



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Turners Falls
in Montague,
MA

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



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

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

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

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Acknowledgements



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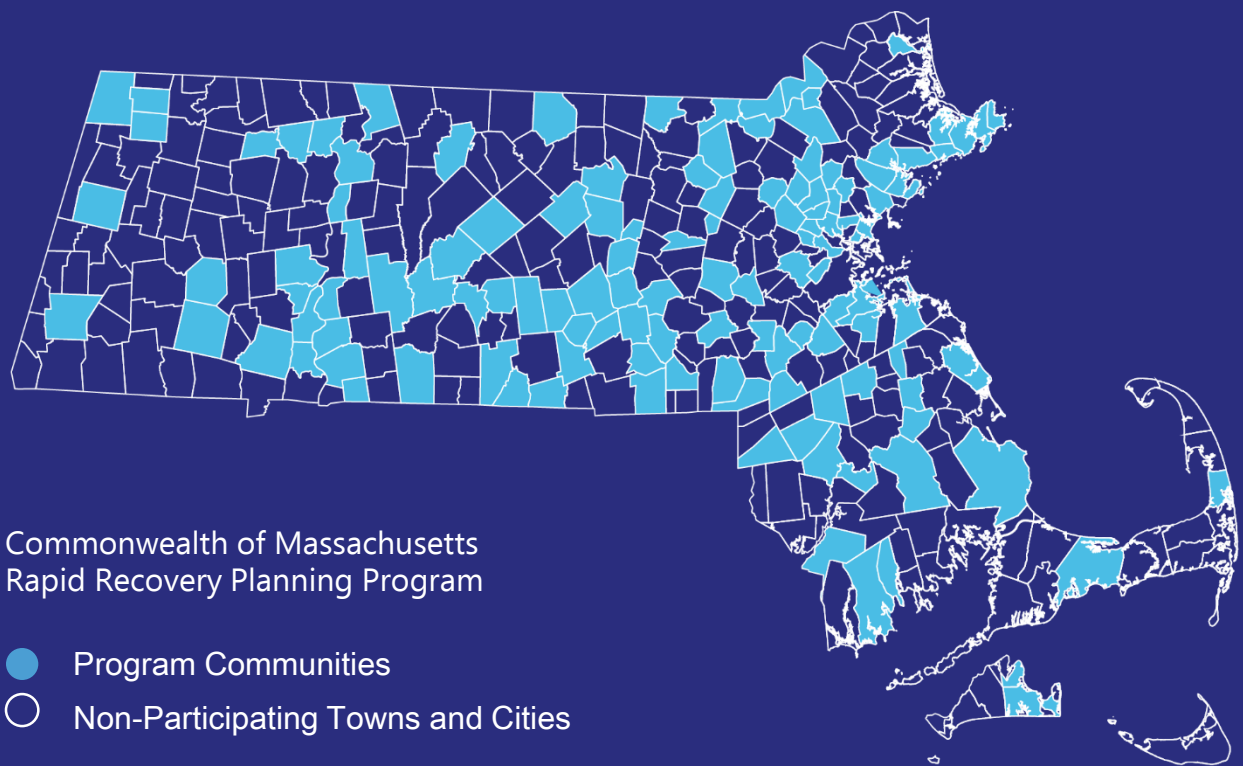
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



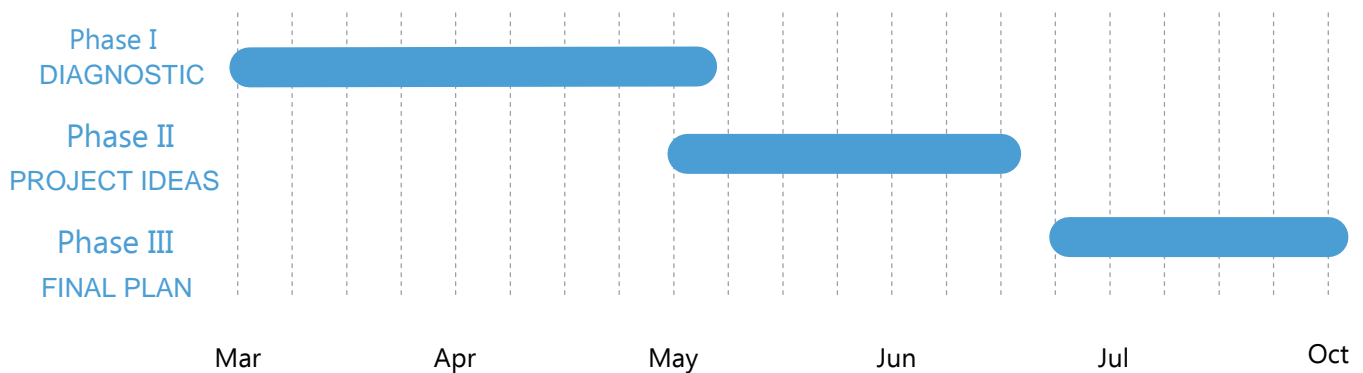
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



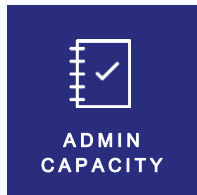
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue/Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

A small, vibrant downtown full of potential in Western Mass

Turners Falls is a village in the Town of Montague located in western Massachusetts, and less than a thirty-minute drive from Amherst, MA to the south and Brattleboro, VT to the north. The area is located near the intersection of Route 2 and Interstate 91, connecting it to the region's major travel routes. It is also 2.5 miles from the Turners Falls Airport, a municipal airport serving the region's industrial, tourism, and educational base. The town is home to 8,614 residents. Approximately 731 residents live within the Turners Falls downtown economic district defined for this Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) – see map on following page.

Turners Falls is home to an eclectic mix of restaurants, shops, and traditional downtown services that is unique, especially for a small-town downtown. In addition to many local businesses, the area is surrounded by natural, recreational resources including state forests and parks. The Great Falls Discovery Center, a Massachusetts DCR facility located on Avenue A within the RRP study area, attracts 21,000 visitors to the area each year. The Shea Theater Arts Center, a 330-seat performing arts center, is also a significant Turners Falls destination. Unity Park, situated on the river between 1st and 3rd streets host many festivals throughout the year.

While parking typically isn't a significant challenge day-to-day, stakeholders note that better wayfinding to public parking is needed for Shea Theater and other visitor events. The physical realm is well-designed with wide sidewalks and good lighting that support an inviting and safe evening experience. The availability of benches and street trees varies and there are nearly 13.5 acres of open space and parks. The Canalside Rail Trail provides a 3.7 biking and walking path from Unity Park that follows along the canal side of Turners Falls and into Deerfield. The Unity Skatepark located in Unity Park attracts riders from a variety of ages and skill levels.

Turners Falls is a multi-story commercial district which includes 42 ground-floor storefronts including retail, restaurants, non-profit services, and banks; upper floors boast office space and residential units. Approximately 64 businesses operate within the study area. 63% of those have 5 or fewer employees. Retail trade represents the highest proportion (22%) followed by other services such as salons (16%), accommodation and food services (14%), and health care and social assistance (8%).

In the business survey, owners' top ranked strategies for supporting the recovery of the Turners Falls business community were:

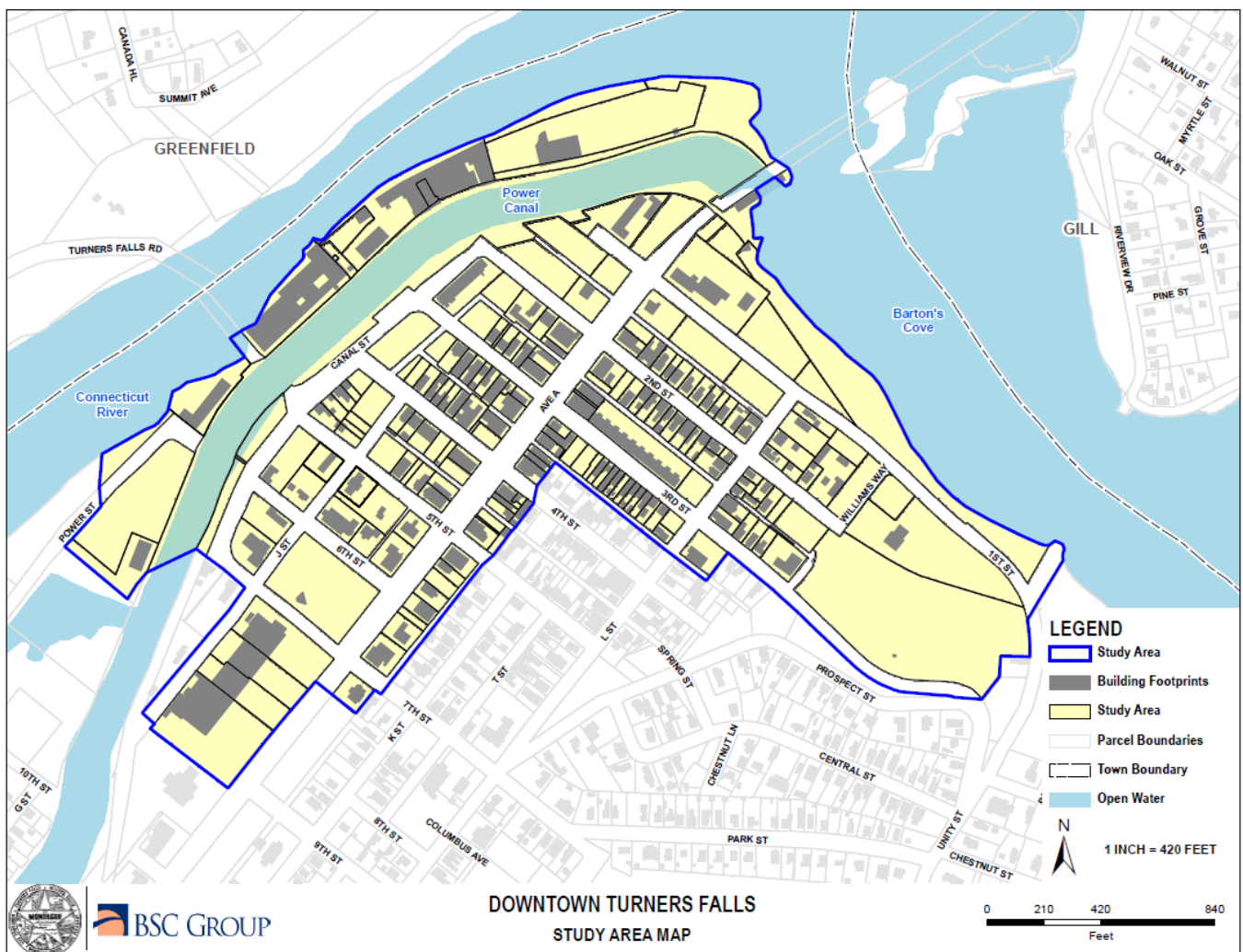
- improvements in safety and/or cleanliness,
- improvements in streetscape and sidewalks,
- more cultural events/activities,
- more opportunities for outdoor dining and selling, and
- marketing strategies for the district.

Business expressed interest in receiving assistance for shared marketing/advertising and low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements.

RiverCulture, a program of the Town of Montague with additional funding from business sponsors, grants, and in-kind donations, is a partnership of leaders from the arts and business community committed to enhancing the creative economy of Montague, including hosting and promoting cultural events and spearheading cooperative marketing efforts. With an established track record, deep inroads to the business, arts, and recreational communities, RiverCulture is well-positioned to play a key role in its recovery if it is able to add resources and capacity to its organization.

There is a desire within the town to support a more bike and pedestrian-friendly community. Stakeholders comment that Avenue A, the main thoroughfare of the study area, would benefit from traffic calming measures, enhanced crosswalk safety and improved streetscape. Other specific suggestions gathered at stakeholder focus groups have included the addition of bike racks, improved accessibility, and creating a better connection from Unity Park to the center of the district by making physical and wayfinding improvements.

This recovery plan attempts to strike balance between a downtown that serves its residents and benefits from increased tourism related economic development. Turners Falls is a full-service downtown with a supermarket, pharmacy, restaurants, hardware store, post office, library, theater, and quality parks. The town recognizes that retaining each of these amenities is critical to the health of downtown and the environmental justice population that lives in and around it. The town also recognizes that tourism and new residents are crucial to supporting the presence of these vital amenities.



Map of Turners Falls Rapid Recovery Plan Study Area Source: BSC Group

Rapid Recovery Plan for Downtown Turners Falls informed and guided by wide-range of public and community input

The Recovery Plan draws reference to the 2013 Downtown Livability Plan and its 2020 “check-in” forum held in February 2020 before the pandemic shutdown.

Development of the Rapid Recovery Plan benefited from a wide range of stakeholder and business input, including:

- A business survey conducted early in the project (March/April 2021), completed by 42 local businesses
- One-on-one interviews with about 10 different public sector leaders, small business owners and property owners
- Three small focus groups with residents, property owners and businesses
- Presentations to the Montague Selectboard and Planning Board
- A public survey to ask about local priorities on project ideas with over 40 responses

The tables shown on this page display the feedback from the public survey on project priorities for downtown Turners Falls, ranked by average score in terms of ‘importance’. These findings align well with the recommended projects, including top scoring priorities such as redevelopment of the Canal District, developing improved riverfront recreational opportunities, focusing on both ‘buy local’ and attracting out of town visitors, hosting more events and festivals, and preserving / enhancing the architectural and physical look of downtown.

Public Infrastructure, Arts, and Recreation	
Potential Project Idea	Avg Score
Develop improved riverfront rec opportunities	3.3
Host more events / festivals	3.0
Preserve downtown architecture via design regs	2.9
Bike lanes, bus stops, sidewalk improvements	2.7
Develop commercial spaces for artists / trades	2.7
Power Town energy efficiency & sustainable design	2.6
Sponsor more public art	2.6
Redevelop TH Annex into multi-purpose space	2.4
Bike lanes, etc. at expense of parking/travel lanes	1.9

Business Support, Economic Development, and Housing	
Potential Project Idea	Avg Score
Redevelop Canal District mill sites	3.6
Focus on residents / nearby visitors to support economy	3.2
Attract out of town visitors to TF for local economy	3.1
Incentives to improve building facades, ADA accessibility	3.0
Buy Local initiatives and downtown business promotions	3.0
Develop more downtown housing	2.7
Develop a unified branding/marketing strategy	2.7
Develop more affordable housing	2.6
Develop more high end/luxury housing	2.4

Project Idea Rankings from Community Survey Source: Hodge Economic Consulting

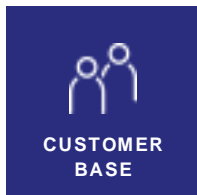
The rapid recovery plan for Turners Falls is focused on a mix of public realm improvements, redevelopment and business support opportunities, and projects to enhance its arts and creative economy

Twelve projects have been developed in great detail by the Town of Montague and a wide-range of partners and stakeholders for this Rapid Recovery Plan:

Recommendation	Project Category
Develop Installation Plans for Multimodal Wayfinding and Branding Signage in Downtown Turners Falls	Public Realm
Implement Policies and Practices to Optimize the Use and Availability of Downtown Parking	Public Realm
Build Out Town Hall Annex into a Multi-Purpose Space for Media and the Arts	Tenant Mix
Connect Downtown to Connecticut River via Great Falls River Access Area	Public Realm
Advance Master Planning and Redevelopment for Canal District	Private Realm / Redevelopment
Implement high-visibility art and placemaking projects	Cultural/Arts
Secure a business development coordinator to support business opportunities in Turners Falls	Admin Capacity
Boost the administrative capacity of RiverCulture to support arts/culture programming and creative economy	Admin Capacity
Accelerate Downtown Streetscape Improvements	Public Realm
Peskeomskut Park Bandshell Improvements	Public Realm
Advance Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities for Municipally-Owned Property	Private Realm / Redevelopment
Develop Design/Zoning Guidelines for Downtown Turners Falls	Admin Capacity

Diagnostic

Key Findings



A Vibrant Small Downtown

The Town of Montague is located in western Massachusetts and less than a thirty-minute drive from Amherst, MA to the south and Brattleboro, VT to the north. It is home to 8,614 residents. Approximately 731 residents live within the Turners Falls economic district defined for this Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP). Montague's population is older than the statewide average with a median age of 45 years. 31% of residents age 25+ have earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 43.7% statewide. Median household income (MHHI) is \$54,841, approximately 67% of the statewide MHHI.

Turners Falls is an eclectic mix of restaurants, shops, and traditional downtown that is unique, especially for a small-town downtown. In addition to many local businesses, the area is surrounded by natural, recreational resources including state forests and parks. The Great Falls Discovery Center, a Massachusetts DCR facility located on Avenue A within the RRP study area, attracts 21,000 visitors to the area each year. The Shea Theater Arts Center, a 330-seat performing arts center, is also a significant Turners Falls destination. Unity Park, situated on the river between 1st and 3rd streets host many festivals throughout the year.

Sources: ESRI Demographic Indicators, 2020; MA DCR, Great Falls Discovery Center



A Highly Accessible District with Many Recreational Amenities

Turners Falls is one of five villages in Montague and is the town's economic center. The Turners Falls RRP study area is bounded by the Connecticut River to the north and west and Avenue A and 3rd Street inland.

The area is located near the intersection of Route 2 and Interstate 91, connecting it to the region's major travel routes. It is also 2.5 miles from the Turners Falls Airport, a municipal airport serving the region's industrial, tourism, and educational base. Approximately 7,683 vehicles travel Avenue A on a daily basis (*MassDOT Road Inventory Database, 2019*). An 11% decrease in vehicular traffic was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are 714 on- and off-street parking spaces throughout the study area. While parking isn't a significant challenge day-to-day, stakeholders note that better wayfinding to public parking is needed for Shea Theater and other visitor events.

The physical realm is well-designed with wide sidewalks and good lighting that support an inviting and safe evening experience. The availability of benches and street trees varies and there are nearly 13.5 acres of open space and parks in the study area including the Great Falls Discovery Center, Unity Park, and Peskeomskut Park. The Canalside Rail Trail provides a 3.7 biking and walking path from Unity Park that follows along the canal side of Turners Falls and into Deerfield. The Unity Skatepark located in Unity Park attracts riders from a variety of ages and skill levels.

64% of business owners participated in a business survey in the spring of 2021 and indicated that they were least satisfied with the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks as well as the condition of private buildings, storefronts and signs. Meanwhile, they were more satisfied with access, safety, and comfort for customers and employees.



Small, Local Businesses Offering an Eclectic Range of Dining, Retail, and Services

Turners Falls is a multi-story commercial district which includes 42 ground-floor storefronts including retail, restaurants, non-profit services, and banks; upper floors boast office space and residential units. This represents just over 217,000 square feet of first floor commercial space according to estimates using the Town's Assessor's database. Seven of the 42 storefronts (16.6%) were vacant during spring 2021 site visits. 8 business closures occurred in Turners Falls since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020; however, 6 new businesses opened during this time so vacancy is generally not a major concern though new small business development is a priority.

Approximately 64 businesses operate within the study area. 63% of those have 5 or fewer employees. Retail trade represents the highest proportion (22%) followed by other services such as salons (16%), accommodation and food services (14%), and health care and social assistance (8%).

In the business survey, owners' top ranked strategies for supporting the recovery of the Turners Falls business community were: improvements in safety and/or cleanliness, improvements in streetscape and sidewalks, more cultural events/activities, more opportunities for outdoor dining and selling, and marketing strategies for the district. Business expressed interest in receiving assistance for shared marketing/advertising and low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements.

Sources: ESRI Business Analyst; May/May 2021 Site Visits; Town of Montague/RiverCulture Assessment



Supporting the Arts, Culture, & Creative Economy, RiverCulture is Critical to Turners Falls' Recovery

RiverCulture, a program of the Town of Montague with additional funding from business sponsors, grants, and in-kind donations, is a partnership of leaders from the arts and business community committed to enhancing the creative economy of Montague. Formed in 2011, RiverCulture's work overlaps with many activities that will be required to support the economic recovery of Turners Falls such as hosting and promoting cultural events and spearheading cooperative marketing efforts; both top recovery strategies identified by businesses. RiverCulture also regularly convenes partners around shared projects, ideas, and goals. It provides coordination for the Turners Falls Cultural District, and functions as a central resource of information for the area.

With an established track record, deep inroads to the business, arts, and recreational communities, and a direct tie to the Town's Planning and Conservation Department, RiverCulture has played an important role assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on the community and is well-positioned to play a key role in its recovery.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO THE RIVER

Turners Falls is bounded to the north by the Connecticut River. Currently, the Canalside Rail Trail provides 3.7 miles of riverside views and recreational opportunities; however, locals note that, apart from riverside views, there is no direct connection to the river such as beach access, swimming, or kayaking. Providing these kinds of additional opportunities in Turners Falls creates placemaking opportunities and brings people into the district for longer periods of time for shopping and dining.

SUPPORTING A MORE BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY DOWNTON

There is a desire within the town to support a more bike and pedestrian-friendly community, even to the extent that Turners Falls could be marketed as a walkable community where cars are not needed.

Stakeholders comment that Avenue A, the main thoroughfare of the study area, would benefit from traffic calming measures, enhanced crosswalk safety and improved streetscape. Other specific suggestions gathered at stakeholder focus groups have included the addition of bike racks, improved accessibility, and creating a better connection from Unity Park to the center of the district by making physical and wayfinding improvements.



The Connecticut River as seen from the Canalside Rail Trail (above); Canalside Rail Trail (below). Photos: Hodge Economic Consulting



Downtown Turners Falls contains an eclectic mix of local businesses. Clockwise from top left: Buckingham Rabbits Vintage clothing store, Riff's North restaurant, Shea Theater, Loot found + made handmade goods Photos: Hodge Economic Consulting



Concert goes at Peskeompskut Park Source: riverculture.org

A Downtown for Locals and Visitors Alike

ARTS & CULTURE

The Turners Falls RRP study area closely aligns with the Turners Falls Cultural District established in 2017. The district helps organize and promote the cultural and recreational assets of the district.

Shea Theater, Unity Park, and Peskeompskut Park are key venues for performance and festivals playing host to Pocumtuck Homelands Festival, Montague Soap Box Races, Pumpkinfest, Franklin County Cider Days, and numerous musical and theatrical productions.

Turners Falls features some public art including planned and impromptu murals on buildings. RiverCulture sponsors a Mural Program and offers guidelines and assistance for artists seeking to bring more art into the public realm.

Through the business survey and stakeholder focus groups, Turners Falls stakeholders have expressed an interest in building upon the arts and culture momentum of the district to further attract people to visit the area and provide a high quality of living for locals. Distinctive lighting, additional murals, and even multi-purpose arts/culture/community space, perhaps similar to River Garden in Brattleboro have been discussed during stakeholder meetings.

VARIETY & VIBRANCY IN THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

For a town of Montague's size, downtown Turners Falls boasts great variety and vibrancy in its offerings, creating the feel of a pocket urban environment.

High-end and specialty retail, such as a Breakdown Records, Loot Made + Found, Swanson's Fabrics, and Notorious Weld offer unique finds and attract hobbyists.

Food City grocery store, Aubuchon hardware, hunting and fishing stores, multiple bicycle shops, salons and barbers, and a yoga studio support the daily goings on for residents. These are all complemented by popular and welcoming dining options emphasizing farm to table and local craft beer offerings.

When combined with the area's recreational and arts offerings, Turners Falls offers a unique mix of businesses with a variety of services and businesses for residents and one-of-a-kind experiences for visitors.



Highlights from the Business Environment

IMPACTS FROM COVID-19

In the spring of 2021, Turners Falls businesses were surveyed to discover how businesses were impacted by COVID-19 and collect business owner input on various strategies that would support the district's recovery. 42 businesses participated in the survey, a very strong 66% response rate.

The impacts from COVID-19 have been widespread and long-lasting. More than two-thirds reported a decline in revenue due to COVID-19. Almost one quarter (22%) of businesses saw revenue decline by 50% or more. 50% of respondents noted a reduction in foot traffic by more than half since March 2020. Additionally, over half of Turners Falls businesses experienced a closure of some kind due to the pandemic. At the time of the survey, 80% of businesses reported they were still operating at reduced hours/capacity or were closed.

The Turners Falls regulatory environment is generally not problematic for business operations, with 62% of businesses reporting no issues with regulations. However, signage regulations and parking regulations were identified as posing obstacles by 15% of businesses each.

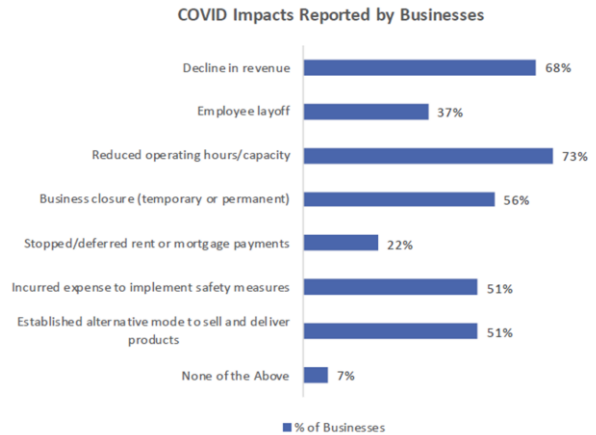
AN IMPERATIVE TO INCREASE CUSTOMERS AND FOOT TRAFFIC

Stakeholder focus groups revealed that sustaining business in Turners Falls can be challenging. Apart from some anchor businesses like the grocery and hardware stores, small businesses operate with a relatively small customer base in Turners Falls. About half of businesses in the study area own their space and supplement business revenue by residential rental revenue on upper floors.

While Turners Falls has a variety of offerings, it has not reached its potential as a tourist destination. Businesses would benefit from an expanded customer base, while the downtown overall would benefit from businesses that would encourage frequent patronage by locals such as coffee shops and bakeries.

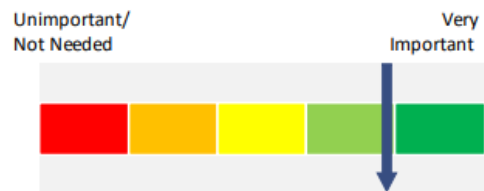
When surveyed regarding strategies to attract customers and businesses, more events and programming, as well as district-level marketing strategies were top-rated by businesses.

Business Input Related to Strategies for Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses (right) Source: Rapid Recovery Program Business Survey, March 2021

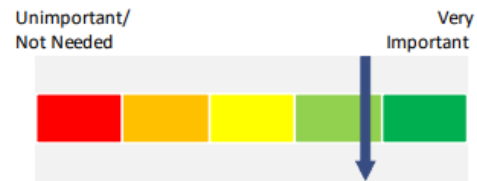


COVID Impacts Reported by Turners Falls Businesses Source: Rapid Recovery Program Business Survey, March 2021

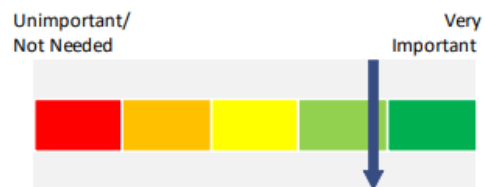
More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District



More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining & Selling



Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District



An Equitable and Sustainable Approach to Recovery

RECOVERY MUST BE EQUITABLE

Turners Falls is an environmental justice census tract and there are over 200 units of deed-restricted affordable housing in the study area. All improvements must be done with consideration of equity and environmental justice.

SUSTAINABILITY

Turners Falls, also known as Power Town, has firm grounding in renewable energy generation and sustainability practices. Turners Falls hosts the largest hydroelectric facility in Massachusetts and two of the largest solar facilities in Western Mass. The walkable downtown boasts rain gardens, community gardens, and a robust street tree program. The Great Falls Discovery Center, Unity Park, Canalside Bike Path, and the Fishway Viewing area are recreational/education draws for ecologically minded tourists. The Town has an Open Space Plan and a Pollinator Strategy and there is real opportunity for Montague to be identified as a leader in sustainable development. The activities identified in this plan must align with the Town's sustainability goals. Whether it is programming, branding, or constructing -- sustainability will be a core consideration for the activity. Recycled materials should be used to the extent possible, and native pollinator-friendly vegetation should be used for all landscaping. The Town should prioritize energy efficient construction on all new buildings and public works projects.

GETTING THE CANAL DISTRICT BACK ON TRACK

The 16-acre Canal District of Turners Falls and its 6 former mill sites represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform blight into a revitalized riverfront. The last paper mill in Turners Falls closed its doors in 2017 and Covid-19 further stymied revitalization prospects. Several action projects in the Recovery Plan involve incremental revitalization of this area that is slated for significant public and private investments over the next 5 years.



People enjoying Unity Park Photo: Town of Montague







Turners Falls Hydroelectric Station Photo: FirstLight Power

Project Recommendations

Recommendation	Project Category	Page
Develop Installation Plans for Multimodal Wayfinding and Branding Signage in Downtown Turners Falls	Public Realm	23
Implement Policies and Practices to Optimize the Use and Availability of Downtown Parking	Public Realm	27
Build Out Town Hall Annex into a Multi-Purpose Space for Media and the Arts	Tenant Mix	30
Connect Downtown to Connecticut River via Great Falls River Access Area	Public Realm	32
Advance Master Planning and Redevelopment for Canal District	Private Realm / Redevelopment	35
Implement high-visibility art and placemaking projects	Cultural/Arts	38
Secure a business development coordinator to support business opportunities in Turners Falls	Admin Capacity	41
Boost the administrative capacity of RiverCulture to support arts/culture programming and creative economy	Admin Capacity	43
Accelerate Downtown Streetscape Improvements	Public Realm	47
Peskeomskut Park Bandshell Improvements	Public Realm	49
Advance Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities for Municipally-Owned Property	Private Realm / Redevelopment	51
Develop Design/Zoning Guidelines for Downtown Turners Falls	Admin Capacity	54

Develop Installation Plans for Multimodal Wayfinding and Branding Signage in Downtown Turners Falls

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Gateway Entrances to downtown, and throughout downtown (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Town of Montague Planning and Conservation Department
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) – Staff time for review and management, hiring a consultant to develop wayfinding and branding sign design and implementation plans, hiring contractors and artists to implement wayfinding signs and murals
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years) - Develop phased approach. include upfront/near-term assessment of existing signage; move quickly towards design for 'core' wayfinding signs to public parking and key attractions. May also include 'gateway' signage with unique art designs.
Risk	 Low Risk – key risk is securing funding
Key Performance Indicators	Primary: people coming to downtown, length of stay, spending downtown Secondary: multimodal counts/intercept surveys to assess impacts in travel behaviors, # of people/businesses engaged in project, implementation of signage plans, recognition of sign program by users, # of people moving downtown
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague, DPW, Parks Department, Downtown Cultural District, RiverCulture, local businesses, downtown residents Potential funding sources: Mass Development, Community One Stop for Growth

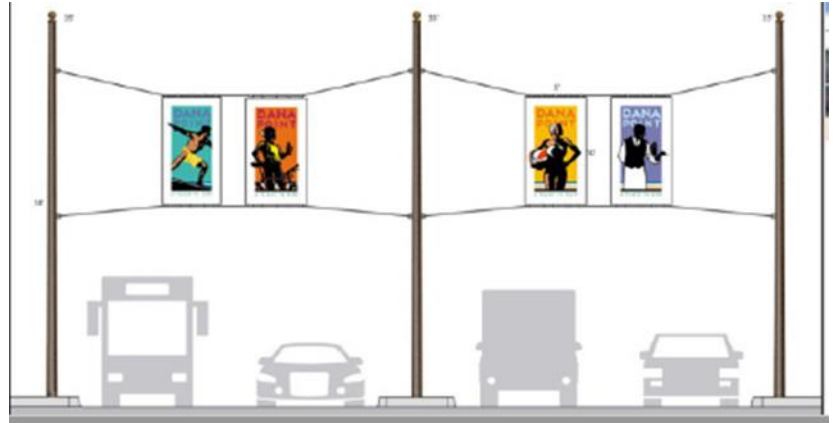


Existing District Signage in Turners Falls. Photo Credit: Hodge Economic Consulting

Diagnostic

Public realm diagnostic scored signage/wayfinding as an F; multiple stakeholder interviews note the lack of signage as an issue in multiple areas. With much to offer in Turners Falls, more people are moving to the area and it can be confusing with the Town of Montague's identity. It can be hard to find and navigate where to park, how to access the theater and shops, and many people don't know Turners Falls is a destination.

With COVID and beyond the Town has limited capacity and resources to address the needs of improving accessibility and visibility of local amenities, such as outdoor dining, parks and nature, and local shopping and Shea Theater. People don't know what is available to them and will go elsewhere or conduct their business online.

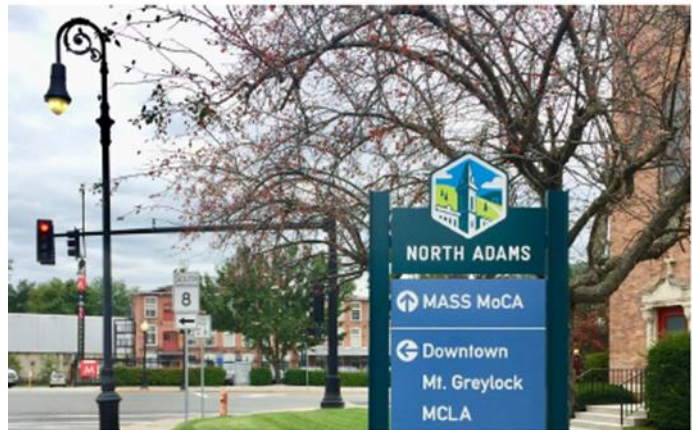


Mock-up of Town Center Banners Source: Nina Harvey, Nelson/Nygaard

Action Item

Determine scope of wayfinding project (e.g., include gateway entrances with art? Include signage on bike trail to/from downtown?); determine sign design scheme and template; identify priorities for signage (e.g., public parking facilities, key attractions); identify contractor to design and procure the signs, etc.

Plan, design and install a comprehensive multimodal branding and wayfinding plan that is useful for people using all modes of transportation, increases local businesses, increases biking and walking trips downtown, and reflects Turners Falls' history and culture to reinforce its unique identity.



Downtown Banners and Signage Source: North Adams Chamber of Commerce; North Adams Office of Tourism (<https://exploreNorthAdams.com/>)

Process

- Existing conditions assessment
 - Review existing studies and relevant reports including Livability Plan, and LRRP, and existing town branding
 - Inventory current signage within the study area
- Community Engagement
 - Develop an ongoing engagement process online and in person.
 - Goals of engagement are to be inclusive, welcoming, and leverage local creativity.
- Planning and Design
 - Develop DRAFT and Final branding and design templates including consistency in theme / branding / colors / logos. This may serve as the template for the rest of the Town of Montague.
 - Develop DRAFT and Final comprehensive multimodal wayfinding installation plans including:
 - Consolidation of existing signage
 - Branded welcome / gateway signage
 - Park branding signage
 - Signage for people driving to access parking and major destinations
 - Walking and biking wayfinding to connect to regional trails and points of interest
 - Artistic wayfinding (e.g., murals, pavement markings, sculpture)
 - Digital / online wayfinding strategies (focus on access to parking on street and off street, add public parking lots on google)
 - Digital kiosks
- Implementation
 - Hire contractors to manufacture and install sign plans
 - Hire local artist(s) to paint wayfinding mural
- Evaluation of key performance metrics
- Multipurpose installation of signage and create a visual barrier of traffic screens / fencing for parks.



Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA. Photo Credit: Hodge Economic Consulting



Best Practice

Wayfinding on Fairmount Greenway



Location

Boston, MA

Budget: Approximately \$10,000

Timeframe: Approximately 10 weeks

Risk: Low. Temporary installation requiring no major construction, low cost, no City approvals needed

Partners & Resources: Fairmount Greenway Task Force, Neighborhood Associations, DotBike, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, City of Boston Transportation Department, The Trust for Public Land, Civic Space Collaborative

Boston's nine-mile Fairmount Greenway is a life-changing development, connecting Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park with a route that links parks, green space, on-street bike routes, trails, transit stations, and city squares. Since 2008, the Greenway's 10-member task force have been working with the City of Boston and multiple other organizations on this long-term vision to connect the Fairmount communities to the heart of Boston. More than 1,000 residents have joined in planning, designing, and implementing Greenway park, streets, and greenway projects.

In 2021, the Fairmount Greenway installed wayfinding signs to mark a 1.5-mile on-street route of the Fairmount Greenway in Dorchester near Four Corners and Codman Square. The wayfinding signs were updated to include key neighborhood destinations and mark the on-street route in February 2021. Twelve signs were printed on corrugated plastic and installed with residents in May 2021.

Process:

- 1) Fairmount Greenway concept development (2008-2010)
- 2) Signage branding, design, and placement (2013-2014)
- 3) Approval process
- 4) Finalizing wayfinding sign design (2021 – 4 weeks)
- 5) Installation: material acquisition, installation day, monitoring

For more information: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>

Implement Policies and Practices to Optimize the Use and Availability of Downtown Parking

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Throughout downtown Turners Falls (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Town of Montague
Budget	 Low (< \$50,000)– Need funds to hire a consultant for a parking study/recommendations.
Timeframe	 Short-term (< 5 years)
Risk	 Medium - Parking changes are almost always controversial to some stakeholders.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Positive perceptions from residents, visitors and businesses on parking. •Supporting further infill development housing in the downtown because the lack of parking has been a limiting factor in the ability to add additional housing units to existing non-conforming properties, despite zoning that enables the infill development. •Stopping the conversion of lawns into haphazard parking spaces.
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague, MassDOT, Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)
Diagnostic	<p>The lack of year-round parking on town streets limits the downtown’s opportunity for residential growth. The Downtown Livability Plan identified this issue as a major barrier to the revitalization and adaptive re-use of existing downtown properties. The vast majority of downtown housing units pre-date the zoning and do not have adequate off-street parking and thus rely on public parking. The continued revitalization of downtown (including the Shea Theater) is limited by parking capacity, particularly during the winter on-street parking ban. The lack of access to parking also lowers the quality of life for residents due to the unpredictability of available spaces. An emerging issue is that residents are parking long term in municipal lots which limits the opportunity for commercial activity. Additionally, the Planning Department has observed a trend of downtown multi-family housing units converting yard areas to parking and increased curb cuts for parking spaces. This cumulatively affects the urban fabric of downtown. In addition to these ongoing issues, COVID-19 highlighted two other key parking issues: 1) the importance of having short-term parking conveniently available for customers doing curbside pick-up for takeout and other purchases; and 2) outdoor events and access to downtown’s outdoor assets (parks, trails) are even more critical than ever but parking for these activities has been stretched without a clear parking plan.</p> <p>Downtown is an environmental justice census tract and is one of the most diverse communities in Franklin County. Downtown Turners Falls hosts a considerable proportion supply of multi-family housing units in Franklin County. There are over 220 units of deed restricted housing in Turners Falls. The absence of a coherent and enforceable parking plan presents a serious quality of life and equity issue for those living downtown.</p>

Action Items

Montague would like to develop a parking management plan for Turners Falls that recommends policies and strategies that maximize the use of existing downtown parking assets. Montague currently offers free, unrestricted parking on town streets and municipal lots and has limited capacity to manage/enforce parking regulations. The demand created from the multi-year revitalization of downtown has put the town at tipping point for considering a new parking policy. A proper analysis and parking policy should accommodate both business and residential needs. The plan will allow the town to overcome a barrier to downtown infill development.

Montague has limited capacity to manage/enforce parking regulations, however there are increased requests for time limited parking on Avenue A and for amendments to the winter on-street parking ban. The continued revitalization of downtown is limited by parking capacity, particularly during the winter on-street parking ban which prohibits overnight parking on town streets December 1 to April 1 regardless of the weather. This forces residents onto municipal lots (or front lawns) which are in short supply. Residents clog the municipal lots and that limits the downtown's capacity for commerce. A comprehensive look at downtown parking will benefit the business and residential community alike.

Based on sustained public pressure from the business and residential community, the Selectboard has directed the Town Planner, Police Chief, and Department of Public Works to study the issue and make recommendations. However, we recognize that the town ultimately lacks the technical expertise to do a sound, objective assessment and will benefit from an objective outside expert to assess the situation and make recommendations. There is will from the Selectboard and relevant town departments to implement the recommendations of the study in a timely manner.

The Town Planner will be the primary point of contact to the consultant. He will help facilitate the exchange of information with the Police Chief, DPW, Town Administrator, Selectboard, and key business and residential stakeholders.



Parking along 3rd Street, Turners Falls, MA Photo: Hodge Economic Consulting







Potential Parking and Streetscape in Turners Falls Source: Town of Montague

Process

- Secure funding to do the proposed parking management study, and establish a stakeholder or advisory group to work with the Town on guiding this work
- Draft an RFP to select a parking consultant to lead this work; key elements of the RFP and scope of work to include:
 - An assessment of existing parking supply, current policies, municipal capacity, and stakeholder perspectives.
 - A recommendation about placing time-limited parking on Avenue A on-street parking
 - A recommendation pertaining to the management of on-street parking during the winter
 - A recommendation pertaining to the management of municipal parking lots
 - A recommendation about how to communicate parking policies and general wayfinding to public parking.

The Town is ready to begin immediately. The town would prefer to be implement changes ASAP to aid in downtown economic recovery and to make meaningful change before the winter 2021/2022 winter parking ban takes effect December 1, 2021.

Build Out Town Hall Annex into a Multi-Purpose Space for Media and the Arts

Category	 Tenant Mix
Location	One Avenue A, Turners Falls (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Town of Montague Planning Department
Budget	 High (>\$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short-term (< 5 years)
Risk	 Low - Building owned by the Town with project support by Selectboard; physical improvements are necessary but straight-forward; finding tenants (in addition to MCTV) for workshops should go smoothly
Key Performance Indicators	Funding obtained for physical improvements; square footage/ number of units dedicated to collaborative workspace; number of tenants secured and number of events planned in multi-purpose area
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague; Montague Community Television (MCTV); RiverCulture Financial Resources: MassDevelopment Collaborative Workspaces Grant, leverage MCTV capital funds
Diagnostic	<p>Stakeholder meetings and focus groups highlighted the lack of multi-purpose space in downtown Turners Falls for a variety of arts, culture and creative economy events/programming, as well as the lack of affordable workspaces for artists and makers.</p> <p>More specifically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MCTV's current studio is too small to function with social distancing and would require HVAC upgrades. 2. Downtown saw a loss artist and artisan workspaces during COVID and the ensuing residential real estate boom.

Action Item

In October 2020, the Montague DPW vacated the 6,500 square foot Town Hall Annex, leaving the single-story garage structure ready for adaptive reuse. The structure is in good condition and a new roof was added in 2019. The site is in prime location in downtown Turners Falls and abuts the Canalside Bike Path and Connecticut Riverfront.

The Town intends to develop the area into a multi-purpose space for media and the arts. One potential tenant is the Montague Community Television which has expressed interest in locating a studio in the largest bay. Initial thinking is that the studio will also serve as a community meeting space and small stage for performance arts rehearsals. RiverCulture could rent out the 5 smaller bays to artists as workshop space.

The specific action item is to implement required physical improvements that would bring the space up to code for an assembly/commercial type use. This includes installing a bathroom, ADA improvements, energy code upgrades, security separation from Town Hall, and doorway/entrance enhancements. The Selectboard has full control over the property and the authority to enter into lease agreements for use of the space.

In addition, the Town will work with local stakeholders to evaluate different and proposed uses, with one critical criteria being how the uses will help spur broader vibrancy and foot traffic for downtown, such as using the space partly as a venue for an art school or college classes.



(Above) Montague Town Hall Annex Source: Google Maps
(Below) Artists' Space Source: MassCulturalCouncil.org

Process

The Town will require an architect to develop a budget and specifications for the physical improvements. With implementation funds in hand, a general contractor will be procured to implement the buildout. MCTV and RiverCulture have already agreed in principle to be the initial occupants of the space.

As physical improvements are being designed, the Town will engage in stakeholder outreach, including with the business community, to discuss potential use options and how to ensure that this new space also helps support downtown vibrancy.





Resource Highlight: A Guide for Creating and Preserving Affordable Artist Spaces

Getting Started Making the case in your community, Is this building right for artists?, Acquisition checklist Read more ...	Leasing/Owning Residential and commercial leases, Co-ops and condo structures Read more ...	Zoning, Code, and Permitting An established process for quality control and code compliance Read more ...
Financing Pre-development costs, Proformas, Tax credits, Short/Long-term financing Read more ...	Design and Construction Phases of the design-build process, Working with architects, Builders and the code Read more ...	Managing Marketing, Selling/Leasing space, Subletting, Governance, Taxes Read more ...



Guide available at: <https://massculturalcouncil.org/artists-art/artist-space-resources/artist-space-guide/>

Connect Downtown to Connecticut River via Great Falls River Access Area

Category	 Public Realm
Location	8 Canal Road, Turners Falls (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Town of Montague Planning Department, Montague Livability Plan, Montague Open Space + Recreation Plan
Budget	 High (>\$200,000)
Timeframe	 Medium (5-10 years) - Project could start earlier than 5 years, but may not be complete within first five years
Risk	 Medium - This is a well-designed project but is complex, working in a tight, environmentally sensitive area, with many different elements to it
Key Performance Indicators	Number of pedestrians on the IP Bridge; number of cars with cartop boats (kayaks, etc.); number of people doing different activities (fishing, whitewater rafting, kayaking)
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague/ FirstLight Power Financial Resources: Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program, Private investment commitments from Firstlight Power



Turners Falls Riverfront Concept Source: Town of Montague

Diagnostic

- 1) Demand for outdoor recreation has expanded exponentially during Covid-19
- 2) Increased river access was the #1 priority request in the downtown stakeholder survey
- 3) River Access is an opportunity to recapture some tourism lost due to the Covid-19 emergency
- 4) This project will help activate the northern end of the blighted Canal District

Action Item

Develop the Great Falls River Access Area. As currently proposed the two-acre Area includes the following elements:

- Accessible viewing of the falls (i.e. the Turners Falls Dam) and the new fish elevator, suitable for groups and those with limited mobility
- Interpretive elements to educate the public about civil engineering, industrial history, river ecology, and the notable pre-colonial history of the location
- A pavilion to provide shelter and a location for educational programming, and arts/culture space and events
- Safe canoe and kayak access with a second slipway below the rapids for added safety (universal access)
- Whitewater rafting access below the falls. Periodic (seasonal) access to class II and III rapids
- Direct access to the Canalside Bike Path and the Great Falls Discovery Center
- Improvement to the pedestrian "iron bridge" linking the Area to the Canalside Bike Path
- Public fishing access
- Maintained open space and naturally vegetated areas with pollinator habitat
- Removal of existing public safety hazards and blight.

Longer term, the Town is hoping to continually improve the outdoor recreation opportunities of Turners Falls, with emphasis on the connection to the river in multiple areas of downtown.

Process

1. Finalize master plan and design of the park
2. Apply for and receive PARC funding (along with Firstlight contributions)
3. Site preparation work (including limited demolition of Indeck mill site)
4. Finalize terms Firstlight's FERC license Agreement/ State Permitting

RIVER ACCESS PLANNING GUIDE

A Decision-Making Framework for Enhancing River Access



Best Practice

River Access Planning Resources



PUBLIC
REALM

Location

Various; All resources are available at: <https://www.river-management.org/river-access-planning-guide>

Prepare to Launch! Guidelines for Assessing, Designing & Building Access Sites for Carry-In Watercraft

Prepare to Launch! is a resource designed to help facility and trail planners and park and recreation project leaders plan and build or update an access site tailored to the needs of canoeists, kayakers, tubers, stand-up paddlers, or small craft sailors. It guides a reader through the development process from conception to design creation and provides a variety of launch construction options.





River Access Planning Guide: A Decision-Making Framework for Enhancing River Access

River Access Planning Guide is a document that provides a step-by-step process to planning for river access with recreation users in mind. The planning guide intends to serve as a resource for planners, river managers, and users as they approach site selection and design to establish new river access or improve existing access. The thoughtful planning and design supported by the planning guide will support and benefit public resource agencies, river managers, and private entities responsible for providing waterway access.

The Good, the Bad, and the Unusual: What Makes a Boating Access Work (or Not)?

Confluence Research and Consulting released a [report](#) highlighting examples of 269 boat launches from a wide range of locations, geographic settings, amounts and kinds of use, and types of facilities. "The Good, the Bad and the Unusual: What Makes a Boating Access Work (or Not)?" is the first of its kind and the first iteration of a national river access database.

Advance Master Planning and Redevelopment for Canal District

Category	 Private Realm / Redevelopment
Location	Canal District area of downtown, including five adjacent mill buildings along the Connecticut River (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Town of Montague, Planning Department
Budget	 Medium (\$50,000 - \$200,000) – MassDevelopment One-Stop funding, such as real estate technical assistance
Timeframe	 Short-term (< 5 years) for master planning, medium to long-term (5 to 15 years) for redevelopment projects
Risk	 High - Environmental impacts that require greater clean-up efforts; physical damage at mill buildings more than anticipated; challenges of securing private investment / redevelopment partners
Key Performance Indicators	Completion of master plan as well as engineering, environmental and redevelopment feasibility analyses required to attract private investment; dollars secured for additional building, utility and access physical improvements; dollars, housing units and square feet (SF) of space committed to redevelopment
Partners & Resources	MassDevelopment, private developers, local banks



Images of Mill Buildings along Connecticut River, Turners Falls, MA Photos: Hodge Economic Consulting

Diagnostic

Turners Falls is a compact village downtown with limited opportunities for new or rehabbed residential housing units and commercial space. The Canal District represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to add new vitality to the downtown area, helping to fully connect the village to the Connecticut River. COVID-19 demonstrated two fundamental truths about Turners Falls that this project could help address: 1) with more remote workers with less need to be physically near major cities, Turners Falls is the kind of attractive small town with an urban feel that is attracting residential demand but with very limited housing options to satisfy new residents; and 2) businesses in Turners Falls are generally struggling to find sufficient customers and foot traffic to be sustainably profitable, which COVID-19 amplified. Redevelopment of the Canal District could bring a substantive increase in housing units (and local customers) as well as other economic activity needed to help Turners Falls be a more economically vibrant and sustainable area in Western Mass.



Aerial of Turners Falls Canal District Source: Town of Montague

Action Item

Advance Master Planning and Feasibility for Canal District, including site preparation, extended utilities, and access improvements

Turners Falls is one of the quintessential planned mill towns of New England. The Turners Falls Canal District is comprised of 6 former mill sites on 16 acres along the Connecticut River. The river powered the mills for over a century and now powers the largest hydro generation facility in Massachusetts. The Town envisions a mixed-use district that reuses these former industrial properties in a way that integrates downtown with the Connecticut River and increases the vibrancy of the village. With major public and private investments underway, post-industrial blight is starting to give way to revitalization. Montague is implementing a MassWorks grant to establish a gateway to the district that features a replacement pedestrian bridge and critical utilities to two mill sites. With two mill redevelopment projects underway, the town is looking to advance the redevelopment potential of the 3 other mill sites (all municipally controlled) and maximize reuse potential of each of the entire area to include housing, open space, and light / commercial industry.

The Town is seeking to develop a district master plan, including redevelopment feasibility options, and to identify needs related to site preparation, extended utilities, and other access improvements. The master plan and redevelopment feasibility should lead the way towards further public investments necessary to spur private investment.

The Turners Falls Canal district is the primary focus for economic development in Montague. The Town now owns 3 of the 5 mill sites and over \$5M has been invested into building stabilization, environmental assessments and cleanup for properties in the district. The state is investing \$2.3 into the Gateway Improvement Project for critical infrastructure upgrades. The EPA is investing \$1.6 into a cleanup of one of the sites the Town just completed a cleanup of another mill site. At least one mill site is proposed for redevelopment into in a cannabis cultivation facility.

Process

1. Execute the Canal District Gateway Project currently funded by Mass works. (This project is currently in design stage.)
2. Implement partial demolition of the municipally owned Strathmore Mill Complex (design complete- estimated cost \$4.3M)
3. Restore/replace the 6th Street Bridge to the Railroad Salvage property.
4. Secure funding for strategic master planning, and work with partners to select a consultant team to lead the master planning project
5. Complete master plan and redevelopment feasibility, including identification of further infrastructure improvements necessary to help attract private investment for redevelopment
6. Obtain Town and local stakeholder support for the redevelopment master plan, along with agreement on next steps
7. Advance other infrastructure improvements and start process of marketing to private developers (e.g., RFP process, marketing materials to highlight the redevelopment opportunity, etc.)

Implement high-visibility art and placemaking projects

Category	 Cultural/Arts
Location	Indeck Coal Silo Site, Canal District
Origin	2013 Downtown Livability Plan, revised 2020
Budget	 High Budget – Estimated to be approximately \$250,000 - This project has substantive private donations lined up for implementation but will also require public/matching funds. Potential funding sources include Massachusetts Cultural Council, New England Foundation for the Arts, Mass Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, or MassDevelopment.
Timeframe	 Short-Term (< 5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk - Potential risks include finding the best local contractors to install the LED lighting, securing funding for the full project, and the extent to which the lighting project (or other future art projects) will help draw additional visitors to Turners Falls
Key Performance Indicators	Increased visitation to Turners Falls; Participation by artist-programmers; Amount of regional publicity; Increased private investment, especially in the Canal District
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague, RiverCulture, Chris Hinkle



Indeck Coal Silo Site, Turners Falls Photo: Hodge Economic



Artist's Rendering of Illuminated Coal Silo Source: Town of Montague

Diagnostic

- 1) Downtown Turners Falls needs to attract the attention of Route 2 motorists travelling between Boston and the Berkshires.
- 2) Foot traffic in downtown Turners Falls is sluggish due to Covid-19 related closures, restrictions and the sharp decrease in live entertainment.
- 3) Activating the coal silo has resurfaced as an idea to address these challenges, in addition to becoming a highly visible placemaking project.
- 4) There is an opportunity for Turners Falls to leverage its artistic and creative economy assets as a foundation for future arts projects and growth in recognition as a vibrant arts community that draws visitors.

Action Item

Near-term, the best opportunity for a high-visibility arts project is an identified project to light the coal silo in the Canal District. Enhancing the night view of Turners Falls was identified in the 2013 Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan. Advances in LED lighting, software and programming has made the idea of a highly programmable system possible. In the spring of 2020, a new resident with ties to the tech world approached the Planning Department with his idea for a "light sculpture" composed of about 6,000 individual LED lights mounted in a grid on the outside of our old coal silo. The lights would run a program for one hour every night around dusk and could be a focal point for evening visitors to enjoy. Different light shows could be programmed by artists around the world, and programming could also be integrated into local youth art programs at the public school and the Brick House.

To best leverage this artistic asset and the evening light shows, there are many ways the business community and Shea Theater could tie into this project. For example, once people come downtown to see the lights, we should align this with restaurant and retail promotions and marketing. This could also be an opportunity to revive events such as Third Thursdays or create pop-up shops in the nearby Discovery Center park.

Long-term, beyond this more immediate lighting project, Turners Falls would like to create a multi-year public art strategic plan to help develop an enhanced, more coordinated and easy to communicate plans for public art throughout downtown Turners Falls.

Process

The Montague Planning Department has reached out to their counterparts in Lawrence, MA responsible for the Iluminación Lawrence project. The Lawrence group is willing to share their knowledge gained by lighting a number of public buildings and bridges in the city.



SEE LAWRENCE IN A NEW LIGHT

LUMINACIÓN LAWRENCE is a city-wide lighting project that aims to create a warm and inviting public realm experience at night using LED lighting and projections. Lighting the city's walls and pedestrian spaces not only makes for a safer, more enjoyable city, but it also serves as a dynamic medium where creatives are invited to turn city spaces into immersive installations of art.

Events Projects Learn More News Get Involved

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



Best Practice

Iluminación Lawrence: Illuminating downtown Lawrence to create wonder and attraction



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Location

Lawrence, MA

Budget: ~\$250,000 + in-kind services

Timeframe: Planning and implementation 10-12 months and ongoing

Risk: Main risks included weather, and availability of technology and political will

Partners & Resources: Light Artist John Powell, City of Lawrence, Lawrence Redevelopment Authority, Mass Development TDI, Essex Community Foundation (ECCF), Groundworks Lawrence, Lawrence Partnership and Lawrence DPW

Iluminación Lawrence was organized to create and develop a comprehensive program to allow Lawrence to be seen "in a different light" Partner organizations and institutions were joined together to fund various projects. The budget was further developed with the assistance of Light Artist John Powell and the MassDevelopment TDI Fellow Jess Martinez to incorporate many Lawrence structures. The Patronicity Funding amount was used as part of the overall funding.





It was determined that the architecture of the magnificent mill buildings in and around Downtown should be "showcased" by artistic illumination to reinforce community pride and attract visitors and residents to Downtown Lawrence Iluminación Lawrence was organized to create and develop a comprehensive program to allow Lawrence to be seen "in a different light."

Process Strategic Decisions

- The initial project considered, for what eventually became Iluminación Lawrence, was only to light the Casey Bridge located in Downtown Lawrence over the Merrimack River
- After the Ayer Clock Tower lighting was added, it was clear that a much more extensive plan be initiated throughout the Downtown
- Now the plan incorporates several significant structures that add to the visual enrichment of Lawrence while recognizing the history, people and events that have gone into its social and cultural legacy
- Significant aspects of its history include perhaps the best physical master plan for a textile mill city in the United States, impact on child-labor laws by Lewis Hind's documentation and writings based on Lawrence child workers and the revolutionary Bread and Roses Workers' Strike of 1912
- Iluminación Lawrence speaks to this grand legacy of the history and resiliency of the City of Lawrence.
- Each new lighting of a structure becomes a community celebration.

For more information: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/cultural-arts-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>

Secure a business development coordinator to support downtown business opportunities

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Downtown Turners Falls (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	LRRP stakeholder interviews and survey
Budget	 Medium budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) – Depends on whether full-time or part-time position, and source of funding
Timeframe	 Short-term (<5 years) - To help address COVID-19 impacts
Risk	 Medium - MassDevelopment is likely to create a new Beyond Gateway City program akin to their successful Transformative Development Initiative (TDI), but the funding of that program and the chances for Turners Falls to be selected are both uncertain.
Key Performance Indicators	Hiring a full-time or part-time business/economic development coordinator (or TDI Fellow); Vacant storefronts filled with new businesses; Successful cross-business promotion efforts; Increase in spending (sales) in retail and restaurants and/or increase in visitor days to Turners Falls
Partners & Resources	MassDevelopment, Town of Montague, Western Mass EDC, Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Community Development Corporation (CDC) Financial Resources: MassDevelopment, and planned Beyond Gateway Cities program; Town general funds; REDO funding from Western Mass EDC
Diagnostic	<p>Smaller scale downtowns such as Turners Falls are appealing and highly walkable for visits, but with relatively modest population in the surrounding areas, the general level of foot traffic and visitation makes it difficult to profitably operate retail businesses and restaurants. COVID-19 exacerbated this challenge with greatly reduced foot traffic, lower auto traffic volumes, as well as eight business closures and seven new vacant storefronts in a downtown with only about 45 total storefronts. The result is a downtown that is fairly quiet on weekdays, more vibrant on weekends but with a general need for more foot traffic, more events/reasons to draw visitors, and more customers for local businesses.</p> <p>Although conditions have improved a bit, COVID-19 continues to dampen downtown visitation, reduce demand for indoor dining, and makes it harder to host and schedule larger events and performances such as at the Shea Theater. And while RiverCulture is a well-established Town program to support arts and cultural programming and events, there is no economic or business development role in Montague to help address or support the wide-range of business needs in Turners Falls.</p> <p>Finally, this type of business development and support role was envisioned in the 2013 Turners Falls Livability Plan, with the recommendation of forming a Downtown Partnership of stakeholders and businesses. And this new role could organize and support that work.</p>

Action Items

The Town of Montague seeks to have an economic development professional focused on a variety of business development, marketing and support roles for Turners Falls. This could be a full-time or part-time position, and one possibility for implementation is MassDevelopment's expected Beyond Gateway Cities program which could be an opportunity for a TDI Fellow focused on business development and support (potentially shared with 1-2 other Franklin County communities). Key tasks for this position are anticipated to include:

- Serve as the point-person for business engagement and business development for Turners Falls, and coordinate closely with RiverCulture and Montague's Town Planner
- Focus on business engagement to understand local business needs, issues, and opportunities; helping to devise strategies, create partnerships, etc.
- Work with property owners and real estate leaders to seek new business opportunities for vacant storefronts
- Devise business promotion events, sustained marketing/promotion of downtown Turners Falls, regularly convene small businesses in Turners Falls, etc.
- Collaborate with Franklin County, regional and state leaders to create business development opportunities and innovative programs (e.g., façade improvements, pop-up shops, creative economy, restaurant week, etc.)







Process

- Partner with FRCOG to be positioned for anticipated MassDevelopment Beyond Gateway Cities TDI program and apply for funding
- Formalize job description and priority tasks based on this project recommendation
- Reach out to local business community to survey them on the biggest needs for downtown
- Determine near-term funding opportunities and if a part-time position is sufficient for this role



Downtown Businesses, Turners Falls, MA Source: Hodge Economic Consulting

Boost the administrative capacity of RiverCulture to support arts/culture programming and creative economy

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Throughout downtown Turners Falls
Origin	Town of Montague Planning Department
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) - Sources of funding include new sponsorships, Mass Downtown Initiative, other grants, Community Foundation of Western Mass
Timeframe	 Short-term (< 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk - biggest risk is enthusiasm of local businesses to participate and help fund over time
Key Performance Indicators	Number of businesses providing sponsorships; dollar value of new grants; reformulated downtown partnership steering committee; number of arts/cultural events and attendance; downtown property values
Partners & Resources	RiverCulture, Town of Montague, local businesses, Mass Downtown Initiative
Diagnostic	<p>The COVID pandemic significantly impacted downtowns. Business surveys have verified that most downtown small businesses, dining, cultural attractions, residential developments, and tourist destinations experienced loss of employment, revenue, customer base and foot traffic. Downtowns with active downtown 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 positioned to help downtowns recover from COVID and prepare for the future. Turners Falls sees the opportunity to build the capacity of their existing cultural- based nonprofit, RiverCulture, to take a leadership role in this effort and capitalize on the economic development impact arts and culture will have as an economic driver in their COVID recovery process.</p>

Action Items

Getting Started - Convene a Downtown Partnership. With the support of the municipality, RiverCulture should play the role of convening stakeholders to form a downtown partnership that would include the Town, RiverCulture, businesses, property owners, and other civic/business leaders. The goal of this effort would be to form a working partnership and to develop a sustainable RiverCulture organization for Turners Falls.

Develop the Value Proposition - It will be essential to develop the value proposition for investing human capital and the financial resources into RiverCulture and communicate to the municipality officials and private stakeholders the impact of their investment. The goal of RiverCulture and the municipality is to build a destination that is attractive to potential businesses, residents, and visitors through arts and cultural programming. A well-managed and sustainable organization will undertake strategic programs and services that will help achieve that goal. Key communication points include:

- Ability to collectively and cost effectively purchase priority programs and services to achieve impact /scale
- Provide a unified voice / "seat at the table" for district priorities
- Professional management and staff dedicated to implementing programs and services in the district.
- Ability to respond to crisis such as COVID-19
- Leverage resources and collaborations

Create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy

- The Partnership Committee should undertake efforts to engage businesses, property owners and interested residents to identify needs and priorities for the downtown, building on the RRP. Additionally, this provides the opportunity to provide community education on the RiverCulture organizational model, identify needs and opportunities, and potential leadership.

- Peer Learning Panels – invite Directors from similar downtown organizations from other successful communities
- Community Forums - fun, engaging and informational visioning sessions
- Visits to other communities with downtown entities to see programs in action
- Websites/social media

Evaluate RiverCulture Organizational Model - it will be important to create the appropriate organizational model for RiverCulture. RiverCulture should consider becoming a 501c3 organization. This approach will give the organization a platform to financial sustainability and governance that is separate from the municipality, including the ability to apply for a wide-range of grant opportunities.

Resources for Startup and Sustainability: Some seed money will be required to organize RiverCulture with this model, such as technical assistance (TA) through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative. Additionally, local Institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/Individual contributors may be sources for seed money. Careful consideration should be given to developing a realistic budget, and a variety of revenue opportunities for the organization. This may include a grant agreement or contract with the municipality, sponsorships, event revenue, grants or contracts, foundation, and individual giving. If possible, RiverCulture should strive to secure multiple year commitments from funders.



Great Falls Festival (Pumpkinfest) in Turners Falls Source: RiverCulture



*Fiesta del Norte, Mexican Mariachi band to play at 5th annual Migrations Festival, Turners Falls Source: RiverCulture;
<https://www.riverculture.org/2021/09/23/5th-annual-migrations-festival/>*

Process

- Create a downtown partnership with the Municipality, key property owners, key local destination businesses, and other business/civic leaders to launch effort.
- Apply for 501c3 designation for RiverCulture to allow RiverCulture to diversify their funding base.
- Enter into agreement with Town to clearly define roles and responsibilities, scope, and metrics.
- Evaluate, train, and expand RiverCulture Board of Directors to include artists, producers, town officials, businesses, property owners and other stakeholders.
- Secure seed funding for TA through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), Foundations and other stakeholder support
- Create community outreach events, widely distribute surveys and other engagement tools to develop program priorities
- Create work plan to align arts and cultural programming with marketing and business development objectives, including an enhanced website for RiverCulture
- Build consensus with stakeholders on programming /budget/staff and volunteer needs
- Create a sustainability plan and secure commitments from key funders. These could include:
 - Town of Turners Falls contract agreement / MOU
 - Event Sponsors – see Springfield BID Sponsorship Guide as example
 - Corporate Sponsors (3-year commitment)
 - Foundation – Barr Foundation, Community Foundation of Western MA, Bank Foundations
 - Develop a “Friends of RiverCulture” group for individual giving
 - Event Revenue
 - State and Federal Grants – MOTT, MCC, ARPA, RTC etc.



Photos of Programs Organized by Easthampton City Arts Source: Easthampton City Arts, <https://www.easthamptoncityarts.com/programs/art-walk/>

Cultural/Arts Administrative Capacity



CULTURAL/
ARTS

Location

Easthampton, MA; Springfield, MA

Easthampton City Arts

<https://www.easthamptoncityarts.com/>

Easthampton City Arts offers a wide range of arts programming and cultural events, which serve as platforms for community engagement and economic development. Through monthly events like Art Walk, and annual festivals like Easthampton Book Fest and Cultural Chaos, ECA supports local artists, musicians, and performers while activating the public spaces of downtown Easthampton.

Springfield Business Improvement District: Sponsorship Packages

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-revised-business-improvement-district-manual/download> (see Appendix 7)

ECA has commissioned several murals, public art installations, and artist-designed bike racks that serve to further integrate the arts into the fabric of the local community. ECA initiatives like the Cottage Street Cultural District, and formal partnerships like the Easthampton Cultural Council, fund and promote local and regional artists to share community-based projects and performances in public spaces throughout Easthampton.

As a way to fund the Springfield Business Improvement District and cultural/arts installations and programs in downtown, Springfield developed a robust Sponsorship Catalog. Opportunities included Street Banners, sponsorships at weekly beer garden events, numerous annual events such as the Downtown Ice Invasion sculpture walk, and more.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA...

- Joe Ryan (Love downtown Springfield) It ROCKS! (SpringfieldDowntown) 10w
- Melissa Moore Weidick! So much fun as always! (SpringfieldDowntown) 3w
- Denise Vanshon Good time for a great cause! (SpringfieldDowntown) 15w
- Stacey Crear Awesome event! Nice job! (SpringfieldDowntown) 15w
- Paul Harris You guys rock thanks for all you do and for keeping Springfield beautiful! (SpringfieldDowntown) 2w
- Pierre Girard Awesome time! (SpringfieldDowntown) 23w
- Doug Harry Morash Great job and lots of fun! (SpringfieldDowntown) 23w

2019 MEASURED ACHIEVEMENTS...

- 125,000+** SpringfieldsDowntown.com visits a year
- 6,338** Weekly Springfield Downtown Newsletter Recipients
- 100+** SBID Events a year
- 463,550+** Facebook Ad Impressions

20,100+ SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

MEDIA PARTNERS

MASS LIVE, COMCAST SPOTLIGHT, WHEATON NEWS, iHeart MEDIA, mix 93.5, FOX 102, 102.7

4th Annual Downtown ICE INVASION



The 4th Annual Ice Sculpture Invasion will take place in the winter of 2021 during a weekend in January. Over a dozen ice sculptures will be placed around the downtown area that will draw thousands to check out the ice masterpieces.

The event includes live ice carvings, fun social media contests, and more.

2020 Facebook Event Page alone had a BID breaking record with over 6,500 people responding to the event and reaching 150,000 people.

Presenting Sponsor - \$3,500

Presenting sponsorship includes:

- Company logo on all signage
- Company logo on all digital creative
- Company logo and link on springfielddowntown.com
- Company name tagged in all social media ads

Location Sponsor

\$1,000 Business Location Sponsor

- Signage/company logo at a designated Ice Sculpture at your office or business location
- Company logo and link on springfielddowntown.com
- Company name tagged in 3 social media posts

\$550 for Double Block





- Signage/company logo at a designated Ice Sculpture
- Company logo and link on springfielddowntown.com

\$300 for Single Block

- Signage/company logo at a designated Ice Sculpture
- Company logo and link on springfielddowntown.com

Pages from the Downtown Springfield Sponsorship Catalog Source: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-revised-business-improvement-district-manual/download>

Accelerate Downtown Streetscape Improvements

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Avenue A and Third Streets (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Town of Montague Planning Department, Downtown Livability Plan
Budget	 High (>\$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short-term (<5 years) - Work can begin in 2021 (or as soon as extra funds are obtained)
Risk	 Low - This is largely a continuation and acceleration of streetscape projects
Key Performance Indicators	Pedestrian foot traffic counts in downtown; rehabilitated downtown properties; customer/visitor satisfaction in Turners Falls
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague Financial Resources: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), MassDOT, Complete Streets
Diagnostic	<p>The Phase 1 Diagnostic derived low-adequate grades for streetscape in downtown Turners Falls with a B for sidewalks, C for trees and benches and C for roadbeds and crosswalks, with multiple instances of infrastructure deterioration and repairs needed. Plus, the focus groups consistently emphasized having a downtown that is walkable and site visits demonstrated a mixed bag of conditions, cleanliness, and maintenance of plantings was uneven. These outdoor spaces became even more critical due to Covid-19.</p> <p>So, this project would address those findings as well as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Increase opportunities for outdoor retail and dining;2) Improve the visibility and appearance of storefronts;3) Incentivize the proper utilization of storefront for foot traffic driven retail; and4) Induce infill development.

Action Item

The Town has been advancing a streetscape improvement program since 2013 to replace a tired, crumbling, limited accessible streetscape. One phase has been successfully completed and has resulted in a revitalized commercial block in the center of downtown and has been well received by the public. A second phase is funded and planned for summer 2022 construction. The Town has design plans for a third phase and will seek funding for implementation. A planned 4th phase incorporating 3rd Street will require additional design.

All these phases of work will include infrastructure improvements across a mix of sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs and plantings, etc. but require additional funding to be implemented more quickly.

Process

- 1) Seek funding for implementation Phase III of the Downtown Turners Falls Streetscape Enhancement Program (First Street to Third Street, Library/War Memorial). Design is complete. Town has right of way secured.
- 2) Seek funding for design and construction of Phase IV to finish the streetscape program.



Aerial Photo of Avenue A Source: Town of Montague



Deteriorating Street Crossing Source: Hodge Economic Consulting

Peskeomskut Park Bandshell Improvements

Category	 Culture/Arts
Location	Peskeomskut Park, Avenue A (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	John Ancil, owner of Fastlights; RiverCulture
Budget	 Low (<\$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short-term (<5 years) - With funding, can easily be completed within one year
Risk	 Low - The needed bandshell improvements are well-understood and straight-forward to implement
Key Performance Indicators	Attendance at Peskeomskut Park events; number of events and partners using the facility
Partners & Resources	Town of Montague, Fastlights, RiverCulture, Shea Theater Financial Resources: Private support (\$3,000 already raised), Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, Cultural District Funds



A concert at the Peskeomskut Park bandstand Source: RiverCulture

Diagnostic

- 1) Covid has demonstrated that there is strong demand for outdoor performance venues where people can comfortably distance themselves.
- 2) Open spaces are in short supply in densely developed downtowns like Turners Falls, and Peskeomskut Park has become an even more popular gathering venue.

Action Item

Peskeomskut Park has been reactivated for community use over the last two years. In 2019, the Town moved the weekly Great Falls Farmers Market to the park and deployed the Turners Falls Summer Series with programmed concerts and movies at the bandshell. Attendance has grown and programming has improved with the interest. The new attention and use of the park has drawn attention to the shortcomings of the park which is its exposure to a busy 7th Street and adjacent strip mall parking lot. The bandshell has inappropriate flood lighting which is ineffective for evening performances, and it retains stormwater on its stage which is a safety issue for performers.

The planned improvements will allow Turners Falls to host more events, longer into the evening, and attract more quality programming to the downtown. Local creative economy partners such as the Shea Theater, Antenna Cloud Farm, Musica Franklin, the Montague Community Band, and the Great Falls Festival all utilize this community asset.

Mockup of proposed fence for Peskeomskut Park.

Source: Town of Montague



Process

Obtain funding for bandshell improvements, followed by procuring a vendor to complete the following activities on the town park:

- Install a visual/sound barrier between the bandshell and 7th Street. Currently, most patrons overlook a large parking lot. This barrier will include a 7'x30' wooden fence and landscaping;
- Replace existing, 20-year-old stage lighting with appropriate overhead stage lights; and
- Install a drainage solution on the concrete floor of the bandshell for performer safety.

Advance Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities for Municipally-Owned Property

Category	 Private Realm / Redevelopment
Location	The old "Railroad Salvage" site at 11-15 Power Street and town-owned parcel on 1 st Street
Origin	Town of Montague, Planning Department
Budget	 Medium (\$50,000 - \$200,000)
Timeframe	 Short-term (< 5 years) to obtain town approval to seek development proposals and issue a redevelopment RFP, medium to long-term (5 to 15 years) for parcel disposition and redevelopment construction
Risk	 Medium – 1) lack of public funding to advance the projects; 2) potential environmental issues, even though both sites appear to have been addressed; 3) challenges of securing private investment / redevelopment partners; 4) environmental permitting
Key Performance Indicators	Town approval to issue separate RFP's for the private redevelopment of each parcel; prepare redevelopment criteria for each site; prepare and advertise RFP's for developer interest; select developers; negotiate disposition agreements
Partners & Resources	MassDevelopment, private developers, local banks



Images of potential redevelopment sites, Power Street (left) and 1st Street (right); Photos by BSC Group

Diagnostic

The Town of Montague owns two key parcels in downtown Turners Falls that provide great opportunities for redevelopment. COVID-19 has demonstrated that Turners Falls provides a viable option for new housing because: 1) with more remote workers having less need to be physically near major cities, Turners Falls is the kind of small town with an urban feel that is attracting residential demand; and 2) new people living downtown will add more foot traffic within the commercial area to support economic activity that will help Turners Falls be a more economically vibrant and sustainable area in Western Mass. Furthermore, selling these public parcels for private development will add to the town's property tax base.

One parcel, located at 11-15 Power Street, is the site of a former factory that was demolished after a fire and it was determined that the building had deteriorated beyond repair. The site was identified by EPA for immediate action through an Action Memorandum in 2020. The building was demolished, asbestos removed and the site was stabilized for redevelopment in the summer of 2021. The parcel is in a desirable location for housing due to its proximity to downtown services and retail, as well as the visual attributes of views to the Connecticut River and canal system. The 6th Street bridge leading to Power Street will be undergoing full reconstruction which will restore full vehicular and pedestrian access to the site from Sixth Street and the downtown area. The Town has included this site in its 40R district and wants to see new housing built on this site.

The second parcel is located on 1st Street across from Town Hall behind the Shady Glenn diner parcel. The parcel is currently used for public parking. The town believes there is a better use for this lot because there is enough parking in this area at Town Hall as well as parking at the adjacent riverfront park. Therefore, the Town-owned parking lot provides an opportunity for more downtown housing consisting of larger townhouse units. Townhouse units would be consistent with the units along 2nd and 3rd streets that previously served as worker housing. The site is in a great location for housing because it is across the street from the Connecticut River, riverfront park, bike trail, and within walking distance of downtown retail and services.

Action Items

Prepare Request for Proposals for the private redevelopment of the town-owned parcels on Power Street as well as 1st Street.

Disposing of publicly owned property by a municipality requires a public advertisement process, unless the land is under the control of a quasi-public agency such as a redevelopment authority or economic development industrial commission. Therefore, the Town must prepare a public process to publically advertise that the parcels are available for sale as per certain requirements to be developed by the Town. This process must be in accordance with Massachusetts General Law.

An example of a municipal checklist for the disposition of town-owned land is :

https://www.marlborough-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3411/f/uploads/municipal_checklist_for_the_purchase_of_city-owned_properties.pdf

Process

1. Prepare a request to the Select Board asking for approval to allow the Planning Department to issue a Request for Proposals for the redevelopment of both sites. The request for proposal can be a stepped process, starting with a Request for Letters of Interest (RFI), then a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), then a Request for Development Proposals (RFP), or one stream-lined process of just an RFP.
2. Prepare criteria for the private redevelopment of both sites. Criteria could include items such as: required types of residential units; architectural style; building massing; financial benefits to the Town and community; market demand; parking requirements; acquisition cost; etc.
3. Establish a committee to review all proposals. Review committee should have expertise in planning, financial analysis and public interest.
4. Issue separate RFI/RFQ/RFP's for both parcels.
5. Promote RFP's in local media, state agencies, real estate publications.
6. Invite interested bidders to a briefing session for both sites to present what Town is expecting to see in the proposals and answer questions.
7. Receive, review and rank proposals. Conduct interviews, ask for more details as needed.
8. Select and then negotiate with preferred developer(s). Goal is to write a mutually agreeable Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) between the Town and developer. Legal counsel will be required.
9. If necessary, the Town may need to advance public infrastructure improvements needed to support the private development in accordance with the terms of the Land Disposition Agreement.
10. Town will need to monitor the developer's advancement of the project through periodic submittals as defined in the LDA, such as approval of architectural and site plans, financing, permits, construction schedule, etc.



Concept Site Plan for 11th and 15th Street Source: BSC Group



Concept Site Plan for First Street Source: BSC Group

Develop Design / Zoning Guidelines for Downtown Turners Falls

Category	 Administrative Capacity
Location	Downtown Turners Falls (Census tract: 040701)
Origin	Livability Plan for Turners Falls, Montague Planning Department
Budget	 Medium budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) – Depends on Findings of feasibility and political will
Timeframe	 Short-term (<5 years) - To help address COVID-19 impacts
Risk	 Medium – The desire to create a zoning approach to ensure infill development and redevelopment in Turners falls is respectful of the architectural character and the public realm.
Key Performance Indicators	Secure Funding, Hire Consultant, Determine preferred Zoning Approach. Secure Town meeting zoning approval
Partners & Resources	Commonwealth of Massachusetts Planning Grants, MassDevelopment Planning technical Assistance, ARPA funding
Diagnostic	<p>Evaluate the viability of current zoning for Turners Falls to preserve and enhance the sense of place and respect its architectural heritage. Traditional or Euclidean Zoning focuses on the type of use allowed on the land. Based on the notion that each space should have one, singular use. Form-Based Zoning focuses on building form as it relates to streetscape and adjacent uses and encourages mixed uses. This project will determine the design guidelines that will best advance the vision of Turner Falls, with emphasis on pursuing a form-based approach to offer a more effective regulatory process.</p>
	

*Example of Form-Based Code Design
Source: Dietz & Co for Town of Montague*

Action Items

As the process will involve the evaluation and comparison of the traditional existing zoning approach and that of a form-based approach the process will involve multiple steps to determine the design guidelines along with the assistance of consultants:

- Designate Montague's Town Planner to take the lead on this effort.
- Secure the requisite funding to undertake the process.
- Develop a scope of work that methodically evaluates the effectiveness and feasibility of traditional and form-based zoning approaches to achieved the desired objective for Turners Falls.
- Create a Form-Based Code Zoning Advisory Committee comprised of zoning users, local officials, business and property owners and community members to provide input and feedback on the process.
- Create a Charge of the Committee that outlines their specific responsibilities.
- Prepare an RFP which outlines the specific services required and qualification desired.
- Determine the optimum zoning approach.
- Focus on business engagement to understand local business needs, issues, and opportunities; helping to devise strategies, create partnerships, etc.
- Prepare preferred design guidelines and zoning.

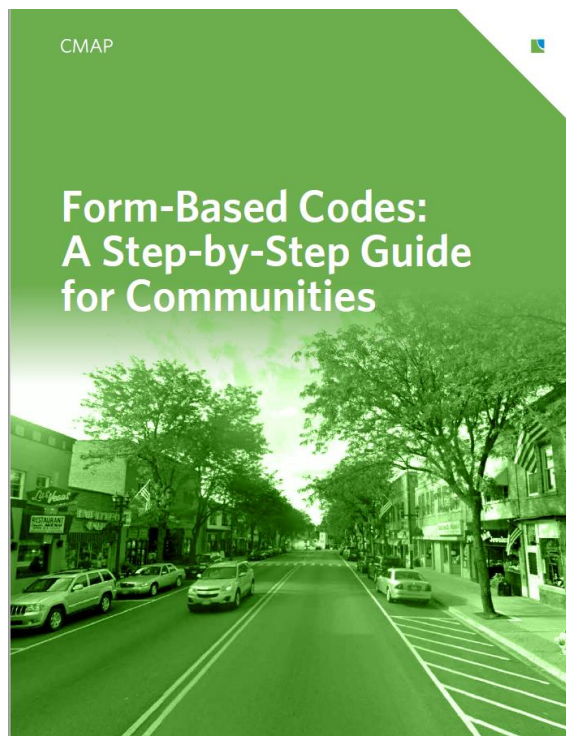


Public Workshop, Village of Campton Hills, Illinois. Credit: Teska Associates. Source: Form-Based Codes: A Step by Step Guide for Communities, Chicago Metropolitan Area Planning

Process

The process will evaluate the adequacy of existing zoning and whether a form-based approach is superior and feasible. As form-based zoning is an entirely different approach, where use is secondary to building form, mass, and locational context, the process will involve substantial public engagement and education.

While it is best if the form-based code replaces the underlying zoning district, there have been instances where form-based code has been adopted as an overlay district keeping the existing underlying zoning intact. However, this optional approach has not enticed property owners to utilize the form-based approach. Another alternative approach short of form-based zoning could be the adoption of Design Guidelines for Turners Falls and integrating them into the Zoning Code.



Planning Resource: Form-Based Codes: A Step by Step Guide for Communities, Chicago Metropolitan Area Planning, <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/10715/CMAP+Form+Based+Codes+Guide+lowres.pdf/5a034e51-ffd5-4b71-b5f1-c068d0096293>