Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Three Business Districts and One Bikeway . . . Getting Past COVID

Arlington Heights, Arlington
Bedford Center, Bedford
E. Lexington Village, Lexington

FinePoint Associates LLC

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RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

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Thank you to all who participated in the Business Survey.

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FinePoint Associates LLC

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RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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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Admin Capacity 194

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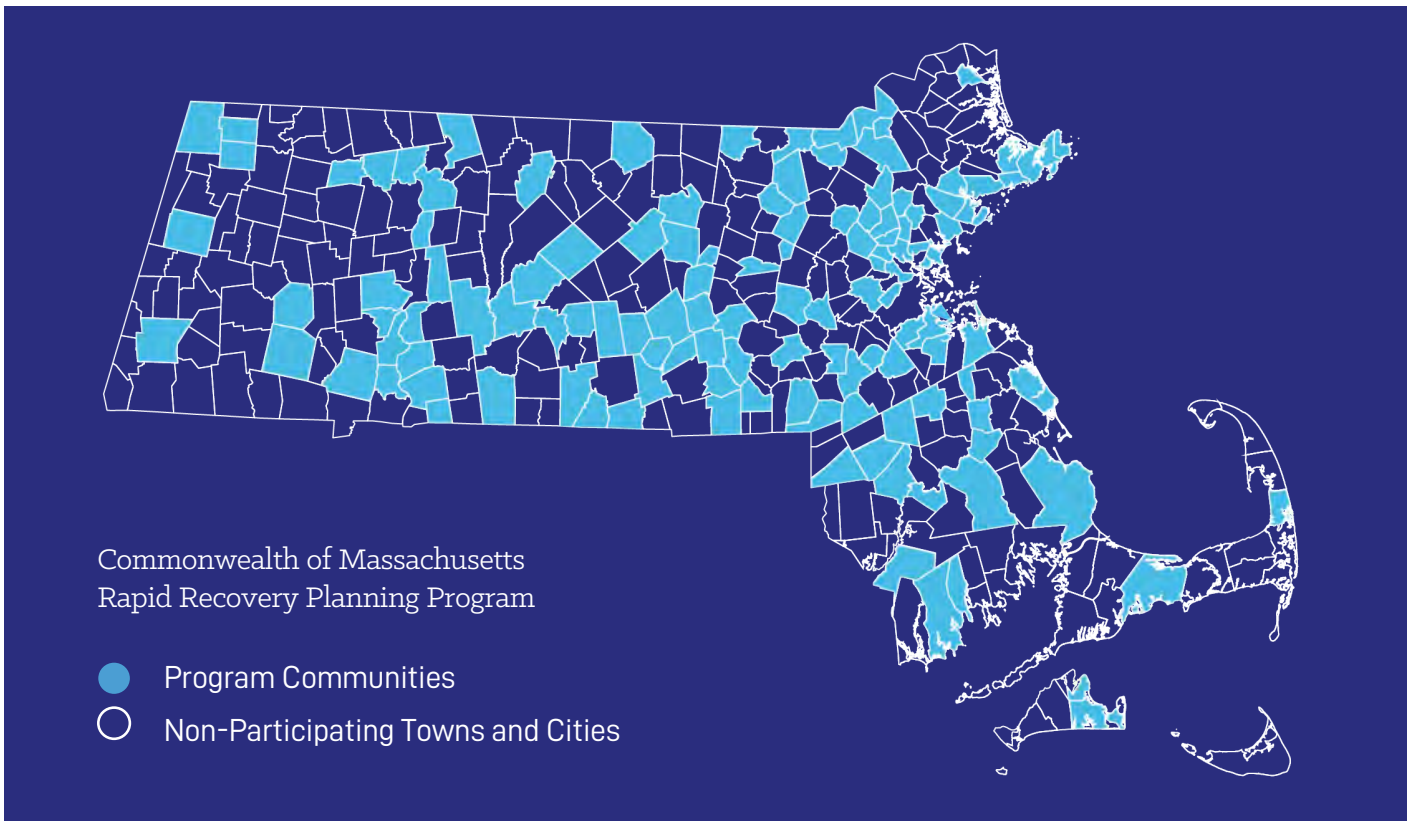
125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



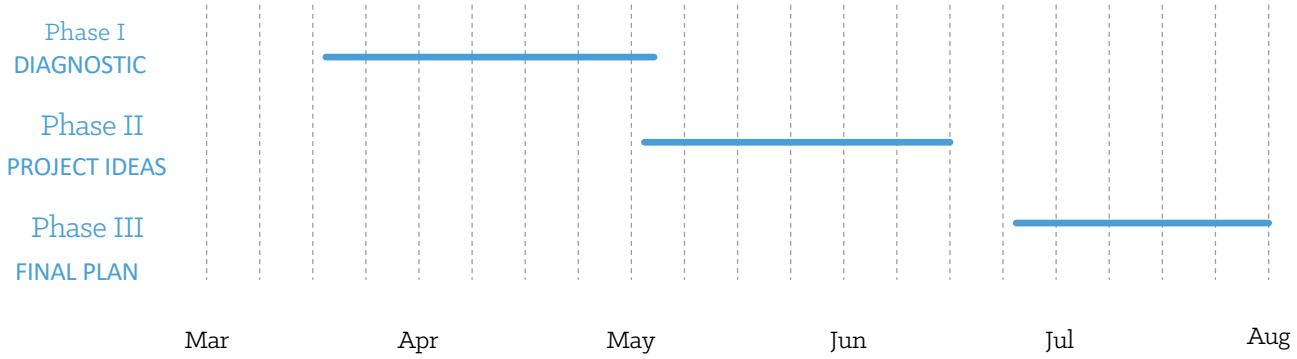
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and East Lexington Business Districts were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. Two-thirds of the businesses were still not back to operating at full capacity when surveyed in April, 2021. Since then, many have faced difficulties hiring employees and bringing customer counts back up, even though vaccine rates have risen dramatically.

The three communities of Arlington, Bedford, and Lexington joined together to apply for assistance from the Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) program to promote recovery in these Districts. The communities requested particular emphasis be placed on how the Business Districts could capitalize on their common asset — the Minuteman Bikeway. So, both the multi-community approach and the focus on the Bikeway make this a unique RRP project.

The FinePoint Plan Facilitator Team worked with town staff and community stakeholders to gather input and generate ideas throughout the course of the planning project. An overview of the process and community engagement activity is provided in Section 3. The objective was to develop a set of recommended projects/actions to assist the Business Districts recover from COVID, be more vibrant than ever, and expand focus on the "Bikeway User" market segment.

The Diagnostic Phase was instrumental in analyzing existing conditions and determining appropriate strategies – the key findings are summarized in Section 1 below. A synopsis of the final RRP Recommendations is provided in Section 2. These recommendations aim to increase vitality and bring customers to the Districts, including improved wayfinding and access between the Bikeway and the businesses, activation and programming of public spaces, an Art Walk installation, mural program, and bike-friendly business district campaign. The rear facade/store-back improvement program will help businesses increase appeal to bikeway users while the proposed revisions to outdoor display and signage regulations will facilitate a variety of high-quality signage and spill-out displays to enliven the Districts.

1. Diagnostic Key Findings

Physical Environment — Bikeway and Bike User Specific

- The Minuteman Bikeway runs close to the three Districts but the businesses are not fully capitalizing on this asset.
- Buildings abutting the trail have blank facades and provide no indication this is a place worth stopping.
- Insufficient wayfinding results in missed opportunities to attract Bikeway users.
- There are physical and visual access issues -- Bikeway users cannot always easily get to businesses or see anything to make them aware of the businesses .
- Bike facilities and amenities in the districts are limited.

Physical Environment — Districts Overall

- The three Districts have very different settings and development patterns.
- Streetscape treatments and business "spill-outs" are limited, and more storefront elements are needed.
- The 100% Corner in Arlington Heights (intersection of Mass Ave. and Park Ave.) is largely inactive.
- All of the Districts have good multi-modal access.
- Informational signage and directories listing business offerings are lacking.
- District branding is limited.

Business Environment

- The three commercial districts encompass over 1/2 million square feet of first-floor commercial space; 9% of first-floor units are vacant.
- Key opportunity sites include: 30 Park Ave and the MBTA Bus Depot in Arlington Heights and the former Veterans of Foreign Wars property in Bedford.
- All three districts have a collection of eateries and a few business clusters. Arlington Heights and Bedford Center have "destination/ anchor" businesses.
- COVID-19 impacts were widespread in all districts. Arlington Heights was hit the hardest, followed closely by Bedford Center. The least impacted was East Lexington Village due to the "essential" nature of most businesses.
- The majority of businesses rent their space and are independently-owned, single-location establishments. Only about one-half are open after 6:00 p.m.
- Top priorities for businesses include: more outdoor dining and selling opportunities, more cultural events, and coordinated marketing strategies.

Customer Base

- The "Resident Market Segments" for all three districts are well-educated, affluent, and older than the state average. Residents in Lexington and Bedford and more likely to have children in the household.
- Sales leakage may point to opportunities. Arlington and Lexington residents spend over $1.2 billion in stores and restaurants outside their towns each year, and Bedford residents spend over $458 million outside.
- The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, and joggers, is largely untapped, despite very close proximity.
- Proactive strategies can be implemented to attract a higher percentage of Bikeway users.
- All three Districts also have an opportunity to attract nearby employees.

Admin Capacity

- Current zoning focuses primarily on the "Private Realm."
- Regulations governing signage and outdoor display of merchandise are restrictive, especially in Bedford.
- Aside from Town staff, there is no organization currently managing recovery efforts in the business districts.

2. Summary of Recommendations

Private Realm	Create a Rear Facade/Store-Back Improvement Program to enhance connection between the Business Districts and the Bikeway. [All 3 Districts]
Revenue /Sales	Design and install wayfinding signage and other elements to encourage Bikeway users to patronize the Business Districts. [All 3 Districts]
	Develop additional cultural events/programming; start with a "Bike-Themed Week" with a coordinated schedule of events in each of the Business Districts. [All 3 Districts]
	Implement a Bike & Pedestrian-Friendly Business District (BFBD) campaign. [All 3 Districts]
Public Realm	Connect the Bikeway to the Districts via designated access way improvements (e.g., pavement markings, design elements), especially at Bow Street, Park Ave, and Depot Park to the Narrow Gauge Trail. [All 3 Districts]
	Install additional bike and pedestrian amenities in the Districts. [All 3 Districts]
	Implement sidewalk zones to edit existing streetscape and add new elements. [East Lexington and Arlington Heights]
	Create a well-marked public "at-grade" accessway from the Bikeway through the parking lot at 30 Park Ave. [Arlington Heights]
	Activate Bow Street Park by installing amenities (to complement nearby food businesses and accommodate events) and work with local organizations to develop programming. [East Lexington]
	Activate Veteran's Memorial Park by installing amenities (to complement nearby food businesses and accommodate events) and work with local organizations to develop programming. [Bedford Center]
	Engage with the MBTA to explore ways to activate/revitalize the underutilized Bus Depot property. [Arlington Heights]
Admin Capacity	Revise outdoor display regulations to promote lively, attractive merchandise displays and spill-out elements. [Bedford Center and Arlington Heights]
	Revise the sign bylaw and outdoor display regulations to encourage a variety of high-quality sign types and promote lively, attractive outdoor merchandise displays. [East Lexington]
Culture/ Arts	Create a mural program (especially for public locations and businesses adjacent to the Bikeway. [All 3 Districts]
	Create a Cultural District Art Walk along the Narrow Gauge Trail that would include a series of temporary art installations. [Bedford Center]

3. Process and Community Engagement

The FinePoint Associates Team, in the role of "Plan Facilitator," worked in collaboration and partnership with the Economic Development and Planning Staff from Bedford, Arlington, and Lexington. Community meetings and focus group sessions included representatives from cultural organizations, bicycle advisory committees, business and property owners, and community residents.

The FinePoint Associates Team conducted a physical assessment of the Business Districts; collected and analyzed real estate, business, and market data; summarized findings, prepared presentations for several community meetings and completed a diagnostic report; researched best practices and potential approaches to address issues, drafted recommendations, and prepared a project profile for each priority recommendation.

Stakeholders engaged in the process and provided input through several activities and input channels.

- Walk About Tours with Community Leaders, Business Owners, and Residents
- Initial Assessment Presentation and Listening Session
- Business Survey of Owners and Representatives
- Focus Group with Bikeway/Biking Organizations from each Community
- Interviews and Work Sessions with Community Project Leaders
- Community Forum — Diagnostic Findings and Discussion
- Community Feedback Sessions to Develop Draft Recommendations

Walk About Tours

Arlington Heights: Kelly Lynema, Senior Planner; Allison Carter, Economic Development Coordinator; Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Bedford: Tony Fields, Planning Director; Alyssa Sandoval, Economic Development Director. Photo: FinePoint Associates

East Lexington Village: Casey Hagerty, Economic Development Coordinator; Sheila Page, Assistant Planning Director; Sandhya Iyer, Economic Development Director. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Walk About Tour Participants at Depot Square in Bedford. Photo: FinePoint Associates

4. Business District Study Area Maps

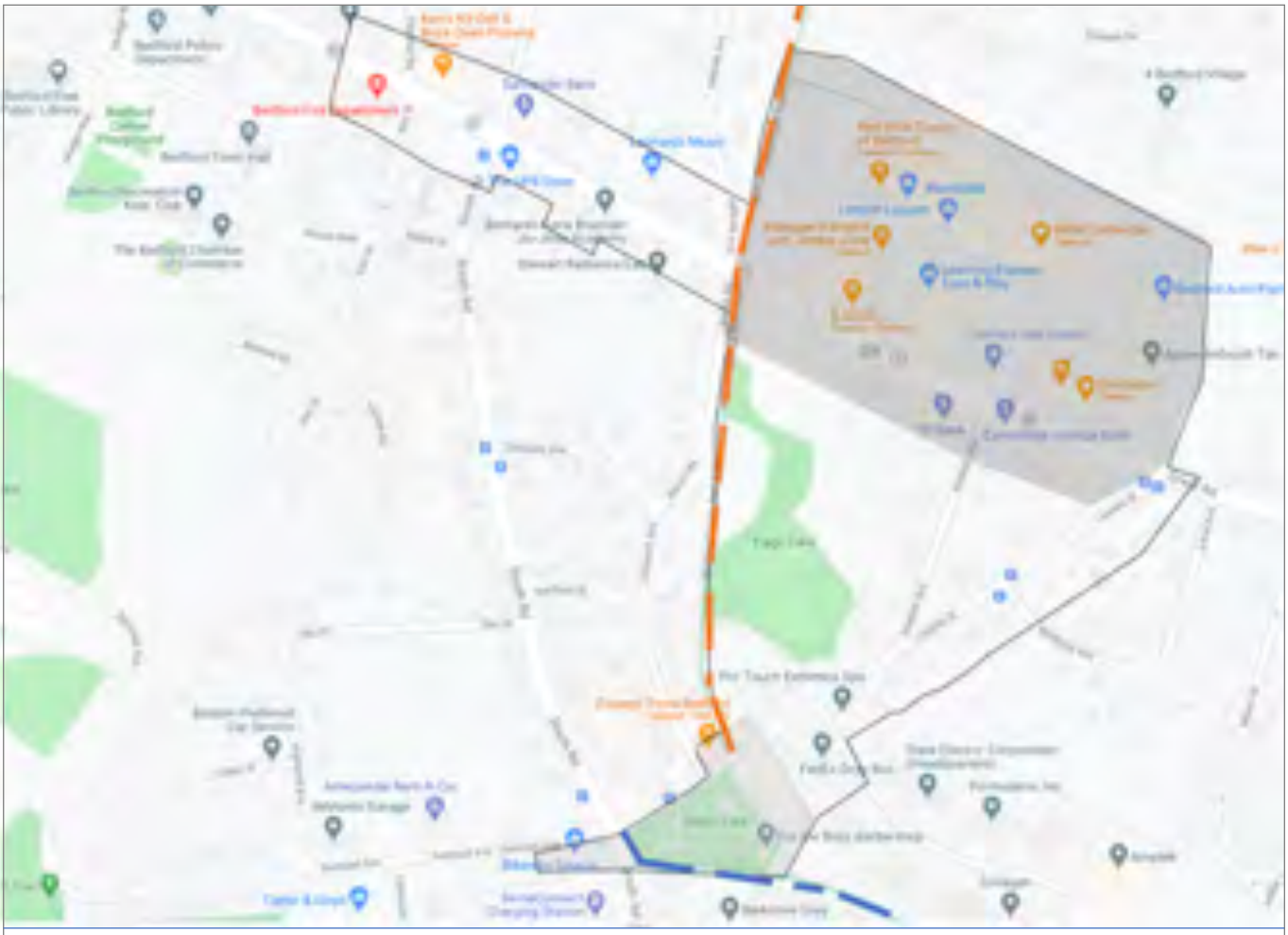
Arlington Heights Business District
Study Area Map

Commercial Core Concentration
Minuteman Bikeway

East Lexington Village Business District
Study Area Map

Commercial Core Concentration
Minuteman Bikeway

4. Business District Study Area Maps (cont'd)



Bedford Center Business District

Study Area Map

- Commercial Core Concentration
- Commercial Node Adjacent to Bikeway
- Minuteman Bikeway
- Narrow Gauge Trail

Diagnostic

Physical Environment

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Key Findings: Physical Environment — Bikeway and Bike User Specific

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Minuteman Bikeway runs near the three districts, but the businesses are not fully capitalizing on this unique common asset.

COVID-19 has spurred an increase in bike commuting and general ridership. Representatives of the three towns would like the RRP initiative to include a focus on the Bikeway with actions that could help businesses target the Bikeway user consumer segment.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The businesses are not oriented toward the Bikeway. Buildings abutting the trail have blank Bikeway-facing facades and provide no indication this is a place worth stopping.

Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center businesses are oriented to the street and sidewalks. With the Minuteman Bikeway in each of these districts (and the Narrow Gauge Trail in Bedford), businesses have a unique opportunity to draw additional customers from these popular commuting and recreational trails. However, most businesses that are adjacent to the trails are not making a visual or physical connection.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Insufficient wayfinding results in missed opportunities to attract Bikeway users.

Some of the common factors inhibiting local businesses in Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center from capturing Bikeway consumers include insufficient wayfinding signage from the Bikeway to commercial districts and other points of interest; lack of information about specific business district offerings; lack of businesses that are oriented toward the trail even when they abut the Bikeway; limited bike amenities; and difficult access points in some areas.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

There are physical and visual access issues along the trail -- Bikeway users cannot always easily get to businesses or see anything that would make them aware that the businesses are there.

In Arlington Heights, there is a grade separation that hinders both the physical and visual connection between the Bikeway and the businesses in several areas. There are a few trail connections which require ascending a staircase and/or navigating through private property parking lots. In East Lexington, the Bikeway is at-grade and within a few hundred feet from most businesses in the District, but the building facades visible from the trail present no indication the area is a retail and service node. In Bedford, the Bikeway terminates at Depot Park, which is approximately 0.25 miles from the commercial core of Bedford Center.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Bike facilities and amenities in the districts are limited.

Amenities such as bike racks, bike corrals, and repair stations on the Bikeway and in the three districts are limited and inconsistent. While there are some U-shaped bike racks on the sidewalks in Arlington Heights, built as part of a previous streetscape project, few businesses have bike racks on site. No bike racks were observed in East Lexington, and a Zagster Bike Share station was removed last year from Berman's Wine & Spirits along the Bikeway due to lack of use. Bedford has a bike repair station at Depot Park and some bike racks at Bedford Marketplace.

Key Findings: Physical Environment — Business Districts Overall

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The districts have very different settings and development patterns.

Arlington Heights is a linear mixed use neighborhood center with a broad range of food services, retail shops, and other services. East Lexington is a strip commercial corridor with auto-oriented commercial uses. Bedford is a traditional New England village center with commercial, civic, and residential uses.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Streetscape treatments and business "spill-outs" are limited.

Streetscape treatments vary significantly between the three districts. While Arlington Heights has the most treatments, such as brick pavers, ornamental lampposts, raised planters, street trees, benches, and bike racks, most of them are dated. Additionally, the placement of several elements on the sidewalks limits opportunities for business spill-out. In Bedford Center, newer but similar streetscape elements were observed, and the district has the same issue of limited spill-out opportunities due to the position of planters and benches on the sidewalks. East Lexington has narrow sidewalks and very few streetscape treatments that could provide opportunities for adjacent businesses to utilize space for café seating or displays.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

More storefront elements are needed.

Successful downtown storefronts use a variety of tools to draw pedestrians and increase their visibility to drivers. On the façades, multiple combinations of elements are employed, such as wall signs, projecting blade signs, banners, awnings, murals (for blank walls), and window signs and displays. Spill-out elements onto the sidewalks are often combined with façade elements such as café seating, planters, merchandise displays, and sandwich board signs. In the three districts, many businesses provide 1 or 2 façade and spill-out elements. However, there is a lot of opportunity to add more combinations.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The 100% Corner in Arlington Heights is mostly inactive.

In Arlington Heights, the 100% corner is at Massachusetts Avenue and Park Avenue. This is the intersection where first impressions are made. However, this intersection does not present as a lively hub -- there is a missed opportunity to appeal to pedestrians and drivers.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

All the Districts have good multi-modal access.

Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center are all centered on major state roads and provide good access by car. These major routes also have good bus transit service, sidewalk networks, and bike trails.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Informational signage and directories listing business offerings are lacking in the districts.

There are no business directories or community kiosks providing information about business offerings and civic events in Bedford or East Lexington. Although Arlington Heights has kiosks and placeholders for business directories, they do not contain current business information. Additionally, there is no information at local businesses targeted to Bikeway users beyond a couple of small sandwich board signs placed haphazardly near the trail.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

District branding is limited.

Marketing and branding initiatives are limited in the three districts. Some typical examples would include logos, slogans, and taglines specifically designed for a given district and distributed through gateway and wayfinding systems, street banners, websites, window signs, publications, and other mediums. Except for "Shop Arlington First" signs in some of the storefronts in the Heights, no organized marketing or branding initiatives were found in the three districts.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Minuteman Bikeway

Bikeway Overview — The Minuteman Bikeway was built by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on an inactive MBTA railroad right-of-way (ROW). The Bikeway is a 10-mile, paved, multi-use rail trail that runs through Cambridge, Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford. It starts at the Alewife MBTA station in Cambridge and terminates at Depot Park in Bedford. The Bikeway is very popular with commuter cyclists as well as recreational cyclists, joggers, strollers, and rollerbladers of all ages. The Bikeway is collectively managed and maintained by the four communities it passes through.

Bikeway, Business Districts, and RRP Connection — The Minuteman Bikeway communities of Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford came together to prepare a Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) for the targeted business districts of Arlington Heights, East Lexington Village, and Bedford Center. The goals of this RRP initiative are to:

- Analyze conditions and opportunities in the three districts with a particular focus on the proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway as a common asset; and
- Create an action plan to help the business districts recover from COVID, be more vibrant than ever, and expand focus on the Bikeway user consumer segment.

Connection to Other Bike Trails — The terminus of the Minuteman Bikeway in Bedford converges with two other trails. Built in 1877 as the first commercial narrow-gauge railroad in the US, the old rail bed has been converted to the Narrow Gauge Trail, providing walkers and cyclists with a beautiful pathway that allows access to Bedford's Historic Center and the popular Bedford Marketplace. The pathway also continues for another 1.5 miles to Springs Brook Park and Fawn Lake. From Depot Park, the Reformatory Branch Trail, a multi-purpose path, provides access to Concord Center via Railroad Avenue, which is approximately 4.5 miles to the west.

Missed Opportunities to Attract Bikeway Users to the Districts — Some of the factors inhibiting local businesses from capturing the Bikeway user consumer segment are listed below. These issues will be discussed later in this report.

- Insufficient wayfinding signage from the Bikeway to commercial districts (or other points of interest).
- Lack of information about specific business district offerings.
- Businesses that are not oriented toward the trail; while the buildings back up to the Bikeway, there are few signs or amenities intended to draw Bikeway users.
- Limited bike amenities in the districts.
- Informal/unmarked and difficult access points in some areas.

Minuteman Bikeway in Arlington Heights near Hurd Field and Trader Joe's. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Diagnostic Indicators:
Urban Design for a Vibrant District

- Tight settlement patterns (higher ratio of building coverage to land area as well as floor area ratios).
- Moderate block size with lengths and widths that are at comfortable pedestrian scale.
- Street wall/street enclosure (the ratio of building height to street width) that provides a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Functional and architectural compatibility between buildings (placement, massing, and scale).
- Supportive relationship between buildings and the public realm (open spaces and streets).
- High degree of vertical and horizontal mix of uses.
- Diversity of commercial and institutional services that fulfill daily needs.
- Clustering of complimentary uses that create synergy.
- Safe and comfortable walking distance to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Active and well-integrated public and civic use/gathering areas.
- Strong terminal vistas.
- Good public connection and access to surface waters where applicable.

Development Patterns and Urban Design Characteristics

Arlington Heights — Massachusetts Avenue (Mass Ave) was a major streetcar corridor that evolved into a linear development pattern of commercial and neighborhood centers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Businesses and residences lined the street in alternating segments creating a pattern of walkable districts with good storefront visibility and convenient access to transportation. For the most part, this walkable development pattern has been maintained in Arlington Heights, largely because the surrounding neighborhoods and the Minuteman Bikeway (a former rail corridor) limits the depth of the lots fronting on Mass Ave.

The Arlington Heights District is located at Mile 3 on the Minuteman Bikeway. The project area extends from Forest Street to the east, to the Lexington Town Line (near Lancaster Road and Mal's Service Center) to the west. The district is centered on Massachusetts Avenue for about 4,100 feet (.78 miles). The project area is bound to the north by the Minuteman Bikeway, and to the north and south by the Arlington Heights neighborhood.

Welcome sign on Mass Ave in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

East Lexington Village — The East Lexington Business District is located at Mile 4 of the Minuteman Bikeway. Most businesses are located on the north side of Massachusetts Avenue. Much of the walkable linear pattern of development, with buildings at the street line, has eroded over time. This is particularly evident on the north side of the corridor where strip development has occurred, and parking has replaced buildings along the street frontage. This strip commercial development pattern creates a disconnect between pedestrians and storefronts. Additionally, the newer buildings were oriented more to the driver than the pedestrian as the car began to replace the streetcar in the mid-1900s; many of the businesses here, like Mal's Service Center, Mass Ave Carwash, Arlex Oil Company, Enterprise Rent-A- Car, Lexington Toyota, and Accurate Break & Alignment, are "auto oriented."

The north side of the district is bounded by the Minuteman Bikeway about 180 feet from Mass Ave. The south side of Mass Ave is predominantly occupied by single family homes and duplexes with a few commercial buildings and converted residential buildings located between Hibbert Street and Taft Avenue.

East Lexington, on Mass Ave at the town line, looking west. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Bedford Center — The Bedford Center District incorporates properties along Railroad Ave/Loomis Street, South Road, and Great Road (State Route 4, 62, 225). These street corridors form a triangle with three nodes, including the Historic Bedford Center to the north, Bedford Marketplace to the east, and Depot Park to the south. The distance between these nodes is a short walk or bike ride.

South Road provides direct access between Depot Park and the Historic Bedford Center and the Town Common, which was established in 1729 as a pasture for livestock. On the Common are the old Town Hall (1856) and the First Parish Church (which co-own this public open space). The Common is centrally located, highly visible, and used for a variety of civic activities, including the Bedford Beer Garden festival twice a year.

Opportunity: The rail fences on the Elm Street side of the Town Common can be removed, allowing for service vehicles to line up along the Common and sidewalk, which is favorable for farmers' markets, craft shows, and other vender activities.

Bedford Market Place on Great Road was significantly renovated with façade enhancements and attractive new infill development along the street frontage (sprawl retrofit), adjacent to the public sidewalk. The shopping center, which is located across Veterans Park, also creates a small open space for people to gather. The Market Place includes several popular restaurants, shops, and services, and is a draw for residents and visitors alike.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

The third node is Depot Park (1874), which provides an attractive terminus to the Minuteman Bikeway and the Narrow Gauge Trail. There are a few buildings in the park including a restored depot freight house, which has been repurposed and leased to private businesses (currently a barber shop and artist studios); an historic building, which serves as a railroad display; a small office building leased to a pediatrician; and the former Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) building, which is currently vacant and under consideration for future use by the Town. There are also 2 rail passenger cars that have been reconfigured for social functions. The park is supported by approximately 100 parking spaces on site, with auxiliary public parking across the street behind the Bikeway Bike Shop.

The Town Common in historic Bedford Center. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

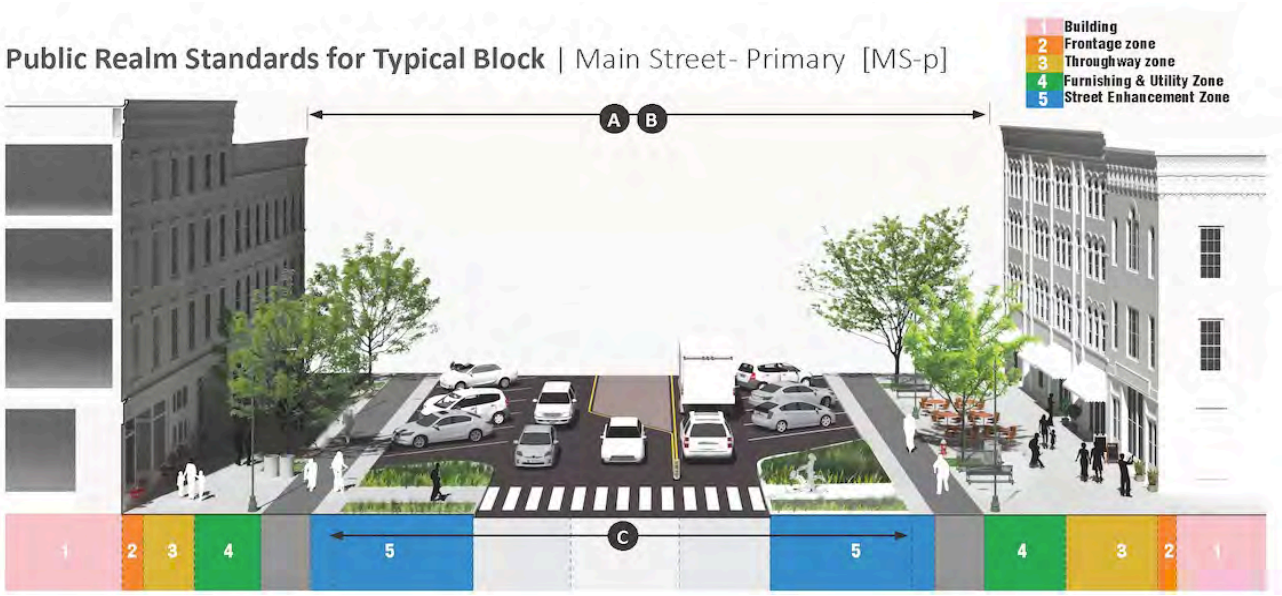
Diagnostic Indicators:
Street Design for a Vibrant District

- A distinct street hierarchy in terms of scale and purpose.
- A thoroughfare network with strong connectivity, circulation, and access.
- Moderate block size with lengths and widths that are at a comfortable pedestrian scale.
- "Complete Streets" integrating a broad range of intermodal facilities (auto, pedestrian, bicycle, bus transit, and rail transit).
- Gateway treatments and wayfinding systems that are attractive, informative, visible, and intuitive.

Street Composition

Arlington Heights

Street Network and Block Widths — There is a distinct hierarchy of streets in the Arlington Heights District. Mass Ave is the primary street and there are 12 secondary intersecting streets, including Forest Street, Appleton Street and Place, Lowell Street, Richardson Ave, Daniels Street, Davis Street, Park Ave, Paul Reverse Road, Dundee Road, Drake Road, and Lancaster Road, which provide access to the surrounding neighborhood. Walkability is high in neighborhood centers when the block length (or distance between intersecting streets) is less than 500 feet (shorter blocks also tend to calm traffic). In Arlington Heights, about half the blocks meet this criteria with some longer distances between intersections on the east and west ends of the district.



Public realm/complete street design standards for a typical block, City of Northampton, MA. Source: Dodson & Flinker, and Brovitz Community Planning & Design

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Mass Ave looking east from Park Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Street Cross Section — The Mass Ave right-of-way is estimated to be 65 feet wide, including sidewalks on both sides (variable width, but typically 8 feet); 8-foot on-street painted public parking lanes on both sides; 5-foot painted bike lanes on both sides; and 2 travel lanes and painted bus pullouts at mid-block and key intersections on the corridor. This is a typical cross section for a neighborhood business district.

Bike lane on Mass Ave looking east. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Offset Intersections — These intersections (45^0 or less) are problematic for vehicle and pedestrian safety. There are several off-set intersections in Arlington Heights, including Forest Street, Lowell Street, Appleton Street, Paul Revere Road, and Dundee Road. Due to the difficult angles of the intersection of Mass Ave at Appleton Street/Place, it is considered accident-prone, especially for cyclists. Community representatives indicated that there had been at least 2 fatalities at the intersection in the last year. Additionally, middle school students use this corridor to get to school. Structural changes are difficult because of property use and terrain. Representatives from Arlington indicate that potential improvements are being considered and they expect traffic control and pedestrian safety modifications to be made to this intersection in the near future.

Crosswalks — There are 9 crosswalks on Mass Ave in the business district starting with the crosswalk and curb extensions at the Lexington town line. From there, the next crosswalk is located at Trader Joe's/Starbucks (+860 feet), Walgreens (+238 feet), Sunrise Assisted Living (+405 feet), MBTA Busway Facility (+288), Szechuan Dumpling (+277), Park Ave Intersection (+204), and Cambridge Savings Bank (+250). All intersecting streets in the district also have clearly marked crosswalks. Overall, the crosswalks are well-placed to provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians. However, the distance between the Cambridge Savings Bank and Lowell Street intersection is approximately 1,132 feet with no crosswalks on the corridor or at the intersection. This creates an impediment to pedestrian access.

Crosswalk and curb extension on Mass Ave at Park Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Curb Extensions — There are curb extensions at the crosswalks at the Lexington town line, the Arlington Heights Busway, and the intersection of Mass Ave/Park Ave. Curb extensions shorten the crossing distance of the street making it safer for pedestrians. They are also a traffic calming device and provide an opportunity for sidewalk activation. The typical curb-to-curb crossing distance at the three locations is approximately 50 feet. Most of the crosswalks are painted with a continental pattern, which is easy for drivers to identify.

Opportunity: The curb extension and brick crosswalks at Mal's and the Busway can be hard to identify and could incorporate the continental pattern for consistency and better visibility.

Sidewalks — Sidewalks are located on both sides of Mass Ave throughout the district and on most intersecting streets, providing good pedestrian access to the adjacent neighborhood. Sidewalk width on Mass Ave varies between 5 and 10 feet, and materials vary between concrete and brick pavers. Sidewalks appear to be wider on the eastern segment of Mass Ave between Clark Street and Forest Street as buildings on both sides of the street tend to be set back 10 to 20 feet from the front street line. For this reason, this part of the district has the best opportunity for "spill-out" treatments, such as sandwich board signs, café seating, and merchandise displays. (See description of Streetscape Treatments below).

Sidewalk on the north side of Mass Ave at the east end of Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

MBTA Bus Stops — Bus stops are located on Mass Ave at Appleton Street, Daniels Street, Park Ave, Arlington Heights Busway (1389 Mass Ave), Paul Revere Road, Drake Road, and Lancaster Road. Some of these stops are enhanced by bus pull outs and shelters. These transit facilities provide easy and convenient access to bus riders who may work, shop, eat, and live in the district and surrounding neighborhood.

MBTA bus shelter on Mass Ave near Appleton Street. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Bike Access — There are 5-foot painted bike lanes in each direction on Mass Ave accommodating commuting cyclists. Commuter and recreational cyclists also have direct access to the Minuteman Bikeway, which runs north and parallel to Mass Ave about 1 to 3 blocks from the corridor. However, the Bikeway has a grade separation at some of the key connector streets in the district, including Lowell Street (overpass), Drake Road (overpass), and Park Ave (overpass with stairway access). There are at-grade connections on Frazer Road, Forest Street, and Ryder Street, which are further away from the core business district. There are also Bikeway connections to private properties, including Trader Joe's/Starbucks (stairway), Sunrise of Arlington (ramp), Drake Village Residential complex, and Gold's Gym, which require cyclists to traverse a parking lot to reach Mass Ave. The Mill Brook also separates local businesses from the Bikeway along certain segments of Mass Ave. While access to the Bikeway is still good, safer at-grade access to the trail would benefit riders and local businesses.

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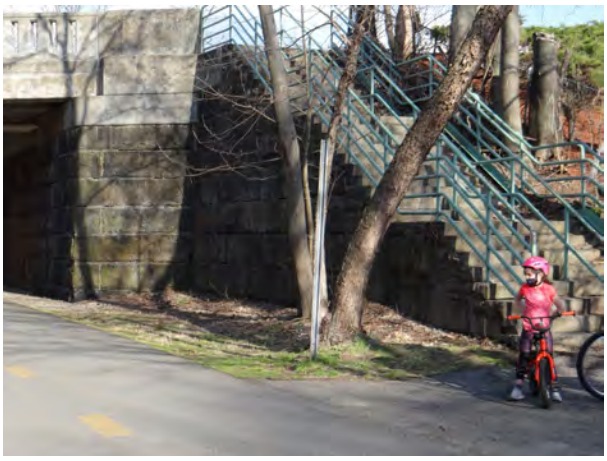
Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**



Bikeway stairway access to Park Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Mass Ave at Bow Street looking west. Photo: FinePoint Associates

East Lexington

Street Cross Section — The Mass Ave ROW is approximately 65 feet in width and 50 feet curb-to-curb. There are 2 travel lanes, unmarked on-street parking lanes on both sides of the street; no designated bike lanes; intermittent planting strips; and sidewalks ranging from 5–10 feet in width, made with varying materials, including asphalt and concrete. Much of the pavement marking has worn off and the lack of painted bike lanes and street parking spaces make the street appear much wider, inducing higher speeds. It also results in an inefficient parking pattern. The lack of streetscape treatments and building setback from the ROW also contribute to higher speeds in the district.

MBTA Bus Stops — Bus stops are located along Mass Ave at Lancaster Road, Hibbert Street, Bow Street, Charles Street, Fottler Ave, Hillside Ave, Oak Street, and Pleasant Street (including Wilson Farm).

Crosswalks — There are crosswalks at the Arlington town line (near Mal's), Sylvia Street, Bow Street, Charles Street, Bowker Street, Fottler Ave, and Oak Street. The crosswalk locations are sufficient to facilitate access from the Liberty Heights neighborhood on the south side of the corridor where most of the businesses are located. However, the speed of traffic, due to the reasons identified above, may create safety issues for pedestrians. Additionally, there is only 1 curb extension at Mal's, which is not a "desire line" for pedestrians. Therefore, there is no visual signal to drivers that there may be pedestrians and that the crossing distance is long.

Bedford Center District

Access and Multi-Mobility — In Bedford Center, painted pedestrian crosswalks and signals are provided in all corners of the 2 intersections at the Town Common. Crosswalks are also provided at the First Congregational Church and Public Library to the west. To the east, along Great Road, crosswalks are provided at the Narrow Gauge Trail (Bacon Road/Hillside Ave) and at the Market Place signal.

In the Center, on-street painted public parking is available on both sides of Great Road between South Road and Elm Street, and around the Town Common. West of the Common, on-street parking is allowed on both sides of the street with a lined wide shoulder but with no individual parking space markings. Additionally, a bike lane appears to be lined from Spring Street to the west, but there are no evident bike lane symbols or signs.

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Great Road looking east. Photo: FinePoint Associates

East of the Common, Great Road narrows down and there is no on-street parking or painted bike lanes along the corridor from South Road to the Narrow Gauge Trail or Bedford Market Place. There is a 4-foot lined shoulder, but 5 feet is necessary for a space to be identified as a bike lane. Traffic moves fast between the Common and Bedford Market Place, particularly going downhill from the Center, approaching the crosswalk at the top of the Narrow Gauge Trail. Paint is also fading in this section of the corridor and some traffic calming applications may be needed.

South Road is another walking and biking corridor connecting Depot Park (the Minuteman Bikeway) with Bedford Center. With the pathways across the Common, access to the "100% corner" at the Fletcher Road intersection is direct and consistent with the pedestrian desire lines.

The bike and pedestrian connection between Depot Park and Bedford Market Place is more challenging. Loomis Street only has a sidewalk on one side, the shoulders are narrow for bicyclists, and traffic flow is fairly rapid. Additionally, there is no crosswalk at Great Road where the Market Place is located.

The connection between Depot Park and the Reformatory Trail is challenging. Railroad Ave is narrow with no sidewalk or open curb cuts over long segments of the corridor. A sharrow is painted in the westbound direction but not in the eastbound one. Community representatives indicated that the Town is developing plans for improved access and safety between Depot Park and the Reformatory Trail.

Directional sign in Depot Park at the corner of South Road and Railroad Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

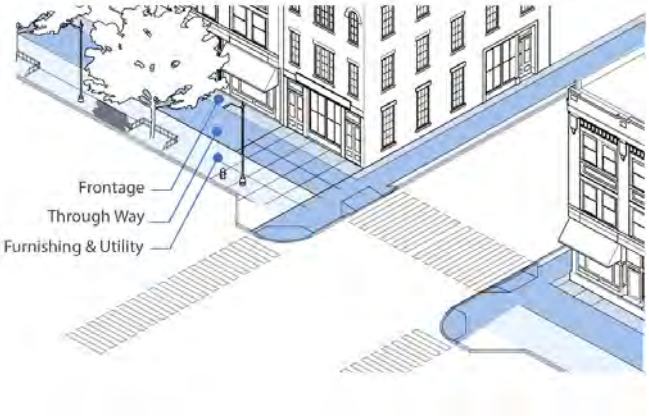
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Diagnostic Indicators:
Streetscape Treatments for a Vibrant District

- Active uses of private frontages between the buildings and sidewalks (civic gathering areas, outdoor dining, store displays, etc.).
- Active uses of public frontages between the private frontage and the curb (sidewalk dining, displays, etc.)
- Well-placed pedestrian crossings and traffic calming devices to enhance safety and quality of the pedestrian experience.
- Attractive streetscapes with a broad combination of street trees, landscaping, and furnishings that are highly functional and well-maintained.
- Attractive and diverse building elements, such as blade signs, wall signs, window signs, and awnings, that are in scale with the building.
- Shopfronts, including various window treatments and displays, that are interesting and engaging to the pedestrian.
- Other tactical urbanism applications, such as parklets, pop-up stores, vendors courts, and other temporary or incremental treatments, to improve vitality.
- Pedestrian level wayfinding systems, including business directories and information kiosks.

Streetscape Treatments



Public realm/sidewalk zones design and activation standards, Town of Medway. Source: Dodson & Flinker, and Brovitz Community Planning & Design

Streetscape treatments may include a variety of surfaces, plantings, and furnishings along the sidewalk that extend onto the street in order to enhance the pedestrian experience and attract customers to the district. Sidewalk paving applications, curb extensions, street trees, planters, benches, bus shelters, and ornamental lighting are common elements of a streetscape plan. The type and quality of streetscape treatments in the three districts vary significantly.

Arlington Heights — In the western segment of Mass Ave from Mal's Service Center at the town line to Paul Revere Road, the streetscape is basic with narrow concrete sidewalks and street trees planted at the curb. Some of the trees have overgrown their tree pits while others are in poor condition or have been removed. From Paul Revere to Davis Street, several additional streetscape treatments have been installed along the corridor. These include more street trees, raised granite planters, cobra head streetlights and ornamental pedestrian level lights. These lampposts have 2 arms to hold banners. While there are no banners currently in place, the arms are positioned parallel to the street, which limits visibility for pedestrians and drivers. Some of the lampposts are set back from the curb, further limiting their visibility.

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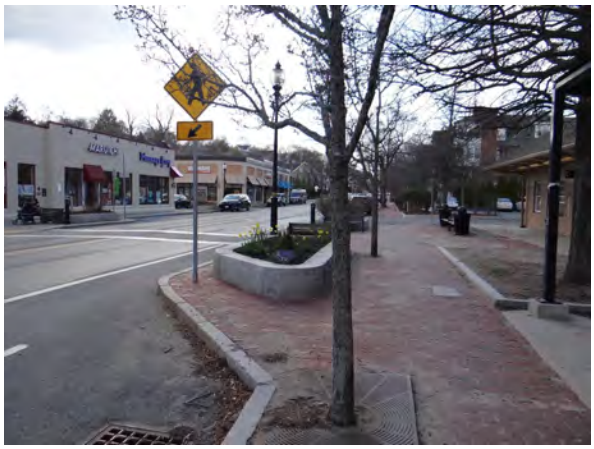
Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Most of the sidewalks (particularly on the north side), have brick pavers. There are also curb extensions and crosswalks between the 1398 Block and the MBTA Busway Facility, and on all four corners of the intersection at Mass Ave and Park Ave.



Typical streetscape and sidewalk treatments in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Generally, these streetscape treatments are dated and in poor condition, with loose brick pavers and missing street trees. Additionally, the inconsistent position of the raised granite planters, street trees (some in the middle of the sidewalks), benches (perpendicular to the street and at the curb), and some pedestrian lights (set back from the curb) create obstacles for pedestrians and limit businesses from fully using the sidewalk for spill-out treatments, such as outdoor seating and display.

Streetscape treatments with brick curb extensions, street trees, raised granite planters, ornamental lights, benches, and crosswalks are in all corners of the intersection at Mass Ave and Park Ave. This is the "100% corner" in Arlington Heights (i.e., the main intersection in the district). These streetscape treatments provide good opportunities to activate the sidewalk with outdoor seating and displays. However, 3 of the 4 businesses in the corner are not in restaurant or general retail use, and 2 of the storefront windows had their blinds drawn down. This creates a missed opportunity to make an impression on drivers, pedestrians, and Bikeway users at a critical intersection of the district.

East Lexington District — Streetscape treatments are very limited in this district. The sidewalks are a combination of concrete and asphalt, and are generally in fair to poor condition, with several interruptions created by wide curb cuts. The planting strips are inconsistent in width and generally not well-maintained. They do not provide for a consistent pattern of street trees. There are 10 crosswalks, but only one curb extension between Mal's Service Center on both sides of Mass Ave. Many of the crosswalk paintings are also worn off. All of this leads to higher speed traffic in the district, creating a challenging environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Typical streetscape and sidewalk treatments in East Lexington. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Bedford Center District — Streetscapes along Great Road, South Road, and Loomis Street are generally good. Except for the block across the Town Common, sidewalks are generally narrow. While outdoor dining is permitted in Bedford, only one restaurant in the historic center was observed to have café seating on the sidewalk. More businesses in the Bedford Market Place have set up café seating.

The sidewalks and streetscapes are fairly new and in good condition in the Center. On the sidewalks between Spring Road and Fletcher Road, outdoor seating and public benches are present, and a clear throughway for pedestrians is maintained. Here, the sidewalks are 8–12 feet in width, and wider at the intersections. However, the tree belt is located

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

inward from the curb and benches are placed in the middle of the sidewalk taking up much of the space that could be utilized for business spill-outs, such as café seating, merchandise display, and sandwich board signs.

Café seating in Bedford Center. Photo: FinePoint Associates

The Town Common is activated on a regular basis for community events like the beer garden festival hosted twice a year by the town. Community representatives stated that the community would like to see more activation of the space for recreational purposes, such as movie viewings.

Cyclists on the Town Common in Bedford Center. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Opportunity: Community participants told us that night-time lighting in the Arlington Heights and East Lexington districts appear to be insufficient. Ornamental pedestrian level streetlights and street banners are a common way to enrich and activate a business district. The towns may want to consider relocating or installing new ornamental streetlights along the curb (the "utility zone") with banner arms oriented perpendicular to the street to improve visibility. Additional arms could also be added to hold hanging planters.

Opportunity: Arlington and Bedford may want to consider installing Over Street Banners in core areas. These types of banners are like welcome signs and can be used to advertise community events. These banners are typically located above the main street and are attached to buildings or light poles on both sides of the street. They should be a minimum of 20 feet above the street and held in place by 2 guide wires to stabilize them against the wind.

Public Open Spaces

In general, each of the three districts has ample publicly accessible open spaces and facilities providing a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities. This includes the Minuteman Bikeway. However, several of these open spaces are not being utilized to their full extent.

Arlington Heights — Within the district and surrounding neighborhood, there are several public open spaces, including Hurd Field, Arlington Reservoir, Mt. Gilboa Park, Arlington Reservoir, Crusher Lot, Hill's Playground, Ed Burns Skating Arena, McClennan Park, and Turkey Hill Hiking Area.

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

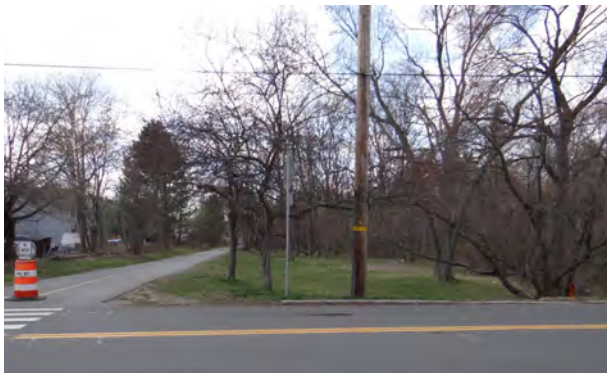
Hurd Field at the Bikeway. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Hurd Field is a public open space that is closest to the district and is located on the Minuteman Bikeway across Trader Joe's and Starbucks. Community representatives indicated that this is a highly active recreational area and that it should become more of a venue for entertainment and food-related activities sponsored in the business district. The Arlington Heights MBTA Busway Facility at 1389 Mass Ave may also have significant future potential as a venue for public events and activities.

Opportunity: Hurd Field and the other nearby public open spaces could be identified on wayfinding directories, both on the Bikeway and in the business district.

East Lexington — Public spaces in and around the East Lexington Business District include Bow Street Park, Adams Playground, Liberty Heights Park, West Farm, Sutherland Woods, Arlington's Great Meadows, Scottish Rite Masonic Museum and Library, Tower Park, and Daisy Wilson Meadow. Bow Street Park is located in this district and abuts the Minuteman Bikeway off Bow Street. The park abuts Mill Brook in the north and the Minuteman Bikeway in the south. Much of the area around the brook is in a flood plain.

Community representatives mentioned that there used to be a swing set in the park that was removed. Going forward, they see opportunities to activate the park with amenities and programming to make connections with the East Lexington Business District. Bow Street Park must be carefully planned as there is a lot of traffic in the area and not much space for parking unless nearby businesses allow the use of their parking lots on a temporary basis. Additionally, the Conservation Committee is taking an active role in deciding the future use of this public property while keeping in mind environmental considerations.



Bow Street Park along the Bikeway. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Opportunity: Bow Street Park is an underutilized open space and could be activated in the short term with some picnic tables, exercise stations, farmers' markets, or other furnishings and activities.

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Public Realm**

Bedford Center — There are several public open spaces in and around the district that provide opportunities for active and passive recreation, such as the Town Common, Page Field (ballfields), Elm Brook Conservation Area, Hartwell Town Forest, Memorial Park (grass area with benches that needs more activation), Bedford High School, Bedford Library, Veterans Park, the Old Burying Grounds, and Great Meadows Refuge (2 miles from the Center). Veterans Memorial Park and Page Field are located directly off the Narrow Gauge Rail Trail, and the Old Burying Grounds is in the historic center (the oldest cemetery in town where many of Bedford's Revolutionary War soldiers are buried). Open space in Depot Park is critical to the viability of the district as the terminus of the Minuteman Bikeway and the Reformatory Trail. The grounds and buildings (including the vacant VFW building and other buildings on site) would best be used to complement the Bikeway and benefit trail users when it comes to organizing civic, food, culture and entertainment-related gatherings.

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

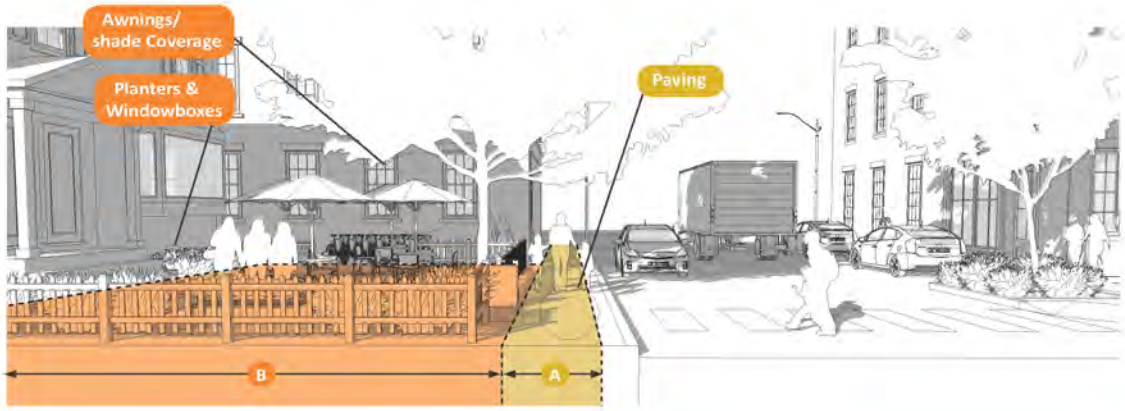
General Observations of Key Private Realm Elements

Vibrant villages and neighborhood business districts are oriented towards pedestrians and have active spaces between the buildings. These villages and districts use a variety of techniques to enhance walkability and create interest for potential customers regardless of whether they are arriving on foot, in cars, on bikes, or by bus. As with most business districts, Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center businesses are oriented to the street and sidewalks. The Minuteman Bikeway provides an opportunity for each district to draw additional customers coming in from this popular commuting and recreational trail.

Some common private realm elements that are important in each district are as follows:

Wall Signs — These signs are best seen by pedestrians from across the street and should be in proportion to the width of the building and located above the windows. Most businesses in all three districts have wall signs that range in size, quality, and condition.

Throughway & Frontage Zone Standards | Side Street [SS]



Throughway Zone

A Width 4' (min.)

Description

The throughway zone is the portion of the sidewalk used for active movement and travel from one place to another in the public realm. It is important that the throughway zone be an adequate width for comfortable two-way pedestrian movement, that it remains clear of obstacles, and that the paving surface is relatively level.

Components

Paving
Public Art
Tree Root Structural Support
p. xx

Frontage Zone

B Width Public Frontage: 2' (min.); Private Frontage Varies (forecourts only)

Description

The frontage zone represents the area in front of first floor shops and restaurants where pedestrians might pause—to read a menu, peer through a shop window, or wait for friends before entering a restaurant. On side streets, the frontage zone only exists in instances of public-private space, such as a forecourt.

Components

Awnings
Café Seating
Planters & Window Boxes
p. xx
Ramps, Steps and Terraces
p. xx
Storefront Displays
Public Art
Bike Racks
p. xx

Private realm/building frontage zone design and activation standards, Northampton, MA. Source: Dodson & Flinker, and Brovitz Community Planning & Design

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Projecting/Blade Signs — Blade signs are very important in pedestrian-oriented districts as they are the most visible signs for potential customers on the sidewalk and may be visible from a block or two away. They are particularly important in districts with a high percentage of visitors who may not know the current mix of businesses. Blade signs are also the most visible to cyclists and drivers on the street. Projecting signs should be perpendicular to the building, a minimum of 8 feet above the sidewalk, and in proportion to the width of the business and height of the building. They should be legible from the sidewalk and street while expressing the unique qualities of the business through artwork, symbols, and color. Brackets and exterior lighting should be designed so that if one business vacates the building, another business can reuse the infrastructure for a new sign. In cases where there are short one-story buildings with flat roofs (like several buildings in Arlington Heights and East Lexington), projecting signs should be allowed to be mounted on top of the building.

Projecting signs over the sidewalk in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

All three districts have limited projecting blade signs, which reduces the chances of potential customers seeing businesses from the sidewalk or vehicles. While projecting signs are permitted, relatively few are being utilized to the benefit of both customers and businesses.

Ground Signs — Where buildings are set back from the sidewalk, ground signs can be used to provide visibility to pedestrians and drivers. Ground signs should be located close to the public right-of-way, at eye level with pedestrians, and similar in size as blade signs. Ground signs are particularly relevant to East Lexington and Bedford Center where many buildings are set back from the sidewalk.

Storefronts and Window Displays — Windows should be clean and transparent, and tastefully display the merchandise or services provided on site. Storefront windows can also be used to display activity, such as the making of food or printing of newspapers. Many storefronts in Arlington Heights and East Lexington are dated and tired-looking. There are some temporary sandwich board signs in Arlington Heights and East Lexington, but they are not high-quality for the most part. Storefronts in Bedford Center and Bedford Plaza are mostly attractive and well-maintained.

Oreck Vacuum storefront windows in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Awnings — This façade element can create variety and texture in a business district. They can also add an attractive feature to an otherwise plain building, which is common in Arlington Heights and East Lexington. Awnings provide shade on the sidewalk and storefront windows, which is particularly important for south-oriented buildings, such as the north side of Mass Ave in Arlington Heights and East Lexington, and Great Road in Bedford. Traditional awnings are typically made with high-quality canvas materials, but more contemporary canopies may include transparent materials that filter sunlight while covering the sidewalk. Signage can also be attached underneath, or to the front or side of a canopy to identify the business.

Awning with lettering at The Heights Pub in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Awnings are limited in East Lexington and Bedford. There are more awnings in Arlington Heights, but many are narrow (don't shade the sidewalk) and several are in disrepair. The lack of awnings in some areas on the north side of Mass Ave (south-facing façades) have resulted in businesses preferring to keep their shades down, which creates a negative impression for potential customers in the district.

Window blinds drawn at the corner of Mass Ave and Park Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

A-Frame/Sandwich Board Signs — These temporary signs are helpful for businesses that want to advertise daily specials or sales. They should be located within 3 feet of the buildings, limited to 8 square feet (SF), constructed with high-quality materials, and removed from the sidewalk after business hours. Some sandwich board signs were observed in each of the three districts, but placement and quality were generally poor.

Sandwich board along the Bikeway in East Lexington. Photo: FinePoint Associates

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Outdoor Displays — Outdoor merchandise displays can be a useful tool for businesses that have room on the sidewalk to accommodate them. Outdoor displays should be high-quality, located within 3 feet of the storefront, limited to less than half of the business frontage, and removed at the end of business hours. Outdoor displays were not common in any of the three districts, probably because of regulations, limited sidewalk space, and business setbacks from the sidewalk, such as in East Lexington and parts of Bedford Center.

Café Seating — Outdoor dining does not only activate the sidewalk or parklet but can expand a business by about 25% with relatively little investment. In each of the three districts, café seating on the sidewalk or in parklets is limited. Much of this may be the result of fairly narrow sidewalks in each district.

Café seating in Bedford Center. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Paint and Murals — Building façades, window frames, doorways, and decorative elements should be painted as needed to maintain quality appearance. There are several buildings and storefronts in the Arlington Heights and East Lexington districts that looked worn down and in need of repainting. This was not observed in the Bedford Center District.

Opportunity: In spaces with large blank walls, murals and painted signs can be effective treatments to activate façades and enliven the district. There are opportunities in all three districts to install murals on the rear walls of commercial buildings, and on the retaining wall of the Bikeway in Arlington Heights. Murals could emphasize the attributes of each district to draw trail users to commercial areas.

Address Vacant Storefronts — Arlington Heights and East Lexington have vacant storefronts. These voids detract from the vibrancy and walkability of the districts. The Town of Arlington has a vacant storefront program that requires owners to make temporary improvements to their windows to enhance the appearance of empty spaces and to make them more attractive to potential tenants. Other types of programs that may be effective include temporary art galleries featuring the work of local artists, projects allowing other storefronts to utilize window space for auxiliary merchandise display, and temporary pop-up stores.

Temporary window painting in vacant storefront in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

The Traffic Calming Effect of Activation — High-quality and diverse business activation adds vibrancy to the district, serves as a traffic calming device, and generates customers. Drivers take notice of interesting streetscapes, crosswalks, storefronts, signs, banners, and activities on sidewalks. These tend to slow the drivers down and expand their peripheral vision allowing them to see more of the storefronts. On-street parking and painted bike lanes also act to slow drivers down. The more active the district, the slower drivers go, and the more exposure businesses have. Traffic calming is needed in each of the three districts.

Key Properties and Opportunities

Arlington Heights

Workbar (1167 Mass Ave) — This is a cooperative office and meeting space on the east end of the district and within a block of the Bikeway. As a result of COVID, more people will be working from home or on a part-time schedule in the office. Coworking spaces could become that "second place" between home and the office that is convenient for residents as well as Bikeway commuters. In addition to Workbar, there could be a market opportunity for more cowork spaces in vacant or underutilized storefronts. Proximity to the Bikeway as well as shops, services, food, and entertainment lends an extra advantage.

Peripheral vision of a driver going at 10-15 MPH. Source: Brovitz Community Planning & Design

Peripheral vision of a driver going at 30-40 MPH. Source: Brovitz Community Planning & Design

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Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Approved Developments at 1207-1211 and 1165R Mass Ave

A new 40-room hotel was approved by the Arlington Redevelopment Board in August, 2020, to be constructed at 1207-1211 Mass Ave (intersection of Mass Ave and Clark St). The hotel will replace the former Arlington Auto Brokers and the Disabled American Veterans Chapter structures. To the southeast, a Comprehensive Permit Application was approved in September 2021 for a 124-unit mixed-use development at 1165R Mass Ave. Both projects are within a block of the Minuteman Bikeway (access at Frazer Rd and Ryder St, respectively), and could significantly enhance utilization of the trail and support for local businesses..

Wannamaker True Value (1298 Mass Ave) — This is a retail anchor for the district. The plain 2-story brick building has very few storefront windows and displays.

Wannamaker Hardware Store in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Penzey's Spices (1293 Mass Ave) — A one-story building is on a big lot with 2 large curb cuts and parking on all sides. While the store is popular in the district, the large and underutilized lot provides an opportunity for potential infill or redevelopment.

1309-13 Mass Ave Block/Classic Café, Lina's Hair Salon — This is a typical commercial building in the district: one-story building with 2 storefronts built at the street ROW line. Façades are plain with large storefront windows, wall signs, a narrow profile awning, no projecting signs, and no spill-out treatments on the sidewalk. Poorly placed street trees partially block the windows, doorways, and signs.

Former Embassy Cleaners (1308 Mass Ave) — This vacant one-story building has a temporary mural painted on the storefront windows. This is an example of the Town's Vacant Storefront Enhancement Program.

Old Schwab Mill (17 Mill Lane) — This is a historic landmark that is owned by the Town. It contains working machinery that runs off belts and provides a glimpse of how small factories were operated during the mid-1800s until the 1960s. This public point of interest should be identified in a future Arlington Heights wayfinding program.

Watermill Condominium (Lowell Street) — These 130 condo units were built in 1998 with direct access to the Minuteman Bikeway and a historic mill preserved on site. Current listings for sale range between $480,000 and $1,900,000. These types of residential developments support the local businesses and enable heavy utilization of the Bikeway.

Gold's Gym (30 Park Ave) — This site is the primary access point between the Minuteman Bikeway and the business district. However, trail users must traverse the parking lot on their way to Mass Ave. This old warehouse building is a prime site for redevelopment; although, until the zoning laws change (possibly this Spring), there appears to be no motivation for redevelopment even though the community is supportive of revitalization in the neighborhood.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

The 100% Corner at Mass Ave and Park Ave — The 4 buildings in the corner are attractive 2-story buildings with large storefront windows. However, only one of the corner businesses is in retail or restaurant use. These buildings are all on the Arlington Historic Structures Inventory and have preservation protections.

There are no projecting signs or spill-out treatments on the sidewalk, and some of the storefront windows have their blinds pulled down. Streetscape enhancements have been made to each corner, and these include ornamental pedestrian lamps and signal arms, raised granite planters, brick pavers, and curb extensions. However, there is no activation, such as implementation of café seating and other spill-out applications, done by adjacent businesses.

The "100% Corner" at the intersection of Mass Ave and Park Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Apothca (1386 Mass Ave) — This one-story concrete building stands out due to its contemporary façade. However, the storefronts here lack appeal and look gray and empty. Murals, lighting, and canopies could enhance the façades.

Oreck Vacuum (1349-51 Mass Ave) — The building has good fenestration, but storefront windows are used as a storage space for boxes and vacuum cleaners, creating an unappealing display.

Oreck Vacuum store window display. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Arlington Heights Busway Facility (1389 Mass Ave) — This MBTA facility (and parking area) is a key location in the district. The Minuteman Bikeway is adjacent to the property but is separated by Mill Brook, preventing direct access that would make it convenient for cyclists to transfer to the bus service. A small, unattractive, older, one-story building is set back approximately 20 feet with a terrace in front, bike corral, raised granite planters, benches, bus shelter, and a curb extension/crosswalk to 1398 Block across Mass Ave. Some streetscape treatments may impede accessibility and utilization of the space for civic purposes. Along the frontage, there are canopy trees, brick sidewalks, and 2 wide curb cuts that create large gaps in the sidewalk. A bus parking area is located behind the building. Bus drivers with keys have access to the building for bathroom use. The building is leased but vacant vacant and in poor condition. Community representatives mentioned that they are interested in activating the site, but also stated that the MBTA has been unwilling to do that even though the building has rodents and needs significant renovation. Community participants felt that this is a "hub" location and agreed that although the facility is used for approximately 21 hours per day, the building and site could be used more productively by including food and civic gathering facilities. A parklet has recently been installed to expand activation potential.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

MBTA Busway at 1389 Mass Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Trader Joe's at 1427 Mass Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Sunrise of Arlington, Assisted Living (1395 Mass Ave) — An attractive, 3 ½-story assisted living facility has a front terrace, semi-circle drop-off area, good landscaping and canopy trees, and iron fencing adjacent to the brick sidewalk. Locating assisted living facilities in the district are good for both the residents and businesses, and there may be additional opportunities in the district.

Walgreen's/Trader Joe's (1425/1427 Mass Ave) — These 2 businesses are major anchors in Arlington Heights and have direct access to the Bikeway via a staircase in the parking lot. Walgreens is set back about 50 feet from the sidewalk with parking in the front, creating a disconnect with the pedestrians. Trader Joe's and Starbucks are located on the sidewalk with good storefront windows and an outdoor café. These are side-by-side examples of how franchise retail can either reinforce the walkability of a neighborhood business district (Trader Joe's) or follow strip development patterns if allowed (Walgreens).

Trattoria Nina (1510 Mass Ave) — At the intersection of Lancaster Road, this small brick building is located on the sidewalk, which is narrow and has no space for spill-out treatments. The restaurant has been using a parklet for outdoor dining in front of the building, which significantly expands customer capacity. This is a good example of how the municipality can help businesses with physical limitations become successful. This intersection is probably a better location for a crosswalk, curb extension, and gateway sign than the mid-block crossing at Mal's, 230 feet to the west. A curb extension in this location would also create a more prominent entrance into the Arlington Heights District and protect a future parklet at Nina's.

Mal's Service Center (1540 Mass Ave) — Located at the Lexington town line, this property is within the Arlington Heights District but is disconnected physically and visually. The building has a garage door on the sidewalk with no apron, requiring cars to back up onto the street. The building is adjacent to the Arlington welcome sign and crosswalk where cars may be parking on the curb extension. Aesthetically, this is a poor gateway to Arlington.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

East Lexington

Some of the anchor businesses identified by community representatives were Berman's Wine & Spirits (in business for nearly 100 years), Mass Ave Car Wash, MA France, Walden Framer, Wicked Bagels, Ixtapa Restaurant, and Great Harvest. Most businesses are on the north side of Mass Ave and abutting the Minuteman Bikeway. Properties on the south side of Mass Ave are predominantly in residential use.

Some of the key properties are the following:

Mal's Service Center (7 Mass Ave) — This business is located at the town line where the crosswalk and curb extension are located. A "Welcome to Arlington" sign is oriented to eastbound traffic and a "Welcome to Lexington" sign is oriented to westbound traffic. Mal's has 2 garage bays that require backing a vehicle out onto Mass Ave. This creates a disruption for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mal's Auto Repair parking lot along the Bikeway. Photo: FinePoint Associates

MA-France, Jackson's Kitchen (40 Mass Ave) — This is a popular gourmet food store and take-out shop in the surrounding neighborhood. A bench, 2 tables, and chairs have been added in front of the building as spill-out treatments.

Berman's Wine and Spirits (55 Mass Ave) — This is a popular store in the district. There is a quality wall sign on the front façade and an attractive, historic neon sign located on the roof below the eave. The property has about 240 feet of frontage along Mass Ave and the same amount along the Bikeway to the rear. The building occupies the east half of the property, and the area in the front and to the side consist of a large parking lot that appears to be underutilized. There is no orientation to the trail, although a bikeshare was located here in the past but removed due to lack of usage. The western half of the property appears to have good potential for infill development.

Walden Fen Framer, Happy Nails, Scotty's Salon, Suburban Homeworks (121 Mass Ave) — This attractive one-story brick building is located at the corner of Bow Street with 3 storefronts fronting on Mass Ave and the fourth fronting on Bow Street (Suburban Homeworks). The building is located on the Bikeway but has no orientation to the trail.

Bollywood Café, Domino's Pizza, Dunkin' Donuts (139-145 Mass Ave) — This dated strip center has 5 storefronts with 3 restaurants that do not appear to have outdoor café seating. The building is set back about 50 feet from the ROW with parking in the front and 2 curb cuts, creating a disconnect from the sidewalk. The building is located on the Bikeway but has no orientation to the trail (no rear entrances or signage).

Shopping plaza at 145 Mass Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Wicked Bagel, Ixtapa Mexican, Nick's Place, New Way Cleaners, Landmark Convenience, Music Emporium (155-195 Mass Ave) — This dated strip center has 6 storefronts, and 3 of the businesses are restaurants that do not appear to have outdoor café seating on the walkway in the front. The building is set back with a parking lot and 2 wide curb cuts, creating a disconnect from the sidewalk. The building is located on the Bikeway but has no orientation to the trail (no rear entrances or signage).

Taipei Gourmet (211 Mass Ave) — This former fast food franchise building has been reconfigured with good fenestration, raised planters with flowers, and an attractive outdoor dining terrace that connects to the sidewalk. It is a good example of strip development being retrofitted to a pedestrian environment.

Taipei Gourmet with outdoor café at 211 Mass Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Great Harvest Bread (229, 233, 241 Mass Ave) — These 3 properties are converted homes owned by the same person who has been retrofitting the buildings for commercial use. Great Harvest at 233 Mass Ave is a popular local bakery with a renovated high-quality storefront and wall sign, and café seating in front along the sidewalk. A new retail space is being developed next to Great Harvest and a Food Truck Business (Parfait Please) uses the parking lot behind the building. The buildings are located on the Bikeway but don't have rear-facing storefronts or signage. The only orientation to the Bikeway is a small sandwich board sign that is not very visible from the trail.

Great Harvest serves as a model for the renovation of older dilapidated homes into commercial or mixed-use buildings with residential spaces above. An alternative would be the redevelopment of dilapidated properties with new commercial or mixed-use buildings taking advantage of access to the Bikeway.

Arlex Oil Corporation (275 Mass Ave) — This attractive 2-story brick office building is set back from the sidewalk and has a well-manicured front yard. The large parcel has parking to the side and rear.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car (301 Mass Ave) — This converted gas station is set back from the sidewalk with parking located on all sides of the building.

Lexington Toyota (389 Mass Ave) — This is the only Class I dealership in Lexington (there are a few used car dealers). The dealership has about 400 feet of frontage along Mass Ave and has attractive landscaping along the ROW, including several canopy trees about 20 feet on-center, adjacent to the sidewalk. A significant number of cars are stored on site. According to community representatives, the dealership owns a lot of land, including historic properties, in East Lexington. They noted that the dealership has had some parking issues with the town.

735 Mass Ave/The Stone Building — This historic building is owned by the town and was built in 1833. It is a Greek Revival-style building and was originally a meeting hall and lyceum for East Lexington. Later, it was used by the neighboring Follen Community Church. Most recently, it was used as the East Lexington branch of the public library that closed permanently. It has been vacant for a while, and the town is considering different ways to repurpose and revive the building.

10 Pleasant Street/Wilson Farms — This is a popular upscale market with fresh produce, meats, seafood, homemade goods, and prepared foods. It is located on Pleasant Street about 400 feet from Mass Ave and about 1,440 feet from the Minuteman Bikeway via Ellen Dana Court.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Bedford Center District

Historic Center Businesses — Great Road is the "Main Street" of Bedford Center and carries a lot of commuter traffic, making the district popular in the region. There are several businesses in the center, such as Ken's NY Deli, Ginger Japanese Cuisine, Right at Home, and Wearovers that are frequented by locals and visitors. There are also several popular service businesses such as Santander Bank, Brown & Brown, Great Meadows Dental, UPS Store, Bedford Auto Clinic, Barnardo Faria Jiu Jitsu, and a few salons and spas. The combination of shops, restaurants, and services makes the center a "place of necessity" for residents and attracts the interest of commuters on Great Road and recreationalists on the Bikeway.

The block building across the Common was built recently and is designed to be consistent with the context and character of the historic center. It fronts on Great Road and wraps around the corner of Fletcher Street. There are 4 storefronts, including Ginger Japanese Cuisine, Ken's NY Deli, KB Jewelers, and Bedford Organic Nails and Spa. This is the "100% Corner" of Bedford Center. Together, the storefronts occupy 230 feet along the sidewalk. This is the only building in the center designed as a traditional downtown block with multiple stories and frontage on the sidewalk. The project was approved under a mixed use overlay district. A 40-space shared parking lot is located at the rear, and it maintains the traditional village center development pattern.

Mixed use building at the corner of Great Road and Fletcher Road in Bedford Center. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Most of the other businesses in the Center are in older village homes that are typically 2 to 2 ½ stories tall and set back from the ROW. The ground floors are commonly converted for commercial use and the upper floors may be in residential or office use. Most buildings have well-maintained lawns, street trees, and small, high-quality ground signs that are visible to drivers and pedestrians. Most lots in the Center are deep, allowing for parking to be located behind buildings.

Railroad Avenue/South Street Businesses — The area around Depot Park includes a broad mix of commercial and light industrial businesses, including Salon Reyna, Baby to Boomer, Bike Source, Bedford Charter Services, deMonts Garage, Vehicle Wraps, Q-Peak, McDonough Electric, Bikeway Source, Leary Auto Repair, Berkshire Grey, and other business tenants in office or industrial buildings. Of most interest to trail users is the Bikeway Source Bike Store, which is active in the community and sponsors activities related to the trail. Railroad Avenue has the potential for infill development, redevelopment, and mixed use, which are possible under the new overlay district.

The Bikeway Source bike shop across Depot Park. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Loomis Street/DeAngelo Drive Businesses — This corridor is mostly residential, but the area near South Street contains several service, retail and food-related businesses. The mixed-use development at 54 Loomis Street is adjacent to Depot Park and the Minuteman Bikeway. This project was approved under the new mixed use overlay district and includes 16 residential condos as well as the Shortstop Café, The Body Boutique, and other businesses that may be of interest to trail users.

Mixed use building at 54 Loomis St adjacent to the Bikeway and Depot Park. Photo: FinePoint Associates

There are also some larger office and light industrial buildings near the Bikeway on Deangelo Drive that collectively contain a variety of businesses like makers (flutes), and medical/dental, distribution, biotech, and corporate offices. One of the larger businesses, Millipore Sigma, is located along the Bikeway. This business park could be a destination for commuters on the Bikeway.

Depot Park — The Town owns the park and the 4 buildings on the grounds. Currently, Boyz Barbershop and artist studios occupy the historic depot building at 80 Loomis Street. Another building in the park at 74 Loomis Street is occupied by Patriot Pediatrics. A small building near the intersection of Loomis and South Street is used as the visitor center that contains souvenirs, historical paraphernalia, maps, and snacks. Adjacent to the visitor center are two restored railcars that can be rented for events.

The old depot building at Depot Park. Photo: FinePoint Associates

The fourth building in the park is the former VFW building that is currently vacant. The Town is considering future uses as well as potentially tearing the building down and converting the space into a pocket park. Community representatives indicated that this would create more space for public gatherings and may improve sight lines for the Narrow Gauge Trail from the parking lot. The community representatives also mentioned that some of the businesses in the Depot Park area have remained closed due to COVID.

The former VFW Building at Depot Park. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Private Realm**

Bedford Market Place (150-200 Great Road) — The upscale shopping center is a conventional strip commercial development that benefited from changes to the zoning amendments permitting mixed use, infill development, and reduced parking requirements. The result has been that much of the street frontage has been converted from excess parking to new development oriented to pedestrian access, including wider sidewalks, underground utilities, and accessible open space. The Market Place has a broad range of popular stores like B. Good, Bruggers Bagels, Red Heat Tavern, Marshalls, Whole Foods, and Starbucks. The small common space is programmed for different activities and gatherings.

Some outdoor dining spaces were created in the Market Place as a result of COVID and people's desire to eat outside. Community representatives also pointed out that the Town and the community wanted to maintain the openness of Veteran's Memorial Park (across the street from the Market Place) because they felt like it was a sacred space, and the park seems to be used well in terms of seating. Overall, it appears that the Market Place area is busy and that not many businesses had to close due to COVID.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Accessibility**

Bikeway Access

In Arlington Heights, the Minuteman Bikeway runs north and parallel to Mass Ave one to three blocks away from the corridor. The trail has a grade separation at some of the key connector streets in the district, including Lowell Street (overpass), Drake Road (overpass — no direct connection from the street but at Drake Village Residential complex), and Park Ave (overpass). There are at-grade connections at Frazer Road, Forest Street, and Ryder Street, which are further away from the district. There are also trail connections to private properties such as Trader Joe's/Starbucks, Sunrise of Arlington, and Golds Gym, which require cyclists to traverse a parking lot to reach Mass Ave. However, because of grade separation, underutilized properties, and limited/indirect connections between the storefronts and the Bikeway, a large economic opportunity is being lost.

In East Lexington, the Minuteman Trail is at-grade and within a few hundred feet from most businesses in the district. However, very few businesses are trying to draw trail users to their businesses. In Bedford, the Bikeway terminates in a somewhat remote public park instead of at the historic center or the popular Bedford Market Place. This physical and visual disconnect between the Bikeway and the businesses creates the perception that there is no access.

Bike Facilities and Amenities

Amenities such as bike racks, bike corrals, and repair stations on the Bikeway and in the three districts are limited and inconsistent. While there are some U-shaped bike racks on the sidewalks in Arlington Heights as part of a previous streetscape project, few businesses have bike racks on site (some bike racks were observed at Gold's Gym, Citizens Bank, Workbar, on the Bikeway below Starbucks, and near the intersection of Mass Ave/Park Ave). No bike racks were observed in East Lexington. A Zagster Bike Share station was removed last year from Berman's Wine & Spirits along the Bikeway due to lack of use. Bedford has limited bike racks at Depot Park, Bedford Center, and Bedford Marketplace.

Bike racks in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Bikers on south-west East Lexington. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Bike racks in Bedford. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Accessibility**

Arlington Heights has painted 5-foot bike lanes on Mass Ave throughout the district for easy access to commuting cyclists. East Lexington has removed bike lane paint but has the space to provide the amenity in the future. Bedford does not have officially designated bike lanes and does not have the width on Great Road between the Common and the Market Place to provide a 5-foot bike lane.

Opportunity: East Lexington could add bike lanes back on Mass Ave, adjacent to the travel lane, instead of having them between on-street parking lanes and the curb, which is very unpopular among commuting cyclists. Bike sharrows could be painted between the business nodes on Great Road, South Road, and Loomis Street, as well as Railroad Avenue leading to the Narrow Gauge Trail and the Reformatory Branch Trail.

Arlington Heights wayfinding directory sign. Photo: FinePoint Associates

District Wayfinding

Overall, there is little to no wayfinding in all three districts. Arlington Heights' wayfinding system was observed to be "all over the place" by a community representative. There is a "welcome sign" in Arlington Heights located at the Lexington town line next to Mal's Service Center, which is oriented to eastbound traffic and is barely visible. Other welcome signs are located across the MBTA Busway at 1389 Mass Ave and oriented to eastbound traffic, and at 1340 Mass Ave near Park Ave and oriented to westbound traffic. There are also 2 directory kiosks on Park Ave, north and south of Mass Ave, that do not have current information regarding businesses and community events. These directories are also constructed with reflective black marble making them difficult to read.

Welcome sign in Arlington Heights. Photo Credit: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Accessibility**

No wayfinding, except for an information box and map on the Minuteman Trail at the Bow Street Crossing, was observed in East Lexington. Community participants agreed that a wayfinding strategy was needed not only for the historic sites but for the commercial sites too, and that appropriate signage would help provide the kind of visibility that the town is looking for.

Above and below: Wayfinding elements in East Lexington. Photo: FinePoint Associates

At the western terminus of the Minuteman Trail at Depot Park in Bedford, there are directory maps on site. None of them direct trail users to Bedford Center and Bedford Marketplace, which are only ¼ of a mile away. Community representatives noted that with a high volume of summer cyclists, there are lots of opportunities for outdoor cafés and a need for wayfinding, especially since Depot Park feeds customers to local businesses via the Minuteman Bikeway, Narrow Gauge Trail, and Reformatory Branch Trail. Wayfinding is needed to help pedestrians and cyclists make the connections between the three trails and other points of interest beyond Depot Park.

Community participants observed some helpful signage, like the 10-mile marker on the Bikeway at the end of the bike path at Bedford Depot Park. However, they also noticed that the signage pointing to the Narrow Gauge from the bike path was somewhat confusing and needed improvement.

As for vehicle access, community representatives observed that public parking signage on South Road and Railroad Ave around Depot Park were unclear and that only the residents knew about the public parking space across the street next to the Bikeway Store. Additionally, community participants noted that there were no wayfinding signs directing people on bike, foot, or in cars to and from Bedford Center, Bedford Marketplace, and Depot Park.

Wayfinding in Bedford. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Accessibility**

Wayfinding signage in Bedford. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Traffic Flow and Customer Access

Traffic volume in each of the three districts is heavy since they are all major local and/or state highways. Additionally, each district is well-served by public bus service, bicycle access (on-street bike lanes and off-street trails), and sidewalk networks. The high-volume and multi-mobility of the districts is an economic opportunity as the likelihood to frequent local businesses increases as more cars, bikes, buses, and pedestrians pass by.

Parking

All three districts have an adequate distribution and balance of public and private parking. Each district has significant public on-street parking, although East Lexington could stripe parking spaces for greater efficiency. Arlington Heights and East Lexington rely heavily on on-street public parking as the commercial districts are narrow, resulting in limited spaces for on-site parking and fewer opportunities to add additional spaces.

On-street parking in Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

On-street parking in East Lexington. Photo: FinePoint Associates

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Physical Environment: **Accessibility**

Street parking in Bedford. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Public Transit

Each of the three districts is served by public transit. The MBTA bus service on Mass Ave in Arlington Heights and East Lexington, and Great Road in Bedford, provides access to residents, commuters, and customers.

MBTA bus in Arlington. Source: MBTA

Business Environment

Key Findings: Business Environment

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The three commercial districts encompass over 1/2 million square feet (SF) of first floor commercial space; 9% of first-floor units are vacant.

Arlington Heights encompasses approximately 283,000 SF of first-floor commercial space; 6 of the 100 first-floor commercial units are vacant. Bedford Center encompasses approximately 223,000 SF of first-floor commercial space; 6 of the 85 first-floor commercial units are vacant. East Lexington Village, considerably smaller than the other two districts, encompasses approximately 76,000 SF of first-floor commercial space; 7 of the 38 first-floor commercial units are vacant.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The former Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) property in Bedford, and 30 Park Ave and the MBTA Bus Depot property in Arlington Heights are key opportunity properties.

The old VFW property at Depot Park is now owned by the town and remains vacant. In Arlington, there is pending zoning amendments for the Town's industrial zones property. Which is under review , with comments expected by October 2021. The zoning amendment could make 30 Park Ave (where Gold's Gym was located) a prime candidate for redevelopment. The MBTA Bus Depot Property, also in Arlington, is very underutilized and can offer opportunities for place-making activities or events.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

All three districts have a collection of eateries and a few business clusters. Arlington Heights and Bedford Center have "destination/ anchor" businesses.

The districts contain a total of 217 establishments. East Lexington has the most limited selection, with only 31 businesses. Bedford Center has 92 and Arlington Heights has 94. There is not much in the way of entertainment and a very limited number of cultural events take place in the districts, although there are a few recreation uses like fitness centers.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

COVID-19 impacts were widespread in all districts. Arlington Heights was hit the hardest, followed closely by Bedford Center. The least impacted was East Lexington Village.

A total of 68% of business in all RRP Districts suffered a year-over-year revenue loss in 2020 due to COVID-19. This was the case for 70% of businesses in Arlington Heights, 65% in Bedford Center, and only 38% in East Lexington (this is likely since most East Lexington shops sell essentials like take-out food, groceries, and liquor).

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

A majority of businesses in the three districts rent their space and are independently-owned, single-location establishments. Only about one-half are open after 6:00 p.m.

Many of the restaurants and a few retailers are open in the evenings. However, approximately half of the businesses (48%) are not open past 6:00 p.m.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Top priorities for businesses in the three districts include more outdoor and selling opportunities, more cultural events, and marketing strategies.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

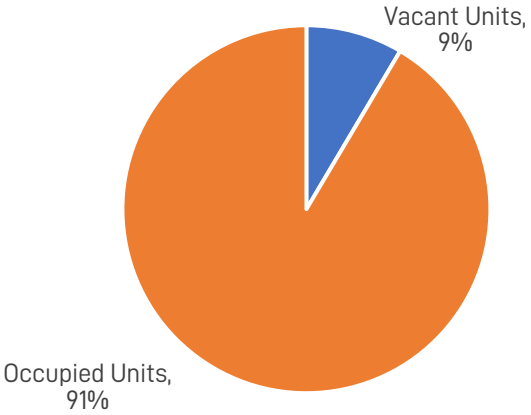
Highlights of the Business Environment: **Real Estate — All 3 Districts**

Together, the three districts encompass over .5 million SF of first floor commercial space. Approximately 9% of commercial units are vacant and 6% of first floor space is vacant.

In total, the districts contain approximately 223 commercial units with first floor presence. At the time of the inventory (April 2021), there were 19 vacant commercial units comprising 9% of all first-floor units.

The three business districts vary in size, layout, and other characteristics. Each district is profiled separately in the following pages.

Vacancy — First Floor Units



Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial SF

583,122

Total # of Commercial Units

243

Total # of Commercial Units with First Floor Presence

223

Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units

19

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Real Estate — Arlington Heights District**

Arlington Heights Business District is a walkable, traditional neighborhood commercial center. The buildings are predominantly one and two stories, and in most areas, they are developed up to the property line bordering the sidewalk. Some properties like Trader Joe's, Walgreens, and Dunkin' Donuts have been developed with parking in the front.

Arlington Heights encompasses approximately 283,000 SF of first-floor commercial space. In total, the district contains approximately 100 commercial units with first floor presence. At the time of the inventory (April 2021), there were 6 vacant units comprising 6% of all first-floor units.

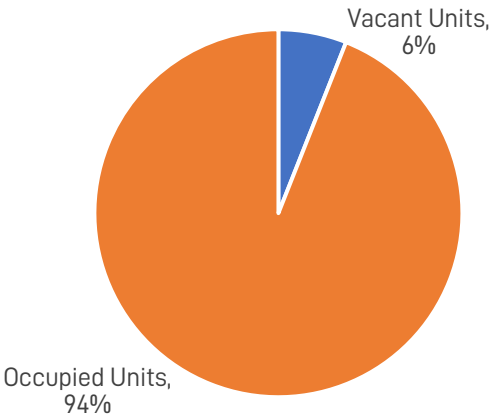
In addition to vacancies, there are several under-utilized properties as described in the previous "Physical Environment" chapter.

The MBTA Bus Depot Property is under-underutilized and might offer opportunities. This property includes a building and surrounding asphalt lot. There is a bus stop and shelter at this location and bus drivers use the site to turn around and use restroom facilities. There is a commercial unit (1,000 SF) that is currently leased but vacant. The commercial space is listed on the MBTA website as an "Upcoming Opportunity" so this may mean the lease is coming to an end.

The pending zoning amendments for the Town's industrial zones could make the property at 30 Park Ave (where Gold's Gym was located) a prime candidate for redevelopment.

Opportunity: This might provide an opportunity to formalize the informal Bikeway entrance, now at that location. It might be possible to negotiate with a developer of that site to provide an easement for a public entrance. That way the Town could add wayfinding signage to this location and create a safe path for cyclists to navigate through the parking lot to the street.

Vacancy — First Floor Units



Example of vacant storefronts. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Under-utilized MBTA building and surrounding lot. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial SF	Total # of Commercial Units	Total # of Commercial Units with First Floor Presence	Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units
283,344	**100**	**100**	**6**

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Real Estate — Bedford Center**

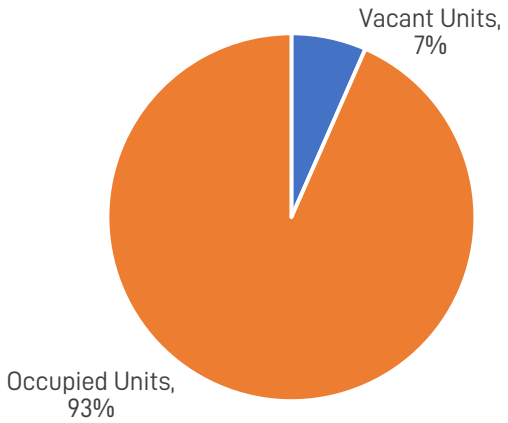
The Bedford Center Study area includes the commercial development along Great Road and the commercial node at Depot Park. The majority of the the commercial activity is situated in 3 shopping plazas. These include: 1) Market Place, the largest and recently renovated plaza, anchored by Whole Foods, Marshalls, and Learning Express Store; 2) 200 Great Road, a retail and office plaza; and 3) Blue Ribbon Plaza, containing Starbucks, a bank, and other shops. The northern section of the district, the historic center, contains the Town Common and is closer in character to a traditional village center. The Depot Park node contains a bike shop and a few food service and personal service establishments. **Bedford Center encompasses approximately 223,000 SF of first-floor commercial space.**

In total, the district contains approximately 85 commercial units with first floor presence. At the time of the inventory (April 2021), there were 6 vacant commercial units comprising 7% of all first-floor units.

In addition to vacancies, there are several under-utilized properties as described in the "Physical Environment" chapter.

The old VFW property located at Depot Park, now owned by the Town, is a key opportunity site.

Vacancy — First Floor Units



Example of vacant storefront. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Vacant town-owned property at Depot Park (previously VFW). Photo: FinePoint Associates

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial SF

223,444

Total # of Commercial Units

105

Total # of Commercial Units with First Floor Presence

85

Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units

6

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Real Estate — East Lexington District**

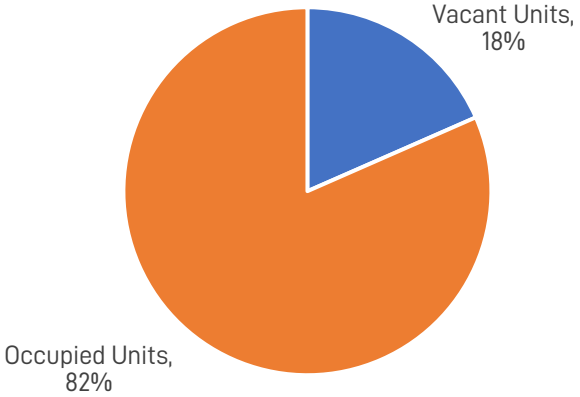
The East Lexington Village Business District is primarily auto-oriented with most of the commercial activity located on the north side of Massachusetts Avenue. The commercial properties predominantly have buildings set back from the street with on-site parking in front. The commercial core is smaller than the other two districts .

East Lexington Village encompasses approximately 76,000 SF of first-floor commercial space.

In total, the district contains approximately 38 commercial units with first floor presence. At the time of the inventory (April 2021), there were 7 vacant commercial units comprising 18% of all first-floor units.

A new commercial unit is being developed at 229 Mass Ave.

Vacancy — First Floor Units



Example of vacant storefronts. Photos: FinePoint Associates

New commercial unit being developed at 229 Mass Ave. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial SF	Total # of Commercial Units	Total # of Commercial Units with First Floor Presence	Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units
76,334	**38**	**38**	**7**

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Real Estate**

The towns could consider implementing additional proactive strategies to address vacant storefronts.

Arlington already has acted proactively to fill vacancies with their Vacant Storefront Bylaw. This and other strategies could be considered to help fill vacancies in the districts.

Opportunity: Communities have implemented a variety of "carrot" and "stick" approaches to reduce vacant storefronts. Examples of successful strategies are described below.

Arlington Vacant Storefront By-law

- Registration of vacant space (> 90 days vacant)
- Fee to register (e.g., $400)
- Fee can be waived if the storefront is activated with art display or other approved temporary use (or meets hardship criteria)
- Fine for not registering (e.g., $100/day)

Taunton Commercial Rent Subsidy Program
(Program rebates the landlord)

Rent subsidy for 2 years for business new to downtown. Must be a for-profit (e.g., $5 PSF up to $5,000 in year 1, $2.50 PSF up to $$2,500 in year 2.

Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program (MVSP)

The program is operated by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development. It requires the municipality submit an application to have the target area be designated as a "Certified Vacant Storefront District." After achieving such a designation, and achieving a commitment of local matching funds, businesses or individuals may apply to the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) for refundable Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) tax credits for leasing and occupying a vacant storefront in that district. (e.g., up to $10,000 in refundable tax credits over a 2-year period).

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Mix — All Districts**

The three districts contain a total of 217 establishments including retail, restaurants, recreation, services, and other entities. For the purposes of this study, we define "establishment" as any non-residential entity.

The table below shows the number of businesses by 2-digit NAICS code (North American Classification System). The table to the right provides business counts for more detailed subcategories relevant to typical downtowns and commercial districts.

The districts are roughly comprised of 20–30% retail; 25–30% eating, entertainment & recreation; and 35–50% services.

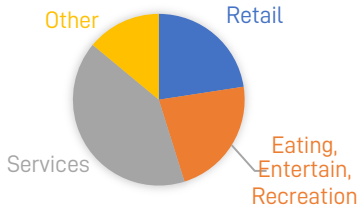
NAICS	Category	AH	BC	EL
11	Agric, Forest, Fish, Hunt	0	0	0
21	Mining	0	0	0
22	Utilities	0	0	0
23	Construction	7	0	0
31-33	Manufacturing	0	1	0
42	Wholesale Trade	1	0	0
44-45	Retail Trade	21	16	10
48-49	Transportation, Warehousing	3	2	1
51	Information	2	1	0
52	Finance and Insurance	4	9	0
53	Real Estate and Leasing	3	2	1
54	Professional, Scientific, Tech.	5	6	0
55	Mgmt. of Companies	0	1	0
56	Admin. Support, Waste Mgmt/Rem.	0	1	0
61	Educational Services	2	1	0
62	Health Care, Social Assist	6	9	2
71	Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	5	6	0
72	Accommodation, Food Services	16	15	9
81	Other Services (exc. Public Admin.)	19	22	8
92	Public Administration	0	0	0
	TOTAL	94	92	31

Abbreviations: AH — Arlington Heights, BC — Bedford Center, EL — East Lexington Village

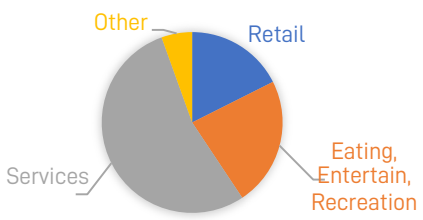
Establishment Type	AH	BC	EL	ALL
Retail	**21**	**16**	**10**	**47**
Motor Vehicle & Parts	0	1	2	3
Furniture & Furnishings	0	0	0	0
Electronics & Appliances	1	1	0	2
Building Mat. & Garden Equip	4	0	0	4
Food & Beverage Stores	7	2	5	14
Health & Personal Care Stores	1	3	0	4
Gasoline Stations	2	1	0	3
Clothing and Accessories	1	1	0	2
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Books	2	3	1	6
General Merchandise Stores	0	1	0	1
Misc. Retail Stores	3	3	2	8
Eating, Entertain, Recreation	**21**	**21**	**9**	**51**
Arts, Entertain, Recreation	5	6	0	11
Accommodation	0	0	0	0
Eating and Drinking Places	16	15	9	40
Services	**39**	**49**	**11**	**99**
Finance & Insurance	4	9	0	13
Real Estate and Rental/Leasing	3	2	1	6
Professional, Scientific, Tech.	5	6	0	11
Educational Services	2	1	0	3
Health Care & Social Assist.	6	9	2	17
Repair & Maintenance	1	2	1	4
Personal Care & Laundry	17	20	7	44
Relig., Grant, Civic, Prof. Orgs.	1	0	0	1
Other	**13**	**6**	**1**	**20**
Agric., Forest, Fishing, Mining	0	0	0	0
Util., Const., Mfg., Wholesale	8	1	0	9
Transport, Postal & Warehouse	3	2	1	6
Information	2	1	0	3
Admin./Sup. & Waste Mgmt	0	2	0	2
Public Administration	0	0	0	0
Total Establishments	**94**	**92**	**31**	**217**
Vacant Commercial Units	**6**	**13**	**7**	**26**
TOTAL Commercial Units	**100**	**105**	**38**	**243**

Note: The Establishment Type Table above shows all business categories that may be present in downtowns/commercial districts. Showing all categories is intended to illustrate those that are represented and not represented

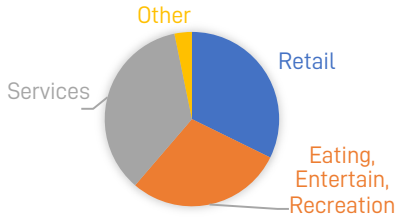
Arlington Heights



Bedford Center



E. Lexington Village



OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Mix — All Districts**

All the districts have a collection of eateries and a few business clusters. Arlington Heights and Bedford Center have "destination/ anchor" businesses.

Anchor establishments and restaurants are important because they are the primary customer attractors in the business districts.

Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover and comparative consumer opportunities. Clusters are important because consumers typically like to accomplish more than one task during a buying trip.

There is not much in the way of entertainment, and there are very limited cultural events that take place in the districts (although there are a few recreation uses e.g., fitness centers.) "Retailtainment" may be more important than ever as we try to bring customers back to the business districts after COVID.

During COVID, customers have become even more comfortable with online shopping, and it will take more to get them back into shopping areas than simply the ability to acquire goods. Even before COVID, millennials had demonstrated a clear preference for experience-related spending, and "retailtainment" was a growing trend.

Opportunity: Encourage more entertainment uses and cultural events in the Business Districts.

Total # of Business Establishments

217

Destination businesses, services, and civic institutions are an important draw for vibrant business districts.

In Arlington Heights, some of the anchors include Wanamaker/True Value, D'agastino, Apothca, Trader Joe's, and Walgreens. Old Schwamb Mill attracts museum visitors and event attendees for activities hosted at the site.

Bedford Center has several anchors such as Whole Foods, Marshalls, and several popular restaurants. In addition, the Town Hall Campus in Bedford, located on the southwest edge of Bedford Center includes Town Hall, the Recreational Department, Public Library, Middle School, and High School. The campus creates a large anchor to the district and significantly benefits businesses in the district. It is also a point of public interest for visitors as the Library has the "Bedford Flag" on display (the oldest militia flag in the US and carried to Concord by the local Minuteman in 1775).

In East Lexington, Wilson Farm is a strong attraction drawing customers to the area.

Destination businesses, attractions, clusters and business mix pertaining to each District are profiled in the following pages.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Mix — Arlington Heights**

Destination Retail

- ❑ Trader Joe's
- ❑ Sports, etc.
- ❑ Penzey's Spices
- ❑ Apothca
- ❑ Walgreens
- ❑ Post Office

Sample of Eateries

- ❑ D'Agostino's Deli
- ❑ Yassou
- ❑ Trattoria Nina
- ❑ The Roasted Granola
- ❑ Abbott's Frozen Custard

Other Attractions

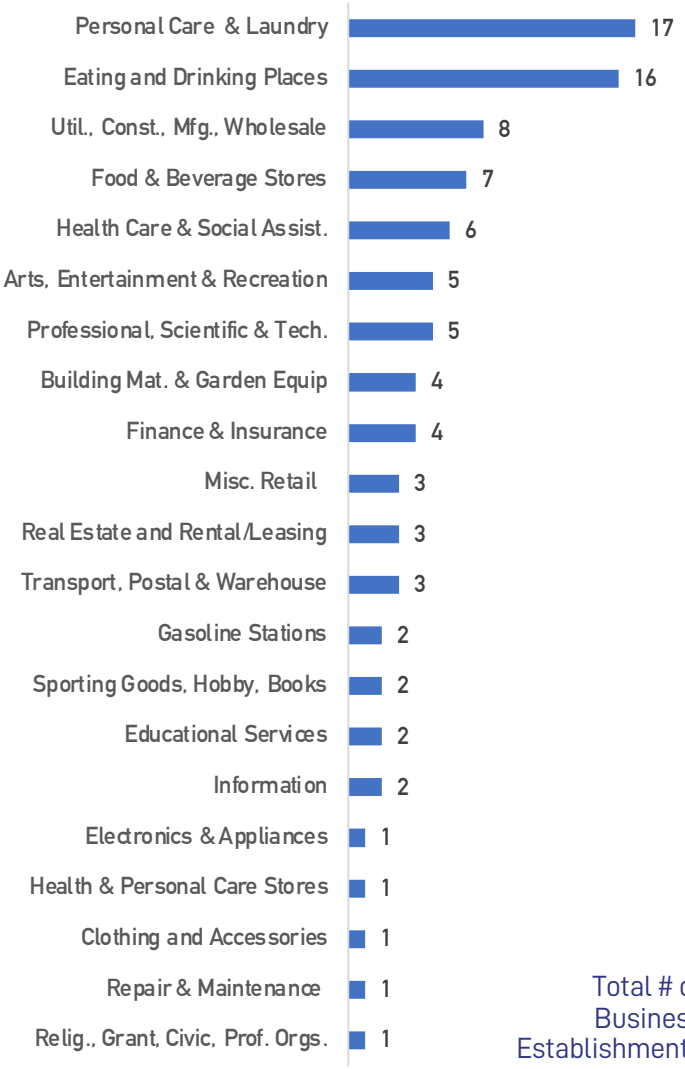
- ❑ Minuteman Bikeway
- ❑ Old Schwamb Mill

Business Clusters*

- ❑ Eating & Drinking Places
- ❑ Recreation & Fitness
- ❑ Groceries, Liquor, Specialty Food
- ❑ Home Improvement/Maintenance
- ❑ Hair, Nails and Spa Services

**Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.*

Examples of businesses in the District. Photo: FinePoint Associates



Total # of Business Establishments

94

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Mix — Arlington Heights**

New Business Development in Arlington Heights

Vacant space at key location, site of Heights Pub — Before.
Photo: FinePoint Associates

Heights Pub – After.
Photo: FinePoint Associates

Site of two new eateries. Photo: FinePoint Associates

A few new businesses have recently located in Arlington Heights, including The Heights Pub and 2 new restaurants that will be sharing space.

In addition, the development of a boutique hotel with a restaurant is currently being planned.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Mix — Bedford Center**

Destination Retail

- ❑ Whole Foods
- ❑ Marshalls
- ❑ Learning Express
- ❑ CVS
- ❑ Post Office

Sample of Eateries

- ❑ Red Heat Tavern
- ❑ Posto
- ❑ Ginger Japanese
- ❑ Ken's Pub
- ❑ B. Good
- ❑ Starbucks

Other Attractions

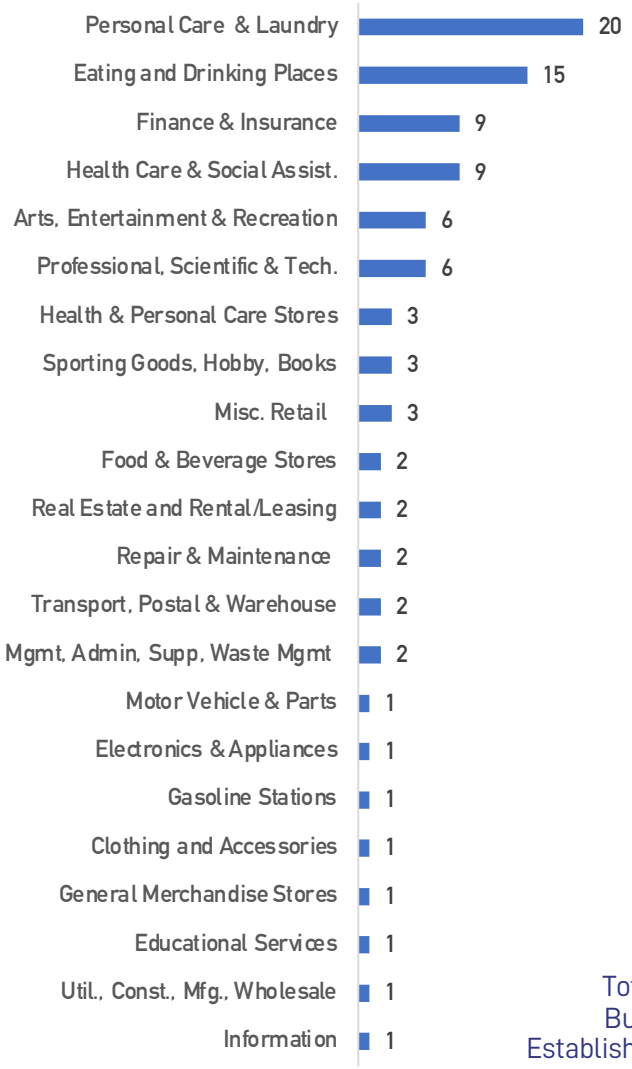
- ❑ Minuteman Bikeway
- ❑ Depot Park
- ❑ Bedford Common
- ❑ Veteran's Memorial Park
- ❑ Bedford Historical Museum (closed until new location)

Business Clusters*

- ❑ Eating & Drinking Places
- ❑ Groceries & Liquor
- ❑ Recreation & Fitness
- ❑ Hair, Nails and Spa Services

**Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.*

Examples of businesses in the District. Photos: FinePoint Associates



Total # of Business Establishments

92

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Mix — E. Lexington Village**

Destination Retail
- ❑ Wilson Farm
- ❑ Berman's Liquor

Sample of Eateries
- ❑ Taipei Gourmet
- ❑ Nick's Place
- ❑ Dunkin' Donuts
- ❑ Ixtapa Mexican Grill
- ❑ Wicked Bagel
- ❑ Great Harvest Bread Company

Other Attractions
- ❑ Minuteman Bikeway
- ❑ Wilson Farm
- ❑ Bow Street Park

Business Clusters*
- ❑ Eating & Drinking Places
- ❑ Convenience & Liquor
- ❑ Auto Sales, Parts & Service

**Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.*

Examples of businesses in the District. Photos: FinePoint Associates

Total # of Business Establishments

31

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Impacts of COVID — All Districts**

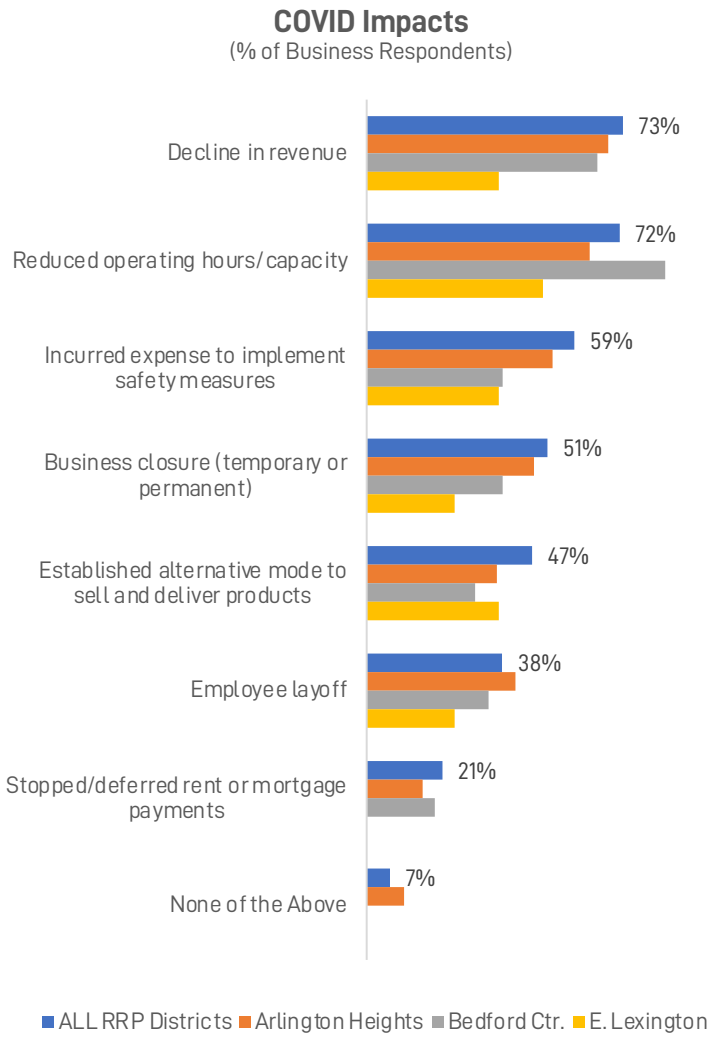
As part of the RRP Program, we conducted a business survey during March/April 2021 — the impact of COVID-19 on businesses was a major topic. Fifty-three (53) business responded from the three target Business Districts.

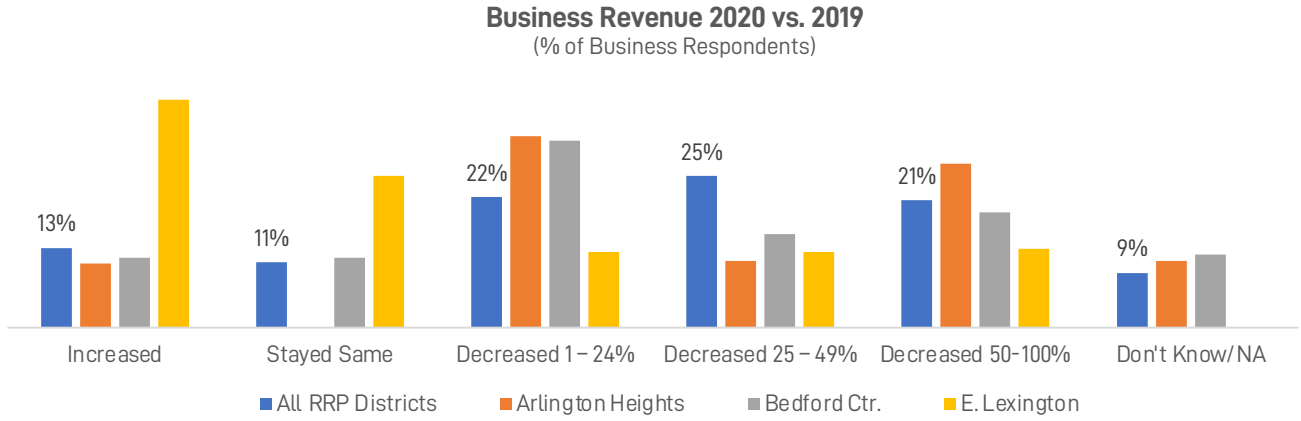
Between 89–100% of businesses in the three districts reported being impacted by COVID-19. The most frequently cited negative impacts were decreased operating hours, decline in revenue, and unplanned expenses.

COVID-19 impacts were widespread in all three districts. In terms of lost revenue, Arlington Heights was hit the hardest followed closely by Bedford Center. The least impacted was East Lexington Village due to the preponderance of necessity establishments (i.e., take-out food, groceries, and liquor).

Seventy-two per cent (72%) of all RRP businesses were forced to operate at reduced capacity or hours due to COVID. This rate was 63% in Arlington Heights, 85% in Bedford Center, and 50% in E. Lexington. At the time of the survey (March/April 2021), at least half of the businesses in the three districts were still not back to operating at full hours (63% in Arlington Heights, 73% in Bedford Center, and 50% in E. Lexington).

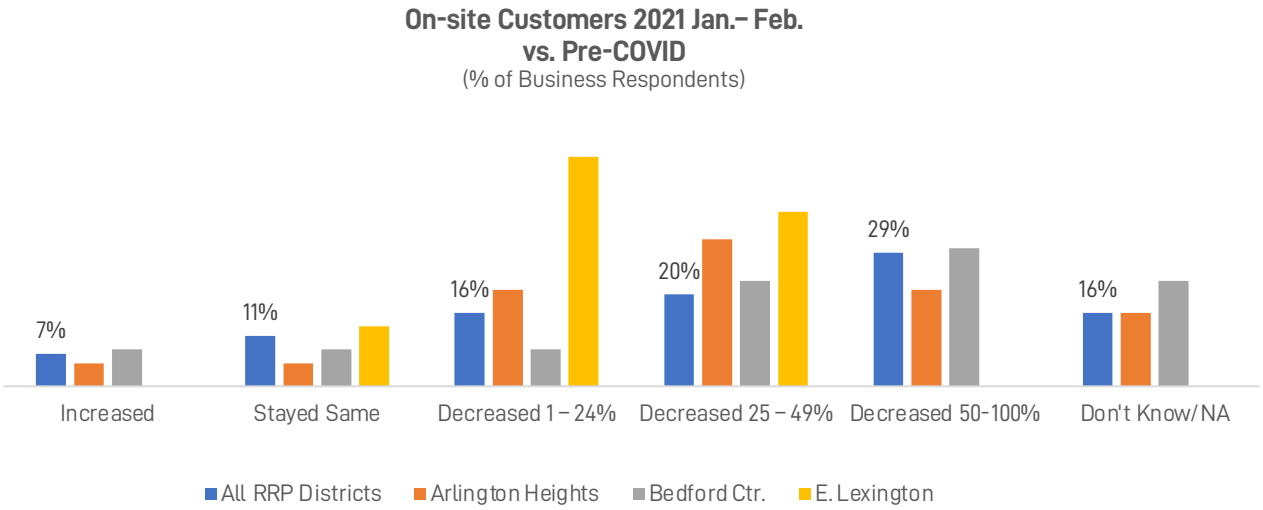
Year-over-year Revenue Loss — Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of business in all RRP Districts suffered a year-over-year revenue loss in 2020 due to COVID-19. This was the case for 70% of businesses in Arlington Heights, 65% in Bedford Center, and 38% in E. Lexington. (The lower impact on E. Lexington is likely due to the fact that a majority of East Lexington shops sell essentials such as take-out food, groceries, and liquor).





OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Impacts of COVID — All Districts**



Decline in Foot Traffic — Decline in foot traffic is an impact experienced in all three districts. A total of 69% of businesses in the three districts indicated a reduction in foot traffic in January and February 2021 compared to the year before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.

On a positive note, **many businesses said they established an alternative mode to sell or deliver their goods and services.**

The Roasted Granola, in Arlington Heights, is an example of a retailer that sells online and at their bricks and mortar location. The term for this is omni-channel retailing, which has helped businesses weather the impacts of COVID.

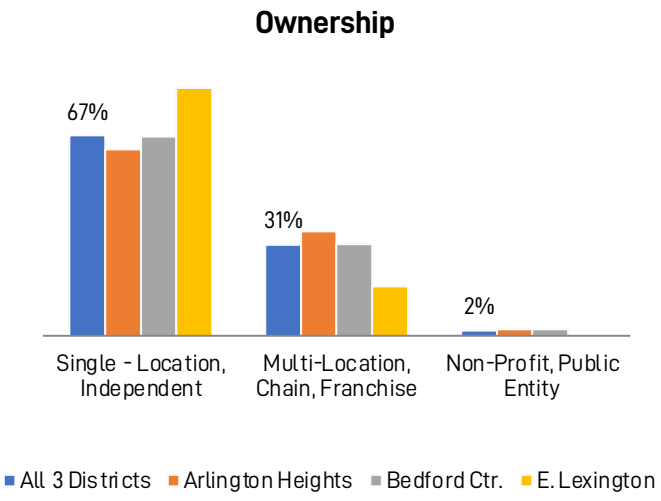
Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Characteristics — All Districts**

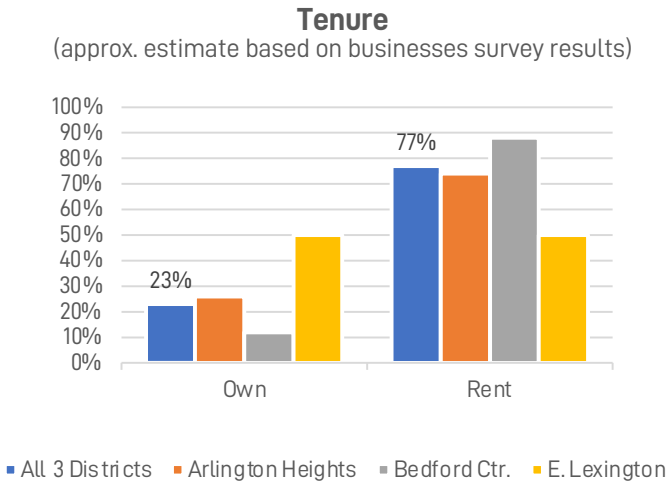
Most of the establishments (67%) in the three districts are independently owned, single-location businesses.

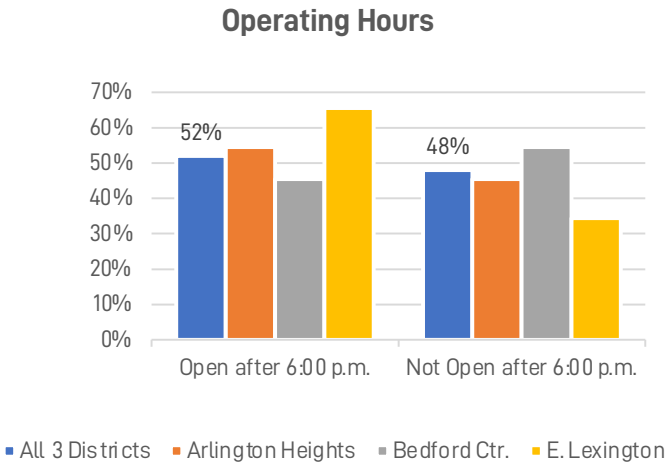
Of the 217 establishments in the three districts, approximately 67% are independent single-location enterprises. National or regional multi-location businesses, chains, and franchises comprise about 31% of the establishments (e.g., Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Walgreens, Dunkin' Donuts, Starbucks, etc.). Approximately 2% of the establishments are public entities and nonprofits .

Business activity declines in the evening hours. Many of the restaurants and a few retailers are open in the evening. However, approximately half of the businesses (48%) are not open past 6:00 p.m.

Most businesses rent their space. Results of our recent business survey suggests that approximately three-quarters of the businesses rent, rather than own, the space where they operate.







Independent, Single-location Businesses

67%

Open after 6:00 p.m.

52%

Rent their Business Space (est. based on survey results)

77%

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Input**

What Business Owners Had to Say. . .

Satisfaction with Business District

When asked about their satisfaction pertaining to various elements of their business districts, the **majority of businesses were neutral or satisfied**. The most negative responses are highlighted below.

Arlington Heights

Thirty-two per cent (32%) were "Dissatisfied" or "Very Dissatisfied" with the **Condition of Private Buildings, Façades and Storefronts.**

E. Lexington

Thirty-eight per cent (38%) were "Dissatisfied" or "Very Dissatisfied" with the **Condition of Public Spaces, Streets and Sidewalks.**

Bedford Center

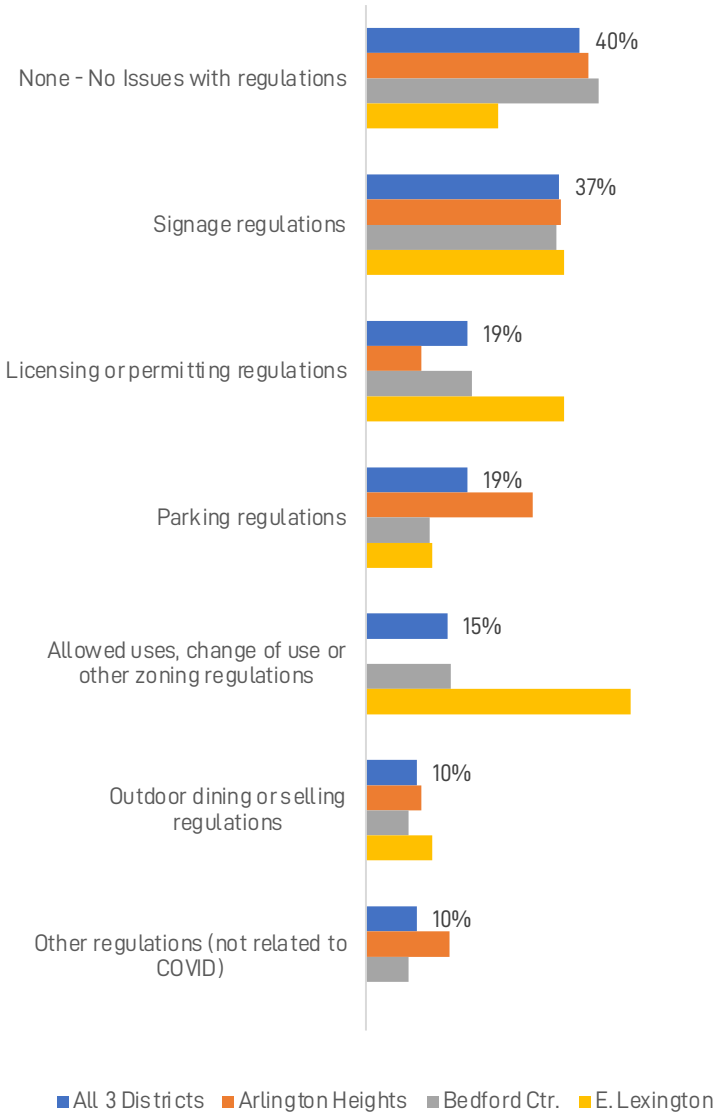
Dissatisfaction rates were low in all surveyed categories.

Regulations

Sixty per cent (60%) of businesses indicated that some aspect of the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation. Signage regulations were cited most frequently (by 37% of businesses).

Signage regulations were cited as an obstacle by more than one-third of the businesses in all three districts.

Regulations that Pose an Obstacle
(Results from Business Survey)



A business survey was conducted in March/April 2021 as part of the RRP Program. Fifty-three (53) businesses responded. The data reported on this page are based on results from that survey.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Input — All 3 Districts**

What Business Owners Had to Say. . .

Businesses indicated the need for a long list of improvements in the three districts (as illustrated in the chart below).

The top three strategies rated as most important to businesses include:

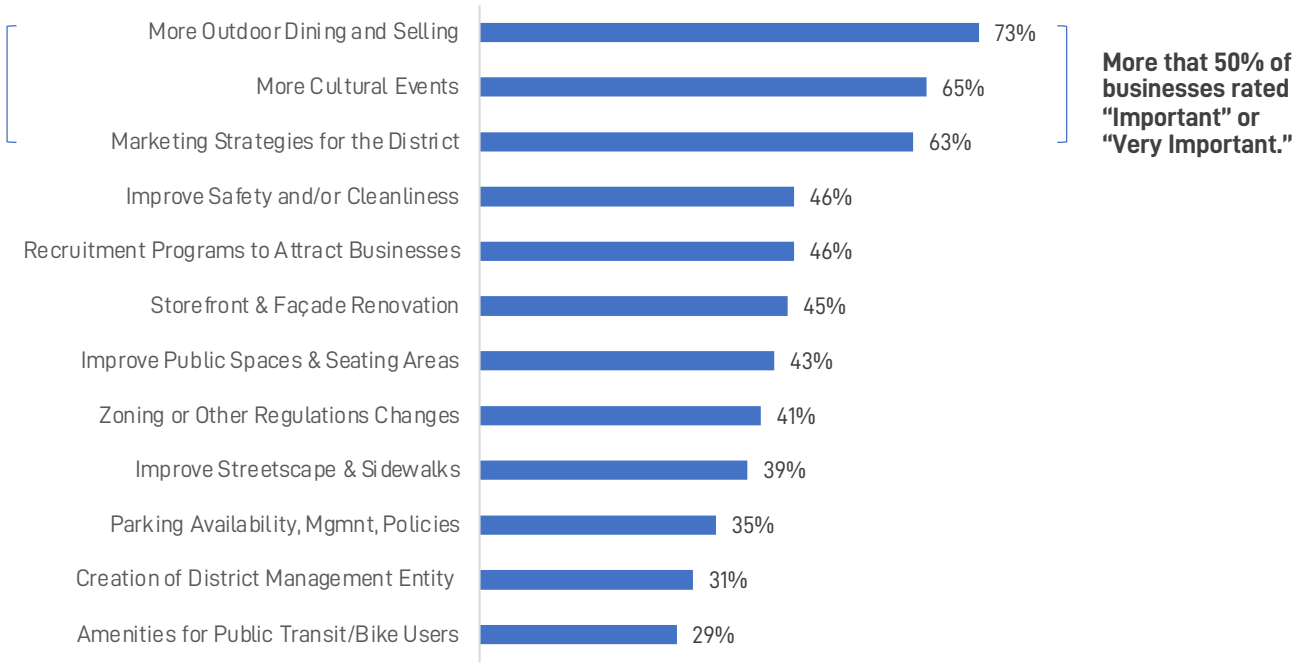
1) More Outdoor Dining & Selling Opportunities,
2) More Cultural Events, and
3) Marketing Strategies for the District.

These results represent the cumulative responses from all three districts. The results for each individual district are presented in the following pages.

According to the survey results, businesses in Arlington Heights and E. Lexington feel that more strategies are important while the the businesses in Bedford Center expressed the need for fewer strategies.

Nonetheless, there was a great deal of agreement on the top priorities.

Strategies Rated as "Important" or "Very Important" by Businesses



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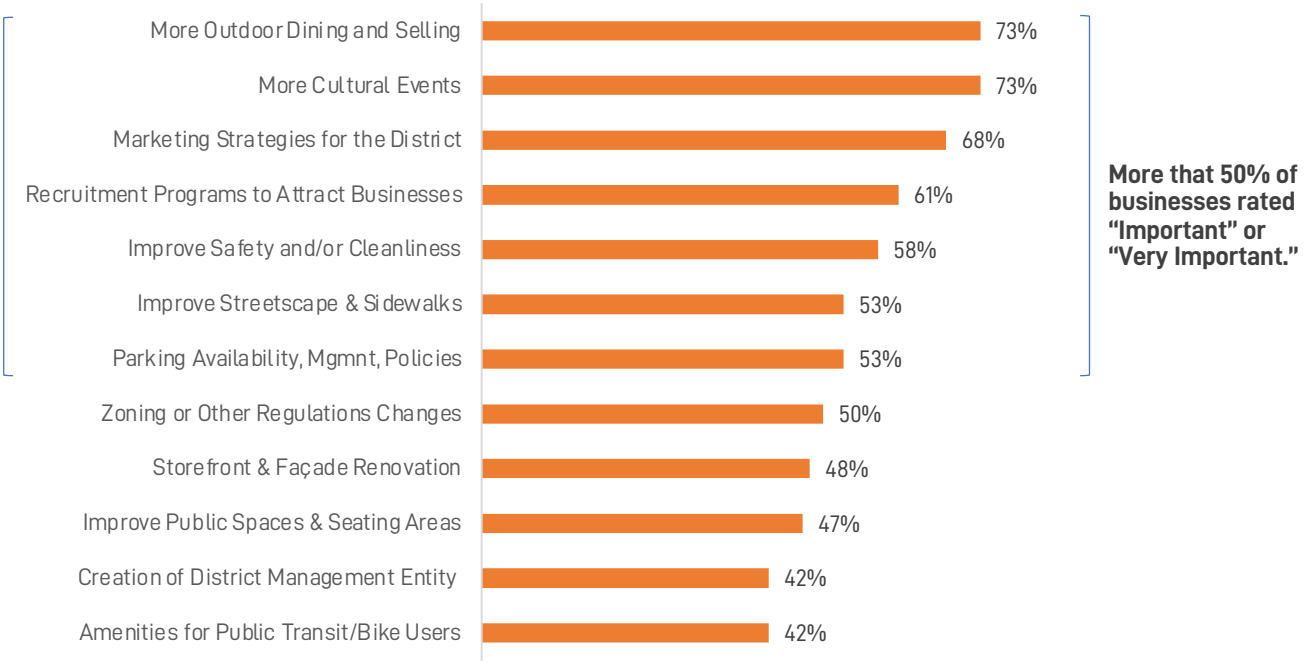
Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Input — Arlington Heights**

What Business Owners Had to Say. . .

Businesses in Arlington Heights indicated the need for a long list of improvements in the district (as illustrated in the chart below). **The top three strategies rated as most important to businesses include:**

1) More Outdoor Dining & Selling Opportunities,
2) More Cultural Events, and
3) Marketing Strategies for the District.

Strategies Rated as "Important" or "Very Important" by Businesses



A business survey was conducted in March/April 2021 as part of the RRP Program. Fifty-three (53) businesses responded. The data reported on this page are based on results from that survey.

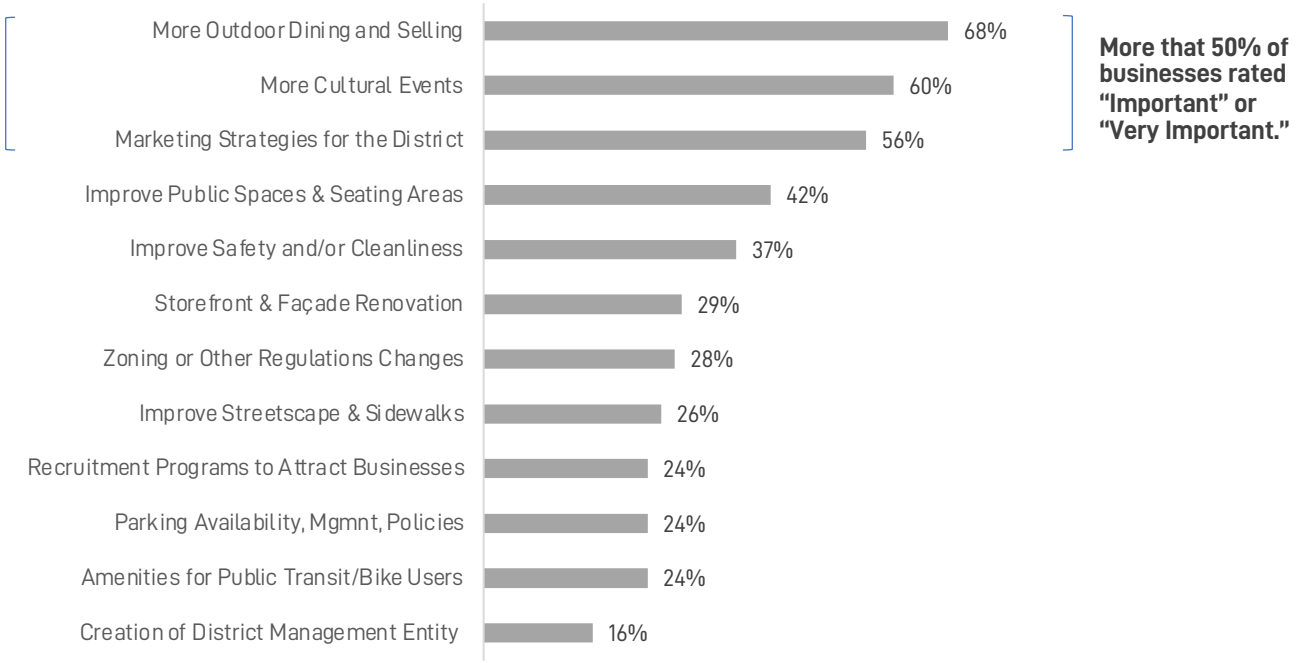
Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Input — Bedford Center**

What Business Owners Had to Say. . .

Businesses in Bedford Center indicated the need for a long list of improvements in the district (as illustrated in the chart below). **The top three strategies rated as most important to businesses include:**

1) More Outdoor Dining & Selling Opportunities,
2) More Cultural Events, and
3) Marketing Strategies for the District.

Strategies Rated as "Important" or "Very Important" by Businesses



A business survey was conducted in March/April 2021 as part of the RRP Program. Fifty-three (53) businesses responded. The data reported on this page are based on results from that survey.

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

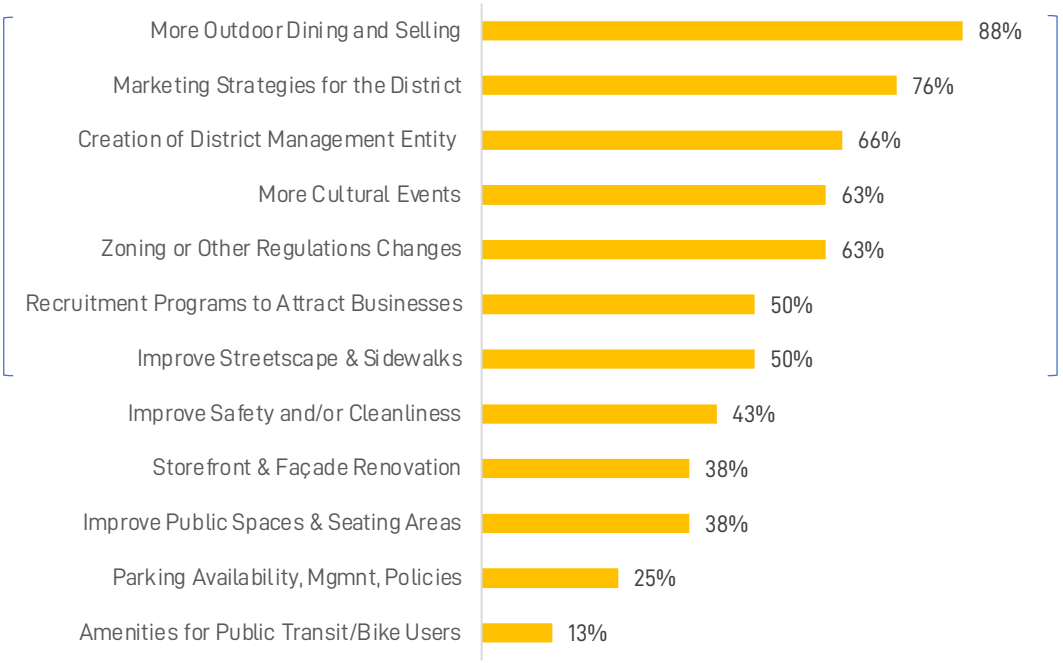
Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Input — E. Lexington Village**

What Business Owners Had to Say. . .

Businesses in E. Lexington Village indicated the need for a long list of improvements in the district (as illustrated in the chart below). **The top three strategies rated as most important to businesses include:**

1) More Outdoor Dining & Selling Opportunities,
2) Marketing Strategies for the District, and
3) Creation of a District Management Entity

Strategies Rated as "Important" or "Very Important" by Businesses



More that 50% of businesses rated "Important" or Very Important."

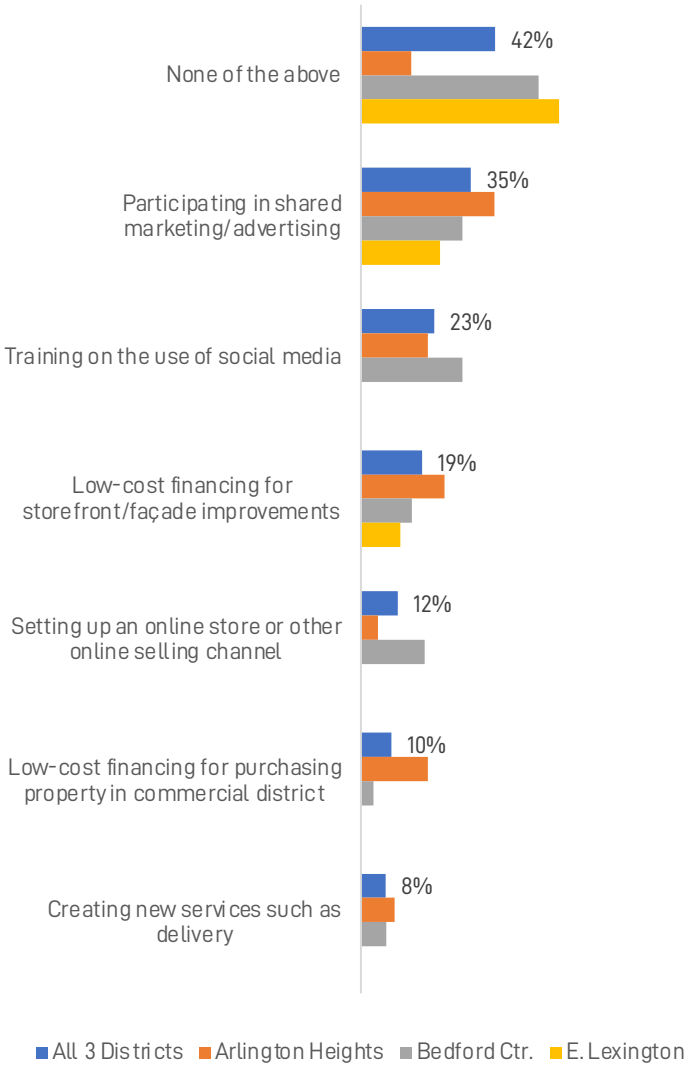
A business survey was conducted in March/April 2021 as part of the RRP Program. Fifty-three (53) businesses responded. The data reported on this page are based on results from that survey.

Highlights of the Business Environment: **Business Input**

What Business Owners Had to Say. . .

When asked about their interest in receiving various types of assistance, businesses most frequently expressed interest in Shared Marketing/Advertising (35% of the all the business survey respondents).

Interest in Receiving Assistance



A business survey was conducted in March/April 2021 as part of the RRP Program. Fifty-three (53) businesses responded. The data reported on this page are based on results from that survey.

Market Environment:

Customer Base and Marketing

CUSTOMER BASE

Key Findings: Customer Base and Marketing

CUSTOMER BASE

The "Resident Market Segments" for all three districts are well-educated and affluent, older than the state average, and more likely to have children in the household in Lexington and Bedford, and less likely in Arlington.

Arlington Heights has the densest trade area population with over 28,000 potential customers located within a 5-minute drive and 108,000 within 10 minutes. East Lexington Village has over 15,000 potential customers located within a 5-minute drive and 79,000 within 10 minutes. Bedford Center has the least dense trade area with 6,000 potential customers within a 5-minute drive and 29,000 within 10 minutes.

CUSTOMER BASE

Sales leakage may point to opportunities. Arlington and Lexington residents spend over $1.2 billion in stores and restaurants outside their towns each year, and Bedford residents spend over $458 million outside.

"Sales leakage" in this case is the difference between the total amount that residents spend at stores and restaurants annually (not including automobiles and gas), and the amount that local businesses generate in sales.

CUSTOMER BASE

The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, etc., appears to be largely untapped despite the very close proximity.

According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway **averages 3,000 daily users**. This represents a significant market opportunity, but it appears to be largely untapped. We completed a user analysis where we counted Bikeway users and observed their turn-off behavior in the three districts. Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts.

CUSTOMER BASE

A proactive strategy could be implemented to attract a higher percentage of Bikeway users into the business districts.

The primary pillars of the strategy would be to:

1. Help them find the districts and let them know what is available (access, wayfinding, and business information).
2. Make them comfortable when they get there (amenities).
3. Let them know they are welcome and wanted (bike-friendly business district practices).
4. Give them a reason to come and come back (promotion and events).

CUSTOMER BASE

All three communities have employees located nearby who add to the potential "Employee Market Segment" opportunity.

Bedford has more employees than it has residents, so clearly, this is a very important market segment.

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base

The business districts have opportunities to attract three principal market segments: 1) Residents living in the surrounding area, 2) Minuteman Bikeway commuters and recreational users, and 3) Employees who work in the community.

The Minuteman Bikeway market segment appears to be largely untapped despite the very close proximity.

Resident Market Segment

Due to their proximity to the districts, the surrounding residents represent potential customers for retail goods, services, and restaurants. The distance that customers are willing to travel is dependent on the quality of the offerings, convenience, and competition. The ability of customers to accomplish several tasks in one trip is also a factor.

2021 Estimates	Town Population	Residents within 5-Minute Drive Time	Residents within 10-Minute Drive Time
Arlington Heights	45,277	28,019	108,457
Bedford Center	14,646	6,219	29,542
E. Lexington Village	33,388	15,893	79,322

The residents living in the areas surrounding the three districts are **well-educated and affluent**. Compared to the state overall, **residents are older**, more likely to have children living in the household in Lexington and Bedford, and less likely in Arlington. A high percentage of households (>90%) **have access to private vehicles** for acquiring goods and services. All three communities have a higher-than-average percentage of **Asian residents;** the town of Lexington is comprised of 31% Asian residents.

Demographic and market analysis information for each of the three districts is presented in the following pages.

Potential Customers for the Districts

Resident Market Segment

- People Living in the Surrounding Area

Non-resident Market Segments

- Minuteman Bikeway Users
- Employees who Work in the Community
- Visitors Coming to Attractions or Events

Minuteman Bikeway Users

Thousands of people use the Minuteman Bikeway for recreation as well as transportation. It is a popular commuting route into Boston and terminates at the Alewife T-Station. It is also an extremely well-used recreational trail for casual cyclers, joggers, and strollers, in addition to more serious bikers. The Bikeway averages **3,000 daily users** at Arlington Center.

This presents a significant market opportunity. Recreational cycling and family outings often include stops for food, coffee, or ice cream. Commuters may be enticed to pick up groceries or grab takeout food on their way home. As active transportation increases in popularity, users are looking for ways to accomplish more day-to-day errands by bike. Plus, if Bikeway users become more aware of the offerings in each business district, they are more likely to patronize the businesses even when their shopping or dining trip does not include the Bikeway.

Employees

Employees of area businesses represent a market opportunity for meal and snack purchases as well as convenience goods, services and more, purchased before, during, and after work hours.

Visitors

Visitors to the area, drawn to attractions and events that bring them within proximity of a commercial center, can create potential opportunities for area restaurants, retailers, entertainment venues, and service providers. Currently, there are a few events and attractions that might generate minor visitor traffic.

How do local residents benefit when businesses attract non-resident customers?

- Makes it feasible to have a larger variety of shops, restaurants, and entertainment options that would not be supported by resident customers alone.

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Demographics — Arlington Heights**

The major potential customer base for businesses located in the Arlington Heights District is the surrounding residential population.

The tables show data for potential trade areas, including the town and areas equivalent to a 5-minute and 10-minute drive time from the District Study Area.

Arlington residents are **well-educated and affluent**. The median household **income is 1.4 times** that of Massachusetts, overall. Compared to the statewide population, residents are slightly older, **slightly less likely to have children** in the household, and about as likely to own their home. Approximately 90% of the households have access to a private vehicle for acquiring goods and services.

The population is less diverse overall; however, there is a significantly **high percentage of Asian residents** (13% compared to 7% statewide).

Arlington Population	TA5 Population	TA10 Population
45,277	28,019	108,457
Arlington Households	**TA5 Households**	**TA10 Households**
20,144	11,484	44,899

2021 Estimates	Town of Arlington	TA5 5-Minute Drive Time	TA10 10-Minute Drive Time	MA
Income, Education & Age				
Median Household Income	$121,601	$136,475	$136,544	$86,645
Par Capita Income	$76,712	$81,237	$81,296	$48,708
Residents ≥25 with Bachelor's Degree+	73%	73%	74%	44%
Median Age	43.1	44.3	43.6	40.5
Households				
Average Household Size	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.5
Households with Children <18	28%	32%	31%	31%
Home Ownership	61%	74%	67%	62%
Household Vehicle Ownership	90%	92%	92%	89%
Avg. Vehicles per Household	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6
Race & Ethnicity				
White Alone	79%	78%	75%	75%
Black/African American Alone	3%	3%	3%	8%
Asian Alone	13%	15%	17%	7%
Other Race Alone/More than 1 Race	5%	5%	5%	9%
Hispanic	5%	4%	5%	13%

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Expenditures and Sales Leakage — Arlington Heights**

Sales leakage (pertaining to the resident market segment) may point to opportunities for District businesses.

Town residents spend
$1.3 billion
per year at stores & restaurants

More than
$683 million
is spent outside each year

52% $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $

TA5 residents spend
$846 million
per year at stores & restaurants

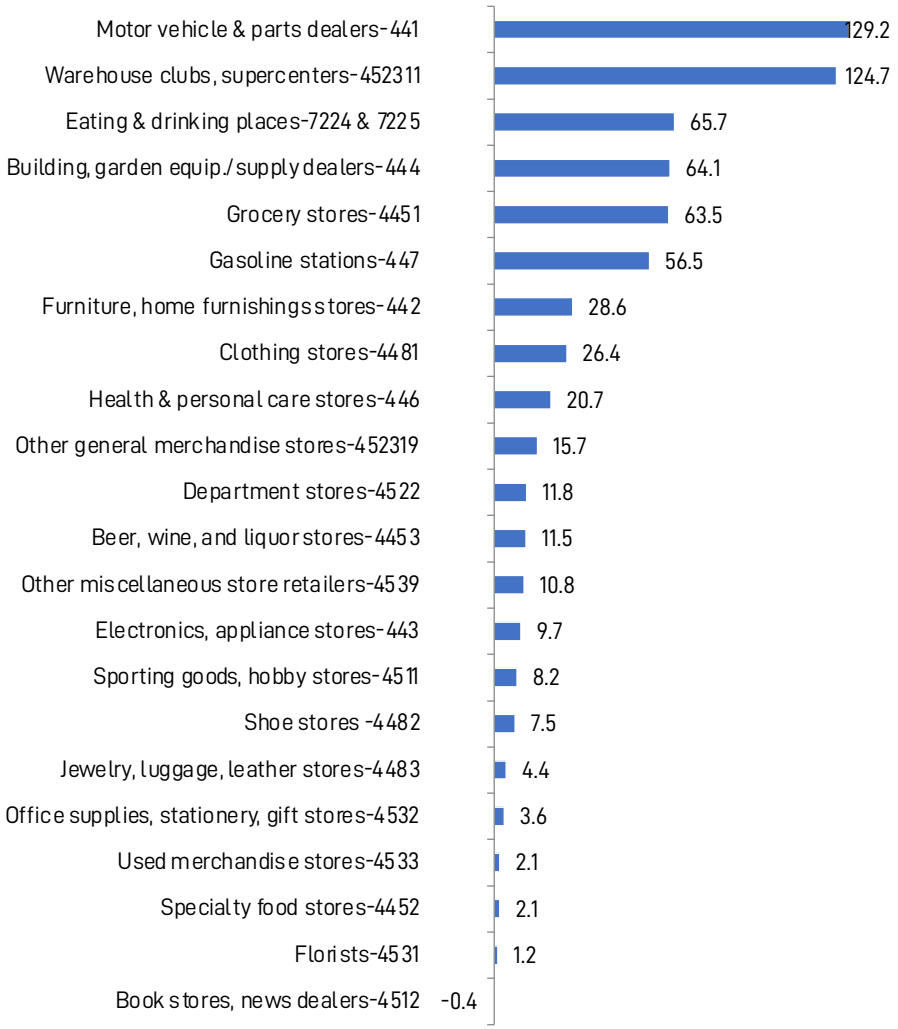
More than
$402 million
is spent outside each year

48% $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $

Town residents spend at least
$65.7 million
outside each year
at eating & drinking places

TA5 residents spend at least
$48.2 million
outside each year
at eating & drinking places

Estimated Retail & Restaurant Demand Compared to Business Sales (Town of Arlington)



CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Demographics — Bedford Center**

The major potential customer base for businesses located in the Bedford Center District is the surrounding residential population.

The tables show data for potential trade areas, including the town and areas equivalent to a 5-minute and 10-minute drive time from the District Study Area.

Bedford residents are **well-educated and affluent**. The median household **income is close to 1.7 times** that of Massachusetts, overall. Compared to the statewide population, residents are older, **slightly more likely to have children** in the household and **own their home**. Approximately 96% of the households have access to a private vehicle for acquiring goods and services.

The population is less diverse overall, although there is a significantly **high percentage of Asian residents** (15% compared to 7% statewide).

Bedford Population	TA5 Population	TA10 Population
14,646	6,219	29,542
Bedford Households	**TA5 Households**	**TA10 Households**
5,700	2,351	11,175

2021 Estimates	Town of Bedford	TA5 5-Minute Drive Time	TA10 10-Minute Drive Time	MA
Income, Education & Age				
Median Household Income	$145,172	$144,573	$148,645	$86,645
Par Capita Income	$83,062	$79,077	$82,054	$48,708
Residents ≥25 with Bachelor's Degree+	72%	72%	71%	44%
Median Age	45.2	46.3	43.7	40.5
Households				
Average Household Size	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5
Households with Children <18	34%	34%	36%	31%
Home Ownership	71%	72%	75%	62%
Household Vehicle Ownership	96%	95%	96%	89%
Avg. Vehicles per Household	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.6
Race & Ethnicity				
White Alone	78%	79%	74%	75%
Black/African American Alone	3%	3%	3%	8%
Asian Alone	15%	14%	19%	7%
Other Race Alone/More than 1 Race	4%	4%	4%	9%
Hispanic	4%	3%	4%	13%

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Expenditures and Sales Leakage — Bedford Center**

Sales leakage (pertaining to the resident market segment) may point to opportunities for District businesses.

Town residents spend
$458 million
per year at stores & restaurants

More than
$183 million
is spent outside each year

40% $$$$$$$$$$

TA10 residents spend
$914 million
per year at stores & restaurants

More than
$472 million
is spent outside each year

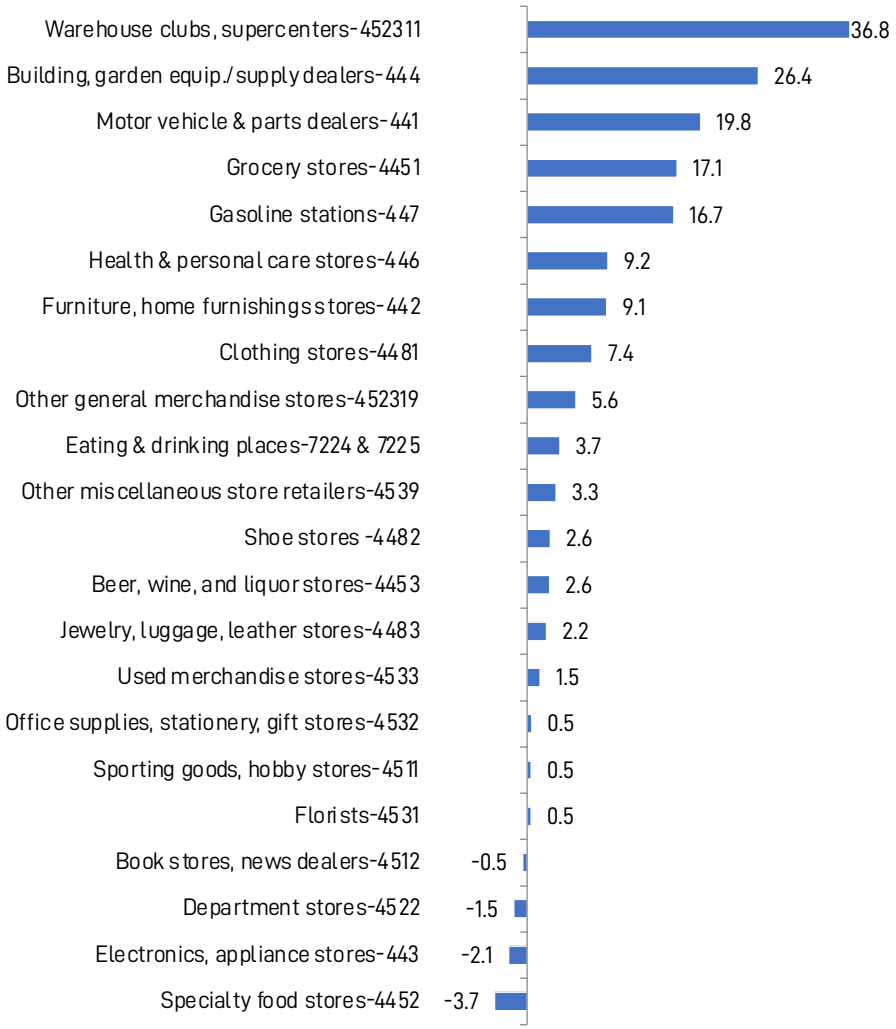
52% $$$$$$$$$$

Town residents spend at least
$3.4 million
outside each year
at eating & drinking places

TA10 residents spend at least
$36.4 million
outside each year
at eating & drinking places

Note: Bedford Center has several large retailers and clearly draws from beyond a 5-minute drive time. Given this and the lower population density, sales leakage for TA10 (10-minute drive time) is shown as opposed to TA5 as shown for the other two communities.

Estimated Retail & Restaurant Demand Compared to Business Sales (Town of Bedford)



CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Demographics — E. Lexington Village**

The major potential customer base for businesses located in the E. Lexington Village District is the surrounding residential population.

The tables show data for potential trade areas, including the town and areas equivalent to a 5-minute and 10-minute drive time from the District Study Area.

Lexington residents are **well-educated and affluent**. The median household **income is more than double** that of Massachusetts, overall. Compared to the statewide population, residents are older, **more likely to have children** in the household and own their home. Approximately 96% of the households have access to a private vehicle for acquiring goods and services.

Compared to the state overall, the population is comprised of a very **high percentage of Asian residents** (31% compared to 7% statewide).

Lexington Population	TA5 Population	TA10 Population
33,388	15,893	79,322
Lexington Households	**TA5 Households**	**TA10 Households**
12,285	6,643	32,111

2021 Estimates	Town of Lexington	TA5 5-Minute Drive Time	TA10 10-Minute Drive Time	MA
Income, Education & Age				
Median Household Income	$187,036	$129,915	$143,025	$86,645
Par Capita Income	$93,954	$81,563	$83,769	$48,708
Residents ≥25 with Bachelor's Degree+	83%	74%	74%	44%
Median Age	46.7	44.7	44.9	40.5
Households				
Average Household Size	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.5
Households with Children <18	39%	32%	32%	31%
Home Ownership	79%	73%	73%	62%
Household Vehicle Ownership	96%	91%	93%	89%
Avg. Vehicles per Household	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.6
Race & Ethnicity				
White Alone	63%	77%	75%	75%
Black/African American Alone	2%	3%	2%	8%
Asian Alone	31%	15%	18%	7%
Other Race Alone/More than 1 Race	5%	5%	5%	9%
Hispanic	3%	4%	4%	13%

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Expenditures and Sales Leakage — E. Lexington Village**

Sales leakage (pertaining to the resident market segment) may point to opportunities for District businesses.

Town residents spend
$1.2 billion
per year at stores & restaurants

More than
$654 million
is spent outside each year

57% $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $

TA5 residents spend
$487 million
per year at stores & restaurants

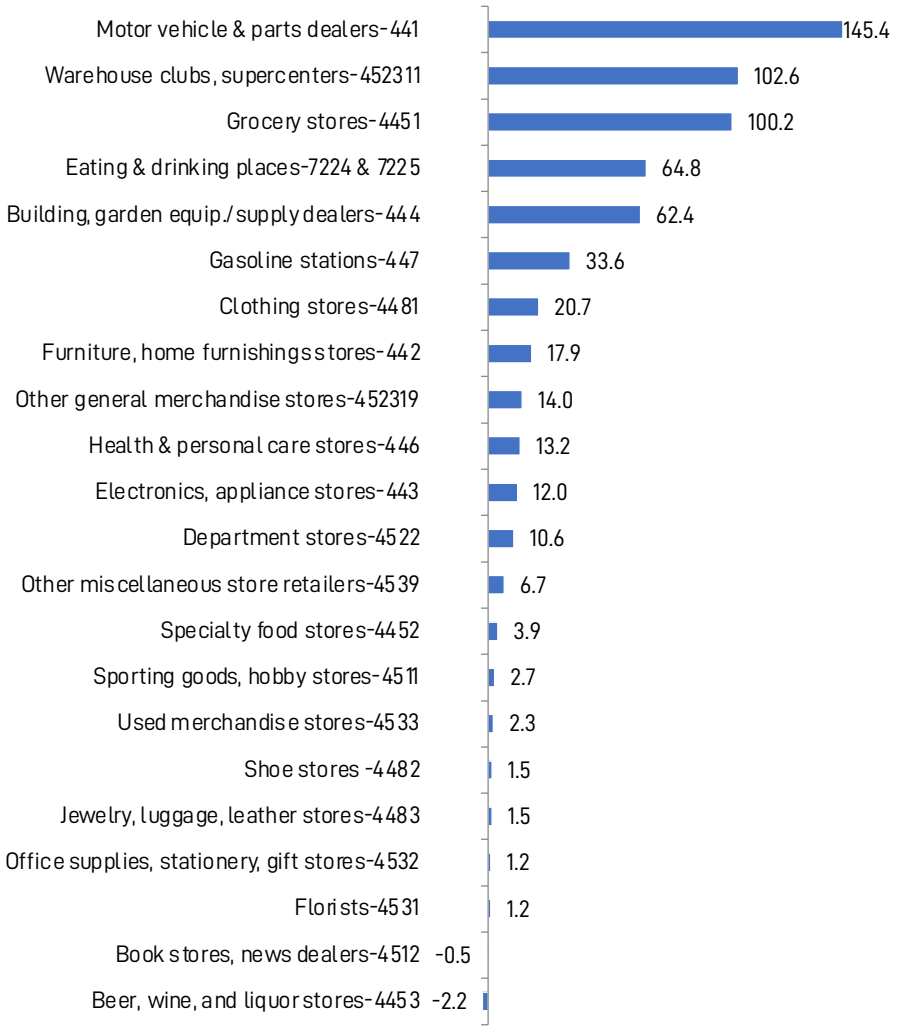
More than
$145 million
is spent outside each year

30% $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $ $

Town residents spend at least
$64.8 million
outside each year
at eating & drinking places

TA5 residents spend at least
$20.8 million
outside each year
at eating & drinking places

Estimated Retail & Restaurant Demand Compared to Business Sales (Town of Lexington)



CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Non-Resident Market Segments**

The **Minuteman Bikeway** is a 10-mile paved multi-use rail trail that runs from Bedford to Alewife station, passing through the towns of Lexington and Arlington along the way.

The Bikeway runs directly behind the businesses on Mass Ave in the Arlington Heights and E. Lexington Village Districts. In Bedford, the Bikeway terminates at Depot Park where users can connect to the Narrow Gauge Trail and continue to the commercial core of Bedford Center.

According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway **averages 3,000 daily users** (cyclists, pedestrians, etc.). This represents a significant market opportunity.

The graphic on the following page illustrates the volume and type of users during a one-hour count on a Saturday in Spring (June 5, 2021).

During the one-hour count, we observed a total of 301 users at the Arlington Heights location, 216 users at the Bedford Depot Park location, and 309 users at the Bow Street location in E. Lexington.

Aside from tracking the user type (e.g., casual biker, hardcore biker, kid biker, walker, jogger, skateboarder, etc.), we also counted how many people exited the Bikeway at locations near the business districts.

In Arlington Heights, out of the **301 Bikeway users, only 13 (4%) got off the trail at Park Ave.**

In Bedford, there were **216 users on the Bikeway, and only 22 users entered the Narrow Gauge Trail.** These users were not all from the Minuteman Bikeway; some originated from other locales in Bedford.

In E. Lexington, out of **309 Bikeway users, only 16 (5%) got off the trail at Bow Street**.

Minuteman Bikeway averages
3,000 Daily Users
in Arlington Center

"Today, the Minuteman Bikeway is one of the most popular and successful rail trails in the United States, enjoyed for both healthy recreation and transportation.

Built by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on an inactive railroad right-of-way, the Minuteman Bikeway has become a treasured regional resource, used by local residents and visitors from near and far. Connecting to the Alewife "T" Station in Cambridge, the bikeway provides an easy way for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel to and from subway and bus lines, serving to reduce automobile traffic in the area.

The bikeway is collectively managed and maintained by the four communities it passes through: Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, and Cambridge."

Source: http://minutemanbikeway.org

Bikers at the end of the Minuteman Bikeway, Depot Park, Bedford. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Minuteman Bikeway Users: One Hour Count

Location	Bikers – Casual and Hardcore	Kid Bikers/Riders	Joggers	Walkers	Strollers	Skaters/ Boarders
Arlington Park Ave Total **301** Exiting **13**	**231**	**16**	**10**	**34**	**5**	**5**
Bedford Railroad Ave Total **216** Entering Narrow Gauge **22**	**188**	**11**	**2**	**15**	**0**	**4**
E. Lexington Bow Street Total **309** Exiting **16**	**239**	**21**	**8**	**32**	**3**	**6**

Source: FinePoint Associates; Count taken Saturday, June 5, 2021

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Non-Resident Market Segments**

Employees

Employees of area businesses represent a market opportunity for meal and snack purchases as well as convenience goods, services and more, purchased before, during, and after work hours.

All three communities have a significant number of employees that add to the potential market opportunity. Bedford has more employees than it has residents so clearly, this is a very important market segment.

During COVID, many employees have been working remotely. This has impacted the volume of customers in the area on a daily basis. **If the "remote working" trend continues, the business districts may be negatively impacted, particularly in restaurant and retail sectors.** On the other hand, if more neighborhood residents work from home, it might trigger increased spending in their local business districts.

Visitors Coming to Attractions or Events

Visitors to the area, drawn to attractions and events that bring them within proximity of a commercial center, can create potential opportunities for area restaurants, retailers, entertainment venues, and service providers.

Currently, there are a few events and attractions that might generate minor visitor traffic.

Opportunity: More cultural events in the Districts could help develop a "relationship" between residents and the Districts as a place for socializing that could extend to spending. Cultural events can also bring .visitors from outside the resident trade area.

Community	Number of Employees
Arlington	10,012
Bedford	19,132
Lexington	23,615

Source: Census on the Map, 2018

Attractions
Arlington Heights ▪ Minuteman Bikeway ▪ Old Schwamb Mill
Bedford Center ▪ Minuteman Bikeway ▪ Depot Park ▪ Bedford Common ▪ Veteran's Memorial Park ▪ Bedford Historical Museum (closed until new location)
E. Lexington ▪ Minuteman Bikeway ▪ Wilson Farm ▪ Bow Street Park

CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights of the Customer Base: **Non-Resident Market Segments**

Events that Draw Residents and Visitors to the Area

District	Event	Where	When	Notes
Arlington Heights	Oktoberfest and Beer Garden	Old Schwamb Mill	October	2018 and 2019
E. Lexington	Berman's E. Lexington Block Party	Berman's Liquor Parking Lot	September	Annual, vendors, sampling, etc.
E. Lexington	Various Wilson Far events (e.g., Dinner in the Field, Goat Yoga, Grilled Cheese Fest)	Wilson Farm	Various	
E. Lexington	Indoor Farmers Market	Waldorf School (just outside the District)	Biweekly Saturdays during Winter	
Bedford Center	Annual Plant and Craft Fair	Town Common	May	
Bedford Center	Memorial Day Ceremonies	Memorial Park	May	
Bedford Center	Bedford Day Parade	Great Road	September	
Bedford Center	Oktoberfest Beer Garden	Town Common	October	
Bedford Center	Summer Solstice Fest	Town Common	June	
Bedford Center	Pole Capping Parade	Great Road	April	Week before Concord and Lexington Minuteman Events
Bedford Center	Concerts	First Parish Church on Town Common	Year Round	
Bedford Center	Haunted House	First Parish Church on Town Common	October	

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of Market Environment: **District & Business Marketing**

Minuteman Bikeway Users. Photos: FinePoint Associates

Key Question:
How can we attract more Bikeway users to the Business Districts?

Suggested Strategy . . .

1. **Help them find the Districts and know what's available.**
2. **Make them comfortable when they get there.**
3. **Let them know they are welcome and wanted.**
4. **Give them a reason to come and come back.**

The Minuteman Bikeway runs directly behind the Arlington Heights and E. Lexington Village Business Districts. In Bedford Center, the Bikeway terminates at Depot Park where users can transition to the Narrow Gauge Trail and connect to the commercial core of Bedford Center.

Bedford Center

E. Lexington Village

Arlington Heights

This report section represents the results of focus group research with trail and bike-related organization representatives from each of the 3 communities, discussions with project leaders, and case study research.

OPEN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Market Environment: **District & Business Marketing**

1. Help them find the Districts and what's available

❑ Improved Wayfinding/Signage

- Signage to show where commercial areas are located and directions from bikeway entry points.
- More signage on the trails to let bikers and other users know what is coming up.
- Better wayfinding at the end of Minuteman Bikeway to direct users to the Narrow Gauge Trail and Bedford Center (inform users that this is not the end!).
- Paint the ground with symbols or install other markers (e.g., Freedom Trail) to lead users to business districts and other sites.
- Wayfinding signs at Gold's Gym and Trader Joe's (private property but they might be amenable).
- Coordination between the 3 towns — regarding signage.

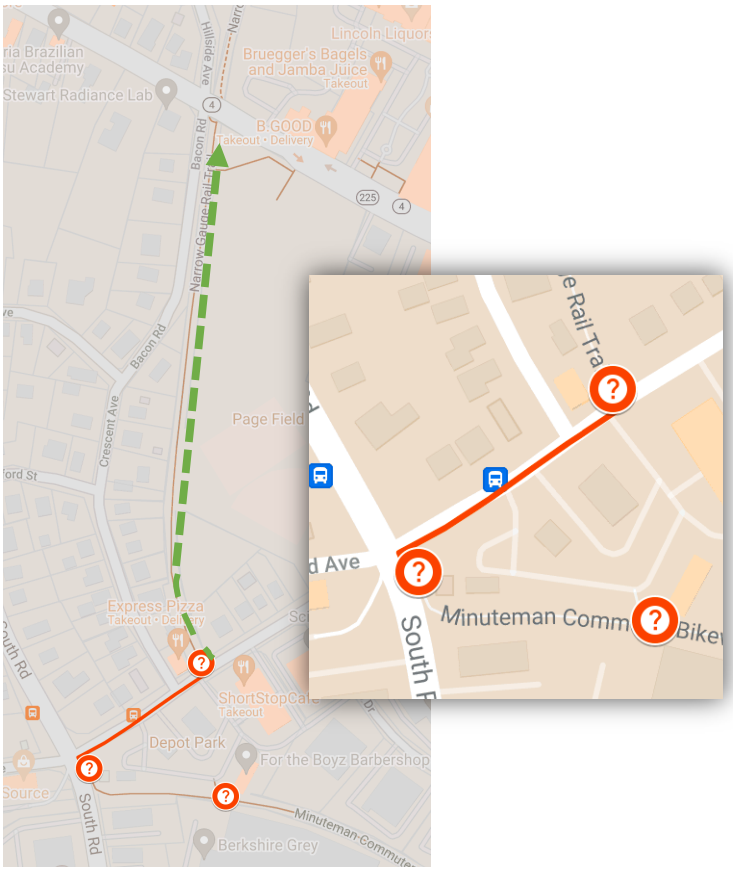
Above: Confusing wayfinding sign at Depot Park.
Below: Depot Park. Photos: FinePoint Associates

❑ Business District Marketing

- Digital marketing — provide information available through smartphones.
- Physical marketing materials — map, pamphlet, etc.
- Business directory/mall map to show people what is offered in the Districts.
- Coordinate with other committees and organizations in the community to garner support for marketing efforts (e.g., Greenway Corridor Committee is planning to produce map of the Bikeway and highlight open space and recreation areas, but is not planning to identify commercial areas).

Small wayfinding post; no info about business district. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Park Avenue Bikeway access points — no signage to identify that the Arlington Heights District is only a few steps away. Photos: FinePoint Associates



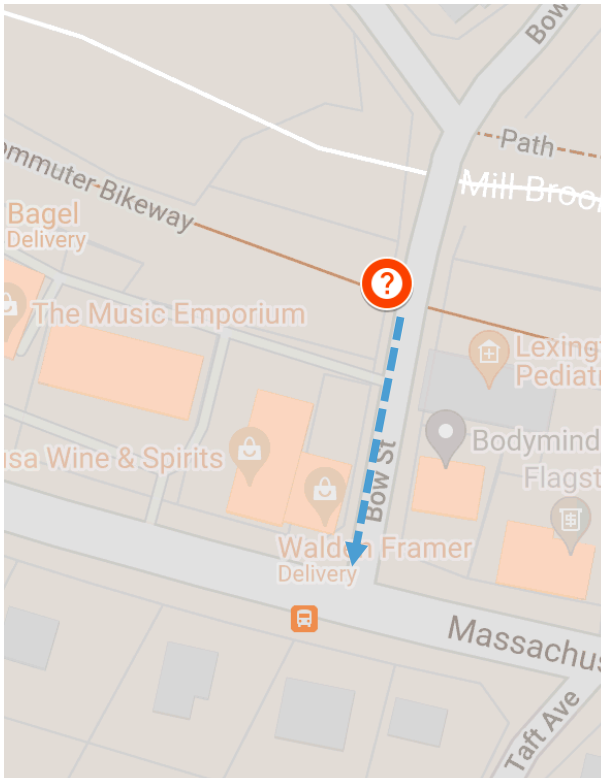
Bedford — Depot Park Area

Key Wayfinding Locations to Direct Users from the Bikeway

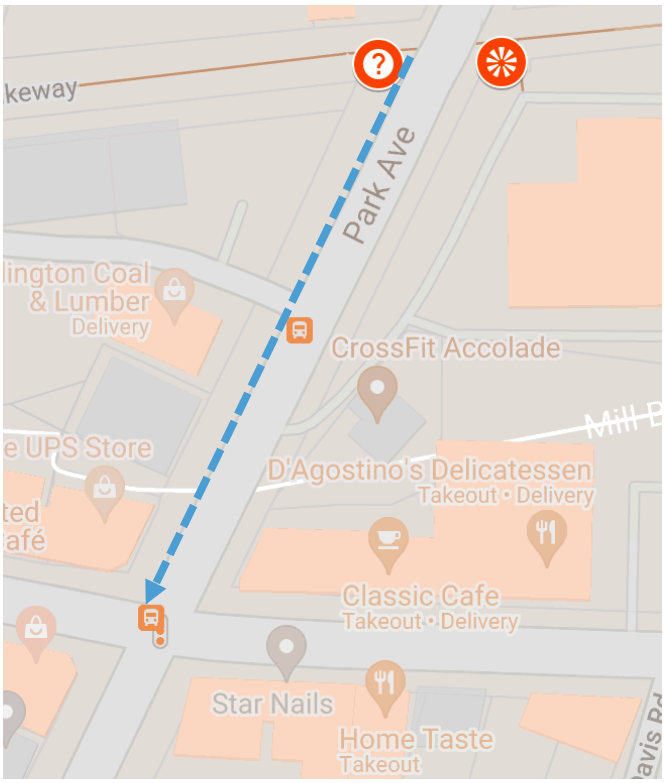
	Suggested Wayfinding Information Sites
	Route to District Core Via Road
	Route to District Core via Narrow Gauge Trail

Entry Issue: Arlington Heights

	Only "At-Grade" Entry Close to District Core Private property? Could formal public entry be created?



E. Lexington — Bow Street Park Area



Arlington Heights — Park Ave Area

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Market Environment: **District & Business Marketing**

2. Make them comfortable

❑ **Amenities**

- Bike racks.
- Picnic tables and benches at Bow Street Park (several eateries in E. Lexington District nearby).
- Picnic tables at Veterans Memorial Park (several eateries at Marketplace in Bedford Center nearby).
- Availability of restrooms (open at Depot Park, access at businesses, public facilities).
- Water fountains.

❑ **Improve Physical Environment as needed**
(See Physical Environment Section)

3. Let them know they're welcome & wanted

❑ **BFBD Program — Bike & Pedestrian Friendly Business District**

- Has been implemented in communities outside of MA.
- Encourage local dining and shopping on foot and by bike.
- Businesses agree to offer accommodations/ amenities/incentives (e.g., water, free wi-fi) and encourage employees and customers to bike.
- Public amenities and infrastructure improvements.
- District branding & marketing as BFBD.
- Complementary events.

Opportunity: The Bike-Friendly Business Districts (BFBD) Program concept started in California with 6 business districts in 2011 and has since been implemented in many other cities. A BFBD could be piloted for the 3 districts and encompass several of the initiatives discussed.

Bow Street park (above) would be an ideal spot for tables and seating to complement several nearby restaurants. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Window decals used by businesses in Glendora BFBD to identify themselves as bike-friendly businesses. The decals include the BFBD website link and hashtag. Source: www.bikefriendlysgv.com

South Pasadena BFBD brochure. Source: www.bikefriendlysgv.com

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Market Environment: **District & Business Marketing**

- ❑ **Encourage businesses to fix-up the (bikeway-facing) rear of their buildings**
- Currently, bikeway users have no visual clues that businesses are located in such close proximity, and they have no way of knowing they could stop for a coffee or sandwich, pick up groceries and a bottle of wine or do other errands. Attractive façade treatments and the opening of rear entrances could indicate vibrancy, signaling that something interesting is nearby.
- **Promote public art at the entry points and other areas near the commercial districts**
- Public art may be allowed where signage isn't. An attractive mural of other art could help to provide a landmark and a visual signal that this is a commercial node.

Opportunity: Consider creating a "Store-Back" Improvement Program that could include design assistance and special financing.

Bikeway-facing façades in East Lexington (above) and Arlington Heights (below) do not attract users to businesses. Photos: FinePoint Associates

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Market Environment: **District & Business Marketing**

4. Give them a reason to come and come back

❑ Programming/Events

We received many ideas from community members about programming and events through the course of our research. We have done our best to represent them below.

- **Rejuvenate the Farmers' Market at Depot Park**
- **Host events at Bow Street Park**
- **Create Bikeway-User-Related Events**

Ideas for events:

- Patriots Day event — Bikers could start from Arlington or Lexington and bike to Concord for the parade.
- Street fares via the Bikeway — Encourage people to bike to events (e.g., Lexington Day, Bedford Day).
- Commuter Breakfast once a year — Use as an opportunity to promote the business districts.
- Yoga at Bow Street Park — This could be a complementary activity for the nearby coffee and bagel shops in E. Lexington [Note: Wonder Yoga is already doing yoga along the Bikeway at the Old Schwamb Mill].
- Ciclavia-style Events (car-free street initiatives) — These can support bike-friendly programs. Memorial Drive in Cambridge is an example; a section of the road is closed to cars on Sundays during the summer.
- Coordinate with local bike shops — A new bike shop, Battle Road Bikes, is opening in E. Lexington and would like to host "Bikes and Movies" events as well as bike-packing trips this summer. There is also a bike shop called Bikeway Source in the Depot Park area.

- **Develop Bike-Commercial District Promotion Events**

Ideas for District Promotional events:

- Scavenger/treasure hunt — Customers have to find each clue, spot specific items, or make a certain number of purchases in each district to qualify for a raffle.
- Poker rides — Participants visit stores to get a poker card. The most cards gets the best prize/opportunity to win.

❑ Promote Complementary Uses/Development

- Reuse town-owned VFW building at Depot Park for something that would be complementary to the Bikeway (consider potential master plan for entire Depot Park area).

Bike-Friendly Business District in Glendora sponsors mornings rides on the 2nd Saturday of the month, featuring at least one bike-friendly business. Source: www.bikefriendlysgv.com

Downtown Scavenger Hunt example, Flagstaff, AZ. Source: www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12271/Down

Previous VFW building, Depot Park. Photos FinePoint Associates

OPEN
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Highlights of the Market Environment: **District & Business Marketing**

It is important to get people back into the habit of coming to the business districts.

Businesses want foot traffic back!

People have significantly changed their consumer behaviors in the last year, but as the vaccination rate rises, we have the opportunity to shape new routines and traditions. It's important to get customers to come back and keep coming back again and again.

Opportunity:

Strategies from other communities . . .

1. Streamline approval process for the use of public and private outdoor space for dining and selling.
2. Support/expand existing attractions and develop new complementary attractions.
3. Create fun and inviting places. Activate underutilized spaces.
4. Develop programming — Events.
5. Promote downtown and what's new. Get a social media campaign going. Use your organization and networks. Encourage individuals to post photos using downtown hashtags.
6. Make it easy to walk and bike downtown.

Administrative Capacity

ADMIN
CAPACITY

Key Findings: Admin Capacity

ADMIN CAPACITY

Current zoning focuses primarily on the "Private Realm."

Conventional zoning bylaws in the three districts address "private realm" building and site improvements, such as dimensions, uses, parking, and landscape. However, in a pedestrian-oriented setting, urban design is a critical issue that also takes into consideration the "public realm." To ensure a cohesive and compatible environment between the two, context-based design standards are often adopted by municipalities to coordinate fenestration, sidewalk activation (signs, displays, café seating), publicly-accessible open spaces, curb cuts, and the location of off-street parking, private and semi-public outdoor spaces, with particular attention given to the interface between the public and private realms.

ADMIN CAPACITY

Regulations governing signage and outdoor display of merchandise are restrictive, especially in Bedford Center.

There may be an opportunity to review Bedford and Lexington regulations to ensure that they are promoting a variety of high-quality signs and spill-out displays.

ADMIN CAPACITY

There is no organization currently managing and overseeing recovery efforts in the business districts.

The Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan (AHNAP) Committee, specifically formed for a designated time period to develop and oversee implementation of the AHNAP, may also be able to serve in an implementation role for the RRP. In Bedford, the newly-formed Bedford Cultural District Managing Partnership might be able to play an implementation role. East Lexington Village does not have a Business District Committee (like there is in Lexington Center), and the staff of the Lexington Economic Development Office would oversee implementation and may consider creating a committee.

ADMIN CAPACITY

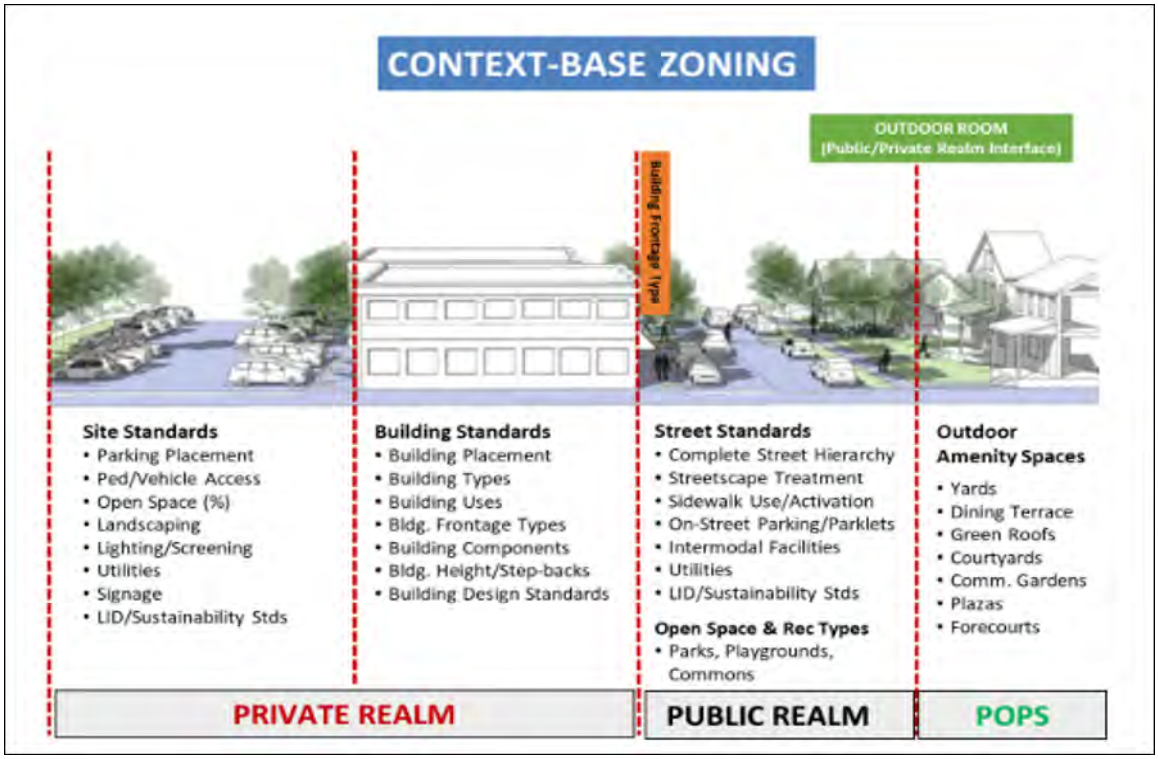
Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **Zoning and Regulations**

Overview

Traditional village and neighborhood centers are different from other conventional zoning districts since they tend to have a broader mix of uses, higher density, older buildings that are being repurposed, limited open spaces on site, and a heavy reliance on a supportive public realm of sidewalks, streets, open spaces, and parking. Therefore, a collaborative relationship between the municipality and private sector is necessary to foster a vibrant district, and zoning is a primary tool for success.

Context-Based Zoning

Effective zoning for traditional village and neighborhood centers must balance mixed uses, existing building improvements, new development, and public realm improvements in a physical setting where preservation, adaptability, and flexibility are needed. This is in the context of Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center. "Context-Based Zoning" (or CBZ) is used as an implementation tool for the municipality's comprehensive master plan or strategic plans for specific villages and neighborhood centers targeted for reinvestment, housing production, and economic development. CBZs establish a range of zoning standards based on established principles of urban design to ensure that the public realm (streets, sidewalks, public open spaces, etc.) and private realm (buildings, driveways, off-street parking, private and semi-public outdoor spaces) are compatible and complimentary.



Context-based zoning graphic. Source: Brovitz Community Planning & Design

ADMIN CAPACITY

Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **Zoning and Regulations**

Some general planning and urban design objectives that apply to the three districts are as follows:

1. Guide the physical character of development by providing context-based building and site development standards that reflect established urban design principles, existing settlement patterns, and architectural character of the district centers, gateways, corridors, and neighborhoods.
2. Create a public realm with high-quality streetscapes, outdoor amenity spaces, and active public spaces that enhance the private realm and improve the functionality, attractiveness, vibrancy, and sustainability of the district.
3. Encourage high-quality housing for a variety of age groups, household types, and income ranges.
4. Support commercial and mixed uses by facilitating development and redevelopment of selected properties within the district.
5. Align public and private investments to maximize positive impact on the district.
6. Foster comfortable, safe, and attractive pedestrian-scale streets, and create a strong sense of place.

Opportunity: As CBZ might apply to Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center, zoning should ensure that standards and incremental developments make the districts increasingly more walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented; foster unique history; create opportunity for reinvestment and business development; and promote a wide variety of housing types to take advantage of the Minuteman Bikeway as well as other modes of transportation and expanding housing choices.

Results from our recent Business Survey suggest that several businesses in each community feel that aspects of the regulatory environment pose an obstacle to business operation. Signage regulations were frequently cited as an obstacle in all three districts. In Arlington Heights, 37% of business respondents identified signage regulations as an obstacle. In Bedford Center and East Lexington Village, 36% of respondents from each district indicated the same .

Arlington Heights

Zoning Map — The Arlington Heights District encompasses a checkerboard of commercial, industrial, residential, and civic zoning districts. The Minuteman Bikeway itself is zoned as Open Space (OS). Unlike many zoning maps in Massachusetts, Arlington's zoning is based on the current property use and not necessarily on future planning goals and community aspirations. Therefore, zoning amendments would be required for most land uses that are different from current use.

Zoning map of Arlington Heights. Source: Town of Arlington

ADMIN CAPACITY

Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **Zoning and Regulations**

The most important zoning district is probably the Village Business (B3), which covers most of the larger buildings centered on the intersection of Mass Ave and Park Ave and extends out along both corridors. B3 allows for a broad range of commercial uses but limits mixed use opportunities, such as residential units.

Dimensional Standards and Land Use — Dimensional requirements, including lot size, frontage, open space, setbacks, height, and lot coverage are reasonable, and reflect current development patterns. There is no floor area ratio requirement in the business districts, which allows for greater density and flexibility. In terms of land use, the Residential Districts significantly limit the number of commercial uses allowed that are subject to special permit approval. A variety of business uses are allowed by right and special permit commercial districts. In the Industrial District, which covers a significant amount of the Arlington Heights District and some key redevelopment parcels, no residential or mixed use is permitted; however, several commercial uses are allowed.

Parking Requirements -Section 6.1 of the ZB (Zoning Bylaw) describes parking standards for all districts in Arlington. In 2020, Special Town Meeting approved an amendment to off-street parking requirements, allowing Special Permit Granting Authorities the ability to reduce or completely eliminate the parking requirements for a business in a B3 or B5 district when the business can demonstrate that it has no ability to create new parking onsite and there is adequate nearby on-street parking or municipal parking. In 2021, Town Meeting extended this provision to make the parking reduction applicable to B1, B2, B2A, and B4 districts as well.*

* This amendment is under review by the Massachusetts Attorney General, with comments expected by October, 2021.

Sign Regulations — Section ZB 6.2 provides for a broad range of signs with reasonable standards. Projecting blade signs, which are critical to pedestrian-oriented business districts, are permitted in the Heights but very few businesses have installed them. Under ZB 6.2.3, there are restrictions for signs projecting over public property, Town ROW, and toward the Minuteman Bikeway, which are all deterrents to drawing customers off the sidewalk and the Bikeway. About a third of survey participants indicated that sign regulations and permitting procedures were an obstacle to business development.

Community representatives indicated that zoning amendments are anticipated this Spring.

Other Regulations — In addition to the zoning bylaws, Arlington has several ordinances intended to enhance the business district. These include:

- Bike Parking Guidelines
- Commercial Corridor Design Standards
- Residential Design Guidelines
- Sidewalk Café Permit Application
- Vacant Storefront Registration

The vacant storefront regulations require building owners to pay a fee, register vacant spaces, and provide temporary window treatments to make the storefront attractive. This program has been effective and may be a model for other districts.

ADMIN CAPACITY

Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **Zoning and Regulations**

East Lexington

Zoning Map — The East Lexington District includes a series of residential and commercial zoning districts: from the town line along Mass Ave, the north side is zoned Retail Shopping (CRS) up to, and including, the Lexington Auto Dealership. On the south side, from the town line, it is zoned Neighborhood Business (CN) up to, and including, the property on the southwest corner of Sylvia Street (62 Mass Ave). From there, the frontage properties on the south side of Mass Ave are in the Two-Family Dwelling District (RT) up to Plainville Street, except for a parcel-based CN and CLO (Local Office) to accommodate businesses that are auxiliary to residential use. From Lexington Toyota, the properties on the north side of Mass Ave are also in the RT district up to Plainfield Street. The surrounding neighborhoods are in One Family Dwelling (RS) and Government Civic (GC). The Minuteman Bikeway is not in a specific zone.

Dimensional Standards and Land Use — Dimensional requirements in East Lexington are reasonable, except for the Retail Shopping District (CRS), which covers most of the businesses on the north side of Mass Ave. While the required lot size is reasonable (15,500 SF), the frontage (125 feet), setbacks (30 in front), lot coverage (25%), and floor area ratio (.20) essentially require strip development. Permitted uses and development standards allow for a broad range of commercial uses either by right or by special permit, but not residential or mixed uses. Community representatives indicated that while mixed use is not allowed anywhere in town, auto-oriented uses are specifically allowed in East Lexington.

Parking — Under Section ZB 5.1, parking standards are reasonable for residential uses but somewhat high for commercial uses in areas with ample on-street parking. There are opportunities in the bylaw to reduce on-site parking so the developer may have to receive a waiver from the Planning Board if they can demonstrate that parking on site is sufficient without all the required space. Parking waivers in the Town Center (CB) are permitted because of the availability of public parking. This should be considered for East Lexington as well. There are reasonable bike parking standards under Section ZB 5.1.8.

Zoning map of East Lexington. Source: Town of East Lexington

ADMIN CAPACITY

Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **Zoning and Regulations**

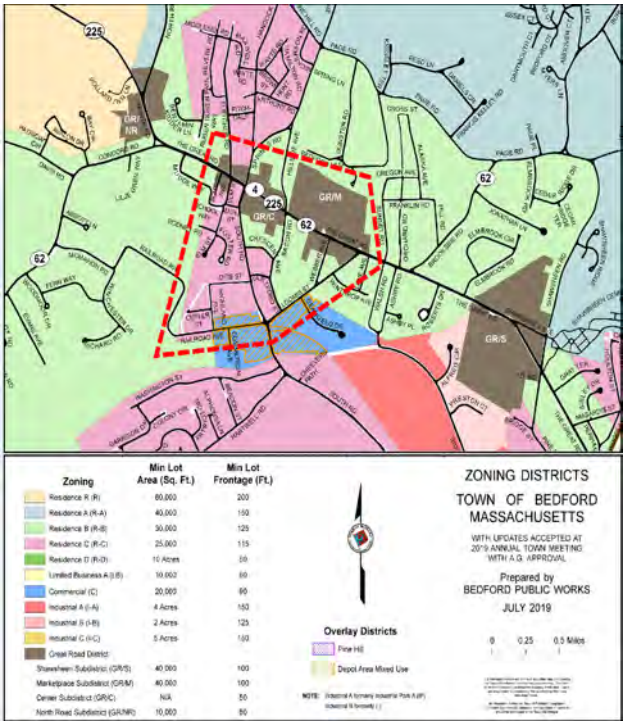
Signage and Spill-Out Standards — Sign regulations in Section ZB 5.2 are fairly restrictive in the CRS district and many owners identified sign regulations as an obstacle for their businesses. For example, wall signs (maximum of 3 feet in height and width) and projecting signs (maximum of 6 SF) require a special permit while they are permitted by right in the Town center (CB district). Wall signs must also be in the front of the buildings and adding signage on the back wall facing the Bikeway would not be permitted. Additionally, sandwich board signs, merchandise displays, and string lights are not allowed. The Town does allow outdoor dining, including parklets, which could benefit East Lexington.

Community representatives indicated that it was difficult to place temporary signs near the trail since any sign bigger than 3 square feet requires a variance from the Board of Appeals.

Opportunity: Dimensional and use regulations could be changed to allow for a more traditional neighborhood center development pattern and mixed use (residential and commercial). Mixed use is probably the best opportunity for reinvestment of the commercial properties on the north side of the corridor. Parking waivers are allowed in the Town Center (CB) and are permitted because of the availability of public parking. For example, retail uses require 1 space/250 SF, while typical neighborhood centers may only need 1 space/400 SF or none if there is good availability and distribution of public parking. This waiver could be considered for East Lexington because of the ample amount of underutilized on-street parking. Sign regulations could be modified to allow for more flexibility in the size and placement of wall signs, projecting signs, and sandwich board signs in East Lexington.

Bedford Center

Zoning Map and Dimensional Standards — The Historic Center along Great Road between School Street and Bacon Road is zoned Great Road District - Center Subdistrict (GR/C). There is no minimum lot size requirement and the 50-foot standard for frontage is consistent with a traditional village center. The Bedford Market Place and properties across the street are zoned GR/M, which requires a 40,000 SF lot and 100 feet of frontage. The area around Depot Park, including properties fronting on Railroad Ave., Commercial Drive, Loomis Street, South Road, and Deangelo Drive, are in the Commercial District (C), which requires a 20,000 SF lot size and 90 feet of frontage. However, the minimum front setback (35 feet), lot coverage (30%) required open space (30%), and floor area ratio (.30), does not reflect a traditional neighborhood center development pattern. A portion of this district is also in the Depot Area Mixed Use Overlay District (Section 18), including Depot Park, portions of Railroad Ave and Commercial Ave, the south side of Loomis Street, including the frontage properties on Deangelo Drive, and a portion for South Road on both sides.



Zoning map of Bedford Center. Source: Town of Bedford

ADMIN CAPACITY

Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **Zoning and Regulations**

Parking — The requirements for residential and office uses, restaurants, and industrial uses are reasonable, but requirements for retail uses are somewhat high at 1 space/250 SF. Specific standards are given for shared parking in mixed use developments. The Planning Board may also grant parking relief by Special Permit under Section ZB 7.4.3.

Land Use Standards — The zoning bylaw allows the combination of multi-family, retail, food, and services. However, in the Commercial District, residential uses are largely restricted.

Depot Area Mixed Use Overlay District — Under ZB Section 18, mixed use development is allowed by special permit from the Planning Board. It provides for multi-family residential, retail, restaurants, services, Research & Development, and similar uses. It requires ground floor commercial uses along the primary street, useable open space, 2 ½ story buildings (37 feet), and higher residential density. It also allows the Town to be flexible on the parking requirements.

The mixed-use development at 54 Loomis Street includes the Shortstop café and other commercial ground floor uses along the street frontage with 16 residential units above and behind the commercial space. Parking is located at the side and rear, and an internal connection is made to Depot Park. This serves the Minuteman Bikeway and provides a good model for future mixed used development in the mixed-use overlay district around the Depot Park, Bedford Center, and near the Bedford Market Place.

Great Road Zoning District — This zoning district covers the Historic Center and Bedford Market Place under ZB Section 22. The purpose of this bylaw is to promote economic vitality and encourage mixed uses in a physical arrangement that is safe for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicular traffic. It is also geared towards enhancing historic character and providing for small and moderate-scale, single and multi-use buildings that support a variety of retail and service uses in the two zoning districts.

Sign Requirements and Spill-Outs — Wall signs, freestanding signs, projecting signs, awning signs, and window signs are all allowed under Article 39 of the Bedford Bylaws. Sandwich board signs require a special permit from the Planning Board. Outdoor merchandise displays are not permitted for general retail stores. Unfortunately, few businesses are taking up the opportunity to install projecting signs.

Historic District — Bedford Center is included in a Historic District and the Historic Commission reviews new developments for this district. Strict adherence to architectural design standards is not required but there is a focus on the historic character in terms of development patterns, scale, and compatibility of new development in the district. This bylaw produced the mixed-use development across the Town Common and the infill commercial development at the Market Place. It serves as a model for mixed use development standards in other communities.

ADMIN CAPACITY

Highlights of Administrative Capacity: **District Management**

There is no organization currently managing and overseeing recovery efforts in the business districts. And there is no dedicated dependable funding source to pay for business district promotion, cultural activities, or general management staffing.

Each of the three communities has an Economic Development Coordinator/Director or Economic Development Department and there are citizen organizations that play a role in some aspect of the business districts. However, there is no entity currently managing and overseeing implementation of recovery efforts.

The Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee (AHNAPIC), formed for a designated time period to oversee implementation of the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan (AHNAP), may also be able to serve in an implementation role for the RRP. In Bedford, the newly-formed Bedford Center Cultural District Managing Partnership might be able to play an implementation role with the Town Economic Development Director. East Lexington Village is quite small and does not have a Business District committee like there is in Lexington Center. The staff of the Lexington Economic Development Office would oversee implementation and may consider creating a committee.

Organization Involved with Business Districts
Arlington Heights
Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee
Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee (AHNAPIC)
Arlington Heights Community Association (AHCA)
Bedford Center
Bedford Chamber of Commerce
Friends of the Minuteman Bikeway
Bedford Bicycle Advisory Committee
Trails Committee
E. Lexington Village
Lexington Chamber of Commerce
East Lexington Community Association
Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee
Greenways Corridor Committee

Opportunity: Consider formalizing a management structure for the Business Districts. Examples follow.

Management Entity	District Delineation	Revenue Sources
Volunteer Downtown Organization	Volunteer program model addressing design, organization, promotion and economic vitality.	Not self-sustaining; state grants, municipal contributions and fundraising
Community Development Corporation	Engages residents and businesses to undertake sustainable community development efforts. Geared to benefit low/moderate income.	Not self-sustaining; state grants, foundations and donations
Business Improvement District	Contiguous area within which property owners pay into a designated fund (via a special tax assessment) and execute supplemental services to benefit economic and social vitality of district.	Self-sustaining through fees; reauthorized every five years, grants and fundraising
Parking Benefit Districts	Geographically defined district in which parking revenues are dedicated to related improvements. Can be a standalone or part of an existing downtown organization.	Self-sustaining through parking revenue fees

Project Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations

Private Realm	Create a Rear Facade/Store-ack Improvement Program to enhance connection between the Business Districts and the Bikeway. [All 3 Districts]
Revenue /Sales	Design and install wayfinding signage and other elements to encourage Bikeway users to patronize the Business Districts. [All 3 Districts]
	Develop additional cultural events/programming; start with a "Bike-Themed Week" with a coordinated schedule of events in each of the Business Districts. [All 3 Districts]
	Implement a Bike & Pedestrian-Friendly Business District (BFBD) campaign. [All 3 Districts]
Public Realm	Connect the Bikeway to the Districts via designated access way improvements (e.g., pavement markings, design elements) especially at Bow Street, Park Ave, and Depot Park to the Narrow Gauge Trail. [All 3 Districts]
	Install additional bike and pedestrian amenities in the Districts. [All 3 Districts]
	Implement sidewalk zones to edit existing streetscape and add new elements. [East Lexington and Arlington Heights]
	Create a well-marked public “at-grade” accessway from the Bikeway through the parking lot at 30 Park Ave. [Arlington Heights]
	Activate Bow Street Park by installing amenities to complement nearby food businesses and accommodate events and work with local organizations to develop programming. [East Lexington]
	Activate Veteran's Memorial Park by installing amenities to complement nearby food businesses and accommodate events and work with local organizations to develop programming. [Bedford Center]
	Engage with the MBTA to explore ways to activate/revitalize the underutilized Bus Depot property. [Arlington Heights]
Admin Capacity	Revise outdoor display regulations to promote lively, attractive outdoor merchandise displays and spill-out elements. [Bedford Center and Arlington Heights]
	Revise the sign bylaw and outdoor display regulations to encourage a variety of high-quality sign types and promote lively, attractive merchandise displays. [East Lexington]
Culture/ Arts	Create a mural program (especially for public locations and businesses adjacent to the Bikeway. [All 3 Districts]
	Create a Cultural District Art Walk along the Narrow Gauge Trail that would include a series of temporary art installations. [Bedford Center]

Private Realm Recommendations

Create a Rear Façade/Store-Back Improvement Program to enhance connection between the Business Districts and the Bikeway. [All 3 Districts]

Category

Private Realm

Location

Arlington Heights (CT 3566.0), East Lexington Village (CT 3581), Bedford Center (CTs 3593.03 and 3591).

Origin

Contributors to Project Idea: Economic Development Staff in all 3 Communities, Bike Focus Group Participants and Consulting Team.

Champions: Economic Development Staff and Bike Advisory Committees in all 3 Communities.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Medium Budget (approximately $200k)

Costs will depend on the final program design, the number of projected projects, and what tasks can be accomplished by existing staff. The following is a list of general cost item categories and ballpark ranges.

1. Program Design and Material Development - Program design, written policies and procedures, application forms, marketing materials, agreement template, "call" documents, electronic content for town website, etc.	$0 – $15,000
2. Financial Assistance Fund - Will depend on the number of projects to be done in the first phase and maximum award for each business and each building in the case of multi-tenant properties - Starting amount should have adequate funding to complete enough projects to have an impact.	$100,000 – 150,000
3. Program Staffing/Administration - Might be accomplished by existing staff or part-time temporary coordinator.	$30,000 – $40,000

Potential funding sources:

- MA Downtown Initiative (MDI), DHCD Community One Stop for Growth
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) Grant Program (in partnership with Middlesex3 Coalition)
- EDA travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation grant program — Competitive Tourism Grant

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

Approximate Schedule

Month 1 – 3	Research Funding & Models, Program Design
Month 3 – 6	Secure Funding, Program Development
Month 6 – 24	Program Marketing/Admin, Renovation Project Completions
2 Years	Evaluate Program Operations & Impacts, Determine Continuation/Revision

Risk	Low Risk Risk: There is a risk that physical improvements on buildings that face the Bikeway might be inhibited by regulations and/or building owners not being interested/willing to make improvements.
Key Performance Indicators	The following indicators could be measured to assess impacts. ▪ Increase in the number of people exiting the Bikeway at the 3 Business Districts. ▪ Greater awareness of the offerings available in the 3 Business Districts. ▪ Number of business customers making purchases on their way to or from the Bikeway. ▪ Increased business sales revenue in the Districts. These indicators could be measured though a variety of methods including: 1) installing a counter at the Bikeway exists, 2) implementing an "in-field" user count data gathering activity, 3) conducting a Consumer Survey to determine increased awareness of offerings and propensity to return to the Districts, and 4) conducting a Business Survey to evaluate sales and perception about customers.
Partners and Resources	▪ Bike Advisory Committees in the 3 communities ▪ Arlington, Bedford and Lexington Chambers of Commerce ▪ Planning Departments in the 3 communities ▪ Arlington Redevelopment Board ▪ Town Managers and Select Boards would need to be supportive ▪ Business and property owners would have to be interested and willing to make improvements ▪ Bedford Cultural District Partnership and Arts Councils in the 3 Districts, especially if there is a decision to go with a "pARTnership" type program in lieu of a more traditional façade improvement program.
Diagnostic	**How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase:** The building façades that face the Bikeway are very nondescript. Most are somewhat bland, industrial-looking, and do not provide visual clues that they contain cafés or restaurants. Most do not have rear-facing entrances, nor do they indicate that there is a business district worth stopping at. The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, etc., appears to be largely untapped, despite the very close proximity of the Bikeway to the Business Districts. According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway averages 3,000 daily users. This represents a significant market opportunity, but it appears that these customers are not exiting the Bikeway to enter the Districts. We completed a field experiment where we counted Bikeway users and observed their turn-off behavior in the three districts. Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts. The lack of "turn-off" is hardly a surprise because there is no signage or other visual clues to alert Bikeway users that food and retail are available within just a couple hundred feet.

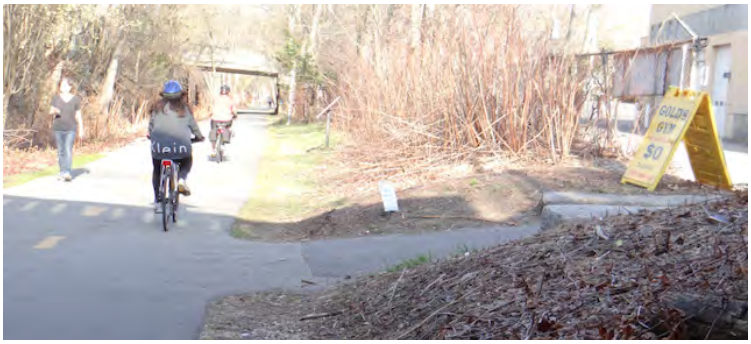
Background on Existing Conditions

Businesses that back up to the Minuteman Bikeway. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Existing Condition

The Business Districts in the 3 communities are within very close proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway, and in fact, many businesses back up to the Bikeway. However, these businesses do not have attractive Bikeway-facing façades or entrances.

Many properties look semi-industrial with very little, if any, façade or signage treatments or welcoming features and therefore, are not likely to pique the curiosity of passersby. Bikeway users would have no indication that these properties contain desirable food and retail options.



Diagnostic (cont'd)

COVID-19 Impacts Addressed by this Project: The Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Business Districts were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. According to our business survey in March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially lower compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.

It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that the "Rear Façade/Store-Back" improvements intend to address. By improving the backs of the businesses that abut the Bikeway, it would create an awareness of the business districts, which would help businesses capitalize on the largely untapped "Bikeway User" market segment (a segment that has grown over the last year as more people turned to bicycles and other public transport alternatives).

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVIC-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer behavior in the business districts has still not returned. The proposed strategy will help to open up new market opportunities for district businesses as old customers hopefully find their way back.

Action Item

Develop a "Rear Façade/Store-Back" improvement program that would encourage business and property owners to make improvements to building façades that face the Minuteman Bikeway. This would significantly increase the awareness about the Business Districts and offerings available. Currently, the building sides that face the Bikeway are very non-interesting blank façades that provide no indication this would be an area to stop and get a bite to eat or do any shopping.

This could be accomplished with one of two options focused on Bikeway facing façades/storebacks.

"Traditional" Façade Improvement Program

This option includes a financial incentive provided to business/property owners typically in the form of a matching grant provided at the completion of the renovation. These programs can be administered by the municipality or a non-profit. Programs often include the following elements:

- Application form
- Design guidelines/standards
- Financial assistance, maximum grant amount
- Funding match requirement
- Eligibility requirements (e.g., geographic area, Bikeway facing, tenants and/or owners, potential impact).

"Art-Inspired" Façade Improvement Program

This option involves matching interested local businesses/property owners with local artists who create and execute façade/storeback design improvement. A financial incentive is provided to cover some or all of the costs usually in the form of payment to the artist. This type of program was piloted in Atlanta for businesses near the Atlanta BeltLine. (More information is provided in the Best Practice section). This type of program may include the following elements:

- Application form and selection process
- Eligibility requirements (e.g., geographic area, Bikeway facing, tenants and/or owners)
- Financial assistance, maximum award
- Call for interested business/property owners
- Call for proposals from interested artists/makers
- Committee and busines/property owner involvement in art partner selection.

Process

1. **Research and clarify regulations** that might restrict building improvements and create rear entrances and signage on private property facing the Bikeway.

2. **Review program models from other communities.** The "Best Practices" provided makes for a good start; however, many communities have experience with façade improvement programs, and it may be worthwhile to interview program managers to get their advice and "lessons learned."

3. **Conduct preliminary conversations with businesses and property owners** to get a read on their interest level and willingness to participate in the program.

4. **Research potential funding opportunities and secure funding** Potential sources include MA Downtown Initiative (for planning phase), State ARPA funds and EDA travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation grants through the Competitive Tourism Grant Program.

5. **Create a program advisory committee** comprised of Town staff (e.g., planning and economic development department representatives) and stakeholders (e.g., bicycle advisory committees, cultural councils).

6. **Determine the most appropriate program design** and requirements based on the results of an in-depth review of the regulations in each community, review of program models, and available funding.

   - "Traditional" or "Art-inspired" program
   - Application Form and Selection Process
   - Eligibility Criteria for Applicants
   - Maximum Amount and Form of Financial Assistance
   - Allowable Use of Funds (façade only or all exterior Bikeway-facing improvements such as outdoor seating seating)
   - Design Standards/Guidelines
   - Other requirements.

7. **Develop program policies, procedures, forms, and materials** Formalize requirements and develop a written set of documents needed (e.g., program guidelines, application form, agreement form template, "call" documents if needed, etc.). Prepare electronic content for town website.

8. **Consider providing illustrative examples of desirable improvements** This might be possible by soliciting assistance from university architecture or other programs to provide some illustrative examples of desirable improvements.

9. **Market the program** Create a marketing initiative to promote the program and encourage business/property owners to make improvements.

10. **Administer the program** (based on the program design) Accept applications, finalize agreements, monitor renovation projects, provide finance assistance payments according to policies.

11. **Evaluate program operations and impacts** after approximately 12 to 18 months (earlier if necessary). Determine revisions or continuation as warranted.

Atlanta, GA

Atlanta BeltLine
(example of "art Inspired" program)

Business Façade pARTnership Grant Program

The Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI) Business Façade pARTnership Grant program partners local artists and maker professionals with the local business community to complete capital improvements to the façade of a business site. The program is designed to catalyze business growth within the BeltLine Tax Allocation District (TAD) that spans the 22-mile BeltLine corridor.

Business Façade pARTnership Grant Program Objectives

1. Stimulate growth of business through capital improvements.
2. Provide work opportunities for Atlanta's artist and maker community through the implementation of the transformative designs they create.
3. Catalyze revitalization of commercial districts within the TAD.

Source: ttps://beltline.org/the-project/economic-development-commercial-real-estate/business-facade-partnership-grant-program

Phase 1: Call For Businesses

- Call for businesses to submit an application to participate in the 2020-2021 program
- Businesses submit an application outlining their façade improvement needs
- Using established standards and criteria, select three to four businesses
- Grants vary depending on the cost to implement the capital improvement design selected and approved during the process but will not exceed $40,000 per business site. A 5% match will be required by the business participants.

Phase 2: Call For Artist Partners & Makers

- Call for artists featuring the façade improvement project opportunities — Artists invited to submit proposals that showcase the business' proximity to the BeltLine by providing a new BeltLine-facing façade
- Artist proposals reviewed by subject-matter experts from ABI and input from business participant received
- Artist partners selected based on proposal's ability to meet the needs of the business' request and ABI's stated objectives.

Phase 3: Façade Improvement

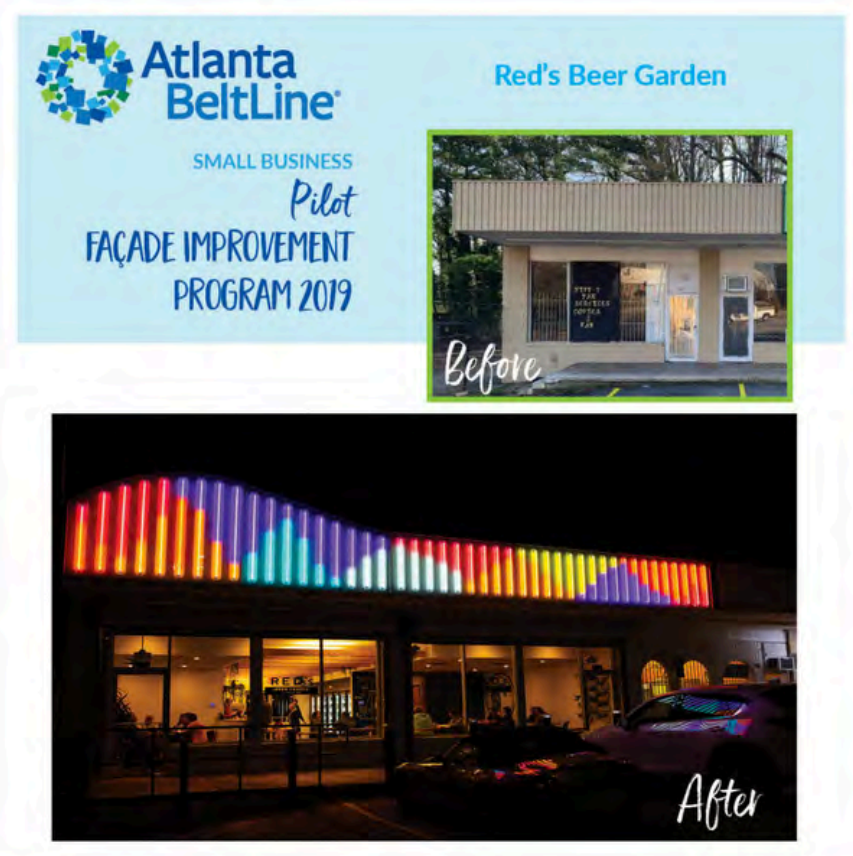
- Finalize project agreement.
- Kick-off meeting with business owner, artist partner & ABI staff
- Business participant fee of 5% is collected
- Grant is paid directly to the artist partner by ABI.

A/C Clutch Façade Renovation, Artist Partners: Rose Smith & Morgan Myles. Source: https://beltline.org/the-project/economic-development-commercial-real-estate/business-facade-partnership-grant-program/#past-projects

Atlanta, GA

Atlanta BeltLine Business Façade pARTnership Grant Program (cont'd)

Source: ttps://beltline.org/the-project/economic-development-commercial-real-estate/business-facade-partnership-grant-program



Red's Beer Garden Façade Renovation, Artist Partner: Lily Reeves.
Source: https://beltline.org/the-project/economic-development-commercial-real-estate/business-facade-partnership-grant-program/#past-projects

Salem, MA

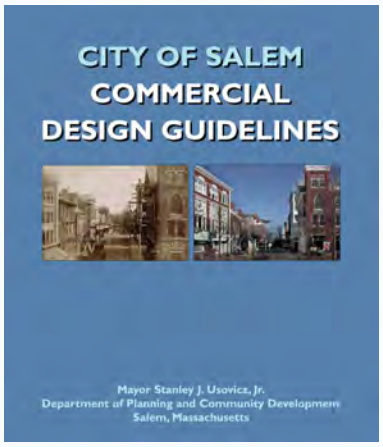
Storefront Improvement Program (example of "traditional" program)

This program is designed to encourage private investment by new and existing property/business owners in eligible districts.

Design Assistance
The Salem Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) provides Design Assistance for qualified businesses at no cost to the applicant. Design Assistance consists of an on-site meeting with the business owner, a schematic design for the proposed improvements, a budget estimate, and a written description of the proposed work.

Construction Grant (up to $5,000)
Eligible businesses can apply for up to $5,000 for exterior improvements to their storefront. (For multi-storefront buildings, each storefront can receive up to $5,000 match with a maximum of $15,000 for the entire building). The program requires a 1:1 match of funds by the applicant.

Source: https://www.salem.com/business-and-economic-development/pages/storefront-improvement-program



The City has also developed Commercial Design Guidelines to help ensure high-quality improvements. An excerpt from the manual is presented on the right.

Source:https://www.salem.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3756/f/uploads/sdg_all_pages_0.pdf

Recommended

Awnings placed between vertical architectural building elements allow the entire façade to read together as one composition.

Multiple awnings on a single building that are generally consistent in size, profile, and placement.

Canvas materials on historic buildings.

Metal and glass materials on newer buildings.

Not Recommended

Continuous awnings that cover vertical building elements and isolate the street level from the building above.

Vinyl or plastic materials that are shiny, or translucent materials that are backlit to create a glowing sign.

Oddly shaped awnings that do not relate to the building architecture.

Corporate colors used on the canopies or as stripes on building fascias or roofs except for those areas defined as signs.

Lighting from canopies that is not shielded from spilling onto the streets and neighboring properties.

Phone numbers and web addresses on awnings.

Box lighting on the underside of the awning.

Not Recommended: This awning that has oversized lettering, obscures the architectural details of the façade, and separates the upper façade from the storefront area. (Newburyport)

Recommended: This glass and steel awning is well integrated into the traditional façade by color and proportion.

Not Recommended: This internally illuminated awning becomes an unattractive and oversized sign at night.

Recommended: Canvas awnings that fit within the structural frame. (Andover)

Cambridge, MA

Storefront Improvement Program (example of "traditional" program)

This Storefront Improvement Program provides financial assistance to property owners or tenants seeking to renovate or restore commercial building exterior façades. The Program seeks to improve the physical appearance of independent businesses, increase accessibility into businesses, and enhance the commercial districts of Cambridge. Reimbursement grants range from $2,500 to $35,000 based on the scope of work. Some sample projects include the Lamplighter Brewing Co., Sumona Restaurant, Thazar Hair Salon, and Hanaya Flora.

Source: https://cityofkaukauna.com/2019/12/02

The Cambridge Storefront Improvement Program provides financial assistance to property owners or tenants seeking to renovate or restore commercial building exterior façades. The Program seeks to increase accessibility into storefronts, improve the physical appearance of independent businesses, and enhance the commercial districts of Cambridge. Architectural design fees may be included in the total cost of eligible improvements (but cannot exceed $5,000).

Retail tenants can participate in the program if they have written approval from the property owner and a current lease that is at least one-year-long with an option for renewal.

This Cambridge Storefront Improvement Program provides:

- Ninety per cent (90%) matching grants up to $20,000 for ADA improvements to entrance, including ramps, lifts, doors hardware and automatic openers, accessible parking, and signage.
- Fifty per cent (50%) matching grants up to $15,000 for other façade improvements, including better windows, paneling, architectural details, and restoration of historic features.
- Fifty per cent (50%) matching grants up to $2,500 for signage, lighting, and awning improvements.

The full Cambridge Storefront Improvement Program Guidelines and Application Form can be obtained from the following link:

https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/econdev/smallbusinessassistance/smallbusinessprograms/storefront

Baraka Mediterranean Cafe installed bright new signage and painting to communicate their brand at their new location. Source: City of Cambridge

Cambridge, MA (cont'd)

The owner of 290-294 Concord Street used SIP funds to update the building façade and make the entrances and display windows more inviting. Automatic door openers were also installed to make the stores more accessible. Source: City of Cambridge

The Hanaya Floral Shop used SIP funds to install new storefront branding, including a combination of wall sign, blade sign, window sign, and painting.
Source: City of Cambridge

Revenue/Sales Recommendations

Design and install wayfinding signage and elements to encourage Bikeway users to patronize the Business Districts. [All 3 Districts]

Category

Revenue/Sales

Location

Arlington Heights (CT 3566.0), East Lexington Village (CT 3581), Bedford Center (CTs 3593.03 and 3591).

Origin

Contributors to Project Idea: Economic Development Staff in all 3 Communities, Bike Focus Group Participants and Consulting Team.

Champions: Economic Development Staff and Bike Advisory Committees in all 3 Communities, Bedford Cultural District Partnership for Narrow Gauge Archway.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low (Under $50,000) for initial items. If all items are implemented depending on number of elements installed, could be Medium.

Medium Budget ($50k -$200k)
Costs will depend on the extent of the design process, how simple or elaborate the elements are, and which aspects can be accomplished by Town Departments (e.g., DPW installation). The following is a list of general cost item categories and ballpark ranges.

1. Business District Destination Signs on the Bikeway - Design and location mapping - Printing/fabrication and Installation - (e.g., 4 - 6 double-sided arrival signs, 4 or more approach signs)	$5,000 – $8,000 (all 3 Districts)
2. Wayfinding Signage at the Bedford Terminus of the Bikeway - Design and location mapping - Printing/fabrication and Installation	$1,000
3. Entry Archway to Narrow Gauge Trail in Bedford - Design competition and Artist commission (if artistic arch) - Installation	TBD
4. District Welcome Signage & Business District Information/Directories - Design and location mapping - Design and Production of Business District Map/Business Listing Information (if included) - Printing/fabrication and Installation	$1,000 – $7,000 per element (low estimate = signage only with minimal information and graphics)
5. Map Kiosks near major Bikeway access points to Business Districts - Design and location mapping - Design and Production of Business District Map & Business Listing Printing/fabrication and Installation	$3,000 – $7,000 per element

Potential funding sources:

- Conservation Preservation Act (CPA) funds
- MA Office of Travel and Tourism (FY21 deadline for Recovery Grant was 2/21/21 but there may be another round for FY22)
- MA Downtown Initiative (MDI) through DHCD Community One Stop for Growth
- MassTrails Grant
- Business owners may be willing to contribute as this will directly benefit their business
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Regional Economic development Organization (REDO) Grant Program (in partnership with Middlesex3 Coalition)

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

Approximate Time Estimates

6 – 9 months	Business District Signs on the Bikeway
6 – 9 months	Wayfinding Signage Bedford
2 – 3 years	Artistic Entry Arch to Narrow Gauge Trail
1 – 3 years	District Welcome Signage/Business Information
1 – 3 years	Map Kiosks near Bikeway access points

Risk

Low Risk

Risk: There is a risk that signage might not be approved for the Bikeway; however, we propose using the basic standards provided in the 2014 Plan regarding color, font, and icons to lower this risk. Another risk is not being able to find funding. Element # 1 is low cost, could be accomplished quickly, and could have immediate benefits. Getting this done quickly may help to raise enthusiasm and make it easier to fund other elements.

Key Performance Indicators

The following indicators could be measured to assess impacts.

- Increase in the number of people exiting the Bikeway at the 3 Business Districts
- Greater awareness of the offerings available in the 3 Business Districts
- Number of business customers making purchases on their way to or from the Bikeway
- Increased business sales revenue in the districts.

These indicators could be measured though a variety of methods including: 1) installing a counter at the Bikeway exists, 2) implementing an "in-field" user count data gathering activity, 3) conducting a Consumer Survey to determine increased awareness of offerings and propensity to return to the districts, and 4) conducting a Business Survey to evaluate sales and perception about customers.

Partners and Resources

- Bike Advisory Committees in the 3 communities
- Arlington, Bedford, and Lexington Chambers of Commerce
- Planning Departments and Departments of Public Works (DPW) in the 3 communities
- Town Managers and Select Boards would need to be supportive
- Bedford Cultural District Partnership
- Arlington Heights Community Association

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, etc., appears to be largely untapped despite the very close proximity of the Bikeway to the Business Districts. According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway averages 3,000 daily users. This represents a significant market opportunity, but it appears that these customers are not exiting the Bikeway to enter the districts. We completed a field experiment where we counted Bikeway users and observed their turn-off behavior in the three districts. Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts.

The lack of "turn-off" is hardly a surprise because there is no signage or other visual clues to alert Bikeway users that food and retail are available within just a couple hundred feet.

Existing Conditions and Previous Planning

Park Ave — There is no signage to indicate that Arlington Heights District and many other eateries and businesses are less than 200 feet away (e.g., Abbotts' Ice Cream, D'Agostino's, Heights Pu, Cookie Time Bakery, etc.). Upper photo: Park Ave entry east of the overpass (at-grade). Lower photo: Park Ave entry west of the overpass (grade change with staircase). Photo: FinePoint Associates

Existing Signage at Park Ave. There is no mention of the Business District. (This sign deviates slightly from the 2014 proposed sign standards because it employs a serif font.) Photo: FinePoint Associates

Existing Condition

There is no signage on the Bikeway identifying any of the three business districts.

Background — Previous Planning

In 2014, the three communities worked with Toole Design Group to develop a plan entitled "Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway." This plan recommends infrastructure improvements, programs, and policies to ensure the Minuteman Bikeway retains its attractiveness as a commuter bikeway and continues to accommodate new users in the future.

One of the sections of this plan addresses wayfinding signage. The plan laid out the following principles.

- Establish consistency in signage along the Bikeway
- Direct Bikeway users to Town Centers
- Improve location signage, including at intersections and Bikeway connections
- Provide consistent Minuteman branding along the Bikeway
- Avoid over-signing the Bikeway

Issues with 2014 Plan:

- While the "Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway" Plan was well done and did mention directional signs to Town Centers (e.g., Lexington Center, Arlington Center), it did not address Arlington Heights and E. Lexington Village Business Districts or Bedford Center.
- The plan was only partially implemented and followed.

Signage/Wayfinding Information at Bow Street — Although there are maps at this E. Lexington Village location, there is no signage to alert Bikeway users that they can find Wicked Bagel, Dunkin' Donuts, a bakery cafe, liquor store, Mexican restaurant, and more just on the other side of the buildings. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Existing Signage at Depot Park - The placement and content of existing signage makes it difficult to understand how to get to the Narrow Gauge Trail from the terminus of the Minuteman Bikeway (which would bring users to Bedford Center). Great Road is listed instead of Bedford Center, which is a missed branding opportunity. (This sign deviates slightly from the 2014 proposed sign standards in that a different shopping icon is used). Photo: FinePoint Associates

Diagnostic (cont'd)

COVID-19 Impacts Addressed by this Project: The Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Business Districts were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. According to our business survey in March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially lower compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.

It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that the wayfinding improvements intend to address. The signage and other wayfinding elements will help businesses capitalize on the largely untapped "Bikeway User" market segment (a segment that has grown over the last year as more people turned to bicycles and other public transport alternatives).

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVIC-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer behavior in the business districts has still not returned. The proposed strategy will help to open up new market opportunities for district business as old customers hopefully find their way back.

Action Item

1. **Install Business District Destination Signs on the Bikeway** at major access points near the business districts to make Bikeway users aware of potential food and retail offerings and direct them to the districts. Two types of signs are suggested: 1) directional signs located at the primary exits to the Business Districts, and 2) approach signs located in advance of the exits (e.g., 1 mile or more). Simple blue signs could be used that would be compatible with the existing signs and the 2014 "Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway" plan. (See example of proposed signs vs. existing signs).

2. **Evaluate and Improve Wayfinding Signage at the Bedford Terminus of the Bikeway** to get users to the Narrow Gauge Trail.

3. **Develop Highly-Visible Entry Archway to Narrow Gauge Trail in Bedford** to entice bikeway users to continue to Bedford Center.

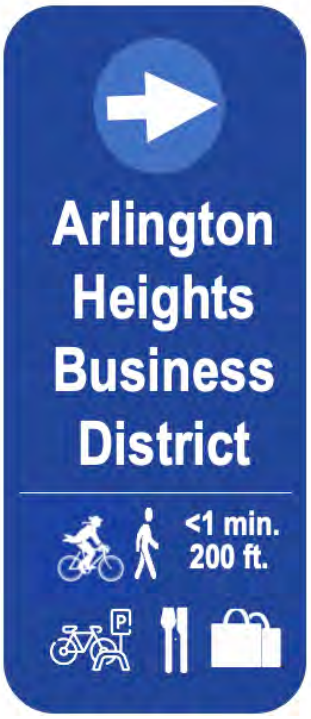
4. **Provide Business District Welcome Signage and Business District Information/Directories** at points where the access ways meet each business district.

5. **Install Map Kiosks near major Bikeway access points to Business Districts** that include the Minuteman Bikeway map and information about businesses located in the nearby districts.

We have also made a related recommendation to "Provide Designated Access Way Improvements" (addressed in a separate plan recommendation].

Proposed Wayfinding Signage Examples

Suggested Bikeway Signage to Announce Business Districts: The proposed signs incorporate the Minuteman logo, an arrow, suggested icons, and sans-serif font compatible with the proposed 2014 standards. They also clearly identify the area as a business district where restaurants and retail (and bike parking) can be found. If Bikeway signage is consistent with the 2014 proposed standards, it is more likely to be quickly approved and implemented.



Example of proposed directional signage to be located at Business District exits (such as Park Ave). (For Illustrative Purposes Only). Source: FinePoint Associates

Example of approach sign located in advance of the exits (e.g., 1 mile). (For Illustrative Purposes Only). Source: FinePoint Associates

Business District Approach Sign

Process

Install Business District Destination Signage on the Bikeway
This is the most imperative of the wayfinding items because currently, there is no signage to alert users about the business districts and the availability of food and retail in such close proximity.

1. Form a small working group representing the three communities (e.g., Economic Development staff and perhaps representatives from Bicycle Advisory Committees and/or businesses)
2. Work together to agree on the contents of the Destination Signage. Determine if miles or travel time will be used. Decide on consistent icons to be used. (Currently, Bedford signs use a shopping cart icon for retail while the Toole Design Group suggested a logo showing 2 shopping bags to denote retail for Lexington signage).
   Suggested Sign Contents:
   - Minuteman Bikeway logo
   - Arrow directing users to the Business Districts
   - Icons indicating food and retail
   - Distance in miles (or travel time by bike/ foot)
3. Determine ideal placement for signs.
   Suggested Possible Locations:
   Arlington Heights
   - Sunrise Senior Living
   - Park Ave

   Lexington Village
   - Bow Street

   Bedford Center
   - Beginning of Narrow Gauge Trail
4. Work with appropriate parties to get approvals for signage installation.
5. Determine sign and post printer/fabricator, get final cost estimates, and determine funding sources for each community.
6. Work with DPW in each community to install signs at specified locations.

Evaluate and Improve Wayfinding Signage at Bedford Bikeway Terminus to guide users to the Narrow Gauge Trail (NGT). As noted, in the Diagnostic Report, the existing signage does not provide clear direction to the NGT and it does not emphasize Bedford Center as a destination.

1. Evaluate contents and location of wayfinding signage at Bikeway terminus.
   Suggestions:
   - Make it easier to understand how to get to the Narrow Gauge Trail (NGT)
   - Include Bedford Center via NGT on the sign rather than Great Road to help reinforce branding/identification for the Business District.
2. Make necessary revisions, fabricate sign changes, and work with DPW to install.

Develop Highly-Visible Entry Archway to Narrow Gauge Trail to entice bikeway users to continue to Bedford Center. The current entrance is fairly nondescript and could easily be overlooked.

1. Bedford Economic Development Director should work with Bedford Cultural District Partnership to raise funds for Artistic Arch Design and Installation.
2. Implement Design Competition/Call for Artists to solicit entries from sculptures, architects, artists, etc. to create the arch. Develop a budget, selection/eligibility criteria, theme (e.g., historic theme, connection to commercial center) and schedule.

Provide Welcome Signage and Business District Information/Directories at points where the access ways meet each district. At a minimum, signage should be provided to welcome users into the district and provide basic directional arrows to food and retail. This would also be a good location for a map of the district and/or business directory and other information (see Best Practice Examples provided).

Process (cont'd)

1. Design Welcome and Business Information signage — Since the signage will be located in the business districts, each community could **make their own decision regarding the type of signage and how extensive the information provided will be.** However, some consistency and common elements among the three communities could help to reinforce common branding as a Bikeway community. It may be helpful to **engage a wayfinding/design consultant** that could collaborate with the working group and design a menu of options for 1) a basic welcome and directional sign, 2) sign with business district map, 3) business district/community information kiosk, 4) Bikeway map kiosk for near the Bikeway etc. with a way to customize any of the above for each community. Then each community could select and customize to meet their needs and budget.
2. If a business directory will be included, the design should be easily updated. In lieu of, or in addition to, a directory, the signage could provide a QR code that would direct users to an electronic business directory or other landing page with information about the Business District.
3. Determine Locations — General suggested locations include the following.
   - Park Ave and Massachusetts Avenue
   - Sunrise Parking Lot and Massachusetts Avenue
   - Bow Street and Massachusetts Ave
   - Great Road and Narrow Gauge Trail Terminus.
4. Each community should **determine the specific location** for their signage/informational elements.
5. Identify funding.
6. Each community should work with appropriate parties (e.g., planning department, DPW, etc.) to arrange for fabrication and installation.

Install Bikeway Map Kiosks at major Business District access points
These kiosks could accommodate the Minuteman Bikeway map plus information about businesses located in the nearby districts. The Bikeway Map will help entice users to stop, and once they've stopped, they may find useful information about nearby businesses and events.

1. Design the Map Kiosk — This item could be designed by the **wayfinding/design consultant** at the same time as the Business District Welcome signs and Business Maps/Directories. Since these elements will be located close to the trail, it will be important for them to be consistent from community to community.
2. These elements should have a space for the Minuteman Bikeway Map and a place where the community could provide information about local business offerings and community events.
3. Mobile technology could be implemented and referenced. QR codes that provide access to Business District Directories and/or other information could be provided. The Minuteman Bikeway Map is available on the mobile application "Maplets." This information could be included in the Map kiosk.
4. Determine Locations — General suggested locations include the following.
   - Park Ave
   - Bow Street
   - Depot Park
5. Each community should **determine the specific location** for their Bikeway Map Kiosk.
6. Identify funding.
7. Each community should work with appropriate parties (e.g., planning department, DPW, etc.) to arrange for fabrication and installation.

Provide Designated Access Way Improvements [Addressed in a separate Plan Recommendation].

Boston, MA

Fairmount Greenway Directional Signage

The Fairmount Greenway is an on-street biking and walking route that loosely follows the Fairmount/Indigo rail line. The Greenway links the Fairmount stations, open space, and other neighborhood amenities.

New wayfinding signage was recently developed and installed.

Signs provide direction and estimated travel time for walking and biking.

NEIGHBORWAY

Photo: Civic Space Collaborative, Michelle Moon

Budget

What	Low Estimate	Mid-range estimate
• Sign design concept development • Sign location identification + mapping • 6-mile corridor	$3,000	$6,000

• Final signs design
  • 12 x 18 inches
  • 12 signs
• Sign location identification + mapping
  • 1.5 mile corridor
	$2,000	$4,000

• Printing Corrugated plastic signs • 12 signs + test print)	$250	$350
• Sign Installation	$100	$500

Source: "Laws of Attraction," Civic Space Collaborative, Michelle Moon

Adelaide, South Australia

Bikeway Directional Signage

PUBLIC REALM

Location

A cost-effective approach to wayfinding was implemented in Adelaide using affordable materials and production methods, including poles wrapped in stickers and surface decals.

Innovative designs also included pavement markings in addition to sign poles.

Source: www.urbanandpublic.com

Source: www.urbanandpublic.com

Business District Information Signage

Arlington Heights, IL

The Walk Arlington initiative in the Village of Arlington Heights, Illinois, emphasizes the health and ecological benefits of walking and shows how quickly a short walk in Downtown Arlington Heights transports you to entertainment venues, stores, and restaurants. The Village's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission participated in the development of the various walking courses.

In the Downtown area, the Village has created eight Walk Arlington **Business Directories** that are placed in large kiosks located at Harmony Park, the Downtown Train Station, North School Park, mid-block on Dunton Avenue, and other Downtown locations. The directories show Downtown business locations as well as suggested walking routes to various destinations.

Source: www.vah.com

Business District Directories placed in strategic locations in the Village of Arlington Heights, IL. Source: www.vah.com

Bennington, VT

The Town of Bennington, VT, installed four corner Community Kiosk structures in their downtown area. These elements display information on local businesses, community events, and history.

Another kiosk is planned for this fall. According to Shanon Barsotti, Community Development Director, the cost for the kiosk will be "around $5,000 for the kiosk itself, installation, and graphic design and panels."

Community Kiosk at the main intersection of downtown Bennington. Photo: Brovitz Community Planning and Design

PUBLIC REALM

Arch Examples

Solana Beach, CA

Coastal Rail Trail

In a nationwide competition, the City of Solana Beach, CA, chose Betsy Schulz's design for two arches to replace the town's aging south-end entry sign and serve as the gateway to a walking and biking trail.

Source: https://betsykschulz.com/project/solana-beach-gateway-arches/

Source: https://betsykschulz.com/project/solana-beach-gateway-arches/

Connellsville, PA

Connellsville, PA, embraces the cycle tourist with art displays on the trail into town.

Source: "Living out of a Trailer, Paul Mulvey, https://www.cycleblaze.com/journals/gap2015/uphill-all-the-way-and-i-mean-it/

Develop additional cultural events/programming. Start with a "Bike-Friendly themed Week or Month." [All 3 Districts]

Category

Revenue/Sales

Location

Arlington Heights (CT 3566.0), East Lexington Village (CT 3581), Bedford Center (CTs 3593.03 and 3591).

Events will happen throughout the three business districts as well as along the Minuteman Bikeway and at the connection points between the bikeway and the districts.

Origin

Contributors to Idea: Economic Development staff in the 3 communities, RRP Process participants, and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Bedford Cultural Council, Bedford Cultural District Partnership, Lexington Cultural Council, Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture Grants.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low: The following are estimates for a “Bike to Business” Week

Event Promotion
Printed Materials and Digital Outreach Expenses — $500

Event Programming Expenses
Performer (if committee decides on large block party) — $1000
Printing of Event Materials (ex. Bike Bingo cards) — $300
Prizes from local businesses — $500

Potential funding source
Business sponsors
Cultural Project Grants (Mass Cultural Council)
Festival Grants (Mass Cultural Council)

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

Project Task	Month					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Recruit 3-5 community partners for event planning	x					
Form event planning committee	x					
Meet with committee to set date, and create initial event plan		x				
Publicize events			x	x	x	
Hold event					x	
Meet with committee for event debrief						x

Risk

Low Risk

Event programming is experimental and temporary in nature, and therefore has no risks. If the event is not a success it should be adapted or discontinued.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following.

- Number of event attendees
- Foot traffic in the districts during and after the event

Partners and Resources

- Chamber of Commerce in each community
- Local bike shops including Battle Road Bikes (Lexington)
- Bicycle Advisory Committee in each town
- Arlington Bicycle Club
- Friends of Lexington Bikeways
- Businesses in the three districts
- Arlington Heights Community Association

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: Local businesses have experienced an economic shock from the Covid-19 pandemic, including those in the Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Village. The pandemic also changed the way people used public and recreational spaces with the Minuteman Bikeway seeing an increase in use. This project aims to leverage the increased use of the Bikeway by connecting cyclists to the adjacent business districts.

COVID-19 Impacts Addressed by this Project: The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant strain for local businesses in the three districts. A total of 69% of businesses in the three districts experienced a reduction in foot traffic in January and February 2021 compared to the previous year before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Seventy-two per cent (72%) of all businesses in the three districts were forced to operate at reduced capacity or hours due to COVID-19 resulting in a loss of customers and income.

Meanwhile, the Minuteman Bikeway, adjacent to the districts, saw increased use as residents and visitors sought out recreational activities and a safe method to commute.

Action Item

"Bike to Business" Week will be a series of events for one week during the spring or summer where the three participating towns will collaborate. For this event, community partners will take ownership of specific bike-themed events throughout the three business districts. Town staff will take a coordinating role convening community partners as they coordinate their respective events. Town staff will also take the lead on logistics and permitting for the events. The focus of the events will be on bringing cyclists from the Minuteman Bikeway into the adjacent business districts to familiarize themselves with the businesses and amenities.

Process

Below are action steps to complete "Bike to Business" Week.

1. Recruit 3–6 community partners for event planning
Community partners will be the key to this event's success. Local neighborhood associations, cycling groups, or other special interest groups should be recruited to plan an event during Bike Week. Local groups, especially very active organizations, will have the resident engagement already in place in order to plan the events and spread the word to the community.

- Send messages or make personal phone calls to inform representatives of local organizations of your intent to hold the event and inquire about their interest in coordinating one event during the week.
- Create a list of interested community groups and a rough idea of the type of event they are interested in coordinating.
- Recruit those most interested in being a part of the event planning committee.

2. Form event planning committee
You will need a team of community partners and town staff from Arlington, Bedford, and Lexington to make this event a successful collaboration. Form a small team of people who have the capacity to check in on a monthly basis early on, and then weekly as the event gets closer.

- After initial inquiries are sent out, select a small team of town staff who will partner with community leaders to coordinate the week of events.
- Confirm that all town departments who need to give approval for events are on the committee.

3. Meet with committee to set date and create initial event plan
Since this event will be a collaboration across three different towns, it will be important to find a date that has no major competing events. If there are any smaller events, they could be looped into the Bike Week umbrella and the events could be co-promoted.

Community partners are best positioned to select a theme and idea for their event, but town staff can play a supporting role by confirming what is possible logistically and regarding permitting. Events could include a bike scavenger hunt, "bike bingo," bike ride challenges and contests, themed or costumed bike rides, block parties with music, and other events. One event a day would be sufficient to not overwhelm any coordinators, volunteers, and those attending.

- Hold initial one-hour video call with committee members to start planning event and brainstorm ideas.
- Select date with no competing events.
- Brainstorm initial ideas with community partners and jointly set a deadline for partners to confirm their event theme/idea.
- Coordinating town staff should check in regularly with community partners to confirm if any town support is needed for permitting, logistics, or other support.
- Work internally to secure any permitting as needed.

Process (cont'd)

4. Publicize events
Once details for the event are confirmed, publicize through as many methods as possible. Community partners and local organizations are ideal partners for outreach as they have a network of residents who they can reach directly. An attractive poster should be designed, which could be posted on the Minuteman Bikeway, in the business districts, and through social media and town websites or newsletters.

- Design event flyer (or hire designer to create)
- Draft press release and distribute to community partners for their edits
- Send press release and flyers to media contacts
- Post event information on social media outlets and town website and any newsletters
- Recruit local partners to publicize events on their social media and email newsletters
- Post flyers along Minuteman Bikeway and in the business districts.

5. Hold event
In the days before the event and the week during the events, check in with community partners to confirm they have what they need and that activities are running smoothly. Attend as many events as possible to meet with business owners and cyclists.

- One week before event, confirm with event partners that details are set, and the event is ready to happen as planned.
- Town staff should plan to oversee and coordinate logistics for any larger events, including large block parties or concerts.
- Throughout the week of events, have town staff each attend 1–2 events to represent the town and hear feedback from attendees. Take photos and connect with business owners when possible.

6. Meet with committee for event debrief
In the week after the event, coordinate a one-hour phone call with the committee to debrief on how the event went and reflect on any challenges. This information could be used in the future if there is interest in making the event annual.

- Hold one-hour video call with event planning committee to gather feedback.

San Luis Obispo, California

Bike Month

San Luis Obispo, California, hosts a Bike Month every year to incentivize cycling and connect with local businesses.

Source: ***https://bikeslocounty.org/bike-month-rolls/***

Below is an except from San Luis Obispo's program of events for their annual Bike Month.

Tweed Ride — Meet up at Triangle Park at 1 p.m., then take a lively jaunt about town in your best turn-of-the-century attire and vintage velocipedes. We'll end up back at Triangle Park for lawn games, iced tea, and a great time.

Bike Happy Hour/Film Screening — Join us for the 3rd Annual Bicycle Happy Hour at Park Cinemas in Paso Robles. Six (6) p.m. social, followed by 7 p.m. screening of 1976 cycling classic, *A Sunday in Hell,* w/ $10 donation.

Rideshare at Farmer's Market — Bike Month isn't over yet! Visit Rideshare at the Thursday Night SLO Farmer's Market and vote for your favorite downtown bike-inspired window display. Collect your Bike Month t-shirt and let them know how your month has been going.

Pedal to Paella VI — Pedal-to-Paella is a bike celebration. Ride starts in the Santa Margarita Park at 5 pm and tours the back streets and alleys. Cruisers and junkers are best.

A group of riders participating in a "Tweed" costumed ride during Bike Month in San Luis Obispo

Seattle, Washington

Bike Bingo

The organization, Bicycle Benefits, in Seattle hosts "Bike Bingo" regularly. The game involves people biking to local businesses and activities and rewards participants with prizes. The organization hosts a launch party for the game and charges $3 per Bingo card to participate, using the funds for the nonprofit. They also host a Bike Tour to local donut shops to get people out into the business districts.

Bike Bingo Card from Seattle Bicycle Benefit event.

Portland, OR

Pedalpalooza

Source: https://www.shift2bikes.org/pedalpalooza-calenda

Every year, a cycling advocacy organization in Portland called Shift helps coordinate hundreds of volunteer-run events throughout the summer. The events, described on their website as "a festival of bikey fun" aim to promote cycling and inclusivity in the cycling community. Some sample events coordinated during the festival include:

Breakfast on the Bridges

- On the last Friday of every month, volunteers serve breakfast to cyclists on three of the city's bridges. Several local coffee shops and restaurant, in addition to other private donors, sponsor the event. There are also prizes for participating and posting pictures and hashtags on social media.

Picnic, Parks, and Swings Ride

- This family-friendly ride tours three different playgrounds and ends with a picnic near some local businesses. Cyclists are encouraged to bring money to buy lunch.

Boba, Bánh Mì, & Desserts ride

- This ride has three parts and supports three local businesses as participants stop to enjoy boba (bubble tea), bánh mì (sandwiches), and Asian desserts.

Superhero Bike Ride

- Cyclists are encouraged to dress as superheroes for this bike ride or wear their scrubs or other work clothes if they are essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Volunteers serving cyclists breakfast on the Burnside Bridge as a part of the Breakfast on the Bridges monthly event. Source: Breakfast on the Bridges PDX Facebook Page

Cyclists pose for a picture at the Superhero Bike Ride in 2020. Source: bikeportland.org/event/superheroes-pedalpalooza

Implement a Bike-Friendly Business District (BFBD) campaign. [All 3 Districts]

Category

Revenue/Sales

Location

Arlington Heights (CT 3566.0), East Lexington Village (CT 3581), Bedford Center (CTs 3593.03 and 3591).

Origin

Contributors to Idea: Economic Development staff in the 3 communities, RRP Process participants and consulting team, biking focus group participants.

In Bedford, the Chamber of Commerce has already initiated efforts to connect businesses with cyclists.

Potential Champions: Bedford Chamber of Commerce and Bicycle Advisory Committees in the 3 communities.

Budget

Low: The following are estimates for a "Bike-Friendly Business District." The estimates below are per district.

Website Platform and Design: $1,500
Graphic Design of Logo/Brochures, Posters: $2,000
Printed Brochures: $200
Printed Posters: $300
Window Decals (30): $300
Bicycle Benefits Starter Package (Materials for 30 businesses and stickers for 300 cyclists): $750

Potential funding source

- Business sponsors or membership fees
- Mass in Motion Mini-Grants

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

Project Task	Month					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Partner with Bicycle Advisory Committee	x					
Create committee	x					
Recruit businesses		x				
Develop benefits for businesses and recruit businesses		x				
Confirm participating businesses			x			
Create marketing strategy				x	x	
Launch and Publicize						x

Risk

Low Risk

The costs for this program are relatively low, so if the efforts by the coordinators are unsuccessful there will be little to no risk for those involved.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the program after implementation include the following.

- Number of participating businesses
- Number of stickers given to cyclists
- Increased foot traffic in the district after program launch
- Increased sales at the participating businesses (as reported by businesses)

Partners and Resources

Arlington Heights
- Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Arlington Heights Community Association
- Arlington Bicycle Club
- Arlington bike shops
- Arlington Heights businesses

East Lexington Village
- Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Friends of Lexington Bikeways
- Lexington bike shops and other businesses

Bedford Center
The Bedford Chamber of Commerce is in the early stages of a Bicycle-Friendly Benefit District program and has a model that could be replicated to Arlington and Lexington. Fourteen businesses are participating and have agreed to give discounts to those who have a special sticker representing the program.

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: This project aims to leverage the increased cycling activity on the Minuteman Bikeway from the COVID-19 pandemic. With the three business districts being in such close proximity to the bikeway, there is an opportunity to shift the bikeway's traffic (from both commuters and recreational cyclists) into economic activity.

COVID-19 Impacts Addressed by this Project: Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of business in all three of the districts experienced a year-over-year revenue loss in 2020 due to COVID-19. This was the case for 70% of businesses in Arlington Heights, 65% in Bedford Center, and 38% in E. Lexington. The businesses in all three towns also reported a decline in foot traffic in January and February 2021 compared to the previous year before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: COVID-19 lockdowns caused potential customers to seek to buy their goods and services online, via delivery, or curbside pickup rather than spending time shopping in person.

The pandemic also caused an increase in the use of the Minuteman Bikeway as residents sought out safe opportunities for recreation and commuting. However, the adjacent business districts often go overlooked as the proximity isn't always clear.

Action Item

A Bicycle-Friendly Business District (BFBD) is the integration of bicycling into a business district's operations, events, and promotions. BFBDs connect cyclists with local businesses by offering incentives and discounts to participating businesses. The member businesses are rewarded through a joint marketing campaign, which typically includes posters, brochures, and a website with their listing.

Partner with Bicycling Advisory Committee
For this initiative, it will be important for the town to partner closely with the Bicycling Advisory Committees to help design the program and lead the outreach to the cycling community. The Town of Bedford has already initiated this partnership.

Create committee
Once a cycling partner is in place, form a small committee with the partner, any needed town staff, and 2–3 local business owners. The committee will help in managing the process to recruit businesses, develop a program of benefits, design marketing, and launch the program.

Develop benefits for businesses and recruit businesses
Local businesses will need a clear list of benefits for being in the program. This could include marketing incentives such as being listed on a website and other promotional material or assistance getting cycling infrastructure installed at their businesses.

The committee should work together to develop the list. Then, business recruitment should be split up among committee members and done in person or via phone. Business owners should be presented with the benefits of the program (to them) and asked what they could offer to cyclists — such as discounts, incentives, etc.

Develop program of benefits for cyclists
With the participating businesses in place, the committee should develop a clear list of benefits for the cycling community. This can include discounts and available amenities at specific businesses as well as amenities available in the Business District.

Confirm participating businesses
With most of the program in place, circle back to any businesses that have not committed, and communicate the full program to them. They may decide to participate.

Create marketing strategy
The marketing of the benefits for the cyclists is the most important aspect of this program. A full marketing strategy should be designed, which includes a website, brochure, posters for participating businesses, and stickers for helmets so participants can identify themselves. Marketing could also include bike-related programming such as bike safety and maintenance workshops or themed bike rides or scavenger hunts.

Launch and publicize
After the website is finished and all materials are created and printed, distribute a press release to get the word out about the program launch. Reach out to local partners to help with publicizing.

Process

Below are action steps to launch a Bicycle-Friendly Business District.

1. Partner with a Bicycling Advisory Committee and business association

- Identify any potential partners
- Reach out to potential partners via phone to explain program and find out interest.

2. **Create committee**

- Once partner(s) are in place, create list of potential committee members, including town staff, staff from local chambers or business associations, and business owners
- Recruit committee members and set date for first meeting.

3. **Develop clear benefits for businesses to become members, recruit businesses**

- Set agenda for committee meeting to include discussing membership benefits for business owners
- Create draft list of benefits based off best practice examples including:
  - Business listed on website
  - Business listed on print material
  - Collaborating on bike-related events
  - Assistance in process or installing new bike racks.
- Hold committee meeting to confirm benefits and define roles.
- Create plan for business recruitment.
- Do outreach to businesses in person and via phone.

4. **Develop program of benefits for cyclists**

- After several businesses are recruited, draft a list of benefits to cyclists (this could be done as a committee or separately). Benefits could include:
  - Discounts on products
  - A weekly deal/discount day for cyclists
  - Permission to bring bike into business
  - Free water, access to wifi, bathroom and other amenities
  - Programming like themed bike rides, bike-related workshops
  - Access to bike repair stations

5. Confirm participating businesses

- Check back with any businesses that were unresponsive or unsure of their participation.

6. Create marketing strategy

- Hire a designer to create a website or create a plan to use internal resources for website.
  - Website should include a map of participating businesses and a list of benefits.
- Hire a designer to create a logo.
- Design (or hire a designer to create) flyers and posters for local businesses.
- Coordinate bike-related program including bike safety workshops or themed bike rides or scavenger hunts.

7. Launch and Publicize

- Draft a press release to send to contacts to spread the word about the program
- Outreach via social media, community partners, and participating businesses.

California

Bicycle Friendly Business District Pilots

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) implemented two pilot Bicycle Friendly Business Districts (BFBDs) in **Glendora** and **South Pasadena**, cities in San Gabriel Valley, in **2017-2018**.

Bike racks and public bike infrastructure

- 10 bike racks were installed outside.
- The bike racks allowed more bikers to park in the allotted locations.
- Participating businesses are able to request a free bike rack after approval and clearance from concerned parties.

Local partnerships and promotional efforts

- The districts identified "local business champions" to facilitate connections within the business community and develop **outreach** strategies and materials.
- In order to participate in the BFBD, businesses could also provide at least one (or a combination) of services, discounts, or amenities for customers and employees arriving by bike, foot, or transit.
- A clear logo was designed for signage and other marketing.

As part of the program, Estolano LeSar Advisors and ActiveSGV, local non-profit organizations, helped produce a report called the Bicycle Friendly Business District (BFBD) Implementation Manual. The manual clearly outlines the reasons to implement a Bicycle Friendly Business District, and steps to launch one in your district.

Source: https://media.metro.net/bikes/images/BFBD_Implementation_Manual_2019-04-02.pdf

Window decals used by businesses in Glendora BFBD to identify themselves as bike-friendly businesses. The decals include the BFBD website link and hashtag. Source: www.bikefriendlysgv.com

Volunteers doing outreach for the pilot Bicycle Friendly Business District. Source: Active San Gabriel Valley's Facebook page

California

Bicycle Friendly Business District Pilots (cont'd)

A clear, visually attractive logo and design theme was at the center of the BFBD pilot program. The brochure also featured a map and list of participating businesses.

Source: https://media.metro.net/bikes/images/BFBD_Implementation_Manual_2019-04-02.pdf

A sample brochure from the Bicycle Friendly Business District Implementation Manual. Source: https://media.metro.net/bikes/images/BFBD_Implementation_Manual_2019-04-02.pdf

California

Bicycle Friendly Business District Pilots (cont'd)

Pictured to the right:
A list of options for BFBD incentives from the Bicycle Friendly Business District Implementation Manual.
Source:
https://media.metro.net/bikes/images/BFBD_Implementation_Manual_2019-04-02.pdf

INCENTIVE OPTIONS

SUPPORT LOCAL BICYCLE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Implement business/company rides or riding clubs
- Share messages and notices on social media
- Post flyers about upcoming events and workshops

BASIC AMENITIES

- Free water
- Free wifi
- Use of restroom
- Seating in-store or storefront
- Bicycle tools, floor pump

ADVERTISE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

- Display a BFBD window cling or poster
- Participate in a local bike-friendly community event

DISCOUNTS ON PURCHASES

- 10-20% off purchases and services (this can be restricted to specific items or entire purchases)
- 10-20% off purchases and services during a specific day (e.g., "Bike Saturdays")
- Up to 50% off a specific item when paired with another purchase (e.g., 50% off pastry with coffee purchase)

GIVEAWAYS

- Free item or service with purchase
- Sponsorship or donated items to active transportation community events (e.g., Bike to Work Day, open streets events, etc.)

EMPLOYEE BICYCLE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Outdoor bicycle parking
- Secure indoor bicycle parking
- Bicycle valet parking
- Bicycle commuter benefits (e.g., parking cash out)
- Company riding clubs
- Company bike rides

PUBLIC BICYCLE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Outdoor bicycle parking
- Secure indoor bicycle parking
- Bicycle valet parking
- Bicycles allowed in-store
- Bicycle deliveries
- Bicycle repair stations

Long Beach California

Discount Program for Bicyclists

One hundred and fifty Long Beach businesses participate in the Bike Saturdays Discount
Program and give discounts and promotions for bicyclists every Saturday.

Source: Bicycling Means Business: The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure, http://bikewalkkc.org

Source: Bicycling Means Business: The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure, http://bikewalkkc.org

USA

Bicycle Benefits

Bicycle Benefits is a national organization that supports districts across the country to start their own Bicycle Friendly Benefit Districts. They provide materials for both businesses to buy directly if they want to be a "Member" of their program or for organizations to use their materials in bulk.

Source: www.bicyclebenefits.org

Public Realm Recommendations

Connect the Bikeway to Districts via designated access way improvements (e.g., pavement markings, design elements). [All 3 Districts]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located in Arlington Heights (Census Tract 3566.0), East Lexington Village (Census Track 3581), Bedford Center (Census Tract 3593.03 and 3591).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: RRP process participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Arlington, Bedford and Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committees.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: The budget for this project will include fees for design, materials/fabrication, and installation of markers guiding the way between the Minuteman Bikeway and the 3 business districts at strategic access points. A low-cost option is to use painted pavement markers. In this case, the budget would include graphic design fees for creating the pavement markings (template), paint (or thermal plastic), and installation. Alternatively, other more elaborate pavement markings could include the design, fabrication, and installation of a medallion or some other markers to be located at strategic access points (e.g., such as those used on the Freedom Trail).

Sample Ballpark Costs for Pavement Markings (such as customized painted sharrows):
10 sharrows x $350 to $450 per sharrow = $3,500 – $4,500

Potential Funding Sources:

- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
- MassHighway general funding programs,
- MassTrails Grant
- Contributions from local businesses
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) Grant Program (in partnership with Middlesex3 Coalition)

Design/fabrication of medallion markers could be provided by the Minuteman Career and Technical High School.

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline for completing the project is approximately 6 months. This includes coordination between the Town departments, boards, committees, civic organizations; design of pavement markings for the 3 districts; identification of partners and sponsors; and installation of pavement markings in the 3 districts. There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to installing pavement markings to lead Bikeway users to the 3 business districts in Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center. Potential impediments to successful implementation could be a lack of political will in the towns to install pavement markings or a lack of support or participation by business owners.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- **Increase in customers in the 3 districts.** The business owners could be surveyed 3 – 6 months after installing the pavement markings to get their opinions on the impacts of the enhanced access from the Bikeway.
- **Public opinion surveys** about the enhanced pavement markings for Bikeway access 6 months after installation.

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals who might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Planning and economic development staff from the towns of Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford for project leadership, funding sources, and implementation.
- Department of Public Works (DPW) from the towns of Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford for installation of pavement markings.
- Arlington Redevelopment Board
- Bicycle Advisory Committees (BAC) from the towns of Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford for input on pavement markings and access points.

Diagnostic

As with most business districts, Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center businesses are oriented to the street and sidewalks. However, with the Minuteman Bikeway in each of these districts, businesses have an opportunity to draw additional customers off the trail with some well-placed and designed pavement markings.

Some of the common factors inhibiting connection to the 3 districts and capturing of Bikeway consumers include:

- Lack of visual or physical connection (most businesses are not oriented toward the trail even when they abut the Bikeway).
- Insufficient wayfinding signage and pavement markings from the Bikeway to the districts.
- Lack of information about specific business offerings and other points of interest.
- Difficult access points in some areas.

The Arlington Heights District is located at Mile 3 on the Minuteman Bikeway. While the Bikeway runs parallel to the district, grade separation, underutilized properties, and limited/indirect connections create a visual and physical barrier. The two major grade separated access points are at Park Avenue (Park Ave) and Trader Joe's/Starbucks, both of which have staircases. The only existing official "at grade" access points are at Sunrise at Arlington (1395 Massachusetts Avenue (Mass Ave)) and True Fitness (30 Park Ave). There is an unofficial "at grade" entrance through the Gold's Gym Parking Lot.

Diagnostic (cont'd)

The East Lexington Business District is located at Mile 4 of the Minuteman Bikeway. The best access point between the District on Mass Ave and the Minuteman Bikeway is Bow Street, which is 180 feet up a gentle slope from the Bikeway. While the trail is at grade on Bow Street and within close proximity from most businesses in the district, there lacks a visual connection.

At Mile 10, Depot Park in Bedford Center is the terminus of the Minuteman Bikeway. This historic park is about ¼ mile from the historic center and the popular Bedford Market Place. This physical and visual disconnection from the Bikeway poses a challenge for businesses to attract customers off the Bikeway. The Narrow Gauge Trail is located across Loomis Street from Depot Park and provides walkers and cyclists access to Great Road (State Route 4, 62, 225) where Bedford's Historic Center and the Bedford Marketplace are located. Getting to the Narrow Gauge Trail from the end of the Minuteman Bikeway requires a right turn onto South Street and another right turn onto Loomis Street. The existing sign at Depot Park is not sufficient to direct customers through the required navigation and does not provide any indication that there is food and retail available just a short ride down the Narrow Gauge Trail.

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, etc., appears to be largely untapped despite the very close proximity of the Bikeway to the business districts. According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway averages 3,000 daily users. This represents a significant market opportunity, but it appears that these customers are not exiting the Bikeway to enter the districts. We completed a field experiment where we counted Bikeway users and observed their turn-off behavior in the three districts. Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts.

The lack of "turn-off" is hardly a surprise because there is hardly any signage and very limited visual clues to alert Bikeway users that food and retail are available within such close proximity.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: The Arlington Heights, Bedford Center and E. Lexington Business Districts were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. According to our business survey in March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially down compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more. It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that these improvements intend to address. The suggested pavement markings, along with signage and other elements, addressed in the wayfinding recommendation will help businesses capitalize on the largely untapped "Bikeway User" market segment (a segment that has grown over the last year as more people turned to bicycles and other public transport alternatives).

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer patronage in the business districts has still not come back to pre-COVID levels. The proposed strategy will help to open up new market opportunities for district business as old customers hopefully find their way back.

Action Item

This project includes using pavement markings to lead Bikeway users to the Business Districts. Designated access ways to be marked include:

- Arlington Heights — Park Avenue (and possibly at Sunrise Apartment Complex)
- Bedford Center — Depot Park to Narrow Gauge Trail
- E. Lexington — Bow Street.

These pavement markings are intended to be consistent in terms of graphics, colors, and materials among the 3 communities and consistent with the other suggested wayfinding signage. One option is to use customized sharrows.

Definition of Sharrow: A road marking in the form of two inverted V-shapes usually above a bicycle, used in situations where cyclists and drivers must coexist in the same lane. It is meant to help cyclists stick to recommended bike routes and alerts drivers to the likely presence of bikes.

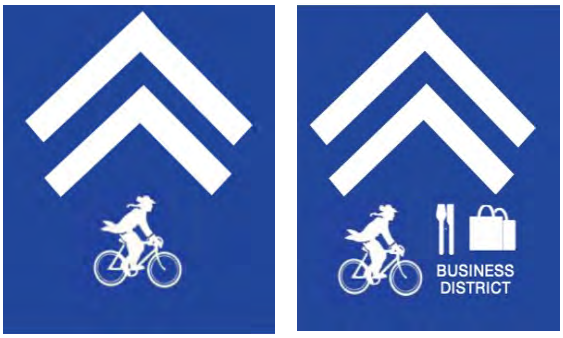
Example of traditional sharrow

A customized Business District sharrow incorporating the Minuteman Bikeway logo along with the food and retail icons could be used to lead customers to the Business Districts. The food and retail icons should be consistent with icons suggested by Toole Design Group (authors of the 2014 study — "Navigating the Minuteman Bikeway"). A customized Minuteman sharrow incorporating the Minuteman logo without the food and retail icons could be used to lead people to the Bikeway from the Districts.

- In Arlington Heights, a Business District sharrow could be installed in the southbound lane of Park Ave going toward Mass Ave and the business district. The Minuteman sharrow could be located on Park Ave in the northbound lane leading back to the Bikeway. A potential second location for these types of sharrows or other markings could be the Sunrise accessway.

- In Bedford Center, Business District sharrows could be installed on South Street (northbound) and Loomis Street (eastbound) leading users to the Narrow Gauge Trail. A smaller coordinating symbol could be used on the Narrow Gauge Trail (northbound) going toward Great Road leading trail users to the business district. Minuteman Sharrows could also be located to direct users in the opposite direction back to the Bikeway.

- In East Lexington, a Business District sharrow could be installed on Bow Street near the Bikeway in the southbound lane going toward Massachusetts Avenue and the business district and a second Minuteman Sharrow could be located on Bow Street in the northbound lane at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue leading trail users back to the Bikeway.



Example of customized sharrows (for illustration purposes only - design to be determined). Image: FinePoint Associates

Example of customized sharrow placement on Bow Street leading to E. Lexington Business District (for illustration purposes only). Photo Source: Google Maps; Image: FinePoint Associates

Process

1. **Collaborate and Seek Input on Pavement Markings**
   The Towns (led by the planning and economic development staff) should solicit input from key stakeholders on the preferred type, design, and location of pavement markings to be installed in the 3 districts. The markings should be coordinated and consistent with the additional suggested wayfinding signage.

2. **Prepare Final Design and Obtain Permits**
   Prepare final design of pavement markings, identify materials and costs for installation, and obtain any necessary local or state permits.

3. **Funding Allocation**
   Determine sources and levels of funding for the pavement markings.

4. **Installation**
   Hire contractors (or use DPW) to install and oversee installation.

The streets and thoroughfares where the pavement markings are proposed are under local jurisdiction and there are no anticipated requirements for property purchase or transfers, site clearance or remediation, or training and technical assistance. The Town will have to go through a vendor procurement process to select contractors to install pavement markings.

PUBLIC REALM

Boston, MA

The Freedom Trail

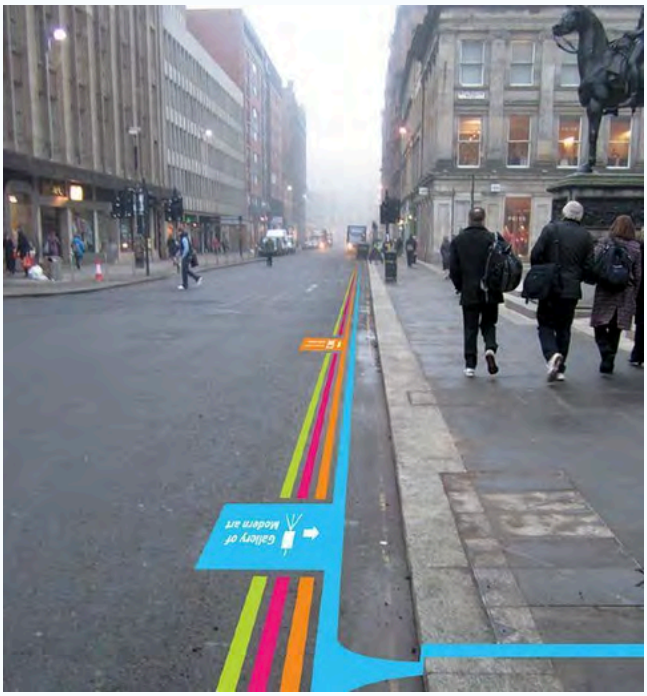
The Freedom Trail was created in 1953 to provide access to important historic landmarks in Boston. The 2.5-mile-long trail winds between Boston Common to the Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown. It follows streets and sidewalks through the city and passes by 16 locations significant to the history of the United States. Pavement markings are largely inlaid red brick, and points of interest along the trail are identified with simple medallions. The Freedom Trail is overseen by the City of Boston's Freedom Trail Commission and is supported in part by grants from various non-profits and foundations, private philanthropy, and Boston National Historical Park. The National Park Service operates a visitors' center on the first floor of Faneuil Hall where they offer tours, provide free maps of the Freedom Trail and other historic sites, and sell books about Boston and United States' history.

Sources: Wikipedia and www.thefreedomtrail.org

Medallion marker embedded in pavement to guide Freedom Trail users, MA. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Examples of Pavement Markers Used as Wayfinding

PUBLIC REALM



The Cycle Path, Andrew Lang Graphic Design. Source: www.pinterest.cl/hanancmm

Pavement markers with QR codes encourage downloads of the City of Sydney's Culture Walks app. Source: brandculture.com.au

Measuring tape painted along the sidewalk on the west side of Spadina, Toronto Fashion District. Source: flickr.com

Examples of Pavement Markers Used as Wayfinding (cont'd)

PUBLIC REALM

Fall River Wayfinding. Source: walkBoston.org

Source: https://terrain-mag.com/st-louis-gets-100-miles-of-bike-routes

Source: hubss.com/projects/category/community-branding/

Install additional bike and pedestrian amenities in the Districts. [All 3 Districts]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located in the Arlington Heights Study Area (Census Tract 3566.0), East Lexington Study Area (Census Tracts 3581), and Bedford Center Study Area (Census Tracts 3593.03 and 3591).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: RRP process participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Towns of Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford Economic Development staff, Planning Boards, and Bike Advisory Committees.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Medium Budget ($50k – $200k)

Budget: The budget for this project will depend on how the work is carried out. Each of the three towns will need to determine the type, location, and quantity of bicycle and pedestrian amenities needed in the business districts, and whether the Department of Public Works (DPW) or a private contractor will be responsible for installation. Some bicycle and pedestrian amenities identified in the public participation process include the following.

- Bike Racks (estimated at $240/unit)
- Bike Corrals (estimated at $3,600/unit)
- Bike Repair Station ($800 – $1,600/unit)
- Bikeshare Station (no cost to towns)
- Bike Lanes ($1 – $7.62/linear foot)
- Bike Lane Stencil ($300 – $324/stencil)
- Street Furniture — benches ($1,600/unit average)
- Street Furniture — trash receptacle ($1,300, $500 – $3,000)
- Water Fountain/Bottle Filling Station

The wayfinding signage, information kiosks, and public art discussed in other recommendations are also amenities that would complement the biking and pedestrian environment.

Potential Funding Sources:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) through Community One Stop for Growth (planning phase)
- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program
- MassDOT Transportation grants
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Municipal funds

Timeframe	Short Term (<5 years) A general timeline for completing the project is approximately 2 years. This includes preparation of a plan for bike and pedestrian amenities in each of the districts, public vetting of amenity plan, approval by the Select Boards, acquisition of elements, and installation. If the project is coordinated between the three towns, there may be a cost savings. There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.
Risk	Low Risk There are no significant risks to installing additional bike and pedestrian amenities in the three districts. Potential impediments to successful implementation could be lack of support by the towns to install bike and pedestrian amenities due to cost, concerns over adequate space on the sidewalks, or lack of community interest (i.e., not considered a high priority).
Key Performance Indicators	Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following: ▪ **Increase in access to businesses by customers on foot or bike.** Once the bike and pedestrian amenities are installed, the towns could count the number of pedestrians on the sidewalks, Bikeway users entering the districts, and utilization of bike racks, corrals, and other amenities. ▪ **Increase in customers for businesses for better utilization/activation of the sidewalks.** This could be somewhat difficult to measure precisely; however, business owners could be surveyed 3 – 6 months after installation of the bike and pedestrian amenities to get their opinion about the impacts on customer traffic.
Partners & Resources	A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below: ▪ Arlington, Lexington and Bedford Planning and Economic Development staff for project leadership, funding sources, and communication with business owners and residents. ▪ Arlington, Lexington and Bedford Department of Public Works for project management and Select Board for support of the project and public outreach. ▪ Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center business and property owners for input on and support for the streetscape improvements.
Diagnostic	**How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase:** To attract more biking customers, it is important to make them feel welcome, comfortable, and accommodated. Having a safe, convenient place to park their bike is a key concern for cyclists. During the diagnostic phase, we heard comments from stakeholders regarding the need for additional bike amenities. One specific comment that came up was, “If you want people to bike to stores and really shop, you should provide parking that accommodates cargo bikes.” In addition, highly visible bike parking sends a signal that the area welcomes and encourages cyclists.

Diagnostic (cont'd)

Other amenities such as water fountains/bottle filling stations and public restrooms are important and will attract cyclists to an area. Comfort features such as benches help to keep cyclists and pedestrians in the area longer.

In the 3 districts, amenities such as bike racks, bike corrals, and repair stations are limited and inconsistent. While there are some U-shaped bike racks on the sidewalks in Arlington Heights as part of the previous streetscape project, few businesses have bike racks on site. No bike racks were observed in East Lexington, and a bike share station was removed last year from Berman's Wine & Spirits along the Bikeway due to lack of use. Bedford has a bike repair station and bike racks at Depot Park and a few bike racks at Bedford Marketplace. The installation of additional bike and pedestrian amenities will enhance access and walkability in the three districts allowing local business to attract more customers on foot, on bike, and in cars.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: The additional bike and pedestrian amenities in the three business districts are intended to address the decline in foot traffic and sales experienced since the onset of the pandemic. By providing additional attention to the biking and pedestrian consumer segments, we hope to attract new users to the business districts while promoting healthy communities and "active transportation." Additional bike and pedestrian amenities will be highly visible to pedestrians on the sidewalk, cyclists, and travelers in cars.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses in Arlington Heights and East Lexington were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer counts in these districts has still not come back to pre-COVID levels.

Action Item

Adding more bike and pedestrian amenities will enrich and activate the three business districts. Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford should work together in planning for additional bike and pedestrian amenities. Actions to be taken in making these improvements include the following key steps:

- The towns should coordinate the planning process for bike and pedestrian amenities in the three business districts, including the location of elements such as bike lanes, bike racks and corrals, bikeshares, bike repair stations, information kiosks, public art installations, wayfinding signs, and business directories.
- Retain a consultant(s) to prepare plan for bike and pedestrian amenities including the location of elements, design specifications, quantities, installation plan, and cost estimate.
- Install new bike and pedestrian furnishings.

Process

1. **Hire Planning Consultant**
   Collectively or individually, the three towns should hire a consultant with bicycle and streetscape planning qualifications to prepare a plan for addition or replacement amenities in the districts. The consultant should identify the location, type, and quality of elements such as bike racks and corrals, bikeshares, bike repair stations, benches, trash receptacles, public water fountains, and information kiosks. The consultant should provide design specifications, installation plan, and a cost estimate. The consultant should also work with the communities to identify the availability of potential public restrooms.

2. **Kick Off Meeting**
   Conduct meetings between the planning consultant, town planning and economic development, DPW, Planning Board, the Select Board, key business and property owners, neighborhood representatives, and bicycle advocacy groups for input on the location and type of bike and pedestrian amenities to be installed in the three business districts.

3. **Public Workshops**
   Conduct interactive workshops with property owners, business owners, relevant boards and committees, stakeholder groups, and interested residents in order to educate the public about the project and obtain sufficient input on the selected locations and types of bike and pedestrian amenities to be added to the three districts.

4. **Prepare Amenities Plan**
   Prepare a plan with locations and specifications for the amenities.

5. **Install Bike and Pedestrian Amenities**
   Acquire selected bike and pedestrian furnishing and equipment, obtain any necessary permits, secure funding sources, hire contractor (if DPW is not the installer), install elements, and oversee installation.

Since the bike and pedestrian amenities are anticipated to be within the public right-of-way, there are no requirements for property purchase and transfers, site clearance or remediation, or training and technical assistance. The towns will have to go through a vendor procurement process to select a contractor to install the bike and pedestrian amenities if the DPW is not the installer.

Pittsford and Fairport, NY

New York Canalway Trail

The Canalway Trail stretches across over 524 miles of upstate New York running from Albany to Buffalo and connecting to several cities and villages along the way. The network of multi-use trails runs parallel to current or former sections of the Erie, Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca, and Champlain canals. The longest of these is the 365-mile-long Erie Canalway Trail, which was fully completed in 2021. Most of the Erie Canal Trail is located on the former "towpaths" adjacent to the canal, which were used by mules to pull boats along the waterway. In many villages connected to the canal, these towpaths and the adjacent business districts have been enhanced with multiple bike and pedestrian amenities. The villages of Pittsford and Fairport in suburban Rochester, NY, are good examples of vibrant districts with amenities such as bike racks and corrals, repair stations, bike share stations, park benches, movable tables and chairs, outdoor dining, gazebos, picnic pavilions, informational kiosks, business directories, and other elements desired to create a strong connection between the trail and the adjacent businesses.

Source:https://bikeeriecanal.com, Wikipedia

Bike and pedestrian amenities, Fairport Village, NY Canal Path. Photos: FinePoint Associates

Example of Bike Amenities

Various Communities

Colorful Bile Rack, Danvers, MA

Covered Bike Corral, Cambridge, MA

Creative Bike Rack with seaside theme, Scitiutate, MA

Thematic Bike Rack, Gloucester, MA

Fish-inspired Bike Rack, Turners Falls, MA

Photos: Brovitz Community Planning & Design

East Aurora, NY

Public Art, Bike Rack

Photos: Brovitz Community Planning & Design

Implement sidewalk zones to edit existing streetscape and add new elements. [East Lexington, Arlington Heights]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located in the Arlington Heights Study Area (Census Tract 3566.0) and East Lexington Study Area (Census Tracts 3581).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: RRP process participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Towns of Arlington and Lexington Planning Boards, Planning and Economic Development Staff, Select Board.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Large Budget ($200k +)

The budget for this project will depend on how the work is carried out. If the Town planning staff in Arlington and Bedford have the experience and time, it is possible for this project to be accomplished "in-house." The Towns could also retain a zoning consultant (including MAPC) to evaluate and revise current outdoor merchandise display and spill-out regulations. In this scenario, planning and economic development staff would assist in identifying model regulations, organizing public participation, and guiding the adoption process. As outdoor displays and spill outs tend to be a sensitive topic, having Town staff directly involved could be a critical part of the process. The preliminary cost estimate of retaining a consultant with assistance from Town staff is provided below.

Budget: The budget for this project will depend on how the work is carried out. The Lexington and Arlington planning and economic development staff will likely lead the project with assistance from the Department of Public Works (DPW). The towns will need to retain a design consultant with planning, landscape architecture, and civic engineering qualifications to prepare streetscape plans for the utilization of each section of the sidewalks. Installation of the streetscape improvements will require a contractor with experience in roadway and sidewalk construction.

The scope of streetscape improvements in both business districts should include basic concrete pavers/apron and curbing (recycled where possible), new street trees where needed, pedestrian level (relocate and reuse existing lights where possible), benches, bike racks and corrals, and wayfinding elements. Cost estimating will consider the following physical characteristics of the two districts:

- Arlington Heights — From the Town Line (Curb Extension at Mal's Auto Body) to the Forest Street intersection, there are 4,695 linear feet of sidewalk and 14 intersections on both side of Massachusetts Avenue. The sidewalks are an estimated 8 feet in width on average.

Budget and Sources of Funding (cont'd)

- East Lexington — From the Town Line (Curb Extension at Mal's Auto Body) to the Oak Street intersection, there are 3,143 linear feet of sidewalk and 9 intersections on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue. The sidewalks are an estimated 6 feet in width on average.

Potential Funding Sources:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) through Community One Stop for Growth (planning phase)
- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program
- MassDOT Transportation grants
- Municipal funds.

Timeframe

Medium Term (5-10 years)

A general timeline for completing the project is approximately 3 years. This includes preparation of the streetscape design plans, public vetting of design plans and standards, approval by the Lexington and Arlington Select Boards, selection of design and installation contractors, and construction. The project schedule will have to be coordinated between the two towns and the project costs could be reduced if both Arlington and Lexington agree to work together and retain the same streetscape designer and construction contractor. This may also reduce the overall timeframe for the streetscape improvements. There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to constructing streetscape improvements except for the temporary disruption of access to businesses as the sidewalks are being reconstructed. Potential impediments to successful implementation could be a lack of political will to make changes to the existing sidewalks due to cost, liability concerns with adjacent property owners, or disruption to businesses; lack of community interest (i.e., not considered a high priority); and business concerns over impact of revenue during construction.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- **Increase in customers for businesses that result from streetscape improvements, ADA accessibility improvements, and better utilization/activation of the sidewalks.** This could be somewhat difficult to measure precisely; however, business owners could be surveyed 3 – 6 months after construction of the streetscape improvements are completed to get their opinions about the impacts on customer traffic.

- **Increase the amount of time customers stay in the District.**

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Arlington and Lexington Planning and Economic Development staff for project leadership, funding sources, and communication with business owners and residents.
- Arlington and Lexington Department of Public Works for project management and Select Board for support of the project and public outreach.
- Arlington Heights and East Lexington business and property owners for input on and support for the streetscape improvements.

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: Streetscape improvements in Arlington Heights and East Lexington will create an attractive, safe and functional setting for local businesses. In Arlington Heights, some streetscape elements interfere with the flow of pedestrian movement and recently, there have been tripping accidents (including a broken nose) due to sidewalks being in disrepair. In East Lexington, sidewalks need improvement and the streetscaping and amenities are minimal. Improvements would provide businesses an opportunity to enhance their visibility, attract more customers, and by making customers more comfortable, hopefully entice them to stay in the business district longer (translating to more sales).

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: Arlington Heights and East Lexington were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. According to our business survey in March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially lower compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more. It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that new streetscape improvements intend to address. As businesses begin to fully reopen, the new sidewalk treatments, landscaping, furnishings, and space for spill outs will provide more opportunity for businesses to increase marketing efforts to bring people back to Arlington Heights and East Lexington.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses in Arlington Heights and East Lexington were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer behavior in these districts has still not returned. Streetscape improvements together with new business spill-out opportunities will be highly visible to pedestrians on the sidewalk, cyclists on the Bikeway, and travelers in cars. This will help customers overcome the lack of access to the customer market and create a more vibrant image of the district leading to rapid economic recovery.

Existing Conditions

East Lexington Current Streetscape Conditions:

Streetscape treatments are very limited in this district. The sidewalks are a combination of concrete and asphalt and generally in fair to poor condition with several interruptions created by wide curb cuts. The planting strips are inconsistent in width and generally not well maintained. They do not provide for a consistent pattern of street trees. There are 10 crosswalks but only one curb extension between Mal's Service Center on both sides of Mass Ave. Many of the crosswalk paintings are also worn down. All of this leads to higher speed traffic in the district creating a challenging environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Community participants indicated that light levels at night in the Arlington Heights (and East Lexington) appear to be insufficient.

Arlington Heights Current Streetscape Conditions:

On the western segment of Mass Ave from Mal's Service Center at the town line to Paul Revere Road, the streetscape is basic with narrow concrete sidewalks and street trees planted at the curb. Some of the trees have overgrown their tree pits while others are in poor condition or have been removed.

From Paul Revere to Davis Street, several additional streetscape treatments have been installed along the corridor, including more street trees, raised granite planters, cobrahead streetlights, and ornamental pedestrian level lights. Some of the lampposts are set back from the curb, limiting visibility and sidewalk use. Most of the sidewalks in this section (particularly on the north side) have brick pavers. There are also curb extensions and crosswalks such as the one at the MBTA Busway Facility. Streetscape treatments with brick curb extensions, street trees, raised granite planters, ornamental lights, benches, and crosswalks are located on all corners at the intersection of Mass Ave and Park Ave.

Generally, these streetscape treatments are dated and in poor condition with lose brick pavers and missing street trees. Additionally, the inconsistent position of the raised granite planters, street trees (some in the middle of the sidewalks), benches (perpendicular to the street and at the curb), and some pedestrian lights (set back from the curb) create obstacles for pedestrians and limit businesses from fully using the sidewalk for spill-out treatments such as outdoor seating and display.

Action Item

Streetscape improvements are a common way to enrich and activate a business district. Arlington and Lexington should work together to install new streetscape treatments. Actions to be taken in making streetscape improvements include the following key elements.

- Retain a consultant(s) to prepare design specifications for streetscape improvements and a contractor to install the plans once approved by the Towns and State.
- Work collaboratively with the towns and the business community to create a vibrant and activated streetscape with the following elements:
  - Handicapped accessibility improvements at pedestrian crossings.
  - On-street parking with intermittent landscape and tree planters, mid-block curb extensions and crosswalks, and parklets to extend the sidewalks and enhance the pedestrian environment.
  - Attractive sidewalks with a broad combination of street trees, landscaping, and furnishings that are highly functional and well maintained.
  - Design for spill-outs spaces and other activation applications such as parklets, pop-up stores, public art, merchandise displays, sidewalk cafés, and other temporary or incremental treatments to improve vitality.
  - Pedestrian level sidewalk elements such as bike racks and corrals, benches, business directories, community information kiosks, banners, and interpretive history sign boards.
- Install sustainable streetscape elements such as pervious pavers, stormwater street tree planters, native landscaping, and solar lighting.

Process

Once a design consultant is selected, the streetscape project should follow the process below.

1. **Kick-Off Meeting**
   Arlington and Lexington should conduct meetings between the design consultant, town planning and economic development, DPW, Planning Board, the Select Board, and key stakeholders including East Lexington and Arlington Heights business and property owners, neighborhood representatives, and bicycle advocacy groups for input on the design and installation of streetscape improvements.

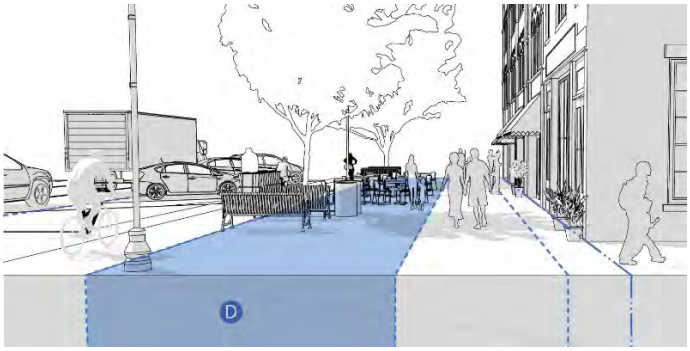
2. **Public Workshops**
   Conduct interactive workshops with property owners, business owners, relevant boards and committees, stakeholder groups, and interested residents in order to educate the public about the project and obtain sufficient input on the overall design of the streetscape improvements and standards for sidewalk activation.

3. **Prepare Streetscape Design Plan and Activation Standards**
   Prepare design specifications and activation standards for each sidewalk zone as follows.

Process (cont'd)

- Street Enhancement Zone: Prepare design plan and activation standards for the street enhancement zone, which includes the area extending past the curb where the following components may be placed: sidewalk curb extensions and crosswalks, bicycle lanes, bike racks and corrals, planter islands, bus pullouts and shelters, and exercise stations. Temporary activation uses like parklets and food trucks may be allowed.

- Furnishing and Utility Zone: Prepare design plan and activation standards for this zone, which is the area of the sidewalk where pedestrians might utilize benches or café seating and where many of the utilities, like lighting and hydrants, are located. This zone is also where street trees are typically planted. Design specifications and standards should be provided for street trees and tree pits, public seating, bicycle parking, and driveways/alley crossings.

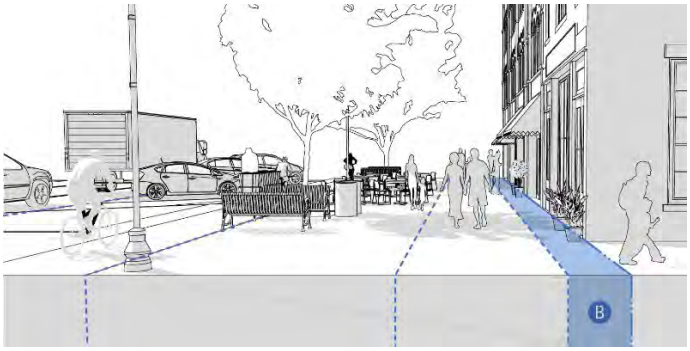


- Pedestrian Throughway Zone: Prepare design specifications for this zone, which is the primary portion of the sidewalk used for active movement and travel by pedestrians. The zone must be designed with an adequate width for comfortable two-way pedestrian movement, remain clear of obstacles, and have a relatively level paving surface.

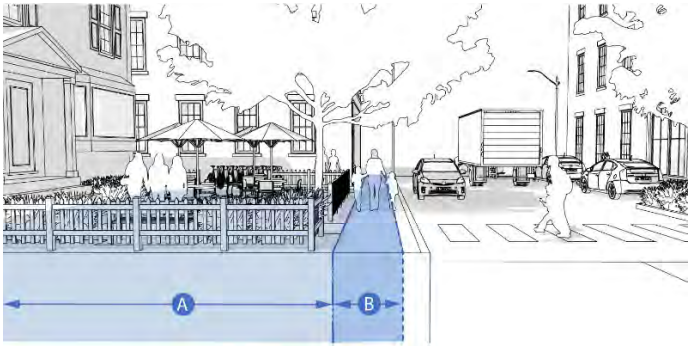
Graphics: City of Northampton Draft Form-Based Code, October 2019, prepared by Dodson & Flinker and Brovitz Community Planning & Design

Process (cont'd)

- Public Frontage Zone: Prepare design specifications for this zone, which is the area between the Pedestrian Throughway and the front lot line of buildings. The size and character of the Public Frontage Zone varies widely depending on context. On wide sidewalks, this zone provides a transitional space for people who are entering a building or viewing a storefront. The materials and design specifications are typically similar to the pedestrian throughway or building frontage zone but may differ in their functions. Design standards should be provided for café seating and outdoor merchandise displays.



- Building Frontage Zone: Prepare design specifications for this zone, which is the area in front of a building or lot that abuts a public right-of-way. This is a crucial part of the public realm and can define its character. Functionally, this zone provides a transition between the public space and private space, and may include semi-public or private outdoor spaces such as alcoves, dooryards, plazas, forecourts, dining terraces, arcades, galleries, and porches, which should be included in the activation and design standards.



4. **Implement Streetscape Plan and Design Standards**
   Prepare detailed cost estimates for streetscape improvements and activation design standards, obtain any necessary permits, secure funding sources, hire contractors, prepare the construction schedule, and oversee construction.

Since the streetscape improvements are within the public right-of-way, there are no anticipated requirements for property purchase and transfers, site clearance or remediation, or training and technical assistance. The City will have to go through a vendor procurement process to select a contractor to design and construct the streetscape improvement.

Graphics: City of Northampton Draft Form-Based Code, October 2019, prepared by Dodson & Flinker and Brovitz Community Planning & Design

Create a well-marked public "at-grade" accessway from the Bikeway through parking lot at 30 Park Ave. [Arlington Heights]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located at 30 Park Avenue (Parcel #59-1-12) in the Arlington Heights Study Area (Census Tract 3566.0).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: RRP process participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Town of Arlington Select Board and Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (to be determined).

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: The budget for this project will depend on the cooperation and involvement of the current or future property owner. It is anticipated that the project costs will include the acquisition of a 15-foot access easement between the Minuteman Bikeway and Park Avenue (approximately 300 feet long), protective bollards, pavement markings, and directional signs from the access point on Park Avenue to the Minuteman Bikeway.

- 15-Foot Easement over 300 feet = To be determined
- Pavement Markings (4 sharrows x $350 to $450 per sharrow = $1,400 – $1,800
- Bollards (30 at 10 feet on center @ $800 – $1,200 per unit = $24,000 – $36,000
- Directional Signs (1 at Bikeway, 1 at Park Ave. @$240 – $528) = $480 – $1,056

Potential Funding Sources:

- Participation of the property owner as part of a future redevelopment project on the site
- MassTrails Grant
- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline for completing the project is approximately 3 years. The Town should work with the property developer/owner to establish a formal public at-grade connection between the Bikeway and Park Avenue through the site, which would benefit future businesses and residents on the site as well as the general public.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to installing an at-grade accessway over the property to provide a formal connection between the Bikeway and Park Avenue for trail users. Potential impediments to successful implementation could be a lack of interest by the current property owner or future developer in locating the bike accessway on site or lack of funding available from the Town, State, or other sources.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- **Increase in customers in the Arlington Heights business district.** The business owners could be surveyed 3 – 6 months after installing the public at-grade accessway to get their opinions on the impacts of enhanced formal access from the Bikeway.
- **Public opinion surveys of trail users** about the enhanced public accessway at Park Avenue for Bikeway users 6 months after installation.

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- The current property owner or future developer to provide the formal accessway and other enhancements to the frontage area along the Bikeway as part of a development site plan.
- Arlington Planning and Economic Development staff for project leadership, funding sources, and implementation.
- Arlington Department of Public Works (DPW) for oversight and possibly, installation of the at-grade accessway.
- Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (ABAC) and other advocacy groups for input on accessway enhancements, grant support and assistance in educating trail users about the new formal accessway.

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: There is no official "at-grade" entrance from the Bikeway to Park Ave, the major road leading to Arlington Heights Business District. There is a staircase on the west side of Park Ave, which is not conducive to bikers, and an "unofficial" at-grade entrance through a private parking lot on the east side of Park Ave, which is not at all obvious to Bikeway users. This condition hinders potential customers from exiting the Bikeway and entering the Business District.

The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, etc., appears to be largely untapped despite the very close proximity of the Bikeway to the Arlington Heights Business District. According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway averages 3,000 daily users. This represents a significant market opportunity, but it appears that these customers are not exiting the Bikeway to enter the district. We completed a field experiment where we counted Bikeway users and observed their turn-off behavior in the three districts. Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts.

Diagnostic (cont'd)

The lack of "turn-off" is hardly a surprise because there is very little signage or other visual clues to alert Bikeway users that food and retail are available within a few hundred feet.

The visibility of this site along Park Avenue, its proximity to the 100% corner of the business district, and its direct access to the Bikeway makes the site a superior location for the primary accessway between the district and Bikeway. CDC guidelines also suggest that COVID transmissions are significantly reduced outdoors. The at-grade accessway to the Bikeway will allow users to gather in an attractive open space and interface with local businesses. Over time, this will help local businesses recoupe revenues that have been lost as a result of the pandemic.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: Arlington Heights was significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. According to our business survey in March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially lower compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more. It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that the access improvements intend to address. The suggested official at-grade accessway will help businesses capitalize on the largely untapped "Bikeway User" market segment (a segment that has grown over the last year as more people turned to bicycles and other public transport alternatives due to COVID).

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer behavior in the business districts has still not returned. The proposed improved at-grade access to the Bikeway will help to open up new market opportunities for district businesses as old customers hopefully find their way back.

Action Item

There is an "unofficial" at-grade accessway through the Total Fitness parking lot (at 30 Park Avenue) that serves as a short cut from the Bikeway to the business district. However as noted, Bikeway users would likely not notice this nondescript access point unless they had previous knowledge about it. Plus, the informal accessway crosses private property through a parking lot without protective barriers, pavement markings or any indication to guide the users to the street and the business district.

The recommended action is to convert this "unofficial" accessway to an official well-marked safe accessway.

A redevelopment project will present the opportunity to work with the property developer to establish a formal public at-grade connection between the Bikeway and Park Avenue as part of a redevelopment plan. An accessway through the site would benefit future businesses and residents on the site as well as the general public. This may be accomplished by the property owner granting an easement or transferring ownership of a small segment to be used for an accessway.

Action Item (cont'd)

In order to achieve an attractive and safe accessway for Bikeway users, the project requires a dedicated easement (approximately 15 feet in width and approximately 300 feet in length) between the Minuteman Bikeway on the east side of the Park Avenue underpass and the existing sidewalk on the east side of Park Avenue. The 15-foot accessway would include a series of bollards along the east edge to protect trail users from vehicles in the adjacent parking lot (pavement markings and wayfinding signs would also be installed to direct Bikeway users to and from the Arlington Heights business district as described in other recommendations of this plan).

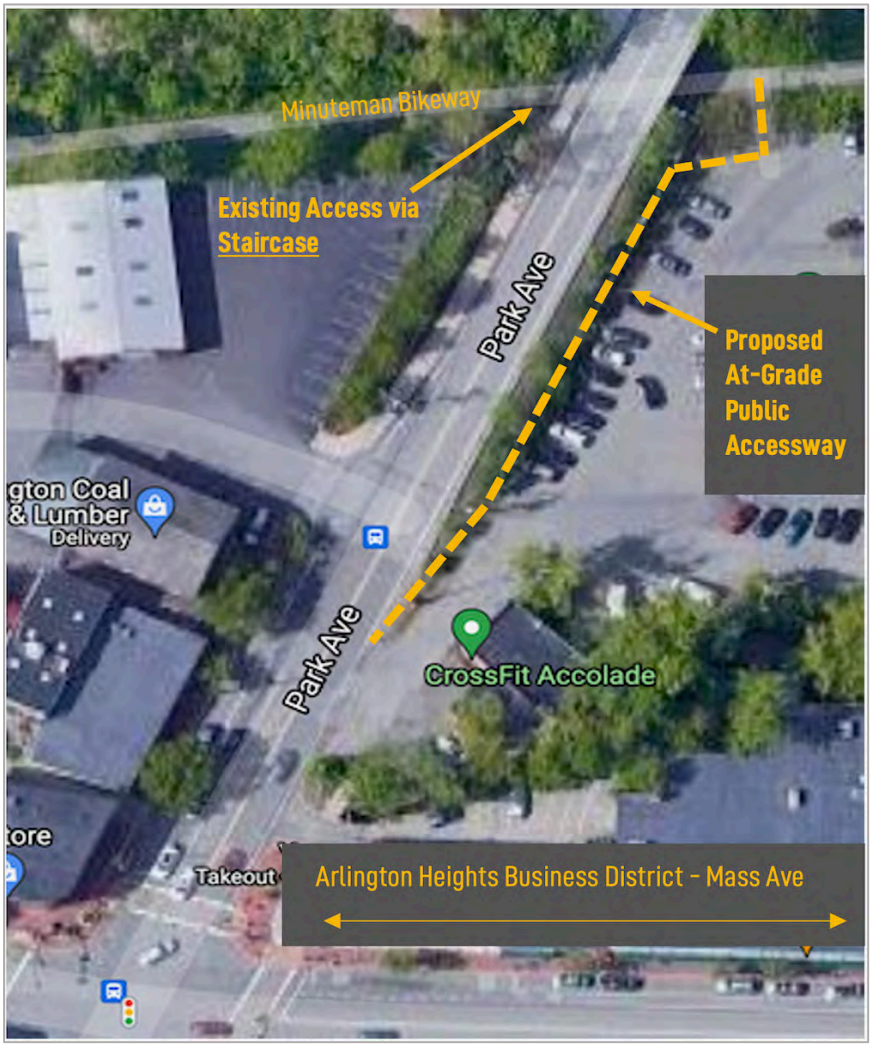
Define At-Grade Accessway Placement and Conceptual Design: The Town of Arlington should prepare a conceptual plan that generally lays out the location, dimensions, and treatments of the proposed at-grade accessway. The concept plan should also identify enhancements, including protective bollards, pavement or other preferred surface materials, pavement markings (i.e., sharrows or similar symbols), and wayfinding sign types and messages. Lastly, the Town should support conceptual design with the property owner or future developer, representatives from the business district and bike advocacy groups.

Install At-Grade Accessway: Obtain necessary permits (i.e., from the State for direct access to the Bikeway) and install the accessway, which may be completed by a future developer, Arlington DPW, or a contractor hired by the town.

"Unofficial" Bikeway access to Arlington Heights Business District. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Existing "Unofficial" Bikeway access requires users to travel through a private parking lot. There is no marked pathway or separation from vehicles. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Action Item (cont'd)



Proposed at-grade public accessway. Photo: Google Maps

Process

1. **Collaborate and Seek Input on Accessway Design**
   The Town (led by the planning and economic development staff) should coordinate with the current property owner (or future developer) to inform them of their interest in locating a public accessway on the property and seek their input on the potential layout and design as an element of site plan review for a future redevelopment project. The Town should also solicit input from key stakeholders (i.e., business owners, residents, and bike advocacy groups) on the preferred design elements of the future accessway.

2. **Determine Final Design and Responsibility for Installation**
   The Town should coordinate with the property owner or future developer on the final layout and design elements of the public accessway and responsible parties for costs and installation. This should be determined during the site plan review and permitting process.

3. **Alternative Funding and Installation**
   If a future developer is not responsible for the cost and construction of the accessway, the Town should seek other funding sources and contractors to complete the project.

4. **Installation**
   Construct the new public at-grade accessway as a negotiated condition to a future development site plan or by the Town with the DPW managing the project and overseeing construction.

Upstate New York, NY

New York Canalway Trail

The Canalway Trail stretches across over 524 miles of upstate New York running from Albany to Buffalo and connecting to several cities and villages along the way. The network of multi-use trails run parallel to current or former sections of the Erie, Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca, and Champlain canals. The longest of these is the 365-mile-long Erie Canalway Trail, which was fully completed in 2021. Most of the Erie Canal Trail is located on the former "towpaths" adjacent to the canal, which were used by mules to pull boats along the waterway. There are numerous overpasses along the canal and at-grade accessways from the trail to the streets above the canal. These accessways are paved and marked with wayfinding signs identifying the points of interest in the districts above.

Sources: https://bikeeriecanal.com, Wikipedia

PUBLIC REALM

The Erie Canalway Trail and Public At-Grade Accessway Connecting to the Village of Pittsford in Upstate New York. Source: Google Maps

Activate Bow Street Park by installing amenities (to complement nearby food businesses and accommodate events) and work with local organizations to develop programming. [East Lexington]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located in the East Lexington Village Study Area at the intersection of the Minuteman Bikeway and Bow Street (Census Tract 3581).

Origin

Contributors to project idea:
Economic Development Department, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Munro Arts Center, Battle Road Bikes, other RRP Participants and RRP Consulting Team.

Potential Champions: Economic Development Department, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Munroe Center for the Arts.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: The budget for this project will depend on the equipment and furnishings installed at Bow Street Park. The key elements of the budget will include the selection and installation of furnishings (e.g., tables, chairs, kiosks, directory and wayfinding signs, public art, playground equipment, stage or gazebo, and lighting). An annual budget for programming will also need to be set aside, which will likely be carried out by the Town and local civic organizations.

Potential Funding Sources: Funding sources may include:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)
- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
- Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) program
- Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program (LWCF)
- Community Preservation Act funds (CPA)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Contributions form local businesses
- Municipal funds

Design/fabrication of medallion markers could be provided by the Minuteman Career and Technical High School.

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline for completing the project is approximately 12 months. This includes coordination between the Town departments, boards, committees, civic organizations, and East Lexington businesses and residents; selection of furnishings to be added to Bow Street Park; installation of furnishings; and creation of a programing plan for the park, identification of partners and sponsors, and scheduling of events. There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to activating Bow Street Park. Potential impediments include:

- A lack of political will to install furnishings and program events in the park (not considered a high priority).
- Lack of support by adjacent property and business owners (such as concern over limited parking).
- Limitations on the municipal budget or lack of grant funding for the project.
- Environmental constraints on the park (floodplains, habitat, and wetlands).
- Access to materials (the pandemic has impacted availability of materials and furnishings that would be used in the park).

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- Increase in customers for East Lexington businesses. The business owners in this area could be surveyed 3–6 months after the opening of the park for their opinions on impacts of the enhanced public gathering space.
- Increase in park users - The number of outdoor seats in the park that are occupied during certain times of the day.
- Number of attendees at the park during different events.
- Public opinion surveys about the park after its opening.

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Select Board (SB) — Approval of park improvements and funding sources.
- Department of Land Use, Health & Development (LUHD) — Site plan review, permitting, grant application.
- Economic Development Department (EDD) — Promotion, grant applications, and coordination of programming.
- Conservation Department and Conservation Commission (CC) — Jurisdiction and permitting for use of wetlands and floodplain.
- Department of Recreation & Community Programs (RCP) — Review of plan improvements and programming coordination.
- Department of Public Works/Public Grounds/Park Division (DPW) — Management of installation of furnishings and other improvements.
- Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) — Input on park improvements and programming, and potential champion.
- Friends of Lexington Bikeways (FLB) — Input on park improvements and programming, and potential champion.
- ACROSS Lexington (AL) — Input on park improvements and programming, and potential champion.
- Greenways Corridor Committee (GCC) — Input on park improvements and programming, and potential champion.
- Munroe Arts Center (MAC) — Idea contributors, possible champion.
- Battle Road Bikes — New bike shop moving into 145 Mass Ave, adjacent to the Bikeway, considering a future back entrance and sponsoring activities in the park.

Diagnostic

Bow Street Park is located on the north side of the Minuteman Bikeway at Bow Street. The park is bordered to the north by the Mill Brook and much of the land in the park is in a flood plain. With about 500 feet of frontage on the Bikeway, the park is highly visible to cyclists and walkers. The large grassy open spaces and large shade trees provide good opportunity for a variety of community activities while being sensitive to natural resources.

Community representatives have identified several ideas for the future activation of the park. The park has to be planned carefully as the only available public parking is on Mass Ave. Additionally, the Conservation Committee will take an active role in the future use of the property due to the environmental sensitivity.

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: As described in more detail in the Diagnostic Report, the lack of vibrant and visible civic gathering spaces in the East Lexington Study Area (ELSA) limits the potential to draw more customers from Lexington, nearby communities, and the Bikeway. Creating a vibrant gathering space along the trail and adjacent to local businesses will draw more local and Bikeway customers. Additionally, CDC guidelines suggest that COVID transmissions are significantly reduced outdoors. The park and the Bikeway provide the opportunity to offer open space for the community to gather and interface with local businesses so that lost revenue over the past year can be recouped over time.

Bow Street Park runs parallel to the Bikeway directly behind several food businesses (e.g., coffee shop, bagel shop, restaurants) but currently has no seating or other amenities. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Battle Road Bikes, new Bike Store opening in East Lexington on Massachusetts Ave. The Minuteman Bikeway and Bow Street Park are located at the rear of the store. The owner has expressed interest in hosting events. Source: Battle Road Bikes Facebook Page

Diagnostic (cont'd)

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: COVID-19 forced several East Lexington businesses to close or scale back in 2020 and 2021 resulting in a decline in local customers and sales. Meanwhile, during the pandemic, there was a renewed appreciation for, and use of, outdoor amenities such as bikeways and greenways as they provided safe pathways for commuting and recreation. This project aims to leverage that new appreciation and the potential customers using the Bikeway. As businesses begin to recover over the next few years, new civic attractions such as the Bow Street Park are critical to drawing not only regular customers but more regional customers and Bikeway users to help reverse the impacts of lost revenue for local businesses over the past 2 years.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: COVID-19 exacerbated the issue of East Lexington's lack of civic open spaces. As many restaurants in Massachusetts were permitted to shift much of their seating capacity from indoor to outdoor dining as a way of sustaining business over the past 1.5 years, ELSA's narrow sidewalks limited opportunities to establish outdoor seating, and Bow Street Park was not equipped with tables and chairs. The Town understands how important it is to provide a central civic open space and attract users that might, in turn, be customers for the East Lexington businesses in close proximity. Therefore, the activation of Bow Street Park a high priority. The goal is to bring more customers from surrounding neighborhoods, travelers along Mass Ave, and Bikeway users into the East Lexington Study Area (ELSA); improve awareness of the businesses; and lead to rapid economic recovery.

Action Item

There is no highly visible and centrally located open space for large civic gatherings on Mass Ave or the Bikeway that would draw local and regional customers. The existing open space in Bow Street Park is attractive but underutilized due to the lack of furnishings and programming.

Actions to be taken include the following:

Define Design Objectives: The Town, together with ELSA residents, businesses and champions of the project, needs to define the objectives and types of activities desired for Bow Street Park. Based on early public input, this may include the following objectives:

- Elements and events that support and enhance connections with area businesses.
- Flexible space that supports a variety of community event types.
- Accessible elements for users of all ages and abilities.
- Limited vehicular access and efficient parking.
- Low-maintenance plantings and furnishings.
- Dedicated facilities for Bikeway users (bicycle parking, repair station, trail information, etc.).

Install Furnishings in the Park: Suggested elements include a Bow Street Park ground sign, tables and chairs (or picnic tables), string or tree lighting, a hatch shell (or stage, band stand or gazebo), bike repair station, bikeshare station, bike corrals, East Lexington Business District Information Kiosk and Business Directory with QR codes so park users can order food and eat in the park, interpretive history boards about the ELSA, exercise station, and playground equipment.

Action Item (cont'd)

Program Activities and Events: Work with local organizations on the programming of civic events and activities in the park. Suggested activities include the farmers' market, exercise classes, live music, live theater, and movies.

Coordinate with Business and Property Owners: Provide guidance to businesses on marketing to potential customers in Bow Street Park; enhance the rear yard appearance and access to properties abutting the Bikeway adjacent to the park; and coordinate with the new bike shop (Battle Road Bikes) in the ELSA interested in hosting some events (e.g., bike movie nights).

Coordinate Parking During Community Events: Work with East Lexington businesses and residents to inform them of upcoming community events and encourage them to keep on-street parking on Mass Ave available as much as possible in the Bow Street area. Seek agreements with private parking lot owners near Bow Park for use during larger civic events.

Process

1. **Form a Bow Street Park Partnership**
   Form a task force/committee to identify design objectives; and oversee the planning and installation process, identifying potential funding sources, permitting requirements, and future activation and programming opportunities and responsibilities. This could include key town departments and stakeholder representatives (e.g., EDD, property owners, business owners, Munroe Arts Center, Planning Department, LUHD, CC, RCP, DPW, BAC, Friends of Lexington Bikeways , ACROSS Lexington, Greenways Corridor Committee).

2. **General Design and Permits**
   Prepare conceptual design of park elements and furnishings, and specifications of preferred furnishings; and obtain any necessary local or state permits.

3. **Public Input**
   Conduct public workshops to inform the community about the project and obtain sufficient feedback on the overall park enhancements and activation plan.

4. **Funding Allocation**
   Determine sources and levels of funding for the park improvements, including activation and programming.

5. **Secure Furnishings and Materials**
   After planning the location and types of furnishings, secure all equipment, furniture, signs, and materials.

6. **Construction**
   Hire contractors, prepare schedule, and oversee installation.

Bow Street Park is owned by the Town and there are no anticipated requirements for property purchase or transfers, site clearance or remediation, or training and technical assistance. The Town will have to go through a vendor procurement process to select contractors to design and construct the park improvements.

PUBLIC REALM

Greenfield, MA

Energy Park

This is an attractive 1.25-acre public park and civic gathering space in Downtown Greenfield that emerged out of the 1992 Strategic Plan for Downtown Greenfield. Development of the property was spearheaded by an agreement with the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) and the City of Greenfield in 1994, and the park was constructed in 1997.

Park elements include an old caboose, ticket office, train station (which serves as a performance stage), interpretive history board, public art, garden demonstrations, play station, picnic tables, solar panels, and a compost station. There is a large open lawn, and the space is regularly used as a venue for concerts and other social gatherings. There is an attractive park sign on Main Street that provides wayfinding to the park. Programing of a variety of events and activities are sponsored by both the City and civic organizations. The Franklin County Musicians Cooperative's "Coop Concerts" are scheduled in the park weekly throughout the summer.

Sources: City of Greenfield, MA, Website

Energy Park Wayfinding Sign on Main Street Greenfield. Photo: FinePoint Associates

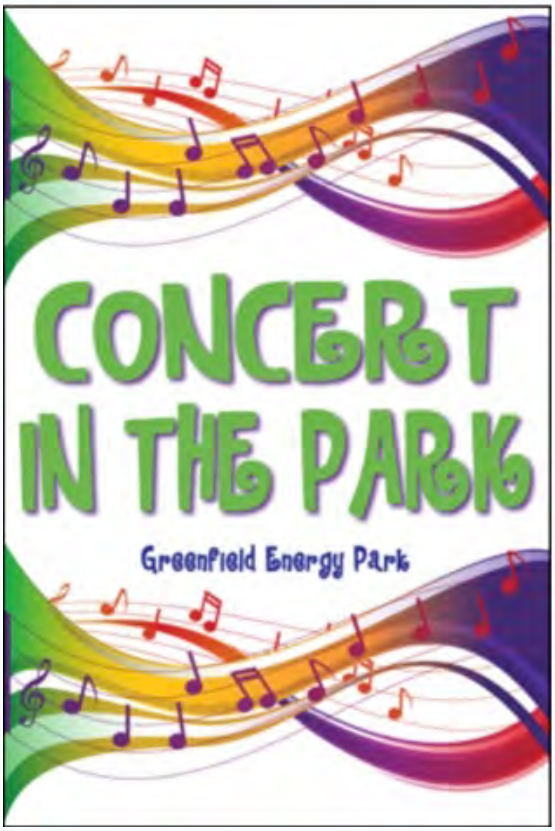
Images: Energy Park, Greenfield. Source: Project for Public Spaces

Greenfield, MA, Energy Park (cont'd)

PUBLIC REALM

Location

Images: Energy Park, Greenfield. Source: www.facebook.com/greenfieldenergypark



Images: Coop Concert Series in Energy Park. Source: Franklin County Musicians Cooperative, www.coopconcerts.org

West Acton, MA

Gardner Field

Gardner Field is located off Route. 111 (Mass Ave) near Kinsley Road in the center of West Acton. This well-used public space will soon be updated with a master plan and additional enhancements.

This small public space is highly utilized with playground equipment, a basketball court, and field area. The park is also activated with civic events such as the West Action Spring Fling, which features various food venders and live music.

The Town of Acton Recreation Department is currently working with The Friends of Gardner Field, Inc. on a master plan for park renovations. The collective goal is to create a universally designed playground in West Acton for people of all abilities. Specific enhancements include an upgrade of the playground equipment, on-site parking (in addition to street parking) to accommodate community events, and a public splash pad as part of a future phase. To date, The Friends of Gardner Field, Inc. has raised over $70,000 of their goal of $100,000 to make the park improvements.

Sources: Town of Acton, MA, Website

Images: Existing Park and Concept Plan of Future Enhancements. Source: Town of Acton, MA, Homepage

Source: The Friends of Gardner Field, Inc. Facebook Page

PUBLIC REALM

Downtown Norwood, MA

Central Street Shared Street

Location

The Town of Norwood is interested in creating more active gathering spaces in the downtown center to facilitate more businesses and draw visitors and customers. They have long considered closing off a section of Central Street adjacent to the Town Common and the Norwood Theater block. This is a secondary street, which is not used significantly for traffic management or parking. Before making a significant commitment to the project, the Town decided to conduct a New Urbanism temporary application. Using all local funds (no C19 recovery funds), the Town installed fillable roadway blockades on both ends of the 275-foot block and synthetic turf on street. They added outdoor bistro tables and chairs, planters, and temporary lights. The "shared street" has become very popular, and the adjacent Town and Norwood Theater have begun to program the space for various community activities. Other nearby restaurants have also benefited, and many people are ordering takeout and eating on the street. The Town is now considering making this area a permanent plaza. The Norwood DPW and Recreation Department acquired and installed all furnishings. The costs are summarized below:

Easy Turf, EZ Putt 2 — 6,750 square feet (SF) for a total of $16,870 ($2.50/SF)
Easy Turf installation with Velcro seams — $3,950.00
Furnishing (Amazon) — $1,590

Sources: Town of Norwood Planning & Economic Development Director

Images: Central Street – Temporary Plaza in Downtown Norwood, MA. Source: Brovitz Community Planning & Design

Activate Veterans Memorial Park by installing additional amenities (to complement nearby food businesses and accommodate events) and work with local organizations to develop programming. [Bedford Center]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located in the Bedford Center Study Area (Census Tract 3591).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: Housing and Economic Development Director, Planning Director, Town Manager, Department of Public Works (DPW), Bedford Cultural Council, Bedford Cultural District Partnership, and the RRP Consulting team.

Potential Champions: Housing and Economic Development Director, Bedford Cultural District Partnership, Veterans Park Committee.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: The budget for this project is expected to be low as most of the park is dedicated to memorials honoring local veterans. Additional elements would need to be discrete, and some would be temporary or seasonal. Potential elements that have been suggested are tables and chairs or picnic tables along with items included in other recommendations (e.g., a community information kiosk/business directory, wayfinding signs, public art/art walk). An annual programming budget will also need to be prepared, which will likely be carried out by the Town and local civic organizations.

Potential Funding Sources: Funding sources may include:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)
- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) program
- Massachusetts Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Community Preservation Act funds (CPA)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Contributions from local businesses
- Municipal funds

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline for completing the project is approximately 12 months. This includes the following:

- Coordinating between the Town departments, boards, committees, civic organizations, and Bedford Center businesses and residents.
- Selecting and installing the furnishing to be added to the park.
- Making a plan for activities and events to be held in the park.

Timeframe (cont'd)

- Identifying and securing partners and sponsors, and scheduling events.

There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to activating Veterans Memorial Park. Potential impediments to successful implementation could be the following:

- A lack of political will to install furnishings and program events in the park (not considered a high priority).
- Lack of support by nearby residents and businesses (such as concern over limited parking and traffic congestion).
- Limited funding (lack of municipal funds, public grants, or private donations for the project).
- Access to materials (the pandemic has impacted availability of materials and furnishings that could be used in the park).

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- Increase in customers in the historic Bedford Center and Bedford Market Place with the activation of Veterans Memorial Park. Business owners in this area could be surveyed 3–6 months after the activation of the park or the day after major events in the park to get their opinions on the impacts of the enhanced public gathering space.
- The number of outdoor seats in the park that are occupied during certain times of the day.
- The number of attendees at the park during different events.
- Average annual daily traffic (AADT) measured on Great Road (Rt 225) at the Bedford Market Place intersection before and after the park improvements and major events.
- Public opinion surveys about the park 6 months after it is activated with furnishings and community events.

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Town Manager's Office (including the Town Manager and Economic Development Director) — Project management, promotion, grant applications, and coordination of programming.
- Planning Department — Site plan review, permitting, and grant application assistance.
- Select Board (SB) — Approval of park enhancements and funding sources.
- Department of Public Works (DPW) — Management of installation of furnishings and other improvements.
- Veterans Park Committee (VPC) — A key partner and deciding body with regards to allowing elements to be added to the park.
- Bedford Cultural District Partnership — Input on park improvements and programming, and potential champion.
- Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) — Input on park improvements and programming, and potential champion.

Diagnostic

Veterans Park is located on Great Road (State Route 4 and 225) in Bedford Center directly across the Bedford Market Place, which has several restaurants and food take-out options. It is also parallel to the Narrow Gauge Trail and there is direct access off the trail into the park. With about 425 feet of frontage on Great Road, the park is highly visible to cyclists, walkers, and drivers. The large grassy open spaces and large shade trees provide good opportunity for a variety of community activities while being sensitive to memorials in the center of the park. The wide sidewalks along the frontage with large shade trees on both sides allows for additional activation without impact to the memorial space.

Community representatives have identified several ideas for the future activation of the park. However, the park has to be carefully planned as it is a sacred place where the primary focus is honoring Bedford's veterans from as far back as the Revolutionary War. Additionally, there is no on-site or on-street parking at the park, so accommodating large civic events is a challenge. The Veterans Park Committee is taking an active role in future uses and physical changes to this public space because of the cultural sensitivity of the park.

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: Creating a more vibrant and visible civic gathering space at Veterans Memorial Park will draw more customers from the surrounding areas as well as Bikeway users. The visibility of the park along Great Road and its proximity to the Narrow Gauge Trail and Bedford Market Place (with lots of food choices but minimal open space) make the park an enticing place to have picnics, enjoy civic events, and honor local veterans. Additionally, CDC guidelines suggest that COVID transmissions are significantly reduced outdoors. The activated park provides an opportunity for users to gather in an attractive open space and spend more time in the District and therefore increase the likelihood of additional spending at local businesses. Over time, this will help local businesses recoup the revenue they lost as a result of the pandemic.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: According to our business survey, 85% of Bedford Center businesses reported having to close or scale back operating hours due to COVID. In addition, residents became more accustomed to online shopping and out of the habit of frequent visits to the commercial district As businesses begin to recover over the next few years, new civic attractions in the Bedford Center Study Area are critical to draw not only regular customers back but also entice more regional customers and Bikeway users in order to recover and maintain Business District vitality.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: COVID-19 exacerbated the issue of Bedford's limited activation of Veterans Memorial Park. As many restaurants in Massachusetts were permitted to shift much of their seating capacity from indoor to outdoor dining as a way of sustaining business during the pandemic, narrow sidewalks in the Historic Bedford Center and at Bedford Market Place limited opportunities to establish outdoor café seating. Veterans Memorial Park was not equipped with tables and chairs to allow local businesses to take advantage of this opportunity to attract more local as well as Bikeway customers. The Town understands how important it is to address this issue and has made the activation of the park a high priority.

Action Item

Veterans Memorial Park provides a great opportunity to establish a direct connection to the Minuteman Bikeway and Narrow Gauge Trail users and restaurants in Bedford Market Place. Additionally, a highly visible and active open space on Great Road will further draw regional customers off this high-volume corridor.

Actions to be taken include the following:

Determine the Appropriate Use of Space in the Park: The center of the park where the memorials are located will remain a homage to local veterans. The project partners and champions will need to conduct a workshop to map out the preferred uses, furnishing, equipment, and programming for the remainder of the park. Some preliminary suggestions from community representatives to engage the space in a more meaningful way included the following:

- The northwest corner of the park could be an extension of the art walk on the Narrow Gauge Trail, and more seating in this area and along the sidewalk on Great Road would bring attention to the monuments and provide a shady spot for trail users and picnickers in the park.
- The open space on the east side of the park could be used for community events, live music and other performances. This area could also be used for exercise classes and other social gatherings. The Select Board will ultimately determine the appropriate uses for that park.

Address the Parking Issue: The issue remains that there is no parking for events in the park. If Veterans Memorial Park is going to host community events, then dedicated parking nearby will need to be secured. The employee parking at the Bedford Market Place directly across Great Road could be one option. The abutting Bedford Funeral Home and TD Bank could be other options for evening events when these businesses are closed. The Town will need to coordinate with the owners of these properties. (Another option might be to consider adding on-street parallel street parking along the frontage on Great Road. This could result in an additional 15–20 parking spaces).

Install Furnishings in the Park: Elements may include movable tables and chairs (or picnic tables), bike racks and corrals, a small gazebo/stage, and a Bedford Center Business District Information Kiosk and Business Directory with QR codes so park users can order food and eat in the park.

Program Activities and Events: The Town should work with local organizations on programming civic events and activities in the park. Suggested activities include live music, live theater, movies, exercise classes, public art displays.

Process

1. **Seek Input on Enhancements to Veterans Memorial Park**
   The Town (led by the Economic Development Director and Planning Director) should solicit input from various stakeholders on the preferred equipment and furnishings to be installed in the park. This should include key town departments, the Select Board, Veterans Park Committee, Bedford Cultural District Partnership, and Bicycle Advisory Committee. Collectively this group should identify design objectives, programming opportunities, permitting requirements, funding sources and oversight responsibilities for acquiring materials and installing elements.

2. **Public Input**
   Conduct a public workshop to inform the community about the project and obtain sufficient feedback on the overall park enhancements and activation plan.

2. **Prepare General Concept Plan and Obtain Approval**
   Prepare conceptual design of park elements and furnishings; identify specifications of preferred furnishings; and obtain any necessary local or state permits.

3. **Coordinate Parking with Adjacent Property Owners**
   The project leaders should coordinate with the Bedford Market Place, Bedford Funeral Home, and TD Bank to secure access to parking during larger community events.

4. **Funding Allocation**
   Determine and secure sources of funding for park improvements, including activation and programming.

5. **Secure Furnishings and Materials:**
   After planning the location and types of furnishings, secure all equipment, furniture, and materials.

6. **Construction**
   Hire contractors, prepare schedule, and oversee installation of park elements.

7. **Prepare and Carry Out a Schedule of Community Events**
   The project leaders and champions should work with civic organizations and local businesses to carry out a program of community events on the park.

Veterans Memorial Park is owned by the Town and there are no anticipated requirements for property purchase or transfers, site clearance or remediation, or training and technical assistance. The Town will have to go through a vendor procurement process to select contractors to install the new park components unless this can be done internally through the DPW or Recreation Department.

Norwood, MA

Town Common

PUBLIC REALM

Location

The Town Common is located in the heart of Downtown Norwood. The 1-acre open space includes a lawn and shade trees, walkways with benches, the Dempsey Memorial Bandstand, and several memorials, including the 20-foot tall "Protectors of the American Way" veterans' memorial statue. The Town sponsors the Concerts on the Common series, which features “old-fashioned” music like marches, swings, and jazz. In 2021, this weekly concert series will be in its 27th year on the Town Common. The Common is also activated with a farmers’ market, the annual Norwood Summerfest, and several other seasonal events

Sources: Town of Norwood Planning & Economic Development Director; Town of Norwood Homepage

Protectors of the American Way Memorial, Norwood Town Common. Source: norwoodthenandnow.com

Norwood Town Common Gazebo where concerts take place. Source: www.norwoodma.gov

Farmers’ Market at Norwood Town Common. Source: Jack B. form Foursquare

East Boston, MA

Gove Street Crossing Pop-up Plaza and Seasonal Installation

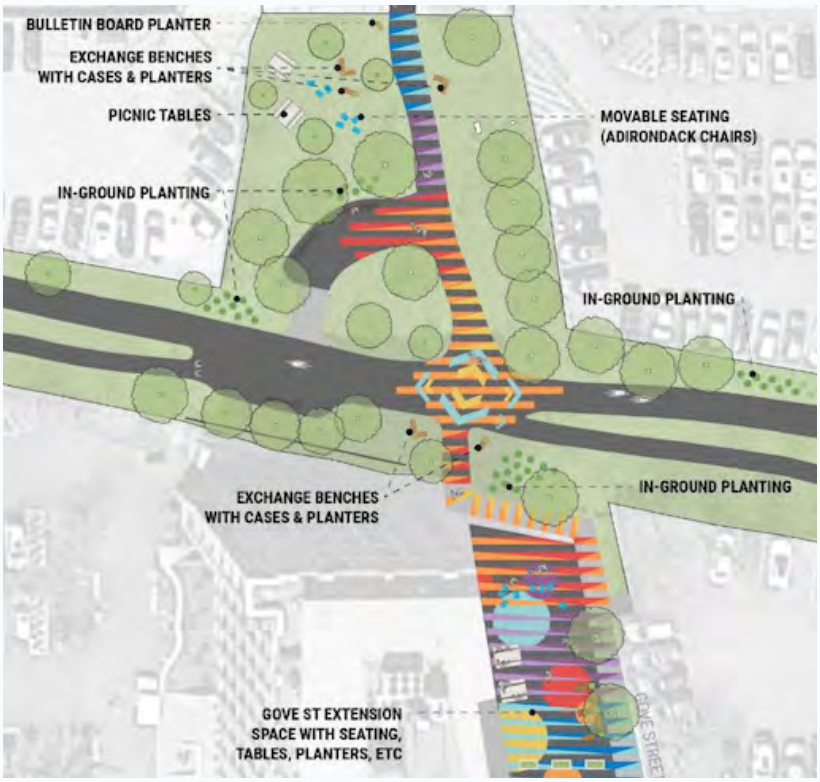
The Friends of the Mary Ellen Greenway (FoMEWG) worked with the Boston Society of Landscape Architects (BSLA) to host a design competition for the Gove Street section of the Mary Ellen Greenway. A 12-member jury selected Toole Design to work on a seasonal installation.

Over three months, Toole Design worked to refine the design by engaging East Boston residents. The final design and project included:
1. a pop-up plaza on Gove Street next to a residential apartment building, and
2. a seasonal installation on the Greenway.

Both designs included a pavement graphic and seating. The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza. The project was funded by a Barr Foundation grant to the Friends of the Mary Ellen Welch Greenway.

Budget and Finance Sources
$16,000 in total from Barr Grant ($6,000 for materials, $10,000 BSLA design competition and project management).
$20,000 pro bono time from Toole Design.

Process
Design Competition (Design challenge, design selection).
Pop-up Installation Planning & Design (Shared plans with FoMEWG and residents at monthly meeting, engaged youth at East Boston Library).
Obtained Approvals (Boston Parks, Boston Transportation Department).
Implementation (Material Acquisition, Installation).



Pop-up Park + Plaza site plan. Site Design/ Source: Toole Design

Pop-up Plaza. Source: Civic Space Collaborative

East Boston, MA

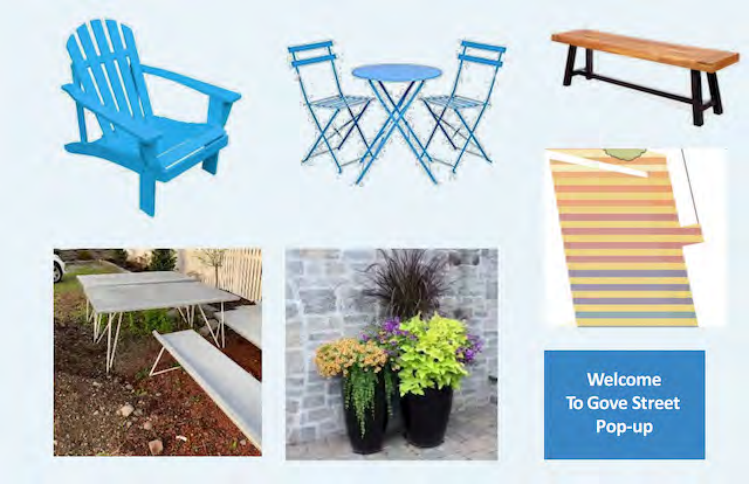
Gove Street Crossing Pop-up Plaza and Seasonal Installation (cont'd)

Programming

The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza, including music in the evenings by local musicians, a piñata party with a local artist, Krina Patel, and games for children. Later in the summer, the Friends and Toole Design led a bike ride for the LandLine Coalition, a group working to connect community paths and greenways in the Greater Boston region.

Seasonal Installation. Source: Civic Space Collaborative

Toole Design laying out the design before volunteers arrive. Source: Civic Space Collaborative



Furnishing Elements. Source: Civic Space Collaborative

Engage with MBTA to explore ways to activate/revitalize the underutilized Bus Depot property. [Arlington Heights]

Category

Public Ream

Location

This project is located in the Arlington Heights Study Area (Census Tract 3566.0).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: Economic Development Coordinator, Planning & Community Development Department, RRP participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Economic Development Coordinator, Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee, Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee (to be determined).

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: This project is expected to be carried out in 3 phases — The first is streetscape and activation enhancements along the frontage. The 2nd phase includes the renovation and reuse of the building, and the 3rd phase includes activation of the parking lot. (The MBTA owns the property, so only phase 1 can be carried out at this time). Phase 1 short term improvements include streetscape enhancements along the frontage that provide more opportunity for activation and programming. This may include reconfiguring of existing raised planters, new tables and chairs, and an Arlington Heights community information kiosk/business directory. The budget would depend on the final design and furnishings to be provided but is expected to be fairly low.

Potential Funding Sources: Funding sources may include:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)
- MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
- Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG)
- Community Preservation Act funds (CPA)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Contributions from local businesses
- Municipal funds

Budget and Sources of Funding (cont'd)

MBTA Property, Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

MBTA Bus Depot building with peeling paint, Arlington Heights. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline for completing phase 1 of the project is approximately 12 months. This includes the following:

- Coordination between the MBTA, the Town departments, boards, committees, civic organizations, and Arlington Heights businesses and residents.
- Selecting and installing the streetscape enhancements and furnishings to be added to the frontage.

There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to enhancing and activating the streetscape in the initial phase and renovating and activating the building and parking lot in future phases. Potential impediments to successful implementation could include:

- Lack of support by MBTA or nearby residents and businesses (such as concern over activity at the site, noise, or parking and traffic congestion).
- Limited funding (lack of municipal funds, public grants, or private donations for the project).
- Access to materials (the pandemic has impacted availability of materials and furnishings that could be used for streetscape enhancements).

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- Increase in customers in the Arlington Heights Business District with the activation of the MBTA Bus Depot frontage. Business owners in this area could be surveyed 3–6 months after the streetscape enhancements and activation of the frontage.
- Number of outdoor seats along the frontage that are occupied during certain times of day.
- Public opinion surveys about the streetscape enhancements and activation 6 months after its implementation.

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Town Manager's Office (including Assistant Town Manager for Development).
- Planning and Community Development Department — Site plan review, permitting, and grant application assistance.
- Economic Development Coordinator — Project management, promotion, grant applications, and coordination of programming.
- Select Board (SB) — Approval of streetscape enhancements and funding sources.
- Department of Public Works (DPW) — Management of installation of streetscape enhancements, furnishings, and other improvements.
- Commission for Arts & Culture (ACAC) — Potential champion and input on streetscape improvements and programming.
- Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (ABAC) — Potential champion and input on streetscape improvements and access to the Bikeway.
- Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee (AHNAPIC) — Potential champion and input on streetscape enhancement and activation.

Diagnostic

Located at 1389 Massachusetts Avenue, the Arlington Heights Bus Depot is owned and operated by the MBTA. The Minuteman Bikeway is adjacent to the property but is separated by Mill Brook, preventing direct access (which would make it convenient for cyclists to transfer to the bus service). The 25,145 SF property has about 225 feet of frontage on Mass Ave and is largely under-utilized. Most of the site is paved over and used to turn buses around approximately 21 hours a day by the MBTA.

A small, older one-story building is located along the frontage and is used by bus drivers who park temporarily and use the restroom facilities. Part of the building (1,000 SF) is leased out but vacant. The building is in poor condition and needs significant renovation. This space is listed on the MBTA website as an "Upcoming Opportunity," which may indicate that the lease is coming to an end.

The building is set back approximately 20 feet with a terrace in front, bike corral, raised granite planters, benches, bus shelter, and a curb extension/crosswalk to 1398 Block across Massachusetts Avenue. Some streetscape treatments may impede accessibility and limit utilization of the space for civic purposes. Along the frontage, there are also canopy trees, brick sidewalks, and 2 wide curb cuts that create large gaps in the sidewalk.

Diagnostic (cont'd)

Community participants are interested in activating the site as a civic gathering space for Arlington Heights. It is considered a "hub" location with the opportunity for more productive uses of the building and site. Currently, the district does not have a large programable open space along Massachusetts Avenue for various events and activities.

Rather than specifically recommending that the Town lease the building, community participants encourage the MBTA to allow for alternative civic uses and activation of the building and frontage as an initial step to fulfilling the site's place-making potential.

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: There is no central public space for social gatherings or events in the Arlington Heights District and events programming is also quite limited. The Old Shwamb Mill (located within close proximity but fairly far from the central commercial core of the District) hosted an Octoberfest and Beer Garden for a couple of years prior to COVID. However, no other activities/events are hosted in the District on a regular basis. Creating a more vibrant and visible civic gathering space at the MBTA Bus Depot along with the programming of events will draw more customers to the district.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: COVID-19 forced a majority of Arlington Heights businesses (63%) to operate at reduced capacity or hours and 70% of businesses experienced a year-over-year revenue loss. As businesses begin to recover over the next few years, new civic attractions in the district are critical to draw local customers and Bikeway users to counter the impacts of lost revenue for local businesses over the past 2 years. In addition, CDC guidelines suggest that COVID transmissions are significantly reduced outdoors and note that more civic open space provides the opportunity for people to spend time in the busines district in a safe way.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: The lack of a central civic open space impacted the community's response to COVID-19. While some communities hosted outdoor dining, pop-up markets, or events (with social distancing) to allow businesses to connect with customers in safe ways and keep them coming to their commercial districts, these opportunities were very limited in Arlington Heights. The bus depot was not useable or equipped for these purposes.

Action Item

Engage MBTA: The Town should engage the MBTA Property Management Division and the MBTA Advisory Board to discuss and negotiate opportunities to activate the bus depot frontage and the bus depot building. While the Town would like to have exclusive programming rights for the site, the initial steps include working together with the MBTA Advisory Board and local legislatures to address the portion of the building and areas along the frontage that don't impact current operations. This alternative will allow more flexibility and potential for even more creative solutions to enliven the space.

Action Item (cont'd)

Define the Short- and Long-Term Activation Opportunities: The site generally breaks down into 4 areas of opportunity:

- Parking Lot: This large space provides a venue for a variety of civic activities such as a farmers' markets, food festivals (e.g., The Taste of Arlington Heights), live music, movies, arts and craft shows, etc.
- Access to the Bikeway: A direct connection to the Bikeway could be made to the MBTA site via the access spur through the Sunrise of Arlington parking lot next door.
- Bus Depot Building: In addition to public restrooms, this space could be utilized for a variety of potential uses such as for Business District promotion activities, a retail business incubator, community meeting space, restaurant incubator, etc.
- Street Frontage: The building setback and the curb extension create a wide frontage along the sidewalk allowing for more activation. This area could be reconfigured into a more active space such as a space with pop-up stores, parklets, movable tables and chairs, public art, a community information kiosk and business directory, pedestrian level lamps and string lights, banners, custom bike corrals, and more.

Install Furnishings along the Frontage: Elements may include movable tables and chairs (or picnic tables), bike racks and corrals, parklets, an Arlington Heights Business District Information Kiosk and Business Directory with QR codes so park users can order food and eat on site.

Program Activities and Events: Work with local organizations on programming of civic events and activities along the frontage, and in the long term, in the bus depot buildings and the parking lot. Suggested activities include live music, live theater, movies, exercise classes, public art displays, and other activities.

Process

1. **Public Input**
   Conduct meetings with the MBTA Services Division, MBTA Property Management Division and the MBTA Advisory Board to discuss and negotiate permission to activate the bus depot frontage and the bus shelter.

2. **Seek Input on Enhancements to MBTA Bus Depot**
   The Town (led by the Economic Development Coordinator) should solicit input from various stakeholders on the preferred furnishings to be installed along the bus depot frontage. This should include key town departments (Town Manager's Office and Department of Public Works), Arlington Commission for Arts & Culture (ACAC), Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (ABAC), Arlington Heights businesses and Arlington Heights neighborhood Action Plan Committee/neighborhood representatives. Collectively, this group should identify design objectives, responsibilities for installing elements, funding sources and permitting requirements, and future activation and programming responsibilities.

3. **Prepare General Concept Plan and Obtain Approval**
   Prepare conceptual design of streetscape elements and furnishings, identify specifications of preferred furnishings, and obtain approval of MBTA and any required local or state permits.

Process (cont'd)

4. **Coordinate with MBTA and Sunrise of Arlington on Bikeway Access**
   The Town should coordinate direct access between the Bikeway and the MBTA Bus Depot through enhancements to the Sunrise parking lot pathway.

5. **Funding Allocation**
   Determine and secure sources and levels of funding for the frontage improvements, including activation and programming.

6. **Secure Furnishings and Materials**
   After planning the type and location of furnishings, secure all equipment, furniture, and materials.

7. **Construction**
   Hire contractors, prepare schedule, and oversee installation of frontage elements.

The Town will have to go through a vendor procurement process to select contractors to install the new park components unless this can be done internally through the DPW or Recreation Department.

Scituate, MA

The Town of Scituate regularly programs civic activities and events in the Scituate Harbor business district. A public walkway and bandstand located along the harbor frame the parking lot and provide an attractive setting for community gatherings. The annual Heritage Festival is a 3-day event that attracts thousands of local residents and visitors. This event is set up in the public parking lot and includes live music, amusement park, a children's playground, retail and food venders, art exhibits, and more. In addition to Heritage Days, the Scituate Harbor Business Association holds community events in the parking lot throughout the year, including the Bandstand Music Series, Art Walk, Classic Cars in the Harbor, Random Acts of Poetry, and Restaurant Week.

Sources: Scituate Harbor Business Association Homepage and Facebook Page Town of Scituate Homepage

Community events make use of a public parking lot. Source: www.scituateharborma.com

Admin Capacity Recommendations

Revise outdoor display regulations to promote lively, attractive merchandise displays and spill-out elements. [Bedford Center and Arlington Heights]

Category

Admin Capacity

Location

This project is located in the Arlington Heights Study Area (Census Tract 3566.0) and Bedford Center Study Area (Census Tracts 3593.03 and 3591).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: Bedford Planning Director, Bedford Director of Housing and Economic Development, Arlington Economic Development Coordinator, RRP process participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Towns of Arlington and Bedford Planning Board, Planning and Economic Development Staff.

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: The budget for this project will depend on how the work is carried out. If the Town planning staff in Arlington and Bedford have the experience and time, it is possible for this project to be accomplished "in-house." The Towns could also retain a zoning consultant (including MAPC) to evaluate and revise current outdoor merchandise display and spill-out regulations. In this scenario, planning and economic development staff would assist in identifying model regulations, organizing public participation, and guiding the adoption process. As outdoor displays and spill outs tend to be a sensitive topic, having Town staff directly involved could be a critical part of the process. A preliminary cost estimate of retaining a consultant with assistance from Town staff is provided below.

Project Task	Cost Estimate if Consultant is Used
Evaluate the existing outdoor merchandise display and spill-out regulations	$1,000 – 1,500
Identify case studies and model standards from similar communities	$1, 000 – 1,500
Prepare specific standards, illustrative graphics, and review procedures for all spill outs	$5,000
Conduct public workshops and hearings to review draft sign bylaw (2-3 meetings/town estimated)	$4,000 – 6,000
Prepare and adopt final outdoor merchandise display and spill-out regulations	$2,000
Total	$13,000 – 16,000

Budget and Sources of Funding (cont'd)

Potential Funding Sources:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) through the Community One Stop for Growth Planning Grants
- Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) technical assistance (DLTA) grants or general planning services
- Town (general funds)

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline of the project below is estimated to take approximately 6 months to complete. This includes public workshops and hearings to inform businesses, property owners, and the general public about changes to the spill-out regulations and to provide an opportunity for feedback prior to adoption. Amendments to the zoning bylaws will also require Town Meeting approval. Once implemented, the towns should work with the Arlington Heights and East Lexington business and property owners to make sure they take advantage of new standards for merchandise displays and other spill outs.

Project Task	Month					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Evaluate the existing outdoor merchandise display and spill-out regulations	X	X				
Identify representative local examples	X	X				
Identify case studies and model standards from similar communities	X	X				
Prepare specific standards, illustrative graphics, and review procedures for all outdoor merchandise display and spill-out types			X		X	
Conduct public workshops, hearings, TM approval of the proposed sign bylaw amendments (3 estimated)	X		X		X	
Prepare and adopt final outdoor merchandise display and spill-out amendments.						

There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to adopting new (or revising existing) outdoor merchandise display and other spill-out regulations as long as they are clear, flexible, produce combinations of high-quality spill outs, improve business appeal, and draw more customers. Potential impediments to successful implementation could be lack of political support for zoning amendments, liability concerns (such as with signs, seating and displays that project over the sidewalk), or site ownership (i.e., some owners may be reluctant to allow displays or other spill outs), or financing limitations of local businesses.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used include the following:

- **Increase in the variety and quality of spill outs**. This could be measured by the number of new high-quality outdoor merchandise displays, sandwich board signs, café seating, and other spill outs..
- **Increase in customers for businesses that implement more spill outs.** This could be somewhat difficult to measure precisely; however, business owners could be surveyed 3 – 6 months after installing new spill-outs to get their opinion about the impacts on customer traffic.
- **Bikeway User Response.** Public opinion surveys of Bikeway users about the expansion of spill outs in Arlington Heights and East Lexington one year after the adoption of new regulations.

Partners & Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Arlington and Bedford Planning and Economic Development staff for project leadership, funding sources, and administration of permitting.
- Arlington and Bedford Planning Board and Select Board to support the merchandise display and spill-out amendments at public hearings and Town Meeting.
- Arlington Heights and Bedford Center business and property owners for input and support for the spill-out regulations.

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: Revisions to the merchandise and spill-out regulations will improve opportunities for business development in Arlington Heights and Bedford Center. This project would allow businesses to have a range of high-quality spill outs (signs, seating, and displays) geared to pedestrians and drivers as well as Bikeway users. These revisions provide businesses an opportunity to improve their visibility and attract more customers.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: As businesses begin to fully reopen, the new display and spill-out standards provide an opportunity for businesses to expand and upgrade the quality of signage and by doing so, increase marketing efforts to bring people back to Arlington Heights and Bedford Center. Arlington Heights and Bedford Center were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. In March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially lower compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more. It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that new outdoor merchandise displays and other spill outs intend to address.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses in Arlington Heights and Bedford Center were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer behavior in these districts has still not returned. Improving the outdoor merchandise display and spill-out standards allows for a broader range of high-quality signage directed at pedestrians on the sidewalk, cyclists of the Bikeway, and travelers in cars. Collectively, existing and new businesses that install coordinated spill outs (such as blade signs, awnings, sandwich board signs, merchandise displays, sidewalk seating and parklets) will help customers overcome the lack of access to the customer market and create a more vibrant image of the district, leading to rapid economic recovery.

Bedford Center: The Historic Center along Great Road between School Street and Bacon Road is zoned Great Road District — Center Subdistrict (GR/C). The area around Depot Park including properties fronting on Railroad Ave., Commercial Drive, Loomis Street, South Road, and Deangelo Drive are in the Commercial District (C). A portion of this district is also in the Depot Area Mixed Use Overlay District (Section 18), including Depot Park, portions of Railroad Ave and Commercial Ave, the south side of Loomis Street including the frontage properties on Deangelo Drive, and a portion for South Road on both sides. Both districts allow and encourage mixed use with business uses intended at street level along the frontage. The purpose of this bylaw is to promote the economic vitality and encourage mixed uses in a physical arrangement that is safe for pedestrian, cyclists, and vehicular traffic.

Under Article 39 of the Bedford Zoning Bylaws, projecting signs and awning signs are allowed while sandwich board signs require a special permit from the Planning Board. Unfortunately, few businesses are taking the opportunity to install projecting signs. While café seating is permitted, outdoor merchandise displays are not permitted for general retail stores. More flexible spill-out standards provided under this project should result in more businesses taking advantage of the opportunity for café seating, projecting signs, and outdoor merchandise displays.

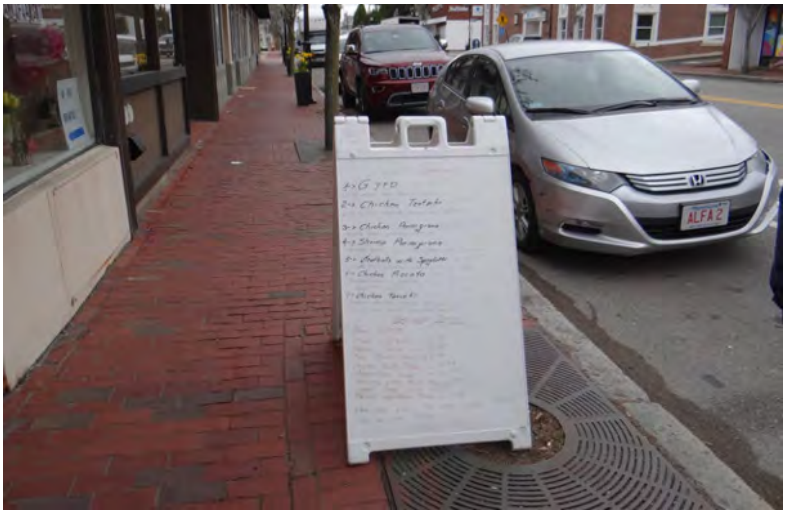
Arlington Heights District: Unlike most towns in Massachusetts, Arlington's zoning map is based on the current property use and not necessarily on future planning goals and community aspirations. Therefore, current zoning in Arlington Heights encompasses a checkerboard of commercial, industrial, and residential zoning districts that may interfere with business development including various types of spill outs. The core of the district is in Village Business Zoning District (B3), which allows more flexibility in uses and spill outs.

Section 6.2 of the Zoning Bylaw allows for a broad range of signs with reasonable standards, including projecting blade signs and sandwich board signs, which are critical to pedestrian-oriented business districts like Arlington Heights. However, few businesses have installed them. Under Section 6.2.3, there are restrictions for signs projecting over public property, Town ROW, and toward the Minuteman Bikeway, which are all deterrents to drawing customers off the sidewalk and bikeway. About a third of survey participants indicated that sign regulations and permitting procedures were an obstacle to business development.

In addition to the zoning bylaws, Arlington has several ordinances intended to enhance business districts, including bike parking guidelines, commercial corridor design standards, sidewalk café permit standards, and vacant storefront registration. Parklets are also permitted in designated areas. However, outdoor merchandise displays are not permitted. More flexible spill-out regulations will be prepared under this project resulting in more businesses taking advantage of the opportunity for café seating, projecting signs, and outdoor merchandise displays to draw more customers.

Existing Conditions

Existing Spill Outs in Bedford Center and Arlington Heights
Photos: FinePoint Associates



Action Item

Arlington Heights District: Unlike most towns in Massachusetts, Arlington's zoning map is based on the current property use and not necessarily on future planning goals and community aspirations. Therefore, current zoning in Arlington Heights encompasses a checkerboard of commercial, industrial, residential zoning districts that may interfere with business development including various types of spill outs. The core of the district is in Village Business Zoning District (B3), which allows more flexibility in uses and spill outs.

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In addition to the zoning bylaws, Arlington has several ordinances intended to enhance business districts, including bike parking guidelines, commercial corridor design standards, sidewalk café permit standards, and vacant storefront registration. Parklets are also permitted in designated areas. However, outdoor merchandise displays are not permitted. More flexible spill-out regulations will be prepared under this project resulting in more businesses taking advantage of the opportunity for café seating, projecting signs, and outdoor merchandise displays to draw more customers.

Process

1. **Evaluation Existing Standards**
   Evaluate existing spill-out regulations for outdoor merchandise displays, awnings, blade signs, sandwich board signs, sidewalk seating, parklets, and other spill outs currently allowed in Arlington and Bedford. Evaluate the number, type, location, review board, length of permitting, and quality of spill outs permitted over the past 3 years.

2. **Case Studies and Character Example**
   Identify representative local and regional examples of high-quality outdoor displays and other spill outs appropriate for the Arlington Heights and Bedford Center business districts, including awnings, projecting blade and banner signs, sandwich board signs, merchandise displays, sidewalk seating, parklets, and others as appropriate.

3. **Model Regulations**
   Identify model sign regulations from similar communities.

4. **Prepare Sign and Display Regulations**
   Define standards and illustrative graphics for all types of spill outs identified in Number 2 above in terms of size, shape, placement, materials, lighting, furnishings, and allowed combinations of different types of spill outs. Prepare spill-out permitting and approval procedures with board review and administrative review by staff.

5. **Public Participation**
   Conduct public workshops and hearings to present and discuss sign/display type and design options and to review draft sign regulations (3 meetings per town estimated).

Process (cont'd)

6. **Adoption**
   Prepare final outdoor merchandise display and spill-out standards for adoption at Town Meeting (or under general municipal codes).

Several cities and towns have adopted (or are in the process of adopting) flexible and context-based sign regulations for the purpose of creating more vibrancy in their downtown districts.

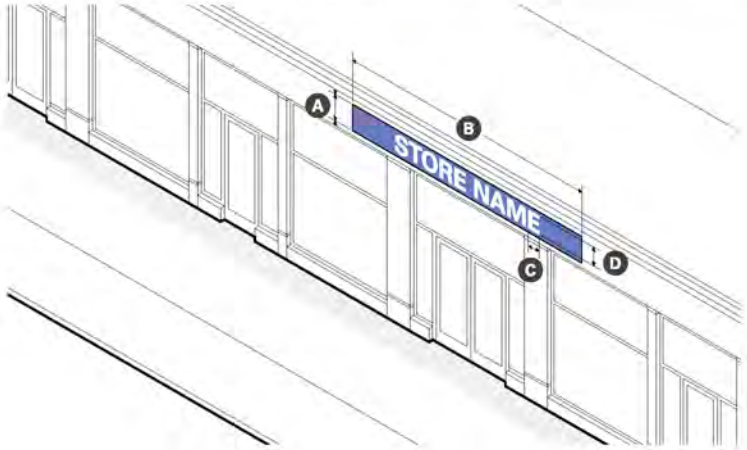
Somerville, MA

The City adopted a comprehensive form-based code in 2019, which includes detailed sign regulations (Section 10.9), café seating (Section 10.5), outdoor storage and displays (Section 9.1), and public realm and civic space standards (Section 13).

The City of Somerville adopted a new Form-Based Code in 2019, which includes context-based sign regulations with detailed design standards and illustrative diagrams for different types of signs. Above are example standards for wall signs, blade signs, and awning signs. Source: Somerville Zoning Ordinance

12. Wall Sign

a. A SIGN attached flat or mounted parallel to the FACADE of a BUILDING that identifies a commercial establishment. Wall SIGNS are intended to be viewed by pedestrians on the opposite side of STREET



Size	
Area (max)	40 sq. ft.
Height (min/max)	1 ft 4 ft
Width (max)	90% of FACADE width

Lettering	
Width (max)	75% of SIGN width
Height (max)	75% of SIGN height
Projection from FACADE (max)	6 inches
Raceway Height (max)	50% of Letter Height

b. Standards

i. Wall SIGNS are only permitted for GROUND-FLOOR businesses.

ii. Internally illuminated SIGN cabinets are prohibited.

iii. Wall SIGNS are prohibited from covering windows or architectural details.

iv. No portion of a wall SIGN is permitted to extend above the lower eave line of a BUILDING with a pitched roof.

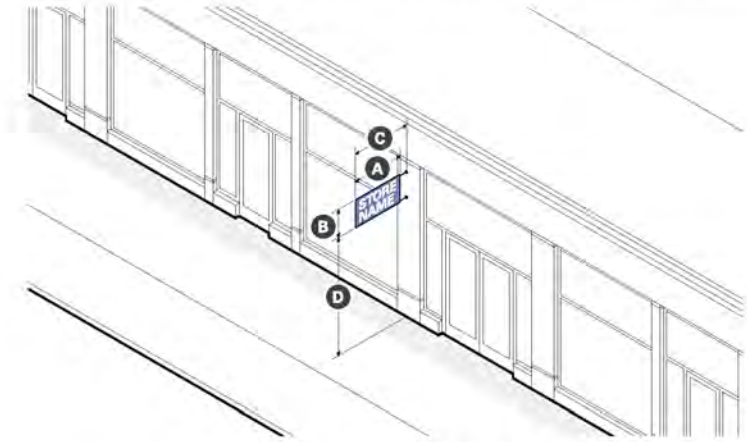
v. No portion of a wall SIGN is permitted to extend above the ROOF LINE or parapet wall of a FLAT ROOFED BUILDING.

vi. No portion of a wall SIGN is permitted to extend above the CORNICE or expression line of the base of a BUILDING.

vii. Information type is limited to business name and logo. Additional information is prohibited.

11. Blade Sign

a. A small, two-sided SIGN that is attached to and projecting perpendicularly from the FACADE of a BUILDING that identifies a commercial establishment. Blade SIGNS are intended to be viewed by pedestrians on the same side of the STREET



Size	
Area (max)	6 sq. ft. / side
Width (max)	4 ft
Height (max)	3 ft
Thickness (max)	6 inches

Location	
Clear Height over Sidewalk (min)	8 ft
Projection from FACADE (max)	4 ft
Number of SIGNS	1 per Tenant

b. Standards

i. Blade SIGNS are prohibited for UPPER-STORY businesses.

ii. A blade SIGN must be located within ten (10) feet of the PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE for the business it identifies.

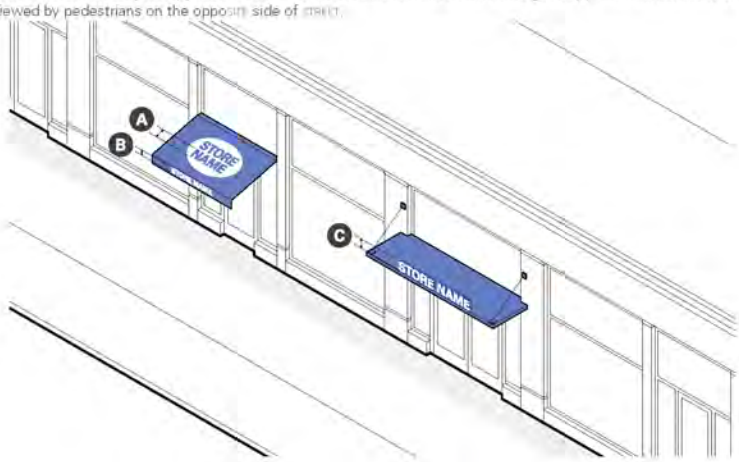
iii. A blade SIGN, including any support hardware, must be mounted below the sills of the second STORY windows of multi-STORY buildings or below the ROOF LINE, parapet wall, or CORNICE of a single-STORY BUILDING.

iv. Any supports, braces, anchors, and other supporting hardware must be integral to the design of the SIGN.

Somerville, MA (cont'd)

13. Awning or Canopy Sign

a. A SIGN that is painted, screen printed, sewn, or adhered onto the surface of a awning or attached above, below, or to the face of an entry canopy that identifies a commercial establishment. Awning/canopy SIGNS are intended to be viewed by pedestrians on the opposite side of STREET.



Area	–
Located on Valance (max)	50% coverage
Located on Awning Slope (max)	25% coverage
Projecting from Canopy (max)	1 sf. per width of canopy

Lettering	
Height	–
Valance (max)	8 in
Awning Slope (max)	18 in
Projecting from Canopy (max)	12 in

b. Standards

i. SIGNS are not permitted on awnings or canopies that do not conform to the provisions for each type of BUILDING COMPONENT. See §3.D. BUILDING COMPONENTS for more information.

ii. SIGNAGE located on the sloping portion of an awning is only permitted for storefronts where the typical area for a wall SIGN is missing.

iii. SIGNAGE is prohibited on UPPER STORY awnings and on the side of awnings with closed ends.

iv. Information type is limited to business name, logo, and address. Additional information is prohibited.

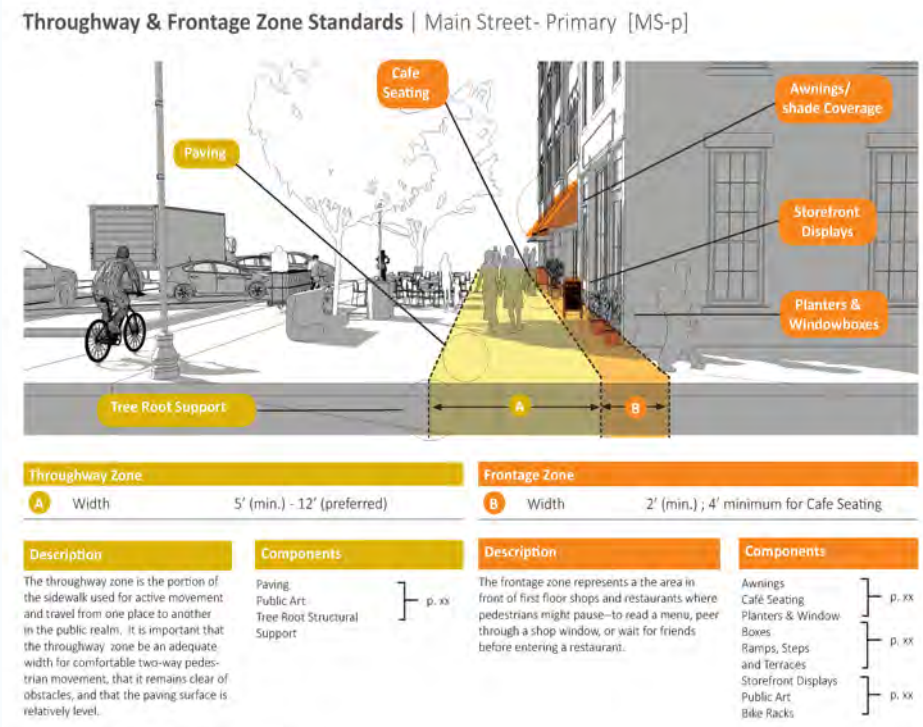
Source: Somerville Zoning Ordinance

Northampton, MA

The City provides for a broad combination of signs in the Central Business District, including wall signs, ground signs, projecting blade signs, awning signs, and others under Section 350-7 of the zoning ordinance.

The City is also reviewing new draft form-based zoning (Section 350-16), which includes building frontage zone standards for the downtown area and Florence center. These design standards address streetscape applications, building encroachments, outdoor displays, café seating, furnishings, and other activation applications on the public sidewalk.

The City of Northampton is in the process of reviewing proposed character-based zoning regulations for Downtown and Florence Center. The proposed regulations include design standards for the Throughway and Frontage Zones along the sidewalks concerning the placement of furnishing, utilities, landscape treatments, and use by adjacent businesses. Source: Northampton Character-Based Zoning Draft 9.16.19 prepared by Dodson & Flinker and Brovitz Community Planning & Design



Revise sign bylaw and outdoor display regulations to encourage variety of high-quality sign types and promote lively attractive merchandise displays. [East Lexington]

Category

Admin Capacity

Location

This project is located in the East Lexington Study Area (Census Tract 3581).

Origin

Contributed to Project Idea: RRP process participants and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Town of Lexington Planning Board, Economic Development Committee, Select Board, Bike Advisory Committee (to be determined).

Budget and Sources of Funding

Low Budget (Under $50k)

Budget: The budget for this project will depend on how the work is carried out. If the Town planning staff have the experience and time, it is possible for the entire project to be accomplished "in-house." The Town could also retain a zoning consultant (including MAPC) to evaluate current sign and display regulations and prepare context-based sign and display standards. In this scenario, planning and economic development staff would assist in identifying model signs, organizing public participation, and guiding the adoption process. As sign regulations tend to be a sensitive topic and are often difficult to change, having Town staff directly involved could be a critical part of the process. The preliminary cost estimate of retaining a consultant with assistance from Town staff is provided below.

Project Task	Cost Estimate if Consultant is Used
Evaluate the existing sign bylaw and display requirements	$1,000 – 2,000
Identify representative local examples and models for high-quality signs and displays	$1,000 – 2,000
Identify case studies and model bylaws from similar communities	$1,000 – 2,000
Prepare specific standards, illustrative graphics, and review procedures for all sign types	$15,000
Conduct legal review of draft bylaw for consistency with sign content case law	$2,000
Conduct public workshops and hearings to review draft sign bylaw (3-6 meetings estimated)	$7,000 – 15,000
Prepare and adopt final sign bylaw amendments	$3,000
Total	$30,000 – 41,000

Budget and Sources of Funding (cont'd)

Potential Funding Sources:

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) through the Community One Stop for Growth Planning Grants
- Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) technical assistance (DLTA) grants or general planning services
- Town (general funds)

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

A general timeline of the project below is estimated to take approximately 12 months to complete. This includes public workshops and hearings to inform businesses, property owners, and the general public about potential changes to the sign regulations and provide an opportunity for feedback prior to adoption. Amendments to the Zoning Bylaw will also require Town Meeting approval. Once implemented, the Town should work with the East Lexington businesses and property owners to make sure they take advantage of new standards for signage and displays.

Project Task	Month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Evaluate the existing sign bylaw	X	X										
Identify representative local examples	X	X										
Identify case studies and model bylaws from similar communities	X	X										
Prepare specific standards, illustrative graphics, and review procedures for all sign types			X		X			X			X	
Conduct legal review of draft bylaw for consistency with sign content case law					X	X						
Conduct public workshops, hearings, TM approval of the proposed sign bylaw amendments (6 estimated)	X		X		X		X		X		X	
Prepare and adopt final sign bylaw amendments											X	X

There are no known or anticipated start and completion dates at this time.

Risk

Low Risk

There are no significant risks to adopting new sign and display regulations as long as the new standards are clear, flexible, produce combinations of high-quality signage, and improve business image and opportunity. Potential impediments could include lack of political support, lack of business support and liability concerns (such as with signs and displays that project over the sidewalk).

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- **Increase in the variety and quality of signs in E. Lexington.** This could be measured by the number of new high-quality wall and sandwich board signs (including those oriented to the Bikeway), projecting blade signs, and sidewalk merchandise displays.
- **Increase in customers for businesses that implement more attractive and effective signage.** This could be somewhat difficult to measure precisely; however, business owners could be surveyed 3 – 6 months after installing new signs and displays to get their opinions about the impacts on customer traffic.
- **Bikeway User Response.** Public opinion surveys of Bikeway users about the enhanced signage and visibility of East Lexington businesses 6 months after installation of new signs oriented to the trail.

Partners and Resources

A summary of entities/organizations/individuals that might be required to implement the project are identified below:

- Lexington Planning and Economic Development staff for project leadership, funding sources, and implementation.
- Lexington Planning Board, Economic Development Committee, and Select Board to support the sign and display zoning amendments at public hearings and Town Meeting.
- East Lexington business and property owners for input on and support for the sign and display zoning amendments.

Diagnostic

The East Lexington Study Area includes the Retail Shopping Zoning District (CRS) on the north side of Massachusetts Avenue and the Neighborhood Business Zoning District (CN) and Two-Family Dwelling Zoning District (RT) on the south side of the street.

East Lexington business and property owners identified signage regulations as an obstacle to business development in surveys and public workshops. Additionally, East Lexington participants indicated that it was difficult to draw potential customers off the Bikeway because placing a temporary sign near the trail larger than 3 square feet requires a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA).

Lexington's sign regulations are in Section 5.2 of the Zoning Bylaw. They are fairly restrictive in the CRS district where most of the businesses are located in East Lexington. For example, the maximum size for wall signs is 3 feet in width and 3 feet in height above the first floor; projecting signs have a maximum size of 6 square feet and require a special permit from the Planning Board (they are permitted by right in the Town Center/CB District); all standing signs require a special permit from the ZBA; and permanent window signs, merchandise displays, and string lights are not permitted. Additionally, wall signs must also be on the front or side of the buildings where street frontage exists. Adding signage on the back wall facing the Bikeway would not be permitted without a variance from the ZBA.

Sign regulations should be modified to allow for more flexibility in the size and placement of wall signs, projecting signs, sandwich board signs, and outdoor displays in East Lexington.

Diagnostic (cont'd)

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: Revisions to the sign regulations will improve opportunities for business development in East Lexington. This project would provide context-based standards that allow businesses to have a range of high-quality signs geared to pedestrians, drivers and Bikeway users. These revisions provide businesses an opportunity to improve their visibility and attract more customers.

Harmful COVID-19 Impacts this Project seeks to Address: East Lexington was significantly impacted by COVID-19. Consumer patterns were disrupted, foot traffic plummeted, and sales declined. According to our business survey in March/April 2021, 69% of businesses in the three districts reported that foot traffic was substantially lower compared to before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more. It is this decline in foot traffic and sales that the sign and display improvements intend to address. As businesses begin to fully reopen, the revised sign standards provide an opportunity for businesses to expand and upgrade the quality of signage and by doing so, increase marketing efforts to bring people back to East Lexington.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: Many of the businesses were forced to close or operate at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID-19. During this time, consumer patterns were severely disrupted. Consumers became accustomed to online purchasing and not going out to eat. Consumer behavior in the three business districts has still not returned. Improving the sign and display standards allow for a broader range of high-quality signage directed at pedestrians on the sidewalk, cyclists of the Bikeway, and travelers in cars. Collectively, existing and new businesses that install a coordinated sign program (such as wall signs, blade signs, window signs, sandwich board signs, and merchandise displays) will help customers overcome the lack of access to the customer market and create a more vibrant image of the district, leading to rapid economic recovery.

Action Item

Successful village and neighborhood business districts depend on visibility with quality storefront treatments, a combination of signs, and spill-out applications (such as sandwich board signs and merchandise displays). This project involves building consensus of East Lexington business and property owners and garnering public support for amendments to the current sign and display regulations to enhance the image of East Lexington and draw more customers from the Bikeway, Massachusetts Avenue, and the surrounding neighborhoods. With clear standards, sign permits could be approved administratively without board review or unnecessary fees that may deter the use of high-quality signage and displays. These changes to the sign regulations should result in higher quality storefronts, improved customer visibility, and improved business revenues.

Existing Conditions

Examples of signage and displays in East Lexington
Photos: FinePoint Associates

Process

1. **Bylaw Evaluation**
   Evaluate existing sign regulations in Section 5.2 of the Lexington Zoning Bylaw to determine the impact on East Lexington business development in terms of the number and type of signs permitted over the past 3 years, the review process (length of time and board approval), and limitation on businesses to provide a combination of signs.

2. **Case Studies and Character Example**
   Identify representative local and regional examples of high-quality signs appropriate for the business district, including wall signs, projecting blade signs, ground signs, awnings and banner signs, window signs, sandwich board signs, merchandise displays, and others as appropriate.

3. **Model Bylaws**
   Identify model sign regulation bylaws from similar communities.

4. **Prepare Sign and Display Regulations**
   Define standards and illustrative graphics for all the types of signs and displays identified in Number 2 above in terms of size shape, placement, materials, lighting, and allowed combinations of different sign types. Prepare sign permitting and approval procedures with board review and administrative review by staff.

5. **Legal Review**
   Conduct legal review of draft bylaw for consistency with sign content case law.

6. **Public Participation**
   Conduct public workshops and hearings to present and discuss sign/display type and design options and to review draft sign regulations (6 meetings estimated).

7. **Adoption**
   Prepare final sign bylaw amendments for adoption at Town Meeting.

Several cities and towns have adopted (or are in the process of adopting) flexible and context-based sign regulations for the purpose of creating more vibrancy in their downtown districts. A couple of recent examples follow.

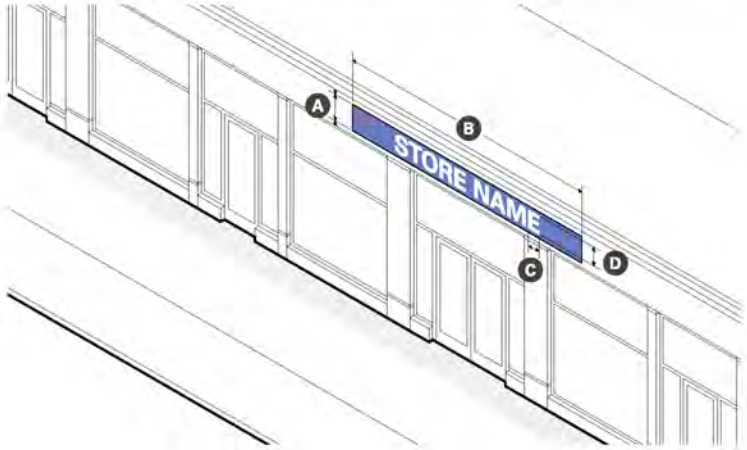
Somerville, MA

The City adopted a comprehensive form-based code in 2019 that includes detailed sign and display regulations under Section 10.9. The design standards include a broad range of signs that are well illustrated and cover a range of commercial districts from pedestrian oriented to strip commercial.

The City of Somerville adopted a new Form-Based Code in 2019 that includes context-based sign regulations with detailed design standards and illustrative diagrams for different types of signs. Above are example standards for wall signs, blade signs, and awning signs. Source: Somerville Zoning Ordinance

12. Wall Sign

a. A SIGN attached flat or mounted parallel to the FACADE of a BUILDING that identifies a commercial establishment. Wall SIGNS are intended to be viewed by pedestrians on the opposite side of STREET



Size	
Area (max)	40 sq. ft.
Height (min/max)	1 ft 4 ft
Width (max)	90% of FACADE width

Lettering	
Width (max)	75% of SIGN width
Height (max)	75% of SIGN height
Projection from FACADE (max)	6 inches
Raceway Height (max)	50% of Letter Height

b. Standards

i. Wall SIGNS are only permitted for GROUND-FLOOR businesses.

ii. Internally illuminated SIGN cabinets are prohibited.

iii. Wall SIGNS are prohibited from covering windows or architectural details.

iv. No portion of a wall SIGN is permitted to extend above the lower eave line of a BUILDING with a pitched roof.

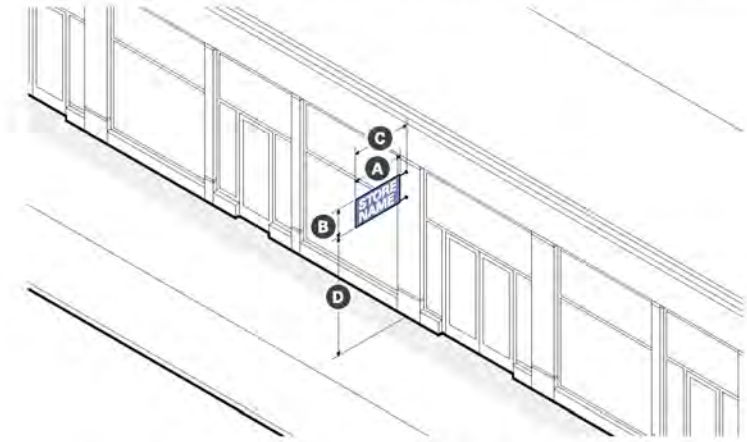
v. No portion of a wall SIGN is permitted to extend above the ROOF LINE or parapet wall of a FLAT ROOFED BUILDING.

vi. No portion of a wall SIGN is permitted to extend above the CORNICE or expression line of the base of a BUILDING.

vii. Information type is limited to business name and logo. Additional information is prohibited.

11. Blade Sign

a. A small, two-sided SIGN that is attached to and projecting perpendicularly from the FACADE of a BUILDING that identifies a commercial establishment. Blade SIGNS are intended to be viewed by pedestrians on the same side of the STREET



Size	
Area (max)	6 sq. ft. / side
Width (max)	4 ft
Height (max)	3 ft
Thickness (max)	6 inches

Location	
Clear Height over Sidewalk (min)	8 ft
Projection from FACADE (max)	4 ft
Number of SIGNS	1 per Tenant

b. Standards

i. Blade SIGNS are prohibited for UPPER-STORY businesses.

ii. A blade SIGN must be located within ten (10) feet of the PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE for the business it identifies.

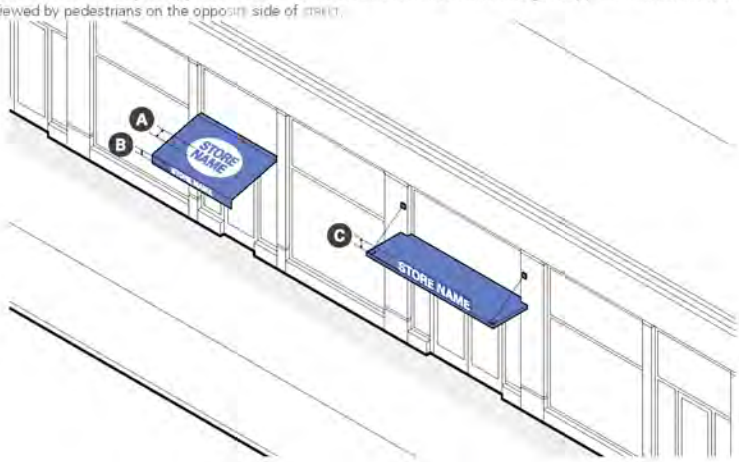
iii. A blade SIGN, including any support hardware, must be mounted below the sills of the second STORY windows of multi-STORY buildings or below the ROOF LINE, parapet wall, or CORNICE of a single-STORY BUILDING.

iv. Any supports, braces, anchors, and other supporting hardware must be integral to the design of the SIGN.

Somerville, MA (cont'd)

13. Awning or Canopy Sign

a. A SIGN that is painted, screen printed, sewn, or adhered onto the surface of a awning or attached above, below, or to the face of an entry canopy that identifies a commercial establishment. Awning/canopy SIGNS are intended to be viewed by pedestrians on the opposite side of STREET.



Area	–
Located on Valance (max)	50% coverage
Located on Awning Slope (max)	25% coverage
Projecting from Canopy (max)	1 sf. per width of canopy

Lettering	
Height	–
Valance (max)	8 in
Awning Slope (max)	18 in
Projecting from Canopy (max)	12 in

b. Standards

i. SIGNS are not permitted on awnings or canopies that do not conform to the provisions for each type of BUILDING COMPONENT. See §3.D. BUILDING COMPONENTS for more information.

ii. SIGNAGE located on the sloping portion of an awning is only permitted for storefronts where the typical area for a wall SIGN is missing.

iii. SIGNAGE is prohibited on UPPER STORY awnings and on the side of awnings with closed ends.

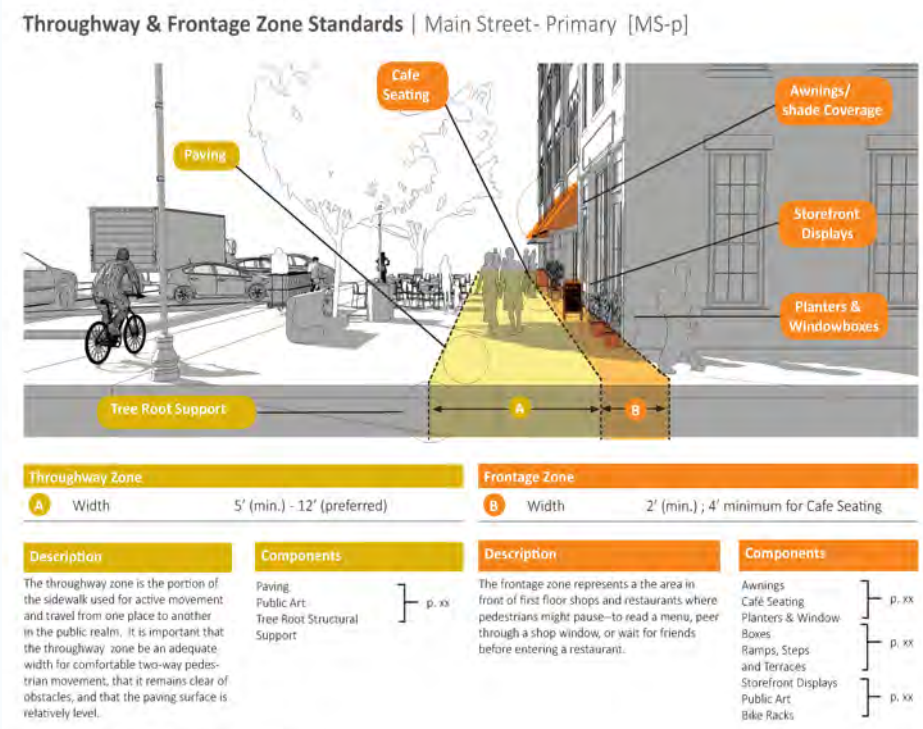
iv. Information type is limited to business name, logo, and address. Additional information is prohibited.

Source: Somerville Zoning Ordinance

Northampton, MA

The City provides for a broad combination of signs in the Central Business District including wall signs, ground signs, projecting blade signs, awning signs, and others under Section 350-7 of the zoning ordinance. The City is also reviewing new draft form-based zoning (Section 350-16), which includes building frontage zone standards for the downtown area and Florence center. These design standards address streetscape applications, building encroachments, outdoor displays, café seating, furnishings, and other activation applications on the public sidewalk.

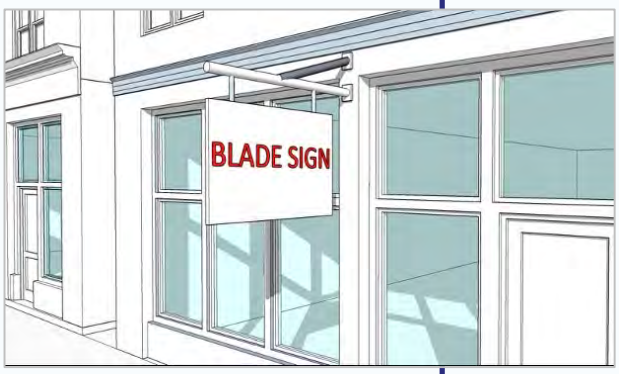
The City of Northampton is in the process of reviewing proposed character-based zoning regulations for Downtown and Florence Center. The proposed regulations include design standards for the Throughway and Frontage Zones along the sidewalks concerning the placement of furnishing, utilities, landscape treatments, and use by adjacent businesses. Source: Northampton Character-Based Zoning Draft 9.16.19 prepared by Dodson & Flinker and Brovitz Community Planning & Design

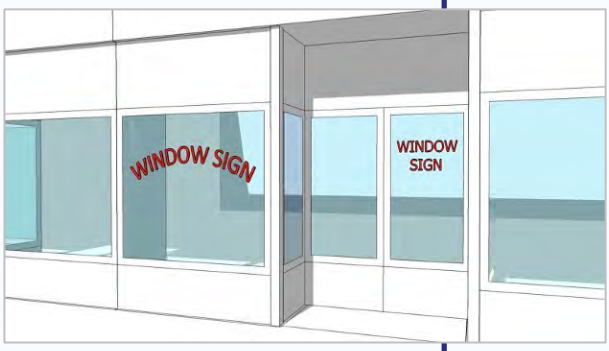


Northamption, MA (cont'd)

Examples of sign types.

Source: Northampton Character-Based Zoning Draft 9.16.19 prepared by Dodson & Flinker and Brovitz Community Planning & Design.





Arts/Culture Recommendations

Create a mural program especially for public locations and businesses adjacent to the bikeway. [All 3 districts]

Category

Culture/Arts

Location

Arlington Heights (CT 3566.0), East Lexington Village (CT 3581), Bedford Center (CTs 3593.03 and 3591).

On walls and fences along the Minuteman Bikeway that serve as connection points to the business districts of Arlington Heights, Bedford Center and E. Lexington Village, and within the districts.

Origin

Contributors to Project Idea: Economic Development staff in the 3 communities, RRP Process participants, and consulting team.

Potential Champions: Bedford Cultural Council, Bedford Cultural District Partnership, Lexington Cultural Council, Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture.

Budget

Low: The following are estimates for a Mural Program run by Arlington, Bedford, or Lexington.

Artist stipend and materials (if one artist) — $2,000 – $10,000 (Depending on size of mural)
Additional Installation materials — $300 – $1000
Event Promotion Materials and Digital Outreach – $200
Total = $2,500 – $11,200 per mural (depending on size)

Potential funding sources:

- Local businesses and/or corporate sponsors
- Hometown Grant
- Patronicity Crowdfunding Program
- Cultural Projects Grant, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- National Funders — National Endowment for the Arts "Our Town Grant"
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds
- Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) Grant Program (in partnership with Middlesex3 Coalition)

Example of blank walls that could be considered for potential mural sites include Berkshire Grey in Bedford and Trader Joes in Arlington, pictured above. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

Project Task	Month 1	2	3	4	5
Identify partners, form committee	x				
Identify top sites with potential for murals	x				
Narrow site list to 2–3 locations		x			
Put out Call for Artists			x		
Select artist(s)				x	
Coordinate mural installation					x
Publicize new artwork and evaluate					x

Risk

Low Risk

There is low risk in hiring artists to paint murals along the Minuteman Bikeway.

Since art is subjective, not everyone may like the finished artwork, but overall, the addition of public art will have a positive affect on both the Bikeway, and the business district.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following:

- Increased pedestrian and cyclists turns from Minuteman Bikeway into the three business districts
- Increased visitors and foot traffic in the business districts
- Positive qualitative experience of the public art by passersby.

Partners and Resources

- Local businesses (especially those who have mural spaces)
- Local artist and arts organizations
- Mass Cultural Council
- Arlington Commission For Arts and Culture
- Arlington Center for the Arts
- Bedford Cultural Council
- Lexington Council for the Arts
- Munroe Center for the Arts

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: The Mural Program seeks to further create a sense of place at the connection points between the Minuteman Bikeway and the three business districts of Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Village as well as in the business districts themselves. While small businesses faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in Minuteman Bikeway usage both for commuting (as residents didn't feel safe using public transit) and for recreation purposes. However, while the bikeway has increased usage, users are seemingly unaware of the business districts that are adjacent to the bikeway. This project will focus on the opportunity of the increased cycling and pedestrian activity on the bikeway and try to draw people into the districts as a complement to more traditional wayfinding signage.

COVID-19 Impacts Addressed by this Project: A total of 69% of businesses in the three districts indicated a reduction in foot traffic in January and February 2021 compared to the previous year before COVID. For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: The COVID-19 pandemic placed a strain on small businesses in each of the districts as they closed or adapted to new safety restrictions.

At the same time, COVID-19 also caused an increase in cycling and pedestrian activity on the Minuteman since public transit became viewed as unsafe for commuting, and many sought outdoor recreation opportunities.

Action Item

The Mural Program aims to enhance the vibrancy of Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Village with public art, while also creating stronger connections between the Minuteman Bikeway and the three districts. The murals would be complementary to our recommendation for more traditional wayfinding as they would informally create a sense of place and destination at the connection points between the bikeway and the districts. Sites adjacent to the bikeway would be prioritized first, and then the program could expand to the districts.

Local partners would be engaged in the coordination from start the finish, and a committee would be formed to oversee the process. Sites would be identified to maximize the opportunity to bring tourists and residents into the districts, while artists would be given a set of parameters to match the goals of the organizing committee. A description of action items is below.

Action Item (cont'd)

1. Identify partners and form Mural Program committee (or hire coordinator)
The best mural programs are those that partner with community members and organizations to ensure that the artwork is representative of the community and is visually appealing to those who will view it. It is recommended to have one key (part-time) staff person dedicated to the mural program (and other public art initiatives). However, if this isn't possible, then a committee will need to be formed to oversee the process and provide oversight and coordination. The committee should be composed of key municipal staff members, local business owners (particularly if they own the buildings being painted), leadership from local arts organizations, and engaged volunteers dedicated to the arts.

2. Identify top sites with potential for murals
This mural program should prioritize the connection points between the Minuteman Bikeway and the business districts but could also include sites within the business districts. Fences may also be considered. While the program will likely start with only 1–3 murals, it may be helpful to compile a list of all possible sites so that the program could be expanded. To gather possible sites, program staff could do an audit of all sites that meet the agreed-upon criteria. Another way of gathering sites is to put out a "Call for Walls and Fences." This would involve publicizing the program and the types of sites you are looking for and asking for building (or fence) owners to respond with their information (either digitally, or via other means).

3. Narrow site list to 2–3 locations
Not all sites will be idea for murals. Some of those identified may have significant barriers regarding the surface type, or the amount of cleaning and preparation needed in order to paint. An experienced muralist would be the best person to help narrow down the sites to ensure that the project will be doable.

4. Put out Call for Artists
Once the top 1–3 sites are selected, a "Call for Artists" will need to be put out. The committee will need to discern if there is a specific type of mural the community would benefit from, or if there is a theme that the artist should adhere to (such as history, nature, etc.). It should be noted, that the best murals come out of processes where the artist is able to use their artistic freedom of expression rather than adhere too specifically to prescriptive guidelines.

The Call for Art process can be formal with specifications outlined and a due date, or more informal through word of mouth. In either type, it is recommended to ask only for previous artwork and a rough sketch for the mural rather than a full design.

5. Select artist(s)
Once artists have submitted to your process, whether formally or informally, the committee should gather to discuss top entries and make the selection.

6. Coordinate mural installation/painting with partners
The selected artist should decide if they are wanting volunteer support in the preparation of the mural wall and the painting. Depending on the level of skill required, kids, teens, or adult volunteers may be able to assist the artist. School groups, or youth organizations could be recruited. When the mural is completed, it will need to be sealed to protect it from the elements and ensure it lasts for as long as possible.

Action Item (cont'd)

7. Publicize and evaluate new artwork
When the artwork is complete, partners may want to hold an "unveiling" event or celebration. At the very least, a press release should be created to share this new attraction with the community. Gather qualitative input on the mural by asking for feedback on the process and design so you can use this for future murals.

Process

1. Identify partners and form Mural Program committee
- Form list of potential partners/staff to join committee
- Confirm participation of participating committee members
- Hold initial meeting to outline goals and discuss roles
- Seek funding via grants or private sponsors.

2. Identify top sites with potential for murals
- Look for sites with proximity to connections from the Minuteman Bikeway to the business districts
- Draft a "Call for Walls and Fences" to business owners
- Publicize "Call for Walls and Fences."

3. Narrow site list to 2-3 locations
- Meet with Committee to select 1 – 3 sites to include in the "Call for Art" (consider the condition of the wall and any cleanup or prep needed)
- If site is privately owned, invite the owner to the Mural Program Committee
- Continue to seek funding via grants and private sponsors.

4. Put out Call for Artists
- Meet with committee to decide on mural theme and any requirements for the Call for Art
- Draft "Call for Art" and revise with feedback from partners. Make sure to include:
    - Site details
    - Request for portfolio
    - Request for rough sketch of mural (not full design)
    - Note if you will be prioritizing local residents or any other scoring methods
- Put out final "Call for Art," publicize via social media, press, printed materials.

5. Select artist(s)
- Meet with Committee to score or vote on entries
- Communicate with winning artist and plan details of schedule, wall prep, volunteers, etc.

6. Coordinate mural installation/painting with partners
- If artist agrees, work with partners to engage volunteers in the painting.

7. Publicize and evaluate new artwork
- Plan unveiling event or similar celebration to share the new mural
- Invite press contacts and community partners
- Ask the artists, residents, and viewers what their experience was so that you can incorporate that feedback into future mural processes.

Maynard, MA

"Maynard as a Canvas"

In April 2021 The Maynard Cultural Council, along with local partners, launched a Mural Initiative called Maynard as a Canvas. They sought to leverage the focus on public space during the pandemic and create a public art mural that would celebrate the past, present and future of the town.

Program Management
- Coordinated by Maynard Cultural Council.

Choosing Sites
- Selected site was highly visible courtyard in the revitalization of the area.

Artists/RFP Process
- Open to Massachusetts' artists with previous mural painting experience.
- One site was selected, and details were given to artists.

Partners
- Local mural curator
- Jury made up of representatives of the community, local artists, and the Maynard Cultural Council will choose the winning design.

Funding
- Maynard Cultural District (in support of Massachusetts COVID impacted artists)
- Maynard Sesquicentennial Committee
- Maynard Community Enhancement Fund
- Local crowdfunding
- Time and material donated by artists.

Source: townofmaynard-ma.gov

Artist Anna Dugan poses in front of her mural at Naylor Court in Maynard. "[I wanted to] just show each person is their own color but then when you come together with other people it kind of overlaps to create a new color and then all together it creates this really joyful explosion of color." — Anna Dugan. Source: https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/beacon-villager/2021/07/26/maynard-mural-naylor-court-part-maynard-canvas-project/8070980002/

Excerpt from Maynard's Call for Artists

We will give special considerations to artists that:

1. Engage the local community in some way.
2. Make clever use of our 150th year as a town.
3. Can complete this project in early summer.

We encourage a theme that is not strictly historical. Think, "Past, Present and Future."

Please consider the following ideas for our future as a town:

- the basis of the town's emphasis is developing culture/arts
- make the downtown more active by driving more people to visit
- use and develop our water sources, the river and mill pond, for recreation, celebration, picnicking.

Source: https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals_unique_info.php?ID=8809

Maynard, MA (cont'd)

"Maynard as a Canvas"

Rendering mock-up of the mural proposed by the artist, Anna Dugan.
Source: Maynard Cultural District, www.facebook.com/DowntownMaynard/

View of quote from mural at Naylor Court in Maynard.
Source: https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/beacon-villager/2021/07/26/maynard-mural-naylor-court-part-maynard-canvas-project/8070980002/

Greenfield, MA

The Greenfield Mural

The mural in the center of Downtown Greenfield was first painted by volunteers from the community in 1990. It was originally the brainchild of Rebecca Tippens and her friend and nationally recognized community muralist, Janet Braun Reinitz, who together saw the big wall adjacent to the Veterans Mall park beckoning for vibrancy. The Veterans Mall committee agreed and came up with the theme for the mural to complement the Veterans Park memorial: *to honor those things of Franklin County that we have loved whether in memory or presence.*

In 2017, the mural, whose colors were fading, was repainted, and images added reflected the changes in what we do and cherish.

In 2020, a QR code was added to direct people to the Greenfield Mural website, which contains a History of the Mural and explanations behind over 50 separate mural images.

Resources for the 2017 and 2020 Projects:

Financial support for the project was provided by several local banks and the Greenfield Cultural Council. Greenfield's Sherwin Williams and Baker Office Supply provided brushes and paint. The Greenfield Business Association helped to recruit painters and garner support from business owners. Greenfield DPW helped in raising the scaffolding and closing the alley. Hawks & Reed hosted a celebratory party. Montague WebWorks donated their skills and artistry to create the website and QR code.

Source: www.greenfieldmural.com

The Greenfield Mural. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Create a Cultural District Art Walk along the Narrow Gauge Trail that would include a series of rotating temporary art installations.

Category

Culture/Arts

Location

Narrow Guage Trail, Beford, MA, (CT 3593.03).

The ArtWalk will be on the Narrow Gauge Trail between Great Rd (to the North) and Loomis St to the South.

Origin

Contributors to Project Idea: Alyssa Sandoval, Economic Development, Tony Fields, Planning Director and Cultural District Partnership members Amy Lloyd, Barb Purchia, Chris Wojnar.

Budget

Low: The following are estimates for a pilot ArtWalk installation and one programming event.

Curated, short-term public art exhibit
Artist stipend (per artist) — $1,000 – $2,000
Installation materials — $1,000 – $2,000

Programming - "walk event" on the Narrow Gauge Trail
Facilitator/Speaker Stipend — $200
Event Promotion Printed Materials and Digital Outreach Expenses — $200 - $300
Event Materials like signage, handouts — $100 - $200

Potential funding sources:
- First Parish Church
- Bedford Cultural Council
- Town of Bedford
- Cultural District Partnership
- Cultural Projects Grant, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal/state funds

Timeframe

Short Term (<5 years)

Project Task	Month					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Form ArtWalk Planning Committee	x					
Confirm potential funding sources		x				
Create short-list of local artists and reach out		x				
Confirm artist, create agreements on stipend, materials budget			x			
Installation				x	x	
Promotion						x

Timeframe

Project Task	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6
Form ArtWalk Planning Committee	x					
Create short-list of possible "Walks" on the Trail, including History Walk, StoryWalk, Poetry Walk	x					
Identify first event, and partners/facilitator		x				
Select date, create promotional materials		x				
Hold event			x			
Event debrief and promotion related to outcomes				x		

Risk

Low Risk

There is low risk in implementing some pilot ArtWalk installations and programming. Starting with temporary or low-cost initiatives will enable the project team to gain political will and wider interest and support for a larger scale and more permanent ArtWalk.

Key Performance Indicators

Performance indicators that might be used to measure anticipated impacts of the project after implementation include the following.

- Increased awareness of businesses in Bedford Center
- Increase in visitor and foot traffic in Bedford Center
- Total annual sales receipts in Bedford Center.

Partners and Resources

- The Cultural District Partnership
- Planning Board
- Bedford Arts and Crafts Society
- Chamber of Commerce
- Cultural Council
- First Parish
- Historical Society
- High School Art Program
- Local artists, musicians, and performers

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase: The ArtWalk initiative and its two components aim to leverage an existing but underutilized community asset, the Narrow Gauge Trail, and increase its potential to be a key pathway from the Minuteman Bikeway to Bedford Center businesses. This project also aims to build on the opportunity for Bedford to become a vibrant destination with arts and cultural opportunities that draw both residents and visitors alike into the Cultural District bounds.

Diagnostic (cont'd)

COVID-19 Impacts Addressed by this Project: Small businesses around the state are struggling as they try to recover from loss of business during COVID-related closures and safety restrictions. Eighty-nine (89) – 100% of businesses in the three districts reported being impacted by COVID-19. The most frequently cited negative impacts were decreased operating hours, decline in revenue, and unplanned expenses. In addition, 69% of businesses in the three districts indicated a reduction in foot traffic in January and February 2021 compared to the previous year before COVID.

Meanwhile, during the pandemic, there was a renewed appreciation for, and use of, outdoor amenities such as bikeways and greenways as they provided safe pathways for commuting and recreation. This project aims to leverage that new appreciation and build on the Narrow Gauge Trail's convenient location as a pathway between the Minuteman Bikeway and Bedford Center.

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: COVID-19 caused financial stress to local businesses including but not limited to those in the retail and restaurant sectors. Businesses were forced to shut down to keep employees and patrons safe, and many who did not have the means or space to adapt to new restrictions suffered financially.

Action Item

The Narrow Gauge Trail Art Walk will build on the opportunity for the Trail to become a stronger connection between the Minuteman Bikeway and Bedford Center businesses as well as between Depot Park and Bedford businesses. The Narrow Gauge Trail has the potential to be a more active linear park with both public art and additional infrastructure including greenery, seating, etc.

The Art Walk will engage local artists in a display of both permanent art and programming and create a vibrant space for residents and visitors to linger in addition to passing through. The Art Walk will also contribute to Bedford Cultural District goals by creating opportunities for artists and enhancing the district through arts and culture on the Narrow Gauge Trail.

These longer-term plans will be catalyzed by two short-term initiatives listed below.

Short-term public art exhibit
The purpose of this initiative is to pilot a temporary public art installation(s) along the trail, which would serve as a starting point for future "Calls For Art" or more permanent installations. The art would be a free-standing installation, either sculpture or photo exhibit, and would showcase the history of the Narrow Gauge Trail.

Programming "walk" event on the Narrow Gauge Trail
An event on the Narrow Gauge Trail will help to enliven the space and create an association with the Trail as a cultural destination. With the physical restraints of the space, a moving "Walking Tour"-style event is the best fit. Because of Bedford's rich history, a historical walking tour could be the programming priority, but other possibilities could include a Poetry Walk, StoryWalk, or other performance.

Process

Below are action steps to complete the two recommended initiatives.

Curated, short-term public art exhibit

1. Form ArtWalk Planning Committee
2. Confirm potential funding sources
3. Create short-list of local artists and reach out to find out interest
4. Confirm artist(s)
5. Create agreements with artist(s) for stipend, materials budget
6. Installation
7. Promote new artwork locally and regionally via social media, press, postering.

Programming “Walk” event on the Narrow Gauge Trail

1. Form ArtWalk Planning Committee
2. Create short-list of possible "Walks" on the Trail, including History Walk, StoryWalk, Poetry Walk
3. Identify first event, and seek out partners and/or a facilitator
4. Select date, create promotional materials, including posters, social media posts, etc.
5. Hold event
6. Meet with Committee for event debrief and promotion of event outcomes.

Malden, MA

ArtLine

"The ARTLine will be a premier public art gallery with miles of professional murals, sculptures, and community hubs. These hubs will feature gathering spaces with bursts of art, greenscapes, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, which will fuel economic growth through the act of creating unique and interesting places throughout Malden."

Timeframe/Funding

- "Phase 1" Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
- Funded by grants, private funders, fundraising events, crowdfunding (Patronicity).

Types of Art/Themes

- Phase 1 included murals, "pocket parks," designer benches, bike amenities, and planters.

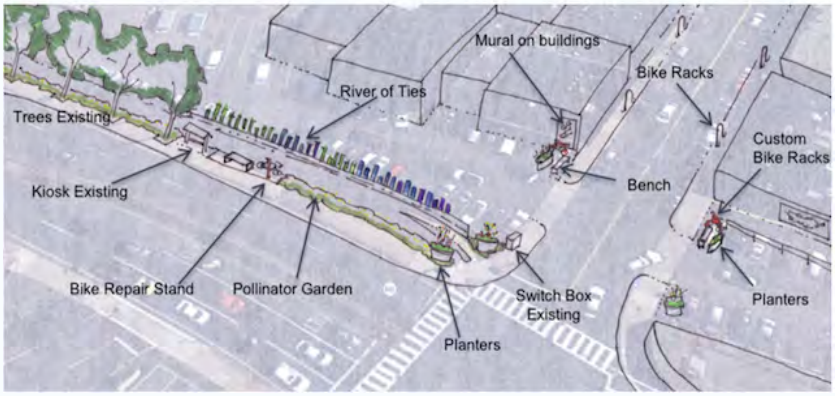
Artists/RFP Process

- Murals featured Malden-born artists
- "Call for Walls and fences" to business owners to identify available sites for the initiative.

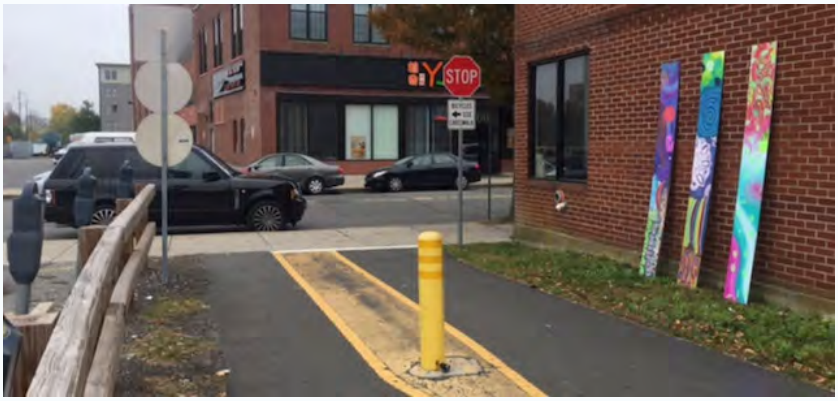
Partners

- Malden Arts (501c3), founded by artists, was the organizer
- The City of Malden
- Groundwork Somerville
- Mass Development

Source: Malden Arts



Rendering of the future Artline including space for bikes, gardens, and gathering spaces



River of Ties Installation along the ArtLine in Malden, MA. Source: www.maldenarts.org

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