

# Downtown Walpole Local Rapid Recovery Plan

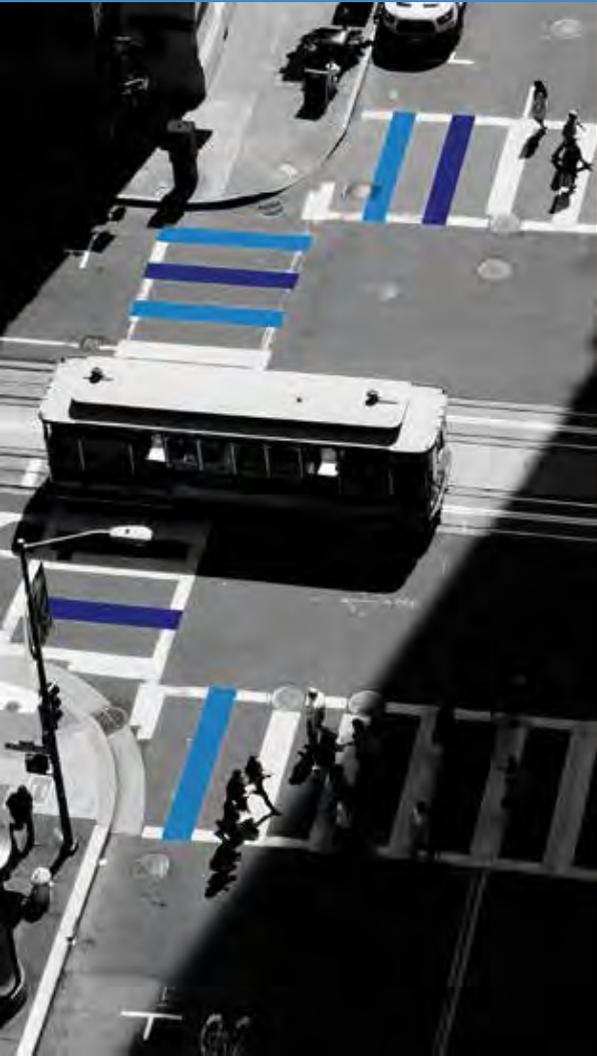
Public Meeting May 27, 2021

# Agenda

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- Project Background
- Diagnostic Results
- Initial Priorities
- What's Next?



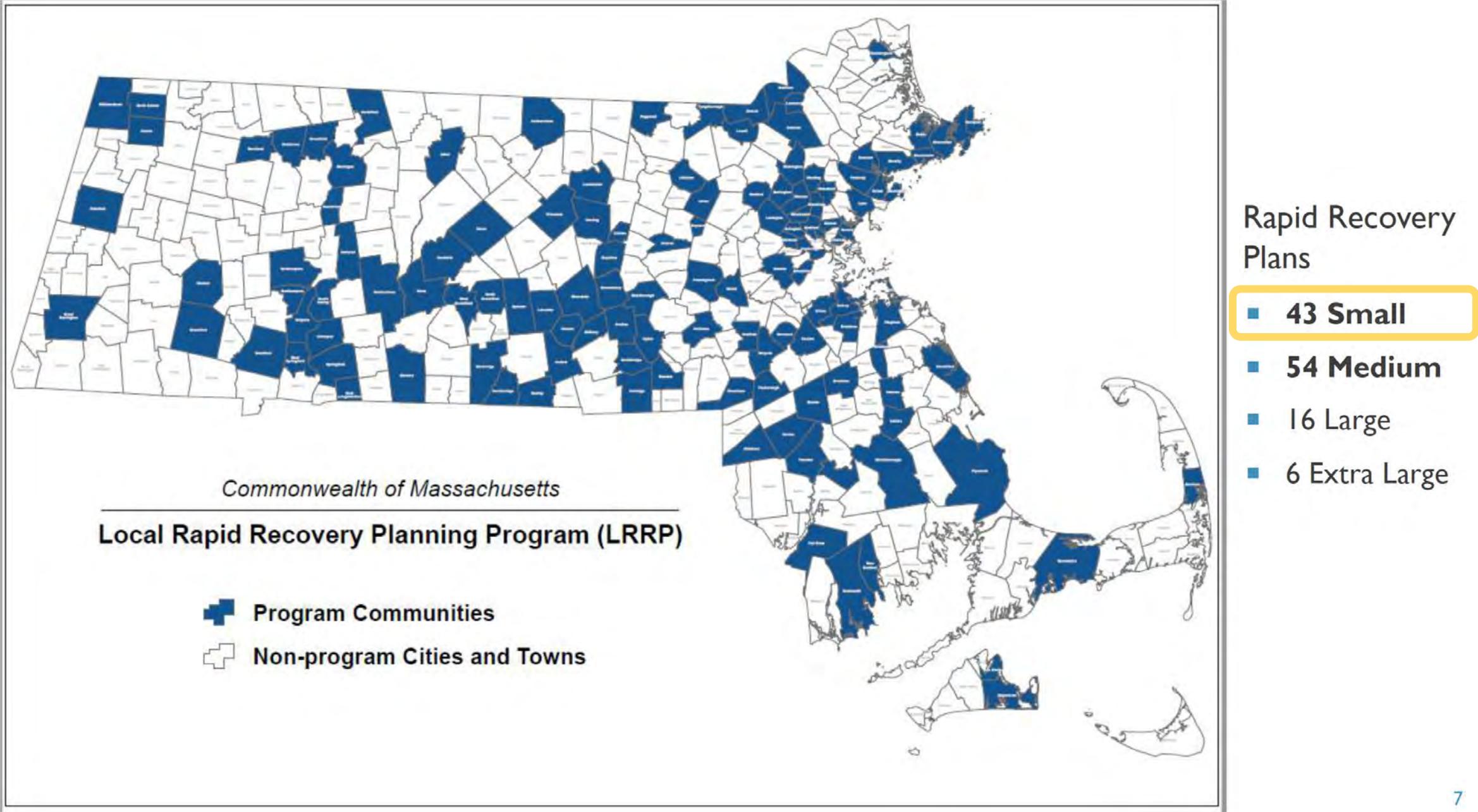


# Project Background

## WHAT IS THE RAPID RECOVERY PLAN (RRP) PROGRAM?

- **Planning grant program** offered by MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- GOAL: Develop **actionable, project-based recovery plans** tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns
  - Collect primary data to measure COVID-19 impacts at local level
  - Create data-driven plans to aid COVID-19 recovery
- **Program website:** [Rapid Recovery Plan \(RRP\) Program | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program)

# DOWNTOWN WALPOLE IS ONE OF 120 PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES



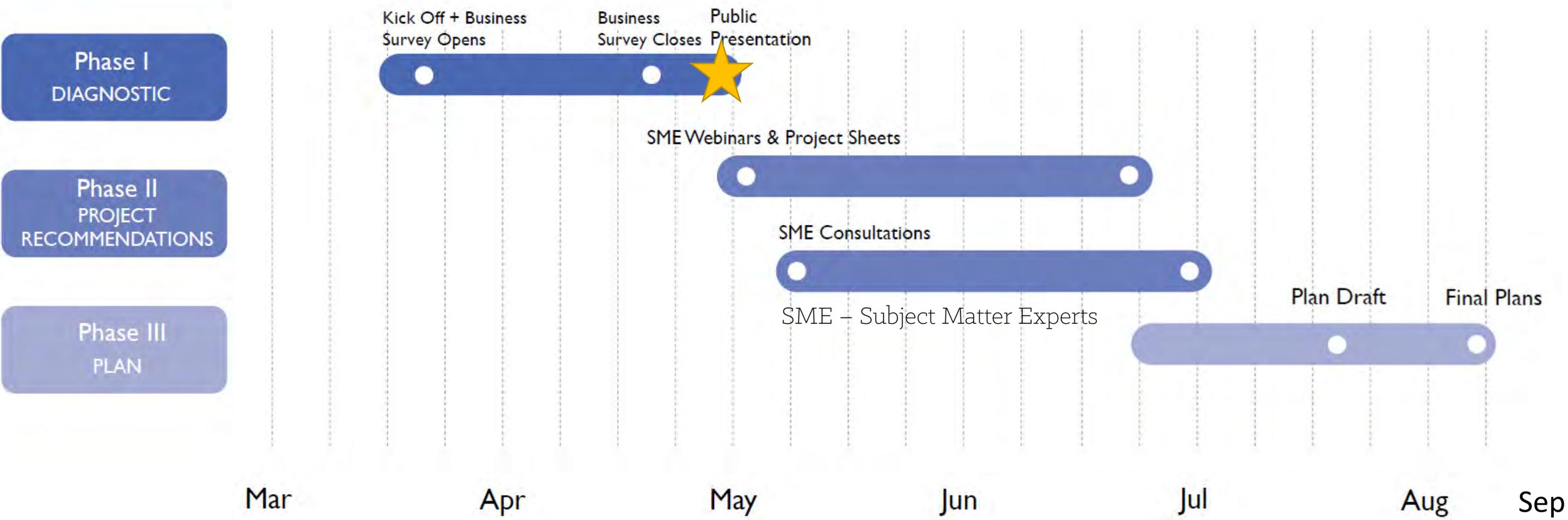
# STUDY AREA



Central Business District (CBD)  
Zoning District



# PLANNING SCHEDULE



# EXPECTED RECOMMENDATION CATEGORIES



Public Realm



Private Realm



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity

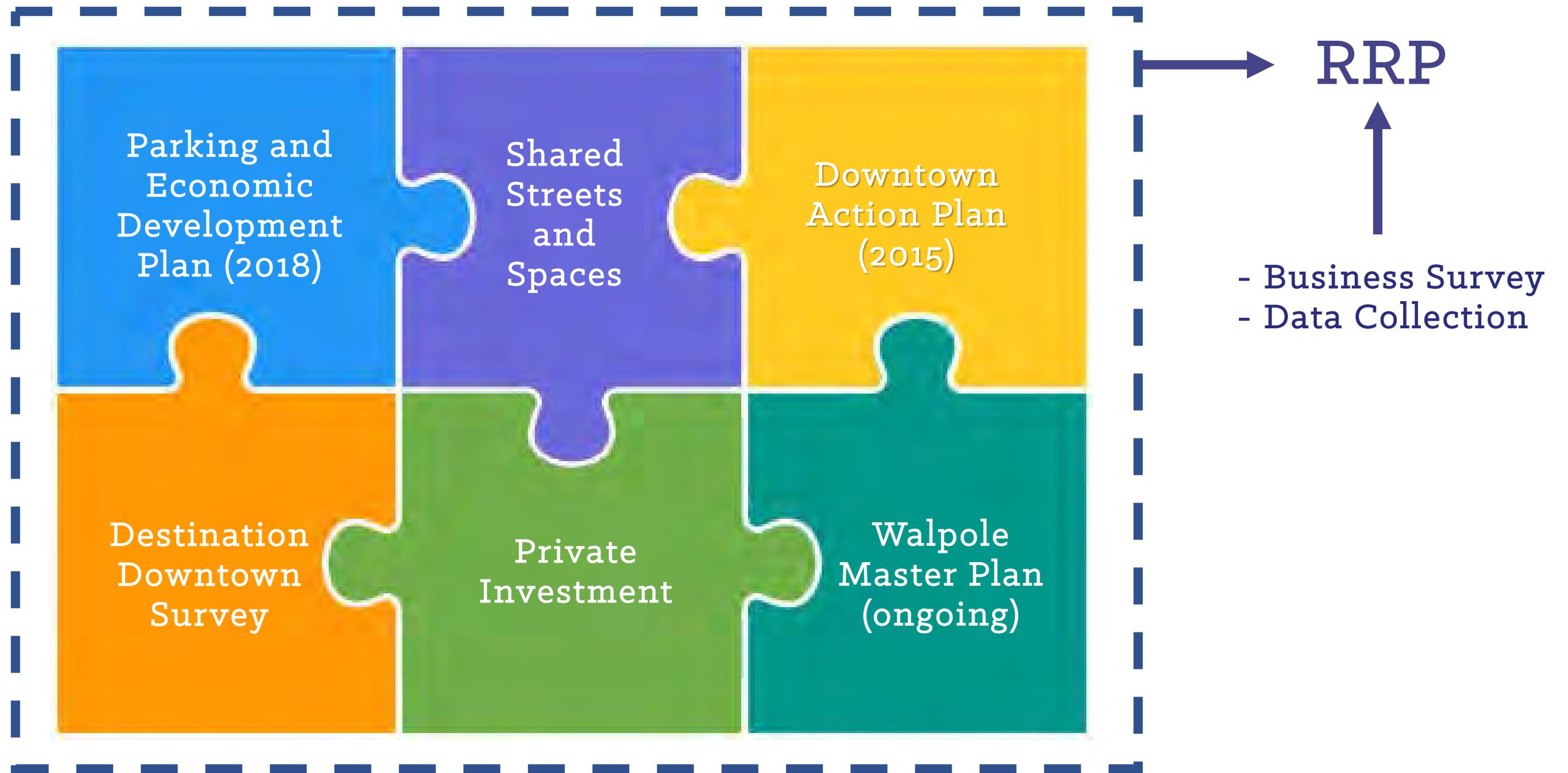


Tenant Mix



Cultural/Arts

THE RAPID RECOVERY PLAN (RRP)  
WILL COMPLEMENT OTHER PLANS/EFFORTS



# DESTINATION DOWNTOWN APPLIED WITH SPECIFIC PRIORITIES IN MIND



Short-Term

Technical training for online business sales and ordering

Development of a Downtown mobile app + wayfinding system

Pedestrian improvements for a safe and walkable downtown

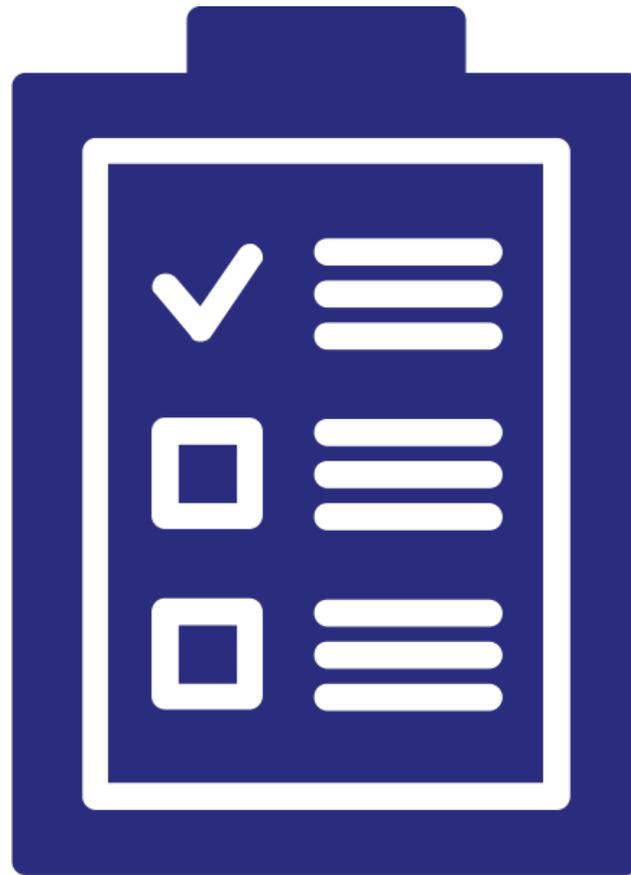
Mid/Long-Term

Streamline permitting process and reevaluate zoning

Signage and façade improvement design standards

Signage and façade improvement funding

## PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING-



- **Share baseline data** (qualitative and quantitative) for an overview of on-the-ground conditions
  - Data collected in the field
  - Business survey results to understand COVID impacts
  - Other community input to understand major district concerns
- **Review early identified priorities**
- **Hear from you** about needs and priorities



Main Street and Common Street  
Credit: Destination Downtown

# DATA/DIAGNOSTIC CATEGORIES



**Market Information**

- Trends
- Consumer Profiles
- Demand



**Physical Environment**

- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Access + Visibility



**Business Environment**

- Anchors/Destinations
- Asset Mix
- Nodes/Clusters



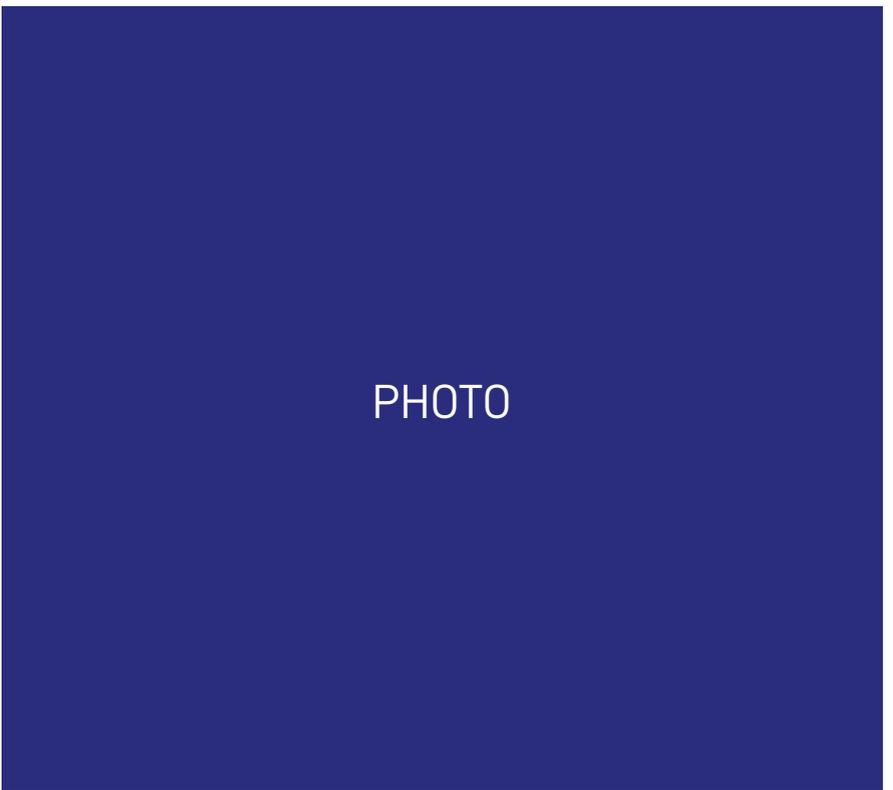
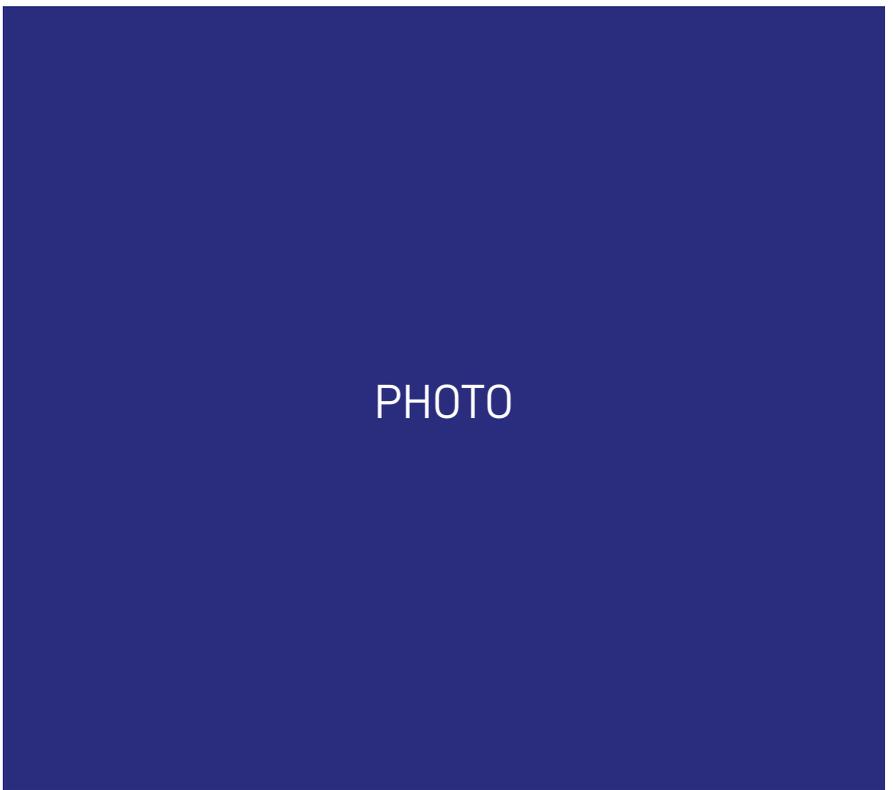
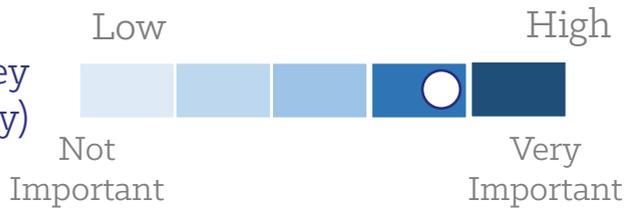
**Administrative Capacity**

- Partners
- Funding
- Regulations/Zoning

ELEMENT: \_\_\_\_\_



Relevant Business Survey Question (if any)



How Downtown Walpole ranks:



DHCD metrics /principles



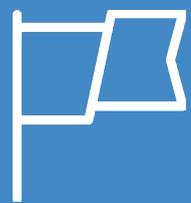
DHCD metrics /principles



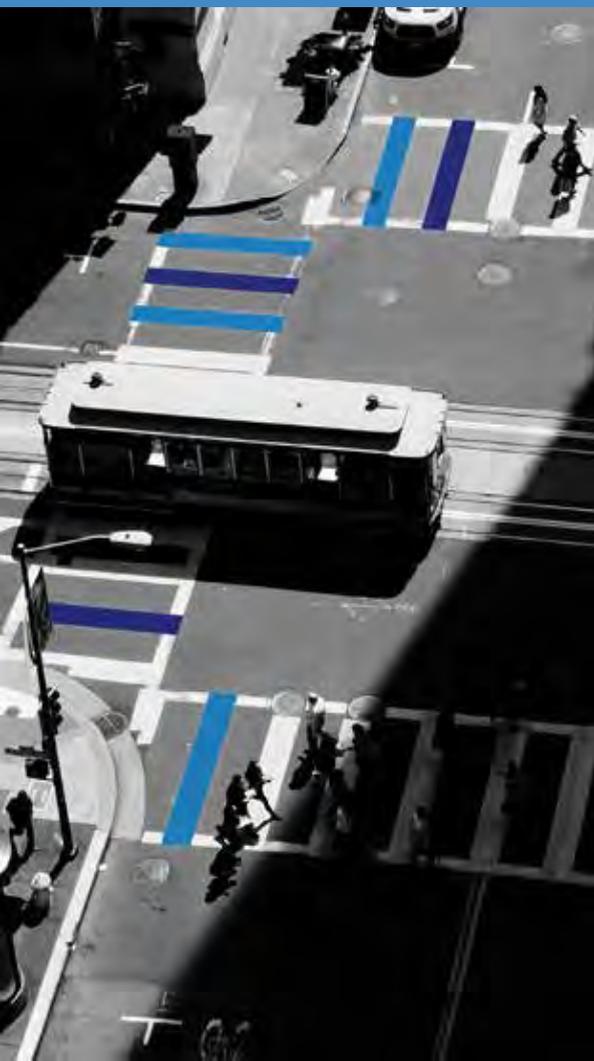
DHCD metrics /principles



DHCD metrics /principles



PHYSICAL  
ENVIRONMENT

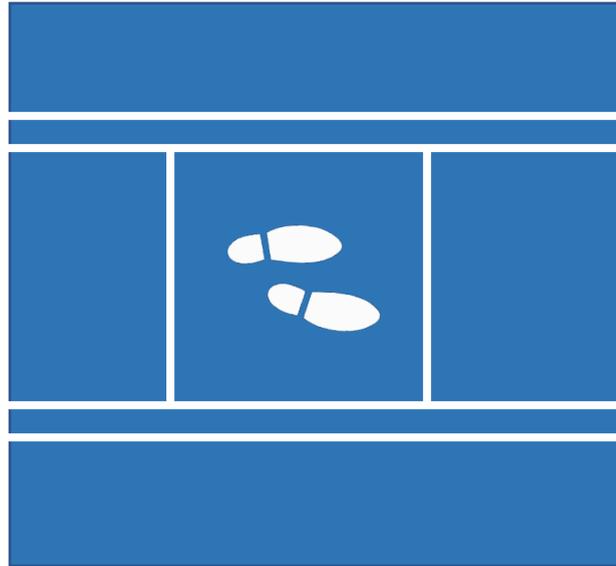


# Diagnostic Results: Physical Environment

## PUBLIC REALM KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Pedestrian improvements in key corridors needed to better connect destinations.** Creating an inviting, interesting walk will encourage foot traffic. Creative solutions needed to work within existing physical constraints.
- **Comprehensive wayfinding system needed.** Pedestrian wayfinding and gateway signage can connect major destinations and encourage people to explore downtown.
- **Parking management improvements could support businesses.** Optimize use of on-street and surface parking for visitors and employees, enhance signage and connections to Main Street.

## ELEMENT: SIDEWALKS



### Guiding Principles:

Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate both the flow of customers and spillover retail/dining activity. In addition, sidewalks should be clean and well-maintained to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians.



Best Practice Example



Importance of streetscape/  
sidewalk improvements

Low



High

# ELEMENT: SIDEWALKS



## How Downtown Walpole ranks:

**A**

More than **75% of sidewalks** in the study area are cleaned, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities.

**B**

About **50% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well-maintained.**

**C**

More than **25% of sidewalks** in the study area pose challenges to the pedestrian experience (including narrow sidewalks and lack of cleanliness/maintenance).

**F**

There are **no sidewalks** in the study area.

## ELEMENT: STREET TREES AND BENCHES



### **Guiding Principles:**

Sidewalks should facilitate a variety of activities, including resting, people-watching and socializing. Street trees and benches are key amenities that support such activities and should be made available without disrupting the flow of pedestrians.



**Best Practice Example**

# ELEMENT: STREET TREES AND BENCHES



Importance of public space and seating areas



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

Street trees and benches are readily available throughout the study area. They are well-designed, well-maintained, and offer shade and comfort to pedestrians.

**B**

Although street trees and benches are available, these amenities have not been cleaned or well-maintained, and require improvements.

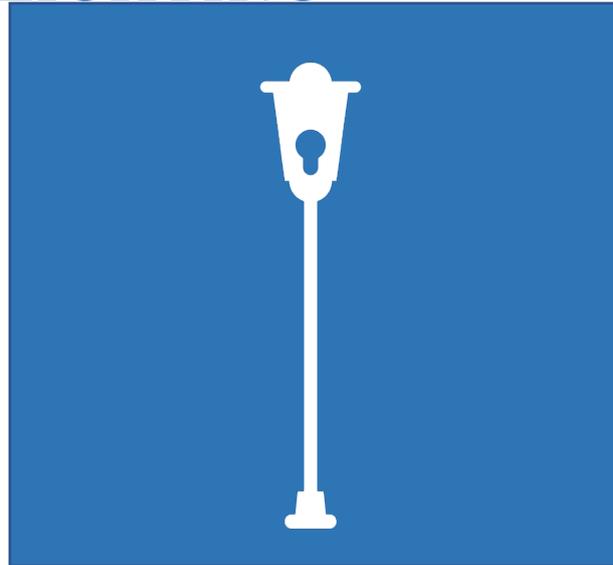
**C**

**Limited availability of street trees and benches creating uncomfortable pedestrian experience.**

**F**

There are no street trees and benches in the study area.

## ELEMENT: LIGHTING



### Guiding Principles:

Street lighting improves pedestrian visibility and personal safety, as well as aids in geographic orientation.



Best Practice Example

# ELEMENT: LIGHTING



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

More than 75% of the study area utilizes a range of lighting strategies to ensure safety of pedestrians and motorists, as well as highlight the identity and history of an area.

**B**

About 50% of the study area is serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.

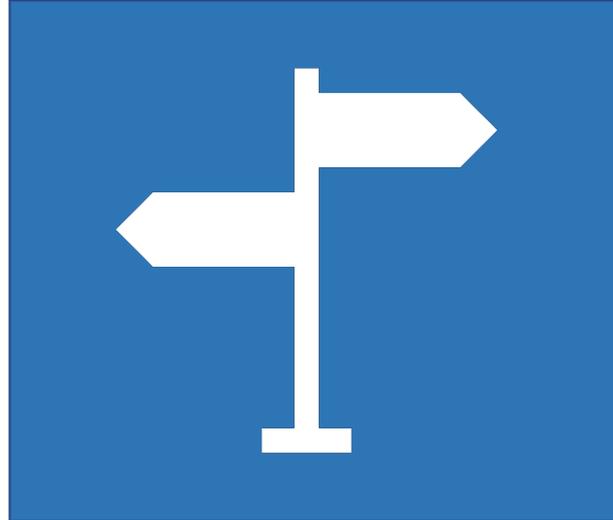
**C**

**Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety.**

**F**

There is no street lighting in the study area.

## ELEMENT: WAYFINDING/ SIGNAGE



### Guiding Principles:

A wayfinding system supports overall accessibility of a commercial district. It benefits pedestrians and bicyclists, and directs motorists to park and walk. Without clear visual cues, customers may find it difficult to park or may be less aware of local offerings.



Best Practice Example

## ELEMENT: WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

A

There is a comprehensive and cohesive wayfinding system that offers geographic orientation to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Signage reflects brand/identity.

B

Wayfinding in the study area is primarily geared towards directing cars. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations to pedestrians.

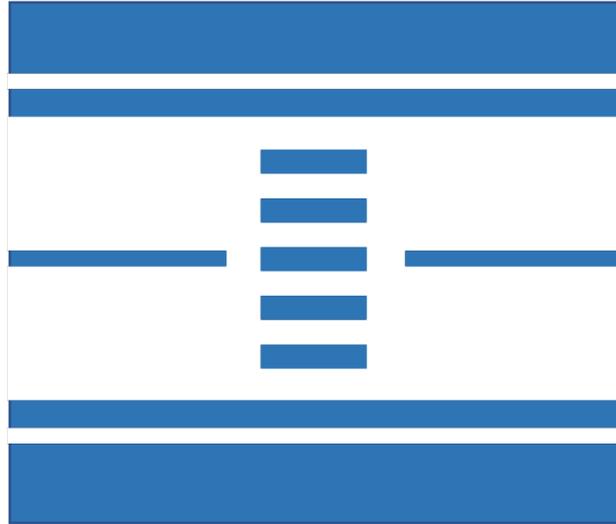
C

**Limited to no signage available throughout the study area.**

F

There is no wayfinding/signage in the study area.

## ELEMENT: ROADBED/ CROSSWALKS



### Guiding Principles:

Roads should be well-maintained to ensure safety of drivers and pedestrians. Crosswalks that are unsafe or inconvenient to customers may undermine accessibility between stores and overall shopper experience.



Best Practice Example

# ELEMENT: ROADBED/CROSSWALKS



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

Roads are designed to balance the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians and create a safe environment for all users.

**B**

**Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.**

**C**

Roads are hazardous to all users.

**F**

The study area is not connected by any major roads.

## PRIVATE REALM KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Storefront signage difficult for pedestrians to see.** Façade signage oriented to drivers not pedestrians on sidewalk.
- **Ground floor design and maintenance improvements needed.** Storefront and window design, awnings, and building lighting can all be improved to highlight local businesses and enhance visual appeal of downtown.
- **More outdoor dining/retail needed.** Limited outdoor dining or retail spillover is a hindrance to increasing vitality downtown. Permanent solutions needed to bring more life downtown.

## ELEMENT: WINDOWS



### Guiding Principles:

Storefronts that maintain a minimum of 70% transparency ensure clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of storefront, as well as improve safety for the business, customers, and pedestrians.



Best Practice Example

# ELEMENT: WINDOWS



How Downtown Walpole ranks:

**A**

More than 75% of storefronts maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.

**B**

About 50% of storefront windows maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.

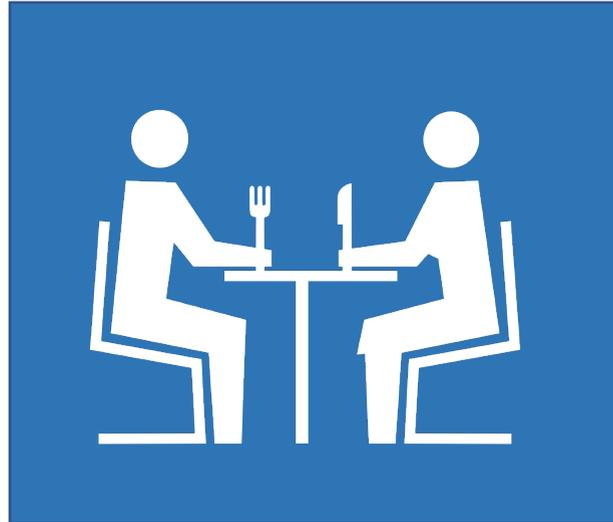
**C**

**More than 25% of storefronts have windows with limited transparency.**

**F**

All storefronts are boarded up and/or have limited transparency.

## ELEMENT: OUTDOOR DISPLAY/DINING



### Guiding Principles:

Attractive window displays and spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks or adjacent parking spaces can help contribute to overall district vibrancy.



Best Practice Example

# ELEMENT: OUTDOOR DISPLAY/DINING



Importance of marketing strategies for district



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

More than 75% of storefronts feature an attractive window display and/or spillover merchandise and dining areas that align with the brand and identity of the district.

**B**

About 50% of storefronts maintain an attractive window display with limited spillover merchandise and/or dining areas.

**C**

**More than 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining that pose challenges to the pedestrian experience.**

**F**

There is no spillover retail/restaurant activity in the district.

## ELEMENT: SIGNAGE



### Guiding Principles:

Signage can help customers identify the location of storefronts and businesses from a distance. Signage should also reflect the visual brand and identity of tenants to help attract new customers.



Best Practice Example

# ELEMENT: SIGNAGE



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

More than 75% of storefront signs reflect the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from more than 10 ft distance.

**B**

About 50% of storefronts have clear signage that reflect basic business information and can easily be seen from adjacent sidewalks.

**C**

**More than 25% of storefronts have signage that does not communicate names of products/services being offered.**

**F**

Storefronts in the study area do not have signage.

## ELEMENT: AWNINGS



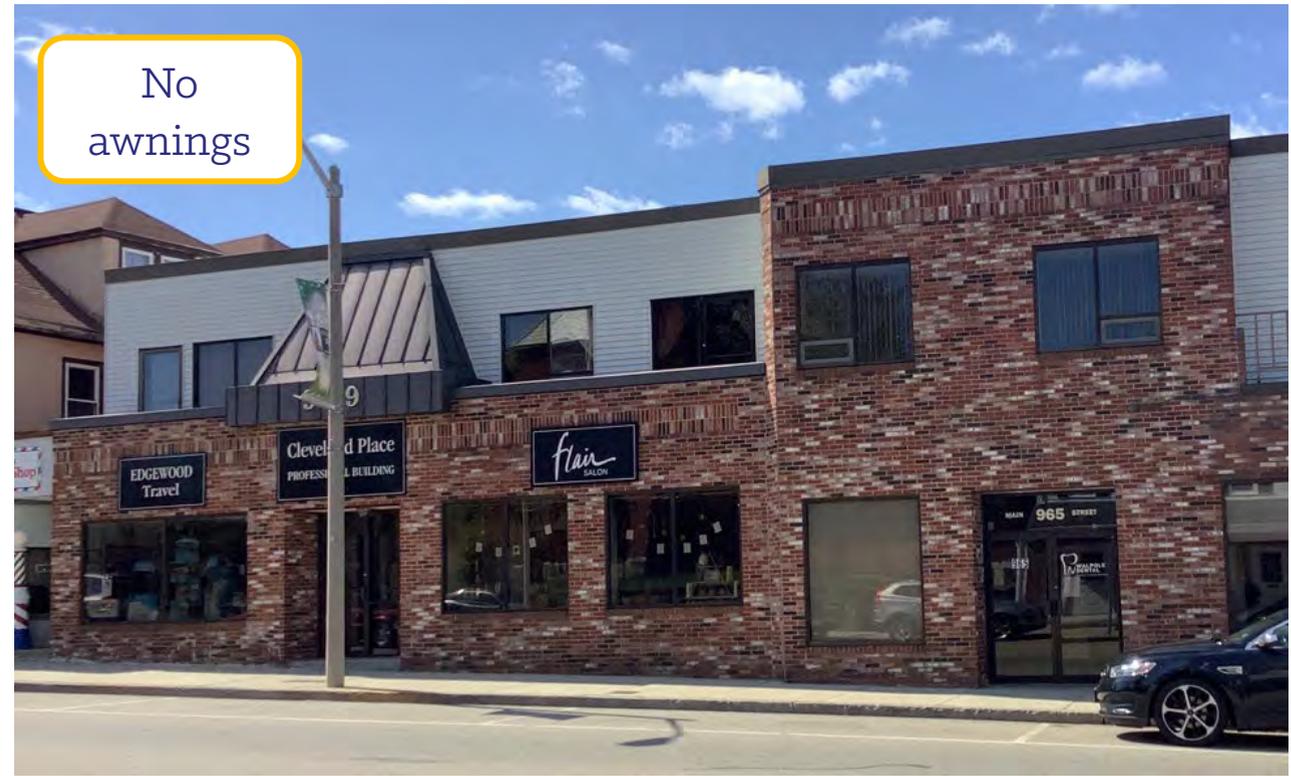
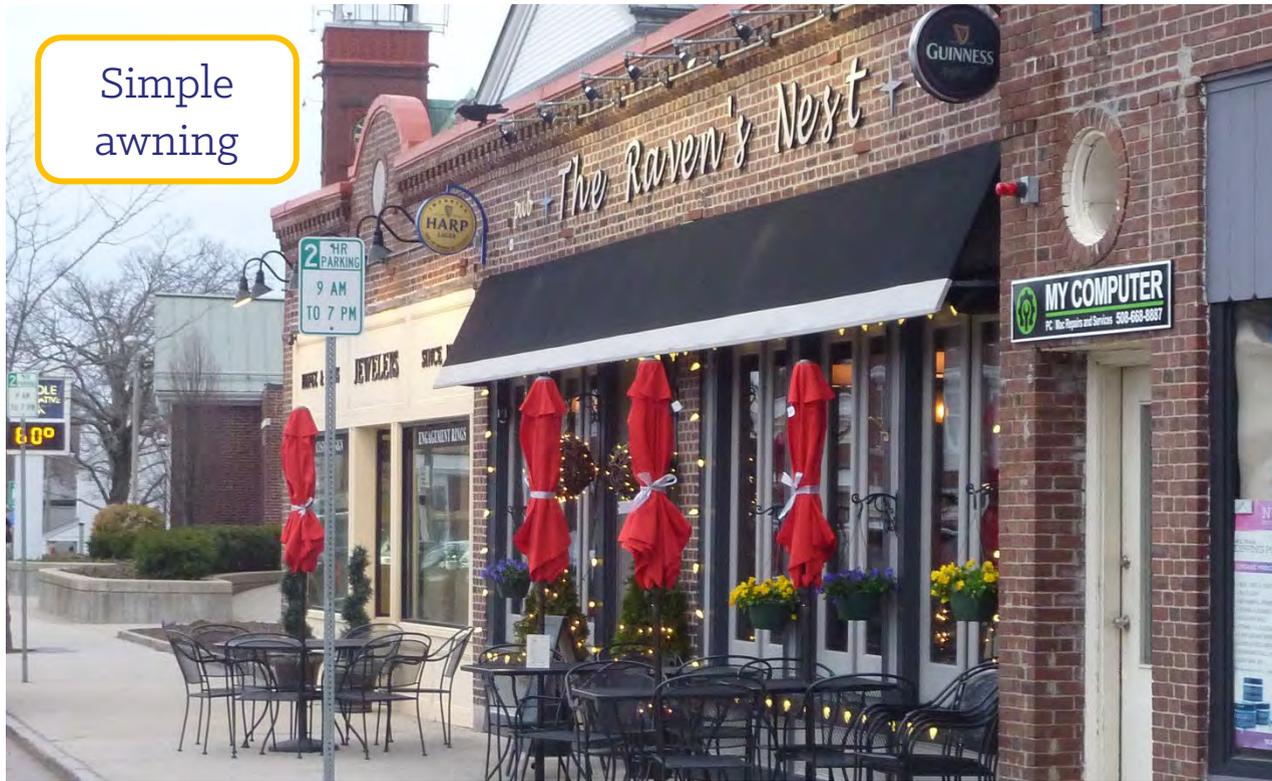
### Guiding Principles:

Awnings can provide shade during warmer months, enabling comfortable outdoor dining arrangements for customers. However, they must be well-maintained and designed in coordination with other elements of the storefront.



Best Practice Example

## ELEMENT: AWNINGS



How Downtown Walpole ranks:

A

More than 75% of properties in the study area have retractable awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

B

About 50% of properties in the study area have functioning awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

C

**More than 25% of properties in the study area do not have awnings and/or have awnings that are unusable or have not been cleaned and maintained.**

F

Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings.





Renovation of storefronts/  
building facades

Low

High



## ELEMENT: FACADE



How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

Storefronts that use high-quality materials, and paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district.

**B**

**Most properties have clean and well-maintained façades, but at least one significant property requiring structural façade improvements.**

**C**

More than 25% of properties require significant building façades improvements, including power washing, painting, and structural enhancements.

**F**

All properties in the study area require significant façade improvements.

## ELEMENT: LIGHTING



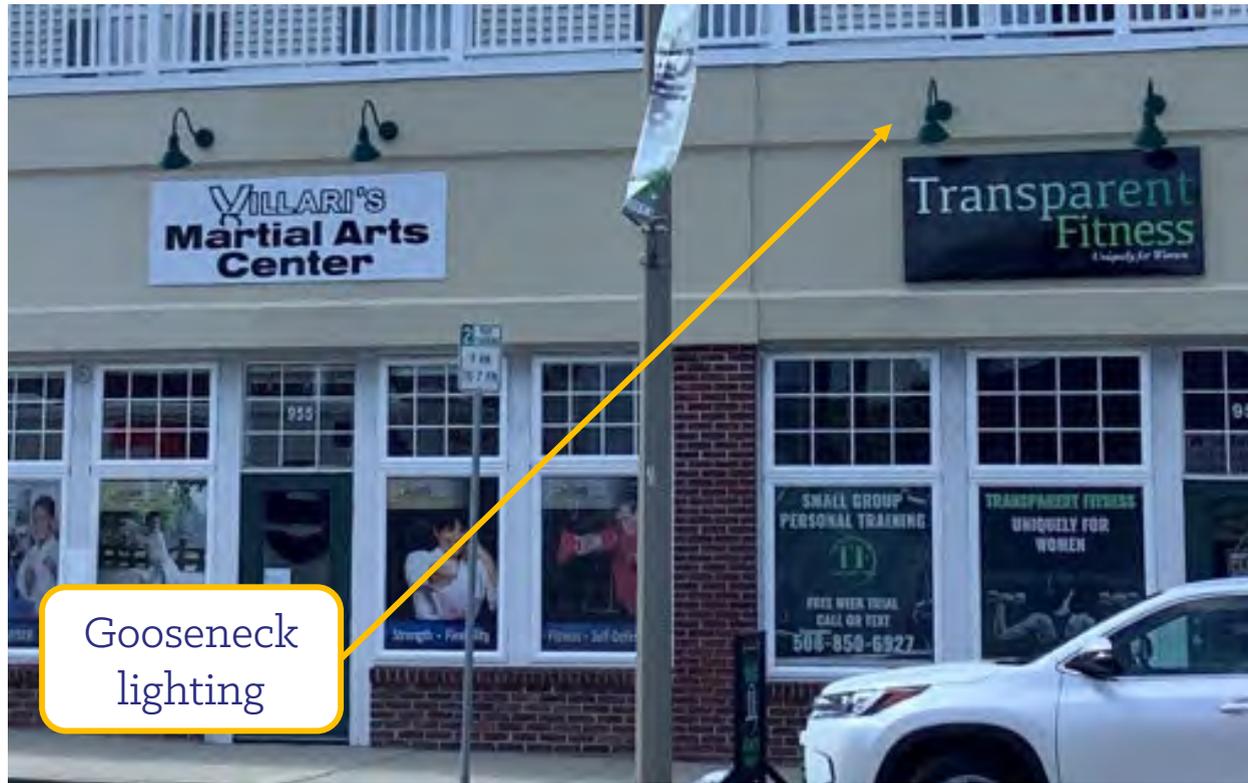
### Guiding Principles:

Storefront interior lighting after business hours help enliven the corridor and boost security on the street.



**Best Practice Example**

# ELEMENT: LIGHTING



Gooseneck lighting



Decorative lighting

How **Downtown Walpole** ranks:

**A**

More than 75% of storefronts have lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.

**B**

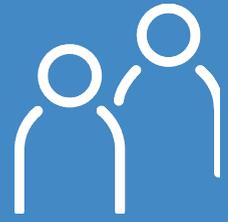
About 50% of storefronts have some interior lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.

**C**

More than 25% of storefronts do not have lighting.

**F**

All storefronts in the study area are shuttered and dark at night.



**CUSTOMER  
BASE**



# Diagnostic Results: Customer Base

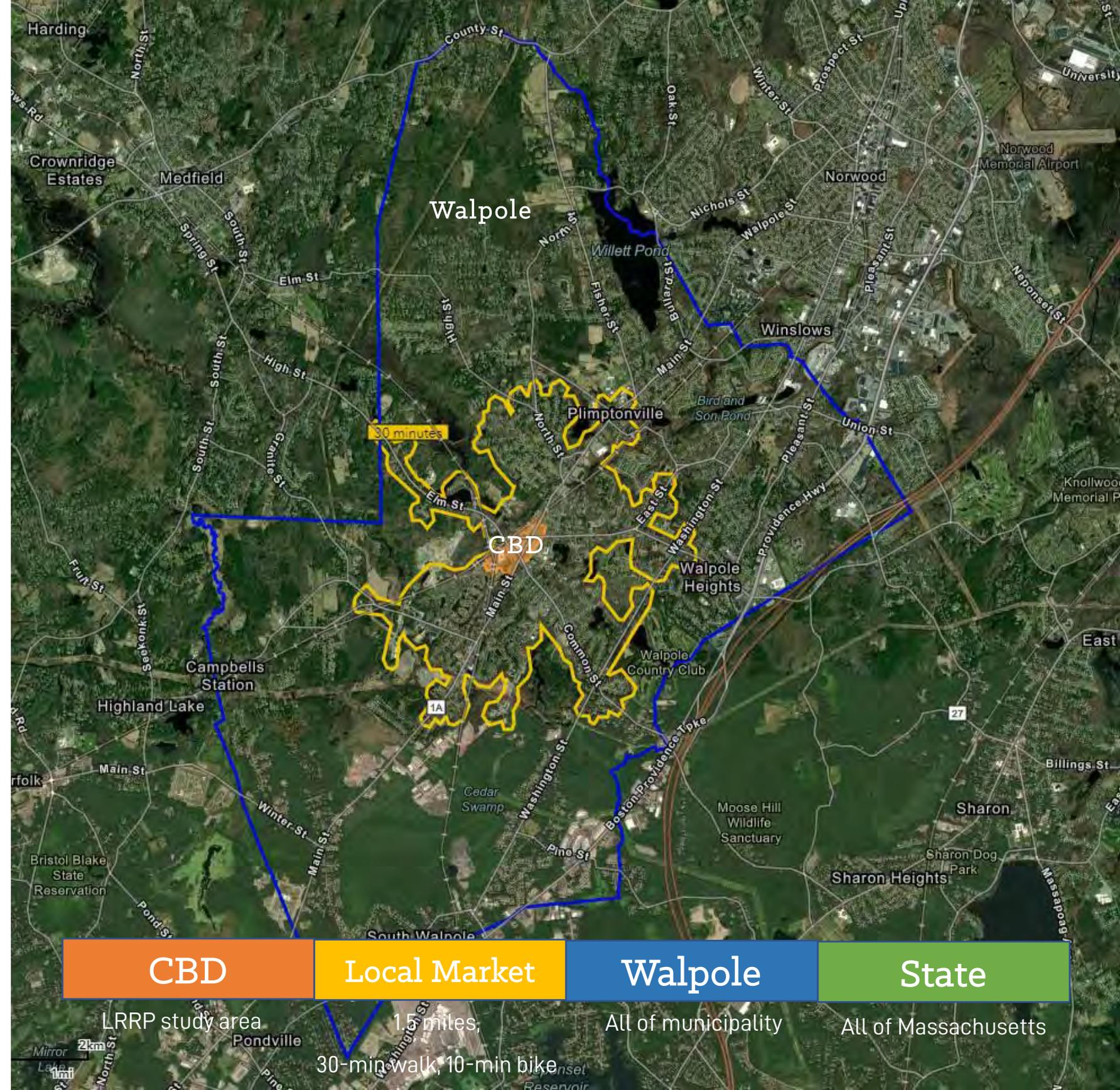
## CUSTOMER BASE KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Growing population.** New housing development will bring more residents to live downtown who will shop and eat here.
- **Business mix and hours limit appeal.** More businesses with storefront appeal will support downtown vibrancy.

## Customer Base Comparison Areas

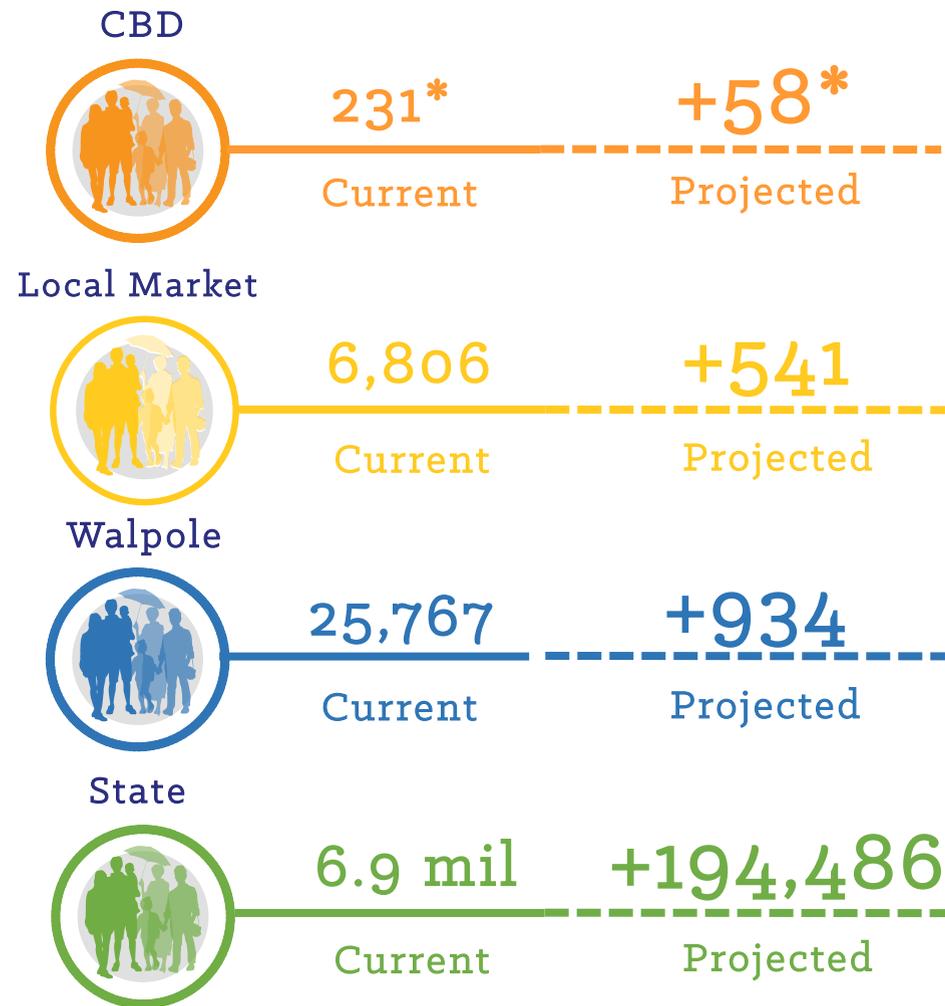
- The study area is the central business district (CBD) boundary.
- To understand the local market this analysis also looks at a 1.5-mile ring (30-minute walk, 10-minute bike ride) around downtown, the entire municipality, and statewide.

<b>CBD</b>	LRRP study area
<b>Local market</b>	1.5 mi, 30-min walk, 10-min bike
<b>Walpole</b>	All of municipality
<b>State</b>	All of Massachusetts

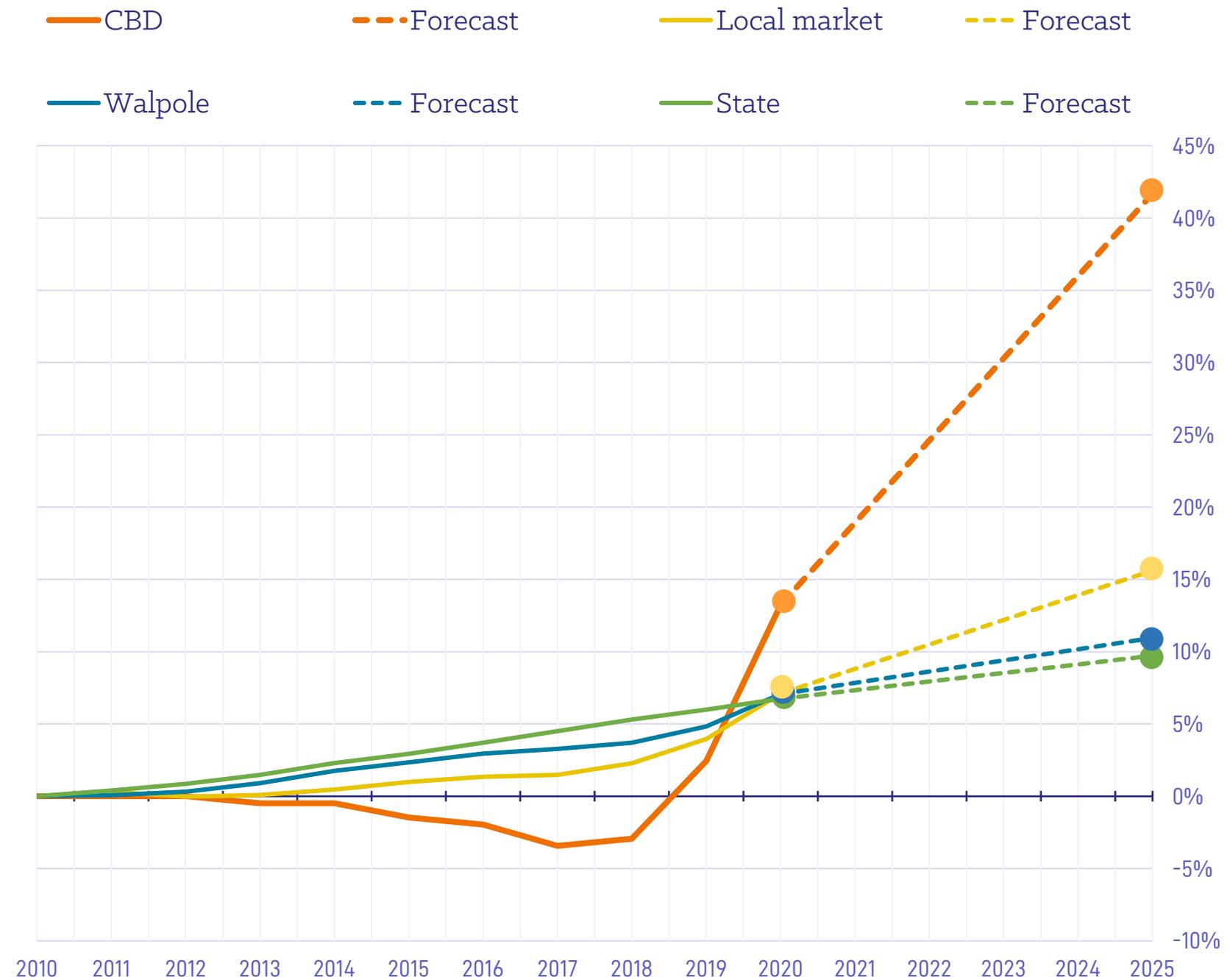


# Population trend from 2010 to 2025

- The CBD study area surpasses the state's growth rate with the recent addition of new multifamily housing, while the surrounding area is on par with the state.



## Population growth since 2010



\* Based on ESRI projections, see "Anticipated housing growth" for more info

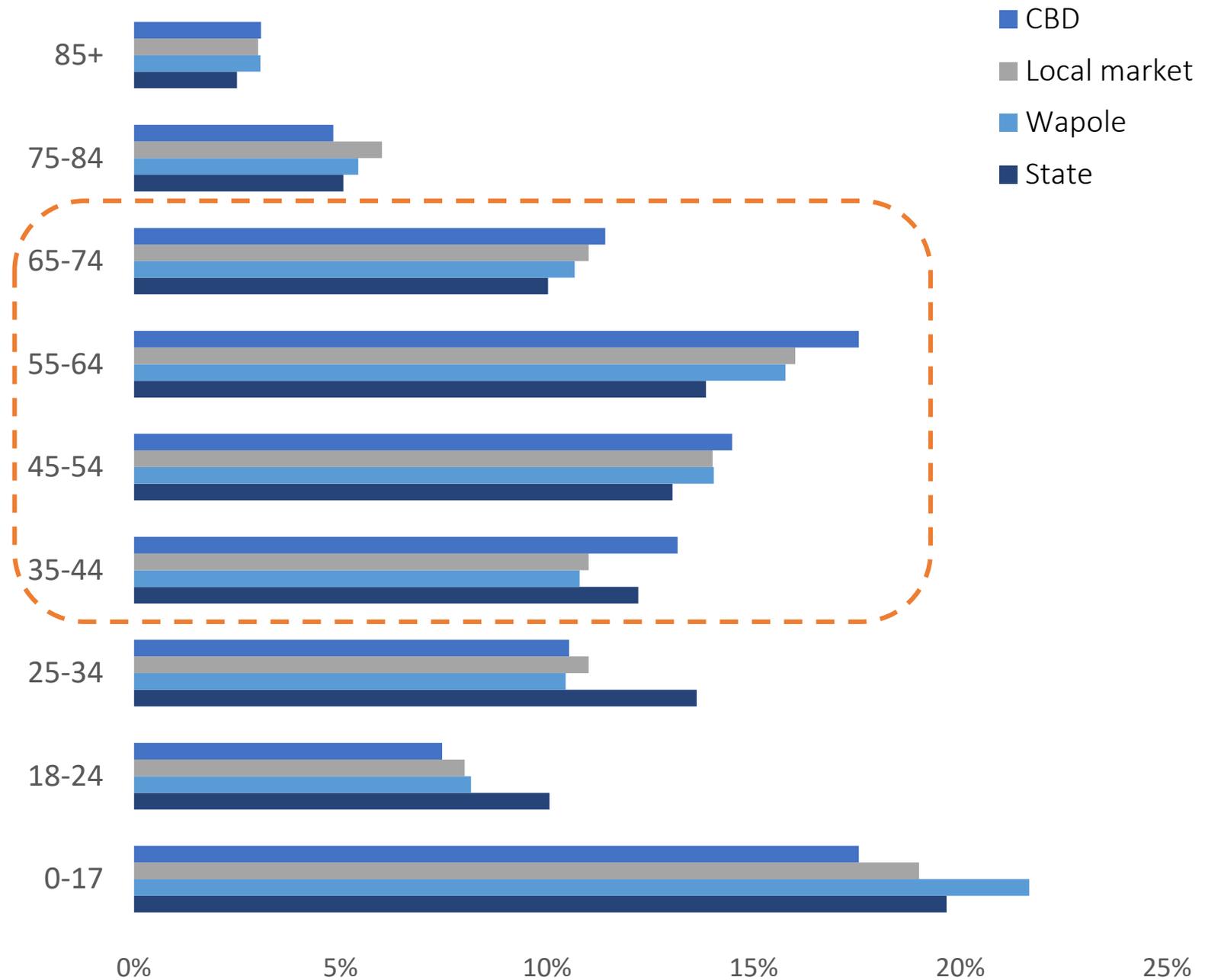
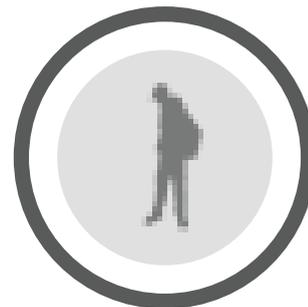
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

# Age distribution

- The local area's age distribution has a **high number of people between the ages of 35 and 74**, and relatively fewer people under 34.

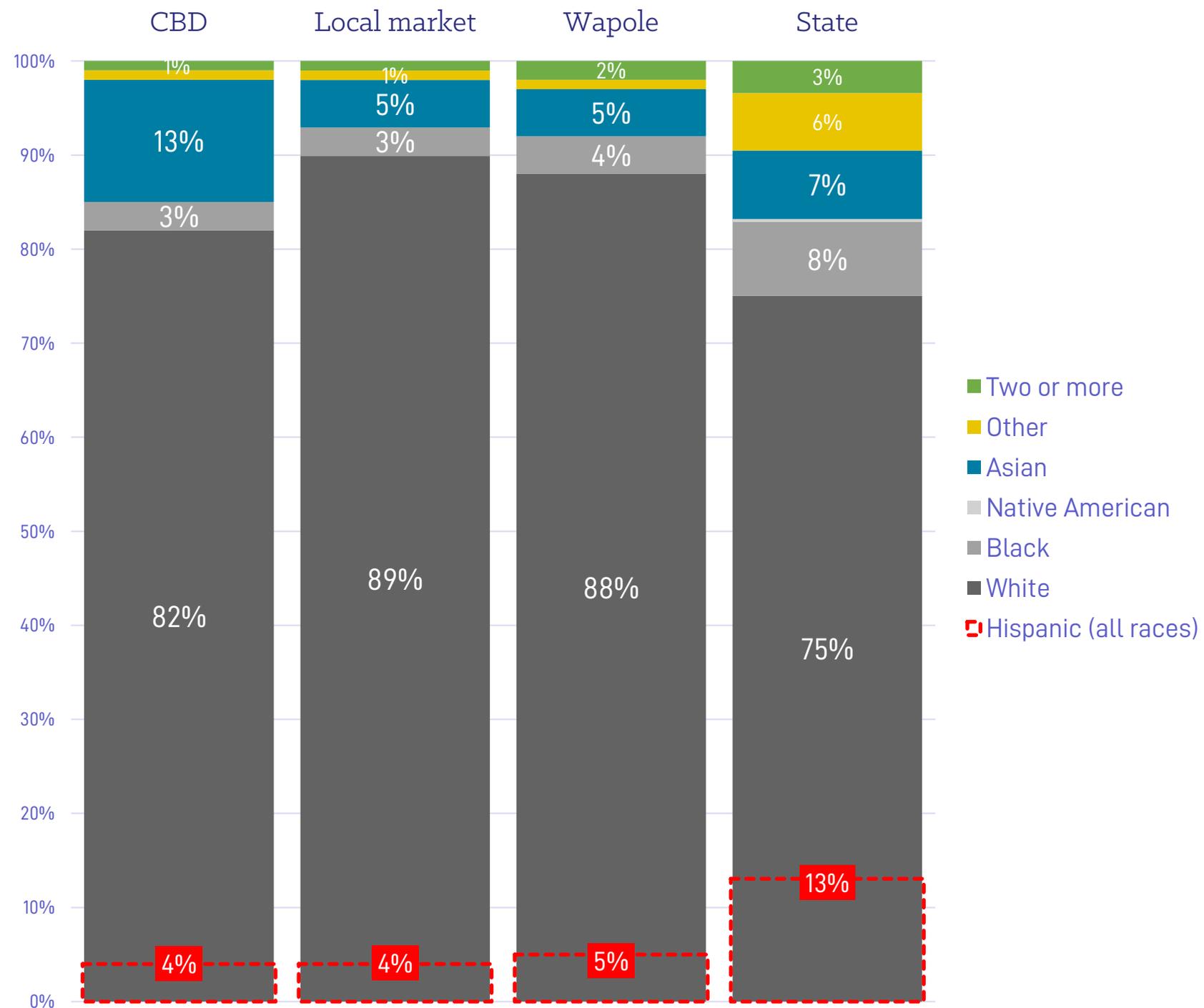
CBD  
  
**46**  
 Median Age

Walpole  
  
**44**  
 Median Age



## Race and ethnicity

- The study area is **less diverse** than the state.
- The study area has a relatively lower proportion of people with Hispanic origin.
- Walpole generally is less diverse than the state.



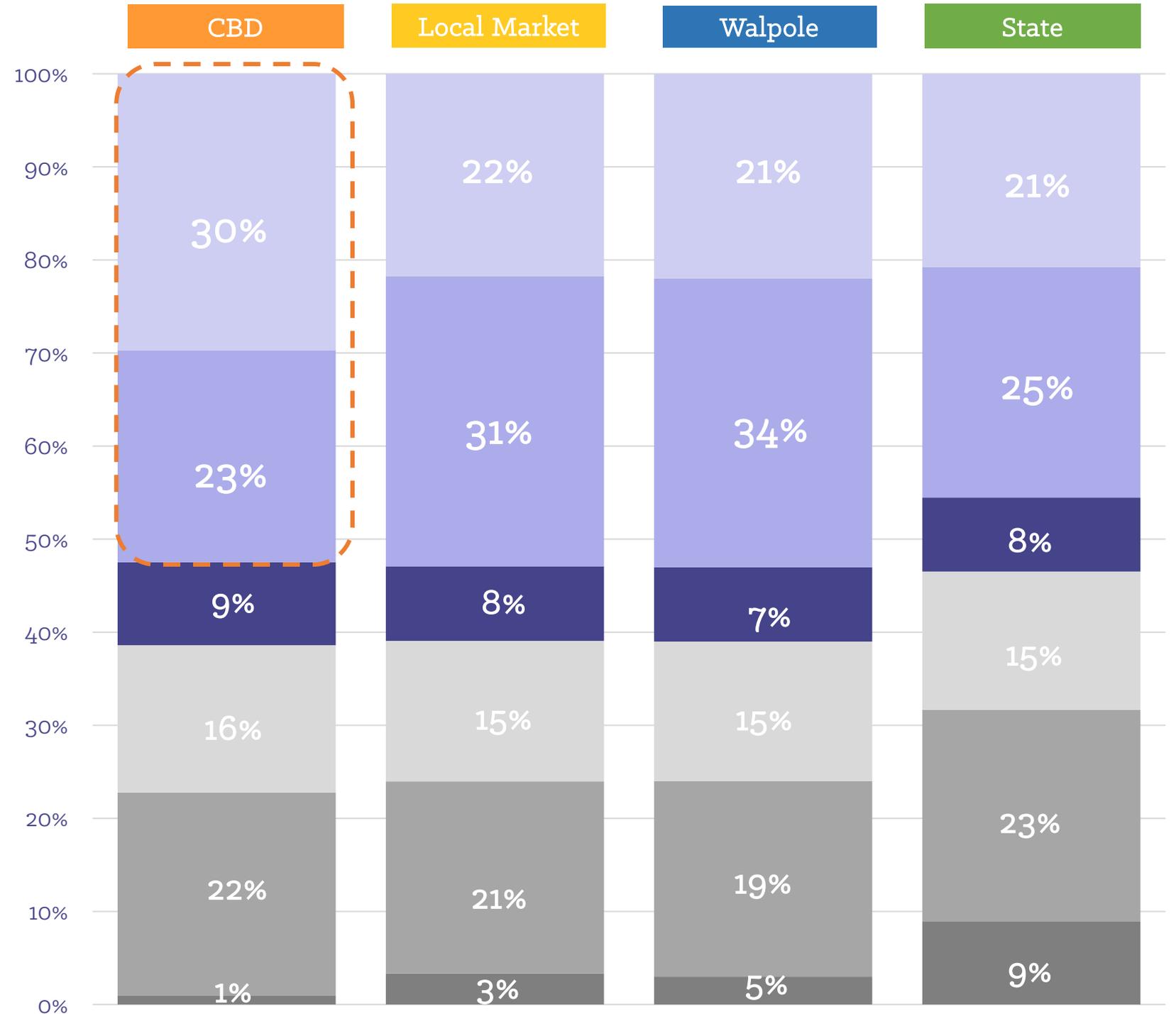
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

# Education

- The study area has a **slightly higher educational attainment** than the state average.



- Graduate/Professional
- Bachelor's Degree
- Associate Degree
- Some College
- High School or GED
- Less than High School



## Population characteristics

- The CBD and local area are expected to add an **additional 500+ people\*** in the coming 5 years.



### Population

	CBD	Local Market	Walpole	State
Avg. household size	1.6	2.4	2.7	2.5
Residential population	231	6,806	25,767	6,993,463
Households	142	2,820	9,309	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	+58*	+541*	+934	+194,486
5-year forecast, household change	+36*	+254*	+386	+73,332
Median age	46	46	44	40

\* Based on ESRI projections, see "Anticipated housing growth" for more info

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

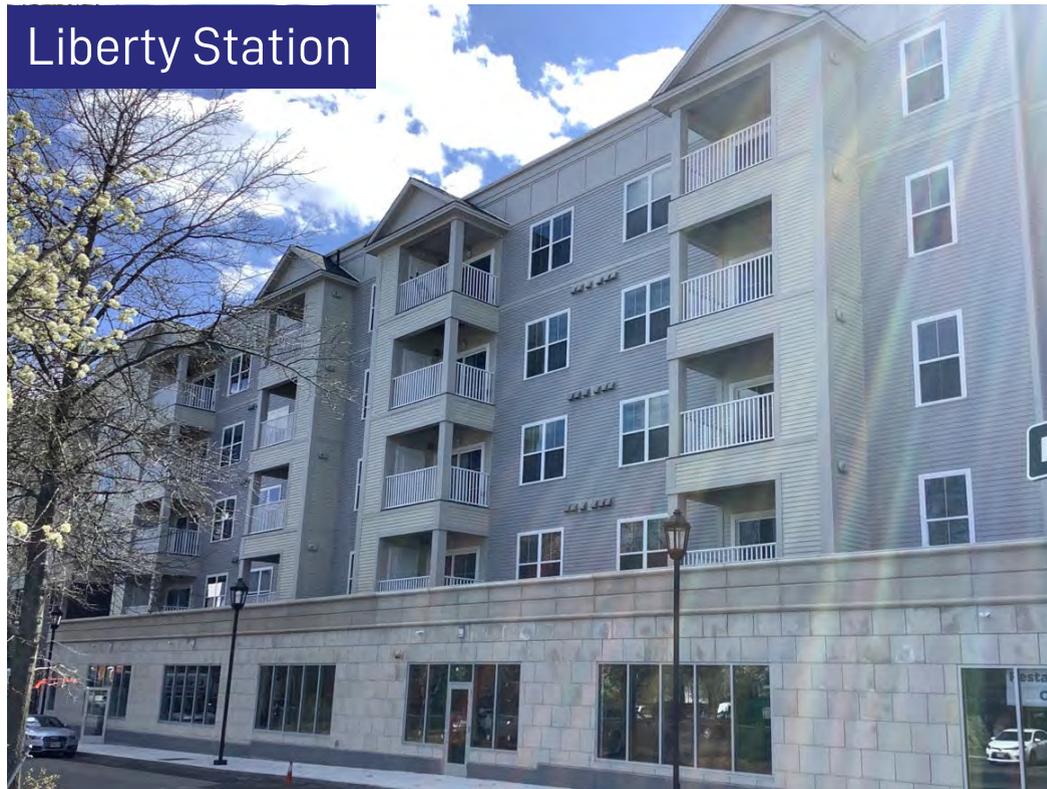
## Recent housing growth

- **New housing projects** in the CBD study area and local market will add to population growth
- Increasing interest in downtown living presents business opportunities

### **CBD:**

- Liberty Station: 152 units (1- and 2-BR)
- Union & West: 192 units (studio – 3BR)
- Could be **400-500+ new residents** when fully occupied

Liberty Station



Union & West



## Jobs and Housing

- The number of jobs in the study area is more than double the residential population.
- Housing in the study area is predominantly owner-occupied.



### Employment and income

	CBD	Local Market	Walpole	State
Median household income	\$78k	\$104k	\$114k	\$81k
Employees	572	3,578	12,222	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	17	726	3,032	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	2.3	0.5	0.5	0.5



### Housing

Median home value	\$444k	\$472k	\$528k	\$415k
5-year forecast, home value growth	10%	13%	15%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	68%	77%	80%	61%

### Additional statistics

- The CBD study area has a **surplus of all retail categories except grocery stores**, for which the entire area has a leakage.
- Most study area residents have access to a vehicle.
- The proportion of households below the poverty level and unemployment in the study area is lower the statewide average.



#### Other indicators

	91%	91%	92%	83%
Own or lease any vehicle				
Have a smartphone	91%	91%	91%	90%
Carry health insurance	84%	83%	82%	77%



#### Poverty

	3%	5%	4%	12%
Households w/ food stamps/SNAP				
Unemployed^ (age 16+)	12%	12%	13%	15%
Households below poverty level	8%	5%	4%	11%

^ as of mid-2020.  
 Town of Walpole preliminary unemployment rate 5.1% in April 2021 (latest available from Mass DOL).  
 Massachusetts preliminary unemployment rate 5.9% in April 2021 (latest available from Mass DOL).  
 Recent estimates for CBD and Local Market unavailable.

# Business Survey Feedback



2021  
Business Survey  
Responses

The top 3 business impacts due to COVID-19:

1. Reduced operating hours/capacity
2. Decline in Revenue
3. Business closure (temporary or permanent) / Incurred expenses to implement safety measures (tie)

**64%** of businesses had **fewer on-site customers** in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

**69%** of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.  
For **48%** of businesses, revenue **declined by 25% or more.**

- Business survey conducted online March 17 – April 16
- 19 survey responses from owners/managers in the CBD study area



**BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENT**



# Diagnostic Results: Business Environment

Total Number of  
Businesses  
(CBD study area)

120



Number of Businesses closed  
since COVID  
(temporary or permanent)

0



Number of Vacant  
Storefronts

10



## BUSINESS TYPES

### 2021 Businesses, by 2-digit NAICS classification

1. Other Services, except Public Administration (15%)
2. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (13%)
3. Retail Trade (10%)
4. Health Care & Social Assistance (9%)
5. Finance & Insurance (9%)



ADMIN  
CAPACITY



# Diagnostic Results: Administrative Capacity

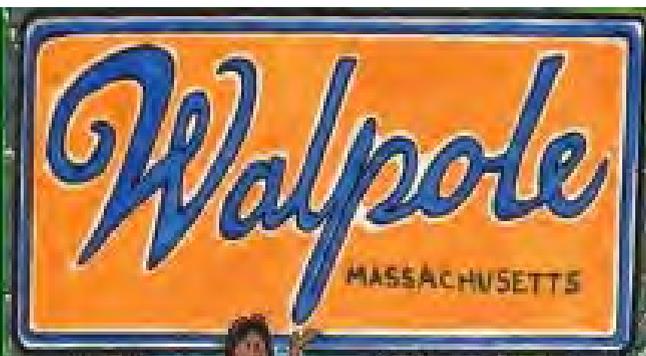
## DESTINATION DOWNTOWN



DESTINATION DOWNTOWN  
WALPOLE, MA

- **Established in 2019** as community-led organization to steer revitalization of Downtown Walpole
- Member of **Main Street America**

WALPOLE DOWNTOWN





# Initial Priorities

ARE THESE STILL PRIORITIZED IN THE RIGHT WAY BASED ON THE DATA AND YOUR CURRENT NEEDS? IS ANYTHING MISSING?



Short-Term

Technical training for online business sales and ordering

Development of a Downtown mobile app + wayfinding system

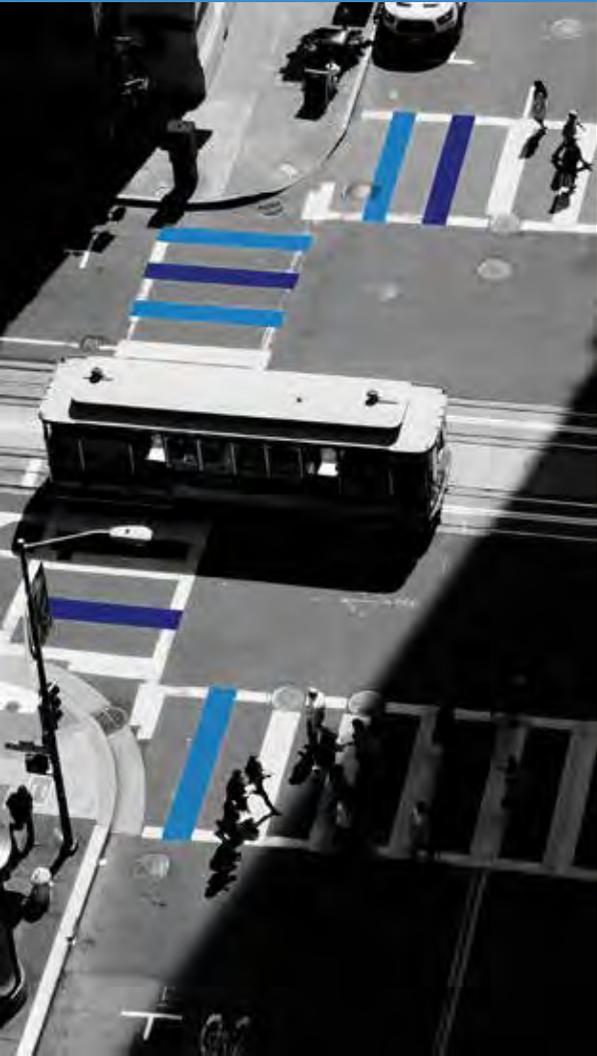
Pedestrian improvements for a safe and walkable downtown

Mid/Long-Term

Streamline permitting process and reevaluate zoning

Signage and façade improvement design standard

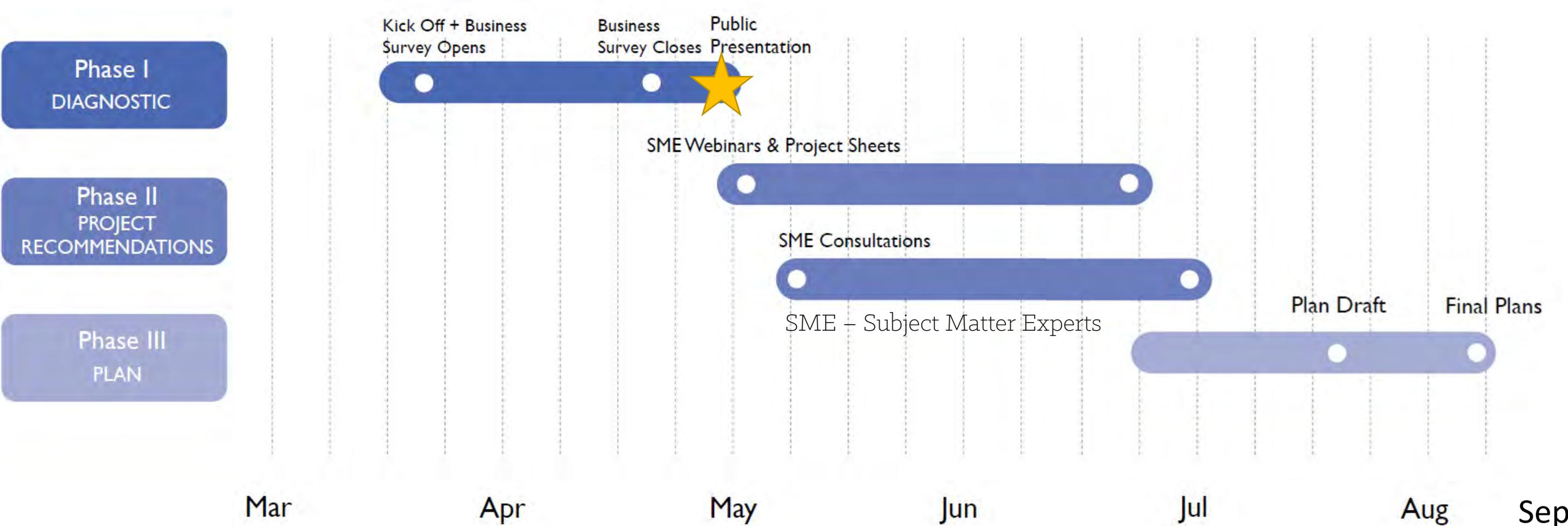
Signage and façade improvement funding



# What's Next?

# PLANNING SCHEDULE

- Begin developing project recommendations



**Subject Matter Experts** will be available in the following categories:

- **Public Realm**
  - Public space transformation (sidewalks, parking, biking, streets)
  - Finding opportunities in overlooked spaces
- **Private Realm**
  - Overcoming zoning/permit/licensing hurdles
- **Revenue and Sales**
- **Administrative Capacity**
- **Tenant Mix**
- **Cultural/Arts**

## **Additional Comments or Questions? Contact us:**

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### **Pat Deschenes**

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Town of Walpole  
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### **Phil Schaeffing**

Plan Facilitator  
Stantec  
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THANK YOU!

