



Town of Lexington

Town Manager's Office

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Select Board
FROM: Jim Malloy, Town Manager
DATE: September 23, 2022
RE: Weekly Update

The following is an update of activities for the week ending September 23, 2022:

Land Use Health and Development:

Planning:

- 95 Hayden Ave. & 128 Spring St./97, 99, 101, & 103 Hayden Ave. – The Site Plan Review application for the recently rezoned Planned Development District for Hobbs Brook Real Estate to construct two new lab and office buildings and a parking garage at Ledgesmont was approved by the Planning Board on September 21. The Applicant will soon be submitting with the Conservation Commission and a Stormwater Permit and then building permits for construction in three phases.
- LexingtonNEXT Comprehensive Plan – After four months this past Summer of public forums on the Draft Comprehensive Plan this past summer, the comments received have been incorporated into the Final Draft. The Final Draft of the Comprehensive Plan will be presented to the Planning Board on Wednesday, September 28 at 6:00 pm during a Zoom meeting. The Planning Board will review this final draft and consider adopting the Comprehensive Plan at this meeting. The [Draft Comprehensive Plan can be found here \(https://www.lexingtonma.gov/816/Draft-Comprehensive-Plan\)](https://www.lexingtonma.gov/816/Draft-Comprehensive-Plan) and the meeting details can be found on the Town's [public meeting calendar here](#).

Economic Development Office:

- Attached please find the survey results from East Lexington businesses and property owners on the three projects proposed for East Lexington improvements.

Town Clerk:

- As previously reported to the Select Board, the Town Clerk is holding a “Dog Tag Election” which will be taking place on October 6th and 7th in elementary grades 3-5 throughout Lexington. The Town Clerk received permission from the Superintendent to move forward and worked in collaboration with Caitlin Ahern, Director of Elementary Education, to make this a reality.

Students will have three (3) tag choices to pick from and the Town Clerk has included some basic election vocabulary and topics for classroom discussion. Please see attached information on this topic.

East Lexington Improvements

In the Spring of 2020, the Town received a grant from the State's Local Rapid Recovery Program. An excerpts version of the Local Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) report is attached with this memo for review. The grant was used to study the Minuteman Bike Path in East Lexington and determine how to leverage the bike path users to support businesses in East Lexington. The report states:

"Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts. The lack of "turn-off" is hardly a surprise because there is no signage or other visual clues to alert Bikeway users that food and retail are available within just a couple hundred feet. While small businesses faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in Minuteman Bikeway usage both for commuting (as residents didn't feel safe using public transit) and for recreation purposes. However, while the bikeway has increased usage, users are seemingly unaware of the business districts that are adjacent to the bikeway. "

Three projects ideas have been developed to help achieve the goals of the report and increase traffic to East Lexington Businesses from the bike path.

1. Wayfinding Signage Project- State Funding

Strategically place signage along the bike path to inform users how to access the businesses. Place a kiosk with information about types of businesses in East Lexington.

2. Store Facade Improvements- ARPA Funding

Provide grants to businesses and property owners to implement front and rear store facades and property improvements.

3. Landscape Improvements- Proposed ARPA Funding

Town Funded initiative to remove invasive species along the bike path to increase visibility to businesses from the bike path. The project will also include the creation of seating areas along the bike path, native plantings along the bike path, and formalizing paths to businesses.

How does this Project respond to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Local Rapid Recovery Diagnostic Phase: The "Bikeway User Market Segment," including commuters, recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, etc., appears to be largely untapped despite the very close proximity of the Bikeway to the Business Districts. According to the counter in Arlington Center, the Bikeway averages 3,000 daily users. This represents a significant market opportunity, but it appears that these customers are not exiting the Bikeway to enter the districts. We completed a field experiment where we counted Bikeway users and observed their turn-off behavior in the three districts. Only a very small percentage of users were found exiting the trail to enter the business districts. The lack of "turn-off" is hardly a surprise because there is no signage or other visual clues to alert Bikeway users that food and retail are available within just a couple hundred feet. While small businesses faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in Minuteman Bikeway usage both for commuting (as residents didn't feel safe using public transit) and for recreation purposes. However, while the bikeway

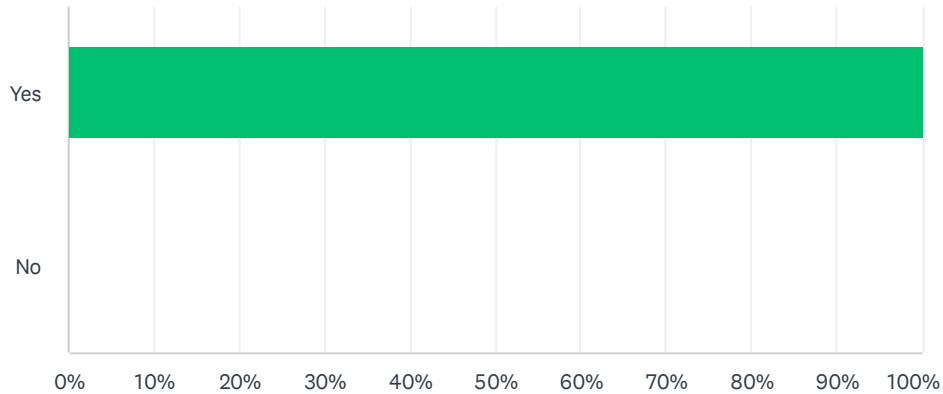
has increased usage, users are seemingly unaware of the business districts that are adjacent to the bikeway. This project will focus on the opportunity of increased cycling and pedestrian activity on the bikeway and try to draw people into the districts as a complement to more traditional wayfinding signage.

We propose landscaping improvements on the Bike path:

- Lexington/Arlington Line to Lexington Toyota
- Wetland delineation
- Surveying
- Permitting/Communication
 - o Conservation Commission
 - o MBTA
 - o DPW
 - o Property Owners/Business Owners
 - o Bike Advisory Committee
- Design
 - o Landscaping Plans
 - o Formalize Paths to businesses
- Implementation
 - o Invasive Species Removal
 - o Plantings (Native plants)
 - o Paths
 - o Seating (Identify outdoor dining locations and bench/rest area/ bike node location)
- Operations and Maintenance
 - o 3 years of invasive species removal
 - o Guide for ongoing maintenance

Q1 Do you support the concept of increased wayfinding signage to encourage bike path users to visit businesses along the bike path?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



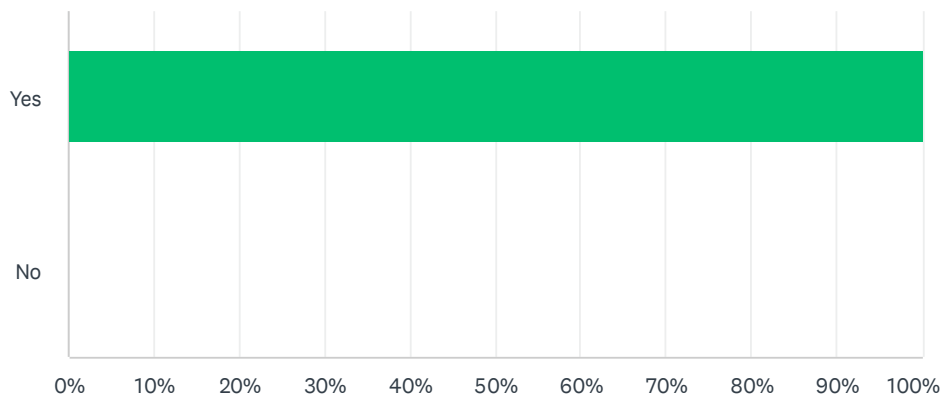
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	6
No	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 6		

#	COMMENTS? :	DATE
1	I love this idea and suggested it before. Perfect way to show where businesses are. Almost like a directory	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
2	I think signs would be a fantastic initial step in increasing visibility and access to the businesses along the bike path.	8/31/2022 4:06 PM

Q2 Do you support the Store Facade Improvement Project for East Lexington?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

East Lexington Improvements



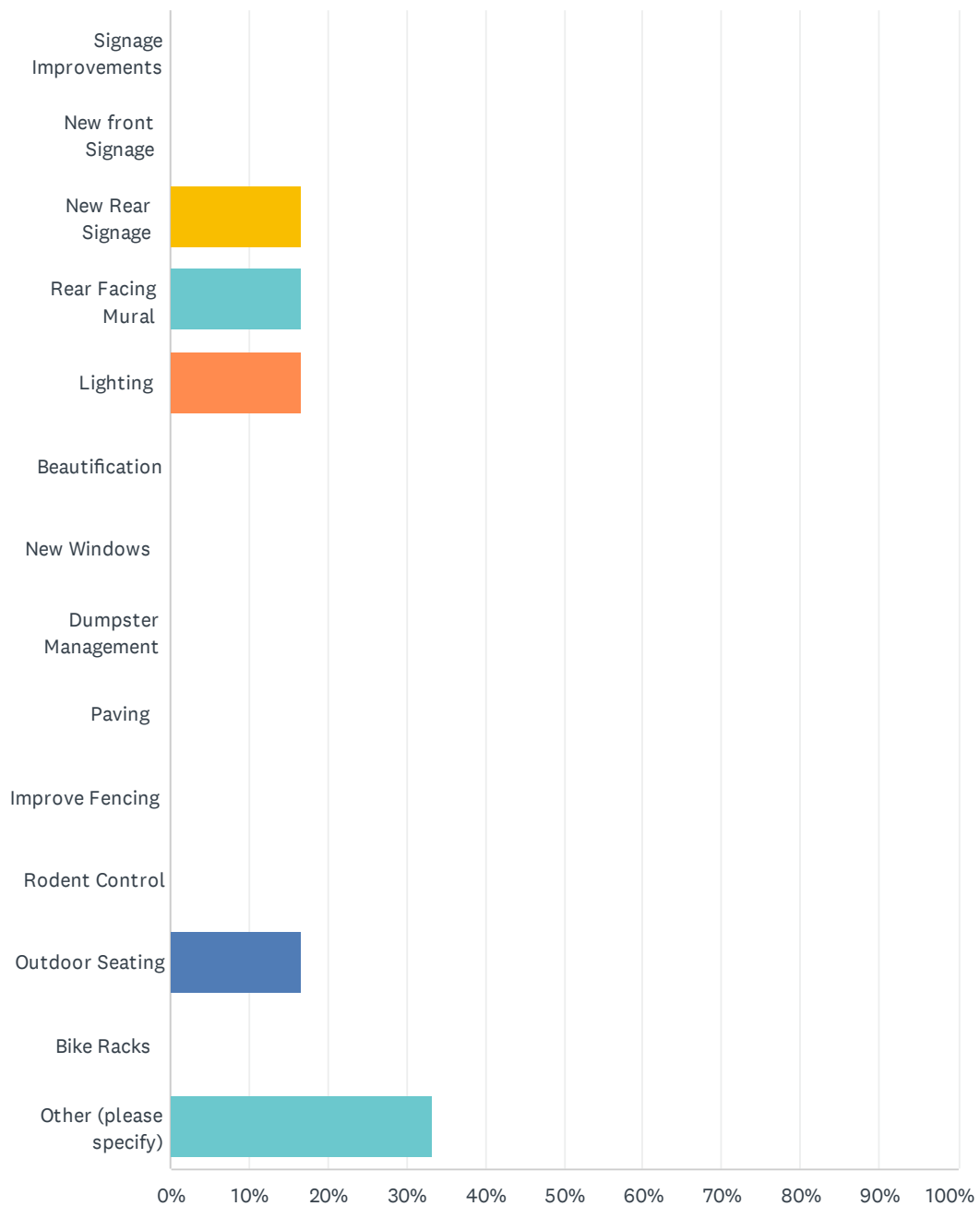
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	6
No	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 6		

#	COMMENTS? :	DATE
1	I feel like these needs to be some "pop" to encourage bikers/walkers to jump off and explore. And to let some opposers know the town supports businesses.	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
2	229 Mass Ave front and rear improvement, siding.	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
3	I think this would be crucial and I'm sure that many businesses would be thrilled to have a little help on this front. We would love to beautify the rear of our shop (Berman's) and any little bit of support from the town would be greatly appreciated. That support could come in many forms (financial, permitting, artwork approval, etc).	8/31/2022 4:06 PM

Q3 What type of improvements are you interested in doing to the front and rear facade of your business?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

East Lexington Improvements



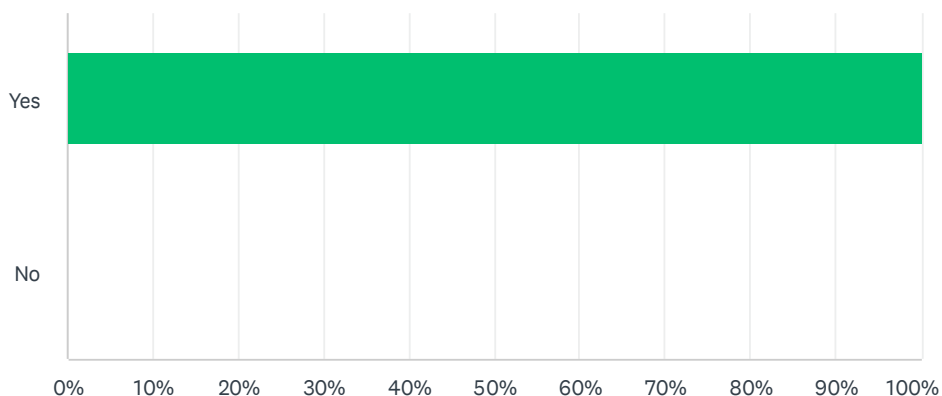
East Lexington Improvements

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Signage Improvements	0.00%	0
New front Signage	0.00%	0
New Rear Signage	16.67%	1
Rear Facing Mural	16.67%	1
Lighting	16.67%	1
Beautification	0.00%	0
New Windows	0.00%	0
Dumpster Management	0.00%	0
Paving	0.00%	0
Improve Fencing	0.00%	0
Rodent Control	0.00%	0
Outdoor Seating	16.67%	1
Bike Racks	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	33.33%	2
TOTAL		6

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	I want to choose more than one - outdoor seating, bike racks, rodent control	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
2	All of the above	8/31/2022 4:28 PM

Q4 Are you supportive of the Town's proposal to improve the landscaping along the bike path in East Lexington to increase visibility to businesses and provide seating areas for users?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



East Lexington Improvements

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	100.00% 6
No	0.00% 0
Total Respondents: 6	

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Japanese Knotweed ridiculous	8/31/2022 4:28 PM

Q5 Contact Information

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Name	100.00% 6
Company	100.00% 6
Address	100.00% 6
Address 2	100.00% 6
City/Town	100.00% 6
State/Province	100.00% 6
ZIP/Postal Code	100.00% 6
Country	0.00% 0
Email Address	100.00% 6
Phone Number	100.00% 6

#	NAME	DATE
1	Mansi Patel	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	Nikul Patel	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	Stephanie Allen	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	Nicole Caron	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	Scott Caron	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	Alex Bluhm	8/31/2022 4:06 PM

#	COMPANY	DATE
1	Jamsan Hotel Management	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	Jasman Hotel Management	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	Allco Donuts DBA Dunkin Donuts	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	Great Harvest	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	Featherview, LLC	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	Berman's Wine & Spirits	8/31/2022 4:06 PM

East Lexington Improvements

#	ADDRESS	DATE
1	30 winter street	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	83 Hartwell Avenue	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	10 Woburn Street	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	233 Mass Ave	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	229 Massachusetts Ave	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	55 Massachusetts Avenue	8/31/2022 4:06 PM
#	ADDRESS 2	DATE
1	N/a	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	-	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	DUnkin	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	233 Mass Ave	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	Na	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	x	8/31/2022 4:06 PM
#	CITY/TOWN	DATE
1	Lexington	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	Lexington	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	Lexington	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	Lexington.	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	Lexington	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	Lexington	8/31/2022 4:06 PM
#	STATE/PROVINCE	DATE
1	MA	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	MA	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	MA	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	MA	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	MA	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	MA	8/31/2022 4:06 PM
#	ZIP/POSTAL CODE	DATE
1	02420	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	02421	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	02420	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	02420	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	02420	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	02420	8/31/2022 4:06 PM
#	COUNTRY	DATE
	There are no responses.	
#	EMAIL ADDRESS	DATE
1		9/12/2022 4:35 PM

East Lexington Improvements

2	[REDACTED]	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	[REDACTED]	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	[REDACTED]	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	[REDACTED]	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	[REDACTED]	8/31/2022 4:06 PM
#	PHONE NUMBER	DATE
1	[REDACTED]	9/12/2022 4:35 PM
2	[REDACTED]	9/12/2022 4:28 PM
3	[REDACTED]	9/1/2022 10:49 AM
4	[REDACTED]	8/31/2022 11:16 PM
5	[REDACTED]	8/31/2022 4:28 PM
6	[REDACTED]	8/31/2022 4:06 PM



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

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

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

**EXCERPTS -
SELECTED PROJECTS**



FinePoint
Associates LLC

dhcd
Massachusetts
RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

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

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

The FinePoint Plan Facilitator Team worked with the town staff, community leaders, and residents to: 1) analyze conditions and opportunities in the three Districts and the Bikeway, and 2) develop recommendations to assist the Districts recover from COVID, be more vibrant than ever, and expand their focus on the Bikeway user market segment. An overview of the process and community engagement activity is provided later in Section 3.

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

1. Diagnostic Key Findings

Physical Environment — Bikeway and Bike User Specific

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

Physical Environment — Districts Overall

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

Business Environment

- The three commercial districts encompass over 1/2 million square feet of first-floor commercial space; 9% of first-floor units are vacant.
- Key opportunity sites include: the Park Ave industrial property and MBTA Bus Depot in Arlington Heights and the former Veterans of Foreign Wars property in Bedford.
- All three districts have a collection of eateries and a few business clusters. Arlington Heights and Bedford Center have "destination/ anchor" businesses.

- COVID-19 impacts were widespread in all districts. Arlington Heights was hit the hardest, followed closely by Bedford Center. The least impacted was East Lexington Village due to the "essential" nature of most businesses.
- The majority of businesses rent their space and are independently-owned, single-location establishments. Only about one-half are open after 6:00 p.m.
- Top priorities for businesses include: more outdoor dining and selling opportunities, more cultural events, and coordinated marketing strategies.

Customer Base

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

Admin Capacity

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

2. Summary of Recommendations

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

3. Process and Community Engagement

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

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

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

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

Walk About Tours



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



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



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



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

4. Business District Study Area Maps



**Arlington Heights Business District
Study Area Map**

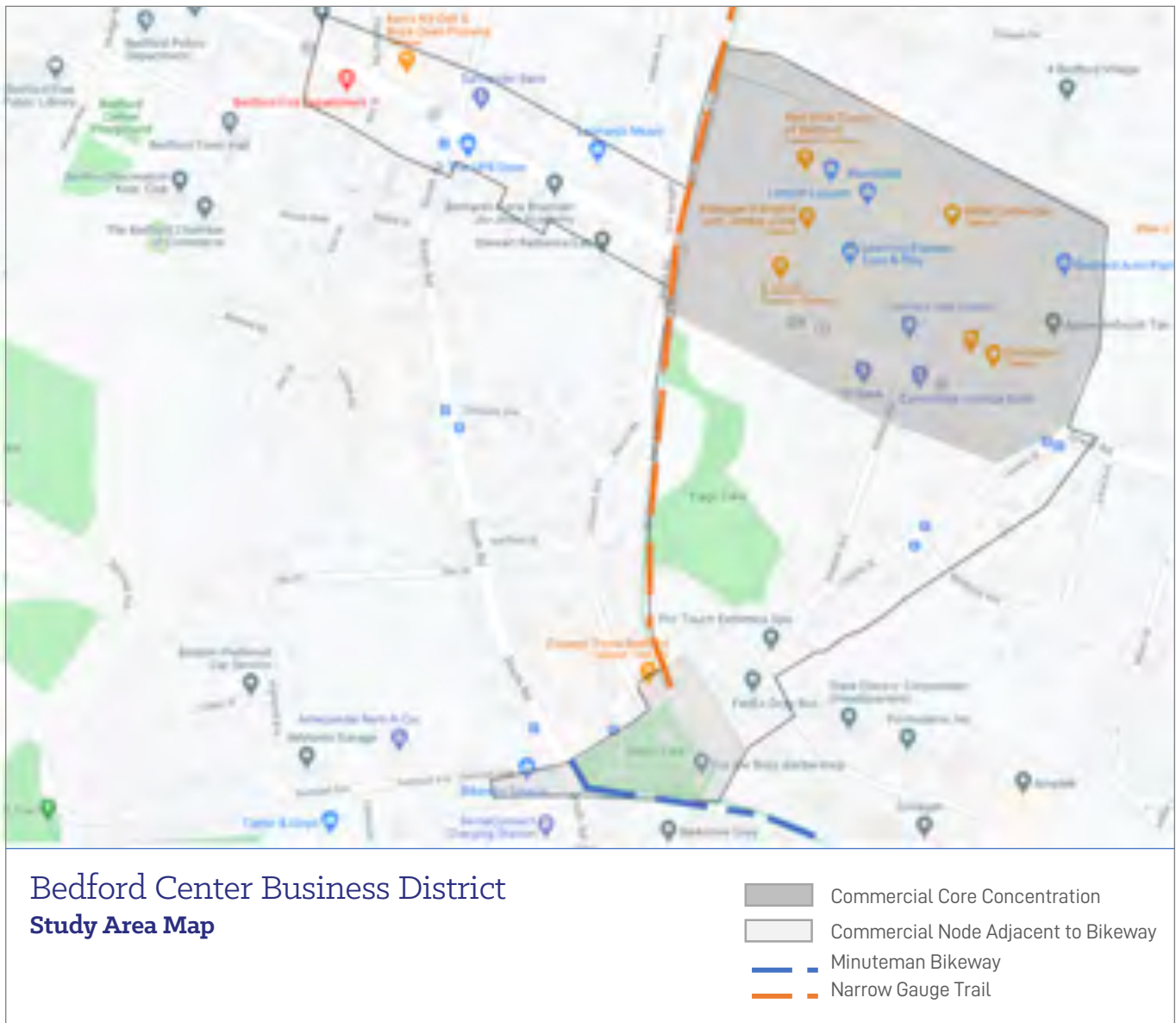
Commercial Core Concentration
Minuteman Bikeway



**East Lexington Village Business District
Study Area Map**

Commercial Core Concentration
Minuteman Bikeway

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



Selected Projects

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

Category



Private Realm

Location

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

Origin

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

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

Budget and Sources of Funding



Medium Budget (approximately \$200k)

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

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

Potential funding sources:

- MA Downtown Initiative (MDI), DHCD Community One Stop for Growth
- Possibly State ARPA funds (depending on legislature decisions about allocation)
- EDA travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation grant program — Competitive Tourism Grant

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

Approximate Schedule

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

Risk



Low Risk

Risk: There is a risk that physical improvements on buildings that face the Bikeway might be inhibited by regulations and/or building owners not being interested/willing to make improvements.

Key Performance Indicators

The following indicators could be measured to assess impacts.

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

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

Partners and Resources

- Bike Advisory Committees in the 3 communities
- Arlington, Bedford and Lexington Chambers of Commerce
- Planning Departments in the 3 communities
- Town Managers and Select Boards would need to be supportive
- Business and property owners would have to be interested and willing to make improvements
- Bedford Cultural District Partnership and Arts Councils in the 3 Districts, especially if there is a decision to go with a “pARTnership” type program in lieu of a more traditional façade improvement program.

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities

Identified in Diagnostic Phase: The building façades that face the Bikeway are very nondescript. Most are somewhat bland, industrial-looking, and do not provide visual clues that they contain cafés or restaurants. Most do not have rear-facing entrances, nor do they indicate that there is a business district worth stopping at.

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

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

Background on Existing Conditions



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

Existing Condition

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

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



Diagnostic (cont'd)

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

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

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

Action Item

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

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

“Traditional” Façade Improvement Program

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

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

“Art-Inspired” Façade Improvement Program

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

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

1. **Research and clarify regulations** that might restrict building improvements and create rear entrances and signage on private property facing the Bikeway.
2. **Review program models from other communities.** The “Best Practices” provided makes for a good start; however, many communities have experience with façade improvement programs, and it may be worthwhile to interview program managers to get their advice and “lessons learned.”
3. **Conduct preliminary conversations with businesses and property owners** to get a read on their interest level and willingness to participate in the program.
4. **Research potential funding opportunities and secure funding**
Potential sources include MA Downtown Initiative (for planning phase), State ARPA funds and EDA travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation grants through the Competitive Tourism Grant Program.
5. **Create a program advisory committee** comprised of Town staff (e.g., planning and economic development department representatives) and stakeholders (e.g., bicycle advisory committees, cultural councils).
6. **Determine the most appropriate program design** and requirements based on the results of an in-depth review of the regulations in each community, review of program models, and available funding.
 - “Traditional” or “Art-inspired” program
 - Application Form and Selection Process
 - Eligibility Criteria for Applicants
 - Maximum Amount and Form of Financial Assistance
 - Allowable Use of Funds (façade only or all exterior Bikeway-facing improvements such as outdoor seating)
 - Design Standards/Guidelines
 - Other requirements.
7. **Develop program policies, procedures, forms, and materials**
Formalize requirements and develop a written set of documents needed (e.g., program guidelines, application form, agreement form template, “call” documents if needed, etc.). Prepare electronic content for town website.
8. **Consider providing illustrative examples of desirable improvements**
This might be possible by soliciting assistance from university architecture or other programs to provide some illustrative examples of desirable improvements.
9. **Market the program**
Create a marketing initiative to promote the program and encourage business/property owners to make improvements.
10. **Administer the program** (based on the program design)
Accept applications, finalize agreements, monitor renovation projects, provide finance assistance payments according to policies.
11. **Evaluate program operations and impacts** after approximately 12 to 18 months (earlier if necessary). Determine revisions or continuation as warranted.

Best Practice Example

Atlanta, GA

Atlanta BeltLine (example of “art Inspired” program)

Business Façade pARTnership Grant Program

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

Business Façade pARTnership Grant Program Objectives

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

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

Phase 1: Call For Businesses

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

Phase 2: Call For Artist Partners & Makers

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

Phase 3: Façade Improvement

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



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

PUBLIC
REALM

Best Practice Example

Cambridge, MA

Storefront Improvement Program (example of “traditional” program)

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

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

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

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

This Cambridge Storefront Improvement Program provides:

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

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

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



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

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

Category



Revenue/Sales

Location

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

Origin

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

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

Budget and Sources of Funding



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



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

1. Business District Destination Signs on the Bikeway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design and location mapping - Printing/fabrication and Installation - (e.g., 4 - 6 double-sided arrival signs, 4 or more approach signs) 	\$5,000 -8,000 (3 Districts)
2. Wayfinding Signage at the Bedford Terminus of the Bikeway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design and location mapping - Printing/fabrication and Installation 	\$1,000
3. Entry Archway to Narrow Gauge Trail in Bedford <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design competition and Artist commission (if artistic arch) - Installation 	TBD
4. District Welcome Signage & Business District Information/Directories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design and location mapping - Design and Production of Business District Map/Business Listing Information (if included) - Printing/fabrication and Installation 	\$1,000 - \$7,000 per element (low estimate = signage only with minimal information and graphics)
5. Map Kiosks near major Bikeway access points to Business Districts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design and location mapping - Design and Production of Business District Map/Business Listing Information (if included) - Printing/fabrication and Installation 	\$3,000 - \$7,000 per element

Potential funding sources:

- Conservation Preservation Act (CPA) funds
- MA Office of Travel and Tourism (the FY21 deadline for Recovery Grant was 2/21/21 but there may be another round for FY22)
- MA Downtown Initiative (MDI) through DHCD Community One Stop for Growth
- MassTrails Grant
- Business owners may be willing to contribute as this will directly benefit their business
- Possibly State ARPA funds (depending on legislature decisions about allocation)

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

Approximate Time Estimates

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

Risk



Low Risk

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

Key Performance Indicators

The following indicators could be measured to assess impacts.

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

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

Partners and Resources

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

Diagnostic

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

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

Diagnostic (cont'd)

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

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

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

Action Item

- 1. Install Business District Destination Signs on the Bikeway** at major access points near the business districts to make Bikeway users aware of potential food and retail offerings and direct them to the districts. Two types of signs are suggested: 1) directional signs located at the primary exits to the Business Districts, and 2) approach signs located in advance of the exits (e.g., 1 mile or more). Simple blue signs could be used that would be compatible with the existing signs and the 2014 “Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway” plan. (See example of proposed signs vs. existing signs).
- 2. Evaluate and Improve Wayfinding Signage at the Bedford Terminus of the Bikeway** to get users to the Narrow Gauge Trail.
- 3. Develop Highly-Visible Entry Archway to Narrow Gauge Trail in Bedford** to entice bikeway users to continue to Bedford Center.
- 4. Provide Business District Welcome Signage and Business District Information/Directories** at points where the access ways meet each business district.
- 5. Install Map Kiosks near major Bikeway access points to Business Districts** that include the Minuteman Bikeway map and information about businesses located in the nearby districts.

We have also made a related recommendation to “Provide Designated Access Way Improvements” (addressed in a separate plan recommendation).

Existing Conditions and Previous Planning



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



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

Existing Condition

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

Background — Previous Planning

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

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

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

Issues with 2014 Plan:

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



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

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

Proposed Wayfinding Signage Examples

Suggested Bikeway Signage to Announce Business Districts:

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



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



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

Business District Approach Sign

Install Business District Destination Signage on the Bikeway

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

1. Form a small working group representing the three communities (e.g., Economic Development staff and perhaps representatives from Bicycle Advisory Committees and/or businesses)
2. Work together to agree on the contents of the Destination Signage. Determine if miles or travel time will be used. Decide on consistent icons to be used. (Currently, Bedford signs use a shopping cart icon for retail while the Toole Design Group suggested a logo showing 2 shopping bags to denote retail for Lexington signage).
Suggested Sign Contents:
 - Minuteman Bikeway logo
 - Arrow directing users to the Business Districts
 - Icons indicating food and retail
 - Distance in miles (or travel time by bike/ foot)
3. Determine ideal placement for signs.
Suggested Possible Locations:
 - Arlington Heights
 - Sunrise Senior Living
 - Park Ave
 - Lexington Village
 - Bow Street
 - Bedford Center
 - Beginning of Narrow Gauge Trail
4. Work with appropriate parties to get approvals for signage installation.
5. Determine sign and post printer/fabricator, get final cost estimates, and determine funding sources for each community.
6. Work with DPW in each community to install signs at specified locations.

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

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

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

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

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

Process (cont'd)

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

Install Bikeway Map Kiosks at major Business District access points

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

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

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

Best Practice Examples

Business District Information Signage

Arlington Heights, IL

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

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

Source: www.vah.com

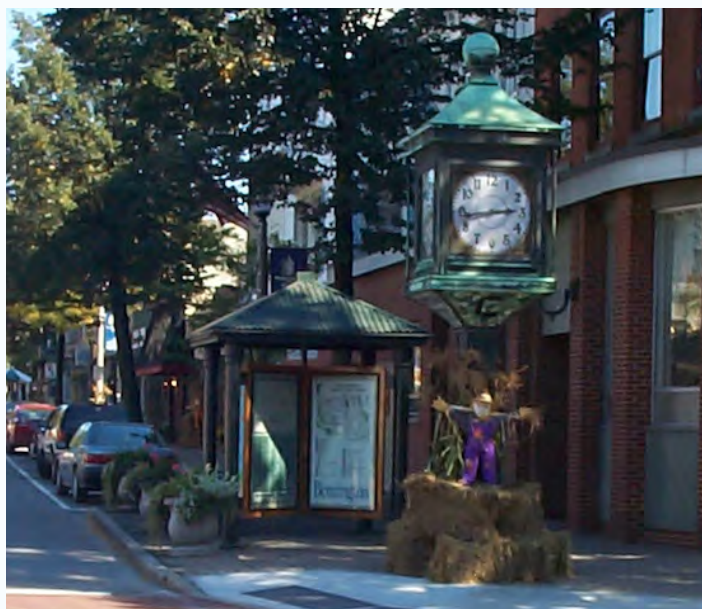
Bennington, VT

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

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



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



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

Create a mural program especially for public locations and businesses adjacent to the bikeway. [All 3 districts]

Category



Culture/Arts

Location

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

On walls and fences along the Minuteman Bikeway that serve as connection points to the business districts of Arlington Heights, Bedford Center and E. Lexington Village, and within the districts.

Origin

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

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

Budget



Low: The following are estimates for a Mural Program run by Arlington, Bedford, or Lexington.

Artist stipend and materials (if one artist) — \$2,000 – \$10,000 (Depending on size of mural)

Additional Installation materials — \$300 – \$1000

Event Promotion Materials and Digital Outreach — \$200

Total = \$2,500 – \$11,200 per mural (depending on size)

Potential funding sources:

- Local businesses and/or corporate sponsors
- Hometown Grant
- Patronicity Crowdfunding Program
- Cultural Projects Grant, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- National Funders — National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town Grant”
- Possibly State ARPA funds (depending on legislature decisions about allocation).



Example of blank walls that could be considered for potential mural sites.

Left: Berkshire Grey, Bedford, Photo: Town of Bedford, Right: Trader Joes, Arlington. Photo: FinePoint Associates

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 years)

Project Task	Month				
	1	2	3	4	5
Identify partners, form committee	x				
Identify top sites with potential for murals	x				
Narrow site list to 2–3 locations		x			
Put out Call for Artists			x		
Select artist(s)				x	
Coordinate mural installation					x
Publicize new artwork and evaluate					x

Risk



Low Risk

There is low risk in hiring artists to paint murals along the Minuteman Bikeway.

Since art is subjective, not everyone may like the finished artwork, but overall, the addition of public art will have a positive affect on both the Bikeway, and the business district.

Key Performance Indicators

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

- Increased pedestrian and cyclists turns from Minuteman Bikeway into the three business districts
- Increased visitors and foot traffic in the business districts
- Positive qualitative experience of the public art by passersby.

Partners and Resources

- Local businesses (especially those who have mural spaces)
- Local artist and arts organizations
- Mass Cultural Council
- Arlington Commission For Arts and Culture Grants Committee
- Arlington Center for the Arts
- Bedford Cultural Council
- Lexington Council for the Arts
- Munroe Center for the Arts

Diagnostic

How this Project Responds to Key Challenges/Opportunities Identified in Diagnostic Phase:

The Mural Program seeks to further create a sense of place at the connection points between the Minuteman Bikeway and the three business districts of Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Village as well as in the business districts themselves. While small businesses faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in Minuteman Bikeway usage both for commuting (as residents didn't feel safe using public transit) and for recreation purposes. However, while the bikeway has increased usage, users are seemingly unaware of the business districts that are adjacent to the bikeway. This project will focus on the opportunity of the increased cycling and pedestrian activity on the bikeway and try to draw people into the districts as a complement to more traditional wayfinding signage.

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

How did COVID Create or Exacerbate the Issue Addressed by this Project: The COVID-19 pandemic placed a strain on small businesses in each of the districts as they closed or adapted to new safety restrictions.

At the same time, COVID-19 also caused an increase in cycling and pedestrian activity on the Minuteman since public transit became viewed as unsafe for commuting, and many sought outdoor recreation opportunities.

Action Item

The Mural Program aims to enhance the vibrancy of Arlington Heights, Bedford Center, and E. Lexington Village with public art, while also creating stronger connections between the Minuteman Bikeway and the three districts. The murals would be complementary to our recommendation for more traditional wayfinding as they would informally create a sense of place and destination at the connection points between the bikeway and the districts. Sites adjacent to the bikeway would be prioritized first, and then the program could expand to the districts.

Local partners would be engaged in the coordination from start the finish, and a committee would be formed to oversee the process. Sites would be identified to maximize the opportunity to bring tourists and residents into the districts, while artists would be given a set of parameters to match the goals of the organizing committee. A description of action items is below.

1. Identify partners and form Mural Program committee (or hire coordinator)

The best mural programs are those that partner with community members and organizations to ensure that the artwork is representative of the community and is visually appealing to those who will view it. It is recommended to have one key (part-time) staff person dedicated to the mural program (and other public art initiatives). However, if this isn't possible, then a committee will need to be formed to oversee the process and provide oversight and coordination. The committee should be composed of key municipal staff members, local business owners (particularly if they own the buildings being painted), leadership from local arts organizations, and engaged volunteers dedicated to the arts.

2. Identify top sites with potential for murals

This mural program should prioritize the connection points between the Minuteman Bikeway and the business districts but could also include sites within the business districts. Fences may also be considered. While the program will likely start with only 1–3 murals, it may be helpful to compile a list of all possible sites so that the program could be expanded. To gather possible sites, program staff could do an audit of all sites that meet the agreed-upon criteria. Another way of gathering sites is to put out a “Call for Walls and Fences.” This would involve publicizing the program and the types of sites you are looking for and asking for building (or fence) owners to respond with their information (either digitally, or via other means).

3. Narrow site list to 2–3 locations

Not all sites will be ideal for murals. Some of those identified may have significant barriers regarding the surface type, or the amount of cleaning and preparation needed in order to paint. An experienced muralist would be the best person to help narrow down the sites to ensure that the project will be doable.

4. Put out Call for Artists

Once the top 1–3 sites are selected, a “Call for Artists” will need to be put out. The committee will need to discern if there is a specific type of mural the community would benefit from, or if there is a theme that the artist should adhere to (such as history, nature, etc.). It should be noted, that the best murals come out of processes where the artist is able to use their artistic freedom of expression rather than adhere too specifically to prescriptive guidelines.

The Call for Art process can be formal with specifications outlined and a due date, or more informal through word of mouth. In either type, it is recommended to ask only for previous artwork and a rough sketch for the mural rather than a full design.

5. Select artist(s)

Once artists have submitted to your process, whether formally or informally, the committee should gather to discuss top entries and make the selection.

6. Coordinate mural installation/painting with partners

The selected artist should decide if they are wanting volunteer support in the preparation of the mural wall and the painting. Depending on the level of skill required, kids, teens, or adult volunteers may be able to assist the artist. School groups, or youth organizations could be recruited. When the mural is completed, it will need to be sealed to protect it from the elements and ensure it lasts for as long as possible.

Action Item (cont'd)

7. Publicize and evaluate new artwork

When the artwork is complete, partners may want to hold an “unveiling” event or celebration. At the very least, a press release should be created to share this new attraction with the community. Gather qualitative input on the mural by asking for feedback on the process and design so you can use this for future murals.

Process

1. Identify partners and form Mural Program committee

- Form list of potential partners/staff to join committee
- Confirm participation of participating committee members
- Hold initial meeting to outline goals and discuss roles
- Seek funding via grants or private sponsors.

2. Identify top sites with potential for murals

- Look for sites with proximity to connections from the Minuteman Bikeway to the business districts
- Draft a “Call for Walls and Fences” to business owners
- Publicize “Call for Walls and Fences.”

3. Narrow site list to 2-3 locations

- Meet with Committee to select 1 – 3 sites to include in the “Call for Art” (consider the condition of the wall and any cleanup or prep needed)
- If site is privately owned, invite the owner to the Mural Program Committee
- Continue to seek funding via grants and private sponsors.

4. Put out Call for Artists

- Meet with committee to decide on mural theme and any requirements for the Call for Art
- Draft “Call for Art” and revise with feedback from partners. Make sure to include:
 - Site details
 - Request for portfolio
 - Request for rough sketch of mural (not full design)
 - Note if you will be prioritizing local residents or any other scoring methods
- Put out final “Call for Art,” publicize via social media, press, printed materials.

5. Select artist(s)

- Meet with Committee to score or vote on entries
- Communicate with winning artist and plan details of schedule, wall prep, volunteers, etc.

6. Coordinate mural installation/painting with partners

- If artist agrees, work with partners to engage volunteers in the painting.

7. Publicize and evaluate new artwork

- Plan unveiling event or similar celebration to share the new mural
- Invite press contacts and community partners
- Ask the artists, residents, and viewers what their experience was so that you can incorporate that feedback into future mural processes.

Best Practice Example

Maynard, MA

"Maynard as a Canvas"

In April 2021 The Maynard Cultural Council, along with local partners, launched a Mural Initiative called Maynard as a Canvas. They sought to leverage the focus on public space during the pandemic and create a public art mural that would celebrate the past, present and future of the town.

Program Management

- Coordinated by Maynard Cultural Council.

Choosing Sites

- Selected site was highly visible courtyard in the revitalization of the area.

Artists/RFP Process

- Open to Massachusetts' artists with previous mural painting experience.
- One site was selected, and details were given to artists.

Partners

- Local mural curator
- Jury made up of representatives of the community, local artists, and the Maynard Cultural Council will choose the winning design.

Funding

- Maynard Cultural District (in support of Massachusetts COVID impacted artists)
- Maynard Sesquicentennial Committee
- Maynard Community Enhancement Fund
- Local crowdfunding
- Time and material donated by artists.

Source: townofmaynard-ma.gov



Artist Anna Dugan poses in front of her mural at Naylor Court in Maynard. *"[I wanted to] just show each person is their own color but then when you come together with other people it kind of overlaps to create a new color and then all together it creates this really joyful explosion of color."* — Anna Dugan. Source: <https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/beacon-villager/2021/07/26/maynard-mural-naylor-court-part-maynard-canvas-project/8070980002/>

Excerpt from Maynard's Call for Artists

We will give special considerations to artists that:

1. Engage the local community in some way.
2. Make clever use of our 150th year as a town.
3. Can complete this project in early summer.

We encourage a theme that is not strictly historical. Think, "Past, Present and Future."

Please consider the following ideas for our future as a town:

- the basis of the town's emphasis is developing culture/arts
- make the downtown more active by driving more people to visit
- use and develop our water sources, the river and mill pond, for recreation, celebration, picnicking.

Source: https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals_unique_info.php?ID=8809

Dear Students,

This year, State elections will be taking place on November 8, 2022.

These elections will decide who will be our next Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and many other positions within our State government.

As you may know, the United States has three types of governing bodies: local, state and federal.

It is often the elections at a local level that can make the biggest direct impact to where you live.

Today, each of you will be given an opportunity to vote and let your voice be heard!

Every year, Massachusetts Law requires dog owners to license their dogs. Anyone who does so receives a tag in a unique shape for that year.

Today, you can make a difference at the local level by choosing to vote.

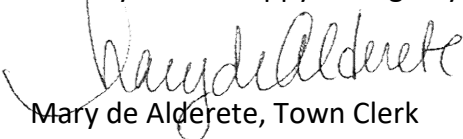
You will have three (3) shapes to select from: a car; a rosette; or fire hydrant.

You will each receive a ballot. Think carefully about what shape you would most like to be the winner for 2023 and then put an "X" in the box next to the shape that matches your choice. Remember – your ballot is private, so you shouldn't show it to anyone unless you need some assistance filling it out. When you're finished, your teacher will explain where you should place it. Then it's time to receive an "I voted" sticker!

The Town Clerk's Office will collect and count all ballots and a winner will be chosen and announced after all the votes are counted. The winning shape will be used for all licensed dogs in Lexington in 2023.

Your voice has a vote and your vote can make a difference!

Thank you and Happy Voting Day!



Mary de Alderete, Town Clerk

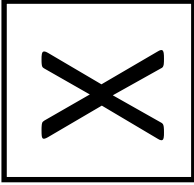
OFFICIAL ELECTION BALLOT

October 6 and 7, 2022

TOWN OF LEXINGTON DOG TAG FOR 2023

DIRECTIONS: Place an "X" in the box for
your choice of dog tags.

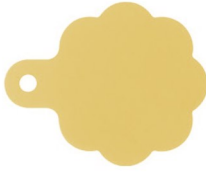
Choose **ONLY ONE**.



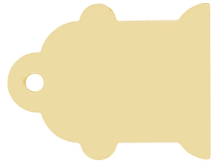
CAR



ROSETTE



FIRE HYDRANT



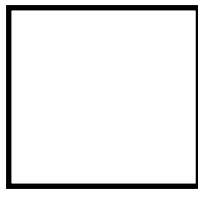
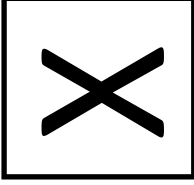
OFFICIAL ELECTION BALLOT

October 6 and 7, 2022

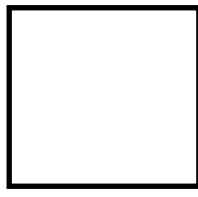
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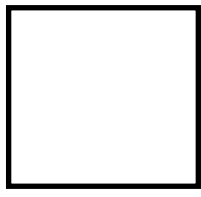
Choose **ONLY ONE**.



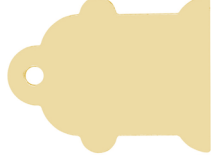
CAR



ROSETTE



FIRE HYDRANT



Discussion Topic: What is a Law

Laws are a set of rules. Games have rules. Your parents or caregivers may give you rules you have to follow. But some rules are so important that are made into laws. Laws made by a government are rules that everyone affected by those laws must follow. You've probably heard the expression "It's the law!" In government, most laws are created to protect people and property. Those laws have a great deal to do with our daily life. You've probably seen a stop sign posted by the side of road, or a sign that swings open on the side of school bus that says STOP. These are pictures of laws that must be obeyed.

Why is it important to vote?

Voting allows people to tell the government what they want it to do.

Increasing the number of people that vote in each election means better representation and more funding to communities. When people vote as a community, it sends the message to state and national legislators to help them better understand its needs. Education, healthcare, infrastructure, the economy, etc. are all affected by voting.

Every Vote Counts

Here are some important events in U.S. history that were decided by just a few votes:

- Richard Nixon, not John F. Kennedy, would have become President of the U.S. in 1960 if one person from each voting place had voted differently.
- If just one U.S. Senator had voted differently, U.S. President Andrew Johnson would have been removed from office in 1867.
- Texas might not have become part of the United States in 1845 if one U.S. Senator had voted differently. The vote in the U.S. Senate was 27-25 to invite Texas to become a state. If it had been a tie, Texas would not have been asked to become part of the Union.

Early Democracy

Democracy, the form of government used in the United States, began as an idea by early Athenians. They decided that a community should choose its own leaders.

In the year 507 B.C., the Athenian leader Cleisthenes introduced a system of political reforms that he called *demokratia*, or “rule by the people” (from *demos*, “the people,” and *kratos*, or “power”). It was the first known democracy in the world.

Types of Democracy

There are two main types of democracies: direct and representative.

Direct - A direct democracy is one in which every citizen votes on all important decisions. One of the first direct democracies was in Athens, Greece. All of the citizens would gather to vote in the main square on major issues. A direct democracy becomes difficult when the population grows. Imagine the 300 million people of the United States trying to get together in one place to decide an issue. It would be impossible.

Representative - The other type of democracy is a representative democracy. This is where the people elect representatives to run the government. Another name for this type of democracy is a democratic republic. The United States is a representative democracy. The citizens elect representatives such as the president, members of congress, and senators to run the government.

What characteristics make up a democracy?

Most democratic governments today have certain characteristics in common. We list a few of the major ones below:

Citizens rule - We've already discussed this in the definition of democracy. The power of the government must rest in the hands of the citizens either directly or through elected representatives.

Free elections - Democracies conduct free and fair elections where all citizens are allowed to vote how they want.

Election Day Vocabulary

Absentee ballot: Used to vote when someone cannot physically be at the polling place on election day.

Ballot: a sheet of paper used to cast a vote.

Bill: a proposed law.

Bipartisan: supported by both political parties.

Campaign: a race between candidates for elective office.

Congress: legislative body of the United States.

Constituent: A person represented by an elected official.

Delegate: one sent to act as a representative for a group.

Democracy: government in which the people hold the ruling power.

Enfranchise: to grant the vote to.

Grass roots: the common people at a local level.

Incumbent: someone currently holding an office.

Law: A set of rules.

Nominate: to name as a candidate for an election.

Petition: a written request signed by many people demanding an action from an authority or government.

Platform: a document stating the aims and principals of a particular party.

Poll: the place where votes are cast and registered, or a survey of the public.

Primary: an election for choosing the candidates who will run in the final election.

Veto: to prevent a bill from becoming law.