



2025 Leicester Center of Town Plan





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Introduction

Introduction

In 2023, the Town of Leicester partnered with CMRPC to develop a vision plan for the Center of Town area. This called for identifying priorities through community engagement and existing conditions analysis and recommending strategies to address these priorities. This project was funded by a Fiscal Year 2023 Community Compact Best Practice Award from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The plan begins with an overview of prior planning efforts, followed by findings from community engagement. Next, potential best practices for downtown areas and town centers are introduced. The plan then examines the Center of Town for consistency with best practices and, where relevant, recommends strategies for achievement. Finally, funding sources and an implementation framework are provided for each strategy.

The plan's main findings are that the Center of Town could benefit from enhancements to the physical realm and the addition of more visitor attractions like businesses and recreational activities. The plan addresses the quality of building facades, streetscapes, and public spaces through a combination of suggested physical improvements and changes to local regulations. Recommendations for business attraction and recreational activities include a variety of marketing and programming initiatives.

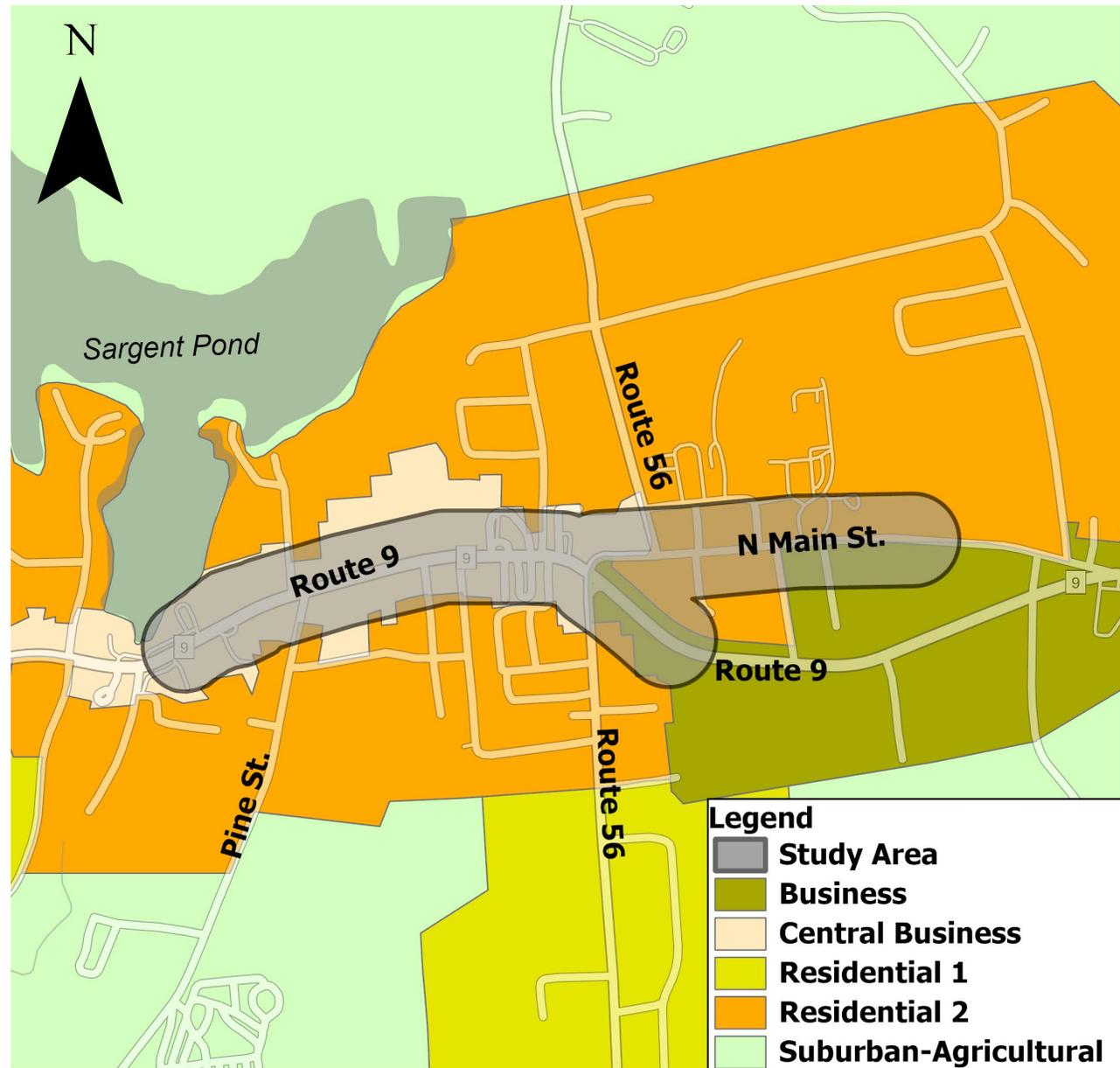


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Study Area

The plan covers the “Center of Town” in Leicester. This includes the Route 9 corridor, from Sargent Pond in the west to beyond the Route 9 / 56 intersection in the east, and the area around the Town Common. This area mostly comprises the Central Business (CB) zoning district. Other zoning districts are indicated in the accompanying map.





Prior Planning Efforts

This plan references and expands upon the following prior planning efforts:

2014 Town Center Study (CMRPC): Analyzed and offered recommendations concerning the infrastructure capacity, land use profile, zoning regulations, and streetscape conditions of the Center of Town.

2017 Workforce Housing Report (CMRPC): Studied the state of the town's housing market and recommended strategies to facilitate housing development, including zoning changes, planning exercises, and communication methods.

2021 Economic Development Plan (CMRPC): Examined economic development in Leicester through the lens of demographics, built environments, housing needs, natural resources, supply of businesses / jobs, and zoning. Identified opportunities to leverage strengths and/or address needs.

2021 Rapid Recovery Plan (Civic Space Collaborative, et al.): Studied and offered recommendations concerning the physical environment, business makeup, and market context of the segment of Route 9 extending from the Center of Town to Cherry Valley.

2024 Downtown Parking Study (Stantec): Analyzed and provided recommendations for parking capacity and pedestrian connectivity around the Town Common and Leicester High School campus.

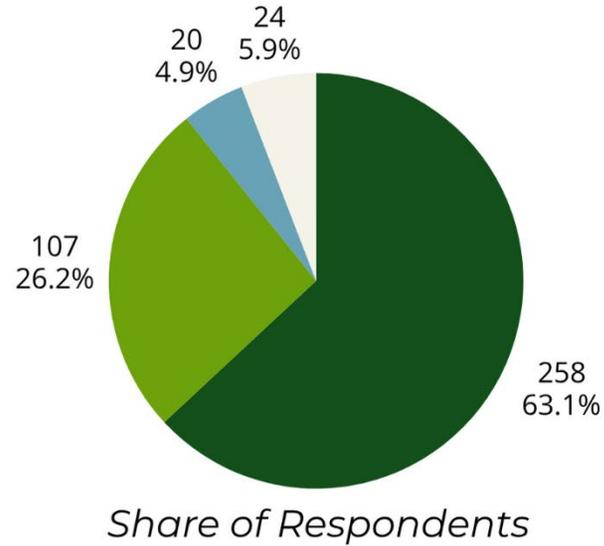
2024 Washburn Square Wayfinding and Gateway Plan (CMRPC): Inventoried existing conditions in the Washburn Square area and recommended locations and designs for new wayfinding and gateway signage.



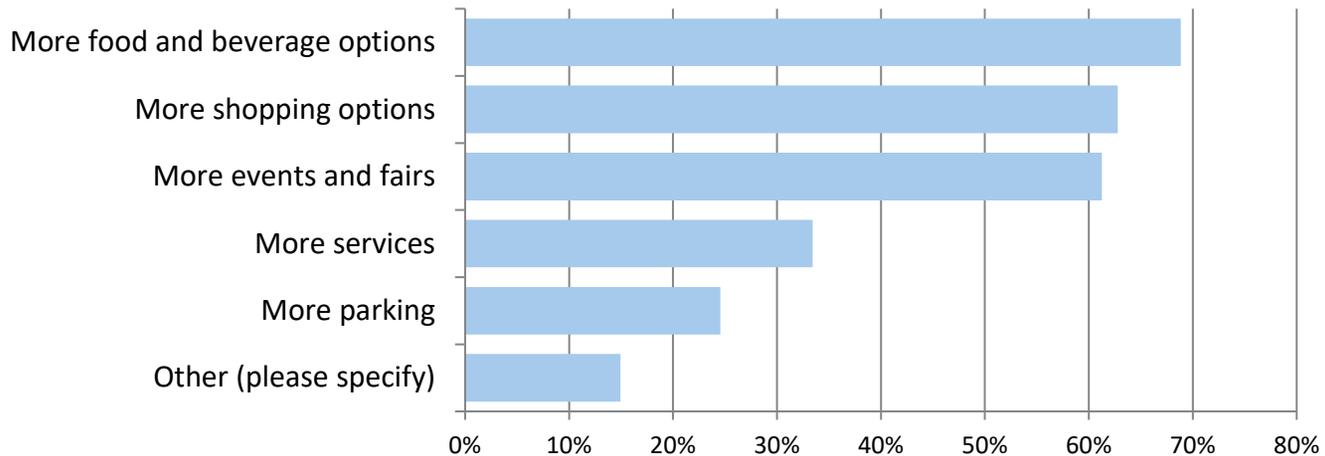
Community Engagement

Survey Q7: How Often are You in and Around the Center of Town?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Other (Yearly, etc.)

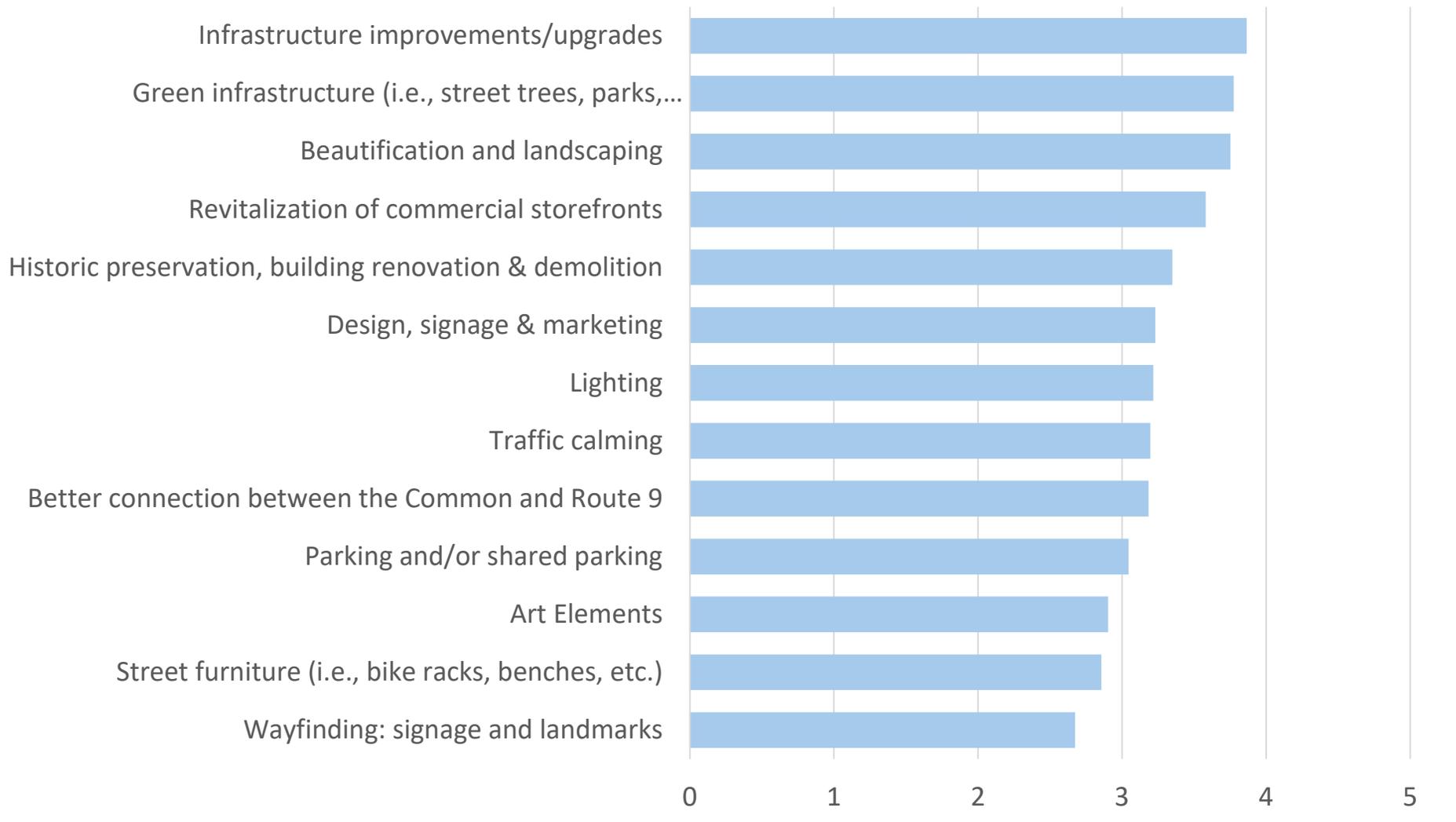


Survey Q8: What activities and amenities would increase your visits to the Center of Town area?





Survey Q9: Rank Priorities for Physical Improvements in the Center of Town and the Common (5 = Highest Priority)





Survey Q10: Rank Priorities for Economic Development Planning in the Center of Town

(9 = Highest Priority)





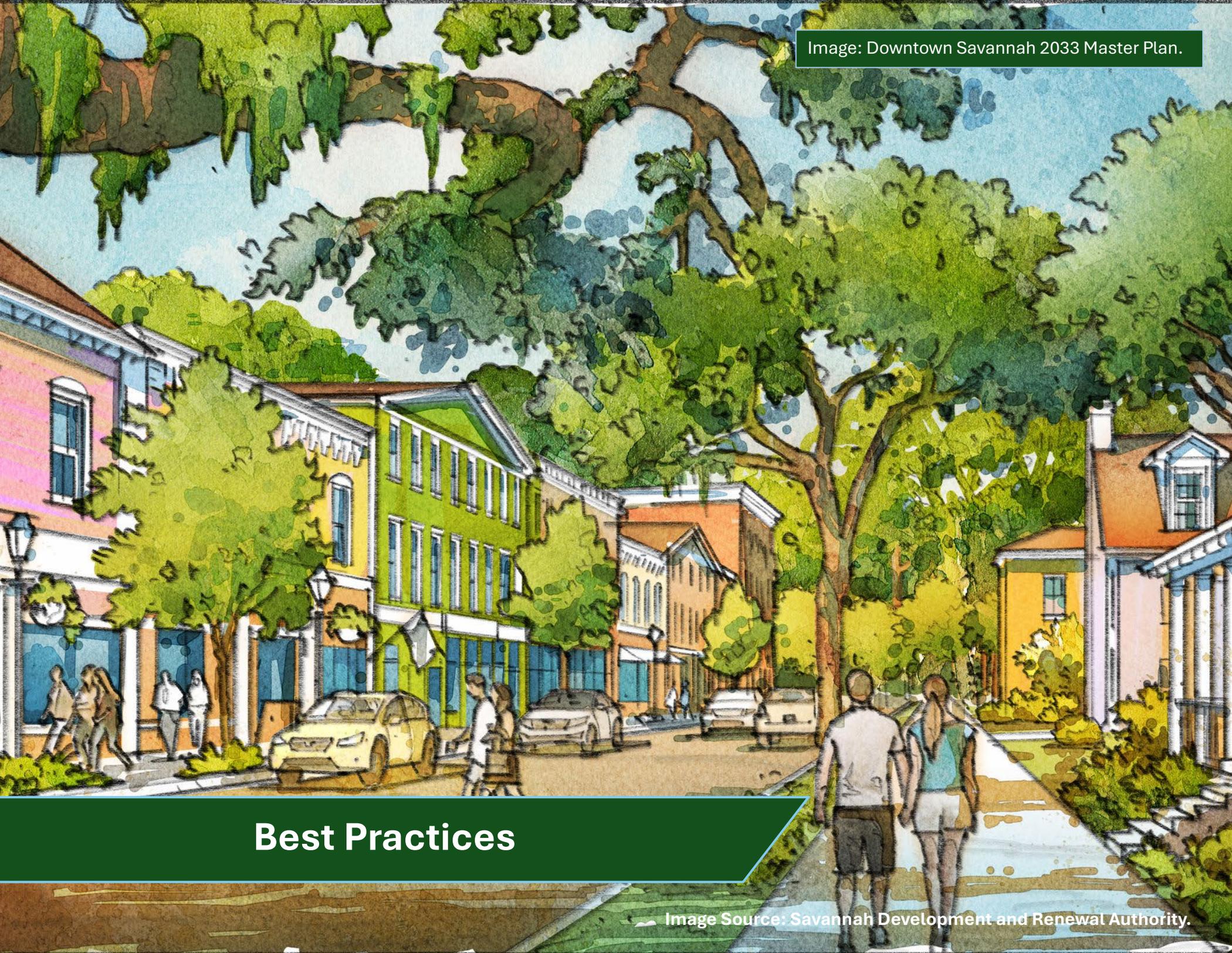
Highlights from Stakeholder and Public Workshop Discussions and Open-ended Survey Responses

- There is a lack of attractions in the Center of Town.
- Route 9 poses a challenge. High traffic volumes and the road / intersection layout creates for a chaotic environment and poor walkability.
- The zoning regulations governing the Center of Town are restrictive.
- There is tension between prioritizing historic preservation vs. new development. New development often faces public opposition.
- The Town Common is an asset and resembles a classic New England setting.

Overall Findings and Priorities

Finding:	Priority:
The buildings, streetscape, and landscaping of the Route 9 corridor are aesthetically unpleasant.	Improve the quality of building facades and streetscapes. The aesthetics of the Route 9 corridor in the Center of Town should more closely reflect the classic New England style of the Town Common.
The Route 9 corridor and Route 9 / 56 intersection presents transportation challenges. High traffic volumes and road layouts inhibit pedestrian connectivity.	Balance pedestrian and multi-modal connectivity on Route 9 with automobile traffic.
There is a lack of commercial attractions in the Center of Town.	Attract and retain new businesses, especially food and drink and retail establishments. Place an emphasis on small business development.
Restrictive zoning regulations inhibit new development / business activity in the Center of Town.	Amend zoning and other regulations to facilitate development / business activity, while balancing this with preservation of historic structures and character.
Community members are in and around the Center of Town on a frequent basis; however, this usually involves passing through the area.	Invest in improvements to public spaces and programming to encourage community members to spend more time in the Center of Town.

Image: Downtown Savannah 2033 Master Plan.



Best Practices

Image Source: Savannah Development and Renewal Authority.

Introduction of Best Practices

The plan breaks down existing conditions analysis into five best practice “themes” related to downtowns / town centers:



Buildings: Concerns the massing / dimensions of structures, facade aesthetics, and allowed uses.



Street Design: Discusses the design / layout of streets, including speed limits and how to allocate street cross-sections among different users (e.g., cars, pedestrians, and bicycles).



Parking and Site Access: Addresses the quantity and placement of parking and driveways / curb cuts.



The Market: Concerns factors that influence the competitiveness of the local business environment.



Community Spaces: Covers the public realm, including the physical environment (e.g., parks, sidewalks, and signage), programming, and emotional attachment.

Each theme incorporates several underlying best practices. This framework was selected because it allows for a systematic review of existing conditions in the Center of Town. Achieving economic development goals often requires overlapping actions in a range of areas. Best practices were sourced from consulting existing case studies of downtown / town center plans and guides from planning organizations. More importantly, best practices were chosen with implementing the Leicester community’s vision for the Center of Town in mind. Best practices are described in the subsequent sections.



Buildings – Best Practices

Create a Continuous Street Front

“Buildings should create a strong street wall, coming close to the sidewalk. Buildings frame the space where social life happens. When buildings push back from the street or parking lots create gaps in the street wall, the quality of the street becomes eroded. Pedestrians will instinctively stop walking if there is nothing interesting to walk to.”¹

To provide for a continuous street front, as much of a building’s width as possible should be placed at the front of the lot in an arrangement parallel to the street. Existing gaps should be filled with infill development when feasible. Where buildings are absent, landscaping can reinforce the street wall. Buildings should only be set back if the resulting space is utilized for outdoor functions of the building occupancies, such as outdoor seating.

Activate the Ground Floor

Ground floors in town centers should be occupied by “active uses.” “Active uses” are public or semi-public uses that encourage pedestrian activity along the front of a building during most business hours.² Examples of active uses include retail, restaurants, entertainment, and some personal services. Uses that do not fit these criteria are offices and residential units. Uses like these belong on the upper floors where they can benefit from more privacy and not detract from fostering a social atmosphere at the ground floor level.



Woodstock, VT. Source: Town of Woodstock, VT.

Encourage Mixed-Use Buildings

Mixed-use buildings are buildings that contain a mix of residential and non-residential uses. Mixed-use buildings are valuable to the vibrancy of town centers because they simultaneously accommodate “active” ground floor uses and higher residential population density. This results in more foot traffic and supports the traditional “work, live, shop” concept that historical downtowns embodied and many demographics, such as young professionals and senior citizens, seek out today.

Make Storefronts Engaging

Storefronts should actively engage visitors. This can be achieved in multiple ways. First, windows and doorways should be large with clear openings and should feature merchandise displays and signage. This creates a sense of transparency that psychologically entices people to see what’s happening inside. Second, building facades should be accentuated with attractive features such as awnings, lighting fixtures, vertical elements, and breaks in the façade to capture people’s attention. Varying building materials, colors, rooflines, and other architectural elements between buildings is another effective way to create engaging storefronts.



Oak Bluffs, MA. Source: Adventurous Kate.



Street Design – Best Practices

Traffic Calming

Successful main streets moderate the speed of vehicle traffic. When cars travel too fast, they pose a hazard to pedestrians and produce unpleasant noise and odor. These factors are likely to discourage activities such as sidewalk strolling, gathering, and outdoor dining that contribute to the vitality of village centers. Communities can implement traffic calming by making changes to street design.

Pedestrian Connectivity

Successful main streets typically feature small, walkable blocks. This involves narrow road widths of no more than one lane in each direction; frequent crosswalks – ideally every 400’, and sidewalks that are elevated from the road and wide enough to accommodate people walking in both directions.³ Studies suggest that greater walkability in urban settings has significant positive impacts on retail performance and property values.⁴

Multi-Modal Infrastructure

Town centers that support modes of transportation besides automobiles can benefit from increased consumer traffic. Multi-modal infrastructure such as bus lines, bike lanes, and trails and parking facilities for bicycles and similar vehicles allow non-drivers to make trips that they otherwise would not. They also present the promise of blending recreation with shopping or dining. For instance, families or friends could bike or walk to the Center of Town, grab something to eat, and return home. Many studies have demonstrated the positive economic impact of rail trails.⁵



Stock Photo; Location Unknown. Source: Terracast Products.

Image: Clarksville, TN.



Parking and Site Access – Best Practices

Image Source: The Leaf Chronicle.

Control And Coordinate Curb Cuts

Curb cuts are necessary to allow for vehicular and pedestrian access to the street. However, too many curb cuts can create hazards for cars and pedestrians alike. A high density of driveways results in more traffic conflict points, which raises the likelihood of accidents when cars are moving on and off the roadway.⁶ Wide curb cuts also create discomfort for pedestrians by interrupting the continuity of the sidewalk. But safety is not the only reason to control site access. Individual curb cuts also come with higher construction and maintenance costs.⁷ For these reasons, access to the street should be limited through coordinated and consolidated curb cuts.

Remove Parking from the Front of Properties

The street front of any town center is valuable real estate that should host social activity and create visual interest. As such, it should not be taken up by parking, which creates low-interest areas and conflict points for pedestrians. “Parking” in this context does not include on-street or curbside parking, however, which can help reduce curb cuts

and allow visitors to park in centralized locations between storefronts. Reimagining where parking belongs on-site and exploring off-site parking arrangements are ways to address parking needs without compromising the street front. Where parking lots do abut the sidewalk or street, they should be screened by landscaping or permeable fencing.



Westborough, MA. Source: MassGIS. “2021 Statewide Aerial Imagery.”



Adequate and Accessible Parking

The predominant mode of travel in the United States is the automobile. Accordingly, it is important for commercial areas to provide enough parking for visitors and to effectively communicate where available parking is located. Otherwise, negative perceptions of parking may deter people from visiting the area. However, the parking supply should be stewarded responsibly. The location and quantity of parking spaces represents an opportunity cost. Every excess or poorly located parking space takes up valuable downtown real estate, which has implications for economic vitality and the local tax base.



The Market – Best Practices

Carve out a Market Niche

Since the emergence of shopping centers and strip malls in the second half of the twentieth century, downtowns and town centers have faced stiff competition. Today, local businesses often cannot compete with the low prices, variety, and convenience offered by big box and chain stores. In this context, it's critical for town centers to distinguish themselves by carving out a market niche where they seek to compete. For many successful town centers, this means fostering an identity around boutique and artisan retail, personal services, and a local food culture.

Host a Critical Mass of Businesses

Successful downtowns feature a critical mass of businesses. This critical mass needs to include places that sell food, such as cafes and sit-down restaurants; destination retail shops, such as collectible or antique stores; and places open in the evening hours, such as dining and entertainment venues.⁸ All these ingredients mark the difference between a collection of businesses relying on their individual merits and a marketplace that is greater than the sum of its parts. When located close together, certain types of businesses can attract more customers and boost sales. These are known as complementary businesses. It's important to note that many retail uses require critical mass to be viable and prefer to open all at once with surrounding establishments.⁹ Having establishments that are open in the



Raleigh, NC. Source: Katie Howell, Technician (newspaper).



evening can also be beneficial to the economic health of business districts. Transactions data for full-service restaurants indicates that restaurants are busiest around 7:00 PM.¹⁰ If retail and other food and drink establishments remain open into this time window, they may be able to tap into an additional customer base.

Residential Density

Higher residential density in and around commercial districts means more potential customers and consumer spending. Assuming a single-family home and a three-unit apartment take up the same space, the occupants of a three-unit apartment will generate between 1.5 and two times as much consumer spending as the occupants of the single-family home in categories like food away from home, alcohol, entertainment, and personal care products and services.¹¹ This imbalance only increases as more apartments are added to the formula.

Residential units within walking distance of a village center offer special appeal. The maximum distance that most people are willing to walk is half a mile, which takes 10 minutes on average.¹² Therefore, the closer residents live to a village center, the more likely they are to walk directly there and generate foot traffic. This can influence the perceptions of prospective tenants; retail is attracted to crowds. In psychology, the theory of social proof holds that “human beings often make choices about what to think, and what to do, based on the thoughts and actions of others.”¹³ In other words, they tend to follow the crowd.

Higher levels of residential density are also needed to support public transportation services.¹⁴

Image: Jackson, MS.

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Community Spaces – Best Practices

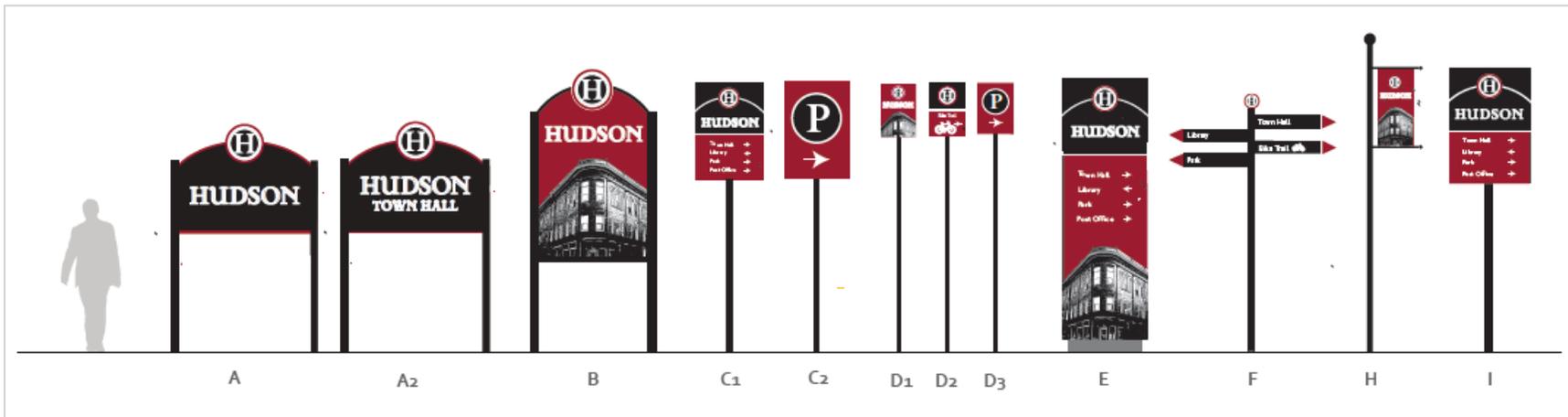
Image Source: Downtown Jackson Partners.

Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding

It is essential for downtown areas to feature gateway treatments that create a strong sense of arrival to the area. This signals to visitors that they are entering a unique place that merits attention. Gateway treatments can come in the form of placemaking elements that generate visual interest, such as signs or trees, and changes to street design that alter drivers' behavior. Within the village center, it is also important that there is adequate signage to guide visitors where to find parking, parks, and other landmarks.

Green Infrastructure

Incorporating green infrastructure into the design of town centers offers a variety of benefits. Green infrastructure is a term applied to measures that reduce stormwater flows to sewer systems and surface waters by instead diverting water to be absorbed and filtered by soil and plants.¹⁵ Examples of green infrastructure include rain gardens, planter boxes, and trees. Green infrastructure reduces water pollution and offers other ecological benefits such as combating the urban heat island effect. It also beautifies business districts. Plants and trees offer a pleasant backdrop to provide contrast in areas predominated by pavement and concrete.



Hudson, MA Wayfinding Specifications. Source: Favermann Design.

Outdoor Amenities

“If buildings are the backdrop to public life, then the sidewalks and streetscapes – including the plazas and open spaces – are the stage.”¹⁶ This “stage” should be enlivened with amenities that offer comfort and visual interest to visitors. This includes tables and seating, plantings, public art, lighting fixtures, and more. These amenities should spill out from storefronts into the public realm without disrupting the flow of pedestrian traffic.

Parks and Greenspace

Parks and green space provide many health benefits to neighborhoods. Health-related benefits include better mental health and mindfulness and more effective building of social capital.¹⁷ There are also real economic benefits that stem from these resources. Dozens of studies have found that properties within close proximity of parks enjoy a positive premium in property value.¹⁸ Finally, parks and green space provide venues for community events and activities. For these reasons, they are an important ingredient in cultivating a prosperous town center.

Sense of Place

Downtowns should be more than places to do business. They should connect with people at an emotional level and be perceived as places with unique qualities.¹⁹ A sense of collective ownership should prevail among property owners and residents



Davidson, NC. Source: Roost Real Estate.



alike. This requires that such areas evoke a sense of place in the hearts and minds of the community. A sense of place should tie into the history, civic pride, and future aspirations of the town. These values should be reinforced through policy, such as regulations and placemaking initiatives, and civic discourse. Communities that treat their town centers as priorities through actions and words are more likely to receive buy-in from prospective business tenants and property owners.

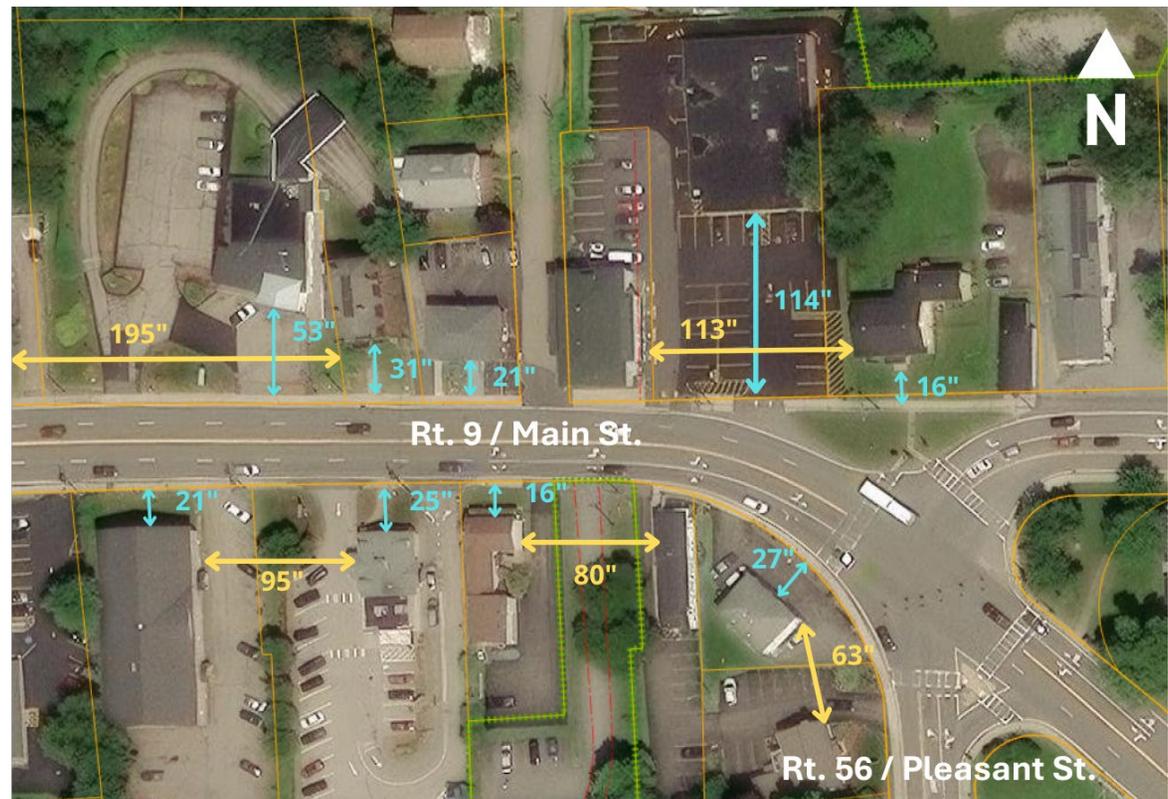


Buildings - Leicester

Create a Continuous Street Front - Existing Conditions

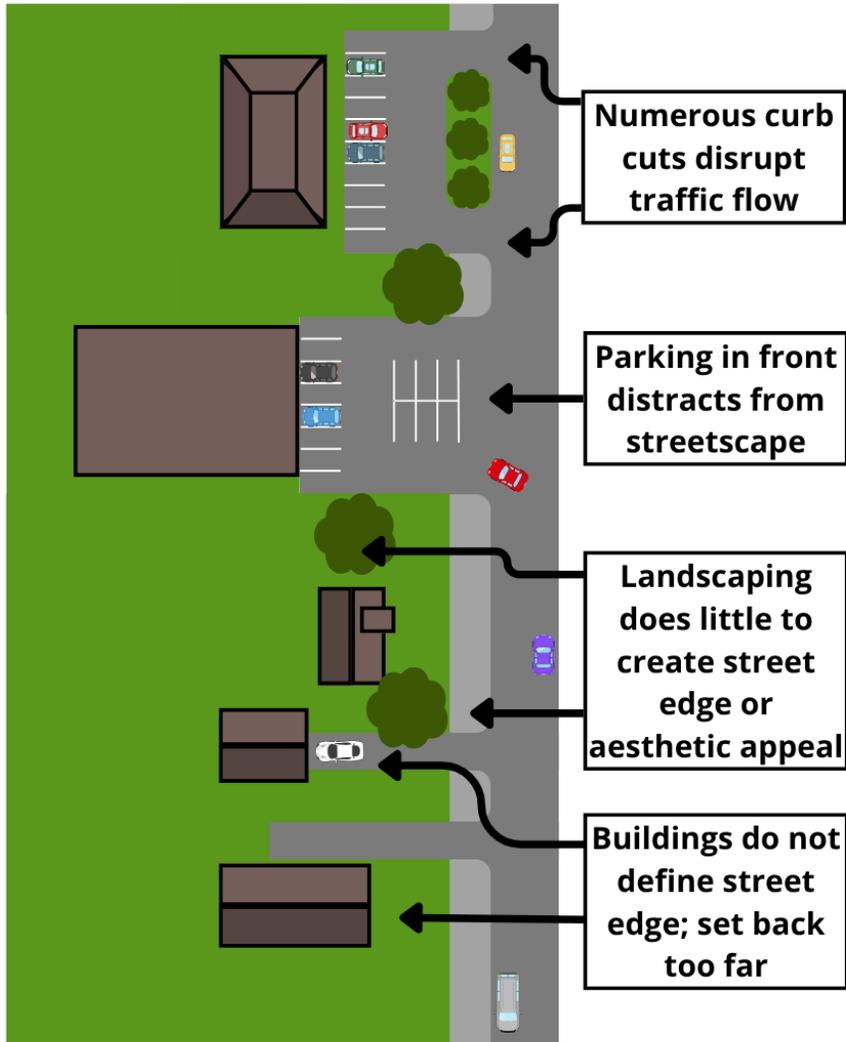
There is an absence of continuity along the street front in the Center of Town. West of the Route 9 / 56 intersection, the distance of storefronts from the sidewalk varies significantly. Older properties, constructed between the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, tend to sit closer to the sidewalk, while properties developed since the mid-20th century feature large front yards to make space for parking. The 2021 Leicester Rapid Recovery Plan also observed that businesses have positioned their storefronts to accommodate vehicular traffic.²⁰ The distance between buildings is wide in some places due to parking lots, landscaping buffers, and frequent access driveways. Finally, there are many single-family homes with large front yards interspersed among businesses.

Without a continuous street wall, points of interest are missing to entice visitors to linger in the area. When storefronts are not tightly grouped, consumers on foot may be less likely to travel from place to place. The placement of buildings along the street can also be a traffic calming measure.²¹ In contrast, sidewalks with no backdrop leave pedestrians feeling exposed to automobile traffic.

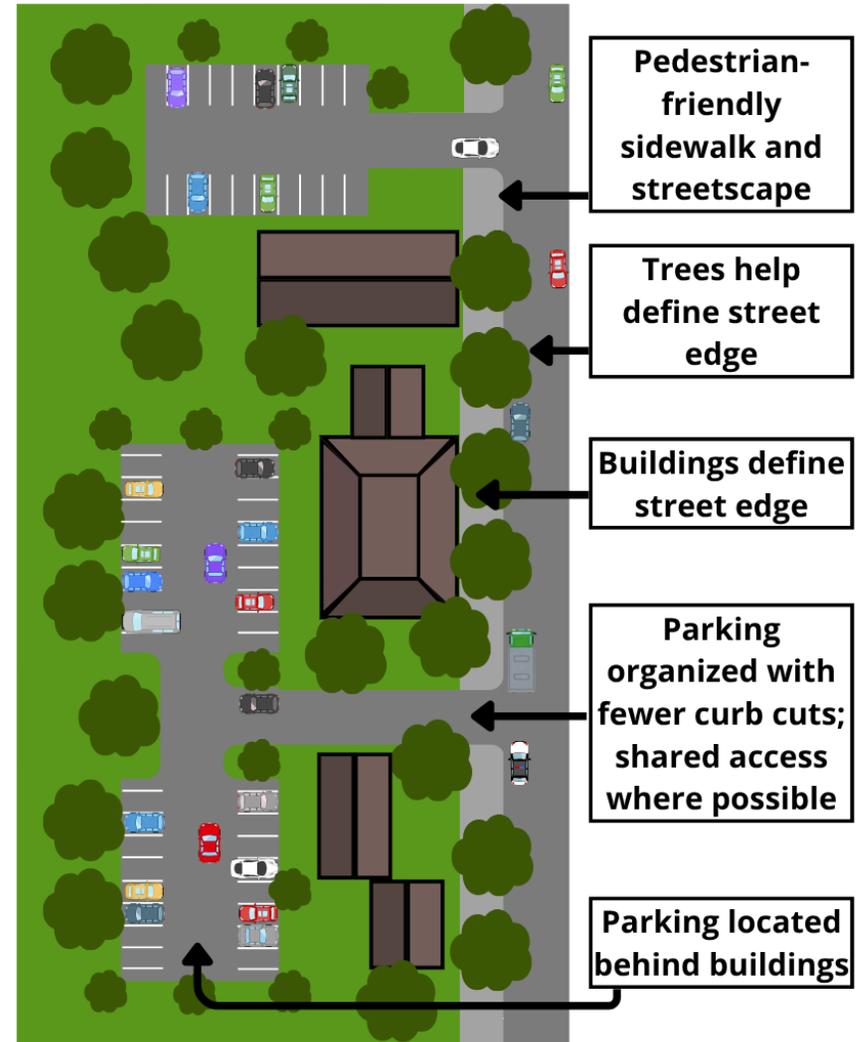


Distances between structures and the sidewalk (teal) and between structures (yellow). Measurements are approximate. Image Source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. "Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map."

Undesirable Streetscape



Preferred Streetscape



Adapted from Stantec. "North Eastham Village Center Plan." 2007.



Leicester’s Zoning Bylaw does not contain provisions to preserve and reinforce the continuity of the street front in the Center of Town. The Zoning Bylaw regulates minimum front yards but does not apply a maximum front yard standard. There is a provision in the Business (B) and Central Business (CB) district site development standards that calls for parking and loading areas to be located to the side or rear of the primary structure to the “maximum extent feasible.”²² However, this leaves much to interpretation and would be less effective if Special Permit approval did not apply to business uses in the CB district.

Other zoning requirements also pose an obstacle. In many traditional downtowns, buildings directly border up against one another. However, this is not permitted in either the CB or B districts due to side yard requirements. The front yard requirement in the B district, which makes up the eastern entrance to the Center of Town, is also very high at 25 ft.²³ Town centers also traditionally feature narrow lots, and Leicester’s Center of Town is no exception. But the minimum frontage requirement of 100 ft. in the CB district is more than necessary to accommodate more modest storefronts (e.g., 40 ft.), even with existing setbacks.

Finally, the origin of many of the property parcels and structures in the Center of Town before the introduction of the Leicester Zoning Bylaw in 1946 means that a large number of structures are likely pre-existing nonconforming in some way, whether due to yard, minimum lot size, or maximum coverage requirements.²⁴ For instance, nearly half of the lots in the CB district are undersized.²⁵ The issue of maximum lot coverage was also noted in the 2017 Workforce Housing Report.²⁶ As a result, alterations to or the reconstruction of commercial properties are subject to a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals, even if new changes do not run afoul of the Zoning Bylaw.²⁷ This adds cost and time to projects. Dimensional requirements should be amended to better reflect the existing conditions of the district and facilitate reuse and redevelopment.

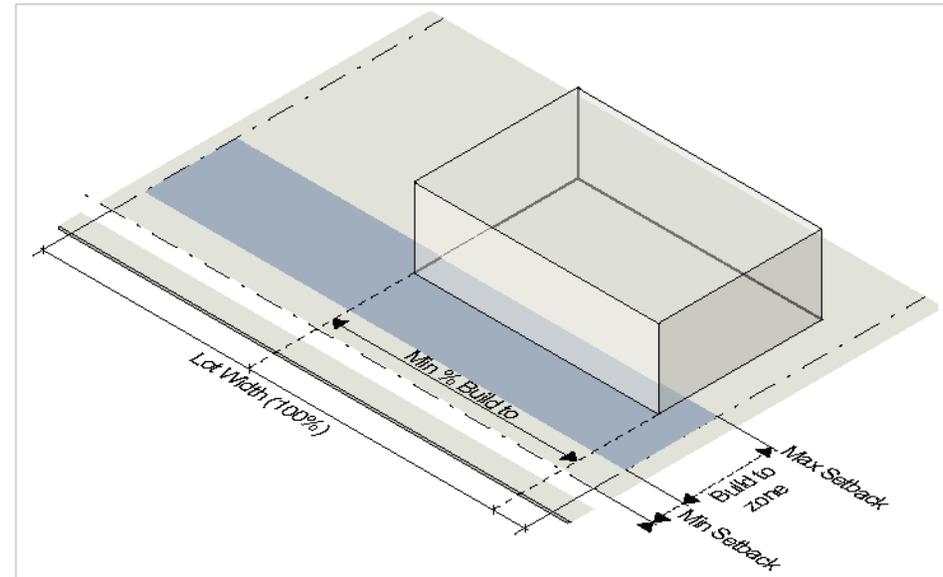
Create a Continuous Street Front – Strategies

1.1 Introduce a Build-to-Zone (BTZ) in the CB District: A BTZ is an area along the property’s frontage in which the façade of the primary building must be located. In this way, it serves as both a minimum and maximum front yard requirement. The BTZ should include an occupancy threshold that regulates the percentage of the BTZ that must be occupied by the primary structure. This ensures that sufficient street enclosure is maintained. A BTZ extending 10 – 15 feet from the property line would be appropriate in the CB district. Implementing a BTZ would be consistent with the 2021 Leicester RRP, which recommended establishing maximum front setbacks and building massing standards, including the orientation of buildings fronting streets.²⁸

1.2 Amend Other Dimensional Requirements in the CB District:

- A) Reduce Minimum Lot Size: The Workforce Housing report recommended a minimum lot size of 10,000 sq. ft.²⁹
- B) Narrow Minimum Frontage Requirements: A minimum frontage requirement of 80 ft. or 90 ft. should be sufficient to accommodate narrow storefronts and a driveway, even with existing setbacks.
- C) Eliminate or Increase Maximum Lot Coverage: Standards for parking, driveways, front and side yards, and more already effectively limit maximum lot coverage on any property. If maximum lot coverage requirements are retained, the Workforce Housing report recommended a maximum lot coverage of at least 50 percent.³⁰
- D) Eliminate Side Yard Requirements Between Non-Residential Uses: Side yards can be maintained where a non-residential use abuts a residential use. The feasibility of having minimal to no separation between buildings will still be subject to building code and fire flow rates of water mains in the area.

1.3 Expand the CB District East of the Route 9 / 56 intersection: Rezone the eastern approach to the Route 9 / 56 intersection (i.e., approximately 350 – 400 ft. east of the intersection) from B to CB. As one of the gateways to the Center of Town, the buildings here should be arranged in a street front pattern consistent with the rest of the area. But the area is zoned B, which requires buildings to be set back far from the street. The B district also allows several uses that are not ideal for a town center setting, such as contractor’s yards and car washes.



Sample Build-to-Zone Graphic. Image Source: City of Roswell, GA Unified Development Code.



1.4 **Switch to a Form-Based Code in the CB District:** Form-based codes aim to foster predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form, as opposed to separation of use, as the organizing principle for land use regulations.³¹ Form-based codes typically include building form standards and street standards applied on the basis of neighborhood-specific regulating plans.

A form-based code would ensure the Town's regulations offer clear guidance on how new development should reflect the scale and character of the Center of Town. In doing so, it would offer the town the ability to influence these considerations while avoiding the ambiguity and uncertainty of discretionary processes like Special Permits.

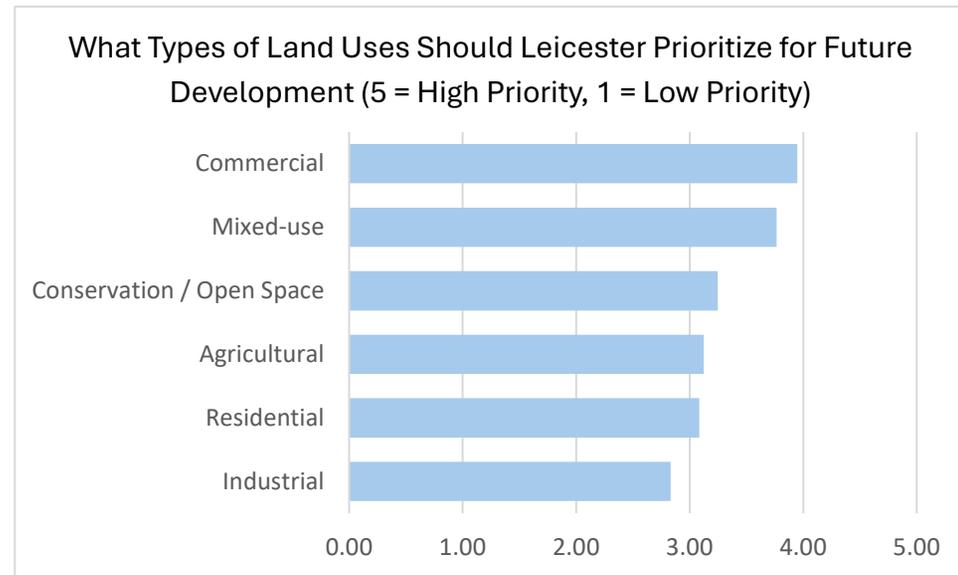
While a form-based code may be appropriate for a historic public setting such as the Center of Town, form-based zoning may introduce more complexity than is necessary in less active settings like residential neighborhoods. Accordingly, the Town could adopt a form-based code for the Center of Town while retaining traditional zoning for other zoning districts.

Encourage Mixed-Use Buildings - Existing Conditions

Mixed-use development appears to be popular among community members; Master Plan survey respondents ranked mixed-use development second for the types of land uses that Leicester should prioritize.³² However, few respondents identified the Center of Town or the Town Common as locations for additional multi-family housing, which typically makes up the residential portion of mixed-use developments. Almost a quarter of the lots in the CB district are currently characterized as mixed-use.³³ The high volume of mixed-use buildings in the Center of Town represents a strength.

Mixed-use development is allowed in the CB and B districts by right and by Special Permit. Vertical mixed use is allowed by right when there are between 1-3 units and by Special Permit when there are four or more units. Horizontal mixed-use development is only allowed by Special Permit. Leicester's Parking Regulations also facilitate mixed-use development by permitting the Planning Board to reduce parking space requirements when a common parking lot is used for separate uses with different peak demand times.

Mixed uses in the CB and B districts are regulated by the Leicester Zoning Bylaw's multi-family development dimensional table.³⁴ (Section 4.2 Table II). These standards impose higher yard setbacks on new mixed-use development compared to other property uses. The increase in front yard requirements from 10 ft. to 25 ft. prevents ground floor commercial uses from abutting the street front. It also reduces the buildable area of any lot. Residential units in mixed-use developments already enjoy an increased level of privacy because they are typically located on upper floors. Therefore, the 25 ft. front yard requirement seems excessive.



Results from Leicester Master Plan Survey Question 11.



Table II also limits the height of structures to two and a half stories, like the rest of the CB district. This height limit may not allow for enough density on smaller lots to make vertical mixed-use development financially feasible.

Finally, under Table II, the minimum lot size for multi-family and mixed uses increases in connection with the number of apartments. This increment is 7,500 sq. ft. in additional lot size for each apartment between two and five apartments, and 2,000 sq. ft. in additional lot size for each apartment above five apartments. The resulting minimum lot size requirements are more than what is necessary to support mixed-use development. In fact, they are so high that they are likely to make new mixed-use development financially uncompetitive and / or unfeasible for developers.

For instance, 1072 Main Street is an existing mixed-use property in the Center of Town with five residential units on a 7,405 ft.³⁵ lot. New construction today of a mixed-use building with the same number of dwelling units would require 45,000 sq. ft. or more than an acre of land. This represents around four dwelling units per acre. For reference, the Massachusetts Smart Growth Model Bylaw recommends a density of at least 12 units per acre for two- and/or three-family residential uses and at least 20 units per acre for multi-family residential uses in residential portions of mixed-use settings.³⁶

Sample Vertical Mixed-Use Building in the CB District

Uses

- Ground Floor: Retail
- Second Floor: Apartments (three 2 BR)

Total Developed Area: 15,340 SF

- Bldg. Footprint: 4,000 SF
- Parking Area: 11,340 SF

Minimum Lot Size: 30,000 SF

- Mixed-Use, 1st Apt: 15,000 SF
- Mixed-Use, Apts. 2 & 3: 15,000 SF

Maximum Lot Coverage: 9,900 SF

Differences

- Minimum Lot Size – Total Developed Area = 14,660 SF
- Maximum Lot Coverage - Bldg. Footprint = 5,900 SF

Square Feet (SF) figures based on current Leicester regulations. Parking area assumes 420 SF per parking space to account for access aisles, landscaping buffers, etc.



Encourage Mixed-Use Buildings – Strategies

2.1 Overhaul the Multi-Family Development Dimensional Table:

- A) Reduce Front Setbacks: Front setbacks for vertical mixed-use properties (i.e., those with a commercial use on the ground floor) should have the same setback as the rest of the CB district.
- B) Increase Building Heights: The maximum height / number of stories of buildings in all of the CB district should be raised to at least 3.5 stories or about 50 ft. “Step-backs” from the top floors of buildings could be required or encouraged to create the visual appearance of less height.
- C) Change Density Standards: The multi-family development table relies on minimum lot size per number of dwelling units to regulate density. This complicated approach should be replaced with a maximum dwelling units per acre standard. That way, the density standard is uniform for lots of all sizes.

Leicester should look to the Massachusetts Smart Growth Model Bylaw for guidance on selecting an appropriate density for mixed-use and multi-family development. Ideally, this density should be at least 15 units per acre.

Leicester may also consider eliminating density requirements for multi-family and mixed-uses all together. The Leicester Zoning Bylaw and associated regulations already provide for minimum lot size, height, and parking standards for the CB district. Combined with the setback standards and maximum coverage limits in Table II, these already effectively limit the scale of multi-family and/or mixed-use development on a lot.

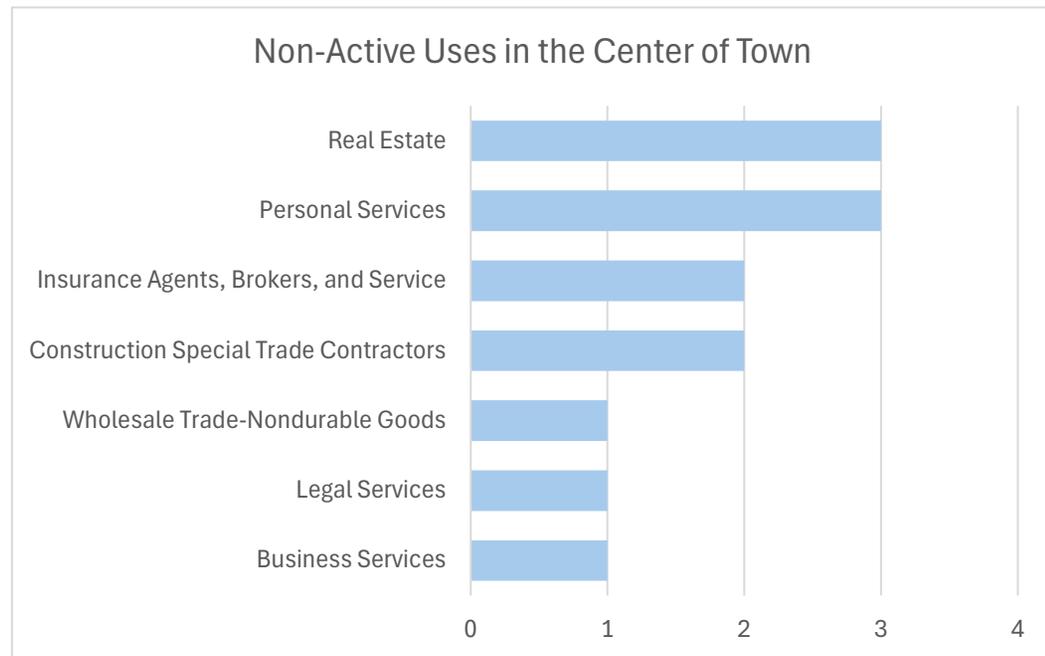
- ### 2.2 Relax Special Permits for Mixed-Use Development:
- The Special Permit threshold for vertical mixed-use buildings should be increased to 15 or even 20 apartments. Below this threshold, vertical mixed-use buildings should be allowed by right.

Activate the Ground Floor - Existing Conditions

The Center of Town is currently home to a diverse array of businesses. Almost two-thirds of these fit the criteria of “active uses.” (See “Buildings – Best Practices”). The other one-third of businesses in Leicester’s Center of Town likely do not fit the criteria of “active uses.” Examples of “non-active uses” include non-consumer facing offices and construction / contractor’s yards. More details on the business makeup of the Center of Town are available in (“The Market – Leicester”).

Nearly all types of business uses in the CB district require a Special Permit. This adds time, cost, and uncertainty to the process of developing property and/or opening a business. Special permit approval should be reserved only for uses that merit unique scrutiny, not to regulate “normal” property uses for a zoning district. Well-crafted dimensional requirements, design guidelines, and other site development standards should play the role of regulating uses that fit the vision of the CB district. Site plan review also offers a more streamlined alternative to Special Permits for project review.

Several uses that have the potential to detract from the vibrancy of the Center of Town are already prohibited in the CB district, including gasoline stations (7), kennels (commercial) (8), car washes (12), rental storage facilities with outdoor storage (13b), and contractor’s yards (14).³⁷ These uses are better located outside the Center of Town due to their automobile-centric development patterns, limited contribution to foot traffic, and/or public health risks.



Personal services include financial / tax services and funeral homes. Source: Data Axle and Esri. Feb. 2024 vintage data (with edits from CMRPC).



Similar to the prohibited uses outlined above, rental self-storage facilities with no outdoor storage (13a) do not contribute to activating economic activity at the street level. However, this use is allowed in the CB district. Drive-through facilities (11) also present a challenging trade-off. Drive-throughs are designed for convenience, allowing people to come and go quickly without leaving their cars. This makes them integral to many industries' business models, such as fast food and banks, but also problematic for promoting walkable downtowns.

Finally, the use regulations of the Leicester Zoning Bylaw do not distinguish between property uses for ground floors and upper floors. This means that active and non-active uses are subject to the same permitting processes (currently Special Permit), even though the latter do not contribute to foot traffic. Instead, permitting for the ground-floor level should be streamlined for active uses and more closely scrutinized for non-active uses.

Activate the Ground Floor – Strategies

3.1 Reduce Reliance on Special Permits: Change the permitting process for property uses that fit the purpose / vision of the CB district from Special Permit to by-right. This should include uses 1-6, 10, 15, 17, 29, and 30 in Section 3.2.03 of the Leicester Zoning Bylaws. Site Plan Review may be applied to uses that demand scrutiny from the Planning Board.

3.2 Scrutinize Uses That Are Inconsistent With Town Center Settings: Even as the permitting process is streamlined for other business uses in the CB district, drive-throughs (11) should remain subject to Special Permit approval. Rental storage facilities with no outdoor storage (13a) should be prohibited.

3.3 Reserve Ground Floor Spaces for Active Uses: Define active uses in the Leicester Zoning Bylaw and only permit active uses to occupy the ground-floor level in the CB district on a by-right basis. Non-active uses that are otherwise allowed in the CB district (e.g., non-consumer-facing offices like finance and insurance) may be allowed on the ground floor by Special Permit or on upper floors by right. This change could be achieved by splitting the column for the CB district in the Leicester Zoning Bylaws schedule of use (Section 3.2) into two columns, one for ground-floor spaces and another for upper floor spaces. See the Cape Cod Commission's Mixed-Use Model Bylaw for sample definitions and language to use.³⁸

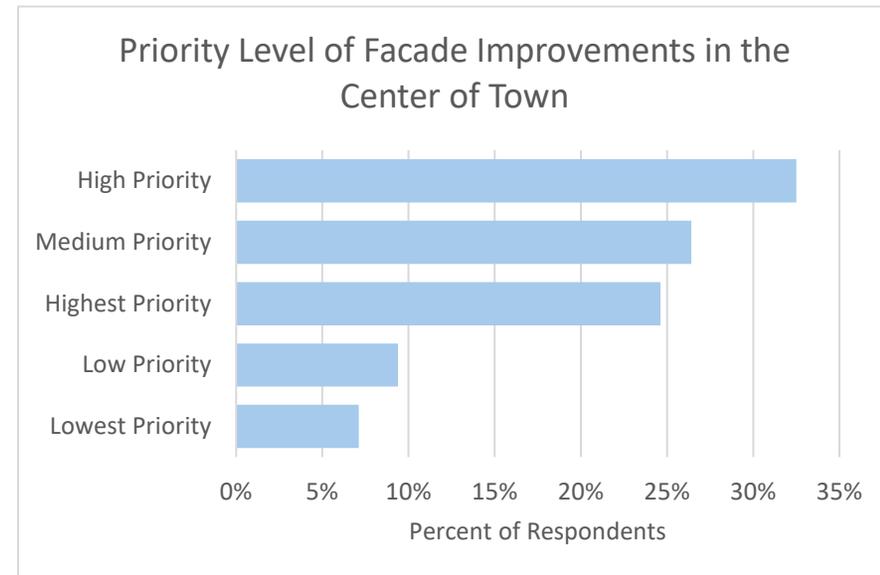
Make Storefronts Engaging - Existing Conditions

Leicester's Center of Town reflects development patterns from many different historical eras. This includes but is not limited to early New England architecture styles like Federal and Georgian, the Greek Revival style of the mid-nineteenth century, and suburban strip malls of the mid-to-late twentieth century.³⁹

This diverse built environment comes with inconsistencies with the quality of storefronts, as observed in the Leicester Rapid Recovery Plan.⁴⁰ Older properties tend to lack transparent storefront windows on the ground floor and façade enhancements to distinguish active ground-floor uses from the upper floors. Due to this, they closely resemble the many single-family homes in the area and may be overlooked by potential customers.

Strip mall-style buildings in the Center of Town do incorporate storefront transparency, but their distance from the sidewalk and road offset the effectiveness of this quality. Furthermore, these buildings often lack character and aesthetic appeal. They do not incorporate vertical breaks in the façade, and at one story with flat roofs, are not consistent with the rooflines of most historical buildings in the area.

Most properties have signage that is primarily oriented to be visible to passing cars. Signs vary in their materials and color palettes, with some featuring brighter colors and others more muted colors. Despite the orientation of signage, most signage is appropriately scaled to cater to both pedestrians and drivers. The sign regulations in the Leicester Zoning Bylaws allow signs up to 30 sq. ft. by right. This size is large enough to be visible to passing cars, while not being too large as to be awkward to pedestrians. However, the Rapid Recovery Plan noted that more than 25% of storefronts have signage that does not



Results from Leicester Master Plan Survey Question 9.

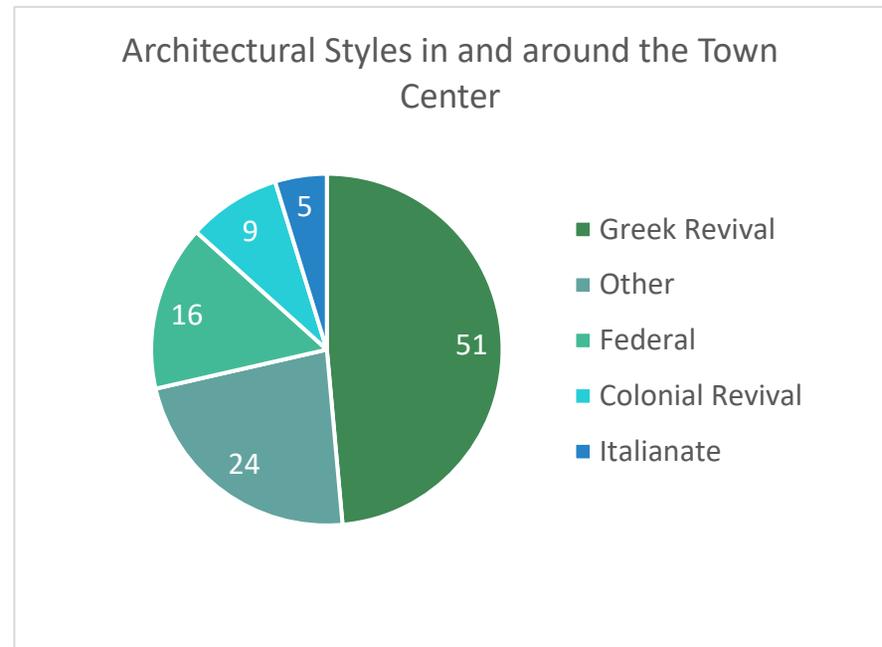
communicate the names of businesses or types of products/services being offered.⁴¹ The Rapid Recovery Plan also noted that more than 25% of storefronts do not have lighting.⁴²

In the Leicester Master Plan Survey, community members identified storefront improvements in the Center of Town as a high priority. “Outdated” was a common word used to describe the area.⁴³ “Design, signage, and marketing” was a medium priority for physical improvements. This category had an average score of 3.2 / 5, with five representing the highest priority.⁴⁴

Make Storefronts Engaging - Strategies

4.1 Develop Design Guidelines for the CB District:

Leicester should draft design guidelines for the CB district. Design guidelines can vary in their specificity and application. Some design guidelines incorporate a high level of specificity (e.g., precise measurements and custom models / diagrams) and become mandatory parts of the zoning code. Other design guidelines are limited to general design principles and purely advisory in nature. The right approach depends on the local context and market. Among communities surrounding Leicester, the Towns of Spencer and Sturbridge both incorporate design guidelines into their site plan review processes for certain mixed-use and commercial districts. At a minimum, design guidelines for the CB district should cover entrances, windows, external materials, signs, awnings, and building massing and scale. Leicester’s Architectural Conservation District, which covers the area surrounding the Town Common, is also intended to incorporate design



Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission. “MACRIS Maps.”

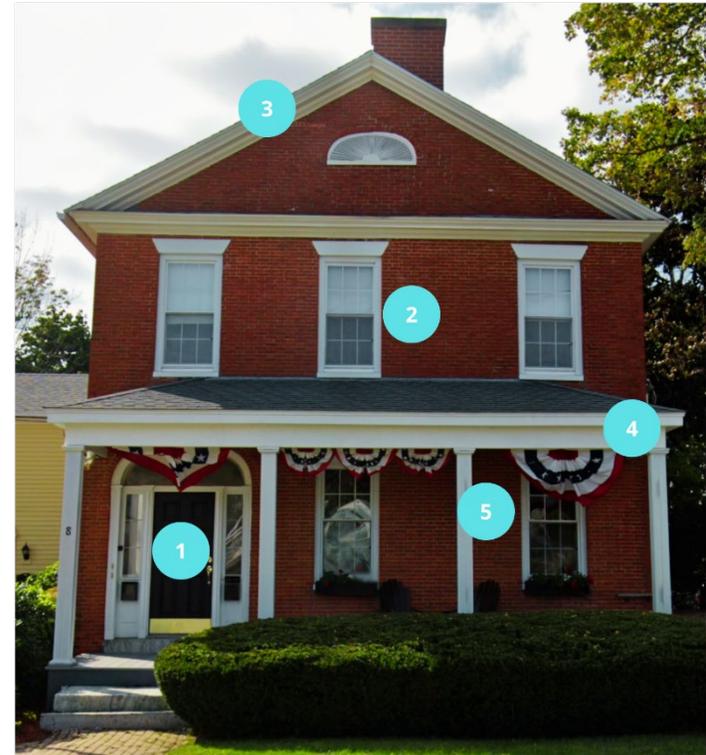
guidelines. The design guidelines for the CB and Architectural Conservation districts should share common features to create a consistent aesthetic between the two areas.

The predominant architecture style present in the Center of Town is Greek Revival.⁴⁵ Some of the typical features of Greek Revival Architecture that could influence future design guidelines include:⁴⁶

1. Front door surrounded by narrow sidelights and rectangular transom
2. Windows typically six over six double-hung sash
3. Gable or hipped roof of low pitch
4. Heavy entablature and cornices
5. Columns, typically in Greek orders

4.2 Create a Façade Improvement Program: Leicester should explore opportunities to create a façade improvement program. While Town funds cannot be spent on directly supporting private businesses, state and federal programs may offer future opportunities to fund a local façade improvement program. For instance, during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the years of recovery that followed, many communities utilized American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to create local façade improvement programs.

The Town should also connect with nonprofit organizations about the possibility of creating local or regional façade improvement programs. Nonprofits, such as the Leicester Business Association or the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation, have more flexibility in how they can spend money to support local businesses compared to the Town.



Building featuring Greek Revival Architecture in the Center of Town. Image Source: Google Maps, Sept. 2023.



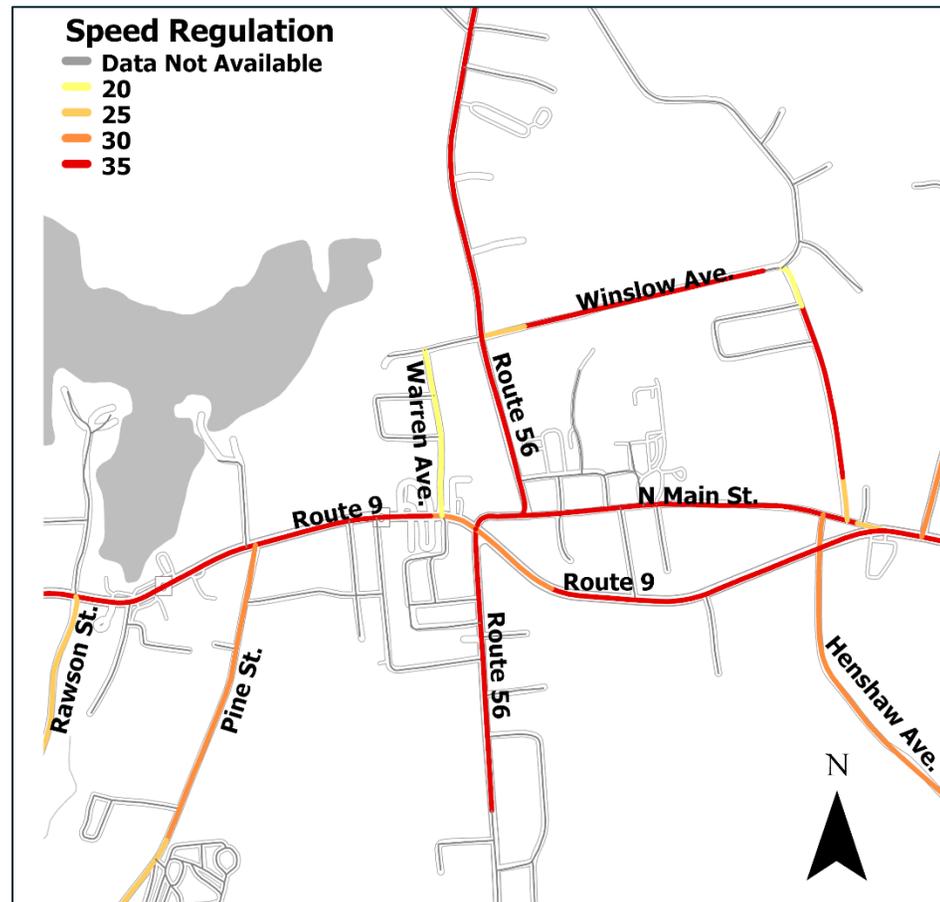
Street Design - Leicester

Traffic Calming – Existing Conditions

Special speed regulations are speed limits based on speed studies.⁴⁷ The special speed regulation on Route 9 is generally split between 30 and 35 mph in the Center of Town.⁴⁸ The average observed travel speed on Route 9 from the Spencer town line to the Worcester city line was 36 mph as of 2017.⁴⁹ The special speed regulation on Main Street (across from the Town Common) is also 35 mph.⁵⁰ Average observed travel speed data is not available for this segment of road.

A speed of 35 mph poses a danger to pedestrians. Analysis shows that the risk of fatality and serious injury for pedestrians involved in a motor vehicle crash increases with higher vehicle speeds.⁵¹ At 40 mph, 77 percent of collisions are likely to result in fatalities or serious injuries for pedestrians. At 20 mph, this share decreases to 18 percent of crashes.

Speeding in the Center of Town appears to be a concern for some community members. Respondents to the Leicester Master Plan Survey ranked traffic calming as a medium priority for the Center of Town. The average score for traffic calming was 3.2 / 5, with 5 representing the highest priority.⁵² In open response answers, several respondents noted issues with speeding and running red lights. A Master Plan Workshop participant also observed that cars speed to get ahead of one another where the lanes merge on the north side of Route 9. The 2024 Downtown Parking Study observed that “drivers often speed through Main Street” (i.e., where it passes the Town Common) too.⁵³

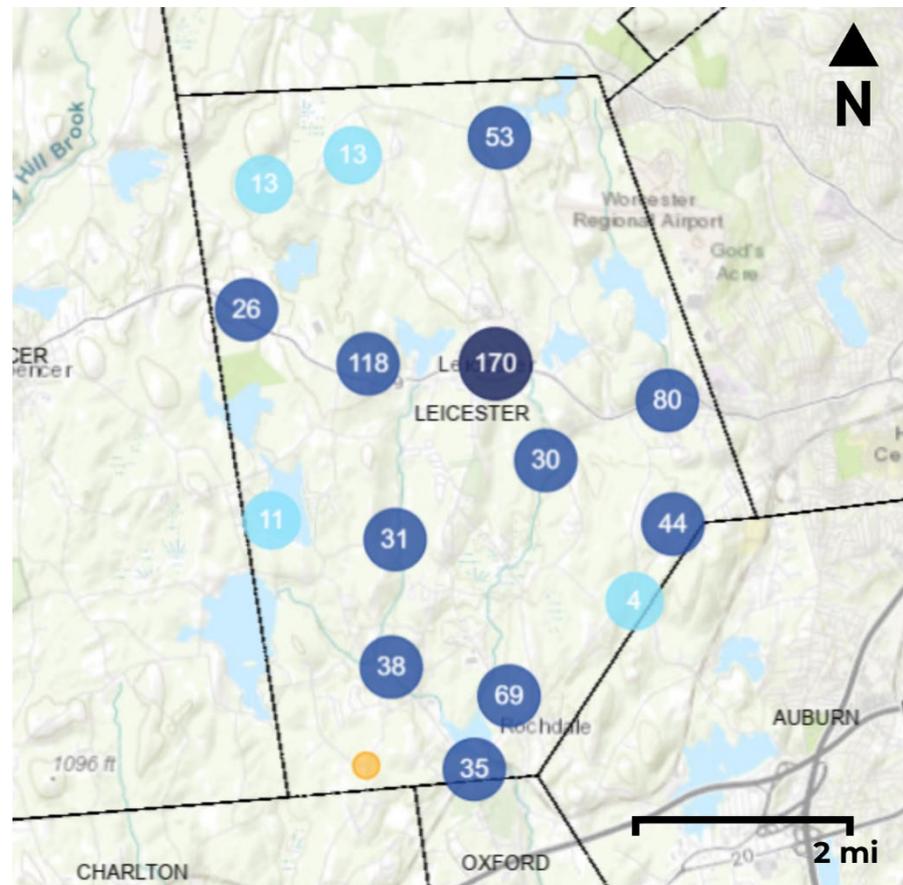


Speed regulations in and around the Center of Town. Data Source: MassDOT Road Inventory File.

The Route 9 / 56 intersection features two design elements that could be considered traffic calming measures. First, there is a chicane that doubles as a curb extension. This was installed on the north side of the intersection sometime after 2001. It replaced a pedestrian refuge island and thereby diverted east to west traffic flowing from Main St. to Route 9. There is also a pedestrian refuge island in the southern portion of the intersection. Otherwise, besides raised curbs, Route 9 features no other design elements to promote traffic calming in the Center of Town. There are no street trees, light posts, or on-street parking, for instance.

Main Street also features no traffic calming measures near the Town Common, except for raised curbs on one side. The only crosswalk present features minimal signage with no rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs).⁵⁴

New traffic calming measures can impact the flow of vehicular traffic. Route 9 in Leicester is a heavily trafficked road, with around 17,000 vehicles per day passing through near the intersection of Routes 9 / 56.⁵⁵ Currently, congestion appears to be limited on Route 9. The average congested time (time in minutes for which a vehicle travels below 20 mph) on Route 9 between Spencer and Worcester is 0.3-0.4 minutes, except for east-bound traffic in the evening where it is 1.5 minutes.⁵⁶ The intersection of Routes 9 / 56 received a Level-of-Service (LOS) grade of B.⁵⁷ LOS grades are determined based on the average seconds of calculated delay at intersections for morning and evening time periods.



Circles represent concentrations of automobile crash locations since 2022 (collected June 2025). Source: MassDOT Crash Data Portal.

The entirety of Route 9 in Leicester is under MassDOT jurisdiction.⁵⁸ Improvements to the right of way on Route 9, including traffic calming measures, fall under MassDOT authority. The planning and design of State highway projects is guided by the MassDOT Project Development and Design Guidelines (PDDG). PDDG Chapter 2 covers the project development process. Route 9 in Leicester would most appropriately be classified as a major arterial road per the PDDG. Route 9’s federal highway classification is principal arterial.

For context, the PDDG identifies 20-30 mph as the target and design speed range for suburban town centers located on arterial roadways.⁵⁹ Target speeds represent “the highest operating speed at which vehicles should operate in a particular context to provide safer environments for all roadway users.” Design speeds are “used to determine the various geometric design features of the roadway for vehicles such as horizontal alignment, vertical alignment, cross slope, and separation of user types.” Posting lower speed limits alone is not enough to achieve target speeds. Target speeds on roadways should be self-reinforced by the physical design of the roadway. In the PDDG process, the determination of speed regulations primarily takes place after construction has been completed.

The PDDG identifies the following speed management treatments as common uses for major arterial roads: curb extensions, medians and pedestrian refuge islands, street furniture, street lighting, street trees, and curbside parking.

There are other downtown areas in Central and Western Massachusetts that are located along principal or minor arterial roads (federal classification) and have 25 mph speed limits.⁶⁰ These include Douglas, Southbridge, Palmer, and Webster. However, none of these downtowns have as high traffic volumes as Leicester’s Center of



Downtown Palmer, MA is located along another state highway, Route 20. The segment of Route 20 that intersects the downtown is under local jurisdiction, meaning the municipality is responsible for maintenance and upkeep. Image Source: Google Maps, Sept. 2023.



Town. Another critical distinction is that these towns have locally accepted the stretch of roadway that intersects with their downtown, creating a break in MassDOT jurisdiction. Municipalities have more flexibility to design and plan their own street improvements on roads under their jurisdiction. However, local jurisdiction also comes with maintenance and upkeep responsibilities.

In coordination with MassDOT, it is possible for municipalities to take over jurisdiction of state highways, depending on the context. But in preliminary conversations with CMRPC, staff from MassDOT District 3 reported that they were not aware of instances in recent decades where small sections of State highway were transferred to local control. Most gaps in state jurisdiction appear to have been in place for a long time. They advised that discontinuances in State jurisdiction are rare, and when they do occur, typically involve changing the entire length of the roadway. Consequently, MassDOT District 3 advised that based on the limited information presented to them, they were not currently supportive of the idea of transferring jurisdiction over Route 9 in the Center of Town to the Town of Leicester. Staff welcomed the Town of Leicester to reach out to the district about any concerns or priorities involving Route 9.

A more transformative traffic calming measure for intersections is the adoption of a roundabout. According to MassDOT, roundabouts encourage reduced vehicular speeds and improve safety by reducing the number of potential vehicle-vehicle and vehicle-pedestrian conflict points.⁶¹ A roundabout servicing up to 25,000 trips a day typically requires a 90–150-foot diameter.⁶² There appears to be insufficient space at the intersection of Routes 9 / 56 for this type of measure. Additionally, roundabouts introduce equal priority for all directions of travel, which can slow progression for high volume approaches, in this case, Route 9.

In contrast to Route 9, Main Street is a local jurisdiction road, allowing the Town to design and implement speed management treatments on its own.⁶³ Towns may also rescind special speed regulations on roads under their jurisdiction.⁶⁴ When a special speed regulation is rescinded, the speed limit defaults to the municipally accepted statutory speed limit. This is 30 mph for “thickly settled” or “business” districts. However, with the adoption of MGL c. 90 § 17C, this decreases to 25 mph. Leicester has not accepted MGL c. 90 § 17C.



Traffic Calming - Strategies

5.1 Complete a Planning and Needs Assessment for Route 9: The first step in the MassDOT PDDG Project Development process is a Planning and Needs Assessment. This step involves identifying issues, alternatives, and potential impacts. Its outcome should be either consensus on a project definition and a decision to submit a Project Initiation Form to MassDOT or a recommendation that the project be delayed or dismissed.

A Planning and Needs Assessment for the segment of Route 9 in the Center of Town should further evaluate the feasibility of lower target and design speeds for Route 9, as well as changes to cross-sections (i.e., how the right of way is allocated between different uses like roads and sidewalks). The latter is important to facilitate strategies from other best practices in this plan.

Local plans are a common starting point for Planning and Needs Assessments. The Town should compile analysis from this plan and other prior planning efforts to serve as a foundation for the Planning and Needs Assessment. Then, any outstanding elements outlined in the PDDG 2.2. Step 1 can be addressed.

5.2 Evaluate the Feasibility of Transferring Part of Route 9 to Local Jurisdiction: Pending the results of the Planning and Needs Assessment and MassDOT's response to any requests from the Town, Leicester should consult with MassDOT about the prospect of transferring Route 9 to local jurisdiction where it passes through the Center of Town. As noted, MassDOT District 3 is currently not supportive of the idea, but it would be wise for the Town to engage in more substantive conversations with MassDOT about the topic. The Town should also weigh the costs and benefits of transferring jurisdiction.

5.3 Establish a Target Speed and Design Speed for (North) Main Street: The design and implementation of traffic calming treatments should begin with consensus on a target speed for the roadway. Then, a design speed can be set and appropriate speed management measures can be introduced to realize the target speed. Main Street is a local jurisdiction road, meaning there is no requirement for the town to follow the MassDOT PDDG. However, it would be wise for the town to follow the process and guidance laid out in PDDG Chapter 3 Section 3.6. Main Street's prominent location near the Town Common and Leicester High School Campus means that community members should be involved in discussions on Main Street's future. As part of this process, recommended improvements from this plan and prior planning efforts, like the 2024 Downtown Parking Study, should be considered when reviewing potential speed management treatments for Main Street.

Pedestrian Connectivity - Existing Conditions

Leicester's Center of Town has an extensive sidewalk network. However, sidewalks along Route 9 offer low comfort for pedestrians in many places due to narrow sidewalk widths, a lack of shoulder or buffer space between the sidewalk and vehicle traffic, and the frequency of potential conflict points with driveways.⁶⁵

Sidewalks in the Center of Town are mostly four to five feet in width.⁶⁶ For reference, the minimum requirement in the MassDOT Project Development and Design Guidelines (PPDG) is five feet.⁶⁷ Sidewalks of this width leave little space between pedestrians and the road when no shoulder or landscaped buffer is present. For this reason, sidewalk widths of 6-12 feet are preferred for most town center locations.

The Downtown Parking Study noted that the condition of sidewalks varies, with some in need of maintenance.⁶⁸ Several comments about sidewalk maintenance were received as part of the Leicester Master Plan Survey. Upkeep of sidewalks along Route 9 is the responsibility of MassDOT. The Town of Leicester is responsible for sidewalks along local jurisdiction roads, like Main Street adjacent to the Town Common. Maintenance of existing sidewalks is constrained by the Department of Public Work's limited budget.

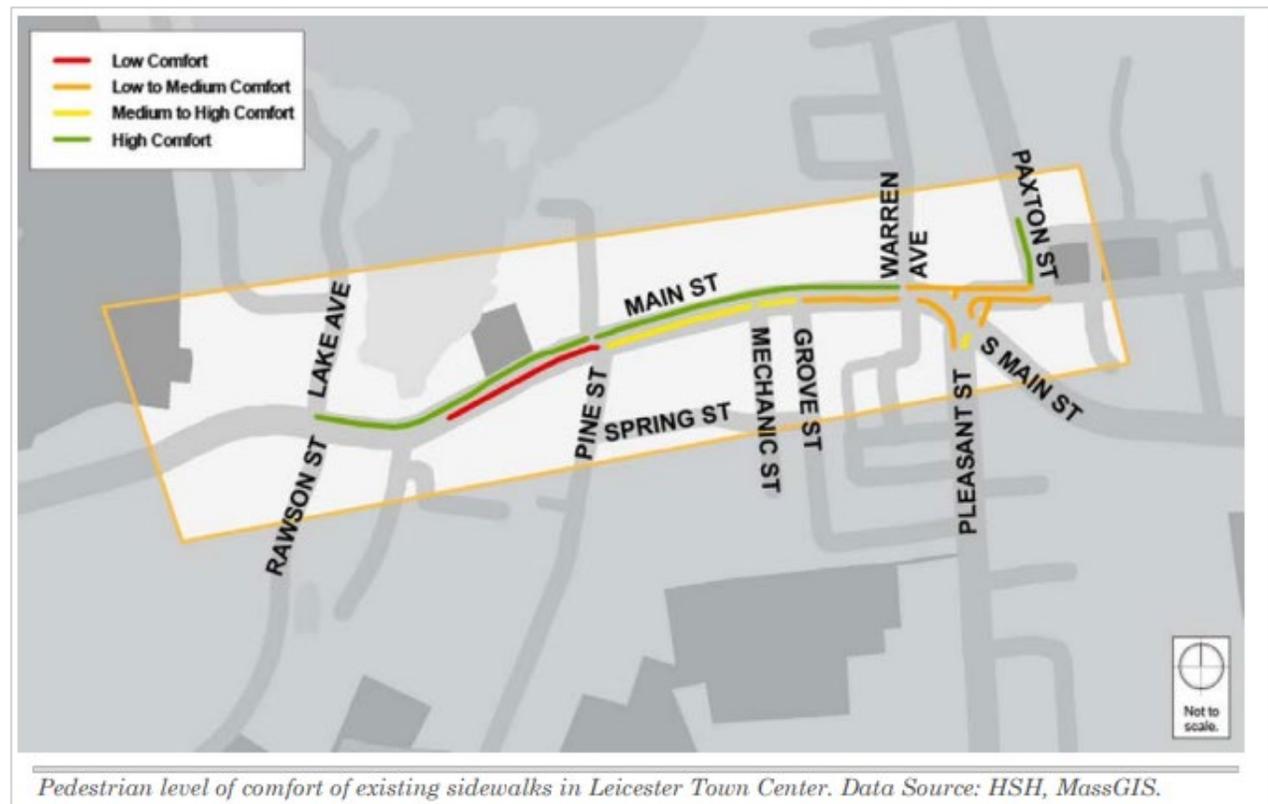
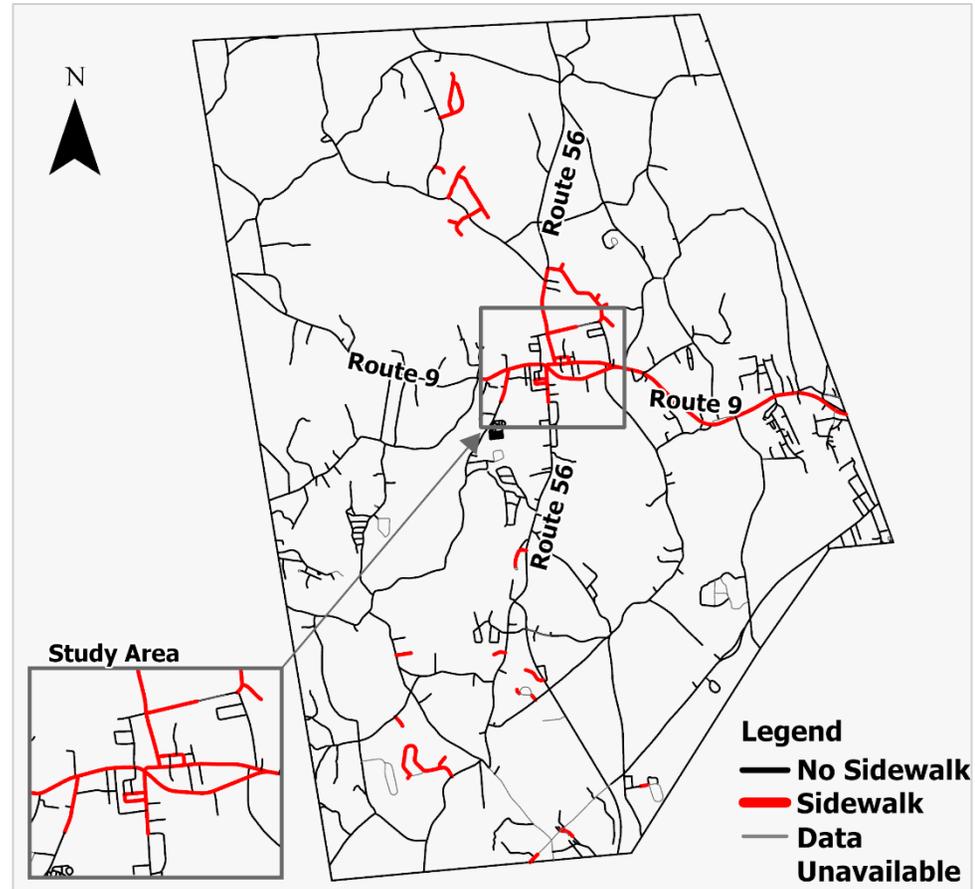


Image Source: Howard Stein Hudson, "Leicester Complete Streets Prioritization Plan." 2018.

There are few crosswalks throughout the area. There is only one crosswalk on Route 9 west of the Route 9 / 56 intersection. Adjacent to the Town Common, Main Street also features only one crosswalk. Where pedestrian crossings are present, they are not outfitted with adequate signage or signals.

The high speed of traffic along Route 9 could make the addition of new crosswalks a safety hazard unless additional traffic calming measures are implemented. The speed regulation in most of the Center of Town is 35 mph.⁶⁹ At this speed and at level grade, the stopping sight distance for vehicles is 250 feet.⁷⁰ This distance increases on downward slopes, such as that present on the westbound lane of Route 9. Wide turning radii at intersections in the Center of Town also place pedestrians at greater risk by lengthening crossing distances and facilitating high-speed turning movements by vehicles.

Leicester's sidewalk network offers limited connectivity between the Center of Town and the rest of the community. To the east of the Center of Town, sidewalks extend to the Worcester City line. To the west, sidewalks only extend to approximately the end of the CB zoning district. To the north, sidewalks run until several hundred feet past the Leicester Elementary and Middle School campus. Finally, to the south, sidewalks only extend a short way down Route 56 / Pleasant Street. Stakeholders and Master Plan Survey respondents indicated a desire to extend sidewalks further south as far as the Hillcrest Country Club.



Roads with sidewalks in Leicester. Source: MassDOT Road Inventory File.



Pedestrian Connectivity – Strategies

6.1 Conduct a Benchmark Review and Update the 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan: Leicester is a participant in the MassDOT Complete Streets program, which is a statewide initiative designed to help municipalities plan, design, and build streets that accommodate all modes of transportation. The initiative involves the creation of a project prioritization plan, which Leicester completed in 2018. Priority projects located around the Center of Town include:

- Priorities 2 & 7: Shared use path along (Old) Main St, Paxton St., and Winslow Ave. - Status: Past due
- Priority 4: Sidewalk improvements and maintenance around the Town Common - Status: Past due
- Priority 5: Crosswalk Improvements and Traffic Calming around the Town Common - Status: Past Due
- Priority 11: Sidewalk Construction on Pleasant St. - Status: Past Due
- Unranked Priority (state roads are ineligible): Additional crosswalks on Route 9 throughout town, including at the intersection with Pine Street and at the Leicester Post Office - Status: Incomplete

Leicester’s complete Streets Plan is considered active until 2039; however, the program allows for updates at least every 3 years to assess the status of the various projects and develop new priorities. The Town should evaluate why the projects outlined above were not completed and identify alternatives, where relevant.

6.2 Widen and Enhance Key Sidewalks:

A) Install Wider Sidewalks: Leicester should prioritize widening sidewalks in the Center of Town, particularly in the commercial areas of the Route 9 corridor. Sidewalk widths of at least 6-8 feet should be targeted. In some locations, this may be challenging due to limited extra space in the right of way. Sidewalk extensions will have to be balanced against other recommended elements in this plan, such as street parking, bike lanes, or green infrastructure. Viable locations for wider sidewalks can be identified during the Planning and Needs Assessment for Route 9 (Traffic Calming: Strategy 5.1).

B) Incorporate Sidewalk Extensions into the Site Development Standards: The site development standards for the CB district (Section 5.8) should require that front yard space be filled with sidewalk extensions when the building façade is located within

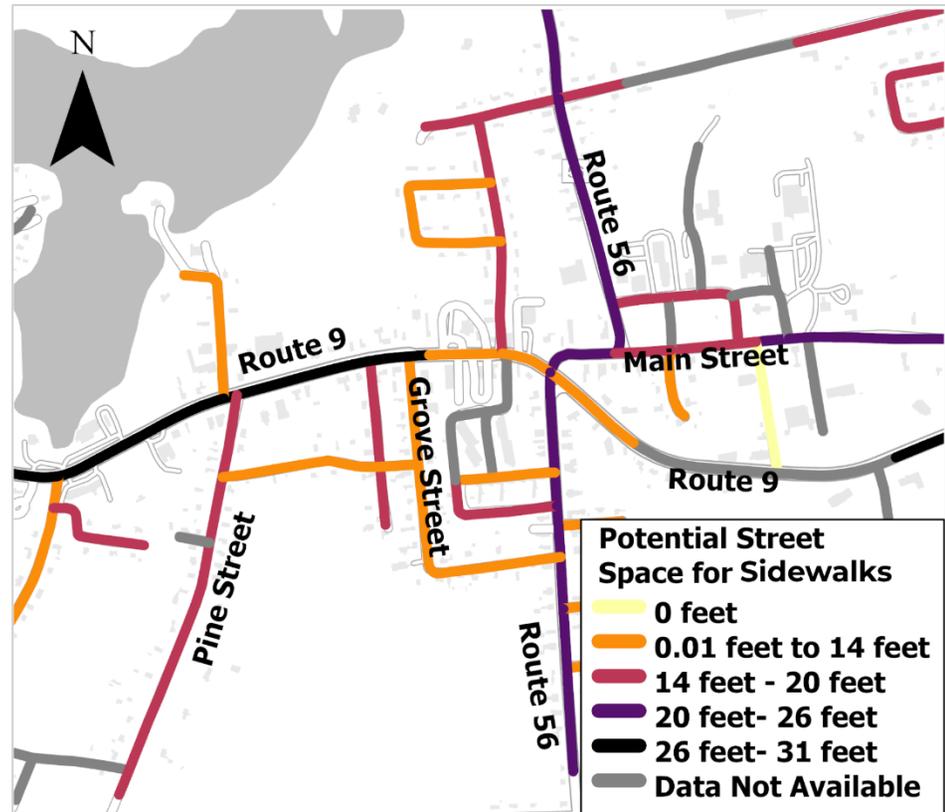
close proximity of the sidewalk (e.g., 0-5 feet). This can effectively create a wider sidewalk in places where narrow sidewalks currently exist and thereby provide more space for pedestrians and activities like outdoor dining.

6.3 Extend the Pedestrian Walking Network

A) Hillcrest Country Club Trail: Leicester should prioritize the formalization of a trail between Hillcrest Country Club and the Town Common. From north to south, the trail would extend down Flint Way, cross Route 9, pass through Russell Memorial Park, cross two private properties, and connect with existing trails in the Hillcrest Country Club property. This would create a continuous off-road path between two well-visited recreation sites in town.

The implementation of the trail would involve recommendation 13 from the Downtown Parking Study, which calls for creating a trail and pedestrian crossing to link Flint Way and Russell Memorial Park. Rather than building a trail into the wooded hill opposite Russell Memorial Park, improvements could instead be made to Flint Way where it intersects Route 9 west of the Police Station. Signage and lighting would be crucial to make this crossing safe.

The Town would need to approach the private landowners about obtaining a trail easement across their properties. Wetland resources areas would also need to be navigated.



Street space indicates the difference between the street right of way and the surface width of the road (excluding shoulders). In other words, the right of way width potentially available to accommodate sidewalks and other features. Data Source: MassDOT Road Inventory File.

B) Ramp at Town Hall Parking Lot: Per recommendation seven of the Downtown Parking Plan, the Town should also install an ADA-compliant ramp from the Town Hall parking lot to Paxton Street, paired with a widened crosswalk and a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB). Improving pedestrian access from parking to the CB district will enhance the functional and visual connection between Washburn Square and nearby businesses.

C) Walk / Bike Map: The Center of Town’s full pedestrian network can be detailed through a public facing walk/bike map that highlights safe walking and cycling routes, bicycle racks, and rest facilities (e.g., benches). This could be distributed through pamphlets and made available in an interactive format online.

6.4 Install High-Visibility Crosswalks and Safety Features:

Recommendation three of the Downtown Parking Plan calls for the installation of higher-visibility crosswalks with appropriate ADA-compliant curb ramps and RRFBs. These crosswalks could be raised where appropriate as a traffic calming measure. The 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan also identifies several locations where new crosswalks could be added along Rt. 9 including two locations in the study area- the post office and the intersection with Pine Street. Assuming other traffic calming measures effectively slow traffic by the eastern entrance of the CB district, another crosswalk may be desirable near the intersection with Barrett drive. These additions would require MassDOT approval, and could be packaged with other upgrades along Route 9.

Concept Map of trail between the Town Common and Hillcrest Country Club (right). Image Source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. “Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map.”



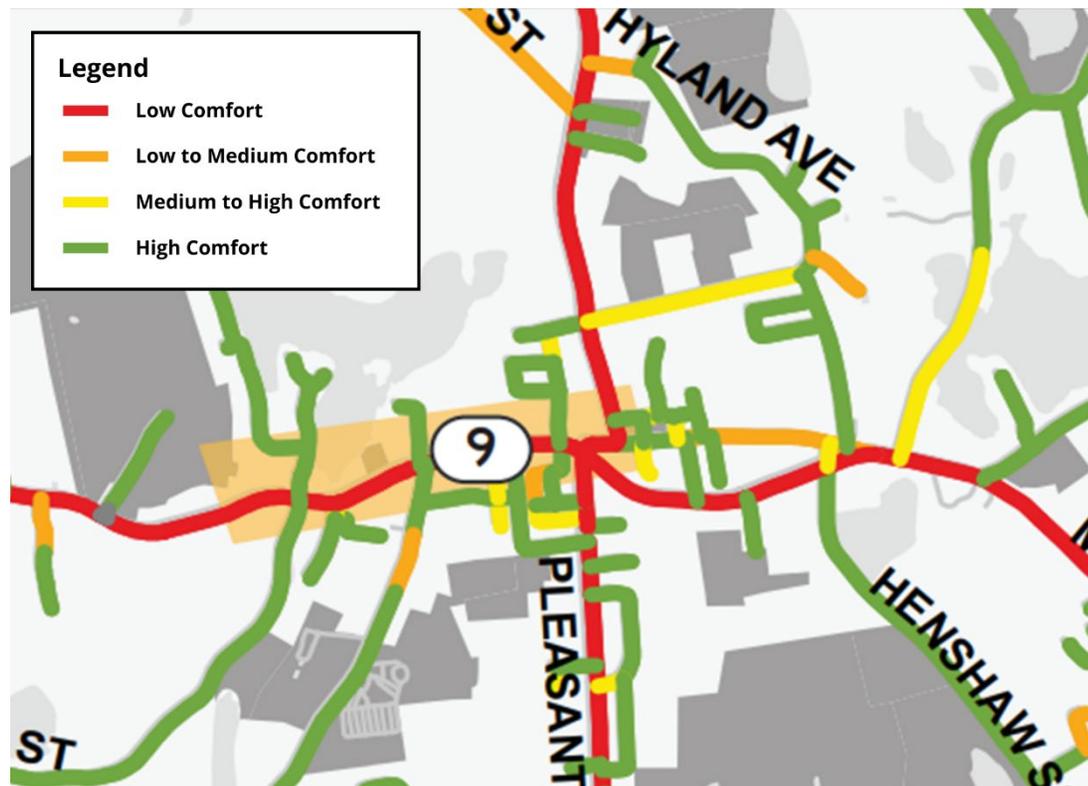
Multi-Modal Infrastructure - Existing Conditions

Leicester's Town Center lacks a robust, well-marked multi-modal transportation network. This has been observed in many prior planning efforts. There are no bike lanes in the Center of Town aside from a small segment on Washburn Square, and there are no bike racks or other secure bicycle parking facilities. No off-road trails connect to the Center of Town.

The 2018 Complete Streets Plan identified the primary roads in the Center of Town—Routes 9 and 56—as low comfort zones for cyclists due to high vehicular volumes and speeds and a lack of shoulders. The approaches to the Route 9 / 56 intersection feature no shoulders, meaning a road diet would likely be necessary to implement a bike lane and/or on-street parking. There likely would not be space for both types of facilities in the road cross-section.

Better pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Town Common and Route 9 was ranked as a medium priority by Master Plan survey respondents. The category ranked 9 / 13 compared to other physical improvement priorities in the Center of Town.⁷¹ While the quality of bike lane infrastructure in the entire Town was ranked as poor by most respondents, installing new bike lanes was only seen as a medium priority.⁷²

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) bus Route 33 runs through Leicester along Route 9 and runs on a flag-stop system, meaning that anyone who wants to get on a



Bicycle level of comfort in the Center of Town. Image Source: Howard Stein Hudson, "Leicester Complete Streets Prioritization Plan." 2018.



bus waves to the bus driver to stop. The driver will stop wherever it is safe to do so. There is no bus shelter or signage in the Center of Town indicating a safe space to wave down the driver.

Multi-Modal Infrastructure – Strategies

7.1 Explore Bicycle Infrastructure Expansion: Install bicycle parking at key destinations, including the Town Common. This can be paired with a Center of Town walk/bike map that defines safe cycling routes and parking, and links to hiking trails and recreational assets. The PDDG Planning and Needs Assessment Process can also evaluate the feasibility of a striped bike lane along Route 9 or Main Street. The 2018 Complete Streets plan also suggested a shared-use or bike lane could be developed to connect destinations along North Main Street, Paxton St., and Winslow Ave. This would create a safer route to link the schools and the Senior Center to the Town Common and Central Business District.

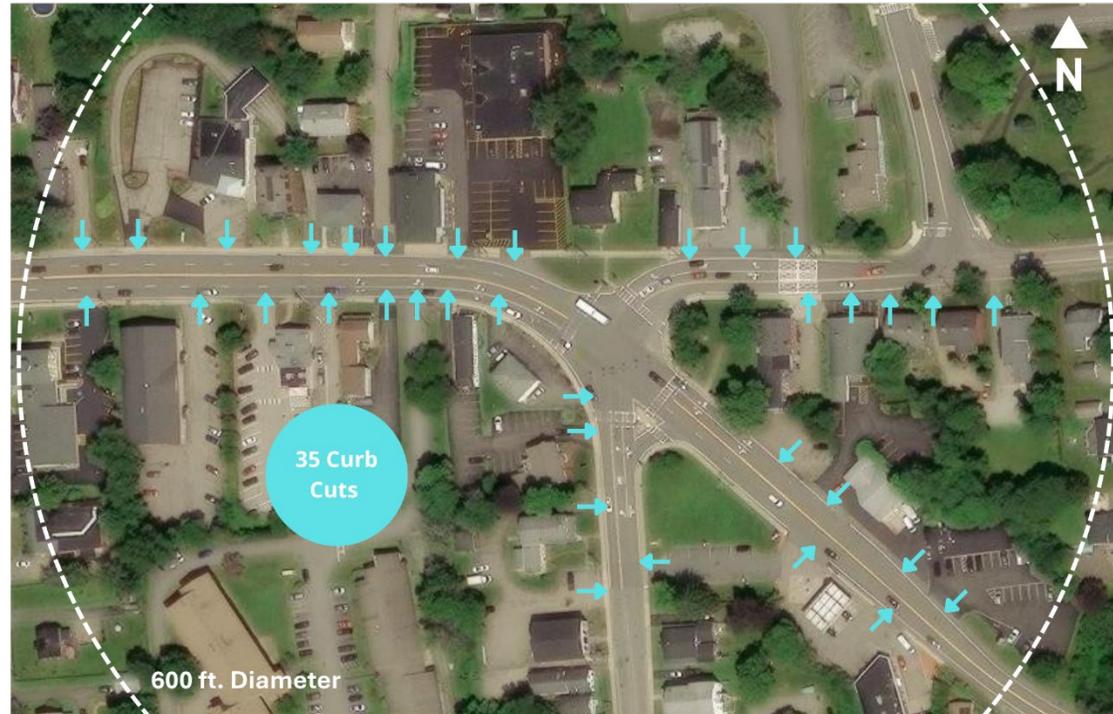
7.2 Improve Bus Stop Infrastructure: Make the existing WRTA availability clearer with a well-marked sign and, as the Central Business district grows in activity over time, consider installing a bus shelter to enhance rider comfort and safety. The shelter could be artist-designed to reinforce placemaking goals. While WRTA prioritizes shelters in high-ridership retail areas, Leicester can choose to invest in a shelter independently if they are willing to take on the maintenance, cleaning, and upkeep.



Parking and Site Access - Leicester

Control and Coordinate Curb Cuts – Existing Conditions

There is a high volume of curb cuts concentrated around the Route 9 / 56 intersection in the Center of Town. Nearly every lot in the area has its own parking lot and curb cut, with some lots even featuring multiple curb cuts. The Downtown Parking Study also observed that many curb cuts are excessively wide.⁷³ These characteristics disrupt the integrity of the sidewalk, leaving pedestrians uncomfortable and at risk of collision with automobiles. They also pose traffic safety risks by introducing more potential conflict points between vehicles. The density of curb cuts decreases east and west of the Route 9 / 56 intersection.



Curb Cuts located around the Route 9 / 56 intersection in the Center of Town. Image Source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. “Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map.”

Leicester’s Zoning Bylaw provides that, “Each lot shall be served by a separate driveway opening onto an approved right of way on which it derives its frontage.”⁷⁴ While this allows for high densities of curb cuts, Massachusetts’ courts have established that access to a right of way is a right of ownership.⁷⁵ Towns may only regulate the location of entrances and make reasonable regulations as to their construction and use.⁷⁶

Leicester appears to have no regulations placing a limit on the number of curb cuts on each lot, besides for the Highway Business-1 (HB-1) zoning district. There are no provisions concerning access management in the site development standards for the CB and B districts.⁷⁷ The Leicester Driveway Bylaw and Parking Regulations also do not regulate the number of driveways / curb cuts on a property.



The Leicester Parking Regulations contain minimum width requirements for driveways. Driveways serving non-residential uses must be at least 20 feet wide where separate access and egress are provided.⁷⁸ Where common access and egress is provided, the minimum required width rises to 25 feet. For driveways only serving either access or egress, 20 feet is a high minimum standard. MassDOT’s PDDG recommends a maximum lane width of 16 feet for single lane driveways.⁷⁹ For two-lane driveways, the MassDOT PDDG recommends a maximum width of 26 feet. This is only a foot larger than Leicester’s minimum width requirement. The Leicester Parking Regulations do allow the Planning Board to waive parking facility design regulations, including minimum driveway width requirements.⁸⁰

Control and Coordinate Curb Cuts - Strategies

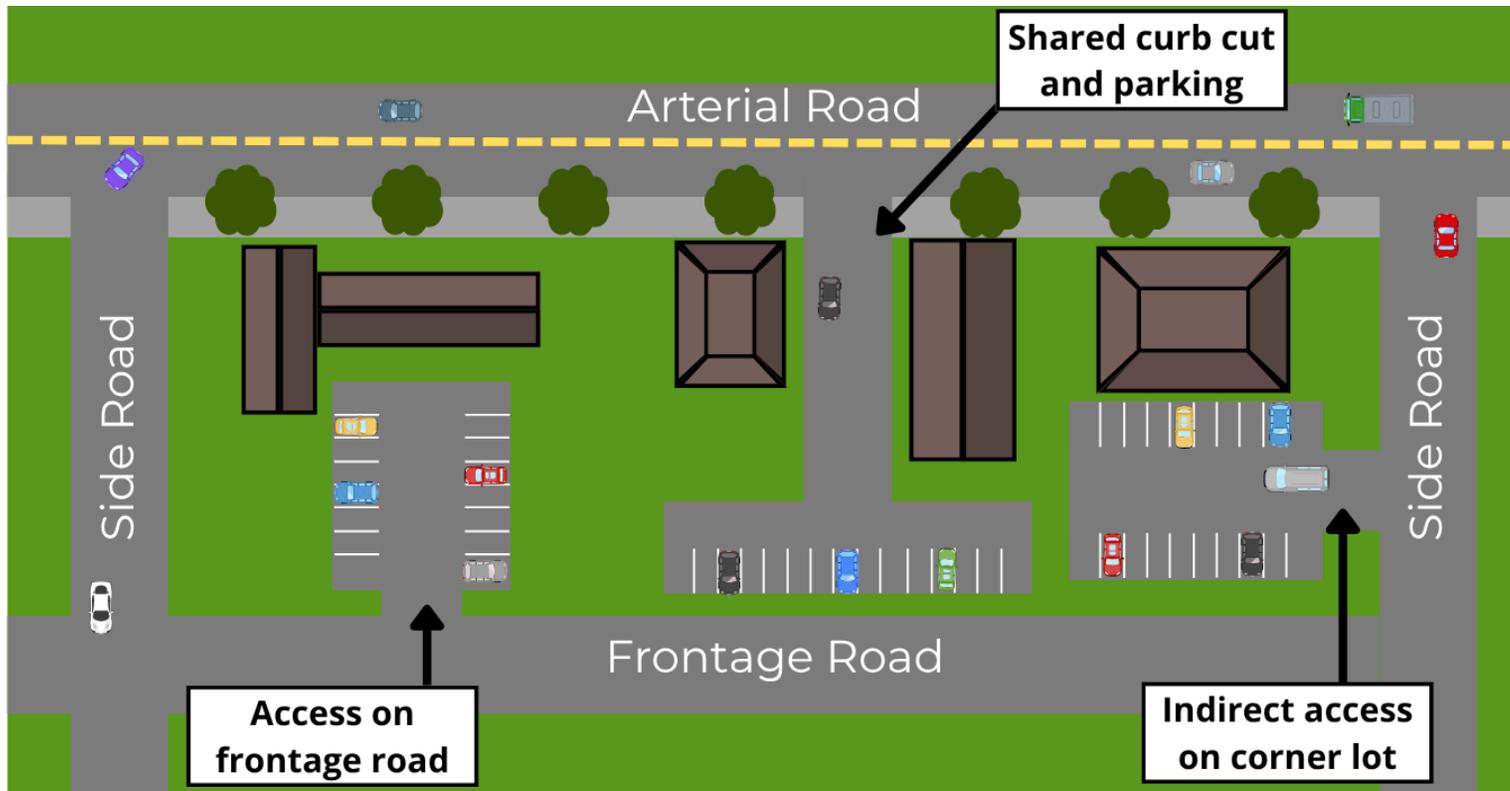
8.1 Apply a Minimum / Maximum Driveway Width Standard: To ensure driveways are neither too narrow nor too wide, Leicester’s parking regulations should set required driveway widths for A) situations where separate access and egress are provided and B) situations where common access and egress is provided. These required widths should reflect the recommended widths in MassDOT PDDG Chapter 15. The provision in the Leicester Parking Regulations allowing the Planning Board to waive parking facility design regulations can be retained to allow for flexibility when needed.

8.2 Limit the Number of Curb Cuts in the CB District

A) Restrict The Number of Curb Cuts per Lot: The site development standards for the B and CB districts should limit the number of curb cuts per lot to one. A less restrictive alternative would be to include language similar to that used for the HB-1 district access and driveway requirements (Zoning By-law Section 5.5.02(C)), which says that “To the maximum extent feasible, only one (1) curb cut shall serve each lot.”

B) Allow and Encourage Shared Driveways and Cross-Access Easements: The site development standards for the CB district should explicitly allow shared driveways serving more than one lot, similar to the HB-1 district access and driveway requirements (Zoning By-law Section 5.5.02(C)). Shared driveways and cross-access easements between parking lots should also be incentivized, as noted in the Downtown Parking Study. Possible incentives to offer in exchange for shared driveways and cross-access easements are relaxing parking standards and dimensional requirements for zoning.

C) Encourage Indirect Access to Properties on Route 9: The site development standards for the CB district should encourage and/or require indirect access to properties abutting major arterial roads, like Route 9. Here, indirect access may take the form of frontage roads (i.e., side roads set back from and laid out parallel to the main road) or requiring that corner lots place their driveways on side streets instead of the arterial road. Again, possible incentives to offer in exchange for these measures are relaxing parking standards and dimensional requirements for zoning.



Visual depicting strategies to limit curb cuts on arterial roads, like Route 9.

Remove Parking from the Front of Properties - Existing Conditions

Most commercial properties along Route 9 in the CB district feature front-facing parking lots that prioritize parking visibility over pedestrian accessibility. This was also observed by the Rapid Recovery Plan. Parking in the front is particularly prevalent for lots developed after the mid-20th century. This layout limits opportunities for active street life by discouraging pedestrian activity and undermining the visibility and appeal of storefronts. In contrast, historic buildings closer to the Town Common are sited near the sidewalk, contributing to a more traditional village feel and human-scale environment.

The Leicester Zoning By-law does not prohibit placing parking in the front of properties in the CB district. Instead, the site development standards for the CB and B districts prescribe that “To the maximum extent feasible, parking and loading areas shall be located to the side or rear of the primary structure.”⁸¹ This leaves much to discretion, which may reduce the effectiveness of the provision if the use of Special Permits is relaxed in the CB district.

Many properties do not feature screening or landscaping buffers between parking areas and sidewalks. This is likely because these properties were developed before Leicester’s landscaping requirements were introduced. The site development standards for new development in the CB and B districts require a 5-foot landscaping screen “along any side of the lot with road frontage to visually separate



*Some properties in the Center of Town lack screening between parking facilities and the sidewalk.
Image Source: Google Maps, Sept. 2023.*



the building and its parking area from the road.”

Leicester does have Landscaping Regulations. However, neither the Landscaping Regulations nor the Zoning Bylaw have design guidance on using fences, walls, berms, or transparent elements to define lot edges.

Remove Parking from the Front of Properties - Strategies

9.1 Prohibit Parking in the Front of Primary Structures: The Continuous Street Front Element recommends a build-to zone with an occupancy threshold to ensure buildings are positioned closer to the street front. This generally eliminates or severely restricts front-of-lot parking, but developers could still manage to squeeze in some front of lot parking if the zoning does not outright prohibit it. The zoning could outright prohibit parking between the building and the street in the CB district, save for by a special permit, and require parking to be located at the rear (preferred) or side (if rear is impractical).

9.2 Incorporate Non-Plant Screening Elements into the Leicester Landscaping Regulations: While Leicester’s Landscaping Regulations specify landscape screening requirements for the CB district, neither the zoning bylaws or the Landscaping Regulations do not address non-plant based elements to the screening, such as berms, masonry, decorative railings, fencing, or walls. The landscaping regulations can also be expanded to function as design guidelines with visuals offering examples of preferred landscaping approaches.

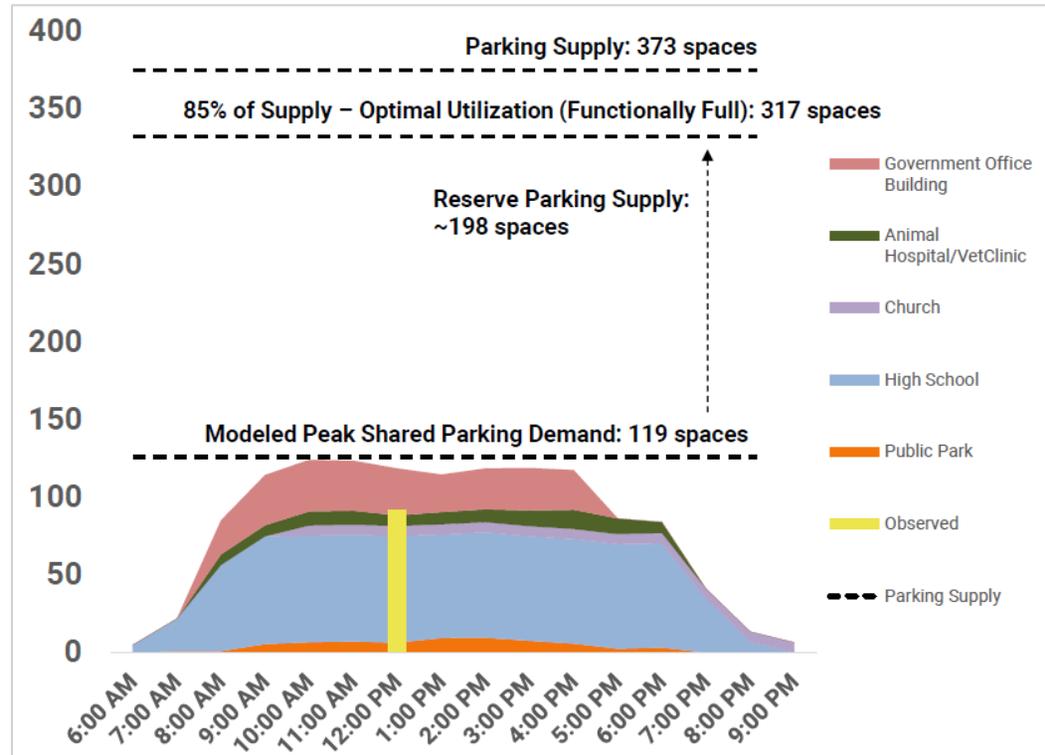
9.3 Approach Garden stores or Landscaping Firms about Donating Plants for Commercial Properties: Many existing properties in Leicester’s Center of Town do not feature screening between parking areas and the sidewalk. While the first step to address this should be to encourage property owners to make improvements themselves, the Town has no way to compel this on lots with existing development, unless it was part of the criteria for Site Plan or Special Permit approval. To offer potted plants or even plant beds to properties with little to no screening, the Town could approach local garden stores or landscaping firms about the prospect of donating plants or labor on a limited scale. This would hopefully motivate property owners to continue the momentum and take ownership of the maintenance or future plantings. In exchange for participation, garden stores / landscaping firms would receive publicity through the Town and partners like the Leicester Business Association.

Adequate and Accessible Parking – Existing Conditions

The Downtown Parking Study found that there is an abundant supply of parking around the Town Common and the Leicester High School campus. But currently, accessing available public parking facilities is challenging due to a lack of wayfinding signage. This was noted by both the Rapid Recovery Plan and the Downtown Parking Study.⁸²

The parking capacity of businesses along Route 9 was not analyzed as part of the Downtown Parking Study. However, a limited review of MassGIS aerial imagery from eight different years (between 2001 and 2023) suggests that there could also be significant excess parking along this corridor.⁸³ Most parking lots are rarely occupied anywhere close to full capacity. Importantly though, parking along Route 9 is divided between private lots. As the Rapid Recovery Plan noted, “there is no central parking location or accessible on-street parking along Route 9 or near the Town Common to accommodate customers who want to walk around the area.”⁸⁴

In Leicester, off-street parking must be located “on the same lot with the principal use or on a contiguous lot within the same zoning district.”⁸⁵ Specifically in the CB district, shared parking is allowed anywhere in the district on the same side of a “major road.”⁸⁶ This rule also applies to



Shared Parking Demand Model for the Town Common / Leicester High School Area. There is a significant gap between modelled peak demand based on area land uses and optimal utilization of the existing parking supply. Source: Stantec. “Downtown Parking Study.”



the B district but only within a 300-foot radius. Other communities allow for greater distances for parking spaces, such as 500 ft. in Southborough, MA and 1,000 ft. in Weymouth, MA.

All of Route 9 in Leicester is under MassDOT jurisdiction.⁸⁷ Improvements to the right of way on Route 9 fall under MassDOT authority. Parking on state roads is regulated under 700 CMR 9.03. MassDOT has the authority to permit on-street parking under this regulation, but staff from MassDOT District 3, Leicester’s Highway District, reported that to their knowledge, the district has not permitted on-street parking on any State highways.⁸⁸ The district wants to ensure that on-street parking is only allowed in places where it can be done safely and where non-motorized modes of transportation can be simultaneously accommodated.

The planning and design of State highway projects is guided by the MassDOT Project Development and Design Guidelines (PDDG). The Speed Management chapter of the PDDG identifies curbside parking as “a common use” for major and minor arterial roads and even target speed limits of 35 mph and above.⁸⁹

Several other communities in Massachusetts located along State highways have local jurisdiction over the stretch of State highway that intersects with their downtown and/or town center area. Municipalities have more flexibility to design and plan their own street improvements on roads under their jurisdiction. For instance, the Town of Spencer has local jurisdiction over Route 9 in its downtown area and has installed on-street parking there.⁹⁰ However, local jurisdiction also comes with maintenance and upkeep responsibilities.

In preliminary conversations with CMRPC, MassDOT District 3 was not supportive of the idea of transferring part of Route 9 to the jurisdiction of the Town of Leicester. (See “Traffic Calming – Leicester” for more details).

The Downtown Parking Study also identified high minimum parking requirements for uses like multi-family residential, office, retail, and restaurants.⁹¹ Leicester’s parking minimums for these uses are significantly higher than the Institute for Transportation Engineers’ observed parking rates.

Site Development Tradeoffs from Parking Standards

Category	Leicester	ITE	Difference
Bldg. Floor Area (sq. ft.)	4750	8250	3500
Minimum Parking Requirement (spaces / sq. ft.)	200	515	N/A
Parking Spaces Required	24	16	-8
Parking Spaces Area (sq. ft.)	9975	6720	-3255
Developed Area (sq. ft.)	14725	14970	N/A

“Leicester” = Town’s current minimum parking requirements. “ITE” = the Institute of Transportation Engineer’s observed parking rates. This scenario assumes a one-story retail building on a 15,000 sq. ft. lot. 420 sq. ft. is factored in for each parking space and associated area from drive aisles and landscaping. Max. lot coverage is not factored in.

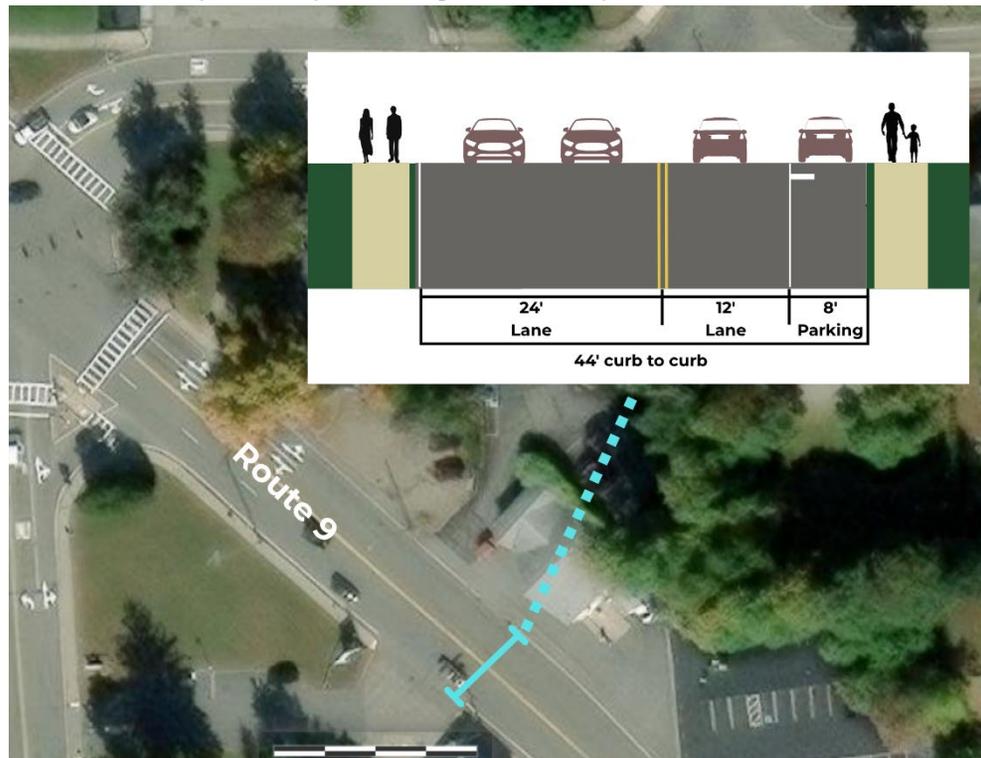
Parking minimums can make a noticeable difference when it comes to potential gross floor area for new development. But the Leicester Parking Regulations do allow the Planning Board to reduce minimum parking standards on a discretionary basis. This is helpful to accommodate uses that may not fit criteria in the use table or are unique for other reasons.

Adequate and Accessible Parking - Strategies

10.1 Implement On-street Parking: Leicester should follow recommendations 1, 2, and 9 from the Downtown Parking Study concerning on-street parking. This would support economic development by allowing visitors to park in central locations and avoid having to park multiple times to reach different establishments. It would also signal to visitors and passing traffic that the area is unique from the rest of the Route 9 corridor.

The Town may also consider placing street parking on Route 9 to the east of the intersection with Route 56. Here, the northern side of South Main Street widens significantly before it splits into two lanes before the intersection. On-street parking here could have a calming effect on traffic passing through the intersection. Some stakeholders noted that cars speed up the hill before the intersection. Barrett Dr. could also offer an opportunity to place on-street parking away from traffic on Route 9.

To be sensitive to the high traffic volumes present on Route 9 and facilitate parallel parking maneuvers, the Town may consider including boxes at either end of parallel parking spaces on this road. That way, drivers have the length of the parking space and the



Potential road cross-section east of the Route 9 / 56 intersection. Image source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. "Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map.". Data Source: MassDOT Road Inventory File.



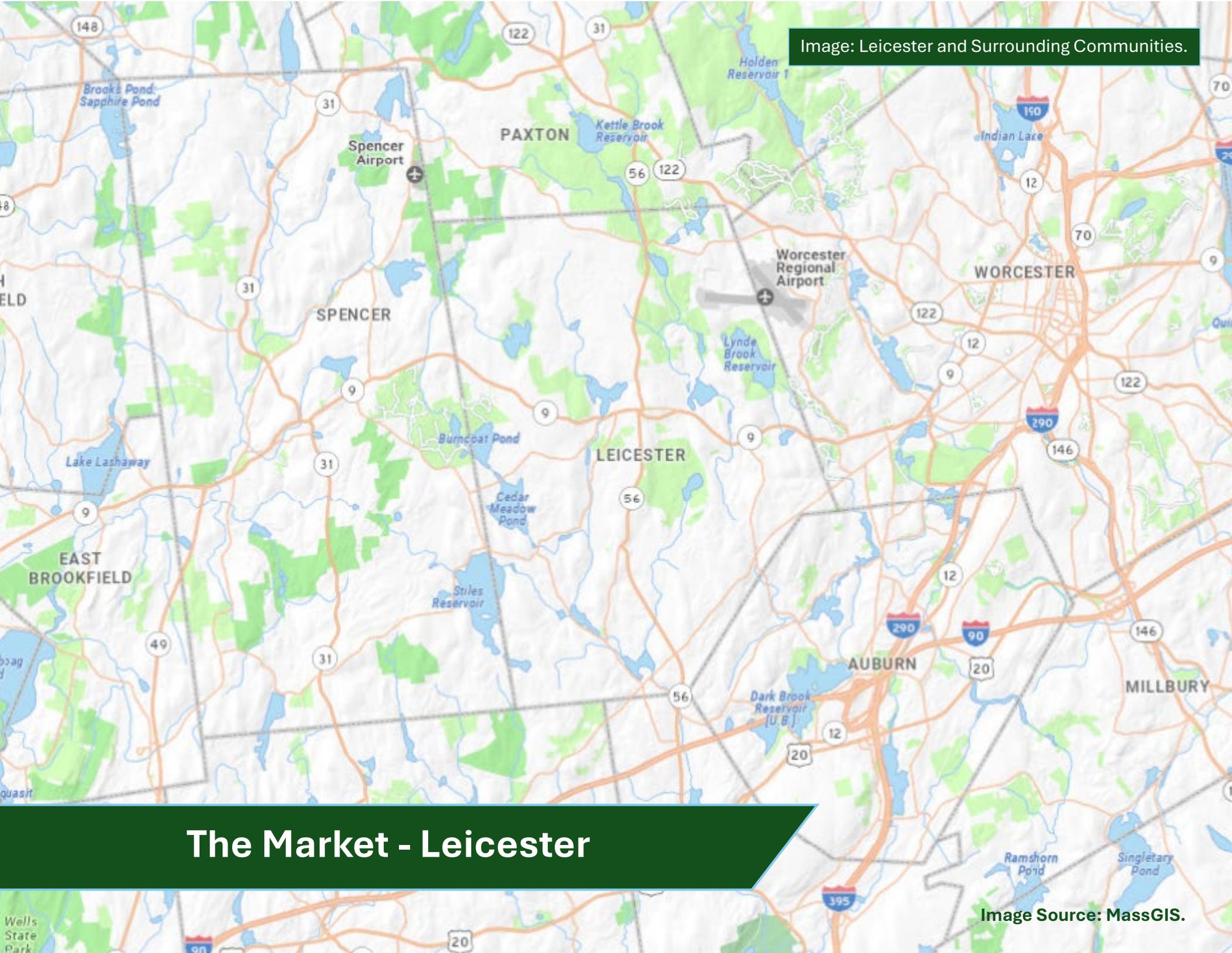
attached boxes to enter and exit the space. The MassDOT PDDG notes that this treatment is suited to roadways with higher traffic volumes.⁹²

Leicester should consult with MassDOT District 3 about the feasibility of on-street parking on Route 9. The district told CMRPC that it welcomes the opportunity to meet with the Town to discuss changes to Route 9 that better address the community's needs. On-street parking could also be more thoroughly explored during a Planning and Needs Assessment (Traffic Calming: Strategy 5.1).

10.2 Reduce Minimum Parking Requirements: Adhere to recommendation 5 from the Downtown Parking Study and reduce Leicester's minimum parking requirements to be closer to observed rates / recommendations from the Institute of Transportation Engineers or the Urban Land Institute.

10.3 Expand the Shared Parking Radius in the B District: Increase the allowable radius for shared parking in the B district from 300 ft. to at least 600 ft. (Section 5.1 of the Leicester Zoning By-laws).

Image: Leicester and Surrounding Communities.



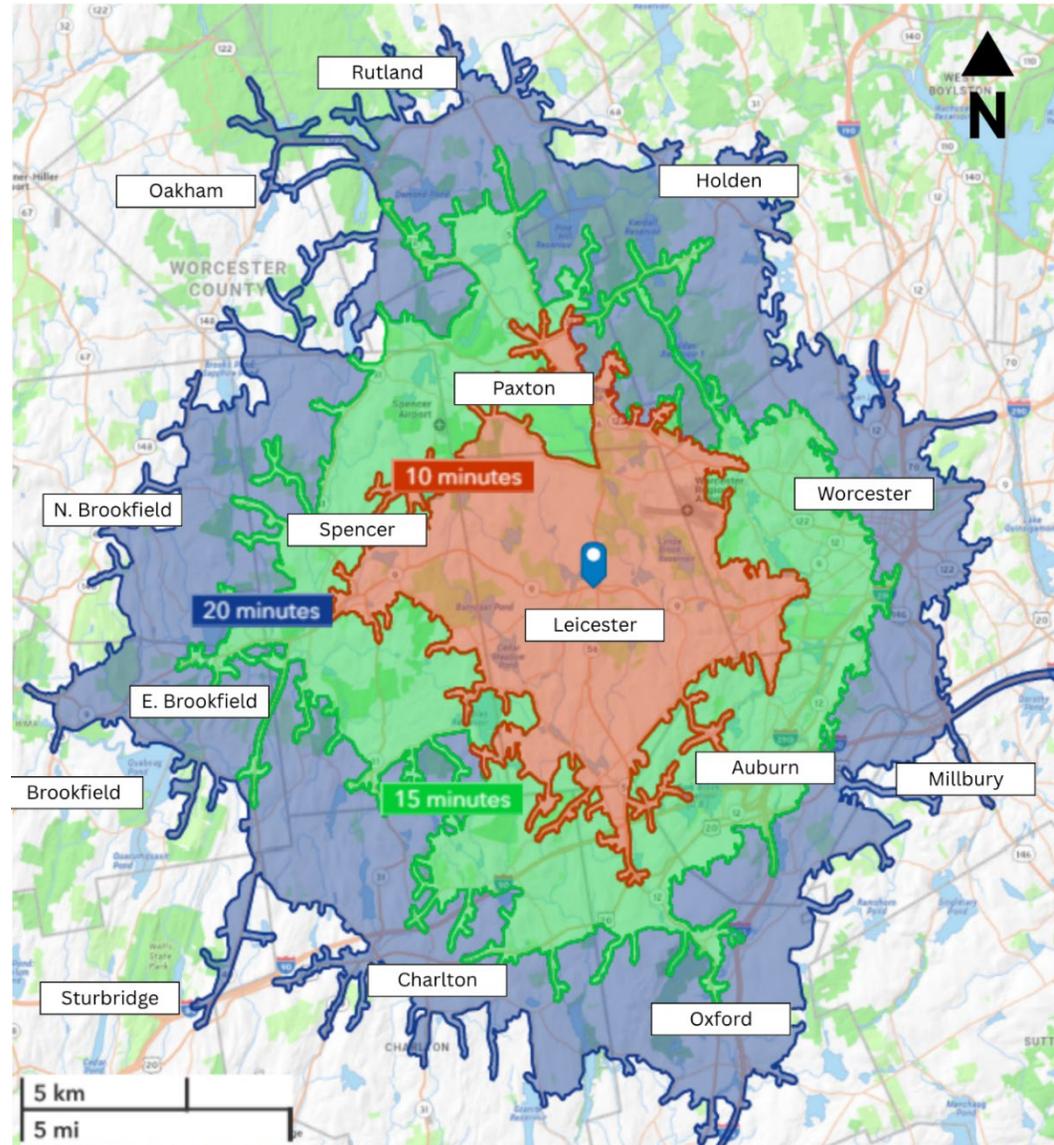
The Market - Leicester

Image Source: MassGIS.

Carve out a Market Niche – Existing Conditions

Leicester’s Center of Town is strategically located around the intersection of Routes 9 and 56. A 2024 MassDOT traffic count recorded around 17,000 daily vehicles passing through Route 9 near the intersection.⁹³ Many of these trips originate from Leicester residents. 63 percent of respondents to the Leicester Master Plan Survey reported that they are in and around the Center of Town on a daily basis.⁹⁴ Another 26% responded “weekly” to the same question. But transportation data shows that more than 60 percent of trips that intersect with the Center of Town from all modes of travel originate in other communities.⁹⁵

The Center of Town is within 10-20 minutes driving distance of a large share of Central Massachusetts. This places it in the same trade area as many malls, shopping plazas, and downtowns in neighboring communities. Trip origin-destination data suggests that Leicester loses significant business activity to other towns. Two-thirds of trips that originate in Leicester for the purposes of eating, shopping, and running errands are estimated to end in other



Drive time map from the Center of Town (blue pin). Image source: Esri ArcGIS Business Analyst & MassGIS.

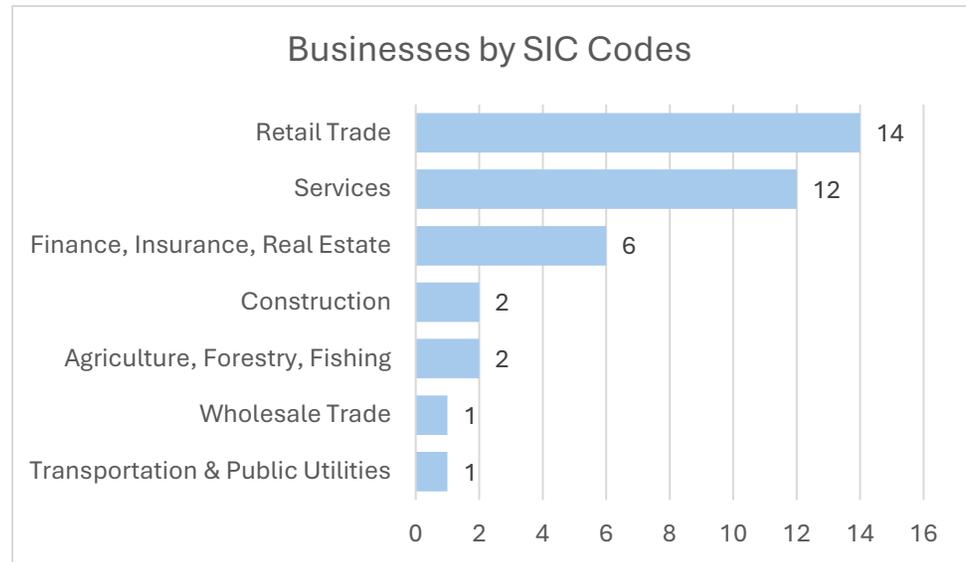


communities.⁹⁶ Retail sales leakage data from the Leicester 2021 Economic Development plan also shows 100% leakage in categories like clothing, shoes, jewelry, and more.⁹⁷

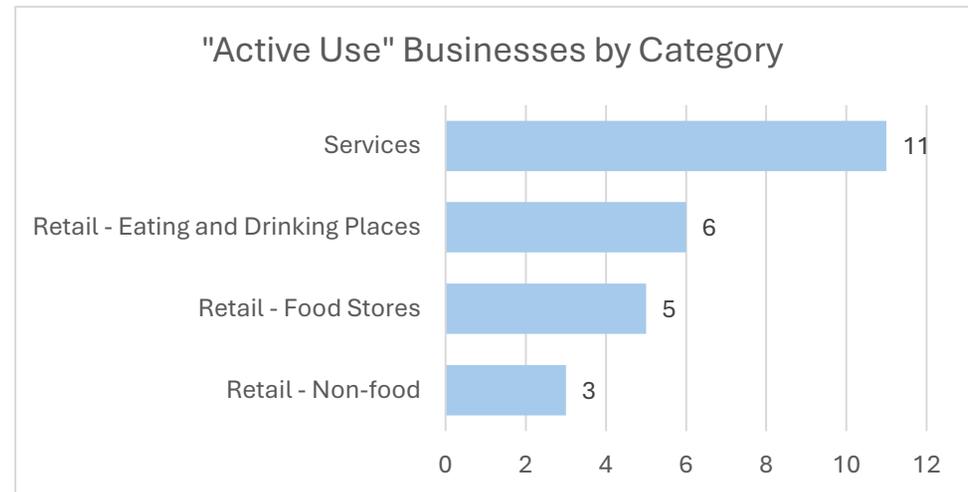
The Center of Town also faces competition within Leicester, namely from Walmart. The presence of Walmart and other regional malls and shopping plazas is likely to corner the market for retail categories that feature limited locations with larger footprints, like clothing and general merchandise. In this market environment, the Center of Town is more likely to be successful carving out a niche in fragmented service and retail industries which occupy smaller footprints.

The Center of Town is currently home to 38 businesses.⁹⁸ Almost two-thirds of these businesses fit the criteria of “active uses,” while the remainder should be considered non-active uses (See “Buildings – Best Practices”). Active uses in the Center of Town are anchored by the service and retail sectors. There is a wide diversity of service establishments, including a post office, preschool, salon / barber shop(s), psychic, window repair shop, physical therapy practice, chiropractor practice, bank, veterinary clinic, and dog groomer.

Active retail uses can be broken down into eating and drinking places, food stores, and non-food retail. Many of the eating and drinking places and food stores are



Businesses in the Center of Town organized by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. Source: Esri and Data Axle, 2024.



Businesses that fit the criteria of “active uses”

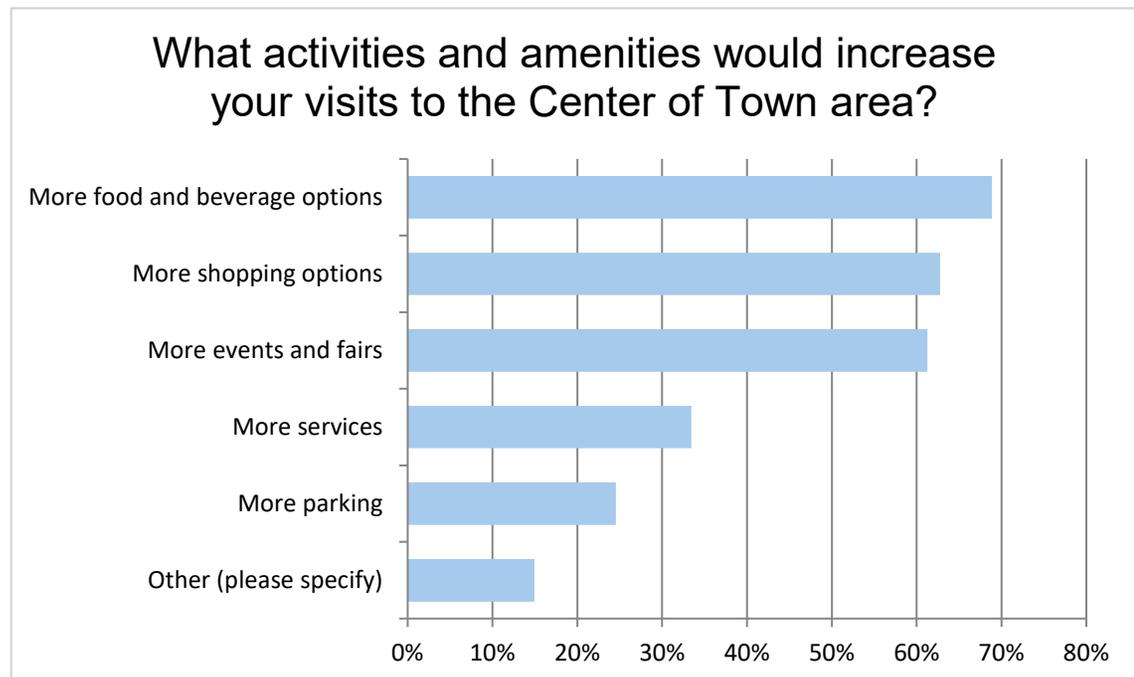


franchise or chain branches with limited-service models. Only a few eating and drinking places may be considered full-service or sit-down restaurants. Besides the Castle Cantina, none of the eating and drinking places appear to host events, trivia, or live music. There appears to be very little evening activity in the Center of Town.

There are three non-food retail establishments in the Center of Town: a building materials store, a bait and tackle shop, and a thrift store. The Center of Town could benefit from additional non-food retail establishments.

Both these business clusters offer a strong foundation for business agglomeration and complementary effects. But there may be limited opportunities for growth in categories like eating and drinking places and food stores. Retail sales leakage data from the Leicester 2021 Economic Development plan showed minimal unmet demand for eating and drinking places and beer, wine, and liquor stores.⁹⁹ However, a majority of respondents to the Leicester Master Plan Survey ranked “Restaurants, brewpubs, other food and beverage establishments” (72 percent) and “Small Local Retail Businesses” (59 percent) as businesses that would be beneficial to Leicester.¹⁰⁰ Survey respondents also reported that they would increase their visits to the Center of Town if there were more food and beverage options and shopping options.¹⁰¹

Non-active uses in the Center of Town fall under the categories of finance, insurance, and real estate; construction; and other miscellaneous business types. Finance, insurance, and real estate firms have a place in downtown commercial districts as office tenants. However, these uses typically do not generate foot traffic and should ideally be located on upper floors.



Results from Leicester Master Plan Survey Question 8.



Limited real estate in the Center of Town should also not be taken up by non-consumer facing businesses like trades contractors, especially when they involve the parking of commercial vehicles. Two buildings located around the Route 9 / 56 intersection appear to be occupied by trades contractors and used for vehicle parking.

Besides businesses, the Center of Town is home to many community assets, including the High School, Library, Rev. Samuel May House, Swan Tavern Historical Museum, Town Common, and Town Hall. The area is close to the Elementary School, Middle School, and Russell Memorial Park too.

Within a 10-minute drive of the Center of Town, overall spending potential (i.e., the household-based representation of the amount spent on products or services relative to a national average of 100) is 98.¹⁰² This score decreases to 89 within 10-15 minutes of the Center of Town and 84 within 15-20 minutes. Esri's tapestry segmentation application—which groups residential areas into segments based on shared demographic, socioeconomic, and lifestyle characteristics—also finds that the predominant population segments within a 10-minute drive of the Center of Town are budget conscious relative to average US households.¹⁰³

Market Niche - Strategies

11.1 Invest in a Catalyst Strategy: A catalyst strategy defines an economic focus or niche and describes the customers or types of businesses that are necessary to support it.¹⁰⁴ The catalyst strategy paints a narrative of what a district might look like if it succeeds in building a focused economy.

Main Street America has formulated a collection of catalyst strategies divided into two broad types: those that are focused on a specific customer segment and those that are focused on an industry, product, or service segment.¹⁰⁵ Based on the Center of Town's market profile and community input, the following catalyst strategies are best suited for the area:

- **Customer segment: Family-Friendly and Family-Serving:**
Leverage the Center of Town's proximity to Leicester's public schools and recreational facilities to attract business types that cater to families (i.e., parents and children 18 years or less). Options include family-friendly restaurants and



establishments focused on recreation (e.g., martial arts or dance) and arts and culture. Host events to attract families with school age children.

- Industry Segment(s): (1) Convenience Goods and Services; (2) Food
Leverage the existing concentration of service and food businesses to build a “business cluster economy” that takes advantage of complementary effects. Growth in the service and food industries may eventually attract interest from niche retail establishments.

11.2 Develop an Economic Development Committee Strategic Plan: Leicester’s Economic Development Committee (EDC) is currently inactive. Once the EDC is relaunched, the first step should be to develop a strategic plan to guide the committee’s efforts. This was also a recommendation of the Leicester Rapid Recovery Plan.¹⁰⁶ A strategic plan is critical to maintaining the EDC’s momentum and direction over time, especially if there is turnover among committee members. The plan should outline the committee’s mission, overarching goals, and roles / responsibilities. It should also catalog recommendations from prior planning efforts, such as this plan and the 2025 Leicester Master Plan, and identify tasks to advance these objectives.

Possible activities that could be outlined in the plan include:

- Creating a business directory or interactive map, sortable by business categories.
- Introducing an event sponsorship program in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Organizing a buy local campaign
- Introducing a business spotlight newsletter or social media series

Host a Critical Mass of Businesses – Existing Conditions

Businesses in the Center of Town are primarily concentrated around the Route 9 / 56 intersection (Rt. 9 / 56 Cluster). A couple buildings in this cluster are presently vacant. A smaller cluster of businesses is present in the west end of the Center of Town in several strip malls (West Cluster). The remainder of businesses are located in a gap between these clusters.

Nearly half of all establishments in the Center of Town are located away from the Rt. 9 / 56 Cluster to varying degrees, including many eating and drinking places / food stores. These businesses are isolated from the Rt. 9 / 56 Cluster by distance and residential uses. There is approximately a quarter-mile gap between the West Cluster and the Rt. 9 / 56 Cluster. This gap is predominantly occupied by low-density residential uses set back from the sidewalk. Pedestrians are unlikely to walk far distances between businesses, especially if there are few visual indications that the business district extends further. On a road like Route 9, drivers may also lose interest quickly if storefronts only extend a few blocks and then give way to single family homes.



Commercial uses include mixed-use properties. Image Source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. "Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map."



As a result, businesses in the Center of Town are potentially missing out on complementary effects that they might otherwise enjoy if storefronts were more tightly grouped. When businesses are located close together, they are more likely to benefit from chance exposure to customers.

The relative isolation of business clusters may contribute to a perception that the commercial base of the Center of Town is small. In the Leicester Master Plan Survey, “small” was a common answer when respondents were asked to describe the Center of Town as it is now.¹⁰⁷ “Lacking” was also a response given by a few respondents. A perceived lack of attractions could affect the community’s enthusiasm for visiting the area. By a wide margin, “Business development retention and expansion” was ranked as the top priority for economic development planning in the Center of Town.¹⁰⁸

Almost all business uses require a special permit in the CB district. The south side of (north) Main Street is zoned R2, and the R2 district prohibits most business uses. However, several historic properties in the Architectural Conservation District are eligible for conversion to commercial uses under the Town’s Adaptive Reuse Overlay District. Locating businesses on Main Street would be advantageous for several reasons. First, businesses here would be ideally positioned to benefit from events hosted on the Town Common. Second, Main Street features far lower traffic volume than Route 9, providing a more pedestrian-friendly setting and opportunities for activities like outdoor dining. Lastly, Main Street is in close walking distance to the Route 9 / 56 intersection. New businesses on Main Street would add to the mass of businesses already located around the intersection.

Host a Critical Mass of Businesses – Strategies

12.1 Issue Guidance on Residential to Commercial Retrofits: Several properties in the Center of Town demonstrate the potential to transition residential structures to commercial uses. This represents an opportunity to balance historic preservation with economic development. To facilitate such conversions, the Town could release an informational guide detailing the steps that must be taken to ready a residential structure for commercial use, depending on the type of new use. Possible topics could include necessary improvements to address accessibility, fire safety, minimum parking requirements, and parking facility design.

12.2 Encourage Property Owners to Lease Out Their Spaces to Food Trucks and Pop-up Vendors: There are several properties in the Center of Town that are most likely not utilized throughout much of the week. These include a church and a

funeral home, both with large parking areas. The Town and other partners, such as the Leicester Business Association (LBA), should encourage property owners to permit their outdoor spaces to be used on a temporary basis by food trucks and other pop-up vendors. The Town and the LBA could help connect potential vendors and property owners for this purpose. This tactic could help generate activity in parts of the Center of Town located between business clusters.

12.3 Offer Financial Incentives to Activate Vacant and Strategically Located Buildings:

A) Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program (MVSP): A couple of buildings in the Center of Town are currently vacant. Leicester should consider applying to the MSVP through the Community One Stop for Growth. The MVSP offers refundable tax credits to incentivize businesses to occupy these and other vacant storefronts throughout the town.

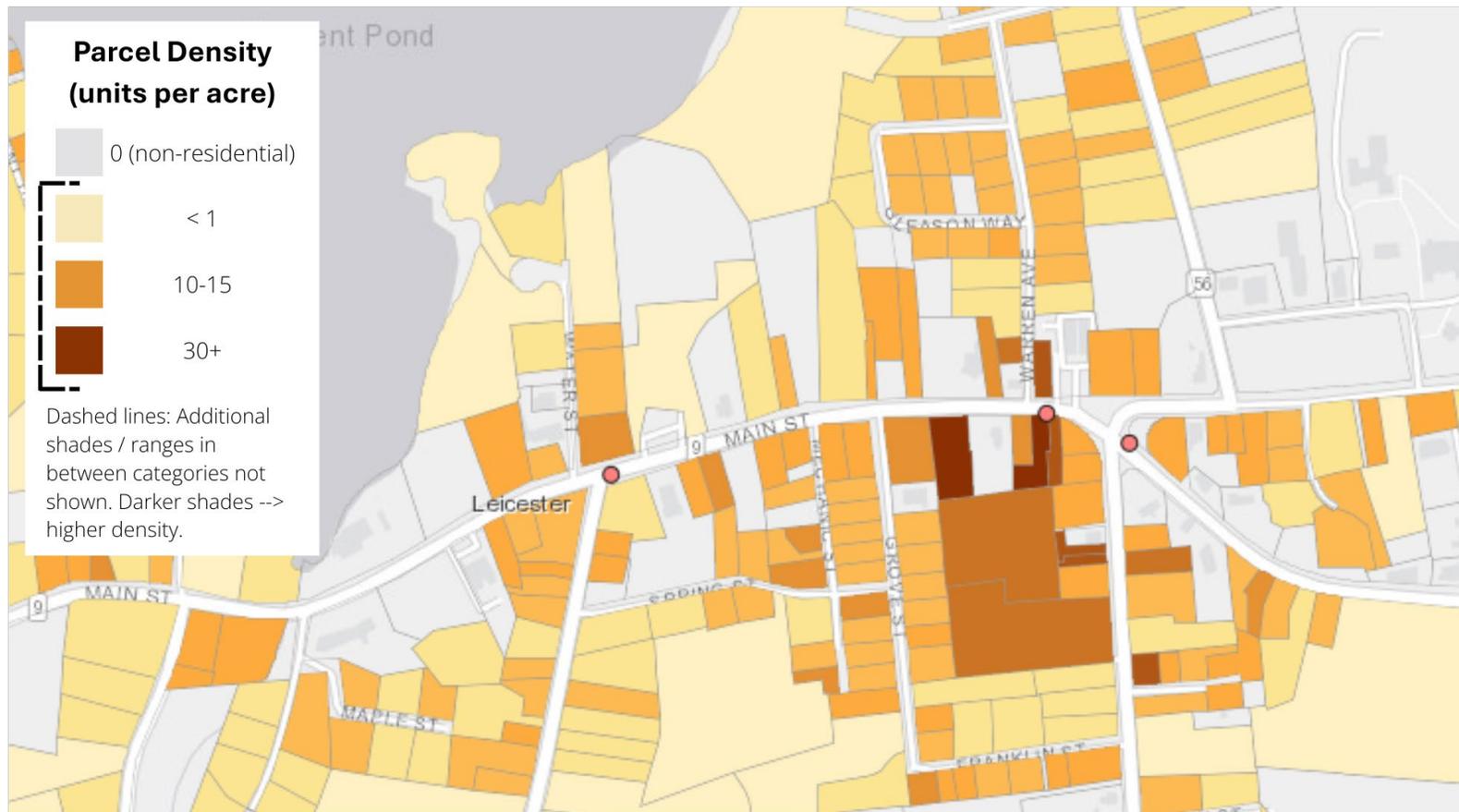
B) Tax Increment Financing (TIF): Leicester has diligently put in place the regulatory framework to facilitate mixed-use development on Main Street. Another step it can take to realize commercial activity across from the Town Common is financial incentives in the form of TIF agreements. TIF agreements would incentivize property owners to make the improvements necessary to convert the ground floor of structures to commercial spaces. This includes complying with accessibility, fire safety, and other regulations. Otherwise, property owners may opt to take the less costly route of returning these properties to residential use.



Property on Main Street across from the Town Common. Image Source: CMRPC.

Residential Density – Existing Conditions

Within a half mile from the middle of the Center of Town, an area comprising about 500 acres, slightly more than half of the land hosts residential or mixed uses.¹⁰⁹ Among parcels with housing units, the average parcel density is 2.45 units per acre or almost 18,000 sq. ft. per unit. While there are some multi-family developments, including the Leicester Housing Authority, almost half



Housing units per acre by parcel in and around the Center of Town. Source: Massachusetts Housing Partnership. “Residency.”



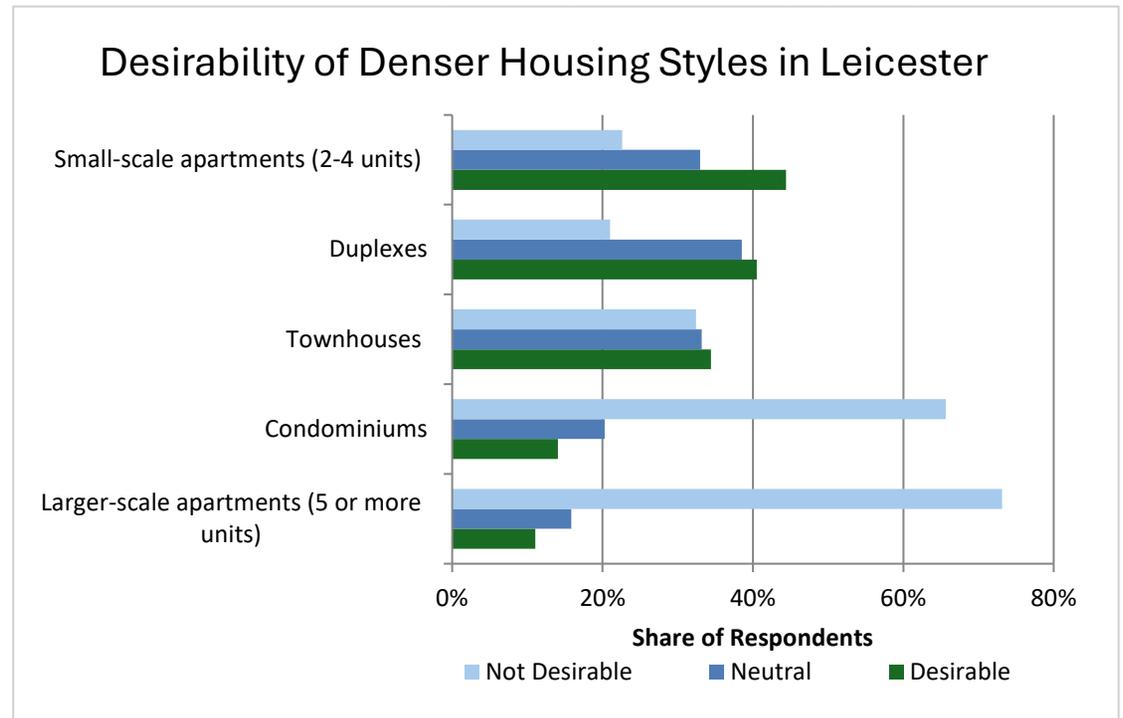
of the residential units are single-family units. These units have an average density of only 1.37 units per acre or 31,796 sq. ft. per unit.

For reference, the MBTA Communities Law sets 15 units per acre as the minimum density for districts rezoned to allow multi-family housing by right. 15 units per acre is the density level of many outlying neighborhoods of Boston, like Dorchester and Jamaica Plain, and nearby suburbs, like Cambridge.¹¹⁰ Higher residential density levels are important to make public transportation service feasible and provide a customer base for businesses, as explained in the “The Market – Best Practices.”

Two-family and multi-family dwellings are allowed by Special Permit in the CB and B districts. In the R2 district, which surrounds the CB district and encompasses the area around the Town Common, two-family dwellings are allowed by special permit and multi-family dwellings are not allowed.

Minimum lot requirements for the CB and R2 districts do not reflect existing conditions on the ground. Almost half of the parcels in the CB are smaller than the minimum lot size requirement of 15,000 sq. ft.¹¹¹ The median lot size in the CB district is about 16,500 sq. ft. In the R2 district, the share of undersized parcels rises to almost two-thirds. The median lot size is around 14,600 sq. ft. compared to the minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft.

In the Leicester Master Plan Survey, housing scored as a medium priority for future development. Residents expressed mixed views about denser types of housing units.



Results from Leicester Master Plan Survey Question 9.



Residential Density – Strategies

13.1 Amend Zoning Regulations in the R2 district to Allow for Gentle Density: Small-scale residential uses like duplexes and small apartments should be allowed by right in the R2 district. This approach is sometimes coined “gentle density” because these housing types can promote greater density while blending into single family neighborhoods.

Minimum dimensional standards should also be relaxed. Even with setbacks, a 10,000 sq. ft. lot with 85 ft. of frontage offers plenty of space for a residence, driveway, and yard space, as demonstrated by many existing houses in the district.

Image: Town Common, Leicester.



Community Spaces - Leicester

Image Source: CMRPC.

Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding - Existing Conditions

Travelers arriving in the Center of Town from any direction receive little visual indication that they are entering the heart of the community. There is no welcoming signage, and there are no distinct streetscape elements or gateway treatments to distinguish the area. As a result, the Center of Town feels undefined and easy to miss. One Leicester resident at the April 2025 Master Plan Workshop described the area as “a pass through.” Within the Center of Town, wayfinding signage is absent, offering visitors minimal guidance to key destinations such as the Town Common, Leicester High School, the Swan Tavern Historical Museum, or public parking areas. The absence of directional cues makes it difficult to navigate or fully engage with the area. Past planning efforts, including the 2024 Gateway and Wayfinding Plan, the 2024 Downtown Parking Study, and the 2021 Rapid Recovery Plan have highlighted these shortcomings.

The area around Washburn Square and the Town Common also feels visually disconnected from the Central Business district. The districts lack defining features that signal that they can function as a cohesive space. There is also no signage that could



Image Source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. “Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map.”

guide visitors to and from the common and other destinations between the two areas. Together, these observations underscore a critical need: Leicester must invest in a thoughtful, coordinated system of gateway features, wayfinding signage, and public realm enhancements that reflect its character and invite people to stop, explore, and connect.

Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding – Strategies

14.1 Develop a Comprehensive Wayfinding and Branding Plan for the Full Center of Town: The 2024 Wayfinding and Gateway Plan includes important recommendations, particularly the development of consistent gateway and wayfinding signage with a common design theme arrived at through a robust community engagement process. The town can build upon the existing report to develop a comprehensive wayfinding and branding plan for the Center of Town. The plan should incorporate broader feedback to refine the designs, location priorities, and new signage locations. The Economic Development Committee (EDC) could play a leading role in reviewing the plan and reaching consensus on priorities for implementation. To manage the implementation effectively, the town should prepare a phased signage installation plan that sequences improvements over time based on available funding and design readiness.

14.2 Install Physical Gateway Treatments: As previously noted, the Center of Town lacks physical gateway treatments to signal arrival and reinforce a sense of place. Many communities have addressed this by installing features such as gateway signs, landscaped medians and planting beds, as well as brick accent pavers along decorative sidewalks. These elements can help create a more inviting entrance to the Town Center, clearly mark the transition into the area, and establish a stronger visual identity for the area.



Wayfinding and branding concepts from the Washburn Square Wayfinding and Gateway Plan.



14.3 Improve the connection between Washburn Square and the Central Business District: To strengthen the Common's role as a central gathering space and more fully connect it to the nearby Central Business District, complementary improvements should be pursued in both areas. Enhancements discussed throughout this report, such as raised crosswalks, period-appropriate lighting, improved signage, and other pedestrian-scaled traffic-calming measures can support both safety and visibility should be consistent throughout the Center of Town. Importantly, all interventions should be developed in coordination with the ACDC and in keeping with the Commission's future design guidelines, ensuring that the Common continues to evolve as an accessible and vibrant civic space without losing the historic character that defines it.

Green Infrastructure - Existing Conditions

The Center of Town lacks any form of intentional green infrastructure aside from the trees on the common. Impermeable surfaces such as parking lots, roads, sidewalks, and buildings cover a significant portion of the area, preventing water from soaking into the ground and causing stormwater to accumulate and run off. The buffer zones between sidewalks and roads, particularly along Route 9, are dominated by narrow, poorly maintained grass strips that contribute little in terms of ecological function, aesthetic appeal, or pedestrian comfort. The Town Common, while historically significant and visually spacious, consists largely of mowed lawn and mature trees, with limited active landscaping or biodiversity. Beyond a handful of ornamental plantings on private properties, there is virtually no public green infrastructure. There are no street trees, no bioretention swales, and no planting designed to manage stormwater or mitigate heat.

This lack of green features not only impacts the quality and usability of public space but also has broader environmental and infrastructure implications. According to Leicester's 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan, the town is increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather, including frequent heavy rainfall. These storms contribute to flooding, erosion, and added stress on aging sewer systems, issues that could be partly mitigated through well-designed green infrastructure interventions.

The 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan further underscores the urgency: nearly every water body recently assessed by MassDEP in Leicester is impaired, and invasive species like Japanese knotweed are spreading along roadways and unmaintained areas. Meanwhile, the Town's capacity



Difference in street tree canopy between Downtown Southbridge and the Center of Town of Leicester.

to manage trees is limited. They currently can only focus on treating sick trees, with no formal strategy in place for planting, monitoring, or diversifying the public tree canopy.

Community feedback also reinforces the importance of this issue. In the Master Plan survey, green infrastructure ranked as one of the highest-priority desired improvements in the town center, second only to general infrastructure upgrades. This signals strong public support for transforming underused green spaces into functioning systems.

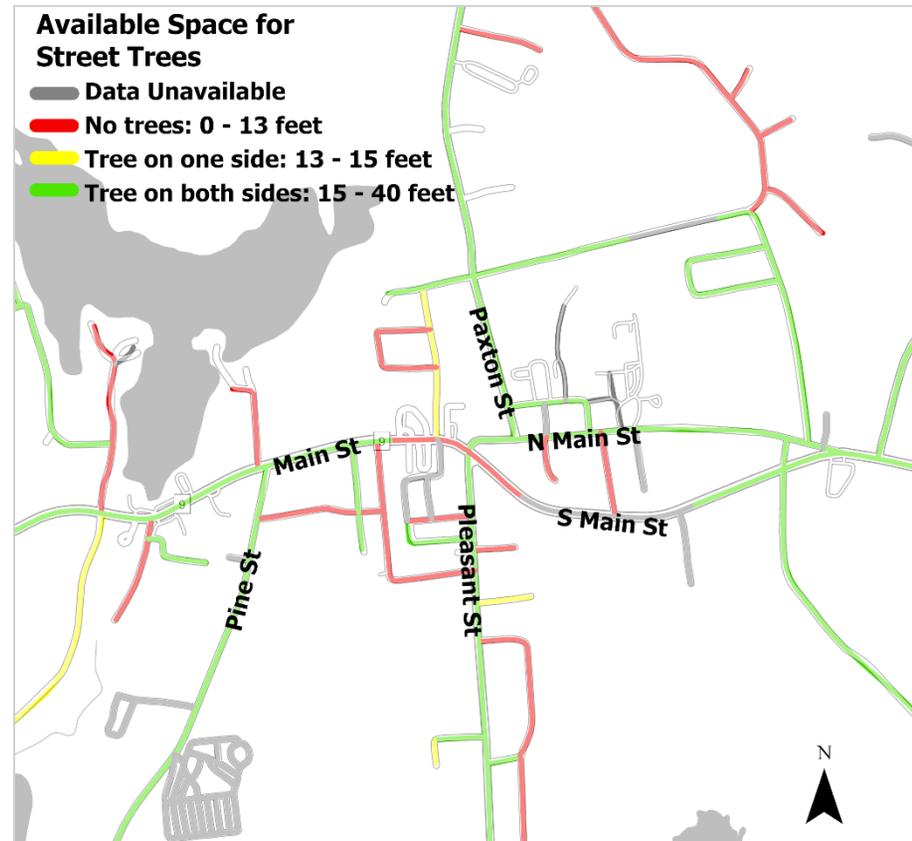
Leicester can increase resilience, improve environmental quality, and enhance the daily experience of its residents and visitors alike by reimagining the center of town as part of a cohesive green infrastructure network.

Green Infrastructure - Strategies:

15.1 Develop a Landscaping and Green Infrastructure Plan for the Route 9 Corridor:

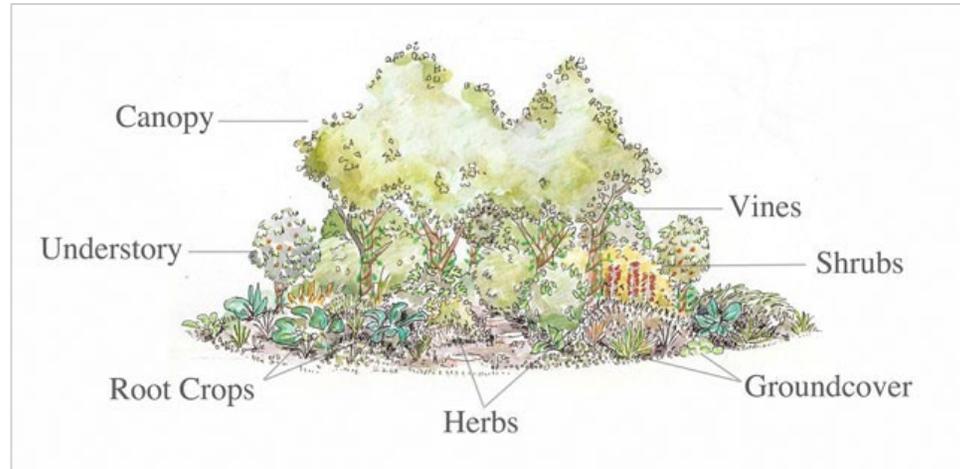
Dedicated planning efforts will be necessary to introduce green infrastructure throughout the Route 9 corridor in the Center of Town. Planning will ensure that new landscaping and green infrastructure is cohesive and follows the guidance laid out in the MassDOT PDDG Chapter 13: Landscape Design.

Section 13.7 lays out the documentation typically required for landscaping projects. Landscaping should be a component of the Route 9 Planning and Needs Assessment (Traffic Calming – Leicester: Strategy 5.1).



Map depicts the difference between right of way width and road surface width. Seven feet (3.5 for tree bed and 3.5 for sidewalk) is assumed to be the minimum width to support a street tree and sidewalk on one side of the road. Sidewalks without trees are assumed to be five feet in width. Extra couple feet are added to account for road shoulders. Data Source: MassDOT Road Inventory File.

The planning exercise could include an inventory of priority areas where improvements would have the greatest visual, environmental, or community impact. A scoring system could be used to prioritize planting locations based on visibility, impact on walkability, stormwater management needs, and proximity to community assets (e.g., schools, library, Town Common). Concept plans could then be developed for priority sites, as well as a long-term maintenance strategy.



Concept image of a food forest. Image Source: One Community.

The plan could take a phased / incremental approach to implementing design items. More limited scale improvements, like shrubs and native pollinator plants may be introduced first, followed by more complicated improvements, like street trees.

More complicated improvements, like street trees.

Native plantings and pollinator gardens require far less upkeep than traditional lawns or ornamental beds. Once established, native pollinator species (like milkweed, coneflower, and bee balm) typically need less watering and no pesticides or fertilizers, making them budget-friendly and DPW-manageable. These gardens have many co-benefits including support for declining populations of bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects that are critical for healthy ecosystems and local agriculture. Even small plantings can strengthen regional biodiversity corridors. These gardens can be installed in spaces not suitable for larger green infrastructure like around signs, next to parking lots, or in sidewalk buffers. The library land or edges of the Town Common, for example, could be repurposed as pollinator gardens.

Food forests are another option for planting in small spaces like pocket parks. They involve layering edible plants to mimic the structure and function of a natural ecosystem. This approach allows for a high diversity of crops in a compact area, with shade-tolerant understory plants growing beneath taller trees and shrubs.



15.2 Create an Adopt a Place Program: Many communities have initiated programs where local groups, businesses, or even families volunteer to beautify and maintain traffic islands, medians, or other public sites. This offers a cost-effective way to enhance the aesthetic quality of the Center of Town without drawing on Town resources. The program could tap into other volunteer initiatives discussed in the Leicester Master Plan, such as volunteer park committees.

Outdoor Amenities – Existing Conditions

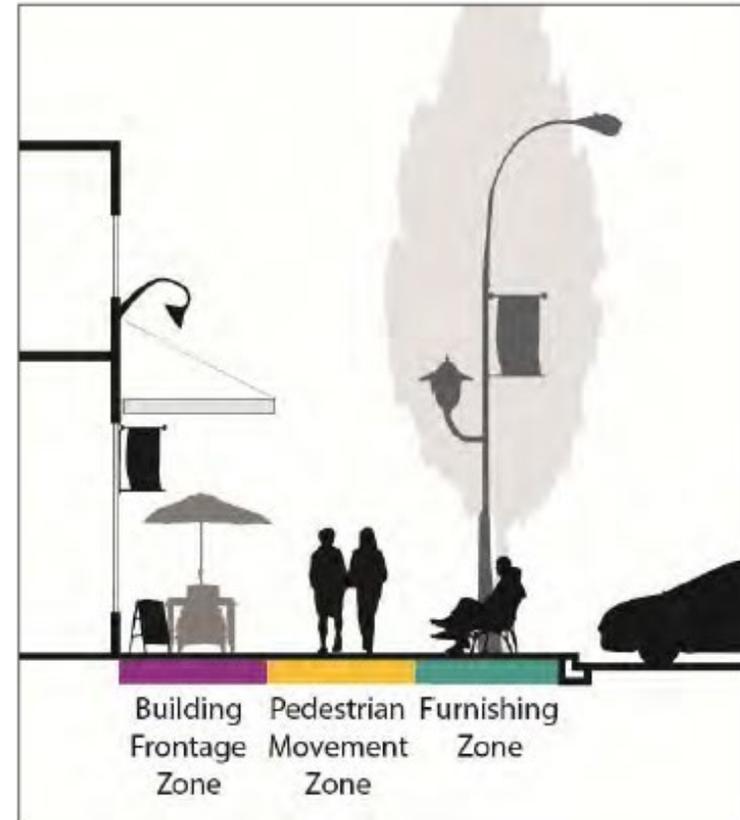
The Center of Town features few outdoor amenities like benches, tables and chairs, lighting fixtures, or public art. Sidewalks have no amenities in either the “building frontage zone” or the “furnishing zone.” This was also observed by the Rapid Recovery Plan.¹¹²

Around the Route 9 / 56 intersection, the sidewalks are relatively narrow compared to traditional town center / downtown settings. The MassDOT PDDG notes that sidewalk widths of 6-12 feet are preferred for most town center locations, but the sidewalks in the study area are mostly four or five feet wide.¹¹³ This leaves minimal room for amenities. Three feet is considered the minimal acceptable clearance (four is recommended) for sidewalks where occasional obstructions like streetlights or street trees are present.¹¹⁴ This leaves only two feet or less for amenities in some parts of the Center of Town. East and west of the Route 9 / 56 intersection, grass buffers are provided between the roadway and sidewalk, but these too feature no amenities.

The front yards of properties are currently not activated to their full potential. Many are either empty lawns with varying levels of landscaping or parking lots. In some places, the slopes of front yards preclude the placement of amenities like patios or tables and chairs.

The only area that features amenities is the Town Common, which hosts benches and a gazebo. However, there are several spaces around the Route 9 / 56 intersection that could accommodate amenities.

Prior Planning studies have observed inadequate lighting as an issue for the Center of Town. The Rapid Recovery Plan and the Downtown Parking Study both identified lighting as a safety concern.¹¹⁵ At present, streetlights in the Center of Town are mounted on utility poles and positioned for road-scale lighting (i.e., mounting height greater than 20 ft.).¹¹⁶ The utility poles take



Sidewalk zones. Source: City of Abbotsford. “Historic Downtown Neighbourhood Plan.” 2018.

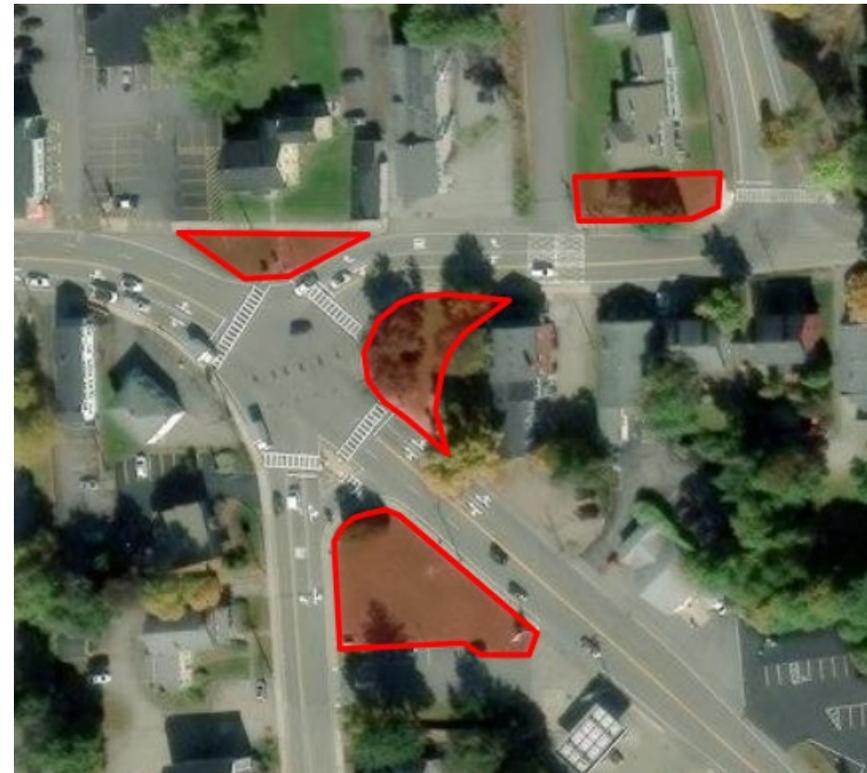
up space that otherwise could be filled by more human-scale light fixtures, like in most traditional town center settings. However, frequent interruptions in the sidewalk due to driveways may complicate consistent spacing of new streetlights. And new streetlights may conflict with telephone poll wires if the latter are not removed.

Outdoor Amenities – Strategies

16.1 Outfit Empty Green Spaces with Amenities: Leicester should enhance the appeal of the Center of Town by enlivening empty spaces throughout the area with amenities. Potential items include benches, tables and chairs, and public art installations. Outdoor benches and table sets could be movable and/or temporary to allow for seasonal installation and removal.

Possible publicly-owned locations include the library and the Swan Tavern Historical Museum. For example, the Town of Oxford outfits the front yard of its library with movable benches. Private property owners can also be approached about activating their lots. Establishments like Dunkin Donuts and Cumberland Farms should be encouraged to place tables and seating in their front yards, subject to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and 521 CMR.

16.2 Sponsor Public Art Contests: One way to build public curiosity and attract visitors to the Center of Town is through exhibiting public art. To do so, the town could issue a call for artists and award stipends to the top submissions. The chosen



Spaces around the Rt. 9/56 intersection that could accommodate outdoor amenities. Image Source: CAI Axis GIS, Esri. "Town of Leicester, MA GIS Map."



works could then be displayed on the Town Common or placed throughout the Center of Town. For nearly a decade, the public library in Oxford has run an “Art in the Yard” program.

16.3 Improve Street Lighting: This should begin with a lighting needs assessment that reviews the factors laid out in section 2.1 of the Federal Highway Administration’s “Pedestrian Lighting Primer.” From there, design criteria, equipment selection, and further steps can take place in accordance with the Lighting Primer prior to installation of new and improved streetlights.

16.4 Bury Utility Lines: In many traditional downtown settings, utility lines are buried underground. This is because overhead utility wires are not only visually unattractive, but they also pose safety risks. Overhead wires are susceptible to inclement weather and when they are compromised, may cause fires, electrical outages, and other types of harm. Furthermore, telephone poles take up space that could be repurposed for amenities like streetlights and street furniture. Studies suggest that burying utility lines may even provide a value boost to nearby properties.

Parks and Greenspace - Existing Conditions

The Common is one of Leicester’s most prominent and valued shared spaces. Surrounded by civic and cultural landmarks, including the Town Hall, the high school campus, and the Becker Mansions, it has long served as a gathering place that bridges generations and backgrounds. Its centrality and visibility make it a natural anchor for civic life, drawing foot traffic that could support nearby local businesses and reinforcing the importance of preserving the heart of town as a vibrant, active, and cherished space.

Despite its strengths, the Common is underutilized for everyday public life. The Parks and Recreation Committee has been hosting frequent seasonal events and recreational activities on the common. For example, in 2024, the Town hosted a series of Family Fun Food Festivals on the Town Common. The Family Fitness Fun in the Parks program also featured a day at the Common with dance activities. The Parks and Recreation Committee manages many annual town events, while also managing the parks and recreational spaces. However, this work is constrained by a very limited budget, and the committee is having to rely largely on volunteer support.

As mentioned in Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding, the park also feels visually disconnected from the nearby central business district, reducing its effectiveness as a central gathering space. The 2024 Wayfinding Study highlights the disconnection, noting a lack of pedestrian-scale signage and safe, legible connections between the common and nearby destinations. This issue is further compounded by the absence of other shared gathering spaces within the



2024 Leicester Family Fun Food Festival. Image Source: Leicester Parks and Recreation.

business district, leaving the Common as one of the only central outdoor venues, yet one that doesn't fully serve its potential.

Additionally, the Common lacks features that invite casual, day-to-day use. In their absence, the Common remains visually attractive but functionally passive, limiting its ability to host spontaneous gatherings, support remote work or study, or serve as a destination for families, seniors, or youth throughout the week.

Improvements that encourage use of the common are appropriate, provided they are approached with sensitivity to the site's historic integrity. As the Common is located within the Architectural Conservation District, the Common is subject to review by the Architectural Conservation District Commission (ACDC) under Chapter 24 of the General Bylaws. Most exterior alterations, including structural additions, permanent landscape features, or new amenities, require a Certificate to Alter from the Commission to ensure compatibility with the existing character of the district. While ordinary maintenance, temporary features, and minor modifications may be exempt from review, more significant or permanent changes are subject to a public regulatory process designed to preserve the setting and architectural integrity of the area.

Parks and Greenspace – Strategies

17.1 **Activate the Town Common Through Low-Impact Placemaking:** Leicester should enliven the everyday atmosphere of the Town Common through low-cost, small-scale, and temporary interventions. Such “placemaking” initiatives include moveable chairs and picnic tables, seasonal planters, rotating public art, interpretative signage, and pollinator gardens. These small but meaningful additions can encourage residents to organically visit and socialize in the Center of Town outside of scheduled events, which is consistent with the goals of the 2024 Wayfinding Report and the 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The low profile



Habitat garden with informational plaque at Lucy Stone Park in Warren, MA. Image Source: Warren Conservation Commission.

and/or temporary nature of these placemaking initiatives also means that they can be implemented without compromising the historical character of the area.

17.2 Rent Out Games and Activities to Use on the Town Common: Recreational activities at parks are a popular draw for community members. But the Town Common does not feature any recreational fields or courts, and the Leicester Parks and Recreation Committee has limited staff capacity to supervise regular organized events. Leicester can promote activity on the Town Common by lending out games for community members to play. Possible options include cornhole, Topsy Toss, croquet, Slammo, and more. Games can be picked up and returned at the Town Hall. To ensure items are returned on time and intact, the Town could require that a form of identification or personal item be left with a Town department, such as the Town Clerk’s Office.

17.3 Continue to Increase the Frequency of Events held on the Town Common: The Parks and Recreation Department already hosts many events on the common, but with an active volunteer base and additional funding, they can still expand on their offerings (see the Open Space Chapter of the 2025 Master Plan for more on expanding the volunteer base). Some additional events that could be held might be:

- A holiday market- music, food vendors, and stands for local artisans
- A neighborhood night- block party-style gathering with lawn games, music, and party games like trivia
- Art on the Common- Showcasing local artists with booths, live painting demonstrations, and interactive art- related activities for kids



The Leicester Parks and Recreation Commission hosted a Family Fitness Fun in the Parks series in 2024. Image Source: Leicester Parks and Recreation Commission.



17.4 Encourage Community-Initiated Activities with Streamlined Permitting: The town can encourage more community-initiated activities in public spaces, such as music performances, pop-up markets, or family-oriented activities. They can do this by creating a town website page with resources and examples of what kinds of pop-up events could be possible as well as an expedited permitting process.

The permitting process can be streamlined by:

- Adopting online permitting
- Differentiating between the permitting processes for permanent and impermanent events
- Designating a staff person and phone number to call for assistance with navigating through the process
- Including a flow chart or other display of the process
- Creating a downloadable manual to describe the process or topic-specific pdfs
- Providing sample traffic and site plans for events
- Creating a pop-up event permit review committee comprised of staff from the departments that need to approve the permits

Sense of Place - Existing Conditions:

Leicester's Center of Town holds deep historic and civic significance, yet it currently struggles to project a clear identity or invite lasting connection. While the Washburn Square area is home to landmarks like the Town Common, Leicester High School, the Samuel May House, and the Swan Tavern Historical Museum, these important assets are not fully tied together by a cohesive visual or social experience. These sites are relatively far from each other without amenities between them to maintain visual interest. As discussed in Parks and Greenspace, there could also be more connective programming to foster community interaction across the sites. The Central Business District that drives economic activity in the center is also visually disconnected from the majority of cultural landmarks around Washburn Square. A fragmented streetscape marked by inconsistent setbacks, narrow sidewalks, and minimal public realm features limits the area's ability to feel like a unified, vibrant town center.

The lack of cohesion in the built environment shapes how people perceive and engage with the town center. A vibrant town center is as much about perception as it is about physical form. Years of inconsistent investment in business development and the quality of buildings and streetscapes has left many residents feeling disconnected from Leicester's Center of Town. The number one word used to describe the center of town in the Master Plan Survey was "boring" and many community members have expressed that the Center of Town feels more like a pass-through than a destination. People growing up in Leicester have never experienced a thriving Main Street in Leicester and may struggle to imagine what one could look like. This limits enthusiasm, investment, and local pride.



The Swan Tavern Historical Museum currently features no signage or other indications of the property's status. Image Source: Google Maps, June 2023.

Sense of Place - Strategies:

18.1 Leverage Cultural Assets: The cultural assets in the Center of Town can be highlighted through additional marketing and programming. The Leicester Historical Commission already hosts walking tours of the town's villages. These could be supplemented with living history demonstrations, public talks, readings, or small exhibits to help activate the public realm and increase community time spent in the Center. New programming ideas could include:

- Self-guided walking tours with QR codes
- Seasonal candlelight tours
- Historical music performances
- Holiday market with carolers
- Children's scavenger hunts involving landmarks

As discussed in "Street Design-Leicester," a digital and printed map of the Common can also be produced to highlight the destinations, walking and biking paths, parking, restrooms, and any significant landmarks. Events can be promoted via social media and A-Frame boards at intersections. A kiosk could be installed at the common or the library with information on events and rotating posters or historic facts.

18.2 Promote and Celebrate Successes: To restore interest in the Center of Town, every improvement, no matter how small, should be treated as an opportunity to tell a new story. When a new tree is planted, when outdoor seating is added, when new art is on display, those changes must be highlighted and celebrated. A running list can be kept of every public realm improvement or event held. This list can be used to track momentum and build a public-facing narrative of progress that can be promoted across platforms. Before-and-after photos, progress updates, and mini-stories can be featured on the Town's website,



The Leicester Parks and Recreation Commission posted photos of the 2024 Family Fun Food Festival on its Facebook page.



social media pages, newsletters, and bulletin boards. Events in the Center of town, such as food festivals or fitness programming, should be heavily documented and shared, capturing the joy and activity through photos and videos. Promotion can also be more effective when it is tied to a broader, recognizable effort. Giving the revitalization initiative a clear name and visual identity, like “Revive Leicester Center,” can help people connect individual improvements to a bigger vision and build momentum.



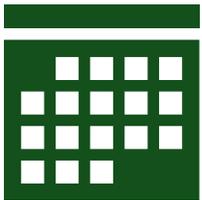
Implementation

Overview

Implementation plans are tools for taking goals and concepts and putting them into action. They help ensure that planning processes culminate in tangible changes and that plans do more than “just sit on a shelf.” Elements included in the following implementation schedule include timelines, responsible parties, and funding sources for each of the plan’s strategies. Responsible parties only include municipal entities. However, the Town should leverage the help of private and nonprofit local partners where relevant.

Group to Oversee Implementation

Plans do not implement themselves. Dedicated volunteers and staff are required to see plans through to fruition. While each strategy in the Center of Town Plan comes with a responsible party, it is also important that a group is tasked with coordinating implementation actions and monitoring progress. The completion of the Center of Town Plan around the same time as Leicester’s 2025 Master Plan presents a unique opportunity. If a master plan implementation committee is formed, the committee could also take responsibility for supervising the implementation of the Center of Town Plan. Another alternative could be the Economic Development Committee, which is intended to include representatives from different municipal boards, such as the Select Board and Planning Board.



Click on the icon to visit an interactive online version of the implementation schedule.



Click on the icon to see an attached version of the implementation schedule (or scroll to p. 101).



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- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid. (p. 9).
- ¹⁰⁶ Civic Space Collaborative, et al. Leicester Rapid Recovery Plan: 2021. (p.59).
- ¹⁰⁷ Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. “Leicester Master Plan Survey: Q5.” 2024.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Q9.
- ¹⁰⁹ Massachusetts Housing Partnership. [“Residency.”](#) Accessed June 3, 2025.
- ¹¹⁰ Gorey, Jon. [“What Does 15 Units Per Acre Look Like?”](#) Lincoln Institute. August 21, 2024.
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- ¹¹² Civic Space Collaborative, et al. Leicester Rapid Recovery Plan: 2021. (p. 18).
- ¹¹³ Massachusetts Department of Transportation. “Project Development and Design Guide: Chapter 5: Cross-section and Roadside Elements.” 2006. (p. 14).
- ¹¹⁴ Massachusetts Department of Transportation. [“Project Development and Design Guide: Chapter 13: Landscape Design.”](#) Accessed May 29, 2025.
- ¹¹⁵ Civic Space Collaborative, et al. Leicester Rapid Recovery Plan: 2021. (p.18); Stantec. “Town of Leicester: Downtown Parking Plan.” 2024. (p. 19).
- ¹¹⁶ Federal Highway Administration. “Pedestrian Lighting Primer.” April 2022. (p. 27).

Implementation Schedule on Next Page

Title	Best Practices	Themes	Updates	Timing	Funding Source	Responsible Parties
1.1: Introduce a Build-to-Zone (BTZ) in the CB District	Create a Continuous Street Front	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
1.2: Amend Other Dimensional Requirements in the CB District	Create a Continuous Street Front	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
1.3: Expand the CB District East of the Route 9 / 56 intersection	Create a Continuous Street Front	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
1.4: Switch to a Form-Based Code in the CB District	Create a Continuous Street Front	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
2.1: Overhaul the Multi-Family Development Dimensional Table	Encourage Mixed-Use Buildings	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
2.2: Relax Special Permits for Mixed-Use Development	Encourage Mixed-Use Buildings	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
3.1: Reduce Reliance on Special Permits	Activate the Ground Floor	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
3.2: Scrutinize Uses That Are Inconsistent With Town Center Settings	Activate the Ground Floor	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
3.3: Reserve Ground Floor Spaces for Active Uses	Activate the Ground Floor	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
4.1: Develop Design Guidelines for the CB District	Make Storefronts Engaging	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Community Compact Best Practices; DLTA; Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; EEA Planning Assistance Grant	Planning Board/ Town Planner
4.2: Create a Façade Improvement Program	Make Storefronts Engaging	Buildings	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Community Development Block Grant	Economic Development Committee
5.1: Complete a Planning and Needs Assessment for Route 9	Traffic Calming	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community Compact Best Practices; DLTA; Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; UPWP	DPW, Town Admin, Select Board/ Town Administrator

Title	Best Practices	Themes	Updates	Timing	Funding Source	Responsible Parties
5.2: Evaluate the Feasibility of Transferring Part of Route 9 to Local Jurisdiction	Traffic Calming	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Local Planning Assistance	Select Board/ Town Administrator
5.3: Establish a Target Speed and Design Speed for (North) Main Street	Traffic Calming	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Not Applicable	DPW
6.1: Conduct a Benchmark Review and Update the 2018 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	DLTA; UPWP; Community Compact Best Practices	DPW; Planning Board/ Town Planner
6.2A: Install Wider Sidewalks	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Complete Streets; Safe Streets and Roads for All	DPW
6.2B: Incorporate Sidewalk Extensions into Site Development Standards	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community Compact Best Practices; DLTA; Community One-Stop Community Planning Grant Program: EEA Planning Assistance Grant	Planning Board/ Town Planner
6.3A: Formalize a trail to the Hillcrest Country Club	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	MassTrails	DPW; Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation
6.3B: Install a Ramp at the Town Hall Parking Lot	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Municipal ADA Improvement Grant	DPW
6.3C: Develop a Walk/Bike Map	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	DLTA; Local Planning Assistance	Economic Development Committee; Parks and Recreation Committee
6.4: Install High-Visibility Crosswalks and Safety Features	Pedestrian Connectivity	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Complete Streets; Shared Streets and Spaces	DPW
7.1: Explore Bicycle Infrastructure Expansion	Multi-Modal Infrastructure	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Complete Streets; Shared Streets and Spaces	DPW
7.2: Improve Bus Stop Infrastructure	Multi-Modal Infrastructure	Street Design	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	10-20 years	Complete Streets (Assuming the Road is Locally Accepted)	DPW
8.1: Apply a Minimum / Maximum Driveway Width Standard	Control and Coordinate Curb Cuts	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; Community Compact Best Practices; EEA Planning Assistance Grant	Planning Board/ Town Planner
8.2: Limit the Number of Curb Cuts in the CB District	Control and Coordinate Curb Cuts	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; Community Compact Best Practices; EEA Planning Assistance Grant	Planning Board/ Town Planner
9.1: Prohibit Parking in the Front of Primary Structures	Remove Parking from the Front of Properties	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; Community Compact Best Practices; EEA Planning Assistance Grant	Planning Board/ Town Planner
9.2: Incorporate Non-Plant Screening Elements into the Leicester Landscaping Regulations	Remove Parking from the Front of Properties	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	DLTA; Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; Local Planning Assistance	Planning Board/ Town Planner
9.3: Approach Garden stores or Landscaping Firms about Donating Plants for Commercial Properties.	Remove Parking from the Front of Properties	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Not Applicable	EDC

Title	Best Practices	Themes	Updates	Timing	Funding Source	Responsible Parties
10.1: Implement On-street Parking	Adequate and Accessible Parking	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Complete Streets	DPW
10.2: Reduce Minimum Parking Requirements	Adequate and Accessible Parking	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
10.3: Expand the Shared Parking Radius in the B District	Adequate and Accessible Parking	Parking and Site Access	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program; DLTA; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Planning Board/ Town Planner
11.1: Invest in a Catalyst Strategy	Carve out a Market Niche	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Economic Development Committee
11.2: Develop an Economic Development Committee Strategic Plan	Carve out a Market Niche	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Massachusetts Downtown Initiative; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; DLTA; Community Compact Best Practices	Economic Development Committee
12.1: Issue Guidance on Residential to Commercial Retrofits	Host a Critical Mass of Businesses	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	DLTA	Building/ Code Enforcement
12.2: Encourage Property Owners to Lease Out Their Spaces to Food Trucks and Pop-up Vendors	Host a Critical Mass of Businesses	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Not Applicable	Economic Development Committee
12.3A: Consider Applying to the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program	Host a Critical Mass of Businesses	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop- Vacant Storefront Program	Planning Board/ Town Planner; Economic Development Committee
12.3B: Offer Tax Increment Financing	Host a Critical Mass of Businesses	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Not Applicable	Select Board/ Town Administrator
13.1: Amend Zoning Regulations in the R2 district to Allow for Gentle Density	Residential Density	The Market	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Community One Stop-Community Planning Grant Program	Planning Board/ Town Planner
14.1: Develop a Comprehensive Wayfinding and Branding Plan for the Full Center of Town	Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Community One Stop-Massachusetts Downtown Initiative; EEA Planning Assistance Grant; Community One Stop- Rural Development Fund	Planning Board/ Town Planner; Economic Development Committee; Historical Commission
14.2: Install Physical Gateway Treatments	Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	PARC Grant; Community Compact Best Practices	Economic Development Committee; DPW; Planning Board/ Town Planner
14.3: Improve the connection between Washburn Square and the Central Business District:	Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	5-10 years	Community Compact Best Practices; Shared Streets and Spaces; Community One Stop-MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program	Economic Development Committee; Planning Board/ Town Planner; DPW
15.1: Develop a Landscaping and Green Infrastructure Plan for the Route 9 Corridor	Green Infrastructure	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Section 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Grant Program; Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant	DPW
15.2: Create an Adopt a Place Program	Green Infrastructure	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Not Applicable	Economic Development Committee; DPW

Title	Best Practices	Themes	Updates	Timing	Funding Source	Responsible Parties
16.1: Outfit Empty Green Spaces with Amenities	Outdoor Amenities	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Not Applicable	Economic Development Committee; Planning Board/ Town Planner; DPW
16.2: Sponsor Public Art Contests	Outdoor Amenities	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Mass Cultural Council- Cultural District Investment Grant	Parks and Recreation Committee; Economic Development Committee
16.3: Improve Street Lighting	Outdoor Amenities	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant; Community One Stop-MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program; Shared Streets and Spaces	DPW
16.4: Bury Utility Lines	Outdoor Amenities	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	10-20 years	Community One Stop-MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program	DPW
17.1: Activate the Town Common Through Low-Impact Placemaking	Parks and Greenspace	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Not Applicable	Historical Commission; Parks and Recreation Committee; Economic Development Committee
17.2: Rent Out Games and Activities to Use on the Town Common	Parks and Greenspace	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	Local Cultural Council Program	Parks and Recreation Committee
17.3: Continue to Increase the Frequency of Events held on the Town Common	Parks and Greenspace	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Mass Cultural Council- Cultural District Investment Grant; Local Cultural Council Program	Parks and Recreation Committee
17.4: Encourage Community-Initiated Activities with Streamlined Permitting	Parks and Greenspace	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	DLTA	Planning Board/ Town Planner
18.1: Leverage Cultural Assets	Sense of Place	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	3-5 years	Mass Cultural Council- Cultural District Investment Grant; Local Cultural Council Program	Parks and Recreation Committee; Historical Commission
18.2: Promote and Celebrate Successes	Sense of Place	Community Spaces	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	1-3 years	DLTA	Parks and Recreation Committee