DOWNTOWN LAWRENCE
ACTION & ENGAGEMENT PLAN

FEBRUARY 2020
project partners

MASSDEVELOPMENT

CITY OF LAWRENCE

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The Downtown Lawrence Activation Plan kicked off in May 2019 and consisted of three main phases:

1 Inventory And Data Analysis
During the first phase, Interface Studio collected data through field work and public engagement to gain an understanding of the issues and opportunities of Downtown Lawrence. This process entailed:
   › A parcel-by-parcel survey of the study area to create up-to-date maps describing land use and commercial characteristics;
   › Census research to examine demographic changes over time;
   › A review of prior plans to ensure alignment;
   › A survey of residents, workers and visitors;
   › Individual stakeholder interviews;
   › Study area tour.

2 Vision And Recommendations
The second phase transitioned to visioning and developing recommendations. This phase of the process included:
   › A summary of the analysis and outreach conducted in the first phase;
   › Public events to present the key issues and opportunities that emerged in the analysis and activities to solicit ideas;
   › Development of preliminary recommendations;
   › Focus groups to review and provide feedback on key issues and preliminary recommendations.

3 Action Plan
The final phase entailed the production of the action plan and implementation matrix with the City and TDI Partnership.

Project Goals
› Liven Up Downtown
› Design Great Streets and Public Places
› Encourage Mixed Use Development

Our Process
Figure 1. Plan process
INTRODUCTION

Figure 2. Study area map

STUDY AREA

Source: City of Lawrence, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

- STUDY AREA
- OPEN SPACE
- WATER

Campagnone Common

Heritage State Park

Merrimack River
Previous Plans

**2011**

**UNION CROSSING PUBLIC ART MASTER PLAN**

The plan provides guidance for public art based on the themes of history, sustainability, and nature with a focus on buildings, bridges, streetscapes and the North Canal.

**2012**

**PLACEMAKING IN THE NORTH CANAL DISTRICT**

The plan identifies five sites for interventions. Three are within the Downtown Lawrence study area: 1) Union and Canal Streets, 2) Lawrence Heritage State Park, and 3) the Canal. Recommendations included increasing programming, adding amenities, and creating an esplanade along the canal.

**2013**

**COORDINATING ACTION IN THE NORTH CANAL DISTRICT**

This report offers recommendations on the Canal, circulation and parking, signage and branding, and development.

**2014**

**LAWRENCE DOWNTOWN WEST PLANNING STUDY**

The plan makes short-term recommendations for access, parking, streetscape and perceptions to be spearheaded by the city, as well as long-term recommendations for reuse and redevelopment of vacant buildings and sites, and changes to property taxes and regulations governing development.

**2015**

**CITY OF LAWRENCE COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STUDY**

To increase affordable housing, the study focuses on capacity building, regulatory, development, and preservation strategies.

**2017**

**LAWRENCE TBD URBAN RENEWAL PLAN**

The plan looks to facilitate the redevelopment of large vacant parcels and promote adaptive reuse of the City’s historic buildings and infrastructure. The strategies also call for streetscape improvements, safer walking and biking, one-way to two-way street conversions, small business support, and Essex Street activation.
INTRODUCTION

Figure 3. Prior plans map
EXISTING CONDITIONS
Lawrence is located off I-93, 30 miles north of Boston and 30 miles south of Manchester. It is about one hour from Boston on the MBTA Commuter Rail - Haverhill Line with a station just south of the Merrimack River.
Lawrence has grown steadily since the 1980s.

In keeping with its nickname “Immigrant City”, much of this growth can be attributed to the foreign-born population.

Since the 1980s, the Latin American community has grown to become a majority today.
Lawrence is a center of Latin American culture and a regional destination for events such as Semana Hispana.

Figure 7. Population density by race and ethnicity map
62% of foreign-born residents in Lawrence come from the Dominican Republic. Other residents come from Puerto Rico (27%), Central America (5%), Mexico (1%) and other countries in South America and the Caribbean (5%).

The heritage of the Latin American community is present in the diversity of businesses and events, giving Downtown Lawrence a unique character:

[upper left] Restaurant La Rubia on Common St;
[upper right] a resident selling piraguas or traditional Puerto Rican shaved ice at Campagnone Common;
[bottom] masked carnival figures join cyclists of all ages at the Ciclovía event celebrated annually on Essex St.
Who’s Downtown?

The downtown area is part of a larger census tract.

Median household income is 45% less than the City and less than a third of the median for Essex County...

Figure 8. Median household income
... even when educational attainment in the study area census tract tracks closely with the City.

Figure 9. Educational attainment
Major employers, including the City of Lawrence, the Lawrence School District, Lawrence General Hospital, New Balance, and Northern Essex Community College, are within a half mile of the study area.
Downtown is a significant source of local employment, but only 27% of those who work in the study area live in Lawrence. Most workers commute from other towns such as Haverhill, Methuen and Lowell.
While it is not as densely populated as other residential neighborhoods in the City, hundreds of new housing units have been built over the last 10 years in and around Downtown Lawrence...

Figure 12. Multifamily housing development map
Mill 240 is one of many mill buildings near the study area that are being converted into apartment buildings. And hundreds more are in the pipeline.
Where is activity concentrated?

Essex St and Appleton Way are the center of activity in Downtown Lawrence.
The Downtown core is centered around Essex Street, especially between Lawrence and Jackson Streets, and the mill buildings are a growing activity hub.

**Figure 13.** Activity hubs map
Significant investment has been made in the mill buildings on the island and along Essex Street.
Residential and mixed commercial/residential use make up the largest amount of land in the study area, 30% and 19% respectively, due to the size of the mill parcels on Middle Island. Essex Street is mainly commercial.
Essex Street and, to a lesser extent, Common Street are the main commercial corridors.
The Downtown Lawrence study area has many examples of successful businesses that have become emblematic in the community:

[upper left] El Taller on Essex St.;
[upper right] Tripoli Pizza and Bakery on Common St, which has been open since 1944;
[bottom] Terra Luna Cafe on Essex St.
There is a range of business hours in the study area. Most businesses are open during the day but hours vary or are not always posted. At night, the eastern side of the study area comes alive with bars, clubs and related businesses.

Figure 17. Business activity hours maps
of businesses in Downtown Lawrence are open during nighttime, a stark contrast with 96% of businesses that are open during the day.

18% of businesses in the study area do not have visible business hours.

3 in every 4 businesses in the study area do not have visible business hours.
A number of leisure and institutional destinations are concentrated in the study area.
The North Canal path has potential to be more active, but is currently only lightly used and has few amenities.
Downtown is a destination for several big annual events but smaller-scale, more frequent events that can enliven the day-to-day experience are rarer.

“It’s difficult to find things to do”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

Figure 19. Events map
Drummers perform in Pemberton Park for the soft launch of Iluminación Lawrence (Eric Romero, 2019).

St. Alfio’s Marching Band takes the streets of Lawrence for the annual celebration of the Three Saints Feast (Eagle Tribune, 2018).

**DOWNTOWN EVENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>TIME OF YEAR</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Patrick’s Day Parade</td>
<td>Cross through study area</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Canal Classic 5K</td>
<td>Cross through study area</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semana Hispana</td>
<td>Campagnone (North) Common</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers Market</td>
<td>Campagnone (North) Common</td>
<td>June-September</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Independence Day</td>
<td>City Hall</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciclovía</td>
<td>Essex Street</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread and Roses Heritage Festival</td>
<td>Campagnone (North) Common</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feast of Three Saints Festival</td>
<td>Common/Union Street</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktoberfest</td>
<td>Essex Arts Center</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony</td>
<td>City Hall</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biSicletas Lawrence</td>
<td>Campagnone (North) Common</td>
<td>May-October</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Bag Wednesdays</td>
<td>Heritage State Park</td>
<td>June-September</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where are the barriers and gaps in activity?

Businesses on Newbury Street are open but keep their shutters half-way down.
Vacancy is low in the study area, but partial commercial vacancy, storefront conditions, and variable business hours make it feel more vacant.

Figure 20. Vacancy map
Crime, a commonly cited concern, has declined in the study area for the past five years in keeping with city-wide trends. The heat map for violent crime shows clustering around the nightclubs.
Property crime, which declined by the greatest amount, is more dispersed.

Figure 22. Property crime (2017-2018) map
Crashes are a concern in the study area, particularly around the Downtown core which is a pedestrian crash cluster and at intersections with Canal Street, which are identified by MassDOT as top 5% crash clusters.

Figure 23. Crash map
Intersection of Union St and Canal St.

A plan view shows some of the safety hazards identified during the field survey (interface Studio, 2019).
Downtown circulation is complicated by several one-way streets – Common Street, Lawrence Street, and Amesbury Street – which place a burden on Essex Street.
Parking occupies a significant portion of the study area but is underutilized. Weekday peak demand is less than 60%.

Figure 25. Parking map
The pedestrian experience is challenged by inactive frontages, such as parking lots, inactive or deteriorated storefronts, cracked sidewalks, out-of-date signs and neglected street amenities.

“There are many storefronts that are abandoned which does not look attractive when walking downtown.”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT
EXISTING CONDITIONS

OUT-OF-DATE SIGNS

NEGLECTED STREET AMENITIES

INACTIVE STOREFRONTS

BETTER WAYS TO DO A-FRAME SIGNS?

CRACKED SIDEWALKS
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
During the course of the planning process, the project team heard from more than 500 community members about their vision for the future of Downtown Lawrence.

The public engagement process included:

**8 Stakeholder Interviews**
Stakeholder interviews were conducted with public officials, community organizations, local developers, and institutional partners, and consisted of both face-to-face and telephone interviews.

**414 Survey Respondents**
A community survey was fielded from June to July of 2019 in order to understand how residents, business owners, workers, and visitors perceive Downtown today, and what could make for a better Downtown in the future. The survey was distributed in both English and Spanish language formats, and included online and hardcopy versions. The electronic survey was distributed via email, the We Are/Somos Lawrence website, word-of-mouth, postcards, and social media channels. The paper survey was distributed at key locations and events, including the senior center and farmers market.

**150+ Open House Participants**
The public open house was held at two locations between August 25-28, and consisted of a series of activities designed to elicit public response and discussion to a set of key issues facing Downtown, and prompted participants to express their ideas and hopes for Downtown’s future. The first location was Lawrence Ciclovía, a popular event that takes place on Essex Street within the study area. The second location was the Lawrence Public Library. In total, more than 150 community members participated in the public open house.

**23 Focus Group Participants**
Four focus groups were held in October, consisting of city department heads, residents, local developers, and small businesses. The purpose of the focus groups was to generate discussion about specific action strategies for Downtown.
Community Survey

More than 400 people with a connection to downtown Lawrence participated in the survey, including residents, workers, and visitors. Most of the residents who responded moved to Lawrence recently. The relative affordability of housing, proximity to work, and preference for an urban lifestyle were the top reasons cited by residents for choosing to live in Lawrence.

Figure 27. Survey: breakdown of participants
A significant portion of survey respondents indicated that they travel outside of Lawrence to have fun or go shopping. More than two thirds of participants say they go to destinations outside of the City to have fun, and a majority of day-to-day shopping destinations frequented by survey participants are located outside of the City.

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS LIVE?  
¿DÓNDE VIVEN LOS ENCUESTADOS?

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS WORK?  
¿DÓNDE TRABAJAN LOS ENCUESTADOS?

WHERE DO THEY DO THEIR SHOPPING?  
¿EN QUÉ LUGAR HACEN SUS COMPRAS?

Figure 28. Survey: where participants live  
Figure 29. Survey: where participants work  
Figure 30. Survey: where participants shop

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS GO TO HAVE FUN?  
¿A DÓNDE VAN LOS ENCUESTADOS PARA DIVERTIRSE?

30% I GO TO DESTINATIONS IN LAWRENCE  
67% I GO TO DESTINATIONS OUTSIDE OF LAWRENCE  
3% I GO TO OTHER PLACES

23% OF PARTICIPANTS INDICATED THAT THEY SHOP NON-GROCERY ITEMS ONLINE, MAKING IT THE 3RD MOST VOTED OPTION.
While residents and workers differed in their responses, there was some overlap: walkability, restaurants/bars, and an easy commute were aspects of Lawrence that participants liked most, and the poor state of cleanliness/attractiveness and concerns about safety were the most disliked characteristics of Downtown Lawrence.

**Figure 31. Survey: most liked/disliked about Downtown**
Patronizing local restaurants, attending arts, cultural, and special events, and shopping were the top three activities participants said they do Downtown. Visitors tend to participate more regularly in all activities Downtown, with a rate of engagement that is 2 to 3 times higher than that of workers or residents.

### HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES DOWNTOWN?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat or order take out from local restaurants</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend arts/cultural/entertainment events</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend religious services</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to parks, exercise or play organized sports</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend other seasonal or special events</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to bars</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to hair salon, doctor, dentist, etc.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 32. Survey: Downtown activities
Open House

Participants chose safety, cleanliness/attractiveness, and a greater variety of businesses as the top 3 things to focus on improving when asked what they would focus on if they were Mayor for a day.

Figure 33. Open house: If I were Mayor I would focus on...
In evaluating Essex Street, participants chose storefront improvements, streetscape and sidewalk improvements, and redevelopment of the vacant bank building at 238 Essex Street as the top three places to spend money on improvements.

Figure 34. Open house: Tell us about Essex Street
Participants favored activating the canal by creating a series of mini-parks, programming plazas, and illuminating bridges.

Participants chose a variety of programs that would draw different audiences to the plaza throughout the day and evening, including games, concerts, food trucks, outdoor movies, and public art and performances.

Participants also liked the idea of enlivening streets through creative paving and landscaping.

Figure 35. Open house: Ideas for enlivening Downtown
Participants largely indicated that their favorite events were large annual festivals, with the exception of the Groundwork Farmers Market, which is a regularly occurring event in multiple seasons throughout the year. Additional events participants would like to see more of include sports leagues and tournaments, more seasonal activities, music, games, and street festivals.

**Figure 36. Open house: Downtown events**
ACTION STRATEGIES
“Downtown is already there. There is so much going on...To put it simply, let’s add more.”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT
Help Downtown Thrive

RATIONALE

The main commercial area looks run down and there is a desire for more variety of businesses that would attract more people.

Focusing on curb appeal, diversification of businesses, and partnerships will support businesses and property owners for a Downtown that is clean, attractive and vibrant.

"Increase curb appeal and quality businesses/attractions to improve the city’s reputation."
- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

RECOMMENDATIONS

Curb appeal strategies will help businesses and property owners improve their exteriors to enhance the overall look and feel of the commercial corridors, strategies include:

› Storefront improvement grants and design assistance for facades, signage;
› Technical assistance for branding, marketing and window display;
› Public art program, such as a commercial corridor artist-in-residence, to spearhead improvement projects, prototype ideas, and engage the community. Such a program could be used to beautify the corridors, through murals and other public art interventions, or provide unique branding/signage to businesses.

Diversification of businesses is important to make Downtown appeal to a broad range of customers and be active day and night, strategies include:

› Retail recruitment and coordination beginning with an Essex Street catalyst project (as recommended in the Urban Renewal Plan and in the works with the Lawrence Partnership)
› Vacant storefront program to encourage temporary reuse for installations or pop up stores. This will require providing regulatory relief for temporary occupancy and recruitment (as recommended in Downtown West Study)

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships will be necessary to help small businesses start up and grow, as well as come together to tackle any issues that arise, strategies include:

› Small business education and assistance with regard to the approvals process and regulations;
› Nightlife management in the form of a task force, night mayor or night ambassadors to help mitigate the impacts of night clubs.
**PRECEDENT:** The Tacony Resident Artist Initiative provided free studio space in a renovated storefront on the commercial corridor, a monthly stipend, and access to funding set aside for civic improvement-focused public art projects on the commercial corridor.


**PRECEDENT:** Nightlife officials (known as night mayors, directors of nightlife, night economy managers) are emerging in cities with a robust nightlife industry, such as DC, Pittsburgh, and New York, to help liaise between the City, nightlife businesses and community stakeholders. This role tackles issues such as noise, congestion and parking associated with the nighttime economy.

Strengthen Downtown Identity with New Signage

RATIONALE
A branding strategy will make Downtown more attractive and user friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Forge a Downtown identity through new signage. Three main types of signage have been identified. Wayfinding with a map of Downtown and attractions can help visitors navigate the area and be aware of what there is to see. These signs can be free standing or attached to existing street furniture such as lamp posts depending on the location. Heritage trail signs are a great way to highlight Lawrence history. The existing The Path/El Sendero signs can be refreshed and expanded upon. Finally, parking signs as part of a Downtown parking strategy will help improve the visitor experience.

Figure 37. Wayfinding sign examples
Downtown Lawrence
STREET SIGNAGE | SEÑALIZACIÓN DE LA CALLE

Figure 38. Rendering of wayfinding signage along Canal Street.
Launch Summer Series Weekly Programming at Various Sites

RATIONALE

While Downtown hosts a number of large-scale annual events that draw visitors from around the region, there are few regular events for a more local audience that could do much to encourage consistent activity.

“More regular community events”
- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

“Provide more performance spaces for artists to express themselves.”
- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended the City and its partners launch a pilot series of weekly events Downtown that incorporate and build off existing summer events that can all be marketed under a “Summer Series” umbrella. Such a series could be bookended by popular annual events such as Semana Hispana at the start of the season and closing out the summer with the Bread and Roses Labor Day celebration. Weekly outdoor programming in the summer would be a good way to test out a variety of programming in key public spaces to generate more activity. The public process unearthed a variety of ideas including salsa dancing and music, food tastings and tours, kids activities, games, bike rides, and movies to name a few. Temporary street closures, such as occurs with Ciclovia, could also be incorporated on streets such as Appleton Street and Canal Street.

As an example, activities could include:

› “Arts on Appleton Way” with salsa dancing and music
› “Friday Night Food Trucks” on Appleton Street like a night market to complement rather than compete with existing food businesses and clubs
› “Hang Outs at Heritage State Park” such as movie nights, performances
› “Cardio on Canal” outdoor fitness classes
› “Downtown Food Tour” at various rotating restaurants
› A dedicated effort will be needed to organize and sustain activities, and if successful, the program can be expanded to include year-round activities.
Figure 39. Programming opportunities map

**PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES**

- “Arts on Appleton Way” with salsa dancing and music
- “Friday Night Food Trucks” on Appleton Street
- “Hang Outs at Heritage State Park” with movie nights, performances
- “Cardio on Canal” with outdoor fitness classes

**ACTION STRATEGIES**
Examples of Inclusive Programming

Food tasting events

Domino tournaments

Large-scale activities and games
Make Essex Street A Great Main Street Experience

**RATIONALE**

Essex Street is subject to speeding and a high number of crashes, particularly involving pedestrians. The traffic circulation due to surrounding one-way streets forces cars onto Essex Street.

Essex Street is the City’s main commercial corridor and could be redesigned for greater pedestrian safety and activity. To this end, two initiatives are recommended: a cleaning, greening and beautification program and a right-of-way redesign for multimodal safety.

“Turn one-way streets to two-way streets.”
- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

“Better traffic enforcement!”
- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Cleaning, greening, beautification program** will focus on the cleanliness and attractiveness of the public realm and combine public services with contributions from the private sector for corridor-wide improvements. Strategies include:

- sidewalk repair
- street lights
- tree planting and maintenance targeting empty tree pits
- daily cleaning
- decorative lighting
- planters and maintenance

**Right-of-way redesign** is important for traffic calming and multimodal safety. Strategies include:

- Right-of-way option 1: change one westbound travel lane to two-way cycletrack.
- Right-of-way option 2: change one westbound travel lane to back-in angled parking. This would add on-street parking to the corridor, almost doubling it in some places. Although there is a learning curve, backing in the space is easier than backing into a parallel parking space. This option would also allow for curb bumpouts at intersections, decreasing the pedestrian crossing distance. Raised crosswalks are another improvement that can make pedestrians more visible.

- As prior plans have recommended, Common, Lawrence, and Amesbury Streets should be converted to two-way streets to improve Downtown circulation and access which would alleviate traffic on Essex Street and allow for the conversion of one westbound travel lane. (as recommended in Lawrence TBD Urban Renewal Plan, Parking study)
Figure 40. Diagram of potential Essex Street improvements

CITY RESPONSIBILITY
1. Sidewalk repair
2. Streetlights
3. Tree planting & maintenance
4. Wayfinding signs
5. Two-way cycletrack or parking
6. Raised crosswalk

PRIVATE RESPONSIBILITY
7. Storefront improvement
8. Daily cleaning
9. Decorative lighting
10. Planters & maintenance

Proposed option 1: convert travel lane to two-way cycletrack
Proposed option 2: convert travel lane to back-in diagonal parking
**Figure 41. Diagram of potential Essex Street right-of-way reconfiguration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel Parking</th>
<th>Back-In Angled Parking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entering space:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entering space:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) signal, 2) stop, 3) back in, 4) straighten out</td>
<td>1) signal, 2) stop, 3) back in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exiting space:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exiting space:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) back up, 2) pull out into travel lane, or 3) inch forward and backward until there is room to pull out</td>
<td>1) pull forward into travel lane (better visibility when exiting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exiting car:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exiting car:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>driver exits into traffic lane, risk of “doorin” cyclists</td>
<td>drivers and passengers exit toward sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parking capacity:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parking capacity:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 feet per vehicle</td>
<td>10-12 feet per vehicle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reimagine Appleton as a Shared Street for People

RATIONALE

Appleton Street is two short blocks between Middle Island, where hundreds of residents live, and the Downtown core on Essex Street, Appleton Way plaza and Campagnone Commons. However, the street is not very active or inviting.

There is an opportunity to create a physical and programmatic link between important Downtown destinations: Middle Island, North Canal, Essex Street, Appleton Way and Campagnone Common. This entails three components: 1) a cleaning, greening and beautification program, 2) public art, and 3) programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cleaning, greening, beautification program as described for Essex Street.

Public art to signal a shift to a more pedestrian-oriented shared street. Strategies include:

› Colored asphalt on Appleton Street between Essex and Canal Streets in the near term with the potential to invest in more intensive treatment such as decorative paving in the future if successful
› Murals or sculpture on sites along Appleton including the parking garage, District Court plaza, and back of the bank building.

Programming to generate activity in an area that has a significant number of residents and workers nearby. Appleton Street is a good site for Summer Series activities and temporary street closure for events.
Figure 42. Diagram of issues and opportunities on Appleton
Figure 43. Diagram of potential Appleton Street improvements
Expand and Program Canal Trail as Fitness and Heritage Trail

RATIONALE

The North Canal occupies an important place in the history of Lawrence and is a unique, though underutilized, asset. The North Canal also sits along the seam of two distinct geographies, the Essex Street commercial corridor and the growing residential and commercial communities on Middle Island in the old mill buildings. By activating the North Canal through physical improvements and programming, the City can foster a more connected Downtown and leverage a unique amenity to spur further growth and economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City and its partners should improve conditions along the North Canal in phases, starting with a series of pilot improvements that can be accomplished in the short-term, followed by long-term capital improvements to the trail.

Pilot improvements can focus on programming and light physical improvements. Programming could include a focus on group fitness classes with the goal of building community around health and creating better connections across Downtown. Physical improvements could include asphalt art, art installations along the existing fence that explore the Canal’s history, and artistic lighting that builds on the recent Illuminacion Lawrence event.

Long-term, the City, State and partners should renovate and widen the trail to allow space for active recreation and seating, punctuated by wider plazas that project over the canal at key locations along the trail.

“The greatest and under-used asset in the city is the canal and dam infrastructure. The City should make every effort to take control of the North Canal from Enel and develop it as an entry to and destination for the city.”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT
Figure 44. Diagram of Canal Street issues

Figure 45. Rendering of Canal Street pilot opportunities - day and night
Figure 46. Rendering of Canal Street long-term interventions
Design Safe and Visually Impactful Gateway Intersections

**RATIONALE**

The intersections at Union and Canal Streets and Amesbury and Canal Streets are both important gateways that carry traffic Downtown, but also dangerous intersections identified as MassDOT top 5% crash clusters.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

These intersections can be redesigned to improve safety and also increase their visibility as a gateway. Interventions such as curb extensions to decrease crossing distance, raised and painted crosswalks to increase pedestrian visibility, and pedestrian signaling should be considered. In the example of Union and Canal, the wide turn radius needed to accommodate trucks can be mitigated by using painted curb extensions to square off the intersection. The curb extensions will encourage cars to make tighter turns, but they will still allow trucks to make wider turns. A feasibility study and data collection would be necessary first steps to improving these intersections.
Figure 47. Diagram of issues at intersection of Union and Canal Streets
Figure 48. Diagram of proposed safety improvements at intersection of Union and Canal Streets
Make Downtown a Great Place to Live

RATIONALE

Downtown is emerging as a residential neighborhood and is surrounded by major employers and institutions that could be encouraged to promote Downtown as a place to live. More residents will support more businesses and activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conversion of the Middle Island mill buildings to new residential and commercial space is almost complete, which has added hundreds of new residents. There are still opportunities to fill in the gaps Downtown with mixed use development that includes housing with a diversity in size and tenure options. Incentives can be explored to encourage employees of Downtown employers to live closer to their work. Additionally, the growth of educational institutions in and around Downtown brings the possibility of student housing. A primary focus of infill and redevelopment should be creating continuous active frontage on Essex Street and north-south connector streets. This will necessitate a parking strategy to concentrate parking and unlock underutilized surface lots on these streets.
Figure 49. Development opportunities map
Coordinate Downtown Marketing

RATIONALE

There is a lot happening Downtown and momentum is continuing to build, but a negative perception of Downtown and Lawrence is still a barrier for attracting visitors, shoppers, businesses, and residents. Coordinate a Downtown marketing strategy that draws visitors locally and throughout the region. The City of Lawrence has already begun to take action on this by creating a centralized marketing initiative called We Are / Somos Lawrence, which consists of website and social media channels with a community calendar, storytelling effort, and information about special events or issues. These efforts are helpful both to promote events to a wide audience, but also to help counter negative perceptions by highlighting positive things happening in the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The marketing effort should be done in coordination with efforts to program Downtown and improve streets, public spaces, and businesses. This will ensure that Downtown has the place-based assets to host programs and events, and that Downtown Lawrence creates a positive first impression when visitors come Downtown.
The City needs to ensure that the regulatory structure and process is aligned with the Downtown vision.

**RATIONALE**

The City can further encourage good urban development by revising parking minimums to reduce overly onerous parking requirements, in coordination with exploring a shared parking structure and consolidation of underused lots as recommended in the parking study. Shared parking is currently allowed under certain circumstances in the City’s zoning code.

The City should also create a standardized permitting process that is easier and more predictable for programming partners, non-profits, and small businesses to navigate. This could take the form of a set of standard permit applications for things such as outdoor seating and events that are approved by an entity within City government.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City should encourage development consistent with the principles of the Downtown Smart Growth Overlay (DSGO). While the design guidelines in the DSGO are calibrated to produce good urban development, the overlay currently allows the applicant to choose between either the underlying zoning or the overlay when seeking approval. Thus, a property owner or developer could forgo following the guidelines if they do not see an incentive to following the DSGO, or if they see the DSGO requirements as too burdensome. By either revising portions of the underlying zoning to be consistent with the DSGO, or by editing the DSGO to incentivize use of the overlay, the City can encourage use of the design guidelines.
Essex Street design principles

1. Entrance awnings
2. Signage
3. Clear entranceways with minimal signage
4. Unobstructed frontage windows with high level transparency
5. Secondary frontage and upper floor window transparency
6. External lighting
7. Quality building materials

“Revamp Essex Street facades.”
- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

**BUSINESS ZONE**
8. Cafe seating
9. Outdoor vending display
10. A-frame signage
11. Planters

**PEDESTRIAN ZONE**
12. Pedestrian clearance

**AMENITIES ZONE**
13. Pedestrian-scaled street lighting
14. Benches
15. Bike racks
16. Street trees

Figure 50. Diagram of design principles and guidelines for Essex Street
IMPLEMENTATION
Implementation will require leadership from the City but also collaboration with the Lawrence Partnership and other government, nonprofit and private sector partners. These partners will prioritize the recommendations and determine timeframes as implementation moves forward.

**Priorities for Early Action**

While some recommendations in this plan are longer-term, requiring intensive coordination and fundraising, others can be accomplished relatively quickly. In evaluating these types of projects for early action implementation, their feasibility and level of impact were key considerations.

Three main projects were determined to be priority projects to be implemented in the coming year:

- Wayfinding signage
- Summer Series weekly programming
- Canal fitness and heritage trail

These early actions should be focused on Canal Street, Appleton Street and Essex Street to connect main hubs of activity as illustrated in the map on the following page.