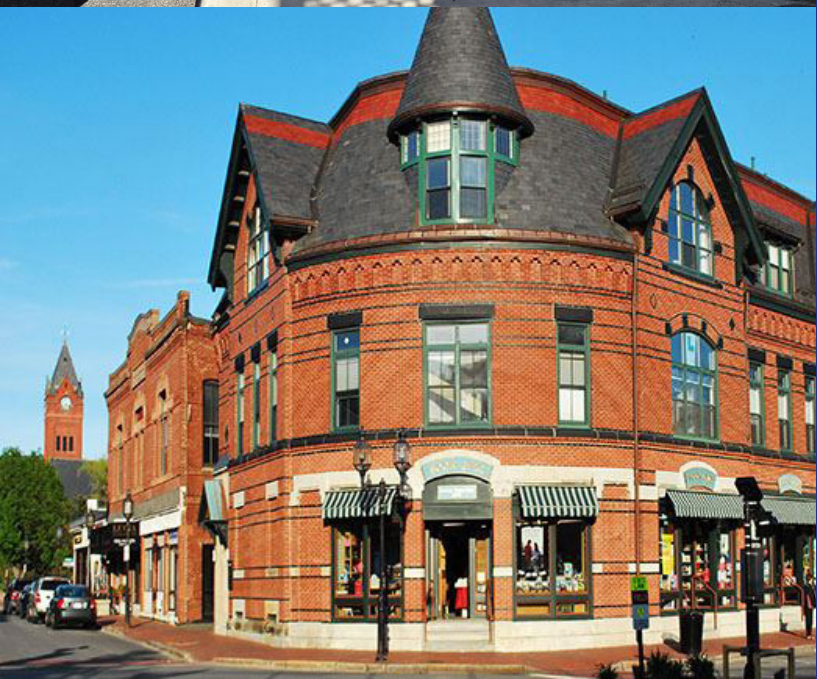




Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Winchester, MA



Acknowledgements



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



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

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

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

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

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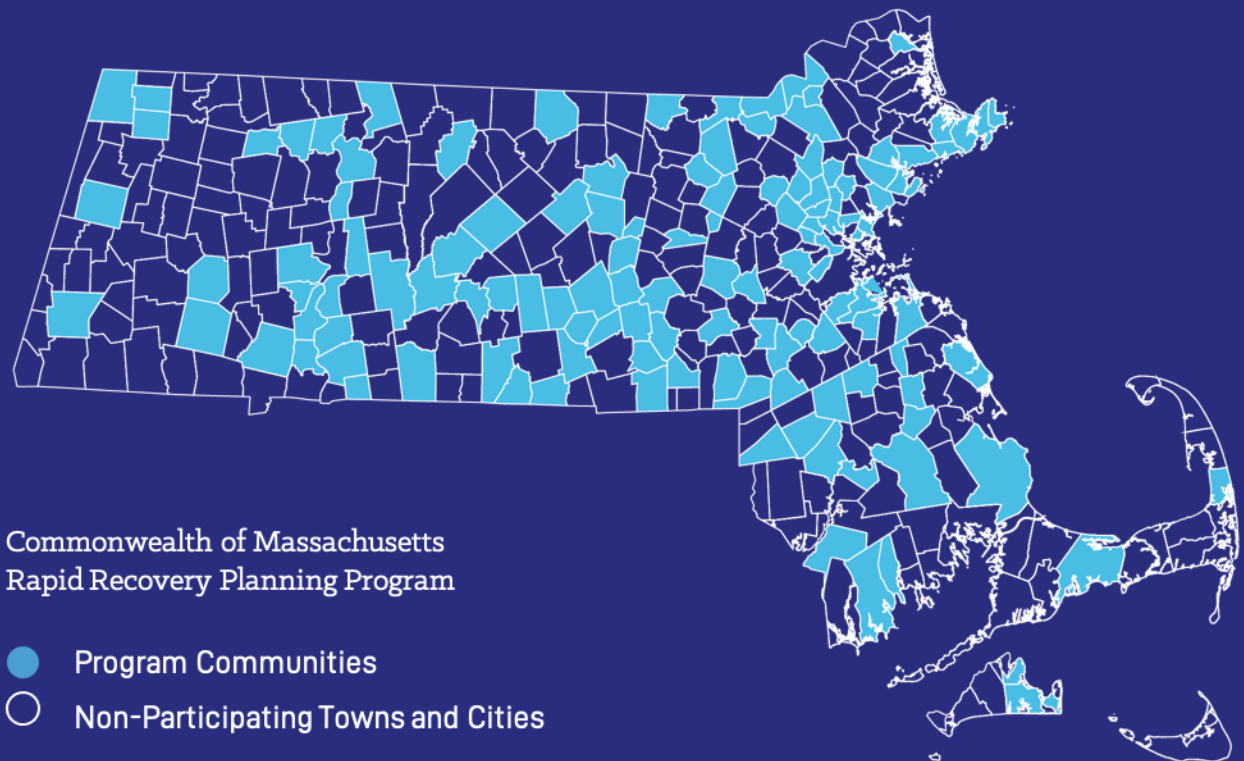
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



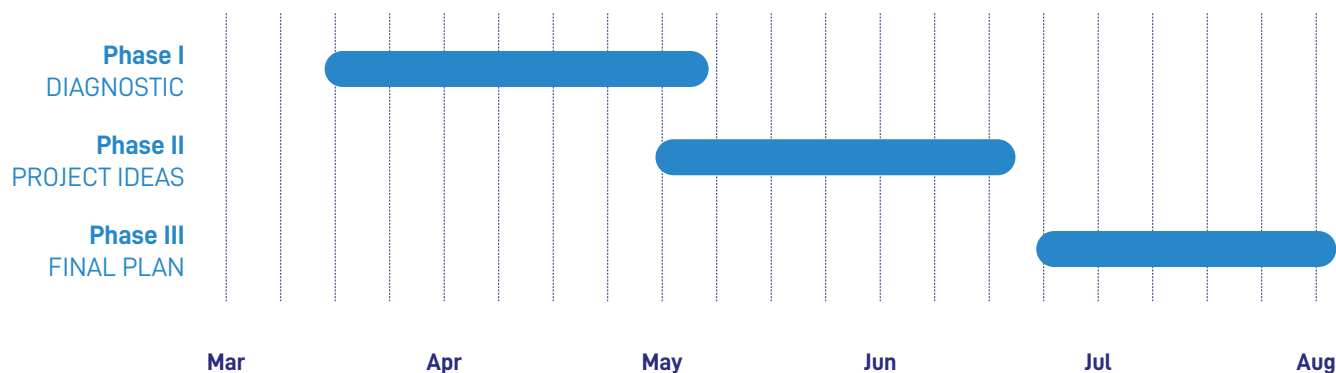
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



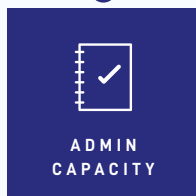
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

A Tactical Approach to Build Back Better:

Strong local partnerships and sustainable administrative capacity to support downtown management, cultural programming, and local economic development

The following plan, developed under contract with DHCD in partnership with the Town of Winchester, provides both diagnostic findings and key project recommendation to help planners, businesses, local organizations, and other stakeholders work together to address the economic and community impacts caused by the recent pandemic, with an eye towards "building back better." The pain and disruption caused by Covid-19 has affected nearly every aspect of the town's social and economic life, reshaping commerce, transportation, education, housing, recreation, entertainment, and even our use and perception of public space.

Importantly, while implementation of the included recommendations will help shape the physical and economic future of the downtown for generations, this analysis and the projects proposed are intended to be more tactical than comprehensive. The current crisis will surely be followed by significant opportunities to act, some of which are being recognized already: for example, the rapid shift to reorganize the public realm to develop outdoor dining, or the sudden but profound changes seen in remote work and commuting patterns. Having a plan in place now, and general agreement about these future directions, will allow partners to make the best use of resources, political will, and other circumstances favorable to change in the near future.

To help the town understand and address current challenges while preparing to seize new opportunities as they arise, DHCD has adopted a clear and thoughtful approach to assessing the strengths, challenges, and areas for growth and development of the study area in terms of four key elements described on the previous pages. This diagnostic framework is rooted in the "Commercial DNA" approach, created and developed by the Local Initiative Support Corporation; to learn more about this approach, see [*Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic: A practical "how to" manual on the Commercial DNA approach.*](#)

Building on Past Efforts

In addition to these required diagnostic survey elements, the team integrated a number of additional components into the study to gather additional information and inform the findings, as well as to focus the recommendations to reflect the specific local needs of key partners and stakeholders. These included:

- A review of existing planning documents and ongoing initiatives, including:
 - Downtown Winchester Economic Study (2009)
 - Winchester Community-Wide Needs Assessment (2018)
 - Winchester Cultural District Planning (2019)
 - Winchester Master Plan (2020)
 - Winchester Local Historic District Study Committee (2021)
 - Planning efforts related to the future of the Waterfield Lot (ongoing)
 - Downtown Improvement Action Plan (current/ongoing, with Toole Design)

Key elements of these plans have been incorporated into this project, where appropriate.

- An online survey of businesses in the study area, administered and analyzed centrally using a framework developed by the DHCD and their LRRP contractor, augmented by a local follow-up survey on pandemic impacts and ARRA funding conducted by the chamber of commerce.
- A series of stakeholder interviews with key organizations and interest groups active in the downtown.
- Meetings with key staff and partners working on planning, economic development, business assistance, infrastructure, parking management, and cultural programming for the downtown.
- Participation in an aggressive program of best practice workshops, webinars, and planning discussions, to share knowledge, insights, creative frameworks, and up-to-date information on the changing pandemic-planning policy landscape. Suggestions from these sources have been included in the recommended project rubrics.

Key Diagnostic Findings

The following sections provide a brief overview of the key diagnostic findings of the study for each of the four elements included in the LRRP framework, followed by additional highlights as relevant to the overall assessment. Importantly, given the practical, tactical nature of the project — and the importance of linking information with action — additional depth on many of these diagnostic findings has been integrated directly in the discussions in the proposed project rubrics (with special attention to the impacts of the recent pandemic), rather than being buried as a pile of background material. Additional diagnostic data informing the study can be found in the Business Survey in the Appendix.

Mutually-Reinforcing Tactical Recommendations for Recovery and Growth

Consistent with DHCD's guidance and LRRP framework, following from this analysis and our conversations with key stakeholders, the bulk of the plan proposes an integrated series of specific project recommendations, ranging from the creation of new staff positions and the possible establishment of a new downtown management organization through wayfinding, events programming, and thoughtful coordination of parking and outdoor dining spaces.

Each recommendation is supported with an informed diagnostic argument grounded in the practical reality of the current moment and the economic situation of the downtown and the regional market; each proposed project is further elaborated through detailed action steps and a description of the implementation process, with strategic tips, creative suggestions, examples of "best practice" models from elsewhere. In addition, the project rubric includes an estimated budget and timeline; a list of possible partners, resources, funding possibilities, and other sources of support; and an assessment of risks involved.

Importantly, while progress can be made on each of these elements individually, we encourage partners to explore ways to make progress on multiple goals together, rather than viewing each recommendation as a stand-alone task. The projects need not compete for priority or resources, but can mutually support each other. For example, as was clear from comments throughout the stakeholder interviews, progress on the town's housing goals will support the development of a vibrant cultural district, and vice versa; similarly, new outdoor dining facilities provide exciting "canvases" for potential public art or wayfinding efforts.

In closing, we would like to sincerely thank all of the community partners and stakeholders listed, as well as those who have contributed to the excellent planning in the past, which this effort builds on. This work would also not have been possible without the ongoing and tireless support and coordination of DHCD (including Emmy and Charles), and the wide range of subject matter experts who consulted on this plan or shared experiences and best practices from others.

“The DNA of a commercial district includes its physical attributes, its community and market assets, its resources, and its capacity to support implementation of revitalization strategies.”

— Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic: Understanding the “DNA” of neighborhood commercial districts

Additional Resources

While we have attempted to keep this plan focused, tactical, and brief (rather than exhaustive, comprehensive, and overwhelming), readers and stakeholders may benefit from the wealth of additional material produced as part of this effort, including the following implementation-oriented resources:

Best Practice Sheet Compendiums

[Public Realm Best Practice Sheets Compendium](#)
[Private Realm Best Practice Sheets Compendium](#)
[Tenants Mix Best Practice Sheets Compendium](#)
[Revenue & Sales Best Practice Sheets Compendium](#)
[Cultural & Arts Best Practice Sheets Compendium](#)
[Admin Capacity Best Practice Sheets Compendium](#)

Funding Databases by Category

[Public Realm](#)
[Private Realm](#)
[Tenant Mix](#)
[Revenue/Sales](#)
[Arts/Culture](#)
[Administrative Capacity](#)

All of these tools, as well as dozens of helpful webinars on a wide range of economic development and downtown recovery topics specific to the Massachusetts context can be found on the LRRP website at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>.

Diagnostic

Key Findings



Winchester town center supports and serves residents

Winchester town center primarily serves the local residential community and one of its key strengths is community influence. Winchester has a large aging population and high youth population, and the town center is an important part of providing public resources for all residents. 84% of Community Survey respondents in 2018 listed the public library as a top reason for visiting town center. The post office, coffee shops, cultural events, and dining were the other top four town center destinations and are important for promoting community health. Customers arrive on foot: 60% of survey respondents reported walking downtown regularly but would like to see new and improved infrastructure. Key challenges involve attracting visitors to Winchester and improving the business community's online presence.



Opportunity for a more multi-modal town center

Winchester is well positioned for multi-modal transportation options for customers and businesses. Car traffic is a primary mode to access the town center, but buses and the commuter rail station are existing public transportation infrastructure that can be strengthened. Winchester station is in the process of renovation. While the town center currently serves primarily residents, the new station could be a catalyst for more visitors shopping and dining in Winchester. 58% of business respondents in the Rapid Recovery Survey said that parking regulations were an obstacle, and parking availability should be increased. However, business owners and customers alike envision a more walkable downtown Winchester.

New development has the potential to increase the density in downtown Winchester with transit-oriented housing and better integration of the downtown and nearby natural attractions, such as the pond and river. Such investments in Winchester's physical realm will be important to maintain its regional competitiveness and grow patronage to town center.



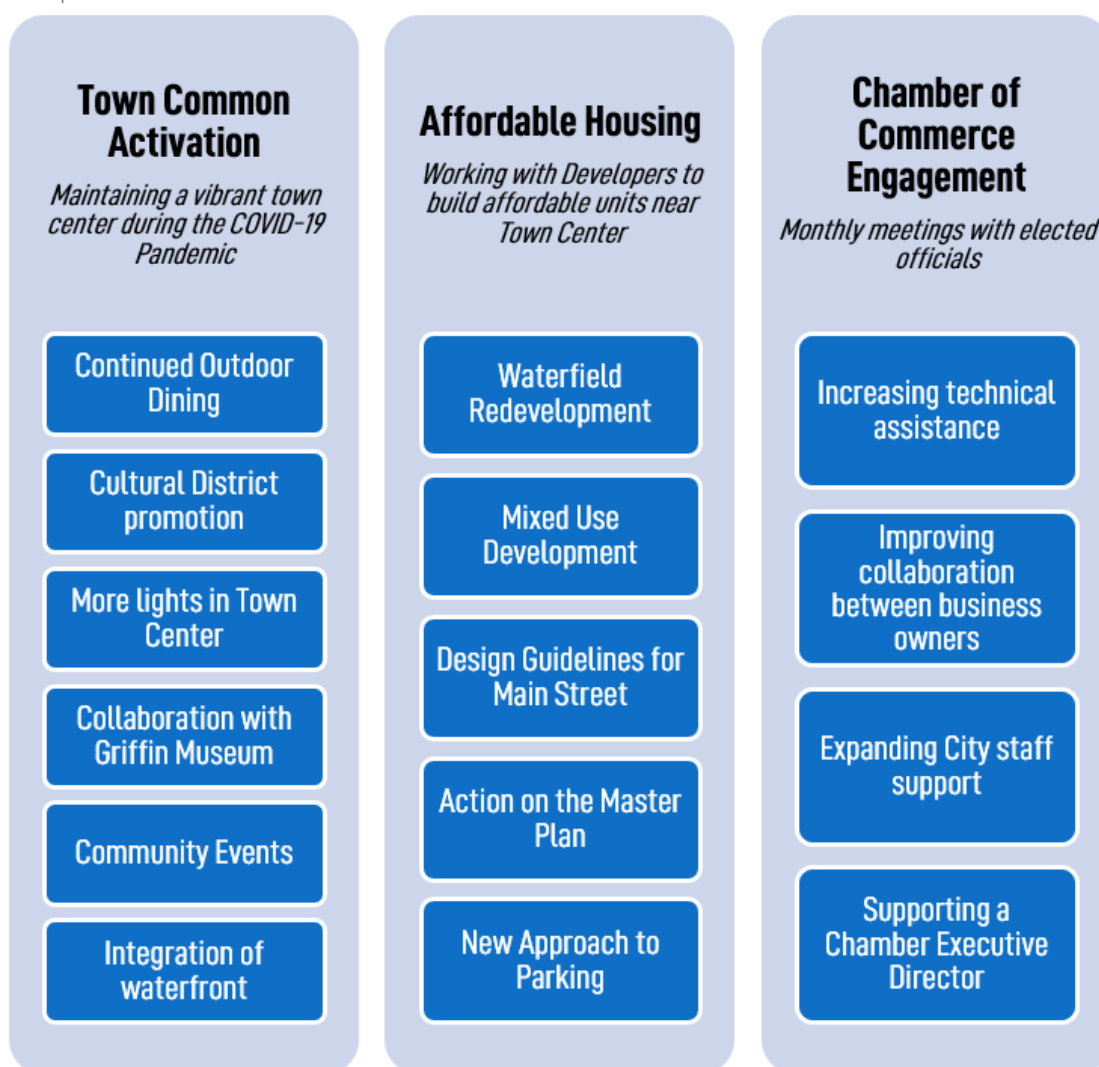
Growing town looking for a town center to match

Winchester's town center has a business mix of cafes, restaurants, and small retail. Residents also expressed interest in a more diverse retail mix with a variety of price points and products particularly for a younger demographic. Youth engagement and more ADA compliant infrastructure and entryways were also important to residents. 75% of business owners in Winchester center rent their commercial space and 45% of Rapid Recovery Program survey respondents expressed interest in commercial property purchase assistance. Winchester residents in 2018 expressed interest in a downtown that preserves historic character while offering a new commercial development with diverse commercial options. Winchester has expressed interest in developing more housing downtown to improve affordability in the community and expand the near-by customer base. The "village square charm" of the Town Center is a priority for the business community to preserve.



Expanding existing organizational capacity

Planning decisions in the mid-20th century focused Winchester's zoning and development on residential and today it is a challenge for commercial and industrial developments to make it through the zoning process. Residents have a great influence on the town center and are the key stewards. A Cultural District was created in 2018 and was able to bring its first public art installation to Town Center during the summer of 2020. There is little formal organization over the economic development of the town center, but business owners would like more city assistance in the form of commercial property purchase assistance, a cooperative marketing strategy, and more opportunities for outdoor dining. The Chamber of Commerce is all volunteers except for the Executive Director.



Successful and Hopeful Initiatives from the Winchester Business Community

Source: Rapid Recovery Program Phase II Stakeholder Interviews, Conducted by PPRI in August and September 2021



Highlights from customer base

Winchester town center primarily serves the local residential community. One key strength that stakeholders acknowledged was the community influence on the downtown. Winchester community members are involved in the formation and cultivation of a vibrant town center. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the town center remained a place to gather and join together as a community. Although many businesses were able to weather the closures, not all were able to stay in Winchester and many struggled. Boosting revenue and sales, particularly for the retail and professional services sectors, will rely on bringing in visitors to the town center.

Winchester has a large aging population and high youth population, and the town has prioritized mental health as a leg of community health. Particularly during the early uncertainty pandemic, folks of all ages walking to the town center was one of the few constants. Expansions to the town center could look to capture the patronage of people who come to the "village square" but might not be the key customers for many of the specialty businesses.

The mom-and-pop stores also face challenges of a low online presence and limited hours of operation. During the day, most customers are retirees and school-age children leaving school. The Chamber of Commerce hopes to organize more community nights for Winchester that will ensure that if the mom-and-pop retail stores stay open later, they will have customers who do not usually come to town center. Websites, online retail, and online ordering will help expand the customer base. The web presence could also help attract visitors after hiking in the nearby Middlesex Fells who might not know about the cafes and restaurants just a short drive away.

The town center is an important part of providing public resources for all residents. 84% of Community Survey respondents in 2018 listed the public library as a top reason for visiting town center. The post office, coffee shops, cultural events, and dining were the other top four town center destinations and are important for promoting community health. The organization of a cultural district in Winchester is an opportunity for the city to invest in the arts and culture resources. The Town Center can be an active place even for people who are not coming to spend, but just to enjoy their community's amenities.

Customers arrive on foot: 60% of survey respondents reported walking downtown regularly but would like to see new and improved infrastructure. One stakeholder said he has "ten routes to walk downtown." The customer base is diverse in its age, interest, and mode of arrival and new initiatives can better support this diversity.

TOP 5 REASONS PARTICIPANTS VISIT TOWN CENTER

	PERCENT
Library	84
Post Office	82
Coffee Shops/Cafés	81
Cultural events	80
Dining	78

Source: Winchester Master Plan Community Survey, October 2018

“People come here for the village square”
-Stakeholder Interviews



Local Business in Winchester
Source: PPRI Photo

Highlights from physical environment

Winchester is well positioned for multi-modal transportation options for customers and businesses. Car traffic is a primary mode to access the town center, but buses and the commuter rail station are existing public transportation infrastructure that can be strengthened. Winchester was one of the first communities outside of Boston to build a rail line into the city and as the station is in the process of renovation the future of that legacy comes into focus. While the town center currently serves primarily residents, the new station could be a catalyst for more visitors shopping and dining in Winchester.

Winchester could do more to bring in commuters and workers to shop downtown. The largest employer in the town of Winchester, the Winchester Hospital campus, has a bus that runs to town center.

58% of business respondents in the Rapid Recovery Survey said that parking regulations were an obstacle, and parking availability should be increased. Interviews with stakeholders reflected the concerns over parking availability and management,

particularly during a period of interruption while the commuter rail is under construction. Business owners were neutral on the implementation of bike infrastructure but did not oppose it. However, business owners and customers alike envision a more walkable downtown Winchester. Business respondents to the Rapid Recovery Program survey were "dissatisfied" with the sidewalks and accessibility for their customers and their employees and expressed an interest in improving signage of store fronts and wayfinding signage. In the winter, businesses struggle with snow removal to maintain access on sidewalks. A 2018 Community Survey found that customers expect a more walkable downtown and traffic calming interventions.

Increasing the density in downtown Winchester with transit-oriented housing and better integration of the downtown and nearby natural attractions, such as the pond and river. Such investments in Winchester's physical realm will be important to maintain its regional competitiveness and grow patronage to town center.

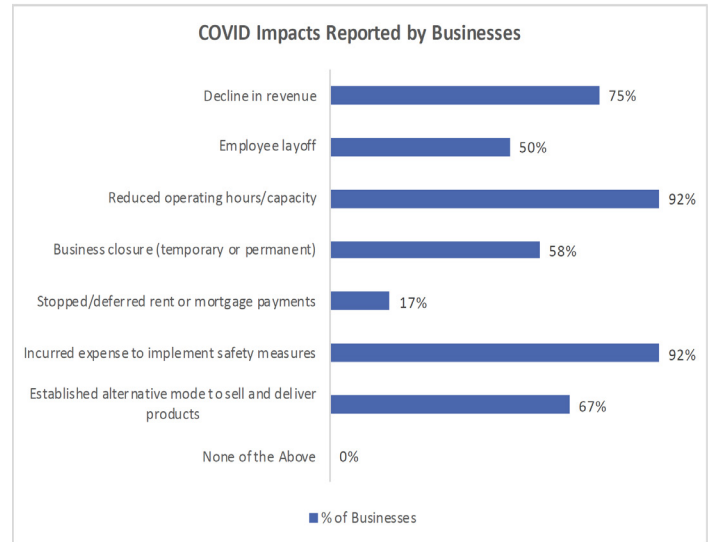


Highlights from business environment

Winchester's town center has a business mix of cafes, restaurants, and small retail. Many of these businesses had to be creative to make it through the pandemic shutdown and face the continuing challenges for local small businesses of competing with national retailers. There is a diversity of needs and capacity in the Winchester business community that requires thoughtful support.

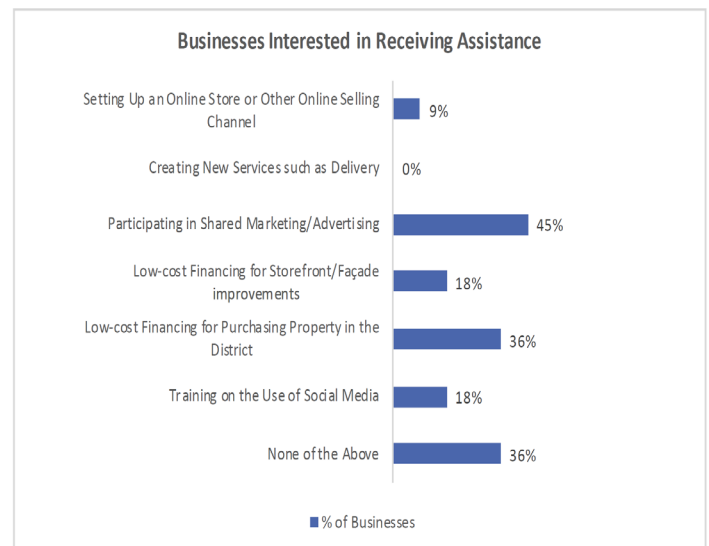
Residents also expressed interest in a more diverse retail mix with a variety of price points and products particularly for a younger demographic. As Winchester grows and hosts a new younger generation of families, the town center has an opportunity to be a place where the beloved long-term businesses can be joined by new exciting businesses. Youth engagement and more ADA compliant infrastructure and entryways were also important to residents.

75% of business owners in Winchester center rent their commercial space and 45% of Rapid Recovery Program survey respondents expressed interest in commercial property purchase assistance. Winchester residents in 2018 expressed interest in a downtown that preserves historic character while offering a new commercial development with diverse commercial options. There is some disagreement in public opinion and among business leaders about density and development, which will have major implications for the downtown's ability to expand and grow. Winchester has expressed interest in developing more housing downtown to improve affordability in the community and expand the near-by customer base.



100% of businesses reported an impact from COVID-19

Source: Rapid Recovery Program Phase I Diagnostic Survey March and April 2021



64% of Businesses expressed some interest in receiving some sort of assistance

Source: Rapid Recovery Program Phase I Diagnostic Survey, March and April 2021



Highlights from administrative capacity



Source: Mass Cultural Council, Griffin Museum of Photography

Planning decisions in the mid-20th century focused Winchester's zoning and development on residential and today it is a challenge for commercial and industrial developments to make it through the zoning process.

Residents have a great influence on the town center and are the key stewards. A Cultural District was created in 2018 and was able to bring its first public art installation to Town Center during the summer of 2020. Arts organizations look forward to increasing the capacity of the Cultural District and partnering with establishments like the Griffin Museum of Photography. The outdoor exhibit was an example of how public art in Winchester is welcome and could be a more regular practice. Some formal institutional investment in the art community also emerged as a desire.

There is little formal organization over the economic development of the town center, but business owners would like more city assistance in the form of commercial property purchase assistance, a cooperative marketing strategy, and more opportunities for outdoor dining. The Chamber of

Commerce is all volunteers except for the Executive Director. However, the leadership and membership of the Chamber would like to increase the capacity of the Executive Director and become a more robust support network. One new practice that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic the chamber hopes to keep is a regular check-in with local elected officials. It was important to keep business owners aware of new opportunities during the early uncertain weeks of the pandemic and now is a convenient and productive access point to local government.

In 2018, the town established the Winchester Cultural District Management Partnership (WCDMP).

Following work by the partnership and review by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), the town formally created the Winchester Cultural District. (The boundaries of this district are roughly the same as those for the current study.) In the words of the WCDMP, this district was envisioned as "a walkable area within the community that creates an infrastructure for local arts', humanities' and science organizations' public programmed events." The long-term vision for the district combines historic, cultural, and natural features, through a strategy that connects shopping, dining, events, and entertainment for current residents and visitors.

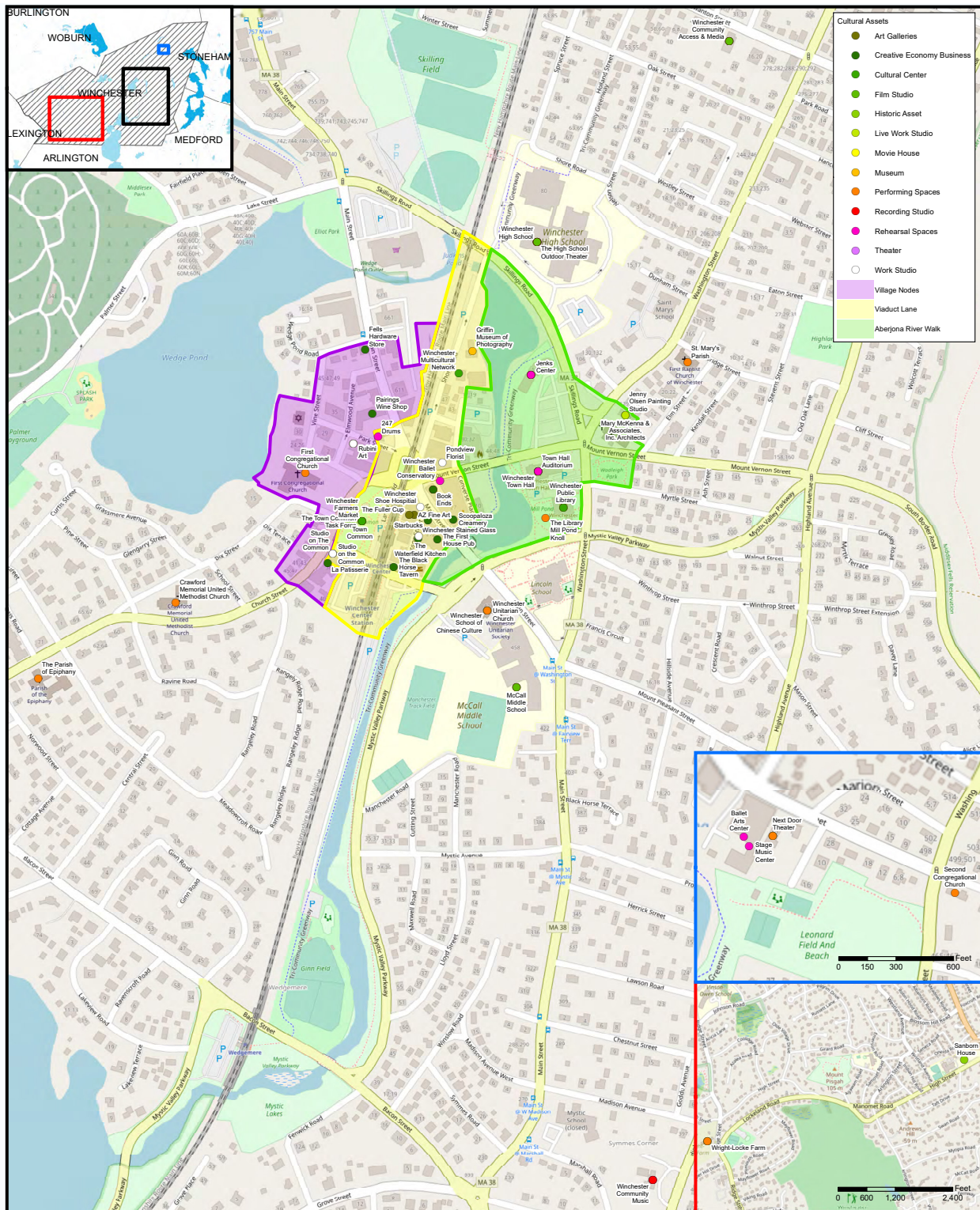
The MCDMP serves as the stewards of planning for the district, charged with management of the district, "to provide an enhanced experience for Winchester residents and visitors, to attract more discretionary spending, and to strengthen the town's unique village context."

Local Historic District Study Committee

The Winchester Local Historic District Study Committee was appointed in 2021 to study the possibility of establishing a Local Historic District (LHD) for the downtown area.

"Our vision: The Winchester Cultural District will include a river walk, the area on the Common and around the renovated train station for public art and cultural installations, events, and festivals beckoning residents from all parts of town. By promoting the district, the town will also attract visitors from outside the community to enjoy the town center businesses, book store, studios and galleries. Explore a variety of interesting dining options. Shop at the Farmers Market. Attend activities such as church-sponsored concerts, library talks, The Jenks Community Center activities, and Griffin Museum exhibits. Travelers to the district via the Tri-Community Bike Trail will find bike storage throughout to allow lingering and exploration within the district."

— "Our Vision," Winchester Cultural District



Town of Winchester, MA: Cultural District Boundary





Prepared for the Winchester Cultural District Partnership



Winchester Cultural District
 Source: Winchester Cultural District Management
 Partnership

Project Recommendations

Public Realm Coordination

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Neighborways Design
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) - MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant TIP
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)/Medium Term
Risk		Medium Risk – Competing goals, fear of change or conflict; funding, perception of lack of parking in downtown and desire to park directly in front of businesses
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Continued use of outdoor space; merchant “buy-in”; agreement on goals and objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand and gain support for transit-oriented development, creative use of curb space for bicycle parking, shared mobility, parklets, and other creative and alternative curbside uses• Reduce circulation of vehicles seeking parking• Install wayfinding signage and online wayfinding strategies that support realtime parking utilization• Increase parking utilization of Town lots• Encourage parking turnover in high demand areas through time based pricing• Create a sense of cohesion and community in the public realm• Establish a BID• Support climate resilience, environmental sustainability and GHG emissions reduction• Improve coordination across Town Departments and public/private partnerships
Partners & Resources		City; Chamber; individual “anchor” businesses; Arts + Culture, Engineering and DPW, local artists, students

Diagnostic

The pandemic has revealed both the need, and the public support for, more flexible use of shared outdoor spaces (parking spaces and lots, sidewalks, bike facilities, parks and plazas). At the same time, it has revealed conflicts in how these spaces are used, and a number of management and maintenance issues related to sharing of space. There is a need for coordination in look and feel of the downtown parklet program, and for it to continue, education and cultural shifts are needed to support its success.

Action Item

1. Fund project and identify Town Project Manager
2. Put out an RFP and hire a qualified consulting firm / team
3. Kick off meeting to review goals, current materials and meet with key stakeholders
4. Existing Conditions inventory to classify different aspects of the public realm (parking spaces, parking lots, sidewalks and rights-of-way, parks, plazas)
5. Conduct curbside management evaluation and monitoring over 3 months to 1 year during different seasons and peak demand
6. Ongoing Engagement throughout project
7. Programming and beautification to establish BID and hire local artists to coordinate parklet art.
8. Develop short, and long term recommendations for parking and curbside management

Process

The project seeks to develop a coordinated public realm through evaluation, engagement, beautification, and programming. It will support a clearer understanding and shared sense of objectives for how outdoor spaces in the public realm can be used best and evolve and adapt over time to meet changing needs. that address climate resilience, environmental sustainability; multimodal transportation choices; shared parking initiatives such as outdoor dining and public space activation; placemaking, beautification and programing.

This project will supplement and be informed by the current Downtown action improvement plan.

Task 1 Evaluation

A detailed monitoring and ongoing evaluation of curbside management and parking utilization will provide data and statistics to residents, businesses, Town Departments and decision makers to support cultural and modal shifts that support the goals of this project. The comprehensive parking study will identify existing assets including parking on and off street, curbside parking signage and wayfinding, and alternative curbside uses such as parklets and bicycle parking. It will also assess supply and demand based on time and geography. Data will be uploaded into GIS/CAD to provide the City with data for ongoing curbside and parking demand management.





Task 2, Engagement

The Public Realm coordination project will also focus on cohesively building community through engaging educational and creative online and in person strategies such as social media surveys, scavenger hunts, and contests; in person and online town forums, Coffee fireside chats, and social listening sessions such as hot cider in the town common, icecream socials, etc.

Task 3 Programming and Beautification

Through this project, the Town will design and establish a Business Improvement District from parking revenue (and other funding sources as available) for programming and beautification of downtown. Coordinating with the Cultural district this project will foster more art related activities and events, and places for artists to display their work in the public realm. This may include coordinating public art for the parklet program, planters, banners, and branding signage.

Regulatory Review for Outdoor Dining and Retail

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		CivicMoxie
Budget		<p>Low Budget (Less than \$50,000) -</p> <p>Costs are low and include dedicated municipal staff time or consultant time to decide what is needed (using LRRP 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 may be incurred for creating or improving online permitting capability, marketing the program to businesses, instituting a bulk purchasing program, or other program elements.</p>
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 years) -</p> <p>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 may be needed. The timeframe may vary depending on whether a municipality's program will be temporary or permanent, with temporary changes likely being faster to implement. The timeframe for permanent changes will also depend on continuation or termination of the temporary loosening of state permitting requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
Risk		<p>Low Risk – 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 (lower permit fees, covering cost of bulk purchases, consultant fees, etc.).</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurant and retail business retention rates (how many can stay open during various phases and resurgences during the pandemic). • 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. • Results of business survey indicating improvements in sales and revenue (or not). • The number of social media impressions of dining and retail spots.
Partners & Resources		<p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality • Chamber of Commerce or local business association/BID • Businesses • State ABCC • Local artists/arts and cultural organizations <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local trade schools 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

Diagnostic

With restrictions on indoor dining during the Covid-19 pandemic, restaurants shifted to takeout and outdoor dining to remain in business. The state temporarily loosened several permitting requirements for outdoor dining and many municipalities streamlined their local permitting processes and removed fees to make it easier for businesses to quickly implement. The city responded quickly, but continued development management of these new outdoor dining will require additional attention.

As the pandemic continues, businesses need certainty in terms of the consistency of temporary bylaws and other regulations so that they can make investments in construction, equipment, and furniture for outdoor dining and retail. In addition, more permanent measures will allow for a closer look at impacts on the public realm. Simplifying outdoor dining requirements and permitting, providing clear regulations and shortened review and permitting timelines, and assistance with design and other elements of outdoor dining/retail will ensure that businesses get the support they need to stay open. Clear outdoor dining/retail design requirements will also help create the best possible public realm and commercial district experience to assist all businesses in the study area.

Action Item

The *LRRP Outdoor Dining/Retail Toolkit* is a resource to assist municipalities in understanding how they can facilitate the creation and ongoing success of outdoor dining and/or retail in their community; the kit offers project examples from other communities as well as space guidelines that adhere to good design practices and ADA requirements. After decisions are made, the municipality can provide its own business toolkit for restaurants and retail, if it chooses, to help take the guesswork out of outdoor dining/retail design, permitting, and construction.

Work should begin with an assessment of your current outdoor dining and/or retail program. The process should include a Task Force or Working Group composed of public sector (planner, DPW, transportation, public health, fire department, etc.) and private sector (business representatives, civic advocates) to help assess work and move the process along.

Process

Phase 1 (2 - 4 weeks)

- Conduct an internal needs assessment by reviewing the Toolkit, conducting an internal meeting with planner, DPW, transportation, public health, and others, about current state of outdoor dining and/or retail and feedback on how effectiveness and challenges with current status.
- Get feedback from businesses about their needs and feedback on how any current program is going (what works/what doesn't) using one or more of the following:
 - Conduct focus group(s)
 - Issue online survey
 - Conduct a larger meetingQuestions should include: desire for winter dining, storage challenges, permitting process feedback, interest in bulk purchasing, financial assistance, etc.
- From internal meeting and business survey, 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 (BID, business association, chamber, etc.)
 - Business representatives
 - Others as needed
- Set an overall schedule for this project and regular meeting dates.
- Create a presentation template to use during project including:
 - History of what municipality has done to support outdoor dining/retail during pandemic
 - Rationale for current efforts

Phase 2 (4 weeks)

- Review Toolkit and research info on focus areas for program. Develop draft guidance for each focus area and list pros and cons
- Get internal input and input from businesses
- Conduct public meeting to get feedback on draft ideas

Phase 3 (4 weeks)

- 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 (10 - 24 weeks or longer)

- Institute changes, obtain agreement on concepts, bylaw votes, etc.

Implement the Recommendations of the Downtown Improvement Action Plan (DIAP)

Category	 Public Realm	Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Town of Winchester, Toole Design Study, Chamber of Commerce
Budget		Large Budget (\$200k+); MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces; Commonwealth Places; town funds; parking revenue; demand management agreements; MBTA
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – the work is already underway, and it would be counter-productive to undertake a major study without intending to act on the recommendations; the scope of the DIAP work is designed to help inform the town on policies and improvements to ensure that current and future growth can be accommodated.
Key Performance Indicators		Completion of DIAP study; implementation of recommendations; post-implementation evaluation to ensure desired results
Partners & Resources		Town of Winchester

Diagnostic

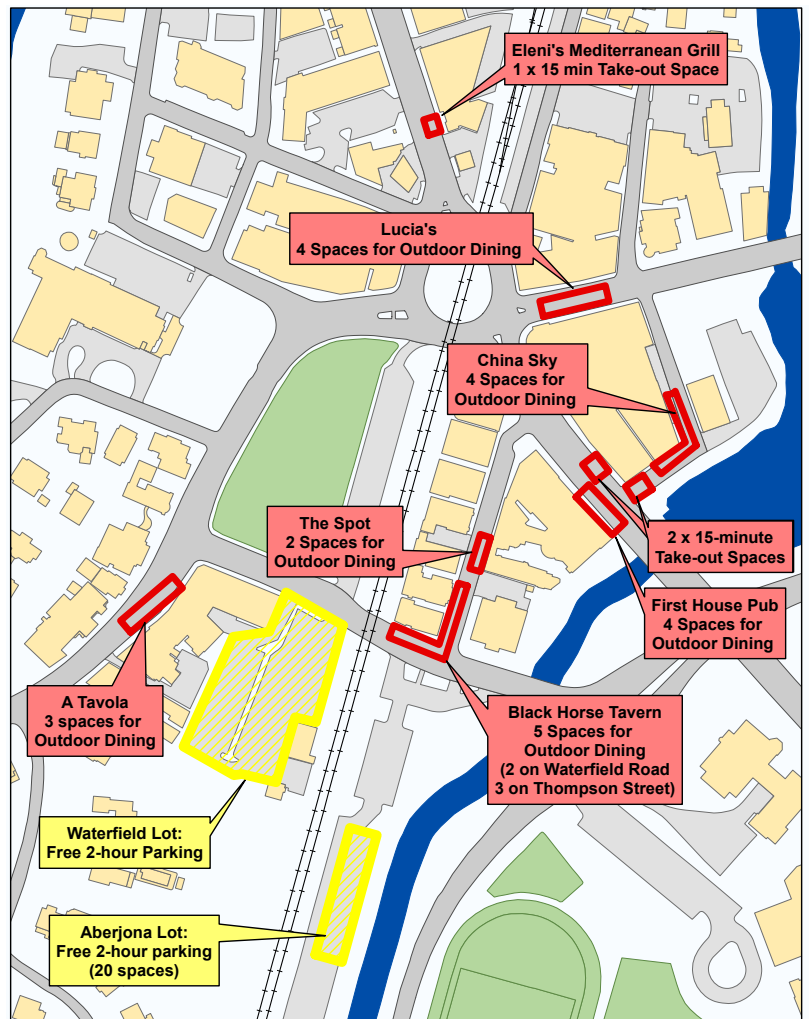
Concurrent with DHCD's LRRP effort, the town's planning office has also engaged Toole Design Group on a Downtown Improvement Action Plan (DIAP). The scope of this work is described as follows:

The objective for this effort is to help Winchester develop an Action Plan to address the short-term parking needs and to frame longer-term parking demand and policies for the downtown area. While the temporary loss of parking due to construction in Winchester Center will put extra strain on the demand, there is also an opportunity for the Town to reassess parking management during this period to put into place policies and projects that will improve the access to downtown once the construction is complete. This plan, in conjunction with the development of the DIAP, will examine the immediate needs and possible options for parking improvements, and will look at longer-term recommendations pertaining to future parking demand management.

Recommendations from this work are intended to include both short- and longer-term actions, including reconfiguration of parking, temporary changes to accommodate MBTA construction, policy changes, and new infrastructure to support parking, pedestrian, and bike use.

Given the obvious overlap between the goals of the LRRP and this Downtown Improvement Action Plan — as well as the unfortunate scheduling disconnect — we have included consideration of this effort and these general directions in development the proposed strategic recommendations. In order to give ample time for the Toole study to fully explore these issues we have not provided specific recommendations to address these topics beyond what is detailed in the scope above. When the DIAP is completed, it can be assumed that these additional recommendations are to be integrated into this plan as recommended projects by reference as well.

In order to use the framework of the LRRP effort to further these recommendations, the following sections outline a general process to implement these activities.



Town Center - Free Parking and Outdoor Dining
Source: Town of Winchester

Action Items

1. Complete all phases of the study with a strong public engagement strategy
2. Implement short-term recommendations
3. Implement longer-term recommendations

Process

1. Complete all phases of the study with a strong public engagement strategy

Before anything can be implemented, the study must be completed: even in responding to crisis or special opportunities, it does not make sense to put the cart before the horse. The first stage is already underway and a consultant firm (Toole Design) has been hired and started work, with plans for additional stages to follow.

The town should be sure to promote the study — the process, as well as the results — and to insist on a vibrant and engaged public engagement strategy throughout, to bring stakeholders together to develop a shared understanding of the study and to build broad community support for implementation of the eventual recommendations. The success of a plan depends as much on the strength of the public engagement as it does on the depth of the findings or the wisdom of the analysis.

2. Implement short-term recommendations

As specified in the scope of services, the study is likely to result in a number of short-term recommendations, including:

- *Parking configuration recommendations, including up to four concept-level plans showing alternative parking configurations in specific downtown areas. This may include angled parking concepts, space dimension adjustments, and/or improved circulation configurations.*
- *Curbside use future needs and recommendations. This will include strategies to balance parking needs with curbside functions such as deliveries, loading space, temporary outdoor retail use.*
- *Short-term temporary solutions for next 2+/- years during MBTA station construction. This may include shared parking opportunities with private surface lots, signage and parking restriction recommendations, and/or wayfinding signage to highlight the location of existing parking areas.*
- *Concept map for network improvements to alternative transportation to encourage more walking, biking and other forms of micromobility and reduce single occupancy vehicle use and parking demand.*

Once studied and developed, the town should act quickly to implement these recommendations, for the reasons described above, in recognition of the current and ongoing impacts on local businesses and the health of the downtown due to both the pandemic and the MBTA construction work. Some items — such as parking reconfiguration — can be implemented directly by the town (traffic and parking, DPW). Others may require policy changes, or work with town counsel to troubleshoot shared use or temporary leasing arrangements.

Funding for temporary improvements may need to be secured, being mindful of the fact that bigger-ticket items may follow in the longer-term recommended amenity improvements.

3. Implement longer-term recommendations

As specified in the scope of services, the study is likely to result in a number of longer-term recommendations, including:

Longer-Term Recommendations:

- *Provide longer-term recommendations based on current conditions, proposed development changes, and policy review, that may include:*
- *Options for additions and/or changes to development standards to incorporate innovative demand management strategies*
- *Changes to parking policies, utilization of curbside space, and pricing mechanisms.*
- *Pedestrian, micromobility, and amenities improvements.*
- *Changes to space allocation for post-MBTA construction.*

Most of these items can be accomplished through regulatory changes, policy revision, or cooperative/management agreements, but amenities may be costly. One possible strategy to generate support and identify/secure funding could be to work with the recommended downtown management organization. Importantly, some of these proposed strategies may result in new revenue streams, or sources of sponsorship/support for demand management mechanisms.

Program Downtown Events to Promote/Support the Cultural District

Category	 Cultural Arts
Location	Study Area
Origin	Town of Winchester, Cultural District
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000) - local funds, sponsorships, Mass Cultural Council
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	number of events/year, total attendees; participation of sponsors/key anchors
Partners & Resources	Town, cultural district, local businesses and cultural organizations

Diagnostic

The adoption of the Winchester Cultural District and the formation of the associated managing partnership were major milestones in planning for the future vitality of the downtown. As envisioned and proposed, the district brings together top-notch cultural offerings (including the Griffin Museum, churches, galleries, and a historic downtown setting), artistic programming and events, public amenities, local shops and restaurants, and wonderful natural assets. Unfortunately, the launch of this new initiative was dampened — and somewhat stalled — by the one-two punch of the pandemic and the MBTA construction. The start-up phase has included some noteworthy events and installations — including two seasons of the popular "Winchester Photoville Fence" installation — but more work is necessary to deliver on the full potential of the district to activate and promote the downtown.

A cultural district works best when it is more than a shaded area on a map or a banner on the street: arts and culture require people coming together to celebrate what is special about this place. Events, festival, fairs, promotions, films, concerts, and other performances and series can bring people to the downtown, promote the cultural and commercial offerings (and the potential to connect the two), and develop venues for mutual support between businesses, artists, and cultural organizations. (They are also a lot of fun, and they remind us all what is wonderful and beautiful about humanity and community — two important and much-needed benefits of this work right now.)

Note: while this recommendation focuses on programming and events, a related project builds on the strengths of the cultural district through public art and artistic amenities. Ideally, the work of these two projects should be coordinated, so that events help promote public art, and art installations serve as "lasting events" to showcase the artistic nature of the downtown. Both recommendations depend on the implementation of the first action item: funding and hiring a cultural district manager.

Action Item

1. Fund and hire a cultural district manager
2. Coordinate and fund a series of artistic programming/events

Process**1. Fund and hire a cultural district manager**

Up to this point, most of the work to plan and advance the cultural district has been undertaken by volunteers, or the efforts of public and private partners who have many other responsibilities in addition to this project (including running businesses or staffing museums). In order to take the district to the next level, including the envisioned programming, coordination, and promotion, the partnership needs dedicated staff.

The relative pause in programming and activity caused by the pandemic (and the coming fall/winter season) should be used strategically. Working quickly, the partners should agree on the most pressing responsibilities for a district manager, being mindful of which tasks can be accomplished by volunteers and which require professional skills and/or most permanent/full-time staffing. The group may want to contact other cultural districts to discuss job descriptions and management models, as well as funding sources. At least initially, it may be wise to consider hiring a part-time or contract-based, with grant-writing and partnership development included as an important first task.

2. Coordinate and fund a series of artistic programming/events

To help build momentum for the district (and attract potential partners, sponsors, and additional revenue streams), a new manager should plan a series of events to promote the district. Importantly, while programming should be ambitious in terms of the number of events, not every event needs to be a large festival or performance: as the group works to cultivate partnerships while discover its market niche and finding its audiences, the emphasis should be on testing out different approaches: creativity and variety is more important than scale at this point, which can help minimize risk while discovering untapped resources.

In addition to attracting visitor and promoting the district, programming is also an important tool to connect local businesses to the goals of the cultural district, and to identify additional partners, whether they are stores and restaurants, local artists, non-profit programs (including churches, schools, and social clubs) or culturally-minded residents. (For some great examples, see the Best Practices sections.)

Whenever possible, look for opportunities to connect programming with other downtown initiatives, including the installation of public art (see parallel recommendation).

Best Practices:

- Contracting with Artists
- Host a downtown cultural event to support businesses and show positive change

Implement Public Art and Lighting Projects for the Cultural District

Category		Public Realm, Private Realm, Cultural/Arts
Location		Study Area
Origin		Stakeholder Interviews
Budget		Higher Budget (\$200,000+) - sponsors, Mass Cultural Council, local business partners
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators		Funding and installation of art; number of visitors; connection of art to events
Partners & Resources		Town of Winchester, cultural district, local businesses and cultural organizations



Shared Streets Project, 2020.
Source: Winchester Cultural Council

Diagnostic

The adoption of the Winchester Cultural District and the formation of the associated managing partnership were major milestones in planning for the future vitality of the downtown. As envisioned and proposed, the district brings together top-notch cultural offerings (including the Griffin Museum, churches, galleries, and a historic downtown setting), artistic programming and events, public amenities, local shops and restaurants, and wonderful natural assets. Unfortunately, the launch of this new initiative was dampened — and somewhat stalled — by the one-two punch of the pandemic and the MBTA construction. The start-up phase has included some noteworthy events and installations—including two seasons of the popular “Winchester Photoville Fence” installation—but more work is necessary to deliver on the full potential of the district to activate and promote the downtown.

The recommendations below suggest much more than a single “project,” envisioning a connected sequence of physical improvements and artistic installations to ground the district in the minds of visitors, residents, and business. Well-placed, thoughtfully-curated, and creatively-fresh public art will ensure that every trip to the downtown — whether to buy a book, grab a cup of coffee, dine at a restaurant, or even just to catch a train (soon! Soon!) — helps cultivate and reinforce the image of the district cultural, artistic, and historic heritage.

Note: while this recommendation focuses on public art and artistic amenities, a related project builds on the strengths of the cultural district through programming and events. Ideally, the work of these two projects should be coordinated, so that events help promote public art, and art installations serve as “lasting events” to showcase the artistic nature of the downtown. Both recommendations depend on the implementation of the first action item: funding and hiring a cultural district manager.

Action Items

1. Fund and hire a cultural district manager
2. Work with local merchants on storefront arts
3. Commission a Public Art Program for the downtown
4. Install artistic/festive lighting for the district



Source: PPRI

Process

1. Fund and hire a cultural district manager

(See "Program Downtown Events to Promote/Support the Cultural District" for details.)

2. Commission a Public Art Program for the downtown

Signature public arts installations — whether centrally located landmarks, gateway/branding features, or even smaller, dispersed, hidden, or quirky elements — help establish the cultural and artistic nature of the district as a public place. Rather than rush to install something quick and flashy, the partners — under the guidance of the new manager — should develop a strategy for public art. Different goals will require different approaches, and the form should follow the function: is art being used to declare a specific theme or identity for this district (and if so: what is it, specifically?); will art help provide wayfinding tools, or connect disparate parts of the district?

The recent success of the "Photoville Fences" installations helps highlight two important considerations: (1) not all public art needs to be permanent, and to some extent more temporary installations can keep things fresh; and (2) whenever possible, public art should aim to connect visitors to existing institutions and partners.

For good examples of this work, see "Contracting with Artists" in the appendix; the attached wayfinding guidelines may provide additional direction.

3. Work with local merchants on storefront arts

Just as the LRRP process highlights the importance of attention to both public and private realm in assessing the health of a downtown, a successful cultural district should include attention to both public and private art installations. The private realm — including storefronts, windows, lawns/yards, restaurant and cafe walls, and (increasingly) outdoor seating areas all provide excellent and highly visible opportunities to showcase the artistic themes of the district while supporting the work of local artists. For some excellent examples of these efforts, see "Interactive Storefronts: Engage Residents Through Artistic Installations in Storefronts" and "Connect artists, entrepreneurs, and makers/crafters with landlords to fill vacant storefronts" in the Best Practices section.



Shared Streets Project, 2020.

Source: Winchester Cultural Council

4. Install artistic/festive lighting for the district

Based on the surveys and public interviews conducted for this plan, a number of residents and business noted the problem of lighting in the downtown, especially in the fall and winter seasons when nights are long, making it less inviting to stay downtown for dinner or to come shop on a Thursday evening. One particular (and relatively low-budget) strategy for addressing this challenge would be to use festive lighting to activate the downtown and improve spirits through the ongoing pandemic and construction. Lighting can tie a district together — signs and architecture vary, but the lights provide visual identity; when used well, it can extend the season for outdoor events. (See "Illuminating downtown Lawrence to create wonder and attraction" in the Best Practices for a good example.)

Best Practices:

- Contracting with Artists
- Iluminación Lawrence: Illuminating downtown Lawrence to create wonder and attraction
- Connect artists, entrepreneurs, and makers/crafters with landlords to fill vacant storefronts and change Main Street image
- Interactive Storefronts: Engage Residents Through Artistic Installations in Storefronts
- Attached wayfinding report

Hire Dedicated Economic Development Director

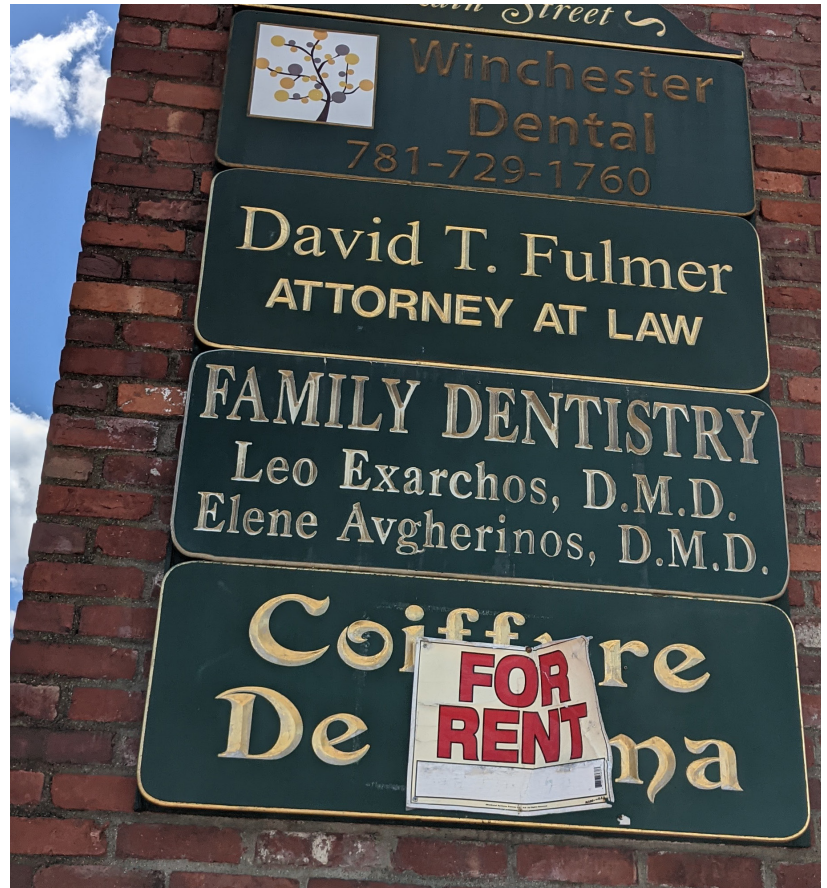
Category	 Admin Capacity	Administrative Capacity
Location		Study Area
Origin		Stakeholder interviews, Town of Winchester
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) – town funds; CDBG; MA Downtown Initiative; see alternative approaches below.
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – There is clearly enough work to keep additional staff busy, and the greater risk is the lack of coordination or the inability to seize upcoming development opportunities due to short-staffing.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of new or expanded businesses; number of new events; increases in grants and other funding for economic development efforts.
Partners & Resources		Town of Winchester, Chamber; potential downtown organization, cultural organizations.

Diagnostic

As noted in the previous sections, the downtown benefits from both a excellent location and a rich historic character, and the town is well positioned to benefit from increased downtown activity, including entertainment, shopping, entertainment, and cultural events. The town has also engaged in good planning for future economic development, with recent (or currently-underway) planning projects that only need to be implemented. However, a common theme emerged throughout the stakeholder engagement and interviews, noting the lack of sufficient internal capacity (town staff) to implement these thoughtful, but ambitious, plans.

While there are many active merchants and a vibrant range of activities happening throughout the downtown, it can be challenging to coordinate the many improvements, projects, and promotional activities envisioned by these plans for the downtown.

The current pandemic has only exacerbated this problem, as planning and development staff have pivoted to address immediate concerns. In the months and years ahead, the town is presented with an unprecedented opportunity to make significant progress on cultural promotion, parking and downtown management, and the potential for transformative new development projects, but to get out of the gate will require additional investment in the core staff who will move these projects forward.



Source: PPRI

Action Items

The town is an important cross-roads as it approaches economic development and downtown management in the future. The approach recommended here would involve hiring (or otherwise expanding existing staff positions) to include one or more dedicated town staff positions to focus on economic development, downtown management, cultural district programming and promotion, wayfinding, and coordination of services to businesses (including ongoing attention to the outdoor dining program).

0. Consider alternative models (see right)
1. Determine needs, staffing model, job description(s)
2. Identify funding
3. Hire, onboard, evaluate, elevate

As a "step 0," the town may still benefit from considering alternatives to hiring new positions. While creating new publicly-funded positions to meet these needs has certain clear benefits in regard to accountability and coordination, some downtowns have benefited from a public-private partnership approach instead, working with the chamber of commerce, arts and nonprofit organizations, property owners, and the greater business community to create a "downtown management organization" to assume and coordinate these responsibilities, often drawing on either grants, sponsorships, or district dues/membership fees for non-public funding.

A variety of approaches fall under the general topic of "downtown management organizations," including Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Main Streets groups, and other non-profit models. For these reasons, along with this recommendation (and the corresponding project related to Cultural Coordination/Communications Staff), the town and stakeholders may want to consider the approach described in the supplemental recommendations concerning the establishment of a district management organization, provided by DHCD's subject matter expert as part of the LRRP project.

Process

1. Determine needs, staffing model, job description(s)

Develop job description for new position(s), being mindful of:

- the need to focus efforts on the downtown, rather than town-wide needs;
- the most appropriate department/office and management/reporting structure for any new or expanded positions. (Note: reorganization may be appropriate when shifting positions and responsibilities to meet changing needs.)
- the importance of realistic expectations for what can be accomplished by a single staff position; better to do a few things well than struggle to cover a wide portfolio poorly;
- the tradeoffs between a "specialist" approach (focused on a more narrow range of activities — say, just infrastructure and public amenities, or just promotion and events) vs. a more general, flexible model;
- to the extent possible, it may be beneficial to start small and allow the position to grow with success.

As a component of this effort, it may be helpful to assess existing responsibilities, qualifications, and workloads for all current town staff/positions active in planning and economic development, as well as grant writing, maintenance, parking, and provision of town services to the downtown. Special attention should be paid to any positions that are currently vacant (which could potentially be repurposed or modified), as well part-time positions which could be expanded or supplemented.



Source: PPRI

2. Identify funding

Funding for any new positions must typically be found through the town budget process. Alternatively, for a more creative — albeit less permanent — approach, consider planning assistance grants to hire contractor- or consultant-services, until the need and the benefit of a permanent can be demonstrated to the taxpayers. (Bonus: it may be easier to identify grant funding sources for short-term/ contract-based positions.)

Another low-budget alternative, as a “pilot” or “proof-of-concept” for the value of a more permanent position, would be to partner with students in a local planning or public policy program, to seek assistance implementing key elements. The obvious benefit being cost savings; the important downside being lack of capacity, and the narrowness of the approach: a volunteer, intern, or student effort is extremely limited in being able to address the longer-term needs of even relatively quick public projects: this approach could work better for projects/ efforts related to coordinating services or events, as opposed to implementing public facilities projects and longer-term/big-budget items.





3. Hire, manage, and evaluate — and build on success.

Follow established town hiring processes to fill role; clearly outline responsibilities; consider implementing review/evaluation process involving wide range of stakeholders to ensure success (and to document/demonstrate benefit of this use of resources).



Source: PPRI

Develop a District Management Organization Model

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location		Study Area
Origin		Winchester, Chamber of Commerce, Ann McFarland Burke
Budget		Low Budget (Under \$50,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – stakeholders have found consensus on brand positioning and brand pillars
Key Performance Indicators		Establishment of selected downtown management organization; number of members.
Partners & Resources		Town of Winchester, Chamber of Commerce



Source: PPRI

Diagnostic

As noted in the diagnostic findings, Downtown Winchester benefits from excellent access and transportation options (at least in once construction is complete), an impressive historic fabric, a vibrant collection of stores and restaurants. The downtown also benefits from a broad network of committed residents, cultural organizations, and business owners, who are dedicated to the success of the district and eager to work together to promote activities together.

Despite these existing strengths and assets, the COVID pandemic significantly impacted the health and vitality of downtown businesses. Business surveys have verified that downtown small businesses, dining, cultural attractions, residential developments, and tourist destinations experienced loss of employment, revenue, customer base, and foot traffic. Downtowns with active downtown organizations were able to pivot and respond to this crisis to help their small businesses weather the storm. Many downtowns have realized that a sustainable district management entity is positioned to help downtowns recover from COVID and prepare for the future.

In Winchester, the town is interested in convening businesses and other stakeholders to form a sustainable downtown district management organization. The purpose of the organization would be to provide better coordination and pooled funding for supplemental services, advocate on behalf of business and downtown stakeholder interests and interface with the town on downtown priorities. The proposed project is to develop a framework to determine a sustainable downtown district management organizational model to meet the needs and opportunities of businesses, residents, and other stakeholders in Winchester. Organizers will undertake a phased and iterative process to evaluate which organizational model is preferred.

Action Item

The town should consider the following action items when developing a project to create a sustainable downtown district management entity

1. Getting Started - Identify startup resources
2. Develop the Value Proposition/ Communication Tools
3. Stakeholder Engagement
4. Create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy
5. Identify Downtown Priorities
6. Evaluate Organizational Models
7. Secure Resources for Sustainability



Source: PPRI

Process

Getting Started

Winchester planning and business leaders could initiate this project by creating a working partnership between the town and downtown stakeholders such as businesses, cultural and tourist attractions, nonprofits, media, property owners, tenants, and residents. Use the LRRP planning process and the project recommendation to form a downtown district management entity as the launching point for stakeholder engagement.

Organizers might consider asking the following questions before launching the effort to form a district management organization:

- Who are the downtown stakeholders?
- How can the town be involved?
- Who might lead this effort?
- What do we need to do to help our downtown recover from COVID and prepare for the future?
- How can we find out what is important to stakeholders?
- How do we sustain the effort?

Develop the Value Proposition/Communication

It will be essential to develop the value proposition for investing human capital and the financial resources into a downtown district management organization and communicate to the town and private stakeholders the impact of their investment. The long-term goal of a downtown district management organization is to build a destination that is attractive to potential developers, businesses, residents, and visitors. In the near term, A downtown district management organization can play an important role in COVID recovery. A successful organization can help achieve increased property values, improved sales and meals taxes, stronger tenancy, a vibrant cultural scene, and a destination where people want to shop, locate a business, dine, and live. A well-managed and sustainable organization will undertake strategic supplemental programs and services that will help achieve that goal.

Key talking points include:

- Ability to collectively and cost effectively purchase priority supplemental programs and services to achieve impact/scale
- Provide a unified voice/"seat at the table" for district priorities
- Professional management and staff dedicated to implementing programs and services in the district.
- Produce and execute cultural and event programming
- Ability to respond to crisis/COVID
- Support new and existing businesses
- Leverage resources and build collaborations

Stakeholder Engagement/Leadership and Partnerships

Launching the organizational efforts to form a district management organization in Winchester should be an intentionally inclusive process that welcomes new as well as long term property and business owners, visitor attractions, volunteer organizations, town, and other key downtown stakeholders to develop the organizational and leadership infrastructure to be successful. The goal of this effort would be to form a strong, diverse, and inclusive steering committee to guide the development of a sustainable district management organization, identify key champions and build a solid coalition around the preferred concept. The town may convene this effort but should quickly transition to a private sector led working steering committee with strong public sector support. The clear demonstration of a public / private partnership will help move this effort forward.



Source: PPRI

Create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy

The Steering Committee should undertake efforts to engage media, businesses, property owners, nonprofits, cultural organizations, visitor attractions, volunteer groups, and interested residents to continue to identify and refine needs and priorities for the downtown. This work will be used to inform the work plan for a district management entity. Additionally, these outreach efforts provide the opportunity to educate stakeholders on various organizational models, identify needs and opportunities as well as potential leadership. Community engagement can happen in a variety of ways including:

- Community Forums - fun, engaging and informational visioning sessions held in accessible, approachable locations such as a local business, restaurant, park, libraries, or community gather space.
- Peer Learning Panels - Invite Executive Directors from downtown district management entities in similar communities to present on the impact of their organizations on their downtowns.
- Visits to other communities with active downtown district management organizations to see programs in action.
- Distribute surveys to a broad cross section of downtown stakeholders to identify needs and priorities.
- Focus groups with key interest groups
- One on one conversations with key stakeholders
- Websites/social media.

Identify Downtown Priorities and Agree on a Shared Downtown Strategy

A downtown management organization should fit with an overall strategy for the downtown, and a strategy for the downtown should pursue well-defined goals and priorities. Given this, as part of the process of planning for this project, the town and other stakeholders must think carefully about what sort of downtown they envision for the future. To some extent, this may feel like a chicken-and-egg problem — a downtown management organization or partnership would be an ideal place for host these conversations and convene different groups to form a shared vision, but without some shared vision you cannot establish the organization. In situations such as this, it can help to act provisionally, and begin with areas of broad agreement first, putting off longer-term or more specific issues for later.





Evaluate Organizational Models

Once organizers have established the downtown priorities/ proposed supplemental programs and budget, it will be important to identify the most appropriate organizational model for Winchester. Two of the most common models are a voluntary nonprofit "Main St" type organization or a more formal Business Improvement District. Organizers must consider an approach to financial sustainability and governance for each model under consideration and weigh the pros and cons. BIDs require more up-front effort to secure support from property owners and other stakeholders, but once established provide a sustainable revenue stream for at least 5 years. Voluntary organizations may require less up-front organizational effort but require a clear commitment for stakeholder financial support and a plan for ongoing fundraising activities to be sustainable. The steering committee may evaluate different organizational models through site visits, peer learning from executive directors of downtown district management organizations, online research, or other TA. Once the preferred model is determined, organizers should seek support letters / statements from key stakeholders like neighborhood associations, merchant groups, cultural and tourist attractions, Chamber of commerce, volunteer organizations involved in the downtown, town, and other important groups.



Source: PPRI

Create and Fund a Downtown Management Organization

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location		Study Area
Origin		Winchester, Ann McFarland Burke
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – broad consensus on the need for more coordination and leadership; existing groups may feel they have a stake in outcome, and will need to be consulted to ensure broad support and “buy-in” for chosen model
Key Performance Indicators		Agreement on a final model for moving forward; funding of the selected model.
Partners & Resources		Town of Winchester, Chamber of Commerce



Source: PPRI

Diagnostic

Whether a Business Improvement District (BID), an independent/voluntary "Main Streets" organization, an expansion of the cultural district, or a dedicated arm of the chamber, an entity focused on planning, managing, and coordinating activities, events, improvements, and promotion for the downtown will require both a formal structure and a dedicated and reliable source of funding going forward.

Action Item

1. Identify Resources
2. Build Support
3. Prepare Organizational Model
4. Launch



Source: PPRI

Process

Resources for Startup and Sustainability

Seed money is required to start a district management organization. Sources include TA through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, MassDevelopment Real Estate Technical Assistance Program, or ARPA funds (if the development of the organization is tied to implementing COVID recovery activities). Additionally, local Institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/individual contributors may be sources for seed money to launch the effort.

Careful attention should be given to developing a realistic budget, and a variety of revenue opportunities for the organization. If a BID is selected, BID fees may provide a sustainable funding base that can be augmented by additional sources to leverage BID revenue. Sources may include sponsorships, event revenue, grants or contracts, foundations, and individual giving. If the town approves the formation of a BID, property owners will reauthorize the organization every 5 years. A voluntary based "Main Street" model will have a funding base that includes sponsorships, event revenue, grants or contracts, foundations, memberships, in-kind services or other partnerships or collaborations.

Winchester may also consider forming a Parking Benefit District (PBD) to fund some activities of a downtown district management entity. A PBD would allow the Town to earmark some, or all the parking revenue generated (after expenses) to a downtown management entity to support eligible programs and services in the district.

Building Support for the Organization

With no active comprehensive downtown organization in place, Winchester may consider the following process to building support for a downtown management entity and determining the best model for their community

- Establish property owner and business databases using information provided by the Town as the official property owner database for organizational purposes and to establish boundaries.
- Create a downtown partnership with Town, key property owners, new developers, key businesses, cultural and tourist destinations, residential groups, nonprofit, and Chamber of Commerce to launch the effort.
- Create a list of potential steering committee members.
- Form a broad-based advisory committee to provide input and feedback
- Secure seed funding for TA two support district management organization formation through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), Mass Development Real Estate TA program, ARPA, Urban Agenda program, Foundations, and other stakeholder support.
- Create community outreach events, widely distribute surveys, and utilize other engagement tools to develop program priorities.
- Hold Community forums on different district management models.
- Initiate one on one conversations with stakeholders to secure support and engagement in process.
- Consensus building with stakeholders on preferred model, programming, budget, and sustainable revenue structure
- Create communication/marketing materials
- Consider executing a demonstration project that could "show" potential programs and services provided to the downtown through a downtown management entity. Possible funding sources may include Mass Development Commonwealth Places, foundations, ARPA, or other key stakeholder support.

Establishing and Launching the Organization

Depending on what ultimate approach and model of organization the Town opts to establish, the following provide a rough outline of the formal steps required to create a management model.

Business Improvement District

Develop the BID Petition components.

Develop MOU with Town to define relationship with the BID, baseline services and support for the BID.

Develop petition signature campaign strategy, timelines, and benchmarks.

Undertake a petition process under direction of the steering committee to secure support of 60% of property owners representing, 51% of the assessed valuation of the district.

The petition will include:

- Map and legal description of BID boundaries
- BID improvement Plan - programs and services
- Fee Structure
- Budget
- Hardship Provisions
- ID Management
- Property owner signatures of support
- Formal Local Legislative Approval: Public hearing and formal vote by Town Council to establish the BID.
- Complete 501c3 and Articles of Organization filings
- Approval of bylaws
- Establishment of a Board of Directors; hire staff.
- Create RFP and secure contracted services if required.
- Initiation of supplemental services
- Reauthorization by property owners every 5 years.

Voluntary Based Downtown Organization

[Note: if the group opts to establish an organization within the existing chamber or other organization, the first three of these steps may be skipped, and the "board of directors" would be replaced with a special subcommittee or advisory board within the organization.

- Formation as 501c3
- Approval of bylaws
- File articles of organization
- Establish board of directors (or advisors)
- Secure funding commitments from stakeholders, Town, and other sources to establish a sustainable financial model for the organization.
- Develop MOU with Town or other partners to define relationship, roles, and support.
- Hire staff
- Prepare RFP and secure contracted services if required.
- Initiation of supplemental services.

Additional Resources

- How to Form a BID In Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-revised-businessimprovement-district-manual/download>
- DHCD/LRRP Best practice rubric: "Forming a BID in Hudson"
- DHCD/LRRP Best Practice Rubric: "Determining Downtown District Management Models in Reading MA"

Case Studies:

- https://www.massdevelopment.com/assets/what-weoffer/BID/HowToCreateABID_2020_CaseStudy_Hudson.pdf
- https://www.massdevelopment.com/assets/what-weoffer/BID/HowToCreateABID_2020_CaseStudy_CentralSquare.pdf
- https://www.massdevelopment.com/assets/what-weoffer/BID/HowToCreateABID_2020_CaseStudy_Hyannis.pdf

Sample communities with downtown district management models to consider:

- BIDs in Massachusetts: Hyannis, Worcester, Hudson, Springfield, Boston, Central Square Cambridge, Taunton, Amherst
- Main St communities: Beverly, Somerville
- Parking Benefit Districts: <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/parking-benefit-districts>
- Commonwealth Places: <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estateservices/commonwealth-places/>
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative: <https://www.mass.gov/services-details/massachusettsdowntown-initiative-mdi>

Develop a Shared Downtown Portal for Online Commerce

Category		Revenue/Sales, Administrative Capacity
Location		Study Area
Origin		Town of Winchester, Stakeholder Interviews, business survey
Budget		Low Budget (Less than \$50k) - possibly Community Compact IT Grant, sponsors/members, better use of existing resources
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – there is a possibility that an online presence will serve to replace the physical downtown, rather than augment and facilitate sales for local businesses, and also potential for conflicting views among merchants about the best platforms for online sales, but these risks seem small compared to the risks of failing to compete in the online marketplace.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of merchants participating; number of visitors; online sales revenue.
Partners & Resources		Town of Winchester, Chamber of Commerce; potential new downtown management organization or cultural district

Diagnostic

Although the primary goal of this LRRP effort is to support and revitalize the physical downtown study area, it is increasingly clear that no business can survive today without a vibrant web presence. This holds true for traditional "bricks-and-mortar" establishments sells goods, as well as more "in-person" offerings such as services, restaurants, entertainment venues. Whether large or small, whether independent or franchised, and whether selling goods for delivery or pickup, take out food, or advance booking for haircuts, shows, or meal reservations, businesses today must be able to be found online.

During the disruption caused by the pandemic, the need for smooth, reliable, and easy-to-find web-based alternatives to in-person commerce became all the more apparent. Businesses that were able to quickly pivot to these platforms continued to thrive even when downtowns were shuttered and customers were quarantined, and were quicker to open again as customers warmed to online purchases and curbside pick-up options.

In order for the downtown to function well as a cohesive whole — rather than an uncoordinated patchwork of sites, services, and remote options — this project envisions a shared platform to promote online shopping, services, and entertainment available in the downtown. For businesses with existing online shopping/reservation sites, the new platform could simply help visitors find them and connect them to their neighbors; for local businesses struggling to make the shift to online sales and reservations, the project could help jump-start and smooth-over this transition.

Importantly, the online world of 2021 is not the same as the old "world wide web" where many local businesses first ventured into the realm of online sales and marketing. Social media, dynamic real-time sites, and mobile apps are far more important than static webpages, and even businesses and with existing websites may be invisible to an entire new generation of customers. The proposed project would bring businesses together to create, support, and promote a shared, modern, full-service platform integrating a range of tools and users, to provide seamless connections for customers, for sharing information, ordering food or commercial goods for pickup or delivery, and reserving tables or services, as well as more generally promotion the downtown and building community.

(Note: one possibility for implementation would be to build on the existing chamber of commerce membership directory, but a more ambitious approach would envision a more robust, cohesive, full-service platform.)

Action Item

1. Identify partners, members, management structure / institutional home
2. Agree on scale/scope; create and launch site
3. Promote
4. Assist/support businesses in transitioning to social media and online sales/reservations

Process

1. Identify partners, members, management structure / institutional home

To develop a comprehensive online presence, the project will require participation by a wide range of business and organizations in the downtown. Rather than form a new entity, it will be best to work through existing organizations, with the most obvious leaders being the chamber, the cultural district managing partnership, and/or a newly created downtown management organization, such as a Main Streets. (See corresponding project recommendations.)

2. Agree on scale/scope; create and launch site

The development of a new online platform may take time, and is best done professionally, and in stages. Once a wide range of partners have been brought together, the group should discuss wishes, needs, and priorities to develop a series of possible scopes or approaches. Often, a "small-medium-large" approach can help organize this process, for example:

- "small" — a basic online site linking to existing business sites, perhaps also including a calendar of events or other promotional activity;
- "medium" — a website as above, plus special features such as restaurant delivery menus, and combined shipping options, as well as social media channels, which much be maintained and programmed to promote the members;
- "large" — a vibrant, multi-platform approach, including web and social media channels linking businesses and customers in a virtual downtown, interactive data analytics for members to learn from, and mobile apps to help customers find stores, parking, and more.

3. Promote

It's not enough to create a site: it must be shared and promoted. Some promotion can happen online, where remote users already are, but members must also commit to promote the platform in their stores, on printed material, and also in marketing, email blasts, social media, etc. Consider a festive, interactive, in-person launch event.

4. Assist/support businesses in transitioning to social media and online sales/reservations

Some businesses will easily make the transition to online commerce, others will not. Importantly, the second group is the one who might benefit most from this project — but only if provided with support and guidance to help convert older business practices to fit an online world. Part of the success of the project will depend on how well this outreach and support is provided, to ensure to all businesses in the downtown are brought along together. (Remember: both physical and online downtowns depend on the "network effect," where the health of your neighbors actually strengthens your own business as well.)

Work Towards Meeting the Town's Housing Goals in the Downtown

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		Study Area
Origin		Working group; town; housing partnership; interviews.
Budget		Medium Budget (Less than \$50,000) [Note: actual development will cost many times more than this, using local sources, private capital, and a wide (albeit confusing and overwhelming) range of funding streams for housing, including CDBG and HOME funds, AHTF, CEDAC funds, tax credits and other funds offered through the state's "one-stop" program, as well as incentive programs.]
Timeframe		Medium Term (5-10 years)
Risk		Low Risk –The envisioned downtown housing targets have already been officially supported by stakeholders, and are incorporated in the zoning for the downtown and the planning for the town's future. The major risks are not related to achieving these goals, but rather with failing to do so, which could have ripple effects on the downtown, on housing affordability, and on the quality of life of residents.
Key Performance Indicators		Increased support for housing; number of units built/progress towards goal; percentage affordable.
Partners & Resources		ZBA, planning board; housing partnership; cultural district; property owners.



Winchester Commuter Rail Station
Source: Wickedlocal

Diagnostic

A vibrant downtown depends on more than just commercial businesses and cultural programming. Local residents — especially those living within walking distance — provide a ready-made customer base and support network for restaurants, services, and other commercial uses. Unlike the single-use zoning of previous generations, designed to separate uses into discrete zones for housing, commerce, and industry, 21st century downtowns blend these uses and functions, for the benefit of all. Mixed-use districts like this reduce the number of daily trips and the need for excess parking, making more efficient use of the public realm. Housing in the downtown can also make good use of upper stories, especially as the demand for small commercial offices declines.

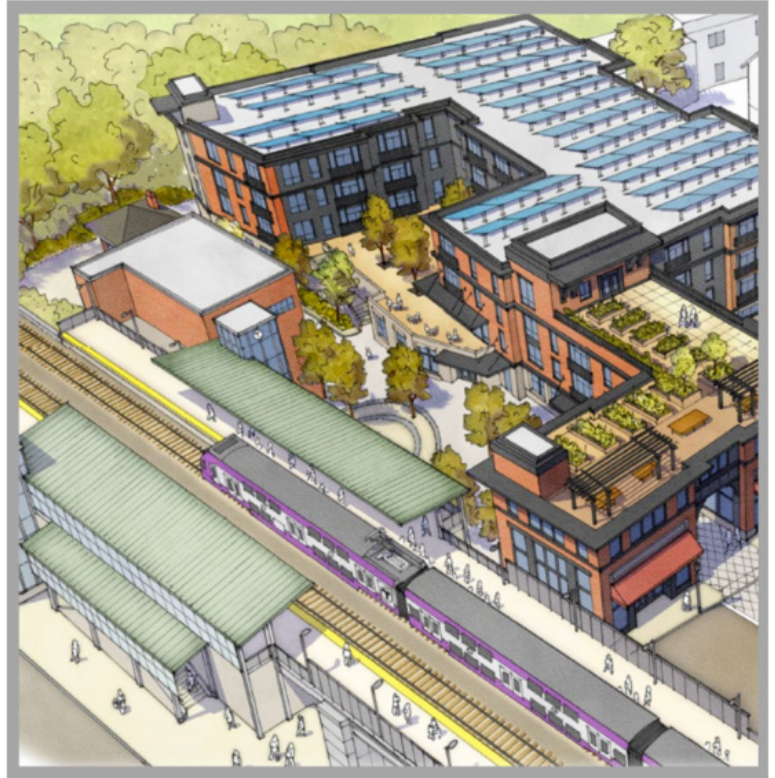
During the recent pandemic, the wisdom of the walkable, “ten-minute” neighborhood became even more clear, as residents worked from home and shopped hyper-locally throughout the day. Business district fortunate enough to be accessible to residents survived, and some even thrived, while single-purpose districts saw more shuttered storefronts.

The town has already established some clear goals for increased housing development in the downtown, stating a target of an additional 200-250 units in the study area. Since 2005 they have been laying the groundwork for this development, with planning studies and (in 2015) a package of zoning amendments to allow and encourage mixed use and affordable housing in the study area. The Town's recent Housing Production Plan promises this growth, and the Master Plan include these goals as well, including in the very first recommendation of the entire plan:

Goal A1

Encourage more commercial, mixed-use, and compact development in areas that support economic vibrancy, including strategic redevelopment parcels in town center and the identified evolving opportunity areas.

A latter goal further elaborates on the importance of locating housing as part of this downtown strategy:



Rendering of Property by Development Team

Source: Winchester Planning Board Town Meeting Report, Fall 2020

Goal A4

Promote housing types that allow residents to age within the community. Housing should be located near community gathering spaces and enable access to everyday amenities and needs.

In addition to this preparation, the town has identified significant development opportunities capable of advancing these goals, including the Waterfield Lot and 10 Converse Place.

Action Items

As noted above, the town has already made progress towards meeting these goals, but more work — and commitment — is required to move the housing needle by convert these planning efforts into actual development and new housing.

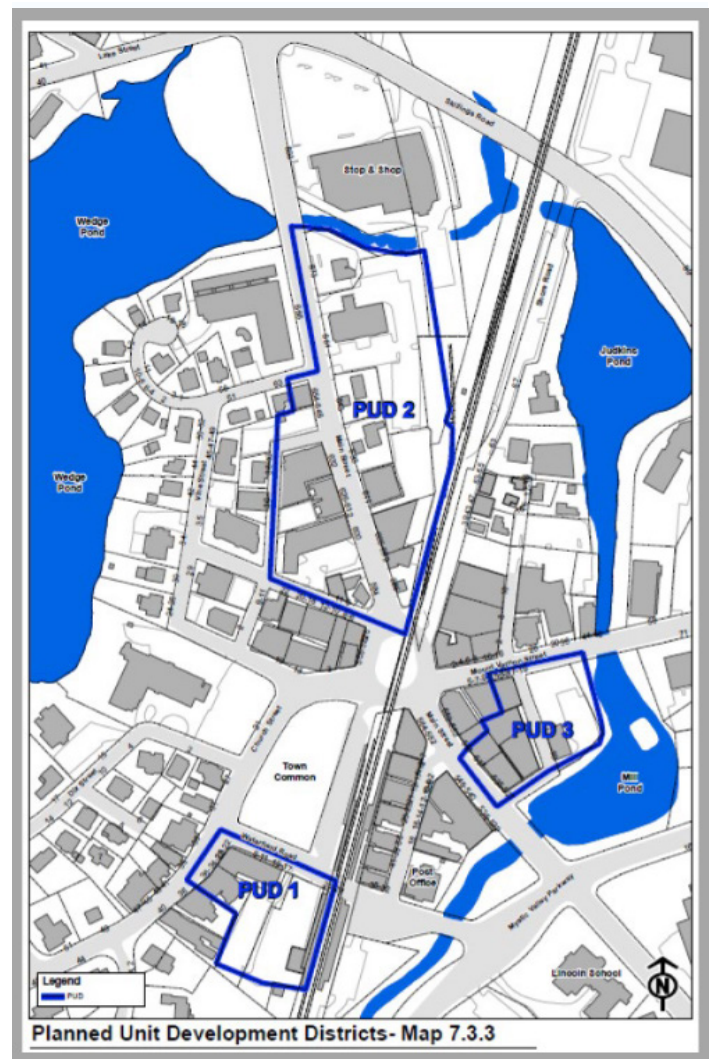
This recommendation includes a single action: continue to advance this work by building broad-based community support to locate, permit, fund, and develop housing to meet the town's targets.

Process

Building and maintaining support will require ongoing efforts to continue the conversations of the Master Plan and zoning work. Given the focus of the LRRP on the downtown and the needs of economic development, we recommend working with any new downtown management organization or economic development staff to connect housing with the planning for the downtown.

The Cultural District Managing Partnership has also expressed strong support for ways to connect new development in the downtown — including the Waterfield Lot — with the goals of the arts community as well: this is a natural partnership, and it may be possible to connect the recommended public arts programming and development with efforts to create more housing. Cultural events and installations can help provide forums for continuing these discussions — and new development can be encouraged to help further cultural goals as well, whether affordable housing for artists or gallery and performance space for future programming.

One model worth exploring from elsewhere is the emerging "Yes in My Backyard" (YIMBY) movement, which brings residents, developers, business owners, planners, advocates, and faith and service organizations together to support increased density where appropriate to meet growing needs, and more development near existing downtowns and transit to make wise use of our urban land. (See, for example, <https://yimby.town/>)



Source: Town of Winchester

Appendix

This report provides the results of a business survey conducted during March and April of 2021. The survey is part of a program launched by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for downtowns and commercial districts. The survey was directed to owners or other appropriate representatives of business establishments located in the targeted commercial areas. (For Data Tables, see page 9.)

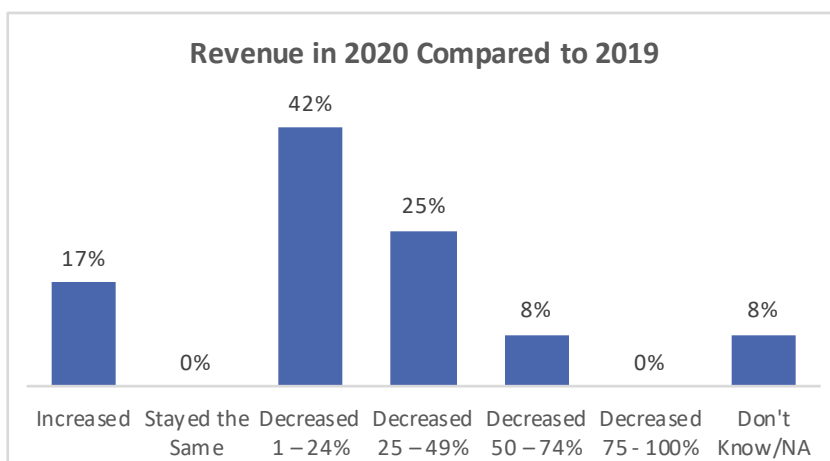
Winchester

Winchester Town Center

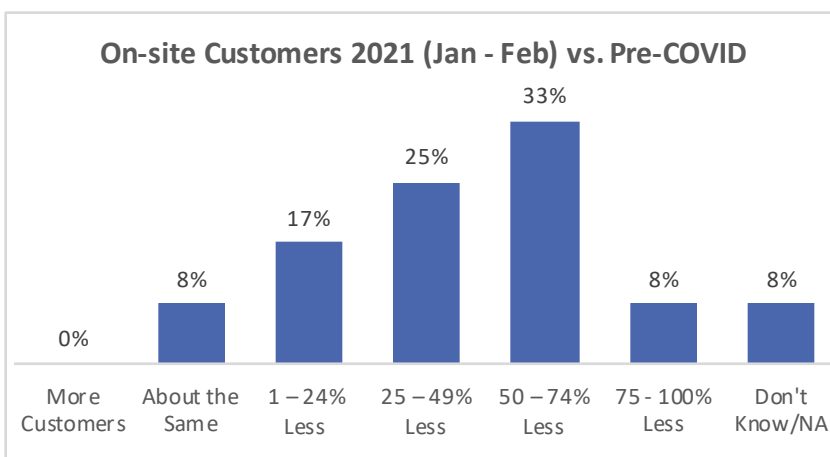
Responses: 12

Impacts of COVID-19**Decline in Business Revenue**

75% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.
For 33% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.

**Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area**

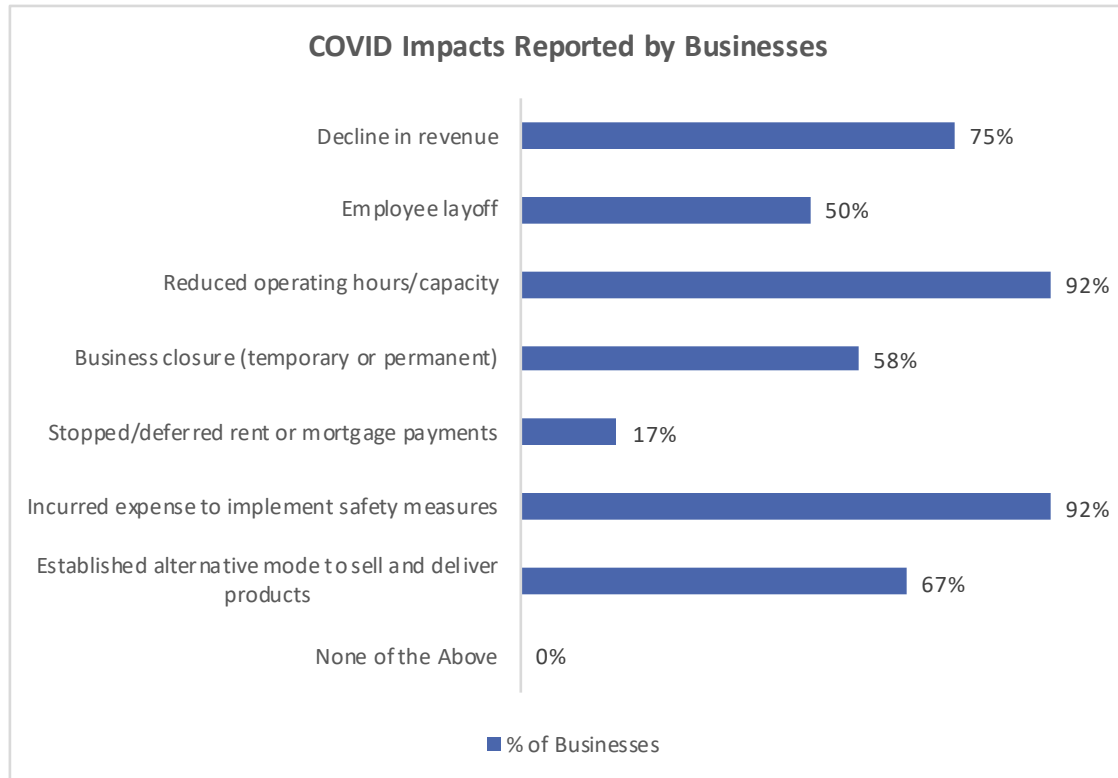
83% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.
66% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

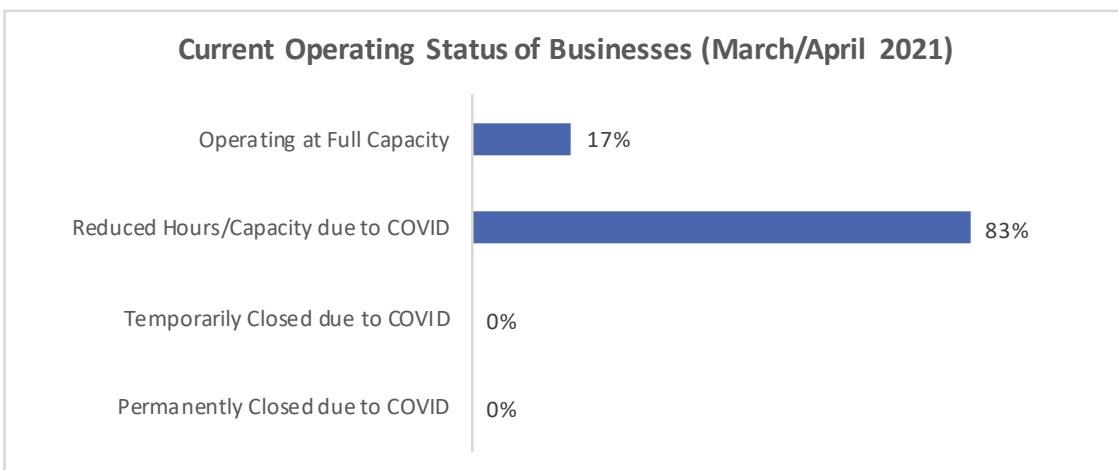
Reported Impacts

100% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



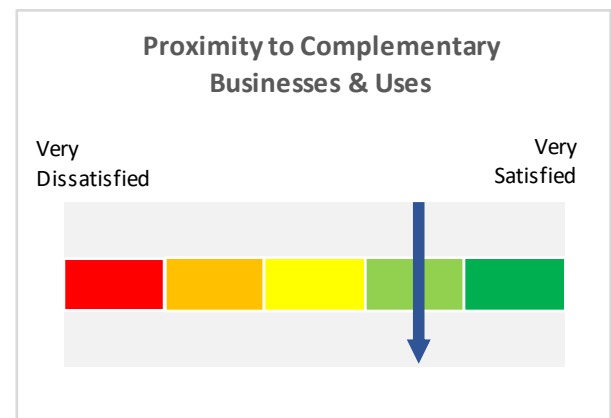
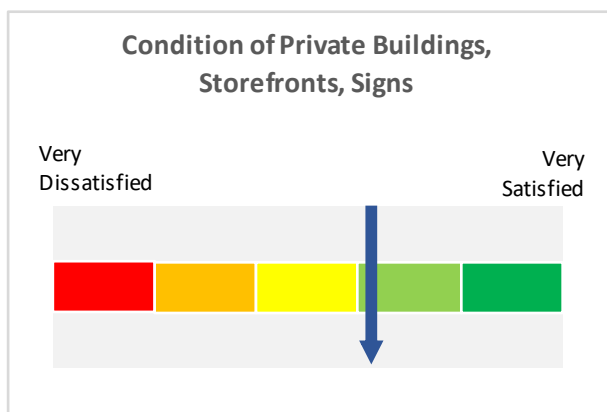
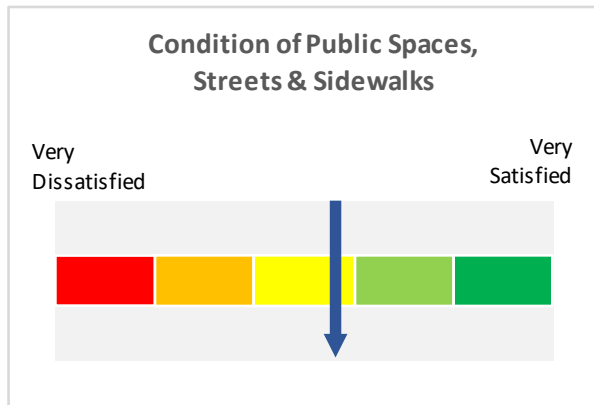
Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 83% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

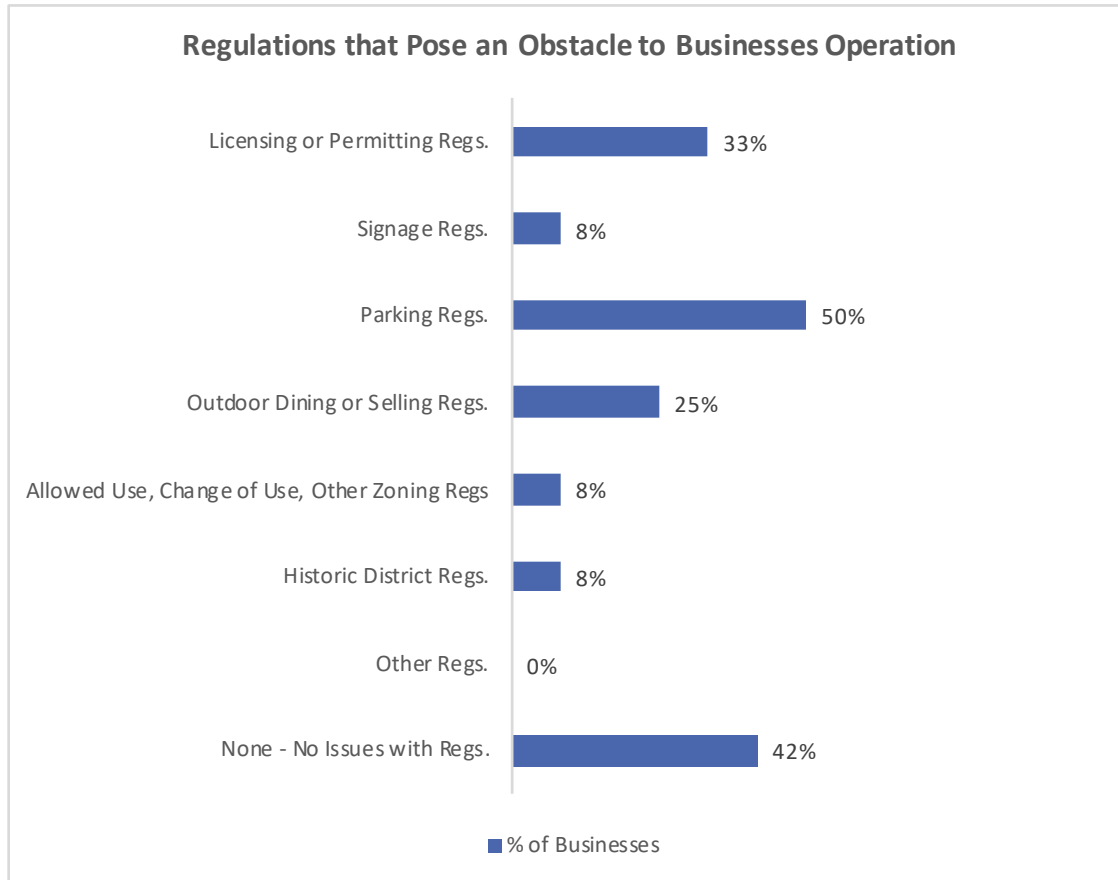
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

Regulatory Environment

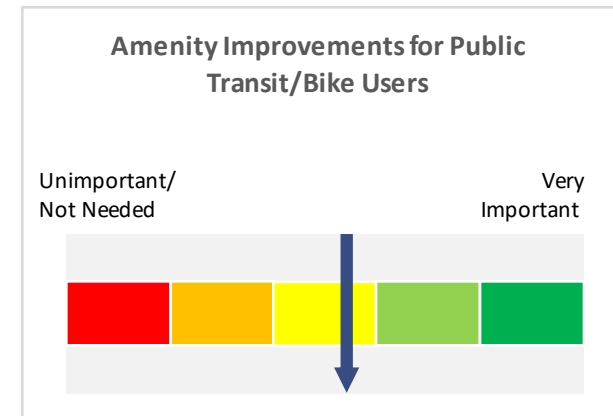
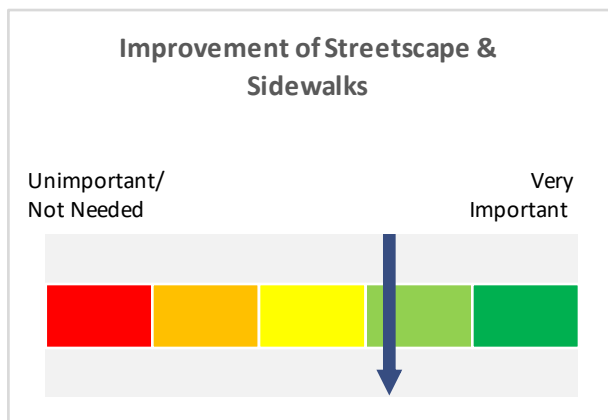
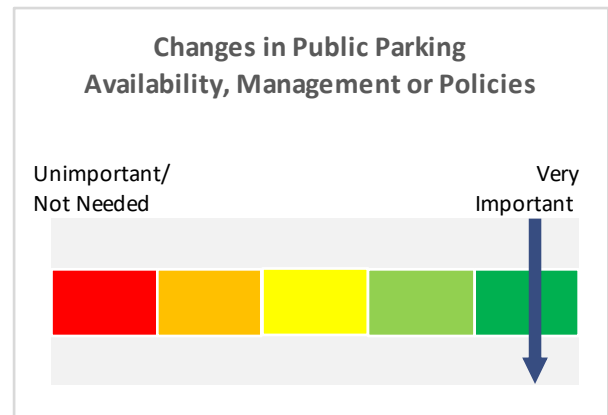
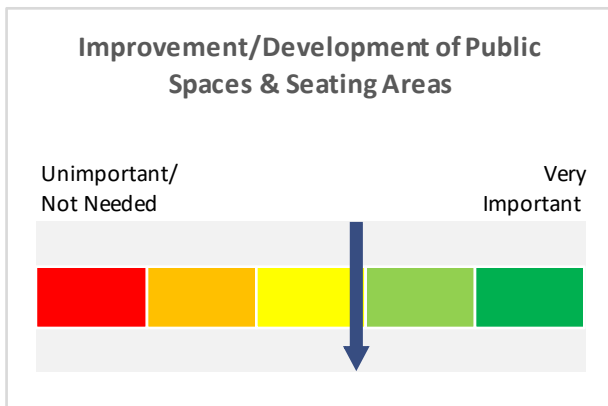
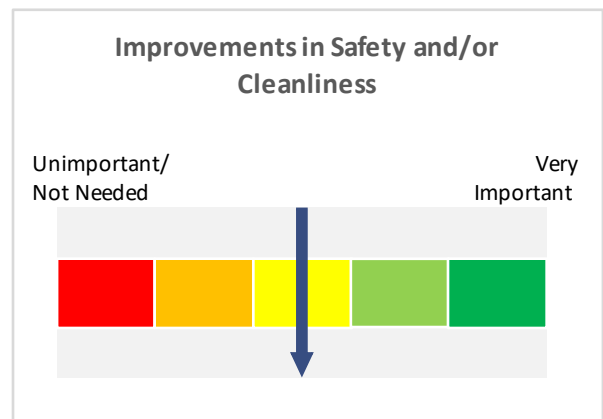
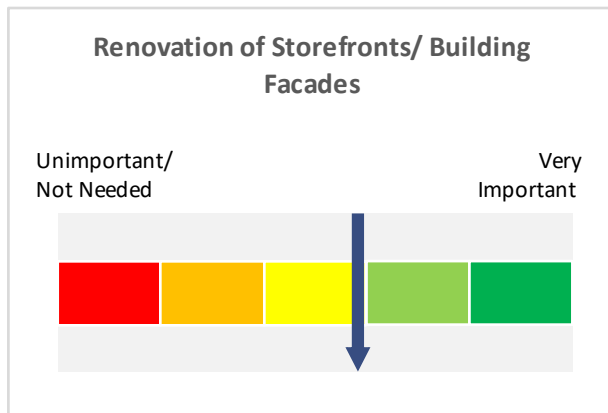
58% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

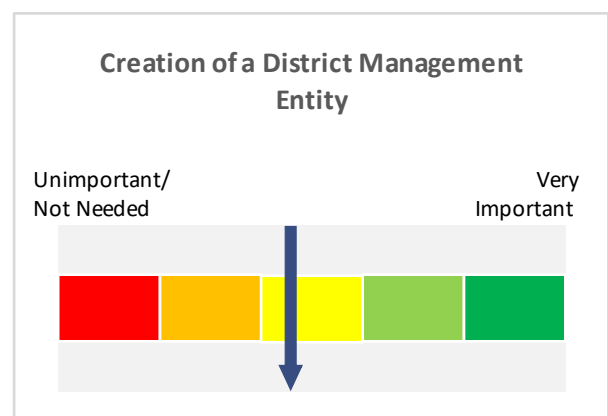
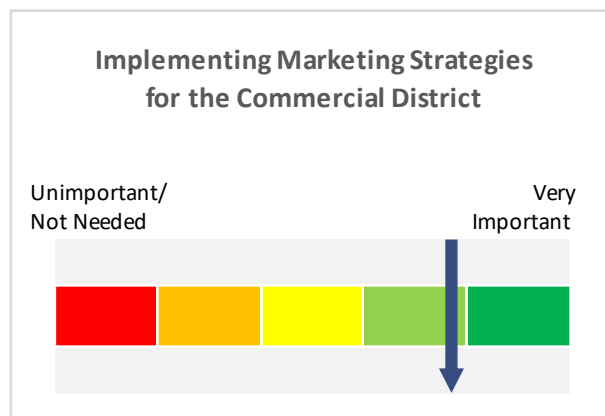
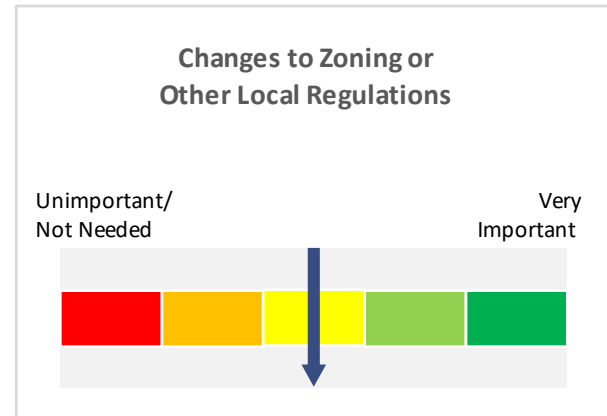
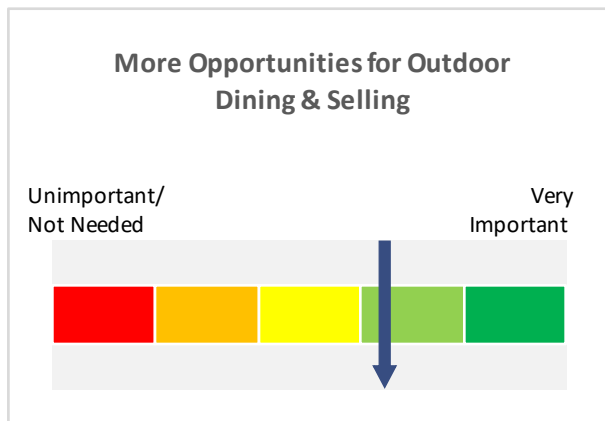
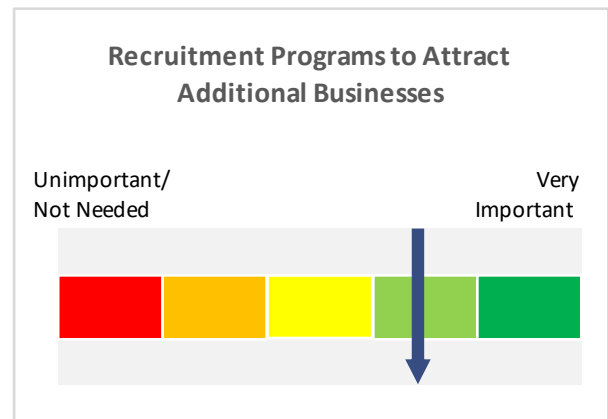
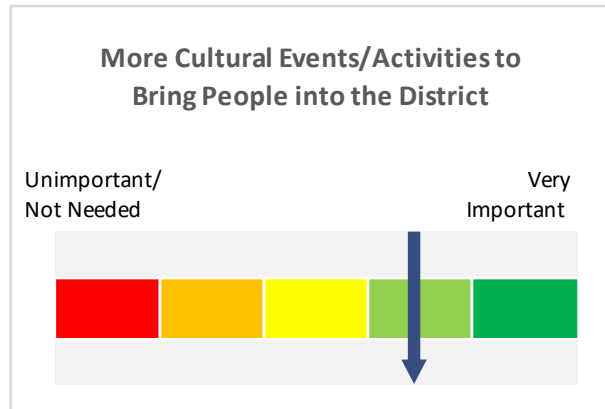
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

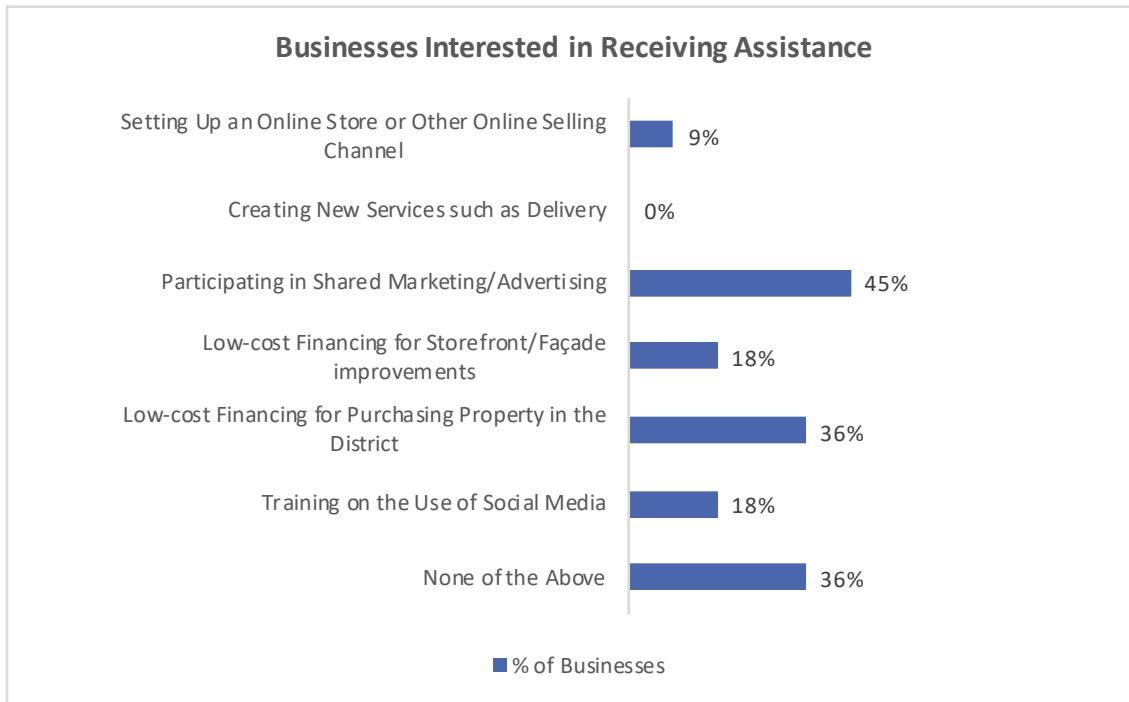
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Businesses Support

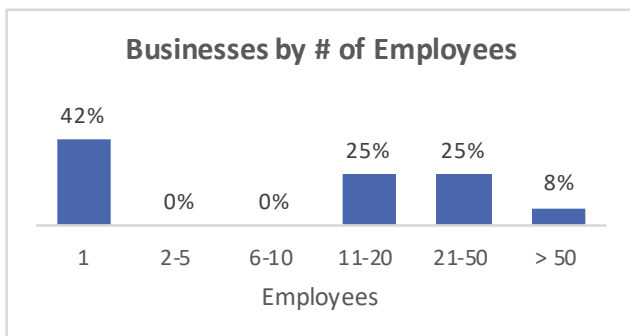
64% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



Business Characteristics

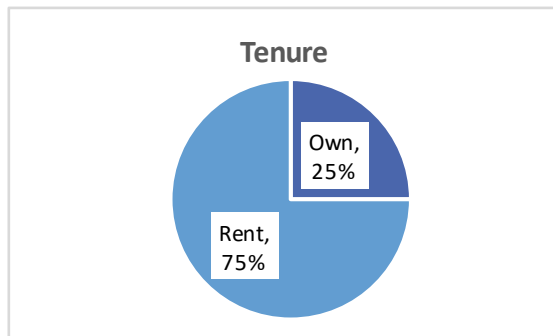
Business Size

42% of businesses are microenterprises (≤ 5 employees).



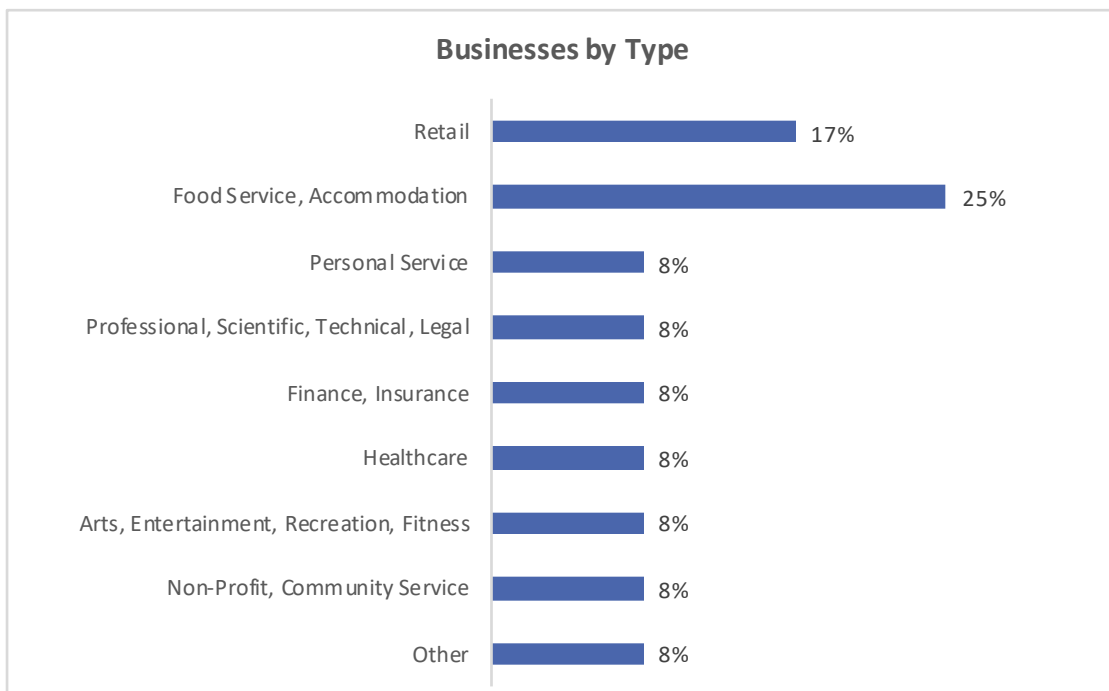
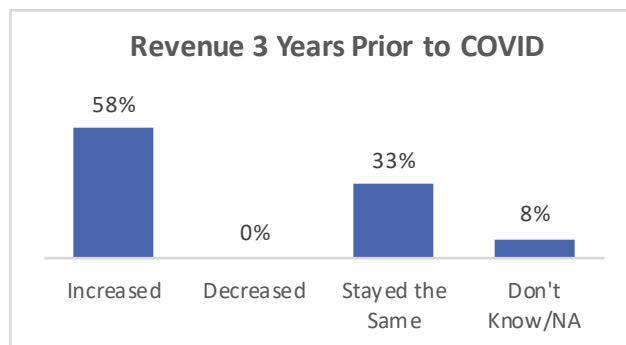
Business Tenure

75% of businesses rent their space.



Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

58% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.



Business Survey Results - Data Tables

Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

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

Winchester	12
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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	5	42%
2 to 5	0	0%
6 to 10	0	0%
11 to 20	3	25%
21 to 50	3	25%
More than 50	1	8%
Total	12	100%

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

Own	3	25%
Rent	9	75%
Total	12	100%

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

Increased	7	58%
Decreased	0	0%
Stayed about the Same	4	33%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	8%
Total	12	100%

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

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	2	17%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	3	25%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	1	8%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	1	8%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	1	8%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	1	8%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	1	8%
Non-Profit, Community Services	1	8%
Other	1	8%
Total	12	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	0	0%
Dissatisfied	4	33%
Neutral	1	8%
Satisfied	7	58%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	1	8%
Neutral	4	33%
Satisfied	7	58%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Access for Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	1	8%
Dissatisfied	5	42%
Neutral	2	17%
Satisfied	4	33%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	3	25%
Neutral	1	8%
Satisfied	4	33%
Very Satisfied	4	33%
Total	12	100%

Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	1	8%
Neutral	3	25%
Satisfied	5	42%
Very Satisfied	3	25%
Total	12	100%

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

Licensing or permitting regulations	4	33%
Signage regulations	1	8%
Parking regulations	6	50%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	3	25%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	1	8%
Historic District regulations	1	8%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	0	0%
None - No Issues with regulations	5	42%

Impacts of COVID

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

Decline in revenue	9	75%
Employee layoff	6	50%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	11	92%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	7	58%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	2	17%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	11	92%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	8	67%
None of the Above	0	0%

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

Increased compared to 2019	2	17%
Stayed about the same as 2019	0	0%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	5	42%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	3	25%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	1	8%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	0	0%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	8%
Total	12	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	0	0%
About the same number as before COVID	1	8%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	2	17%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	3	25%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	4	33%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	1	8%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	8%
Total	12	100%

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

Operating at full capacity	2	17%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	10	83%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	0	0%
Permanently closed due to COVID	0	0%
Total	12	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	2	17%
Moderately Important	4	33%
Important	6	50%
Very Important	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	17%
Moderately Important	2	17%
Important	6	50%
Very Important	1	8%
Total	12	100%

Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	2	17%
Important	9	75%
Very Important	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	4	33%
Moderately Important	4	33%
Important	4	33%
Very Important	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	1	8%
Important	2	17%
Very Important	9	75%
Total	12	100%

Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	9	75%
Important	1	8%
Very Important	1	8%
Total	12	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	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	17%
Moderately Important	2	17%
Important	5	42%
Very Important	3	25%
Total	12	100%

More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	25%
Moderately Important	0	0%
Important	4	33%
Very Important	4	33%
Total	12	100%

Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	2	17%
Important	4	33%
Very Important	5	42%
Total	12	100%

Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	17%
Moderately Important	2	17%
Important	5	42%
Very Important	3	25%
Total	12	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	17%
Moderately Important	5	42%
Important	4	33%
Very Important	0	0%
Total	12	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	3	25%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	5	42%
Important	1	8%
Very Important	2	17%
Total	12	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	1	9%
Creating new services such as delivery	0	0%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	5	45%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	2	18%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	4	36%
Training on the use of social media	2	18%
None of the above	4	36%



Improve zoning, licensing, and permitting interactions






Provided by SME Consultant

BSC Group, Inc.

Location

Various locations - subject matter is about processes not a location-based project

Origin	Multiple municipalities – Examples are not site/community specific
Budget	 Low budget (Under \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short term (Less than 5 years) – many achievable in days to weeks
Risk	 Low risk
Key Performance Indicators	Municipalities needed to modify permitting requirements/procedures to meet the needs of businesses who needed to change/modify business practices to respond to COVID and public health concerns and regulations. This included actions by municipalities to expedite permitting processes. Success is measured by tracking: the ease of filing and obtaining a permit; how quickly permits are issued; and the ratio of permits issued vs. permits denied.
Partners & Resources	Municipal Departments, Boards and Commissions such as: Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, License Commission Health Department, Police, Fire, Department of Public Works (DPW) Business support organizations such as Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts (BID's)

Diagnostic

The COVID-19 pandemic required municipalities to rapidly adapt their regulatory processes through an evolving public health crisis to help businesses survive. Though challenging, a crisis such as COVID presented communities and businesses with new opportunities for improved and streamlined operations.

When COVID-19 impacts reached Massachusetts in the spring of 2020, public health precautions quickly initiated a transition to less in-person contact for retail transactions. To adapt and remain in business, retailers sought approval for new actions such as: increased delivery service; short-term parking for take-out and curbside pickup; alcohol to go; and a transition from indoor to outdoor dining, fitness, shopping and recreational activities.

These changes required municipalities to consider new regulatory procedures, adaptation of prior regulations, and taking advantage of the state's relaxation of certain requirements. Throughout Massachusetts, municipalities and businesses met the COVID challenge by taking chances, being flexible, pivoting business models, and thinking creatively and "outside the box." Critical to the success was the transition to online permitting processes, permits and approvals for new approaches to deliver products/food to customers, leniency for outdoor eating and drinking, and other unique and creative solutions.

Action Items

Municipalities worked to quickly adapt or modify rules and regulations to support the business community, knowing that time was of the essence. The following actions were proven to be successful. These actions were either initiated by municipalities or requested by business owners and then approved by municipalities.

- Waive time limits for permits to minimize the need to re-apply to continue an approved action
- Encourage Boards and Commissions to hold joint meetings to expedite and streamline certain permitting processes
- Improve municipal websites and outreach to businesses to explain current as well as changes to the regulatory framework
- Encourage Planning Boards to either grant the following or gave planning staff the ability to provide administrative approvals to relax certain zoning requirements such as :
 - Temporary or permanent reduction in parking requirements to provide additional outdoor dining and gathering in areas currently used for parking.
 - Relaxed signage requirements to allow temporary signs to promote outdoor sales and dining
- Establish procedures for police, fire and public works to easily review/approve requests to block-off on-street parking spaces or portions of streets to be used for outdoor dining/events
- Create requirements describing how to safely block-off portions of a roadway or on-street parking with rigid and visible barriers to allow them to be safely used by pedestrians/customers.
- Waive some permitting requirements and fast-track others for a more efficient permitting process to allow businesses to quickly take advantage of a more flexible regulatory framework.

Process

Promote associations who can speak for the greater good

- form new or strengthen existing business associations who speak for all the businesses in a commercial area to advocate for permitting and regulatory changes to benefit all businesses. This minimizes pitting the interests of one business versus another and provides a unified voice in promoting change.

Make it easier for businesses to find the information they need

- Municipalities should consolidate all relevant business information in a single location on the municipality's website including permitting and regulatory items. Streamlined permitting and joint meetings of permitting boards is also encouraged to expedite permit requests.

Propose that successful temporary regulations to become permanent

- Where permitting changes made to accommodate COVID have proven successful, municipalities should consider making temporary changes permanent.

Roll-over permits

- Some municipalities who issued permits in 2020 for COVID related accommodations have agreed to allow those permits to "roll-over" to 2021 through a written request from the business, and therefore avoiding a full permit re-application.



Zoning for a Resilient Downtown



Provided by SME Consultant Levine Planning Strategies, LLC

Location Burlington, VT

Origin	City of Burlington (VT) Office of City Planning
Budget	 High Budget – \$450,000 (HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant)
Timeframe	 Medium Timeframe – 6 years (3 years' planning & 3 years to finalize code)
Risk	 Medium Risk – increased timeframe and cost helped reduce risk
Key Performance Indicators	Growth and survival of existing businesses; number of business expansions
Partners & Resources	Federal agencies; Community & Economic Development Office; Mayor's Office

Diagnostic

Downtown businesses often need to adapt and change quickly. However, many local zoning codes make it difficult to quickly adjust business models. In many cities, use tables are many pages long, with many common uses requiring a discretionary review. Adding a new use or adding space to a business, even on a trial basis, can be difficult to do. In addition, changes may trigger increased parking requirements that cannot easily be met in a downtown setting. For these reasons, many downtown businesses are reluctant to change their model and potentially find a successful new strategy.

This problem predates COVID-19. However, in the wake of the pandemic, businesses had to adapt quickly, experiment, and be prepared to provide new uses to attract customers. In the short-term, many communities were flexible. Going forward, however, it's likely that many communities will return to reviewing changes in use or space. At the same time, research suggests that businesses need flexibility to succeed post-COVID-19.

Some communities have responded to this issue by reducing the number of uses in their zoning. Others have simply made it easier to add a new use on site or expand existing uses. Still others have looked to remove use limitations altogether in certain zones, focusing on goals outlined in local plans to guide decisions.

Action Items

An important step to help businesses post-COVID is to think about zoning requirements as a small business might. What if a record store wanted to add a small bookstore in the back of their space? Would that be allowed? Would they have to somehow provide additional parking? Would it require a public process with the risk and cost of being denied? If so, communities should think about whether that is their goal. In some cases, it may make sense to keep zoning restrictions on certain uses. For example, drive thru restaurants often have negative externalities, especially in a downtown location. On the other hand, a walk-up window for pedestrians is likely to have few of those negative effects, and can help drive local businesses as visitors continue to be wary of going indoors. Once you have a sense of how your zoning affects business decisions, it would be advisable to check in with some local businesses to get their thoughts as well.

With that data in hand, communities can use their plans to guide how to change their zoning. A few small steps may make a big difference. These could include:

- Reducing or removing regulations on outdoor dining in zoning. Licensing and other municipal processes can usually suffice;
- Revising parking requirements for new uses downtown. Re-tenanting an existing space, or changing from one use to another, should not generally trigger any new parking requirements; and
- Streamlining the review process for changes in use. Either reduce the number of use groups in zoning so small changes don't trigger zoning review or allow more uses by right. If some public review is appropriate, rely on staff-level administrative review as much as possible.

Process

Burlington's planning process began in earnest in 2010 when the city received a Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. That grant made it possible to develop a plan for the downtown and waterfront, called "PlanBTV." The vision in that plan was then codified in a form-based code beginning in 2013. The new zoning reduced the number of uses downtown by 50%. More importantly, it made it easier for a business to modify their use category by significantly reducing the timeframe and risk to the business. Changes such as these are ongoing. Most recently, city planners have worked to update the definitions and uses for food and beverage uses to recognize the rise of new dining and drinking options.

Not every community needs to have as extensive a process as Burlington. Simply auditing the use table, streamlining the list of uses, and making it easier to change from one use to another, would be helpful for downtown businesses post-pandemic. That process could be done at a much lower cost and much more quickly.



The Pine Street Enterprise District in Burlington (Credit above & cover: David White, FAICP, Burlington Office of City Planning)



Strategy Guide for Activating Public Spaces






Provided by SME Consultant

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

Location

Worcester, MA

Origin	CMRPC
Budget	 Medium
Timeframe	 Medium Term
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Communities will have realistic action plan for easily permitting commercial and community activity on a range of public spaces
Partners & Resources	Regional Planning Agency, Municipal Planning Boards and Staff

Action Items

1.0 Background and Baseline Research

- 1.1 Inventory of public spaces (public and private): Identify the location and basic characteristics of all public spaces within the study area, including access, ownership and suitability for public activities
- 1.2 Inventory of existing permitted activities and processes : Review all processes for issuing of permits for public and privately organized events within public spaces
- 1.3 Stakeholder Identification and Outreach: Identify and solicit feedback from organizations, companies and individuals that have in the past held public events or showed interest in holding public events within the town or study area
- 1.4 SWOT Analysis : Analyze potential opportunities and challenges around utilization of public spaces
- 1.5 Case Studies and Resources: Research similar communities in the state and region and create a catalogue of realistic, achievable activities

2.0 Community Input

- 2.1 Municipal Listening Session(s): Solicit feedback on existing processes, paying special attention to what has worked, where friction points may be
- 2.2 Community / Stakeholder Listening Session(s): Solicit feedback from community stakeholders on opportunities and challenges
- 2.3 Summary of Community Feedback: Summarize all community feedback and develop recommendations for reducing friction points

3.0 Strategy Guide Development and Review

- 3.1 Summary and analysis of existing processes
- 3.2 Opportunities and Challenges
- 3.3 Case Studies
- 3.4 Recommendations for streamlining the permitting process
- 3.5 Review all recommendations with municipality and incorporate recommended edits

Process

1. Outreach and background research
2. Develop draft materials and visuals
3. Municipal review and revision






La Santa Tacos and Tequila [photo by Jeff Owen, NMCOG]

Tyngsborough: Expedite License Modifications for Outdoor Dining



Provided by SME Consultant Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

Location Tyngsborough, MA

Origin	Baker-Polito Administration, ABCC, and Tyngsborough Board of Selectmen
Budget	 Low- Applications do not require a fee. Municipal staff time is required for processing, review and inspections.
Timeframe	 Short-term – Less than 1 week for the community to revise procedures, notify establishments and receive applications, plus up to 1 week to review and approve applications
Risk	 Low – Potential lack of political will; opposition from abutters or neighborhood; noise levels, especially late evening
Key Performance Indicators	Modifications to licensed premises permitting the service of alcohol in a designated outdoor area allowed restaurants to increase their revenue stream. Indicators could include the number of license modifications approved, number of customers served, sales, and the change in visitors to the district. Cooperation of the establishments would be required.
Partners & Resources	Local Licensing Authority (e.g. Board of Selectmen); municipal departments responsible for the review of the applications and required inspections, e.g. Fire Department, Building Inspector

Diagnostic

The process for obtaining a modification to a victualler (restaurant) license or a license to serve alcohol for on-premise consumption typically requires 60 days.

Due to emergency health restrictions imposed early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants were not allowed to provide indoor sit-down service, greatly impacting their revenues. Furthermore, restaurants that did not already have a license that allowed for outdoor service needed a seek a license modification and demonstrate their ability to comply with COVID-19 health and safety requirements. Without a streamlined process in place, the license modification process would typically take up to two months, jeopardizing the survival of many restaurants that were already struggling.

Action Items

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

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

The Board of Selectmen utilized this same application process to consider modifications to Common Victualler Licenses, which are the license required to serve food in Tyngsborough. If a business possessed both types of licenses, they were able to apply for both modifications with a single application.



Top Photo: Dream Diner Outdoor Seating (photo credit: www.dreamdiner.com)



Center Photo: Dream Diner Tent with Outdoor Seating (photo by Jeff Owen, NMC06)



Bottom Photo: Cazadores Restaurante Mexicano Tent with Outdoor Seating (photo by Jeff Owen, NMC06)

Action Items (continued)

In order to accommodate license modification requests in time for Phase II reopening of outdoor service at restaurants, Tyngsborough's Board of Selectmen (the Local Licensing Authority) notified holders of Common Victualler Licenses and on premise liquor licenses of the streamlined license modifications within days of the State's announcement.

Fourteen applications were received in Tyngsborough, including eight restaurants located along Middlesex Road, the town's primary commercial corridor and an area described locally as "restaurant row". Every application was approved within one week. Unlike locations within some downtown areas, outdoor dining accommodation could be addressed on-site in this suburban setting.

Process

- Local Licensing Authority (e.g. the Board of Selectmen) amends temporary license modification process.
- Licensing Agent sends a notice to all Common Victualler and Section 12 Liquor License holders informing them of the opportunity to modify their licenses.
- Applications are reviewed by all relevant departments to ensure that plans adhere to all relevant local, state, and federal building codes, public safety orders, and health guidelines.
- Prior to opening, business are required to be in compliance with both the general business and industry specific standards released by the Commonwealth, including maintaining a COVID-19 control plan template, posting a compliance attestation poster visible to patrons and other visitors, and additional signage to describe the rules for maintaining social distancing, hygiene protocols, and cleaning.
- An onsite inspection is performed prior to commencing outdoor service.
- Tyngsborough imposed the following additional limitations:
 1. The outdoor area must be roped off, fenced off, or blocked off by other means.
 2. Installation of a tent was permitted with inspection by the Tyngsborough Fire Department but tents must be open aired, meaning only a roof. No tents with side walls were permitted.
 3. All tables must be 6 feet apart.
 4. No parties of larger than 6 people were permitted.
 5. All employees must wear masks at all times.
 6. Patrons are required to wear masks except for when seated at their own table.

Streamlining Special Event Permitting



Provided by SME Consultant

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Location

Osceola County, Florida

Origin	Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, Osceola County (FL) Board of County Commissioners Community Development Department
Budget	 Low-cost, municipal staff engagement
Timeframe	 Short-term, may require changes to municipal review processes
Risk	 Low risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of permits reviewed and issued, length of permitting and approval process
Partners & Resources	Municipal departments, to include, but not limited to Planning, Police, Fire, Building, DPW, and Health, and Town/City Administration; DLTA funding to assess permitting
Diagnostic	<p>The COVID pandemic has unleashed creativity and permissiveness in municipal special events permitting that cities and towns want to hold onto as society opens up. Elements to be retained include easing the burden of applying for permits and making sure costs reflect the amount of effort necessary to process the permits and do not result in inequitable access by different groups.</p> <p>More efficient and easier permitting processes can lead to quicker turn-around and peace of mind for those organizing these events for the community. Streamlining event permitting can help agencies organizing events to use their resources more efficiently and will result in better events when permitted on a singular parcel as zoning dictates.</p> <p>The following example is a regulatory process taken from Osceola County in Florida that employs best practices for special event permitting: a central repository for application with the ability to submit electronically and follow the permit review process via electronic permitting. Review processes are done transparently and discussed at routinely scheduled meetings in conformance with the local government's regulatory codes.</p>

Action Item

In order to streamline your permitting process, the municipality should review its permitting powers: who reviews and approves, how much does the permit cost, is there an appeal procedure, etc.

The following Best Practices can be used to improve communication between stakeholders and the community about the local permitting process for special events. For this best practice, the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners utilizes these techniques to ensure an expedient, open permitting process for their special events.

- Single Point of Contact
- Users' Guide to Permitting with Permitting Flow Charts & Checklists
- Clear Submittal Requirements
- Concurrent Applications
- Combined Public Hearings, if needed
- Pre-Application Process
- Development Review Committee (DRC)
- Regularly scheduled inter-departmental meetings
- Physical proximity of professional staff to review

These best practices apply to streamlining special event applications that are allowed in specific areas of a community. In most cases, the zoning district would dictate the type of uses allowed in a community. This particular example permits special events as a type of use in commercially zoned areas and have a limitation of occurrences per calendar year.

Process

As listed above, streamlined permitting can be realized if a municipality explores the concepts below. Not only has COVID maybe expedited these processes, but it has likely created a more permanent change in the ways municipalities interact with special events.


1. Single Point of Contact. The Community Development Department was the repository for the initial application and would determine if requirements were met leading to the scheduling of a Development Review Committee Meeting.
2. Users' Guide to Permitting and Permitting Flow Charts and Checklists. If a community already has a product like this, the process for permitting for special events can be incorporated into the existing guide. As the government provided an electronic permitting system, following the flow of the permit was easy for the applicant to see what either was missing or if a staff review had occurred.
3. Clear Submittal Requirements. Special event permit applications required documented permission from the property owner, site plan, photos, proof of insurance, and a narrative description of the event. Other documents would be required if necessary.
4. Concurrent Applications. Other required application permits, and their approvals, would need to be furnished as part of the permit approval process. The communication internally would be to ensure those permit approvals were occurring with the County Health Department or Public Safety, if necessary.
5. Combined Public Hearings, if needed. This was not a likely occurrence due to the local regulation, however, concurrent approvals would occur at a designated meeting of the local Development Review Committee.
6. Pre-Application Process. The point of contact for the process was the specific department staff person who would be able to address outstanding issues and questions regarding the permit requirements.

Process (Continued)

Development Review Committee. The administrative approval of the DRC would occur either through a consent agenda or if pulled to be addressed publicly. The DRC included DPW, Buildings, and Planning/Zoning. The Departments of Public Safety and Health and the School District are often attendees at these meetings.

Regularly scheduled inter-departmental meetings. These meetings kept the issues of the specific special event permit in the County's pipeline of coordinated reviews.

Physical proximity of professional staff to review. The County Administration Building housed all departments. The housing of all departments in the building allowed for a One-Stop shop of sorts. Like with other permitting, increased the ability of interdepartmental staff communications with applicants and each other.

	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Osceola County Special Event Application</h3> <p>Osceola County Board of County Commissioners Community Development Department 1 Courthouse Square, Suite 1400 Kissimmee, FL 34741 Phone: (407)742-0200 Specialpermits@osceola.org</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Application No.: _____ Date Received: _____</p>
<p><u>Submittal Checklist</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Property Owner Authorization <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of Ownership <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Description <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Narrative describing the event in detail. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sounds which will project beyond the property lines. • Vehicular Traffic and parking <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site plan showing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lot Dimensions, • Location of Special Event (with all details of set-up), Setbacks of set-up from property and right-of-way lines, Driveways, identifying parking and access, roads, tents, signs, portable toilets, and any other structures and setbacks from property lines and any other existing site improvements <input type="checkbox"/> Application Fees \$620.00 	<p>In accordance with Chapter 3, Article 3.8, Section 3.8.1.O of the Osceola County Land Development Code, authorization for a Special Event is issued to:</p> <p><u>Applicant</u></p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Agent/Lessee: _____ Tax ID# _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Email: _____ Phone: _____</p> <p><u>Event Details</u></p> <p>Address of Event: _____</p> <p>Parcel Number: _____</p> <p>Dates of Event: _____ Hours: _____</p> <p>Event on County property? Yes (<input type="checkbox"/>) No (<input type="checkbox"/>) If yes provide liability Insurance. The insurance shall have a limit not less than \$1 million per occurrence for the general aggregate.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Details of Event: (a narrative may be attached to describe the event in detail.)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

An application like this existed both as a fillable paper version and electronically at the county's permitting website.

Permitting Pop-Up Events



Provided by SME Consultant

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Location

Fort Worth, TX; Austin, TX; Burlington, VT

Origin	Fort Worth, TX; Austin, TX; Burlington, VT
Budget	 Medium cost, municipal staff participation/training and possible investment in permitting software
Timeframe	 Medium-term, will require changes to municipal review processes
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of permits reviewed and issued, length of permitting and approval process, collaborator level of satisfaction
Partners & Resources	Municipal departments, to include, but not limited to Planning, Police, Fire, Building, DPW, and Health, and Town/City Administration; DLTA funding to assess permitting
Diagnostic	<p>As downtowns emerge from the pandemic partners, collaborators and business improvement districts are eager to plan and hold pop-up (time-limited and purposefully impermanent) events, such as a pancake breakfast, to bring people back to these vital retail and commercial centers. In Springfield MA both the city and collaborators have been frustrated by the city's event permitting process and are eager to seize this moment to improve the process. Issues identified include: lack of an on-line event permitting process; requirement to pay fees using cash; necessity to make in-person visits to multiple city offices; time required, and confusion about the materials required to make the request. Springfield is in the midst of addressing this issue; Fort Worth TX, Austin TX and Burlington VT are Best Practice sites as they have implemented on-line relatively easy to navigate event permitting processes. Fort Worth has a robust on-line event permitting system that includes a downloadable manual as well as numerous topic specific PDFs and a phone number to call with questions and/or for additional information. Austin TX has created the Austin Center for Events, an interdisciplinary team to assist applicants through the event permitting process, and Burlington VT produced an exemplary manual in 2018 that is referenced by most cities working on this issue.</p> <p>More efficient and easier permitting processes can lead to quicker turn-around and peace of mind for those organizing these events for the community and will increase the likelihood of such events happening and bringing people back to our city and town centers and other commercial districts. Implementing on-line permitting for local government is an appropriate and approved use of COVID recovery funds from the federal government so it is timely to advance this best practice.</p>

Action Plan

Permitting a pop-up event efficiently requires municipal staff to differentiate permitting processes for permanent versus impermanent events. An important pre-requisite for a user-friendly efficient pop-up permitting process is a user-friendly municipal website. Making sure your municipal website is easy to navigate and includes a "How do I..." option is recommended because many applicants will come to the municipality not knowing where to start. Ideally the municipality will accept pop-up event applications electronically, and this may require new software, staff training, and updates to the existing municipal permitting processes; additional best practices are to identify a municipal staff person charged with helping applicants to navigate the process and including a flow chart or other visual display of the process. In Burlington VT the event permitting process is facilitated by an Associate Planner in the Planning Department but the approvals and permits are granted by the Department of Public Works (DPW), the entity responsible for streets and rights of way-the location where most events happen. In Fort Worth TX they have an Outdoor Events Manager to facilitate the process and they differentiate between neighborhood events (that require a one-page form) and larger city-wide events that require a 6 page form).

Just as many cities and towns have a Development Review Committee, made of municipal staff representing the departments that need to sign off on new developments (DPW, Planning, Building, Police, Fire, Health, Legal, Licensing), it is recommended that municipalities form a comparable pop-up event review committee. In Springfield this group is called the "Events and Festival Committee". Applicants visit this committee to propose pop-up events and receive preliminary approval, and then have to visit all the participating departments to receive their separate approvals. Stream-lining this process to move from paper to an electronic application would enable the Events & Festivals committee to forward their preliminary approval to all the relevant municipal departments clearly stating any necessary supplemental information required from the applicant. The applicant provides the necessary information electronically and the permit is issued.

Pop-up event applications can be simplified, but by their very nature are not simple and it may make sense to explain this to potential applicants. Applicants will need to explain where the event is taking place, provide a site plan, proof of insurance, and an operations plan. Fort Worth TX provides sample traffic plans and sample site plans as part of the application process on their outdoor events webpage.



Office of Outdoor Events

Any outdoor gathering on public or private property that attracts more than 500 attendees, requires a street to be closed, sells food or beverages, or uses tents, stages, bleachers, fireworks, open flames or portable toilets requires a city permit. The rules also apply to parades, neighborhood events requiring the use of city streets, events in parks and some First Amendment activity.

Events conducted entirely on the property of a church, educational institution, college or university campus, or on property containing an occupied residence are exempt. Also, events per contracts with the City or at City-owned facilities and at the Texas Motor Speedway are exempt.

Event organizers are required to apply to the city within a lead time based on event size and purpose in order to obtain approval, be placed on the city's Event Calendar, attend the Pre-Event Committee Meeting and provide notice to surrounding property owners. Two committees are in charge of scheduling events, reviewing event plans and applications. The Event Calendar Committee includes city staff and representatives from Sundance Square, Downtown Fort Worth Inc., the Cultural District, Fort Worth South, the Chambers of Commerce and the Stockyards. The Pre-Event Committee includes city staff and representatives from Trinity Metro, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission and various stakeholders. A designated employee from the City's Public Events Department will serve as special events manager to coordinate the process.

Please carefully read the guidelines below for **document submission deadlines** specifically for Neighborhood Events and Parades, Large Outdoor Events and Parades, and First Amendment activity.



Contact Us

Location
Fort Worth

Ordinance

- [View the ordinance »](#)
- [View the latest updates »](#)

(PDF, 86KB)

Other

View information on Fort Worth street classifications in the [Master Thoroughfare Plan](#).

Staff Contact:
Cynthia Alexander, Outdoor Events Manager
817-392-7894

Office of Outdoor Events, City of Fort Worth, TX
<https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/departments/public-events/outdoor-events>

Process

Permitting a Pop-Up event efficiently requires municipal staff (especially decision-makers) to believe in the importance and utility of pop-up events. Municipalities need a pop-up event champion(s) to secure the necessary human and financial resources to make these processes work efficiently and effectively. Consider reaching out to your BID or any existing business support organization if you are experiencing push-back from CEOs or other decision-makers. Investing in an on-line permitting software package and related training and web-site updates and refinements is the ideal process for facilitating pop-up events for larger municipalities hoping to host numerous events annually. Fort Worth TX is using Accela for their on-line permitting. The pandemic has taught cities and towns around the country that we do not need as much paper and in-person contact as we used to think we did and that we can conduct work on-line safely, securely and efficiently. Moving to on-line applications has increased employee safety, customer satisfaction and will facilitate pop-up events.

As identified in the Action Plan, the process to make pop-up event permitting more efficient is:

1. Assess your current situation: are your collaborators and affected municipal staff happy with the existing process? Identify 'pain points' and start improving there. Who makes decisions and why? Who is missing? And what can you learn from COVID innovations that can become permanent?
2. User-friendly municipal website. Fort Worth, TX, designed their page to have a landing page where you could easily find the documents and requirements of what was needed for special events. Additionally, a citation and link to the city ordinance is presented which establishes the justification for the requirements to follow.
3. On-line and/or e-permitting software. At a minimum accept applications via email, and consider investing in e-permitting software, especially after the pandemic as such investments by municipal government are an approved use of federal COVID recovery funds. Accela permitting software is being used in Fort Worth to process pop-up event applications.
4. Identify and publicize a Pop-up event coordinator. A municipal staff person or department needs to be identified as the primary contact for pop-up permits. The staff person assists the applicant with ensuring the review process is comprehensible and efficient and that all the requirements of the application are met. In Burlington, VT, the Associate Planner in the Planning Department is the facilitator of the application and process. In Fort Worth, the Office of Outdoor Events has a staff contact, an Outdoor Events Manager, who is tasked with facilitating the process of review and determining whether an application is for neighborhood events or larger city-wide events, which is determined in accordance with their City Ordinance.
5. Create a Manual that describes the process and publicize it widely and regularly. All three example cities have developed beautiful, easy to follow manuals that not only explain the local permitting process but also help applicants differentiate between the kinds of pop-up events possible and how to design and implement effective ones.
6. Provide sample documents. Fort Worth requires a site plan and offers a sample version on the permit website to make it easier for applicants to understand what is needed.

Process (Continued)

7. Create a pop-up event permitting review committee comprised of the municipal staff representing departments that need to approve the permits: Streets (DPW), law enforcement and public safety, Insurance (Legal), Parks or Schools if not on the streets, and others as appropriate to your situation.

For municipalities not yet ready to move to an on-line permitting process, it is recommended that you mimic the effectiveness of on-line permitting in real life by forming a pop-up event review committee, similar to a Development Review Committee, with very clear guidance on all information required of applicants to host a pop-up event and commit to requiring no more than two meetings with the applicant: one for preliminary approval and the second to receive any information missing from the first visit. Each department that needs to sign off should delegate a pop-up event staff person and a back-up. Fees should be able to be paid using credit cards or other on-line payment methods.

Some additional resources utilized for this document and will be used to explore further recommendations for permitting pop-up events can be found here:

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission produced a Toolkit on "The Pop-Up Economy" that explains three different kinds of pop-up events: shops, events and planning, emphasizing the temporary nature of pop-up events and how cities and towns can more easily facilitate such happenings.

<https://www.dvrpc.org/reports/MIT026.pdf>



Determining a District Management Model for Downtown Reading






Provided by SME Consultant

Ann McFarland Burke , Downtown Consultant

Location

Reading, MA

Origin	Town of Reading, MA
Budget	 A Massachusetts Downtown Initiative grant provided Technical Assistance. The Town provided staff support and early coordination.
Timeframe	 The process took approximately 18 months. This timeframe was expanded due to the pandemic and extensive community education undertaken as part of the process.
Risk	 Political , property owner, tenant and other stakeholder consensus for preferred organization model is required to successfully establish a downtown organization
Key Performance Indicators	Establishment of a sustainable downtown organizations with a real defined program , sustainability model and appropriate staff support.
Partners & Resources	Town of Reading, downtown advisory and steering committee and other downtown stakeholders

Diagnostic

The creation of a downtown management organization was intended to establish a dedicated organization that would provide supplemental programs, services and advocacy for the downtown. The downtown organization would undertake activities to attract businesses, investment, customers and residents to downtown. These could include marketing, placemaking, business development and advocacy.

Determining the appropriate downtown management organization model was a unique process for the Reading community, downtown property owners and businesses. The process included extensive outreach and community education to explore program priorities, financial sustainability, organizational models and champions from both the private and public sector.

Action Item

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

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

Process

- The Town of Reading secured Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance funding and committed staff to initiate and support
- A large broad-based community advisory/working group was formed to provide input and feedback
- A survey was widely distributed to community residents, businesses and other stakeholders - 1600 responses were received providing insight into program priorities and community preferences

Process (Continued)

- **Community Outreach Event** - A Pizza/ Ice Cream Social brought over 150 residents to provide input
- **3 Community Forums** – Panels featuring executive directors of different types of downtown organizations described their programs, challenges and models.
- **Working sessions with Advisory committee** to discuss specific model alternatives / cost and benefits
- **One on one conversations** with key stakeholders
- **Consensus building** with stakeholders and recommendation of preferred model and next steps.
- **Transition from city led effort to Steering committee** comprised of property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to lead organizational effort. City staff continued staff support. TA support continued through additional MDI grant.
- **BID Steering Committee.** BID organizational process underway

Town of Reading Sponsored Pop-Up Event

ReImagine Reading
Pizza and Ice Cream Social



September 18th from 6 pm to 8pm
Pleasant Street Center
49 Pleasant Street

A pop-up public event to help launch a downtown organization featuring local businesses, free pizza, ice cream, photo booth and more

Please RSVP on Eventbrite by 9/16: https://ice_cream_social.eventbrite.com

ALL ARE WELCOME!

For more information, please contact Andrew MacNichol, Staff Planner at amacnichol@reading-ma.us



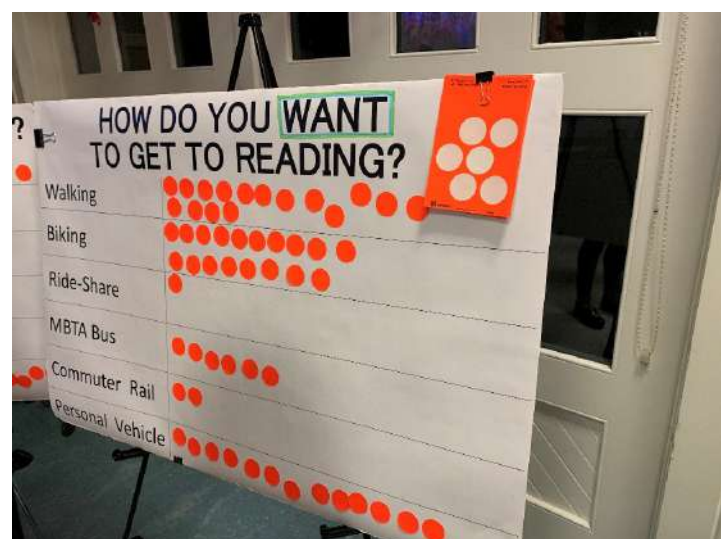
ReImagine Reading
SURVEY!



Or by web: <https://www.readingma.gov/reimagine-reading>

Scan QR Code with your phone camera to take the survey

More Info on back 



Stakeholder engagement process



Formation of a Business Improvement District in Hudson, MA



Provided by SME Consultant

Ann McFarland Burke, Downtown Consultant

Location

Hudson, MA

Origin	Downtown Hudson Business Association, Town of Hudson, MA	
Budget		MDI Grant for Technical Assistance. Town staff provided support to Steering committee.
Timeframe		Short term (<5 years). Planning, Signature campaign and Initiation took approximately 2 years
Risk		Medium Risk – property owner, business and political support required for success.
Key Performance Indicators	Formal vote by Board of Selectmen to formally establish the BID, corporate and tax filings completed, staffing and initiation of services	
Partners & Resources	Hudson Planning Dept, Property Owner Steering Committee, MDI, donated legal, graphic design	

Diagnostic

The Hudson BID was formed to capitalize on an emerging renaissance of downtown and sustain positive economic growth. New activities, cultural events and entrepreneurs had begun the positive momentum for the downtown and stakeholders believed a BID would help ensure sustainable success. The BID created a way for downtown Hudson to implement a BID Improvement Plan that included wayfinding, enhanced and well-managed parking, infrastructure improvements, marketing and event coordination. The BID services were designed to help the downtown continue to grow and thrive as a destination to shop, work, live and visit.

Hudson had an engaged business community, as well as property owner and town administration support for the effort.

The strong steering committee and town support resulted in overwhelming buy-in of property owners (80%) and the unanimous vote by the Board of Selectmen to approve the BID.

Action Item

To form a BID, a community must have the support of 60 % of the property owners representing 51% of the assessed within the proposed district. Hudson is a small BID with 120 parcels in the district.

The Downtown Hudson Business Association in partnership with the Town of Hudson spearheaded activities to form a BID and execute the step- by- step process to successfully create a BID in Hudson. This included:

- Identification of staff and financial resources
- Establishment of a strong property owner based steering committee
- Creation of a property owner outreach strategy
- Consensus among stakeholders on program priorities, fee structure, boundaries and budget
- Execution of the petition process and formal approval by Board of Selectmen
- Initialization of BID services

Process

Forming a Business Improvement District is a four phase project. Resources to help a community organize and execute the strategies and legislative authorization process can be found in these publications :

[How To Form a BID in MA- Manual available at www.mass.gov/ MDI](http://www.mass.gov/MDI)

[BID Case Studies available at www. massdevelopment.com](http://www.massdevelopment.com)

Hudson began their BID formation process scratch.. A working committee that included stakeholder property owners and planning staff undertook the following steps to successfully build a BID in Hudson.

BID Case

Process (Continued)

PHASE 1 - TEST THE FEASIBILITY

1. Verify minimum baseline conditions
2. Develop a case statement for the BID.
3. Introduce the BID concept to stakeholders
4. Recruit the steering committee.
5. Find the resources.
6. Establish preliminary boundaries.
7. Create a property owner database.
8. Develop a plan outline and timeline.

PHASE 2 - CREATE THE BID IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Conduct a needs assessment.
2. Outreach to the community.
3. Write the BID Improvement Plan.
4. Determine the budget.
5. Establish a fee formula.
6. Develop the Memorandum of Understanding.
7. Establish a billing mechanism.

PHASE 3 - CONDUCT THE PETITION PROCESS

1. Prepare the BID Petition.
2. Organize the Petition Signature Campaign.
3. Mail information package to property owners.
4. Conduct the signature campaign.
5. Organize the legislative authorization process



New entrepreneurs in Downtown Hudson



Gateway Rotary to Downtown

Process continued

PHASE 4 - INITIATE OPERATIONS

1. Form Bylaws and Articles of Organization.
2. Establish the initial Board of Directors.
3. Apply for nonprofit status.
4. Communicate with members.
5. Hire staff.
6. Select vendors.
7. Formally launch services.

Early Highlights

A Seat at the Table / Partnership with the Town of Hudson- The BID provides a unified voice and effective advocacy for downtown businesses and property owners.

- **Enhanced Downtown Appearance** - Implemented wayfinding signage, banners, hanging baskets, holiday lighting, benches and other physical enhancements to the district to create a more appealing experience for the visitors to downtown Hudson.

- **Rotary Gateway** - The BID has been active in the design, implementation and communication to property owners and tenants on the Gateway rotary project. These efforts help mitigate the disruption caused by construction by ensuring timely communication and execution of the project.

- **Business Support** -Actively working with property owners to retain and recruit tenants. Vacancy rates in the BID fell from 11% to 5% since its inception in 2017 . Provided free TA on PPP and other financial relief programs during Covid.

- **Creating Collaborations** - Formed new collaborations with groups and organizations that were previously untapped resources.

The Legislative Authorization Process





Source: Arlington

Establishment of Parking Benefit District for Improvements and Amenities in Arlington's Town Center






Provided by SME Consultant

Stantec Consulting, Inc.

Location

Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Origin	Town of Arlington
Budget	 <p>Low – No cost to the Town to establish a Parking Benefit District (PBD) through the Select Board. Arlington DPW manages maintenance tasks. The Town hired a contractor for beautification efforts and snow plowing.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (<5 years) – The establishment of the Parking Benefit District, implementation of new parking meters, and formal allocation of meter funds took approximately 1 year.</p>
Risk	 <p>Medium Risk – Political buy-in and support from local businesses and perception issue related to implementing new meters</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Parking meter revenue
Partners & Resources	Arlington Select Board, Arlington Department of Public Works, Finance and Capital Planning Committee
Diagnostic	<p>Arlington was in need of a dedicated revenue source to fund needed changes in their Town Center. The PBD was ideal for setting aside a stream of money to implement improvements that did not have priority in the Town's Capital Plan.</p> <p>Through a parking study, Arlington determined that a performance-based adjustment to their parking pricing would provide much needed curbside availability while increasing revenues. Arlington installed new meters and initiated the parking management changes during the PBD approval process.</p> <p>The PBD fund was created to support a wide range of physical improvements as well as administrative/maintenance responsibilities including installation & ongoing meter maintenance; the parking control officer's salary; credit card & collection fees; servicing lease payments for meters; implementing pay-by-phone; snow removal in parking lots; the Arlington Center Sidewalk Project (ongoing); and parking lot re-designs.</p>
Action Item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a Parking Advisory Committee, to manage the PBD. The Committee has complete flexibility to amend revenue allocation details and the operational/managerial structure, as the adopted local enabling legislation was written to ensure flexibility Establishing a system of accountability and trust for ongoing oversight by the Town's Financial Committee & Capital Planning Committee, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic reporting to committees & stakeholders, maintaining consistent engagement and input; and Making an annual presentation at Town Meeting Establishing a special revenue fund with a revolving fund structure for on-going parking meter revenues Defining a list of streetscape, mobility, connectivity, and accessibility improvements that are funded by the PBD special revenue fund

Process

In 2016, the Massachusetts General Court enacted the Municipal Modernization Act. One of the provisions of that law authorized the creation of parking benefit districts (PBDs).

The Town approved the article and adopted local legislation to create a PBD in Arlington Center with a defined geographic area, per State rules.

The Arlington Center Parking Benefit District Committee formed and developed a reporting structure to the Select Board, regularly proposes PBD-funded improvements, and manages PBD operations.

Once the PBD had been defined, parking meter revenue only is transferred into the Parking Benefit District Special Revenue fund, from which disbursements are made.

Following the adoption of the PBD, additional managerial responsibilities and expenditure management tasks may need to be assigned depending on the project type [e.g. the Department of Public Works manages sidewalk improvements].

Success Story

Upon adoption of the PBD no negative impacts have been identified. New parking meters on Massachusetts Avenue were readily embraced by the community.

The original PBD revenue projection presented to the Select Board was conservative. It has regularly exceeded expectations.

The PBD has created an appetite for parking meters in other districts, which are being explored.

While parking revenue was lower due to pandemic impacts, the Town took advantage of the MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces Grant in 2020 to create impactful temporary improvements downtown. PBD funds were used to supplement this award through the purchase of planters to beautify and protect outdoor dining areas.

In the future, the PBD will fund permanent installations of other temporary improvements including outdoor dining infrastructure and landscaping.



Public engagement flyer for PBD. Source, Arlington.



Plan of proposed downtown improvements, including PBD-funded features such as landscaped pots and benches, and sidewalk enhancements. Source, Town of Arlington.



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






Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

Wakefield, MA

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

Diagnostic

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

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

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

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

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

Action Item

The two overlapping programs took two different paths.

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



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



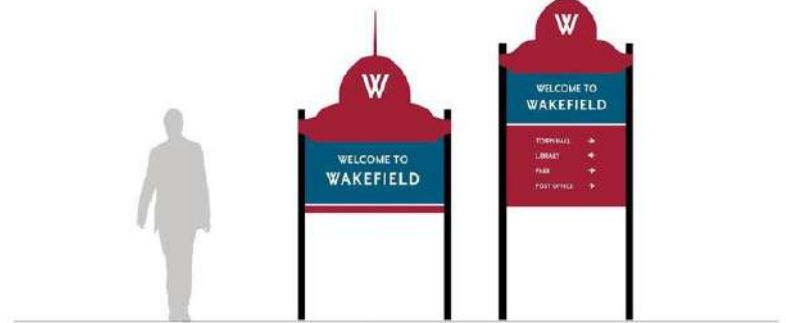
Old Band Stand adjacent to Lake Quannapowitt in Wakefield, MA

Process

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



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



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

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

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

Previous Historical Landscape Design for Wakefield's Branding and Wayfinding Shelves

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



Sailboat with cherries



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

Community Meeting and Open House: Hurd School future options

WAKEFIELD — The Town Council and Town Administrator Stephen P. Maio would like to give the public an update on the ongoing

evaluation of the Hurd School located at 27 Cordis Street in the "Lakeside" neighborhood. The public is invited to a second Open House and Community Meeting.

The first Open House and Community Meeting was held on Tuesday, June 5, at 6:15 p.m. at the school. The Town Administrator will lead the discussion and provide updates to the ongoing evaluation followed by a question and answer session about the building's future.

"After hearing from the public at our first meeting and evaluating our swing space and other needs, it is time to re-engage the neighborhood and community to discuss the best use of the building moving forward," according to the Town Administrator.

The Hurd School was declared excess property in 2005 by the Wakefield School Committee and

Stolen credit cards reported

WAKEFIELD — A Winslow Drive woman called police at about 11 a.m. yesterday to report that her credit cards had been stolen.

The woman noticed that the cards were missing over the weekend but was not sure when they were taken.

Police said that fraudulent charges were made using the credit cards at Home Depot in Danvers and Target in Stoneham. The cards have been cancelled.

At about 3 p.m. yesterday, a caller reported that a UPS truck took down some wires at the corner of Oak Street and Orchard Avenue. Police confirmed that they were cable wires and made sure they

POLICE Page 9

HURD Page 7

Kiosks coming to downtown

Town Council notebook

By MARK SARDELLA

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

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

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

KIOSKS Page 7



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



Kiosks back before Council tonight

Published on the July 16, 2018 edition.

WAKEFIELD — A plan to display wayfinding kiosks as a way to help drive visitors to the downtown area has been approved by the Town Council last night.

The council's board of consensus approved the plan to install the kiosks, which would have a digital component. The plan is to place the kiosks at four locations around town: one at the corner of Main and Water streets, one at the corner of Main and Albion streets, one at the corner of Main and Lake Avenue, and one at the corner of Main and Common streets.

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Kiosk Debate Dominates Town Council Meeting

Latest town effort to draw visitors to downtown faces no shortage of debate.

By Bob Harris, Staff Writer | July 16, 2018 11:15 pm ET

WAKEFIELD



WAKEFIELD — It's true that Lake Quannapowitt was formed by glacial ice some 12,000 years ago. It's true that the town's history is a rich one. But it's the town's future that's the real debate at tonight's Town Council meeting.

The debate was over the town's plan to install four new kiosks in downtown Wakefield. The kiosks would have a digital component and would be paid for by Wakefield Main Streets through their private fundraising efforts.

The kiosks will be placed at four locations around town: one at the corner of Main and Water streets, one at the corner of Main and Albion streets, one at the corner of Main and Lake Avenue, and one at the corner of Main and Common streets.

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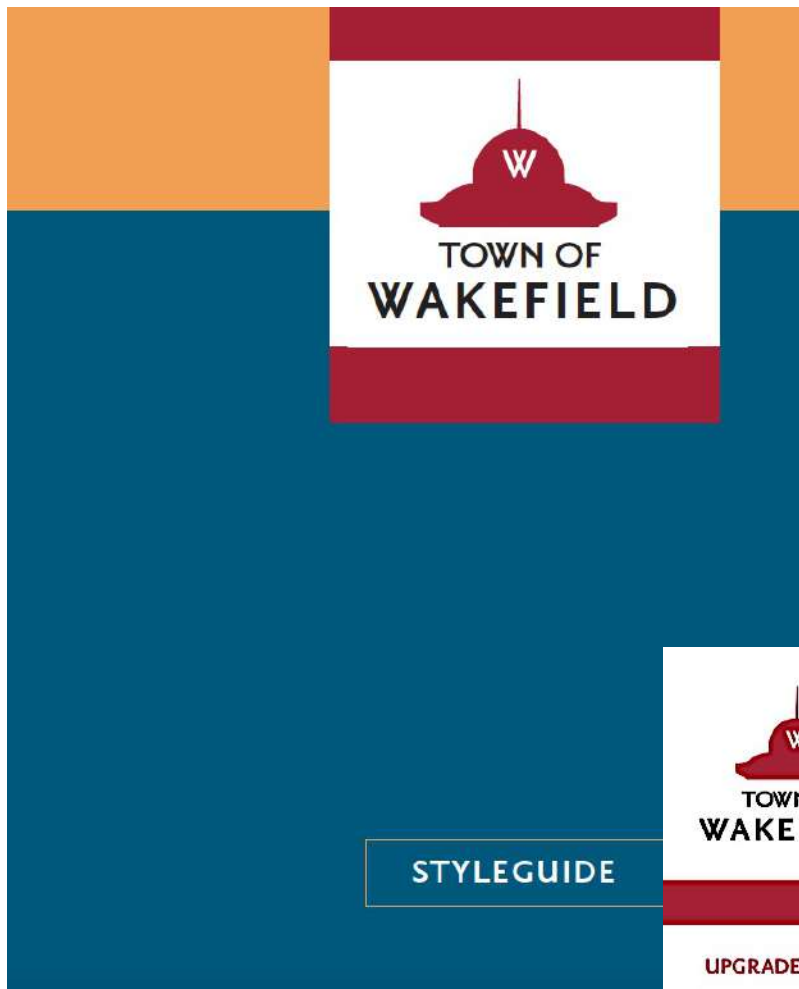


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UPGRADED DROP BOXES AT TOWN HALL



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

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

DATES TO NOTE

Tax Collector

Third-quarter actual real estate bill due:

February 1, 2021

Third-quarter actual personal property bill due:

February 1, 2021

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

Assessing Department

Abatement applications due:

February 1, 2021

Statutory exemptions due:

April 1, 2021



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

When preparing for a snow event, the Town often initiates a temporary restriction of on-street parking. This allows plowing crews and public safety vehicles to safely access the roads and perform curb-to-curb cleanup. Parking ban announcements and other emergency notifications are made via our CodeRED e-alert system.

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

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

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



Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Provided by SME Consultant

Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Worcester, MA

Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Provided by SME Consultant

Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Worcester, MA

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

Diagnostic (continued)

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

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

Action Item

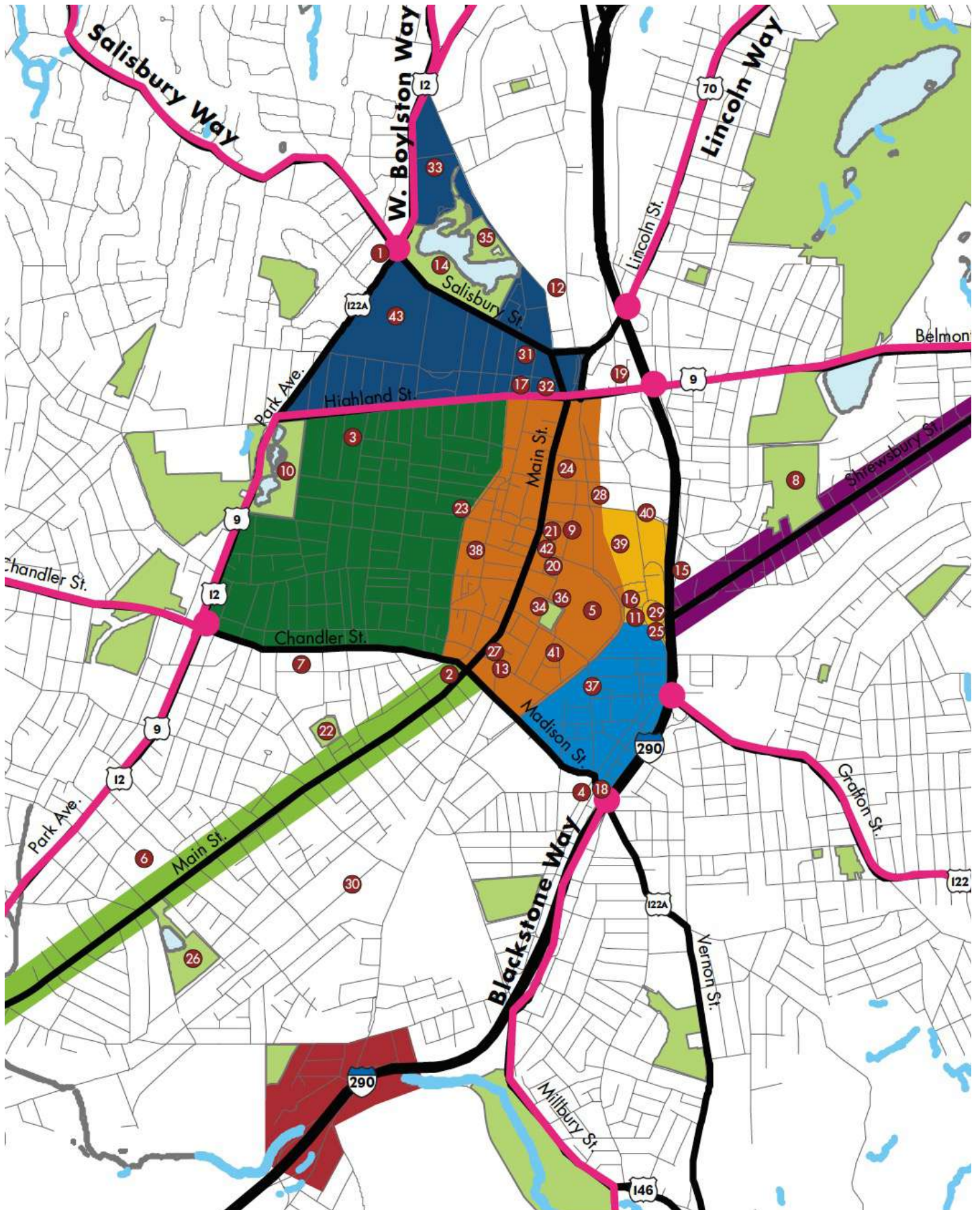
As this project continues to roll out it will be important to look at it in light of current development, updating locations and messages as-needed.

Things to consider adding in the future:

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

Process

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



Districts and Wayfinding analysis



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



Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

Well, ME

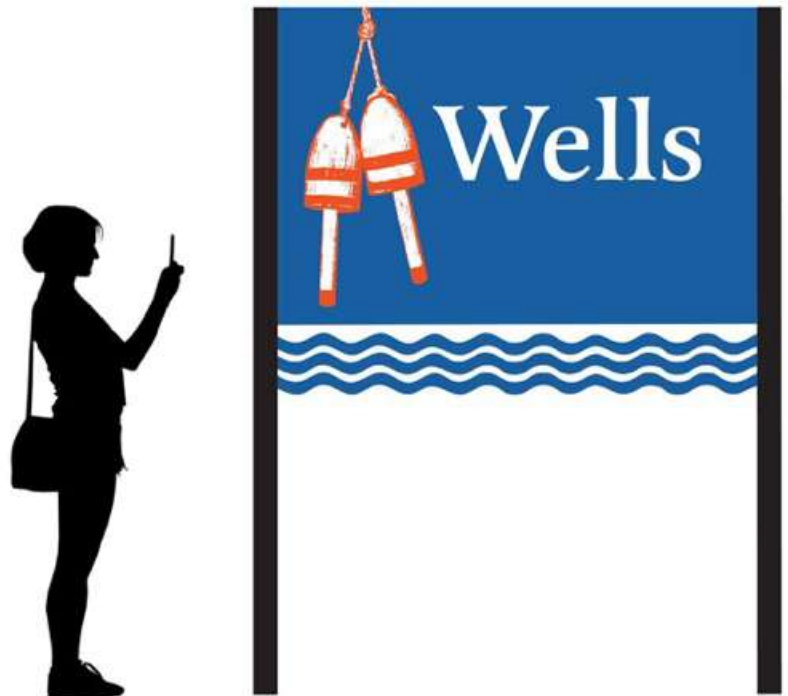
Origin	Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen
Budget	 Medium—\$30,000 design fee + \$80,000 for implementation
Timeframe	 Short- 8 months for design and planning
Risk	 Low
Key Performance Indicators	Installation and use of signage, Functionality of signage
Partners & Resources	Town of Well, Maine

Diagnostic

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

Action Item

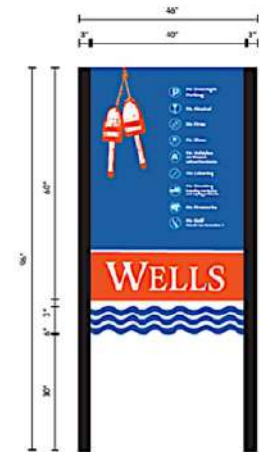
- Meetings with the Advisory Committee were scheduled over the next four (4) months.
- Utilizing existing conditions, community history and natural areas, each meeting looked at another aspect of the program.
- Locations were explored in terms of decision points and directional element considerations.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



Precedent: Lobster buoys.

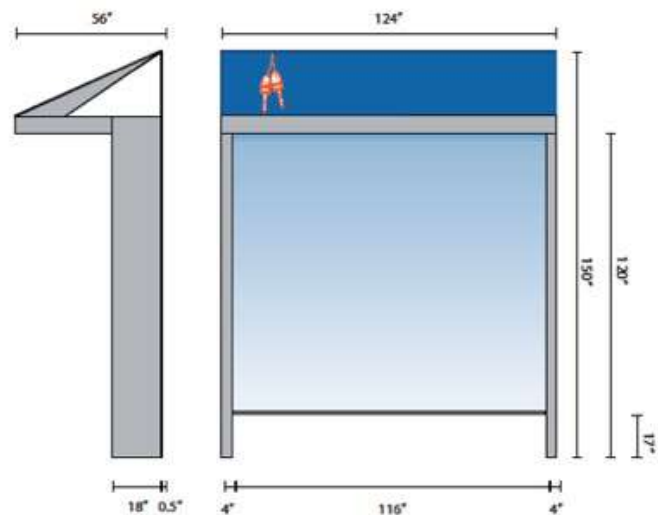
Process

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



Favermann Design | March 2019

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



The trolley stop between Ogunquit and Kennebunkport.

Process – Strategic Decisions

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



J INSTRUCTIONAL

GRAPHICS

Dimensions: 40" x 60"

Material: Aluminum panel 2mm thick (or per suggestion of fabricator)

Print: Full color print on adhesive vinyl

All major white vinyl lettering is reflective

Anti-graffiti coating

Colors: Red (Pantone 322C), Blue (Pantone 301C), Light Blue (Pantone 305C)

Font: Latienne Pro Medium, Bicyclette Bold

STRUCTURE

Posts: 3" square posts metal capped

Baked Enamel Finish: Pantone Black C

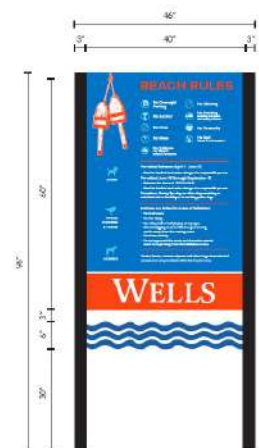
Paint applied to all sides; must have 8 year guarantee

Sign Fabricator to make recommendations on installation to adhere to MaineDOT standards and specifications

Must verify overall dimensions and orientation in the field

Vendor will make recommendations to affix panel to posts

Footings to be recommended by installer



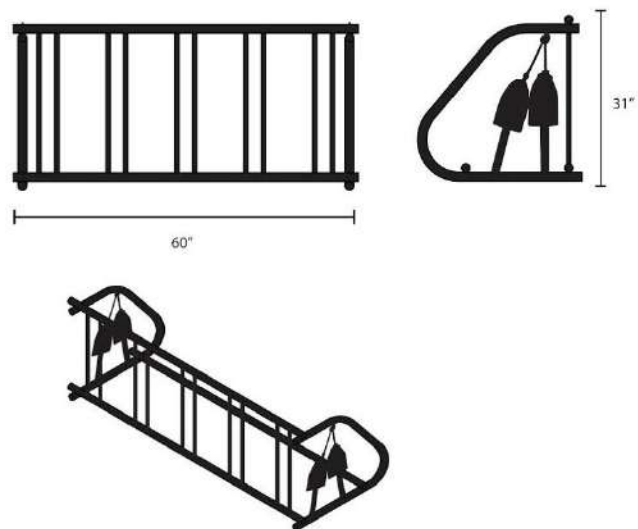
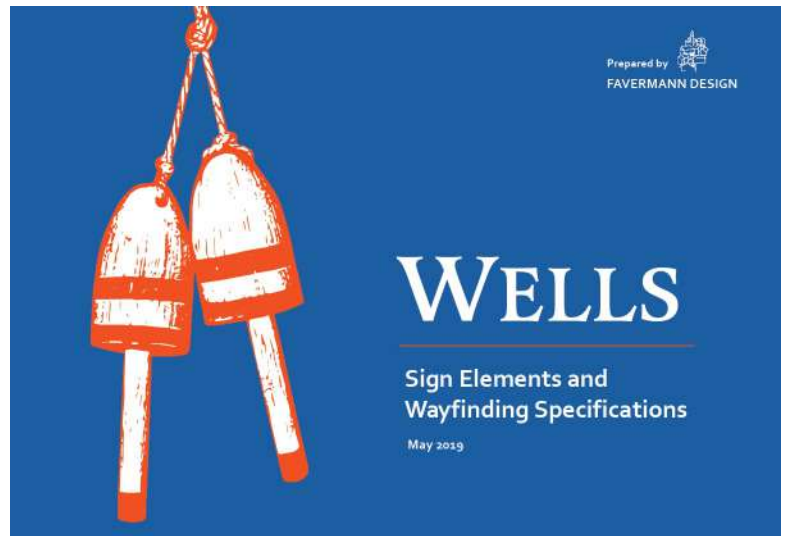
To meet overall activation goals downtown, two locations were targeted for public space events and activities.

Desired Outcomes

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

Add-ons

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



Create “Bass in the Grass” Event



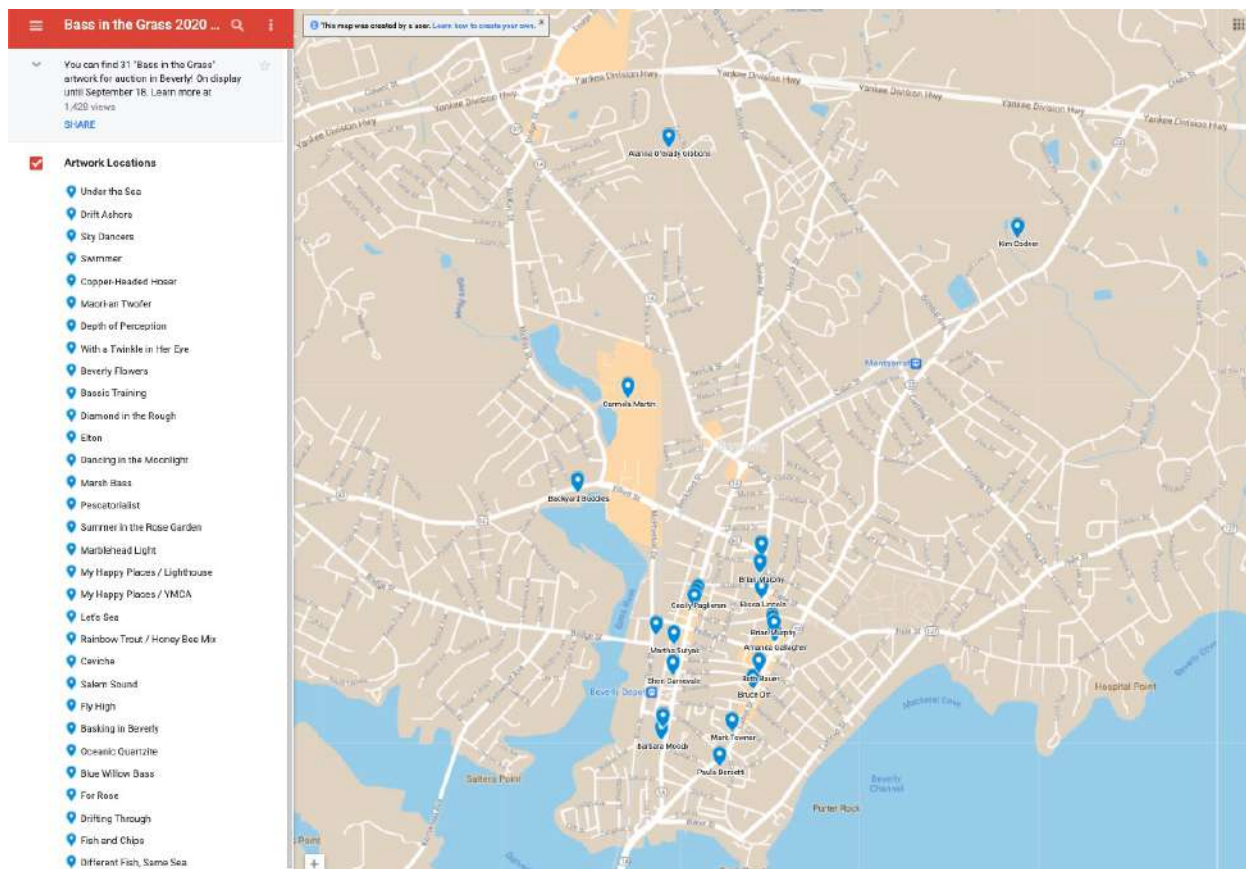
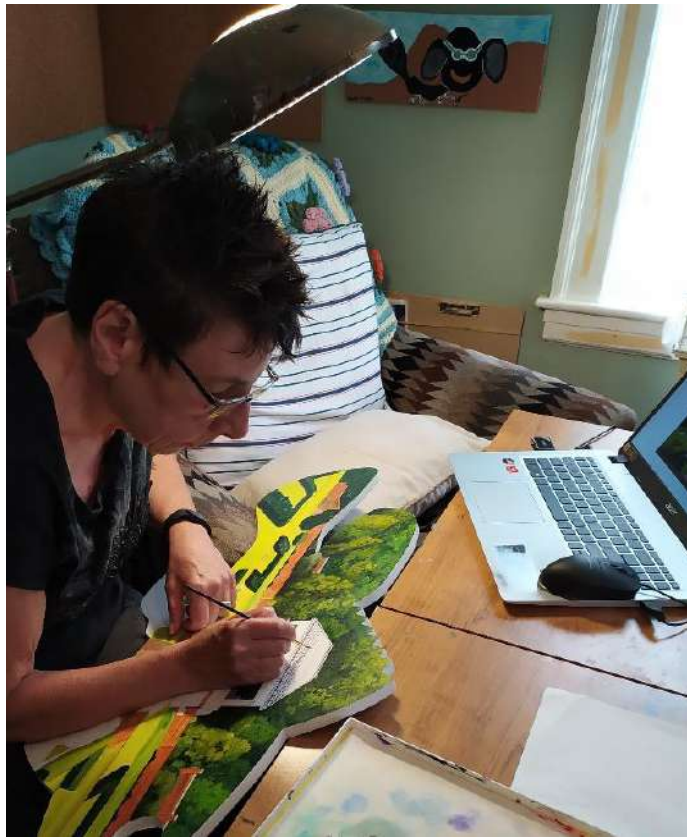
Provided by SME Consultant

Beverly Main Streets

Location

Beverly, MA

Origin	Beverly Main Streets
Budget	 Low budget: Materials \$1735, Stipends \$3850, Auction Site & Marketing: \$1844
Timeframe	 Short term: The event was set up in 5 months. Due to its success, the event is expected to run as an annual event.
Risk	 Low Risk: Capacity restrictions, event name, reliance on grants being awarded
Key Performance Indicators	No. of visitors/attendees (the cultural event attracted 450 visitors over 2 days – 1st event of its size in Beverly since lockdown; local artist support)
Partners & Resources	Beverly Main Streets, Historic Beverly, Gentile Brewing, Beverly Cultural Council, MA Commonwealth Places, Chatham Merchants Association
Diagnostic	<p>We couldn't offer a guaranteed stipend to artists other than half of the highest bid on their fish; artists signed on without knowing if they'd be compensated (bids not guaranteed).</p> <p>We were on such a tight time frame and didn't have decisions on grants we had applied for; this was a risk for BMS to outlay cash when our revenue was significantly down.</p> <p>We didn't have time to do an open call for art so we engaged artists we were familiar with. There was some backlash from artists who weren't invited.</p>



<p>Action Item</p>	<p>We created 31 blank 3' bass and made stands for each. Local artists painted the bass, creating 31 unique pieces of art. We held a socially-distanced outdoor viewing event at historic Hale Farm over the weekend of August 15-16. Then we delivered the bass to 31 different businesses in our downtown where they were on display for 2 weeks. During that time, we launched an online auction.</p>
<p>Process</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identify role of committee (plan, jury, manage, help get sponsors) 2 Decide on shape/size/quantity of public art, event names 3 Find location for public event 4 Decide on dates & raindates for Hale Farm 5 Identify artist to design shape and size 6 Confirm who will cut out stencils 7 Decide on base structure 8 Decide on sponsorship fee per shape 9 Share ideas on where shapes could go while auction is happening 10 Decide on artist stipend and share of auction proceeds 11 Create logo 12 Decide whether artists submit fish design or portfolio 13 Kids - What is age range, any compensation? on paper, no jury 14 Complete sponsor form, call for art, BMS site, social media for call 15 Artists submit applications 16 Create draft schedule of all events 17 Get feedback from restaurants re: hosting in 2020 18 Share sign template with cutter 19 Start teasing on social 20 Jury artists 21 Alert artists of status (in or not) 22 Deliver stencils to cutter 23 Select auction platform 24 Identify emerging artists from MCA, EC, BHS 25 Work out logistics with Hale Farm 26 Identify ways to reach kid artists 27 Challenge board & committee members to get at least 1 sponsorship 28 Identify how to display kids' fish 29 Finish cutting shapes 30 Build / test auction platform 31 Build bases 32 Send contract to artists 33 Artists pick up fish 34 Create volunteer schedule (setup, take down, during event) 35 Enlist volunteers 36 Artists complete fish and deliver to BMS 37 Share fish name with BMS 38 Photograph each fish 39 Make signs (for each fish and large sign for event) 40 Assemble fish and signage 41 Test arrangement at Hale House 42 Create map of downtown locations (if applicable) 43 Hold event at Hale House 44 Host auction 45 Pay artists 46 Deliver fish to businesses 47 Display fish 48 Deliver fish back to BMS 49 Distribute fish to buyers 50 Hold wrap up event

Event Branding: Taste Fall River



Provided by SME Consultant

Zapalac Advisors

Location

Boston, MA

Origin	The Fall River TDI partnership, supported by Laurie A Zapalac, PhD working as a technical advisor to MassDevelopment's TDI program and the partnership
Budget	 Low (Less than \$30,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 1 year)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of event tickets sold, direct feedback from the community including participating restaurants and ticket buyers, social media response and press coverage
Partners & Resources	Mass Development, The TDI Fall River Partnership, People Inc., Alexandra's, City of Fall River, Bank Five and Rockland Trust
Diagnostic	<p>In 2017 Fall River launched a new "brand" for the city, <i>Make it Here</i>, drawing from the city's textile heritage and celebrating its potential as an environment for Makers.</p> <p>Fall River had applied to the MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative and in 2018, MassDevelopment wanted to ensure that critical public sector, private sector and institutional partners on the ground were ready to make the commitment to support the two to three-year technical assistant program to drive transformative change on Main Street.</p> <p>Just as planning was underway, negative headlines about Fall River started appearing in the press in relationship to the indictment of the current mayor. This led to broader discussion about the need to drive key narratives about Fall River that put a spotlight on positive things in the community</p> <p>In 2019, planning begun on the creation of a "first initiative," intended to give the partners experience collaborating with one another while addressing the need to amplify an existing city brand and find new things to celebrate.</p>

Diagnostic (continued)

The partnership had enough institutional memory to know that a similar event had been carried out in Fall River in years past – and had been relatively successful – but not sustained due to relying heavily on volunteers, so one goal was to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and work toward a sustainable operating model.

Among the Main Street businesses there were traditional, well known Portuguese and Portuguese-influenced restaurants – something for which Fall River is recognized – as well as number of newer additions expanding offerings in downtown.

While Main Street had maintained an interesting mix of uses, there were deficiencies in building management and some properties were vacant. So one goal was to raise the “brand” of Main Street by showing it’s potential and a vibrant and activated streetscape.

As the *Taste Fall River* idea emerged, there were two interrelated concerns from certain members of the partnership: 1) Would anyone from beyond Fall River be interested in this event and 2) Were online ticket sales even necessary? – reflecting an “everyone uses cash” mindset. The partnership discussed both and pressed forward with the idea that if they worked to assemble a top-notch event, there would be interest from Fall River – as well as other markets. That then confirmed that investing the time and money in developing a website and Eventbrite posting for the event would be necessary and worthwhile.

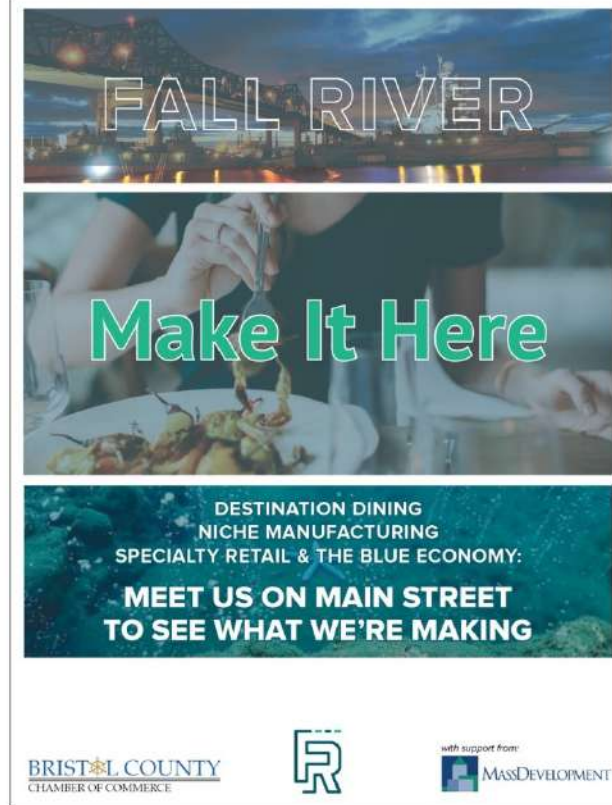
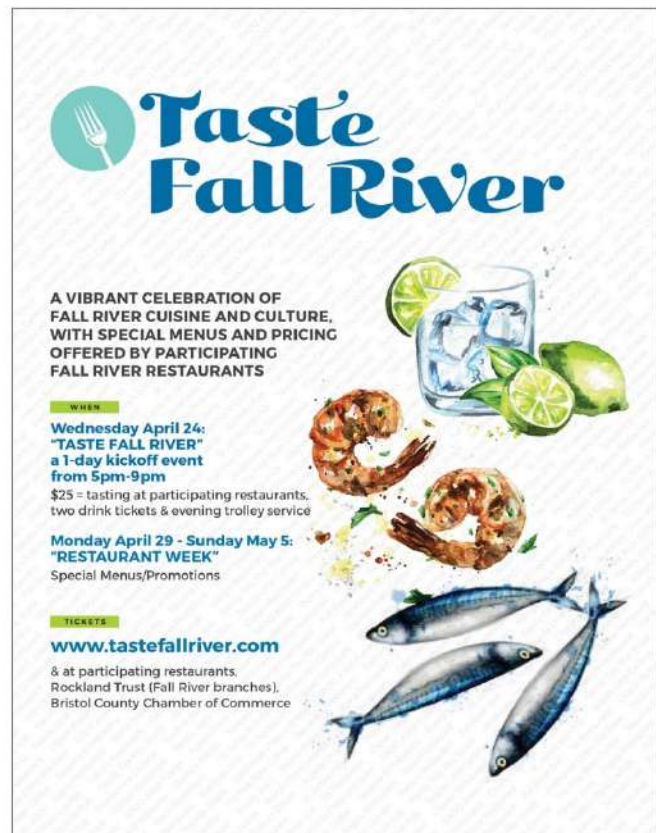
Action Item

The relevance of this project for thinking about Covid rapid recovery includes:

- Bringing together a set of partners to collaborate on a response to drive economic development and direct narratives towards shared values and aspiration.
- The actual event included Taste Fall River – a one evening dining event – and Fall River Restaurant Week – a weeklong program of discounts offered by participating businesses.
- In tandem, the partnership developed an information “kit” that included a topline narrative that elaborates on the core “Make it Here” brand, while also including practical information for any party interest in investing or developing along Main Street. We gathered cut sheets for all property listed for sale or lease and summarized this information, making all of it available as part of the information kit.

Process (for Covid pivots)

- **Event conceptualization led by the partnership**, including event co-chairs who organized schedule, recruited restaurants to participate, other "node" locations to be open, and managed ticket sales by all partners. Other partners played key roles including securing sponsorships and lining up musicians who played at key locations throughout the evening.
- **Coordination led by the City of Fall River representative on the partnership** – including securing trolley, permitting, police detail, etc.
- **Website Design and Social Media Campaign.** The lead consultant worked closely with one of the event co-chairs to launch an event website. Another partner member set up the Eventbrite for online ticket sales (and acted as the fiscal representative for the project). Another partner worked with an in-house graphic designer to develop the event poster. We found ways to message creative and strategic tie-ins between the Make it Here and Taste Fall River concepts, "Make it a girls' night, make it a date night ... etc."
- Any social media coverage for a new event starts small – so it was important to not let a low number of "likes" discourage efforts. Training and encouragement were necessary to drive home the importance of liking/sharing/posting – but we felt this was worthwhile overall to encourage businesses to support one another.
- We aligned with a relevant social media influencer active on Instagram (and Facebook) to push out the message to her audience and provide some specialty photography. On the day of the event, we posted restaurant owners preparing ("pre-game"), during the event, as well as as the event wrapped and an after-party at one of the participating restaurants was underway.
- A partner member with marketing and social media experience was instrumental in deploying a press release and managing a social media campaign.
- **Information Kit and Real Estate Data.** Was created by the lead consultant, with input from local commercial real estate brokers.
- 2019 Taste Fall River proved to be a fun and successful event, helping Main Street businesses build stronger relationships, prove the vitality of the district, showcase a unique range of dining offerings, and inspire confidence in all partners as well as the broader community about what is possible in Fall River's future.
- Having access to analytics from the event website, Eventbrite, Facebook and Social Instagram gave us clear feedback about what messages resonated and hard data about interest in Fall River from the broader regional market.
- The partnership surpassed the goal of selling 400 tickets, and the profit was donated to the City of Fall River to be put towards the purchase of an ADA-accessible trolley.



Taste Fall River – Fall River, MA



Create Calm Street Pilots and Pop-Up Curbside “Streeteries”






Provided by SME Consultant

Nelson\Nygaard

Location

Natick, MA

Origin	Town of Natick, Natick Center Cultural District
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50k)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Create an Inviting Pedestrian Retail Environment (Measures: Speed of Cars Before and After, Number of Crashes, Perception Survey), Support Social-Distance-Safe Local Dining and Spending (Measures: Number of Seats Added, Sales)
Partners & Resources	MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, A Greener Greater Boston (AGGB) program of the Solomon Foundation and Barr Foundation
Diagnostic	<p>Overly-large intersections and wide travel lanes were contributing to higher speeds of travel through the heart of Natick's pedestrian core. In order to create a more comfortable and attractive walking and biking environment, lane and intersection diets could be deployed to achieve safer operations while sustaining the same vehicle throughput.</p> <p>The team worked to design solutions working with majority already-owned materials, with limited purchases for temporary and safety materials.</p> <p>In early pandemic social distancing, while indoor dining was unsafe, the Town was seeking quick solutions to help local businesses continue serving and attracting customers. Retrofitting on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining could help create interim options for safer dining and company.</p> <p>Natick Center Cultural District also found ways to engage creative placemaking elements into the process in order to support local artists during the economic struggles of the pandemic.</p>
Action Item	<p>As communities grappled with strategies to restart local businesses – especially those that rely on foot traffic and shared spaces (i.e., retail and restaurants) – providing a safe environment that reinforces recommended COVID-19 physical distancing measures, is paramount. Given the need to provide more outdoor space for businesses to serve customers, and sidewalks unable to accommodate both business activity and pedestrian accommodation, communities like Natick were looking to repurpose streets to provide additional space so that both may be safely accommodated.</p> <p>A rapid response was necessary to help businesses recover quickly as COVID-related restrictions begin to relax and allow for non-essential business activity to resume. At the same time, ensuring the safety of restaurant users, as well as those in vehicles and on bicycles, was critical. A focus on low-cost, rapid implementation was critical to serving safety and business vitality needs. All programs and projects were designed to be flexibly modified.</p>

Action Items (Continued)

Key actions included:

- A kickoff meeting with all department officials to confirm project goals
- Site analysis and issues identification
- Business owner outreach
- Design concept development
- Stakeholder presentations and tactical event promotion
- Traffic calming testing in the field
- Confirming longer-term trial design and installing materials
- Processing feedback and engagement

Process

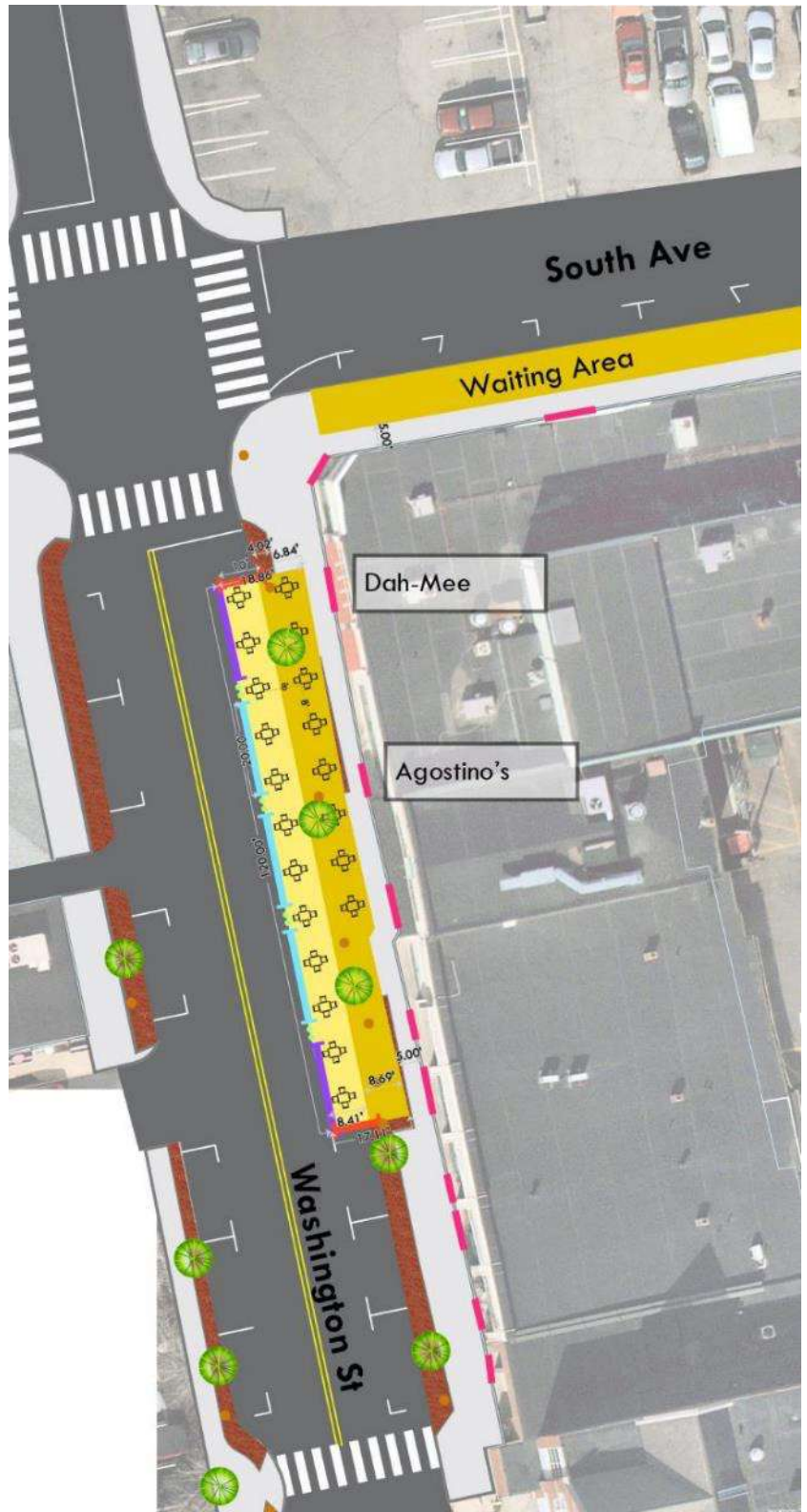
- Discuss Need for Intervention
- Field Visits and Observations, Counts, Documentation
- Measure Key Dimensions
- Create Design Alternatives
- Present to Stakeholders for Feedback
- Plan Installation Date and Timeline
- Promote Event through Fliers, Social Media, and Town-wide Announcements
- Design Business and Citizen Engagement Survey
- Create Materials List, Budget, Order Supplies, and Plan for Deliveries
- Optional: Post Virtual Messaging Signs on Approaches to Announce Upcoming Changes
- Decide on Police Detail and Oversight Needs, Cover Liability Needs
- Optional: Plan for Street Sweeping
- Create Hour-by-Hour Install Schedule and Steps for Install Day
- Day of: Measure and Lay Down Materials, Observe and Tweak As-Needed, Document through Photos and Videos, Consider Intercept Surveys and Programming around Event
- After Day of Testing, Install More Permanent Seasonal Materials
- Optional: Consider Local Art Enhancements



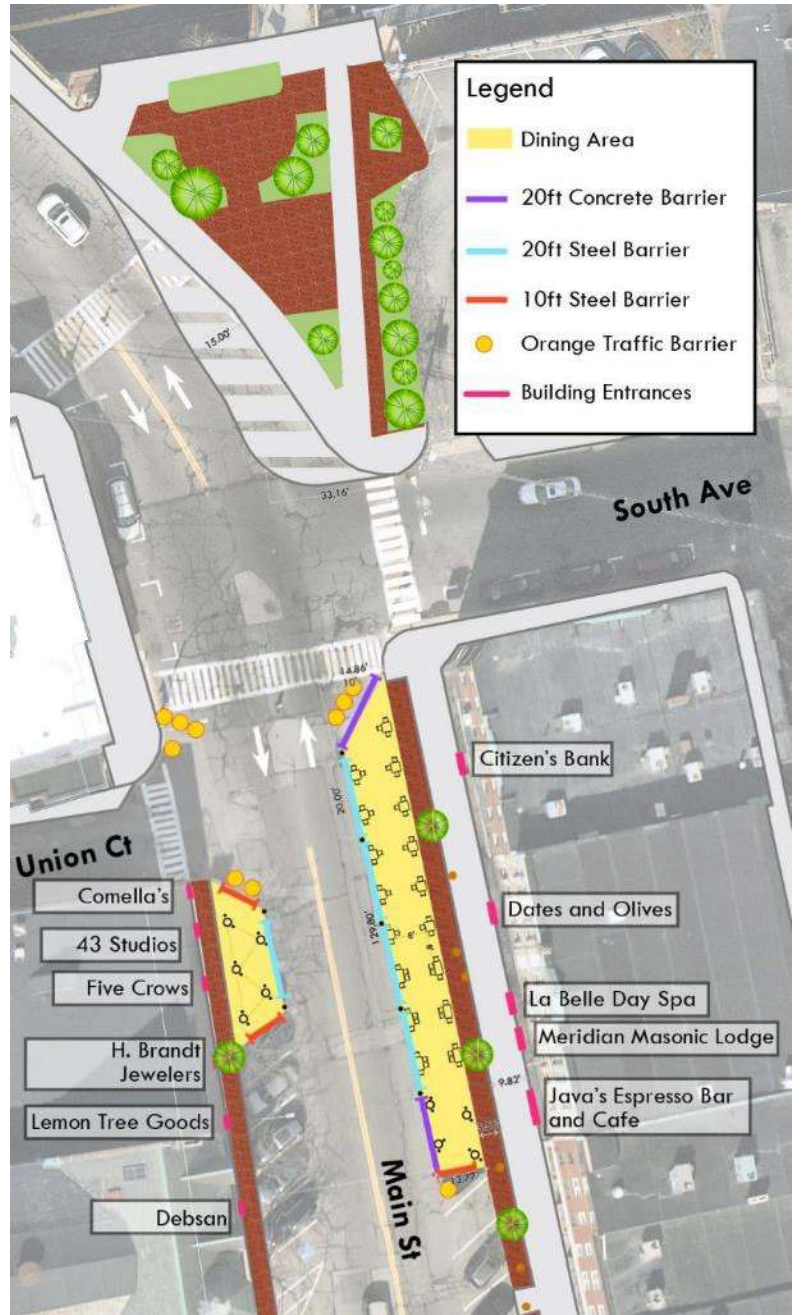
Image of Tactical Testing Before Striping and Adding Bollards



Image of Washington Street Eatery As Installed



Layout Plan of Washington Street Eatery In On-Street Parking Lane



Layout pLan of before and after conditions for traffic calming and in-street outdoor dining on Main Street



Images of jersey barriers with reflective tape and artist mosaics and of temporary chalk art in tactical curb extensions – will receive art murals long-term. Credit: Ted Fields



Increase Outdoor Dining and Safe Bike/Pedestrian Connections



PUBLIC
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

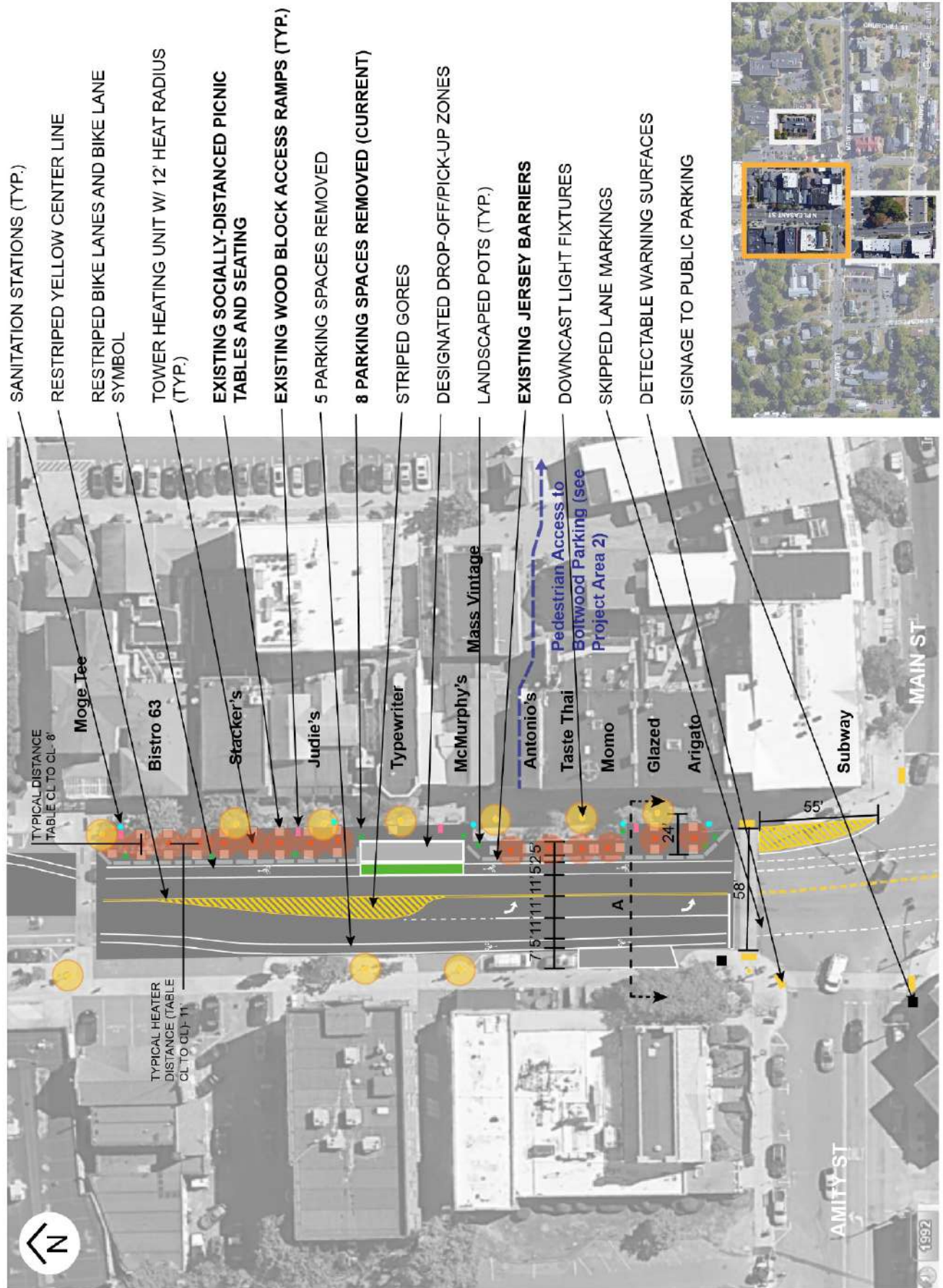
Stantec Consulting, Inc.

Location

North and South Pleasant Streets- Town of Amherst, Massachusetts

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

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



North Pleasant Street Design Concept. Credit, Stantec.

Process

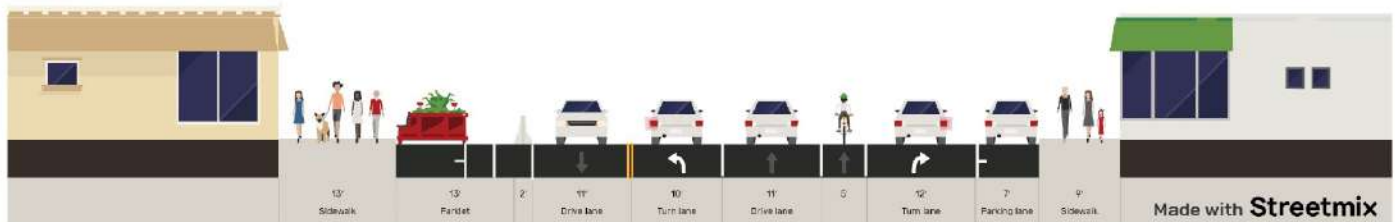
The general implementation steps identified for the project included:

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

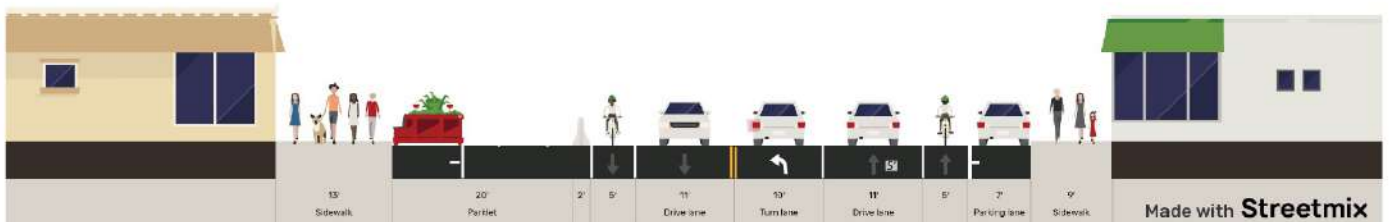
Within 15 days of the award, the South Pleasant Street median was removed, travel lanes were re-aligned and re-striped, detectable warning surface were installed, and safety barriers placed. Picnic tables, landscape pots, parking sandwich board signs, and sanitation stations were also purchased and placed.

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

Existing (Looking south)



Proposed (Looking south)



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

Success Story

The project was an overall success because it had built upon strong community efforts to immediately mobilize and respond to the pandemic in the spring of 2020. Following the award of the MassDOT grant, Town Manager Paul Bockelman stated, "These changes have the potential to make a permanent improvement to the streetscape in our Downtown."
(Amherst Indy)



View along North Pleasant Street of the expanded dining area with heating towers.



View of North Pleasant Street showing the realigned roadway to accommodate bicycle lanes and expanded dining areas.



Programming & Activating Open Streets



Provided by SME Consultant

Jeanette Nigro – Perch Advisors LLC

Location

Brooklyn, New York City

Origin	Open Streets – Vanderbilt Avenue is led by Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council with support from Perch Advisors.
Budget	 <p>Medium Budget: Year 1 (2020) budget was less than \$20,000, but year 2 (2021) projected budget is approximately \$85,000</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (< 5 years) The 2020 season of Open Streets Restaurants Vanderbilt Avenue was a pilot, and a process of continual experimentation, iteration and improvement from start to finish. As a pilot program, it was launched in a matter of weeks. The program was relaunched in 2021 with improvements to streetscape, business engagement, and community input.</p>
Risk	 <p>Medium Risk: Project needed extensive support from the community and required a high level of involvement from NYC DOT</p>
Key Performance Indicators	<p>Increased pedestrian traffic volume and use of roadway for safe cycling</p> <p>Increased self-reported revenue for participating businesses</p> <p>Increased job opportunities within the commercial corridor</p> <p>Reported increased engagement between the community and local businesses, deeper sense of connection between neighbors and the local business community</p> <p>Drop in traffic noise during times of program</p>
Partners & Resources	NYC Department of Transportation, NYC Department of Sanitation, NYPD, Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, Community Volunteers, restaurants, Perch Advisors
Diagnostic	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses were forced to close their indoor spaces to customers as a result of local restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, and evidence that increased rates of transmission take place indoors. As a result of lack of customers, many businesses struggled to cover costs. The apartment buildings on Vanderbilt Avenue and adjacent blocks typically do not have private or communal outdoor space (terraces, balconies). There remained among community members a desire for safe spaces to gather to host socially distanced events such as family meals, birthday celebrations, children playing and community events. <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDC guidelines suggest that COVID transmissions are significantly reduced outdoors. City streets offer open space for the local community to gather and interface with local businesses, so that businesses can recoup lost revenue. Open Streets was introduced by New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio as a citywide program allowing commercial streets to apply to New York City Department of Transportation for permits to close streets to vehicle traffic so that businesses, including restaurants and retail, can expand into the travel lanes of the roadway. NYC's Open Streets program was developed through a partnership between NYC Department of Small Business Services, NYC Department of Transportation, and neighborhood-based community organizations representing local business communities, such as Business Improvement Districts, Merchants Associations, and Local Development Programs in neighborhoods throughout the 5 boroughs. The Open Streets program transformed Vanderbilt Avenue into public square, providing a desperately needed opportunity to mingle, people watch and appreciate the pleasures of city life.

Action Items

Vanderbilt Avenue Open Streets was piloted in 2020 by Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council (PHNDC). The program was launched within a very quick time frame and was revised in 2021 to address challenges and opportunities presented in the first iteration of the program. The program allows communities to embrace new public space and support small businesses.

- Outreach to businesses to determine interest in participating in an Open Streets program
- Determine timing of proposed Open Streets (once a week, every weekend)
- Secure support and needed permits from local Department of Transportation to close streets
- Determine staffing and fundraising plan (Paid staff will require a higher level of fundraising, while volunteers will require a higher level of management and coordination)
- Coordinate deployment of barriers and cones to close streets and indicate bike lanes -- either from DOT or privately purchased
- Determine seasonality of Open Streets -- does it take place all year long? Only in the spring and summer?

Create long-term goals, in partnership with the local Department of Transportation's 10-year goals:

- Does the community seek to reduce or eliminate car usage? Encourage public transit? Long term plans might work in partnership with other city transportation objectives, such as building out public transportation and bike infrastructure
- Long term goals: Permanent Open Streets – Use the temporary Open Streets program and outcomes as a model for a permanent closed street setting

Process

Considerations in implementing such a program:

- Open Streets programs should take place with some level of regularity, even if it's only once a week

Example: Vanderbilt Avenue is the major traffic conduit between Prospect Park and South Brooklyn and Atlantic Avenue onwards to Manhattan. The Avenue sees heavy bike traffic (approximately 800 bikes per hour at its peak). Thus accommodations must be made for bike traffic, with a clear bike path

- Make sure businesses have equitable access to open space.

Alternating sides of bike route so that businesses on one side of the street don't consistently lose the space for business. Businesses should pay proportionately to the amount of space they access.

- Make sure program can be sustained.

Activation of more permanent solutions to operating Open Streets likely to be funded through use of federal COVID relief funds that are intended for permanent pedestrian blocks, staffing, operations.

- Activate underutilized space in the Open Street with arts and cultural programming

Ensure that members of the local artistic community have equal access to the opportunity to perform, create and install art.

Programming should be

- Diverse and inclusive
- Last a reasonable amount of time (30 - 90 minutes)
- Take place at reasonable hours (not when neighbors may be sleeping)
- Family friendly
- Reasonable volume so as not to disturb neighbors

The program was transformative to the neighborhood and helped 24 restaurant partners to survive complete closure of indoor shopping and dining due to COVID-19. Feedback from residents, visitors and businesses to PHNDC has been extremely positive and supportive of continuing in the future.

For a great article on the NYC Open Streets Program, visit:
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/17/nyregion/nyc-open-streets.html>



Launch a public art program



PUBLIC
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Melrose, MA

Origin	City of Melrose, MA
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$70K) - with full build-out
Timeframe	 Short Term (1 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Number of survey engagements and art commissions far exceeded expectations.
Partners & Resources	Mayor, City Manager, Planning Department, DPW, Local Arts Organizations, Local Businesses, High School Students
Diagnostic	<p>Selbert Perkins Design collaborated with the City and community stakeholders to develop a wayfinding and creative placemaking master plan for the City of Melrose including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayfinding Analysis • Preliminary Design Concepts • Art Opportunities • Call-for-Art • Art Program Logo <p>The entire project, including was conducted during Covid-19 with over 700 participants. Community engagement was conducted in partnership with Civic Space Collaborative.</p> <p>In February of 2020, the City of Melrose extended a solicitation for quotes regarding a wayfinding study & design services. The scope of work discussed in the solicitation described development of a multi-modal wayfinding system that speaks to the city's past and present that will provide wayfinding for pedestrians, cyclists & vehicles. The City of Melrose received funding from the Massachusetts Marketing Partnership & the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism for this effort.</p> <p>Selbert Perkins Design, in collaboration with Civic Space Collaborative, won the bid with the City of Melrose in March of 2020. The proposal submitted to the City of Melrose met all the conditions of the original solicitation and was modified after being awarded to include a larger outreach effort to the city's residents. In addition to the amplified outreach, public art would be an important element of the placemaking and wayfinding effort.</p> <p>In late March, the COVID-19 virus became a global pandemic. The project team adapted to the crisis, pivoting to web based resources for interviewing city residents, project meetings, committee and focus group meetings, as well as a virtual community meeting with the City's residents.</p> <p>"The selected art projects are unique and diverse and will enhance the vitality of the City's public spaces and promote economic development, which were goals of the initiative" says Mayor Brodeur. "I am excited to showcase and support the amazing talent in our community through this effort."</p> <p>Working closely with Mayor Paul Brodeur, the Planning Department, and project committee, we were able to successfully complete the project in 9 months.</p>

Action Items

Recommendations for signage and wayfinding include:

- Develop additional wayfinding as a placemaking element in Melrose to help residents and visitors find their way around the city.
- Create a signage pilot to roll out less expensive sign types throughout the city.
- Earmark funding for implementation over the next 1-2 years.
- Prioritize directing visitors and residents to downtown to support the local Melrose commerce.
- Install trail signage to help residents and visitors successfully utilize trails and greenspace in Melrose.
- Include walking distances on major signage to encourage walking as a method of transportation.
- Initiate outdoor seating, street narrowing, and other measures to support small business in the downtown and other commercial areas.
- Partner with local organizations to help envision and manage these programs to further support Melrose commerce.
- Consider a regular "open main street" program, closing streets to car traffic to encourage outdoor activity and support local downtown businesses.

Process

- Understand who the stakeholders and decision-makers will be.
- Form a committee to oversee the process.
- Visit the site to audit of existing conditions.
- Conduct a Wayfinding Analysis including; multi-modal circulation, main decision points, and key destinations.
- Research the history of the place, uncover stories that might inspire the design.
- Identify opportunities for art/placemaking.
- Engage with stakeholders and the public to understand needs and preferences. If possible, create a survey and/or focus groups to get feedback from a larger cross-section of people.
- Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide design efforts.
- Design concepts for brand and wayfinding elements.
- Develop the preferred design into a family of sign types with materials, colors, etc.
- Provide a sign location plan and order of magnitude budget.
- Create public art criteria and develop a call-for-art to identify qualified public artists.
- Release the call for art or bid and select artists/vendors.
- Oversee installation.
- Celebrate!



Stakeholder engagement event outdoors



Winter Activation at the Panoway in Downtown Wayzata



Provided by SME Consultant

The Musicant Group

Location

Linear lakefront park within downtown Wayzata, MN

Origin	The Musicant Group + Wayzata Chamber of Commerce with funding from the City of Wayzata and the Panoway Conservancy	
Budget		\$90,000 covering larger events, weekly programming, physical improvements, project management and staffing
Timeframe		Planning: Nov - Dec 2020 Implementation: Jan - Mar 2021
Risk		Very short planning period, frigid temperatures, alignment within the partnership, brand new space
Key Performance Indicators	Return visitors during event series, emergence and increases in self-programming, local news coverage, community awareness of the space displayed by event attendance, number of pilot features continued during future seasons	
Partners & Resources	Small businesses and community organization partnerships to co-produce events. City provision of bathrooms, storage, snow removal, site care, and Christmas trees. These partnerships unlocked a significant increase in possible programming and expanded of the impact from a one-time site activation to a series that would impact traffic in downtown overall.	

Diagnostic

Wayzata is a lakefront main street community located 15 miles west of Minneapolis, MN long known as a destination for shopping and dining. A major challenge that the downtown has faced for decades is that while the single-sided main street looks out over Lake Minnetonka, there lies a parking lot and active freight railway that cut off access between the two. Through years of effort, the 2-block long parking lot was converted into a linear park – the Panoway – which opened in the late summer of 2020. As the effects of COVID were increasingly felt by the community and the retailers, the city and chamber saw the newly opened space as a strategic features to help drive customer traffic downtown during the coldest months of the year.

In order to remain responsive and iterative with the changing COVID-19 landscape, we adopted a gradual implementation that focused on providing a variety of activities within regularly scheduled times and serving the needs of the community members already present, while building to safe in-person gatherings for signature events.

Key opportunities included:

- Leveraging the views of the lake
- Providing high quality outdoor places for people to enjoy take out
- Working with existing habits of dog walking, walking, running, bike riding, and fire building

Challenges included

- Ensuring that visitors could stay warm and/or warm up
- The need to create experiences that didn't need to be actively staffed
- How to translate a long standing one-time event into a season long experience

Action Item

The project took a holistic approach to the activation of the space and its impact on the entire downtown. We combined the physical enhancement of the space with a spectrum of programming and promotion to support a continuum visitation – from daily, to weekly outing, to first-time local tourist.

Action #1 – Persona Generation + Experience Mapping

At the onset we mapped out the different audience/user types (personas), identifying their characteristics, wants, desires, and pain points. We then collated these together to craft the key experiences that the overall project should aim to deliver.

Action #2 - Building Partnerships

Once the core event and improvement framework had been set, we engaged with local businesses and organizations to co-produce events as part of the activation. Critically, budget was allocated to pay the partners for their participation. These efforts brought in additional resources, promotional capacity, and generated heightened feelings of community ownership.

Action #3 – Physical improvements

Throughout the activation, improvements were made to support programming and everyday use. The two fold focus of these were to enhance visitor warmth and to create more things to do. Enhancements included: a winter garden / wind block, curling court, activity cart, fire pits, ice sculptures, light installations, and a pop up dog run.

Action #4 – Execute Programming

Each Friday new small and large scale events would occur, providing both regularity and variety – which together serve to build an audience over time.

Action #5 – Promotion

Through multichannel marketing, PR, and the events themselves the brand and awareness of the space downtown grew which drove continued increases in daily visitation, weekly rituals, and destination tourists.

Process

- Project launch with the city to define shared goals and what can be done as-of-right, what needs a permit, and what is off limits. Also to catalogue what other resources partners can provide upfront and stakeholders who should be engaged
- Engage with the broader community – both stakeholders, partners, and the broader public. Conversations with stakeholders and partners should focus on what shared success looks like and if there are ways to collaborate. For the public, focus question on what they want to be able to do in the site – these then shape the core experiences that the project / site should deliver.
- Feedback from the public and stakeholders should shed light on which direction to take for items where the project team may disagree.
- Once personas and priority experiences have been defined, craft improvements plan that incorporates physical improvements, events, promotions, and site care.
- Make first round of improvements. Gauge relative success through agreed upon metrics. Be sure to reserve budget to fund iterations based on learnings that can only occur after a project has begun
- Promote via mediums that are relevant to the site and targeted audiences. Leverage community partners to promote through their networks.
- Collect data throughout the effort to gauge success, lessons learned, and testimonials. Capture data that not only is important to you, but also current and future project partners and funders
- Once project is complete, craft a final report that can be used to guide future iterations and to solicit funding in future years.



Physical Improvements: Fire to warm up visitors, a winter garden of repurposed evergreen trees, and lighting installations with pop-up domes



Ongoing Site Materials: Outside of events, there were still elements available on site for users to enjoy, including a Letters to the Lake interactive opportunity, an activity box, and a Puppies of Panoway box of dog treats + toys.

Chair the City's Restaurant Reopening Task Force






Provided by SME Consultant

Beverly Main Streets

Location

Beverly, MA

Origin	Beverly Main Streets (BMS)
Budget	 <p>Low budget. No direct costs to the Task Force (TF) but City did take TF's recommendation to supply jersey barriers for outdoor dining and pay artists to paint them</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Medium</p>
Risk	 <p>Low Risk. City created a Business Reopening Task Force; BMS suggested the creation of a separate restaurant TF because of specific challenges faced by the industry sector.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Downtown saw a positive economic impact from social media promotions BMS and each restaurant shared ("tiponyourtakeout")
Partners & Resources	Beverly Main Streets, City of Beverly, Greater Beverly Chamber of Commerce
Diagnostic	<p>Among restaurant business owners, there was an urgent need to get clear guidance on re-opening from a trusted and familiar source, including the following emerging trends and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPE sourcing, effectiveness, guidelines • Social distancing techniques for specific spaces • Insider information ahead of public releases from MA Restaurant Association and MA Brewer's Guild • Federal funding (PPP loans) through local lenders <p>There was also a need for to advocate for local guidance on re-opening that aligned closely with the State's to ensure consistency and ease of implementation (and to not lose business to neighboring communities because of stricter restrictions)</p>

Action Items

Created a Task Force (TF) with 10 restaurant owners across the city (not just downtown) plus the City's Planning Department and Mayor's Office.

The groups met weekly at first then biweekly as State reopening phases lasted longer. Shared what we heard from TF members with all restaurant owners.

Beverly Main Streets conducted research on PPE, PPP, EIDL, HVAC systems, plexiglass sources, heaters, etc. They also advocated for changes at state and local levels, including ABCC, both for indoor and outdoor dining.

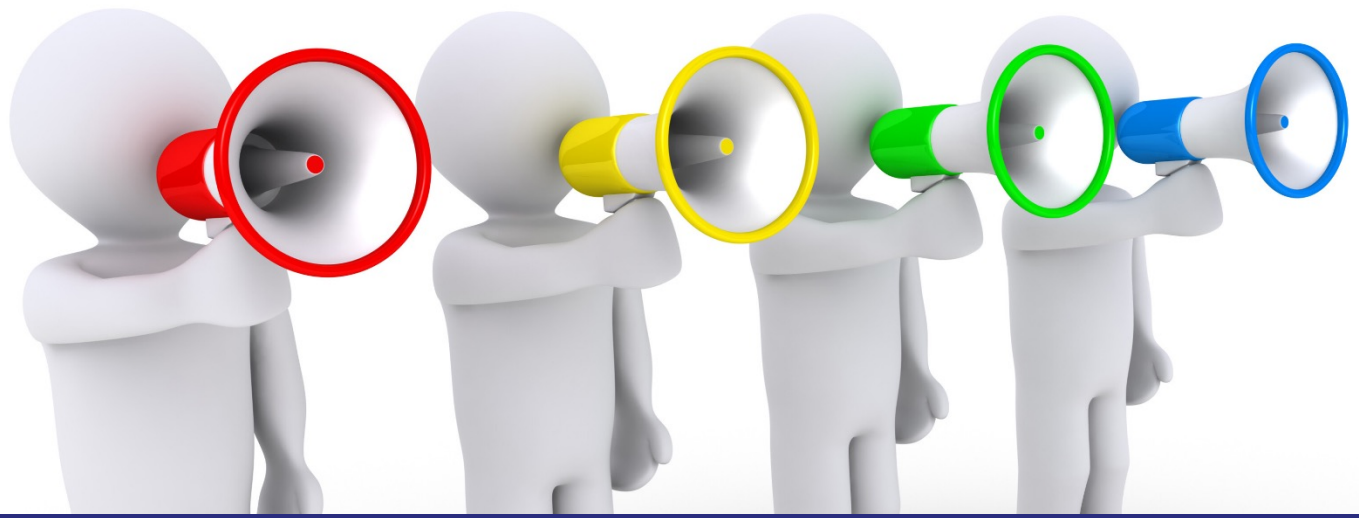


Jersey Barrier Beautification Project in Beverly - Beverly Citizen - Beverly, MA

Process

- Identify restaurant owners
- Identify City staff
- Recommend initial categories of focus
- Find contact info for non-downtown businesses, relevant state agencies and trade groups
- Attend relevant webinars; take notes and share with owners, City staff, partners
- Communicate with neighboring Main Streets organizations and business contacts
- Host webinars on PPP and EIDL with SBA reps and with MA Unemployment who could answer questions specific to restaurants





Coordinated Social Media Marketing



**REVENUES
& SALES**

Provided by SME Consultant

Cepheid Solutions

Location

Online

Origin	If you JUST build it, they will NOT come! Our Marketplace project benefits from a coordinated communications campaign to increase visibility and awareness. However, these tools and strategies will benefit any community project or initiative.
Budget	 <p>The human assets are probably already in place for most communities. The new costs will involve training (and practice), a strategic guide, and the time dedicated to organize and implement an effective program.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Training is an ongoing activity, but initial training can be completed in 30 days. Organizing and creating a strategic guide can be completed in 30 days, as well. Implementation is also an ongoing activity.</p>
Risk	 <p>There are few downside risks, except poor organization and implementation. Must be sensitive to messaging, opt-out, and privacy issues.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Message impressions, followers (media dependent), responses, reach
Partners & Resources	<p>Community administration, Departments of Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce, Business Community, Sources of Training, the traditional media (Radio/TV/Newspapers)</p> <p>The strength of this project is not in creating a single powerful marketing group, but in leveraging the combined strength of many voices to create a unified and effective communication eco-system. So, more voices and more participation is better.</p>

<p>Diagnostic</p>	<p>In context to the Local-search eCommerce Marketplace project, the initial objective is to create awareness and engagement with the project. Going forward, the goal is to create a coordinated and integrated marketing effort that encourages shopping with the local retail community – both online and in-store.</p> <p>The three dimensions of success in this arena are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Skills competency – does each constituency understand the tools they have to work with, and is proficient in their use 2.Activity and Deployment – are each of the tools fully put to use 3.Integration and Coordination – are the different constituencies collaborating towards a common goal <p>The final measure in effectiveness will be the change in Total Local Retail Sales. An effective program will see awareness and engagement with the marketplace.</p> <p>Beyond the Marketplace project, these tools and skills</p>
<p>Action Item</p>	<p>Initial planning session (1hr – one time)</p> <p>Training (ongoing – but i2.5 hour initial self-paced training course)</p> <p>Interview Stakeholder(s) (1hr – one time)</p> <p>Setup Social Media Accounts (3 hrs one time)</p> <p>Content Development (1-10 hrs monthly)</p> <p>Operate Program (4hrs monthly - assuming weekly posts)</p> <p>Planning & Coordination (1 hr weekly)</p> <p>Program Reporting (1 hr monthly)</p>
<p>Process</p>	<p>Launching this project requires an initial planning session in which the constituency groups and their key spokesmen are identified, along with the initial timeline and objectives.</p> <p>Focus of activities for each group are identified and dates to complete initial training (ongoing training needs can be identified at 6 week point).</p> <p>Selection of a point person to coordinate.</p> <p>Establish weekly, monthly quarterly goals, and adjust accordingly.</p> <p>In the Marketplace project, two of the constituencies (The State Govt and Traditional Media) will not be actively involved. However, the coordinator can obtain editorial calendars, position papers, etc. that can be used by the other groups to coordinate with.</p>

Rapid Website Development






Provided by SME Consultant

Cambridge Retail Advisors

Location

Boston, MA

Origin	Established in 2019, the Retail and Restaurant Technology Initiative has piloted, vetted, and implemented its mission in partnership with Boston Main Streets Foundation, the City of Boston, and Citizens Bank. During the COVID-19 crisis we have quantified the significant impact of our program and are proud to promote the great diversity of participants.	
Budget		\$1,000-\$2,000 per site to design and build
Timeframe		1-2 weeks for a website to be designed and built depending on complexity
Risk		<p><u>Participant Limitations</u> – Project timelines are dependent on participant involvement. We use our screening process to make sure those chosen have the time and ability to commit.</p> <p><u>Language Barriers</u> – Language can present a challenge, but we have invested in translation services to keep our program available to businesses owners of different races and creeds.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Development time, online ordering/eCommerce integration, website traffic	
Partners & Resources	<p><u>Cambridge Retail Advisors</u> – Website design and development</p> <p><u>Erin of Boston Photography, LLC</u> – Photography services</p>	
Diagnostic	Websites are a pivotal gateway for businesses to reach out to the world, often serving as a centralized hub of activity. As part of this process, we provide expertise that has been refined through hundreds of builds. Our Rapid Website Development is honed and proven to deliver immediate digital transformation.	
Action	Our website development program provides a fast and effective web presence for retailers or restaurants. We alleviate the major pain points of including technological hurdles and costs, and in less than 2 weeks create a platform to promote from and sell on. Websites not only serve as the face of an organization, but they also serve as a pivot point for most operations including marketing and sales. We're proud to offer this service and have many success stories from small businesses throughout Boston.	

Process

Onboarding Phase

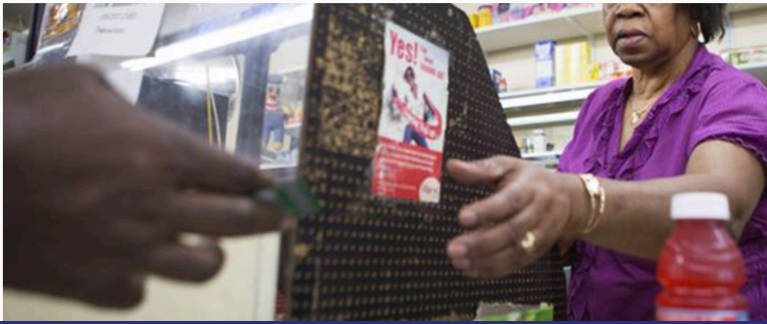
1. Explain the simple design process and benefits of the end website
2. Purchase the desired domain name
3. Set manageable goals with clear timeframes

Discovery Phase

4. Gather content and determine look/feel for the website
5. Collect media such as photos and video *(Schedule photographer if required)*
6. Link Social Media *(if applicable)*
7. Link online selling platforms *(if applicable)*

Review/Finalization Phase

8. Review website with business owner prior to publishing live
9. Publish site and encourage business owner to incorporate their new website into their marketing plan
10. Handoff website to business owner and encourage frequent edits!



Is your business or organization:

- ✓ Black-Owned,
- ✓ Black-Operated,
- ✓ Black-Oriented?

If so...

Get Listed! Its FREE!

Sponsoring Culturally-specific Portals for Digital Marketing and Promotion



**REVENUES
& SALES**

Provided by SME Consultant

Third Eye Network, LLC

Location

Rochester, New York/Finger Lakes Region

Origin

Susu Management Group, LLC (*d/b/a Black-owned Business Rochester*)
Niche Market Insights Foundation, Inc. (*501(c)3 not-for-profit organization*)
InfoWorks Development

Budget



Portals: \$25k – \$75k ea (implementation); \$12k – \$15k/year ea (maintenance)
APIs: \$5k ea (implementation); \$1k+/year ea (maintenance)

Timeframe



Portals: 3 – 6 months ea (implementation and training)
APIs: 1 – 3 months ea (implementation and training)

Risk



Requires a regional organizational affiliate or sponsoring agency, socio-political will and actively engaged community collaboration; the digital divide

Key Performance Indicators

Engagement Rates (*# of niche listings, # of user accounts, # of pageviews, # of new visitors*); **Community Commerce** (*# of paid subscriptions, niche market sales, non-niche revenues*); **Community Impact** (*funds raised, # of reinvestments, grants awarded, # of businesses/jobs*)

Partners & Resources

Dr. Lomax R. Campbell, Matthew T. Bain, The BOB SquadSM, and NMI Foundation Board;
Proprietary Database, Niche Market Portals, Directory APIs, CalendarWiz API (*discontinued*)

Diagnostic

Backgrounder

- BOB Rochester was launched in late 2014 as an anti-racist response to the untimely deaths of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown Jr., and others at the hands of police; inspired by the legacy of Victor Hugo Green who published *The Green Book* (1936 – 1966)
- By design, it is a community-driven marketing and promotion resource for area BOBs intended to empower Black enterprise, public service organizations and affinity associations; this social enterprise has organically amassed over 700 listings since its public launch

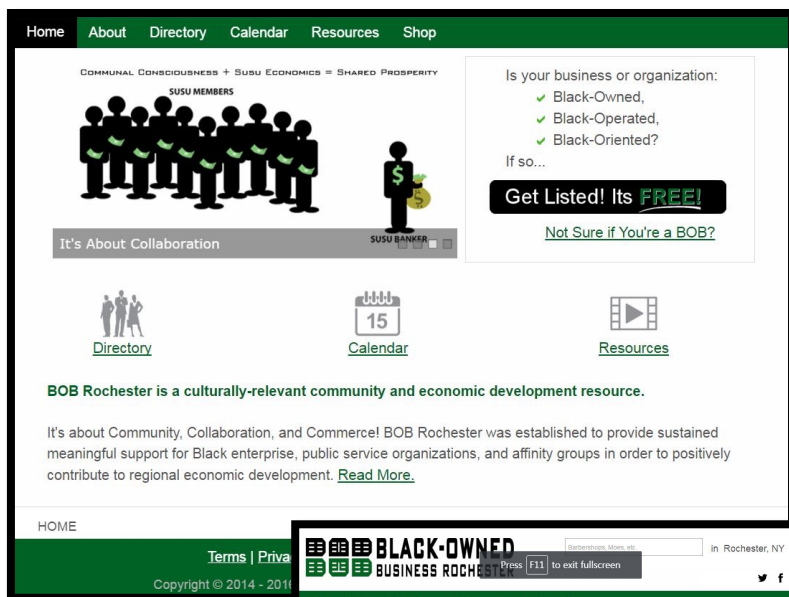
Pandemic Effects

- Site statistics demonstrate community participation runs parallel with crises (i.e., civic unrest, COVID-19 pandemic)
- Renewed interest in BOBs evidenced by 26.5k in new users (a 723.99% increase) with 36.5k sessions; average monthly pageviews have increased from 1,600 (pre-pandemic) to 6,900 (post-pandemic); pageviews spiked during the summer of 2020: 4.2k (May), 83.2k (Jun), 17.5k (Jul), 6.9k (Aug), 7.6k (Sept)
- Local community gifts surpassed \$50k

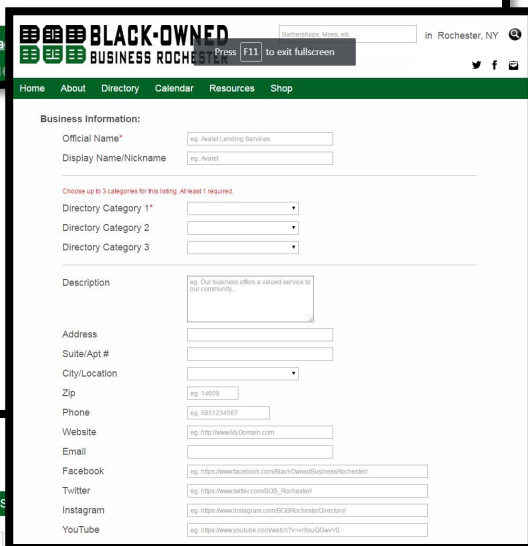
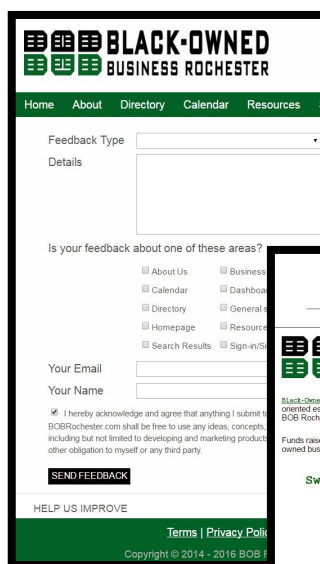
Actions – Pandemic-related Pivots

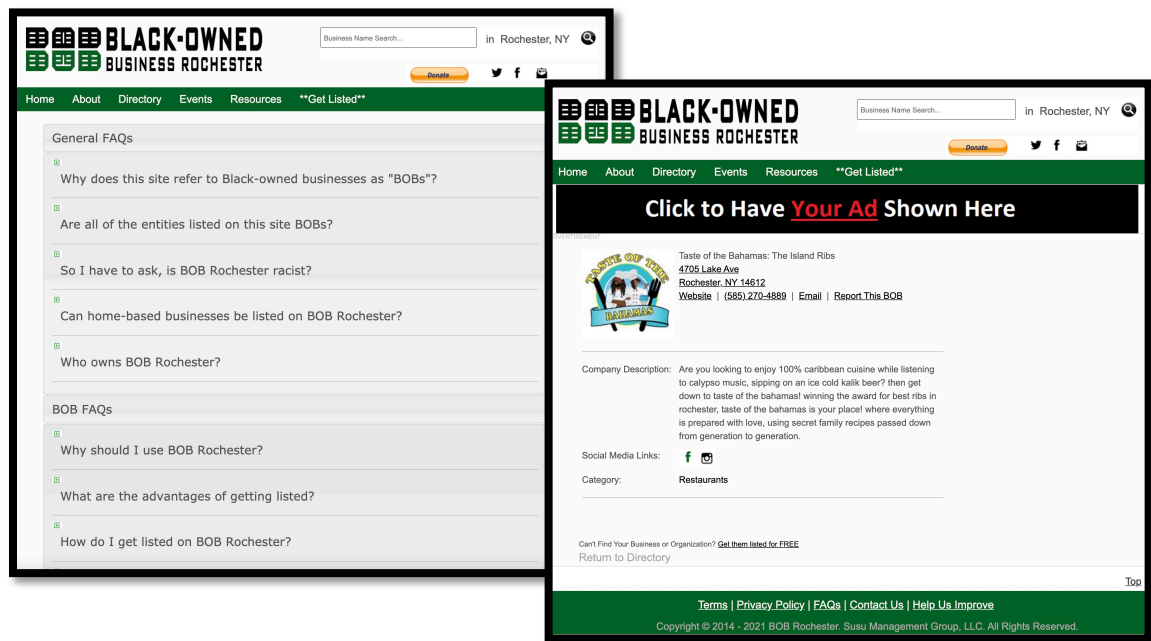
Platform Development

- Developed an API to expand network reach, BOB promotion, and the data warehouse; allot 1 – 3 months at \$5k
- New brand development is underway, LocalBOBs.com (Fall 2021), for national expansion; allot 6+ months at ≤\$75k
- Create niche-specific platforms centering Latinx-, Asian-, and Native American-owned businesses; can filter by women-, disadvantaged-, LGBT-, and veteran-owned, as well as certification statuses (including MBE, WBE, DBE, LGBTBE, SDVOB/VOSB, and Section 3 businesses); allot 4 months at \$25k – \$75k each and \$12k – \$15k for annual maintenance
- New features will include check-ins, profile administration, crowdsourcing, job boards, ratings, reviews, eCommerce, a request for responses feature, custom APIs, niche-specific reporting, free and paid subscription levels, and more
- Connect a community reinvestment fund



BOBRochester.com screenshots





Sample Pages Documentation

Ready for technical detail	Page	Description
4/23/20XX	About	Information page. A billboard of sorts to suggest the purpose of the site to the user in greater detail than the Home page.
	Add a BOB	(See Get Listed)
7/18/20XX	Calendar	A calendar display of events entered into the system. These events can be 'downloaded' to a user's device at will.
	Contact Us	A form to allow users to engage BOB Rochester administrators.
2/7/20XX	Directory	Listing of BOBs. Displayed in multiple ways to afford a comfortable user experience.
	FAQs	Frequently asked questions of users.
	Get Listed	A form interface that allows a user to request that a BOB get listed.
	Header (Search)	Used to search for BOB-records in the system by category, name, or tags. This should support partial string search. This page persists across all pages used in the site except for error-pages.
	Help Us Improve	A form to allow users to suggest ideas through the existing website.
	Home	An informational page. A billboard of sorts to suggest the purpose of the site to users, and highlight recent news and upcoming events.
	Privacy Policy	Static governing terms of privacy afforded to users of the BOB Rochester website.
	Resources	A listing of culturally-relevant books, movies, podcasts and other media focused on skill building and cultural community development.
	Shop	A listing of products for sale to support/sustain the efforts of BOB Rochester.
	Terms	Static terms of service provided by BOB Rochester to users of this website and system.
	Page (search results)	Resulting page of search or BOB Directory selection.
10/10/20XX	Profile	Static result of specific BOB listing.
	Media	Links to news articles, audio-visual files, and BOBR press kit items

Sample page documentation list for describing the purpose of each page and managing platform development

Process

Regional Integration Strategy

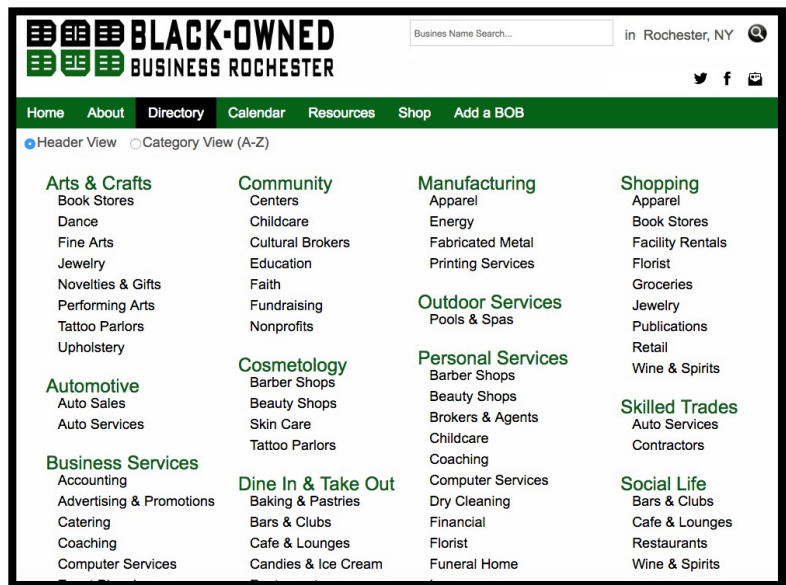
- Decide whether or not to partner with NMI Foundation, Inc. a new national non-profit (501c3) community wealth building organization to support these and related efforts within the regional context
- Identify an economic development or non-profit organization to serve as the *Organizational Affiliate* for the territory or region; they would spearhead network development and implementation with the software vendor and administer the network post-implementation, including onboarding and managing paid staff and/or volunteers (*see the next bullet*)
- Cultivate *Niche Market Ambassadors* (e.g., the BOB SquadSM) to perform outreach focused on deepening cultural community engagement through technical assistance and network navigation (budgetary considerations can include stipends, interns or co-ops, part-time, and full-time jobs)

Strategic Resource Development

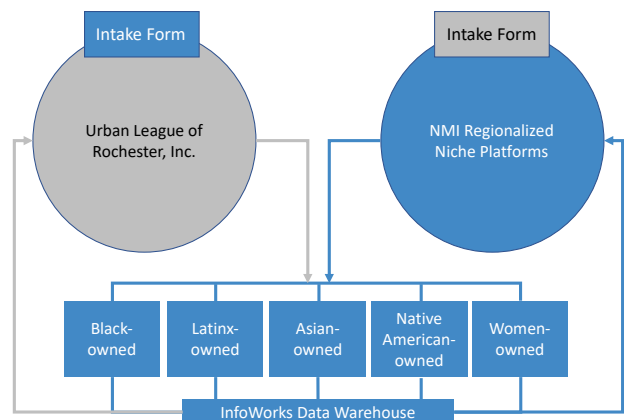
- Conduct outreach to the private sector, government, philanthropy, and the general community to garner financial support for the project; private sector incentives may include tax credits
- Establish a community fund connected to the network for garnering financial support and through which to allocate revenues for community reinvestment

Platform Implementation

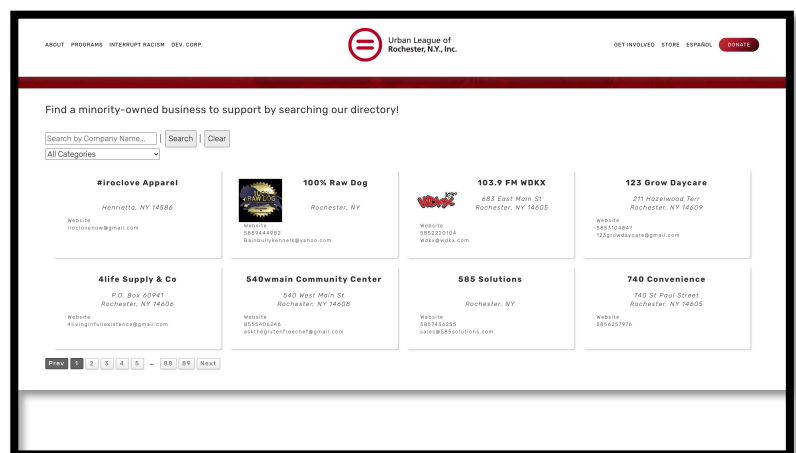
- Determine whether to sponsor one or more integrated culturally-specific portals and custom APIs in support of cultural communities of interest (*keep in mind that prices may vary by vendor, number of counties, population size, and/or features*)
- Select a vendor like InfoWorks and collaborate with the community to determine the desired scope of work
- Form a 3 – 7 person project team and maintain a weekly meeting schedule with the vendor
- Develop site content, create social media pages, pilot site developments, participate in training workshops, and identify niche directory listings with the community; celebrate wins publicly
- Prepare a rollout strategy with actions



Original BOB Rochester directory screenshot in header view



API conceptual model for NMI regionalized platforms and Urban League of Rochester (client)



New LocalBOBs.com API on client's website (www.urbanleagueroch.org)



Optional Other Search Parameters

Location:

☒ Search near me

☐ Search near

Search near me

☐ Ignore location

Search radius:

15 miles



Search

Local eCommerce Marketplace


**REVENUES
& SALES**

Provided by SME Consultant

Mondoforma

Location

Online – Ashland Marketplace is in process

Origin

The idea sprang from a frustrating day trying to locate an item I knew was available somewhere in my town. Hours of effort gave way to simply ordering the item online and waiting a week for it to arrive. The technology for local online shopping was widely available and mostly free but required planning and organization.

Budget



Many of the tools are free. Planning and organization may benefit from an educational seminar, training, and consultations, at a nominal fee. Training is also widely available online for many of the tools.

Timeframe



Individual retailers can create accounts in ~1 hour. Community efforts to coordinate should be ~6 weeks, and a community-centric marketing effort, is an ongoing activity, > 6 months.

Risk



The potential benefit, leveraging internet technologies to steer shoppers to local stores rather than distant, online-only websites, is great. The financial and structural risks are minimal.

Key Performance Indicators

Total sales (\$), total online sales (\$), total number of transactions, number of BOPIS, BOPAC, and local deliveries, # of customers, # of new customers

Partners & Resources

The core technologies – SEO, mapping, marketplaces, etc. already exist and mostly free. An effective program will also integrate with other projects, such as business websites, email campaigns (CRM), Facebook, Etsy, etc. Additional resources could include: community business directory, community outreach resources, scheduling a group discussion for the purposes of planning and organizing, and coordination with other LRRP projects and teams to incorporate the benefits of those programs into store, community, and marketplace operations.

Diagnostic

Every porch-delivery – by FedEx, UPS, Amazon, etc. – is potentially a purchase that was made online and shipped from a distant retailer. Most of these purchases are items that could be purchased from local retailers. Providing a “shop local online, buy local online” capability, mindset, and awareness can strengthen the local economy, and help local retailers.

A leading metric of this phenomenon is Decreasing Total Retail Sales. In the absence of decreasing population, this is an indicator that sales dollars are being spent outside the community.

Decreasing retail employment is generally an early indication that revenue/employee is insufficient to maintain employee headcount. Technology can be a force multiplier which can increase sales per employee, and create a need for additional employees, and increase the needs for other supporting businesses that provide training, equipment, communications, and connectivity services

Even local retailers that have their own websites from which they can sell, are at a competitive disadvantage to large eCommerce platforms that present thousands of products in dozens of product categories. A local multi-vendor eCommerce marketplace combines the communities total product selection, and creates a comparable selection of products to large eCommerce companies, making the community an eCommerce destination.

This approach should also promote the store, provide a map to their location, and strengthen the relationship between shoppers and local businesses. Retailer identification and branding reinforces the shopper-retailer relationship, and encourages repeat business.

Action Item

The recommended course of action is an initial outreach to community stores to present the benefits of a coordinated community-centric online marketplace technologies. This may require some collateral materials, and an outreach effort.

As with the “Coordinated Communications” project, the “Local eCommerce Marketplace” project is effectively a coordinated and integrated process. This means that the project results will benefit greatly from identifying a point person to coordinate the discussion and efforts.

The community of retailers may also benefit from a group presentation on the creation of a marketplace, websites, a local online business directory, local search technologies, and how integrating the various technologies and platforms can create a powerful “local online” alternative to the major eCommerce websites.

Many of the technologies and platforms are already built and no development or customization activity is required. Awareness of the technologies and how to apply and integrate them will also benefit from a community sponsored publicity effort and/or outreach campaign.

In some cases, integrating the various technologies may require some outside specialists or training, depending on the specific groups of technologies selected. Retailers can and should sign up for accounts on various platforms and establish omni-channel strategies. Communities can and should build directories. Directories and websites can and should be integrated with marketplace platforms. And, ideally, retailers should leverage cross-platform inventory management tools.

Process

The process for implementing this project begins by identifying whether this should be a consultant-led project, a DIY project, or some combination of the two. The community should identify the community point person on the project who will centralize communications, set a project schedule, and monitor the key metrics in monitoring its success. This should be someone that can speak for the community and with local retailers.

Next, we recommend scheduling a community discussion/presentation (~1 hour) to present the project, describe the implementation, and enroll participants.

Each enrollee will receive an email that provides links to information, tools, and tutorials that will help them create vendor accounts on the various platforms. Emphasis should be placed on these activities being coordinated on a community level, and integrated to create a "the community is a marketplace" result. Ideally, this should also include a community retail business directory and local-search enabled marketplace platform.

With vendors accounts created and products uploaded, the marketplace is effectively fully operational. However, it is our experience that merely creating the capability does not automatically mean that customers will begin using it.

We highly recommend that the marketplace project be implemented in conjunction with a marketing or communications project. This can take many forms, from community communications up to a fully coordinated social media marketing project. We will provide a Best Practices project sheet for a coordinated social media marketing project which is designed to work with the marketplace project, but can also be leveraged to benefit any community projects or communications.

We highly recommend integrating the directory and marketplace with other online retail initiatives, facilitating an omni-channel solution for those retailers engaged in selling via multiple online marketplaces.

The last component in the process is to collect data on the project progress and integrate it with other community communications. This will keep residents and businesses engaged and informed about the community's efforts to strengthen the local economy, and invested in a positive outcome.

To be competitive with major eCommerce websites, the community marketplace will need to provide a comparable level of product selection and convenience features. But the project can gain a competitive advantage by emphasizing those dimensions of competition which eCommerce sites cannot match, such as: Customer Service, Product Demonstrations, shopping as an experience, personal relationships, proximity, and location-based fulfillment options (BOPIS, BOPAC, Local Delivery, etc.)

ashlandmass.com/842/Shop-Local-Ashland

CORONAVIRUS INFO

Covid-19 Information for 2021
[Read On...](#)

Create an Account - Increase your productivity, customize your experience, and engage in information you care about. [Sign In](#)

Ashland Restaurant Directory

[Shop Local Ashland](#)

 Ashland Deals & Steals

Home > Doing Business > Business Directory > Shop Local Ashland

Shop Local Ashland

Shopping local was never more important than NOW! Please remember during these tough times our local shops and restaurants need us now more than ever. During the next few months when you are looking for holiday presents or are looking to enjoy a delicious dinner, think ASHLAND! There is so much right here in your own backyard!

If you shop or dine local in town let us know! Tag @TownofAshlandMA on Facebook or Instagram, share the love and spread the news that Ashland is not only a great place to live, work but is the best place to play, eat and shop!

Shopping

Click any image below to be directed directly to the businesses website.

A community business directory (community government owned) provides a listing service for interested businesses. In this example, different pages are created for different categories of businesses, including restaurants and retail.

Westborough

https://mondoforma.com

Become a seller Vendors Sale My Account

- All categories -
 Search products

Optional Other Search Parameters

Location: ☐ Search near me ☒ Search near ☐ Ignore location

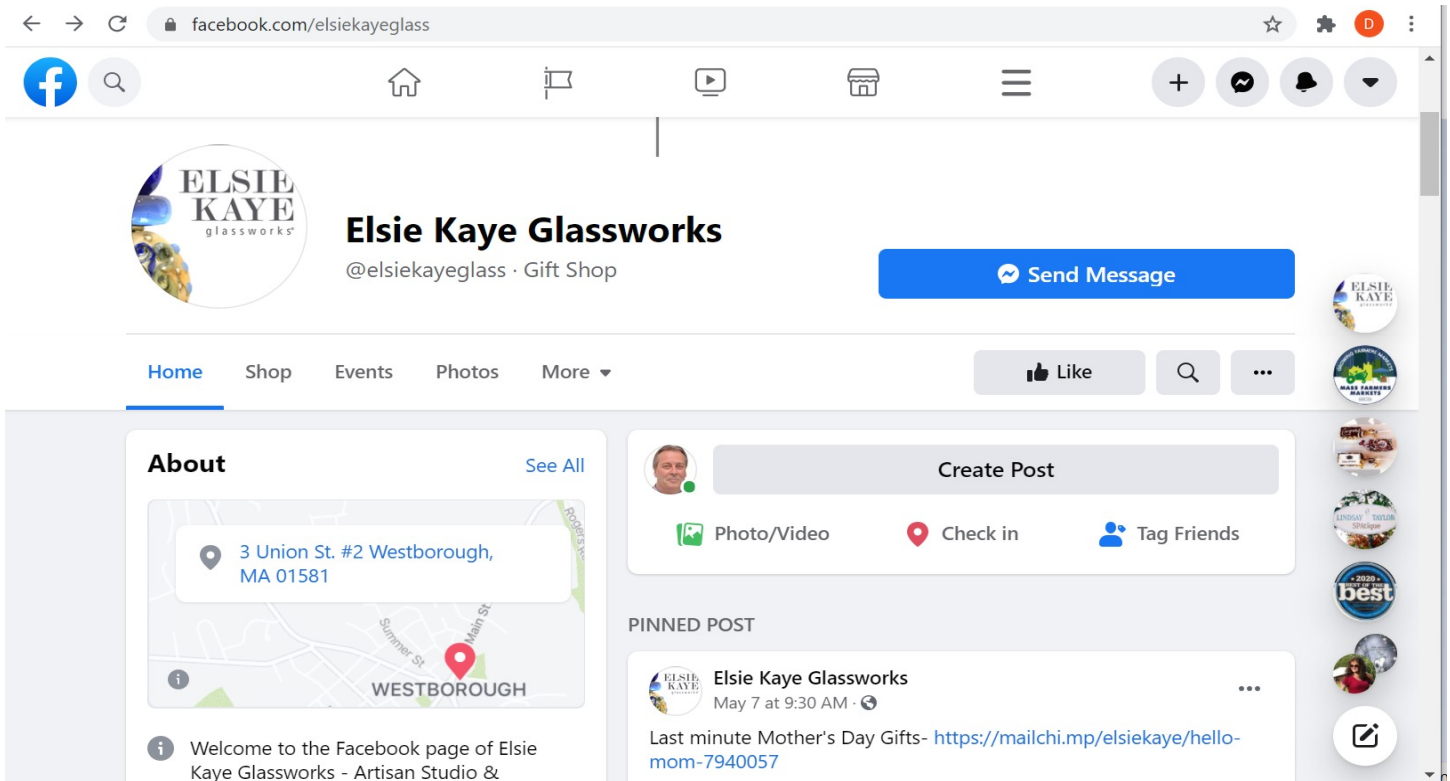
Search radius:

[Search](#)

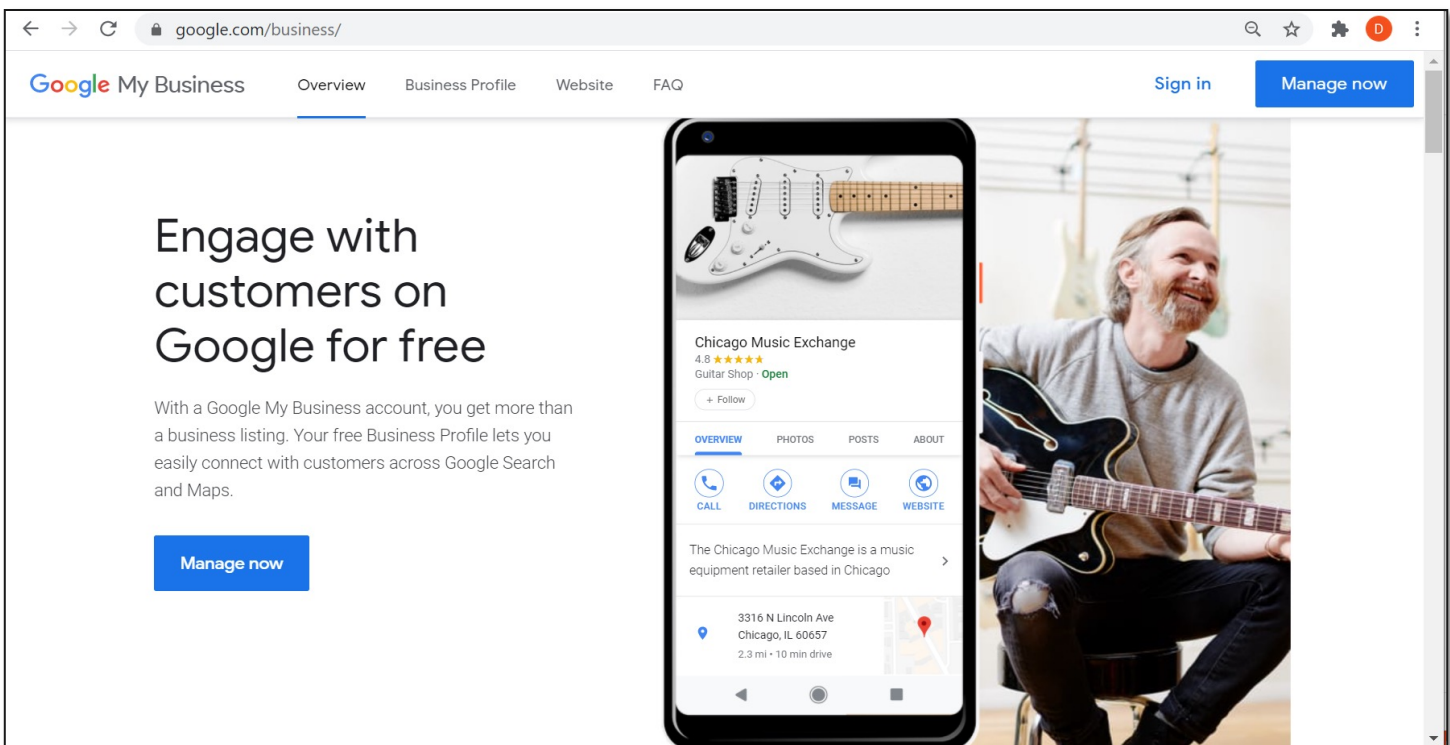
Cart is empty

Featured Vendors Near You

Mondoforma is a local-search enabled marketplace, that allows shoppers to identify their location, their radius of search, and keywords of the product that they are shopping for. The Home page also provides featured vendors that might be of interest to shoppers.




A Facebook Page connects your business with customers and offers key information about your business, products, and services. It also creates a “feed” of information that is presented to your best customers, helping to solidify the shopper-store relationship, and keeping them informed about news and upcoming events.




Credibility gained from Google is enough to sway people to be 38% more likely to visit your store, and 29% more likely to buy something. Research finds that 88% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.

Checkout


Deliver to



Curbside Pickup — Free
(Immediate)



USPS — \$1.00
(2 days)



Local Delivery — \$3.00
(Same day)

Want it right now? Pick it up at the store.

Customer Sign in

Customer's notes

Chat

Blue Ice - the novel by Mark Cahill	
1 x \$9.95	
1 item(s)	\$9.95
Stripe surcharge	\$0.20
Taxes	
VAT (6.25% included)	\$0.59
Order Total	\$10.15

Shoppers appreciate preferred additional delivery methods, and stores that offered BOPIC and BOPAS options saw their sales increase >17%. In addition to the traditional shipping options that eCommerce websites offer – like FedEx, UPS, and USPS – local retailers can offer options which their proximity to shoppers enables – such as Buy Online Pickup In Store (BOPIS), Buy Online Pickup At Curb (BOPAC), and Local Delivery.



Retail & Restaurant Technology Initiative







Provided by SME Consultant

Cambridge Retail Advisors

Location

Boston, MA

Origin	Established in 2019, the Retail and Restaurant Technology Initiative has piloted, vetted, and implemented its mission in partnership with Boston Main Streets Foundation, the City of Boston, and Citizens Bank. During the COVID-19 crisis we have quantified the significant impact of our program and are proud to promote the great diversity of participants.
Budget	  <p>Projects can be customized to work within a range of budgets. The typical configuration per location cost is ~\$5,200, outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equipment (iPad, cash drawer, scanner, receipt printer) ~ \$2,000• First Year POS Subscription Fees ~ \$1,200• Project Management and Implementation - \$2,000
Timeframe	 <p>4-6 weeks is the average time frame for a new retail or restaurant implementation, this would include: candidate vetting, enabling eCommerce, setup of POS hardware and software, and establishing cost savings best practices. Business coaching is conducted throughout the engagement with the entrepreneur. Surveys are completed periodically to validate that all steps were completed, and provide feedback to better the program.</p>
Risk	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Participant Limitations</u> – Project timelines are dependent on participant involvement. We use a screening process to make sure those chosen have the time and ability to commit.• <u>Language Barriers</u> – Language can present a challenge, but this may be overcome with translation services to keep the program accessible to businesses owners of different races and creeds.• <u>Internet Access or Cell Service</u> – Internet is required to support the POS system, hence it's useful to build a partnership with a provider such as Comcast.
Key Performance Indicators	Implementation time, eCommerce, online ordering revenue, operating cost reduction, stakeholder reporting, surveys and program evaluation
Partners & Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Cambridge Retail Advisors</u> – Program Management2. <u>Comcast</u> – Internet, Voice, Security3. <u>Lightspeed POS</u> – Technology Partner (retail sector)4. <u>Toast POS</u> – Technology Partner (restaurant sector)5. <u>Quantic POS</u> – Technology Partner (retail sector)6. <u>SCORE</u> – business coaching/support

Diagnostic

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

Action Item

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

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

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

Below are the key actions:

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

Process

Discovery Phase (1 week)

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

Onboarding & Implementation Phase (4-5 weeks)

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

Summary

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



Innovative Funding For Arts Districts



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Levine Planning Strategies, LLC

Location

Portland, ME

Origin	Creative Portland and the City of Portland [ME]
Budget	 Medium Budget – \$100K a year in direct funding allocated
Timeframe	 Short Timeframe – 18 months to 2 years for local and state approvals
Risk	 Medium Risk – Funding will depend on district growth
Key Performance Indicators	Change in economic activity downtown; number of downtown visitors; paid opportunities for local artists
Partners & Resources	Municipal finance, economic development & planning officials; local arts organizations; local Chamber of Commerce; and downtown organizations

Diagnostic

Many communities support the arts in their downtowns as part of a comprehensive economic development and placemaking strategy. While funding can come from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and local sources, there will be an increased need for funding for arts and cultural coming out of the pandemic. Attracting visitors and customers to downtowns, when they have become accustomed to ordering items on-line and even watching live music remotely, will require more than simply turning on the "OPEN" signs. Providing additional support for artistic endeavors that will attract people to downtowns will be an important part of COVID-19 recovery.

Unfortunately, funding sources for arts and culture are limited. Federal assistance will potentially help, but will be temporary. Local governments will be seeking to utilize general fund revenue for a variety of deferred needs. Finding alternative sources to fund arts activities in the next few years will be important for post-pandemic recovery.

Action Item

In 2008, two predecessor arts and culture organizations in Portland, Maine, merged to form a quasi-public non-profit called Creative Portland. Creative Portland's mission is "to support the creative economy through the arts by providing essential resources, by fostering partnerships, and by promoting Portland's artistic talents and cultural assets."

Creative Portland understands the link between economic development and the arts. According to their website, "[a]s the official nonprofit arts agency, we support economic development efforts by strengthening and stimulating our workforce, creative industries, and enterprises." Before COVID-19, Creative Portland focused on popular arts activities such as the First Friday Art Walk and the 2 Degrees networking program.

During the pandemic, Creative Portland responded by creating the [Portland Artist Relief Fund](#) to provide stipends to local artists to keep working while many of their usual outlets were closed. In May 2020, in the first round of awards, they funded 63 artists in the gig economy.

Creative Portland is funded in an unusual way. With limited local and state funding otherwise available, a dedicated portion of downtown property tax revenue funds \$100,000 of the organization's annual budget. Using Maine's equivalent of the District Increment Finance program, the City of Portland created a downtown district that uses growth in property tax revenue to fund the creative economy and other economic development activities.

This dedicated funding also serves as seed funding for the organization. Creative Portland is able to leverage that funding with private fundraising, other grants, and other revenue generation activities.

Process

Using District Increment Financing (DIF) to fund downtown arts & culture efforts requires several steps. A community must first designate a development district (such as downtown) and a development program for that district. That program will need to include an explanation of how funding arts & cultural activities will serve the goals of the DIF program. The program must outline infrastructure needs in the district, existing and proposed zoning changes, and a financial plan outlining uses for DIF funding. This final program must be approved by the municipal legislative body and the State Economic Assistance Coordinating Council.

If the DIF district is approved, DIF funding is "captured" from a portion of new property tax revenue created in the development district. Unlike in Maine, DIF funding in Massachusetts must generally be used for capital expenses, such as construction of an arts facility. However, in many cases, such an investment can help leverage other funding for arts & culture efforts, much like Creative Portland's ability to use their public funding to generate other revenue streams.

Other Financing Tools

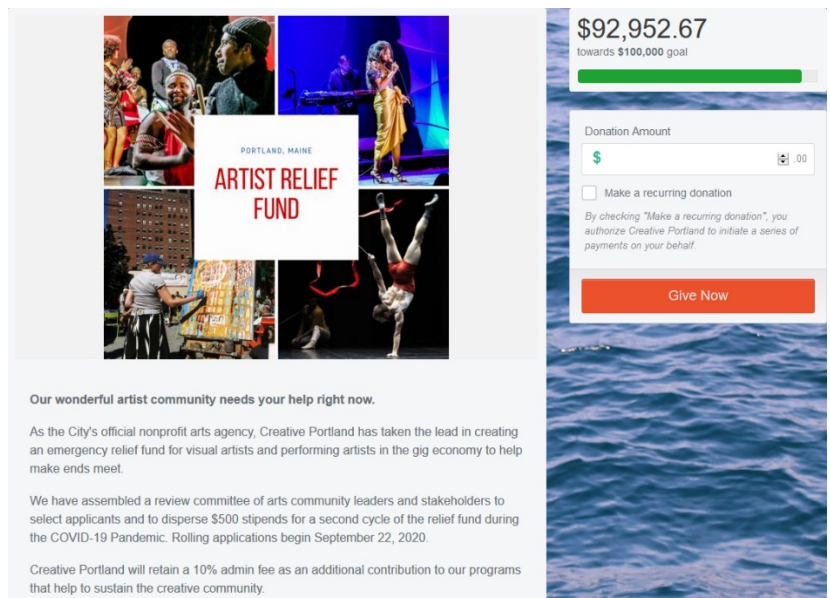
Given that DIF funding must be generally used for capital expenses, how can that help with the ongoing operational need of a local arts & culture organization? There are several ways that DIF funding of capital needs such as dedicated space for administration and performances, can help provide the economic benefits of arts programming:

- It allows private and grant funding efforts to be focused on programming and operating expenses, rather than capital needs;
- A bricks and mortar performance space downtown can be a convincing statement about the ability to draw people downtown. That pass-by traffic can be a powerful attractor to other retail and hospitality investors, such as restaurants, convenience stores, and even hotels;
- With the growth of crowd funding platforms such as EquityNet, Wefunder, or even, as Creative Portland does, a dedicated platform that ensures all the funding raised stays with the organization; and
- An arts & cultural organization with an established presence in a community can serve as a fiscal sponsor for other non-profits in the region. This relationship allows other organizations to seek additional grants, while raising some revenue for the arts organization as a service fee. As an example, Creative Portland is the fiscal sponsor for several Portland non-profits, including [Black Owned Maine](#), the [Maine Music Alliance](#), and [PechaKucha Portland](#). Creative Portland provides these organizations with fiscal infrastructure and collects a five percent service fee.

FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK

A CREATIVEPORTLAND^{ME} PROJECT

First Friday Art Walk, a popular Creative Portland Event, has been curtailed during the pandemic



PORTLAND, MAINE ARTIST RELIEF FUND

\$92,952.67
towards \$100,000 goal

Donation Amount
\$ 0.00

☐ Make a recurring donation

By checking "Make a recurring donation", you authorize Creative Portland to initiate a series of payments on your behalf.

Give Now

Our wonderful artist community needs your help right now.

As the City's official nonprofit arts agency, Creative Portland has taken the lead in creating an emergency relief fund for visual artists and performing artists in the gig economy to help make ends meet.

We have assembled a review committee of arts community leaders and stakeholders to select applicants and to disperse \$500 stipends for a second cycle of the relief fund during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Rolling applications begin September 22, 2020.

Creative Portland will retain a 10% admin fee as an additional contribution to our programs that help to sustain the creative community.

Creative Portland used crowdfunding to raise almost \$100,000 towards an Artist Relief Fund



Contracting with Artists



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Location

Various locations (Lynn, MA; Natick, MA; Watertown, MA)

Origin	Marjorie Weinberger, Jenn Erickson, Annis Sengupta, MAPC; Lynn, Massachusetts; Natick, Massachusetts; Watertown, Massachusetts
Budget	 Medium (\$50 - \$200 K)
Timeframe	 Short (0-5 years)
Risk	 Medium - High
Key Performance Indicators	Engaging diverse residents in planning issues and processes; increasing pedestrian activity in underused public spaces; greater social cohesion and well-being.
Partners & Resources	<p>School art departments, libraries, public health departments, planners, property owners, departments of recreation, departments of public works, local cultural councils, public art commissions.</p> <p>Resource: Home :: Municipal Artist Partnerships (municipal-artist.org)</p>

Diagnostic

Bringing artists into municipal projects can build energy and draw new activity into downtown commercial areas. Contracting with artists using the 30B process has proven to be challenging and difficult. Working with the IG's office, MAPC has established guidelines for contracting with artists pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30B, section 2[1], which states that a city may, as a public procurement, enter into a Grant Agreement with an individual to "carry out a public purpose."

MAPC's process maintains transparency, accountability and fairness while creating a straightforward means of both (1) paying artists for time spent on concept development and (2) contracting with artists for work that exceeds \$10,000 in value.

Contracting with artists brings many benefits to local communities. A few benefits of this recovery strategy include:

- Creation of local jobs for artists from within and outside of the community through Calls for Artists that are tailored to addressing specific issues and opportunities, e.g., wayfinding in the Town Center
- Allocation of public resources towards the design, creation, and installation of works that create immediate changes in the built environment
- Testing new models of contracting with artists for a designated timeframe, e.g., through the launch of a municipal Artist-in-Residence program

[1] MGL c. 30B, §2 defines "Grant agreement", [as] "an agreement between a governmental body and an individual or nonprofit entity the purpose of which is to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation instead of procuring supplies or services for the benefit or use of the governmental body."



Photo: MAPC

Action Item

Dedicated Artist Liaison

- Ensure that the artist has a contact within the municipality who can help navigate permitting processes, access to space and equipment, and help build relationships with other areas of municipal government such as schools and libraries.

Flexibility and Creative Problem Solving

- Artist-led projects bring innovation to local government and often require flexibility and creative problem-solving in order to implement new ideas within the constraints of local government.

Attention to Cultural Equity

- Building a welcoming and inclusive community renewal after the pandemic requires purposeful attention to what art forms, artist experience and values are reflected in calls for art and artist contracts. Who is making decisions about what is funded? Are opportunities available to people fluent in commonly-spoken languages other than English?

Respect Artists' Intellectual Property

- MAPC affirms artists' rights to maintain their intellectual property under contract with government entities. Government entities may reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, and otherwise use, and authorize others to use any artworks/deliverables developed under grant agreements with attribution for both themselves and the artist.

Process

- Determine model for contracting with artist:
 - Residency
 - Artist facilitator
 - Art installation
 - Youth development
- Establish funding source to support artists' work
- Identify local priorities, partner organizations and individuals to guide artist selection process;
- Select artist using Call for Artists or Call for Art, including:
 - Overview and Purpose of Opportunity
 - Desired Outcomes
 - Award Details
 - Application Instructions
 - Key Dates
 - Selection Process and Criteria
- Engage partners and community through artistic programming and implementation
- Use interviews, observations, reflections and surveys to document and evaluate impacts



Iluminación Lawrence: Illuminating downtown Lawrence to create wonder and attraction



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

Lawrence, MA

Origin	City of Lawrence and Mass Development TDI Fellow in collaboration with a light artist plus partners developed the concept to focus on Downtown Lawrence.
Budget	 High approximately \$225,000 + in-kind services. <i>Note:</i> budget increases as project elements are added to program.
Timeframe	 Medium– planning and implementation 10-12 months and ongoing
Risk	 Medium – Main risks included weather, and availability of technology and political will
Key Performance Indicators	Community and regional attention, number of participants at events
Partners & Resources	Light Artist John Powell, City of Lawrence, Lawrence Redevelopment Authority, Mass Development TDI, Essex Community Foundation (ECCF), Groundworks Lawrence, Lawrence Partnership and Lawrence DPW

Diagnostic

Early on, the bridge and the clock tower, were the first concepts developed. After a devastating gas-main explosion and utility collapse in a number of the City of Lawrence neighborhoods, it was felt that an extension of the project be made to include other structures to underscore Lawrence as a rich historic, architecturally and vital community

Therefore, it was determined that the architecture of the magnificent mill buildings in and around Downtown Lawrence should be "showcased" by artistic illumination to reinforce community pride and attract visitors and residents to Downtown Lawrence

Iluminación Lawrence was organized to create and develop a comprehensive program to allow Lawrence to be seen "in a different light"

Partner organizations and institutions were joined together to fund various projects. The budget was further developed with the assistance of Light Artist John Powell and the MassDevelopment TDI Fellow Jess Martinez to incorporate many Lawrence structures.

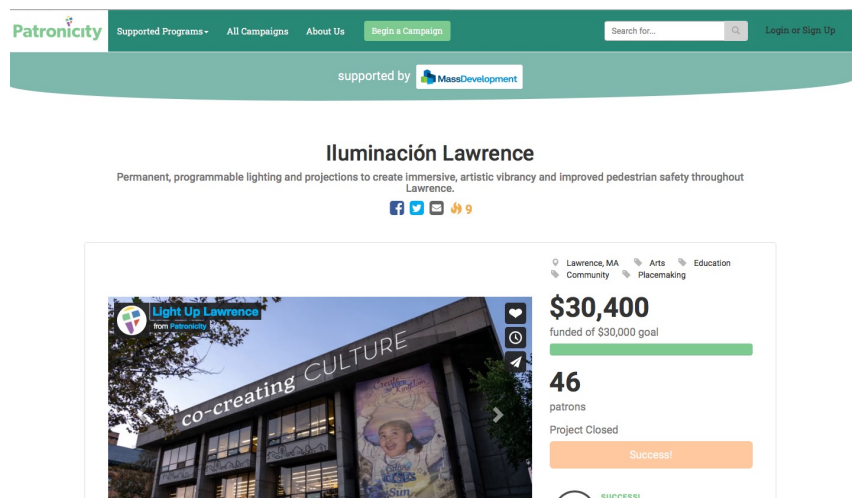
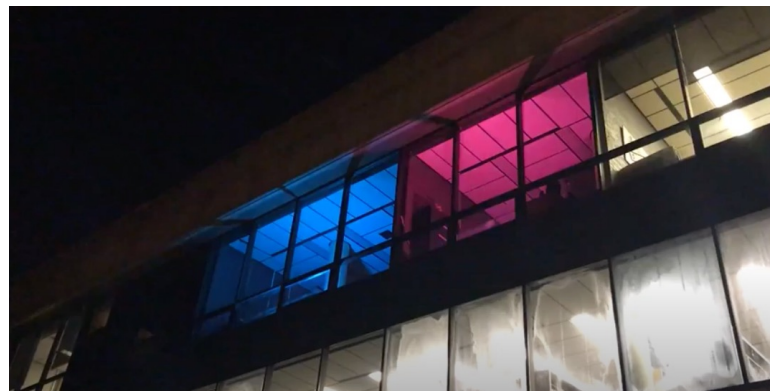
The Patronicity Funding amount was used as part of the overall funding.

Action Item

- To reinforce the program, an *Iluminación Lawrence* website was developed to communicate news of the project elements, schedule and related events
- A Patronicity funding project was developed to raise \$30,000 in matching money. The goal was met by raising \$30,400 which MassDevelopment matched to implement the project. Additionally, several other significant amounts were raised by other public and private sources.
- Local Press outlets, facebook and the City of Lawrence's official website as well as partners' websites were used to communicate the project to residents and businesses
- Phased tests and "soft openings" were created to reinforce community interest
- Music was part of the plan as well and was and is provided by
- In 2021, the Boston Architectural College will assist with rolling out other lighted structures in the Downtown



Iluminación website



Process

- The artistic and technical aspects of the project were initially worked out by Light Artist John Powell who had extensive experience lighting buildings, bridges and other structures nationally and internationally. The initial concept of the project focused only on the Casey Bridge and then later on the Ayer Mill Clock Tower.
- Mr. Powell convinced various members off the community leadership that this concept needed to be expanded to incorporate many structures throughout the Downtown
- Unfortunately, he passed away in early 2020 and replacement artists have now taken his creative and technical place
- Needed permissions and permitting were ascertained from public and private building owners
- LuminArtz developed approaches to direct lighting facade of City Hall
- Internal illumination took place at the Lawrence Public Library
- "Soft Openings" were used as testing for technology. These in turn became community events that added excitement and energy to the program
- Organizations, agencies and individuals collaborated on every aspect of the program
- Individual budgets have been created for each event and each activity area.
- Throughout the projects program, a detailed implementation plan with timeline of tasks, roles was created and followed
- Document has been extensive throughout the total program
- This has and will assist with future project components programming
- During each programmed event, community celebrations have taken place, leading to continued community pride and joy.
- Businesses and residents have all positively responded to the overall program.



Lighting was used to emphasize significant architectural features and to enliven the downtown experience. .



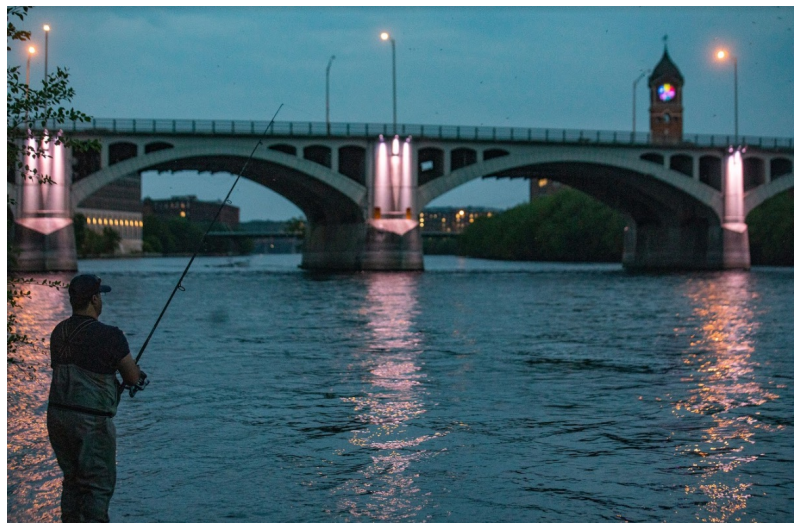
Internal view of Ayer Mill Clock Tower lighting..

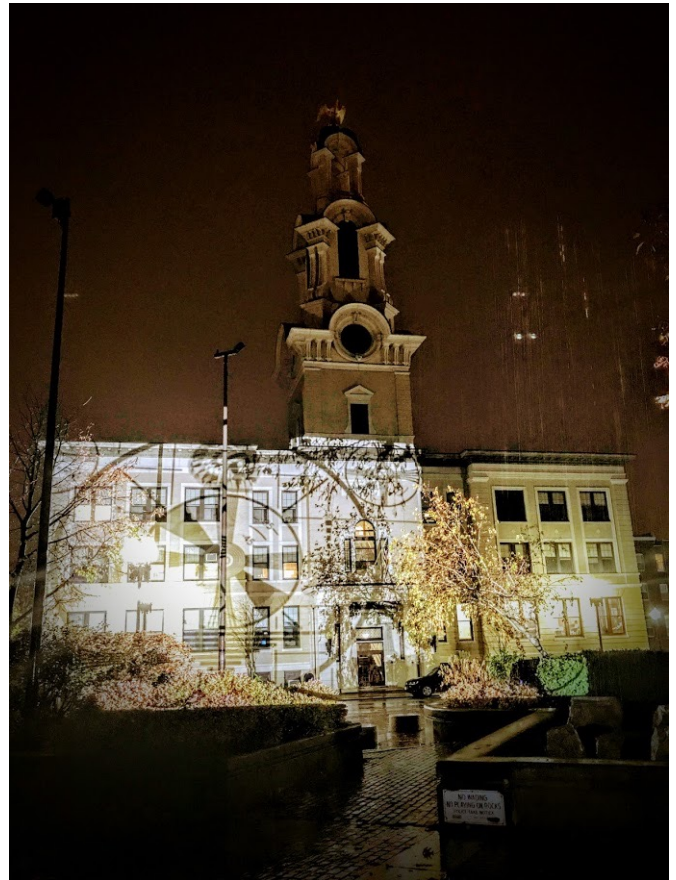
Process- Strategic Decisions

- The initial project considered, for what eventually became *Iluminación Lawrence*, was only to light the Casey Bridge located in Downtown Lawrence over the Merrimack River
- After the Ayer Clock Tower lighting was added, it was clear that a much more extensive plan be initiated throughout the Downtown
- Now the plan incorporates several significant structures that add to the visual enrichment of Lawrence while recognizing the history, people and events that have gone into its social and cultural legacy
- Significant aspects of its history include perhaps the best physical master plan for a textile mill city in the United States, impact on child-labor laws by Lewis Hind's documentation and writings based on Lawrence child workers and the revolutionary Bread and Roses Workers' Strike of 1912
- *Iluminación Lawrence* speaks to this grand legacy of the history and resiliency of the City of Lawrence.
- Each new lighting of a structure becomes a community celebration



Iconic Casey Bridge over the Merrimack River





Events such as Reverberation concerts support collaborations where many regional and local organizations and City departments work closely toward the common goals illuminating the Downtown. The partnerships and that are needed to plan an event are an important element of overall activation of business districts.



Source: Renew Newcastle

Connect artists, entrepreneurs, and makers/crafters with landlords to fill vacant storefronts and change Main Street image





CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Newcastle, Australia

Origin	Renew Newcastle was an effort started by an urbanist and arts and events organizer to fill vacant storefronts with new creative industries in a post-industrial city.
Budget	 Medium
Timeframe	 Medium
Risk	 Low
Key Performance Indicators	Number of vacant storefronts filled, number of tenants that went on to rent permanent space as viable businesses, stabilization and rise of property values, reduction in crime, economic benefit to the community
Partners & Resources	Organization that led creatives recruitment, landlord matching, and marketing, including events, City Planning Department (zoning), private funders to provide seed money for cleaning/maintenance of storefronts.

Diagnostic

Newcastle is a post-industrial city 100 miles north of Sydney, Australia. In 2008, there were a significant number of vacant buildings in the downtown and 150 vacant storefronts on the mile-long stretch of the city's main street. Challenges were numerous:

- What industries could take the place of the former coal, steel, and shipbuilding center of the country?
- How could low property values and crime be addressed by recruiting new 21st Century industries to the city?
- What uses could fill vacant storefronts to give vibrancy to the street?
- How might a solution be scaled to make a difference in the image of the city and significantly reduce ground floor vacancies?

The project identified new "industries" to replace long-defunct economic engines in the city.



Action Item

Through online searches, Marcus Westbury, the creator of Renew Newcastle, identified a significant number of creatives, artists, and makers living and working in and near Newcastle. By surveying those creatives about their space needs and interest in bricks and mortar locations downtown, he was able to identify a large need for space. After matching with landlords eager for even temporary tenants, the Renew Newcastle program slowly and steadily built momentum and a new image for the city...one of a destination for makers and creatives and their customers. The program focused new tenants in targeted areas and then staged events to draw attention to the businesses. The goals were to support creatives and help them transition to viable businesses and permanent space in the city.

Renew Newcastle set up 250 temporary projects in vacant properties and 1/3 of the projects become sustainable businesses. Of those, 81 of those enterprises became a viable business and permanently occupied their storefronts.

In 2008, there were 150 vacant storefronts on the mile-long strip of the city's main street.



Source: Renew Newcastle

Five years into the program, the main street of the city boasted a density of creative uses and entrepreneurs.

Process

- Set up a non-profit with a board of directors that come from a wide range of backgrounds including local business, arts, community representatives. An alternative is to work under the auspices of an existing organization such as the BID, Main Streets Program, or local Chamber of Commerce.
- Survey local restaurants, artisans, makers, creatives (look on Etsy), to see who would benefit for having a temporary brick and mortar location in downtown.
- Assess ownership of all the vacant storefronts in downtown.
- Meet with planning department to discuss opportunities for temporary uses that would not require changing zoning or getting variances (avoid applications and formal legislative process as much as possible).
- Approach owners of vacant properties and ask if spaces could be “borrowed” on a very short-term basis for creatives to sell products.
- Use a Rolling 30-day license agreement.
- The Nonprofit or other entity manages relationship with property owners and works with the City to create a short-term agreement that avoids changing zoning.
- Nonprofit also carries insurance for all of the temporary projects.
- With temporary leases secure, clean up/renovate store fronts.
- Help local small business/artisans move into the spaces.
- When there are several storefronts occupied in one location, host events to garner attention.



Source for all photos: www.edwinrichards.com Instagram: @edwinajillrichards

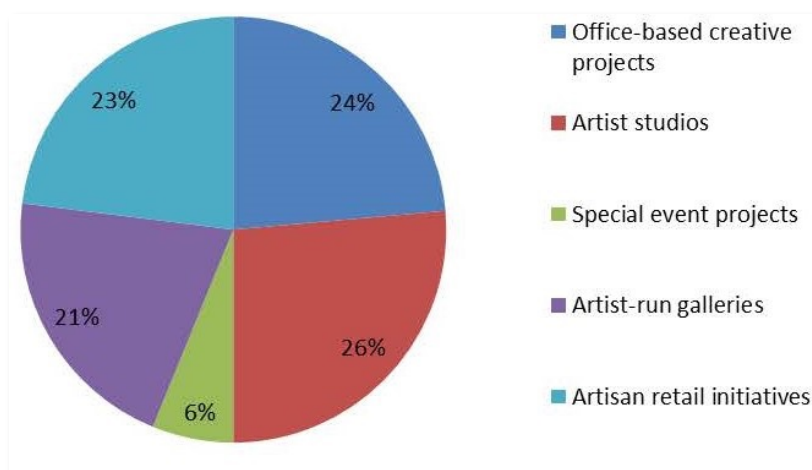
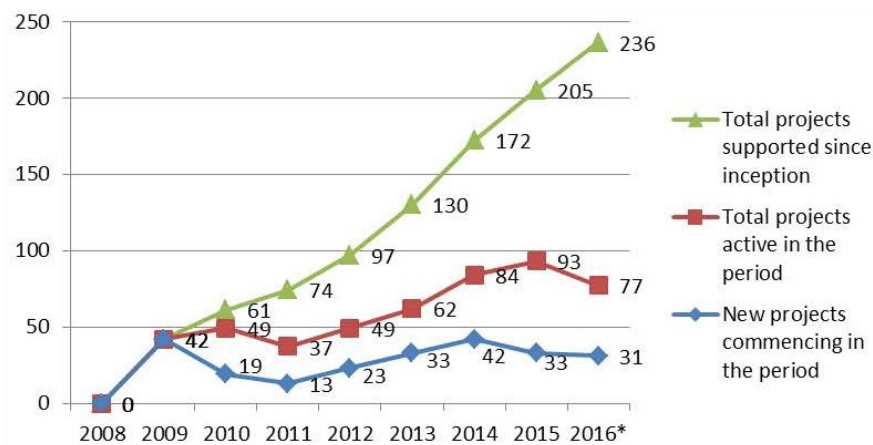
Many of the artisans and entrepreneurs went on to rent permanent space.

Economic Impact to the Community

An economic impact study conducted in 2015-16 looked at the value of the following impacts:

- Creation of jobs and skills developed
- Conversion to commercial leases
- Volunteer engagement
- Mitigation of blight
- Improved business and community confidence
- Improved regional brand

It was determined that for the annual budget of \$208,000 Australian Dollars for Renew Australia, economic impact across the above areas was valued at a little over \$3m Australian Dollars for a benefit-cost ratio of 14:1.



	Estimate
Total Costs	\$208,000
Benefits	
Creation of jobs and skills development	\$2,358,436
Conversion to commercial lease	\$191,828
Volunteer engagement	\$62,763
Mitigation of blight	\$100,698
Improved business and community confidence	\$55,183
Improved regional brand value	\$234,069
Total Benefits	\$3,002,977
PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
Net Benefit	\$2,794,977
Benefit Cost Ratio	14.4

Source: An Economic Evaluation of the Renew Newcastle Project, CofFEE, 2016

Etsy



Source for all photos: www.edwinrichards.com Instagram: [@edwinajillrichards](https://www.instagram.com/edwinajillrichards)



Interactive Storefronts: Engage Residents Through Artistic Installations in Storefronts



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Civic Space Collaborative

Location

Creative Commons storefronts at 554 Main St, Worcester, MA

Origin	During the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan (2020), Interactive Storefronts was created by Claudia Paraschiv, Adrienne Schaeffer-Borego, and Michelle Moon (Civic Space Collaborative), with Evelyn Darling and Andrew McShane (Worcester BID) and Hank Van Hellio (Worcester PopUp at the JMAC), and Courtney Truex (Menkiti Group).
Budget	 <p>Low Budget (\$4,800): Full installation, including \$900 artist stipend and \$300 material budget for each artist/storefront</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (6-9 months)</p>
Risk	 <p>Low Risk</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Transformation of empty storefronts; Increased foot traffic; Ongoing implementation of the storefront program
Partners & Resources	Funding by Downtown Worcester BID and the storefront space's owner, the Menkiti Group, with instrumental support from Hank Van Hellion of Worcester PopUp at the JMAC. The Downtown Worcester BID oversaw the installation days and coordinated directly with the artists.
Diagnostic	<p>Interactive Storefronts were a direct response to the shifting COVID-19 landscape, where social distancing was a key factor to maintain public health, yet engaging the community in public processes remained an important goal.</p> <p>The Interactive Storefronts operated simultaneously with an online survey and the development of a Downtown Placemaking Plan. Interactive Storefronts enabled civic art for public engagement in a creative and safe manner according to current COVID-19 best practices for public safety. Staggered installation times and viewing art through a storefront was a COVID-friendly activity. The use of photography, social media, and QR codes were engaged. The project helped bring art to a diminished Downtown, support a local artist community, and engage residents in a planning process while maintaining public health.</p>
Action Item	<p>Interactive Storefronts enlisted local artists to engage residents in feedback for the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan and enliven downtown storefronts in anticipation of the Creative Commons at 554 Main Street. Residents and Downtown visitors were able to view the public process of the placemaking and beautification survey unfold in-person. Over several months the Interactive Storefronts traced the survey progress from survey questions, to community answers, and finally to proposed public space placemaking interventions.</p> <p>The goals of the project included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging residents to enjoy public art in Downtown Worcester. • Encouraging residents to provide input toward the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan in a real physical space, and to interact with the installations through photography and social media. • Motivating residents to access the full placemaking survey via QR codes. • Supporting the local artist community, especially emerging artists, while keeping opportunities for engagement alive during COVID-19. • Prototype Interactive Storefront Art for future iterations. • Creating public art while maintaining safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action Item (Continued)

The storefronts featured temporary installations from August to December 2020 with a rotation of three phased installations:

Phase 1: Placemaking survey engagement to prompt people to take the online survey (with a QR code) and respond to a question on site through safe interaction.

Phase 2: Survey results to communicate primary survey results to the public.

Phase 3: Placemaking proposals to illustrate primary placemaking interventions coming to Downtown Worcester.

Artists creatively brought empty storefronts to life and engaged residents to participate in a placemaking survey with such novel artistic strategies as creating a “mirror” to show who Downtown Worcester is and encouraging viewers to take a photo for themselves and post on social media.



Interactive Storefront Installation Phase 1 (Survey Questions) by Joshua Croke

Process

Planning

In Worcester, the Interactive Storefronts served multiple purposes: engaging the community to participate in the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan, activating empty storefronts, supporting the local artists community, and keeping public health as a priority during Covid-19. The Interactive Storefront Committee emerged from these desired outcomes. Our Interactive Storefront Committee met weekly for several weeks and communicated by email to get from concept to implementation efficiently.

It is important to engage the community around a common issue: Identify a local policy, public realm / placemaking, or community / environmental issue that would benefit from creative community engagement. For Worcester Interactive Storefronts, the project engaged residents to participate in a survey for the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan.



Interactive Storefront Installation Phase 2 (Survey Answers) by Joshua Croke

Process (Continued)

Create an Interactive Storefront Committee:

Identify one to three local groups to help shepherd the project. In Worcester, the collaborative efforts between Civic Space Collaborative, the Downtown BID, the building owner, and local Worcester PopUp covered all the necessary needs for a successful project. Local groups should have expertise, connections, and missions around local placemaking, creative endeavors, community building, or particular issues as they relate to the policy issue to be addressed. For instance, if the goal is to inform residents about sea level rise, then a local nonprofit focused coastal clean-up may be a good partner.

Identify a Project Lead, clarify roles for the Committee members, and create a project implementation timeline, and clear budget.

The Project Lead is responsible for overseeing the Call for Art, shepherding the selection process, and aiding the implementation. The Lead can be a member from the Committee, or a hired local with an interest in civic and/or artistic engagement and can themselves be an artist. Civic Space Collaborative led the initial process including the Call for Art, and up until the artist selection, and then wrote the artist prompts for Phases 2 and 3 based on survey responses and selected projects. For implementation, the local Worcester team [Downtown BID and Worcester PopUp] took over to support on the project on the ground. This was a successful transition of leadership that strengthened the relationship between local institutions and individual artists and built local capacity to create similar projects in the future.

Identify location(s): Identify visible and accessible empty or underused storefronts for the art-work. Note that underused means that, while the space may have a tenant, the tenant might not have the ability or inclination to outfit their public facing storefront and may benefit from the artistic installation. In Worcester, the Interactive Storefronts served the plans of the building owner to create an artistic hub in the future, Creative Commons, as well as the goals of the rest of the Committee. Ideally, finding shared goals is important, but equally effective is using a storefront activation to serve multiple discrete goals.

Build and support the local artist community:

One of the goals of the project is to help build up the local artist community. To create a more supportive and inclusive process, the Call should clearly favor local artists, and it should be accessible to artists at different levels of their career, especially beginning, and of varying degrees of proficiency in English, technology, or other barriers to applying. The Committee Members should be comfortable acting as support to the artists. In Worcester, four artists participated over the course of seven months as they activated the storefronts and were involved in the civic process of the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan, the Covid-19 response of bringing art Downtown, and building community with each other.



Artist: John Vo, Phase 3 (Public Space Interventions)



Artist: Pamela Stolz, Phase 1 (Survey Questions)

Process (Continued)

Call for Art + Artist Selection

Issue a Call for Storefront Art: Gather all the partners and create a mutually beneficial plan outlined through a "Call for Storefront Art." Choose an agreed upon digital space such as Google Drive or email to collect the information. The Project Lead should keep all discussions, drafts, and ideas in one organized space. Translate the Call into different languages to reach immigrant communities. Determine a feasible schedule that keeps momentum but is do-able for artists and the Storefront Art Committee. Distribute important technical information to aid artists in their application regarding any restriction on materials or media (for example: specify only non-toxic, sustainable, recyclable materials), whether the installation would be on the exterior of the storefront (as a painted mural) or on the interior (as either a painted mural or a multi-media installation), availability of electricity, and dimensions of the storefront window and space for the installation.

Support artistic freedom in public art: Art is meant to hold up a mirror to society, to lead the viewers to question assumptions, and to provoke. Too often, art that is curated by a committee becomes a watered-down version of itself. Make a commitment to each other and to artists that they have artistic freedom and will be judged on excellence of vision and craft, rather than on an unspoken censorship of pleasing the least common denominator.

Distribute the Call for Art: Distribute the call through all available channels such as: email networks of partners, municipal networks, social media, e-newsletters, newspapers, targeted emails and phone calls to specific artists, and flyers at schools, libraries, coffee shops, and other hubs of foot traffic. Create an opportunity for an online information session where artists seeking to submit applications can go over the Call step by step and ask questions. In Worcester, the information session was well attended by over a dozen artists who asked clarifying questions about the Call for Art and better understood the requirements and the process. Even during times where in-person gathering is safe, an online information session is convenient and can be viewed on people's own schedules. Ensure the info session is recorded for those who cannot attend.

Select the artist(s): Determine a Selection Committee, review and selection process, and timeline to select the artist(s). A good process includes allowing each committee member to review the submissions before coming together to review and select. For Worcester, the Committee was able to efficiently and unanimously select artists over an online meeting. Immediately following the meeting, email every applicant whether they were selected based on clear selection criteria.



Detail of artist: Pamela Stolz, Phase 1 (Survey Questions)



Detail of artist: Eamon Gillen, Phase 1 (Survey Questions)

Process (Continued)

Installation + Removal

Preparing for Installation: The client and artist should sign contracts and be clear about expectations soon after selection that outlines the deliverables, time, and payment amount. In addition, discuss need and coverage of insurance. In the case of Worcester, the building owner provided insurance coverage for the artists during installation, as well as for the artwork.

Publicize and promote the installation: Distribute press releases, post in eNewsletters, and on social media about the installation. The Worcester BID and Civic Space Collaborative worked to develop the materials and publicize the project.

Installation day and events: Determine appropriate times and a timeline for installation. If social distancing is required, then stagger installations of multiple storefronts. If the installation is entirely from the interior, then public viewing on the installation day can still follow public health social distancing guidelines. If social distancing is no longer required, then installation day is a good opportunity to engage the local community by providing a local ambassador to speak with the public about the goals of the project. In the case of Worcester, we maintained social distancing as was necessary for public health. Each artist had a set time for the installation and a BID staff member met the artist on site. The installation is also a good opportunity to hire a local photographer to document the process and any events.

Help visitors view and understand the storefront art: Provide simple, legible information about the purpose of the installation and a bio of the artist(s) on site, and to translate the information as appropriate. A QR code is an effective way to connect interested viewers with more information. At the Worcester Storefronts their signs about the survey with QR code and website links posted for the Phase 1 installation.

Removal of installation: In few cases, the artist can save the installation for another purpose; however, in most cases, the installation will need to be removed and properly disposed. Recycle as much as possible, for instance in the case of fabric art installation, use textile recycling. In the case of paint on glass, use a bladed paint scraper to remove all paint without getting it into the storm drain system. If the paint is stubborn, spray the on the glass mural/paint with a mixture of warm water and acetone at a 1:1 ratio, soaking the scraper in the mixture prior to scraping. Keep a trash barrel close by to toss the paint chips and a broom and dust pan to sweep up and properly dispose of paint dust.

Following this Storefront Installation the BID installed a snowflake installation in winter 2020-2021 and is working on larger storefront installation in 2021.



Artist: Eamon Gillen, Phase 1 (Survey Questions)



Artist: Eamon Gillen, Phase 2 (Survey Answers)



Artist: Eamon Gillen, Phase 2 (Survey Answers)



Digital Version



Corrugated Plastic (2-4 years)



Aluminum (Permanent)

Examples of Wayfinding Signage (12" x 24")

Case Studies

- [Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway](#)
- Lexington MA – Across Lexington Trails
- [Assabet River Rail Trail – Maynard and Hudson](#)



Wayfinding to Downtown at the Minuteman Bikeway Trailhead in Bedford

Across Lexington

Accessing
Conservation land
Recreation areas
Open space
Schools and
Streets in Lexington



Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) – Maynard & Hudson

- Incremental steps have been taken to complete the ARRT's routing immediately adjacent Downtown Maynard and Hudson
- Demonstration routes on strategic routes can help residents and key decision makers to envision potential impacts on active transportation, placemaking and economic development



Approaching Downtown Maynard on the ARRT (Source: ARRT Facebook)