



**Revised: 11/23/2021**

# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

**Elm Street &  
Downtown Corridor  
Westfield, MA**

# Acknowledgments



Lead Consultant  
BETA Group, Inc

Bill McGrath, Plan Facilitator  
Charlie Creagh, Lead Planner



Westfield, MA

Peter Miller, Community Development Director  
City Hall - Room 300  
59 Court Street  
Westfield, MA 01085  
413-572-6246  
[p.miller@cityofwestfield.org](mailto:p.miller@cityofwestfield.org)

---

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

## Public Meeting Attendees

Anne Daley  
Bill Westerlind  
Paul Cacolice  
Mina Reshamwala

## Principal Planner

Jay Vinskey

## City Engineer

Mark Cressotti

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.

**For more information, contact**  
**Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)**  
**100 Cambridge St, Suite 300**  
**Boston, MA 02114**  
**617-573-1100**  
**[mass.gov/DHCD](https://mass.gov/DHCD)**

---

# Table of Contents

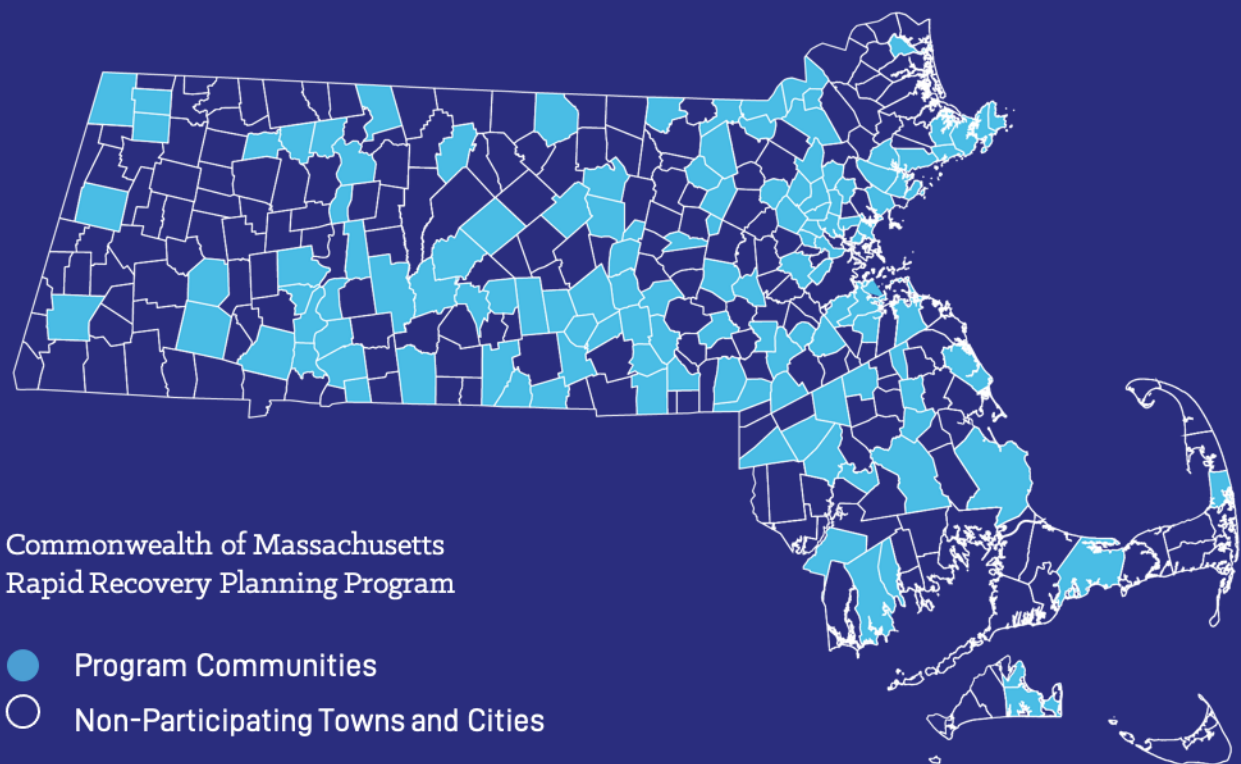
1.0 Rapid Recovery Program	1
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Approach/Framework	3
2.0 Executive Summary	5
2.1 Study Area Map	6
3.0 Diagnostic Key Findings	7
3.1 Customer Base	8
3.2 Physical Environment	8
3.3 Business Environment	9
3.4 Administrative Capacity	9
3.5 Summary Analysis	10
4.0 Project Recommendations	12
4.1 Building Improvements	13
4.2 Wayfinding Signage	16
4.3 Permanent Venue Space	18
4.4 Additional Projects Table	20
5.0 Funding Sources	21
Appendix	
A - Potential Funding Spreadsheets	
B - Public Workshop Presentation	
C - Compendium Best Practices	



## 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.



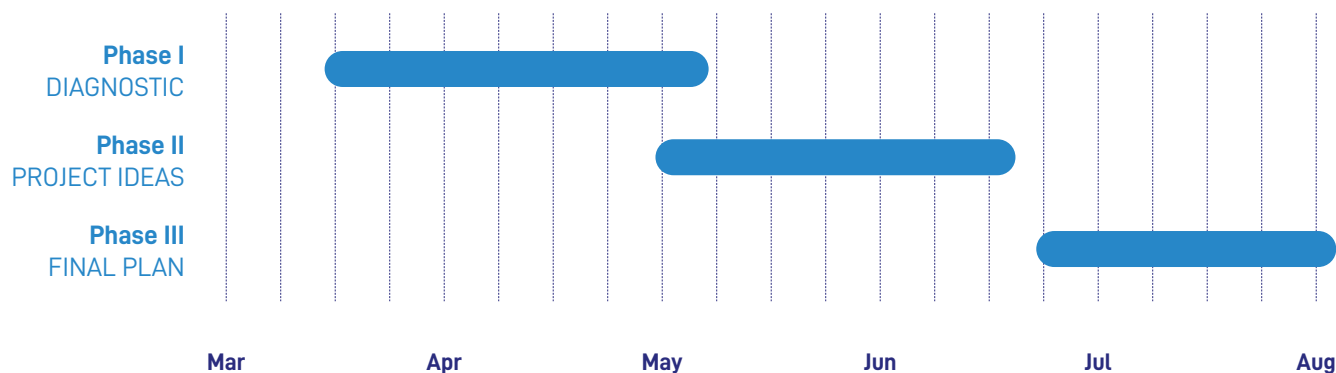
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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 (extended to October 8th, 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



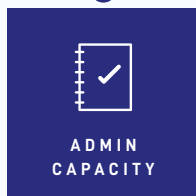
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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

---

## 2.0 Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

## Whip City Downtown Revitalization

Downtown Westfield is home to an established commercial area with established restaurants, retail offerings, health care institutions, recreation options, a post office, banks, art galleries, and professional offices. The north-south Elm Street and Broad Street enjoyed lively crowds on weekends including families with young children, college-aged folks from Westfield State, and retirees seeking a quieter, but still urban life in beautiful Pioneer Valley in Western MA.

Westfield was just the fourth city in Massachusetts to develop a Business Improvement District, and many improvements to downtown area were made as a result. But a 2012 change in MA state law required business owners in the district to participate, removing the option for them to opt out. As a result of this change in law and a variety of other factors, the City Council voted to dissolve the BID in July 2014.

Previous planning studies have had success in generating thoughtful proposals to enliven downtown. The Westfield Downtown Plan Final Report from the UMass Design Engagement Studios included significant public outreach and included recommendations like 1) Promote new construction in the Depot Square District, 2) Create a riverfront Park and Riverfront District, 3) Support reuse of under-utilized buildings and property along Elm Street, and 4) Advance the Columbia Greenway Trail

This report proposes the following projects to enliven downtown and help struggling businesses out of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19:

### **1) Activate Vacant Store Fronts**

- Develop CBDG style grant program to encourage and assist owners in developing and occupying vacant store fronts
- Coordinate this program with other initiatives related to facade improvements

### **2) Engage Landlords to Improve Buildings**

- Improve awnings, store facades, and lighting in an effort to fill vacant properties, and pursue grant funding opportunities to attract and retain new businesses and provide technical assistance training

### **3) Develop a Cohesive Wayfinding and Signage Plan**

- Include signage to/from downtown and the Columbia Greenway and the downtown trailhead
- Include pedestrian-oriented signage to improve foot connections to downtown businesses and to connect north and south ends of downtown across the Westfield River

### **4) Develop a Permanent Venue Space for Events**

- Engage Artworks of Westfield, and other local non-profits and integrate into the redevelopment of 64 Elm St parcel
- Utilize City parking lot space and cross-promote with the Columbia Greenway

### **5) Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodation in Downtown**

- Install Valley Bike Kiosks at strategic locations in the downtown to capitalize on the anticipated Spring 2022 completion of the Columbia Greenway. Key locations would include:
- PVTa Oliver Transit Pavilion
- Off-street parking lots
- Westfield River Esplanade

### **6) Improve Pedestrian Safety and Walkability**

- Engage a Downtown pedestrian safety study, incorporate pedestrian oriented wayfinding signage into study goals and plans

**7) Social Media Marketing Program**

- Utilize local Chamber of Commerce and Westfield State affiliated program to develop a comprehensive social media marketing campaign

**8) Recruit New Businesses**

- Revisit various bylaws to ensure a business-friendly atmosphere at City Hall. Actively market vacant properties.

**9) Encourage the Development of a New Downtown Business Association**

- Following the dissolution of the downtown Business Improvement District, encourage another organizational structure for a future group that promotes beautification downtown

**10) Develop an Electric-Bike Rental Program**

- Study the feasibility, funding, and possible sponsors for a future program. Establish contact with Pioneer Valley bike share program leaders and BlueBikes program leaders to understand keys to success

A map of the study area can be seen on the following page.



*Existing view at River*



*Proposed view at River*

**A rendering of a proposed Riverfront Park in Westfield**

*Source: Westfield Downtown Plan, UMass Amherst*



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

### Westfield Downtown Revitalization - Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program

#### LEGEND

Westfield Study Area



Data Source: MassGIS  
Issue Date: March 2021  
This Map is Intended for Planning Purposes Only

A map of the Westfield Downtown Revitalization study area

---

## 3.0 Diagnostic



# Key Findings



## The City's customer base is mixed

The two largest age groups by percentage of the total population (town-wide) are 25 - 34 years old (13%) and 55 - 64 years old (14%). The median household income for the Town is just over \$63,000, while the median household income for the study area is just over \$29,000.

Downtown Westfield's restaurants, retail, and other commercial offerings are poised to make a strong comeback as downtown establishments continue to add capacity and extend hours post COVID-19.

Planned events continue to take place in the downtown bringing both Westfield residents and people from the surrounding area into the downtown. Development of the Columbia Greenway and Riverfront will extend the draw to downtown for people experiencing these recreational facilities.

DEMOGRAPHICS	STUDY AREA	TOWN WIDE
Population	781	42,407
At Least Some College	43%	63%
Median Income	\$29,524	\$63,594
Age (0 - 18)	16%	24%
Age (19 - 54)	48%	44%
Age (55 - 84)	36%	32%
Race (Non-White)	37%	20%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, U.S. Census Data



## Public perceptions about the physical environment

The consultant team examined the condition of the public realm during field work analysis conducted in May, 2021. See the table at right for the study area cumulative score of each of the elements examined during the field visit. Westfield's business owner survey received 56 responses, or roughly 43% of the 128 storefronts examined by the project team in the study area. The business survey revealed that the primary area of dissatisfaction among business owners and merchants was the general condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs. The business owner survey included a question about possible ways to **improve the physical environment, atmosphere, and access** for customers and employees. The top rated options include:

- Changes in public parking availability, management, or policies;
- Improvements in safety and / or cleanliness; and
- Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks

The consultant team observed

The field analysis team observed that on-street parking was generally well utilized although it's not clear if the vehicles were customers or employees. Most of occupied stores were open for business and there was a moderate level of pedestrian activity. Sidewalks are in good condition and appear to be consistent with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for accessibility. However, many storefronts would require renovation to come into compliance with accessibility requirements.

It appears that the existing public realm environment effectively meets the needs of business owners, employees, and customers. However, there is interest in expanding parking opportunities.

PUBLIC REALM ELEMENTS	CUMULATIVE SCORE
Lighting	B
Wayfinding & Signage Benches	B
Sidewalk	A
Street Trees & Benches	B
Roadbed & Crosswalks	B



## Westfield's downtown continues to strengthen

Similar to the scoring process used for the public realm, elements of the private realm were also scored during the field work analysis. See the table at right for the study area cumulative score of each of the elements examined during the field visit.

While downtown has a variety of vibrant businesses that provide a solid core, the project team observed a number of vacant storefronts. These include key parcels within the corridor:

- 3 Main Street - Former Leo's Gallery Deli.
- 10 Main Street - Former Bank of America Building
- 89 Elm Street - Lambson Square
- 330 Elm Street - near terminus of the Columbia Greenway extension
- 30 Elm Street - former Santander Bank building

The City's ability to promote occupancy of these properties will enhance the long term viability of downtown and work to expand its customer base.

PRIVATE REALM ELEMENTS	CUMULATIVE SCORE
Lighting	B
Facade	B
Awning	NA / FAIL
Signage	C
Outdoor Display & Dining	NA / FAIL
Window	B



## Need for a Downtown Businesses Association

Westfield was just the fourth city in Massachusetts to develop a Business Improvement District, and many improvements to downtown area were made as a result. A 2012 change in MA state law required business owners in the district to participate, removing the option for them to opt out. As a result of this change in law and a variety of other factors, the City Council voted to dissolve the BID in July 2014.

New opportunities that may be available through the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) have renewed interest in re-establishing a Downtown Business Association. The association will enhance the City's vision for the Elm Street corridor to create a walkable, vibrant, independently-minded community, where people of all backgrounds can gather and thrive. The City is fortunate to have a sizable young adult population with WSU, but it is also imperative we to engage families with children, and active adults. With an extension of the popular Columbia Greenway Trail there is tremendous opportunity to bring new audiences to downtown. Most importantly, however, downtown needs to be a place where people would choose to live.

## Analysis



### BUILDING DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIPS

Westfield's downtown potentially benefits from the proximity of Westfield State University (WSU) and its student population. Establishing a successful housing component within the downtown will help to promote and diversify business offerings to serve a mix of students, older adults, families with small children and childless couples.

Partnering with WSU, a downtown Business Association and the City to promote the establishment of a robust housing infrastructure will create a dynamic that allows existing businesses to thrive post-Covid and also attract new business to fill vacant storefronts.



### REGIONAL MARKETING

Westfield's downtown businesses rely on a customer base that is a combination of residents as well as people from the surrounding towns. Planned events draw people to the downtown and provide a dynamic customer base. While these events are popular, they provide only a short term boost to the area. Recreational facilities like the Columbia Greenway and Riverfront Park offer an excellent opportunity to bring a new population into downtown.

A robust marketing campaign coupled with a wayfinding program will enhance the ability for downtown businesses to attract customers using the recreational facilities. Planned downtown events can also take advantage of these programs to promote attendance.

Expanding and diversifying the customer base will enhance the ability for existing businesses to thrive post-Covid and also attract new business to fill vacant storefronts.

**A rendering of a proposed building on an Elm Street parcel between School Street and Arnold Street**  
*Source: Elm Street Redevelopment Study, Westfield, MA. Utile, 2019.*



Proposed, Looking North on Elm Street

## Analysis



### PARKING

The Westfield Downtown Revitalization corridor includes a combination of on-street and off street parking options. On-street parking is located on both sides of Elm Street. The parking is not metered but does have a signed one hour parking limit to encourage customer turnover and reduce employee parking. Off street parking is available behind Elm Street in the City owned Reader lots. This parking is free with a signed two hour time limit.

There is a recognized need for additional public parking for downtown to serve customers as well as employees. Improved parking management and enforcement would help to better utilize the available parking supply while options are explored to increase the supply. A possible public private partnership may be available through the future redevelopment of the 64 Elm Street parcel



### ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

The City of Westfield has an active Community Development Department that promotes economic development, develops downtown revitalization initiatives and administers CDBG funding. The City's Go Westfield web page notes, "The City of Westfield is committed to working with businesses to make it easy to locate, operate, and grow jobs. Westfield has distinguished itself by tapping into numerous economic development programs to improve its infrastructure, leverage state-owned property and facilities for commercial use, develop its workforce, and tap into private investment in support of its economic development agenda."

Two crucial positions are currently vacant, that of the City Advancement Officer, a position established in the early 2010's focused on economic development activities, and the Community Development Block Grant Coordinator, which has been vacant since November 2020. The Office of Community Development & Planning is staffed by the Community Development Director, the Principal Planner, and Office Manager.

Filling vacant staff positions would provide additional administrative capacity.

Additionally, engagement of a Downtown Merchants' Association or other District Management entity would provide additional dedicated support for the area.

### *Westfield River Esplanade & Columbia Greenway Rail Trail Junction*






---

## 4.0 Project Recommendations

## 4.1 Vacant Storefront Activation Program

Category		Public Realm
Location		Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
Origin		Peter Miller, City of Westfield Community Development Director
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) - 12 months planning, 2-4 years implementation
Risk		Medium Risk – Risk associated with building owners volunteering to join in the program
Key Performance Indicators		1) Number of building owners engaged in the program in the first year 2) Number of storefronts revitalized in years two through four
Partners & Resources		City of Westfield Planning Department (planning, design, implementation), The Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce (marketing empty storefronts post-revitalization)



*Example of vacant downtown storefront*

**Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts**

- City identified a number of vacant storefronts within the corridor
- Vacant storefronts detract from the overall vitality and safety of the downtown
- 93% of business survey responses indicated being negatively impacted by shutdowns and restrictions associated with COVID-19

**Action Items**

- The municipality needs to make decisions prior to and during the creation of this program. If the municipality already knows the answers, then staff can proceed with developing the program. If not, the municipality can work the decision points into a scope of work for assistance in development and perhaps managing the program. See Process for some of these questions.
- If starting from scratch, the municipality needs to accomplish the following:
  - » Identify capacity within the municipality to guide the program and bring on additional capacity
  - » Develop an appropriate level of design guidelines
  - » Engage the business, property owners, and community to get buy-in for the program
  - » Develop criteria for application, approval, installation, and maintenance
  - » Develop the funding and oversight structures
  - » Conduct an existing conditions assessment and identify the buildings and the landlords with the highest needs in terms of number of vacancies, square footage of vacancies, and age of and appearance of storefront facades
- Develop a spreadsheet of vacancies, owners, leasing agents, dates contacted, and initial response, including willingness to collaborate and participate in the revitalization program

**Process****Pre-Program Development:**

- Identify who in the municipality will manage this program: municipal staff, existing downtown committee/organization, volunteer committee, or a hybrid
- If the municipality does not already have design guidelines for the area that are suitable for this program, then decide how those guidelines will be developed. Will the design guidelines be just for the facade improvement program, or will they be more broadly applicable?
- Discuss the potential focus of the program: components of a storefront, the entire storefront, the entire facade? The entire

building? Will signage, lighting, awnings and other elements be included/ Will interior improvements to address accessibility be included? Will the municipality fund the design, all or some of the improvements, or both?

- Discuss what will not be eligible. Eligibility may be determined by the funding source (ARPA, CDBG, etc.)
- Discuss the length of time that improvements must be maintained and the enforcement process for ensuring that improvements are maintained. Maintenance requirements could be tied to the length of the tenant's lease.
- Consider the funding structures. The program can provide grants or loans to property owners or businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Forgiving loans after a certain time if the improvements are maintained is another option.
- Decide whether the guidelines and program will be developed in-house or whether the municipality will seek outside help. The funding source may determine the type of outside assistance; for example, the municipality may need to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP).

**Developing the Program**

- Decide the following
  - » CDBG style economic development grants
  - » Which elements will the program fund and which are the responsibility of the property owner?
  - » What are the eligibility requirements for participating in the program?
  - » What is the length of the program?

- » How long will property owners be required to maintain the improvements?
- » What is the enforcement procedure for maintenance? (This could be repayment of a grant or a lien on a property.)
- » Will the responsibility for maintenance transfer to a new owner if the property is sold?
- Differentiating between the responsibilities of the tenant (often the small businesses) and the landlord (the property owner) is critical - a small business may be enthusiastic about the assistance, but the landlord may not. The municipality may need to consider parallel outreach processes.
- Decide on the application process and how applicants will be evaluated. Are certain property types or improvements given priority over others? Make sure the process of choosing participants is transparent.
- Develop the forms and train the people who will be evaluating the applications

### Implementation

The program can provide grants or loans to property owners / businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate for reluctant property owners, while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Some communities have indicated that requiring a match from the property owner may create longer-term support of the program.





If the property owners are less interested in the program, the municipality might consider offering grants to the first 3-5 participants to sign up (depending on resources) and transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This method would also allow the municipality to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area,

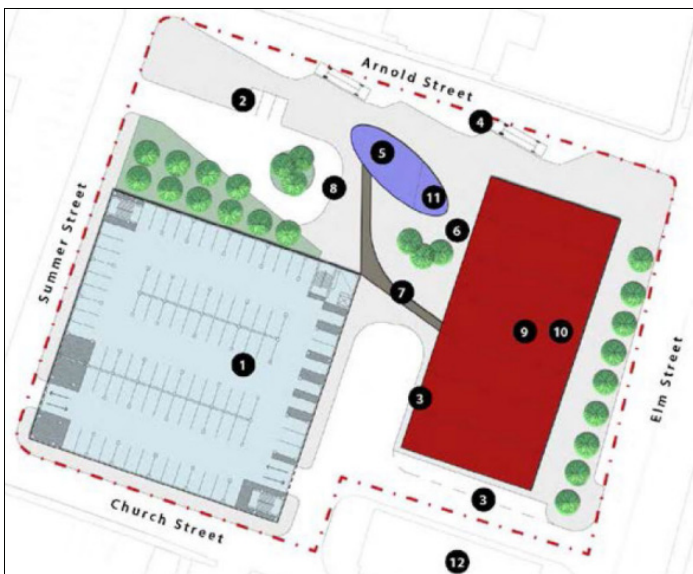
Education of all people involved in the program needs to be an ongoing component. A municipality that is short on project management resources should consider hiring a dedicated staff member or consultant to manage this program.

Finally, the municipality should consider streamlining approvals of projects under this program to reduce the time needed for implementation.



## 4.2 Develop a Permanent Venue Space for Events

Category		Public Realm
Location		Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor & 64 Elm Street parcel
Origin		1) LRRP Phase One Business Survey 2) Project Team Field Work 3) Peter Miller, City of Westfield Community Development Director
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) - 6-12 months planning, 12-36 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – The risk for this project category is relatively low
Key Performance Indicators		1) Success of locating and securing a permanent venue space for events downtown
Partners & Resources		1) Town of Westfield Planning Department 2) ArtWorks of Westfield 3) Westfield Redevelopment Authority



Plan rendering of the parcels proposed for redevelopment in the March 2013 Elm Street Urban Renewal Plan

Source: <https://www.westfielddevelopment.com/DocumentCenter/View/1198/Elm-Street-Urban-Renewal-Plan>



88, 80, 64, and 56 Elm Street parcels were obtained through eminent domain after a 1986 fire destroyed the popular Newberry's Department Store downtown - the proposed transit center was built, but the remainder of the site remains vacant in this April, 2021 aerial shot

Source: NearMap

**Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts**

- The first Phase One public meeting identified a permanent venue space for events downtown as a critical tool necessary to bring local residents into the downtown area, attract visitors from farther afield, and drive foot traffic to local businesses
- An emphasis is placed on utilizing the Westfield Redevelopment Authority parcels on Elm Street between School Street and Arnold Street because this site is in need of substantial redevelopment and is in the core of the downtown commercial district
- Destroyed by a fire in 1986, the Elm Street urban renewal site has been a vacant eyesore for decades and represents an opportunity to incorporate important artists and event space in Downtown Westfield - which would in turn drive foot traffic to area businesses as folks attend events at the proposed new space

**Action Items**

- No responses to most recent request for interest in development. Proposals were due on September 14, 2021.

- It has been identified by potential developers that the project would require significant public subsidy in order to become financially feasible.
- The American Rescue Plan has made significant federal resources available for the development of affordable housing. All parties who have expressed interest in the project have proposed affordable housing mixed-use development. Any other redevelopment will require creative financial structure.
- The 1.6-acre property is zoned as Commercial-Office-retail-Enterprise District - with this in mind, critical action items include determining if any part of the proposed project includes an art venue space

**Process**

- Confirm the preferred project site which is likely the vacant 64 Elm Street parcel. Engage Westfield Redevelopment Authority to determine compatibility with Urban Renewal Plan
- Develop preliminary programming for venue space such as farmers markets, indoor recreational activities, concert/performance space







**The possible future look of the Elm Street urban renewal site**

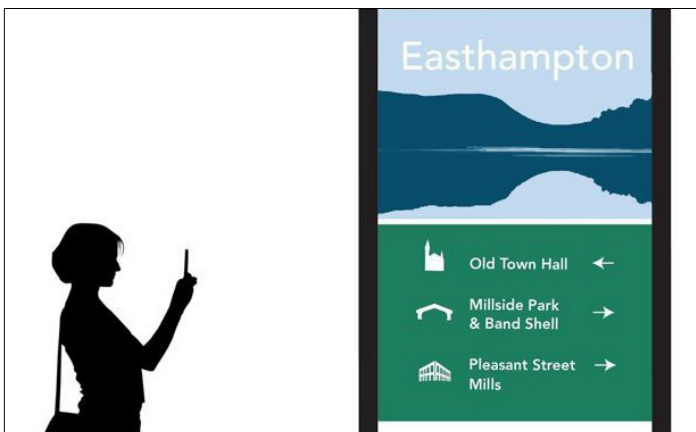
Source: <https://www.westfielddevelopment.com/DocumentCenter/View/1198/Elm-Street-Urban-Renewal-Plan>

- Develop preliminary programming for infrastructure including permanent building, HVAC requirements, sanitary facilities utility requirements
- Conduct a study that includes all soft and hard costs of operating a venue space, including generating print and digital promotional material, paying utility bills, and staff
- Conduct analysis of potential sources of funding to cover capital improvement and operations costs, including private funding through local banks, utility companies, etc., and public resources such as ARPA funding, MassWorks, and Rural and Small Town Development Funds
- Examine the feasibility of including small food service operation to generate revenue.
- Secure grant funding and work with Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce to share advertising or other promotional materials. Consider audiences and platforms (traditional/digital) for promotional materials -- local residents, nearby visitors, and visitors from outside the region. Consider partnerships with hotels, inns, bed and breakfasts, and AirBnBs.



## 4.3 Develop a Cohesive Wayfinding and Signage Plan

Category		Public Realm
Location		Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
Origin		1) LRRP Phase One Business Survey 2) Project Team Field Work 3) Peter Miller, City of Westfield Community Development Director
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) - 6-12 months planning, 12-24 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – The risk for this project category is relatively low
Key Performance Indicators		1) Public input, feedback on sign design and branding 2) Foot traffic in downtown and at area businesses
Partners & Resources		Town of Westfield Planning Department (planning, design, implementation), The Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce (input and feedback on signage content, branding) The public and residents of Westfield (input and feedback on signage content)



Easthampton, MA has a recent wayfinding program and information on the Towns website

Source: <https://easthamptonma.gov/432/Downtown-Wayfinding>



Downtown Concord, NH has attractive wayfinding signage in the historic downtown

Source: <https://twitter.com/BrentToderian/status/971842182742122496/photo/2>

**Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts**

- Business survey and public meeting identified wayfinding signage as a successful way to generate additional foot traffic in the downtown area
- Downtown Westfield is the gateway from I-90 to a number of bucolic and rural hill towns, to Westfield State University - proper signage along this important route will orient travelers and give them the information they need to stop and explore Westfield, in turn driving business sales which will lift struggling businesses out of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19
- 93% of business survey responses indicated being negatively impacted by shutdowns and restrictions associated with COVID-19

**Action Items**

- Utilize similar design to existing MassDOT dark green signs that the state has installed elsewhere in Hampden and Franklin counties
- See "Process" below for additional detailed action items

**Process**

- Drivers approaching from I-90 have to slow down before entering the downtown area and consider their next move, including turning for Route 20 and heading west towards recreational and leisure destinations, continuing south to access Route 202, or stopping and shopping
- This natural crossroads effect is an excellent opportunity for cohesive and attractive wayfinding signage implementation
- Work closely with business owners to decide which signs will include business names and directional arrows pointing to those locations, including signage to/from Downtown and the Columbia Greenway and the downtown trail head
- Within the Signage and Wayfinding project recommendation, include a comprehensive parking management plan for East Milton Square
- Seek funding sources such as MassDevelopment Implementation Grants

**Bank of America Building, Main Street**

## 4.4 Engage Landlords to Improve Building Facades

<b>Category</b>		Private Realm
<b>Location</b>		Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
<b>Origin</b>		Peter Miller, City of Westfield Community Development Director
<b>Budget</b>		Low Budget (\$20,000-\$30,000)
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short Term (<5 years) 1-6 months to write an RFP and hire a consultant, 6-12 months for the consultant to conduct public outreach and write detailed guidelines with graphics that are particular to the downtown Westfield corridor
<b>Risk</b>		Medium Risk - Cooperation among varied businesses and property owners is required
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Successful adoption of the new design guidelines</li> <li>2) Increase in the number of applications that are consistent with the design guidelines</li> <li>3) Decrease in the number of staff hours and meetings dedicated to the design and review during the site plan or special permit process</li> <li>4) Increase in the number of buildings constructed, renovated, or rehabilitated that meet the design guidelines</li> </ol>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		City of Westfield Community Development, Westfield Planning Board, Architect/Engineering Designer, Local Business Owners



The Town of Sterling has design guidelines for facades and other commercial and retail structures



## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

Creating or updating design guidelines and combining the update with financial assistance to property owners to update buildings and sites to be consistent with the new guidelines addresses several negative economic impacts of the COVID -19 pandemic.

Design guidelines can sometime be seen primarily as an aesthetic requirement. However, they can also have significant impacts on the economic and public health of an area, both of which are directly related to the continuing impacts of the pandemic:

- Small businesses in deteriorating downtowns, villages, and corridors are less likely to recover quickly because of a perception of a lack of safety or viability. Design guidelines that are responsive to community identity will reinforce a revitalized, vibrant area.
- Design guidelines that include landscape requirements can help improve air quality and reduce the heat island effect, improving public health for people who live, work, and shop in the target area.
- Design guidelines can also address accessibility for people with physical disabilities by requiring appropriate access that is well-integrated into the building and the site.
- Tools such as outdoor dining, outdoor retail display, serving windows, and upgraded HVAC systems can be integrated into the design guidelines to encourage permanent solutions that address the health and safety of the target area
- 57% of business owner survey respondents indicated that they are dissatisfied with the condition of private buildings, facades, storefronts, and signs
- 31% of business owner survey respondents indicated they were either neutral or dissatisfied with the condition of private buildings, facades, storefronts and signs.

## Action Items

- Understand why the municipality feels that design guidelines are necessary. Is this part of a façade/sign improvement program, and/or to control new development in an existing area? What are the areas of greatest concern?
- Decide whether this is a project that can be done in-house or requires a consultant with appropriate expertise.
- Decide which funding source is appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds.
- If a consultant is deemed appropriate, go through the Commonwealth's procurement process (unless the grant program has an on-call consultant).
- Identify the people/organizations who need to be part of this process.
- Develop an engagement process appropriate for the municipality and the required approval process.

- Once the design guidelines have been approved, consider a public education program to inform people on a regular basis about the new requirements and their implications. Key targets for this campaign include property owners and real estate brokers

## Process

The timeframe will vary depending on whether the design guidelines are specifically incorporated into the zoning). From the kick-off to entering the municipal approval process, the project should take 8-12 months.

- **Months 1-2:** Review existing zoning bylaws for embedded design guidelines and standards; develop inventory of historic and current buildings and site treatments; interview municipal staff, boards with approval responsibility, former applicants, local land use lawyers, others with relevant experience and concerns.
- **Months 3-4:** Research appropriate precedents; develop public outreach/engagement program. Consider a public kick-off/charrette, depending on the needs of the community. Discuss the thresholds for use and the appropriate review body and process.
- **Months 5-7:** Engage with business/property owners and public on options and concerns; develop draft guidelines; develop illustrations. Decide (with municipality) whether design guidelines are a separate, advisory document or part of the zoning bylaw/ordinance. If the guidelines are integrated into the zoning, decide whether illustrations are part of the zoning or a separate document. Consider meeting with the appropriate boards to introduce the draft design guidelines and receive feedback.
- **Months 8-9:** Revise the design guidelines to its final draft prior to the municipal approval process. Publicize the final draft prior to City Council Meeting review and approval



*Typical building facades on Elm Street*

## 4.5 Develop a Parking Management Plan

Category		Public Realm
Location		LRRP Study Area - Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
Origin		Community meeting input
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000). Funds will be sought for a study with prioritized recommendations.
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) - 1-6 months to release a RFP and retain a consultant, 6-12 months for the study, 1-3 years to implement safety upgrades
Risk		Low Risk – Parking improvements are unlikely to be controversial among the public
Key Performance Indicators		1) Completion of a Parking Management Study
Partners & Resources		Westfield Community Development Department local business owners and property owners



*On-Street Parking*

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- 68% of business owner survey respondents indicated a decline in revenue as a result of COVID-19
- 71% of business owner survey respondents indicated a reduction in capacity or hours of operations as a result of COVID-19
- A parking management plan is needed to improve parking and traffic operations for both events and typical weekdays and weekends
- A parking management plan will help to clarify customer and employee parking options
- Improving parking and curb side operations and increasing parking supply will improve access and safety for customers to businesses and events

## Action Items

- Improving the turnover of parking spaces will help improve customer parking for businesses
- Identify the goals, study area, scope of work, schedule, and funding to develop a parking management plan
- Identify Town department/commission/committee to oversee undertaking the parking management plan

## Process

- Identify budget and funding source for parking management plan
- Develop a Request for Proposal to hire a transportation consulting firm to assist the Town in developing the plan
- Hold Kick-off meeting with Town and consultant to review goals, scope, study area, and schedule for the plan
- Solicit input from businesses, residents, and stakeholders on draft and final recommendations of the plan
- Evaluate the potential to convert head-in diagonal on-street parking to parallel parking
- Develop implementation strategy for parking recommendations
- Town to formally adopt and approve parking management plan



## 4.6 Improve Pedestrian Safety and Walkability

Category		Public Realm
Location		Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
Origin		Peter Miller, City of Westfield Community Development Director LRRP Public Meeting
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – Pedestrian safety and mobility are priorities for local businesses and the city
Key Performance Indicators	<p>The City has undertaken sidewalk and roadway improvements in the downtown area over the past decade. Building on these improvements to improve walkability and make safe connections to municipal parking lots, the Columbia Greenway and future riverfront amenities. Measurable by:</p> <p>1) Creation of a pedestrian connection plan identifying preferred routes and necessary improvements to establish desired connections</p>	
Partners & Resources	<p>City of Westfield Local business</p>	



*Existing alleyway connecting to Elm Street to municipal parking lot*



*Sidewalk adjacent to storefronts - Elm Street*

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- During the inventory phase, the team noted the sidewalks to be in generally good condition physically throughout the downtown area. A majority of the Business Survey Respondents ranked Improvement of Streetscape and Sidewalks as "Important". As part of the same survey, a majority of respondents gave Improvements in Safety and / or Cleanliness the rankings of either "Important" or "very Important".
- Other input from the businesses reflects significant interest in the creation of more opportunities for Outdoor Selling and Dining and a majority of Business Survey respondents expressed it was "Important" or "Very Important" to develop or improve Public Spaces to bring people into the district.
- The assimilation of data and subsequent scoring of the Public Realm elements resulted in a Sidewalk grade of A, with Crosswalks, Road Bed and Wayfinding signage assigned a grade of B. The inventory revealed that elements such as Lighting, Street Trees and Benches were generally in fair condition and received a grade of B.
- Attracting and retaining visitors to downtown as part of realizing identified business objectives along with development of residential housing and potentially student housing will result in more pedestrians on the sidewalks and crossing the streets Action Items

## Process

- Create working group of City, University and business representatives to coordinate areas of need, places of opportunity and goals.
- Develop a Master Plan outlining potential project areas, types of projects being considered (ADA compliant access, safety, ornamental lighting, curb neck-downs, sidewalk widening, enhancements, etc) and look for areas of overlap
- Coordinate and link project identification with other recommendations such as the installation of bike kiosks and locations for such installations.
- Ensure the planning effort encompasses the portion of downtown extending to the riverfront and trailhead for the Columbia Greenway to fully provide for connection to the existing businesses as well as municipal parking lots.
- Rank the potential projects and systematically develop plans to develop an inter-connected and related improvements that link uses like parking areas with retail destinations.
- Conduct field walk to review types of projects with stakeholders.
- Finalize Master Plan

## Action Items

- Identify funding sources
- Identify private sector partners for expanded beneficial impacts
- Create agreements for improvements outside public R.O.W
- Develop Master Plan of desired projects and obtain approvals
- Align Projects with related initiatives such as signage and permanent event venue space



**Pedestrian connection to public parking lots behind the Elm Street Downtown Corridor**



## 4.7 Social Media Marketing Program

---

Category	 	Private Realm / Sales & Revenue
Location		LRRP Study Area - Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
Origin		Community meeting input
Budget		Low ( \$20,000-\$30,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) - 1-6 months to release a RFP and retain a consultant, 6-12 months for the study, 1-3 years to implement safety upgrades
Risk		Medium Risk –
Key Performance Indicators		1) A successful program will need to overcome potential language barriers
Partners & Resources		Westfield Community Development Department local business owners and property owners

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- 71% of businesses reported a decline in revenue as a result of covid-19
- Only 32%% of businesses reported that they established alternative modes to sell and deliver goods
- Development of a social media presence could benefit businesses by elevating their business profile and reaching a larger/targeted customer base.

## Action Items

- Establish a position within the City to be resource for businesses
- Survey downtown businesses to identify the extent of interest

## Process

- Establish a technical assistance program for downtown business owners
- Ensure that businesses within the LRRP study area is a major focus of the program
- Market the program through the City's website and coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce
- Market the program as a multi-lingual program to reach more business owners
- Identify potential grant opportunities to provide technical assistance to new and existing businesses
- Solicit a consultant through an RFP process

## 4.8 Recruit New Businesses

<b>Category</b>		Public Realm
<b>Location</b>		LRRP Study Area - Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
<b>Origin</b>		Peter Miller, City of Westfield Community Development Director
<b>Budget</b>		Low Budget (\$20,000-\$30,000)
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short Term (<5 years) - 1-6 months to release a RFP and retain a consultant, 6-12 months for the study, 1-3 years to implement safety upgrades
<b>Risk</b>		Low Risk – There is an overall support for bringing in new business to downtown in concert with occupying vacant space
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		1) Completion of a Parking Management Study
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		<p>The City has recognized that a key to continued revitalization of the downtown area is to bring new businesses to help fill currently vacant storefronts. The key metric for this initiative is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase the number of businesses in the downtown</li> <li>2) Conduct an annual inventory of the number of vacant storefront properties</li> </ol>

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- 71% of businesses reported a decline in revenue as a result of covid-19
- 51% of businesses reported that regulations pose an obstacle to business operation
- Westfield has a solid core of vibrant businesses. However, new businesses are needed to support and compliment the goal of establishing more downtown housing units. A robust effort to recruit new business will enhance revenues for existing businesses and provide a larger nucleus to support housing

## Action Items

- Review the City's "Westfield Development" and "Go Westfield" web pages to include downtown specific business opportunities
- Coordinate business promotion for downtown with the Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce
- Review regulatory requirements to identify potential impediments both financial and time related

## Process

- Identify the key economic benefits for downtown business promotion
- Ensure that the LRRP study area is a major focus of the business recruitment effort
- Establish a review process for current regulatory requirements with the goal of streamlining the permitting process for downtown development
- Conduct in house or retain a consultant through the release of an RFP
- Identify potential grant opportunities to assist new businesses
- Work with existing property owners to market vacant storefronts

## 4.9 Encourage the Development of a new Downtown Business Association

---

<b>Category</b>		Private Realm
<b>Location</b>		LRRP Study Area - Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
<b>Origin</b>		Community meeting input
<b>Budget</b>		Low Budget (\$20,000-\$30,000)
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short Term (<5 years) - 1-6 months to release a RFP and retain a consultant, 6-12 months for the study, 1-3 years to implement safety upgrades
<b>Risk</b>		Medium Risk – Cooperation among varied businesses and property owners is required 1) Establishment of an effective Downtown Business Association
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		1) Completion of a Parking Management Study
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		Westfield Community Development Department local business owners and property owners



## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- 71% of businesses reported a decline in revenue as a result of covid-19
- Westfield was just the fourth city in Massachusetts to develop a Business Improvement District, and many improvements to downtown area were made as a result. Establishment of a new Downtown Business Association will provide a strong advocate for continued infrastructure and regulatory improvements that will benefit all businesses.

## Action Items

- Reach out to businesses and owners to identify interested businesses
- Prepare survey of downtown business community to identify general framework

## Process

- Establish boundaries for Downtown Business Association
- Ensure the LRRP study area is a major focus of the plan
- Conduct in house or retain a consultant through the release of an RFP
- Identify potential funding mechanisms possibly through MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative (TDI)
- Develop mission statement and finalize association objectives



*Park Square - Downtown Westfield*

## 4.10 Develop an Electric-Bike Rental Program

---

Category		Public Realm
Location		LRRP Study Area - Westfield Downtown Revitalization Corridor
Origin		Community meeting input
Budget		Low Budget (\$20,000-\$30,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) - 1-6 months to release a RFP and retain a consultant, 6-12 months for the study, 1-3 years to implement safety upgrades
Risk		Low Risk – Both the City and downtown businesses have expressed interest in this program
Key Performance Indicators		1) Installation of bike rental kiosks at key downtown locations
Partners & Resources		Westfield Community Development Department Local business owners and property owners Regional Collaborative / Planning Group



## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- 71% of businesses reported a decline in revenue and 78% reported a decrease in foot traffic as a result of covid-19
- Establishment of a bike rental program combined with the anticipated Spring 2022 opening of the Columbia Greenway may create an additional method by which people can access businesses which will drive sales and revenue.

## Action Items

- Identify strategic locations within downtown for bike kiosks
- Coordinate with regional collaborative/planning group to expand bike-share opportunities
- Implement prioritized recommendations
- Coordinate with Valley Bike or other bike-share vendors

## Process

- Secure funding to develop a bike-share plan
- Ensure the LRRP study area is a major focus of the plan
- Conduct in house or retain a consultant through the release of an RFP
- Work collaboratively to ensure that the selected locations prioritize access to bike share kiosks for pedestrians as well as users of the Columbia Greenway.
- Identify funding opportunities for implementing recommendations and install multiple bike share kiosks throughout the Downtown and study area



**PVTA Oliver Transit Pavilion - Strategic Bike Share Location**

# Additional Proposed Projects Table

The City's recovery will depend on a mix of projects to activate both the public and private realms in Westfield

The following table of proposed projects includes a variety of streetscape, public realm, private realm, and other projects that will further enliven and activate Downtown Westfield

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	STEPS
Improve landscape / streetscape in city parking lots	Mid Term	Utilize street trees, shrubs, planter islands, and crosswalk and other striping to create a user-friendly and safer environment for motorists parking and pedestrians accessing their vehicles and area stores and restaurants. Provide trash receptacles and well-lit and aesthetically updated connections to Elm Street.
Develop parking strategies for short-term and long-term users	Mid Term	Study the possibility of commuter parking and employee parking programs that utilize a paid monthly or annual pass. Require spots closest to storefronts be reserved for customers.
Infrastructure improvements for Westfield Whip Company parcel	Long Term	Improve access and circulation for the 360 Elm Street parcel where Westfield whip Company was formerly located. Establish a connection to the Columbia Greenway and to Emory Street.

---

## 5.0 Funding Sources



## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impacts

- 68xx

## Action Items

- Imxx

## Process

- Idexx

# Funding Sources

The following funding sources are anticipated to be available specifically for COVID-19 impact-related project recommendations

## American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)

Westfield is slated to receive \$17.1 million in ARPA funding according to the Massachusetts Municipal Association. ARPA Funding can be used for direct relief related to COVID-19 impacts through the use of **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CLFRF)** in the following five core areas

1. **Respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts** - this includes COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral health, and certain public health and safety staff
2. **Economic impacts of the public health emergency** - these include efforts to mitigate economic harm to workers, households, small businesses, affected industries, and the public sector
3. **Lost public sector revenue** - payments may be used to fund government services to the extent of revenue reductions from the pandemic
4. **Premium pay for essential workers** - funds may be used for additional support for those who have faced the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors
5. **Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure** - recipients may invest to improve access to clean drinking water, support wastewater and storm water infrastructure, and expand access to broadband internet:
  - » Wide range of eligible water and sewer infrastructure projects – specifically, all that would otherwise be eligible to receive financial assistance through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
  - » Broadband projects must provide service to unserved and underserved households and businesses. Eligible projects are expected to be designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds

symmetrical upload and download speeds of 100 Mbps

Potential eligible uses within these five core areas include the following expenses:

- Direct COVID-related costs (testing, contact tracing, etc.)
- Public health and safety staff
- Hiring state and local government staff up to the number of employees to pre-pandemic levels
- Assistance to unemployed workers, including job training
- Assistance to households
- Small business assistance
- Nonprofit assistance
- Aid to impacted industries
- Expenses to improve efficacy of public health or economic relief programs
- Survivor's benefits
- CLFRF funding **cannot** be used to:
  - » Replenish a "rainy day" fund or other reserve fund
  - » Make a deposit to a pension fund

## Additional Funding Sources for Various Public and Private Realm Improvement Projects

The following funding sources were included specifically for recommendations generated as part of this ongoing planning study. The list can be applied to a wide variety of public realm and private realm improvement projects.

### RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Raleigh is moving forward with ARPA-funded projects to combat the economic downtown that was a direct result of COVID-19:

- \$400,000 in "light and sound improvements in downtown Raleigh to mitigate COVID-19 transmission by promoting more outdoor space usage"
- \$200,000 for a grant pool which "local businesses impacted by COVID-19 can apply for financial aid"

- \$250,000 will fund the "development of an ice rink in downtown Raleigh" that is anticipated to contribute to spillover economic activity in the area
- \$230,000 will be used to "fund a downtown economic development study in collaboration with the Downtown Raleigh Alliance."
- \$230,000 will fund "two new temporary fiscal analyst positions to manage federal grant compliance reports over approximately five years."

<https://indyweek.com/news/wake/raleigh-american-rescue-plan-funds/>

---

## Building Improvements Funding Sources

### Hometown Grants

T-Mobile provides grants up to \$50,000 per town and may be used to rebuild or refresh community spaces, including historic buildings. Towns with populations under 50,000 are eligible to apply.

### Underutilized Properties Program

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth MassDevelopment*

This funding source is for large scale projects. It could be used to help address larger buildings in a target area that have more significant issues related to deterioration, disinvestment, or ADA-compliance. Bundling this program and a few of the other more specialized grants could enable a municipality to address both large scale building interior renovations and smaller scale properties and lower cost facade improvements with a separate improvement program at the same time.

### Collaborative Workspace Program

*MassDevelopment*

This grant provides owners and operators of collaborative work spaces up to \$100,000 for new equipment or building improvements. Alternatively, seed grants of up to \$15,000 to plan for new working spaces are available. This grant is an opportunity to address the exterior and the interior of a building while also helping to support existing local jobs and create new job opportunities.

### Community Preservation Act

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

### Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

*Massachusetts Historical Commission*

This is a 50% reimbursable matching grant for preserving properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Preservation. Applicants are limited to municipalities and nonprofits. Many downtown and village centers include nonprofit and municipal anchors. This grant could be used to ensure that all properties in a target area are brought, over time, to the same standard of repair. The program does have limitation on allowable costs. A preservation restriction is required.

### Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. The Community Development Fund (CDF) awards grants to communities throughout the Commonwealth. This program helps eligible cities and towns to meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development and public social services. It supports CDBG eligible activities and encourages applicants to develop

coordinated, integrated and creative solutions to local problems. Mini-entitlement communities through on a formula calculation based on a high statistical indication of need, poverty rate and size. Eligible CDBG projects include but are not limited to:

- Housing rehabilitation or development
- Micro-enterprise or other business assistance
- Infrastructure
- Community / public facilities
- Public social services
- Planning
- Removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with disabilities

## Wayfinding Funding Sources

### Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth Department of Housing and Community Development*

All communities are eligible to apply. This program provides technical assistance and design services for a variety of downtown improvement elements. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which could include studying and generating a range of design options and offering a blueprint for how to move forward. The next application round opens in the spring. In 2018, Foxborough, North Chelmsford, and Winchendon reviewed grant awards for wayfinding.

### Commonwealth Places Program

*MassDevelopment*

This competitive grant advances locally driven placemaking projects in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in eligible communities throughout Massachusetts. The aim of Commonwealth Places Resurgent Places is to help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy.

- Seed grants available from \$250 - \$7,500
- Implementation grants available up to \$50,000
- Successful examples of this grant include:
  - » Marlborough received \$15,000 for wayfinding and branding strategy development
  - » Greenfield received funding used by the Greenfield Business Association for reimbursing restaurants to purchase outdoor dining furniture

---

## Venue Space Funding Sources

### Community Preservation Act

This source only applies in those communities that have adopted the CPA. CPA grants can fund projects that enhance local arts and cultural infrastructure and contribute to economic revitalization - including public art, placemaking, and stabilization or organizations and creative business collectives.

### Shared Winter Streets and Spaces

*MassDOT*

This grant supports the re-purposing of streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities and community programming. Funds can contribute to the creation of locations for eating, shopping, play, and community events and spaces for all ages. Given the interest in re-purposing Westfield's parking lots into outdoor venue spaces, this grant should be examined to see if funding could be utilized for that purpose.

## Alternative Funding Programs

The following funding programs are grouped as alternative because they either do not stem directly from a local or regional agency or governing body or they do not directly fund the type of proposed improvement projects recommended in this report.

### Local Banks and other Community Development Financial Institutions

Local banks with a community development financing program for small businesses may be able to help provide low or no interest loans to small businesses for their share of the improvements, especially for a storefront or sign upgrade. The focus of the program at each bank is different; contact your local bank(s) and discuss how they could participate in investing in the community.

### Business Improvement District (BID) or Other Downtown District

Funds from a BID may be used for planters, trash and recycling receptacles, sanitation and maintenance staff, graffiti removal, storefront facades, windows, doors, and sign maintenance, and a variety of other elements.

### Municipal Vacant Storefronts Program

*Economic Assistance Coordinating Council*

This program is intended to encourage municipalities experiencing an economic downturn and a high rate of vacancies to apply to officially form a Certified Vacant Storefront District. Businesses within the district then apply for refundable tax credits to address vacant storefronts. This could help reduce the number of vacant storefronts while a separate façade improvement program addresses accessibility, deferred maintenance, and design issues on the exterior or the site.

### Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

*Massachusetts Historical Commission*

This is available for significant rehabilitation of historic buildings and may help supplement a larger project in a downtown. The guidelines developed for the municipal façade/storefront improvement program could be incorporated into the review of larger projects.

### Summary

The above funding sources may be used to fund a variety of public and private realm improvement programs, maintenance, and streetscape improvements. While many of the above funding sources could be leveraged in combination with other funds to develop a façade improvement program, the list in general was developed with a wide variety of improvement projects in mind.

See funding spreadsheet in appendix for comprehensive list of possible funding sources provided by Department of Housing and Community Development.

---

# Appendix

- A. Potential Funding Spreadsheet
- B. Public Workshop Presentation
- C. Compendium of Best Practices



---

# Appendix

## A. Potential Funding Spreadsheet

---

# Appendix

## B. Public Workshop Presentation

---

# Appendix

## C. Compendium of Best Practices