

# DOWNTOWN ROCKLAND Action Strategy

JULY 2019



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# Introduction

## Purpose

Over the last five years the Town of Rockland has successfully completed several major planning efforts and implemented a number of major projects, including developing a Housing Production Plan; adopting the Downtown Rockland Revitalization Overlay District (DRROD), a 40R “Smart Growth” District; and creating the Rockland Rail Trail. Progress has been substantial, but challenges to downtown revitalization still exist and significant development has not yet moved forward. For example, the Town lacks adequate sewer and water infrastructure to support the new overlay zoning's full build-out potential.<sup>1</sup> At present, the lack of a downtown vision results in reactive planning.

This Downtown Rockland Action Strategy is created to target and address issues under these themes to catalyze economic development:

- **Urban Design and Streetscape** — Establish an overall vision for integrated urban design and streetscape improvements along the corridor and illustrate priority streetscape improvements to enhance downtown’s sense of place.
- **Redevelopment Opportunities and Infrastructure** — Identify opportunity sites and assess their potential for transformative development.
- **Transportation and Downtown Connections** — Analyze how existing parking supply and regional connections can contribute to the downtown economy.
- **Natural Systems and Open Space** — Integrate goals and recommendations of the recently completed Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- **Business Attraction and Retention** — Identify strategies to support existing and attract new businesses in the downtown.

## Downtown Vision

The Rockland Downtown Action Strategy’s study area is a sub-area of the DRROD’s boundaries. The vision for Downtown Rockland was informed by feedback from community stakeholders through interviews and participants who attended the public workshop over the course of this planning work:

*Downtown includes a variety of a housing types in new and rehabilitated buildings to serve the needs of all household types. Existing historic buildings are renovated and host more uses and activities. Cherished civic uses such as the Community Center continue to thrive, and the Rockland Rail Trail is a successful recreational amenity that serves as a local and regional connection. Downtown is a destination for Rockland residents – Union Street is a vibrant main street occupied with new restaurants, shops, service providers, and other businesses. Beautiful landscaping, highly visible crosswalks, and pedestrian-oriented lighting makes Union Street attractive and safe and comfortable for pedestrians. Wayfinding and informational signage easily guide visitors along Union Street while proudly displaying Rockland’s history.*

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the Town’s inadequate sewer and water infrastructure, the 40R Smart Growth district is currently conditional. Projects cannot proceed as-of-right under the regulations without specific approval of sewer/water capacity and mitigation strategies. As a result, the Town is not able to participate in the Commonwealth’s 40R incentive program.

This plan incorporates the goals of the DRROD, specifically:

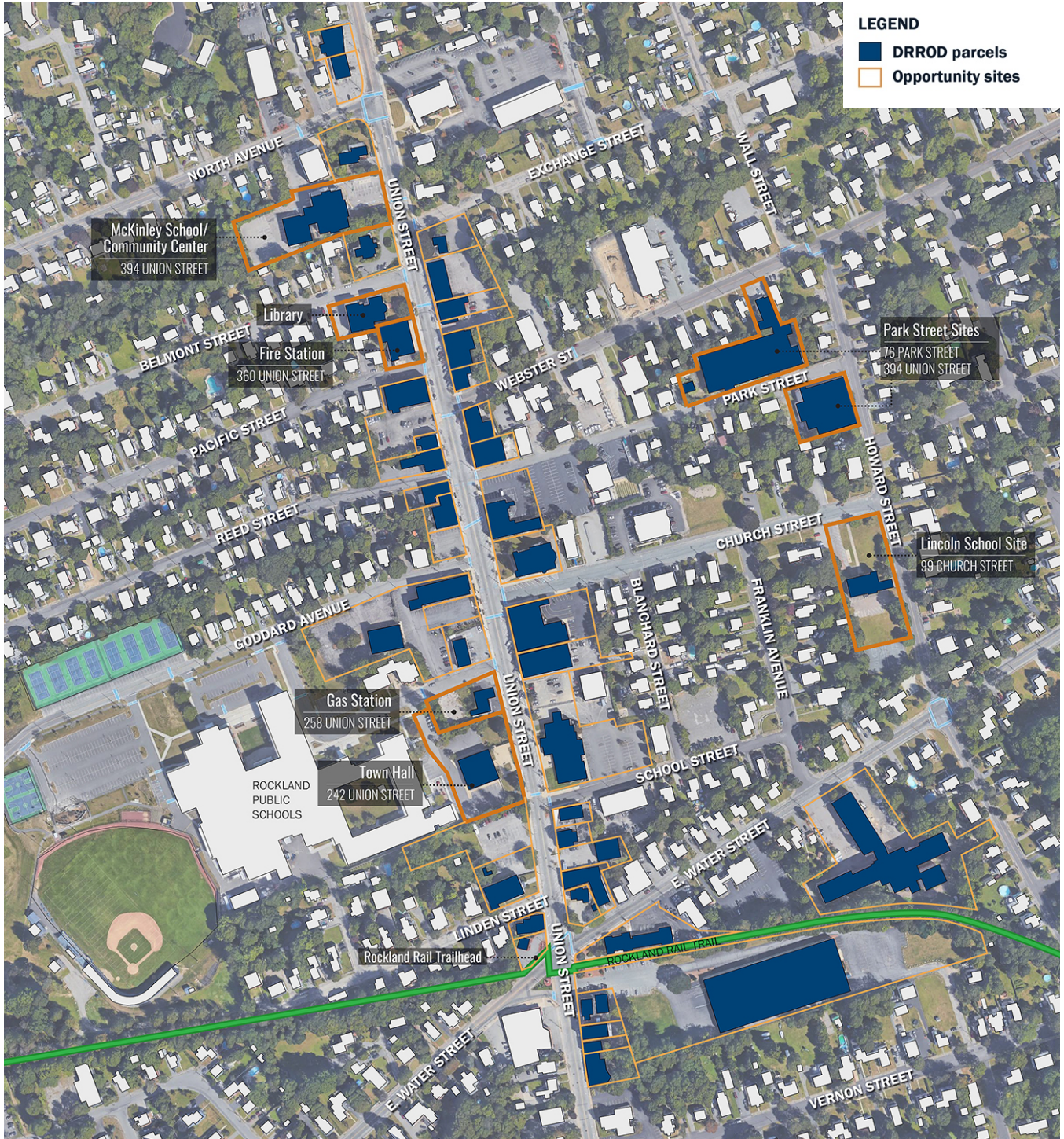
- Enabling an increase in housing production that will provide for a full range of housing choices for households of all incomes, ages, and sizes in order to preserve Rockland’s community character.
- Enabling a mix of uses along Union Street corridor in order to advance walkability, safety, convenience, and to meet local need and demand for appropriate amenities.
- Ensuring high-quality site planning, architecture, and landscape design that enhances the distinct visual character and identity of downtown Rockland.
- Ensuring predictable, fair, and cost-effective development review and permitting.
- Generating net positive tax revenue.

## **Study Area**

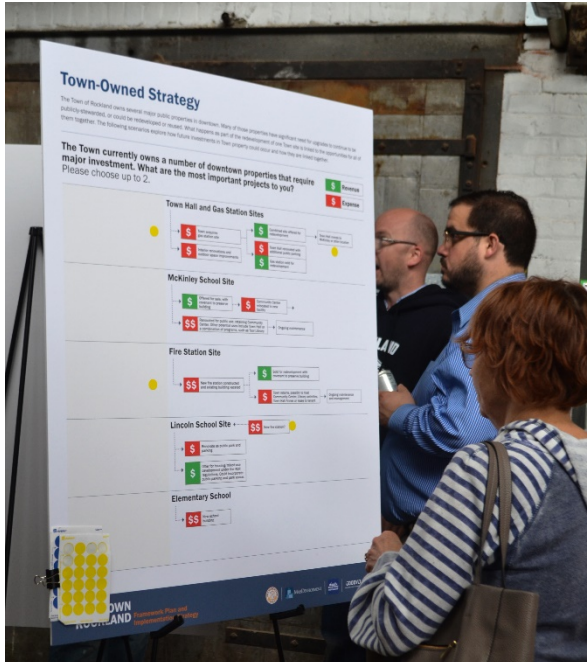
The Downtown Rockland Revitalization Overlay District (DRROD) was adopted as a new mixed-use and multi-family residential zoning district to encourage smart growth in downtown Rockland in accordance with the purposes of the Commonwealth’s 40R Smart Growth Overlay requirements. Adopting the district was a key step in advancing the goals of the Rockland Housing Production Plan, including providing for a range of housing choices for households of all incomes, ages, and sizes. The district also enables mixed-use development, with a focus on pedestrian-oriented building form centered along Union Street. The Union Street Corridor Subdistrict of the DRROD is the core of the study area and provides clear design standards for building orientation, setbacks, parking lot design, and façade design that will inform the urban design of the area.

This plan focuses on a study area centered on the Union Street Corridor between North Avenue and Water Street as well as public space at the Rockland Rail Trail trailhead. At the start of the planning process, the Town identified five key sites poised for redevelopment: the Fire Station at 360 Union Street, the gas station site and Town Hall at 258 and 242 Union Street, McKinley School/Community Center at 394 Union Street, the Lincoln School site at 99 Church Street, and the Park Street sites located at 76 Park Street and 324 Howard Street. The Downtown Action Strategy sought residents’ feedback on their vision for these sites and how investments into these properties could add to the vibrancy of downtown.

# Study Area Map



## Public Process



In addition to detailed stakeholder interviews with Town staff, property owners, and service providers, the plan included an all-day, open-house style public workshop on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. Over a dozen boards were displayed that detailed the analyses completed to date, described the elements of the Downtown Action Strategy, and solicited input from the community on implementation priorities and strategies. Stations included interactive exercises—including a mural prompt, a photobooth of streetscape elements, and postcards to the future or the past of key sites—to generate additional feedback on important elements.

The public workshop took place concurrently with the Sandpaper Factory Open Studios event to highlight an important asset in the study area and to engage the creative community and its supporters. Over three dozen

attendees provided detail comments, feedback, and inspiration for the Downtown Action Strategy.

Following the end of the event, materials from the public workshop were displayed at Town Hall for further engagement. Throughout the public process, the Advisory Committee has provided guidance on plan content, analysis, and implementation.

## Key Challenges and Opportunities for Downtown Revitalization

The Downtown Action Strategy builds upon findings and recommendations in recent planning efforts. This plan supplemented past plans with detailed stakeholder interviews with Town staff, downtown property owners and service providers to identify key challenges and opportunities for revitalization in the study area. These include:

- **The Town’s sewer infrastructure increases the cost of development, but limited additional development can be physically accommodated through mitigation efforts.** Currently, the Town’s sewer treatment plant exceeds EPA regulations for the quantity of discharge. In 2006, the Board of Supervisor’s voted to impose a sewer construction and connection moratorium for any development greater than 2 bedrooms. Since then, the Town has developed a sewer use ordinance to govern mitigation and allow larger scale development, subject to mitigation projects and fees. While there are physical constraints to mitigation in some areas, this is not a significant concern in downtown. However, the high cost of sewer and water fees, all due at the beginning of a development project, is a financial deterrent to the feasibility of downtown revitalization and property redevelopment.
- **Rockland’s emerging creative economy revolves around creatives and entrepreneurs, but tenant-ready and affordable space is in short supply.** Affordable and tenant-ready retail space on Union Street is difficult to find. The Sandpaper Factory is an example of such a place within Rockland.
- **The Rockland Rail Trail is a budding success.** There is potential for the Rail Trail to provide excellent access to the senior center, Rockland Middle and High School, and the Union Street



corridor, but connections and access points need to be improved. Additional placemaking may also be necessary for downtown to fully benefit from the potential of the Rail Trail as an amenity.

- **There is widespread desire for a destination use within downtown, or a place that functions as an attraction.** Identifying and targeting a specific use that appeals to all Rockland residents will be difficult. However, there are also obstacles to new retail, dining, and entertainment development in downtown, including: the gap between the cost of making poorly-maintained spaces tenant-ready and what potential businesses can afford to pay; the difficulty of navigating the change of use process with Town regulatory bodies; and the need to increase the visual appeal of the corridor.
- **There are ongoing concerns about how to continue maintenance and steward community uses most efficiently.** Many stakeholders identified the need for strategic action to keep up general maintenance and physical upgrades to municipal buildings that are currently home to community uses. The Downtown Action Strategy identifies near-term, small-scale opportunities to move forward with implementation as well as investments that can help address ongoing maintenance needs.
- **People want to park and walk in the downtown—but don't feel comfortable doing either right now.** Many stakeholders identified the current look and feel of Union Street as an impediment to walking—they reported that the street feels empty, tired, and unsafe, particularly at nighttime. The unappealing walking conditions also were mentioned as part of a discussion of parking—almost every interviewee cited a desire for clear, centralized, off-street public parking in the downtown. Clear signage and improved walking conditions may help distinguish parking concerns as real or perceived.
- **Rockland has seen success with hosting family-friendly events that draw people to the Downtown.** Town staff play an active role in hosting many well-attended events, including Rockland Day, an Easter egg hunt, touch-a-truck, restaurant week, and others, that draw a wide range of residents and families to Downtown. REiMAGINE ROCKLAND has also had success with focusing on events, publicity, and communications as a way to engage Rockland residents in downtown.

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# Urban Design and Streetscape

## Promote Historic Preservation

Rockland has a number of notable historic buildings. The Rockland Library, McKinley School/Community Center at 394 Union Street, Phoenix Building at 315–321 Union Street, and Rockland Trust Company at 288 Union Street are all listed on the National Register of Historic Places as individual buildings. Beyond these landmarks, downtown also includes the Lower Union Street Historic District, stretching from Water Street to Market Street and listed as a part of the National Register. Downtown Rockland’s historic buildings help provide pedestrian-scale storefronts, a sense of place, and connections to the Town’s rich history. Retaining and restoring historic buildings in downtown Rockland is a community priority and contributes to the identity and character of downtown. The Town could consider adopting a Local Historic District and/or Cultural District to strengthen downtown’s identity and leverage state resources for preservation.

## Pursue Placemaking Opportunities

There are several opportunities to add public space, foster lively street-level activity, and contribute to an attractive downtown through placemaking strategies. Many of these strategies can be deployed in the short term, while others may be more appropriate as part of a larger redevelopment project.

### 1. McKinley School/Community Center at 394 Union Street and Library/Fire Station sites and 360 Union Street and 20 Belmont Street:

The Community Center and the Rockland Library are both major civic destinations with thriving public programs and events. Placemaking could expand opportunities for community activity around these sites. The lawn in front of the library can be activated with movable seating and lighting that would make it more attractive as a public place, as well as better equipped to host informal social events. If the McKinley School is renovated for a public use, there should be improvements to the playground and public space in front of the building. The urban design analysis on page 12 and page 14 have further discussion of these ideas.



- 2. Park Street Sites at 76 Park Street and 324 Howard Street:** There are opportunities to provide green space, potentially including a dog park, as part of the redevelopment of these properties. Redevelopment could also include public parking. Placemaking here should ensure that redevelopment fits into the surrounding neighborhood and helps create a pleasant walk to Union Street through techniques like landscaping and common materials.
- 3. Town Hall and Gas Station Sites at 258 and 242 Union Street:** Overhead lighting, installed across the plaza in front of Town Hall, could help increase the attractiveness of Union Street and make it more welcoming at nighttime. Overhead lighting could also be installed across public or private parking or outdoor public space at other sites. Creative crosswalks, murals, and other public art opportunities could also be part of placemaking.
- 4. Rockland Rail Trailhead:** Placemaking at the trailhead could include landscaping, intersection treatments, and other amenities, including more signage. See page 27 for more information on these strategies.



*Overhead lighting installed over parking areas, public spaces, or other rights-of-way increases the attractiveness and safety of Union Street. Lighting can also be installed in street trees as appropriate, such as in the small green spaces in front of Town Hall and at the Rockland Public Library.*



*The Town has worked to locate a site for a mural in the downtown and should continue to encourage the use of public art to add interest to public spaces.*



The Sole of Rockland effort is an example of combining public art, wayfinding, and community engagement to result in placemaking.



These examples of creative crosswalk improvements are an example of how the Sole of Rockland effort may be expanded to further placemaking in downtown. This type of pedestrian enhancement increases the visibility of crosswalks at key intersections and gateways to major public destinations, such as those shown on the map on page 24.



## Improve the Union Street Streetscape

The Town is currently working on near term improvements along Union Street from North Avenue to VFW Drive. In 2019 the Town will be adding sidewalks, curbing, and ADA-compliant ramps. The Town plans to install tree grates and tree guards in the core downtown section of sidewalk to protect the street trees lining Union Street. Low-cost, high-impact improvements can be made to improve the streetscape for pedestrians.

Other near term improvements of Union Street to consider:

- Resurfacing Union Street
- Installing solar-lit bollards in the bump-outs at crosswalks to provide additional lighting
- Installing temporary lighting measures like decorative overhead lights
- Installing crosswalks with a stamped brick overlay or other placemaking design
- Designing and installing unified parking signage throughout downtown

In the medium term, the Town and private developers could provide more gathering spaces along sidewalks or as a part of new development and more useful and inviting seating in public spaces, like the improvements detailed earlier.

In the long term, undergrounding the utilities on Union Street could unlock a major transformation by removing the clutter of wires and poles and creating space for more attractive lampposts and pedestrian-oriented lighting, an expanded greenscape with more trees and planting areas, and public art. Grant funding and shared costs through utility providers and/or the Commonwealth may be available to help cover the relatively high cost of this effort.

# Redevelopment Opportunities and Infrastructure

## Focus on Catalyst Properties

Downtown Rockland currently contains a number of significant vacant or publicly-owned properties that are potential sites for catalytic redevelopment, or changes that could transform not only the property but also fulfill some of the larger planning goals for downtown.

## McKinley School/Community Center: 394 Union Street

### URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

The McKinley School building should be a priority for historic preservation and adaptive reuse. Deferred maintenance has led to significant but necessary investments while the Town considers options for future uses. This could be accomplished through public and/or private investment in rehabilitation and improvements to the facility to allow more intensive use of the property. Reuse could include creating a civic center building, with a relocated Town Hall and still continuing the daycare and community center programs within the building. In this case, the front yard of parking and play area should be reconfigured to still allow access for Brockton Area Transit (BAT) flex bus service and accessibility while providing a more welcoming and attractive view along Union Street through public spaces and landscaping. The Town can consider declaring the school property surplus and solicit redevelopment proposals if current community uses can be relocated.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Important public uses and destinations in the node, including community center, daycare, and veterans activities that serve over 10% of Rockland residents</p> <p>Landmark historic building that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places</p> <p>Near strong businesses between Exchange Street and Webster Street, including new retail expansions</p>	<p>Parking lot in front of McKinley is unattractive</p> <p>Vacancy and passive office uses are nearby, such as the former law firm offices, creating a low activity tone</p> <p>Need for expensive repairs and upgrades to the building to ensure historic preservation, meet modern building code</p> <p>Significant renovations of public historic buildings are difficult to finance</p>	<p>Improving the appeal of the site from Union Street with landscaping and lighting</p> <p>Accessing grants and resources for historic preservation of key buildings</p> <p>Potential location for adaptive reuse</p> <p>Potential to serve as a center or anchor for civic life and activities</p> <p>Potential sale of Town property might generate revenue helpful to other initiatives in downtown, or provide housing while preserving the building</p>	<p>Demolition of the building due to unsustainable maintenance costs</p> <p>Perception that it is easier to tear down the building than to renovate</p> <p>Potential loss of important, public uses like the Community Center from downtown</p> <p>Sale for private renovation could still cost the Town funds in order to relocate current Community Center activities</p>





Concept showing new investment



Existing conditions from Union Street and Exchange Street

## Fire Station Site: 360 Union Street

### URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

If the fire department relocates to a new station, the Town should pursue opportunities for adaptive reuse of the fire station building at 360 Union Street. The Town should ensure that active, street-level uses are included, such as outdoor dining, and improve the public space in front of the neighboring Rockland Library to make this area more attractive for public seating or events.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Important public uses and destinations in the node, including library; near community center and daycare</p> <p>Landmark historic buildings</p> <p>Near strong and improving retail businesses in the section of Union Street between Exchange Street and Webster Street</p>	<p>Library entrance was reconfigured with the modern addition in the back, so the attractive front space is no longer used</p> <p>Some vacancy and low activity in some surrounding buildings</p> <p>Reuse of fire station may be expensive, depending on building condition and eventual use</p>	<p>Fire station can likely support adaptive reuse</p> <p>If vacated by fire department, the fire station building could house dining uses with attractive outdoor seating, or possibly library expansion space with a tool lending library</p> <p>Introduce mixed uses to the corridor, with the more active use on the ground floor</p> <p>Potential sale or lease of Town property might generate revenue to support other downtown initiatives or Town priorities, or provide greater sidewalk-level activity from other uses</p> <p>Create inviting public spaces in front of the Rockland Library and fire station site by installing lighting and comfortable furniture</p>	<p>Need for repairs and maintenance of historic buildings</p> <p>Unknown cost of reusing the fire station</p> <p>Fire station is currently a good downtown neighbor that would be lost if redeveloped and may not be replaced with as active a use</p>



Concept showing new investment

Existing conditions: Union Street at Fire Station and Library



## Park Street Sites: 76 Park Street and 324 Howard Street

### URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

The Park Street sites offer an important opportunity for new growth that will bolster the Town’s tax base and complement the existing neighborhood character. New investment can be leveraged to improve the area’s connection to downtown via a safe, attractive, and walkable street. New development should incorporate scale transitions, materials, and other design elements that fit well within the established neighborhood context. Redevelopment could add uses that align with community goals identified in the Housing Production Plan as well as generate economic activity downtown, including housing, retail, and services.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Strong neighborhood context surrounded by a variety of housing types</p> <p>Large sites that can accommodate development and parking</p> <p>Opportunity for green space as a part of development</p> <p>40R District signals to investors that Rockland is proactively planning for growth</p>	<p>Prior industrial use and fire creates possible concerns of contamination</p> <p>The 40R zoning is conditional because of the need for upgraded water and sewer infrastructure</p> <p>High costs of new development, including sewer and water fees</p>	<p>Restore vacant property to use as an opportunity to reinforce downtown neighborhood character, expand housing options, and strengthen tax base</p> <p>Retain smokestack for visual interest; could be used for signage, lighting, or leased for communications equipment</p> <p>Chance to incorporate public parking as part of redevelopment as needed</p> <p>Town could participate in the court receivership process for the site, potentially obtaining the site directly and offering it for sale with conditions, or encouraging a new owner with plans for development</p>	<p>Uncoordinated development proposals may not fit well with each other or the neighborhood context</p> <p>Challenges to development feasibility may result in extended vacancy</p> <p>Town does not own and directly control land, so could be a lengthy process to redevelop</p>



Concept showing new investment



Existing conditions: Park Street looking towards Union Street

## Town Hall and Gas Station Site Cluster: 242 and 258 Union Street

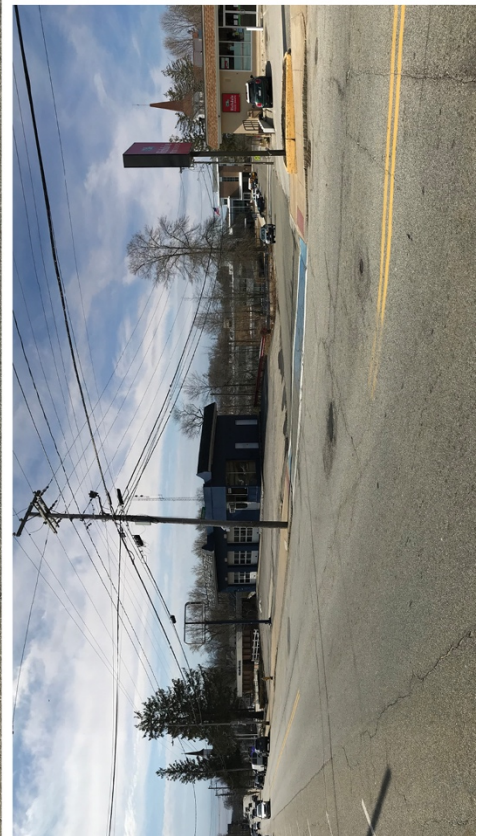
### URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

Redevelopment of Town Hall would be triggered by the Town’s administration and legislative body on potential relocation of Town offices. Town Hall, at 242 Union Street, is adjacent to a vacant gas station property at 258 Union Street, currently offered for sale. This cluster provides a good opportunity for mixed uses that will boost economic activity along the corridor. Redevelopment would include new construction and could be designed for universal accessibility that would help meet the accessibility needs of some senior households. Closing curb cuts and restoring sidewalks at the gas station site at 258 Union Street should be a priority of any redevelopment site plan. Public parking could possibly be provided behind a new building to provide a consistent, comfortable streetscape along Union Street. Active ground-floor uses provide destinations for pedestrians.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Public space and mature trees near Town Hall help provide more green, attractive character on Union Street</p> <p>Plaza in front of Town Hall has potential to serve as an additional event space and support ongoing programming</p> <p>Convenient parking for Town Hall, with options on street, in lot, and accessible from shared use of school parking in the evening</p> <p>Prominent corner of Union Street and proximity to Rockland Public Schools</p>	<p>Steep grade of site and of Union Street in this area may obscure sightlines and complicates redevelopment</p> <p>Potential brownfields and contamination at the gas station site</p> <p>Less opportunity for building reuse than other sites because of small building size, lack of historic value, and low number of windows in existing structures</p> <p>Potential expense and risk of acquiring gas station site</p>	<p>Residential or mixed-use development could help bring activity to Union Street</p> <p>Walkable distance to Rockland Public Schools campus is an amenity to residential development</p> <p>Potential to re-establish curb by eliminating the large curb cuts as part of redevelopment to improve sidewalk safety and appearance</p> <p>Appropriately-scaled buildings can define street edge to make the street feel more inviting</p> <p>Potential use of site grading to allow for tuck-under parking as part of a new building</p>	<p>Any development will require subsidy to be financially feasible</p> <p>Gas station property at 258 Union Street could remain in use as an automotive business, potentially creating unattractive conditions along Union Street and Goddard Avenue</p>



Concept showing new investment



Existing conditions of Union Street at Goddard Avenue

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# Transportation and Downtown Connections

## Parking inventory around Union Street:

<b>666</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1,092</b>
off-street spaces in major private lots within one block of Union Street	on-street spaces	off-street spaces on Town-owned property	off-street spaces in school lots	<b>total parking spaces</b>

## Maximize Use of Existing Parking

Despite ample supply of private and public parking downtown, stakeholders and residents expressed concerns during interviews about parking availability and circulation. Some downtown stakeholders do not like using the public on-street parking spaces and would prefer more off-street spaces. Existing parking is provided in a variety of formats and locations, which can be difficult to navigate. In order to address this concern, a parking inventory was conducted to create a tally of public on-street spaces, public off-street spaces, private off-street spaces, and an overall total of parking in the downtown area.

Overall, public and private parking is well-distributed along downtown's blocks. Stakeholder concerns focused more on the convenience of parking, rather than the capacity. Drivers can generally find a place to park but may need to walk one or two blocks to their destination. The Town's top priority should be to increase access to, and use of, existing parking resources.

Parking should be added sparingly as little land is available, it can detract from walkability, it does not contribute directly to economic



development, and comes with significant costs. Downtown presents many opportunities for alternative ways to increase parking convenience: 1) enhancing walkability and bikability 2) improving signage indicating parking availability and 3) expanded sharing of existing parking supply.

If these strategies are unsuccessful and a future parking utilization study finds a need for more parking management or supply, then the Town should consider locating new public parking lots at that time.

## Design and Install Coordinated Parking Signage



Consistent signage with a unified design could be installed at the multiple public parking areas across downtown to clearly communicate that they exist and are public. The Town should also pursue opportunities to make school parking available for public use outside of school hours and install signage indicating its availability.

*Clear, consistent signage helps make public parking easier to locate and use.*



*(Left) The Doughboy parking lot could be a potential location for shared parking. (Right) There are existing shared parking arrangements in downtown, such as this lot shared by Bagnell Auto Supply, Rockland Public Schools, and the First Baptist Church. Signage needs to clearly explain hours and rules of access for shared parking.*

Examples of private shared parking arrangements, where multiple destinations share a parking area owned by one property owner, already exist in downtown Rockland. Expanding shared parking—where the public is able to access private lots outside of business hours or access excess spaces—will help make better use of all the existing parking in downtown Rockland. Clear signage explaining hours and rules of access will be important. The Doughboy parking lot, located right on Union Street, is a potentially useful location for shared parking in a private lot.

Parking signage should be coordinated with an overall wayfinding and signage program that reflects Rockland’s unique identity and contributes to placemaking.

## SPACES AVAILABLE IN PRIVATE OFF-STREET LOTS WITHIN ONE BLOCK OF UNION STREET

In addition to marked on-street parking spaces and off-street spaces, there are significant amounts of on-street parking available on residential streets within one block of downtown. Improving walking conditions on these cross streets to Union Street—including Park Street, Church Street, Webster Street, Belmont Street, and Water Street—can help provide parking for Union Street when its on-street spaces are full. Other customers or employees may enjoy parking on a quieter side street and walking a half block to their destination.

## Improve the Walking and Biking Environment

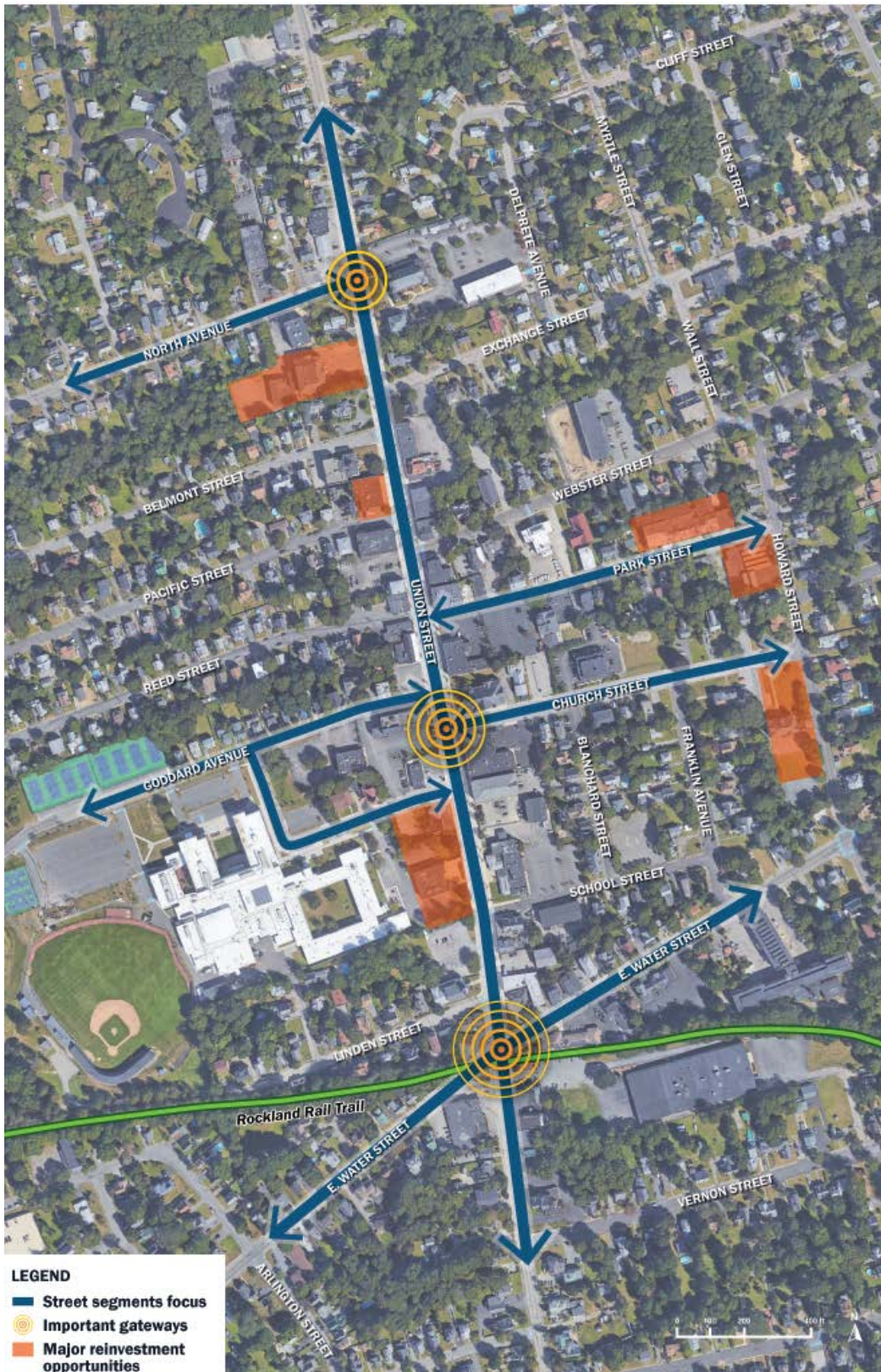
One of the most important strategies to improving transportation throughout downtown is improving the walking environment. When it feels safer and more pleasant to walk, visitors are not only more likely to walk to nearby destinations, but also are willing to walk further distances from a parking spot, expanding the effective radius of parking areas. An improved walking environment can help encourage a “park once” approach, where visitors to downtown park once upon arriving, and then visit multiple destinations in downtown by walking between them, such as from the Rockland Library to Mike’s Pizza.

Recommended streetscape improvements and placemaking initiatives detailed on pages 7 and 10 will help support a more attractive, safer walking environment. The Town can also support expanded public transportation, infrastructure for biking, and regional connections that will help expand options to navigate downtown beyond driving. The Town could also consider a bikeshare program, perhaps as part of a regional system on the South Shore, with stations in the downtown. Together these strategies should minimize the need to drive to and around downtown Rockland by improving other forms of transportation.

## Connect Downtown with Surrounding Neighborhoods

In addition to improving the walking environment along Union Street, downtown will be stronger if it is better connected to surrounding neighborhoods and residential areas. The map on page 24 shows key street segments, including North Avenue, Park Street, Church Street, Goddard Avenue, and Water Street, that help connect important public destinations, redevelopment opportunity sites, and surrounding neighborhoods to downtown. These segments and other cross-streets should be considered for improvements including consistent sidewalks, street trees, ADA-compliant curb ramps, and lighting as needed.

### Priority Downtown Intersections and Street Segments for Walkable Character



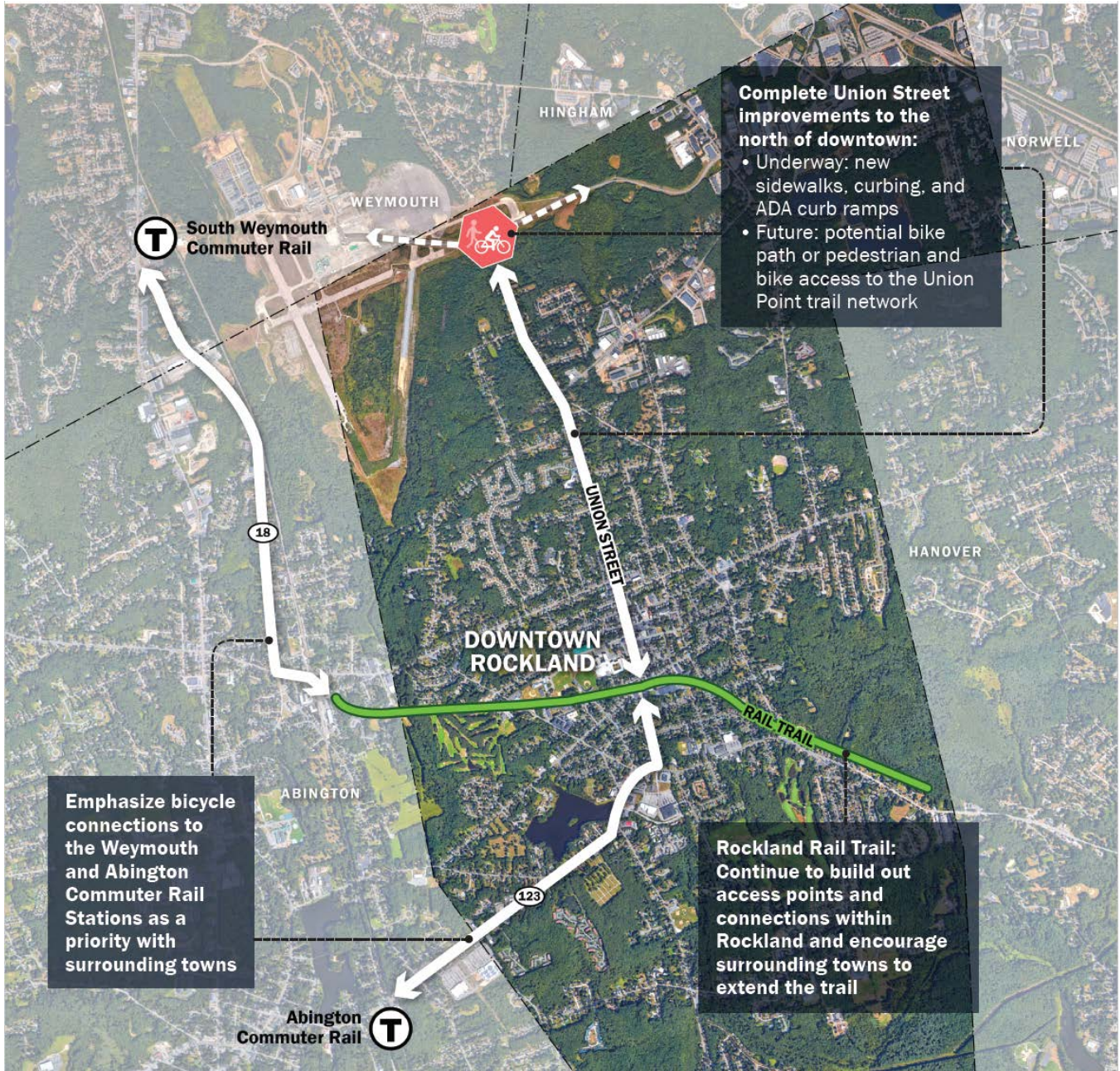
## Expand Regional Connections

Downtown Rockland would benefit from expanded regional connections for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly those that connect downtown to major transit facilities and recreational assets. These improvements benefit current and future downtown residents, allowing them to access a broader range of jobs by transit and improving the option of walking or biking to local destinations. They will also help make downtown Rockland a more accessible regional destination for dining, shopping, or other activities that neighbors in surrounding towns may visit after riding on the Rockland Rail Trail, for example. Improved bicycle connections can also be particularly valuable to young adults and teens who want safer ways to travel independently.

Improvements that would best serve downtown include:

- Completing improvements to Union Street north of downtown, including projects currently underway to provide new sidewalks, curbing, and ADA-compliant curb ramping along the full route. In the future, this segment could host a bike path that connects to pedestrian and bicycle access to the Union Point development and its recreational trail network. These improvements are also identified in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Creating stronger bicycle connections to commuter rail stations in Weymouth and Abington. Rockland should work with Abington and Weymouth to designate priority corridors and bicycle routes to access MBTA commuter rail stations and Route 3 Express Bus service. Ensuring that downtown residents and employees can access major regional transit is an important long-term priority for downtown. The Town should continue to support Brockton Area Transit bus service.
- Expanding recreational access to the Rockland Rail Trail and Town Forest trails. A spur trail from the Rockland Rail Trail could connect to the existing trails and open space in the Rockland Town Forest. The Town should continue to build out access points to the Rockland Rail Trail from neighboring Town-owned properties and public right-of-way to make it easier to use. The Town should also encourage surrounding towns to extend the trail, increasing its value as a regional connection. These improvements and goals are also identified in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

## Strengthen Regional Connections from Downtown to Transit and Recreational Amenities



*Downtown Rockland would benefit from enhanced regional connections for pedestrians and cyclists, including an expanded Rockland Rail Trail, connections to trails at Union Point and the Town Forest, and MBTA commuter rail stations in Weymouth and Abington.*

# Natural Systems and Open Space

## Town of Rockland’s Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Town of Rockland recently completed an Open Space and Recreation Plan. While the most significant open spaces and recreational facilities identified in the Rockland Open Space Plan are largely outside of the immediate downtown area, those assets, like the Town Forest, are important to the town overall. Increasing access to these assets through trail connections, improved sidewalks, and bike facilities is an important priority for both natural systems and open space as well as transportation and connections. All of these are important for downtown vitality.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan also identifies a number of guiding principles and strategies that are relevant to the downtown study area, including:

- Investing in maintenance as a priority for infrastructure and for recreation facilities—an approach of use and improve what the town already has;
- Promoting green infrastructure into streetscape projects and other improvements that help advance the sustainability and greening goals of the plan; and
- Celebrating the success of the Rockland Rail Trail as a new recreational asset by investing in additional amenities along the trail, improved access points, and stronger connections to the downtown.

## Install Amenities along the Rockland Rail Trail

The Town should continue to build out access points and connections from the Rockland Rail Trail to downtown, public spaces, and public transit to encourage more users of the trail to arrive by bike, foot, or other mobility device. In addition to stronger regional and neighborhood connections, the Town and its partners should continue to invest in improvements that make the trail a more attractive, useful public space.

Public art, signage, water fountains, trash receptacles, and other key amenities and accommodations for trail users could be installed at highly visible, public locations. The Town could encourage maintenance, events, and programming by partner groups—such as a friends of the Rockland Rail Trail—to conduct clean-ups, dog walks, parades, and other events that help welcome residents to the trail.



*Water fountains, signage, and public art like these examples along other trails can make the Rockland Rail Trail a more attractive destination for a variety of users.*

Most importantly, the Town can focus on building a major downtown trailhead at the intersection of Union Street and Water Street, where the trail crosses downtown. A series of improvements can help improve the attractiveness of the intersection, increase safety, and make the trail a more prominent feature in downtown Rockland.

The Town could also pursue a bikeshare system, perhaps as part of a regional system on the South Shore, by working with innovative operators. A bikeshare system could help more users access the Rail Trail, downtown Rockland, and other regional assets without driving.

## Build a Downtown Trailhead for the Rockland Rail Trail at Union Street

### URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

The intersection of Water Street and Union Street is difficult to navigate, but an important gateway and center of activity for downtown. This area could provide a more prominent trailhead for the Rockland Rail Trail. While some surrounding uses are complementary, the Town should encourage more public parking—including for bikes—more dining, and more bike and walker-focused retail in the area. Installing amenities like trail signage, bike racks, seating, trash cans, and public art could help create a more prominent and convenient gateway to the trail. Over time, the Town could pursue strategies to increase visibility and ease of crossing in the intersection, including a four-way pedestrian crossing.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Recent improvements to shrink bump-outs, add parking, and install ADA curb ramping have improved the intersection</p> <p>Rail trail is well-used</p> <p>Recent successful efforts to provide other access points and improvements to the trail</p> <p>Existing dining uses—including Dunkin’ and restaurants—are very compatible with a trailhead</p>	<p>Complex intersection with substantial turning movements</p> <p>Little to no designated parking near downtown for the trail</p> <p>Little municipal property and right-of-way to guide change</p> <p>Trail presence is not well-marked at Union Street</p>	<p>Install trailhead amenities including bike racks and trash/recycling receptacles</p> <p>Larger trailhead amenities: designated parking, signature public art as part of a trailhead gateway to increase the visibility of trail, water fountain, and lighting</p> <p>Encourage nearby dining uses and retail to see the rail trail as an asset and source of customers</p>	<p>Potentially not advisable to displace viable, revenue-generating use at the trailhead</p> <p>Could become victim of own success—parking could get overwhelmed and trash management could become an issue if Town does not plan for maintenance</p>





Concept showing reinvestment



Existing conditions of Union Street at Water Street and Rockland Rail Trail crossing

## **Incorporating Placemaking and Public Spaces**

These concepts for a trailhead and improvements to the Rockland Rail Trail received significant support at the Downtown Framework Public Workshop, but participants also identified other improvements to public spaces and public property that could help improve downtown, including improved children’s play areas, a skate park, and a more attractive downtown streetscape. Ideas for placemaking are discussed on page 8, with location-specific analysis for the McKinley School/Community Center, Rockland Library/Fire Station, and Park Street sites on pages 12, 14, and 16.

These recommendations for specific sites help advance additional goals of the Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan to incorporate green space in new development and locate a dog park within the Town.

# Business Attraction and Retention

Downtown Rockland currently has a rich variety of businesses and institutions. The Union Street corridor hosts three historic churches with large congregations, Town Hall, the Fire Station, Library, and McKinley School/Community Center. In addition to housing in the surrounding neighborhoods, the Union Street Corridor hosts one mixed-use apartment, one multi-family apartment building, and two large historic homes that have been converted to duplex or multi-family uses. The remainder of the corridor, or 68% of properties, hosts retail and service businesses. Retail businesses include: dining (16%), shops (16%), barbershops/salons (16%), other personal services (10%), banks (6%), and fitness (1%).

Neighborhood restaurants such as Rita Marie's and Mike's Pizza have been in business for a long period of time and function as "third places" where community members can gather socially beyond the home and workplace. At the public workshop, residents identified a need for more "third places" or destinations, such as a bookstore or coffee shop, more restaurants options, and entertainment like an arcade. Local residents indicated that their needs for fitness, groceries, and restaurants that serve alcohol are being met outside of Rockland. Many long-term shops cater to a regional audience, rather than the daily needs of Rockland residents, providing uniforms, athletic equipment, and auto parts. Salon and barbershop uses are prevalent, and frequently-closed; a number have limited hours of operation. More retail and services in downtown will encourage residents to spend their disposable income locally. A detailed market study is needed to further understand the type of businesses that downtown can realistically support under existing conditions and other scenarios where more density is introduced to the study area.

Like many small towns, Rockland is challenged by the changing faces of retail, especially with the growth of online retailers. Yet downtown has also retained long-term employers and gained important new ones. New businesses and service providers that have opened in recent years include eating and drinking establishments like a Brazilian steak house, now expanding to include a butcher shop. The success of the Tae Kwan Do school and new dining and drinking options is a sign that Rockland may be adapting to the evolution of traditional brick and mortar retail.

One goal that could help across all strategies for business attraction and retention is to build the capacity of the Rockland Chamber or REiMAGINE ROCKLAND to act as a downtown management organization. Downtown management organizations can take the form of a non-profit Main Streets organization within a defined district. A Main Streets organization can play a role in convening key downtown stakeholders, particularly property owners and businesses, and help coordinate implementation of downtown initiatives. Main Streets organization can work as a partner with the Town to help market and fill vacant storefronts, provide technical assistance to businesses to market downtown, and oversee programming that adds to the area's vibrancy. They will be able to fundraise and have access to different funding streams, such as small grants, that the Town may not be qualified for.

## Help Vacant Spaces Become Ready for Tenants

While downtown has many successful businesses and civic uses, vacant and underutilized retail spaces and downtown properties do exist and many more properties have significant amount of deferred maintenance. Currently, at least 12% of properties along Union Street in the study area are vacant. In interviews, there was

a general consensus among tenants of the Sandpaper Factory, Town leaders, developers, the Fire Chief, and Zoning Board of Appeals members that the poor condition of available commercial spaces in downtown Rockland is an obstacle to attracting higher value retail tenants or being able to move their business into retail space in downtown.

The cost of upgrading these spaces to be tenant-ready can be significant, deterring investment and making it more difficult for small businesses to afford upgrade space. The Town and its partners should consider incentive programs that help fund upgrades to make vacant spaces tenant-ready. Such programs might include, as appropriate: permit fee rebates issued by the Town, abatement or deferral of property taxes or sewer and water fees levied by the Town, or small grants for external rehabilitation and safety upgrades administered by a downtown management organization.

### **Revise Land Use Regulations as Needed**

The 40R district and existing land use regulations are largely appropriate for downtown, encouraging a large range of commercial uses as part of mixed-use development. The strong design and performance standards of the 40R district should help ensure that that most commercial uses should fit in with the surrounding context.

As a result, the DRROD regulations should help spur economic development once sewer and water capacity issues are resolved, while still maintaining sufficient local control of design elements and uses. The regulations help property owners and developers by creating predictable permitting pathways. Once a parking study is complete, the Town may consider amending parking regulations to better match demand and avoid over-supply of parking.

In addition to the 40R district regulations, the Town should explore bylaws that help prevent storefronts from becoming vacant for too long by requiring a vacant property registry.

### **Market Properties, Businesses, and Events**

In addition to helping reduce the costs of upgrading commercial spaces, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND and other partners can continue their successful marketing of businesses and events in downtown. Drawing more people to events and programs can help grow the downtown customer base and contribute to downtown's community feel. Marketing of properties for development should emphasize the need for uses that bring and keep people downtown—such as restaurants, cafes, and entertainment options. Such destination uses help strengthen the downtown for all uses, including retail and services.

### **Expand Outreach and Engagement to Rockland's Entrepreneurs and Diverse Communities**

There are a number of recent small businesses started by entrepreneurs in downtown Rockland, and this may be another potential market for tenants and important stakeholders to consider when planning for downtown. A significant number of entrepreneurs and potential customers come from diverse cultures that are relatively new in Rockland and contribute to the Town's evolving community. Proactive outreach to these cultures, such as Rockland's Brazilian community, utilizing translation for non-English speakers if necessary, could help encourage additional downtown business investment and stewardship. The Rockland Library is

an example of a Town department working to ensure diverse communities are included by procuring more books in Brazilian Portuguese.

Additionally, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND may help expand programming by publicizing community festivals and events as part of the larger Rockland calendar. Events and festivals can provide a reason to come downtown and help strengthen community ties.

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# Implementation Strategy

The Downtown Rockland Action Strategy establishes an ambitious vision for how the Town of Rockland, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND, and other stakeholders can encourage transformative changes in their downtown. It includes recommendations for small but powerful steps to activate public spaces, adjustments to Town operations, and stakeholder actions that will help achieve the goal of a thriving, walkable downtown. It also includes an urban design analysis of how the Town might unlock economic potential on key sites in the 40R district.

The following recommendations are driven by the Downtown Rockland vision and framed by goals and implementation strategies. The recommended actions are tangible steps that the Town, its key stakeholders, and regional partners, should consider taking in the short, medium, and long term. Short-term strategies should commence in the next 1-3 years; medium-term strategies may take 3-5 years; and long-term strategies are likely over 5-10 years or longer. Long-term strategies may also require policy decisions and actions outside of the Town's direct authority. The strategy also identifies leadership and potential funding sources for each action, although these may change over time.

Goals are listed by the five elements of the Framework Plan:

- Redevelopment Opportunities and Infrastructure
- Urban Design and Streetscape
- Transportation and Downtown Connections
- Natural Systems and Open Space
- Business Attraction and Retention

***The goals, actions, and strategies are cumulative. Some actions undergird the overall framework and must be completed for other strategies to succeed. Others can move forward now. For the Town to advance catalytic redevelopment of the opportunity sites in the 40R district, the Town will need to make progress on the goal of upgrading sewer and water infrastructure to enable new development and meet the Town's regulatory commitments. Similarly, by developing a 5-year capital improvement plan for public facilities, the Town can move forward with renovation, redevelopment, and property disposition as appropriate and as part of a coordinated strategy.***

Planning, particularly for major transformation like the Downtown Framework envisions, can change and shift over time. The Town's capacity to execute or lead many of these strategies may also be constrained at times, based on changes to staffing or funding. By making a practice of accountability, the Town can help incorporate any needed changes in priorities. Town staff should provide an annual update on implementation to the Board of Selectmen and public and include references to the Downtown Rockland Action Strategy as a part of budget requests for downtown.

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
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## REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

<b>GOAL 1 Upgrade sewer and water infrastructure to enable new development and meet the Town’s regulatory commitments.</b>			
<b>Strategy 1.1 Determine existing water and sewer choke points and opportunities for upgrades and offsets in the downtown.</b>			
<b>Action 1.1.1.</b> Determine upgrades or offsets needed to accommodate development at catalytic properties.	Sewer and Water Superintendents	Ongoing	Town
<b>Strategy 1.2 Identify and pursue resources to invest in upgrades to the sewage treatment plant and system.</b>			
<b>Action 1.2.1.</b> Dedicate capital funds to upgrade the system.	Town	Ongoing	Town
<b>Action 1.2.2.</b> Reduce the cost of development through coordinated adjustment of all Town-imposed permitting fees. Consider spreading fees across a longer period of time.	Town	Short	Town
<b>Action 1.2.3.</b> Pursue state grant and financing opportunities that support economic development.	Town, Rockland and South Shore Chamber	Ongoing	Programs: MassWorks, Brownfields Redevelopment Fund, MassDevelopment’s Site Readiness Program, Mass. Economic Development Incentive Program
<b>Action 1.2.4.</b> Consider district-level financing instruments such as TIF, DIF, etc. to support infrastructure improvements.	Town, Rockland and South Shore Chamber	Medium	MassDevelopment Technical Assistance
<b>GOAL 2 Conduct a public facilities assessment of downtown.</b>			
<b>Strategy 2.1 Develop a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan for public facilities.</b>			
<b>Action 2.1.1.</b> Complete an assessment and analysis of public facilities in downtown and create a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan for the downtown portfolio.	Town, Rockland Public Schools	Short	Town



STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>Action 2.1.2.</b> Identify opportunities for shared facilities, consolidation, or reinvestment that will serve the Town's highest needs.	Town, Rockland Public Schools	Short	Town
<b>Strategy 2.2 Ensure critical and prized community uses remain in downtown.</b>			
<b>Action 2.2.1.</b> Identify a downtown location for the community center and daycare, whether at McKinley School or another site.	Youth Commission, Town	Medium	Town
<b>Action 2.2.2.</b> Improve programming for teens and young adults at the community center, library, and for event programming in downtown.	Youth Commission, Library	Short	Town
<b>Strategy 2.3 Consider offering surplus Town-owned properties for sale or redevelopment in ways that support the downtown vision.</b>			
<b>Action 2.3.1.</b> Based on highest-priority capital needs identified under Strategy 2.1.1, determine surplus Town-owned property.	Town	Short	Town
<b>Action 2.3.2.</b> Pursue state grants for due diligence studies to prepare and market sites for redevelopment and develop RFPs.	Town	Medium	MassDevelopment's Site Readiness Program
<b>Action 2.3.3.</b> Identify any conditions of sale for each property, such as desired uses or senior housing units. Develop preservation and adaptive reuse requirements to apply as part of an RFP or sale agreement for Town property. Consider adopting regulatory instruments such as zoning amendments or easements to make redevelopment more predictable.	Town, Planning Board, Zoning Board	Medium	Town, MassDevelopment's Site Readiness Program

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>GOAL 3 Support development in the 40R district to meet the Town’s housing production plan and expand its tax base.</b>			
<b>Strategy 3.1 Redevelop the Park Street sites as multi-family housing.</b>			
<b>Action 3.1.1.</b> Advance the court receivership process for the Park Street sites.	Town	Short	Town
<b>Action 3.1.2.</b> If the Town gains site control, offer the Park Street sites for redevelopment for purchase or through an RFP process. Consider conditions of sale that would advance town goals, like affordable housing, and help new development transition well to existing downtown and neighborhood context.	Town	Medium	Town, developer, pursue technical assistance grants through MassDevelopment

## URBAN DESIGN AND STREETScape

<b>GOAL 4 Improve the safety and appearance of the sidewalk and streetscape along Union Street.</b>			
<b>Strategy 4.1 Pursue a complete street design for Union Street.</b>			
<b>Action 4.1.1.</b> Adopt a complete streets policy and prioritization plan for the Town.	Highways Superintendent	Medium	MassDOT, MAPC
<b>Action 4.1.2.</b> Study the feasibility of undergrounding utilities and removing poles from Union Street in the downtown.	Highways Superintendent, National Grid	Medium	National Grid, Town
<b>Action 4.1.3.</b> Advance a major redesign of the Union Street corridor once utilities are underground, including pedestrian-scale lighting, improved sidewalks, and additional street trees. Install prominent crosswalks at key intersections across Union Street.	Highways Superintendent	Medium	MassDOT

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>Strategy 4.2 Develop a coordinated wayfinding and signage program that reinforces Rockland’s identity and appeal.</b>			
<b>Action 4.2.1.</b> Install signage for major public destinations, public parking, and pedestrian navigation.	Town of Rockland	Short	DHCD’s Downtown Initiative Grants
<b>Strategy 4.3 Activate sidewalk-facing public spaces and storefronts.</b>			
<b>Action 4.3.1.</b> Install attractive lighting and movable furniture on the lawn in front of the library building to encourage more use as a public greenspace.	Town, Library Staff, REIMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	Town, private sponsors
<b>Action 4.3.2.</b> Continue to program the plaza in front of Town Hall with community events.	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	Town, private sponsors
<b>Action 4.3.3.</b> Develop downtown-specific public art, including murals, rotating sculpture displays in public spaces, and/or art in crosswalks.	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	Private sponsors, Mass Cultural Council, 4th Floor Artists, MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places program, Town
<b>Action 4.3.4.</b> Encourage window decorations for holidays by hosting a contest and other aesthetic improvements that increase attractiveness.	REIMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	MGCC, Main Streets
<b>Action 4.3.5.</b> Establish a registry for vacant downtown property to be hosted on the Chamber’s website and with the Town. Consider requiring the display of art in vacant property in lieu of an annual fee to the Town.	Rockland Chamber, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND, Town	Short	Rockland Chamber, property owners

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>GOAL 5 To preserve the historic character of downtown Rockland as a New England town center.</b>			
<b>Strategy 5.1 Promote historic preservation of buildings in the Downtown Rockland Historic District.</b>			
<p><b>Action 5.1.1.</b> Make preservation a condition of sale or redevelopment of Town-owned historic properties. Consider adopting a façade easement program to ensure historic preservation is included as a part of redevelopment plans.</p>	Town, Historical Commission	Medium	Town, developer, historic tax credits
<p><b>Action 5.1.2.</b> Distribute Historical Commission photographs to property owners and downtown stakeholders. Encourage property owners and/or Historical Commission to research and publicize the history of their property through interpretive signage or other means.</p>	Historical Commission	Ongoing	Town, private funds
<p><b>Action 5.1.3.</b> Study adopting a Local Historic District and/or Cultural District in downtown to strengthen and promote sense of place and identity.</p>	Town, Historical Commission	Medium	Town

## TRANSPORTATION AND DOWNTOWN CONNECTIONS

<b>GOAL 6 Improve multi-modal access to downtown.</b>			
<b>Strategy 6.1 Expand multi-modal access options to and from downtown Rockland.</b>			
<p><b>Action 6.1.1.</b> Pursue funding to plan, design, and install bicycle facilities along key routes from downtown Rockland to MBTA stations in Abington and Weymouth.</p>	Town, Weymouth, Abington, MBTA, South Shore Chamber	Short	MassDOT, Town, Weymouth, Abington
<p><b>Action 6.1.2.</b> Continue to invest in Brockton Area Transit (BAT) service in downtown and advocate for increased MBTA and BAT service.</p>	Town, South Shore Chamber	Ongoing	MBTA, BAT

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>Action 6.1.3.</b> Recruit a car share service like Zipcar by providing spaces in public parking lots downtown.	Town	Medium	Town, Zipcar or other car share services
<b>Action 6.1.4.</b> Work with surrounding towns to attract a regional bikeshare system and/or pursue bikeshare within downtown and along the Rockland Rail Trail.	Town, South Shore Coalition, South Shore and Rockland Chamber	Medium	Town, South Shore and Rockland Chamber
<b>GOAL 7 Ensure adequate parking to serve a thriving downtown.</b>			
<b>Strategy 7.1 Maximize the use of existing parking facilities.</b>			
<b>Action 7.1.1.</b> Open parking at Town-controlled parking areas for public access when possible (i.e., make school parking available for general public use outside of school hours).	Town, Rockland Public Schools	Short	Town
<b>Action 7.1.2.</b> Support growth by leveraging existing parking downtown through public/private partnerships. Consider lease terms such as payments to offset increased insurance or maintenance costs.	Town	Short	Town
<b>Action 7.1.3.</b> Conduct a parking utilization study to identify appropriate management strategies and the long-term potential for a parking benefits district.	Town	Medium	MAPC, MassDevelopment Technical Assistance
<b>Action 7.1.4.</b> Based on the results of a parking utilization study, consider reviewing downtown parking ordinances to establish consistency and predictability for users.	Town	Long	Town
<b>Strategy 7.2 Making parking in downtown easier to navigate and understand.</b>			
<b>Action 7.2.1.</b> Install prominent, coordinated parking signage on all public parking areas (including any leased private parking areas) within	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
downtown, clearly displaying hours of access.			
<b>Action 7.2.2.</b> Publicize available parking options to downtown visitors, businesses, other property owners, and public facilities, such as with a printed and/or online map.	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND
<b>Action 7.2.3.</b> Continue to update the parking inventory developed as part of the Downtown Rockland Action Strategy.	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND

## NATURAL SYSTEMS AND OPEN SPACE

<b>GOAL 8 Continue to invest in the Rockland Rail Trail as a driver of downtown economic development.</b>			
<b>Strategy 8.1 Develop a prominent trailhead and gateway for the Rockland Rail Trail at the intersection of Union Street and Water Street.</b>			
<b>Action 8.1.1.</b> Install prominent gateway signage to mark Union Street access points and increase visibility of the Rockland Rail Trail.	Town	Medium	CPA, DCR, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND, private sponsor(s), Town
<b>Action 8.1.2.</b> Reorient the intersection to accommodate pedestrian and bike crossings, including a diagonal crosswalk, signal timing, and continuous path paving to allow trail users to continue their path.	Town, Highways Superintendent	Medium	MassDOT, Town
<b>Action 8.1.3.</b> Install trailhead amenities such as bicycle racks, benches, a water fountain, trash and recycling receptacles, and a trail map. Redesign Town-owned property at the intersection to accommodate some of these amenities.	Town, Highways Superintendent	Short	CPA, DCR, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND, private sponsor(s), Town

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>Strategy 8.2 Encourage surrounding businesses and properties to leverage the Rockland Rail Trail as an amenity.</b>			
<p><b>Action 8.2.1.</b> Work with surrounding businesses to locate bike racks and outdoor seating, and encourage trail-friendly retail tenants, as appropriate. Work with surrounding property owners to install and maintain attractive landscaping along trail edges and access points.</p>	Friends of Rail Trail	Medium	Private funds
<p><b>Action 8.2.2.</b> Continue to build out access points to the trail within Rockland.</p>	Highways Superintendent, Town	Medium and Long	DCR, Town
<b>GOAL 9 Promote community stewardship of the rail trail.</b>			
<b>Strategy 9.1 Support “friends of the rail trail” organizations and activities.</b>			
<p><b>Action 9.1.1.</b> Establish and publicize a clear point of contact at the Town for community-sponsored clean-ups, trail building, or other activities.</p>	Town, REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	
<p><b>Action 9.1.2.</b> Include the rail trail as part of downtown programming, such as dog walks, bike parades, or other events.</p>	REiMAGINE ROCKLAND, Friends of the Rail Trail, Rockland Park Department	Short	
<b>GOAL 10 Connect downtown to regional open space amenities.</b>			
<b>Strategy 10.1 Build pedestrian and bicycle connections to the trail network and recreational assets at Union Point and the Rockland Town Forest.</b>			
<p><b>Action 10.1.1.</b> Identify priority connections and map the need for installation of new or improvements to existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities.</p>	Highways Superintendent, Town	Medium	DCR, MassDOT
<p><b>Action 10.1.2.</b> Develop consistent signage for the Rockland Rail Trail and spur connections that provide consistent branding and wayfinding.</p>	Friends of Rockland Rail Trail	Medium	DCR

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<p><b>Action 10.1.3.</b> Work with surrounding Towns to advance regional connections and projects around the Rockland Rail Trail.</p>	<p>Town, Hanover, Abington</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>DCR, Town, neighboring towns</p>
<p><b>GOAL 11 Increase use and quality of open space in downtown.</b></p>			
<p><b>Strategy 11.1 Include open space as a part of redevelopment opportunities in downtown.</b></p>			
<p><b>Action 11.1.1.</b> Renovate the playground at McKinley School/Community Center to be publicly accessible, welcoming, and visible from Union Street if the property is retained as a public use.</p>	<p>Youth Commission, Rockland Park Department</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Town, CPA</p>
<p><b>Action 11.1.2.</b> Incorporate a publicly accessible downtown playground into the potential new elementary school and expand public access to shared Town and school facilities outside of school hours.</p>	<p>Rockland Public Schools</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Town, CPA</p>
<p><b>Action 11.1.3.</b> Include open or green space, such as a dog park, as part of the redevelopment of the Park Street sites and/or Town-owned property such as the former Lincoln School. Consider adopting regulatory tools to incentivize creation of new open space for development or redevelopment in downtown.</p>	<p>Town, private developer</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Private</p>
<p><b>Action 11.1.4.</b> Investigate potential for a skate park in a downtown location.</p>	<p>Youth Commission, Rockland Park Department</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Town</p>



STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
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## BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

### GOAL 12 Understand existing market across all sectors to put the Town in a better position to pursue opportunities.

#### Strategy 12.1 Inventory existing businesses and available properties.

<p><b>Action 12.1.1.</b> Create a Downtown Advisory Committee that can host regular meetings with property owners and downtown businesses to better understand obstacles, tenanting challenges, and marketing needs.</p>	<p>REIMAGINE ROCKLAND, Town, South Shore and Rockland Chamber of Commerce, South Shore Coalition</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Town, South Shore and Rockland Chamber</p>
<p><b>Action 12.1.2.</b> Commission a market study for retail, dining, and entertainment market potential.</p>	<p>Town</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>MassDevelopment, MAPC</p>

#### Strategy 12.2 Build organizational capacity to focus on downtown business retention and recruitment

<p><b>Action 12.2.1.</b> Develop a “one-stop” guide to doing business in Rockland.</p>	<p>REIMAGINE ROCKLAND, Town, South Shore and Rockland Chamber</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Town, Rockland and South Shore Chamber of Commerce</p>
<p><b>Action 12.2.2.</b> Develop a local organization’s capacity to administer grant programs or identify a fiscal agent.</p>	<p>Rockland and South Shore Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>MassDevelopment Technical Assistance, Rockland and South Shore Chamber of Commerce</p>
<p><b>Action 12.2.3.</b> Consider establishing a Main Streets organization to build capacity for downtown programming, business support and recruitment or creating a Main Streets program at an existing organization.</p>	<p>REIMAGINE ROCKLAND, Rockland and South Shore Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>National Main Streets program</p>
<p><b>Action 12.2.4.</b> Study the feasibility of deferring or abating some portion of property taxes when vacant space is renovated as an incentive program.</p>	<p>Town</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Town</p>

STRATEGY/ACTION	LEADERSHIP	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL RESOURCES
<b>GOAL 13 Expand outreach and engagement of Rockland’s diverse cultures.</b>			
<b>Strategy 13.1 Proactively engage business owners and community leaders in downtown initiatives.</b>			
<b>Action 13.1.1.</b> Incorporate businesses and community events, and festivals into REiMAGINE ROCKLAND programming, marketing, and events calendar.	REiMAGINE ROCKLAND	Short	REiMAGINE ROCKLAND
<b>Action 13.1.2.</b> Pursue arts-based improvement programs like the Sole of Rockland and place-making strategies that engage community leaders and organizations.	REiMAGINE ROCKLAND, Town	Medium	Mass Cultural Council, private sponsors
<b>Action 13.1.3.</b> Identify translation resources for the Town of Rockland, as needed.	MAPC, South Shore Coalition	Short	South Shore Coalition