

This report provides the results of a business survey conducted during March and April of 2021. The survey is part of a program launched by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for downtowns and commercial districts. The survey was directed to owners or other appropriate representatives of business establishments located in the targeted commercial areas. (For Data Tables, see page 9.)

Montague

Downtown Turners Falls

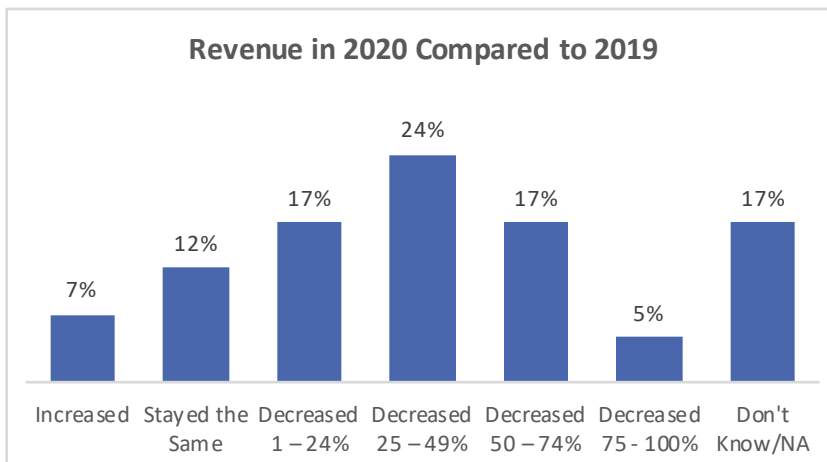
Responses: 41

Impacts of COVID-19

Decline in Business Revenue

63% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.

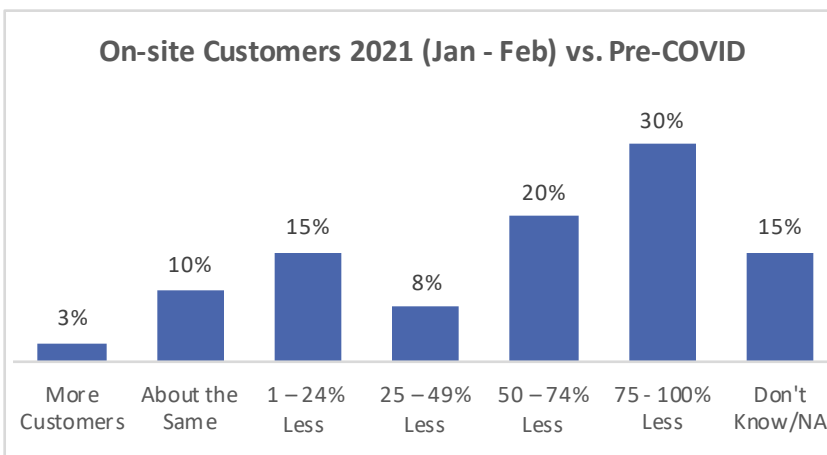
For 46% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.



Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area

73% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

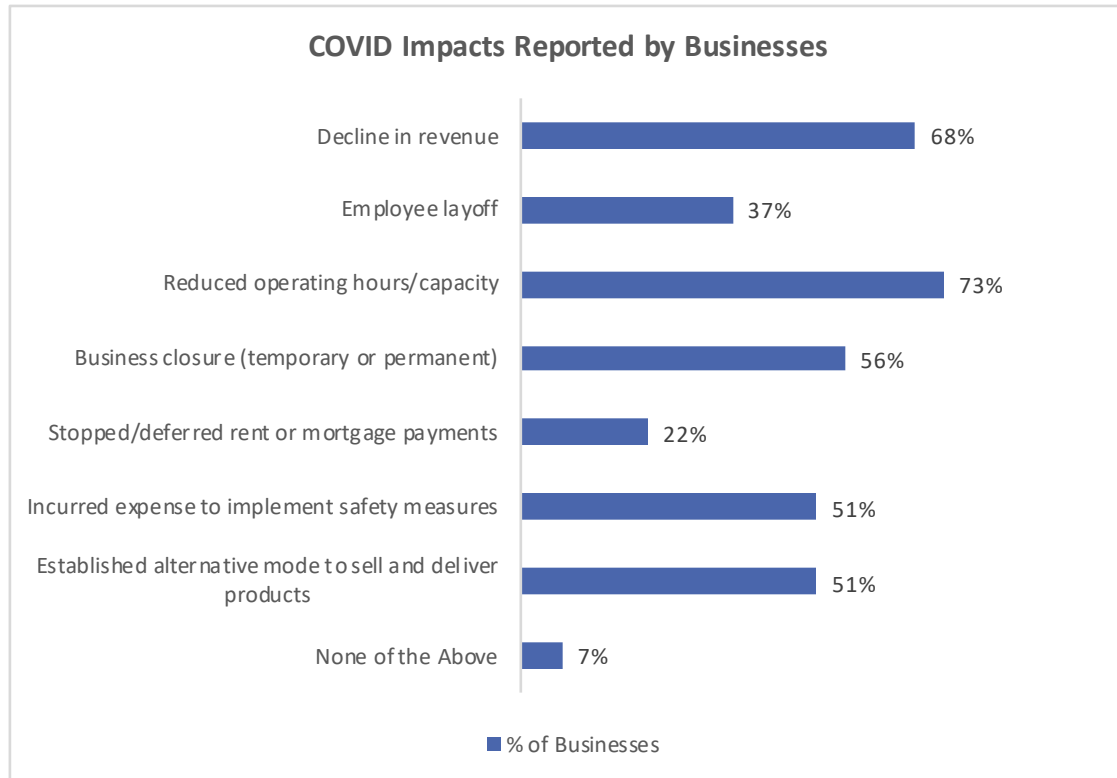
58% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

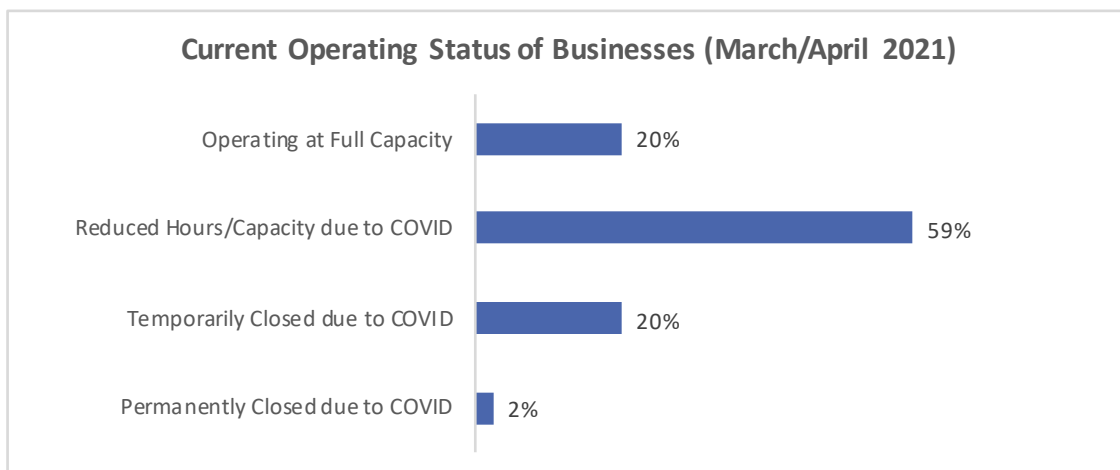
Reported Impacts

93% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



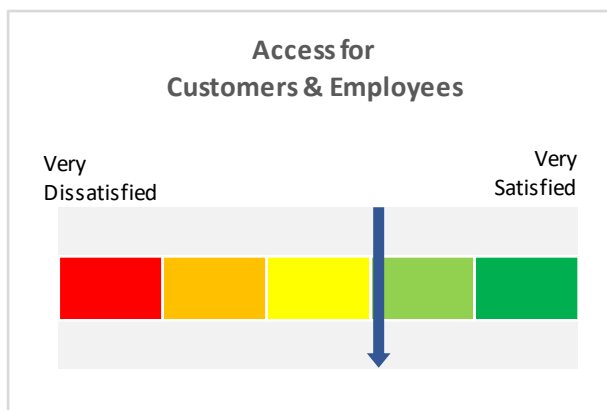
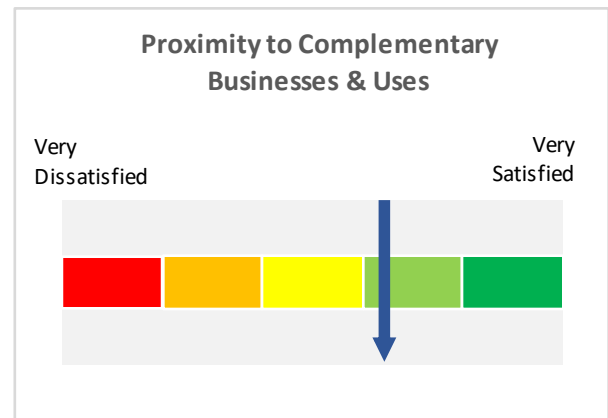
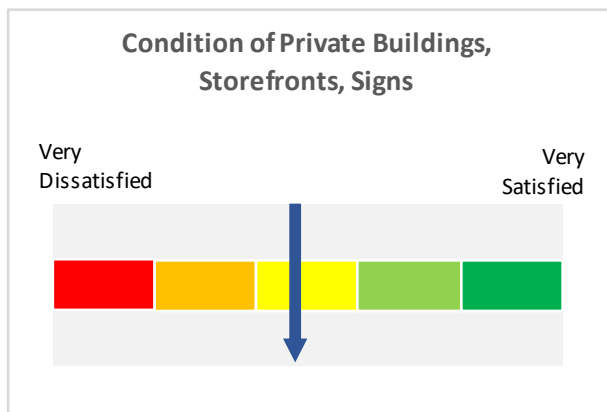
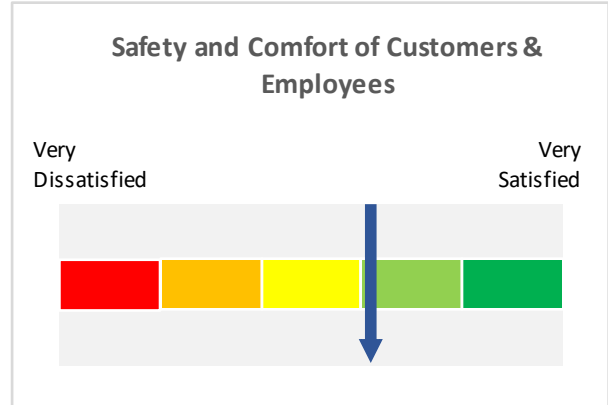
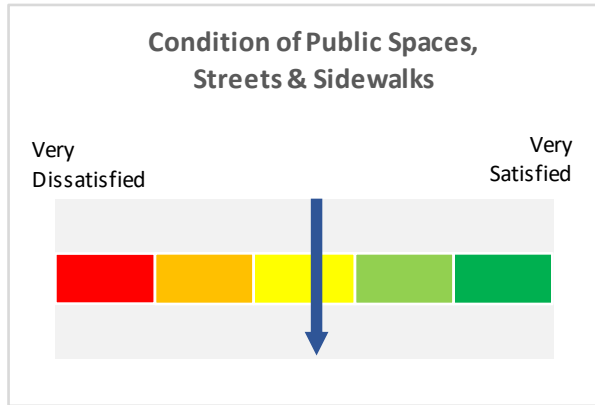
Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 80% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

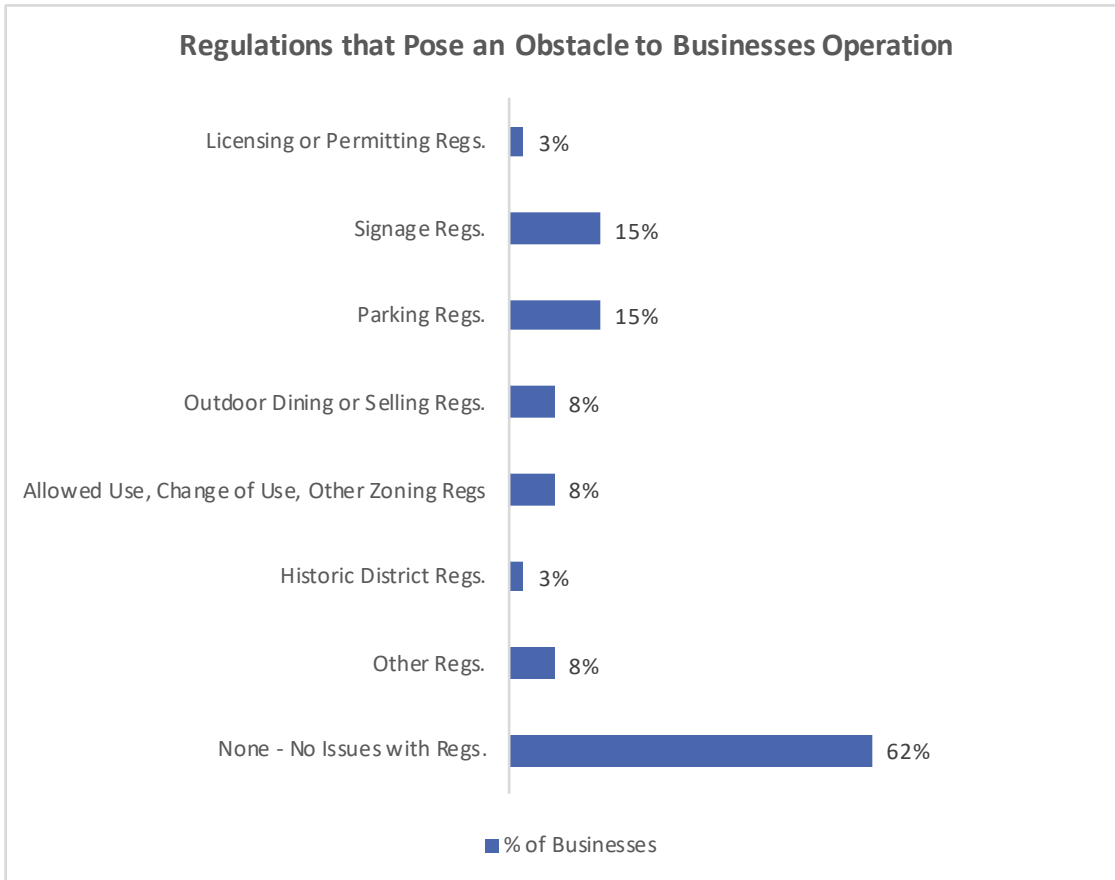
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

Regulatory Environment

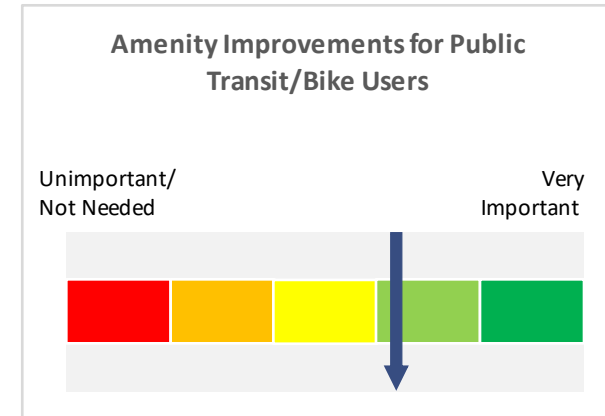
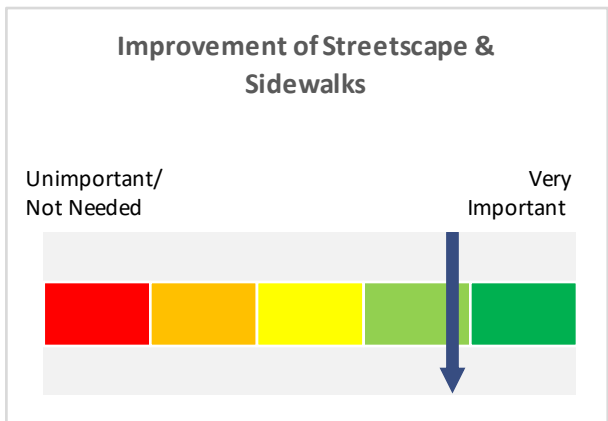
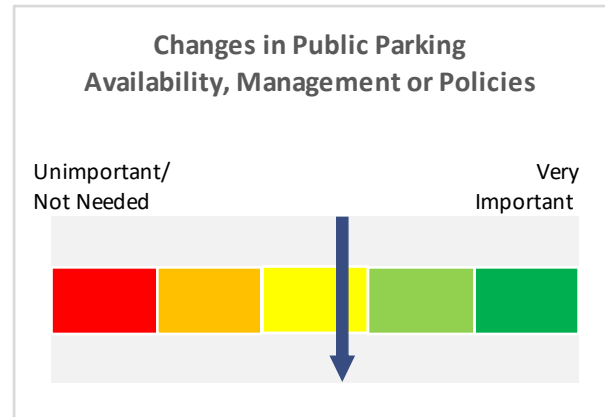
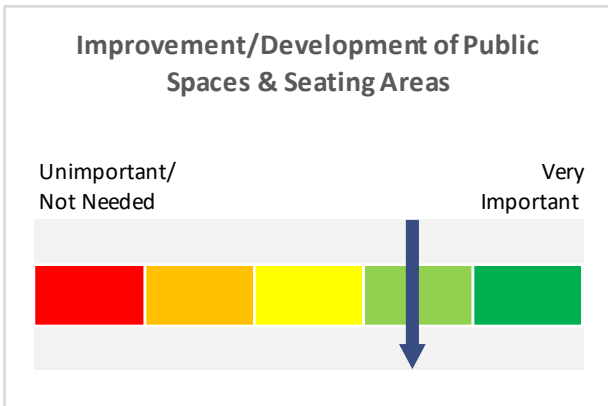
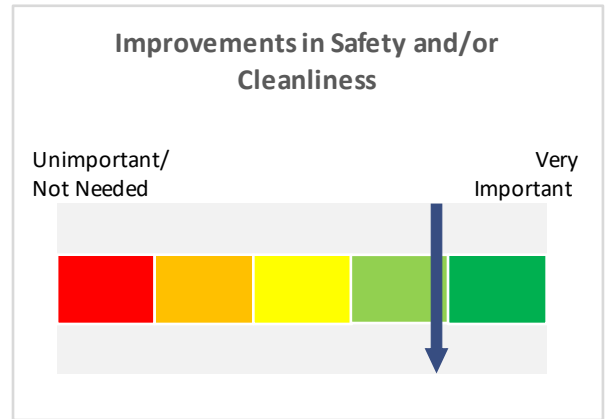
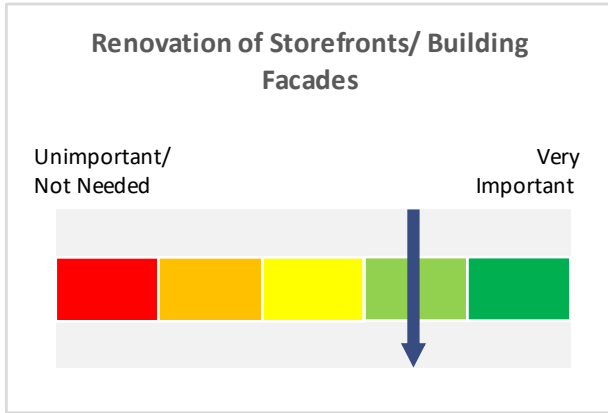
38% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

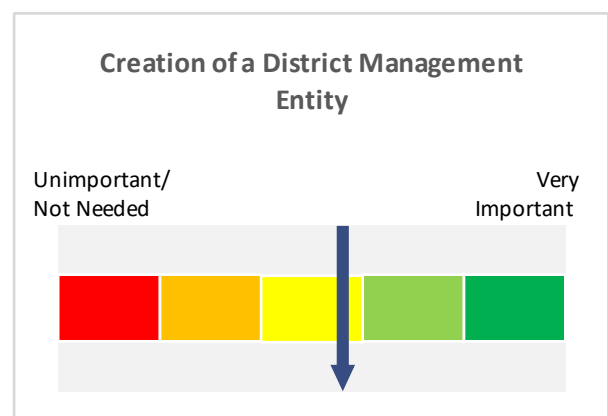
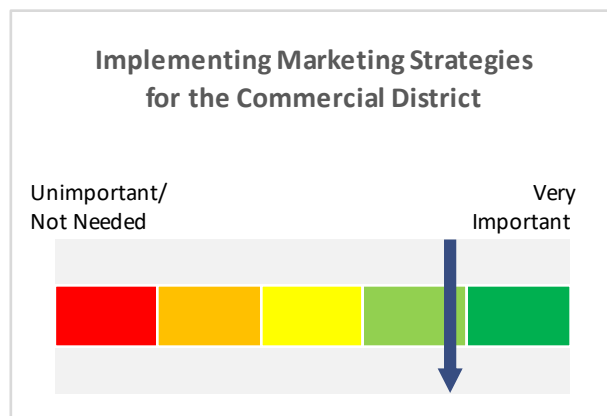
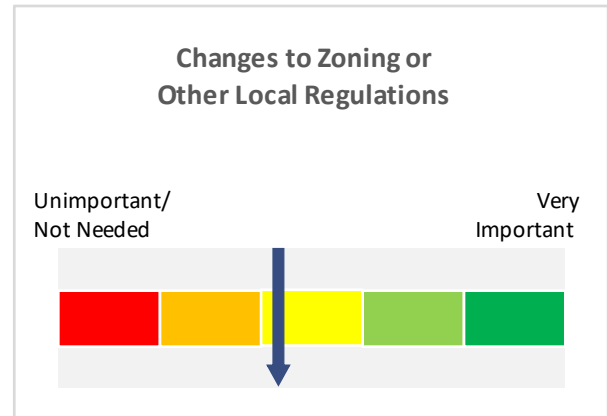
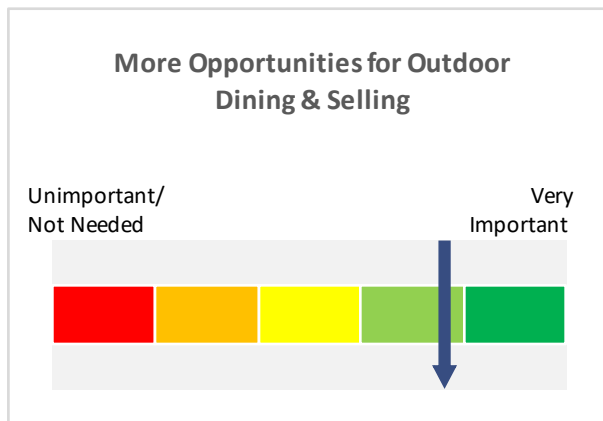
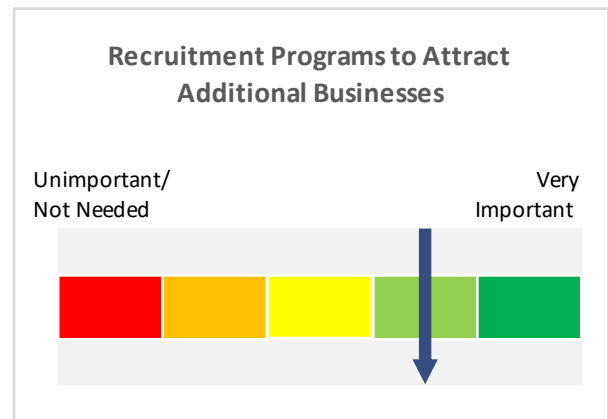
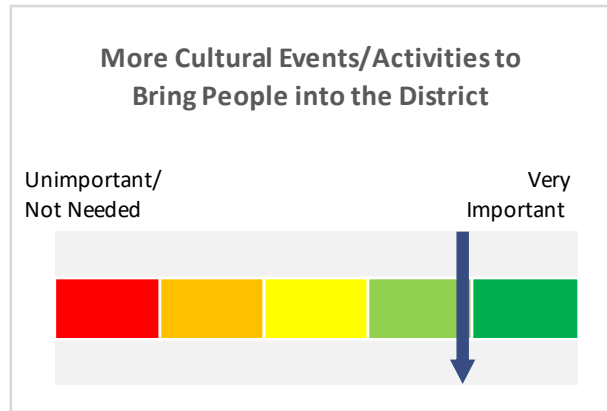
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

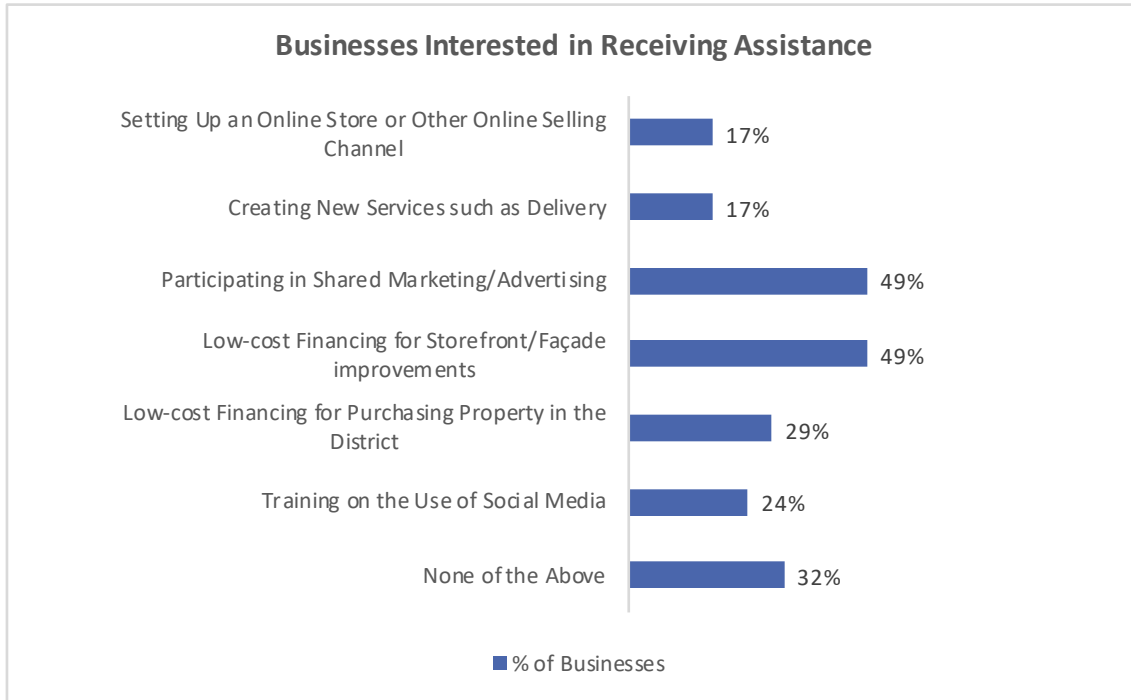
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Businesses Support

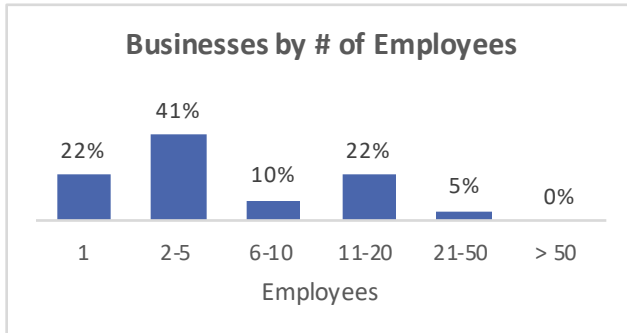
68% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



Business Characteristics

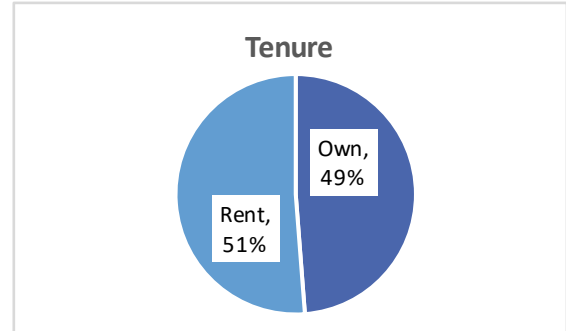
Business Size

63% of businesses are microenterprises (≤ 5 employees).



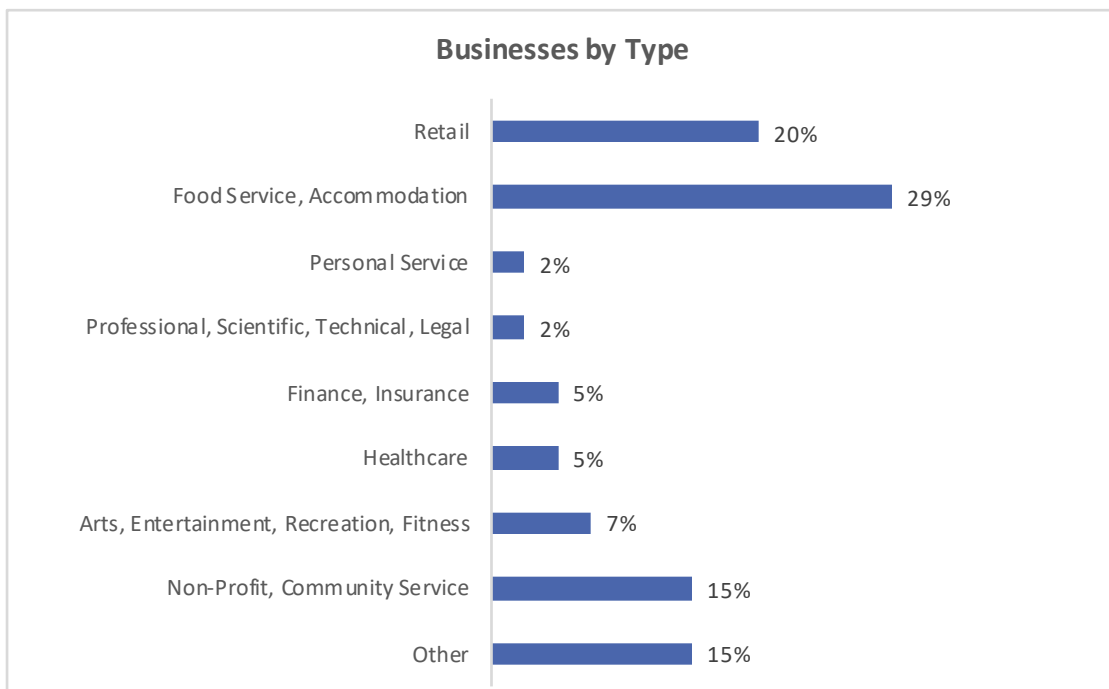
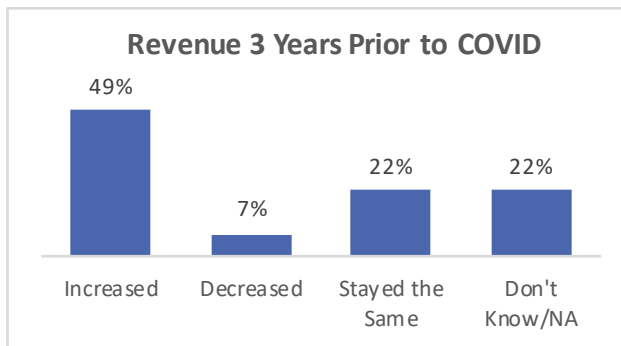
Business Tenure

51% of businesses rent their space.



Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

49% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.



Business Survey Results - Data Tables

Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

1. Please select the community where your business is located.

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Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

2. Including yourself, how many people did your business employ prior to COVID (February 2020), including both full-time and part-time?

1	9	22%
2 to 5	17	41%
6 to 10	4	10%
11 to 20	9	22%
21 to 50	2	5%
More than 50	0	0%
Total	41	100%

3. Does your business own or rent the space where it operates?

Own	20	49%
Rent	21	51%
Total	41	100%

4. During the 3 years prior to COVID, had your business revenue . . . ?

Increased	20	49%
Decreased	3	7%
Stayed about the Same	9	22%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	9	22%
Total	41	100%

5. Please select the category that best fits your business.

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	8	20%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	12	29%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	1	2%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	1	2%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	2	5%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	2	5%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	3	7%
Non-Profit, Community Services	6	15%
Other	6	15%
Total	41	100%

6. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Downtown or Commercial District where your business is located.

Condition of public spaces, streets, sidewalks

Very Dissatisfied	1	2%
Dissatisfied	13	32%
Neutral	9	22%
Satisfied	17	41%
Very Satisfied	1	2%
Total	41	100%

Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	16	39%
Neutral	13	32%
Satisfied	12	29%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	41	100%

Access for Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	2	5%
Dissatisfied	4	10%
Neutral	10	24%
Satisfied	23	56%
Very Satisfied	2	5%
Total	41	100%

Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees

Very Dissatisfied	1	3%
Dissatisfied	5	13%
Neutral	9	23%
Satisfied	24	60%
Very Satisfied	1	3%
Total	40	100%

Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	5	13%
Neutral	9	23%
Satisfied	24	60%
Very Satisfied	2	5%
Total	40	100%

7. Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle to your business operation?

Licensing or permitting regulations	1	3%
Signage regulations	6	15%
Parking regulations	6	15%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	3	8%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	3	8%
Historic District regulations	1	3%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	3	8%
None - No Issues with regulations	24	62%

Impacts of COVID

8. Did your business experience any of the following due to COVID? Select All that apply.

Decline in revenue	28	68%
Employee layoff	15	37%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	30	73%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	23	56%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	9	22%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	21	51%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	21	51%
None of the Above	3	7%

9. How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?

Increased compared to 2019	3	7%
Stayed about the same as 2019	5	12%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	7	17%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	10	24%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	7	17%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	2	5%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	7	17%
Total	41	100%

10. Please estimate how the number of customers that physically came to your business in January and February 2021 compares to before COVID.

More customers than before COVID	1	3%
About the same number as before COVID	4	10%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	6	15%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	3	8%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	8	20%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	12	30%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	6	15%
Total	40	100%

11. At the current time, what is the status of your business operation?

Operating at full capacity	8	20%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	24	59%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	8	20%
Permanently closed due to COVID	1	2%
Total	41	100%

Strategies for Supporting Businesses and Improving the Commercial District

12. A few approaches to address Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?

Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	7%
Moderately Important	12	29%
Important	17	41%
Very Important	9	22%
Total	41	100%

Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	2%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	7%
Moderately Important	11	27%
Important	16	39%
Very Important	10	24%
Total	41	100%

Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	2%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	8	20%
Important	18	44%
Very Important	14	34%
Total	41	100%

Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	3%
Moderately Important	8	20%
Important	17	43%
Very Important	14	35%
Total	40	100%

Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies

Unimportant/Not Needed	4	10%
Of Little Importance or Need	5	13%
Moderately Important	15	38%
Important	9	23%
Very Important	6	15%
Total	39	100%

Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	3%
Of Little Importance or Need	7	18%
Moderately Important	12	30%
Important	9	23%
Very Important	11	28%
Total	40	100%

13. A few approaches to address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?

More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	2%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	7%
Moderately Important	6	15%
Important	11	27%
Very Important	20	49%
Total	41	100%

More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	2%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	7%
Moderately Important	6	15%
Important	14	34%
Very Important	17	41%
Total	41	100%

Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	2%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	7%
Moderately Important	6	15%
Important	13	32%
Very Important	18	44%
Total	41	100%

Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	2%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	7%
Moderately Important	10	24%
Important	16	39%
Very Important	11	27%
Total	41	100%

Changes to Zoning or Other Local Regulations (not related to COVID)

Unimportant/Not Needed	4	11%
Of Little Importance or Need	13	34%
Moderately Important	14	37%
Important	3	8%
Very Important	4	11%
Total	38	100%

Creation of a District Management Entity (Business Improvement District or other organization)

Unimportant/Not Needed	2	5%
Of Little Importance or Need	6	15%
Moderately Important	17	41%
Important	12	29%
Very Important	4	10%
Total	41	100%

14. Are you interested in receiving assistance for your business in any of the following areas? Select All that Apply.

Setting up an online store or other online selling channel	7	17%
Creating new services such as delivery	7	17%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	20	49%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	20	49%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	12	29%
Training on the use of social media	10	24%
None of the above	13	32%

15. Please list any specific suggestions or ideas for possible projects, programs or actions that could help support businesses and improve the commercial district. (Optional)

Comments

Focus on public safety while pandemic is still happening.
Several questions were difficult to answer. Storefronts and facades are important to maintain, signage is extremely important. Regulations need to be clear and enforced
Mini grants for facade or exterior improvements
—
More effective and better enforced pedestrian crosswalks
—
We could use parking lot improvements, and also parking regulations to make sure we have more accessible parking for customers
We need to raise the minimum wage requirements and educate the public about how much goods and services need to cost in order to pay people fairly.
An outdoor free or sliding scale summer performance/music/festival series offered by RiverCulture/Shea that businesses align sales and special meals with to encourage safe foot traffic
Cleaner streets, more commitment to being green/eco friendly with recycling containers as well as more trash containers, more bike racks,
Booska's Flooring
—
Shea Theater Arts Center, Inc.
—
New England Wound Care
perhaps information accessible to people using the bike path as well as facilities available to outdoor recreation users such as more waste cans, bike racks in town, and some public restrooms.
A Public Transit Ad campaign on Buses and Shelters, Trains and Stations.
—
—
—
More attention should be paid to business not on Main Street. Sidewalk, Parking signage, landscape and other service a not given enough attention
Additional traffic slowing measures are needed for cars coming from Rte 2 over the bridge to create pedestrian safety.
—
—

—
Some art / sculpture / landscaping / facade work to help beautify and unify the downtown area combined with park-like outdoor eating areas on Avenue A
—
Pedestrian right of way signs at cross walks, better tie in with bike path and unity park, bringing in shops, book stores
—
—
Changing of winter parking policy; finishing Spinner Park; more active policing in downtown Turners Falls & to have more community service organizations in downtown Turners
—
THE RENDEZVOUS
Montague Parks & Recreation Dept.
Remove most of the islands. Would be able to have outdoor dining and they are an eyesore
—
Park development
In the immediate future I'd like to see an emphasis on open air projects for the spring/summer like outdoor exhibitons/concerts/theater.
—
Country Creemee
Low cost financing on property development soft costs.

