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# MAIN STREET RESEARCH PROJECT



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The Bentley Service Learning Center  
Bentley University  
Waltham, MA

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BENTLEY UNIVERSITY  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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During the period of September to December 2011, Bentley University conducted a study of the downtown Waltham area, emphasizing Main Street. This report complements a study conducted in 2008 on the Moody Street area. The objective was to assess and analyze the current business climate and to suggest ways in which it might be improved. These suggestions are based on surveys and interviews of business owners, landlords, realtors, City officials, and consumers, as well as comparisons with other towns and cities. The following is a list of key findings discussed in the report.

- Collective Advertising and Branding of Main Street. Although individual businesses have used various methods to advertise their stores, Main Street does not currently have an overall brand that consumers can recognize. Main Street should be advertised as a multiple-stop destination area through the efforts of the city and downtown organizations, which exist to improve the business climate.
- Improving the Business Mix. Consumers have consistently indicated clothing retailers and entertainment venues as important additions to the downtown area. Main Street would benefit from unique and independent businesses that cater to these preferences and add to the current variety. These additions would continue to differentiate Main Street from other shopping destinations, such as strip malls and the potential development at the Polaroid Site.
- Improving Small Business Support. The future success of the downtown area depends on the city and local organizations' support of small businesses. The current process of starting a small business is difficult and complex. Simplifying start-up procedures and reducing initial financing costs could help to nurture the growth of small businesses in the downtown area.
- Visual Appeal of Storefronts. Compared to other successful downtown areas, Main Street lacks some important qualities that may contribute to the overall attractiveness of the area. To create a more welcoming environment in the downtown, specific positive changes to storefronts should be considered. These changes may include, but are not limited to, more visually appealing signs, the incorporation of design elements, and increased overall neatness.
- Taking Advantage of the Student Population. Downtown Waltham is in close proximity to two mid-sized universities, Bentley and Brandeis. Currently, the downtown is not capitalizing on the student market. By improved advertising and various incentive programs, Waltham could be more successful in attracting and retaining student consumers.
- Aesthetic Impact of Vacancies. The presence of vacancies negatively affects the atmosphere of the downtown area. Other areas have taken initiatives to improve the

aesthetic appeal of the vacancies at minimum costs. Waltham's empty storefronts can make positive contributions to the downtown environment by taking similar steps, even while they are unoccupied.

- Perceptions of Main Street Consumer Safety. Waltham has proven to be a safe environment for both residents and visitors, although many people do not see it as so. Several small improvements to sidewalks and street lights may be able to increase the perception of safety in the area and add to the overall Main Street atmosphere. To allow for the continuation of the safe environment, business owners should take all available steps to ensuring the safety of both their employees and their patrons.
- Strengthening Communication between Individual Businesses and the City. Most business owners rarely take the opportunity to interact with Waltham city officials to provide suggestions or concerns regarding the conditions of the downtown area. This is partly because the process of contacting the appropriate department of the city government is ambiguous and difficult for a business owner to approach, creating a disconnect between these two crucial groups. A simple and efficient method of communication between the two could facilitate feedback and discussion, allowing for frequent and relevant contact to strengthen relations between business owners and government officials.
- Improving the Effectiveness of the Downtown Business Support Organizations. Currently, the Downtown Waltham Partnership and Downtown Initiative Committee are two separate organizations that both work to promote collaboration and success among businesses in downtown Waltham. By working together and joining their resources, these organizations could more effectively support the business community and unify the downtown area.
- Festivals and Events. Current successful festivals and events in the downtown Waltham area and similar activities in nearby cities have demonstrated that a fun, imaginative, and unified community can be achieved through the collective efforts of business owners and the city of Waltham. Additional events, community festivals, and the effective use of public spaces could enhance the brand image of downtown Waltham and attract visitors and potential consumers.

This project would not have been possible without the contributions of many individuals and organizations, to which the team would like to express its gratitude. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed in this report belong to the members of the team and may not reflect the same viewpoints as the individuals that contributed to the project.

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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This report is designed to assess the current business climate along Main Street in downtown Waltham. We used several different sources of data to conduct this assessment. The team performed surveys of the businesses, landlords, and realtors. In addition to the surveys, interviews were conducted with these groups, as well as with several City officials. The team reviewed the physical conditions along the street and compared them to corresponding downtowns in other neighboring cities. Additionally, we reviewed City regulations that directly affect the businesses. Using the information gathered, the team has been able to formulate recommendations to the City and its businesses. This introductory chapter reviews the history of Main Street, the overall structure of the project, and the research methodology that was used. The following three chapters discuss a number of specific areas, such as the physical streetscape, business mix, vacancy management, advantages of cultural diversity, role of special events, regulations and fees, along with many others.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Downtowns were a key part of American city life before the emergence of malls. As malls became more prevalent, the downtowns generally suffered. In order to compete, they were forced to reinvent themselves, finding ways to revamp their older infrastructure in order to more effectively attract consumers and compete with their counterparts. Waltham's downtown is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Due to these struggles, the City established a revitalization committee in order to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness. The improvements made have shown the downtown's desire to compete effectively with the malls and surrounding downtowns.

For example, the Charles River Museum was created, helping the City preserve many of its historical assets while simultaneously attracting individuals to the area. Additionally, a variety of new shops and restaurants opened their businesses in the downtown area. Since the beginning of the 1990's, Main Street has accumulated a wide range of cuisines, drawing many different cultures and ethnic groups to the area<sup>1</sup>.

From cafés and pizza parlors, to Asian, Italian, and American food, thousands of college students have been attracted to the downtown area. Formerly, the downtown did not strongly or actively acknowledge the presence of college students in the area. However, over time, Waltham has become more recognized as a college town with university students frequenting the downtown area at least nine months out of the year<sup>2</sup>. Main Street has become flooded with more restaurants, bars, and salons, making it increasingly difficult for smaller companies to successfully enter into

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<sup>1</sup> Shurr, Scott. "Waltham restaurant history." *Waltham-community.org*. 2003 April. Web. 22 Nov.2011.

<sup>2</sup> Survey of College Students, 14 Nov. 2011.



the marketplace. Since the recent downturn in the economy, the economic climate has staggered growth on Main Street. This is clearly demonstrated through the noticeable number of vacancies.

In 1995, Steven Lagerfield wrote an article in the Atlantic Online discussing “What Main Street Can Learn from the Mall.” In this article, shopping guru Robert Gibbs gave insight on the situation, explaining how small cities can survive by learning the lessons of the shopping mall, everything from a store’s location to the placement of benches to the color of trash cans. The bottom line, Gibbs stated, was that “if people won’t come downtown to shop, there simply won’t be a civic realm”<sup>3</sup>. Even as Main Street developed over the years, Waltham still tended to lag behind other towns in its rate of development. Instead of making an innovative, new idea a reality, the City has often waited to see how other surrounding towns would manage an issue before they attempted it themselves. The importance of aesthetics and business presence in the downtown has now reached an all-time high. This report is one example of efforts accumulated to respond to this transformation.

### STRUCTURE OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

With a three month time constraint, the research team limited the study to the area shown in Figure 1–1. That is, the scope of the project ranged between Lyman and Heard Street to Bank Street and the forked intersection. Owners of non-chain businesses were surveyed and all other occupied stores were considered in our research. Even though our focus was only on a portion of Main Street, the findings from the business owners, landlords, and realtors have provided helpful information to other areas in the downtown Waltham vicinity.

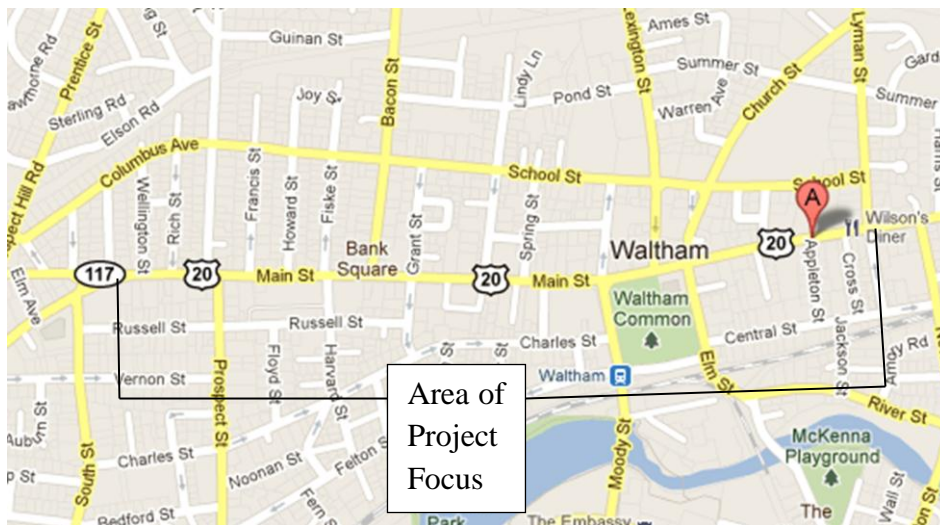


Figure 1-1: Area of Study

<sup>3</sup> Lagerfield, Steven. “What Main Street Can Learn From The Mall.” *The Atlantic Online*. The Atlantic Monthly Company, Nov. 1995: 110-120.

After multiple discussions with city officials, business owners, landlords, and realtors, the research team selected three key aspects of Main Street to direct its focus:

- Enhancing the Business Climate Along Main Street
- Main Street's Environment and Appeal
- Opportunities for Collaboration and Cooperation

Numerous resources, ranging from surveys and interviews to secondary research, were used to accumulate information for this project. Based on the findings, the team was able to formulate recommendations on these topics and assess the overall business climate on Main Street.

## **SCOPE OF THE KEY AREAS**

A brief summary of each of the above stated areas is provided below:

- *Enhancing the Business Climate Along Main Street*: This section discusses the current status of businesses on Main Street and what could be done to further improve it. The topics range from a summary of the current business mix to the identification of new business opportunities and the way in which new businesses might be supported. Other topics include new sources of funding, the accessibility of the street, and how vacancies affect Main Street.
- *Main Street's Environment and Appeal*: The purpose of this section is to identify the key aesthetic elements that comprise Main Street. This can be achieved through analyzing the current conditions and examining critical changes that can be made to the streetscape, storefronts, lighting, signage, cleanliness, business decor, and safety. We seek to identify and provide ways to implement changes that could be made to improve the Main Street atmosphere.
- *Opportunities for Collaboration and Cooperation*: Opportunities for collaboration within downtown Waltham have been developed, ranging from the current lack of community branding to further cooperation among businesses in the downtown area. Aspects addressed include, but are not limited to: the development of a brand image, increased collaboration between businesses and organizations, and additional festivals and events.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to have a complete view of Main Street and the business context in its entirety, information was gathered with regards to Main Street, the City of Waltham, the current business climate, and potential consumers. The research team created business, landlord, realtor, and consumer surveys, conducted interviews with City officials, and accessed other resources to collect information on key areas of the downtown.

### *BUSINESS OWNER / LANDLORD / REALTOR SURVEY*

The purpose of surveying business owners, landlords, and realtors was to gather information on the specific insights from within Main Street. In creating each survey, the team formulated questions with regards to the three key areas of focus in order to obtain the most accurate and

relevant information for the project. Reaching out to more than just Main Street business owners allowed the team to gain an overall understanding of the relationship between the City and its counterparts. Additionally, questions branched into their personal opinions of the positive and negative aspects of being located on U.S. Route 20, as well as any marketing strategy they have used to help drive business. The surveys were distributed in mid-October and collected through November. The on-site interviews were conducted to receive a face-to-face interaction between the research team and its Waltham counterparts, encountering both helpful and unwilling participants along the way. Many individuals were willing to assist the team further in the exploration and research process. Appendix A contains a copy of the business survey.

### *CONSUMER SURVEY*

The purpose of the consumer survey was to gather information from Main Street's current and potential customers. Questions ranged from the topic of a free shuttle, what they would like to see on the street, what draws them to the area, and what was their frequency of visitation. In order to reach a variety of individuals to compare perceptions, a campus wide survey was distributed at Bentley University. A total of 348 surveys were collected online. Consumer responses reflected many of the teams concerns during the research process. Appendix B contains a copy of the college survey.

### *INTERVIEWS*

Interviews were conducted with several City officials and community members, ranging from the mayor to participants in various downtown Waltham organizations to business owners and city councilors. Landlords, realtors, and a handful of business owners were interviewed as well. The participants were asked questions with regard to the three key areas of focus, as well as business-to-city relations within Waltham. As the team quickly discovered, the relationship between individuals in the downtown greatly affect the overall business climate and well-being of the Main Street scape. The purposes of the interviews were to gain insight from the multiple levels of the Waltham city hierarchy, seeing each of their perspectives and how they compared. These interviews gave the team more detailed responses and ideas than the survey could, with the ability to go more in-depth with pressing issues the City faces.

### *OBSERVATIONS AND OTHER FIELD RESEARCH*

To make accurate and effective recommendations to the city, it was imperative that the team become familiarized with the entirety of Main Street. Observing specific elements of the street as well as viewing photographs allowed the team to analyze the aesthetics of the street more closely. Interviews with the City officials, landlords, business owners, and realtors revealed insights for improvements on the street itself as well as on the interactions among different constituencies. The street was also catalogued in order to analyze the current business mix, recording the name and type of each business. Through observation of Main Street and other related research, information was gathered on the current status of the area to develop recommendations for areas of potential growth.

Field research was also conducted outside of Waltham's Main Street area. Downtown Watertown, Lexington, and Belmont were examined for comparison of the streetscapes. The team collected information in order to gain an outside perspective of a functioning and profitable downtown. Valuable comparisons were made between the downtown area of Waltham and that of other neighboring towns.

#### *SECONDARY RESEARCH*

Additional data was acquired from several Waltham and online sources. Waltham and other organizational websites were used in order to find more information on the downtown area, including ordinances, grants, and governmental policies. Maps were obtained from Google Maps in order to provide a visual of the streetscape the team focused on, as well as the direct location of businesses along the street. Resources include the Waltham Government Center, located at 119 School Street.

#### *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

A number of organizations and individuals have contributed to the development of this report. The team greatly appreciates all of the cooperation and willingness of various participants. We especially would like to thank: Mayor Jeannette A. McCarthy, Chris D'Aveta, Ron Vokey, Sally Collura, Richard Dacey, Jennifer Rose, Lucia Droby, Jerry Kaufman, June Conway, Diane Leblanc, Alice Taylor, Main Street business owners, landlords, and realtors, and everyone else who contributed to this project.

Although this project involved meeting with numerous individuals to discuss their viewpoints of Main Street and the downtown Waltham area, all opinions expressed in the research project are those of the research team and all of its members. Some opinions may not reflect those of the individuals that contributed their insight.



## **Chapter 2**

### **ENHANCING THE BUSINESS CLIMATE ALONG MAIN STREET**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Enhancing the business climate of the Main Street area is not an easy task, but is of the utmost importance in allowing Waltham to reach its full potential. In order to achieve this goal, improvements must be made to the variety of businesses on the street, the way in which new businesses are supported, the City's use of grants, and Main Street's accessibility for its consumers.

The first section, the business mix on Main Street, details the number and type of businesses on the street. Some suggestions have been made to guide the street towards a more successful business strategy. For example, the vacancies on the street could be used creatively as an invitation for new businesses and to improve the aesthetics of the street. This could be accomplished by keeping them clean, well kept, and using the space for temporary uses that will benefit the street. In terms of the businesses that should be added to the current composition, the analysis shows that smaller, unique businesses would be the most beneficial.

Secondly, additional methods for new business support should be considered. Starting a business is a daunting process. Support can be as simple as teaching good general business practices, guidance through the permit process, the zoning guidelines, and the process of applying for loans.

The section concerning grants examines those currently used, as well as possibilities of future funding that could be acquired by the City or business owners. This discussion includes the past year's allocation and usage of the Community Development Block Grant. Additionally, the Mass Works Infrastructure Program and the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund are suggested as valuable means of obtaining possible funds for future projects regarding economic development. The alternative financing options provided by the District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program and MassDevelopment are also suggested as means of providing fiscal support to the economic development of the downtown area. DIF provides support for projects that encourage increased residential, commercial, and industrial activity. MassDevelopment provides bond financing, loans, and tax credits for projects that create jobs, increase available housing, eliminate blight, and enable economic growth. These additional grants and financing options might facilitate some of the suggested changes and improvements to the downtown area.

Waltham's Main Street is a smaller section of U.S. Route 20, which carries high traffic volumes. These high-flow traffic conditions create unique advantages and disadvantages for local businesses. The main advantage is increased business exposure to consumers, while the disadvantage of the congested conditions makes navigation and parking difficult. In addition to driving, there are several alternative ways to travel to the Main Street area. Better utilization of these alternatives could attract more customers to Main Street.

## BUSINESS MIX

A critical step in improving the health of Main Street and the downtown area is understanding the current economic climate and business mix. Without an understanding of the area's strengths and weaknesses, appropriate and effective planning cannot take place. Currently, there are 111 store fronts located on Main Street within the defined area of study. These businesses fit into six broad categories: financial institutions, nail and hair salons, restaurants and bars, service offices, retail, and auto shops and gas stations. The service office category can be separated further into real estate, law, health, and other services. Community institutions, such as the library, schools, and churches, have not been included. The distribution of businesses is displayed in Table 2-1 and a full list of businesses can be found in Table 2-2.

Table 2-1: Business Mix

<b>Financial Institutions</b>	<b>9</b>	Any analysis of the current business mix must be based on making the downtown area as attractive and successful as possible. In order to accomplish this goal, one must always be aware of the current economic climate and its effects on Main Street businesses. The City is currently preparing for the impending development of the Polaroid Site, which is planning to bring seven retail stores, two restaurants, and one anchor department store to Waltham. The completion of this complex will have significant impacts on the downtown area. A study from West Virginia University indicates that, when large retailers, like those entering the Polaroid Site, are introduced into a local economy, there are a wide range of impacts. Those
<b>Nail/Hair Salons</b>	<b>13</b>	
<b>Restaurants/Bars</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>Service Offices</b>	<b>20</b>	
Real Estate/Insurance	9	
Law	3	
Health	7	
Other	1	
<b>Retail</b>	<b>25</b>	
<b>Auto Shops/Gas Stations</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	small businesses in direct competition with large chain retailers generally fail <sup>4</sup> . However, their introduction also presents opportunities for unique, specialty retailers to thrive. Therefore, the City should focus on fostering diverse and distinctive shops along Main Street.

As can be seen from Table 2-2, there is a healthy variety of businesses on Main Street. Fifty-two percent of all businesses are restaurants, bars and retail outlets (Figure 2-1). Businesses in these two categories encourage visitors to spend time exploring the street and what it has to offer. A shopper could come to the street with the intention of eating lunch or visiting one specific shop and discover another business that interests them. The other enterprises featured, like auto repair shops and dentists offices, represent destinations that are only visited when needed. Increasing the number of restaurants and retail stores would make Main Street a more attractive shopping destination.

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<sup>4</sup>Sobel, Russell S. "Has Wal-Mart Buried Mom And Pop?: The Impact of Wal-Mart on Self-Employment and Small Establishments in the United States." *Economic Inquiry* 46.4 (2008): 676-95.

**Table 2-2: List of Main Street Businesses in the Area of Study as of Fall 2011**

<b>Financial Institutions</b>	Joseph II's Family Restaurant	<b>Auto Store/Shops &amp; Gas Station</b>
Bank of America	KFC	Advance Auto Parts
Citizens Bank	La Campania	Don's Service Center
Coldwell Bank	The Mad Raven	Gulf Gas Station
Danvers Bank	McDonald's	Hogan Tire & Auto Service Center
Liberty Tax Services	MiLan Restaurant	JN Phillips Auto Glass
RTN Federal Credit Union	Sabatino's	Valvoline Instant Oil Change
Sovereign Bank	Subway	Watch City Petro
Waltham Check Cashing	Sushi Box	
Watertown Savings Bank	Via Latina Convenience & Deli	<b>Retail</b>
	Waltham Sports Pub	CVS
<b>Nail Salons</b>	Wendy's	DKNT Systems, Inc.
Angel Nail and Spa	Wilson's Diner	Fast Signs
Lady Finger Nails and Spa		Goodwin's High End
Life's Simple Pleasures	<b>Services</b>	Gordon's Fine Wine & Liquor
Queen Nails Salon	<i>Health</i>	Hannaford's
T&T Nails	Advocates, Inc.	Herbalife
	Bennet R. O' Neil Optician	J&J Cleansers
<b>Hair Salons</b>	Children's Dental of Waltham	J&J Variety
Alfredo One Barber	Eastern Health Services	Kev's Kwik Market
Classic Looks Hair Salon	Gental Dental	Metro PCS
Frank's Barber Shop	Marash Deltal Laboratories	Mint Cleaners
Hair Cuttery	New England Peditry	Natural Compounder
Hair's Evelyn Unisex Salon		Nickerson & Hills Art Supplies
Just Cutz	<i>Law</i>	Norman Associates, Inc.
Shear Pleasure	Dacey & Dacey	Printing Minuteman Press
Sisters Unisex Salon	Foster & Cannon	Quick Stop Variety
	Lupo & Lupo	Roger's Pharmacy
<b>Restaurants/Bars</b>		Royal Cleaners
Absolutely Asia Restaurant	<i>Real Estate/Insurance</i>	Sign-A-Rama
Anna's Pizza House	All-Pro Realty	Spoke N Wheel
Asia Wok	Century 21 Associates	Superior Shoe Repair
Baan Thai	Colonial Real Estate	The Bait Bucket
Bullets Bar & Grill	Gerald M. Curtin Commercial	UPS
Café on the Common	Martocchia Realtors	Watch City Cigar
The Common Café	O'Brien Insurance Agency	
Dunkin Donuts	Re/Max	
The Elephant Walk	Robinson Insurance	
Hall of Fame Pizzeria	Village Realty Group	
Hon Dynasty Restaurant		
Il Capriccio	<i>Other</i>	
Joe Sent Me	Preserve	



It should be noted that only a very small percentage of businesses on Main Street are large, national chains. Only 9 of the 54 restaurants, bars and retail businesses are chain stores. A large variety of independent and interesting businesses will help Main Street maintain a unique identity. Customers can access a McDonald's or CVS in almost any town. The same cannot be said for shops like Watch City Cigar and Superior Shoe Repair. Attracting and cultivating stores of this nature would keep customers coming back to Main Street and differentiate the area from shopping malls and other shopping districts in the surrounding area.

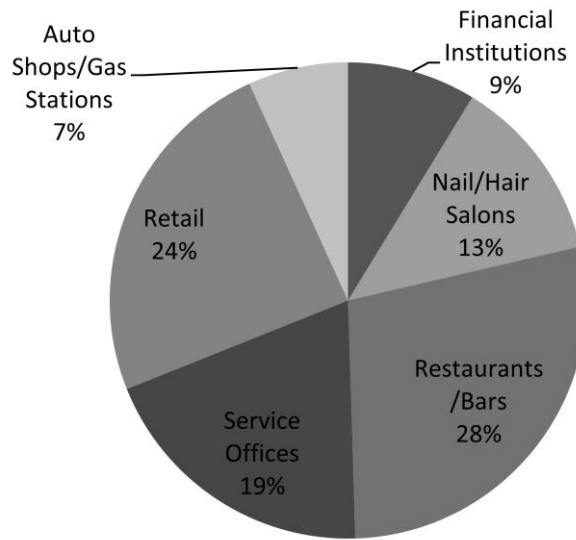


Figure 2-1: Business Distribution

The variety found within both the retail and restaurant categories is also encouraging. Table 2-2 features a full list of the businesses found on Main Street. As seen there, Italian, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, and American cuisine, among others, can all be found in the downtown area. In addition to the ethnic variety, there is an excellent mix of high to low-end eateries.

Similarly, there are numerous retailers found on the street, ranging from bicycle sale to shoe repair. Unfortunately, there is a distinct lack of high-end shopping. There are no clothing stores, shoe stores, or electronics retailers. The presence of affordable and practical retailers helps in catering to the needs of local consumers, many of which live in the low income housing in the downtown area. However, attracting new and exclusive high-end retailers is the key to making Main Street a more viable shopping destination. Greater Boston residents, college students, and young professionals consider clothing and entertainment retailers as the most critical additions to the downtown area (Moody Street Report). In addition, there is a distinct lack of ethnically oriented retail options on Main Street. Encouraging the development of ethnic retailers, like many of those on Moody Street, would make the downtown area a more unique and exciting retail destination.

The number of auto repair shops, gas stations, and financial institutions featured on the street should also be analyzed. Businesses of this type represent 16% of all businesses found on Main Street (Figure 2-1). These businesses perform critical functions in the local community and attract considerable clientele. The many drivers on Route 20 and in Waltham have the opportunity to fill their tanks and repair their vehicles thanks to the gas stations and auto

maintenance shops. In addition, local residents have convenient access to their money because of the multiple banking options also found on the street.

However, these businesses do have their drawbacks. They often require considerable real estate and break up the chains of retail shops lining Main Street. This creates a fragmented streetscape that may deter shoppers from exploring the street. These businesses also generate customers based on need. Most individuals only visit gas stations, auto repair shops, and banks when they absolutely need the services they offer. Trips to shops are not often incorporated into trips to the bank or the gas station. These businesses may discourage customers from walking the street and shopping at multiple locations.

Developing ways to leverage the business attracted by these need based stores could benefit the other retail establishments on Main Street. Prominently offering coupons and discounts for local businesses in gas stations and auto repair shops could encourage customers to walk the street while they wait for their vehicles to be serviced. Banks could include similar incentives for signing up for checking and savings accounts. Such cross promotion may enhance the vitality of the downtown area and increase local business exposure.

## VACANCIES

The City should be well aware of the current state of vacancies in the downtown area as they have the potential to positively or negatively impact the health of the business mix. In a downtown area, the state of each business has the ability to impact those around it. A successful business draws customers to itself and the neighboring businesses. Alternatively, a vacancy takes away from the area's atmosphere and can be detrimental to surrounding businesses' health.



Figure 2-2: Vacancy on Main Street

The downtown Waltham area has experienced its fair share of vacancies. The 2008 Moody Street Report stated the street had twelve vacancies. While Main Street and Moody Street are not



**Figure 2-3: Vacancy in Lexington**

eight vacant spots. We do not have the number of vacancies from 2008, but it is logical to assume a decrease from the restoring economy. The majority of these vacancies on Main Street are being managed by local real estate companies looking for renters. The appearances of the vacancies vary from well-maintained to rundown.

According to our surveys, business owners listed filling vacancies as the most important aspect for improving downtown, followed by adding more retail stores and increasing street cleanliness. While there are not many vacancies considering the length of the street, any vacancy is a negative reflection on the economic climate and can impact the performance of surrounding businesses. A vacant business represents failure and destituteness, which is not the image downtown Waltham or any commercial area wants to impart. Having vacancies makes surrounding businesses look bad as well and in turn hurts their business, thereby creating a cyclical effect of poor business for the area. Filling vacancies will make the atmosphere of the street feel more complete and improve morale of both business owners and consumers. Keeping the vacancies to a minimum will allow it to live up to its full potential. This potential includes a more diversified business mix, more retail locations, and/or increased ethnic diversity.

Unfortunately, there are reasons as to why these vacancies exist. In the survey of real estate agents, poor business performance and limited parking availability were listed as reasons explaining why Main Street has vacancies. The cost of starting a business is higher than many entrepreneurs realize and can lead to rapid failure. Real estate agents also mentioned that the typical vacancy takes around 5–6 months to be filled. Without proper maintenance by the landlords during the time of vacancy, the appearance of the properties may start to deteriorate. Figure 2–2 shows a vacancy on Main Street that has been unoccupied for an extended period of

directly comparable, they are both indicative of downtown Waltham’s economic wellbeing. Fortunately, it seems as if the economic climate’s recent turn-around has had some positive effects on Waltham. This is apparent from the decreasing number of vacancies currently on Moody Street when compared to the 2008 Moody Street Research Report. Currently there are eight vacancies on Moody Street, which is a substantial decrease. On Main Street, there are also currently

time. All of the windows are covered by blinds and the address is peeling off of the sign. This does not provide a welcoming atmosphere to those on the street.

When comparing the Main Street vacancy to ones in Lexington the differences are apparent. Figure 2-3 shows open windows allowing potential new business owners to see inside the building before they consider renting it. The



**Figure 2-4: Example of Art in the Window of a Vacant Building**

inside is clean, but not barren. Also, on the window is a colorful sign for the realtor that catches the eye. A frequently mentioned short-term solution to the vacancy issue is to turn the property into an art display. While it does not provide any income for the landlord or direct benefit to any business, placing art in the windows of vacant properties improve the appearance of the area. Adding artwork on display to the vacant properties will effectively add visual appeal and a sense of culture to the community that will be welcomed by consumers and business owners alike. According to the survey of Waltham landlords, some property owners would be willing to display artwork in their vacancies if it is for a non-profit effort. One property manager on Main Street mentioned how they have artists as their tenants and that using their work throughout vacancies in downtown Waltham would be advantageous for all parties. Jim Walker, commenting on his article for Brand New Watch asks “Can the cool ‘art window’ project which has been done the past couple years in the vacant toy store on lower Moody be expanded to the upper end of Moody?”<sup>5</sup>. There is evidence that consumers think this is a good idea and wish it were utilized more often. Figure 2-4 is a great example of a window display by an artist in a vacancy in another town. It brightens up the buildings appearance and gives people on the street something to appreciate as opposed to boarded up windows. Also, it makes walking on the street more enjoyable and could increase foot traffic. A similar approach to improve property appearance would be large outdoor murals to decorate otherwise blank walls, similar to the mural on Whitney Avenue just off of Moody Street.

## **NEW BUSINESS SUPPORT**

Filling these vacancies and encouraging a healthy business mix is critical to improving the City’s economy. However, disjointed planning will not have the desired effects. The City and its local organizations must have appropriate focus when attempting to support local businesses. These

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<sup>5</sup> From: <http://blogs.wickedlocal.com/brandnewwatch/2011/11/08/good-things-heading-south-on-moody-street/#ixzz1ddPTeFsR>

efforts must set businesses up for success, not overburden and stress them. As has already been stated, the focus of the City and local support organizations must be to attract unique and diverse small businesses to Main Street and the downtown area.

Entrepreneurs face a daunting task when opening a new venture and the City must be sensitive to their needs. According to the Small Business Administration, 50% of all small businesses fail within the first five years. The City must strive to improve these odds by enacting legislation and providing information that can help businesses avoid common mistakes. The top eight reasons for small business failure, as described by Michael Ames in his book *Small Business Management*, are listed in Table 2–3. Obviously the majority of these issues are under the complete control of the individual small business owner. However, the City and local support organizations can take steps to help small business owners overcome these obstacles.

**Table 2-3: Top Eight Reasons for Small Business Failure**

- 
1. Lack of experience
  2. Insufficient capital
  3. Poor location
  4. Poor inventory management
  5. Over-investment in fixed assets
  6. Poor credit arrangements
  7. Personal use of business funds
  8. Unexpected growth

#### *LOCAL SUPPORT*

As can be seen in Table 2–3, insufficient capital and poor credit arrangements are often the cause of small business failure. Waltham possesses a savings and loan institution named Bay Colony Development Corporation. Bay Colony specializes in Small Business Association 504 loans, which are only issued to small businesses with yearly net profits of less than \$5,000,000. The 504 loan is a long-term, fixed rate financing tool designed to encourage economic development through the acquisition of major fixed assets for expansion or modernization. These loan funds may be used for such projects as purchasing or renovating land or existing buildings, purchasing improvements such as street lighting, utilities, parking lots, and landscaping, and purchasing long-term machinery and equipment. Because the average for-profit business in the downtown area does not have tangible net worth in excess of \$7.5 million and does not have an average net income in excess of \$2.5 million, the majority of businesses would qualify. Directing local business owners to this useful service may help them attain capital, especially in the current economic climate. Disseminating information on 504 loans, like that featured in Table 2–4, will encourage business to use this valuable local resource.

The Small Business Association of New England (SBANE) is a non-profit organization designed to “provide a legislative voice for small business at the state and federal levels and to make practical information available to help business owners grow their companies”<sup>6</sup>. Using this support, Main Street business owners could modify legislation, creating laws that encourage growth. SBANE also has monthly meetings that are held in Waltham, making it very convenient for local business owners to attend.

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<sup>6</sup> From: [www.sbane.org](http://www.sbane.org)

The City might turn to its local universities in its support efforts. For example, Bentley University is a world-class business institution with resources that many businesses on Main Street could benefit from. Many classes taught at the university focus on helping real world businessmen and women. The City could encourage the university to include more Main Street and downtown businesses in course projects. General Business 320 is an excellent example. Students create specialized business plans for a few participating local companies based on the owners goals and expectations for the next five years of business. The university also has an active service learning department that is constantly offering help and support to local causes. Turning their attention to the economic climate of the downtown area could only boost Waltham’s sense of community and the economic fortunes of the City.

**Table 2-4: 504 Loans at a Glance**

<b>Maximum Project Size</b>	None
<b>Maximum 504 Debenture (our piece of the total financing package)</b>	\$5 or \$5.5 million, depending on whether your business meets an approved public policy goal or is classified as a small manufacturer (NAICS codes beginning with 31, 32 or 33)
<b>Typical Financing Structure</b>	50% Bank Financing, 40% 504 Financing, 10% Borrower’s Equity
<b>Minimum Equity Requirements</b>	Generally, 10% is standard, 15% if you have not owned the business for two or more years (Start-up); 15% if the real estate is considered special use (ex. skating rink, hotel); 20% if the project is both a start-up and special use. Note: seller financing of all or part of the equity requirement may be allowed if certain conditions are met. Call for details.
<b>Loan Fees</b>	Approximately 2.15% of debenture amount, which can be rolled into the loan. Legal costs for the debenture are typically \$2,000 to \$3,000 depending on the loan size, and can also be rolled into the loan.
<b>Bank Participation Fee</b>	One time 0.5% of Bank Loan
<b>Occupancy Requirement</b>	Owner must occupy at least 51% of an existing building. For new construction, owner must agree to occupy 60% of the building with plans to occupy 80% within 10 years.
<b>Personal Guarantees</b>	Required of all owners of 20% or more of the operating company or real estate entity.
<b>Approval Limit</b>	The approval is good for 48 months
<b>Assumable</b>	Yes, prepayment penalty is waived, a small assumption fee is usually charged (e.g., 1.0% of loan balance). Note: the buyer is expected to be as strong financially as the seller. Alternatively, the buyer can apply for a new 504 loan.
<b>Refinance Existing Debt and Borrower’s Cash Injection</b>	Yes, with some requirements. Call us to discuss this.
<b>Type of Business</b>	Must be for profit (with a few exclusions)

## CITY SUPPORT

The City could aid small business by altering the permit and certificate acquisition process and its zoning regulations. These laws impact the time and money that small business owners must invest in the start-up process. Stream-lining these regulations could save entrepreneurs aggravation and critical funds.

### Permits

Before a business can open its doors, it must acquire a series of permits and certificates. All businesses must file a general business certificate along with permits relating to their specific business type. The permit requirements for a typical retail store and restaurant can be seen below in Table 2–5.

Table 2-5: Required Permits by Business Type

<u>Business Type</u>	<u>Required Permits and Certificates</u>
<b>General Retail</b>	Business Certificate Engineering Permit
<b>Restaurant (No Alcohol)</b>	Business Certificate Engineering Permit Health Department Certificate
<b>Restaurant (Alcohol)</b>	Business Certificate Engineering Permit Health Department Certificate Liquor License

The forms required to acquire these permits can be found online. Unfortunately, there is no new business portion of the site dedicated to describing the City’s permit requirements. One must travel to each department’s page to access their permit forms. The establishment of a “one-stop-shop” page would make the process significantly simpler and clearer. It should also be noted that not all citizens have access to computers. Those who cannot print the forms from online are required to obtain the forms from the individual departments issuing the permits. Such a process is sure to frustrate and confuse potential entrepreneurs. The City should focus on dedicating an office as an information center for those attempting to establish a business in Waltham. The City Clerk’s office is a natural candidate, as it is responsible for maintaining all permit records. Information packets could be provided that detail what permits are required for each business type and where these permits can be attained. Such information will prevent confusion and speed up the process for business owners.

It has also become clear that the acquisition of liquor permits is a prevalent city issue. The process for applying is not significantly different than all other permits. However, any individual

attempting to acquire a permit must present his or her application to the City Licensing Commission. The commission must select which applicants will receive liquor licenses, as they can only issue a limited number. The factors the board considers when issuing licenses is not made public. Creating a list of defined factors will make the process more subjective and fair, improving the City's relationship with its business owners. It also gives the City the opportunity to dictate what type of businesses will be given preference. Policy can be written into the guidelines, encouraging the board to issue licenses to small, unique businesses that will add to the diversity on Main Street.

The engineering permit is required for all businesses with real estate space in Waltham, as it gives the business access to the town's utilities. Incorporated into the engineering permit is a water-usage fee that has had serious impacts on local business owners. Changing the nature of this fee could be extremely beneficial to business owners.

### **The Infiltration and Inflow Mitigation Fee (I/I)**

The I/I fee is a one-time fee applied to both commercial and residential real estate in the City of Waltham. The fee is based on the amount of water used per day and the amount of waste that enters the system by unconventional means, which the City is responsible for removing. Specifically, the City must remove four gallons of this waste for every gallon that comes through the system. The City is required to comply with this due to previous investigation of the City of Waltham's stormwater system, specifically where the system meets the Charles River and other local bodies of water. The number of gallons per day, which is the principal measurement used in calculating the fee, is assessed each time a property is developed or a deed is transferred by the Engineering Department. As a result, this fee serves as a huge factor in determining the initial cost of starting a business and can be considered a barrier to entry. Barriers such as this can have a dramatic effect on new businesses as well as deterring potential new businesses from coming to the area.

The I/I fee caters to the problem of infiltration and inflow present in Waltham. Infiltration is water other than wastewater that enters a sewer system from the ground through means, which include, but are not limited to, defective pipes, pipe joints, connections, or manholes. Inflow is water other than sanitary flow that enters a sewer system from sources which include, but are not limited to, roof leaders, cellar drains, yard drains, area drains, drains from springs and swampy areas, cooling towers, storm waters, surface runoff, street wash waters, or drainage.

In order to have a clearer understanding of the fee itself, it is important to know some background about the I/I fee. The City of Waltham is the legal owner and operator of a municipal separate stormwater system consisting of drains, which are designed to collect, convey, and discharge stormwater to receiving water channels<sup>7</sup>. These drains empty into the Charles River at various points. On April 30, 2001 the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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<sup>7</sup> Environmental Protection Agency Docket No. 05-06



issued a Notice of Noncompliance to the City of Waltham for not reporting their sewer overflows<sup>8</sup>. This is more or less a written plan regarding overflows within the city limits and how it plans to do to address them within thirty days of their discovery. The following month the Superintendent of the Department of Public Works stated that the new sewer design for the area was expected to begin in June 2001. The new sewer system was installed by January 2003. On May 9, 2002, an engineer from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) observed a sewer leak from the City's sewer line in the area across from the Beaver Brook Reservation Building and notified the City (Site B in Figure 2-5). In response, the City commissioned the Department of Public Works to monitor the area and submit a proposal for the sewer to be repaired shortly. On May 14, 2002, an engineer from the DEP inspected an area near the Metropolitan State Hospital just off of Trapelo Road (Site A in Figure 2-5). Sewage was surcharging and overflowing from a city sewer line onto the adjacent wetland and a tributary to Beaver Brook. On May 16, an engineer from the DEP went to inspect the site and observed no overflow. Also, the Department noticed that there had not been any effort by the City to clean up the sewage that had collected in the wetland<sup>9</sup>.

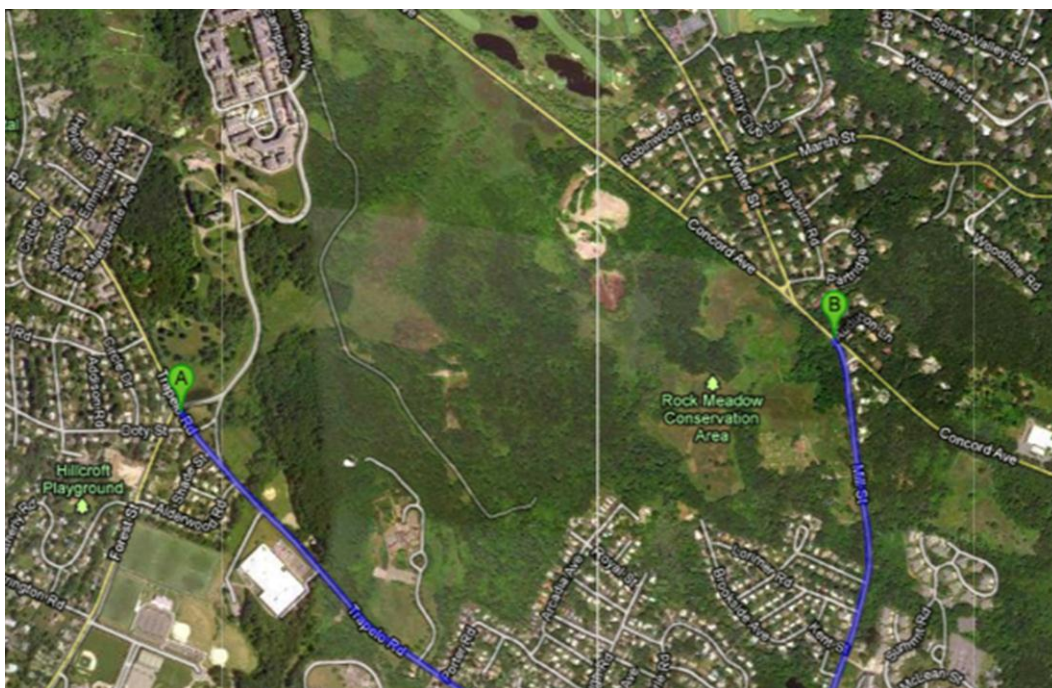


Figure 2-5: Sites of Overflow

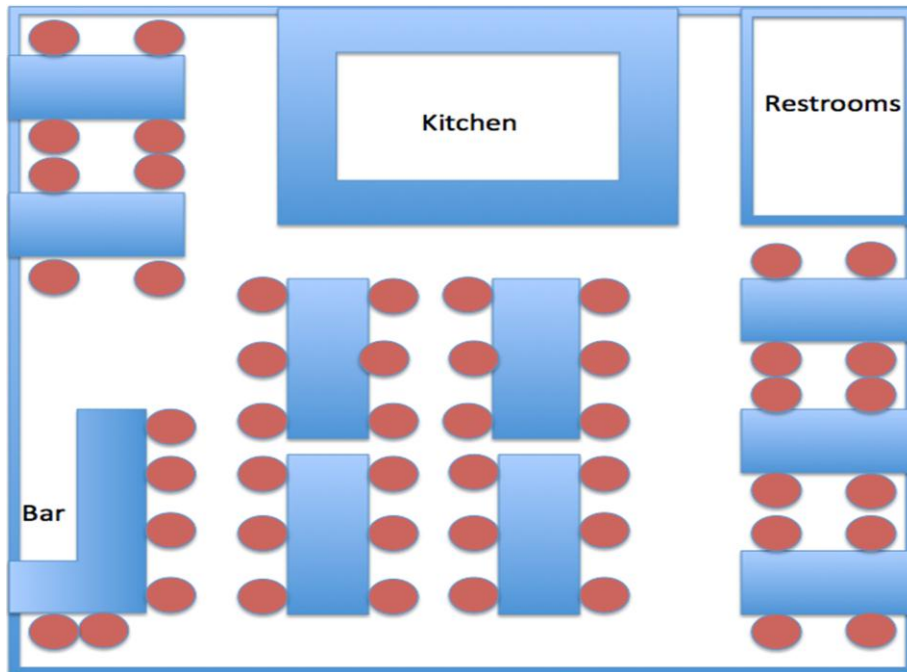
As of June 30, 2003, before issuing a sewer connection permit, the City of Waltham requires the removal of four gallons of infiltration and inflow for each additional gallon of wastewater that will be discharged to the sewer system.

<sup>8</sup> The Mass DEP Consent Order

<sup>9</sup> The Mass DEP Consent Order

As one can surmise, this fee is a huge addition to the start-up cost of starting a new business. On top of initial cash outlays that the business owner has to pay to get the business going, this fee comes before a permit can be issued to use the water system in the city. Since all of the properties that are attractive for business owners are on the city grid, the fee is impossible to avoid. To illustrate the severity of this fee, the following example shows the impact on one type of business that uses a substantial amount of water per day, a restaurant:

**Table 2-6: I/I Fee Calculation**



Assuming this restaurant uses about 5,800 gallons of water per day:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{I/I Fee} &= \text{Gallons of Flow per Day} \times 4 \times \$3 \\ \mathbf{\$69,600} &= 5,800 \text{ gallons} \times 4 \times \$3.00 \end{aligned}$$

Scenario Assumptions:

- The restaurant is very efficient and turns over a table every hour and thirty minutes
- The checks for the small tables are about \$40 and the large tables generate about \$60 (or \$10 per person throughout the restaurant)
- The bar generates about \$10 per person each hour.
- The restaurant is only open for dinner and after-dinner drinks
  - Dinner is served from 4PM to 10 PM
  - The bar is open from 3 PM to 12AM

Given these assumptions the net sales per day equals **\$4,500**.

This means that the restaurant would have to operate at this capacity for a total of fifteen and a half days to pay off this fee. From this fee alone the restaurant would not be making any profit for those two weeks. If the costs of overhead, operating expenses, taxes, and other costs

associated with the restaurant were factored in, then the restaurant would take much longer to get beyond this initial cost. This scenario also implies that the business is running at full tilt right from the start. This simply is not true for new businesses. It takes time for a new business, especially a restaurant, to establish a solid customer base as well as build a reputation in the community. This factor would also add to the time it would take to completely pay off this fee.

As demonstrated, the I/I fee places an extreme amount of pressure on the businesses from the outset. Since the fee has been mandated at a level higher than the local government, legislative strategies would be very difficult to implement. Therefore, the solutions must create a harboring environment to conduct business despite this barrier to entry. The first solution would be to create a long term financing option for the I/I fee as opposed to a lump sum payment before business can be conducted. The fee could be constructed in such a way that it would create a positive outlook for the business owner by being collected in smaller payments. The benefit of this agreement can be seen quite clearly. From the perspective of the business owner, smaller payments are much easier for a new business to stomach. Rather than placing the business in a difficult position at the outset, this would give the business a better chance at survival by not impacting their bottom line as much. Table 2-7 shows the amount the example restaurant would pay monthly versus the lump sum.

**Table 2-7: Monthly Payment Option of I/I Fee**

<b>Fee Total: \$69,600</b> <b>Interest Rate: 3% Annually for 2 Years</b> <b>After 2 Years: \$73,838.64</b>	<b>Making Monthly Payments</b> <b>Monthly Payment: \$3,032.62</b>
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The second solution would be to give the new businesses a tax break for the first two years of operation. Most small businesses are not expected to make a profit in these first two years; therefore, giving them a tax break would increase the net income of these businesses. By doing this, the business would now have more cash to put back into their growth and development. The unfortunate side of this strategy is that existing businesses do not receive any benefits. Although this is unfortunate on a case-by-case basis, it is beneficial to the business community as a whole. The economic climate would improve overall because the new businesses would become healthier as a direct result of this action. The new successful businesses would bring in more customers and, in turn, boost the overall business climate by encouraging competition.

Another solution to this problem, which is similar to the previous solution, would be to impose tax breaks for two different categories of businesses - small and large. These categories would be based on overall firm value. The idea being that larger businesses have more cash on their books to pay taxes, therefore taxing them more than their smaller counterparts will not affect them as much. On the other side of the coin, the smaller businesses are able to retain more cash to nurture and grow their business. The previous solution mentioned the problem of not reaching all businesses. This solution would mitigate that issue by being an “across the board” fix.

## Zoning

Alterations to the City’s zoning laws could also have a positive impact on new business development. As can be seen in Figure 2–6, the area of study is located in a Business B zone. This designation governs the amount of space a business may use in relation to the size of the plot of land on which the building resides. The total floor area of a business located in a Business B zone may not exceed 50% of the area of the parcel of land itself. With special permits, a maximum of 100% of the total land area is acceptable.

However, Moody Street is located in a Business C zone. In this zone, business floor area is limited to 100% of the land area by right, and can be expanded to 250% with the acquisition of permits. Legislators made this decision in an effort to stimulate business growth on Moody Street. A similar piece of legislation could be passed in an effort to improve Main Street. Building density is similar on both streets. If anything, Main Street has more space and plots available for development. Increasing the limit to 100% of parcel area would help attract businesses that require a fairly significant amount of floor space, like high end clothing and shoe retailers. Eliminating the need for special zoning exemptions would also simplify the expansion process for successful businesses in need of more space. Such a change would make vacancies more attractive to potential business owners and increase the speed at which they are filled.

These changes would also make Main Street and Moody Street appear to be equal priorities. During the course of this study, it has become clear that several Main Street businesses believe that City Hall has paid more attention to Moody Street. City unity is critical if a legitimate downtown revitalization is to occur. Businesses must begin to take pride in the appearance of their storefronts and the success of the downtown area as a whole. Altering the zoning code and making the other changes listed above might help fill vacancies, foster a healthy business mix, and increase the downtown vitality as a whole.

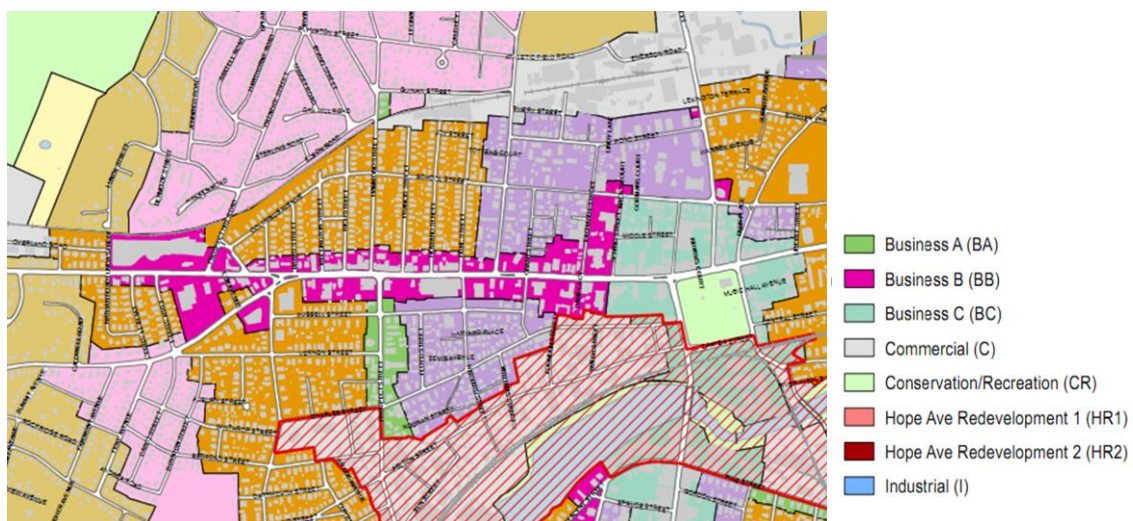


Figure 2-6 : Zoning of the Study Area

## FISCAL FUNDING

One of the biggest obstacles in developing an area of the city and encouraging economic growth is the availability of funds. The proposed changes and improvements to the downtown area all require money and additional resources that the City and business owners might not find feasible to provide in their entirety, if at all. This problem is not unique to Waltham. Many businesses, cities, and other establishments around the country experience the same financial struggles which have motivated federal and state governments and other organizations to provide assistance for projects that appear to be good investments. Any improvements or additions to cities that encourage increased business translate to an overall improvement in the economy on both a state and national level. As a result, there are various grants available to cities if the project or the city itself meets certain criteria.

As one of thirty-seven entitlement cities in Massachusetts, the City of Waltham receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds each year from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Through this grant, Waltham utilizes over one million dollars to provide funds that go towards benefiting low to moderate income members of the community, eliminating or preventing the spread of slums or blight, or meeting particularly urgent community development needs stemming from serious and immediate threats to public health or welfare. These funds have previously been used to finance social service programs, renovate public parks and facilities, and rehabilitate housing in low income neighborhoods. In order for social service programs to receive grant money, they must be providing services that improve Waltham's public services and facilities dealing with such issues as employment, housing, crime

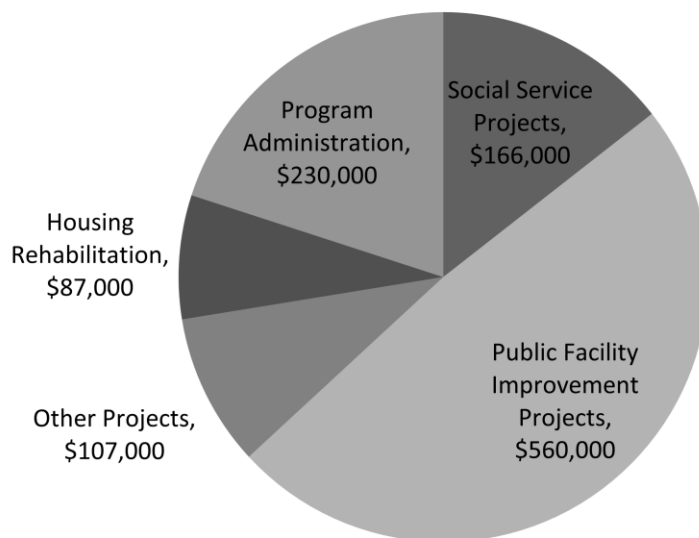
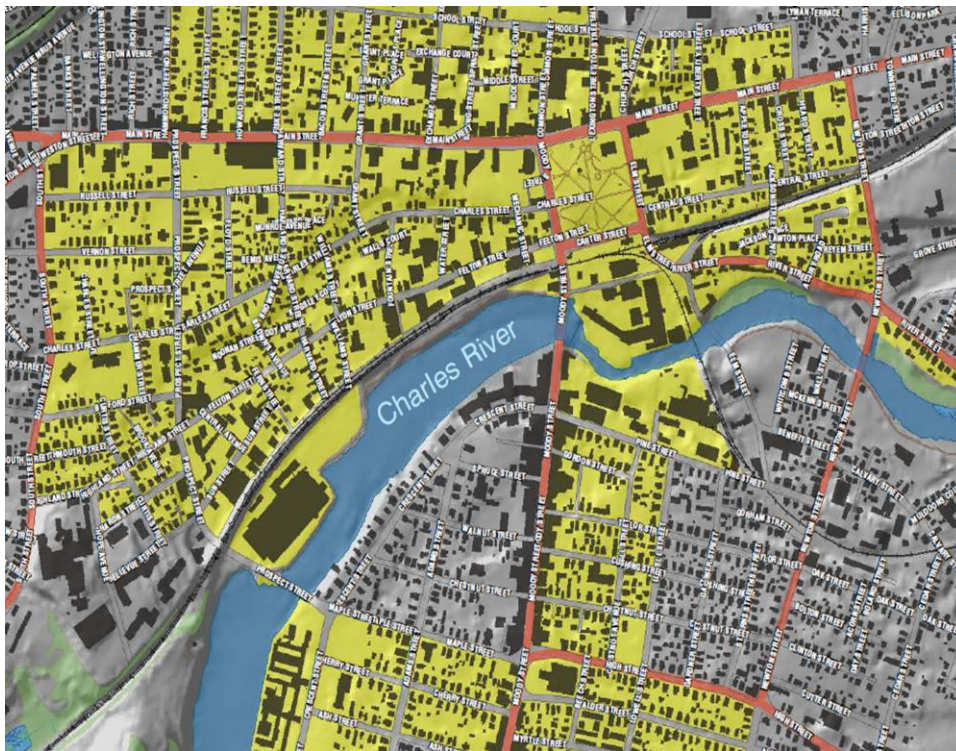


Figure 2-7: Proposed HUD Grant Allocation

prevention, childcare, health, drug abuse, education, fair housing, energy conservation, welfare, and recreational needs. No more than 15% of the total grant can be allocated towards public services and at least 70% of the grant must benefit people who are low to moderate income. Figure 2-7 illustrates the numerical breakout of the CDBG grant proposed budget for 2011-2012.

The center of Waltham, which includes Moody Street and Main Street, is included in the CDBG "target areas," which are areas where at least 44.8% of the

population is considered low to moderate income. In order to increase the foot traffic in the downtown area of Waltham, the City could also consider using this grant to support the construction and development of businesses with low income housing on the second and third stories of the buildings. By increasing the amount of low income housing in the center of Waltham, additional potential customers would be provided for the businesses located on Main Street and Moody Street. There are currently several dollar stores located on Moody Street, and the majority of the restaurants are in the low to moderate price range, which are conducive to the business of low-income customers. By increasing housing in the area, foot traffic would increase without creating much of an additional need for parking. Figure 2–8 below shows the aforementioned “target areas” in the downtown area shaded in yellow<sup>10</sup>.



**Figure 2-8: CDBG Target Areas**

In addition to the HUD grant, there are various other resources available to Waltham that could be utilized to fund improvements and development in the downtown area. The Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund supports the planning and development of cultural facilities by providing grants to the private sector. The historical aspect of Waltham could be capitalized on in order to differentiate Waltham from surrounding cities. One way to achieve this is through the creation, renovation, and improvements of non-profit cultural facilities which would create jobs and attract people outside of the community to support local business. Previous projects funded by this grant include the renovation of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, an increase

<sup>10</sup> Five Year Strategic Plan <http://waltham.ma.us/planning/2010/WPD%20StrategicPlan%202010-14%20Draft.pdf>

in the accessibility to the Fitchburg Historical Society building, the restoration of the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts in Worcester, expansion of the Massachusetts Symphony Orchestra in Worcester, renovation and reconstruction of the Quadrangle in Tower Hill Botanical Garden, and improvements to the ValleyCAST! Whitinsville Theater and Museum. Additional details for the ValleyCAST! Project are shown in Figure 2–9<sup>11</sup>.

**ValleyCAST!, Whitinsville**  
**Theater and Museum Improvements**  
**Grant: \$160,000**

**About the Facility:** ValleyCAST! operates out of the historic Whitin Mill campus, which includes a theater, meeting space, and retail space; the historic Brick Mill, which houses galleries and affordable housing; and the Museum of Industrial Heritage. While the primary construction was complete in 2006, the theater and museum require a number of improvements in order to be professionally equipped venues.

**About the Project:** The Cultural Facilities Fund awarded ValleyCAST! \$160,000 for renovations to Whitin Mill site buildings including theater lighting improvements, installation of assistive listening equipment, and museum climate control improvements to protect displays.



**Figure 2-9: Description of ValleyCAST! Whitinsville Theater and Museum Improvements**

This grant could similarly be used to support the renovation and reconfiguration of the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation. Since this museum is located off of Moody Street, enhancing the museum to increase the number of daily visitors would result in an increase of traffic into the downtown area of Waltham. This would then create an avenue to increase business for local restaurants, stores, and offices in the downtown area.

The District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program, administered by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC), provides a financing option to encourage increased residential, commercial and industrial activity to “stimulate private investment which in turn increases the taxable value of property and generates incremental taxes”<sup>12</sup>. All cities and towns in Massachusetts are eligible to participate. The DIF “enables municipalities to fund public works, infrastructure and development projects by allocating future incremental tax revenues collected from a predefined district to pay project costs”<sup>13</sup>. The City of Waltham could consider utilizing

<sup>11</sup>Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund [http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/facilities/facilities\\_fundinglist.htm](http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/facilities/facilities_fundinglist.htm)

<sup>12</sup>About the District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program

<http://www.mass.gov/hed/business/funding/infrastructure/dif/about-the-district-improvement-financing-dif.html>

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

such a program to perform development projects that would benefit both the business community and the city as a whole. After designating a portion of Main Street as a development district, a predesigned development program could be implemented to improve the less developed, underutilized areas of Main Street. Initiatives such as providing cleaner streets and sidewalks, increasing the aesthetics of downtown parks and historic buildings, and extended care for new and existing trees, shrubs and flowers for the area have been financed by similar programs in other cities. Developing a similar program for Main Street would result in increased business for the downtown area as a whole.

MassDevelopment works with businesses, nonprofits, and local, state, and federal officials to create jobs, increase available housing, eliminate blight, and enable economic growth in Massachusetts. They provide a variety of financing options for businesses including bond financing, loans, and tax credits. One such tax credit that would be of interest to the downtown Waltham area is the 4% Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits. “If over 50% of the total development costs of an eligible multi-family rental project are being financed with tax-exempt bonds issued through MassDevelopment, the project is eligible to apply for an allocation of low income housing tax credits”<sup>14</sup>. Tax-exempt bonds which are offered through MassDevelopment are available to fund real estate projects and new equipment purchases such as affordable rental housing, public infrastructure projects, and municipal and government projects. These bonds are exempt from federal taxes (and sometimes state taxes) and are usually the lowest interest rate option for financing. This funding could be used to finance a large scale development project to increase the amount of low income housing in the downtown area. As a result, foot traffic would increase causing the business climate to benefit.

The Mass Works Infrastructure Program provides “public infrastructure funding to support economic development and job creation”<sup>15</sup>. This grant could be used by Waltham to finance future large-scale residential and commercial developments. The funding could also be used partially for design and engineering costs. However, because Waltham has a population of over 7,000, only 10% of the total funding can be allocated for this purpose<sup>16</sup>. Such activities as creating increased parking, adding and repairing sidewalks, and increasing bicycle access could all be covered by this grant.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

The above recommendations will not have their desired effects if customers cannot easily access the downtown area. As a result of being a part of U.S. Route 20, Main Street brings unique accessibility advantages and disadvantages to Waltham’s downtown area, especially in regards to traffic and parking conditions. Traffic and parking conditions affect both realized and perceived accessibility of the area and this, in turn, affects the businesses that are located along the street.

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<sup>14</sup> MassDevelopment Tax Credit Financing <http://www.massdevelopment.com/financing/tax-credit-financing/>

<sup>15</sup> Mass.gov <http://www.mass.gov/hed/business/funding/infrastructure/the-massworks-infrastructure-program.html>

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25/2572600.html>



Because of these factors, accessibility is an important part of Main Street’s economic climate that should not be overlooked.

### *CURRENT TRAFFIC CONDITIONS*

Waltham’s Main Street is only a small section of U.S. Route 20. While there are many signs that identify the street as Route 20 while leading into the downtown area, there are relatively few that identify it as Waltham’s Main Street. The upcoming city project that involves a \$200,000 budget for signs in Waltham should include these types of signs in order to attract more people to Main Street businesses.

Since the street is a major highway, traffic flows at a high volume through Waltham’s Main Street. Traffic conditions on the street can be seen on the map in Figure 2–10<sup>17</sup>.



**Figure 2-10: Mid-day Main Street Traffic Conditions**

The majority of Main Street, with the exception of one block, falls in to the mid-range of traffic congestion. This could be attributed to the amount of traffic lights, which create stop-and-go traffic conditions along the street. The locations of the nine traffic lights in our area of study are shown by the red dots along Main Street in Figure 2–11<sup>18</sup>.



**Figure 2-11: Location of Main Street Traffic Lights**

### **Business Owner Perspective**

The traffic conditions on Main Street create both advantages and disadvantages for businesses located on the street. The stop-and-go traffic conditions on Main Street give drivers a chance to notice businesses along the road while they are stopped at a traffic light potentially making more

<sup>17</sup> From Google Maps’ traffic feature

<sup>18</sup> From Google Maps

consumers aware of businesses on the street. This opportunity to attract more customers increases the importance of businesses maintaining attractive storefronts that can be seen by the drivers on the road. Additionally, eighty percent of respondents to the business owner’s survey identified “volume of customer traffic” as the biggest advantage of locating their business on Main Street. In contrast to the advantages it provides, the high traffic conditions could also provide disadvantages to businesses on Main Street. Perceived difficulty in traveling along Main Street due to the slow traffic conditions could deter potential consumers from visiting Main Street who end up taking their business to different areas. One respondent of the business owner’s survey mentioned that there are “a lot of car accidents on the street.” Car accidents on Main Street can temporarily prevent access to certain businesses, putting business owners at a further disadvantage. The high volume of traffic on Main Street also leads to issues concerning parking availability.

*CURRENT PARKING CONDITIONS*

The current parking situation on Main Street is a mix of public lots with metered parking, private lots for certain businesses, as well as metered and free parallel parking along the street. As shown by location in Figure 2–12, the public lots in the Main Street area and their capacities are as follows:

- Library Lot (31 Regular & 2 Handicap Spaces)
- Central Square Parking Deck (248 Regular & 7 Handicap Spaces)
- Church Street Lot (19 Regular & 1 Handicap Spaces)
- Railroad Lot (34 Regular & 2 Handicap Spaces)
- Carter Street Lot (45 Regular & 2 Handicap Spaces)

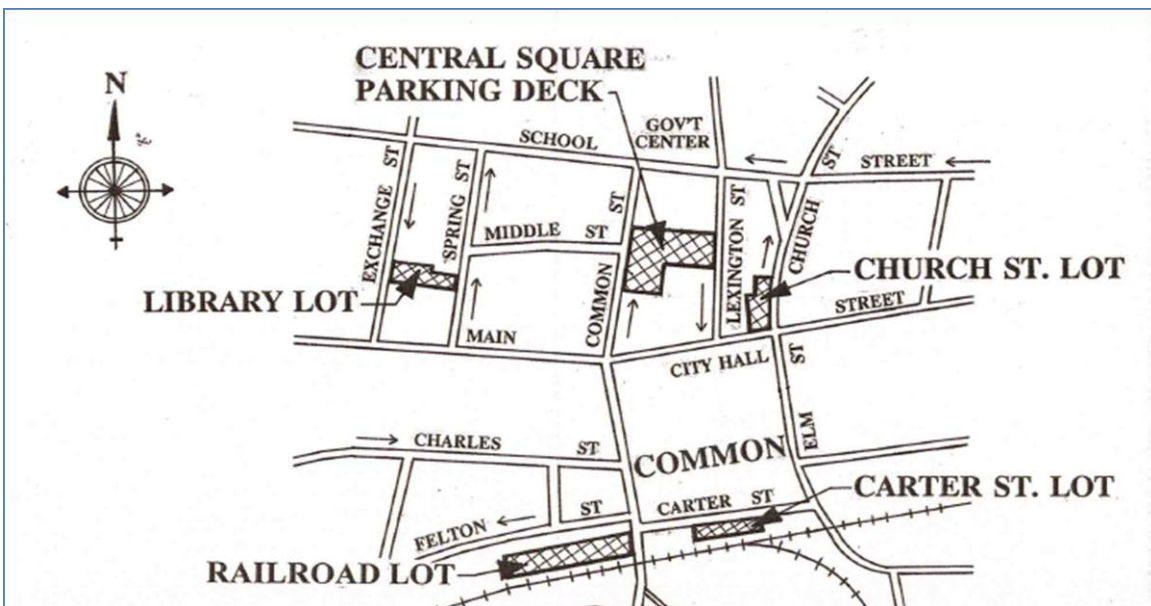


Figure 2-12: Locations of Main Street Area Parking Lots

It is important to point out that all of these lots are located within a few blocks of each other in the area surrounding Waltham City Hall and the Waltham Common.

The Library Lot and Church Street Lot are both smaller lots with only short-term meters available. The Central Square Parking Deck, Railroad Lot, and Carter Street Lot have both short-term and all-day meters available. The Railroad Lot and the Carter Street Lot are further away from the businesses on Main Street and are mostly occupied by those who take the Commuter Rail. These lots are almost fully occupied during the work day. The Library Lot, Church Street Lot, and Central Square Parking Deck are used more frequently by customers of Main Street businesses than by commuters. All of these parking lots are labeled as public parking lots by signs such as those shown in Figures 2–13 through 2–15. While some, such as the Library Lot (Figure 2–13), have clear informative signs, others like the Church Street Lot (Figure 2–14) have signs that are difficult to see from the road due to damage and interfering foliage. The Central Square Parking Deck sign (Figure 2–15) contains so much information about parking costs and regulations that it becomes tedious and confusing for drivers to read. Some parking availability concerns could be lessened by using simpler and more visible signage at the entrance of public parking lots.

In addition to the metered public parking lots, metered parallel parking is also available in some areas on Main Street and its side streets as well. This street parking is primarily available in the vicinity of the public parking lots, as shown in Figure 2–12. Payment at meters is only required Monday through

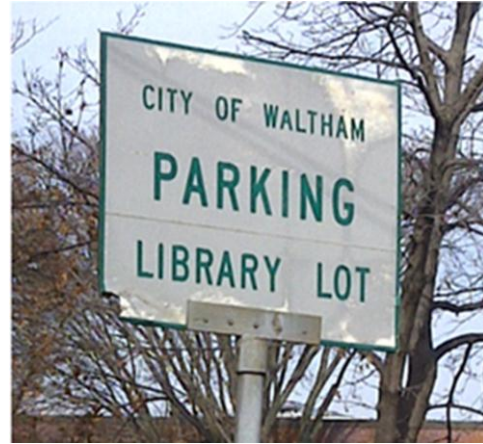


Figure 2-13: Library Lot Entrance Sign



Figure 2-14: Church Street Lot Entrance Sign



Figure 2-15: Central Square Parking Deck Entrance Sign

Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Parking at meters is free on Sundays and on eleven holidays. Overnight and 24-hour parking is not allowed in any public parking lots<sup>19</sup>. Monthly and yearly parking stickers to park at meters can be purchased from the Treasurer’s Office in City Hall and early stickers are also available for senior citizens for a discounted cost from the Waltham Council on Aging<sup>20</sup>.

There is a standard meaning for the colored marking meter posts in the public parking lots and metered street parking of Main Street area. Silver posts represent short term meters, which allow parking for less than two hours and are not valid places for those with monthly or yearly stickers. Green posts represent all-day meters, which are not valid for vehicles with senior stickers but do allow monthly and yearly stickers<sup>21</sup>. The details about the regulations of this colored post system are not made very clear to drivers in the Main Street area. Better informing drivers of the current parking regulations, the City of Waltham could help problems would parking availability in the Main Street area.

The current condition of the parking meters along Main Street and in the adjacent public parking lots also creates problems with parking in the downtown area. Each parking meter has a digital display informing users of the time remaining on the meter. As shown in Figure 2–16, many of these meters are hazed over and scratched so badly that users cannot read the displays. This forces the user to guess how much time is left and thus pay the meter incorrectly as a result.



**Figure 2-16: Example of the Sup-Par Conditions of Parking Meters**

Beginning in June 2011, the Waltham Traffic Engineering Parking Meter Division began to implement its Pay-by-Space Parking Meter Program<sup>22</sup>. This parking program uses kiosks that accept payment in the form of coins and dollar bills for all the numbered spots in a lot. According to a brochure produced by the Waltham Traffic Engineering Parking Meter Division, the “system is

designed to be more convenient than the individual coin only parking meters.” However, the

<sup>19</sup> From: <http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/parking-meters-division/faq/what-hours-are-meters-enforced>

<sup>20</sup> From: [http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/walthamma/files/file/file/pay\\_by\\_space\\_brochure\\_june\\_2011.pdf](http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/walthamma/files/file/file/pay_by_space_brochure_june_2011.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Information from Central Square Parking Lot sign.

<sup>22</sup> From: [http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/walthamma/files/file/file/pay\\_by\\_space\\_brochure\\_june\\_2011.pdf](http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/walthamma/files/file/file/pay_by_space_brochure_june_2011.pdf)

kiosk does not return bills or give change. In addition, there is no way to add time to the initial purchase. Currently, none of the Main Street area lots have been changed over to the Pay-by-Space Parking Meter Program. Some of the problems with the current parking situation on Main Street, such as the confusion with the colored post system and the current condition of parking meters, will be relieved by the implementation of the new Pay-by-Space Parking Meter Program.

### **Business Owner Perspective**

In addition to the public parking lots and the metered street parking, there are also areas of free parallel street parking and many private lots owned by individual businesses. Private lots often have signs restricting who can park there. Despite the variety of parking options available in the downtown Waltham area, many of the Main Street business owners feel that parking is inadequate. Sixty percent of business owner's survey respondents answered "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" with the parking availability aspect of Main Street. When asked to elaborate on the aspects they were dissatisfied with, several business owners commented on parking. Comments made include "not enough parking spaces" and "parking is terrible."

### *ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION*

In addition to driving to Waltham's Main Street, there is a wide variety of other transportation options available to the customers of Main Street businesses. The area surrounding Waltham's Main Street is a heavily populated residential area. Those living in close proximity to Main Street have the options of walking or traveling by bicycle. However, the option of walking is made less desirable by the current perceptions of the safety of the area and conditions of sidewalks. Bicycling is also a viable mode of transportation that could be utilized by even more Waltham residents. Currently, there is not a bicycle lane on Main Street and this presents a safety concern for those who choose to travel by bicycle. Main Street also lacks bicycle racks for customers to use while they are inside Main Street businesses. The addition of a bicycle lane and more bicycle racks would encourage more people to travel this way. The MBTA bus lines and commuter rail provide a convenient way for residents of the Greater Boston Area to travel to Waltham's downtown area from further locations. If consumers were encouraged to better utilize these alternative methods of transportation, it would increase the number of customers that visit Main Street businesses. Alternative modes of transportation would also help to alleviate some the problems of traffic and parking availability.

## Chapter 3

### MAIN STREET’S ENVIRONMENT AND APPEAL

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#### INTRODUCTION

In order to fully understand the current condition of Main Street in Waltham, it is important to explore all of the different aspects of the Main Street environment. In creating recommendations that can further aid prosperity in the area, many detailed observations were necessary. A complete picture of the existing conditions is necessary to understand the current climate and recognize improvements that could be made. The recommendations presented in the following section are based on the findings regarding the public areas, storefront maintenance and signage, lighting, cleanliness, and safety.

While the business mix and branding of Main Street stand out as important factors in the study, the role of aesthetics plays an equally vital role. In order to get a complete picture of the current environment, all three aspects need to be considered. When visiting Main Street, the aesthetic qualities of the area are what stand out the most. In order for businesses to succeed, they must attract visitors. By appealing to customers in an aesthetic form, the businesses are able to draw positive attention to their store. It is vital that businesses make a positive first impression on their customers through the way in which their storefronts are presented. The observations of Main Street reveal many positive attributes as to the aesthetic appeal of businesses downtown. Additionally, recommendations are made in areas that could benefit from improvement.

Throughout the process, we have strived to make the recommendations into attainable goals for both the city and the business owners. The most important factor is that the solutions proposed do not come at a high cost. Instead, it is important to focus on smaller changes that can be made. These small changes can have a major impact on the atmosphere of Main Street and the area can become a more appealing place to those who visit.

#### APPEAL OF THE PUBLIC AREAS

Public areas are trademarks of a town. Citizens visit these spaces frequently



Figure 3-1: View of the Common from Main Street

and engage in activities with other community members. Therefore, preserving and maintaining an aesthetically appealing public area is important in order to create a welcoming feeling in any downtown.

As shown by Figure 3-1, Waltham has a well-kept public area called the Waltham Common, which is located along a section of Main Street. This space adds a very appealing, friendly atmosphere to downtown Waltham. The Waltham Common is also a place where families and friends gather for social events. During the warmer seasons, cultural fairs, festivals and concerts are held on the Common as both a source of entertainment and a way to bring the community together.

In addition to the Common, Main Street is adorned with historical buildings which add to the atmosphere of the downtown area. One example is the Waltham Public Library, which has been renovated several times. The library's numerous renovations show the city's dedication to maintaining the aesthetic appeal of the area. The gardens in front of the Waltham Public Library, as shown in Figure 3-2, have been tended to and maintained by the Waltham Gardening Club in order to add to the building's appeal. The Waltham Gardening Club serves as an example of how, with the help of community involvement and dedication, the appearance of the public areas can continue to improve.



**Figure 3-2: Waltham Public Library**

### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

Well-preserved public areas serve as positive trademarks for downtown Waltham. They also help to motivate business owners to improve their properties' visual appeal and bring uniformity to the downtown area. Areas like these could be used as a model to further improve the aesthetic appearance of other public spaces around the city of Waltham. Members of the Waltham community should take these attractive qualities into consideration for their own use and work to make positive changes in the downtown area.

### **BUSINESS DECOR**

Landscaping is essential to the atmosphere and appeal of any downtown area. Many business owners realize that by improving the landscaping on Main Street, they are taking a step towards creating a better foundation for the economic environment of the downtown area. An appealing green area in front of a business helps to attract more customers through visual stimulation, as shown in Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4. Here, the Watertown Savings Bank and the Reynolds &

Associates Real Estate Agency effectively utilized spaces in front of their properties to create welcoming storefronts for their businesses. The businesses contribute to not only the attractiveness of their own establishment, but also to that of the downtown as a whole. Through caring for their own appeal, they add liveliness to Main Street, which creates a more attractive environment for visitors.



**Figure 3-3: Watertown Savings Bank**



**Figure 3-4: Reynolds & Associates Real Estate**

### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

Business owners can put several initiatives into practice in order to improve the overall appeal of their properties. There are many additional ways to incorporate landscape into storefronts in order to make the store livelier, even if stores lack a green space. As shown in Figures 3-5 and 3-6, decorations located in the storefronts create a welcoming environment for customers because they add a sense of warmth and personality. Business owners should take these features into consideration when decorating their own storefronts.



**Figure 3-5: Flower Pots in Front of a Store**



**Figure 3-6: Planter in a Storefront Window**



Another possible initiative is encouraging business owners to adopt a green area, such as the sidewalks in front of their business and taking responsibility for maintaining this area. Adopting a green space would be especially beneficial for landscaping companies. These companies, which often do not have storefronts, would be able to display their work for the entire community to see. In addition, they would be creating good will within their community through their contributions. The idea of adopting a green area has been proven successful in other towns around the Greater Boston area, such as in Winchester, Massachusetts. Visually pleasing areas create a more welcoming environment. Customers will feel more comfortable browsing and walking around businesses. This could help increase both foot traffic and customer base for the area.

### **STORE SIGN LIGHTING**

Main Street offers a great variety of places to visit, ranging from restaurants, bars, and coffee shops to grocery stores, pharmacies, and real estate agencies, amongst others. Despite the diversity of businesses, many of them go unnoticed due to their lack of store sign lighting. If a store sign is not illuminated, potential customers on Main Street at night, both on foot and by car, are not able to see the different businesses and realize what Main Street has to offer. Additionally, if a store sign is not well lit, people searching for a specific store are less likely to be able to find it, especially in the harsh conditions of a New England winter. It is important for Main Street to capitalize on the diversity of stores that it has in order to drive traffic to the downtown area and make Main Street a destination point.

The current regulations of the General Ordinances and Zoning Code of the City of Waltham state that no signs can be illuminated with any fluorescent, neon, or incandescent lighting in any Business C zone, which includes the majority of Main Street's businesses. Nevertheless, a light may be installed above signs in order to ensure that the sign is visible during the night time as long as the sign itself is not emitting any type of light.

There are several businesses on Main Street whose overhead sign illumination stands out. These businesses understand the value of drawing the eye to a store sign in order to make others take notice of their establishment. The first example is the Il Capriccio Restaurant in Figure 3-7 that has hang-over lights directly above the storefront's sign. This makes the restaurant visible to customers, especially at night



**Figure 3-7: Hangover Lights Illuminating Il Capriccio's Sign**

when the majority of their customers visit. The Mad Raven Pub & Grill in Figure 3-8 uses the same type of lighting and receives the same benefits of better visibility of their sign. Both restaurants also utilize the overhead lighting as an aesthetic improvement that adds to the visual appeal of their storefront.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

Adequate lighting on a business's storefront, particularly the sign, helps as an advertising technique for business. As cars drive along Main Street, store fronts and signs with good lighting catch drivers' attention. For example, in Figure 3-9,

hangover lights illuminate this sign during the nighttime, allowing both drivers and people walking by to acknowledge that this particular establishment is "For Lease", better serving its advertising purpose. The heavy traffic flow on the street allows drivers time to look around and survey the area to see what Main Street has to offer.

Good lighting creates a safe environment, which allows customers to feel more comfortable exploring Main Street, especially at night. If the customers feel more comfortable in the surrounding area, they would be more likely to increase the frequency of their visits.

### **STREET LIGHTING**

Public lighting on the sidewalks is a large contributor to the aesthetic perception of Main Street. It provides visitors with visibility of Main Street. This visibility impacts both one's ability to see the sidewalk and their surroundings at night. It also physically brightens up the street and makes it stand out. Most importantly, lighting creates a sense of safety for those on



**Figure 3-8: Hangover Lighting Illuminating The Mad Raven's Sign**



**Figure 3-9: Lights Illuminating Vacancy Sign**

Main Street at night.

It is a common perception that as you travel further down Main Street towards South Street, lighting becomes more infrequent, and thus the street becomes more uninviting. However, light posts are actually numerous and very evenly dispersed along Main Street. The main problem with street lighting is actually its lack of impact along the street.



**Figure 3-10: Light Post Along the Commons**

As you travel further down the street, the store fronts start to become less noticeable. This is not because there is no street lighting, but because of the trees and foliage obstructing the lights themselves. This creates lack of proper lighting, as the light is being lost within trees and is not actually illuminating the street below. Without proper lighting, Main Street visitors are not drawn to the vibrant store signs. Due to the blocked street lights in front of certain businesses, these places miss out on potential customers. People choose locations that stand out over those which look dark and gloomy. However, with proper tree pruning, Main Street will glow and attract those customers who currently miss opportunities.

It is important to notice the difference in care taken towards street lights on different parts of Main Street. One restaurant owner along the Commons cited no concerns from his customers in reference to problems with street

visibility. He stated that his customers felt very safe walking around the restaurant and to their cars at night. Positive feelings like this are what bring more customers to the downtown area at night and therefore increase businesses' success. The light-posts used the downtown area are very aesthetically pleasing, as viewed in Figure 3-10, and create a bright atmosphere along the Common since they are properly tended to in order to ensure the light is not blocked.

The same restaurant owner added that his customers have stated that they feel uncomfortable parking their cars further from the restaurant due to their own perceptions of



**Figure 3-11: Light Post Blocked by Tree Branches**

Main Street safety. They do not want to walk through dark streets alone, where stigmas have caused them to be on alert. This is not because proper lighting is not present, but rather because the proper lighting is blocked by trees and foliage. Notice in Figure 3-11 how the top of the lamp post is being blocked by branches. This light is found between Rich Street and Wellington Street, which is further from the Common area.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

If there were an increase in effective lighting, it may lead to an increase in foot traffic to Main Street. People would be more apt to walk around at night and feel safe doing so. There are many residential buildings in the downtown area, and each of those residents represents a potential customer for Main Street. Using visible lighting to encourage these residents to become customers of businesses would increase foot traffic without creating more congestion on the roads. Trimming of the branches around light posts is a simple solution that will give these customers a more visible sense of their surroundings and a secure feeling to their neighborhood.

### **STORE SIGNAGE**

Store signage contributes to the overall atmosphere of Main Street by providing a first impression to potential customers. A good sign can attract numerous new customers while an inadequate sign can dissuade them from visiting. This missed opportunity can take place without the customer understanding the extent of what the store has to offer.

On Main Street, there is a disparity in the quality of store signage. While some restaurants, such as In a Pickle displayed in Figure 3-12, have signs that truly display the uniqueness of their businesses, others have outdated and less welcoming signs. Well-designed and well-displayed signs help to develop a creative and lively atmosphere for the street. On the other hand, dull and outdated signs negatively contribute to the atmosphere of the area, which sends an ambiguous message to the consumers about the identity of Main Street.



**Figure 3-12: In a Pickle Store Front**

The main issues of problematic signage include poor design, maintenance, placement, and size. This ultimately leads to poor visibility and the lack customer attraction. Some stores have outdated signs while others simply do not have any visible signs. As a result, there are a number of shops on Main Street that do not have a welcoming look and do not fit into the picture of a well-established downtown area. Poorly maintained storefronts are unattractive and prevent Main Street from being a destination street.



**Figure 3-13: Uniform Signs Along Main Street**

When looking at the signage issue in downtown Waltham, it is important to take into account the city regulations that affect the business owner's regarding their store signs. While many restaurants and stores are trying to stand out and show their unique characteristics, some city regulations prevent them from doing so. Uniform designs, as shown in Figure 3-13, show how many restaurants and shops are unable to stand out to new customers since the entire block has a single-colored awning. Other regulations such as the restriction of neon and perpendicular signs have also hindered the businesses in their ability to stand out on the street. Business owners have expressed their frustrations regarding this specific problem during interviews.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

While the sign regulations may have made sense in the past, it is crucial that the regulations are amended in order to meet the needs of today's businesses. Restrictions such as the ban of perpendicular signs prevent businesses from chances to attain more visibility. Since Main Street caters to pedestrians, it is vital that businesses take advantage of any opportunities to attract those customers. Perpendicular signs are a great method to do so, for they stand out from a far distances and make visitors aware of what stores lay ahead of them. With perpendicular signs, a consumer is able to see numerous stores signs on both sides of the street. These signs motivate the consumer to explore areas that intrigue them. Therefore, it is essential for the city of Waltham to work with the business owners to make changes to the current sign regulations for the revitalization of the downtown area.

Signage plays a key role in attracting new potential customers. Attractive signs draw customers toward businesses, especially as customers walk by the storefront. Therefore, improving the quality of the signage throughout Main Street can be a big step towards the creation of a more welcoming and thriving downtown Waltham. Figure 3-14 is an example of a business on Main Street with an exemplary sign. This sign stands out because it is attractive, informative, and visible from all directions on Main Street. Roger's Pharmacy was established 75 years ago, which allowed it to have a “grandfathered-in” perpendicular sign. This store is a great example of why Waltham’s sign regulations should be updated. With modified sign regulations, businesses on Main Street will be able to improve their overall attractiveness, and in turn, improve the atmosphere of the area.



Figure 3-14: Roger's Pharmacy

## STREET SIGNAGE

Street signage is another aspect that influences the overall perception of the Main Street area. It is important that signs dedicated for public parking and directions to destination areas are organized and well-kept in order to allow consumers to access the Main Street area with ease.

Along Main Street there are an abundance of signs that give directions to locations such as public parking. If one pays careful attention, they will have little trouble navigating through the downtown area. For example, Figure 3-15 shows an intersection with signs for public parking, handicap parking, and the fines associated with parking illegally. Parking directions such as this

one are common throughout the Main Street area, helping consumers find the closest parking spaces. In fact, in a survey of Bentley University students, of those who answered that they never go to Main Street, only 8% (3 out of 48) said that the lack of parking is one of the reasons, which indicates that parking availability is not a deterrent of Main Street.

Nevertheless, some of the city signs lack clarity, uniformity, and proper maintenance. The sign in Figure 3-15 that reads “\$100.00 fine” can be interpreted both as the fine for parking in the no parking zone and as the fine for parking illegally in the handicap spaces. Uniformity is also an issue where as some signs differ in size, shape, and style. The sign in Figure 3-15 for handicap parking is split into two pieces with the directional arrow on a separate section. Additionally, Figure 3-16 shows a turning sign that is worn out and located inconveniently under a tree where the driver may not be able to view it. These city signs can create confusion and frustration for both consumers and business owners who drive and park along Main Street. One business owner mentioned that she received a parking ticket because she misunderstood a parking sign on Main Street.

More importantly, there are few signs that direct traffic to the downtown area or other places of interest in Waltham. Destination signs near highway exits and around the town outskirts are important for the revitalization of Main Street. They create awareness of the existence of businesses and attractions available in Waltham.

The lack of funding is the primary issue behind these less-than-ideal signs in the Main Street scape. Consumers, business owners, and the Bentley Moody Street Research Group pointed out the issues with signs around the city and it has since received recognition. A \$200,000 fund dedicated for a new sign package for Waltham will soon be implemented.



**Figure 3-15: Intersection on Main Street with Multiple Parking Signs**



Figure 3-16: A Worn Out Street Sign

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As this \$200,000 funding is confirmed, it is critical that the money is put towards consistency and long term maintenance of the street signage. Doing so will diminish confusion when navigating the Main Street area. Additionally, the city should consider putting signs near highways and the outskirts of town to give directions leading towards major businesses in downtown Waltham. If these new signs are implemented, it will be a big step towards generating more consumer awareness and traffic to Main Street, and therefore creating a better downtown.

### VACANCIES

Vacancies are one of the biggest problems in creating vitality in any downtown area. Currently, there are eight vacancies on Main Street. While filling vacancies is always a top priority, keeping them clean and aesthetically appealing is also important for maintaining the Main Street atmosphere.

Figure 3-17 shows a vacancy on Main Street that is well kept and clean. Such vacancies not only look more appealing to developers, but also help to maintain the positive perception of Main Street. A worn down vacancy is harmful to the atmosphere of Main Street simply because it cuts down on the liveliness and aesthetic appeal of the downtown. After dark, these storefronts can look unwelcoming and discourage foot traffic in the area. Figure 3-18 shows a less attractive vacancy that may cause some to have a negative perception of the area.



Figure 3-17: A Well-Kept Vacancy



Figure 3-18: Unkempt Ledge inside a Vacancy



*RECOMMENDATIONS*

It would be beneficial for Main Street if the vacancies were to have their own unique decorations in order to make them more welcoming. Figure 3-19 displays a vacancy that is clean but dull with all of its blinds closed. Decorations to this building could help contribute positively to the appearance of the surrounding area.



**Figure 3-19: A Well-Kept but Dull Vacancy**

One possibility is implementing a city-wide decoration plan for vacancies. Figure 3-20 displays a vacant storefront in South Euclid, Ohio decorated by students of Notre Dame College. The city collaborated with college students to bring the vacant storefronts “back to life” by showcasing art inside the empty stores. Initiatives like these benefit both the downtown area and the college students at minimal costs. By taking similar steps, students from Waltham schools could have an opportunity to showcase and promote their art while helping the downtown atmosphere. This concept would provide a more aesthetically pleasing storefront while these buildings are unoccupied. These initiatives also add to the sense of community among the residents of Waltham as a result of their involvement in this project.



**Figure 3-20: Art displayed in vacancy in South Euclid, Ohio**

In order to promote cleaner vacancies on Main Street, communication between landlords and City officials needs to improve. If communication is improved, it may lead to a greater sense of pertinence and responsibility on the landlord's part as they are made aware of the effects these unclean vacancies have on the perception of Main Street. For example, a City official was able to encourage a landlord to clean his property periodically by simply reaching out to him by phone and expressing her concern about the overgrown grass surrounding his building. Considering that several landlords own the majority of the buildings on Main Street, this strategy should prove to be effective if well implemented. As an extension of increased communication, there could be periodic checkups on the vacancies by City employees to ensure that the location is well kept. A solution like this one requires little effort or money and can be very effective in making the vacancies more attractive.

### **LITTERING**

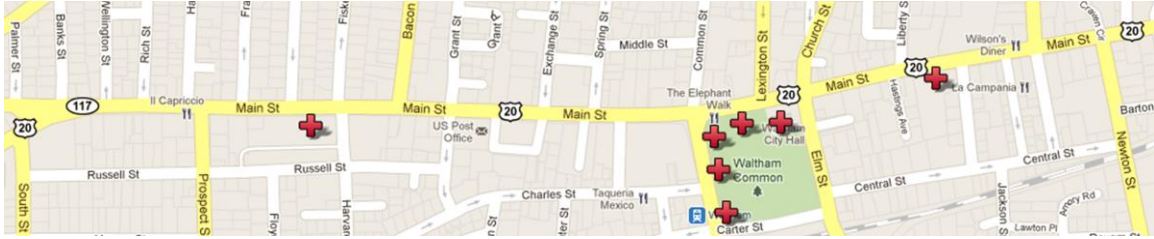
Throughout Main Street, many patches of public grass that were meant to add an aesthetic quality to the area are currently covered with trash and litter. This trash is leading to an unclean and unwelcoming feeling throughout Main Street. A clean atmosphere that is well kept and litter-free is much more appealing to visitors and potential customers. For example, Figure 3-21 is a patch of grass that a street sign is based in. In this figure, we can see the degree to which Main Street is littered with garbage. Within this particular patch, there are: paper scraps, plastic bottles and bottle caps, alcoholic containers, glass pieces, plastic wrappers, and cigarette butts. Figure 3-22 also shows the severity of the trash that covers Main Street. This figure shows the base of a telephone pole and the edge of a storm drain. Tangled within the weeds, there are soda cups, alcohol bottles, wood scraps, plastic wrappers, chewed gum, and cigarette butts. The prevalence of this litter is leading to a dirty and unwelcoming feeling towards Main Street.



**Figure 3-21: Littered Patch of Grass at Base of Sign**



**Figure 3-22: Littered Base of Pole**



**Figure 3-23: Locations of Main Street Trash Receptacles**

The main cause of the trash problems on Main Street are the lack of public trash cans along the street, as observed by the red ‘plus’ signs in Figure 3-23. Excluding the area of the Commons, there are only two available public trash bins for use. There are many areas of Main Street where one can walk for blocks without seeing a single trash can. If people need a place to throw out their garbage, they are not given an option as to where they can and therefore many revert to simply throwing it on the ground. The trash simply ends up tangled up in these public patches of grass because people lack another convenient option. The business owners are also confused as to whose responsibility it is to clean up this trash, and so it stays untouched out in the open as a sore sight to see.

The only area on Main Street that does in fact have consistent trash bins is the Common, as observed in Figure 3-24. Here, it can be observed that there is no litter on the ground, as people are able to find a place to throw out their unwanted items. The trash bins on the Common look like the one in Figure 3-24. This is an attractive and sturdy garbage bin that will protect Main Street from becoming dirty and littered.



**Figure 3-24: Trash Receptacle**

***RECOMMENDATIONS***

There is a very simple solution to this problem: more trash bins. There should be at least one on every street block. This provides customers who have garbage to dispose of with a convenient location and distance in which to do so. If this is done, less trash will end up on the ground tangled up in grass as demonstrated in Figure 3-21 and 3-22. In fact, the town of Watertown was awarded a grant in order to finance the cost of the trash bins. Waltham could seek out a similar monetary grant in order to install more receptacles on Main Street. With less litter, a brighter more inviting atmosphere can be created.

An additional approach to the trash problem could be to cover up the small patches of grass completely. For example, Watertown has done this by placing pavers and metal grates very close to tree trunks and signs within each grassy patch. This can be seen in Figure 3-24. It is important to notice how there is no litter surrounding the trunk of the tree. Any litter that may have ended up around it has been quickly and easily swept up and thrown away.



**Figure 3-25: Metal Grate Covering Tree Base in Watertown**

## **SIDEWALK DAMAGE**

When walking down Main Street, there are safety concerns that are evident. The prevalence of sidewalk damage is a main concern that should to be addressed. As observed in Figure 3-26, the sidewalks that line Main Street are cracked, sloping and unclean, and their presence damages the appearance of Main Street as a whole. Steps should be taken in order to improve the sidewalks of Main Street and create a safer and more appealing environment in the downtown area.

Safety is a main concern when considering the sidewalks on Main Street. As the center of the community, Main Street should provide its residents with a safe and friendly place to walk around. Currently, it is very easy to trip on the cracks in the sidewalk or get your foot stuck on one of the sloping areas. A fall such as this could be harmful, especially to the elderly population in the area. Additionally, anyone who is either in a motorized scooter or pushing a stroller faces greater problems from the uneven sidewalk. A bump that may not matter much when walking on the sidewalk creates an actual problem for people with wheeled vehicles. An older member of the Waltham community who is confined to a motorized scooter for long distances explained this further in an editorial to the Wicked Local Waltham website. One of the main concerns he had was that the areas in which the sidewalks are raised, it is impassible for people in scooters, therefore forcing them into the road where they are at odds with cars, trucks, and bicycles. The sidewalks are a liability for both the town and the stores on the street. If anyone were to be severely injured from the damages in the sidewalk, this could lead to a possible lawsuit. It is important that something be done to prevent anyone from being hurt in the future.



**Figure 3-26: Numerous Damaged Sidewalks on Main Street**

Safety issues regarding the maintenance of sidewalks during the winter months are a major factor as well. People are often unaware of the regulations regarding snow removal and therefore confusion about responsibility is often present. Currently, the regulations state that business owners must remove the snow from the sidewalk in front of their store. As for the vacant storefronts, it is the responsibility of the land owner to remove the snow (Moody Street Report pg. 96). Snow removal is such an important issue because the snow and ice that build up during the winter months can make the sidewalks a dangerous place and deter people from walking down Main Street. It is also important to remove the snow and ice because the buildup may lead to greater damage of the already distressed sidewalks in the area.

In addition to safety, there is also the issue of the streetscape of Main Street and how the sidewalks detract from it. In order to stimulate the economic climate in the area, increased foot traffic is needed to help to drive customers to the local stores. Sidewalks that are cracked and sloping create an environment that isn't conducive to that overarching goal. It is also important for local stores to share customers. In order for this to happen, customers need to feel enticed by the downtown area and the want to explore further. Additionally, small issues, such as gum and trash on the sidewalks, create a dirty atmosphere. If the area was better kept, people may be more encouraged to treat the downtown area with greater respect. Aesthetically speaking, the sidewalks are a blemish on Main Street. They create a downtrodden environment which spreads to other areas, such as storefronts and the appearance of vacancies.

## *RECOMMENDATIONS*

Improving the sidewalks would be a great start to revitalizing Main Street and creating a destination point for people from both within and outside the town. In regards to the snow removal problem, it is important to make sure business owners and land owners are well versed in the regulations and understand their responsibilities. There needs to be a group effort in order for there to be an effective improvement in the downtown area.



**Figure 3-27: Brick Accents in Sidewalk in Downtown Watertown**

Although realistic budget limitations do not allow for an extreme overhaul of the sidewalks on Main Street, it is important that steps be taken to improve the situation. Currently, there is a five year ongoing plan in the downtown area to improve the sidewalks and make them more uniform. The town is presently working on the sidewalks a block at a time depending on the current condition of the road and the sidewalks. Simple measures such as implementing better cleaning methods, like power washing, would make a major impact on the area. Also, any area that can be considered a safety hazard should be fixed as quickly as possible in order to prevent any possible injuries. While the aesthetic appeal of the sidewalks is an important issue, it is vital that Main Street is a safe area for those who utilize it. Other downtown areas in nearby towns have taken steps to improve the aesthetic quality of their sidewalks. In downtown Watertown, brick accents have been put in the sidewalks and the sidewalks are well maintained, giving the downtown area a clean and cohesive look, as shown in Figure 3-27.

## **SAFETY CONCERNS**

The police presence is one of the most important aspects of safety in the downtown Waltham area. With a strong police presence, the crime rate can be reduced and people will feel more comfortable walking around Main Street. The Waltham Police Department has taken many steps to ensure that they have a constant presence in the downtown area and are doing all that they can to continually improve the safety of Waltham.

One of the most important aspects of the police department is the “beat cop” who patrols on Friday and Saturday nights in the downtown area. A beat cop is an on-duty police officer who

patrols the area on foot in order to further ensure the safety of the residents and keep a close eye on the nighttime happenings. This is especially important in downtown Waltham because of the plethora of restaurants and bars in the area that attract the majority of their customers at night. The beat cop creates more of an awareness of the police department and is able to get better acquainted with the community. By being on foot instead of always in their cars, it creates a sense that the officers are more approachable. In turn, community members are more likely to go to the cops with problems. It is important that the community feels that its police officers are approachable and a part of the community itself in order to utilize them to their full potential.

Another way in which the Waltham Police Department creates a presence in the downtown area is through the consistency with which they patrol Main Street. The police department aims to have a police cruiser on Main Street at all times. One of the ways in which they are able to accomplish this is by putting a single officer in each police cruiser instead of having two officers to a car as was done in the past. By putting a single officer in each cruiser, it creates more of a presence, as people in the town see double the amount of cruisers out at any given time. They are also able to cover more area in less time. The more often people see police cruisers, the better they generally feel about the safety of the area and the fact that the police department is taking proactive steps to help prevent crime. Additionally, the police department has what is referred to as an “overlap car.” This overlap car begins its rounds at the half hour, instead of at a quarter to the hour like the rest of the officers. The overlap car is vital to ensuring the safety of the area because it helps prevent crime during the changeover period between shifts of officers, when most crimes take place. The police department has also created an additional shift from 12:00am to 2:00am. An extra police cruiser is sent out during this time period in order to further ensure the safety of the residents during a time when many of the bars in the area are closing and crime is more likely to take place. This creates a more dedicated presence and works to deter those in the area from acting out negatively.

The Waltham Police Department utilizes bike patrols as well in order to create a stronger police presence in the area. Bike patrols are a great asset to the police department because of their ability to blend in with the community. People do not usually expect to see officers on bikes so they rarely notice that the person biking by happens to be a police officer. Because of this, the bike patrol officers can become part of the community and are often witness to things that they would not see while in their cruiser. Police dogs can be used in a similar matter. Because the dogs are trained to distinguish the scent of items such as drugs or explosives, they are able to detect illegal items that officers on their own would not be able to notice. This provides the police officers with even more opportunities to find criminals and to possibly stop future crimes.

The prevalence of homelessness in Waltham is another important topic to discuss when looking at the safety of the overall area. Waltham has an abundance of programs through which they are trying to help the homeless. One of the main attractions for the homeless in the area are the rooming houses that Waltham offers. People are able to rent one room at a time which makes it a more affordable solution to those who are without a home and struggling financially. Also, the

downtown area has great access to public transportation, through both the commuter rail which goes into Boston and the MBTA buses. This is a major draw for the homeless who often struggle with the troubles of transportation when lacking a car. Waltham also has the Joseph Smith Health Alliance which provides free health services for people who do not have health insurance and cannot afford to see a doctor. Main Street offers several different soup kitchens which provide the homeless with a free warm meal. Many of the homeless in the area depend on the food they receive from the soup kitchens year round. Since Waltham is home to all of these resources, homeless individuals from towns around Waltham migrate to the area in order to use the services available for them. Waltham, especially Main Street, has become a hub for the homeless in the area. With the great amount of homeless in town, the crime rate is not as bad as it could be. Nevertheless, the prevalence of homelessness is a great sense of discomfort for many in the area. In fact, a survey that was given to over 300 college students in the area showed that 36% of the students feel that the homeless in the downtown area contribute to an unsafe feeling.

Additionally, the predominance of homelessness in Waltham may also be contributed to the fact that Waltham has a high number of people with mental illnesses. In fact, when speaking with the Waltham Police Department, they concluded that most of the homelessness in Waltham could be accounted for between substance abuse and mental illness. Many of the mentally ill do not have adequate access to medical professionals in order to get the help they need. Over the years, they have fallen through the cracks of the system and have never been able to overcome their problems, often leaving them out on the street. Mental illness has become such a pressing issue in Waltham that the Waltham Police Department partnered with the Edinburg Center in order to have more knowledge and resources at hand for when it came to dealing with the mentally ill. When a police officer knows that they are going on a call regarding someone who appears to be mentally ill, they will sometimes bring a medical professional from the Edinburg Center with them. This person can act as a mediator in the situation and can help evaluate the behavior of the person believed to be mentally ill in order to ensure everyone's safety. By bringing on medical professionals to evaluate the people in question, they can avoid putting people in jail who are in desperate need of medical attention. This helps avoid making everyone a criminal in the sense of the law. Although evaluating these people and getting them professional help can work to alleviate some of the homeless problems in downtown Waltham, homelessness remains prevalent and is something that needs to be addressed in order to improve Waltham as a whole.

When looking at the crime in Waltham, it is important to keep the local crime rate in perspective to the national average. Overall, the crime in Waltham, with a crime index rating of 154.2 in 2010, is relatively low, compared to the U.S. average of 319.1. While this rating is low in terms of the rest of the country, the city itself is at a ten-year peak with the current rating. In addition, the crime index has gone up exponentially since its rating of 88.7 in 2005. Table 3-1 shows the overall crime rating for 2000, 2005, and 2010 as well as the break down as to types of crimes in the area. One major crime that affects the downtown area but is not considered in the chart is prostitution. As the economy worsened over the past few years, prostitution has seen an increase.



Because of the Internet, women are able to basically run their own businesses and no longer need to work with others. Waltham has the highest number of hotel rooms in New England, outside of Boston, so that factor contributes to the prevalence of prostitution as well. Prostitution has become more of a problem than many people in the area are aware of. Although some may see it as a victimless crime, the fact of the matter is that it creates a negative environment within the community and it is something that needs to be addressed in order to improve downtown Waltham.

Currently, the Common is a great asset to Main Street and the community of Waltham as a whole. Not only is the Common aesthetically pleasing, but it maintains a satisfactory level of safety. One of the main reasons for this is that the area is well lit. Good lighting is a major deterrent for crime in any area. Also, the Common is patrolled often by police officers on bike. Since there is a strong police presence, there is less crime in the area. Police officers on Main Street also keep a keen eye on the happenings of the Common. The area does attract a lot of the homeless in the community and is seen as a gathering place for them. Overall, the Common is patrolled enough that this is not an issue.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are many steps that can be taken by local businesses in order to increase the safety of themselves and their customers. By following these simple steps, businesses can protect themselves from much of the crime that is targeted at them, and create a safer environment for Main Street consumers. While not all businesses are aware of what needs to be done, they can enlighten themselves through the “Safety Tips for Waltham’s Small Business Owners” pamphlet that is distributed by the police department.

One of the best things that a small business can do to increase their security is to install a video surveillance camera. Although some people are opposed to the idea because they do not like the thought of always being watched, surveillance cameras can be vital to the safety of businesses. Surveillance cameras that are very visible to customers and potential robbers can act as a major deterrent against crimes. If a potential robber notices the camera either at the entrance or above the cash register, they often reevaluate their plans knowing that their crime is going to be

**Table 3-1: Crime Rates in Waltham**

Type of Crime	2000	2005	2010
<b>Murders</b>	0	0	2
per 100,000	0	0	3.3
<b>Rapes</b>	12	7	13
per 100,000	19.9	11.9	21.6
<b>Robberies</b>	8	15	24
per 100,000	13.3	25.4	39.9
<b>Assaults</b>	11	55	112
per 100,000	18.2	93.1	186.3
<b>Burglaries</b>	132	85	200
per 100,000	219	143.9	332.7
<b>Thefts</b>	783	498	759
per 100,000	1298.8	843.1	1262.8
<b>Auto Thefts</b>	73	78	73
per 100,000	121.1	132.1	121.5
<b>Arson</b>	N/A	4	2
per 100,000	N/A	6.8	3.3
<b>Crime Index</b>	<b>129.1</b>	<b>88.7</b>	<b>154.2</b>

captured on tape. It is also important to have a surveillance camera that takes videos of high quality. Because the tapes from the cameras may need to be used as evidence in court, it is important that the police can clearly make out the face of the alleged robber from the video. If the footage is blurry or grainy, the evidence becomes useless in court and it is very hard to achieve a conviction.

There are even more things that can be done within a store to make it a safer environment. One of the most important things that a business owner can do is to make sure that the employee within the store is elevated. This can be done by raising the floor behind the cash register where the employee spends most of their time. By elevating the employee, they have a clearer view of the entire store and are more likely to notice if something is not right. During peak hours of business, it is important to have at least two employees in the store at all times. Potential robbers are less likely to rob a store that has multiple employees working. This creates a safer environment for both the employees and the customers.



**Figure 3-28: Example of a Blocked Storefront**

A prevalent problem that faces the stores on Main Street is the amount of signage that blocks the windows from the outside, such as viewed in Figure 3-28. It is important that store windows and doors remain free of advertisements and signs in order to create a safer environment. When driving by, police officers should always be able to see into the store and be able to see the employee that is working. Windows that are covered create a sense of safety for the potential robber because they know that it is difficult for anyone to see in. Additionally, there is the legal aspect. In the City of Waltham, it is illegal to cover more than half of the window surface of a business.

Outside of the store, there are a few things that can be done to create a safer environment as well. One of the most important things any store owner or land owner can do it is to make sure that there is adequate lighting outside of the store. Lighting is a major deterrent for robbers and vandals because they are more easily recognizable in the light. It also makes patrons feel safer when they are in the area and provides a better environment for any employees that may be going to and from the store, especially in the early morning and late night hours. Fencing and shrubbery can also be a major deterrent for potential robbers because it interferes with their possible escape route. It can also increase the aesthetic quality of a storefront which in turn makes the store more appealing to customers.

## **Chapter 4**

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

There appear to be many opportunities to unify the downtown area through collective advertising and cooperation between the city and businesses. Currently, downtown Waltham lacks an overall branding strategy to portray an effective uniform image to consumers. Various advertising strategies have been utilized by individual businesses. However, an overall promotional strategy for the downtown Waltham area does not exist. The New York Times defines branding as “a company’s face to the world...A brand is also how the company is perceived by its customers—the associations and inherent value they place on your business”<sup>23</sup>. This same concept can be applied to the downtown Waltham area as a whole. Customers do not have a good idea of what the street has to offer because it lacks overall branding. A branding strategy could provide consumers with an understanding of what the area has to offer and what they can expect when visiting. This rise in awareness could help to attract more people. Creating a unified brand image on Main Street would help promote a culture that is unique and identifiable to consumers.

Collaboration between various downtown organizations could provide a valuable support system to business owners and the downtown community. Business operations in Waltham could also be enhanced by strengthening the relationships between businesses and government officials. Establishing a clear procedure for communication between store owners and the City would allow for frequent and effective contact, strengthening their relationship and providing the City with relevant information about current business conditions.

Lastly, through festivals and events, the downtown area can present a stronger sense of community and promote a more unified atmosphere. Increased awareness of the Main Street brand would result from attracting consumers to the area for these community events.

#### **BRANDING AND ADVERTISING OF DOWNTOWN WALTHAM**

This section reviews various attributes of the downtown Waltham area and provides suggestions on how to utilize such attributes in constructing an overall brand image of the downtown. There is room for improvement in many areas, including individual business advertising, advertising the downtown area as a whole, and enhancing the downtown atmosphere. With the improved advertising and streetscape, downtown Waltham’s overall brand image will improve.

The results of this analysis are supported by various research methodologies including online surveys, on-site surveys, basic field research, and various interviews. These interviews included business owners, real estate agents, and landlords who own buildings in the downtown area. It was necessary to gain insight from the different perspectives in order to understand how the area

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<sup>23</sup> "The Importance of Branding Your New Business." *The New York Times*. 17 Mar. 2009.

is currently viewed and what significant improvements, both short-term and long-term, can be made. Addressing downtown Waltham's brand from both the business and consumer perspectives is critical to the successful implementation of sustainable changes that could make a difference to its overall atmosphere.

#### *CURRENT ADVERTISING STRATEGIES*

Businesses in the downtown area have benefited from individual advertising efforts. Out of the Main Street businesses surveyed, approximately half of respondents indicate they currently have websites, and several utilize flyers, email, social networking, and other various methods of advertising. It is clear that a number of individual businesses have a web presence. The Internet provides consumers the ability to locate businesses within seconds. It is in the best interest of individual businesses in the downtown area to create their own websites that are attractive and easy-to-navigate for consumers. A website provides a business with the opportunity to reach potential consumers that otherwise may have never heard about the business. Although there is a cost incurred by the businesses to create a website, the benefit of attracting new consumers greatly outweighs the cost. Advertising and consumer awareness can significantly help in the success and continued growth of a business. Creating a Facebook page or a Twitter account are two additional ways for businesses to reach new consumers using the Internet. Many people utilize social media every day, and it has the potential to be a very valuable resource for businesses in the downtown area. Additionally, social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter do not charge users for their services. This could be especially useful for advertising to the college students in the area, as social media is widely used among the younger generations. There are many other advertising strategies available to business owners that will lead to greater consumer knowledge. However, collective advertising strategies also have significant potential to compliment individual business strategies as well as the downtown community.

Advertising the downtown Waltham area as a whole could prove to be beneficial, but no such strategy currently exists. Main Street and Moody Street have an abundance of different options for consumers and have the potential to effectively market themselves as a destination area. Analyzing the downtown Waltham area and its potential for a collective advertising strategy is just as important as analyzing that of individual businesses in order to gain a full perspective.

The downtown business community can be better unified through existing resources that are available. The Watch City Card is a great way for businesses to advertise and attract consumers. Also, an improved community website for the downtown area could help in sharing information about what Main Street has to offer. This would be very useful for anyone interested in getting a better feel for the area. By examining the community websites of other successful downtown areas, Waltham's business support groups could improve their websites accordingly. This could be very beneficial to both businesses and consumers and also serve to further unify the downtown.

### *STUDENT INSIGHT INTO EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING*

A survey that reached 348 Bentley University students provided further insight into the current branding and advertising situation in downtown Waltham and its effects on attracting students as consumers. Figure 4-1 portrays the results in a bar graph. When asked how one hears about restaurants, stores, etc. on Main Street, “Word of Mouth” was chosen by 87% of students. “Walking by” was also chosen by 46% of students while some students also wrote “Driving by” in the “Other” option. It can be seen that the downtown area has a lot of room for improvement regarding its advertising efforts. The majority of respondents hear about stores by either word of mouth or walking by. In fact, eighty percent of businesses surveyed recognized their location as a clear advantage, due to the high volume of customer traffic that occurs on Main Street. Additionally, flyers could be used much more effectively, especially on campus settings, as they are already a familiar method of advertising. Attracting more student interest in the downtown area could help in branding Waltham as a college town. The Internet is also an easily-accessible and effective way to reach interested consumers. Stores can advertise online through individual websites or review sites that already exist for little cost, while still reaching many consumers.

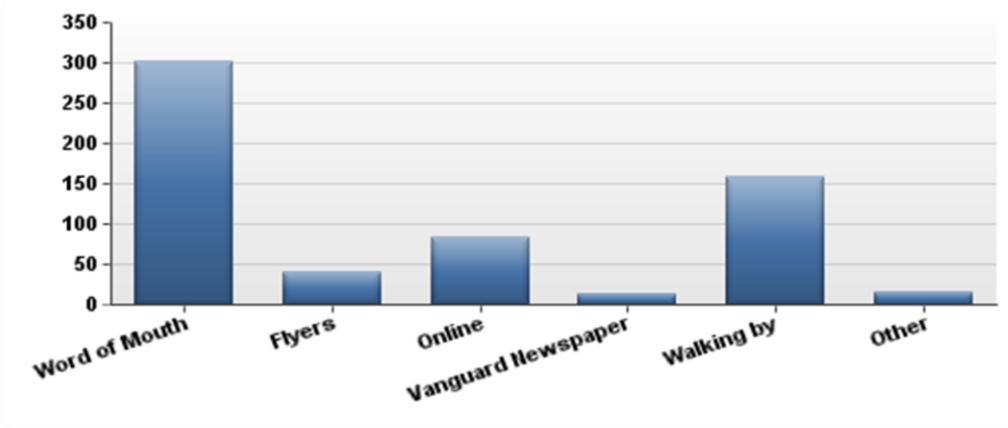


Figure 4-1: How students hear about stores in the downtown area

### *COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD*

A community bulletin board for the downtown area is an easy way to boost Main Street’s advertising potential. It would represent an additional channel for both businesses and consumers to advertise and reach out to the community. The bulletin board should be a substantial size and allow residents and businesses to post flyers, advertisements, coupons, etc. on both sides. Placing it by the Commons on the Main Street and Moody Street intersection would be a good location to cover the two major streets that make up the downtown area. Many downtown areas offer bulletin boards as a successful way of free advertising and community outreach. Waltham should consider investing in a bulletin board to enhance the area’s brand providing it with more of a downtown feel where consumers go to shop and eat, giving residents a resource that is free for them to use.

## STORE SIGNAGE

Store signage provides another way for businesses to advertise and brand themselves. As mentioned, many students reported that they notice stores just by walking or driving by. The signs on each store provide a first impression to potential consumers which are vital to their perception of the businesses. However, store signage has been a consistent problem for businesses on Main Street. Many businesses have unattractive or unreadable signs above their stores. Only twenty-five percent of the businesses surveyed stated building appearance as an advantage of being located on Main Street. Store signage can have a significant impact on improving the overall building appearance, especially from a consumer's perspective. Fifty-six percent of the businesses surveyed were either neutral or dissatisfied with the store signage/display situation, indicating a high level of opportunity for changing the signage in downtown Waltham. If this sample of businesses is reflective of the total population of downtown, many more should be interested in improving their store sign.

A potential solution to this problem was offered by a Main Street business involved in sign-making. The owner stated that he would be willing to help other stores on the street improve their signage at a discount if it would help business for his store and create uniformity on the street. Creating greater uniformity in store signage throughout the downtown area would create a more cohesive image and make downtown Waltham a more attractive shopping area.

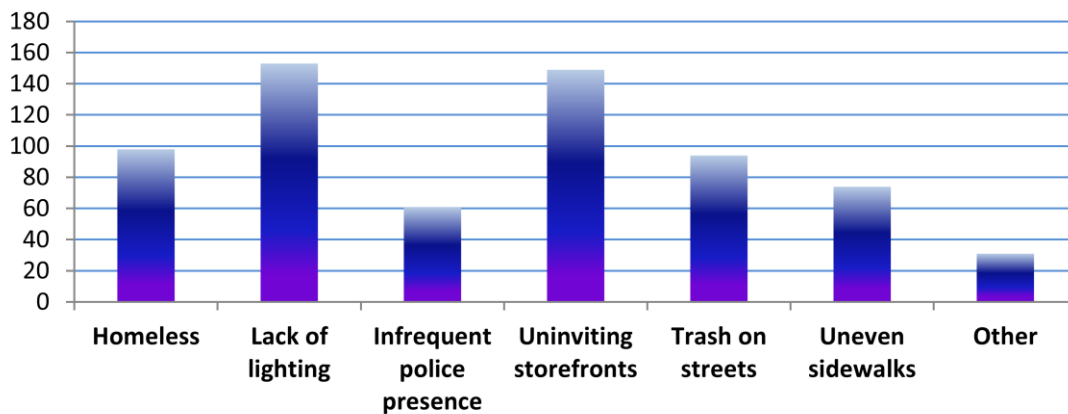


Figure 4-2: Factors that Create an Unsafe Feeling on Main Street

Consumers prefer a shopping area that is clean and welcoming, providing an environment in which they feel safe. When asked “What, if any, of the following items create an unsafe feeling on Main Street?”, “Uninviting storefronts” was chosen by 43% of students (Figure 4-2). Enhancing store signage can aid in the creation of more inviting storefronts and a safer perceived atmosphere to consumers as a result.

### *WATCH CITY CARD*

The Watch City Card, which is offered through WalthamTourism.com, has the potential to be a great resource to local businesses, as well as, consumers. (Figure 4-3) Currently, only fifteen businesses participate in the City Card program. Considering the amount of local businesses, restaurants, and retail stores which currently operate in the downtown Waltham area, this number could be greatly improved. There seems to be limited enthusiasm from businesses about participating according to the survey of owners. When asked “How familiar are you with walthamtourism.com?”, seventy-five percent of businesses responded “Not at all.” Businesses must register for the card through the Waltham Tourism website. From the sample of businesses surveyed, it is clear that Waltham Tourism needs to make itself more well-known in the local business community. Businesses need to be better informed about the organization in order to benefit from its offerings to the community. When asked “Would you consider participating, if you are already not, in the Watch City Card? (A customer discount card used to promote stores in downtown Waltham i.e. buy 3, get 1 free),” only nineteen percent of businesses responded “Yes”, while sixty-nine percent of businesses responded “No.” More research needs to be dedicated to understanding why a majority of the businesses would not like to participate in an opportunity that could prove beneficial for their company, and to determine if the sample of businesses surveyed reflects that attitude of all of the businesses located in the downtown area. It is also important to educate business owners about the Watch City Card so that they understand the positive impact it can have on their business. It could be an additional way for businesses to advertise and reach new consumers that are looking for deals and discounts.

### *COMMUNITY WEBSITES*

Advertising the downtown area through one common website can help to brand Main Street as a destination area. Harvard Square and Davis Square both have fairly strong community websites designed to promote local business and events. Both websites are aesthetically pleasing and easy to navigate, making them welcoming for consumers looking to visit the area. By integrating features found on these websites, such as a news stream, daily events on the homepage, and even social media plug-ins, Waltham could further develop its community websites and encourage nearby residents to visit the page much more frequently.

Harvard Square in Cambridge is a well-known retail and restaurant location which is frequented by many shoppers every day. The Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA) runs its website and provides a portal for Harvard Square businesses to collectively advertise their products and/or services (Figure 4-4). The website also provides information on each day’s events



**Figure 4-3: The Watch City Card Can be a Valuable Advertising Tool for Waltham Businesses**



which could attract consumers to the area. Downtown Waltham does not have a community website that is as thorough as Harvard Square’s and could greatly benefit from developing one.

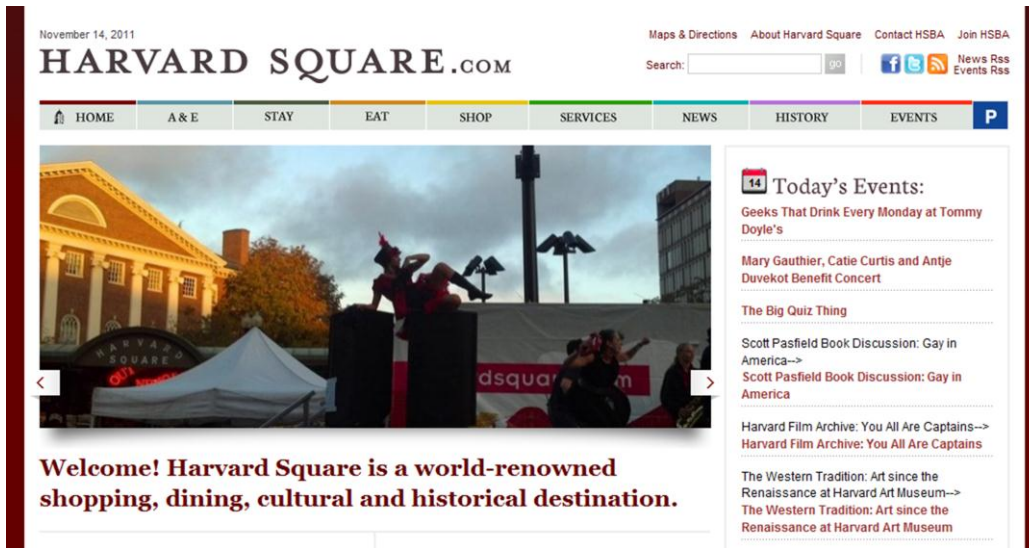


Figure 4-4: Harvard Square’s Website

Davis Square also has a notable community website (Figure 4-5). It is maintained by the Davis Area Resident/Business Initiative (DARBI), a non-profit organization founded in 2006 to enhance the Davis Square experience. The group states that, “Our mission is to ‘Build Community in Davis Square’ by supporting, organizing and participating in events that build relationships and familiarize people with the current issues impacting our area.”

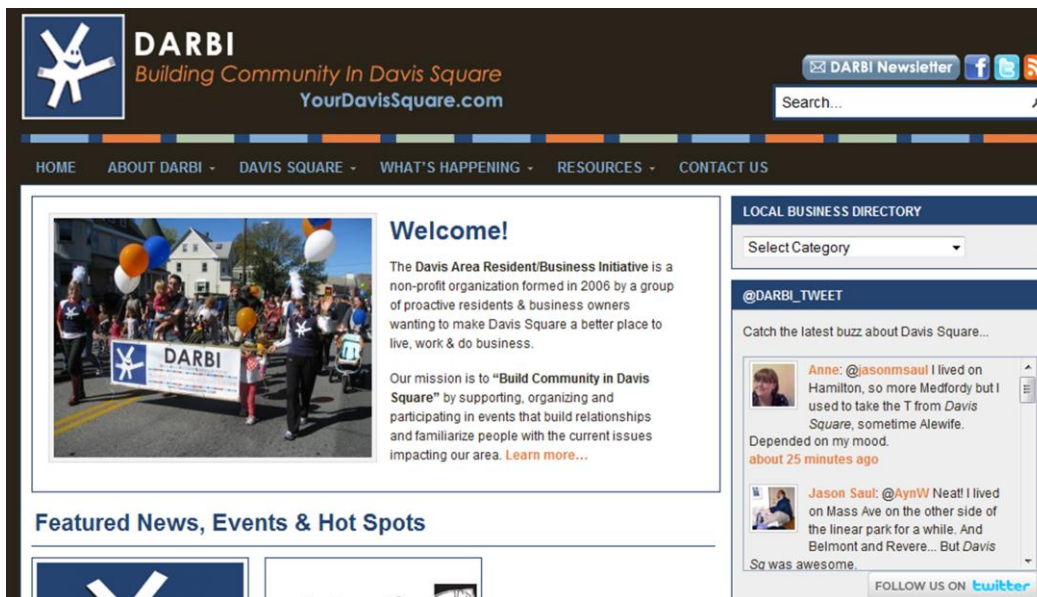


Figure 4-5: YourDavisSquare.com

Waltham Community organizations, whether it is the Downtown Waltham Partnership or Waltham Tourism, can learn a lot from DARBI. DARBI hosts a very user-friendly website that

is easy to navigate with clear and concise options. One section is called “Featured Businesses” where DARBI will pick a business to highlight for a certain amount of time, giving consumers additional information about the business and providing the business with free advertising to reach potential consumers. There needs to be a single organization for Waltham that operates similar to DARBI, as the Downtown Waltham Partnership and Waltham Tourism are currently both taking on this role. (Figures 4-6 and 4-7) Another important aspect of Davis Square’s website is the local business directory which allows one to filter businesses in the area by the category in which one is interested. Creating one easy-to-navigate website for the downtown area removes the confusion of having to sift through multiple websites in order to get a good picture of downtown Waltham and what it has to offer. Waltham Tourism and the Downtown Waltham Partnership should merge and work together for the greater good of the community.



Figure 4-6: Waltham Tourism’s Website

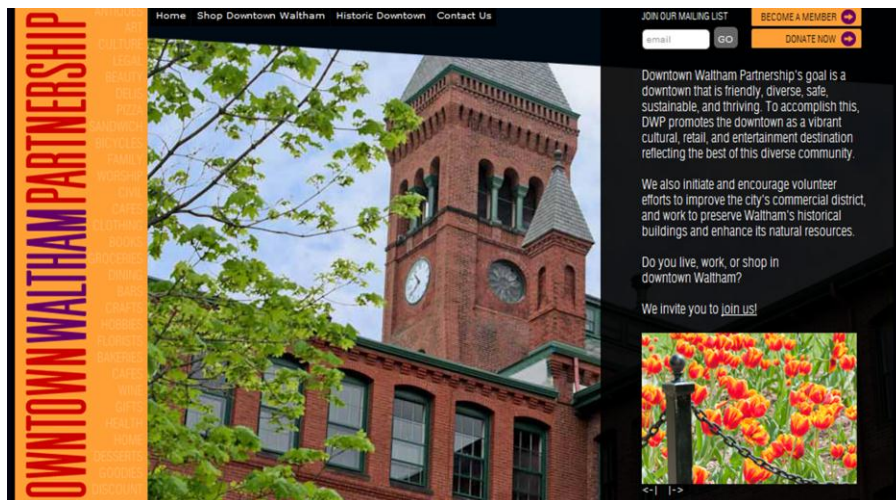
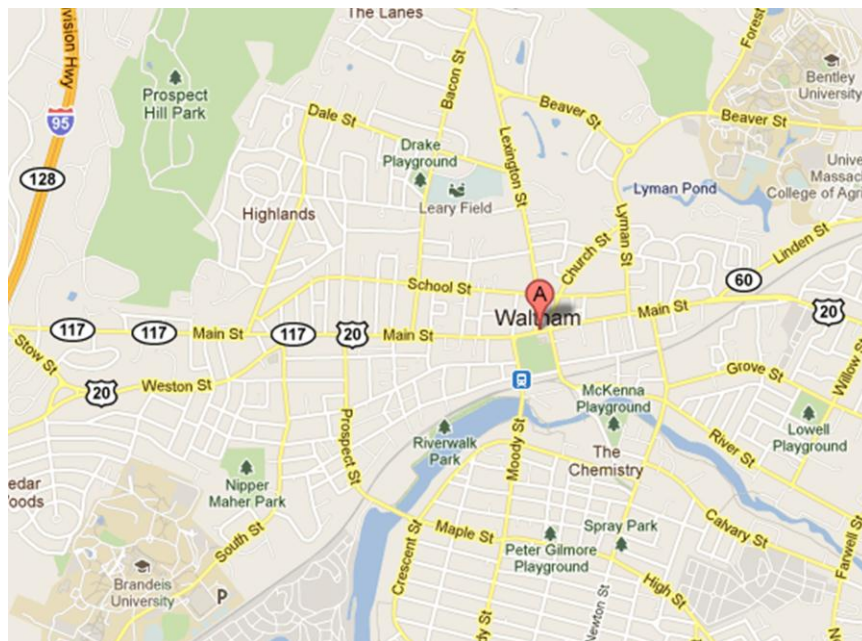


Figure 4-7: Downtown Waltham Partnership’s Website

The Downtown Waltham Partnership and Waltham Tourism both maintain community websites (Figure 4-6 and 4-7) so therefore there is no official website for the downtown Waltham area. This hurts the chances of unifying the area as a visitor destination. Having one website will provide clearer information to consumers and make it easier for them to find what they are looking for in one location, just as the Harvard Square website does. These two organizations will be described in detail in the “Downtown Waltham Business Organizations” section of this report.

*BRANDING AS A COLLEGE TOWN*

Another way to improve the brand image is to capitalize on one of the most prevalent customers in the area: the college student. Waltham is home to two small-medium sized universities, Brandeis University and Bentley University. In a city with a population of over 60,000, the combined student bodies of the two universities have over 8,000 students. This makes up thirteen percent of the present population while school is in session and therefore, the college student is a key demographic that the city of Waltham should target. The college demographic enjoys restaurants, bars, high-end retail, or other activities for weekends and night life (Figure 4-9). Both colleges are on the higher side of the cost spectrum with total annual tuition and fees adding up to above \$50,000. From this statistic, one can infer that many of the students come from financially stable backgrounds and are more likely to have disposable income readily available. The universities are within reasonable range to the downtown areas as well (Figure 4-



**Figure 4-8: Map Showing Main Street's Proximity to Bentley University and Brandeis University**

8). Both universities are about 1.5 miles from the Waltham Common, which is a four minute drive or a half-hour walk. The short drive is easy for both colleges for those with a vehicle on campus and a cheap taxi ride for those without.

Downtown Waltham has yet to truly capitalize on this great opportunity. The problem is that Main Street is not fulfilling its potential market share of college students. According to the survey of Bentley students, twenty nine percent rarely go to Main Street and eleven percent never do. With such a close location, it is quite astonishing that Bentley students do not visit more often. When asked for reasons they do not visit Main Street, sixty-two percent said there was nothing of interest to them. About half of the students responded saying they go to other downtown areas to meet their needs. Other substitute areas often mentioned include Boston, Harvard Square, Watertown Arsenal Mall, Burlington, and Lexington. These places are cited for having large retail businesses (e.g. Target), clothing stores, nightclubs, or a mall setting. Main Street has retail and clothing, but often smaller stores or specialized products. The retail or clothing stores with bigger brand names or more variety are often chosen due to the familiarity. Thirty-five percent of students responded that they do not go to Main Street because of lack of transportation. A good portion of college students in the area are not able to take advantage of what Main Street has to offer simply because they cannot get there with relative ease. There is also the factor of safety on Main Street. Eighteen percent of students who responded said they do not feel safe on Main Street. More than fifty percent said the lack of lighting and uninviting storefronts are reasons for feeling unsafe on the street. Many students also listed homelessness or general uncleanliness as reasons not to visit. These problems are not crime related and could be solved without increased police enforcement.

There is also the potential problem of the Waltham’s residents’ perspective. Many Waltham residents and locals that are not college students may prefer how the city currently operates and would not like a change in their downtown area, especially one that accommodates to a college-aged demographic. If existing businesses started to target the college crowd and/or larger amounts of college students took over the downtown area, locals may feel as if they are losing their city. Many of the solutions to the “college town” problem are relatively straightforward, realistic and practical. They would be of low cost to the universities, city, or downtown businesses, and while cost effective, changing Waltham into more of a college scene could give a

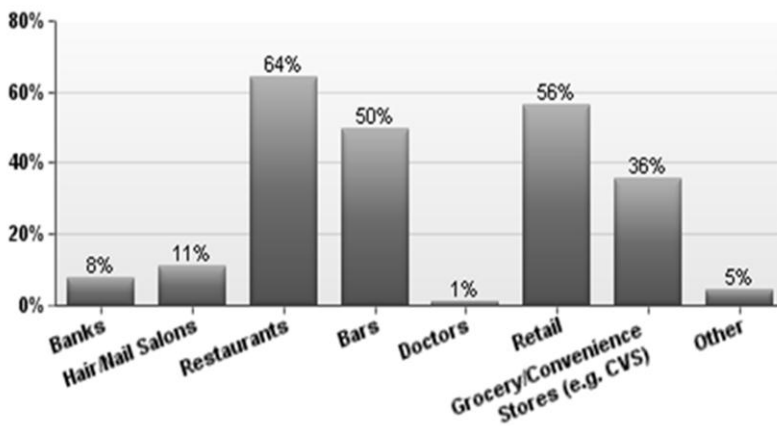


Figure 4-9: Question Response on Consumer Survey

really positive spin on the economic climate. Many cities filled with college students and young professionals have bustling downtown areas such as Inman or Davis Square in Somerville and Harvard Square. These areas are filled with high-end clothing stores, coffee shops, and unique restaurants and bars. These squares have low

vacancy rates because the college scene is often present to keep the businesses in good health.

Many students stated that there was nothing of interest to them on Main Street. This can be attributed to two possibilities. Either there is truly nothing of interest to the student on the street, or the student is not aware of what Main Street has to offer. The first possibility could be solved by a diversification in the business mix. The encouragement of retail stores, higher quality clothing stores, nightclubs, etc. would appeal to the college crowd and effectively draw in profit for those businesses as well as increase foot traffic for others. Also, the addition of these businesses could bring more of a shopping culture to Main Street rather than a one-stop destination. Patrons may wish to stroll down the street seeing what other unique boutiques or coffee shops the area has to offer rather than going to Main Street just to satisfy one specific need. Even though there is a need for a diversification of businesses, it is also certainly true that many students lack the knowledge of what exists in the downtown area. This could be easily improved by an increase in advertising.

There are a number of ways for businesses to promote themselves among the college students. The first is simply increased advertising. Flyers on campuses, ads in the Bentley Vanguard or the Brandeis Hoot, social media such as Facebook and Twitter are all easy and cheap ways to grab student's attention. Utilizing the school's newspapers is a lot cheaper than advertising in a local or mainstream newspaper and it guarantees that the college demographic will be targeted. One simple solution would be a downtown catalogue that would spread around campuses during a beginning of the year. The catalogue would be filled with advertisements for various businesses on Main Street that could offer coupons or discounts to the college students. Even without a special offer, a spot in this advertisement would inform students of what is available on the street. This could also be done through updating the visitor guide which lists all of the businesses in the downtown area, and by making it available on Bentley and Brandeis' campuses to enhance students' knowledge of what downtown Waltham has to offer. Discounts to college students do not necessarily have to be flyer or catalogue based but could be in-store. A special discount could be given to Bentley and Brandeis students if they present school issued identification at the time of purchase. Our survey report states eighty-nine percent of Bentley students had never heard of businesses on Main Street giving such discounts. Those that had heard of the discount stated several of the same places including In a Pickle, Wilson's Diner, and Joe Sent Me. This shows that the businesses that give out discounts will be remembered by students and knowledge of the discount would be spread by word-of-mouth. While not using monetary discounts, some restaurants could take advantage of the two nearby colleges by accepting discretionary funds from the students. This system is used by many colleges, like Boston University, with surrounding food establishments. It offers convenience to the students, while the business may get some sort of premium from the college. Another simple way to target students in this way would be to have a university night. Whether this would give the students a discount, close off the business to only said students, or just be an informal night where they suggest those students

come, giving the students this option of their own night will give them a destination in mind, as well as a sense of camaraderie that could develop into a weekly tradition.

The students also mentioned lack of transportation to downtown Waltham as the reason for not visiting. Both Brandeis and Bentley have a shuttle to Harvard Square which is an easy way for students to get into Cambridge and Boston (Figure 4-10). Only Brandeis, however, currently has shuttles that run to residential areas and attractions on Main and Moody Street. Bentley does not have this option, but according to our survey if a free shuttle was provided similar to Brandeis, seventy-four percent of students would be more inclined to visit the downtown area. While the shuttle would come at a cost

to the university, it would be supporting the community by helping local businesses. It would also reduce drunk driving among students making the streets safer, while opening up more parking spots for non-student patrons. Another option that has been explored by many college bars is that the bar itself provides a shuttle or bus to pick up students and escort them to the specific location. Again, this would show that the bar endorses safety in the community



Figure 4-10: Example of a Small Shuttle Bus

while guaranteeing business for that location. With this shuttle, the bar would get more college students than usual and could make up make up costs with the extra profit.

## **DOWNTOWN WALTHAM BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS**

### *COLLABORATIVE BUSINESS GROUPS*

Waltham currently has two primary groups for business owners: the Downtown Waltham Partnership (DWP) and the Downtown Initiative Committee (DIC). The two groups are completely separate entities, though both ultimately have the same goal: to promote collaboration and mutual success among business owners in the downtown Waltham area.

The Downtown Initiative Committee is a branch of the Waltham West Suburban Chamber of Commerce, and is the group responsible for planning Waltham's annual Holiday Prelude. Currently, the Downtown Initiative Committee's web presence is fairly limited. Granted, the committee is heavily involved with [WalthamTourism.com](http://WalthamTourism.com), but a Google search for "Downtown

Initiative Committee Waltham” yields very few relevant results. In order to become a powerful force in Waltham, the Downtown Initiative Committee must increase brand awareness and membership.

The Downtown Waltham Partnership is another active group in Waltham, and involves businesses, special interest groups, and residents in order to achieve the common goal of revitalizing downtown Waltham. The DWP is based on the Main Street model, which has been adopted by downtown areas throughout the United States to facilitate economic and cultural revitalization.

The groups have similar goals, but also have similar problems at the moment. Most Waltham business owners are either unaware that the DWP and DIC exist or are unwilling to participate. In a study conducted by the Downtown Waltham Research Group, seventy-three percent of business owners surveyed were “not at all familiar” with the Downtown Waltham Partnership. In the same study, eighty percent of business owners surveyed were “not at all familiar” with WalthamTourism.com, which belongs to the Downtown Initiative Committee. Therefore, there is a great deal of room for improvement in generating awareness for the two major downtown Waltham collaborative business groups.

#### *WALTHAMTOURISM.COM*

Currently, the most detailed website for the City of Waltham is WalthamTourism.com, which is sponsored by the Waltham West Suburban Chamber of Commerce. The website allows Waltham business owners to register for a free account to have their business listed on the site, post events on the Waltham calendar, and add their Watch City Card promotions to the Watch City Card webpage. WalthamTourism.com also comprises separate pages for dining, accommodations, shopping, and services that consumers can find in Waltham. Each of these pages contains a listing of Waltham establishments that fit their respective categories, often with location, contact information, hours of operation, and pricing information, if applicable.

The website has a generally dynamic look and feel, and navigation is easy for frequent Internet users. The calendar feature of the website allows consumers and businesses alike to click on a month or a specific date to see what events are taking place in Waltham, along with other important details, such as who is organizing the events, the price of admission, location, website, and a contact email address.

While the concept of the website is fairly strong, it leaves something to be desired. The dining page, shown in Figure 4-11, consists simply of a blue background with black text. There are no images on the page, and the amount of blank space is overwhelming. The pages for Accommodations, Shopping, and Services, all have a similar setup to that of the Dining webpage. By simply asking restaurants to submit images to the website, each page would be much more aesthetically pleasing, and would also offer businesses the opportunity to showcase their products and services. Furthermore, WalthamTourism.com could benefit greatly from the

addition of more registered users. Currently, the number of businesses adding events to the calendar is fairly limited, which makes the website much less valuable to potential consumers looking for new places to visit. Businesses would most likely be more likely to register for the website if they were given the opportunity to include a link back to their own website in the section with their business information on WalthamTourism.com. This would increase traffic to each business owner’s website, as well as further populate the community of registrants on WalthamTourism.com.

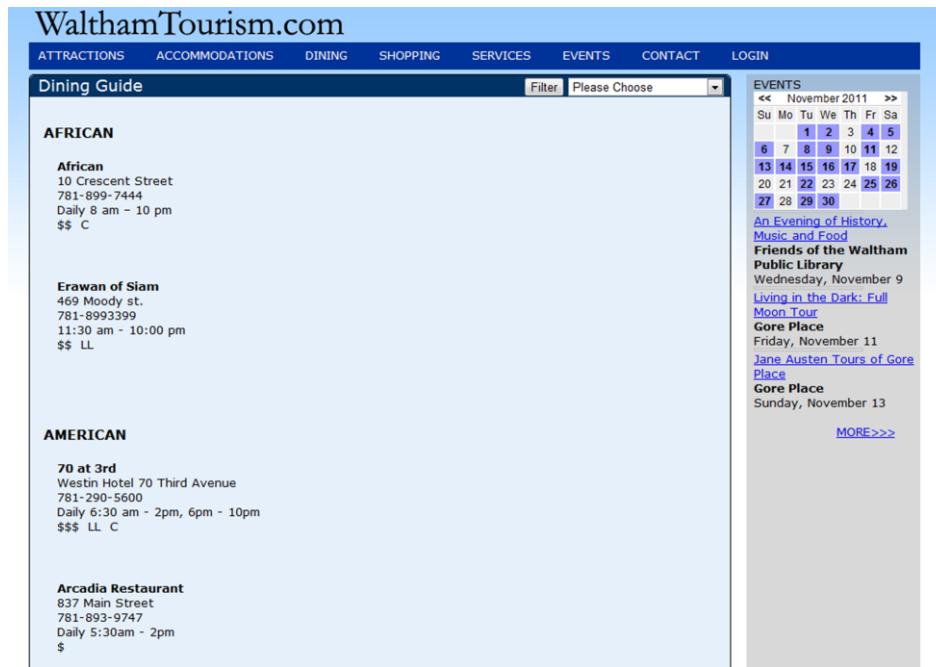
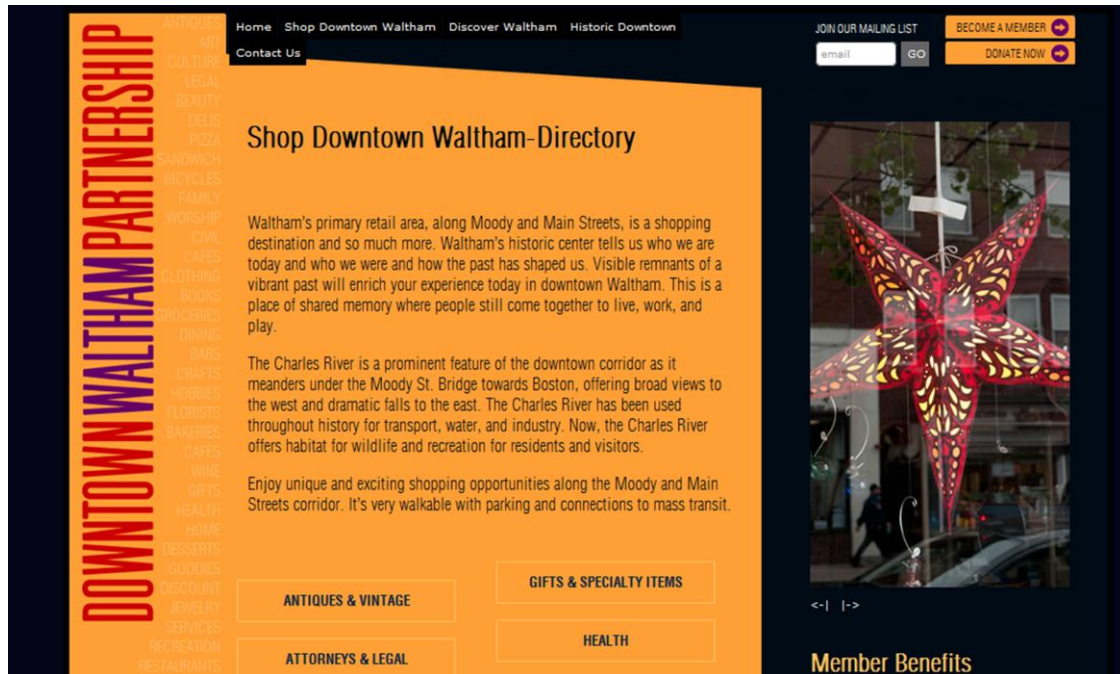


Figure 4-11: WalthamTourism.com Dining Guide

### *DOWNTOWNWALTHAM.ORG*

DowntownWaltham.org is similar to WalthamTourism.com, and is a project of the Downtown Waltham Partnership. The two websites ultimately have similar goals, but attempt to reach said goals in two very different fashions. The creators of DowntownWaltham.org seem to have placed a much greater emphasis on the importance of designing an aesthetically pleasing website than those of WalthamTourism.com, which is very clear based on the use of vivid colors and images. As shown in Figure 4-12, the pictures on DowntownWaltham.org show Waltham in a positive light and make the city look like an attractive place to visit. Furthermore, the image in the center of the homepage rotates between the picture of the statue shown below and fourteen other images.





**Figure 4-12: DowntownWaltham.Org Shopping Directory**

The website’s primary goal at this point in time seems to be to increase the number of businesses registered to use the website and the overall membership of the Downtown Waltham Partnership. DowntownWaltham.org currently has no businesses listed under any of its shopping categories, including “Delis and Pizza,” “Restaurants and Bars,” and “Gifts and Specialty Items,” all of which should have a vast array of listings for the downtown Waltham area.

The website also has some basic usability issues, which discourage consumers from spending large amounts of time on the website. Pages take far too long to load, given the fairly basic nature of the website. What appears to be a “What’s Happening” link on the home page does not function properly. This button could ultimately link to a calendar feature, which is one of the main distinguishing factors between WalthamTourism.com and DowntownWaltham.org.

Other usability issues are also present on DowntownWaltham.org. When a visitor clicks “Shop Downtown Waltham” on the top navigation bar, the navigation bar no longer fits on one line, but rather the “Contact Us” link gets moved to the following line, as is demonstrated in Figure 4-12.

When all of the top navigation links do appear on one line, however, the “Become a Member” and “Donate Now” boxes become overly crowded, and the purple arrows cover parts of the link text. Furthermore, the “Join Our Mailing List” link present above the search bar on the top right of the page does not function, thereby preventing interested consumers from learning more about Waltham businesses and events.

Additionally, the Waltham Map in Figure 4-13 shown on the DowntownWaltham.org homepage is anything but useful to someone interested in learning more about Waltham, as it shows no roads or landmarks to give potential consumers a frame of reference when exploring the city. The Downtown Waltham Partnership would benefit from including more details regarding points within Waltham, rather than using the map to point out the fact that Waltham is 215 miles from New York City.

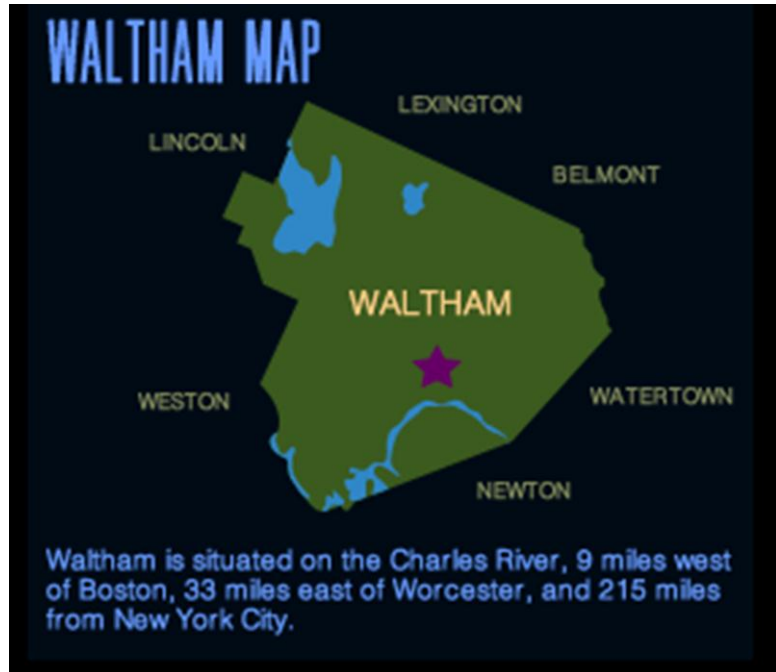


Figure 4-13: Waltham Map Found on DowntownWaltham.Org

The Downtown Waltham Partnership and the Downtown Initiative Committee operate separate but comparable websites but, by cooperating and sharing resources, they could provide an improved service for the downtown community. Down-townWaltham.org has a much more dynamic look and feel than WalthamTourism.com, but the latter website seems to have more registered businesses and community support. If the strengths of these two websites were merged, Waltham could potentially have a high-quality website to unify the downtown community and contribute to the city’s overall branding efforts. To combine these two entities would lead to more efficient and effective operations than is currently possible through their individual efforts.

### **CITY / BUSINESS OWNER RELATIONS**

To successfully unify the downtown area, it is crucial to establish a clear channel of communication between Waltham business owners and City officials. Main Street business owners know first-hand the current conditions of the area and are knowledgeable about issues and concerns that may arise. Allowing these owners to easily relay feedback to the city would provide the most accurate information available. Officials could constantly be informed of safety hazards, cosmetic issues, and more, if they relied on the input of Main Street business owners. In addition, if business owners had positive or successful interactions with their City officials, they would be more cooperative in future Main Street development activities.

### *KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND CONTACTS*

Waltham City Council consists of six Councilors-at-Large and nine Councilors assigned to a specific ward within the city. The map in Figure 4-14 shows these nine wards, and illustrates the fact that Main Street is the dividing line between Ward 5 and Ward 6, so there are two different Councilors for the Main Street area. Waltham City Council serves as the primary legislative body in Waltham, and confirms or rejects motions put into action by the Mayor. City councilors are expected to represent the interests of their constituents, including businesses, residents, and special interest groups.

City council also consists of a number of specialized committees, designed to focus on specific issues in Waltham. These committees include the License and Franchise Committee, the Public Works Committee, the Ordinance and Rules Committee, the Finance Committee, the Veteran Service Committee, the Long Term Debt Committee, and the Community Development Committee, all of which have a Councilor designated as a chairperson.

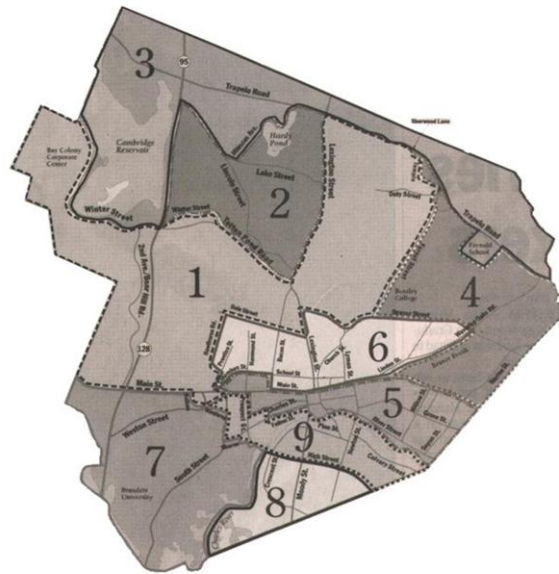


Figure 4-14: City Council Ward Map

The Waltham Planning Department is also crucial to any project development in the downtown Waltham area. The Planning Department's most important function may very well be the gathering and allocation of grant monies for projects within the city, especially from the Federal Community Development Block Grant Program. Other Planning Department priorities include public works improvements, guiding long-term city planning and development, and ensuring the success of the economic climate in Waltham.

According to the survey of business owners on Main Street, forty percent had never contacted the city with concerns or problems. However, in no way does this indicate that owners have nothing to offer regarding the current economic climate of the downtown area. Instead, this lack of contact could be improved by providing owners with a direct method of communication to the City. Currently, the best mode to contact a department of the Waltham government is not clear to business owners. Contact information is listed on the City of Waltham's website, but with over thirty departments it is not apparent which department pertains to a specific problem business owners may encounter (Figure 4-15). If the process was more streamlined, business owners would be more likely to supply valuable insight for future area improvements. The City of Waltham could compile the information to not only understand what issues are prevalent and need to be addressed on Main Street, but also how urgent they are.

Assessor's Department	610 Main Street Waltham, MA 02452	(781) 314-3200
Auditor's Department	610 Main Street First Floor Waltham, MA 02452	(781) 314-3220
Auxiliary Fire Department		
Board of Survey and Planning	165 Lexington Street Waltham, MA 02452	(781) 314-3803
Building Department	119 School Street Government Center, Lower Level Waltham, MA 02451	(781) 314-3275
Cemetery Department	203 Prospect Street Waltham, MA 02453	(781) 314-3495
City Clerk	610 Main Street City Hall Second Floor Waltham, MA 02452	(781) 314-3120
City Council		
Community Preservation		(781) 314-3117
Consolidated Public Works	167 Lexington St Waltham, MA 02452	(781) 314-3800
Council on Aging	488 Main Street Waltham, MA 02452	(781) 899-7228 (781) 314-3499
Elections		
Emergency Management	27 Lexington Street Waltham, MA 02452	781-314-3198 (Main) 781-314-3296 (Environmental Specialist) (781) 314-3830 (781) 314-3830 (Permitting & Infiltration & Inflow) (781) 314-3855 (Dispatch)
Engineering	119 School Street Waltham, MA 02451-4596	

Figure 4-15 Department Contact Information on the Waltham City Website

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

The process of communicating with the City government is not a straightforward task for business owners. The only way to find the appropriate contact information is through the Waltham City website. When owners look online, a link for businesses can be found on the right side. However, all visitors are presented with the same screen upon entering the site (Figure 4-16). The website does not cater the layout according to what type of user the visitor is. This makes it difficult to sort through all the available links to find the area originally intended. For example, when business owners visit the site, they want information only specific to businesses, but they are presented with the same links as all other visitors to the site. If the website first allowed the site navigator to indicate their interest: resident, business, or visitor, it could then show the most relevant pages. By doing so, business operators could quickly narrow their Internet resources to those that pertain directly to them.



Figure 4-16: Current Homepage of the Waltham City Website

Once the business owner has successfully located his or her specific page of the Waltham website, the options become slim. The current business page only includes five sections titled: EDC/Planning, Building, Zoning, Resources, and Other (Figure 4-17). There is no obvious section to direct current business owners to the information they may be seeking. The links available also do not represent every resource that the City offers to business owners. Most importantly, there is no link to contact the City officials.



**Figure 4-17: Business Owners on the Current Waltham City Website**

After completing a search on the Waltham website, the business owner may hopefully find the contact information desired. However, the hassle of locating it does not encourage a user to return to the website to research another issue in the future. This lengthy task required to research the procedure for reporting a certain problem may dissuade a business owner from following up on it next time. Having a simple list on hand to reference for situations that may arise would save time and effort for the business owner.

In addition, not all correspondence with the City has been satisfactory for business owners. One business owner described a specific encounter that left her very dissatisfied with the process and the eventual outcome. The Main Street owner had discovered the sidewalk outside her store was uneven and presented safety concerns to customers and all foot traffic. She attempted to notify the city on several occasions and expressed that it took a lot of time and effort to get in contact with them. Once the City was informed of the issue, the owners and employees grew increasingly irritated, waiting for any action from the City. When they finally did respond, the owner was still displeased with the haphazard nature of the result. Instead of repairing the dangerous sidewalk, the city worker spray painted the cracks with red symbols, indicating where the problems were. Over a year has gone by since the incident, and the sidewalk has still not been repaired (Figures 4-18 and 4-19). In this case, by not establishing a positive relationship with the business owner, the City may harm its reputation as a supportive, reliable governing body. It is also likely that the City lost a valuable resource in further endeavors by discouraging

the business owner from future contact. Thus, the process in which business owners contact the city should be simpler and create a timely response.



Figure 4-18: Sidewalk Safety Concerns



Figure 4-19: City's Response to Concerns

Business owners need an easy way to navigate the Waltham City website and find contact information for the department they wish to contact. The Somerville City website addresses this on their homepage with a tab specifically for businesses (Figure 4-20). The viewer should be given options of resident, business, or visitor to guide them in the appropriate direction immediately. Instead of searching the site, it is obvious where to begin for users not familiar with the layout. Business owners should have no trouble with this step of the communication process.



Figure 4-20: Somerville Homepage Featuring a Link to the Businesses Page

When the business owners have chosen the appropriate tab, they should be presented with relevant information to their operations. Somerville's website, again, exhibits a useful sample of topics for business owners in their city (Figure 4-21). The links include details for new business owners, existing businesses, and contacting the City officials. The City can use this channel to

relay any information they wish the business owners to have access to. This includes start-up details, zoning maps, forms and applications, etc. This page should also be the location for the department contact information regarding downtown Waltham concerns.



Figure 4-21: Business Page Found on Somerville's Website

Within the website's business page, Waltham should include an index designed specifically to direct business owners to the department that can best handle their question or concern. The town of Burlington includes a "Who Do I Talk to About...?" directory with a list of common issues and which section of the town government to contact regarding them (Figure 4-22). This would be an effective solution to the confusion of Waltham business owners that do not understand the function of the various government departments. It would make the process of tracking down the correct contact information simpler. The main priority of this page is to limit the number of options to only include the necessity outlets for common issues. Burlington lists over a hundred subjects in its web page which is overwhelming to a reader. Waltham could benefit from this example while listing only ten to twenty common business concerns. An owner could easily navigate to this webpage and find the department related to his/her issue.

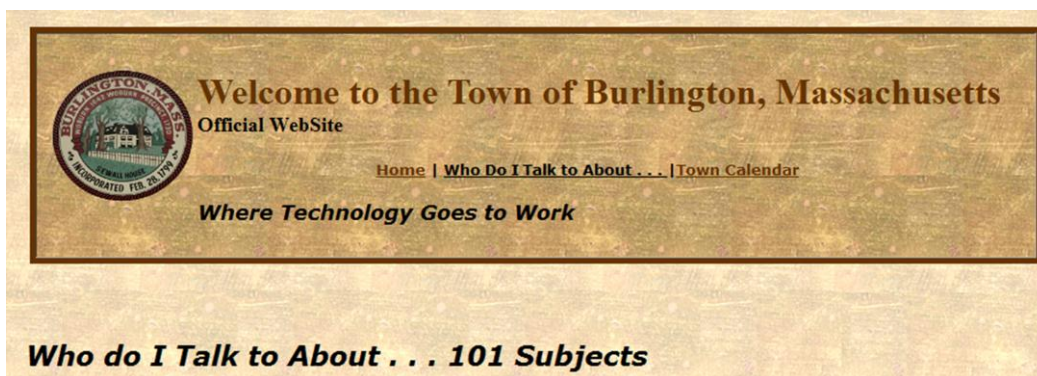


Figure 4-22: Subject Directory Found on the Burlington Website

Once the business owner has located the appropriate department, they need an easy channel of communication to relay their problem. The website should include a direct link to email the desired members of the Waltham City government. The City of Somerville again provides a useful model for providing businesses a method to email their City officials (Figure 4-23). The link displays a phone number and a form to submit an email directly to the department of choice. Instead of labeling this link as “Contact Us,” it may even be more accurate to use a title like “Send a Question or Concern.”

Lastly, business owners need this contact information to be readily accessible. A print version of “Who Do I Talk to About ...?” should be available to make the list accessible in every store. The list of topics should again be kept to a reasonable amount and the related department’s contact information should be listed. This would allow business owners to find the phone numbers or emails that they use most frequently to report an issue (Figure 4-24). The document would be a valuable resource for owners to have nearby to look up a problem and report it to the appropriate group.

Home > Contact Us

Contact the City of Somerville  
93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143

Telephone 🇺🇸 617-625-6600 📞

TTY Customers Please Dial 🇺🇸 1-866-808-4851 📞

Department to Contact: \*  
General Question/Comment (no particular department) ▾  
Your question/comment will be sent to this department.

Name: \*

Address:

Phone:

Email: \*

Question/Comment: \*

**Figure 4-23: Email Submission Form Used by Somerville Business Owners**

Issue	Department	Phone	Email
Broken Water Meter	Water Dept	781-314-3810	
Street Light Outage	Waltham Wires Dept	781-314-3175	<a href="mailto:tkelly@city.waltham.ma.us">tkelly@city.waltham.ma.us</a>
Pothole	Street Dept	781-314-3855	
Recycling and Waste	Recycling Dept	781-314-3855	

**Figure 4-24: Example of a Printed Contact Sheet for Business Owners**



The City should also arrange occasional opportunities for face-to-face meeting with Waltham business owners. A walk-in session, open to all business owners that choose to attend, would allow the City government to seem more approachable and available to businesses. All owners should be notified of this chance to express concerns or ask questions directly to Waltham City officials. Located in a neutral location, such as a Waltham school or library, these meetings would improve business owners' feelings toward their governing body by establishing a personal relationship. The Mayor and other City Councilors would only need to answer questions and make note of issues that the owners present. By addressing these issues at meetings, officials will appear more approachable and concerned about the City's wellbeing. Even holding this as a quarterly event would improve the communication between the City and its business owners.

## **FESTIVALS AND EVENTS**

Community-wide public festivals and events are valuable avenues in which citizens of the city in question come together and create a sense of unity. Recently, as well as in the more distant past, the City of Waltham has experienced success in achieving a greater sense of community through their support and endorsement of such events. These events, whether they are parades, festivals, live entertainment, art exhibits, and the like, hold the potential not only to help Waltham create a brand image for the community, but also to instill the idea that Waltham is a fun and exciting place for people from surrounding areas to visit and explore.

### *EXISTING FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN WALTHAM*

#### **Restaurant Week**

In accordance with Historic Waltham Month, the City established Waltham Restaurant Week, which takes place over a one-week period in mid-July. Some Waltham restaurants also took part in Restaurant Week Boston, which runs for two-weeks in mid-August<sup>24</sup>. During Restaurant Week, participating restaurants offer fixed priced lunches and dinners, hoping to attract more customers to their establishment. While Restaurant Week is a great event for bringing individuals from all over Boston to the Waltham area, by having the event in the summer, the City is isolating the vast college population, losing out on potential revenues from college students. In order to reap the benefits of being home to thousands of college students, the City should consider either moving Restaurant Week or initiating another Restaurant Week so that it is in accordance with the college school year.

#### **Holiday Prelude**

In recent years, the City of Waltham has instituted the tradition of an annual Holiday Prelude that takes place over a ten day stint in late November, early December<sup>25</sup>. The prelude kicks off with the annual tree lighting ceremony on the Waltham Common on the Friday evening after Thanksgiving, and during the next nine days various events and activities take place throughout

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<sup>24</sup> "Restaurant Week Boston: August 14-19 & 21-26, 2011 | OpenTable." OpenTable, Inc., 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Waltham News Tribune. "Get into the Spirit of the Season at the Waltham Holiday Prelude." *WickedLocal.com*. Wicked Local Waltham, 2 Dec. 2010.

the city (Figures 4-25 and 4-26). Such activities include various raffles and a window decorating contest for businesses downtown as well as American Express' Small Business Saturday. These activities encourage citizens to not only frequent the downtown area over the holiday season, but also shop at their local stores and restaurants, in order to potentially boost the economy in their local community<sup>26</sup>.



Figure 4-25: Holiday Prelude, Waltham Common



Figure 4-26: 2010 Holiday Prelude Kickoff-Tree Lighting on Waltham Common

### **The New England Steampunk Festival**

In May 2011, the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation hosted The New England Steampunk Festival in downtown Waltham (Figure 4-27). This event was such a success that the Charles River Museum has already set a date for the Festival in May of 2012. The event in May 2011 drew 2,500 people per day and over \$30,000 in admission fees, twenty-five percent of which went to renovating the museum after flood damage<sup>27</sup>. The festival consisted of numerous vendors and performing acts and artists which provided a variety of attractions for all who attended. It is important to note that the festival brought more than just admission revenue into the City, as individuals traveled from far distances, causing both hotels and restaurants to see an increase in patronage. In addition, the Steampunk Festival brought individuals and families from

<sup>26</sup> Waltham News Tribune. "Community Notes: Visit the Waltham Tourism Website." WickedLocal.com. Wicked Local Waltham, 25 Oct. 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Reiss, Jaclyn. "Steampunk Festival in Waltham Drew 2,500 per Day." Boston.com. Boston.com, 8 May 2011.

the Waltham community out to the downtown area as well, allowing many individuals to see for the first time what the City's downtown had to offer<sup>28</sup>.

*RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN WALTHAM*

**Welcome Back College Event**

According to an online survey completed by current college students, the downtown Waltham area is already an area in which many students visit. However, these students tend to see a specific restaurant or bar as their destination, not the downtown as a whole. Students do not feel inclined to frequent downtown Waltham because they believe there is nothing of interest in the area. However, if there was a community event specifically for college students,

these individuals might be more inclined to observe what the downtown has to offer, which in turn, might cause them to frequent the area more often. One of the key reasons Waltham should delve into this sector of the population is that being the home of two universities and thousands of college students of varying wealth, the City of Waltham and business owners have the ability to reap financial benefits, allowing the businesses in the downtown area to grow and flourish. In order to delve into the college student sector of Waltham's population, the City should consider sponsoring a "Welcome Back" event in early September as well as late January. This event can focus on the multitude of small businesses and restaurants located in the Waltham area, with exhibits focusing on food, entertainment, the arts, etc. that is within close reach of Brandeis and Bentley students. By showcasing what the downtown Waltham area has to offer and embracing the abundant college population, the City of Waltham, especially the downtown area, will be a more welcoming area where college students can spend both their time and money.



**Figure 4-27: The 2011 New England Steampunk Festival – Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation**

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<sup>28</sup> "International Steampunk City." *Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation*. Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation.

## International Festival

In addition to capitalizing on the college town environment, the downtown should also capitalize on its diverse population. Promoting diversity in a city can prove to be extremely beneficial to its overall brand. By distinguishing itself as a place of diversity, all businesses in the downtown Waltham area will benefit from the increased foot traffic provided by additional customers that are attracted to the diversity of the area.

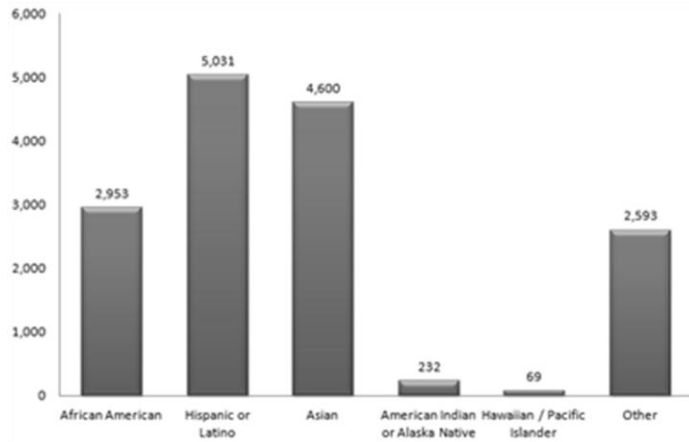


Figure 4-28: Waltham Non-White Ethnicity Statistics

The City of Waltham is home to an ethnically and culturally diverse population, with non-white individuals making up 23.65% of the population. The ethnic breakdown of these individuals is shown in Figure 4-28<sup>29</sup>.

Since the City of Waltham has a very diverse population, it makes sense that they should have an event showcasing the vast diversity. In order to do so, Waltham should look to the city of Peabody and their extremely successful International Festival that has taken place for the past twenty-eight years (Figure 4-29). This festival embraces the entertainment, food, and art of over



Figure 4-29: International Festival, Peabody, MA

thirty-five ethnicities, all of which represent the people of Peabody. If Waltham were to institute such an event, it would undoubtedly be successful. People from Waltham and surrounding communities would attend to support their ethnic groups. With numerous different groups represented, the attendance would be unimaginable, bringing both people and money into the City, with the hope that these individuals will see what Waltham has to offer and come back.

### *ADVERTISING FESTIVALS AND EVENTS*

While walking or driving through downtown Waltham, specifically both Main and Moody Street, an individual might be surprised at the lack of signage and advertisements for community events. Whereas in many cities and towns in the area, advertisements for community events are displayed

<sup>29</sup> National Relocation for People on the Move <http://profiles.nationalrelocation.com/Massachusetts/Waltham/>

through various techniques, including banners stretching across the street, pole banners, community bulletin boards, A-frames, and flyers. Throughout the entire downtown area, in Waltham, one would notice that the advertisements currently being utilized are pole banners and A-frames at only the cross-section of Main and Moody Street. By locating advertisements in such a small part of the downtown area the Waltham community is isolating the potential attendees to those individuals who drive or walk through that explicit area downtown and happen to notice such signage.

In addition, if pole banners and A-frames will be the main forms of advertising, it is necessary that such advertisements are not only sturdy and durable, but also readable from a considerable distance. Figures 4-30 through 4-32 demonstrate the signage throughout Waltham. Although such advertisements include the key information about the event, it is evident that even when in close proximity to such signs, it is difficult to read the particular details.



**Figure 4-30: Weather Related Instability of A-Frames**

Online advertising, through the use of online event calendars and blogs, is a key tool that will help citizens of not only Waltham, but also other surrounding communities know what events are transpiring in their area, which in turn would most likely boost the attendance at such events. While some events taking place in downtown Waltham have taken advantage of such online advertising (Figures 4-33 and 4-34), such advertising, as well as the utilization of an online calendar should be a regular technique employed<sup>30</sup>.



**Figure 4-31: A-Frame Advertisements**



**Figure 4-32: Pole Banner Advertisement**

<sup>30</sup> *Waltham Tourism*. Waltham West Suburban Chamber of Commerce, 2011. Web. 13 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.walthamtourism.com/home/index/2011/11/13>>.

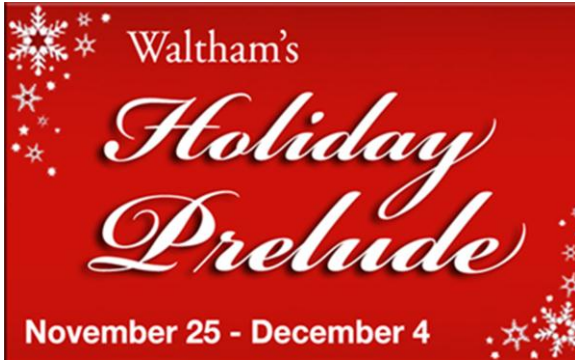


Figure 4-33: Online Advertisement for Waltham's Holiday Prelude



Figure 4-34: Advertisement for Small Business Saturday

Surrounding cities and towns, such as Lexington, utilize various advertising techniques, including A-frames, community bulletin boards, and online calendars, in order to showcase the community events coming up (Figures 4-35 through 4-37). By utilizing a variety of advertising techniques, a vast array of individuals will be exposed to the details of such community events, thus boosting the attendance and traffic to downtown areas.



4-36: Sturdy A-Frame Advertisement



Figure 4-35: Example of Information Board



**4-37: Event Schedule on Community Board**

# APPENDIX A: BUSINESS OWNER / LANDLORD / REALTOR SURVEY

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## BUSINESS OWNER SURVEY

1.) Do you own this property? If not, who manages this property?

Yes

No



2.) How long has your business been located on Main Street?

3.) What advantages do you believe your location on Main Street offers to your business? (choose all that apply)

Volume of customer traffic

Proximity to home

Size of store

Street atmosphere

Diversity of potential customers

Other

Cost of rent

Building appearance

4.) How satisfied are you with the physical state of the building(s) in which you currently operate?

Very Dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

5.) How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Main Street?

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall visual appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General consumer perception	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Store signage/display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snow removal (sidewalks, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current economic climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6.) For the aspects that you are dissatisfied with, please explain why you are dissatisfied and what you would like to see changed.



7.) How important is it that the following aspects be improved in the downtown area?

	Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Store Signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Street Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Filling Vacancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More Restaurants/Cafes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More Retail stores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8.) Who is responsible for improvements and repairs (painting, etc.) to the exterior of your building(s)?

- Landlord
- Business Owner
- I am currently the landlord and business owner to my building(s)

9.) In general, how satisfied are you with the city's responsiveness to your concerns or problems?

- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Not Applicable

10.) How do you currently advertise or promote your business? (choose all that apply)

- Flyers
- Website
- Other
- Newspaper Ads
- Social Media
- We do not advertise or promote
- Email

11.) How many customers do you get in an average week?

12.) How familiar are you with the Downtown Waltham Partnership?

Not at all

Somewhat Familiar

Very Familiar

13.) How familiar are you with walthamtourism.com?

Not at all

Somewhat Familiar

Very Familiar

14.) Would you be willing to participate, if you are already not, in a community business-owner organization? If not, why?

Yes

No

I currently participate

15.) Would you consider participating, if you are already not, in the Watch City Card? (A customer discount card used to promote stores in downtown Waltham i.e. buy 3, get 1 free) If not, why?

Yes

No

I currently participate

16.) Would you be willing to follow up with the Downtown Waltham Research Group to voice more of your ideas/opinions (i.e. focus groups, interviews)?

Yes

No

17.) Are there any other comments, questions, or concerns that have not been addressed above that you would like to ask the Downtown Waltham Research Group?

# LANDLORD SURVEY

1.) How long have you been a landlord in the downtown Waltham area?

2.) How many buildings do you own in the downtown Waltham area? Where are they located?

3.) How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your building(s)?

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Physical Appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tenants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Property Value	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4.) How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Main Street?

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall Physical Appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General Consumer Perception	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current Economic Climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Store Signage/Display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking Availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snow removal (sidewalks, parking lots, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5.) How important is it that the following aspects be improved in the downtown Waltham area?

	Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Store Signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Filling Vacancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More Restaurants/Cafes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More Retail Stores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6.) Who is responsible for improvements and repairs (i.e. painting, etc.) to the exterior of your building(s)?

- Landlord
- Business Owner
- I am currently the landlord and business owner to my building(s)

7.) Do you currently own any vacancies in the downtown area?

Yes

No

8.) Is anything being done to fill the vacancies in the downtown area?

Yes

No

9.) Would you consider nonprofit uses for both vacancies and business (e.g. putting artwork in the windows, murals on brick walls, etc.)?

Yes

No

10.) How difficult is it to fill vacancies in the downtown area?

Very Difficult

Difficult

Neutral

Easy

Very Easy

11.) When searching for a renter, what type of businesses do you prefer? Why?

12.) Have you ever contacted the city with a problem or question?

Yes

No

13.) If so, what has been the biggest issues and what was the response from the city?

14.) Would you be willing to follow up with the Downtown Waltham Research Group to voice more of your ideas/opinions (i.e. focus groups, interviews)?

Yes

No

15.) Are there any other comments, questions, or concerns that have not been addressed above that you would like to ask the Downtown Waltham Research Group?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for the Downtown Waltham Research Group. Please provide the following contact information below for our research purposes. This information will also be used to update the records of the Downtown Waltham Partnership.

Company Name

Address

Address(es) of Buildings Owned

Phone Number

Email

# REAL ESTATE SURVEY

1.) How many properties do you currently have listed on Main Street, if any?

2.) How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Main Street?

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall visual appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General consumer perception	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current economic climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Store signage/display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snow removal (sidewalks, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3.) How would you rate prospective tenants'/owners' interest in utilizing locations for the following purposes?

	Very Low	Low	High	Very High
Restaurants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Office Space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beauty Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clothing/Other Retail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General Merchandise/Convenience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4.) On average, how long does it take to fill a vacancy on Main Street?

5.) In your opinion, what are the primary reasons businesses leave Main Street?

6.) In your opinion, why do business owners choose Main Street as their location?

7.) How important are the following aspects of the surrounding area to business owners when viewing properties?

	Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Store Signage/Display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Surrounding Business Types	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Surrounding Vacancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8.) Would you be willing to follow up with the Downtown Waltham Research Group to voice more of your ideas/opinions (i.e. focus groups, interviews)?

Yes
  No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for the Downtown Waltham Research Group. Please provide the following contact information below. This information will also be used to update the records of the Downtown Waltham Partnership.

Your Name	<input type="text"/>
Company Name	<input type="text"/>
Company Address	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>
Website	<input type="text"/>

## APPENDIX B: CONSUMER SURVEY

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What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

How often do you go to Main St.?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

If you never go, why not? Check all that apply.

- No parking
- No transportation
- Nothing of interest
- Other



Rank your frequency of visits to the following on Main St.:

Banks

Hair/Nail Salons

Restaurants

Bars

Doctors

Retail

Grocery/Convenience Store (e.g. CVS)

Other

If there were a free shuttle to access Main St./Moody St., would you be more inclined to go?

Yes

No

Are there other downtown areas that you shop in because what you need is not available in the downtown Waltham area?

Yes

No

What other downtown areas do you frequent? What do you purchase there?

What type of businesses do you think would improve Main St. and would make you go more frequently? Check all that apply.

Banks

Hair/Nail Salons

Restaurants

Bars

Doctors

Retail

Grocery/Convenience Stores (e.g. CVS)

Other

Have you ever hear about a student discount/offer from somewhere on Main St.? If so, where?

Yes

No

How do you hear about restaurants, stores, etc. on Main St.? Check all that apply.

Word of Mouth

Vanguard Newspaper

Flyers

Walking by

Online

Other

According to the following scale, how safe do you feel on Main St.?

Unsafe

Safe

What, if any, of the following items create an unsafe feeling on Main St.? Check all that apply.

Homeless

Trash on streets

Lack of lighting

Uneven sidewalks

Infrequent police presence

Other

Uninviting storefronts

Does this affect the frequency to which you visit Main St.?

Yes

No

Is the downtown atmosphere conducive to walking around and exploring the area?

Yes

No