



# Rapid Recovery Plan

October 27, 2021

**Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea**



# Acknowledgments



Town of Essex, Massachusetts



Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce



Dodson & Flinker, Project Facilitator



BSC Group, Heather Gould – SME for Shared Economic Development Project Manager



Stantec, Amelia Casey and Jason Schrieber – SME for Wayfinding



Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts



Essex Merchant Group



Bench Consulting, Jonathan Berk – SME for Winter Events



Levine Planning Strategies, Jeff Levine – SME for Cultivating Desirable and Viable Downtown Businesses



Zapalac Advisors, Laurie Zapalac – SME for Shared Marketing and Branding and Lighting/Streetscape Improvements

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.

**For more information, contact DHCD:**  
**100 Cambridge St, Suite 300**  
**Boston, MA 02114**  
**617-573-1100**  
**[mass.gov/DHCD](https://mass.gov/DHCD)**

---

The Planning Team would also like to thank the following individuals for participating as key stakeholders throughout the planning process:

## Manchester-by-the-Sea

Board of Selectmen	Becky Jaques
Business owner	Amy Lage
Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce	Peter Webber
Communications Coordinator	Tiffany Marletta
Cricket Press	Erika Brown
Downtown Improvement Committee	Gar Morse
Executive Assistant to Board of Selectmen	Sonja Nathan
Long-term resident	Linda Crosby
Town Planner	Sue Brown
Town Administrator	Greg Federspiel
Planning Board	Christina Delisio

## Essex

Board of Selectmen	Ruth Pereen, Chairman
Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce	Ken Riehl
Economic Development Committee	Jodi Harris
Essex Division of The Cape Ann Chamber & Gloucester Bank in Essex	Michelle French, President - EDCAC & Manager GB
Essex Merchants Group, Economic Development Committee	Donna Roy
Former Town Planner	Matt Coogan
Town Planner	Dana Menon
Town Administrator	Brendhan Zubricki

---

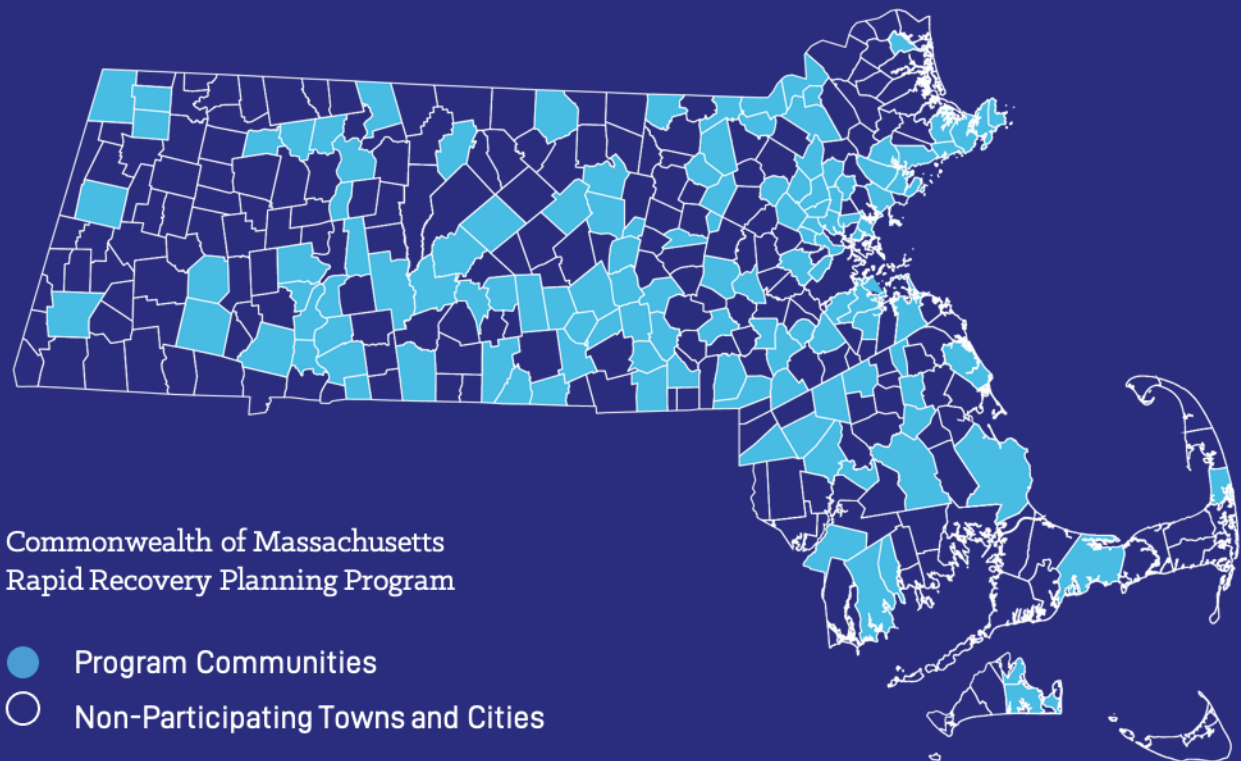
# Table of Contents

Rapid Recovery Program	
Introduction	6
Approach/Framework	8
Executive Summary	9
Diagnostic Key Findings	13
Customer Base	20
Physical Environment	34
Business Environment	49
Administrative Capacity	64
Project Recommendations	60
Public Realm	67
Revenue and Sales	99
Tenant Mix	117
Administrative Capacity	121
Illustrations of Recommendations	131

## 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.





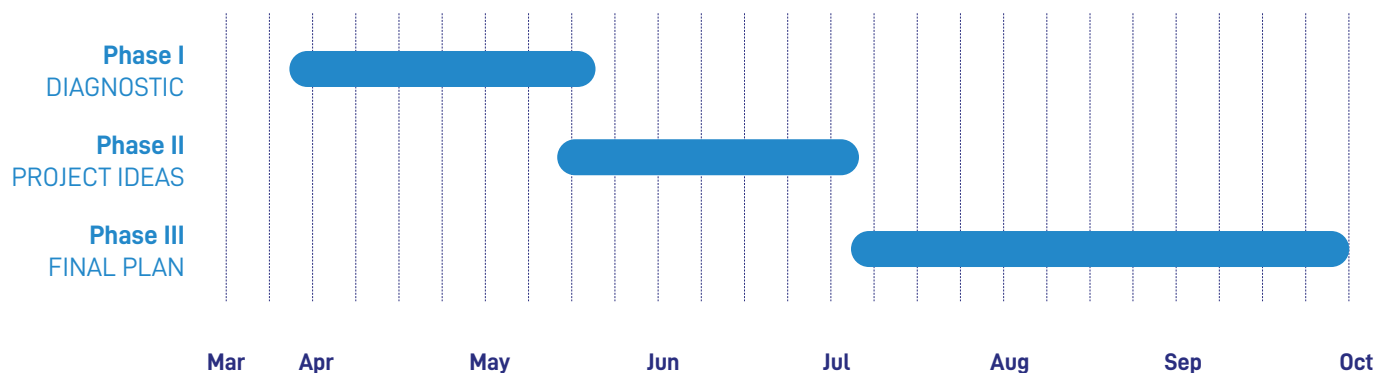
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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 March-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



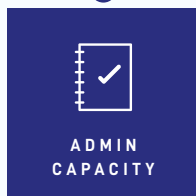
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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

## Downtowns Working Together to Recover from Covid

Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea have many things in common: beautiful waterfront settings on Cape Ann, a shared school system, and downtowns with unique businesses and a strong sense of place. The downtowns also largely share their customer base, both the year round population and the summer visitors who are crucial for the survival of many businesses. Recognizing their commonalities and the value of collaboration, the two towns participated jointly in the Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program to make action-oriented plans to help their downtowns recover from the impacts of Covid.

The downtown businesses of both communities have also been profoundly impacted by Covid. Each experienced at least one business closure. In a survey conducted by DHCD for this project, 100% of businesses had been negatively impacted by Covid in one way or another from temporary closure, to reduced operating hours or capacity, to extra costs for Covid compliance. More recently staffing shortages have hurt the businesses.

While the downtowns are set within relatively wealthy communities and businesses are often neighbors with high value homes, the economic picture for the downtowns is challenging in the best of times and the Covid pandemic had profound impacts on businesses. Compared to the 348 largest counties in the United States, Essex County ranked 65th for most job losses. This is particularly challenging for employees who face the high cost of housing on Cape Ann. It also reduces the customer base for downtowns that depend on each resident to support them. The downtowns in both towns have a high percentage of retail and restaurants. Indeed, food services and accommodations is the largest industry in Essex both by jobs and aggregate wages. Most of those businesses are in the downtown area. Retail is the third largest employer in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Both industries were profoundly impacted by the pandemic as were other face-to-face service businesses which are common in the downtowns. Meal tax revenue shows that neither downtown has reached pre-pandemic revenue levels. This impacts both the businesses and the town finances. Participants in this planning process said it will take years for many businesses to recover ground lost during the pandemic.

Despite the challenges, participants in the RRP planning process have shown great love for their downtowns and a wealth of knowledge and experience they are committed to using to help the downtowns bounce back. The RRP provided an opportunity to take stock of the downtowns, to identify needed improvements, and to identify resources and processes necessary to implement them. Throughout the process stakeholders from Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea collaborated, showing their complementary skills and helping to deepen understanding the unique strengths that each downtown can build upon. This collaboration may be a bright spot to come out of Covid. It will no doubt lead to better downtowns and stronger communities.

Over the last six months, consultants worked with local stakeholders to assess current conditions, evaluate project alternatives, and assemble a set of clear recommendations for further action. The project began with an assessment of physical, social and economic conditions in the two downtown areas that produced several key findings. The local customer base is relatively wealthy and well-educated, with a median income ranging from around \$113,000 in Essex to \$125,000 in Manchester. The resident population, however, is likely insufficient to support existing downtown businesses by itself – both downtowns rely on visitors from the larger region and beyond, and thus are to some extent competing with other Cape Ann destinations.

---

## Understanding Current Conditions and Planning for Effective Action

The **physical environment** in both centers, while very different in some respects, reflects the challenges that many historic centers face as they work to accommodate the demands of modern vehicular traffic within an 18th and 19th Century development pattern. This has required a balancing act between providing easy access and ample parking for visitors and maintaining the walkability and charm that people enjoy once they park their cars. Both downtowns would benefit from additional parking, but at the same time both also need additional space for sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, street furnishings and other amenities.

An extraordinary **Sense of Place**, rooted in unique activities, historic character and spectacular coastal settings, is a key asset for each community. Building on this is vitally important to maintaining quality of life for residents and attracting visitors to support local shops and restaurants. There are more convenient locations for shopping districts, with higher traffic counts and better regional connections, but they can't match the sense of place you have here. It's worth protecting and using as the cornerstone for economic development.

The current **economic base** is somewhat different in each community. Essex has important regional clusters of restaurants, antiques, home goods and crafts, but relatively little in terms of daily needs. Manchester-by-the-sea has a broader range of businesses providing goods and services to local customers, including professional services, restaurants, shops, as well as a grocery store, hardware store, dry cleaner and pharmacy. According to a business survey more than two thirds of businesses had lower revenue due to Covid-19, with 45-50% declining by more than 25%. While only 1 business closed in each community, additional storefront vacancies persist in 2021.

Property owners and businesses are key stewards of both downtown areas, along with town staff, elected officials, boards and commissions, and the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. Manchester's downtown improvement committee and Essex Merchant's Group both serve an important role. Nevertheless, among the challenges identified by participants is in the area of **administrative capacity**, with limited staff and overstretched volunteers working hard to keep up with existing demands, much less take on additional projects. Pursuing renewal and revitalization efforts will require shared effort and collaboration between town staff, elected officials, business owners and residents – but it also means that in some cases funding for new projects will have to include financial support for staff time necessary to implement them.

Understanding these challenges and opportunities is fundamental to developing a recovery strategy that is both meaningful in its outcomes and realistic in its implementation. This report concludes with a set of concise project recommendation designed to support grant applications and continued local initiatives – both to continue Covid recovery efforts and build a foundation for long-term growth and revitalization. These include:

- A Placemaking Plan, with ideas for enhancing the physical environment as well bringing in arts, cultural and recreational activities
- A wayfinding program, including signage and other information to guide visitors
- Outdoor lighting improvements, including pedestrian lighting for sidewalks and coordinated lighting across the public realm and private areas used by the public
- Public Bathrooms that are easy to find and accessible
- Branding & Marketing to create and disseminate a shared identity and coherent messaging for the downtowns
- Off-Season Events & Placemaking to bring local residents and visitors downtown throughout the year
- Cultivating Desirable Businesses through pop-up markets and other business incubation techniques
- Hiring a short-term economic development project manager to make sure that great ideas get implemented
- Changing zoning in Essex to better coordinate the growth and function of business areas

## A Joint Plan for Distinct but Similar Communities

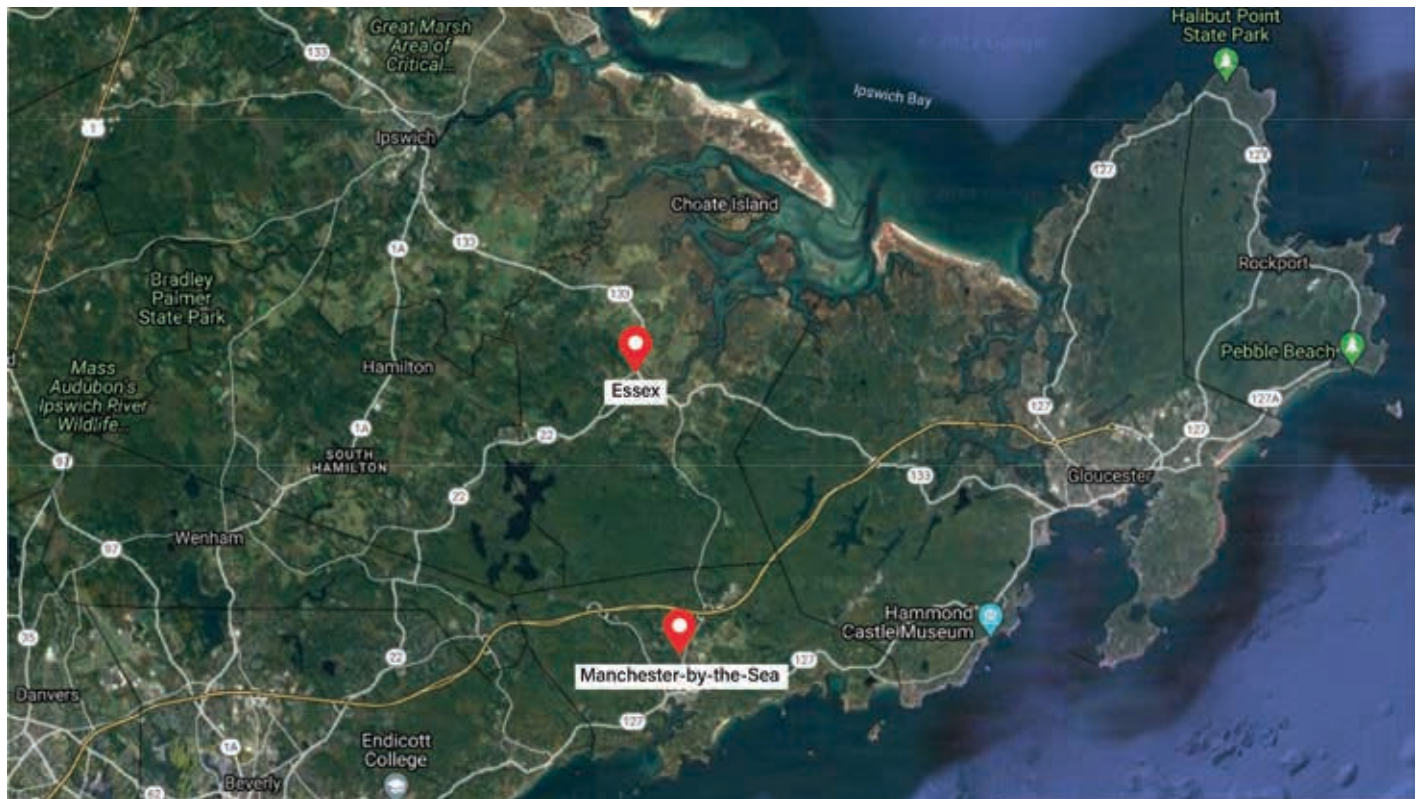
Rapid Recovery Planning for Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea was carried out jointly as a single project.

The two communities are both alike and different. They have different histories, different cultures, different downtown configurations and business strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, the fundamentals of their downtowns are quite similar given the overlap of their customer markets, their similar locations within Cape Ann transportation networks, their shared challenges with many workers who commute out of town and a seasonal economy, and the growing governmental and organizational relationships between the two towns. This plan reflects those similarities and differences.

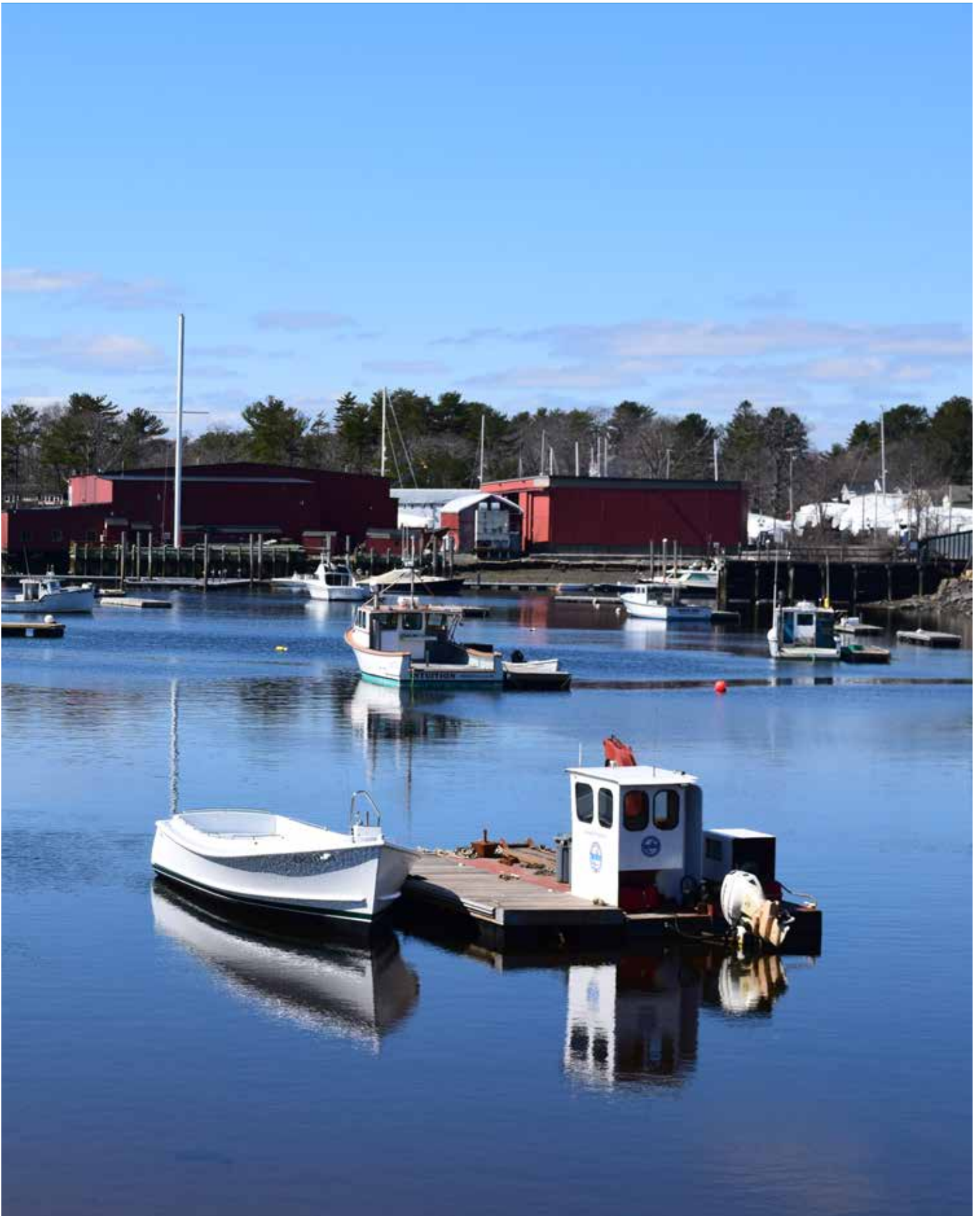
The Diagnostic Section mostly presents information together for each community, except for the physical realm which is evaluated separately.

Project Recommendations apply to both communities. The communities can choose to pursue project implementation, including applying for grants, together or separately depending on individual community priorities and funding sources.

At the beginning of the project, some participants expressed concerns about how the communities would find shared recommendations, given their perception of the differences between the communities. However, as the project progressed, the similarities between the communities became more evident, as did the complementary nature of their strengths and weaknesses. In the end, the information sharing and collaboration between the two communities may have been one of the most fruitful aspects of the project.



*Map of Essex and Manchester*



*Manchester-by-the-Sea Harbor*  
*Source: Dodson & Flinker*

---

## Diagnostic



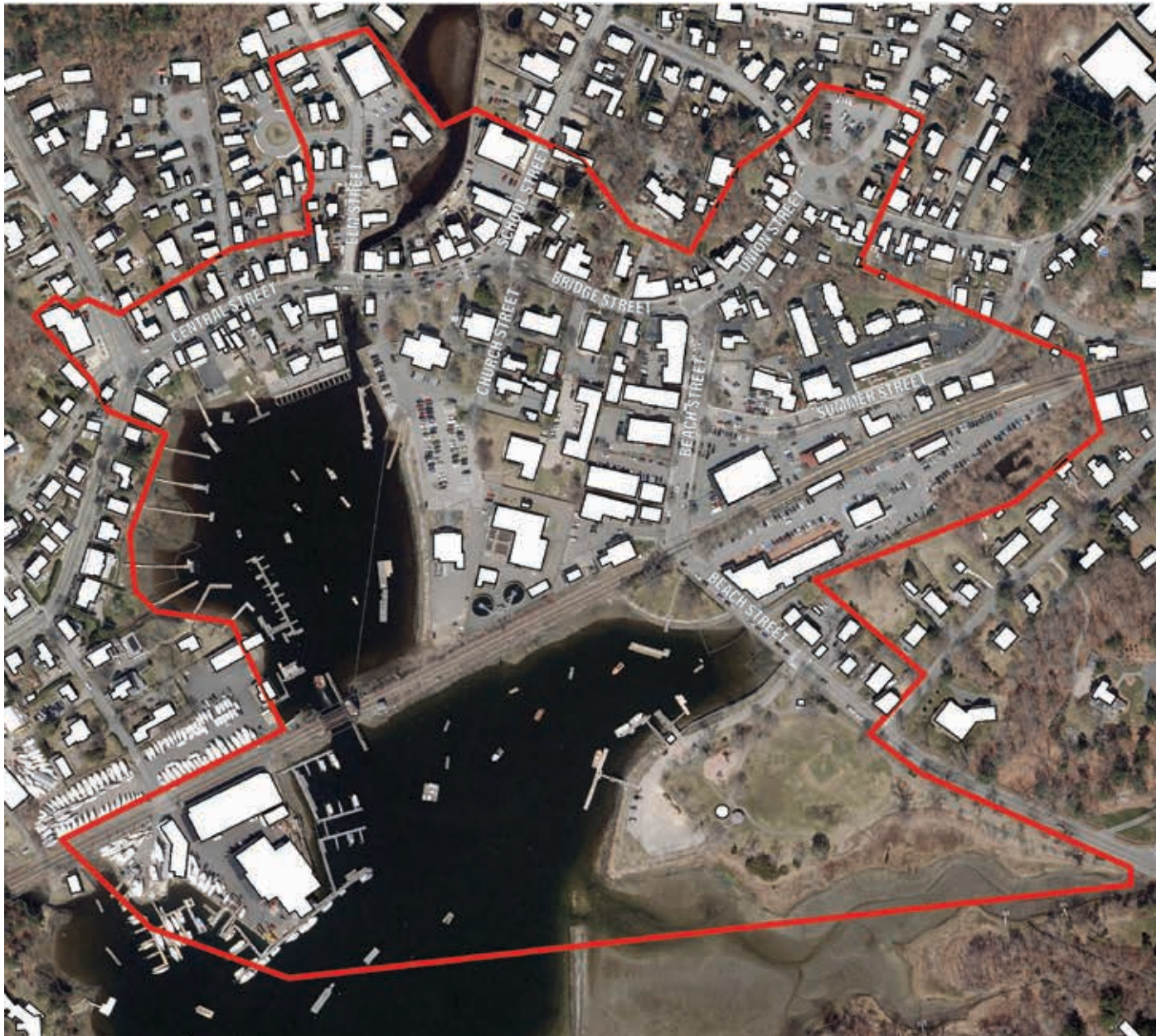
## Essex Project Area



*Source: MassGIS, Dodson & Flinker*



## Manchester-by-the-Sea Study Area



Source: MassGIS, Dodson & Flinker



# Key Findings



## Downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea both have a relatively wealthy, but small, local customer base

Both Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex have relatively wealthy, but small, customer bases within a five minute drive time. There is a significant flow of residents out of both communities during the day, which reduces the daytime population available to support downtown businesses. Many local commuters pass by convenient shopping and dining opportunities on their commutes, which likely reduces their spending in the downtowns. Manchester-by-the-Sea's immediate customer base (those within 5 minutes) is about twice as large as Essex's and has more disposable income.

There are significant overlaps in the two communities' customer bases at the 10 and 15 minute drive times. The population and the associate purchasing power in these bigger areas dwarfs those of the 5 minute ring. Both downtowns serve local needs, but also depend heavily on visitors from Cape Ann and beyond, especially day trip tourists during the summer months. Businesses in both downtowns report that most of their money is made seasonally. Both downtowns need to maintain and expand a broad customer base in order to sustain businesses and/or add new ones.

The commuter rail station in Manchester-by-the-Sea, which was heavily impacted by the pandemic, contributes to the downtown's customer base through both daily commuters and seasonal visitors, especially those visiting Singing Beach. Route 133 (Main Street/The Causeway) in Essex sees about 14,000 vehicles per day increasing visibility for businesses located there. The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway runs through both communities, bringing visitors including an increasing number of bicyclists, who reportedly spend more money per visit than customers who drive. Boating also contributes customers to both downtowns. Cultivating alternative modes of transportation and attracting enthusiasts of outdoor activities will strengthen the customer base of both downtowns.

Essex's population is projected to grow slightly over the coming decade, while Manchester-by-the-Sea's population is predicted to shrink. Older adults will comprise an increasingly large portion of the population over the coming decade. Housing attainability and diversity are major concerns in both communities. High housing costs probably reduce downtown spending for some residents. The lack of diverse housing shapes the size and composition of the downtowns' customer bases as well as the ability of businesses to attract employees.

Because the customer bases for the downtowns overlap so much, the towns would benefit from continuing to collaborate on economic development activities. Each community can build on the strengths of its downtown, while minimizing excessive competition with the other.



## Both downtowns have an authentic sense of place with opportunities for improvements

Both downtowns have a unique and appealing sense of place that is derived from their coastal setting and historic architecture.

### Essex

Essex has a long downtown with businesses at the east end of Main St/Martin Street, stretching along the causeway (Route 133/Main St), and scattered along Southern Avenue and Eastern Avenue, including the South Village shopping center.

The Great Marsh is a defining feature for the downtown. It, and other outdoor attractions in the area, help draw customers from near and far.

The physical environment of the public and private realms are mixed. The roadbed and sidewalks on Route 133 are functionally adequate and in good repair, but designed as a highway strip rather than a downtown street. Benches and planting areas along the causeway make it more welcoming. There are frequent curb cuts, some quite large, and limited crosswalks along Route 133. Sidewalks along Martin Street are often in poor repair. In one key stretch (between the Post Office and the entrance to the town parking lot), the sidewalk lacks any separation from the street other than paint.

Parking is mostly off-street and private, though there is one sizable, but hidden, public parking lot off of Martin Street. Parking is a perennial challenge, especially along the causeway where space is constrained by the Great Marsh.

Building facades and signage vary from quaint to dated to artistic. A good number of businesses have an auto-oriented design with limited windows to the street and a lack of pedestrian-scale signage. Many businesses are housed in converted historic residential structures, which contributes to the unique sense of place of the downtown.

Outdoor lighting and wayfinding are minimal and predominantly auto-oriented. Improvements to both would strengthen the pedestrian-friendliness of the downtowns and support business recovery. Overhead power lines degrade the look of the downtown, especially on the causeway which has almost no trees.

### Manchester-by-the-Sea

Manchester-by-the-Sea is known for its historic small-town charm and waterfront location. The downtown is centered around Route 127 (Central Street/Bridge Street/Union Street) and Beach Street. There are some gaps between storefronts along Route 127 where municipal, residential, and ground floor office uses are interspersed, but overall the downtown hangs together and has relatively obvious edges. The downtown is adjacent to a beautiful high quality harbor with docks and one mile away from Singing Beach. The Commuter Rail station attracts residents and visitors. There are two waterfront parks in the downtown, Reed Park and Masconomo Park.

Reflecting historic development patterns, the town's sidewalks are generally narrow with little or no room for expansion. This can sometimes make walking less comfortable but also contributes to the downtown's strong sense of place. Sidewalk materials and level of repair vary. Sidewalks on Beach Street and Summer Street are predominantly concrete, but some recent reconstructions have used asphalt. Attractive planters and seating in both the public and private realm contribute to the attractiveness of the downtown. However, there is limited street furniture in the public realm, such as benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, signage, art installations, and trash receptacles. Adding these features would improve the look and feel of the downtown and encourage people to stay longer and patronize more businesses.

The downtown also lacks street trees along Route 127, with trees located in private yard spaces. Beech Street and Summer Street have more street trees.

---

Crosswalks on Beach Street are well marked with pavers and curb bump-outs. Similar improvements on Route 127 would make the street more pedestrian-friendly and encourage visitors to keep exploring when they reach gaps in the continuity of businesses along the street.

The town has a strong sense of place that derives from its historic architecture, narrow streets, topography, views of the harbor, and high-quality landscaping on private sites. Placemaking initiatives could build on this sense of place and improve the functionality of the downtown by providing additional lighting, seating, and other elements to maintain visual interest.

Business owners and town residents who participated in public outreach for the RRP program said that limited public parking restricts the downtown growth by discouraging visitors and residents to park once and visit multiple businesses. Community members expressed concerns about the lack of a convenient circular route that unites the primary streets, reducing foot traffic in downtown. A pedestrian path between the public parking lot behind Town Hall and Beach Street will help but needs to be publicized, including with wayfinding elements.

The downtown lacks public bathrooms. This makes it more difficult for visitors and residents, especially older adults, to linger in the downtown.



## Covid-19 had a significant impact on the downtowns

Both downtowns include a mix of local serving businesses and ones that are more regional draws. Retail, food service, and professional service businesses are common in both downtowns.

Essex's food service and accommodation industry is especially strong. Town wide it provides the most jobs and most aggregate wages of any industry. Retail businesses in Essex have a cluster in antiques/home goods/crafts.

Manchester's downtown has a more complete mix of daily goods and services, including a pharmacy and grocery store. Residents report it meets most of their daily needs. Residents in Essex, on the other hand, want more local-serving goods and service businesses in the downtown.

Professional services appear to be a potential growth area for both downtowns. These businesses can provide good jobs and daytime employees that serve as the customer backbone for a downtown. That said, care needs to be taken so that offices do not reduce the interest of streets to pedestrians by occupying too many storefronts.

The Covid-19 Pandemic had profound impacts on both downtowns. Essex had one permanent business closure. According to survey results, 67% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019 and 50% of businesses saw revenue decline by 25% or more (survey had 18 responses). Manchester-by-the-Sea had at least one business closure and one business that relocated to Essex. Survey results showed that 81% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019 and 45% of businesses saw revenue decline by 25% or more (survey had 11 respondents). Meal tax revenues for the towns show precipitous declines during the pandemic. Unemployment spiked in April 2002 and has been falling since but is still above pre-pandemic levels. Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Essex County's drop in employment (6.7%) ranked 65th out of the 343 largest counties in the country.



## Continued collaboration will benefit the downtowns. Both towns need to increase capacity to speed up the local recovery efforts.

The key stewards in both towns are the property owners, local businesses, Town government and the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. Other active stewards in Essex are the Essex Merchants Group, and the Town's Economic Development Committee. In Manchester-by-the-Sea, the Downtown Improvement Committee and the Manchester Merchants Group are also key stewards. There are too many local organizations, boards and committees who play a role in the downtown to name them all here, but all play a crucial role. Neither town has a formal district management entity.

Both towns have limited, but highly engaged, staff. Neither town has staff dedicated solely to economic development. Essex has a part-time planner and a Town Administrator whose duties include grant writing and economic development, among many others. Manchester-by-the-Sea has a full-time planner and several other town staff have increased their business support role during the pandemic, including the Executive Assistant to the Board of Selectmen and the town's Communication's Coordinator.

In Manchester-by-the-Sea, businesses feel well supported by the Town. Previous planning identified a need to introduce less restrictive zoning policies to boost economic growth and mixed-use development. However, there is also a possibility that physical limitations are a greater impediment than zoning. Chief among the limitations is a lack of shared parking. Providing shared parking and/or redeveloping a few key parcels could increase the potential of the downtown to meet the town's housing and economic development goals.

In Essex, participants in this planning process cited zoning restrictions and permitting processes as a barrier to success, as well as the limited hours of some town staff, including code enforcement. The town adopted new zoning for the downtown in spring of 2021. It simultaneously enacted a moratorium on conversion of uses. The town is currently engaged in a zoning diagnostic with MAPC and it is crucial that the town complete zoning changes following. Those zoning changes stand to have a profound impact on business conditions in the town overall.

Implementing the Covid recovery actions outlined in this plan will likely require additional staff or volunteer resources. Creating a shared economic development project manager would speed recovery. Continuing to collaborate with regional partners will help spread the burden of the work ahead.



## Highlights from the Customer Base

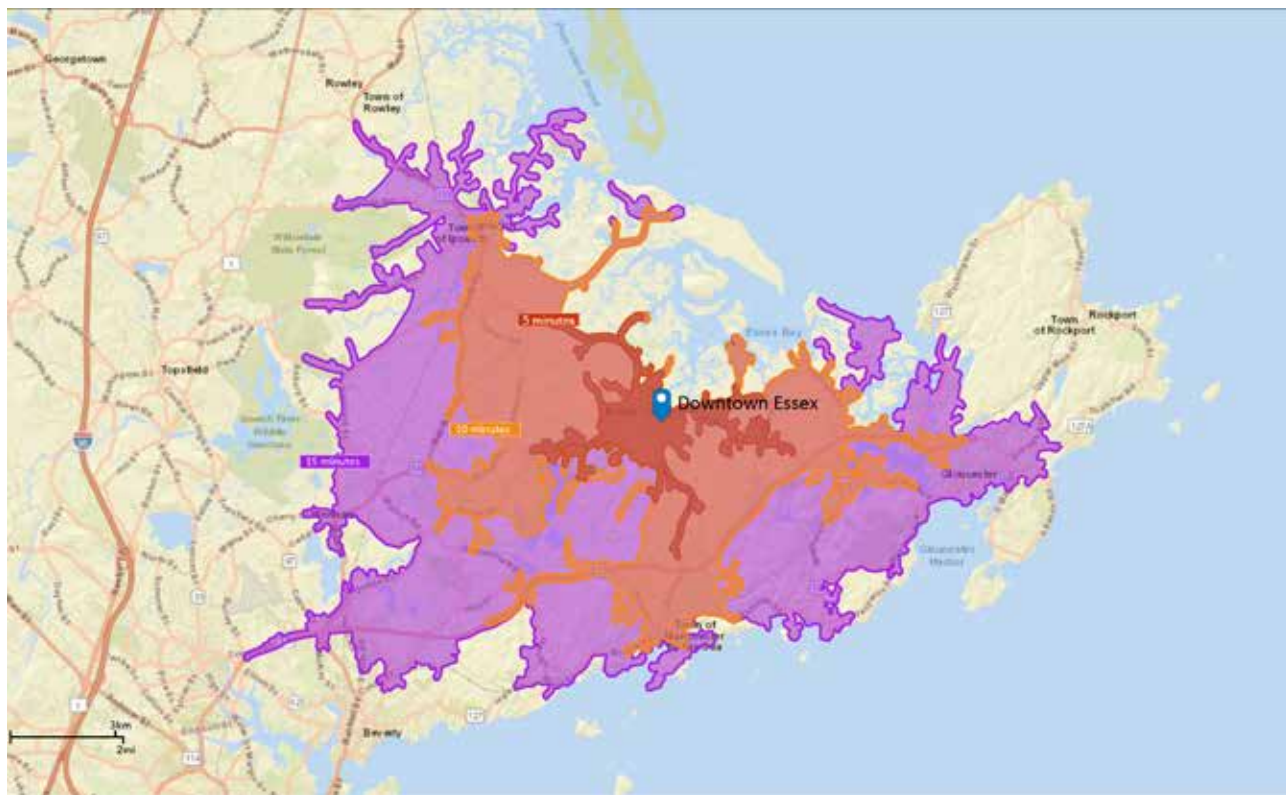
The primary question of this section is "Who are the customers of businesses in the study area?" The characteristics of customers give us a window into how many businesses can be supported in the downtown, and what kinds of businesses might be successful.

Data for this section was collected based on three areas for each downtown where possible: a five minute drive, a 10 minute drive, and a 15 minute drive from the downtown study area. This approach is consistent with that used in the 2020 "Essex Economic Development Plan", making it easier to use the two plans together and to synchronize information that is available for Essex with information for Manchester-by-the-Sea for future collaborative efforts.

Customers within a 5 minute drive have a day-to-day relationship with a downtown. Some of these customers can access the area on foot or bicycle, which increases the appeal of the area. These customers may patronize businesses in the downtown primarily because they are convenient.

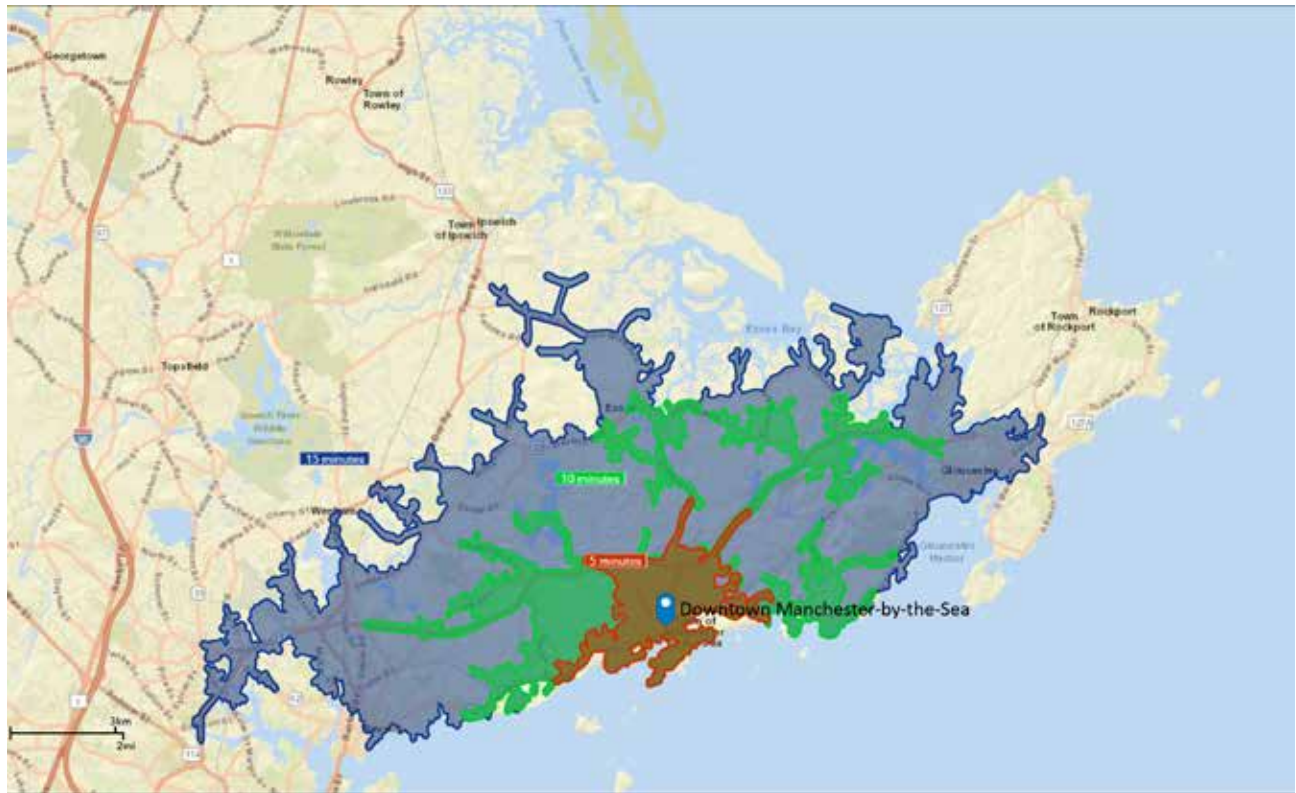
Customers within 10 minutes are also likely to find the area convenient but will likely have other businesses that are equally accessible. Notably, the two downtowns are about 10 minutes apart. These customers will likely patronize businesses in the downtown if they are equivalent to businesses that are located further afield. Customers at a 15 minute drive or greater will likely have access to several competing areas that are equally convenient from a transportation perspective. To attract these customers, businesses must offer a competitive advantage like price, quality, or service. It also helps if the downtown has multiple desirable businesses or attractions so that a customer has more reasons to make the trip to a downtown.

As shown in the maps of drive times, large portions of the customer base for Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex overlap. Essex has a slightly larger customer base by geography, but Manchester's is bigger by population (see later sections). The overlaps of the customer base are important when thinking about how to strengthen both downtowns without excess competition. That is one reason collaboration between the towns is so important.

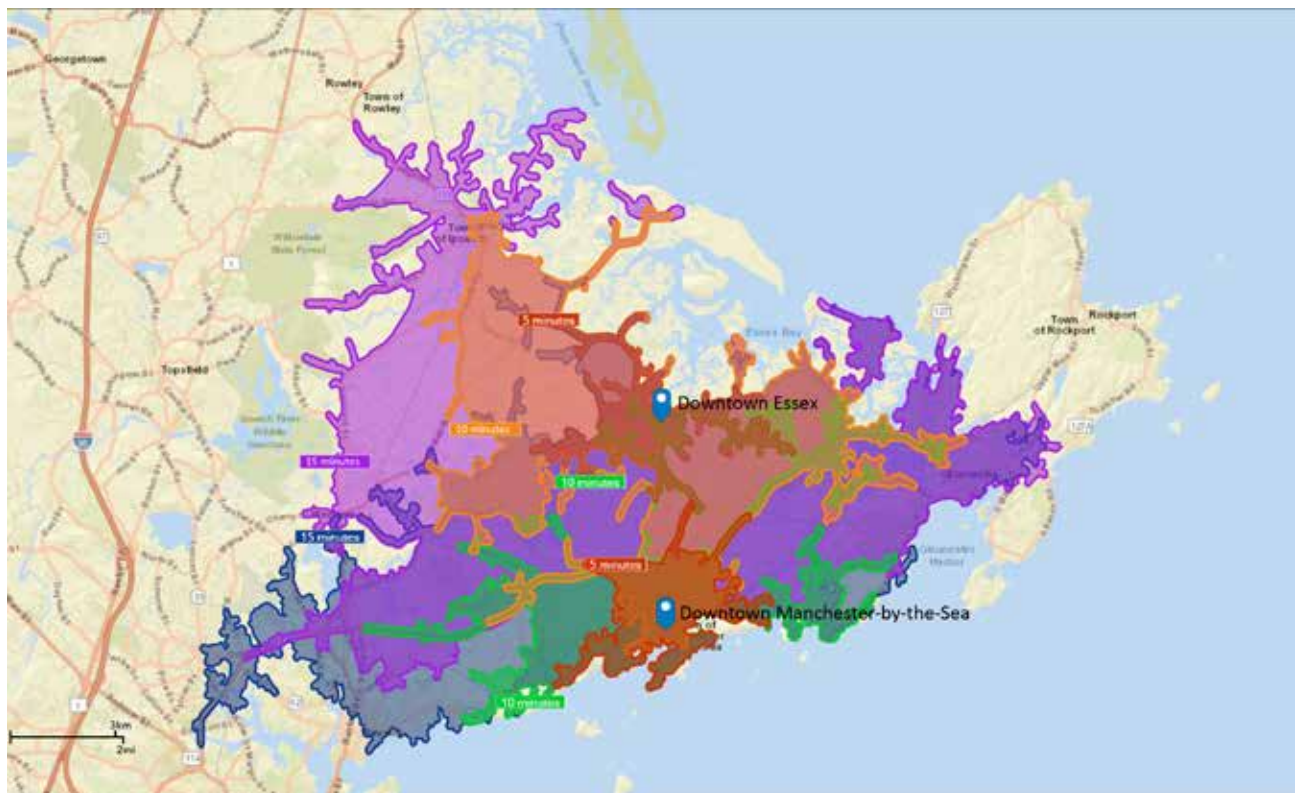


**5, 10 and 15 minute drive times from the center of downtown Essex**  
**Source: ESRI Business Analyst**





5, 10 and 15 minute drive times from the center of downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea  
Source: ESRI Business Analyst



5, 10 and 15 minute drive times showing both downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea  
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

## POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

The population within 5 minute drive of downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea is almost two-and-a-half times the population within 5 minutes of downtown Essex (4,210 vs 1,697). Within a 10 minute drive from the downtowns, the customer base is about 2,500 people larger for Essex than Manchester (15,265 compared to 12,679). At 15 minutes, Manchester-by-the-Sea's customer base is almost 10,000 people larger than Essex's (68,644 vs 59,889). At this distance, both Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea's customer bases are reaching into Gloucester and Beverly, while Essex's also reaches into Ipswich.

It is worth noting that the population does not scale evenly for each time increment. In other words, Essex's customer base at 15 minutes is not three times larger than the customer base at 5 minutes. It is 35 times larger.

This reinforces a basic point that we heard from a number of business people throughout the RRP process—both downtowns serve local residents, but they depend on visitors to make a profit or even to remain open.

## AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age distribution of a customer base gives us clues into what kinds of businesses customers may want to patronize and also provides a window into the future of the community. The customer bases for both communities are older than the population of Essex County as a whole. Of the geographies, the median age is highest (50.9) within 5 minutes of Manchester-by-the-Sea. Within the age bands, the most striking difference is that downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea has a low population of 25-34 year olds. At 6%, it is half of the average for Essex County (12%). This may reflect the high cost

	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester			Essex County
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	
2010 Total Households	624	5,716	23,146	1,709	4,384	25,599	285,956
2021 Total Households	679	6,029	23,889	1,807	4,542	26,615	298,439
2021 Total Population	1,697	15,265	59,889	4,210	12,679	68,644	781,856
2021 Average Household Size	2.50	2.49	2.40	2.33	2.49	2.40	2.56

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester			Essex County
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	
Age 0-19	342 (20%)	3232 (21%)	12785 (21%)	880 (21%)	2964 (23%)	15014 (22%)	182188 (23%)
Age 20-24	103 (6%)	781 (5%)	3750 (6%)	154 (4%)	1193 (9%)	5222 (8%)	46877 (6%)
Age 25-34	191 (11%)	1547 (10%)	5984 (10%)	268 (6%)	920 (7%)	7410 (11%)	96161 (12%)
Age 35-44	167 (10%)	1589 (10%)	6318 (11%)	467 (11%)	1156 (9%)	7182 (10%)	93303 (12%)
Age 45-54	209 (12%)	1935 (13%)	7662 (13%)	578 (14%)	1614 (13%)	8538 (12%)	101894 (13%)
Age 55-64	309 (18%)	2649 (17%)	9831 (16%)	748 (18%)	2070 (16%)	10593 (15%)	112900 (14%)
Age 65-74	224 (13%)	2083 (14%)	7721 (13%)	653 (16%)	1663 (13%)	8293 (12%)	84637 (11%)
Age 75-84	108 (6%)	991 (6%)	3864 (6%)	352 (8%)	795 (6%)	4195 (6%)	42878 (5%)
Age 85+	44 (3%)	459 (3%)	1975 (3%)	111 (3%)	304 (2%)	2199 (3%)	21018 (3%)
2021 Median Age	47.5	47.7	46.5	50.9	45.7	44.3	42

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



of housing and the lack of diversity of housing units near downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. The need to provide more diverse and accessible housing has been the topic of past plans in both communities and was a major focus of both Manchester-by-the-Sea's Master Plan and Essex's 2020 Economic Development Plan.

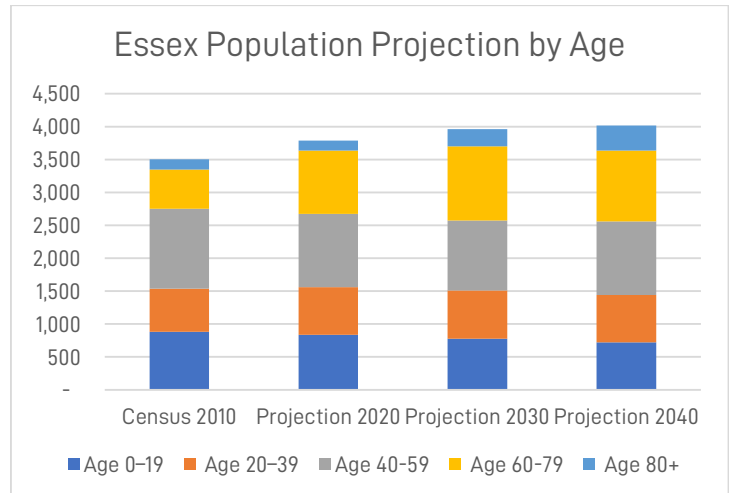
Population projections by the UMass Donahue Institute used 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) data to estimate how the population of Massachusetts communities would change by 2020, 2030, and 2040. These counts serve as the basis for population projections by MassDOT and regional planning agencies. It is worth noting that they are more recent than the population projects shown in the Manchester Housing, Economic, and Land Use Scenario Study.

The projections show that Essex's population will add about 200 people between 2020 and 2040. The older adult age groups (60-79 and 80+) will grow over that time. The younger ages (0-19) will shrink slightly, while the size of the young adult and middle aged groups will remain consistent.

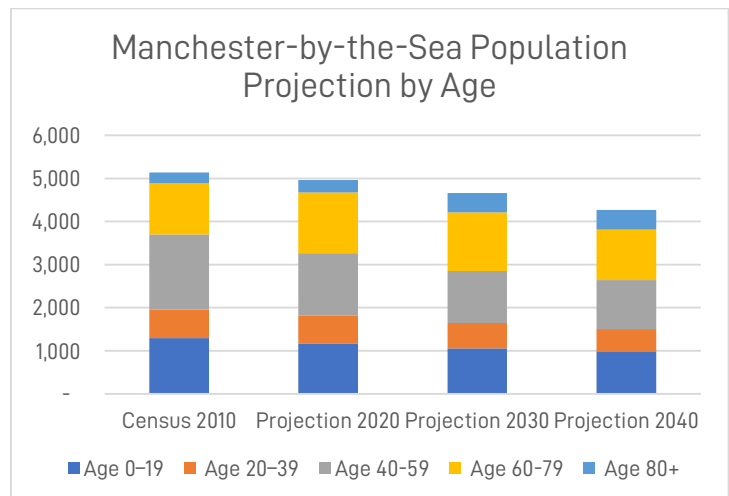
Manchester-by-the-Sea's population is projected to shrink by almost 700 people between 2020 and 2040 with losses in all age groups except 60-79, which will remain essentially flat, and 80+, which will double in size.

If the population projections bear out, the implication for both communities is that businesses may want to focus on serving older adults in coming decades and that both communities need to do more to bolster their young adult populations to balance out the older population. Manchester-by-the-Sea in particular needs to make efforts to prevent its potential loss of population.

It is worth noting, that the pandemic may have disrupted the age composition of households in both towns. There is anecdotal evidence that many suburban communities have seen an increase in population, particularly in families, who have moved out of urban areas. Strong demand in the local housing market may be further evidence of this shift.



Source: UMass Donahue Institute Population Projections, Vintage 2018

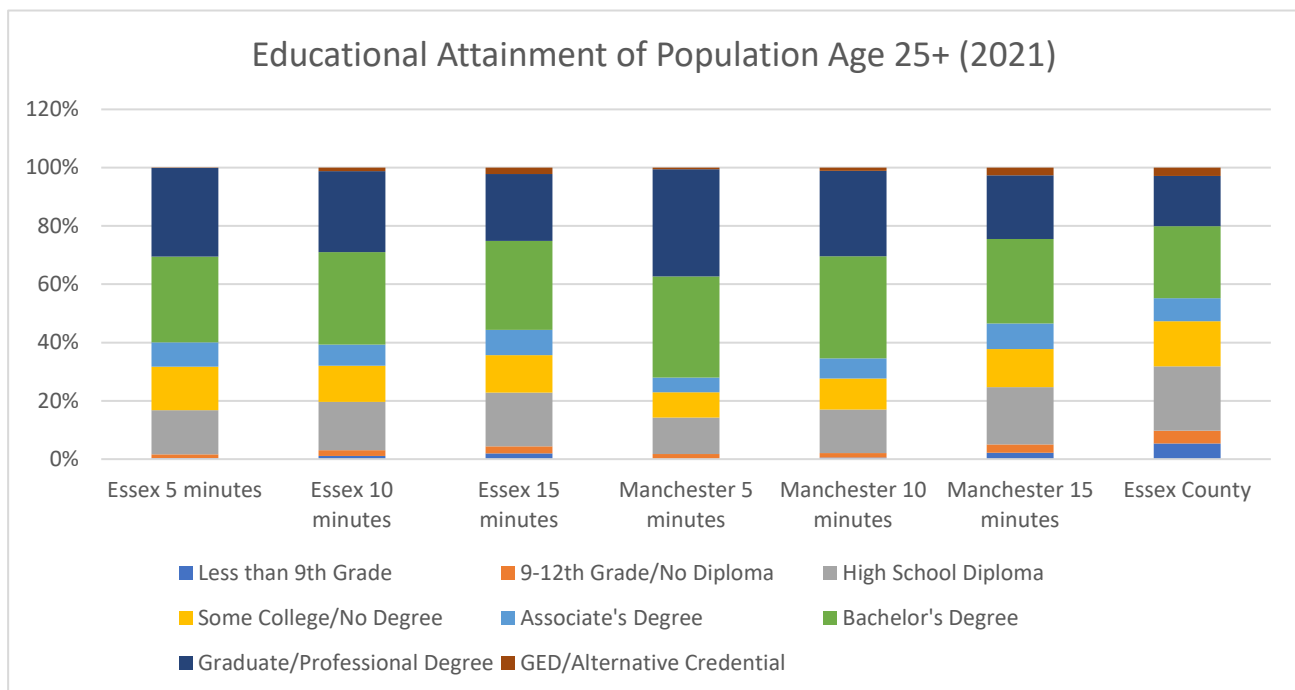


Source: UMass Donahue Institute Population Projections, Vintage 2018

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Both communities have a highly educated population, with significantly more people with a bachelor's degree or graduate/professional degree than Essex County as a whole. The population within a five minute drive time from Manchester-by-the-Sea is the most highly educated of the comparison geographies; over 70% of them have a bachelor's degree or higher. Generally, people with a higher education level earn and spend more, but there are some variations between groups regarding how they allocate that spending. For example, less educated

groups spend a greater percentage of their income on food at home, while higher income groups spend a larger percentage on food away from home and entertainment.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Educational Attainment of 2021 Population Age 25+	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester			Essex County
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	
Less than 9th Grade	4	128	863	0	49	1,062	29,818
9-12th Grade/No Diploma	17	221	1,060	58	127	1,418	24,403
High School Diploma	189	1,859	8,006	397	1,278	9,497	121,610
Some College/No Degree	187	1,398	5,551	274	906	6,291	86,042
Associate's Degree	105	817	3,746	159	584	4,248	43,514
Bachelor's Degree	367	3,569	13,235	1,103	2,984	14,066	136,558
Graduate/Professional Degree	380	3,126	9,937	1,167	2,504	10,557	95,049
GED/Alternative Credential	2	136	955	18	91	1,270	15,797

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

## HOUSING

The occupancy characteristics of housing units are relatively consistent across the geographic areas, with about 2/3 of units owner occupied, a little less than 1/3 renter occupied, and about 6-8% vacant units.

Previous plans for Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea have stressed that housing affordability and the lack of housing diversity are major issues in both communities. Median home prices vary depending on the data source and the specifics of properties that sold within the time period for the data. The 2021 median home price within five minutes of the downtowns is \$667,989 for Essex and \$860,931 for Manchester-by-the-Sea (ESRI Business Analyst). In any case, it is likely that home prices in Manchester-by-the-Sea are near the top ten among communities statewide, while Essex's home prices are within about the top 50 among communities statewide.

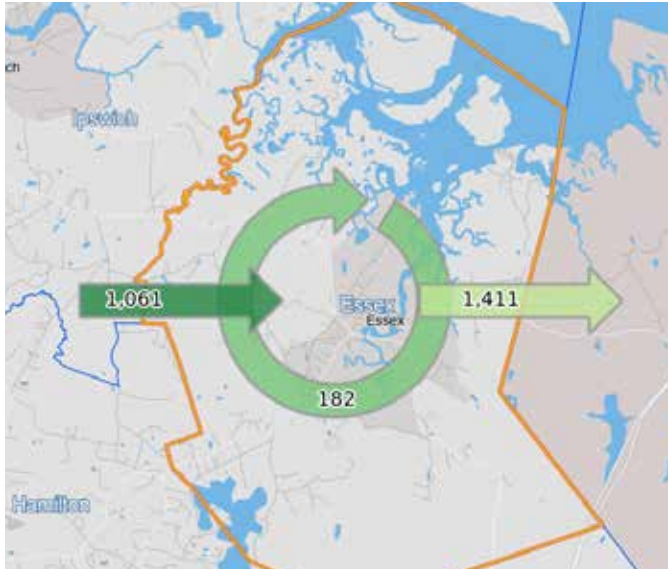
In addition to making it difficult to attract and retain young people and employees for businesses, high home expenses can be a drag on spending even for those lucky enough to have housing. Households who spend more than 30% of their income on housing are termed "cost-burdened." 32% of households in Manchester-by-the-Sea and 45% of households in Essex are cost-burdened.



**Top: A recent housing development in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. Bottom: historic houses in downtown Essex**  
Source: Dodson & Flinker

Variable	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester			Essex County
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	
2021 Owner Occupied Housing Units	476	4,212	16,010	1,263	3,344	17,037	189,240
2021 Renter Occupied Housing Units	203	1,818	7,879	545	1,198	9,577	109,199
2021 Vacant Housing Units	42	508	2,086	153	416	2,077	21,569
2026 Owner Occupied Housing Units	501	4,405	16,575	1,318	3,452	17,636	196,564
2026 Renter Occupied Housing Units	200	1,753	7,824	529	1,157	9,572	107,920
2026 Vacant Housing Units	41	515	2,102	149	410	2,071	21,426

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Worker Inflow and Outflow in Essex	Count	Percent
Employed in Essex	1,243	100.0
Employed in Essex but Living Outside	1,061	85.4
Employed and Living in Essex	182	14.6
Living in Essex	1,593	100.0
Living in Essex but Employed Outside	1,411	88.6
Living and Employed in Essex	182	11.4

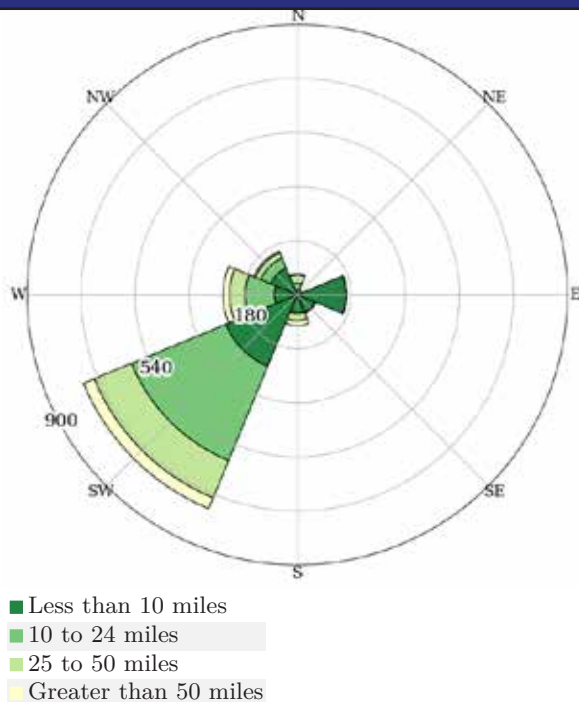
## TRAVELING TO WORK, ESSEX

Of the 1,243 workers employed in Essex, only 182 live in town, while 1,061 local jobs are filled by people who commute from out of town. 1,411 Essex residents, meanwhile, commute to work elsewhere. The graph below shows the industries that Essex residents work in versus the number of jobs per industry in the town. Accommodations and Food Services, for example, employs 415 workers in Essex, while only 155 Essex residents are employed in that industry. By contrast, 251 Essex residents are employed in Health Care and Social Assistance with only 36 jobs in the town.

Essex residents who work outside of town, have slightly longer commute times (31.3 minutes) than the average commute for Essex County (30.4) or Massachusetts (30.2). The largest commuting cohort travels southeast to work towards Beverly, Salem, Danvers, Peabody and beyond to Boston. A smaller cohort heads east toward Gloucester. 47% travel less than 10 miles, but 30% travel 10 to 24 miles, and 15% travel 25 miles or more.

The 1,061 people who work in town but live elsewhere provide a customer base for local businesses. The 182 Essex residents who also work in town will likely take advantage of local goods and services to save a trip. However, the nearly 89% of residents who leave town every day for work are likely shopping and visiting restaurants on their way home. This reduces the effective customer base for businesses in downtown Essex.

## Commute Distance and Direction for Essex Residents



## Number of Workers by Industry

Public Administration	61	33
Other Services (excluding Public...)	79	67
Accommodation and Food Services	155	415
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	54	16
Health Care and Social Assistance	251	36
Educational Services	177	124
Administration & Support, Waste...	77	119
Management of Companies and...	38	0
Professional, Scientific, and Technical...	152	41
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	19	10
Finance and Insurance	79	14
Information	56	8
Transportation and Warehousing	35	48
Retail Trade	160	76
Wholesale Trade	51	18
Manufacturing	155	170
Construction	113	153
Utilities	8	2
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas...	0	0
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and...	8	3

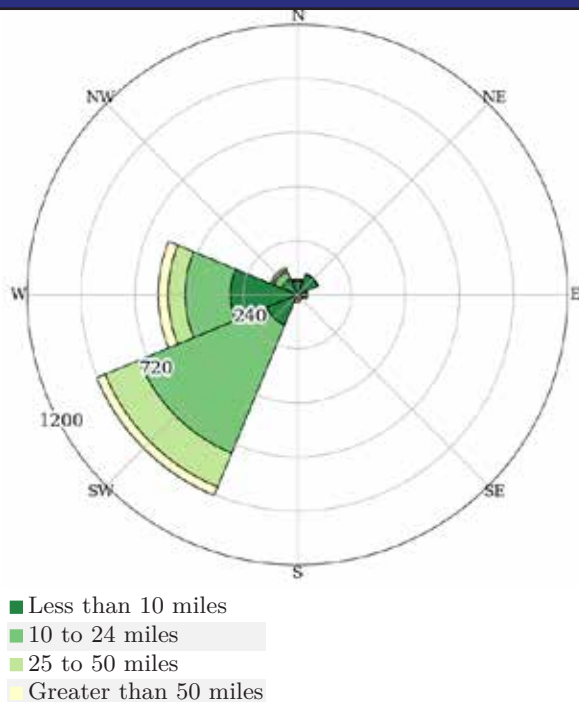
■ Live in Essex ■ Work in Essex

Source (Top, Middle, Bottom, Right): Census on the Map, 2018



Worker Inflow and Outflow in Manchester	Count	Percent
Employed in Manchester	1,451	100.0%
Employed and Living in Manchester	208	14.3%
Employed in Manchester but Living Outside	1,243	85.7%
Living in Manchester	1,987	100.0%
Living and Employed in Manchester	208	10.5%
Living in Manchester but Employed Outside	1,779	89.5%

#### Commute Distance and Direction for Manchester Residents



Source (Top, Middle, Bottom, Right): Census on the Map, 2018

#### TRAVELING TO WORK, MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

Of the 1,451 workers employed in Manchester-by-the-Sea, only 208 live in town, while 1,243 local jobs are filled by people who commute from out of town. 1,179 Manchester-by-the-Sea residents, meanwhile, commute to work elsewhere. The graph below shows the industries that Manchester-by-the-Sea residents work in versus the number of jobs per industry in the town. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, for example, employs 362 workers in Manchester, while only 84 Manchester residents are employed in that industry. By contrast, 321 Manchester residents are employed in Health Care and Social Assistance with only 101 jobs in the town.

Manchester residents who work outside of town, have longer commute times (36.9 minutes) than the average commute for Essex County (30.4) or Massachusetts (30.2).

As with Essex, the largest commuting cohort travels southeast or east towards Beverly, Salem, Danvers, Peabody and beyond to Boston, with smaller cohorts heading to Essex or Gloucester. 37.5% travel less than 10 miles, 43.4% travel 10 to 24 miles, and 19% travel 25 miles or more.

The 1,243 people who work in town but live elsewhere provide a customer base for local businesses. The 208 Manchester-by-the-Sea residents who also work in town will likely take advantage of local goods and services to save a trip. However, the nearly 90% of residents who leave town every day for work, are likely shopping and visiting restaurants on their way home. This reduces the effective customer base for businesses in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea.

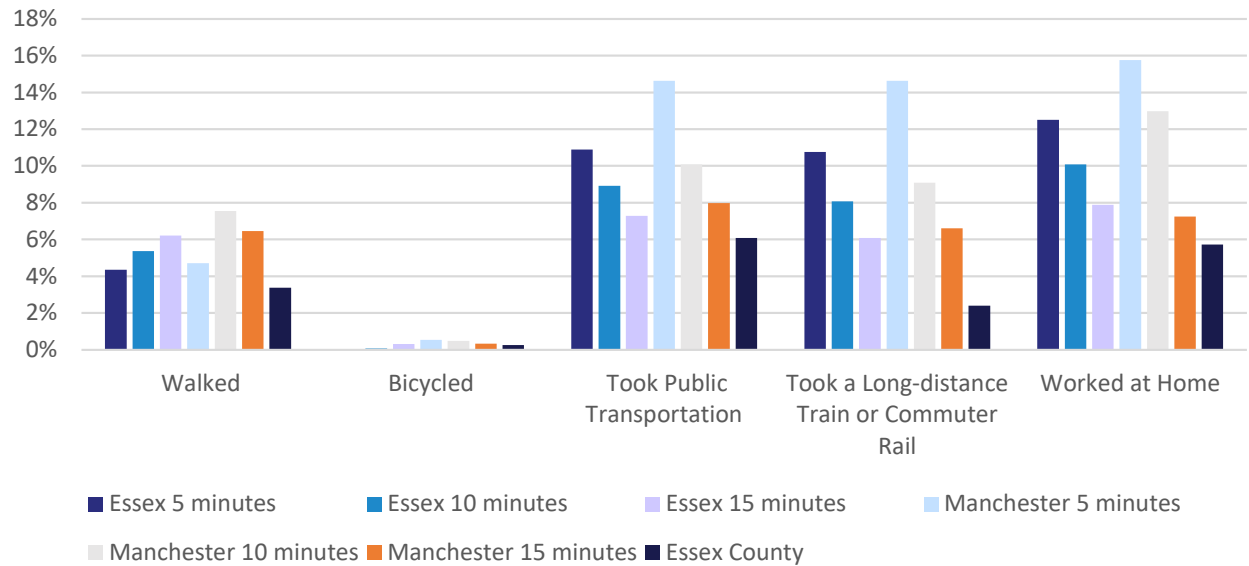
#### Number of Workers by Industry

Public Administration	98	53
Other Services (excluding Public...)	80	50
Accommodation and Food Services	170	100
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	84	362
Health Care and Social Assistance	321	101
Educational Services	248	359
Administration & Support, Waste...	82	51
Management of Companies and Enterprises	34	0
Professional, Scientific, and Technical...	226	84
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	50	20
Finance and Insurance	128	57
Information	90	18
Transportation and Warehousing	63	0
Retail Trade	209	178
Wholesale Trade	70	25
Manufacturing	117	25
Construction	91	117
Utilities	8	9
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	0
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4	2

■ Live in Manchester ■ Work in Manchester



## Commute Mode for Workers 16+ (other than Car, Truck, Vans) (2019)



Source: ACS Five-year Estimate, 2015-2019 via ESRI Business Analyst

### COMMUTE MODE

Like many small towns, the vast majority of commuters in Manchester and Essex travel by car, truck or van to work. That said, compared to Essex County, workers within 5, 10 and 15 minute drives of the downtowns have relatively high rates of walking to work, taking public transportation, taking commuter rail, or working from home.

The workers within 5 minutes of each downtown who walk to work or work at home are a small but strong customer base for the downtowns. These people are out on foot or home during the day and

so are more available to patronize local businesses. The percentage of people working at home has likely increased during the pandemic, which may open new opportunities for downtown businesses.

Workers who take commuter rail are also an important customer base for Manchester-by-the-Sea.

	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester			Essex County
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	
2019 Workers 16+ Walked	30	368	1,745	88	438	2,100	12,796
2019 Workers 16+ Bicycled	0	5	88	10	28	106	943
2019 Workers 16+ Took Public Transportation	75	611	2,048	274	585	2,594	23,035
2019 Workers 16+ Took a Long-distance Train or Commuter Rail	74	553	1,706	274	528	2,153	9,060
2019 Workers 16+ Worked at Home	86	690	2,216	295	753	2,356	21,707

	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester		
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
2021 Total Daytime Population	1,791	15,482	59,983	4,230	11,685	69,718

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

## DAYTIME POPULATION

Daytime population estimates give a sense of how many people are within range of a downtown to support local businesses during the day. These estimates are particularly important for businesses like lunch restaurants and cafes that require a daytime patron base. The daytime population within 5 minutes of Downtown Manchester is almost twice that of Downtown Essex, while Essex has a larger daytime population within 10 minutes.

## TRANSPORTATION AS A SOURCE OF CUSTOMERS

Customers are much more likely to patronize businesses if they are passing by anyway. That is why foot traffic and vehicle traffic volumes are a key measure of the economic potential of a downtown. There is no data available for foot traffic in Essex or Manchester. Motor vehicle traffic volumes have been measured in several locations. Counts for Essex were downloaded from the MassDOT Traffic Count Portal and a traffic study for the bridge repair project. Counts for Manchester-by-the-Sea were collected from the Manchester-by-the-Sea police department and adjusted to convert them to Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) which represents the total number of trips past a given point over the course of a year, divided by 365.

### Essex, AADT:

- Main St at the Causeway bridge, 2019: 14,357
- Route 22 south of Essex St, 2019: 5,652

### Manchester-by-the-Sea, AADT:

- Pine Street, near #6, 2016 count adjusted for growth: 3,029
- Beach Street at Old Neck, 2019: 2,830
- Central Street, near #40, 2020: 6,079
- Union Street, near #8, 2021: 6,736

Overall, traffic counts in Manchester-by-the-Sea's downtown are moderate. They indicate a downtown that is not overwhelmed with the noise and disruption of cars, although volumes may be higher during

some times of days than others. There are not enough passing vehicle drivers in Manchester's downtown to attract businesses with an auto-centric model.

Traffic volumes on the Causeway in Essex are significant. Volumes are high enough that passing traffic is likely a significant source of business. There is limited potential to draw auto-oriented businesses, for example, the existing Dunkin Donuts. Participants in Essex cited the passing traffic as a source of customers, especially drivers and bicyclists who are making a day trip on the Essex Scenic Byway.

The bridge on the Causeway is slated for reconstruction. Stakeholders in Essex expressed strong concerns about a potential loss of business resulting from congestion due to the project. Any loss of customers will be especially difficult because the causeway is home to many restaurants and an inn—types of businesses that have been especially hard hit by the pandemic.

Although bicycle traffic counts are not available for the downtowns, participants in the planning process reported more bicyclists in recent years. Reportedly, bicyclists spend more per trip at restaurants than other customers.

Boating is reportedly a significant source of customers in both downtowns.

Improving alternative modes of transportation and attracting enthusiasts of outdoor activities will strengthen the customer base of both downtowns.



Traffic on the Causeway, Essex  
Source: Dodson & Flinker



---

## TAPESTRY MARKET SEGMENTATION

ESRI's Tapestry Market Segmentation divides populations into groups that share similar demographic, spending, and consumer preferences. These Market Segments are sometimes used by businesses to determine whether an area has a customer base that is suitable for their business model.

Four market segments are most common within the customer base areas. Urban Chic is the most common market segment overall. Top Tier appears only in the 5 and 10 minute drive time for downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. Savvy Suburbanites are found in the 15 minute buffer of downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea and the 10 and 15 minute buffers of downtown Essex,

The dominant market segments are briefly described below.

### Urban Chic

- Residents with a sophisticated and exclusive lifestyle
- Half of all households are occupied by married-couples and 30% by singles
- Busy, well-connected, and educated consumers
- Median age is 43 years

### Pleasantville

- Older people, empty nester, and many are still home to adult children
- Single-family homes maintained with dual incomes
- Higher homes values and net worth because of high incomes
- Sports and movie enthusiasts, internet users, love to shop online or in a variety of stores

### Top Tier

- Earn three times more than the US household income
- Highly-educated professionals with corporate career goals

- Income from strong investment portfolio, and many own their businesses
- Lavish homes, high-class lifestyle, charity dinners, shopping at high-end retailers, and music lovers

### Exurbanites

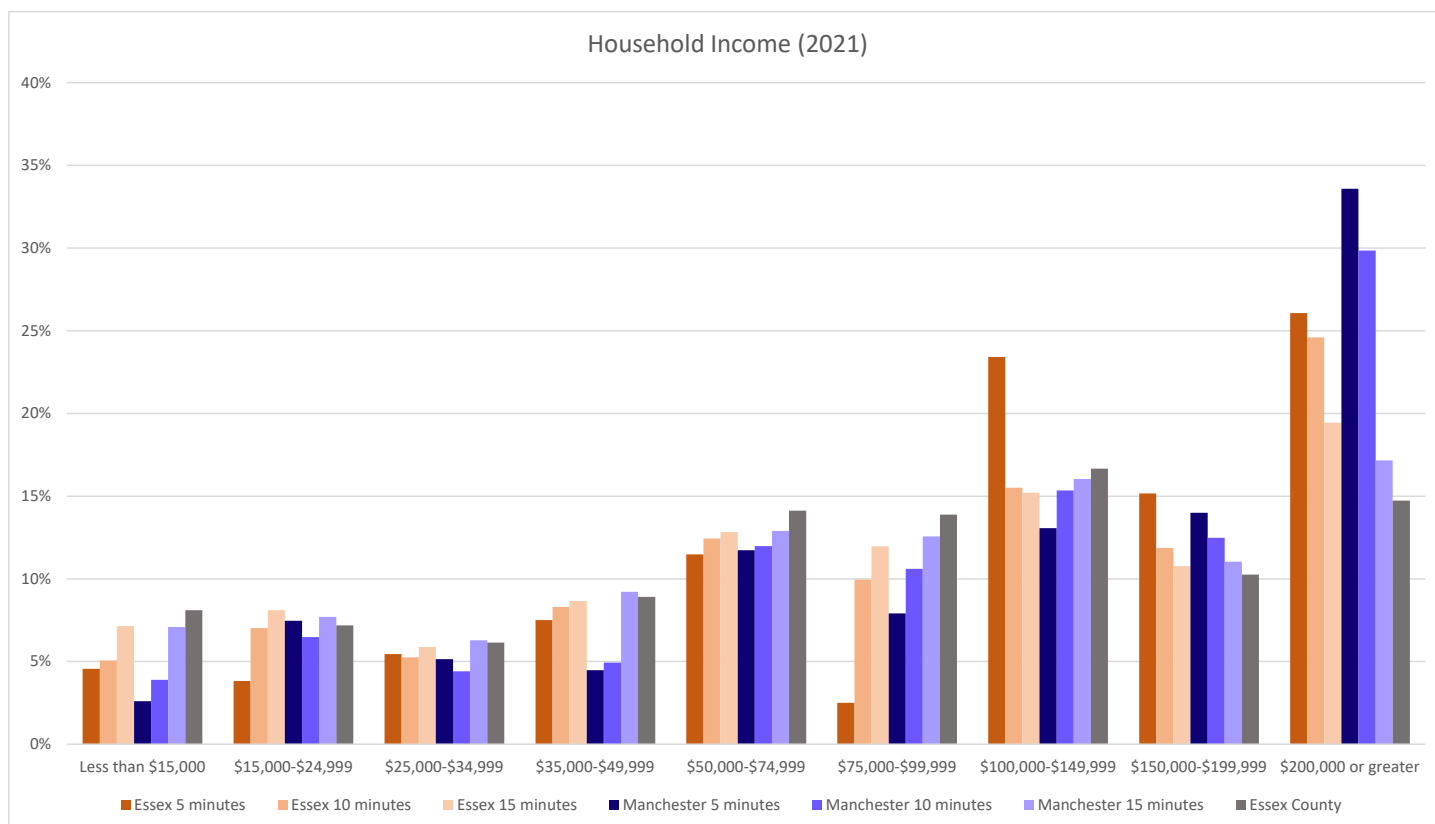
- These residents are now approaching retirement
- Active in their communities, generous donors, and seasoned travelers
- Support arts due to their proximity to large metro centers
- Prefer more expansive home style in less crowded areas. Affluent and urbane lifestyle

### Savvy Suburbanites

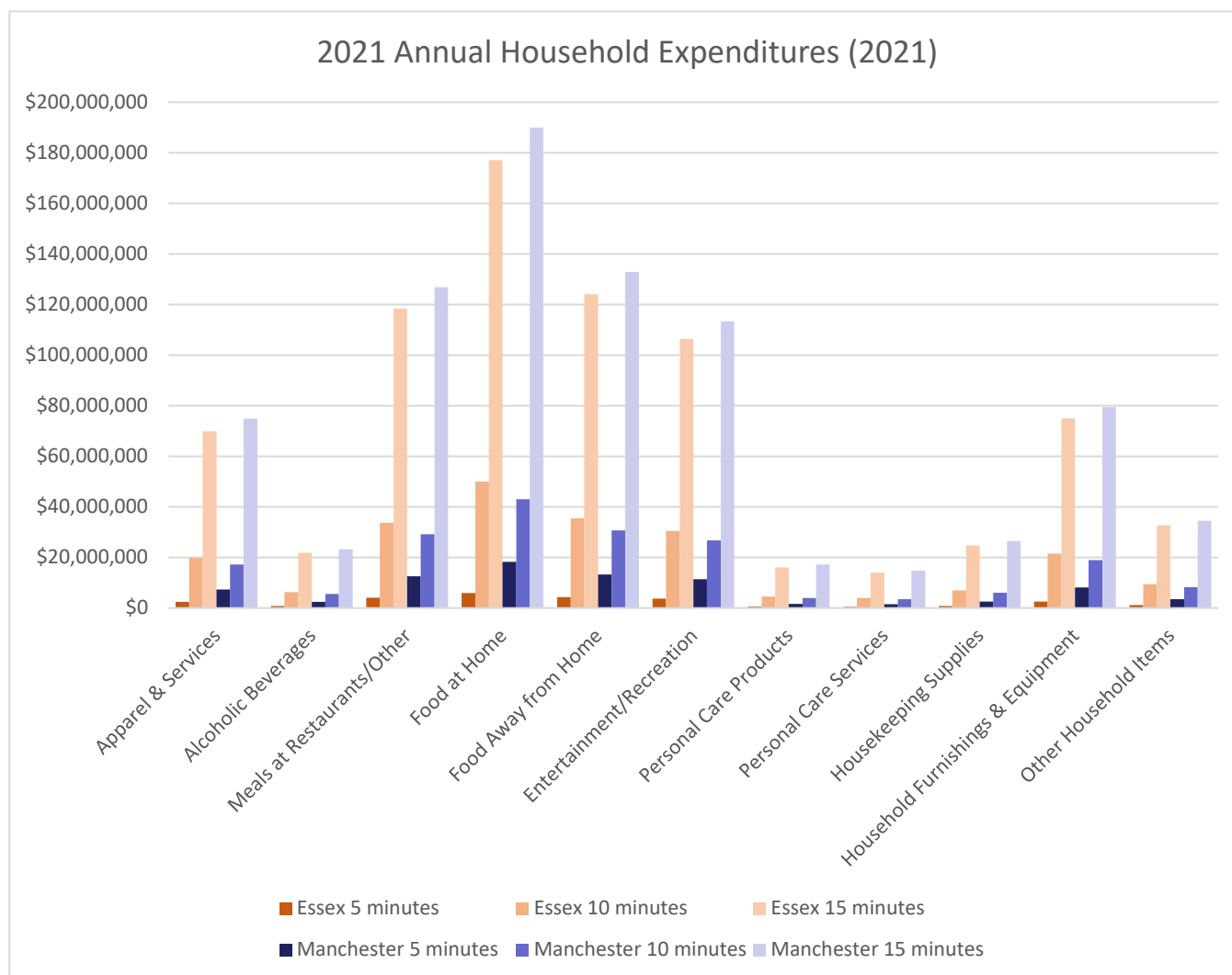
- Well-connected consumers that appreciate technology and make liberal use of it for everything from shopping and banking to staying current and communicating
- Informed shoppers that do their research prior to purchasing and focus on quality
- Gardening and home remodeling are priorities, usually DIY. Riding mowers and power tools are popular, although they also hire contractors for the heavy lifting.
- There is extensive use of housekeeping and personal care services.
- Foodies: They like to cook and prefer natural or organic products.
- Physically fit, residents actively pursue a number of sports, from skiing to golf, and
- Invest heavily in sports gear and exercise equipment

	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester			Essex County
	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	
2021 Median Household Income	\$126,079	\$104,549	\$88,843	\$138,121	\$120,647	\$86,843	\$83,299
2021 Average Household Income	\$164,336	\$149,941	\$131,347	\$189,539	\$174,985	\$125,032	\$117,202
2021 Per Capita Income	\$66,513	\$59,893	\$51,978	\$80,962	\$64,451	\$49,079	\$44,808
2021 Aggregate Income	\$112,872,805	\$914,270,151	\$3,112,926,641	\$340,851,360	\$817,172,805	\$3,368,988,514	\$35,033,330,394
2021 Aggregate Household Income	\$111,583,830	\$903,994,688	\$3,137,736,692	\$342,496,080	\$794,782,000	\$3,327,721,097	\$34,977,581,167
2021 Median Disposable Income	\$96,913	\$79,030	\$66,902	\$103,191	\$93,107	\$65,152	\$62,339
2021 Average Disposable Income	\$110,571	\$100,598	\$90,019	\$120,028	\$113,072	\$86,881	\$82,566
2021 Aggregate Disposable Income	\$75,077,984	\$606,507,054	\$2,150,473,194	\$216,891,493	\$513,571,446	\$2,312,345,415	\$24,640,859,840
2021 Median Net Worth	\$518,974	\$411,197	\$273,698	\$669,844	\$612,845	\$225,932	\$202,867
2021 Average Net Worth	\$2,502,691	\$2,258,130	\$1,879,189	\$2,879,968	\$2,762,555	\$1,618,292	\$1,438,936

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019 via ESRI Business Analyst



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

## INCOME, DISPOSABLE INCOME, AND NET WORTH

Across indicators of income and net worth, the median and average Essex or Manchester-by-the-Sea household earns more and has more to spend than household in Essex County as a whole. Consistent with patterns for educational attainment, the populations within five minutes of each downtown are the best off, with income net worth and disposable income dropping farther away from the downtowns.

Markers of income and wealth are generally higher in Manchester-by-the-Sea than Essex. Within the 5 minute drive time, aggregate disposable income is over \$200 million for Manchester-by-the-Sea and \$75 million for Essex.

That said, the cumulative purchasing power of the larger populations at the 10 or 15 minute travel times dwarfs the differences in income within 5 minutes of the downtowns.

Aggregate disposable income is over \$2 billion within a 15 minute drive of both Manchester and Essex.

The implications for support of business are clear: there is more money within Manchester-by-the-Sea to support its downtown, but for both downtowns the real opportunity lies in drawing in more customers from outside. However, attracting a broader customer base means competing with a greater number of businesses that are spread throughout that 10 or 15 minute drive time.

## ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES

The household budget expenditures shown in the graph above focus primarily on discretionary spending, rather than basics like housing and transportation. These estimates are based on the latest Consumer Expenditure Surveys from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). ESRI Business

Analyst uses the results of these and other data collected by the federal government, which are referenced to income and demographic data, to estimate the annual spending patterns of households with similar characteristics to Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea. This type of analysis is used by businesses to gauge the market for goods and services in a particular community.

understanding of the competition in an area and other factors like available space for businesses and whether the environment in the community would support that kind of business (considering, for example, the community's walkability, parking availability, infrastructure, regulations, etc).

As was described previously in the income section, this data illustrates the scale of difference between the aggregate spending by the smaller customer markets close to the downtowns compared to the aggregate spending of a large population.

The data can be used by prospective businesses or economic development leaders to assess the potential customer base for new endeavors. Obviously, this data needs to be matched with an

	Downtown Essex			Downtown Manchester		
	Essex 5 minutes	Essex 10 minutes	Essex 15 minutes	Manchester 5 minutes	Manchester 10 minutes	Manchester 15 minutes
Annual Budget Expenditures	\$92,028,145	\$752,472,839	\$2,628,576,431	\$281,758,574	\$657,084,644	\$2,798,933,860
Retail Goods	\$26,934,590	\$222,291,449	\$777,395,878	\$82,946,991	\$194,436,407	\$827,035,813
Apparel & Services	\$2,385,370	\$19,800,837	\$69,894,935	\$7,287,303	\$17,146,763	\$74,854,089
Alcoholic Beverages	\$784,133	\$6,323,174	\$21,881,149	\$2,393,690	\$5,550,388	\$23,220,593
Meals at Restaurants/ Other	\$4,124,689	\$33,725,568	\$118,299,242	\$12,544,313	\$29,193,263	\$126,869,852
Food	\$10,327,706	\$85,465,080	\$301,099,663	\$31,431,925	\$73,754,851	\$322,756,127
Food at Home	\$5,982,789	\$50,034,224	\$177,071,648	\$18,209,530	\$43,031,329	\$189,908,088
Food Away from Home	\$4,344,916	\$35,430,856	\$124,028,015	\$13,222,395	\$30,723,523	\$132,848,039
Entertainment/ Recreation	\$3,713,187	\$30,494,900	\$106,426,665	\$11,421,833	\$26,706,482	\$113,339,414
Personal Care Products	\$544,863	\$4,535,804	\$16,022,020	\$1,665,825	\$3,924,233	\$17,176,385
Personal Care Services	\$479,542	\$3,967,628	\$13,943,591	\$1,480,847	\$3,490,440	\$14,731,875
Housekeeping Supplies	\$824,666	\$6,978,946	\$24,761,095	\$2,537,998	\$6,045,672	\$26,470,867
Household Furnishings & Equipment	\$2,611,157	\$21,469,703	\$74,936,274	\$8,079,681	\$18,919,221	\$79,356,294
Other Household Items	\$1,143,795	\$9,391,054	\$32,712,634	\$3,537,895	\$8,278,946	\$34,555,531

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



## Understanding and Evaluating the Physical Environment



*Aerial view of downtown Essex*  
*Source: MassDOT Pictometry*



*Aerial view of downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea*  
*Source: MassDOT Pictometry*

### RRP DATA COLLECTION FRAMEWORK:

The second part of the RRP Data Collection Framework asks "how conducive is the physical environment to meeting the needs and expectations of both businesses and customers?" In order to answer that question, the process applies an assessment approach that divides the physical environment into two equally important elements: the Public Realm, which includes public streets, parks, sidewalks and their associated signs and furnishings; and the Private Realm, primarily the privately-owned buildings and their components, including facades and fenestration, signage and lighting. While they are owned and managed by different entities, the public and private realms are equally important to the downtowns' success as a center of business and community life.

Based on site visits, interviews and analysis of maps and photographs, the following assessment describes each aspect of the public and private realm and assigns a letter grade to summarize its relative strength or weakness. (This framework is adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach, as

published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", authored by Larisa Ortiz (Managing Director, Streetsense) and funded in part by Citi Community Development.)

The assigned grades for each element of the physical environment are based on a shared RRP rubric provided to each of the consultants. Essentially, if the desired element is present and functioning well as part of the downtown, it gets a higher grade. If it is absent or dysfunctional, it gets a lower grade. The point of this assessment is not to assign blame or point out the deficiencies of any particular property, but rather to identify which elements of the physical environment support the needs of businesses and customers and which ones represent opportunities for improvement. By looking at this comprehensively, the process can help identify potential projects or improvements with the greatest impact on the attractiveness and functionality of the downtown environment.



## Highlights from the Physical Environment of the Public Realm Essex

### SIDEWALKS

There are continuous concrete sidewalks along Main Street from Southern Ave to Western Ave, separated from the street by granite curbs. In the center of the study area, however, curbs are absent so that cars can pull into head-in parking at Shea's Riverside Restaurant, CK Pearl and the Marina. Sidewalks are approximately 4-5 feet wide at minimum throughout, with curb ramps and detectable warning strips at intersections to maintain accessibility.

On Martin Street, sidewalk conditions are more irregular, with a curb-separated asphalt sidewalk on the north side from Main Street to Winthrop Street. On the south side of Martin street, there is a continuous asphalt walkway that connects to the library and residential areas to the west, but it varies from a separate sidewalk in front of the library, to a painted strip along the road shoulder from the Fire Station to Main Street. In this area pedestrians must contend with cars pulling across into head-in parking at the Ipswich Bank and the Post Office.

On Eastern Ave there is a continuous sidewalk on the north side of the road that continues the east end of the study area at Farnham's Clam Shack. This appears to be a minimum of 4 feet wide throughout, concrete at the west end changing to asphalt as it runs east, and separated from the road throughout by a granite curb.

Rating: "B" with continuous clean and reasonably well-maintained sidewalks in most of the study area, but with limitations, due to width, on any use other than as a through-way for pedestrians. There is little room in most areas for expanded sidewalk displays or outdoor dining, though there are opportunities in some areas of the public right of way and within the private frontage of many structures.

### STREET TREES AND BENCHES

There are virtually no street trees within the public right of way throughout the study area, other than half dozen oaks and maples along the north side of Martin Street. There are also relatively few trees in the private street frontage that are close enough to the public sidewalks to provide any shade.



*Typical sidewalk and utilities at the south end of Main Street  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*



*Benches and plantings installed as part of previous  
streetscape improvements along the causeway.  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*



There are some benches within part of the study area, for the most part concentrated in the northern half. These include three granite benches in a planted island in front of the Village Restaurant and four granite benches in a small park across from the marina. There are also some Victorian-style steel park benches facing the street on the inside edge of the sidewalk: two in front of the Essex Wine Exchange, two in front of the Brewery, four in front of the parking lot across from CK Pearl, and one more in front of the adjacent small Woodman's parking lot. All of the steel benches were done as part of streetscape improvements that included concrete pads beneath the benches adjacent (contiguous with the sidewalk) and establishment of a plantings to help buffer the parking lots. These include some shrub pines and beach plum as well as some grasses and perennials. They also installed six small flowering trees in the CK Pearl and Woodman's parking lot beds, which appear to be crabapples.

Rating: "C" with very few trees and limited availability of benches for most of the study area.

#### LIGHTING

Street lighting is limited to cobra-head fixtures on utility poles. In the center of the causeway these have been supplemented and/or replaced by flood lights that illuminate the private parking lots adjacent to the street.

Throughout most of the study area, utility poles are placed at the curb line within the sidewalk, narrowing the through-way by 12-18 inches. These carry the standard assortment of high voltage lines, step-down transformers and separate lines connecting the transformers to street lights, homes and businesses. Lower down they also carry thick cable and telephone lines. Throughout the study area the poles and wires detract greatly from the otherwise high scenic and historic character of the area.

Rating: "C" with the tall street lights and parking lot flood lighting providing for general illumination and visibility, but creating an environment that is not supportive of a comfortable pedestrian experience.

#### WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE

There is signage for individual shops, restaurants and other businesses. Some of this is well designed and fabricated from attractive and durable materials, and many of the antique stores have historically-appropriate signage. Woodman's and other restaurants have a variety of signage, for the most part appropriate to the clam shack tradition.

There is no wayfinding signage directing visitors to public parking or other key locations. In the center of the study area there is an information sign/kiosk for the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. This includes a series

of maps, photographs and text describing key features in the region, as well as a panel focusing on locations in Essex. This includes a simple map of downtown Essex with the location of places of interest: the Essex Historical Society and Shipbuilding Museum, Cogswell's Grant, the Historic Essex Walking Tour, and the Essex Clamfest, as well as general info about seafood and dining, arts and culture, nature trails and Essex River recreational opportunities.

Rating: "B" with wayfinding in the study area provided primarily by street signs and signs for individual businesses. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations.

#### ROADBEDS AND CROSSWALKS

Main Street, AKA Route 133, is a busy road carrying East-West traffic across the Essex River and is a classic bottleneck – exacerbated by a right-of-way that narrows to 40 feet in some places. Traffic counts in 2019 were estimated at 14,000-16,000 trips per day, with seasonal adjustment. Paved width between curbs is about 30 feet, with striping (on average) for two 11-foot travel lanes and two 4 foot shoulders/bike lanes. Many of the historic structures are close to the edge of the right of way, leaving little room for widening, if that were deemed appropriate. There is limited on-street parking throughout most of the study area, with most of it at the northern end of the downtown, between Martin Street and Western Ave.

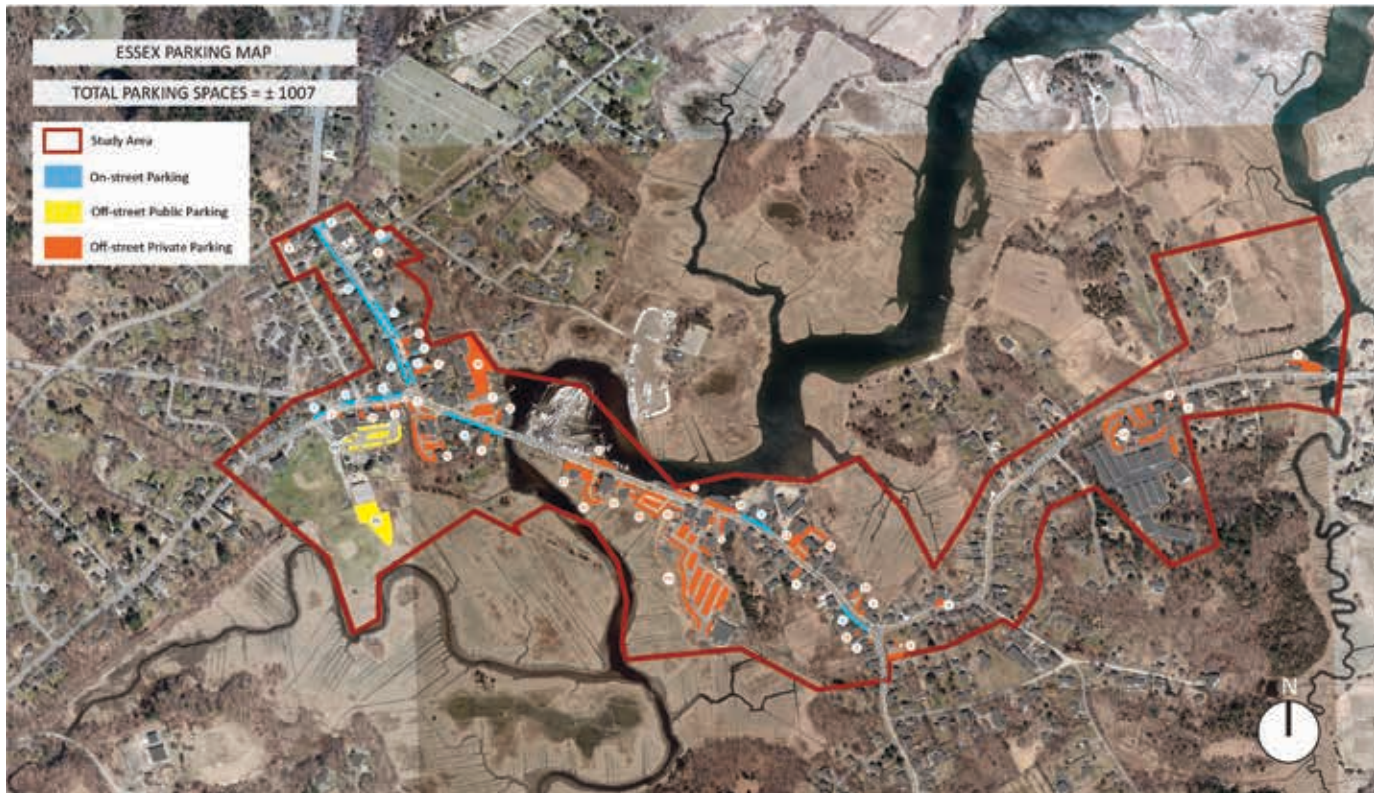
Crosswalks have been laid out in key locations, starting at the East end of the study area at J.T. Farnham's, at Grove Street, Southern Ave, at Woodman's and CK Pearl, at Willow Court, Martin Street, the Post Office and Pickering Street, and at the First Congregational Church and Spring Street.

Crosswalks are clearly marked with diagonal striping, and there are curb ramps and detectable warning strips for accessibility.

Rating: "B" with roads designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with relatively limited crosswalks for pedestrians.



## PARKING



*Parking Inventory Map for the Town of Essex  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*

There are about 1,007 parking spaces in the study area, with a mix of on-street parking and public and private off-street parking.

Private off-street parking is distributed throughout the study area, with most businesses having at least some off-street parking. Large lots at Woodman's and the South Village Center shopping center have a disproportionate percentage of the parking spaces, with 290 and 105 spaces respectively. Woodman's shares some of its parking with Shea's Restaurant.

Public off-street parking is located behind businesses fronting on Martin Street to the east of the Town Hall and extending south of the tennis courts. The center spots in this lot are used for boat trailer parking seasonally. There are also a small number of public off-street spaces at the boat launch adjacent to the Shipbuilding Museum. Both public parking locations are difficult to find, and their rules are likely unclear for visitors. There is a pedestrian path from the parking lot behind Martin Street that runs up several flights of stairs to emerge next to the Village Restaurant. This pedestrian connection

is convenient but not handicapped accessible and can be dangerous in winter months. Many visitors are probably unaware of the pedestrian path.

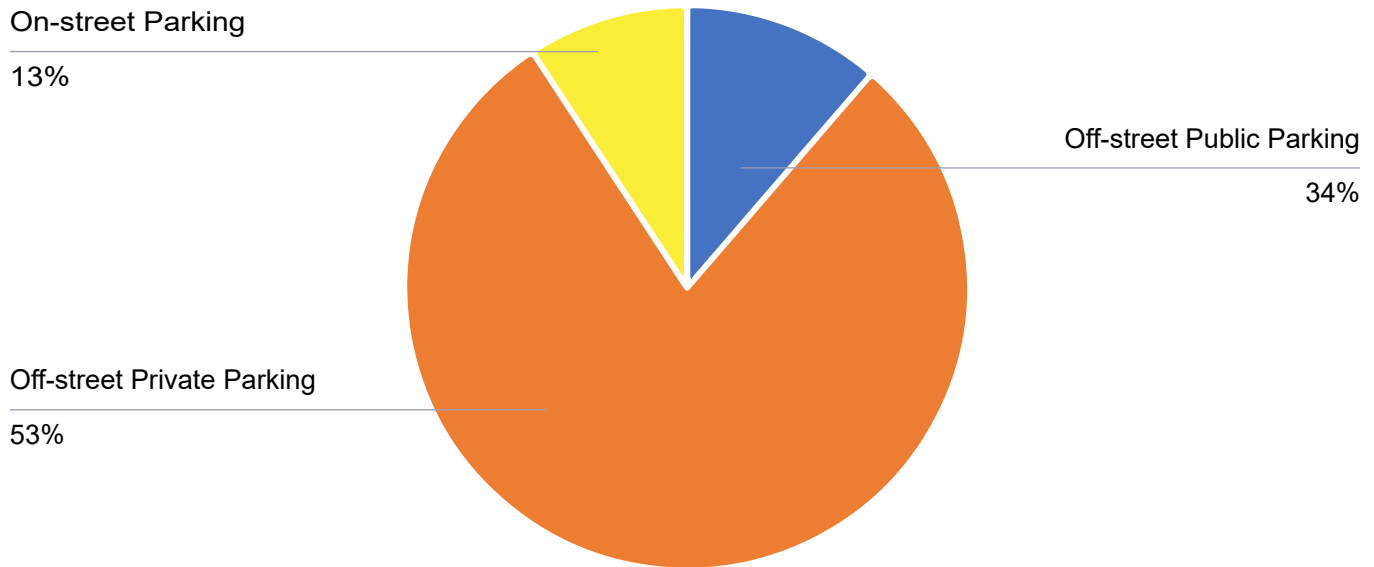
On-street parking is prohibited on much of the causeway, arguably where it is needed most, because MassDOT does not allow it and the current configuration of the highway with breakdown lanes on both sides does not provide space for on-street parking.

Nelson-Nygaard completed a parking study for downtown Essex in 2016. It included the following recommendations:

### Maximize Existing Parking Resources

- Formalize on street parking
- Increase efficiency of public off street parking
- Use time limits and clear signage to regulate parking

## Distribution of Parking Spaces in Essex



*Distribution of Parking Spaces in Essex  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*

### Support Downtown Business Through Sharing

- Initiate public and private shared parking agreements
- Encourage shared parking between businesses
- Explore opportunities of valet parking and loading

### Enhance Downtown Experience

- Provide better parking information and signage
- Strategically locate crosswalks and improve safety
- Install missing sidewalks and minimize driveway cuts
- Improve event parking management during summer.

The recommendation to formalize on-street parking was implemented, albeit in a modified manner. The town "reverse-striped" on-street parking. In other words, locations where parking are prohibited were striped.

As noted in the Nelson-Nygaard study, there are numerous locations in downtown Essex with large curb cuts. The stretch of parking on Martin Street



*Stretch of Martin Street area that is lacking a true sidewalk with curb. Cars back across the striped pedestrian area.  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*

in front of the Post Office and Village Centre building is particularly problematic. There the street lacks a curb and sidewalk entirely, with only painted white lines to indicate where pedestrians should walk. In this location, it is worth exploring whether a sidewalk can be established on private property adjacent to the building fronts, with formalized angled parking straddling public and private property. This would eliminate conflicts between cars backing out and pedestrians and provide a continuous safe sidewalk.





Total open space: 33.725 acres, 1,469,061 SF

*Open Space near downtown Essex*  
*Source: MassGIS, Dodson & Flinker*



*Views of the Great Marsh from the causeway are one of the defining elements of downtown Essex*  
*Source: Dana Menon*



## Highlights from the Physical Environment of the Private Realm Essex

### WINDOWS

There are about 55 businesses fronting on principal streets in the study area, within a broad variety of building types. These range from a hot dog stand in a shed to huge restaurant facilities, and from home businesses in the side of a house to large shopping centers and marina operations.

Façade treatments are equally varied, and while there are 7 or 8 traditional "main street shopfronts," most of the businesses are in either converted homes, sheds, barns or some manner of eclectic restaurant or waterfront structure. Many of the older residential and shop-front structures are right on the sidewalk, but many uses are setback behind parking lots. Most of the restaurants and waterfront uses turn their backs to the sidewalk and street frontage, and open up to the river and marshes in the rear with dining room

windows and outdoor decks.

Rating: "C" with more than 25% of the storefronts and other businesses having limited transparency.

### OUTDOOR DISPLAY/DINING

Only about 10-12 of the businesses in the study area actively engage the public pedestrian realm with window displays or outdoor displays. Many of the restaurants have outdoor dining, but few do so on the public sidewalk: most open up on the opposite side facing the marshes and river, or have terrace seating on the side of the building.

Rating: "C" with relatively small number of storefronts creating active window displays and fostering spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks and other shared spaces.



*A house long-ago converted to a storefront with outdoor display area*  
Source: Dodson & Flinker



*Renovations were recently completed at 166 Main Street*  
Source: Dodson & Flinker



## SIGNAGE

About half the businesses in the study area have attractive, well-designed and durable signage. Many of these incorporate the logo or other brand identity of the shop or restaurant they identify. Many have signs in a traditional location above a window or doorway facing the street frontage, as well as projecting signs or wall signs that are visible to pedestrians walking down the sidewalk. Another third have signs that are functional, but worn out or poorly design, and the remainder have little or no signage.

Rating: "C" with more than 25% of businesses lacking effective signage to communicate the name of the business or type of product/services being offered.

## AWNING

Relatively few (about 25%) of the shopfront in the study area employ awnings, and relatively few of those are fully-functional, retractable awnings. The majority of buildings have some kind of covering for the entrance, including porches, arcades or recessed entry. This probably reflects the mix of architectural styles and the relatively low number of south-facing facades.

Rating: "C" with about 25% of properties in the study area having awnings, and few of those fully functional.

## FACADE

Many of the buildings and shopfronts within the study area are well-maintained and attractive. In the west end of the study area there are a large number of intact historic structures representing Essex's growth as a shipbuilding center. A number of homes were evidently modified to create shopfronts, and these remain as shops and antique stores. There is a similarly interesting mix of historic residential and commercial structures in the east side of the study area near Southern Avenue.

The more industrial core of the study area evolved from ship building and related uses to restaurants and tourism, and in the course of that process many businesses kept the tradition of working waterfront sheds and clam shacks. Newer buildings such as the brewery have put a modern spin on the working waterfront aesthetic. The broad range of periods and styles makes it difficult to identify a single theme, other than "waterfront eclectic."

Overall, the diverse assemblage of buildings in the study area creates a lively visual environment, with the exception of the larger buildings along the causeway where there are long stretches of parking and blank facades facing the street.

Rating: "C" with more than 25% of properties requiring significant façade improvements, including power washing, painting and structural enhancements. (Note that a number of buildings in the study area are currently undergoing renovations.)



*The causeway at night*  
Source: Dana Menon

## LIGHTING

Most buildings are close to the street and rely on street lighting to provide for general illumination and security along the street frontage. Many have some modest lighting at doorways, small post lamps, etc.

Rating: "C" with more than 25% of storefronts lacking effective lighting to enliven the corridor after dark.



*Eastern Avenue at night*  
Source: Dana Menon



## Highlights from the Physical Environment of the Public Realm Manchester-by-the-Sea

### SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks are continuous on both sides of the street throughout the study area, and separated from the street by granite curbs. More than 75% of the sidewalks in the study area are clean, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities. Reflecting the historic context, sidewalks are relatively narrow, with little room in many areas for more than comfortable building entry and through-way space.

Handicapped accessibility is good overall, with curb ramps and clear crosswalk patterns throughout. The upper part of downtown lacks detectable warning strips in some locations. Sidewalks in the upper part of downtown are a mix of concrete and asphalt. Some areas are in poor repair, especially Central Street west of the Town Hall. Overall the upper area shows that the Town has made incremental repairs and improvements. The area would benefit from a holistic streetscape improvement project.

More recent streetscape improvements along Beach Street and Summer Street are evident in the better conditions of sidewalks, which are universally concrete, and the improved crosswalk design, including concrete block pavers for contrast and detectable warning strips at curb ramps. Curb extensions at the Beach Street/Summer Street intersection narrow the width of the crosswalk and help to demarcate it from the parking lanes.

Rating: "A" with more than 75% of the sidewalks in the study area clean, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities. The only drawback is the width of many of the sidewalks limits the use of the street frontage for display, dining, street trees and furnishings and sidewalk conditions are poor in some locations. As has been discussed during previous projects the only way to increase sidewalk width in this historic context would be to eliminate parking spaces.

### STREET TREES AND BENCHES

There is a fairly continuous planting of street trees along Beach Street and Summer Street, though some of the older specimens planting in narrow tree belt or tree pits show signs of stress and decline. Several

larger oak, ash and locust trees are doing well where they have more soil volume—in front of the post office and fenced next to the Richdale service station at the corner of Summer and Beach Streets. Narrow tree strip/planters along Summer Street have younger trees that appear to be surviving, and the planter appears to be a continuous trench, a best practices, which will allow for some root expansion.

Union Street is shaded by some lovely large trees: not in the right-of-way, but rather in private front yards and the front lawn of the library, First Parish Church and the green in front of Town Hall. There is little room for additional tree plantings within the right-of-way, though there are opportunities to enhance the streetscape with additional trees along the private frontage. There are no benches evident throughout the study area except for the Town Hall park. There are some Adirondack chairs and a separate table and chairs in the front yard of the library.

Rating: "B" with reasonable number of trees throughout the study area, but limited benches.



*Decorative lighting and tree plantings on Summer Street*  
Source: Dodson & Flinker





*A group sign board identifies businesses on Elm Street  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*



*Crosswalks connect sidewalks at the south end of the village to the park  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*

## LIGHTING

Lighting throughout the study area is primarily by means of cobra-head style streetlights along Bridge, Central, Union, Elm and School Streets. These appear to be about 30 feet high, and fitted with LED luminaires. On Beach Street and Summer Street, streetscape improvements included a custom-designed historical post light, and there are no additional cobra-type fixtures.

The historic lights reportedly have been somewhat trouble-prone. With most buildings right on the sidewalk, there are few additional lighting fixtures, though many buildings have some lighting for signage, at doorways, or under arcades or overhangs. Throughout the study area overhead wires have been buried, which adds immensely to the downtown's visual character

Rating: "B" with about 50% of the study area serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.

## WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE

Most of the signage in the study area is for individual businesses and storefronts and is generally composed of high-quality design and materials. Many businesses have projecting signs (also known as blade signs) visible to pedestrians walking down the sidewalk, as well as signs facing the street. With most businesses close to the edge of the road, signs appear to be legible for both pedestrians and motorists.

There is limited-to-no wayfinding signage directing people to public parking or other key locations in the district. Small "P with arrow" signs point to the parking behind town hall. They are mounted to an aluminum post and a light post east of the entrance. There is a reasonably well-designed sign at the head of Elm Street listing businesses there, and there are signs listing the multiple businesses at the entrance to the Harbor's Point shopping center and at the 7 Summer Street complex.

Rating: "B" with wayfinding in the study area primarily by means of identifying signage for individual businesses. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations.

## ROADBEDS AND CROSSWALKS

All the roads within the study area are relatively narrow, reflecting the history of Manchester-by-the-Sea as a pre-automobile village. Winding around the harbor and across the hilly topography, they foster an enjoyable series of changing views and vistas that makes the area a wonderful place to visit. Buildings are close to the road, providing a comfortable sense of enclosure and helping to limit vehicular speeds.

As noted, sidewalks are relatively narrow, but comfortable to walk on. Streetscape improvements to Beach Street and Summer Street include somewhat wider sidewalks with post lamps, tree plantings and other amenities that support pedestrian comfort. There are crosswalks at Bennet and Pine, Morse Court, Elm and Bridge, Central and School, Union and Chapel, Union and Beach and Summer, and crossing Beach Street at the entrance to Masconomo Park. For the most part, intersections have crosswalks limited to two of the four legs of the intersection.

Crosswalks are clearly marked with continental-style striping, and there is contrasting pavement with concrete pavers for the crosswalks at Beach and Summer Streets.

Rating: "B" with roads designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently (and maximize on-street parking) with relatively limited crosswalks for pedestrians.



*Curb bumpout and crosswalk with paver pattern on Beach Street*  
*Source: Dodson & Flinker*

## Distribution of Parking Spaces in Manchester-by-the-Sea

On-street Public Parking

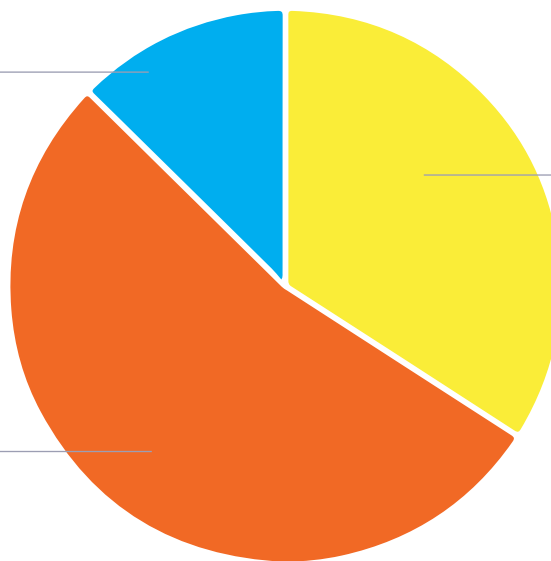
**13%**

Off-street Public Parking

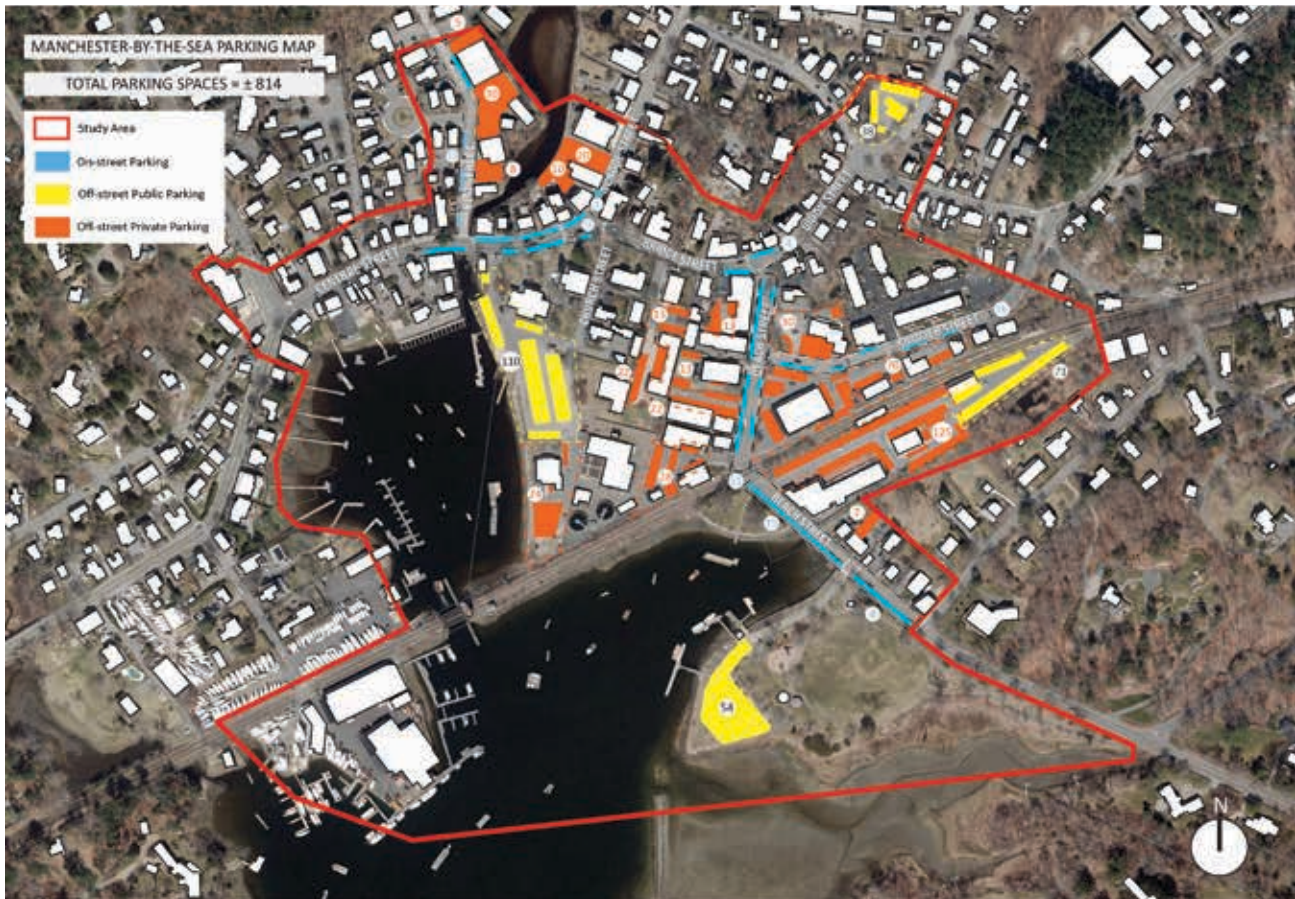
**34%**

Off-street Private Parking

**53%**



*Distribution of Parking Spaces*  
*Source: Dodson & Flinker*



**Parking Inventory Map**  
**Source: Dodson & Flinker**

## PARKING

Downtown Manchester has about 814 on-street and off-street (public/private) parking spaces. However, finding a parking spot can be a challenge in the downtown, especially during the summer season when the town experiences an influx of visitors. On-street parking has been reduced due to the expansion of restaurant seating into parking spots in response to Covid indoor seating capacity limitations. While there is a fear that the loss of parking spaces might make the town inaccessible for residents and visitors, the community members who participated in the planning process generally said that finding a balance between outdoor dining and parking could activate public spaces and create a vibrant downtown.

Field work and public input indicated that some on-street parking spaces could be better delineated to avoid confusion. Time restrictions could be revisited to improve parking turnover. The Town should consider adding handicapped parking to provide access to older customers.

Community members also expressed concerns over the lack of wayfinding signage in the town which increases cruising time for residents and visitors. In particular, the public parking lots are difficult to find. In some cases, it is not clear whether parking is public or not. The new pedestrian path between the Town Hall parking and Beach Street will improve the utility of the town hall parking lot. Adding wayfinding for the path would increase people's awareness of it and speed the process of people forming new habits related to where they park and how they circulate through the downtown on foot.





Total open space: 7.11 acres, 309,711.6 SF

*Open Space near downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea*

*Source: MassGIS, Dodson & Flinker*



## Highlights from the Physical Environment of the Private Realm Manchester-by-the-Sea

### WINDOWS

A majority of the storefronts are in historic structures that follow the common model of the 19th and 20th century downtown: large display windows; entries covered with porch, arcade or awning, or recessed; attractive signage oriented to the pedestrian space as well as the road. More recent buildings for the most part follow the historic pattern, either within a more modern building, or as a historic recreation (as at #4 Summer Street). A number of businesses, particularly on Elm Street and other areas off the main road frontage, were not purpose-built as shopfronts and have a lower level of transparency, but most have attractive facades and clear entrances.

Rating: "B" with about 50% of the storefronts maintaining windows with at least 70% transparency.

### AWNING

Relatively few (about 25%) of the shopfront in the study area employ awnings, and relatively few of those are fully-functional, retractable awnings. The majority of buildings have some kind of covering for the entrance, including porches, arcades or recessed entry. This probably reflects the mix of architectural styles and the relatively low number of south-facing facades.

Rating: "C" with about 25% of properties in the study area having awnings, and few of those fully functional.

### OUTDOOR DISPLAY/DINING

Relatively narrow setbacks and sidewalks limit the amount of space for outdoor display and dining in much of the study area, though most of the buildings have attractive windows with displays or open views into the interior of the shop or restaurant. Several shops maintain a few benches or a table and chairs next to the building. More recent projects, including 4 Summer Street and Harbor's Point, have included larger outdoor plazas for display and outdoor dining.

Rating: "B" with about 50% of storefronts maintaining an attractive window display, and somewhat limited outdoor display and/or outdoor dining areas.

### SIGNAGE

Most businesses in the study area have attractive, well-designed and durable signage. Most signs incorporate the logo or other brand identity of the shop or restaurant they identify. Many have signs in a traditional location above a window or doorway facing the street frontage, as well as projecting signs or wall signs that are visible to pedestrians walking down the sidewalk.

Rating: "A" with more than 75% of storefront signs reflecting the unique brand identity of tenants and easily seen from both the sidewalk and the street.



*Outdoor dining on brick plaza. The tulips in planters show someone takes care for this area*

*Source: Dodson & Flinker*





**Manchester-by-the-Sea Private Realm:** A high degree of ground floor transparency and covered entrances enhance the pedestrian environment  
**Source:** Dodson & Flinker

## FACADES

The vast majority of the buildings and shopfronts within the study area are well-maintained and attractive. Many have been carefully restored to maintain their historic character, and newer buildings are generally appropriate in scale and detailing. A few of the older buildings are in need of restoration, or at least a coat of paint, but most are very well maintained. A few mid- to late-20th century buildings do not fit in as well, with somewhat dreary strip mall architecture, small or opaque windows, and poor relationship to the street.

Rating: "A" with more than 75% of properties having well-maintained facades, with limited need for structural enhancements.

## LIGHTING

Most buildings are close to the street and rely on street lighting to provide for general illumination and security along the street frontage. Most have some entry lighting, either adjacent to a doorway or under the ceiling of a porch, arcade, overhang or awning.

Rating: "B" with about 50% of storefronts having interior or facade lighting that helps to illuminate sidewalks.



**Custom light fixtures installed as part of a previous Streetscape project**  
**Source:** Dodson & Flinker





## Highlights from the Business Environment

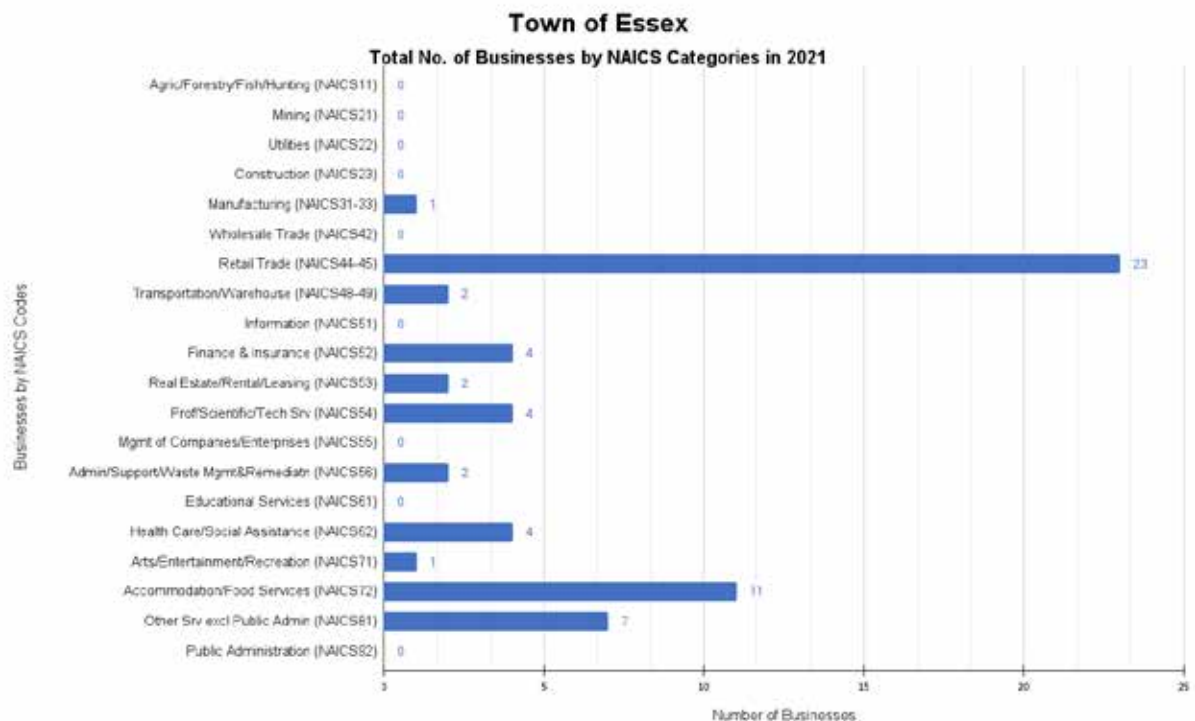
### TYPES OF BUSINESSES IN DOWNTOWN ESSEX

The top three industries of businesses in downtown Essex are Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45) with 23 businesses, followed by Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72) with 11 businesses, and Other Services Excluding Public Administration (NAICS 81) with 7 businesses. The downtown has four businesses each from Finance & Insurance (NAICS 52), Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (NAICS 54), and Healthcare and Social Assistance (NAICS 62) industries. Transportation/Warehouse (NAICS 48-49), Real Estate/Rental/Leasing (NAICS 53), and Admin/Support/Waste Management & Remediation (NAICS 56) have two businesses each. There is one business each from Art/Entertainment/Recreation (NAICS 71) and manufacturing (NAICS 31-33) industries. No downtown agriculture, mining, utilities, construction, wholesale trade, or public administration businesses were identified in data collection for this plan..

When categorized by NAICS codes, downtown Essex has a larger variety of businesses than downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. This likely reflects downtown Essex's large study area. The large study area includes a greater diversity of business settings, including the Martin Street area, the Causeway, isolated businesses along Eastern Avenue, and South Essex Village Center shopping area.

Downtown Essex has especially strong business clusters in antiques/home goods/crafts and restaurants.

Participants in this plan reinforced one of the findings from Essex's 2020 Economic Development Plan: residents of Essex want more local-serving businesses that meet their day-to-day needs, for example a dry cleaner or a grocery store. In addition, participants highly valued the large number of artists in Essex and thought the arts should be a focus of future economic development efforts.



*Essex Businesses by NAICS Categories*  
*Source: Dodson & Flinker*

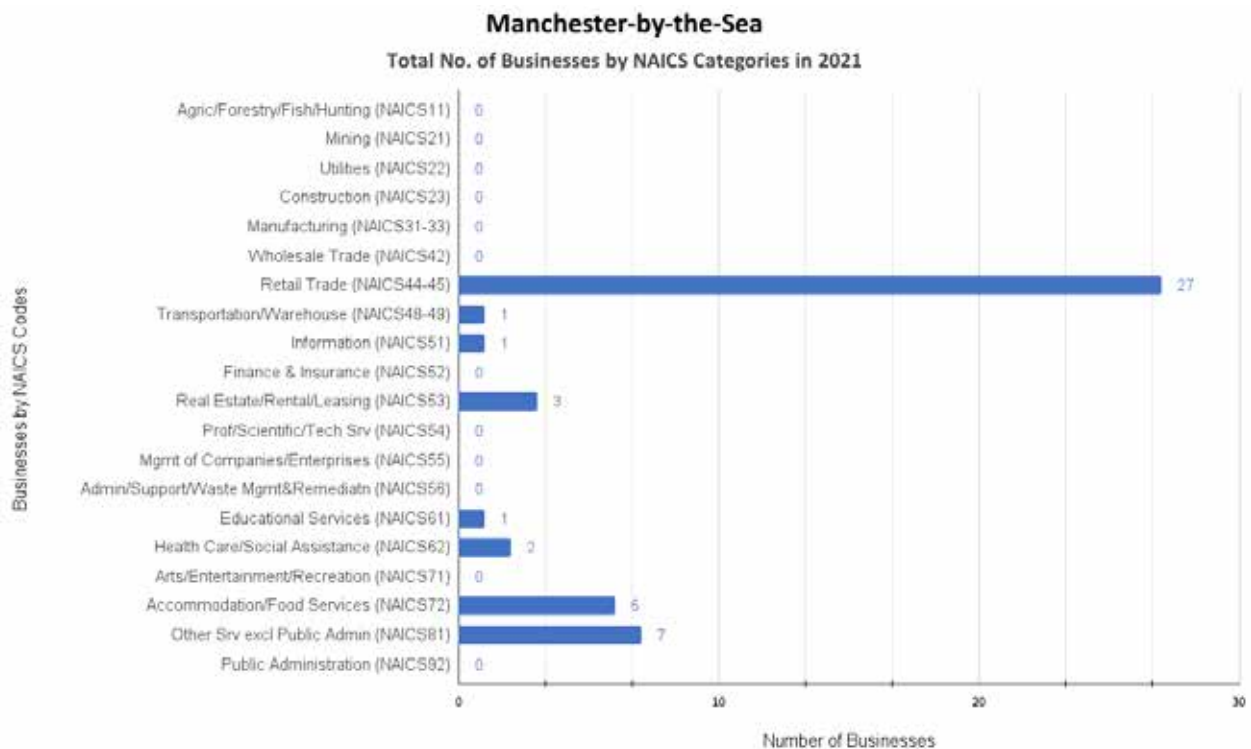
## TYPES OF BUSINESSES IN DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

The most common businesses in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea are Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45) with 27 businesses, followed by Other Services Excluding Public Administration (NAICS 81) with seven businesses, and Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72) with six businesses. The town has three Real Estate/Rental/Leasing (NAICS 53) businesses and two Healthcare (NAICS 62) related businesses. Other industries include Transportation and Warehouse (NAICS 48-49), Information (NAICS 51), and Educational Services (NAICS 61) with one business each.

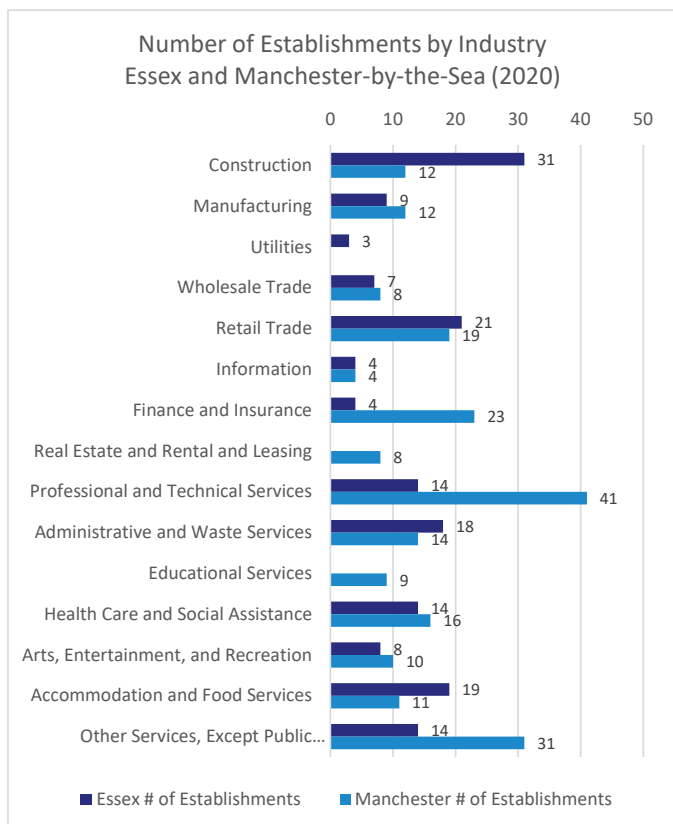
The downtown business inventory for this project did not find any businesses related to construction, manufacturing, finance, technology, arts and entertainment, utilities, or administration support. It is possible that these types of businesses exist but do not have a visible street presence and so were missed in the inventory that augmented a business list provided by the town with field work (reading

signs). Although the downtown has a relatively small commercial economy, community participants in the RRP process said that the local businesses serve most of their daily needs.

Notable clusters in the downtown include professional real estate, restaurants, and low-price high-end goods (consignment, off-price merchandise).



**Businesses by NAICS Codes in Manchester-by-the-Sea**  
**Source: Dodson & Flinker**

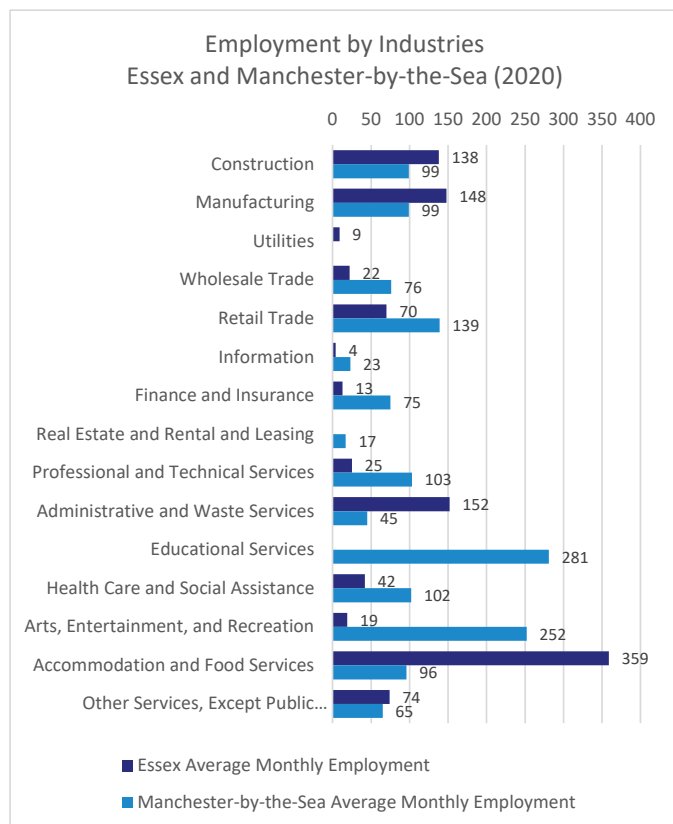


Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance

## ESTABLISHMENTS, EMPLOYMENT, AND WAGES FOR THE TOWNS AS A WHOLE

To get a better understanding of how businesses vary by number of employees and wages, we need to look at data from the towns as a whole. 2020 data from the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance shows that for Essex as a whole, Construction has the most establishments (31), followed by Retail Trade (21), Accommodation and Food Services. Accommodation and Food Services provides by far the most jobs (359), more than double the next industry: Administrative and Waste Services with 152 jobs. As shown in the graph on the following pages, Accommodation and Food Services generates the most total wages, followed by Administrative and Waste Services, and Construction.

In Manchester-by-the-Sea as a whole, Professional and Technical Services has the most establishments (41), followed by Other Services, Except Public Administration (31), and Finance and Insurance (23). The largest job generator in Manchester-by-the-Sea is Educational Services (281), followed by Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (252) and Retail (139). Total wages are highest for Educational Services, followed by Finance and Insurance, and Professional and Technical Services.

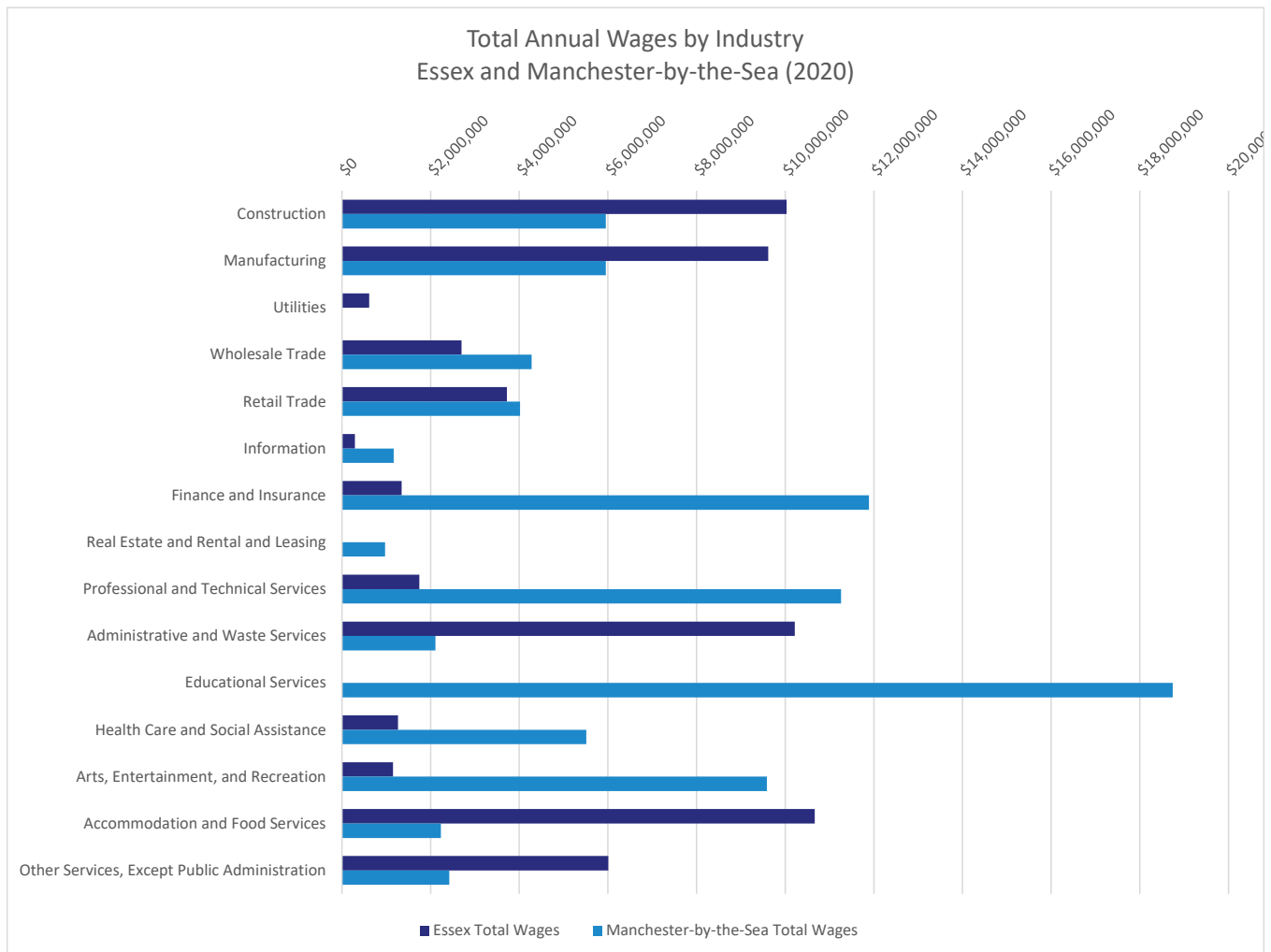


Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance

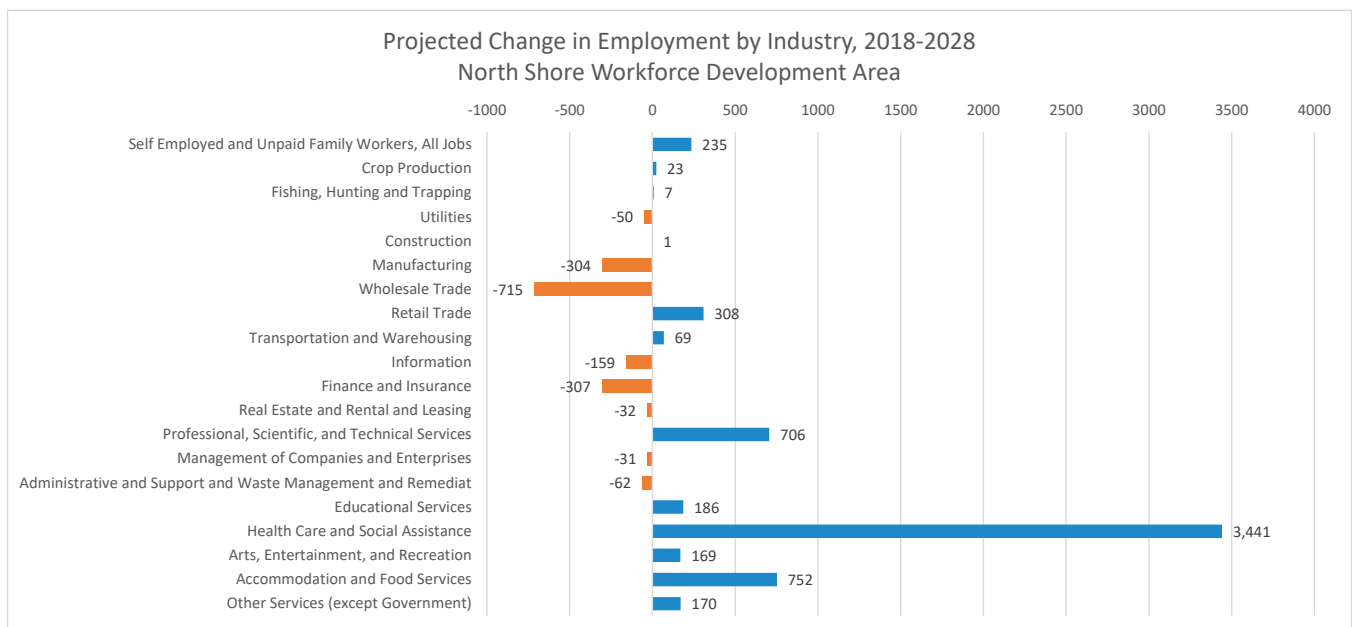
Food service and Accommodation is clearly the largest part of Essex's economy, while Retail is a major employer in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Both of these downtown-oriented types of businesses were hard hit by the pandemic.

The wage data shows that office oriented industries make up a large portion of Manchester-by-the-Sea's economy (Finance and Insurance, Professional and Technical Services), while schools are major employers in both communities.

Looking forward, the bottom graph on the following page shows employment projections for the 2018-2028 period for the North Shore Workforce Development Area (of which Essex and Manchester are part). Health Care and Social Assistance will have by far the largest growth in jobs. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services will have healthy growth (a strength for Manchester) as will Accommodation and Food Services (Essex's strength). Retail trade shows some growth potential. Economic development efforts for the downtowns could focus on industries that are expected to have job growth. These industries may be looking for space and fundamentally jobs are the backbone of a healthy downtown because employees become customers of other businesses.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance



Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance

## COMMERCIAL SPACES

To estimate the basic commercial space capacity of the downtowns, Dodson & Flinker counted storefronts in the field and via Google Street View. We estimated the amount of ground floor commercial space using GIS for three use categories: retail, office, and manufacturing.

We found 27 storefronts in Essex, six of which were vacant in May, 2021. Several of the vacant storefronts were in buildings that could be considered dilapidated. The amounts of commercial space can be seen in the table below.

We counted 46 storefronts in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Two storefronts were vacant in May, 2021.

While commercial office space took a major hit during the Covid pandemic, many workers are growing tired of inadequate work from home spaces and we may see a rebound in demand for small offices that can be used for remote work. Attracting additional office uses could help bolster the daytime population of the downtowns with spillover benefits for restaurants, retail, and service businesses. On the other hand, too many offices in ground floor spaces can reduce the vitality of a downtown.

## COMMERCIAL RENTS

The asking rent for commercial space is a significant determinant of whether it is feasible for a business to establish in a downtown. Asking rents in Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea were collected from Co-Star for the Essex Gloucester Sub-market.

The average asking rent for ground floor retail space in 2021 is \$16.50/square foot. The average asking rent for ground floor office space in 2021 is \$21.53/square foot. Based on conversations with commercial landlords, rents vary widely in the downtowns depending on the condition of the space, location and other factors.

Commercial Spaces	Downtown Essex	Downtown Manchester
Total No. of Storefronts	27	46
Total Ground Floor Retail Space	130,931	111,988 s.f.
Total Ground Floor Office Space	6,367	14,394 s.f.
Total Ground Floor Manufacturing Space	0	0 s.f.

**Source:** *GIS Analysis and Field Work by Dodson & Flinker*



## Impact of COVID-19 on the Business Environment

### SURVEY ABOUT COVID IMPACTS ON DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development conducted a survey of downtown business owners as part of the Rapid Recovery Program. The survey was open in April 2021 and netted 18 responses in Essex and 11 in Manchester-by-the-Sea.

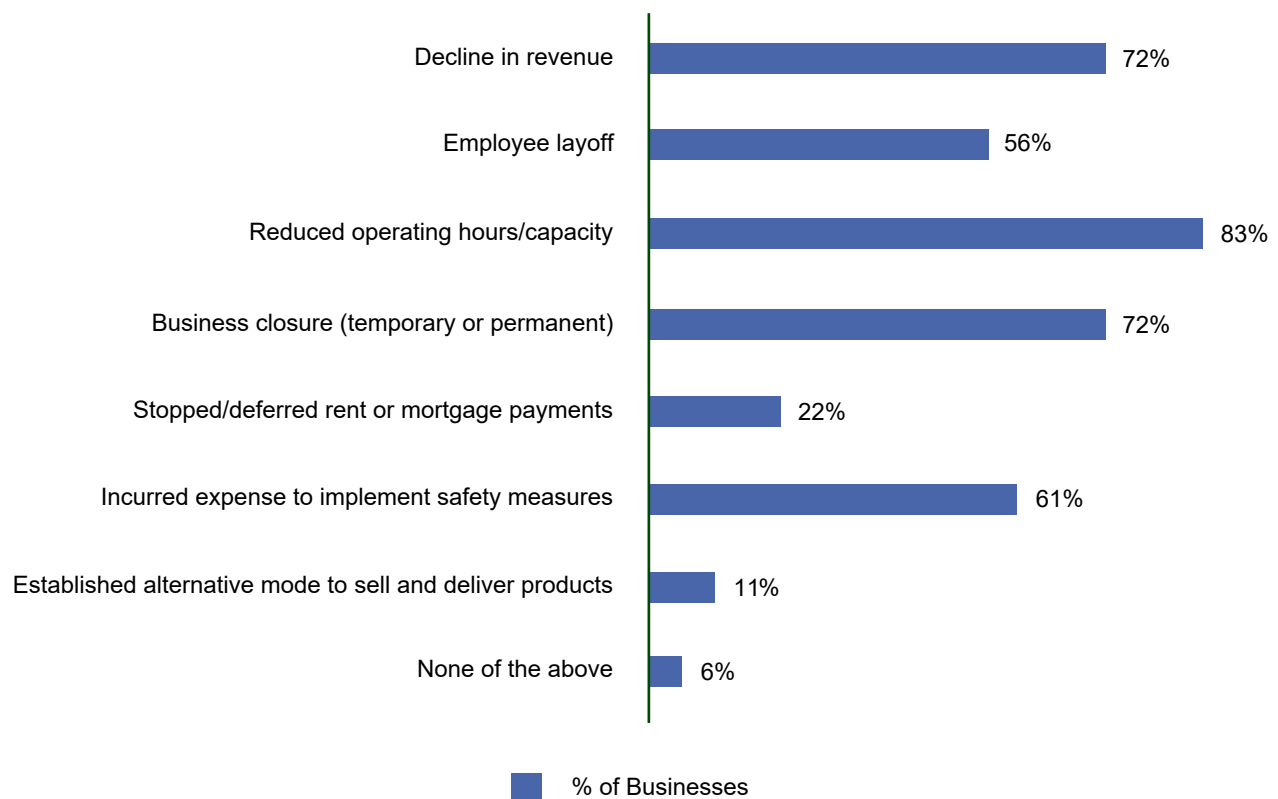
### SURVEY RESULTS, ESSEX

According to a business survey conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development in March/April 2021, 94% of the responding businesses in Essex were impacted by the pandemic and the associated economic disruption. Over 72% of the total businesses experienced reduced revenues and business closures (either temporary or permanent). Most businesses (83%) had to reduce their operating times and capacity. 56% of the businesses had to layoff employees. In Essex, 78% of

businesses own their space and 22% rent. Perhaps coincidentally, 22% of the businesses had to stop or defer their rent or mortgage payments to continue operations during the pandemic. In addition, due to social distancing requirements of the pandemic, 61% of businesses had to incur expenses to implement safety measures. Only 11% of the total businesses in Essex established an alternative mode to sell or deliver their products.

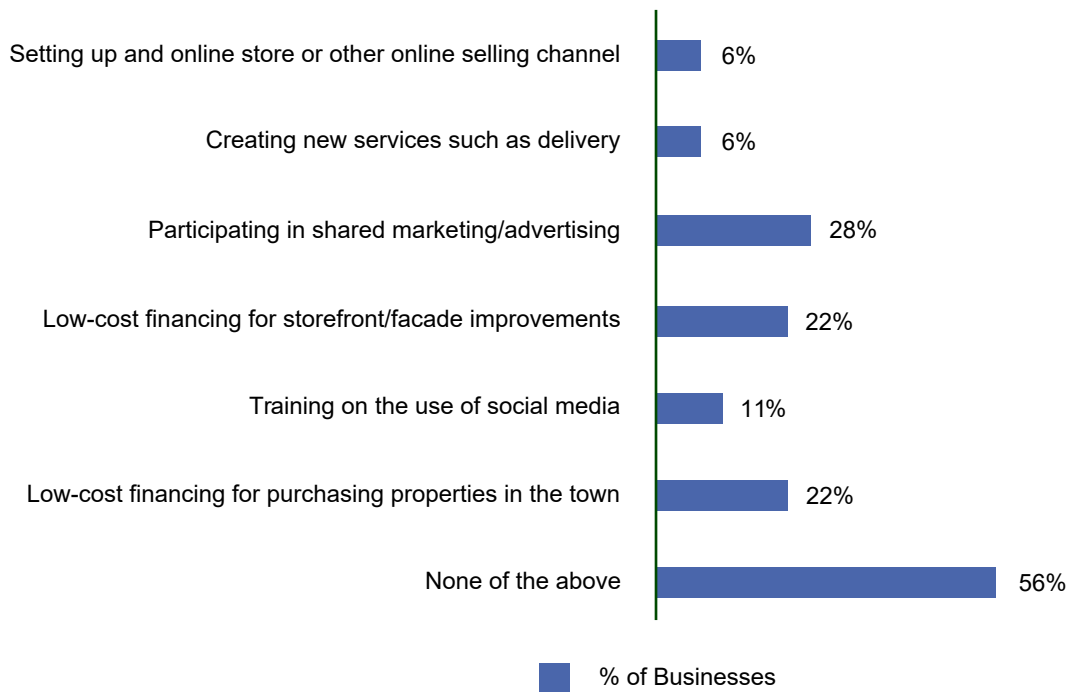
At the time survey (March/April 2021), only 28% of the total businesses in the town were operating at full capacity, whereas 72% of the businesses reported reduced operational capacity and times. Out of the those, 22% were temporarily closed and 6% were permanently shut down.

### COVID-19 Impacts Reported by Businesses



*COVID-19 Impacts Reported by Businesses in Manchester-by-the-sea*  
*Source: Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey Report*

## Businesses Interested in Receiving Assistance

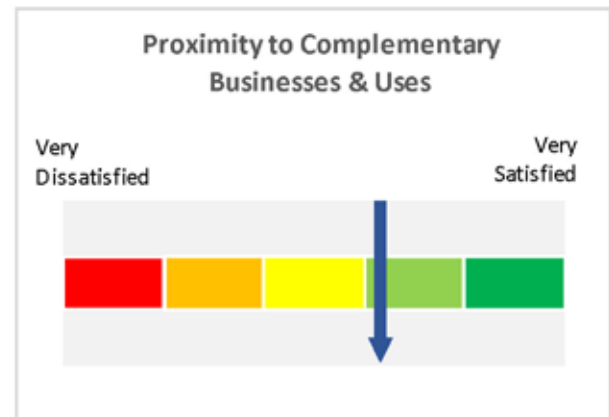


*Businesses Interested in Receiving Assistance in Manchester-by-the-sea*  
*Source: Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey Report*

The survey revealed that 44% of the responding businesses wanted some kind of assistance after the pandemic. The majority of the businesses needed help to shift some of their operations/services online to be better prepared for any future crises. 28% of the businesses were interested in participating in shared marketing/advertising, 22% needed help to use social media, and about 6% needed help to set up an online store or use other online selling platforms. Apart from that, 22% of the businesses expressed their desire to access low-cost financing for storefront/facade improvements and 11% needed low-cost financing for purchasing other properties in the district. Over 5% of the businesses also expressed interest in creating new services such as delivery.

When asked about their satisfaction with the Commercial District, respondents overall were neutral about the condition of public spaces, streets & sidewalks; the condition of private buildings, storefronts, signs; and access for customers & employees. They were more satisfied with the safety and comfort of customers and employees, and the proximity to complementary businesses and services.

## Business Satisfaction with the Commercial District



## SURVEY RESULTS, MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

The 11 respondents to the survey in Manchester-by-the-Sea were mostly small businesses. Over 64% of the respondents had 5 or less employees, followed by 11% of the businesses with 6-10 employees and another 11% with 11-20 employees.

More than 90% of the participating businesses rent their space, making them vulnerable to rent increases when times are good, but for some businesses with understanding landlords, renting allowed them to reduce or defer payments for space.

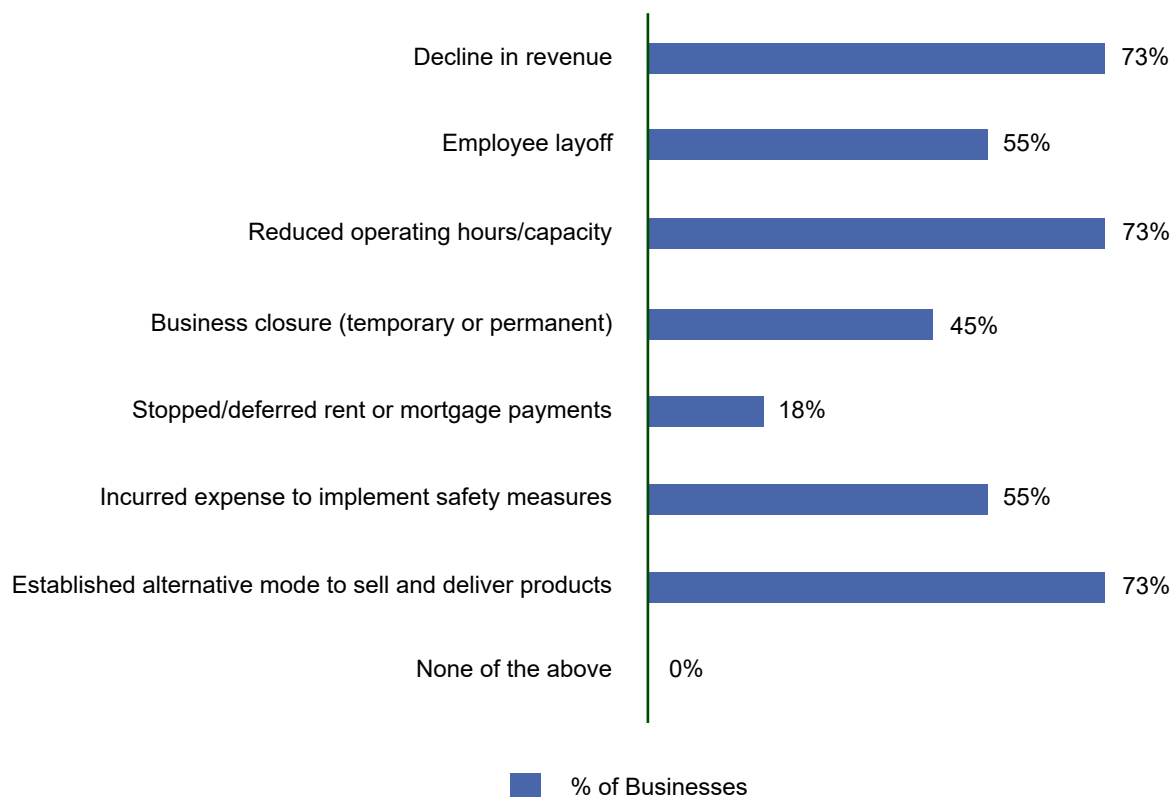
The survey highlighted that, in the three years before the pandemic, 55% of the businesses in the town experienced an increase in revenue and 36% of the businesses saw no net profit or loss. This indicates that the downtown economy was on a good track before the pandemic.

Survey results showed that all the responding businesses in Manchester-by-the-Sea were impacted by the pandemic and the associated economic outfall.

Over 73% of the total businesses experienced declined revenues and business closures (either temporary or permanent). Most businesses (73%) had to reduce their operating times and capacity and 55% of the businesses had to layoff employees due to unforeseen circumstances. About 18% of the businesses had to stop or defer their rent or mortgage payments to continue operations during the pandemic. In addition, due to social distancing requirements of the pandemic, 55% of businesses had to incur expenses to implement safety measures. Only 11% of the total businesses in Manchester-by-the-Sea could establish an alternative mode to sell or deliver their products.

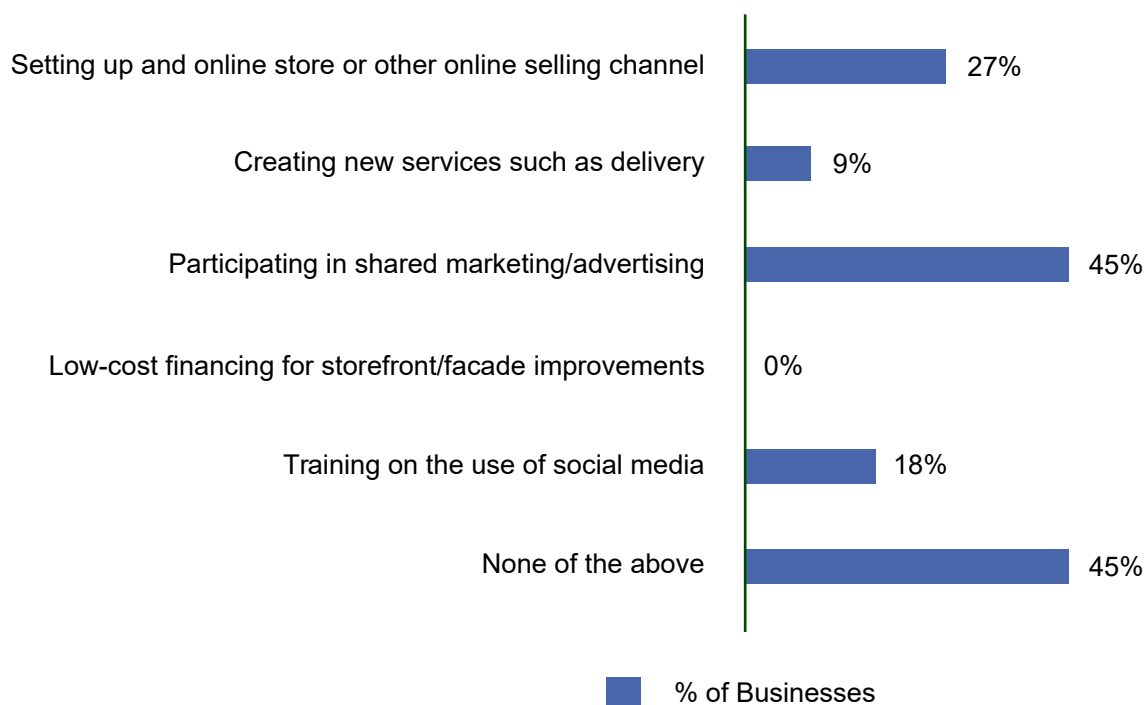
At the time survey (March/April 2021), 45% of the total businesses in the town were operating at full capacity, while 55% of the businesses reported reduced

## COVID19 Impacts Reported by Businesses



*COVID-19 Impacts Reported by Businesses in Manchester-by-the-sea*  
*Source: Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey Report*

## Businesses Interested in Receiving Assistance



*Businesses Interested in Receiving Assistance in Manchester-by-the-Sea*  
Source: Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey Report

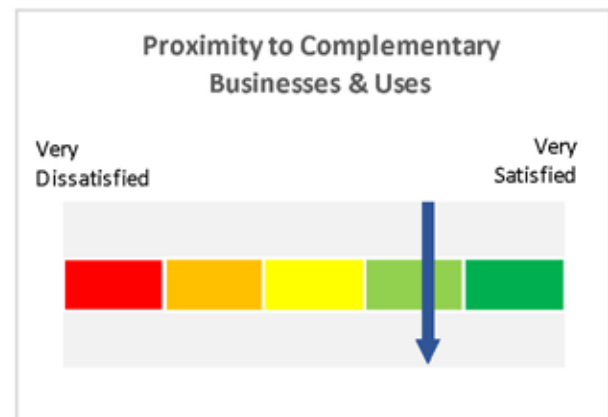
operational capacity and/or operating hours. None of the respondents' businesses were temporarily closed or shut down permanently.

The survey also revealed that 55% of the businesses were interested in some kind of assistance to recover from the pandemic. The majority of the businesses wanted help shifting some of their operations/ services online to be better prepared for any future crises. 45% of the businesses were interested in participating in shared marketing/advertising, 18% wanted help using social media, and about 27% needed help setting up an online store or using other online sales platforms. 9% of the businesses expressed their desire to access low-cost financing for storefront/facade improvements and 9% wanted assistance with creating new services such as delivery. Nonetheless, 45% of the businesses that participated survey did not desire any kind of assistance at all.

Businesses in Manchester-by-the-Sea were generally satisfied with the Commercial District as shown on the next page.



## Business Satisfaction with the Commercial District



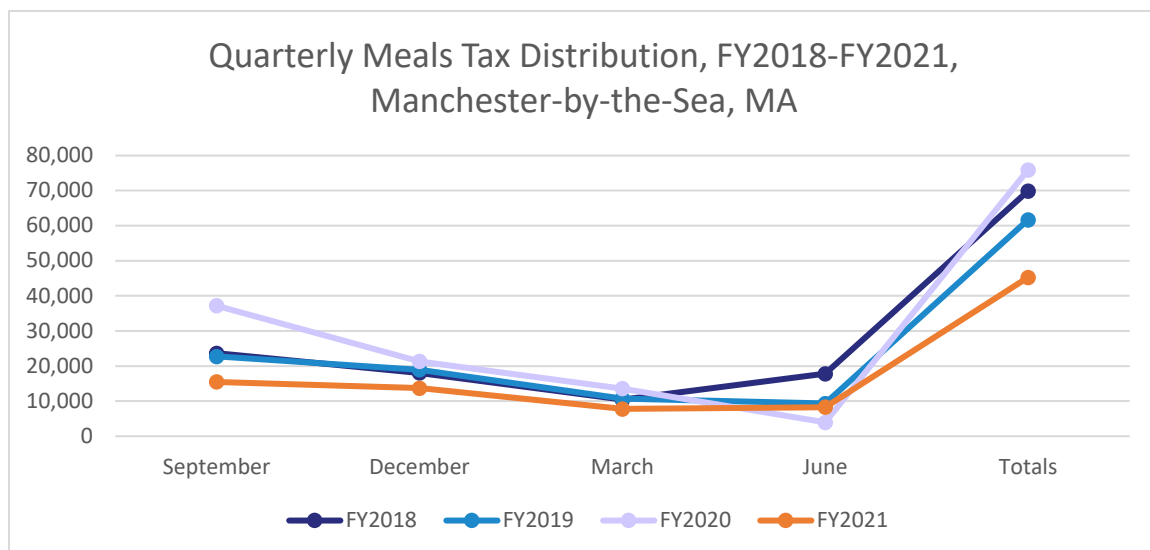
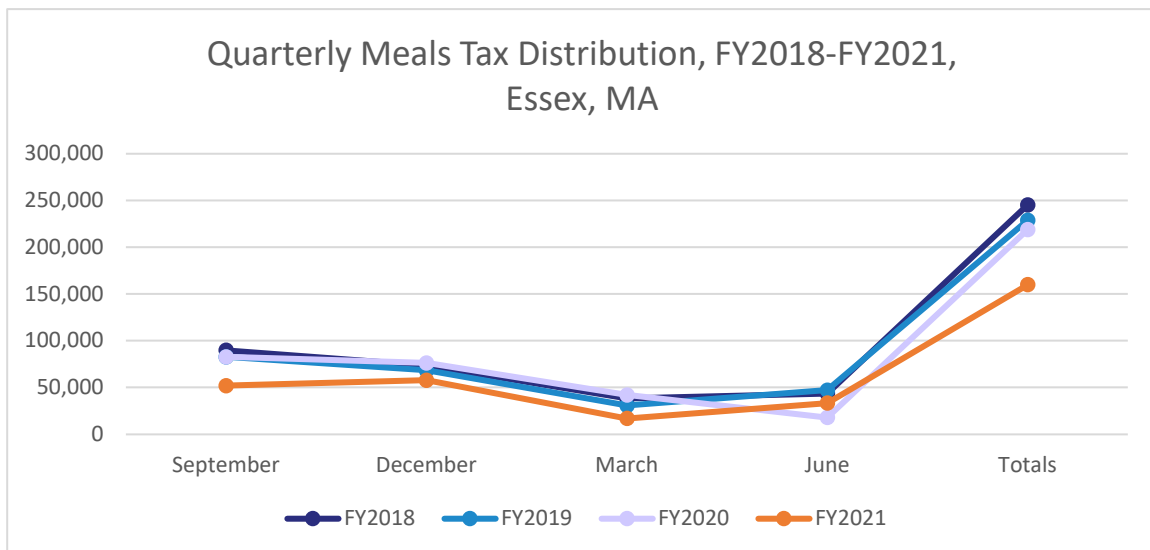
Source: Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey Report

## Measuring the impact of Covid: Meals taxes

One measure of the impact of Covid is the receipt of meals taxes in a community. Meals taxes provide a window into the revenue declines of local food service businesses, which were hit particularly hard by the pandemic, especially in the early days.

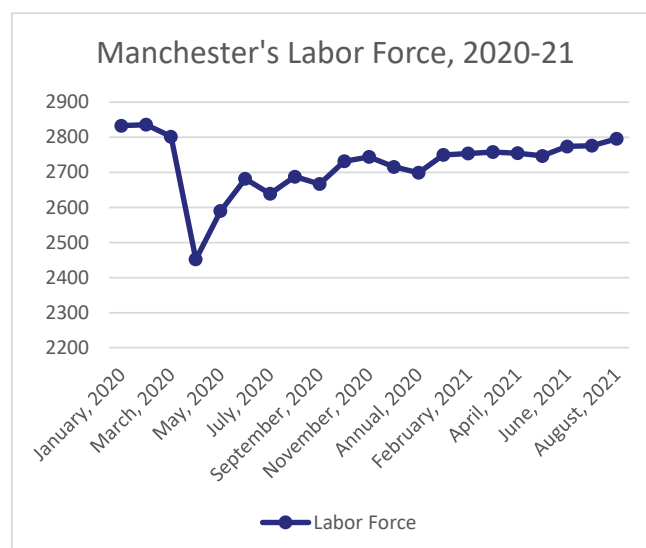
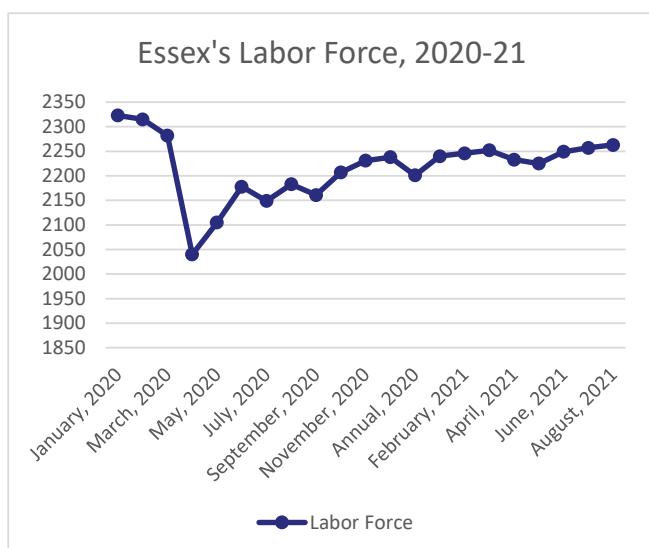
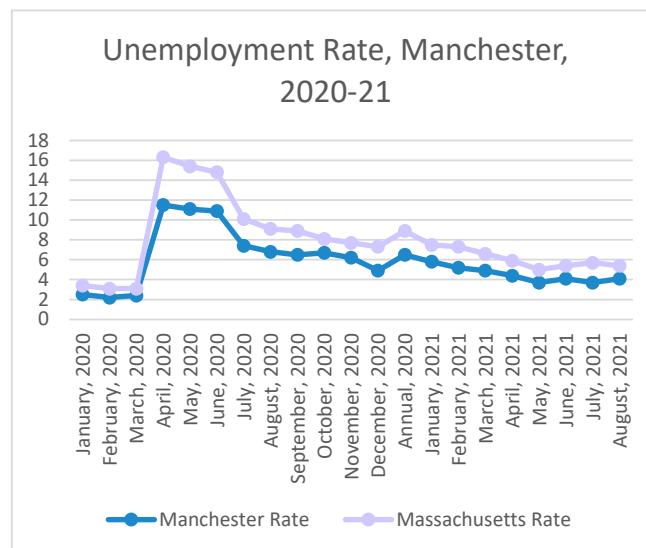
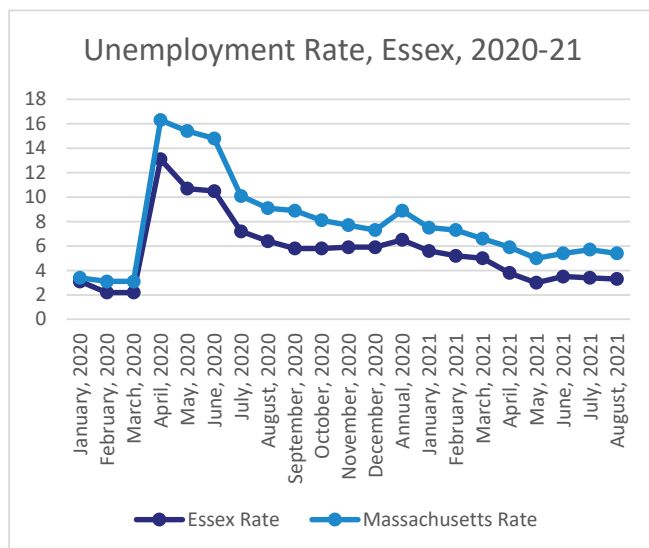
Data for meal tax for both towns was downloaded from Massachusetts Department of Revenue. The data shows Meals Tax Distributions to municipalities per quarter of the state fiscal year. The state fiscal year starts in the July preceding the calendar year. So, for example, the data point for September of FY2018, actually covers a period of months before September of 2017. Information about the exact months each data point covers was not available at the time of publication.

Meal Tax Distributions for both Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea show that meals tax revenue was strong during the first three quarters of FY2020 (calendar July 2019–calendar year March 2020). There was a steep year-over-year drop between June of FY2019 and June of FY2020 (the end of the quarter after the pandemic begin). Meal tax distributions remained lower than previous years through the first three quarters of FY2021. The distribution for the quarter ending June 2021 was higher than that of the previous year, but still lower than FY2019 in both communities. Overall, meal tax distributions in FY2021—the first year to show the impact of the pandemic in all quarters—were about 70% of those in 2019 in both communities. The drop in 2021 likely reflects both the closure of businesses and reduced revenues at those that remain.



Meals tax distribution to Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea by quarter FY2018 through FY2021

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue ([https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Local\\_Option\\_Meals\\_Rooms](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Local_Option_Meals_Rooms)).



#### Impact of Covid-19 on employment and wages

Between March 2020 and March 2021, Essex County's 6.7% drop in employment ranked 65th out of the 343 largest counties in the United States.

In Essex, the unemployment rate rose sharply from 2.2% in March 2020 to its peak of 13.1% in April 2020, and Manchester-by-the-Sea saw a similar increase from 2.4% to 11.5% during this same period. Unemployment rates have generally fallen since then, with a plateau in winter 2021, to the most recent rates of 3.3% in Essex and 4.1% in Manchester in August 2021, slightly higher than they were in January of 2020.

The size of the labor force in both communities dropped

precipitously in April 2020 then quickly rebounded over the next two months. The labor force has generally continued to grow since then, with slight drops in July and September 2020 and in spring 2021. In August 2021, the labor force in both communities reached its highest count since the start of the pandemic, at 2,263 in Essex, 97% of its count in January 2020 (2,323), and 2,796 in Manchester, 99% of its count in January 2020 (2,833).

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the varying impacts of the pandemic across industry supersectors. The dataset includes changes in the employment and wages over the first year of the pandemic. Between March 2020 and March 2021, Essex

## Private Establishments: Employment and Wages, Quarter 1, 2021

### Essex County

Supersector	Number of establishments Private Q1 2021p	Employment Private Mar 2021p	12 month percent change in employment Private Mar 2020-Mar 2021p	12 month change in employment Private Mar 2020-Mar 2021p	Location quotient Private Mar 2021p	Average weekly wage Private Q1 2021p	12 month percent change in average weekly wage Private Mar 2020-Mar 2021p	12 month change in average weekly wage Private Mar 2020-Mar 2021p
Natural Resources and Mining	131	627	7.70%	45	0.18	\$1,120	-1.20%	(\$14)
Professional and Business Services	4,148	36,503	-0.40%	-153	0.83	\$1,902	6.00%	\$107
Construction	2,334	14,597	-0.50%	-77	0.96	\$1,445	1.70%	\$24
Financial Activities	1,672	11,752	-2.50%	-298	0.67	\$2,263	9.40%	\$194
Goods-Producing	3,343	53,442	-3.30%	-1,839	1.2	\$1,960	1.60%	\$31
Trade,Transportation, and Utilities	4,049	49,996	-3.40%	-1,747	0.87	\$1,171	22.60%	\$216
Manufacturing	878	38,218	-4.50%	-1,807	1.47	\$2,169	2.00%	\$42
Education and Health Services	9,874	68,067	-6.20%	-4,534	1.42	\$966	2.10%	\$20
Total, all industries	27,911	259,476	-6.40%	-17,875	1.02	\$1,370	9.40%	\$118
Service-Providing	24,568	206,034	-7.20%	-16,036	0.99	\$1,216	12.00%	\$130
Information	452	4,472	-7.80%	-376	0.76	\$2,254	7.00%	\$148
Other Services	2,173	9,850	-19.40%	-2,370	1.16	\$698	16.50%	\$99
Leisure and Hospitality	2,200	25,394	-20.50%	-6,558	0.93	\$495	3.30%	\$16
Public Administration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unclassified	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

County saw greater employment in Natural Resources and Mining, with an increase of 7.7%. All other supersectors had a decrease in employment, ranging from a -0.4% decline in Professional and Business Services to a -20.5% decline in Leisure and Hospitality employment. Data for Public Administration and Unclassified was unavailable. Over the same year, average weekly wages increased across all supersectors, except for Natural Resources and Mining, which had a -1.2% decline. The largest wage increases were in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (22.6%), Other Services (16.5%), and Service-Providing (12.0%). Industries with the largest declines in employment saw wage increases of 3.3%

(Leisure and Hospitality) and 16.5% (Other Services), likely showing the need for employers to raise wages to rehire workers lost during the pandemic.

As has often been mentioned, the pandemic hit the most vulnerable populations hardest. Generally high wage industries, such as Professional and Business Services and Financial Activities, saw less job loss and significant wage increases.

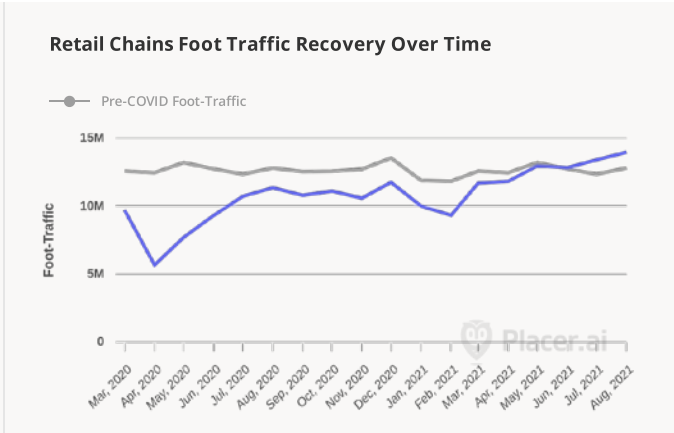
### Pandemic Recovery according to Location Data

Placer.AI is a provider of mobile phone location data. Their Covid recovery dashboards, based on their proprietary methods, show foot traffic data at various retail chains by county. The data should be taken with a grain of salt both because the underlying methodology is not publicly available and because it focuses on retail chains which have a different business model than most businesses in Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea. Nonetheless, the data provides an interesting perspective on Covid recovery.

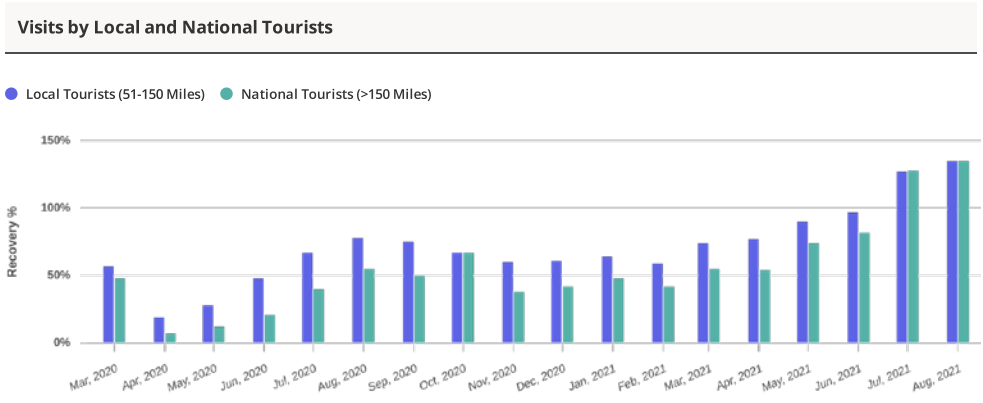
Their dashboard for Essex County shows that, as of August 2021, foot traffic at major retail chains had recovered to just over pre-pandemic levels. The recovery varies by store type, with Spa & Beauty, Electronics, and Medical and Health, having the largest recovery, followed by Superstores, Hotel/Casinos, and Shop & Service. Meanwhile, Leisure remains at 65% of pre-pandemic levels, possibly demonstrating shifting preferences or lower interest in some in-person activities. The slow recovery of Office Supplies may show some customers shifting to online purchasing.

For Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea, the implication is that basic needs from superstores and medical services remain strong, while a surprising market for beauty services perhaps shows a pent-up demand during the pandemic. To speed recovery from the pandemic, economic development for Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea should focus on essential local goods and services. Businesses that are likely to fare well also include those based in human relationships like spas and beauty or medical care; businesses where proximity and convenience is a selling point, like car repair or a convenience store; and businesses that provide a place-based experience that cannot be provided through Amazon, like dining. While the demand for electronics retail reflects an ongoing market for home office space, this type of retail is served by big box stores that do not match Essex and Manchester's business environment.

An additional trend in Essex County is increasing rates of local and national tourists, surpassing pre-pandemic levels in summer 2021. This renewed interest in tourism may be a lingering outcome from the pandemic, and Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea should continue to plan business investments around visitors to the North Shore's unique coastal environment.



Retail Chains Foot Traffic Recovery By Category		
Category	Recovery	
Apparel	<div></div>	103%
Dining	<div></div>	98%
Fitness	<div></div>	111%
Groceries	<div></div>	109%
Home Improvement	<div></div>	111%
Hotel/Casinos	<div></div>	115%
Leisure	<div></div>	65%
Medical & Health	<div></div>	126%
Shop & Service	<div></div>	113%
Spa & Beauty	<div></div>	139%
Superstores	<div></div>	120%
Office Supplies	<div></div>	85%
Electronics	<div></div>	131%



Sources, this page: Placer.ai





## Highlights from Admin Capacity

### STAFF, VOLUNTEER AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The key stewards in both towns are the property owners, local businesses, Town government and the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce.

Other active stewards in Essex are the Essex Merchants Group, and the Town's Economic Development Committee. The Essex Merchants Group has played a pivotal role in promoting Essex businesses, including sophisticated and far-reaching advertising. The Group's budget has been substantially reduced during the pandemic due to a loss of town funding and loss of dues from members whose finances were stressed by the pandemic.

In Manchester-by-the-Sea, the Downtown Improvement Committee and the Manchester Merchants Group are also key stewards. Downtown streetscape improvements are the result of the former's efforts. Prior to the pandemic, the latter organized a successful event series to bring customers downtown prior to the pandemic and produced a downtown business map.

Both towns have limited, but highly engaged, staff. Neither town has staff dedicated solely to economic development. Essex has a part-time planner and a Town Administrator whose duties include grant writing and economic development, among many others. Manchester-by-the-Sea has a full-time planner and several other town staff have increased their business support role during the pandemic, including the Executive Assistant to the Board of Selectmen and the town's Communication's Coordinator. Results include an improved business resource section on the town's website, including promotion of local businesses.

Neither town has a formal district management entity.

The Cricket is a valuable resource for both towns. In addition to its critical roles communicating town news and providing an advertising outlet for businesses, the Cricket has initiated some Covid recovery efforts.

Both towns have benefited from working with MAPC, the regional planning agency, in the past. They have also both made good use of grant and technical assistance opportunities from the Commonwealth.

There are too many local organizations, boards and committees who play a role in the downtown to name them all here. Many made valuable contributions to this plan and will continue to contribute to Covid recovery.

### REGULATIONS

In Manchester-by-the-Sea, businesses feel well supported by the Town. Previous plans identified a need to introduce less restrictive zoning policies in the downtown and to potentially expand the downtown zoning districts boundaries to boost economic growth and mixed-use development. However, there is also a possibility that physical limitations are a greater impediment than zoning. Chief among the limitations is a lack of shared parking. Providing shared parking and/or long-term planning for redevelopment of a few key parcels, like those behind town hall, could increase the potential of the downtown to meet the town's housing and economic development goals.

In Essex, participants in this planning process cited zoning restrictions and some non-zoning permit requirements as a barrier to business success, as well as the limited hours of some town staff, including code enforcement. The town adopted new zoning for the downtown in spring of 2021. It simultaneously enacted a moratorium on conversion of uses. The town is currently engaged in a zoning diagnostic with MAPC and it is crucial that the town complete zoning changes following that. Those zoning changes stand to have a profound impact on business conditions in the town overall.

Essex's economic development strategy is at a crossroads. Its strategy of increasing marketing to attract more visitors to downtown businesses was successful in the pre-pandemic era. Shifts due to COVID—a decline in eating out, a decline in tourism, and increased working from home—revealed both the downside of relying on tourism and the potential for additional local-serving businesses. Meanwhile, as existing businesses attempt to adapt to changes

---

in the marketplace by diversifying their offerings or expanding their customer base—for example by hosting events—there is growing tension with adjacent residents, who see increased impacts like noise and traffic.

At this point, Essex needs to determine which businesses will be viable in the town going forward, how to support existing businesses, how to attract new businesses providing goods and services desired by residents, how to balance the needs of businesses and residents, how to maintain an adequate commercial tax base, and how to address land use conflicts borne from a history of allowing businesses throughout the town.





#### INCREASING CAPACITY

Implementing the Covid recovery actions outlined in this plan will likely require additional staff or volunteer resources. Creating a shared economic development project manager would speed recovery. Continuing to collaborate with regional partners will help spread the burden of the work ahead.

---

## Project Recommendations

# Create placemaking plans for downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Essex and Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
Origin		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
Budget		<p>Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) per community</p> <p><b>Funding Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHCD Mass Downtowns Initiative</li> <li>• MAPC District Local Technical Assistance</li> <li>• EOEAA Community Planning Grant</li> <li>• EDA Competitive Tourism Grants</li> <li>• ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (TBC)</li> <li>• Essex Heritage Partnership Grant Program</li> </ul>
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicting priorities for use of space and conflicting ideas about the brand and identity of the downtowns. These risks can be mitigated by ensuring the plan involves comprehensive community outreach with effective consensus building and negotiation. These conflicts are more likely if the town moves forward with piecemeal projects without a holistic plan</li> <li>• If the plan is not implemented participants could become discouraged about planning. This risk can be mitigated by setting realistic expectations.</li> <li>• Opportunity cost: resources invested in the plan will not have been put toward implementation. On the flip side, the plan could result in better and easier implementation of projects in the future</li> </ul>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased support for implementation of downtown improvements</li> <li>• Increased funding for downtown improvements including improved grant application success</li> <li>• More consistency of public and private downtown improvements</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources		Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, DPWs/Highway Department, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Historic District Commission, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, community organizations, artists, ped/bike advocates, local design professionals



---

## Diagnostic

The customer base within close proximity to both downtowns is small and insufficient to sustain most downtown businesses. This means the businesses must compete for customers with other Cape Ann communities and other regional and national tourist destinations. These visitors come mostly in the summer months. This presents challenges for business people who must manage fluctuating customer demands, staffing needs, and cash flow. The need to compete and the seasonal economy are long-standing issues that Covid made more pressing, for two reasons. First, Covid put many downtown businesses in Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea in a weakened financial position. Second, Covid further reduced the local customer base. Many people are eating out less, shopping less, and skipping trips to service providers.

At the same time, Covid changed behavior patterns on a broad-scale. People stopped commuting. Long-distance vacations were replaced with closer-to-home trips. Interest in outdoor experiences increased. Consumers became less loyal to brands and stores. These changes create openings for Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea to attract new local and visitor customers.

With the growth of online shopping and online culture, customers are increasingly seeking one-of-a-kind, authentic real world places for shopping, eating out, etc. Both downtowns already have distinct natural charm. This is a strength the downtowns can build upon to capture greater market share. There are many potential improvements that the towns can make to their physical environment to improve the functionality and charm of the downtowns. This project would develop a plan for coordinating and prioritizing those improvements.

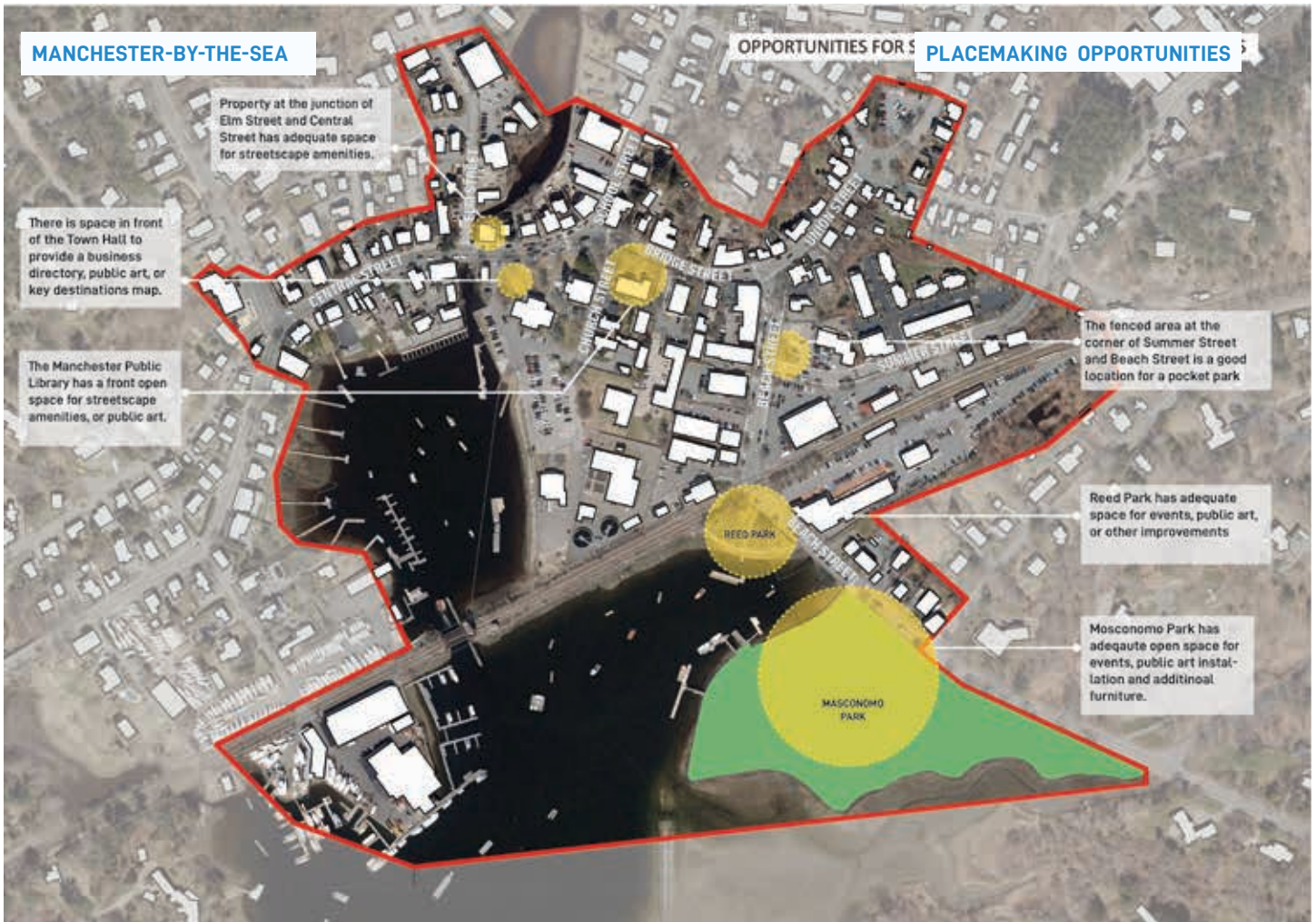
The placemaking plan would take a holistic look at physical improvements that could be implemented over time. It would develop a list of projects and identify character defining elements like materials palettes, furniture styles, light fixtures, preferred colors, etc. The plan could also provide conceptual designs for key locations or topics, for example, parking improvements, pedestrian safety improvements, or pocket park designs for specific locations. If desired, it could make recommendations for design guidelines for the private realm—including façade design and signage. Ultimately, the plan would lead to public realm improvements to build on the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses identified in this RRP plan's findings. Improvements could include the installation of street furniture, plantings in planters and pocket parks, art, storefront improvements, business signage, parking improvements, and Instagram-friendly installations that would reinforce the unique character of the downtowns. The plan could also set the stage for any potential major redevelopment opportunities in the downtowns, for example the area of Manchester-by-the-Sea's wastewater treatment plant.

The Placemaking plan would be especially focused on improvements that could lengthen customer dwell time in the downtowns and expand the range of businesses customers patronize in a single visit. Placemaking plans would build upon the sense of place of both downtowns, through carefully curated materials design palettes, and unique installations, increasing the downtown's distinctiveness and appeal for customers.

This project could precede more specific design/build projects related to wayfinding, lighting, etc. It differs from the project recommendations for those topics in that it is more holistic and would likely be at a more conceptual level of detail.

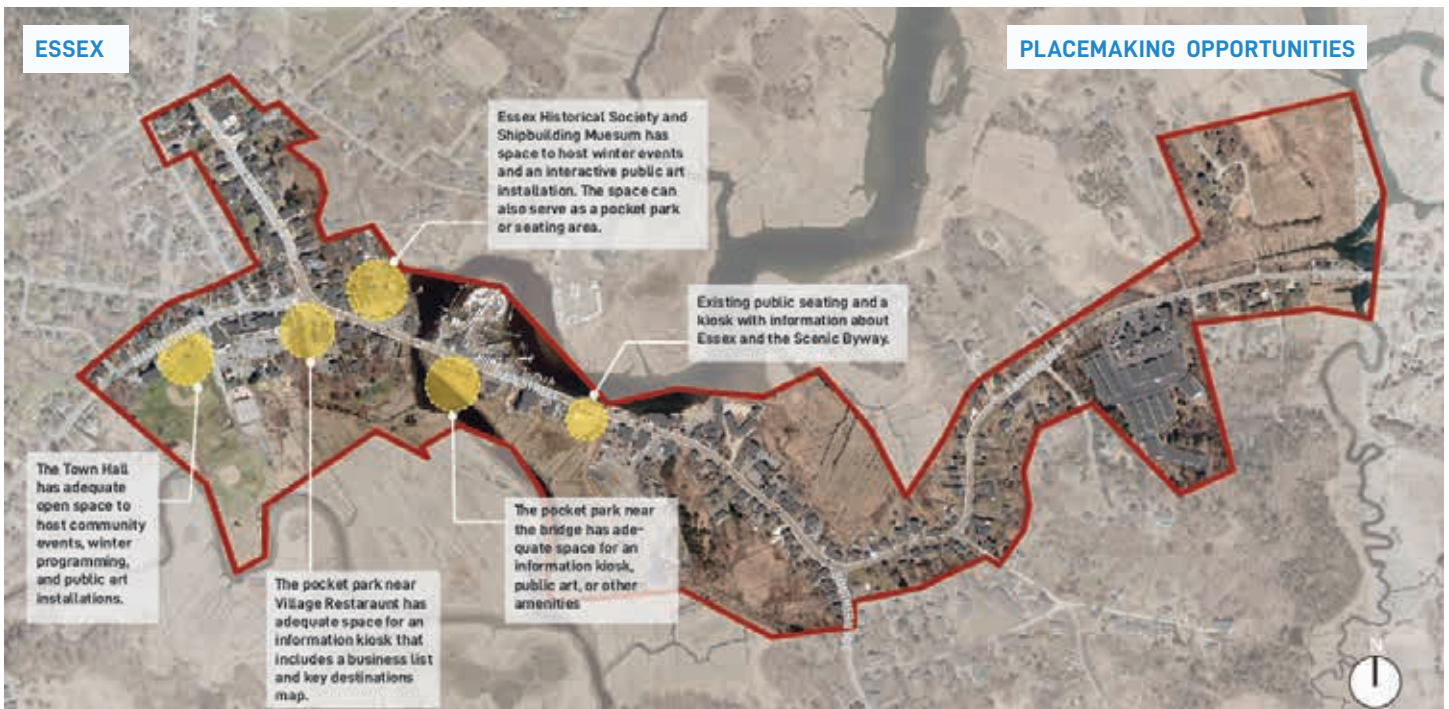
## MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES



## ESSEX

## PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES





<p><b>Action Item</b></p>	<p>Develop a Placemaking Plan to identify and prioritize improvements for the downtowns, including developing conceptual designs for various public realm elements like parking, circulation, pedestrian safety, public seating, wayfinding, outdoor lighting, open space improvements and pocket parks. The plan will build on the downtowns' unique sense of place and improve their functionality with an eye toward attracting more customers and increasing the amount of time and money they spend in the downtowns.</p> <p><b>Key Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the key topics and focus areas for the plan</li> <li>• Document existing conditions inventory and analysis of the downtown</li> <li>• Convene a broad representative cross-section of the community to develop and review alternative designs</li> <li>• Select the most suitable designs</li> <li>• Complete the Placemaking Plan with cost estimates and implementation plans</li> </ul> <p>Note: Both communities could use the same consultant, but the planning processes and project goals should be tailored to each community's unique needs</p>
<p><b>Process</b></p>	<p><b>Mobilization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key partners and responsibilities</li> <li>• Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide the plan</li> <li>• Obtain funding</li> <li>• Hire a placemaking designer</li> </ul> <p><b>Design/Planning Process</b></p> <p>The design process for this type project will typically have the following steps: document existing conditions, analyze existing conditions, develop design alternatives, develop preferred alternatives, develop implementation plans. Community engagement is an essential part of the process. Approaches to community engagement vary widely. The process described below proposes a charrette and demonstration events as the heart of the community engagement approach. When developing the project RFP the town can leave the method of engagement up to the consultant or can specify a method.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect background data</li> <li>• Review relevant plans, regulations, etc. and summarize them</li> <li>• Conduct multiple extended site visits. Observe the downtowns in action at different times of day, and ideally seasons. Talk to people on the street and in businesses about their experience of the downtown</li> <li>• Document existing conditions. The level of detail and topics depend on the focus of the plan. This may involve field measurements, sketches, and photographs, or full professional surveying.</li> <li>• Analyze existing challenges and opportunities</li> <li>• Prepare for charrette</li> <li>• Hold a design charrette—typically a five to seven day on-site planning process where designers develop quick design concepts that are revised iteratively on subsequent days. Work is typically completed during the day with public meetings in the evening to share results and get feedback. Open houses and focus groups are often included.</li> <li>• Revise charette plans</li> <li>• Hold temporary demonstrations of selected project implementation steps. Also called tactical urbanism, demonstration events enable the public to see mock ups of improvements in full-scale. For example, curb bumpouts can be simulated with paint and cones. Pocket parks can be simulated with movable furniture and potted plants. Demonstration projects need to be paired with an outreach effort that links the demonstration to broader project goals and alternative analysis. It should also be used to gather detailed feedback from the public—ideally with a method that produces a representative sample.</li> <li>• Revise design plans and add detail to them. Depending on the budget, designs may be developed to a conceptual, schematic, or design development level. Construction documentation is typically not included in this kind of plan, but could be.</li> <li>• Develop cost estimates</li> <li>• Develop a phasing plan for implementation</li> </ul>



## Best Practice

# Placemaking and Streetscape Planning

---



Various Locations

### The Power of Placemaking

Our historic main streets and village centers evolved in a time before automobiles, when catering to the needs of the pedestrian was the key to attracting customers. Whether old or new, successful streets and pedestrian places build on time-honored principles to provide pedestrian functionality and physical comfort within an beautiful and stimulating setting. Planning for the streetscape involves looking at the entire cross-section between buildings and the street in order to accommodate desired activities.

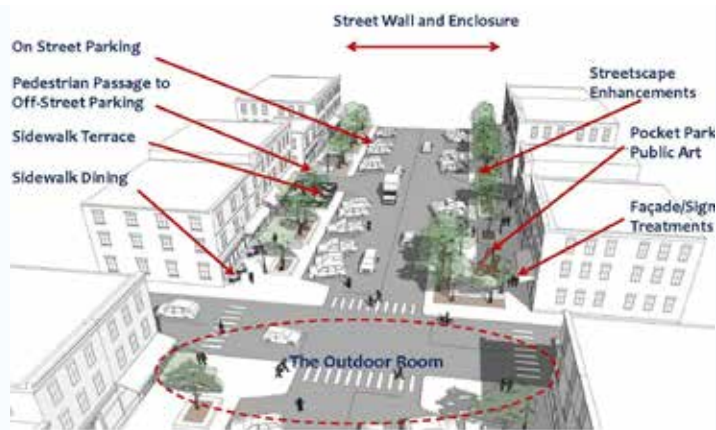
A streetscape plan typically includes paving, planting, lighting, benches, signage and other elements within a coherent and attractive composition. Placemaking takes the process one step further, with a focus on how people experience and use a space, and how that space expresses the character and culture of that community.



## Turners Falls Downtown Plan

The award-winning 2013 Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan focused on the streetscape of Avenue A. Despite improvements to streetscape installed in the 1980s, the downtown suffered from a lack of pedestrian activity and community life. While the sidewalks themselves were landscaped and comfortable, there was no focus of activity, nowhere people gathered. Through a collaborative planning process, the plan defined the strengths and weaknesses of the downtown and explored a range of ideas for improving streetscape design and creating a stronger sense of place.

In addition to the typical mapping, site analysis and functional assessments, the project focused on identifying improvements and potential activities that would build on Turner Falls incredible historic fabric and sense of place and give people a reason to keep coming back.



*Illustration showing streetscape and placemaking alternatives (above) - local stakeholders helped develop a series of improvements to explore, then rated them during a public forum to identify priorities for implementation (below).  
Source: Dodson & Flinker*



*New pedestrian plaza installed in Turners Falls as a result of the Downtown Plan  
Source: Berkshire Design Group*

## Oak Bluffs Streetscape Master Plan

A year-long planning process organized by the Oak Bluffs Downtown Streetscape Committee produced detailed plans and visualizations of potential improvements to three areas of downtown Oak Bluffs. Completed in 2015, The plan included exploration of alternatives for the traditional streetscape elements of sidewalks, parking spaces, tree plantings and landscaping, with a particular focus on connectivity - linking up existing sidewalks, boardwalks and paths into a continuous system, and identifying the key gaps. One of the goals of the project was to come up with consistent streetscape materials, plantings and furnishings to make the downtown more inviting and "true to Oak Bluff's unique character." The plan incorporated goals for "green streets" as well as incorporating universal design principles to accommodate people of all abilities.

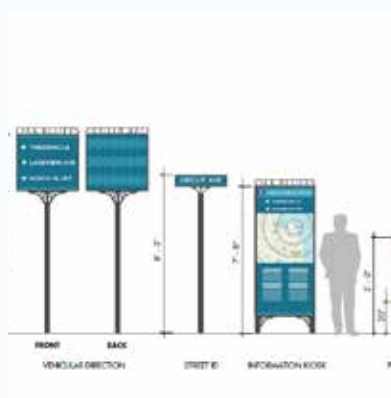
The Oak Bluffs plan generated ideas for placemaking, wayfinding and branding, ranging from renaming streets to a coordinated plan for graphic design and signage. Funding has been secured for major upgrades to the streetscape; the plan meanwhile has helped to coordinate simple improvements to signage and landscaping.



*Visualization of Streetscape Improvements*  
Source: Horsley Witten Group



*Placemaking ideas for a gateway at North Bluff Park*  
Source: Horsley Witten Group



*Initial wayfinding sign concepts were incorporated with only minimal changes in signs installed since the project was completed*

## Downtown Worcester Placemaking and Beautification Project

In 2018, the City of Worcester approved the formation of the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District (BID) to promote local economic growth, active programming, walking and bikeability, and to create a vibrant place for both residents and visitors. Currently, the BID works with 140 property owners to implement the vision.

The City and the BID received a \$54,000 grant funding from the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program to revitalize the downtown. The two entities worked together to develop a placemaking plan that involves strategies to convert on-street parking spaces into outdoor dining spaces, install new landscaping elements, and create a safe space for pedestrians and bicyclists by adding street lighting and signage. The BID hired the planning consultants from – Civic Space Collaborative – to create an action plan, design community engagement tools, and implementation strategies. Other project partners include The Menkiti Group; The Worcester Pop-up at JMAC – a program by the Worcester Culture Coalition in partnership with the Hanover Theatre.

The short-term goals include installing planters, cigarette butt disposals, and dog waste disposals. The long-term goals are increasing outdoor dining, installing bike racks, trash receptacles, and street trees. The BID also created an Ambassador program to keep the downtown safe and clean. The Ambassadors are responsible for maintaining the new streetscape amenities. They need to empty the cigarette butt disposals and dog waste disposals 2-3 times a week and monitor daily. They also need to maintain the planters and monitor for trash and other waste.

The City and the BID were planning to add the placemaking elements before the end of Summer 2021.



*A masterplan shows the location of proposed short-term improvements.*  
**Source:** *Proposed Downtown Worcester Streetscape Amenity Additions Placemaking Plan (Storymaps. ArcGIS)*




*"Quick win" improvements focus on quality of life issues like cigarette butts and dog waste, as well as simple beautification projects like flower planters.*

**Source:** *Proposed Downtown Worcester Streetscape Amenity Additions Placemaking Plan (Storymaps. ArcGIS)*



# Improve outdoor lighting

<b>Category</b>	 Public Realm
<b>Location</b>	Downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
<b>Origin</b>	Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
<b>Budget</b>	<p>Budget: Medium (\$50k-\$200k)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Component 1. Plan/launch: \$10,000</li> <li>• Component 2. Full lighting plan process, including a pilot project/ installation: Up to \$100,000</li> <li>• Component 3. Educational on dark sky preservation: \$0, in kind contribution)</li> <li>• Component 4. Outdoor Lighting Installation: depends on cost of selected components installed and number required. For a ballpark cost, assume \$5000 per luminaire/pole + installation costs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDI Technical Assistance Grant (Component 1 and/or 2)</li> <li>• MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program (Component 4)</li> <li>• MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant (Component 4)</li> <li>• MassWorks, most competitive if project is catalyzing private development (Component 4)</li> <li>• National Association of Realtors grant programs</li> <li>• Cost split with energy provider</li> <li>• Green Communities funding</li> <li>• Business sponsorship program</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Short Term (<5 years)
<b>Risk</b>	<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build support by pointing out the simultaneous contributions that good lighting makes toward community health, safety, economy, and experience. Especially important in a post COVID-19 context is the ability for carefully conceived lighting to enable increased use of outdoor space and ensure social distancing all year round.</li> <li>• Address conflicting priorities for use of space through the planning process, with an aim toward utilization of design thinking to solve problems.</li> <li>• Resolve conflicting ideas about the brand and Identity of the downtowns through a shared marketing and branding strategy, inclusive of community visioning.</li> <li>• Head off potential misunderstanding of Dark Sky Preservation goals by integrating community education opportunities throughout the project. (See notes in process section)</li> </ul>



## Key Performance Indicators

- Number of dark sky fixtures installed in the public and private realm and the effectiveness of their lighting (Note: more light and more fixtures is not necessarily better)
- Increase evening foot traffic and business activity, resulting in greater community cohesion, while still allowing for social distancing
- Increased evening revenues for businesses and more businesses staying open in the evenings
- Elimination of lighting conflicts and improved light levels (more even, less glare, less sky glow, and light spill).
- Pervasive community understanding of the benefits of utilizing Dark Sky Preservation principles for lighting

## Partners & Resources

Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, DPWs/Highway Department, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Historic District Commission, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, community organizations, artists, International Dark Sky Association and dark sky advocates

## Diagnostic

### Essex

Essex does not have sufficient pedestrian-scale outdoor lighting in its downtown. The Causeway is particularly dark at night. Existing lighting is composed of sparse cobra head fixtures with energy inefficient lamps (not LED), spillover lighting from business facade lightings and windows, and security lighting, which causes glare and light trespass into residential properties, including ones across the marsh. Conduit and pullboxes are in place from the last time sidewalks were rebuilt. There are 52 positions for lighting.

### Manchester-by-the-Sea

Manchester-by-the-Sea has attractive pedestrian scale lighting on Beach and Summer Streets as a result of a previous downtown improvement project. Lighting on Central/Bridge/Union Street is by highway style cobra head fixtures which have been retrofitted with LED lamps. Interspersing the cobra head fixtures with appropriately styled pedestrian-scale lighting that would improve lighting conditions, cue visitors about the full extent of the downtown, and reinforce the brand of the downtown.

### Covid Impacts Addressed by the Project

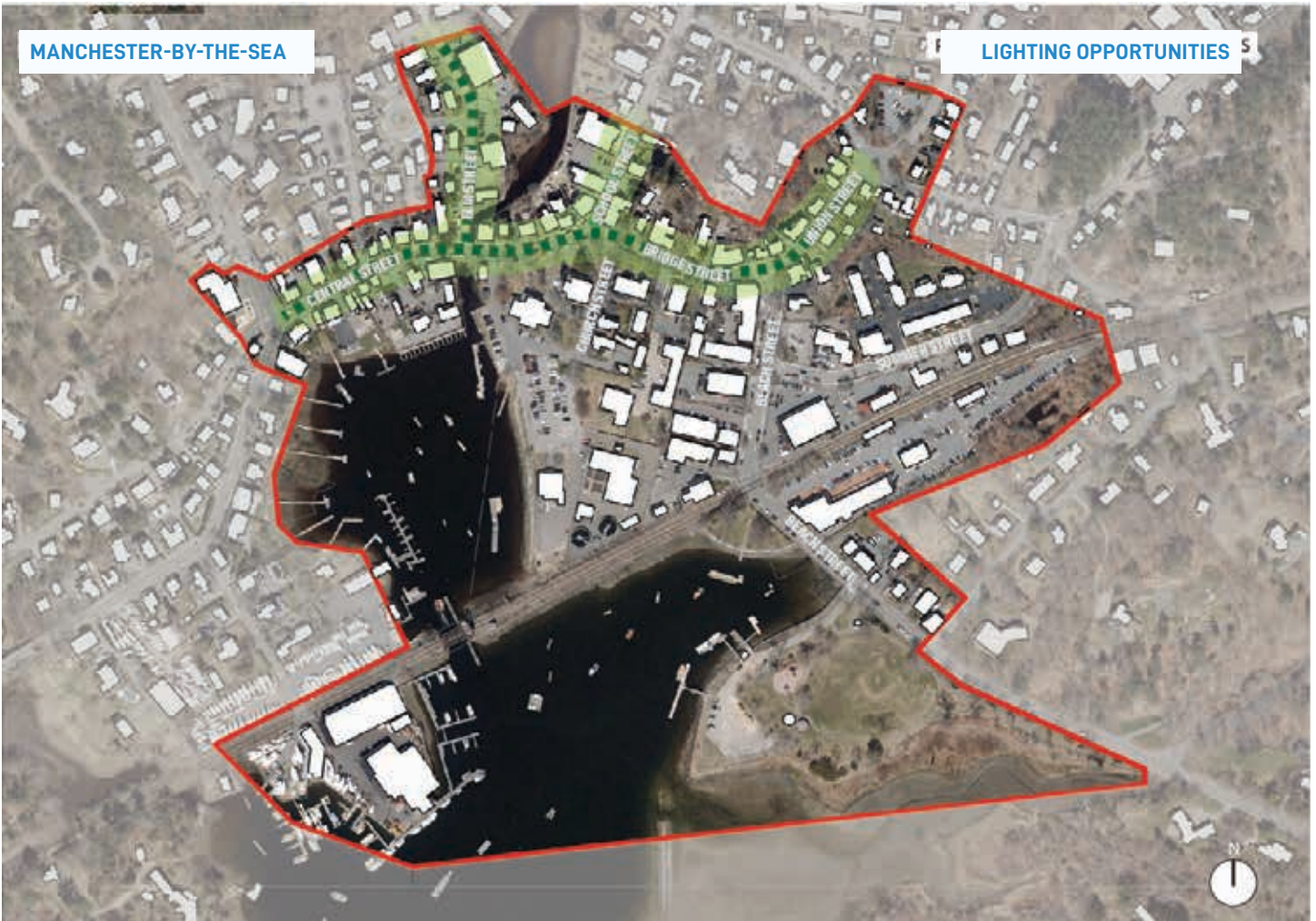
Businesses in both downtowns have been hit hard by Covid, especially the restaurants, retail, and face-to-face service businesses. Both towns have lost businesses including a retail operation and restaurant in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Meal tax receipts show a steep drop that restaurant revenues have yet not reached pre-pandemic levels. In fact, FY 2021 was worse than FY 2020. Employment also has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

To recover from the impacts of Covid, businesses need to expand their revenue above pre-pandemic levels. Increasing their hours of operation and/or drawing more customers at night is one way to do that. While Essex has an active restaurant culture at night, Manchester-by-the-Sea has a reputation for "rolling up the carpets when the sun goes down." Outdoor lighting improvements in both communities would improve the functionality and appeal of the downtowns at night, making it more feasible for businesses to remain open at night and for customers to patronize them. This is particularly important because both communities have a small day-time population. Public realm lighting will also improve the outdoor dining created as a result of Covid and make it easier to social distance, if needed.

Excess outdoor lighting, especially light on the blue end of the spectrum, has been shown to have adverse mental and physical health impacts. Reining in, and preventing, excess light and light trespass, would help provide a supportive environment for people to recover from the mental and physical impacts of the Covid pandemic.

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

LIGHTING OPPORTUNITIES



ESSEX

LIGHTING OPPORTUNITIES





## Action Item

Develop Outdoor Lighting Plans and Implement them to Ensure Public Safety and Enhance Wayfinding & Placemaking, guided by Dark Sky Preservation Principles. Improved outdoor lighting would make the downtowns more appealing at night, expanding the viable hours for doing business. Additionally, temporary lighting in summer and/or the shoulder seasons could make the downtowns more appealing for strolling and outdoor dining. Temporary lighting could include string lights over sidewalks, fixtures with changeable colors, and/or projected textures or images in selected locations. Improvements in pedestrian scaled lighting will be paired with increased attention to dark sky principles throughout the town to ensure small town character is maintained and lighting does not harm humans or wildlife. Outdoor lighting improvements have additional benefits. They can serve as a wayfinding feature—unique lighting fixtures can be a cue that "you are in a downtown." The look of lighting can reinforce the local brand. Wayfinding and placemaking elements, like banners and hanging baskets, can be added to light poles.

### Key Actions

- Achieve a broad-based community consensus about need for lighting improvements, the goals for it, the appropriate look and feel of lighting to reinforce the town's brand, and the value of dark-sky lighting principles
- Develop an outdoor lighting plan for the downtown
- Test a lighting installation
- Install lighting for the downtowns
- Incorporate dark sky principles into town systems and policies
- Over-time, phase out light pollution from public and private lighting throughout the town
- Coordinate lighting improvements with wayfinding and branding efforts. For example use light poles as a substrate for hanging banners or planters to communicate the extent of the downtown area

## Process

### Project Launch (preparation for the community planning phase):

- Confirm project manager and leadership team
- Define and gather relevant data for planning
- Review details on scope and schedules of major projects anticipated to impact these districts in the near future. Design scope and schedule of lighting plan to maximize opportunities to inform / impact these projects. Depending upon schedules, it may be necessary to fast-track design of some lighting elements by embedding schematic design within the planning process or by ensuring continuation into the design phase as soon as the plan is completed.
- Define project goals, scope, and steps for a community-driven process.
- Set preliminary budget; pursue grants and allocate funds; hire planning consultants, including lighting specialist and/or public artist as needed.

### Plan:

1. Confirm project focus areas (each major lighting component may cover a slightly different geography) and gather any additional necessary site information / base materials.
2. Include a Dark Sky Preservation Community Education component. Invite International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) members and collaborators to educate about dark sky preservation issues, discuss state proposed legislation, and participate in the planning process. Consider inviting the following people:
  - Dr. James Lowenthal and/or Dr. Doug Arion – academic researchers and project collaborators
  - Jane Slade – Lighting industry representative (Speclines) and creator of "Starving for Darkness" podcast.

## Process (Continued)

- Dr. Motta Matta – Gloucester resident, cardiologist and co-author of reports by the American Medical Association on human health impacts of certain types of LED outdoor lighting
- John Judge - Manchester-by-the-Sea resident, President and CEO of the Appalachian Mountain Club and author of: The Outdoor Citizen: Get out, Give Back and Get Active. His relevant experience includes AMC's dark sky preservation public education campaign and work to make the AMC Maine Woods the first designated International Dark Sky Park in North America in 2021, advancing Maine's astro-tourism economy in the process.

From these conversations,

- Discuss the possibility of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea working to become the first certified IDSA Dark Sky Communities in Massachusetts.
  - Set goals to be leaders in this space, including by working with MA Green Communities program to integrate dark sky preservation principles
  - Look for ways to tell stories about what steps are being taken via community marketing and branding/storytelling focused on the intersections of community health and natural resource conservation.
3. Inventory current lighting amenities and map out needs and objectives by area type. Each area may come with different oversight/responsibilities and funding sources, but all contribute to environmental quality and dark sky preservation. Lighting impact is cumulative! For example:
    - Sidewalks (pedestrian)
    - Shared use paths: walkers / runners / cyclists / horses
    - Roadway & roadway signage: vehicles and cyclists (but without blinding pedestrians)
    - Parking spaces and parking lots
    - Storefronts /signage (private realm)
    - Landscape
    - Service areas
    - Landmarks / public art
  4. Map out lighting management needs related to temporal conditions (time of year, event lighting, seasonal/holiday lighting, weather) and discuss technology for remote management.
  5. Identify overarching goals, organizing principles and technical guidelines:
    - Safety
    - Beauty / aesthetic impact (lighting as art and lighting for art)
    - Functionality (including lighting as wayfinding)
    - Preservation of dark sky
    - Cost management and energy efficiency
    - Ease of maintenance and agile management (dimming, central control, etc.)
    - Discuss how these interrelate with other streetscape amenities.
    - Analyze community bylaws; plan updates to be sure key principles are addressed.
  6. Identify a small pilot project installation to test out key principles. Plan community walking tours as a walk to explain project intent and gain direct community input.
  7. Identify lighting components in anticipated major projects - map out the reality of how projects may be sequenced and/or funded and look for short and long lead grant opportunities.
    - Schedules for roadway improvements (requires coordination with MassDOT, etc.)
    - Other Public Works
    - Private Realm: major site (re)developments
    - Facade improvement programs, etc.



- 
8. Assemble all planning content into a user-friendly final plan and present it to the public. Include clear priorities, guidelines and/or best practices. Plan to hold ongoing workshops if need be and monitor future conditions.
  9. Implementation
    - Revise specifications from test project, as needed
    - Develop site specific drawings and specifications
    - Procure materials and contractor as needed
    - Install improvements



Assembly Row, Somerville - Source: Copley Woolf Design Group

# Creative Downtown Lighting Strategies



Location: Various

## Designing an Integrated Lighting System

Responsibility for lighting in downtowns and village centers is typically divided between the lighting of private facades and building entrances, managed by each building owner, and public street lighting. Most street lighting is fairly homogeneous, since the power company will provide and maintain two or three standard light fixtures, but charges special fees for custom poles and luminaires. Since the 1980s cities and towns have included decorative lighting as part of streetscape improvement projects - typically using pedestrian-scale light poles with traditional fixtures, but generally left private lighting up to each landowner.

More recently, private developers are creating integrated plans for lighting that include streets, sidewalks, gathering spaces and building facades as part of one composition. Communities are starting to follow suit as they work to enhance existing streetscapes.

### Berkshire Lightscapes, Pittsfield, MA

Inspired by the vision of a Pittsfield resident, Berkshire Lightscapes was created in 2017 to draw more attention to historic buildings and public spaces in downtown Pittsfield. The project received funding from local donations matched by MassDevelopment, and has lit three buildings and three public plazas in its first phase, and inspired private building owners to light three other buildings. The project mostly uses programmable LED uplighting on buildings, and intends to continue its work in a second phase.

Installations are designed to be permanent, and incorporate LED color kinetic lights utilizing special fixtures that mount on the buildings. They are computer controlled and can remain one color or be programmed to change colors on a selected schedule. The eventual goal is to connect all downtown buildings through WiFi to create coordinated lightshows for special occasions throughout the year.

So far the project has raised and invested \$117,000, including \$52,000 crowd-funded on Patronicity; \$50,000 from MassDevelopment's Commonwealth Places matching fund; and \$15,000 from Pittsfield Beautiful.



*Photo Sources: Berkshire Lightscapes*



### Solar Street Lights, Topsfield, MA

Topsfield sought to illuminate their main thoroughfare with historical luminaires, without having to trench for wires beneath streets that had recently been paved. Nor did they want to have large solar panels visible. The design team at SpecLines assembled parts from three different companies in order to find a solution: a dark-sky LED luminaire from Spring City; solar poles by Soluxio, held up by a decorative base by CMT-Valmont.

The solar collectors are embedded in a cylindrical fixture wrapped around the pole itself, making the pole appear a little wider than standard poles, but otherwise not very visible. The pole has a smart control system that fine tunes output to preserve battery life, with higher light levels during active early evening hours, lower levels after midnight, and full output returning at 4AM. The Topsfield lights are programmed to operate at the full output with 20 Watt LEDs from dusk to dawn.



*Photo Sources: SpecLines Lighting Solutions*



### Springfield BID Lighting Project

The Springfield Business Improvement District has installed lighting as part of its other downtown improvement projects. "Uplighting" was installed on eight Main Street buildings from Bridge Street to Falcon Way, helping to literally highlight the incredible asset represented by the city's historic architecture. The lighting emphasizes building corners, helping visitors to identify landmarks, and is credited by local stakeholders with increasing the sense of safety and security.

The BID has also sponsored installation of cafe lighting across streets in the Downtown Dining District, with the goal of duplicating the ambiance of Italian piazzas. Some of the lights are strung fairly high above the street to provide general illumination (and stay out of harm's way), others at more of a ceiling height to enhance outdoor dining spaces.



*Photo Sources: MassLive.com*

# Improve wayfinding

<b>Category</b>		Public Realm
<b>Location</b>		Downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
<b>Origin</b>		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Low (under \$50k) for Design Concepts Only (\$50k per community) or High (\$200k+) for Design Development + Installation (\$250k-400k per community)</p> <p><b>Funding Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program</li> <li>• Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program</li> <li>• Essex Heritage Partnership Grant Program</li> <li>• DHCD Mass Downtowns Initiative</li> <li>• Community Development Block Grants</li> <li>• EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge</li> <li>• EDA Competitive Tourism Grants</li> <li>• Upcoming ARPA programs (TBD)</li> <li>• Sponsorship &amp; off-site advertising</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short Term (<5 years)
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funding and political will. Mitigate by showing the benefits of wayfinding systems in other downtowns, including taking site tours</li> <li>• MassDOT restrictions on signage. Mitigate by consulting with MassDOT early in the design process</li> <li>• Introduction of inconsistent wayfinding over time. Mitigate this risk by ensuring that the wayfinding system is designed comprehensively enough to cover future need. Widely publicize the wayfinding style guides and periodically remind stakeholders about them.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitorship and spending at various businesses and destinations</li> <li>• Utilization of parking</li> <li>• Anecdotal evidence about dwell time of visitors in the downtowns and how much of the downtown a visitor explores</li> <li>• Pedestrian and bicycle counts</li> <li>• Opinion information about the ease of navigating the downtowns</li> <li>• Accuracy of residents' and visitors' knowledge of what the downtowns have to offer</li> <li>• Before and after studies of spending by mode</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Manchester Historic District Commission, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, local community organizations (Historical Societies, Shipbuilding Museum, etc.), local business owners, MassDOT (for roads/areas under DOT jurisdiction), local artists (to provide additions such as accent inset panels, materials, glass, ceramic, metal, etc.), On-Call Fabrication Consultant for continued maintenance efforts

## Diagnostic

### Essex

Essex has a long downtown with a node of businesses at the east end of Main St/ Martin Street, businesses along the causeway (Route 133/Main Street), and scattered businesses along Southern Avenue. Though most businesses have road front visibility and circulation is mostly linear and therefore simple, the downtown lacks cohesion. Most customers—especially tourists—do not patronize multiple businesses in the downtown during a visit. Limited shared parking, very limited and difficult to find public parking, and residences interspersed with businesses have hindered the development of a downtown where visitors park-once and visit multiple businesses. Destinations like the Shipbuilding Museum, and access to the Great Marsh are not obvious and easy to find. Wayfinding would encourage visitors and residents to view the downtown as a cohesive destination and improve utilization of public parking. Essex has a kiosk for the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway, and historic interpretive signs. Essex previously explored wayfinding for downtown, but found that the sign designs that were suitable for MassDOT requirements for Route 133 (Main Street) would not have improved the look and feel of the downtown. Many businesses in Downtown Essex rely heavily on visitors from outside of town. A large portion of the businesses in the area are restaurants, which experienced prolonged operational and capacity restrictions.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the district with several business closures and a loss of revenue. Improved wayfinding would enable the businesses to recover lost ground and increase their market share in the highly competitive Cape Ann market area.

### Manchester-by-the-Sea

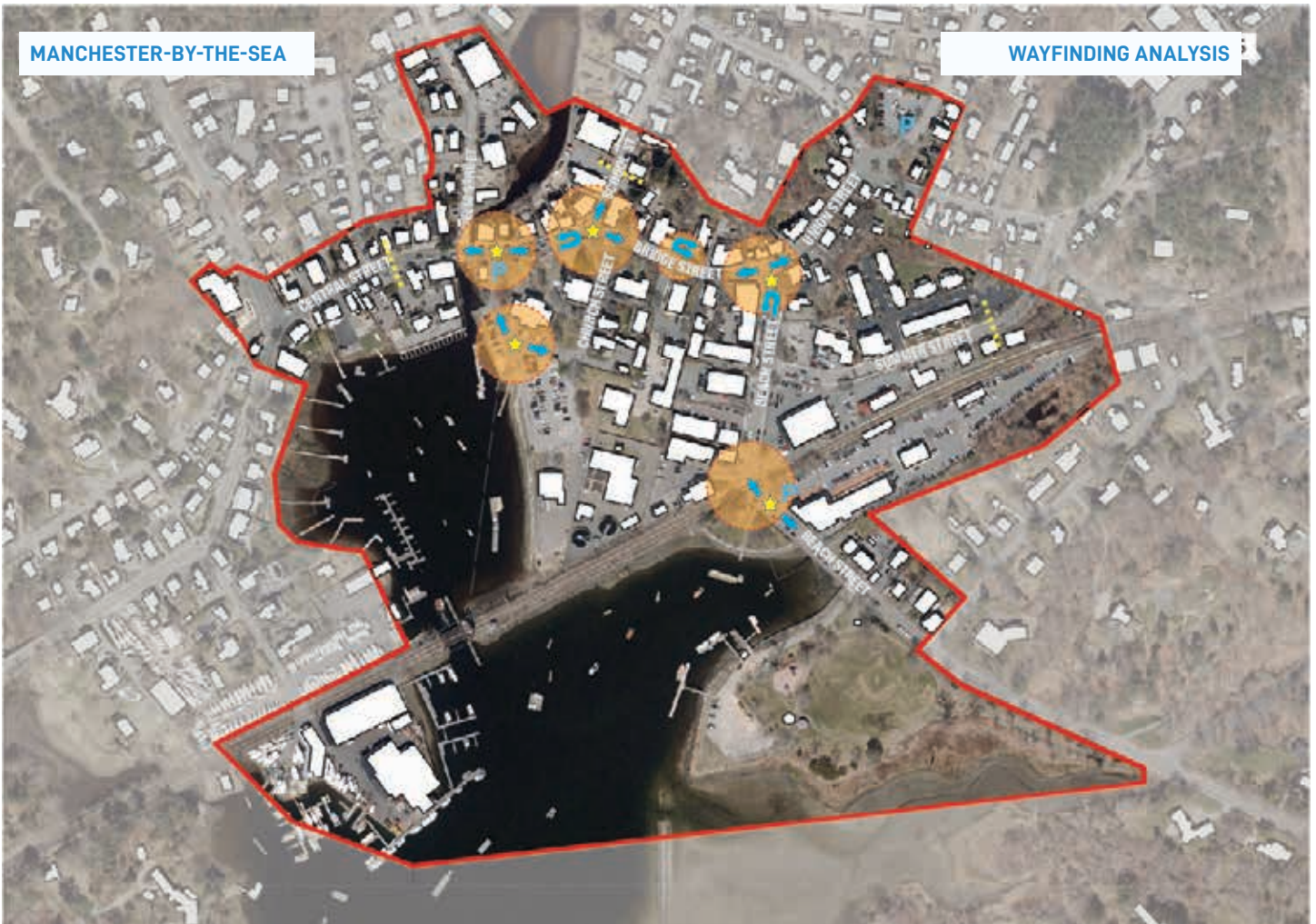
Manchester-by-the-Sea is a residential seashore community with a vibrant mix of locally-owned shops and restaurants in the downtown area. The downtown is adjacent to a beautiful harbor with docks, and close to the popular Singing Beach which serves both residents and visitors. The small-town charm of Manchester-by-the-Sea and Singing Beach attracts visitors, especially during the summer season. Visitors primarily arrive by MBTA train or car; visitors by boat are also a significant customer base. Public parking is quite limited and can be difficult to find because it is not visible from primary streets. Singing Beach is a short way out of town and has limited parking. Likewise, the docks at the harbor are not visible or obviously accessible to visitors. The town has two primary commercial streets (Route 127 and Beach Street) with commercial uses spread over a fairly long distance. Municipal, residential, and ground floor office uses are interspersed with retail, restaurant, and public-facing service uses along Route 127 (Bridge/Central/ Union Streets). This, combined with the lack of a convenient circular route uniting the primary streets, likely reduces foot traffic reaching the commercial uses at the ends of the downtown. Business owners report that their customers are often not aware of the full scope of the downtown. The Town recently added a pedestrian passage that will improve the convenience of parking behind Town Hall and better connect Route 127 and the Beach Street area, but the parking and the pedestrian passage could use wayfinding to inform residents of the improvements.

COVID-19 reduced business patronage in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Reductions of MBTA service were particularly impactful. A wayfinding system would give a bump to businesses as residents and visitors are becoming reacquainted with Manchester-by-the-Sea, or discovering it for the first time.



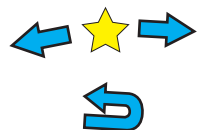
## MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

## WAYFINDING ANALYSIS



## ESSEX

## WAYFINDING ANALYSIS



directional decision point

gap in storefronts continuity:  
encourage continued exploration



Parking: needs wayfinding



Gateway to downtown



## Action Item

Develop comprehensive wayfinding systems for downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea and downtown Essex. Wayfinding will improve the legibility of the downtowns so that visitors know that they have arrived in the downtown, can find parking (especially public parking), can find their way from parking to destinations, and are compelled to continue down streets beyond breaks in the continuity of storefronts/businesses and onto additional destinations. Both communities want to keep signage to a minimum. They are interested in a "placemaking" approach to wayfinding where physical cues make the downtowns more legible. Some signs are likely necessary at key decision points. Kiosks at prominent locations, like public parking lots, may be beneficial. Paper and online maps can also assist with wayfinding. Wayfinding should build off the local brand. Creation of branding elements can become part of a wayfinding project, for example, creation of a logo and color scheme.

### Key actions:

- Establish a working committee
- Define project goals and scope; build local support
- Obtain funding
- Hire a consultant
- Approve designs
- Installation
- Monitoring
- Maintenance and Improvements

### Key considerations:

- Limiting sign clutter
- Using banners, sidewalk materials, sidewalk & street markings in-lieu of more signs
- Integrating online wayfinding tools
- Other public realm features that accomplish goals of knitting together nodes without signs, such as consistent lighting, integrated paving/sidewalk materials, consistent streetscape elements (posts, benches, markers), landscaping (including hanging baskets), flags, etc.



*Wayfinding opportunities in Essex (pedestrian path to parking, public parking lot, gap in storefronts) and Manchester-by-the-Sea (gap in storefronts, train station, pedestrian path from Beach Street to public parking)*

*Source: Dana Menon (left column), Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea (bottom right), Dodson & Flinker (middle column, top right)*

## Process

### Wayfinding Plan and Conceptual Design (35% of project)

- Establish advisory committee composed of business owners, Town staff and officials, community members, and partner organizations
- Hold Advisory Committee meetings to:
  - Identify key project goals and basic project scope
  - Identify funding sources
  - Develop a process for hiring a consultant
  - Conduct outreach to build support for the project
- Hire a wayfinding planning consultant
- In consultation with the Advisory Committee:
  - Map existing circulation patterns
  - Identify key destinations that need additional visibility
  - Identify key locations where navigational decisions are made
  - Identify locations where visitors will need encouragement to continue exploring the downtowns
  - Define elements of the "brand" of the downtowns, and how wayfinding can reinforce it.
- Review/create map of existing wayfinding signage systems
- Evaluate where the "gaps" are for wayfinding signs and current conditions/remaining lifespan for existing signs
- Develop concept designs for branding and wayfinding elements
- Create a sign location plan and message schedule (the content on each sign)
- Develop a few representative sign types and analyze them and how they would fit in the built environment and in the downtown area
- Assess signage locations and messaging, with an understanding of the various contexts for the signs (i.e., freestanding, pole-mount, wall mount, projecting, etc.)
- Ensure that the proposed design adheres to all required design guidelines, including ADA-compliance for font size, size, and contrast. Encourage design considerations to meet multi-lingual needs. Integrate MassDOT guidance for those signs proposed in State right-of-way.
- Develop aesthetic design options, working with community, businesses, and local artists
- Conduct additional outreach to business owners, the Town, community members, and other stakeholders to obtain feedback on the concept designs and alternatives
- Develop a target budget for infrastructure
- Hold preliminary discussions with permitting agencies
- A Sign Fabricator should be consulted for Raw Order of Magnitude (ROM) price estimates. These ROM numbers will help inform the decision of which design direction to pursue (and identify any Value Engineering measures).
- Consider steps for integrating branding and key destinations into online maps/ materials available on Town and stakeholder websites



*Signs in Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea*

*Source: Dana Menon (left, middle left, middle right), Dodson & Flinker (right)*

---

## Process (Continued)

### Design Development Process (30% of project efforts)

- Desired design option (or hybrid of) to be applied to all sign types
- Location Plans and Message Schedules to be developed and evaluated by Team
- Optional: Development of online branding and maps for Town website
- Confirm design compliance with rules and regulations (local, state, and state agencies if placement under different jurisdiction)
- Circulate design package to entire Team for input
- Issue design package to prospective Sign Fabricators for Preliminary Bids and reveal possible Value Engineering moves that might be required to meet budget.

### Design Intent (25% of project efforts)

- Add/include all specifications and fabrication details necessary to solicit competitive bids from capable Fabricators
- Finalize Location Plans and Message Schedules
- Circulate design intent package (bid document) to entire Team for final sign-off

### Bid Assistance (5% of project efforts)

- Identify recommended/capable Fabricators
- Issue Design Intent Package, field all questions and issue responses to all bidders
- Assist Client in bid review and selection

### Artwork Coordination (Sign Fabricator efforts, shop drawings, material sample submittals)

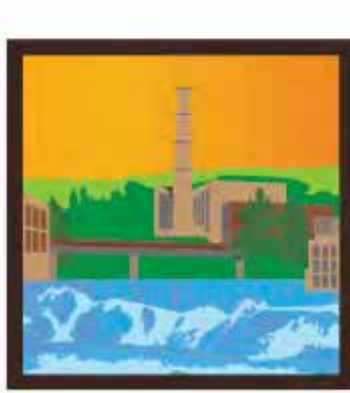
- Hand-off of all specific, unique art, icons, symbols and logos.
- Development of all required templates for Sign Fabricator's use in building out sign messages (Including but not limited to one-line, two-line and multi-line variations, side A and side B layouts, flush left and flush right variations, etc.)

### Construction Observation (5% of project efforts)

- Review and approve Fabricator's Shop Drawings (limit to two rounds of drawings)
- Review and approve Fabricator's paint finish and material sample submittals
- Conduct a shop visit mid-fabrication if desired/required before completion.
- Coordinate with MassDOT and state agencies to review and provide input on shop drawings for signs in their ROW
- Obtain permits as needed (note that special highway signs not compliant with MassDOT guidance may need to be installed outside MassDOT ROW)

### Installation and Post-Installation (Punch Review)

- Once installed, Designer is to review each sign installation to ensure its completion, quality and adherence to the Design Intent (coordinate where necessary with state agencies)
- This review should be summarized in a document to be issued to the Town (proof of completion)
- Monitor how well signs are working; measure performance indicators.
- Update locations and integrate new elements based on the response to the installations.
- Periodically review and update online content. Work with mapped destinations to integrate links onto their websites.



Source: Arnett Muldrew & Associates

## Best Practice

# Community Wayfinding & Branding



Location: Various

Effective Wayfinding Strategies link visitor orientation to branding and placemaking

Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through the physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space. It starts with basic directional signage, but goes further: helping people understand their location in relation to the rest of the district or downtown; highlighting key landmarks and corridors that aid in navigation; and creating a unique identity and visual character for special places within the downtown as well as for the downtown as a whole.

Wayfinding systems provide an opportunity to create a unique brand identity that builds on "sense of place." This can reference historic or natural features, cultural events or other aspects of the community - with the design of signage often coordinated with marketing and outreach materials, websites and other communication tools.



Multi-lingual directional painted "signage" on a walkway in West Colfax, Colorado. Signs were painted by volunteers with funding from a health foundation.  
Source: <https://westcolfaxbid.org/portfolio/candy-cane-lane/>



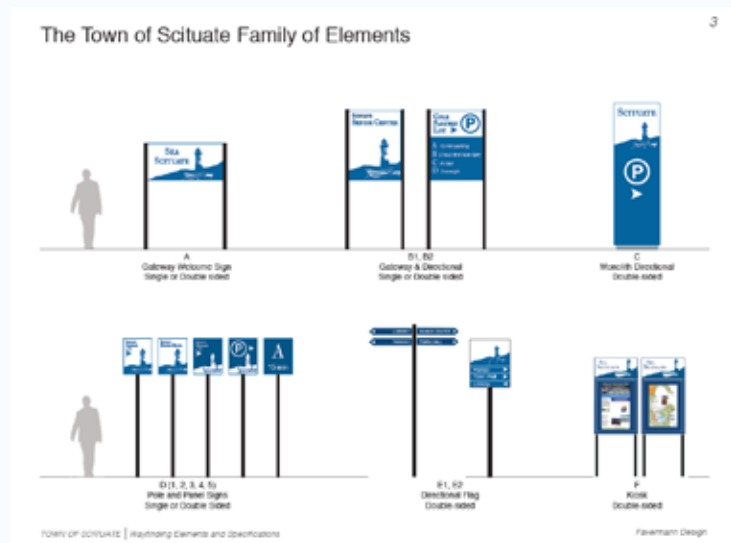
## Scituate, MA Wayfinding & Branding Program

Scituate is a historic coastal town located midway between Boston and Plymouth in Massachusetts. The town has a beautiful harbor that offers many activities such as retail, dining, seasonally active boating, sailing, fishing, educational and cultural programs, and tourism. The harbor attracts a large volume of residents and visitors during the summer months, increasing the demand for parking, improved signs for connectivity, and welcoming streetscapes.

The Town of Scituate partnered with Favermann Designs to create an illustrated brand/slogan and wayfinding signs to drive local economic growth. The Town's Economic Development Commission (EDC) allocated \$10,000 from the FY 2018 funds towards the implementation of the wayfinding project. The consultants received \$18,000 from the Town as their services fees. The Town planned to replace an old taxi stand with information kiosks and a pocket park. The kiosk includes a list of town events, a map of key destinations, and a local business directory. The EDC and the consultants created a logo/brand that represents the future vision of the town. The logo -- "Sea Scituate" -- is used on directional signs and kiosks to ensure the visitors and residents are aware of these changes. EDC also marketed the logo on the Town's social media pages.



**Wayfinding System Elements - Street and Destination Signs**  
Source: Favermann Design



**A detailed wayfinding plan shows how each element fits into the overall system with coordinated graphics.** Source: Favermann Design



**Coordinated kiosk design accommodates different needs - public announcements, an orientation map, and a map of businesses.**  
Source: Favermann Design

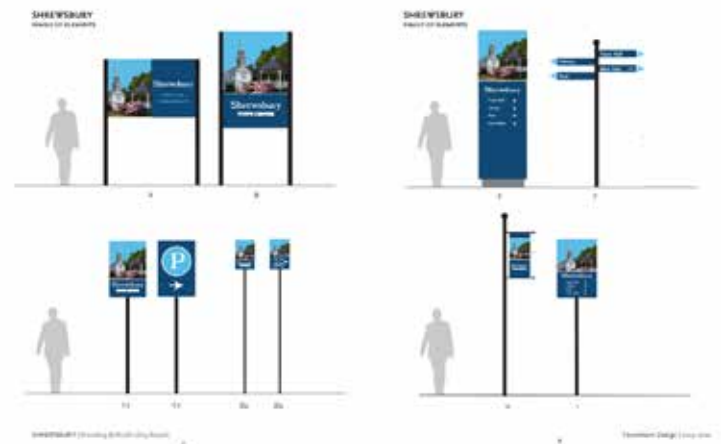
## Shrewsbury Community Branding & Wayfinding Project

Shrewsbury is a commuter town located next to the City of Worcester in Massachusetts. The town has a notable economic history, including agriculture, leather industries, sawmills, and recreation and tourism. In recent years, the town witnessed a population growth due to its proximity to Worcester and colleges, universities, and a medical center and school. The town has an active tourism industry which was only interrupted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Town of Shrewsbury received \$15,000 in grant funding from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) program of the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This grant paid for consulting services to create a community branding and wayfinding plan. The project aimed to reinforce a sense of place, arrival, and shared visual experience through signage and informational markers.

The Town established an Advisory Committee to represent different perspectives on the community's essence and vision for the future. The project's consultant - Favermann Design - worked with the Advisory Committee to create alternatives for a brand theme, logo and slogan. The Town's Board of Selectmen reviewed the designs in a virtual public forum (due to COVID-19) and provided recommendations. The consultant designed a family of wayfinding signs and a map of site placement.

*Existing decorative light fixtures and banners were identified as a starting point for a larger branding and wayfinding system in a previous downtown masterplan.*  
Source: Horsley Witten Group



**Wayfinding System Elements**  
Source: Favermann Design



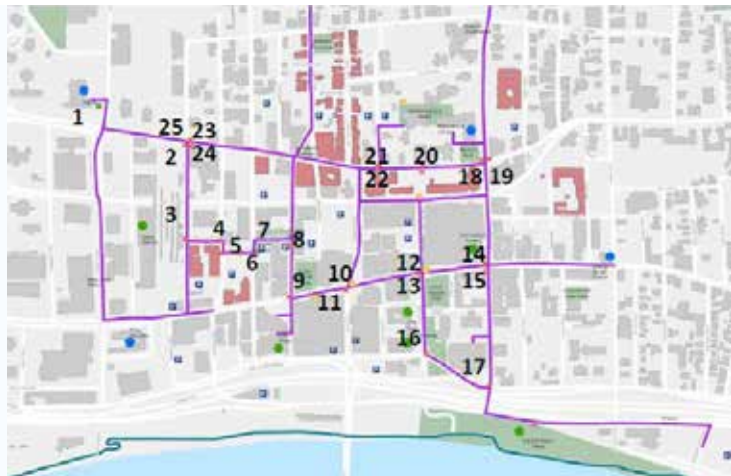
**Wayfinding System Location Map**  
Source: Favermann Design

## WalkBoston Wayfinding Program

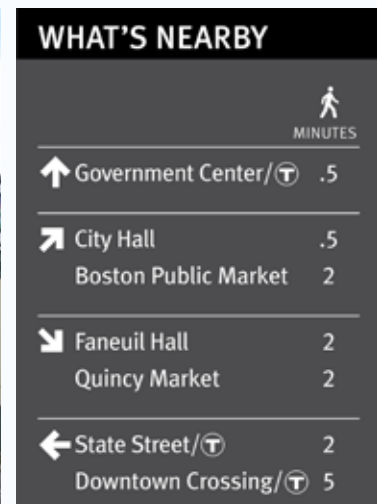
WalkBoston's mission is to encourage utilitarian walking as part of everyday life. One potential strategy they identified to increase everyday walking is the installation of wayfinding signs, which can give local residents clear information about walking routes and walking times to get to key destinations. With funding from Massachusetts Department of Public Health, WalkBoston started working with seven community to create systems of wayfinding signage.

Their first project, in 2014, focused on Codman Square, a commercial and civic hub in the Dorchester Neighborhood of Boston. Working with local community organizations, WalkBoston installed 90 wayfinding signs along the arterial streets leading to the square. In 2016 they placed 300 additional wayfinding signs in Springfield, Fall River, Turners Fall, Northampton and Belchertown.

Unlike other wayfinding projects that include branding and placemaking as part of the design, the WalkBoston signs are purely utilitarian, with basic information about routes and destinations, with travel time for walking (and in some cases, biking). The point is to overcome uncertainty as to the best route, while helping pedestrian understand how easy it is to walk to where they want to go.



Part of the process is close consultation with local stakeholders to determine desired walking destinations, routes and sign locations as shown on this map of the wayfinding loop for Downtown Springfield. Source: WalkBoston



The signs themselves are simple and focused on communicating direction and distance to key destinations. Source: WalkBoston



WalkBoston has also been testing wayfinding pavement decals in downtown Boston - designed for areas with no available sign poles - in order to determine their durability. Source: WalkBoston

# Provide additional public restrooms

<b>Category</b>		Public Realm
<b>Location</b>		Downtown Essex and Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
<b>Origin</b>		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) per community</p> <p>Funding Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AARP Community Challenge Grant</li> <li>• Community Development Block Grant</li> <li>• ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (TBC)</li> <li>• Essex Heritage Partnership Grant Program</li> <li>• Sponsorship and Advertising</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>		<p>Short Term (&lt;5 years)</p> <p>Planning and Implementation within 2 years</p>
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus on locations of the restrooms. Mitigate by undertaking a transparent site analysis process with well-publicized opportunities for community input</li> <li>• Town approvals (materials, design, etc.): Mitigate by involving town boards and decision makers in the community input process</li> <li>• Adequacy of funding for construction, management &amp; maintenance. Mitigate by scoping the project effectively.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of visitors of all age groups and their time spent in the downtowns (particularly children and older adults)</li> <li>• Decreased requests to use restrooms in businesses</li> <li>• Increased number of pedestrians and bicyclists</li> <li>• Perception of the convenience and cleanliness of public restrooms</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, DPWs/Highway Department, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Historic District Commission, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, community organizations



## Diagnostic

### Essex

Essex's downtown currently has a public bathroom at the Town Hall. The Essex Shipbuilding Museum reports that they function as a de facto visitor center with associated restroom use. Both locations have limited hours and neither is open in the evening. The Town Hall is open Monday-Thursday 7:30AM-3:30PM. The Shipbuilding Museum was closed through much of the pandemic but has recently reopened Thursday-Sunday, 10AM-3PM. In addition, there are restrooms at the playground next to the ballfields. Many visitors to downtown Essex come to patronize a single business and can usually use a restroom at that establishment. However, business owners and stakeholders who participated in the RRP planning process, identified a need for downtown Essex to become more of an integrated destination where visitors take advantage of access to natural resources and stroll between cultural institutions, and multiple businesses. Public restrooms would help bring that vision to reality. In addition, public restrooms can be an attraction on their own. Many potential customers pass through downtown Essex on the Scenic Byway. Well publicized public restrooms could give travelers another reason to stop downtown.

### Manchester-by-the-Sea

Manchester-by-the-Sea currently has one public restroom in the Town Hall. Two businesses make their restrooms available for public use. The town tested temporary restrooms this summer. Businesses owners and town residents who participated in public outreach for the RRP plan said that a lack of public restrooms was a drag on the downtown. The town attracts many summer visitors who need restrooms to be able to enjoy the town before or after a day at the beach. The town has a large number of older adults, making it essential to provide facilities that enable them to move comfortably in outdoor spaces.

### How the project relates to Covid recovery

A lack of public restrooms is a problem that predates the pandemic. However, resolving it will enable the town to draw more visitors and keep them in the downtown for a longer period of time so that they can spend more money at businesses. Public restrooms enable basic hygiene (hand washing) that can slow the spread of Covid and other infectious diseases. Further, if the pandemic results in future capacity restrictions, businesses may be less able to accommodate requests to use their restrooms.

## Action Item

Upgrade existing restrooms and/or add new public restrooms to enable visitors to spend more time in the downtowns and boost patronage of local businesses.

### Key Actions

- Upgrade existing restrooms that are suitable for expanded public use
- Build new public restrooms
- Conduct regular cleaning, restocking, and maintenance
- Publicize the improved and new restrooms. Coordinate with wayfinding efforts.

---

## Process

### Improve Existing Restrooms

- Identify public and private facilities that can make their restrooms available for public use
- Identify necessary improvements, including those for ADA-accessibility
- Estimate costs
- Negotiate legal agreements to enable public access, public improvements to private property, and maintenance agreements
- Develop detailed design plans
- Obtain funding for improvements
- Sign legal agreements as needed
- Undertake procurement
- Oversee construction

### Build new Restrooms

- Identify suitable locations for new public restrooms.
- Identify the party that will be responsible for restroom maintenance
- Engage businesses, residents, DPW and maintenance staff in restroom design
- Develop schematic and final designs and cost estimates
- Develop a project schedule
- Obtain land and/or access easements, if needed
- Obtain funding
- Undertake procurement for construction
- Oversee construction

### Cleaning and Monitoring

- Regularly clean and supply the restrooms
- Track restroom use and solicit feedback about the cleanliness and convenience of the restrooms.
- Communicate regularly with facility managers to ensure that the restrooms are functioning adequately and that regular cleaning and maintenance is being performed.
- Solicit sponsorship from local businesses to help defray the cost of maintenance

### Publicize Restrooms

- Publicize the restrooms as part of marketing efforts for the downtowns.
- Coordinate with wayfinding maps and signage to describe the restroom's location, hours, and any special features of the restrooms.



## Best Practice

# Creating Accessible Public Restrooms



Location: Shelter Island NY

### Keeping visitors downtown when they gotta go





Towns have limited options when it comes to providing public bathrooms: access to a town hall, library or other public building; creating a free-standing structure, or bringing in spot-a-pot type units on a temporary basis. The primary draw back of full-function, free-standing toilets is the cost, while the problem with spot-a-pots is the user experience.

After researching the options, Shelter Island identified the Portland Loo as a good alternative. It was designed for downtown Portland, Oregon, and was so successful it is now marketed nationally. At around \$100,000, it has running water and flushes like a traditional restroom. Waste is collected in a tight tank which is emptied as needed, after hours. It can easily be moved to adjust to demand, and has a high level of user satisfaction. It fits in well at the streetside of the existing park at the edge of Dering Harbor (top photo).



*Photo Source: Dodson & Flinker*

# Develop a shared branding and marketing program

<b>Category</b>		Revenue/Sales
<b>Location</b>		Downtown Essex and Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
<b>Origin</b>		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Low Budget (under \$50,000)</p> <p>Potential funding sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDI Community Capacity Building grant (up to \$25,000)</li> <li>• MOTT grant</li> </ul> <p>Additional funding will be necessary for implementation of individual programs outlined in the plan.</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>		<p>Short Term (&lt;5 years)</p> <p>Planning and Implementation in 6-12 months, followed by ongoing maintenance</p>
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of long-term stable funding for marketing and branding updates. Work on addressing this challenge during the development of the marketing plan development. Scale the marketing plan to the available resources</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported satisfaction of stakeholders and other community members regarding representation of community values and identities in branding and marketing approaches</li> <li>• Increase in sales in person and sales online as measured by individual businesses</li> <li>• Number of new customers on site</li> <li>• Increase in online engagement (number of subscribers/followers, responses, and website traffic) in response to specific plan initiatives</li> <li>• Increase in high quality media coverage in response to locally generated content and initiatives</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, traditional media



## Diagnostic

A business survey, conducted in March-April 2021 by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD), revealed that 45% of the business respondents in Manchester-by-the-Sea are interested in shared marketing/advertising initiatives. About 27% of the businesses expressed interest in setting up an online store or channel and 18% wanted to receive training on the use of social media. The survey showed that 28% of businesses in Essex are interested in shared marketing/advertising initiatives. About 6% of the businesses expressed interest in setting up an online store or channel and 22% wanted to receive training on the use of social media.

Due to the COVID-19 social distancing requirements, there was a major decline in downtown foot traffic of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea. It forced an Increased dependence on eCommerce, forcing businesses to change operation models and explore ways to reach and expand their customer base. However, many businesses faced a hard time adapting to the digital world because of a lack of information, expertise, and technological support.

This project aims to address these specific deficits while also providing a comprehensive plan or "roadmap" for marketing the towns in a way that is authentic to community values, effectively reaches key demographics/psychographic groups, and provides common frameworks upon which businesses can develop layer additional individual storytelling and consumer engagement strategies.

The Essex Merchant Group has had a long-term shared branding and marketing effort that was successful in increasing customers in the downtown. The marketing effort was supported, in part, by funding allocated from the Town of Essex's meal tax revenues. Due to budget shortfall in Essex, however, the amount of funding being allocated to the Essex Merchant Group was reduced. The loss of funding from the Town combined with the inability of some member businesses to afford the cost of membership in the organization due to COVID impacts has led to uncertainty about the ability of the Essex Merchant Group to continue funding shared marketing.

On a positive note, COVID-19 spurred increased collaboration between the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea and local businesses, including promotion of businesses on the Town website.

The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce received funding for the Cape Ann Comeback Grant which includes shared marketing efforts. However, participants in the grant recognize that funding will be insufficient to sustain long-term efforts. This planning looks to identify a resilient financial strategy for shared marketing and branding long term.

## Action Item

Develop a Shared Branding and Marketing Program for the downtowns of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea. The project will build on work by Essex Merchants Group, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Manchester Merchants Group, downtown businesses in both communities, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, and Cape Ann Comeback Grant. It will build a unique brand for each downtown based on its community values and stories. It will improve and expand shared marketing platform(s) for all downtown businesses.

The program will benefit from an economy of scale through joint procurement and use of shared implementation infrastructure. It will also enable the communities to continue to collaborate and benefit from their complementary expertise.

This project is closely tied to the public realm projects. These projects will all define and developing the identity of the community which would then be communicated in various

<p><b>Action Item (Continued)</b></p>	<p>mediums (print, online, banners, signs, improvements to the built environment, etc).</p> <p><b>Key Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the local brands</li> <li>• Develop the marketing plan by undertaking a series of participatory sessions with an ad hoc marketing/branding plan committee and other key stakeholders</li> <li>• Implement the brand and marketing plan across media and channels</li> </ul>
<p><b>Process</b></p>	<p><b>Launch</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine project manager for planning process, apply for grants, hire consultants, determine which stakeholders will be involved in the planning and map out process and schedule</li> </ol> <p><b>Plan Development Tasks</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify data needed to inform planning (market data, current social media analytics, etc.) and begin gathering it.</li> <li>2. Interview stakeholders to understand their needs and objectives.</li> <li>3. Hold collaborative planning sessions. Some will be intended for the entire stakeholder group; some may be limited to a subset. Topics may include the following, with the degree of emphasis and level of detail to be confirmed during the Launch stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce concept of a values-based approach to branding &amp; shared marketing. Undertake values / visioning exercise.</li> <li>• As background, review the roles of conventional destination marketing materials (flyers, brochures, magazines, etc.) and PR strategies (newspaper article / video profiles), etc. and how these are evolving with new technology as well as due to COVID-19.</li> <li>• Create an inventory of all destinations / events / experiences / activities. (The Cape Ann Guide + Directory data, Essex Merchants Group data and Manchester-by-the-Sea downtown business map are a natural starting point for this.)</li> <li>• Discuss types of shared marketing / co-promotion and referral strategies as well as relationship marketing.</li> <li>• Develop goals and positioning statement to guide the rest of the branding and marketing plan process.</li> <li>• Determine what builds the downtown's brand and how can that be experienced? Also discuss strategies for brand development of individual businesses and institutions in this context.</li> <li>• Determine to whom are you marketing? Consult market data: demographics/psychographics/market segments.</li> <li>• Set audience engagement goals.</li> <li>• Develop maps and curated Itineraries as well as possible technology to support them.</li> <li>• Develop social media, photography, video, graphic design assets and consumer-driven content strategies – with a focus on linking shared and independent social media campaigns.</li> <li>• Plan events &amp; experience offerings in driving visitors to Town (and specific strategies for marketing these).</li> <li>• Identify preferred shared marketing / branding platforms: analyze existing tools and skills to build and/or improve a shared marketing &amp; e-commerce integrated platform (website/portal).</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Note: each component will include some exploration of case studies and best practices. Whenever possible, this should include examples presented by local businesses or organizations (or collaborations), with goal of promoting peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and further encouraging collaboration.</p> <p>Ideally, the group will launch a small pilot program (or small pilots for different types of programs) during the planning process so that all stakeholders experience the process, impacts, and analytics prior to committing to the final plan / strategy.</p>

---

## Process (Continued)

### Bringing it all together

1. Finalize the marketing plan with confirmed priorities, identifying project leads, key tools that will be used, budgets, duration, impact measurement strategies, agreements to share specific types of data and agreements on funding to support plan implementation. Present draft plan components for stakeholder comment and reach agreement on all plan elements.

### Implement:

1. TBD on goals, for example: set up a shoppable landing page and social media accounts for all businesses; plan specific campaigns about fall visitation geared to specific groups (Empty Nesters, Cycling & Trail Running Enthusiasts, or Remote work/long stay travelers, for example)
2. Appoint/hire a Program Manager to coordinate with the Towns and the businesses, develop weekly/monthly content, and plan campaigns.

### Measure & adjust

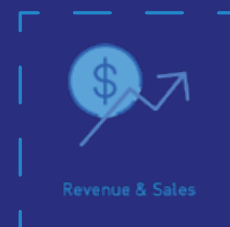
1. Track in-real-life (IRL) and online engagement and sales data. (Work with participating businesses on data sharing strategies.)
2. Conduct a customer survey to test impacts of specific program elements.
3. Report updates to the Town and partners and make program adjustments as needed.



Wells, Maine— Source: Favermann Design

## Best Practice

# Marketing and Branding



Location: Various

### Building a brand around a town's unique assets

Small towns often lack the staff and consulting budgets to pursue the kind of branding and marketing campaigns that larger towns and cities can afford to implement. Regional chambers of commerce often take on this role, but then it's sometimes hard for individual towns to distinguish themselves. Web sites and social media make it easier than ever for small towns to communicate to potential visitors, but what is it that they're trying to say? In the following examples, each town started by identifying the community features, stories and resources that draw people there, as well as the images that seemed to capture that brand identity. These were incorporated in different forms of communication: a traditional print, media and public display campaign in Bethel, CT; a wayfinding project in Wells, Maine; and a downtown branding and wayfinding program in Wakefield, MA.

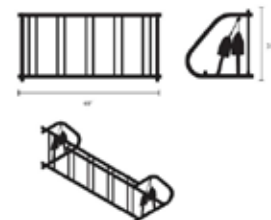
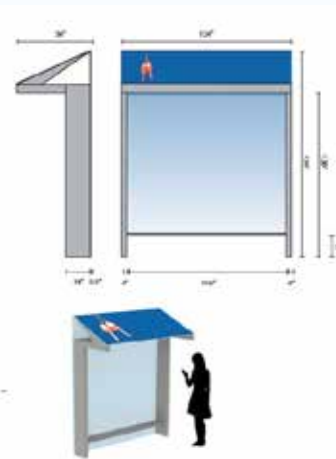


## Uniting Branding and Wayfinding in Wells, ME

Wells hired Favermann Design to develop a branding and wayfinding sign system that also had applications for internal communications, street furniture and public art. Starting with a visual survey of the community historic features and natural setting, the firm worked with an advisory committee to identify a set of simple images, colors and shapes that could be shaped into a common brand identity. The resulting logos and graphic template were then worked into a template for welcome and wayfinding signage, informational kiosks, bike racks, and print materials.



*The project team identified a simple waterfront theme with reference to local colors and materials and developed a consistent series of applications. Source: Favermann Design*



*With the central theme and logo established, the project showed how it could be applied to different elements, including a bus stop, bike rack, and even beach stickers. Source: Favermann Design*

## Discover Bethel Marketing Strategy, Bethel, CT

The Bethel Chamber of Commerce built a downtown marketing campaign based on identifying and celebrating local resources. The "Discover Bethel!" theme revolves around recreation, history, local traditions and unique shopping and dining opportunities, and packages them as a unified package with something for everybody. The central means of outreach is the DiscoverBethelCT.com website, but materials are also carried through public signage, T shirts, and traditional print media.



Sources: Bethel Chamber of Commerce



## Downtown Branding & Wayfinding Program Wakefield, MA

Wakefield identified the need to reinforce the success of its downtown with a brand identity and better directional signage. After a period of study with a town committee they identified some general themes based on local history. They hired Favermann Design, which took the ideas forward and expanded plans for information kiosks into a more comprehensive strategy that would extend the brand across multiple aspects of the wayfinding and communications campaign. The firm took the image of the town's historic bandstand and used it as the graphic theme for signage, kiosks and print materials. This included welcome and directional signs, kiosk displays and other outdoor communications. They chose a common color scheme for the signs and brought the same colors and typography into a style guide for written communications.



*The Bandstand was the inspiration for the shape of the signage.*



*Kiosks, welcome signs and wayfinding all reference the form and colors of the historic bandstand to form a consistent brand identity. Source: Favermann Design*



*A style guide provides a graphic template using the same themes as the outdoor signage which is used for newsletters and web pages. Source: Favermann Design*

# Establish an off-season events series based in winter placemaking

Category		Revenue/Sales
Location		Downtown Essex and Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
Origin		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
Budget		<p>Low Budget (&lt;\$50,000) Approximately \$10,000-\$15,000 for program infrastructure that will be used for each event. Less than \$5,000 per repeat event.</p> <p>Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MassDOT, Shared Streets and Spaces</li> <li>• CDBG Funding</li> <li>• State and regional foundation support</li> <li>• Crowdfunding through Patronicity</li> <li>• NEFA Arts Grants</li> <li>• Art Place America</li> <li>• National Association of Realtors Placemaking Grants</li> <li>• ARPA Funding (TBD)</li> </ul>
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (&lt;5 years) Planning in two months. Implementation in 3 months.</p>
Risk		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpredictable weather conditions</li> <li>• Challenge of coordinating multiple partners</li> </ul> <p>Risks will be minimized as much as possible by promoting this as a temporary intervention. If there are issues with spaces chosen that are insurmountable after installation the event can be moved to alternative sites. Most materials purchased for the event series will be able to be moved and reused for future events.</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of events</li> <li>• Number of visitors during the event series</li> <li>• Sales during event</li> <li>• Press coverage and social media mentions/likes</li> <li>• User sentiment data (could be collected via intercept interviews and/or post-event survey): do visitors make more trips to the area during winter? Do visitors consider the area more of a destination during winter than they did previously? Do visitors and residents feel more positively about the downtown during winter than they did previously?</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources		Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, local entertainers, artists, craftspeople, makers, arts and community organizations, schools, placemaking consultant to support both planning and continued community engagement as project goes through iterations



## Diagnostic

Businesses in both Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea report that they make a large portion of their profits during the summer months, and experience significantly reduced revenues in the winter.

Loss of revenue due to COVID-19 has put businesses in a weakened position to survive the off-season. If the pandemic continues to impact the capacity of businesses and/or the willingness of customers to patronize indoor businesses, winter months will see further reductions in sales.

Prior to COVID, some businesses in Manchester-by-the-Sea were holding a monthly event series that was showing success. However, due to the challenges of the pandemic, the event series lapsed. Essex hosts several large events but none in the winter.

Events are a proven way to draw customers to businesses and both communities have experienced success with previous events. Local residents have shown strong support for events and a thirst for more of them. During public outreach for the RRP plan, community members and business owners said that they thought a winter event series would improve the attractiveness and vibrancy of the downtowns.

Social distancing measures made some people more willing to participate in outdoor experiences in the winter, liking eating outdoors or socializing outdoors. This project will help make that behavior change more sticky.

This project will expand the customer base for the downtowns and bolster business revenue. It will also help rebuild community cohesion that was lost due to Covid social distancing measures.

## Action Item

Create a winter event series to draw people to the downtown and provide a much-needed bump in customers during the "off-season."

This project would build off best practices for winter placemaking developed in response to COVID. It would create an off- season event or events that would be rooted in improving and activating specific places in the downtown to make them more comfortable and fun for outdoor off-season gatherings. Event participants would stroll between outdoor event spaces and local businesses which would also provide activities or attractions building off the event theme. The event series could span the two communities with a trolley, vans, or school buses providing transportation between the downtowns and circulating to other local destinations, like area sledding hills.

### Key Actions

- Create a basic plan for the events
- Raise funds
- Establish detailed logistical plans, recruit volunteers
- Promote events
- Hold Events
- Document events including successes and improvements needed

---

#### **Establish Basic Parameters for Events**

- Meet with the Advisory Committee to discuss the events, budget, capacity, promotional needs, and additional resources.
- Identify appropriate public spaces for the events, including warming spaces with activities (for example at Reed Park, Village Restaurant parking lot), and restrooms
- Work with businesses and property owners to identify private spaces that can be used for the events.
- Create a set of themes for the events.
- Establish the event schedule

#### **Fundraising and Logistics**

- Obtain seed funding and conduct additional fundraising
- Identify any require permits and obtain them
- Prepare detailed logistical plan for set up, support facilities, power, circulation, parking, safety & security, and clean up.
- Recruit volunteers

#### **Promotion**

- Promote the event in and around the town through multichannel marketing.

#### **Hold Events**

- Hold event series
- Make iterative changes and improvements during series, as needed

#### **Learning and Documentation**

- Solicit feedback from the community and businesses to make improvements in the future. For example, conduct intercept interviews during the events. Conduct a survey afterward.
- Gather data about attendance, sales, etc.
- Create a program report that can guide future events

See the following proposal for an event series from Bench Consulting.

## WINTER WARMER IN ESSEX & MANCHESTER BY THE SEA

Prepared for LRRP Program



### DIAGNOSTIC

Businesses in both Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea report that they make a large portion of their profits during the summer months, and experience significantly reduced revenues in the winter. Loss of revenue due to COVID-19 has put businesses in a weakened position to survive winter months. Creating a winter event series to draw people to the downtown and provide a much-needed bump in customers during the "off-season." The towns are seeking to provide a regional draw to support area businesses.

### PROJECT PROPOSAL

From our discussions with the group, it sounds like events leading up to the holiday season have been a success in past years but that not much is planned in the months following the holiday season. For residents, these can be some of the toughest months of a New England winter and for businesses, this can be some of their lowest revenue months. We are proposing a winter festival over multiple weekends that connects the commercial areas of Manchester By The Sea and Essex along with area sledding hills (weather permitting) and other attractions as the group sees fit. Hiring a trolley to ferry patrons between area parking lots, both commercial districts and local sledding hills while encouraging all area businesses to take part by providing their own outdoor "apres ski" atmosphere with food and drinks inspired by the winter season. The goal here is to provide resources to businesses and to eventually make this event as light a lift as possible for event organizers, with organizers providing the transportation, marketing support and perhaps some programming in public spaces adjacent to the commercial centers to get started.

### PARTNERS & RESOURCES

- Town Representatives
- Regional Chamber Staff
- Local restaurants, and small businesses and merchants groups
- Arts organizations, creatives and local craftspeople
- Placemaking Consultant to support both planning and continued community engagement as project goes through iterations.

### FUNDING

- Shared Streets and Spaces - MassDOT
- ARPA Funding (TBD)
- Commonwealth Places, MassDevelopment
- CDBG Funding
- State and regional foundation support
- Crowdfunding through [Patronicity](#)
- NEFA Arts Grants
- Art Place America
- National Association of Realtors Placemaking Grants

### PROJECT INSPIRATION

#### Winterbridge Fall River

Winterbridge featured a number of outdoor activities geared towards providing a safe, warm, inviting space for people to base their visit to Downtown Fall River while also providing an opportunity for passive use during non event hours. A small stage, performance venue, two propane powered warming stations, evergreen trees to block wind and create a festive mood, and much more were added to the space. This space would be intended for use in all seasons but designed specifically for winter use. For more Winter Ideas see our [Winter Places Guide](#).



**MATERIALS:** Stage, pergola, lights, fire pits, trees, warming stations, tables, chairs, hand made log benches.

#### Cafe Bicycle, Edmonton



Private restaurants have adapted very well, even in pre-covid times, to embracing the outdoors in winter in Canada. In many cities, local regulations were changed to allow and encourage outdoor dining and guidance was provided from the city as to strategies to employ to change up how we think of winter outdoor dining. Food and drink menus were changed and setups encouraged customers to embrace the season with seasonally inspired menu items and a wood fire for warmth.

**MATERIALS:** tables, chairs, wood burning firepits, Adirondack chairs, firewood, winter drink menu.

## WINTER WARMER IN ESSEX & MANCHESTER BY THE SEA



### PROCESS



#### Location

We recommend focusing these projects in the commercial cores of MBTS and Essex with direct trolley connections to area parking lots and sledding hills. Providing trolley service between the different locations will enable visitors to easily enjoy a complete experience without having to worry about traffic congestion or parking.

#### Identify Inspiration

We've provided two sample projects that encapsulate components of our recommendations for implementation here. [For more Winter Placemaking ideas, please see our Winter Places Guide from 2020 here.](#)

#### Plan & Implement

We're recommending providing a "tool kit" or small budget for restaurants to adapt to this program. Encourage a small wood burning firepit and lighting (whether flood lighting or bistro lighting). Less formal seating elements including standup tables, benches and addirondak chairs preferred to formal dining setups outdoors.

#### Feedback

An incredibly important part of any iterative project like this. Ensure you're actively seeking input through in person and online methods. During any events or programming, have someone on site surveying community members, businesses and area residents.

#### Iterate

What worked? What didn't work? Adapt your project based upon user feedback. Did residents benefit? Did area businesses benefit. How could things be improved and could another location be more appropriate for this intervention. .

### ACTIVATION LOCATIONS- *Beyond Participating Businesses*

#### Manchester By The Sea



##### Reed Park (or other central location)

As area businesses slowly adopt this program, it will be more integral early on to plan some placemaking activations in town. Having one central gathering place in each town that also serves as the Trolley stop will be a great way for visitors to base their visit to town from and begin their stroll. Encourage "guides" to locate here and add some space for a warming station for people to grab warmth before getting moving on a walk around the Downtown and into participating restaurants and businesses.

##### Suggested Materials:

tables, chairs, fire-pit, "information desk," downtown map or guide.

#### Essex



Using a portion a parking lot at the intersection of Martin and Main, create a public space to serve as the Trolley Hub for Essex, a central location for visitors and event attendees to get dropped off and get some warmth in a similar seetup to the space in Manchester By The Sea.

##### Suggested Materials:

tables, chairs, fire-pit, "information desk," downtown map or guide.

#### Sledding Hills



This location will serve as a stop along the trolley tour of the two towns at a designated hill for sledding, assuming winter cooperates and brings some snow. Providing just a handful of sleds to borrow and a warming station at the base of the hill.

##### Suggested Materials:

Sleds to borrow, warming station



### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Data

- Number of events
- Sales during events
- Visitors at events

#### User Sentiment

- Do visitors make more trips to the area during winter?
- Do visitors consider the area more of a destination during winter now than they did previously?
- Do visitors spend more time or make more visits to the area?

### RISKS

Risks will be minimized as much as possible by promoting this as a temporary intervention. If there are issues with spaces chosen that are insurmountable after installation this can be moved to alternative sites with most materials purchased intended to be able to be moved elsewhere.

### KEYS TO SUCCESS



#### Early Engagement

Bring together a team of engaged business owners, property owners, creatives and residents from the area early in this planning process so they can feel as much of the planning process as possible and are more likely to stay engaged throughout this first iteration and hopefully beyond.



#### Changing Mindsets

One of the biggest things we can do to encourage more people to get out and about in winter in New England is encouraging a change in mindset. We're willing to spend hours outside at a Patriots game or a ski lodge but not on main street? Focussing messaging around "apres ski" or "winter warmer" will help get people in the right mindset. Encourage personal warmth over loads of propane. Dress for a day on the slopes when you come downtown.



#### Feedback

Have an online survey always open combined with in person surveys of attendees to events and users of the space as well as direct outreach to abutting residents and businesses. What did visitors like. What did they not like. Where areas more heavily visited than others? How can we encourage more widespread visitation and patronage of more businesses next time?



#### Business Engagement

The long term success and sustainability of this project is contingent upon early engagement and involvement with area businesses. We have planned these community spaces in each community which, long term, would be a heavier lift but assuming business embrace this program as their own and continue their own programming for years to come, these spaces won't be as necessary in the future.

Prepared by Jonathan Berk:  
[Jonathan@patronicity.com](mailto:Jonathan@patronicity.com)



## Best Practice

# Winter Events and Downtown Activation



Location: Various

### Bringing life back downtown in the off-season

While indoor shopping and dining venues attract loyal customers even in the depth of winter, with no one hanging out downtown sales normally drop dramatically. Many communities, especially those with long cold winters, schedule winter festivals and special events. Many are also applying placemaking strategies to create pop-up outdoor markets, performance venues and parklets that activate downtown spaces for the entire season, and give people a reason to "come see what all the fuss is about."

For the Poppportunity Winter Market in Central Square in Cambridge (above) unheated sheds provide space for small business throughout the winter.

## Northampton Ice Festival

Launched in February 2011, the Northampton Ice Art Festival is an annual public display of ice sculpture in downtown Northampton. The one-day event invites roughly ten artists to carve sculptures from large blocks of ice, weighing up to 900 pounds, mounted on pedestals along Main Street. The artists work on site, allowing pedestrians to watch the process during the day, and in the evening, the work is lit from the pedestals below, coinciding with the monthly "Arts Night Out", which also features events at local art galleries and businesses. The Ice Art Festival also marks the last evening of Northampton's holiday lighting, which features decorative lighting on trees in downtown Northampton during the winter months. The sculptures are left up throughout the weekend or longer as weather permits.

The event is organized by the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA), which is affiliated with the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce. DNA also organizes Arts Night Out and the holiday lighting. According to its website, the group works with the retail and restaurant community in Northampton to promote and produce "signature downtown events". In addition to supplying the ice and displays, the event pays each participating artist a \$200 stipend for their work.

The Festival brings people downtown in an otherwise quiet time of year. It also employs classic placemaking strategies, combining live, interactive, creative events with display of the finished art.



*Photo sources: Downtown Northampton Association; Design Northampton*



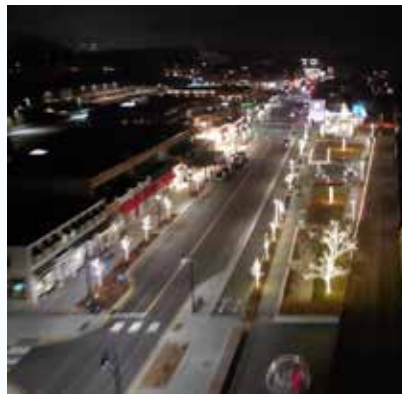


## Winter Activation in Wayzata, MN

Wayzata, located 15 miles west of Minneapolis, recently converted a parking lot between the downtown and Lake Minnetonka into a linear park called the Panoway, opening in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic pushed the local Chamber of Commerce and the City to look for ways to activate the space, especially in the winter months when recreation on the lake is in hibernation.

With assistance from the Musicant Group, a collaboration of the Chamber, City and the Panoway Conservancy implemented a brief planning process and assembled \$90,000 to fund weekly programming, special events, physical improvements and staffing to activate the park from January to March, 2021. The partnership included key support from the city, including bathrooms, storage, snow removal, maintenance and even used Christmas Trees.

The project included physical improvements that included decorative lighting, a winter garden, a curling court, and fire pits, as well as a host of activities. These included do-it-yourself experiences centered on an "activity box," as well as weekend programming. Coordinated outreach and marketing was designed to drive continued increases in daily visitation, "weekly rituals" and destination tourism over the course of the winter.



*Holiday lighting was extended into the park to create a welcoming space, while fire pits provide needed warmth to enable longer visits.*



*A curling court and equipment was a key focus*



*Interactive stations included a "graffiti ice wall," and activity box filled with games and activities for people (and dogs).*

*Photo sources: Musicant Group; Wayzata Chamber of Commerce*



## Winterbridge Festival, Fall River, MA

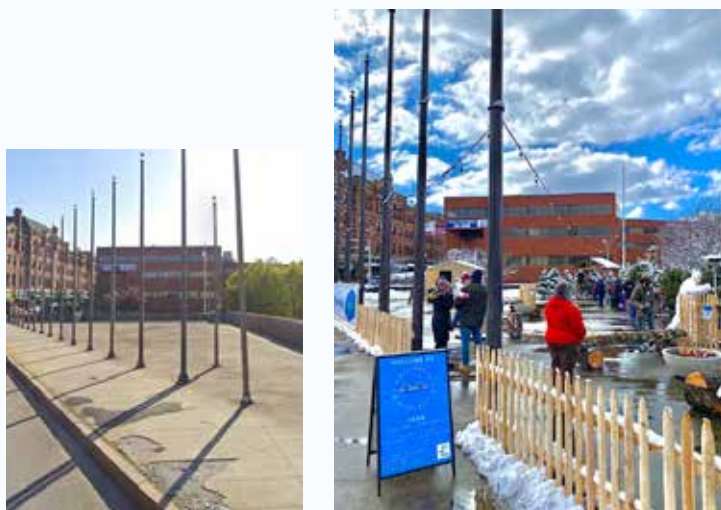
Winterbridge is a collaboration between MassDevelopment TDI, the city of Fall River and the Fall River Arts + Cultural Coalition (FRACC). Running for Fridays and Saturdays for six weeks, events focus on the transformed Gromada Plaza. Volunteers help set up simple seating, fencing and booths. Evergreen trees are brought in to dress up the space, which is activated by fire pits, live entertainment, dance lessons, live painting demonstrations and other activities.

The Winterbridge cultural events grew out of the desire for a quick win at relatively low cost (\$37,000 plus in-kind donations). They also help to demonstrate the power of FRACC, a 40-member diverse group of arts, culture, business, community nonprofit, philanthropic and public sector stakeholders. The project was designed to bring the community together and engender city pride, and also to provide for safe cold-weather activities during the Covid-19 Pandemic.



*An empty urban plaza is activated with low-cost furnishing built by volunteers, showing that placemaking is not about fancy materials, but rather giving people something fun to do in a space.*

*Source: Fall River Arts + Cultural Coalition (FRACC)*



*Before and after: pop-up placemaking like this allows for ideas to be tested before more permanent features are installed - if they are needed at all.*

*Source: FRACC*



*Painting demonstrations, music and family-friendly activities bring people downtown who otherwise may never visit.*

*Source: FRACC*

# Cultivate desirable and viable downtown businesses

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		Downtown Essex and Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
Origin		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
Budget		<p>Low Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)</p> <p><b>Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Compact</li><li>• MAPC District Local Technical Assistance</li><li>• Regional Pilot Project Grant Program, Massachusetts Office of Business Development</li><li>• Urban Agenda Grant Program from EOHEd (prioritizes urban communities with a median household income less than 90% of states, but is open to all communities. Bonus points for projects serving Black/Latino communities)</li><li>• Small Business Technical Assistance Grant from Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (for implementation actions)</li></ul> <p>Note: Many of the steps in this recommendation could be carried out by a short-term project manager and/or properly trained volunteers. See the recommendation "Short-Term Economic Development Project Manager"</p>
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (&lt;5 years)</p> <p>The initial effort may be short-term, but this project requires an ongoing, long-term commitment. Project results and strategy can be reassessed every 5 years.</p>
Risk		<p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inability to sustain funding for the effort. Mitigate risk by implementing the short-term economic development project manager position including training local volunteers to carry on this action for the long-term.</li><li>• This is a difficult undertaking because some economic forces are stacked against success (increases in: online sales, commodification of many products, and chain businesses). Mitigate risk by: setting realistic expectations, establishing a clear implementation strategy, building on local strengths, investing in local businesses and people, and making a long-term ongoing commitment to success.</li></ul>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successful completion of a market study</li><li>• Successful completion of environment scan</li><li>• Successful completion of programs to cultivate businesses</li><li>• Successful establishment of marketing efforts to cultivate or attract businesses</li><li>• Contacts with potential business proprietors</li><li>• Increased number and diversity of downtown businesses</li><li>• Reported satisfaction with business mix by residents, downtown business owners, and downtown property owners</li></ul>

## Partners & Resources

Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members

## Diagnostic

COVID-19 revealed underlying weaknesses and opportunities in the business environments of downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea.

There is a lack of local serving businesses in downtown Essex. Downtown businesses are highly dependent on seasonal tourism and visitor dollars. Impacts from Covid-19—especially the decline in eating out, capacity reductions, and a decline in tourism—resulted in a loss of revenues, at least one business closure, and reduced operating hours. Both the pandemic and previous downturn in the antique market, show the disadvantage of having a large percentage of businesses clustered in a particular niche. Participants in this and previous projects in Essex have expressed a strong desire for additional local serving businesses, like a grocery/market, dry cleaner, café, pharmacy, etc.

Manchester-by-the-Sea's downtown has a fairly strong mix of local-serving businesses for its size. Input from businesses during outreach for the RRP plan showed that businesses cannot rely solely on local customers and need to expand their visitor customer base. COVID-19 stressed many downtown businesses. Capacity reductions, reduced MBTA service, and reduced visitors resulted in lost revenues. Several businesses closed or relocated to other communities.

In both downtowns, a few businesses were able to capitalize on increased work-from-home customers and seasonal residents who stayed in town longer—for example, by shifting from a sit-down restaurant to a takeout restaurant.

Long-term, both downtowns are wrestling with how to maintain active retail storefronts as competition from online sales ramps up.

Developing a more diverse economic base for both downtowns will help local recovery, as well as build resilience against future disruptions.

## Action Item

Cultivate new businesses to downtown Essex and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, especially businesses that will serve local needs, complement existing businesses and/or provide high-quality jobs. Collaborate between the towns to attract complementary/synergistic businesses.

### Key Actions

- Establish the Market
- Conduct an Environmental Scan
- Develop Programs
- Initiate Outreach and Marketing Efforts
- Monitor Effectiveness

#### Establish the Market

- Building on the Essex Economic Development Plan (MAPC, 2020), Manchester's Housing, Economic Development, and Land use Scenario Study (MAPC, 2018), and information in this plan, conduct a market study to reveal opportunities for additional and viable businesses that would provide goods and services desired by residents and that would support the viability of the downtowns overall. This would include a market analysis of consumer resources, gaps in the current market, and a leakage or population threshold study that looks that spending that is being done outside of the downtowns and could be captured locally.
- Inventory existing businesses and any historical data that can be collected to track changes in tenant mix over time.
- Determine what "basic" industries (that might attract other businesses) are of interest. While they are not necessarily immediately contributing to downtown vitality, they can provide a source of additional year-round income for use in local businesses.

#### Conduct an Environmental Scan

- Meet with existing businesses to hear what they think would be complementary businesses to what they provide.
- Meet with residents to hear what they would like to see in the district.
- Review existing research and recommendations developed to date.
- Work with property owners to identify available spaces for new or expanded businesses.
- Identify and eliminate regulatory hurdles to business establishment.
- Identify potential public improvements, including parking, lighting, and public realm enhancements, that could support business viability.
- Identify if there is a shortage of space, or different space needs, for this ideal tenant mix. If so, develop ideas as to how to accommodate those needs.

#### Explore and Create Programs

- Explore a mentoring program that matches existing business and community leaders with emerging entrepreneurs to provide support on working with local banks, real estate agents, and permitting agencies.
- Explore a buy local campaign with a focus on supporting new and struggling businesses including "cash mob" events.
- Explore façade, site, and signage improvements.
- Explore potential short-term tenant spaces for start-up businesses. This can lower allow local business startups to see if there is a market locally before making a large investment in brick and mortar space. For example, a business incubator space can be provided in an existing parking lot or underutilized parcel using pre-fabricated sheds for pop-up shops.
- Obtain funding for pilot programs to develop and test a more active economic development strategy for the downtowns, including some of the elements above.

#### Initiate Outreach and Marketing Efforts

- Establish marketing materials that promote the opportunities in the downtowns for the selected programs
- Conduct outreach to potential business owners, current business owners, and property owners to help them understand the opportunities provided by these efforts.

#### Monitor Effectiveness

- Monitor the impacts of the economic development strategy, including unintended consequences and adjust course to improve the program.





## Best Practice

# Cultivating Desirable Downtown Businesses



Location: Ashland, MA

### The Ashland "Corner Spot"

The Corner Spot is a pop-up incubator space combined with a downtown "third-place," with outdoor seating and tables, porch swings, a free mini-library, and a kids play area in a parklike setting. Programming includes dancing and sing-alongs, open-mic nights, book fairs, and seasonal festivals.

The centerpiece is a 300 square foot building that offers businesses the opportunity to test out their market in a downtown setting. The structure includes utilities, including a public bathroom, free Wi-Fi, tables and chairs and other amenities. Businesses can rent the space for \$100/week.

The project was spearheaded by Ashland's Economic Development Director, with support from MassDevelopment and crowdfunding through Patronicity.



Photo Sources: [thecornerpotashland.com](http://thecornerpotashland.com)

# Hire a shared short-term economic development project manager

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Downtown Essex and Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea
Origin		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
Budget		<p>Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)</p> <p>Salary depends on position structure. Variables include number of hours per week, fringe benefits, duration. Reasonable salary expectation for a mid-level Economic Development professional are approximately \$60,000-\$85,000)</p> <p>Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MA Administration &amp; Finance grant (Community Compact)</li><li>• MAPC District Local Technical Assistance;</li><li>• ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (TBC)</li><li>• Regional Pilot Project Grant Program, Massachusetts Office of Business Development</li><li>• Urban Agenda Grant Program from EOHEd (prioritizes urban communities with a median household income less than 90% of states, but is open to all communities. Bonus points for projects serving Black/Latino communities)</li></ul>
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (&lt;5 years)</p> <p>Planning and Hiring a Project Manager in 6 months. Employ the Project Manager position for a 2-5 year term with option to extend the position.</p>
Risk		<p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balancing needs of the two towns</li><li>• Unrealistic expectations</li><li>• Managing competing goals between communities - For example, both communities would like to attract Business X. Both have suitable locations. How does this position negotiate the competition between the communities?</li></ul> <p>Mitigate the risks by establishing a clear plan for the position upfront, including who the hire will report to, how their time will be tracked and reported, and how to resolve disputes, if they arise.</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number and dollars of grants received</li><li>• Number of volunteers trained</li><li>• Clarity of systems for economic development in each municipality</li><li>• Progress in implementing local plans</li><li>• Anecdotal evidence about ease of communication between businesses and the towns</li><li>• Anecdotal evidence about the level of collaboration between Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea governments</li></ul>

---

## Partners & Resources

Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Essex Strategic Planning Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, MAPC

### Additional Resources

MA Shared Services Manual, A Toolkit of Regionalization Best Practices for City and Town Officials (2013)

The MA Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA)

<http://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/2013-shared-permit-manual-web.pdf>

A County Manager's Guide to Shared Services in Local Government (2013)

IBM Center for The Business of Government

[https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event\\_attachments/](https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event_attachments/Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf)

[Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf](https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event_attachments/Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf)

Shared Planner Best Practices (2017)

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

<http://www.cmrpc.org/shared-planner-program>

Hilltown Collaborative – Job Description – Rural Economic Development Coordinator for the Towns of Middlefield, Chester, Blandford, Huntington, Montgomery and Russell (2017)

<http://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/rfp/Position%20Profile%20FINAL.pdf>

## Diagnostic

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that businesses have limited capacity to steward the downtowns and that these businesses need the support of Town government to advance collaborative efforts. For example, each town is lacking administrative support to organize events, write grants, and facilitate public realm improvements. Both communities would like to diversify the local economy. Establishing a Town position dedicated to supporting existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and spearheading economic development initiatives would contribute greatly to improving the business climate in each town, provide capacity for downtown improvement projects, and signal to businesses that the Towns value them and take their concerns seriously. A shared project manager would enable the towns and their businesses to learn from and support each other.

The impacts of COVID, coupled with declines in revenue, has led to positions being frozen, reduced, or eliminated. Both towns had to implement cost saving measures and even temporarily reduced staff hours. Staff in both Essex and Manchester were impacted. While in recovery mode, there are still many gaps in service that exist.

A shared position would allow the Towns to move forward with previously identified priorities which now languish due to a lack of funding and staff capacity.

Overall, both towns would like someone who can help find ways to support existing businesses and bring in new businesses that serve the local communities and create year-long, full-time job opportunities.

---

**Action Item**

Hire a short-term Economic Development Project Manager for the Towns of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea.

The project manager would be tasked with ramping up the Towns' economic development efforts. The project manager would develop and implement the Towns' economic development strategies, including Covid recovery actions and economic development actions identified by previous town plans. The project manager would develop systems and processes for economic development, improve communication between businesses and the towns, and build the capacity of local volunteers to undertake economic development. The goal of this project would be to develop tools and systems for economic development and train a volunteer force that can sustain the towns' economic development efforts at the conclusion of the short-term position.

Potential responsibilities could include some of the following:

- Develop 1, 2, and 5 year implementation plans for economic development based on previous town plans
- Grant writing
- Serve as a point of contact for existing businesses.
- Conduct outreach to existing businesses
- Coordinate with business groups, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, and other related organizations
- Special events support
- Inventory properties and businesses or other data collection
- Complete market analysis
- Recruit businesses that serve local needs, complement existing businesses, and/or create year-round full-time high-quality job opportunities
- Help show Manchester and Essex are "open for business" by creating a guide that walks through the steps to opening a business in each community;
- Provide technical support to the business community related to zoning and other permitting processes, help problem-solve issues
- Participate in regulatory change processes
- Create a business retention program to strengthen the local business economy
- Participate in branding and marketing efforts
- Enhance livability and walkability of the two communities

**Key Actions**

- Each town establishes its priorities and expectations for the position
- Establish a memorandum of agreement, or similar, between the towns
- Develop a job description
- Allocate or obtain funding
- Hire the project manager
- Conduct regular supervision
- Conduct regular reporting to the Towns
- Implement economic development activities
- Prepare for hand-off of economic development to volunteers, including training
- Document project for other communities to replicate



## Process

- Establish inclusive engagement. Identify group of engaged stakeholders. Let all stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute the development of the project before formalizing the job description or any formal arrangements between the towns.
- Create a steering committee representing municipal leadership, elected officials, municipal staff, relevant municipal boards/commissions, project champions, business owners, and key stakeholders from each community.
- Assess needs and potential structures for the position. Set a solid foundation for cooperative efforts.
- Develop a common understanding of goals and commitments:
  - Identify commonalities and compatible goals and determine joint priorities.
  - Is the arrangement feasible and realistic?
  - Where will the position be hosted?
  - What is the budget?
  - How is it funded?
  - What are the responsibilities?
  - What will be the structure for review and evaluation of position and progress made?
  - Set realistic expectations!
  - Focus on shared benefits.
- Determine how collaboration will occur. For example:
  - Intermunicipal agreements – MGL c.40, Section 4A – Approval by Board of Selectmen is required. Funding appropriated through Town Meeting.
  - Agreement with MAPC under terms of a fee-for-service contract.
  - Agreement with MAPC, MassDowntowns Initiative or another organization for grant-funded technical assistance. This may not provide a long-enough term for the position. Many technical assistance grants are for one year.
  - Agreement with another organization, like the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce
  - Contract with another community that has excess economic development staff capacity
- Establish a formal agreement between the towns.
- Develop a job description
- Allocate or obtain funding
- Hire the project manager
- Start with low-hanging fruit. This lowers risk/uncertainty and allows partners to test results and build up trust/relationships.
- Maintain cooperative spirit through ongoing and continued communication between partners, staff, stakeholders, and the public throughout the duration of the position.
  - Set clear goals with measurable results.
  - Schedule regular meetings.
  - Keep records and minutes of meetings and share with group.
  - Communicate with stakeholders.
  - Encourage patience and flexibility.
  - Bring energy and enthusiasm, and a problem-solving attitude.
- Prepare for handoff to local volunteers
- Document the results of the short-term position including lessons learned, so that other municipalities can learn from the project.

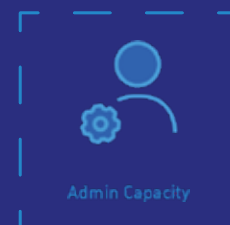
# The Big Reveal



June 24, 2018 | Noon–4pm  
Huntington Town Common

## Best Practice

### Hiring a Short-Term Economic Development Project manager



Six Gateway Hilltowns, MA

#### Collaboration helps rural towns compete

In 2016, six hilltowns on the western edge of the Berkshires formed The Hilltown Collaborative in order to pursue shared goals for economic development. Through the agreement they were able to qualify for a \$40,000 grant to prepare an economic development plan. The plan laid out strategies for shared branding and marketing, and made it clear that staffing would be critical for implementation. This was funded by a second community compact grant in 2017, which allowed the Collaborative to hire a Shared Economic Development Director. Funded for 12 months with the \$100,000 grant, the position was extended through 2020. In that time, the director was able to implement many of the strategies outlined in the original plan, including a shared marketing program, including graphic design and content for materials, and a new website. Training and other support has been provided for small businesses. In 2020 the collaborative release a series of six videos with the theme "Gateway Hilltowns, Naturally." The shared economic development director played a key role in moving plans forward, which is otherwise difficult in small rural towns without professional planning or economic development staff.



*A regional brand identity and marketing program, including new website (above) was unveiled in 2018 (top photo).  
Source: gatewayhilltowns.org*



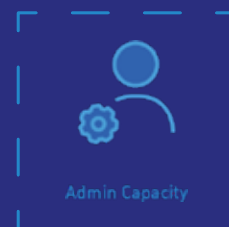
*A visitors center, co-located with the Carm's restaurant, opened in 2020  
Source: Westfield News*





## Best Practice

# Hiring a Short-Term Grant Writer with ARPA Funding



Location: Lee County, Iowa

### Using federal funding to secure other funds

The Lee County Board of Supervisors decided to use the county's share of ARPA funding to hire someone to manage the funds and write additional grants. The County has \$6.5 million reserved in ARPA funding, out of which 3% (\$195,000) can be used for administrative purposes. These funds will be allocated over the period of five years until Dec 31, 2026.

The County looked at two options for hiring a new position. The first option was to hire a part-time (20 hours/week) funding coordinator to exclusively handle the ARPA funds and related documentation. The second option was to hire a full-time position to handle ARPA funds and secure other grant funding for the County. The Board decided the new staff person will be offered a salary of around \$63,000, partially coming from the ARPA funds and the rest from the new grants. If the position does not generate enough revenue by the end of the ARPA funding allocation period, the County will discontinue the position.

# Adopt zoning changes that are consistent with the town's goals for economic development and housing

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Essex, all areas of town other than downtown
Origin		Essex/Manchester-by-the-Sea RRP Advisory Committee
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)  Funding Sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAPC District Local Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Community Planning Grant from EOEAA</li> <li>• Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI), Technical Assistance</li> </ul>
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) 1-2 years
Risk		Medium Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to achieve agreement and failure to pass zoning.</li> <li>• To mitigate this risk, conduct a robust community engagement at all points in the process. Invite community members to participate in goal setting. Allow them to review the existing conditions analysis and any concept plans. Do an education session about what zoning is and how it works. Invite representatives from communities that have similar zoning changes to talk about the process and results. Hold workshops as the zoning is being developed. Meet with property owners to ask them about their future plans, explain the zoning, and discuss how zoning changes impact the development potential on their site and their neighbors'.</li> <li>• Zoning changes are adopted but do not result in the desired outcomes. To mitigate this risk:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base the zoning on a detailed and realistic physical plan that shows the vision for the zoning. The physical plan should show the desired build out of the zoning reflecting environmental constraints, market forces, and contemporary building practices.</li> <li>• Ground zoning changes in local economic realities. Assess and build public awareness of the market potential of various parts of the town. What does the market need—small apartments, townhouses, single-family houses, Class A office space, low-cost commercial space, light industrial space? What are the rents or selling prices in the area and how do those compare to the cost of construction? Calibrate the zoning to enable the kind of development that is viable and desirable and ensure it contributes to the community's vision, but do not set the standards so high that it is not economically viable to make desirable property improvements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of citizens engaged in process</li> <li>• Adoption of zoning</li> <li>• Decreased permitting time</li> <li>• Decreased conflict among citizens</li> <li>• Meeting town housing &amp; economic development goals</li> </ul>



---

## Partners & Resources

Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Planning Board, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Merchants Group, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, MAPC

## Diagnostic

Essex has historically, “not had zoning,” meaning it did not have zoning districts with different allowed uses. The town recently adopted its first use-based zoning district covering the downtown. It simultaneously passed a moratorium on changes of use from residential to commercial or industrial. Over the coming two years, the Town needs to make major decisions about the future of its land use and how and where businesses fit in. These decisions will shape the town's business environment for decades.

Meanwhile, the town's economic development strategy is at a crossroads. Businesses in the downtown have recently used sophisticated marketing, primarily through the Essex Merchants Group, to attract more visitors to downtown. The effort was successful in the pre-pandemic era. However, the pandemic revealed the vulnerability of local businesses with sharply lower revenues and at least one business closure.

As existing businesses attempt to adapt to changes in the marketplace by diversifying their offerings or expanding their customer base—for example by hosting events—there is growing tension with adjacent residential uses, who are concerned about potential impacts like noise and traffic.

At this point, the town needs to determine how to support existing businesses, how to attract new businesses providing goods and services desired by residents, how to balance the needs of businesses and residents, how to maintain an adequate commercial tax base, and how to address land use conflicts born from a history of allowing businesses throughout the town combined with residents' changing expectations about land use.

## Action Item

Zoning changes—Essex only. Adopt zoning changes in Essex to clarify where businesses are allowed. As Essex contemplates adopting zoning changes, it needs to know how those changes could impact current and future businesses including ripple effects on downtown businesses. The zoning change process would include documenting current and potential future locations for businesses and a community conversation about the role of businesses in Essex: the realities of doing business in Essex and the positive and negative impacts of businesses on the community at large. The community conversation will help voters make informed decisions about zoning that will have long-term impacts on the town's businesses and economy. A similar conversation about housing types will also be necessary.

### Key Actions

- Conduct a diagnostic of existing zoning (underway by MAPC)
- Develop the basic scope of zoning changes
- Identify desired land uses
- Identify desired development patterns
- Develop zoning districts
- Develop performance standards for various uses
- Develop basic form-standards and/or design standards or guidelines
- Test the proposed zoning
- Develop the full code
- Adopt zoning
- All steps require extensive community participation

## Process

### Diagnostic

- Review the existing zoning. Evaluate for consistency with state law. Evaluate for consistency with best practices in contemporary zoning. Evaluate ways in which the zoning is, or is not, aligned with the Town's Master Plan and/or any other relevant plans.
- Consult with property owners, residents, business owners, developers, planning department staff, planning board members, zoning board of appeals members, town counsel, and the code enforcement officer to determine what is working in the existing zoning and should be kept and what is not working and needs to change.
- Map existing land uses and lot dimensions
- Conduct a survey and two public forums

### Scoping

- Decide whether to revise the current zoning or start fresh. Establish how detailed the code should be, and whether it should be very prescriptive or more flexible.
- Decide what approach to use for the zoning changes: Euclidian, Form-based Code, or hybrid. For the remainder of this process, we assume a hybrid approach will be used.
- Determine which locations in the town are suitable for which commercial and residential uses
- Refine inventory of existing commercial uses including impacts on adjacent uses, and plans for future expansions, closure, etc.
- Analyze the fiscal impacts of existing commercial uses throughout the town, including tax receipts, use of town services and facilities, wages paid with multiplier effects, contribution to civic life of the town (donations, etc.) and monetary and non-monetary value of goods and services provided.
- Augment inventory of land use patterns with analysis of property ownership patterns, environmental constraints, and transportation and infrastructure systems
- Identify nodes that are suitable for continued and/or expanded commercial and residential development.

### Determine desired development patterns and intensities

- Building off the Diagnostic's analysis of existing lot characteristics, analyze existing building form characteristics (building height, depth, massing configurations, etc.)
- Identify appropriate development intensities throughout town
- Develop a vision showing the physical plan for development patterns throughout the town, including preferred building types and scales, site design patterns, circulation, open spaces, and public realm improvements.

### Develop zoning districts

- Create map of proposed zoning districts
- Develop purpose statements for zoning districts
- Develop table of use for districts showing which uses will be by-right, by right with site plan approval, or by special permit
- Develop dimensional table for districts

### Develop performance standards for various uses

- Some performance standards may apply to all uses while others will be specific to particular uses. For example, performance standards could address: outdoor lighting, noise, commercial site design, stormwater management, etc.

### Develop basic form-standards and/or design standards or guidelines

- At a minimum, establish maximum front setbacks, building massing standards including the height and orientation of buildings fronting streets and public spaces, a front entrance requirement, standards for ground-floor uses, minimum transparency on the ground floor, and standards for pedestrian friendly off-street parking. These standards will vary by district and/or use depending on the vision for each district.

### Test the proposed zoning

- Test the potential buildout on a variety of parcels

---

## Process

- Evaluate the economic and fiscal impacts of the proposed zoning including impacts on the existing downtown (availability of customers, increase or decrease in property values in the downtown, changes in overall town business ecosystem).
- Consider developing a build out analysis for the full town.

### Put the pieces together into the full code

- Draft the code at the level of detail needed to establish a clear and predictable process of design and review, balanced with the town's capacity to manage that process and the ability of the real estate market to support the desired vision.

### Community Engagement

- Incorporate within each of the steps of this process a robust process of public involvement and iterative development of design concepts and regulatory approaches. Most communities benefit from a scenario-based process that explores multiple alternatives at each stage before settling on a preferred approach.
- Throughout the process conduct outreach to property owners, business owners, and potential developers to learn about their concerns and test how the zoning may impact them.
- Conduct a series of public workshops

### Adoption

- Follow the process specified by state law for zoning adoption. Where possible, use the provisions of the Housing Choice legislation to adopt zoning changes with a simple majority rather than a supermajority.

---

# Illustrations of Project Recommendations

The illustrations on the following pages show examples of how project recommendations can be put together in actual locations in Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea to help improve conditions for business success.





Two views of downtown Essex, showing existing conditions (top) and project recommendations (bottom)  
Source: Dodson & Flinker



*Two views of downtown Essex, showing existing conditions (top) and project recommendations (bottom)*  
*Source: Dodson & Flinker*





*Two views of a gateway to downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, showing existing conditions (top) and project recommendations (bottom)*  
Source: Dodson & Flinker



Google Earth



Two views of downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, showing existing conditions (top) and project recommendations (bottom)  
Source: Dodson & Flinker



---

# Rapid Recovery Plan

## Essex & Manchester-by-the-Sea



**DODSON & FLINKER**  
Landscape Architecture and Planning