

Burlington Town Center

Local Rapid Recovery Plan

Presentation of Phase 1 Diagnostics

June 3, 2021

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates

Plan Facilitator



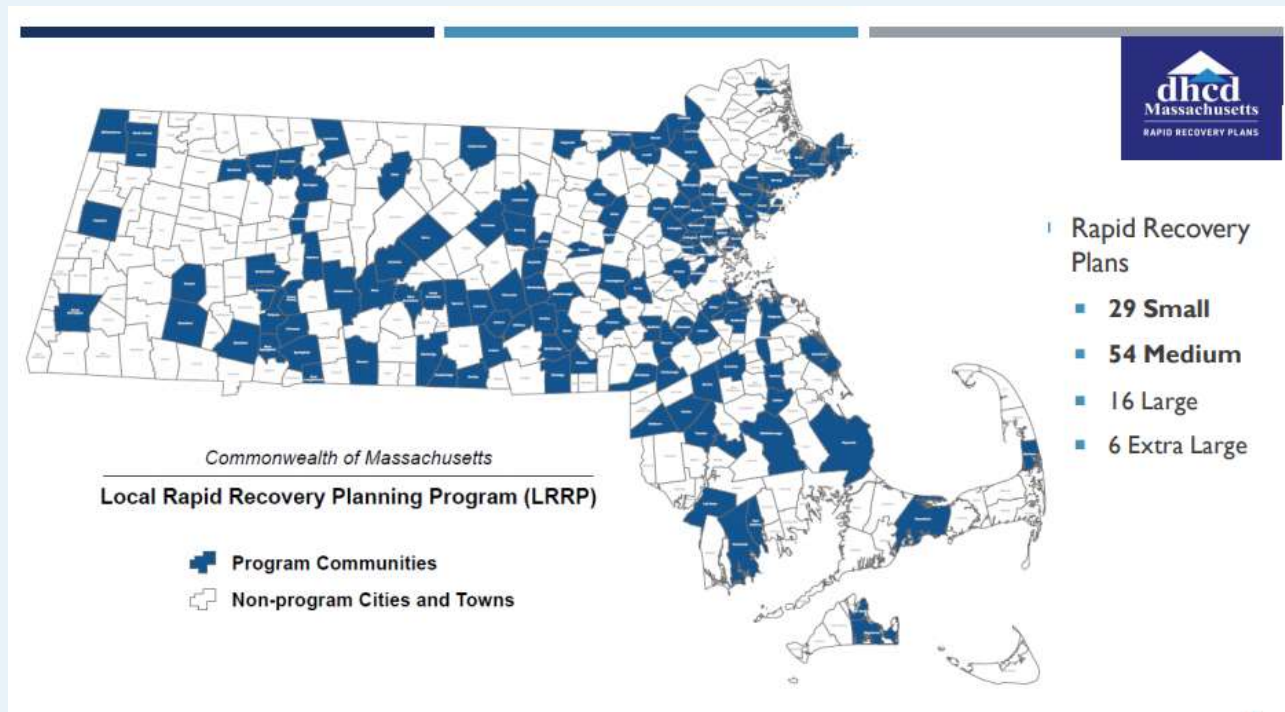
Agenda



- 1 Program Overview**
- 2 Business Survey**
- 3 Physical Environment**
- 4 Market Characteristics**
- 5 Capacity and Regulatory Considerations**
- 6 Initial Project Ideas**
- 7 Next Steps**

Local Rapid Recovery 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.



Local Rapid Recovery Program

3-phase process

1 - Diagnostic

Market Information

Physical Environment

Business Environment

Administrative Capacity

2 - Synthesize

Develop
Recommendations

Support from Subject
Matter Experts

Identify Actionable
Project

3 - Final Plan

Transportation & Infrastructure,
Placemaking & Landscape
Architecture

Redevelopment & Private
Investment

Marketing & Promotion

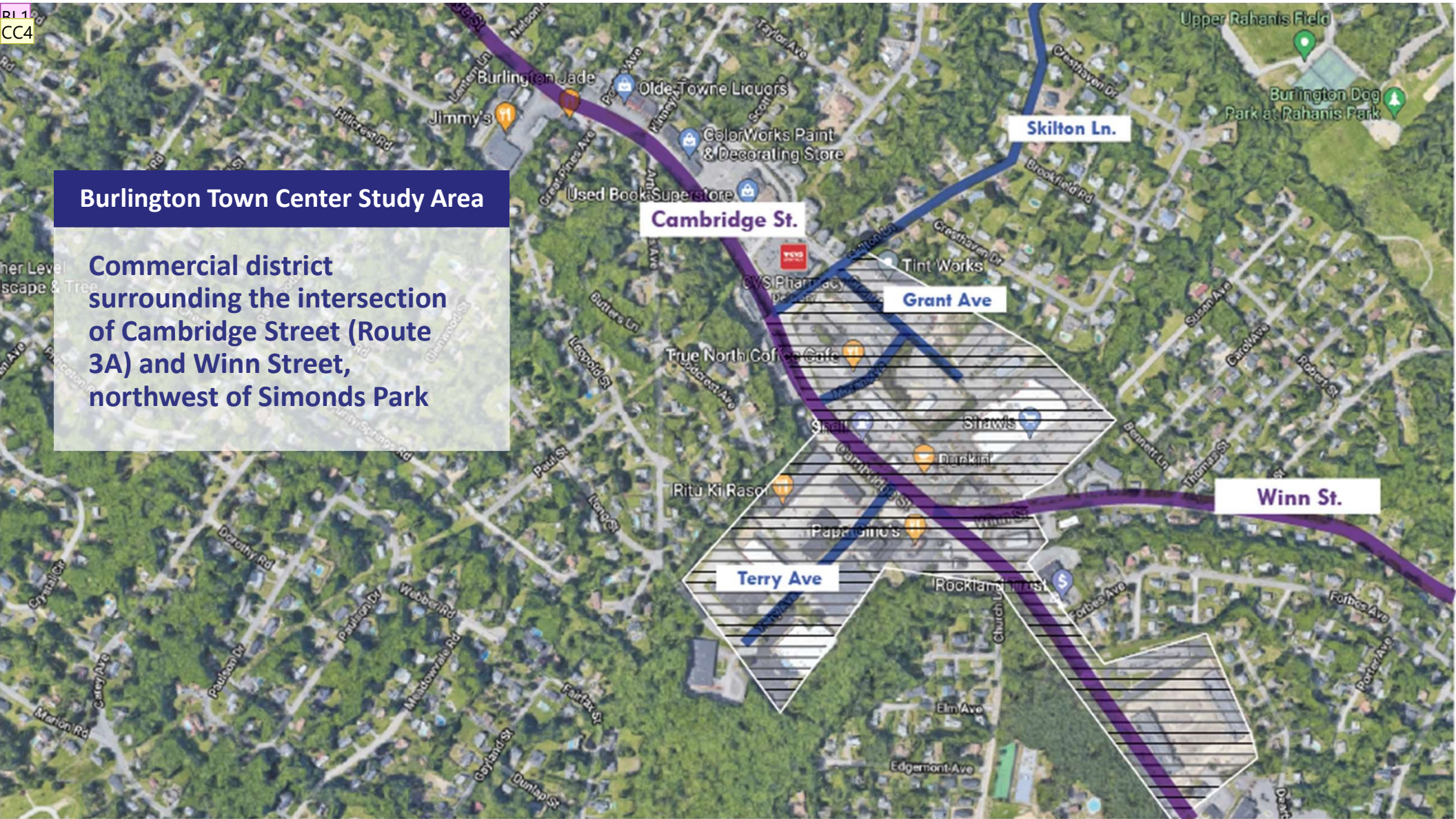
Land Use, Zoning, Regulations

Small Business Technical
Assistance

Cultural/Arts Organizations

Burlington Town Center Study Area

Commercial district
surrounding the intersection
of Cambridge Street (Route
3A) and Winn Street,
northwest of Simonds Park





**BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT**



Business Survey

DHCD's Business Survey Report

- Conducted between March and April 2021
- 16 respondents
- Comments:

"Improvements that incentivize foot traffic."

A coffee shop or over-the-counter food establishment

COVID Impacts, Business Satisfaction, Strategies

- All respondents said they were affected by COVID-19, 88% reported 25% or more reduction in foot traffic
- Signage regulation was noted by 38% of respondents as an obstacle to business
- Businesses are interested in shared marketing and training for social media



**PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT**



Access, Public Realm, and Private Realm

Key Takeaways

- MassDOT ownership of Route 3A limits what can be done without a more formal complete streets project development process
 - Repaving project likely to add bike lanes where feasible (still pending)
 - Cambridge Street/Winn Street intersection has already been identified as in need of improvement through Road Safety Audit process and the town may wish to fund preliminary design and obtain federal/state funding to implement

Takeaway 1

High traffic volumes and auto orientation impact walkability



Takeaway 2

Small business nature of most retail is a community plus – vacancies are generally low



Takeaway 3

District lacks any real identity for those passing through and is unlikely to draw from outside local area

Public Realm

The public realm includes sidewalks, street trees and benches, lighting, wayfinding, directional signage, roadbed quality, and crosswalks.



Physical Environment

Transportation, wayfinding, and lighting infrastructure vary greatly among the Town Center, reducing the salience of district identity and cohesion between distinct shopping strips

Sidewalks, Crosswalks, and Roadbeds

- Cambridge Street recently repaved
- Sidewalks made of concrete or asphalt largely hazard free
- Few sidewalks are protected from the roadway by a planting street or furnishing zone

Lighting

- Vehicle-oriented lighting in roadway illuminates intersections on Cambridge Street
- Side streets with limited lighting
- Pedestrian-oriented lighting rare

Streetscape

- Much of Cambridge Street has street trees providing shade, visual interest, and psychological incentive to slow vehicle speeds
- Limited benches or places to gather

Wayfinding

- Limited district branding signage
- Wayfinding oriented to vehicle directions and through movement
- No pedestrian wayfinding signage between Town Center areas



Pedestrian Environment

Sidewalk infrastructure is highly variable

- Some areas have street trees and landscaping
- Other areas have no sidewalk with parking access having overtaken the walk zone; remedies for this (e.g., access management) would have negative parking impacts



Inlaid brick and planting strips in the sidewalks at new development



New concrete sidewalks along Skilton Lane



Extended curb cut for head-in parking eliminated sidewalk



Western sidewalk of Cambridge Street at Simonds Park is not protected from high-speed traffic.

Wayfinding

- Linear corridor makes placemaking and establishment of a consistent identity challenging.
 - Visitors to the area may not know they are in Burlington Town Center
- Limited pedestrian-oriented wayfinding to encourage a park-once environment



Southbound view to
Winn/Cambridge intersection



Signage on Terry Ave is minimal



No signage at Cambridge/Winn intersection

Private Realm

The private realm includes storefronts and office space within the study area, as well as their associated facades, lighting, signage, and displays.



Storefronts and restaurants frequently have parking spaces located in front of entrances between building and Cambridge Street



Separated commercial strips of different ages have varied architectural style and levels of urban design and pedestrian accommodations



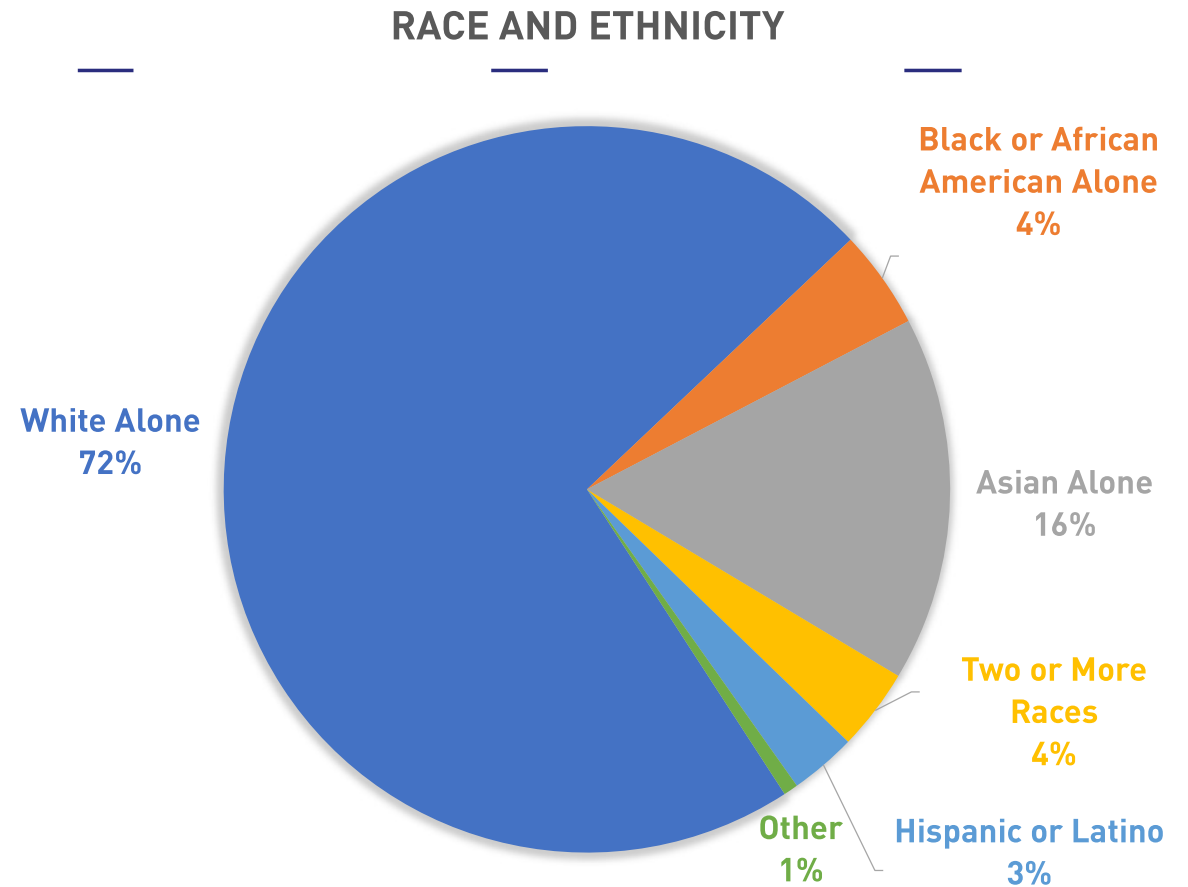
**CUSTOMER
BASE**



Market Characteristics

Burlington Town Center Demographics

- Total population: 25,792
- Identified as Asian Alone: 16%
- Potential opportunity to highlight diversity of dining and food shopping in Town Center





**BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT**



Tenant Mix and Vacancy

Tenant Mix and Vacancy

- 100% of respondents to the business survey said they were affected by COVID-19
- 88% of business respondents noted a 25% or more decrease in foot traffic
- 75% of business respondents said they were operating at reduced hours/capacity
- Commercial tenants are predominantly serving the local market
- A number of restaurants and retail establishments are international in nature, particularly South Asian

Businesses

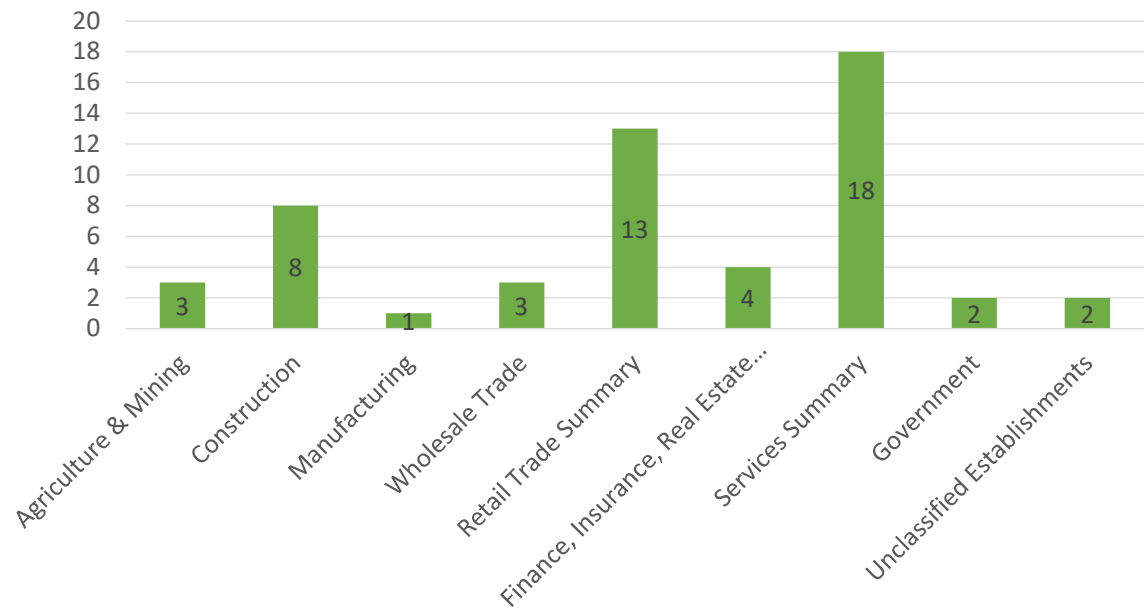
- Total: 52
- Vacant storefronts: 21 (Many in Shoppes at Simonds Park)

Commercial Space

Commercial businesses in the Town Center are primarily service-oriented offices, retail, and restaurants

Asking Rent

Retail: \$32/sq ft
Office: \$13/sq ft





ADMIN
CAPACITY



Capacity and Regulatory Considerations

Administrative Capacity

- Who are the key stewards of the study area?
- Are they adequately staffed and resourced to support implementation of projects?
- Are the regulatory, zoning, and permitting processes an impediment to business activity?
- Why or why not? If lacking a stakeholder entity, is a discussion needed on district management?

Considerations

There is no association of Town Center businesses.

Should the signage process be evaluated?



Initial Project Opportunities

Burlington Town Center

Goals for Project Recommendations

- Reflect community stakeholder input on priorities
- Refine project design with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
- Develop final list of projects

Available Resources

- SME Project Description Sheets
- SME Webinars
- SME Consultations
- Funding Sources

PROJECT CATEGORIES

Projects *are expected* to be categorized in the following six areas.



Public Realm



Private Realm



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Tenant Mix



Cultural/Arts

+ OTHERS

Project Title	An action-oriented statement, e.g. Renovate historic building for restaurant use; Install lighting in public plaza
Category	Public Realm, Private Realm, Revenue & Sales, Admin Capacity, Tenant Mix, Cultural/Arts
Location	Street address/ project site
Origin	Names of individuals or organizations that contributed to project idea
Action Items	Concise description of project and key actions that will be taken
Process	A list of chronological steps to fully implement the project, e.g. training, property/land purchase
COVID Recovery	How will this project support the district's recovery from the pandemic?
Budget	Estimated total project cost and a high-level breakdown of costs. Where possible, identify potential sources of funding

PROJECT RUBRIC

Timeframe	Estimated timeline of project implementation, including phasing and any milestones
Partners and Resources	Include a list of public/non-profit/private entities needed to implement project and specify any roles
Key Performance Indicators	Description of project's anticipated impacts, e.g. economic, environment, social
Risk	Identify potential risks to the project including political will, regulatory restrictions, community interests, site ownership, environmental constraints, or financing limitations
Case Study/Best Practice	Descriptions of projects similar to the one being proposed. Examples may be local/ regional/ national/ international

PROJECT RUBRIC



Neighborhood Branding
and Marketing

Wayfinding and
Orientation

Safety
Improvements

Façade Improvement and
Signage Grant Fund



Recommended Areas of Activity

The areas identified in the map to the right are the primary areas for future temporary placemaking actions. The public survey tested options for each area; the primary and secondary preferences and priorities are incorporated into this playbook.

In addition to the five specific areas, corridor-wide options are also included. For two strategies, weekend/seasonal markets and pocket parks, winter options are identified.

The three highest preferences identified by the community survey were:

- Area-wide directory signage
- Weekend/seasonal/winter market
- Outdoor dining and vendor space

The combination of the weekend/seasonal/winter market was the community's highest priority.



Temporary Placemaking Opportunity Zones: Under-utilized, shared parking lots for multiple businesses.





Wayfinding/ Ground Mural



Placemaking Playbook

Source: Town of Burlington (2021)

HIGHEST PREFERENCE/PRIORITY

Image	Strategy	Page #	Area
	Directory Map	13	① Cambridge Street MBTA Bus Stops
			Corridor-wide
	Weekend Market	14/26/30	② Cambridge Street & Terry Street Parking Lot
	Seasonal Market		③ Shaw's Wall and Adjacent Parking Area
	Winter Market	14/26/30	⑤ Grant Avenue Loading Areas
	Outdoor Dining and Vendor Space	15/26/28	④ Cambridge Street and Moran Ave Parking Lots

High-Preference Placemaking Strategies

Source: Town of Burlington (2021)

Next Steps

Phase II

- Develop Recommendations
- Seek SME Support
- Identify Actionable Projects
- June/July

Phase III

- Summarize Diagnostic Findings
- Present Project Recommendations (Draft and Final)
- July/August

PRIVATE REALM IMPROVEMENTS

SAMPLE PROJECT

The following recommendations in this section were presented to the [redacted] [redacted] s. Although these strategies present opportunities to attract new visitors and leverage new spending in the region, they are early ideas that will require significant support and reinvention following the impacts of COVID-19. Many key elements that will enable full execution of the strategy have not been uncovered and will require further exploration.

1 Renovation of historic building for independent bookstore, cereal bar and restaurant.

Category  Place-Based Asset Enhancement

Origin [redacted]

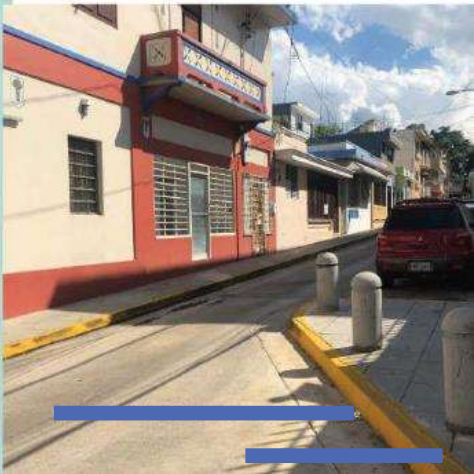
Location [redacted]

[redacted] cultural space that includes an independent bookstore, cereal and coffee bar, and restaurant that will offer artist clients a place dedicated to social gatherings, live music, open mic sessions, a selection of Caribbean literature amongst other international titles.

The facility will transform [redacted] [redacted] by building a destiny for bibliotherapy unlike any other in the area. It's main mission is to

promote the [redacted] street and start engaging with businesses in the urban center of [redacted], joining the the current movement that wants to see the Main Street prosper once more.

Collaborations between local businesses are therefore key to the success of this project, including featuring local products and services at the asset from other businesses in [redacted] [redacted] [redacted].



PRIVATE REALM IMPROVEMENTS

SAMPLE PROJECT

Partners & Resources

A key partner on the project has been identified: [REDACTED], an established coffee farm in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]'s culinary expertise will be critical for the coffee bar experience at the Librería. Other partners include a local brewery, another food and beverage expert who will be able to customize gastronomy offerings at the asset.

Risks

The major risk as of this moment is the impact the pandemic will have on both the local and international economy. Despite some project delays that resulted from the pandemic and closure of operations and businesses island-wide, [REDACTED] has moved forward with phase 2 which includes cleaning and rehabilitation of the historic building. To engage with neighbors and local businesses, [REDACTED] will also be surveying them to determine exterior design of the building.

Currently, [REDACTED] is in a state of disrepair following destruction in [REDACTED] and the more recent entry of national chains such as Walmart and other stores. [REDACTED]s have taken away spending from the historic center. Small businesses will likely continue to struggle attracting visitors with competition from other more convenient retailers.

Other risk factors are perception of crime and safety in the historic urban center that discourages pedestrians and visitors from the area, and inconvenient parking areas for customers.

Case Study or Best Practice

Libros AC (San Juan, PR); Casa Norberto (San Juan, PR)



Source: Michal Parzuchowski (Unsplash)

Establishing and/or formalizing
district entity



Adopting flexible signage
regulations or use groups



Easing outdoor dining permitting
processes



ADMIN CAPACITY
IMPROVEMENTS

ADMIN CAPACITY

SAMPLE PROJECT

5

Establish A Formal Waterfront Merchants' Association

Category	 Organizational Capacity
Origin	In Planning Team
Location	
Budget	<p>Low (<\$50,000)</p> <p>An initial grant from philanthropic foundations or from the Municipality may be needed to cover initial capital costs such as a digital subscription service to establish a digital hub for sharing resources and communications amongst members, as well as any initial pilot projects. In particular, the association should work closely with the Municipality to align its work with any goals/vision for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, either directly or through State government. CDBG Funds are flexible, available, and designed to meet community needs.</p> <p>More recently, merchants' associations have also turned to crowdsourcing funds facilitated through on-line third-party platforms that involves accepting investments from a wide network of smaller donors.</p> <p>As the coalition grows and formalizes, however, nominal membership fees may be collected annually to cover costs of maintaining operations of the group.</p>

Crowdsourcing Platforms:

kiva

Unlike the other platforms, Kiva crowdsources 0% interest loans (in increments of \$25 or more) to small business owners who could not otherwise access traditional loans, which are contingent on preexisting capital. These loans will be repaid by the recipient and then used by lenders to fund new loans, donate or to withdraw.

KICKSTARTER

Smaller targets that may be easily met as the platform operates on an all-or-nothing model. However, if your project is successfully funded, Kickstarter collects a 5% fee and payment processing fees (between 3-5%).

P
Patroncity

Unlike Kickstarter, Patroncity allows partial funding so that if the goal is not reached, funds can still be disbursed towards the project. Rolling funds distribution is allowed before the campaign ends. In addition to enabling crowdfunding, Patroncity provides program management and individual project coaching to each campaign in a given program. Fees have also been waived for non-matched crowdfunding campaigns that launch prior to May 31st.

FUNDABLE

Most effective for short-term fundraising (1-2 months) as the platform operates on a subscription service at \$15 per month. Donors may also be given the choice of Equity (\$50k-\$100k funding goal) or Rewards (see funds from the public by selling products, pre-orders, or merchandise & services).

gofundme

In addition to having a 0% platform fee and providing donor protections guaranteed, GoFundMe has also created a Small Business Relief Initiative to help small businesses that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and empower their communities to rally behind them. As part of the Small Business Relief Initiative, GoFundMe, Infat, QuizBooks, Yelp, GoDaddy, and Bell.com have each donated to the Small Business Relief Fund, which will issue \$500 matching grants to qualifying businesses that raise at least \$500 on GoFundMe.

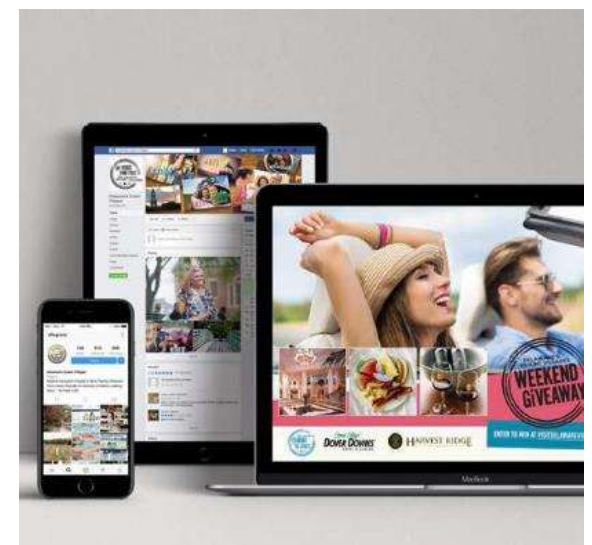
Providing business technical support



Determine district brand positioning and identity



Creating comprehensive marketing strategy




REVENUE & SALES
IMPROVEMENTS

REVENUE & SALES IMPROVEMENTS

SAMPLE PROJECT

1

Build on the Existing Brand and Marketing Efforts of the North Region

Category	 Marketing, Events and Promotion (Agro-Culture Demand)
Origin	[redacted] Planning Team
Location	[redacted] [redacted]
Budget	Medium (\$50,000-\$200,000+) Costs may cover consultant fees for the creation of the plan and production of conceptual marketing collateral. Execution of the plan and any marketing/advertising strategies adopted from the plan will incur additional costs that will be estimated by the consultant through the strategic planning process.
Timeframe	Short (<5 years) This project will need to be established immediately to ensure a COVID-19-responsive brand.



REVENUE & SALES IMPROVEMENTS

SAMPLE PROJECT

past/ongoing efforts to promote the Island (██████████) as a whole to visitors place the organization in the best position to build and maintain an improved brand for the North Region.

In the process, however, several on-the-ground stakeholders and suppliers must also be engaged to ensure full buy-in and execution, including the participation of Frutos del Guacabo. Para La (██████████) among other key assets. For visitors and travelers to have a positive experience and to nurture their loyalty to a destination such as the North Region, the local stakeholders and community must participate in developing the brand as they will help ensure that the brand is delivered and sustained in years to come.

Case Study or Best Practice

Kent County Tourism Corporation is the destination marketing organization for Kent County, Delaware and its incorporated cities and towns. In its effort to rebrand the county, Kent County engaged consultants experienced in destination marketing to conduct town hall sessions to secure stakeholder input, leverage online listening technology to understand locale's reputation and conduct a proprietary and projectable panel study of consumers living within a 250-mile radius of the area.

The in-depth audience research revealed three target audience segments whose interests resonated with Kent County's offerings. Informed by consumers, the consultant then strategically repositioned the area with a compelling new name — [Delaware's Quaint Villages](#) — and tagline, "At Your Own Pace". The evolved brand, after being implemented strategically across all communication channels including its new website, has resulted in tracked incremental return on marketing investments of \$18 Million, a return of \$47 for every marketing dollar invested, 19% increase in accommodation tax collections and visitor parties who collectively visited all 20 of its cities, towns and villages in Kent County.



Marketing collateral created by StreetSense for Kent County Tourism Corporation as part of its rebrand. Source: StreetSense

CULTURAL/ARTS

SAMPLE PROJECT

The following recommendations in this section were presented to the [REDACTED]. Although these strategies present opportunities to attract new visitors and leverage new spending in the region, they are early ideas that will require significant support and reinvention following the impacts of COVID-19. Many key elements that will enable full execution of the strategy have not been uncovered and will require further exploration.

1

Create Museo de Historia Natural de Puerto Rico

Category



Place-Based Asset Enhancement

Origin

Location

Similar to the proposed Interdisciplinary Center [REDACTED], the renovation of a historic Art Deco building in downtown [REDACTED] is being revitalized as the [REDACTED], which will contain the [REDACTED] on the first floor and a Center for Scientific Research on the upper floors. Other programs on-site will include multipurpose rooms, a Café / Bistro and Hostel.

The Museum of [REDACTED] in aims to

be an anchor "must see" destination for the region, with educational exhibits, interactive learning and cultural programming and events.

[REDACTED] is a non-profit institution, dedicated to providing educational experiences on the nation's natural history to locals and visitors, and will stimulate knowledge exchange between universities in the Americas and Europe and research centers. In the event of emergency situations such as a hurricane, earthquakes or tsunami, the facility also aims to be a support hub for the community.



Source: Streetscape

Source: Simon Arce, *Miha Dolano*

Thank You!

Bill Schwartz, AICP

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates

bschwartz@nelsonnygaard.com

617-306-9466