

## **Economic Development Subcommittee**

**August 20, 2020**

**6:00 PM**

### **UNOFFICIAL MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Councilors Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones

**Town staff also in attendance:** Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, Chrissy Whelton - Assistant to the Town Administrator, Bryan Taberner - Director of Planning and Community Development, Amy Love - Town Planner, Anne Marie Tracey - Marketing & Communications Coordinator, Alecia Alleyne - Administrative Assistant

**Other Attendees:** Cobi Frongillo, Steven Sherlock, Bonnie Corso, Lisa Piana

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#### **Meeting was never called to order, a full quorum was not met**

**1. Reopening Phase 3 Discussion.** No questions were asked of the Administrator.

**2. Economic Development Update**

- a. Bonnie Corso and her husband Mark Corso - local business owners, who took over the old Sheva Market location and put in Fresh Start Market. This is a small 100% local New England healthy market, along the lines of a Whole Foods at a smaller scale. They and other potential small business owners read the results of the Economic Study and saw that there was a desire for a local market and decided that this would be the perfect opportunity to open this business.

**3. Market Analysis & Market Position Presentation Discussion & Work Plan**

- a. Business listening Tour dates and times were announced. These sessions were developed to discuss the needs, ideas, and strategies related to economic development, town marketing and communication within Franklin.
- b. Councilor Hamblen presented a couple of drafts for potential wayfinding signs that could be placed around Town to educate residents and non-residents about the many attractions found here in Town.

Because a full quorum was never met, this meeting was rescheduled to September 2, 2020 and will take place in the Council Chambers preceding the Town Council Meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned at 6:48 PM**



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# Town of Franklin Market Study

Funding provided by:  
Direct Local Technical Assistance  
Planning for MetroFuture Technical Assistance  
Town of Franklin

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## **Prepared for**

Town of Franklin  
355 East Central Street  
Franklin, MA 02038



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## **Prepared by**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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This document was produced with input from the Town of Franklin residents, the Franklin Downtown Partnership, the Franklin Cultural District Committee, and Town Staff.

Professional technical assistance was provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council: Raul Gonzalez, Senior Planner, Annis Sengupta, Assistant Director of Arts & Culture, Jenn Kaplan, Economic Development Planner, Alyssa Kogan, Regional Planning Data Analyst, and Iolando Spinola, Community Engagement Specialist.

This project was undertaken with funds from Direct Local Technical Assistance. MAPC wishes to express our thanks to the Governor and the members of the Legislature for their continued support and funding of this program.

Special thanks to Dean College and Lisa Piana, Executive Director of the Franklin Downtown Partnership, Nancy Schoen, Chair of the Cultural District Committee, and Pandora Carlucci for their assistance and input.

### **Metropolitan Area Planning Council**

#### **Officers**

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#### **Town Staff**

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Town Administrator Jamie Hellen  
Town Planner Amy Love  
Director of Planning and Community Development Bryan Taberner  
GIS Coordinator Kate Sjoberg  
Marketing and Communication Specialist Ann Marie Tracey

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# I. Summary of Recommendations

The Town of Franklin, its community partners, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, through research, outreach, and analysis, have worked to create the following Market Study. Within this study, the input of residents, businesses, and students and staff from Dean College were incorporated. The three focus areas of the study were Downtown Franklin, the Mixed Business Innovation District, and the Crossing, as well as the Franklin Cultural District.

Research included demographic, housing, transportation, and business data, with consumer spending habits, and market potential, and expenditures incorporated within the study. Additionally, the Town of Franklin Market Study held multiple community engagement sessions, with a town-wide open house, a Business Roundtable, a Dean College Roundtable consisting of students and staff, and a town-wide survey, in addition to the Cultural District Roundtable already mentioned. Furthermore, a town Economic Development Survey was provided, with over 700 responses.

Through research, interviews, and public outreach, a list of eleven recommendations were created in ranked order. These recommendations build upon the strengths of Franklin's history, its arts and culture community, its active boards and committees, its inspiring college, and its distinctive neighborhood businesses. A full breakdown these recommendations can be found at the end of the study. The recommendations are as follows:

- 1. Business Attraction and Expansion**
- 2. Digital Marketing**
- 3. Promoting Existing Cultural, Open Space, and Recreation Amenities**
- 4. Planning Processes, Incentives, and Marketing**
- 5. Review of Zoning, Permitting Procedures, and Regulatory Laws**
- 6. Multi-Modal Transportation System Expansion**
- 7. Public Realm Attraction**
- 8. Town Commercial District Improvements**
- 9. Franklin Industrial Areas**
- 10. Business and Consumer Outreach**
- 11. Tourism and Event Attractions**

## II. Study Timeline & Activities

The Town of Franklin is a community of approximately 34,000 residents, and is a historic, beautiful town with an excellent sense of community, with well-maintained open space, a high-quality college, attractive residential neighborhoods, a downtown that is the heart of entertainment and culture for Franklin, unique and active business corridors, and a wealth of commercial and industrial businesses. Franklin is best known for the Franklin Public Library, America's first public library, housing in a bookcase the original books Benjamin Franklin donated to the Town.

In June 2019, MAPC awarded the Town of Franklin a technical assistance grant to create a Market Analysis and Market Position Summary (Market Study). Additionally, Franklin provided funding for key components of the study. Bryan Taberner, Director of Planning, acted as the local point of contact. He helped coordinate meetings, helped with community engagement activities and outreach initiatives, and assisted in the analysis of the data and community feedback. He and the Franklin Downtown Partnership, the Franklin Department of Planning and Community Development, the Franklin Cultural District Council, and Dean College played key roles in supporting MAPC in this effort.

Together, over seven months, MAPC and town partners developed the Market Study for three key areas in town, Franklin Center, The Crossing, and the Mixed-Business Innovation District and the town's commercial economic development goals and priorities for the immediate future.

Engagement activities included meetings with town staff and partners, an economic development survey, a business roundtable, an arts and culture roundtable, a Dean College students and staff roundtable, and a public open house event. These allowed community members to share insights and feedback with the town. Community members' ideas and statements are documented in this report, and they form the foundation of the analysis and other elements of the Market Study.

The community survey collected over 700 responses. About 25 people participated in the open house and each of the roundtables. Those who did had in-depth conversations and gave some comprehensive feedback. Thanks to the public participation, this plan reflects the values community members hope will guide the town into the future.

### The Effects of COVID-19 on the Study

It is important to note that the framing of this study, as well as the various business analysis and roundtable discussions, were done in the period leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is quite possible that many of the assumptions, recommendations, and data points will not reflect the aftermath of the affects of the virus, quarantine, and shuttering (and subsequent reopening) of businesses.

Additionally, although most of the demographic information has remained the same, there may be instances where business size and consumer behavior may shift. The references and recommendations take this into account and have remained the same from the pre-COVID-19 time. The success of Franklin depends in large part on a healthy business community, and hopefully this project can be a source of assistance and a snapshot of Franklin business health pre-COVID.

### III. Market Study Context

A preliminary market assessment was undertaken as a component of the Market Study. The purpose of the assessment was to identify the potential for supportable industrial, commercial and office development in the study area and to better inform future planning decisions and development opportunities.

It is important to note that this preliminary assessment of market opportunities is not a prediction of what will occur on the site. It is a representation of what may be possible should policies and market interest align given current data, trends and projections for future household growth, spending potential and employment within and around the Town of Franklin over the next 5 to 10 years.

#### Planning Efforts in the Study Area

Much has happened over the last two decades to create a more attractive, pedestrian friendly and vibrant Downtown Commercial District. The area's business community has benefited from substantial public and private investments. Below are some of the more important Planning efforts related to these changes

**2002-2003 Franklin Center Plan.** Starting roughly 20 years ago the Town of Franklin made revitalization of its Downtown a top priority. During 2002 and 2003 the Town performed visioning activities and created a concept plan for revitalization of Franklin center; this plan has guided the Town forward for over 15 years. The Town's Franklin Center Plan was developed to provide the Town's officials and partnering businesses and nonprofit organizations with a basic structure to envision, and create, a vibrant and unique commercial district. The Plan identified areas of improvement needed in order to dramatically change and revitalize Downtown Franklin. The following nine key concepts were identified:

- Streetscape Improvements
- Parking Improvements & Pedestrian Connections
- Public Places
- Circulation Strategies & Traffic Calming Measures
- Mixed Use
- Architecture, Facades & Historic Preservation
- Cultural Uses
- Image & Identity; and,
- Promoting Franklin Center

One of the key strategies from the Franklin Center Plan was the creation of the Franklin Downtown Partnership.

**2013 Master Plan.** In 2010, the Town Council formed the Master Plan Committee to update Franklin's 1997 Master Plan. Some of the goals identified in the Master Plan include supporting artists and the arts, adopting smart growth principles, improving energy efficiency, and making the town more walkable, bikeable, and transit oriented. The goals below from Franklin's 2013 Master Plan emphasize the importance of the Downtown's revitalization and the success of the Town's business community:

- Work to revitalize Franklin's Downtown core and adjacent neighborhoods.



- Adopt strategies that will support the Town of Franklin's small business community, promote higher levels of commercial investment, and increase related property tax yields.
- Support and strengthen the Town of Franklin's business retention and attraction initiatives, activities and strategies.
- Continue to implement the Town's Franklin Center Plan, including implementation of strategies and improvements in the areas of circulation, traffic calming, streetscape improvements, parking, pedestrian connections, and encouragement of mixed-use development.

**Franklin Downtown Partnership.** The mission of the Franklin Downtown Partnership is to stimulate economic development in downtown in order to create a positive impact throughout the area and to be a pro-active organization that brings residents, business owners and community leaders together, encourages cooperation, and builds leadership for the purpose of revitalizing downtown Franklin.

The Partnership sees Franklin's downtown as the heart of the community: a center of civic and cultural activities, government services, commercial businesses, and diversified housing. All of the Partnership's activities are designed to foster greater vitality in the downtown commercial district and to serve as a vehicle for public policy discourse. The Partnership implements an annual work plan aimed at stimulating economic activity, supporting local businesses, increasing public events, and the continuous revitalization of the downtown area.

**Franklin Cultural District Committee.** In June 2017 Franklin Town Council passed Resolution 17-45 endorsing state-sponsored cultural district goals, and the establishment of the Franklin Cultural District Committee. During 2018 the newly created Committee developed and refined Franklin Cultural District's goals, which are a blend of the State's Cultural District Initiative (CDI) goals, previous planning initiatives (2002 Franklin Center Plan & Franklin's 2013 Master Plan) and additional input from Partners and the general public.

The State's CDI goals are as follows: to attract artists and cultural enterprises, encourage business and job development, establish the district as a tourist destination, preserve and reuse historic buildings, enhance property values, and foster local cultural development. By the time Franklin Cultural District became a State sponsored Cultural District, the area was already becoming the focal point for arts and culture in the south MetroWest region. The Cultural District designation serves to draw additional attention to the area and assist in creating needed economic activity that will strengthen the Town's ongoing revitalization efforts.

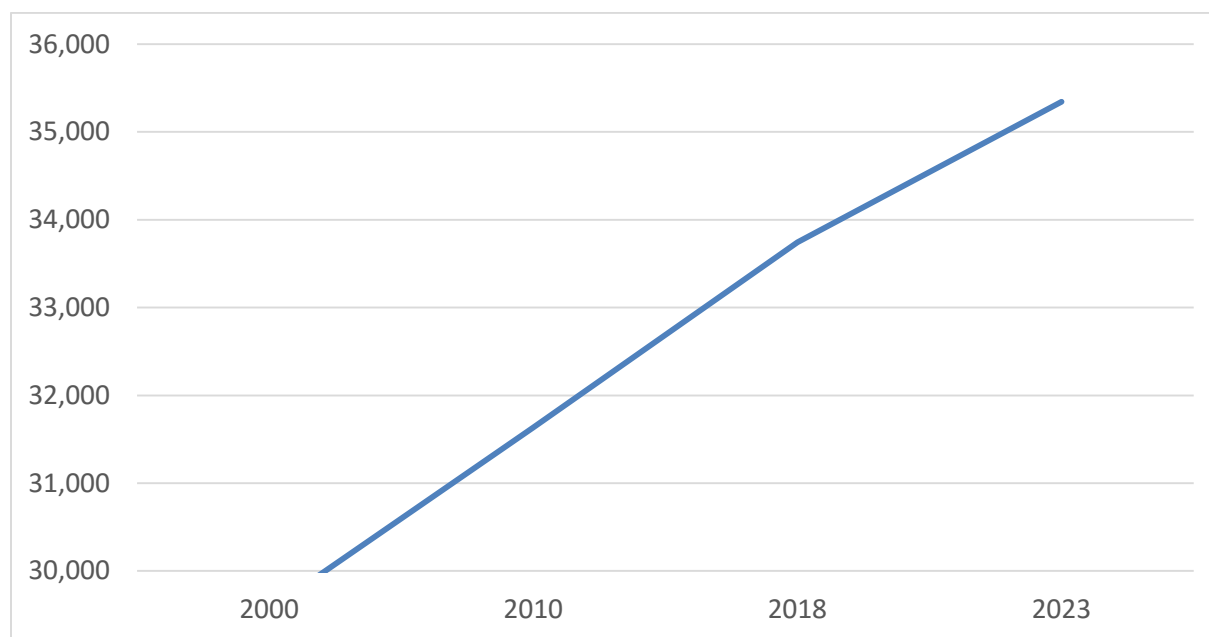
## IV. Residential Analysis

### Population

According to the American Community Survey, along with MAPC's projections, in 2019, the population of Franklin was 34,174, with 11,770 households. The average household size in Franklin is 2.83 people, this is compared to the state average of 2.5 people per household. The median age for Franklin is 39.3, slightly below the state average of 40.2. The total daytime population, that is, the number of people who are present in an area during normal business hours, including workers, stood at 31,662. This includes 16,265 workers and 15,397 residents.

Between 2000 and 2018, Franklin's population grew by 14% and is projected to grow another 4.65% between 2018 and 2023. The largest percentage growth is projected to occur within the population age 65 and over at 2.7% growth, followed by 1.7% growth in the population age 25-44.

**Figure 1: Population Growth: 2000-2023**

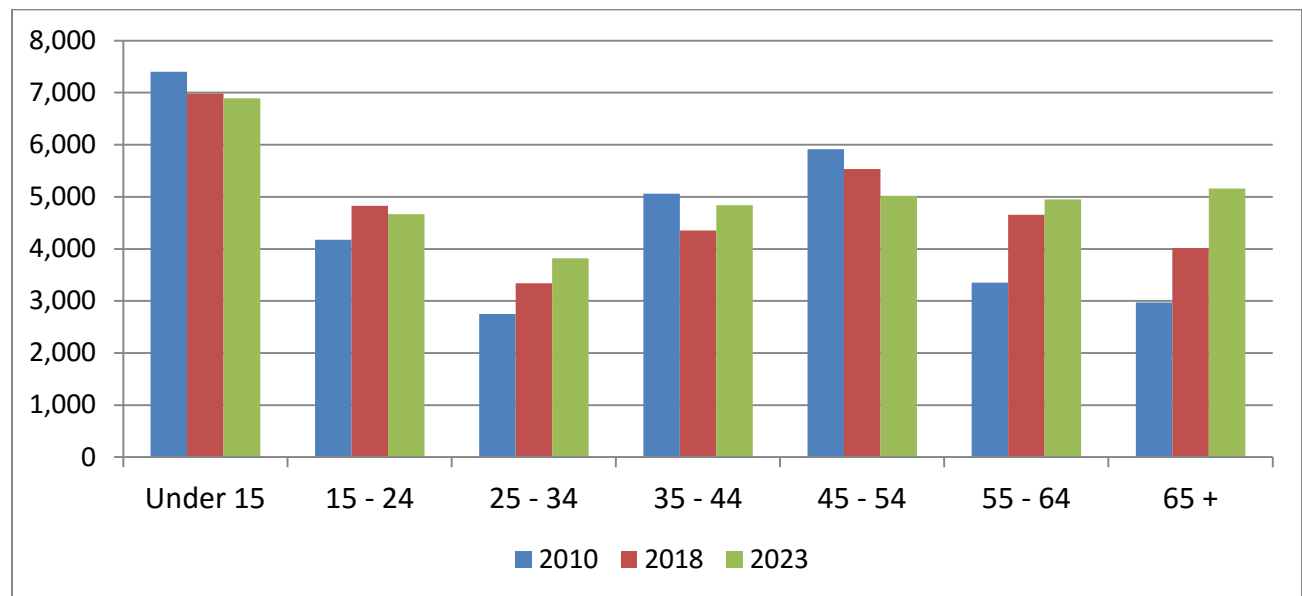


Source: US Census, American Community Survey

Generationally, Franklin's two largest cohorts are currently split between Generation Z at 28% and Generation X at 24%, with Baby Boomers at 21%. As shown in Figure 2 on the next page, the Town of Franklin is projected to grow by over 1,600 residents between 2018 and 2023. Most of the growth between 2010 and 2023 is projected to be seniors (+41%) and those between the ages of 55 and 64 (+30%).

Housing preferences for these Baby Boomers, Millennials, and Generation Z in many ways align. Both are increasingly interested in residing dense pedestrian-oriented environments that offer many amenities and transportation options. The Town of Franklin certainly has the potential to provide many of these options and has been doing so through its most recent construction of housing units.

**Figure 2: Change by Age: 2010-2023**



	2010	2018	2023	Change 2010-2023	% Change 2010-2023
Under 15	7,403	6,985	6,892	(511)	-7%
15 - 24	4,176	4,825	4,665	489	12%
25 - 34	2,752	3,341	3,817	1,065	39%
35 - 44	5,062	4,353	4,842	(220)	-4%
45 - 54	5,916	5,534	5,019	(897)	-15%
55 - 64	3,353	4,657	4,948	1,595	48%
65 +	2,974	4,015	5,160	2,186	74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,635</b>	<b>33,709</b>	<b>35,342</b>	<b>3,707</b>	<b>12%</b>

## Housing

The median household income for Franklin is \$122,849 in 2019, increasing from \$107,029 in 2018. However, the median home value in 2019 is slightly below half a million at \$494,732, an increase of \$24,190 within one year, when the 2018 median home value was \$470,542. Franklin is projected to have its median household income increase to \$141,598 in 2024, an increase of \$18,749. The median home value, however, is projected to increase to \$530,978 by 2023, which is an increase of over \$60,000 in the same time period. Franklin homeowners spend about 19.7% of their income on mortgage and spend an average of \$19,714 on mortgage and basics a year.

In 2000, the number of owner-occupied housing units was 80%. That number is projected to decrease to 77% in 2023. In terms of single-family housing, half of the 2010 housing units building permits the Town of Franklin had issued were for single-family homes. In 2019, single-family housing permits were less than 7% of all housing permits. Additionally, within the same period of time, apartment building permits had increased from just one unit in 2010, to 259 in 2019.

Within the ten-year period, the number of housing unit permits issued for apartments stood at 555, or about 51% of all building permits. This was followed distantly by single-family units, at almost 21%. The combined number of condominium housing unit building permits numbered at 299, or about 28% of all housing unit permits within the past decade.

**Table 1: Housing Unit Building Permits Issued by Fiscal Year**

Year	Building Unit Type							Fiscal Year Totals
	Single Family	Apartments	Condos - Single Fam	Condos - Duplex	Condos - Triplex	Condos - Fourplex	Condo - Other	
2010	36	1	-	8	-	16	1	62
2011	13	-	-	8	3	4	15	43
2012	20	8	-	8	-	-	-	36
2013	35	-	-	14	-	8	14	71
2014	21	-	-	6	-	8	-	35
2015	18	-	2	16	6	4	-	46
2016	22	280	12	-	3	4	-	321
2017	20	7	12	-	-	-	-	39
2018	17	-	18	2	36	-	5	78
2019	22	259	8	-	45	7	6	347
Totals	224	555	52	62	93	51	41	1,078

Source: Town of Franklin, Department of Community Development

Given existing inventory and demographic changes there has been a potential to support additional housing units, particularly multi-family units, in the Town of Franklin within the past decade. MAPC's housing projections represent how changing trends in births, deaths, migration, and housing occupancy might result in higher population growth and greater housing demand. In order to assess the market potential for housing within a community, MAPC staff compare these projections with the number of units that have actually been permitted over the past ten years to understand how supply is aligning with demand. Because markets cross municipal boundaries, it is important to look at residential supply and demand across multiple communities.

A community may actually experience more or less market demand if surrounding communities are either not producing enough or producing significantly more housing than the demand projections indicate. For example, if a community adjacent to Franklin is producing very limited housing, Franklin may capture more of the regional market demand and thereby lower the individual demand within that adjacent community.

Additionally, some existing single family housing is likely to be freed up by older generations who are looking to downsize however, so there may not be a need to actually construct this much new single family housing if existing units are being freed up to meet the market demand. There is unlikely to be a significant amount of single-family housing developed near the Franklin Center Commuter Rail station. However, single family alternatives could be feasible and may offer a nice transition between existing single-family residential neighborhoods and more dense multi-family development. In particular, Downtown Franklin may be able to support between family alternatives that could serve families looking for a little more space than a unit in a multi-family building might offer, combined with convenient access to public transit.

## V. Retail, Food Service, & Spending Analysis

### Trade Area

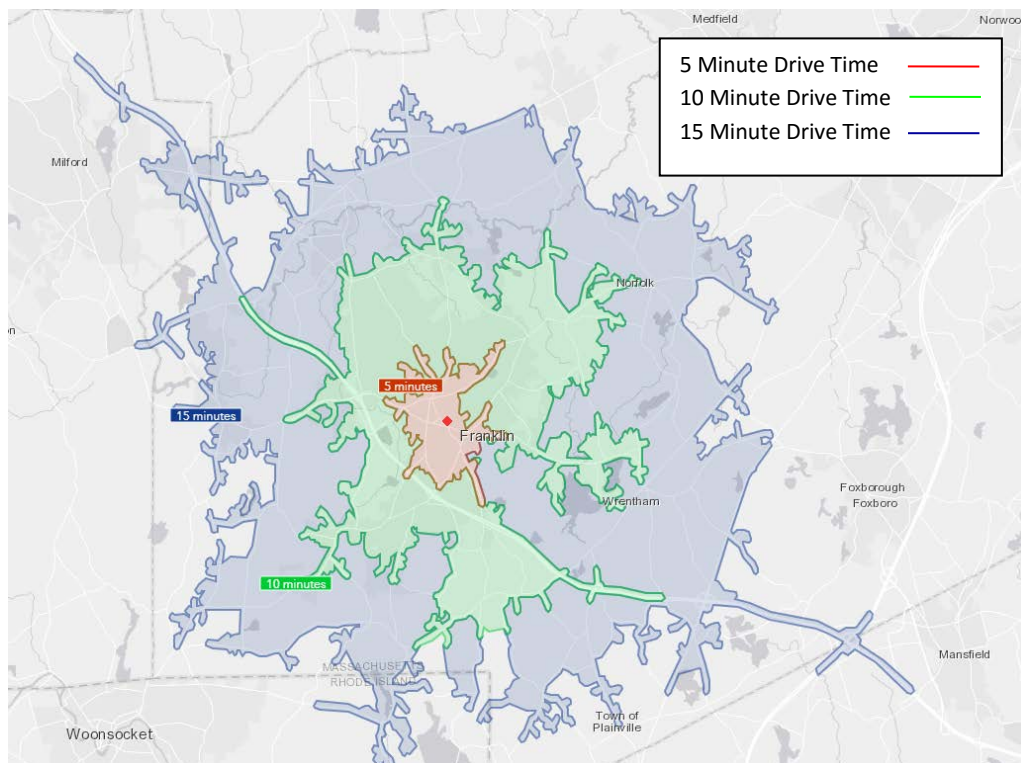
In order to estimate the amount of *additional* retail and food services businesses the town can support it is important to first identify a trade area. The trade area is the geographic area from which a retail establishment generates sales. There are many factors to consider when determining a primary trade area including the distance and time that people may be willing to travel in order to reach a destination, any physical or geographic barriers as well as regional competition. For the Franklin study area, MAPC selected the Franklin Center commuter rail station and looked at three drive times to define the trade area.

The ten-minute drive time is the primary market as it is reasonable to assume that people would be willing to travel this distance in order to attain goods and services within the study area. For comparison and to account for a more local and regional draw, MAPC staff also considered a secondary trade area of a fifteen-minute drive time and a local trade area of a five-minute drive time.

When considering a fifteen-minute drive time (or secondary trade area), the ability to support additional retail establishments downtown substantially decreases due to their being more businesses within the trade area, which reduces residential spending power. Instead, increasing the amount of residential within the local trade area would help to bolster retail market opportunities.

Drive times are displayed in the following map.

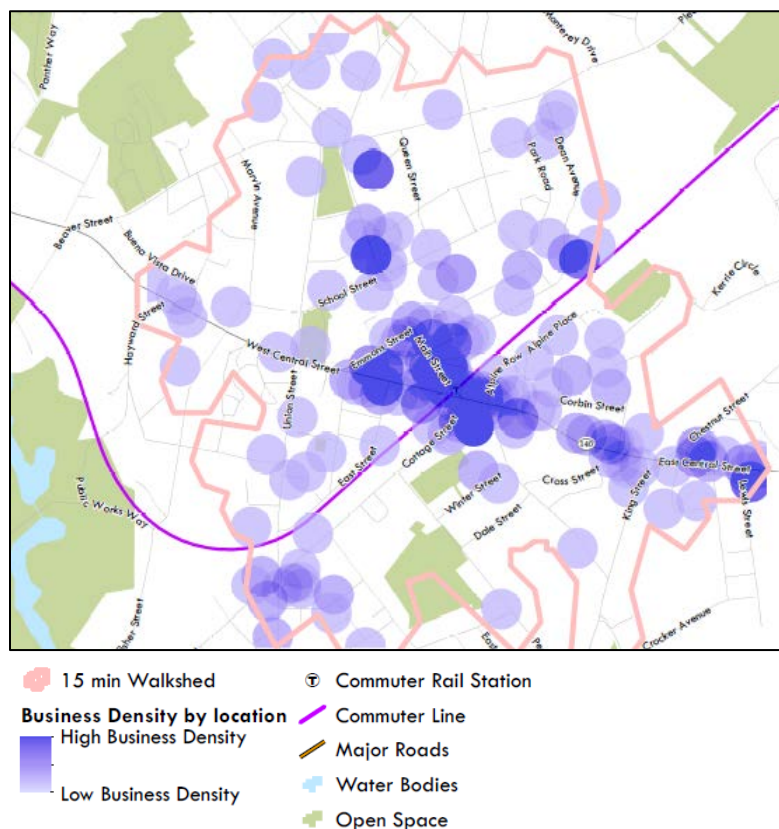
**Figure 3: Retail Trade Area, Drive Times**



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

On the next page is the approximate fifteen-minute walk time (times may vary) from the Franklin Center Commuter rail station, with the highest density of businesses near the station, with more along East Central Street.

**Figure 4: Business Density in Franklin Center**



The population of five-minute drive time, which is also the fifteen to twenty-minute walk time, includes the local market in Franklin Center, where about 6,688 people live, including many Dean College students. The per capita income in the area is \$38,930, above the national per capita income of \$32,621, but below the state per capita income of \$41,794. The population within a ten-minute drive almost quadruples to 23,011, with individuals making \$56,085. People within a fifteen-minute drive, which stretches into Norfolk, Bellingham, and Woonsocket, made around \$51,785.

**Table 2: 2019 Trade Area Demographics**

	LOCAL 5 MINUTE DRIVE	PRIMARY-REGIONAL 10 MINUTE DRIVE	SECONDARY-REGIONAL 15 MINUTE DRIVE
Population	6,688	23,011	41,546
Number of Households	2,480	7,914	14,590
Median Household Disposable Income	\$60,895	\$99,425	\$91,002
Per Capita Income	\$38,930	\$56,085	\$51,785

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### Retail Opportunity Gap Analysis

MAPC staff analyzed ESRI Business Analyst data within the defined trade areas in order to conduct a retail gap analysis. A retail opportunity or gap analysis looks at the overall demand for retail goods and services within a designated trade area based on the spending potential of the households (demand), and the actual sales for those goods and services within the market area (supply). The difference between the demand and supply is called the retail “gap.” If the demand exceeds the supply, there is “leakage,” meaning that residents must travel outside the area to purchase those goods. In such cases, there is an opportunity to capture some of this spending within the market area to support new retail investment. When there is greater supply than demand, there is a “surplus,” meaning consumers from outside the market area are coming in to purchase these good and services. In such cases, there is limited or no opportunity for additional retail development. Thus, the retail gap analysis provides a snapshot of potential opportunities for retailers to locate within an area.

Below in Table 3 is a summary of the retail opportunity gap analysis by industry group and trade area. Figures in red are negative numbers that indicate there is a surplus of sales within the trade area. Figures in green are positive numbers that indicate a retail gap or leakage and represent potential opportunities for more retail in the area.

**Table 3: Retail Opportunity Gap Analysis**

Industry Summary	NAICS	LOCAL TRADE AREA	PRIMARY TRADE AREA	SECONDARY TRADE AREA
		5 minute drive time	10 minute drive time	15 minute drive time
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink		-\$35,479,615	\$164,106,042	\$4,054,859
Total Retail		-\$24,039,314	\$153,914,603	-\$94,455
Total Food & Drink		-\$11,440,301	\$10,191,439	\$4,149,314
<b>Downtown and Mixed-Use Oriented Industry Groups</b>				
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	-\$5,043,413	-\$224,244	-\$3,394,434
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	-\$765,310	-\$15,414,210	-\$14,955,398
Building Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply	444	\$2,317,744	\$21,578,737	-\$35,183,255
Food & Beverage Stores	445	-\$12,907,084	\$13,879,568	\$66,422,005
Health and Personal Care	446, 4461	-\$5,515,938	\$9,251,091	-\$32,277,472
Clothing & Clothing Accessories	448	-\$3,627,179	\$12,308,892	-\$83,563,720
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	451	-\$7,602,877	\$7,307,871	\$15,367,568
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$2,492,134	\$5,670,381	-\$95,422,949
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	-\$11,440,301	\$10,191,439	\$4,149,314

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Table 3 above indicates that that local and secondary trade areas present fairly limited opportunities for additional retail. The local walking area is likely over-retailed and in need of additional residential spending power in order to increase the market potential for additional retail stores.

### Potential Supportable Retail

MAPC staff uses a conservative capture rate to analyze the retail gap and understand the potential for additional establishments. This capture rate acknowledges that any single retail district will never be able to re-capture the full amount of retail leakage. Competition from regional shopping areas, as well as other local districts and online shopping will always draw business away from the study area. When analyzing the market potential within the trade areas, MAPC uses a 15% capture rate. Using this methodology, the market within each of the trade areas could likely support the industries detailed below.

It is important to note that the data below is not a prediction for what will occur within the study area, rather it is an opportunity or estimate of retail space that could be supported based on the gap analysis figure, average sales per square foot of different store types, average store sizes in downtown areas, and an estimated spending capture within each trade area.

As highlighted in the bullets below and in Table 3, Franklin's experiences leakages (green figures in the table) and surpluses (red) in the following:

- **The town is strongest in furniture stores, health and personal care stores, as well as electronics and appliance stores.** Although there is a gap within the five to ten-minute drive time, local health store demands are met mostly by the location of five pharmacies in in town, with many more being located within the 15-minute drive. Additionally, Franklin boasts at least two furniture stores, Classic and Simon's. The town is also well represented in the consolidating physical electronics stores.
- **Franklin is underserved in food and beverage stores and food service and drinking places, although not locally.** Although food stores generate a leakage of \$66 million within the secondary trade area, they produce a local surplus of \$12.9 million. There is a local surplus of restaurants, however, there is a leakage of drinking places for all three trade areas. Franklin already has many different types of commuters passing by, and these businesses may be able to catch consumers if they are given a reason to stop by.
- **The local Franklin market is generally overserved.** Locally Franklin currently experiences a surplus of restaurants, food and beverage stores, and hobby supply stores.
- **The town has the most potential in miscellaneous store retailers when it comes to the local and secondary trade area.** Establishments in this sector include stores with unique characteristics like florists, used merchandise stores, and pet and pet supply stores as well as other store retailers. Given that these businesses are varied under this catchall, some businesses may do better than others.

It is important to note that there are many factors that influence whether or not a retail store or restaurant may want to locate in a particular area. Some of the additional factors that impact the decision to locate a new retail establishment include:

- Availability and quality of the retail space



- Size of the spaces available
- Location of the space- is this a place where many people are passing by?
- Foot traffic
- Rents and terms
- Parking- is it available nearby or within a short walk?
- Product or service price points
- Marketing
- Business plan and acumen
- Zoning and other regulatory obstacles
- Permitting and inspection processes

Although the potential exists for a limited amount of more retail, based on the numbers, the amount captured may be less, dependent on the above factors.

### Consumer Spending Habits

Along with the likelihood of demand within the three trade areas in Franklin, consumer spending habits for apparel display a higher than average purchasing pattern than the nation as a whole, according to ESRI's US Market Potential Index, a database that measures the likely demand for a product or service for the area. ESRI's U.S. Consumer Spending data is based on a combination of the latest consumer expenditure surveys from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Spending Potential Index (SPI) measures Franklin's spending in comparison to the U.S. average of 100. That is, if Franklin spends twice the national average, its SPI will be at 200. Furthermore, if there is half as much spending potential in Franklin compared to the country, it will have an SPI of 50.

There is a relative likelihood of the adults or households in the specified trade areas to exhibit certain consumer behavior compared to the U.S. Women's clothing, children's clothing and shoe sales were above the U.S. average for all three trade areas, showing the potential for these types of businesses to do well within the area.

However, competition with online retailers paints an uncertain future for the apparel industry, not only in Franklin, but in the MAPC region and the nation as a whole. Traditional retailers, without their own brands, or without a focus on e-commerce or a dedication to specialty products that are not carried by online retailers, have been seeing a significant decline nationwide. These uses also typically require large tracts of land and locations proximate to major highways that provide direct regional access, with few options. Some potential may exist for smaller retailers; however, additional residential densities, along with transportation infrastructure improvements, would be required to support these establishments.

**Table 4- Trade Area Spending Habits and Retail Market Potential**

Product/Consumer Behavior	Franklin Adults Compared to the Nation					
	Local Area (5 Minute Drive)		Primary Area (10 Minute Drive)		Secondary Area (15 Minute Drive)	
	Avg No of Adults	SPI	Avg No of Adults	SPI	Avg No of Adults	SPI
Population 18+	5,453	-	21,775	-	53,188	-
Bought any men's clothing in last 12 months	2,560	99	11,057	107	27,234	108
Bought any women's clothing in last 12 months	2,429	104	10,005	107	24,121	106
Bought clothing for child <13 years in last 6 months	1,476	102	6,202	107	14,731	104
Bought any shoes in last 12 months	2,950	103	12,598	110	30,391	109
Homes had any home improvement in last 12 months	648	91	3,416	122	8,519	125
Usually buy based on quality - not price	1,042	101	4,233	102	10,290	102
Price is usually more important than brand name	1,419	95	5,506	92	13,363	92

Source: ESRI US Market Potential Index

Regarding consumer behavior, adults within the three trade areas are more likely than the national average to buy items based on quality instead of price, although a larger percentage of adults in the areas view price as more important than the brand name. They also are more likely to buy items on credit and show greater interest to buy items that are environmentally friendly and/or support a charity, when compared to the rest of the country. They are also more likely to purchase organic food compared to the rest of the country. The trade areas are more than twice as likely to subscribe to fiber optic than the rest of the country. They were far more likely to own stock, take foreign trips, and spend more than \$1,000 per month on credit card expenditures.

On the other hand, adults in the trade areas were less likely than average to spend more than \$20 at convenience stores within the last month. The trade areas were far less likely than the national average to buy cigarettes at convenience store, only own a cell phone (no landline telephone), drink cola, and spend money at a convenience store.

#### **Restaurant Market Potential**

The trade area market potential for restaurants displayed higher than average beer/ale consumption for adults within all three trade areas. Moreover, there was a higher than average number of adults who went to a bar/pub/nightclub within the last year. People within the trade area are also more likely to dine at a family restaurant or steakhouse within the last six months. Along with the higher potential for leakage in the food and beverage service industry, this could spur potential growth in the gastropub sector. The trade area experiences a lower than average number who went to fast food restaurants.

**Table 5- Trade Area Restaurant Market Potential**

Product/Consumer Behavior	Franklin Adults Compared to the Nation					
	Local Area (5 Minute Drive)		Primary Area (10 Minute Drive)		Secondary Area (15 Minute Drive)	
	Avg No of Adults	SPI	Avg No of Adults	SPI	Avg No of Adults	SPI
Drank beer/ale in last 6 months	2,459	107	10,305	112	25,368	113
Went to a bar/night club in last 12 months	1,080	115	4,492	120	10,840	118
Dined out in last 12 months	2,970	105	13,450	119	32,706	118
Went to family restaurant in last 6 months	4,127	101	17,340	106	42,638	107
Went to family restaurant: 4+ times a month	1,431	99	6,297	109	15,306	108
Went to fast food/drive-in restaurant in last 6 months	4,929	97	19,976	102	48,600	100
Went to fast food/drive-in restaurant 9+ times/mo	2,087	100	8,692	101	20,868	101
Went to fine dining restaurant last month	709	124	3,589	157	8,708	156
Went to fine dining restaurant 3+ times last month	245	144	1,095	161	2,575	155

Spending habits at restaurants for the trade area located within a fifteen-minute drive time from Downtown Franklin varied compared to the national average. About 16% of adults went to fine dining restaurants within the last month, almost 5% went to a fine dining restaurant more than three times within the last month. By and large, the three areas saw average to above average spending habits in various restaurant types, with fine dining ranking higher than the rest of the nation. Restaurants that were frequently visited include places similar to The Cheesecake Factory, Dunkin', Panera Bread and Chipotle.

## Recreation Expenditures

Table 6- Trade Area Spending Potential Index on Recreation

Recreational Activity	Local Area SPI	Avg \$ Spent	Primary Area SPI	Avg \$ Spent	Secondary Area SPI	Avg \$ Spent
Camp Fees	182	\$122.13	252	\$168.55	308	\$206.31
Winter Sports Equipment	157	\$8.51	200	\$10.84	208	\$11.29
Recreational Vehicles and Fees	136	\$217.04	196	\$313.70	221	\$352.85
Fees for Recreational Lessons	138	\$198.11	201	\$288.63	205	\$293.33
Stamp & Coin Collecting	143	\$6.10	187	\$8.02	197	\$8.44
Tickets to Theatre/Operas/Concerts	137	\$103.43	190	\$143.21	195	\$147.11
Docking and Landing Fees for Boats and Planes	125	\$11.89	192	\$18.31	200	\$19.06
Membership Fees for Social/Recreation/Civic Clubs	132	\$311.23	188	\$445.57	193	\$455.89
Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions	129	\$923.67	187	\$1,335.51	189	\$1,351.75

The above tables show recreation expenditures, which is the average amount of total yearly expenditures of activities for households. People within the three trade areas were more than likely to have more disposable income and spend more money than the rest of the country. Compared to the national average, people within the secondary trade area were three times as likely to spend money on camp fees. Additionally, other outdoor recreation activities, such as purchasing recreational vehicles, winter sports equipment purchases, and docking fees ranked considerably higher than the rest of the country.

## VI. Business Analysis

### Largest Employers

MAPC staff also analyzed data on the largest employers to determine which industries are the most represented amongst this group. Below in Table 7 are the 12 employers in Franklin that employ more than 100 people. This data includes both full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. As the table demonstrates, the largest employers consist of the Town of Franklin along with manufacturing and dairy processing.

Franklin's twelve largest employers represent a number of different industries including wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, retail trade, and manufacturing, along with the Dean College. Amongst these largest employers, there is no real concentration within one particular industry.

**Table 7: Franklin Largest Employers**

Rank	Employer	Nature of Business	Number of Employees
1	Town of Franklin	Government	1,972
2	Dell/EMC Corporation	Computer Storage/Manufacturing	1,562
3	Garellick Farms	Dairy	600
4	Tegra Medical	Precision Grinding Medical	387
5	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Scientific Instruments & Equipment	350
6	Dean College	College	339
7	Alpha Grainger	Manufacturing	160
8	Shaw's Supermarket	Supermarket	156
9	Cold Chain Technologies	Healthcare Packaging	153
10	Stop & Shop Supermarket	Supermarket	150
11	Big Y Supermarket	Supermarket	135
12	BJ's Wholesale	Retailer	120
Total			6,084

Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Town of Franklin

### Largest Industries

The largest industries in Franklin, by number of employees, are manufacturing, retail trade, and educational services. Franklin is well known for its manufacturing sector, particularly at Forge Park and Franklin Industrial Park, and about 20% of jobs in Town being within this trade. Retailers were the second largest industry at 1,805, with food and beverage stores in particular employing about 648 people.

Additionally, the retail industry has the highest number of individual businesses, with food and beverage stores and general merchandise stores being the most numerous. Dean College and other educational services employed about 10% of the total workforce.

**Table 8: Industries by Number of Employees and Firms**

Industry	Business Number	Business Percent	Employee Number	Employee Percent
Manufacturing	70	5.7%	3,133	19.2%
Retail Trade	151	12.3%	1,805	11.1%
Educational Services	51	4.2%	1,610	9.9%
Accommodation & Food Services	68	5.6%	1,560	9.6%
Wholesale Trade	59	4.8%	1,200	7.4%
Finance & Insurance	51	4.2%	1,109	6.8%
Health Care & Social Assistance	87	7.1%	1,044	6.4%
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	134	10.9%	1,007	6.2%
Other Services	138	11.3%	954	5.9%
Construction	122	10.0%	666	4.1%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	51	4.2%	470	2.9%
Public Administration	35	2.9%	434	2.7%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	24	2.0%	395	2.4%
Admin, Waste Management, & Remediation	46	3.8%	274	1.7%
Information	33	2.7%	272	1.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	24	2.0%	270	1.7%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	1	0.1%	53	0.3%
Utilities	2	0.2%	25	0.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	3	0.2%	5	0.0%
Unclassified Establishments	75	6.1%	3	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16,289</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development

## Transportation

About 78% of Franklin residents drove alone to work, 6.8% public transportation, 4.7% carpooled, 2.5% walked to work, and, statistically 0.0% biked to work. Although two commuter rails stations are located in Franklin, during the Business Roundtable, many people stated that the commuter rail was infrequent and expensive for commuting to and from Franklin. Additionally, more than a quarter of Franklin residents spent more than 45 minutes a day to travel to work and are considered extreme commuters.

Table 9: Where Franklin Residents Work in 2017 (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
All County Subdivisions	17,482	100.0%
Franklin (Norfolk, MA)	2,249	12.9%
Boston (Suffolk, MA)	1,775	10.2%
Framingham (Middlesex, MA)	653	3.7%
Milford (Worcester, MA)	524	3.0%
Norwood (Norfolk, MA)	380	2.2%
Hopkinton (Middlesex, MA)	360	2.1%
Marlborough (Middlesex, MA)	320	1.8%
Foxborough (Norfolk, MA)	316	1.8%
Providence (Providence, RI)	315	1.8%
Worcester (Worcester, MA)	312	1.8%
All Other Locations	10,278	58.8%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2017

Most Franklin residents travel outside of town to get to work, with only 12.9% of 17,842 Franklin residents working in town. Most residents traveled outside of town to go to work, with the City of Boston, at about 40-plus miles away, being where one in ten Franklin residents traveled to work. Boston was followed by Framingham and Milford to round out the top three, with Providence and Worcester rounding out the top ten. Outside the top ten, each remaining municipality received less than 2% of residents, although combined they formed where the majority of Franklin residents traveled to work.

Table 10: Where Franklin Workers Live in 2017 (All Jobs)		
	Count	Share
All County Subdivisions	15,944	100.0%
Franklin (Norfolk, MA)	2,249	14.1%
Woonsocket (Providence, RI)	713	4.5%
Bellingham (Norfolk, MA)	636	4.0%
Milford (Worcester, MA)	420	2.6%
Attleboro (Bristol, MA)	384	2.4%
Boston (Suffolk, MA)	352	2.2%
North Attleborough (Bristol, MA)	335	2.1%
Blackstone (Worcester, MA)	292	1.8%
Wrentham (Norfolk, MA)	289	1.8%
Cumberland (Providence, RI)	272	1.7%
All Other Locations	10,002	62.7%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2017

About 14% of the 15,944 Franklin workers live in Franklin. This is followed by nearby Woonsocket, Rhode Island and Bellingham, Massachusetts. The top ten municipalities that Franklin workers came from were generally from nearby municipalities, with Boston being a notable exception at 2.2%. Almost two-thirds of Franklin workers, however, did not come from these ten municipalities, but from many other municipalities.



## VII. Franklin Cultural District

The Franklin Cultural District (FCD) represents a partnership among key arts and culture anchors in Franklin working toward strengthening the geography of the district as a walkable arts and culture destination for residents, workers and visitors. The area of the FCD encompasses properties within all three business districts included in the study area for this market analysis.

The Downtown Commercial District and the Mixed Business Innovation District are both situated within the cultural district almost in their entirety. One parcel in the Franklin Crossing business district – Franklin Community Access Television – is also included in the Franklin Cultural District.

This overlapping of boundaries among the cultural district and business districts was one driving factor for an in-depth analysis of the cultural district as part of this market analysis. Another factor is the importance of the arts and culture anchors that comprise the district's leadership committee to the economic vitality of downtown Franklin.

The goals of the Franklin Cultural District for FY2020 include two items with direct relevance to this work. Goal 4, "Advocate for redevelopment of industrial properties within the Town's new Mixed Business Innovation District," and Goal 5, "Conduct a substantial economic development research, analysis and planning project - *Foundational Market Analysis & Market*

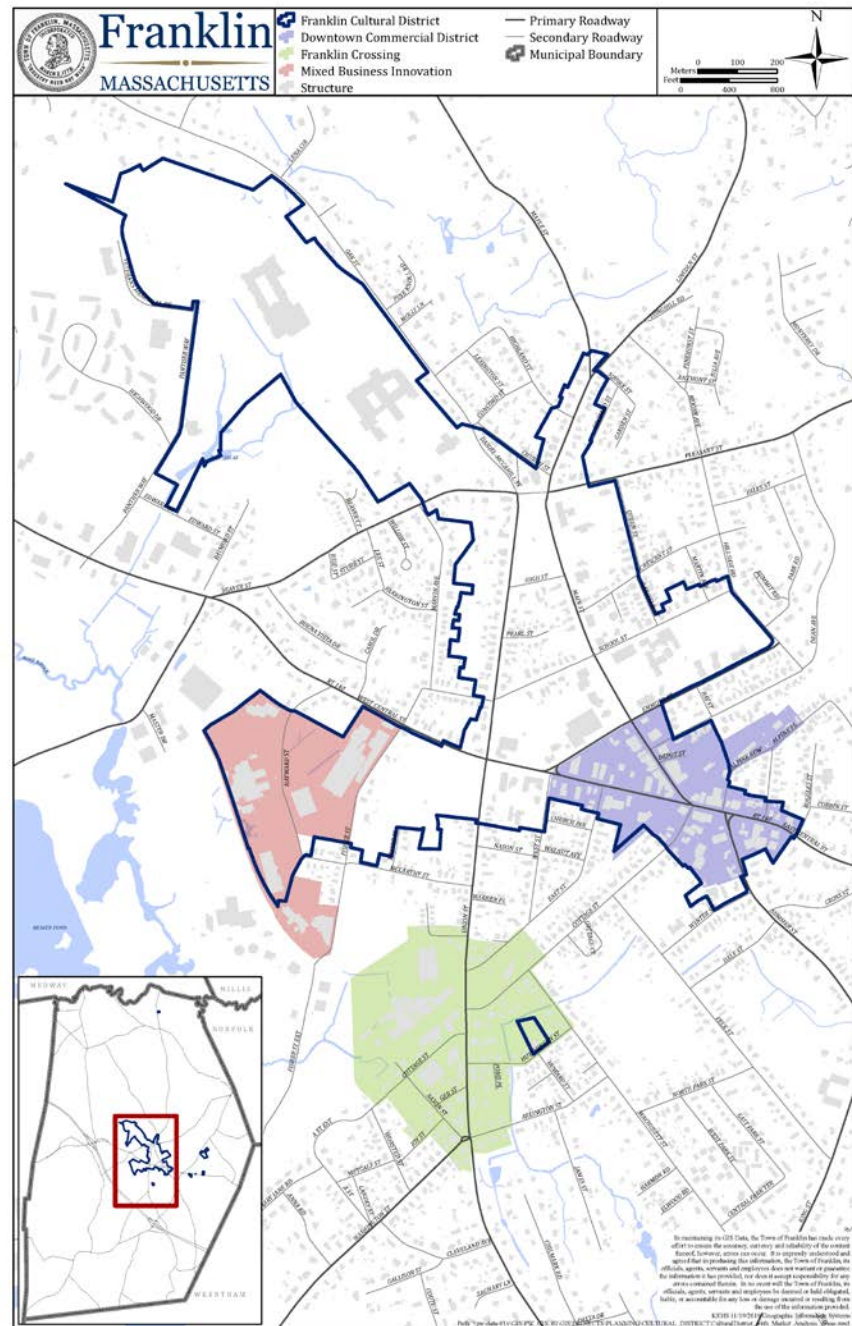


Figure 5 – Franklin Cultural District and Economic Corridors



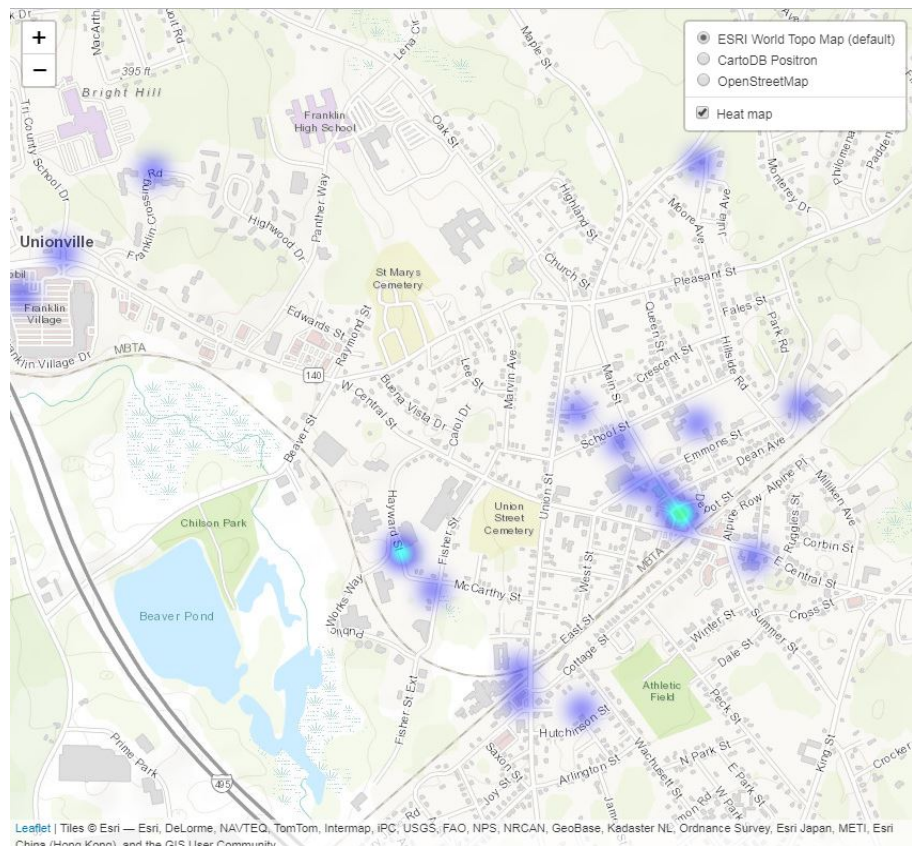
*Position Summary for Franklin Center and Surrounding Neighborhoods,”* are directly aligned with the purposes of this market analysis. A full list of the goals for the cultural district in FY2020 are included below.

### **Franklin Cultural District FY 2020 Goals**

1. Develop FCD's Long-term Marketing Plan, including further refinement of the cultural district brand, enhancement of social media resources, and development of Wayfinding Signage.
2. Continue to strengthen FCD's Partnership, and increase the number of collaborative projects.
3. Survey FCD Partners regarding the impact from collaborative marketing activities, as well as lessons learned and suggestions for the future.
4. Advocate for redevelopment of industrial properties within the Town's new Mixed Business Innovation District, which is the southwest corner of FCD.
5. Conduct a substantial economic development research, analysis and planning project - *Foundational Market Analysis & Market Position Summary for Franklin Center and Surrounding Neighborhoods*.

## VIII. Arts & Culture Assets in Franklin

Franklin is rich in arts and culture assets and the Franklin Cultural District partnership strengthens these assets by structuring opportunities for coordinating and working towards shared goals. The map of the Franklin Cultural District highlights many of the key arts and culture assets in Franklin. As part of this market analysis, MAPC also analyzed creative economy activity captured in InfoUSA data from 2016. This analysis illuminates that the areas of Franklin that recorded concentrated creative economic activity in 2016 are largely within the cultural district boundaries. See figure 6.



### Figure 6- Arts & Culture assets in Franklin

A complete list of arts and culture assets compiled from the 2018 Franklin Cultural District asset map, the New England Foundation for the Arts Creative Ground database, the Franklin Cultural Council grantee lists from 2016, 2018, and 2019, and the 2016 creative economy data from InfoGroupUSA is included in Appendix I.

## Arts & Culture Organizations

Community-based arts and culture organizations are an important set of arts and culture assets in Franklin and a source of opportunity to improve coordination and collaboration.

**Franklin Cultural District Committee (FCDC).** The Franklin Cultural District Committee is a town-appointed seven-member committee tasked with attracting artists and cultural enterprises, encouraging business and job development, establishing the district as a tourist destination, preserving and reusing historic buildings, enhancing property values, and fostering local cultural development. In addition to managing the Cultural District, the FCDC has also established formal partnerships with many of the anchor arts and culture assets in town. Also, in addition to regular committee meetings, the FCDC coordinates quarterly Cultural District Partners meetings within the FCD.

**Franklin Historical Commission (FHC).** The Franklin Historical Commission is a seven-member committee appointed by the Town for the preservation, protection, and development of the historic and

archaeological assets of Franklin. The commission is responsible for a variety of tasks related to this mission including operating and maintaining the Franklin Historical Museum, which is a Franklin Cultural District partner and located within the district. The FHC is an important asset in supporting the district's goal of preserving and reusing historic buildings, holds multiple programs throughout the year, and regularly participate in annual festivals within the Cultural District.

**Franklin Cultural Council (FCC).** The Franklin Cultural Council is the municipally appointed entity that connects the resources of the state arts agency, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, to the local needs and priorities of Franklin. The Cultural Council is tasked with administering a bi-annual survey of local priorities, administering and distributing annual grants for arts, science and the humanities for local benefit, and serving as community leaders regarding arts and culture in Franklin. In addition to the tasks listed above, the Franklin Cultural Council is a partner of the Franklin Cultural District and has initiated public arts activities and fundraisers, including the 2014 ladybug project, described below. Additionally, the 2018 and 2019 Art Week Cultural Connections and Community Arts Advocacy Day.

**Franklin Art Association (FAA).** The Franklin Art Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization established in 1971 to promote the visual arts and preserve fine arts traditions through exhibitions, classes, lectures, and sponsored activities. Residence in Franklin is not required for membership, which is open to all. As an organization focused on the visual arts, the FAA helps connect the cultural district to visual artists in Franklin and the surrounding region. The association does not have a permanent location and holds its meetings in the Franklin Senior Center, and partners with exhibition spaces within and outside of Franklin for their Fine Art Showcases and other events.

## Strengths

**Walkability.** Franklin residents appreciate the streetscape, clusters of cultural assets in a condensed area, and walkability of Franklin. These assets distinguish Franklin from the surrounding towns and are the backbone of the cultural district. The walkability of the district and the proximity among three centers of current and potential cultural activity – the Downtown Commercial district, the Mixed Business Innovation District and the educational and civic cluster around Franklin High School – was recognized by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in its approval of the district boundaries. The design features of Main Street from its intersection with Central Street to Dean Avenue is emblematic of design for walkability. Buildings meet the sidewalk, storefronts feature large windows where displays can draw the eye. Entrances are frequent and curb cuts are few and far between. A mix of wall-mounted and blade signs provide variation along the façade and lighting is scaled to illuminate the pedestrian realm. Street trees, curb bump-outs and trash cans provide additional pedestrian amenities.

**Character and Identity.** Franklin residents, business owners, and organizations appreciate the investment in the streetscape, open space resources, and promotion of a strong community character and identity in the public realm. The walkability of Franklin's downtown and its beautification efforts have contributed to the creation and success of the Franklin Cultural District. Painted ladybug statues commissioned in 2014 to commemorate the success of Franklin second graders working through the Massachusetts legislative process in 1974 to have the ladybug recognized as the state bug represent one of the projects recognized for their contribution to the downtown.

**Education.** The Franklin Cultural District offers a wide range of education opportunities, from general education from early childhood through adulthood to specialized education in a range of artistic disciplines. General education institutions and organizations are the largest set of arts and culture assets in Franklin, and they form the backbone of the artistic and cultural strengths of the town. The use of public arts to commemorate an important moment in the history of Franklin Public Schools through ladybug statues highlights the importance of the education system as an arts and culture asset in Franklin. The K-12 public school system offers families a robust arts education based on the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework. This curriculum is supplemented with arts and culture enrichment funded through the Franklin Cultural Council. In 2019, about two-thirds of Franklin Cultural Council grants were awarded to local artists and organizations. Of these local grants nearly three-quarters were awarded to the school district or individual schools to support arts and culture enrichment. Additionally, the Franklin Arts Academy has a rich academic program that fosters the link between critical and creative thinking through academic rigor, high expectations, and interdisciplinary connections with the Arts.

**Performing Arts.** With a Black Box theater, a performing arts program in the public school system and Dean College's Visual and Performing Arts Division located within the Cultural District, it is clear that Franklin supports robust activity in the performing arts. Franklin offers opportunities for all levels of performing arts education throughout the lifespan and across artistic disciplines. Music and dance are strongly represented among education offerings, performance groups, and performance venues. The musical community is particularly strong in Franklin with fifteen musical programs or performance groups identified in the asset analysis, as well as the multiple dance groups, (within The Black Box, each of the public schools, Franklin School of Performing Arts, Patty Eisenhower's and Encore)

*Pandora Carlucci likes the opportunity for education that supports arts and culture. "There are a variety of places to learn including Dean College, Franklin School of Performing Arts, Encore, Lifelong Learning Institute, The Drummers' Studio, and more... There is great education available in fine arts and visual arts; this is a great strength for the Cultural District." (Cultural District Roundtable)*

**Culinary Arts.** Restaurants and bars in downtown Franklin enhance the performing arts in the Franklin Cultural District by supporting the area as a walkable destination. In addition to providing places to eat, drink and socialize, a number of local bars and cafes function as performance venues as well, including the Cake Bar, Teddy Gallagher's, Intermissions, and the Uptowne Pub. Restaurants and bars in the Cultural District primarily offer casual dining options. The more upscale 3 Restaurant, a favorite destination for local residents, is located outside the Franklin Cultural District and at a distance from the town's performing arts activity clusters.

**Visual Media and Telecommunications.** In addition to its strength as a destination for the performing arts, Franklin also has a cluster of assets related to visual media and

*Mary Olsson likes all the changes that have happened from what the Downtown Partnership has done. "It used to be just a street; the Downtown Partnership brought in all the beautification and the growth including a theater and a number of restaurants." (Cultural District Roundtable)*

telecommunications including photographers, television and radio stations, digital media production companies, advertising companies, and graphic designers and illustrators, as well as a small community of

visual artists. Supporting the growth of this asset cluster could build resources to help improve the visibility of the cultural district, help showcase the arts and culture of Franklin, and support further growth of visual arts in Franklin.

**Fiber Arts.** Franklin is home to a number of assets connected to textiles and fiber arts. In particular the Franklin Mill Store and Emma's Quilt Cupboard (within FCD) provide a range of retail products and services (including sewing machine repair at Emma's Quilt Cupboard) as well as classes and events related to quilting, knitting, and sewing.

**First Public Library in the United States.** Franklin is named after Founding Father Benjamin Franklin, who donated 116 books to the town. His books are currently on display at the Franklin Public Library, a Greek-temple style building with impressive columns and murals, and, of course, an extensive number of books.

## Opportunities – District Wide

**Walkability.** Streetscape improvements have ensured that the Franklin Cultural District has pedestrian amenities like sidewalks, lighting, and plantings. However, many of the district's parcels continue to privilege automobiles through a discontinuous street-wall and large swaths of parking with frequent and wide curb-cuts to accommodate vehicular traffic. This is particularly true along West Central Street traveling westerly from the railroad bridge. As the Mixed Business Innovation District is developed, this stretch of roadway has the potential to become a pedestrian connector to new activities and amenities in the southwest corner of the cultural district. Walkability improvements to West Central Street and the Mixed Business Innovation District should create a stronger and more continuous streetwall, reduce the scale and number of curb-cuts, encourage pedestrian-scaled lighting, and increase the number of pedestrian-oriented commercial and cultural amenities.



Figure 7: View up West Central Street showing discontinuous streetwall.



Figure 8: View up Main Street showing continuous streetwall.

**Active Ground Floor Uses.** Participants in the Cultural District Roundtable identified a need to increase pedestrian activity in the cultural district. Participants in the Open House preferred active uses for the Downtown Commercial district with an emphasis on cafés, specialty retail, specialty food stores, and restaurants. This preference was echoed in the Cultural District Roundtable. Lisa Piana said they have been working on this for a while. She stated that people want to come to downtown and physically buy things like gifts. That would help the walkability of people coming to the downtown area. For instance, after people go to the post office there are great services and businesses, but people want to be able to buy a gift in Franklin. They would like a card store, a bookshop, or a place to hang out.



**Signage.** Participants in the Cultural District roundtable expressed appreciation for the visual character promoted by existing sign guidelines in town and also advocated for a loosening of restrictions in the Downtown Commercial District areas of the cultural district to allow for more varied signage and signs that support cultural anchor businesses like Intermission Café, which is located off the street and can be difficult to find with signs that conform to current guidelines. Encouraging artistic and varied signage can add visual interest and build the identity of this corner of the cultural district as a creative destination. The blurring of the line between art and signage through façade and signage designs, murals, and a mix of wall-mount and blade signs add to the texture of the pedestrian realm and improve pedestrian wayfinding.

In Beverly, Massachusetts, the managing partner for the Beverly Arts District is the Beverly Main Streets organization. By partnering with local artists and creatives, Beverly Main Streets has been able to use their façade improvement program to build visual interest and artistic elements into the public realm through creative commercial signage (see sidebar).

**Innovation and Collaboration.** A challenge identified by participants in the Cultural District Roundtable is finding resources to try out new ways of working together and to incentivize innovation.

*Steve Sherlock noted, “In terms of investment, there are some natural partnerships available within the organizations... There are people around the table, but each business thinks what is in it for me. If there were some joint pool money, or seed money for collaborative projects, that would help such events.”*

Another area of interest among Cultural District partners is increasing spaces that create opportunities for collaboration and gathering. Ideas for co-working spaces, shared creative work spaces, maker-spaces, and test kitchens during the Roundtable. This interest was echoed in feedback from the Open House. Arts and crafts spaces, cafés for gathering, co-working spaces, and shared commercial kitchens were most frequently identified as preferred uses for the Mixed-Business-Innovation District.

**Visual Arts Exhibition Space.** The Franklin Cultural District lacks space for exhibition of visual arts, and the Franklin Art

## Beverly Arts District: Artistic Signage Promotes Visual Interest

Steez Design, led by Montserrat College of Art alum Andy Bablo, has been a driving force behind increasing artistic signage throughout the district. The quality of his and his partners' work has eased enforcement of sign restrictions within the district and allowed for a blurring of the line between murals and commercial signage to the benefit of the district.



Above: Mingo Gallery signage, Steez Design; Below: Cityside Diner mural, Mariah Leah.



Association frequently stage their annual showcases outside of town. Establishing a gallery space in the cultural district would help provide a home for the visual arts alongside the strong performing arts anchors. Galleries can be stand-alone exhibition spaces or they can be combined with commercial uses or non-profit cultural spaces. The Mingo Gallery in Beverly, Massachusetts is both a gallery and a framing store in the Beverly Arts District, and it features both local and international artists. The Zullo Gallery in Medfield is a non-profit volunteer-run organization created by the Medfield Arts Council in 1988 to exhibit a wide variety of professional art. It has expanded to include classes, events and a live music program.

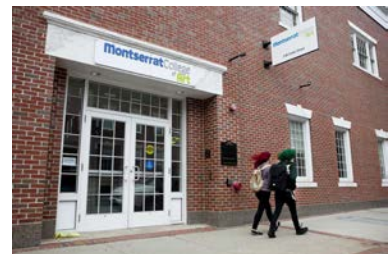
**Dean College.** Partnerships and collaboration with Dean College offer opportunities for the Cultural District to achieve its goals. Dean College has been an extremely important partner for the Town (for example, hosting monthly FDP meetings). Roundtable participants highlighted that downtown Franklin offers few nightlife and entertainment destinations to meet the needs and interests of Dean College students. This observation was echoed by Mark Arentsen, Dean of the Joan Phelps Palladino School of Dance and the School of the Arts, who said Dean College tries to provide programs for the students because they cannot go anywhere else; the options are either out of the students' price range or the businesses are closed. It would be nice to have late dining or a coffee shop staying open past 8 PM. He stated he thinks there is opportunity for that in the downtown. Montserrat College of Art's intentional integration with the Beverly Arts District has helped to strengthen and enhance that cultural district (see sidebar).

## College Connections: Montserrat College of Art

Montserrat College of Art, located within the boundaries of the Beverly Arts District, is a core partner with Beverly Main Streets and the City of Beverly for planning and implementing the district. In 2010, the College recognized the importance of embracing and integrating with its surroundings to its long-term stability and success. This led the College to consolidate its Cabot Street presence into a single building, to expand programming in its Cabot Street gallery, to establish Winter Street as a path to the district and highlighting the district's amenities to its students.



Above: "Constellation" in Frame 301 Gallery on Cabot Street, Steez Design.  
Below: 248 Cabot Street, Juliette Lynch for the Boston Globe.



## IX. Franklin Public Outreach

The Town of Franklin Market Study held multiple community engagement sessions, with a town-wide open house, a Business Roundtable, a Dean College Roundtable consisting of students and staff, and a town-wide survey, in addition to the Cultural District Roundtable already mentioned. Each event averaged about 25 people from town. Furthermore, each event had a presentation from MAPC elaborating on the demographics and business profile for Franklin, as well as information on each business district.

### Franklin Open House

Town of Franklin staff and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) held an Open House public meeting on October 17, 2019 to engage the community and receive input for this study. Numerous residents and business owners attended the meeting, where the following goals were presented:

- Present to the community the economic development strategy process thus far.
- Identify and map strategic areas for redevelopment, both town-wide and within the individual economic corridors.
- Prioritization of town economic development issues.
- Select the preferred public space uses in Town.



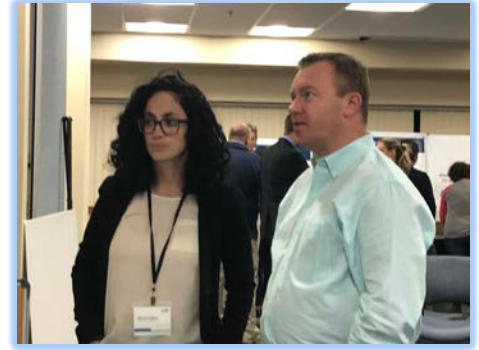
Participants at the event were actively engaged in the process - many staying up to two hours - and remained to discuss the plan with other attendees, Town officials, and MAPC staff.

The big takeaways from the evening were that there was widespread support for concentrating development in the existing economic corridors, including the desire for arts and culture space within the Mixed Business Innovation district. There was also significant support to adding to the restaurant mix in town, providing food truck options, and around additional recreational options and programming (festivals, special events, etc). Gas stations and fast food restaurants were not desired.



**Table 9: Public Use Space Preference Exercise**

Preference Type	Positive Reaction	Negative Reaction
Food Trucks	19	0
Seating Areas	18	1
Festival Lighting	18	0
Outdoor Performance Space	17	0
Street Festivals	17	1
Public Art	16	0
Small Park Areas	14	0
Athletic Events	12	13
Better Store Signage	12	0
Wayfinding Signs	11	4
Public Restrooms	5	8
Outdoor cafes (written in suggestion)	3	0



By far, people's favorite destination is the Franklin Public Library, followed by Del Carte and the Common. Furthermore, when asked what they think the town will need to help local businesses in the next 10 years, there were various responses, from addressing parking, to adding density downtown, to pursuing affordable professional office space in the Town. When asked what they thought the town would need to support arts and culture in the Franklin Cultural District, the largest response was to bring in food trucks, as well as adding more meeting spaces for art groups.

## Business Roundtable

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at Dean College Campus Center, the Town, Dean College, and MAPC held a business roundtable, with representatives from wineries, insurance agencies, and realtors, to name a few. As mentioned, MAPC presented some of the initial findings of the market study, and asked participants to engage in a discussion around the following questions.

1. What do you like about Franklin's downtown? How does the downtown positively affect your business?
2. How could the Town improve its services/processes? Are there opportunities for the Town to change certain processes or regulations to attract desired economic development?
3. Where should the town prioritize its economic development investments and what kind of economic development do you want to see in Franklin?



4. Can and should the Town do more targeted marketing to specific businesses or developers?
5. Do you find that businesses in Franklin do well in comparison to neighboring communities? Why or why not?
6. What is your vision for Franklin's downtown, The Crossing area and the Mixed Business Innovation District? How could they be improved?

Notes from the discussion can be found in Appendix II. Highlights from the Business Roundtable include participants stating the downtown is a good selling point from the college's perspective; aesthetically, it looks beautiful and the changed traffic pattern is very good. They also believe that commuter rail station is very unique although greatly underrepresented, and that parking is limited. Additionally, participants stated the importance of the industrial base to Franklin, given that it has great facilities and is well located.

Overall, participants agreed that the diversity of businesses types, sizes, and efforts provide a lot of personality and the downtown area is walkable and beautiful. They also had great remarks on the public library and Dean College as well as the Town committees, which are well organized and effective.

## Dean College Roundtable

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, also at Dean College, the Town, Dean College, and MAPC held the Dean College Economic Development Roundtable, which involved the participation of college staff and students. The Roundtable was organized around the following questions:

1. Are there businesses in Franklin that you visit often?
2. How often do you use services or shops in Franklin?
3. How do you most frequently get to shopping and service areas?
4. Approximately how many times a month do you stay in Franklin for dining/entertainment purposes in the evening or on weekends?
5. What types of businesses you would like to see that are not here now?
6. What would make you visit/shop more often in Franklin?
7. In one word, how would you describe Franklin?
8. What would you change, keep or eliminate in Town?

Notes from the roundtable, along with a preference survey, can be found in Appendix III. Strengths identified were that Dean College brings in a younger, more diverse population to Franklin. College students find Franklin Center to be clean, safe, and its shops to be welcoming. Harvest Festival is seen as a boon for Franklin and bringing in younger crowds. Dean College roundtable participants also feel that the Franklin meets their needs in grocery stores, pharmacies, and hairdressers. Local stores that are frequented by students include Little Shop of Olive Oils, Elizabeth's Bagels, and The Cake Bar.

Participants stated that the town could and should utilize its green spaces for students, particularly the Town Common could be used for more outdoor events and food trucks. They also stated there is a disconnect between local businesses and the student population's needs, and that pizza shops seem to be the only types of restaurants that thrive in town. There is little knowledge about what the town has to offer the student population.

Students generally frequented chains such as Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, and pharmacies, and that there is a lack of entertainment in town outside of Dean College. Dean College roundtable participants generally stated that Franklin was weak in men's apparel, bookstores, independent coffee shops and clubs/bars.

Dean College roundtable participants thought that Franklin Center lacked in cultural attractions, gathering places, and outdoor and nightlife activities.

## **Economic Development Survey**

From October to December of 2019, the Town of Franklin provided a survey to residents on their opinions on town services and community values. The survey consisted of ten questions, 10 closed ended questions and 2 open ended questions, along with a few demographic questions. The survey also contained a comment box. At the close of the survey, the town received 762 responses, a substantial number for a community of about 34,000. General results of the survey can be found in Appendix IV. A summary of the survey results is below.

### **Question 1: Which of these community values are of the most importance to you?**

A vast majority of Franklin residents valued the school system and infrastructure over the other options. A majority of respondents also stated that they sought a fiscally responsible social government, with about half supporting the desire of recreational facilities (both indoor and outdoor), and open space preservation.

### **Question 2: Which type of retail businesses would you like to see more of in Franklin?**

A vast majority of residents prefer seeing more restaurants and drinking establishments, with little over half preferring sporting goods, hobby, and arts stores. A little under half preferred clothing and accessory stores.

### **Question 3: Which type of restaurants are you most interested in?**

About two-thirds of respondents preferred farm to table, locally sourced restaurants, followed by outdoor seating eateries, which, in light of COVID-19, would likely be more common. Cafes and bakeries were supported by a little over a third of respondents, followed by seafood and breweries.

### **Question 4: What type of retail amenities would you like to see or see more of in Franklin?**

Retail amenities were not as popular as restaurants, with all responses getting under half of participant support. That being said specialty markets were the most popular, followed by bookstores and women's clothing stores.

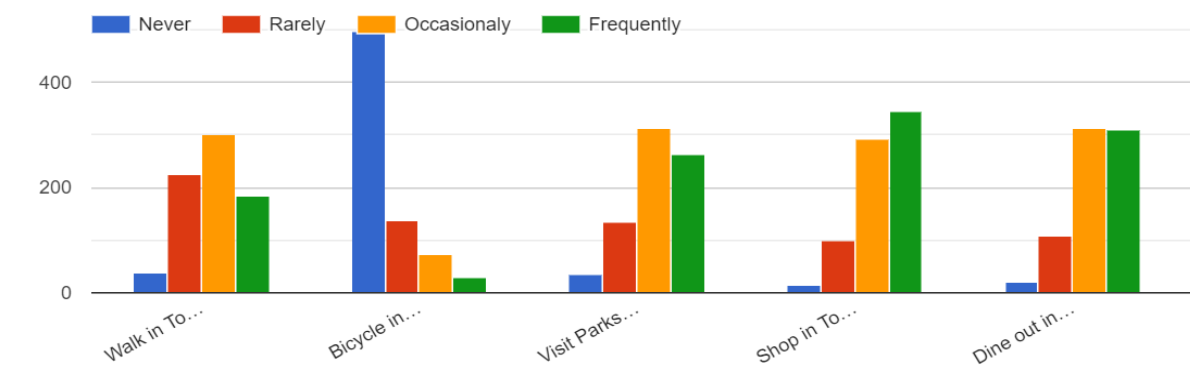
### **Question 5: What type of events would you support being held in Franklin?**

Events were greatly supported by participants of the survey. Over three-quarters of respondents wanted food truck festivals, followed by two-thirds supporting a Franklin Restaurant Week and Friday night concerts on the Common. Additionally about 60% supported music festivals and over 50% supported beer gardens, wine tastings, and art festivals.

### Question 6: How often do you... (List of responses)?

Survey participants were asked how often they walked, biked, visited parks, shopped, and dined out in town. A large proportion of respondents liked to frequently shop and dine out in town, with a majority doing so at least on occasion. Most also visited parks in town, though less frequently. Few walked in town, with a majority of respondents stating that they have never biked in town.

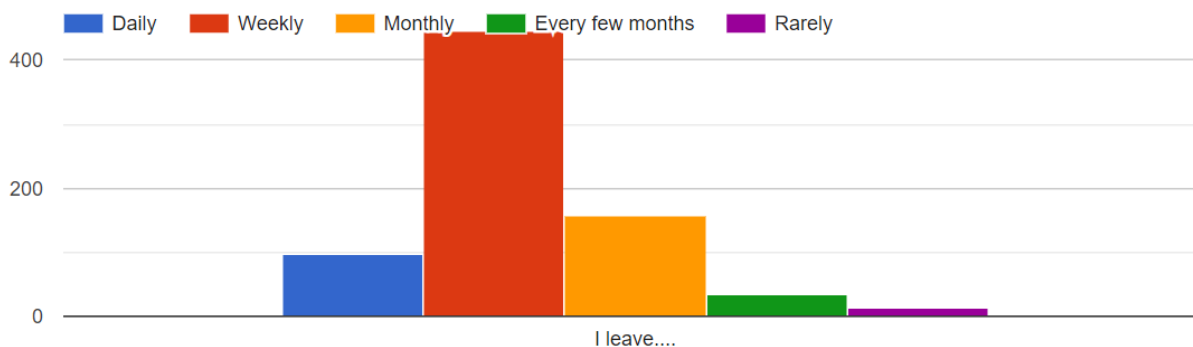
How often do you...



### Question 7: How often do you leave Franklin to shop or dine in neighboring towns/regions?

Franklin residents found themselves leaving town often to fulfill their shopping needs, with over half leaving weekly to shop or dine in neighboring towns, usually Wrentham, Bellingham, and even as far out as Foxborough. About a fifth of respondents stated that they do this monthly, with about one in ten stating they do so daily.

How often do you leave Franklin to shop and/or dine in neighboring towns/regions?



### Questions 8, 9, & 10: What do you typically leave Franklin for, and where?

About three quarters of respondents stated that they left Franklin to go to restaurants outside of town. This was followed by just under two-thirds of respondents saying they left to go do specialty shopping. A little under half left to shop for their daily needs and services, with only 40 percent saying they leave town to do grocery shopping.



Figure 10: Ideal Franklin Word Cloud



## X. Recommendations

Based on results from the market study, along with input from the community (through the Open House, Business Roundtable, Arts & Culture Roundtable, Dean College Roundtable and Economic Development Survey), a set of recommended goals, strategies and actions were developed. Recommended goals, strategies and actions focus on marketing Franklin's existing and potential future amenities to attract more business activity; concentrating development in the existing economic corridors of Franklin Center, The Crossing, and the Mixed Business Innovation District; and growing industry sectors identified in the market study as holding the potential for growth.

### 1. Business Attraction and Expansion

Create guidelines to assist businesses in locating and expanding in Franklin.

- a. Create "Franklin Business Guide" (using the [Dedham Business Guide](#) as inspiration) to help small businesses and prospective developers to navigate the municipal process.
- b. The guide should have an introduction, key contacts, office hours, ABCC licensing process/fees, building permitting information, business certificate and establishment licensing information, the site plan review, variances and the design review process.
- c. The guide should inform potential businesses of pre-application meeting between town staff as well as Technical Review Meeting dates.
- d. Post a list of types of businesses that are permitted, do well, and are attractive for Franklin.
- e. Create a list of supportive resources for businesses, including SBDC classes, ABCC links, and the role of town departments in the process.
- f. Post sample business plans, budgeting mechanisms, and financial plans and include templates, when possible.
- g. Provide resources for home-based businesses, mobile businesses, co-working spaces, and brick-and-mortar businesses.
- h. Provide categorized links and resources for different business types, including licensing, permits, and procedures.
- i. Create quality of life information sheets on livability and amenities in the community.
- j. Upload updated guides to town website, Facebook and Twitter pages and create print versions as well.

### 2. Digital Marketing

Update the Town website, social media, and blog to provide more detail about economic development activities, events, and local businesses.

#### Town Website

- a. Update the Town website to make it easier to locate information. This includes streamlining detail about economic development and including information about the unique qualities about Franklin that makes it an excellent town for businesses.
- b. Expand 'clickable' content on town website and move away from wordy documents and PDFs.
- c. The website should include a municipal profile that provides important community information such as demographics, business mix, commercial space costs, available community incentives, and tax rates to help potential investors.
- d. Develop a database of available retail/office spaces and opportunity sites for development and place on Town website.



- e. Place this plan on the town website in a highly visible location as a marketing tool to attract businesses and retailers that hold potential in Franklin.

#### Social Media

- f. Promote local businesses, restaurants, and stores through the town Facebook and/or Twitter page.
- g. Highlight the Business of the Month on the Town Blog as well as the Facebook and Twitter pages.
- h. Have local businesses submit an application form where they describe why their company should be considered the Small Business of the Month. They should use the attributes considered valuable to the Town (i.e., Staying Power, Company Growth, Innovation, Involvement, and Response to Adversity).

#### Other forms of digital marketing

- i. Create a digital and print out version of informational maps, update them annually, and have them available at prominent locations throughout town for customers who are not sure exactly what they can get at every business.
- j. Create description and links for each of Franklin's business districts, with list of businesses (or maps), and information and contacts for the respective business associations.
- k. Create a centralized database of local businesses and artists and offer individualized site selection assistance including demographic reports to assist businesses in their customer and workforce profile needs.
- l. Coordinate community calendars and house in one site, to be shared amongst the Franklin Downtown Partnership, the Franklin Cultural District, Franklin Matters, and other partners.
- m. Make information about business training resources accessible to residents and businesses.

### **3. Promoting Existing Amenities**

Promote existing cultural, open space and recreation amenities and explore opportunities to create additional amenities to attract more visitors and their spending to Franklin businesses.

- a. Continue to identify opportunities for additional multi-purpose trails and bike facilities.
- b. Develop and publish a map – available online and in print– to highlight the many historic and open space amenities in Franklin. To further capture visitor spending, highlight local eating, lodging and retail establishments on the map to capture more spending locally.
- c. The New England Trunkline Trail begins in Franklin and is popular to bicyclists, cross-country skiers, and hikers. Extending it to Union Street/Cottage Street could attract more people to Downtown.
- d. Study feasibility and benefits of hosting larger regional sports tournaments, particularly during the shoulder seasons (fall and spring), perhaps in conjunction with Dean College.
- e. Identify local partners and seek funding (including grants) to create a local bike share program for people to see and experience Franklin's many amenities.

### **4. Planning Processes, Incentives, and Marketing**

Further planning processes, incentives, and marketing that could grow the town's economy and promote the Town's business friendliness.

#### Marketing



- a. Create a comprehensive marketing strategy that highlights Franklin's high quality of life, retail and recreation amenities, school system, and access to Boston and Providence. Promote Franklin as a place that is open for business and that the town is more than residential.
- b. Establish a community brand and marketing program. The town should use its successes of the recent past, and accolades it receives from others (if they are not more than 5 years old), create key marketing messages and materials to make a unique selling proposition for the Town.
- c. Identify and recruit regional stores that may be interested in opening in Franklin and create a list of stores nearby *that are desirable*, visit those stores, hand them marketing materials, and discuss the possibility of their opening another location in Franklin.
- d. Send staff to local Trade Shows and conferences, such as the International Conference of Shopping Centers (ICSC), or the eTail Conference in Boston, which is a business conference held globally for e-commerce professionals. Discussions include "Retail Disruption and the Future Of eCommerce" and "Digital Transformation: How To Turn Your Company Into A Digital Master".
- e. Create a marketing campaign targeted at commuter rail passengers, particularly those who park their vehicles at or near Franklin and travel to points west. For example, a promotion that offers discounts at local businesses for a limited amount of time to those who can show their commuter rail pass when they are making a purchase, this can be done in conjunction with the current Franklin Downtown Partnership discounts.

#### Incentives

- f. Consider incentives for development which provides underground parking, historic preservation, streetscape, open space, or other on or off-site public improvements.
- g. Consider the creation of additional Economic Opportunity Areas within the three focus areas in order to incentivize investment (TIF's etc.)

#### Processes

- h. Review creating district-based plans for Franklin Center (building off the previous Franklin Center plan), The Crossing, and the Mixed Business Innovation District.
- i. Work with the Franklin Downtown Partnership to update the Vacant Storefront Registration form for property owners, including property type, location, square footage, and owner/agent contact information in order to help market properties.
- j. Update the long-range town-wide Master Plan, which was created in 2013. And just like the 2013 Master Plan, continue to include measuring the achievement/inaction of goals and recommendations in the plan, addressing issues that have emerged since 2013, public engagement, implementation, and leveraging existing documents.

### **5. Review of Zoning, Permitting Procedures, and Regulatory Laws**

Continue to collaborate with relevant boards to review zoning and permitting procedures as well as regulatory laws and identify mechanisms to streamline business regulation and expedite permitting to provide regionally competitive and responsive services in a way that does not compromise quality development.

- a. Form a transparent, streamlined, and responsive business permitting process which will greatly improve Franklin's competitiveness in attracting new businesses.

- b. Continue to provide services to assist existing and new businesses with their permitting process, including assistance with other departments and agencies, as well as other regulatory bodies, of which the Technical Review Committee serves as an asset.
- c. In appropriate target areas, establish basic requirements for uses, site planning, and design, so that projects which meet those Town requirements can obtain approvals through a streamlined permitting process.
- d. Within the town department goal-setting process, have each town board and department review its regulatory programs that affect business development, including town regulations and the processes by which both state and town regulations are administered.
- e. Substitute reliance on special permits or town council approval to control use and dimension by identifying a design review process which is based on specific area goals, and an approval process which is more comprehensive as well as predictable.
- f. Consider expedited review processes for projects that meet certain performance metrics and review administrative approvals for applications that fall below a certain scale/size threshold.
- g. Continue to work with new development and infrastructure projects to minimize temporary construction impacts so that patronage of nearby existing businesses is not negatively impacted, or, whenever possible, to inform neighboring businesses of scheduled major impacts.

## **6. Multi-Modal Transportation System Expansion**

Create a more robust, convenient, and efficient multi-modal transportation system to better connect Franklin students, residents, and businesses.

- a. Develop and adopt a Complete Streets policy that requires street design and construction to accommodate all users including cars, transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.
- b. Improve downtown circulation and mobility: Find new and innovative ways to alleviate parking restraints and encourage other forms of transportation, such as a pedestrian connection from Dean College to Franklin Center entertainment venues.
- c. Work with GATRA to improve the Franklin Area Bus line to have a fifteen minute to half hour schedule, with a more circular pattern around Franklin Center.
- d. Identify funding to conduct a parking study to improve convenience and accessibility of parking through parking management strategies.
- e. Pursue funding for parking garage on commuter rail parking lot. However, study parking issue for near term remedies before launching parking structure effort – inventory spaces, identify who is occupying spaces, and assess management alternatives such as organized off-site employee parking (perhaps with shuttle service), sharing of parking lots; try to keep any new parking off the main commercial streets, behind buildings.
- f. Promote shared parking so that parking facility serves multiple destinations, much like what is happening in Franklin Center. Provide examples of Shared Use Parking Agreements to local businesses (One can be found at: [http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PortlandMetro\\_SharedParkingModelAgreement.pdf](http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PortlandMetro_SharedParkingModelAgreement.pdf)).
- g. Repair existing crosswalks (particularly near the intersection of School and Union as well as on Maple Street) and add additional crosswalks where needed most to ensure pedestrian safety.
- h. Ensure sidewalks are in good condition, both within the Franklin Center (which generally received high marks from respondents), but also along north parts of Franklin, including the other economic districts (Conditions vary along these corridors).
- i. Survey residents (including students) to understand why they may or may not use sidewalks and if so, how they use them.

- j. Conduct an inventory physical conditions of sidewalks.
- k. Provide incentives for businesses to shovel snow from their sidewalks.
- l. Create a Franklin Bike Plan and secure funds for provision of bike parking, bike racks, and bike lane markings.
- m. Identify priority locations for the placement of bike racks in Franklin Center to encourage cyclists to stop at local businesses.

## **7. Public Realm Attraction**

Further the creation of a visually attractive public realm, including wayfinding, beautification efforts, and local art.

- a. Create a guide for cultural district arts and culture planning that will include indicators, establish baseline conditions, and identify opportunities to coordinate private and public data collection efforts to streamline ongoing assessment of progress toward downtown district arts and culture planning goals.
- b. Improve wayfinding signage to better guide visitors to Franklin's existing commercial districts and their many amenities. New signage could complete these routes for both drivers and pedestrians promoting access to businesses and shops as well as parks and points of interest.
- c. Increase beautification projects for Franklin, including planters and landscaping at appropriate commercial districts.
- d. Consider adopting a set of design guidelines for the Mixed Business Innovation District to encourage the building design desired by participants at the public meetings.
- e. Identify current uses in the Mixed Business Innovation District, and work with property owners to coordinate on areas of mutual benefit for the district.
- f. Partnering with Dean College, organize cleanups of town districts, arts and beatification projects, and litter along roadways.
- g. Work with local arts groups to develop a public art program to not only improve the streetscape environment, but to attract people to districts, including alternating lamp post banners for different events/seasons.
- h. Develop an arts competition, perhaps at one of the various town events, for new public art to be displayed. Promote having art displayed in vacant spaces.
- i. Create a town palette to be used for signage and standardized materials.
- j. Utilize town resources, such as town hall or the Franklin Public Library, for community outreach.
- k. When retail vacancies arise, work with property owners to provide the space for "pop up" galleries and events, or to allow artwork to be displayed until the space is filled.
- l. Meet with Dean College (quarterly, if possible) to discuss opportunities to make the town more enticing to students and staff.

## **8. Town Commercial District Improvements**

Improve the character of each of the commercial districts.

- a. Promote Franklin Center, the Mixed Business Innovation District, and The Crossing as pedestrian-oriented social, cultural, and entertainment centers of town, not only because of the economic benefits from the districts themselves, but also for the benefits to town-wide economic development efforts without homogenizing the districts.

- b. Promote design/façade improvements, through incentives, as a chief mean of identifying businesses in the commercial districts.
- c. Develop a plan to updated cohesive urban design standard for commercial areas (and has been successful in Franklin Center), including public streetscape, lighting, façade improvement, open space, and building standards, without burdening businesses with restrictive zoning bylaws.
- d. Identify, implement, and support programs that promote rehabilitation of significant buildings.
- e. Promote businesses that serve local needs and contribute to the uniqueness of the commercial areas.
- f. Promote the adoption of a street tree-planting program, as well as a commemorative tree planting program, where trees can be planted to honor a person, significant life event, or other idea.
- g. Identify funding to further develop target area plans for each of the commercial districts to encourage appropriate development, placemaking and marketing recommendations suitable to the unique characteristics of each.
- h. When elevating each district, however, the Town must be mindful of not being restrictive in creating zoning bylaws that could negatively affect current or potential businesses.
- i. Work with current owners of local businesses (particularly in Franklin Center) interested in opening another shop or restaurant to identify potential spaces connect them to resources (training, funding), etc.
- j. Activate all currently vacant sites within the Mixed Business Innovation District by defining it as a desirable and active job center, with arts, entertainment, and business incubator opportunities.
- k. Provide businesses located within Priority Development Area sites more information about the initiatives and business expansion opportunities and how to assist property owners with filling empty or underutilized spaces.
- l. Consider seeking State assistance through the Mass Development Site Readiness Program to prepare vacant sites for active uses.

## **9. Franklin Industrial Areas**

Improve conditions within the Franklin area industrial areas.

- a. Work with local businesses in the Forge Park, Grove Street, and Franklin Industrial Park areas to create a business committee and assist in their program development.
- b. Meet with business committee to inform them of Economic Opportunity Areas, Priority Development Sites, and Tax Increment Financing opportunities.
- c. Invest in signage for the entrance to industrial parks.
- d. Provide businesses located within Economic Opportunity Areas and Priority Development Sites more information about the initiatives and business expansion opportunities and how to assist property owners with filling empty or underutilized spaces.
- e. Work with local business to identify the most pertinent skills to meet local industry needs and direct jobseekers to the available instructional resource or workforce training.
- f. Promote diverse sets of industrial uses within the industrial parks.
- g. Promote use of vacant commercial or industrial spaces for small business incubators and art studios.
- h. Review eligibility in applying for the state's Massachusetts Manufacturing Innovation Initiative (M2I2) and Technology Research & Development and Innovation funds.

## **10. Business and Consumer Outreach**

Continue to hold business and consumer roundtables and continue to implement Town Surveys

- a. Create a Town Business Survey to gauge the economic health of local businesses.
- b. Work to refine questions and expand awareness of the survey, preferably every year.
- c. Invest in marketing and outreach prior to the release of the survey.
- d. Share general results of the survey with roundtables, business associations, partner organizations, and the community through the monthly newsletter and website.
- e. Use the results of the survey to prioritize retention/expansion visits for the year.
- f. Work with respective roundtables about industry-specific findings from the survey to determine annual economic development goals and recommendations.
- g. Use survey results to gauge business health/satisfaction in order to be more predictive than reactive to changing business climates.

## **11. Tourism and Event Attractions**

Provide additional programming at Franklin Center, the Town Common, and other areas, where appropriate, to attract more visitors to Franklin throughout the year.

- a. Continue to support, but increase marketing, of festivals including the Harvest Festival and the Strawberry Stroll, that bring thousands of visitors to Franklin.
- b. Develop additional events to bring local and regional visitors to Franklin in the peak summer months, for example, Friday Night Concerts on the Common, Food Truck events, and Music & Arts Festivals.
- c. Work to increase the number of visitors to Franklin during the shoulder seasons (spring and autumn) through improved program development, such as formulating a Franklin Restaurant Week with local businesses.
- d. Use survey results to gauge business health/satisfaction in order to be more predictive than reactive to changing business climates.
- e. Look to attract additional downtown anchor establishments that will draw larger numbers of people to Franklin Center during the day and evening to increase foot traffic in and support smaller establishments nearby.