



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Holliston

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



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

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

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

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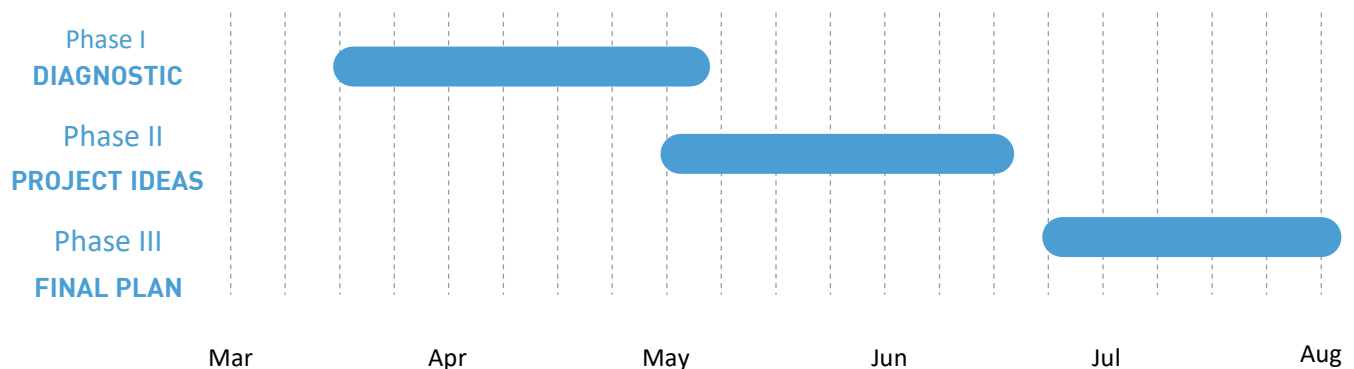
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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.



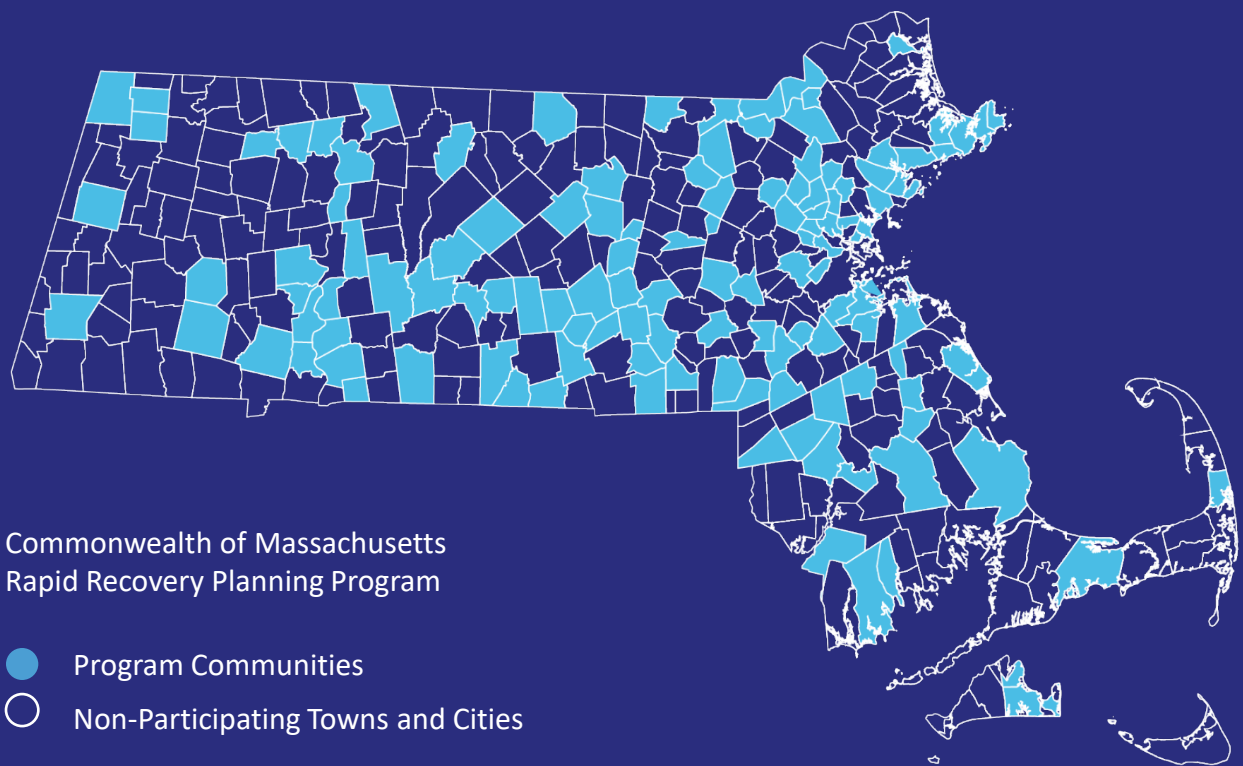
In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in “Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic”, and authored by Larisa Ortiz,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

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 Diagnostic Framework



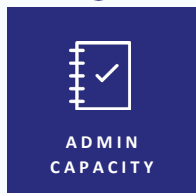
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue/Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

A Town Ready to Grow Sustainably

The Town of Holliston is in the MetroWest region of Boston, a cluster of communities between Rte. 128 and I-495. Holliston is bounded by Medway, Millis, Sherborn, Ashland, Hopkinton, and Milford. Routes 16 and Route 126 intersect in Downtown Holliston with connections to Framingham to the north and to Milford and I-495 to the southwest.

MetroWest grew significantly in the past 20 years. Holliston's population was just under 15,000 in 2019, a 9.1% increase since 2010 with an additional 5% growth forecast by 2030. Holliston is one of 37 municipalities under the MetroWest Compact Partnership, which collaborates on long-term, regional and infrastructural investments.

In the past 20 years, Holliston's household median income has grown significantly. In 2019, it was estimated to be \$135,340, more than \$50,000 higher than the state average of \$81,215. This reflects Holliston's high proportion of college-educated residents. Many residents commute to Boston, Framingham, and other communities in the region. Employment within Holliston is concentrated in agriculture, general and operations management, and labor.

For this effort, the LRRP study area is Downtown Holliston/Blair Square, located at either end of Central Street between Washington Street (Routes 126/16) and Railroad Street. Between Central and Elm Streets, Washington Street features traditional commercial establishments, government offices, and other community resources typically seen in a municipal downtown. Commercial establishments extend east from Washington Street along the Central Street spine in the direction of Blair Square, a primary access point to the Upper Charles Rail Trail, an important resource for attracting visitors to the study area during warmer weather. A 40-50 space municipal parking lot is located off Green Street. See image next page.



Holliston Upper Charles Rail Trail. Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Downtown Holliston/Blair Square LRRP Study Area. Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Holliston Public Library on Washington Street. Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Economic growth and recovery in Downtown Holliston/Blair Square will result from reviving/expanding local business support and by pursuing a mix of improvements, including adding much-needed sewer capacity.

Several specific project ideas aimed at enhancing Downtown Holliston/Blair Square are in various stages of development. These placemaking and streetscape improvements will support continued visitation and improve the public realm. Addressing the lack of sewer infrastructure will likely unlock much more economic activity, which in turn could support a larger and more-involved business community. The following six projects and strategies are recommended for Downtown/Blair Square:

- Build and Sustain Capacity for Economic Development and Local Business
- Improve Pedestrian Improvements on Central Street
- Develop Plan and Strategy for Sewer Connections to Downtown Holliston
- Develop Wayfinding Plan for Drivers, Pedestrians, and Bicyclists
- Implement Blair Square Placemaking Improvements
- Implement Plans for 9 Green Street property

Key Streets for improvement. Photo: Flickr

Diagnostic

Key Findings



CUSTOMER BASE

The Town’s customer base is established and well educated.

Holliston has a population of 14,724 and the largest proportion of the population is between the ages of 45 and 65, a prime cohort to support local commerce and community activities with younger children. The town’s residents are highly educated, with 50% of residents having a college degree.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Washington and Central Streets form the center of Downtown Holliston but the connection to Blair Square to its east is not strong.

Downtown Holliston is not well connected to Blair Square and the Upper Charles Rail Trail, approximately 1,200 feet to the east. The trail is an important recreational asset that draws visitors and to Holliston. The connection could be improved by increasing directional signage, improving connective infrastructure, and highlighting the accessibility of the municipal parking lot. Several of the issues identified for this effort were flagged in previous studies and the town’s list of project ideas (see Appendix).



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Most Downtown businesses serve local needs with expansion limited by the lack of sewer infrastructure.

Economic development in Holliston is constrained by lack of sewer infrastructure individual properties are served by septic systems. A reliance on this aging infrastructure has particularly limited the addition of new food establishments and other potentially water-intensive services such as a dental and medical offices. There are 56 storefronts, 67% of which consist of service-oriented office space; six establishments were vacant at the time of the April 2021 site visit.



ADMIN CAPACITY

Limited town staff capacity and the lack of new volunteers or a sustainable business organization may hinder economic growth.

As a small town, Holliston has limited staff capacity to support many economic development projects. While organizations such as the Holliston Community Action Fund, Holliston Cable Access Television (HCAT), and the town’s Economic Development Committee (EDC) all work to support local business growth, the number of individuals actively engaged is limited and it has been difficult to recruit new members.



Highlights from the Public Realm

WASHINGTON STREET CORRIDOR

Recent infrastructure investments on Washington Street have created a pleasant and attractive walking environment with featuring benches, greenery, and ornamental streetlamps. Buildings close to the sidewalks create a pleasant edge for walking and storefront lighting adds to the walking experience after dark. Goodwill Park is located at the end of Green Street just to the west. The town previously purchased the 9 Green Street parcel and is planning to redevelop the site.

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding signs, particularly for pedestrians, between Blair Square, Washington Street, the municipal parking lot, and Goodwill Park are limited or missing. Improved signage to direct drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians between Washington Street and Blair Square can help to link Downtown Holliston to Blair Square. People visiting the rail trail and Goodwill Park can walk or bike between both locations today but may not know how close they are to one another or to the municipal parking lot on Exchange Avenue today.



Sidewalks on the western side of Washington Street are wide and furnished with benches, street trees, and trash bins.

PEDESTRIAN CONDITIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON, BLAIR SQUARE, AND RAIL TRAIL

Central Street has not been improved in the same manner as Washington Street. While the roadbed and sidewalks are generally in good condition, the walking experience is inconsistent. Land uses vary and include auto repair businesses, retail stores with surface parking in front, and numerous wide driveways.

Lighting is not as good as on Washington Street. The existing municipal log behind the fire station is not well marked.



Sidewalks on the south side of Central Street are frequently missing, crumbling, or disrupted by long curb cuts for auto-oriented businesses.



Study Area and Key Observations. Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Central Street. Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Holliston Upper Charles Rail Trail. Source: Nelson\Nygaard

The Holliston Upper Charles Trail is an important asset to draw visitors.

UPPER CHARLES RAIL TRAIL

The Holliston Upper Charles Trail is a 24-mile unpaved multi-use path on a former rail right-of-way connecting six towns. It is used for biking, walking, jogging and cross-country skiing. Paralleling Railroad Street, the trail is used as a safe route for walking and biking to the elementary school and middle school to the north of Blair Square.

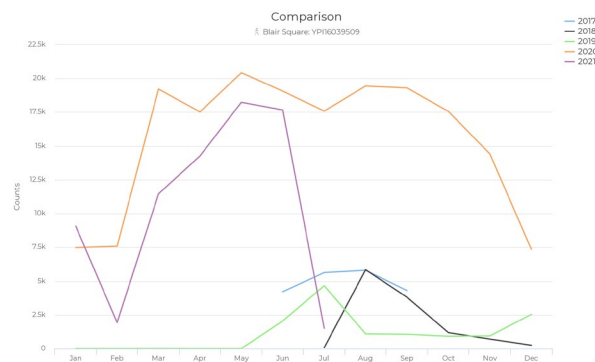
Trail usage is highest on weekends, driven by recreational visitors. Since MAPC installed automated trail counters in December 2019, an average of 472 pedestrians and cyclists used the trail per day, 392 on weekdays and 671 on weekends. Midday use is steady even during weekdays, with daily traffic peaking at around 35 trail users at 11 AM on weekdays compared to 91 trail users at 11AM on Saturdays and 83 at 3PM on Sundays.

Following the onset of social distancing measures in 2020, Blair Square experienced an increase in use during the summer months, compared to the previous year, before a drop leading into 2021 and corresponding with lower temperatures and earlier sunsets.

BICYCLE CONNECTIVITY AND PARKING

Between the trail entrance and Downtown Holliston, bicycle connectivity is not well established, potentially limiting the draw for area visitors to explore the area. Improving on-street bicycle accommodations and signage for both pedestrians and cyclists can promote greater awareness of local businesses and their proximity to the trail.

Currently, a single bike rack with space for ten bicycles is present in Blair Square today has a single bike rack. Other bike parking is provided on at the library on Washington Street and at Goodwill Park on Green Street. Additional bike parking is needed, particularly near local businesses.



Trail users jumped significantly at Blair Square in 2020, matching the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Numbers in 2021 have sustained growth. Source: MAPC



Highlights from the Business Environment

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL TIED TO SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

There are 56 active businesses in the town; six storefronts were vacant at the time of the April 2021 site visit. Most businesses in Holliston are services, health care assistance, and retail trade. Opportunity for economic development is focused in the study area, which for many years has been constrained by the lack of sewer infrastructure. Water-intensive uses such as restaurants have not been able to open or expand. An existing wastewater system located at the Robert Adams Middle School to the northeast of the study area has some capacity.

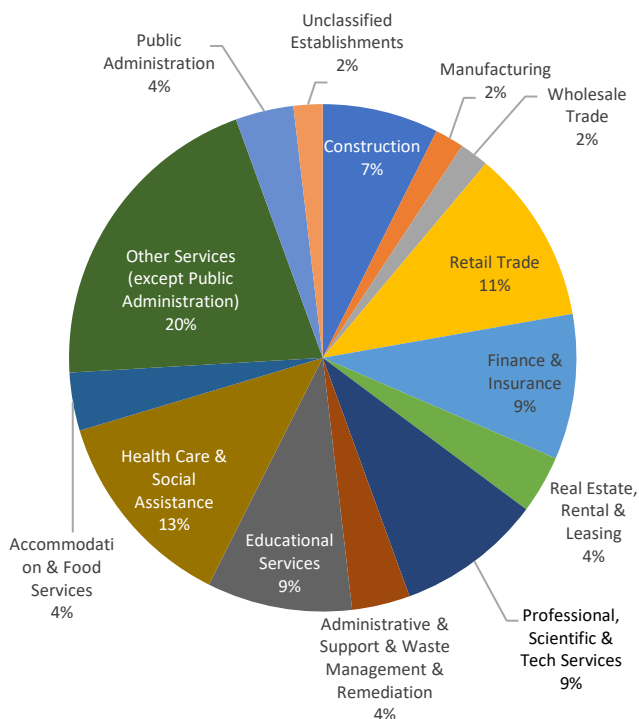
POTENTIAL FOR PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Developing stronger connections from Upper Charles Trail to the town core can be addressed through aligning public realm improvements.

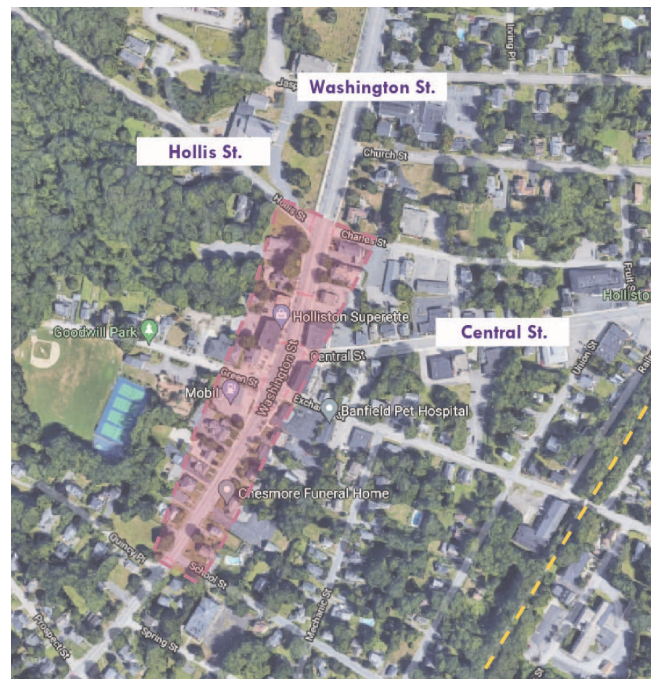
COVID-19 IMPACTED LOCAL BUSINESSES

In March and April of 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development conducted a survey of businesses as part of the Local Rapid Recovery Program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Holliston surveyed 23 respondents 61% of whom reported a 25% or greater reduction in foot traffic. Respondents expressed general satisfaction with safety, proximity to complementary businesses, and access for customers and employees, the condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs and the condition of public spaces and streets. Public parking availability and management was identified as among the more important areas of focus for possible recovery strategies. Respondents also expressed interest in attracting more businesses through town-wide events, adding more restaurants and shops, implementing a public sewer system, investing in public realm greenery, and implementing marketing strategies.

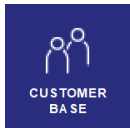
No. of Businesses



Mix of business by NAICS category. Source: US Census Bureau



Map of commercial nodes. Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Highlights from the Customer Base

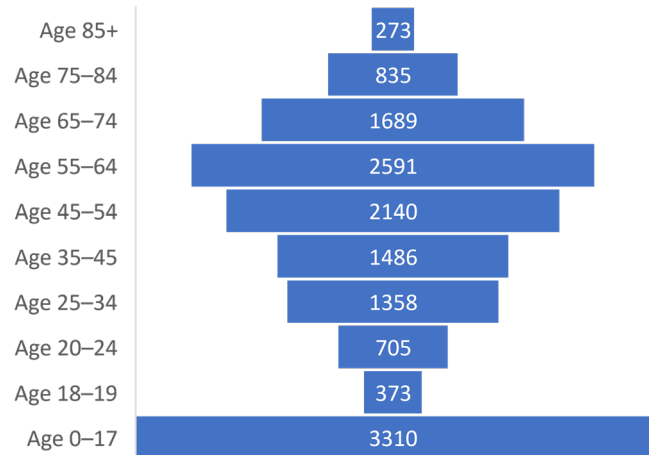
Well-established and well-educated customer base

With a population of 14,724, Holliston has grown 9.1% since 2010 and is projected to grow another 5% by 2030. About one third of residents are between 45 and 65 and one fifth are 17 or under. In the last 20 years, the population over 65 has doubled, which is on trend with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)'s regional projections.

The population of Holliston is predominantly White (87.4%), followed by Asian (5.3%), Hispanic/Latino (3.7%), and Black (1.1%). The town's residents are educated with 50% of residents having a college degree. The median income in Holliston is \$135,340, a figure that has grown significantly in the last two decades.

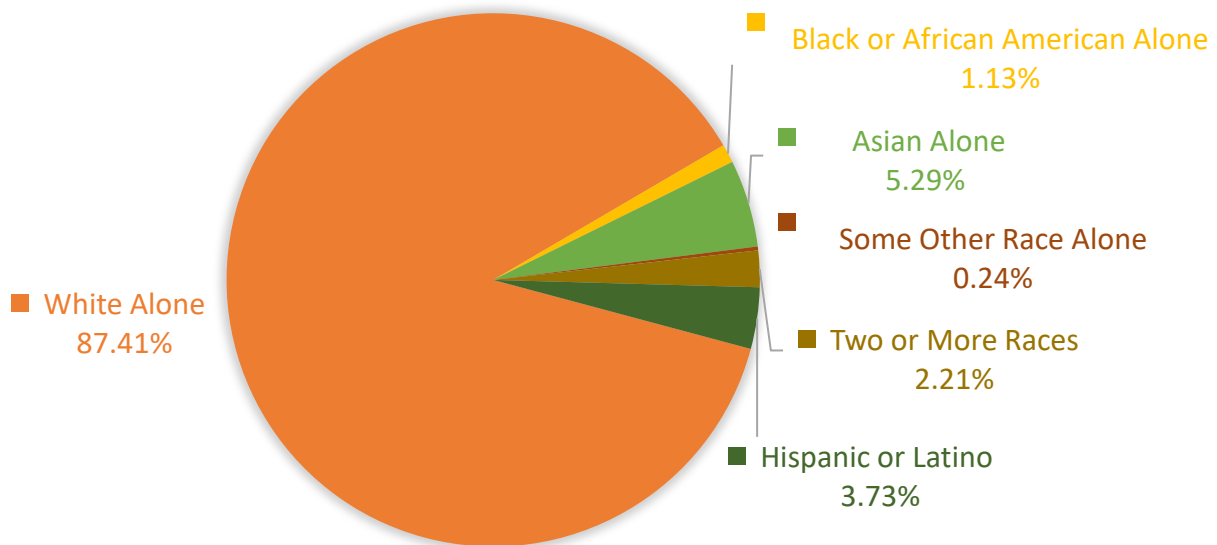
Based on discussions with the town, most of the businesses Downtown Holliston/Blair Square serve local needs with some pass-by activity for those traveling through the community. The Holliston Upper Charles Rail Trail is seen as an important draw from outside of town.

Age Distribution

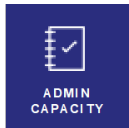


Age Distribution of Holliston town-wide residents, via ACS 5-Year estimates (2015–2019)

RACE AND ETHNICITY



Race and ethnic composition of Holliston. Source: U.S. Census, 2019 ACS.



Highlights from Administrative Capacity

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH ARE LIMITED

As a small town, Holliston has limited staff capacity to support many economic development projects. While organizations such as the Holliston Community Action Fund, Holliston Cable Access Television (HCAT), and the town's Economic Development Committee (EDC) all work to support local business growth, the number of individuals actively engaged is limited and it has been difficult to recruit new members.

As a response to COVID, HCAT spearheaded the *Holliston Together* program to promote the support of the local business community, with videos highlighting individual businesses. The Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC), works proactively to promote, encourage, expand, and strengthen the local economy and diversify the community's tax base. The EDC is a 6-member board that meets monthly. It supported the *Small Business Strong* support campaign in 2020.

The Town of Holliston is a part of the MetroWest Compact Partnership, which is working regionally to inform a collective response to COVID-19 impacts. This partnership is a potential resource for additional economic development support.



Project Recommendations

Build and Sustain Capacity for Economic Development and Local Business

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Study Area
Origin	Town of Holliston
Budget	 Low Budget (less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term: reconstituting an organization could be accomplished in 18 months
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Participation, recruitment of new volunteers, applications for grants, formalized partnerships with chambers of commerce
Partners & Resources	Partners: Economic Development Committee, Holliston Cable Access Television, Holliston Business Association, Milford Area Chamber of Commerce, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, 495/MetroWest Partnership Resources: Grow Grant



Images of footprints on Washington Street sidewalk. Photo Credit: Nelson\Nygaard

Diagnostic



The COVID pandemic significantly impacted downtown businesses. Business surveys verified that most small businesses, dining, cultural attractions, and destinations experienced loss of employment, revenue, customer base and foot traffic. Downtowns with active organizations demonstrated their ability to pivot and respond to this crisis to help their small businesses weather the storm. Many downtowns have realized that a sustainable district management entity or similar organization is necessary to help downtowns recover from COVID and prepare for the future.

In Holliston, there is a desire to develop a sustainable organizational model to support businesses and the downtown in COVID recovery and ongoing programming to create a socially and economically district and advance .

Action Item

Getting Started

Many communities form downtown management entities by creating a working partnership between the municipality and downtown stakeholders such as businesses, local chambers of commerce, nonprofits, media, civic leaders, property owners and active residents. This is particularly true in communities with in active or no existing downtown organizations. Holliston currently supports businesses in partnership with HCAT and the EDC. The opportunity may exist to use the LRRP planning process as a launching point for increased stakeholder engagement and new partnerships.

Communicating the Value Proposition

To gain more business support and participation, is important to communicate the **value proposition** to all involved for investing human capital and financial resources into a new or revived organization. Ultimately the goal of any downtown organization is to create a destination that is attractive to potential businesses, residents, and visitors. If successful, this effort translates into increased property values, sales and meals taxes, stronger tenancy, a vibrant cultural scene, and a destination where people want to shop, locate a business, dine and live. A well-managed and sustainable organization will undertake strategic programs and services that will help achieve that goal. Factors include:

- Ability to collectively and cost effectively pursue priority programs and services that show impact /scale
- Having a unified voice advocating for district priorities
- Professional managed and dedicated staff
- Leveraging resources and collaborations

Stakeholder Engagement/ Leadership and Partnerships

HCAT, the EDC, the MetroWest Regional Partnership, nearby chambers of commerce, major property and business owners, along with the town staff can meet to discuss how to revive or reconstitute a downtown management entity. The goal of this effort would be to form a working partnership and to develop a sustainable district management model for Holliston. This effort may be initiated by the town but should transition to a privately-led working steering committee with strong public sector support. The clear demonstration of a public / private partnership will help move this effort forward.

Create a Community / Business Outreach Strategy

A working group should undertake additional efforts to engage businesses, property owners and interested residents. Some of this work has been done through the LRRP process but will need to continue to execute proposed LRRP projects and other priorities. In addition, this provides the opportunity to provide community education on organizational models, identify needs and opportunities as well as potential leadership. This could happen in a variety of ways including:

- Community forums - fun, engaging and Informational visioning sessions
- Peer learning panels - executive directors from downtown management entities other successful communities
- Visits to other communities with downtown entities to see programs in action
- Surveys of needs and priorities (although this has recently been done through the LRRP process but could include a broader distribution to other stakeholders.
- Websites/social media etc.

Resources for Startup and Sustainability

Some seed money will likely be required to start an organization. Possible sources include technical assistance through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, or ARPA funds (if the development of the organization can be tied to implementing COVID recovery activities). In addition, local institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/individual contributors may be sources for seed money to launch an effort to form a downtown management entity.

Careful consideration should be given to developing a realistic budget, and a variety of revenue opportunities for the organization. Depending on the selected organizational model this may include assessment/fees, sponsorships, event revenue, grants or contracts, foundation, and individual giving. If possible, the downtown organization should strive to secure multiple year commitments from funders (if forming a voluntary based nonprofit).

Process

With limited resources and no active downtown organization in place, Holliston may consider the following steps to begin the incremental process of building support for a downtown management entity.

- Create a downtown partnership with HCAT, EDC, key property owners, and key destination businesses to launch the effort
- Form a working advisory committee to provide input and feedback
- Secure seed funding for technical assistance to explore district management models through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), ARPA, foundations and other stakeholder support
- Explore entering into an agreement with the 495/MetroWest Partnership or other chambers of commerce to provide basic administrative support to the downtown organization
- Program community outreach events, conduct surveys, and pursue other engagement tools for input and community education
- Hold community forums on different management district models
- Hold direct conversations with stakeholders
- Develop consensus on preferred models, programs, and budget
- Create management entity model

Additional Resources

How to Form a BID In Massachusetts:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-revised-business-improvement-district-manual/download>

Community Comments

In its review of the draft report, a representative of the town stated:

A significant, bold move for Holliston would be to establish an economic development strategy that would add sewer infrastructure to the downtown area, include redevelop the former lumber building complex next to Casey's and the mill buildings into residential and restaurants to increase activities along the rail trail corridor and make the downtown more viable. Another important aspect is to bury the electric lines in parts of Washington and Central Streets and add street trees to get away from the paved mayhem along Central. So many of the businesses in town have uncontrolled access across their entire frontage. Any redevelopment will need to eliminate this. Improved zoning bylaws and review committees would be required.



Determining a District Management Model for Downtown Reading, MA



ADMIN
CAPACITY

Provided by SME Consultant

Ann McFarland Burke, Downtown Consultant

Location

Reading, MA

Origin	Town of Reading, MA
Budget	 A Massachusetts Downtown Initiative grant provided Technical Assistance. The Town provided staff support and early coordination.
Timeframe	 The process took approximately 18 months. This timeframe was expanded due to the pandemic and extensive community education undertaken as part of the process.
Risk	 Political, property owner, tenant and other stakeholder consensus for preferred organization model is required to successfully establish a downtown organization
Key Performance Indicators	Establishment of a sustainable downtown organizations with a defined program, sustainability model and appropriate staff support.
Partners & Resources	Town of Reading, downtown advisory and steering committee and other downtown stakeholders

<p>Diagnostic</p>	<p>The creation of a new downtown management organization was intended to establish a dedicated organization that would provide supplemental programs, services and advocacy for the downtown. The downtown organization would undertake activities to attract businesses, investment, customers and residents to downtown. These could include marketing, placemaking, business development and advocacy.</p> <p>Determining the appropriate downtown management organization model was a unique process for the Reading community, downtown property owners and businesses. The process included extensive outreach and community education to explore program priorities, financial sustainability, organizational models and champions from both the private and public sector.</p>
<p>Action Item</p>	<p>Economic development plans for downtown Reading had included the recommendation to establish a sustainable downtown organization to support the economic and social health of the downtown. The Town of Reading spearheaded activity to launch the process of community and property owner engagement to explore what model would be appropriate for downtown Reading. This included :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of staff and financial resources • Creating a community outreach and engagement strategy • Research to identify community priorities / recommendations • Peer learning from other communities • Consensus building among stakeholders • Transition of leadership to private sector
<p>Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town of Reading secured Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance funding and committed staff to initiate and support • A broad-based community advisory/ working group was formed to provide input and feedback • A survey was widely distributed to community residents, businesses and other stakeholders – 1,600 responses were received providing insight into program priorities and community preferences

Process continued

- **Community Outreach Event** - a Pizza/ Ice Cream Social brought over 150 residents to provide input
- **3 Community Forums** - Panels featuring executive directors of different types of downtown organizations described their programs , challenges and models.
- **Working sessions with advisory committee** to discuss specific model alternatives / cost and benefits
- **One-on-one conversations** with key stakeholders
- **Consensus building** with stakeholders and recommendation of preferred model and next steps
- **Transition from city-led effort to Steering committee** comprised of property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to lead organizational effort. City staff continued staff support. TA support continued through additional MDI grant.
- **BID Steering Committee.** BID organizational process underway

Town of Reading Sponsored Pop-Up Event

ReImagine Reading Pizza and Ice Cream Social



September 18th from 6 pm to 8pm
Pleasant Street Center
49 Pleasant Street

A pop-up public event to help launch a downtown organization
Featuring local businesses, free pizza, ice cream, photo booth and more
Please RSVP on Eventbrite by 9/16: https://ice_cream_social.eventbrite.com

ALL ARE WELCOME!

For more information, please contact Andrew MacNichol, Staff Planner at amacnichol@ci.reading.ma.us



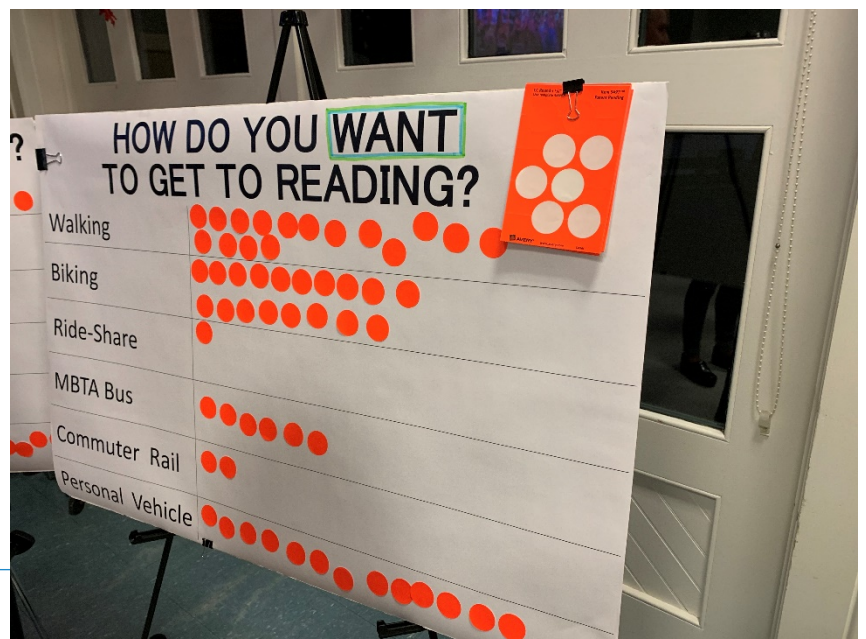
ReImagine Reading SURVEY!



Or by web: <https://www.readingma.gov/reimagine-reading>

Scan QR Code with your phone
camera to take the survey

More Info on back 



Implement Pedestrian Improvements on Central Street

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Central Street corridor
Origin	Town of Holliston, 2017 Harriman Streetscape Plan, Nelson\Nygaard
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) - with brand deployment
Timeframe	 Short Term (less than 5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk – will require cooperation from private property owners
Key Performance Indicators	Number of pedestrians, development projects, new business openings
Partners & Resources	Partners: Town of Holliston staff, Select Board, and Town Meeting Resources: Local funds, Commonwealth Places Fund , Shared Streets and Spaces , Hometown Grants Program , MassWorks Infrastructure Program (see Appendix table)

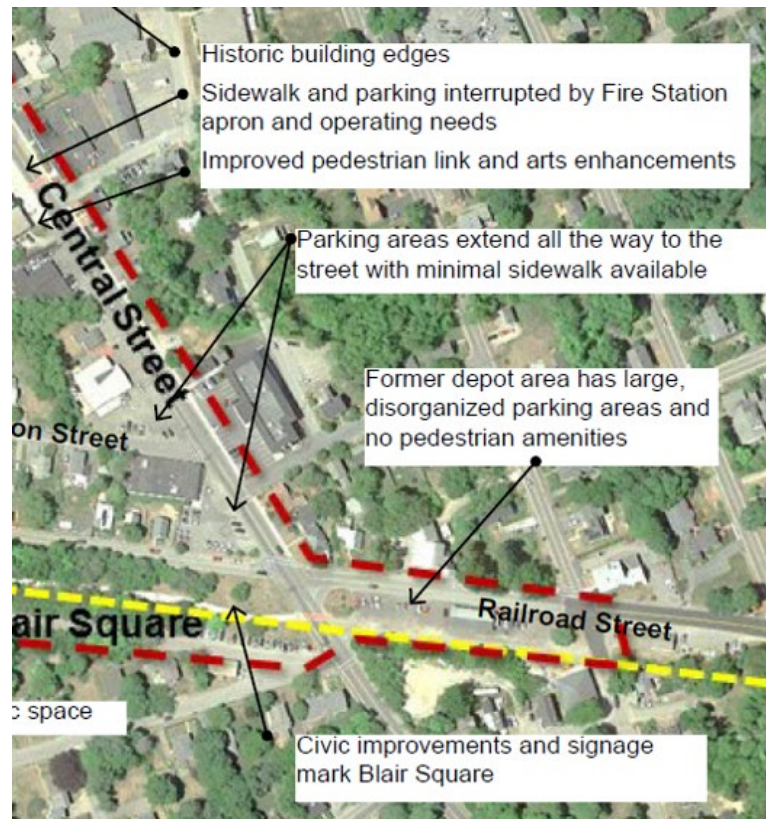


Sidewalk disrupted by open driveway, Central Street. Photo Credit: Flickr

Diagnostic

The Upper Charles Rail Trail is an established seasonal attraction next to Blair Square and Central Street connects Blair Square to Downtown. While the overall street has an inviting character, gaps in the walking environment along Central Street interrupt the linkages between the two areas. Some land uses are incompatible and in some areas, parking lots disrupt the sidewalk. This discontinuity was flagged in the 2017 Harriman Streetscape Plan. The lack of wayfinding signage is also a limitation.

There is an opportunity to fill in the gaps in the pedestrian network by repairing and extending sidewalks on both sides of the street. Additionally, installing pedestrian-scale lighting and buffers on sidewalks where feasible would create a safer and more pleasant experience. This project can draw Rail Trail visitors to Downtown Holliston along Central Street.



Notes from 2017 Streetscape Plan. Credit: Harriman

Action Items

Develop a connected pedestrian walkway by engaging a design consultant to plan and design improvements in the corridor. The plan should:

- Consolidate driveways and install continuous sidewalks
- Widen sidewalks where possible
- Include landscape and pedestrian-scale lighting intervals
- Incorporate wayfinding signage (see wayfinding project)

Process

- Issue consultant RFP
- Once selected, hold project kickoff with key stakeholders
- Conduct outreach to abutters to solicit feedback on access, deliveries, etc.
- Adjust elements of the project as needed based on feedback
- Identify and propose sidewalk construction and connectivity. Determine the length of the project, and how to mitigate community impacts during construction.
- Determine any parking adjustments, and working with businesses along Central Street to redesign, relocate, or share parking spaces with the municipal lot during and after construction.
- Secure materials and expertise for construction
- Construct, repair, and expand sidewalks and implement crosswalk marking
- Install wayfinding signage, lighting, plantings and other buffers
- Manage traffic during construction
- As part of follow up, measure activity along the street (vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists) and track new building permits



2017 Central St. Sidewalk Improvement Concept. Credit: Harriman

Develop Plan and Strategy for Sewer Connections to Downtown Holliston

Category	 Other
Location	Downtown Holliston and Blair Square
Origin	Town of Holliston
Budget	 High. See tables below.
Timeframe	 Long-Term
Risk	 High Risk – engineering design and construction required
Key Performance Indicators	Securement of right of way, construction documentation
Partners & Resources	Partners: Town of Holliston Resources: Local funds, Commonwealth Places Fund , MassWorks Infrastructure Program , Mass DEP State Revolving Fund Loan Program , Economic Adjustment Assistance through ARPA (see Appendix table)

Item	Unit	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Cost
Gravity sewer mains	Linear feet	3,500	\$250	\$875,000
Force main	Linear feet	2,200	\$250	\$550,000
Sewer pump station	Lump sum	1	\$750,000	\$750,000
TOTAL				\$2,175,000

Costs for Gravity Sewer and Pump Station, Source: BETA Group, Inc.

Item	Unit	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Cost
Low-pressure pumps and services	each	41*	\$10,000	\$410,000
Low-pressure force Main	Linear feet	5,700	\$250	\$1,425,000
TOTAL				\$1,835,000

Costs for Low Pressure Sewer System, Source: BETA Group, Inc.

** Based on seventeen 3-bedroom houses, twelve 10,000-square foot retail spaces, eight 10,000-square foot office spaces, and four 40-seat restaurants.*

Diagnostic

The lack of sewer infrastructure in Downtown Holliston has impeded local business growth, particularly restaurants. There has long been an interest in connecting to existing sewer capacity at the nearby middle school property and civil engineering support is needed to help the town plan for advancing the concept to implementation.

A recently purchased property at 9 Green Street has provided the town with an opportunity to revitalize the downtown by providing additional parking and some ongoing septic issues at nearby properties.

An existing wastewater system located at the Robert Adams Middle School, approximately 3,300 feet from 9 Green Street is not currently at capacity. This system shows an existing capacity of 40,000 gallons per day (gpd). Currently, the wastewater system at the school handles approximately 17,000 gpd, leaving approximately 23,000 gpd of additional capacity. The table below shows the flow requirements for different uses and what could be supported by the available capacity.

Two systems could convey wastewater from buildings within the Downtown Holliston/Blair Square to the existing wastewater system at the middle school. 1) A gravity system would convey wastewater to the low point at the intersection of Central Street and Fruit Street where a pumping system could be constructed to pump wastewater to the existing system. 2) Individual low-pressure pumps could be installed at each building being serviced with a low-pressure wastewater system directing that flow to the system at the school.

Action Item

- Further define the service area, the type of structures, their uses and wastewater flows to be serviced by expansion of sewer system (in either design)
- Confirm the capacity of the existing wastewater system at the Robert Adams School
- Conduct detailed topographic survey to determine the best routing to connect to the school system
- Further define the most cost-effective way to convey wastewater to the service area

Type	Unit	GPD	Quantity	Total Flow (gpd)
Residential	Per bedroom	110	52 bedrooms	5,720
Retail space	Per 1,000 square feet	50	115,000 square feet	5,750
Office space	Per 1,000 square feet	75	76,000 square feet	5,700
Restaurants	Per seat	35	164 seats	5,740
TOTAL				22,910

Based on Massachusetts Title V flow estimates, this table provides a sample of the quantity of bedrooms, office/retail space and restaurant seats that could be served by this wastewater system. Source: BETA Group, Inc.

A link to Beta's memorandum can be found [here](#).

Process

- Meet with town personnel or their representatives to further detail capacity at existing wastewater system
- Fully define the number and type of uses that will be serviced by the new wastewater system
- Investigate most cost-effective method to provide wastewater service this area
- Secure funding for design and construction
- Proceed to design of the method selected
- Bid and construct the new wastewater system to service the area



Sewer Service Area Overview. Photo Credit: BETA Group, Inc.

Develop Wayfinding Plan for Drivers, Pedestrians, and Bicyclists

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Town of Holliston, Nelson\Nygaard
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) - with brand deployment
Timeframe	 Short Term (less than 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – stakeholders have found consensus on brand positioning and brand pillars
Key Performance Indicators	Number of visitors, parking utilization, bike counts, increased foot traffic
Partners & Resources	Town staff, Select Board, Town Meeting Resources: Local funds, Commonwealth Places Fund , Hometown Grants Program , MassWorks Infrastructure Program (see Appendix table)



Small public parking wayfinding signage for southwest-bound drivers on Washington Street. Photo Credit: Nelson\Nygaard

Diagnostic

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, usage along the Holliston Upper Charles River Trail for pedestrian and bicycling traffic has increased. In addition, Downtown/Blair Square businesses reported decreases in foot traffic. Visitors to the rail trail may not know that there are other places to visit beyond the rail trail parking area even though Washington Street is 1,200 feet away.

There is an opportunity to develop a pedestrian, cycling, and vehicular wayfinding system that can elevate Washington and Central Streets while highlighting existing amenities.

Visitors to the rail trail from outside Holliston are more likely travel by car and park by Blair Square. The 40-50 space municipal lot between Exchange and Central Streets is available for parking but signage is limited.

As part of an economic recovery strategy, wayfinding signage could encourage drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians to patronize both ends of the district.

Action Items

Develop a wayfinding system to better connect Blair Square to Downtown. Actions include:

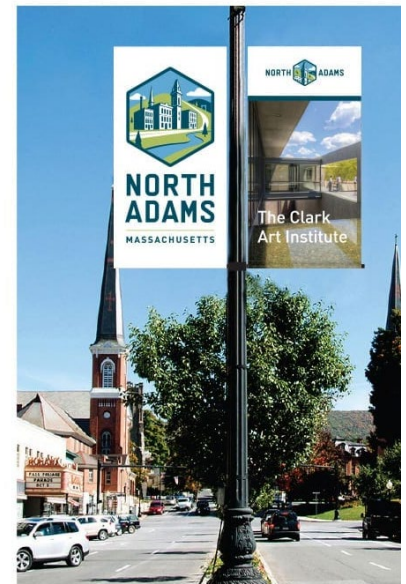
- Plan directional signs that link downtown, Blair Square, and the Upper Charles Trail.
- Identify locations for signage along Central and Washington Streets.
- Identify key local or regional destinations to place on directional signs.
- Consider extending directional signage along the Upper Charles Trail.
- Include bike and walk times and distances on signs.
- Include a maintenance plan for sign replacement and/or information updates.
- Consider expanding bike parking and installing bike repair stations.
- Install parking identification signage on Central and Exchange as well as wayfinding to/from nearby destinations.



Bicycle wayfinding in Provincetown including key destinations, distances and estimated travel times. Photo Credit: <https://bikeprovincetown.org/wayfinding>.

Process

- Gather funding and expertise.
- Establish clear goals for the project and identify key stakeholders.
- Develop proposals for the project that link clear motor vehicle, pedestrian, and cyclist routes to and from the Rail Trail and Washington Street and work with key stakeholders to narrow and adjust options.
- Issue an RFP to develop a wayfinding system to include:
 - Audit of existing signage
 - Establishment of clear wayfinding goals and objectives, and agreement on town center and project boundaries
 - User identification and journey mapping
 - A family of wayfinding sign types
 - Key destinations to be included in the sign program
 - A sign location plan
 - A signage message schedule with consistent nomenclature
 - Conceptual and final sign design concepts
 - Materials and mounting recommendations
 - A design intent bid package that can be issued to signage fabricators for pricing and installation
 - Sign fabrication and installation oversight (review shop drawings, answer RFIs, develop punch lists, etc.)
- A bid package to sign fabricators should include developing and installing prototype signage at one or two locations before rollout of the full system.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among town departments to confirm responsibility for maintenance.
- Identify and source bike parking and bike repair station options
- Install bike parking / bike repair stations



Comprehensive wayfinding system in North Adams, MA. Photo Credit: <https://www.stoltze.com/projects/city-of-north-adams/>

Implement Blair Square Placemaking Improvements

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Blair Square, Central Street, Front Street, Railroad Street, and Exchange Street
Origin	Holliston's Select Board appointed a Blair Square Committee made up of residents, business owners, and town staff volunteers to discuss and approve designs from Collab Landscape Collection and Beals + Thomas for a redesigned Blair Square.
Budget	 Large Budget: (\$400,000+) depending on the level and extent of stormwater management and curb line reconstruction in the approved design
Timeframe	 Medium Term: (5-10 years), while the visioning process has concluded, the timeframe needs to include funding, final design, and implementation
Risk	 Medium Risk – stakeholders have found consensus on design
Key Performance Indicators	Increased pedestrian activity; increased rail trail volume, increased coordination among businesses, residents, and organizations; reduced retail vacancy
Partners & Resources	Town of Holliston staff, Select Board, Town Meeting, Blair Square Committee, Friends of Holliston Trails, and others Resources: Local funds, Commonwealth Places Fund , Hometown Grants Program , MassWorks Infrastructure Program (see Appendix table)
<div>  <div>   </div> <div> BLAIR SQUARE MASTER PLAN <div>FEBRUARY 3, 2021</div> </div> </div>	
	

Beals + Thomas/Collab rendering for Blair Square Redesign. Photo Credit: <https://www.townofholliston.us/print/109391>

Blair Square and rail trail conditions today. Photo Credit: Plan Facilitator

Diagnostic

The Upper Charles River Rail Trail is adjacent to Blair Square and the area near Railroad Street, Front Street, Central Street, and Exchange Street.

The area around Blair Square is not clearly defined and can be transformed into a recognizable gathering place while continuing to support visitors to the rail trail.

The Town's Blair Square redesign plan is aimed at making the park space available for a variety of uses and ensure safety. This includes separating bicyclists from gathering places. New seating and a pavilion/ bandstand next to a larger open lawn can support events and commemorate the Veteran's Memorial Flagpole.

At the same time, accommodating parking for trail users and downtown visitors remains key to final design. Striping appropriate safe spaces will formalize what parking is available, and additional signs to the municipal lot can tie in a broader section of Downtown to Blair Square improvements.

Action Item

Action items needed to complete the Blair Square improvements include design development, construction documentation, and construction:

Design Development

- Materials palette development, including seat wall design, paving materials, shade structure, informational kiosk, lighting, landscaping species, and site furnishings.
- Parking layout and accessibility design coordination with MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces Program improvements on Front Street.
- Veterans Memorial Honor Roll design
- Plans including site preparation, layout and materials, landscape plan, grading and drainage design, and site details.
- Cost estimates
- Public engagement meetings

Construction documentation (including Veterans Memorial Honor Roll design):

- Sitework construction drawings and technical Specifications
- Revised cost estimate
- Town meeting preparation



Mock-up of Blair Square Redesign, facing South. Photo Credit: <https://www.townofholliston.us/print/109391>

Process

Developing a vision plan and approved design for the public realm improvements in Blair Square should follow the traditional planning process of existing conditions review, analysis of opportunities and constraints, exploration of alternatives and selection of a preferred design.

Each step of the process requires a degree of public engagement to review local issues at hand so that shared values and consensus lead to durable buy-in to decisions made. The establishment and involvement of the Blair Square Committee is an already complete step in this process.

The following process steps have also been completed to date:

- Prepare an analysis of trends and likely future conditions of the Upper Charles Rail Trail and surrounding Blair Square parcels, based on zoning, demographics, real estate market, business conditions.
- Develop and visualize alternatives for redesign within this larger physical, economic, social and environmental context.
- Evaluate alternatives within Blair Square Committee public discussion and build consensus in support of a preferred design.





The following steps will help move the Blair Square Master Plan designs to implementation:

- Document the preferred alternative within a final masterplan design development documents, cost estimates, and materials palette
- Determining responsibilities to implement it, including staff and volunteers.
- Test preferred alternative(s) with tactical urbanism demonstrations and gather community feedback
- identify and apply for grant funding (or secure town funds) to pursue detailed design and construction.
- Temporary construction or permanent easements are identified and sought
- Conduct procurement process to hire contractor.
- Contractor completes project construction.



Proposed Blair Square Redesign, facing North. Photo Credit: <https://www.townofholliston.us/print/109391>

Implement Plans for 9 Green Street Property

Category	 Tenant Mix
Location	Washington Street / Green Street intersection area
Origin	Town of Holliston, Nelson\Nygaard, Goman + York
Budget	 High Budget: Estimate is \$250,000 for design fee and program to subsidize implementation to develop the communications, marketing and activation of the space. Should the adjacent parcel become available, additional funding will be needed.
Timeframe	 Short Term – less than 5 years: 1 year or less to develop project – 1-2 years of project planning and acquiring the adjacent property and funds. Implementation of the guidelines will be long-term
Risk	 Medium Risk – setting guidelines/policies in place assures that any improvements done in the downtown must be adhered to. One parcel is currently in the Town's control and is planned for redevelopment..
Key Performance Indicators	Degree of space utilization and activation; Ability to draw new development/tenant interest to the downtown; Approval by town to proceed with the initial project; Increased visitor/consumer traffic and sales.
Partners & Resources	Town of Holliston staff, Select Board, and Town Meeting and possibly abutters. Resources: Local funds, Commonwealth Places Fund , MassWorks Infrastructure Program (see Appendix table)



9 Green Street parcel. Photo Credit: Nelson/Nygaard

Diagnostic

The corner of Washington Street and Green Street/Exchange Avenue is a key gateway into Downtown Holliston and has the largest concentration of businesses in the neighborhood. At the end of Green Street, Goodwill Park attracts residents and visitors alike to its fields and playground.

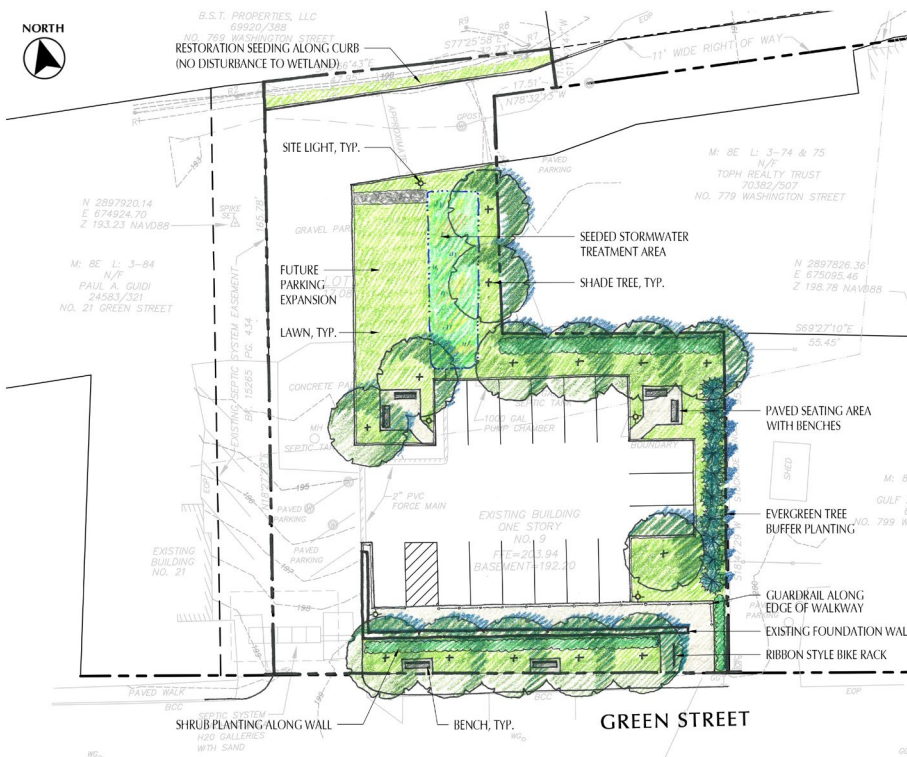
In its December 2020 Special Town Meeting, Holliston appropriated funding for the design/engineering costs to cover demolition, stormwater, and site planning. In its May 2021 Annual Town Meeting, Holliston appropriated funds for demolition, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2021. PARE is under contract to the town for this work.

This project is seen as a catalyst to economic development and growth in the Downtown.

Action Item

This project will investigate the most affordable means to achieve that "highest and best use" as soon as possible, including but not limited to:

- New site elements identifying vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow, wayfinding, lighting, and other amenities
- New paving, curbing, and sidewalks to reinforce the drives and parking areas and provide safe pathways to the downtown commercial offerings
- Identifying what new amenities, structures and/or buildings should be introduced to the site or what infrastructure should be provided to market it for other/future purposes by the town or future developments/tenants.
- To develop the parcel(s) into not only additional parking, but a programmed space with the park/parking at one end and the Rail Trail at the other end of Central Street.
- To serve as an example of fostering economic growth within Downtown.



9 GREEN STREET - LANDSCAPE CONCEPT SKETCH A
TOWN OF HOLLISTON, MA

SHADLEY ASSOCIATES, P.C.
JUNE 28, 2021

CONCEPT DESCRIPTION

- TRADITIONAL LANDSCAPE DESIGN
- STREET TREE PLANTING AND SHRUB HEDGE WITH BENCHES ALONG GREEN STREET
- LAWN AND SHADE TREE PLANTING AROUND PARKING LOT WITH EVERGREEN TREE AND SHRUB BUFFERS
- PAVED SEATING AREAS IN CORNERS OF THE PARKING LOT
- SPACE FOR PARKING EXPANSION

REPRESENTATIVE IMAGES



PARE /Shadley Associates Preferred Concept Sketch for 9 Green Street

Process

Conceptualization of Design Options

- With a landscape and site plan established, consider possible options for programming future use of the space.
- Based upon the programming and design concepts; estimate costs for bidding process.

Identify Sources of Funding

- Identify sources and applicability – outlined in budget section (city/state sources – grants, economic development funds, ARPA, revitalization grants)

Build Support and Pursue Local Approvals

- Coordinated with town staff to understand implementation – code-related issues, permitting, inspections, etc.
- Conduct outreach/informational sessions to present the project
- Obtain Select Board and Town Meeting support as required

Communicate the Proposals

Once the design has been approved and funding has been secured:

- Use town staff or hire an expert to develop a communication plan for marketing/outreach for planned improvements/programming.
- Development of a Communications and Marketing plan – this plan should begin prior to the groundbreaking and be ongoing through the opening and activation of the space.
- This project can be an example or case study for the Town's economic development efforts which can then be used to attract new market development.
- The plan should establish metrics for understanding the success benchmarks once design is launched.

Post Development/Space Activation/Next Steps

- Shared parking utilization by visitors and customers
- Wayfinding signage
- Micro Events - pop-up shop, performances, food truck, little free library
- Program in conjunction with Blair Square placemaking
- Seasonal uses (may crossover to the ballfields/park)
- This project can lead similar area projects and instituting a full redevelopment plan of the area including the adoption & implementation of a design program is essential to build on the momentum from this project.

Appendix

Possible Funding Resources Cited in Report

Name of Fund	Agency/ Organization	Maximum Eligible Grant Amount per Applicant	Description/ Allowable Use of Funds	Link
Commonwealth Places	MassDevelopment	\$300,000	To help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy, including improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in their communities. This program complements the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Shared Streets & Spaces.	https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/
Shared Streets and Spaces	MassDOT	\$200,000	To support the repurposing of streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities and community programming, including but not limited to facilities for eating, shopping, play, and community events and spaces for all ages.	https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eligible-and-ineligible-projects-shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program
Economic Adjustment Assistance	U.S. Economic Development Administration	\$10,000,000	EDA's ARPA EAA NOFO is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to, and recover from, the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, including long-term recovery and resilience to future economic disasters. Under this announcement, EDA solicits applications under the authority of the Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which is flexible and responsive to the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders. This is the broadest NOFO EDA is publishing under ARPA and any eligible applicant from any EDA Region may apply.	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=334743
Hometown Grant Program (Private)	T-Mobile	\$50,000	To build/rebuild/refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in town.	https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants
MassWorks Infrastructure Program	MA Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development		The most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities and other eligible public entities primarily for public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur private development, and create jobs - particularly for production of multi-family housing in appropriately located walkable, mixed-use districts.	https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworks-infrastructure-program
State Revolving Fund Loan Program	MA Department of Environmental Protection	Municipalities	The State Revolving Fund (SRF) offers affordable loan options to cities and towns to improve water supply infrastructure and drinking water safety; and to help them to comply with federal and state water quality requirements that deal with wastewater treatment plants and collection systems, while addressing issues such as watershed management priorities, stormwater management, and green infrastructure. Additionally, the SRF supplies financial assistance to address communities with septic system problems.	https://www.mass.gov/state-revolving-fund-srf-loan-program

Project Needs List for Downtown/Blair Square 2/24/2021

Number	Location	Idea
1	Central St. EB sidewalk and crosswalk at fire station	Replace eastbound sidewalk from Fire Station to Union St. with more prominent type, install curb ramp at crosswalk on north side; Fix cracking on sidewalk Infront of "The Hub"; Bike accommodations ; Install bike rack at fire station
2	Crosswalk, across Washington at Prospect St. and Pleasant St.	Consider moving crosswalk, Install rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) at crosswalk
6	Central St. at Railroad St.	Install new ADA ramps on west leg with level landing and wider ramp
8	School St. at Washington St.	Install ADA compliant ramps and crossing signage
22	Washington St. south of downtown area; Central St.; Lowland St.	Install speed limit feedback
28	Bus stop improvements	Bus stops: Washington St. at Public Library and Washington St. across Church St. Install bus stop improvements (i.e., bench or shelter) Extend bus route and shelter at Hopping Brook Rd. near industrial park
46	Bike path to Washington St.	Rail trail path signage along Central St. from Railroad St. to Washington St.
47	Bike path to Washington St.	ADA connection from Railroad St. along Exchange St. to Washington St. and signage
50	Union St. south of Exchange St.	Resurface sidewalk (1,822 LF) maintain ADA complaint curb ramps

Source: Town of Holliston