



DOWNTOWN STOREFRONT TO STOREFRONT STRATEGY

PART OF GREENFIELD'S A DELIBERATE DOWNTOWN INITIATIVE



CITY OF GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Roxann Wedegartner, Mayor



Sponsored by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

Prepared by Innes Associates Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2022, the City of Greenfield restarted its “A Deliberate Downtown” Initiative with a public forum that was broadcast on Greenfield Community Television.¹ This initiative is a continuation of the 2020 initiative, “A Deliberate Downtown: Growing by Design.”

During this period, the City was awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI),² sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. This program matches communities with consultants who provide technical assistance to address areas of concern. The MDI program paired Innes Associates with the City.

The City sought the MDI grant for a “storefront to storefront” strategy. This strategy helps support the experience of the public realm, in other words, areas that are visible to and accessible by the public. A storefront-to-storefront strategy addresses three specific areas:

- The street (curb to curb)
- The sidewalk/front setback (curb to storefront)
- The storefront and store windows

In January 2021, the City of Greenfield completed a *Downtown Business District Assessment and Market Analysis*, prepared by FinePoint Associates and also sponsored by MDI. The report notes significant support for continued outdoor dining, an improved streetscape, more public art installations, and additional community events and cultural activities.³ This strategy provides additional guidance for outdoor dining and an improved streetscape.

¹ Link to the broadcast: <https://gctv.org/a-deliberate-downtown/>

² Link to the MDI program: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>

³ FinePoint Associates, *Downtown Business District Assessment and Market Analysis*, 2021, p. 8.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Greenfield's downtown already demonstrates many of the strategies communities use to bring activity to a downtown and incorporate local history and culture to create a sense of place and belonging. The City has installed public art along the sidewalk, in the parks, and on walls. However, some of the storefronts (under private control) and areas of street and sidewalk are poorly maintained and detract from the appearance of the area.

The Existing Conditions map to the right shows a significant amount of paved surfaces, which is not unusual for an urban area. The amount of available parking provides a significant resource: it supports the local businesses and events at Energy Park. But the area may be over-parked at certain times of the week or seasons of the year, which presents other opportunities to host or support the desired cultural and community events, identified in the *Downtown Business District Assessment and Market Analysis*.

As shown on the following pages, some of these lots are in the process of transformation, which will bring additional energy into the downtown. This storefront to storefront program will help support these planned improvements by encouraging private property and business owners to update their properties in coordination with the City's significant investments.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

The reboot of the downtown is based on two sets of actions. The first action is the planned repaving and reconfiguration of Main Street. This will be a major transformation of the downtown. This area is already walkable by virtue of the compact distances and the historic building patterns. The planned improvements to pedestrian and vehicular safety will enhance that walkability.

The second set of actions is a combination of planned public and potential private investment in new buildings and spaces. The map on the next page shows the location of major new public initiatives including the following:

- New fire station
- New library
- New skate park
- New or proposed parks

These significant public investments in the downtown support the potential reuse of the buildings and parking lots shown on the plan and provide an opportunity for property owners to leverage the City's investment into redeveloping their properties.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS OR ANTICIPATED

- ① NEW FIRE STATION (FALL 2023)
- ② REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- ③ FISKE AVENUE POCKET PARK
- ④ NEW GREENFIELD SKATE PARK (2023)
- ⑤ REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY (WILSON'S)
- ⑥ GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- ⑦ COURT SQUARE REDEVELOPMENT
- ⑧ REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- ⑨ NEW LIBRARY (2023)
- ⑩ RE-USE OPPORTUNITY (HOPE STREET LOT)
- ⑪ ENERGY PARK
- ⑫ FEDERAL STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



MAP SOURCES: ESRI, MASSGIS, INNES ASSOCIATES
 1 PACHECO ROSS ARCHITECTS
 3 CONWAY SCHOOL OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN
 4 PILAR DESIGN STUDIOS
 7 HARRIMAN ASSOCIATES
 9 JOHNSON ROBERTS ASSOCIATES
 STREET PLANS PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF GREENFIELD

AREA-WIDE STRATEGIES

The map to the rights identifies some key geographic areas to consider as the City implements its planned improvements and the recommendations of this report.

- The 100% corner was identified in Greenfield's report from the Local Rapid Recovery Program, an initiative sponsored by DHCD to help communities recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This corner is a key intersection of Main Street, Bank Street, and Federal Street. The LRRP report noted that this corner was mostly vacant;⁴ strategies to revitalize the area around it could help support new development.
- Gateways, identified in blue at each end of Main Street, are key entry points into the downtown. They should be a special focus of signage, landscaping, and the transition of strategies from non-downtown areas to the downtown. For example, lighting, street trees, street furniture, and paving materials for the downtown should start and end at the gateways.
- The walking radii indicate comfortable walking distances from central point. For this map, the 100% corner is used as that central point and the radii demonstrate close most destinations are within those radii.
- Green dashes link parking lots to parks, and indicate the routes along which signage could be used to easily direct people from one to the other. This strategy would help support community and cultural events.⁵
- Orange dashes outline parking lots owned by the City that could be used to support events elsewhere in the downtown or become temporary locations for smaller events.

ACTIONS

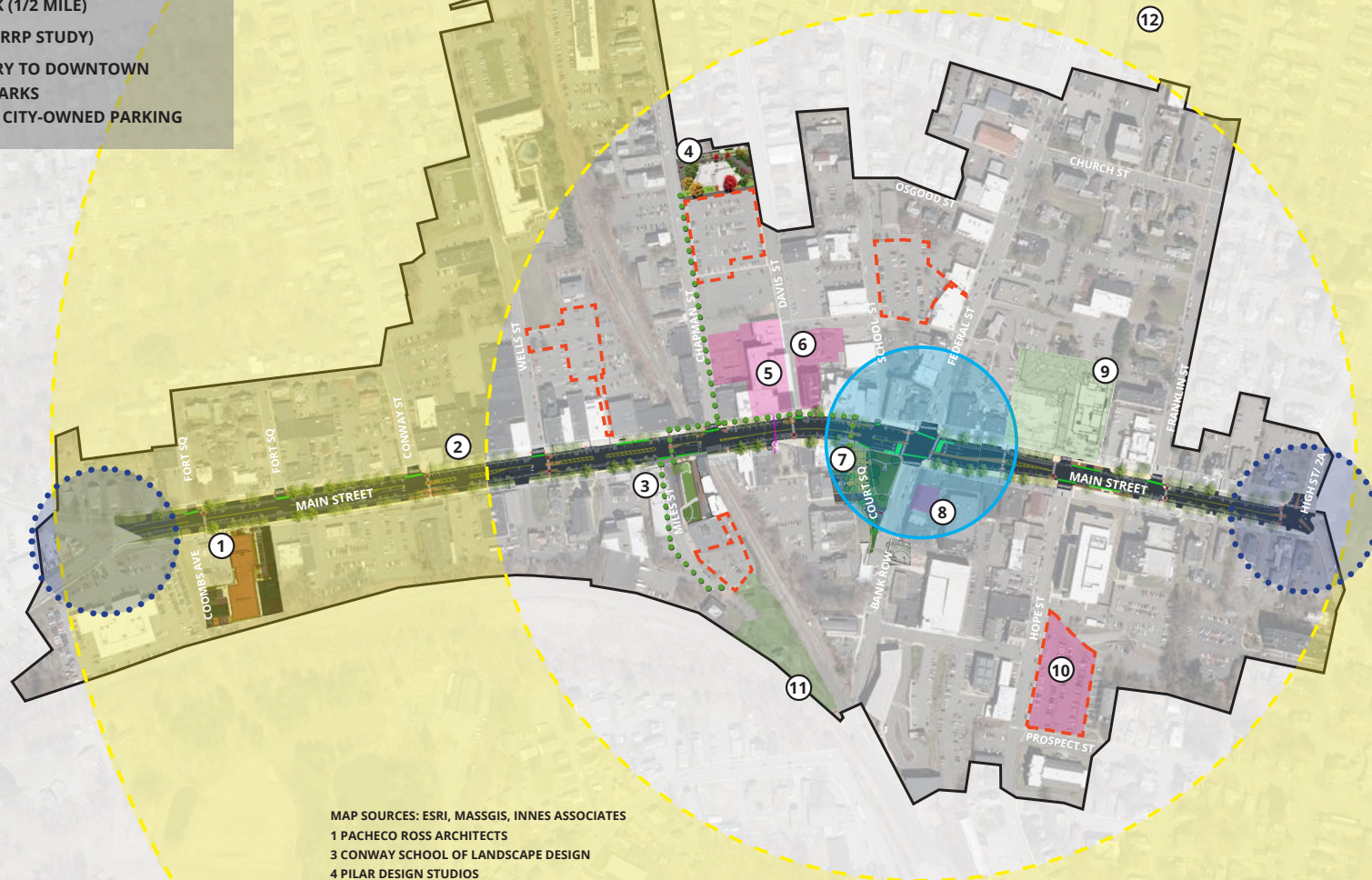
- Pass policies and regulations that provide guidance for the private use of public sidewalks and rights-of-way.
- Provide storefront business owners with resources for activation.
- Create a wayfinding system between parking lots, especially those owned by the City, and parks, especially Energy Park. This could include both street signs and street murals. Both should be refreshed on a regular schedule.
- Evaluate areas within City parking lots for temporary events, such as farmers' markets or craft fairs, or as locations for a larger cultural or music event that encompasses all of downtown, including Energy Park and the planned improvements at the Fiske Avenue Pocket Park and Court Square.

⁴ FinePoint Associates and Brovitz Community Planning & Design, *Greenfield: The Deliberate Downtown* (Local Rapid Recovery Program), 2021, p. 8.

⁵ The City has a wayfinding strategy that could incorporate this recommendations. Favermann Design, *Community Branding & Wayfinding Program: City of Greenfield Final Report*, 2015.

WALK RADII AND KEY STRATEGIES

- 10- 15 MIN. WALK (1/4 MILE)
- 15-20 MIN. WALK (1/2 MILE)
- 100% CORNER (LRRP STUDY)
- GATEWAYS/ENTRY TO DOWNTOWN
- PATHWAYS TO PARKS
- STRATEGIES FOR CITY-OWNED PARKING



MAP SOURCES: ESRI, MASSGIS, INNES ASSOCIATES
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CURB-TO-CURB

Curb to Curb strategies address the street itself. The City is already planning significant improvements as part of its Main Street Improvement Project. These curb-to-curb strategies supplement that investment by offering some additional pedestrian safety improvements and ideas for curb management.

Main Street is a wide street, and anecdotal reports suggest that some people feel that the crosswalk lights are not bright enough to clearly identify pedestrians in the crosswalks at night. Pictures to the right show some options to address that concern.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, on-street parking was reconfigured to allow different uses, such as outdoor eating and curbside pick-up. Both of these strategies have remained popular as people continue to support restaurants who have not fully recovered from the pandemic. A careful balance is needed to ensure that outdoor eating and temporary spaces do not have a major impact the availability of on-street parking in any single block, but many communities have made these options a permanent part of their downtowns.

Finally, the City already has several crosswalk murals (right) which are engaging additions to the street. Snow, salt, and plowing have a negative impact on the murals, so they should be updated or replaced on a regular basis.

ACTIONS

- Install lighting at crosswalks that provides greater visibility for cars and drivers.
- Designate a limited number of parking spaces for parklets; assign parklets on an annual basis and shift spots each year.
- Designate a limited number of parking spaces as 15-minutes pick-up spaces to support takeout from local restaurants or online shopping/in-store pickup to support retail.
- Consider an annual crosswalk mural program to refresh or replace the city's current crosswalk murals.





SOURCE: STREETLIGHTS-SOLAR.COM



SOURCE: TAPCONET.COM



SOURCE: TAPCONET.COM



SOURCE: GGWASHI.ORG



SOURCE: CURBED.COM



SOURCE: POPULARMECHANICS.COM



SOURCE: WALKERCONSULTANTS.COM



CURB-TO-STOREFRONT

In a downtown, curb-to-storefront generally refers to the sidewalk or the front yard setback. Outdoor eating is an option in this zone and outdoor retail display has become more common. Both require sufficient space for pedestrians to walk safely along the sidewalk without disturbing diners or shoppers.

Planters, window boxes, creative signage, and bike tools are other ways to recognize community preferences and local cultures. Signage can be used to direct people to their destination and showcase Greenfield's history.

Other ways of activating the sidewalk include continuing Greenfield's street bench program (see picture on page 4), monitoring the murals on the transformers to make sure they are in good condition, and using the bees as a focal point for landscaping. Local organizations might be interested in an "adopt-a-bee" program for a pollinator garden around the base.



ACTIONS

- Allow outdoor dining or retail display where the width of the sidewalk allows safe passage for pedestrians.
- Encourage ground floor business owners to support planters or window boxes.
- Encourage sandwich signs, with some restrictions to protect pedestrian safety, and coordinate with updated sign guidelines to allow more than one sign per business.
- Add bike racks and bike tools as designated spots throughout the downtown.
- Designate areas for a kiosk or public informational signage that provides direction, supports businesses, and provides information about local history.
- Continue to support public art at key locations throughout the Downtown.
- Consider a pollinator garden around the base of each bee with a local organization as the sponsor.



STOREFRONT

Addressing the storefront means coordinating the efforts of the business owner, the property owner, and the City. The City's role is to support creative solutions and update the City's permitting processes and incentive programs.

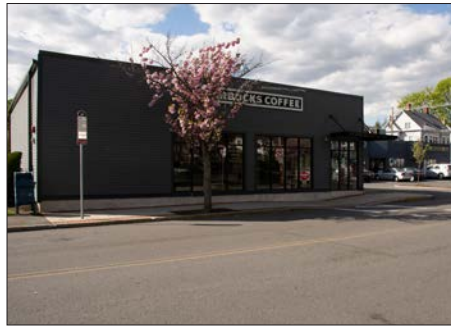
Storefronts include both the façade of the building and the window display. The City can encourage creative storefront design and window displays by providing assistance to small business owners through technical services and direct assistance. Linking business owners to experts in storefront design and window display, perhaps through a recorded webinar, and supplementing that with a storefront improvement program, would help small business owners with few resources.

Fortunately, the City has business owners who have begun creative storefront design that can serve as inspiration to other businesses (below).



ACTIONS

- Create a guidebook for property and business owners to understand how to best use storefronts and window displays to display their businesses.
- Use the City's designation as a Vacant Storefront District to address empty storefronts. Consider coordinated displays of public art, local history, or other methods of enlivening the storefronts between tenants.
- Consider restarting the City's storefront improvement program.
- Continue to develop the mural programs in Greenfield and encourage property owners to take advantage of blank walls to create murals. Consider working with some property owners to support murals that change annually.
- Create a window display contest at strategic times – summer, holidays, or late winter – to encourage creative and changing displays.
- Encourage awnings and wall banners and coordinate with updated sign guidelines to allow more than one sign per business.



PUBLICLY-ACCESSIBLE SPACES

The City already has plans to rethink Fiske Avenue as a pocket park and revitalize Court Square with a new layout. Creating small gathering spaces throughout the downtown establishes space for daily interactions and special events that can spill across the downtown.

Publicly-accessible spaces do not have to be limited to City initiatives. Where possible, property owners with extra space including front or rear yard setbacks or connecting side alleys, can work with the City to develop opportunities for outdoor dining or seating areas. Simply organizing the treatment of parking areas to provide a buffer between pedestrians and parking can make a significant contribution to the public realm.

This **BANK IN MARBLEHEAD, MASSACHUSETTS** (below) tied the design of their parking lot into the sidewalk (working with the Town) and an adjacent public park. A combination of plantings and open fencing screens the parking from pedestrians while allowing visibility into the lot for customers.



The **CORNER SPOT IN ASHLAND, MASSACHUSETTS** (right) is a good example of a temporary space that is used for different purposes. Eventually, this spot may be redeveloped for affordable housing; it is the site of a former house that had to be demolished. In the meantime, the Town built a multi-purpose shed that can be used for pop-up retail or food and provided a outdoor community space that is flexible for daily use and special events.

This **RESTAURANT IN PORTLAND, MAINE** (below) used their rear parking area for a multi-level seating area for outdoor dining. This strategy creates a unique dining experience for customers while creating visual interest for passing pedestrians.





IMPLEMENTATION

Many of the strategies in this report include public art, and the City has a built-in partner with the **GREENFIELD LOCAL CULTURAL COUNCIL** who can support these efforts with existing ties to the artist community and an understanding of available resources, both local and state. Two other organizations provide expertise and grants for placemaking and public art: MassDevelopment and the Mass Cultural Council.

The **GREENFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY** will be an important partner for future development of buildings in the downtown. They also have links to property owners and state and regional agencies that can help with implementation. They may be a good resource for developing a storefront or façade improvement program.

Other partners in implementation include property and business owners, the **FRANKLIN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**, local arts groups, and the **GREENFIELD FARMERS' MARKET**.

The first step in the implementation process would be to share this report with potential local partners and discuss priorities and resources. The guides and websites listed on the following three pages provide useful information for a robust discussion among the different groups. Sharing this report with partners allows each to identify actions that they can implement or support. The partners can then prioritize the actions by available resources and funding, coordinating the timing of implementation with each other.

PARTNERS

GREENFIELD LOCAL CULTURAL COUNCIL

<https://greenfield-ma.gov/g/17/Local-Cultural-Council>

MASSDEVELOPMENT

<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/key-initiatives/tdi/tdi-creative-catalyst>

<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

<https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/festivals-and-projects-grant-programs-are-combining/>

OTHER PARTNERS

<https://greenfield-ma.gov/g/19/Redevelopment-Authority>

<https://www.franklincc.org/>

<https://greenfieldfarmersmarket.com/>

RESOURCES

AREA-WIDE

WAYFINDING TOOLKIT Selbert Perkins Design for the Massachusetts Local Rapid Recovery Program

POPUP EVENTS Bench Consulting created a Winter places guide for pop-up events during the winter. Their website has examples of communities who implemented these strategies.

Starlight Square in Cambridge and Bow Market in Somerville are examples of recurring events while Burtonsville, Maryland had a placemaking event with a post-event breakdown. Belchertown has a Farmer's Market that could be replicated in a park or in a parking lot.

CURB-TO-CURB

STREETLIGHT RESOURCES Two resources for the streetlights shown on page 11 are Greenshine and Tapco.

OUTDOOR DINING RETAIL TOOLKIT Civic Moxie for the Massachusetts Local Rapid Recovery Program

BROCKTON DOWNTOWN PARKLET POLICY Innes Associates and Halvorson Tighe & Bond Studio for the City of Brockton. This document includes the official municipal policy and program for on-street parklets.

LINKS

AREA-WIDE

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>

<https://benchconsulting.co/winter-places/>

<https://www.starlightsquare.org/>

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

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/placemaking/burtonsville-placemaking/>

<https://belchertownfarmersmarket.weebly.com/>

CURB-TO-CURB

<https://streetlights-solar.com/>

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

<https://brockton.ma.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Approved-Parklet-Policy.pdf>

CURB-TO-STOREFRONT

Although the City of Greenfield already has experience with asphalt murals, the **ASPHALT ART GUIDE** from Bloomberg Associates may provide further inspiration and guidance for private property owners.

Pittsburgh's **OFFICE FOR PUBLIC ART** has interesting resources and programs for supporting artists and incorporating public art into the city.

STOREFRONT

These two guides provide useful resources for storefront activation and developing a storefront or façade improvement program.

STOREFRONT ACTIVATION TOOLKIT The Musciant Group for the Massachusetts Local Rapid Recovery Program

SIGN AND FAÇADE TOOLKIT Innes Associates, for the Massachusetts Local Rapid Recovery Program

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE SPACES

THE CORNER SPOT in Ashland, MA is an excellent example of a community-based gathering place with flexible uses. The Town created it on the site of a dilapidated building that had to be demolished.

CURB-TO-STOREFRONT

<https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/asphalt-art-guide>

<https://opapgh.org/>

STOREFRONT

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE SPACES

<https://thecornerspotashland.com/>

OTHER RESOURCES

MAIN STREET AMERICA is a nationwide organization and resource dedicated to helping communities revitalize their downtowns. Greenfield, Indiana has such a program, and their strategies may be of interest to Greenfield, Massachusetts.

BUILD A BETTER BLOCK is another nationwide program and resource for downtowns, including a guide to creating parklets.

The **MASSACHUSETTS LOCAL RAPID RECOVERY PROGRAM** has three other toolkits that may be of use to the City of Greenfield as it continues to focus on its downtown:

- **BRANDING TOOLKIT** Selbert Perkins Design
- **DISTRICT MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT** Ann McFarland Burke
- **MARKETING TOOLKIT** Goman+York Property Advisors

MassDevelopment has a program for underutilized properties that may assist with the City's long-term revitalization efforts.

The City is already part of the Vacant Storefronts program from the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC).

OTHER RESOURCES

<https://www.betterblock.org/>

<https://www.mainstreet.org/home>

<https://www.greenfieldmainstreet.org/>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>

<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/underutilized-properties-program>

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-vacant-storefronts-program-mvsp>

