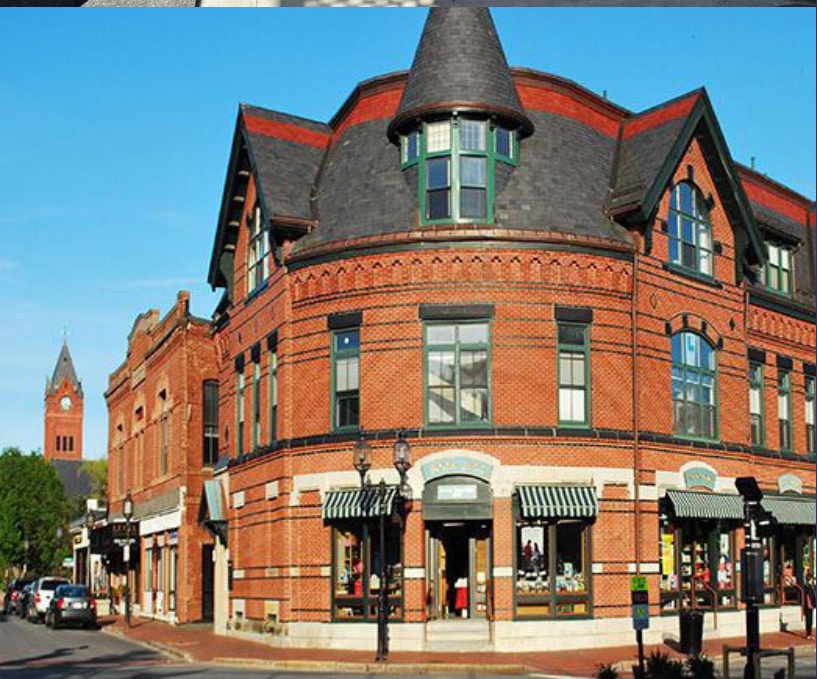




Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Winchester, MA



Acknowledgements



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



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

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

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

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

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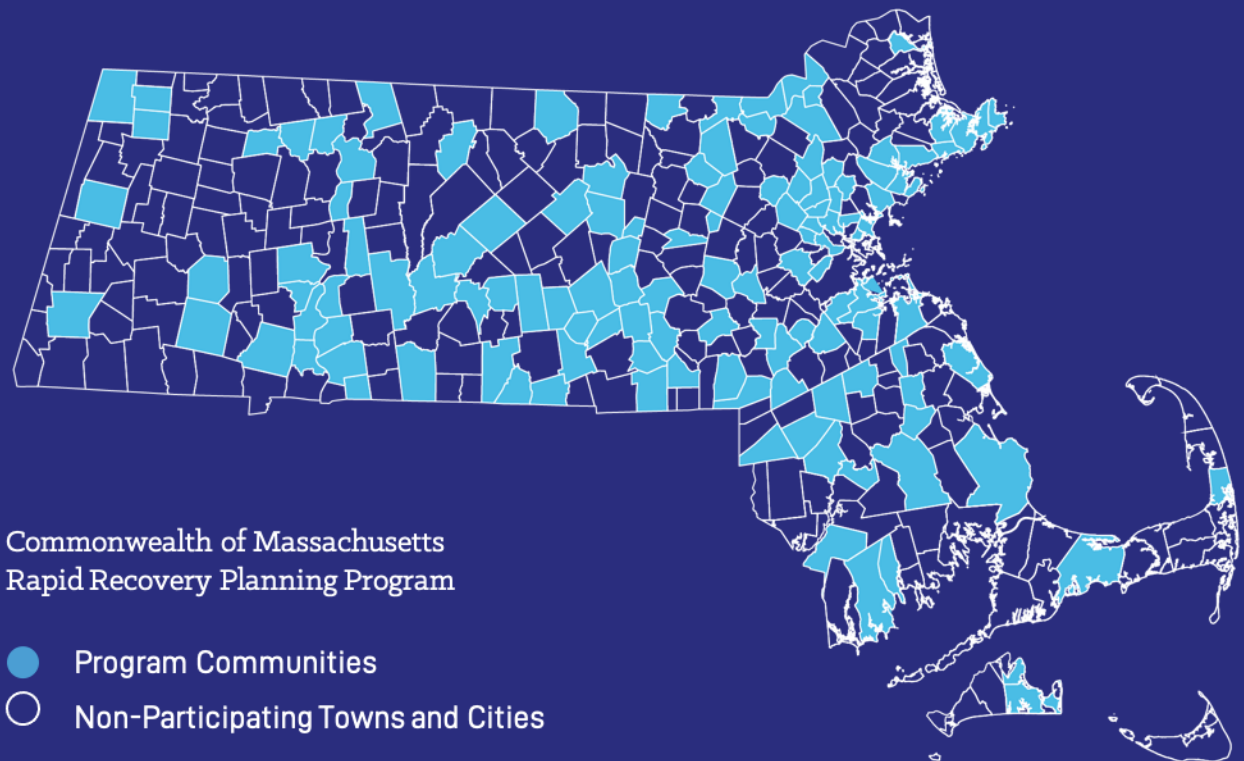
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



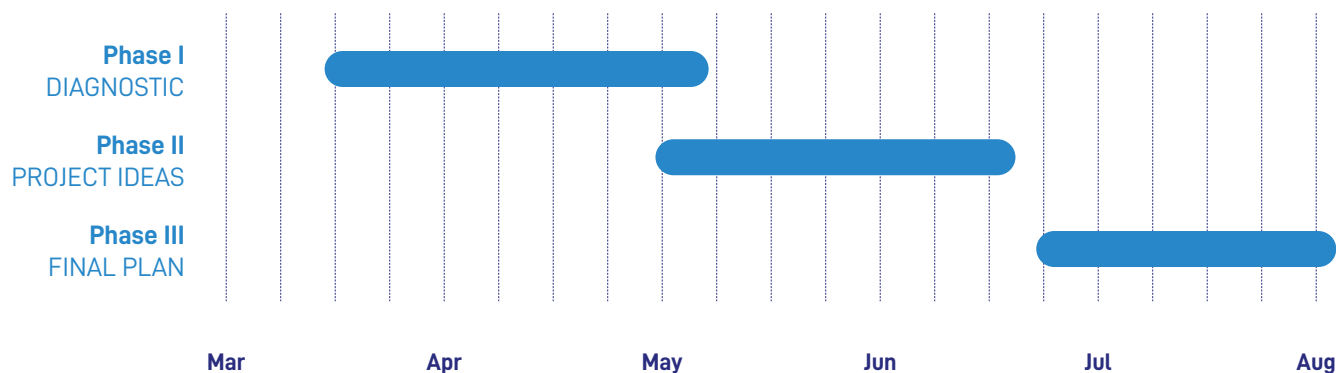
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



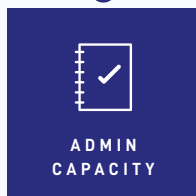
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

A Tactical Approach to Build Back Better:

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

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

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

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

Building on Past Efforts

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

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

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

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

Key Diagnostic Findings

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

Mutually-Reinforcing Tactical Recommendations for Recovery and Growth

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

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

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

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

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

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

Additional Resources

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

Best Practice Sheet Compendiums

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

Funding Databases by Category

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

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

Diagnostic

Key Findings



Winchester town center supports and serves residents

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



Opportunity for a more multi-modal town center

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

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



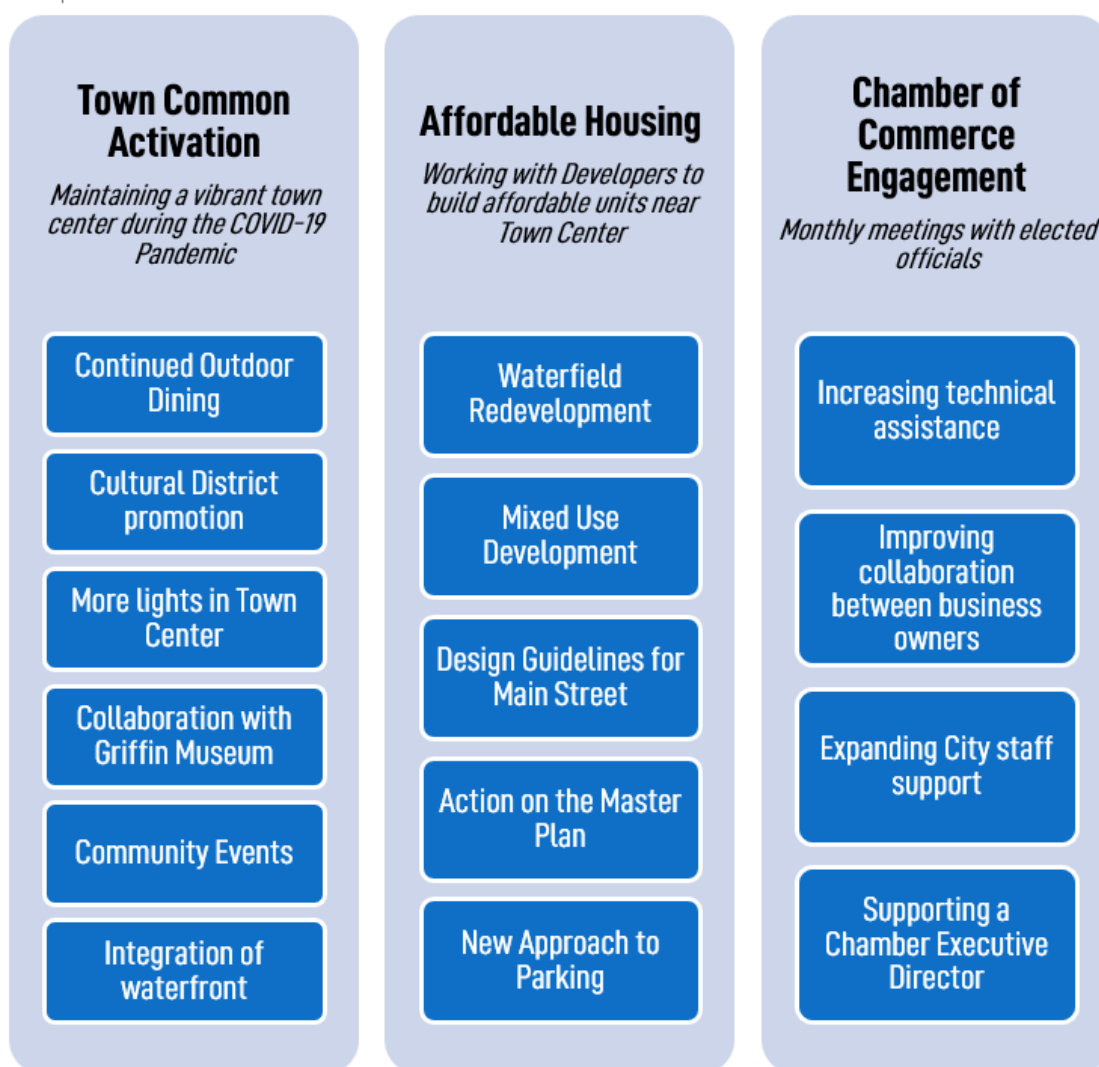
Growing town looking for a town center to match

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



Expanding existing organizational capacity

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



Successful and Hopeful Initiatives from the Winchester Business Community

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



Highlights from customer base

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

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

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

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

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

TOP 5 REASONS PARTICIPANTS VISIT TOWN CENTER

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

Source: Winchester Master Plan Community Survey, October 2018

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



Local Business in Winchester
Source: PPRI Photo

Highlights from physical environment

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

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

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

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

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

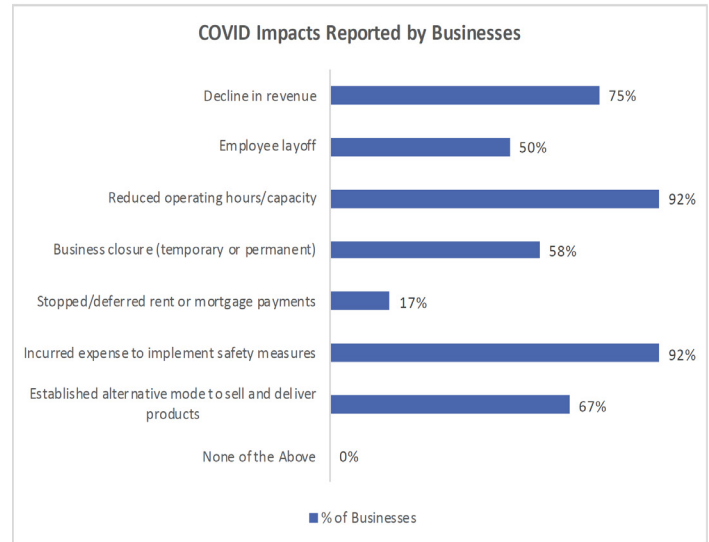


Highlights from business environment

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

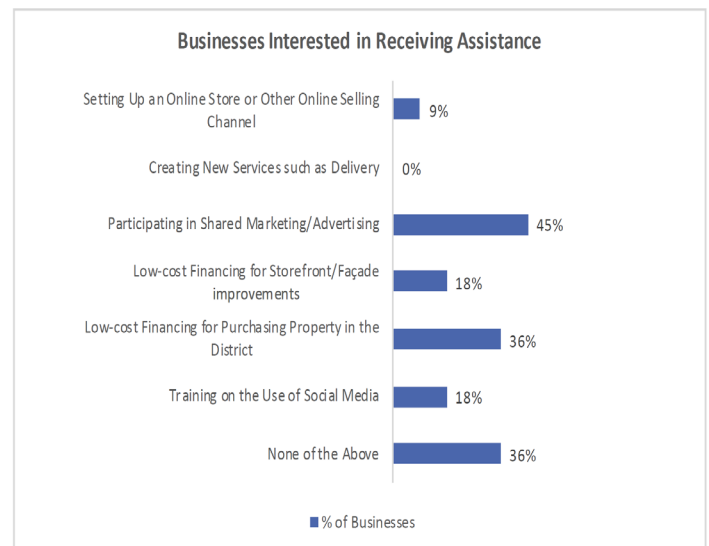
Residents also expressed interest in a more diverse retail mix with a variety of price points and products particularly for a younger demographic. As Winchester grows and hosts a new younger generation of families, the town center has an opportunity to be a place where the beloved long-term businesses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

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



100% of businesses reported an impact from COVID-19

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



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

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



Highlights from administrative capacity



Source: Mass Cultural Council, Griffin Museum of Photography

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

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

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

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

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

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

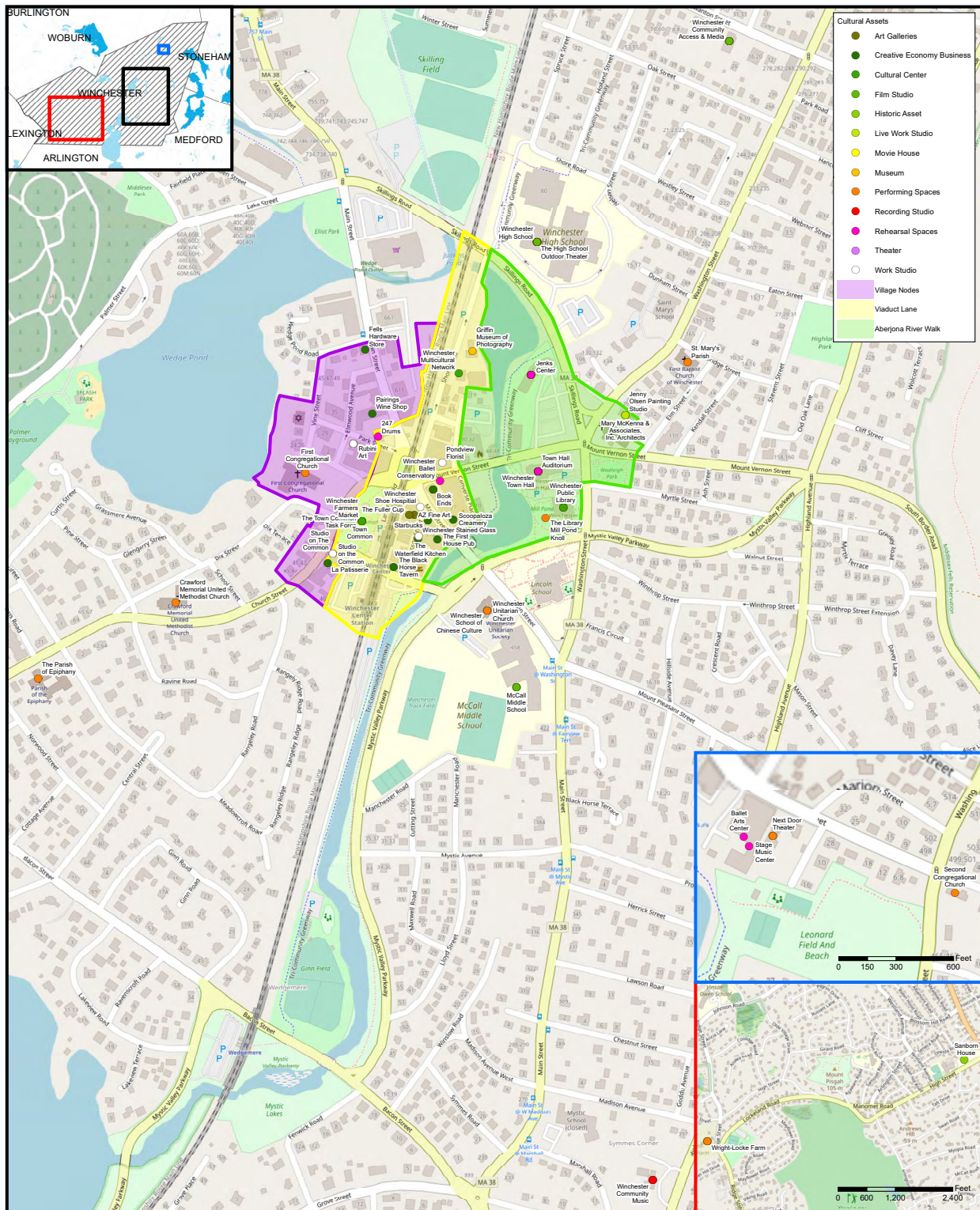
The MCDMP serves as the stewards of planning for the district, charged with management of the district, "to provide an enhanced experience for Winchester residents and visitors, to attract more discretionary spending, and to strengthen the town's unique village context."

Local Historic District Study Committee

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

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

— "Our Vision," Winchester Cultural District



Town of Winchester, MA: Cultural District Boundary





Prepared for the Winchester Cultural District Partnership



Winchester Cultural District
Source: Winchester Cultural District Management
Partnership

Project Recommendations

Public Realm Coordination

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

Diagnostic

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

Action Item

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

Process

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

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

Task 1 Evaluation

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





Task 2, Engagement

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

Task 3 Programming and Beautification

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

Regulatory Review for Outdoor Dining and Retail

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		CivicMoxie
Budget		<p>Low Budget (Less than \$50,000) -</p> <p>Costs are low and include dedicated municipal staff time or consultant time to decide what is needed (using LRRP Outdoor Dining and Retail Toolkit) and take action to make decisions, instigate necessary changes, and provide clear and concise guidelines and requirements to businesses. Additional costs may be incurred for creating or improving online permitting capability, marketing the program to businesses, instituting a bulk purchasing program, or other program elements.</p>
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 years) -</p> <p>Timeframe is estimated to be from 3 – 6 months for most elements of this project, with additional time possibly needed to conduct outreach and education prior to attempting any permanent zoning bylaw changes that may be needed. The timeframe may vary depending on whether a municipality's program will be temporary or permanent, with temporary changes likely being faster to implement. The timeframe for permanent changes will also depend on continuation or termination of the temporary loosening of state permitting requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
Risk		<p>Low Risk – Risks are low for this project and include building political will, weighing the cost vs. benefit of the program, and any financial costs the municipality wishes to incur to support businesses (lower permit fees, covering cost of bulk purchases, consultant fees, etc.).</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurant and retail business retention rates (how many can stay open during various phases and resurgences during the pandemic). • The number of new outdoor dining and/or retail spots created. • The number of new businesses that open and are in business one year and two years out. • Results of business survey indicating improvements in sales and revenue (or not). • The number of social media impressions of dining and retail spots.
Partners & Resources		<p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality • Chamber of Commerce or local business association/BID • Businesses • State ABCC • Local artists/arts and cultural organizations <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local trade schools or construction companies (possible construction of platforms and other common elements). • Potential business sponsorships for umbrellas and planters. • Lessons learned from businesses in your community that have implemented temporary outdoor dining

Diagnostic

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

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

Action Item

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

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

Process

Phase 1 (2 - 4 weeks)

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

Phase 2 (4 weeks)

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

Phase 3 (4 weeks)

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

Phase 4 (10 - 24 weeks or longer)

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

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

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

Diagnostic

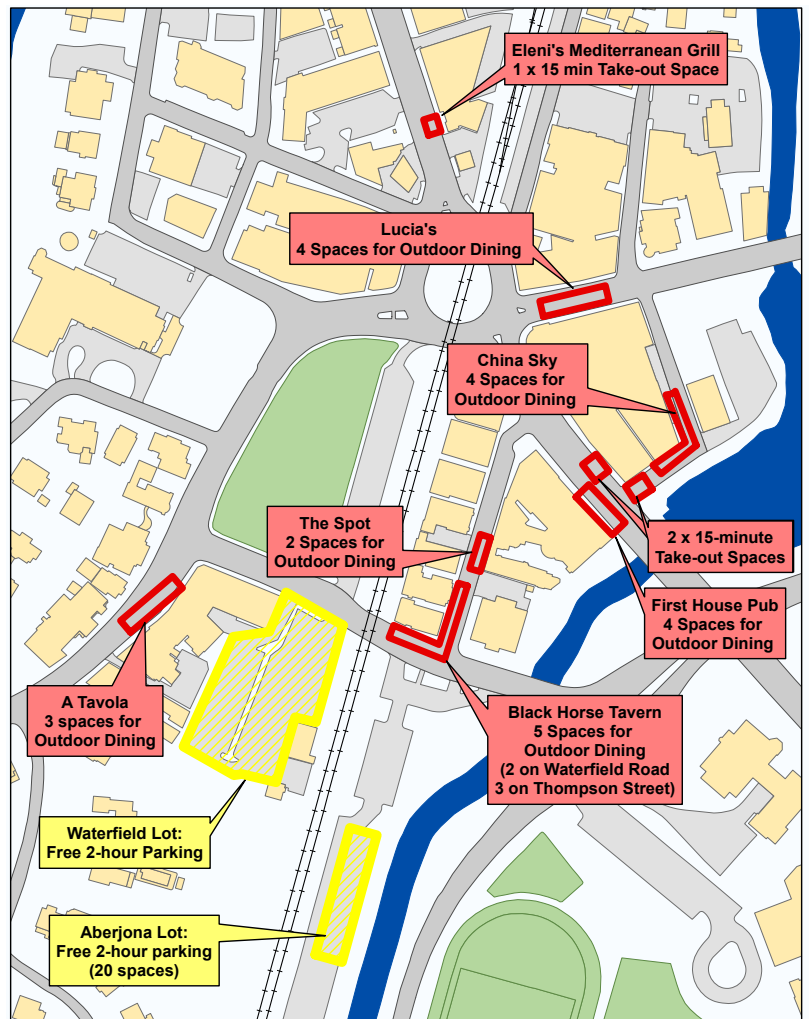
Concurrent with DHCD's LRRP effort, the town's planning office has also engaged Toole Design Group on a Downtown Improvement Action Plan (DIAP). The scope of this work is described as follows:

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

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

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

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



Town Center - Free Parking and Outdoor Dining

Source: Town of Winchester

Updated 5/3/21

Action Items

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

Process

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

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

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

2. Implement short-term recommendations

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

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

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

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

3. Implement longer-term recommendations





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

Longer-Term Recommendations:

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

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

Program Downtown Events to Promote/Support the Cultural District

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

Diagnostic

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

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

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

Action Item

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Best Practices:

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

Implement Public Art and Lighting Projects for the Cultural District

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



Shared Streets Project, 2020.
Source: Winchester Cultural Council

Diagnostic

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

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

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

Action Items

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



Source: PPRI

Process

1. Fund and hire a cultural district manager

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

2. Commission a Public Art Program for the downtown

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

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

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

3. Work with local merchants on storefront arts

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



Shared Streets Project, 2020.

Source: Winchester Cultural Council

4. Install artistic/festive lighting for the district

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

Best Practices:

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

Hire Dedicated Economic Development Director

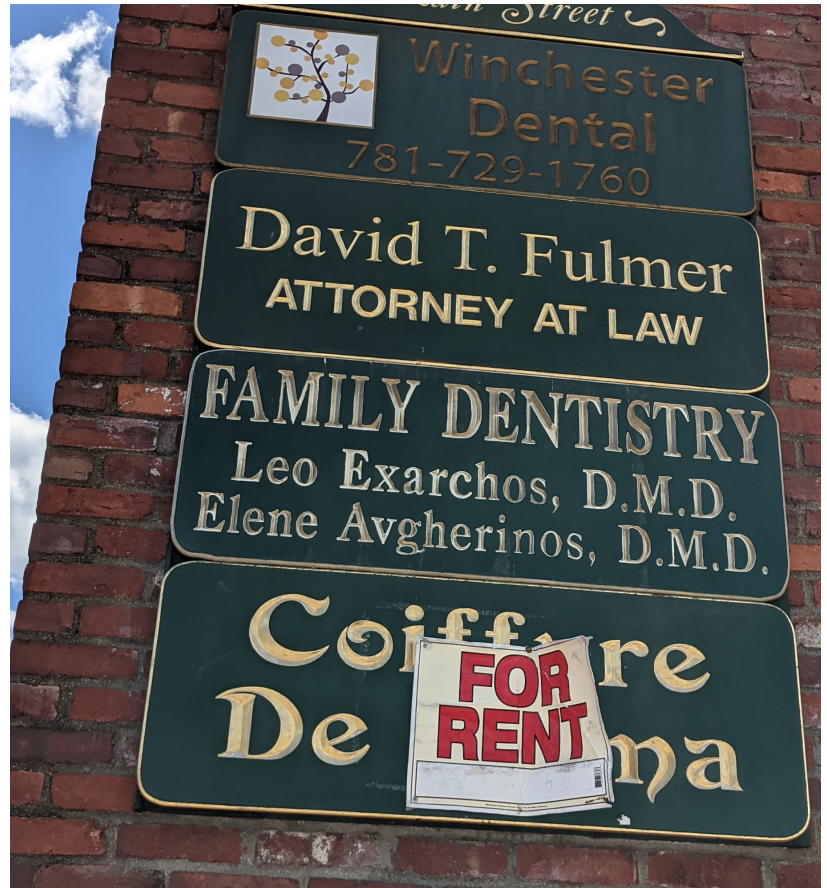
Category	 Admin Capacity	Administrative Capacity
Location		Study Area
Origin		Stakeholder interviews, Town of Winchester
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) – town funds; CDBG; MA Downtown Initiative; see alternative approaches below.
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – There is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

Diagnostic

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

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

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



Source: PPRI

Action Items

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

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

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

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

Process

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

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

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

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



Source: PPRI

2. Identify funding

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

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





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

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



Source: PPRI

Develop a District Management Organization Model

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



Source: PPRI

Diagnostic

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

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

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

Action Item

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

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



Source: PPRI

Process

Getting Started

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

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

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

Develop the Value Proposition/Communication

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

Key talking points include:

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

Stakeholder Engagement/Leadership and Partnerships

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



Source: PPRI

Create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy

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

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

Identify Downtown Priorities and Agree on a Shared Downtown Strategy

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

Evaluate Organizational Models

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



Source: PPRI

Create and Fund a Downtown Management Organization

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



Source: PPRI

Diagnostic

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

Action Item

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



Source: PPRI

Process

Resources for Startup and Sustainability

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

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

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

Building Support for the Organization

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

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

Establishing and Launching the Organization

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

Business Improvement District

Develop the BID Petition components.

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

Develop petition signature campaign strategy, timelines, and benchmarks.

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

The petition will include:

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

Voluntary Based Downtown Organization

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

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

Additional Resources

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

Case Studies:

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

Sample communities with downtown district management models to consider:

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

Develop a Shared Downtown Portal for Online Commerce

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

Diagnostic

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

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

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

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

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

Action Item

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

Process

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

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

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

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

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

3. Promote

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

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

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

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

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



Winchester Commuter Rail Station
Source: Wickedlocal

Diagnostic

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

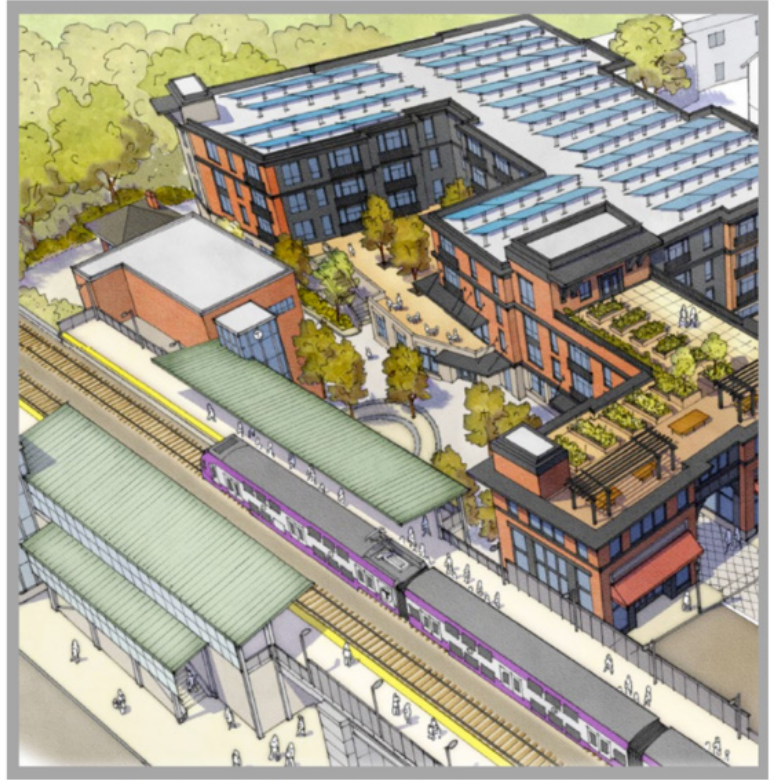
During the recent pandemic, the wisdom of the walkable, “ten-minute” neighborhood became even more clear, as residents worked from home and shopped hyper-locally throughout the day. Business district fortunate enough to be accessible to residents survived, and some even thrived, while single-purpose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

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

Goal A1

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

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



Rendering of Property by Development Team

Source: Winchester Planning Board Town Meeting Report, Fall 2020

Goal A4

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

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

Action Items

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

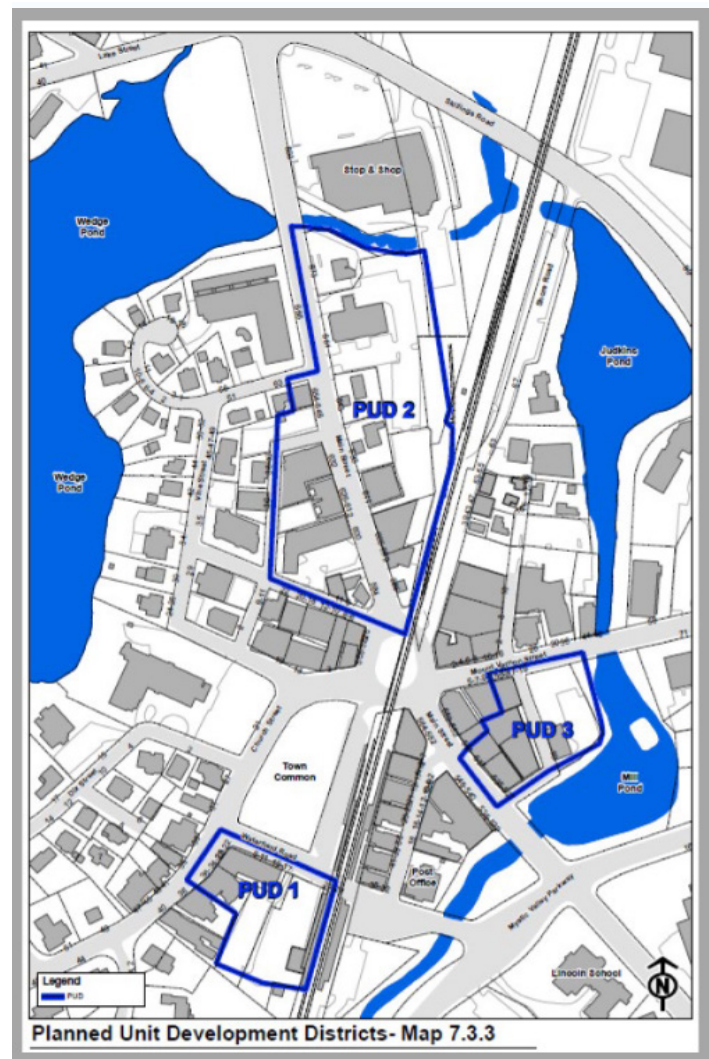
This recommendation includes a single action: continue to advance this work by building broad-based community support to locate, permit, fund, and develop housing to meet the town's targets.

Process

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

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

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



Source: Town of Winchester

Appendix



Best Practice

NYC Small Business Resource Network (SBRN)



Tenant Mix

Location

New York City, New York

Project Summary

New York City small businesses were able to benefit from a network of nonprofit business associations analogous to chambers of commerce that pooled resources and access to technical assistance. The assistance took the form of advising for grants, regulation and permit compliance, and e-commerce. The network was also able to offer businesses industry-specific support for particular businesses. Businesses were able to reduce the time spent on administrative work and external organizing as the resource network was able to better coordinate with city-run programs and communicate opportunities to member businesses. Though the program was primarily funded by donations, it is evidence of how creating a network of small businesses and increasing administrative capacity supports businesses in crisis, even across neighborhoods and main streets.



Best Practice

Develop an urban renewal plan to support revitalization of the public realm



Tenant Mix

Location

Brockton, Massachusetts

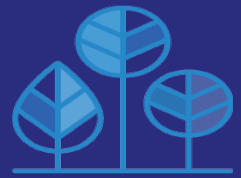
Project Summary

The city of Brockton, MA used an urban renewal process to develop unused space for public use and flood protection. The three-phase project started with land acquisition by the city of underutilized parcels determined by updating to determine what appropriate use would be. The city then implemented new infrastructure investments to bring the parcels up to the new zoning standards before finally disposing of the land to developers to maintain it under certain use criteria. Funding sources for the program included state and federal grants and District Improvement Financing. The goals of the project were specifically to incorporate a multi-use path along Trout Brook and protect the downtown area from repeated flood damage. The project exemplifies the unification of economic development and investment in climate resilience.



Best Practice

Establish Parking Benefit District to Better Manage Parking Resources and Enhance Village Vitality



Public Realm

Location

Brookline and Arlington, Massachusetts

Project Summary

Brookline created a Parking Benefit District (PBD) to fund expansions of administrative capacities and an advisory board made up of residents and business owners to recommend rates, expenditures from the PBD Revolving Fund, and other proposals to revitalize Brookline Village. Brookline was able to use the fund to make temporary investments in the public realm permanent installations. PBDs are authorized under the 2016 Municipal Modernization Act. In Arlington, a PBD has increased interest in exploring other locations to expand the available parking. Key benefits include the community control over parking and its revenue and expansion of town center stewardship as well as maximizing impact of limited parking for economic development.



Best Practice

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



Public Realm

Location

Natick, Massachusetts

Project Summary

Natick, MA was able to combine DOT Shared Streets grants with the partnership and administration capacity of the Natick Cultural District to make a safer downtown space with engagement of the local creative community. The Calm Streets and Curbside Streeteries were part of Natick's response to the restaurant shutdowns at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding for the use of public space in roads and sidewalks came from MassDOT grants and programming and activation was facilitated by the Cultural District. The program also had the advantage of reducing speed through the downtown to improve pedestrian and bicyclist comfort. The pilots were fast to implement and inexpensive, but there was a great deal of coordination by town departments, community engagement, and flexible adjustments that made the program ultimately successful.

Beech Tree Themed Street Furniture: Community Branding



Public Realm

Chelmsford, Massachusetts

Project Summary

Chelmsford, MA used a legislative earmark to fund an investment in locally crafted public furniture. The program addressed a shortage of places for people to gather to rest and contemplate and used the opportunity to create a cohesive design theme for the downtown with benches, bike racks, planters, kiosks, tree grates, and tree guards with similar design motifs. Designs were submitted to fabricators contracted to the city and Chelmsford DPW installed the new items. The final design was created with consultation of the historic society and evokes the beech tree as a symbol of Chelmsford. The project was fast paced, completed within five months, but effective.