



Town of North Brookfield: Downtown Central Business PDA (# 212-10)

Purpose of Analysis

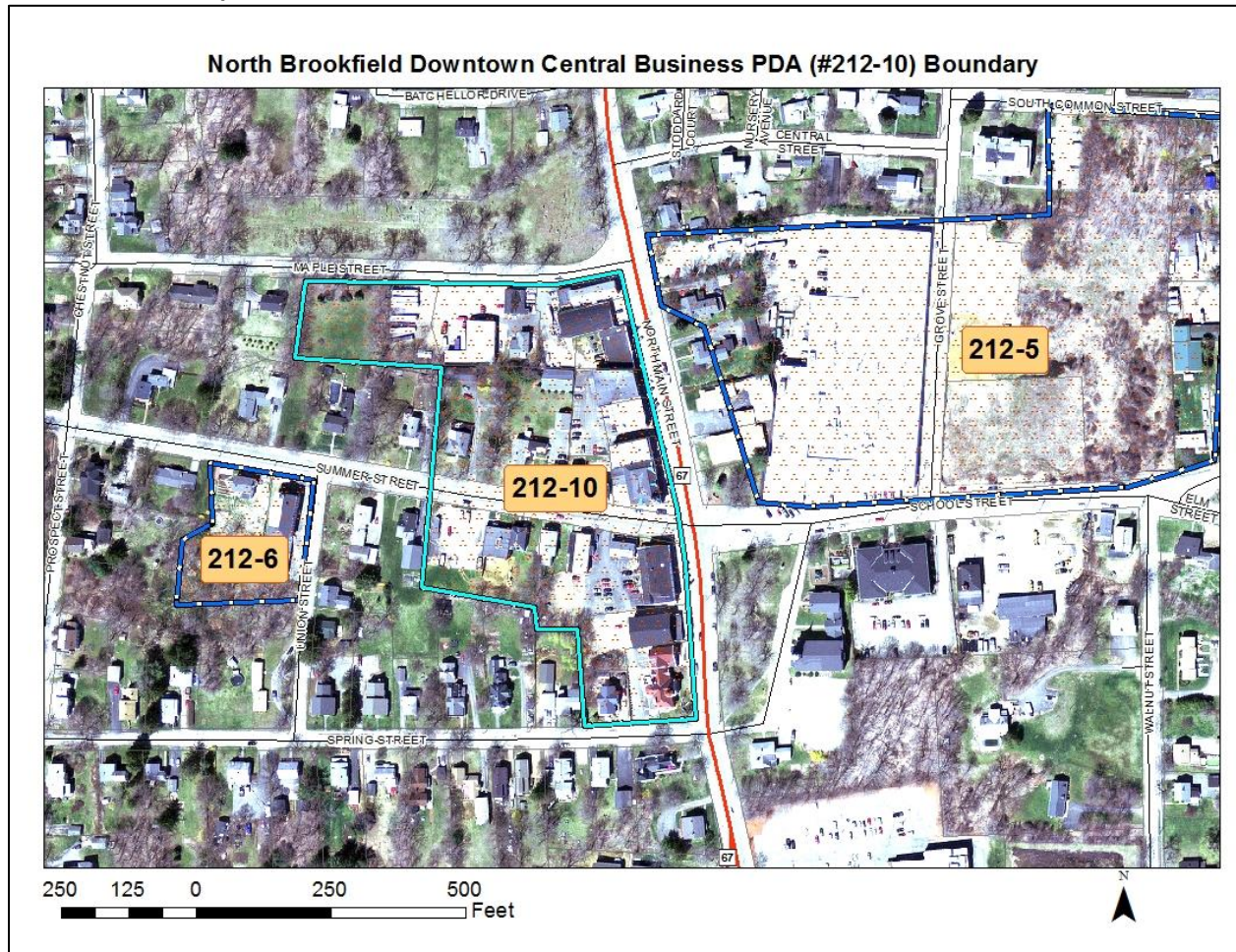
The Downtown Central Business PDA (PDA# 212-10) was identified by the Town of North Brookfield as a Priority Development Area within the 2013 [Rural-11 Prioritization Project](#) (See Map 1 for location of the Downtown Central Business PDA on the following page). Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are areas within a municipality that have been identified as capable of supporting additional development or as candidates for redevelopment. These are areas on which a town is focusing its energy to promote thoughtful economic development that is closely tied to the community's goals. The Downtown Central Business PDA was identified both as a local and regionally significant Priority Development Area (PDA).

PDA assistance projects are intended as a “next step” following the completion of a prioritization project. Planning funds from the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program support the effort and up to 40 hours of technical assistance may be provided to each interested community. Specifically, the objective of this project is to provide participating communities with a packet of information for a PDA that can be used to guide them in identifying possible zoning changes, development of a Chapter 43D application¹ or other grant applications (MassWorks; DHCD's Downtown Technical Assistance), promotion to developers, as a template for future analysis of additional PDAs, etc. CMRPC staff worked with each participating community to ensure that the technical assistance provided was tailored to the town's specific needs.

The Town of North Brookfield's DLTA request was submitted on behalf of the Town of North Brookfield by the Board of Selectmen in September 2014 for an *“analysis of the downtown area...with specific emphasis on a walkable Town center with the historic Town House as a destination and economic development resource. We would like to examine existing infrastructure and zoning, promote economic development in the Town center, and determine potential grant opportunities that would positively enhance access to and enjoyment of our Town center. We are anticipating that CMRPC can advise the Town on the potential for tourism, job growth and additional parking, and identify suitable business categories for vacant commercial properties.”* After a discussion between Mary Walter of the Board of Selectmen and CMRPC staff it was agreed to have CMRPC staff focus the 40-hour technical assistance time to address the issues noted above and a scope of services was prepared accordingly. CMRPC's Principal Planner, Eric R. Smith, AICP, acted as the Project Manager for this Project.

¹ www.mass.gov/hed/business/licensing/43d

Map 1: Location of the North Brookfield Downtown Central Business PDA



Land Use:

A review of the existing land use, based on 2005 MassGIS data, shows the built environment of the Downtown Central Business District (see Map 2 on the following page). CMRPC notes that some of the land uses of the District identified through MassGIS's land use mapping effort do not accurately portray the land use patterns of the Downtown Central Business Area, as some of the commercial uses on Main Street are showing up as industrial, residential or urban public / institutional. Some of the buildings located in this PDA, such as the Duncan Block Building and 181 North Main Street are actually mixed use, with commercial uses on the lower level and residential above. A number of buildings include vacant spaces at this time and present one of the challenges to economic development for the Town.

A list of the parcels included in the PDA is included in Appendix A and among the set of information of each parcel, based on the Town of North Brookfield Assessors' data, includes a land use code that provides more accurate land use data than the MassGIS data. A summary of the various land uses is included within Table 1 on the following page.

Map 2: Existing (2005) Land Use – Based on MassGIS Data

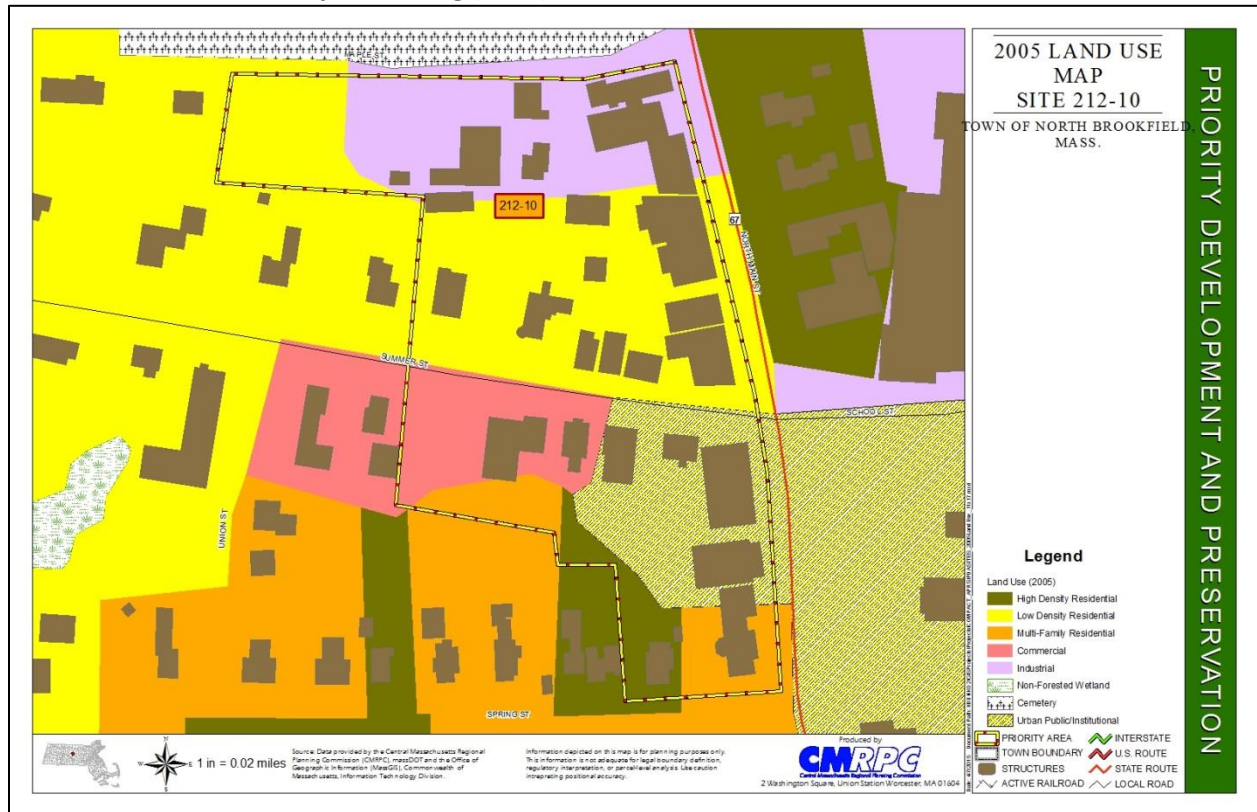


Table 1: Assessors Data Land Use Summary

<u>Use Code</u>	<u>Use Description</u>	<u># of Parcels</u>
031	Mixed Use - Commercial and Residential	6
013	Mixed Use - Residential and Commercial	1
101	Residential - Single Family Residential	5
104	Residential - Two-Family Residential	2
314	Trucking Terminals	1
325	Small Retail and Service stores	4
341	Bank Building	1
356	Misc. Public Services	2
931	Town-owned Town-House Building	1
956	Library	1

Source: North Brookfield Assessors; there are 24 parcels located within the PDA

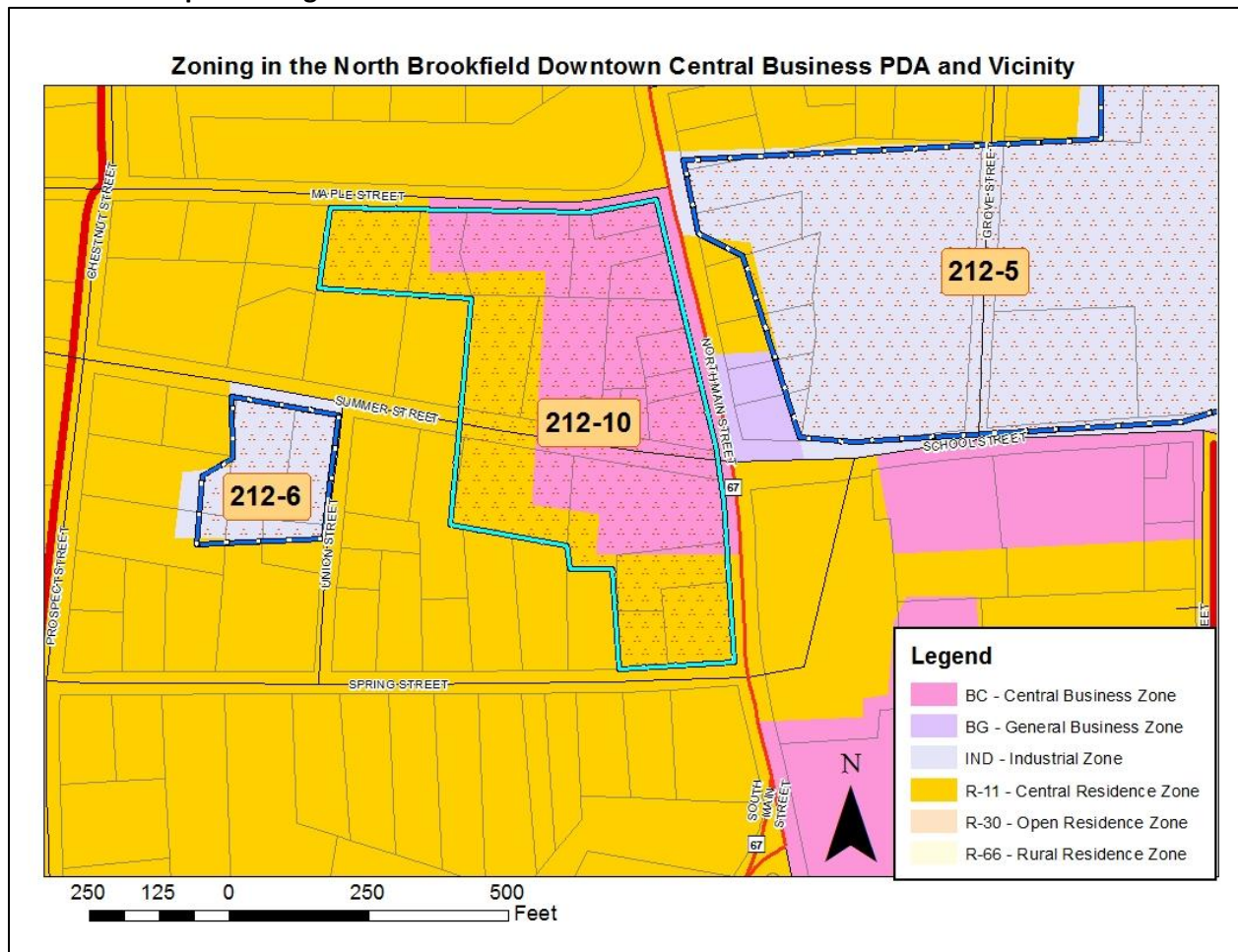
Zoning

The Town North Brookfield's Downtown Central Business District PDA includes two existing base zoning districts: 1) The Central Business (BC) District, which includes the parcels on North Main Street from Maple Street up though to just south of Summer Street, and the 2) the Residential-11 (R-11) zoning district, which is located to the rear / west / south of the CB District. The Haston Free Public Library, for

example, is on located a parcel in the R-11 District just outside of the BC District. Map 3 below indicates the zoning district information in the Downtown Central Business District PDA. Some of the parcels are split between the BC and R-11 zoning districts. Some of these parcels are identified and discussed in the zoning assessment that follows. In addition the entire Downtown Central Business District PDA is located within the more expansive Downtown Overlay District (see Map 4 on page 11).

As introduced above, and can be viewed on Map 3, there are a handful of lots that are split into one or more zoning districts. Such split zoning commonly happens when zoning districts are based off of a certain district from a roadway centerline (e.g. 250 feet from Main Street) and that distance does not equate to parcel boundaries. One example of a lot that is split into two zoning districts is 35 Summer Street, which is the North Brookfield Bank Building Property. It is actually split in such a way that the majority of the property is in the R-11 zoning district and a small portion of the lot (northeast corner) is in the BC zoning district (See Figure 1 on page 5). CMRPC staff recommends that this lot be included entirely within the BC zoning district.

Map 3: Zoning in the North Brookfield Downtown Central Business District PDA





As indicated in Figure 1 to the left, the North Brookfield Savings Bank property at 35 Summer Street is split into BC and R-11 zoning districts. CMRPC staff recommends this property by rezoned to be fully contained in the BC – Central Business Zoning District

Figure 1: Close up of zoning district map for 35 Summer Street

Although outside of the Downtown Central Business PDA, but located directly across from the Town House building on North Main Street is a red barn structure, which appears to be vacant at this time. The red barn property is actually consisting of two parcels with an address of 192-206 Main Street. The red barn is split into three (3) zoning districts: GC, R-11 and Industrial. CMRPC staff question if the GC (General Commercial) zoning district is really the best zoning for this property, as it seems that the downtown centric, BC zoning district is more consistent with the area (see Figures 2 and 3 below).



Figure 2: close up of zoning district map for 192-206 Main Street; Figure 3: the red barn at 192-206 Main Street.

Use Assessment:

As indicated above and shown in Map 3, the underlying zoning districts of the Downtown Central Business PDA are the Central Business Zone (BC) (which is for most of the lots that front North Main

Street, along with a few Maple Street and a couple on Summer Street) and the Residential 11 (R-11) zoning districts (for all the other lots not noted above).

Section IV of the Zoning Bylaw provides the set of “Use Regulations”. The bylaw begins in subsection A by providing a list of uses for residential districts. Therefore we begin our assessment discussion with the uses allowed in such districts (which includes R-11) as later under the commercial district discussion there are references provided back to the set of allowed uses in the residential districts.

CMRPC staff also notes how the Town of North Brookfield has been developing a “Use Table” that will provide a summary of all allowed uses. As currently the North Brookfield Zoning Bylaw is missing a Table of Use summary in its Zoning Bylaw, which is found in a majority of communities’ zoning bylaws. We recommend the Town implement a Table of Use for all the various allowed uses across all zoning districts. It is much easier for people, including prospective business owners to utilize a table format to figure out if their proposed use is allowed (either as a by-right use or via a Special Permit) or not.

Permitted by-right land uses in the residential districts, including R-11, are as follows:

- 1) Single-family dwelling
- 2) Governmental, educational, religious or other nonprofit institutional use
- 3) Farm, orchard, greenhouse, tree nursery, truck garden or woodlot operated for commercial purposes. May include retail sale of agricultural or horticultural products provided the major portion of these products has been raised on the premises (*CMRPC staff notes provisions for seasonal signs are also provided for*). *CMRPC staff questions if some of the land intensive agricultural uses are appropriate for the residential zone located right adjacent to the Downtown Central Business area. Certainly CMRPC supports agriculture, and we have been providing a lot of planning support in this area over the last few years, including with the Central Mass Grown initiative. We just believe that more “urban agriculture” based agricultural uses such community gardens and farmers markets would be more appropriate in the built-up area of the Downtown.*
- 4) Accessory uses as follows (required to be “customarily incidental to a permitted main use on the same premises and not detrimental to a residential neighborhood.”):
 - Use of space in a dwelling for a customary home occupation, office or studio maintained by resident occupants.
 - Use of property in connection with his trade by resident carpenter, contractor, electrician, painter, plumber or other artisan provided that no manufacturing or assembly work requiring substantially continuous employment shall be carried on and provided that all storage of vehicles, materials or equipment shall be within the principal building or within suitable accessory buildings.
 - Renting space to lodgers, boarders or tourists provided that no separate cooking facilities are maintained, and provided that no more than three (3) rooms are rented. Accommodations shall not be provided for more than six (6) persons in addition to the resident family.
 - Swimming pool (allowed subject to meeting setback provisions).
 - Accessory Apartment (allowed subject to meeting a set of standards).

The next set of uses are “uses which may be allowed, on a special permit, by the Board of Appeals, or in the case of ‘o’ below, by the Planning Board, after a public hearing and subject to the appropriate regulations if determined to be neither offensive or detrimental to the neighborhood”:

- a) Cemetery, golf course, riding stable, boat livery, ski area, ski mobile area, airport or camp for children or adults. *(These uses are allowed in the BC and the R-11 zoning districts; CMRPC staff believes they are out of character for the built-up area of the Downtown Central Business District)*
- b) Nursing home, sanatorium, orphanage or similar use
- c) Dog kennel or veterinary hospital (in R-66 District only; therefore would not be cited in the Downtown Central Business PDA).
- d) Private school, kindergarten, trade or professional school
- e) Telephone exchange, natural gas or electric power facility, pumping station, railroad or bus station or other public utility use
- f) Commercial raising of swine or furbearing animals or commercial slaughterhouse. *(These uses are allowed only in the R-11 but CMRPC staff believes they are out of character for the built-up area of the Downtown Central Business District)*
- g) Private club not conducted for profit.
- h) Removal of gravel, loam, sand or rock for commercial purposes. *(These uses are allowed only in the R-11 and CMRPC staff believes they are out of character for the built-up area of the Downtown Central Business District)*
- i) Conversion of a dwelling, existing at the time of adoption of this Bylaw, into a multi-family dwelling provided that all sewage disposal, yard and parking requirements can be met.
- j) Antique or gift shop for retail sale of products of home occupation provided items for sale are not displayed outdoors
- k) Undertaker
- l) Construction of a multi-family dwelling containing no more than four (4) dwelling units shall be permitted only the Central Residential District (R-11). *CMRPC staff notes there are series of standards that apply to the permitting of such use.*
- m) Office, minimum area of office should approximate 100 square feet per person
- n) Cemetery for burial of all types of animals, provided written permission is received from the Board of Health and the State Department of Environmental Quality Engineering *(old name of this Agency; the Town should put updated name when amending their zoning bylaw).*
- o) Use of a part of an existing single family dwelling or a secondary building or a new building for the following uses permitted in the **Central Business District**: 1-b, 1-c, 1-d (except hotel, motel), 1-e, 2-b, 2-c, 2-d. *CMRPC points out the way this clause references a whole set of uses in another zoning district points out how it can difficult for a potential business owner in interpreting the zoning bylaw and underscores the need for a Table of Uses.*
- p) In considering an application for a special permit under this section, the Planning Board will insure that such uses are: (1) secondary to the principal uses of the premises for residential purposes; (2) neither offensive nor detrimental to the abutters, the neighborhood or the town; (3) compatible with adjoining uses.
- q) Family day care, subject to the following conditions (a set of 4 conditions are then provided).
- r) Use of buildings existing on August 19, 1998 (excluding Dwellings) for warehouse and storage of restaurant equipment.

Then Section B is for the “Central Business District”. The first set of allowed uses is the “Permitted Uses” (subsection 1):

- 1) The first permitted use of the Central Business District states that “Any use permitted under Sect. IV, A, 1 and A, 2, **except f and h, 1 under A, 2** (emphasis added). No dwelling² shall be erected on a lot less than 11,000 sq. ft. in area.” CMRPC’s review of the residential allowed uses has found that the Central Business District all of the residential uses except for slaughterhouses and earth removal-related uses, which CMRPC staff notes makes sense not allowing these two particular uses within the Downtown area.
- 2) Office or bank.
- 3) Retail Business or consumer service. *There is also a clause on employees engaged in repair or making articles.*
- 4) Hotel, motel, restaurant or parking lot
- 5) Newspaper or job printer
- 6) Signs or other advertising devices indicating the name of the firm and good and services available on the premises (then has the set of standards).
- 7) One sign or other advertising device of a freestanding nature (*then has a set of standards*).
- 8) Office facility associated within an Industrial use, located on land which abuts an Industrial District, with a 20-foot setback from a public way.
- 9) Parking lot, access ways and landscaping associated with an Industrial use, located on land which abuts an Industrial District.

In addition to the permitted by-right uses noted above, Section B(2) provides the set of “uses which may be allowed, on a special permit, by the Board of Appeals after a public hearing and subject to the appropriate regulations, if determined to be neither offensive or detrimental to the district and provided all necessary safety precautions have been taken.” These uses are as follows:

- Place of amusement or assembly, commercial recreations facility or club conducted for profit
- Undertaker
- Automobile service station or garage, automobile sales or parking garage
- Sale and storage of feed, lumber, building supplies or fuel
- Conversion of a structure lawfully in existence into mixed residential and business use. Prior to occupancy all ZBA requirements shall be met including parking, trash removal and comply with all building, safety, conservation and health codes.

It should be noted that the Downtown Overlay District has its own set of use requirements, which CMRPC has assessed in the section that follows. One use not explicitly identified in the underlying zoning is restaurants, but that use is identified in the Downtown Overlay District and we provide our assessment accordingly.

Downtown Overlay District Use Assessment

The Downtown Overlay District provisions are included as Section IV(E) of the Town of North Brookfield’s Zoning Bylaw. Subsection 3 (Authority) indicates that the Planning Board shall serve as the Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA) for the following categories in the Downtown Overlay (CMRPC staff provides our comments in *italic* font based on our review of each provision):

² Dwelling is defined in the definitions section of the zoning bylaw to mean a residential dwelling unit.

- a. **Any use in the Downtown Overlay District.** *CMRPC staff is unclear if this provision is this taken to mean that any use will require a Special Permit no matter what, even if allowed by-right in an underlying zone. The Town also has Site Plan Review provisions in Section VI(G) of the zoning bylaw that will be triggered for new development (see page 13 for further discussion).*
 - b. **Any use in the Downtown Overlay district that requires a Special Permit through the Zoning Board of Appeals for existing zoning districts R-11 (Central Residence), R-30 (Open Residence), B-C (Central Business) B-G (General Business) and Industrial District.** *CMRPC staff believes this provision is intended to switch the SPGA authority from the Zoning Board of Appeals to the Planning Board for such uses in underlying zones that require a Special Permit. But if all uses require a Special Permit currently anyways (see a above) is this provision redundant?*
 - c. **Any use requiring a special permit pursuant to 4. Use Provisions b. Uses by Special Permit of this Downtown Overlay District Bylaw.** *CMRPC staff believes this clause is the one that would make sense from an administrative point of use. We provide our assessment on allowed uses in the Downtown Overlay District in the section that follows.*
 - d. **Where standards or other requirements listed as part of this Downtown Overlay District may conflict with those in the underlying district(s) (The bylaw then lists all such underlying districts including the Central Business District) the overlay provision shall apply.**
- Permitted Uses include but are not limited to:
 - a. Mixed-use development
 - b. Cafes (*CMRPC notes how the Town of North Brookfield is trying to encourage more restaurants and the restaurant use is allowed subject to Special Permit; see below. As part of preparing this assessment we researched the differences between what is considered a Café versus a restaurant with differences between the two increasing blurred.*)³
 - c. Professional Offices
 - d. Financial Institutions such as but not limited to: banks and mortgage companies
 - e. Small scale Retail Institutions (<4,000 square feet)
 - f. Personal Services such as but not limited to: Dry Cleaners, Beauty Salons, Tailors, Printing, Photocopying, Photo Processing, and Photography Studios
 - Uses which may be allowed on Special Permit from the Planning Board after a public hearing and subject to appropriate regulations, if determined to be neither offensive nor detrimental to the district and provided all necessary safety precautions have been taken.

³ Cafes primarily aim to sell coffee - good coffee, different types of coffee - and things that go with coffee, like light sandwiches, cakes, breakfasts, and snacks; also, a variety of drinks as well as tea, for people who don't like coffee. Restaurants focus on selling you the whole meal. Coffee is available, but only a certain type. Lately, cafes have begun to serve meals such as lunches and pasta, and restaurants have started selling light meals, high tea and desserts. The line blurs and is garbled with bistros, coffeehouses and bakeries sometimes now serve coffee. For more information see <https://www.quora.com/Market-Research/Whats-the-difference-between-a-cafe-and-a-restaurant>

- a. Entertainment uses such as but not limited to : Movie Theaters (1 or 2 screens) or Indoor recreations (i.e. arcade, bowling alley, etc.)
- b. Outdoor Markets such as but not limited to Farmers' Market, Flea Market, etc. *(CMRPC staff recommends that Farmer's Markets be a by-right use. The Town's licensing authority would also be providing review for permitting of any public space.)*
- c. Bed and Breakfast and Boarding Houses
- d. Restaurants *(Following up on the discussion above under cafes, CMRPC staff recommend that not all Restaurants be allowed by Special Permit, at least those that are full service and are utilizing existing spaces; although perhaps a Special Permit could still be required for fast food restaurants. For example, CMRPC staff is aware of how the Town of Millville recently changed their restaurant use provisions to allow them in their Central Business District subject to site plan review. In addition in the 2015 Central Massachusetts Model Village District Bylaw that CMRPC has prepared we provide the café and restaurant uses together in one category as a by-right use as follows:*

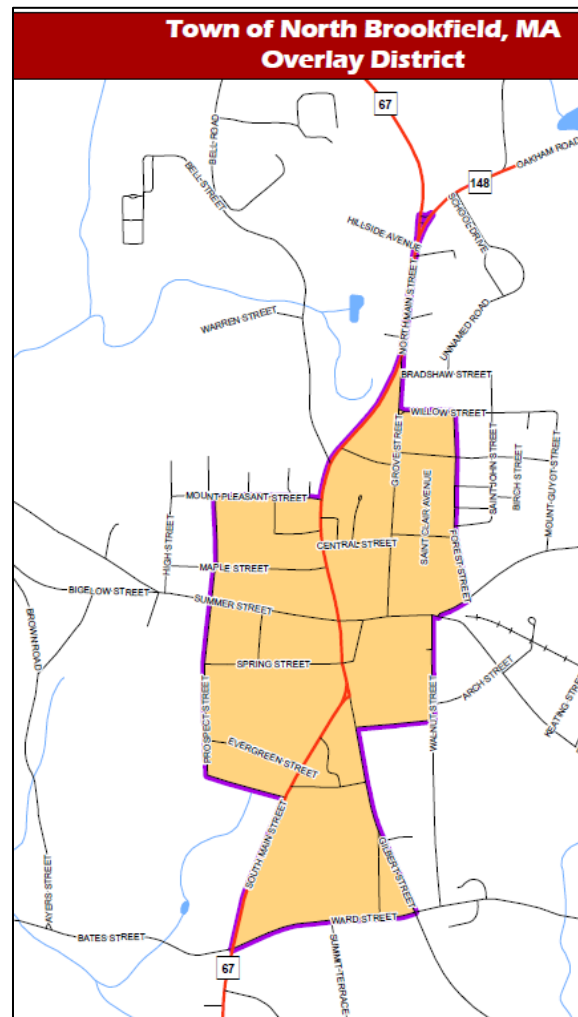
Cafés, Restaurants, Taverns or other establishment providing food and beverage within a building (Communities may want to add related definitions such as bar, brew pub, distillery, microbrewery, nanobrewery, etc. In addition, some communities may want to require a Special Permit for this designation to address noise, operating hours, etc.).

We also have included a provision for Outdoor seating that would be allowed by-right:

Outdoor seating associated with Cafés, Restaurants or Taverns subject to applicable licensing requirements (CMRPC believes such outdoor seating use is more like an accessory use and should be incorporated into a community's accessory use provisions; we can assist communities in developing appropriate standards upon request.)

- The following are prohibited uses identified in the zoning bylaw:
 - a. Retail operations with more than 2,000 square feet of gross floor area on any individual floor. *(CMRPC staff question if this provision conflicts with the permitted use provision under subsection 4e that allows small scale retail establishments up to 4,000 sq. ft.)*
 - b. Drive-through operations
 - c. Adult Entertainment

Map 4: North Brookfield Downtown Overlay Zoning District



Zoning: Dimensional Requirements

CMRPC staff has provided an assessment of the existing dimensional requirements, in order to develop any specific recommendations related to dimensional controls in the two underlying zoning districts: Central Business (BC) and Residential 11 (R-11). The existing dimensional requirements are indicated in Table 2 on the following page. In the text that follows, CMRPC provides our assessment and analysis of the lot area (size) and lot coverage of the two zoning districts. One aspect of North Brookfield's zoning to consider is that for the R-11 zoning districts the type of use (particularly the different types of residential uses in the R-11 zone) will factor into the exact set of dimensional requirements.

Table 2: Dimensional Requirements for lots in the Downtown Central Business PDA

ZONING DISTRICT	MIN. LOT AREA (Sq. Ft.)	MIN. LOT FRONTAGE (Feet)	MIN. SETBACK (front)	MIN. SETBACK (Side)	MIN. SETBACK (Rear)	MAX. LOT COVERAGE % of Lot	MAX. BLDG HEIGHT (Feet)	MAX. # BLDG STORIES (# of Stories)
Central Business (BC)	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	30 Feet	50	40	3
R-11 – One-Family Use	11,000	100	20	10	20	25	35	2.5
R-11 – One-Family Use (Rear lot)	55,000	40	100	100	100	5	35	2.5
R-11 – Two-Family Use	16,000	100	30	20	20	25	35	2.5
R-11 – Three-Family Use	27,000	100	30	20	20	25	35	2.5
R-11 – Four-Family Use	41,000	100	30	20	20	25	35	2.5
R-11 – Other Permitted Uses	11,000	100	20	10	20	25	35	2.5

- In the R-11 zoning district, the type of use (particularly the different types of residential uses) will factor into the exact set of dimensional requirements.

North Brookfield Downtown Central Business District PDA Lot Analysis

CMRPC's staff conducted an analysis of the dimensional requirements of lots within the Downtown Central Business District PDA, specifically lot area and lot coverage. Our analysis of these two components follows in the upcoming sections. CMRPC made use of the Town of North Brookfield's Assessors Data for the properties located within the Downtown Central Business District PDA as well as CMRPC's Geographic Information System (GIS) to facilitate our analysis. There are 24 lots either fully or partially included in the Downtown Central Business District PPA. CMRPC staff notes that the Downtown Overlay District relies on existing underlying zoning for dimensional requirements.

Lot Area:

As indicated in Table 1, there is no existing minimum lot area for lots within the BC District. Meanwhile the existing minimum lot area for lots within the R-11 District is 11,000 square feet.

CMRPC staff analyzed a total of 24 lots that are contained in the Downtown Central Business District PDA (of the 24, 3 are barely in the PDA with a fourth, 58 Summer Street, only having the Maple Street frontage in the PDA.). Of the 24 total lots, 11 are entirely in the Central Business District and 7 are in the R-11; another 6 are split between the two zoning districts in some fashion. Only 6 Spring Street is non-conforming for the 11,000 square-foot minimum lot size/area requirement for properties in the R-11 zone. Overall, based on our assessment, lot size requirements do not seem to pose any regulatory barrier to redevelopment in the PDA, particularly the lots on North Main Street.

Lot Coverage:

CMRPC utilized a relatively new MassGIS layer of building structures to calculate lot coverage for the set of parcels analyzed within the PDA. CMRPC staff's analysis focused on the set of 11 lots in the BC district. We note 6 lots are above the maximum lot coverage for the BC District of 50%. The 50% maximum lot coverage requirement for parcels in the BC seems low, as some buildings in the Downtown Central Business PDA comprise a majority of lot. Therefore, we would recommend increasing the existing lot coverage requirement for parcels in the CB District.

Site Plan Review Requirements

Section VI(G) of the Zoning Bylaw provides the Town's Site Plan Review requirements, including the regulatory framework for what types of development are required to go through Site Plan Review. Subsection 2 provides the framework for what "Projects Requiring Site Plan Review" which states the following:

"No permit for the construction, exterior alteration, relocation, occupancy, or change in use of any building shall be given and no existing use shall be expanded except in conformity with a site plan approval by the Planning Board. Site Plan Review shall also be required for the resumption of any use permitted by this Bylaw that is discontinued for more than two (2) years."

Subsection 3 does provide some exemptions. But one exemption we note that is lacking explicitly is "change of use" which is referenced in the "Projects Requiring Site Plan Review" section. CMRPC staff notes that a few communities realize that there is an extra regulatory hurdle to require people who want to open a business in an existing vacant space to go through the site plan review process. Ashburnham and Concord are provided as two examples and we have included their language as Appendix B. CMRPC recommends that the Town of North Brookfield amend their Site Plan Review provisions to provide some clear exemption opportunity for change of use, particularly as a way to encourage restaurants in vacant spaces.

Parking Space Requirements

CMRPC has provided a review of parking space requirements focusing on the zoning for the PDA. The Town of North Brookfield's conventional parking requirements are found in Section VI(B). However, the Downtown Overlay District does provide some flexibility for businesses (or potential businesses) located

here. The Downtown Overlay District has a subsection that focuses on parking, see Section IV(E)(8), which allows the Planning Board, as part of a Special Permit process, to reduce the conventional minimum requirements or provide alternative methods for meeting the required parking.

Some of the available innovative parking strategies as outlined in the zoning bylaw are:

- **Shared On-Site Parking**
 1. **Non-competing Uses:** In mixed-use developments, applicant may propose a reduction in parking requirements based on an analysis of peak demands for non-competing uses. Up to [75%] of the requirements for the predominant use may be waived by the Planning Board if the applicant can demonstrate that the peak demands for two uses do not overlap.
 2. **Competing Uses.** In mixed-use developments, applicants may propose a reduction in parking requirements where peak demands do overlap. In these cases, the Planning Board may reduce the parking requirements of the predominant use by up to [30%].
- **Off-Site Parking:** Separate from, or in conjunction with Shared Parking provisions, an applicant may use off-site parking to satisfy their parking requirements in accordance with the following conditions:
 1. Off-site parking shall be within [two hundred (200) feet of the property for which it is being requested. *CMRPC recommends that the distance be increased somewhere between 500 and 1,000 feet.*
 2. Off-site parking spaces provided by a separate private property owner shall be subject to a legally binding agreement that will be presented to the Planning Board as a condition of the Special Permit. Where an agreement shall expire within a specified timeline, the applicant or current property owner shall continue to provide evidence to the Zoning Enforcement Agent that the agreement has been extended.

Development Suitability, Opportunities and Constraints

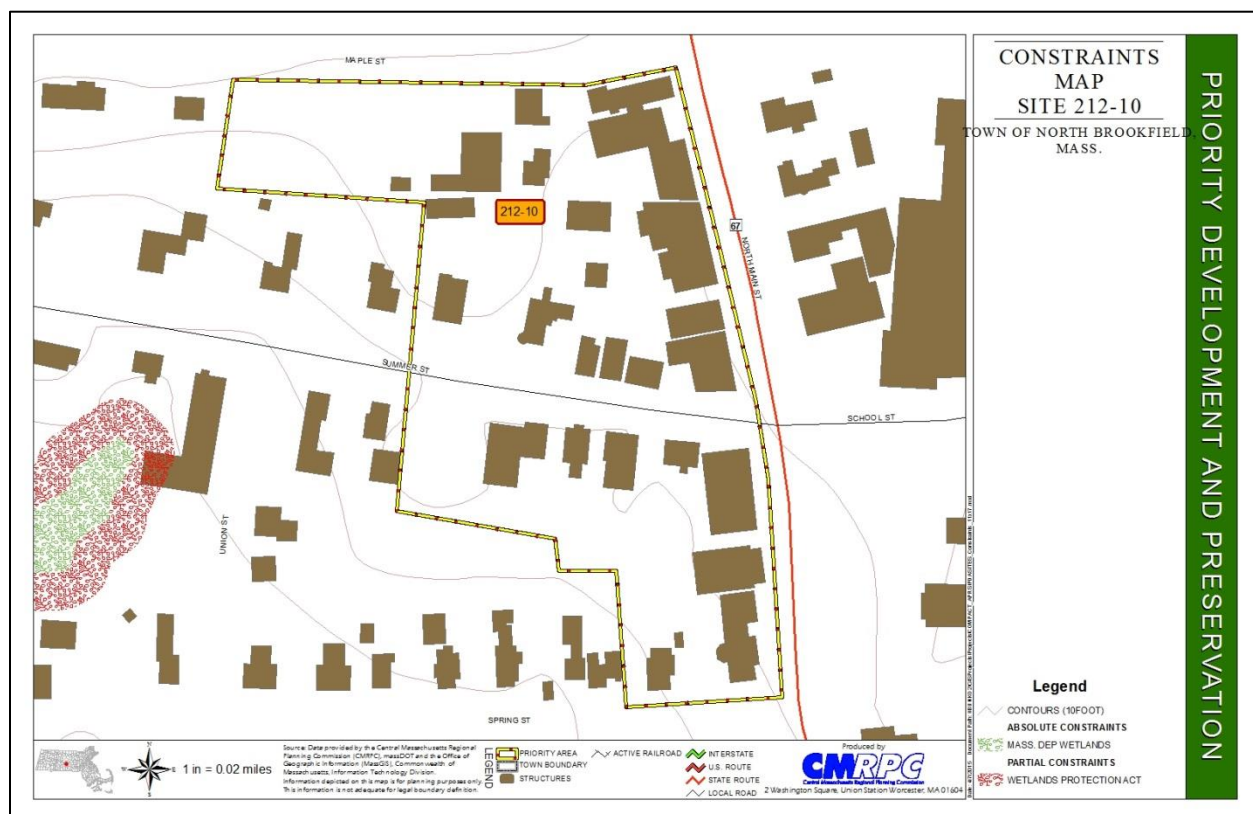
This next section provides a review of development and/or redevelopment opportunities within the North Brookfield Downtown Central Business PDA. CMRPC provides a review of residential market demand opportunities, review of environmental constraints, walkability considerations, restaurant opportunities, creative placemaking aspects of economic development, streetscape, and parking.

Residential Market Demand Opportunity: There is market demand for residential development in this PDA, based on a recent national survey. According to a recent *Better Cities and Towns* e-newsletter article, *“a recent national survey by TransitCenter found a big, unmet desire for mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. TransitCenter is interested, they report, because the kind of neighborhood a person lives in is the primary factor in who takes transit. However, mixed-use doesn't necessarily mean cities. About 18 million people--or six percent of the nation--would like to live in mixed-use suburban neighborhoods, but currently don't. About 10 percent of Americans would like to live in mixed-use small towns, but don't.*

*That gap will create a flow of people moving to fulfill their unmet desires.”*⁴ More residents living in the North Brookfield Town Center could correspond to an increased market demand for commercial and service uses. This would include restaurants (see discussion on page 16). There are demographic trends in favor of walkable communities, of which North Brookfield already has the elements to be.

Environmental Constraints: There are no identified environmental development constraints in the Downtown Central Business PDA, as indicated in Map 6 below. Given that this PDA is a previously built-up area that is not surprising. Constraints to development are related to market conditions and cost to rehabilitate vacant spaces (both soft and hard costs). There is an opportunity of reusing existing Infrastructure as this PDA benefits from readily-available public water and sewer utilities that services the area

Map 6: North Brookfield Downtown PDA Constraints Map



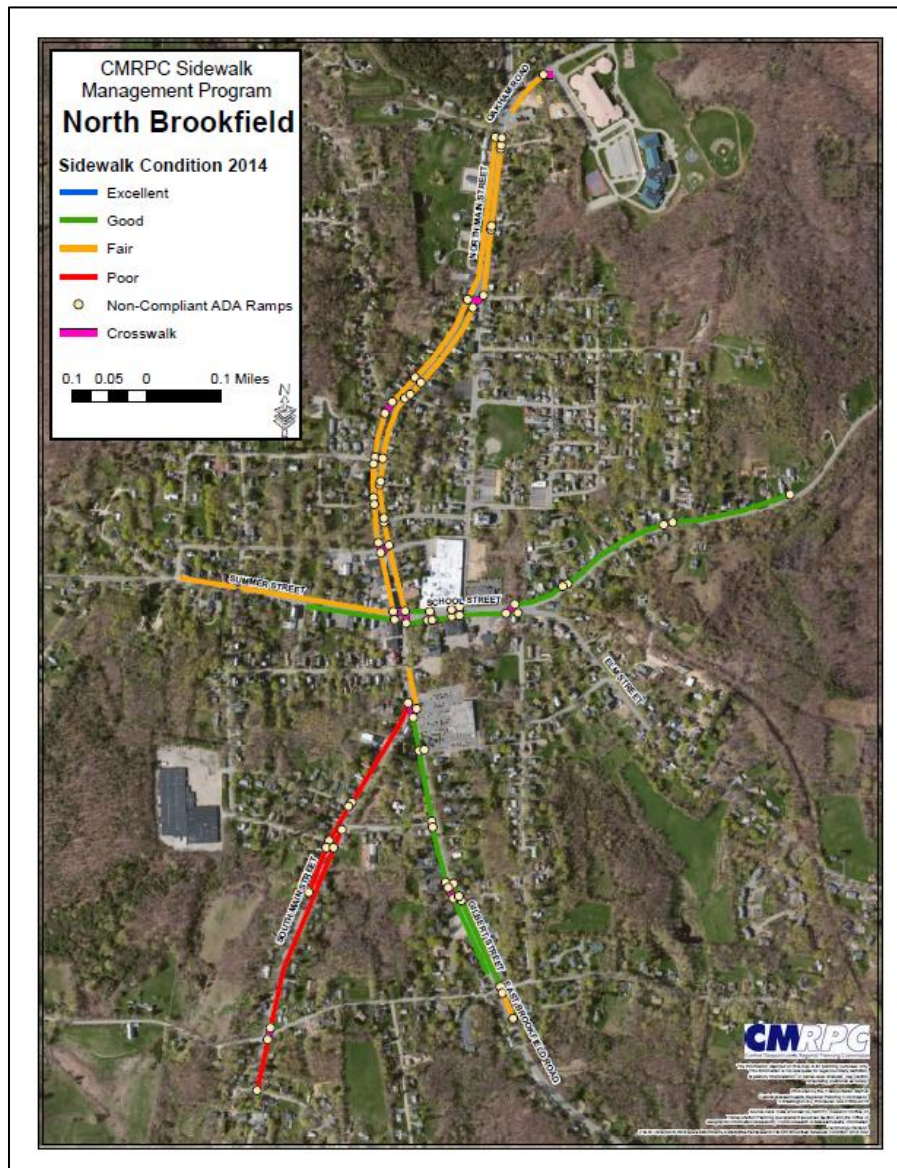
Walkability Considerations

Overall the Downtown Central Business District has elements of a friendly walkable area with sidewalks in most areas of the PDA. However, CMRPC staff observed no sidewalks in front of the First Congregational Church property, which has a nice common-like landscaped area in front of it. Inclusion of sidewalks here would provide a continuous pedestrian pathway to the Hannaford's Plaza on that side of the street. Also of note is that no sidewalks are considered to be in excellent condition in the study area. The ones in the immediate Town Center area are only in fair conditions. Also there are many

⁴ The full article is available at <http://bettercities.net/news-opinion/blogs/robert-steuteville/21350/small-cities-and-towns-are-urban-places-too>.

sidewalks with non-compliance ADA ramps. The Town should seek funding to improve sidewalks in the Town Center that would provide for ADA accessibility. See Map 5 below for a sidewalk conditions map.

Map 5: Sidewalks and their Conditions in the North Brookfield Town Center



Restaurant Opportunities: In speaking to the Town Board of Selectmen as part of preparing the Scope of Services for this PDA Assessment, the Town had identified the fact that there is a lack of full service restaurants currently in the Downtown Central Business PDA. The Board of Selectmen envisioned a restaurant row flourishing in the Downtown. The redevelopment of the Town House building provides an opportunity for it to be a cultural venue again. This move would allow for a potential set of customers for restaurants before and/or after performances.

In order to achieve this vision there are steps the Town can take to promote the fact there are restaurant opportunities here. One of the matters was already identified and that is on the zoning side. Currently only cafés are allowed by-right (subject to SPR) and other restaurants require a Special Permit. To help expedite permitting of restaurants, CMRPC recommends that most restaurants (except for fast-food) be allowed by-right. Also if restaurants are utilizing existing vacant spaces, there should be no site plan review).

CMRPC was able to speak to two restaurant group owners in order to help provide a roadmap to the Town of North Brookfield in facilitating the opening of additional full service restaurants. The first restaurant development discussion was with Dan Gonya of Table 3 (who operates the Duck, Avellinos and Cedar Street Grille in the Town of Sturbridge). The second was Karim El-Gamal, Owner of The Rail Trail Flatbread Company and the New City Microcreamery, both are located in Downtown Hudson..

The #1 point to consider, according to Mr. Gonya, is how much of a local population do you have that can support restaurants. Although he now sees business comprised of 25% or less of local people, he used to see 50% locals. Technology and social media tools/apps such as Trip Advisor, Open Table and Yelp create a “Digital Sign Post” for local restaurants. Something to keep in mind of North Brookfield.

Both restaurant owners indicated the trend of restaurants becoming a destination. This trend can be seen in the success of Rose 32 in Hardwick, for example. Five years ago, the #1 idea to bring people from the outside, Mr. Gonya was thinking, was a sign from the Mass Turnpike. But since then there have been major changes, especially related to the economic downturn and also technology, as noted above. He noted the Sturbridge Route 20 CT District had a base, with some existing local restaurant establishments.

Mr. El-Gamal began by discuss landlord issues and potential incentives. He suggested that the Town work towards getting the building landlords involved as part of working with potential restaurateurs. Some of the ideas he suggested included:

- a) Have the restaurant owns use a portion of profits / sales say, 1% off the side, to go towards the rent base
- b) Landlords should invest some portion of startup costs (\$) in build-up of restaurant space
- c) Landlords give first year free rent as part of having the tenant sign a 5-year lease. That will free up some \$ capital to get the restaurant build out going.

Point’s b and c are important when you consider that it costs \$50 per square-foot in investment for restaurant build out. Most restaurants range in 250-700 square feet in size. Mr. El-Gamal noted the rent costs are the biggest overhead for restaurants start up and there are ways for Towns can do / find ways to entice landlords. Besides the ideas he noted above, Mr. El-Gamal indicated that towns are holders of the liquor licenses and will now when licenses will be available. There are both pouring and beer/wine license. Some restaurants can be successful if allowed to be a “BYOB” (“Bring your own beverage establishment). Landlords do have to be ready for the marketing push by the Town.

Finally Mr. El-Gamal noted the Town could help by having a National Register Historic District established. This would help facilitate the rehabilitation of vacant spaces in historic buildings by use of historic tax credits (Federal and State). Currently only the North Brookfield Town House is included as a National Register Historic Property. There are also Local regulatory considerations (such as the Special Permit versus by-right issue of permitting restaurants as previously discussed).

As previously indicated, one key thing to think about from the Town's perspective is that the Town can draw population from the surrounding communities, especially New Braintree and Oakham , which are rural in nature and do not have a traditional downtown area. As both restaurant group owners indicated restaurants have the opportunity to make the North Brookfield Downtown Central Business District a destination. Therefore, CMRPC has provided information about not only the immediate communities' population (in addition to the Town of North Brookfield's) in Table 3 but also the set of second ring of communities that surround North Brookfield (see Table 4 on the following page). As indicated in Table 3 in 2010 there was a population of 26,641 persons in the Town of North Brookfield and surrounding communities. But if you factor in the second ring communities the population is almost 100,000 and anticipated to grow almost 17 percent by 2035 (see Table 4). The Town could promote this information with perspective restaurateurs to help them understand their potential market.

Table 3: Population of North Brookfield and Surrounding Communities

Community	2000	2010	% Growth 2000-2010	Projection 2020	Projection 2035	% Projected Growth 2010-2035
North Brookfield	4,683	4,680	-0.1%	4,880	5,280	12.8%
Brookfield	3,051	3,390	11.1%	3,530	3,810	12.4%
East Brookfield	2,097	2,183	4.1%	2,240	2,450	12.2%
New Braintree	927	999	7.8%	1,050	1,130	13.1%
Spencer	11,691	11,688	0.0%	12,270	13,490	15.4%
West Brookfield	3,804	3,701	-2.7%	3,850	4,160	12.4%
Oakham	1,673	1,902	13.7%	1,980	2,140	12.5%
Total North Brookfield and surrounding towns	26,253	26,641	1.5%	27,820	30,320	13.8%

Table 4: Population of the second ring set of communities surrounding North Brookfield

Community	2000	2010	% Growth 2000- 2010	Projection 2020	Projection 2035	% Projected Growth 2010- 2035
Barre	5,113	5,398	5.6%	5,630	6,100	13.0%
Brimfield	3,339	3,609	8.1%	3,841	4,126	14.3%
Charlton	11,263	12,981	15.3%	13,910	15,650	20.6%
Hardwick	2,622	2,990	14.0%	3,100	3,360	12.4%
Leicester	10,471	10,970	4.8%	11,460	12,360	12.7%
Paxton	4,386	4,806	9.6%	5,030	5,410	12.6%
Rutland	6,353	7,669	20.7%	8,750	9,680	26.2%
Sturbridge	7,837	9,268	18.3%	9,920	12,570	35.6%
Ware	9,707	9,872	1.7%	10,374	10,947	10.9%
Warren	4,776	5,135	7.5%	5,430	5,940	15.7%
Total of second ring set of communities	65,867	72,698	10.4%	77,445	86,143	18.5%
North Brookfield and surrounding towns – including second ring	92,120	99,339	7.8%	105,265	116,463	17.2%

In addition to attracting residents of the neighboring communities, the Town Center is home to a number of businesses, especially the Quaboag Rubber Company, which is the Town's largest employer (estimated at between 250-499 according to the Mass. Department of Labor and Workforce Development). In fact a review of the Town's larger employers indicates that besides Quaboag Rubber, there are a number of sizable employers within or near the Town Center, which includes Hannaford's Supermarket, Municipal-related (Town Hall, Fire, Police, and Library), and North Brookfield Savings Bank. These employees represent a daytime population market opportunity for restaurants.

An additional consideration when analyzing commercial development suitability, such as restaurants, is traffic: the number of cars that travel past the site. CMRPC has identified 5,134 Average Daily Vehicle Trips (ADT) (51.3% NB and 48.7% SB) on N. Main Street (Routes 148 and 67) at a location south of Oakham Road on September 11-13, 2013. This traffic count is the closest recent count available near the Town Center.

Placemaking Considerations

Placemaking: Another economic development tool that the Town can make use of for planning in the Downtown Central Business District PDA is a tool known as placemaking. *“Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.”*⁵ An important consideration to the North Brookfield Village / Town Center area is the fact that *“Mixed-use compact, walkable neighborhoods are fundamental building blocks of communities with a strong sense of place”*⁶ CMRPC believes that the development of mixed-use neighborhood represents an economic development opportunity for North Brookfield’s Downtown Central Business District and the surrounding Downtown area. There are existing placemaking elements in place with the Haston Free Public Library located here with the Town House representing a redevelopment opportunity as a cultural venue (to which it has been in the past, hosting concerts and live performances)

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) sponsored a Placemaking workshop in spring 2015, which was held in Lowell. Although CMRPC staff was not able to attend, we were provided one document that was referenced as a resource during the workshop. This document entitled, *Placemaking for REALTOR® Associations: A Guide to Transform Public Spaces to Community Places*, was prepared by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) and has a lot of good information related to Placemaking that seems relevant to help revitalize North Brookfield Town Center. Therefore we have included various resources and case studies from that document in this Report in the text that follows.

The NAR’s Placemaking document describes Placemaking a bit more comprehensive than the general introduction provided above indicating that *“Placemaking is simply a way of creating a place in a community where people want to visit and be. These places are welcoming, safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, usable, accessible and invite interaction. Placemaking is where a space is turned into a place where residents, and others, can connect with each other to meet, greet, gather, and come together as a community. A space becomes a place when there is a reason to go there.”*

“Placemaking and Public Spaces”

The NAR Placemaking Report notes that *“every community has a variety of public spaces, some of which are noticeable and others which may be hidden. Public places most recognized are parks, streets, boulevards, and plazas. But public spaces are also found in between private spaces such as alleys, neglected courtyards, and stairways. These could be a city’s most underutilized and potentially valuable assets. However, even noticeable public spaces in communities may be unused or underused because of safety concerns or because they have deteriorated — all of which can be improved to increase their usage and usefulness and to strengthen and enrich a community. Placemaking can enhance a public space and make it come to life. You can help by identifying a public place and developing its positive potential so that whole community can benefit.”* CMRPC staff notes that the Town of North Brookfield owns the pocket park at the north east corner of North Main Street and School Street. But this space appears to be largely underutilized at this time. A placemaking process could help the town residents identify ways the park could be redesigned to foster greater use. For example, the Town of North Brookfield does not have host a Farmers Market and this park represents a potential venue.

⁵ Mark Wyckoff, Michigan State University

⁶ Robert Steuteville, Better Cities and Towns

“Build a Better Block”

The “Build a Better Block”⁷ program seems very relevant for North Brookfield. One way to initiate Placemaking into a planning process in the North Brookfield Town Center could be with a Better Block project, which is a tool where communities engage in a temporary, short-term (usually 1–2 days) build-out process to show the potential of a one to two block area in need of revitalization.

Ideas for a Better Block project could include creating pop-up businesses (pop-up storefronts are discussed in the following section), installing seating areas and planters, inviting local musicians to play and artists to paint, temporarily changing traffic patterns and parking, and making the block more people- and bike-friendly. The following website provides additional details on the Build a Better Block Program: <http://betterblock.org/how-to-build-a-better-block/>. For workshops or questions about putting together a Build a Better Block initiative in North Brookfield, the Town could send an email to info@teambetterblock.com. CMRPC staff can also facilitate this contact upon request.

“Tour of Vacant Buildings/Spaces”

The Town of North Brookfield may also want to consider planning and organizing a tour of the vacant buildings. Deb Brown, Director of the Webster City, Iowa, Chamber of Commerce, looked at the empty store fronts downtown and other available buildings around town as opportunities. She and her team held a **Tour of Empty Buildings**. They worked with local real estate professionals as point people on the tour to field questions about what businesses could be a good fit, square footage, cost, condition and so on. Deb notes that it is important to build relationships with members in your community and ask for their help. They may be able to be part of the tour and provide details about the history of the buildings.

“Pop-up Storefronts”

The information in this section is based on the approach taken in the Pop-up Storefront mini-course that has been developed by Becky McCray and Deb Brown of the Small Business Survival Store. CMRPC staff participated in this mini-course during the preparation of this PDA report in order to help craft a strategy for developing a pop-up storefront program in the North Brookfield Town Center. But before the strategy outline is presented, an introduction to what is a pop-up storefront is provided.

To begin this discussion we start by providing the information as to “What is a pop-up storefront?” Pop-up shops and pop-up retail are temporary retail spaces that sell merchandise of any kind⁸. Pop-up shops can come in many different flavors, including:

- Special Event: a short-term rental of an otherwise empty storefront, which could last just one day, or longer (one to six months, for example), and could include sublets to other individuals or organizations
- Seasonal Use: a rental that happens during certain times of the year, for example, a business that only requires space during the holidays or summer months (Halloween shops are a great example of this)

⁷ <http://betterblock.org/> A Better Block project’s focus is to bring back a neighborhood rapidly rather than developing a larger scale, more financially complex project that could take years. It can help people come together to create a community destination quickly.

⁸ <http://blog.thestorefront.com/what-exactly-is-a-pop-up-shop/>

- Recurring: a shop that is only open one day a month, or that opens in a different location every several months
- Step 1: Choose a location and sketch the layout. One potential site for a series of pop-up storefronts is 181 Main Street. This mixed-use building features a series of vacant storefront spaces, which appear to have been vacant for a number of years. For example a Google Street View image taken in June 2009 (see Figure 4 below) looks similar to the building today. A popular “lunchette” was once located here. In order to sketch a layout, the Town could utilize building records on file with the Assessors or Building Department, which could provide help facilitate a sketch to layout pop-up storefront spaces.

Figure 4: Google Street View of 181 Main Street (June 2009)



- Step 2: Find co-conspirators. As CMRPC staff’s primary contact for this Project has been the Board of Selectmen, the Board will be helpful in getting others involved. CMRPC staff suggests reaching out to members of the town’s Cultural Council and Historical Society, along with representatives of the real estate and artists’ community.
- Step 3: Choose a date. The Region holds a “Backroads Studio Tour” every October. The event for the Pop-up in North Brookfield could be designed to correspond with this event. See <http://www.backroadsstudiotour.com/> for more information. There was one artist participating from North Brookfield in 2014 and the Pop-up could help bring more people into North Brookfield downtown area than has been occurring in the past.
- Step 4: List out your marketing tools – North Brookfield is part of the region known as the “Brookfields” and there is a “Browse the Brookfields” marketing initiative. <http://www.browsethebrookfields.com>. North Brookfield is also part of the Quaboag Hills region and is included in the marketing of the Quaboag Valley Chamber of Commerce. <http://www.qhma.com/index.php/visiting-the-quaboag-hills.html>. The Backroads

Studio Tour could also be considered a regional marketing tool. The Town could definitely use these regional resources to further economic development in the Downtown Central Business PDA, beyond just the pop-up initiative.

- Step 5: Finding people to do pop-ups – New England Foundation for the Arts has a database to help find local artists. The Town could utilize this tool, which is known as the Creative Ground and is available at <http://www.creativeground.org/>. Also in the Town of Hardwick, a few towns away, there is an excellent bakery and some folks in North Brookfield want to establish a coffee/tea café that serves Rose 32 goods. A pop-up might be a good way to start this!
- Step 6: Finding other businesses – CMRPC suggests that as part of the pop-up effort, the Town should reach out to existing businesses.
- Step 7: Talking to the Town government – As part of preparing this report, one task included a presentation to the Board of Selectmen in late July 2015, which introduced the pop-up idea to them then.

“Creative Placemaking”

Communities across our nation are leveraging the arts and engaging design to make their communities more livable with enhanced quality of life, increased creative activity, a distinct sense of place, and vibrant local economies that together capitalize on their existing assets.

Artscape DIY identifies several components to creative Placemaking including cultural districts, creative and cultural industry clusters, mixed-use development, and public and community arts. Many communities are integrating arts and cultural projects into larger Placemaking initiatives. Public art, which is one component of creative Placemaking, includes works such as large-scale sculptures, projections, mosaics, fountains, monuments, light installations or murals, which are displayed in the public realm to be enjoyed by all. Public art projects are a simple way to get started with creative Placemaking in your community (see Figure 5 on the following page on how the City of Providence used public art to celebrate George M. Cohan).

The Realtor association Creative Placemaking report asks: *“Do you know of any local arts organizations that you can partner with to plan a project to create better places by installing works of art, or to work with local residents on a creative Placemaking activity?”* CMRPC certainly believe that there is the opportunity for the North Brookfield Town House (pictured in Figure 6 on the following page) to become an anchor cultural facility in this PDA (See grants and resources section for more information on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s Cultural Facilities Fund).

The Town of North Brookfield already has an annual venue for local residents to show their arts and crafts. The Haston Public Library’s Friends of the Library, holds an annual May Festival on the grounds of the First Congregational Church common. The Haston May Festival also represents creative placemaking in that it represents a celebration of local food, farms, and gardens.

For more information on Artscape DIY visit their Home Page at: <http://www.artscapediy.org/Home.aspx>. See their creative placemaking toolkit at: <http://www.artscapediy.org/Creative-Placemaking/Approaches-to-Creative-Placemaking.aspx>

Figure 5: Public Art of George M. Cohan in Providence, RI



Figure 6: The North Brookfield Town House



Creative Placemaking and Economic Development Examples

The Town of Walpole, NH hosts the **Walpole Artisans Cooperative**, which has a storefront gallery in the Walpole, NH Town Center. The shop is run as a cooperative, by the artisans themselves, which is located at 52 Main Street in Walpole, NH. At their gallery one can find unique locally made gifts, original artwork handcrafted by juried members. They also facilitate a regional art tour Thanksgiving weekend,

which includes their storefront gallery as one of the stops. For more information visit: <http://www.woodcollection.com/WalpoleArtisansCooperative.htm>.

Also in New Hampshire is the League of NH Craftsmen. According to their website, <https://www.nhcrafts.org/>, since 1932, the League of NH Craftsmen has led the way in setting the standard and promoting fine craft throughout the United States and the world. Fine craft that is made by hand in New Hampshire. The mission of the League is to encourage, nurture, and promote the creation, use and preservation of fine contemporary and traditional craft through the inspiration and education of artists and the broader community. League members include more than 750 Juried Craftspeople working in a wide range of media from Baskets and Clay to Printmaking and Wood. Juried Craftspeople have met the League's rigorous standards for creativity, innovation, and technical expertise. They must also be a resident of New Hampshire or reside in a town in Maine, Massachusetts, or Vermont that has part of its town limits within ten miles of the New Hampshire border.

The League hosts an Annual Craftsmen's Fair, which starts the first Saturday in August and runs for nine day and held at the Mount Sunapee Resort in Newbury, the beautiful Dartmouth/Sunapee region of New Hampshire, the Fair is a wonderful opportunity to meet more than 350 craftspeople, learn more about craft through demonstrations and workshops, and treat yourself to a work of fine craft or get an early start on your holiday shopping. However, in addition you can shop all year at the seven League of NH Craftsmen fine craft galleries that are located throughout the state. Many of the fine craft galleries also hold classes, demonstrations, and workshops that are open to people of all ages and skill levels. For information on location of the seven galleries visit: <https://www.nhcrafts.org/retail-galleries.php>.

Heritage Tourism as a form of economic development: As an example, the Town can build on the legacy of being the summer home of playwright George M. Cohan, and Long View Farm, the recording studio located north of the Downtown Central Business area, which was the location of recording many classic rock records. These facts of North Brookfield could be promoted with the Browse the Brookfields and Quaboag Hills promotional efforts. As previously indicated the City of Providence celebrates their City's heritage as being the birthplace of Mr. Cohan and have installed a sculpture off of Wickenden Street (see Figure on the previous page).

The Town could direct economic development in the Center Village the way towns of Pomfret and Putnam have in northeastern Connecticut. Putnam now has a First Fridays event, which is designed to bring people to shop and eat at their downtown establishments. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.discoverputnam.com/>. Pomfret is marketing their community where "*Quiet country roads lead to pastoral byways, historic landmarks, unique shops and exceptional restaurants.*" For more information visit: <http://www.visitpomfret.com/index.html>. Again the Town could provide itself more on the Browse the Brookfields and Quaboag Hills websites.

Parking

There is on-street parking on North Main Street. There are signs posted for 2-hour parking. Parking is laid out as parallel parking on the east side of North Main Street, but angled on the west side (with spaces angled towards the direction for southbound drivers). There is off-street parking available to the rear of some of the North Main Streets. The Town could work with the property owners to see if shared parking could be encouraged, and if so, signage could be developed. A further assessment of parking was beyond the available hours for this Project and the Commonwealth's Mass. Downtown

Initiative represents a potential source of funding for a detailed parking assessment (see the resources section).

Recommendations

Zoning

- CMRPC recommends that the Town of North Brookfield amend their Site Plan Review provisions to provide some clear exemption opportunity for change of use, particularly for businesses and restaurants that would be utilizing existing vacant spaces. See Appendix B for language from the towns of Ashburnham and Concord.
- The Town should adopt the use regulations changes as recommended for the Central Business District, as identified on pages 6-11 of this Report.
- In the Downtown Overlay District, the Town should amend the zoning use provision here to allow full-serve restaurants as a use by right, with site plan review as needed only for new construction.
- The Town should adopt the zoning district boundary adjustments, as identified on pages 4-5, to prevent these parcels from being located in split zoning districts.
- Implement the Table of Uses within the North Brookfield Zoning Bylaw.
- Increase the allowed lot coverage for the CB Zoning District above the current 50% requirement.

Non-Regulatory

- The Town should establish an Economic Development Committee, which would help guide the implementations of this PDA report. Alternatively, the Town could create a Downtown Focus Committee, given that the Economic Development Committee would likely be focusing on overall Town-wide economic development issues. The Town of Ashburnham had created a Downtown Focus Committee to address zoning, site reuse planning issues, and economic development within their Town Center.
- The Town, led by the Board of Selectmen, should convene a landlords outreach meeting. This would allow the issues and ideas identified in this Report to be promoted.
- Seek funding to improve sidewalks in the Town Center that would provide for ADA accessibility. The State's new Complete Streets Certification Program (see below) represents one potential funding source. A second is the Town's Chapter 90 funds.
- Establish a National Register District for the PDA, in order to have the opportunity for landlords, property owners, and developers utilize historic tax credits in rehabilitation of vacant and underutilized buildings.

Potential grant and funding resources to assist with implementation

Below are a number of state, federal, and regional potential grant and funding resources that could assist with implementation. CMRPC staff provides these as they represent a "planning toolbox" that can be utilized for further planning and/or implementation of the opportunities and recommendations provided in this Central Business District PDA Report.

State-related Resources:

- Mass. Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant (In FY '16 the grant application deadline, is February 8, 2016. This is a source of funding to help with the completion of the historic structure inventory for the rest of North Brookfield Town Center, as part of the achieving the ultimate goal to have this area be designated as a National Historic Register District, beyond just the Town House building. The opportunity for historic tax credits to help rehabilitate vacant spaces for restaurants was identified in this Report. For more information: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm>).
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI): DHCD's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. The primary mission of the MDI is to make downtown revitalization an integral part of community development in cities and towns across the Commonwealth. MDI's guiding principles are that the most effective approach to downtown revitalization is a holistic one; that it addresses economic and community development needs; and that it provides a framework of interrelated activities that promote positive change in a downtown to keep it healthy and prosperous. For more information: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html>.

The FY '16 deadline is December 4, 2015, which will be too late for the Town to submit an application for this year. But hopefully the program will continue as it represents a potential funding source for a detailed parking study of this PDA (The State makes use of Nelson Nygaard Consulting Associates, a leading parking management and planning consultant firm).

- MassDevelopment: MassDevelopment's Real Estate Pre-Development Services offer the opportunity for market feasibility analysis and site planning assistance for the Town House. For more information: <http://www.massdevelopment.com/real-estate-development/>.
- Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund.

The Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) grants support projects that create jobs in construction and cultural tourism; expand access and education in the arts, humanities, and sciences; and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the Commonwealth. Over eight years CFF has awarded grants of \$82.4 million to nearly 600 projects across the Commonwealth. Demand for CFF grants continues to outpace supply: In a 2014 survey 198 organizations reported \$448 million in capital expenses through 2017.

For detailed information visit the program's website at:
<http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/facilities/facilities.htm>

In the summer of 2015, Governor Charlie Baker announced that his Administration's first state capital plan includes \$10 million for the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF). With this new Fiscal Year 2016 allocation, the Governor builds upon the investment of nearly \$85 million in capital support for the nonprofit cultural sector through CFF. These grants have previously helped launch many transformative projects, leveraging private sector dollars that have kept the sector growing and thriving. CFF has also enabled hundreds of cultural non-profits to be good stewards of our cultural treasures. Unfortunately the deadline for the FY 2016 round of CFF grant applications submittals was due on Friday, December 4th. But this found definitely

represents a potential source of funding to help completing the rehabilitation of the Town House into a cultural facility for performances.

Types of Projects Funded. The Capital Grant Program offers grants for:

- Site or facility acquisition (provided there is a signed Purchase & Sale Agreement and appropriate business planning is in place).
- Repair, rehabilitation, or renovation of existing facilities. This may include (but is not limited to) efforts to improve physical accessibility, fire safety, and other building safety.
- New construction/expansion of existing facilities (provided appropriate business planning is in place).
- Final-stage design of new facilities
- Purchase of major equipment or integrated systems. This may include HVAC systems, sound and light systems, rigging or similar equipment, provided that these are fully integrated elements of a building, structure or site and are fixed in place. Mobile goods or equipment, including moveable seating and display cases, are not eligible for grant reimbursement.
- Any combination of the above.
- New projects that demonstrate a transformative impact on the host community.
- Goals of the Feasibility & Technical Assistance Grants Program

The planning and construction of cultural facilities can be complex. The purpose of the Feasibility & Technical Assistance Grants is to help managers and board members of cultural organizations get the objective information and analysis they need before they commit their organization's energies and financial resources to a facilities project.

- **Types of Projects Funded**

Organizations that are contemplating an Eligible Project may apply for funds to support pre-implementation planning - research, fact-finding and analysis that can help them make more informed decisions about their facilities development effort.

Types of planning and technical assistance may include, but are not necessarily limited to: market studies; capital campaign feasibility studies; systems replacement plans or other comprehensive facility plans; site selection surveys; preliminary architectural plans and/or schematic drawings; accessibility assessments. Business plans are only eligible if they relate to the facility.

Organizations can also plan for Universal Design solutions to accessibility challenges in their facilities. Organizations can work with a consultant who will identify possible solutions that meet ADA, 504, and Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAP) requirements, but go beyond to provide solutions that are an improvement for all visitors.

Feasibility & Technical Assistance Grant funds are not available for non-facilities-related planning efforts (such as an overall organizational business plan); site acquisition; regular operating activities; ongoing staff positions; complete architectural drawings; fundraising or marketing activities; or publications.

In addition, 2015 has brought the addition of three (3) new State Programs that offer the opportunity for planning-related assistance to the Town of North Brookfield:

- **TA Connect: Technical Assistance Connect for Planning & Development**

TA Connect represents a new program, led by MassDevelopment and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHCD). Other Primary Partners include the Regional Planning Agencies, which CMRPC represents for our 40 communities. According to documentation provided by MassDevelopment and EOHED: “TA Connect coordinates planning and development technical assistance in Massachusetts cities and towns to enhance service delivery, leverage resources, and foster cooperation. In addition, the initiative hosts capacity building trainings and topical education opportunities and provides tactical assistance that emphasizes specific, near-term solutions intended to spur more effective long-term economic development and urban planning.”

Goals of the TA Connect Program are to:

- 1) Coordinate technical assistance for planning and development
- 2) Build local capacity
- 3) Stimulate future growth

TA Connect is not intended to duplicate or replace other initiatives.

How the Program will work:

- Phase 1: “intake” – Community completes information form, MassDevelopment staff receives and completes intake form for primary partners’ review.
- Phase 2: “Review” – MassDevelopment assembles primary partners and any secondary partners for conference call, Groups determine appropriate TA in context
- “Execution” – Referral of community to appropriate program or initiative; Follow up to ensure updated status in TA database.

TA Connect Initiative Timeline:

July 2015 –	MassDevelopment and EOHED launch the beta TA Connect
September 2015 -	MassDevelopment and EOHED will launch the full TA Connect
January 2016 –	it is anticipated to launch a stand-alone TA Connect website

There could be the opportunity for North Brookfield to utilize the TA Connect program for assistance with implementation of one or more of the recommendations of this Report, which besides making use of existing State resources (such as MassDevelopment’s Real Estate Pre-Development Services) that could lead to CMRPC providing our assistance funded under either DLTA or LPA hours.

For more information, including obtaining the application instructions, the Primary Partners Contact information is provided for below:

MassDevelopment- EOHED:	Tania Hartford, AICP, Director of RE Services: thartford@massdevelopment.com Emmy Hahn, Program Coordinator: elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us
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Commonwealth Compact Cabinet.

Established under Executive Order 537, a Community Compact is voluntary, mutual agreement between the Commonwealth and a municipality. The Compact is based on an understanding of commitments the Commonwealth is willing to make in exchange for the community agreeing to aspire to best practices in local governance. A Compact with the Commonwealth establishes mutual standards, expectations, and accountability for both the state and municipalities.

In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. These areas are grouped in categories that include: Education, Energy and Environment, Financial Management, Housing and Economic Development, Information Technology, Regionalization/Shared Services, and Transportation and Citizens Safety. For more information see the full list of best practice topic areas that include a number of example areas under each category noted above, at the following link:

<http://www.mass.gov/governor/administration/groups/communitycompactcabinet/bestpractices/>

The Commonwealth's commitments that it will provide to communities who participate in the Compact are as follows:

- Intends to be a reliable partner on local aid.
- Pledges to work with our partners in the Legislature toward earlier local aid formula funding levels.
- Will work to make available technical assistance opportunities for cities and towns as they work toward best practices.
- Will not propose any new unfunded state mandates, and we will look at existing mandates with a goal toward making it easier to manage municipal governments.
- Will give special attention, in its review of state regulations, to those that affect the ability of municipalities to govern themselves.
- Pledges to work closely with municipal leaders to expand opportunities to add municipal voices to those state boards and commissions that impact local governments.
- Will introduce incentives for municipalities that sign Compacts in existing and proposed state grant opportunities, including proposals for technical assistance grants available only to compact communities.
- Will identify ways to expedite state reviews that can often slow down economic development opportunities or hinder other municipal interests.

The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement. Once approved, the written agreement will be generated and signed by both the municipality and the Commonwealth. The Compact also articulates the commitments the Commonwealth will make on behalf of all communities.

For smaller communities, regionalization of the Compact is an option. The Communities will individually fill out an application, choose the same best practice(s) and choose the regionalization option on the website. For more information on Community Compacts and to find out how your community can participate please contact the Program Administrator at the Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services at (617) 626-2300 or visit www.mass.gov/ccs. The Town of North Brookfield could apply for assistance related to transportation and economic development under the Compact program to further the planning issues identified in this PDA Assessment Report.

- The new Complete Streets Certification Program. The 2014 Transportation Bond Bill (Chapter 79 of the Acts of 2014) included a new program entitled the “Complete Streets Certification Program.” The program was established to encourage municipalities to regularly and routinely include complete streets design elements and infrastructure in locally-funded roads. The Certification Program is codified within MGL Chapter 90I. Pursuant to Chapter 90I, based on \$50 million in funding authorization from the 2014 Bond Bill, there shall be funding disbursed in the form of grants to certified cities and towns for infrastructure and planning. MassDOT is expecting \$12.5M to be spent over the next two years (2016-17)

Based on information presented at the January 2016 CMRPC Quarterly Meeting, MassDOT has developed the following program objectives:

- Provide technical assistance and incentives for adoption of Complete Streets policies at the municipal level
- Encourage municipalities to adopt a strategic and comprehensive approach to Complete Streets, rather than simply seeking funding for a single project, through Complete Streets prioritization plans
- Facilitate better pedestrian, bicycle, and transit travel for users of all ages and abilities by addressing critical gaps in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure, and safety
- In distributing FY16 funding, reward municipalities who have committed to adopting Complete Streets best practices through the Community Compact Cabinet while assuring underserved municipalities are served equitably by the program as stated in the statute

MassDOT has developed three (3) tiers for entry into the Program:

Tier 1 –Complete Streets Policy Development - *CMRPC notes that given the Town of North Brookfield does not have a Complete Streets Policy at this time, they will need to begin at this Tier. The Town will need to adopt a Complete Streets Policy, which maybe a by-law or administrative policy. CMRPC Staff can provide the Town with sample policies upon request. We helped the Town of Spencer adopt a local policy last year.*

Tier 2 –Complete Streets Prioritization Plan Development

Tier 3 –Project Approval and Notice To Proceed for construction

In terms of funding potential, MassDOT is providing funding for Planning Assistance to support a Complete Street Prioritization Plan—Up to \$50,000 available to any community (Reimbursable); Complete Streets Construction —Up to \$400,000 (Reimbursable); Contact MassDOT for an eligible list of Complete Streets infrastructure and roadways. Design is not an eligible expense.

The Town should contact MassDOT at CompleteStreetsProgram@dot.state.ma.us for additional information on the Complete Street Certification Program.

Federal-related Resources:

Historic District Tax Credits: if the Town can expand the National Register District Boundary, as identified in this Report, property owners can get a financial benefit in the form of tax credits for property rehabilitation (see the following link for additional information: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>). Also see the State survey grant identified earlier.

Rural Business Development Grants (RDBG), which is a Program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). CMRPC identified this program as it represents a **potential funding source** to fund the pop-up storefront program and provide loans for businesses, especially for those looking to open up new restaurants in this PDA. .

What does this program do?

RBDG is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas that have fewer than 50 employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. Programmatic activities are separated into enterprise or opportunity type grant activities.

Who may apply for this program?

Rural public entities including, but not limited to:

- **Towns**
- Communities
- State agencies
- Authorities
- Nonprofit Corporations
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Federally-recognized Tribes
- Rural Cooperatives

What is an eligible area?

RBDG funds must be directed for projects benefitting rural areas or towns outside the urbanized periphery of any city with a population of 50,000 or more. Check [eligible areas](#).

How much funding is available?

There is no maximum grant amount for enterprise type grants; however, smaller requests are given higher priority. Generally, grants range from \$10,000 up to \$500,000. There is no cost sharing requirement. Opportunity type grant funding is limited to a maximum award of \$50,000 for unreserved funds. Total opportunity type grant funding is limited statutorily to up to 10% of the total RBDG annual funding.

How may funds be used?

Enterprise type grant funds must be used on projects to benefit small and emerging businesses in rural areas as specified in the grant application. Uses may include:

- Training and technical assistance, such as project planning, business counseling/training, market research, feasibility studies, professional/technical reports, or product/service improvements
- Acquisition or development of land, easements, or rights of way; construction, conversion, renovation, of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utilities
- Pollution control and abatement
- Capitalization of revolving loan funds including funds that will make loans for start-ups and working capital
- Distance adult learning for job training and advancement
- Rural transportation improvement
- Community economic development
- Technology-based economic development
- Feasibility studies and business plans
- Leadership and entrepreneur training
- Rural business incubators
- Long-term business strategic planning

Opportunity type grant funding must be used for projects in rural areas and they can be used for:

- Community economic development
- Technology-based economic development
- Feasibility studies and business plans
- Leadership and entrepreneur training
- Rural business incubators
- Long-term business strategic planning

How are applications evaluated for competitive funding?

- RBDG applications compete at the state office level, which are dependent on appropriations. All applications are evaluated based on:
 - Evidence showing job creation to occur with local businesses;
 - Percent of nonfederal funding committed to the project;
 - Economic need in the area to be served;
 - Consistency with local economic development priorities;
 - Experience of the grantee with similar efforts; and
- Other factors described in the current Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA), if one is published.

How to get started?

- Applications are accepted through USDA Rural Development's [local or State offices](#) once per year. Applicants are advised to view program information specific to [your local or State office](#) to learn about local application timelines, concept paper requirements, etc.
- Grant awardees will need to complete required paperwork and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Contact your for details.

Who can answer questions?

- Contact the local office, which is:

Massachusetts | Rhode Island | Connecticut

Scott Soares, State Director

451 West Street

Amherst, MA 01002-2999

Voice: 1 (800) 352-8015 (toll free) or (413) 253-4300

Fax: (413) 253-4347

www.rd.usda.gov/ma

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/news-release/usda-announces-business-development-grants-southern-new-england>

CMRPC-related Resources

DLTA funds will be available in 2016, which can offer the opportunity for CMRPC staff to build on the work in this North Brookfield Central Business District PDA Assessment. CMRPC could also assist the Planning Board with an analysis of the Town's other PDAs. The Planning Board can also make use of its LPA funds in FY 2016 to fund work in any of these areas.

CMRPC Transportation Staff may be able to help with some of the Complete Streets and/or streetscape-related planning components along roadways within the North Brookfield Central Business District PDA. Contact Mary Ellen Blunt, Program Manager, at (p) 508-459-3337 or email @ mblunt@cmrpc.org.