

DRAFT

Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Great Road Corridor
Revitalization

Acton, MA



Acknowledgments

DRAFT



Acton, MA

Kristen Guichard, MPA, AICP, Planning Director
Kaila Sauer, Assistant Planner



Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce



Lead Consultant BETA Group, Inc

Jeff Maxtutis, Plan Facilitator
Charlie Creagh, Project Planner



Subject Matter Expert Neighborways Design

Jessica Mortell, Principal and Senior Placemaker



Subject Matter Expert Innes Associates Consultants

Emily Innes, Founder



Subject Matter Expert Mondoforma

Dion Kenney, Chief Operating Officer

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



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

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

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

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

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

Public Meeting Attendees

Ann Corcoran
David Shoemaker
Derrick Chin
Franny Osman
Kim Kastens
Hart Millett
John Raguin
Larry Kenah
Catherine Usoff
Bob Puffer
Janet Adachi
Jo Karen

Public Outreach Participants

Lester Gould
Kim Walsh
Elaina Khalin
Kimberly Hurwitz
Ann Chang
Willa Breese

LRRP Working Group

Derrick Chin, Planning Board and Economic Development Committee
Qin Pang, Town Engineer
Larry Kenah, Economic Development Committee
Cindy McCullough, Owner, One on One Spa Indulgence
David Martin, Select Board
Ray Yacouby, Planning Board
Corey York, DPW Director
John Mangiaratti, Town Manager
Kristen Guichard, Planning Director and Zoning Enforcement Officer

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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



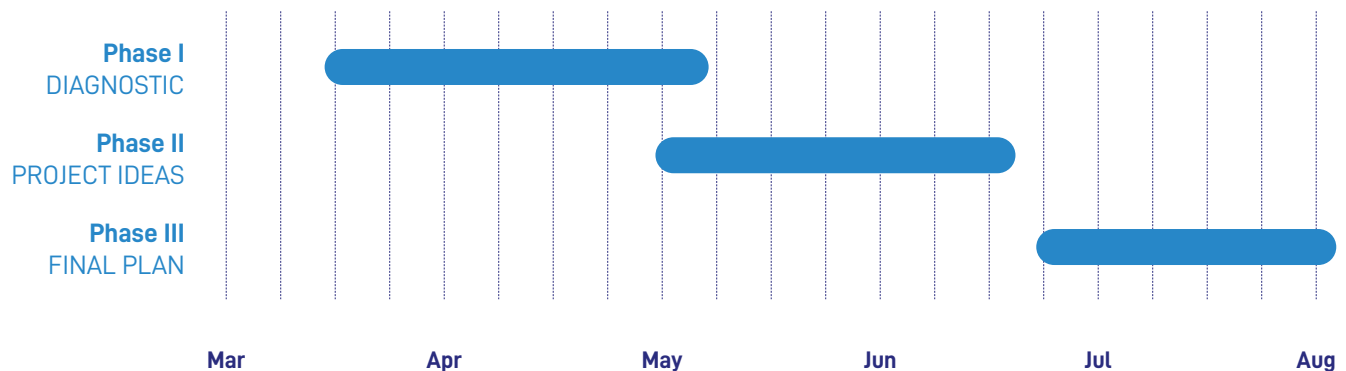
1.0 Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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.

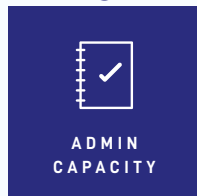
Each Rapid Recovery Plan was developed across three phases between February-August 2021 (extended to October 8th, 2021.) Phase 1 - Diagnostic, Phase 2- Project Recommendations, Phase 3 - Plan.



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?

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

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

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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

2.0 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Great Road in Acton has Great Businesses that are Open for Business

Acton, Massachusetts is a predominantly bedroom community located west of Boston along Route 2. Great Road is an active commercial and retail corridor traveling diagonally across the town from Route 2 along the southern edge heading north to the Littleton Town line.

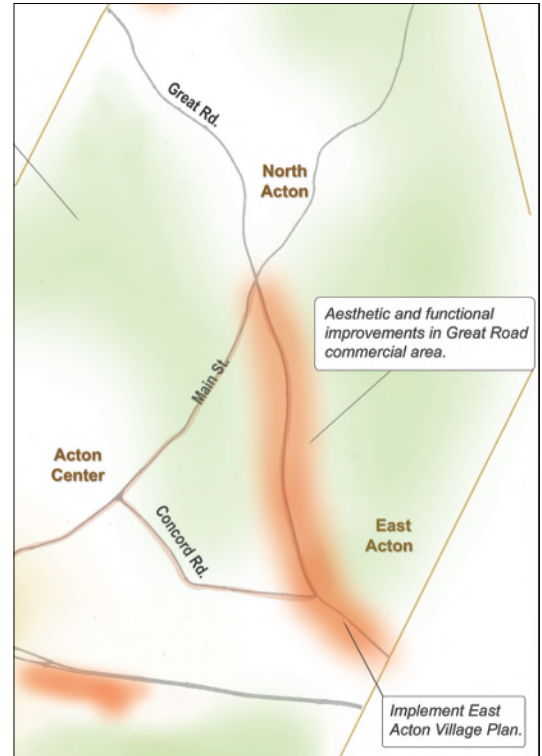
Acton was incorporated in 1735 as a town utilizing the open town meeting system still in place today. Settlers utilized sawmills, gristmills, the manufacturing of barrels, pencils, and woolen clothing to sustain their livelihoods. In the middle 1800s the introduction of the railroads caused the town to grow rapidly, and the railbeds remain today as the locations of the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Known for its apples, many active orchards were replaced with housing in the early and middle 1900s.

Approximately 80% of homes and businesses in Acton use private on-site septic tanks. Larger apartment and condo buildings typically use private sewers and private small-scale treatment plants. South Acton is the only location with a municipal sewer system. Completed in 2001, the sewer system serves roughly 10% of the Town. Previous planning efforts have identified Great Road as an area in need of "aesthetic and functional improvements" in the commercial areas. The project team acknowledges that Great Road is in need of some aesthetic and functional updates, including traffic calming, additional pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, signage, and the possibility of municipal sewer throughout. Acton is in the midst of a strong recovery from COVID-19 shutdowns as businesses reopen and people take to the rail trails.

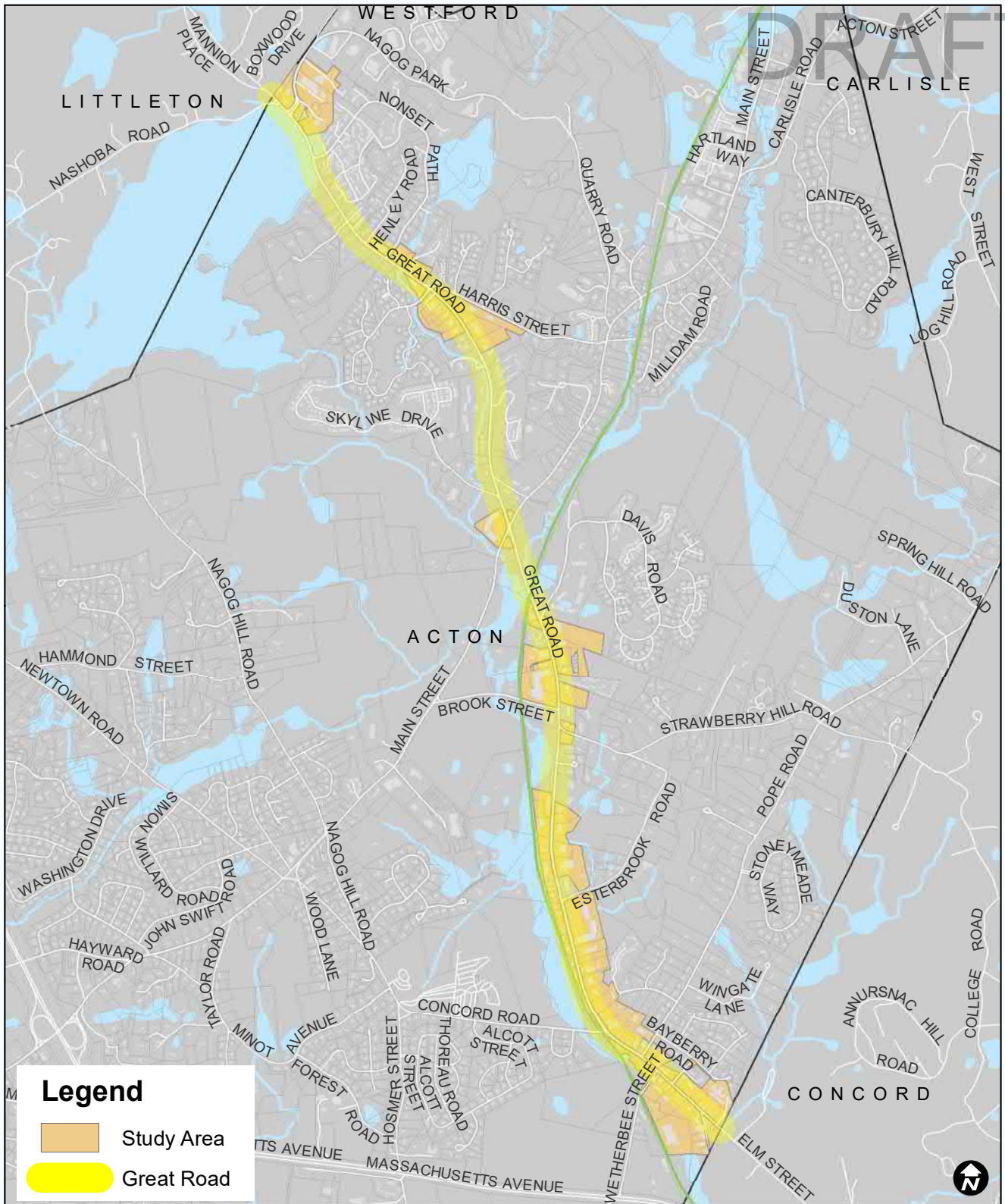
To ensure that Acton has a strong post COVID-19 recovery, the project team is recommending the following projects be implemented:

- **Rail Trail Wayfinding:** The Town should work with the MBTA (land owner), the Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and a professional consultant to develop a variety of wayfinding signage options that promote area businesses just off of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
- **Great Road Wayfinding:** The Town should additionally generate a variety of wayfinding signage options to orient Great Road pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists to the many restaurants and retail options along Great Road.
- **Municipal Sewer Expansion:** To bolster economic development and encourage the filling of vacant storefronts and commercial buildings, the Town should examine the feasibility of a municipal sewer system expansion for Great Road commercial areas.
- **Shared Marketing:** The Town should work closely with the Chamber of Commerce to create a program for Great Road business owners to learn about how to expand web-based presence and sales and to collaborate on marketing opportunities to learn how cross-market for new businesses.

A map of the Great Road study area in Acton can be seen on the following page.



The Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan includes a destination heat map with recommendations for improvements along Great Road



A map of the study area -- Great Road in Acton from the Concord town line to the Littleton town line

3.0 Diagnostic

Key Findings



The Town's customer base is older

The largest demographic age group by percentage of the total population is the 55 - 64 years age group which makes up 17% of residents. The median household income for the Town is just over \$145,000.

The Town's Comprehensive Community Plan includes demographic forecasts. The Road Map document makes the case that the senior population will continue to grow, people will have fewer children, and school enrollment will decline. Therefore, there is an emphasis on developing a mix of housing with fewer bedrooms per unit that meets the needs of seniors. Key to the success of a growing senior population is conducting planning activities today that encourage those folks to comfortably age in place. Often, project recommendations that allow folks to age in place also encourage economic development and steady retail and commercial success. These projects include sidewalk, path, and trail connections, signage, shade trees, and a comfortable and inviting area of businesses, goods, and services clustered close together near housing.

DEMOGRAPHICS	TOWN OF ACTON	STUDY AREA
Population	22,120	188
At Least Some College (or higher)	91%	85%
Median Income	\$145,110	\$110,368
Age (0 - 18)	25%	19%
Age (19 - 54)	42%	44%
Age (55 +)	33%	38%
Race (Non-White)	35%	33%

Source: US Census Data, American Community Survey 2019, retrieved using ArcGIS Pro 2.7.0



Perceptions about the existing physical environment

The consultant team examined the condition of the public realm during field work analysis. See the table at right for the study area cumulative score of each of the elements examined during the field visit. Acton's business owner survey received 31 responses, or 16% of the 190 storefronts examined by the consultant team in the study area. The business owner survey revealed that the primary area of dissatisfaction among business owners and merchants was the condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs. The business owner survey included a question about possible ways to improve the physical environment, atmosphere, and access for customers and employees. The top rated options include:

- Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks
- Improvement in safety and cleanliness

The field analysis team observed strong customer activity at Great Woods Plaza, Gould Plaza, and some of the other retail plazas along Great Road. The team also observed many people enjoying leisure and recreational activities including jogging, walking, and bicycling. At a high level, it appears that the existing public realm environment appears to meet the needs of business owners, employees, and customers. Although, the team observed a lack of public outdoor seating and public or private outdoor dining options. Additionally, our public outreach indicated that there is interest in additional public transportation options, way finding signage, and filling vacant storefronts and commercial spaces.

PUBLIC REALM ELEMENTS	CUMULATIVE SCORE
Lighting	NA / Fail
Wayfinding & Signage	NA / Fail
Sidewalk	B
Street Trees & Benches	NA / Fail
Roadbed & Crosswalks	B



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Great Road businesses were strongly impacted by COVID-19 shutdowns

The project team observed a high number of vacancies along Great Road in Acton. Approximately 18 individual first-floor storefront or office spaces were vacant at the time of the field audit (last week of April, 2021).

See the map on the following pages that show the location and number of vacancies examined in Acton. The first page is the northern portion of the study area and the second page is the southern portion of the study area.

Similar to the scoring process used for the public realm, elements of the private realm were also scored during the field work analysis. See the table at right for the study area cumulative score of each of the elements examined during the field visit.

PRIVATE REALM ELEMENTS	CUMULATIVE SCORE
Lighting	C
Facade	B
Awning	NA / FAIL
Signage	C
Outdoor Display & Dining	NA / FAIL
Window	C



ADMIN CAPACITY

Committee advocate role

Multiple committees exist that provide analysis and advice to Town officials and work closely with business owners and the public to generate thoughtful recommendations. Committees in Acton are designated by the select board and often have representatives from other committee.

The sewer sub committee worked hard to bring sewers in South Acton to a town vote. Land was purchased on Adams Street and a sewer treatment system was built serving South Acton. Some homes, businesses, and schools in the area had been experiencing sewage effluent overflowing their septic and leech field systems prior to the construction of sewers. Although the south Acton sewer vote did pass, a deal was struck that requires any future betterment be paid for by users, and not with Town tax revenues.

This report recommends that a committee be formed for Great Road sewer analysis. Specifically, the Town selectmen should form a committee to plan sewerage along Great Road. Items to be critically analyzed include the option to only offer sewerage services to commercial plazas and require tie-ins for commercial properties, vs. allowing any residential property who wishes to tie in to have the option of doing so. Additionally, examining package treatment plants is recommended. (Package treatment plants are pre-fabricated treatment facilities used to treat wastewater in small communities or on individual properties).



Legend

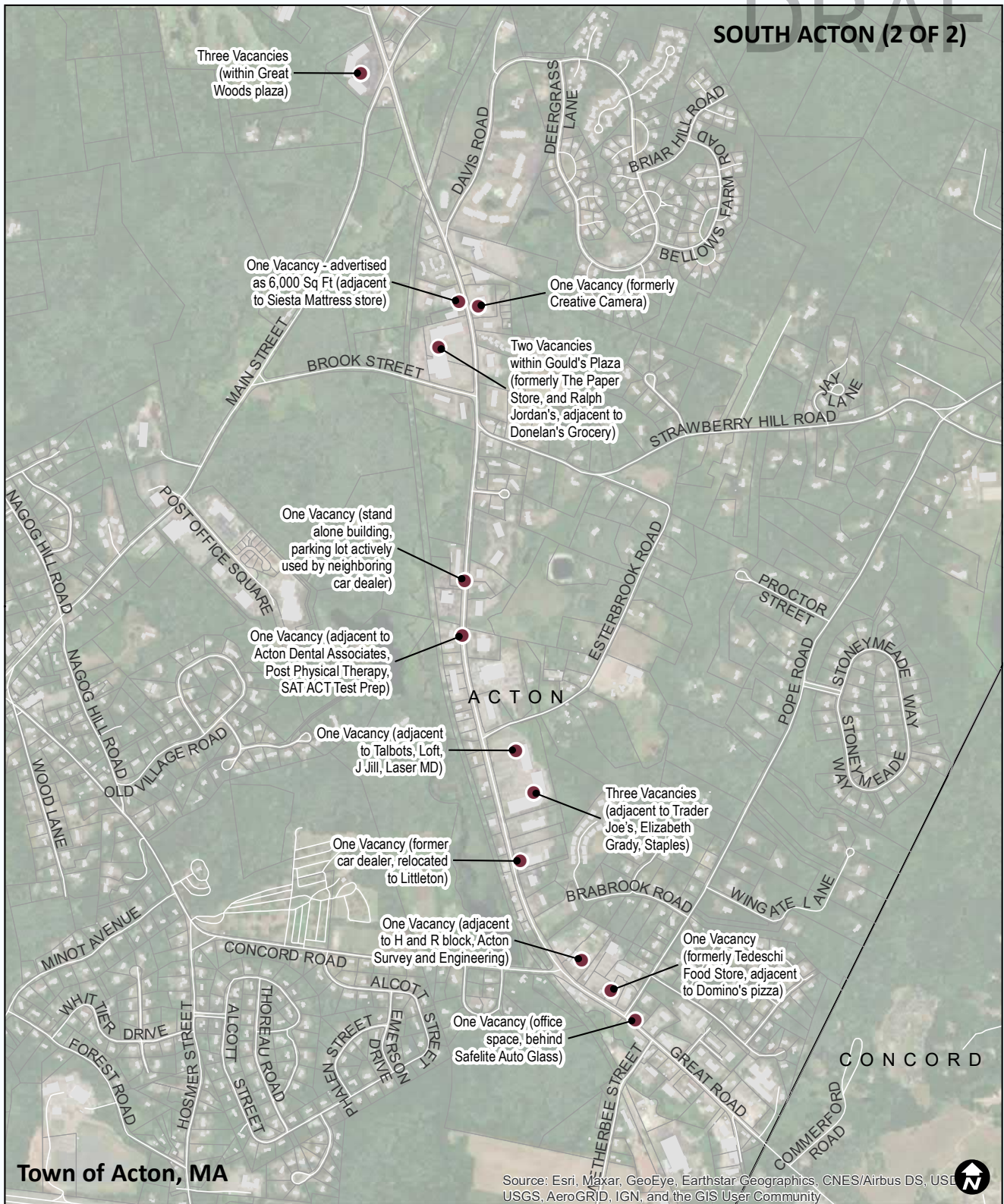
Great Road Acton - Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program

BETA

- Vacant Storefronts in Acton (May 2021)

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

A map showing vacant storefronts examined during fieldwork in April and May, 2021



Legend

Great Road Acton - Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program



- Vacant Storefronts in Acton (May 2021)

A map showing vacant storefronts examined during fieldwork in April and May, 2021

0 0.25 0.5 Miles



EXISTING VACANCIES + SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS VENTURES

Great Road businesses rely on locals and commuters heading to Route 2 and I-495 for a large portion of their business revenue. There are approximately 18 vacant store fronts or commercial office spaces along Great Road, many a result of COVID-related economic downturn, shutdowns, and the dramatic decline in daily automobile commuters.

"The Town launched a COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program through the CARES Act to assist businesses with wage coverage, rent, loss of inventory and other fixed costs not already compensated by other federal COVID-19 financial assistance or relief programs. Even with the [grant program] effort, the Town has still lost businesses; others are still struggling, and will in the foreseeable year without proactive investment in Acton's economic infrastructure." - *Quote from the Acton LRRP Planning Application.*

In concert with the Town Planning Director, the project team has developed a flyer that is proposed to be installed on vacant storefront windows. The flyer includes a few sentences about the LRRP program, a map that identifies the vacant storefronts along Great Road, and QR code to a survey that asks locals to provide input on what types of businesses they would like to see in storefronts along Great Road. The Town has agreed to further develop the draft flyer, generate a digital survey, and update the QR code to link to the future survey questions following the conclusion of the LRRP planning project process. (See the following page for a draft version of the empty storefront window flyer.)

Some of the signs advertising available commercial spaces along Great Road in Acton



GREAT ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

The study area would benefit from a variety of physical and aesthetic improvements to foster a sense of place and create a welcoming environment for visitors. The following list of bullets highlight key issues the team found during our field analysis:

- Nagog Park is not pedestrian friendly and includes almost no signage directing visitors to the office park behind the businesses
- Traveling south from Acorn Park, the sidewalk ends abruptly at the Sport Loft
- There is no crosswalk at the intersection of Harrison Road at Great Road
- There is no sidewalk in front of Niro Eye Care and the Music Maker School
- There is a dead-end sidewalk in front of Alpha Cars
- There is no sidewalk at the Dunkin Donuts, Chrysler-Dodge-Ram dealer (and would compliment the rail trail connection)
- There is no sidewalk at the Holy Grail sports bar, bike shop, or pizza place
- The plaza that includes Colonial Spirits would benefit from the addition of sidewalks and shade trees
- The Subway restaurant and adjacent buildings have generous curb cuts that encourage high speed turns, this plaza area would benefit from access management and a reduction in the width of and number of curb cuts
- Trader Joe's area plaza has inadequate pedestrian connections to the sidewalks along Great Road and to neighboring side streets and plazas
- The right-of-way along Great Road is wider in the vicinity of the Trader Joe's plaza, but has few to no street trees and a very narrow sidewalk buffer
- Gould Plaza (Donelan's grocery store area) includes a crosswalk that does not connect to a sidewalk at the Coach Estates apartment complex

Although not an exhaustive list, the above transportation- and visitor-experience related issues include sidewalk gaps and plaza aesthetics that if corrected would create a more comfortable walking / bicycling / visitor environment at the various businesses examined during the field study.

VACANT COMMERCIAL SPACE SURVEY

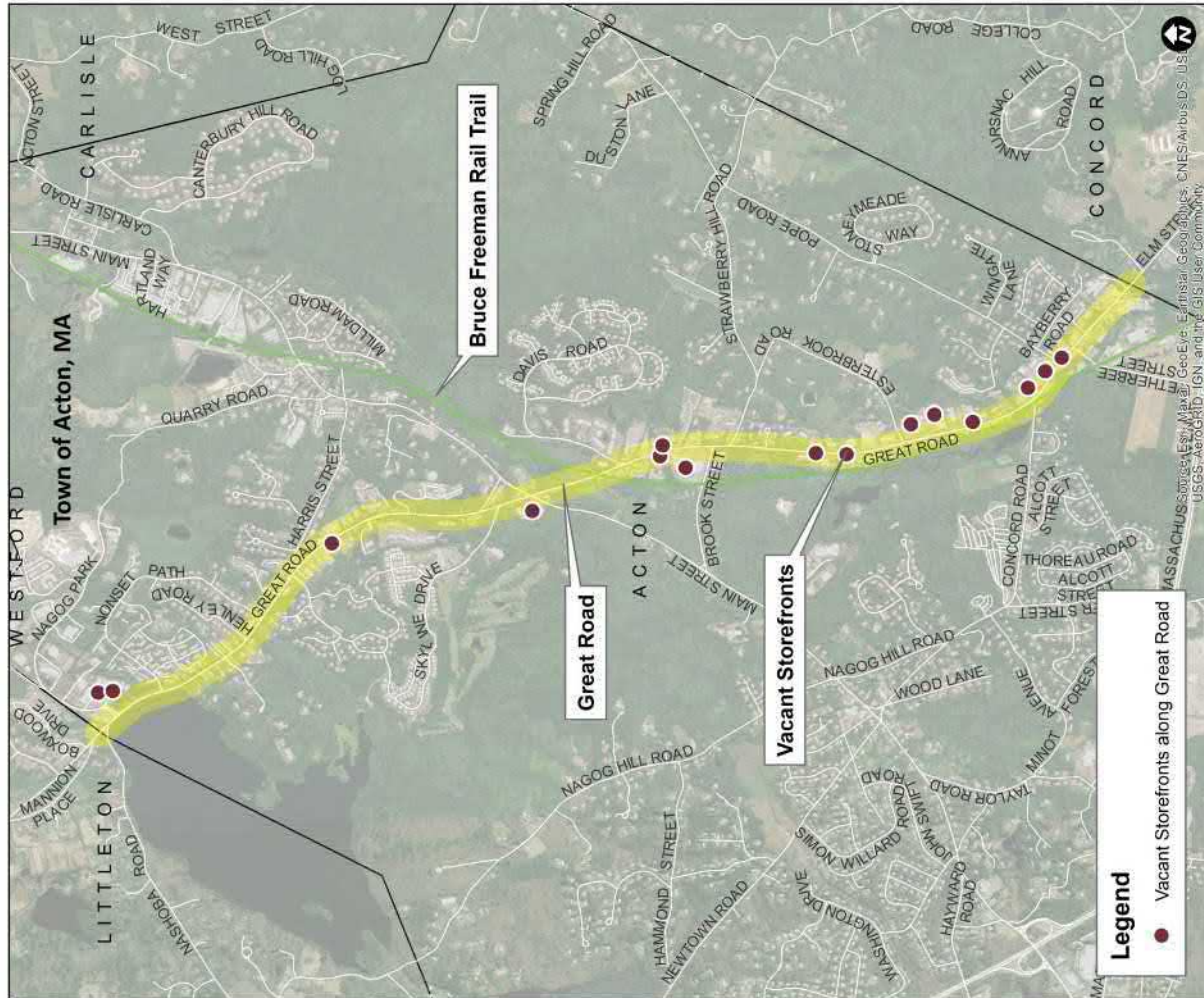
The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has sponsored the Local Rapid Recovery Program. This program has identified priority projects along Great Road in Acton for businesses and residents to emerge stronger from COVID-19 related shutdowns through Economic Opportunity.

The Town of Acton wants YOUR OPINION on what you would like to see fill these vacant store fronts. A grocery store? A gym? A restaurant? Scan the QR code with your smartphone to fill out the survey today.



QR code goes here (TBD)

SCAN ME



A draft of the proposed vacant storefront flyer. This flyer will show vacant storefront locations and ask folks to provide input on what types of businesses they'd like to support along Great Road

For more information contact: Kristin Guichard, Planning Director and Zoning Enforcement Officer
Phone: (978) 929-6631 | kguichard@actonma.gov | 472 Main Street, Acton, MA

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DATED STRUCTURES

Acton businesses would benefit from updated retail and commercial plaza options. Many of the existing structures are dated and in need of facade and other upgrades.

WAYFINDING + CONCEPT MAP DEVELOPMENT

Folks using the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail may not know about the many retail and dining options available to them just off the trail along Great Road. There was great enthusiasm during the initial public meeting and in subsequent meetings with Town planning staff about a wayfinding signage plan for the trail. A draft concept including a few different Bruce Freeman Rail Trail signage options can be seen below.

See the following page for an example of a concept map that shows Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users the locations where the trail connects directly to businesses. This map, or a future iteration of a similar map, could be printed and inserted into a trail kiosk to orient trail users to Great Road business locations. Additionally, a simple QR code could link trail users smart phones to a digital version of this map showing individual businesses, their hours of operation, and logical connection points.

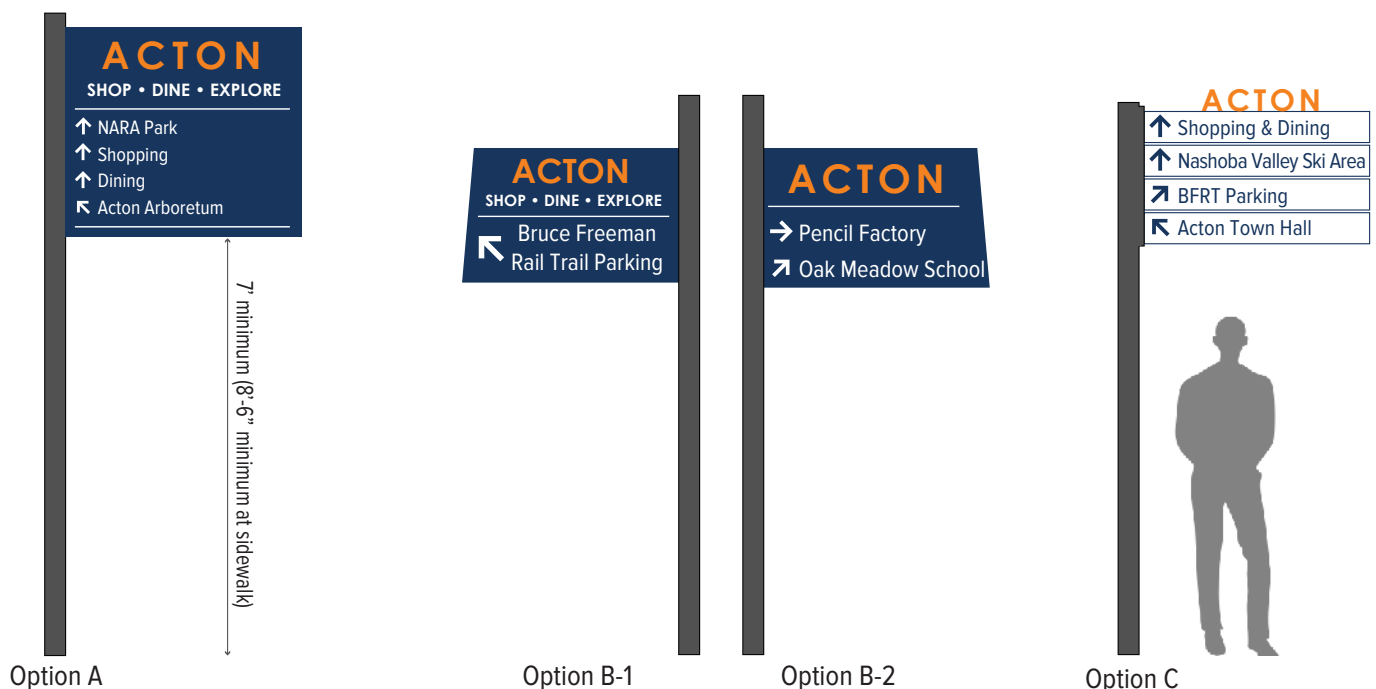


CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce provides a variety of services member businesses:

- Network events, business luncheons, breakfasts, and events with guest speakers
- Advocates for changes to traditional business lease programs, including encouraging building owners to allow year-to-year
- Encourages businesses to grow, adapt, and helps new entrepreneurs find suitable rental spaces
- Social Media Marketing 101 events

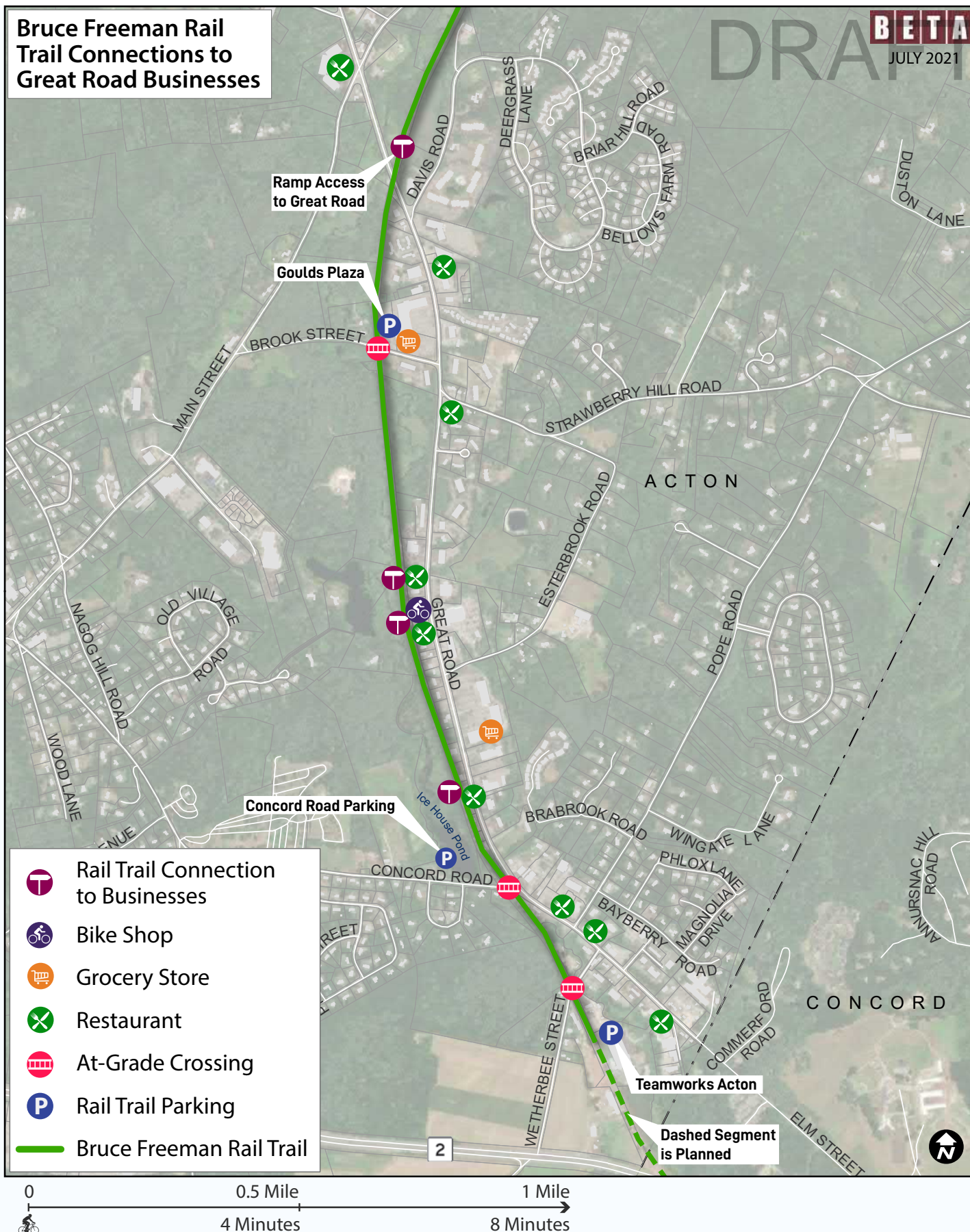
Wayfinding signage draft concept examples



Source: placeholder URL

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Connections to Great Road Businesses

BETA
JULY 2021



A draft concept map showing connections from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to Great Road businesses. A future iteration is proposed to be included on a kiosk or wayfinding signage along the trail.

Public Input

PHASE ONE PUBLIC MEETING

The project team hosted a public meeting on June 16th that included 18 attendees. Following the presentation, a lively roundtable of comments, questions, and answers ensued. The critical issues brought up and discussed during that meeting were transformed into the project recommendations available in the next section of this report.

TABLING SESSIONS

On August 12th, the project team met in-person with plaza / building owners and business owners at three plazas along Great Road that have vacant commercial spaces. We set up a table and had copies available of the Subject Matter Expert rubric applications for the four proposed projects, draft versions of the BFRT concept wayfinding signage family and map including location of proposed signage, and additional project-related resources.

The plazas where we hosted tabling sessions and engaged owners, employees, and customers include Acton Woods Plaza, Gould's Plaza, and Brookside Shops.

The project team gathered valuable input about the inability of plaza owners to transition spaces from retail to restaurant use due to sewer restrictions, landlords offering more flexible lease agreements to help struggling businesses, and feedback about wayfinding signage, placemaking, and collaborations in regards to cross promoting businesses.

Acton Woods Plaza



Members of the project team met with local business owners to discuss sewer capacity at Acton Woods Plaza (no photographs available)

Gould's Plaza



A local employee, a member of the project team, and a Town Planner discuss placemaking outside of Donelan's Grocery store

Brookside Shops



A member of the project team, a local business owner, and a digital marketing expert discuss opportunities for cross-promoting neighboring businesses

Q Cleaner & Tailor Acton MA Retweeted

In Acton & Metrowest
@HomeinMetrowest
Replying to @BigBirdActon and 2 others
Kim Walsh owner of Q Cleaner & Tailor @QCleanerTailor sharing ideas today w/ Town of Acton Great Road #LRRP team!
Kim's idea: Create & display 'Great Road Acton' banner flags 2 build community & brand Great Road corridor businesses + connect online too! #GreatRoadActon #ActonMA







Aug 12, 2021

Jeff Maxtutis, Plan Facilitator, and Charlie Creagh, planner, discuss proposed project ideas with Kim Walsh, owner of Q Cleaners. A local resident posted this photo on Q's Twitter account.

4.0 Project Recommendations

4.1 Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Signage

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Category		Public Realm & Revenue and Sales
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, Town of Acton, First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (1-2 years) - 6 months planning, 6 - 12 months design, engineering, and construction
Risk		Low Risk – Risks associated with approval from MBTA
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase in Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users utilizing local businesses 2) Increase in sales and revenue 3) Increase in number of folks engaged in surveys and community meetings
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Acton Planning Department, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), MassDOT (Route 2A), Local walking and bicycle advocacy and trail groups; Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Assabet River Rail Trail Inc, Acton Select Board Transportation Advisory Committee, Nashoba Regional Greenway, Champions in local businesses / chamber of commerce; Cindy McCullough, Internal departments; Recreations Department, Engineering, Public Works, Planning, Communication, Sustainability Director</p>



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users park their bikes for a break at Dunkin Donuts along Great Road in Acton.



Downtown Concord, NH has attractive wayfinding signage in the historic downtown.

Source: <https://twitter.com/BrentToderian/status/971842182742122496/photo/2>

Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- Business survey and public meeting identified the need to market area businesses using signage and create path connections to those businesses to increase sales and revenue

Action Items

- Develop some signage options
- Study the inclusion of a QR code on signage that would easily allow users to access a map showing a variety of area retail and dining options (this could be updated with operating hours, etc.)
- Distribute signage options to the public, local business owners, the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and the MBTA Department that administers the land where the rail trail is located to solicit public feedback and input

Process

- Determine which Town of Acton staff member will administer the project
- Apply for grants, or utilize ARPA money, generally secure funding
- Work internally or hire an expert to come up with 3-6 different signage options, include branding, a logo (consider addition of "Great Businesses Along Great Road!" or similar branding technique)
- Generate a map that shows which sign will go where. Include both decision points and confirmation points
- Develop an ongoing engagement process online and in person to gather feedback on sign designs and locations
- Engage with additional professionals to administer funds to fabricate signs
- Record on a sharable digital map which signs were installed where, how many, and what they say. Use this document to ensure maintenance over time and reference if the public ever submits comments of vandalism or additional text information needed.

The photo and graphics are courtesy of the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide



The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban bikeway Design guide includes helpful guide to wayfinding signage.

Photo Credit: <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bikeway-signing-marking/bike-route-wayfinding-signage-and-markings-system/>

CONFIRMATION SIGN



TURN SIGN



DECISION SIGN



The current terminus of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is a prime location for wayfinding signage to encourage trail users to dine and shop at Great Road restaurants and shops.

4.2 Great Road Wayfinding Signage

DRAFT

Category		Public Realm & Revenue and Sales
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director, First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years) - 6 months planning, 6-12 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – There is low risks associated with cooperation among different participants
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meeting with local business owners and a wide cross section of the public to distribute different signage options and solicit their feedback. 2) Increase in foot traffic, or motor vehicle traffic, that stops and shops in retail or restaurant offerings along Great Road after the signs are installed (consider travel intercept surveys before and after implementation to assess the increase in people walking, biking, and driving to local shops)
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, residents of Acton (the public)



Wayfinding signage combined with street signs in Cedar Falls, Iowa

Source: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2015/13-short-range-livability-solutions.html>

Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- General wayfinding signage along Great Road to help direct visitors to the multiple Town centers, retail plazas, and other destinations was identified at the first public meeting as a way to increase foot traffic, sales, and revenues

Action Items

- Develop some signage options
- Develop a concept map that indicates preferred signage locations (include different icons for decision points and confirmation points)
- Distribute options and preferred locations map to the public, local business owners, and others to solicit public feedback and input

Process

- Determine which Town staff member will administer the project
- Apply for grants, or utilize ARPA money (generally secure funding)
- Work internally or hire an expert to come up with 3-6 signage options, discuss early-on in the process using colors and/or branded icons that are specific to Acton
- Generate a map that shows what sign type, and what specific text, will go where along Great Road. Include Confirmation signs, turn signs, and decision sign types.
- Develop an ongoing engagement process online and in-person
- Record which sign was installed in which location and what the precise text wording says. Use this document to ensure maintenance over time.

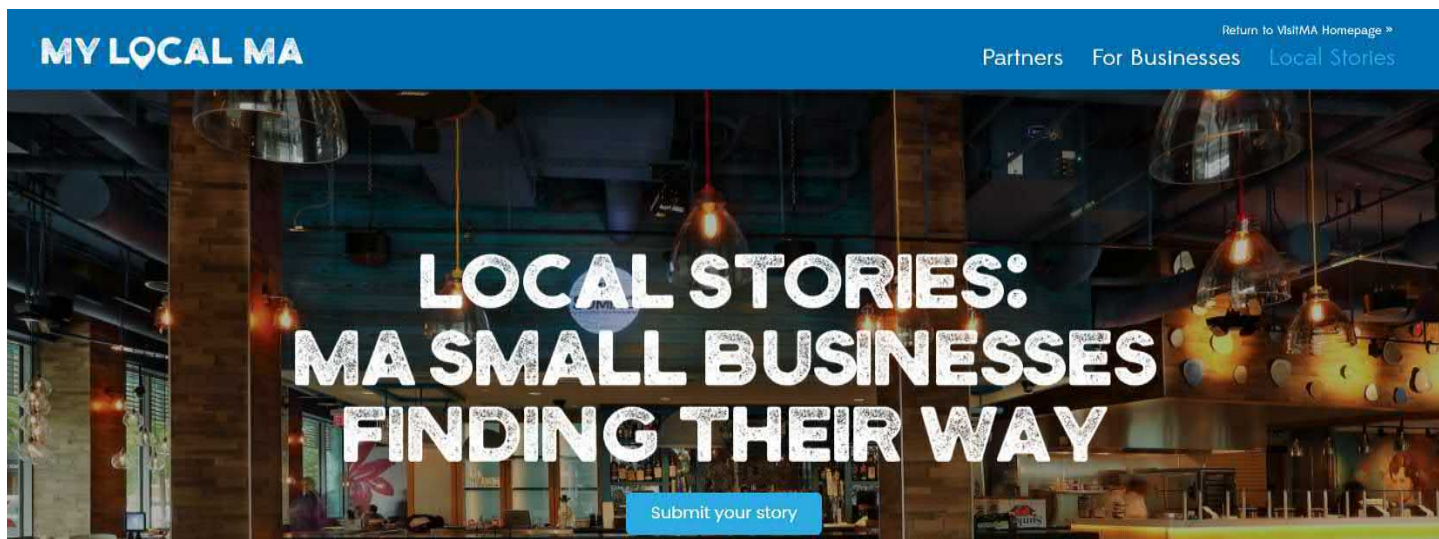


Great Road signage and placemaking would encourage folks to dine and shop at Great Road restaurants and shops.

4.3 Shared Marketing Campaign

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Category	 Private Realm
Location	LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin	Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director, First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget	 Small - up to \$25,000 1. Local search enabled multi-vendor marketplace (\$8,000 - \$25,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (6 - 12 weeks) 1. Local search enabled multi-vendor marketplace (6-12 weeks)
Risk	 Low Risk – Some business owners / plaza owners may not want to participate
Key Performance Indicators	1) Participation in initial stakeholder meeting 2) Confirmed number of participants utilizing the program 3) Survey participants at 6 months, 12 months after deployment of program 4) Track types of marketing / outreach utilized
Partners & Resources	Town of Acton, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, Great Road Business Owners & Employees



In response to COVID-19 economic downturn, the state launched the My Local MA campaign urging MA residents to shop at local MA businesses

Source: <https://www.visitma.com/lovelylocalma/stories/>

Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- 53% of business survey responders expressed interest in participating in a shared marketing / advertising program in Acton
- The impact of COVID-19, combined with changing consumer behavior, on-line sales competition, and physical space utilization dynamics have reduced business sales for most small stores and shops along the Great Road Corridor. If left unaddressed, the impacts could be a long-term threat to the business community and local economy.

Action Items

- Identify program participants
- Create common areas of focus and interest
- Work to define strategy and an array of ways to approaching marketing both collectively and individually
- Develop a Local-Search enabled Multi-Vendor Marketplace
- Create on-line E commerce presence that can compete with large e-tailers by offering broad product selection and the convenience of shopping on-line. Transaction services are provided platform but processing is directly between the shopper and vendor
- Hire a consultant to help establish the program

Process

- Secure funding for Acton "Brand Awareness" and marketing
- Create Geographic Subdomain & URL
- Build marketplace as either a large local-search enabled platform or as an Acton-only marketplace, or a combination of the two
- Leverage already existing technologies and platforms to reduce costs
- Identify a minimum number of retailers to upload inventory, train in management and administration of their e-store, and discuss strategies to leverage new online sales capability.

Other Projects Include

- Coordinated Communications Program
- Education and Certification Program
- Micro-Fulfillment Center
- Pop-Up Space



A business on Great Road in Acton utilizing a sign with a QR code that advertises grocery delivery

4.4 Expand the Municipal Sewer System

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Category		Public Realm
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director, First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		\$50,000 for an additional sewerage study
Timeframe		Medium Term (5 - 10 years) - 6 months planning, 6-12 months implementation
Risk		Medium Risk – Some risk involved in financing a large capital construction project such as a municipal sewer system
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meeting with local business owners to understand their needs for sewer access 2) Up-front costs vs. long-term costs (examine success using a cost-benefit analysis) 3) Ensuring business owner interest remains high once cost information is distributed 4) Working with state or other sources to solidify grant funding
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Acton Department of Public Works, MassWorks program, property owners and businesses



Brookside Shops - Pier 1 Imports closed, and retail/commercial uses are limited due to the lack of municipal sewer tie-in at the site. The site was vacant at the time this report was published.

Source: <https://www.blacklinere.com/property/brookside-shops-acton-ma/>



A brand new, yet empty storefront along a stretch of Great Road without access to municipal sewer.

Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- Connecting existing buildings to a new municipal sewer system would allow those building owners to promote the spaces to a much wider variety of potential tenants, notably restaurants and other food preparation outfits

Action Items

- Discuss feasibility, determine location of existing service and areas to tie-in to developed retail and commercial plazas along Great Road
- Obtain public input and distribute concise information about opportunities and constraints and a fee schedule for those that tie-in to the new system
- Draft a plan with cost estimate and timeline for design, engineering, construction, and maintenance

Process

- Identify Town department staff responsible for leading the coordination effort
- Examine opportunities for funding
- Map suitable areas for a package treatment plant (location relative to the shopping plazas, soils, wetlands, water table, ownership, etc.)
- Understand the discharge options (current wastewater treatment plant or other) and identifying land for discharge if appropriate.
- Evaluate the actual flow from existing businesses and proposed and preferred new businesses.
- Calculate the total required capacity and evaluate against suitable sites.
- Develop a cost-benefit ratio of cost of sewer vs. increase in tax base from fully occupied plazas.

Next Steps

The business and property owners should provide data about actual usage to compare against state requirements for capacity evaluations.

Once a cost-benefit calculation has been established for the different options, a public engagement should seek to educate residents about the issues, options, costs and implications. This education and discussion process will help the Town decide on its options (full municipal sewer, centralized system, or distributed system) and decide which option(s) should be further explored. The town should consider revising the bylaw(s) to allow for more flexibility in installing the sewer, including giving the people the option to pay when they connect and not when the betterment is installed.

The final stage of the planning process would be to choose one or more options for an in-depth engineering analysis and determine final feasibility and selection from there.

Additional Considerations

The Town should expand its past research to evaluate other options. Town-wide sewer has many benefits, including environmental benefits from replacing failing septic systems, but it can be expensive and, depending on the community, logistically difficult.

Smaller package treatment plants serving several plazas could be a feasible option. The Town should investigate possible locations for the plants, which plazas would be served, and calculate the cost-benefit ratio of increased economic development from a public-private partnership to install the plants. Fortunately, ARPA funds can support sewer and additional infrastructure funds may become available. At the state level, MassWorks is also a potential funding source.

The Town should consider whether those plants would serve only the plazas or plazas plus residents. This will have implication for capacity calculations, funding sources, and final costs to the property owner.



West Acton sewage treatment plant

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMJwj507IE8>

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4.5 Additional Proposed Projects

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The Town's recovery will depend on a mix of marketing strategies, BFRT and Great Road wayfinding, and examining possible strategies to fund municipal sewer expansion.

The following table of proposed projects includes a variety of streetscape, public realm, private realm, and other projects that will help bolster the project recommendations on from the previous pages:

ADDITIONAL PROPOSED PROJECTS TABLE

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	STEPS
Fill in existing sidewalk gaps	Medium Term	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seek public input on existing sidewalk gaps (and reference page 12 in this report, "Physical Environment, Great Road Improvements") and develop a plan to address gaps in the existing Great Road sidewalk network2. Reach out to MassDOT and come up with a timeline to fund reconstruction of certain sections of Great Road to include ADA-compliant concrete sidewalks with a tree buffer (where right-of-way width allows)
"Great Businesses on Great Road" pole banners	Short Term	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seek design services for pole banners advertising businesses along Great Road2. Include "Great Businesses along Great Road" or a similar slogan (seek public input) for the banners3. Install the banners near Nagog Park and near the Concord town like to create a district effect and entice folks passing through to slow down, look, stop, and shop at local merchants
Vacant storefront space marketing	Short Term	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work with property owners to ensure empty spaces are being marketed on a variety of platforms, including those that are specific to the renting of commercial spaces such as LoopNet.com

4.6 Additional Research & Funding Sources

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Funding Sources

Typical funding sources include federal and state grants dedicated to economic development, community revitalization, and municipal revenue. Many municipalities work with a consortium of interested parties, including local banks, that contribute to the pool of funds. Application fees can be utilized to circulate additional funding through the target area. Occasionally large institutions or private developers may join the team administering the program in an effort to revitalize the corridor and community around a campus or mixed-use development. Local institutions and developers should be contacted to determine if they would contribute to a pool of funding for a storefront facade revitalization program. No dollar amount is too small to contribute, but a specific range of choices should be agreed upon prior to engaging them. A bronze, silver, and gold level would enable their name and logo to be included on construction fencing, flyers, or project web sites. Investigate the MA Downtown Initiative in the spring under the One Stop portal offered by the Commonwealth, Community Development Block Grants, and Main Streets programs.

American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)

Littleton is slated to receive \$2.9 million in ARPA funding according to the Massachusetts Municipal Association. The table on the following page shows an approximation of the amount of ARPA funding likely to be received by each Town around Littleton. ARPA provided roughly \$385 million to be split between 313 Massachusetts communities with populations under 50,000. The Baker Administration received the first 50% of that money on May 28, 2021 and shortly after sent a letter to municipalities that includes details on how they can get their ARPA money deposited into local coffers. It appears that ARPA funding can be used for small businesses and COVID-19 related economic impacts. ARPA Funding can be used for direct relief related to COVID-19 impacts through the use of Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CLFRF) in the following five core areas:

1. **Respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts** - this includes COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral health, and certain public health and safety staff
2. **Economic impacts of the public health emergency** - these include efforts to mitigate economic harm to workers, households, small businesses, affected industries, and the public sector
3. **Lost public sector revenue** - payments may be used to fund government services to the extent of revenue reductions from the pandemic

4. **Premium pay for essential workers** - funds may be used for additional support for those who have faced the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors
5. **Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure** - recipients may invest to improve access to clean drinking water, support wastewater and storm water infrastructure, and expand access to broadband internet:
 - » Wide range of eligible water and sewer infrastructure projects – specifically, all that would otherwise be eligible to receive financial assistance through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
 - » Broadband projects must provide service to unserved and underserved households and businesses. Eligible projects are expected to be designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical upload and download speeds of 100 Mbps

Potential eligible uses within these five core areas include the following expenses:

- Direct COVID-related costs (testing, contact tracing, etc.)
- Public health and safety staff
- Hiring state and local government staff up to the number of employees to pre-pandemic levels
- Assistance to unemployed workers, including job training
- Assistance to households
- Small business assistance
- Nonprofit assistance
- Aid to impacted industries
- Expenses to improve efficacy of public health or economic relief programs
- Survivor's benefits
- CLFRF funding cannot be used to:

- Replenish a "rainy day" fund or other reserve fund
- Make a deposit to a pension fund

Additional Funding Sources for Public and Private Realm Improvement Projects

The following funding sources were included specifically for recommendations generated as part of this ongoing planning study. The list can be applied to a wide variety of public realm and private realm improvement projects.

Municipal Sewer Funding Sources

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. The Community Development Fund (CDF) awards grants to communities throughout the Commonwealth. This program helps eligible cities and towns to meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development and public social services. It supports CDBG eligible activities and encourages applicants to develop coordinated, integrated and creative solutions to local problems. Mini-entitlement communities through on a formula calculation based on a high statistical indication of need, poverty rate and size. Eligible CDBG projects include but are not limited to:

- Housing rehabilitation or development
- Micro-enterprise or other business assistance
- Infrastructure
- Community / public facilities
- Public social services
- Planning

“Programs focused on commercial properties are usually administered and staffed by a municipality’s planning, community development, or economic development office; a Main Street organization; a business improvement district, or other government-affiliated entities.”

<https://plannersweb.com/2013/10/how-facade-improvement-programs/>

- Removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with disabilities

Wayfinding Funding Sources

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth

Department of Housing and Community Development

All communities are eligible to apply. This program provides technical assistance and design services for a variety of downtown improvement elements. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which could include studying and generating a range of design options and offering a blueprint for how to move forward. The next application round opens in the spring. In 2018, Foxborough, North Chelmsford, and Winchendon received grant awards for wayfinding.

Commonwealth Places Program

MassDevelopment

This competitive grant advances locally driven placemaking projects in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in eligible communities throughout Massachusetts. The aim of Commonwealth Places Resurgent Places is to help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy.

- Seed grants available from \$250 - \$7,500
- Implementation grants available up to \$50,000
- Successful examples of this grant include:
 - » Marlborough received \$15,000 for wayfinding and branding strategy development
 - » Greenfield received funding used by the Greenfield Business Association for reimbursing restaurants to purchase outdoor dining furniture

Alternative Funding Programs

The following funding programs are grouped as alternative because they either do not stem directly from a local or regional agency or governing body or they do not directly fund the type of proposed improvement projects recommended in this report.

Local Banks and other Community Development Financial Institutions

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

Business Improvement District (BID) or Other Downtown District

Funds from a BID may be used for planters, trash and recycling receptacles, sanitation and maintenance staff, graffiti removal,

storefront facades, windows, doors, and sign maintenance, and a variety of other elements.

Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

Massachusetts Historical Commission

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

Collaborative Workspace Program

MassDevelopment

This grant provides owners and operators of collaborative work spaces up to \$100,000 for new equipment or building improvements. Alternatively, seed grants of up to \$15,000 to plan for new co-working spaces are available. This grant is an opportunity to address the exterior and the interior of a building while also helping to support existing local jobs and create new job opportunities.

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

Massachusetts Historical Commission

This is a 50% reimbursable matching grant for preserving properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Preservation. Applicants are limited to municipalities and nonprofits. Many downtown and village centers include nonprofit and municipal anchors. This grant could be used to ensure that all properties in a target area are brought, over time, to the same standard of repair. The program does have limitation on allowable costs. A preservation restriction is required.

Summary

The above funding sources may be used to fund a variety of public and private realm improvement programs, maintenance, and streetscape improvements. While many of the above funding sources could be leveraged in combination with other funds to develop a façade improvement program, the list in general was developed with a wide variety of improvement projects in mind.

See funding spreadsheet in the Appendix for comprehensive list of possible funding sources provided by Department of Housing and Community Development.

Appendix

APPENDIX A - Comprehensive Funding Spreadsheet

Name of Fund	Available for RRP Projects	Funding Sector	Agency/ Organization	Maximum Eligible Grant Amount per Applicant	Eligible Applicants	Description/Allowable Use of Funds
Planning Assistance Grants	Yes	Public	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	\$125,000	Municipalities and Regional Planning Agencies	To fund technical assistance and help communities undertake public process associated with creating plans and adopting land use regulations consistent with the Baker-Polito Administration's land conservation and development objectives including reduction of land, energy, and natural resource consumption, provision of sufficient and diverse housing, and mitigation of/preparation for climate change.
Regional Pilot Project Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Partnerships of municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations	To fund projects that support businesses and communities in stabilizing/growing their regional economy with one or more of the recovery efforts under Partnerships for recovery. no capital-related projects will be funded.
MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Yes	Public	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	See grant.	Municipalities	The most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities and other eligible public entities primarily for public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur private development, and create jobs - particularly for production of multi-family housing in appropriately located walkable, mixed-use districts.
Community Compact IT Grant	Yes	Public	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	\$200,000	Municipalities	This is a competitive grant program focused on driving innovation and transformation at the local level via investments in technology. support the implementation of innovative IT projects by funding related one-time capital needs such as technology infrastructure, upgrades and/or purchases of equipment or software. Incidental or one-time costs related to the capital purchase such as planning, design, installation, implementation and initial training are eligible.
Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency/FEMA	See grant.	Property Owners	To reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to buildings, manufactured homes, and other structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

MA Downtown Initiative Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$25,000	Municipalities	Technical assistance for downtown revitalization in 6 categories
TDI Creative Catalyst	Yes	Public	Mass Development	\$40,000	Individuals and organizations in current and graduated Transformative Development Initiative Districts	To support public-facing projects that enhance local arts and cultural infrastructure and contribute to economic revitalization - including public art, placemaking, and stabilization of organizations and creative business collectives
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency/FEMA	See grant.	Property Owners	Hazard mitigation projects reducing the risks from disasters and natural hazards
Commonwealth Places	Yes	Public	Mass Development	\$300,000	Municipalities	To help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy, including improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in their communities. This program complements the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Shared Streets & Spaces.
Community Preservation Act	Yes	Public	Community Preservation Trust Fund/State Department of Revenue (DOR)	See grant.	Only communities that have adopted the Community Preservation Act are eligible to receive CPA Trust Fund matching funds annually.	To preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.
Partnerships Matching Funds Program	Yes	Public	Department of Conservation and Recreation	\$25,000	State park friends and advocacy groups, civic and community organizations, institutions, businesses, municipal governments, dedicated individuals	To support capital investments at DCR-owned state parks, beaches, and other reservations.

Restaurant Revitalization Fund	Yes	Public	Small Business Administration	See grant.	Eligible entities include restaurants, food stands / trucks / carts, caterers, bars / saloons / lounges / taverns, snack and non alcoholic beverage bars, bakeries, brewpubs, breweries / microbreweries, wineries, distilleries, inns, and licensed facilities of a beverage alcohol producer. Priority group: Small businesses that are at least 51% owned by one or more individuals who are women / veterans / socially and economically disadvantaged.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, business maintenance expenses, construction of outdoor seating, business supplies, business food and beverage expenses (including raw materials), covered supplier costs, and business operating expenses
BIZ-M-POWER	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$20,000	Small businesses (i.e. employing 1-20 FTE employees, including 1 or more of whom owns the business, annual revenue not exceeding \$2,500,000) in brick-and-mortar (physical) establishment operating within Massachusetts	To assist low-income and moderate-income entrepreneurs with their acquisition, expansion, improvement or lease of a facility, purchase or lease of equipment, or with meeting other capital needs of a business.
Shared Streets and Spaces	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Department of Transportation	\$200,000	Municipalities	To support the repurposing of streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities and community programming, including but not limited to facilities for eating, shopping, play, and community events and spaces for all ages.
Small Business Technical Assistance Grant	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$85,000	501(c)3 organizations	To fund specific counseling and training programs that assist small businesses in securing new or increased financing for growth, providing digital grants (MGCC Program), establishing crowdfunding campaigns through the Biz-M-Power grant (MGCC Program), achieving stability and viability, creating/retaining jobs, increasing the economic vitality of the neighborhood, community, or region.

Economic Adjustment Assistance	Yes	Public	Economic Development Association	\$10,000,000	<p>Eligible applicants under the EAA program include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. Under the EAA program, EDA is not authorized to provide grants or cooperative agreements to individuals or to for profit entities. Requests from such entities will not be considered for funding.</p> <p>EDA's ARPA EAA NOFO is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to, and recover from, the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, including long-term recovery and resilience to future economic disasters. Under this announcement, EDA solicits applications under the authority of the Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which is flexible and responsive to the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders. This is the broadest NOFO EDA is publishing under ARPA and any eligible applicant from any EDA Region may apply.</p>
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Competitive Tourism Grants	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$10,000,000	<p>For EDA Competitive Tourism Grants, eligible entities include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. 42 U.S.C. § 3122(4)(A); 13 C.F.R. § 300.3.</p> <p>EDA's ARPA Tourism NOFO is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions to rebuild and strengthen their travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry through various infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. Under this NOFO, EDA solicits applications under the authority of the Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which is flexible and responsive to the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders.</p> <p>EDA's travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation grants will be delivered through two components: (1) State Tourism Grants and (2) EDA Competitive Tourism Grants.</p>
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Build Back Better Regional Challenge	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$500,000	<p>Eligible applicants under this NOFO include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. Under this NOFO, EDA is not authorized to provide grants or cooperative agreements to individuals or to for profit entities. Requests from such entities will not be considered for funding.</p> <p>Through this American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity (ARPA BBBRC NOFO), EDA aims to assist communities and regions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has caused, and continues to cause, economic injury to U.S. communities and regions in devastating and unprecedented ways. This ARPA BBBRC NOFO is designed as a two-phase competition to (1) help regions develop transformational economic development strategies and (2) fund the implementation of those strategies that will create and grow regional growth clusters. Such efforts will help regional economies recover from the pandemic and build economic diversity and resiliency to mitigate impacts of future economic disasters.</p> <p>In Phase 1, EDA will provide technical assistance grants to approximately 50-60 coalitions (through a lead institution). These coalitions will be considered “finalists” and the grants will be used by the finalists to prepare more detailed applications for transformational projects that benefit their respective geographic regions and are aligned around a holistic approach to building and scaling a strategic industry.</p> <p>In Phase 2, EDA will award each of the 20-30 finalist coalitions \$25-75 million (and potentially up to \$100 million) to fund the collection of projects they identified. The projects will be funded through grants to coalition members.</p>
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Statewide Planning, Research, and Networks	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$6,000,000	See grant.	<p>The ARPA Statewide Planning, Research, and Networks NOFO is part of EDA's multi-phase effort to respond to the coronavirus pandemic as directed by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Specifically, this NOFO seeks to build regional economies for the future through two primary avenues: a) Statewide Planning and b) Research and Networks.</p> <p>Subject to the availability of funds, awards made under this NOFO will help develop coordinated state-wide plans for economic development and data, tools, and institutional capacity to evaluate and scale evidence-based economic development efforts, including through communities of practice and provision of technical assistance among existing and new EDA grantees.</p>
Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	See grant.	Eligible organizations shall be corporations, foundations, organizations or institutions that operate regionally and service 10 or more contiguous towns/cities. They must be exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, and have a primary focus of economic development and perform the services required by MGL Chapter 23A Section 3J and 3K.	Grants should be used to assist entrepreneurs, small businesses, and business partners in order to stabilize and/or grow regional economy. They may not, however, be used to increase salaries or hire additional staff for the organization.
Hometown Grant Program	Yes	Private	T-Mobile	\$50,000	Towns with population <50,000	To build/rebuild/refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in town.
Greener Greater Boston Program	Yes	Private	Solomon Foundation/ Barr Foundation	\$20,000	Municipalities, Trail conservancies and non-profits	To fund preliminary design (for each stage of design), capacity building and operational support, and public engagement and implementation toward projects that enhance the beauty, utility, and accessibility of Greater Boston's greenways.

Nellie Leaman Taft Foundation Competitive Grants	Yes	Private	Nellie Leaman Taft Foundation	\$15,000	Non-profits 501 (c)(3) (small to mid sized) that benefit residents of greater Boston inside the Route 495 beltway	To seed funding for new ideas and initiatives, start-up and on-going support for grass roots organizations, and entrepreneurial projects that may enable an organization or its constituents to achieve greater self-sufficiency.
Seed Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$1,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups launching new projects or starting to significantly change the direction of an existing project. Most often, groups have been working on the project less than a year and usually don't yet have much direct experience with implementing the idea.
Grow Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$4,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups to deepen their work by further developing a community vision, lowering barriers to participation, identifying new stakeholders and working to bring more voices and lived experiences into core decision-making processes.
Young Leaders Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$6,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$175,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support projects led by young leaders aged 15-25
Small Business Matching Grant	Yes	Private	NewVue Communities	\$5,000	22 North Central Massachusetts cities and towns from Athol to Harvard with a combined population of 240,000 (refer to https://newvuecommunities.org/cities-towns-we-serve/)	To support micro-enterprises (businesses with 5 or fewer employees) that need help with marketing and accounting.
William J. & Margery S. Barrett Fund	Yes	Private	Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation	See grant.	Nonprofit organizations, public agencies or community organizations that provide services to the residents of Adams, Cheshire or Savoy, MA.	To fund projects, programs, capital improvements and general operating support of initiatives that benefit the community in arts and culture, early childhood development, environment, and health and social services.
Central Berkshire Fund	Yes	Private	Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation	\$5,000	Nonprofit organizations, public agencies or community organizations that provide services to the residents of the communities of Becket, Cummington, Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Washington and Windsor.	To fund projects, programs, capital improvements and general operating support of initiatives that benefit the community in arts and culture, early childhood development, environment, and health and social services.

Merrimack Valley Municipal Business Development and Recovery Fund	Yes	Private	Essex County Community Foundation/Columbia Gas	\$2,000,000	City of Lawrence, the Town of Andover, and the Town of North Andover	To provide direct support (individual business support, general business promotions, technical assistance and business consultation services, economic development and planning) to the municipalities and their business communities (not businesses directly) impacted by the recent gas disaster in Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence
Efficiency and Regionalization grant program	No Longer Available	Public	Community Compact Cabinet	\$100,000	Municipalities, regional school districts, school districts	For governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants provided funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects. Small capital purchases or improvements that are integral to the implementation of a functional program such as equipment or software; Technical assistance including consulting services, assistance in drafting contracts or other agreements; and Transition or project management costs, not to exceed one year.
MDAR Urban Agriculture Program	No Longer Available	Public	Mass Department of Agriculture	See grant.	Municipalities, Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3), Public or non-profit educational or public health institutions, Established urban farmer with more than three (3) years of commercial urban farming experience	To fund long-term, capital investments such as infrastructure improvements, building upgrades, purchase of computer software and systems, land procurement, and purchase of farm equipment to increase access of fresh, local produce in urban neighborhoods with a high concentration of low-moderate income residents
Cultural Facilities Fund (Systems Replacement)	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Cultural Council	See grant.	Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3) engaged in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; municipalities, and colleges or universities that own cultural facilities	For 20-year capital needs assessments of buildings and mechanical systems.

Coastal Resilience Grant Program	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management	\$1,000,000	Municipalities located within the Massachusetts coastal zone; Certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that own vulnerable coastal property that is open and accessible to the public	To provide financial and technical support for local and regional efforts to increase awareness and understanding of climate impacts, identify and map vulnerabilities, conduct adaptation planning, redesign and retrofit vulnerable public facilities and infrastructure, and restore shorelines to enhance natural resources and provide storm damage protection.
Housing Choice Capital Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Mass Housing Choice Initiative	See grant.	Housing Choice Communities	To plan and build the diverse housing stock located on publicly owned land, leasehold, easement or right-of-way, or are for the purchase of public land - includes pre-construction survey, design, engineering and construction costs, feasibility studies, land acquisition, etc.
Cultural Facilities Fund (Capital Grants)	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Cultural Council	See grant.	Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3) engaged in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; municipalities, and colleges or universities that own cultural facilities	For the acquisition, design, construction, repair, renovation, and rehabilitation of a cultural facility.
Cultural Facilities Fund (Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grants)	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Cultural Council	See grant.	Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3) engaged in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; municipalities, and colleges or universities that own cultural facilities	For the planning and assessment of a cultural facility.
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Small Business Administration	\$10,000,000	Businesses such as live venue operators or promoters, theatrical producers, live performing arts organization operators, museum operators, motion picture theater operators (including owners), and talent representatives.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, taxes and fees, administrative costs, advertising, production transportation, and capital expenditures related to producing a theatrical or live performing arts production.

Regional Pilot Project Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations that are federally tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code and intend to promote regional recovery from the economic impacts of COVID19	To support businesses and communities in stabilizing and/or growing their regional economy through solutions including (but not limited to) job creation, transportation, childcare, digital marketing and promotion efforts, digital business directories. This funding should not be used to fund projects or purposes for which there is already state or federal funding available (i.e. Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, Paycheck Protection Program, Small Business Grant Relief programs). No capital-related projects will be funded through this program.
Real Estate Services Technical Assistance	No Longer Available	Public	MassDevelopment	\$10,000	Eligible applicants include municipal officials, planners, local stakeholders, and others.	Grants may be used toward technical assistance opportunities in Surplus Property Reuse (e.g. Constraints and Feasibility Analysis, Master Planning, Test Fits, RFP/Q Assistance) or Local District Management Implementation Technical Assistance (e.g. District Improvement Financing, Business Improvement District formation)
Business Equity COVID-19 Emergency Fund	No Longer Available	Private	Foundation for Business Equity	See grant.	Black and Latinx majority-owned (51% or more) businesses with revenues of at least \$250,000	Flexible loans may be used for working capital and other demonstrated business needs (e.g., salaries and wages, inventory, equipment, marketing, etc.)
Brownfields Redevelopment Site Assessment Fund	Maybe	Public	MassDevelopment	\$100,000		To finance the environmental assessment of brownfield sites in Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs) of the Commonwealth
Urban Agenda Grant Program	Maybe	Public	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	See grant.	Cross sector consortiums and coalitions	Funding to local partnerships to implement projects that are based on collaborative work models with the goal of advancing economic progress. Typically, Early Stage Strategy Development and Strategy Implementation by an Existing Cross-Sector Consortium or Coalition

Community Development Block Grant	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$1,350,000	Municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Municipalities may also apply on behalf of a specific developer or property owner.	A broad range of community development needs - including projects such as housing rehabilitation or development; micro-enterprise or other business assistance; infrastructure; community/public facilities; public social services; planning; removal of architectural barriers to allow access; downtown or area revitalization
Brownfields Redevelopment Remediation Fund	Maybe	Public	MassDevelopment	\$500,000	See grant.	To finance the remediation of brownfield sites in Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs) of the Commonwealth
National Endowment for the Arts Grants	Maybe	Public	National Endowment for the Arts	See grant.	Regional Arts Agencies	This funding will be allocated to local state and regional arts agencies to distribute through their funding programs
Housing Development Incentive Program	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	See grant.	Developers (projects located in Gateway Cities)	Tax incentive to undertake new construction or substantial rehabilitation of properties for lease or sale as multi-unit market rate residential housing
MassTrails Grants	Maybe	Public	Department of Conservation & Recreation, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	\$100,000	Public entities and non-profit organizations (with documented land owner permission and community support)	To design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences
MassEVIP Fleets Incentives	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection	\$7,500	Public Entities	Helps eligible public entities acquire (buy or lease) electric vehicles for their fleets.

Abandoned Housing Initiative Strategic Demolition Fund Grant	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Attorney General's Office	\$125,000	Municipalities, Municipal Housing and Redevelopment Authorities, Nonprofit organizations	To be used for the construction of an affordable housing structure.
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund	Maybe	Public	State Historic Preservation Office	See grant.	Municipalities and private non-profit organizations	To support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places - including pre-development work, development projects such as stabilization, protection, rehabilitation and restoration
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	Maybe	Public	State Historic Preservation Office	See grant.	Municipalities and private non-profit organizations	To support efforts to identify and plan for the protection of the significant historic buildings, structures, archaeological sites and landscapes of the Commonwealth (including cultural resource inventories, nomination of properties to National Register, community-wide preservation plans, other studies/reports/publications to identify and protect significant properties)
Massachusetts Recycling Fund	Maybe	Private	BDC Capital	See grant.	See grant.	To help Massachusetts businesses active in recycling-related activities obtain the capital needed for any reasonable business purpose.
Closed Loop Infrastructure Fund	Maybe	Private	Closed Loop Partners	See grant.	Municipalities and private companies	Provides below-market rate loans to fund replicable, scalable and sustainable recycling and circular economy infrastructure projects across collection, sortation, processing and new technologies.

Name of Fund	Available for RRP Projects	Funding Sector	Agency/ Organization	Maximum Eligible Grant Amount per Applicant	Eligible Applicants	Description/Allowable Use of Funds
Regional Pilot Project Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Partnerships of municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations	To fund projects that support businesses and communities in stabilizing/growing their regional economy with one or more of the recovery efforts under Partnerships for recovery. no capital-related projects will be funded.
MA Downtown Initiative Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$25,000	Municipalities	Technical assistance for downtown revitalization in 6 categories
Restaurant Revitalization Fund	Yes	Public	Small Business Administration		Eligible entities include restaurants, food stands/trucks/carts, caterers, bars/saloons/lounges/taverns, snack and non alcoholic beverage bars, bakeries, brewpubs, breweries/microbreweries, wineries, distilleries, inns, and licensed facilities of a beverage alcohol producer. Priority group: Small businesses that are at least 51% owned by one or more individuals who are women/veterans/socially and economically disadvantaged.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, business maintenance expenses, construction of outdoor seating, business supplies, business food and beverage expenses (including raw materials), covered supplier costs, and business operating expenses
BIZ-M-POWER	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$20,000	Small businesses (i.e. employing 1-20 FTE employees, including 1 or more of whom owns the business, annual revenue not exceeding \$2,500,000) in brick-and-mortar (physical) establishment operating within Massachusetts	To assist low-income and moderate-income entrepreneurs with their acquisition, expansion, improvement or lease of a facility, purchase or lease of equipment, or with meeting other capital needs of a business.

Shared Streets and Spaces	Yes	Public	MassDOT	\$200,000	Municipalities	To support the repurposing of streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities and community programming, including but not limited to facilities for eating, shopping, play, and community events and spaces for all ages.
Small Business Technical Assistance Grant	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$85,000	501(c)3 organizations	To fund specific counseling and training programs that assist small businesses in securing new or increased financing for growth, providing digital grants (MGCC Program), establishing crowdfunding campaigns through the Biz-M-Power grant (MGCC Program), achieving stability and viability, creating/retaining jobs, increasing the economic vitality of the neighborhood, community, or region.

Build Back Better Regional Challenge	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$500,000	<p>Eligible applicants under this NOFO include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. Under this NOFO, EDA is not authorized to provide grants or cooperative agreements to individuals or to for profit entities. Requests from such entities will not be considered for funding.</p>	<p>Through this American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity (ARPA BBBRC NOFO), EDA aims to assist communities and regions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has caused, and continues to cause, economic injury to U.S. communities and regions in devastating and unprecedented ways. This ARPA BBBRC NOFO is designed as a two-phase competition to (1) help regions develop transformational economic development strategies and (2) fund the implementation of those strategies that will create and grow regional growth clusters. Such efforts will help regional economies recover from the pandemic and build economic diversity and resiliency to mitigate impacts of future economic disasters.</p> <p>In Phase 1, EDA will provide technical assistance grants to approximately 50-60 coalitions (through a lead institution). These coalitions will be considered “finalists” and the grants will be used by the finalists to prepare more detailed applications for transformational projects that benefit their respective geographic regions and are aligned around a holistic approach to building and scaling a strategic industry.</p> <p>In Phase 2, EDA will award each of the 20-30 finalist coalitions \$25-75 million (and potentially up to \$100 million) to fund the collection of projects they identified. The projects will be funded through grants to coalition members.</p>
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Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development		Eligible organizations shall be corporations, foundations, organizations or institutions that operate regionally and service 10 or more contiguous towns/cities. They must be exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, and have a primary focus of economic development and perform the services required by MGL Chapter 23A Section 3J and 3K.	Grants should be used to assist entrepreneurs, small businesses, and business partners in order to stabilize and/or grow regional economy. They may not, however, be used to increase salaries or hire additional staff for the organization.
Seed Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$1,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups launching new projects or starting to significantly change the direction of an existing project. Most often, groups have been working on the project less than a year and usually don't yet have much direct experience with implementing the idea.
Grow Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$4,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups to deepen their work by further developing a community vision, lowering barriers to participation, identifying new stakeholders and working to bring more voices and lived experiences into core decision-making processes.
Young Leaders Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$6,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$175,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support projects led by young leaders aged 15-25
Small Business Matching Grant	Yes	Private	NewVue Communities	\$5,000	22 North Central Massachusetts cities and towns from Athol to Harvard with a combined population of 240,000 (refer to https://newvuecommunities.org/cities-towns-we-serve/)	To support micro-enterprises (businesses with 5 or fewer employees) that need help with marketing and accounting.

Merrimack Valley Municipal Business Development and Recovery Fund	Yes	Private	Essex County Community Foundation/Columbia Gas	\$2,000,000	City of Lawrence, the Town of Andover, and the Town of North Andover	To provide direct support (individual business support, general business promotions, technical assistance and business consultation services, economic development and planning) to the municipalities and their business communities (not businesses directly) impacted by the recent gas disaster in Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence
Efficiency and Regionalization grant program	No Longer Available	Public	Community Compact Cabinet	\$100,000	Municipalities, regional school districts, school districts	For governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants provided funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects. Small capital purchases or improvements that are integral to the implementation of a functional program such as equipment or software; Technical assistance including consulting services, assistance in drafting contracts or other agreements; and Transition or project management costs, not to exceed one year.
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Small Business Administration	\$10,000,000	Businesses such as live venue operators or promoters, theatrical producers, live performing arts organization operators, museum operators, motion picture theater operators (including owners), and talent representatives.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, taxes and fees, administrative costs, advertising, production transportation, and capital expenditures related to producing a theatrical or live performing arts production.
Regional Pilot Project Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations that are federally tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code and intend to promote regional recovery from the economic impacts of COVID19	To support businesses and communities in stabilizing and/or growing their regional economy through solutions including (but not limited to) job creation, transportation, childcare, digital marketing and promotion efforts, digital business directories. This funding should not be used to fund projects or purposes for which there is already state or federal funding available (i.e. Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, Paycheck Protection Program, Small Business Grant Relief programs). No capital-related projects will be funded through this program.

Business Equity COVID-19 Emergency Fund	No Longer Available	Private	Foundation for Business Equity	See grant.	Black and Latinx majority-owned (51% or more) businesses with revenues of at least \$250,000	Flexible loans may be used for working capital and other demonstrated business needs (e.g., salaries and wages, inventory, equipment, marketing, etc.)
Urban Agenda Grant Program	Maybe	Public	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	See grant.	Cross sector consortiums and coalitions	Funding to local partnerships to implement projects that are based on collaborative work models with the goal of advancing economic progress. Typically, Early Stage Strategy Development and Strategy Implementation by an Existing Cross-Sector Consortium or Coalition
Community Development Block Grant	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$1,350,000	Municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Municipalities may also apply on behalf of a specific developer or property owner.	To meet a broad range of community development needs - including projects such as housing rehabilitation or development; micro-enterprise or other business assistance; infrastructure; community/public facilities; public social services; planning; removal of architectural barriers to allow access; downtown or area revitalization

Appendix

APPENDIX B - Phase One Public Presentation

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Local Rapid Recovery Plan
Impacts of COVID-19
Acton, Massachusetts
Great Road Commercial Corridor
June 16, 2021

Agenda

Tonight's Meeting – 6:00-7:30PM

1. Introductions
2. Overview of Local Rapid Recovery Program
3. Schedule
4. Project Goals
5. Acton, Great Road Commercial Corridor Study Area
6. Existing Conditions: Diagnostics and Business Surveys
7. Public Comments
8. Next Steps

Project Team

BETA Group

Thomas Loughlin, PE

- Plan Facilitator

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Charlie Creagh

- Project Planner

Town of Acton

Matthew “Selby”

- Land Use and Economic
Development Director

Kristen Guichard

- Planning Director / Zoning
Enforcement Officer

LRRP Program

Local Rapid Recovery Plan

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- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
- The Local Rapid Recovery Program (LRRP) provides municipalities an 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
- Three Phases:
 - Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys
 - Phase II: Project Recommendations
 - Phase III: Plans

Local Rapid Recovery Program

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Schedule

Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys

- Completed between March and May

Phase II: Project Recommendations

- In progress May -> June
- Gather additional input from business owners and stakeholders

Phase III: Plans

- July -> August

PROJECT PLAN CATEGORIES



Local Rapid Recovery Plan

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Goals

PHASES

GOALS

Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys



- Collect baseline diagnostic data
- Engage stakeholders to understand COVID impacts and district concerns
- Provide an overview of on-the-ground conditions within the Study Area

Phase II: Project Recommendations



- Consult key stakeholders on priority projects
- Refine design of projects with Subject Matter Experts
- Develop final list of projects

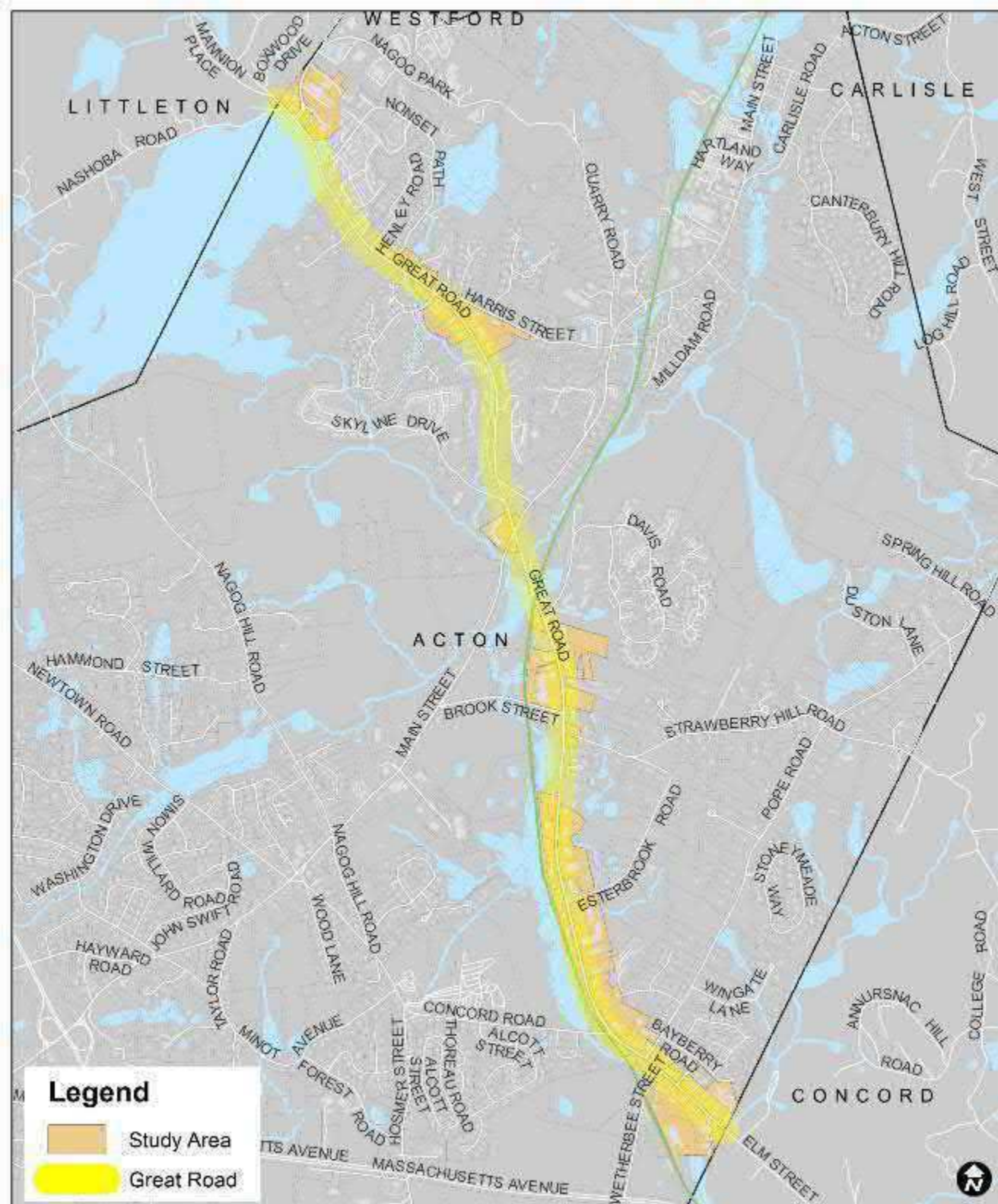
Phase III: Plans



- Create draft of Rapid Recovery Plan
- Gather community feedback on draft Plan and Project Recommendations
- Finalize Plan for submission to commonwealth

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Study Area





Phase I

Diagnostic Category

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Consumer Base:

- Who are the customers?
- What are their preferences and needs?

District Demographics

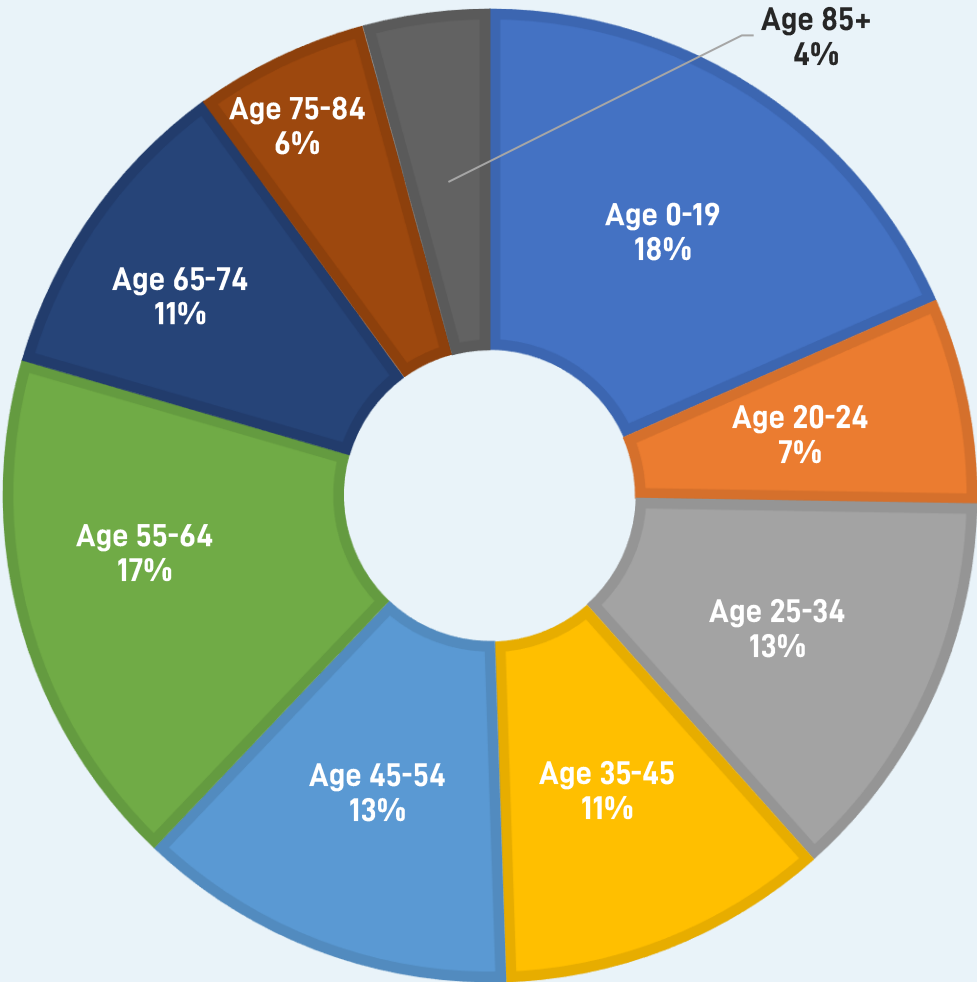


	Study Area	Whole Town
Total Resident Population	188	23,120
Median Household Income	\$110,368	\$145,150
Median Age	46	43.8
Median Household Size	1.7	2.7

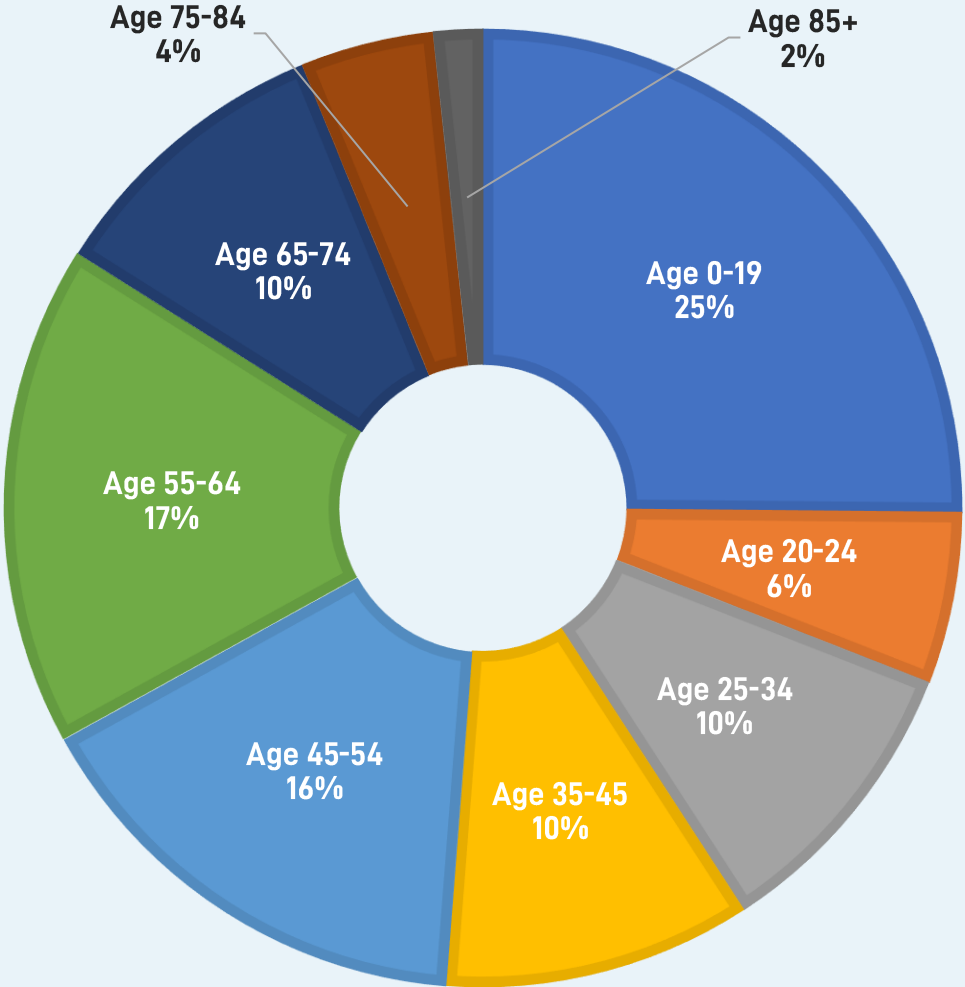
Population By Age Distribution



STUDY AREA



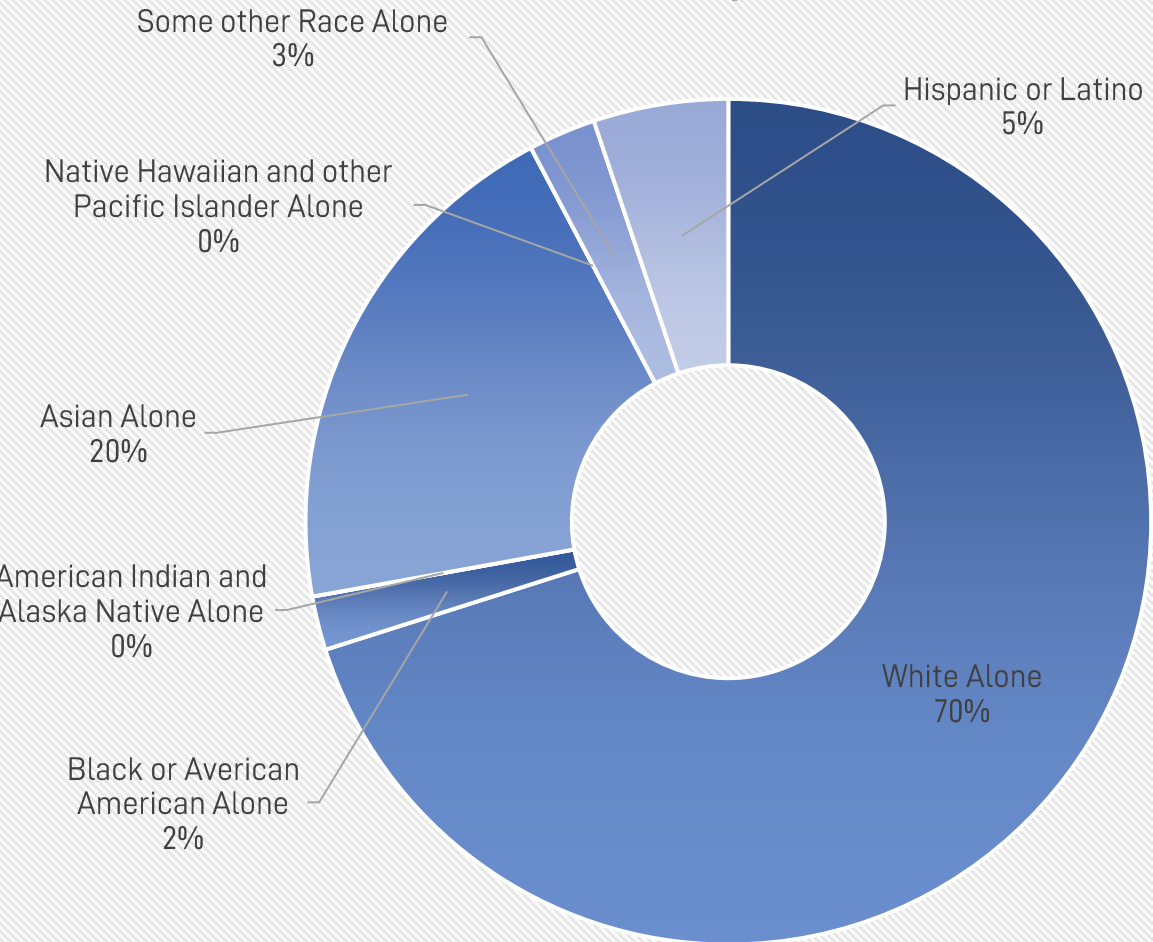
WHOLE TOWN



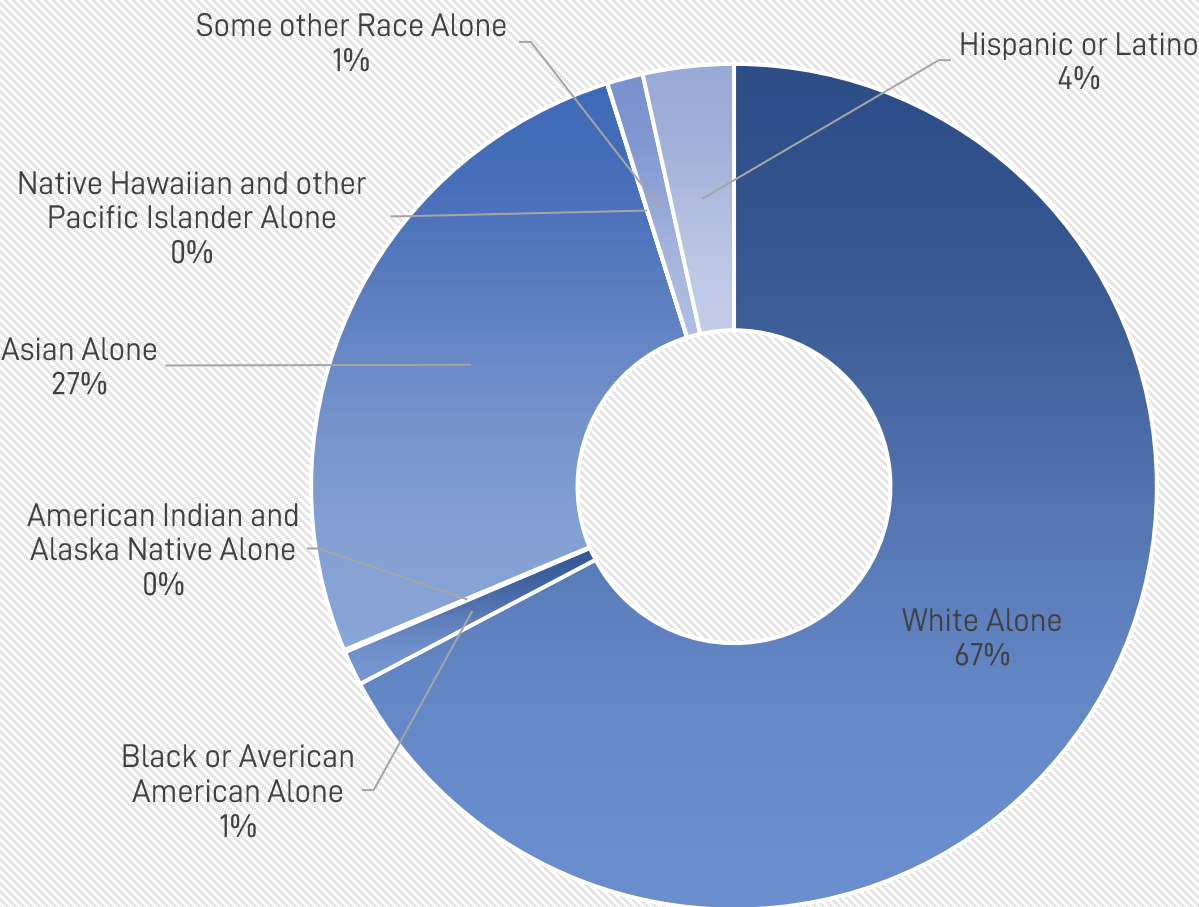


Population By Race/Ethnicity

Study Area

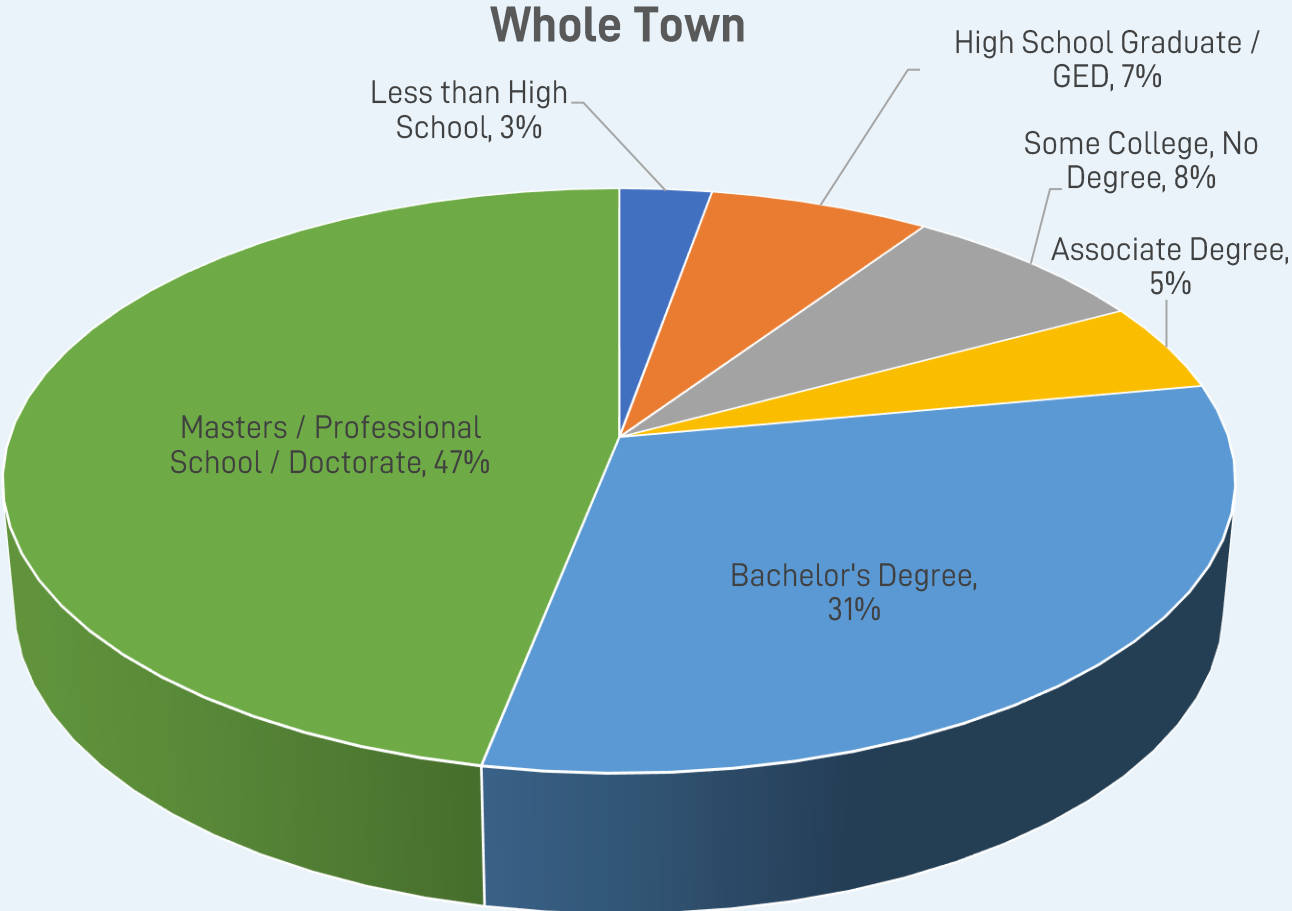
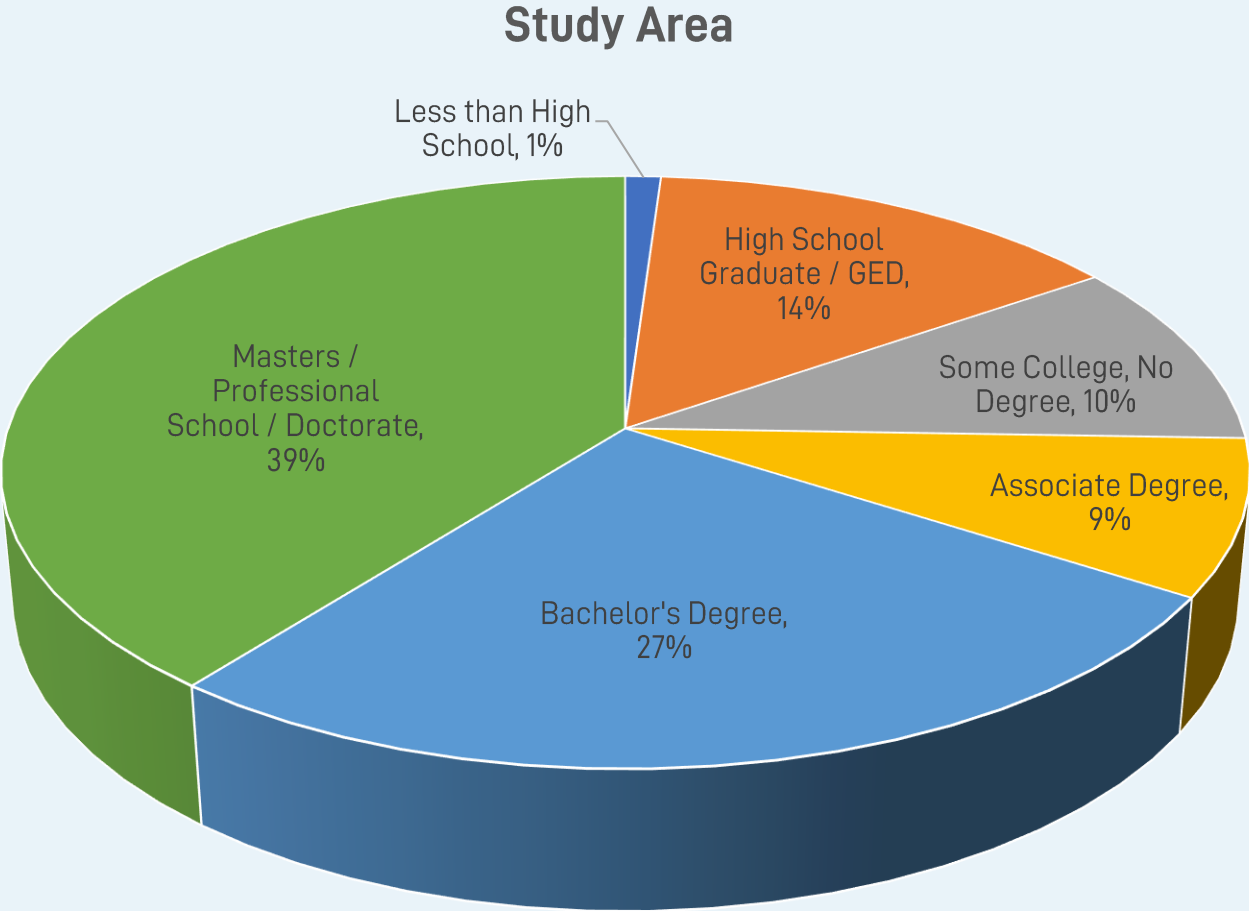


Whole Town





Population by Education Attainment





Phase 1

Diagnostic Category

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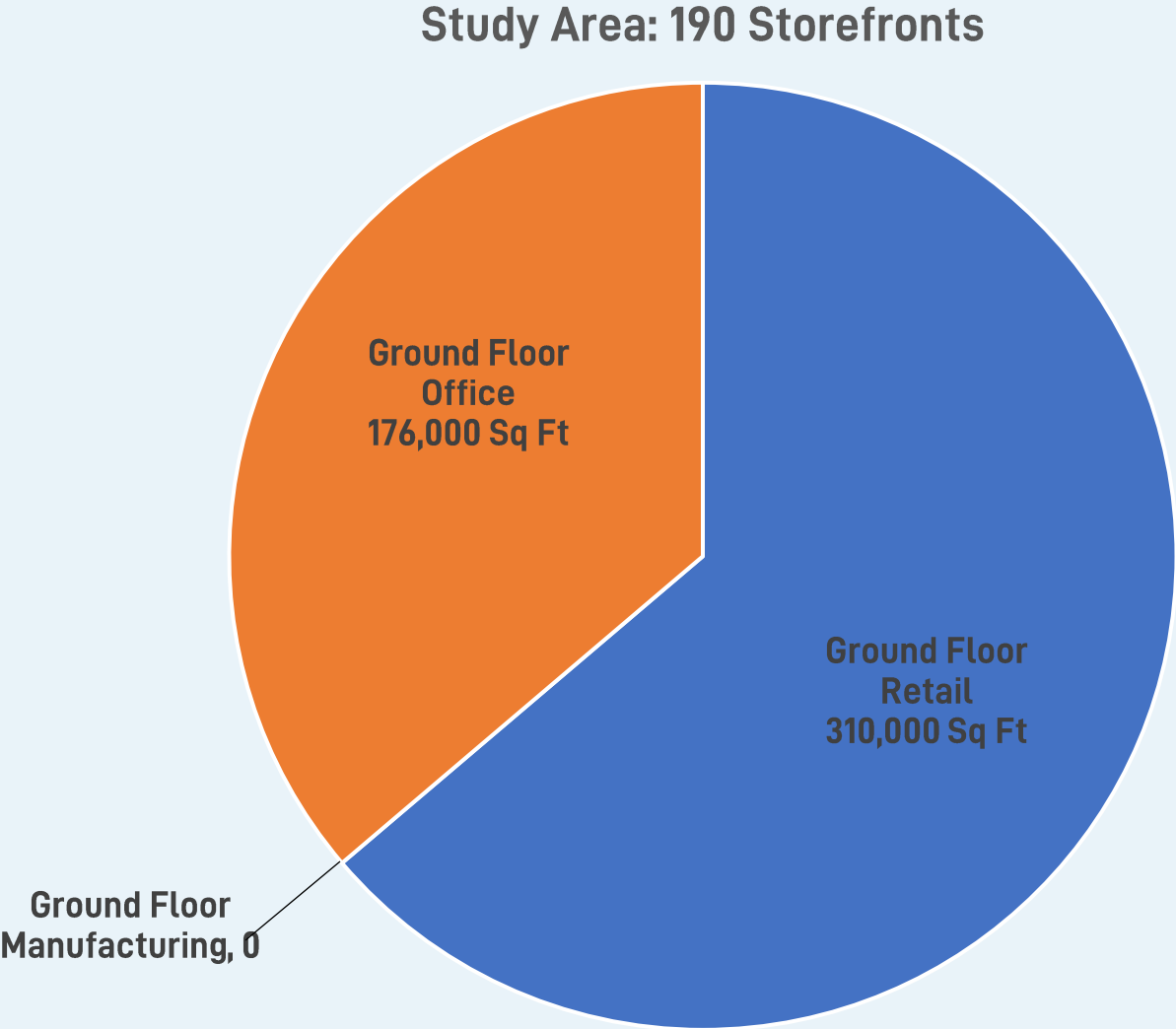
Business Environment:

- What are impacts of COVID-19 on businesses?
- Is there an anchor, destination, or mix of businesses driving the local economy?
- How well does the business mix meet customer groups?





Storefronts



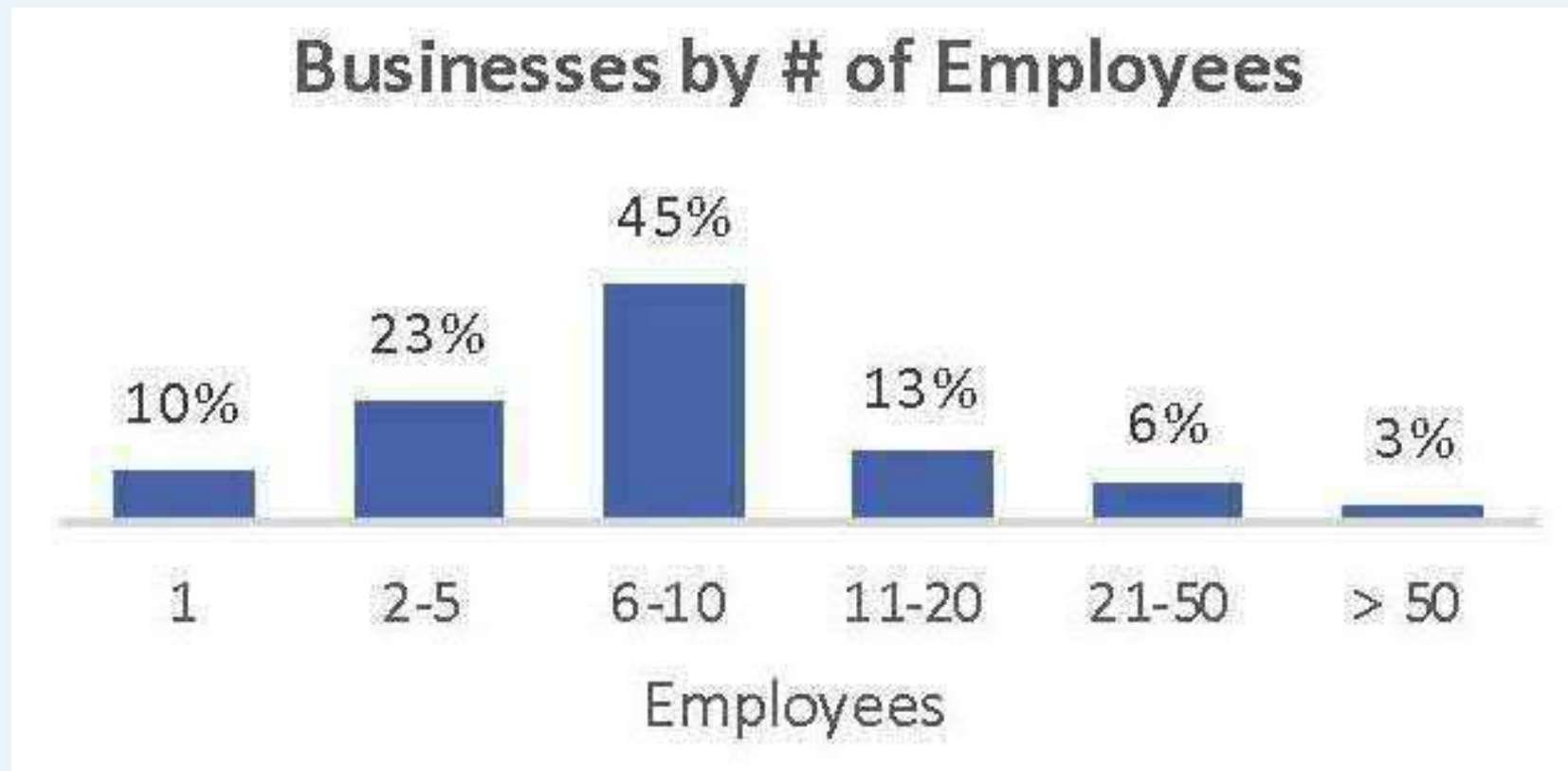
- Results of a business survey conducted during March and April of 2021
- Survey was launched by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- To help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for downtowns and commercial districts
- Directed to owners or other appropriate representatives of business establishments located in the targeted commercial area

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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Characteristics - Business Size

- **33% of businesses are micro-enterprises (<= 5 employees)**
- **78% of businesses have less than 10 employees**



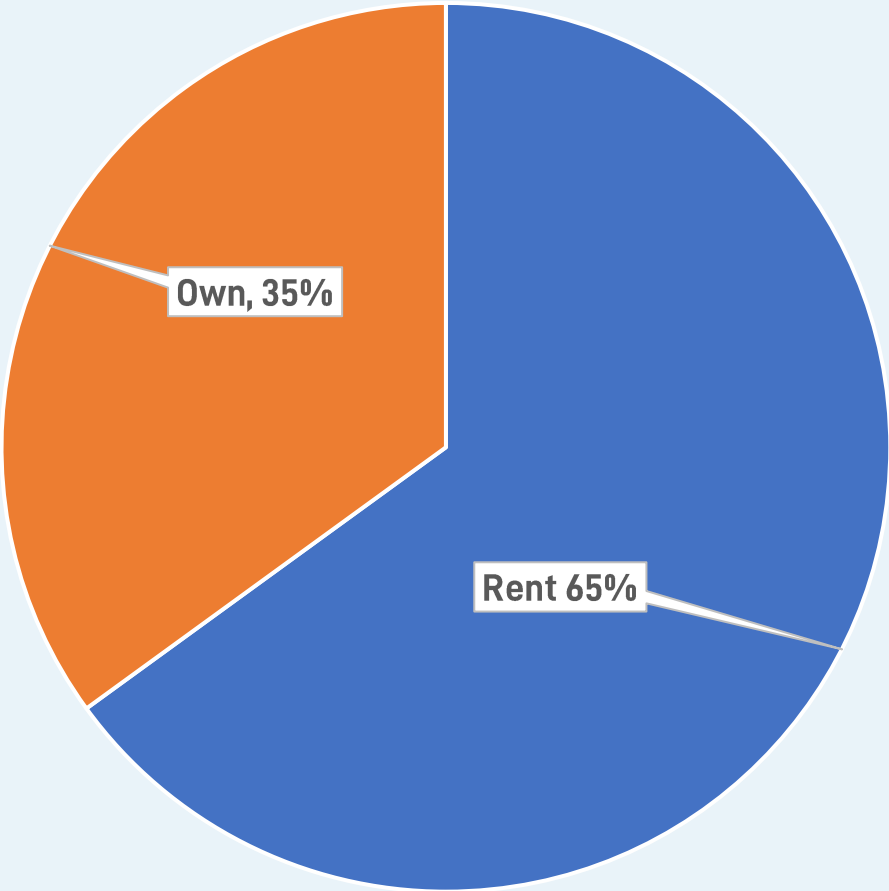
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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Characteristics - Business Tenure

- **65% of businesses rent their space**

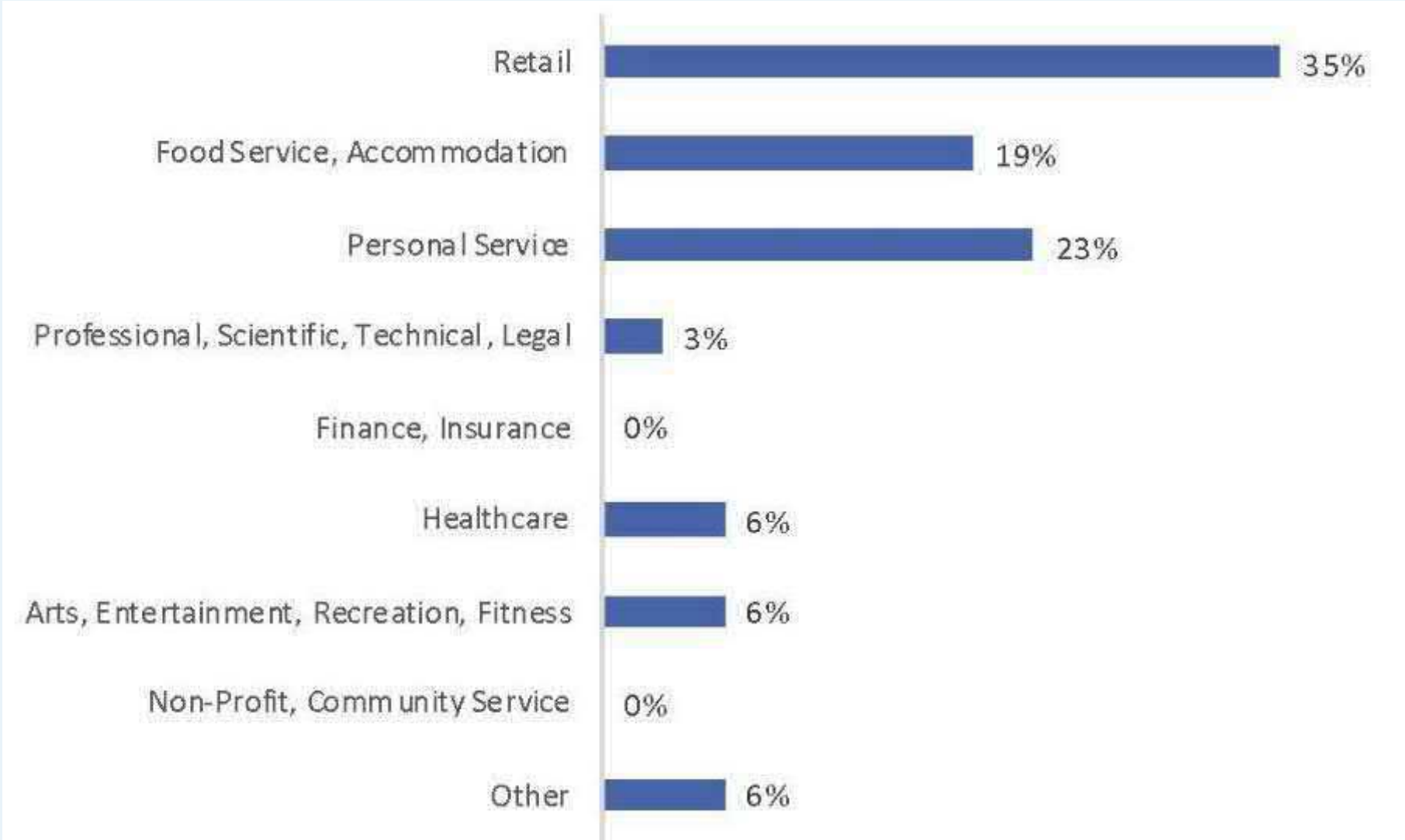
Owner VS Renter



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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Characteristics - Business Type



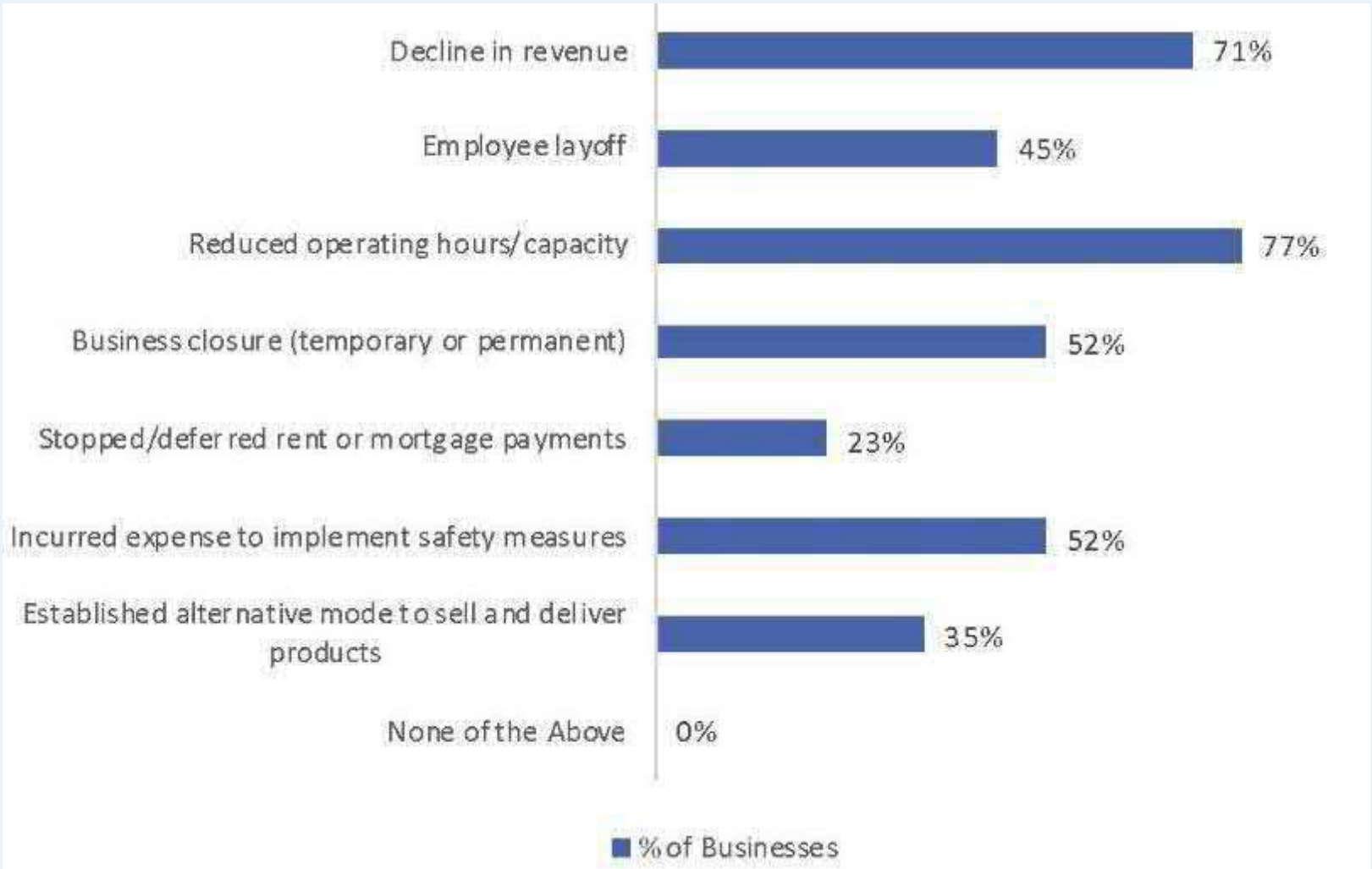
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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Reported Impacts

- **100% of Businesses reported being impacted by COVID**

COVID Impacts Reported by Businesses



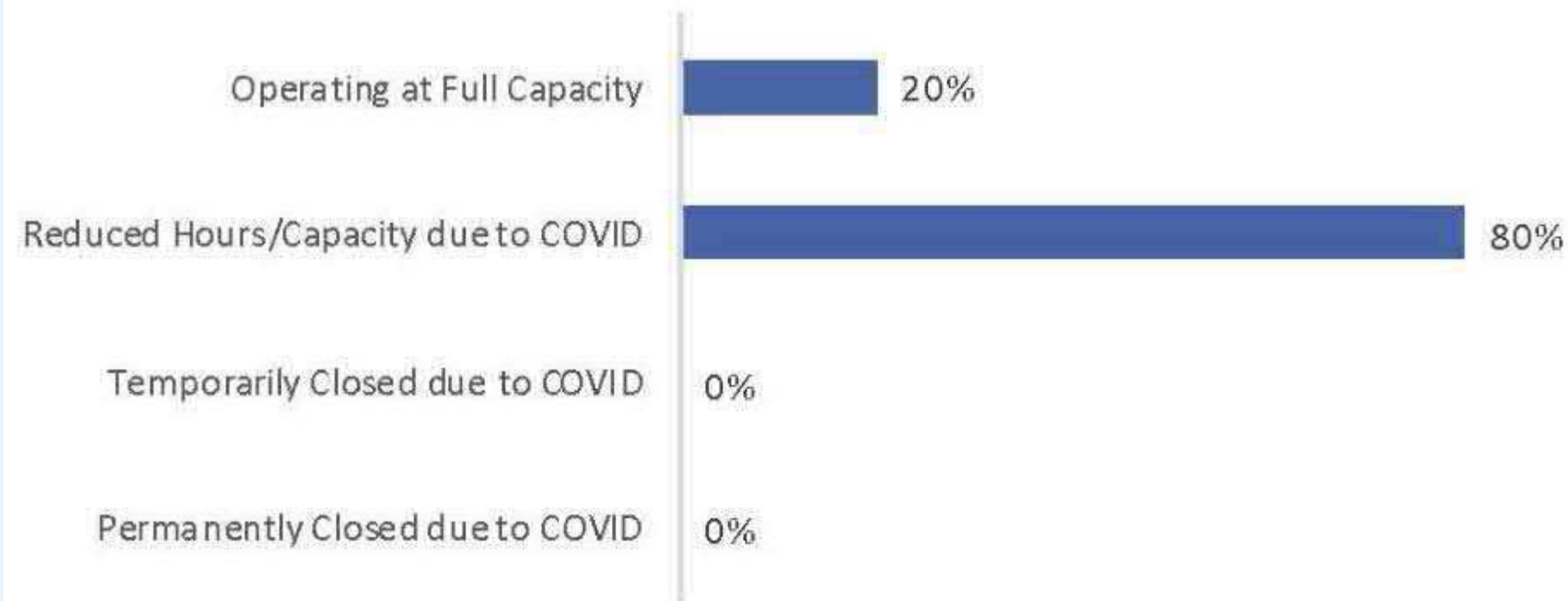
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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Operating Status

- At the time of the survey, 80% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours / capacity or closed

Current Operating Status of Businesses (March/April 2021)

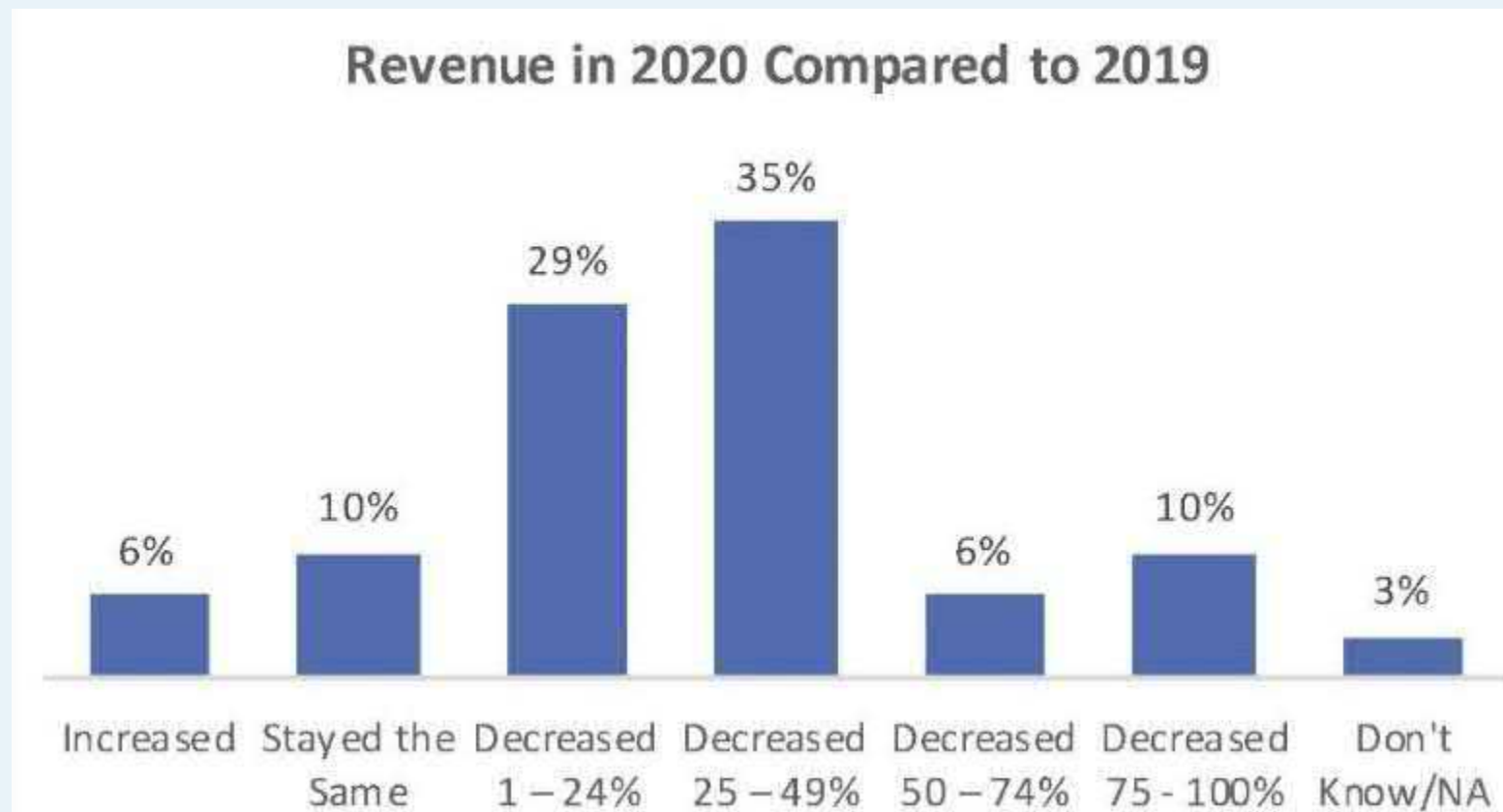


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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Decline in Business Revenue

- 80% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than in 2019
- For 51% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more

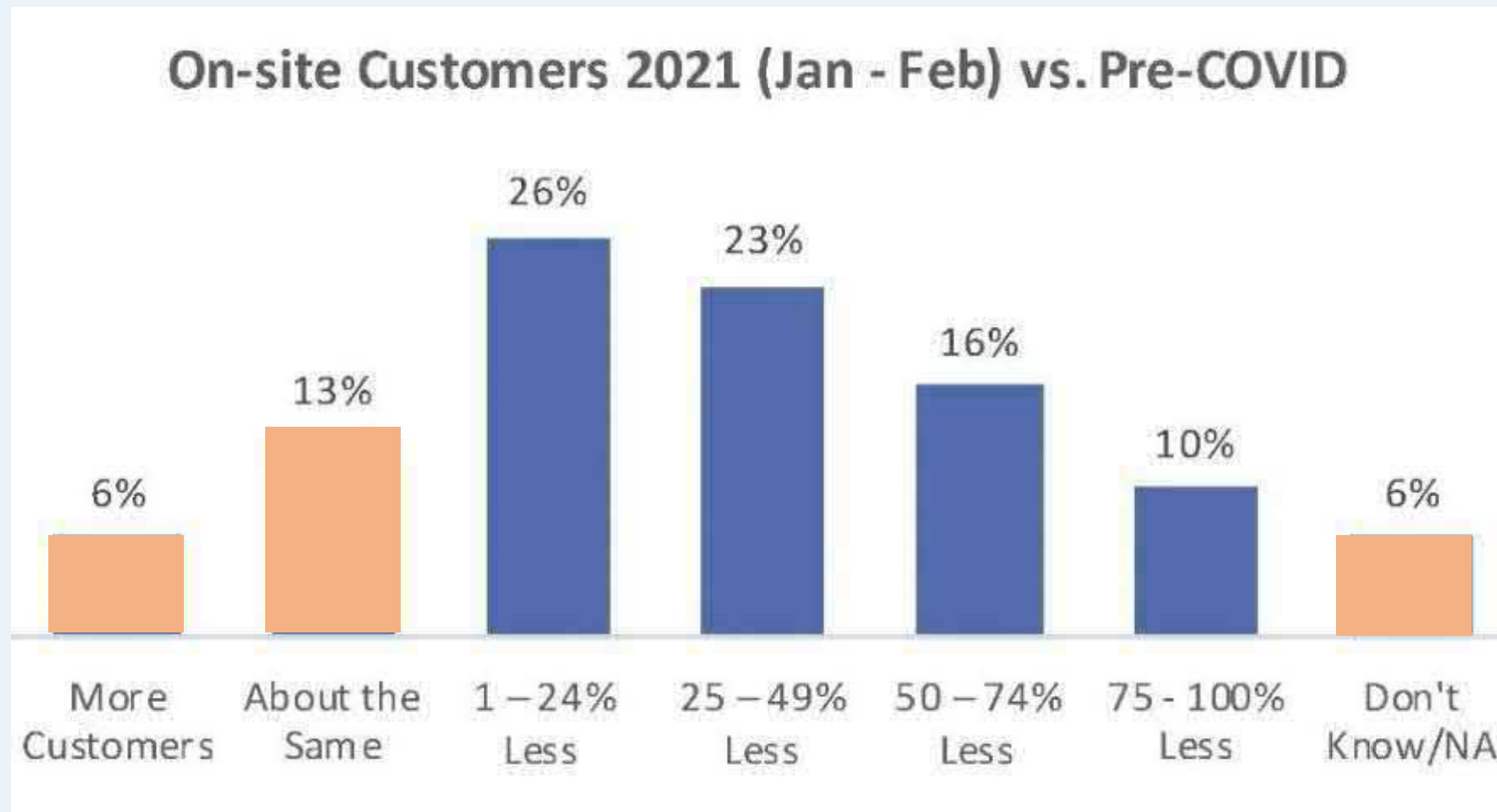


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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area

- **75% of businesses had less on-site customers in January/February of 2021 than before COVID**
- **49% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more**

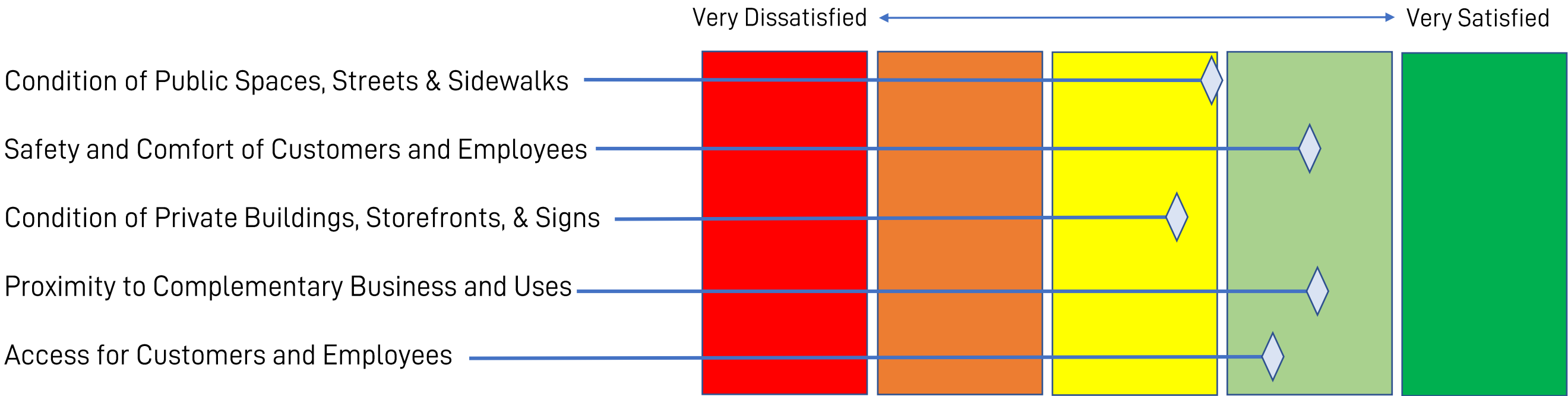


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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

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

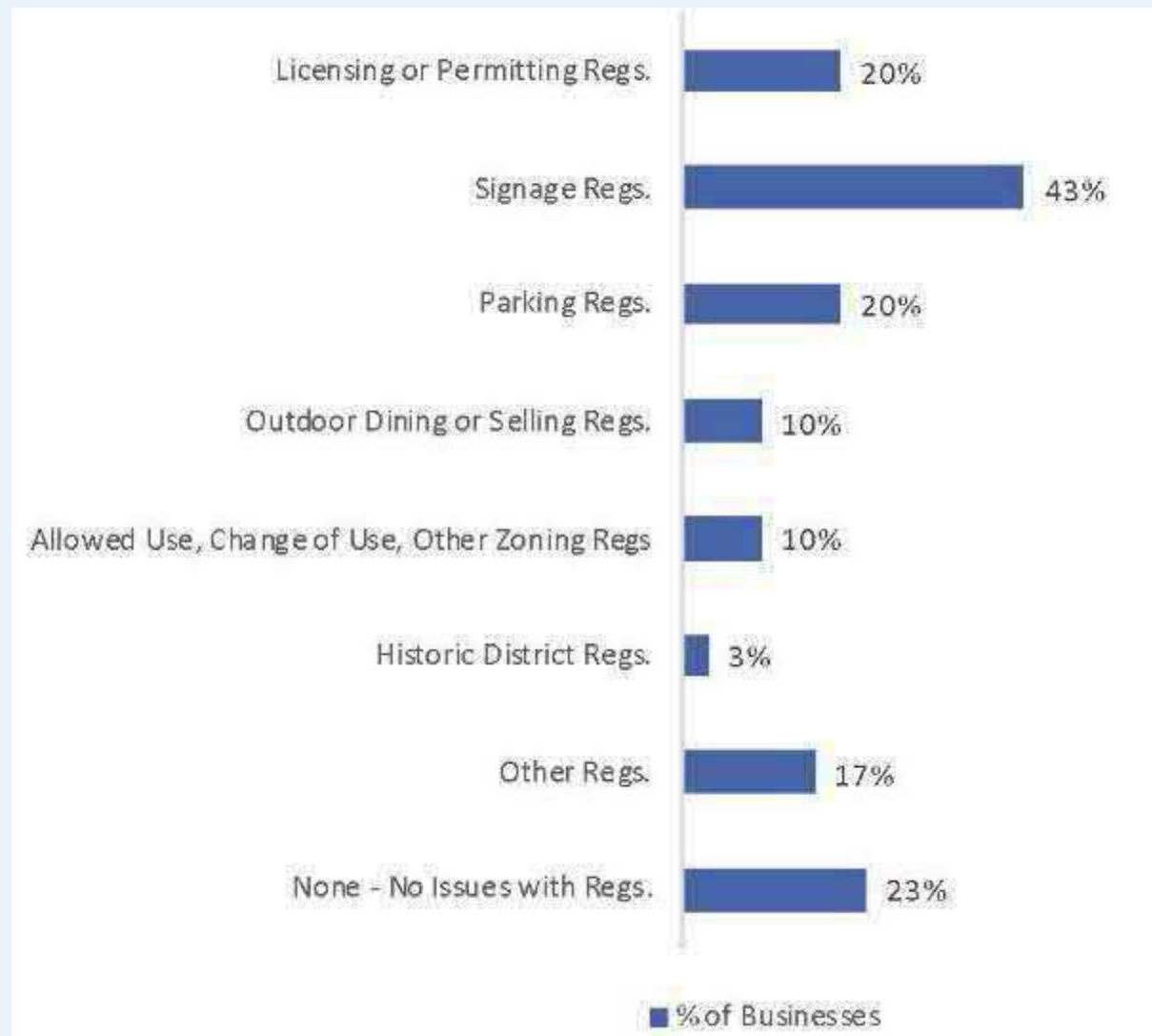


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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Satisfaction with Commercial District - Regulatory Environment

- **77% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation**

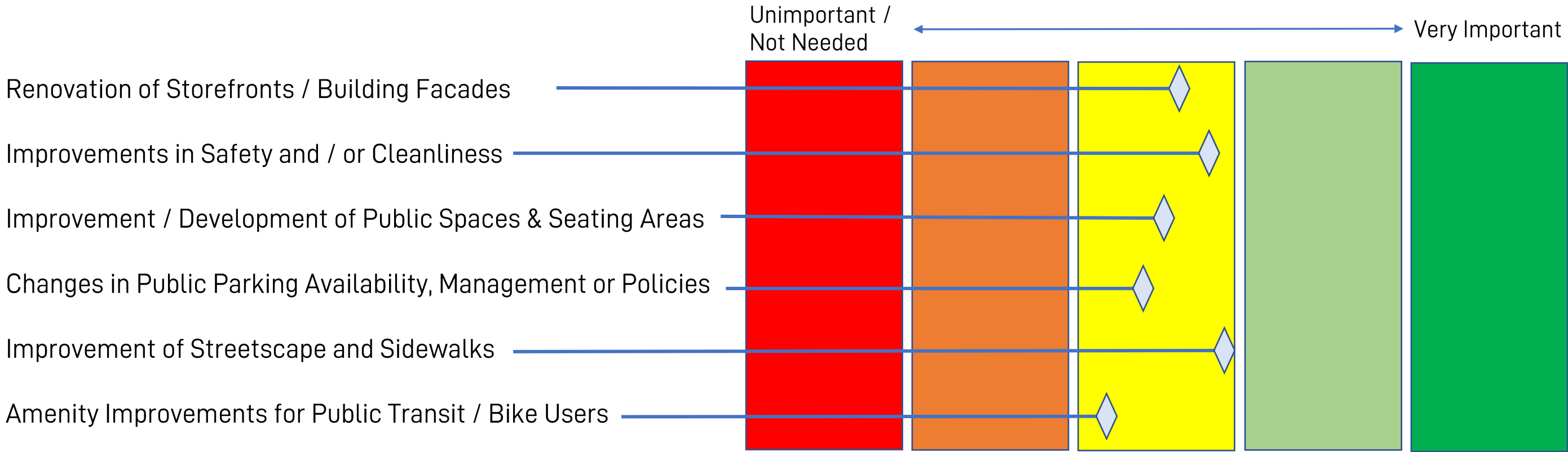


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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Input Related to Possible Strategies
• **Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access**

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



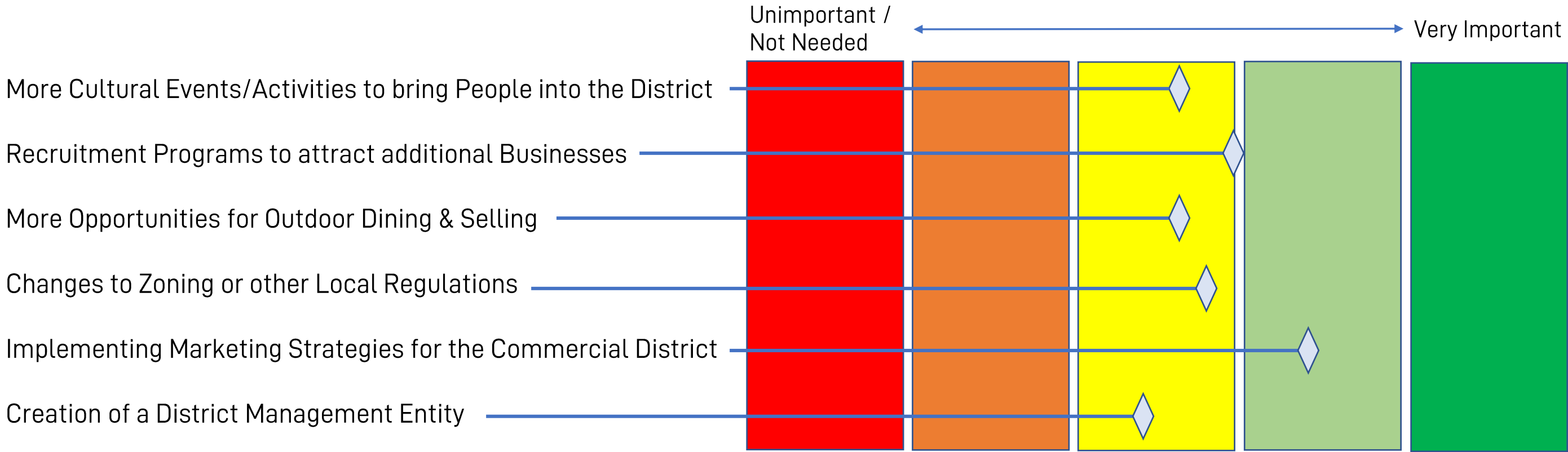
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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

- **Attraction / Retention of Customers and Businesses**

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



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Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

Business Input Related to Possible Strategies - Business Support

- **73% of businesses expressed interest in receiving assistance**





PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



Phase 1 Diagnostic Category

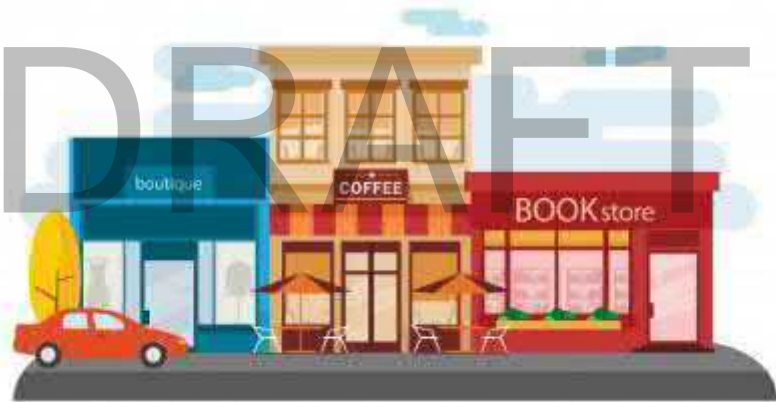
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Physical Environment:

- How is the physical environment meeting the needs of businesses?
- What are the challenges and opportunities:
 - Public Realm
 - Private Realm
 - Access + Visibility

Data Collection Analysis

Private Realm



Feature Grading	Most Positive			Least Positive
	A -	B -	C -	
Window				B
Outdoor Display/Dining				NA/FAIL
Signage				B
Awning				C
Lighting				B
Façade				B



Physical Environment: Private Realm

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SCORING RUBRIC				
ELEMENT	A	B	C	FAIL / NA
Windows <i>Windows are maintained and appear 70% transparent</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Storefronts are boarded up or windows have no transparency</i>
Outdoor Display / Dining <i>Attractive window displays / spillover restaurant & retail activity on sidewalks</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>There is no spillover retail / restaurant activity in the district</i>
Signage <i>Storefront signage reflects the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from a distance</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Storefronts in the study area do not have signage</i>
Awning <i>Awnings are retractable, well-designed, maintained, and clean</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings</i>
Façade <i>Facades should be attractive, well-maintained, and not require any major structural upgrades</i>	< 75%	<i>At least a few require major upgrades</i>	> 25%	<i>Nearly all properties in the study area require significant façade improvements</i>
Lighting <i>Interior storefront lighting after business hours improves the sidewalk lighting conditions</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Nearly all storefronts in the study area are shuttered and dark</i>

Data Collection Analysis

Public Realm

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Feature Grading	Most Positive			Least Positive
	A -	B -	C -	
Sidewalks				B
Street Trees - Benches				NA/FAIL
Lighting				NA/FAIL
Wayfinding - Signage				NA/FAIL
Roadbed - Crosswalks				B



Physical Environment: Public Realm

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SCORING RUBRIC

ELEMENT	A	B	C	FAIL / NA
Sidewalks <i>Sidewalks are clean, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>There are no sidewalks</i>
Street Trees and Benches <i>Street trees and benches are readily available and offer shade and offer opportunities to rest and socialize</i>	<i>Street trees and benches are readily available throughout out the project area</i>	<i>Street trees and benches have not been cleaned and require other improvements</i>	<i>Limited availability of street trees and benches results in an uncomfortable pedestrian experience</i>	<i>There are no street trees and benches</i>
Lighting <i>Street lighting improves pedestrian and motorist safety as well as highlights the history and identity of an area</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	<i>Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety</i>	<i>There is no street lighting</i>
Wayfinding / Signage <i>Cohesive wayfinding systems offer visual cues for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as direct motorists where to park and walk</i>	< 75%	<i>Wayfinding is primarily intended for motorists, little to no signage for pedestrians and bicyclists</i>	<i>Limited or no signage</i>	<i>There is no wayfinding / signage</i>
Roadbed and Crosswalks <i>Roads are well-maintained to ensure motorist and pedestrian safety and are balanced to the needs of different users</i>	< 75%	<i>At least a few require major upgrades</i>	> 25%	<i>The study area is not connected with major roads</i>

Existing Conditions

- Store fronts
- Window decorations
- Outdoor planters
- Lighting
- Limited outdoor seating (private)



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Existing Conditions

- Plaza / strip mall
- Pockets of retail / commercial use along Great Road



DRAFT

Existing Conditions

- Outdoor signage advertising businesses



DRAFT

Existing Conditions

- Temporary / road-side signage advertising businesses
- Typically only allowed 45 days per year / signage regulations loosened due to COVID



DRAFT

Existing Conditions

- ADA Accessibility
- Sidewalks / connectivity





ADMIN
CAPACITY

Phase 1 Diagnostic Category

Administrative Capacity:

- Who are the stewards of the study area?
- Are there adequate resources?
- Are regulatory, zoning, or permitting processes impediments to businesses?



ADMIN
CAPACITY

Phase 1 Diagnostic Category

Administrative Capacity:

- Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce (8 towns)
- Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail



SUMMARY



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What We Have Heard from Businesses



PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT



Businesses Least Satisfied with

- Condition of private buildings, store fronts, and signs

Improvement Strategies for Physical Environment

- Improvements of Streetscape and Sidewalks
- Improvements in Safety / Cleanliness



Regulations Pose an Obstacle to Business Operation:

- Signage Regulations: 43%

Improvement Strategies to Attract and Retain Customers

- Recruitment program to attract businesses
- Marketing strategies



**BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT**

Additional Strategies

DRAFT

- Bike Path – wayfinding / promote businesses
- Sidewalk gaps
- Business Improvement District (70% of owners required)
- Investigate feasibility of sewers
- Vacant storefront program match



COMMENTS



DRAFT

Comments

DRAFT

Next Steps:

- Gather & summarize additional information
- Develop recommendations
- Discuss with town staff
- Finalize plan and recommendations
- Final presentation: July - August
- Submit plan to DHCD: August

DRAFT

Thank You!

Appendix

APPENDIX C - Select Board Presentation

Local Rapid Recovery Plan

Impacts of COVID-19

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Acton, MA
Great Road Commercial Corridor
Steering Committee Update Meeting
August 19, 2021



Agenda

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Today's Meeting – 10:00-11:00AM

1. Introductions
2. Project Team | Schedule + Goals
3. Acton – Great Road Study Area
4. Recommended Projects
5. Q & A | Comments
6. Next Steps

Project Team

BETA Group

Jeff Maxtutis

- Plan Facilitator

DRAFT

Charlie Creagh

- Project Planner

Town of Acton

Kristen Guichard, AICP

- Planning Director / Zoning
Enforcement Officer

Kaila Sauer

- Assistant Planner

Local Rapid Recovery Plan

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Goals

PHASES

GOALS

COMPLETE

Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys



- Collect baseline diagnostic data
- Engage stakeholders to understand COVID impacts and district concerns
- Provide an overview of on-the-ground conditions within the Study Area

ONGOING

Phase II: Project Recommendations



- Consult key stakeholders on priority projects
- Refine design of projects with Subject Matter Experts
- Develop final list of projects

AUGUST-OCTOBER

Phase III: Plans



- Create draft of Rapid Recovery Plan
- Gather community feedback on draft Plan and Project Recommendations
- Finalize Plan for submission to commonwealth



BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT



Regulations Pose an Obstacle to Business Operation

- Signage Regulations: 43%

Improvement Strategies to Attract and Retain Customers

- Recruitment program to attract businesses
- Marketing strategies

Additional Strategies

- Bike Path – wayfinding / promote businesses
- Sidewalk gaps
- Business Improvement District (70% of owners required)
- Investigate feasibility of sewers
- Vacant storefront program match

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Recommended Projects



1. Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Signage

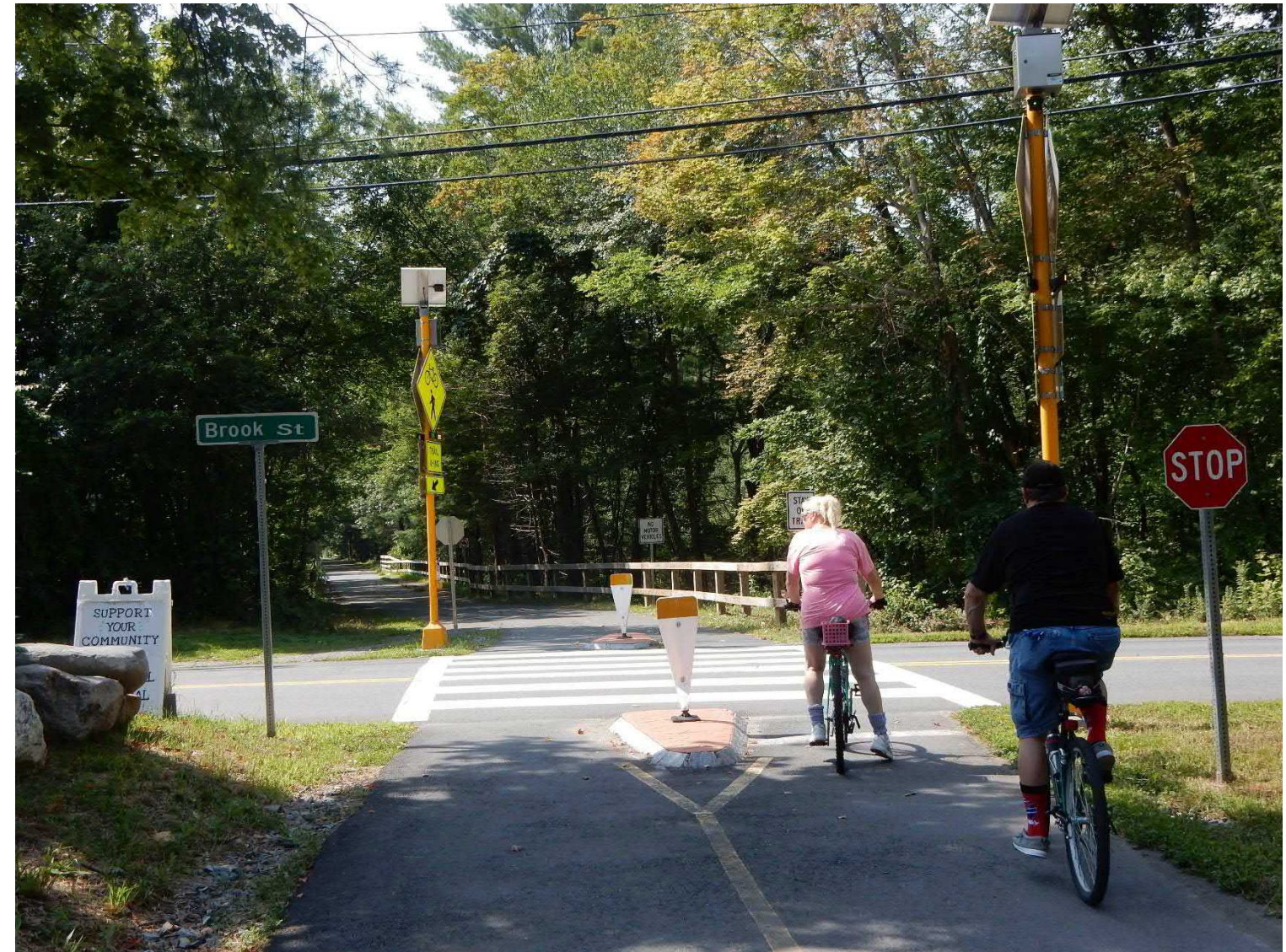
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Observations:

- There is a strong desire to create signage and formal connections from BFRT trail to Great Road businesses

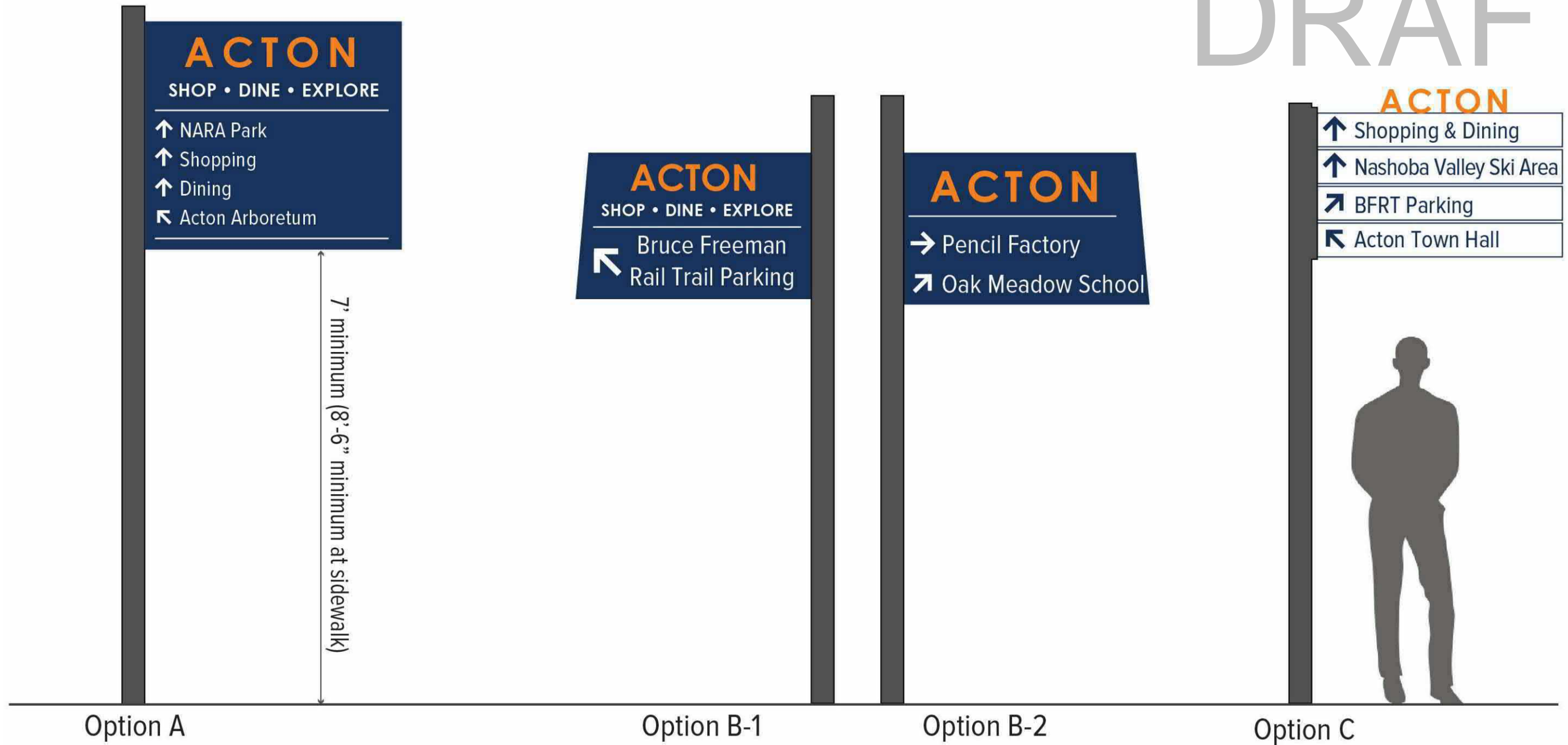
Recommendations:

- Generate wayfinding family signage options
- Solicit public feedback and input on sign choices and locations
- Potentially utilize ARPA money for sign installation
- SME: Neighborways



Signage indicating the proximity of Great Road businesses would encourage trail users to shop at local businesses

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2. Great Road Wayfinding Signage + Placemaking

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Observations:

- Signage along Great Road would reinforce the area as a commercial district that is open for business

Recommendations:

- Develop a brand for the Great Road corridor
- Generate wayfinding family signage options, consider pole banners
- Solicit public feedback and input on sign choices and locations
- Potentially utilize ARPA money for sign installation
- SME: Neighborways



Wayfinding and placemaking signage along Great Road would reinforce the area as a commercial / retail destination

3. Shared Marketing Campaign

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Observations:

- Strong desire indicated in the LRRP business owner survey for a Great Road business marketing campaign

Recommendations:

- Work in tandem with the Chamber of Commerce and other interested groups to offer shared marketing resources and workshops
- Encourage cross-marketing
- SME: Mondoforma



Folks attending a future cooking class at Kitchen Outfitters could receive a coupon for a discount at Blackbird Café, for example

4. Expand the Municipal Sewer System

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Observations:

- Very strong interest by business owners and property owners to increase sewer capacity to allow for other uses (restaurant, gym)

Recommendations:

- Study use of ARPA and MassWorks funding for possible sewer infrastructure expansion
- Perform critical public outreach, solicit input
- Forecast and share cost information
- Garner support from public officials, business owners
- SME: Innes Associates



The empty storefront pictured here at Brookside Shops in Acton is limited in future uses due to site septic requirements



COMMENTS



DRAFT

Comments

DRAFT

Next Steps:

- SME Meetings
- Finalize recommendations
- Discuss with town staff
- Finalize plan and recommendations
- Final presentation: September
- Submit plan to DHCD: October 8th

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Three SME Meetings:

1) Wednesday, August 25th @ 11:00am with Neighborways

- Discuss wayfinding along BRFT and along Great Road and placemaking at trail wayside behind Donelan's

2) Date To Be Determined

- Sewer expansion with Innes Associates

3) Date To Be Determined

- Shared Marketing with Mondoforo

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Thank You!

Appendix

APPENDIX D - Shared Marketing - Mondofoa Subject Matter Expert

PROJECT: Acton Shared Marketing Campaign

COMMUNITY: Acton, MA – Great Road Corridor

PLAN FACILITATOR: BETA Group

SME: Mondoforma (Cepheid Solutions Inc.)

Project Overview: The Town Planner and the Chamber of Commerce have identified the goals of expanding web-based presence and sales, and to cross-market businesses in support of the Great Road Corridor. Within this community, 53% of business survey responders expressed interest in participating in a shared marketing / advertising program in Acton.

Additional factors: The impact of the pandemic, combined with changing consumer behavior, competitive business operational efficiencies, and physical space utilization dynamics have had negative consequences for many small businesses and the existing retail centers in the Great Road Corridor. The net impact, if unaddressed, could be a potential threat to the business community and the local economy.

Advances in technology and its utilization can not only help to address these short-term challenges, but can also help the community to be better positioned for a future in which greater reliance on and incorporation of digital technologies will be endemic. It is in our interest to leverage the capabilities of a “digital downtown”, to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and to prepare for an increasingly competitive future economy in which being “online” will be a minimum requirement for all competitive businesses and communities.

Solution Guidelines: As with any project, there are some desired design features, specifications, and limitations that are identified as being important to any proposed solutions. Among these are:

- Leverage internet technologies to encourage local sales
- Enhance local businesses visibility
- Increase community awareness and cross-selling opportunities
- Facilitate events promotion and branding
- Facilitate wayfinding in the community
- Encourage creative space utilization
- Low-moderate cost to create
- Low-moderate cost to maintain
- Low-moderate manpower requirements
- Minimize ownership complexities
- Leverage ecommerce and online selling models and tools

Approach: Our initial thoughts were focused on retail shopping and marketing & messaging capability. But we recognized that these tools and resources, when combined with other readily available tools, can address many of the pandemic-related consequences while creating significant long-term value for the community. We will also provide suggestions for other projects which could help the business community address the space utilization question and provide a meaningful contribution to Acton retail, but whose specific project details are beyond the scope of this consultation.

Perhaps the greatest threat to local retail is the increasing consumer reliance on online shopping. The convenience and product selection provided by the giant e-commerce websites makes it easy for shoppers to opt for online shopping as the first resort when looking for specific products. The net result is that products are purchased and shipped from 300 miles away, even when available in a local store. The solution is to create a local search enabled marketplace which combines all the collective product selection of the local brick & mortar retail businesses, and the ease and convenience of shopping online.

We also identified solutions to address the needs of the community to create awareness and engagement. To ensure that Acton will be a “digitally rich” community, with the supporting organization, processes, and tools to effectively deliver a social media function. And lastly, we identified an inexpensive approach to personal and professional education and tech-enrichment to encourage digital sophistication.

Proposed Solutions: We are proposing three distinct but mutually beneficial projects, each of which addresses a specific aspect of the goals discussed with BETA Group and Town representatives. Each project can be developed and run independently, but each will also benefit from their mutually reinforcing nature. The projects include:

Local-Search enabled Multi-Vendor Marketplace – Ecommerce sales, as a percentage of total retail, grew dramatically as a result of the pandemic. Consequently, local retailers without an online sales channel lost sales. Even those with an online store are at a disadvantage as they won’t typically have the product selection of large sophisticated ecommerce marketplaces. Our proposed project is to provide a local-search enabled multi-vendor marketplace of the community’s vendors. This approach would create an online presence that can compete with the large e-tailers by offering broad product selection and the convenience of online shopping, while enabling online sales directly with local retailers. An advantage of this approach is that transaction services are provided by the platform but processing is directly between shopper and vendor.

The marketplace can be built as a part of a large local-search enabled platform, as an Acton-only marketplace, or as a combination of the two. By leveraging already existing technologies and platforms, the cost – in dollars, manpower, and administration – are reduced to the customization costs of geographic market

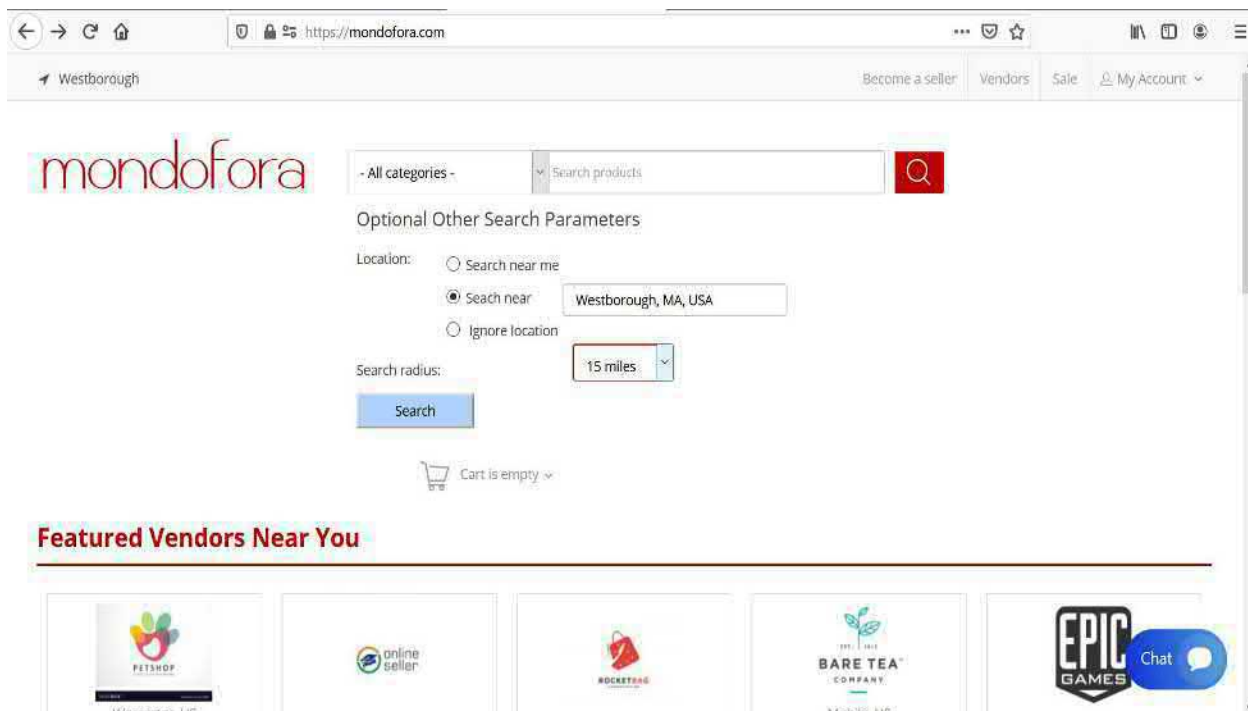
segmentation and, if desired, establishing a URL-redirect capable sub-domain on the marketplace server.

To be effective, this marketplace would need to on-board a minimum number of retailers, upload their inventory, train them in the management and administration of their e-store, and discuss strategies to leverage their new online sales capability. Additionally, a local marketplace would benefit greatly from a coordinated outreach and engagement messaging project.

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Cost (est)</u>	<u>Time (est)</u>
Create Geographic Subdomain & URL	\$1000 (opt.)	1 week
Outreach to Retailers	\$3000 - \$10,000	3 weeks
Onboard Retailers & Inventory	\$200/store	4-10/day
or Self-Onboarding (free tools & tutorials)	\$0/store	~3 hrs/store
Training (Webinar, group trg, - 100 people)	\$1000/webinar	1/day
or Training (in-person, store trg – 10 ppl)	\$500/store	2/day
or Self-Training (free tools & tutorials)	\$0/store	1 – 10 hrs/store
Strategic Application session	\$5000	1/day
or ongoing Newsletter & Video	\$0	ongoing
Total (range)	\$8000 - \$25,000	6 – 12 weeks

Here are a few screenshots of what a local-search enabled marketplace could look and act like:



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Figure 1: Homepage, where the shopper identifies his location and radius of search

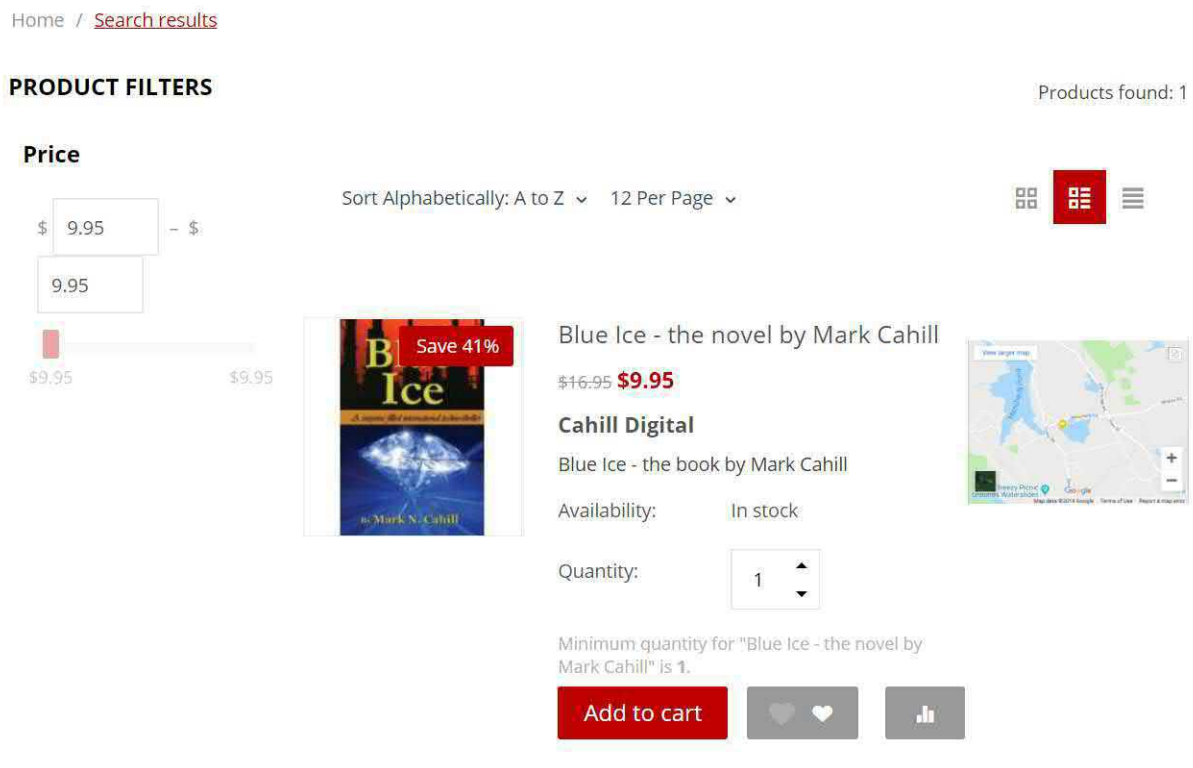


Figure 2: Search Results page, showing Product, Vendor, Price, and Location

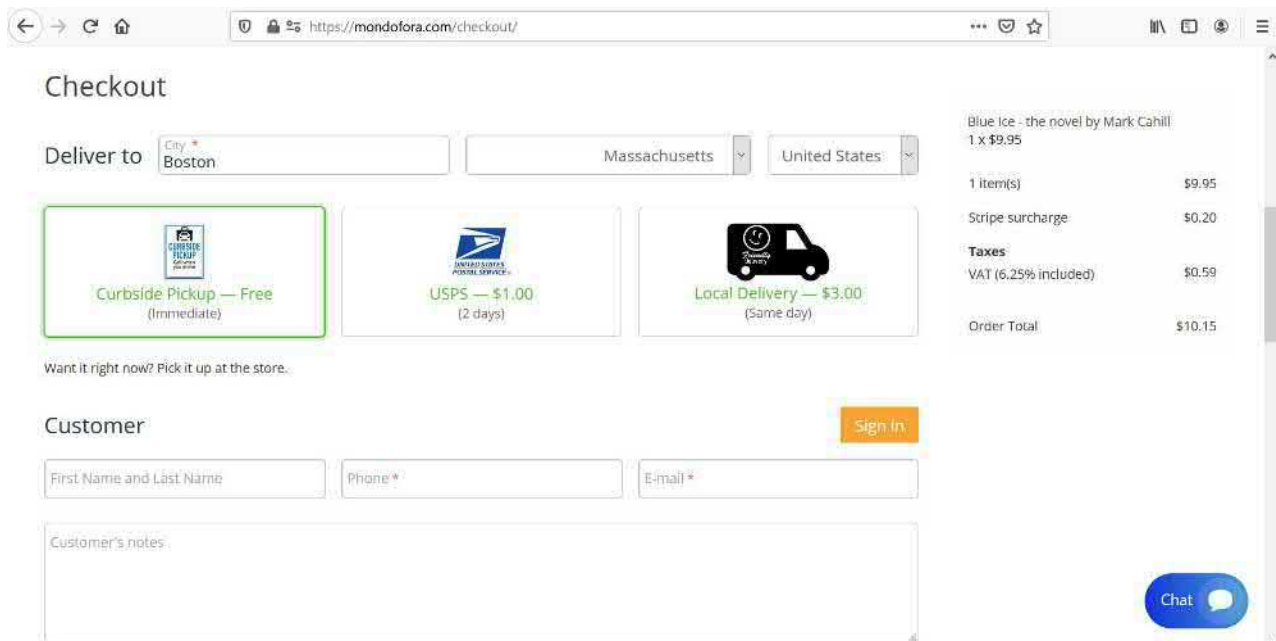


Figure 3: Fulfillment Selection page, showing Vendor-specific fulfillment options (this can include local pickup and courier-delivery options that non-local cannot)

Coordinated Communications Program – This recommendation is for the establishment of an intentionally designed organization (people and activities) which will collectively create and promote messaging to create awareness of the retail community’s initiatives (Marketplace, events, goals, etc) and encourage enthusiasm and participation in these activities.

The first step in this process is recognizing a shared objective – to create and manage a coordinated messaging program for businesses in the community. This objective is shared among multiple constituencies in the community – businesses, residents, municipal government, community organizations, the media (traditional media and social media), each having their own agenda, mindset, and messages. The second step is establishing the resources and processes to get these different constituencies to collaborate and message their respective audiences in a coordinated and complementary manner. The strength of this project is not in creating a single powerful marketing group, but in leveraging the combined strength of many voices to create a unified and effective communication eco-system.

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Cost (est)</u>	<u>Time (est)</u>
Initial planning session	\$200	1 week
Identify grp reps and coordinator (volunteer?)	\$0	3 weeks
Initial Training	\$500	1 day
Ongoing Training	\$200 -\$500/month	4 hrs/month
Consolidate Editorial Calendars	\$0	2 days
Content Development	\$0 - \$1000/month	4 – 16 hrs/mo
Operate Program	\$0 - \$1000/month	4 hrs/month
Planning & Coordination	\$0	1 – 3 hrs/weekly
<u>Program Reporting</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>1 hr/week</u>
Total (to launch)	\$900	3 wks
Total (ongoing)	\$200 - \$2500/mo	ongoing

Education and Certification program – The world is changing quickly. To implement a “digital downtown” community that can fully leverage the on-going changes in technology, the community would benefit from an education, or community enrichment, program.

A community managed (or outsourced) program could offer a structure for different levels of proficiency. The courses could be offered either via internally developed content or through external content which has been reviewed & approved by Town Management or the Chamber. To provide motivation, each level could come with a “digitally trained” certification. Proposed certification levels: Internet Practitioner, Internet Manager, and Internet Master.

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Cost (est)</u>	<u>Time (est)</u>
Stakeholder interviews	\$250	1 week
Design syllabi	\$125	1 week
Develop Trainings (3 Webinar presentations)	\$2000	3 weeks
Conduct 3 sessions (recorded for reuse)	\$600	ongoing
Identify Additional sources of content	\$250	3 weeks
Evaluation/certification	TBD	ongoing
Messaging to the community	\$0	1 hr/week
Total	\$3,225	5 wks

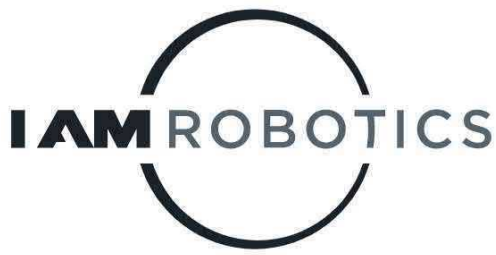
Additional Solutions (outside scope): Consistent with the goals of creating retail capability, augmenting sales, and utilizing retail space in the Great Road Corridor, we want to recommend the relevant parties to further explore two specific opportunities. These were both discussed with the community and have great potential, but are beyond the specified scope of this specific engagement.

The first is related to online commerce, and specifically to local-search enabled marketplaces. This is the concept of the Micro-Fulfillment Center (MFC) – essentially a mini warehouse-like space which provides local product fulfillment without a retail store attached. MFC's can represent a single store or multiple stores, and are becoming a popular efficient local retail functionality. An article on MFC's will be provided.

The second goes by the description of “pop-up space” essentially short-term space – typically either holiday related retail (Halloween store, Christmas store, etc.) or short-term shared space, such as a farmer's market or flea market. These are typically low-infrastructure needs spaces, with short-term usage. They are quick to set up and disassemble, and can be tied to a larger community event planning process. They do, however, require a messaging strategy and coordination to ensure community awareness and engagement.

Adjacencies: It is tempting to think of these kinds of projects in isolation. However, they are likely to both benefit and complicate other aspects of town operations, and other LRRP projects under consideration. As an example, online sales and community engagement will impact other aspects of the community – such as parking, traffic flow, signage, etc. It would be worthwhile considering how the community could leverage their benefits.

Some of the changes to be considered would include: modifications for Curbside Pickup (Parking area layout, signage, traffic flow, etc), Internal Layout (Online Purchase pickup area, floor plan, wayfinding, etc), Staff Training (new business models, customer service, online chat, marketplace administration and inventory uploading, etc.), and considerations for community space like roadways, sidewalks, public parking, landscaping, etc. These specific items are beyond the scope of our analysis, but should be considered as part of an ongoing process of development and modernization.



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HOW WILL MICRO-FULFILLMENT CENTERS CHANGE THE RETAIL INDUSTRY?

Micro-fulfillment centers (MFCs) are small warehouses that are compact enough to place almost anywhere, and they are designed to fulfill online orders fast and efficiently, close to where customers live. To satisfy the expanding demand for e-commerce fulfillment, click-and-collect, and home delivery, MFCs seek to transform last-mile delivery logistics so that on-demand e-commerce can become a profitable and scalable business model.

Consumer Demands

The modern-day grocery store was developed in 1916 by Clarence Suanders when he launched his grocery chain, Piggly Wiggly. It offered customers a full-service store that displayed items on shelving, with price tags, and available for customers' inspection. It linked fulfillment and marketing, and the business model has stayed relatively unchanged since that time.

The definition of a grocery store, however, may be changing from “a place to shop” to “a place of convenience at the right moment within people’s lives.” In fact, four factors are responsible for creating a new normal:

- **Urbanization.** Fifty-four percent of the world’s population live in urban areas, and this number is expected to rise to 68% by 2050.
- **Instant Gratification.** Consumers have become increasingly impatient waiting on their stuff to be delivered. They want it now.
- **Access to Anything.** Consumers expect online retailers to offer a seemingly unlimited variety of products.
- **Convenience.** Consumers demand a fast and easy ordering process and free delivery.

Supply Chain Challenges

In addition to the challenges that evolving consumer demands create, retailers also must contend with evolving challenges in the supply chain:

- **Lack of Space.** Industrial and logistical real estate vacancies are at near record lows.

- Shortage of Labor. The labor crunch is trending worse every year as a result of the baby-boom generation aging out of the workforce just as the younger tech-centric generations enter the workforce, uninterested in manual labor.
- The Need for Speed. Retailers are under pressure to increase click-to-door speed to satisfy the consumer desire for near-immediate delivery.

In the past, retailers in all categories could differentiate themselves based on the brands they carried, the assortment they offered, and how they priced their products. This is no longer the case. In the new marketplace, speed and convenience have become the fourth pillar of retail differentiation.

The rise of e-commerce is the result of this drive toward speed and convenience. Retail stores are now brick and mortar as well as virtual. In many cases, stores are only virtual, marketing is digital, and the entire store is online in the customer's hand. Retailers are seeking to adapt, and one way they are doing so is embracing MFCs because they offer certain key advantages:

- Their hyperlocal placement means they are close enough to where shoppers live to dramatically reduce last-mile delivery costs.
- They require a significantly lower initial investment. Several MFCs can be built for the cost of one huge automated distribution center..
- They offer retailers the flexibility necessary to make targeted and strategic decisions about its automated e-commerce fulfillment.

Additionally, MFCs make e-commerce accessible to a broader range of retailers by lowering the major cost barriers:

- Lower picking labor costs through automation
- Lower last-mile costs with hyperlocal placement
- Lower real-estate costs by condensing into smaller spaces

The Last-Mile Battleground

For retail industries in which profit margins are slim, last-mile logistics have become the battleground for a competitive advantage. MFCs have the potential to shift the entire landscape on this battlefield. By building in dense urban settings where more than half the population lives, retailers can reduce the cost of last-mile delivery by simply shortening ship-to-door distance. Retailers who can lower last-mile related costs will be at a competitive advantage.

The growth of MFCs does not happen in a vacuum, however, and retailers must consider the impact of other factors such as the expansion of small format urban stores and last-mile delivery by robots. These factors and others have prompted variations on MFCs, such as “dark stores” and converting some space inside store buildings into MFCs.



A Competitive Advantage

MFCs change the path of a product. At the store level, product moves from the warehouse to the store’s backroom, and then to the store floor. Online orders then oftentimes require the product to move from the store floor back to the backroom before it is sent out for delivery. MFCs simplify this path, requiring a product simply to go from the MFC to the store’s backroom, and then to the customer’s door. Sometimes, the trip to the backroom is unnecessary because the backroom is the MFC.

Changes are already being seen in the grocery industry. Demand for online ordering and direct-to-consumer grocery delivery have created a shift with grocery store center aisle products. While consumers may still want to select their produce in store, many have realized that significant time can be saved by allowing someone else to shop for pre-packaged goods. Since 2003 Americans are spending less time shopping. Consumers spent 12 hours per month shopping in 2003, as compared to 10 hours per month in 2018. As a result, grocery stores are shrinking the center of the store and enhancing the experience associated with the perimeter where fresh produce is on display.

It is only a matter of time when hyperlocal MFCs will become a foregone conclusion in the operating plans of grocery stores of the future. Centralized fulfillment simply cannot get products to consumers fast enough. New methods for picking, packing, and shipping are essential to maintaining a competitive edge in the shifting market. Industry experts predict that the principles of MFCs and related automation are most likely to be incorporated directly into local retail stores through on-site micro-warehousing because of the following:

- Grocery stores are already full of inventory that can be used for e-commerce.
- Goods-to-person fulfillment automation is more accessible than ever with low-cost mobile picking robots that are more cost-effective and reliable than manual labor.
- Retailers can reduce last-mile delivery costs.

While retailers and brands have been built on consistency, name recognition, and loyalty, the marketplace has changed. Consumer expectations and behavior are different and evolving, and they are driving retailers to change and adapt or be left behind.

IAM Robotics is a mix of robot and automation experts, tinkerers, and problem solvers, who have been addressing problems in logistics and the supply chain for years.

IAM Robotics' team of world-class engineers are focused on delivering innovation and operational value that is transforming the material handling industry.

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Home > Industry Solutions > Micro-Fulfillment

Micro-fulfillment centers: Bringing fulfillment closer to the customer

A simple and compact last-mile delivery solution that can be placed anywhere, especially where real estate space is limited or cost-prohibitive.

Streamline the supply chain to customer flow, while maintaining a seamless and uninterrupted customer experience around online fulfillment. Increase fulfillment capacity as demand rises and your business grows.

A flexible, data-driven and robotic solution that won't become obsolete as the market changes allows you to leverage new technologies as they emerge. You can optimize the center by efficiently integrating automated and manual picking.



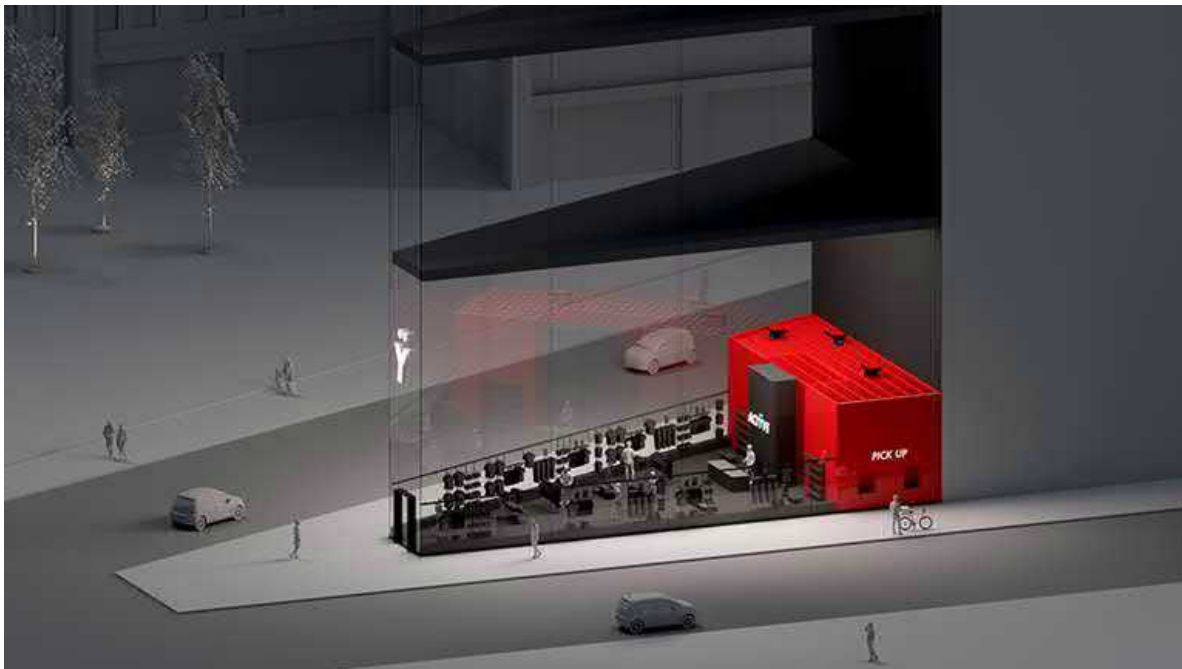
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A modular solution for a variety of applications

Automated micro-fulfillment centers can be a perfect solution for general merchandise retailers, as well as non-retailers, like manufacturers and distributors.

As demand for e-grocery services increases, micro-fulfillment centers have become an ideal solution for grocers wanting to move fulfillment closer to customers for curbside pickup or home delivery.

It can be especially attractive to pure-play e-grocers who don't have retail stores that can serve as fulfillment hubs, easily storing between two to five days of grocery inventory.



Fast and efficient automated micro-fulfillment centers

Standardization is Key

Standardized processes. Easy and fast installation. Ramp up in months. Scale up at your own pace by adding modules.



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Modular Software

Swisslog SynQ software enables seamless management and optimization.



Ultra High-Density Storage

Maximize your inventory at hand while saving floor space.



Click & Collect

Seamless pick up points to collect eCom orders in dedicated areas. Collect orders in just a few minutes. Ideal for buy online & pick up in store.



Brownfield Locations

Fully customizable solution. Fit for purpose. Any facility, any height, any shape will do.



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Best-in-class automation

There are a range of automation technologies and solutions to choose from as you build your automated micro-fulfillment center.

- The AutoStore automated storage system efficiently picks and stores product to make better use of available space and increase the efficiency of the goods-to-person processes.
- The CycloneCarrier shuttle storage and retrieval system delivers high throughput and storage capacity for storing small loads fast and efficiently.
- The CarryPick storage and order picking system quickly adapts to changing customer demands and SKU sizes and makeup.



CycloneCarrier: Dynamic shuttle storage and retrieval system

Swisslog's automation experts can help you determine the best automation strategy for your micro-fulfillment efforts and identify the automation technologies needed to stay competitive. They can work directly with you and your unique business needs to ↑

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implement quickly. Schedule an appointment to talk with Swisslog automation experts today.

Winning The Last Mile In The Supply Chain Race : Using Micro-Fulfillment To Synergize Online & Storefront

COVID-19 has further accelerated MFC growth, as well as presented challenges to the growth of MFCs. Consumers are rewarded with increased choice, shorter delivery times and efficient curb-side pickup options thanks to MFCs. A more efficient order fulfillment method can be utilized – one that reduces labor and transport costs, avoids clogging retail stores with pickers, and supports higher order demand levels. In this White Paper you will learn:

- How to utilize automation to maximize efficiency and profitability
- How to synergize online and storefront using MFCs
- The future of MFCs
- The importance of partnering with an experienced automation provider to achieve optimal efficiency and profitability outcomes that has extensive experience with other models such as Dark Stores and Central Fulfillment Centers (CFCs).



Appendix

APPENDIX E - Wayfinding - Neighborways Design Subject Matter Expert

Mission

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To help communities rapidly transform streets into safer, more beautiful places for everyone.



neighborwaysdesign

Connected Neighbors

Beautiful Neighborhoods

Slow Streets

Goals / Performance Indicators

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- Meet with local business owners and members of the public to distribute signage options and solicit feedback.
- Increase the number of people walking, biking, and driving to stop and shop along Great Road.
- *Placemaking? Create destinations people want to visit and linger.*
- *Fill vacant store fronts?*
- *Community participation – increase # of folks engaged in surveys and community meetings?*
- *Connect local neighborhoods to the rail trail?*

Partners and Resources

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- Partners
 - MassDOT (Rt2A) and MBTA (Bruce Freeman RT)
 - Local walking and bicycle advocacy and trail groups – Friends of the BFRT, ARRT Inc,
 - Acton Select Board Transportation Advisory Committee
 - Nashoba Regional Greenway
 - Champions in local businesses / chamber of commerce – Cindy McCullough, stay engaged with Chamber as it changes leadership
 - Internal departments – Recreations Department, Engineering, Public Works, Planning, Communication, Sustainability Director
- Resources
 - Federal Grants – ARPA
 - FBFRT – may have funds
 - Downtown Initiative MDI – applied in past for townwide wayfinding
 - Foundation Grants – Solomon Foundation, Barr Foundation
 - [MassDOT](#)
 - [Statewide bicycle and pedestrian plans Update](#)
 - Complete Streets Grant program (crossing improvements)
 - MassDevelopment Grants
 - Massworks Grants
 - Developers
 - [LRRP Funding Resources](#)

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Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

Picnics
/benches
/ shade /
bike
parking

Gould's Plaza

Desire Line – potential painted walkway.

Private
cafe
Seating

Make picnic tables more
accessible / visible – better
bike racks

Picnic
Tables??
Older style
bike racks



Digital Version



Corrugated Plastic (2-4 years)



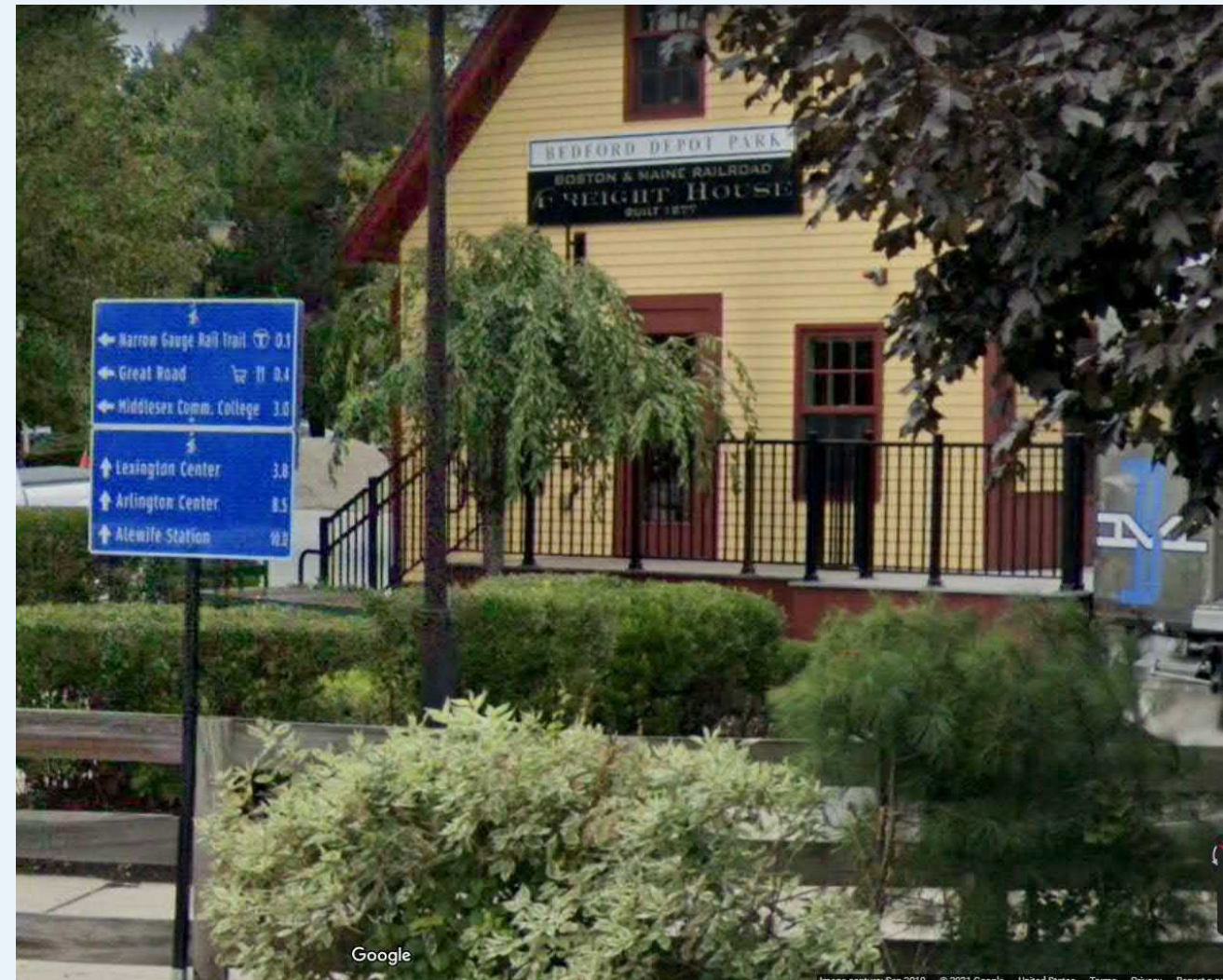
Aluminum (Permanent)

Examples of Wayfinding Signage (12" x 24")

Image Sources: Civic Space Collaborative; Ball Square Main Streets

Examples & Resources

- [Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway](#)
- Lexington MA – Across Lexington Trails
- [Assabet River Rail Trail – Maynard and Hudson](#)
- Reimagine Broadway, Everett, MA



Wayfinding to Downtown at the Minuteman Bikeway Trailhead in Bedford

Image Source: Google Maps

Across Lexington

Accessing
Conservation land
Recreation areas
Open space
Schools and
Streets in Lexington



Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) – Maynard & Hudson

- Incremental steps have been taken to complete the ARRT's routing immediately adjacent Downtown Maynard and Hudson
- Demonstration routes on strategic routes can help residents and key decision makers to envision potential impacts on active transportation, placemaking and economic development

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Approaching Downtown Maynard on the ARRT (Source: ARRT Facebook)

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Digital Version



Corrugated Plastic (2-4 years)



Aluminum (Permanent)

Examples of Wayfinding Signage (12" x 24")

Final Steps of SME Consultation

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1. Comments on rubric
2. Send this presentation
3. Share additional resources from discussion if any

jessica@neighborways.com

neighborwaysdesign