revenue during the pandemic. Approximately 50% of impacted businesses experienced a decrease in revenue greater than 25% and a decrease in customer base greater than 50% compared to the 2019 rates. To recover effectively, businesses need to understand what resources are available to support them. Redundancies between business support services the Town planned to offer and those currently offered by regional organizations identified that there are plenty of resources available, but a need for greater coordination and marketing. The Business Resource Center will serve as a central, coordinated location for business support resources.



The Town may use a similar model for creating their own repositories. Source: [Massachusetts State Online Business Directory](#)



Listings on online business directories will improve businesses' visibility in the local community. Source: [City Local Pro](#)

Action Item

The Business Resource Center will serve as an accessible and up-to-date central clearinghouse of resources available to support local businesses. The Business Resource Center will include the following:

- Guidance regarding local code and ordinance adherence;
- Information on local or regional business support events;
- Information on community events that include businesses (e.g., farmer's markets, holiday fairs);
- Available local, state, and federal grants (e.g., Small Business Administration [SBA], CDBG, ARPA); and
- Contact information for business support organizations (e.g., WRC, Massachusetts Office of Business Development [MOBD], EDC).

As needed, sections of the website may be translated to increase accessibility for business owners who speak a language other than English.

Process

Phase 1: Initial Analysis and Establish the Planning Process

- Identify Town staff and community members who are responsible for leading this effort. The EDD is the proposed lead.
- Conduct an internal assessment of available Town resources and activities to support businesses and begin creating a catalog of existing resources.
- Conduct an audit of regional resources and activities from agencies such as WRC, and MOBD to support businesses to add to the catalog.
- Identify business owners, Town staff, and key community members who have insight on the needs of local businesses to engage during the planning process.

Phase 2: Develop the Site and Content

- Conduct interviews with business owners, Town staff, and key community members to understand what additional existing resources are important to highlight, what additional resources may need to be developed (e.g., grant application guides), and the most accessible format for the information.
- Analyze collected information to identify:
 - Existing local, State, and federal resources to include in the pilot business resource center;
 - Additional guides and resources to develop and include in the business resource center in a future update;
 - Needed business support activities that the Town, EDC, or local civic organizations may be able to provide and can be added to the business resource center; and
 - Details regarding the most effective format of the business resource center.
- Research and identify an online platform to host the business resource center. The site will likely live as an extension of the existing Town website.
- Develop a pilot business resource center to include any existing resources identified.
- Hold a stakeholder review period to collect feedback and insight on the pilot business resource center.
- Update and publish the business resource center.
- Market the site to businesses to initiate engagement through newspapers, community newsletters, and WRC.

Phase 3: Evaluation and Maintenance

- Utilize website analytics, a feedback form or other mechanism, and engage businesses to identify areas for improvement and gaps of information that can be included.
- Identify the agency responsible for maintaining the resource center on a regular basis and keeping the information up to date.
- Conduct regular updates of the business resource center with new events, guides, and other resources.
- Once a year, conduct a full-site review and update the business resource center to align with changes in priorities and goals.

Create an Economic Development Committee Strategic Plan

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Town of West Springfield
Origin	Planning Department
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000) if done internally. Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) if contracting external consultants to facilitate plan development.
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years). Phase 1 (1-3 months) and Phase 2 (3-6 months)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Percent increase of business retention compared to 2019 levels; Percent increase of reported business income compared to 2019 levels; Completed economic development projects
Partners & Resources	EDD, Planning Department, West Springfield Redevelopment Authority, WRC, West Springfield Town Council

Diagnostic

The EDC Strategic Plan will provide the Town of West Springfield with a vision for economic development and purpose for creation of an EDC. The extent of economic impact on businesses by COVID-19 reinforced the need for a local entity dedicated to supporting economic recovery and growth. Additionally, stakeholders identified how community representatives who have established rapport with subsets of business owners (e.g., minority business owners, business owners who speak English as a second language) are well positioned to serve as liaisons and local champions for the business community in this way. The EDC will serve as a central coordinating organization for the regional services available, Town resources, and any activities they may offer the business community themselves. Before developing and implementing projects to support local businesses recover from COVID-19, the EDC needs to establish core goals and a vision for their efforts towards economic growth and recovery through a Strategic Plan.



Public-facing Economic Development Strategic Plan outlining strategies and goals of the EDC. Source: [Tualatin Oregon](#)

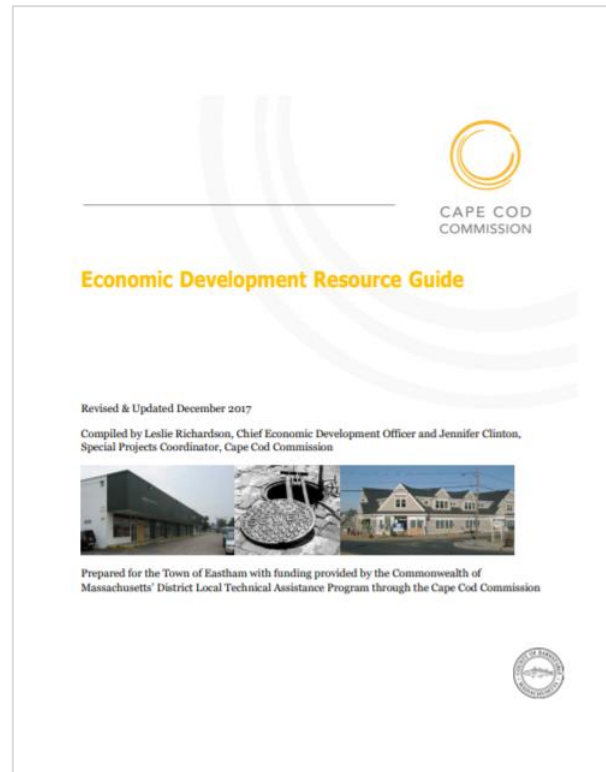
Funding (continued)

Funding Sources:

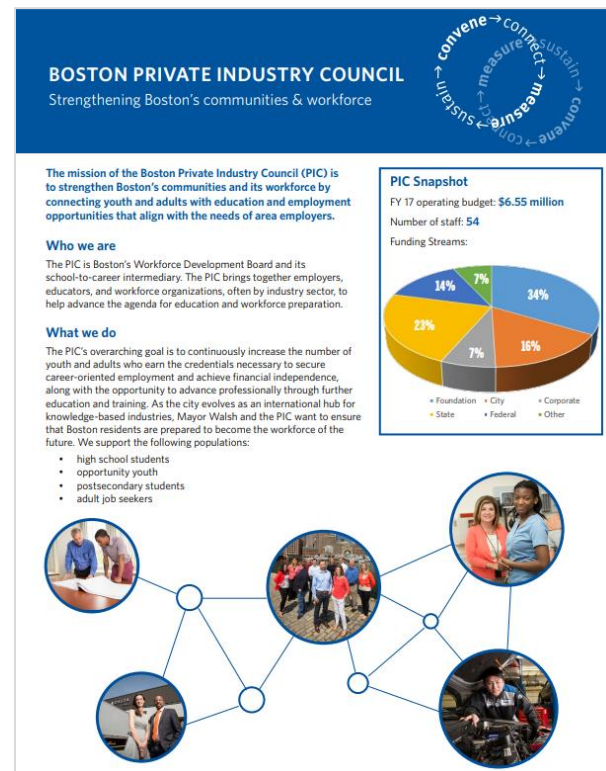
- [PVPC Planning Services](#)
- [Community Planning Grant Program](#)
- [Community One Stop for Growth](#)
- [ARPA Economic Adjustment Assistance](#)

Risk (continued)

Stakeholders agree this is a needed and high-priority project. Potential risks that may impact the project include limited engagement or availability to work on the project from Town staff and other elected and appointed officials.



Economic Development Resource Guide to support local communities begin their own EDCs. Source: [Cape Cod Commission](#)



The creation of a regional workforce development board to provide oversight and guide the vision of the EDC. Source: [Boston PIC](#)

Action Item

EDC Plan Components

The EDC Strategic Plan will serve as a foundation for the role of the EDC and provide guidance as to the activities/projects under their purview. While the EDC may have focus areas for specific neighborhoods/communities, they will service the entire Town. The EDC Strategic Plan will include the following:

- Mission statement;
- Goals that will drive efforts towards the mission statement;
- Projects the EDC will undertake that will meet established goals;
- Data relevant to economic conditions, including demographic data of West Springfield businesses and customer base, an analysis of future market trends, and public input;
- EDC roles and responsibilities, including those of the EDC as a whole, EDC members and specific positions (e.g., EDC Chair), Town staff liaisons (e.g., EDD), and regional representatives (e.g., WRC); and
- EDC operational procedures, including member turnover procedures and guidance for plan maintenance.

EDC Vision

The most important components of the EDC Strategic Plan are the mission statement and goals. The mission statement will drive the EDC towards a specific vision for economic development in West Springfield. The following is a sample mission statement that the EDC may adopt:

The West Springfield EDC works proactively to promote, encourage, and facilitate the development of responsible and properly planned commercial and industrial growth within the community in order to expand and strengthen the local economy, diversify the community's tax base and give the residents more opportunities to live, work, and thrive in an economically forward-looking and financially strong community.

The EDC goals propose specific, measurable objectives that push towards the mission statement for economic development. The goals will also be action-oriented and direct the EDC's activities and will align with the following examples:

- Proactively promote and encourage the development, redevelopment, expansion and retention of West Springfield's downtown, commercial, and industrial tax base.
- Support existing businesses and encourage them to remain in West Springfield, and if feasible, to expand operations.
- Pursue grants with other departments as appropriate.
- Market West Springfield as a business-friendly community.
- Streamline permitting.
- Develop centralized informational sources regarding business and commercial/industrial real estate development opportunities including tax incentives that are revenue positive.

Projects undertaken by the EDC will directly correlate to one or more economic development goals.

EDC Stakeholders

The EDC Strategic Plan stakeholders will be inclusive of a diverse group of community members, including business owners, Town staff and officials, industry representatives, and community members who have expertise in economic growth. The Strategic Plan stakeholders may also become the EDC once it is established. A Town staff member ("EDD") will be the lead of the EDC and business liaison to the Town government. The EDD will have the standalone responsibility of economic development in West Springfield, as the position has an extensive workload to guide economic efforts and it will help avoid any competing allegiances between supporting businesses and regulating them.

Process

Phase 1: Establish the Planning Process

- Identify Town staff and/or third-party consultants who will be responsible for leading the development of the Plan.
- Identify key community stakeholders, including business owners and community members, who have an insight on economic development in West Springfield and will be engaged during the planning process.
- Should the EDC Strategic Plan development align with the update to the Town of West Springfield Master Plan, consider additional planning process milestones that may need to be added (e.g., public review periods, stakeholder group composition).

Phase 2: Develop the Plan

- Conduct an internal audit of applicable Town planning documents, economic development and business support activities from the Town and region, and efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and any existing goals and efforts of the Committee to incorporate into the Plan.
- Collect data relevant to economic conditions (e.g., demographics, future market trends). This information may be available in various other plans or formats (e.g., Workforce Development Plan).
- Develop a survey to collect feedback from the business community regarding the needs and vision for economic development.
- Conduct interviews with Town staff, regional organizations, and key community leaders to understand the role the EDC should play in economic development and any core goals they should establish.
- Hold a public forum (e.g., Town Hall, webinar, online survey) to collect additional input regarding the needs and vision for economic development.
- Develop a draft Strategic Plan, starting with the mission statement and economic development goals.
- Hold a stakeholder review period to collect feedback and insight on the draft Strategic Plan.
- Finalize and adopt the EDC Strategic Plan.

Phase 3: Maintenance

- On an annual basis, review the Strategic Plan to note project progress and any needed changes or additions to operation procedures.
- Every five years, conduct a full-plan review and update process to align the Plan with any changes in priorities and goals.
- When the Town of West Springfield's Master Plan is updated, utilize the EDC Strategic Plan as a guide for the economic development section. Update the EDC Strategic Plan to align with the updated Master Plan as needed.

Create a Workforce Development Plan

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Town of West Springfield
Origin	WRC
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years). Phase 1 (3-6 months) and Phase 2 (3 months)
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Percent increase of business retention compared to 2019 levels; Percent increase of reported business income compared to 2019 levels; Average employee turnover; Increase in number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees; Increase in Median Income
Partners & Resources	WRC, Planning Department, EDC, Community Development Department, United Way, Multi Resource Cultural Center, Asnuntuck Community College, West Springfield High School, Lower Pioneer Valley Education Collaborative



Workforce development is core to economic recovery success. Source: [Giving Compass](#)

Diagnostic

The Workforce Development Plan will address the workforce shortage and associated challenges that have become more pronounced due to COVID-19. Before COVID-19 began, West Springfield experienced a noticeable workforce shortage in various trades professions, and the pandemic's excessive strain on employees has further magnified this deficit. Workforce shortages are observed across industries, but particularly in hospitality, trades professions, and education paraprofessionals. Community stakeholders identified particular barriers for manufacturing fields and any job that requires an apprenticeship (e.g., welder, electrician, plumber), as well as a need for programs to support high school students' and other individuals' access to the training they need to enter trades fields. Additionally, workforce shortages are due in part to the extended deadline for UI benefits, but many individuals are not expected to return to the workforce even after UI has ended due to other challenges (e.g., cost childcare, workplace environment, level of pay). The Workforce Development Plan will establish a vision for workforce development in the West Springfield region and identify actionable steps to address identified challenges.



Guide to support developing a Workforce Development Plan. Source: [Esri](#)



Suggested planning cycle for workforce development planning. Source: [BusinessWest](#)

Action Item

Workforce Development Plan Components

The Workforce Development Plan will analyze current workforce conditions and provide guidance for activities to address any identified challenges. The Plan should will include the following major components:

- Vision for workforce development in West Springfield and the surrounding regions;
- Baseline assessment of existing conditions;
- and Short- and long-term projects to address identified workforce development challenges.

The baseline assessment will consist of evidence collected during Phase 2 through data collection, surveys, and discussions with stakeholders. The information gathered will inform conclusions regarding:

- Skills gaps of local residents, by age and current job experience;
- Training and programmatic gaps to prepare individuals to enter targeted fields;
- Underlying causes of workforce shortages;
- Local stigma associated with targeted fields;
- Existing workforce development programming; and
- Local and regional capabilities to support future workforce development initiatives.

The conclusions and findings may vary by industry and may rely more on anecdotes and qualitative analysis for more recent impacts when quantitative data is unavailable. The Plan will identify various projects to address the risks and gaps identified in the baseline assessment and leverage local and regional capacities. The project list will entail short-term projects that can be implemented immediately, as well as long-term recommendations. Projects that the Plan may outline include:

- Hold recurring industry meetings for employers to discuss skill shortages, hiring and training issues, and worker engagement/retention strategies;
- Hire a local Workforce Development Specialist, who is funded in part by the local community college, Town, and WRC; and
- Conduct an employer education campaign to discuss job quality.

Stakeholders

A variety of stakeholders who represent a diverse set of perspectives in workforce development issues and have different roles in implementing identified solutions will be engaged. The three stakeholder groups are outlined below.



Regional Organizations: As workforce development is a regional effort, regional coordination will be key in the development and implementation of an effective plan. These stakeholders will be engaged throughout the process, but particularly to understand regional workforce shortages and existing workforce development resources, such as the Asnuntuck Community College agreement to offer in-state pricing to West Springfield residents, immigrant outreach programming with MRCC, and Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative trades career program.



Employers and Industry Leaders: These stakeholders will be able to offer unique, industry-specific perspectives regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on their workforce and any existing challenges magnified by the pandemic. Their engagement is particularly crucial due to the anticipated gap in quantitative data on the impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, these stakeholders will be engaged to operationalize the Plan, as many of the findings of the baseline assessment and the projects will require action and buy-in from .



Community Members: Community members will be engaged primarily to understand existing barriers to entering or returning to the workforce. The community members engaged throughout the planning process should represent a diverse set of West Springfield interests, including individuals who are currently or have been involved in one of the target industry, potential future workforce members, and families of current or future workforce members.

Action Item (continued)

The process for creating the Workforce Development Plan will occur over three phases:

Phase 1: Establish the Planning Process

- Identify Town staff, regional partners, and/or third-party consultants who will be responsible for driving the development of the Plan.
 - If hiring a third-party consultant to support development, develop an RFP that outlines the key goals and intended outcomes of the planning process. Consider the use of a regional plan to pool resources from neighboring jurisdictions.
- Identify key community stakeholders, including business owners, industry leaders, regional organizations, and community members, who have an insight on workforce challenges and opportunities in West Springfield and the surrounding region and will be engaged during the planning process.

Phase 2: Develop the Plan

- Conduct an internal analysis of known challenges for workforce development prior to and throughout COVID-19 and existing resources that may be leveraged to address those barriers.
- Collect data relevant to workforce challenges and opportunities (e.g., revenue losses by sector, limited qualified staff available).
- Conduct interviews and roundtable discussions with key community stakeholders to discuss existing workforce development context, resources, and issues.
- Hold a public forum for employers and employees (e.g., Town Hall, webinar, online survey) to collect additional input regarding the needs and vision for workforce development.
- Have the identified project lead develop a draft Workforce Development Plan.
- Hold a stakeholder review period to collect feedback and insight on the draft Plan.
- Finalize the Workforce Development Plan

Phase 3: Implementation and Maintenance


- Implement the recommendations as outlined in the Plan, prioritizing projects that are most achievable to support economic recovery from COVID-19.
- Utilize the Workforce Development Plan analysis and conclusions to drive economic development actions in West Springfield.
- On an annual basis and as significant changes occur in the region, review the Workforce Development Plan to note project progress and report any relevant impacts on the workforce.
- Every five years, conduct a full-plan review and update process to align the Plan with any changes in priorities and goals.

Establish a Small Business Microgrant Program

Category	 Tenant Mix
Location	Study Area
Origin	Planning Department
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (less than 5 years). Phase 1 (1-3 months) and Phase 2 (6-12 months)
Risk	 High Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of applicants and grant awardees; Percent increase of reported business income for awardees compared to 2019 levels; Increase in applications received over time; Impact of grant project on business revenue long-term; Impact on business survival and retention
Partners & Resources	Business Resource Center Manager, WRC, Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce, Planning Department, EDC, and Community Development Department

Diagnostic

The revenue of West Springfield businesses were greatly impacted by COVID-19. Nearly 70% of respondents to the business survey experienced a decrease in business revenue since 2019, and nearly 20% of respondents experienced a decrease of 50% or greater. Businesses are interested in financing opportunities to address these impacts, as 70% of respondents expressed interest in low-cost loans or grants that may be used to support business recovery and growth and community stakeholders confirmed this interest. The small business microgrant program will provide businesses with funding to support their recovery and growth. The program will fund a variety of business needs, such as capital improvements, marketing efforts, technical assistance, as well as some of the resulting efforts from the other RRP projects.



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Operate a Business
Licenses and Permits
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NYC LMI Storefront Loan

Applications for the NYC LMI Storefront Loan program reopened on July 7, 2021, and are being accepted until further notice. Please note that the eligibility criteria has changed; read below to determine if you are eligible to apply.

Product Details:

- Loan amount: up to \$100,000
- Loan term: 60 months, including no payments the first six months
- Interest rate: 0%
- Pre-payment penalty: none
- Closing fee: \$300 (only if loan is approved)

Who Can Apply?

Businesses must:

- Operate in one of these [eligible LMI neighborhoods](#)
- Employ between 2-99 employees in total across all locations
- Have been in operation since January 1, 2018, or before
- Be cash flow positive in 2019 and be able to demonstrate the ability to repay
- Have no personal or business tax liens or legal judgements within the past three years
- Provide a personal guarantee for the loan. All owners of 20% or more of the business must co-sign on the loan and must have an average personal credit score of 625 or higher.

LMI Storefront Revitalization Loan Program for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: [NYC Business](#)

Action Item (continued)

Program Components

The microgrant program will provide funding for businesses to implement a variety of projects and support economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. The three main program components are as follows:

- Identify a viable funding resource for the program;
- Create a structure to evaluate applications and administer grants; and
- Conduct a pilot grant cycle and expand the program.


The microgrant program will begin with the Central, Merrick and Memorial neighborhood businesses and then expand into the broader community in future iterations.

Funding Source

The program is intended to initially be funded using HUD CDBG funding. In order for the program to retain eligibility, the businesses must be located in the LMI communities, as specified by HUD. The pilot program will be targeted at businesses in this area. After the initial funding cycle, the Program Manager(s) will consider alternate funding resources that may be more sustainable for the program and allow for additional businesses to be eligible for funding. This may include altering the program to become loan-centric rather than dependent on grants, potentially including the involvement of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) partner.

Program Administration

The program will require a dedicated Program Manager(s) to establish and maintain the program. The likely Program Manager(s) are the Community Development Director, EDC Director, and/or Town Planner, although additional staff may be needed depending on the breadth of the program. The Program Manager(s), will be responsible for establishing criteria for eligible businesses, developing a rubric to score applications and evaluate those applications, and awarding grants. Multiple individuals will evaluate applications individually, and the averaged scores will be used to determine grant awardees. Grant evaluations will be as transparent as possible to equitably administer the grants, establish confidence in the program, and encourage applicants who are not awarded a grant to apply in the next grant cycle.

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Common Capital Loans Get a Business Loan

Common Capital offers fixed and variable rate loans and lines of credit of any size up to \$300,000 in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden counties. Financing can be used for everything from a business start-up to working capital, inventory, supplies and equipment.

[Get a Loan >](#)

A Community Development Financial Institution offering loans and business assistance to small business owners. Source: [Common Capital](#)

Action Item (continued)

Businesses Eligibility Criteria

In addition to the LMI requirements for applicant eligibility, the Program Manager(s) may maintain other eligibility criteria, such as:

- For-profit businesses must be in business for more than 1 year.
- Businesses must maintain a physical brick-and-mortar location in the Study Area.
- The business must maintain twenty or fewer full-time employees, including the owners.
- 51% or more of the jobs created or retained by the business must be held by LMI-earning individuals.

Eligible Grant Activities

Applicants may apply for funding to support a variety of efforts to support economic recovery from COVID-19. In the pilot round, grants are expected to be no more than \$20,000 per business, although grants will likely be of lesser value. Eligible activities may include technical assistance on certain expertise, including but not limited to:

- **Business resilience and growth planning:** supply chain management, best hiring practices, and staff retention efforts
- **Digital business tools:** bookkeeping and point-of-sale systems
- **Website design and online marketing:** social media management, customer review sites, and website development and maintenance

Eligible activities may also include façade and storefront improvements, structural alterations to the business space, and needed equipment and resources.



Best Practice: A Collaborative Small Business Technical Assistance Effort to Drive Business Resilience and Opportunity to Diverse Communities Arlington, VA

ReLaunch is a collaborative effort to drive business resilience and opportunity in 2021. Companies will receive tailored tools and professional assistance to revitalize, strengthen and transform their businesses. For detailed information please visit: www.relaunch.business ReLaunch is designed to provide service to diverse communities, particularly those that have limited digital infrastructure, making them more exposed to the business decline during COVID-19 business disruptions. It serves business owners whose primarily language is Spanish; service business owners who are immigrants or people of color.

Process

The process for establishing a small business microgrant program will occur over three phases.

Phase 1: Establish the Program

- Identify a Program Manager(s) who will be responsible for implementing and maintaining the microgrant program.
- Identify a funding source for the grant program. Consider any specific requirements that must be met by the applying businesses to maintain eligibility of the grant.
- Establish the structure of the small business microgrant program, including:
 - Criteria for businesses to be eligible to apply;
 - Timeline for applications and awards;
 - Amount and/or value of grants to be awarded;
 - Application collection system;
 - Rubric and method to score applications;
 - Process to select and distribute awarded grants; and
 - Procedure for tracking and monitoring use of grant funds.
- Identify additional Town staff who will support the Program Manager(s) in evaluating the applications, as needed.

Phase 2: Conduct a Pilot Program

- Market the microgrant program. This may include:
 - Sharing the document with WRC and their network of businesses;
 - Promoting the program on the Business Resource Center and Town social media pages; and
 - Holding a town hall to discuss the program, eligibility criteria for businesses, potential projects to be funded, and process for applying to the program.
- Collect and evaluate applications according to the pre-established rubric.
- Select grant recipients and administer the grants. Provide feedback to businesses whose applications were not selected.
- Monitor grant awardees progress until project completion.

Phase 3: Refine and Expand the Program

- Collect feedback from the pilot program participants to understand program strengths and areas for improvements, included but not limited to:
 - Value and number of grants;
 - Eligible uses of funds;
 - Criteria for evaluating applicants; and
 - Marketing and educational efforts.
- Refine the program according to collected feedback.
- Expand the region of applicant eligibility as appropriate.
- Due to changes in program eligibility, received feedback, or other changes, reconsider the program funding source.
- Repeat the steps outlined in Phase 3 to collect applications and award grants.

Appendix

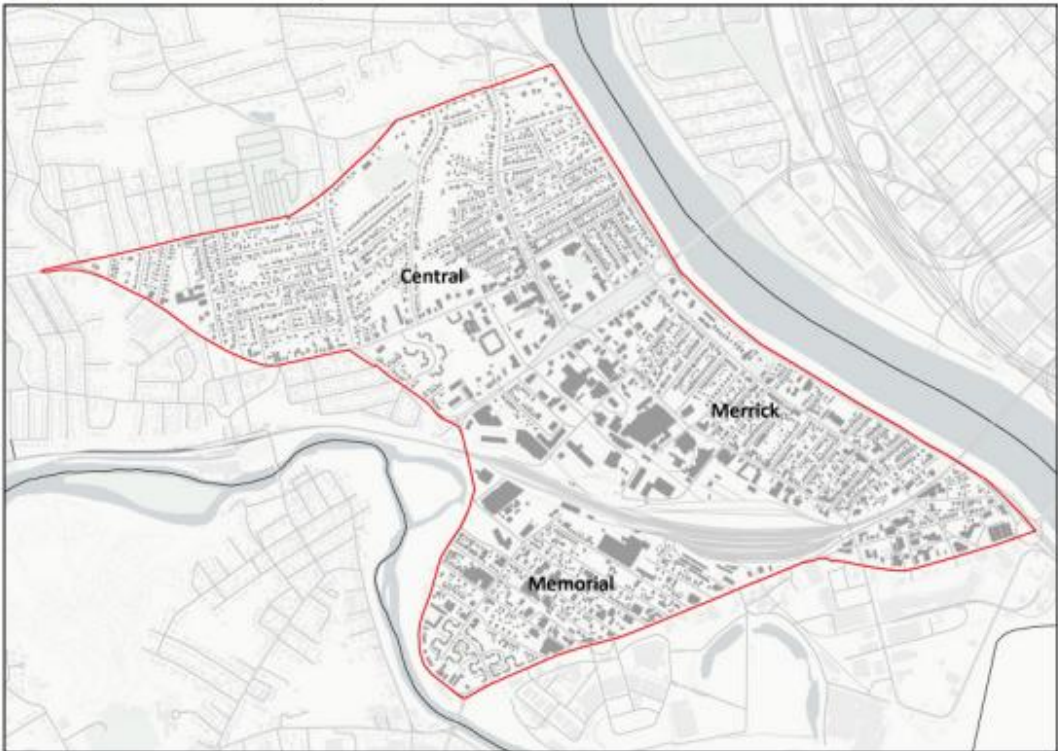
Appendix A. Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
ABCC	Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
CBD	Central Business District
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CDFI	Community Development Financial Institution
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
DHCD	MA Department of Housing and Community Development
DPW	Department of Public Works
EDC	Economic Development Committee
EDD	Economic Development Director
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
LMI	Low- to Moderate-Income
LPVCTEC	Lower Pioneer Valley Career Technical Education Center
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MOBD	Massachusetts Office of Business Development
POI	Points of Interest
PVPC	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
RFP	Request for Proposal
RRP	Rapid Recovery Plan
SBA	Small Business Administration
UI	Unemployment Insurance
WRC	West of the River Chamber of Commerce

Appendix B. Data Profile

West Springfield Data Appendix

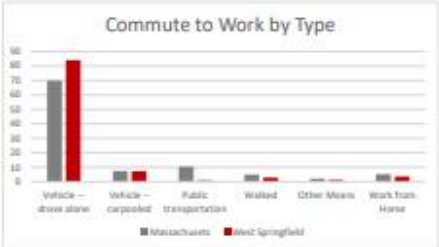
Study Area Boundary



Area Demographics

Total Population		Population Density (per sq. mile)		Average Household Size	
9,718	Study Area	5,858	Study Area	2.49	Study Area
28,635	West Springfield	1,665	West Springfield	2.35	West Springfield
153,599	Springfield	4,852	Springfield	2.69	Springfield
6,850,553	Massachusetts	885	Massachusetts	2.51	Massachusetts

Commute Type		Car Ownership	
51.2%	Work in West Springfield, Live Elsewhere	N/A	Study Area
8.1%	Live & Work in West Springfield	89.2%	West Springfield
40.7%	Live in West Springfield, Work Elsewhere	77.1%	Springfield
		87.6%	Massachusetts

Commute to Work	
	

Data Sources : ESRI, August 2017. US Census Bureau, 2014-2019 American Community Survey. 2018 OntheMap Application.

Area Demographics

Race and Ethnicity



	Study Area	West Springfield	Springfield	MA
Hispanic or Latino	22.5%	14.9%	48.9%	11.8%
White Alone	71.6%	79.9%	66.3%	78.1%
Black or African American Alone	5.9%	4.1%	21.9%	7.6%
Asian Alone	8.9%	6.4%	2.8%	6.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	0.5%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%
Some Other Race	9.0%	5.9%	8.5%	3.3%

Educational Attainment



	Study Area	West Springfield	Springfield	MA
12th Grade or Less	16.1%	10.6%	19.9%	8.7%
High School Graduate	26.9%	24.4%	36.3%	23.9%
Some College, No Degree	21.8%	19.4%	19.2%	15%
Associate's Degree	9.2%	10.3%	7.2%	7.4%
Bachelor's Degree	14.6%	19.8%	10.0%	24.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree	11.3%	15.6%	6.8%	20.3%

Population by Age



	Study Area	West Springfield	Springfield	MA
Under 5	6.6%	5.4%	8.4%	5.3%
5-14 Years	12.6%	11.2%	13.9%	16.4%
15-24 Years	13.7%	11.8%	16.5%	13.8%
25-44 Years	30.1%	26.4%	27.3%	26.4%
45-64 Years	25.1%	27.7%	21.9%	27.3%
65+ Years	11.8%	17.5%	12.1%	16.4%

Median Age

35.9	Study Area
42.2	West Springfield
32.1	Springfield
39.5	Massachusetts

Foreign-Born Population

N/A	Study Area
13.2%	West Springfield
9.4%	Springfield
17.3%	Massachusetts

Income

Median Household Income

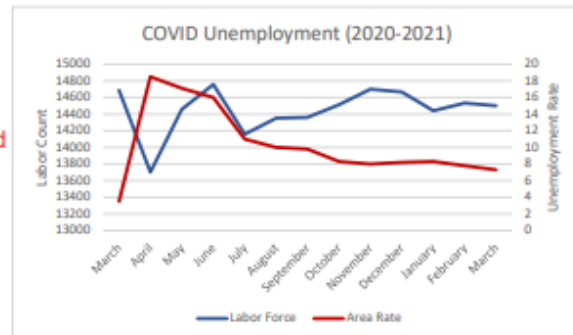
\$45,062	Study Area
\$53,053	West Springfield
\$39,432	Springfield
\$85,843	Massachusetts

Pop. Below Poverty Line

N/A	Study Area
11.3%	West Springfield
26.9%	Springfield
10.3%	Massachusetts

Employment

Labor Force and Unemployment Rates



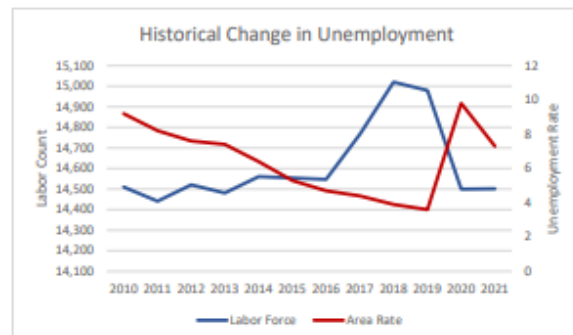
Housing Characteristics

Pop. Rent Burdened

N/A	Study Area
24.9%	West Springfield
63.1%	Springfield
48.8%	Massachusetts

Median Rent

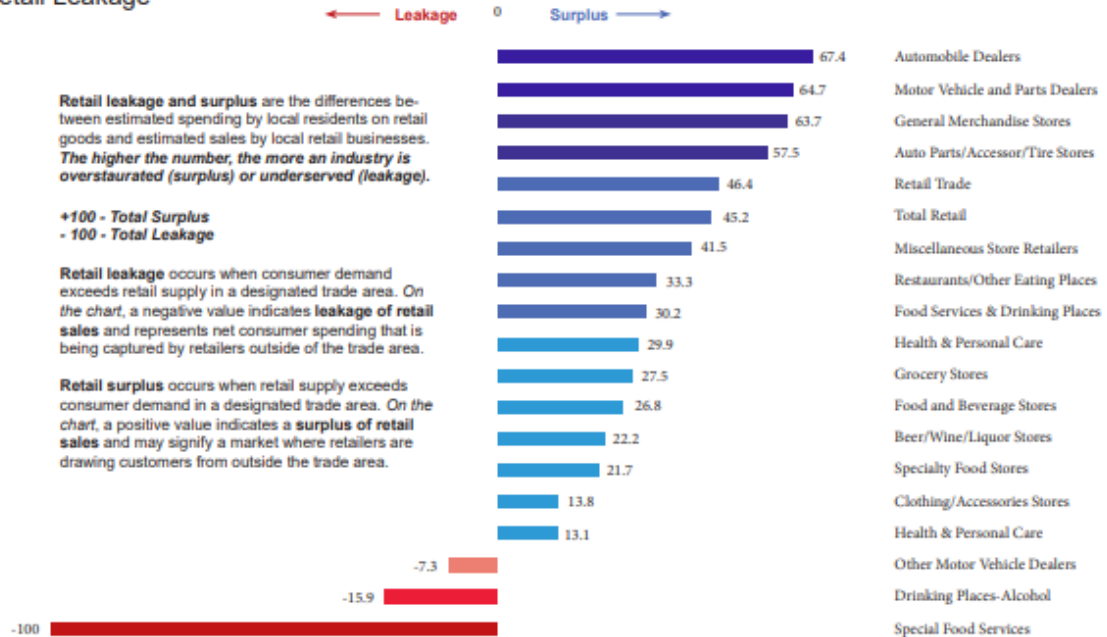
N/A	Study Area
\$878	West Springfield
\$1,073	Springfield
\$1,360	Massachusetts



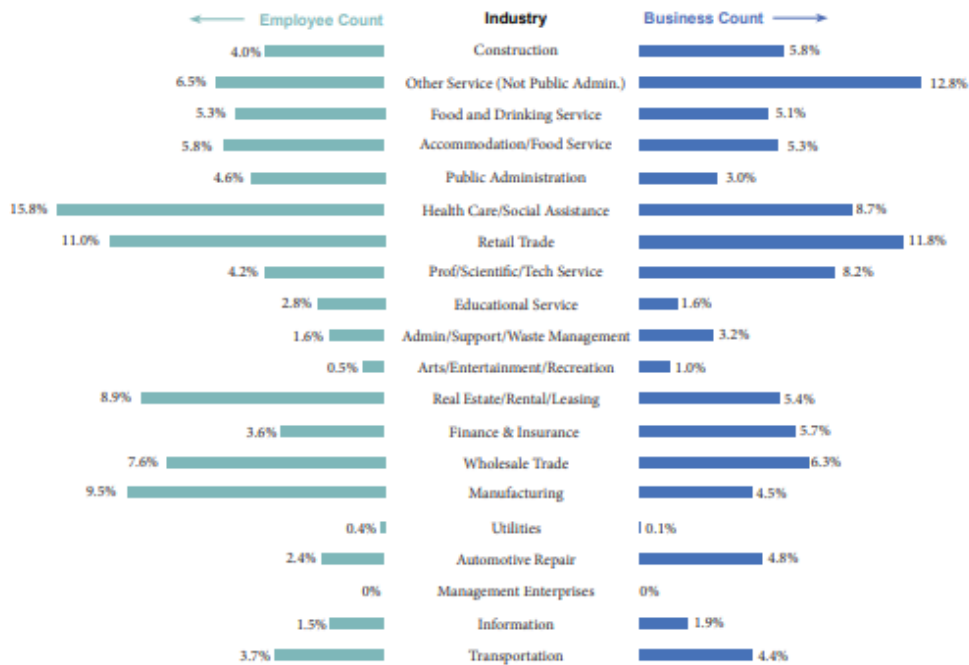
Data Sources: US Census Bureau, 2014-2019 American Community Survey.

Business Landscape

Retail Leakage



Types of Businesses in Study Area



Data Sources : ESRI, August 2017.

Appendix C. Business Survey Results

Business Survey Results - Data Tables

Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

1. Please select the community where your business is located.

West Springfield	27
------------------	----

Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

2. Including yourself, how many people did your business employ prior to COVID (February 2020), including both full-time and part-time?

1	2	7%
2 to 5	4	15%
6 to 10	4	15%
11 to 20	6	22%
21 to 50	6	22%
More than 50	5	19%
Total	27	100%

3. Does your business own or rent the space where it operates?

Own	16	59%
Rent	11	41%
Total	27	100%

4. During the 3 years prior to COVID, had your business revenue . . . ?

Increased	17	63%
Decreased	3	11%
Stayed about the Same	6	22%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	4%
Total	27	100%

5. Please select the category that best fits your business.

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	5	19%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	9	33%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	0	0%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	0	0%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	1	4%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	0	0%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	3	11%
Non-Profit, Community Services	2	7%
Other	7	26%
Total	27	100%

6. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Downtown or Commercial District where your business is located.

Condition of public spaces, streets, sidewalks

Very Dissatisfied	3	11%
Dissatisfied	9	33%
Neutral	4	15%
Satisfied	11	41%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	27	100%

Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	9	33%
Neutral	10	37%
Satisfied	8	30%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	27	100%

Access for Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	1	4%
Dissatisfied	5	19%
Neutral	9	33%
Satisfied	9	33%
Very Satisfied	3	11%
Total	27	100%

Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	1	4%
Dissatisfied	5	19%
Neutral	6	22%
Satisfied	12	44%
Very Satisfied	3	11%
Total	27	100%

Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses

Very Dissatisfied	1	4%
Dissatisfied	5	19%
Neutral	10	37%
Satisfied	10	37%
Very Satisfied	1	4%
Total	27	100%

7. Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle to your business operation?

Licensing or permitting regulations	3	12%
Signage regulations	9	35%
Parking regulations	7	27%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	1	4%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	5	19%
Historic District regulations	0	0%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	1	4%
None - No Issues with regulations	9	35%

Impacts of COVID

8. Did your business experience any of the following due to COVID? Select All that apply.

Decline in revenue	21	78%
Employee layoff	13	48%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	18	67%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	10	37%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	5	19%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	18	67%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	11	41%
None of the Above	1	4%

9. How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?

Increased compared to 2019	3	11%
Stayed about the same as 2019	5	19%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	8	30%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	5	19%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	2	7%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	3	11%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	4%
Total	27	100%

10. Please estimate how the number of customers that physically came to your business in January and February 2021 compares to before COVID.

More customers than before COVID	1	4%
About the same number as before COVID	4	15%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	7	27%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	3	12%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	7	27%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	3	12%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	4%
Total	26	100%

11. At the current time, what is the status of your business operation?

Operating at full capacity	14	52%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	11	41%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	2	7%
Permanently closed due to COVID	0	0%
Total	27	100%

Strategies for Supporting Businesses and Improving the Commercial District

12. A few approaches to address Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?

Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	8	30%
Moderately Important	5	19%
Important	10	37%
Very Important	4	15%
Total	27	100%

Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas

Unimportant/Not Needed	4	15%
Of Little Importance or Need	7	26%
Moderately Important	7	26%
Important	6	22%
Very Important	3	11%
Total	27	100%

Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks

Unimportant/Not Needed	2	7%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	7%
Moderately Important	9	33%
Important	7	26%
Very Important	7	26%
Total	27	100%

Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness

Unimportant/Not Needed	3	11%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	4%
Moderately Important	8	30%
Important	5	19%
Very Important	10	37%
Total	27	100%

Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies

Unimportant/Not Needed	4	15%
Of Little Importance or Need	6	22%
Moderately Important	6	22%
Important	5	19%
Very Important	6	22%
Total	27	100%

Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders

Unimportant/Not Needed	6	22%
Of Little Importance or Need	9	33%
Moderately Important	7	26%
Important	2	7%
Very Important	3	11%
Total	27	100%

13. A few approaches to address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?

More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District

Unimportant/Not Needed	4	15%
Of Little Importance or Need	7	26%
Moderately Important	3	11%
Important	7	26%
Very Important	6	22%
Total	27	100%

More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

Unimportant/Not Needed	2	7%
Of Little Importance or Need	5	19%
Moderately Important	6	22%
Important	7	26%
Very Important	7	26%
Total	27	100%

Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

Unimportant/Not Needed	2	7%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	4%
Moderately Important	9	33%
Important	10	37%
Very Important	5	19%
Total	27	100%

Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	4%
Of Little Importance or Need	4	15%
Moderately Important	10	37%
Important	7	26%
Very Important	5	19%
Total	27	100%

Changes to Zoning or Other Local Regulations (not related to COVID)

Unimportant/Not Needed	5	19%
Of Little Importance or Need	6	22%
Moderately Important	7	26%
Important	3	11%
Very Important	6	22%
Total	27	100%

Creation of a District Management Entity (Business Improvement District or other organization)

Unimportant/Not Needed	3	11%
Of Little Importance or Need	4	15%
Moderately Important	9	33%
Important	8	30%
Very Important	3	11%
Total	27	100%

14. Are you interested in receiving assistance for your business in any of the following areas? Select All that Apply.

Setting up an online store or other online selling channel	0	0%
Creating new services such as delivery	2	7%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	7	26%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	12	44%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	7	26%
Training on the use of social media	3	11%
None of the above	10	37%

Appendix D. Phase I Stakeholder Meeting



Project Team Introductions

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Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program

- The Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP) Program supports the economic and development needs of communities as they recover from the impacts of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- LRRP Objectives:
 - Collect **primary data** to measure COVID-19 impacts on the local business community.
 - Develop **actionable projects** that reflect COVID-19 recovery needs, community priorities, available resources, and local implementation capacity.
 - Finalize a **rapid recovery plan** that meets the short-term and long-term economic recovery goals of the community.

PROJECT STATUS UPDATES

FINDINGS FROM PHASE I

TRANSITIONING TO PHASE II

Project Status Updates

Our data collection included:

- Reviewing 6+ Town Documents
- Interviewing 7 Key Informants
- 20+ Baseline Data Points
- 15 Site Visit Data Points
- 27 Responses to Statewide Business Survey

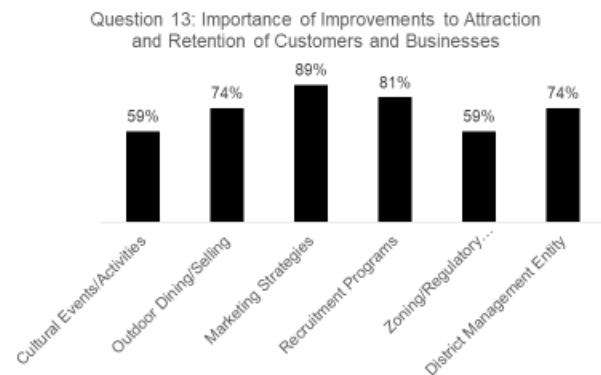
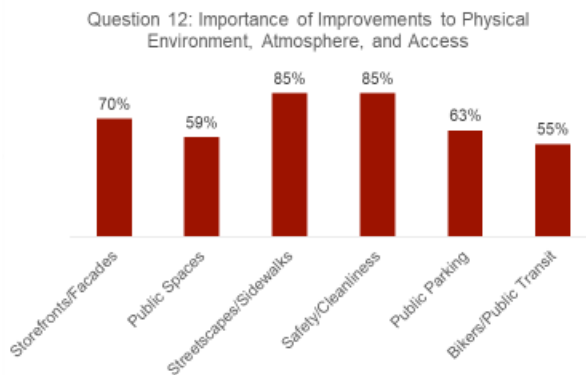


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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 5

Business Survey: Key Findings

Businesses were impacted in various ways by COVID-19. The most common impact to businesses in West Springfield was a **decline in revenue** (78% of respondents) and **incurred expenses to implement safety measures** (70% of respondents).



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 6

PROJECT STATUS UPDATES

FINDINGS FROM PHASE I

TRANSITIONING TO PHASE II

Drivers of Community Impact

Activating
Public Space

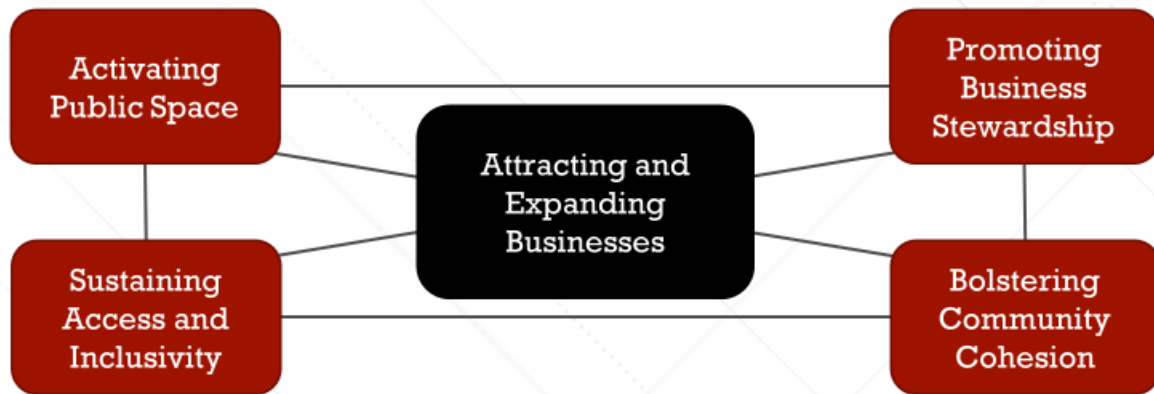
Sustaining
Access and
Inclusivity

Attracting and
Expanding
Businesses

Promoting
Business
Stewardship

Bolstering
Community
Cohesion

Drivers of Community Impact



Activating Public Space

- Fractured and Inactive Public Space
- Car-centric Infrastructure
- Perceived Gaps in Parking
- Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws
- Branding Business Districts



Activating Public Space

- **Fractured and Inactive Public Space**
- Car-centric Infrastructure
- Perceived Gaps in Parking
- Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws
- Branding Business Districts

59% of respondents indicated that improvement and development of public spaces and seating areas is of some importance to them.

Business Survey

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

Activating Public Space

- Fractured and Inactive Public Space
- **Car-centric Infrastructure**
- Perceived Gaps in Parking
- Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws
- Branding Business Districts

“There is a lot of space to develop and activate, to do that, West Springfield needs a green space/town commons. The current green space is underutilized. Needs to become more pedestrian-focused and -friendly.”

Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

Activating Public Space

- Fractured and Inactive Public Space
- Car-centric Infrastructure
- **Perceived Gaps in Parking**
- Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws
- Branding Business Districts

"Gaps in parking infrastructure has been an issue in West Springfield for many years... Elm Street is centrally located which brings people in -- leniency of parking restrictions would encourage business to the "downtown" area."

Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business
Stewardship

Bolstering Community
Cohesion

Sustaining Access and
Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 13

Activating Public Space

- Fractured and Inactive Public Space
- Car-centric Infrastructure
- Perceived Gaps in Parking
- **Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws**
- Branding Business Districts

"Zoning has always been an issue in West Springfield. Regulations are strict and need to be rethought, which the Town has already begun during COVID-19 (i.e., outdoor dining)."

Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business
Stewardship

Bolstering Community
Cohesion

Sustaining Access and
Inclusivity



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Activating Public Space

- Fractured and Inactive Public Space
- Car-centric Infrastructure
- Perceived Gaps in Parking
- Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws
- **Branding Business Districts**

"The City should support development with a downtown-focused mindset... Business Districts should draw people in and retain patrons."

Key Informant Interviews, Business Survey

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Promoting Business Stewardship

- Leverage Regional Opportunities
- Establish Business Steward
- Low-Cost Financing Opportunities
- Branding and Marketing



Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 16

Promoting Business Stewardship

- **Leverage Regional Opportunities**
- Establish Business Steward
- Low-Cost Financing Opportunities
- Branding and Marketing

"Local businesses could be more connected to regional efforts and leverage the regional network."

Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

Promoting Business Stewardship

- Leverage Regional Opportunities
- **Establish Business Steward**
- Low-Cost Financing Opportunities
- Branding and Marketing

74% of respondents indicated that creating a district management entity (business improvement district or other organization) was of some importance to them.

Business Survey, Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

Promoting Business Stewardship

- Leverage Regional Opportunities
- Establish Business Steward
- **Low-Cost Financing Opportunities**
- Branding and Marketing

"Therefore, if your credit was impacted by COVID you won't get a loan except at a high rate... Business models are changing so there needs to be start-up money for businesses that fits what the town is looking for."

Key Informant Interviews, Business Survey

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business
Stewardship

Bolstering Community
Cohesion

Sustaining Access and
Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 19

Promoting Business Stewardship

- Leverage Regional Opportunities
- Establish Business Steward
- Low-Cost Financing Opportunities
- **Branding and Marketing**

89% of respondents indicated that implementing marketing strategies for the commercial district would be important to them.

Key Informant Interviews, Business Survey

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business
Stewardship

Bolstering Community
Cohesion

Sustaining Access and
Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 20

Bolstering Community Cohesion

- Hold Community Events
- Connect with All of West Springfield
- Community Buy-in to Changes
- Leverage Local Capacity for Engagement

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business
Stewardship

**Bolstering Community
Cohesion**

Sustaining Access and
Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 21

Bolstering Community Cohesion

- **Hold Community Events**
- Connect with All of West Springfield
- Community Buy-in to Changes
- Leverage Local Capacity for Engagement

59% of respondents believe it is important to have more cultural events/activities that bring people downtown.

Business Survey, Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business
Stewardship

**Bolstering Community
Cohesion**

Sustaining Access and
Inclusivity



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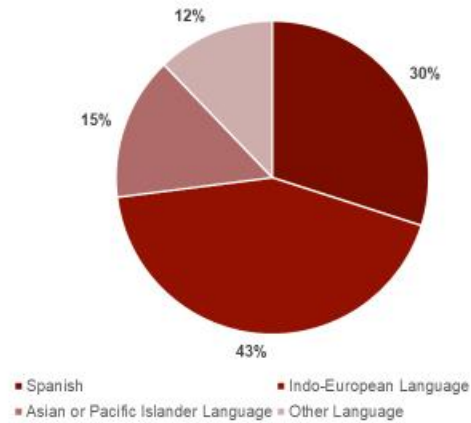
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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 22

Bolstering Community Cohesion

- Hold Community Events
- **Connect with All of West Springfield**
- Community Buy-in to Changes
- Leverage Local Capacity for Engagement

Languages other than English Spoken at Home



Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 23

Bolstering Community Cohesion

- Hold Community Events
- Connect with All of West Springfield
- **Community Buy-in to Changes**
- Leverage Local Capacity for Engagement

The responses to the business survey had high variability in opinion; some individuals found certain projects to be the most important proposed change, while others found the same activity to be very unimportant.

Business Survey, Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 24

Bolstering Community Cohesion

- Hold Community Events
- Connect with All of West Springfield
- Community Buy-in to Changes
- **Leverage Local Capacity for Engagement**

"Identify community representatives who have established rapport with subsets of business owners to serve as liaisons and local champions."

Key Informant Interviews, Documentation Review

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

- Facades, Lighting, and Visibility
- Broadband
- Access to Resources



Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity

Generating Community Cohesion

- Facades, Lighting, and Visibility
- Broadband
- Access to Resources

"Update businesses' facades to look more professional and cleaner. Currently, there is not a lot of greenery. Residents and visitors should have safe and walkable Town."

Business Survey, Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 27

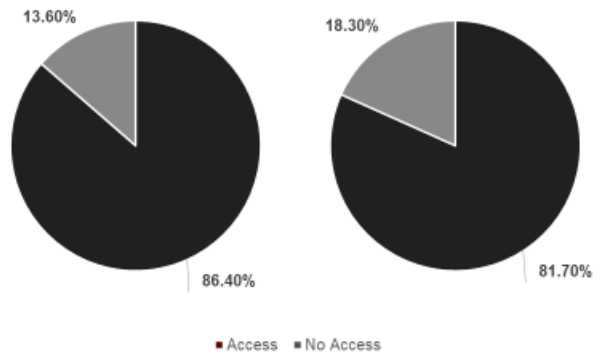
Generating Community Cohesion

- Facades, Lighting, and Visibility
- **Broadband**
- Access to Resources

Households with a Computer and Broadband Access

Massachusetts

West Springfield



Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 28

Generating Community Cohesion

- Facades, Lighting, and Visibility
- Broadband
- **Access to Resources**

"Business owners struggled to adapt and keep staffing during the pandemic... COVID-19 brought light to aspects of running a business that owners did not previously focus on."

Key Informant Interviews

Activating Public Space

Promoting Business Stewardship

Bolstering Community Cohesion

Sustaining Access and Inclusivity



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 29

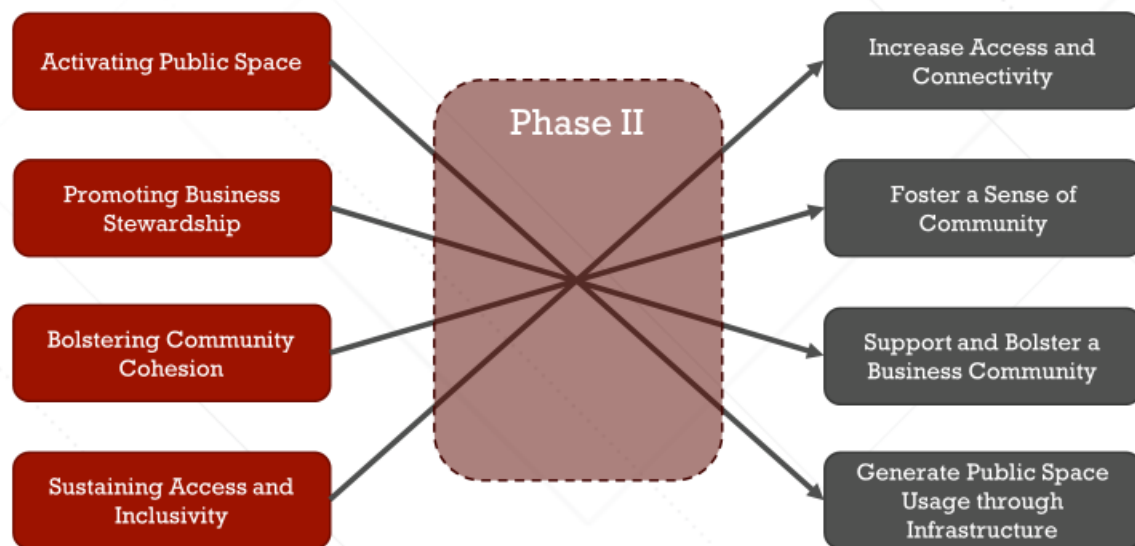
Do these conclusions accurately represent
West Springfield?

PROJECT STATUS UPDATES

FINDINGS FROM PHASE I

TRANSITIONING TO PHASE II

Data to Project Analysis



Phase II Project Examples

Town of Topsfield, Massachusetts Downtown Village and Outdoor Dining and Lighting Plan



Town of Middleton, Massachusetts Rail Trail Plan



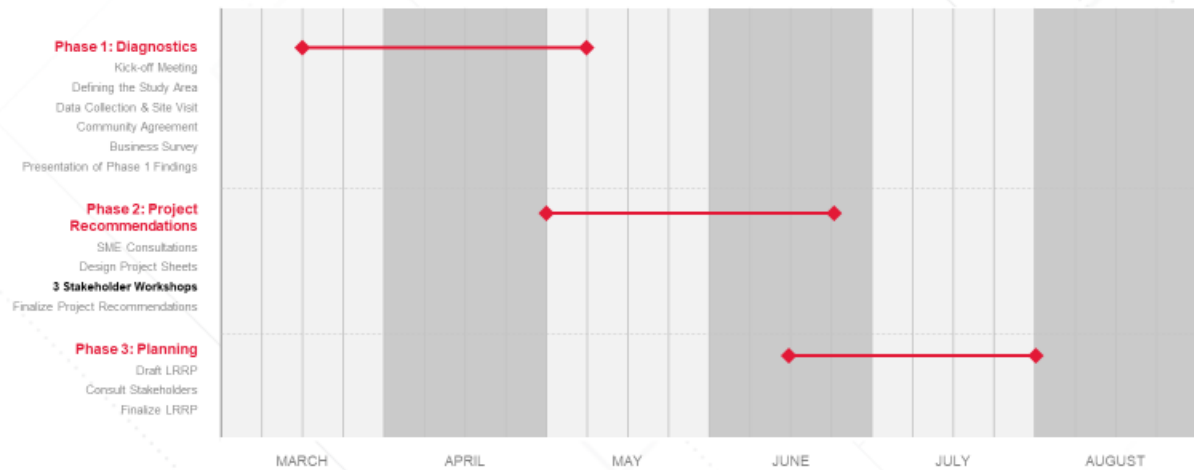
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City of Panama City, Florida Civic Center and Convention Center Plan



Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Community Kick-off Meeting | 33

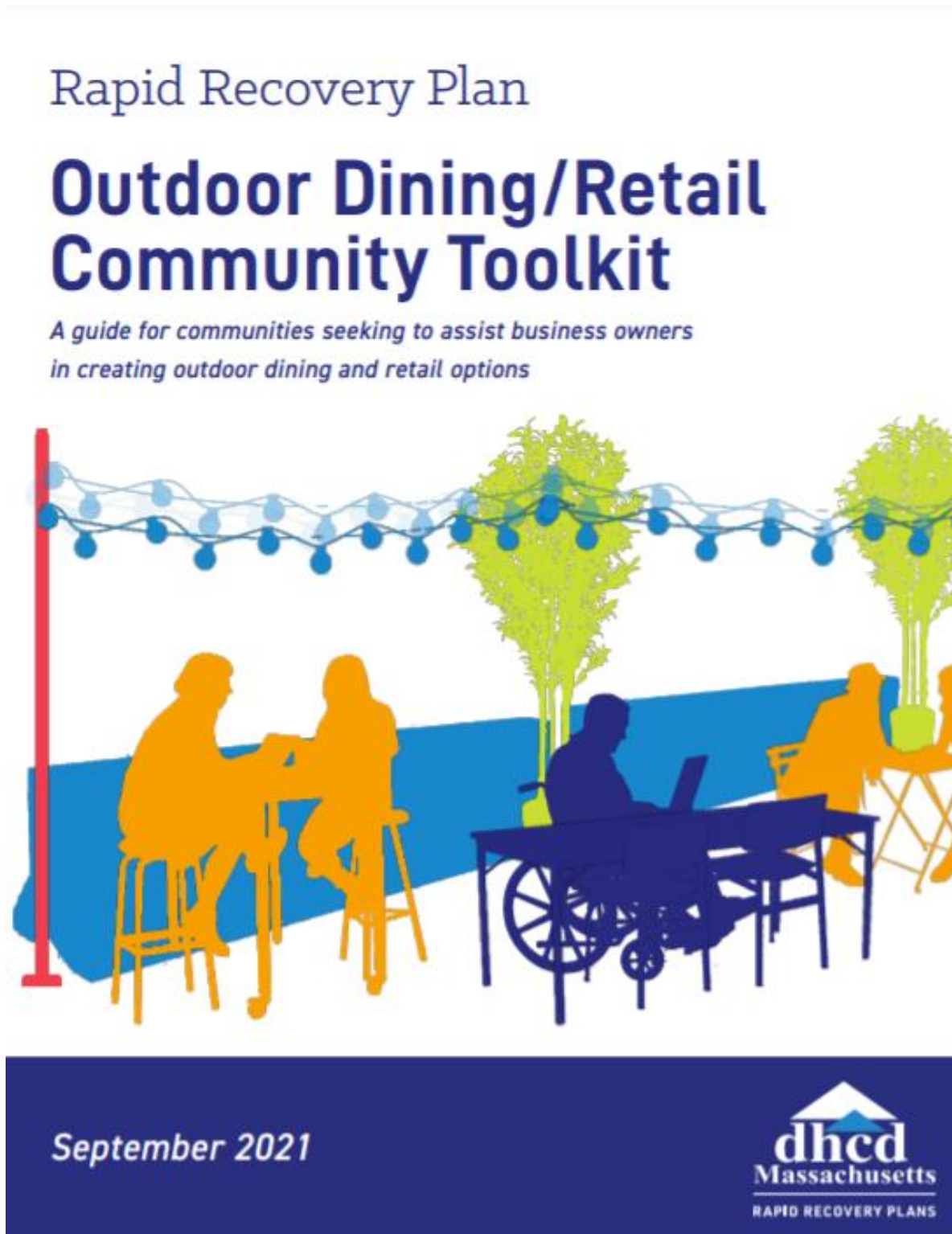
Project Timeline and Milestones



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Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program: Phase I Stakeholder Meeting | 34

Appendix E. Outdoor Dining Toolkit



The Outdoor Dining Toolkit Retail/Community Toolkit is provided as an attachment to this document.