

DOWNTOWN

Throughout the Master Plan update process, residents and the business community consistently highlighted three areas of town: Downtown, Canton Junction, and Route 138. These areas became the focus of many conversations at public meetings or directed comments of online surveys. Issues and needs overlapped within the geographic areas, which made it easier to talk about them comprehensively in the Master Plan.

The Downtown will have a strong sense of place. It will be walkable, vibrant with activity, have a broad range of uses, and connect to nearby destinations.

DOWNTOWN has the potential to play a leading role as a commercial/mixed use center. It primarily serves the day-to-day convenience retail needs of nearby residents, offering establishments such as banks, a pharmacy, hair and nail salons, convenience stores, restaurants, and a limited number of small retail shops. It is also home to small professional offices, such as attorneys, accountants, realtors, doctors, and others. In addition to the diverse mix of uses, Downtown boasts a strong collection of institutional buildings, including the Public Library, Town Hall, and the Post Office.

Make Downtown Canton a Destination

Downtown Canton has many elements that work effectively toward making the area a true destination both for locals and people visiting Canton. However, the Town recognizes that there are several challenges to making the Downtown a true, thriving destination. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Perform outreach to local businesses in Downtown to explore the potential for partnerships with the Town that will help administer improvements, investments, and programs.
2. Continue to invest municipal funds in Downtown infrastructure and streetscape amenities.
3. Revisit zoning in the Downtown to:
 - Clarify the Zoning Map to have one set of development procedures and standards for the Downtown area.
 - Revise signage requirements to ensure high quality design and appropriately scaled signage.
 - Revise the Use Table to ensure that only highly desirable uses are allowed in the Downtown area.
 - Include better standards for dimensional requirements that reflect best practices in downtown design.
 - Develop design standards/guidelines for elements like building form, façades, pedestrian space, building materials, and other important aspects of site and architectural design.
4. Consider incentives to help make “raze and replace” redevelopment more financially viable.

Expand Shared-Mobility and On-Demand Services

As the popularity of ride share services, like Uber and Lyft, and bike share rises, there will be more of these types of services competing for curbside space. Canton can position itself favorably for this trend by using existing resources to develop a “curbside management” program for all users. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Use results of the Parking Strategy and curbside inventory to designate ride share drop off/pick up zones for services like Uber and Lyft to provide curbside management.
2. Pursue the integration of new technologies to allow more flexible use of curb space in the most desirable areas, such as in the Downtown along Washington Street.

Establish Strong Connections

The Town recognizes the need to provide connectivity between the existing Downtown environment and new development, such as the Paul Revere Heritage Site. Establishing these connections supports the option to walk or bike for local neighborhood trips rather than drive. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Support multimodal infrastructure between the Paul Revere Heritage Site and Downtown Canton as well as Canton Junction.
2. Identify resources for new development in Downtown to reduce vehicle trips, such as bike share programs, bicycle parking, or designating ride-share pick-up/drop-off locations.

Implement the Downtown Parking Strategy

The *Parking Strategy* found that the parking system in Downtown Canton meets existing demand, but there is opportunity to create a more flexible, customer-friendly, coordinated parking system. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Implement branded signage and wayfinding to direct pedestrians between parking and local destinations.
2. Work with private property owners to open underutilized parking to the general public.
3. Facilitate shared parking agreements between existing and/or new businesses. Consider providing in-kind services such as plowing, maintenance, improved walking connections to Downtown, and signage in exchange for property owners allowing the public to use their parking.
4. Adjust parking requirements in the zoning bylaw. Current parking requirements for Downtown exceed standard recommendations for a mixed-use vibrant downtown.
5. Reconsider on-street parking regulations through priced parking or a time-limit structure that incentivizes longer term parkers like employees and customers stopping in multiple locations to park off-street and use prime on-street parking for short-term trips.

Improve Multimodal Transportation

Encouraging more multimodal options in the Downtown requires improvements to the existing network that will make walking and biking safer. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Continue to evaluate the feasibility and cost of recommendations for Washington Street at Neponset Street and Church Street to improve traffic flow, circulation and safety. These may include signal timing adjustments, a peak hour northbound left turn lane, and multimodal improvements. See the Town-Wide Connections in **CONNECT**.
2. Pursue funding for design and construction for the Complete Streets projects prioritized in Downtown Canton. See Neighborhood Connections in **CONNECT**.
3. Identify Complete Streets projects where improved facilities from those in the current Complete Streets Plan may be feasible in the Downtown area, such as on-street or separated bike lanes, as part of the design process.

What's missing?