



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

City of North
Adams

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



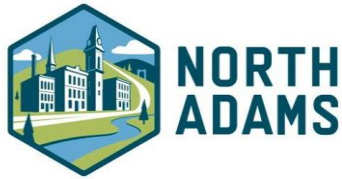
The Local Rapid Recovery Planning (RRP) program is a key part of the Baker-Polito Administration's Partnerships for Recovery Plan, the strategy established to help communities stabilize and grow the Massachusetts economy as a result of the economic impacts brought on by COVID-19. The plan invests \$774 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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Acknowledgements



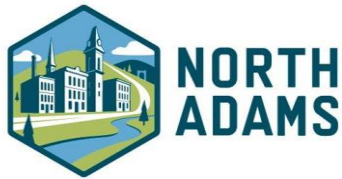
City of North Adams

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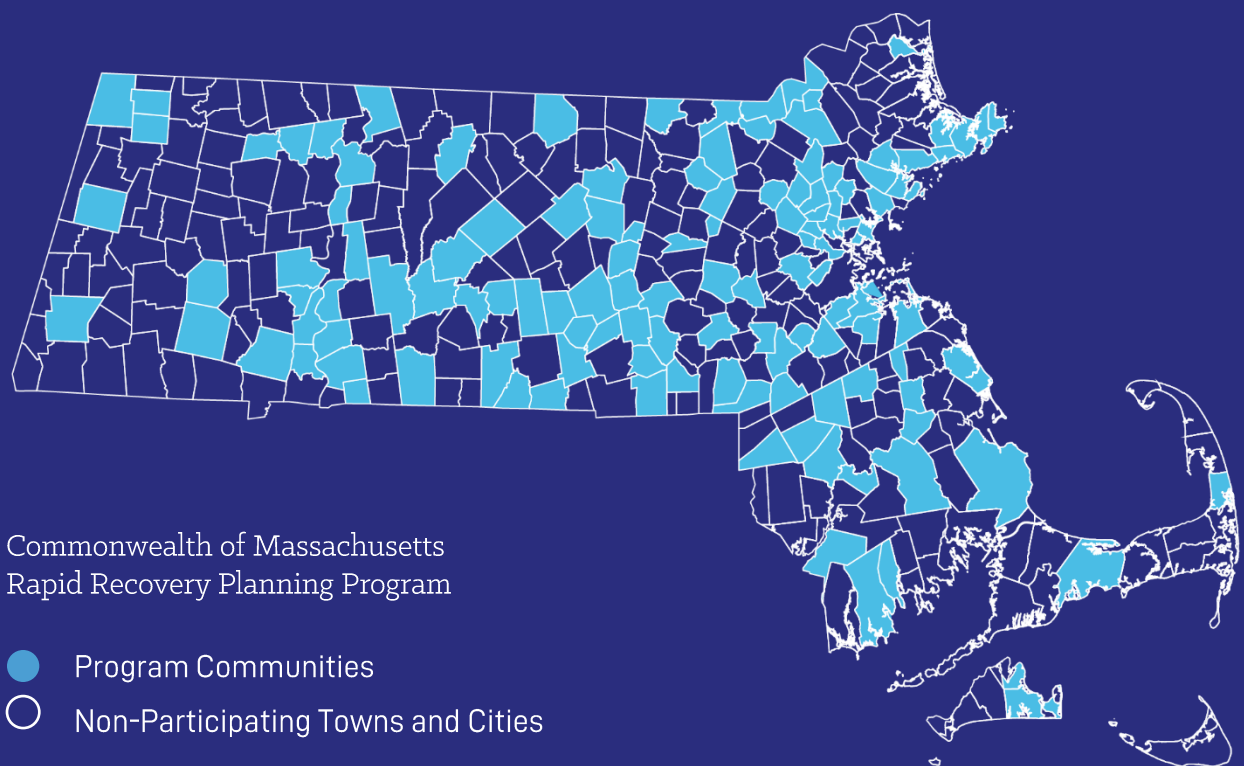
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



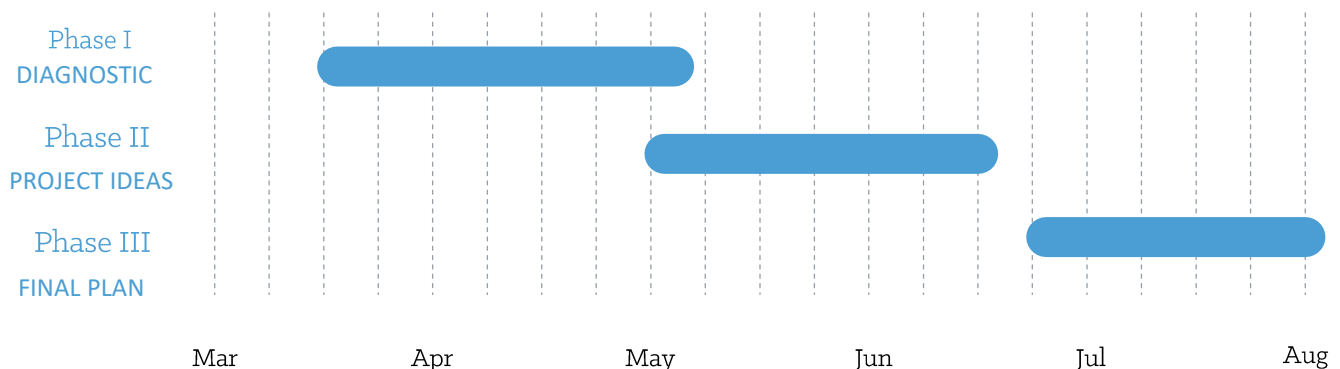
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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



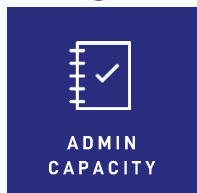
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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

Rapid Recovery Plan – City of North Adams

As with many communities in Massachusetts and indeed across the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges and highlighted existing deficiencies in the City of North Adams. Prior to the pandemic, North Adams had been struggling with lackluster economic activity within the downtown. Despite the presence of nearby tourism magnet, MASS MoCA, the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), and various employers, high commercial vacancy rates persist. In addition, urban renewal interventions that occurred decades ago have fragmented the physical layout of the City which works to discourage non-motorized travel. The city's recovery from the pandemic will require a mix of infrastructure improvements, business attraction strategies, and organizational capacity building. The Office of Community Development along with the city's Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations such as the Office of Community Events and the Public Arts Commission, are well positioned to further these projects with support from other community coalitions.

Since the 1970's, the City of North Adams has taken actions to effectuate quality, broad-spectrum change. These include a diverse set of projects centering on infrastructure, parks and recreation, and economic development. Drawing on funding provided through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the city has embarked on projects such as razing blighted buildings, conducting major building improvements to the local senior center, construction of the skate park and splash park at Noel Athletic Field Complex, along with the completion of numerous feasibility studies centered upon economic development, housing, and transportation. Design interventions that enhance common public spaces, beautify the streetscape and landscape, and create non-motorized connections that link people to places of work, school, services, and outdoor recreation are all recurring themes that emerge from the North Adams Vision – 2030 Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Strategic Economic Development Plan, and Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

The pandemic highlighted the need for investments to improve the economic landscape of the city through twelve (12) projects. These projects focus on themes related to attracting more residents and visitors to the downtown, improving multimodal connections that link key destinations, getting businesses back to the downtown, and understanding future housing needs.

Residents and visitors will be drawn downtown by improving public spaces, programming and marketing pop-up events, developing a tourism marketing study, and creating multimodal pathway connections that provide circulation from neighborhoods to downtown destinations. A public amenities plan will serve as a blueprint for enhancing the downtown's aesthetic and recreational appeal and will incorporate signage improvements for better navigating to destinations. Getting businesses back to the downtown will be accomplished through the creation and dissemination of a business permitting guide, potential implementation of a vacant property registration ordinance, and a storefront improvement program. Elucidating future housing strategies will be accomplished through developing a housing market study, for which residential recruitment will be a vital component.

All projects outlined in this plan can individually work to improve the economic condition of downtown North Adams. Together, they can work to create lasting improvements that serve to revitalize the downtown.

Downtown North Adams: Study Area

Below is a map of the study area that was delineated for the Local Rapid Recovery Program effort. The study area encapsulates the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in the northwest, running south to include Western Gateway Heritage State Park. Then moving east, the study area includes American Legion Drive and surrounding establishments including just beyond Oasis Plaza in the southeast. It then moves north to include Ashland Street up to the intersection of Eagle and Center Street. It then proceeds west along Center Street before heading North along Marshall Street up to the Hoosic River.

This strange footprint was chosen because of the mixture of buildings and uses within its boundaries align more with a traditional downtown character. Within these boundaries are multistory buildings containing commercial storefronts, office space, and residences, along with parks, museums, retail shops, and restaurants. For the purposes of this effort, this study area is 'most' downtown in terms of use and character.

Downtown North Adams Local Rapid Recovery Planning



Diagnostic

Key Findings



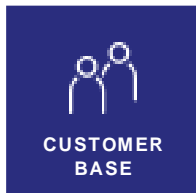
The City has aging public infrastructure

Despite any significant reconstruction projects, the primary roadways (Routes 8 and 2) that allow access to the downtown remain in a state of good repair. Other streets within the downtown require or will soon require attention as cracks in the roadbed, in the sidewalk, and faded crosswalk paint are all visible. There are several small parks and other public areas scattered throughout the downtown. Through the RRP process, the city seeks to identify additional opportunities to enhance public amenities such as benches for seating, trash receptacles, hand washing stations, shade trees, and improved awnings.



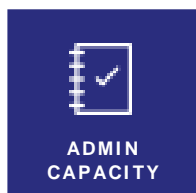
Downtown North Adams is anchored by a mix of retail, food services, and cultural attractions

Just over a third of active businesses in the downtown provide retail or accommodation and food services. The remaining businesses provide construction, manufacturing, information, finance and insurance, real estate renting and leasing, professional, scientific and technical services, educational services, health care and social assistance, and arts, entertainment, and recreation services. There are a total of 122 businesses in the downtown with 31 vacant storefronts.



Downtown North Adams attracts residents from throughout the city and beyond

Downtown North Adams has a small resident population of about 464 individuals but attracts consumers from throughout the city. Residents in the downtown tend to be slightly younger, have a lower medium household income, and a slightly smaller average household size compared with the demographics of the city as whole. It is estimated that the downtown population has a similar educational attainment to the city at large. Fine-grained data for race and ethnicity for our study area could not be obtained for comparison with the city.



The City has a limited number of organizations with limited resources overseeing recovery efforts

The Chamber of Commerce has been assisting the City's Office of Community Development in downtown revitalization efforts. Together, these two entities represent the administrative capacity within the Study Area.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

ACCESS

Despite any significant reconstruction projects, the primary roadways (Routes 8 and 2) that allow access to the downtown remain in a state of good repair. Some of the smaller side roads, sidewalks, crosswalks, and parking areas in the downtown need improvements, especially for ADA accessibility.

Within the downtown, there are 1,779 parking spaces. This appears to be sufficient in accommodating resident and visitor parking.

VISIBILITY

Street lighting in the downtown appears to be adequate but could be improved along private storefronts – specifically to better allow visitors to see merchandise sold inside shops. This may improve the overall visitor experience.

Signage along streets in the downtown appear adequate but could benefit from enhancements. For the most part, street signs serve to move motorists quickly through the downtown. Opportunities to better highlight the commercial districts, cultural attractions, and parking areas should be explored.

When it comes to business signage, some businesses, particularly along Eagle Street, have invested in high quality, permanent signs to showcase their shops. Other businesses along Main Street, Marshall Street, and Ashland Street use temporary, frame signs during the warmer months that are easily deployable and are typically placed just outside of the business. Opportunities for better, permanent signage that describe the offerings of each business should be explored. Overall, most businesses located on Main Street, Marshall Street, Eagle Street, and Holden Street scored higher on various design elements than business located on Ashland Street or within the Steeple City Plaza and Oasis Plaza.

Aesthetics

Building façades in the downtown range in aesthetic appearance. For the most part, façades in need of improvement are intermixed with those that are adequate in appearance. Some building façades located on Eagle Street, Main Street, Marshall Street, and Ashland Street show signs of age.

Parks

There are several parks and parklets located in the downtown. Within the study area, Western Gateway Heritage State Park (WGHSP) is located on the west side of the city and there is a pocket park and parklet located along Eagle Street. Just outside the study area, but still within the downtown, there is Veteran's Memorial Park, located in between Center Street and Route 2, Colegrove Park located next to Church Street, and UNO Park located near the intersection of Houghton and River Street. Overall, the condition of parks is good, however, improvements to WGHSP could help reinvigorate and anchor the space as a destination/gathering place.



Pocket park along Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

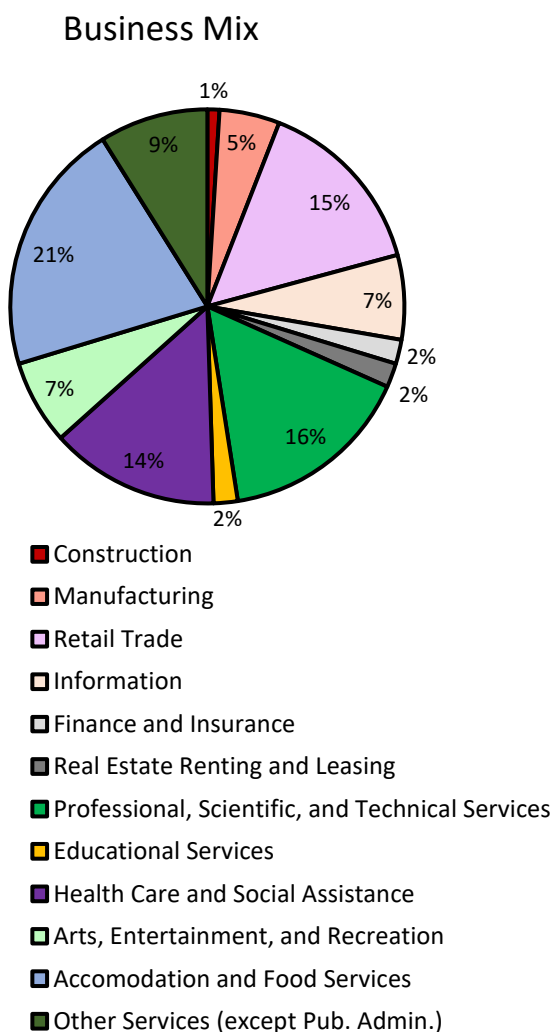


Highlights from the Business Environment

Business Mix

There are currently 122 active businesses downtown covering a range of sectors from accommodation and food services (21%), professional, scientific, and professional services (16%), and retail trade (15%). Accommodation and food services are the main drivers bringing people to the downtown.

Other sectors represented downtown include health care and social assistance (11%), information (6%), and arts, entertainment, and recreation.



Business Space

There are 153 business locations in the downtown, with 31 (20%) vacant. The vacancy rate in some areas, especially along Eagle Street and within Steeple City Plaza and Western Gateway Heritage State Park, can create a sense of isolation and abandonment.

Many of the business's downtown are located on Main, Marshall, Holden, and Eagle Streets, which form the downtown's commercial core. There are also a smaller number of businesses located on Ashland Street and American Legion Drive.



Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Holden Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Highlights from the Customer Base

Customer Base

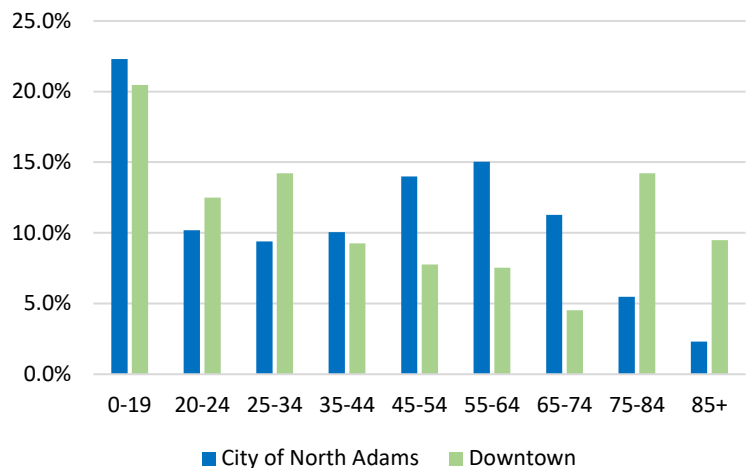
Downtown North Adams has an estimated population of approximately 464 residents. This represents about 3.5% of the entire city, which has a total population of 12,959 residents.

The educational attainment of downtown residents is comparable to the city overall. Downtown, 32.5% of individuals 25 years of age and older have a high school diploma or less as compared to 34.9% of residents in the City of North Adams. In the downtown, 13.6% of residents have a bachelors degree or higher as compared to 15.6% of residents in the city overall.

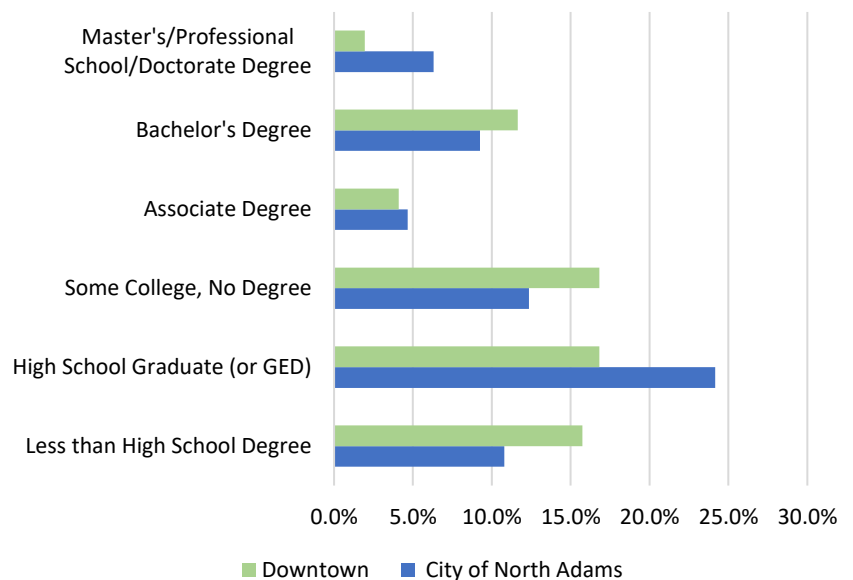
The average household size of the downtown is slightly smaller than that of the city, at 1.72 compared to 2.15 individuals per household, respectively. The median household income for downtown residents is much lower (\$22,885) compared to the city (\$41,471) overall.

The median age between the downtown and the city differs by about 4 years. Residents in the downtown have a median age of about 38.5 years. For the city overall, the median age is about 42.4 years of age. Age distribution in the downtown parallels the city overall.

Age Distribution: City of North Adams compared to Downtown North Adams



Population by Educational Attainment (Ages 25+)





Highlights from Administration Capacity

Administration Capacity

The City of North Adams has an Office of Community Development (OCD) that actively works to secure monies from various funding sources to procure technical services and to implement tangible improvements through construction projects. Over the years, the OCD has overseen various planning and feasibility studies including, Complete Streets: Envisioning a Multimodal North Adams, Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, Eagle Street Woonerf Feasibility Study, North Adams Vision 2030 – Comprehensive Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Mohawk Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Feasibility Study / Ashuwillticook Trail Extensions, Mohawk Trail and Mount Greylock Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plans, Ashland Street Corridor Study, downtown Walkability Study, Strategic Economic Development Plan, and Downtown Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. These studies are designed to provide recommended pathways for revitalizing downtown North Adams. In addition, OCD also support larger marketing efforts for the downtown.

The Office of Community Events is responsible for event planning and coordination. This organization assists and provides guidance to private entities that want to hold events in public areas.

The North Adams Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization that promotes and advances the economic, civic, and social vibrancy of the North Adams community. The Chamber will, in some instances, partner with the OCD to effectuate economic development projects.

The North Adams Public Arts Commission is responsible for developing policies for the selection and placement of public art, and the custody and care of all works of art owned by the city. The Public Arts Commission is a key organization that should be involved in decisions surrounding public art installations.

Together, these organizations represent the administrative capacity within the RRP study area.



City Hall, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

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Business Permitting Guide

Category	 Public Realm
Location	City of North Adams
Origin	Local Rapid Recovery Plan Outreach Process
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative Program, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) the ease of filing and obtaining a permit; (b) how quickly permits are issued; (c) the ratio of permits issued vs. permits denied.
Partners & Resources	North Adams Office of Community Development and business support organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce



South End of Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

As with many municipalities, the COVID-19 pandemic created new issues and highlighted current deficiencies in existing municipal operations. In the City of North Adams, the effects of the pandemic have been mixed.

As a new or prospective business owner in North Adams, the process by which obtaining the necessary approval, permits, and license to operate within the City can pose a barrier for entrepreneurs seeking to open an establishment. Though the pandemic adversely impacted many, the city did see several new businesses spring up during this period. With no formal process outlining the necessary documents to complete, how to obtain the documents, and where the paperwork should be submitted, the pandemic has further exacerbated the procedure of navigating the permitting, licensing, and zoning processes of opening or expanding a business in the downtown.

Action Item

The creation of a Business Permitting Guide that is accessible on the City's webpage will provide current and/or prospective business owners with instructions for obtaining and submitting the necessary documents to secure a desired permit/license for general or specific business operations. The permitting guide will also include a list of contacts from a 'business response team' – composed of local business owners/managers. The response team will serve as a resource and point of contact for new/prospective business owners that need information specific to business operation regulations.



Give a Dog a Bath Dog Grooming located on Ashland Street, North Adams.
Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Identify appropriate municipal staff to be included in the development of the business permitting guide. This includes municipal staff from the Board of Health, Building Commissioner and Inspector, Fire Department Captain, Safety Inspector, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, and Community Development staff.
- Identify existing business owners that have gone through the business development process and are willing to be listed in the guide and share their insight with new or prospective business owners upon request. This group can be referred to as the 'Business Response Team' and should have representation from different business categories including, retail/service/office, food/beverage, and home-based businesses.
- Initiate development of Business Permitting Guide. It could be helpful to divide the guide into the following sections:
- **Getting Started**: provide brief overview of the permits required for every business, for those specific to food/beverage establishments and home-based businesses, and where to turn in the guide for specific information on these permits.
- **Approvals for Other Business Activities**: provide information regarding the approval process for a few less common business activities such as using the sidewalk in front of your business, holding special events, and complying with the American with Disabilities Act.
- **Detailed Information for Permits and Licenses**: provide detailed information on each permit, including submittal requirements, costs, timelines, and other relevant information.
- **Finding the Right Location and Other Business Matters**: provide advice from the North Adams Chamber of Commerce for new business owners regarding the signing of a lease, common landlord/tenant issues, and questions about insurance.
- **Appendix**: include links to resources and organizations that can help with the development of business plans and obtaining financing.



Garden located on Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Tourism Marketing Study

Category	 Public Realm
Location	City of North Adams
Origin	North Adams Office of Community Development, Local Rapid Recovery Plan Community Input Survey
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative Program, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Urban Agenda Grant Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Number of event tickets sold (to special events such as Fresh Grass Festival and to year-round events that take place at MASS MoCA); (b) social media responses and press coverage; (c) hotel/motel stays.
Partners & Resources	North Adams Office of Community Development, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Mass Development, Mass MoCA, MA Office of Travel and Tourism



The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

The tourism and hospitality sector in Massachusetts has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. In North Adams, revenues generated through the local option excise meals tax were down 8% from 2020 to 2021; and revenue from the local option excise rooms tax were down 15% during the same period.

Tourism is and will remain a large economic driver for the City of North Adams. Rich in cultural attractions, industrial relics from a bygone era, and beautiful scenic vistas, the City is home to numerous points of interest. As businesses that cater to and benefit from tourism continue to recover, this project seeks to reinvigorate this economic sector and promote the downtown as a tourist destination.

In addition to being identified by the City's Office of Community Development as an important step for economic recovery, the results of a public input survey conducted during the diagnostic phase show support for promoting the City as an outdoor travel and art hub.

Action Item

A Tourism Marketing Study will seek to catalog existing natural, cultural, and historic assets along with general existing conditions, and will ultimately promote these downtown offerings as tourist destinations. A primary focus of the Tourism Marketing Study will be to understand visitor demographics (i.e., age, income, place of origin, reasons for visiting, etc.) and then identify viable avenues for marketing/promoting the City's downtown as a destination to these populations.



DCR Visitors Center, Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams.
Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To develop a Tourism Marketing Study, the city may consider the following steps:

- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) outlining the primary objectives for the Tourism Marketing Study .
- Select consulting services from preferred organization to recommend marketing and communications strategies for the city, provide analysis, and develop a Tourism Marketing Study that also include key tourism benchmarks.
- The process to develop the plan may include:
 - Conducting primary research through key stakeholder interviews with travelers
 - Obtaining and analyzing additional primary and secondary research such as hotel/motel visitor data and/or place of origin data from ticket sales to MASS MoCA events
 - Conducting analysis of tourism and brand positioning of comparable communities
- Upon completion of the plan, explore funding sources and pathways for promoting key attractions to specific market segments.







Bright Ideas Brewing located on MASS MoCA Campus, North Adams.
Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



MASS MoCA Campus, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Program Flexible Performance/Retail Space in Western Gateway Heritage State Park

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area – Western Gateway Heritage State Park
Origin	Office of Community Development
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces Grant, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – Owner buy-in is essential. Release from liability for the storefront owners may be required. Budget.
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) number of businesses that engage in mobile pop-up/number of pop-up performances; (b) number of attendees attracted to pop-up retail/performance; (c) commercial tenancy rate.
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development and business support organizations such as the North Adams Chamber of Commerce



Entrance to Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Pop-up stores and performances offer a great opportunity to increase business visibility and profits while making good use of underutilized space within the city. Currently, there are virtually no, or very limited, opportunities for businesses to open a pop-up store for a day, or during a special event. Programming flexible retail in Western Gateway Heritage State Park (WGHSP) could work to draw people to this underutilized space and help support existing and new businesses. Coordinating special events such as performances that could coincide with pop-up retail could further draw people to this space and help to stimulate more economic activity.

Creating outdoor retail and performance space is further practical in lieu of COVID social distancing requirements.

Action Item

Program special event performances and create opportunities for businesses to sell and market at WGHSP through:

- Allowing pop-up stores in existing vacant space (vacant buildings in WGHSP), if permissible, and/or setting up outdoor retail.
- Allowing special event performances to occur within WGHSP.
- Coordinating pop-up retail in WGHSP to coincide with downtown events to attract additional foot traffic to the area.



Various photos of Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process


- Measure key dimensions of pop-up retail/performance area.
- Create flexible design alternatives that will help facilitate pop-up performance/retail events.
- Determine desired design alternative including installation of any physical structures (e.g.: pergola, stage, etc.).
- Create materials list and budget.
- Secure funding to procure design and construction of such structures. Explore procurement of flexible design installation from local sources.
- Conduct business owner outreach to identify businesses that will participate in pop-up retail events. Coordinate with MASS MoCA and city departments to identify pop-up performances that can occur in WGHSP.
- Develop pop-up programming (winter and summer months) in coordination with identified businesses.
- Schedule and execute programming according to its design.
- Promote event through flyers, social media, and city-wide announcements.



Western Gateway Heritage State Park, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Two corresponding best practice sheets titled “Create Calm Street Pilots and Pop-Up Curbside ‘Streeteries’” and “Permitting Pop-Up Events” can be found in the Appendix Section

Consideration of Vacant Property Registration (VPR) Ordinance

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Downtown North Adams
Origin	Office of Community Development, LRRP Outreach Process
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 High Risk – Political capital/willingness to enact ordinance, legal challenges among land/building owners
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured to tracking: (a) VPR ordinance implementation, (b) reduction of vacant properties
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, North Adams Housing Authority, North Adams Chamber of Commerce



Vacant properties along Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

As with many other municipalities, the pandemic tended to highlight and exacerbate preexisting challenges facing the City of North Adams. One such issue was that of landlord accountability. While it can be difficult for entrepreneurs or prospective business owners to track down and contact landowners during normal times, the pandemic further complicated this process.

Through the public input survey and one-on-one interviews with businesses owners that were conducted during the diagnostic phase, improving landlord accountability was seen as an important step for economic recovery. During the height of the pandemic, the city saw several new businesses open. One co-owner of a recently opened establishment reported that the current location of the business was not their first choice, however, due to one landlord's lack of responsiveness, the business was essentially forced to settle into their current location. According to this business owner, landlord lack of responsiveness could be detrimental for new entrepreneurs looking for suitable business spaces in the downtown.

Action Item

The VPR ordinance seeks to create a mechanism for identifying the potential responsible parties for unoccupied buildings and impose appropriate costs upon those parties by requiring registration of vacant properties with local city government. Lack of registration or adherence to regulations result in municipal or criminal fees. If fees remain unpaid, the local government places a lien against the property.



Vacant property located along Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Vacant property located at the corner of Eagle and Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate a VPR ordinance, the City may consider the following steps:

- First key element of a VPR scheme is determining local government's goals, which will be evident through the ordinance's scope/purpose section or through the ordinance's definition of "vacancy."
- Determine the preferred VPR ordinance model or combination:
 - Classic model: requires property owners to register the property after certain length of vacancy.
 - Foreclosure model: requires registration initiated at foreclosure.
 - Combined model: Several cities in Massachusetts require owners register vacant residential buildings no more than (seven) days after initiation of the foreclosure process, or if the property has not been legally occupied for (sixty) days or more, and/or not properly maintained or secure, or both.
- Determine if ordinance requires escalating fees or flat fees. Escalating fee provisions typically stipulate that every year a property is vacant, the annual fee increases.
- Set up registration process (should be accessible on the city's webpage) and develop compatible guidance document outlining information needed for registration process and any additional responsibilities.
- Enact ordinance and enforce fee structure.



Space for lease at former Nail Design shop located in Steeple City Plaza, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Space for lease at former business located along Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled "Use a Form Based Code to Shape Public Realm Improvements Over Time" can be found in the Appendix Section

Public Amenities Plan

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Downtown North Adams
Origin	Office Of Community Development, LRRP Outreach Process
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> Planning Assistance Grants, MA Downtown Initiative Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Public input; (b) business community support; (c) timeframe from plan completion to implementation.
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, Public Arts Commission



Mural along Center Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Bench near Post Office on the corner of Main and Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

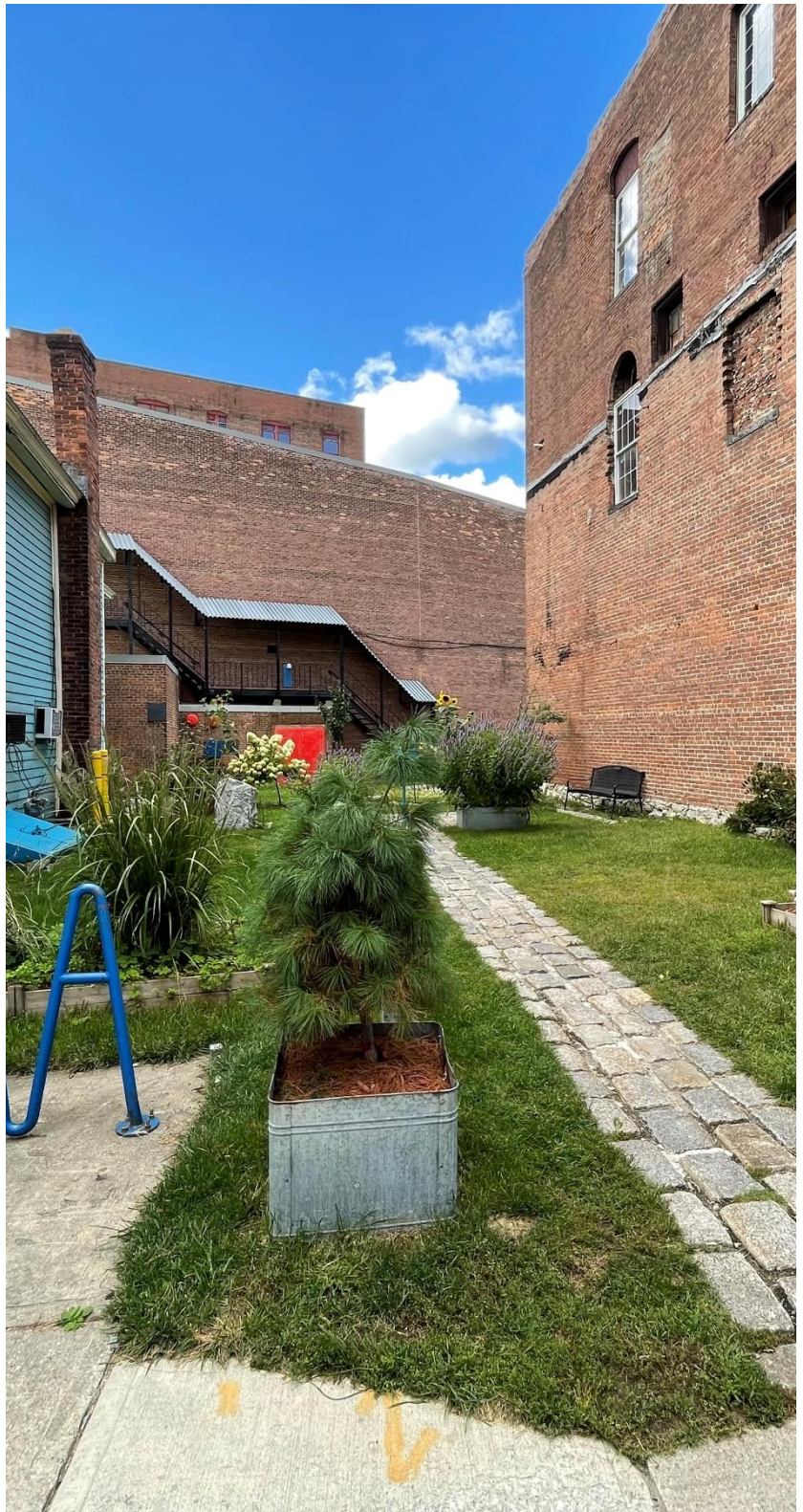
Diagnostic

Social distancing and efforts to minimize the amount of time spent in indoor environments, particularly crowded indoor spaces, has illuminated the need to facilitate a diverse set of outdoor activities.

During the diagnostic phase, business owners that were surveyed identified the need to improve the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks. These businesses also identified amenity improvements for public transit/bike users as an important strategy for improving the condition of the physical environment. Furthermore, the public input survey conducted during the diagnostic phase found that making improvements to infrastructure, wayfinding, and the general aesthetic of the downtown's-built environment were all important action steps to promote economic recovery.

Action Item

Develop an actionable Public Amenities Plan that includes site-specific recommendations for installing features such as trash cans, benches, hand washing stations, shade trees, and awnings. This plan will also include recommendations for wayfinding signage enhancements along with public art installations. Recommendations will include anticipated budget for improvements.



Pocket Park, Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate this process, the City of North Adams should consider the following steps:

- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Issue RFP outlining purpose, goals, scope of services, project requirements, proposal format, contact information, proposal delivery instructions, evaluation criteria, and timeline.
- Select qualified vendor/consultant.
- Commence study and provide needed support.
- Present recommendations to key stakeholders including volunteers, civic organizations, city staff, elected officials, and MassDOT.
- Explore funding and donation sources and identify preferred strategy to raise funds for material, labor, consultants, or permitting fees.

Key action steps to develop the plan include:

- Catalog existing amenities and identify specific areas in need of improvements/enhancements.
- Conduct site/field measurements of areas that need improvement and determine the dimensions of available space for new amenity features to be installed including public art installations.
- Determine needed improvements and the type and placement of new amenity features (e.g.: trash cans, benches, hand washing stations, shade trees, and awnings). Dimensions of new amenity features should be commensurate with available space.
- Outreach to residents, civic groups, businesses to gauge interest in stewarding location(s) to help with maintenance, such a watering plants and annual cleaning and painting.
- Determine whether improvements require design/engineering consultation.
- Recommend improvements and develop plan for each site improvement that includes the amount of and type of improvements desired, material needed, labor required, permitting requirements/costs, and maintenance needs.



Seasonal parklet, Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Benjamin Lamb – Heart of Eagle mural, Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System” can be found in the Appendix Section

Construct Eagle Street Woonerf

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Eagle Street, North Adams
Origin	Office of Community Development
Budget	 Large Budget (>\$200,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MassWorks, Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Community Development Block Grant, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 High Risk – Eagle Street business community support, adverse impact to revenues/sales of Eagle Street businesses
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Woonerf implementation; (b) biannual revenues/sales for Eagle Street businesses; (c) social media responses; (d) attendance at Eagle Street events; (e) traffic speed; (f) pedestrian and bicycle traffic volume; (g) traffic volume
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, MassDOT, City Engineer, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Eagle Street business community



North End of Historic Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Creating additional outdoor hangout and/or gathering spaces has become increasingly desirable due to the COVID pandemic.

The public input survey conducted in the diagnostic phase revealed a desire to create more hangout/gathering spaces that facilitate socializing and greater community cohesion.

The need to create better walking and bicycling infrastructure was also identified during the diagnostic phase and has been a recurring theme of previous planning studies that have focused on improving downtown circulation.

Action Item

This project will focus on constructing a woonerf along the short, historic section of Eagle Street.

A woonerf is a unique design innovation that aims to change the way the street is used and seeks to improve the quality of life on streets by designing them for people, not just for traffic. Traditional Woonerven (plural) typically eliminate the curb separating the sidewalk from the roadway and put the two on the same grade. Beyond the functional design of controlling traffic speed and volume, a woonerf can also be thought of as a type of social intervention. By incorporating plantings, street furniture, and gathering spaces into the streetscape, these designs seek to maximize social opportunities while creating an efficient and novel use of space.

In North Adams, this project will seek to drastically increase public amenities and pedestrian features along the short, one-way historic section of Eagle Street.



Rendering of Eagle Street Woonerf, North Adams. Rendering Photo Credit: Emily Lange, BRPC.

Process

To initiate the woonerf project along Eagle Street, the City may consider the following steps:

- Review recommended design alternatives provided in the 2019 Eagle Street Woonerf Feasibility Study conducted for the city.
- Gather additional feedback (from business owners along Eagle Street and from North Adams residents) to determine whether the recommended design alternatives from feasibility study are still relevant, if there's a preferred design from those options, or if new design alternative(s) is needed.
- Consider conducting traffic study to determine traffic volume and speed, and the number of pedestrians and cyclists using Eagle Street.
- Consider tactical urbanism strategies (e.g.; temporary installations) to test out woonerf design features. Temporary woonerf and traffic calming design features could be, in part, informed by results of the traffic study.
- Gather public feedback on tactical urbanism strategies to help inform future, permanent design alterations.
- Contract with licensed professional surveyor to conduct topographic survey to determine existing conditions/constraints. This will help to determine the exact footprint the project will need to work within
- Conduct pavement core analysis to assess depth and condition of existing pavement and sub-base.
- **Concept Plan and Estimate:** Work with roadway design engineer for concept plan and estimate. Develop RFP to contract with engineering design firm to provide design alternatives, engineering plans, associated cost estimates, and timeframe. This task should include input from multiple stakeholders including adjacent neighbors, business owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base
- Determine preferred design alteration and work toward full engineering plan. Preferred design should encapsulate design upgrades for ADA compliance. Preferred design should also be informed by input from emergency management officials as it relates to the required 20-foot fire lane that needs to be preserved along the street.
- **Construct Woonerf:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with installing a woonerf along Eagle Street with appropriate roadway markings and signage.



Rendering of Eagle Street Woonerf, North Adams. Rendering Photo Credit: Emily Lange, BRPC.

Install Downtown Cycle Track

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Main Street and Marshall Street, Downtown North Adams
Origin	Office of Community Development
Budget	 Large Budget (\$200,000 +) Estimated project cost: \$544,690 <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 High Risk: Difficulty raising funds, political will, potential lack of support from community/Main Street/Marshall Street businesses
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Biannual cycle track bicycle ridership numbers; (b) visitation rates among Main Street/Marshall Street businesses.; (c) social media responses and press coverage.
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, City Engineer, DPW, MassDOT



Rendering of Cycle Track along Main Street. Photo Rendering Credit: Emily Lange, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Rich in cultural attractions, industrial relics from a bygone era, and beautiful scenic vistas, North Adams boasts numerous points of interest. Such points of interest can be thought of as islands of opportunity which represent institutions such as MASS MoCA, downtown restaurants, boutique shops, grocery stores, and landmarks such as Western Gateway Heritage State Park. In essence, these places are important to employment, recreation, tourism, and day to day activities. These places are largely connected via roadways, but lack safe, convenient pedestrian connections.

During the diagnostic phase of the RRP process, 64% of businesses surveyed within the downtown reported less foot traffic (i.e., less on-site customers) than before COVID. Moreover, 50% of these businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more. Additionally, the public input survey conducted for this project and for similar planning projects in the downtown reveal a desire among some residents to greatly enhance the downtown's walkability and bike-ability in order to facilitate convenient, multimodal travel.

Infrastructure projects that enhance cycling, such as a Main Street and Marshall Street cycle track, will allow users to comfortably access businesses along this multimodal route. Enhancing this type of access may result in pathway users spending more time and money in the downtown.



Main Street, looking west. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item

Cycle tracks are typically conceived of as bike facilities characterized by physical separation from the roadway, either through a physical barrier like bollards or curbing, or through distance created by striping.

This project would seek to build-out a continuous, two-directional cycle track along Main Street and Marshall Street. The portion of cycle track located along Main Street will necessitate the removal of one west-bound vehicle travel lane.

Process

To implement the downtown cycle track, the city may consider the following steps:

- Review existing cycle track conceptual engineering design provided by Waterfield Design Group (WDG). Conceptual design is included in 'North Adams Downtown Bike and Pedestrian Plan.'
- Determine best configuration of cycle track from design alternatives provided by WDG.
- Secure funding for advancing cycle track planning and implementation efforts.
- Conduct pavement core analysis to assess depth and condition of existing pavement and sub-base.
- Develop RFP to contract with engineering design firm to provide full engineering design, cost estimate, and timeframe. This task should include input from multiple stakeholders including adjacent neighbors, business owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base. This task should also include signal design review to determine new signalization for Main Street/Marshall Street intersection.
- **Construct Cycle Track:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with installing cycle track with appropriate pavement markings and signage.



Looking north on Marshall Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Cycle track rendering along Marshall Street, North Adams. Photo Rendering Credit: Eammon Coughlin, BRPC.

Install Cycle Track along American Legion Drive

Category	 Public Realm
Location	American Legion Drive, Downtown North Adams
Origin	Office of Community Development
Budget	 Large Budget (\$200,000+) <u>Funding Sources:</u> Commonwealth Places, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 High Risk: Difficulty raising funds, political will, potential lack of support from community/Main Street/Marshall Street businesses
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: Biannual cycle track bicycle ridership numbers; (b) social media responses and press coverage.
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, City Engineer, DPW, MassDOT



Looking southeast to northwest along American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

This project responds to the pandemic-induced decline in foot traffic and on-site customer visitation rates among local businesses. Moreover, this project seeks to further expand the build-out of high comfort bicycle facilities that allow non-motorized access to various destinations in the downtown.

American Legion Drive currently has the city's only existing bike lanes. The roadway has a wide right-of-way that allows for flexibility in design and is an ideal connector between Main Street and MCLA along Ashland Street. American Legion Drive is also a potential location to connect to a future bike path spur by creating an above or below ground pedestrian/bicycle crossing at the existing Pan Am rail line.



Looking southeast along American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item

This project would seek to create a two-directional cycle track along American Legion Drive. The City will need to determine if the existing bike lanes should be upgraded to a cycle track through restriping and elimination of all parking along the north/east side of the street; or, reconstruct the roadway to build a permanent barrier between the cycle track and vehicle lanes. Additionally, through narrowing the roadway, parking could be preserved along the northern section of the street.



Potential location to connect future bike path spur through elevated or underground pedestrian/bicycle crossing at rail line. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Consider conducting traffic study to determine traffic volume and speed, and the number of pedestrians and cyclists using American Legion Drive.
- Contract with licensed professional surveyor to conduct topographic survey to determine existing conditions/constraints. This will help to determine the exact footprint the project will need to work within.
- **Concept Plan and Estimate:** Work with roadway design engineer for concept plan and estimate. Develop RFP to contract with engineering design firm to provide design alternatives, engineering plans, associated cost estimates, and timeframe. This task should include input from multiple stakeholders including adjacent neighbors, abutting owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base.
- If roadway reconstruction will occur to accommodate installation of a permanent barrier between the cycle track and vehicle lane, the city should conduct a pavement core analysis to assess depth and condition of existing pavement and sub-base.
- Conduct signal design review and determine new signalization for the intersections at either end of the street (intersection at Ashland Street and intersection at Main Street).
- Determine preferred design.
- Acquire necessary permits and conduct any required environmental reviews.
- **Construct Cycle Track:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with installing cycle track with appropriate pavement markings and signage.



Looking west down American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Looking west down American Legion Drive, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Route 30 Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Separated Bicycle and Shared-Use Lanes” can be found in the Appendix Section

Reconstruct Pedestrian Bridge north of Western Gateway Heritage State Park

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge
Origin	Office of Community Development
Budget	 Large Budget (\$200,000+) Project Estimate: \$2,000,000 Funding Sources: Commonwealth Places, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program, FHWA Surface Transportation Block Program (STBG)
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk: Difficulty raising funds, politically will
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) Project completion; (b) biannual utilization rate (pedestrian counts).
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, City Engineer, Pan Am Railways



Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

Just north of Western Gateway Heritage State Park, a pedestrian bridge allows users to cross over the Pan Am rail line from Furnace Street and Secor Avenue to West Main Street. The bridge has structural deficiencies and needs replacement.

This project responds to the pandemic-induced decline in foot traffic and on-site customer visitation rates among local businesses.

Additionally, this project is a key component of the future construction and expansion of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail that will extend down from Williamstown, through North Adams, and on to the existing link in Adams.



Deficiencies along Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item

This project seeks to replace the existing pedestrian bridge with a new ADA compliant crossing structure.

Replacing this structure with a newer, safer, and more accessible crossing will provide enhanced pedestrian access to the downtown core among neighborhoods surrounding Heritage State Park. On the flip side, enhancing this structure through replacement will afford a convenient pedestrian connection to access Heritage State Park.



View from Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

- Secure funding for work related to demolishing, designing, and replacing existing crossing with new ADA compliant structure.
- **A Comprehensive Survey:** Develop RFP for development of base plan, which requires a comprehensive horizontal and vertical survey of the bridge site, including adjacent park, commercial, residential, and public-way parcels, in addition to the Pan Am right-of-way.
- **Concept Plan and Estimate:** Work with bridge design engineer for concept plan and estimate. Develop RFP to contract with structural engineering design firm to provide design alternatives, engineering plans, associated cost estimates, and timeframe. This task should include consideration of technical, design, and constructability input from multiple stakeholders including Pan Am representatives, adjacent neighbors, abutting owners, as well as several city boards and commissions representative of the user or jurisdictional base.
- Determine preferred design.
- Acquire necessary permits and conduct any required environmental reviews.
- **Demolishing and Replacing Pedestrian Bridge:** Develop an RFP for furnishing all labor and materials and performing all work in connection with demolishing and removing the existing structure and installing a new, ADA compliant pedestrian bridge north of Western Gateway Heritage State Park (WGHSP).
- Bidding General Contractors should be MassDOT prequalified in categories of “Bridge Construction” and “Highway-Construction” in a single contract amount of \$2 million or more.



Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore



Heritage State Park Pedestrian Bridge. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore

Storefront Improvement Program

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Downtown North Adams
Origin	Office of Community Development, LRRP Planning Process
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) Funding Sources: MA Downtown Initiative Program, BIZ-M-POWER, Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) number of storefront facades improved; (b) impact of each improvement on local businesses.
Partners & Resources	Landlords and merchants, the Office of Community Development and business support organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce Resources: Community Development Block Grant



DiLego Jewelers and CG's Hair Design both located along Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

The pandemic caused reduced operating hours and business closures in downtown North Adams. The appearance of buildings and storefronts in the downtown are mixed, with some being of poor quality and in general disrepair. Improving the condition and appearance of these buildings will increase their attraction among patrons and will work to attract new businesses looking to establish a presence in North Adams. This project seeks to address the adverse economic impacts felt during the shutdown.

Action Item

The storefront improvement program will improve the appearance of buildings in the downtown business district area which are street facing or in prominent view. The program will seek to stimulate redevelopment and private sector capital investment by proactively addressing deteriorating property conditions and encouraging improvements that increases business activity and economic vitality in the downtown.

Program design should include a tiered and matching award system that provides increased funding for larger projects and should promote ADA improvements.



The Bear and Bee Bookshop located along Holden Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate the storefront improvement program, the City of North Adams may consider the following steps:





- Determine amount of Community Development Block Grant funding that will be allocated yearly to support storefront improvement program.
- Review guidelines from exemplar programs and guidelines for a local Storefront Improvement Program that meets existing needs. Develop Storefront Improvement Program guidelines.
- Establish program application that is accessible through the city’s webpage. Program application should be clear, concise, and user-friendly.
- Establish application review process and award system, including template contract for awardees.



Christo's Famous Pizza followed by AR Designs Fine Art & Tattoo located along Holden Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheet titled “Developing Storefront Guidelines to Energize Downtown” can be found in the Appendix Section

Expand Online Presence of Downtown Businesses

Category	 Revenue/Sales
Location	City of North Adams
Origin	Downtown Businesses, City of North Adams and North Adams Chamber of Commerce
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) <u>Funding Sources:</u> MA Downtown Initiative
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) the number of businesses that request assistance for and set-up e-commerce capabilities; (b) business vitality (sales performance) in an uncertain future.
Partners & Resources	North Adams Office of Community Development, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Community Development Corporation



Secret Stash located on Eagle Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Terra located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses surveyed within downtown North Adams reported losses in revenue and a reduction in on-site customers.

Of businesses surveyed, 51% reported generating less revenue in 2020 compared with 2019, and 37% reported revenue declines by 25% or more. Additionally, 64% of businesses surveyed had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID, and 50% reported a reduction in on-site customers by 25% or more. Naturally, these impacts resulted from safety precautions put in place that significantly restricted normal business operations along with the ability of patrons to visit businesses deemed non-essential.

Naturally, establishing a virtual, online presence (e-commerce, social media) has been identified as an avenue for recovery now and well into the future. Moreover, establishing a more robust online presence was a high priority for businesses that expressed interest in receiving recovery assistance.

Action Item

This project will provide technical assistance to interested businesses that wish to expand their online presence and/or establish e-commerce capabilities for selling products/goods/services through the internet. Key community action items may include:

- Identify partners/providers to implement the program in a timely fashion.
- Identify marketing tool to reach target market.
- Identify which businesses within the study area need the most help.
- Ensure there are enough resources to meet the need.



Scizzor Sisterz located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.



Lucky Cat Tattoo (LCT) located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Action Item Continued

Key Technical Assistance Action items may include:

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

Process

To initiate this process, the city may consider the following steps:

- Explore funding sources and secure funds to implement e-commerce technical assistance training.
- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Issue RFP outlining purpose, goals, scope of services, project requirements, proposal format and contact information, proposal delivery instructions, and evaluation criteria and timeline.
- Identify and select partners to implement the program in a timely fashion.
- Identify marketing tools to reach target market.
- Identify which businesses within the study area need the most help.
- Ensure there are enough resources to meet the need.
- Create a system to approach small business technical assistance topics with empathy, patience, and encouragement recognizing that the topics are difficult for many diverse audiences that suffer from a digital divide disadvantage.
- Conduct trainings. Provide materials that can be referenced following the one-on-one time provided during TA sessions.



CG's Hair Design located on Ashland Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

A corresponding best practice sheets titled “A Collaborative Small Business Technical Assistance Effort to Drive Business Resilience and Opportunity to Diverse Communities” can be found in the Appendix Section

Housing Market Study

Category	 Tenant Mix
Location	Downtown North Adams
Origin	North Adams Office of Community Development
Budget	 Low Budget (<\$50,000) Funding Sources : MA Downtown Initiative, Urban Agenda Grant Program
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Success will be measured by tracking: (a) project completion; (b) tracking key indicators related to housing production and comparing post-study indicators to pre-study indicators; (c) tracking developer relationships; and (d) increased occupancy of underutilized buildings
Partners & Resources	Office of Community Development, Chamber of Commerce, North Adams Housing Authority



Main Street looking east, downtown North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Diagnostic

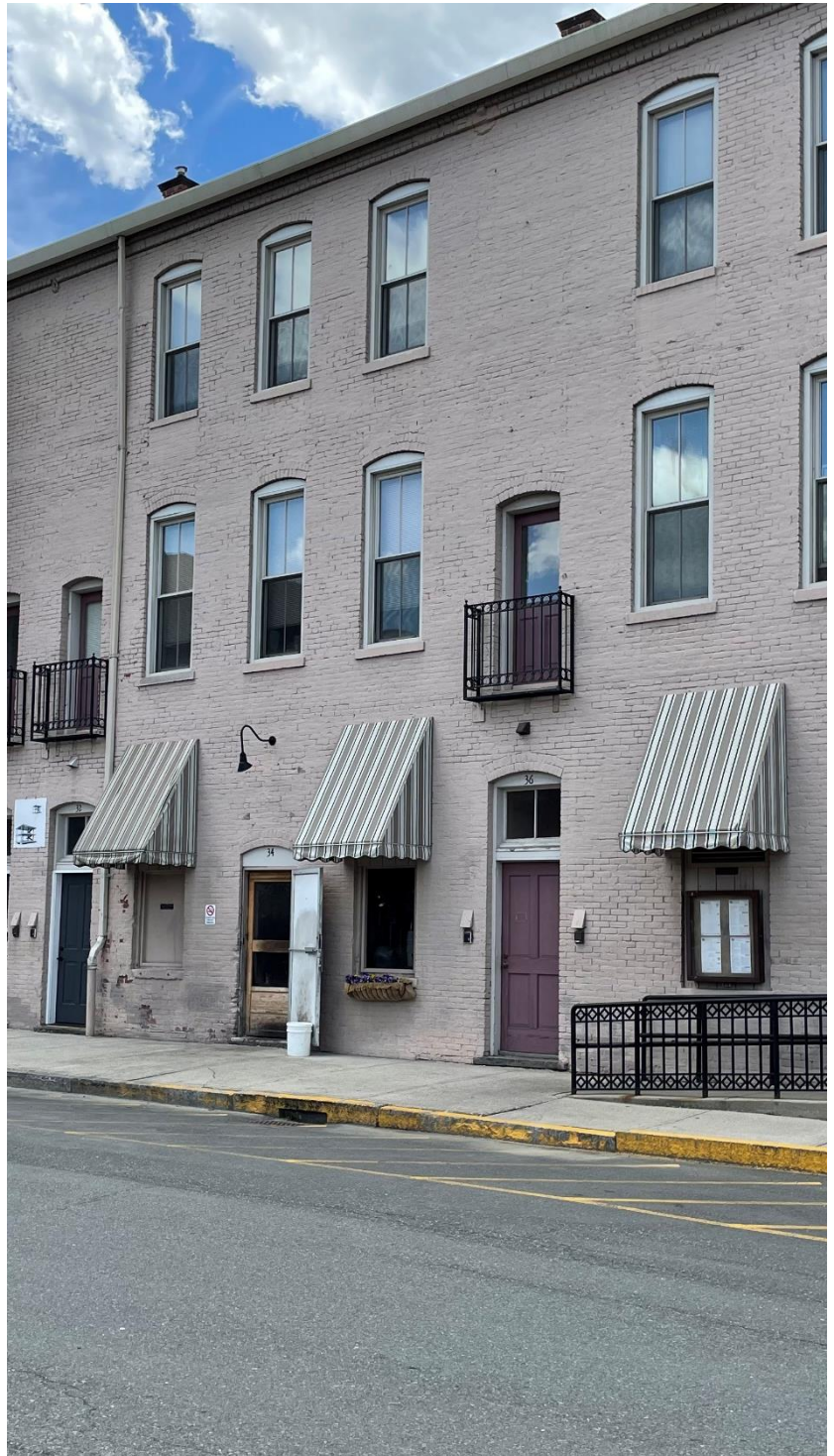
A Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the City of North Adams was completed in 2020. In addition to continued population decline, the HNA contained three key findings: an aging housing stock, a housing supply deficit, and stagnant production of new housing units. Adequate housing and a sufficient supply thereof are integral to stimulating economic development.

The City of North Adams has undertaken action promote housing development, including working to adopt Smart Growth Zoning in and near the downtown area. In order to further stimulate residential investment in North Adams, a thorough understanding of the housing market, and market demand for housing, is necessary.

Such a study will help the City of North Adams attract and inform residential and mixed real estate developers and demonstrate a path to successful housing production in North Adams.

Action Item

A Housing Market Study will seek to identify housing in strategically significant, yet underutilized buildings within the downtown. The study will aim to elucidate preferred housing types for prospective market. Therefore, residential recruitment will be a crucial element of this study.



Back of Public building from Center Street Lot, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

Process

To initiate this process, the City of North Adams may consider the following steps:

- Explore funding sources and secure funds to conduct housing market study.
- Develop a complete scope of work and project schedule.
- Issue RFP outlining purpose, goals, scope of services, project requirements, proposal format and contact information, proposal delivery instructions, and evaluation criteria and timeline.
- Select qualified vendor/consultant.
- Initiate study to determine housing options in strategically significant, yet underutilized buildings within the downtown.
- Conclude with recommendations moving forward.
- Upon completion of the plan, the city should consider working with property owners to encourage the development of site plans and/or floor plans that coincide with recommendations.



Main Street, North Adams. Photo Credit: Justin Gilmore, BRPC.

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