Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

City of Fall River

dhcd
Massachusetts

RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

Acknowledgements

City of Fall River
William Kenney, City Planner
Mike Dion, Executive Director, Community
Development Agency

Project Team

Stantec
Steve Kearney, Plan Facilitator
Sarabrent McCoy, Urban Planner

Subject Matter Experts

Goman + York
Denise L. Robidoux, Chief Operating Officer

Revby
Michael Aparicio, Principal
Anita Morson-Matra
Luiz Moras, Business Development Associate

Stantec
Jason Schreiber, Senior Principal
Amelia Casey, Transportation Planner

Steering Committee

Fall River Redevelopment Authority
Sarah Page, Executive Director

MassDevelopment TDI
James McKeag, TDI Fellow

One SouthCoast Chamber
Mike O'Sullivan, Co-CEO

Viva Fall River
Patti Rego, District Director

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 downCitys, 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, Citys, 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 DownCity Initiative Program. These plans address the impacts of COVID-19 on local downCitys and small businesses by partnering with Plan Facilitators and Subject Matter Experts to pursue locally-driven, actionable strategies.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE
HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

dhcd Massachusetts
RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

For more information, contact DHCD:
100 Cambridge St, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114
617-573-1100
mass.gov/DHCD

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Local Rapid Recovery on a Statewide Scale

Like thousands of communities across the United States, Massachusetts' towns and cities experienced months of significant financial loss during the COVID-19 pandemic as business districts had to temporarily close and then face extended periods of safety-related measures that limited visitation. For many businesses, this meant permanent closure. Others were aided by federal and state programs, working diligently to keep their livelihoods intact during a very difficult period. These difficulties were particularly notable in New England where historic village centers have defined communities for generations. Over 350 distinct jurisdictions make up the Commonwealth, and nearly every place has at least one village or downtown business district greatly impacted by COVID-19. Every one faces serious challenges recovering from the pandemic.

Fortunately, the LRRP is a tremendous opportunity to leverage upcoming stimulus dollars for downtown benefits across the state. While hundreds of distinct districts are a challenge to address systematically, this diversity is a natural strength for Massachusetts. Every affected downtown is the crossroads for its broader community—typically a compact and walkable place where vacancies may be readily visible but where every business knows each other and has come together to face the pandemic. The interdependencies are quickly evident when talking with local stakeholders who take ownership of their village centers. Working with municipal officials, LRRP Plan Facilitators have quickly leveraged the energy of downtown merchants, engaged residents, vested landowners and village organizations to create the solutions within this plan—solutions tailored to the unique character of this place. Downtown Fall River, like over 120 other communities in Massachusetts, now has a comprehensive recovery strategy and the momentum to implement lasting change, collectively supporting the entire Commonwealth.

Addressing Top Priorities for Economic Recovery in Fall River

Downtown Fall River faces challenges that are detrimental to the economic fabric and vitality of the City overall. The City and key stakeholders are passionate about the revitalization of their community; a planning initiative such as the Local Rapid Recovery Program can act as a vital step to move closer to economic recovery. The program and plan serve as a resource for the City to prioritize rapidly implementable solutions that provide

tangible solutions which can address economic recovery impediments right away. It also creates a toolkit for the City realm needs, as well as programs to increase business resilience and business diversity to implement long-term recommendations and programs that address public and private within Downtown Fall River.

Fall River Faces Notable Challenges for Recovery

The LRRP diagnostic framework provides a comprehensive database of market demand profiles specifically generated for the LRRP Fall River study area, as well as an assessment of public and private infrastructure conditions and administrative hurdles and challenges. This database serves as a resource for Fall River champions to apply for future external funding opportunities and justify project recommendations. Key challenges and needs in the Fall River community that arose from the public engagement process, diagnostic data collection and analysis, and project idea development include:

- Fall River needs a champion to unite businesses and spur and maintain street-level revitalization.
- Fall River would benefit from streetscape improvements to make navigating and spending time in Downtown more comfortable and desirable for all.
- A lack of wayfinding and signage is keeping visitors and residents from accessing parts of Downtown they otherwise might be interested in.
- Fall River businesses and destinations face many below-average physical conditions and several vacancies.

Developing Solutions in Partnership with the Fall River Community

Public outreach efforts for the Rapid Recovery Program involved both interactive, open house workshops as well as virtual, COVID-19-friendly meetings. During Phase I of the project – focused on robust data collection and analysis efforts – the project team worked with the City to engage key stakeholders to better understand Downtown issues. The project team also hosted a virtual meeting at the initial stage of the project to discuss project goals and key findings. The project team and City hosted an open house event at Heritage State Park that gave the public and business community the opportunity to provide input on preliminary project ideas. Materials from the Open House were then displayed at City Hall to solicit additional in-person feedback from those who could not attend the Open House.

Priority Projects

The Fall River RRP project team, in partnership with the City and stakeholders, developed a set of project ideas that addressed a range of solutions focused on short-term recovery and long-term vitality in Downtown Fall River. Public engagement efforts revealed that projects recommending walkability and accessibility safety improvements, wayfinding improvements, and administrative and financial support programs all ranked highly on the list or RRP projects. Final project ideas are part of a comprehensive set of solutions that implemented together can facilitate Fall River's recovery.

Implementing Strategies for Recovery and Revitalization in Fall River

The plan developed for Downtown Fall River through the Local Rapid Recovery Program is based on from a robust diagnostic assessment of public and private infrastructure, business community needs, market demand statistics, and administrative gaps and challenges. A comprehensive set of recommended projects vetted by the community and institutional leaders has been developed that addresses economic vitality solutions and revitalization efforts for the Downtown Fall River business community. Within the overall program, each proposed project provides detailed information on project budget, potential timelines, key partners and performance indicators, as well as critical action items, processes, and considerations. Funding sources noted in the project rubrics are resources for the City and community groups to seek external funding and commence the next phase of project design and implementation. The comprehensive and diverse set of project recommendations both aide in immediate recovery for Downtown Fall River and offer long-term solutions that improve the overall economic, commercial, and social health of Downtown. Fall River is encouraged to pursue grant funding immediately for many of these projects to help Downtown overcome COVID-19's challenges with smart and resilient solutions that can be deployed quickly.

Existing conditions
Source: Stantec

Project List

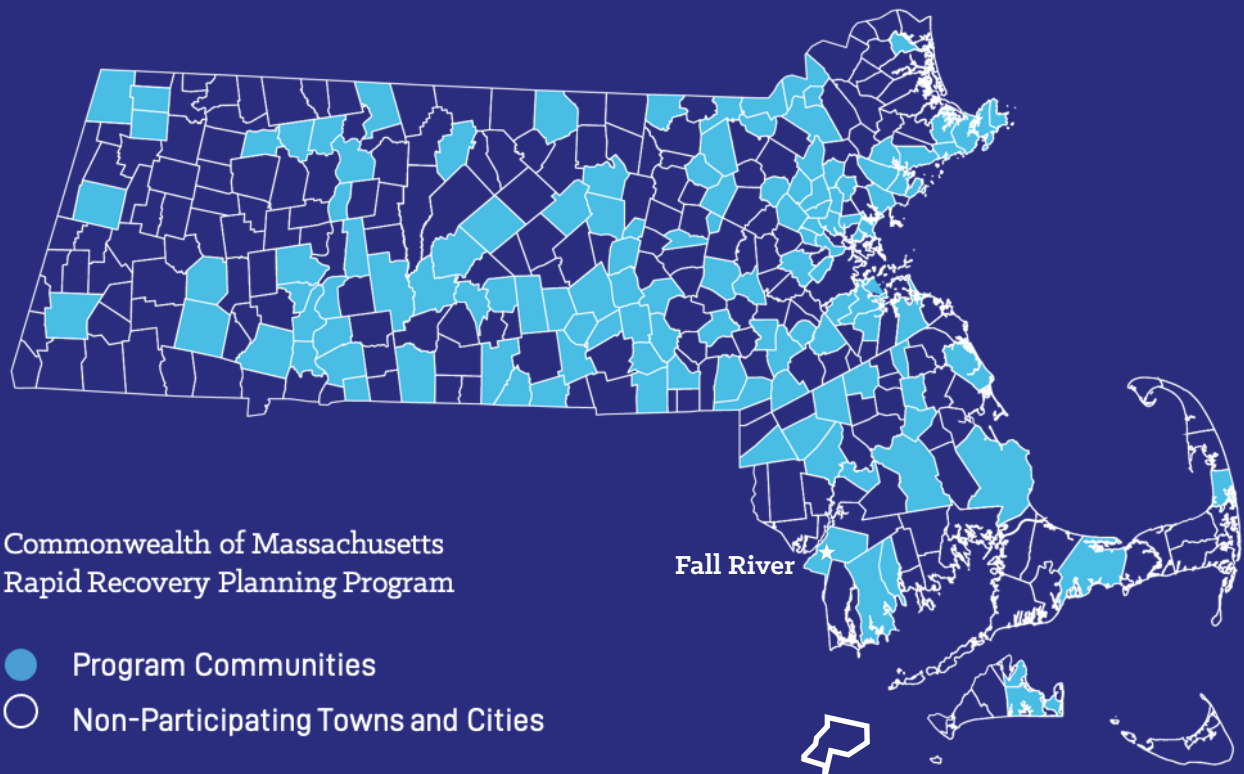| Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Public Realm	Create Pop-Up Parklets and Improve Existing Parklets	Develop parklets to add outdoor seating, shade, and other amenities downtown. Target funds to add amenities and programming to existing parklets.	Short	Medium	✓
	Develop a Comprehensive, Cohesive Wayfinding System	Building on previous wayfinding and branding campaigns, develop a cohesive plan in two phases: Initial, quick-build wayfinding campaign and fixed, permanent wayfinding program, first for the study area and then expanded through Fall River.	Medium	Medium	
	Initiate a Parking Study	Initiate a parking study to understand issues and develop recommendations.	Short	Small	✓
Private Realm	Develop Storefront Design Guidelines and Program	Develop storefront design guidelines and encourage uptake through a municipal program, providing assistance to small businesses with funding eligibility requirements and streamlining permitting process.	Short	Small	
	Develop Facade Design Guidelines and Program	Develop guidelines for downtown facades, addressing windows, awnings, and signage.	Short	Small	
	Develop Outdoor Dining Program and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement.	Short	Medium	
Arts and Culture	Highlight Local Artists through a Collaborative Public Art Program	Assemble a public art task force to lead curation and installation of public art around downtown and beyond. Use a unified public art master plan to identify short-, medium-, and long-term strategies.	Short	Medium	
	Collaborate with Creative Community to Activate Underused Spaces	Collaborate with the local creative and cultural community to temporarily activate underused public and private spaces with performances, interactive art, games, food vendors and expand downtown events.	Short	Medium	
Tenant Mix	Develop Vacancy Tracking Tool and Tenant Recruitment Strategy	Build a tool around the existing vacancy database so that LRRP data might be used to match new tenants with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying Downtown's tenant mix and activating empty properties.	Short	Medium	✓
	Create a Vacant Storefront Program	Create a pop-up storefront program to match makers, artists, and other tenants with temporary commercial space.	Short	Medium	
Revenue and Sales	Develop Business Support Program	Build on work of MassDevelopment through TDI initiative to support existing businesses and new entrepreneurs at every stage to build a cluster of retail activity downtown.	Short	Medium	✓
Admin. Capacity	Build Administrative Capacity of the City and Supporting Organizations	Build on previous efforts to continue addressing administrative gaps to improve Downtown experience.Specifically, consider: New roles, new funding mechanisms, incubation of a new downtown organization.	Medium	Medium	✓

Rapid Recovery Plan Background

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, City centers, and commercial districts.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Rapid Recovery Planning Program

Fall River

● Program Communities
○ Non-Participating Towns and Cities

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, City 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-October 2021. Phase 1 - Diagnostic, Phase 2- Project Recommendations, Phase 3 - Plan.

PROJECT TIMELINE
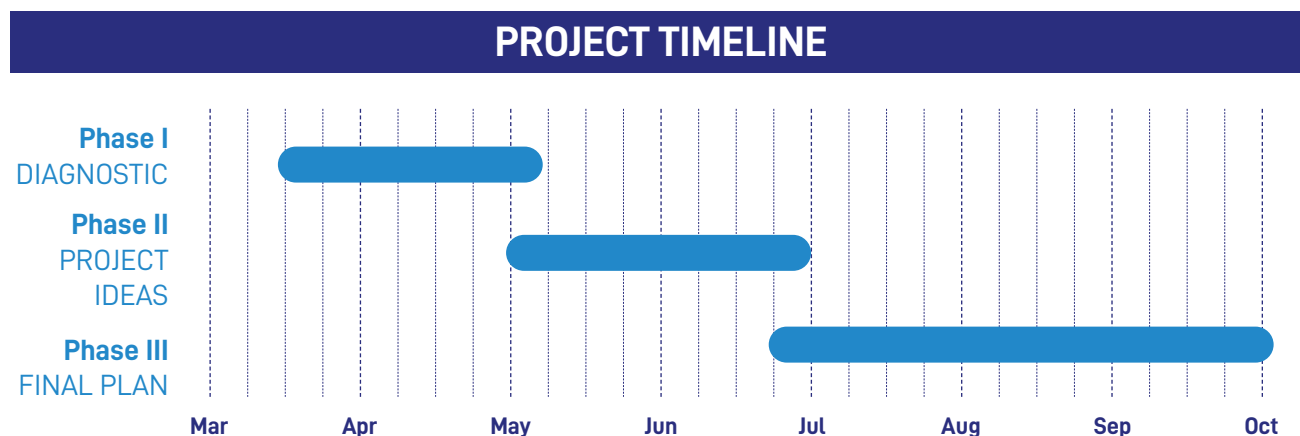
In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", and authored by Larisa Ortiz, 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
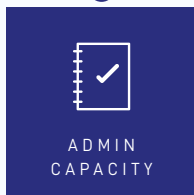
CUSTOMER BASE

Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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?

ADMIN CAPACITY

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

Diagnostic Data Collection Methodology

Data Collection Goals

Baseline data collected will be used by the Commonwealth to communicate overall program impact and to support future funding and resource allocations that may be used toward implementation of final projects across participating communities.

Baseline data sets a minimum expectation for data collection and only reflects what the Commonwealth is requesting from all Plan Facilitators such that it will enable the measurement of COVID impacts at the State level for all participating communities. Beyond the baseline data outlined in this guide, it was expected that Plan Facilitators (PF's) would glean additional insight from their analysis, observations and feedback from the community and businesses. Plan Facilitators ensured that additional information collected through their own discretionary methods and processes would be integrated into the Diagnostic section of each final Rapid Recovery Plan and were used to inform the unique Project Recommendations that emerge through this process.

Diagnostic Asset Breakdown

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) worked with Larissa Ortiz, the Managing Director at Streetsense, to adapt the "Commercial DNA Framework" as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) and Streetsense. The framework uses four major components – Market Demand (Customer Base), Physical Environment (Public and Private Realm), Business Environment, and Administrative Capacity – to assess the vitality of a commercial district. The Local Rapid Recovery Program team tailored this framework to align with the vision to develop plans and a comprehensive dataset that analyzes economic challenges to downtowns and town centers.
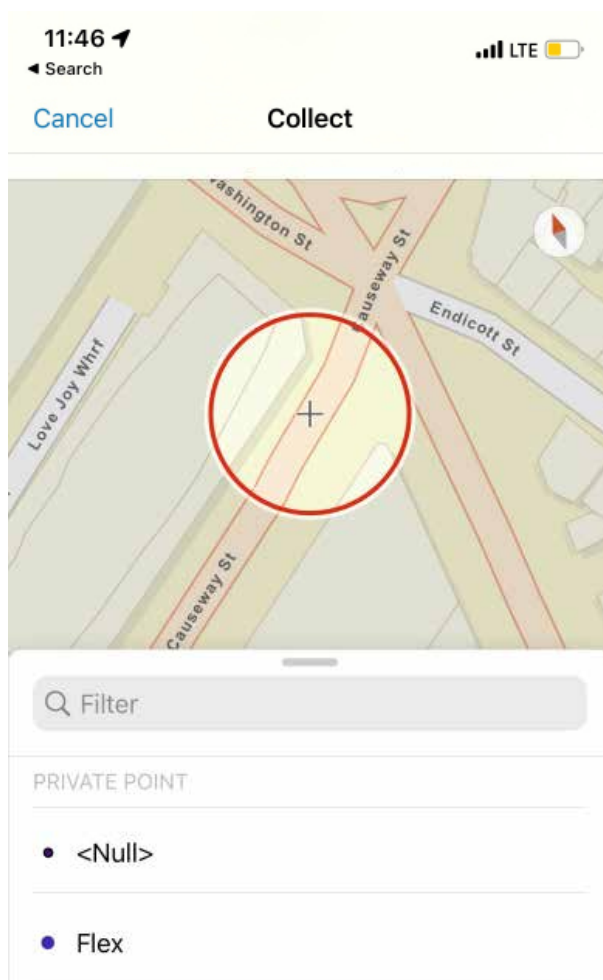
Data Collection Process

In order to effectively capture public and private infrastructure, market demand data, and business environment statistics within the Fall River study area, the Plan Facilitator team developed a robust data collection structure. The team utilized platforms such as ArcGIS Field Mapping and Spatial tools, ESRI Business Analyst, and Co-Star Market Data software to collect data for their community and adhere to the Rapid Recovery Program requirements.

To gather the public and private realm physical environment data, the team deployed field collectors utilizing ArcGIS Collector software and hardware to conduct site visits lasting between four to eight hours to spatially record all physical environment assets. The field collectors used the ArcGIS Collector tool to record field observations, take imagery for each public and private realm asset, and document various characteristics and assets within the defined LRRP study area. The ArcGIS Collector platform compiled all field data alongside other spatial information on business environment details such as vacancy rates and annual average rent into a geodatabase that could be analyzed and mapped remotely.

Public and private realm characteristics collected in the field included elements such as the condition, width, placement/location, and presence of streetscape amenities, lighting, seating areas, and ADA-compliant infrastructure. Based on the observations and characteristics for each diagnostic category, the data collector determined an objective grade for each public and private realm asset, such as a crosswalk, sidewalk, awning, or

façade. The collectors adhered to the grading system developed by the DHCD LRRP team, which ranged from A (highest grade) to Fail (lowest grade). More details on the field categories and type of data collected can be found on pages 21-23.


The ArcGIS Collector tool allowed data collectors in the field to develop an online database for public and private realm data

Data Analysis & Outputs

Upon completion of data collection efforts for the public and private realm physical environment assets, Plan Facilitators used the spatial database and ArcGIS WebApp platform (as seen in the image below) to assess collected assets and their associated attributes and characteristics. The Plan Facilitator also reviewed each field grade determined by the data collector by comparing to the field imagery. Each asset received a final grade once the Plan Facilitator conducted a thorough review of each asset characteristic, image, and observations. For example, a crosswalk asset that received a "C" field grade could have a width between four to six feet, poorly maintained paint, and lack a detectable panel and/or curb ramp on either side. The Plan Facilitator confirmed or changed this grade after a final review of the asset attribute data and documented field image.

Developing a database for the spatial elements of the diagnostic data highlights major gaps within the commercial fabric of the business district and identifies areas that lack adequate streetscape amenities or connectivity infrastructure. Ultimately, the data gives communities the opportunity to capitalize on these challenges and promote projects that enhance their downtowns or town centers.
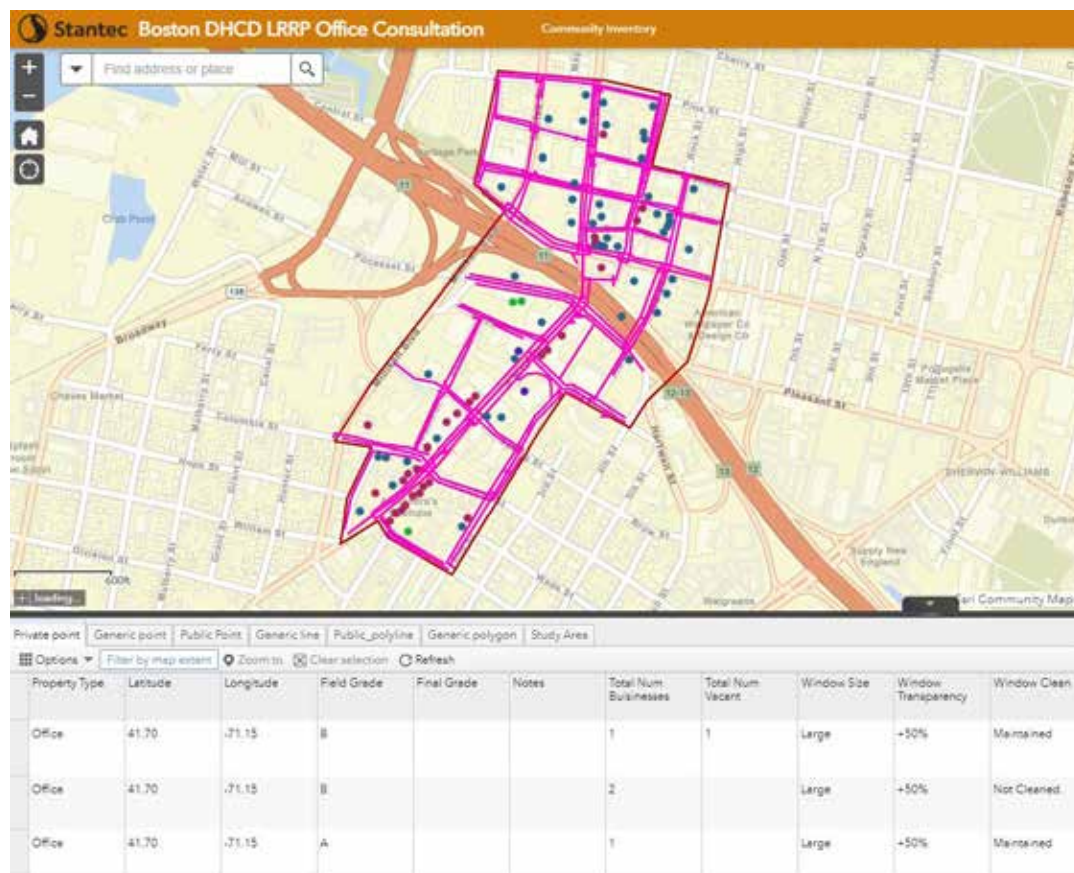
The ArcGIS database platform allows Plan Facilitators to query data based on asset type, final grade, or condition/ maintenance level.

Final Diagnostic Grade

The final stage of the data collection process included developing an aggregate score for each physical environment element. Plan Facilitators conducted an analysis that created an average score of "A" (highest score), "B", "C", or "Fail" (lowest score) for diagnostic components based on the collective grades for each individual asset. For example, the public realm category "Sidewalks" received one final, overall grade for the study area, and the private realm category "Building Facades" received a study area grade as well (as seen in the image below).

Example

As required by the Program, all Plan Facilitators presented the final diagnostic results to their communities during a public meeting. This forum allowed municipal representatives and the public to provide input on the program approach, diagnostic framework, and final results. Each Plan Facilitator ultimately submitted the entire database of all diagnostic categories to DHCD to be compiled with the results from all LRRP communities.

Diagnostic Asset: Physical Environment (Public Realm)

Physical Environment: Public Realm Diagnostic Geodatabase Fields	
Field	**Field Description**
Indicator Type	Wayfidning/Signage Park Open Space Other
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Image	Data Collectors took imagery of each asset
Signage Condition	Wayfinding/general signage condition/maintenance
Signage Icon	Presence of icons on signage (pedestrian for walking, arrows for direction, bus for transit stop)
Signage Point of Interest	Directions or distance of current location to Downtown points of interest
Signage Distance	Presence of walking/driving distances on signage
Signage Map Presence	Presence of Downtown map on signage
Signage Technology	Presence of smart technology/interactive screen on signage

Physical Environment: Public Realm Diagnostic Geodatabase Fields	
Field	**Field Description**
Indicator Type	Sidewalks Crosswalks Pedestrian Signals Roadbed Streetscape Amenities Lighting
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Image	Data Collectors took imagery of each asset
Sidewalk Assets	Width, condition, material type
Crosswalk Assets	Width, condition, presence of a detectable panel and ADA ramp, material type, crosswalk type, presence of sign (s)
Pedestrian Signal Assets	Presence of pedestrian signal
Roadbed Assets	Material type, condition, paint condition
Streetscape Amenities	Trees: number of trees, tree health, tree pit maintenance, tree shade cover Benches: number of benches, bench age, condition, cleanliness of bench
Lighting Assets	Condition of lighting structure, extent of light brightness

These tables provide details on the physical environment elements collected during site visits to the RRP study area. Data collectors created assets for each public realm component, and populated the fields with characteristics such as asset condition or dimensions. Each asset then received a grade (A, B, C, or Fail) based on field observations.

Diagnostic Asset: Physical & Business Environment (Private Realm)

Physical & Business Environment: Private Realm Diagnostic Fields	
Field	**Field Description**
Property Type	Retail Office Industrial
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Occupancy	Number of businesses and number of vacant storefronts
Window Assets	Window size, transparency of window, maintenance/cleanliness
Outdoor Display & Dining	Storefront Displays: presence of storefront display, cleanliness of display, condition of display Storefront Dining: presence of outdoor dining facilities (chairs, benches, tables), outdoor dining protection from vehicles, canopies present, accessibility infrastructure (ADA ramps, detectable panels)
Storefront Signage Assets	Exterior signage present, visibility of signage from 10-feet away, condition/maintenance, signage branding (integration with storefront design)
Storefront Awning Assets	Storefront awning present, retractable capabilities, condition/maintenance, protection from weather events, awning design (integration with storefront design)
Storefront Facade Details	Building façade condition/maintenance, building façade material, building facade paint condition/maintenance
Storefront Lighting Assets	Exterior and interior lighting fixtures present, lighting present/turned on after standard working hours
Business Characteristics	Average asking price, average rent, average unit square footage, number of units, percentage vacant, property address, annual rent by square footage, zoning classification

This table provides details on the physical environment elements collected during site visits to the LRRP study area. While in the field, data collectors provided edits to the existing storefront assets that assessed storefront infrastructure such as lighting, outdoor displays, and windows. Each asset then received a grade (A, B, C, or Fail) based on field observations. The private realm database later incorporated business characteristics (for each storefront) such as average rent, number of units, and vacancy information.

Diagnostic Asset: Business Environment (Business Survey)

The DHCD LRRP program included a survey of local business owners located in the targeted Fall River RRP study area. The purpose of the survey was to obtain business input to help guide strategy development, garner buy-in from the local business community and provide data from all LRRP participating districts for DHCD to inform programs and policy.

The RRP team administered the survey online and via printed hard copies to representatives from for-and non-profit businesses (including temporarily closed businesses). The Plan Facilitator (PF) and Fall River RRP team promoted the survey to local businesses and distributed the link to encourage response. The business survey opened on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, and closed on Monday, April 12, 2021. DHCD developed the survey in both English and Spanish, and additional languages were accommodated through oral interview methods (with translators).

The DHCD LRRP team worked with FinePoint Associates to finalize the design of the survey. After the survey closed, FinePoint developed a summary results report for each LRRP community. The report produced provided results in aggregate form only so that the results will be anonymous. These results contributed to the diagnostic phase data collection efforts and helped inform project idea and plan development.
The business survey included questions that addressed the following topics areas:

- Business characteristics and satisfaction with location
- COVID-19 impacts on businesses and their operations
- Potential strategies to support businesses and improve the commercial district

*The business survey was distributed online and via paper hard copies in each LRRP community. The Fall River PF team worked with the Fall River staff to distribute and promote the survey.*

Sample Questions:
- **Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle for your business operation?**
- **How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?**
- **Considering the conditions in your commercial area, how important to you are each of the following strategies that address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses? (Strategies included more opportunities for outdoor dining, creation of a district management entity, and recruitment programs to attract businesses)**
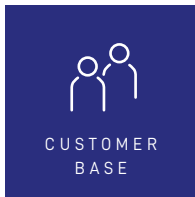
Diagnostic Asset: Customer Base

To supplement DHCD's diagnostic data, the LRRP Plan Facilitator team extracted market demand data (customer base data) from ESRI's Business Analyst tool to understand demographics, customer statistics, and market profiles. The data looked at customer base profiles for four regions: statewide, municipal-wide, "locality" (1.5 mile radius), and the LRRP study area. The following table below summarizes the specific data collected for this diagnostic category.

Customer Base Data	
Data	**Data Description**
Demographics	Population Trends Age Distribution
Education	Educational Attainment
Customer Statistics	Average Household Size Employment and Income Statistics Jobs-to-residents ratio Median Home Value Home Value Growth
Retail Market Profile	Retail Leakage (total retail surplus) Grocery Store Leakage (total surplus) Restaurant Leakage (total surplus)
Other Statistics	Crime Index Vehicle Ownership Poverty - unemployment status

1 LRRP Study Area Boundary - Downtown area/commercial district

2 Local Market Area - 1.5 mile radius, which includes a 30-minute walk and 10-minute bike ride

3 LRRP Communitywide - encompasses all of the municipality

4 Statewide - encompasses all of Massachusetts

The above map highlights the four regions included in the Customer Base analysis
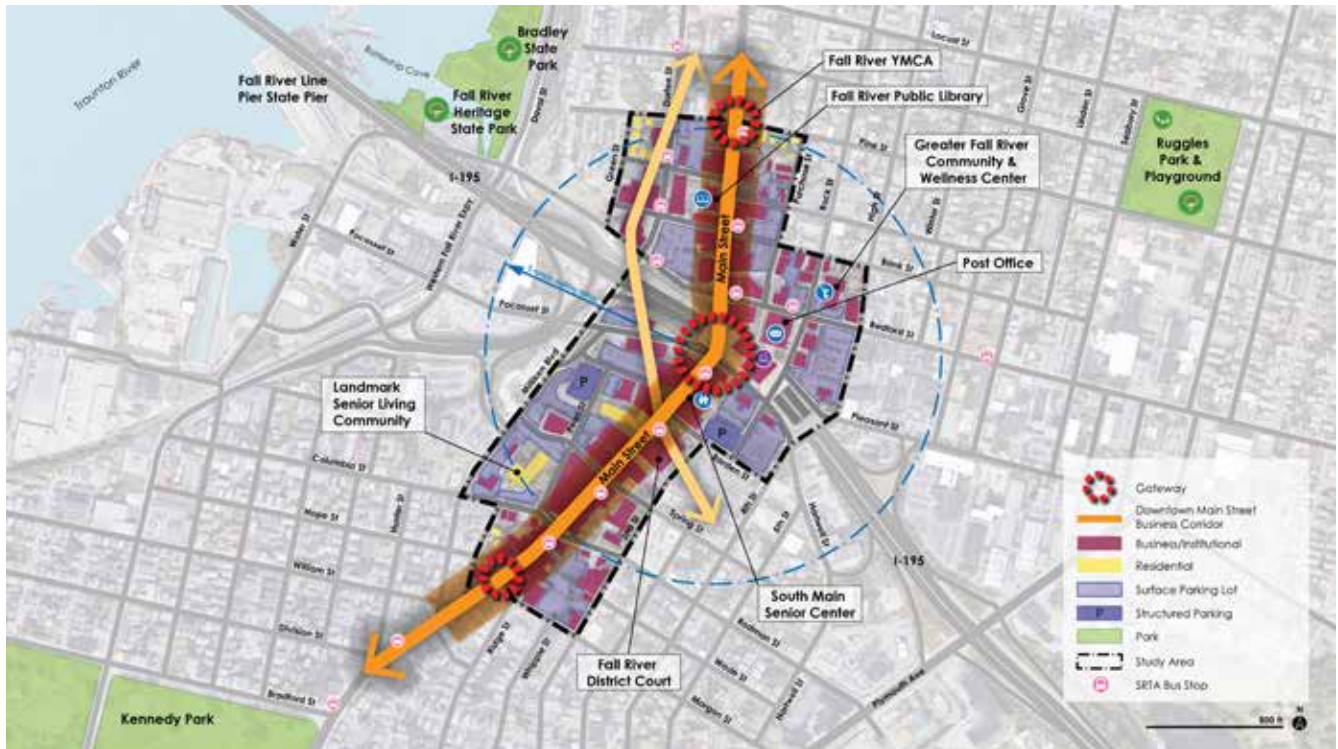
Diagnostic Key Findings

LRRP Study Area

Why Focus on the Commercial Core?

The Local Rapid Recovery Program targets downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts in order to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on local businesses and downtown activity. LRRP study areas include concentrated areas of commercial and retail activity (i.e., "Nodes, Corridors, Town Centers or Commercial Areas"), therefore excluding significant areas of non-commercial, non-retail uses. This program did not look at residential zones or collect data related to residential infrastructure or local residential statistics. By focusing on the commercial/retail core, communities can use the LRRP plans and diagnostic data to implement data-driven, easily implementable solutions to revitalize a downtown.

Fall River RRP Study Area

The RRP study area is oriented around S. and N. Main Streets, including the entirety of the MassDevelopment TDI district, which is oriented around S. Main. The study area is largely made up of commercial and institutional buildings and surface parking, and split by I-195. It is one of a few concentrated commercial centers in Fall River, along with the Waterfront and the Flint. The highways serve as a hindrance to reaching the Waterfront from Downtown by bike or on foot, though the two neighborhoods are close. While there are no full-size parks within the study area—only parklets, like Gerald Lawton Park—two Olmsted parks, Kennedy and Ruggles, are nearby.

Existing Conditions & Project Orientation Map of the Fall River RRP Study Area
Source: Stantec

TDI District Map
Source: MassDevelopment TDI

Key Findings & Diagnostic Data Overview

Fall River is older and more diverse than the surrounding area

Downtown has a slightly more educational attainment than the surrounding area, and a relatively high proportion of people of Hispanic origin. Fall River's homeowner rate is quite low, compared to the state, and its daytime employee population is four times greater than the residential population.

CUSTOMER BASE

Downtown Fall River needs pedestrian amenities

While Downtown Fall River benefits from an intact historic fabric and nearly complete sidewalk network, public and private realm upgrades are needed to make the neighborhood more inviting and more comfortable for all users. Currently, Downtown Fall River's obstructed storefronts, lack of seating options and awnings, limited pedestrian-scale lighting, and lack of retail spillover detracts from the pedestrian experience, and keeps visitors from spending longer amounts of time downtown. Parking is too difficult and confusing, and wayfinding materials could be improved, to guide residents to new parts of town and show visitors what Fall River has to offer.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Downtown Fall River has a surplus of retail and food options

But many of them have struggled in the past few years, with COVID-19 straining and highlighting existing issues. A large majority of businesses surveyed (88%) reported experiencing one or more COVID-19 related impacts to their business operations, capacity, revenue, or expenses. Many businesses did not have the capacity to pivot in ways required by the pandemic. Of the many impacts of COVID-19 on local businesses, the most pervasive were: Reduced operating hours and capacity; decline in revenue; and incurred expenses for safety measures, such as Plexiglass barriers.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Downtown Fall River lacks clear management of revitalization initiative implementation and maintenance

There is currently no capacity to maintain or clear head manager of street-level projects downtown, what in other communities is the work of a Business Improvement District, or BID. While the climate in Fall River is not currently favorable for formation of a BID, there is room for potential alternatives to add capacity for these street-level initiatives, both within the City and in the form of another type of organization. The future vitality of Fall River's downtown would benefit from demonstrated improvements to supporting maintenance, public realm improvements, programming, and other initiatives downtown.

ADMIN CAPACITY

Previous and Concurrent Plan Review

The City of Fall River has completed or been the subject of a number of planning efforts over the past decade or so, some of which are summarized below. Documents related to those planning efforts articulate community goals and priorities that have informed the LRRP process. The LRRP seeks to build on these community-based planning efforts and not duplicate them. These previous and concurrent planning efforts are highlighted below.

Fall River/South Main District Activation Strategy (Ongoing)
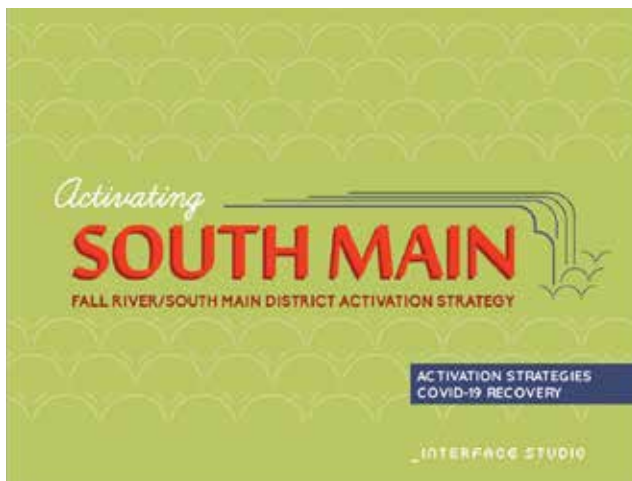
MassDevelopment has been working with Interface Partners on an activation strategy for Fall River's South Main Street District since before the pandemic. A core goal of the LRRP has been to align with priorities outlined by that plan.

Relevant goals

1. Employ programming and promotion strategies to attract more people to the district, more frequently
2. Improve attractiveness of the District, through both public and private realm investments
3. Support a diverse mix of complementary, thriving businesses
4. Increase mixed-use development to strengthen residential business support

5. Strengthen connections to nearby neighborhoods and destinations

Priority actions

1. Organize to promote the district and grow capacity
   - Lay groundwork for district management, including hiring a district director and building a support network for small businesses, and eventually forming a district management entity.
   - Coordinate the district's branding and promotional strategy, including systematically documenting district activities and improvements and producing new marketing content, including a website and other branded collateral.
2. Create an excellent customer experience
   - Build up seasonal programming in the district, including strengthening existing events
   - Make Main Street clean, green, and attractive, through the right-of-way re-design, district wayfinding improvements, planter installation and public art commissions.
   - Develop parking management strategy, and explore a parking benefits district.
3. Tackle vacancy and support businesses
   - Encourage and assist with storefront improvements, by activating

storefronts with art and artist space, developing a façade improvement program, and holding a contest for best storefront design. The City could create a program to incentivize new businesses to move to the district, including lease subsidy and tenant improvements.

- Enable outdoor dining by assisting businesses with permitting and creating an Outdoor Dining Guide.
- Finish launch of initial incubator space and expand pop-up concept to other vacant storefronts.
- Support mixed use development, by first cataloguing vacancies and performing a basic needs assessment and test fits for potential uses to then develop an acquisition and disposition process and strategy.

Other previous plans or studies of relevance to this Rapid Recovery Plan include:

City of Fall River Master Plan (2009)

The City of Fall River's Master Plan sets out a vision through 2030, with four underlying themes: neighborhood stabilization, sustainability, economic development, and city character and identity.

Relevant goals
- Develop and enhance Fall River as a tourist destination with an emphasis on the arts, culture, and history
- Continue to improve the physical appearance of Fall River's streetscapes, neighborhoods, and entrances, particularly in and around the historic downtown and Government Center area
- Preserve, restore, reconstruct, and protect Fall River's cultural landscapes, including

boulevards
- Strengthen and improve the capacity of historical, arts, and cultural institutions and organizations in the city
- Increase neighborhood stability and commitment
- Continue to improve, remodel and renew Fall River's older housing units, including market and nonmarket-rate housing
- Continue to diversify the economic base of the city while emphasizing economic clusters for which it has relative advantages
- Continue to market the city as a location for new and expanded industries
- Identify leaders who can serve as "ambassadors" of Fall River
- Improve signage and wayfinding for all modes and interests
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access, circulation, and safety
- Improve parking downtown and in other central business districts

- Use roadway upgrades as an opportunity to coordinate the aesthetics and appearance of the city
- Address the need for accessible and inexpensive transportation especially for school children and youth
- Continue to meet the needs of a growing senior population
- Develop more mixed-use housing (with commercial activities) to increase the vitality of key areas and provide a larger market for adaptive reuse of buildings, especially mills, and other mixed-use areas

Relevant priority actions
- Identify and commence a pilot program to develop a neighborhood plan addressing beautification, housing, recreation and other resident needs to serve as a template for other neighborhood plans
- Support the Downtown/Waterfront Revitalization Initiative Committee with the hiring of a marketing manager, development of a vision statement for the waterfront, and a web site, and brochure focusing on the downtown and the waterfront
- City Council Committee on Economic Development and Tourism shall convene a Tourism Summit to clarify issues and get consensus as a first step in developing a Tourism Plan

Downtown Urban Renewal Plan (2019)

Fall River recently completed Urban Renewal Plans for Downtown and the Waterfront. The URP for Downtown calls for the reunification of Downtown's two halves (split by I-195) and clarification of Main Street's role as a commercial spine.

FALL RIVER · DOWNTOWN URBAN · RENEWAL · PLAN
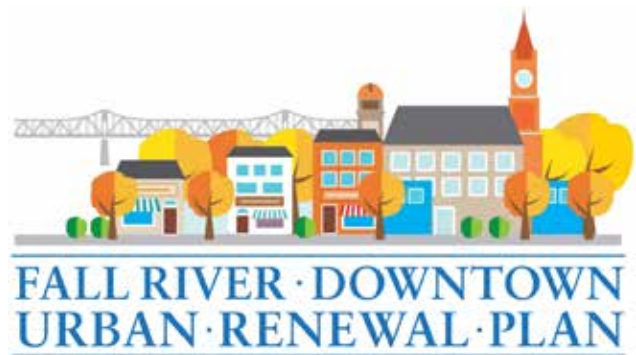
Relevant goals
- Attract residents downtown to support existing and future businesses and services
- Rehabilitate and redevelop underutilized, partially vacant, and vacant buildings along the Main Street spine; expand into other areas of the downtown as needed.
- Establish design guidelines to control the physical characteristics of future development

Relevant priority actions / recommendations
- Acquire underperforming buildings and/or vacant land. Acquisitions have been identified by phase in the Implementation Plan, however, the order in which parcels are acquired may shift based on market conditions related to both the value and availability of the proposed property and its proposed future use at the time of acquisition.
- Merge or divide the parcels (re-parcelization), as necessary, into developable parcels.
- Work with one or more private developers to undertake the activities necessary to add buildings, landscaping, and public/private open space. Land transferred from the City to the FRRA may be disposed of, as with any other parcel acquired by the FRRA, or retained by the FRRA, depending on the future use of the parcel and the transfer agreement with the City.

- Use an LDA and the design guidelines found in this Urban Renewal Plan to control development.
- Use design guidelines to control the physical form of private future development within the urban renewal area.
- Establish critical links between the waterfront and the downtown; those links should be physical (along Columbia Street, Anawan/Pocasset Streets and Central Street/Bedford Street), cultural, and economic.
- Undertake additional studies to examine the parking and circulation needs within the downtown.
- Install public infrastructure improvements such as public parking and open space to enhance the urban renewal area and attract additional private investment.

Historic Preservation Efforts

According to the most recent annual Commission report (2019), the City has 1,914 structures/objects/sites on the Fall River Register of Significant Structures. With each annual report, the Fall River Historical Commission outlines recent projects and areas of interest. Those sites within the study area that were highlighted in the most recent annual reports include:

- 385 Columbia Street, added to the local Register of Significant Structures in 2018.
- Oak Grove Cemetery, where a broader conversation about the role of the Historical Commission in decisions about historic parks (including Kennedy and Ruggles Parks, near the study area) is ongoing.
- The recently-sold former police station, on Bedford Street, and its expected adaptive reuse as apartments.

National Register of Historic Places listed sites

Source: Fall River Historical Commission Annual Report 2017

Highlights from the Customer Base Data

What is the Customer Base Diagnostic?

Demographic data from ESRI's Business Analyst software helps us to understand the local customer base, their spending habits, and the degree to which businesses are capturing customer dollars. Data such as a community's population trends, age and education profiles, household statistics, vehicle accessibility, and employment and income profiles help to tell a story on who is frequenting the town or a commercial district. It also highlights the demand for certain retail or commercial uses, therefore assisting in community-wide economic development efforts.

The Customer Base Diagnostic poses the question: **who are the customers of businesses in the LRRP Study Area?**

Customer Base Results in Fall River

Fall River's Downtown has a small but diverse population. While population estimates suggest minimal growth for Downtown, planned projects and developments for the project area suggest a different story. And while the resident population of Downtown is small, its daytime employee population is nearly four times greater.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Fall River and the area around downtown lag behind the statewide population growth. Downtown's relatively small residential population of 553 in 2020 is projected to slightly decrease over the next 5 years. Based on projects under development or planned, Downtown's population will increase significantly.
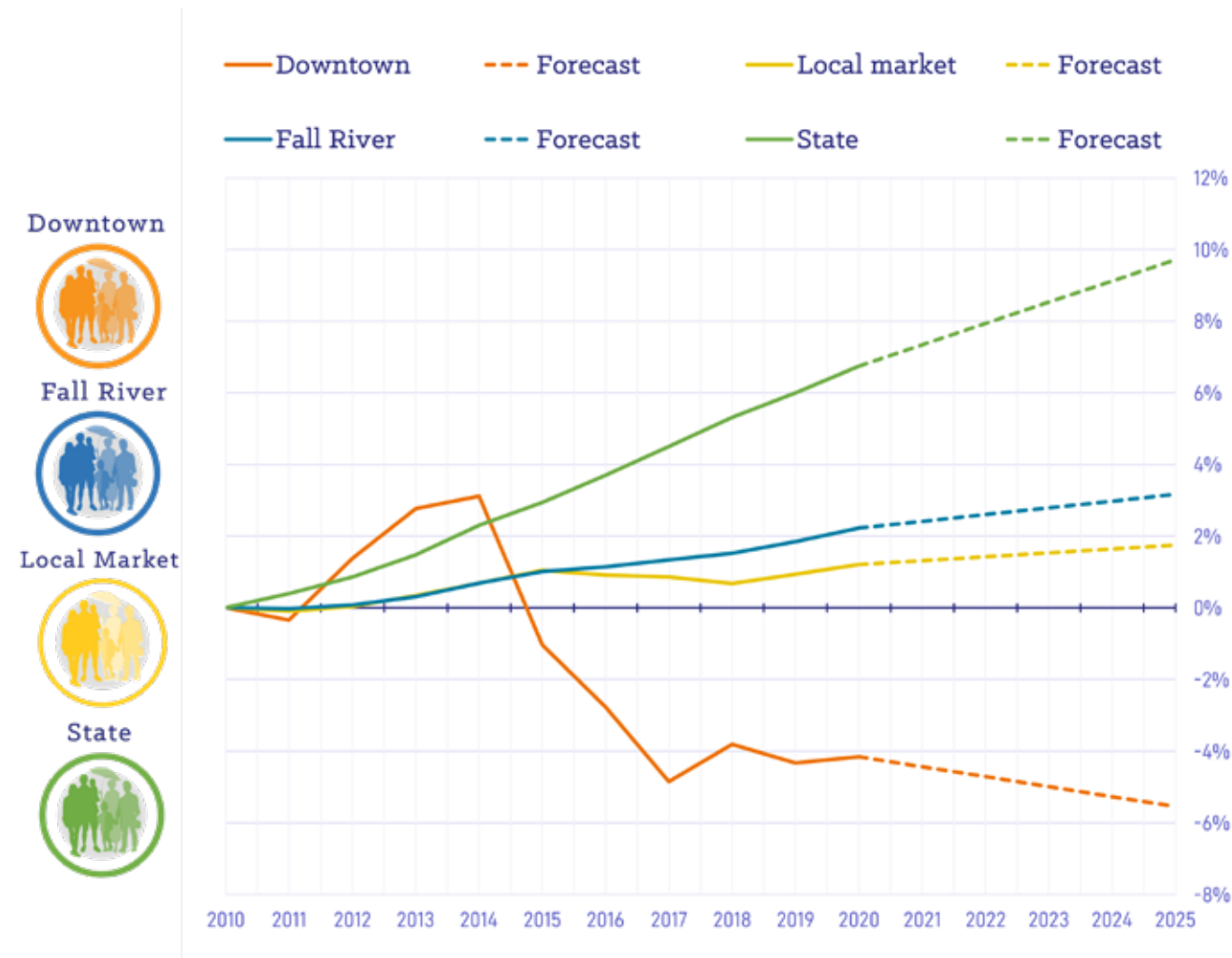
Population trend in the study area
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

DEMOGRAPHICS

Downtown's population skews older than the surrounding area. The area is also is more diverse than the local market and the overall municipality, and has a relatively high proportion of people of Hispanic origin.

Age Distribution
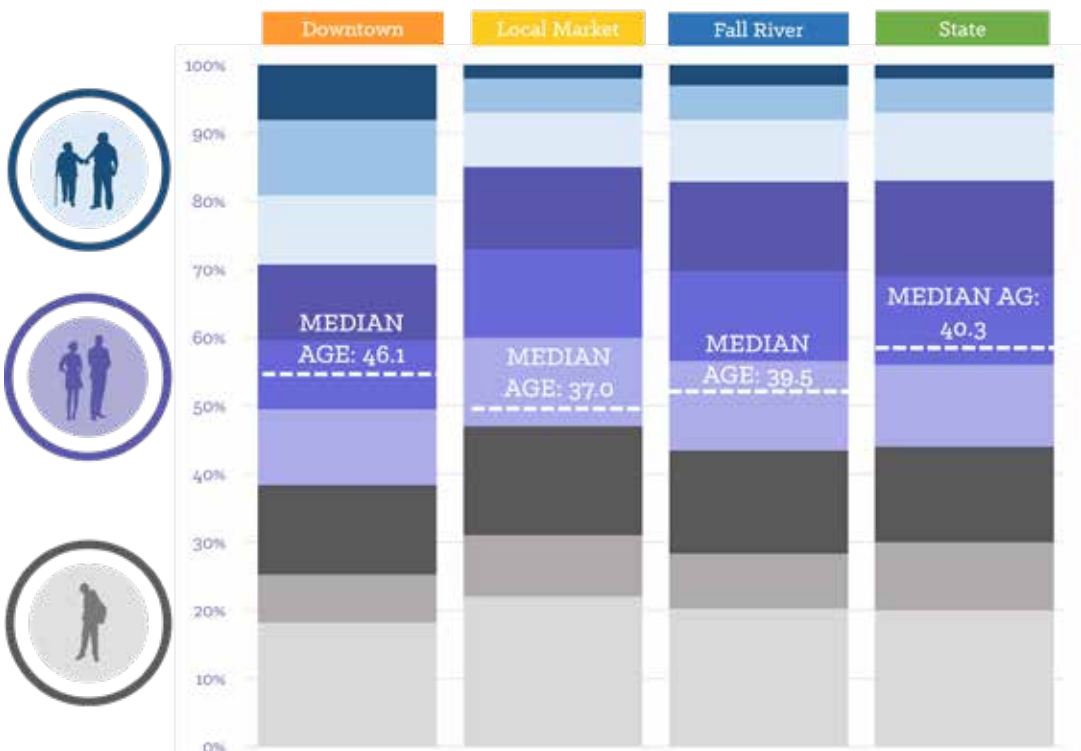
Source: Esri Business Analyst

- 85+
- 75-84
- 65-74
- 55-64
- 45-54
- 35-44
- 25-34
- 18-24
- 0-17

DEMOGRAPHICS

Education

Source: Esri Business Analyst

Legend:
- ☐ Graduate/Professional
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Associate Degree
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ High School or GED
- ☐ Less than High School
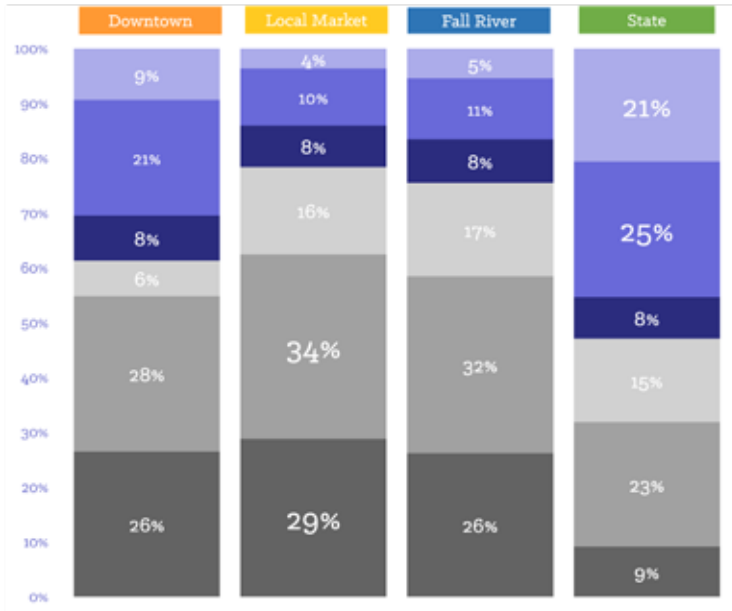
Race and Ethnicity

Source: Esri Business Analyst

Legend:
- ☐ 2 or More
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ⬚ Hispanic (All races)

CUSTOMER STATISTICS

Downtown's daytime employee population is almost 4 times greater than the residential population. Downtown's housing is predominantly rental; Fall River overall has almost half as many homeowners as the State overall.

Population

	Downtown	Local Market	Fall River	State
Avg. household size	1.3	2.2	2.3	2.5
Residential population	553	50,938	90,812	6,993,463
Households	395	22,558	39,409	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	-8	270	839	194486
5-year forecast, household change	-6	132	382	73332
Median age	46	37	40	40

Employment and income

	Downtown	Local Market	Fall River	State
Median household income	1.3	2.2	2.3	2.5
Employees	2,131	18,736	32,259	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	31	4,723	8,975	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	3.9	0.4	0.4	0.5

Housing

	Downtown	Local Market	Fall River	State
Median home value	$250k	$242k	$253k	$415k
5-year forecast, home value growth	8%	12%	12%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	5%	24%	34%	61%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

CUSTOMER STATISTICS

Downtown has a high crime rate, but note that this includes all types of crime. Downtown's proportion of households below the poverty level and unemployment is higher than the city and statewide average. Only about half of downtown residents have access to a vehicle.

	Downtown	Local Market	Fall River	State
Crime				
Crime index**	205	113	109	67
Other indicators				
Own or lease any vehicle	52%	73%	77%	83%
Have a smartphone	75%	86%	86%	**90%**
Carry health insurance	63%	68%	71%	**77%**
Poverty				
Households w/ food stamps/SNAP	66%	32%	28%	12%
Unemployed (age 16+)	**22%**	19%	18%	15%
Households below poverty level	**29%**	22%	19%	11%
Marital status				
Married	40%	39%	42%	**48%**
Divorced	12%	11%	**12%**	10%
Never married	33%	**43%**	39%	37%

Highlights from the Physical Environment

What is the Physical Environment Diagnostic?

The integrity of public infrastructure and private buildings and storefronts plays an important role in the experience of a downtown, town center, or commercial district. Accessibility from a parking lot to the sidewalk, comfortability while using streetscape amenities, and an inviting storefront window all have an impact on the vitality of a town center. It is important to bifurcate the physical environment into the public and the private realm to acknowledge the fundamentally different nature of the tactics and funding mechanisms available for each. The following public and private elements of the Fall River's physical environment have been analyzed:

- Public Realm: Sidewalks, street trees & benches, lighting, wayfinding and signage, roadbed and crosswalks
- Private Realm: Storefront windows, outdoor display and dining, signage, awning, facades, and lighting

The Physical Environment Diagnostic poses the question: **How conducive is the physical environment to meeting the needs and expectations of both businesses and customers?**

Physical Environment Results in Fall River

Major crosswalks are in need of repair, including the crosswalks at Old 2nd St and Government Center. Reliable pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure must be a priority, as only about half of downtown residents have access to a personal vehicle. The lack of benches, or places to rest, limits who can enjoy Downtown's public realm, and how. The current wayfinding system – highlighting points of interest, helping customers find parking - fails to make Downtown easily legible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists alike. Signage is limited and inconsistent, potentially discouraging certain users from accessing Downtown.

While pedestrian-scale lighting is strong on Main Street and in a few locations, it can be improved throughout the study area, including around Lawton Park.

Fall River Physical Environment Grade

B

Downtown Fall River's physical environment receives an overall grade of "B". There are some key takeaways from this analysis, that will inform needs assessment and project recommendations. Those include:

- It is a strength that the majority of downtown is connected with sidewalks that are in generally good condition, but some areas are in need of repair.
- Additional crosswalk safety measures are needed. Many crosswalks are faded and in need of improvement.
- Parking and parking management is an issue. The City needs to better understand issues regarding the availability and management of parking.
- There is significant opportunity to increase vitality by adding more benches and other amenities that make visiting and spending more time in downtown desirable.
- While pedestrian-scale lighting is strong on Main Street and in a few locations, it can be improved throughout the study area.
- Inconsistent wayfinding hampers the city from achieving its goal of having a stronger identity and attracting both existing and new visitors to downtown destinations.
- It is an asset that the majority of downtown buildings maintain their historic integrity, but many are in a serious state of disrepair.
- Many first floor windows are covered with blinds or cluttered with signs and other items, disrupting the relationship between the interior stores and public realm.
- The lack of outdoor dining or retail spillover is a significant hindrance to increasing vitality downtown, particularly in attracting pass-through visitors
- Additional awnings on buildings could improve façade appearance and prevent fading on window displays.

Existing conditions, Downtown Fall River
Source: Stantec
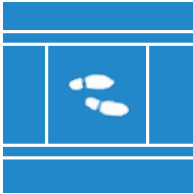
SIDEWALKS

While Downtown Fall River benefits from a relatively well-connected and well-maintained sidewalk network, pedestrians of all ages and abilities cannot always reliably access and get around downtown safely. Some key sidewalks are narrow or lacking maintenance.

A

More than 75% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities.

B

About 50% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well-maintained.

C

More than 25% of sidewalks in the study area pose challenges to the pedestrian experience (including narrow sidewalks and lack of cleanliness/maintenance).

F

There are no sidewalks in the study area.

Existing sidewalks, Downtown Fall River
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate both the flow of customers and spillover retail/dining activity. In addition, sidewalks should be clean and well-maintained to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

STREET TREES AND BENCHES

Downtown needs more street amenities, to make visiting and spending more time in Downtown desirable.

A

Street trees and benches are readily available throughout the study area. They are well-designed, well-maintained, and offer shade and comfort to pedestrians.

B

Although street trees and benches are available, these amenities have not been cleaned or well-maintained, and require improvements.

C

Limited availability of street trees and benches creating uncomfortable pedestrian experience.

F

There are no street trees and benches in the study area.

Existing streetscape
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Sidewalks should facilitate a variety of activities, including resting, people-watching and socializing. Street trees and benches are key amenities that support such activities and should be made available without disrupting the flow of pedestrians.

LIGHTING

While sidewalks along Main Street are generally well-lit, much of the rest of Downtown is not.

A

More than 75% of the study area utilizes a range of lighting strategies to ensure safety of pedestrians and motorists, as well as highlight the identity and history of an area.

B

About 50% of the study area is serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.

C

Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety.

F

There is no street lighting in the study area.

Existing lighting
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Street lighting improves pedestrian visibility and personal safety, as well as aids in geographic orientation.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Inconsistent wayfinding hampers the city from achieving its goal of having a stronger identity and attracting both existing and new visitors to downtown destinations.

A

There is a comprehensive and cohesive wayfinding system that offers geographic orientation to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Signage reflects brand/identity.

B

Wayfinding in the study area is primarily geared towards directing cars. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations to pedestrians.

C

Limited to no signage available throughout the study area.

F

There is no wayfinding/ signage in the study area.

Existing wayfinding
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
A wayfinding system supports overall accessibility of a commercial district. It benefitspedestrians and bicyclists and directs motorists to park and walk. Without clear visual cues, customers may find it difficult to park or may be less aware of local offerings.

ROADBED AND CROSSWALKS

Major crosswalks are in need of repair, including the crosswalks at Old 2nd St and Government Center. Reliable pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure must be a priority, as only about half of downtown residents have access to a personal vehicle.

A

Roads are designed to balance the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians and create a safe environment for all users.

B

Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.

C

Roads are hazardous to all users.

F

The study area is not connected by any major roads.

Existing crosswalks
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Roads should be well-maintained to ensure safety of drivers and pedestrians. Crosswalks that are unsafe or inconvenient to customers may undermine accessibility between stores and overall shopper experience.

WINDOW

Too many storefront windows are obstructed, and a number of storefronts have small or no street-facing windows.

A

More than 75% of storefronts maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.

B

About 50% of storefront windows maintain at least 70% transparency.

C

More than 25% of storefronts have windows with limited transparency.

F

All storefronts are boarded up and/or have limited transparency.

Existing windows
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Storefronts that maintain a minimum of 70% transparency ensure clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of storefront, as well as improve safety for the business, customers, and pedestrians.
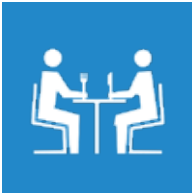
OUTDOOR DISPLAY AND DINING

The lack of outdoor dining or retail spillover is a significant hindrance to increasing vitality downtown, particularly in attracting pass-through visitors.

A

More than 75% of storefronts feature an attractive window display and/or spillover merchandise and dining areas that align with the brand and identity of the district.

B

About 50% of storefronts maintain an attractive window display with limited spillover merchandise and/or dining areas.

C

Only about 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining limiting the pedestrian experience.

F

There is no spillover retail/restaurant activity in the district.

Existing displays
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Attractive window displays and spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks or adjacent parking spaces can help contribute to overall district vibrancy.

STORE

SIGNAGE

Some storefronts need new or updated signage.

A

More than 75% of storefront signs reflect the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from more than 10 ft distance.

B

About 50% of storefronts have clear signage that reflect basic business information and can easily be seen from adjacent sidewalks.

C

More than 25% of storefronts have signage that does not communicate names of business or types of products/services being offered.

F

Storefronts in the study area do not have signage.

Existing signage
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Signage can help customers identify the location of storefronts and businesses from a distance. Signage should also reflect the visual brand and identity of tenants to help attract new customers.

AWNING

Additional awnings on buildings could improve facade appearance and prevent fading on window displays.

A

More than 75% of properties in the study area have retractable awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

B

About 50% of properties in the study area have functioning awnings that have been well- maintained and cleaned.

C

More than 25% of properties in the study area do not have awnings and/ or have awnings that are unusable or have not been cleaned and maintained.

F

Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings.

Existing awnings
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Awnings can provide shade during warmer months, enabling comfortable outdoor dining arrangements for customers. However, they must be well-maintained and designed in coordination with other elements of the storefront.

FACADE

While Downtown Fall River benefits from in-tact historic infrastructure, some buildings require structural improvements.

A

Storefronts that use high-quality materials, and paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district.

B

Most properties have clean and well-maintained façades, but at least one significant property requiring structural façade improvements.

C

More than 25% of properties require significant building façades improvements, including power washing, painting, and structural enhancements.

F

All properties in the study area require significant façade improvements.
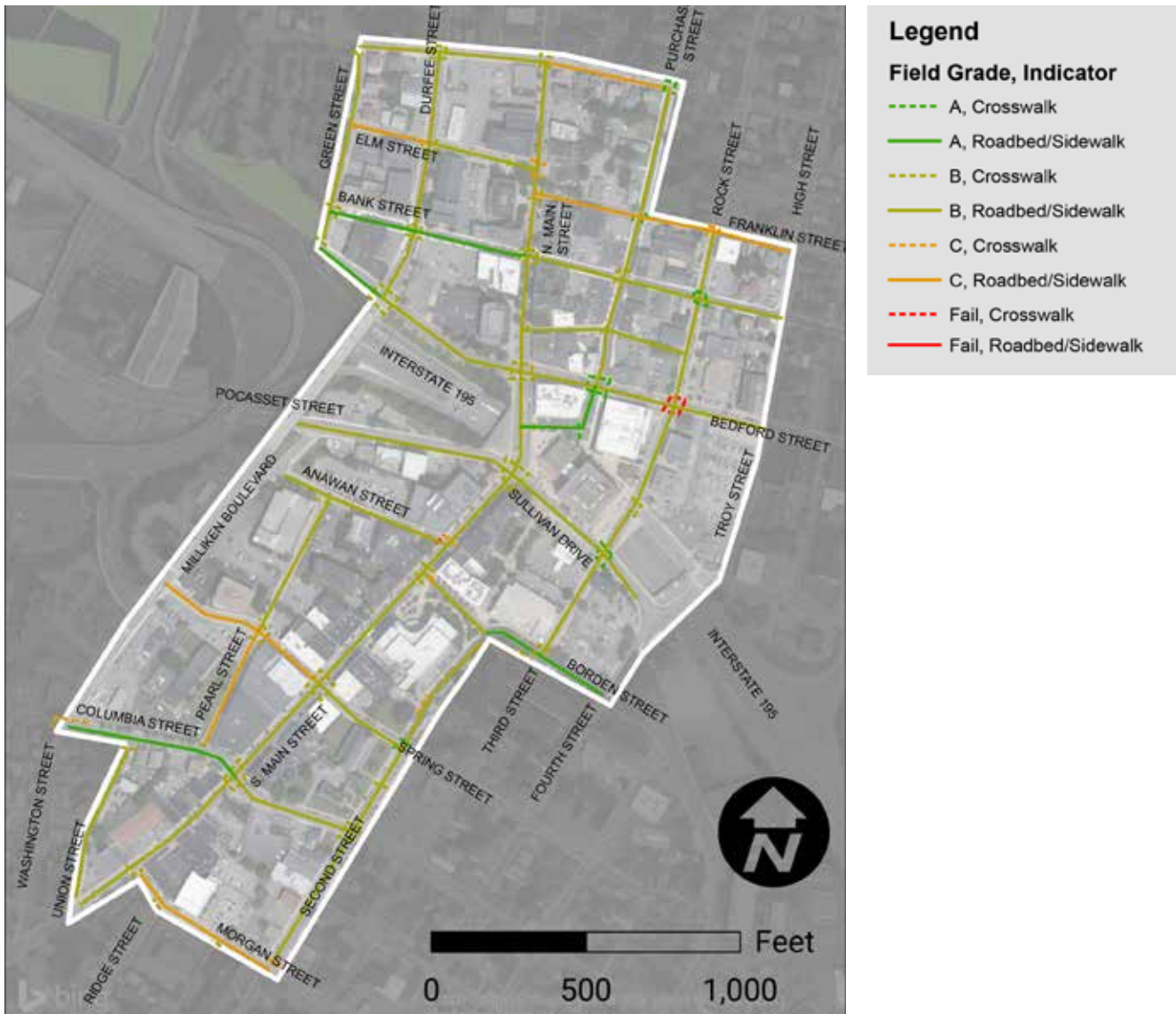

Existing facades
Source: Stantec

Best Practice Guiding Principles:
Storefronts that use high-quality and durable building materials, as well as paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district to potential customers.

CROSSWALK AND SIDEWALK SCORES

Legend

Field Grade, Indicator

- A, Crosswalk
- A, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- B, Crosswalk
- B, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- C, Crosswalk
- C, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- Fail, Crosswalk
- Fail, Roadbed/Sidewalk
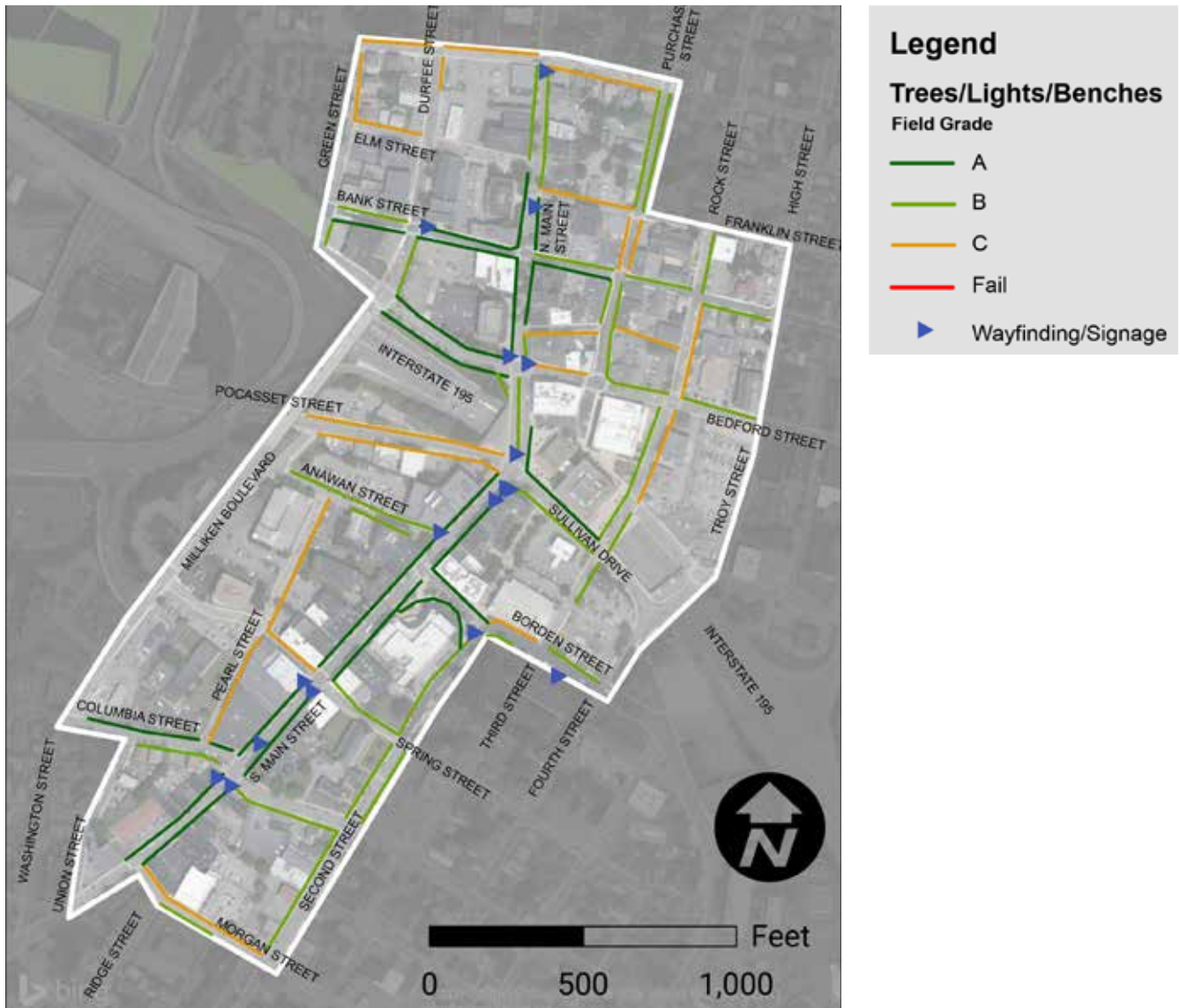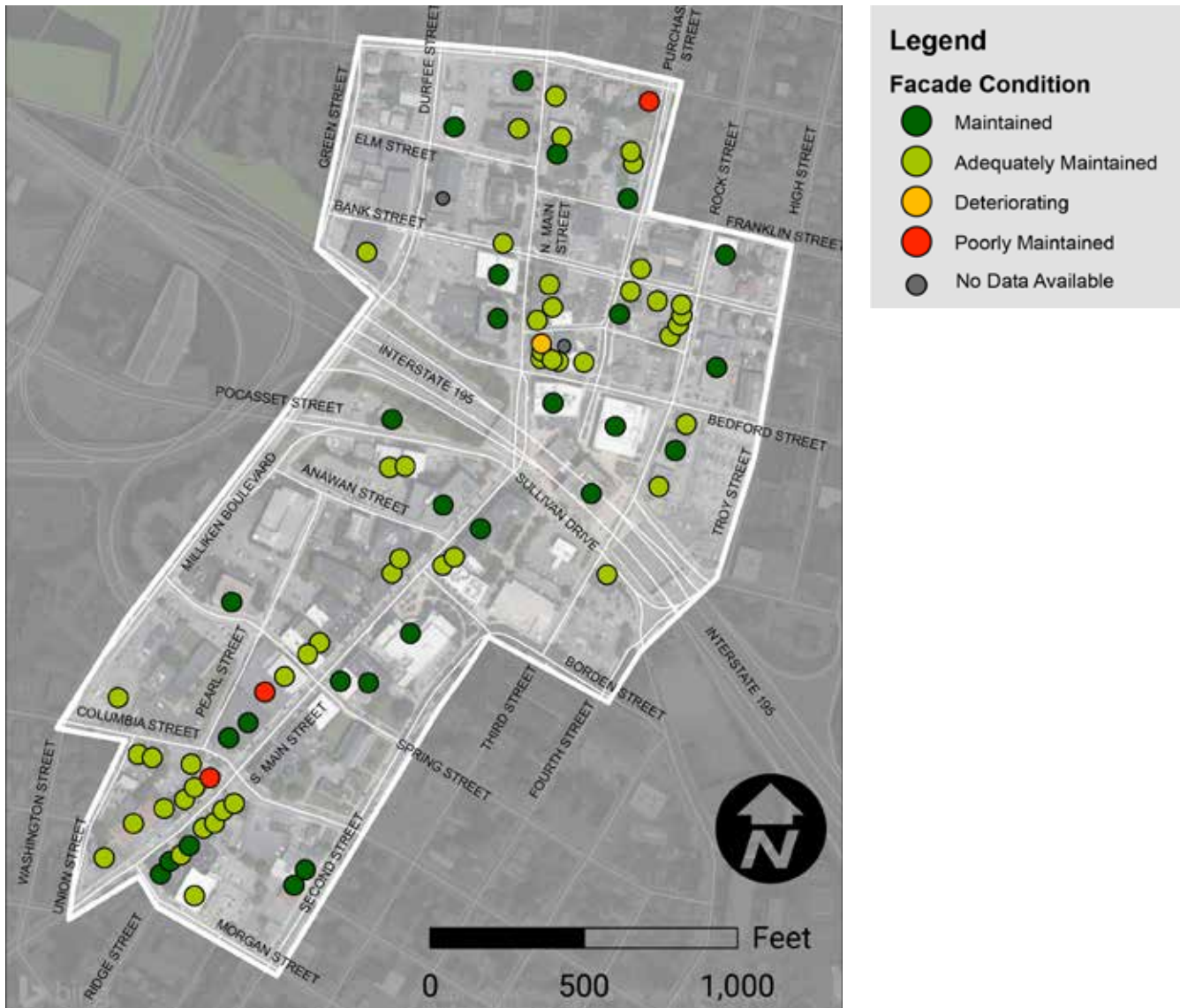
Source: Stantec

STREETSCAPE INFRASTRUCTURE

Source: Stantec

FACADE CONDITIONS

Source: Stantec

Note: While many facades are adequately or well-maintained, they may lack elements that would enhance the pedestrian experience. They may still be good candidates for facade or storefront improvements (to windows, awnings, signage, storefront displays, or other amenities).

OPEN

BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT

Highlights from the Business Environment

What is the Business Environment Diagnostic?

The conditions of the local business environment - including business density, quality, and type of offerings - play a critical role in how successful businesses are meeting the needs of the district's customers. Collecting data related to the tenant mix and concentration of stores provides an insight into the health of local businesses, as well as highlights the presence (or lack of) major anchors and drivers that attract visitors and residents to frequent businesses in the district. In support of this diagnostic, the State sent out business surveys at the beginning of the LRRP and shared results with Plan Facilitators.

The Business Environment Diagnostic poses the question:

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

Business Environment Results in Fall River

Nearly 9 in 10 surveyed businesses reported experiencing one or more COVID-19 related impacts to their business operations, sales, expenses, and capacity. Businesses are generally satisfied with the Downtown business environment but recognized a need for improvement in both the public and private realms. Details from the business survey and retail leakage assessment are outlined on the next page.

RETAIL LEAKAGE

Retail	Downtown	Local Market	Fall River	State
↑ Demand exceeds supply		2.6	5.4	5.8
↓ Supply exceeds demand				
Total retail surplus/leakage*	-58.3			
Grocery store surplus/leakage*	-53.5	-30.7	-23	2.4
Restaurant surplus/leakage*	-83.1	-7.8	-3.9	-0.7

Downtown's retail stores and restaurants are serving much more than the immediate downtown population. Much of the downtown spending is done by visitors.

BUSINESS SURVEY

A survey was completed by a variety of 25 businesses in the area. A large majority of businesses surveyed (88%) reported experiencing one or more COVID-19 related impacts to their business operations, capacity, sales, or expenses. Businesses most commonly experienced reduced operating hours and capacity and declines in revenue, pausing a period of growth and stability over the three years prior. One year into the pandemic, in March and April 2021, only 36% of surveyed businesses were operating at full capacity.

Despite these COVID-19 related impacts, half of downtown businesses surveyed were not interested in receiving assistance. Of those interested, popular forms of assistance included: Low-cost financing for storefront and facade improvements, and opportunities for shared marketing and advertising.

While businesses overall reported being satisfied with the quality of the downtown environment, they also identified a number of ways to make downtown better, including:

- Renovation of storefronts and building facdes
- Improvements in safety and cleanliness
- Changes in public parking availability, management, or policies
- Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks
- More cultural events and activities to bring people to the district
- Recruitment programs to attract additional businesses
- More opportunities for outdoor dining and selling
- Implementing marketing strategies for the district

**43%** of businesses had fewer on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

Top 3 most reported COVID-19 impacts:
- Reduced operating hours/capacity
- Decline in revenue
- Incurred expenses for safety measures

43% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019. For **14%** of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.

VACANCY/OCCUPANCY PROFILE IN THE LRRP STUDY AREA
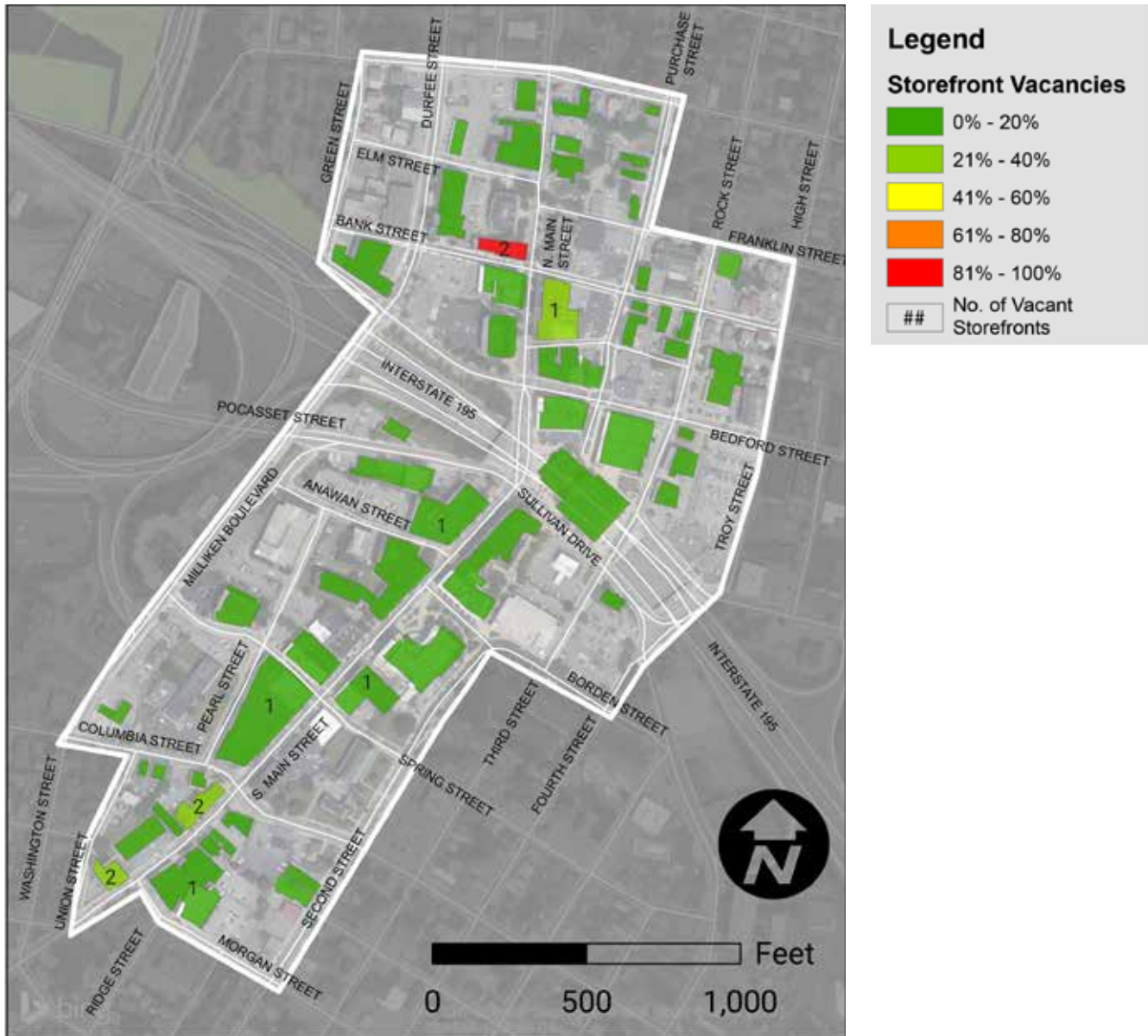
Source: Stantec

Note: This map does not reflect upper-floor vacancy. Additionally, importantly, a building with less than 40% storefront vacancy, shown in green here, can still significantly detract from the vibrancy of Downtown.

Highlights from the Administrative Capacity

What is the Administrative Capacity Diagnostic?

Administrative capacity refers to a combination of leadership, organizational capacity, resources, and regulatory and policy frameworks that enable catalytic investments and improvements to take root. Understanding leadership roles and champions as well as funding mechanisms and existing partnership are critical components to assessing the administrative capacity of a community.

The Administrative Capacity Diagnostic poses questions such as:

- Who are the key stewards of the LRRP Study Area? Are they adequately staff and resourced to support implementation of projects?
- Are the regulatory, zoning, and permitting process an impediment to business activity? Why or why not?
- If lack a stakeholder entity, is a discussion needed on District Management?

Administrative Capacity Results in Fall River

Administrative capacity related to the needs of this study primarily comes from the City's Planning Department and Redevelopment Authority, as well as the One SouthCoast Chamber. Community organizations play a key role as well. Viva Fall River, a collaborative initiative through the MassDevelopment TDI program, is actively working to increase capacity in and around Fall River's downtown. But despite momentum within and beyond City Hall, there remains a capacity gap, as identified by this plan's steering committee.

Administrative Capacity Diagnostic Highlights

Though capacity has been in flux with changing administrations, the City and Fall River's community organizations have made some progress in building capacity to address downtown issues that both precede and were highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City recently hired an Assistant Planner, significantly increasing the capacity of the Planning Department.

Additionally, the TDI Initiative has served to identify administrative needs and strengthen collaborative ties between key organizations in Fall River. Out of that ongoing effort arose Viva Fall River, leadership of which was involved in the development of this plan.

Even so, gaps remain. There is currently no capacity to maintain or clear head manager of street-level projects downtown, what in other communities is the work of a Business Improvement District, or BID. While the climate in Fall River is not currently favorable for formation of a BID, there is room for potential alternatives to add capacity for these street-level initiatives, both within the City and in the form of another type of organization. The future vitality of Fall River's downtown would benefit from demonstrated improvements to supporting maintenance, public realm improvements, programming, and other initiatives downtown.

The need and potential next steps to increase administrative capacity in Fall River are further explored in the Project Profile on pages 131-157.

Summary of Needs

Key Findings

- Fall River has a strong historic fabric but many of its buildings and spaces are underutilized or suffering from maintenance issues. Wayfinding and parking need to be more effectively addressed.
- COVID-19-related changes in operations and customer habits affected nealry 9 in 10 surveyed businesses. Businesses are generally satisfied with the business environment but see opportunities for improvement.
- Fall River has an established network of organizations already working towards many of the goals that inform this plan. Still, gaps in capacity remain (for one, related to the maintenance of Downtown street-level amenities), as do further opportunities to collaborate.

Alignment of Goals & Key Findings

Fall River applied to LRRP with key goals in mind. The key findings of the diagnostic align with and clarify the needs of City of Fall River in alleviating the negative impacts of COVID-19 on its Downtown and revitalizing Downtown in the long term. Those original key goals follow in the next pages.

Project Recommendations
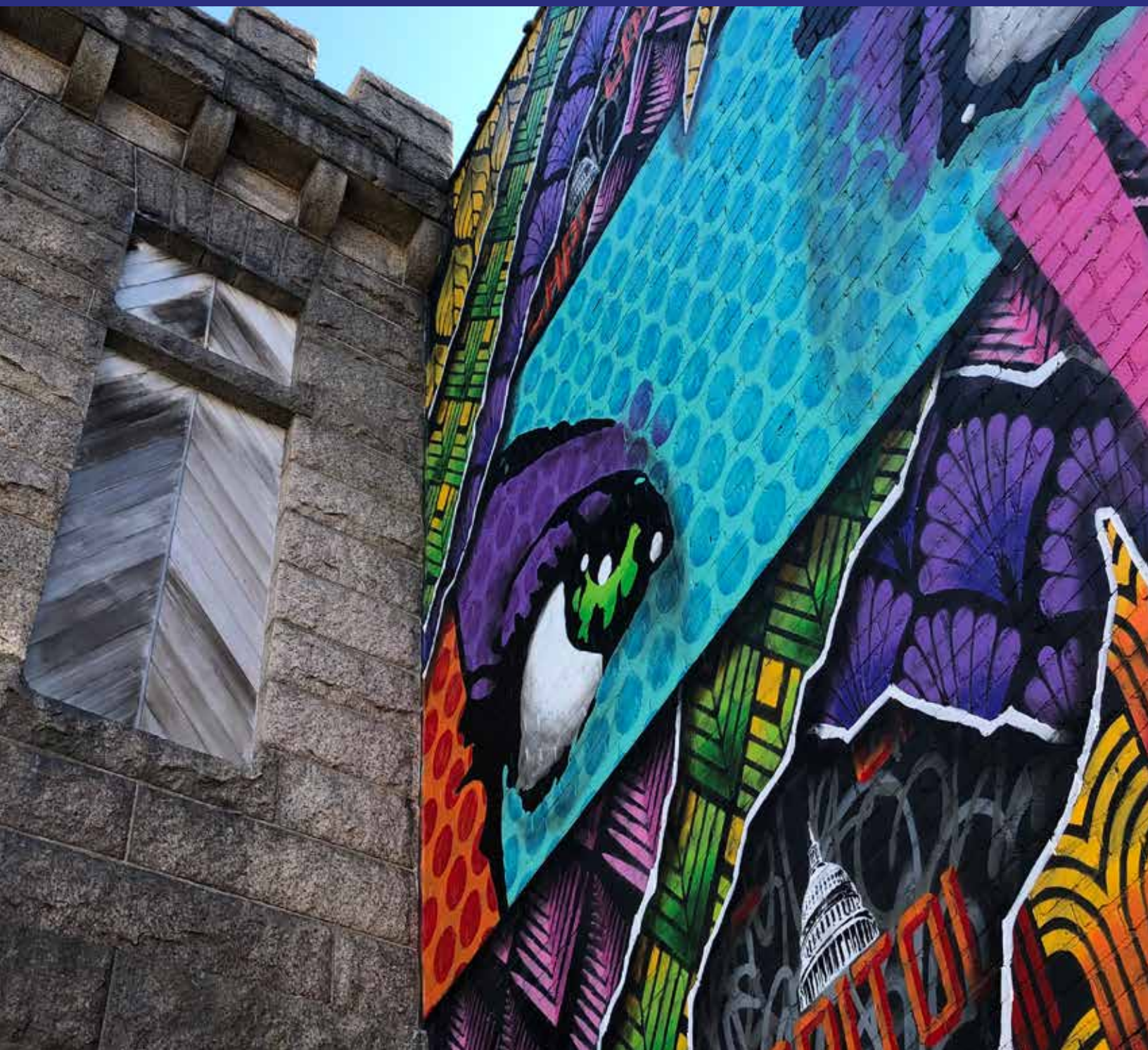
Identification & Prioritization of Projects

Integration of Project Goals & Recommendations

All project ideas developed through the LRRP program integrate the overarching goals of supporting business competitiveness, building vibrant communities, creating a trained and skilled workforce, and using technical assistance to create a defined and actionable project list.

The RRP goals build upon the goals and priorities identified in previous and concurrent planning initiatives taking place in Fall River. Those goals and priorities are outlined in the Previous and Concurrent Plan Review section (pg. x).

The following goals were listed in Fall River's initial RRP application:
- Develop opportunities to support and stabilize our businesses
- Identify current—and future—public funds available for local businesses
- Increase administrative capacity with development of district management organization
- Initiate parking study
- Improve the public realm with increased amenities
- Support 'Pop-Up' activities and other programming to increase customer presence and visits
- Prioritize quality of life issues
- Support safety improvements for pedestrians and bikers

Public Engagement Efforts

PRESENTATION OF DIAGNOSTIC FINDINGS

The project team presented diagnostic findings and discussed project goals with the community via Zoom on June 10, 2021.

OPEN HOUSE

The project team held an Open House in the DCR Heritage State Park Visitor Center from 5 to 7 p.m. on September 16, 2021, after advertising the event through Chamber, Town, and Viva Fall River channels. The location allowed for some members of the public who were not previously aware of the event to join before or after their evening walk along the greenway.

The Open House involved the display of posters detailing the DHCD program, the diagnostic process and results, and each project recommendation. Each poster included a space for Open House participants to add comments and ideas related to the project recommendations, via sticky note. Participants expressed agreement, points of concern or consideration, and offered questions about implementation. The Open House clarified

the need to include two additional project proposals, for a public art program and facade program. All comments were recorded and can be found in Appendix X.

Open House engagement
Source: Stantec

OPEN HOUSE, CONTINUED:
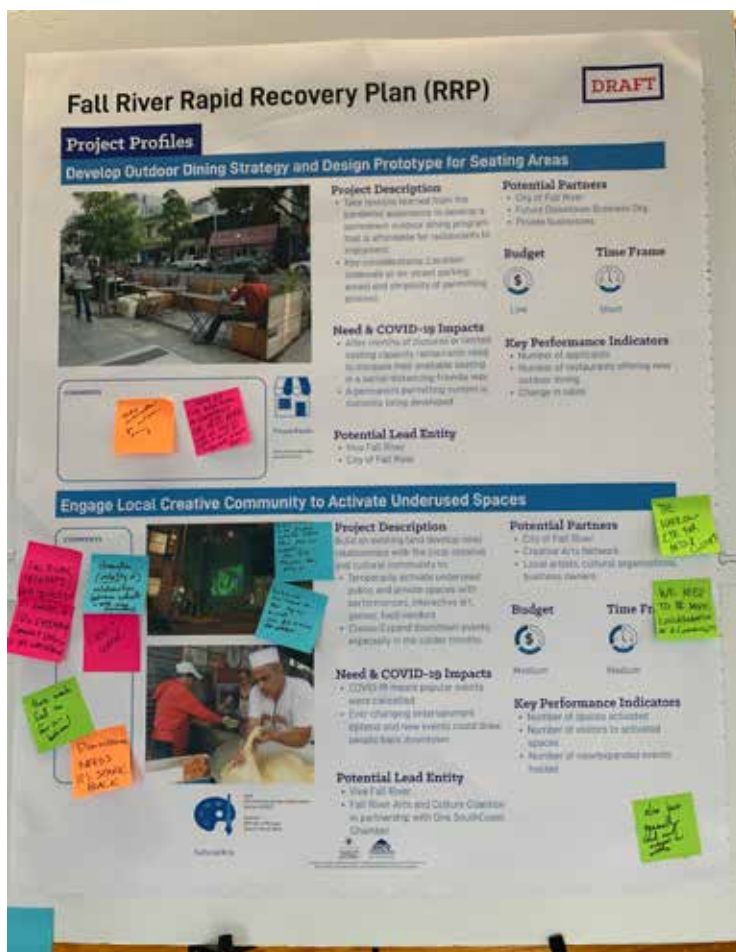**POSTERS AT CITY HALL**

Based on the response to the Open House, and to allow participation by those unable to attend, updated versions of the same posters were dispalyed at City Hall October 5-15, with sticky notes made available for the public to add comments. All comments were recorded and can be found in Appendix X.

(additional details following close of City Hall display October 15)

Prioritization Process

The recommendations that most clearly aligned with project goals were the ones prioritized. The priorization process was a product of regular meetings with the LRRP steering committee and public feedback via the diagnostic presentation, project proposal open house, and display of project proposals (and solicitation of feedback via comment cards and sticky notes) at City Hall.

The steering committee included representatives of the City of Fall River, Viva Fall River, MassDevelopment, the Fall River Redevelopment Authority, and One SouthCoast Chamber.

Open House poster session results
Source: Stantec

Development of Project Goals

↓

Public Priority Voting Evaluation (Phase II Workshop)

↓

Alignment with Project Goals Evaluation

↓

Contextual Prioritization by Municipal Staff
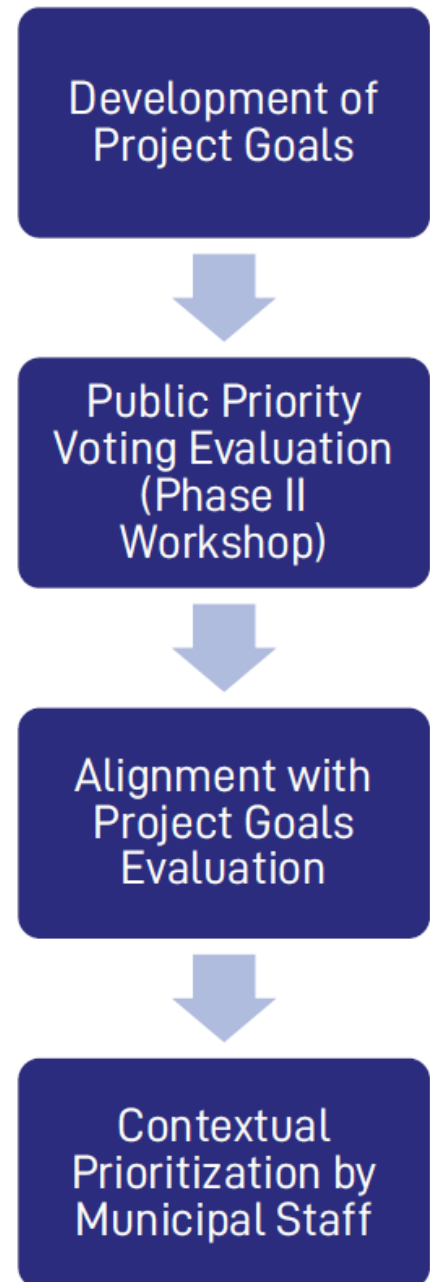
Project List & Map

Project Ideas

The following section provides an overview of the project prioritization results from the public engagement efforts and stakeholder feedback, along with a map that illustrates project locations at a site and district-level. The Fall River LRRP Report includes 12 projects, all of which address dynamics addressed in the diagnostic, including Physical Environment, Business Environment, Customer Base, and Administrative Capacity.
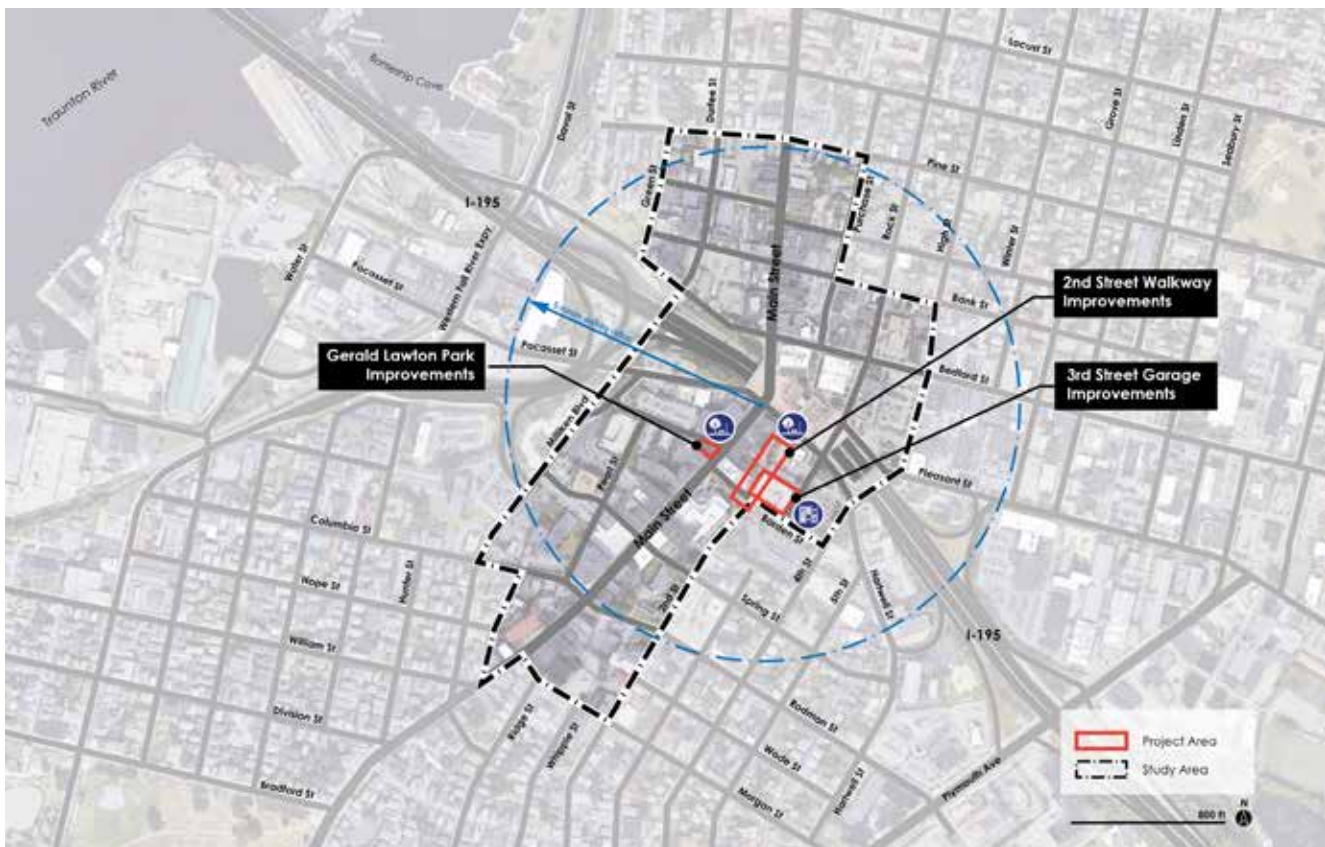
Fall River LRRP Project Ideas Map
Source: Stantec

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Public Realm	Create Pop-Up Parklets and Improve Existing Parklets	Develop parklets to add outdoor seating, shade, and other amenities downtown. Target funds to add amenities and programming to existing parklets.	Short	Medium	☑
	Develop a Comprehensive, Cohesive Wayfinding System	Building on previous wayfinding and branding campaigns, develop a cohesive plan in two phases: Initial, quick-build wayfinding campaign and fixed, permanent wayfinding program, first for the study area and then expanded through Fall River.	Medium	Medium	
	Initiate a Parking Study	Initiate a parking study to understand issues and develop recommendations.	Short	Small	☑
Private Realm	Develop Storefront Design Guidelines and Program	Develop storefront design guidelines and encourage uptake through a municipal program, providing assistance to small businesses with funding eligibility requirements and streamlining permitting process.	Short	Small	
	Develop Facade Design Guidelines and Program	Develop guidelines for downtown facades, addressing windows, awnings, and signage.	Short	Small	
	Develop Outdoor Dining Program and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement.	Short	Medium	
Arts and Culture	Highlight Local Artists through a Collaborative Public Art Program	Assemble a public art task force to lead curation and installation of public art around downtown and beyond. Use a unified public art master plan to identify short-, medium-, and long-term strategies.	Short	Medium	
	Collaborate with Creative Community to Activate Underused Spaces	Collaborate with the local creative and cultural community to temporarily activate underused public and private spaces with performances, interactive art, games, food vendors and expand downtown events.	Short	Medium	
Tenant Mix	Develop Vacancy Tracking Tool and Tenant Recruitment Strategy	Build a tool around the existing vacancy database so that LRRP data might be used to match new tenants with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying Downtown's tenant mix and activating empty properties.	Short	Medium	☑
	Create a Vacant Storefront Program	Create a pop-up storefront program to match makers, artists, and other tenants with temporary commercial space.	Short	Medium	
Revenue and Sales	Develop Business Support Program	Build on work of MassDevelopment through TDI initiative to support existing businesses and new entrepreneurs at every stage to build a cluster of retail activity downtown.	Short	Medium	☑
Admin. Capacity	Build Administrative Capacity of the City and Supporting Organizations	Build on previous efforts to continue addressing administrative gaps to improve Downtown experience. Specifically, consider: New roles, new funding mechanisms, incubation of a new downtown organization.	Medium	Medium	☑

Implementation / Next Steps

Project Action Plan

The Local Rapid Recovery Program gives communities a defined and implementable compilation of projects that have been vetted by the community, as well as a data-driven plan that can alleviate the impacts from COVID-19 pandemic. This report provides detailed information on the budget ranges, timeframe, funding sources, action items, and key processes required to properly execute and implement the project ideas. The project ideas developed through this program serve as opportunities for communities to rapidly implement capital improvements and address administrative and economic development challenges. Municipal departments and planning entities can use the project ideas as a resource for internal or external funding opportunities.

Obtaining Funding

Considering the vast number of project ideas and differing budget ranges (less than $50K or greater than $400K), it can be overwhelming and overly timeconsuming for communities to seek assistance and find funding opportunities. The Department of Housing and Community Development provides extensive resources that contain information on existing local, state, and federal grant programs, organized by the diagnostic categories including physical environment, business environment, administrative capacity, and customer base.

The table on the following page organizes the 12 projects for the Fall River LRRP plan by implementation timeframe (short, medium, or long-term), as well as budget range (less than $50K or greater than $400K). Organizing projects by potential budget and timeframe can act as a resource for communities to assess projects that could be implemented quickly and cheaply, and which projects should be addressed at a later date due to funding, political, or administrative setbacks.

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Project Profiles

Create Pop-Up Parklets and Improve Existing Parklets with Seating and Other Amenities

Category		Public Realm
Location		RRP Study Area, including Gerald Lawton Park and the Old Second St Pedestrian Walkway
Origin		Activating South Main
Budget		Medium Potential sources: Shared Streets and Spaces
Timeframe		Medium
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators		Number of parklets created Number of visitors to parklets User feedback
Partners & Resources		City of Fall River Viva Fall River One SouthCoast Chamber Private property owners Local businesses Local artists and creative community

Existing conditions, Old 2nd St Pedestrian Walkway
Source: Stantec

Diagnostic	COVID-19 highlighted a lack of small outdoor gathering spaces throughout downtown. During the engagement process, stakeholders expressed a need for places to rest, to make downtown feel like a destination, a place where they want to spend time. There are a number of existing, underused spaces of varying sizes that can be better designed to encourage informal gathering and public use. Spaces like Lawton Park and the Old 2nd Street Pedestrian Walkway are well-sited but could be further activated with programming and amenities like seating, lighting, and/or shade. Outdoor seating became increasingly important during COVID-19, and as public health restrictions change, creative new seating areas can help draw people back downtown.
Action Item	Build on successes like Winterbridge to develop winter-adaptable, creatively designed parklets to add outdoor seating options, shade, and other amenities downtown, to encourage users to stay a while. With each project, consider the micro-environment of each space and the unmet needs of pedestrians moving through or nearby the space. Target funds to add amenities and programming to existing parklets such as Lawton Park and the Old 2nd Street pedestrian walkway.

Existing conditions at Gerald Lawton Park
Source: Stantec

Process	The process steps include:
	• Meet with City staff and private property owners to discuss seating opportunities
	• Engage with community to discuss seating needs and parklet design ideas
	• Develop design concepts and identify preliminary pricing
	• Share concepts with stakeholders and community to identify preferred design elements
	• Finalize parklet design and costs
	• Work with property owner(s) to determine liability, insurance, outdoor furniture storage, and maintenance responsibilities
	• Install parklet pilot project(s). Start with Lawton Park and the Old 2nd Street pedestrian walkway to test design concepts.
	• Promote via relevant media, track number of participants and other metrics, and collect user feedback via simple survey
	• Refine ideas as needed based on user feedback

Illustration of an activated Old Second Street Pedestrian Walkway, with adjacent portion of Borden St closed for a bigger event.
Source: Stantec

Relevant Report:
Activating South Main (2021)

Pop-up activation and parklet amenity additions were key elements of the Activating South Main plan. The project team developed a public space "typology" for their study area, mapping existing plazas, pedestrian walkways, alleys, and parks, in addition to on-street parking spaces and parkling lots.
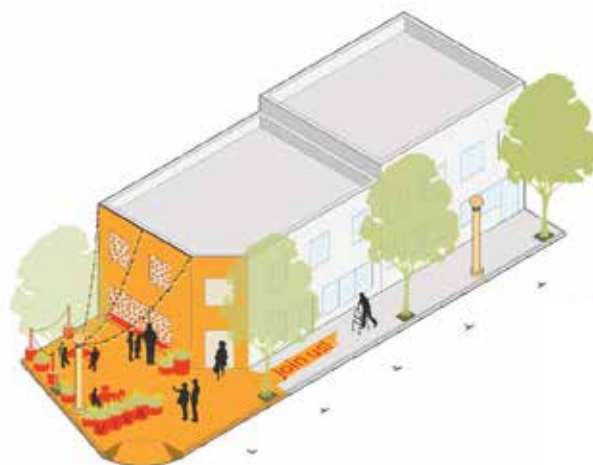

Source: Activate South Main, Interface Studio

The project team also developed illustrations of different types of small public space activations to highlight various strategies ready for adoption.

SMALL PLAZA ACTIVATION

Source: Activate South Main, Interface Studio

This illustration might prove useful for sites like Gerald Lawton Park, an existing but underutilized park that could be improved with addtion of amenities and programming.

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY ACTIVATION

Source: Activate South Main, Interface Studio

The Old 2nd Street pedestrian walkway could be well-suited to a similar treatment, for everyday use and more frequent special programming. Programming could even occasionally spill from that pedestrian walkway into Borden St. between South Main and 2nd, where for bigger events (street festivals? farmers' markets?), the City could temporarily close down that portion of the street to cars.

Gove St. Crossing: Pop-Up Park and Plaza

Location: East Boston, MA

Best Practice:
East Boston's Greenway Crossing Pop-Up Parklet and Plaza

The Friends of the Mary Ellen Greenway (FoMEWG) worked with the Boston Society of Landscape Architects (BSLA) to host a design competition for the Gove Street section of the Mary Ellen Greenway. A 12-member jury selected Toole Design to work on a seasonal installation. Over three months, Toole Design worked to refine the design by engaging East Boston residents. The final design and project included:

- a pop-up plaza on Gove Street next to a residential apartment building, and
- a seasonal installation on the Greenway.

This project happened prior the COVID-19 pandemic, although planning and installation would be possible while still maintaining appropriate guidelines for public health. Painting the asphalt, planting annuals in the containers and perennials, and building the benches were all COVID-19 friendly activities since people were able to social distance and/or work in small groups.

Both designs included graphic painting and seating.

Over the past year, we saw important open space in our communities is for both physical and mental health, with parks being one of the few places where people could meet up safely outside. The pop-up park and plaza activated the Greenway using tactical urbanism and placemaking. As a result, the Greenway became even more of a destination and provided passive forms of recreation, which did not previously exist. In addition, the Greenway was transformed into an exciting place for people, and especially for children. As part of the installation, minilibraries were filled with children's books and toys and were very exciting for the kids to discover when they went to school on Monday morning. With everyone spending a lot of time in their neighborhoods this past year, it is important to make spaces a little more exciting.

This project was funded by a Barr Foundation grant to the Friends of the Mary Ellen Welch Greenway.

Process

DESIGN COMPETITION

Design Challenge: FoMEWG worked with BSLA to host a design competition for the Gove Street section of the Greenway. Eight entries were submitted that included both long and short-term ideas for the Greenway at Gove Street.

Design Selection: The entries did not include the names of the individuals or firms in order to ensure a blind judgement of the designs. The 12-member jury of East Boston residents selected Toole Design to work on a seasonal installation. The final designwas selected since it successfully active the spaces, greatly enhanced the east / west connections used bystudents,

incorporated community engagement into the design process, and the materials were also in Spanish.

POP-UP INSTALLATION PLANNING + DESIGN

Planning + Design: Over three months in Spring 2019, Toole Design worked to refine the tactical short-term installation by engaging East Boston residents and FoMEWG. The design was shared at the monthly Greenway meeting, and the Project Team engaged youth at the East Boston Public Library. The final tactical design with pavement graphic and seating including: a pop-up plaza on Gove Street next to a residential apartment building, and a seasonal installation on the Greenway.

The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza.

Approvals for Boston Parks: The Project Team met with Boston Parks to review the proposed design, and Boston Parks was asked to weigh on the seating structures and painting before the design was final. The FoMEWG submitted a "Small Projects Form" outlining the proposed project, its design, and maintenance plan for Parks to review and approve.
Approvals from Boston Transportation Department: The Project Team met with the City of Boston's Public Realm Director to discuss the plaza concept. For the one-week temporary plaza installation, the project team applied for a 1-week event permit and posted "No Parking" signs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Material Acquisition: In June, the project team acquired the materials from nurseries, lumber yards, the hardware store, and ordered the bistro sets online. These items were transferred to the site in East Boston upon procurement.
Installation: Toole Design staff worked to build the exchange benches off-site and then assisted the benches on site. The Project Team planned for two installation days, which included a Saturday. Toole Design outlined the

pavement graphics prior to volunteers arriving each day. Volunteers painted the pavement graphics on the Greenway and plaza, planted plants in the planters, and placed the seating. Lunch was provided to the volunteers.

Programs: The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza, including music in the evenings by local musicians, a piñata party with a local artist, Krina Patel, and games for children. Later in the summer, the Friends and Toole Design lead a bike ride for the LandLine Coalition, a group working to connect community paths and greenways in the Greater Boston region.

Removal: The one-week pop-up plazas were removed, and the chairs and tables were relocated to the seasonal Parks installation on the Greenway. In the fall, the Parks installation with the benches were removed and put into storage for the winter.

Re-Installation: In Summer 2020, the benches and Adirondack chairs were placed in the Parks section of the Greenway.

Benches and chairs in the Parks section of the Greenway.

Design and Implement a Wayfinding System for Pedestrians, Bikes, and Cars

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Fall River
Origin		City of Fall River
Budget		Medium – $200,000 Possible sources: • MassDevelopment TDI Creative Catalyst or Commonwealth Places grants • DHCD MDI or Community Development Block grants • Upcoming ARPA programs (TBD)
Timeframe		Short (< 5 years)
Risk		Medium Will require support from business and property owners. Building consensus among key stakeholders and community representatives around design, locations, and what to highlight could be challenging. Budget constraints for permanent wayfinding updates and capacity for/responsibility of maintenance are a consideration.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of wayfinding signs installed Before/After studies of spending by mode Survey to capture user perceptions, behavioral changes Changes in business revenue
Partners & Resources		• City of Fall River • Fall River Arts and Culture Coalition • Viva Fall River • Downtown business organizations • Creative Arts Network • Redevelopment Authority • Mass in Motion • Green Futures

Diagnostic	Photo analysis and stakeholder input confirmed a significant problem with branding and wayfinding in Downtown Fall River. While some branding initiatives are currently in place, they are not cohesive and often conflicting. Maintenance has been an issue. Clear signage can encourage users to navigate different parts of downtown, after COVID-19 slowed downtown foot traffic. Of all project proposals presented at the Open House, this proposal received the most engagement. Community members cited a broader signage problem in Fall River, suggesting that visitors are deterred from visiting Downtown Fall River because signage of all kinds -- wayfinidng, street signs, store signage -- is lacking. There is a frustration with the lack of wayfinding not just within and around Fall River (connecting Downtown to the Waterfront, and pedestrians/cyclists/motorists to various assets within those neighborhoods and beyond) but also the lack of signaling to drive-through, would-be visitors about what Fall River has to offer.
Action Item	Building on previous wayfinding and branding campaigns, develop a cohesive plan in two phases: • Initial, quick-build wayfinding campaign using sidewalk decals, light pole banners, storefront window displays • Fixed, permanent wayfinding program informed by first phase Plan for expansion beyond the study area.
Process	The process steps include: • Review previous wayfinding efforts and existing signage systems • Conduct wayfinding analysis, including multi-modal circulation, main decision points, key destination • Identify opportunities for public art in wayfinding system • Engage with stakeholders and the public to better understand needs and perceptions. • Design concepts for brand and wayfinding elemenets

Best Practice:
Wakefield MA's Wayfinding Initiative

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

There was no universally accepted brand or wayfinding system for the Town of Wakefield. On the edge of Wakefield Center, Lake Quannapowitt is a popular setting for walkers, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters off Route 128 in Middlesex County. It is the site of many organized races from 5Ks to Ultra Marathons However, rarely do outside visitors travel beyond the lakeside the 200 yards to the

BEST PRACTICE

Wayfinding System to Help Reinforce the Downtown Experience

Location: Wakefield, MA

Along with interested citizens, town officials including the Town Planner, Police Officer, City Councilor, and Main Street board members made decisions regarding locations. Source: DHCD

Town of Wakefield's Downtown. This is a missed opportunity to support restaurants and shops in the Downtown.

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

The Town's administration allotted funding to design a branding and wayfinding system. Seven months later a Massachusetts Legislative Earmark was granted to the

Wakefield Main Streets Program for the design and fabrication of informational kiosks.

The two overlapping programs took two different paths.

Over an eight-month period, the branding and wayfinding design process went through a series of group meetings with a large Advisory Group of 24 representatives.

A month after the town landscape-based brand was approved by the Advisory Committee and presented in the local daily newspaper and to the Town Council, a devastating lightninginduced fire burned down the majestic

church steeple. The loss of the church set back the discussion of whether or not the approved image should be brought forward as a historical image or changed to reflect the current conditions.

The designs and branding and wayfinding program were put on hold.

Overseen by the Wakefield Main Streets Board of Directors and invited Town officials, the kiosk design program was mandated to have only 3.5 months to complete design, design review, put out for bidding and start implementation.

The kiosk program went fully ahead. However, some community members felt left out of the design and placement of the project elements. Their concerns had to be integrated.

PROCESS

After a number of kiosk design alternatives were presented to the Wakefield Main Streets Board, one design was chosen to develop, locate and specify. Three (3) of the kiosks were to be twosided and analog; the fourth was to be digital and four-sided. The digital one would be set closest to the lake. Historical town images and commentary was developed to fit around as a border around a business directory for one side of the directory. Set in an airtight locked Plexiglas window, this information could be easily changeable on the two-sided kiosks. On the opposite side was space for timely event posters and community announcements. The digital kiosk was designed to have a screen/monitor that was programmable from the town hall. There was much criticism around the placement and look of the digital kiosk. The town council eventually addressed the public and took a stand that the location, size and look of the kiosk was the best possible solution.

Kiosk-opposing residents were invited to an expanded Branding and Wayfinding meeting to assist with eventual sign element placement on maps.

Favermann Design was then hired by the Town administration to create a style guideline to reflect the iconic kiosk toppers.

After a period of about four months the guidelines have resulted in the establishment of a consistent Town of Wakefield visual brand for internal communication, the official website, emails, business cards, interior town hall signage, newsletters and even drop boxes.

These guidelines were in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and further thought was given to the on-hold wayfinding program. It was decided that a new approach should be taken that abandoned the problematic landscape and instead visually reflected the kiosk and style of the Town of Wakefield. Utilizing the new design approach, plans are going ahead for a new directional sign for the Greenwood neighborhood. A test will take place during the Summer of 2021 to see how wayfinding can connect the Lake with downtown.

From wayfinding signage to printed informational materials and the Town's website, the Town of Wakefield "branded" elements and strictly adhered to style guidelines demonstrate how programs can build upon and even improve each other toreinforce a sense of place, a sense of arrival and a sense of shared experience. Source: DHCD

Initiate a Parking Study

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Fall River
Origin		Long-understood need, echoed throughout RRP process Community Onestop Leads (via City of Fall River's Mayor Office, Planning Department, Fall River Community Development Agency, Fall River Redevelopment Authority)
Budget		Low
Timeframe		Short term (< 1 year)
Risk		Medium, depending on recommendations resulting from study. Political buy-in and support from local businesses and the public for a potential increase in parking prices is uncertain.
Key Performance Indicators		• Parking utilization • Improved user experience • Improved business owners' experience
Partners & Resources		City of Fall River Department of Public Works Transportation Board Mass in Motion Fall River Redevelopment Authority Local businesses

3rd St Parking Garage
Source: Google Maps

Diagnostic	The issue of parking in Downtown Fall River has been a long-term concern and priority for the City, businesses, residents, and visitors.

Parking supply and demand are often out of balance, and in changing ways since COVID-19. Some of the issue might be related to the lack of wayfinding signage and knowledge of parking options (and the rates and hours of those options) around downtown.

There are concerns about the structural integrity and accessibility of the Third Street parking deck, currently a key parking asset for Downtown Fall River.

While there is broad recognition that parking is an issue in Downtown Fall River, members of the public also acknowledge that there is space currently occupied by parking that could be more effectively, productively put to use as public space, outdoor dining restaurant spillover, or other infrastructure. |
| **Action Item** | Initiate a parking study to understand whethert here is a lack of adequate parking or a need to better manage parking, and develop recommendations for improvements. |

Main St. on-street parking
Source: Google Maps

Process

The following outlines the expected scope of work for a consultant for this project. Applicants should describe their approach to each of these services.

Task 1: Existing Conditions Assessment

Kickoff: The Consultant team will work with City staff to convene a kickoff meeting with appropriate participants to discuss logistics including available data, proposed work plan, study area and schedule.

1. Review Available Data: The Consultant team will review existing parking management data from internal and publicly available resources, including:
   - Current planning documents
   - Current and historic parking supply data
   - Parking management practices and policies
   - Planned changes to the transportation network

2. Parking Inventory: Consultant will create a baseline inventory for parking assets based on the results of Task 1.2, including the following information
   - Location
   - Regulation
   - Price
   - Inventory

   The inventory should be in an ARCGIS-editable format.

3. Parking Utilization: Consultant will conduct field surveys of parking accumulation in all spaces identified in Task 1.3 on a "typical" day that avoids special events, school vacations, significant road closures, etc.

4. Current Demand Evaluation: Consultant should identify "parking crunch" areas as well as those that are underutilized, including by categories such as regulatory type or price, and identify opportunities to change regulations in price, time, or user limitations to encourage people to use parking spaces as efficiently as possible to meet their needs.

PROCESS, CONTINUED

Task 2: Public Outreach

Consultant will prepare and conduct a public outreach plan in coordination with the City. This may include any combination of stakeholder interviews, outreach events, surveys, etc. as deemed appropriate by the Consultant. Public participation is crucial to the successful implementation of any parking plan, and the City expects the public outreach plan to be sufficiently broad and inclusive.

Task 3: Land Use Assessment

1. Zoning Review: Consultant will review the City's parking requirements in the zoning code and identify parking requirements are outdated, too restrictive for Fall River's mixed-use downtown, or otherwise limiting outcomes desired by the City and stakeholders.
2. Existing Parking Demand and Land Use Assessment: Based on a database of existing land uses by square footage or unit obtained from Assessing and/or other publicly available sources, the Consultant will create a parking generation ratio specific to downtown Fall River and assess the sufficiency of the available parking supply to meet the needs of downtown's land uses.
3. Future Parking Demand: Working with the City, Consultant will develop at least two future land use scenarios for downtown that simulate potential infill and redevelopment, then assess the sufficiency of existing supply to meet the future demand.

Task 4: Best Practices and Case Studies

The Consultant will work with the City to identify and document up to five case studies of best practice parking management solutions that might be applicable to downtown Fall River. Each will provide insight as to how a city is using an emerging or established parking management tool to solve similar problems to those identified in Fall River.

Task 5: Policy, Supply, and Management Strategies

Working closely with the City, the Consultant will develop a comprehensive set of strategies that address identified needs in downtown Fall River. These strategies will consider elements such as:
- Pricing strategies
- Optimization of existing supply
- Addition of new supply
- Enforcement policies
- Advanced parking technologies
- Parking regulatory strategies
- Operational changes

Task 6: Draft and Final Plan

The Consultant will compile all data products, analyses, maps, and narratives into a user-friendly document available in both print and on-line electronic forms for public distribution. Native design documents will be provided to the City. All study materials and supporting data sets will be provided to the City before the end of the project.

Develop Storefront Design Guidelines to Energize Downtown

Category		Private Realm
Location		Study area
Origin		City of Fall River
Budget		Low Estimate is: • $35,000 for consultant design fee (more or less, depending on level of public engagement and how illustrative the code is) • $25,000 for program to subsidize implementation
Timeframe		Short (1 year)
Risk		Low The guidelines will be advisory in nature. While the program will aim for widespread participation, participation in the program and uptake of the guidelines will not be compulsory. There is risk in adopting overly restrictive guidelines, which may limit uptake and discourage some from investing in the community. Guidelines that are opaquely developed or that do not reflect the capacities and culture of Fall River could have a negative effect.
Key Performance Indicators		• Number and diversity of landlords and merchants participating • Increase in the number of buildings constructed, renovated, or rehabilitiated that meet the design guidelines

Diagnostic	During diagnostic field visits, a majority of storefronts were creating a negative impact. Throughout downtown, issues included: • Windows blocked with curtains or other more permanent materials • Signage that is inconsistent and often inaccurage • Signage that is temporary, or hand-written • Clutter such as microwaves and other items in windows • Fading storefront displays • Limited lighting Fresh storefront design and displays will convey a sense of energy and momentum downtown
Action Item	• Scope and develop storefront design guidelines and encourage uptake through a municipal program • Provide assistance to small businesses with funding eligibility requirements and streamline permitting process

Process	The process steps include:
	• Finish photo documentation (90% complete)
	• Review existing embedded design guidelines and standards
	• Interview municipal staff, boards, applicants, local land use lawyers, and others with relevant experience and concerns
	• Identify best practices and research relevant precedents
	• Identify people and organizations that should be engaged in the guideline development process
	• Develop appropriate engagement process
	   • Discuss thresholds for use andd the appropriate review body and process
	   • Engage with business and property owners and the public on options and concerns
	• Develop design guidelines, including some enforceable standards as well as some voluntary standards
	• Decide which funding source is appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds
	• Identify target storefronts for early adoption - potential early success stories to serve as proof-of-concept and encourage greater variety of participants
	• Consider a public education program to inform people on a regular basis about the new requirements and their implications

Best Practice: Everett's Storefront Guidelines

The City of Everett is a primarily working class community just north of Boston. It has a large share of Brazilian, Latino and Italian first- and second-generation residents. In the last few years, a very large casino has opened in Everett that gives the city some needed donations and fees for public improvements. There are two major retail enclaves in Everett: Everett Square and Glendale Square. Everett Square, the larger of the two, is the traditional downtown where the public library and City Hall and many amenities are located. Stores and restaurants are primarily locally owned, family enterprises. Only a minority of Everett's business are national or regional chains.

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

BEST PRACTICE

Storefront Guidelines

Location: Everett, MA

Applicable Commercial Areas

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

Everett Square

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

Applicable areas
Source: City of Everett, via DHCD

merchant and landlord participation. The Mayor also felt that a more restricted approach to storefront design be adhered to with similar sign details and limited awning colors.

A study was commissioned to develop Guidelines for Signage and Storefronts. Following this, the guidelines were to be translated into the City of Everett's Building Code.

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

- Review the drafted pages with Everett's planning staff, Building Department and representatives of the Mayor's office.
- Final approval of Storefront Guidelines.

PROCESS

- Extensive research of other cities and towns guidelines and procedures.
- Based on best practices, create easily understandable illustrated storefront component pages that reference City of Everett regulations.
- Establish storefront element criteria through including specifically referenced dimensions, materials and placement.
- Photo-document good and bad examples of storefront elements.
- Create a City of Everett color pallet.
- Show by illustration approved and not approved ways of applying storefront elements.
- Circulate among town staff the drafts individual guideline pages for review and refinement.
- After completion of Storefront Guidelines, during the Covid-19 shutdown, work with the Building Commission to rewrite

Everett's Building Code to reflect the clearer storefront criteria.

- Others involved in the rewriting of Building Code include the city attorney and community development director
- This sentence by sentence intensexercise gave focus to the Building Code while doing away with unnecessary zoning code criteria
- This Collaboration made a tedious set of tasks quite reasonable to complete.
- This process allowed an opportunity to address sign issues throughout the City such as nonconforming uses, public/private garages, etc.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

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

Wall Signs - Height
The top of wall signs should be higher than any of the following, whichever is lowest
1. 25 ft above grade,
2. top of sills of the first level of windows above the first story, or
3. the height of a building at the building line
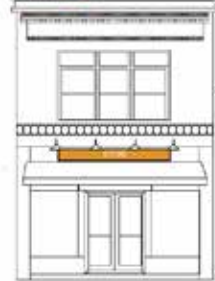
This 👍   Not This 👎

The wall sign is not compliance since the wall sign is located 25 feet above grade

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

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

Awning Sign

Ordinance illustrations
Source: City of Everett, via DHCD

Before

After

Is your project located in the Everett or Glendale Square Areas?

YES

NO

Great! Your project is eligible for the grant program!

1) Review Design Guidelines as you design your project to ensure compliance with the guidelines.

2) Review the sign ordinance to ensure compliance with the zoning ordinance

2) Submit appropraite applications to reviewing body.

At this time we are not funding projects outside of the Everett or Glendale Square areas. However, we recommend you consider these guidelines as you develop your project.

Was your project approved?

NO

YES

Congratulations - make sure you have received your buidling permit and/or sign permit before construction begins!

Review Process

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

Source: City of Everett, via DHCD

Develop Facade Improvement Program

Category		Private Realm
Location		RRP Study Area, with potential to expand to Fall River's other commercial areas
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Medium American Recovery Act
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Medium Requires buy-in from and some work on behalf of business and commercial property owners.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of applicants to program Number of improved facade features Change in sales by businesses following program participation Sustained program participation over time
Partners & Resources		City of Fall River MassDevelopment/TDI Fall River Building Department Fall River Redevelopment Authority Viva Fall River Business owners and commercial property owners

Diagnostic	Before and since COVID-19, downtown business facades have fallen into various states of disrepair. Some, even if well-kept, detract from what could be a more inviting, warm downtown pedestrian environment, with unclear signage, lack of lighting, or lack of windows. Facades along N. and S. Main Streets and their cross streets could more effectively offer shade and lighting to passers-by, stir up interest to would-be visitors, and contribute to a more lively streetlife. The restrictions and challenges associated with COVID-19 asked businesses to individually reassess, in many ways, how they present themselves to potential customers. As a whole, as restrictions and behaviors related to COVID-19 change, downtown business clusters want to find ways to draw people back downtown.
Action Item	Develop guidelines for downtown facades, addressing • Windows • Awnings • Signage
Process	The process steps include: • Talk to business owners, commercial landlords, other stakeholders about which components of storefronts to include in the program -- where there is both a need and a gap in funding/guidance. • Research best practices and identify appropriate program structure, scope, and processes. • Identify funding streams that are accessible to interested businesses and do not have requirements that would preclude key businesses from participating • Identify top priority properties to serve as early successes, proof-of-concept • Identify means of choosing next round of properties • Manage implementation *(continued on next page)*

Process, continued

The program can provide grants or loans to property owners/businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate for reluctant property owners, while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Some communities have indicated that requiring a match from the property owner may create longer-term support of the program. If the property owners are less interested in the program, Fall River might consider offering grants to the first 3-5 participants to sign up (depending on resources) and transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This method would also allow the City to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area. Education of all people involved in the program needs to be an ongoing component. A municipality that is short on project management resources should consider hiring a dedicated staff member or consultant to manage this program.Finally, Fall River should consider streamlining approvals of projects under this program to reduce the time needed for implementation.

Precedent

SIGN AND FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - ASHLAND, MA

Program application.
Source: Town of Ashland, MA

- Town Contact: Beth Reynolds, Economic Development Director, breynolds@ashlandmass.com
- Funding by: Home Rule petition for annual appropriation and Home Rule petition forrevolving fund – both approved by Town Meeting.
- Structure: 50% match up to $5,000
- Characteristics:
  - Preferred target area (high traffic streets) but is open to all businesses in Ashland.
  - Includes building improvements (accessibility, signs, awnings, painting).
  - Includes site improvements (parking lots, planters, landscaping)

Texas Star Retail Store
106 W. Columbia

Project Summary

Scope of work
- New signage

Costs
- Façade Improvement loan + grant: $5,060

Notable Outcome
"Without the Main Street grant & the purchase of our new sign we would not be experiencing the huge growth of customers into our store."—Tammy Barbee, owner

Before

After

214-216 Main St.

Project Summary

Scope of work
- Masonry and mortar repair of the façade brick

Costs
- Total project cost: $16,000
- Façade Improvement loan + grant: $8,800

Before   After

TMSP Rendering

HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT REVOLVING FUND

This is a state-by-state program. In 2016, Texas adopted, and Maine did in 2019.

The Historic Commercial District Revolving Fund provided small revolving loans to support highly visible facade improvements to buildings and storefronts in Gardiner, Biddeford, and Skowhegan. Improvements ranged from brick cleaning to full-facade rehabilitation. The Fund provided 3-year 0% interest loans to business and building owners.

This is not a funding source, but an example of a program that could serve as a model for communities with a significant number of historic buildings in their commercial centers.

The Texas program includes a PDF of before-and-after pictures, the scope of work, and the cost for each building, selections from which are featured here.

This program also serves as a reminder that historic photos of a downtown can be used to as a base for developing design guidelines for the program, reinforcing characteristics specific and unique to each community.

Adopt Permenant Outdoor Dining Permitting Process and Guidance

Category		Private Realm
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Low
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Medium Siting conflicts with parking, pedestrian and bike infrastructure.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of applicants for permits Number of restaurants offering outdoor dining Change in sales of restaurants after expanding outdoor dining program
Partners & Resources		Viva Fall River City of Fall River Future Downtown Business Organization Private businesses

Outdoor dining configuration, Spring 2021
Source: Stantec

Diagnostic	The COVID-19 pandemic required quick operational changes by restaurants, and outdoor dining was one form of quick pivot to respond to the needs and interests of staff and diners alike -- to offer dining options to diners of various comfort levels and lower risk of transmission to staff. Recognizing the potential long-term benefits of outdoor dining to economic development and business resilience, many communities are looking for ways to make COVID-19 era outdoor dining solutions permanent and further expansion easier. Even as COVID-19 related concerns and restrictions change, the customer base's interest in outdoor dining options is anticipated to remain. A permanet permitting system is currently being developed in Fall River.
Action Item	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement Key considerations: Location: Sidewalk, or on-street parking areas? Simplicity of permitting process
Process	The process steps include: • Engage stakeholders to understand needs, barriers to uptake, issues with current outdoor dining permitting system. • Research best practices related to easy-uptake, efficient outdoor dining permitting programs • Develop and distribute guidance and technical assistance related to types of outdoor dining solutions (whether on sidewalk or on-street parking); how to fund; where to buy furniture; adjusting business operations to account for new/different service. See LRRP Outdoor Dining Toolkit to start. • Adopt new permitting system

Guidance from DHCD's Outdoor Dining Toolkit: Streamlining the Outdoor Dining Permitting Process

When we say "streamline the process," it can include all or some of the following goals:

1. Offer a single application for businesses to apply for permits and licenses to provide outdoor dining and retail.
2. Offer an online application to help businesses save time.
3. Provide a checklist of all requirements.
4. Provide a liaison at City or Town Hall to guide businesses through the outdoor dining and retail rules and requirements.
5. Create a short-track or condensed timeline for permitting and approvals by coordinating Town or City inspections and reviews.
6. Provide clear design guidelines and other requirements that take the guesswork out of providing outdoor dining and retail.
7. Offer bulk purchasing of common items needed for outdoor dining and retail to get better prices for businesses and standardize select items that may be hard or confusing to source.

These approaches aren't mutually exclusive and you may choose to combine various methods of streamlining applications. For instance, some communities will offer a single, online application and also provide a short-tracked permitting and inspections process. If they offer design guidelines and a complete Toolkit for businesses (using this Toolkit as a guide, of course!), that's one more way to streamline the entire process for businesses.

A summary guide to these approaches follows. Further details can be found in the LRRP Outdoor Dining Guide, as can information about providing design and materials guidelines to businesses and making temporary outdoor dining regulations permanent.

Offer a single application for businesses to apply for permits and licenses to provide outdoor dining and retail.
Creating a single application makes a simple process for businesses and municipal staff. A single application replaces all other permit and license forms that would typically be required for outdoor dining or retail. One requiired application also gives assurances to businesses that they are not missing any key steps.

Elements to include in a single application:
- Offer application by seating type/location/space ownership
- Offer an online option
- Provide a checklist of all requirements
- List any separate permits that may be required
- Provide design guidelines
- Offer guidance regarding alcohol sales and service
- Provide key dates and timeline for review and approvals

Some municipalities opt to incorporate all types of outdoor seating into a single application and others have a different application depending on the type. For example, Brookline, MA has a single application on which the applicant selects their proposed outdoor dining type classified by location. Categorizing applications by the proposed location or by ownership of the space (public or private) makes good sense as different considerations (and different municipal permits and review) come into play if seating is proposed for the street or a sidewalk.

Provide a checklist of all requirements.
To help businesses organize all of the materials and information they will need to successfully apply for an outdoor dining or retail permit, it is useful to provide a checklist of required items. A clearly defined checklist will decrease chances for confusion and enable the applicant to organize the proper materials in advance, rather than having to start and stop the application to seek out necessary documentation. The checklist should be as succinct and easy to understand as possible.

It is important to explicitly identify any required or optional elements that need a separate permit application from the business. It is up to the discretion of the municipality to decide which elements to include as part of the primary application and which require separate permitting. When possible, streamline the process by designating pre-approval for certain equipment and models that have been vetted to remove uncertainty on the part of the businesses. Common examples of things that may require separate municipal approval/permitting include:

- Tents/Canopies
- Outdoor Heaters
- Platforms
- Sidewalk Use/Obstruction

Offer an online application.
Online applications help ease the process for businesses and can be done two ways:
If your municipality already has an online form center or portal for submitting permit applications, this is a streamlined way to allow applicants to attach any necessary uploads directly to their application and submit all in one place.

If you don't have a public portal for applications and other submittals, an alternative option is to provide fillable PDFs that applicants can submit by email along with any other necessary attachments.

Hard copy applications should also be available upon request for applicants who may lack internet access or proficiency.

Provide a liaison at City Hall.
Designating someone as the single point person at City or Town Hall can help ease the process for businesses that have questions about outdoor dining permitting and provide one stop shopping. This liaison can also serve as the coordinator of staff and department requirements, providing a consistent presence and source of information. The liaison can also report back on barriers or challenges in the permitting process and initiative changes in response to real time feedback from businesses and public sector collaborators.

Create a short-track or condensed timeline for permitting and approvals.
By coordinating Town or City inspections and reviews, and possibly eliminating or shortening some public review processes, the overall timeline from application to permit approval can be shortened, helping restaurants make quick pivots to retain customers and staff. In addition, providing clear timelines for permitting, from application submittal through inspections and approvals, helps businesses stay on track and prevents misunderstandings and missed deadlines. Time is money for businesses; important information to include in the timeline includes:

- Date the application process opens (if applications are seasonal)
- Overall estimated time from submission to municipal decision
- Outline any public review periods that are required

The application deadline and any intermediary deadlines, such as site inspections, municipal grants, or materials for loan (if applicable) When the outdoor dining/retail season begins and ends (if applicable

Provide clear design guidelines and other requirements including alcohol licensing checklist of all requirements

Businesses have expertise in menus, food, dining experiences for customers, service, and in the case of outdoor retail, displays and signage. The design and construction of outdoor dining and retail can stymie the most sophisticated business owner; it's just not part of their expertise and experience. Guidelines can help!

Previously, an application to extend the licensed premises to serve alcohol in a new outdoor area had to be approved by both a municipality's local licensing authority (LLA) and the ABCC. However, per Bill S.2475, An Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency, LLA's have been granted the authority to approve the extension of licensed premises until April 1, 2022 without the need for ABCC approval. This means allowing alcohol service in a public outdoor space, including a space across the sidewalk, is fully at the discretion of the LLA. After approval, the LLA must notify the ABCC of the amended license.

As with outdoor dining in general, businesses that have been granted an outdoor extension of their premises for alcohol service through this expedited process are presently scheduled to revert to their pre-approval status after April 1, 2022. If a business is seeking to extend their premises for outdoor alcohol service beyond April 1, 2022, they must follow the ABCC's usual regulations for Alteration of Premises/Change of Location. This consists of submitting an application to the LLA for approval, which then gets forwarded to the ABCC for approval.

Offer bulk purchasing of common items needed for outdoor dining and retail.

Some equipment or materials may be specialized and also need to meet safety requirements. Items such as outdoor heaters have to meet fire safety or electrical codes, and the storage of propane fuel, if used, can be complicated. Additionally, items such as platforms to raise on-street parking spaces to sidewalk height are fairly standardized but require construction knowledge and structural design. To get better prices for businesses and standardize select items that may be hard or confusing to source, towns and cities may choose to bulk purchase items on behalf of businesses.

BEST PRACTICE

Providing Welcoming Outdoor Dining

Location: Salem, MA

Best Practice:
Salem, MA's Welcoming Outdoor Dining Initiative

City of Salem's Mayor's Office worked with Salem Economic Development Rapid Recovery Task Force and Creative Collective to address the immediate need for increased outdoor dining capacity brought on by COVID-19. The program allowed restaurants to stay open and in business, and was a useful marketing tool for participating businesses.

The outdoor dining program was a successful transformation of public and private spaces into outdoor "streeteries" for the benefit of restaurants and the Salem community, including residents and tourists.

Over 50 restaurants participated in the program in 2020, and 56 have applied for the 2021 season. Local artists were employed with to transform protective jersey barriers into works of art.

With an eye towards making the program permanent, the design and implementation of these spaces has already evolved to be more safe, accessible, usable, and attractive.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Initial quick roll-out showed the community it is possible to transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant outdoor dining.
- Restaurant owners and managers are keen to keep the outdoor dining.
- Most community leaders and members love the program as demonstrated by several surveys conducted during 2020.

Outdoor dining in Salem, MA
Source: DHCD

CHALLENGES
- The transition from temporary to permanent will require significant investments in design and construction.
- Parking is a real and perceived loss for businesses and people driving into Downtown Salem.
- Considerations related to universal design, public health, and building codes.

PROCESS
- Establish a core group of stakeholders to shepherd the project and to meet weekly to get the project started.
- Hire a project manager with restaurant community connections. In Salem, John Andrews, Owner / Chief Creative Officer of Creative Collective managed, coordinated, and helped implement the program for 2020 and the evolution of the program in 2021. Creative Collective was hired by the City of Salem. The project manager brings together the stakeholders from City departments, restaurants, and local artists to create functional, safe, community minded, and aesthetically pleasing installations for outdoor dining.

- Communicate with each individual restaurant owner or manager to establish their needs and possible contribution (materials or labor).
- Communication with any available channels (from email to social media
- to going door to door) is key.
- Create a marketing strategy with a mix of different communication methods. Examples: posting to Facebook groups, direct messaging on social media, door to door campaign, and phone calls.
- Communicate design guidelines for best practices related to public health, universal design, and building code compliant design.
- Determine if pedestrian right-of-way needs redesign, new accommodation.
- Ensure full accessibility with universal design.
- In 2021, obtain City approval based on an automated application under the viewpoint portal.
- Aid and assist as needed in the buildout of individual spaces.
- Determine items to be provided by the City. In Salem, the City provided jersey barriers heaters, and the City also provided labor and material support on an individual restaurant basis.
- Coordinate with Department of Public Works on delivery and placement of jersey barriers and heaters.
- Hire local artists to paint barriers and coordinate mural with aesthetic input from individual businesses. The City of Salem hired the artists.
- Create a plan for storage and winterization.
- Meet with core stakeholders to iterate for the following season, learn from mistakes, and evolve the program.

Outdoor dining in Salem, MA
Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

Highlight Local Artists through a Collaborative Public Art Program

Category		Culture & Arts
Location		Fall River
Origin		RRP Open House Groups like Creative Arts Network have recently been championing a similar model.
Budget		Medium
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Medium Many in Fall River see a need to convey a stronger local identity and stir up community pride, and Fall River has some strong arts and culture infrastructure, as highlighted by events like Fabric Fest. But the collaborative spirit between arts and cultural organizations could be stronger, and there is frustration among some veterans of the arts and culture effort in Fall River with what can feel like reinventing-the-wheel.
Key Performance Indicators		Number and diversity of installations Program engagement levels
Partners & Resources		City of Fall River Fall River Arts and Culture Coalition Creative Arts Network Local artists, cultural organizations, business owners

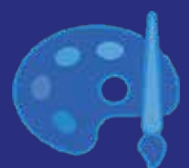|	
Diagnostic	While Fall River has seen a number of successful (temporary and permanent) public art installations, there is a need for more collaboration and means of sustainaing public art initiatives over the long term. Fall River has strong creative energy, but it needs formal outlets for support. A recent proposal developed by the Creative Arts Network for a public art policy reflects this need.
	This initiative is motivated in part by Fall River's interest in conveying a stronger identity to visitors and leveraging the underappreciated parts of its rich history to do so. Clarifying and implementing a public art strategy would be part of a larger effort to get people excited about returning downtown after COVID-19 slowed foot traffic.
Action Item	Assemble a public art task force representing diverse interests to engage the public and partners to identify key sites and Fall River storylines to prioritize in the curation and installation of public art around downtown and beyond.
	Use a unified public art master plan to identify short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to highlight Fall River's creative community, reinforce community pride, and convey a strong local identity.
Process	A public art task force (or similarly-charged body) would provide leadership necessary to identify opportunities and guide implementation and maintenace as Fall River's artistic character evolves. The task force could:
	• Identify partners and stakeholders
	• Make connections between existing policies and intiatives and the need for more formal public art support and direction
	• Clarify the scope of mediums and venues involved in the public art initiative.
	• Develop a public art master plan, setting out short-, medium-, and long-term strategies, and engaging partners and the public early and often.
	• Revisit and revise the plan's strategies and scope with some frequency

Public Art Program

Location: Melrose, MA

Best Practice:
Public Art Program, Melrose MA

DESCRIPTION

Selbert Perkins Design collaborated with the City and community stakeholders to develop a wayfinding and creative placemaking master plan for the City of Melrose including:

- Wayfinding Analysis
- Preliminary Design Concepts
- Art Opportunities
- Call-for-Art
- Art Program Logo

The entire project, including was conducted during Covid-19 with over 700 participants. Community engagement was conducted in partnership with Civic Space Collaborative. In February of 2020, the City of Melrose extended a solicitation for quotes regarding

Crowd at Public Art Porgram event.
Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

a wayfinding study & design services. The scope of work discussed in the solicitation described development of a multi-modal wayfinding system that speaks to the city's past and present that will provide wayfinding for pedestrians, cyclists & vehicles. The City of Melrose received funding from the Massachusetts Marketing Partnership & the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism for this effort. Selbert Perkins Design, in collaboration with Civic Space Collaborative, won the bid with the City of Melrose in March of 2020. The proposal submitted to the City of Melrose met all the conditions of the original solicitation and was modified after being awarded to include a larger outreach effort to the city's residents. In addition to the amplified outreach, public art would be an important element of the placemaking and wayfinding effort. In late March, the COVID-19 virus became a global pandemic. The project team adapted to the crisis, pivoting to web based resources for interviewing city residents, project meetings, committee and focus group meetings, as well as a virtual community meeting with the City's residents. "The selected art projects are unique and diverse and will enhance the vitality of the City's public spaces and promote economic development, which were goals of the initiative" says Mayor Brodeur. "I am excited to showcase and support the amazing talent in our community through this effort."
Working closely with Mayor Paul Brodeur, the Planning Department, and project committee, we were able to successfully complete the project in 9 months.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendations for signage and wayfinding include:

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

PROCESS

- Understand who the stakeholders and decision-makers will be.
- Form a committee to oversee the process.
- Visit the site to audit of existing conditions.
- Conduct a Wayfinding Analysis including; multi-modal circulation, main
- decision points, and key destinations.
- Research the history of the place, uncover stories that might inspire the design.

- Identify opportunities for art/placemaking.
- Engage with stakeholders and the public to understand needs and preferences. If possible, create a survey and/or focus groups to get feedback from a larger cross-section of people.
- Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide design efforts.
- Design concepts for brand and wayfinding elements.
- Develop the preferred design into a family of sign types with materials, colors, etc.
- Provide a sign location plan and order of magnitude budget.
- Create public art criteria and develop a call-for-art to identify qualified public artists.
- Release the call for art or bid and select artists/vendors.
- Oversee installation.

Mural installation in Melrose
Source: Silvia López Chavez, via City of Melrose

Partner with Local Creative Community to Activate Underused Spaces

Category		Culture/Arts
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		City of Fall River
Budget		Medium Potential funding sources include: • MA TDI Creative Catalyst • Shared Streets and Spaces
Timeframe		Medium
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators		• Number of spaces activated • Number of visitors to activated spaces • Number of new/expanded events hosted
Partners & Resources		• Viva Fall River • Fall River Artsa nd Culture Coalition, in partnership with One SouthCoast Chamber • Creative Arts Network • Local artists, cultural organizations, business owners

Illustration of a small evening concert in Gerald Lawton Park.
Source: Stantec

Diagnostic	COVID-19 meant popular events were cancelled. Ever-changing entertainment options and new events could draw people back downtown and encourage them to stay a while.
Action Item	Build on existing and develop new relationships with the local creative and cultural community to: • Temporarily activate underused public and private spaces with performances, interactive art, games, food vendors • Create/Expand downtown events, especially in the colder months
Process	The process steps include: • Review best practices, begin to identify potential barriers or assets. • Meet with arts and culture organizations, studios, collectives to identify points of alignment and get a sense of what they have interest in and capacity for. Discuss current event permitting process and potential barriers. • Research means of addressing permitting or other administrative challenges to increasing event frequency. • Meet with potential host businesses, landlords, and institutions to get a sense of who has interest, and in what, to identify program branding barriers, support needs, time and resource limitations. Identify potential priority sites to target. • Clarify roles - accounting for program development, marketing, and long-term maintenance. • Work with partners to advertise events

Best Practice:
Rice + Larpenteur Alliance Activation

The Rice and Larpenteur Alliance was created to support the community and commercial interests of the low-moderate income, multicultural community that converges at the intersection of three municipalities. The central commercial district was both bustling and suffering from neglect and bad press in large part due to one business. The goals of these events in general were to:

- Generate new, lasting positive activity and visitation in the district
- Strengthen the newly launched brand for the area and reputation broadly
- Test and build support for larger capital improvements

Key opportunities included
- Building off the momentum and buy-in from the first event the year prior

Challenges included
- The need to take a concentrated event format and spread it out throughout the district
- Generate positive activity while also minimizing unsafe congregation

- Generating participation by and benefits for small businesses, especially BIPOC owned ones
- Ensuring those from communities who spoke one of 5 non English languages felt invited and included
- Overcoming negative press from high profile incident that occurred at the longstanding bad behaving business

Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

Rice + Larpenteur: Activation and Retention in a Suburban, Multicultural Community

Location: Roseville, Maplewood, at St. Paul, MN

ACTION ITEMS

The COVID-safe approach to the events was to create a main event hub that then supported attendees to visit businesses and other activities throughout the district.

Action 1. Expand the event spaces and programming as a benefit, not a bug. While we couldn't have everyone come to a single site, we used it as an opportunity toget attendees to visit area businesses and organizations directly - which in many ways created even more benefit for them. This was done by creating an event hub that had live music and info tents that distributed district passports (with rewards to visiting all the sites) and branded bags to support shopping. The district was visibly activated by attendees who were walking between sites holding their branded bags. The event blended fun, food, community engagement, and services for those of all ages.

Action 2. Lead with equity. Business are often seen as a source for event sponsorship revenue. As a district dominated by new and BIPOC owned businesses we wanted to ensure that the event series was as beneficial to these entities as possible. As such, small businesses were meaningfully compensated provide event features such as free food samples, live performances, and interactive demonstrations. For promotion, we both partnered with organizations and used communication channels in the native languages of those who lived in the surrounding neighborhoods to promote the event.

Action 3. Use one-time events to drive long term improvements. Many changes to the physical environment are often possible during larger events that are more difficult to put into place during non-event days. Each of the events featured physical pilots that tested out concepts that stakeholders sought

Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

to implement in larger ways going forward these included: public art, a new plaza, new patio seating areas for restaurants, expanded landscaping, seating areas, and wayfinding.

Action #4 – Leverage positive events to create new narratives. Despite much good that occurs in the district, most mentions of the area were dominated by criminal activity that occurred at one business. The event series created reasons for the media to cover the district and served the change the narrative for the broader public

PROCESS

- Establish shared goals for client, communities, small businesses, and other stakeholders
- Recruit event committee, roles, and meeting schedule
- Create event name, concept, and partner recruitment one-pager
- Conduct outreach to businesses and community organizations to host event sites and/or provide event activations
- Create promotional materials
- Secure 3rd party vendors and performers and stakeholder contributions
- Finalize site map, furnishings, supplies, give-aways, and volunteer shirts or hats
- Create passport and onsite signage
- Finalize day-of plan and program with staff and volunteer roles
- Notify press
- Execute event and track KPIs
- Create summery report with successes, lessons learned, and opportunities for increased impact in years to come

EVENT FEATURES

- Concerts and tents for participating nonprofit organizations
- Two storefront patio expansions
- Permanent planter improvements
- Art installation at local park pavilion
- Free food samples given out by compensated local businesses
- Event passport
- Event poster, lawn signs, postcards
- Gift and Go Event
- Shop Local Guide
- Gift bags with local business gift cards, swag, cookies, branded PPE (mask, sanitizer)

Develop a Vacant Retail Storefront Tool to Support Tenant Recruitment

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Small (<$50,000), with potential for expansion Maintain vacancy database Develop recruitment strartegy Funds to incentivize moves (fit-out, lease provisions) .
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Low Market risk/perception
Key Performance Indicators		Development of tool Frequency of vacancy data collection/updates Number of businesses matched to vacant storefronts using tool Diversity of new business owners in preivously vacant storefronts
Partners & Resources		Viva Fall River City of Fall River Building owners MassDevelopment/TDI

Diagnostic	There are a handful of vacancies in Downtown Fall River. There is a desire to increase entrepreneurial and new business growth within Downtown Fall River, some of which could fill these downtown vacancies. The filling of vacancies can serve as a signal that Downtown is an exciting place to be, as COVID-19 restrictions and behaviors change and foot traffic picks up. Data were collected as part of the LRRP diagnostic process to track vacancy, and there is an opportunity to leverage this data to match new and emerging businesses with vacant storefronts. The initial development of a vacancy tracking tool is needed, as is a tenant matching strategy and plan for maintenance and updates to the tool in the future.
Action Item	Build a tool around the existing vacancy database so that LRRP data might be used to match new tenants with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying Downtown's tenant mix and activating empty properties.
Process	The process steps include: • Identify lead • Develop vacancy tracking tool • Seek additional funding for maintain ongoing vacancy tracking system • Develop marketing campaign to attract new developers and businesses • Link aspiring entrepreneurs to state training programs and scholarships for entrepeneurial workshops • Determine whether financial assistance is needed to enhance recruitment efforts, and if so, identify a budget, funding sources, and requirements for funding. • Monitor progress and adjust as needed • Determine who will manage and update the vacancy tool, and with what frequency

Create a Vacant Storefront Program

Category	Tenant Mix
Location	RRP Study Area
Origin	RRP process
Budget	Medium
Timeframe	Short
Risk	Medium
Key Performance Indicators	Change in the number of underutilized/vacant parcels Number of participating businesses Number of patrons/visitors to the spaces Revenue generated Change in revenue at neighboring storefronts
Partners & Resources	City of Fall River Viva Fall River One SouthCoast Chamber MassDevelopment TDI

Diagnostic	There are a handful of vacancies in Downtown Fall River. There is a desire to increase entrepreneurial and new business growth within Downtown Fall River, some of which could fill these downtown vacancies. The filling of vacancies can serve as a signal that Downtown is an exciting place to be, as COVID-19 restrictions and behaviors change and foot traffic picks up. A combination of new commercial activity, art installations, and community uses would attract the largest variety of visitors and customers as well as create new destinations for local residents.
Action Item	Creating a Vacant Storefront Program can be broken into three phases: • Phase 1: Creating the Structure of the Vacant Storefront Program (Estimated Timeline: 1-2 months) • Phase 2: Attracting Property Owners/Selecting Locations and Funding Activations (Estimated Timeline: 2-4 Months) • Phase 3: Implementation
Process	**Phase 1: Creating the Structure of the Vacant Storefront Program (Estimated Timeline: 1-2 months)** **Defining Goals:** The Project's goals will drive implementation and activities. Possible goals include: bringing more people to Downtown, supporting existing businesses, seed new businesses in vacant spaces, creatig work/studio space for community organizations or artists. **Identifying Target Audience:** The public should be at the heart of any vacant storefront program. Understanding who will want to visit the spaces and who you want to attract will direct the project's decision-making and help identify the type(s) of businesses/organizations to invite to participate in the program (both as landlords and types of activations/stores). **Defining Key Metrics and Establishing Baseline Data:** Similar to defining project goals, the key metrics will help inform project implementation. Possible metrics include: decrease in underutilized/vacant parcels, the number of participating businesses, number of patrons/visitors to the spaces, revenue generation, increased revenues in neighboring businesses, number of community activations, and the community's perception of Downtown Fall River. *(continued on next page)*

Process, continued

Baseline data (both readily available and that can be easily/quickly collected) can help determine the metrics most valuable to Downtown Fall River.

Determining Target Locations for Activations: The Project's goals will help drive the location(s) selected for the vacant storefront program. Pop-ups in vacant storefronts near struggling businesses will help boost those struggling businesses whereas pop-ups near thriving businesses will benefit from the existing foot traffic drawn to these popular businesses. The project team will need to balance these impacts to benefit everyone, allowing visors to experience the thriving businesses and support Downtown's businesses that are struggling.

Gathering Project Partners: In addition to the primary project partners, there are a variety of other organizations that can help move the vacant storefront program forward. These potential partners include existing businesses and community organizations that may use or benefit from the activations. Depending on the pilot's target location, partner organizations could include nearby businesses, non-profits, arts organizations, office buildings, or others. Any organization that has a stake in the program's success, or could benefit from the program, is a potential partner.

Determining Funding Incentives: An important Phase I activity is identifying and securing funding sources. Providing adequate funding allows the program to incentivize owners of vacant storefronts to participate in the program. It is advised that the program start with the soft incentives of marketing spaces to permanent tenants and improving the district.

Documenting Program Plan: Program documentation should include all program information, partners, duration, goals, key metrics, etc. It should also include the marketing strategy used to reach out to businesses and property owners as well as outlining the way the program and activations/spaces will be marketed at launch.

Phase 2: Attracting Property Owners/Selecting Locations and Funding Activations (Estimated Timeline: 2-4 Months)

Phase 2A: Attracting Property Owners (Estimated Timeline: 2-4 months, depending on existing relationships with property owners)

Attracting Partners - Go Local: Popup activations and vacant storefront programs are most successful in recruiting locally-owned properties. There is a higher likelihood of participation from property owners who are also members of the community. Using collective-action centric messaging (we are all in this together, the district's reputation and appeal is not a zero sum game) can help encourage participation. Downtown activation benefits the entire community. Communicate that the program is a way to meaningfully enhance the building/landlord's reputation as one who cares about and supports Downtown Fall River.

Pitch the Program as Marketing Their Leasable Space: Successful popup and vacant storefront programs undo themselves - that is, the temporary uses boost foot traffic, generating new leads for tenants, and resulting in new leases. The value statement to property owners for why they should allow low- or no-cost use of their spaces is that this use does not preclude them from seeking permanent tenants; in fact, it can help attract permanent tenants and temporary activations may convert

to permanent uses. Additionally, the popup/ vacant storefront program activates spaces that are not generating revenue.

Keep Costs Low and Simplify Logistics: Particularly as the program is launching, it is important to make it easy for businesses, artists, community groups, building/property owners, and others to participate in the program. The submission/application form should request contact information, level and type of activity they are interested in (including whether they will need a closed storefront or space that is open to visitors, operating hours/times, days of the week, etc.). The form can outline the financial incentives available to support the business/property owners. Identifying the incentives for participation may be particularly important for attracting the first few business/property owners. These early participants can serve as proof of concept to attract others. The program should clearly communicate implementation and management strategies to make sure that businesses, artists, community groups, building/property owners, and other participants feel comfortable.

**Phase 2B: Finding Activations
(Estimated Timeline: 2-4 months)**

Find Spaces Before Activations: The recruitment of building/property owners should occur before activations are recruited. Recruiting the spaces first allows project organizers to know the types of spaces and availability of these spaces to help match the activations with the spaces. There is an added benefit to having an early understanding of what landlords are willing to host. It is important to have spaces committed to participation before starting to recruit the activations.

Community Needs Survey: Conduct a community needs survey to identify the amenities/activities missing from Downtown Fall River. It may be possible to incorporate these amenities and activities into vacant storefronts as part of the pilot program.

**Phase 3: Implementation
(Estimated Timeline: 2-4 months)**
A pilot program should run at least two months, especially if interior activations and popup stores are planned. The time and effort necessary to prepare a property and start a business, create/install an artistic installation, or other activation should be balanced with the length of stay to make the project worthwhile. At the same time, the building/property owner will want assurances that if a lease becomes available, they will not be tied into this temporary activation. A minimum 2-month contract followed by a month-to-month arrangement can serve both parties.

Program Management:
For vacant properties and interior activations, consider a third-party management entity. Given the low revenue generating potential, having a third-party management entity with a master use agreement or lease for the vacant properties can simplify the process and provide use of their existing insurance capacity.

The third-party should enter into use agreements with the users of the vacant spaces that defines rules and regulations, but does not put the logistical or insurance burden on the users who are likely unfamiliar or ill-equipped to take on logistical hurdles for short term uses.

The third-party acts as the recipient of the sublease and uses existing organizational insurance and capacity to navigate any permitting needs and building owner

requirements. The third-party could also cover utilities to lessen the burden even more for the building/property owners and short-term use tenants.

The use agreement should stipulate the minimum and maximum operational hours needed to produce the activation goals of the program. However, at the beginning/as you're trying to build demand, flexibility is probably best.The use agreement should have clauses about what would trigger immediate termination of the agreement, such as prohibited uses. This is a strategy to mitigate activity that the building/property owner or third-party master agreement holder believes will significantly increase their liability.

The use agreement should also define what the landlord will provide (access to the building, furniture, fixtures, equipment etc.) and what the master agreement holder and end user will be responsible for providing.

In the case of vacant storefront activations, it is important to promise at least 60 days of occupation to make it worthwhile for the short-term user and then have a rolling 30 day expulsion clause (without cause) going forward to allow for the space to be rented and temporary uses to cease.

It is common for challenges to arise from a lack of communication or overly reactive building/property owners, so relationship building at the program's start (and before) is critical to the success and stability of storefront activations.

Regulatory/Permitting Considerations:

- It can be challenging to use a vacant building that does not have a certificate of occupancy. If that is the case, target this location as an exterior-only activation (facade improvements, art installations, community messaging, local business highlights, etc.)
- If the building/property owner/landlord is looking to rent space but cannot because of the economy or other outside force, a short-term internal-use can be a win for both the landlord and community.
- The time burden of a difficult regulatory process can prevent efforts like these from getting off the ground. From the city's perspective, they should work to create as easy of a permitting process as possible that still ensures people's safety. Programs that are able to access blanket permitting - that is, once the permitting is done at the start, it is set for a period of time instead of the program or its participants needing to file separate permits for each engagement.
- If the program has a third-part management organization or is otherwise able to establish a master use agreement/lease, they can take responsibility for permitting.

Financial incentives could include: $500+ bonus for the first building/property owner who signs up, lump sum payments to each building/property owner to help ready their interior for use, waiving permitting fees, rent-pass through vouchers for artists/entrepreneurs to procure space from landlords in agreements that look more like traditional leases.

Best Practice:
Storefront Activation in Australia

Renew Newcastle was an effort started by an urbanist and arts and events organizer to fill vacant storefronts with new creative industries in a post-industrial city.

PROCESS

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

Many of the artisans and entrepreneurs went on to rent the space.
*Source: http://www.edwinarichards.com/*

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

BEST PRACTICE

Connect Artists, Entrepreneurs, and Makers/Crafters with Landlords to Fill Vacant Storefronts

Cultural/Arts

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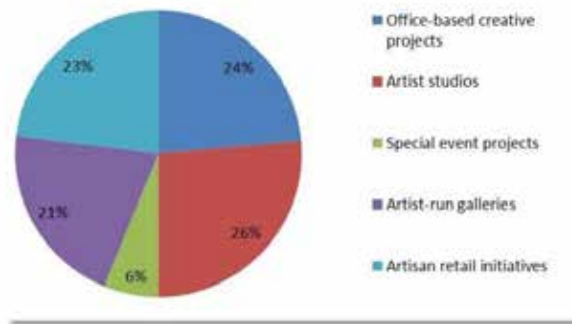
Source: *An Economic Evaluation of the Renew Newcastle Project, CofFEE, 2016*

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

STEPS

- Set up a non-profit with a board of directors that come from a wide range of backgrounds including local business, arts, community representatives. An alternative is to work under the auspices of an existing organization such as the BID, Main Streets Program, or local Chamber of Commerce.
- Survey local restaurants, artisans, makers, creatives (look on Etsy), to see who would benefit for having a temporary brick and mortar location in downtown.
- Asses ownership of all the vacant storefronts in downtown.
- Meet with planning department to discuss opportunities for temporary uses that would not require changing zoning or getting variances (avoid applications and formal legislative process as much as possible).
- Approach owners of vacant properties and ask if spaces could be "borrowed" on a very short-term basis for creatives to sell products.
- Use a Rolling 30-day license agreement.
- The Nonprofit or other entity manages relationship with property owners and works with the City to create a short-term agreement that avoids changing zoning.

- Nonprofit also carries insurance for all of the temporary projects.
- With temporary leases secure, clean up/ renovate store fronts.
- Help local small business/artisans move into the spaces.
- When there are several storefronts occupied in one location, host events to garner attention

An economic impact study conducted in 2015-16 looked at the value of the following impacts:
- Creation of jobs and skills developed
- Conversion to commercial leases
- Volunteer engagement
- Mitigation of blight
- Improved business and community confidence
- Improved regional brand

It was determined that for the annual budget of $208,000 Australian Dollars for Renew Australia, economic impact across the above areas was valued at a little over $3m Australian Dollars for a benefit-cost ratio of 14:1.
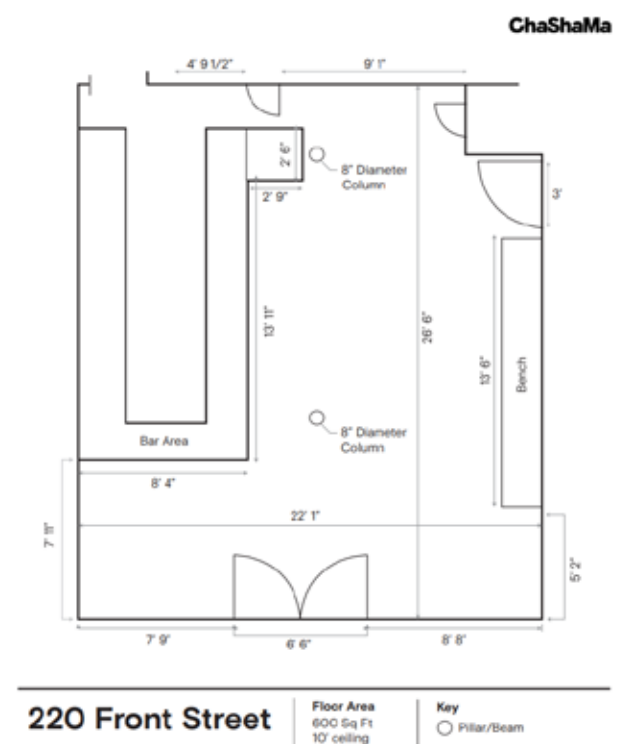
Best Practice:
ChaShaMa's Sotrefront Startup Program, with NYC Department of Small Business Services

With an increased amount of vacant space in New York City during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City partnered with ChaShaMa, a not-for-profit that generally offers space to artists, to create short term opportunities for businesses to test out a brickand-mortar location in commercial areas across the city.

This creates opportunity to liven commercial districts with new, short-term businesses, helping landlords to activate their unused space, make the street feel more alive, create increased opportunities for commerce for small, minority and women-owned businesses, and provide no-cost space to businesses otherwise unlikely to be able to afford commercial rents in high traffic commercial corridors.

Challenges of this program currently being addressed are ensuring businesses have commercial storefront opportunities once the

A block from Union Square, this multi-use storefront contains artist studios in the rear and a white box gallery space in the front. This space previously contained an artisan furniture store with exhibition walls for artwork.

Floorplan

Use:
Presentation Space,
Workspace

Amenities:
24 Hour Access, Air
Conditioning, Heating,
Restrooms, Storefront
Window, Track Lighting
Viewable 24/7, WiFi

ChaShaMa

220 Front Street

Floor Area
600 Sq Ft
10' ceiling

Key
○ Pillar/Beam

ChaShaMa's website provides profiles of all vacant sites, including photos, floorplans, and details about potential uses and amenities. Source: ChaShaMa

BEST
PRACTICE

Supporting Entrepreneurs and Commercial Landlords with Pop Up Business Activation

Tenant Mix

Location: New York, NY

no-cost space has ended; supporting businesses with technical assistance such as access to capital and finding affordable, permanent space, and sustainable resourcing of the project for the long term success of small minority and women-owned businesses. The project had a medium budget ($50,000-$200,000), as it required dedicated staff and project subsidies. The project launched within 90 days; space is generally tenanted for 30 – 60 days maximum.

ROLES

Storefront Start-Up is a partnership between a not-for-profit community organization that typically supports artists in accessing work and exhibit space and the NYC Department of Small Business Services to support minority and women-owned businesses in accessing free storefront space (avg 30 days) in high traffic commercial areas.

The non-profit or municipal partner can begin by evaluating vacant space in their commercial corridors and contacting property owners to determine their interest in short term space leases. The organization will have to determine if they can cover necessities for opening a commercial space (such as utilities and wifi) or if a landlord would be willing to provide short term access to these services.

Simultaneously, the lead partner can connect with local businesses in need of space through social media marketing (no to low cost), partnerships with local business serving organizations (such as SBDC's, chambers of commerce) and begin to create a database of businesses interested in short term commercial leases. Essentially, building both the space and potential tenants together will help launch the matches efficiently and quickly

One of ChaShaMa's storefronts
Source: ChaShaMa

The lead organization should also determine business priority – is the program focused on women entrepreneurs? People of color? Create an evaluation tool to match businesses with respective spaces based on a set of priorities. Businesses should receive operating guidelines, a MOU to discuss what they can and can't do with the space, their responsibility to the program, and how long the term of the space use is.

The lead organization should provide as much support to both the landlord and tenant as possible and consider connecting with a local technical assistance provider to help the business leverage the storefront opportunity to their long-term growth.

PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine the strategy to support businesses – are you focused on serving a specific demographic (ex. Women-owned businesses) or sector (retail, design)
- Decide on a criteria on how businesses will be selected for space

- Research and identify vacant storefront properties in communities, particular those commercial corridors that may have high current vacancy rates. Local BIDs or DIDs can help identify vacant properties.
- Connect with property owners of vacant spaces to determine their interest in short-term no-cost lease opportunties, and if so, their terms of use.
- Create a database with notes and updates on available properties and interested businesses.
- Create a standard Memorandum of Understanding to be used as a baseline of agreement between the organization, the property owner, and the business owner. For example: how long will the space be used? Who will pay for buildout costs (if any)? Who will cover utility costs?
- Begin to match businesses with potential vacant spaces. Determine how far in advance businesses would need to be "occupancy ready" and how long landlords would need for the property to be considered "move in condition".
- Support both the business and property owner with the transition into the space; troubleshoot any issues in real time to mitigate any future problems or miscommunications.
- Create social media and marketing opportunities to businesses to let people know they will be in the activated space, with plenty of lead up marketing prior to the move in date.
- Determine further support for the business after the space agreement has expired, if any.

ChaShaMa's listing of vacancies on their website
Source: ChaShaMa

Create Downtown Fall River Retail/Business Support Program

Category		Revenue and Sales
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		Viva Fall River
Budget		Medium One-on-one consultations and implementation funds average $2,000-3000. Recommended to engage 8-10 stores per session
Timeframe		Short (2-3 months)
Risk		Medium Recruiting for retailer participation when time constraints and budget constraints may be a challenge. Language facility--Portuguese in particular -- will likely be needed.
Key Performance Indicators		Creation of active program Successful implementation of recommended improvements More retailers asking to be involved Survey of particpants
Partners & Resources		Viva Fall River MassDevelopment/TDI Local financial institutions Local business organizations and markets Bristol County Economic Development Consultants

Diagnostic	According to business survey results, most retail businesses in Fall River lost revenue, were forced to reduce staff, and witnessed a significant decline in customer traffic since March 2020. While big federal and state programs offered some immediate relief, there is still a need for support addressing long-standing capacity issues laid bare by COVID-19, targeting both individual businesses and the Fall River business community as a whole.
Action Item	Build on work of MassDevelopment through TDI initiative to support existing businesses and new entrepreneurs at every stage to build a cluster of retail activity downtown. Could include: • Business plan competitions • Educational workshops • Creation of an Advisory Committee to understand the needs of existing businesses, lead branding initiatives, and develop a local impact fund

Process	The process steps include:
	• Identify business owners who are in need of assistance
	• Identify needs and most effecitve means of support
	  • Website set-up support?
	  • Point-of-sale set-up support?
	• Perform retail incubation study
	• Communicate a program to help businesses update their businesses and implement store design improvement
	• Work with local financial institutions to use TDI equity funds to support early-stage funding for startups, building on current pilot with Baycoast Bank, Bank 5, and Rockland Trust.

Relevant Study

Rebuilding Main Street After COVID-19: Recommendations For and Reflections From Small- and Mid-Sized American Cities

By Jeff Levine and Emma González Roberts, MIT Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning

This study was designed to understand the long-term needs of local businesses from their perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of local econoimc development officials. Businesses were asked about their short-term priorities, but the focus of the study was on their long-term needs. The results of the study reflected the views of a variety of local businesses. Approximately half of the responding businesses were minority-owned or woman-owned, and almost half had five or fewer employees prior to COVID-19.

While there was a wide range of views from local businesses and officials, a few long-term priorities emerged:

- A top priority for local businesses was for government to provide financial incentives to help them remain competitive as the pandemic recedes. For example. the sign and facade improvement grant program run by the City of Gardner offers 5 year forgivable loans for up to $2,500 for signs, or $15,000 for facades. This program is funded through the City's CDBG program.
- Another high priority for local businesses was the privision of rent or mortgage releif so they could remain in their locations. For example, the Small Business Relief Program, run by the Local Initiative Support Corporation, has provided up to $25,000 in funding for rent and similar expenses for small businesses over the past year. To date, that program has had 12 rounds, totaling $215 million.
- A third priority was for communities to develop a thoughtful and consistent program for public space based on which businesses owners could make long term investment. There was a concern taht changing priorities, such as annual changes to open streets programs or outdoor dining rules, would add uncertainty to future businesses decisions. For example, after a successful pilot project in 2015, Halifax, Nova Scotia redesigned Argyle Street in their downtown as a permanent shared street, allowing businesses to make long-term investments in outdoor dining.
- Finally, local busineses were interested in changes to health, licensing, and zoning codes that would allow their operations to respond quickly to business opportunities. For example, the Town of Freeport, ME, exempts conversations between most restaurants and retail trade uses from site plan review to allow for rapid changes in downtown spaces. Similarly, the City of South Burlington, VT, "flipped" its table of uses in 2016. In their City Center form-based code, there is a list of prohibited uses rather than a list of permitted uses, allowing businesses to change between any use that is not explicitly prohibited.

Report cover.
Source: MIT DUSP

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

BEST PRACTICE

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

Location: Arlington, VA

ReLaunch participant, Rincome Thai Cuisine
Source: ReLaunch website, Rincome Thai Cuisine

ReLaunch is designed to provide service to diverse communities, particularly those that have limited digital infrastructure, making them more exposed to the business decline during COVID-19 business disruptions. It serves business owners whose primarily language is Spanish; service business owners who are immigrants or people of color

COMMUNITY ACTION ITEMS

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

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER ACTION ITEMS

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

PROCESS

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

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

ReVitalize

Are you seeking ways to strengthen your business with assistance in financial management and sourcing capital, branding and marketing, digital presence, business knowledge, legal structures and strategic planning? For more information and to apply.

Learn More

ReBuild

Are you looking for additional tools to streamline and expand your business during the pandemic? Explore the latest free resources to help sustain and grow your business and check back for frequent updates.

Learn More

ReNew

Your online footprint is vital now and in the future. Does your website need a refresher? Can your clients make purchases on your website? Are you using the right tech to expand your opportunities? For more information and to apply.

Learn More

ReLaunch's three components
Source: ReLaunch website

Build Administrative Capacity of the City and Supporting Organizations

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		On-going effort in Fall River, highlighted by RRP process
Budget		Medium
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Medium Will require support from the City and supporting organizations.
Key Performance Indicators		Demonstrated improvements to supporting: Public realm maintenance Public realm improvements Programming Other new initiatives downtown
Partners & Resources		City of Fall River Viva Fall River One SouthCoast Chamber

Diagnostic	The City and partner organizations currently lack the capacity to effectively support maintenance, public realm improvements, programming, and other new initiatives Downtown. There is a need for both targeted support (in the form of funding and personnel) and broader collaboration between existing cmmunity organizations. During COVID-19, issues related to trash and overall streetlife maintenance downtown worsened.
Action Item	Build on previous efforts to continue addressing administraitve gaps to improve Downtown experience. Specifically, consider: • New roles • New funding mechanisms • Incubation of a new organization, alternative to a BID
Process	There are a few potential short-term roles to increase capacity within the City. Those are: • Planning and Economic Development Intern • Arts and Culture Planning Intern In addition to increasing capacity, an internship program could foster relationships between the City and academic institutions (regional or national). Interns could be graduate-level students, focusing on specific projects, such as: • Public realm / Shared Streets Plan: Make direct connection to the $250K investment already made by the City of Fall River • Wayfinding • Mapping of businesses and City resources There is also potential for an additional long-term City position, such as: • Shared Streets Coordinator/Manager • Public Realm Cooridnator/Manager • Placemaking Program Coordinator/Manager Recent examples of similar roles in Pittsburgh, PA, Sunnyvale, CA, and Camden, NJ. Additionally, consider • District Improvement Financing program • Applying for MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, accepting applications in January 2022

Precedent

RELEVANT LONG-TERM ROLES

Manager of Placemaking and Activation
Pittsburgh, PA
- For the Oakland Business Improvement District
- Oversees the Clean and Safe contract responsible for sidewalk and public space sweeping and maintenance services
- Manages initiatives related to public realm activation, business vitality and recruitment
- Organizes responses to Requests for Proposals

Placemaking Manager
Long Beach, CA
- The Placemaking Manager will implement programs from the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) Vision 2020 Strategic Plan and develop and implement new projects and programs, to enhance and activate public spaces within the Downtown Long Beach Business Improvement District (BID), including parks, sidewalks, plazas, gateways, and other open spaces.

Placemaking Manager
Sunnyvale, CA
- Responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the community engagement and Phase 0 strategies for Sunnyvale's urban regeneration project
- Coordinates the delivery of all aspects of community and stakeholder involvement and coordinating support from team members and external consultants
- Contributes to evolving the strategy and implementation of the Engagement Plan with project leadership.

- Develops robust series of interesting events, creates a platform in which to scale the total number of events over time and builds a program that a) reflects the diverse local interests expressed through early engagement, b) supports local cultural producers, and c) brings high-quality programs from elsewhere
- Works with partners to use renovated buildings and adjacent lots, exploeopportunities to program in adjacent parks, manage the budget

Placemaking and Public Space Manager
Camden, NJ
- For the Camden Special Services District
- From the job posting: The Camden Special Services District (CSSD) is seeking a creative, collaborative person to support and manage programs that enhance downtown Camden's physical environment and daily experience.

DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT FINANCING

Per MassDevelopment, with District Improvement Financing,

> *a town or a city can establish a funding stream for economic development activities that is linked to, and derived from, the results of economic development. DIF is a locally-enacted tool that enables a municipality to identify and capture incremental tax revenues from new private investment in a specific area and direct them toward public improvement and economic development projects. DIF is not a new tax or special assessment and it does not increase a municipality's tax rate.*

Brockton and Taunton are two examples of communities that have employed District Increment Financing. Case Study write-ups for both cities, developed by Camoin Associates for MassDevelopment, follow.

DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT FINANCING IN TAUNTON, MA

Case Study: District Improvement Financing
City of Taunton
Plymouth County, Massachusetts
2016 Population: 56,504
Median Household Income: $54,785[1]

This case study is provided for illustrative purposes only to provide an example of a municipality's process and methodology. This performance is no guarantee of similar results.

Background

District Improvement Financing (DIF) was used in the City of Taunton (City) to continue implementation of a long-term effort to redevelop a state-owned vacant brownfield site for sale to private businesses, creating jobs and generating tax revenue.

The campus of the former Paul A. Dever State School in Taunton (Dever School) was state surplus land authorized by the legislature to be sold by the state's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to the Taunton Development Corporation (TDC), a private, non-profit economic development corporation. The TDC successfully redeveloped the first three phases of the Dever School as the Myles Standish Industrial Park (MSIP). The largest industrial park in New England, the MSIP (Phase 1 – Phase 3) has 100 companies, 7,400 employees and over 5.8 million square feet of development.

In 2002, legislation authorized the TDC to purchase the balance of the site and redevelop it as an expansion of the MSIP (Phase 4) and the development of a new life science training and education center (Phase 5).

Unlike the three previous phases of the Dever School, the remaining land contained more than 50 abandoned buildings and structures with a decaying infrastructure system that needed to be completely redeveloped. The TDC had been hesitant to move forward with the DCAMM disposition process for Phases IV and V of the property due to the negative value of the land. The demolition and remediation costs were much higher than the value of the land so the development was not feasible.

Basics | Dever School Phase IV and V Development District

District Adoption | November 2011

Original Assessed Value | None – land was owned by the state and tax-exempt

Acreage | 220 (estimated 13,760 total acres in City =1.4%)

Taxable Parcels | None at start, but 8 have been added back to the City's tax rolls

DIF Eligible Project Costs | *$5.97 million

*2018 Projections

The Goal

The TDC wanted to move the Phase IV and V development project forward and, in 2010, they reached out to MassDevelopment to partner with them. TDC, MassDevelopment and the City worked together to create a financing plan that would close the funding gap of the project and move the development forward.

The Process

A public/private finance plan was developed to cover the estimated costs and funding gap of the project. MassDevelopment agreed to cover all of the up-front project and staff costs and would be repaid if future

[1] Population and Median Household Income from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Case Study: District Improvement Financing
City of Brockton
Plymouth County, Massachusetts

2016 Population: 94,813

Median Household Income: $49,956[1]

This case study is provided for illustrative purposes only to provide an example of a municipality's process and methodology. This performance is no guarantee of similar results.

The Goal

The City of Brockton (City) experienced 50 years of disinvestment following industrial era decline, similar to other cities across America. After building back its professional capacity with a new city planner, the City wanted to take measures to spur increased private reinvestment in the downtown.

The Decision

Brockton approached District Improvement Financing (DIF), governed by Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 40Q (DIF Statute), with a two-pronged plan that included both educating local leaders about the economic development tool, and developing a community-supported vision for improvements and revival in the downtown.

Brockton's efforts to create a Development District[2] (DIF District) and Development Program were led by the Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City, who had previous experience with DIF in another community. The Director was able to gain support from the City's Mayor, Chief Financial Officer, and Assessor to create a DIF District and Development Program by showing how DIF enables a community to pay for public investments out of the DIF District's own new growth.

Communities frequently express two concerns with DIF – its effect on tax rates and on individual properties. The City successfully communicated to the public that DIF was not a new tax. Because the Brockton DIF District is quite large relative to DIF Districts that had been completed in other communities, at that time, a large number of residents and businesses in the DIF District benefitted from the outreach by the City. In the formation and implementation of the DIF District, the Assessor plays a key role in providing data and refining the district; and in Brockton, the Assessor specifically worked with the City Council to explain the details of the DIF District and how it would affect their constituents' property. It was made clear that tax rates would not increase as a result of a property's location within a DIF District.

Creating a vision to work towards required a thoughtful approach. The City also needed to consider how it should develop, and then implement, the vision. Brockton had not had a City Planner for eight years and first needed to

Basics | Downtown Brockton District Improvement Financing Program and Financial Plan

District Adoption | July 2015

Original Assessed Value | $224,463,117

Acreage | 190.5 (estimated 13,760 total acres in City = 1.4%)

Taxable Parcels | 488

DIF Eligible Project Costs | $31,115,250

Development Program and Financial Plan Adoption | March 2016

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[1] Population and Median Household Income from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

[2] Capitalized terms not defined herein have the meaning set forth in the DIF Statute.

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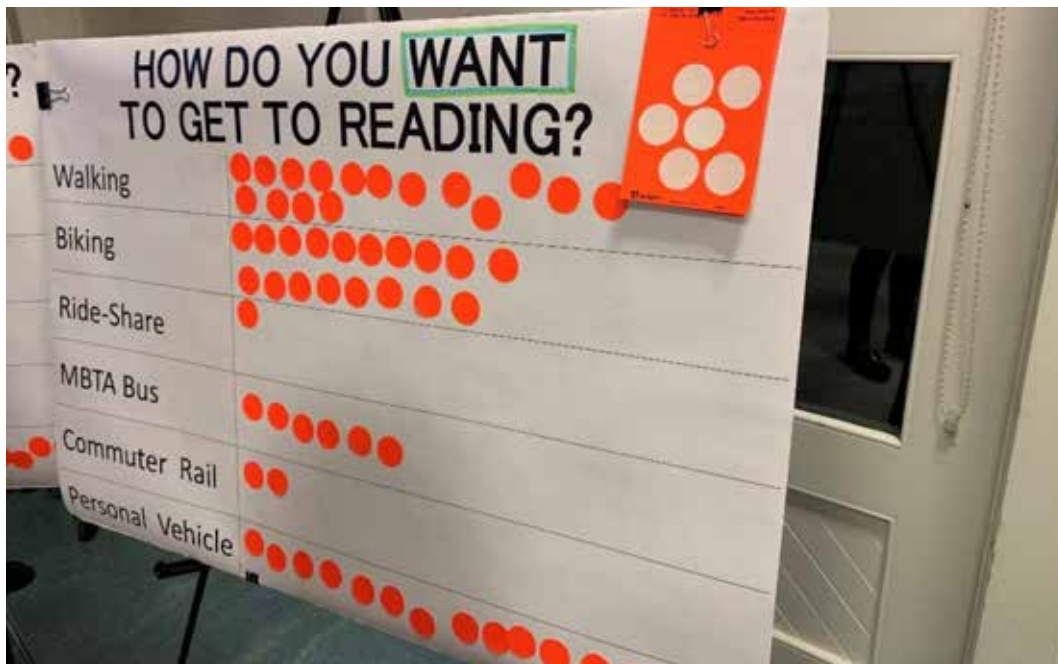
BEST PRACTICE

Determining a District Management Model for Downtown Reading

Location: Reading, MA

Best Practice:
Finding a District Management Model for Reading, MA

The creation of a downtown management organization was intended to establish a dedicated organization that would provide supplemental programs , services and advocacy for the downtown. The downtown organization would undertake activities to attract businesses, investment, customers and residents to downtown. These could include marketing, placemaking, business development and advocacy. Determining the appropriate downtown management organization model was a unique process for the Reading community, downtown property owners and businesses. The process included extensive outreach and community education to explore program priorities, financial sustainability, organizational models and champions from both the private and public sector.

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

This included :
- Identification of staff and financial resources
- Creating a Community Outreach and
- Engagement Strategy
- Research to identify community priorities / recommendations
- Peer learning from other communities

- Consensus building among stakeholders
- Transition of leadership to private sector

PROCESS

- The Town of Reading secured Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance funding and committed staff to initiate and support
- A large broad -based community advisory/ working group was formed to provide input and feedback
- A survey was widely distributed to community residents, businesses and other stakeholders - 1600 response were received providing insight into program priorities and community preferences
- Community Outreach Event - A Pizza/Ice Cream Social brought over 150 residents to provide input
- 3 Community Forums – Panels featuring executive directors of different types of downtown organizations described their programs, challenges and models.
- Working sessions with Advisory committee to discuss specific model alternatives / cost and benefits
- One on one conversations with key stakeholders
- Consensus building with stakeholders and recommendation of preferred model and next steps .
- Transition from city led effort to Steering committee comprised of property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to lead organizational effort. City staff continued staff support. TA support continued through additional MDI grant.
- BID Steering Committee. BID organizational process underway

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Public Realm	Create Pop-Up Parklets and Improve Existing Parklets	Develop parklets to add outdoor seating, shade, and other amenities downtown. Target funds to add amenities and programming to existing parklets.	Short	Medium	☑
	Develop a Comprehensive, Cohesive Wayfinding System	Building on previous wayfinding and branding campaigns, develop a cohesive plan in two phases: Initial, quick-build wayfinding campaign and fixed, permanent wayfinding program, first for the study area and then expanded through Fall River.	Medium	Medium	
	Initiate a Parking Study	Initiate a parking study to understand issues and develop recommendations.	Short	Small	☑
Private Realm	Develop Storefront Design Guidelines and Program	Develop storefront design guidelines and encourage uptake through a municipal program, providing assistance to small businesses with funding eligibility requirements and streamlining permitting process.	Short	Small	
	Develop Facade Design Guidelines and Program	Develop guidelines for downtown facades, addressing windows, awnings, and signage.	Short	Small	
	Develop Outdoor Dining Program and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement.	Short	Medium	
Arts and Culture	Highlight Local Artists through a Collaborative Public Art Program	Assemble a public art task force to lead curation and installation of public art around downtown and beyond. Use a unified public art master plan to identify short-, medium-, and long-term strategies.	Short	Medium	
	Collaborate with Creative Community to Activate Underused Spaces	Collaborate with the local creative and cultural community to temporarily activate underused public and private spaces with performances, interactive art, games, food vendors and expand downtown events.	Short	Medium	
Tenant Mix	Develop Vacancy Tracking Tool and Tenant Recruitment Strategy	Build a tool around the existing vacancy database so that LRRP data might be used to match new tenants with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying Downtown's tenant mix and activating empty properties.	Short	Medium	☑
	Create a Vacant Storefront Program	Create a pop-up storefront program to match makers, artists, and other tenants with temporary commercial space.	Short	Medium	
Revenue and Sales	Develop Business Support Program	Build on work of MassDevelopment through TDI initiative to support existing businesses and new entrepreneurs at every stage to build a cluster of retail activity downtown.	Short	Medium	☑
Admin. Capacity	Build Administrative Capacity of the City and Supporting Organizations	Build on previous efforts to continue addressing administrative gaps to improve Downtown experience.Specifically, consider: New roles, new funding mechanisms, incubation of a new downtown organization.	Medium	Medium	☑