



**Urban Land
Institute**

Boston/New England

North Brookfield TAP

June 7, 2021

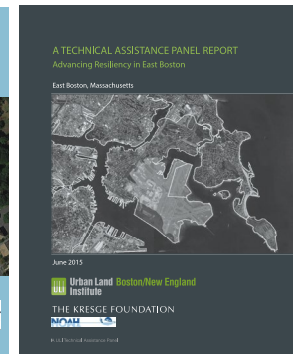
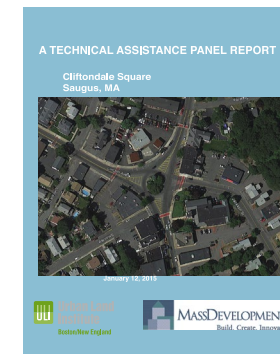


About ULI – the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising nearly 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI at the local level

Boston/New England District Council covers nearly all of New England with over 1,300 Members—developers, architects, planners, public officials, financiers, students, etc.



Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

North Brookfield, Massachusetts

ULI Boston/New England is committed to supporting communities in making sound land use decisions and creating better places. A TAP brings together ULI members with a range of professional expertise to provide focused, collaborative consultation to a local government or qualifying non-profit organization.

TAP Impact on Communities:

- 82% said their behavior and approach to **Municipal Planning and Economic Development Strategies** was affected
- 67% said there were **increased municipal investments** related to the stated goals and recommendations of their TAP report.
- 62% said at least **one key developable asset** addressed in their TAP report had been **redeveloped** consistent with ULI Boston/New England recommendations

Final Deliverable – Written report (10 - 12 weeks) will be available at <http://boston.uli.org>

TAP Sponsors:



Town of
North Brookfield
MASSACHUSETTS



The Panel

Co-Chairs

- Emily Innes, Innes Associates
- Susan Connelly, Housing Opportunities Unlimited

Panelists

- Francisco Feliz, Bennett Hill Partners
- Joseph Karanja, University at Buffalo
- Shyla Matthews, MassDevelopment
- Gerry Sullivan, SSV Architects

TAP Writers

- Mike Hoban

ULI Staff

- Sara Marsh, Manager
- Manikka Bowman, Director Outreach & Policy
- Michelle Landers, Executive Director



The Process

Briefing Meeting

Panelists received briefing information from the town regarding the study area including zoning, past studies, current conditions, etc.

Site Visit

On June 4, panelists toured the study area and Town House in North Brookfield with members of Friends of the Townhouse committee and Downtown Development committee.

Stakeholder Interviews

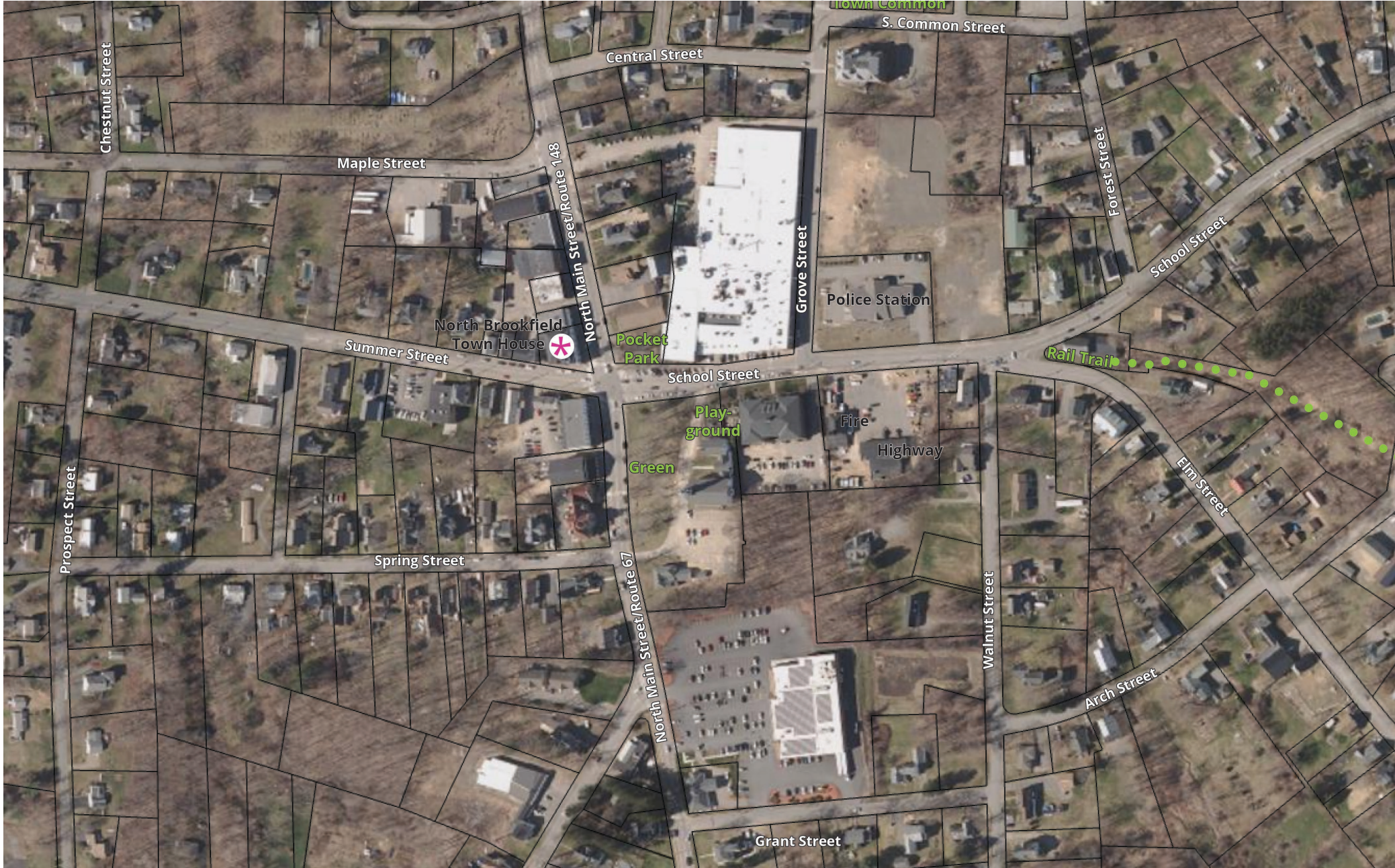
On June 4, the panelists interviewed property owners, business owners, and public officials via Zoom to better understand the needs of district tenants and the community.



Panel Assignment: Address These Questions



Study Area



1. Planning

How can the Town House current space configuration meet the programming of the Friends of the Town House plans to turn the building into an anchor institution and shape arts and cultural programming to attract people to Main Street?

2. Community Design

How can the Town establish more control over design of new construction and preservation of town character that is responsive to a shared downtown vision?

3. Town Governance & Capacity

How can the Town work towards building capacity to advance economic development initiatives along Main Street?



What did we hear, see and learn?



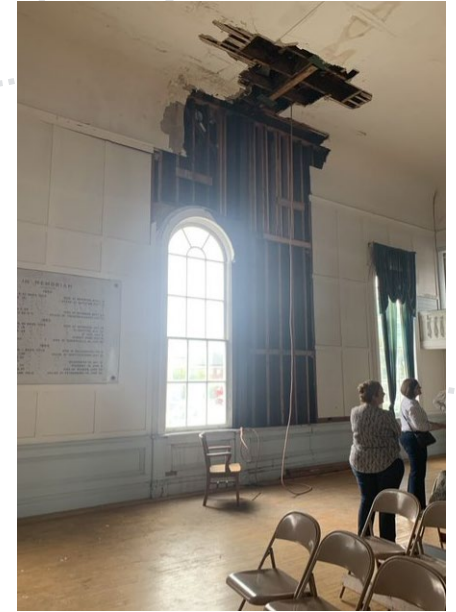
Assets and Opportunities

- An American "Main Street"
- Town House structure and condition
- Amount of completed due diligence
- Public Library
- Congregational Church
- Historic assets of community
- Hannaford Supermarket
- Quality of life
- Vibram North American Headquarters
- Committed volunteer energy
- Public investment to date
- Well placed available public properties
- Strong relationship with State & federal partners (US EPA)
- Complete Streets grant



Challenges for North Main Street as well as the Town House

- Consistent, professional leadership that is not tied to election cycles
 - Need a different level of town staff capacity
- Aligning individual land use decisions with the Master Plan
 - Consistency with current plans
- ADA accessibility of the Town House
- Cost to rehabilitate the Town House
 - Lack of secured, financeable anchor tenants
- Public parking access
- Lack of designated delivery zones on Main St.
- Viability of cultural center – need a regional draw
 - Town identity; connecting the dots
 - A regional cultural center
- Dependency on few employers
- Reliance on volunteers (have done amazing work!)





Recommendations

Recommendations – Planning

- How can the Town House current space configuration meet the programming of the Friends of the Town House plans to turn the building into an anchor institution and shape arts and cultural programming to attract people to Main Street?

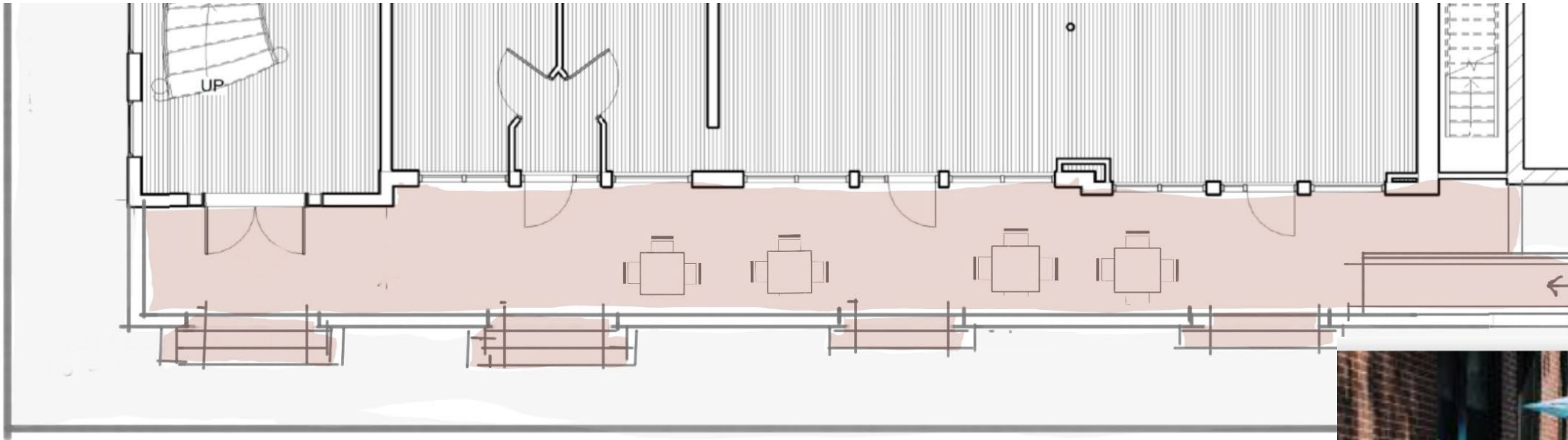
The Town House potential can only be unlocked if it is accessible to all.

Recommendation: Consider focusing Complete Streets work on Town House side of N. Main St.



Plan view of accessible sidewalk in front of Town House

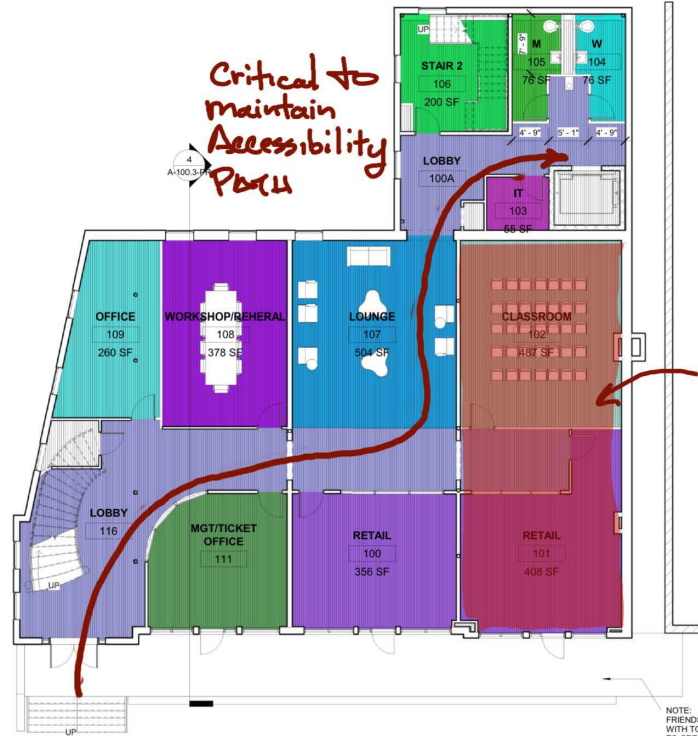
Creates enough depth to support outdoor seating – street activation



Recommendations – keep spaces flexible until you have a tenant, kitchen can happen later, keep ADA in mind



2 BASEMENT FLOOR PROPOSED
1/8" = 1'-0"



1 FIRST FLOOR PROPOSED
1/8" = 1'-0"

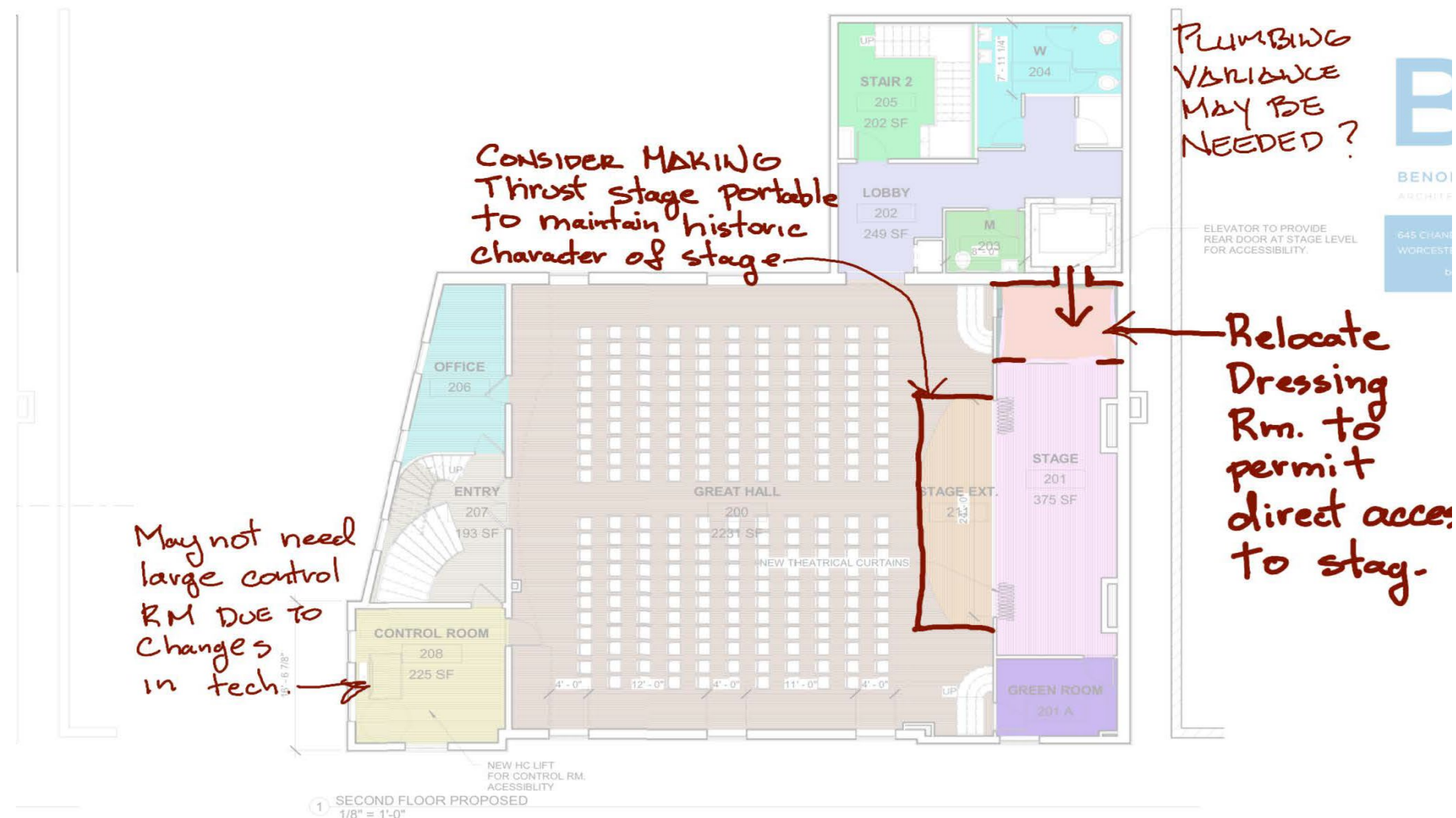


FRIENDS OF THE
NORTH BROOKFIELD
TOWNHOUSE

NORTH BROOKFIELD
TOWNHOUSE FEASIBILITY
215 NORTH MAIN STREET

No. Date Description

Recommendations – possible simplifying



Fiscal Viability of the Town House; so much has been done next steps

- Using initial cost estimates from Architectural Heritage Foundation and continue work with AHF as a project manager:
 - Costs to rehabilitate and bring up to ADA standards (approx.)
\$4,900,000
1,900,000 – estimated historic tax credit equity
3,000,000 – gap
- Monthly carrying costs for \$3,000,000: **\$12,300 + building operating costs**
 - FOTH would need 'anchor tenants' that could pay this amount
 - To decrease the monthly "rent needed" increase grant funding for the rehabilitation.
 - Identify a "debt" / financing partner:



Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant

What does this program do?

This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the economic development of

What is an eligible area?

Rural areas including cities, villages, townships, and towns including Federally recognized Tribal lands with no more than 20,000 residents according to the latest U.S. Census Data are eligible for this program.

How may funds be used?

Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and/or improve essential community facilities, to purchase equipment, and to pay related project expenses.

- Local food systems such as community gardens, food pantries, community kitchens, food banks, food hubs, or greenhouses

For a complete list see Code of Federal Regulations 7 CFR, Part 1942.17(d) for loans; 7 CFR, Part 3570.62 for grants.

What kinds of funding are available?

- Low interest direct loans
- Grants
- A combination of the two above, as

Fiscal Viability of the Town House

- Increase the marketability of the property – create value:
 - Liquor license from the B of S (can be beer and wine only)
- Bring your "public" partners/funders together to continue momentum

Ask and support them to work together: CMRPC, MassD, AFH, MCC, USRDA.....

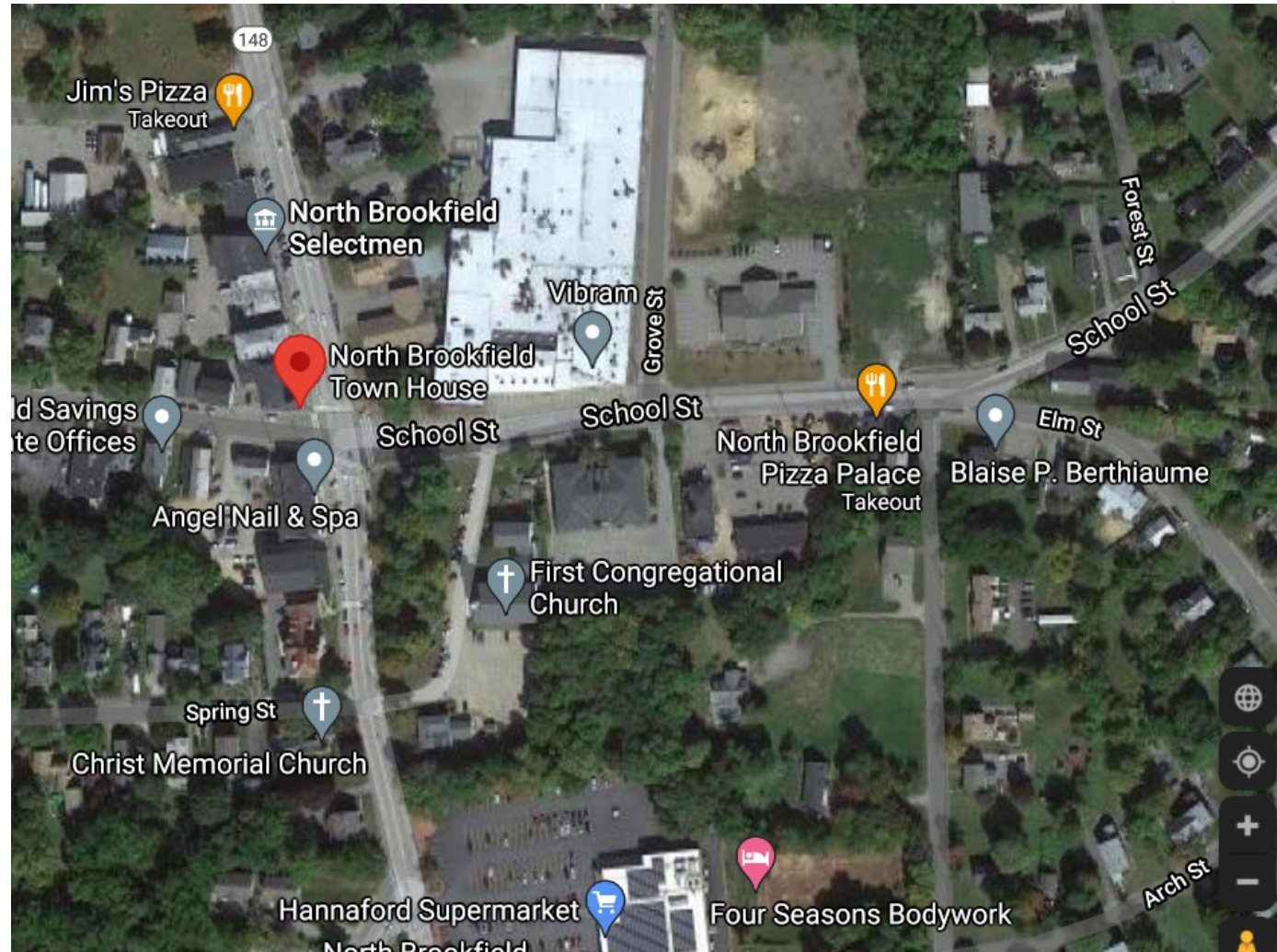
- Partners, sponsors and marketing - the NB Town House is the
- ***Regional Cultural Center***



The viability of the Town House does not stand alone

Utilizing the work done to date and the resources the town does have, can move the Town House, and the town's revenue generating opportunities, forward.

- Lack of public parking for all downtown businesses
- Deliveries:
 - Create "Delivery" zone(s) and times (ex. 8 am to noon)



Community Design – implementing a vision; consistency

- How can the Town establish more control over design of new construction and preservation of town character that is responsive to a shared downtown vision?

North Main Street – visual appeal



Recommendations – Community Design

Proposed Parking Lot

Estimated maximum number of spaces based on 325 sf per parking space (includes circulation).

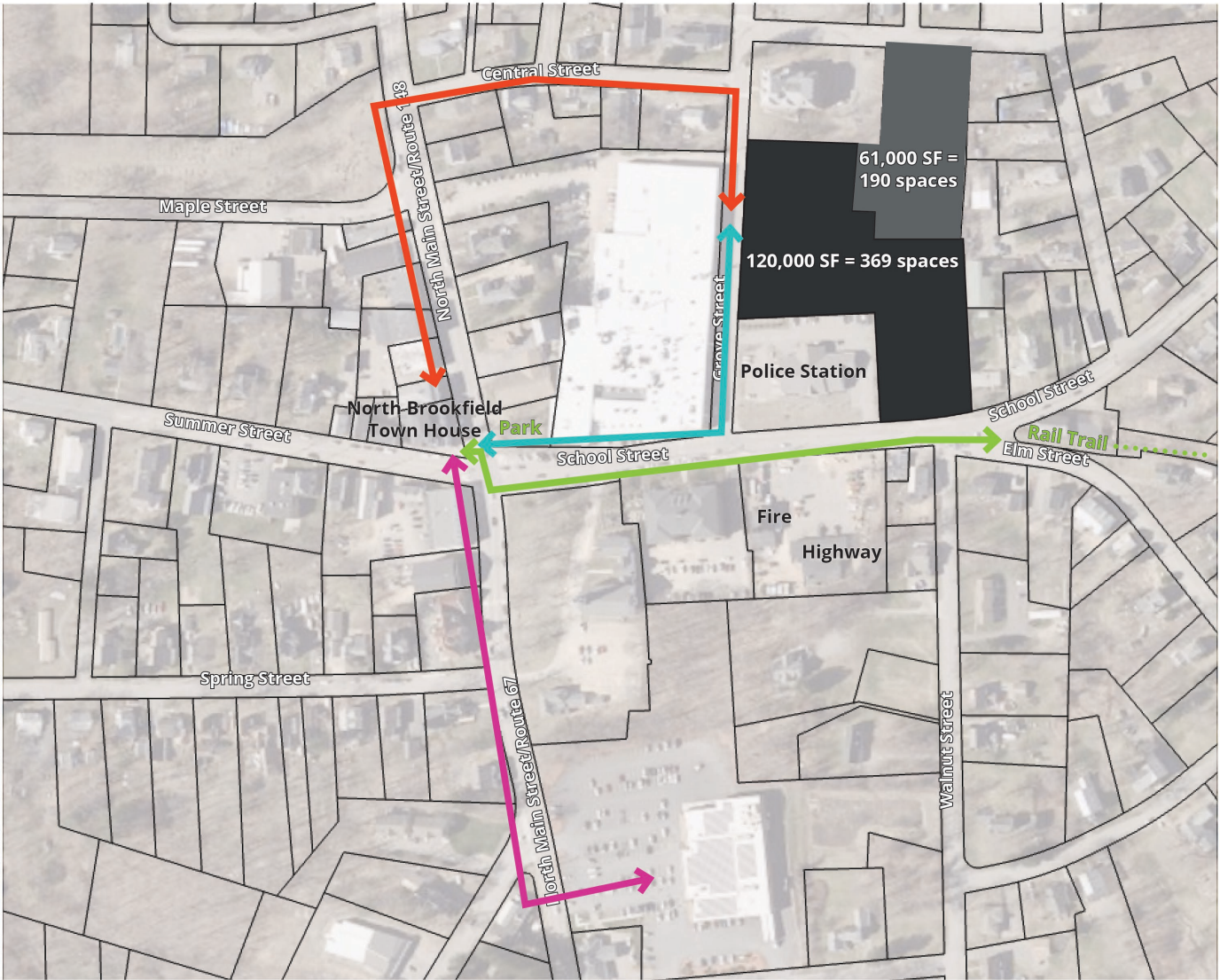
Both lots are owned by the Town.

Remediation is complete on the larger lot.

Remediation of the smaller lot could cost less if used for parking.







Rail Trail to Town House	5 min	1,210 ft	545 steps
Parking lot to Town House via School Street	5 min	1,220 ft	554 steps
Parking lot to Town House via Central Street	6 min	1,500 ft	682 steps
Hannaford to Town House	4 min	1,100 ft	500 steps

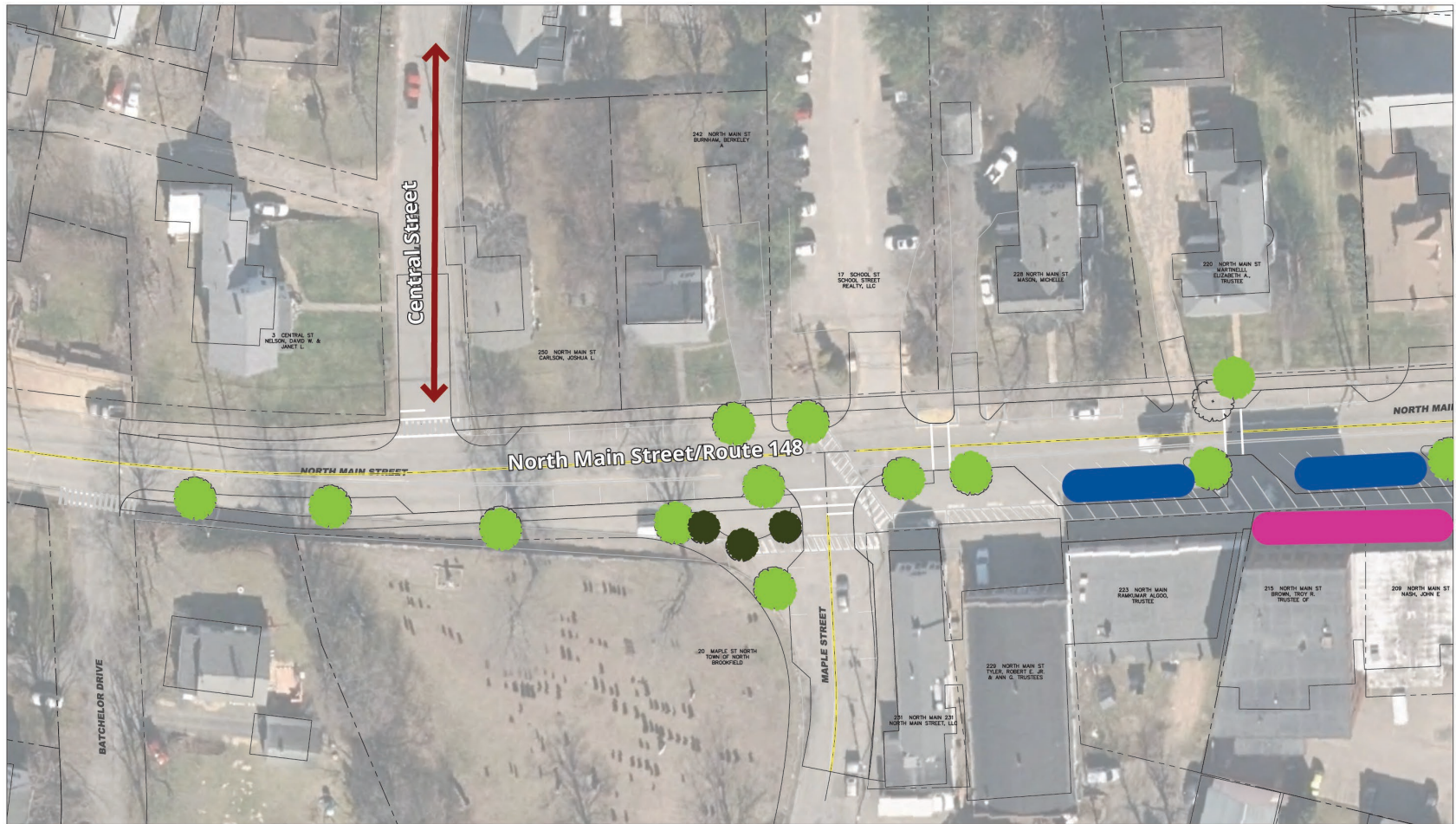


Conceptual illustration: not to scale.

Recommendations – Community Design

Streetscape 1

-  Consider creating dedicated delivery (8am-12pm) and drop-off/pick-up zones to support local businesses.
-  Check position of proposed trees relative to entrances to ground floor retail.
-  Extend new sidewalk to connect to proposed Grove Street parking lot.
-  Address accessibility to ground floor entrances. Consider elevated plaza with seating/dining.









SITE CONCEPT
DOWNTOWN COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT
NORTH BROOKFIELD, MA
APRIL 5, 2021

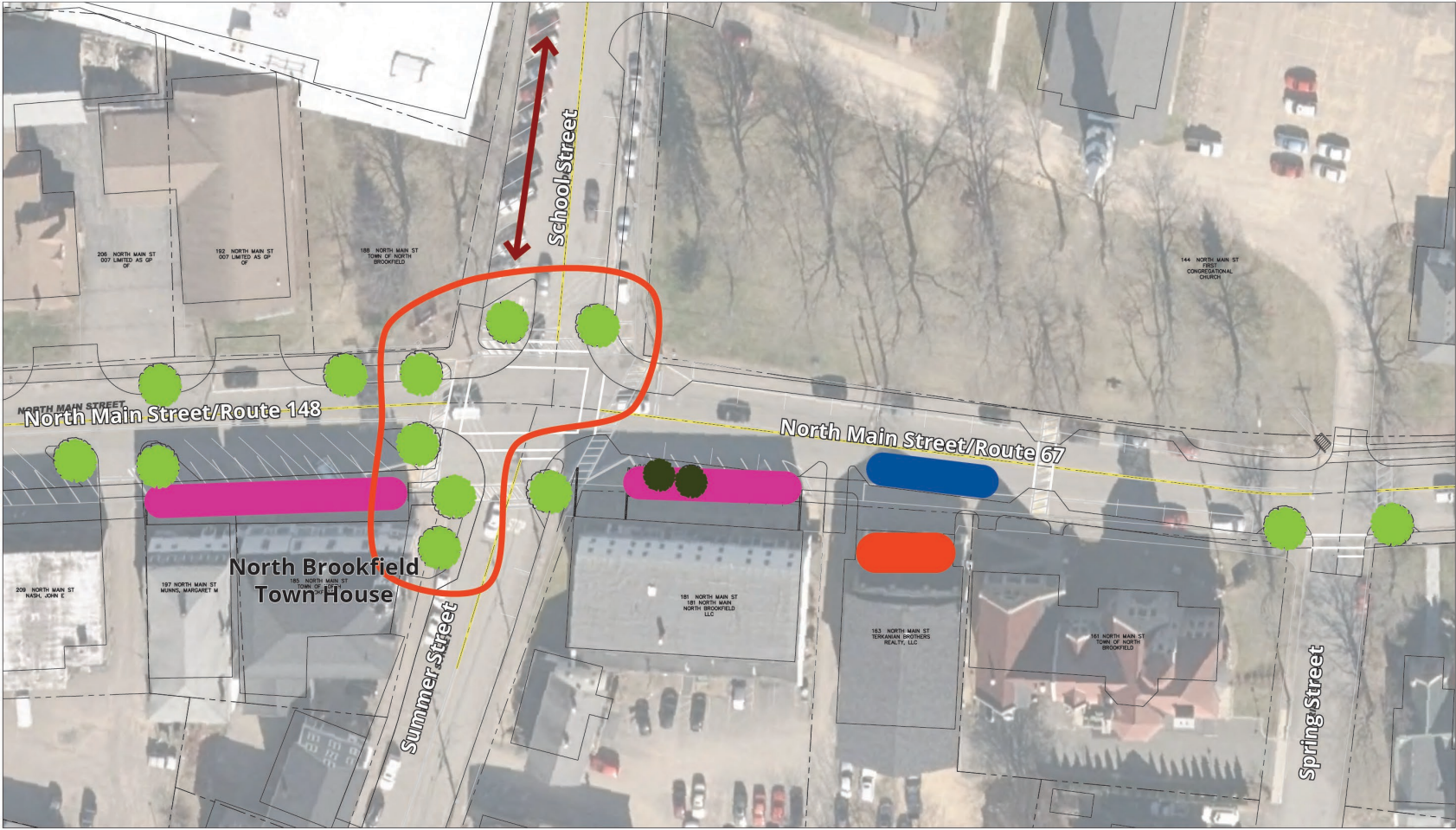


Conceptual illustration: not to scale.

Recommendations – Community Design

Streetscape 2

-  Consider creating dedicated delivery (8am-12pm) and drop-off/pick-up zones to support local businesses.
-  Check position of proposed trees relative to entrances to ground floor retail.
-  Extend new sidewalk to connect to proposed Grove Street parking lot.
-  Address accessibility to ground floor entrances. Consider elevated plaza with seating/dining.
-  Remove addition to ground floor façade of Union Star Building.
-  Evaluate impact of proposed trees on historic view of Town House.



SITE CONCEPT
DOWNTOWN COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT
NORTH BROOKFIELD, MA
APRIL 5, 2021



Conceptual illustration: not to scale.

Recommendations – Community Design

Proposed Parking Lot: Options

Funding to create parking lot unlikely for single-purpose use.



School Street frontage offers opportunity for development to draw people from the Rail Trail to the Downtown.



Outdoor plaza activates the new building.



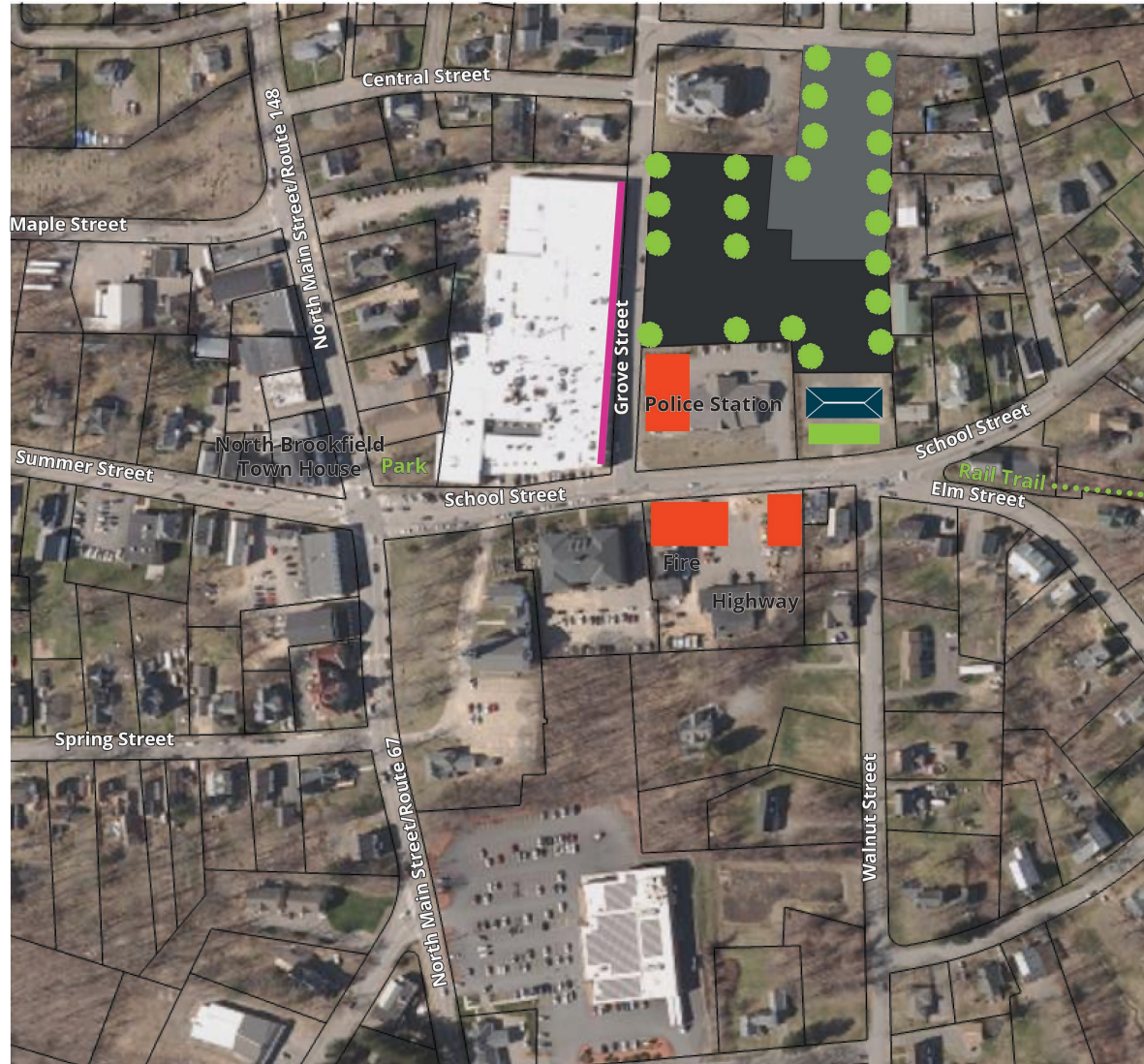
Low-impact stormwater management techniques will mitigate heat island effect and support identity of sustainability for both Town and Vibram.



Vibram could activate its wall along Grove Street to support Town's revitalization efforts and its own branding.



Parking lot offers opportunity for temporary/seasonal activation. Additional parking to support temporary activities could be provided at the Police Station and the reorganized Fire/Highway site.



Conceptual illustration: not to scale.

Recommendations – Community Design



Placemaking Resources

ULI Creative Placemaking Report: <https://knowledge.uli.org/en/Reports/Research%20Reports/2020/Creative%20Placemaking>

Project for Public Spaces: <https://www.pps.org>

The Corner Spot, Ashland: <https://thecornerspotashland.com/>

The Town should also add wayfinding strategies that would direct people from the parking area to the destinations (Town House, Rail Trail and other trail links, specific businesses). Consider using time and steps rather than miles or feet and incorporate elements of the Town's history, arts, and culture into the signage.

Signage can be traditional or more creative, depending on the identity desired.



If supported and managed in a greater context the Town House can be a catalyst for long-term economic growth and tax generation

- How can the Town work towards building capacity to advance economic development initiatives along Main Street?

Recommendations – Town Governance & Capacity

- Town Manager and staff on payroll (final decision makers; creates consistency of vision/enforcement across local political election terms)
- Town vision and implementation process- Vision to increase revenue with actionable Short-term and medium-term strategies
- Assess revenue generation and risk management of Town House leases and other municipal spaces
- Finalize and enforce consistently zoning for downtown committee to base decisions on
- Assessing revenue generation & expenditure activities – e.g. parking space revenue generation
- Establish standards regarding Town House programming (whether Friends of the Town House or otherwise).
- Implement a study on downtown accessibility and traffic concerns – Help assess the impact of delivery times mapping and street scape concerns to downtown vibrancy and economic traction to retail shops which is key.



Strategies and Resources



Action Steps

1. Prioritize Complete Streets design to the Town House area
2. Create Business Plan for Town House
 - Investigate and vet tenants
 - Interview and secure a commercial real estate brokerage to help townhouse vacancy build up
3. Support of Selectboard to hire qualified professional Town Manager
4. Create Municipal Parking Lots and Wayfinding
 - School Street / Grove Street lots and DPW parcel

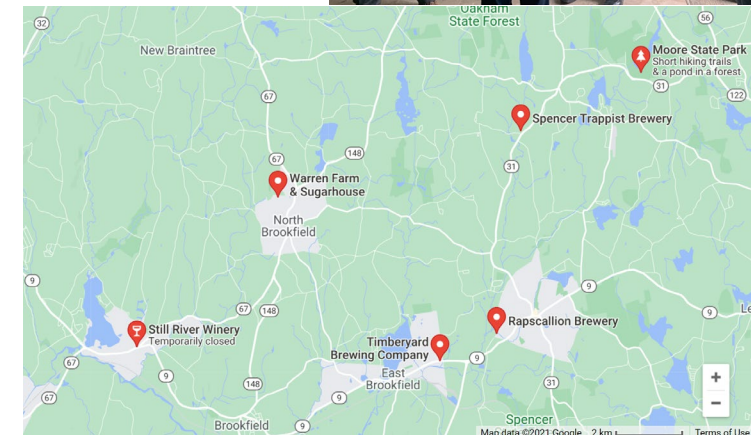


Action Steps

IMPLEMENTATION – Alignment and implementation of study work and strategic planning work

CONNECTIONS – Nurture, support and identify businesses, anchor institutions, outdoor enthusiasts, and arts and culture members of the community. Develop an ability to identify and demonstrate strong connection to collaborative user community.

REGIONALISM – Regional identity and cooperation is essential for growth of both visitation, business, and municipal finances



Source: Google

Resources

- Massachusetts Community One Stop For Growth
 - Town has applied for FY22 Round and utilized the Rural & Small Town option for funding resources
- Massachusetts Division of Local Services
 - Training, Guidance, and Best Practices
- Brownfields Redevelopment Fund
 - Hazardous Materials Assessment Survey / Remediation of School St.
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
 - Technical Assistance and Education Workshops
- MassDevelopment Collaborative Workspace Program
- Massachusetts DOR Efficiency & Regionalization Grant Program
 - FY23 application period
- Partnerships with Anchor Institutions and Quaboag Hills CofC
- USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

A grayscale background image showing a person from behind, raising their right hand in a meeting or presentation setting. Other people are visible in the background, slightly out of focus.

Q&A

North Brookfield TAP
June 7, 2021



Urban Land Institute Boston/New England