



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

City of North
Adams

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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Acknowledgements



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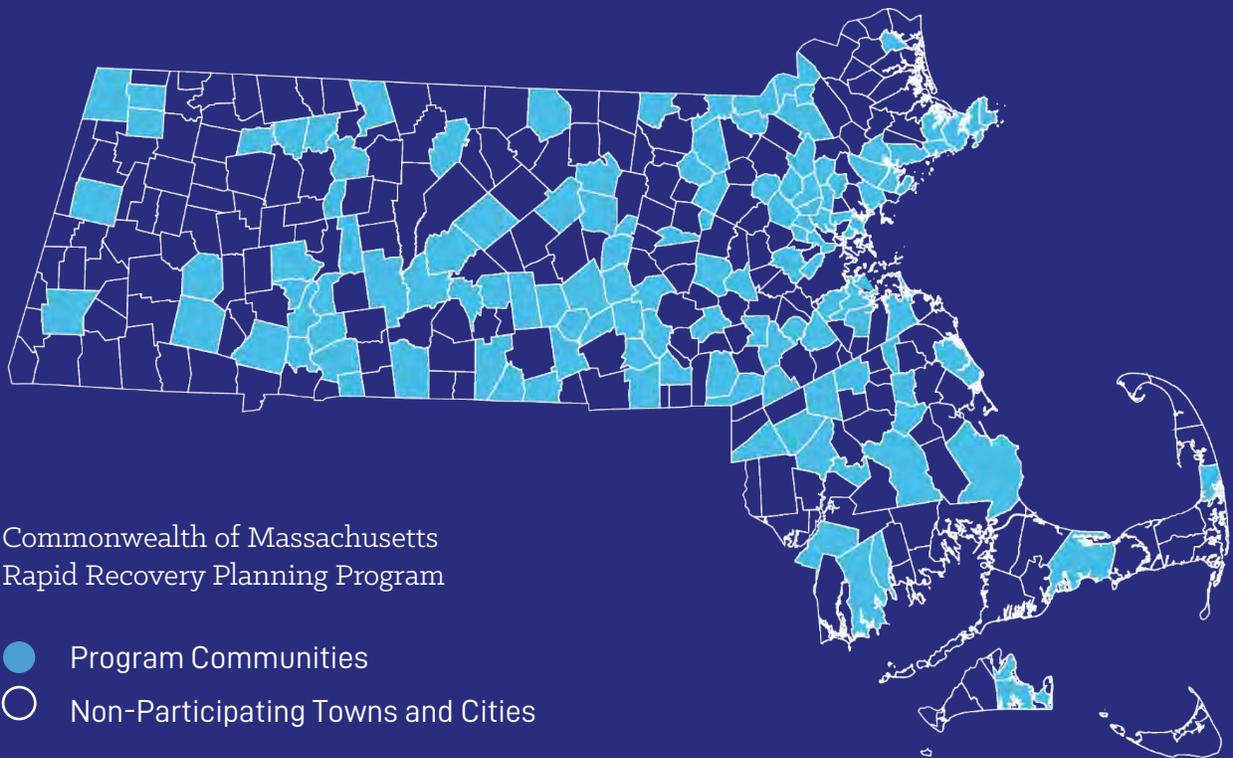
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



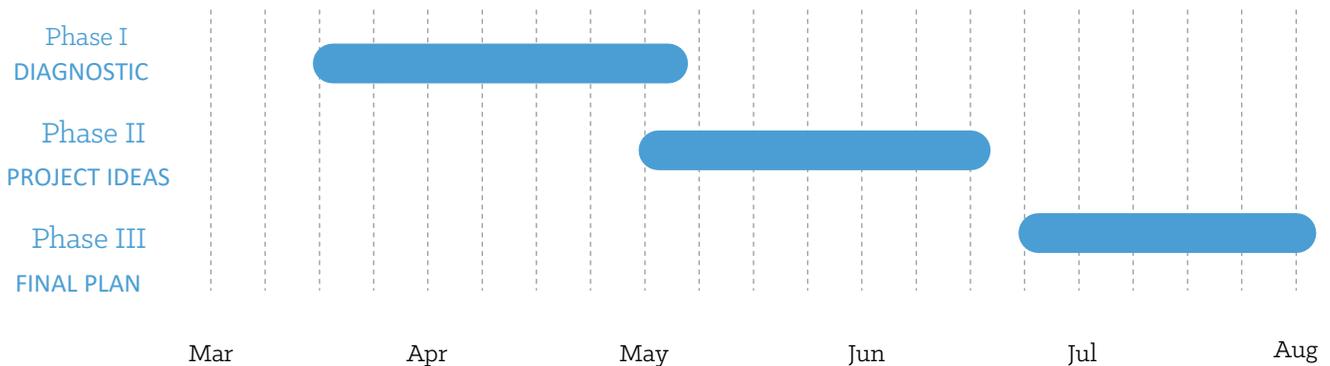
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

Rapid Recovery Plan – City of North Adams

As with many communities in Massachusetts and indeed across the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges and highlighted existing deficiencies in the City of North Adams. Prior to the pandemic, North Adams had been struggling with lackluster economic activity within the downtown. Despite the presence of nearby tourism magnet, MASS MoCA, the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), and various employers, high commercial vacancy rates persist. In addition, urban renewal interventions that occurred decades ago have fragmented the physical layout of the City which works to discourage non-motorized travel. The city's recovery from the pandemic will require a mix of infrastructure improvements, business attraction strategies, and organizational capacity building. The Office of Community Development along with the city's Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations such as the Office of Community Events and the Public Arts Commission, are well positioned to further these projects with support from other community coalitions.

Since the 1970's, the City of North Adams has taken actions to effectuate quality, broad-spectrum change. These include a diverse set of projects centering on infrastructure, parks and recreation, and economic development. Drawing on funding provided through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the city has embarked on projects such as razing blighted buildings, conducting major building improvements to the local senior center, construction of the skate park and splash park at Noel Athletic Field Complex, along with the completion of numerous feasibility studies centered upon economic development, housing, and transportation. Design interventions that enhance common public spaces, beautify the streetscape and landscape, and create non-motorized connections that link people to places of work, school, services, and outdoor recreation are all recurring themes that emerge from the North Adams Vision – 2030 Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Strategic Economic Development Plan, and Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

The pandemic highlighted the need for investments to improve the economic landscape of the city through twelve (12) projects. These projects focus on themes related to attracting more residents and visitors to the downtown, improving multimodal connections that link key destinations, getting businesses back to the downtown, and understanding future housing needs.

Residents and visitors will be drawn downtown by improving public spaces, programming and marketing pop-up events, developing a tourism marketing study, and creating multimodal pathway connections that provide circulation from neighborhoods to downtown destinations. A public amenities plan will serve as a blueprint for enhancing the downtown's aesthetic and recreational appeal and will incorporate signage improvements for better navigating to destinations. Getting businesses back to the downtown will be accomplished through the creation and dissemination of a business permitting guide, potential implementation of a vacant property registration ordinance, and a storefront improvement program. Elucidating future housing strategies will be accomplished through developing a housing market study, for which residential recruitment will be a vital component.

All projects outlined in this plan can individually work to improve the economic condition of downtown North Adams. Together, they can work to create lasting improvements that serve to revitalize the downtown.

Downtown North Adams: Study Area

Below is a map of the study area that was delineated for the Local Rapid Recovery Program effort. The study area encapsulates the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in the northwest, running south to include Western Gateway Heritage State Park. Then moving east, the study area includes American Legion Drive and surrounding establishments including just beyond Oasis Plaza in the southeast. It then moves north to include Ashland Street up to the intersection of Eagle and Center Street. It then proceeds west along Center Street before heading North along Marshall Street up to the Hoosic River.

This strange footprint was chosen because of the mixture of buildings and uses within its boundaries align more with a traditional downtown character. Within these boundaries are multistory buildings containing commercial storefronts, office space, and residences, along with parks, museums, retail shops, and restaurants. For the purposes of this effort, this study area is 'most' downtown in terms of use and character.

Downtown North Adams Local Rapid Recovery Planning



Diagnostic

Key Findings



The City has aging public infrastructure

Despite any significant reconstruction projects, the primary roadways (Routes 8 and 2) that allow access to the downtown remain in a state of good repair. Other streets within the downtown require or will soon require attention as cracks in the roadbed, in the sidewalk, and faded crosswalk paint are all visible. There are several small parks and other public areas scattered throughout the downtown. Through the RRP process, the city seeks to identify additional opportunities to enhance public amenities such as benches for seating, trash receptacles, hand washing stations, shade trees, and improved awnings.



Downtown North Adams is anchored by a mix of retail, food services, and cultural attractions

Just over a third of active businesses in the downtown provide retail or accommodation and food services. The remaining businesses provide construction, manufacturing, information, finance and insurance, real estate renting and leasing, professional, scientific and technical services, educational services, health care and social assistance, and arts, entertainment, and recreation services. There are a total of 122 businesses in the downtown with 31 vacant storefronts.



Downtown North Adams attracts residents from throughout the city and beyond

Downtown North Adams has a small resident population of about 464 individuals but attracts consumers from throughout the city. Residents in the downtown tend to be slightly younger, have a lower medium household income, and a slightly smaller average household size compared with the demographics of the city as whole. It is estimated that the downtown population has a similar educational attainment to the city at large. Fine-grained data for race and ethnicity for our study area could not be obtained for comparison with the city.



The City has a limited number of organizations with limited resources overseeing recovery efforts

The Chamber of Commerce has been assisting the City's Office of Community Development in downtown revitalization efforts. Together, these two entities represent the administrative capacity within the Study Area.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

ACCESS

Despite any significant reconstruction projects, the primary roadways (Routes 8 and 2) that allow access to the downtown remain in a state of good repair. Some of the smaller side roads, sidewalks, crosswalks, and parking areas in the downtown need improvements, especially for ADA accessibility.

Within the downtown, there are 1,779 parking spaces. This appears to be sufficient in accommodating resident and visitor parking.

VISIBILITY

Street lighting in the downtown appears to be adequate but could be improved along private storefronts – specifically to better allow visitors to see merchandise sold inside shops. This may improve the overall visitor experience.

Signage along streets in the downtown appear adequate but could benefit from enhancements. For the most part, street signs serve to move motorists quickly through the downtown. Opportunities to better highlight the commercial districts, cultural attractions, and parking areas should be explored.

When it comes to business signage, some businesses, particularly along Eagle Street, have invested in high quality, permanent signs to showcase their shops. Other businesses along Main Street, Marshall Street, and Ashland Street use temporary, frame signs during the warmer months that are easily deployable and are typically placed just outside of the business. Opportunities for better, permanent signage that describe the offerings of each business should be explored. Overall, most businesses located on Main Street, Marshall Street, Eagle Street, and Holden Street scored higher on various design elements than business located on Ashland Street or within the Steeple City Plaza and Oasis Plaza.

Aesthetics

Building façades in the downtown range in aesthetic appearance. For the most part, façades in need of improvement are intermixed with those that are adequate in appearance. Some building façades located on Eagle Street, Main Street, Marshall Street, and Ashland Street show signs of age.

Parks

There are several parks and parklets located in the downtown. Within the study area, Western Gateway Heritage State Park (WGHSP) is located on the west side of the city and there is a pocket park located along Eagle Street. Just outside the study area, but still within the downtown, there is Veteran's Memorial Park, located in between Center Street and Route 2, Colegrove Park located next to Church Street, and UNO Park located near the intersection of Houghton and River Street. Overall, the condition of parks is good, however, improvements to WGHSP could help reinvigorate and anchor the space as a destination/gathering place.



Pocket park along Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

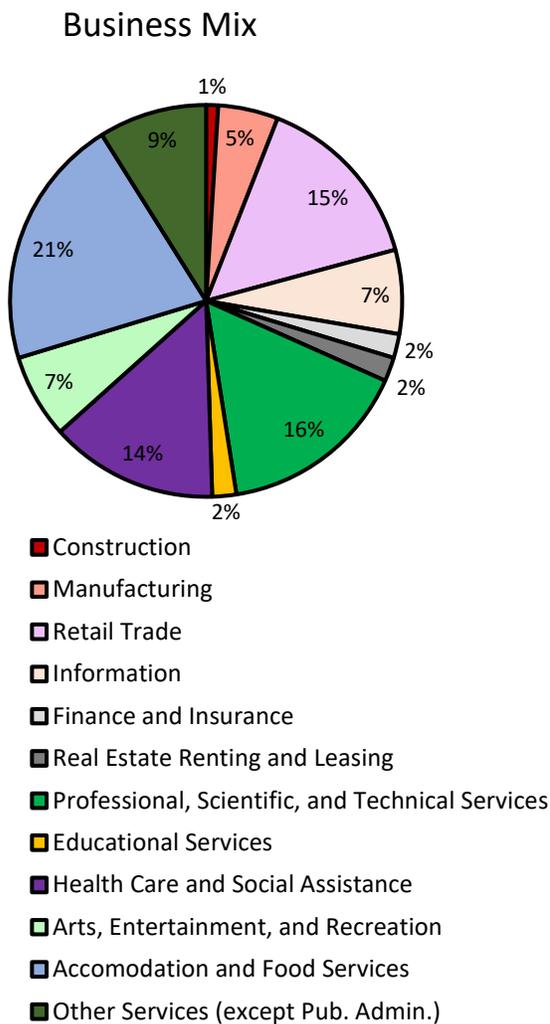


Highlights from the Business Environment

Business Mix

There are currently 122 active businesses downtown covering a range of sectors from accommodation and food services (21%), professional, scientific, and professional services (16%), and retail trade (15%). Accommodation and food services are the main drivers bringing people to the downtown.

Other sectors represented downtown include health care and social assistance (11%), information (6%), and arts, entertainment, and recreation.



Mix of businesses by NAICS category

Business Space

There are 153 business locations in the downtown, with 31 (20%) vacant. The vacancy rate in some areas, especially along Eagle Street and within Steeple City Plaza and Western Gateway Heritage State Park, can create a sense of isolation and abandonment.

Many of the business's downtown are located on Main, Marshall, Holden, and Eagle Streets, which form the downtown's commercial core. There are also a smaller number of businesses located on Ashland Street and American Legion Drive.



Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Holden Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Highlights from the Customer Base

Customer Base

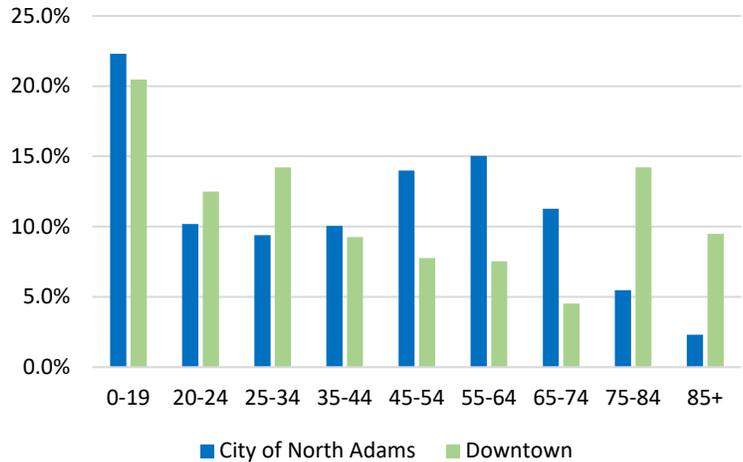
Downtown North Adams has an estimated population of approximately 464 residents. This represents about 3.5% of the entire city, which has a total population of 12,959 residents.

The educational attainment of downtown residents is comparable to the city overall. Downtown, 32.5% of individuals 25 years of age and older have a high school diploma or less as compared to 34.9% of residents in the City of North Adams. In the downtown, 13.6% of residents have a bachelors degree or higher as compared to 15.6% of residents in the city overall.

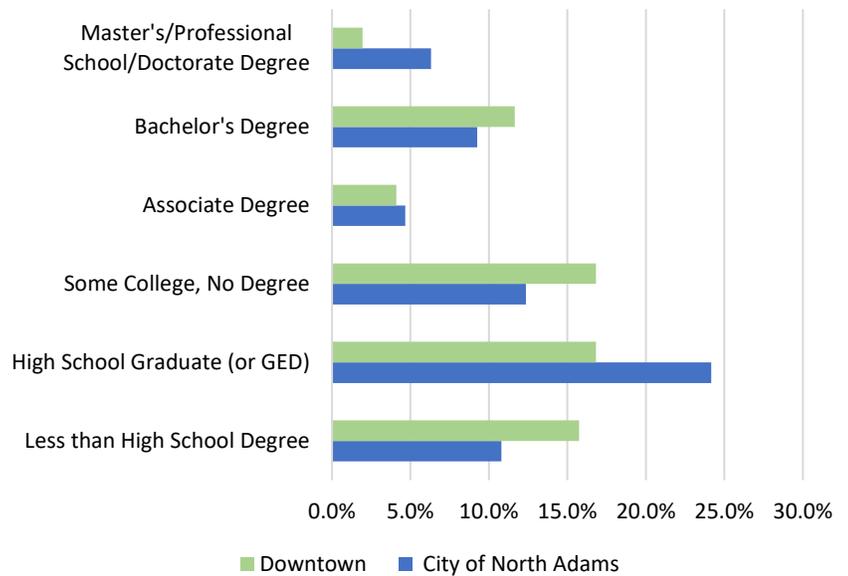
The average household size of the downtown is slightly smaller than that of the city, at 1.72 compared to 2.15 individuals per household, respectively. The median household income for downtown residents is much lower (\$22,885) compared to the city (\$41,471) overall.

The median age between the downtown and the city differs by about 4 years. Residents in the downtown have a median age of about 38.5 years. For the city overall, the median age is about 42.4 years of age. Age distribution in the downtown parallels the city overall.

Age Distribution: City of North Adams compared to Downtown North Adams



Population by Educational Attainment (Ages 25+)





Highlights from Administration Capacity

Administration Capacity

The City of North Adams has an Office of Community Development (OCD) that actively works to secure monies from various funding sources to procure technical services and to implement tangible improvements through construction projects. Over the years, the OCD has overseen various planning and feasibility studies including, Complete Streets: Envisioning a Multimodal North Adams, Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, Eagle Street Woonerf Feasibility Study, North Adams Vision 2030 – Comprehensive Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Mohawk Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Feasibility Study / Ashuwillticook Trail Extensions, Mohawk Trail and Mount Greylock Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plans, Ashland Street Corridor Study, downtown Walkability Study, Strategic Economic Development Plan, and Downtown Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. These studies are designed to provide recommended pathways for revitalizing downtown North Adams. In addition, OCD also support larger marketing efforts for the downtown.

The Office of Community Events is responsible for event planning and coordination. This organization assists and provides guidance to private entities that want to hold events in public areas.

The North Adams Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization that promotes and advances the economic, civic, and social vibrancy of the North Adams community. The Chamber will, in some instances, partner with the OCD to effectuate economic development projects.

The North Adams Public Arts Commission is responsible for developing policies for the selection and placement of public art, and the custody and care of all works of art owned by the city. The Public Arts Commission is a key organization that should be involved in decisions surrounding public art installations.

Together, these organizations represent the administrative capacity within the RRP study area.



City Hall, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Project Recommendations

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Business Permitting Guide

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | City of North Adams |
| Origin | Local Rapid Recovery Plan Outreach Process |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative Program, Seed Grant |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) the ease of filing and obtaining a permit; (b) how quickly permits are issued; (c) the ratio of permits issued vs. permits denied. |
| Partners & Resources | North Adams Office of Community Development and business support organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce |



South End of Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

As with many municipalities, the COVID-19 pandemic created new issues and highlighted current deficiencies in existing municipal operations. In the City of North Adams, the effects of the pandemic have been mixed.

As a new or prospective business owner in North Adams, the process by which obtaining the necessary approval, permits, and license to operate within the City can pose a barrier for entrepreneurs seeking to open an establishment. Though the pandemic adversely impacted many, the city did see several new businesses spring up during this period. With no formal process outlining the necessary documents to complete, how to obtain the documents, and where the paperwork should be submitted, the pandemic has further exacerbated the procedure of navigating the permitting, licensing, and zoning processes of opening or expanding a business in the downtown.

Action Item

The creation of a Business Permitting Guide that is accessible on the City's webpage will provide current and/or prospective business owners with instructions for obtaining and submitting the necessary documents to secure a desired permit/license for general or specific business operations. The permitting guide will also include a list of contacts from a 'business response team' – composed of local business owners/managers. The response team will serve as a resource and point of contact for new/prospective business owners that need information specific to business operation regulations.



Give a Dog a Bath Dog Grooming located on Ashland Street, North Adams.
Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Identify appropriate municipal staff to be included in the development of the business permitting guide. This includes municipal staff from the Board of Health, Building Commissioner and Inspector, Fire Department Captain, Safety Inspector, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, and Community Development staff.
- Identify existing business owners that have gone through the business development process and are willing to be listed in the guide and share their insight with new or prospective business owners upon request. This group can be referred to as the 'Business Response Team' and should have representation from different business categories including, retail/service/office, food/beverage, and home-based businesses.
- Initiate development of Business Permitting Guide. It could be helpful to divide the guide into the following sections:
- **Getting Started:** provide brief overview of the permits required for every business, for those specific to food/beverage establishments and home-based businesses, and where to turn in the guide for specific information on these permits.
- **Approvals for Other Business Activities:** provide information regarding the approval process for a few less common business activities such as using the sidewalk in front of your business, holding special events, and complying with the American with Disabilities Act.
- **Detailed Information for Permits and Licenses:** provide detailed information on each permit, including submittal requirements, costs, timelines, and other relevant information.
- **Finding the Right Location and Other Business Matters:** provide advice from the North Adams Chamber of Commerce for new business owners regarding the signing of a lease, common landlord/tenant issues, and questions about insurance.
- **Appendix:** include links to resources and organizations that can help with the development of business plans and obtaining financing.



Garden located on Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Tourism Marketing Study

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | City of North Adams |
| Origin | North Adams Office of Community Development, Local Rapid Recovery Plan Community Input Survey |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative Program, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Urban Agenda Grant Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Number of event tickets sold (to special events such as Fresh Grass Festival and to year-round events that take place at MASS MoCA); (b) social media responses and press coverage; (c) hotel/motel stays. |
| Partners & Resources | North Adams Office of Community Development, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Mass Development, Mass MoCA, MA Office of Travel and Tourism |



The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

The tourism and hospitality sector in Massachusetts has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. In North Adams, revenues generated through the local option excise meals tax were down 8% from 2020 to 2021; and revenue from the local option excise rooms tax were down 15% during the same period.

Tourism is and will remain a large economic driver for the City of North Adams. Rich in cultural attractions, industrial relics from a bygone era, and beautiful scenic vistas, the City is home to numerous points of interest. As businesses that cater to and benefit from tourism continue to recover, this project seeks to reinvigorate this economic sector and promote the downtown as a tourist destination.

In addition to being identified by the City's Office of Community Development as an important step for economic recovery, the results of a public input survey conducted during the diagnostic phase show support for promoting the City as an outdoor travel and art hub.

Action Item

A Tourism Marketing Study will seek to catalog existing natural, cultural, and historic assets along with general existing conditions, and will ultimately promote these downtown offerings as tourist destinations. A primary focus of the Tourism Marketing Study will be to understand visitor demographics (i.e., age, income, place of origin, reasons for visiting, etc.) and then identify viable avenues for marketing/promoting the City's downtown as a destination to these populations.



DCR Visitors Center, Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams.
Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To develop a Tourism Marketing Study, the city may consider the following steps:

- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) outlining the primary objectives for the Tourism Marketing Study .
- Select consulting services from preferred organization to recommend marketing and communications strategies for the city, provide analysis, and develop a Tourism Marketing Study that also include key tourism benchmarks.
- The process to develop the plan may include:
 - Conducting primary research through key stakeholder interviews with travelers
 - Obtaining and analyzing additional primary and secondary research such as hotel/motel visitor data and/or place of origin data from ticket sales to MASS MoCA events
 - Conducting analysis of tourism and brand positioning of comparable communities
- Upon completion of the plan, explore funding sources and pathways for promoting key attractions to specific market segments.



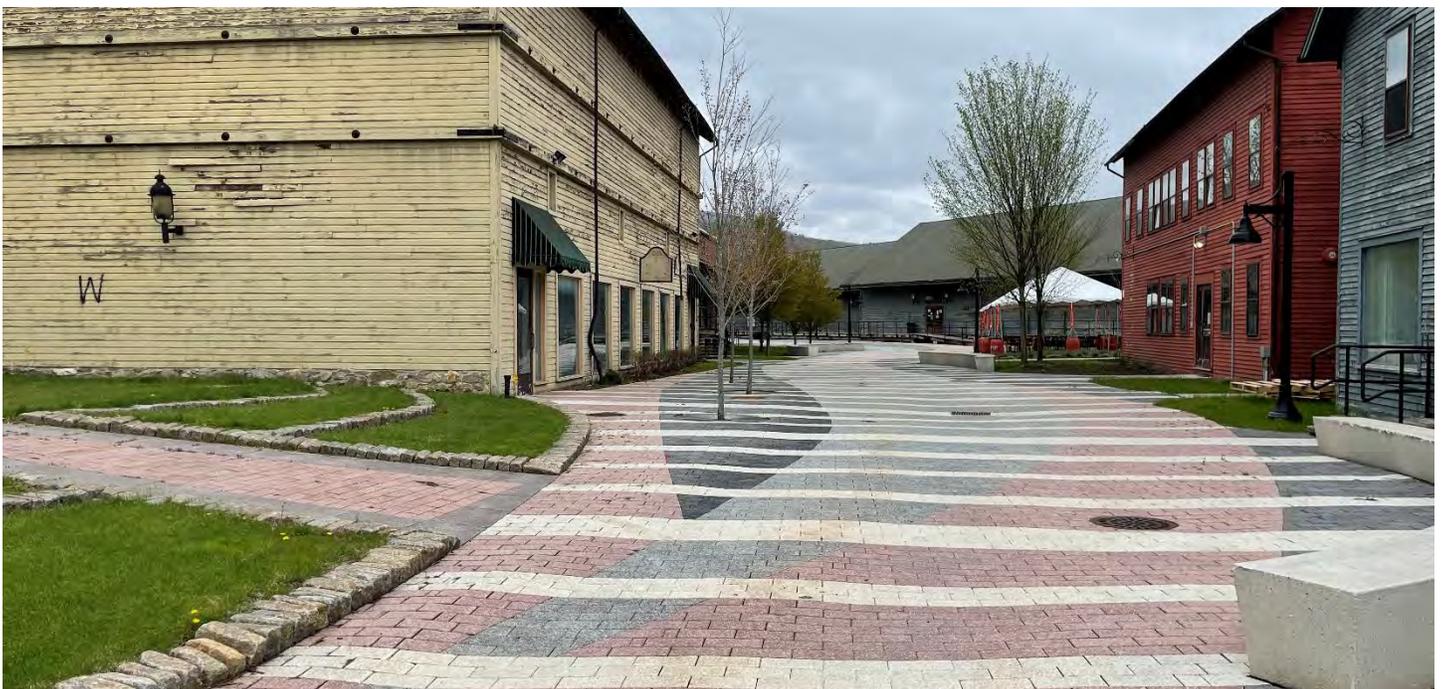
Bright Ideas Brewing located on MASS MoCA Campus, North Adams.
Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



MASS MoCA Campus, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Program Flexible Performance/Retail Space in Western Gateway Heritage State Park

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Study Area – Western Gateway Heritage State Park |
| Origin | Office of Community Development |
| Budget |  Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces Grant, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk – Owner buy-in is essential. Release from liability for the storefront owners may be required. Budget. |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) number of businesses that engage in mobile pop-up/number of pop-up performances; (b) number of attendees attracted to pop-up retail/performance; (c) commercial tenancy rate. |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development and business support organizations such as the North Adams Chamber of Commerce |



Entrance to Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Pop-up stores and performances offer a great opportunity to increase business visibility and profits while making good use of underutilized space within the city. Currently, there are virtually no, or very limited, opportunities for businesses to open a pop-up store for a day, or during a special event. Programming flexible retail in Western Gateway Heritage State Park (WGHSP) could work to draw people to this underutilized space and help support existing and new businesses. Coordinating special events such as performances that could coincide with pop-up retail could further draw people to this space and help to stimulate more economic activity.

Creating outdoor retail and performance space is further practical in lieu of COVID social distancing requirements.

Action Item

Program special event performances and create opportunities for businesses to sell and market at WGHSP through:

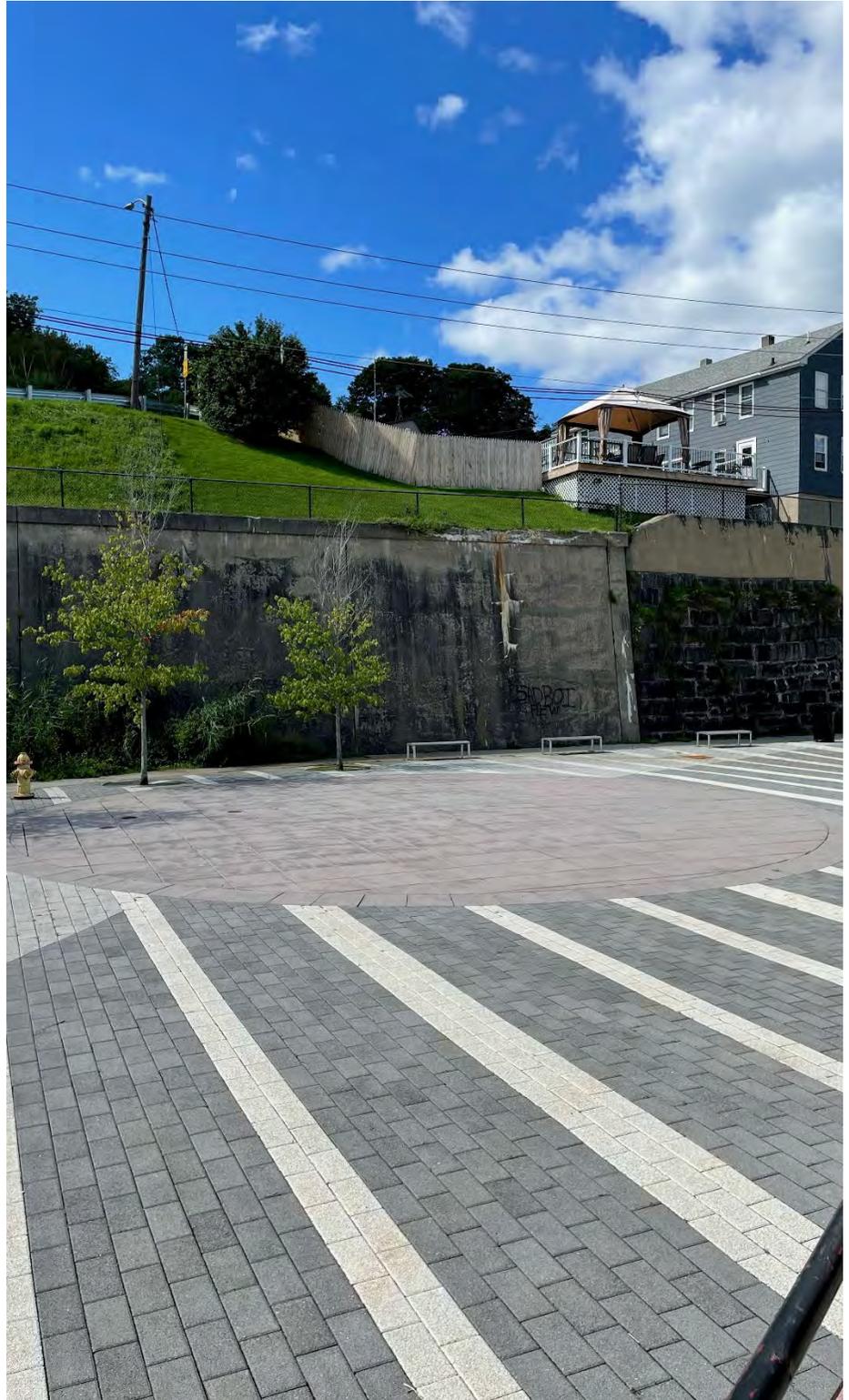
- Allowing pop-up stores in existing vacant space (vacant buildings in WGHSP), if permissible, and/or setting up outdoor retail.
- Allowing special event performances to occur within WGHSP.
- Coordinating pop-up retail in WGHSP to coincide with downtown events to attract additional foot traffic to the area.



Various photos of Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Measure key dimensions of pop-up retail/performance area.
- Create flexible design alternatives that will help facilitate pop-up performance/retail events.
- Determine desired design alternative including installation of any physical structures (e.g.: pergola, stage, etc.).
- Create materials list and budget.
- Secure funding to procure design and construction of such structures. Explore procurement of flexible design installation from local sources.
- Conduct business owner outreach to identify businesses that will participate in pop-up retail events. Coordinate with MASS MoCA and city departments to identify pop-up performances that can occur in WGHSP.
- Develop pop-up programming (winter and summer months) in coordination with identified businesses.
- Schedule and execute programming according to its design.
- Promote event through flyers, social media, and city-wide announcements.



Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Two corresponding best practice sheets titled “Create Calm Street Pilots and Pop-Up Curbside ‘Streeteries’” and “Permitting Pop-Up Events” can be found in the Appendix Section

Consideration of Vacant Property Registration (VPR) Ordinance

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Downtown North Adams |
| Origin | Office of Community Development, LRRP Outreach Process |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  High Risk – Political capital/willingness to enact ordinance, legal challenges among land/building owners |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured to tracking: (a) VPR ordinance implementation, (b) reduction of vacant properties |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, North Adams Housing Authority, North Adams Chamber of Commerce |



Vacant properties along Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

As with many other municipalities, the pandemic tended to highlight and exacerbate preexisting challenges facing the City of North Adams. One such issue was that of landlord accountability. While it can be difficult for entrepreneurs or prospective business owners to track down and contact landowners during normal times, the pandemic further complicated this process.

Through the public input survey and one-on-one interviews with businesses owners that were conducted during the diagnostic phase, improving landlord accountability was seen as an important step for economic recovery. During the height of the pandemic, the city saw several new businesses open. One co-owner of a recently opened establishment reported that the current location of the business was not their first choice, however, due to one landlord's lack of responsiveness, the business was essentially forced to settle into their current location. According to this business owner, landlord lack of responsiveness could be detrimental for new entrepreneurs looking for suitable business spaces in the downtown.

Action Item

The VPR ordinance seeks to create a mechanism for identifying the potential responsible parties for unoccupied buildings and impose appropriate costs upon those parties by requiring registration of vacant properties with local city government. Lack of registration or adherence to regulations result in municipal or criminal fees. If fees remain unpaid, the local government places a lien against the property.



Vacant property located along Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Vacant property located at the corner of Eagle and Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate a VPR ordinance, the City may consider the following steps:

- First key element of a VPR scheme is determining local government’s goals, which will be evident through the ordinance’s scope/purpose section or through the ordinance’s definition of “vacancy.”
- Determine the preferred VPR ordinance model or combination:
 - Classic model: requires property owners to register the property after certain length of vacancy.
 - Foreclosure model: requires registration initiated at foreclosure.
 - Combined model: Several cities in Massachusetts require owners register vacant residential buildings no more than (seven) days after initiation of the foreclosure process, or if the property has not been legally occupied for (sixty) days or more, and/or not properly maintained or secure, or both.
- Determine if ordinance requires escalating fees or flat fees. Escalating fee provisions typically stipulate that every year a property is vacant, the annual fee increases.
- Set up registration process (should be accessible on the city’s webpage) and develop compatible guidance document outlining information needed for registration process and any additional responsibilities.
- Enact ordinance and enforce fee structure.



Space for lease at former Nail Design shop located in Steeple City Plaza, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Space for lease at former business located along Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Use a Form Based Code to Shape Public Realm Improvements Over Time” can be found in the Appendix Section

Public Amenities Plan

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Downtown North Adams |
| Origin | Office Of Community Development, LRRP Outreach Process |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> Planning Assistance Grants, MA Downtown Initiative Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Public input; (b) business community support; (c) timeframe from plan completion to implementation. |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, Public Arts Commission |



Mural along Center Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Bench near Post Office on the corner of Main and Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

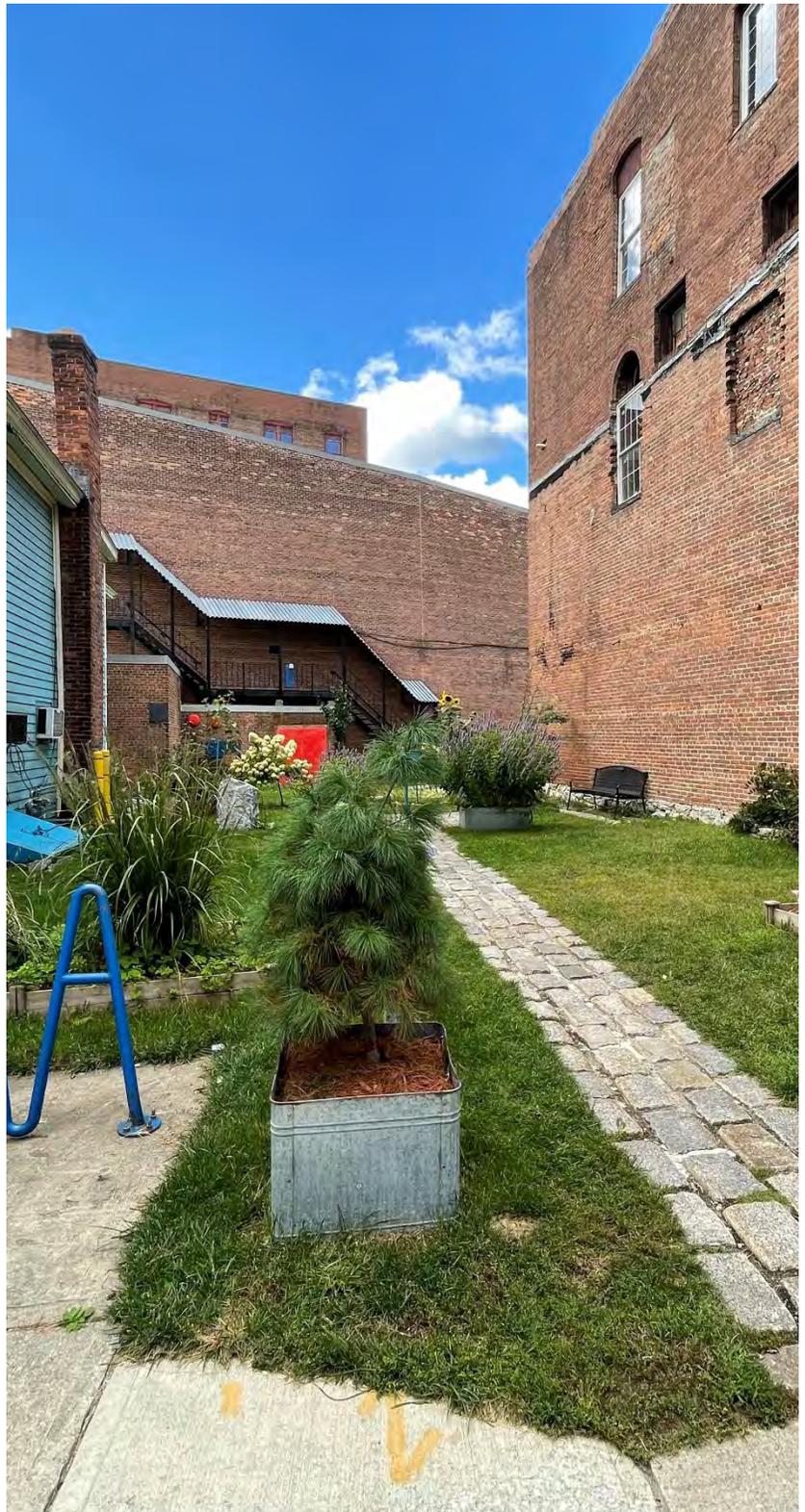
Diagnostic

Social distancing and efforts to minimize the amount of time spent in indoor environments, particularly crowded indoor spaces, has illuminated the need to facilitate a diverse set of outdoor activities.

During the diagnostic phase, business owners that were surveyed identified the need to improve the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks. These businesses also identified amenity improvements for public transit/bike users as an important strategy for improving the condition of the physical environment. Furthermore, the public input survey conducted during the diagnostic phase found that making improvements to infrastructure, wayfinding, and the general aesthetic of the downtown's-built environment were all important action steps to promote economic recovery.

Action Item

Develop an actionable Public Amenities Plan that includes site-specific recommendations for installing features such as trash cans, benches, hand washing stations, shade trees, and awnings. This plan will also include recommendations for wayfinding signage enhancements along with public art installations. Recommendations will include anticipated budget for improvements.



Pocket Park, Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

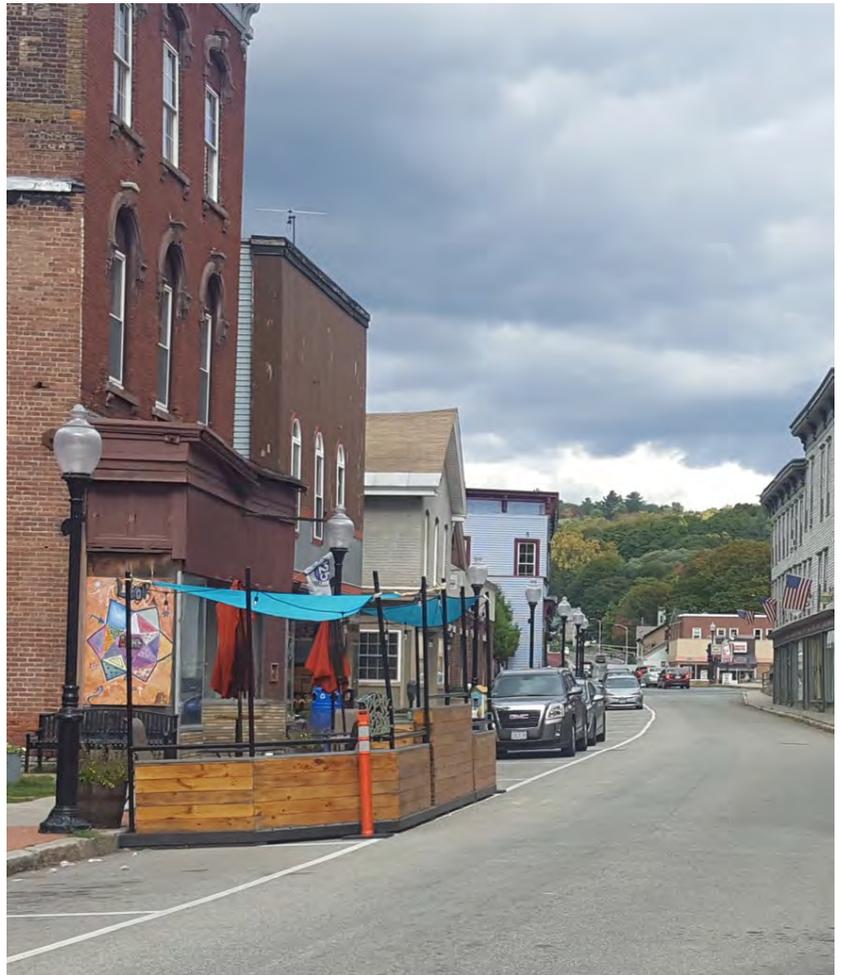
Process

To initiate this process, the City of North Adams should consider the following steps:

- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Issue RFP outlining purpose, goals, scope of services, project requirements, proposal format, contact information, proposal delivery instructions, evaluation criteria, and timeline.
- Select qualified vendor/consultant.
- Commence study and provide needed support.
- Present recommendations to key stakeholders including volunteers, civic organizations, city staff, elected officials, and MassDOT.
- Explore funding and donation sources and identify preferred strategy to raise funds for material, labor, consultants, or permitting fees.

Key action steps to develop the plan include:

- Catalog existing amenities and identify specific areas in need of improvements/enhancements.
- Conduct site/field measurements of areas that need improvement and determine the dimensions of available space for new amenity features to be installed including public art installations.
- Determine needed improvements and the type and placement of new amenity features (e.g.: trash cans, benches, hand washing stations, shade trees, and awnings). Dimensions of new amenity features should be commensurate with available space.
- Outreach to residents, civic groups, businesses to gauge interest in stewarding location(s) to help with maintenance, such a watering plants and annual cleaning and painting.
- Determine whether improvements require design/engineering consultation.
- Recommend improvements and develop plan for each site improvement that includes the amount of and type of improvements desired, material needed, labor required, permitting requirements/costs, and maintenance needs.



Seasonal parklet, Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Benjamin Lamb – Heart of Eagle mural, Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System” can be found in the Appendix Section

Construct Eagle Street Woonerf

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Eagle Street, North Adams |
| Origin | Office of Community Development |
| Budget |  Large Budget (>\$200,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MassWorks, Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Community Development Block Grant, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  High Risk – Eagle Street business community support, adverse impact to revenues/sales of Eagle Street businesses |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Woonerf implementation; (b) biannual revenues/sales for Eagle Street businesses; (c) social media responses; (d) attendance at Eagle Street events; (e) traffic speed; (f) pedestrian and bicycle traffic volume; (g) traffic volume |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, MassDOT, City Engineer, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Eagle Street business community |



North End of Historic Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Creating additional outdoor hangout and/or gathering spaces has become increasingly desirable due to the COVID pandemic.

The public input survey conducted in the diagnostic phase revealed a desire to create more hangout/gathering spaces that facilitate socializing and greater community cohesion.

The need to create better walking and bicycling infrastructure was also identified during the diagnostic phase and has been a recurring theme of previous planning studies that have focused on improving downtown circulation.

Action Item

This project will focus on constructing a woonerf along the short, historic section of Eagle Street.

A woonerf is a unique design innovation that aims to change the way the street is used and seeks to improve the quality of life on streets by designing them for people, not just for traffic. Traditional Woonerven (plural) typically eliminate the curb separating the sidewalk from the roadway and put the two on the same grade. Beyond the functional design of controlling traffic speed and volume, a woonerf can also be thought of as a type of social intervention. By incorporating plantings, street furniture, and gathering spaces into the streetscape, these designs seek to maximize social opportunities while creating an efficient and novel use of space.

In North Adams, this project will seek to drastically increase public amenities and pedestrian features along the short, one-way historic section of Eagle Street.



Rendering of Eagle Street Woonerf, North Adams. Rendering Photo Credit: Emily Lange, BRPC.

Process

To initiate the woonerf project along Eagle Street, the City may consider the following steps:

- Review recommended design alternatives provided in the 2019 Eagle Street Woonerf Feasibility Study conducted for the city.
- Gather additional feedback (from business owners along Eagle Street and from North Adams residents) to determine whether the recommended design alternatives from feasibility study are still relevant, if there's a preferred design from those options, or if new design alternative(s) is needed.
- Consider conducting traffic study to determine traffic volume and speed, and the number of pedestrians and cyclists using Eagle Street.
- Consider tactical urbanism strategies (e.g.; temporary installations) to test out woonerf design features. Temporary woonerf and traffic calming design features could be, in part, informed by results of the traffic study.
- Gather public feedback on tactical urbanism strategies to help inform future, permanent design alterations.
- Contract with licensed professional surveyor to conduct topographic survey to determine existing conditions/constraints. This will help to determine the exact footprint the project will need to work within
- Conduct pavement core analysis to assess depth and condition of existing pavement and sub-base.
- **Concept Plan and Estimate:** Work with roadway design engineer for concept plan and estimate. Develop RFP to contract with engineering design firm to provide design alternatives, engineering plans, associated cost estimates, and timeframe. This task should include input from multiple stakeholders including adjacent neighbors, business owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base
- Determine preferred design alteration and work toward full engineering plan. Preferred design should encapsulate design upgrades for ADA compliance. Preferred design should also be informed by input from emergency management officials as it relates to the required 20-foot fire lane that needs to be preserved along the street.
- **Construct Woonerf:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with installing a woonerf along Eagle Street with appropriate roadway markings and signage.



Rendering of Eagle Street Woonerf, North Adams. Rendering Photo Credit: Emily Lange, BRPC.

Install Downtown Cycle Track

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Main Street and Marshall Street, Downtown North Adams |
| Origin | Office of Community Development |
| Budget |  Large Budget (\$200,000+) Estimated project cost: \$544,690 <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  High Risk: Difficulty raising funds, political will, potential lack of support from community/Main Street/Marshall Street businesses |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Biannual cycle track bicycle ridership numbers; (b) visitation rates among Main Street/Marshall Street businesses.; (c) social media responses and press coverage. |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, City Engineer, DPW, MassDOT |



Rendering of Cycle Track along Main Street. Photo Rendering Credit: Emily Lange, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Rich in cultural attractions, industrial relics from a bygone era, and beautiful scenic vistas, North Adams boasts numerous points of interest. Such points of interest can be thought of as islands of opportunity which represent institutions such as MASS MoCA, downtown restaurants, boutique shops, grocery stores, and landmarks such as Western Gateway Heritage State Park. In essence, these places are important to employment, recreation, tourism, and day to day activities. These places are largely connected via roadways, but lack safe, convenient pedestrian connections.

During the diagnostic phase of the RRP process, 64% of businesses surveyed within the downtown reported less foot traffic (i.e., less on-site customers) than before COVID. Moreover, 50% of these businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more. Additionally, the public input survey conducted for this project and for similar planning projects in the downtown reveal a desire among some residents to greatly enhance the downtown's walkability and bike-ability in order to facilitate convenient, multimodal travel.

Infrastructure projects that enhance cycling, such as a Main Street and Marshall Street cycle track, will allow users to comfortably access businesses along this multimodal route. Enhancing this type of access may result in pathway users spending more time and money in the downtown.



Main Street, looking west. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item

Cycle tracks are typically conceived of as bike facilities characterized by physical separation from the roadway, either through a physical barrier like bollards or curbing, or through distance created by striping.

This project would seek to build-out a continuous, two-directional cycle track along Main Street and Marshall Street. The portion of cycle track located along Main Street will necessitate the removal of one west-bound vehicle travel lane.

Process

To implement the downtown cycle track, the city may consider the following steps:

- Review existing cycle track conceptual engineering design provided by Waterfield Design Group (WDG). Conceptual design is included in 'North Adams Downtown Bike and Pedestrian Plan.'
- Determine best configuration of cycle track from design alternatives provided by WDG.
- Secure funding for advancing cycle track planning and implementation efforts.
- Conduct pavement core analysis to assess depth and condition of existing pavement and sub-base.
- Develop RFP to contract with engineering design firm to provide full engineering design, cost estimate, and timeframe. This task should include input from multiple stakeholders including adjacent neighbors, business owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base. This task should also include signal design review to determine new signalization for Main Street/Marshall Street intersection.
- **Construct Cycle Track:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with installing cycle track with appropriate pavement markings and signage.



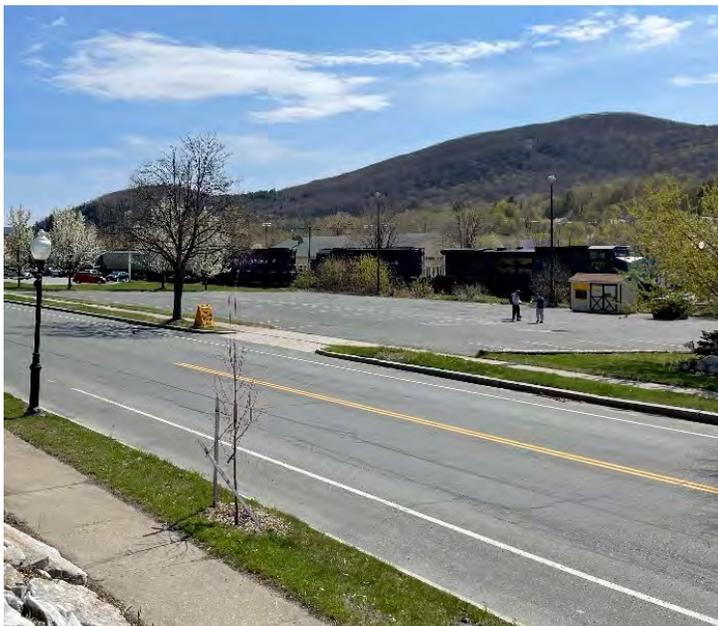
Looking north on Marshall Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Cycle track rendering along Marshall Street, North Adams. Photo Rendering Credit: Eammon Coughlin, BRPC.

Install Cycle Track along American Legion Drive

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | American Legion Drive, Downtown North Adams |
| Origin | Office of Community Development |
| Budget |  Large Budget (\$200,000+) <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  High Risk: Difficulty raising funds, political will, potential lack of support from community/Main Street/Marshall Street businesses |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: Biannual cycle track bicycle ridership numbers; (b) social media responses and press coverage. |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, City Engineer, DPW, MassDOT |



Looking southeast to northwest along American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

This project responds to the pandemic-induced decline in foot traffic and on-site customer visitation rates among local businesses. Moreover, this project seeks to further expand the build-out of high comfort bicycle facilities that allow non-motorized access to various destinations in the downtown.

American Legion Drive currently has the city's only existing bike lanes. The roadway has a wide right-of-way that allows for flexibility in design and is an ideal connector between Main Street and MCLA along Ashland Street. American Legion Drive is also a potential location to connect to a future bike path spur by creating an above or below ground pedestrian/bicycle crossing at the existing Pan Am rail line.



Looking southeast along American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item

This project would seek to create a two-directional cycle track along American Legion Drive. The City will need to determine if the existing bike lanes should be upgraded to a cycle track through restriping and elimination of all parking along the north/east side of the street; or, reconstruct the roadway to build a permanent barrier between the cycle track and vehicle lanes. Additionally, through narrowing the roadway, parking could be preserved along the northern section of the street.



Potential location to connect future bike path spur through elevated or underground pedestrian/bicycle crossing at rail line. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Consider conducting traffic study to determine traffic volume and speed, and the number of pedestrians and cyclists using American Legion Drive.
- Contract with licensed professional surveyor to conduct topographic survey to determine existing conditions/constraints. This will help to determine the exact footprint the project will need to work within.
- **Concept Plan and Estimate:** Work with roadway design engineer for concept plan and estimate. Develop RFP to contract with engineering design firm to provide design alternatives, engineering plans, associated cost estimates, and timeframe. This task should include input from multiple stakeholders including adjacent neighbors, abutting owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base.
- If roadway reconstruction will occur to accommodate installation of a permanent barrier between the cycle track and vehicle lane, the city should conduct a pavement core analysis to assess depth and condition of existing pavement and sub-base.
- Conduct signal design review and determine new signalization for the intersections at either end of the street (intersection at Ashland Street and intersection at Main Street).
- Determine preferred design.
- Acquire necessary permits and conduct any required environmental reviews.
- **Construct Cycle Track:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with installing cycle track with appropriate pavement markings and signage.



Looking west down American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Looking west down American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Route 30 Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Separated Bicycle and Shared-Use Lanes” can be found in the Appendix Section

Reconstruct Pedestrian Bridge north of Western Gateway Heritage State Park

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge |
| Origin | Office of Community Development |
| Budget |  Large Budget (\$200,000+) Project Estimate: \$2,000,000 <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program, FHWA Surface Transportation Block Program (STBG) |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Medium Risk: Difficulty raising funds, politically will |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Project completion; (b) biannual utilization rate (pedestrian counts). |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, City Engineer, Pan Am Railways |



Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Just north of Western Gateway Heritage State Park, a pedestrian bridge allows users to cross over the Pan Am rail line from Furnace Street and Secor Avenue to West Main Street. The bridge has structural deficiencies and needs replacement.

This project responds to the pandemic-induced decline in foot traffic and on-site customer visitation rates among local businesses.

Additionally, this project is a key component of the future construction and expansion of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail that will extend down from Williamstown, through North Adams, and on to the existing link in Adams.



Deficiencies along Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item

This project seeks to replace the existing pedestrian bridge with a new ADA compliant crossing structure.

Replacing this structure with a newer, safer, and more accessible crossing will provide enhanced pedestrian access to the downtown core among neighborhoods surrounding Heritage State Park. On the flip side, enhancing this structure through replacement will afford a convenient pedestrian connection to access Heritage State Park.



View from Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Secure funding for work related to demolishing, designing, and replacing existing crossing with new ADA compliant structure.
- **A Comprehensive Survey:** Develop RFP for development of base plan, which requires a comprehensive horizontal and vertical survey of the bridge site, including adjacent park, commercial, residential, and public-way parcels, in addition to the Pan Am right-of-way.
- **Concept Plan and Estimate:** Work with bridge design engineer for concept plan and estimate. Develop RFP to contract with structural engineering design firm to provide design alternatives, engineering plans, associated cost estimates, and timeframe. This task should include consideration of technical, design, and constructability input from multiple stakeholders including Pan Am representatives, adjacent neighbors, abutting owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base.
- Determine preferred design.
- Acquire necessary permits and conduct any required environmental reviews.
- **Demolishing and Replacing Pedestrian Bridge:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with demolishing and removing the existing structure and installing a new, ADA compliant pedestrian bridge north of Western Gateway Heritage State Park (WGHSP).
- Bidding General Contractors should be MassDOT prequalified in categories of “Bridge Construction” and “Highway-Construction” in a single contract amount of \$2 million or more.



Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore



Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore

Storefront Improvement Program

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Private Realm |
| Location | Downtown North Adams |
| Origin | Office of Community Development, LRRP Planning Process |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) Funding Sources: MA Downtown Initiative Program, BIZ-M-POWER, Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Seed Grant |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) number of storefront facades improved; (b) impact of each improvement on local businesses. |
| Partners & Resources | Landlords and merchants, the Office of Community Development and business support organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce Resources: Community Development Block Grant |



DiLego Jewelers and CG's Hair Design both located along Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

The pandemic caused reduced operating hours and business closures in downtown North Adams. The appearance of buildings and storefronts in the downtown are mixed, with some being of poor quality and in general disrepair. Improving the condition and appearance of these buildings will increase their attraction among patrons and will work to attract new businesses looking to establish a presence in North Adams. This project seeks to address the adverse economic impacts felt during the shutdown.

Action Item

The storefront improvement program will improve the appearance of buildings in the downtown business district area which are street facing or in prominent view. The program will seek to stimulate redevelopment and private sector capital investment by proactively addressing deteriorating property conditions and encouraging improvements that increases business activity and economic vitality in the downtown.

Program design should include a tiered and matching award system that provides increased funding for larger projects and should promote ADA improvements.



The Bear and Bee Bookshop located along Holden Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate the storefront improvement program, the City of North Adams may consider the following steps:

- Determine amount of Community Development Block Grant funding that will be allocated yearly to support storefront improvement program.
- Review guidelines from exemplar programs and guidelines for a local Storefront Improvement Program that meets existing needs. Develop Storefront Improvement Program guidelines.
- Establish program application that is accessible through the city’s webpage. Program application should be clear, concise, and user-friendly.
- Establish application review process and award system, including template contract for awardees.



Christo’s Famous Pizza followed by AR Designs Fine Art & Tattoo located along Holden Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Developing Storefront Guidelines to Energize Downtown” can be found in the Appendix Section

Expand Online Presence of Downtown Businesses

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Revenue/Sales |
| Location | City of North Adams |
| Origin | Downtown Businesses, City of North Adams and North Adams Chamber of Commerce |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) the number of businesses that request assistance for and set-up e-commerce capabilities; (b) business vitality (sales performance) in an uncertain future. |
| Partners & Resources | North Adams Office of Community Development, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Community Development Corporation |



Secret Stash located on Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Terra located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses surveyed within downtown North Adams reported losses in revenue and a reduction in on-site customers.

Of businesses surveyed, 51% reported generating less revenue in 2020 compared with 2019, and 37% reported revenue declines by 25% or more. Additionally, 64% of businesses surveyed had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID, and 50% reported a reduction in on-site customers by 25% or more. Naturally, these impacts resulted from safety precautions put in place that significantly restricted normal business operations along with the ability of patrons to visit businesses deemed non-essential.

Naturally, establishing a virtual, online presence (e-commerce, social media) has been identified as an avenue for recovery now and well into the future. Moreover, establishing a more robust online presence was a high priority for businesses that expressed interest in receiving recovery assistance.

Action Item

This project will provide technical assistance to interested businesses that wish to expand their online presence and/or establish e-commerce capabilities for selling products/goods/services through the internet. Key community action items may include:

- Identify partners/providers to implement the program in a timely fashion.
- Identify marketing tool to reach target market.
- Identify which businesses within the study area need the most help.
- Ensure there are enough resources to meet the need.



Scizzor Sisterz located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Lucky Cat Tattoo (LCT) located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item Continued

Key Technical Assistance Action items may include:

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

Process

To initiate this process, the city may consider the following steps:

- Explore funding sources and secure funds to implement e-commerce technical assistance training.
- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Issue RFP outlining purpose, goals, scope of services, project requirements, proposal format and contact information, proposal delivery instructions, and evaluation criteria and timeline.
- Identify and select partners to implement the program in a timely fashion.
- Identify marketing tools to reach target market.
- Identify which businesses within the study area need the most help.
- Ensure there are enough resources to meet the need.
- Create a system to approach small business technical assistance topics with empathy, patience, and encouragement recognizing that the topics are difficult for many diverse audiences that suffer from a digital divide disadvantage.
- Conduct trainings. Provide materials that can be referenced following the one-on-one time provided during TA sessions.



CG's Hair Design located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled "A Collaborative Small Business Technical Assistance Effort to Drive Business Resilience and Opportunity to Diverse Communities" can be found in the Appendix Section

Housing Market Study

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Tenant Mix |
| Location | Downtown North Adams |
| Origin | North Adams Office of Community Development |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources</u> : MA Downtown Initiative, Urban Agenda Grant Program |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Low Risk |
| Key Performance Indicators | Success will be measured by tracking: (a) project completion; (b) tracking key indicators related to housing production and comparing post-study indicators to pre-study indicators; (c) tracking developer relationships; and (d) increased occupancy of underutilized buildings |
| Partners & Resources | Office of Community Development, Chamber of Commerce, North Adams Housing Authority |



Main Street looking east, downtown North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

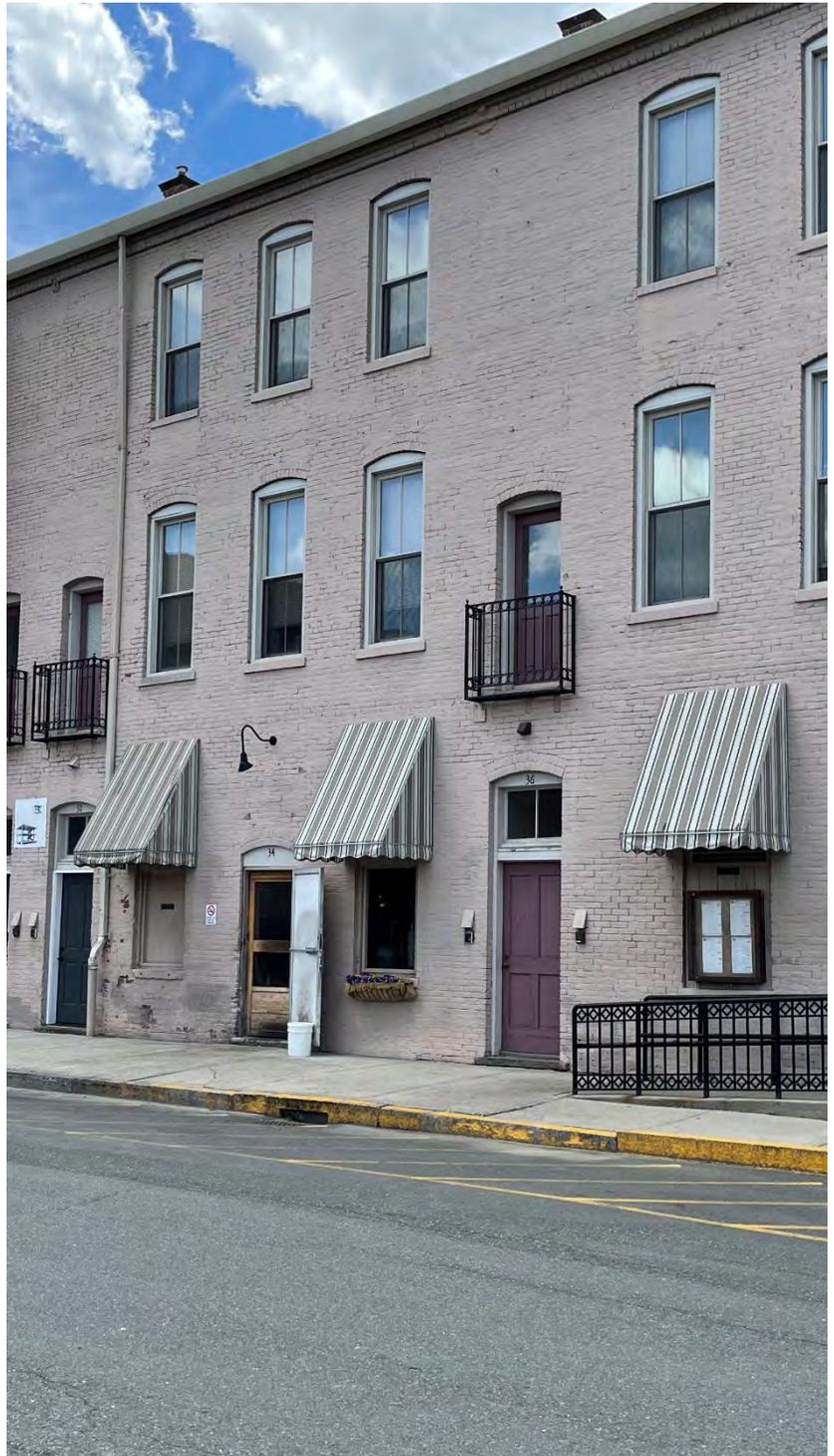
A Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the City of North Adams was completed in 2020. In addition to continued population decline, the HNA contained three key findings: an aging housing stock, a housing supply deficit, and stagnant production of new housing units. Adequate housing and a sufficient supply thereof are integral to stimulating economic development.

The City of North Adams has undertaken action promote housing development, including working to adopt Smart Growth Zoning in and near the downtown area. In order to further stimulate residential investment in North Adams, a thorough understanding of the housing market, and market demand for housing, is necessary.

Such a study will help the City of North Adams attract and inform residential and mixed real estate developers and demonstrate a path to successful housing production in North Adams.

Action Item

A Housing Market Study will seek to identify housing in strategically significant, yet underutilized buildings within the downtown. The study will aim to elucidate preferred housing types for prospective market. Therefore, residential recruitment will be a crucial element of this study.



Back of Public building from Center Street Lot, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate this process, the City of North Adams may consider the following steps:

- Explore funding sources and secure funds to conduct housing market study.
- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Issue RFP outlining purpose, goals, scope of services, project requirements, proposal format and contact information, proposal delivery instructions, and evaluation criteria and timeline.
- Select qualified vendor/consultant.
- Initiate study to determine housing options in strategically significant, yet underutilized buildings within the downtown.
- Conclude with recommendations moving forward.
- Upon completion of the plan, the city should consider working with property owners to encourage the development of site plans and/or floor plans that coincide with recommendations.



Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Appendix

| | |
|---|-----|
| Related Best Practice Example Projects | 55 |
| Business Survey Report | 87 |
| Public Input Project Ideas Survey Summary | 104 |



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



PUBLIC
REALM

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

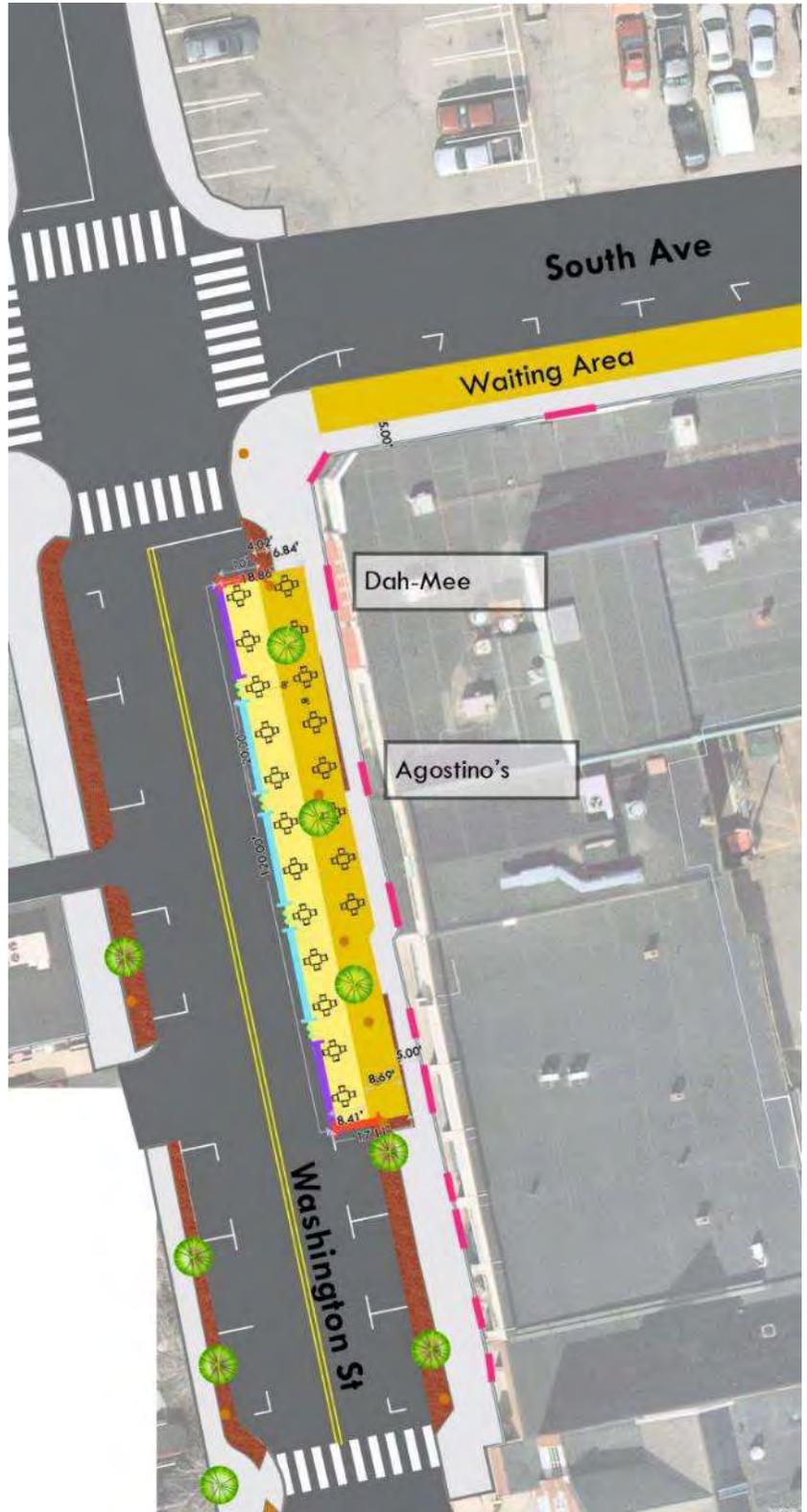
- Discuss Need for Intervention
- Field Visits and Observations, Counts, Documentation
- Measure Key Dimensions
- Create Design Alternatives
- Present to Stakeholders for Feedback
- Plan Installation Date and Timeline
- Promote Event through Fliers, Social Media, and Town-wide Announcements
- Design 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



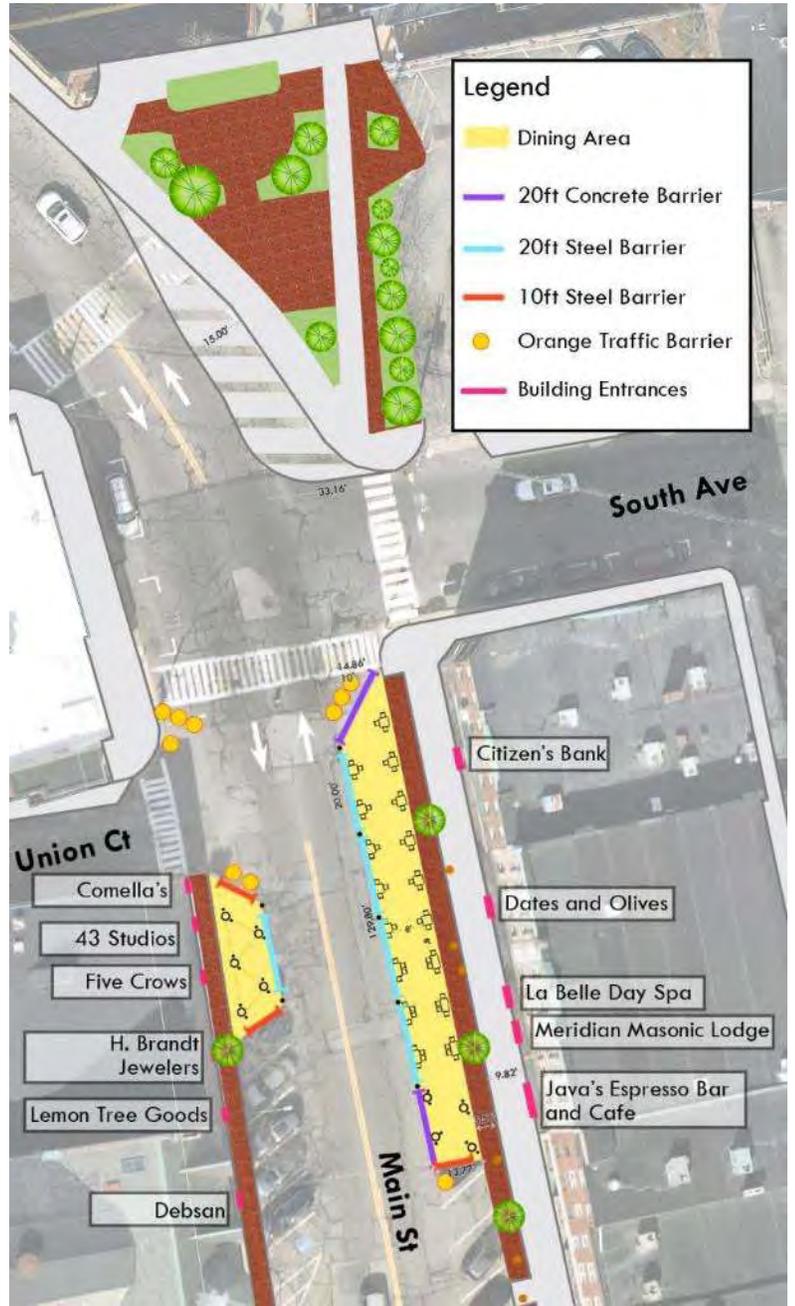
Image of Tactical Testing Before Striping and Adding Bollards



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

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.



Find almost anything on our website

Search

Home / Departments / Public Events Department / Office of Outdoor Events

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.

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

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

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>



Use a Form Based Code to Shape Public Realm Improvements Over Time



Provided by SME Consultant

Dodson & Flinker

Location

Florence, Massachusetts

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Origin</p> | <p>An ongoing project of the Northampton Dept. of Planning & Sustainability, with consulting assistance from Dodson & Flinker and Brovitz Community Planning and Design (please note that zoning elements described here have not been adopted, and many elements have changed or been eliminated over the course of the project).</p> |
| <p>Budget</p> | <p> Medium Budget: (\$50k-\$200k) depending on size and extent of project area and the complexity of potential development types.</p> |
| <p>Timeframe</p> | <p> Medium: while codifying the design standards is relatively straightforward, building consensus around the masterplan and streetscape design on which those standards is based can take several years, and is often accomplished in stages.</p> |
| <p>Risk</p> | <p> Low to Medium: If there has been an effective, stakeholder-driven planning process leading to a shared vision, form-based codes are well-supported; resistance rises according to the extent to which landowners and businesses see that vision as limiting rather than enabling future opportunities.</p> |
| <p>Key Performance Indicators</p> | <p>Reduced time in design, review and permitting; reduced conflicts between users of the public realm; improved longevity of street improvements and tree plantings; increased investment in public realm improvements; increased rents; increased property values.</p> |
| <p>Partners & Resources</p> | <p>Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, Planning Board, Design Review Committee, Downtown residents and business owners.</p> |

Diagnostic

Like a lot of communities, Northampton is working to promote redevelopment of its downtown while preserving the historic character of its unique buildings and streetscapes. An architectural review committee administers design guidelines that were prepared 20 years ago, but much time is spent in negotiation as the committee works with applicants to interpret them. Current district boundaries, moreover, include areas within the core historic district where stringent architectural guidelines make sense, as well as side streets and transitional areas where more flexibility is appropriate.

The form-based code approach provides an opportunity to fine-tune the zoning for each part the downtown: setting clear standards for good urban design in all areas, maintaining a strong historic preservation standard in the core, and allowing for more flexibility and creativity in other areas.

The challenge (as well as opportunity) of this approach is that before the code can be written there has to be a clear idea of what is desired. Where the current zoning and review process leaves a lot of those decisions to be made (and negotiated) during the design and permitting process, the form-based code requires the community to make those design decisions up front – greatly simplifying design and permitting and allowing for a predictable outcome for all concerned.

Action Item

1. Define the study area and generally establish how detailed the code should be, and whether it should be very prescriptive or more flexible.
2. Review the existing zoning for the area and consult with property owners, residents, business owners, developers, planning department staff, planning board members, zoning board of appeals members, and the code enforcement officer to determine what is working in the existing zoning and should be kept and what is not working and needs to change.
3. If none exists, conduct a detailed survey and analysis of existing conditions, including dimension of streets and sidewalks, setbacks, lot dimensions, parking, landscaping, architecture, use patterns, materials,, etc.
4. Establish and/or verify the community's overall vision for the future of the area, likely including some combination of preservation, adaptation or transformation. Verify how the vision relates to the public and private realms, including functional and aesthetic goals, pedestrian connections, complete street concepts, etc.
5. Determine the best approach to enabling the community's vision, which could be adopting a new district with form-based standards, a form-based overlay district, or incorporating form-based standards throughout the code.
6. Determine the topics to be regulated and the standards for them. At a minimum, establish maximum front setbacks, building massing standards including the height and orientation of buildings fronting streets and public spaces, a front entrance requirement, standards for ground-floor uses, minimum transparency on the ground floor, and standards for pedestrian friendly off-street parking.
7. Draft the code at the level of detail needed to establish a clear and predictable process of design and review, balanced with the specific community's capacity to manage that process and the ability of the real estate market to support the desired vision. Test the code on a range of sites within the study area and revise the code as needed to ensure the desired outcomes.
8. Incorporate within each of these steps a robust process of public involvement and iterative development of design concepts and regulatory approaches. Most communities benefit from a scenario-based process that explores multiple alternatives at each stage before settling on a preferred approach.

Process

The process of implementing a form-based code for the public realm starts with planning for the district and drafting the code itself, as described above. Key implementation steps involve bringing the code forward for public review, making any necessary changes to respond to feedback from stakeholders, and moving through the adoption process as governed by state and local law.

Throughway & Frontage Zone Standards | Main Street-Primary [MS-p]

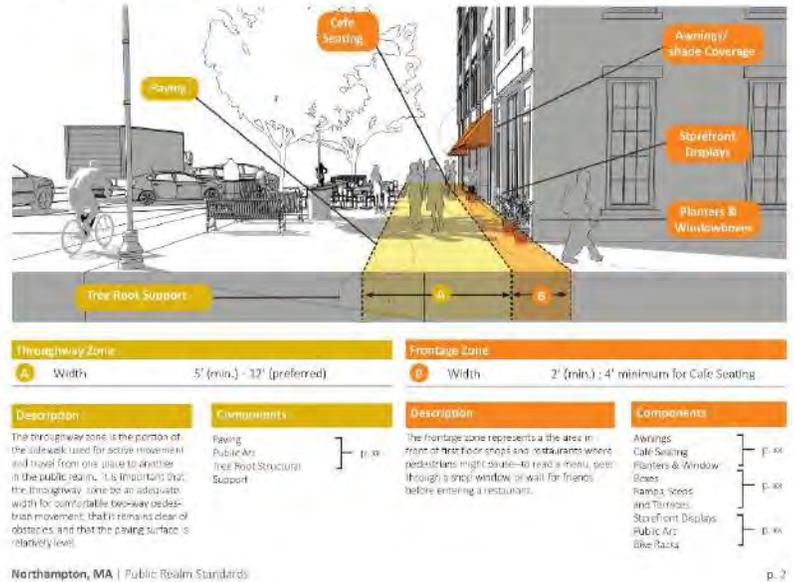


Diagram showing dimensions, allowed components and uses within the Throughway and Frontage Zones.

Defining Standards for the Public Realm

The form-based code for the public realm provides a detailed breakdown of each element, including the frontage zone adjacent to the buildings; the throughway zone that provides a clear path for pedestrians; and a furnishing and utility zone for trees, light fixtures, benches and other furnishings. It can also include a street enhancement zone with standards for parking spaces, stormwater management and temporary uses within the parking area.

A simpler or more complex cross section can be developed, depending on the need. The goal is to provide for a predictable arrangement of all desired elements, coordinated with the provision for vehicular passage, parking, public transit and bicycling. This ensures that outdoor dining, sidewalk displays, public seating, art and other elements can all coexist within a compact footprint while minimizing conflicts. If some uses won't fit the dimensions of the street or are inappropriate to the area, that decision is made up front, providing clear direction to all involved.

Furnishing & Utility and Street Enhancement Zone | Main Street-Primary [MS-p]

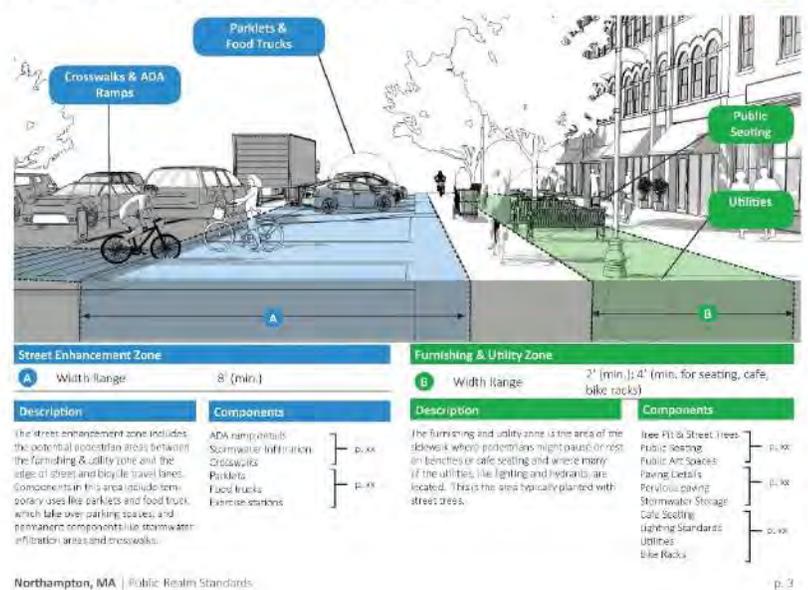
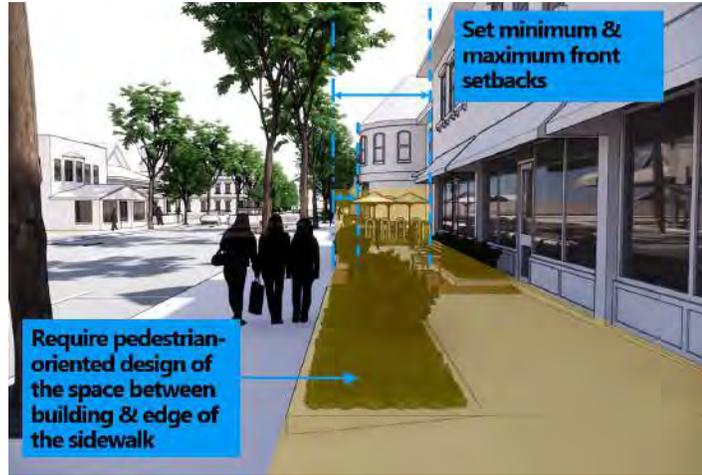


Diagram showing dimensions, allowed components and uses within the Furnishing and Utility and Street Enhancement Zones.

Calibrating Public Realm Standards to different street types, districts or neighborhoods.

One value of the graphic form-based code is the ease to which it can be calibrated to reflect different design and dimensional standards for varied districts or street types.

This is usually represented by cross sections (or three-dimensional representations) of each area, with simple tables defining the desired parameters for setbacks, street and sidewalk elements, and the relationship of building entrances and façade elements to the public way.



The form-based code establishes appropriate building setbacks, then provides standards for designing both public and private frontage areas within a unified composition.



Diagram showing cross section, dimensional parameters and photographic examples for a typical "Main Street - Secondary" block.



Diagram showing cross section, dimensions and examples for a typical "Side Street" block..



Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



PUBLIC
REALM

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

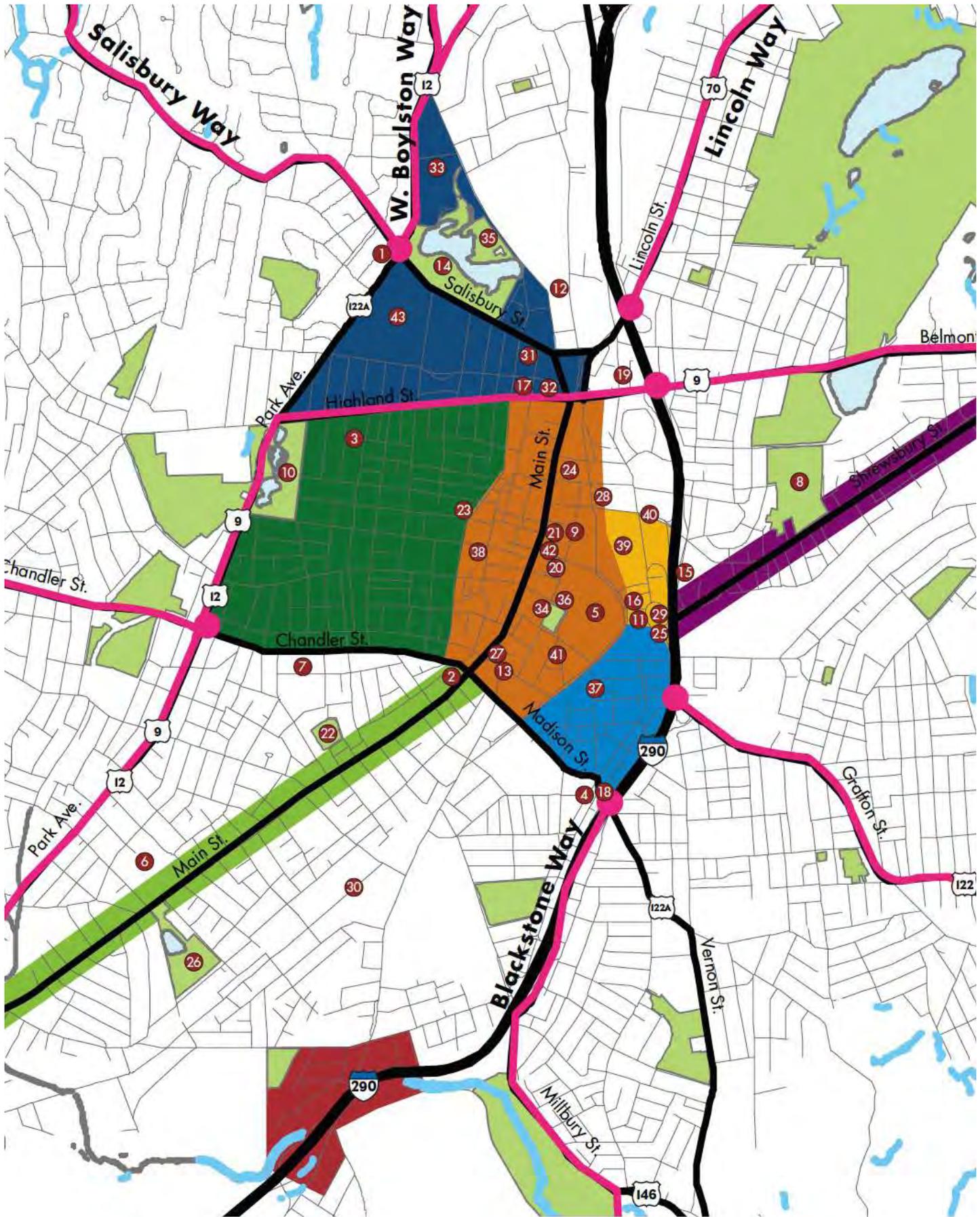
As this project continues to roll out it will be important to look at it in light of current development, updating locations and messages as-needed.

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



Lake Cochituate

 Town Line
 Exist. Trail Connections
 Project Limits

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



Provided by SME Consultant

BETA Group, Inc.

Project Location

Wayland, MA
Natick, MA

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

Diagnostic

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

Action Item

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

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

Process

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

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

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

Maintain flex posts, pavement markings and signage as needed.

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



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



Developing storefront guidelines to energize downtown



Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

Everett, MA

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Origin | Mayor, City of Everett |
| Budget |  Low - \$35,000 for design fee + program to subsidize implementation for \$25,000 |
| Timeframe |  Short- 10 -12 months |
| Risk |  Low |
| Key Performance Indicators | Level of participation by landlords and merchants |
| Partners & Resources | City of Everett, Everett Building Department and Community Development Department, and landlords and merchants. |

Diagnostic

The City of Everett is a primarily working class community just north of Boston. It has a large share of Brazilian, Latino and Italian first- and second-generation residents.

In the last few years, a very large casino has located there that gives the city some needed donations and fees for public improvements. There are two major retail enclaves in Everett: Everett Square and Glendale Square.

Everett Square, the larger of the two, is the traditional downtown where the public library and City Hall and many amenities are located.

Stores and restaurants are primarily locally-owned, family enterprises. Only a minority of Everett's business are national or regional chains.

In a bid to encourage the appeal of Everett's downtown to outside visitors, the year before the Pandemic, the Mayor directed the Community Development Director to create a framework to better guide merchants in enhancing their storefronts. A subsidy grant program was being developed to encourage merchant and landlord participation.

The Mayor also felt that a more restricted approach to storefront design be adhered to with similar sign details and limited awning colors. A study was commissioned to develop Guidelines for Signage and Storefronts. Following this, the guidelines were to be translated into the City of Everett's Building Code.

Action Items

- Photo-documentation of all commercial blocks and stores in both Everett Square and Glendale Square.
- Creating a panoramic view each block showing "existing" and "proposed."
- Thorough review of existing storefront improvement programs throughout the United States and Canada to recognize applicable precedents and best practices.
- Development of a City of Everett Guidelines format while exploring various cases for refinement and review.
- Drafting distinct pages referencing individual aspects of storefronts. These included wall signs, blade signs, awnings and window treatments.
- Review the drafted pages with Everett's planning staff, Building Department and representatives of the Mayor's office.
- Final approval of Storefront Guidelines.



Everett Square

Applicable Commercial Areas

The Everett Storefront Sign and Design Guidelines are applicable to any storefront located in the Everett Square neighborhood and the Glendale Square Neighborhood.

Everett Square

Everett Square is a prominent commercial corridor in the city center running along Broadway Street between Hancock Street in the north and Revere Beach Parkway in the south. The center of Everett Square is at the intersection of Broadway and Chelsea/Norwood streets.



The high number of vacant storefronts contributed to lack of vibrancy downtown.

Process

- Extensive research of other cities and towns guidelines and procedures.
- Based on best practices, create easily understandable illustrated storefront component pages that reference City of Everett regulations.
- Establish storefront element criteria through including specifically referenced dimensions, materials and placement.
- Photo-document good and bad examples of storefront elements.
- Create a City of Everett color pallet.
- Show by illustration approved and not approved ways of applying storefront elements.
- Circulate among town staff the drafts individual guideline pages for review and refinement.
- Organize whole Storefront Guidelines set of pages.
- After completion of Storefront Guidelines, during the Covid-19 shutdown, work with the Building Commission to rewrite Everett's Building Code to reflect the clearer storefront criteria.
- Others involved in the rewriting of Building Code include the city attorney and community development director.
- This sentence by sentence intense exercise gave focus to the Building Code while doing away with unnecessary zoning code criteria
- This Collaboration made a tedious set of tasks quite reasonable to complete.
- This process allowed an opportunity to address sign issues throughout the City such as non-conforming uses, public/private garages, etc..

Signs

Signs

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

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



City Ordinance/Regulation:
Section 12.5.5(b) of the City Ordinance further regulates the number and size of signs. See Technical Requirements for more information.

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Signs and Technical Requirements

Awnings

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

City Ordinance/Regulation:
City Council Rule 74.B further regulates awnings...
Awning signs are also further regulated in City Ordinance Section 12A.



Awning Signs - Material

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

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



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

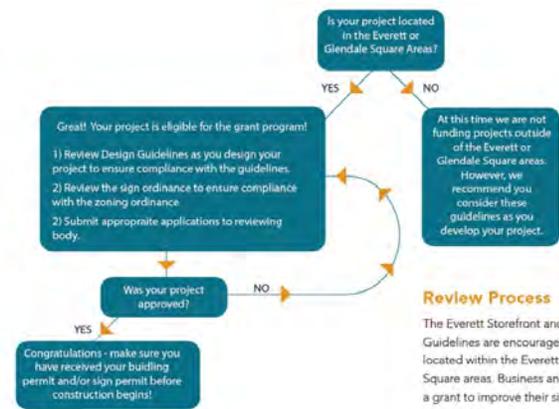


This awning is made of shiny vinyl and is not encouraged.

The block party was a near-term, easy action item in the overall implementation plan and was intended to support a good image for this area of the downtown and set up for larger and longer-term action items such as building redevelopment, wayfinding, and business recruitment for ground floor spaces.

Process- Strategic Decisions

- City of Everett deciding to create storefront guidelines
- Building Commission desiring to match new guidelines to City's Building code.
- Creation of a digital set of storefront criteria for use by merchants, landlords and fabricator/installers.
- Use of panoramic photo-montage to establish existing conditions.
- Use of photo-montages to act as baseline show proposed conditions using new storefront criteria.
- Collaboration between strategic City departments for ownership of the guidelines and shared development of the review process for design and grant applications.
- Creation of easily understandable and illustrated storefront criteria.



Review Process

The Everett Storefront and Facade Design Guidelines are encouraged for any storefront located within the Everett Square and Glendale Square areas. Business and property owners seeking a grant to improve their signage or awning shall demonstrate compliance with these guidelines and any applicable zoning regulations. This flow chart is meant to help you understand the process to get your project approved.

Review Process and Grant Application

Everett Square

Before



After





Projecting/Blade Signs

Projecting/blade signs should be limited one to a business entrance and should not contain more than two faces. To maintain the pedestrian feel of the corridor, projecting/blade signs cannot project more than 5 feet from the building or be larger than 8 square feet. The sign should also not be placed higher than the following: whichever is the lowest, 25 feet above grade, the top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story, or the height of the building at the building line.



Wall Signs

Wall Signs - Height

The top of wall signs should be higher than any of the following, whichever is lowest:

- 25 ft above grade,
- top of sills of the first level of windows above the first story, or
- the height of a building at the building line

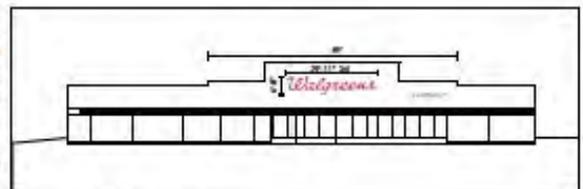


Everett MA Signage Case Study

The following depicts how signage is applied based on current and proposed regulations. The proposed regulations are depicted in Example 2. However, two additional renderings were provided to show alternative sign sizes.

Example 1
 Allowed Under Current Regulations Based on Sign Permit Documentation
 Max Sign Size = 395 (158ft x 2.5 = 395, per sign permit)

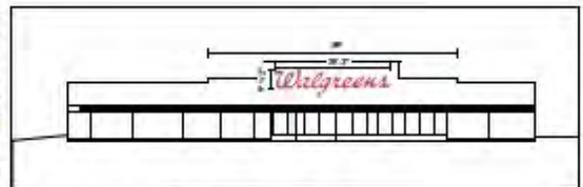
Main Sign As Shown = 199.77sf



Note - square footage is split up between the two signs "Walgreens" & "Pharmacy"

Example 2
 Proposed Regulations
 4 square ft per linear foot of wall which pertains to the sign, for facades set back more than 100-feet from the centerline of the road
 Max Sign Size = 356 sf

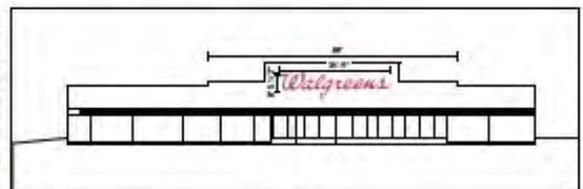
As shown = ~ 354 sf
 Dimensions = 39.25' x 9.04'



Note - proposed regulations would not permit two wall signs on the same facade, therefore this example using all allotted sign size to the single wall sign.

Example 3
 Comparison
 3.5 sf per linear foot of wall which pertains to the sign, for facades set back from than 100-feet from the centerline of the road.
 Max Sign Size = 311.5sf

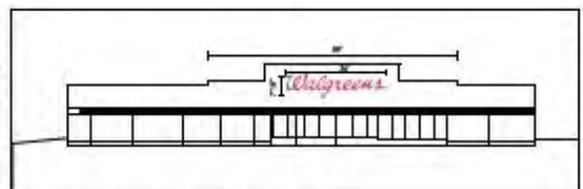
As shown = ~311.12sf
 Dimensions = 36.75' x 8.47'



Note - proposed regulations would not permit two wall signs on the same facade, therefore this example using all allotted sign size to the single wall sign.

Example 4
 Comparison
 3 sf per linear foot of wall which pertains to the sign, for facades set back from than 100-feet from the centerline of the road.
 Max Sign Size = 267sf

As shown = ~266.30'
 Dimensions = 34' x 7.83'



Note - proposed regulations would not permit two wall signs on the same facade, therefore this example using all allotted sign size to the single wall sign.

ReLaunch

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



Provided by SME Consultant

Revby LLC

Location

Arlington, VA

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Origin | BizLaunch, Arlington Economic Development Team (Internal group of 5) |
| Budget |  Medium (\$200,000) - CARES Act Funding (Committed Funding) through December 31, 2021. Funding to be used for technical assistance and the development of digital technology tools. |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (1 year) - October 2020 Funding earmarked; November - December 2020 Project Development; January - February 2021 Procurement process and selection of vendors; March 2021 Informational Meetings and Call for Applications; April - December 2021 - Rolling applications and delivery of services. |
| Risk |  Low Risk - Budget losses; participation of legacy businesses and hard to reach business populations; funding elimination; staffing; lack of overall participation. |
| Key Performance Indicators | Positively impact and successfully sustain Arlington's small business ecosystem. Particularly a positive impact to those businesses most in need due to the negative effects of the pandemic. Mitigate risk of business closures. Business closures will be monitored in key industries |
| Partners & Resources | Arlington County Government (Office of Economic Development); Commissioner of Revenue; Purchasing Office; Police Department (Office of Nightlife); Revby; Amazon Web Services (AWS) & Nub8 (Cloud Provider); Treasurer's Office; County Attorney's Office; Communications Team for Arlington County and AED. |

Diagnostic

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

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

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

Action Item

Community Action Items:

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

Revby (the TA provider) Action Items:

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

Process (by the Community)

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

Process (by Revby, the TA provider)

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

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.)

North Adams

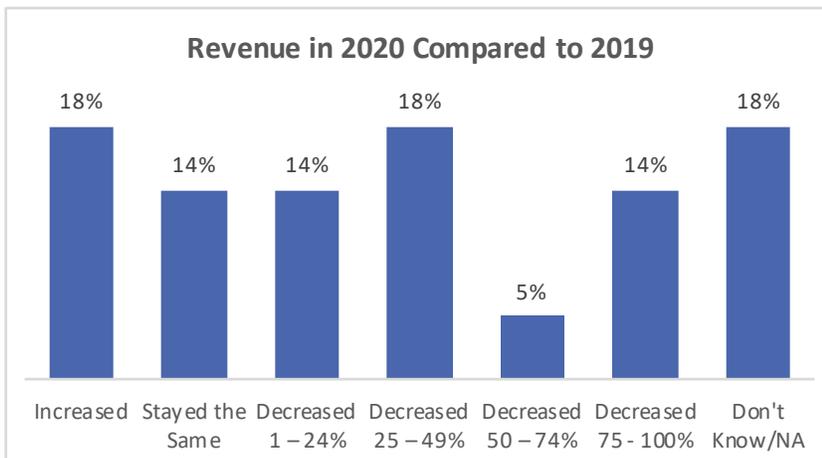
Downtown North Adams

Responses: 22

Impacts of COVID-19

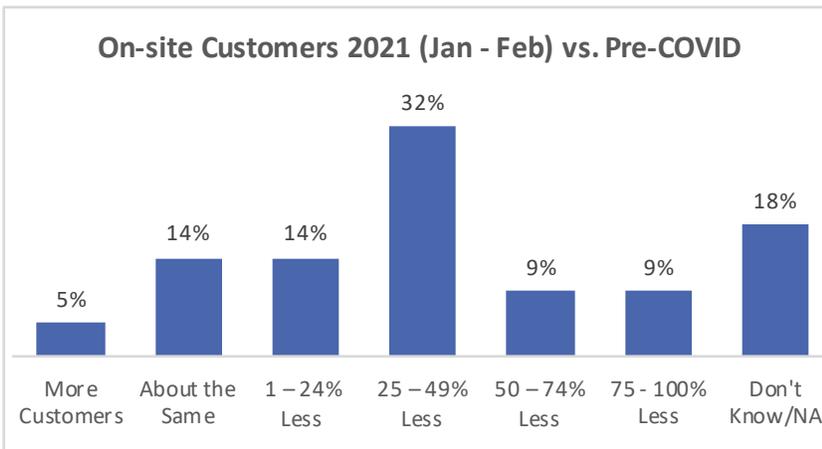
Decline in Business Revenue

51% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019. For 37% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.



Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area

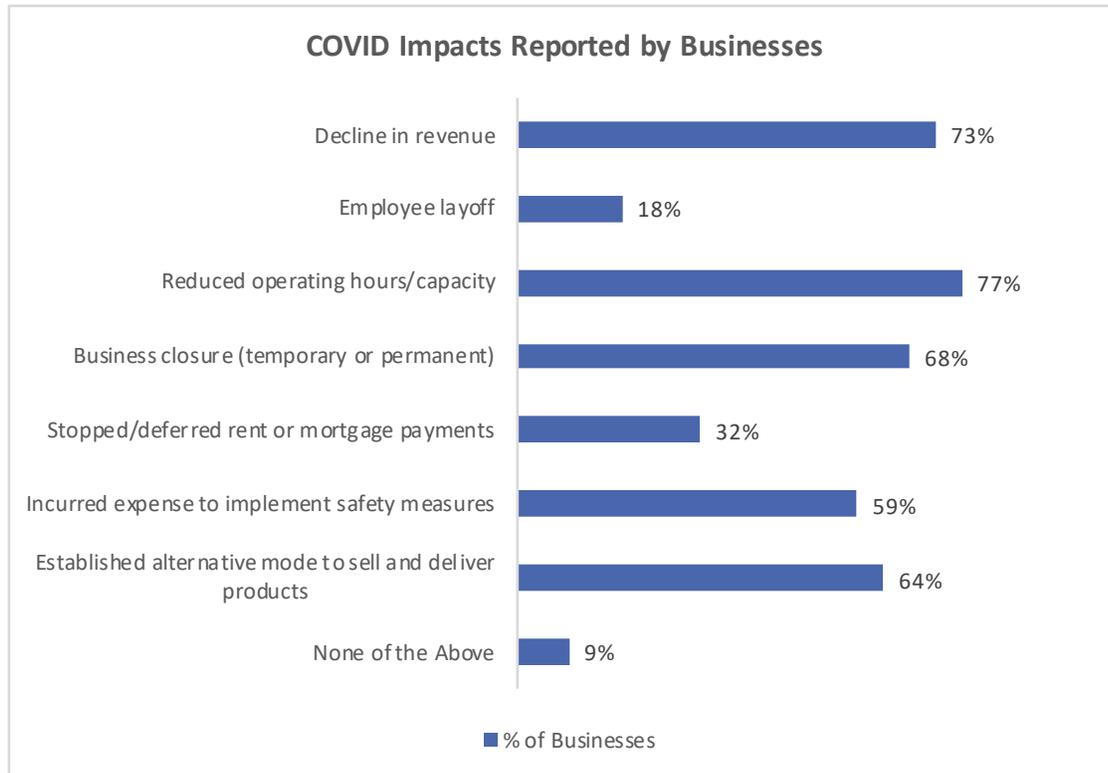
64% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID. 50% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

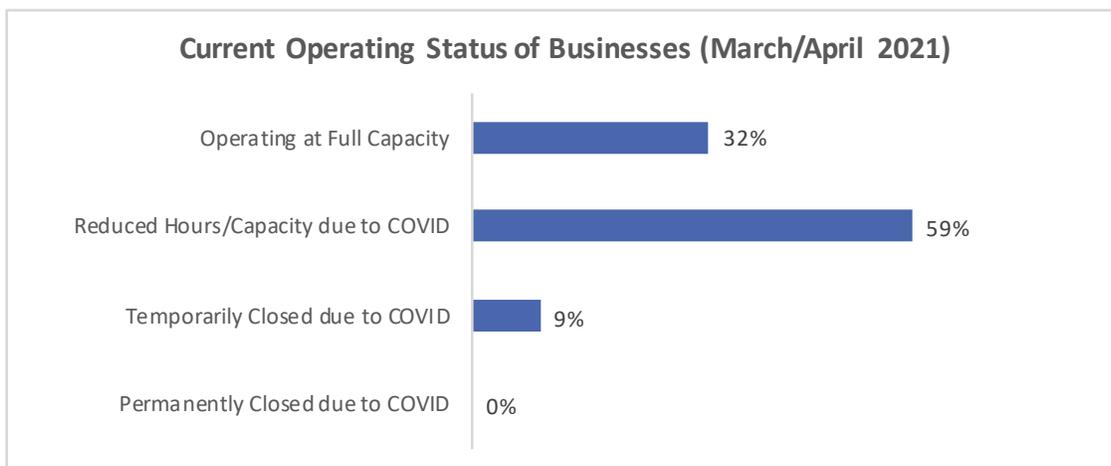
Reported Impacts

91% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



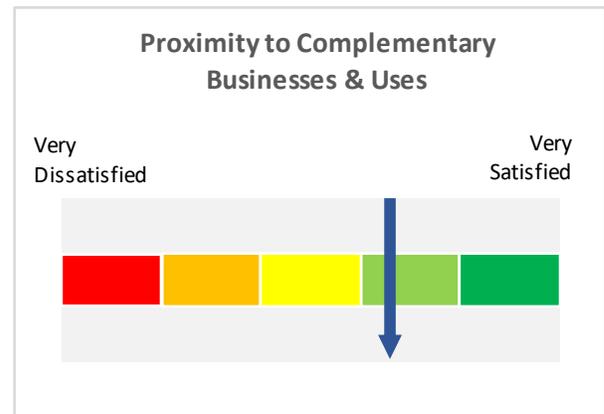
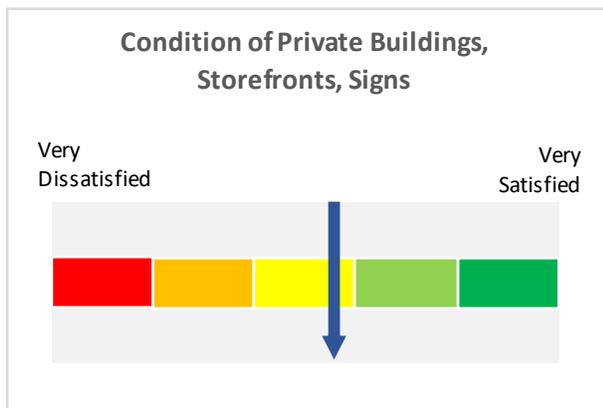
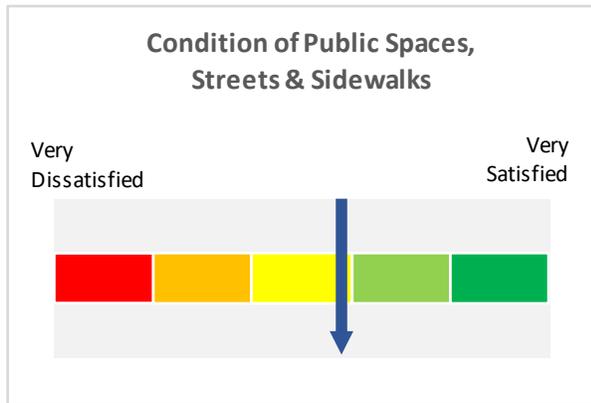
Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 68% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

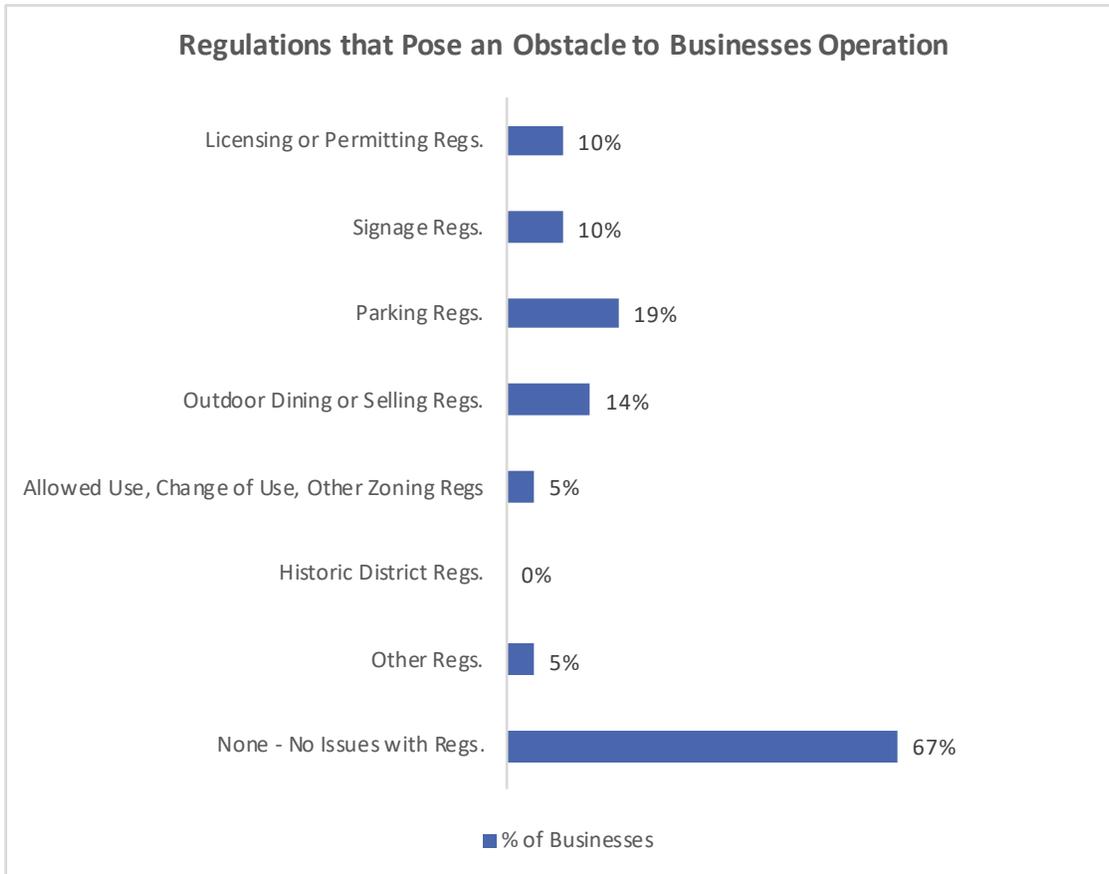
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

Regulatory Environment

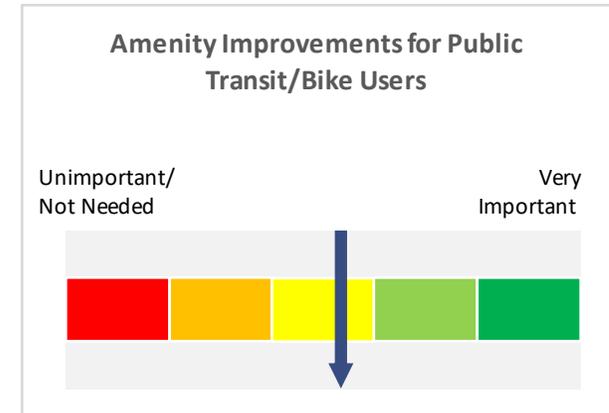
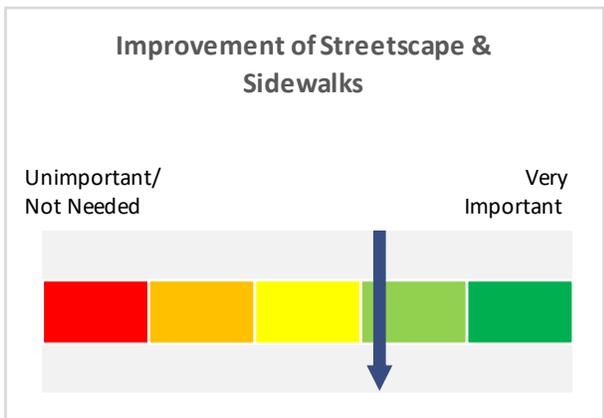
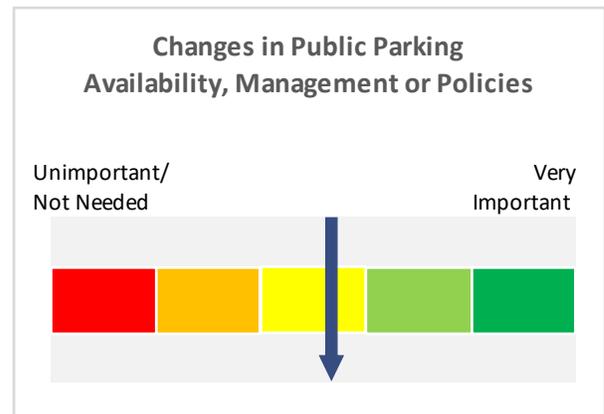
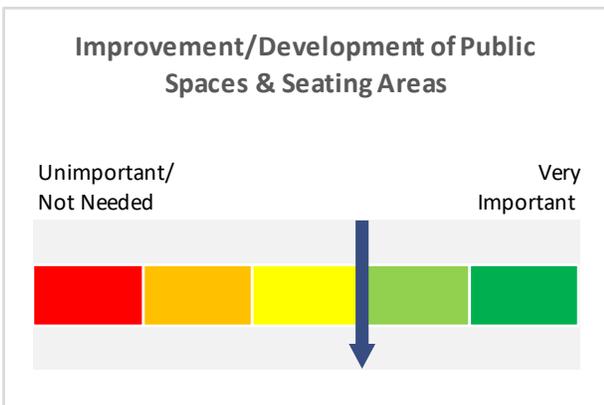
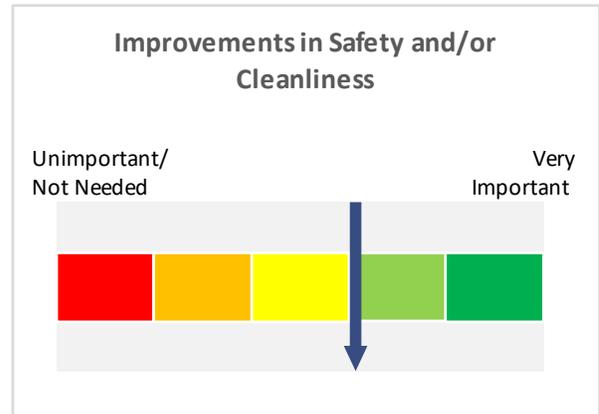
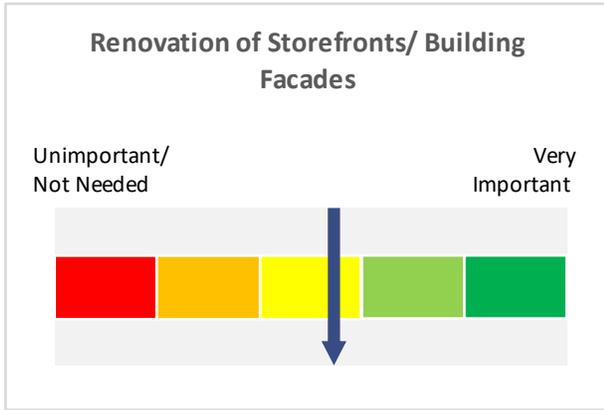
33% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

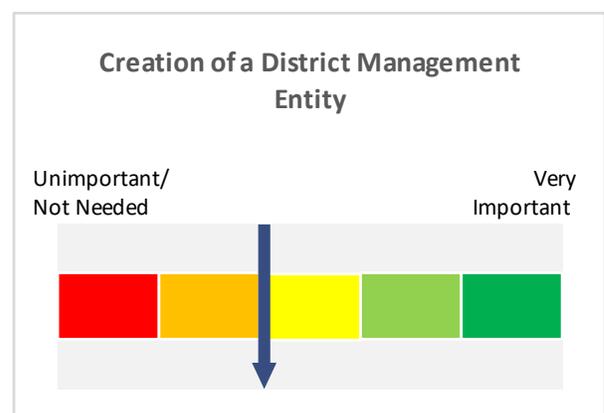
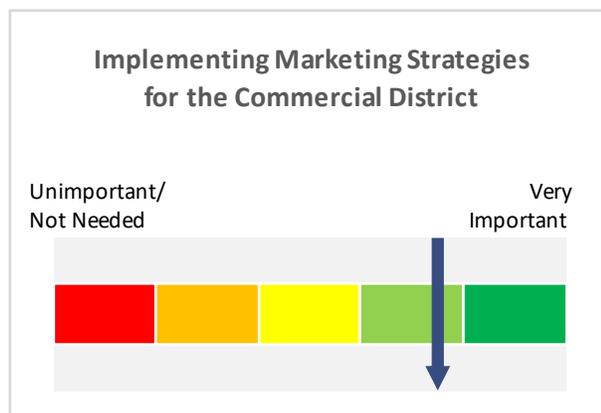
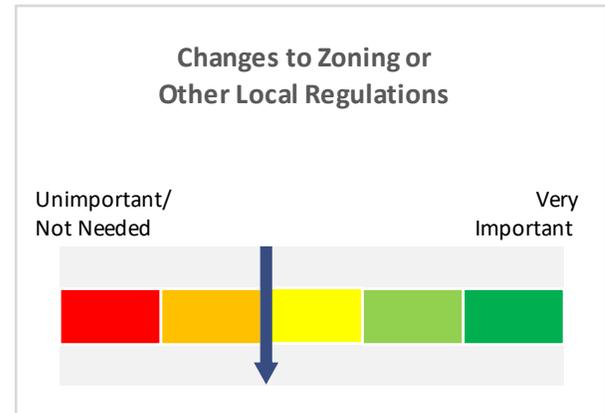
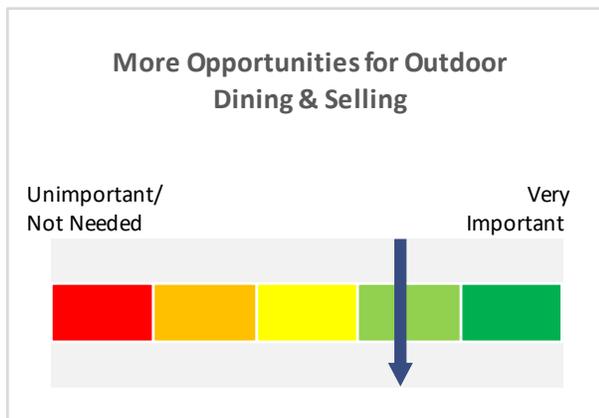
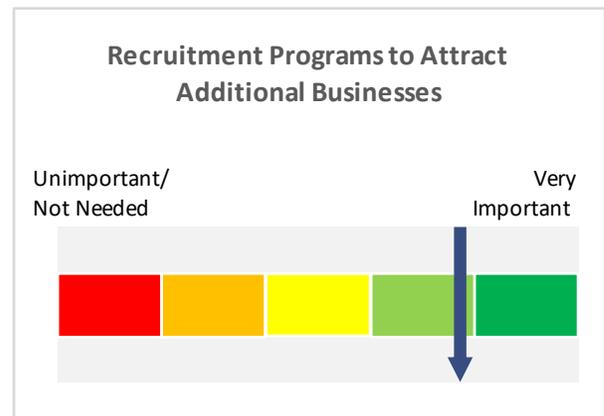
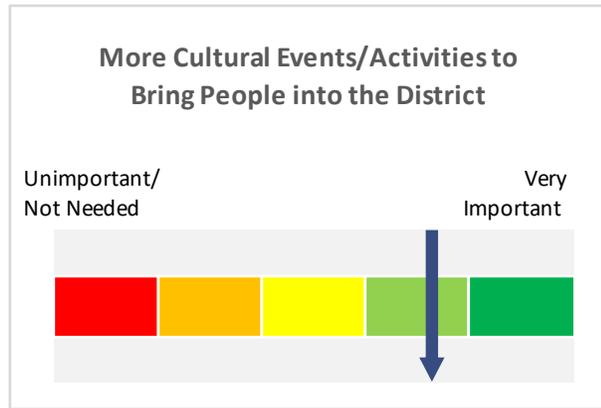
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

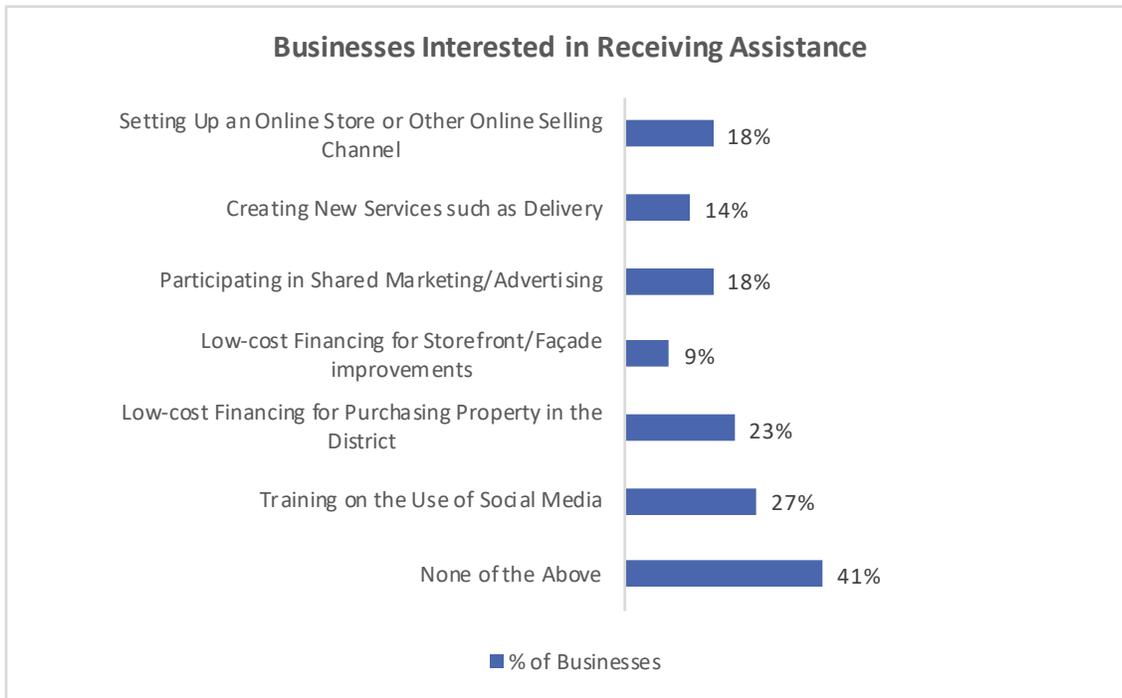
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Businesses Support

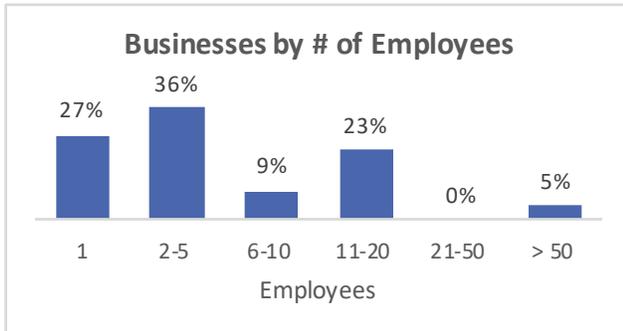
59% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



Business Characteristics

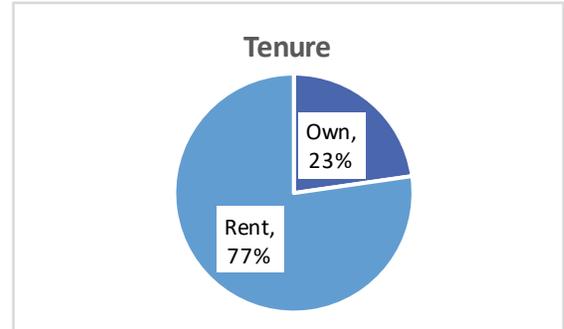
Business Size

63% of businesses are microenterprises (≤ 5 employees).



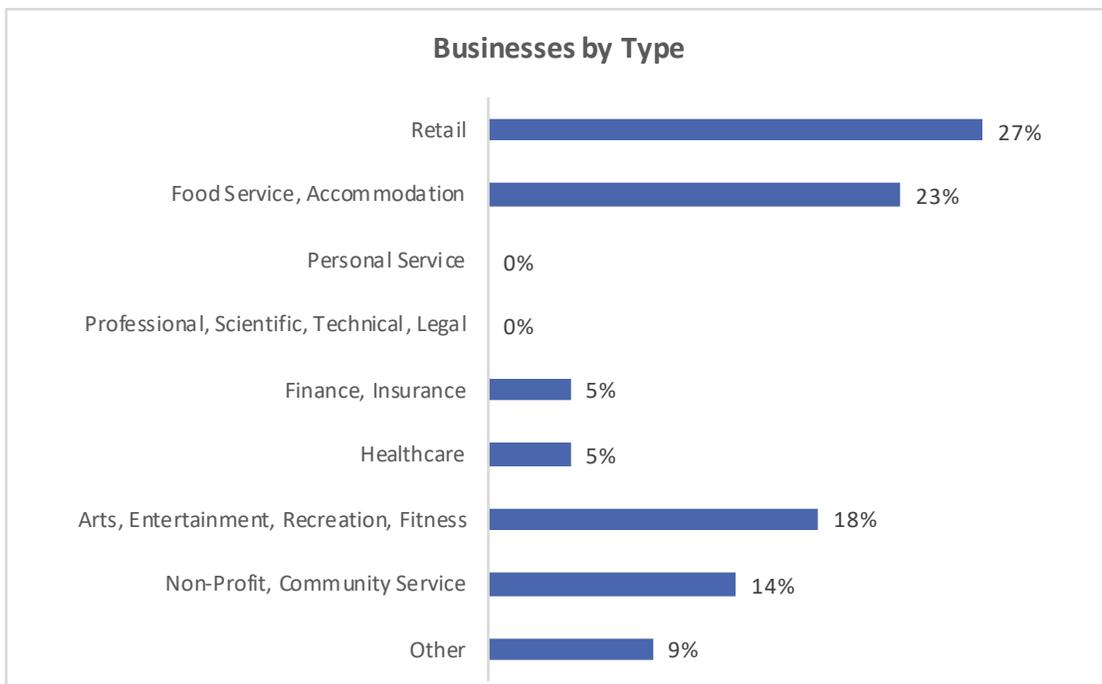
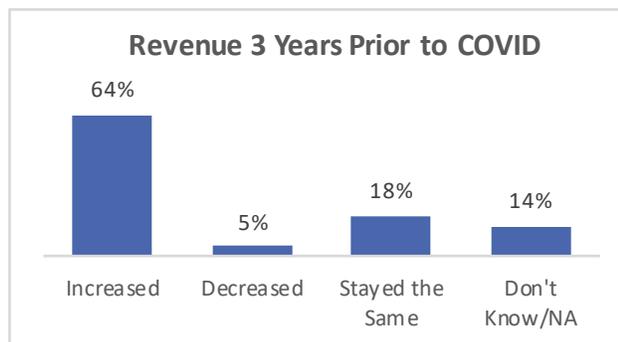
Business Tenure

77% of businesses rent their space.



Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

64% 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.

| | |
|-------------|----|
| North Adams | 22 |
|-------------|----|

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 | 6 | 27% |
| 2 to 5 | 8 | 36% |
| 6 to 10 | 2 | 9% |
| 11 to 20 | 5 | 23% |
| 21 to 50 | 0 | 0% |
| More than 50 | 1 | 5% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|-------|----|------|
| Own | 5 | 23% |
| Rent | 17 | 77% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---------------------------|----|------|
| Increased | 14 | 64% |
| Decreased | 1 | 5% |
| Stayed about the Same | 4 | 18% |
| Don't Know/Not Applicable | 3 | 14% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---|----|------|
| Retail (NAICS 44-45) | 6 | 27% |
| Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72) | 5 | 23% |
| Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81) | 0 | 0% |
| Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54) | 0 | 0% |
| Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52) | 1 | 5% |
| Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62) | 1 | 5% |
| Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71) | 4 | 18% |
| Non-Profit, Community Services | 3 | 14% |
| Other | 2 | 9% |
| Total | 22 | 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 | 1 | 5% |
| Dissatisfied | 4 | 18% |
| Neutral | 7 | 32% |
| Satisfied | 7 | 32% |
| Very Satisfied | 3 | 14% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 1 | 5% |
| Dissatisfied | 5 | 23% |
| Neutral | 6 | 27% |
| Satisfied | 8 | 36% |
| Very Satisfied | 2 | 9% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Access for Customers & Employees

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 1 | 5% |
| Dissatisfied | 1 | 5% |
| Neutral | 6 | 27% |
| Satisfied | 11 | 50% |
| Very Satisfied | 3 | 14% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 0 | 0% |
| Dissatisfied | 1 | 5% |
| Neutral | 4 | 18% |
| Satisfied | 13 | 59% |
| Very Satisfied | 4 | 18% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 0 | 0% |
| Dissatisfied | 1 | 5% |
| Neutral | 8 | 36% |
| Satisfied | 11 | 50% |
| Very Satisfied | 2 | 9% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Licensing or permitting regulations | 2 | 10% |
| Signage regulations | 2 | 10% |
| Parking regulations | 4 | 19% |
| Outdoor dining or selling regulations | 3 | 14% |
| Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations | 1 | 5% |
| Historic District regulations | 0 | 0% |
| Other regulations (not related to COVID) | 1 | 5% |
| None - No Issues with regulations | 14 | 67% |

Impacts of COVID

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

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Decline in revenue | 16 | 73% |
| Employee layoff | 4 | 18% |
| Reduced operating hours/capacity | 17 | 77% |
| Business closure (temporary or permanent) | 15 | 68% |
| Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments | 7 | 32% |
| Incurred expense to implement safety measures | 13 | 59% |
| Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.) | 14 | 64% |
| None of the Above | 2 | 9% |

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

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|------|
| Increased compared to 2019 | 4 | 18% |
| Stayed about the same as 2019 | 3 | 14% |
| Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019 | 3 | 14% |
| Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019 | 4 | 18% |
| Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019 | 1 | 5% |
| Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019 | 3 | 14% |
| Don't Know/Not Applicable | 4 | 18% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|--|----|------|
| More customers than before COVID | 1 | 5% |
| About the same number as before COVID | 3 | 14% |
| 1 – 24% less customers than before COVID | 3 | 14% |
| 25 – 49% less customers than before COVID | 7 | 32% |
| 50 – 74% less customers than before COVID | 2 | 9% |
| 75 – 100% less customers than before COVID | 2 | 9% |
| Don't Know/Not Applicable | 4 | 18% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|--|----|------|
| Operating at full capacity | 7 | 32% |
| Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID | 13 | 59% |
| Temporarily closed due to COVID | 2 | 9% |
| Permanently closed due to COVID | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 22 | 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 | 2 | 9% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 5 | 23% |
| Moderately Important | 5 | 23% |
| Important | 7 | 32% |
| Very Important | 3 | 14% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 1 | 5% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 3 | 14% |
| Moderately Important | 7 | 32% |
| Important | 8 | 36% |
| Very Important | 3 | 14% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 0 | 0% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 2 | 9% |
| Moderately Important | 9 | 41% |
| Important | 8 | 36% |
| Very Important | 3 | 14% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 9% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 2 | 9% |
| Moderately Important | 7 | 32% |
| Important | 6 | 27% |
| Very Important | 5 | 23% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 9% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 7 | 32% |
| Moderately Important | 3 | 14% |
| Important | 6 | 27% |
| Very Important | 4 | 18% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 9% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 6 | 27% |
| Moderately Important | 5 | 23% |
| Important | 5 | 23% |
| Very Important | 4 | 18% |
| Total | 22 | 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 | 0 | 0% |
| Moderately Important | 8 | 36% |
| Important | 8 | 36% |
| Very Important | 6 | 27% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 0 | 0% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 4 | 18% |
| Moderately Important | 3 | 14% |
| Important | 10 | 45% |
| Very Important | 5 | 23% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 0 | 0% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 1 | 5% |
| Moderately Important | 6 | 27% |
| Important | 7 | 32% |
| Very Important | 8 | 36% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 0 | 0% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 3 | 14% |
| Moderately Important | 3 | 14% |
| Important | 5 | 23% |
| Very Important | 11 | 50% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 3 | 14% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 9 | 41% |
| Moderately Important | 5 | 23% |
| Important | 3 | 14% |
| Very Important | 2 | 9% |
| Total | 22 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 4 | 18% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 7 | 32% |
| Moderately Important | 5 | 23% |
| Important | 5 | 23% |
| Very Important | 1 | 5% |
| Total | 22 | 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 | 4 | 18% |
| Creating new services such as delivery | 3 | 14% |
| Participating in shared marketing/advertising | 4 | 18% |
| Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements | 2 | 9% |
| Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district | 5 | 23% |
| Training on the use of social media | 6 | 27% |
| None of the above | 9 | 41% |

15. Please list any specific suggestions or ideas for possible projects, programs or actions that could help support businesses and improve the commercial district. (Optional)

Comments

| |
|--|
| — |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| There needs to be consistant marketing of downtown businesses from office of touris., chamber, and other regional efforts. |
| — |
| Berkshire Emporium |
| Special retail events like closed street markets, retail "pop-up" opportunities |
| — |
| A dedicated rubish clean up, for litter and animal waste, to appeal to foot traffic. |
| — |
| — |
| none |
| Walking Access to the parking lot |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| Berkshire Young Men's Christian Association |
| — |
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Survey Findings: July 6, 2021

Desire for Additional Gathering Spaces

- Bookstore, café
- Live music venue, café, bar
- Exercise/dance school with evening lessons for ballroom/dancing
- Bookstore, coffee shops, gathering spaces
- Allowing real outdoor dining space
- Real coffee shop – i.e., Starbucks/Tunnel City café
- Deli or lunch spot
- Arcade/roller rink (family friendly)

Improve Landlord Accountability

- Hold absentee landlords accountable for the condition and vacancy of their downtown addresses so more empty storefronts are available to rent.
- Less slumlords and slums (Eagle Street)
- We have lost some great businesses due to predatory landlord practices.
- For other landlords, they save more money by having empty storefronts due to tax purposes.

Enhance Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Calming

- Improve pedestrian safety by implementing traffic calming measures (like posting the speed limit) and clearly marking crosswalks both with pavement markings and identification signs.
- Slower, less traffic, 4 lanes is ridiculously useless.

Provide Financial Incentives for (New) Businesses

- Financial incentives for businesses to open shop in downtown.
- Lower rent to encourage businesses in vacant store fronts.
- Downtown will always suffer due to higher rent for retailers.
- NA needs to think about how to attract startups and have them in downtown. There are several businesses in the Norad mill. Why are they there instead of downtown? That is worth knowing. I suspect the owner of Norad mill was accommodating to startup businesses in important ways that the owners in downtown are not.
- Lower commercial taxes.
- How can the city tip the scales tax wise to fill these empty stores and regulate or cap rental fees?

Marketing Campaign – Promote Downtown North Adams

- The town needs to do more marketing and become an outdoor travel and art hub. The murals and stuff are great, but how does it bring people to town? The town should use money to draw people from the cities. Showcase the natural beauty of the area and all the outdoor activities which can be done.
- Big idea...Ad Campaign
- Billboard with businesses names to draw attention to businesses that lack advertisement. V&V, Planet Fitness, Movies, papa Gino's, dollar store etc... visitors can't shop what's not advertised.

Infrastructure, Wayfinding, and Aesthetic Improvements

- Let's be serious about "micro-mobility" as an alternative mode of transportation in North Adams. Can we provide well-publicized routes for Pedestrians AND Bicyclists, and scooters, wheelchairs, skateboards to get around to City destinations easily? This City is small enough to travel on-foot, but cars and trucks have been dominant Downtown. Let's provide temp signs at key corners, and a big Public Outreach effort, to get folks back on their bikes! Do another "Downtown Ride Around" and local Walks to persuade post-pandemic folks that streets are SAFE! Okay? Thanks!!
- Better infrastructure and more events.
- Lighting and beautification of the library square and steeples on timers in the evening.
- Less slums (Eagle Street).
- Less concrete, more green.
- Better signage in the right places.
- Also, artists should be invited to do pop up galleries. Overall, it comes down to making NA look appealing for people to stay in and invest. The fact that so many spaces are empty and there are so many homeless within the city make it look less appealing than it needs to be. There is huge potential here, but it needs to be marketed, developed, and cleaned up before it can improve.

Additional Cultural Events

- Downtown events around MOCA gatherings that draw outside people here. The challenge has always been to get people downtown. So, in fantasy, could we have a street theater AFTER the MOCA event before people went to their lodging?
- Organized art walks.
- More events.
- Better infrastructure and more events.
- Also, artists should be invited to do pop up galleries.

Desire for More Retail Shopping

- We need stores so we have somewhere to shop except Walmart.
- Main St. needs retail stores. There are only service-type businesses (banks/restaurants/hair salon).
- Less banks (impossible unfortunately).

Enhance MoCA and MCLA Connection to Downtown

- GIFT the Mohawk theater to Mass MoCA under the condition that it is rehabbed as a performance space & theater. The entire city would benefit in a very large way from such a space. North Adams needs to stop holding onto properties that it cannot afford to maintain and make meaningful use of and the Mohawk Theater is a gem being hoarded & wasted b/c the city seeks to turn a profit from an unprofitable space (in its current state). Gift it to mass MoCA and the gift will return to this city tenfold.
- A Mass MoCA presence downtown (bank building for sale now).
- Larger connection to MCLA (Mohawk Theater?).

Other Ideas – Non-Categorized

- **Bylaw Modification** - Get rid of the bylaws that prevent a cannabis dispensary from setting up “near churches” (...in the “steeple city” ...). North Adams is missing out on a substantial opportunity for growth (ask silver therapeutics in Williamstown), by limiting itself in such an antiquated way. Government has no business doing religious work or favoritism toward the aforementioned.
- **Relocate Roots Teens Center to Main Street**: ROOTS teen center should move from Eagle Street to Main Street and restart after-school and evening drop-in programming.
- **Plan for Locals**: Remember to cater to locals and not just tourists.
- **Interregional Access**: Huge Idea...major highway access.
- **Additional Parking**: Regular idea...more parking, less empty storefronts.
- **Affordable Recreational Amenities**: Shops, galleries dining for all income levels.
- **Thomas Krens**: Work with Thomas Krens more closely.