Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Belchertown

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Massachusetts

RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

Acknowledgements

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

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Civic Space Collaborative

Michelle Moon,
Claudia Lafontaine

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

Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce

Andrew Surprise

Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation

Sheila Cuddy

Belchertown Cultural Council

Melissa Mann

MassDevelopment

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Table of Contents

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.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Rapid Recovery Planning Program

● Program Communities
○ Non-Participating Towns and Cities
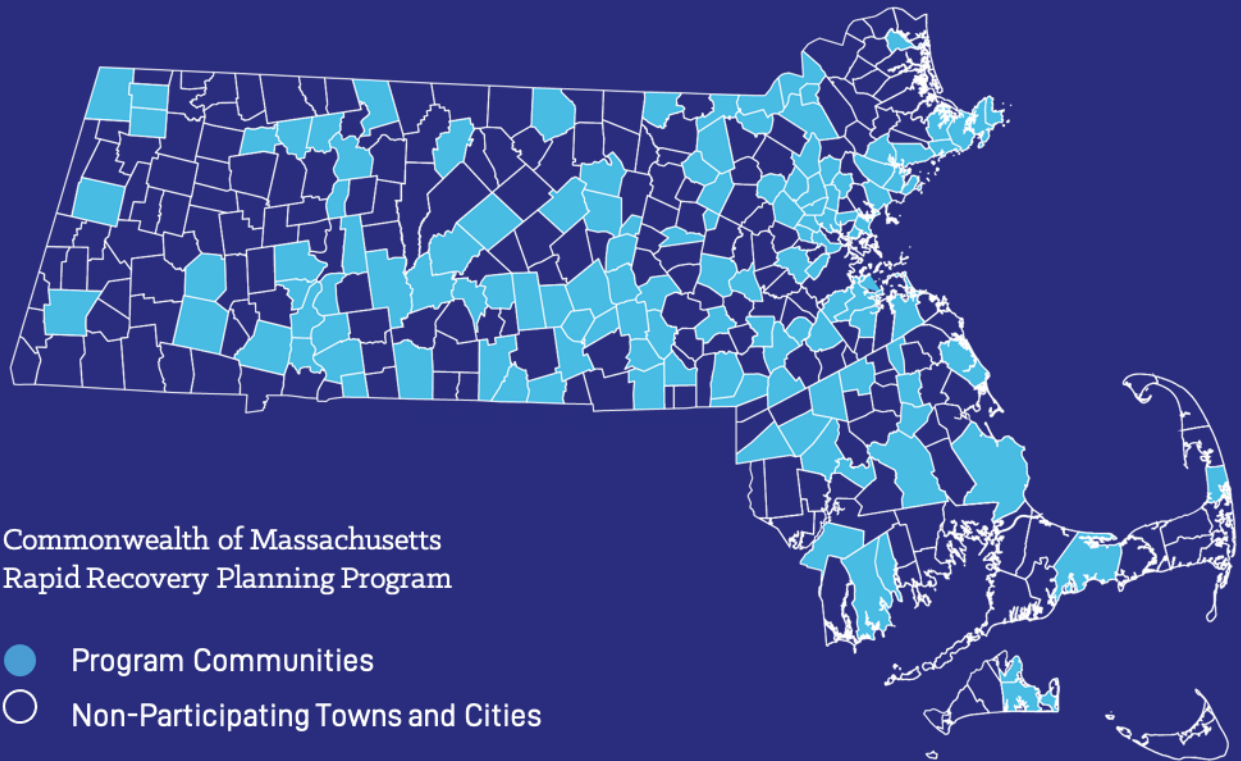
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

The Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program is intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, 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.
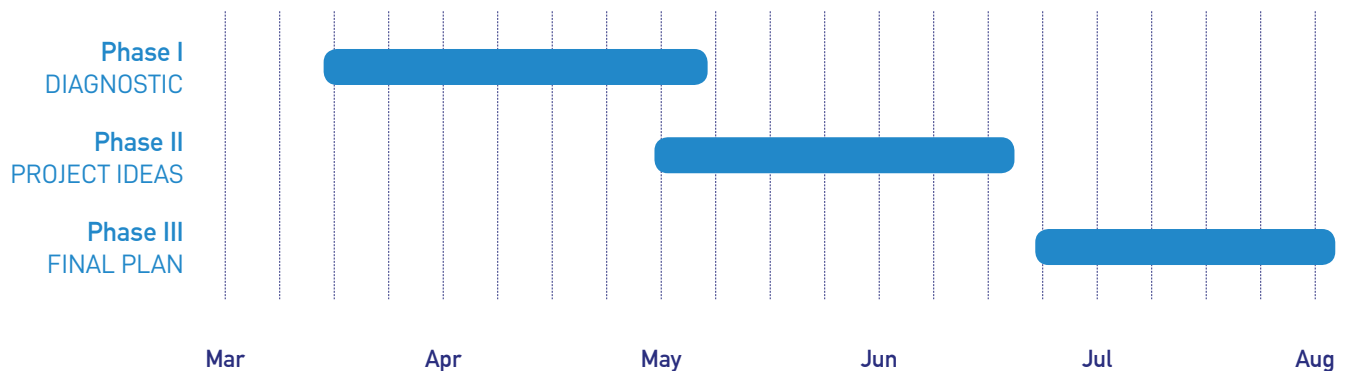
In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", and authored by Larisa Ortiz, 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

CUSTOMER BASE

Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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

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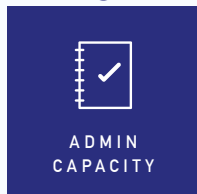
Who are the key stewards of the Study Area? Are they adequately staffed and resourced to support implementation of projects? Are the regulatory, zoning, and permitting processes an impediment to business activity?

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

Public Realm   Private Realm   Tenant Mix   Revenue & Sales   Admin Capacity   Cultural/Arts   Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Emerging from COVID: Reactivation, Focus and Momentum

Belchertown's economic prospects following the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 shutdown are positive. While local businesses did experience impact in sales and some initiatives have been slowed or altered, permanent economic impacts appear limited. No major local business closures are attributed to COVID, and larger-scale initiatives and opportunities that existed before the pandemic remain. In fact, Belchertown's core opportunities and paths toward growth have not changed as a result of COVID-19. This especially includes the ongoing redevelopment of the Carriage Grove area, which continues apace.

Opportunities identified in response to COVID-19 impacts are more fine-grained, and for the most part don't represent wholly new initiatives. Instead, recommended strategies are designed to complement existing activities, or strengthen them.

One emergent area of focus is on outdoor experience, including navigation, spatial activation/ place-making and exterior building appearance. This approach is consistent with Rapid Recovery program guidelines, and generally affirms the new emphasis on outdoor commerce and focus in the context of COVID-19.

Surfacing Key Assets & Opportunities

Belchertown does not lack for interesting businesses, proximity to nature or historic buildings. There are numerous opportunities to recreate, shop, dine, and participate in civic life. However, there may be mixed knowledge of these assets, presenting an opportunity to build awareness among newer residents and visitors.

One way to act on this opportunity is to implement a new wayfinding system, which would raise awareness of key community assets, including more "hidden" business districts, outdoor amenities, and cultural resources. In conjunction with a community branding effort, this would help tell Belchertown's existing story more efficiently and impactfully to more people.

A more concrete example of surfacing assets would be intentional, low-cost place-making efforts, especially in some of Belchertown's remarkable natural areas.

Community Engagement

Belchertown also has a deep reservoir of volunteerism, public participation and civic pride. However, this resource is somewhat diffuse. This lack of focus means some individuals or businesses might feel disconnected from the whole, and efforts toward organization have not always been sustainable or scalable.

To rectify this challenge, Belchertown can create or support formal structures that engage businesses, like a new local Chamber of Commerce Committee, or an Economic Development Project Manager. Such structures would complement more concrete resources, like a streamlined permit process, or investments in physical improvements to business exteriors.

Similarly, a proposal for an expanded food truck program would build on the existing program to prioritize greater choice and programmatic sustainability. Community engagement would also play a vital role in the aforementioned community branding initiative, which would depend on authentically leveraging a shared sense of place and local identity.
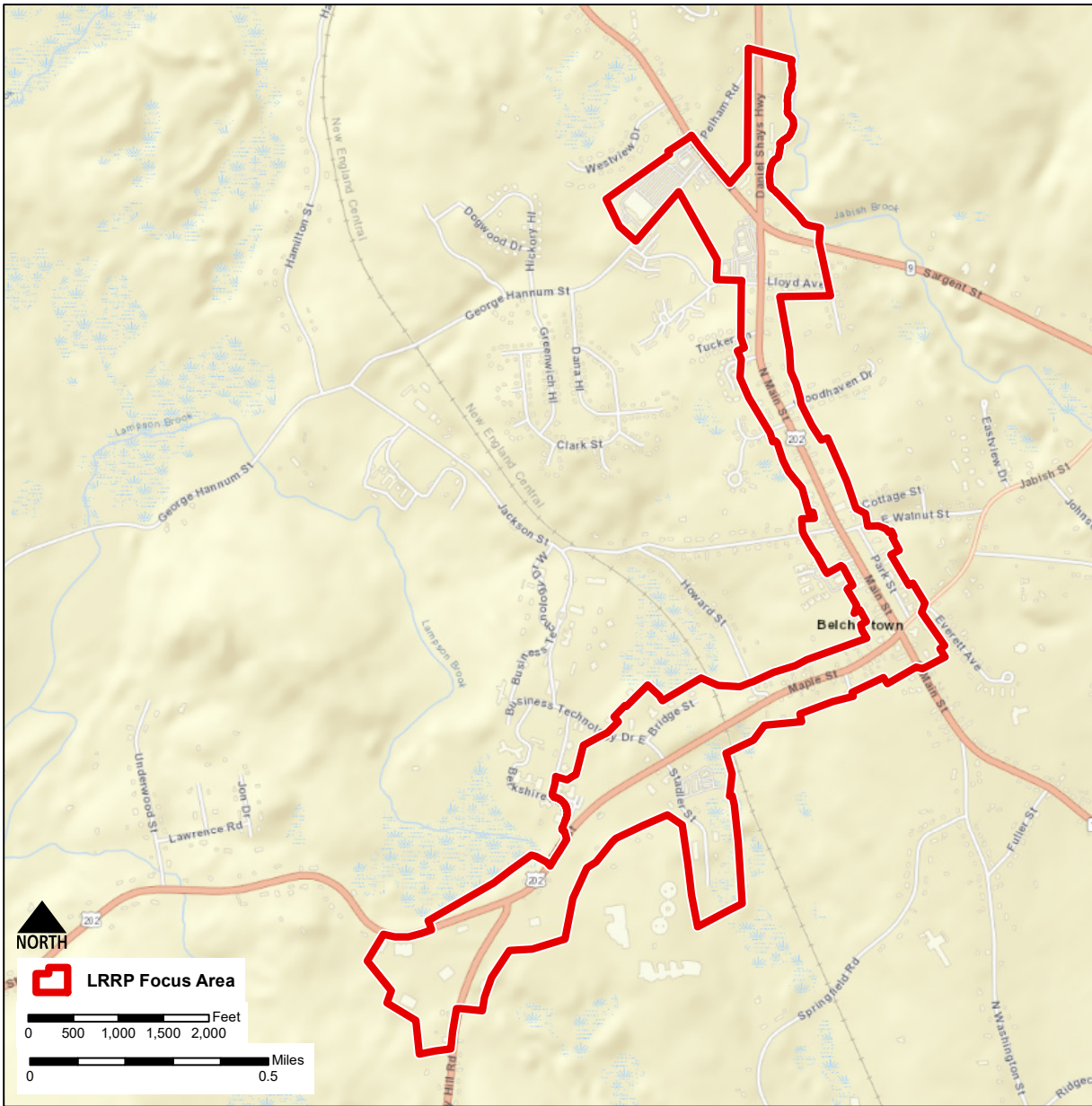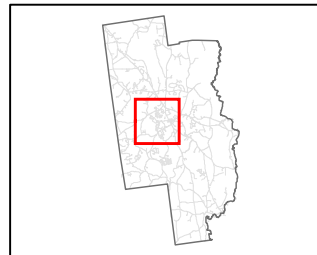
Belchertown, Massachusetts
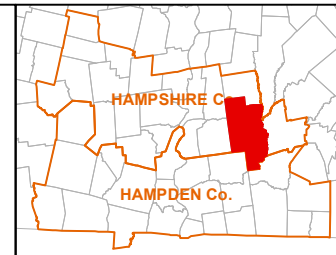
Local Rapid Recovery Program
Focus Area Map

Data Sources:
Town of Belchertown Massachusetts,
MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Municipal Locator Map

Regional Locator Map

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Project Map

Diagnostic

Key Findings

Belchertown Center's customer base is growing

The Project Area has a growing and diversifying population and has the potential to support a wide range of business types. The customer base includes income levels from affluent to low-income, and older, long-time residents as well as newer individuals and families. The community is adjacent to Amherst, home to the University of Massachusetts flagship campus and two private colleges, and many faculty, students, and staff live in or visit Belchertown. The town also borders the Quabbin Reservoir, which attracts many visitors from neighboring towns as well as regionally. With greater marketing efforts, Belchertown Center could attract far more of all of these customers.

Public infrastructure is being slowly but methodically upgraded

Although Belchertown Center's public infrastructure is aging, regular upgrades are planned and taking place. New sidewalks and crosswalks are being installed on State Street at the time of this study. The area around the Town Common has also been redone with new sidewalks and benches. North Main Street is scheduled for Complete Streets upgrades next, with further improvements coming as funding allows.

Belchertown Center's business mix is primarily retail and services

Nearly half of the businesses in the Center are retail stores or services, providing many options for local residents. There is a significant component of food services, as well, but most entities are "fast food," specialized options (cookies, coffee) or are breakfast/lunch only. There are few full-service restaurants in the Project Area.

The Center has no downtown organization overseeing recovery efforts

Although there is no single organization in charge of the Project Area, several local and regional entities have interest in its future. The challenge for the Town will be to coordinate and collaborate with all of these entities to achieve shared goals.

Highlights from the Customer Base

Demographic data was gathered for the Town of Belchertown and for the Project Area, which comprises the Town Center business district and includes a ½-mile radius around the actual project boundaries . The town-wide median household income is $93,719, while the project area median is $77,332. Of the town-wide workforce of 3,102, more than half (1,766) are in the project area. And the project area, like the rest of town, is predominantly non-Hispanic white (both about 89%) (U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015-2019).

The Town as a whole is more affluent than the project area, and the recently-completed Belchertown Economic Development master plan chapter indicates that residents wish for additional types of businesses, such as coffee shops, a gym, and more venues for teenagers. Residents indicated that some businesses don't have sufficient hours (close too early or close on a weekday), and they wish for more variety in restaurants.

Highlights from the Physical Environment

Overview

Belchertown's Town Center has a wide range of physical environments, extending along Route 202 from the Route 9 intersection all the way to the intersection with Route 21. The northern section includes a number of large chain stores as well as some smaller strip malls. The historic Town Common area is scenic, architecturally notable, and has several small shops, offices, and restaurants. Along State Street, there is currently a mix of commercial development and public uses including recreational open space. The Carriage Grove development is part of this area, and a significant portion remains to build out. Additionally, Stadler Street is a concentrated commercial area with several small strip malls and other discrete buildings.

The project area includes 102 properties that were counted as "storefronts" under the project guidelines. Many of them are not what one might traditionally think of as storefronts, such as 6 Berkshire Ave in Carriage Grove or a medical office building, but these entities were included as part of the project.

Total # 0f Storefronts	102
# of Vacant Storefronts	10
Total # of Businesses	92
#of Parking Spaces (on and off street)	Approximately 1,400
Permanent parks and Plazas	Town Common
Total Annual Visitors	About 7,000 (see below for details)

All elements were evaluated according to a set of criteria established by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) along with Streetsense. MDI notes that it is important to bifurcate the physical environment into the public and the private realm to acknowledge the fundamentally different nature of the tactics and funding mechanisms available for each.

Public Realm

MDI specifies that the public realm includes common areas such as streets, sidewalks and public spaces that are typically under public ownership and may be managed and maintained by either the public sector or a nonprofit entity such as a BID.

In many parts of Belchertown's project area, sidewalks and crosswalks are non-existent; however, new sidewalks were being installed along State Street at the time of this assessment. Where older sidewalks exist, they are in poor condition. This is typical for most communities, given that there is limited public funding for sidewalk upgrades. Road conditions are somewhat better, although additional crosswalks are needed. Street trees exist only along the Town Common and part of North Main Street and benches are found only on the Common.

Signage is sufficient for basic travel needs but does not identify key assets and destinations for drivers or pedestrians.

Sidewalks on Rte. 202 (Maple Street section)

Private Realm

The private realm refers to buildings and storefronts that are typically owned by individuals or corporate entities. In Belchertown's project area, building facades are generally well-maintained, and most private signage is attractive and easily visible. However, in some areas, particularly the older strip malls, signage is weathered, outdated, and somewhat confusing as new signs have been added over time. Some even has graffiti that has existed for some time. As for "curb appeal," most stores do not have merchandise displays outdoors or significant visibility into the store. Only a couple of restaurants have outdoor dining, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most stores do not have outdoor lighting that illuminates the sidewalk, and they generally do not have awnings.

Rannsaka in the Quabbin Shops

Stadler Street Shops

Access & Visibility

Access and visibility refers to the transportation network that offers customers convenient accessibility, whether by private vehicle, car share, foot, bike, or public transit, and the visibility of businesses to customers and passersby. Belchertown Center is easily accessible by car. There is a bus route that has infrequent service. Bicycle and pedestrian access is much more limited, with unsafe conditions and crossings, and sidewalks do not generally meet ADA accessibility criteria. Businesses directly on the street are visible, but there is little to indicate the existence of businesses in Carriage Grove or Stadler Street. Around the Town Common, it is difficult to distinguish between residences and businesses that are located in historic residential buildings.

Intersection of Rte 202 and Stadler Street

Parks and Plazas

Parks and plazas identified in this program are permanent spaces that are available for use year-round by the public. They are typically owned, managed, and/or programmed by the local Parks Department and/or another public or quasi-public entity. Belchertown has a very large (3.5 acres), historic Town Common, ringed by 19th-century homes and churches as well as a few commercial uses. The Common includes large grassy areas, trees, monuments, benches, and a generously-sized parking lot (about 70 spaces). There is also a field on State Street that is part of the Carriage Grove complex and is currently used for youth recreation. However, it will be developed as part of the Carriage Grove master plan.

Highlights from the Business Environment

As mentioned, there are 102 storefronts with 92 businesses and 10 vacancies. Together these businesses provide nearly 1400 parking spaces in the Town Center. Businesses are fairly spread out, and well-loved local venues are interspersed with franchises, chain stores and civic uses, limiting the "sense of place."

Anchors/Destinations

The Town's Economic Development plan states that there are an estimated 7,000 annual local and outside visitors to the Town for the Annual Belchertown Fair, Food Truck Fridays, Stone House Museum, Firefighters Museum, Jessica's Boundless Playground, and the Historic Town Common. All of these entities are located or held in the Project Area. The Annual Fair and Food Truck Fridays have been held on the Town Common, but the community is looking for a potential new site for the food trucks. The historic museums have a steady but small number of visitors, partly due to lack of marketing and partly because they are unobtrusively tucked in along the streetscape.

Two major shopping centers also serve as anchors in the Town Center, because they attract large numbers of customers or visitors not only from Belchertown but from a wider region – these include the Stop & Shop Plaza and the CVS Plaza.

Stop & Shop Plaza

Firefighter's Museum

Asset/Business Mix

The Town Center has a broad mix of commercial, public, and civic uses that meet a wide range of needs. There are 92 active entities, of which more than one quarter (25) are retail, including many small shops, and another quarter (22) in services such as real estate, financial, insurance, pet care, plumbing, hair and nail salons, etc. The next two largest categories are restaurants (14) and medical/dental offices (7). There are a number of entities classified as "educational" (beyond public schools), including dance and driving schools. There are two manufacturing businesses in the Center, one transportation provider, and two museums – the Stone House Museum and the Firefighters Museum. There is ample parking at most locations, except along Main Street opposite the Common.

Total # 0f Storefronts	102
# of Vacant Storefronts	10
Total # of Businesses	92
#of Parking Spaces (on and off street)	Approximately 1,400

Business Survey

A local Business Survey conducted in April 2021 resulted in sixteen (16) responses. Highlights from the survey indicated that:

- Revenue and customers were down by 25-50% or more for a majority of respondents.

- There was some interest in façade improvements.

- Interest in marketing, cultural events, and business recruitment programs.

- Seven of 16 respondents expressed an interest in shared marketing.

Nodes/Clusters

The Town Common is a clear node and destination, but once there, other places to go are fairly scattered. At the former Belchertown State School, a new cluster is developing as the Carriage Grove Development, with a senior living complex, a children's day school, and several businesses in the existing historic buildings. Pedestrian facilities in this area are better than some other areas.

Another cluster is located at the intersection of Route 9 and 202 where several shopping centers converge, both old and new. The Stop & Shop Plaza and CVS Plaza serve as anchors, as mentioned, but smaller strip malls include the Quabbin Shops and The Crossing.

Signage on Route 9

There is something of a youth services node along State Street with the public schools, Belchertown Day School, Jessica's Boundless Playground, Clay Mates Arts Café, Footloose School of Dance, Kidz Club, and Tigon Martial Arts. A cluster of Town services also exists in that area, with the Police Department, Senior Center and Recreation Department. Sidewalks were being installed along this corridor at the time of the assessment in spring of 2021.

The Stadler Street Shops comprise a cluster of small businesses that are somewhat hidden from the main road on State Street (Rt. 202). This is an area in need of both private and public sector upgrades, and in particular, consolidation of the multiple Stadler Shops signs at the entrance.

Carriage Grove Development Site

Administrative Capacity Highlights

Administrative capacity in Belchertown is modest. There is no business association serving the Town Center, although a number of organizations consider it part of their service area. See below for a list of partners. Capacity is also limited within town government, where staffing is limited to one town planner.

Partners in Belchertown Recovery work include:

- Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce

- Belchertown Community Alliance

- Belchertown Cultural Council

- Belchertown Economic Development and Industrial Corporation

- Belchertown Farmers and Artisans Market, Inc.

- MassDevelopment

- Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce

- Quaboag Valley CDC

Belchertown Farmer's Market

Rapid Recovery Survey

Project Recommendations

Business Engagement Incentive Program

Category

Administrative Capacity

Location

Belchertown Center

Origin

Town LRRP Committee, Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, Assorted Local Small Businesses

Budget & Sources of Funding

Low-Budget $25,000

Potential Sources include:

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds could cover assistance with the formation and/or design of the BCA when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regional Economic Development Council of Western Mass (REDO)
$5,000,000 was recently made available by DHCD to the 125 municipalities participating in the LRRP program. Belchertown submitted a request for $24,580 to the REDO on September 23, 2021. Notification regarding approval of the request is expected in October, with funds available (if approved) in early November.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet
Best Practices Program
The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement. Once approved, the written agreement will be generated and signed by both the municipality and the Commonwealth. The Compact also articulates the commitments the Commonwealth will make on behalf of all communities. The FY22 Best Practice program opened on August 15th, 2021 and will remain open until available funds are exhausted.

While the possibility of a grant from this source may be a stretch, and would require support from the municipality, it could be worth investigating. Potential Best Practice categories identified on the State website that could be investigated include:

- Create Opportunities for Engaging Diverse Stakeholders in economic development efforts, such as to assist with identification of priority development projects, improve local permitting processes, and proactively address obstacles to…job creation.
- Create Cross-Sector Partnerships to help carry out community-driven responses to community-defined issues and opportunities for economic development.

Timeframe

Short-Term (Less Than Five Years)

Risks

Low-Risk. Risks include: Limited formal influence on partner organization, unpredictable responses among prospective Chamber members, timing nuances regarding funding schedules and opportune windows for customer engagement.

Key Performance Indicators	• Number of businesses engaged
	• New Chamber members
	• Social media engagement in Small Business Saturday
	• Reports of increased sales on Small Business Saturday
	• Depth & breadth of participation in Chamber committee planning efforts

Partners & Resources

Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, Belchertown Cultural Council

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

Small businesses reported decreased sales and customer engagement in 2020, and suffered from an ongoing deficiency in organized networking, community branding and strategic coordination in response to COVID-19.

Belchertown sits on the geographic periphery of multiple Chambers of Commerce, and to date has received limited engagement from any of them. As a result, local businesses don't benefit from coordinated events, advocacy or networking with peers. Despite these deficiencies, there are numerous local business owners and other professionals who seek to network, organize modest events and build local identity and brand.

Simultaneously, one area Chamber is currently reconstituting and seeking concrete opportunities to demonstrate value.

Action Item

Via support of the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, the Town will facilitate greater business networking, strategic coordination and customer engagement. Town support will allow the Chamber to implement existing plans to seed and facilitate a local business committee or association in Belchertown.

Process

Specifically, the Chamber will:
1. Begin by organizing modest coordinated efforts for "Small Business Saturday" on 11/27/21. Activities will include social media promotion, development of printed collateral, organizing customer incentives (e.g. community-wide punch cards), etc. (Approx. $5k) Note: this activity dependent on short-term prospective funding.
2. Facilitate formation of a local volunteer committee, building on momentum from Small Business Saturday efforts. Early work will include in-depth engagement with key business stakeholders, identifying key needs, development of committee goals, next projects etc. (Approx. $12,500)
3. Implement a spring or early summer public event or business promotion inclusive of multiple businesses. (Approx. $5k)
4. Organize coordinated efforts for "Small Business Saturday" or a similar fall initiative in 2022. Activities will include social media promotion, development of printed collateral, organizing customer incentives (e.g. community-wide punch cards), etc. (Approx. $5k) Note: this activity is dependent on when the grant cycle begins, and whether this effort is funded in 2021. If funded for 2021, 2022 efforts would be based on Chamber priorities.
5. Throughout the project period, focus on enrolling local businesses as Chamber members; make all existing Chamber resources available to those members; and encourage their use. (Approx $2,400 - 1st year membership subsidies).

The Town will:
1. Connect Chamber staff with Belchertown Cultural Council leaders (for coordination with existing Winter Lights event).
2. Make introductions to 3-5 local business leaders as prospective leading committee members.

Best Practice

North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber has been holding an annual Small Business Saturday for nearly a decade. It is a day to support the local businesses that create jobs, boost the economy, and preserve neighborhoods around the country.

Nationally, a total of 1.5 million Facebook users, 130 public and private organizations, and dozens of elected officials have declared their support for SBS. More than 100,000 small businesses downloaded SBS marketing materials, 10,000 businesses signed up for free Facebook advertising that ran on SBS, and around 200,000 consumers registered their American Express cards to receive $25 statement credits when they shopped at a small business on SBS. American Express is the founding sponsor of Small Business Saturday

The North Central MA Chamber has developed a gift card system to be used at local businesses.

Small Business Saturday - The Main-Dempster Mile (maindempstermile.com)

In Evanston, Illinois, they've created a variety of activities in addition to Small Business Saturday and gathered them all on one webpage.

Building Internal Staff Capacity for Economic Development Activities

Category

Administrative Capacity

Location

Town-Wide

Origin

LRRP Leadership Group

Budget & Sources of Funding

Low Budget (under $50K)

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds could cover assistance with the formation and/or design of the BCA when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ARPA, DLTA, DHCD Planning Grant

Timeframe

Short-Term

Risks

(Low Risk) Sustainable Funding, Pre-Existing Organizational Structure

Key Performance Indicators

- Progress on concrete LRRP, other projects
- Progress on ARPA funding
- Turnaround time on town services supported with navigation.
- Community engagement

Partners & Resources

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

Belchertown has a cadre of committed community volunteers and elected leaders who facilitate a variety of events, community engagement initiatives and informal outreach to regional business partners. However, the Town is extremely constrained when it comes to staff capacity to support or lead project implementation outside of standard economic development initiatives directly tied to land-use.
Separately, it has also been identified that there is a strong demand for new or expanded programming that builds a sense of place, community branding, etc. In particular, COVID-19 highlighted a limited range of outdoor venues, and a lack of administrative nimbleness to implement mitigation efforts in a timely fashion.

Action Item

Belchertown will:
- Build administrative capacity for implementation of smaller economic development-related projects without complex land-use components.
- Strengthen communication among and between Town volunteer committees, community business leaders, private event sponsors, etc.
- Refine experiences of existing and prospective businesses as they interact with Town government.

Process

1. Designate ARPA funding to:
    a. Economic Development Project Manager Role
    b. Potential PVPC Hourly Consulting (supplemental, via DLTA)
2. Identify Priority Activities. Potential Priorities Include:
    a. LRRP project implementation
    b. Community engagement/ town service navigation
    c. ARPA funding project prioritization, administration, selectboard support
    d. Support & Enhancement of existing volunteer-led initiatives.

**Process
(cont'd)**

3. Determine department/supervisor, and key internal partners for priority activities. Anticipate how partners can build in time for collaboration and supervision, and adjust existing processes to communicate with a new team member.
4. Develop Job Description
   a. Draft description, accounting for PVPC support or not.
   b. Prioritize key skills and experience. Potential priorities include change. management, project management, procurement, event planning, grant administration, customer service.
   c. Convene key partners for review - Town Manager, Dir. of Planning, EDIC Staff, Select Board Reps.
   d. Consider examples of what concrete outcomes stakeholders desire in 6-12 months, and establish priority objectives & measurables.
   e. Vote to approve new role at Annual Meeting.
5. Establish Hiring Committee
6. Hire
7. Onboarding
   a. Senior staff should make affirmative introductions
   b. Agree on initial 4-6 month objectives. Potential objectives include a modest LRRP project, key community member & business owner outreach, etc.

Best Practice

Context
The City of Easthampton, MA focuses much of its economic development through an arts and culture lens, leveraging a high density of artists into events, branding and public space revitalization. Locally produced art is often featured in retail outlets, and galleries add energy to commercial districts, driving customers to adjacent shops and restaurants.

Background
This effort has been underway for well over a decade, and for much of that time has been supported by an Arts Coordinator. While this individual is focused on supporting local arts and artists, the interconnection between arts and the local economy imply the Arts Coordinator strengthens the local economy, often quite directly. Large outdoor events drive customers to local businesses, and public art installations create a welcoming environment, inviting visitors to slow down and look for more, often inside stores. Though the City benefits from volunteer support via its "Easthampton City Arts" body, most stakeholders identify the Arts Coordinator as the central pillar of success.

Based in the City's Planning Department, the position began as a part-time, grant-funded initiative, and has gradually become a full-time role, fully funded by the City budget.

Stakeholders agree this commitment of resources is rooted in broad community support catalyzed by early events, where businesses especially witnessed the impact of public art. It has been maintained because the community has come to perceive the importance of arts to the larger community identity, and the value in articulating that connection actively, publicly and in an organized fashion.

Key lessons for success and sustainability include:

Focus: The Arts Coordinator is by definition limited to a specific area of work, so over time when community members perceive that work, they associate it with the position.

Key Constituencies: The Arts Coordinator communicates actively with and provides programming for a specific set of constituents, and prioritizes open-ended relationship-building.

Broad Community Engagement: Though artist-focused, arts-related efforts have offered numerous entry points for a variety of other community members. Most significantly, town-wide public art initiatives and large events show a commitment to participatory values - art appreciation is valued along with production. This spirit is nurtured by the Arts Coordinator.

Internal flexibility: Though arts are a separate practice than community planning, staff in the Easthampton Planning department demonstrated a tolerance for risk, and a new area of exploration. Leaders considered the value long-term of brand-building, and made investments in community spirit, without necessarily knowing how it would manifest concretely.

Doing Business in Belchertown
Registration, Permit & Licensing Streamlining

Category

Administrative Capacity

Location

Town-Wide

Origin

LRRP Leadership Group

Budget & Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50K)

Potential Sources include:

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
The Town may consider using local ARPA funds for an ARPA administrator or consultant who may also oversee this process. (Also see Building Internal Staff Capacity for Economic Development Activities)

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet Best Practices Program

The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement. Once approved, the written agreement will be generated and signed by both the municipality and the Commonwealth. The Compact also articulates the commitments the Commonwealth will make on behalf of all communities. The FY22 Best Practice program opened on August 15th, 2021 and will remain open until available funds are exhausted.
Potential Best Practice categories identified on the State website that could be investigated include:
  - (IT) Citizen Engagement - Develop a plan to improve digital communications with the public, including content structure on the website, practices around content creation and ownership and social media.
  - (Economic Development) Create and Distribute an Economic Development Guide/Manual to not only promote development goals and priorities, but also specifically and clearly outlines the community's policies and procedures related to zoning and permitting.

Timeframe

Short-Term (1-5 Years)

Risks

Low Risk

Key Performance Indicators

  - Turnaround time from expression of interest/inquiry to establishment of new business
  - Feedback from businesses & partner organizations
  - Compliance rates with existing rules and regulations

Partners & Resources

Town Departments
Potential Resources to Refer Small Businesses: Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation, Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

Belchertown has no organized information about registration, permitting and licensure requirements to start or grow a business in Belchertown.
This deficiency is a challenge for those seeking to start new businesses, causing a lack of predictability and clarity on how difficult or easy starting or relocating a business might be. This leaves Belchertown at a competitive disadvantage compared to other communities, especially at a time when individuals may be considering new ventures in response to COVID-19.

Action Item

Belchertown will organize and make easily available all information related to new business registration, licensure and permitting.

Process

Review of Existing Systems
1. Gather all existing forms and published guidelines related to business registration and permitting, across all departments.
2. Document process, possibly via spreadsheet, identifying as much as possible of the following: task, department, contact, required information, cost. Note where information is currently listed, and what is and is not published.
3. Audit forms & guidelines:
    a. Identify redundant form fields
    b. Identify standards and discrepancies in applications/forms vs. associated guidelines
    c. Confirm with relevant Town staff if materials are updated and accurate.
    d. Identify missing information, including addresses, costs and projected approval timelines.
4. Contact recent business registrants of various types and survey their experience (prioritize in-person outreach over digital surveys). Gather insight on the following:
    a. Overall experience
    b. Required time from beginning process to end
    c. Areas of confusion and clarity
    d. Town staff and/or departments engaged, in order
    e. Whether business was able to successfully open or not

Refine Communication and Materials
5. Create flow charts or an "approval path" for different types of business or business activities (i.e. food, retail, outdoor, manufacturing, business services etc.). Prioritize the most common types of businesses in Town.
6. For each type of business or activity, go through all steps in the flow chart, one-by-one. Identify potential obstacles in each step (bad phone numbers or lack of voicemail, lack of clear order of steps, or appropriate contacts etc.).
7. Address obstacles that allow for easy resolution.
    a. Recreate forms and guidelines to improve consistency across departments.
    b. Where possible, in consultation with town staff, establish target timeframes for approvals, inspections etc.
8. Create a central web page with overview of key steps, departments & forms.
    a. Include all practical information (contact info, basic definitions, links to state agencies etc.)
    b. Consider a simple contact form for "expression of business interest," allowing staff to track all interested parties through approvals
    c. Include a permit matrix addressing which bodies or departments address each type of permit.
9. Optional: create specific web pages or documents addressing approval path requirements of specific business types/activities. Include "what to expect," fees, required steps from state and federal agencies, etc.

Evaluation and Improvement
Once the initial new information structure is in place, survey every individual who interacts with it, and implement a continuous improvement approach.

**Best Practice: New Business
and Permitting Guidebooks
Northampton, Sturbridge,
Great Barrington,**

The City of Northampton offers an "Establishing a Business" webpage with links out to various permitting bodies as well as other resources. (https://www.northamptonma.gov/2334/Establishing-a-Business)

Towns across the state have developed comprehensive permitting guidebooks which include and exceed the scope of this project, addressing construction, wetlands issues, etc.

Excellent examples of sector-specific flow charts can be found from the Town of Sturbridge: https://bit.ly/sturbridgepermits

The Town of Great Barrington has a simple overview of permit types, issuing authorities, and scenarios requiring permits: https://bit.ly/gbpermits

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Improve zoning, licensing, and permitting interactions

ADMIN CAPACITY

Provided by SME Consultant   BSC Group, Inc.

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

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

Diagnostic

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

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

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

Action Items

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

- Waive time limits for permits to minimize the need to re-apply to continue an approved action

- Encourage Boards and Commissions to hold joint meetings to expedite and streamline certain permitting processes

- Improve municipal websites and outreach to businesses to explain current as well as changes to the regulatory framework

- Encourage Planning Boards to either grant the following or gave planning staff the ability to provide administrative approvals to relax certain zoning requirements such as :
- Temporary or permanent reduction in parking requirements to provide additional outdoor dining and gathering in areas currently used for parking.
- Relaxed signage requirements to allow temporary signs to promote outdoor sales and dining

- Establish procedures for police, fire and public works to easily review/approve requests to block-off on-street parking spaces or portions of streets to be used for outdoor dining/events

- Create requirements describing how to safely block-off portions of a roadway or on-street parking with rigid and visible barriers to allow them to be safely used by pedestrians/customers.

- Waive some permitting requirements and fast-track others for a more efficient permitting process to allow businesses to quickly take advantage of a more flexible regulatory framework.

Process

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

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

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

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

Strategy Guide for Activating Public Spaces

Category

Administrative Capacity

Location

Belchertown Center

Origin

Town of Belchertown and Belchertown Community Alliance

Budget & Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k))

Commonwealth of Massachusetts One Stop for Growth
Community Planning Grants (project limit is $75,000)
A Community Planning Grant may be used for Zoning Review and Updates, which could include assistance with rezoning the Enterprise Zone parcel.

District Local Technical Assistance Grant
Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and DHCD
Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies and may be used for planning projects.

ARPA
The potential for use of local ARPA funds for this project should be examined by the Town of Belchertown.

Timeframe

Short (<5 years)

Risks

Low - This project will help the community develop a process that facilitates more civic activity. Communities will have realistic action plan for easily permitting commercial and community activity on a range of public spaces.

Key Performance Indicators

- Creation of local committee or working group to address this project
- Development of strategy guide

Partners & Resources

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Municipal Staff
Municipal Boards

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

The COVID-19 shutdown severely limited the types of activities in which Belchertown residents could partake, and the community had not yet developed processes and experience in coordinating alternative options. This project will help to prepare the community to initiate, encourage and facilitate a greater variety of community activities using available public spaces.

Action Item

Develop a written strategy guide to assist municipal boards in activating public spaces:
1. Conduct outreach and background research
2. Develop draft materials and visuals
3. Carry out municipal review and revisions
4. Finalize strategy guide

Process

Background and Baseline Research

1) Inventory public spaces: Identify the location and basic characteristics of all public spaces within the project area, including access, ownership and suitability for public activities.
2) Conduct an inventory and assessment of existing permitted activities and processes: Review all processes for issuing of permits for public and privately-organized events within public spaces
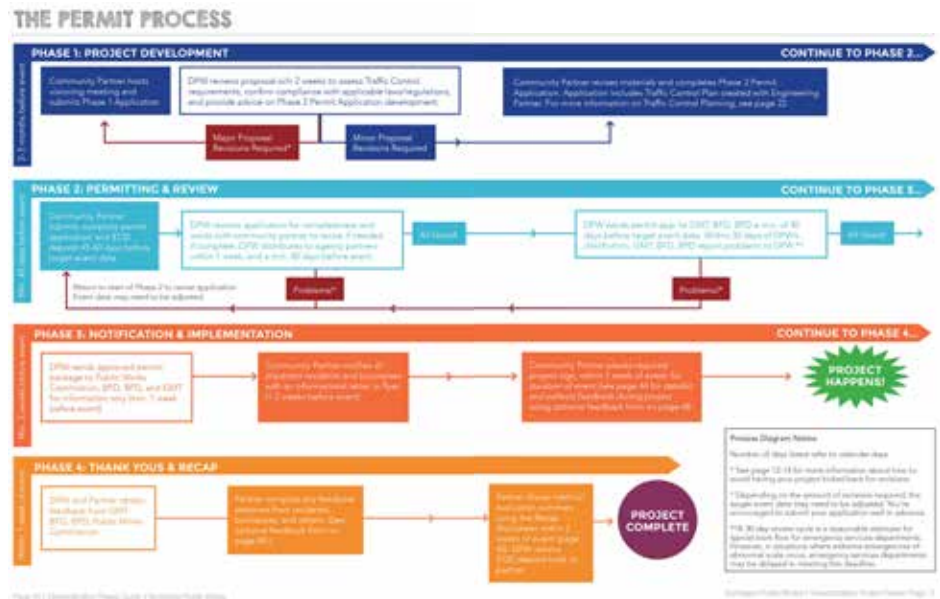
3) Stakeholder Identification and Outreach: Identify and solicit feedback from organizations, companies and individuals that have in the past held public events or showed interest in holding public events within the project area.
4) SWOT Analysis : Analyze potential opportunities and challenges around utilization of public spaces.
5) Case Studies and Resources: Research similar communities in the state and region and create a catalogue of realistic, achievable activities.

Community Input

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

Strategy Guide Development and Review

1) Write all sections:
    a. Summary and analysis of existing processes
    b. Opportunities and Challenges
    c. Case Studies
    d. Recommendations for streamlining the permitting process
2) Review all recommendations with municipality and incorporate recommended edits.

This guide is authored by Kathy Madden for the Project for Public Spaces: How to Turn a Place Around | Publications — Project for Public Spaces (pps.org)

CommunityLedDemonstrationProjectPolicyGuide2018.pdf (burlingtonvt.gov)

Winter Projection: Historic Images on Historic Buildings

Category

Arts and Culture

Location

Belchertown Center.
Potential venues include
• Belchertown United Church of Christ (Community Building projecting to Church Building, or Common Gazebo to Church Building)
• 6 Berkshire Avenue (possibly projected from 8 Berkshire)

Origin

LRRP Leadership Group, Belchertown Community Alliance

Budget & Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)) potential sources include: Mass Cultural Council: Festivals Grant or MassDevelopment: Commonwealth Places, Patronicity (Crowdfunding), Mass Humanities, NEFA

Timeframe

Short Term

Risks

Medium - Novel idea and process, weather could influence success, may require coordination among multiple partners. Appropriate combination of technology and venue are critical.

Key Performance Indicators

Audience, Number of content contributors

Partners & Resources

Stone House Museum, Belchertown Community Alliance, Belchertown Historical Commission,

Possible: Friends of State School Association, Belchertown Cultural Council (Winter Light Nights Collaboration)

Potential Venue Partners: Belchertown United Church of Christ, Belchertown Community TV

Potential AV Vendors: Theatrix (Bruce Wallace, Principal), Zasco (Michael Zaskey, Principal)

Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

During the pandemic, Belchertown residents did not gather or participate in outdoor group events as much as some communities. The major outdoor activities have been hiking, fishing, boating, etc. There is a need to bolster community spirit and solidarity.

Action Item

Belchertown Community Alliance will build community spirit and awareness of under-appreciated outdoor spaces and structures. By projecting historic images that are publicly viewable, BCA will facilitate safe outdoor gathering, while leveraging interest in town history.

Process

Phase 1: Planning and Design
1. Convene Core Stakeholders. Vital contributors will include Stone House Museum, and any other content contributors. Key Priorities:
    a. Which content is or can be available without extensive resources (digital vs. analogue, existing organization/cataloguing, etc.)
    b. What time resources are available among core participants?
    c. What scope is satisfactory to all participants? (address target time of day, level of tech sophistication, etc.)

2. Venue & Surface Selection. This factor will determine most details about the project. Key criteria include:
    a. Type of surface. Color and finish greatly affect projection quality. Generally white works better, and allows for a less powerful projector.

**Process
(cont'd)**

    b. Architectural details. Buildings with windows, cornices etc. will require projection mapping software vs. blank surfaces which accept standard video or presentation tools (e.g. powerpoint).

    c. Space for projectors. Any semi-permanent installation will require weatherproof housing or a building. Power is also vital, and requirements vary by projector brightness.

    d. Projector throw distance. Distances greater than 25 feet may require high-powered, more costly projectors and lenses. (10k-30k lumens). Most scenarios where a building may be available for projector housing would require a higher-powered system based on distance from target surfaces. Shorter distance scenarios in Belchertown (using a projector of 4k-10k lumens) may all require temporary outdoor installation and removal, or construction of secure housing.

3. Concept Design: Develop a lighting design including renderings/images/sketches, site plan, budget, installation timeline, and a management plan. Consider security, weather.

    Recommendation: At this juncture, decide whether a long-distance (building-to-building) or short distance (outdoor projection setup) is preferred. In the case of the former, it may be appropriate to engage professional AV expertise, secure rented equipment and professional support with mapping software.

    A setup with a closer projector (likely outdoors) may allow non-professional AV management, rental or purchase of equipment, and optional use of mapping software. This approach may also allow for more experimentation.

4. Funding: Secure resources based on concept design. (see budget, above)

Phase 2: Implementation

5. Materials: Acquire materials needed, including a projector, protective housing, cabling, computer and software to create an animation show. These materials could be a combination of rented, purchased, or borrowed. Consider the documentation of the installation with a camera and associated equipment. Equipment such as cables, computers, and chosen animation software can likely be acquired before a site has been selected; however, projectors must be selected with the distance they will span in mind.

6. Timeline: Identify timeline for the placement, maintenance, removal, and storage of the projection equipment.

7. Insurance and permitting: Acquire insurance for project implementation such as artist insurance or general liability insurance, as well as any necessary permits from the Town or permission from the property owner.

8. Promotion: The art installation and any events programmed should be promoted prior to the installation with print and online materials. Include a project webpage link and QR code on promotional materials that could allow for metrics to be tracked (such as number of attendees).

9. Installation and maintenance: Define project partners responsible for installing and maintaining projection equipment throughout the display.

Phase 4: Evaluation, Removal, and Storage

10. Evaluate: Analyze the outcome of the installation based on the Key Performance Indicators section.

11. Removal and storage: Removal and storage responsibilities and locations should be discussed during concept development, as well as included in budget planning.

Process (cont'd)

2. Venue & Surface Selection. This factor will determine most details about the project. Key criteria include:
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Jamaica Plain Centre/South Main Streets (JPCSMS) Winter Light Show
Jamaica Plain Centre/South Main Streets (JPCSMS) has hosted a Winter Light Show for the past two years and has put out a request for proposals (RPP) for winter 2021. Their goal is to "reflect the values and diversity of the Jamaica Plain community and highlight celebration of the various faiths and cultures of the residents, as well as the winter season." For the first year, they crowdfunded for projection equipment using Patronicity, raising a total of $32,000, with more than $15,000 in crowdfunding and the remaining portion funded by a grant from Boston Main Streets Foundation, and a match from Boston Main Streets. They also allow community groups to use the projector.
In their current RFP, JPCSMS provides a $10,000 budget to cover all costs and compensation including equipment for safely enclosing the projector, content design, installation and de-installation, insurance, permits and fees. JPCSMS provides a Panasonic DLP Projector and Panasonic lens ET-DLE250 (zoom).

https://jpcentresouth.com/jp-light-show/

Iluminación Lawrence: Illuminating downtown Lawrence to create wonder and attraction

CULTURAL/ ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant   Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location   Lawrence, MA

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

Diagnostic

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

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

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

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

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

Action Item

- To reinforce the program, an *Iluminación Lawrence* website was developed to communicate news of the project elements, schedule and related events

- A Patronicity funding project was developed to raise $30,000 in matching money. The goal was met by raising $30,400 which MassDevelopment matched to implement the project. Additionally, several other significant amounts were raised by other public and private sources.

- Local Press outlets, facebook and the City of Lawrence's official website as well as partners' websites were used to communicate the project to residents and businesses

- Phased tests and "soft openings" were created to reinforce community interest

- Music was part of the plan as well and was and is provided by

- In 2021, the Boston Architectural College will assist with rolling out other lighted structures in the Downtown
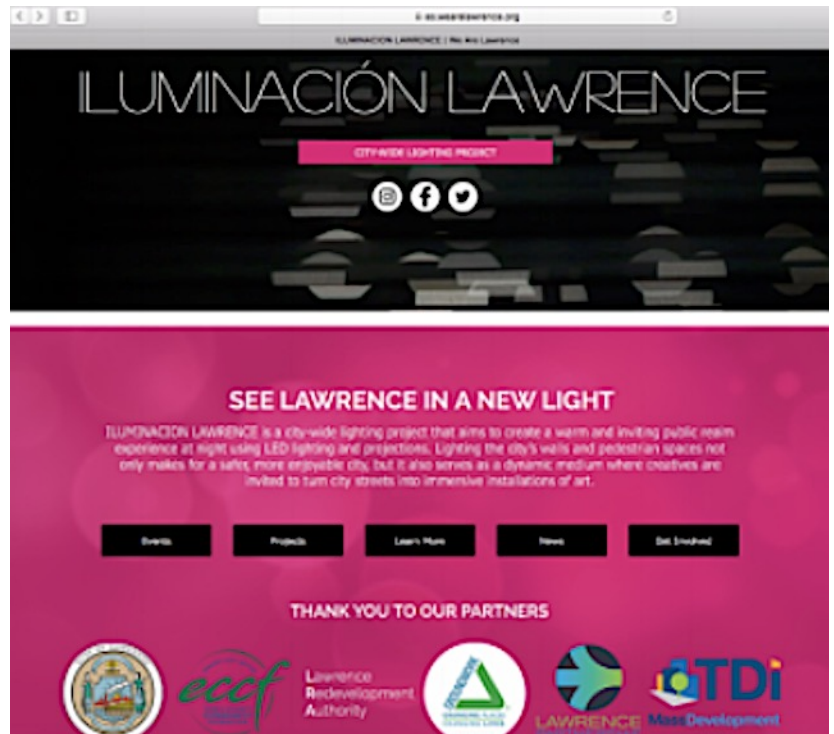
Iluminación website
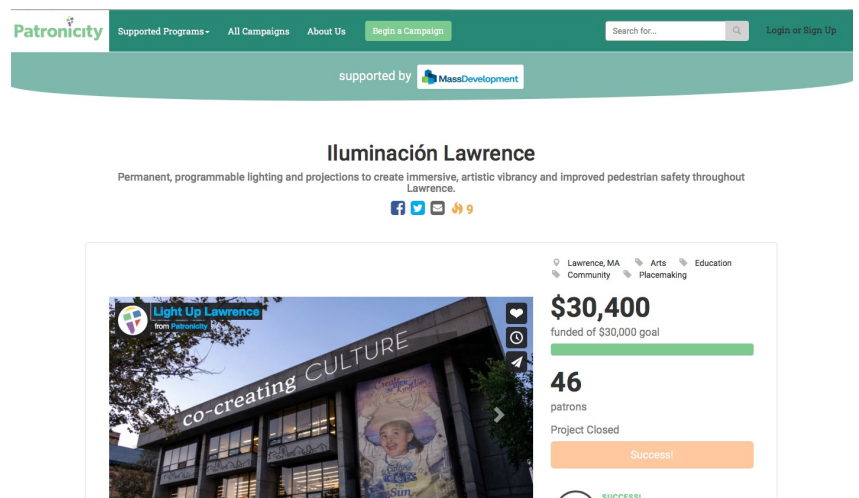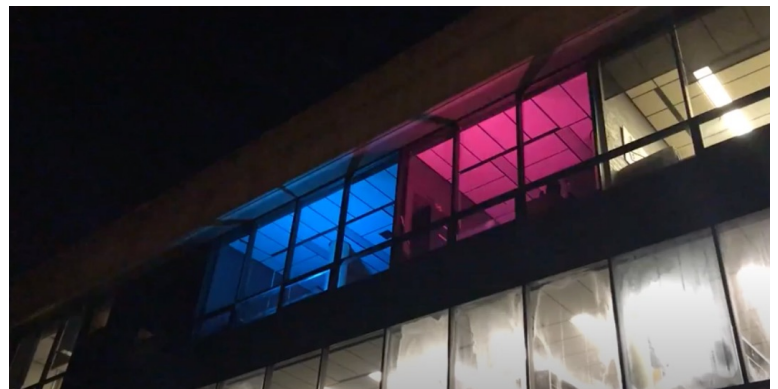
Process

- The artistic and technical aspects of the project were initially worked out by Light Artist John Powell who had extensive experience lighting buildings, bridges and other structures nationally and internationally. The initial concept of the project focused only on the Casey Bridge and then later on the Ayer Mill Clock Tower.

- Mr. Powell convinced various members off the community leadership that this concept needed to be expanded to incorporate many structures throughout the Downtown

- Unfortunately, he passed away in early 2020 and replacement artists have now taken his creative and technical place

- Needed permissions and permitting were ascertained from public and private building owners

- LuminArtz developed approaches to direct lighting facade of City Hall

- Internal illumination took place at the Lawrence Public Library

- "Soft Openings" were used as testing for technology. These in turn became community events that added excitement and energy to the program

- Organizations, agencies and individuals collaborated on every aspect of the program

- Individual budgets have been created for each event and each activity area.

- Throughout the projects program, a detailed implementation plan with timeline of tasks, roles was created and followed

- Document has been extensive throughout the total program

- This has and will assist with future project components programming

- During each programmed event, community celebrations have taken place, leading to continued community pride and joy.

- Businesses and residents have all positively responded to the overall program.

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

Internal view of Ayer Mill Clock Tower lighting..

Process- Strategic Decisions

- The initial project considered, for what eventually became *Iluminación Lawrence,* was only to light the Casey Bridge located in Downtown Lawrence over the Merrimack River

- After the Ayer Clock Tower lighting was added, it was clear that a much more extensive plan be initiated throughout the Downtown

- Now the plan incorporates several significant structures that add to the visual enrichment of Lawrence while recognizing the history, people and events that have gone into its social and cultural legacy

- Significant aspects of its history include perhaps the best physical master plan for a textile mill city in the United States, impact on child-labor laws by Lewis Hind's documentation and writings based on Lawrence child workers and the revolutionary Bread and Roses Workers' Strike of 1912

- *Iluminación Lawrence* speaks to this grand legacy of the history and resiliency of the City of Lawrence.

- Each new lighting of a structure becomes a community celebration

Iconic Casey Bridge over the Merrimack River
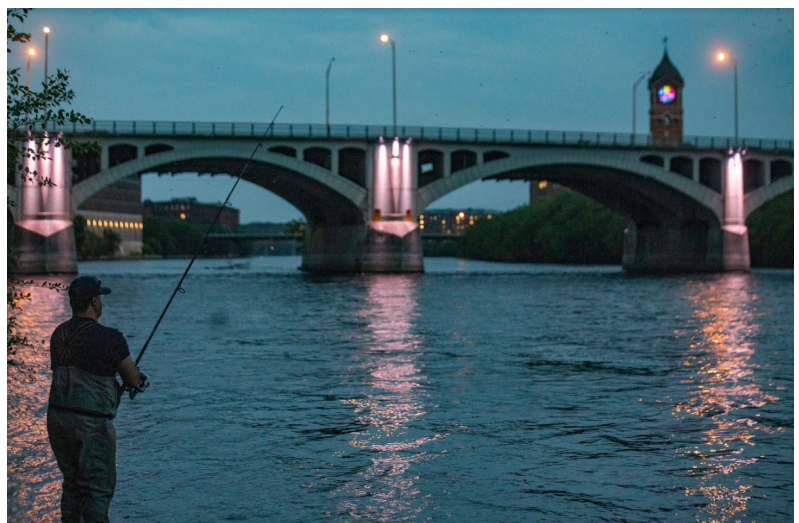
Branding Belchertown - Articulating Our Historic and Future Identity

Category

Revenue and Sales

Location

Town-Wide

Origin

LRRP Leadership Group, Belchertown Cultural Alliance

Budget & Sources of Funding

Medium Budget ($60k)
The following are potential sources:

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 sign upgrades when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and DHCD
District Local Technical Assistance Grant
Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies and may be used for planning projects. Each RPA has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals. All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required. Wayfinding/Signage and Façade Improvement projects are also contemplated in this report, among others. Should the Town engage PVPC for other LRRP projects, administrative assistance with branding may also make sense.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet
Best Practices Program
The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement. Once approved, the written agreement will be generated and signed by both the municipality and the Commonwealth. The Compact also articulates the commitments the Commonwealth will make on behalf of all communities. The FY22 Best Practice program opened on August 15th, 2021 and will remain open until available funds are exhausted.

Potential Best Practice categories identified on the State website that could be investigated include:
- Create Opportunities for Engaging Diverse Stakeholders in economic development efforts, such as to assist with identification of priority development projects, improve local permitting processes, and proactively address obstacles to housing accessibility and affordability as well as job creation.
- Create Cross-Sector Partnerships to help carry out community-driven responses to community-defined issues and opportunities for economic development.

Funding related to regional business and economic development associations, as well as Town funds might also be investigated.

Timeframe

4-8 months

Risks

Low-Risk. Public engagement could require longer consideration than may be preferable.

Key Performance Indicators   Observed adoption among community members, Use of logos/key images among town staff

Partners & Resources   Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Consultant TBD

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

During COVID-19, a variety of small businesses reported decreased sales and customer engagement. Customers may have prioritized convenience of online shopping or large retailers and service providers in adjacent communities. This departure from local businesses may have been accelerated by a deficit in local branding that can drive customer loyalty. Additionally, informal feedback suggests unmet local demand for new micro-enterprises, food purveyors etc. But Belchertown doesn't seem to resonate among prospective businesses who may be candidates to serve Belchertown customers, or locate in Belchertown.

More broadly, local leaders identify a strong set of local assets that do combine to make an appealing community, but that these assets are not necessarily organized into a cohesive, easily accessible story or brand.

All of these dynamics combine to present an opportunity.

Action Item

Belchertown will engage the services of a Branding Consultant to articulate a clear community brand and associated materials and resources.

These resources will be utilized formally within local government, but also informally among community stakeholders, residents, local organizations, etc.

Process

RFP Development
1. The Town should agree on initial overarching objectives. Potential priorities include:
    a. Regional positioning (prospective residents, businesses, customers, tourists)
    b. Business Sector Identification (e.g. arts, children's services, food, etc.)
    c. Customer Loyalty
2. Town should determine:
    i. Preferred level of community input (if extensive input is preferred, that should be core demonstrated competency of any consultant.)
    ii. Breadth of deliverables
    iii. Target end-users of deliverables (internal staff, partner organizations, residents, etc.)
    iv. Any ongoing services
    v. Budget
3. Town Identifies Brand Project Manager/ Communications Lead (Represents town during engagement with consultant, oversees proper usage of eventual brand collateral following engagement)

Consultant Engagement
Basic approach includes some combination of the following steps, or similar:
1. Research & Discovery - This phase will be the most extensive and is critical to success. At minimum, requires key stakeholders, existing information, etc. Digital surveys likely valuable here.
    Recommendations:
    a. Include in research an audit of existing visual representations, with a focus on commonalities.
    b. Cross-reference successful towns and cities with similar goals as a benchmark, identifying characteristics that create authenticity.
    Key question: How public should this process be? Deep community engagement could have valuable spillover impacts, but requires more time and resources from consultants and core internal stakeholders.
2. Concept Direction: Based on research, potential directions are shared for validation or rejection. It is recommended that the town develop a position statement inclusive of common vision, values etc.

3. Visual Language: Selection of colors, image style, copy based on position statement, etc.

4. Logo Design: Combines above steps into concrete visual identity. This stage should include multiple options, based on RFP.

5. User Testing & Refinement: Pushes draft product to key stakeholder for feedback.

**Process
(cont'd)**

6. Brand Guide Development: Document to include standards for how brand is to be used. Includes variations on logo, key color codes, various file formats, direction for appropriate use.

Potential Additional Steps

7. Encourage community deployment of brand collateral or concepts through creative community engagement. Channels could include T-Shirt design contests, collaboration with local makers and craft professionals (e.g. Hammer and Stain Western MA), interactive station at annual fair, a "made in Belchertown" logo variant etc. If these or similar activities are priorities, earlier steps in the process should account for them (e.g. community input process, definition of deliverables in RFP, etc.)

Wayfinding Belchertown: Surfacing Assets, Focusing Attention

Category

Public Realm

Location

Town-Wide

Origin

LRRP Leadership Group, Belchertown Cultural Alliance

Budget & Sources of Funding

Large Budget ($200k+)

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 sign upgrades when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regional Economic Development Council of Western Mass (REDO)
$5,000,000 was recently made available by DHCD to the 125 municipalities participating in the LRRP program. Belchertown submitted a $27,000 grant application to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through the REDO on September 23, 2021. https://www.westernmassedc.com/

T-Mobile
Hometown Grants
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

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and DHCD
District Local Technical Assistance Grant
Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies and may be used for planning projects. Each RPA has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals. All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required. Should the Town engage PVPC for other LRRP related projects, administrative assistance with signage and wayfinding may also make sense.
http://www.pvpc.org/

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Compact Cabinet
Best Practices Program
The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement. Once approved, the written agreement will be generated and signed by both the municipality and the Commonwealth. The Compact also articulates the commitments the Commonwealth will make on behalf of all communities. The FY22 Best Practice program opened on August 15th, 2021 and will remain open until available funds are exhausted.

Budget & Sources of Funding (cont'D)

Potential Best Practice categories identified on the State website that could be investigated include:

Housing and Economic Development
Best Practice: Create Cross-Sector Partnerships to help carry out community-driven responses to community-defined issues and opportunities for economic development.

Active Transportation
Best Practice: Implement Complete Streets by joining MassDOT's Complete Streets Funding Program and demonstrating the integration of Complete
Streets principles into regular planning and design practices on local roadways.
https://www.mass.gov/best-practices-program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
A Quick-Launch/Quick-Build Municipal Funding Program
The Shared Streets and Spaces Program will be accepting new applications beginning in January 2022. Details on future program operation including exact deadlines, application documents, and eligibility requirements will be published as they become available.
Building on the success of the Shared Streets and Spaces Municipal Grant Program first launched during the summer of 2020 -- and later extended to address the particular challenges of winter -- the Massachusetts Department of Transportation is now announcing a new phase of the program. The new phase will operate similarly to previous iterations of the Shared Streets and Spaces Program by supporting municipalities and transit authorities to improve plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. In light of recent increases in speeding-related crashes and fatalities, this new phase of the program will have an additional emphasis on safety, and is looking to fund projects that improve safety for all road users through interventions that achieve safer conditions and safer speeds.

https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Complete Streets Funding Program
A Complete Street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes
- walking, biking, transit and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities. The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program provides technical assistance and construction funding to eligible municipalities. Eligible municipalities must pass a Complete Streets Policy and develop a Prioritization Plan. All Program news, guidance, and registration information are available through an online Portal.

Grant opportunities of up to $400,000 are available for Complete Streets projects, including Signage and Wayfinding projects, provided the Town has adopted a Complete Streets policy and the project includes walking and biking. The Belchertown Walk Audit Report provides an excellent resource for adopting such a policy in an expeditious manner.
https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
One Stop for Growth Development Continuum
All grant programs within the One Stop for Growth fall into the Continuum.
The Community One Stop for Growth is a single application portal and collaborative review process of grant programs that make targeted investments based on a Development Continuum:
Preparing for Growth
   Grants to support activities and initial steps by community-based actors to attract and guide
      private investment in a community.
   • Community Capacity Building
   • Planning & Zoning
   • Site Preparation

Catalyzing Specific Projects
Grants to support private, commercial, industrial, and residential investment projects that further the community vision.
   • Predevelopment & Permitting
   • Buildings (vertical)
   • Infrastructure (horizontal)

Continuum Detail – Community Capacity Building

Projects may focus on a geographic area (district, community, or region) or a target population. Preference for projects that demonstrate a clear vision and a leadership group that is effective and stable. For projects with a target population, preference for those with involvement of, or impact on, Black and Latino populations. Projects may fund consultants or, in certain cases, staff time.

Projects in the Community Capacity Building section of the Development Continuum include:
- Technical Assistance for Improving a Downtown or Commercial Center
- Early Stage Strategy Development
- Strategy Implementation by an Existing Cross-Sector Consortiums or Coalition

Grant Type: Technical assistance or Implementation Grants. Projects may fund consultants or staff.

Grant Sizes: Potential for $25,000 to $100,000 awards. Downtown technical assistance grants will not exceed $25,000.

https://www.mass.gov/info-details/one-stop-for-growth-development-continuum#overview-

American Association of Retired Persons
AARP Community Challenge Grant Program
The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative that helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. The program is intended to help communities make immediate improvements and jump-start long-term progress in support of residents of all ages.
Since the program's debut in 2017, AARP has awarded $9.3 million through 800 grants. The projects have been completed across all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative, which helps cities, towns, villages and rural areas become great places to live for residents of all ages. As part of this effort, AARP staff and volunteers engage and mobilize residents, delivering technical assistance and expertise to local leaders and organizations, and supporting the work of the communities and states that have enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Note: The Town is not required to hold the Age-Friendly designation in order to qualify for a grant.
https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/

Funding related to regional business and economic development associations, as well as Town funds might also be investigated.

Timeframe		**Short-Term** **Phase One** 3 Months: RFP Development and Advertising 1 Month: Vendor Selection 4-8 Months: Community Engagement, Analysis, Design Concepts **Phase 2** 3-6 Months: Formal Designs, Fabrication & Installation
Risks		Low-Risk. Risks include multiple stakeholders involved in oversight, fabrication and installation challenges, reconciliation of community feedback priorities.
Key Performance Indicators		• Number of survey respondents • Number newly identified wayfinding deficit areas (eg, specific intersections lacking useful signage) • Community support for further investment (following Phase one) • Traffic/Activity in Targeted Areas
Partners & Resources		Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Belchertown Community Alliance, Belchertown EDIC, MassDevelopment, Consultant TBD
Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts		COVID-19 highlighted a need for better community branding, as many residents didn't utilize local businesses or assets. Additionally, the increase in outdoor recreation driven by COVID-19 revealed mixed awareness about valuable outdoor assets like trails, some of which are proximate to local businesses.

Action Item

In order to strengthen town branding and place-making, the Town will seek a consultant for a comprehensive wayfinding system that better highlights key community assets and supports a memorable community identity/brand.
Phase one will focus on the initial steps of a town-wide approach to wayfinding. This will include community engagement, data layering and analysis, and design concept development.

In phase two, the Town will build on design concepts toward specific designs and plans, and will have signage fabricated and installed.

Process

Phase One

1. RFP development assistance by consultant
    a. The Town should agree on initial overarching objectives.
    b. The Town should clarify if initial RFP should be inclusive of phases one and two, or just phase one.
2. Consultant selection. Key criteria:
    a. Experience in non-urban communities
    b. Creative but practical approach to multi-modal signage
    c. Capacity for collaboration with local stakeholders/artists
    Consultant work should include some combination of the following steps:
3. Community engagement, including surveys, key stakeholder interviews.

    Key questions: What do current residents need to be more aware of? Where should visitors be directed?
4. Wayfinding Analysis & Data Layering, including audits, circulation plans, sign location plans, data layering, etc.

    Basic approach includes: Identification and categorization of common Points of Interest (POI) across the town, and consideration of tiers of POI in relationship to different groups. Also a prioritization of "decision points" representing key junctures for travelers.
5. Design Concepts, including sign types, visual identity, priority capital investments, etc.
    Basic approach includes: Consideration of travel modes, central venues & top tier destinations, and correspondingly appropriate text sizes.

Phase Two

6. Final Signage Design: Specifying location, function and design of different signs.

7. Fabrication & Installation (can be bid separately, or as part of consultant contract)
    Basic approach includes:
• Early coordination with relevant Town permitting bodies
• Understanding base pricing, refining designs for cost savings and volume discounts. Minimum two fabrication bids recommended.

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

PUBLIC REALM

Provided by SME Consultant	Mark Favermann, Favermann Design
Location	Wakefield, MA

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

Diagnostic

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

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

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

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

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

Action Item

The two overlapping programs took two different paths.

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

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

Old Band Stand adjacent to Lake Quannapowitt in Wakefield, MA

Process

- After a number of kiosk design alternatives were presented to the Wakefield Main Streets Board, one design was chosen to develop, locate and specify.

- Three (3) of the kiosks were to be two-sided and analog; the fourth was to be digital and four-sided. The digital one would be set closest to the lake.

- Historical town images and commentary was developed to fit around as a border around a business directory for one side of the directory.

- Set in an airtight locked Plexiglas window, this information could be easily changeable on the two-sided kiosks. On the opposite side was space for timely event posters and community announcements.

- The digital kiosk was designed to have a screen/monitor that was programmable from the town hall.

- There was much criticism around the placement and look of the digital kiosk. The town council eventually addressed the public and took a stand that the location, size and look of the kiosk was the best possible solution.

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

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

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

- These guidelines were in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and further thought was given to the on-hold wayfinding program. It was decided that a new approach should be taken that abandoned the problematic landscape and instead visually reflected the kiosk and style of the Town of Wakefield.

- Utilizing the new design approach, plans are going ahead for a new directional sign for the Greenwood neighborhood. A test will take place during the Summer of 2021 to see how wayfinding can connect the Lake with downtown.

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

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

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

- Though carefully announced by the Main streets Board, controversy was caused by residents feeling left out of the process.

- Several Town council meetings addressed the size, content and location of the kiosks, especially the proposed digital one adjacent to the lake.

- All kiosk locations are on Town property and are at the best decision-point locations possible.

- The "waters" were eventually calmed and the process continued until a successful implementation of the program.

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

- Below is an image of the previous design that was affected by the destructive church fire.

- The "new" simpler design has found favor in the community.

- The Town of Wakefield is now creating a fully consistent "look" for all its official elements.

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

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

PUBLIC REALM

Provided by SME Consultant	Mark Favermann, Favermannn Design
Location	Well, ME

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

Diagnostic

- Wells, Maine is a seaside community in Southern, Maine. It is located between the two more affluent communities of Ogunquit and Kennebunkport.

- Besides being a summer seaside resort , it is a fishing village and lobster boat harbor as well as being the site of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

- There is no concentrated downtown area. Instead commercial businesses are spread along US Route 1 or Post Road in Wells.

- The town administration felt that the town needed a branding and wayfinding sign system that also had applications for internal communications and even street furniture and public art.

- A national competition was administered, and Favermann Design was designated the consultant.

- Our firm did a visual survey of the various parts of the community including ways to the beach, commercial activities and feeder streets and roads.

- Historic buildings, structures and various types of estates and campuses were reviewed.

- An advisory committee was appointed by the town administrator to discuss and review project components.

Action Item

- Meetings with the Advisory Committee were scheduled over the next four (4) months.

- Utilizing existing conditions, community history and natural areas, each meeting looked at another aspect of the program.

- Locations were explored in terms of decision points and directional element considerations.

- After accessing needs, street furniture design versions were explored.

- Public art was looked at as potential focal point and visual markers.

- Local capability for fabrication was reviewed and discussed.

- New and existing public buildings, signage needs were considered

- Colors were tested and explored
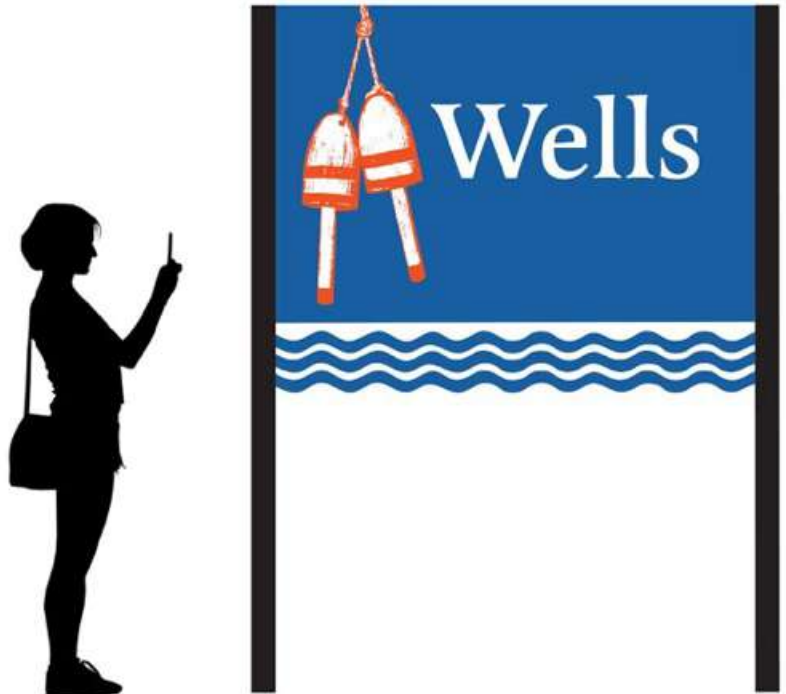
Precedent: Lobster buoys.

Process

- After photo documentation, a comprehensive community design alternative element presentation was made to the advisory committee.

- This was followed up a few weeks later with a presentation of past case studies created and developed for other communities.

- An *Ideation Exercise* followed a few weeks later that thoughtfully looked at ways to describe the "brand" of Wells by words and phrases.

- The Advisory Committee fully participated in this ideation exercise. It fostered a sense of ownership by the participants.

- From the *Ideation,* a number of alternative designs were created. These were then presented to the Advisory Committee for review and refinement.

- Once a couple of design directions were approved, Creative development proceeded for a number of sign element examples including for "beach rules" and a number of studies for street furniture.

- Beach Rules included pre-season regulations that restricted activities that could endanger the threatened Plowing Plover who lays their eggs on the Wells' beaches in the Spring.

- Dog regulations and horseback riding rules were also included in Beach Rules. Symbols were set parallel to word descriptions.

- Photoshop versions were set in place for discussion of signage, street furniture and public art markers.

- Street furniture explorations included themed benches, kiosk, bike racks and trolley stops.

- Design options were developed into families of elements.

- A vendor list was developed based on appropriate fabricator/installers in both Maine and Massachusetts.

- Cost estimates were developed in collaboration with fabricators/installers.

- Public art suggestions were scrutinized by the Advisory Committee.

- A map of locations for sign element placement was created in collaboration with the Advisory Committee.

- A full set of sign element and street furniture pieces fabrication specifications were created for bidding.
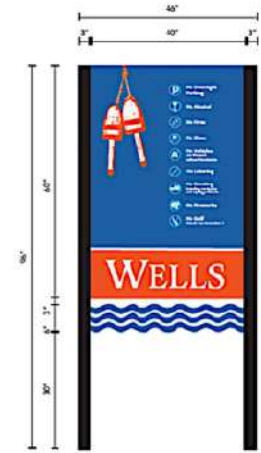
Plowing Plover bird on Wells Beach in the springtime next to the beach rules on the sign.
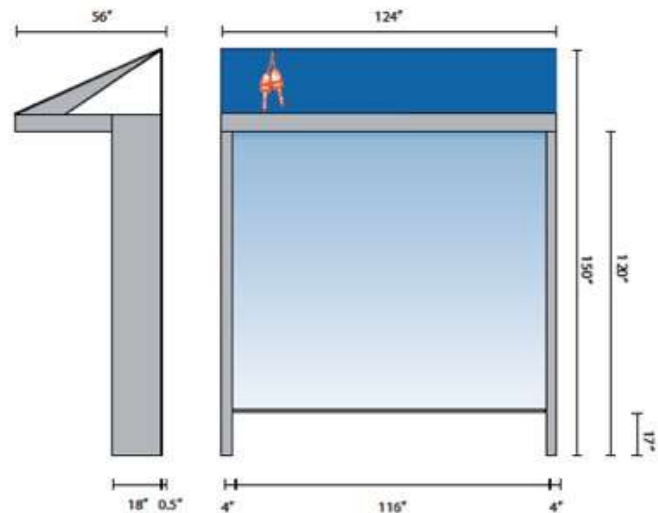
The trolley stop between Ogunquit and Kennebunkport.

Process – Strategic Decisions

- The decision by Town of Wells to start the process

- The appointment of strategic stakeholders to the Advisory Committee representing a cross-section of strategic interests

- Review of commercial sign program sponsored by State of Maine found program uneven, not maintained and detracting from the environment/landscape

- The graphic design chosen by the advisory Committee was two lobster buoys set on the left side of the panel.

- The colors chosen for the system of wayfinding elements were a turquoise and a Cadmium Red.

- Street furniture and gateway/entrance sign elements was to have wavy elements symbolic of the ocean.

- Sculpture was to be made from polished aluminum or steel.

- The designs were shared in the Town administrator's weekly newsletter to residents and businesses.

- A presentation was made to the Wells Select board for discussion and tacit approval of the total design package.

- Recommendations were made for branding to be applied to Wells internal communication including newsletter, stationery, agendas, etc.

- A decision was made to develop elements that connected with the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and significant historic structures in town.

- Discussion was held about a phased implementation of the Wayfinding and signage system.

- A thoughtful decision was made to use Maine-based vendors.

J
INSTRUCTIONAL

GRAPHICS
Dimensions: 40" x 60"
Material: Aluminum panel 2mm thick (or per suggestion of fabricator)
Print: Full color print on adhesive vinyl
All major white vinyl lettering is reflective
Anti-graffiti coating
Colors: Red (Pantone 172C), Blue (Pantone 301C), Light Blue (Pantone 305C)
Font: Latienne Pro Medium, Bicycllette Bold

STRUCTURE
Posts: 3" square posts metal capped
Baked Enamel Finish: Pantone Black C
Paint applied to all sides; must have 8 year guarantee
Sign Fabricator to make recommendations on installation to adhere to MaineDOT standards and specifications
Must verify overall dimensions and orientation in the field
Vendor will make recommendations to affix panel to posts
Footings to be recommended by installer
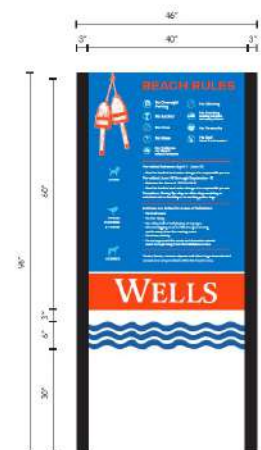
To meet overall activation goals downtown, two locations were targeted for public space events and activities.

Desired Outcomes

- A full set of detailed fabrications specifications was created for vendors to make proposals and to fabricate wayfinding and sign elements as well as street furniture units.

- The wayfinding elements included sculpture as "landmarks" in a Kevin Lynch way that were to serve as external reference points.

- The themed street furniture also had sculptural qualities marrying form and function with aesthetics.

- The notion of the Wells brand was to make the town more of a destination than just a pass-through place on the Southern coast of Maine.

- The Wells brand visually spoke to the hominess of the community and hard-working residents.

- Signs were designed to be durable, easily maintained and cost-effective. Replacement if damaged was easily done as well.

Add-ons

- The "brand" could be applied to many saleable objects such as T-shirts, mugs, sweatshirts, caps, etc.

- Revenue from the sale of these items could pay for the system of wayfinding and sign elements and/or maintenance.

- An expensive, but "brand" reinforcement piece could be a "Beach Pass" for residents. This would replace existing less colorful beach passes.

- Signs recognizing the line between Kennebunkport and Ogunquit and Wells could be strong identifiers for the community.

- A gateway sign leaving the Maine Turnpike and entering Wells would welcome and visually embrace visitors.

- The Wells branding and wayfinding and sign element program is only constrained by budget and community follow-through.
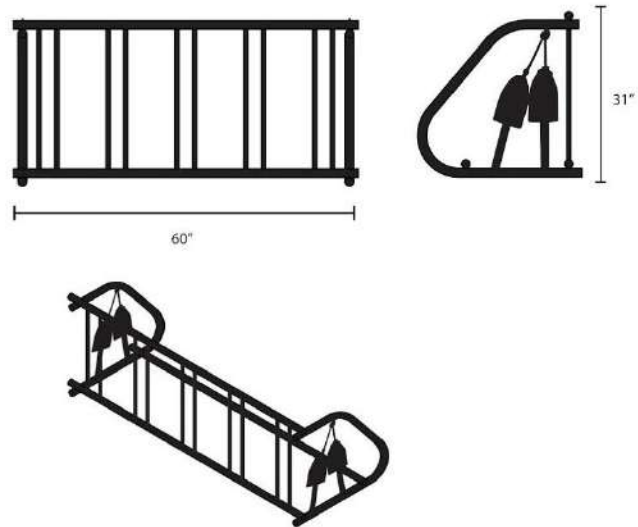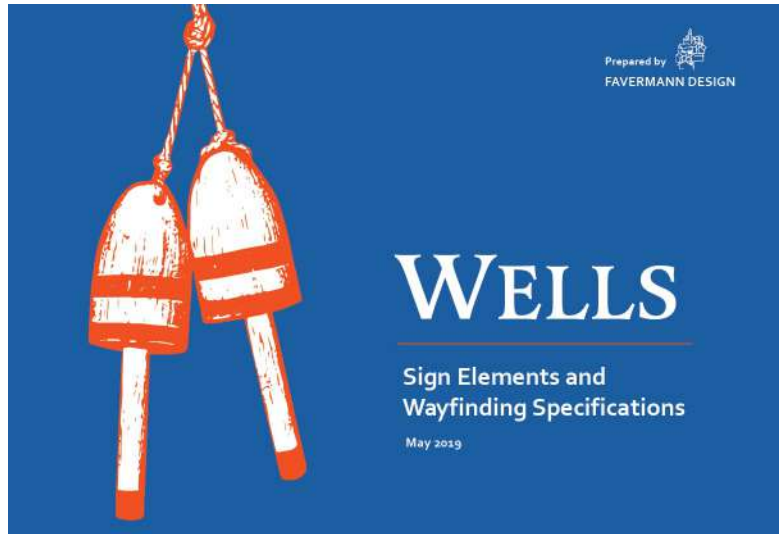
Site Preparation for Lampson Brook Enterprise Zone

Category

Public Realm

Location

Belchertown Center

Origin

Town of Belchertown, Belchertown Community Alliance, and Lampson Brook Farm Board.

Budget & Sources of Funding

High (>$200,000)

MA Department of Agriculture (MDAR)
Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program (awards up to $500,000)
This program will fund projects that support local food production and equitable access to food. It would cover the cost of equipment, vehicles, business planning, construction, and renovations associated with an agriculture or food-processing related use of the Enterprise Zone.

Massachusetts Food Ventures Program (awards up to $300,000 with 50% match requirement)
The program funds projects that will advance the MA Food Ventures program to increase access to healthy, affordable food options and improve economic opportunities for low to moderate income communities. Most of the desired uses for the Enterprise Zone, such as local food production or processing, fit the criteria for this grant program, so long as low-moderate income communities are served.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts One Stop for Growth

Community Planning Grants (project limit is $75,000)
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
A Community Planning Grant may be used for Zoning Review and Updates, which could include assistance with rezoning the Enterprise Zone parcel.

Site Readiness Program
MassDevelopment (awards range from $50,000 to $1m.)
Site Readiness grants can be used for demolition of buildings and construction of site-related upgrades, as well as pre-permitting and permitting.

District Local Technical Assistance Grant
Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and DHCD
Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies and may be used for planning projects. Typically, zoning review and revisions can be funded through this source.

ARPA
The potential for use of local ARPA funds for this project should be examined by the Town of Belchertown.

Timeframe

Short (<5 years)

Risks

Medium – The project depends on developer interest and state funding sources.

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of Pre-Proposals for development and number of responses to final RFP
- Funding for demolition obtained
- Successful site preparation to "shovel ready" status

Partners & Resources

- Lampson Brook Farm Board
- New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI)
- Belchertown EDIC
- ConservationWorks, LLC
- MA Department of Agriculture (MDAR)
- MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
- MA Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) – property owner
- UMass Isenberg School of Management
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

This property offers the potential to complement existing economic development, housing, and community space initiatives taking place on the adjacent Carriage Grove property. It is a largely vacant 10-acre parcel that can be used for commercial purposes, and any uses are required by recent legislation to be sustainable, natural-resource based enterprises, ideally with provision for public access. This type of use would be highly compatible with the current public health restrictions and limitations on many indoor activities.

Action Item

Next steps to further development of this project include several concurrent activities. Some steps may depend on the results of other investigations. The deadline for disposition of the property is currently January 2022 but is expected to be extended for one more year. Please see Process section for more details on the Action Steps below:

1) Assess potential uses for the Enterprise Zone site, using results of the Lampson Brook Farm Management Plan, Pre-Proposals, and community input.
2) Assess site preparation needs, including building demolition, building repair, and environmental compliance.
3) Develop cost estimates for repair, demolition, and 21E process; apply for grant funding; and complete site preparation.
4) Seek developer who will partner with Lampson Brook Board to create desirable and compatible use that also conforms with Town requirements.

Process

Continue Detailed Site Evaluation
1) Work with EEA to complete land survey and legal description of Enterprise Zone parcel.
2) Complete historic and structural appraisal of the 18 existing buildings to make final determination about which ones are salvageable.
3) Complete cost estimates for 21E Assessment, site remediation if necessary, and demolition or repair of deteriorated buildings (at this time, 11 of the former dairy farm buildings are considered beyond repair).
4) Conduct 21E Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to determine whether the property contains hazardous materials. (Confirm with DCAMM whether previous testing has occurred).

Continue Planning for Future Uses of the Property
1) Continue to develop Management Plan for the entire Lampson Brook property, with the help of ConservationWorks.
2) With assistance from Isenberg School of Management, complete survey of 250 farm operations within a 20-mile radius to determine interest in a possible regional food processing center, commercial kitchen for value-added production, or related activity.
3) Work with the Isenberg School of Management to compile and evaluate Requests for Pre-Proposals for the purchase of the 10-acre Enterprise Zone parcel. Proposals were due on 9/21/21.
4) Determine need for zoning amendments and lot frontage/access requirements as well as potential site plan reviews and compliance with other regulatory items.

Simultaneously Proceed with Outreach and Negotiation with Potential Developers
1) Negotiate with potential interested developers of the site, whether through pre-proposals or other means.
2) Finally, advertise the property for sale through a competitive bid process and convey to interested and appropriate party, as provided for in the amended Lampson Brook Farm legislation.

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

PUBLIC
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant   Emily Keys Innes, AICP, LEED AP ND, Innes Associates Ltd.

Location   Brockton, MA

Elliot Street

Puffer Playground

Riverside Street

Elliot Street

Boyden Street

Potential Connection to Elliot Street

Future Crosswalk Improvement

Single-Family neighborhood

Moody Street

Commercial Flex

Commercial Flex

Trout Brook

Neighborhood Park

Commercial Flex

Stormwater Management Landscape

North Manchester Street

Tabor Avenue

Williams Avenue

Parker Street

Potential Public Safety Building

Multifamily Residential

Multifamily Residential

Court Street

Future Intersection Improvement

Tyler Street

Mixed-Use: Residential, First Floor Retail and Office

Hunt Street

Manchester Street

Future Development Area

Brockton Area Transit Centre

Brockton Police Department

Future Development Area

Centre Street

Brockton Station

Plymouth Street

Future Intersection Improvement

Snow Park

Commuter Rail

Image Courtesy of the Brockton Redevelopment Authority and Hartman

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

PUBLIC REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

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

Location

Brockton, MA

Origin	Downtown/Trout Brook Redevelopment Plan
Budget	Medium ($50,000-$200,000) – Operating Funds, MassDevelopment Technical Assistance
Timeframe	Medium (5-10 years) – Property acquisition and disposition; public infrastructure improvements; private development
Risk	Medium – Risk Political, legal
Key Performance Indicators	Linear feet of multimodal trails, sidewalk, bicycle lanes, roads, utilities, installed. Square feet of open space, recreation, non-residential uses developed. Units of market-rate and affordable housing developed; types of housing developed.
Partners & Resources	Redevelopment Authority; Municipal Boards and Committees; Residents, Property owners, Employers, Institutions; Municipal Planning Staff; Department of Housing and Community Development

Diagnostic

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted existing inequities in access to jobs, housing, public open space, broadband, safe non-vehicular transit, and many other elements of our built environments. By combining public and private investment into a single strategic plan, a municipality with a redevelopment authority can address some of these inequities through three steps: acquiring underutilized land; implementing public infrastructure improvements; and disposing of the land to developers who must meet specific criteria for redevelopment. This process allows communities to incorporate long-term changes to address challenges from the last year.

In Brockton, the criteria for redevelopment grew out of the goals for the planning process, including the continued revitalization of the Downtown, which is adjacent to the redevelopment area; connecting existing isolated neighborhoods to the Downtown, regional public transit, and local playgrounds and parks; addressing repetitive loss from the flooding of Trout Brook; and using Trout Brook as an organizing and linking component of the plan.

Action Item

The acquisition of underutilized land will allow the Brockton Redevelopment Authority to reparcelize the land for four distinct purposes:

- Creating a central multiuse path along Trout Brook that links the existing neighborhood to two other parks in the area and a proposed new neighborhood playground.

- Extending local streets to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to public transit and the Downtown.

- Creating flood storage areas to address repetitive flood losses from the impaired brook.

- Developing a mix of uses, including commercial flex, multifamily, and small single-family to provide space for local jobs and a variety of housing types to meet different community needs.

Other action items include the following:

- Modifying the zoning ordinance to meet the redevelopment goals of the plan.

- Applying for grants and other funding sources to address the public components of the plan.

Process

Implementation of this plan includes the following steps:

- Modify the existing zoning to incorporate new uses and dimensional standards that reflect the proposed and existing uses.

- Acquire underutilized land.

- Develop an RFP for the acquired land incorporating criteria for the required improvements.

- Develop design and engineering plans for the multi-use path, flood storage, and new street layout.

- Dispose of the land according to specific criteria for the redevelopment of that land.

- Apply for grants to address public infrastructure component of the plan. Other funding sources are outlined in the plan and include state and federal grants as well as District Improvement Financing.

Develop a Façade, Signage, and Physical Improvement Program

Category

Private Realm

Location

Belchertown Center

Origin

LRRP Committee

Budget & Sources of Funding

Medium Budget ($50,000-$200,000)

In addition to municipal funds, the following are appropriate sources:
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 sign upgrades when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts One Stop for Growth
Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (project limit $25,000) Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which would include creating the program, developing the design guidelines, and providing conceptual designs for improvements, depending on the complexity of the project. An MDI grant may be sufficient for the full project unless the community is looking for a more extensive set of illustrations or a significant public engagement process.

Community Planning Grants (project limit $25,000-$75,000)
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
A Community Planning Grant may be used for Zoning Review and Updates, which can include the sign code and design guidelines if they are part of the municipality's zoning bylaws or ordinance.

District Local Technical Assistance Grant
Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and DHCD
Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies and may be used for planning projects. Each RPA has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals.

All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required.

Timeframe

Short-Term (1-5 Years)

Risks

Medium Risk. Risks include:
- Relatively slow implementation.
- Coordination between multiple parties (tenants and property owners).
- Somewhat diffuse overall impacts that may be challenging to measure comprehensively.

Key Performance Indicators

- Uptake of program by tenants and/or property owners
- Private dollars leveraged
- Change in vacancy rates or rents
- Increased sales or customer traffic

Partners & Resources

Property Owners, Small Business Owners

Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Belchertown does not have explicit challenges with the physical exterior of businesses, but has only a modest number of businesses with high quality, comprehensive signage, window displays, outdoor displays, lighting etc. Investments in this area might reflect an area of growth, rather than mitigation of deficiencies. In particular, attention to liminal spaces where the public and private realm meet outdoors may encourage engagement among prospective customers hesitant to move indoors.

Modest investments in landscaping and paint add to the pedestrian experience

Candidate for improvement

Action Item

The town will support commercial property owners and tenants in adding vibrancy, activity and texture that increases customer engagement and beautifies the area. Specifically, the town will make some combination of grants and/or loans available for non-structural improvements to the exterior of commercial properties.

Process

1. **Refine key program goals**. Possible areas of focus include beautification, customer engagement, public health support (e.g. outdoor dining), community branding, or public space activation.
2. **Engage tenants and property owners to determine:**
   a. Overall interest
   b. Desired investments
   c. Preference between loans and grants
   d. If coordination may be advantageous (e.g. within one shopping plaza among multiple tenants)
   e. Degree of comfort with bureaucratic obligations (applications, reporting etc.)

Recommendation: a survey in the near-term highlighting the Town's need to expend ARPA funds may encourage responses.

Analysis

3. From business and property owner feedback, identify ideal levels of individual expenditures, and priority areas of investment. Possibilities include signage, facade, outdoor display systems, permanent or temporary landscaping (flowers), lighting, outdoor dining, window displays, etc.
4. Consider existing Belchertown regulations and laws, including any sign codes, lighting regulations, etc.
5. Also consider what level of investment might activate building permit requirements, and associated ADA compliance regulations.
6. Discuss objectives regarding duration of impact, and implied obligation of maintenance. Possibilities could range from seasonal (flowers, displays) to many years (signage).
7. Consider the funding structures. The program, once established, could 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. Another option is to forgive loans after a certain time if the improvements are maintained. Consider risk tolerance for non-payment and administrative responsibilities regarding payment collections, etc.

Recommendation: consider a two-track program, with small grants available for immediate investment (flowers, outdoor or window displays, etc.) and loans provided for longer-term capital investments.

Focused ornamental lighting beautifies this storefront at all hours via somewhat substantial investment.

Very small investments enhance the visual experience and create a welcome space.

**Process
(cont'd)**

8. 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).
9. 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.

Implementation

10. If the property owner interest is limited, 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.
11. Be intentional about highlighting initial recipients and visal results of investments in order to encourage broader participation.

Best Practice

Ashland, Massachusetts is conducting a Sign and Façade Improvement Program that provides a 50% match up to $5,000. This program is a revolving loan fund, but this can also be done with grants. The preferred target area is high-traffic streets but it is open to all businesses in Ashland.

The program includes building improvements (accessibility, signs, awnings, painting) and site improvements (parking lots, planters, landscaping).

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

Expanded Food Truck Program

Category

Tenant Mix

Location

Belchertown Center

Origin

Town LRRP Committee, Belchertown Community Alliance

Budget & Sources of Funding

Programming: Low Budget (under $50k)

Capital Investment: TBD

Potential Programming Sources include:

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds could cover assistance with potential program management support.

Commonwealth Places
This program might fund physical investments. May include a crowd-funding component, complementing current program popularity.

Timeframe

Short-Term (1-5 Years)

Risks

Medium Risk. Risks include:
- Unpredictable volunteer time resources
- Natural churn of individual food purveyors
- Regional competition for food purveyors
- Unpredictability of possible venue transition

Key Performance Indicators

- Volume of food trucks and customers
- Consistency of food trucks and customers
- Cultural Council time invested (keeping it to a manageable rate)
- Overall sales

Partners & Resources

Belchertown Cultural Council, Food Truck Purveyors, Consultant and/or Manager TBD, Sponsors, etc.

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

Local surveys and other community input suggests an unmet demand for a wider range of eating options. These include local consumers reporting travel to other communities for dining opportunities, and extremely high demand at earlier food truck events.

Experience with earlier Food Truck events also suggests a disconnect between high customer demand and purveyor response, implying opportunities for increasing efficiency.

Additionally, Belchertown's existing Food Truck Friday model is interpreted by some stakeholders to pose a challenge to other businesses.

Action Item

Belchertown will sustainably grow its Food Truck program, offering more consumer choice, business predictability and administrative efficiency.

Depending on potential capital investments in new parks facilities, this initiative might be located in one or multiple venues.

While that prospective investment is outside the scope of the LRRP program, any new permanent structures constructed with food trucks strongly in mind should prioritize restroom facilities, power, and protection from the elements, including precipitation and wind.

Process

1. In close consultation with Belchertown Cultural Council, clarify and prioritize goals of program expansion. Possibilities include:
   a. Increased food options, measured by frequency & cuisine diversity, regardless of purveyor-type (storefront vs. truck).
   b. Additional permanent food purveyors (storefront)
   c. Administrative efficiency
   d. Event participation & community spirit (including support of ancillary stakeholders -performers, vendors etc.)
   e. Spacial activation
   f. Public revenue
   g. Reduced conflicts with other businesses

2. Consider alternative models, including the following recommendations.

   a. **Administrative Reorganization.** As currently constituted, the program requires the Cultural Council to manage both operations and outreach, which combine to make a challenging burden. The addition of **paid management support** may allow for more efficient operation. Specifically, we recommend the following division of labor:

   Core Operations should be implemented by a Town Economic Development Project Manager, or an event production vendor TBD (likely engaged via RFP). **Community Outreach** could remain in the purview of the Cultural Council, consistent with their role as community leaders.

   The precise split of these areas of responsibility should be examined in detail, but in this approach, paid management would focus primarily on food purveyor engagement & support, venue management and ancillary services. Cultural Council Volunteers would focus primarily on promotion, partner outreach, (including performers and non-food vendors) and ancillary revenue (Sponsors, apparel, etc.)

   Separating these responsibilities means investment (in the form of paid management) will be focused on growth and sustainability (in the form of increased truck participation).

   In the case of events, day-of volunteer support will still be required.

   b. **Vendor Retention & Sales Growth.** A key challenge to the program has been engagement and retention of a variety of purveyors. Lack of reliability is also a factor, in part due to competition from other vendor opportunities. In order to overcome these challenges, we recommend a focus on experimentation, led by a paid individual or management entity. All strategies should be posed to vendors before attempting. Possible approaches include:
      i. Offering "non-event" slots to a smaller number of purveyors, likely on less competitive days of the week, possibly for several weeks in a row.
      ii. Rebating vendor fees (avoid waiving fees)
      iii. Pre-selling event tickets which could be convertible to food vouchers, demonstrating guaranteed customer interest.
      iv. Streamlining permitting as much as possible compared to other communities.
      v. Facilitate referrals to private events
      vi. Offering or facilitating parking during non-business hours

**Process
(cont'd)**

    c. **Event Operations**: It may be possible to add efficiencies to smooth both customer and vendor experiences. Possible approaches include :
        i. **Queue Management.** By utilizing small paper menus with check-boxes, purveyors could minimize decision paralysis and expedite ordering
        ii. **Order-ahead technology** allows customers to order and pay in advance. This could be limited to the first hour of an event, and possibly be paired to exclusive specials with limited availability.
        iii. **Mobile payment** and "line-busting" approaches that allow orders to be accepted away from the primary order window/area.
        iv. **Transparent customer communication.** As part of both event promotion and ordering, set realistic expectations on food production times.

        Note: most or all of these approaches would likely require volunteer support on the day of an event.

        Additionally, it may be eventually possible for some of these strategies to receive centralized support, like mobile payment technology.

    d. **Administrative Revenue Generation**
        i. Grow Sponsorships. For the existing event model which includes extensive promotion and attendance, current sponsorship rates are low. It is recommended to define more explicit sponsorship tiers, including a "lead" sponsorship roles of at least $2,500 (target of 3 per season) with corresponding recognition in promotions and onsite.

        Lower-tier sponsors should remain closer to the $100-$300 rate, including significant food investment. For example a $250 sponsorship might include $100 in date-specific food credit, deliverable to vendors. This would fortify "guaranteed" vendor income and drive overall turnout.

        ii. Consider a "50/50 raffle", possibly tied to aforementioned pre-sold tickets.

Best Practice

A private business owner (of a pre-existing food truck) in West Hartford, CT has created The Gastropark (https://www.thegastropark.com/). Open Wednesday through Sunday, the Gastropark features rotating food trucks and an indoor bar. This investment followed town zoning changes allowing for food trucks.

In Wells, ME a bakery owner has developed a permanent Food Truck lot in their parking lot, growing from three trucks in 2017 to 10 in 2021 (along with an outdoor covered beer garden). https://cadfoodtrucks.com/

Key lessons for success and sustainability include:

- Profit focused coordinator with hospitality experience
- Emphasis on low-key, family-friendly experience
- Beer and/or alcohol sales

Locally, The City of Chicopee recently opened a small multi-use space in an undeveloped lot with food trucks as one potential use in mind.