



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Springfield

A Plan for the
Main Street
Convention Center
District

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



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

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

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

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

Acknowledgements



Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Catherine Ratté, Principal Planner, Section Co-Manager
Kenneth Comia, AICP, Senior Land Use Planner
Jacinta Williams, Land Use Planner
Douglas Hall, PhD, Data Manager/Photography
Jake Dolinger, Senior GIS Planner



City of Springfield
Tim Sheehan, Chief Development Officer
Brian Connors, Deputy Director
Marcos Gonzalez, Project Manager



Springfield Business Improvement District
Chris Russell, Executive Director
Michelle Grout, Executive Assistant



Third Eye Network
Dr. Lomax R. Campbell



Levine Planning Strategies
Jeff Levine, AICP



BSC Group
Jef Fasser, AICP, RLA, LEED AP

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

City of Springfield	Chris Cignoli, Director, Department of Public Works Patrick Garrity, Engineer + Permit Manager, Department of Public Works
Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce	Nancy Creed, President
Springfield Cultural Partnership	Karen Finn, Executive Director
Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau	Mary Kay Wydra, President
Springfield Parking Authority	Bokul Bhuiya, Executive Director
Trust Transfer Project	Vanessa Ford, Project Manager
Community Music School of Springfield	Eileen McCafferty, Executive Director
NAI Plotkin	Evan Plotkin, President & CEO
RR and Company Realty / <i>The Shops at Marketplace</i>	Robert Roberge
Massachusetts Convention Center Authority	Dennis Callahan, Esq., Deputy Director

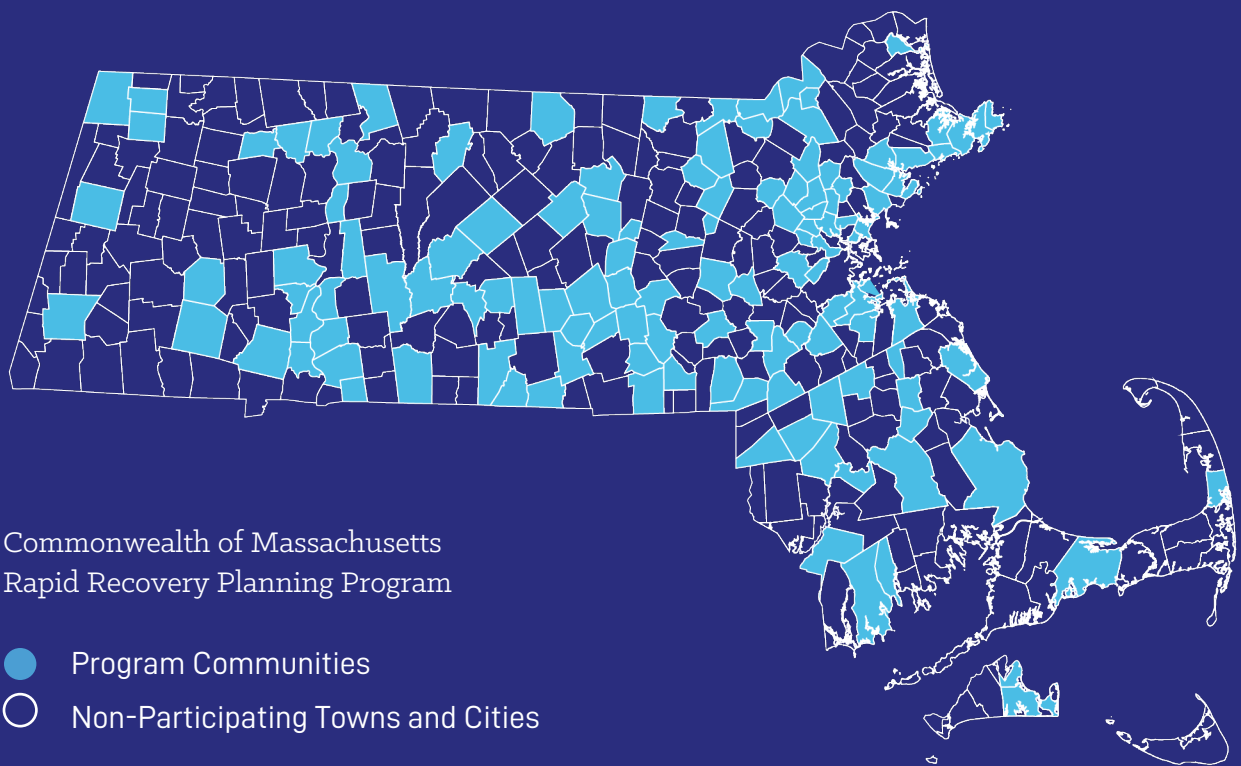
Table of Contents

Rapid Recovery Program	6
Introduction	6
Approach/Framework	7
Executive Summary	9
Diagnostic Key Findings	15
Physical Environment	20
Business Environment	23
Market Information	25
Administrative Capacity	26
Project Recommendations	29
Appendix	117

125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



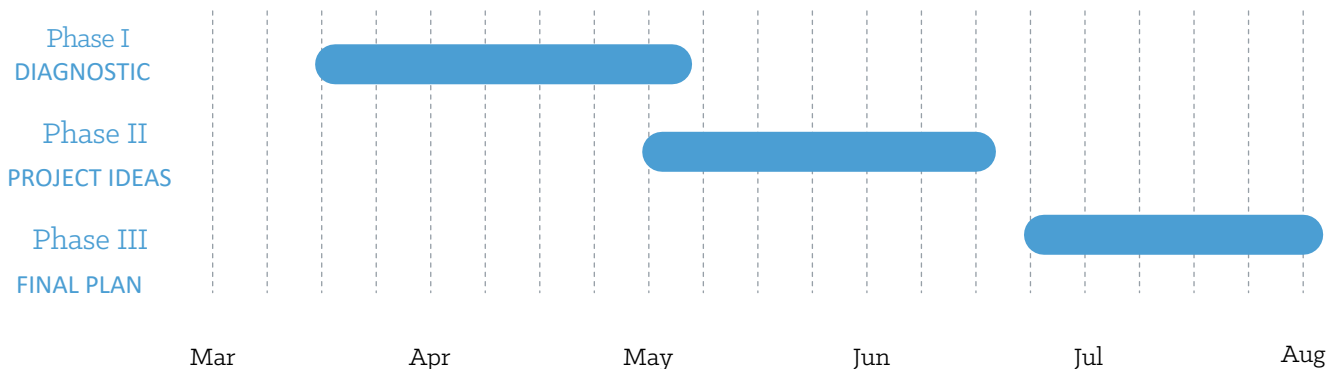
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue/Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary



A District on the Rise

Springfield's Main Street Convention Center District (MSCC) is strong but weakened by the pandemic. The project area, a portion of Springfield's Metro Center neighborhood, had just been making a come-back after a period of dis-investment and challenges when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, with a resulting loss of customers, revenue, some employees and eventually a few businesses. The combined commitment of the city Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), the Springfield Business Improvement District (BID), support from MassDevelopment, the investments from MGM and the city's Blueprint plan, joined with the ingenuity, resourcefulness, determination and drive of the individual businesses in the district bodes well for a swift return to sound economic footing. The district has great potential with numerous catalytic projects finally underway or complete including but certainly not limited to the decades long planned and anticipated rejuvenation of the buildings around Court Square into a combination of market rate and affordable housing and the re-development of Pynchon Plaza, opening the district to the Springfield Museums on beautiful Chestnut Street.

Just as Springfield was re-engaging in late 2020 with their collaborators the Chicago Consultants Studio on the 2019 Implementation BluePrint Master Development Plan, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts launched the Local Rapid Recovery Plan process. Springfield is grateful to the Department of Housing and Community Development and MassDevelopment for this strategic planning initiative which has helped the city and their key partners, stakeholders and collaborators identify and lift up 15 catalytic projects that will facilitate economic recovery in the Main Street Convention Center District. Following the guidance provided by the Commonwealth and their consultant, Streetsense, made it easy to diagnose issues and areas of opportunity and identify the essential initiatives needed to secure the city's key downtown district's future.



Springfield, Massachusetts

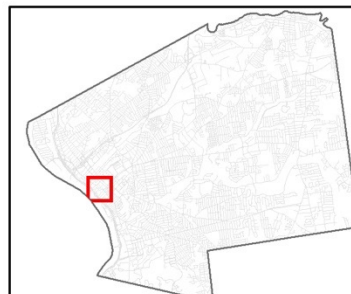
Local Rapid Recovery Program Focus Area Map

Data Sources:
 City of Springfield Massachusetts,
 MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

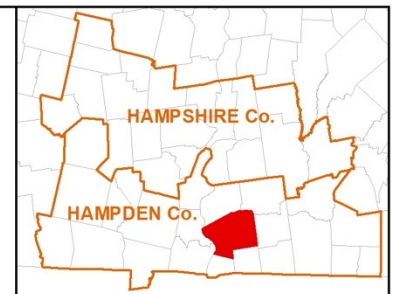
 The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis without proper field verification.
 Produced by the PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
 60 Chippingwood Street, First Floor, Springfield, MA 01104-3400
 413.781.6065 • www.pvpc.org



Municipal Locator Map



Regional Locator Map





Strengthening Existing Efforts to Activate and Improve the Public Realm with Electronic Event Permitting and key Business Support will Achieve Success

Throughout this strategic economic recovery process stakeholders, city staff and other collaborators have been extremely impressed with the specific and targeted projects that have emerged to address the districts' economic woes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The city and in particular this district have been very well planned in recent years and the district was on the road to economic development success as the pandemic hit; this RRP strategic planning process was able to hone in on recovery projects because the longer term and big ticket infrastructure and other action items for sustainable economic development are already articulated in the [Springfield Implementation Blueprint](#) among other plans and studies.

The district has a strong foundation upon which to build including significant success with arts and culture focused activation of public spaces initiated, supported and maintained by lively and fluid collaborations and partnerships of public and private enterprises. Recommendations to build on these efforts included continuing the Trust Transfer project and organizing a cycling race in the district. The Springfield Business Improvement District and the other public and private entities that support businesses in the district provide an additional layer upon which to build COVID-recovery actions, in some cases strengthening and in others transitioning existing and emergency actions into the next phase of business support needed in this district, including targeted support for Black and Brown owned businesses and assistance converting high rise office space to residential and/or lab space. And of course, the long awaited and almost universally supported recommendation for electronic permitting of special events will make it easier for civic groups and others to organize events such as the Pancake Breakfast, Jazz and Roots, and Thunderbird Thursdays to bring thousands of new shoppers, customers and clients to the district.



In the Project Summary below, the 15 projects identified represent a balanced combination of initiatives in the Public Realm, the Private Realm, Revenue/Sales, Culture/Arts, Tenant Mix and Administrative Capacity. The projects interact well together and for just 1% of the city's initial American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, all of them could be launched within the year. At the end of the planning effort, a survey was sent to the stakeholders and wider business community. The survey asked respondents to choose the top five projects. The top 5 projects have been identified in **BOLD**.

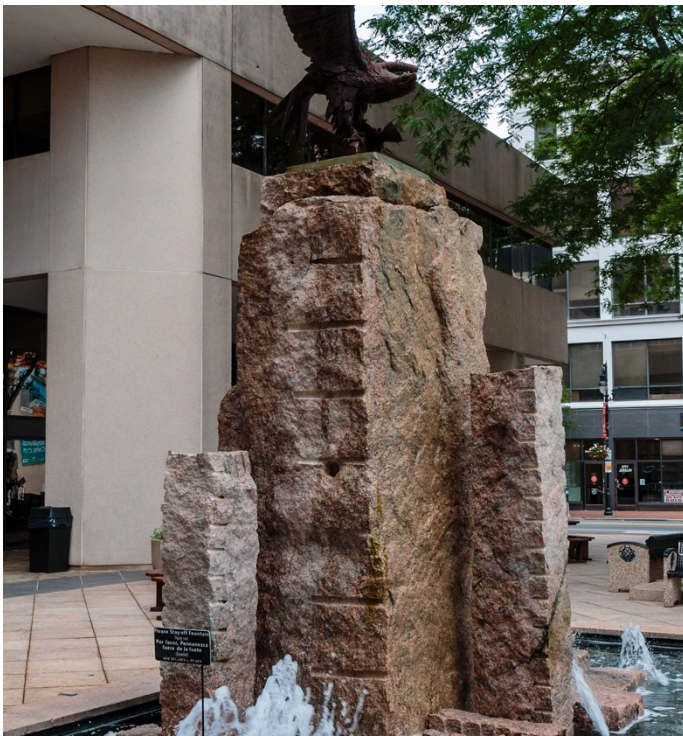
Project Summary

	Project Name	Private Realm	Public Realm	Admin Capacity	Revenue Sales	Culture Arts	Tenant Mix
1	Black and Latinx/Hispanic Business Owners Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
2	Improving Business owner satisfaction with city permitting & Internal Citywide Communication by Streamlining and Digitizing the city's special event permitting processes			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3	Support and enhance City's existing Storefront Improvement program.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
4	Enhance existing Pedestrian Wayfinding with a new Wayfinding App and/or Wayfinding Web-based QR Codes to printed maps.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
5	Improve Parking Access in Springfield's downtown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
6	(Re)investing in the Private Realm with Creative Code Compliance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
7	Springfield Cycling Race in the Downtown		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
8	Activating Court Square and Beyond with Targeted and Tactical Arts and Cultural Projects	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
9	Outreach to and Programming with and for District Businesses to encourage workers and customers to stay in the district longer		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
10	Small Business Fund for Pandemic Response Unanticipated Costs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
11	Improve the "Entrances to the City" so they look beautiful and inviting as it is some people's first experience with the city		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
12	Art in Vacant Buildings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
13	Expand housing (and possibly lab/tech) options in downtown through commercial conversions.						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Continue <i>Trust Transfer Project</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
15	Activate Bruce Landon Way on Mass Mutual Center and other Event Days a la Jersey Street in Boston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

Process and Stakeholder Engagement



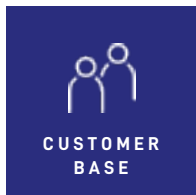
The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission worked closely with the Springfield Office of Planning and Economic Development and with staff from the Springfield Business Improvement District (BID) to facilitate Springfield's Rapid Recovery Planning process. The business survey facilitated by Finepoint Associates provided a good jumping off point and snapshot of where the district businesses were at in the Spring of 2021. Additional business engagement included walk-throughs in the district informally interviewing business managers and owners; an on-line meeting to present the findings of the diagnostic phase, and a final survey to rank the proposed action recommendations.



Stakeholder engagement included the previously mentioned community presentation of the diagnostic phase and one-on-one emails and interviews with the stakeholders identified through an iterative process involving OPED and BID staff and stakeholders themselves. Stakeholders played a key role in both initially identifying action recommendations and in refining them and prioritizing the final list. The specific data (demographic and business-specific) collected and analyzed revealed details of how the pandemic affected the businesses in the district and the changing customer base. Many stakeholders gave generously of their time throughout the process, carefully reviewing proposed projects and providing invaluable comments and suggestions.

Diagnostic

Key Findings



District's Customer Base is Diverse and Growing

High rise office buildings and their well-compensated tenants and owners merge with the Main Street Convention Center (MSCC) district's disproportionately economically disadvantaged residents (median household income-\$22,753) and the hundreds of thousands of diverse visitors, shoppers, patrons, diners, concert-goers, and fans of hockey and the many other sports and events that roll out at the Mass Mutual Convention Center, Symphony Hall, and the other key destinations in the district each year. Approximately 5,000 (64.8%) people who live in the MSCC district are Hispanic/Latino, and 1,600 (15%) are Black/African American. The City includes over 84,000 workers, a substantial number of which (31,207) are located in the district. City-wide, there are approximately 22,400 secondary and post-secondary students and 153,000 residents with a median household income of \$43,841 and a median age of 33.¹ This growing and diversifying population has the potential to support a wide range of business types. And it is boosted by the tens of thousands visitors reported by the Greater Springfield Visitor and Convention Bureau to spend time in the district each year. Keeping workers in the district after work and enticing Convention Center, Symphony Hall, and Court Square event guests to experience the district's restaurants and other businesses are ways to increase district businesses customer base and revenue and enliven the area.



¹Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015-2019 [Note: for purposes of identifying the potential market for the project area, the district's parameter has been extended by half a mile.]



Recent Investments in Physical Environment Yield Results

The MSCC district is a beautiful physical environment. A surprising number of trees and other plants, flowers, and green spaces welcome shoppers, residents and visitors alike. Wide and comfortable sidewalks with lots of benches, striped bike lanes, ValleyBike electric bikeshare stations, pedestrian wayfinding, covered bus stops with seating, numerous plazas with public art including sculptures, murals, window displays, landscaped gardens, fountains and water and light art installations are inviting and create a comfortable environment. Signage and wayfinding is good with the pedestrian wayfinding including distances, and an App or QR codes connected to the existing kiosks would be very helpful. Building facades are well-maintained on some blocks and could use some attention in other blocks, and most signage is attractive and easily visible. Most businesses do not have merchandise displays outdoors, but the few who do are setting an example for their neighbors. Nadim's has outdoor dining with occasional music, activating a "lost space" and the Marketplace 'alley' is attracting hundreds of visitors each month with their varied programming.

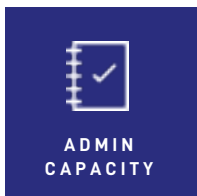




District Increasingly Designed for Fun!

As can be seen on the map of the district, there is a central corridor of Pynchon Park to Bruce Landon Way and Court Square comprising an outdoor pedestrian play area anchored by the Mass Mutual Center and Symphony Hall with the restaurants and cafés along Main Street and the Marketplace alley providing places to enjoy local cuisine. Most of the businesses in the Main Street Convention Center District are retail stores or services, providing many options for workers, residents, shoppers, visitors, and overflow from the Convention Center events. In addition to the Convention Center that has capacity for 10,000 to 25,000 people and that holds 25 events each year, the district is also home to Symphony Hall, and is abutted by the MGM casino and its comedy club and the increasingly vital Worthington Street Entertainment district with Dewey's Lounge, the Ethnic Study and 1636 North recently joining Theodore's and Bar Kaya. The Marketplace "alley" is home to a growing number of Black and Brown owned and women owned businesses. This mix of commercial, public, and civic uses meets a wide range of needs. There is agreement that the district needs more retail on ground floor with current offices moving up to second floors and above, and the city recently purchased three key properties in the district to address the issue of vacancies. Businesses surveyed support all the proposed improvements to the physical environment and are generally satisfied with the condition of the district-safety, accessibility and compatible uses. Businesses are interested in marketing, cultural events, and business recruitment programs.





Public Private Partnerships Support Building Back Better

From 2016-2021 the City has invested nearly \$20 Million in activating and revitalizing the city's downtown. More recently, just before and throughout the pandemic (2019-2021) "[The Implementation Blueprint](#)" is coordinating, directing and unifying the ongoing development activity in the entire downtown. The proposed Main Street Convention Center district overlay zone is designed to address the acknowledged negative impacts of ongoing real estate speculation, stagnation, and disinvestment, and is perfectly suited to accelerate the district's emergence from the pandemic. The zone advances an aesthetic image and identity for the area and will leverage the historic and architectural character of existing buildings. It enables the city and partners to apply incentives to curate the type and location of retail, restaurants, and entertainment tenants to increase activation and pedestrian traffic. Not only does the district have this profound commitment from the city, it is also well served by the Commonwealth's oldest business improvement district. The Springfield Business Improvement District (BID) was established in 1998 as a resource for business owners and was a key source of support for businesses through the height of the pandemic and forced closures. Other partners, resources and collaborators include: MassDevelopment and MassMutual Finance as well as local supporters Evan Plotkin of NAI Plotkin, Make it Springfield, and DevelopSpringfield.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

PUBLIC REALM

The MSCC district includes three primary streets: Main Street, State Street, and Dwight Street and the secondary streets of Harrison Avenue, Columbus Avenue, Pynchon Street and Bruce Landon Way. Main Street has few vacancies (4) and activated sidewalks, street amenities, good lighting, maintained roadbeds and crosswalks. Harrison St., Dwight St., Bruce Landon Way, State St and Pynchon St all have wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian wayfinding, bus shelters and benches as appropriate but still look like mostly concrete and do not currently feel like pleasant physical environments. In all parts of the district sidewalks and crosswalks are existent, with most in good shape. Road conditions are good, as the district is served by two-way streets throughout, except for Dwight Street (which the city has identified for transition to two-way traffic in the future). Interstate 91 creates an unfortunate buffer between the district and the Connecticut River, but the highway serves the downtown well, overall. Street trees and benches are well distributed but gaps do exist especially along State Street next to the Mass Mutual Center. Court Square has numerous benches welcoming passive recreation opportunities in the downtown. Signage is sufficient for basic travel needs but does not identify key assets and destinations for drivers. Pedestrians are well served by wayfinding kiosks along most district streets that highlight interesting points throughout the district and the greater Metro Center neighborhood. The existing pedestrian wayfinding could be expanded to include an App and/or QR code system enabling users to download walking routes and maps.





PRIVATE REALM

The Marketplace Shops are a beautiful example of private realm activation of a space as is the plaza between Nadim's and One Financial Plaza. Other examples of private realm investments abound in the district and should be applauded, encouraged and facilitated. Most building facades are generally well-maintained, and most private signage is attractive and easily visible. The city has a storefront improvement program, enhancements to which are included in this plan. Some businesses in the district could make their entrances more welcoming. As for "curb appeal," most stores do not have merchandise displays outdoors or significant visibility into the store. Most stores do not have outdoor lighting that illuminates the sidewalk, and some have awnings.



ACCESS + VISIBILITY

The MSCC district is extremely accessible by all modes of transportation, with striped bike lanes on the street, some bike parking, three covered bus stops, pedestrian way finding, signalized intersections with audible walk signals and ample on street and off street surface lots and covered parking structures and a ValleyBike share station at Court Square. During the business survey outreach both business owners and customers repeatedly raised the issue of parking—complaining of both a lack of parking and pointing out that the Springfield Parking Authority (SPA) meter monitors seem to pounce on vehicles with expired meters. In reality there is ample parking on-street and in surface lots and covered parking garages throughout the district. The Springfield Parking Authority (SPA) parking lot under Interstate 91 at the end of Pynchon Street is a two minute walk to the heart of the district.

There are opportunities for improvement, with wide empty sidewalks on State Street next to the MMC and on both sides after Main Street. Dwight Street and Bruce Landon Way sidewalks are also very empty and uninviting. MGM's offices and the Casino that line State Street after Main Street all have blacked out windows and the large photos attached to the MMC on State Street are peeling off and look very dated.



PARKS, PLAZAS, AND PARKLETS

Parks, plazas and parklets are plentiful in the MSCC district providing places to park one's person and partake in the pretty scenery. Pynchon Plaza, recently renovated and re-opened after over a decade of laying empty and closed welcomes residents, visitors, and workers with its lighted fountains, gorgeous art work and beautiful prairie-like plantings in the heart of the city. Bright smiling colorful faces from the giant murals on the adjacent parking structure add to the joy of being in this sparkling new plaza. At the other end of the district gracious and stately Court Square presents the traditional New England town common with elegant trees providing hours of shade and pleasant times as well as the location for the Jazz and Roots fest, outdoor concert nights, the Farmer's market and rallies and protests. Across East Columbus Avenue, just out of the district is the Riverfront Park that leads to the 3.7 mile CT Riverwalk and Bikeway. Small parklets dot the district throughout producing surprising pockets of green and a place to sit. The Metro Center neighborhood, of which the Main Street Convention District is a portion, boasts 2.95 acres of park and plaza spaces.



Highlights from the Business Environment

The project area includes 79 properties that were counted as "storefronts" under the project guidelines.

Indicator	Data
Total # of Storefronts	79
# of Vacant Storefronts	23 (29%)
Total # of Businesses	56
# of Parking Spaces (on and off-street)	Approximately 2,364
Permanent Parks and Plazas	Court Square, Pynchon Plaza

Businesses are mixed within the architecture of Main Street, the Market place "alley" and a portion of State Street and Dwight Street; in addition to a variety of offices, well-loved local restaurants and cafés interspersed with new food start-ups dominate, with clothing stores, print shops, beauty supply, jewelry stores and civic uses, including Springfield City Hall and the Courthouse, rounding out the mix.



ANCHORS/DESTINATIONS

MGM is at the edge of this district and cannot be ignored. The district anchors are the Convention Center, which is now open and hosting events, Court Square surrounded by the old First Church, the twin Symphony Hall and Springfield City Hall with the Carillon in between, Tower Square and the finally being renovated and re-developed 21 Elm Street. The Marketplace shops, a private 'alley/pedestrian way' behind Main Street that has been beautifully activated by a number of businesses with support from the BID is a new hot destination and Nadim's restaurant anchors an emerging cluster of locally owned restaurants in the district.

As originally identified in the 2018 Implementation Blueprint and further validated in the 2019 report by Innovation Group (Appendix C), the MSCC district holds great potential for leveraging synergies with MGM to expand market draw in the conference and meetings market. Having facilities that can accommodate this demand and compete with area/regional convention facilities is crucial. In this regard, the Mass Mutual Convention Center (MMC) is deficient, particularly with respect to offering a dedicated, connected convention/conference hotel, connected parking structure, and additional meeting rooms for break out sessions which are essential for the meetings and conference market MMC attracts. With the planned re-development of the parking garage on the corner of Dwight, Bruce Landon Way and Harrison streets there is an opportunity to consider retail and other uses on the ground floor and the possibility for a new hotel in the parking lot across from Mass Mutual between the Marketplace alley and the new garage.

NODES/CLUSTERS

Clearly the Main Street Convention Center District is a cluster of event spaces from the core Mass Mutual Convention Center to Symphony Hall and Court Square itself, to smaller event spaces such as The Hub and outdoor spaces such as Bruce Landon Way and Pynchon Plaza. There is a burgeoning local restaurant cluster with the Marketplace breakfast and lunch trio of Nosh, Sweet Ideas and 413 Café; across the street is Nadim's; moving south down Main street takes one to Sol Karibe, next to the new Soul Food restaurant , Crown Fried Chicken and Jugito's, the new Juice Bar is around the corner.



The Mass Mutual Center and adjacent Bruce Landon Way present an opportunity for the Thunderbirds and other events at the Center to transform the space into an outdoor celebration and party space, with food carts, cafés, vendors, etc., similar to Jersey Street in Boston during Red Sox games or events at Fenway Park.

The district has a broad mix of commercial, public, and civic uses that meet a wide range of needs. There are 56 active entities, of which more than one quarter (16) are accommodation and food services – like restaurants. The next five categories, all representing 9 percent of total businesses include retail (5), financial and insurance services (5), professional, scientific and technical services (5), arts, entertainment and recreation (5) and public administration (5).

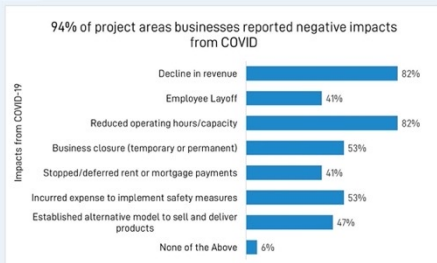
There were five businesses that permanently closed due to COVID-19, including along Main Street and in the Marketplace although many did close temporarily and/or have had significant restrictions on operations, especially the restaurants. Some of the 23 vacant businesses in the district at the time of this survey (Spring 21) have been vacant for several years.

BUSINESS SURVEY

A local Business Survey conducted in April 2021 resulted in eighteen (18) responses. Highlights from the survey indicated that:

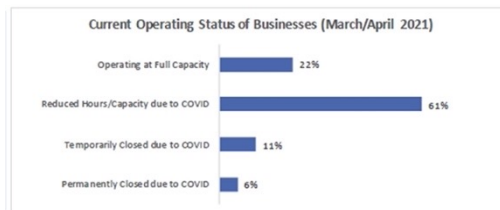
- 94 percent of businesses report being negatively affected by COVID
- Less foot traffic and ongoing concerns about parking were highlighted
- Support for all proposed improvements to the physical environment was high
- 56 percent of businesses were interested in participating in shared marketing/advertising

COVID Impacts



Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 78% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.





Highlights from Market Information

While the City of Springfield started into the COVID recession with a higher unemployment rate than the overall rate for Hampden County (5.6% unemployment in January 2020, compared with 4.6% for Hampden County), the pandemic hit Springfield's economy particularly hard. While the unemployment rates in each of the counties in the Pioneer Valley, and statewide, peaked in April 2020, Springfield's unemployment rate continued to climb until June, hitting a peak unemployment rate of 21.6%.

With this in mind, businesses face an uphill climb given the financial hardships facing such a large share of the local workforce. On a related note, focusing efforts to bring consumers into Springfield from neighboring communities makes a lot of sense given this context.

CUSTOMER BASE

Springfield's customer base draws from a city population of 153,000 residents with a median household income of \$43,841, a median age of 33.4, and 2.6 residents in the average household. The project area includes nearly 8,000 residents with a substantially lower median household income of \$22,753, and an older median age of 38.0 years. Approximately one quarter of the residents over 25 years of age in both the city (27%) and project area (23%) have an Associate's degree or higher level of education.

Springfield's residents are comparatively young, with 38% of city residents and 28% of project area residents under 25 years of age. Springfield's population of older residents is comparatively small, with just 17% of city residents and 19% of project area residents 65 years of age or older.

Springfield has a diverse mix of races and ethnicities. Both the city and project area have very large populations of Hispanic or Latino residents, accounting for 45.0% (69,301) and 64.8% (5,143) of residents, respectively. The city also includes over 32,000 Black residents, 4,200 Asian residents, and a substantial population (6,951) of two or more races. The project area includes 1,584 Black residents, 97 Asian residents, and 230 residents of two or more races.

The City includes over 84,000 workers, a substantial number of which (31,207) are located in the project area. City-wide, there are approximately 22,400 secondary and post-secondary students.





Highlights from the Administrative Capacity

The MSCC district is well served administratively by the city office of planning and economic development who facilitate economic activity by both administering the city's existing development guidelines, regulations and programs and by planning for the future and by the Springfield BID and a number of other public and private initiatives including MassDevelopment, MassMutual, the Springfield Redevelopment Authority and DevelopSpringfield. Springfield overhauled their development regulations through a comprehensive zoning review in the late 2000's and aside from the previously mentioned and widely recognized need to update the city's special events permitting process and the new proposed MSCC district overlay zone, business owners and developers are generally satisfied with the city's development regulations. The city is up to date on planning for the area with the 2018 Implementation Blueprint: An Economic Development Strategy for The Renaissance of a Great American Downtown that was updated in 2021.

The Springfield BID is Massachusetts oldest and longest serving BID. Since 1998, the Springfield BID has been a resource for business owners, both those contemplating opening a business in Downtown and those who currently operate in this dynamic urban center. The BID is a supporting member of Springfield's Central Cultural District and a partner in the Clean and Safe program which is a vital service that continues to make Downtown attractive to both visitors and residents as well as business owners. The district is also part of the city's and MassDevelopment's Springfield Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) district and is supported by MassDevelopment, DevelopSpringfield, and MassMutual Finance. These entities have the capacity to oversee and advance proposed projects that will catalyze economic recovery in the district.

REGULATIONS + ZONING

The main regulatory issue raised consistently throughout the district's rapid recovery planning process was that of the city's user unfriendly special event permitting process that prior to the pandemic required applicants to appear in person at numerous city offices and departments. During the pandemic the city accepted scanned email applications and is now looking into electronic special event permitting.

An additional key regulatory recommendation emerging from this planning process is that of advancing the proposed MSCC district overlay zone. The Main Street and Convention Center Overlay District is intended to better align the goals, objectives and policies of the underlying zoning with those of the Master Development Plan as they relate to development and redevelopment of the land area and land uses in a defined geographic area within the District. The overlay boundaries generally respond to areas of need and opportunities of the District, including the east side of the Main Street Corridor abutting MGM, the area encompassing the Mass Mutual Center, and key potentials of the redefined Court Square area.

Together with the Blueprint Plan, the overlay district seeks to bolster the pedestrian environment, development opportunities, and overall viability of projects through an emphasis on activities and amenities at the street level. The zoning overlay shall permit, encourage and facilitate the coordinated development of complementary land uses and activities within the overlay area which are intended to attract residents, visitors and employers to the area.

The objectives of the Main Street/Convention District Overlay Zone include:

- Create the local environment for development by establishing a municipal vision for the area that includes zoning controls, design criteria, and development incentives
- Advance an aesthetic image and identity for the area
- Leverage to the extent possible the historic and architectural character of existing buildings
- Apply incentives to curate the type and location of retail, restaurants, and entertainment tenants to increase activation and pedestrian traffic
- Identify sites within the plan area for new convention and hospitality related development
- Identify sites for new residential development to further stimulate area livability, appeal, and activation
- Plan for and promote utilization of vacant parcels and surface parking lots through consolidation to support infill development
- Use municipal powers and authority to acquire, stabilize, and reposition underutilized, vacant, or blighted commercial structures in the District






The city is looking into taking advantage of the Commonwealth's 40R Smart Growth district initiative to advance this work.² This state sanctioned program allows a municipality to identify a development district and create overlay zoning to permit higher density and mixed use development, often in concert with public transit services. When approved by the state (DHCD), the municipality is eligible for incentive payments of up to \$600,000 (depending on the number of additional units permitted over and above what is allowed by the underlying zoning) and \$3,000 per new housing unit developed. The 40R funds can only be used for capital projects within the Downtown. The 40R District can coincide with or be a subset of a DIF District or other overlay or development districts. 40R includes a 20% affordability requirement for any new housing created. The applicability of 40R to the downtown development district should be evaluated to determine when and if funding is still available from the state and if the downtown area qualifies.

The Springfield zoning ordinance indicates that in Area A (and much of the remaining downtown zone) are primarily Business B and Business C, both of which allow for dense residential development. Therefore, the benefit of establishing a 40R district may preclude significant incentive payments, but might still include the \$3,000 per unit payments for new housing with at least 20% affordability.

²Details on the proposed modified zoning overlay focused along the Main Street corridor and its activation are available in [The Blueprint-updated 2021, ImpBlueprintMasterDevelopmentReport_FINAL_email.pdf \(springfield-ma.gov\)](#)

Project Recommendations

Black and Latinx/Hispanic Business Owners Support

Category	 Private Realm, Administrative Capacity
Location	Main Street Convention Center District and relevant city-wide
Origin	City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), Springfield Business Improvement District (BID), Property Manager in District
Budget	 Medium budget (\$150,000) – Funding sources may include American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA), additional City and/or State funds via the Community One Stop for Growth portal
Timeframe	 Short Term; Year 1: Build Portal – Year 2: Refine portal, increase adoption/utilization, and expand the network of supports – Year 3: Reporting, sustainability planning and additional refinement.
Risk	 Medium risk; Some explicit risks regardless of the program mix can include: the existence of lack of trust resulting from past interactions between local government and the community; lack of a relationship; risk of low adoption rates of the program mix; perceived lack of legitimacy and authenticity of program mix; human and financial resource constraints and sustainability; actual or perceived stereotyping in marketing and public relations efforts.
Key Performance Indicators	Number of businesses accessing the portal and formalizing their businesses, number of mentors and volunteers attracted/retained, net promoter and customer satisfaction scores, newly formalized businesses successfully engaging post-formalization activities by number and volume (e.g., locating in formal spaces, accessing capital, selling to government and corporations, pursuing MWBE certifications.)
Partners & Resources	Springfield BID, City OPED, The HUB, Berkshire Bank RevX, Western Massachusetts Black Chamber of Commerce, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts, Senators Gomez and Lesser, New North Citizens Council, Develop Springfield, Urban League, to provide dialogue on the program mix.



Diagnostic

The pandemic has exacerbated the existing and long established disparities between so-called mainstream and Black/Brown businesses.

Between February and April of 2020, the number of Black and Brown business owners nationwide dropped by 41 percent.

According to [a report from the Boston Indicators](#), business owners of color in the state already had an unmet financial need of half a billion dollars a year, where additionally, white-owned firms were much more likely to get all of the Paycheck Protection Program funds they asked for.

With state and federal governments allocating unprecedented amounts of aid to businesses during the pandemic, there is opportunity to reshape some of these types of policies and services in favor of providing better access to them for entrepreneurs of color.

Action Item

Springfield will create a Black and Brown business owners technical assistance and capacity building program that will be launched in the Main Street Convention Center district with the goal of expanding city-wide over time to include programs as identified in the Description.

The project should be sustainably designed with a fundraising and partnership development in mind, to include steps of recruiting trainers, navigators/technical assistance providers, and participants might be relevant actions for which to plan.

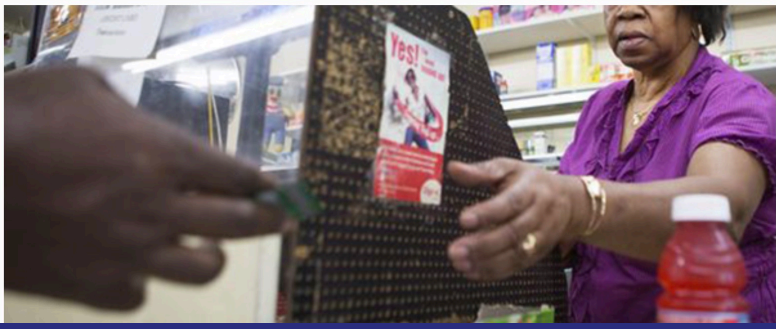
Dependent on the goals and scope for portal development, Springfield can plan for \$50,000-\$125,000 just for implementation planning, with annual renewal fees up to \$25,000. Additional costs can be planned for programming like special events, program supplies and other resources, stipends for volunteers/mentors, meals, travel, etc. Philanthropy is a key avenue for support this type of program as well.

Process

The project can be implemented by utilizing ARPA funds. Steps include:

1. Form a program development committee.
2. Obtain a formal charge for the committee through typical avenues.
3. Draft and release and Request for Proposals for possible vendor(s).
4. Engage in routine meetings with selected vendors until the program is built out.
5. Create and run the program, ensuring marketing and packaging to the public are also a part of the creation of the program.
6. The metrics aligned to goals and key performance indicators should be developed and measured first.
7. Consider a pilot program to inform program refinement over time.





Is your business or organization:

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

If so...

Get Listed! Its FREE!

Sponsoring Culturally-specific Portals for Digital Marketing and Promotion





REVENUES & SALES

Provided by SME Consultant

Third Eye Network, LLC

Location

Rochester, New York/Finger Lakes Region

Origin	Susu Management Group, LLC <i>(d/b/a Black-owned Business Rochester)</i> Niche Market Insights Foundation, Inc. <i>(501(c)3 not-for-profit organization)</i> InfoWorks Development
Budget	 Portals: \$25k – \$75k ea (implementation); \$12k – \$15k/year ea (maintenance) APIs: \$5k ea (implementation); \$1k+/year ea (maintenance)
Timeframe	 Portals: 3 – 6 months ea (implementation and training) APIs: 1 – 3 months ea (implementation and training)
Risk	 Requires a regional organizational affiliate or sponsoring agency, socio-political will and actively engaged community collaboration; the digital divide
Key Performance Indicators	Engagement Rates <i>(# of niche listings, # of user accounts, # of pageviews, # of new visitors);</i> Community Commerce <i>(# of paid subscriptions, niche market sales, non-niche revenues);</i> Community Impact <i>(funds raised, # of reinvestments, grants awarded, # of businesses/jobs)</i>
Partners & Resources	Dr. Lomax R. Campbell, Matthew T. Bain, The BOB Squad SM , and NMI Foundation Board; Proprietary Database, Niche Market Portals, Directory APIs, CalendarWiz API <i>(discontinued)</i>

Diagnostic

Backgrounder

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

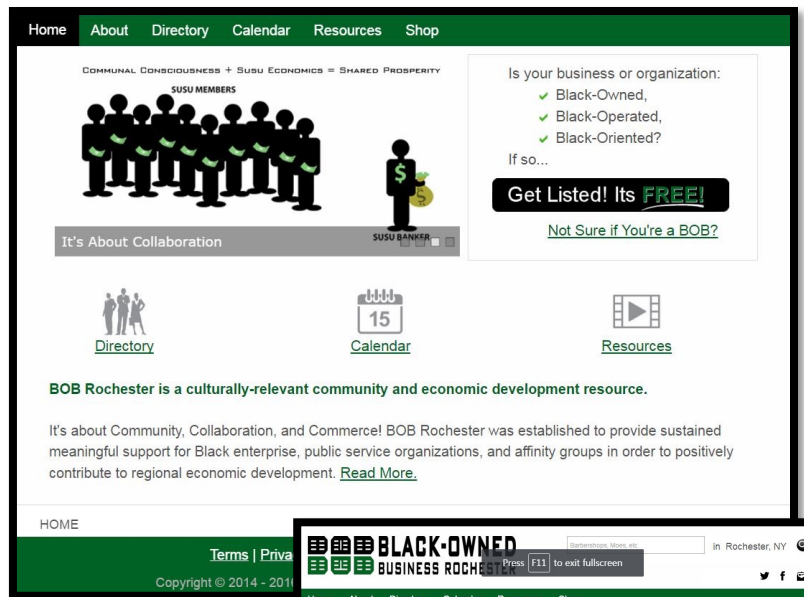
Pandemic Effects

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

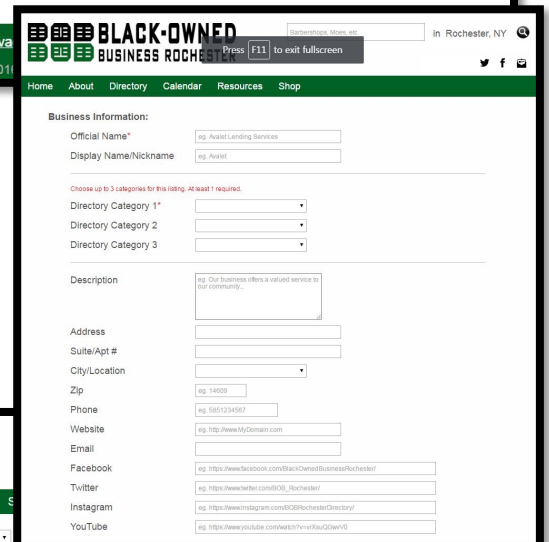
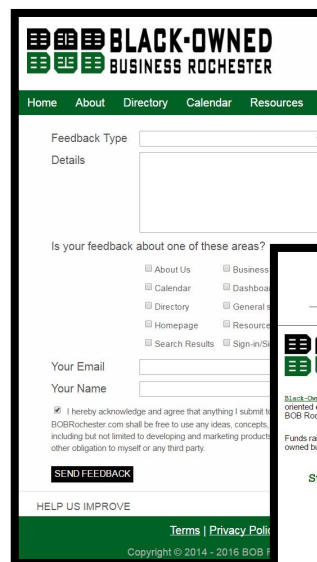
Actions – Pandemic-related Pivots

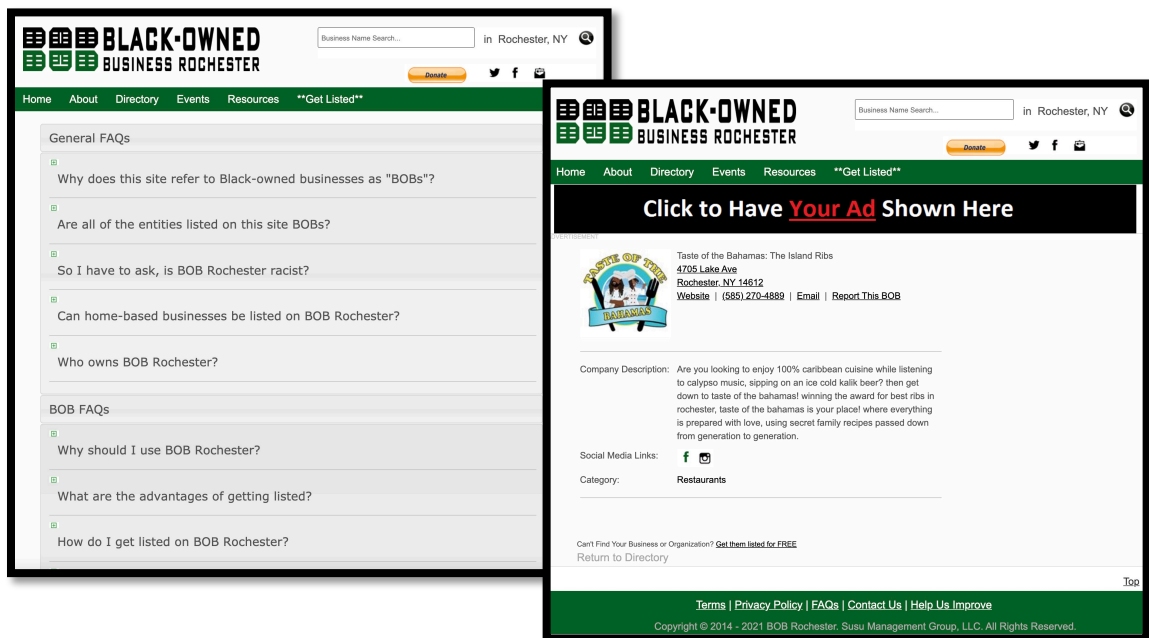
Platform Development

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



BOBRochester.com screenshots





Sample Pages Documentation

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

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

Process

Regional Integration Strategy

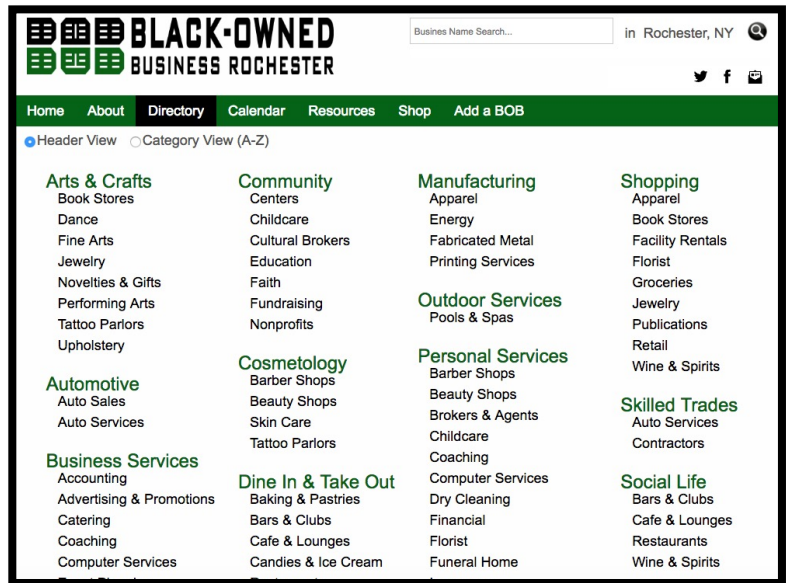
- Decide whether or not to partner with NMI Foundation, Inc. a new national non-profit (501c3) community wealth building organization to support these and related efforts within the regional context
- Identify an economic development or non-profit organization to serve as the *Organizational Affiliate*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

Strategic Resource Development

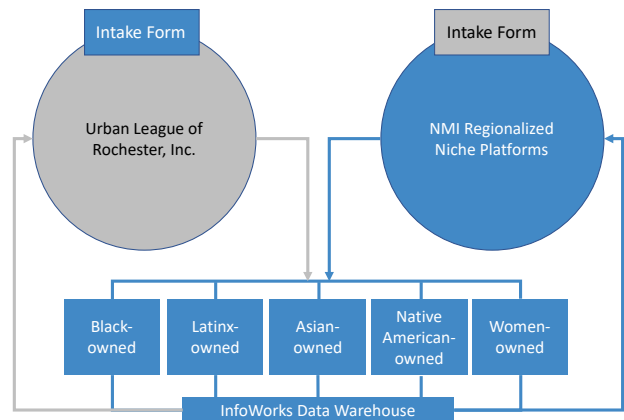
- Conduct outreach to the private sector, government, philanthropy, and the general community to garner financial support for the project; private sector incentives may include tax credits
- Establish a community fund connected to the network for garnering financial support and through which to allocate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

Platform Implementation

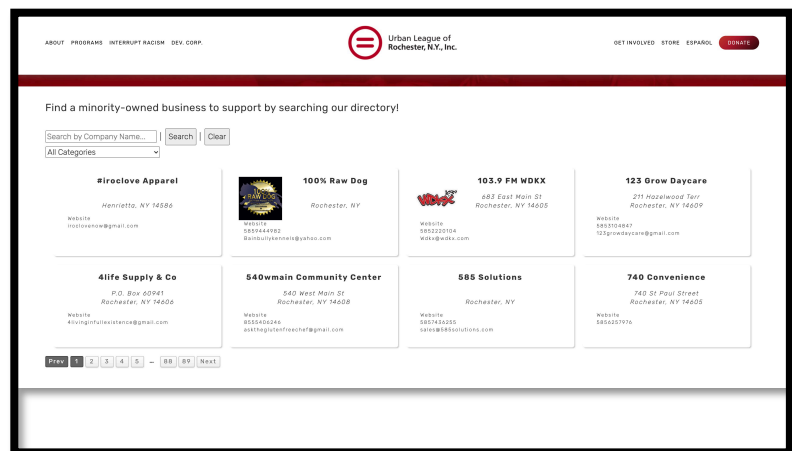
- Determine whether to sponsor one or more integrated culturally-specific portals and custom APIs in support of cultural communities of interest (*keep in mind that prices may vary by vendor, number of counties, population size, and/or features*)
- Select a vendor like InfoWorks and collaborate with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



Original BOB Rochester directory screenshot in header view



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



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



Culturally Competent Volunteer and Mentoring for Black Entrepreneurs



Provided by SME Consultant

Jeanette Nigro, Principal – Perch Advisors LLC

Location

New York City

<p>Origin</p>	<p>Developed by Hester Street in partnership with United Way of New York City and Perch Advisors</p>
<p>Budget</p>	<p> Development of training and implementation of volunteer/mentorship program cost under \$50,000</p>
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p> Short Term (Less than 5 years) – Program was developed and launched in less than 6 months</p>
<p>Risk</p>	<p> Low Risk: Public will was high and the program could be developed, scaled, and replicated</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Number of volunteers trained on providing culturally competent mentoring; number of volunteers citing a better understanding of implicit bias and historical discrimination; number of businesses supported through volunteer/mentorship programs; exit surveying to determine impacts to improved business performance indicators.</p>
<p>Partners & Resources</p>	<p>Key partners could include: Municipalities and government agencies offering small business support, neighborhood and business organizations including Business Improvement Districts, Chambers of Commerce, Black business organizations; technical assistance partners offering no-cost services such as federal Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), PTAC's, colleges and universities, business services organizations serving Black businesses such as Project Hope, Minority Business Development Agency, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI's), minority business associations, corporate partners with volunteer programs.</p>

BEST PRACTICE

Diagnostic

When the COVID 19 pandemic hit in March 2020, NYC businesses faced immediate and imminent closures. Particularly hard hit were businesses in the retail, services, and hospitality sectors. In NYC, the pandemic was poised to create an extinction level event for Black-Owned businesses, with many concentrated in the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic.

Black-businesses needed help - mentorship and peer support - to pivot their business, navigate loans and grants, and adapt operations to the new normal. But additionally, they needed the type of support that understood the history and lived experience of Black businesses, including discrimination in lending and leasing, and lack of community-based resources in neighborhoods.

The program was developed to train mentors and volunteers on how to deliver culturally competent technical assistance for Black-businesses. Three modules were developed to educate mentors on the history of discrimination of Black business owners, the ways in which implicit bias impact technical support, and how to engage in active listening and conversation. Volunteers and partners were required to complete the entire 3-part training prior to being matched with a business. Post training exit surveys showed a significant increase in understanding of the lived experience of Black business owners in NYC, the ways in which implicit bias could impact how volunteers support businesses, and improved ability to communicate in a non-judgmental and unbiased manner with their future mentees.

Action Items

Developing a volunteer or mentorship program to provide one on one support for Black and minority businesses requires an understanding of the lived and historical experience of those served through this work. Black and minority businesses have historically been marginalized through community segregation, red lining, bias in bank lending, among other ways that impact not only how they run their business, but often foster a deep mistrust in the institutions designed to help them improve their businesses, particularly during a crisis like COVID-19. COVID has made it even more challenging for Black and minority businesses to trust a system which was neither developed to include nor communicate with them. The sheer volume of information on COVID support and resources, often overwhelming and conflicting, furthered confusion on what support business could access.

Equity and implicit bias training helps volunteers, mentors, and technical assistance providers understand the Black and minority business experience and how it impacts access and use of resources to help them stabilize and grow. Any municipality, community organization, or small business technical assistance provider can take the extra step to develop training that better prepares those who serve Black and minority businesses to provide more thoughtful outreach and service provision.

Initiating equity and bias training could include as many partners as are willing to collectively work together to train their staff and volunteers. It is suggested that an outside consultant with expertise in this area be brought in to align intended outcomes and develop and administer the training. Training can be ongoing and include any partners or organizations seeking to better serve Black and minority businesses in a more equitable and inclusive way.

Process

- Identify organizations with community and business support experience that can develop culturally competent service delivery training. There are opportunities for smaller municipalities to collaborate to develop shared goals and content in order to reduce costs and
- Research the history of businesses within the community/city/municipality to gain a better understanding of their experience. Consider hiring an expert in the area of cultural competency and inclusion to support the development of training curricula.
- Identify the goals and outcomes intended for the training.
- Survey Black and minority businesses to understand their needs, identify how their needs are defined by their experiences, and in what ways mentors and volunteers can support their journey.
- Identify corporate or community partners committed to both providing mentorship and technical assistance and delivering support in a culturally respective way. Corporate sponsors with existing volunteer/mentorship programs, technical assistance providers, even municipal staff who support businesses can leverage their existing programs and improve their support to businesses.
- Partner organizations collaborate to review survey data, prioritize training needs for volunteers/mentors, and begin developing training.
- Test training with several organizations; use time within the training to ask questions in small groups; incorporate feedback and iterate training modules to ensure inclusivity and understanding.
- Pilot a small group of business and volunteer matches; observe and survey for impact.

Our mission is to help small businesses thrive across the Finger Lakes Region. We provide entrepreneurs and small businesses with the vital assistance, resources, and information they need. Nexus i90 makes support more accessible to foster equitable growth and inclusiveness and spur economic prosperity for our region.



The Gateway for Entrepreneurs

We are dedicated to helping connect and grow the entrepreneurial community of the Finger Lakes region.

[Learn more](#)

Facilitating Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building and Enhancement



Provided by SME Consultant

Third Eye Network, LLC

Location

Rochester, New York/Finger Lakes Region

Origin	City of Rochester – Mayor’s Office of Community Wealth Building Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Center for Urban Entrepreneurship Rochester Economic Development Corporation (REDCO)
Budget	\$417.5k Digital Infrastructure; \$1.5M Ecosystem Enhancement
Timeframe	28 Weeks <i>[SourceLink Pro Implementation]</i> ; 12 Months <i>[Regional CRM Expansion]</i> ; 24 Months/cohort <i>[Ecosystem Enhancement]</i>
Risk	Requires public and philanthropic investment, socio-political will and actively engaged collaboration among the entrepreneur support community
Key Performance Indicators	Network Collaborations <i>[# of partners & referrals, funds raised, engagement rates]</i> , Community Commerce <i>[# of businesses/jobs created/retained, # and % of goals achieved]</i> , Ecosystem Enhancements <i>[# of new offerings/improvements, impact of policy changes]</i>
Partners & Resources	<p>Collaborators: City of Rochester Mayor’s Office of Community Wealth Building, RIT Center for Urban Entrepreneurship, REDCO, Rochester Public Library Business Insight Center, JustCause, Monroe County Economic Development Dept., Urban League of Rochester, IBERO-American Action League, M&T Bank Foundation, ESL Foundation, Rochester Downtown Development Corporation, SCORE Greater Rochester, PathStone Enterprise Center, Small Business Administration Rochester Chapter</p> <p>Sponsors: Living Cities – City Accelerator Catalytic Capital Grant (\$100k); JPMorgan Chase – Matching & CRM Expansion Grants (\$137.5k, \$180k); Empire State Development/New York State – Ecosystem Enhancement Grant (\$1.5M)</p>

BEST PRACTICE

Diagnostic

Action – Facilitating Nested “Hub and Spoke” Model Development

Strategy Feasibility Planning

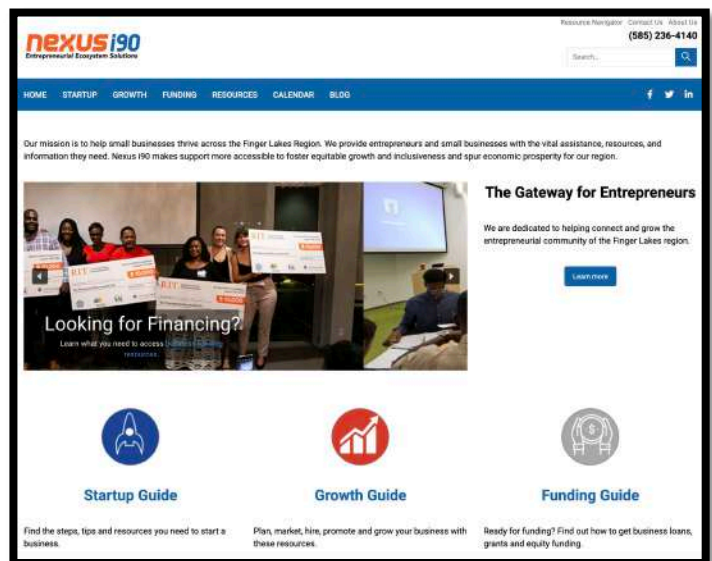
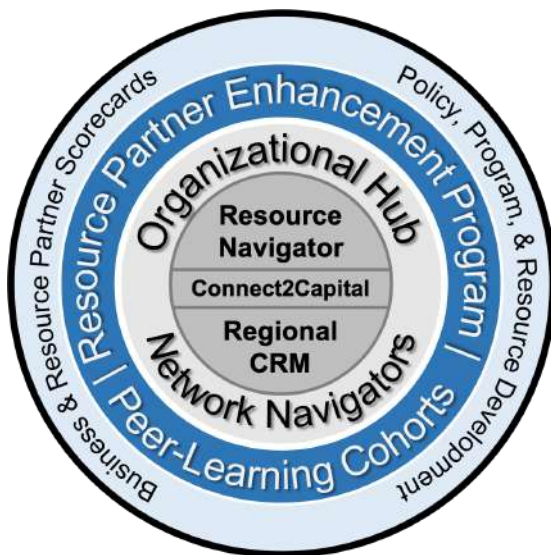
- Biennial small business climate and needs assessment survey; allot three to four months for planning and execution at \$10k – \$15k
- 4 – 5 culturally-specific, peer-led focus groups (e.g., *Black-owned, Latinx-owned, and women-owned businesses, businesses earning over \$100k annually, and those who had prior dealings with the “Organizational Hub”*); 6 to 10 participants per group at \$15k – \$20k total
- Findings: Bureaucracy was a barrier; universal monocultural approaches fail; support resources and pathways were unclear, decentralized, and disjointed; little capital access and know-how

Anti-Racist Community Building

- Host 3 – 5 three-day Undoing Racism® Workshops with The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (www.pisab.org) for resource partners, small businesses, influencers, and other stakeholders; allot three to four months for planning and execution at \$13.5k/workshop, when hosting 2 or more
- Attend Kauffman Foundation’s ESHIP Summit, join networks, and invest in related learning materials to plug into the global entrepreneurial ecosystem movement; allot up to \$2k/person
- Co-created the scale of proposed digital asset development activities (consider hyper-local versus regional approaches) with REDCO
- Spearheaded Sourcelink implementation with key collaborators
- Hosted resource partner gathers during project kick-off and launch events
- Prepared and released resource partner enhancement program RFPs
- Selected cohort participants by committee
- Publicly launched and currently administering the inaugural cohort

Campbell’s Nested “Hub and Spoke” Model for Inclusive Ecosystem Building and Enhancement

Nexusi90.org home page



Process - Digital Asset Development *(phased)*

Resource Navigator Implementation (Nexusi90.org)

Select a vendor like SourceLink (joinsourcelink.com), establish a project team, and maintain a weekly meeting schedule to identify and map resources, develop site content, create social media pages and a hotline, participate in train-the-trainer workshops, and convene regional resource partners for project kick-off and pre-public launch meetings; allot four to six months at \$75k for implementation and \$15k for annual maintenance *(prices may vary by vendor, number of counties, population size, and/or features)*

Custom CRM Development and Platform Integration

Determine the scope of work based on community needs *(Rochester was interested in expanding access to SourceLink's CRM so any resource partner in the region that wanted to adopt the platform as a system of record or integrate their organizational system with the shared platform)*; allot 12 months of planning and execution at \$180k *(future SourceLink clients would not incur this expense)*

Connect2Capital is a collaborative online lending network created by Community Reinvestment Fund USA; allot four months for planning and execution *(in progress)* at an unknown cost due to a third-party sponsor

Process – Resource Partner Enhancement Program

Peer-learning Cohort Program

Program Planning: Determine target cohort size based on funds raised for the program; prepare requests for proposals for prospective resource partner and organizational coaches cohorts; responses should articulate proposed enhancement plans from resource partners, and demonstrate coaches' expertise and commitment to support the cohort and program; and establish a selection committee and develop scoring rubrics before releasing both requests for proposals, conduct candidate selection and matching processes, and notify program participants; allot six months at \$750k – \$2M total for three to six resource partners *(\$150k – \$200k grants each)* and three to six organizational coaches *(\$100k – \$150k grants each)*

Program Convenings: Host two day convenings *(virtual or in-person)* to kick-off and receive major progress updates at the beginning, middle, and end of the program; these events should include culturally-relevant music, soul checks *(check-ins)*, opening remarks from dignitaries and program administrators, a keynote speaker, relevant panels, team presentations, engaging activities, and breakout rooms/groups; allot six to nine months for planning and execution at varying costs based on delivery format *(virtual vs. in-person)*, refreshments and parking fees according to the number of participants, insurance requirements, interpretation and translation service needs, entertainment, decorations, and honorariums; these costs should be equitably deducted from the funds awarded to the resource partners and organizational coaches cohorts

Program Management: Resource partners should meet with their assigned coaches at least bi-weekly throughout the program, all coaches should meet with program administration at least once monthly for check-ins, an "all-cohort" meeting should be conducted monthly with both cohorts for updates and cohort collaboration, and resource partners should meet with program administration for an individual onboarding session at the beginning of the program and periodically as warranted throughout the program

Program Workshops: All cohort members should be required to participate in an Undoing Racism® Workshop early in the program to inform their work, and principals and tools should be regularly revisited; two to three months for planning and execution at costs equitably deducted from the funds awarded to the resource partner and organizational coaches cohorts

nexus190
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Solutions

Resource Navigator Contact Us About Us (585) 236-4140

HOME STARTUP GROWTH FUNDING RESOURCES CALENDAR BLOG

SELLING TO BIG BUSINESS AND THE GOVERNMENT

Selling to Big Business and the Government

Selling to the Government
Government agencies and large corporations buy the same types of things most businesses do, professional services, supplies, landscaping services and so on. Selling to government agencies can be tricky though, and that's where Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC) come in to play. PTAC offices provide small businesses throughout the region with assistance in submitting and understanding bidding opportunities and contracts. Often, they also support businesses in gaining certifications for women-, veteran- and minority-owned businesses.

Becoming Certified
Certification programs can help you market your business to both large business and governments. Many large corporations and governmental entities set aside a percentage of their purchasing contracts for small businesses, minority and/or women owned businesses. Becoming "certified" as one or more of these types of businesses enables a company to bid on contracting opportunities. MWBE.com offers a description of certification.

Most government entities will require a company to at least go through a streamlined or shortened verification process that is specific to that agency. Certification can take from 30-90 days.

Find local resources to help with procurement by searching the Resource Navigator.

Growth Guide
Maintaining Growth
Marketing to Drive Profit
Exporting to Expand Sales
Selling to Big Business and the Government
Hiring and Managing Employees
Events and Advisors
Exit Strategies
Networking for Growth

Need help? Call Us (585) 236-4140
We're here to help you start and grow your business.

Can't find what you're looking for? Have a suggestion? Let us know.

nexus190
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Solutions

Resource Navigator Contact Us About Us (585) 236-4140

HOME STARTUP GROWTH FUNDING RESOURCES CALENDAR BLOG

SET FUNDING

Get Funding

Contrary to popular belief there are only a very few grants available to start and grow businesses.

Estimate the amount of funding you need to secure financing for your business
Start at the beginning: how much money do you need and for what?

- Tips on estimating startup costs (SBA)
- Online startup costs calculator (Bizplans.com)
- Small Business Development Center (SBD) counselors can also help you determine your startup or expansion financing needs

Determine the Best Source of Funding

- Overview of business financing (Bizfilings by CT)
- Quick Pick chart of funding sources based on stage of business (Bizfilings by CT)

Put Together a Business Plan
Get more information on specific types of funding:

- Friends and Family Funding
- Types of Loans Available
- SBA/Bank Loans
- Angel and VC Investment
- Technology Grants

Funding Guide
Get Funding
The Truth About Free Government Grants
Friends and Family Funding
Types of Loans Available
SBA/Bank Loans
Angel and VC Investment Groups
Technology Grants

Need help? Call Us (585) 236-4140
We're here to help you start and grow your business.

Can't find what you're looking for? Have a suggestion? Let us know.

nexus190
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Solutions

Resource Navigator Contact Us About Us (585) 236-4140

HOME STARTUP GROWTH FUNDING RESOURCES CALENDAR BLOG

Resource Navigator

To request that your organization be included in the Nexus 190 Resource Navigator please complete this online form.

Narrow Your Search

Zip Code or City, State

Distance

Area of Assistance

Specific Need

Opportunity Populations

Business Type

Business Stage

Industry

Keyword

Refine Search

thehub.com
AdHub.com
A library of the advertising industry listing Ad Agencies, Freelancers and other marketing resources to help companies promote their business.

ENTREPRENEUR
Ain Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Rochester
The Ain Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Rochester is an interdisciplinary center that subsidizes the University and Rochester communities in developing and applying an entrepreneurial mindset via training programs and other offerings.

ROCHESTER
Black-owned Business (BOB) Rochester
Black-owned Business (BOB) Rochester is a community-driven marketing and promotional resource serving Greater Rochester (NY) area BOBs. BOB Rochester was created to empower Black entrepreneurs, public service organizations, affinity groups, and associations.

BI
Business Insight Center
Our market research services don't just save your company time and money, we can also identify potential customers to help increase your bottom line.

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
Carlson Center for Intellectual Property
The Carlson Center for Intellectual Property assists with prior art searches and filing for patents, trademarks, and copyright.

nexus190
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Solutions

Resource Navigator Contact Us About Us (585) 236-4140

HOME STARTUP GROWTH FUNDING RESOURCES CALENDAR BLOG

EVENTS

Search for events

Find Events List

Now onwards

Filters

Event Category

Cost \$0

Venues

Organizers

Day

Time

City

Featured Events

May 2021

May 20 @ 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm EDT

Level Up: Rochester Edition featuring Nita Brown
Online

Walker's Legacy Foundation, the nonprofit arm of Walker's Legacy, is proud to present Level Up: Rochester Edition, a digital speaker series created to support seating and aspiring female entrepreneurs seeking guidance, encouragement, and practical advice. Level Up: Rochester Edition will take place on March 18, 2021 at 12 PM EDT, and will feature guest Nita...

nexus190
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Solutions

Resource Navigator Contact Us About Us (585) 236-4140

HOME STARTUP GROWTH FUNDING RESOURCES CALENDAR BLOG

STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL STARTUPS

Steps for Successful Startups

Step 1: Prepare for Success
Take the time to find out if your idea is viable. Who will buy your product or service? What's happening in your industry?

- Research your market
- Take a startup class
- Talk to a startup counselor

Step 2: Plan Your Business
Good business planning keeps you focused, and can be the difference between failure and success.

- Take a business planning class
- Write a business plan
- Talk to a business planning counselor

Step 3: Register and License Your Business
You'll need to go through several steps to make sure your business can operate legally.

Startup Guide
Steps for Successful Startups
Prepare for Success
Plan Your Business
Register and License Your Business
Forms of Business Organization

Need help? Call Us (585) 236-4140
We're here to help you start and grow your business.

Can't find what you're looking for? Have a suggestion? Let us know.

nexus190
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Solutions

Resource Navigator Contact Us About Us (585) 236-4140

HOME STARTUP GROWTH FUNDING RESOURCES CALENDAR BLOG

ADMINISTRATIVE

Finally, We Have Reached Our Nexus!

By Dr. Lorain B. Campbell | Administrative

Recent Posts

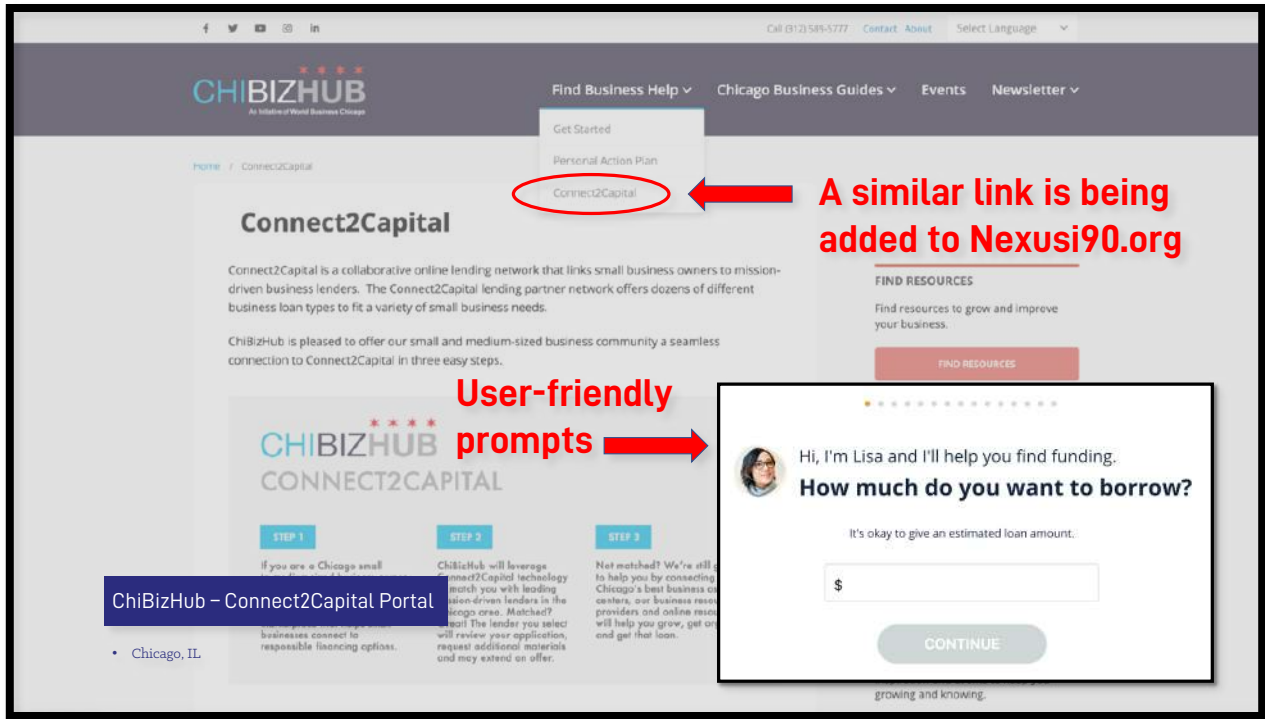
- Three C's of Launching and Growing a Small Business Part 3
- Three C's of Launching and Growing a Small Business Part 2
- Finally, We Have Reached Our Nexus!
- Three C's of Launching and Growing a Small Business Part 1

Recent Comments

Archives

- September 2020
- August 2020

Nexus 190 screenshots



SourceLink affiliate ChiBizHub demonstrates how the Connect2Capital portal will integrate into Nexusi90.org

Resource Partner Enhancement Program – Cohort I Member Organizations



Each Cohort I member above focuses on different entrepreneurial cultural communities: Black-owned, Latinx-owned, Women-owned businesses, low-to-moderate income residents, previously incarcerated and justice system involved residents, and food-based businesses (including new ventures and those who previously operated informally)

Improving Business owner satisfaction with city permitting & Internal Citywide Communication by Streamlining and Digitizing the city's special event permitting processes

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location	Main Street Convention Center District	
Origin	Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) and Department of Public Works (DPW)	
Budget		<p>Medium - estimated cost is \$75,000 including the cost of purchasing off the shelf software OR developing an internal electronic special event permit tracking process. Funds can come from American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA), CDBG, State funds via One-Stop portal. Plan for annual updates and their associated costs.</p>
Timeframe		<p>Short-term – City staff are interested in transitioning to electronic permitting for alignment with routine permit applications and for special events and are ready to act</p>
Risk		<p>Low - There is considerable support to improve the city’s special event permitting process and consensus that some form of electronic tracking process will improve the experience for city staff and event organizers.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	<p>Improved satisfaction with the special event permitting process by both City staff and event organizers; shortened timeframes for processing of special event permits; improved longevity of staff; positive response from customers</p>	
Partners & Resources	<p>City Staff (planning and economic development, building, DPW, Fire, Police, Mayor’s Office, etc.)</p>	
Diagnostic	<p>Prior to the pandemic, the city acknowledged limitations of the existing special event permit process. During the shutdown, the city learned it could process applications via email and is now eager to move to an electronic process to streamline special event permitting.</p>	
Action Item	<p>Springfield will research both the capabilities of an existing online permit vendor, Accela, and other vendors recommended and/or on the state list, to provide electronic permitting services for special events.</p>	

1. Product Research

- a. Create a sheet of potential vendors that could provide this service and communities that have utilized their services. Outline their product options and any pricing information. Include Accela on this list, both in terms of what it currently provides to the City and what other options it offers.
- b. Be conscious of the end user experience as well as the internal experience using any process.

2. Determine Selection Methodology

- a. Determine whether to (a) issue an RFP/RFQ or (b) negotiate with Accela for additional services.
- b. If an RFP/RFQ will be issued, outline selection criteria based on 1.c. It is recommended to request Accela to bid.

3. Select Cautiously

- a. Use a strong selection team to choose implementation path, and retain that team in implementation.
- b. Be conscientious consumers, making sure you understand what vendors are offering and for what cost.
- c. Keep at least one backup plan in mind to provide an option to change course and maximum city leverage.
- d. Be clear with vendor or new staff as to what your top needs are. Avoid being convinced to utilize prefabricated products unless you determine they meet your needs.

4. Implement System

- a. Consider inviting one or two key users to beta-test a system if possible before full launch.
- b. Maintain the team from 4.a. to manage implementation as it moves forward.
- c. Make sure there is a clear project manager on the City side and maintain active involvement in product deployment.

5. User-Friendly website

- a. Make sure you have a landing page where users can easily find the documents and requirements of what is needed for special events.
- b. Consider including a citation and link to the city ordinance which establishes the justification for the requirements to follow.

6. Special Event Staff Person

- a. A municipal staff person or department needs to be identified as the primary contact for special event permits. The staff person assists the applicant with ensuring the review process is comprehensible and efficient and that all the requirements of the application are met. In Burlington, VT, the Associate Planner in the Planning Department is the facilitator of the application and process.

In Fort Worth, the Office of Outdoor Events has a staff contact, an Outdoor Events Manager, who is tasked with facilitating the process of review and determining whether an application is for neighborhood events or larger city-wide events, which is determined in accordance with their City Ordinance.

7. Create a Manual

- a. Create a Manual that describes the process and publicize it widely and regularly. All three example cities have developed beautiful, easy to follow manuals that not only explain the local permitting process but also help applicants differentiate between the kinds of special events possible and how to design and implement effective ones.

8. Create a special event permitting review committee

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

9. Provide sample documents

- a. If you are going to require a site plan, provide an example of a completed one and examples of other required forms to make it easier for applicants to understand what is needed.

10. Assess Effectiveness

- a. Develop a system to assess product effectiveness, including a business survey.
- b. Be open to changing course as needed based on feedback.
- c. Continue to evaluate project effectiveness on original criteria as much as possible.

Streamlining Special Event Permitting



Provided by SME Consultant

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Location

Osceola County, Florida

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

Action Item

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

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

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

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

Process

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


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

Process (Continued)

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

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

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

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

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

Permitting Pop-Up Events






Provided by SME Consultant

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Location

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

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

BEST PRACTICE

Action Plan

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

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

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

Find almost anything on our website

Search

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

Office of Outdoor Events

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



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

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

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

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

Contact Us

Location
Fort Worth

Ordinance

- [View the ordinance »](#)
- [View the latest updates »](#)
(PDF, 86KB)

Other

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

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

Process

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

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

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

Process (Continued)

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

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

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

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

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

Support and enhance City's existing Storefront Improvement program

Category		Private Realm; Revenue and Sales
Location	Main Street Convention Center District	
Origin	City Office of Planning & Economic Development (OPED), Springfield BID	
Budget		<p>Medium – The estimated seed funding could be \$100,000 and funded by the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA), State funds via the Community One Stop for Growth portal, City budget, revenue funds from Casino impact fees and Cannabis sales</p> <p>Short Term. Some steps to implement include:</p>
Timeframe		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding partners and sources, including its parameters asking “will this program be a grant, loan or forgivable loan?”, and “what are the funding amounts and matching fund requirements?” • Recruit members of city staff, business organization(s) • Create eligible project elements and storefront improvement guidelines an application form and examples
Risk		Low risk due to recruiting for retailer participation when time and budget constraints are a challenge.
Key Performance Indicators	Successful implementation of recommended improvements, more retailers/property owners applying for funding and implementing improvements.	
Partners & Resources	City OPED, Springfield BID, DevelopSpringfield, MassDevelopment, Springfield Redevelopment Authority, <i>Make It Springfield</i>	
Diagnostic	<p>Many businesses experienced a decline in business while navigating the pandemic. Some may have been in the process of improving business storefronts prior to shutdowns, but revenue limitations slowed progress so there was a lengthening of time were buildings and storefronts remained neglected. Improved storefronts will help attract customers back into these businesses.</p>	

Action Item

Assess issues that may limit the effectiveness of the existing program and work to improve access to funds and to remove barriers/issues raised by users. Issues to be address include, but are not limited to, better definition and illustration of zoning and building code requirements, providing a list of pre-approved architects, general contractors, material suppliers and sign manufacturers to save time on procurement etc.

Where the recently updated program requires 10% match from business owner applicants and 100% match from property owner applicants with private match spent first. A maximum ask for business owners is \$25,000, so business owners would have to spend \$2,500 first; the City will need to continuing assessing if this amount is a barrier for new businesses; in addition, the City has reduced number of bids required from 3 to 2, but applicants still have to secure 2 construction bids.

BID/OPED will identify business owners who are in need of assistance to boost sales and customer satisfaction and approach them with information about the storefront improvement program and how the funding can help them.

Grant funding will be secured to provide consulting services to interested business owners. Contextualize program to help business update their businesses utilizing design consultant and providing funds to applicant if building or storefront is improved.

Process

The process will include:

- the City identifying funding source(s) and securing grant funding;
- retaining a retail consultant to work with the City to enhance the program and also provide advice to interested business owners;
- provide recommendations to business and property owners for effective storefront improvements;
- assure compliance to recommended activities; and
- reimburse those who have made improvements.





Image: Andover

Develop a façade/storefront/site improvement program



Provided by SME Consultant

Emily Keys Innes, AICP, LEED AP ND, Innes Associates Ltd.

Location

Not Applicable

Origin	Innes Associates Ltd.
Budget	 Low (less than \$50,000)  Medium (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (1-5 years)
Risk	 Medium
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop design guidelines for the façade elements to be improved. • Develop the structure of the program. • Manage the program over time. • Design assistance. • Implementation, including construction. • Displacement protection programs.

BEST PRACTICE

Potential Sources of Funding

In addition to municipal funds, the following are appropriate sources:

Funding Sources for All Façade Improvement Programs

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds should cover assistance with the design of façade, storefront, or site improvements when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Possible impacts are addressed in the sections on **Key Performance Indicators** and **Diagnostic**.

Hometown Grants

T-Mobile

This program will fund up to \$50,000 per town and may be used to rebuild or refresh community spaces, including historic buildings. <https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants>

Local Banks and other Community Development Financial Institutions

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

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (project limit \$25,000)

All communities are eligible to apply. Some of the funding for this program is reserved for non-entitlement Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) communities. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which could include creating the program, developing the design guidelines, and providing conceptual designs for improvements, depending on the complexity of the project. This program could be used to develop the design guidelines for the façade improvement program.

Business Improvement District or Other Downtown District

Funds from a BID may be used for a façade improvement program.

Funding Sources that May be Leveraged

A façade improvement program may be used to address components of the façade (including awnings and signs), a storefront system, accessibility, the entire façade or façades visible from a public way, and/or components of the site (including signage, planters, restriping for outdoor dining or retail display, or adding more permanent landscaping). However, within a target area such as a downtown, corridor, or other commercial area, some buildings may have more extensive needs. For example, many historic buildings require elevators for access to upper floors. Other buildings may require structural repairs to the façade or interior.

The sources on the next page are examples that can work in tandem with a façade improvement program to address buildings with larger needs.

Potential Sources of Funding

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth: Underutilized Properties Program

MassDevelopment

As with the historic tax credits below, this funding source is for a much larger project. It could be used to help address larger buildings in a target area that have more significant issues. Bundling this program and a few of the other more specialized grants could help a municipality address smaller properties with the façade improvement program and larger ones with these more targeted funds.

Municipal Vacant Storefronts Program

Economic Assistance Coordinating Council

This program will not fund façade improvements. The municipality would form a district. Businesses the district then apply for the funds to address vacant storefronts. This could help reduce the number of vacant storefronts while the façade improvement program addresses accessibility, deferred maintenance, and design issues on the exterior or the site.

Collaborative Workspace Program

MassDevelopment

This grant provides another option to address both the exterior and the interior of this space while also helping to support local jobs and job creation.

Community Preservation Act

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

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

Massachusetts Historical Commission (project limit \$3,000-\$100,000, depending on project type)

This is a 50% reimbursable matching grant for preserving properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Preservation.

Applicants are limited to municipalities and nonprofits. Many downtown and village centers include nonprofit and municipal anchors. This grant could be used to ensure that all properties in a target area are brought, over time, to the same standard of repair. The program does have limitation on allowable costs. A preservation restriction is required.

Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

Massachusetts Historical Commission

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

Risk: Explanation

The risk level depends on the community and the relationships of the property owners with the municipality. The highest level of risk occurs in conversations with property owners; for various reasons, the owners of the most distressed properties may be reluctant to participate. Once funding is secured and a few projects have been successfully completed, this risk level is likely to drop. Early engagement with property and business owners will also reduce this level of risk.

Some communities have indicated that that owners will not want to participate in programs funded by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds because of the number of requirements. Communities using these funds should consider helping with the paperwork and providing a list of local designers and contractors who meet the program's eligibility requirements.

Façade improvements can also be about community values relative to the physical space; a third level of risk occurs within the community conversations around the design standards for the program. In some communities, a façade improvement program may be an implementation step in an earlier planning process. In others, developing a community vision for the area before creating the program will be necessary to receive support for the program.

The final risk is the displacement of smaller businesses as property values, and rents, increase to match the upgrades to the physical environment. Since many smaller businesses are often also local businesses, improvements without protection for those small businesses may result in attractive, but empty, storefronts. Municipalities should consider structuring the criteria for participation in their façade improvement programs to reduce the risk of displacement.

Key Performance Indicators

Improvements as a result of these programs include safety, accessibility, pedestrian comfort, and aesthetics. Over time, upgrades to façades and sites contribute to a perception that an area is vibrant, safe, and attractive to businesses and their customers. The increase in value attracts investment and contributes to a higher tax base.

KPI for this project could include the following:

- Creation of the program.
- Number of applicants over a specific timeframe.
- Number of façades, storefronts, and/or sites improved within a specific timeframe.
- Maintenance of the improvements after a set number of years.
- Increase in visitors to the target area.
- Increase in sales at the property/business improved and within the target area.
- Ability to extend the program to other commercial areas within the municipality (if appropriate).
- If anti-displacement measures are included in the program:
 - Number of local businesses within improved properties that are still there after a set number of years.
 - Number of new local businesses that have started or relocated to the target area within a set number of years.

Partners & Resources

- Municipal staff (planning and economic development, building and/or zoning inspector)
- Municipal boards (City Council/Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Design Review Board, Economic Development Committee)
- Property/business owners
- Downtown organizations

Diagnostic

Reasons for undertaking a façade or storefront improvement program may include one or more of the following:

- Requirements to address the transmissibility of COVID-19, such as new windows, doors, or HVAC system may be unaffordable to a small business owner and/or may have a negative impact on the façade if improperly sourced and installed.
- On-site parking spaces are poorly organized and, if reorganized, can provide room for outdoor dining or retail display.
- Local small businesses do not have the resources (time, money, expertise) to address substandard storefronts.
- Distressed properties have a negative impact on people's impression of the viability and/or safety of a business district and property owners are unable to make the improvements themselves.
- Storefronts are not accessible to those who have problems with mobility, whether temporary or permanent.
- Historic downtowns often have empty upper floors because of the lack of accessible elevators. A major improvement project could provide grants to address both interior and exterior accessibility.
- Historic properties may have been "improved" with inappropriate materials or repairs.

Site improvements that reduce asphalt and add landscape can address public health issues by reducing the heat island effect, planting trees to address air quality, and using low impact design to manage stormwater onsite.

Action Item

The municipality needs to make certain decisions prior to and during the creation of this program. If the municipality already knows the answers, then staff can proceed with developing the program. If not, the municipality can work the decision points into a scope of work for assistance in development and perhaps managing the program. See **Process** for some of these questions.

If starting from scratch, the municipality will need to accomplish the following:

- Identify capacity within the municipality to guide the program and bring on additional capacity.
- Develop an appropriate level of design guidelines.
- Engage the businesses, property owners, and community to get buy-in for the program.
- Develop the criteria for application, approval, installation, and maintenance.
- Develop the funding and oversight structures.

Pre-program development

1. Identify who in the municipality will manage this program: municipal staff, existing downtown committee/organization, volunteer committee, or a hybrid.
2. If the municipality does not already have design guidelines for the area that are suitable for this program, then decide how those guidelines will be developed. Will the design guidelines be just for the façade improvement program, or will they be more broadly applicable?
Note that the entity managing this process does not have to be the municipality. For example, a Community Development Corporation or other nonprofit could sponsor the program.
3. Discuss the potential focus of the program: components of a storefront, the entire storefront, the entire façade, all façades, the site? Will signage, lighting, awnings and other smaller elements be included? Will interior improvements to address accessibility be included? Will the municipality fund the design, all or some of the improvements, or both?
4. Discuss what will not be eligible. Eligibility may also be determined by the funding source (for example, CDBG funds).
5. Discuss the length of time that improvements must be maintained and the enforcement process for ensuring that improvements are maintained. Maintenance requirements could be tied to the length of the tenant's lease.
6. Consider the funding structures. The program can provide grants or loans to property owners/businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Forgiving loans after a certain time if the improvement are maintained is another option.
If the property owners are less interested in the program, the municipality might consider offering grants to the first 3-5 to sign up (depending on resources) or through a lottery process and transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This method would also allow the municipality to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area. This would need to be a highly transparent process.
7. Decide whether the guidelines and program will be developed in-house or whether the municipality will seek outside help. The funding source may determine the type of outside assistance; for example, certain programs will assign on-call consultants. For others, the municipality may need to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Developing the Guidelines

1. If the municipality already has design guidelines that can be used for the façade improvement program, skip to the next section.
2. For developing the guidelines, review the Best Practices for Design Guidelines.

Developing the Program

1. Decide the following:
 - a. Grant, loan, or hybrid
 - b. Which elements will the program fund and which are the responsibility of the property owner?
 - c. What are the eligibility requirements for participating in the program?
 - d. What is the length of the program?
 - e. How long will property owners be required to maintain the improvements?
 - f. What is the enforcement procedure for maintenance? (This could be repayment of a grant or a lien on a property.)
 - g. Will the responsibility for maintenance transfer to a new owner if the property is sold?
2. Differentiating between the responsibilities of the tenant (often the small business) and the landlord (the property owner) is critical – a small business may be enthusiastic about the assistance, but the landlord may not. The municipality may need to consider parallel outreach processes.
3. Decide on the application process and how applicants will be evaluated. Are certain property types or improvements given priority over others? Make sure the process of choosing participants is transparent.
4. Develop the forms and train the people who will be evaluating the applications.

Implementation

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

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

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

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

Example 1: Sign & Façade Improvement Program

Ashland, Massachusetts

Town Contact

Beth Reynolds
Economic Development Director
breynolds@ashlandmass.com

Funding by:

Home Rule petition for annual appropriation and Home Rule petition for revolving fund – both approved by Town Meeting.

Structure

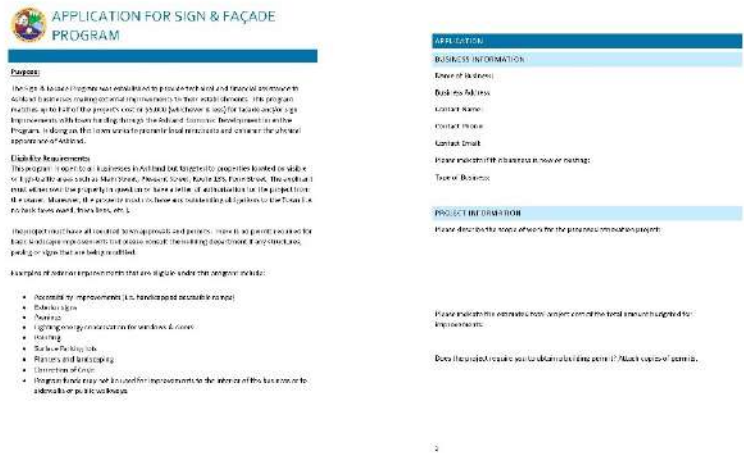
50% match up to \$5,000

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)

<https://www.ashlandmass.com/669/Business-Incentive-Programs>

Note: Many existing programs use CDBG funds. Examples 1 and 2 both use municipal funding sources. Examples 3 and 4, which are both Main Streets Programs, provide a model for using historic preservation funds.



Courtesy of the Town of Ashland

Example 2: Storefront Improvement Program

Cambridge, Massachusetts

City Contact

Christina DiLisio
Project Manager
cdilisio@cambridgema.gov

Funding by:

Municipal capital funds

Structure

Tiered matching grants based on improvement type

Characteristics

- Includes increasing accessibility to the store (part of their Storefronts-for-All program) and improving or replacing windows and doors to address COVID-19 restrictions.
- Also recommends tax credit programs to address accessibility, historic preservation, and energy efficiency

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/econdev/smallbusinessassistance/smallbusinessprograms/storefront>



Courtesy of the City of Cambridge

Example 3: NPS Main Street Façade Improvement Grant

Main Street America

<https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/projects/spotlight/facadeimprovements/npsgrant>

- Main Street America announced a façade improvement grant program using funds from the Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program, now the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program. This grant is sponsored by the National Park Service.
- This example is not given as a funding source, rather, it is an option for using historic preservation funds, such as CPA funds, to create a façade improvement program that would address the historic buildings in a target area. This option is provided because some communities were looking at non-CDBG sources for a façade improvement program. This may be a useful model for a local program.
- The site provides a link to each of the communities chosen for this program. The awards are expected to be \$25,000 per project, and the site has the preservation covenants, grant agreements, and two webinars which may be useful.

Example 4: Historic Commercial District Revolving Fund

Main Street America

<https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/projects/spotlight/facadeimprovements/hcdrf>

- State-by-state program – in 2016, it was Texas and in 2019, it was Maine.
- 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.
- 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.

Conduct Business Assessments – An Outside-In Approach



Provided by SME Consultant

GOMAN+YORK Advisory Services

Location

New England

Origin	GOMAN+YORK
Budget	 Low Budget - Consultant's Time
Timeframe	 Short Term (1-day site visit, consultation and evaluation)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	No. of completed business storefront improvements; Self-reported tenant traffic & sales growth
Partners & Resources	City/Town Economic Development, Chamber, Landlord, Tenants
Diagnostic	<p>Like other recessionary periods, Post Covid-19 is a time to reassess the way businesses are presenting themselves to consumers.</p> <p>A business assessment takes an impartial look at businesses and offers a critique that will hopefully offer low-cost solutions for improvement.</p> <p>Think of storefronts, signs and window displays as your introduction to potential consumers and clients. As such, the storefront comprises a major portion of the business assessment process. The process can be done for an individual storefront or an entire business district.</p> <p>In the next case study presented we will go into more depth on exterior improvement programs that were developed for Downtown Manchester, CT. Improvement programs – such as grant funding & community matching funds, are sources that can be utilized to help offset costs to businesses.</p>

Action Item

A Business Assessment can help to transform a struggling business or a long-term successful business that needs a refresh. A critical look at the business from the outside in is important not only from the customer's perspective, but for the business to grow and be a vibrant contributor to the community.

The Outside Assessment is a quick response to aid tenants in the process of reviewing their business from the consumer's perspective. This process is usually done as a whole business assessment. However, in this best practice sheet we will speak to assessing the physical components of a business - its storefronts, display windows and signs.

The site assessment begins with the exterior of a business. An honest assessment of a business will help the business owner to recover from the effects COVID-19 has had on their business. Consumers are venturing out more with the positivity rates declining and vaccinations increasing.

How we work with communities Bloomfield, CT – Economic Development Advisory and other municipalities

As Economic Development Advisors to the Town of Bloomfield, our team at GOMAN+YORK has worked for several years not only with their large businesses, but the Town's small businesses. We offer business assessments and consultations that encompass the whole business – that includes assessing the interior, exterior, marketing, business planning, funding sources and more.

It is important to note that while these are primarily done to help existing businesses, we also assist new and potential small businesses that are looking to enter the market.

Business assessments are funded through a variety of sources. The GOMAN+YORK team has worked with individual tenants at their request, at the request of a town as an ongoing Economic Development consultant and throughout our careers in the commercial real estate industry.

Our business consultants have provided business assessments for a variety of public and private clients including, the Town of Bloomfield, CT; the CT *rail* Property Management and Utilities Unit, Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) shopping center and local retail tenants.



In the above examples we are looking at how vacancies are handled. The one on the right portrays activity and fun – enticing people to want to bring a business here. The example to the left is closed off and leaves nothing to the imagination for its potential as a new business.



Bad



Good



Good



Good



Bad

Exterior improvements to storefronts and signage can totally transform a single business or an entire area.

Process

Site Visit: 1- 2 hours

Report/Evaluation: 2 hours

Tenant Consultation: 1 – 2 hours

Implementation: short-term and ongoing

The Report

Be direct as to what needs to be done

- “Take down the handwritten signs”
- ✓ Producing printed easy to read signs
- “Clean your windows”
- ✓ Allows customers to see what you have to offer and entices them to enter, portrays cleanliness
- “Window displays should feature what you have to offer”
- ✓ Customers will want to walk in to see more!

The Consultation

- ✓ Be direct
- ✓ Be sympathetic
- ✓ Be honest
- ✓ Always offer suggestions
- ✓ Do an outside-in walkthrough
- ✓ Be open to questions
- ✓ Share your findings with key stakeholders



**Conducting Business Assessments;
Consider the storefront from a
customer’s perspective**

Step outside and look at your storefronts from a customer’s perspective

- Are the windows clean?
- Are there handwritten signs?
- Are there exterior security grates?
- What are the façade conditions – peeling paint, damaged awnings, etc?
- Are you highlighting who you are and what you have to offer
- Are you communicating a positive or negative image to customers?
- Is your storefront signage readable as patrons are walking down the sidewalks or driving by?



A-Frame Signs allowed by regulation without permits

**Supporting the Implementation of
Recommended Storefront
improvements**

- Signage improvement programs – grant funding, community matching funds, are sources that can be utilized to help offset costs to businesses.
- Work with the town to streamline a zoning process to change sign criteria, including storefront signs, blade signs and awnings. Adjust code language and regulations pertaining to storefront improvements to support improvements.



Unique and historic identifying signs allowed by regulation

Enhance existing Pedestrian Wayfinding with a new Wayfinding App and/or Wayfinding Web-based QR Codes to printed maps.

Category		Private Realm; Revenue and Sales
Location	Focus on the Main Street Convention Center District and the Metro Center neighborhood, but expandable. The Greater Springfield Visitor and Convention Bureau is also interested so could expand regionally.	
Origin	City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), Springfield Business Improvement District (BID), Greater Springfield Visitors and Convention Bureau	
Budget		Medium Budget, (\$175,000) – with full build out; American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-with focus on MSCC district to bring customers back, Casino Mitigation grants, CDBG, Mass Development Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) challenge grants 2022
Timeframe		Short term (1-2 years for full build out)
Risk		Low risk - significant interest to expand pedestrian way-finding from both the BID and the Visitor’s Bureau and the city invested in way-finding kiosks in 2015-16; this project will make the existing system that much more useful and significantly expand utility with QR codes and customizable maps to be printed.
Key Performance Indicators	Number of visitors, number of customers for businesses in the MSCC District, increase in sales at businesses included on wayfinding maps and kiosks.	
Partners & Resources	BID, Greater Springfield Visitors and Convention Bureau	
Diagnostic	<p>84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID. Pedestrian way-finding has been shown to successfully bring people to downtowns and improve the experience for visitors and workers/residents alike. Springfield launched a kiosk based pedestrian way-finding system in 2015-16, but as the years have gone by the kiosks need to be cleaned and maintained and the limitations of a kiosk-only system have become clear. Evaluations of London’s pedestrian way-finding system show users get to their destinations faster and get lost less frequently.</p> <p>This project will also address issues of lack of parking, as the maps and/or App will include parking locations and estimated short travel time from parking garages and lots to key businesses and could also assist with highlighting Black and Brown owned businesses as there are an increasing number of them and customers eager to spend their money in Black and Brown owned businesses.</p>	

Action Item

The City of Springfield worked with Applied Information Group (Applied) to design and implement a pedestrian wayfinding system of kiosks in 2015-16. Applied had developed a comparable system in Cleveland which was updated and expanded by the city using the City Wayfinding services of the company T Kartor. The City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) and/or the BID and/or the Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau will convene interested parties to discuss and agree on scope of pedestrian wayfinding expansion (QR codes to website maps or App or both) before completing procurement to engage City Wayfinding to complete expansion

Process

The process will include:

- Convene a meeting of the three key interested parties (OPED, BID, GSVCB) including others as appropriate such as the Springfield Parking Authority (SPA), Dennis Callahan of the MA Convention Center, and determine to move forward with a web based QR code system, an App or both.
- Identify funding to advance project.
- Secure funds.
- Complete procurement to secure a vendor with the goal of engaging City Wayfinding.
- Engage vendor.
- Oversee work of City Wayfinding (or other qualified vendor) to complete Springfield way finding expansion.
- Evaluate success and revise, learn, expand as appropriate..



Destination Cleveland, <https://www.citywayfinding.com/cases/cleveland/>

Destination Cleveland is the Convention and Visitors Bureau for Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Their mission is to drive economic impact and stimulate community vitality for Greater Cleveland through leisure and business travel. With more than 16 million visitors annually, their City Wayfinding system helps travelers to figure out what to see, do and eat, and how to get there.

In collaboration with the city, Applied Wayfinding developed a masterplan in 2013 to create a positive welcome, connect parts of the city and tap into Cleveland's rejuvenated appeal and brand. Prototypes, testing and systemization were followed by implementation of a street sign system, transit integration, airport connections and an online mapping tool; all devised to deliver seamless journeys.

T-Kartor took over the management and maintenance of Seamless Cleveland Wayfinding in 2019, bringing the system onto the City Wayfinding platform. This allows the production team to ingest source data from multiple agencies, and to maintain the integrity and consistency of the map database across the whole city. It supports automated graphic extracts at multiple scales and with variations in styling, to assist production of a wide range of on-street and printed products.

T-Kartor provides Destination Cleveland with an online content management portal to keep track of both the mapping database and the full catalogue of wayfinding products. This keeps the centralized map data asset in sync with all customer-facing information, ensuring accurate, updated maps which is so important to maintain trust in the system.

T-Kartor now produces and maintains the full range of mapping products, and in the coming few years Destination Cleveland aim to update signage on a regular basis, and to expand into new areas of the city, increasing the reach of the city's wayfinding information.

Deliverables

- Seamless City Wayfinding basemap across the whole city in a range of different map scales
- More than 100 on-street map-based wayfinding signs
- 10-15 printed publications, refreshed annually
- Bespoke conference maps

Research: Legible London,
<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/will-london-s-new-wayfinding-system-get-more-people-walking/23683/>

Improve Parking Access in Springfield's downtown

Category



Public Realm; Private Realm

Location

Main Street Convention Center District, Metro Center neighborhood

Origin

Springfield Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), Springfield BID, downtown businesses

Budget



Low (\$50K) American Recovery Act with focus on bringing customers back to the downtown while making it as easy as possible, CDBG, State funds

Timeframe



Short Term – start immediately and roll out Public Information Campaign

Risk



Low



Key Performance Indicators	Increased sales at district businesses; increase in number of customers at businesses in the district; increased satisfaction with Springfield’s downtown; decrease in complaints about the unfriendliness of the city’s downtown
Partners & Resources	Springfield Parking Authority (SPA), Springfield Business Improvement District (BID), MA Convention Center Authority-oversees the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield
Diagnostic	<p>84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID. Business owners, customers and city staff affirm there is a perception of a lack of parking in the district combined with a reputation of aggressive parking meter enforcement, and, diagnostic findings refute the lack of parking spaces but affirm the negative perception of parking enforcement. City staff and stakeholders support a multi-pronged approach to educate shoppers, residents, visitors and workers about the many parking options available encouraging people to park once and walk (syncing with the recommendation to improve pedestrian way-finding) making it more likely that visitors will stay longer and that workers might stay after work to shop or dine in the district. The approach proposes a suite of concurrent actions: complete the switch to a Parking App option including the option of using coins if possible for people who do not have smart phones or who are uncomfortable with on-line transactions to pay for parking meters, consider including a targeted short term valet parking program-1-2 years (Evan Plotkin & BID financed previously), revision of City of Springfield Parking Authority practices to first start with giving warnings and then move to a fine, and a collaborative public information and education campaign lifting up the over 1600 parking spaces available in the district combined with an overall message of coming back to the district to shop, eat, recreate, live and work. The Parking Authority offers a “Smart Card” (in place for 10+ years) that function as a pre-paid credit/debit card, which can be loaded from the SPA office on Bridge Street. Motorists may insert these cards into the credit card slot (on the meter) and select how much they would like to pay. There is no fee per transaction for the use of these Smart Cards, but there is a one-time admin for when the card is purchased and loaded (with cash only). The SPA has also implemented Passport Parking system throughout the downtown where the motorists may utilize an app to pay for parking. There is an option to extend time on a specific meter space if needed from the app without going to the meter.</p> <p>The MA Convention Center Authority will be tearing down and replacing the parking structure on Dwight street, Harrison and Bruce Landon Way and this is a perfect opportunity for publicity on parking and should be exploited to launch this initiative.</p>
Action Item	City OPED staff, or funded Consultant, to convene a meeting with key staff from the SPA and the BID to affirm commitment to act to improve access to the existing parking available in Springfield’s downtown, and roles and responsibilities moving forward.

The process will include:

- City OPED staff, or funded Consultant facilitator, convene interested parties to assign roles and responsibilities and affirm work process.
- Secure an estimated \$25,000-\$50,000 ARPA and/or MA Convention Center Authority funds for cost of public information and education campaign focused on educating people about the number of parking spaces available in a range of options from on street to surface lots to covered parking structures with details on distance to key destinations and time it takes to walk from parking to shopping/dining.
- Determine which entity will engage a consultant to assist with the Public Information and Education (PI&E) campaign.
- Entity engages consultant team and group works with consultant to design PI&E campaign.
- SPA commits to training staff and completing transition of parking meters to enable Parking App use or coins.
- Integrate project with expansion of pedestrian way finding with a new App and/or QR codes and the ability to print custom walking maps from parking to businesses.
- Launch Public Service Announcement style television, radio, social media and print campaign.
- Evaluate success.

The municipal parking garage provides the first hour of parking for free, with \$0.75 per hour after that.

<https://www.northamptonma.gov/259/Parking-Lots-Passes>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [northamptonma.gov](https://www.northamptonma.gov). The page title is "Create an Account - Increase your productivity, customize your experience, and engage in information you care about." The navigation menu on the left includes: "Parking Lots & Passes", "Transportation & Parking Commission", "FAQs", "General Information", "Report Disability Parking Abuse", "Meter Bag Rental Program", "Validated Parking Program", "NEW Pay-by-Plate Parking System", and "Parkmobile". The main content area is titled "PARKING LOTS & PERMITS" and contains several sections: "E. John Gare Parking Garage" (with a photo of the building), "Gothic Street Parking Structure", "Municipal Parking Lots", "Free Commuter Parking", and "Downtown Parking". A "Parkmobile" logo is visible on the right side of the page, along with a link: "Validated Parking is now available in the E. John Gare Parking Garage".

(Re)investing in the Private Realm with Creative Code Compliance

Category



Private Realm; Administrative Capacity

Location

Main Street Convention Center District

Origin

City Office of Planning and Economic Development

Budget



Medium – The estimated cost for this project \$100,000 to capitalize the fund.

Possible funding sources:

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Communities may use ARPA funding for small business assistance, such as to enhance outdoor spaces for COVID-19 mitigation (e.g., restaurant patios) or to improve the built environment of the neighborhood (e.g., façade improvements).

Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Applicants must meet and adhere to federal requirements and compliance issues. The Massachusetts CDBG Program is a competitive program that is available to all municipalities that are not Entitlement Communities and encourages joint or regional applications. Communities may apply for funds for downtown or commercial district related projects including sign/facade programs.

Private/Nonprofit/Foundation funding – Low-interest or no-interest loans or grants from private lenders, often those with a community focus or a small, local bank or nonprofit organization with community interest.

Historic funding – Historic preservation and landmarks organizations such as Main Street America receive grant funding from the National Park Service specifically for rural “Main Street” communities.

Local Municipal Funding (Set-Aside) – Municipal allocation set-aside from a special revenue stream for a set amount of time (e.g., permit revenues, sales tax set-aside, special fees such as landfill tipping/disposal fees, etc.)

Special Taxing Bodies – Business district designation (creating an additional sales tax) or special service area (additional property tax), TIF districts

Timeframe



Short-term – City can seek start up monies to capitalize the fund for prospective businesses to take advantage of to assist with paying for code improvements in an initial pilot.

Risk  Low-medium risk due to political will and community interests

Key Performance Indicators Decrease in number of code violations; faster code compliance response; increased sales at businesses who take advantage of the fund to expand; change in economic activity in the district

Partners & Resources BID, City Building Commissioner, DPW, Planning, Economic Development, Funders

Diagnostic Businesses will be able to recover from any improvement issues with building code and permitting due to long vacancies in building and offices before and after COVID as there were some vacancies already existing in the District.

Action Item An inventory of buildings/storefronts that may need significant work to bring into compliance will also be completed along with identification of funding sources to provide monies to property owners/businesses for compliance improvements.





- Process
- Ensure applicants and city staff are working off common documents for establishing building code and other regulation requirements for compliance.
 - If not, create a code compliance manual identifying required improvements and make it easily accessible and in hard copy.
 - Recruit members of business community, BID partners, City Building Commissioner, DPW, OPED and understand building code requirements and other permitting for businesses wanting to open up in MSCCD
 - Identify and set aside through City department (maybe non-profit) private realm monies and sources that can be available to possible businesses during this time.
 - Begin to notify businesses of opportunities of availability of building code compliance funds.
 - Evaluate ongoing project with milestones to be identified by committee.

Best Practice Funding for improvements

“Rent Escrow Account Program” (REAP) – Los Angeles, where when an owner falls out of compliance for a certain time, tenants may pay reduced rent (set by City). Paid to owner or escrow account. City may be able to undertake repairs by placing a lien on the property.

Emergency Repair Program (ERP) – NYC, where Housing Code Enforcement Agency may fix violations and bill owner. If owner fails to pay, a tax lien will be placed on the property.

Springfield Cycling Race in the Downtown

Category		Public Realm
Location	Main Street Convention Center District	
Origin	City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED)	
Budget		Low - ~\$10,000 American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA), CDBG, Mass Development Commonwealth Places Seed Grants (\$250-\$10,000 no match) and/or Implementation (up to \$50,000 with a match required)
Timeframe		Short – Planned for Spring/Summer 2022
Risk		Low – There is political will for this event and there are no regulatory restrictions other than following the city’s event permitting process. This could be an opportunity to integrate related RRP projects including the updated Way Finding, Parking Access Campaign, and the Electronic event permitting process.
Key Performance Indicators	Increase in sales for district businesses; increase in bodies in the district. Historically outside events that require street closures do not always yield increased foot traffic for existing businesses; the event organizers will need to work closely with the BID and District businesses. For evaluation suggest including a survey link in the BID newsletter 1-2 weeks after the event.	
Partners & Resources	BID, NAI Plotkin, MassBike, Walk/Bike Springfield, Greater Springfield Visitor and Convention Bureau	
Diagnostic	84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID.	
Action Item	City has been approached by a Bike Race organizer that runs bike races in downtowns--see the New Haven Grand Prix at www.newhavengp.com	
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convene a Downtown Bike Race committee including outreach to the very active volunteer led Springfield Walk Bike committee and include the State Bicycle Advocacy organization, MassBike. 2. Affirm costs of hosting this event in the District. 3. Secure funding—we recommend ARPA funding as this is a low cost event that will bring people to the District and if well designed will benefit local businesses, especially restaurants and café’s. 4. Identify a route that will minimize street closures that inhibit customer access for District businesses. 5. Collaborate closely with the BID and District businesses to assure the best outcome for businesses in the district. 6. Publicize the event. 7. Hold the event. 8. Evaluate success. 	

Activating Court Square and Beyond with Targeted and Tactical Arts and Cultural Projects

Category		Private Realm; Public Realm; Revenue & Sales
Location	Main Street Convention Center District (Court Square, Pynchon Plaza Bruce Landon Way, Marketplace Alley, to the District-abutting Riverfront Park)	
Origin	City OPED	
Budget		Low; Typical expenditures can include artist stipends and materials. This project can be capitalized with American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds and other City funds, competitive grants like Commonwealth Places through MassDevelopment or Massachusetts Downtown Initiative through the One-Stop Program.
Timeframe		Short Term
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators	Transformation of empty public spaces; increased foot traffic; ongoing implementation of arts projects for other spaces and possible vacant storefronts; social media exposure	
Partners & Resources	City OPED, Springfield BID, Convention Center Authority, Trust Transfer Project (TTP), Springfield Cultural Partnership, Community Music School of Springfield	
Diagnostic	<p>The ongoing pandemic has continued to highlight systemic inequities within the economic landscape of the City of Springfield. As such, our awareness continues to grow and shift towards finding ways to create a more inclusive approach with regards to activating spaces with arts and cultural experiences.</p> <p>The activation of public spaces can be applicable in a variety of ways – performance art, painting, digital art that’s immersive and social media driven (i.e., Van Gogh exhibit, Dr. Seuss, Rosé Mansion etc.), sculpture, live music, commission of local artists and artisans to help design and create public amenities and spaces such as benches, flower pots and containers and improve safety for pedestrian and roadway users via projects such as crosswalk art, pedestrian space art, traffic signal box art and other supporting street wayfinding infrastructure.</p> <p>Acting as both an economic driver for the city to help draw public engagement with currently underutilized available open spaces, and as a public health awareness resource to assist with outreach in regards to COVID-19, food insecurity and mental health. This can be even expanded to implement other long-term projects being in the Springfield Local Rapid Recovery Plan such as improving gateways to Springfield and also paired with the efforts of continuing the <i>Trust Transfer Project</i>.</p>	

Action Item

City OPED and other partners can work together to create lasting arts and cultural experiences throughout the public spaces in the District. Find natural partnerships, like the Trust Transfer Partnership and Community Music School, to provide resources and opportunities to artists that work with those entities, and work on trying to establish a funding source for the arts projects. Explore fundraising events in an activated public space or allocations in BID dues to support such programming.

Process

IDENTIFY

1. Identify and reach out to local artists, restaurant owners, and City staff interested in collaborating
2. Meet to recommend initial categories or areas of focus within the business development district

LOCATE

1. Find spaces everyone feels would benefit from the art
2. Consider spaces and businesses that could benefit from the increased foot traffic

PARTNER

1. Trust Transfer Project together with the City of Springfield and local artists and artisans and local business owners

PLAN & IMPLEMENT

1. Discuss which sites and artists and artisans will be paired together
2. Determine a cause or theme that may be highlighted, if any (i.e., COVID-19, food insecurity, mental health, or community engagement without a specific message)
3. Determine the duration the art or performance will last
4. Arrange payments and conditions for artists and materials, if any



Tipton Alley



PUBLIC
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

Bench Consulting (from Patronicity)

Location

Tipton, Indiana

<p>Origin</p>	<p>City of Tipton, Tipton Main Street Association, Chamber of Commerce, Tipton County Economic Development Organization</p>
<p>Budget</p>	<p> \$39,000</p>
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p> Two to three months to build and install most components and artwork.</p>
<p>Risk</p>	<p> Low risk assuming you can get buy in from local property owners and those who use the alley. Low investment costs makes this a low risk, high reward proposition.</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Visitor counts, "stopping and staying time," events and attendees at programmed events. Change in area vacancy rates and, if you have willing businesses, sales numbers before and after intervention.</p>
<p>Partners & Resources</p>	<p>Tipton Main Street, Local economic development corporation, the area Chamber of Commerce and local artists and youth organizations. Funding was provided through a combination of crowdfunding and matching grant dollars from a state government grant program.</p>

BEST PRACTICE



Before



After

BEST PRACTICE

Diagnostic

Issues arose around pedestrian safety crossing the alley space. Located in the heart of Main Street this space was an obstacle to a safe, inviting pedestrian experience. In addition, there was a startup Main Street organization looking to develop space, build support for its work, but more importantly, the Main Street district as a whole. The street itself was extremely car oriented with more traffic than pedestrians on the streets. An improved sense of place was needed to get drivers out of their cars and on foot, a proven tactic for increasing spending opportunity. The proximity to existing businesses, the town square, and the need for a gathering space made this alley ideal for investment and improvement.

Action Item

The intention with Tipton Alley was to develop a space that could serve as the hub of the Main Street. A space, built on a human scale, that provided a respite from the busy traffic on the street while enticing people to 1) visit downtown safely and 2) extend their stays while visiting downtown, and 3) create community connections.

As with any placemaking project, the process is as important as the outcome. How do you ensure this space will be something that residents embrace and enjoy? Have them engaged in the planning and implementation process as much as possible. Because collaboration is key and here, local artists help design the mural installations on one wall and others worked to transform the entry way of the alley to incorporate historically contextual photographs.

Early on, it was important to have proper permissions in place to use the alley and eliminate vehicle access from the main street on a permanent basis. Enjoy maintenance plans and activation and programming plans are also in place at the start.

It was important to not just plan for how the space would be transformed but activated so a community wide "farm to table" dinner was planned as part of the planning and fundraising. This project focused on programming of the space in the design phase and clarified the needs for ongoing maintenance and support.

Process

LOCATE: Find a space that you have reasonable site control over or a permission agreement in place that is centrally located within your main street or commercial district. Consider spaces that need care and attention.

PARTNER: The more local representation that's involved in planning and implementing these projects, the more successful they will be. Here, local Chamber of Commerce was involved, engaging the business community, artists helped to design the public art and residents volunteered to implement.

PLAN: Ensure site control is in order, insurance is in place and proper permissions to use any alley space have been granted before beginning to build your project. Define the potential uses for space, the more variety, the better. Consider local vendors and source products locally.

IMPLEMENT: Consider adding elements in stages, celebrating at each milestone. Be sure your site is supervised. Communication with all contractors, artists, and volunteers is important so be sure to plan ahead. Getting community investment is critical, ask for the financial support you need locally first.

FEEDBACK: Public comments can be typical and predictive, often they include questions about government waste, maintenance and use. Prepare your responses before hearings and reach out personally when possible. Also, prepare to preemptively share the most compelling project elements.

ITERATE: Additional features can be added based on use, one example is WiFi. If there is a high demand for the space, ensure there is a process for renting and reserving the space.

Outreach to and Programming with and for District Businesses to encourage workers and customers to stay in the district longer--after work and/or to shop etc., on weekends

Category



Revenue and Sales; Public Realm; Cultural and Arts

Location

Main Street Convention Center District and expand to whole downtown

Origin

Springfield BID



Budget



Low – Less than \$50,000 of Springfield’s 97 million American Recovery Act funds

Timeframe



Short – underway with BID now and support to continue for one year

Risk



Low

Key Performance Indicators

Improved sales for businesses in district, increased number of customers

Partners & Resources

City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), Springfield Visitor’s and Convention Bureau, MA Convention Center Authority, Mass Mutual Center, Businesses in the downtown, large employers

Diagnostic	84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID. BID currently reaches out to all their member businesses and all businesses in the district encouraging individuals to sign up for the BID newsletter which lists all the events they organize and know about in the downtown, but we still heard from key stakeholders that they are not always aware of events and activities in the district.
Action Item	Expand the current efforts of the BID to create a community in the district to include the existing electronic newsletter, website and calendar and to include creative use of social and traditional media.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City allocates \$50,000 ARPA funds to BID for expanded outreach and engagement in the district. • BID surveys Businesses in the downtown, members and key stakeholders to understand issues and refine existing outreach and engagement as well as programming. • BID and collaborators combine on shared social and traditional media outreach and programming.

Small Business Fund for Pandemic Response Unanticipated Costs

Category		Private Realm
Location		Main Street Convention Center District
Origin		Springfield Business Improvement District (BID)
Budget		Low - \$50,000 American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)
Timeframe		Short – proposed project is a fund administered by the BID to offset pandemic related unanticipated costs to businesses to assure no more business closures through June 30, 2022
Risk		Low risk - BID administered a comparable fund to assist businesses through the first wave of the pandemic in Spring-Summer of 2020 and it was very effective
Key Performance Indicators		Level of satisfaction of Businesses in the district who needed assistance; decreased number of business closures
Partners & Resources		City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), DevelopSpringfield, Mass Development
Diagnostic		84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID. Two businesses in the district closed in 2020
Action Item		During COVID the BID received and disbursed funds to businesses to cover relatively small (under \$5,000) unanticipated pandemic related costs, such as: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), mask purchase for distribution to customers, hand sanitizer, signage related to masks, re-configuring space to allow for social distancing etc., and this support should continue, integrating with DevelopSpringfield's Lease it Local program as appropriate. BID can survey businesses to identify specific needs.
Process		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City OPED affirm BID is correct entity to administer the fund. 2. City allocate \$50,000 ARPA funds to project. 3. City transfer funds to BID. 4. BID educates businesses in the District about the fund and its purpose and how to access it.



Helping Main Street in the Long Term After COVID-19



**REVENUES
& SALES**

Provided by SME Consultant

Levine Planning Strategies, LLC

Location

Flint, MI; Haverhill, MA; Lansing, MI; Portland, ME; Nashua, NH; and Youngstown, OH

Origin	Department of Urban Studies & Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Budget	 <p>Medium Budget – varies by actions taken but may exceed \$100,000</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Medium Timeframe – 5 to 10 years</p>
Risk	 <p>Medium Risk – requires political and funding stability to implement</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Sales and/or economic activity downtown; percentage of occupied storefronts; number of businesses open in 2019 still open 5-10 years later.
Partners & Resources	Municipal government; downtown business groups; state & federal partners

BEST PRACTICE

Diagnostic

Even before 2020, many downtowns businesses struggled. The shutdown of local businesses in the past year simply revealed the weaknesses in existing support systems for local economies. Some businesses survived through quick adaptation and embracing new tools such as enhanced social media and additional delivery services. Other businesses struggled to make those transitions, either because their business model did not work well remotely, or because the owners lacked the skills to make such transitions. Regardless of whether a business was able to pivot, most likely its overall revenue was down in 2020, raising the question of how to pay for its (largely vacant) physical space and employees.

Large federal and state programs helped take the edge off of these issues, but there remains a large backlog of rent and mortgage payments. At the same time, small property owners are in danger of losing their properties to lenders because their tenants cannot make rent payments.

At the same time, there were some forced innovations, such as changes to public spaces, that were popular among many customers. While the overall affect of the pandemic was negative for downtowns, it would still be wise to learn from those efforts and potentially retain the best of them.

There has been a fair amount of attention paid to what small businesses will need in the near term to recover from the pandemic. However, not as much work has been done on how COVID-19 will affect downtowns in the long term.

These case studies and survey, funded by the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning, were designed to explore the changes communities should consider for the next five to ten years to ensure their commercial districts can thrive. What do businesses want and need from local government to survive in the long term? What will they need if there is another significant disruption to business? What do local economic development officials think would help in their community? While this study didn't offer all the answers, it outlined areas to think more about.

Study Findings

This study was designed to understand the long-term needs of local businesses from their perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of local economic 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 & façade 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 façades. This program is funded through the City's CDBG program;*
- Another high priority for local businesses was the provision of rent or mortgage relief 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 business owners could make long term investment. There was a concern that changing priorities, such as annual changes to open streets programs or outdoor dining rules, would add uncertainty to future business 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 for outdoor dining;*

Study Findings (Continued)

Finally, local businesses 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 conversions 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.

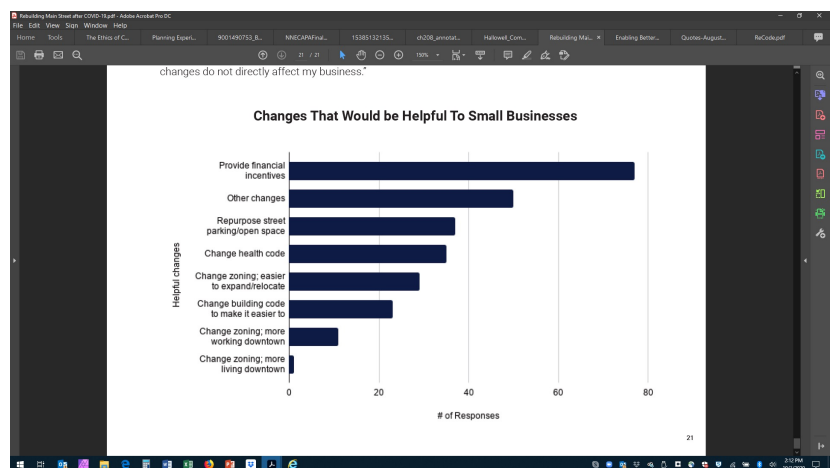
Process

The study used the following methodology:

1. An initial list of about 15 communities was developed, based on community size and built form. In order to control for weather and built form elements, only communities in New England and the Upper Midwest were part of that initial list;
2. Of those 15, six responded with an interest in participating in the study. Those six had a wide range of median household income levels and demographics;
3. Researchers compiled summary sheets about each of the communities for background information (see sample sheet for Haverhill below);
4. Study researchers interviewed local economic development officials, ranging from the Mayor of Youngstown, OH to the head of the Portland, ME, downtown improvement district;
5. With the assistance of these local officials, researchers distributed a survey to local businesses asking questions about their size and ownership; use of federal and state COVID relief programs; short-term needs; and long-term needs;
6. Researchers compiled the results into a summary report outlining business responses and interview summaries, as well as their recommendations for public actions based on those findings.



Argyle Street in downtown Halifax, NS, has been an outdoor dining spot for 25 years. In 2017, following a planning process & pilot program, the street was reconstructed as a permanent shared street, allowing local businesses to make long term investments based on the redesign (Source: Steven Lee under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license)



In the long run, businesses were still looking for financial help, but also changes in how public realm spaces were managed; changes to health codes; and simplification of zoning requirements

Haverhill, Massachusetts

Racial demographics

- White: 73% Black: 3%
- Latina/o: 20% Other: 4%

Household median income

- \$67,579

“There is strong local leadership on diversity and inclusion because it leads to a stronger workforce, better education, and better healthcare. We need to continue to embrace and welcome Latino community.”

– **Dougan Sherwood,**
**President & CEO, Greater
Haverhill Chamber of
Commerce**

H AVERHILL IS A CITY THAT IS HOME TO 64,000 PEOPLE located 35 miles north of Boston on the border of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. One of the state’s oldest historic communities, Haverhill has seen several industries come and go from lumber mills and flour mills in the seventeenth century to shoe manufacturing in the nineteenth century. By the mid-twentieth century, the shoe industry had declined and the city embraced urban renewal, demolishing swaths of historic buildings downtown. In recent decades, the city has invested in major downtown revitalization including the Haverhill Riverfront Boardwalk and the conversion of abandoned factories into loft apartments and condominiums.

Organizations working to strengthen the economy of Haverhill’s downtown include the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and the City of Haverhill Office of Economic Development and Planning. For this report, we interviewed Dougan Sherwood, President and CEO of the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. We received survey responses from a total of **22 small businesses** in Haverhill.



Washington Street in downtown Haverhill, MA. 2017.
Photo credit: Jim Davis.

Sample profile sheet on one of six small city case studies

BEST PRACTICE

Provide Funding and Technical Assistance to Enable Business Viability During COVID-19



Provided by SME Consultant

Revby LLC

Location

Arlington, MA

Origin	Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development; Arlington Economic Development Recovery Task Force; Arlington Community Development Block Grant Subcommittee
Budget	 <p>Medium (\$200,000) - \$180,000 of direct assistance to businesses via working capital grants and \$20,000 to a technical assistance program with two contracted consultants.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (< 1 year) - TA contract to end of 2021. One-on-One TA: 10 hours to be completed within that timeframe. Workshops completed before end of June 2021.</p>
Risk	 <p>Low Risk - A challenge for the Technical Assistance program was limited capacity on the part of the small business owners. Must follow CDBG requirements; subject to be returned to HUD should use of funds be deemed ineligible.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Business vitality (sales performance) through the pandemic and into the post-pandemic world.
Partners & Resources	Town of Arlington, MA Dept. of Planning and Community Development; Small businesses (grant recipients); Contracted consultants (technical assistance providers), including Revby LLC
Diagnostic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for working capital was identified as the most urgent need in the business community; thus, the majority of funds for the program were dedicated to direct assistance. • CDBG funding entails reporting requirements that must be explained to business recipients. • The technical assistance program was a pilot initiative.

Action Item

The Department of Planning and Community Development Action Items:

- Administering a relief program for Arlington businesses with twenty or fewer full-time-equivalent employees, including the owner.
- The program provides short-term working capital assistance and technical assistance to enable the viability of the business during the severe economic interruption related to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions.

Technical Assistance project Action Items (by Revby, a TA provider):

- Build trust with the business owner during the first sessions and collaboratively work on a plan on how the technical assistance time allotted may be used to support the business owner in the best way possible.
- Conduct several TA sessions over Zoom
- Provide a final project deliverable that outlines the work completed and provides resources and recommendations for the business owner's ongoing use.
- Provide workshops on topics including business resilience and digital marketing.

Process

Process by the Town of Arlington:

1. Conduct analysis of current needs that align with eligible use of CDBG funds.
2. Complete a substantial amendment of CDBG Annual Action Plan, including public comment period and citizen participation process.
3. Open application period December 2020-January 2021 (including information session).
4. Review of applications by 4 members of DPCD team.
5. Notify applicants and execute grant agreements (February).
6. Complete procurement process for Technical Assistance providers (January-February).
7. (Ongoing) Complete reimbursement requests.
8. (Ongoing) Technical Assistance sessions and workshops: Topics include digital marketing, website assistance, eCommerce, SEO, Bookkeeping, and business resilience.
9. Collect reporting documentation and close out award requirements with HUD.

Process by Revby, a TA Provider:

1. Conduct first meeting introduction over a Zoom call; identify needs; create plan for time allotted.
2. Conduct interactive working sessions to build capacity and improvements around the identified topics. Facilitate brainstorming sessions so the business owner can create their own content and action items. Provide tools, examples, recommendations to support the sessions.

Improve the "Entrances to the City" so they look beautiful and inviting as it is some people's first experience with the city

Category



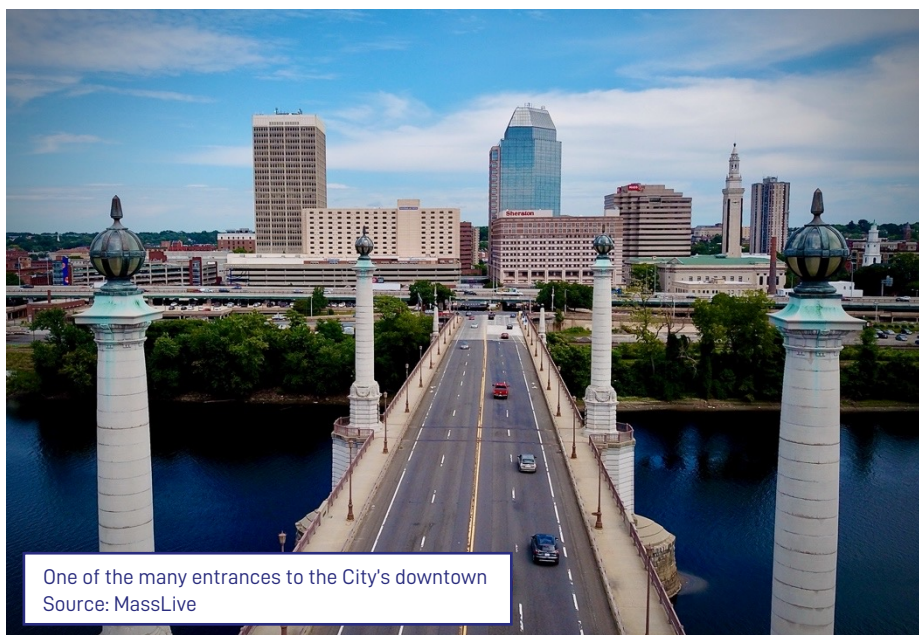
Public Realm

Location

Focus on entrances to the Main Street Convention Center District

Origin

Springfield Business Improvement District (BID)



Budget



Low \$25,000 (annual) City Department of Public Works (DPW) identified need for person power over the summer to perform basic maintenance

Timeframe



Short-term

Risk



Low; Some conversations needed with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) who has responsibility for maintenance and perform it annually. This would supplement 1-2 times over the Spring/Summer.

Key Performance Indicators

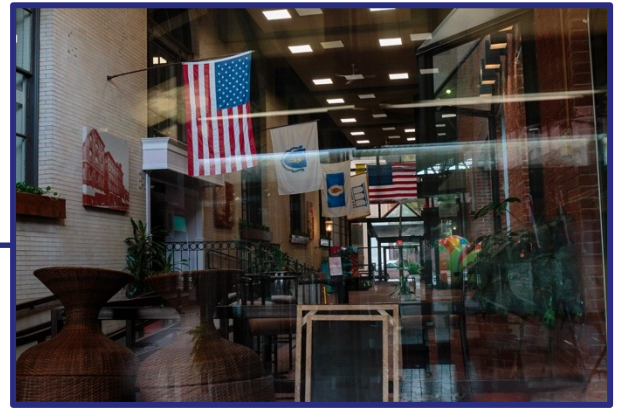
Improved appearance for people in automobile and buses entering the District; increased positive responses recorded by the Springfield Visitors and Convention Bureau and the BID

Partners & Resources

Springfield Visitors and Convention Bureau, City DPW, MassDOT

Diagnostic	84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID. Anything that can be done to improve the physical appearance of the entrances to a city will support the city’s economic development.
Action Item	A majority of visitors to the district arrive via the I-91 highway and East and West Columbus Ave. approach corridors. As a primary entry and first experience to the district, this corridor requires new identity and public realm enhancements. In addition to the primary district ‘entrance’ other auto-focused entrances to the city off 1-291 and the Union station area will be improved. The city will work to secure a commitment from MassDOT to enable the BID and the DPW to move forward with Spring/Summer annual maintenance of highway/roadway entrances to the city focusing on the Main Street Convention Center District.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key stakeholders responsible for upkeep and maintenance in right of ways on the approach to Springfield through various thoroughfares. • Discuss requirements and current maintenance protocol of those key nodes and thoroughfares with the stakeholders. • Secure commitment through Memoranda of Understanding of the MassDOT to allow the BID and/or City DPW to maintain highway/roadway entrances at certain times of year or as needed. <p><u>In the MSCC district:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District pylons to demark the boundaries along both sides of the highway at key intersections (starting at the exit ramps, Union St., State St., Court St.); straddling the highway will visual connect both sides and promote a stronger linkage to the between the District and riverfront parks/amenities • Enhanced landscaping along the I-91/Columbus embankments and roadways to provide continuity and unification; a simple expansion the plantings used at the Union St./ Columbus Ave. intersection along the stretch of highway in a periodic repetition would unite and improve the environment and sense of arrival • E. Columbus Ave. intersection “arrival node” enhancements at Court St. and State St. that mimic the Union/Columbus precedent but expand it across the full intersection • Additional edge “arrival node” at key intersections from city street approaches including Court St. and Main St., Court St and Dwight St., Dwight St. and State St. and Union St. and Main St.

Art in Vacant Buildings



Category



Cultural/Arts; Public Realm; Revenue & Sales

Location

Main Street Convention Center District

Origin

Springfield Cultural Partnership, NAI Plotkin, Trust Transfer Project

Budget



Low (\$30,000 --staff time at BID to manage, oversee and assure implementation and evaluation of project, \$7,500 staff time at BID to clean, and maintain storefronts and hang art, \$10,000 Art for the Soul Gallery to manage art sales and delivery, \$2500 (\$500 stipends for est. 5 people who serve on the oversight committee and are not paid by their job for their time) Budget assumptions: one year budget, to be renewed annually, ~10 storefronts American Recovery Act Plan (ARPA)

Timeframe



Short Goal is to start this project as soon as funds are secured, (Springfield's ARPA \$), and run for one year with three to five months design and 9-7 months implementation.

Risk



Low Risk – Both the Springfield Cultural Partnership and the Community Music School are very supportive of this project and it has received positive publicity in local media

Key Performance Indicators

Increase in visitors to District. Increase in number of customers and sales for businesses.

Partners & Resources

John Simpson (local Artist), Art for the Soul Gallery, Springfield Museums, City Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED)

Diagnostic

The City Office of Planning and Economic Development, in collaboration with the Springfield Cultural District have been bringing public art to the district for several years. Local real estate developer, Evan Plotkin of NAI Plotkin also has a long-standing commitment and experience in the district using art to improve public and private spaces. The COVID shutdown harmed businesses in the MSCC district causing loss in sales and revenue. Several businesses went out of business during the pandemic increasing the number of vacant storefronts in the district. The goal of this project is to formalize previous efforts into a program run by the BID (or other appropriate entity) to ensure that all storefronts in the district contribute to a positive experience for shoppers, workers and visitors, encouraging them to spend money, stay longer, and return often.

Action Item

Create a process through which art can be displayed in vacant and under-utilized storefronts (possibly in vacant buildings for pop up galleries/art openings) to assure a visibly pleasing experience with the goal of bringing more people to the district, keeping people in the district longer and motivating them to return thereby stimulating and facilitating economic activity. A related benefit is supporting the economic activity of local artists as their work will be prioritized for display and sale.

Process

- Convene City OPED staff, BID, NAI Plotkin, owners and/or landlords of vacant storefront, Cultural District, Art for the Soul Gallery and local artists to oversee project, forming a Storefront Art Working Group.
- Secure commitment from vacant (consider all businesses if they want to supplement their existing storefront with art) storefront owners/landlords to allow use of space for art work display/sales.
- Address liability concerns, insurance etc. to assure art is safe and secure and spaces are protected if project includes pop up galleries, art openings.
- Create and maintain a website of all the art, consider collaborating with Art for the Soul Gallery, for sales and communication of additional information about the project, the art, the artists, the District—with links to the other projects proposed, especially the District calendar of events and walking maps, in conjunction with one of the proposals in this plan, a Wayfinding app.
- Work with area media (social, TV, radio, print) to publicize the project and issue a call for artists. Consider initially launching with existing available art from local galleries (Art for the Soul, Evan Plotkin) and possibly the Springfield Museums.
- Select artists to create work, and/or select work from existing collections.
- Hang art in storefront.
- Hold a gala Storefront Art Opening in Court Square or Pynchon Plaza or Marketplace Alley, or other identified locations. Include volunteer art tour guides to walk groups around, consider pedal-cab tours; could coincide with the launch of the expanded Pedestrian Wayfinding Maps and/or App.
- Maintain the website and media presence explaining when art rotates, publicizing art sales, highlighting local collectors.
- Evaluate impact—are businesses in the district experiencing an increase in walk in customers? Did their sales increase the night of the Storefront Art Opening (if they are open in the evenings) and did they experience any sustainable increase? Did customers mention the art as a draw?
- Consider conducting a baseline survey before launch of RRP projects and then quarterly to evaluate any changes.



Creative empty storefront treatments by Newton Community Pride’s WindowArt



Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

City of Newton (in two Villages)

Origin	Community group, artists collaborating with landlords to revitalize store closures due to impacts of COVID-19
Budget	 Low (<\$50,000)—utilization of existing artwork
Timeframe	 Medium-term – planning and implementation took 6 months
Risk	 Low Risk for project execution. However, connecting with absentee landlords will present difficulties.
Key Performance Indicators	Perceived street enhancements; No. of potential tenants engaged; No. of tenants signing leases
Partners & Resources	Town Administrators, City Departments of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts—including the Cultural Division, the Planning and Economic Development Department and the Department of Public Works, local landlords, potential tenants, arts organizations and artists

BEST PRACTICE

Diagnostic

Though the Covid-19 Pandemic more finely focused on the dilemma of empty storefronts, this is a continuous, if sometimes only temporary, negative situation in downtowns and commercial districts. Vacant stores are a glaring or at least front and center visible loss to a commercial area, block or building. And most landlords do the least effort to re-lease—simple signs, ads or word of mouth to existing tenants.

The issue is how to combine the needs of the commercial district to the resources available to be creative and commercially reinforcing. One thoughtful solution was by Newton Community Pride, a non-profit organization building community for all to enjoy through arts and culture programming.

The Newton Community Pride staff and board recognized the empty storefront needs of the City of Newton commercial districts. They also had an inventory of artwork by local resident artists.

They wanted to install artwork in as many empty storefronts as possible. However, it was challenging to ascertain landlord ownership especially with absentee landlords, as they are a subgroup of landlords with less incentive to visually enhance their empty properties. They focused on identifying and working with various owners that they could,

After a short few weeks, Newton Community Pride installed a number empty storefronts with art.

Context

- No matter how beautiful or historic a façade is, an empty storefront makes it an eyesore.
- Empty Storefronts are distractions from a vital commercial area or downtown.
- With no rent, revenue or relief, unless enlightened or visionary, a landlord usually does the least expensive solution like just paper in the windows, standard for lease signs, etc.
- Arts organizations, student artists and community artists have all assisted to make the empty stores more visually appealing.



Vacant ground floor uses were mapped and space characteristics noted.



The vacant storefronts contributed to lack of vibrancy in the City of Newton's commercial districts.

Action Items/Process

- Document the empty storefronts in a particular commercial area. In the City of Newton's case, there are 13 separate villages with some commercial district located in eight (8) of them.
- Select focus areas. In Newton's case, focus was centered upon the greatest concentration of stores and empty storefronts.
- Identify landlords and reach out to landlords through cold calls, e-mails, and online and print publications. Persistence in reaching out seemed to payoff the most.
- To augment the "Call for Interested Landlords," Newton Community Pride used local media through press releases including [The Boston Globe](#), local online publications, social media and their own website to communicate the program.
- Discuss and agree with landlords on the organization's approach to the empty storefront. Individual property managers made final decisions about what went where.
- Develop an approach to the installations or create an inventory of existing artwork by local artists. In this case, the artwork already existed and had been used as part of the previously funded Newton Community Pride program, FenceArt. FenceArt produced a juried "call to artist" that generated an inventory of artwork.
- All art was previously printed on vinyl banners, and this allowed for an easy installation behind storefront windows..
- The results of the initial effort were disappointing to the organization who desired much more landlord participation. However, the lessons learned here allow for future project application.



Even the most beautiful block architecturally with wonderful historic detailing looks bad when the empty storefronts are empty.



Empty storefronts in a beautiful commercial block is like the missing tooth in the beautiful smile.

Process – Strategic Decisions

- Establishment of a collaborative network to discuss and share resources.
- Decide who are the key decision-makers of each project be they landlords, business associations, arts organizations, city agency, etc.
- Think innovatively, out of the box. In this case, the decision to utilize existing and available artwork allowed for several steps to be skipped in the process.
- Learning from this experience, in the future it would be desirable to have a City of Newton official agency to identify landlord ownership. In-turn, this would facilitate greater numbers of cooperating storefronts.
- Publicizing the successful projects to encourage more landlord/building owner involvement.
- Decision that the installed program should have a time limit for elements to be replaced.
- It was determined that this WindowArt Project was a part of the overall Covid-19 Program titled “Newton Al Fresco” that also included artist-decorated Jersey barriers, painted cable spools as side tables for benches for outdoor eating and individual murals.
- A related project to WindowArt and another creative Covid-19 response is an innovative new pilot program partnered by the City of Newton, the Town of Needham and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Project: Pop-Up*.
 - This will allow small retailers to access 1-3 storefronts in Needham and 4-5 storefronts in Newton at a significantly reduced cost.
 - The retailers, many of whom are currently operating primarily online, will have access to the commercial space for 2-3 months to introduce their businesses to a wider audience and will have access to a wide range of support services.



Newton Community Pride Artwork Installation in Empty Storefronts



Newton Community Pride energizing empty storefronts with artists' work (above); Articles about the program (below).

NEWTON-TAB

Newton Community Pride announces WindowART to fill vacant windows

COURTESY OF NEWTON COMMUNITY PRIDE
 Published 9:11 a.m. ET Apr. 16, 2021



Newton Community Pride will host WindowART, a public art initiative to bring art to Newton's commercial district.

THE HEIGHTS
 Est. 2019 Independent Since 1920

TO CREATOR HEIGHTS | COVID-19 UPDATES | NEWS | SPORTS | ARTS | OPINIONS

Home » Newton Community Pride Fills Vacant Storefronts With Artwork



Newton Community Pride Fills Vacant Storefronts With Artwork

By Julia Rennie

April 25, 2021 Updated April 25, 2021 at 11:39 pm



A photograph of a vibrant red archway in Mexico next to a red "for rent" sign draws public attention in an otherwise empty Newtonville storefront window. As a part of a new public art initiative sponsored by Newton Community Pride, vacant Newton storefronts will display professional artwork in an effort to beautify the city.

"It's a lovely opportunity to have shoppers and diners and pedestrians stumble across a beautiful piece of artwork as opposed to brown paper cardboard or a for lease sign, so it makes a nice addition to our villages," Gloria Gavris, board chair of Newton Community Pride, said.

The project, called WindowART, incorporates the pieces from Newton Community Pride's annual FenceART project, including local artist Howard Fleeman's "Nested Arches, Mexico." This public art initiative is a submission-based competition that displays winning artists' work on fences throughout Newton, such as at the Newton Free Library and the Newton Senior Center. A jury of professional artists selects 20 submissions to be printed on vinyl banners and displayed throughout the year.

Newton Community Pride rotates the art among five Newton fences every 10 weeks, beginning in October and November, Gavris said. Submissions to the competition were open to artists who reside, work, or participate in art classes in Newton.

Community Corner

WindowART To Fill Vacant Windows Around Newton

Newton Community Pride is trying something a little different this year and repurposing its FenceArt project.

Jenna Fisher, Patch Staff

Posted Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 10:09 am ET | Updated Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 12:46 pm ET

Like 15 Share

Reply

Newton Community Pride is trying something a little different this year and repurposing its FenceArt project. (Gloria Gavris, courtesy)

NEWTON, MA — If you've ever walked past a vacant storefront and felt a little hopeful about the potential that space has, you're not alone.

Newton Community Pride, a nonprofit volunteer group with a mission that includes beautification projects that support the community, decided to fill vacant windows with art.

Summary

- Think of the empty storefront as an opportunity for creative artistic expression to energize a storefront, block or commercial area.
- This allows the commercial building or district to take a negative and make it into a positive through visual enhancement while generating provocative conversation or even by creating a temporary art gallery.
- Partners are necessary so that collaboration can take place smoothly between the community agencies, business and arts communities.
- Publicize the activity. This draws community interest, reinforces artists' involvement and attracts potential landlord participants.



Source: Renew Newcastle

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






CULTURAL/
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Newcastle, Australia

<p>Origin</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Budget</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Risk</p>	<p> Low</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Number of vacant storefronts filled, number of tenants that went on to rent permanent space as viable businesses, stabilization and rise of property values, reduction in crime, economic benefit to the community</p>
<p>Partners & Resources</p>	<p>Organization that led creatives recruitment, landlord matching, and marketing, including events, City Planning Department (zoning), private funders to provide seed money for cleaning/maintenance of storefronts.</p>

BEST PRACTICE

Diagnostic

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

Challenges were numerous:

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

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



Action Item

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

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

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



Source: Renew Newcastle

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

Process

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



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

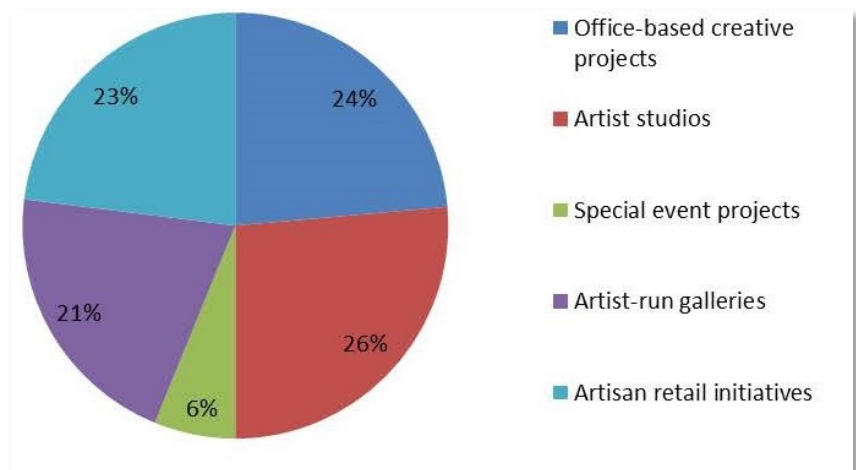
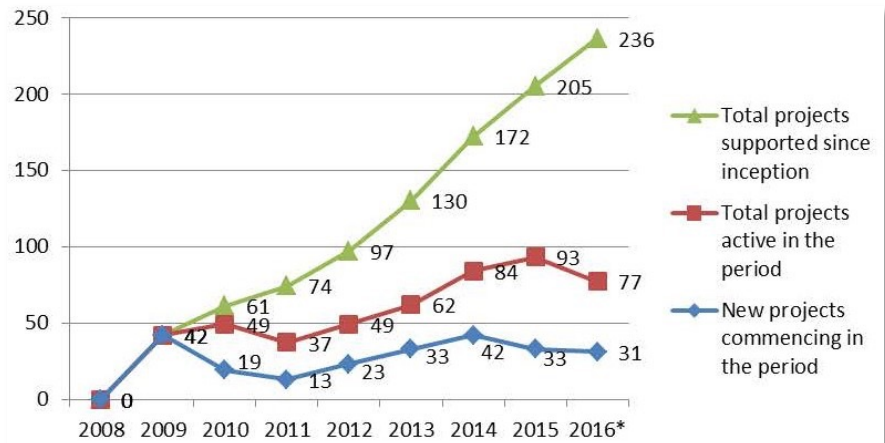
Many of the artisans and entrepreneurs went on to rent permanent space.

Economic Impact to the Community

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

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

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



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

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

Expand housing (and possibly lab/tech) options in downtown through commercial conversions.

Category



Tenant Mix

Location

Main Street Convention Center District with possible expansion

Origin

Evan Plotkin (NAI Plotkin)

Budget



Medium (start with \$200,000) ARPA, CDBG, MDI, Community One Stop

Timeframe



Short-term (work to establish fund in 6 months, and run for 2 years as a pilot and then evaluate)

Risk



Low Risk; There is a relatively small number of large commercial property owners in the District so not many entities will be affected, but there is a significant opportunity for dramatically increasing the population in the district with 1-2 conversions of existing high rise buildings.

Key Performance Indicators

Increased number of residents living in the district; new lab/tech space

Partners & Resources

City OPED, MassDevelopment, MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), NAI Plotkin

Diagnostic

Residents are needed in Springfield's Main Street Convention Center district to assure sustainable economic recovery. Large commercial property owners report 65% occupancy as a result of the COVID pandemic, but even before were only at 80%.

Additionally, the Commonwealth has identified and has invested in creating goals for housing production. A mixed use project, like this, is not only smart growth, but would add housing units to a region that is seeking eastern Massachusetts residents to relocate here.

Action Item

Capitalize a fund (grants or loans/forgivable loans) for large commercial property owners to determine costs and process to transform to residential or possibly lab/tech space. Examine residential and other uses in high rise buildings in district

Process

- Identify funding source to capitalize a fund for commercial property owners to determine costs and processes required to include residential or lab/tech space in their currently operating office building high rises.
- Seek responses from interested property owners to identify individual building needs.
- Ensure that City and Zoning codes are up-to-date to allow for an increased residential component and/or light industrial, lab-type spaces. If not, work to amend current code to allow additional residential or lab and tech space in the District.
- Identify or allow developers to identify consultants to determine architectural and building needs for these additional types of uses.
- Provide funding or supplement private funding to fund the building studies.



Continue *Trust Transfer Project*



Category



Public Realm, Culture/Arts

Location

Main Street Convention Center District

Origin

Karen Finn - Springfield Cultural Partnership; Eileen McCafferty - Community Music School of Springfield; Vanessa Ford - faith-based organizations

Budget



Medium \$150K-200K. \$75K for 6 months "skinny budget" - initially funded through Urban Agenda Grant at EOHEE through Community One Stop for Growth; will be self-funded through organizations in the coming years. Grant requests are being made.

Timeframe



Short-Term





Risk



Low-risk; continuing and expanding an already popular program that has proved itself through the initial seed money

Key Performance Indicators	Increased number of visitors in the District; # of black and brown paid artists and exhibitions; number of individuals participating in mentoring program; # of partnerships, sponsors, and contributors stepping forward to help fund (i.e. Jeff Sullivan from New Valley Bank).
Partners & Resources	Springfield Cultural Partnership; Community Music School of Springfield; Creative Youth Development Project (Focus is Food Insecurity) for creative youth across the country; The HUB; City OPED in conjunctions with any activating public spaces efforts.
Diagnostic	84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID. Springfield has very low vaccination rates which will be targeted with this program that has the trust of Black and Brown communities and that is beautifying the District with positive messages about vaccination.
Action Item	City and partners commit use of available funds to support Trust Transfer Project through this growth year toward financial stability. Main Goal of TTP: Communicating Essential Public Health Messaging in collaboration with Black and Brown Artists who are members of the community = TTP and Culture Rx. TTP centers artist's voices at the beginning of the process to reflect the collective, as a result the outcome is completely different.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene meeting of partners to identify funding source—determining if this is American Recovery Act funding eligible—partners are confident it is as it is in an economically affected district with a very high percentage of Black and Brown residents, and promotes public health messages through art employing Black and Brown Artists. • Work collaboratively to secure funding. • Allocate funding to TTF. • Receive reports and celebrate success.

Activate Bruce Landon Way on Mass Mutual Center and other Event Days a la Jersey Street in Boston

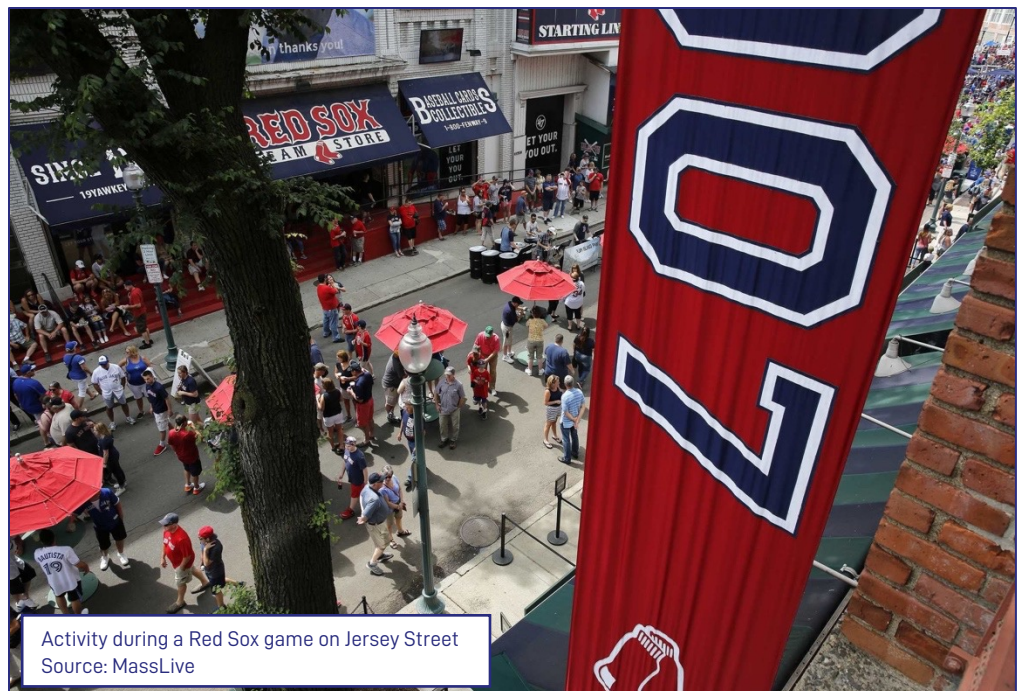
Category	 Public Realm; Private Realm
Location	Main Street Convention Center District, Metro Center neighborhood
Origin	Springfield Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), Springfield BID, Mass Convention Center Authority-Mass Mutual
Budget	 Low (\$50K) American Recovery Plan Act with focus on bringing customers back to the downtown while making it as easy as possible, CDBG, State funds
Timeframe	 Short Term – the plan is to undertake a physical space design and develop basic physical infrastructure that can support and adapt to a variety of configurations to bring people outside of the Mass Mutual Center on event days to celebrate outside in the street
Risk	 Low-risk
Key Performance Indicators	Increased numbers of people in the district resulting in increased sales at district businesses; increase in number of customers at businesses in the district; increased satisfaction with Springfield’s downtown
Partners & Resources	Springfield Business Improvement District (BID), MA Convention Center Authority-oversees the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield
Diagnostic	<p>84% of businesses surveyed in the district reported less revenue generated in 2020 than previous years. 78% of businesses had less on-site customers in early 2021 than before COVID.</p> <p>The MA Convention Center Authority will be tearing down and replacing the parking structure on Dwight street, Harrison and Bruce Landon Way and this is a perfect opportunity for transformation of Bruce Landon Way into an outdoor extension of the MassMutual Center.</p>

Action Item

City OPED staff, or funded Consultant, to convene a meeting with key stakeholders and map out a plan to install the physical and regulatory infrastructure to facilitate event day(s) transformation of Bruce Landon Way into an exterior extension of the MassMutual Center.

Process

- City OPED staff, or funded Consultant facilitator, convene interested parties to assign roles and responsibilities and affirm work process.
- Secure an estimated \$25,000-\$50,000 ARPA and/or MA Convention Center Authority funds for cost of physical space design plan and adaptable physical infrastructure (banners, tables, chairs, food stalls/stations, vendor carts/stalls) to temporarily transform Bruce Landon Way into an outdoor event space, a la Jersey Way in Boston for Red Sox games and other events at Fenway Park.
- Identify any related regulatory changes required to facilitate the initiative.
- Determine which entity will engage a consultant to assist with physical transformation as necessary.
- Entity engages consultant team and group works with consultant to advance planned improvement.
- OPED staff implement, or engage consultant to assist with implementation of, necessary regulatory changes.
- Launch Bruce Landon Way events.
- Evaluate success and refine as needed.



Activity during a Red Sox game on Jersey Street
Source: MassLive



“Social Zones & Shared Streets”



Provided by SME Consultant




Bench Consulting (from Patronicity)

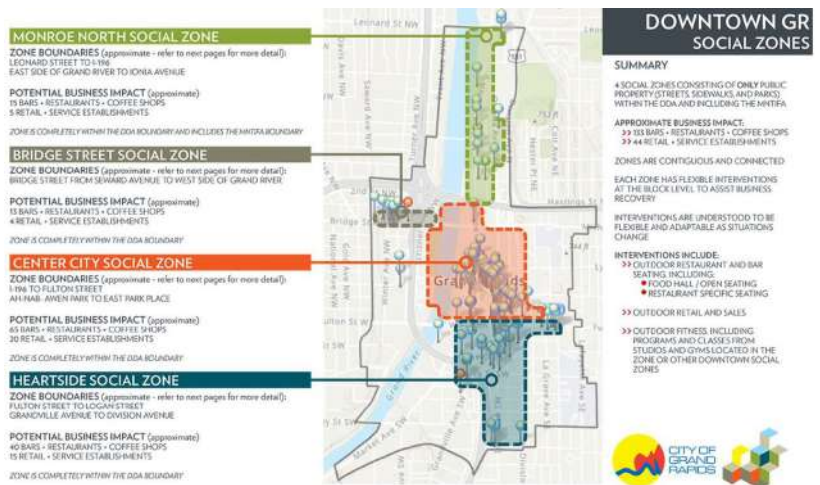
Location

Grand Rapids, Michigan *(and other communities)*

1

BEST PRACTICE

Origin	City of Grand Rapids
Budget	 <p>The total cost to implement is minimal depending upon how much you want to activate your street. Tables and chairs are necessary but nicer street furniture, turf, games, artwork and landscaping will make the space more comfortable and inviting.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Setup takes only a few days and can last most of the year.</p>
Risk	 <p>Outdoor alcohol consumption can have its inherent risks and you'll have to gauge your public's stomach for altering vehicle access and parking. Is it an actual "parking problem" or a parking perception problem.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	<p>The number of attendees at different events and pedestrian counts in downtown. Area business increase on days of events or activations. Increase in restaurant sales. Measure public perception of downtown and use patterns.</p>
Partners & Resources	<p>Area small business support groups, local chambers of commerce, designers, landscapers, contractors and community groups.</p>
Diagnostic	<p>Downtown Grand Rapids piloted a number of outdoor "social zones" last year on a rapid implementation basis in response to the impacts of the pandemic. The goal was to get visitors downtown and provide a safe outdoor space for people to spend time and consume food and beverages. With the success of last years installations, the City and State pushed forward with language allowing broader outdoor social zones which allow patrons to purchase AND consume alcohol in these designated areas, some of them being as long as the City block itself. The idea is that encouraging people to visit the district, stop and stay longer while making it not just an errand but also an experience, solving for some of the issues facing brick & mortar retail pre pandemic.</p>
Action Item	<p>These types of programs aren't new around the country but are being more heavily adopted by cities as a response to the difficult conditions created by the pandemic and issues driving sustained foot traffic into our downtowns.</p>



Process

1. **LOCATE:** These types of interventions are best suited to commercial settings. Typically they will involve reclaiming some street space for people and you'll want to be strategic about the type of street treatment that makes the most sense for your community, whether that's shared street, or a full open street or a part time open street.
2. **PARTNER:** In Grand Rapids downtown BID was the project lead while city officials supported with municipal resources and area pedestrian and cycling organizations stepped up to ensure these spaces were fully adopted and supported by the community with "adopt a social zone" campaigns. In addition, more than 150 artists were paid a stipend to paint the barricades, support the creative economy during a difficult time.
3. **PLAN:** Planning for an initiative like this involves an extensive array of program partners, from the state level to change the liquor licensing laws to local partners to close the street and support of businesses and restaurant community to ensure all changes work well for everyone and police to ensure security for attendees and the City. Ensure vehicle access levels
4. **IMPLEMENT:** DPW and other local contractors supported the installation while area restaurants were given the ability to spruce up their shared spaces. In addition "adopt a social zone" programs created volunteer groups able to clean and maintain the spaces, taking some of the onerous off the City, BID and restaurant.
5. **ITERATE:** After a very rapidly deployed year 1 of the Social Zone experiment which occurred during the pandemic, year two features some changes to the layout and demarcation of the downtown social zones as well as an expansion into over a dozen social zones across the rest of Grand Rapids to encourage support of other neighborhood business districts without drawing too much business away from those districts by focusing on Downtown only.



Appendix

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

Springfield

Main Street Convention Center District

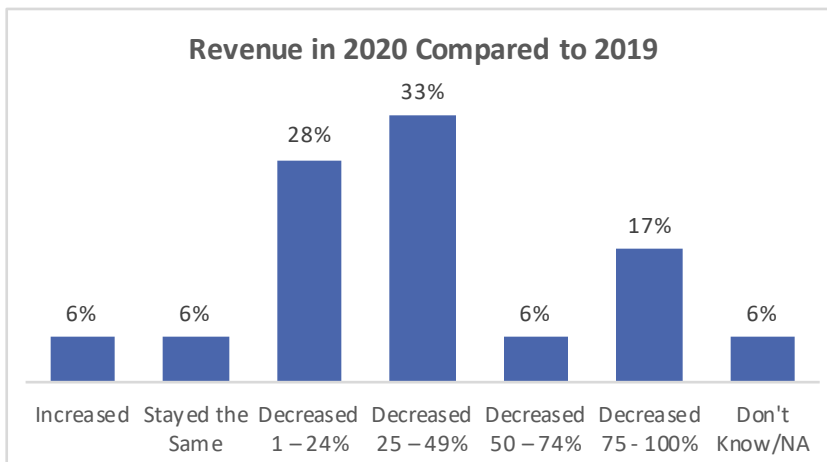
Responses: 18

Impacts of COVID-19

Decline in Business Revenue

84% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.

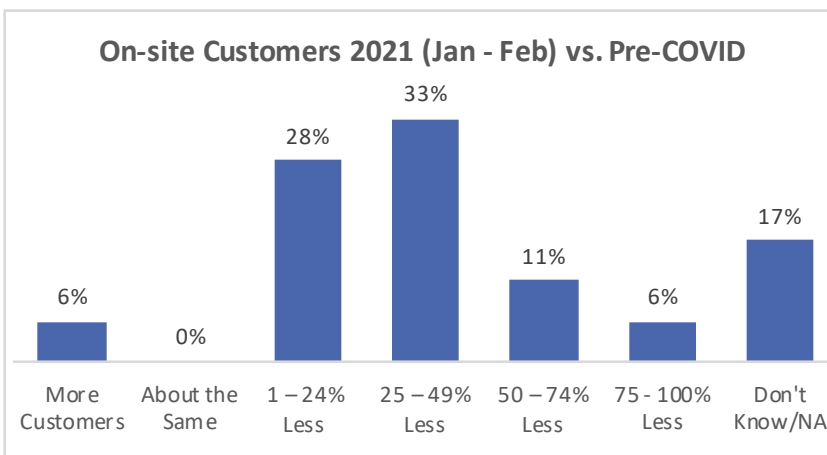
For 56% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.



Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area

78% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

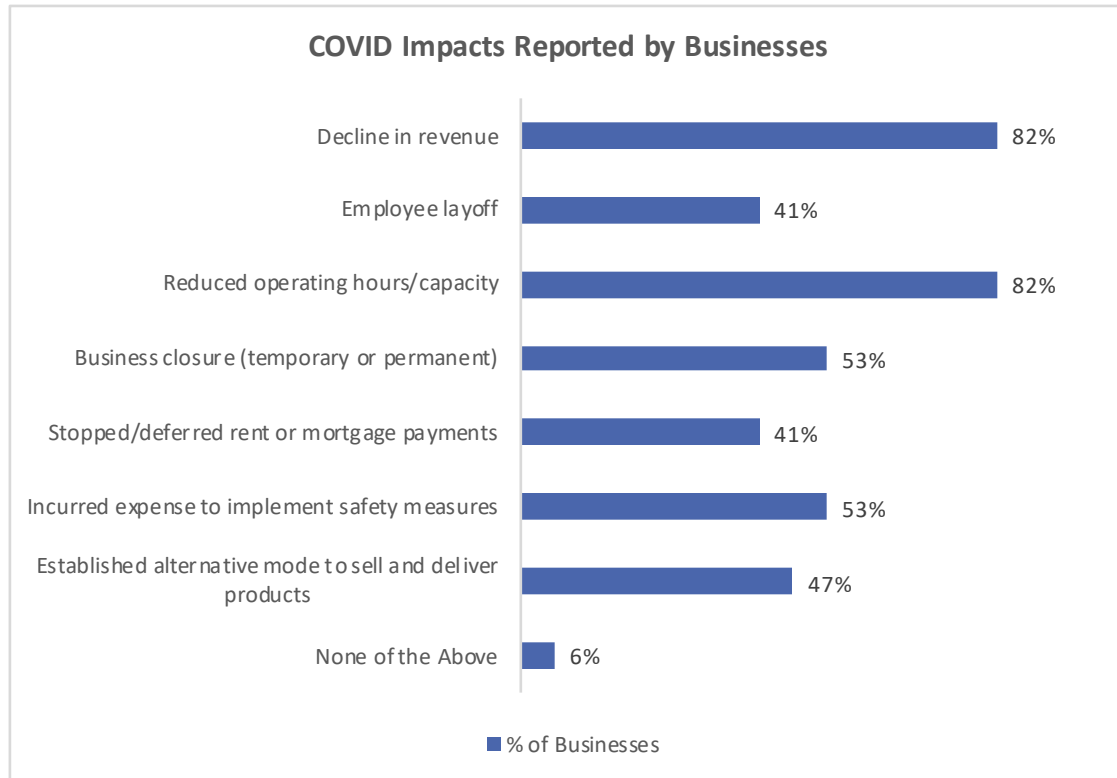
50% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

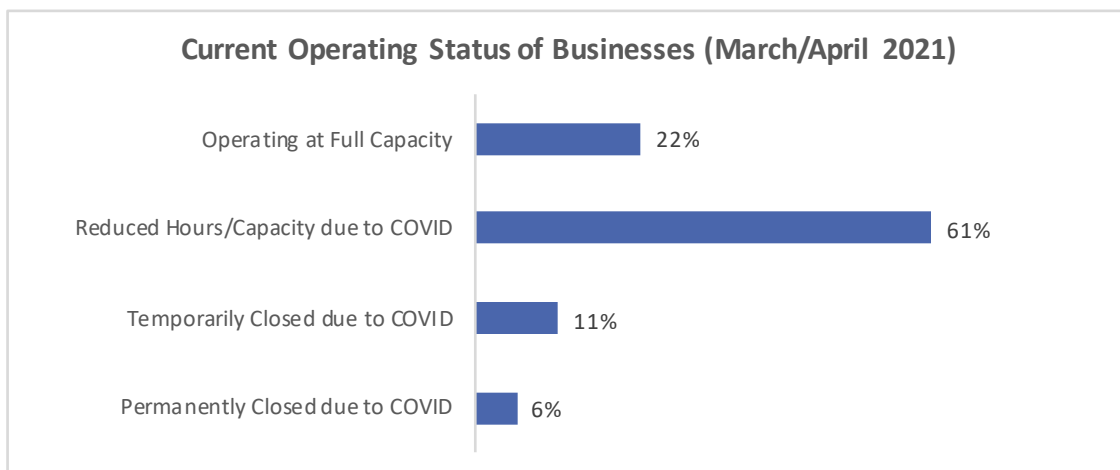
Reported Impacts

94% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



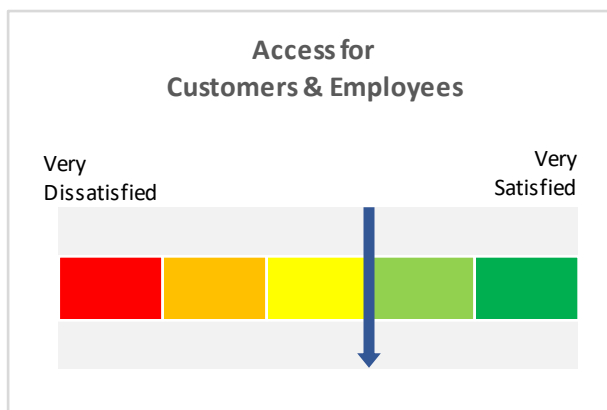
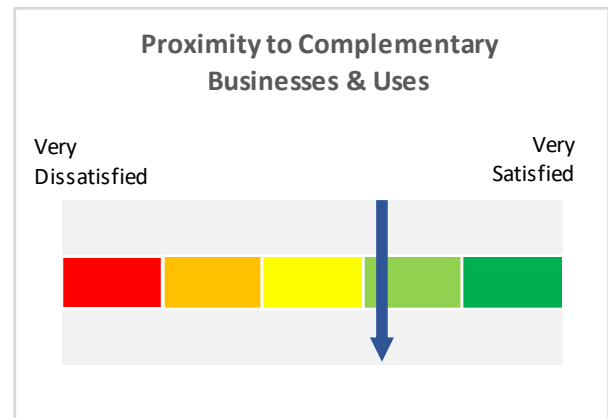
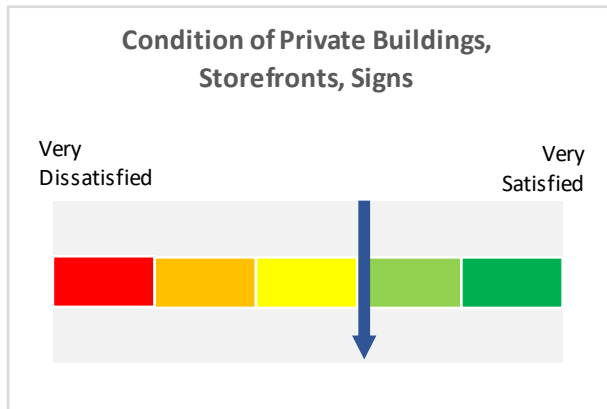
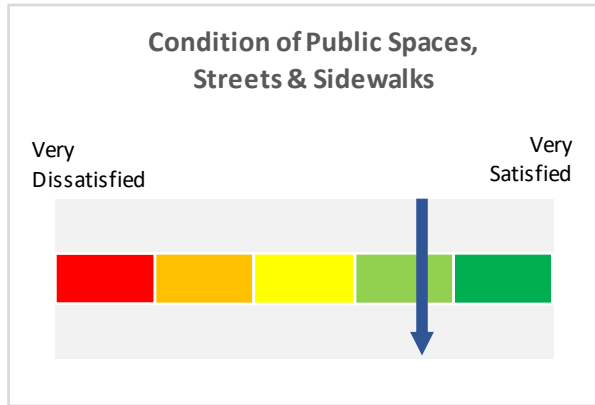
Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 78% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

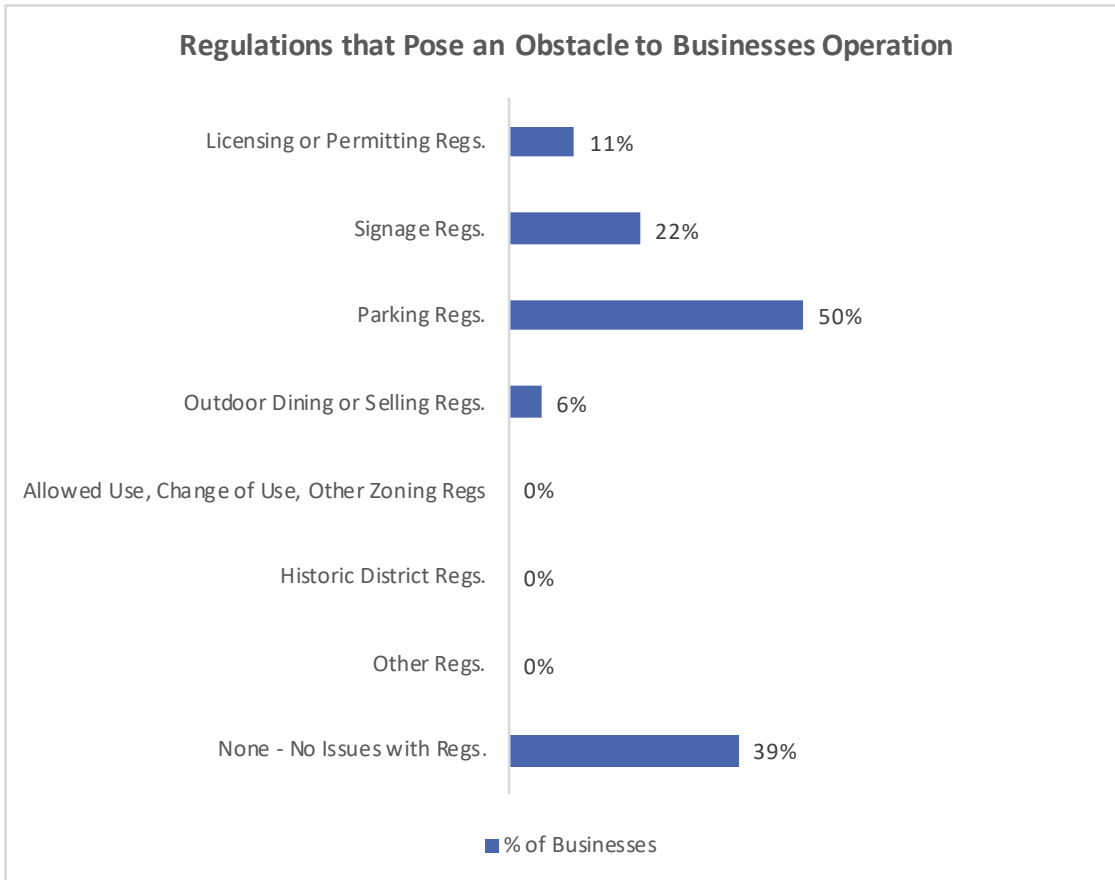
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

Regulatory Environment

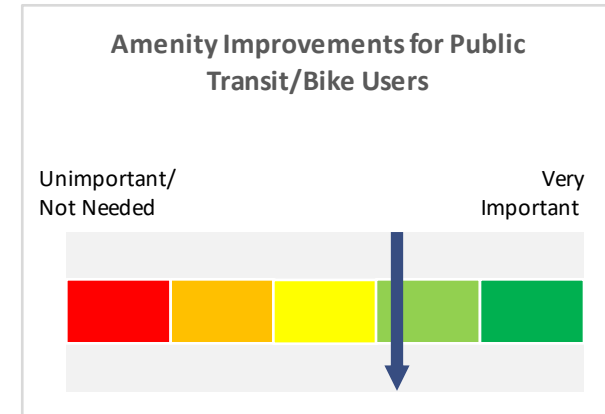
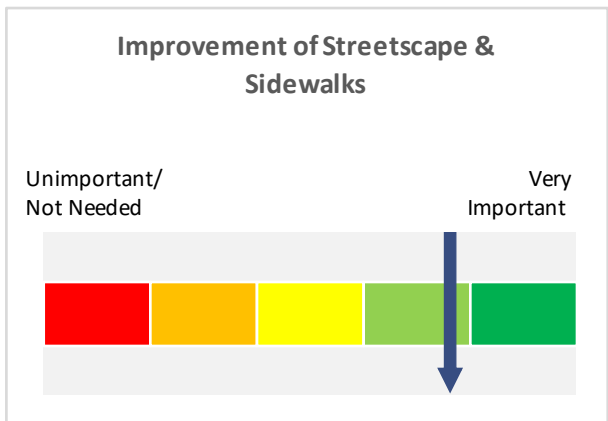
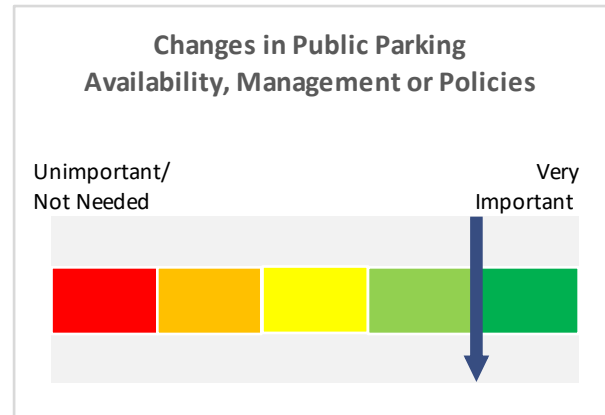
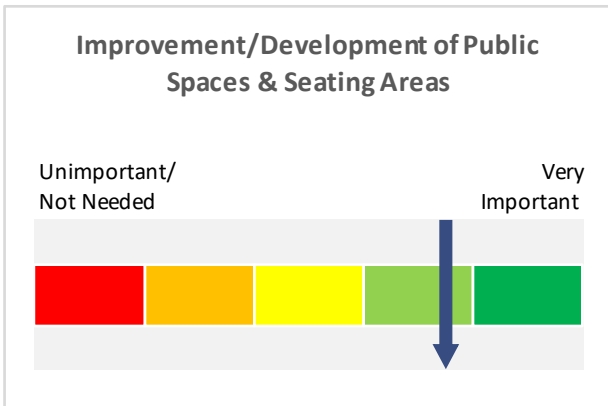
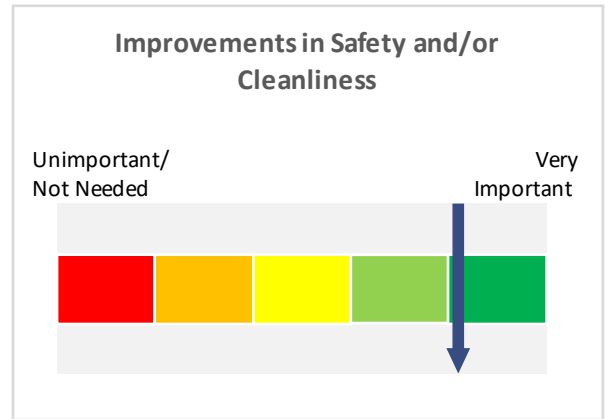
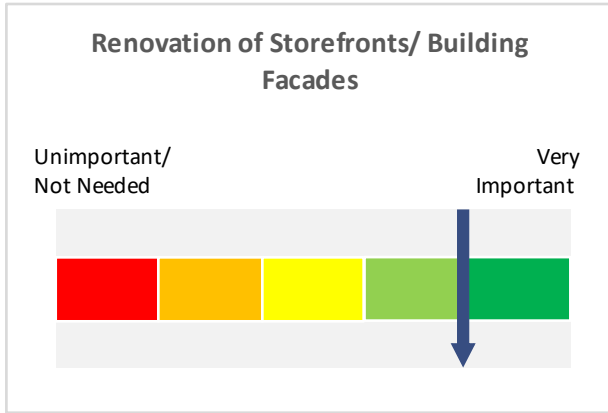
61% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

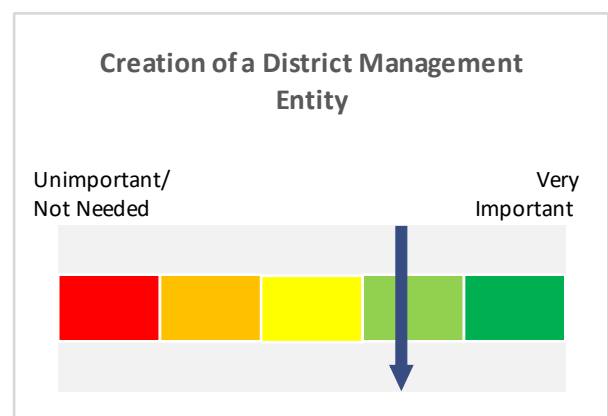
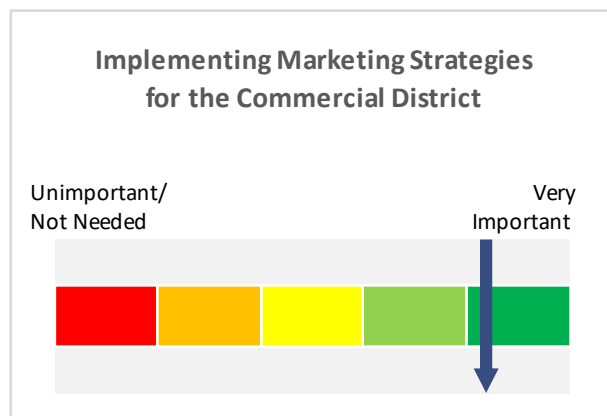
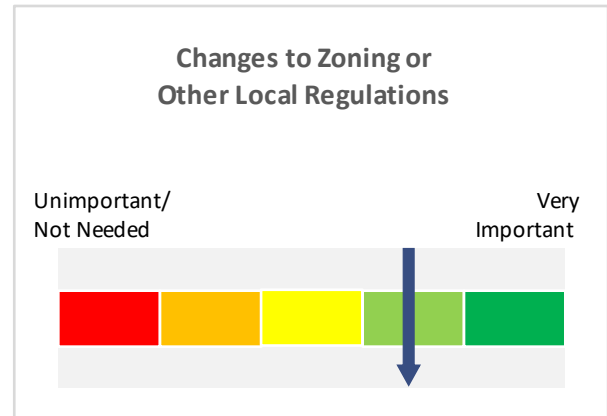
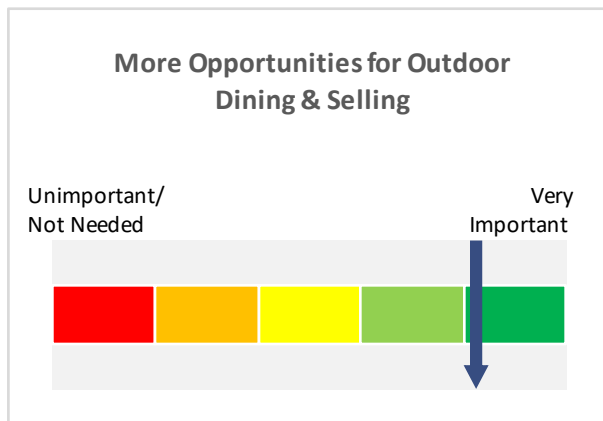
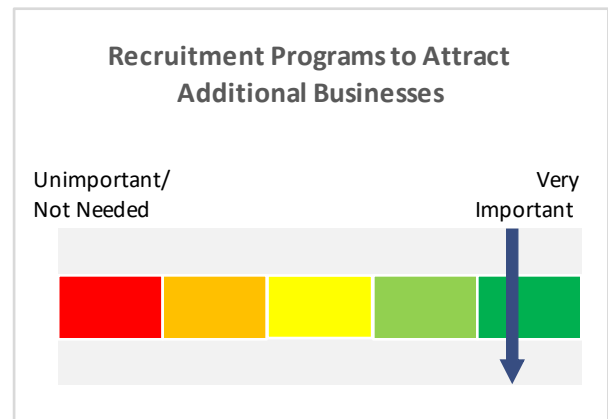
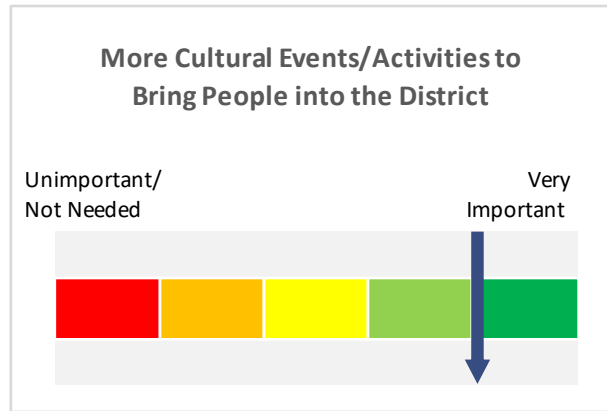
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

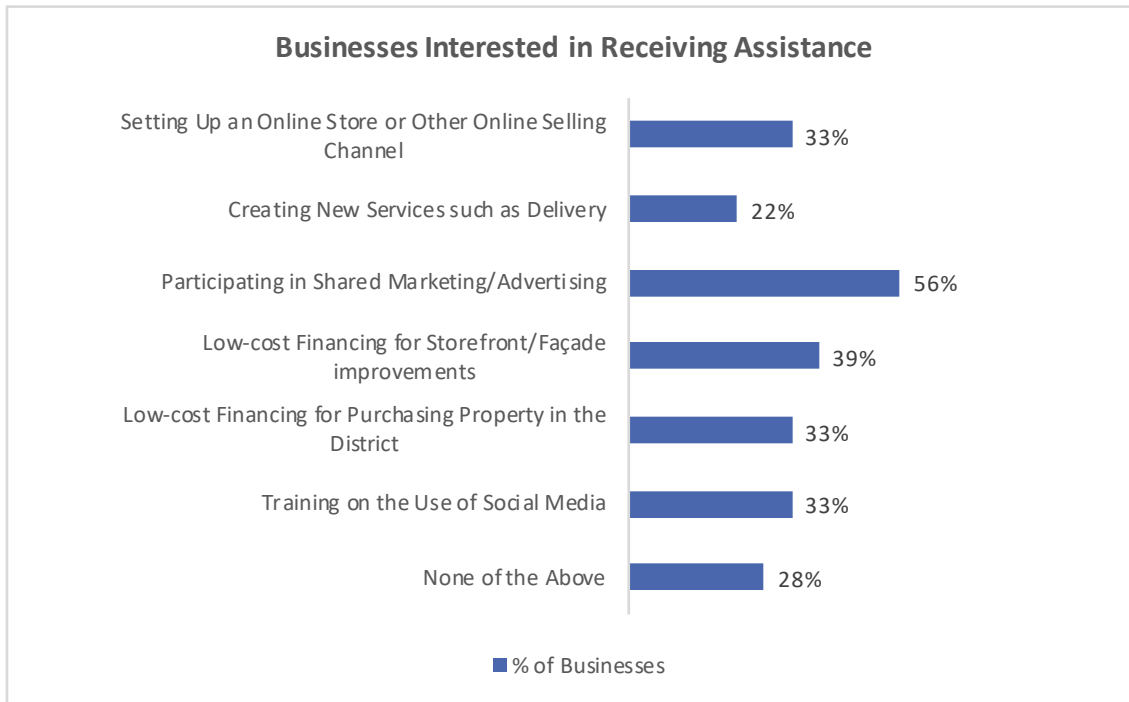
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Businesses Support

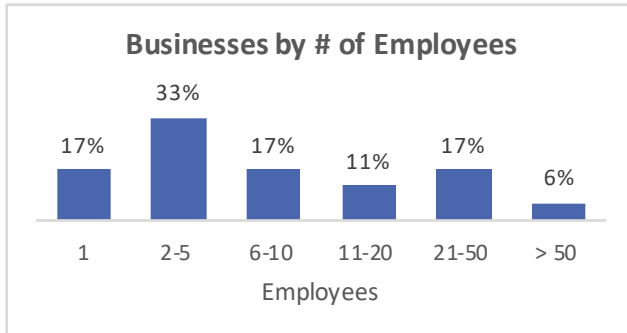
72% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



Business Characteristics

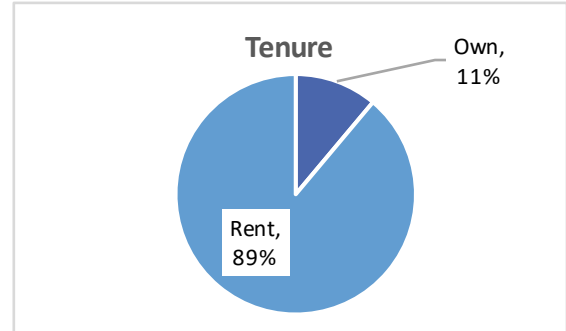
Business Size

50% of businesses are microenterprises (≤ 5 employees).



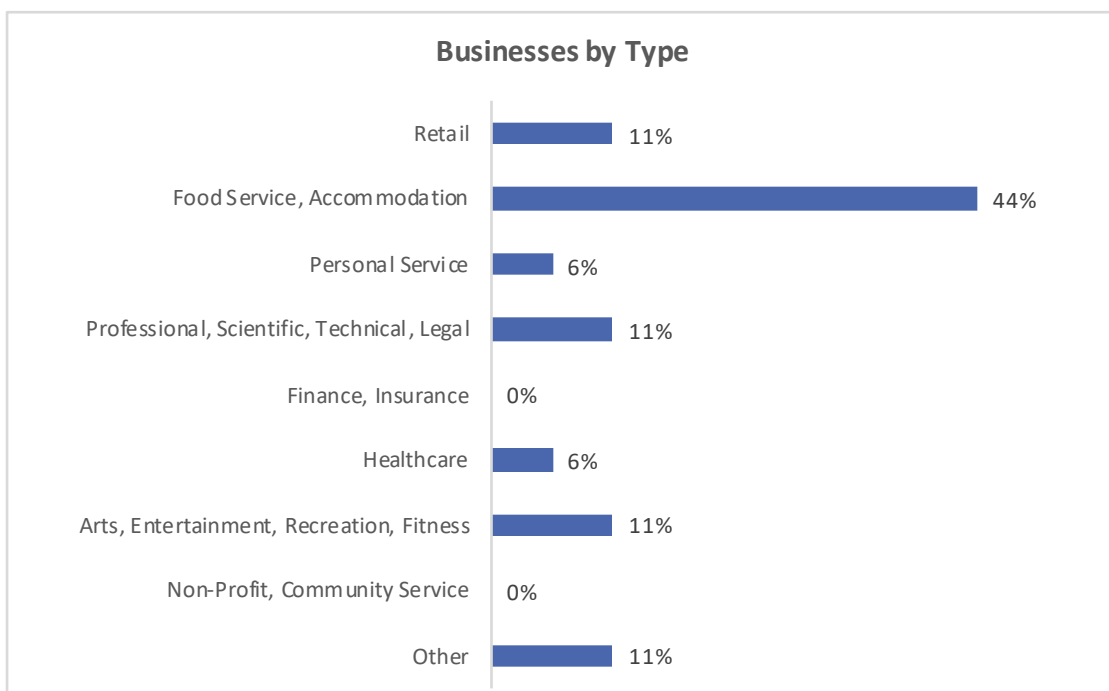
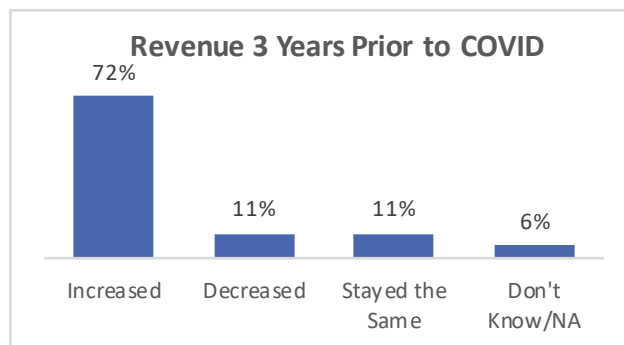
Business Tenure

89% of businesses rent their space.



Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

72% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.



Business Survey Results - Data Tables

Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

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

Springfield	18
-------------	----

Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

2. Including yourself, how many people did your business employ prior to COVID (February 2020), including both full-time and part-time?

1	3	17%
2 to 5	6	33%
6 to 10	3	17%
11 to 20	2	11%
21 to 50	3	17%
More than 50	1	6%
Total	18	100%

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

Own	2	11%
Rent	16	89%
Total	18	100%

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

Increased	13	72%
Decreased	2	11%
Stayed about the Same	2	11%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	6%
Total	18	100%

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

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	2	11%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	8	44%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	1	6%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	2	11%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	0	0%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	1	6%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	2	11%
Non-Profit, Community Services	0	0%
Other	2	11%
Total	18	100%

6. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Downtown or Commercial District where your business is located.

Condition of public spaces, streets, sidewalks

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	2	11%
Neutral	1	6%
Satisfied	11	61%
Very Satisfied	4	22%
Total	18	100%

Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage

Very Dissatisfied	2	11%
Dissatisfied	3	17%
Neutral	2	11%
Satisfied	7	39%
Very Satisfied	4	22%
Total	18	100%

Access for Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	1	6%
Dissatisfied	4	22%
Neutral	4	22%
Satisfied	5	28%
Very Satisfied	4	22%
Total	18	100%

Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	1	6%
Dissatisfied	1	6%
Neutral	4	22%
Satisfied	8	44%
Very Satisfied	4	22%
Total	18	100%

Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	3	17%
Neutral	5	28%
Satisfied	7	39%
Very Satisfied	3	17%
Total	18	100%

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

Licensing or permitting regulations	2	11%
Signage regulations	4	22%
Parking regulations	9	50%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	1	6%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	0	0%
Historic District regulations	0	0%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	0	0%
None - No Issues with regulations	7	39%

Impacts of COVID

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

Decline in revenue	14	82%
Employee layoff	7	41%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	14	82%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	9	53%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	7	41%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	9	53%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	8	47%
None of the Above	1	6%

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

Increased compared to 2019	1	6%
Stayed about the same as 2019	1	6%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	5	28%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	6	33%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	1	6%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	3	17%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	6%
Total	18	100%

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

More customers than before COVID	1	6%
About the same number as before COVID	0	0%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	5	28%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	6	33%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	2	11%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	1	6%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	3	17%
Total	18	100%

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

Operating at full capacity	4	22%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	11	61%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	2	11%
Permanently closed due to COVID	1	6%
Total	18	100%

Strategies for Supporting Businesses and Improving the Commercial District

12. A few approaches to address Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?

Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	2	11%
Important	11	61%
Very Important	5	28%
Total	18	100%

Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	2	11%
Important	11	61%
Very Important	4	22%
Total	18	100%

Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	5	28%
Important	7	39%
Very Important	6	33%
Total	18	100%

Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	4	22%
Important	5	28%
Very Important	9	50%
Total	18	100%

Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	2	11%
Important	6	33%
Very Important	9	50%
Total	18	100%

Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders

Unimportant/Not Needed	2	11%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	5	28%
Important	5	28%
Very Important	5	28%
Total	18	100%

13. A few approaches to address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?

More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	1	6%
Important	4	24%
Very Important	10	59%
Total	17	100%

More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	1	6%
Important	3	18%
Very Important	11	65%
Total	17	100%

Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	2	12%
Important	3	18%
Very Important	11	65%
Total	17	100%

Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	2	12%
Important	5	29%
Very Important	10	59%
Total	17	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	18%
Moderately Important	3	18%
Important	6	35%
Very Important	5	29%
Total	17	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	12%
Moderately Important	3	18%
Important	6	35%
Very Important	5	29%
Total	17	100%

14. Are you interested in receiving assistance for your business in any of the following areas? Select All that Apply.

Setting up an online store or other online selling channel	6	33%
Creating new services such as delivery	4	22%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	10	56%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	7	39%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	6	33%
Training on the use of social media	6	33%
None of the above	5	28%

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

Comments

Grants to help renovate storefronts
—
Parking is huge
—
Very important to keep as much business in the Community. We just lost a contract to a huge company in the US and owned by a firm based in France.
—
—
—
—
A Downtown Amphitheatre on the Riverfront, Riverfront Water Activities
—
—
Nadim's Downtown
Hot Oven Cookies LLC
—
Continue to crack down on the marauding dirt bike gangs that are scaring customers away!
—
Lou Cadorette

Report for City of Springfield Local Rapid Recovery Plan Priority Survey

Response Counts



Totals: 9

1. Below are the list of Projects currently being considered for Springfield's RRP. Please select your top five from the list below.

Value	Percent	Responses
Black and Latinx/Hispanic Business Owners Support Creation and maintenance of a cultural specific business support program including a web-based portal for Black and Latinx-owned businesses.	75.0%	6
Streamlining and Digitizing the city's special event permitting processes Improving business owner satisfaction with city permitting and internal Citywide communication by streamlining and digitizing the city's special event permitting processes	50.0%	4
Support and enhance City's existing Storefront Improvement Program Assess issues with Storefront Improvement Program and to work to improve access to funds and to remove barriers by users.	37.5%	3
Enhance existing Pedestrian Wayfinding with a new Wayfinding App and/or Wayfinding Web-based QR Codes Supplement on-the-ground District wayfinding with a wayfinding app and/or wayfinding web-based QR codes providing information like nearest parking space, local events or destinations.	25.0%	2
Improving Parking Access in Springfield's Downtown Create a public information and education campaign focused on educating people about the number of parking spaces available in a range of options from on-street to surface lots to covered parking structures. Details on distance to key destinations and time it takes to walk from parking to shopping/dining.	25.0%	2
Springfield Cycling Race in the Downtown Support and promote bike races in Downtown Springfield	12.5%	1
Activating Court Square and Beyond with Targeted and Tactical Arts and Cultural Projects Activate public spaces like Court Square with performance art, painting, digital arts, immersive and social media driven activities, etc. Explore partnerships and fundraising to provide continuous programming and opportunities for local residents, business owners, and visitors.	25.0%	2

Value	Percent	Responses
<p>Outreach to and Programming with and for District Businesses to encourage workers and customers to stay in the district longerExpand the current efforts of the Springfield Business Improvement District to create a community in the District to include the existing electronic newsletter, website and calendar and to include creative use of social and traditional media.</p>	12.5%	1
<p>Small Business Fund for Pandemic Response Unanticipated CostsContinue to support the BID's response to the pandemic including receiving and disbursing funds to businesses to cover unanticipated pandemic-related costs such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), mask purchase for distribution to customers, hand sanitizer, signage related to masks, re-configuring space to allow for social distancing, etc. Integrate with DevelopSpringfield's Lease It Local program, as appropriate, as BID can continue to survey businesses to identify specific needs.</p>	25.0%	2
<p>Improve the "Entrances to the City" so they look beautiful and inviting as it is some people's first experience with the citySecure commitment of MassDOT to enable the BID and the DPW to move forward with Spring/Summer annual maintenance of highway/roadway entrances to the city focusing on the Main Street Convention Center District.</p>	62.5%	5
<p>Art in Vacant BuildingsCreate a process through which art can be displayed in vacant and under-utilized storefronts (possibly in vacant buildings for pop up galleries/art openings) to assure a visibly pleasing experience with the goal of bringing more people to the District.</p>	37.5%	3
<p>Expand housing (and possibly lab/tech) options in downtown through commercial conversions.Capitalize a fund (grants or loans/forgivable loans) for large commercial property owners to determine costs and process to transform to residential or possibly lab/tech space. Examine residential and other uses in high rise buildings in District.</p>	50.0%	4
<p>Transform Bruce Landon Way creating an entertainment corridor on Game and Event DaysCity to explore transforming Bruce Landon Way creating a similar corridor to Jersey Street in Boston for Springfield Thunderbirds games, concerts and events.</p>	25.0%	2
<p>Implement Main Street Convention Center District OverlayThe Implementation Blueprint for Downtown Springfield presents zoning regulations and an overlay district for development in the District.</p>	37.5%	3

2. Are there any other projects or ideas that are missing that can help Springfield recover post-COVID?

ResponseID Response




2 Additional bicycle infrastructure.

3 Additional bicycle infrastructure.

5 bring large employee government and nongovernment employers into the vacant buildings in the CBD to enhance feet on the street and quality of life and work in the city.

6 Restaurant/Hospitality Fund which would support training, recruitment/retention incentives, to get people back to work and stay in work

3. Of the choices listed below, how would you most readily identify yourself within the landscape of the city of Springfield? Choose all that apply.

Value		Percent	Responses
District Business Owner		28.6%	2
City Staff		14.3%	1
Stakeholder		57.1%	4

