



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Town of Medfield

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



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

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

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

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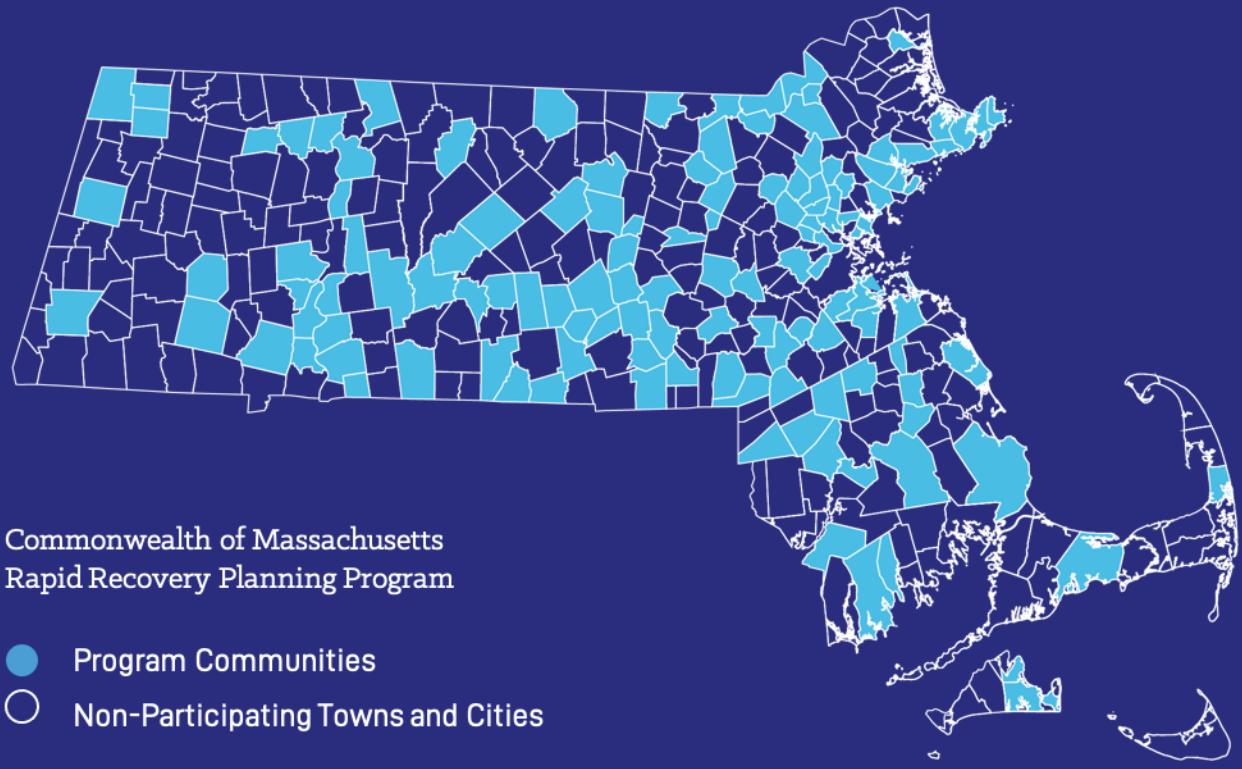
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



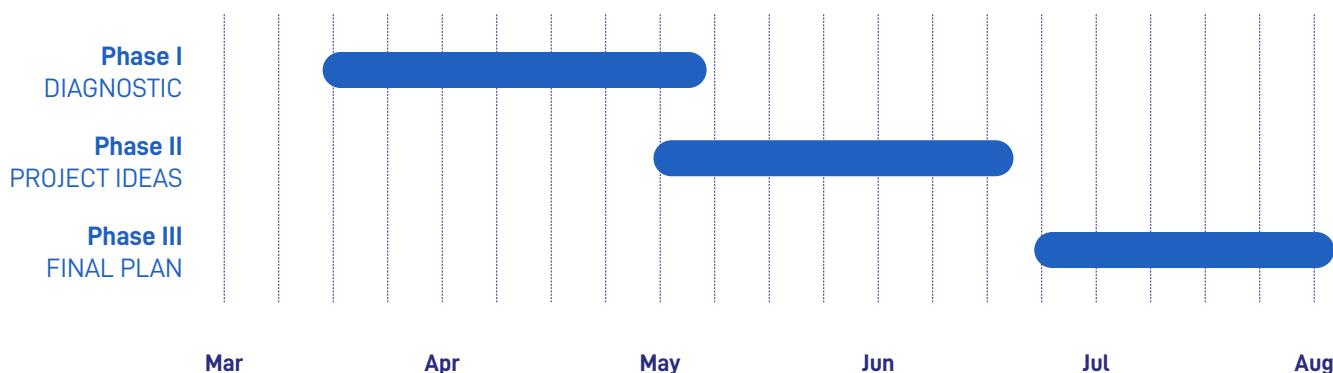
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?

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

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

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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Preserving and Enhancing Medfield's Sense of Community

Medfield is a suburban community approximately 30 miles from downtown Boston and 33 miles from Providence, RI, but the Town has retained much of its New England village character. Preserving the sense of small town community was a key theme from stakeholders during the 2020 Medfield Town Wide Master Plan (Master Plan) process as well as from stakeholder engagement in the LRRP planning process. Medfield residents recognize the importance of their downtown as the economic, social and cultural center of their community. The diversity of local businesses, civic, cultural and religious institutions, and public spaces creates a sense of place in downtown that many communities are lacking and that Medfield residents value. Stakeholders have identified many ways in which the physical environment could be enhanced to support the local economy, create opportunities for community gathering, and make the district a safer, more accessible and desirable place to spend time.

Changes to commuting patterns, shopping, and social gathering as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak have highlighted the importance of physical spaces in creating a sense of community. The Master Plan acknowledges the importance of "third places" to gather and build a sense of community, separate from home ("first place") and work ("second place"). The existence of safe, accessible, and attractive third places has become even more critical as many workers have found their first place (home) merging with their second place (work). Many office employees made the transition to work from home due to COVID-19 in spring 2020, and for some, this transition has become a permanent change. While the popularity of remote work was growing prior to the pandemic, the increase in employers offering full or partial remote work options has been a major shift in the workplace since 2020. Employees who are no longer restricted geographically by the fixed location of an office, are choosing to live in places with a better quality of life. This includes proximity to appealing third places, such as parks, cafes, community centers, bars, churches, etc.

Downtown Medfield has many features that help to create a sense of place, including a number of parks and civic spaces in the heart of downtown. Residents, business owners, and other stakeholders have identified several challenges hindering economic recovery in downtown, including traffic, pedestrian access, parking, and a better mix of retail and restaurants. This Plan provides a guideline for developing projects that will help address these issues and provide opportunities for economic growth in Medfield.



Seating outside of Brother's Marketplace. Photo credit: BerryDunn

The Town's recovery will require an investment in infrastructure

Traffic and circulation in downtown is the biggest challenge to creating a more viable business district in Medfield. Navigating the Main Street area of downtown with high traffic volume and relatively high vehicle speeds has been noted as a point of frustration for both pedestrians and motorists. Medfield, like most communities, experienced a decrease in traffic volume in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak; however, traffic has begun to increase again, in 2021. Addressing vehicular traffic, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, and availability and convenience of parking through strategic infrastructure improvements is a priority for Medfield residents and business owners.

A high volume of pass-through traffic on Route 109 is a challenge to making the downtown safer and more pedestrian-friendly. Many stakeholders have expressed a concern about safety while walking downtown, especially related to pedestrian crossings at major intersections. With several schools, civic buildings, and religious institutions in and near downtown, it is critical for streets to be safe and accessible for users of all ages and abilities.

While some stretches of the downtown are traditionally developed with zero lot line setbacks and pedestrian-oriented storefronts adjacent to the sidewalk, there are also several commercial properties and intersections that are auto-oriented in their design, with parking lots in front of storefronts and long crossing distances. Providing safe and connected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure would help reduce the number of vehicle trips within downtown and by making it easier and safer for customers to walk between various downtown destinations. Creating a "park once" district has multiple benefits, including reduced traffic congestion in downtown and livelier streets. Providing safe and convenient public parking is an important aspect of a "park once" district and is necessary to facilitate more walking trips within downtown.



Upham Road., towards Main Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Public parking lot on Janes Avenue. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Diagnostic

Key Findings



Medfield residents are engaged in their community

Medfield is a tight-knit community with residents who are actively engaged in civic and community organizations. Medfield residents and other community stakeholders have had continuous involvement in planning initiatives for the Town, including the current Local Rapid Recovery Plan process. More than 120 stakeholders responded to the community survey, 131 stakeholders provided comments in the online forum, and 26 businesses responded to the business survey. Approximately 94% of survey respondents indicated a thriving downtown is important or very important to their community.

The Medfield community has a strong customer base with buying potential and an interest in supporting local businesses. The median household income in Medfield (\$160,963 per the 2019 American Community Survey) is nearly double that of Massachusetts as a whole. While many Medfield residents commute to Boston or other suburbs for work, the Town's daytime population of 16,000 is still higher than the residential population of 12,600. It is possible that changing office policies will result in a higher work-at-home population for the long-term, further increasing the demand for amenities in downtown Medfield.

Stakeholders emphasized the desire for a diversity of sit-down restaurants, bars, breweries, specialty shops, bakeries, and an ice cream shop. These types of non-necessity businesses bring vibrancy to downtowns and could attract more people to the district from further away, increasing downtown's customer base. Medfield residents take pride in their community and are eager to support new and existing local businesses.

Approximately 94% of survey respondents indicated that a thriving downtown is important or very important to their community.

Most "Liked" Public Comments from Online Engagement

Get the powerlines and cable wires underground, replacing the telephone poles with more attractive street lamps. Aesthetics matter in a downtown and clearing the skyline would make an enormous impact. People tend to spend more time in areas that are well maintained and attractive.

Lobby to the state for a commuter rail stop. Accessibility and commutability are top players in the economic viability of a downtown.

Amenities that Medfield residents would like to see downtown:
Budget-friendly family dining spot, dog park with fence, a permanent stage for music performances, a new or renovated playground, ice cream parlor, more sidewalks, upscale stores and restaurants, repainted crosswalks



Source: Medfield LRRP Social Pinpoint public engagement page.



Medfield has a compact downtown

Medfield has a traditional small town center with shops, restaurants, services, public facilities, and schools all within a walkable distance; however, due to the existing condition of pedestrian infrastructure and lack of bicycle infrastructure, the downtown is not as accessible or as pleasant a destination as it could be. Stakeholders noted bicycle infrastructure is lacking and extending sidewalks to secondary streets off of Main Street would improve connectivity and accessibility in downtown.

Efforts to create a safe and walkable Main Street are competing with the demands of residents, commuters, and truck drivers who use Main Street (Route 109) and Route 27 as primary transportation routes.



The downtown is Medfield's economic, social, cultural, and civic hub

Medfield has an active downtown with a diversity of services, amenities and institutions that bring people to the area. At the center of the district is the town hall, public library, several churches, and Montrose School. These destinations have consistent visitors who inhabit downtown on a regular basis and help sustain the many restaurants and shops in the district. Additionally, residents patronize downtown banks and personal service businesses on a regular basis.

While there are very few vacant storefronts in downtown Medfield, the district is lacking the types of destination businesses that encourage visitors to stay downtown beyond their essential trips and that could draw visitors from beyond Medfield. Some survey respondents referenced the nearby towns of Wellesley and Hingham that both have excellent pedestrian infrastructure and a healthy mix of necessity goods and services and non-necessity businesses that encourage spontaneous shopping and browsing.

Stakeholders see room for improvement to boost economic activity, attract new businesses, and support a sense of community in downtown Medfield.



The Town needs additional economic development capacity

While the Town is committed to initiatives to support businesses in economic recovery, staff have found that additional capacity to engage the business community is needed to advance recovery efforts. The Town has worked with the Medfield Employers and Merchants Organization (MEMO) to reach out to the business community, and would like to have the resources to provide continued support to MEMO and all Town businesses. Building relationships with business owners, landlords and community groups is necessary for effective implementation of community-driven economic development strategies. Building these relationships takes time, and ideally, would involve a dedicated and experienced economic development professional leading the process. It will be important to identify an appropriate person to build and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, identify community leaders who can assist in managing initiatives, and engage volunteers to support these efforts.

Medfield could consider reviving the Economic Development Committee to provide oversight for and coordination of economic development initiatives to verify programs are aligned with the Town's overall goals for growth and development. Additionally, the Town could consider using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to hire a temporary economic development coordinator or consultant to provide resources for initial planning and implementation of the proposed projects. Most of the proposed initiatives in this plan are relatively low-cost and short-term projects. In addition, there are other recommended short-term projects and actions the Town may consider to support economic recovery. A temporary economic development staff person could coordinate these various initiatives and set priorities for economic development activities, considering the Town's broader recovery goals.



Park Street Books & Toys, Main Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Highlights from the Physical Environment

ACCESSIBILITY

The downtown sidewalks along Main Street, North Street, and South Street are generally in good condition; however, many side streets do not have sidewalks and the sidewalks along Main Street end just outside of the downtown area.

Medfield's Main Street (Route 109) is a busy commuter route with heavy pass through traffic, especially during the morning and evening commuting times. The primary intersections in downtown at Spring Street, North Street, and South Street have long crossing distances and a lot of turning traffic.

SAFETY

The safety concern with crossing Main Street in downtown Medfield was a notable concern from residents, businesses and Town officials. While crossing signals and crosswalks exist, the predominance of automobiles and the speed of vehicles traveling on Main Street results in a potentially dangerous situation for pedestrians, especially at the busiest times of day.

In addition to street crossings, navigating the many vehicles turning on and off of Main Street to reach parking areas for businesses in the district also poses a challenge to pedestrians and cyclists.

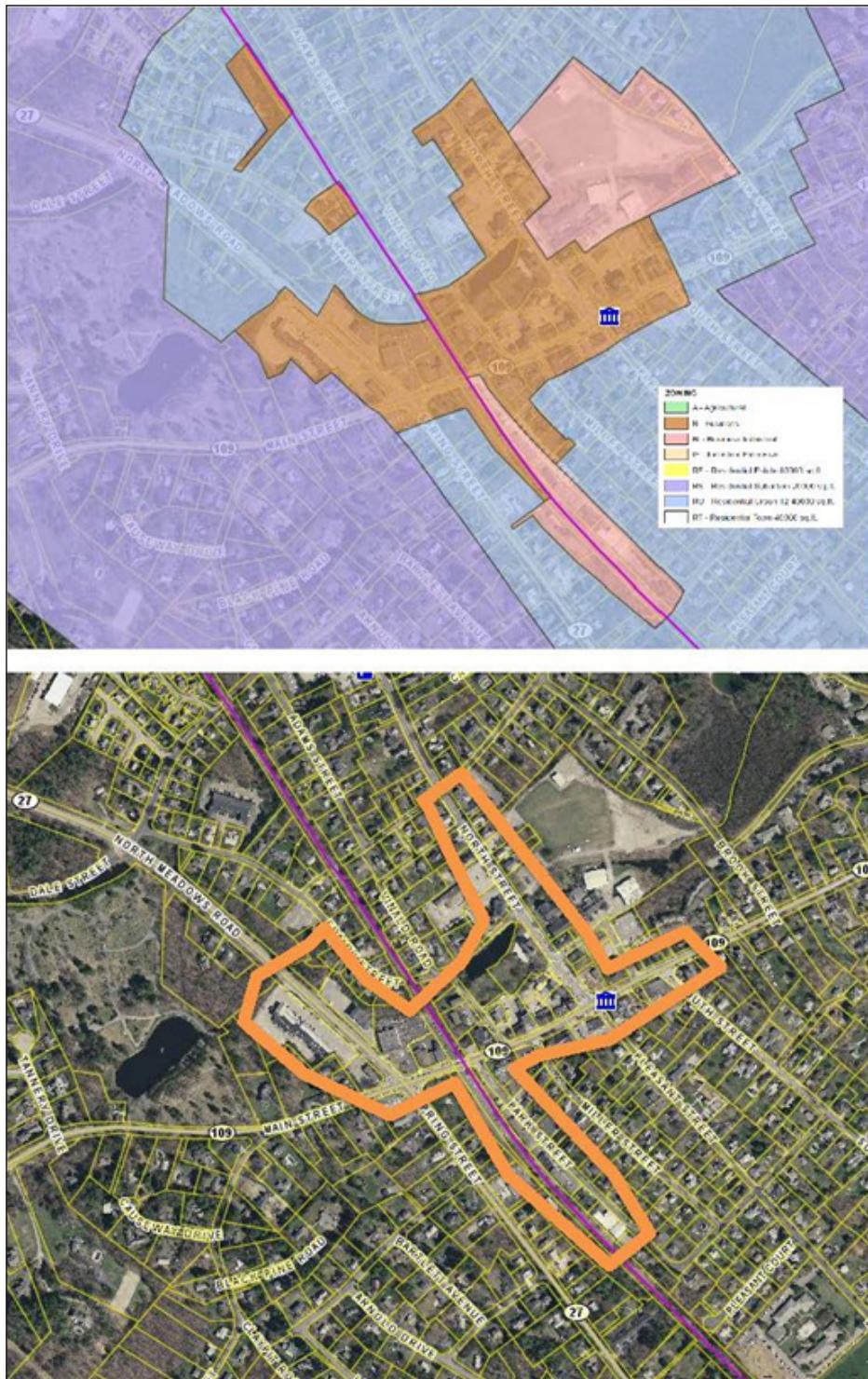
CONNECTIVITY

Having a connected network of pedestrian infrastructure is important to creating a thriving downtown district, improving safety, and facilitating traffic flow. Medfield has a relatively small and compact downtown area with short walking distances between businesses, amenities, and other points of interest; however, vehicular traffic and lack of sidewalk connectivity make it challenging and intimidating for many people to navigate the area safely.

Having pedestrian infrastructure that is safe and easy to navigate will allow downtown visitors to park once and walk to various amenities in the district rather than driving short distances from place to place within downtown. This will result in fewer vehicle trips within the district and fewer vehicles turning in and out of individual parking areas, which causes traffic to back up on Main Street at peak travel times.



*The end of the sidewalk on Park Street.
Photo credit: BerryDunn*



Zoning Map and Map of Downtown Study Area. Source: Town of Medfield



Meeting House Pond. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Medfield has a variety of gathering spaces downtown

PARKS

There are several public parks within downtown, including the gazebo park adjacent to the library, Baxter Park at the corner of Main Street and Spring Street, Meeting House Pond on Frairy Street, and Straw Hat Park on North Street. Survey respondents noted a need for better maintenance, additional seating, and other amenities at these parks, particularly Baxter Park and Meeting House Pond, to be more inviting. Some residents noted the recent addition of picnic tables in downtown parks, and they would like to see more amenities added to public parks and improved maintenance to encourage more people to use these spaces for gathering.



*Sidewalk outside of the Medfield Public Library.
Photo credit: BerryDunn*

INFORMAL GATHERING SPACES

In addition to the public parks downtown, there are many small and informal open spaces, both public and private, where people gather. Understanding how people use these informal spaces, can provide guidance for how the Town can enhance public spaces and support the development of public and private gathering spaces. For example, sidewalks where lots of interactions happen could be extended to create parklets allowing for more seating and gathering space.

Funding or incentives could be provided to encourage private, nonprofit and religious institutions to create public gathering spaces on their properties, simply by adding seating and lighting.

POCKET PARK

Straw Hat Park, named after Medfield's history of straw hat manufacturing, was a community-led pocket park project supported by the Medfield Foundation, Inc., and the Cultural Alliance of Medfield. Community members provided input on the design and voted on the name of the park. The park was partially funded through donations by residents and other supporters who purchased commemorative bricks, park benches, chairs, and tables.

Highlights from the Business Environment

MIX OF BUSINESSES

Downtown Medfield has a mix of retail, office, professional services, personal services, restaurants, and other uses. This healthy mix of businesses and amenities draws people to downtown throughout the day, week, and year round. The district's relatively low commercial vacancy rate is a positive sign for the economic recovery of downtown Medfield.

IMPACTS FROM COVID-19

Nearly 90% of businesses surveyed indicated being impacted by COVID-19 and 77% suffered a decline in revenue from 2019 to 2020, as well as a decline in on-site customers in January and February of 2021 compared to pre-COVID. As of April 2021, only half of those businesses were operating at full capacity.

Business owners tend to be satisfied with the physical environment of Medfield's downtown, including streets, sidewalks, condition of buildings and signage, and safety. The impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on revenue and customer traffic have highlighted a need for better promotion of businesses, events, and the downtown district in general.

MARKETING

More than half of businesses surveyed had to make business process changes to establish an alternative mode to sell and deliver products. This included developing or enhancing a website, creating a delivery service, or establishing curbside pick-up.

The impacts of COVID-19 exposed the need for adaptable marketing and communication strategies for businesses, in order for owners to quickly adjust to the economic climate and reach customers directly.

Thirty-five percent of businesses surveyed expressed an interest in participating in some type of shared marketing strategy with other downtown businesses. Some businesses are not taking advantage of free and low-cost tools for promoting and marketing their business and services, such as Google Ads and various social media platforms.

Many stakeholders also noted the need for better general promotion of the downtown district as a place to visit, and would like to see more programs and events that would attract visitors to downtown Medfield.



Gazebo at Medfield Public Library. Photo credit: Town of Medfield

Project Recommendations

1. Install wayfinding signage

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Town staff, site visit observations, recommendation of the 2018 Downtown Medfield Parking Study
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$20,000 - \$35,000 for a consultant to develop a design and specifications.• \$35,000 - \$70,000 for installation, depending on the type and number of signs proposed. <p>Funding Opportunities (see Funding Table in Appendix for details): American Rescue Plan Act funding MA Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program Regional Pilot Project Grant Program</p>
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – community support
Key Performance Indicators	Downtown visitors, easier navigation of downtown, improved sense of place, increase in visitors to key attractions and businesses
Partners & Resources	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Public Works – provide feedback on signage plan; oversee installation of signage• Planning & Zoning Department – oversee project implementation; coordinate promotion of the project and programming with community organizations• Economic Development Committee – assist in selecting a consultant; provide feedback on wayfinding signage design, signage plan, and guidelines• Medfield Employers and Merchants Organization – provide feedback on wayfinding signage design, signage plan, and guidelines; assist with promotion of the project and events to support the initiative

Bike rack near Straw Hat Park. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Diagnostic

Wayfinding signage can help visitors efficiently navigate an area and can increase visibility of lesser known businesses and amenities, helping to attract new customers. The goal of the Town's wayfinding program is to provide consistent and attractive information to assist the public in navigating the Town and to improve the overall downtown experience for all visitors.

In the recently conducted survey of downtown businesses, many tenants indicated a concern about the lack of street parking in downtown, as well as a need for public beautification enhancements. A comprehensive wayfinding system would serve to direct visitors to public parking and other downtown amenities while also implementing physical improvements in the way of signage and banners to promote Medfield and create a sense of place.

Medfield has a relatively compact and walkable downtown with a variety of restaurants, goods and services. However, businesses and municipal officials have found it challenging to draw people to spend time downtown due to a perceived lack of public parking and some traffic intersections that pedestrians find unsafe to cross, especially during peak traffic hours. A public parking lot is available opposite Town Hall on Janes Avenue, but without clear signage directing visitors to this lot, it tends to be underused. In addition, some businesses off of Main Street struggle to attract customers due to limited visibility of their storefronts.

The purpose of this project is to create visual cohesiveness and a sense of place for the downtown area and to allow visitors to more easily navigate the district in order to access parking, businesses and civic resources. A successful wayfinding system, providing directional signs, on-street communication and clear Town branding would improve the downtown experience for visitors and improve access to and visibility of secondary attractions.



Baxter Park. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Action Items

- Develop a wayfinding signage design that represents Medfield's character.
- Develop specifications to guide fabrication and installation and to provide designs for future expansion of wayfinding signage.
- Install wayfinding signage to identify the Town and directional signage to assist visitors in navigating the downtown.



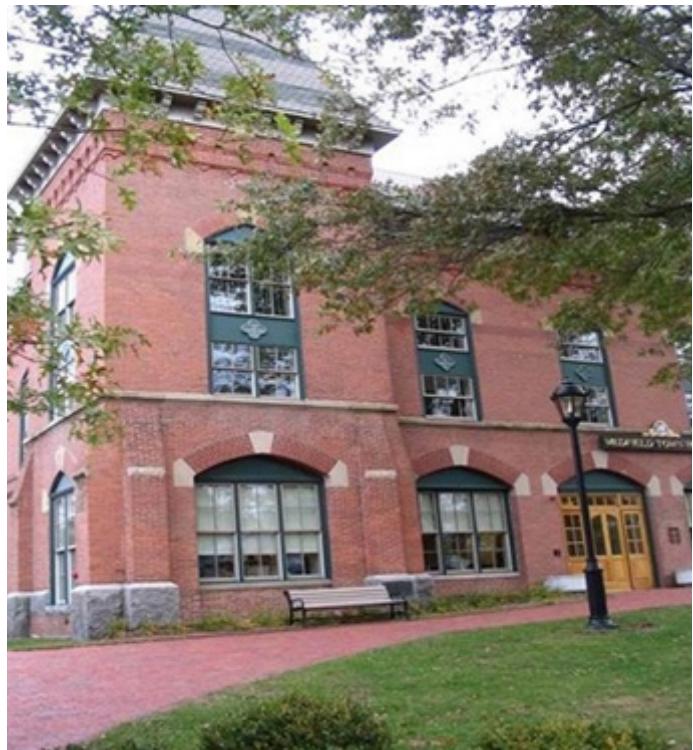
Types of wayfinding signs. Source: Hillsboro, Oregon Wayfinding Project, www.hillsboro-oregon.gov.

Process

- **Establish a work group** or committee to oversee the project, including selecting a consultant, facilitating community engagement, and managing the installation process.
- **Select a design consultant** to develop a wayfinding design, plan, and specifications. The design should reflect the Town's character and strong sense of community.
- **Engage the community** to obtain feedback on potential wayfinding signage designs. The selected consultant can lead the engagement effort prior to developing design proposals, or the consultant could develop designs to be shared with the community for feedback. Since the Town has recently led a lengthy public engagement initiative through the master plan process and now through the LRRP process, this existing feedback on community character and vision for the Town could be used to first develop designs.
- **Conduct an inventory and assessment** of existing signage and inventory of principal destinations that should be included on wayfinding signs (e.g., Town Hall, the library, municipal parking lot). Existing signage should be replaced so that all wayfinding signage is consistent in appearance.
- **Develop a consistent and standardized wayfinding plan** including proposed locations for different sign types and proposed signage that could be added in the future.
- **Develop design specifications** for each sign type. The selected consultant should prepare construction details for signage including different uses of the logo, lettering details, dimensions, materials, and installation details.
- **Coordinate with the Department of Public Works and the Planning & Zoning Department** on any required reviews and approvals.
- **Coordinate with the Department of Public Works on installation of signage.**
- **Promote the project** online and via social media.

Other Considerations

- Consider developing designs and specifications for additional signage that may not be in the initial installation plan, including a digital information kiosk, event signage, business directory, and historic informational signage. This will allow the Town to easily expand the wayfinding signage program without having to go through the design process again.
- Consider hosting an event or program to support the project and increase awareness. Events could include a downtown scavenger hunt, community planting day, or contest via social media to encourage visitors to tag photos of themselves with the new signs.



Medfield Town House. Photo credit: Town of Medfield



Wakefield Business Directory, Wakefield MA. Source: Google Maps

Best Practice

Wakefield Wayfinding System



Best Practices

The Town of Wakefield is a suburban community north of Boston with a thriving downtown and two commuter rail stations. The Town is also home to Lake Quannapowitt, which sits at the edge of Wakefield Center and is a popular recreational area. The Town implemented a branding and wayfinding system, with the goal of increasing activity in the downtown and attracting visitors to the lake to also visit downtown shops and restaurants.

- The Town selected a design for informational kiosks from a number of alternatives presented to the Wakefield Main Streets Board.
- Due to funding restrictions, the kiosk design process was limited to 3.5 months.
- Some community members felt left out of the process and there was criticism from the public regarding the placement and design of the kiosks.
- Opposing residents were invited to an expanded branding and wayfinding meeting to provide input on sign element placement on maps.
- Favermann Design was hired to develop a style guideline to be used for internal and external communications, website design, town hall signage and other marketing and branding initiatives.
- The style guideline allowed for a consistent branding approach for the Town.
- The Town is now using the new design approach for directional signs for the Greenwood neighborhood.

Other Recommendations

- Use landmarks as orientation cues and memorable locations. Landmarks will help navigators with orientation within a larger area. Suggested landmarks: Library, Medfield Town House, churches, schools, etc.
- Provide a clear path with visible sight lines to a destination or marker (additional signage).
- Use universally recognizable icons to represent features and destinations (food, shopping, parking, restrooms, etc.)
- Consider existing signage and proposed signage and text to limit visual clutter.



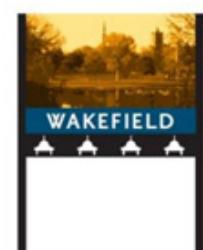
Wakefield, MA. Source: Google Maps.



The Bandstand



Tree by the Lake



Vista of Town Across Lake

Proposed branding designs prepared by Favermann Designs. Source: Wakefield Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Committee.

2. Launch a traffic calming pilot project

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Survey responses, discussions with Town staff
Budget		<p>Low Budget (<\$50,000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$10,000 - \$20,000 consultant services• <\$10,000 materials and administrative costs <p>Funding Opportunities (see Funding Table in Appendix for details):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">American Rescue Plan Act fundingRegional Pilot Project Grant ProgramMA Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance ProgramCommonwealth PlacesShared Streets and SpacesSeed GrantsMA CDBG Mini-Entitlement Program
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – the Town can test temporary traffic calming features and study their impact on traffic and accessibility before implementing more permanent traffic calming infrastructure
Key Performance Indicators		Improved pedestrian accessibility and perception of safety for pedestrians, insight into the effectiveness of permanent traffic calming infrastructure
Partners & Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and Zoning Department – oversee project and selection of a consultant• Public Works Department – coordinate project installation and data collection with other Town officials• MassDOT – provide guidance on best practices• Community groups – promote the project and assist in coordination of events to support project implementation; provide volunteers to assist with data collection and project implementation as appropriate
		<p><i>Intersection of North Street and Main Street.</i> Photo credit: BerryDunn</p>

Diagnostic

Vehicle traffic and pedestrian access are a significant challenge to creating a more vibrant downtown Medfield and assisting local businesses in economic recovery. While Medfield has a relatively compact and walkable Town Center, businesses and municipal officials have found it difficult to draw people to spend time downtown due to a perceived lack of public parking and pedestrian crossings that many users consider to be dangerous, especially for young children and people with mobility challenges. Main Street is a heavily trafficked regional road, State Route 109. Busy intersections, long crossing distances and lack of safe sidewalks are barriers to increasing pedestrian activity downtown.

The Town would like to engage in a planning process to establish long-term solutions to the current transportation and safety issues in downtown. A temporary pilot project would provide a real-world test of potential long-term infrastructure improvements, engage the community, and allow the Town to collect data on the effectiveness of the traffic calming measures.

The goals of the temporary traffic calming project are:

- To improve the safety and livability of downtown Medfield streets for users of all ages and abilities.
- To reduce vehicular speeds through the center of downtown.
- To make the downtown streets more physically attractive through the addition of traffic calming measures and aesthetic features.
- To collect data on the effectiveness of the temporary traffic calming measures in meeting the above goals.
- To ensure that any traffic calming installation has the support of the community.

The Town has identified specific crossings and pedestrian ways that are the most hazardous and where improved infrastructure could encourage more pedestrian use. A pilot project could test the feasibility of curb extensions and pedestrian islands at the North Street and Main Street intersection and could provide data and community feedback to support permanent infrastructure improvements at this location. The accessibility and visibility of businesses on Park Street is also a concern of the Town. Creating a temporary walkway or "sidewalk" along Park Street could increase the accessibility to these businesses and highlight Park Street as a pedestrian way.

Action Items

- Install temporary barriers, flex posts, painted walkways, and/or other physical features to slow traffic through downtown and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment, with shorter crossing distances and beautification features.



Main Street approaching South Street intersection. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Main Street approaching South Street intersection. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Process

- **Select a consultant** to develop an implementation design for traffic calming measures, focusing on the identified locations (Main Street at North Street, Main Street at South Street, and along Park Street).
- **Determine baseline data** to collect prior to project installation. This could include traffic speeds, pedestrian counts, or a survey of users' pedestrian experiences. Consider the proposed timeline, funding available for the project, and how the data will be used to support a long-term infrastructure project proposal.
- **Collect the baseline data**, working with the selected consultant, Department of Public Works, Planning & Zoning Department, and Police Department.
- **Identify the exact traffic calming needs** based on the existing conditions (e.g., long crossing distances, poor sight lines for pedestrians, turning radii).
- **Develop a plan for traffic calming measures** that will meet the Town's traffic calming needs and not impede traffic circulation to, from and along Route 109.
- **Purchase or locate temporary infrastructure items** and necessary materials to complete the installation. This could include flexible bollards, planters, paint, temporary signage, or other materials.
- **Set a timeframe for installation** and removal. The recommended implementation timeline is two to four months. This allows enough time for the pilot project to be tested and experienced by a significant number of users, but with a short enough timeframe for removal in case there are any issues with the installation.
- **Publicize the project** to make residents and business owners aware of the timeframe of the project and to gain their involvement.
- **Create a community event** around the installation. Work with local community organizations who have interest in supporting the project. Events could include painting the temporary "islands" and curb extensions or adding beautification features (landscaping, pots, planting) to complement the temporary infrastructure.
- **Collect experimental conditions data** to compare with baseline data.
- **Document results** of the pilot project to be used for future traffic studies and as support for future planning and implementation projects to address traffic calming, if appropriate.



Swanton Village, VT. Photo credit: Team Better Block



Main Street at North Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Park Street businesses and parking. Photo credit:

Focus Areas

Town staff, residents, and other stakeholders identified three locations in the downtown that are especially challenging to navigate as a pedestrian. These locations should be the focus of the project:

- **Main Street at North Street:** This is a wide intersection with a lot of turning traffic which makes it especially dangerous for pedestrians attempting to cross.
- **Park Street:** Many stakeholders noted the lack of sidewalks on Park Street. There are several businesses on Park Street, including a hair salon, nail salon, and restaurant. The parking lot for the Park Street Station retail building abuts the street, with no lane designations for vehicles or pedestrians. Customers accessing these businesses on foot are forced to walk in the street with traffic and navigate the parking area with vehicles pulling in and backing out.
- **Main Street at South Street:** Stakeholders noted that this crossing is also challenging as a result of turning traffic and vehicles that get stuck in the intersection during the traffic signal cycle.



Central Avenue, Norwich, CT. Photo credit/
Source: Sean D. Elliot/The Day.

Best Practice

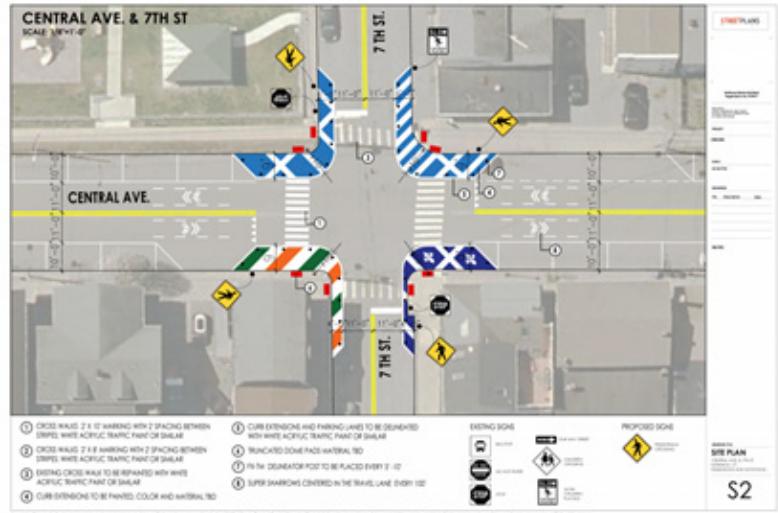
Traffic calming on Central Avenue



Best Practice

Central Avenue in Norwich, CT is a through street with a wide road bed and street parking/shoulder areas that are not marked, resulting in fast vehicle speeds. This street is a main route for transit, school buses, and pedestrians. Four intersections along Central Avenue were identified to test the proposed traffic calming measures.

- The City used a \$25,000 traffic safety grant to create painted pedestrian bump-outs at four key intersections in the Greenville neighborhood of Norwich.
- The City selected Street Plans to assist on this project. The firm specializes in tactical urbanism, complete streets and public space design.
- Public meetings were held with local stakeholders to discuss potential traffic calming interventions.
- The plan that was developed included painted bump outs to enable pedestrians to step out and see traffic from around parked cars, and to allow drivers to see pedestrians as they approach an intersection.
- The intent of the project was to increase safety by reducing the crossing distance for pedestrians. While no physical structure was installed as part of the project, the brightly colored, painted bump outs caught the attention of motorists and had a similar effect of slowing traffic as a physical curb extension.
- The City and Street Plans enlisted local volunteers to help with installation.
- Art was incorporated in the project and reflecting the cultural diversity of the neighborhood. The painted bump outs were designed with the colors and motifs of 16 countries' flags. The flags represent the countries of origin of many of the neighborhood's residents.
- The project involved an inclusive design which helped to increase community support and involvement. Community members took part in project planning and implementation.
- The project involved developing partnerships with: Capital Regional Council of Governments, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, Greenville Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, and FHI Studio.



Site Plan for Central Avenue traffic calming project.
Source: Capital Region Council of Governments



Shared Street Pilot Program, Salem, MA. Photo credit: Neighborways

3. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and Prioritization Plan and Conduct a Road Safety Audit

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Town wide / Study Area
Origin	Name of individual/organization that contributed to the ideation/formation of the project
Budget	 <p>Low Budget (<\$50,000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative costs to prepare and adopt the Policy Once the policy is approved by MassDOT, the Town is eligible for \$38,000 in planning funds to develop a Prioritization Plan. \$10,000 - \$20,000 to conduct a Road Safety Audit <p>Funding Opportunities (see Funding Table in Appendix for details):</p> <p>Costs for all stages of the project can be funded by MassDOT, once the Complete Streets Policy has been adopted and accepted by MassDOT. The Town can leverage the following resources for additional funding for implementation for construction projects:</p> <p>MA CDBG Mini-Entitlement Program Shared Streets and Spaces Hometown Grant Program</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (<5 years)</p>
Risk	 <p>Low Risk – support of Town staff and elected officials</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Support from the community for Complete Streets initiatives; funding awarded for implementation of priority Complete Streets projects
Partners & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & Zoning Department – compile background information on the Program and the existing conditions in Medfield to support the project; oversee the coordination with the consultant and MassDOT Department of Public Works – compile background information on the Program and the existing conditions in Medfield to support the project; oversee the coordination with the consultant and MassDOT Board of Selectmen – review and adopt the policy and provide guidance and support for the Road Safety Audit and development of a Prioritization Plan. Community groups – Many stakeholders identified the need for improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in downtown Medfield. Community groups can promote and support the project, including school/student organizations, cycling groups, and senior groups. Local businesses – businesses who will benefit from the initiative may be willing to promote and support the project.

Diagnostic

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Complete Streets Funding Program (the Program) was created in 2014 as part of the Transportation Bond Bill. The purpose of the program is to educate municipal officials about Complete Streets, promote and increase the adoption of Complete Streets Policies and Plans, and increase the implementation of Complete Streets projects. Currently, 236 municipalities have approved Complete Streets Policies, as part of the MassDOT program and 190 construction projects have been funded.

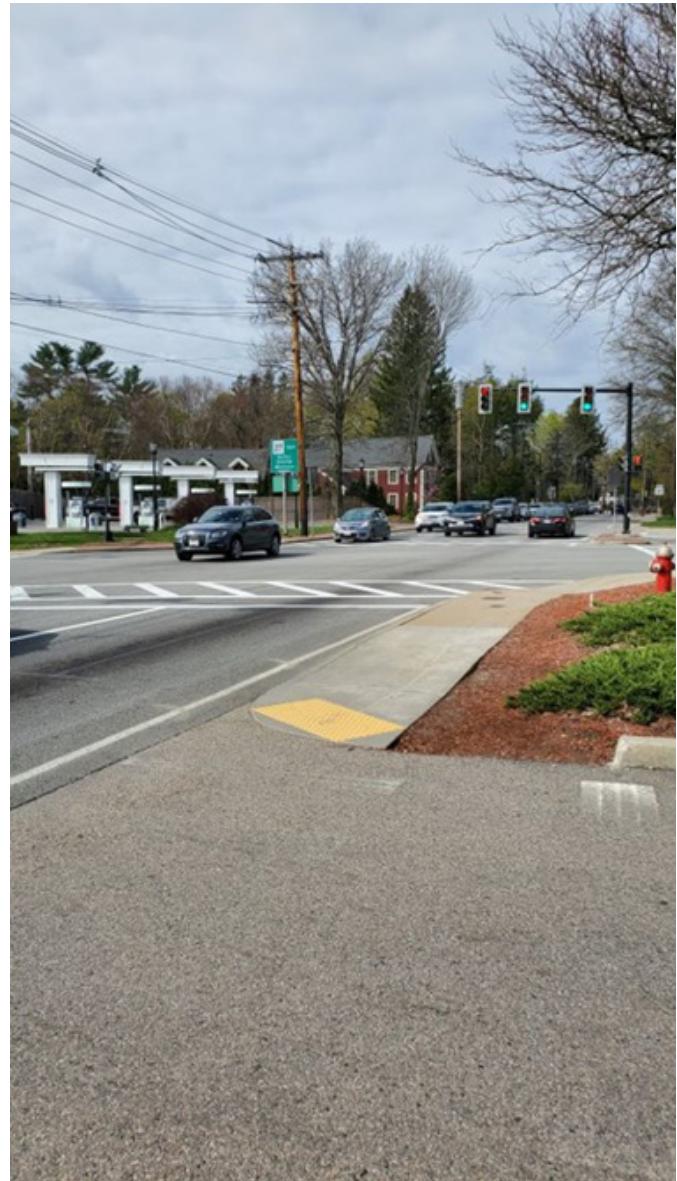
Complete Streets are defined by the US Department of Transportation as streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users, including people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transit riders. The concept of Complete Streets involves thinking inclusively about how our transportation networks are used and can be enhanced.

By adopting a Complete Streets Policy (Tier 1 of the Program), the Town will be formalizing its support for Complete Streets principles in policy and implementation of new infrastructure projects. Acceptance of the Policy by MassDOT will make Medfield eligible for up to \$38,000 in technical assistance funding for the development of a Prioritization Plan (Tier 2 of the Program). Once the Plan is completed, the Town will be eligible to apply for up to \$400,000 in construction funding each year.

Town officials and stakeholders have identified traffic and safety to be one of the most critical issues for downtown Medfield. The Complete Streets Funding Program provides an opportunity for the Town to evaluate its current street network and work towards creating safer and more inclusive streets for all users.

Action Items

- Develop a Complete Streets Policy that is supported by the Town and reflects the Town's goal to make getting around Town safe and pleasant, for all transportation modes.
- Conduct a Road Safety Audit of downtown Medfield to understand existing conditions and identify opportunities for mitigation of identified safety concerns.
- Develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan using the results of the Road Safety Audit as a guide for identifying and prioritizing potential infrastructure projects.



Main Street at Route 27. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Process: Complete Streets Policy

In order to be eligible for funding through the MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program, municipalities must adopt a Complete Streets Policy.

- Gather existing data and public input in support of the proposed policy.
- Consider developing a public engagement initiative, involving an educational component to define Complete Streets, showcase the success of policies in similar communities, and provide examples of how Complete Streets principles can be applied in Medfield.
- Draft a Complete Streets Policy that specifically addresses the required principles and the Town's goals for improving safety and reducing congestion. The Policy should have a clear vision and intent, and should articulate a clear commitment to users of all transportation modes and of all ages and abilities. The Policy should also address best practices as laid out in the [Complete Streets Funding Program Guidance](#) document.
- In order to streamline the approval process to reach Tier 3 and funding eligibility sooner, the Town could submit a commitment letter or Letter of Intent (LOI) to MassDOT, expressing the Town's intent to pass a Complete Streets Policy within one year. This will allow the Town to obtain Tier 2 technical assistance funding to develop a Prioritization Plan, prior to the Policy being adopted.
- Present the proposed policy to the Board of Selectmen, including information on the benefits of the Complete Streets Funding Program.

Process: Road Safety Policy

A Road Safety Audit (RSA) is the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) formal safety performance examination of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent, multidisciplinary team. The purpose of an RSA is to estimate and report on potential road safety issues and identify opportunities for improvement. An RSA considers all potential road users (motorist, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.) as well as user capabilities and limitations.

- Identify the scope of the Road Safety Audit— what stretch of road and/or intersections should be included?
- Select a consultant to complete the RSA.
- Perform the field reviews to collect existing conditions data.
- Conduct an analysis of the data collected and prepare a report.
- The consultant should present the findings and recommendations to the Town.

Process: Complete Streets Prioritization Plan

Once the Tier 1 Policy has been completed, the Town may request up to \$38,000 in technical assistance funding for the development of a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. Funding is used to hire a consultant or Regional Planning Agency (RPA) to develop the Plan.

- Determine local needs and assess existing documents, including the Master Plan, Downtown Parking Study, and Sidewalk Design Guidelines.
- Engage the public throughout the planning process, including in the existing conditions assessment and developing a project list and priority criteria.
- Conduct assessment of existing conditions. A Road Safety Audit could be completed as part of the Prioritization Plan process.
- Create a project list, including a minimum of 15 projects that the Town would like to complete in the next five years.
- Develop and apply evaluation criteria to the project list to determine priority.
- Present the final Plan to the public.
- Submit Prioritization Plan to MassDOT.



Main Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn

The Best Complete Streets Policies of 2015



Source: Smart Growth America

Best Practice

Natick Complete Streets



Best Practice

The Town of Natick was an early participant in the MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program. The Town adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2015. The policy was drafted by Town staff and supported by the Town's Planning Board and Safety Committee. The Board of Selectmen unanimously approved the adoption of the policy. The policy was named one of the best Complete Streets Policies of 2015 by Smart Growth America.

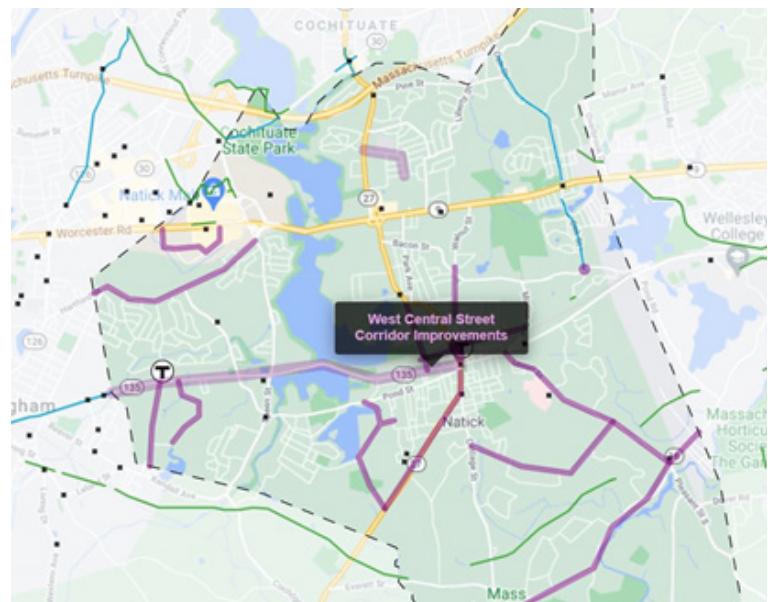
The Town then developed a multi-year Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, which identifies a list of potential projects ranked by safety, mobility, accessibility and system continuity criteria. The plan includes cost estimates and timelines for proposed projects. Public working group meetings were held to gain input in the development of the project list and discuss priorities. The Town used funding from MassDOT to develop the Prioritization Plan.

After approval of the Plan by MassDOT, Natick was eligible to receive funding for construction projects. In 2016, the Town was awarded \$400,000 in construction funding to install high visibility pedestrian crossings with rapid rectangular flashing beacons at various locations. In 2018, the Town was awarded additional construction funding in the amount of \$205,000 to construct pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements to the West Street/Campus Drive Corridor and to Newfield Drive.

With 10 of the 26 projects successfully completed, Natick is now moving forward to update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, as recommended by MassDOT. A "Safer Streets For All" community forum was held earlier this year, and the Town then solicited feedback on proposed projects using an online survey engagement tool.



Signaled crosswalk, Natick, MA. Source: Google



Interactive public engagement map developed by Toole Design for Natick's Complete Street Program. Source: Town of Natick, www.natickma.gov

4. Establish a downtown façade grant program

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Town staff, business community
Budget	Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) • \$150,000 - \$200,000 minimum is recommended depending on the funding structure of the program and funds available.
	 Funding Opportunities (See Funding Table in the Appendix for details): American Rescue Plan Act funding Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Private/Nonprofit/Foundation funding Historic funding
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk -- success of the project requires political support to fund the project and interest from the business community.
Key Performance Indicators	Implementation of beautification and façade improvement projects within the study area and an improved aesthetic appearance of downtown Medfield.
Partners & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning & Zoning Department – manage the implementation and monitoring of the program• Building Department – provide support to applicants in the permitting process• Planning Board – provide support for the development of the program and review of applications• Sign Advisory Board – provide support for the development of the program and review of applications• Medfield Employers and Merchants Organization – provide support for the development of the program and promote the program to members



Mural on the South Street façade of Brothers Marketplace. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Diagnostic

The Town of Medfield is committed to making improvements to downtown to be a safe gathering place for the community and an attractive and viable place to do business. The economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak have left many businesses with fewer resources to invest in renovations, new signage, and other physical improvements to their properties and storefronts. A façade improvement and beautification grant program could support downtown businesses in making much needed improvements to building facades that will enhance the overall appearance of downtown.

There are several benefits of a successfully implemented façade improvement program, including:

- Strengthening the economic viability of locally owned businesses by helping to increase sales and attract new customers;
- Contributing to the area revitalization by improving marketability of a space and the district as a whole and motivating other property owners to make improvements;
- Contributing to a sense of community by improving the aesthetics of the public realm and creating a safe and attractive place to do business;
- And providing a more attractive commercial district to stimulate additional private investment.

Several commercial buildings in downtown are in need of updating and could use assistance from the Town. Businesses and property owners would benefit from façade improvements that could attract more customers or new businesses that could bring new people to downtown. This program could encourage owners to invest in their properties with very little risk involved.

As the pandemic has shifted shopping habits and resulted in a significant decline in in-person customers for most businesses, the Town is hoping to attract more destination businesses, including sit-down restaurants and specialty retail and food stores to meet the needs and desires of Medfield residents and to maintain the viability of the commercial district. Creating a safe, attractive and walkable district is key to ensuring a sustainable local economy for Medfield businesses.

Visible façade improvements throughout the district will enhance the overall appearance of the Town and motivate other tenants and property owners to make improvements and keep up with maintenance of their properties. Ultimately, future façade improvements supported by this program will complement the recent renovations along Main Street and will create a more cohesive downtown.

Action Items

- Develop a façade improvement grant program that is easy for the Town to implement and accessible for businesses and property owners to apply for.



Existing building on Main Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Existing building on Main Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Process

Conduct outreach to the business community to identify interest in a façade and beautification program and to understand the types of projects that will likely be proposed.

Establish a committee that will oversee the program and be responsible for reviewing applications and selecting awardees.

Determine the types of projects that the Town would like to see as a part of the grant program—large projects (full façade renovations) small projects (painting, new signage, window/door replacement, etc.) or a combination

Establish the terms of the grant:

- **Funding:** Depending on the source of funding, the program can be structured as a grant or a loan. A grant program would incentivize more participation and would be more accessible to smaller businesses. A loan program with a revolving fund would enable future funding cycles upon payback of initial loans.
- **Disbursement:** Grant funding can be disbursed at the time of selection or as a reimbursement grant to be paid after completion of the work, in accordance with approved plans. A reimbursement grant will help ensure that projects are implemented as proposed and in a timely manner; however, providing upfront funding for a project may be a challenge for smaller businesses.
- **Grant categories:** If the program is intended to target both small and large projects, then two separate categories may be appropriate, one for full façade renovations and another for small improvement projects. Different funding structures may be considered for different grant categories, depending on interest and funding availability (e.g., a loan program for full façade renovations and a grant program for small projects up to a certain dollar amount).
- **Matching requirement:** At least a small percentage of applicant matching is recommended in order for applicants to have some ownership over the project (10 to 25 percent). For small businesses, a larger matching percentage may not be financially feasible. If the program is funding full façade renovations, a larger matching amount (up to 50 percent) may be appropriate, in order to allocate funds for more projects.
- **Eligible projects:** Consider including site improvements, such as landscaping or repaving a walkway, as eligible projects. Projects should be limited to exterior improvements facing a public street or way. Typically ineligible improvements include HVAC, interior renovations, non-permanent fixtures, security systems, and equipment.
- **Program area:** The program can be open to all commercial properties in the Town or limited to the downtown study area. If the program is limited to a specific area, provide a clear map of the program area.



Park Street businesses. Photo credit: BerryDunn

- **Design guidelines:** The Town should provide general design guidance for applicants, including preferred styles, materials, and examples of desired improvements.
- **Maintenance:** Grant awardees should be required to maintain façade and beautification improvements for a minimum amount of time (typically 3 to 5 years). Monitoring and follow-up to ensure maintenance of projects should be included in program development and resource allocation.
- **Review criteria:** The selection committee should consider the overall aesthetic benefit/impact of the proposed project to the streetscape as a whole, the historical or architectural significance of the property, the condition of the existing structure, the consistency with the design guidelines, and the level of investment by the applicant.
- **Priority projects:** The Town could consider prioritizing certain types of projects, including specific locations, historic buildings, business preferences (micro enterprises, minority and women-owned businesses, income status), or type of improvement.
- **Disqualifying factors:** Applicants who owe taxes or have outstanding violations should be disqualified. The Town may also consider disqualifying applicants who have previously received funding through the program.
- **Architectural services:** The Town may want to allow a certain dollar amount of the grant award be used for design services. This can help to ensure the quality of proposed projects as well as compliance with design and building code requirements. For full façade renovations, plans prepared by a licensed design professional could be a requirement.
- **Application:** Applicants should submit plans, material lists, cost estimates (bids may be required for larger projects), photos of existing conditions, and owner consent (if the tenant is applying).

Challenges and Other Considerations

- Early engagement with property and business owners and soliciting input into the program requirements, may diminish any reluctance or concerns from the business community.
- Smaller businesses may have limited capacity to manage paperwork. A streamlined, easy application process and assistance from the Town in navigating the program will increase participation.
- The funding source may come with implementation hurdles that are less flexible and have additional programming and reporting requirements that may make the program more challenging to administer.
- Applicants may have a hard time finding a contractor to do the work. Consider providing a list of pre-qualified contractors to ensure quality and timeliness of approved work.
- With investment in façade improvements, there may be a concern about increases in property values, taxes and rents. This concern should be addressed when developing program requirements (e.g., referring to examples of programs where improvements have resulted in an increase in sales, which would cover the minimal increase in taxes).
- Particularly related to the impacts of COVID-19, improvements to address health and safety related to the outbreak may be considered as eligible for funding (e.g., replacement of doors and windows, outdoor seating structures, walk-up window installations, etc.).
- Involve stakeholders early in the process and solicit feedback during and after the first round of funding to make adjustments based on small business needs.



Outdoor seating at Nosh & Grog. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Main Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Quinsigamond Village, Worcester, MA. Photo credit: Google Maps

Best Practice

Quinsigamond Village Storefront and Façade Improvement Grant Program



Best Practice

The City of Worcester established the Storefront and Façade Improvement Grant Program for the Quinsigamond Village commercial district. The goals of the program included providing a unified approach to improving the visual quality of the district, enhancing and restoring buildings to encourage economic growth, achieving a high standard of design and workmanship, and providing an incentive for small businesses to invest in their property.

The program included two tiers of funding. The Full Façade Improvement Grant covers 75 percent of the project cost up to \$30,000, for full façade renovations. The Storefront Improvement Grant covers 75 percent of the project cost up to \$15,000, for smaller scopes of work to repair and enhance storefronts, including painting, awnings and signage, window and door replacement, and exterior lighting.

Both programs are reimbursement programs in which grant funding is paid to applicants upon completion of the project and verification that the work is in compliance with the approved design. The applicant is required to maintain the improvements for a period of three years following the completion of the façade or storefront improvements.

To help ensure compliance with the City of Worcester's Design Guidelines and to provide guidance to applicants in the design process, the City contracted with an architect to provide a free preliminary scope of work, cost estimate, and rendering for interested applicants. These items were required to be submitted with all applications and following a grant award, applicants were required to contract with an architect or licensed contractor to complete final plans and specifications. This cost could be included in the grant amount, up to \$2,500. While these requirements resulted in added cost to the City and applicant, it has helped to ensure that the projects implemented are of a high quality and in compliance with the Design Guidelines.



Before and after façade improvements: Village Pizza in Quinsigamond Village, Worcester, MA. Photo credit: Google Map

5. Create a downtown business portal

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location		Town-wide
Origin		Town staff, business stakeholders involved in the LRRP Work Group
Budget		Low Budget (<\$50,000) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Administrative costs and potentially costs for additional website features through CivicPlus
		Funding Opportunities (see Funding Table in Appendix for details): American Rescue Plan Act funding Regional Pilot Project Grant Program MA Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – funding, business adoption, customer adoption
Key Performance Indicators		Visits to the portal, positive response from businesses and customers, regular communication to the business community
Partners & Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Planning & Development Department – coordinate project and gather business resource informationTown Clerk – develop business certificate form and work with other Town staff and business community to establish a business directoryTown Information Technology professional – work with Planning & Zoning and Town Clerk to set up online tools through CivicPlus; assist in maintaining and updating information.Medfield Employers and Merchants Organization (MEMO) – promote the project to members and provide feedback on the proposed business portal

Diagnostic

In the past five years, Medfield has made substantial improvements in technology and communication, in keeping with the Town's Community Compact commitment to enhance transparency and citizen engagement. Implementing additional website features could have a significant impact on engagement from the business community and support for businesses during this time of economic recovery, post-COVID-19.

There is currently no central location or resource for businesses within the Town of Medfield to access information about municipal services and resources related to economic development or for opening a business. Additionally, the Town does not have a business directory for users to locate businesses and services within the Town. In order to provide better support and communication to the business community and to promote Medfield as a business-friendly community, a comprehensive online business portal is recommended.

This project consists of creating a business database, developing a web-based business directory, and providing a business resources page on the Town website. A business database will be used by the Town to understand the businesses community, communicate with business owners, and structure economic development programs to best meet the needs of existing businesses. A web-based directory will allow users to search for businesses in Medfield and provide greater exposure for many of the Town's small businesses that do not have extensive online or social media exposure. The portal will provide a one-stop site for resources related to starting a business, hiring employees, finding funding, and navigating the municipal permitting and licensing processes.

The Town has an important role in regulation that affects the business community as well as providing technical assistance, funding, and other resources to support businesses. Without a central location for presenting and promoting this information, supporting efforts to shop local may be hindered.

Action Items

- Develop a business database to be managed by the Town.
- Develop a business listing directory on the Town's website for users to search for businesses in Medfield.
- Provide an online resource with specific guidance for existing businesses, including permitting and licensing requirements, business certificate renewals, grant and loan programs, Town events, and links to other business resources.
- Provide an online resource with specific guidance for regulatory requirements for opening a business in Medfield, available commercial spaces, and links to other resources for starting a business.



Sign for businesses at 50 North Street. Photo credit: BerryDunn



Main Street. Photo credit: Town of Medfield

Process

Business Database: The Town has expressed a need for an up-to-date database of businesses in Town in order to conduct outreach and provide support through economic recovery initiatives to the business community. While the Town maintains business certificate records, these forms are not digital and cannot be easily transferred to create a database. One option to develop a business database would be to create an online form for business certificate submissions, using the Form Center feature in CivicPlus, the Town website host service.

- Develop a form through the CivicPlus Form Center with the required business certificate form fields.
- Require business certificate applicants to complete the form online. Consider having a public computer/kiosk for walk-in applicants to complete the online form in the office.
- Provide applicants with the option to print the form, have it notarized, and then mail the form to the Town, or to come to Town Hall, have the form printed and notarized at the Town Clerk's office.
- Business data will be collected and maintained through the Form Center and can easily be transferred for other uses by Town staff.

Business Directory: A business directory can provide greater exposure for local businesses through the Town website.

- Data collected for the business database can be used to populate a business or resource directory. Alternatively, other municipalities have promoted the business directory and asked for businesses and organizations to opt-in in order to be listed in the directory.
- The Town can consider including nonprofit organizations, religious institutions, or other entities that would not be captured by the business certificate database. Determine appropriate categories for the business directory (e.g., restaurant, personal services, realtors, etc.).
- Determine the information to be included in the directory. It is recommended that the business name, brief description, and contact information (address, phone number, links to email address and website) be included. If opting in, businesses could also provide a logo to include in the directory.
- Develop a directory using the Resource Directory system feature through CivicPlus.
- Ensure that the directory is maintained and updated periodically, so that information is kept current.
- Include a link for businesses to add their business to the directory or to update contact information.



Bullard's Marketplace. Photo credit: BerryDunn

Business Portal: The purpose of a business portal is to provide easy access to relevant information for existing businesses and to provide information and guidance for proprietors looking to open a business in Medfield. Municipal regulations can be challenging to navigate for business owners who may not be familiar with the Town's requirements or processes. The portal, or business webpage, should provide all pertinent information from one main page. Making information easily accessible and providing additional resources to support businesses will present Medfield as an open, transparent and business-friendly community. The Town should consider including the following information:

- Information on building permits, sign permits, business certificates, and licenses.
- Public health permits and regulations.
- Planning and zoning permits, regulations and processes.
- Business directory.
- Information about other Town regulations that impact the business community, including outdoor dining, noise, and parking.
- Town economic development resources and programs.
- Links to regional and state economic development initiatives, funding programs, and chambers of commerce.
- Information on vacant commercial space and vacant properties within the Town.
- Recent and upcoming projects that may impact businesses (e.g., market studies, downtown capital improvements, Comprehensive Plan).
- Community events that businesses could benefit from and/or participate in (e.g., Shop Local campaign, farmers' market, holiday events).
- Community demographic profile that highlights the Town's customer base and labor force.
- General resources for starting a business.

Initial content for the business portal can simply be a compilation of existing information from Town departments and links to important resources outside of the municipal government.

Continue to expand this resource with new and updated information.

Solicit feedback from the business community to understand what information would be most useful to include.

Hire a consultant to develop materials, as appropriate. This could include a new business guide or a user-friendly development process guide.





Stamford, Connecticut. Source: Stamford Economic Development, www.choosestamford.com

Best Practice

Durham Business Directory Stamford Business Portal



Best Practice

Business Directory: Durham, NH

Durham's business directory allows users to find businesses by searching the list or using the map feature. The listing includes the option for each business to provide a logo, increasing the visibility of the business. Each business listing links to a separate page for each business, including a description of the business (if provided), website, contact information, link to Google Maps location, social media links, and additional photos if provided by the business. Providing space for more business information for each listing, assists small businesses with advertising their products and services. Including a business website, social media links and mapping, makes the site more user-friendly.

Business Portal: Stamford, CT

The City of Stamford has developed the Stamford Business Portal as the go-to resource for starting, managing, and growing a business in the City.

The portal provides a broad range of resources related to starting and growing a business, including developing a business plan, finding a location, financing, networking and marketing.

The portal includes information on City, State and federal permitting and licensing requirements, so that applicants are aware of all layers of regulation before they begin.

The Permits and Licenses tab breaks down regulatory requirements based on specific business types, so that a user only needs to review the requirements for their specific business type.

Stamford has developed "Starter Kits" with all of the relevant permits, resources and guides that are necessary to assist entrepreneurs in starting a new business. Starter Kits have been developed for several different business types, including bars, food trucks, hair salons, and retail shops.

Additional resources addressing topics such as managing your business, greening your business, and disaster preparedness demonstrate Stamford's support of the business community.

Town of Durham, New Hampshire, Business Directory. Source: www.ci.durham.nh.us

City of Stamford Business Portal and Retail Starter Kit. Source: www.stamfordbusinessportal.org

Appendix

[Add inventory spreadsheet and survey results](#)

