

From 9-5 to 24/7: Building Thriving Business Districts

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District Management Studies of Success

- Where is District Management Happening
- Smart Growth America
- Putting it in Context
- Bringing it Home

Where District Management is Happening

- Both urban and rural communities
- Populations from 6,000 to 600,000
- From Food & Ag, to Arts & Culture, to Tech & Innovation +
- District management is as diverse as the districts being managed
- For our conversation, focusing on the Berkshires and Western MA
 - Adams
 - Easthampton
 - Great Barrington
 - North Adams
 - Pittsfield

Smart Growth America

Seven Keys to District Management Success

1. Understand your community
2. Create an attractive, walkable place
3. Diversify economic uses
4. Plan for equity
5. Improve government regulations and processes
6. Finance projects
7. Establish ongoing place management

(also suggest going down the rabbit hole of Strong Towns)

1. Understanding your community

Grass roots input and catalysts

TRUE community engagement

Let the community author if you want activity to be received and productive

Leverage leadership to steward that understanding upward and across

No voice is too small, but make sure none are too big.

A community is not just who lives there or owns a business there.

2. Create an attractive, walkable city

Embrace the aspiration of a 15 minute walkable city

Appreciate historic neighborhood identities and infrastructure.

Small beautification in the aggregate can make massive impacts

Sidewalks matter

Prioritize people, not vehicles

Requires a healthy mix of big/small, retail/office, residential/commercial

Consider specialized overlays (example: 40R)

3. Diversify economic uses

Mixed use

Public amenities and aesthetics are economic drivers

Recognize seasonality and where seasonal gaps exist

Involve the breadth of use partners in decision development

Avoid over-investing in any “one hit wonders”

A diverse ecosystem is a resilient ecosystem

4. Plan for equity

Who is supported, who isn't?

Who will benefit, who won't?

How can more people be involved? How can more people benefit?

Who is being left behind?

Ask lots of questions, engage lots of folks

Consider novel programs in place elsewhere that are already working well regarding specialized grants, incentives, breaks and technical assistance.

The work towards equity is never “done”

5. Improve government regulations & processes

Government should be accessible but not burdensome

Avoid applying unnecessary bureaucratic process to what can be done privately

Adopt ordinance and policies that are clear and concise

Use tools that the state provides to help streamline

When possible, work regionally to create consistency in policies across municipalities that may share population engagement

6. Finance projects

Public private partnerships are fantastic, and challenging

Consider “tax breaks” as a financing component

Leverage municipal powers of specialized district designations

Consider novel funding mechanisms

Be consistent

Create accountability measures

7. Establish ongoing place management

Capacity, capacity, capacity

Outside contractors and private partners are an underutilized opportunity

Depoliticize the districts ongoing operations

Develop meaningful structures that have collective input and buy in

Set termed timelines for structures, and allow for adjustment over time

Data and tracking should be a priority, not an afterthought.

District Management Models

MANAGEMENT ENTITY	DISTRICT DELINEATION	REVENUE SOURCES
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)	Legally authorized contiguous area within which property owners pay to develop, fund and execute supplemental services to benefit economic and social vitality of district	Self-sustaining through fees; reauthorized every 5 years Grants and fundraising
VOLUNTARY DISTRICT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION	Dedicated district offering a volunteer program model addressing design, organization, promotion and economic vitality	Not self-sustaining; state grants, municipal contributions and fundraising

District Management in MA- BIDs

BIDS In MA Currently 10- 10 in process



District Management in MA -Volunteer

Volunteer Based Organizations: Business Associations, Chambers, Main Streets and Cultural Districts

There are about 60 in MA - these vary in areas of focus. Typically event oriented, but there are some that take on a stronger role in the economics of the downtown.

Downtown
Pittsfield  Inc.



Beverly Main Streets

 natick center
cultural district



SALEM
MAINSTREETS

B  STON
MAIN STREETS

Downtown
Framingham  Inc.
building business, community & culture

COVID WAS A GAME CHANGER!



BEFORE COVID

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



STREETSSENSE

AFTER COVID

CENTRAL SOCIAL DISTRICT



BE IN THE KNOW

Where the emphasis had been on commercial and office space- there is now an emphasis on really making downtown 24-7.

Building downtown neighborhoods through housing, placemaking/connections, small business, and walkability.

In the Local Rapid Recovery Program (COVID Plans for recovery) 124 community based plans acknowledged what an existing district management entity was able to do to assist the downtown in recovering from COVID or those communities that did not have a DM entity wanted to create one for recovery and sustain an economic viable downtown.

COVID brought **Downtown Vitality** to the forefront.

For Example, the concept of Shop Local was no longer a “cute ideal” it took on a whole new context.

What can I purchase within walking distance in my downtown? Also, how do I support the local businesses that are being affected by COVID.

Municipalities recognized that they could not do it alone - they needed a partner. District Management took on a whole new relevance.

Everything Ben outlined is the recipe for success, but a municipality cannot do all that without a partner.

The municipality has oversight of key elements of making a downtown succeed - zoning, parking, housing regs, enforcement of building codes, health codes, etc.

But a well funded DM entity supplements those pieces in to a district that thrives.

In the following slides the concept what a municipality can do with a DM partner creates a situation that creates a sustainable downtown.

Housing - Attleboro



TDI Community and currently looking to create a DM entity that ensures the downtown is a place where people want to live.



Small Business - Shop Local



Marketing



MUSIC BY:
BREE PERRY
RICHE OLIVER
MIKE KELLNER
MUSIQUE DE GUITARE

WINTER MARKET & SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY CELEBRATION

SHOP DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES
ENJOY STROLLING VICTORIAN CAROLERS

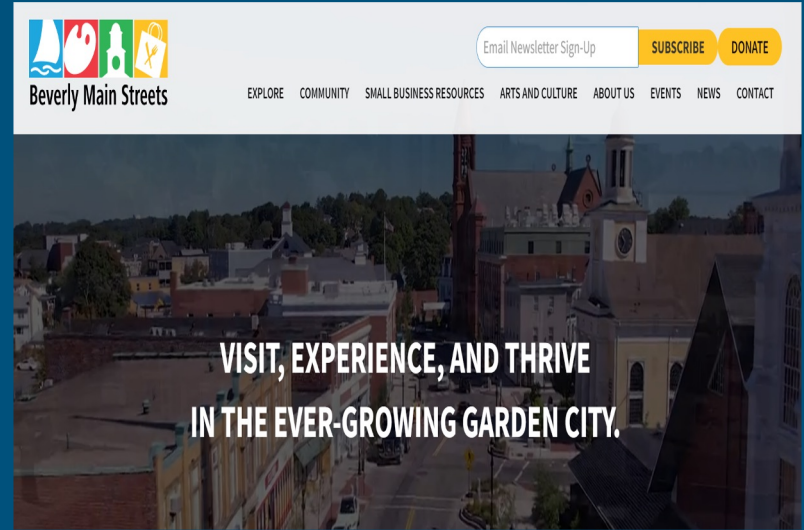
SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 25TH
10:30 AM - 2:30 PM


LIVE MUSIC | HOT DRINKS | VENDORS
FIRE PIT | S'MORES | SCAVENGER HUNT

LIBERTY & UNION PARK, 78 MAIN ST
TAUNTON LOCATIONS
WWW.DOWNTOWNTAUNTON.ORG



BID
DOWNTOWN
taunton
Business Improvement District




Beverly Main Streets

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VISIT, EXPERIENCE, AND THRIVE
IN THE EVER-GROWING GARDEN CITY.

Pittsfield, MA  #HeartOfTheBerkshires

Events - Placemaking- Play



Downtown Vitality Bill

An Act to promote downtown vitality

H.228/S.130

Lead Sponsors: Rep. Antonio Cabral and Sen. John Cronin, Gateway Cities Caucus

- Would dedicate 5% of online sales tax revenues to a new fund to strengthen and support small business districts across the state
- Referred to the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Business
- Coalition partners include: MassCreative, Mass Association of Business Improvement Districts, MAPC, Mass Cultural Council, MassINC's Gateway City Innovation Institute

Community One- Stop For Growth

MA Downtown Initiative Program - District Management is a category that can be applied for receiving technical assistance on creating an entity in your community.

www.mass.gov/community-one-stop-for-growth

Q&A