

A Marlborough 2010 Corp. and Tufts University Collaborated Initiative for a Better Downtown Marlborough

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# Marlborough 2010

## Community Action Plan

### Downtown: In Focus



# Acknowledgements

The Marlborough 2010 Field Projects Team thanks the countless people who helped this project become a reality. Particular recognition goes to the support given by the Field Projects faculty team and the client, Marlborough 2010. Special acknowledgement should be given to the people of Marlborough; residents, business owners, and elected officials alike - without their continuous contributions and enthusiasm, this project would not be what it is today. All participants were very receptive and always interested and willing to contribute to the project.

The four case study towns also merit specific mention. Elected officials and business owners in Amesbury, Hudson, Leominster and Waltham were equally helpful with both ideas and time. Below are specific individuals, though it was their collective action, and the action of a town looking towards the future, that was most helpful.

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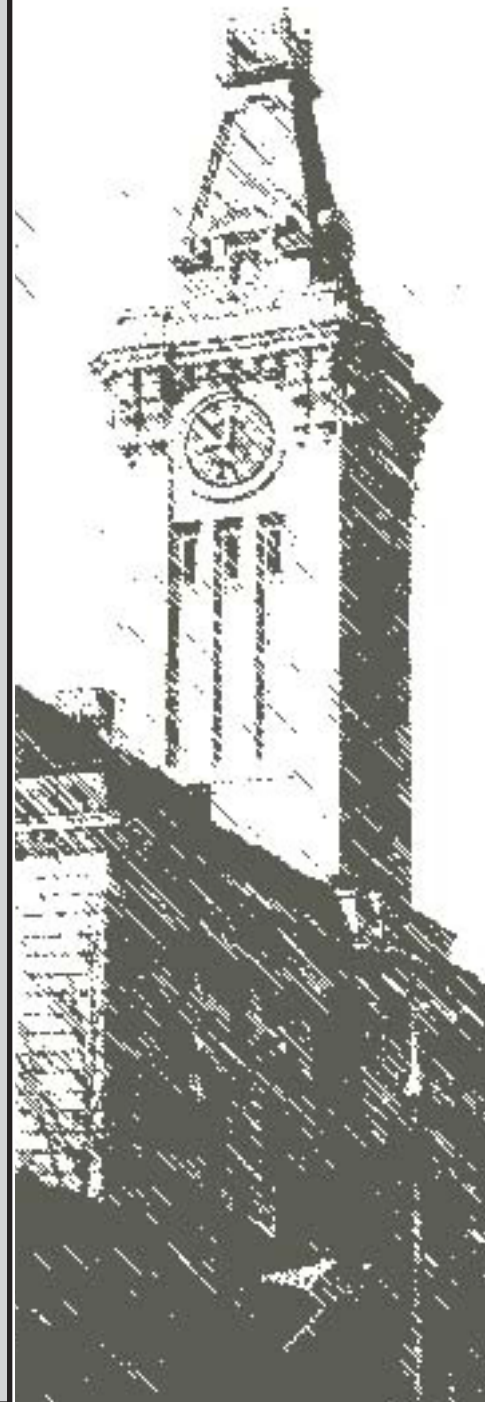
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## Project Scope

**M**arlborough 2010 has engaged Tufts University through the Urban and Environmental Planning and Policy program for a revitalization study of the Marlborough downtown district.

The purpose of this study is to develop recommendations for promoting downtown Marlborough as a dynamic, mixed-use destination in which residents and visitors alike congregate to live, work and play. The target area for this study is Main Street bounded by Bolton Street (Route 85) to the east and the intersection of Granger Street (Route 20), Main Street, Mechanic Street and Bates Avenue to the west.

This document is intended to recommend low-cost, short-term initiatives to help revitalize the downtown.

## Marlborough 2010 Overview

**M**arlborough 2010 is the state-chartered economic development corporation for the City of Marlborough and represents a public-private partnership for planning. Its mission is to provide vision and advocacy for the smart development of the city in order to enhance the community's quality of life through balanced economic, housing, and cultural development (Wellen, 2009).

Working with numerous state and regional planning organizations, Marlborough 2010 strives to attract large-scale investment from industries such as high technology, renewable energy, life sciences and national security/defense (Marlborough 2010. com, 2009).

Under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 43D, Marlborough 2010 currently serves as the City's permitting authority under the expedited permitting process (Marlborough2010.com, 2009).

## Aerial of Project Area



1656 - Marlborough is Settled at the intersection of Two Native American Trails

1852 - Branch line of the B&M Railway begins service

1850's - Influx of Irish and French Canadians arrive to work in the Shoe Industry

1851 - The first Public High School was established

1660 - The settlement is officially incorporated as a township

1836 - Samuel & Joseph Boyd open the first Shoe Manufacturing Business

1673 - The Boston Post Road cuts through the region en route to Boston from New York

1862 - The Marlborough Militia Captures the John Brown Bell

1675 - The town is nearly destroyed by Native Americans during King Philip's War

1863 - Frye Boots established

1789 - President George Washington visits the Williams Tavern



## The Problem

There is a perception that there are no useful downtown stores and there are no visitors to downtown Marlborough. Conversely, no potential investors want to open a business in a downtown with no customers. To compound this, there are numerous conceptions, and misconceptions about what is a "good store" and or "worthy customer".

The recommendations here have taken this divide into account and are specifically geared toward bridging the gap between Marlborough's disparate communities.

# INTRODUCTION TO MARLBOROUGH

Officially incorporated in 1660, Marlborough grew because of its location along the Old Boston Post Road (Route 20) - The major East-West highway across Massachusetts - in the late 18th century, and the influx of the shoe manufacturing business in the early 19th century (TerraSpehere, 2002). In Marlborough, as well as many other communities, Route 20 went through the downtown and was a key component to the vitality of the central business district. Marlborough's dynamism was further enhanced by the development of a downtown rail line in 1850. By 1890, with a population of 14,000, Marlborough had become a major shoe manufacturing center, producing boots for Union soldiers as well as footwear for the civilian population (TerraSpehere, 2002).

Increased automobile use and dependency coupled with the improvements to the highway system throughout the mid-1900's led to a decline of the railways and thus weakened Marlborough's link to transportation. The construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) in the 1950s siphoned off much of the traffic on Route 20, and many businesses that depended on vehicular traffic relocated to the surrounding interstates (I-495 and I-290). In addition, due to urban renewal policies<sup>1</sup> of the 1960s, Route 20 was rerouted; a bypass was created around Main Street and downtown Marlborough, further stagnating downtown businesses. Marlborough's proximity to three interstates attracted new economic development such as Raytheon, Hewlett-Packard, AMD, Sun Microsystems and most recently Sepracor, though it did not help downtown revitalization (Wellen, 2009).

<sup>1</sup> Urban Renewal: Following World War II, and continuing into the early 1970s, "urban renewal" referred primarily to public efforts to revitalize aging and decaying inner cities, although some suburban communities undertook such projects as well. Including massive demolition, slum clearance, and rehabilitation, urban renewal proceeded initially from local and state legislation (Hirsch, 1983).



## A New Community (Census.gov, 2009)

- 2007 Population: 38,065
- Demographics: 88.5% White, 0.7% African-American, 4.3% Asian, 13.1% Hispanic
- Hispanic population has increased 7.1% since 2000
- Per Capita Income: \$28,723

1902 - City Hall Destroyed by fire

1890 - Marlborough Becomes a city

1889 - Marlborough Street Railway begins electric trolley service

1886 - Electricity arrives in Marlborough



1970 - I-290 is built, connecting Marlborough with Auburn, MA

1957 - I-495 is Constructed, connecting Marlborough with Cape Cod and NE Massachusetts

1892 - John Brown Bell brought back to Marlborough and placed in Union Common

1897 - The Walker Building was constructed at its present location

1924 - The Walker building is expanded to its current size

1971 - The Rockport Shoe Company is founded



## Amesbury

- Population: 16,450
- Demographics: 97.2% White, 0.6% African-American, 0.6% Asian, 0.9% Hispanic
- Per Capita Income: \$24,103
- Planning Initiatives/Important Facts:
  - Community Development Block Grant funding for affordable housing and facade improvements
  - Central Business Overlay District.
  - Innovative use of existing parking structures
  - Non-regulatory mural program

## Hudson

- Population: 18,113
- Demographics: 94% White, 0.1% African-American, 3.0% Hispanic
- Per Capita Income: \$26,679
- Planning Initiatives/Important Facts:
  - Significant Portuguese population
  - Adjacent to Marlborough (former suburb)
  - Focus on businesses and community involvement in the downtown
  - Use of Assabet River Rail Trail as a downtown revitalization tool

### Case Study Methodology

Looking at all Massachusetts municipalities, the team first selected only those with a similar industrial past to Marlborough.

Next, this list of 40 mill towns was further reduced by selecting only those with similar demographics as Marlborough: population, ethnicity, income levels, proximity to highways, airports, recreational areas, and natural features.

Out of the seven remaining towns and cities, the final four were chosen based on their successful planning initiatives.

\*All data is 2005-2007 ACS Statistics except Amesbury (2000 Census Data)

\*\*Extended methodology in Appendix 1

## Leominster

- Population: 41,216
- Demographics: 87.2 % White, 3.1% African-American, 3.1% Asian, 10.9% Hispanic
- Per Capita Income: \$25,441
- Planning Initiatives/Important Facts:
  - Numerous downtown, community events (Ladies Night, Johnny Appleseed Festival, Winter/Summer Stroll)
  - Focus on local, independent, downtown businesses
  - Planning to create a downtown "draw" for visitors and residents

## Waltham

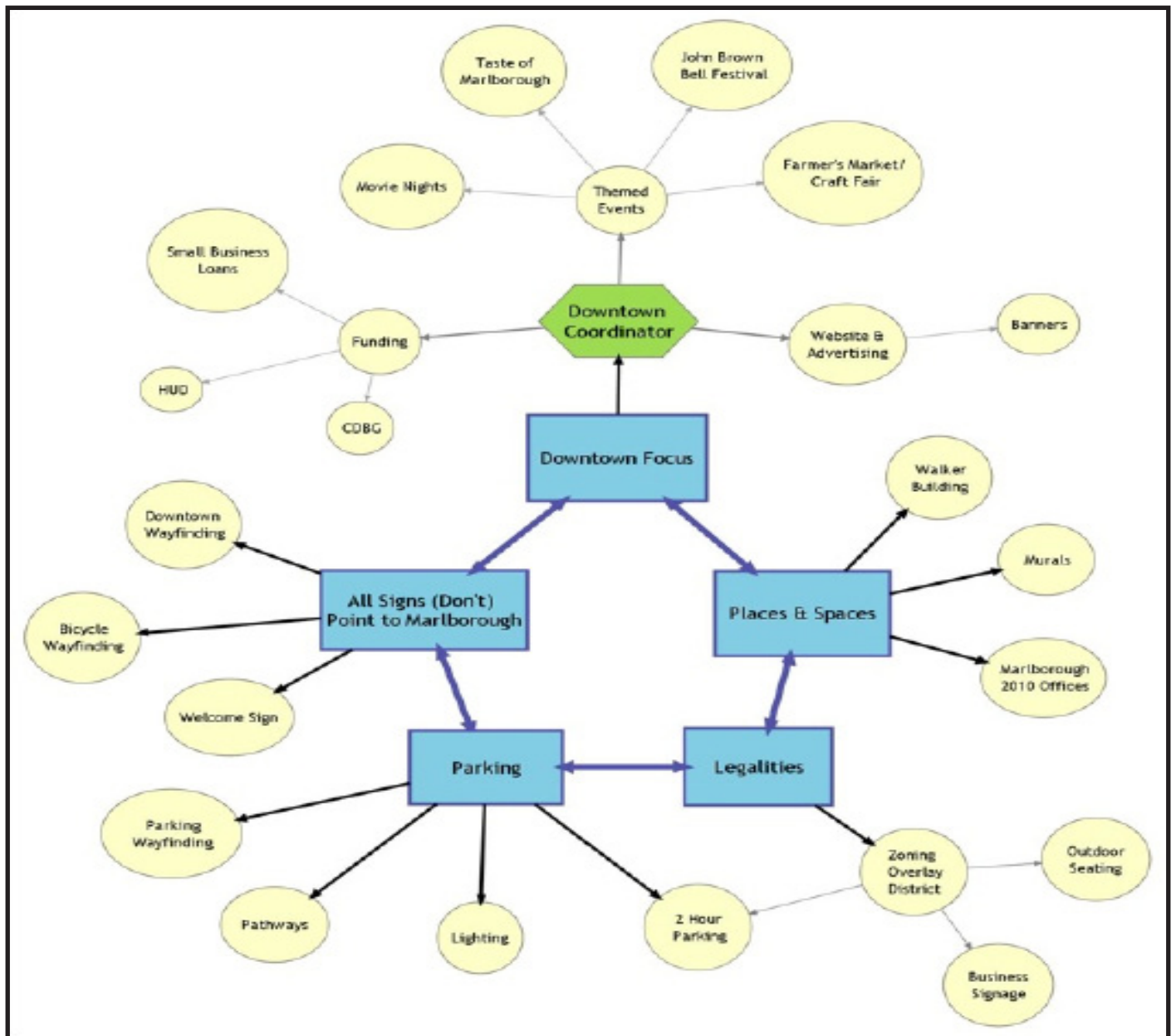
- Population: 58,989
- Demographics: 76.6% White, 8.1% African-American, 10.3% Asian, 8.5% Hispanic
- Per Capita Income: \$30,441
- Planning Initiatives/Important Facts:
  - Significant minority and immigrant population
  - Innovative use of CDBG money (Downtown Coordinator funding)
  - Large student population
  - Thriving restaurant and arts scene

# Recommendations

The four case study cities began their revitalization efforts with physical infrastructure (streets and sidewalks) improvements, which naturally lent itself to more business investments. These cities present an aesthetic impact on their environs akin to the "broken window" thesis advocated by Wilson and Kelling (1982), which suggests that physical signs of neglect contribute to a perception of general decay and decline in an area. Physical improvements can send a signal to potential investors that the downtown is a good place to invest.

Marlborough has recently completed a new streetscape, the first step in all the case studies' revitalization strategies. With additional focus on creating downtown "draws" and future business investment, Marlborough will once again have a thriving downtown.

The concept map depicted below illustrates the thought process that went into compiling this report. Recommendations are organized in five main subsections: Downtown Focus, All Signs Point To Marlborough, Parking, Places and Spaces, and Legalities. The downtown coordinator position is highlighted because of its greater ties to the success of the recommendations.



# Downtown Focus - Coordinator Needed



## What is a downtown coordinator?

A downtown coordinator can be a private consultant or a municipal employee whose sole focus is the downtown business district.

## What would it do in Marlborough?

A downtown coordinator in the City of Marlborough would help emphasize the relationship between downtown businesses and the larger Marlborough community. Interviews with various business owners underscored a disconnect between downtown establishments. An analysis of the facades of various storefronts echoed the same level of disconnect between owners and potential customers. The coordinator would fill this void - helping all stakeholders work together. Marlborough 2010 was designed to facilitate advice towards larger corporate entities, and consequently the small businesses on Main Street are missing an equal counterpart with which to coordinate efforts (Wellen, 2009).

## What have others done?

While the position is often funded from the city's planning department, as was initially the case in Waltham, the city can use CDBG money to pay the coordinator's salary and provide them with a working budget (Rose, 2009). In many cities, such as Waltham, cities and local business owners prefer to have a private consultant since it provides business owners with an advocate that is not directly connected to the city and the Mayor (Rose, 2009). The coordinator's duties can range from advertising and marketing for downtown businesses to arranging and promoting downtown events.

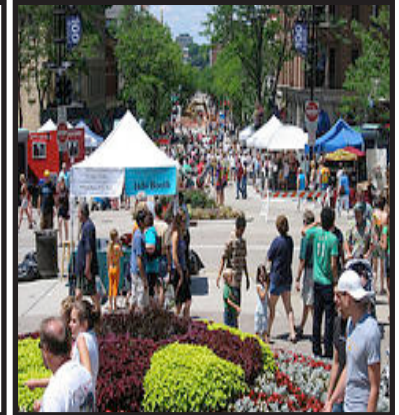
The Downtown Coordinator recommendation is split into two separate subsections: community focus and business focus. Community focus includes: Farmer's Market and Crafts Fair, The John Brown Bell Festival, The Taste of Marlborough, and Downtown Movie Nights. The Business Focus includes: Marketing, Low-Interest Loans, and Advertising.



# Community Focus

## Farmer's Markets

Farmers' markets are simple, low-cost community events that serve to bring both additional customers into the downtown area, and to give the community a weekly, or bi-weekly gathering place to meet, network, and unite. According to the Massachusetts Federation of Farmer's Markets, "Markets offer a combination of social and economic activity that enhance communities and are unparalleled by almost any other community activity." (Mass. Fed. of FM, 2009) While Marlborough has a market, the location and time frequently change, primarily due to conflicts with business owners. Organized effectively, the market's organizers can work with local businesses to find a location and time that will benefit farmers and business owners, as well as the Marlborough community (Stauble, 2009).



### Why should you support this?

- "Markets also stimulate community building. People of diverse backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and economic profiles gather around a common theme and in so doing develop a shared perspective that benefits us all." (Mass. Federation of FM)
- Local Markets help ensure that produce comes from local sources and enhances sustainability efforts.
- Helps you save money since market prices are often lower than at grocery stores.
- If craftsvand prepared goods/foods are sold, markets allow for new business opportunities.

## John Brown Bell Festival



The John Brown Bell, taken by the Marlborough Militia from Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, is an important piece of American history (Marlborough-ma.gov, 2009). However, promoting a single artifact is not often enough.

Leominster uses its place in history as the birthplace of Johnny Appleseed as the foundation of a region-wide festival that brings people into the downtown and promotes local businesses. Marlborough should promote the John Brown Bell in a yearly festival publicizing the bell and the City's history and unique businesses.

### Why Should You Support This?

- Community events are an important foundation in building a unified, proud community.
- The festival will introduce new businesses to the community residents.
- Good educational family event providing historical information about the city and region

# Community Focus

## Taste of Marlborough

The Taste of Marlborough was an event held twice in the Summer of 2008 designed to introduce the communities of the Greater Marlborough region to the city's downtown restaurants (Kane, 2009). Restaurants were not required to participate, but most did. Each customer bought tickets to try samples at restaurants of their choosing.

Many community members have explained that the event introduced them to restaurants they did not know existed, but would definitely return to. The downtown business community was equally supportive - adding that the unique event served as a showcase for their restaurant to new potential customers.

### Why Should You Support This?

- Provides the community with a fun, family-oriented evening activity.
- A good way to meet and interact with members of the community.
- An effective way to learn about the city and what it has to offer at an affordable price.

## Movie Night

In the summer of 2008, Marlborough 2010 hosted two community movie nights on the Walker Building lawn (Valiente, 2009). This free event brought community members to the downtown to interact, enjoy the summer evening, and patronize downtown businesses.

The Summer Movie Nights purpose is two-fold: Provide a free, family-oriented activity and provide another opportunity for downtown businesses to take advantage of increased visitors.

### Why Should You Support This?

- Promotes fun, safe, family-oriented activities while promoting nightlife in downtown.
- Provides a community gathering place and source for local pride.

*“An active and well-organized downtown association can help downtown businesses and property owners work together towards their mutual benefit. Somewhat similar to the organization of a shopping mall (Robertson 1997). With a broad base of volunteers and a full-time downtown manager (Stitt 1996)... city government needs to be a supportive partner in downtown development activities.” (Burayidi, 2001)*

# Business Focus

## Marketing

A primary role of a downtown coordinator is to help local businesses understand how to better market themselves. In this role, the coordinator is a direct consultant for each business. In Leominster, Sandie Chacon helped many Brazilian-owned stores create storefronts that would attract not just the Brazilian population, but the rest of Leominster as well (Griffin-Brooks, 2009).

A downtown coordinator can also help local businesses create new incentives to attract customers. Also in Leominster, Ms. Chacon forged partnerships between numerous downtown stores, showing them that by offering discounts based on receipts from neighboring stores, business would improve for all (Vallee, 2009).

## Low Interest Loans

The process for getting a loan, as well as understanding its terms and conditions, can be confusing, especially to a non-native English speaker or a new business entrepreneur. A downtown coordinator can guide a business owner through this complex process, as well as help in finding the right loan, with good terms.

Studies have found low-interest and Small-Business loans to increase employment opportunities and tax revenues with a minimal (2%) default rate (Bradshaw, 2002). A downtown coordinator can also promote the existing \$700,000 bridge loan pool that is open to downtown businesses in need of additional startup or operating capital (Wellen, 2009).

## Advertising

Advertising can be very expensive, especially for a small, or new business owner. A downtown coordinator can work with all downtown businesses to create effective, cheap advertising that can benefit all businesses in the downtown district.

In Leominster, the downtown coordinator is developing a website, called [www.shoplocalleominster.com](http://www.shoplocalleominster.com), where each downtown business can develop, with or without the coordinator's assistance, a profile page of their business. This page can not only explain what the business offers, but can also offer coupons, or other incentives to draw more customers (Vallee, 2009).

Although website design and production can be a costly process, this system spreads the costs over numerous businesses, making it a low-cost option. Additionally, Leominster sells low-cost ads in their tourism brochures. Advertising space can be sold for as little as \$50 to local business owners (Vallee, 2009).

## Why Should You Support This?

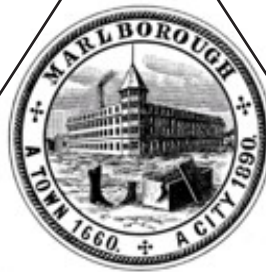
- A coordinator can help improve aesthetics and business investment in Marlborough without using city resources and time.
- Improved cohesiveness of downtown businesses.
- Tax dollars are not siphoned off to attract businesses, offer incentives, as they would be with a TIF
- Tax dollars can be used for other, more productive projects
- Increased ability to create a new business



# Downtown Focus Action Points

## COMMUNITY

- **Encourage public officials to hire a downtown coordinator.**
- **Attend and support community events.**



## BUSINESSES

- Urge elected officials to hire a downtown coordinator.
- Work with elected officials to develop a coordinator's role and duties.
- Participate in community events.
- Consider sponsoring community events.

## CITY OFFICIALS

- Attain funding and hire a downtown coordinator.
- Work with business to develop coordinator's role.

## Funding Sources:

CDBG, HUD, Municipal, Private Investment, Business Partnerships

## Who Should Be the Downtown Coordinator?

For the downtown coordinator role to be most effective, the ideal person for the position should possess several qualifications:

- The coordinator should be fluent in the primary languages spoken in Marlborough: English, Spanish, and Portuguese.
- The ideal candidate should be a well-known member of the Marlborough community with numerous relationships - both professionally and personally--with the residents, business owners, and elected officials of Marlborough.
- A downtown coordinator should understand and be able to easily advise others about banking procedures as well advertising and marketing strategies.

# To Park or Not to Park?

Many Marlborough residents and visitors believe the downtown has a parking problem. Furthermore, surveys conducted showed that many more people say they would visit the area more frequently if adequate parking were available. Despite these impressions, there is a significant amount of parking in the form of street parking and two large, free public garages just 50 feet from Main Street. The issue is not a lack of available parking spots, but access and direction to the available parking spots. Accessible and adequate parking allows customers easy access to downtown shops and activities (Gratz, 2006).



"The over-focus on parking interferes with thinking about the genuinely innovative solution necessary to either jump-start downtown revitalization or give a boost to an ongoing rebirth momentum. Many downtowns unwittingly have more parking available than reasons to park. Downtowns need parking, of course. But amazingly, in many downtowns, the actual number of existing spaces and how well they are used is often unknown."

(Burayidi, 2001)

# Pathway to Parking

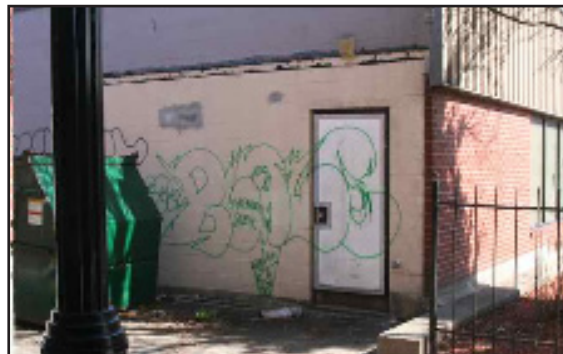
The two pathways to the public garages from Main Street are not well lit and not inviting. In responses to questions about safety in the downtown area, Marlborough residents stated that the areas and corridors around the public parking garages were in need of safety amenities. Surveys showed that if the pathways to the garages were more visually appealing, prospective users would be more inclined to use them.

Literature states “the entry experience and the succession of environmental information and activities have a major role in determining the individual itinerary.”(Zacharias, 2001) Waltham has found success with parking garages by creating pedestrian-friendly pathways to garages, and by making a strong connection between downtown and the garage (Fields, 2009).

Likewise, Hudson implemented a sponsorship program where local businesses sponsored planters and lights increasing the safety of the area and creating a more inviting atmosphere (Ciccolo, 2009). Finally, Hudson continues landscaping beyond the pathway and into the parking area, whereas Marlborough’s paths leave the pedestrian behind Main Street businesses, an area filled with dumpsters, graffiti, and poor lighting.



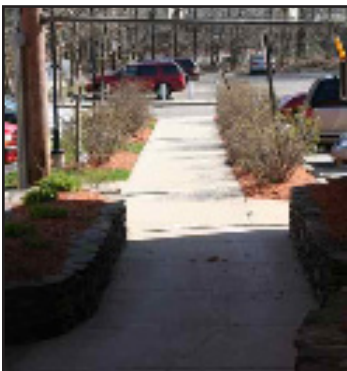
Marlborough’s Pathways



*“Since parking facilities serve as a major pedestrian impediment, some cities have realized the benefits of locating parking lots/garages in less conspicuous places—such as behind main street buildings—that are clearly marked with directional signage. Linking these parking facilities directly to major downtown destinations is a key to this strategy.”*

*(Burayidi, 2001)*

## Hudson and Waltham Pathways



### Why Should You Support This?

- Increased safety from lights, and a more enjoyable environment.
- Additional community gathering space.
- Promotes community pride in the downtown.

# Parking Wayfinding Signs

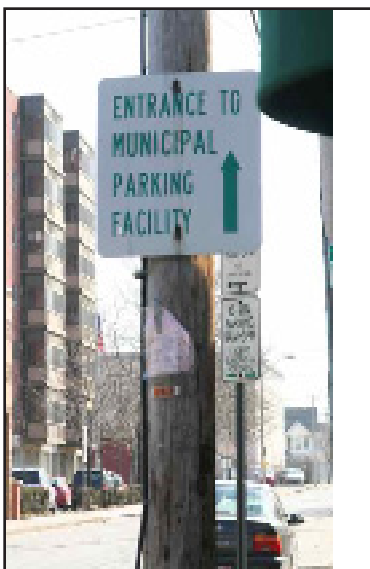
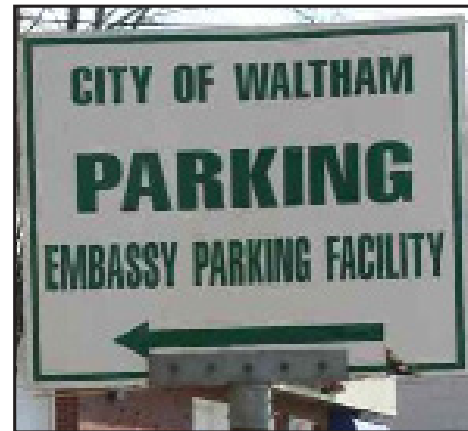
In Waltham, the community benefited significantly by improving signage for their garages (Fields, 2009). Both Hudson and Leominster have great signage indicating the location of their free municipal lots.

Surveys and informal interviews revealed that many Marlborough residents and visitors were not aware of the free parking garages located near Main St. Parking wayfinding signs can help potential downtown patrons find available, nearby parking. This will increase downtown customers and business.



*“The key usually is not to build more spaces but to more effectively manage the existing spaces and to better inform the public as to the whereabouts of available parking.”*

*(Burayidi, 2001)*



*“In central business districts, visitors may not be familiar with the downtown street layout and get lost as they search for difficult-to-find parking facilities.” (DOT, 2009)*

## Why Should You Support This?

- Easier to find parking; Less time wasted looking for parking.
- Increased use of parking garages improves perception of safety.

# “Two-Hour” and “Customer-Only” Parking



*“In many downtowns, the actual number of existing spaces and how well they are used is often unknown. Worse, downtown merchants and their employees often park in front of their stores and then complain they lose business because parking space is insufficient.” (Burayidi, 2001)*

## Won't Police Enforcement Cost More Time and Money?

Amesbury experienced a similar problem to Marlborough when downtown employees were parking in limited time parking spots for an entire day or shift. Rather than creating a new detail to enforce the time-limit, Amesbury chose to enforce the parking time limit as residents and visitors began to complain (Kezer, 2009). As the number of violations subsided, the City stopped issuing citations. In this way, Marlborough could create revenue and change people's parking habits without hiring more police officers.

Currently, Marlborough has free, two-hour parking up-and-down Main Street however, numerous business owners, employees, and customers complained that many business owners and employees park in front of their stores throughout the day (Hitner, 2009).

Enforcing the two-hour parking time limit serves two purposes: first, it creates customer turnover and abundant customer parking in ideal locations. Second, it creates a revenue stream in the form of citations. This revenue could be used to fund other recommendations presented in this report.

The Amesbury Downtown Business Association views parking turnover as a critical component in increasing customer access to downtown businesses. As such, the Downtown Business Association has circulated a petition among businesses to increase garage use and leave street parking for customers. (Newburyport News, 2009)

As an alternative, or in addition to enforcement of the two-hour parking limit, the City can also provide “Customer Only” parking areas. Hudson has had great success using this technique to provide enough customer parking and turnover (Ciccolo, 2009).

*“The least desirable, often-inconvenient spaces are left for the customers everyone wants.” (Burayidi, 2001)*

## Why Should You Support This?

- Quick stops downtown to City Hall, the Post Office, or to shop are more convenient and less of a hassle.
- Improved chance of finding prime, storefront parking.



# To Park or Not To Park Action Points

## COMMUNITY

- **Prove that parking spaces work: shop downtown.**



## BUSINESSES

- Enforce parking bans within your business by discouraging employees from parking in on-street or customer only parking spaces
- Encourage city officials to fund parking wayfind signs.
- Sponsor landscaping in pathways

## CITY OFFICIALS

- Gather business business sponsorship for pathways.
- Encourage police enforcement.
- Vote to create customer only parking.

Funding Sources:  
CDBG, HUD, Municipal, Private Investment, Business Partnerships

# Places and Spaces

Downtown Marlborough has numerous underutilized buildings and public spaces that leave the area feeling like a “dead zone.” By making use of existing infrastructure and reusing existing buildings, rather than creating new places and spaces for the community outside of the Main St. area, Marlborough can bring vibrancy back to the downtown. The two areas of immediate concern are the Walker Building and the numerous blank walls that are visible throughout the downtown.

## The Walker Building

While the Walker Building should be preserved, its existing use as city offices is well below its potential. However, it is beyond the scope of this project to determine exact uses and funding for the reuse of this historic building.

Amesbury has had great success converting an old theater into an after-school gymnastics facility for school children.



While gymnastics is not the ideal use for the Walker Building, possible future uses include a community center, a continuing education center, or professional offices.



## Brighten up the Downtown

Numerous Marlborough community members expressed a desire to see more public art downtown. Public art installations like murals are a low-cost method of increasing the downtown’s vibrancy and energy.

Amesbury has painted several murals, all by local artists, throughout the downtown in previously blighted areas like parking lots (Fahey, 2009). Murals can change to feature different local artists and continually pique community members’ interest.

*“Across the nation, cities are turning to murals to liven up blank walls and façades in their downtowns. A Mural is a large work of art painted on the exterior wall of a building within public view and designed to bring beauty to the building and surrounding region. Murals can serve as effective tools to promote social, historical, cultural awareness. Murals have been found to have many benefits, including fostering a sense of pride within the community, reinforcing social and cultural norms and identities, deter crime and vagrancy, encouraging community involvement and unity.” (Kirsch, 1995; Thomas & Rappoport, 1996).*

## Why Should You Support This?

- Murals can make Marlborough a destination.
- Murals can serve as an outlet for community communication and promote cross-cultural awareness.
- Improved aesthetics encourage more people to live, work, and play in Marlborough.

# Places and Spaces Action Points

## COMMUNITY

- **Recommend artists for the mural.**
- **Brainstorm mural themes.**
- **Participate and support a mural competition.**



## BUSINESSES

- Donate painting materials.
- Sponsor an artist.
- Encourage residents and visitors to visit new murals and offer incentives to visit your business at the same time.

## CITY OFFICIALS

- Formalize mural program.
- Sponsor a design contest.
- Research potential investors for the Walker Building.

Funding Sources:  
Private Investment, Municipal Funds, Urban Self-Help Funds

# Legalities

While community events and low-cost improvements will have a significant impact in revitalizing the downtown, Marlborough needs to change certain legal constraints to allow for a more vibrant district. The three most significant changes pertain to zoning - specifically a downtown, mixed-use overlay district and outdoor restaurant seating - and sign ordinances.

## Zoning

The City's current zoning encourages the spatial segregation of land uses; for example, industrial, commercial and residential areas are all kept separate from one another. Currently, because the downtown only allows commercial uses and not residential, it is nine-to-five community, as opposed to a 24-hour community. Once businesses close for the day, or when businesses are closed on Sundays and holidays, the downtown is vacant. By allowing residential uses within the downtown, there are constantly people around, which adds to the district's sense of vibrancy.

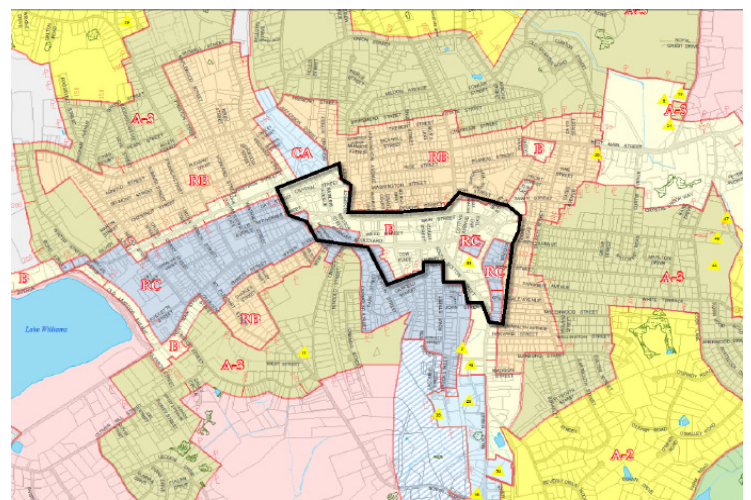
Additionally, with mixed-uses, there is a greater chance for spillover business as well as spontaneous purchasing. Finally, downtown residents require certain amenities nearby--pharmacy, coffee shop, ice cream parlor, and more eating options--which creates a market for new businesses.

### What is an overlay district?

An overlay district is an additional zoning requirement that is placed on a geographic region without changing the underlying zoning (Witten, 2009). The regulatory applications of overlay districts vary greatly, exemplifying the unique ability of these districts to adapt to a wide array of community concerns. Regulations or incentives are attached to the overlay district to protect a specific resource or guide development within a stated area (Witten, 2009).

### Marlborough's Downtown Overlay District

A Marlborough downtown overlay district (DOD) would be sit on top of the existing Business zoning district (District B).

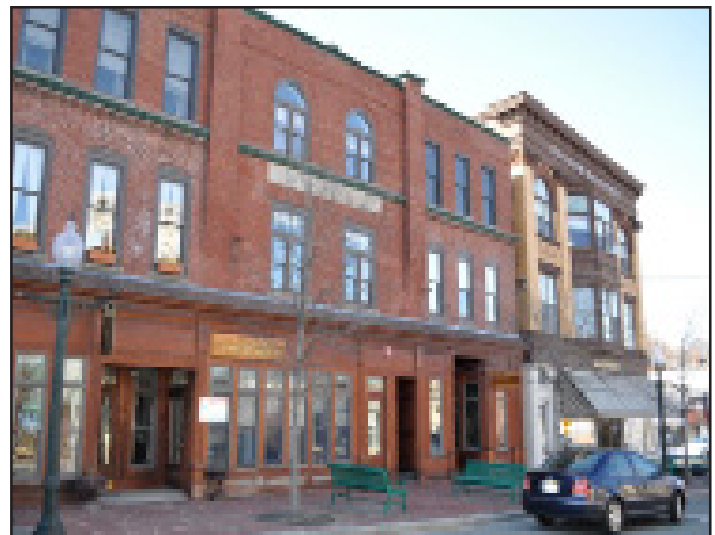
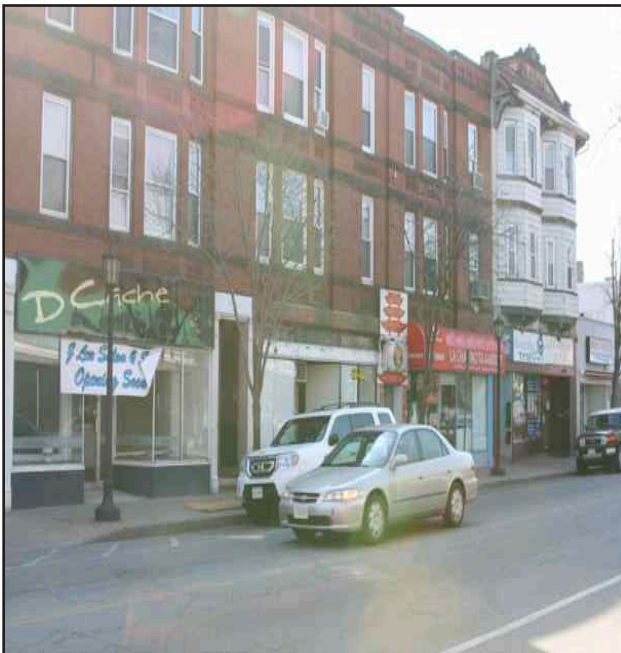


Uses allowed in the DOD would include: second stories on existing buildings, affordable and market-rate housing, entertainment uses (e.g. movie theater), and outdoor restaurant seating.

Traditional neighborhood development uses compact, defined urban neighborhoods, comprising a compatible mix of uses and housing types, which are connected with sidewalks and facilitate convenient and safe movement throughout the community for all modes of transportation (Ctr. for Land Use Ed., 2005). While we emphasize the mixture of land uses as a critical component of downtown Marlborough's future success, it should be noted that the downtown region should also contain a mixture of design elements - sun, shade, public amenities, outdoor seating, etc. - in order to provide an adequate level of life within the spaces.

"In recent years, many downtowns have recognized the advantages of having more people actually live downtown, thereby providing a human presence throughout the week and a market for downtown businesses."

(Burayidi, 2001)



### Why Should You Support This?

- Changes the dynamic of the downtown; makes it more vibrant
- Increases possible housing (affordable housing) options in an ideal location
- Provides an option for a different type of housing (i.e. urban over suburban)

# Outdoor Seating in the DOD

Permitting restaurants to provide patrons with outdoor seating options enhances downtown business and provides the downtown region with a sense place. Sidewalk seating for restaurants is an attractive component of traditional neighborhood development - it invites people to interact in public spaces providing much needed vitality to the downtown streets (Ctr. for Land Use Ed., 2005). Allowing outdoor restaurant seating within the downtown overlay district would enrich the downtown experience for residents and visitors alike. Outdoor seating at downtown restaurants provides customers with an incentive to patronize those eateries rather than other restaurants in the greater Marlborough region.

*“the correlation between the number of [outdoor] commercial seats and the Liveliness Index was the most significant, indicating that it was a powerful characteristic for supporting liveliness.”*  
(Meta, 2007)



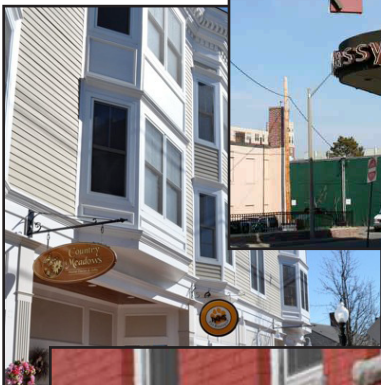
## Why Should You Support This?

- Creates new, vibrant public spaces.
- Safer downtown streets: studies show that an increase of pedestrian activity leads to a reduction of crime.
- Provides another type of dining experience.
- Expands seating options at many locally owned downtown eateries.

# Signage

Marlborough has a long and sorted history when it comes to signage. The current sign ordinance does not allow for signs that come off sideways of building facades (also known as protruding signs). As a result, Marlborough's downtown lacks sufficient vibrancy and dynamics to attract motorists and other passersbys.

Hudson has a very similar store inventory as Marlborough, with an overabundance of hair and nail salons, banks, and insurance offices. However, Hudson's sign ordinance allows for protruding signs, and, as a result, the downtown feels much more livable and livelier.



## Won't This Change Hurt Businesses?

Each time Marlborough attempts to change the sign ordinance, numerous stakeholders throughout Marlborough debate the possible changes. Realtors' signs are often not in compliance, and business owners with signs not in compliance tend to fight against the proposed changes (Wellen, 2009).

For these reasons, the sign ordinance change proposed here should only apply to the downtown overlay district. In addition, the proposed ordinance, which will allow protruding signs of a specific shape, style, and size will not apply to pre-existing signs; that is, if a sign is already hanging, it need not conform. However, once an existing sign is taken down it must, from that point forward, be in compliance.

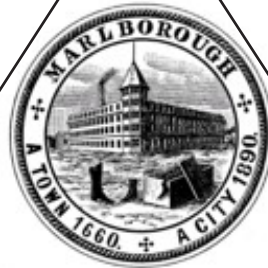
## Why Should You Support This?

- Simple method to end a long-standing point of contention.
- Protruding signs create a vibrant, appealing downtown that will encourage business investment.

# Legalities Action Points

## COMMUNITY

- Encourage new downtown uses by patronizing downtown businesses.
- Actively participate in all zoning hearings so that any changes reflect the local needs.



## BUSINESSES

- Encourage city officials to create a downtown overlay district.
- Show support of by taking advantage of changes to seating and sign ordinances.

## CITY OFFICIALS

- Create a downtown overlay district quickly.
- Streamline procedural process to change singage ordinance.
- Work with business owners and potential investors to encourage new downtown uses..

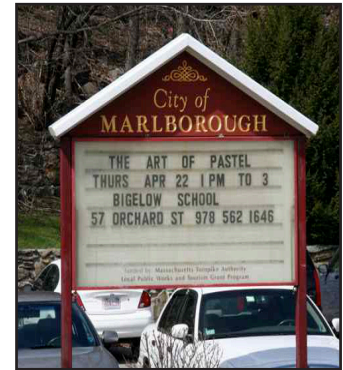
Funding Sources:  
Municipal Funds, Private Investment



# All Signs Point to Marlborough

In order for downtown Marlborough to thrive, potential visitors need to be properly directed to Main Street. With the current signage, it is unclear where Main Street is, from either end of the bypass. Additionally, bicyclists on the Assabet River Rail Trail are not directed to Main Street.

To compound these wayfinding problems, the city does not take advantage of the banner pegs that were installed on the historic lampposts lining Main Street. A few low-cost solutions could direct more customers downtown and enhance the downtown's livability.



## Downtown Marlborough Signs

On the corner of Main Street, Granger Blvd (Route 20), and Mechanic Street, there is publicly owned land on which the Welcome to Marlborough sign exists. It is unclear, however, because of the sign placement where downtown Marlborough is. The same problem exists on the corner of Route 20, Route 85 and Main Street. Changing the orientation of these welcome signs, or adding directional arrows to them is a low-cost and easy way to encourage more traffic into the downtown (Valiente, 2009).

*“Everyone complains about traffic. We hate sitting in it, and government spends billions trying to make traffic move faster and more smoothly. But not all traffic is bad. Indeed, in the case of downtown[s]...traffic is life.”* (Downtown Think Tank, 2008)



### Why Should You Support This?

- Draws more visitors to the downtown, creating a thriving, vibrant downtown the community can be proud of.
- Low-cost method to promote downtown Marlborough and make use of existing infrastructure.
- Attracts more passersby on Route 20 to the downtown.

# Bicycle Wayfinding Signs

Beginning in South Acton, and running through Maynard and Hudson before reaching Marlborough, the Assabet River Rail Trail connects downtown Marlborough to numerous other communities and potential customers (arrtinc.org, 2009). However, there is no signage directing pedestrians and cyclists from the bike path into downtown Marlborough.

A simple series of wayfinding signs on Highland Avenue, Lincoln Street and Cashman Street would guide trail users directly into downtown Marlborough to shop, explore, and dine. These wayfinding signs could be sponsored by local businesses for promotion.

Hudson has had great success using simple bike path wayfinding to direct more customers to the downtown. (Ciccolo, 2009)



## Why Should You Support This?

- Promotes downtown Marlborough as a destination, and attracts more visitors and patrons.
- Enhances a new family-friendly activity.
- Promotes a healthy community.
- Attracts visitors that won't compound parking issues.

# Banners



Marlborough has historic lampposts with banner rungs installed on Main Street. Although banners are displayed during the holiday season, they could be installed year-round to promote downtown Marlborough and special events like the Farmer's Market, Taste of Marlborough and Downtown Movie Night.

Banners also provide a sense of vitality to the district, and promote downtown Marlborough as a destination while creating a hospitable business atmosphere. In addition, by working with a local print shop, the City could create a dynamic city center while helping a local business.

"Changing the banners regularly would... help to keep downtown as a destination fresh in the minds of both locals and tourists." (Downtown Think Tank, 2008)



## Won't This be Expensive?

Costs would be relatively cheap; approximately \$100 - \$125 per banner plus installation (Jones, 2009). Banners create the same visual draw as American flags, but serve a dual-purpose by promoting the downtown and community events.

## Why Should You Support This?

- A relatively low-cost method of promoting downtown Marlborough while creating a pleasing visual stimulus.
- A more attractive downtown through existing infrastructure.
- Community members and visitors will be more informed of local events occurring downtown.

# All Signs Point to Marlborough Action Points

## COMMUNITY

- Use the bike trail.
- Encourage city officials to implement signs and improve wayfinding.



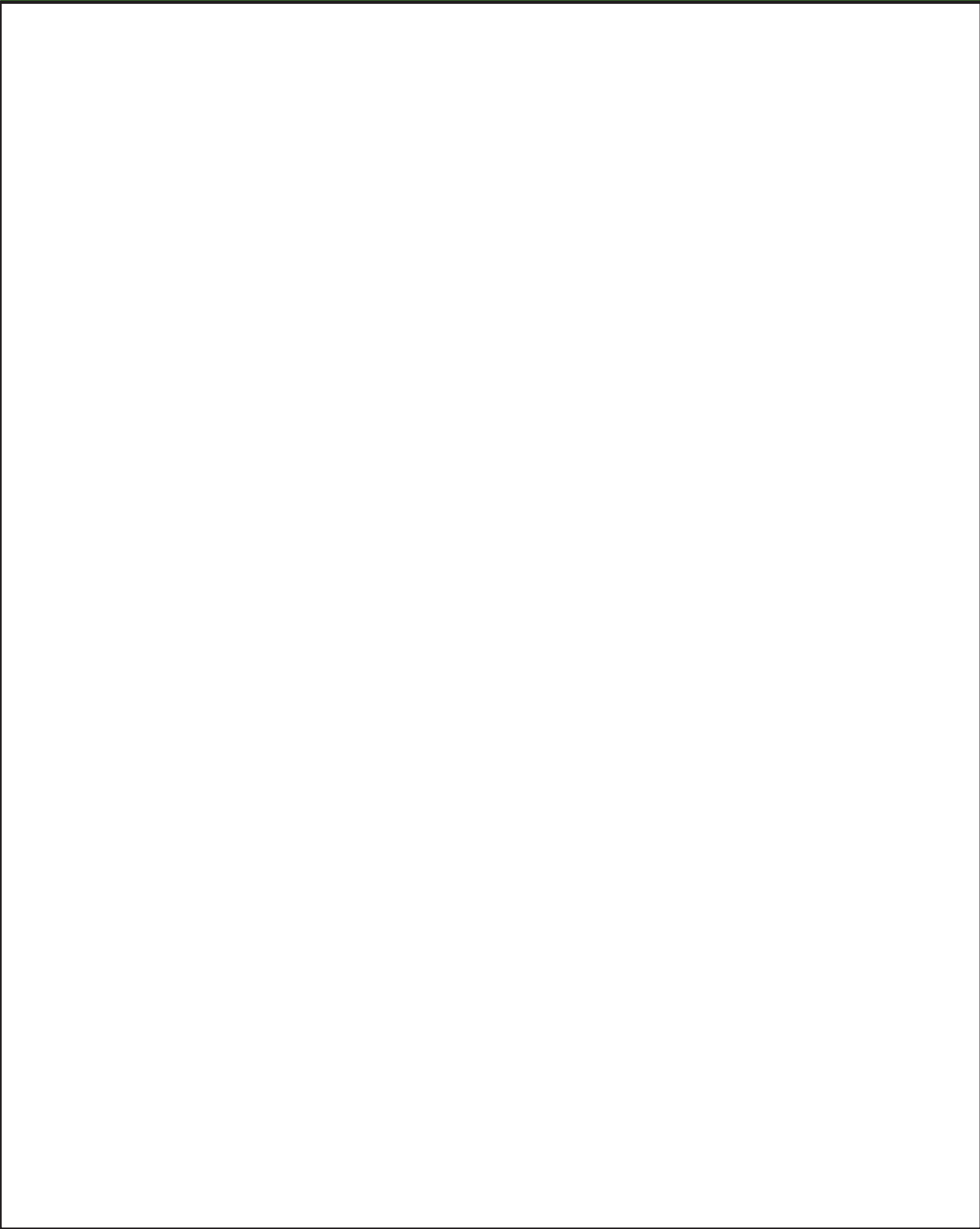
## BUSINESSES

- Sponsor bike path wayfinding signs.
- Promote the creation of banners for thematic events.
- Sponsor lamppost banners.

## CITY OFFICIALS

- Contact potential business sponsors.
- Selective use of flags for enhanced effect.
- Create a schedule for banners.
- Create more banners.

Funding Sources:  
Friends of the Assabet River Rail Trail, MassHighway,  
Local Businesses, Municipal Funds



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# Appendix 1: Extended Methodology

## Case Study Selection

In identifying downtown revitalization methods, Marlborough 2010 asked the Field Projects Team to base their recommendations on existing, substantiated strategies from other regional cities and towns. It was determined that a best practices analysis would provide tangible results of existing physical plans, economic incentives, and community planning programs that exist in similar cities and towns. Once successful initiatives were identified, the team would work to adapt recommendations to reflect the accomplishments of these other municipalities.

In order to gain thorough insight, once the case study cities and towns were selected, semi-structured interviews with municipal officials were conducted in order to understand that particular city's path towards revitalization. The team also visited each site at least once, to document some of the physical changes that had transpired as result of the planning/policy legislation. The methodology of selecting the case study cities and towns are as follows.

Choosing to focus on New England municipalities<sup>1</sup> with a similar industrial past, the research team first selected a list of candidate cities of 40 former mill towns with criteria focusing on four key categories: demographics (population/race/income), proximity to regional landmarks (highways/airports/recreational areas), natural features, and planning processes. Using basic web-based sources for data, the matrix was filled in, allowing the team to compare and contrast the municipalities on various levels. After lengthy analysis and discussion, the matrix was pruned to seven finalist cities, as follows:

Town	State	Population	Economic Development	Old Building Use	Transit	Proximity to City/Airport	Planning Process	Per Capita Income	Demographic	Density
Amesbury	MA	16,450	1996 adopted city gov't format. Revitalized downtown (info on town website) and a HUGE master plan.	museums, historical sites	bus, commuter rail	boston 50 miles.	<a href="http://www.ci.amesbury.ma.us/home.nsf?namesbury&amp;group=43">http://www.ci.amesbury.ma.us/home.nsf?namesbury&amp;group=43</a>	\$24,103	87.2% White, 0.8% African-American, 0.6% Asian, 0.9% Hispanic	1,326 per sq. mile
Holyoke	MA	39,838	Economic Development Department: several committees related to industrial and commercial development	canal system. Open Square redevelopment. Converted old mills into mixed use. Cafes, lofts, art space	PVTA	Springfield 10 miles.	<a href="http://ci.holyoke.ma.us/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=15&amp;Itemid=7">http://ci.holyoke.ma.us/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=15&amp;Itemid=7</a> <a href="http://ci.holyoke.ma.us/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=55&amp;Itemid=7">http://ci.holyoke.ma.us/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=55&amp;Itemid=7</a>	\$15,913	65.67% White, 3.3% African-American, 0.81% Asian, 41.38% Hispanic	1,871 people per sq. mile
Hudson	MA	18,113	Economic Development Commission. Apparently they recently had a DT revitalization project but couldn't find notes on it.	Historic Commission and Historic District	No Transit	40 Miles West of Boston	Elected Planning Board, E.D. with 5 members	\$28,679	White 94% Latino 3% Black 13%	623 people per sq. mile
Leominster	MA	41,303	Lowest Tax rate in state, CDBG program, multiple economic development incentive programs.	Historic Preservation Commission	Yes, MBTA Fishburne Line. The stop is North Leominster	North of Worcester and West of Boston	Planning Board, 1 ED with 5 specific members!	\$21,789	White 81% Latino 11% 3.7% Black	1430 people per sq. mile
Maynard	MA	10,037	Chamber of Commerce. Couldn't find much more on their economic development. They did have a webpage that really showed off the downtown region. Looks like it was revitalized recently and has a decent life atm. Worth a 3rd largest employment center in the region, 3rd most highly valued business center in the region, lots of investment behind restaurant scene (see Draft Report)	Historical Commission	No Transit! Nearest station is South Acton of MBTA	West of Boston, Northeast of Marlborough	They have a Planning Board, 1 Planner and 5 members.	\$27,016	White 94% Latino 3% Black 1%	1990 people per sq. mile
Waltham	MA	59,362			Buses, commuter rail	Very close to Boston	<a href="http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/PLANNING/Web%20Pages/Planning%20Home.htm">http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/PLANNING/Web%20Pages/Planning%20Home.htm</a> lots of grant, loan, and incentive programs	\$26,394	82.58% white, 4.41% aa, 7.29% hispanic, 8.49% hispanic	4,883 people per sq. mile
Woonsocket	RI	43,224	Woonsocket Main Street - Riverfront Initiative. Various Development Districts	MANY	No?	25 miles to Providence	Signage credit policy	\$30,819	83.14% White, 4.44% African-American, 9.32% Hispanic	5,748 people per sq. mi

The seven finalist municipalities showed the highest level of correlation with Marlborough and thus compelled further investigation into formal planning and policy initiatives. After a formal review of planning initiatives, the list was further pared down to four case studies based on this extensive research of the downtown district and successful revitalization plans. The four case study cities/towns selected to provide a best practice analysis were Waltham, Amesbury, Leominster and Hudson, MA. Table 1.1 lists the demographics of Marlborough compared to the case study towns/cities and more specific details on revitalization efforts have been disseminated throughout the final report.

<sup>1</sup>It was later determined to exclude municipalities outside of Massachusetts because of differences within state political structure. While these cities could still have had relevance to Marlborough, it was determined it would be out of the scope of the project to provide a detailed analysis on other state programs.

## **Interview Methodology**

To gain further insight from various stakeholders in the Marlborough and case study communities, the team utilized public surveys and formal interviews to obtain qualitative data. Marlborough 2010 provided the team with a basis of critical stakeholders within the Marlborough community – a list of diverse individuals, equally representative of the topics addressed in the final recommendations. The team identified three broad categories of interviewees; public officials, business/land owners, and community/advocacy groups and developed a set of questions relevant to the needs of each party. To supplement the list provided by Marlborough 2010, the team also solicited involvement from various business owners, religious groups, and city employees. Approximately twenty formal, 30-minute interviews were conducted in Marlborough by the research team. The results of these interviews are reflected throughout the recommendations of the report and effectively reflect the various interests within the downtown region.

To gain deeper insight on the planning and policy processes that evolved in the case study municipalities, formal interviews were also conducted with various stakeholders in these respective communities. Using the strengths outlined in each case study municipality, the team was able to identify key participants to engage in the interview process. Approximately ten formal, 30-minute interviews were conducted in the respective communities by the research team. The interview participants selected, represent individuals with extensive knowledge of the planning process that helped revitalize the community in recent years. The results of these interviews are reflected throughout the recommendations of the report and effectively reflect the applicability of the case studies.

## **Survey Methodology**

To obtain a wider representation of the concerns and ideas of the community, the team developed a tool with which to conduct public research surveys (p.33). The team concluded that a research survey would serve as the most effective tool to capture the thoughts of the Marlborough community not reflected in the formal interview process.

Surveys participants were solicited to participate throughout the downtown region. A sample of approximately one hundred survey participants was used to draw a profile representative of the community needs as a whole. The results of the survey were compiled in a matrix and plotted to show trends among participants, providing a visual aid to the research team in developing recommendations to suit the needs of Marlborough residents. The survey findings were reflected throughout the recommendations.

# Appendix 1: Extended Methodology (Continued)

## Downtown Marlborough Revitalization Survey

\*\*This survey is completely anonymous. The survey is part of a study to understand what, if any, improvements are needed on downtown Marlborough. Please answer the questions honestly, and to the best of your ability. Thank you.\*\*

1) Are you a resident of Marlborough?

2) Have you ever visited downtown Marlborough (Main St. and Surrounding Area)? If no, please continue with Section B.

### Section A: (Only fill out if you have visited downtown Marlborough)

1) How often (days per week or days per month) do you visit downtown Marlborough?

2) What would encourage you to visit downtown Marlborough more (Circle all that apply)?

Better Stores      Better Safety      Better Access      More Parking

Other (Please Explain):

3) How do you travel to downtown Marlborough (Circle all that apply)?

Walk      Bike      Car      Bus

Other (Please Explain):

4) What are your reasons for visiting downtown Marlborough (Circle all that apply)?

Restaurants      Medical      Banking      Salon/Beauty      Work      Government

Services/Post Office      Nightlife/Bar      Pharmacy/Convenience Store

Grocery Store      Liquor Store      Clothing Store      Specialty Store

Other (Please Explain):



# Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 7  
AND  
[MARLBOROUGH 2010]

## I. Introduction

Project (i.e., team) number: 7

Project title: Land Use Assessment and Planning to Revitalize Marlborough's Downtown Commercial District

Client: Marlborough 2010

This Memorandum of Understanding (the "MOU") summarizes the scope of work, work product(s) and deliverables, timeline, work processes and methods, and lines of authority, supervision and communication relating to the Field Project identified above (the "Project"), as agreed to between (i) the UEP graduate students enrolled in the Field Projects and Planning course (UEP-255) (the "Course") offered by the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning ("UEP") who are identified in Paragraph II(1) below (the "Field Projects Team"); (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ Team 7 \_\_\_\_\_, further identified in Paragraph II(2) below (the "Client"); and (iii) UEP, as represented by a Tufts faculty member directly involved in teaching the Course during the spring 2009 semester.

## II. Specific Provisions

(1) The Field Projects Team working on the Project consists of the following individuals:

1. Adam Knoff                      email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2) The Client's contact information is as follows:

Client name: Marlborough 2010

Key contact/supervisor: Tom Wellen

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Marlborough, MA 01752

Web site: [www.Marlborough2010.com](http://www.Marlborough2010.com)

(3) The goal/goals of the Project is/are:

- Why is downtown Marlborough underutilized by business, residents and visitors alike and what corrective steps or actions can be used to create a thriving main street corridor?

(4) The methods and processes through which the Field Projects Team intends to achieve this goal/these goals is/are:

- Conduct interviews and host charrette for key stakeholders and the general public, respectively.
- Research relevant examples of downtown revitalization.
- Analyze zoning code and previous studies to understand the needs of downtown Marlborough.

(5) The work products and deliverables of the Project are (this includes any additional presentations for the client):

- Comprehensive report of findings and presentation to the city council and key stakeholders.

(6) The anticipated Project timeline (with dates anticipated for key deliverables) is:

- Case Studies, Community Surveys, and Interviews – February – March
- Synthesize prior reports and analyze city zoning – Late February – March
- Charrette – Mid March
- Project Outline Draft – Feb 23
- Final Report Draft – April 3
- Final Presentation – April 21
- Final Report – May 1
- Assessment Memo – May 4

(7) The lines of authority, supervision and communication between the Client and the Field Projects Team are (or will be determined as follows):

- Adam Knoff will be in direct communication to the client (Tom Wellen).

(8) The understanding with regard to payment/reimbursement by the client to the Field Projects Team of any Project-related expenses is:

- Client will reimburse for any community involvement costs.

### III. Additional Representations and Understandings

A. The Field Projects Team is undertaking the Course and the Project for academic credit and therefore compensation (other than reimbursement of Project-related expenses) may not be provided to team members.

B. Because the Course and the Project itself are part of an academic program, it is understood that the final work product and deliverables of the Project (the “Work Product”) – either in whole or in part – may and most likely will be shared with others inside and beyond the Tufts community. This may include, without limitation, the distribution of the Work Product to other students, faculty and staff, release to community groups or public agencies, general publication, and posting on the Web. Tufts University and the Field Project Team may seek and secure grant funds or similar payment to defray the cost of any such distribution or publication.

C. The report cannot be altered without written consent of the Field Project Team. Any data collected by the team is available to the client. Conversely, any data the client currently has pursuant to the project will be made available to the Field Project Team.

D. It is understood that this Project may require the approval (either through full review or by exemption) of the Tufts University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process is not expected to interfere with timely completion of the project.

### IV. Signatures

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For MARLBOROUGH 2010

By: TOM WELLEN

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2009

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Representative of the Field Projects Team

By: DAVID J. FORBES

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2009

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Tufts UEP Faculty Representative

By: RACHEL BRATT

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2009



# Appendix 3: IRB Documentation



OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST

Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research  
Institutional Review Board

Re: IRB Study # 0902030  
Title: Marlborough 2010: Land Use Assessment and Planning to Revitalize Downtown Marlborough  
PI: David Forbes  
Co-Investigator(s): Gabriel Lopez-Bernal, Adam Knoff, Nicholas Petschek  
Faculty Advisor: Rachel Bratt  
IRB Review Date: 2/24/2009

February 27, 2009

Dear David,

I have reviewed your *Application for Exempt Status* for the above referenced study. This study qualifies as exempt from review under the following federal guidelines:

Exempt Category 2 as defined in 45 CFR 46.101 (b). For complete details please visit the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office (DHHS) for Human Research Protections (OHRP) website at:  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.101>

Any changes to the protocol or study materials that might affect the exempt status must be referred to the Office of the IRB for guidance. Depending on the changes, you may be required to apply for either expedited or full review.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of the IRB at (617) 627-3417.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne Wakeford".

Yvonne Wakeford, Ph.D.  
IRB Administrator

