

Storefront Activation

RAPID RECOVERY
PROGRAM TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been made possible through technical assistance provided by the Baker-Polito Administration's Local Rapid Recovery Planning program.



The Local Rapid Recovery Planning (RRP) program is a key part of the Baker-Polito Administration's Partnerships for Recovery Plan, the strategy established to help communities stabilize and grow the Massachusetts economy as a result of the economic impacts brought on by COVID-19. The plan invests \$774 million in efforts to get people back to work, support small businesses, foster innovation, revitalize downtowns, and keep people in stable housing.

In addition to the planning program, recovery efforts include a Small Business Relief Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation. This program, which concluded in May 2021, provided more than \$687.2 million to over 15,000 businesses across the Commonwealth, with a focus on businesses located in Gateway Cities, among demographic priorities, or operating in sectors most impacted by the pandemic. Cities, towns, and non-profit entities are using Regional Pilot Project Grant Program funding for recovery solutions that seek to activate vacant storefronts, support regional supply chain resiliency, and create small business support networks. To promote recovery in the tourism industry and support the ongoing My Local MA marketing initiative encouraging residents to support their local economies by shopping, dining and staying local, another \$1.6 million in grants were awarded through the new Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant Pilot Program. Through April 2021, MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program has invested \$26.4 million in municipal Shared Streets projects to support public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

In support of the overall recovery strategy, the Administration made \$9.5 million in awards for 125 communities to create Local Rapid Recovery Plans, through the MA Downtown Initiative Program. These plans address the impacts of COVID-19 on local downtowns and small businesses by partnering with Plan Facilitators and Subject Matter Experts to pursue locally-driven, actionable strategies.

**For more information, contact DHCD:
100 Cambridge St, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114
617-573-1100
mass.gov/DHCD**

Toolkit prepared by:



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Why This Toolkit?

Why This Toolkit?

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, downtowns across the state are suffering from increased vacancies and underutilized spaces. Empty spaces, whether a vacant storefront, a blank wall, or an unused lot, cause blank spaces as people walk along the street, negatively impacting the economic and streetscape vitality of a downtown area. Studies have shown that people strolling with no agenda need something to engage them every 25 feet or so. This keeps them walking, and in the downtown context that means more people on the street increasing safety, creating a sense of community, and passing by stores with the potential to shop.

Addressing vacant storefronts and vacant or underutilized properties head on is a priority and can bring vibrancy back to downtown. Filling vacant spaces can create a series of effects:

- improving the look of downtown, communicating care and promoting community pride;
- generating foot traffic to support businesses;
- creating social opportunities for the community connect;
- increasing the experience of safety; and
- serving as an incubator to give an economic boon to the area.

This toolkit is "How-to-Guide" intended to help municipalities large and small in setting up pop-up programs in vacant storefronts on their main streets and commercial districts.

““With the right resources, some collaboration, and a little imagination, empty storefronts can come alive, create positive results, and become vibrant community spaces that showcase Main Street opportunities!”

~Main Street America. *Main Spotlight: Windows of Opportunity - The Transformation of Empty Storefronts on Main Street*. Lisa Morgen, Retailworks, Inc. March 18, 2021.

Getting Started

Getting Started

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is a guide to help communities generate positive social and commercial activity by activating vacant or underutilized spaces in their core districts. This Toolkit offers suggestions for how to determine what type of program is best for your community, answers common questions, provides examples of what has worked in other communities, and provides MA-specific detail for implementation.

The toolkit is divided into three sections.

The first section - **The Basics: We Want to Set Up a Vacant Pop-Up Program** - lays the groundwork for how to set up a program. Every community is different, but there are similarities in setting up a pop-up program whether large or small, whether inside storefronts and exterior window activations. Everyone should start here.

The following two sections detail specifics for different types of vacant storefront activations:

- **We want to set up a Temporary Pop-up Program Inside Vacant Storefronts**
- **We want to set up a Temporary Window Activation Outside Vacant Storefronts**

After going through The Basics section, you should be able to determine which sections are right for your community.

Toolkit Checklist

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Getting It Done

The Basics: We Want to Set Up a Vacant Pop-Up Program

You have already determined that you have vacancies that you would like to activate with a pop-up program. Which ones? How many? For how long should the program run? This section will help you define your target area, set your goals, determine your measurements of success, and negotiate funding options.

1 Step 1: Define Your Goals

First, understand the problem your program is targeted to address. How are these vacancies impacting your city? Is it primarily economic? Do the vacancies degrade the aesthetic presence of downtown and affect other businesses? Are vacancies generating negative activity that's becoming a safety issue?

Second, put people at the center of your plans. Part of defining your goals must include understanding the people, organizations or businesses that will be affected by the program. Understanding of who will be interested in visiting these spaces will drive your decisions and help you hone in on which businesses/organizations to target (both lease space and types of activations). Consider exploring community needs through a survey: what are missing amenities? What do they want to do/see/purchase that they can't today? Can this program address some of those desires?

Finally, convert all of this information into positive goal statements to guide your program. Creating goal statements also provides your community to affirm the direction of your program. The program will not be able to do everything. With crystal clear goals and buy-in on them from your major stakeholders, your goals can act as the "goalie" for the rest of your process, deflecting potential uses that don't serve that purpose.

Sample Program Goal Statements

Below are examples of program goal statements from other cities. Your program may target one or more of these goals.

- Reduce negative aesthetic impact of vacant storefronts
- Increase foot traffic to support existing businesses and improve safety and perception of safety
- Offer a low-cost option for local entrepreneurs to try new ideas and reach new customers
- Encourage small business entrepreneurs to find a permanent retail location within downtown/district
- Create viable platforms for small businesses that reflect the culture and character of their neighborhoods
- Enhance the retail core of downtown with more merchants and products
- Create an opportunity for artists to expand their studio space and present their work to the public.
- Increase public gathering spaces
- Generate jobs for local residents

2 Step 2: Determine the Area You Want to Activate

For a pop-up program to have the most impact, a noticeable percentage of change must take place. Depending on the size of your city and location of vacancies, determine your target location. For smaller cities with one core business district, the answer may be simple, to target the primary downtown main street or commercial district. For larger cities with many vacancies spread across multiple commercial districts, target your first pop-up program in one area only. This will simplify implementation and concentrate impact. Many pop-ups in one area creates buzz and draws people more effectively than pop-ups spread across the city. A larger concentrated program can serve as a pilot, which can later be expanded to other areas incorporating lessons learned.

Also consider how the location of your pop-up program will affect the surrounding businesses, and visa-a-versa. Pop-ups in storefronts that are in close proximity to struggling businesses will bring more people to the area and help give those businesses a boost. Pop-ups placed near thriving businesses will benefit from the already existing foot traffic in the area.

3 Step 3: Select the type (or types) of activations that best address your goals.

Given your goals (step 1) and the nature and location of your vacancies (step 2), what type of activation will have the most impact and ease of implementation? This toolkit covers two types of activations:

- **Interior Activations of Vacant Storefronts**

Interior storefront activations involve use of the interior of a shop, whether the entire store or a portion of it. People will be coming in and out of the space. This type of activation will require a license agreement or a lease with the property owner for temporary use. *If your goals involve helping entrepreneurs get into downtown retail space, you will need an interior storefront activation.*

- **Exterior Activations of Vacant Storefronts**

Exterior storefront activations involve only window displays or other changes to the façade of the building. There is no interior access in this scenario, outside of setting up the display. As such, these activations are much simpler to implement, though a written agreement with the landlord will still be required. *If your goals are about creating vibrancy on a street and supporting existing businesses, an exterior storefront activation is simpler to implement to meet your goals.*



Images: 12 Essex St Melrose (top),
Storefront display via blog.bonbrand.com



- *Activation of Vacant or Underutilized Lots*

Activation of vacant or underutilized lots is another way to make a positive impact in a downtown or commercial district. Vacant lots might be privately or publicly owned and are typically the result of a building being torn down that is awaiting future development. These sites can occur in the middle of an otherwise active street. Underutilized lots, such as parking lots that are empty some days or at certain times of the day, are also great to stage micro-pop-up or events. *If your goals involve creating community space or hosting events to draw people to downtown, focusing on vacant lots might be your answer.*



Images: The Musicant Group's Pop Ups at Central Station, St Paul, MN (top), Pop Zebra (below)

4 Step 4: Gather Partners

Tap into organizations that can help move your project forward. This will include surrounding businesses and community organizations that may use or benefit from the program. Depending on your target location, partner organizations could be surrounding businesses, non-profits, theaters, or office buildings. Any organization that has a stake in the success of the program is a potential partner. These partners might be willing to provide funding or marketing support. At the very least, the partnerships should focus on communicating the status of the program every step of the way so they can be supportive on the ground and provide good word-of-mouth advertising.



5 Step 5: Set Your Timeline and Define Your Targets

Metrics of Success. Define key metrics for success and gather baseline data to measure your pilot program. For example: change in the number of vacant stores; number of participating businesses; number of patrons/visitors to the spaces; revenue generated in pop-ups; change in revenue at neighboring storefronts; community perception of downtown. The baseline data you have available or you are able to gather during the planning phase may determine what you choose as your metrics for success.

Number of Activations. What is your target number of activations? Knowing this will determine the management structure. The target number of activations is highly dependent on how close together they are, the overall number of vacancies, and your goals. You have to determine the right number to make an impact and meet your goals.

(Pilot) Program Timeline. If this is your first time running a pop-up program, consider this your pilot. A pilot program should run for a minimum of two months, especially if interior activations are planned. The time and effort to ready a property and start a business, artistic or other activation should be balanced by a length of stay to make it worthwhile. At the same time, the building owner/landlord will want an assurance that if a lease becomes available that they will not be long tied into this temporary activation. A minimum 2-month contract followed by a month-to-month contract can serve both parties.

What is the Right Number of Activations?

Example: If you have ten vacancies along a 3-block Main Street, you might want to target 70% activation: five being interior storefront pop-ups, and two being exterior window activations that contribute to the vibrancy of the street and add extra marking to the surrounding shops. You should have enough activations in the immediate area to create an impact. One new pop-up may not draw people downtown if they have been reluctant to go. Five-ten new pop-ups, whether interior or exterior, provide more of an incentive to visit.

6 Step 6: Determine Your Management and Financial Structure

Your management and financial structure will vary depending on the type of activation you are planning, and the goals of your program. Management of an exterior window activation is far simpler than an interior pop-up activation. Financial support can come from grants, city fees, sponsors and the participants themselves. See the specifics in each section:

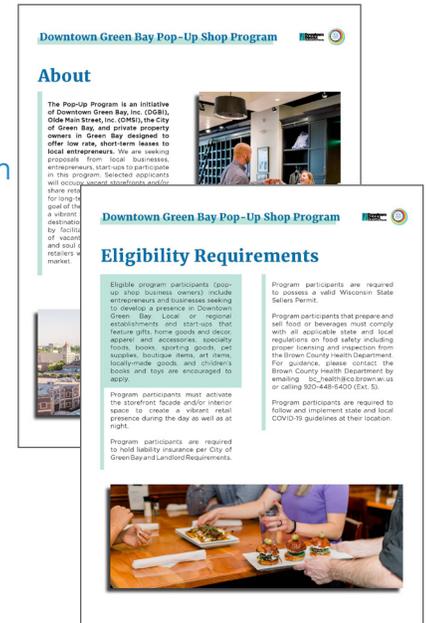
- Interior Activations of Vacant Storefronts, pg page 16
- Exterior Activations of Vacant Storefronts, pg page 28

7 Step 7: Document your Program Plan

Before you begin recruiting storefronts or the pop-ups to fill them, all of the above should be documented in a simple program plan that you can use during recruitment. You might choose to create two versions of materials: one marketing the program to property owners and landlord, and the other marketing the program to potential pop-ups. Your program plan should include:

- Description and goals of the program.
- Dates of the program. Be clear about whether you expect tenants to move out at the end of the program, or whether the goal is to convert to a long-term lease after this trial period. This may alter the types of applications you receive.
- Application process, as well as the criteria for selection.
- Management structure and legal requirements
- Any rules for the program that an applicant would need to determine whether their shop would be a good fit.

See the *Key Resources* section for links to sample of project documentation.



8 Step 8: Recruit Owners and Tenants/Pop-ups

Not until you have completed the first seven steps should recruitment begin. You will likely have already reached out to a few potential owners and tenants as you were setting goals and gathering partners, but until you have the details worked out, and documented, don't try to get commitment from participants. Whether you recruit spaces or pop-ups first will depend on your program.

In some cases, recruitment of landlords and storefront owners should happen before recruitment of activations. Knowing what types of spaces are available before recruiting participants will draw more place-based responses for use. Recruitment of landlords also may alter the type of pop-ups you eventually recruit, since you will get an early understanding of what landlords are willing to host.

On the other hand, recruiting landlords too early may not be feasible. You cannot ask a landlord to hold a vacant space for a future activation that you are working to recruit. Recruiting activations can take several months, and some landlords may have their spaces rented before you can fill them.

Ultimately, the right order for recruitment depends on your community, your relationship with building owners, and your contacts with potential pop-up tenants. It may take some testing to see which approach works better for your program.

9 Step 9: Marketing

Create a comprehensive marketing plan to promote your program launch. Create buzz in the community at least one month prior to the program so people know it is coming. As pop-ups move in, take pictures and post to social media or in the newspaper. Make opening day an event, and ensure the media is there to cover it. Throughout the program, update social media with pictures of people shopping or interacting with the pop-ups.

It will be helpful to determine ways to connect the storefronts together: set up a temporary page on your website that has information about all of the storefronts participating; create a QR code window cling to put up in each participating storefront.



10 Step 10: Launch! (and Iterate!)

Launch is just the beginning. Here you will begin analyzing the impact and making adjustments. These ten steps should be constantly revisited and adjusted to ensure you are meeting your goals - you may even find that redefining your goals is appropriate as the program progresses.

A temporary pop-up program should set the stage for a longer-term implementation and ongoing management of vacancies in your community.

We want to set up a Temporary Pop-up Program Inside Vacant Storefronts

Filling vacant storefronts is a great way to add vibrancy to the street as well as jump start long-term leases. If you are looking to help new businesses get into downtown retail space, or give artists locations to create and display their wares, you will need an interior storefront activation.

“The increasing popularity of pop-up stores has been a boon for landlords struggling to fill vacancies amid the explosion of online shopping and coinciding rise in brick-and-mortar store closures. And it is no longer a niche business. Storefront.com estimates that pop-up retail has grown into an \$80 billion industry. Although landlords prefer long-term leases with established tenants, many owners recognize the value in experiential retail. Pop-ups create buzz and help drive shopper traffic. And successful pop-ups may become longer term tenants with larger footprints.”

~Prospering with Pop-Ups: Legal Considerations for Landlords and Tenants, Herman R. Lipkis, April 01, 2019.

Management and Financial Structures

Even before you recruit storefronts for the program, you should set up the management and financial structure. In order to attract owners of vacant stores to the program, they will need to know exactly how the program will be run, what they have to contribute, and the risks and benefits of participating. Participation needs to be easy for both landlords and tenants.

Management Models

There are a number of ways to manage a temporary vacant storefront pop-up program, which boil down to three main models:

1. City/Town enters into a lease agreement with the property owners and subleases to tenants.

The municipality holds the most control (and responsibility) in this scenario, entering into temporary lease agreements with landlords, and then sublease agreements with the tenants.

 *See How Others Are Doing It: Wrentham, MA*

2. Owners and tenants enter into agreements directly with each other

The municipality provides help in recruitment, matching pop-ups to vacant storefronts, marketing and oversight, but tenants and landlords enter into the legal agreement with each other. In this scenario, the landlords and businesses hold the legal burden. Businesses should hold their own insurance.

 *See How Others Are Doing It: Melrose, MA*

3. Third-party entity holds agreements and insurance

Rather than tenants negotiating individually with each building owner, consider working with a third party management entity. The third party would hold a master use agreement or lease for all of the participating vacant properties, with common rules and language across the entire program. The pop-up tenants would sublease with the third party entity rather than the building landlord themselves. This management structure can streamline the program and create and lower the barrier to entry for both the building owner and the tenant. This takes a major logistical burden off of the tenants, many of whom may be unfamiliar with commercial leases or ill-equipped to take on those responsibilities for short term use. The third-party could also utilize existing organizational insurance.

License or Lease Considerations

In the case of a temporary pop-up, you may be able to use a license rather than a lease. A license gives the licensee the legal authority to use the landlord's asset. Generally, licenses are given out for short-term occupants. In either case, the agreement should stipulate the terms of the short-term space use. While these terms could vary depending on use, below are key elements to consider. *Also see the Resources section for links to sample lease agreements.*

	License/Lease Considerations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Length of the term. It is simplest to have the entire program sign for the same term, such as a three-month program, but you could adjust the term based on the landlord or the activation. For longer-term programs without a clear end date, you should be able to promise at least 60 days to make it worthwhile for the short-term occupant and then have a rolling 30 day expulsion clause for no cause going forward to allow for the space to be rented and temporary uses to cease.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities and garbage. Simplest would be for the owner to continue to cover all utilities and garbage removal during the temporary period, and for the tenant to pay a flat fee for rent.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details for how the space may (or may not be) altered, along with stipulations that improvements or alterations of any kind must be discussed with the landlord.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hours of access. The lease should include any limitations on access to the store, including hours and/or days of the week. The agreement might also include a requirement for minimum hours of operation by the tenant to ensure the tenancy results in an open and active storefront to meet the goals of the program.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repair responsibilities and timelines. Typically tenants would be responsible for general upkeep such as cleaning or minor repairs (such as interior paint touch-ups or light bulb replacement). Landlords would be responsible for structural or utility repairs. Since this is a short-term lease, the agreement should include a requirement on the speed of repairs to electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems should there be an issue. Landlords should consider their ability to complete repairs in a timely manner before entering into an agreement.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clear understanding of responsibility for any personal or property damage resulting from tenancy. This protects both the landlord and the tenant.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statements outlining what would trigger immediate termination of the agreement, such as uses you want to prohibit. This is a strategy to mitigate activity that the property owner or third party master-agreement holder believes will significantly increase their liability. Examples might include hosting un-approved events in the space, making un-approved modifications to the space, using the space at unauthorized hours, or the presence of illegal substances on site.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Penalties if tenants do not comply with the program. For example, the tenant might have to reimburse the city for grant money received and/or opportunity costs lost.

Regulatory/Permitting Considerations

The time burden of a difficult regulatory process can prevent efforts like these from getting off the ground. Municipalities should look to create as easy of a process as possible that ensures people's safety. A simple process to acquire a temporary use permit should be part of the program.

If multiple pop-ups will cycle through a space during the program (for example, three one-month pop-ups over a three-month program) permitting should be done on the front end. One permit covering all of the intended uses should be established up front, rather than as each tenant moves in. If using a third party, make sure as much of the burden falls on the third party who is holding the master use agreement/lease.

It can be challenging to use the interior of a vacant storefront that does not have a certificate of occupancy. If that is the case, target this location as an exterior-only activation (see next section).

Pop-up Retail Ordinance

The City of Austin, TX created a Pop-up Retail Ordinance to help facilitate temporary activations. The ordinance allows for issuance of temporary Certificates of Occupancy, though they still must comply with underlying zoning. 45-day permits can be issued, with renewal for up to 90 days.

Insurance

Liability and property insurance should be considered when setting up the program. Either require businesses to have their own insurance as a criteria of participation, or work with a third party firm to hold the insurance for the program. Since acquiring insurance can be an impediment for some temporary pop-up retailers, part of the program benefits can be to facilitate partnerships between the businesses and firms that providing insurance services. A financial benefit of participation could be that insurance premium be paid for the duration of the pop-up program.

 In Sheboygan, WI, tenant retailers must sign a waiver of liability regarding program participation, including responsibility for any personal or property damage resulting from participation.

 The program in West Town, Chicago requires general insurance coverage up to \$1M, with the West Town Chicago Chamber of Commerce listed as additionally insured.

 In St. Paul, MN, the St. Anthony Park Community Council, a nonprofit resident/business association, acted as the master licensor and policy holder for a pop-up shop program in their space, with temporary tenants added as "additional insureds" to the existing liability insurance policy.

Also see the Resource section for more information for businesses.

Financial Models

The goals of your program should drive your funding structure. How much financial help will you provide to the pop-up tenants? Will you help the landlords fill their space by paying them full rent, or will they have to accept a reduced fee in order to fill their space? What about capital improvements?

Determine how the program will be funded so you can incentivize owners of vacant storefronts and tenants to participate. Don't forget that the soft incentives (recruitment, marketing, logistical support in leasing and permitting) should be included as part of the incentive package and a way to attract both owners and tenants.

Owners/Landlords: Set the rent target that is right for your community, your goals, and the amount of funding you have. Full market rate rent would attract the most owners/landlords, but likely limit the number of pop-ups you could set up. 50-80% market rate asks the owners/landlords to bear some of the burden, while reaping the benefits of their space being in use. It is unlikely that owners/landlords would participate for less than 50% rent unless there are other significant incentives included with participation, such as capital improvements.

Tenants: Pop-up programs can require tenants to pay market-rate rent, provide the space rent free, or anywhere in between. Determining the right rent level has a lot to do with the community. Are you are filling a few vacancies in an otherwise busy downtown, or trying to build momentum after years of disinvestment? Are trying to attract thriving online businesses into downtown retail space (free rent might not be necessary, but a reduced rent would provide incentive) or are you trying to support budding local entrepreneurs (free rent for a period of time may help them make the leap into retail space).



If you want the program to run more like a traditional lease between landlord and tenant, yet still want to provide free rent to the tenant, set up a rent pass-through in the form of a voucher to entrepreneurs, artists, or other tenants to procure the space. This keeps the financial support going directly to the tenant, rather than paying the building owner. While the money is effectively going to the same place, support from the city is to the tenant. This can be a more attractive model for some municipalities.



In New York City, non-profit ChaShaMa provides free rent for three months to get businesses going. The hope is that this boost will enable them to enter into a long-term lease after the program.

Funding and Support

Grants

Pop-up programs are typically about downtown revitalization, and grants are available to fund this work. The State of Massachusetts is committed to helping communities recover from the economic downturn experienced during the pandemic. The Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program was intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts. Funding resources are included on the website and are intended to inform communities of the most up-to-date information on grants and other resources available.



Mass.gov

See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program#funding-resources->

Starting a temporary pop-up program could be a pilot project for managing vacant storefronts in your city going forward. The State of Massachusetts has provided grants to cities for pop-up programs under the Regional Pilot Project Grant Program.

See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/regional-pilot-project-grant-program>



The towns of Wrentham, MA and Franklin, MA received this grant. See the How Others Are Doing It section.

If art is to be highlighted in the pop-ups, artist grants could be tapped into to fund temporary gallery or maker space:

- New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) offers grants to artists and organizations to support the creation and presentation of work.
See <https://www.nefa.org/>
- Mass Cultural Council partners with communities across the Commonwealth to “expand access, improve education, promote diversity, and encourage excellence in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Through our efforts, we make our state a better place to live, work, and visit for everyone.” In 2021, Mass Cultural Council supported 161 organizations with \$342,500 in Cultural Investment Portfolio Projects grants for programming during the July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 fiscal year.
See <https://massculturalcouncil.org/>



Local Partners

Private companies that have a stake in the success of the program could sponsor a storefront. Support from partners could come in the form of funding (such as a sponsorship) or sweat equity and donated materials. A major office building neighboring many vacant properties may find that donating to the program in order to activate the area is a benefit to their employees and therefore their bottom line. Nearby entertainment venues may be able to donate time or artwork to the program, seeing the benefit of more activity in the area creating a safer environment, especially at night when most shows take place. Local charitable organizations may provide volunteer hours to support and may be able to tie the program to their mission and goals, tapping into additional funds that may not be available to the municipality normally. In some districts, BIDs or parking fees could be tapped into for funding. Be creative as you seek how to support the program.

Participants

You may be setting up the program and minimizing logistical barriers, while the participants fully fund their own participation. Will the program be free to tenants, or will they be paying to rent the space? Will the property owners be required to accept a reduced rent, or will the program provide market rate rent? For tenants and landlords, the requirements for participation (such as commitment to setting up an attractive storefront) are part of their support.

Recruiting Spaces and Tenants

Step 8 in *The Basics* section explained that the order in which you recruit landlords and potential tenants depends on your program, and the relationships you have in place. Recruiting landlords and storefront owners before recruiting the pop-ups (tenants) will draw more place-based responses for use. Knowing what types of spaces are available before recruiting participants may alter the type of pop-ups you eventually target, since you will know what landlords are willing to host.

On the other hand, recruiting landlords too early may not be feasible. You cannot ask a landlord to hold a vacant space for a future activation that you are working to recruit. Recruiting activations can take several months, and some landlords may have their spaces rented before you can fill them.

 For the October-December 2021 Pop-Up Shop program in Sheboygan, WI, they began recruitment of pop-up tenants in June 2021, with interviews and final selection happening over the summer and early fall. *After* their top tenants were identified, they recruited storefronts. Not all identified tenants were paired with a vacant storefront for the October launch, but this planted a seed for extending the program into the future, when other vacant spaces come up and need to be filled. Clear communication to both tenants and landlords is key to keeping expectations in check.

Recruiting Vacant Storefront Owners/Landlords

Focus first on locally-owned properties who are invested in the community. There is a higher likelihood of participation from owners who are also community members. Encourage property owners with community messaging, such as: We are all in this together. Your participation benefits the entire district. Activating the main street benefits the entire community. This is a way to meaningfully enhance your reputation as a landlord as one who cares about and supports their community/district.

Pitch it as marketing their leasable space. A successful program undoes itself - the temporary uses boosting foot traffic to their space, generating leads for new tenants and resulting in new leases. For many programs, tenants are selected based on their likelihood of turning into long-term tenants, so if your program goals support that, it is a major incentive to landlords.

Emphasize this is temporary. A temporary pop-up does not preclude them from seeking out permanent tenants. This program activates a space that wouldn't have been generating revenue during this time anyway.



1 Lincoln St. in Newton, MA hosted a pop-up shop in Fall 2021 and extended through the holiday season. (Image: Google)

Adding business and activity in and around a vacant space will contribute to a more desirable neighborhood overall and help to attract longer term prospects.

Make participation easy with clear communication up front. Be prepared with your management plan in place prior to recruitment. Develop a brief summary document outlining how the program will work, including regular check-ins with the owner and lessee to ensure the use is complying with agreed upon parameters. Create a submission form requesting contact information, level and type of activity they are interested in (such as will they need a closed storefront or open to visitors, how many hours, time of day, days of week, etc). Have a plan to shut down activations that don't follow the rules.

Consider financial incentives to support building owners. Asking building owners to lease at a reduced rental rate may be necessary. Providing further financial incentives to support the building owners can help in the recruitment process, such as waiving any permitting fees, a stipend to ready the interior for use, or a \$500 bonus for the first landlord to sign up, then \$400, \$300, etc. to build excitement and get the ball rolling.

Point out capital benefits. When the building is occupied, it is being looked after, which will help minimize crime or vandalism. Additionally, if the pop-up program is funding any basic improvements prior to occupancy, that is like money in their pocket, providing capital improvements that will outlast the program.

Note: If owners are reluctant to give internal access to their space, see if they would be open to an exterior, window-only activations. See the We want to set up an Exterior Window Activation of Vacant Storefronts Program section, page xx.

Recruiting and Selecting Activations

Consider this an opportunity to curate your downtown. Balancing the mix of goods and services that are provided. No salons or health care in the area? Seek out those types of small businesses. Don't have a hardware store in the area? How about pop-up tool library, or a fix-it clinic. More people will come to the area if there is more variety of things to do/buy. If there is success in the pop-up, you may draw a long-term business in.

Consider the pop-up types and how they will complement existing businesses. You may want to avoid direct competition with nearby stores. On the other hand, adding similar stores can draw more people by providing more choice. For example, adding a clothing pop-up near an existing retail clothing store could bring more customers to both businesses.

"A recent survey indicates that 25 percent of retailers are investing in pop-up store locations. Due to their temporary location, pop-up stores have a "here today, gone tomorrow" existence. As a result, they provide an alluring, exclusive type of shopping experience and a sense of urgency to buy, which can lead to additional sales. Because of their temporary nature, pop-ups can be more creative and whimsical in design. What a perfect opportunity to get consumers to take notice and to create an Instagrammable moment for them! And what a wonderful opportunity for the retailer to drive up social media traffic and expand their brand."

~ Main Street America. *Main Spotlight: Windows of Opportunity - The Transformation of Empty Storefronts on Main Street.* Lisa Morgen

Match pop-ups to the available spaces. Appropriate uses vary based on context and the goals of your project. Location, size, access, parking, and walkability all factor into what type of activation would work in a space.

Retail Businesses and Services

One of the quickest routes to implementation is a pop-up retailer that already has online sales, or a store in another location. In this scenario a customer base is already established and may provide immediate foot traffic to visit the new brick-and-mortar store. An established online retailer is also set up to help with advertising the program through their existing website and social media channels. This option is also effective if you are looking for the tenant to pay rent.

Your goal may include supporting new businesses. If you are providing a rent-free program it is reasonable to disallow businesses with existing locations to participate. New businesses should be vetted to ensure they will add to the vibrancy of the street.

Participation criteria for retailers might include the items below. These items could be included on the license agreement.

Participation Criteria	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Minimum and maximum of operational hours needed to produce the activation outcomes the program wants to see. Since the point is to activate the street, you may require a businesses to be open a minimum of 40 hours per week, with at least 8 hours on weekends.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Requirements for stock in the store. You don't want to end up with a businesses that has very little inventory and so sells out before program completion. With that, you will end up with another vacant storefront on your street. The agreement should stipulate reasonably full stock.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Minimum requirements for attractive window displays. The occupation of the vacant storefront should benefit the street. Occupying the back room of a vacant store is likely not going to fulfill your goals for the vacant storefront program. (Although, if your only goal is to help small businesses start up, it may.)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Minimum marketing requirements, such as the business must have a website and social media presence. You may want to require that the business proactively market its participation in the pop-up shop program. Ensure they have access to social media posts and images from the overall program to push out to their own networks. A collective marketing campaign with unified messaging and images across multiple platforms and channels will expand the impact of the program.

A Note on Food Businesses. For many programs, food businesses are more difficult unless they already have a significant operations basis. The food industry has significant barriers to entry and the first three months of a new food business are turbulent. Even if the on-season business is a food business, sharing kitchens is a frequent source of conflict. If the space would require significant build out to house a food business, that can create a financial and permitting barrier to a rapid-implementation activation project.

Visual Artists

Vacant storefronts make excellent artist galleries and studios. Art galleries offer a number of benefits: low cost, easily accessible artists to fill space, and may be easier to get regulatory approval. A significant draw-back is that they may not generate much traffic, save for opening/ special events, and sales are not likely from the average shopper (though this depends on the type and price-point of the art).

Art studios are also an excellent option. There is often a large unmet need for quality and affordable space for artists to make their wares. We recommend encouraging people to come in and watch if the artist approves and the lease allows it. Provide indoor or outdoor seating to encourage people to linger. Watching art being made is a great way to activate the street. Artists who already have work created that can be displayed while they utilize the space for ongoing creation is an added benefit, allowing for retail use of the space as well.

Seek artists via social media groups (facebook, reddit, next door), art fair lists, neighboring community art commissions, etc.

Performing Artists

Could your local theater move their rehearsals to this space temporarily? There are always theater groups or bands looking for rehearsal and performance space. Partnering with a theater troupe(s), musicians or other performers would animate the space with real live people. This would provide advertising for them (many performers are struggling due to performance restrictions during the pandemic) as well as a mini show for passers by. Set up seating outside or inside to encourage people to watch for a while.



Images: Artist studio details via Laura Adai (top), Musical Storefronts via Kaufman Music Center (below)



Community Space

Another draw is a rotating community space. Many community residents, artists, and entrepreneurs want to see positive change and would be willing to support revitalization of their downtown or main street. In many cases, they only need a vision, and help from the municipality to guide them through the regulatory and permitting processes. Support could come in the form of finances, volunteering, visioning and planning events, or donations of goods and services. This approach enhances the sense of community while enhancing the image of the street and district.

An organization or staff could organize micro events in one of the vacant storefronts: social clubs, community meetings, pop-up concerts, game nights, music lessons, indoor winter "park" space, lending library, teen hangout, community class location, weekly "TED" talk, movie nights with popcorn sales, etc.

 *See How Others Are Doing It: CultureHouse in Boston, MA*



*Images: CultureHouse, <https://culturehouse.medium.com/>
Left: Union Square - Boston MA | Right: Kendall Square - Cambridge, MA*

We want to set up a Temporary Window Activation Outside Vacant Storefronts

Using vacant store windows as a canvas is a great way to add vibrancy to a street, and there is little risk for the store owner. No one need enter the storefront in this scenario. Window activations can create interest in the street, bringing more people to the area and keep them walking, increasing foot traffic for open businesses.

Additionally, simply upgrading the facade of a building can have a big impact on the overall feeling of a street. A full activation (interior or exterior) is not always necessary. Providing grants for owners to upgrade the facades of their vacant buildings can have positive benefits for surrounding businesses. Outdoor space improvements provide dual benefit to the business and the community streetscape, which drives more foot traffic and thus more business.

“A vacant storefront is the perfect stage to creatively promote the available space or to showcase other businesses and events in the area. Furthermore, clever window displays can tell a story, educate, entertain, lift spirits, and draw attention to downtowns. It’s time to transform these blank canvases into attractive and engaging windows displays through a visual storefront campaign.”

~ Main Street America. Main Spotlight: Windows of Opportunity - The Transformation of Empty Storefronts on Main Street. Lisa Morgen, Retailworks, Inc. March 18, 2021. <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2021/03/18/main-spotlight>

Management and Financial Structures

Management of an exterior window activation is far simpler than an interior pop-up activation. A lease is not needed; only a simple use agreement with the owner of the building.

Agreement Considerations

The agreement should stipulate the terms of the short-term use. While the terms of the agreement will vary slightly based on the type of activation, below are key elements to consider.

	Agreement Considerations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Length of the term. It is simplest to have the entire program sign for the same term, such as a three-month program, but you could adjust the term based on the landlord or the activation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilities. The store owner should ensure coverage of the utilities. Specifically, electrical, since lighting will be required for the window activation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details for how the exterior and interior window space may (or may not be) altered, along with stipulations that improvements or alterations of any kind must be discussed with the landlord.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repair responsibilities and timelines. Either the program coordinators or the landlords will be for ensuring lights work for the duration of the installation. Who will monitor the project and how often? If a bulb goes out, who will repair it?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear understanding of responsibility for any personal or property damage resulting from the installation. This would be unusual, but if the window installation somehow damages the building (or more rare, incites someone to damage the building) who will be held responsible?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements outlining what is allowed and what would trigger immediate termination of the agreement. This may include outlining language or imagery that you want to prohibit.

Funding Sources

Grants

Vacant storefront window activations are about downtown revitalization, and grants are available to fund this work. The State of Massachusetts is committed to helping communities recover from the economic downturn experienced during the pandemic. The Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program was intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts. Funding resources are included on the website and are intended to inform communities of the most up-to-date information on grants and other resources available. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program#funding-resources->



Mass.gov

A typical window activation is an art installation. Artist grants are a good place to start for funding:

- New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) offers grants to artists and organizations to support the creation and presentation of work. See <https://www.nefa.org/>
- Mass Cultural Council partners with communities across the Commonwealth to "expand access, improve education, promote diversity, and encourage excellence in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Through our efforts, we make our state a better place to live, work, and visit for everyone." In 2021, Mass Cultural Council supported 161 organizations with \$342,500 in Cultural Investment Portfolio Projects grants for programming during the July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 fiscal year. See <https://massculturalcouncil.org/>



Local Partners

Private companies that have a stake in the success of the program could sponsor a storefront. Support from partners could come in the form of funding (such as a sponsorship) or sweat equity and donated materials. A major office building neighboring many vacant properties may find that donating to the program in order to beautify the street is a benefit to their employees and therefore their bottom line. Nearby entertainment venues may be able to donate time or artwork to the program, seeing the benefit of more activity in the area creating a safer environment, especially at night when most shows take place. Local charitable organizations may provide volunteer hours to support and may be able to tie the program to their mission and goals, tapping into additional funds that may not be available to the municipality normally.

Advertising

Another approach to funding a window activation would be to treat it as advertising space. Neighboring businesses could extend their window displays and pay for the extra frontage. Theaters could advertise upcoming shows. Treating the storefront as a valuable marketing opportunity could open more funding opportunities.

Business Improvement Districts

Since neighboring businesses will benefit from a pop-up program, having those businesses fund or partially fund the program makes sense. If you have an established business improvement district with funding, tap into those businesses to sponsor the program. Be creative as you seek how to support the program.

 The Downtown Milwaukee Business Improvement District #21 implemented a pop-up program in 17 windows at four downtown properties. These activations drew attention to the real estate space as well as entertained passersby. The installations included illustrations of historic downtown buildings and envisioned types of businesses that could work in those spaces. "Activating vacant storefronts has proven to be a great utilization of our resources," said Beth Weirick, CEO of Downtown Milwaukee, Business Improvement District #21.¹



Images: Milwaukee BID #21 Window Activations. Photos by Retailworks, Inc.

¹ Main Street America. Main Spotlight: Windows of Opportunity - The Transformation of Empty Storefronts on Main Street. Lisa Morgen, Retailworks, Inc. March 18, 2021. <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2021/03/18/main-spotlight>

Recruiting Storefronts and Activations

Attracting owners/landlords and window activations to an exterior vacant storefront program is far simpler than interior pop-ups; but some of the same principles apply. In addition to the recommendations in the previous section, "Recruiting Spaces and Tenants" on page 23, also consider the following points.

Selecting Storefronts for the Program

Size. Does the storefront have large windows? In order to create an attractive, eye-catching window display, the windows need to be large enough to create an impact. If the windows don't allow for an effective indoor display, shift to thinking though what could be done to the facade of the building that might fit within the program. If the building is vacant and street parking in front of the building is not needed, consider adding a parklette in this space.

Visibility. Is the storefront visible to passersby? Vacant spaces on a second floor of a building or off an alley are not the best choices for an exterior activation.

Lighting. Are there working exterior lights to light the facade at night? Do interior lights exist that could illuminate the window display area? If lights aren't available, are there electrical outlets close to the windows so temporary lights can be used? Ensure the landlord knows that electrical service is required for these activations.

Cleanliness. Is the exterior and visible interior of the storefront clean and in good repair? If not, will the owner be responsible, or will that be part of the program? Keep in mind that a window activation should consider the interior of the space. If the space is in disrepair, create a window display that completely hides the interior.

"An empty storefront is the perfect stage to not only creatively promote a space, but showcase a downtown's "brand", feature local celebs, and even highlight historic buildings."

~Milwaukee BID #21 Project Statement.
Retailworks Inc.

Recruitment and Selection of Activations

In many cases, exterior storefront activations involve working with artists to install an outdoor gallery, but there are many other avenues to explore. Some ideas for activations include:

- Outdoor Art Gallery. Exhibit artist's existing work, or ask artists to create work based on a theme.
- Connected piece that tells a story or is a riddle/scavenger hunt that gets people to walk the entire length of the district, visiting each of the storefronts.
- Themed or holiday window decorations. For a long-term project, rotate the theme monthly or seasonally to get people back to see the updates.
- Promotion of a community-wide event or building project. Show large-scale project concept drawings and ask for public feedback.
- Community message boards. Chalkboards or magnetic letters allowing people to say hello to their neighbors.
- Advertising space for other businesses or nonprofits. This might be marketed as a "Local Business Spotlight." Highlight a local business in vacant store windows (owner, store history, etc.) This could be free advertising for the business, or charge for it as a revenue stream.
- Know Your Neighbors campaign. Have the community nominate great neighbors. Tell their story of how they contribute to the community. Use photography or have a local artist draw their portrait.

 Cambridge, MA had a contest for artists to submit storefront imagery which could be reproduced and used throughout the city in vacant storefronts. This is an ongoing program to support all districts with vacancies over time, rather than a targeted, temporary pop-up program. *See the How Others Are Doing It section.*

 This children's toy store in Hopkins, MN made use of an inactive mail slot to interact with passersby, asking children to leave a question for the "Wampus." A similar interactive display could be set up in a vacant storefront to encourage community interaction (and fun!).



Working with Artists

If an art in storefronts or mural approach is taken, quality responses for artists require you to provide them guide rails for their creativity to be expressed. Three possible ways to pursue a artist activation:

1. An open call for artists to submit existing work to be displayed in storefronts.
2. Directly commissioning new pieces from local artists for specific locations, perhaps centered around a theme.
3. A competitive process in which the artist submits an idea created specifically for this project. If you want to hold a competition, a best practice requires limited inputs of artist time on the front end (such as submission of prior work and qualifications) and production of new work only once the opportunity is secured.

Seek artists via social media groups (facebook, reddit, next door), art fair lists, neighboring community art commissions, etc, or partner with local artists organizations. In the City of Cambridge, MA, Cambridge Arts works to partner local artists who are interested in temporary installations or pop-up projects with owners of vacant properties.

Note: working with local schools and their art departments/teachers would also be a possible approach; as well as working with a company that specializes in window activations, such as Retailworks, Inc. (<https://retailworksinc.com/visual-merchandising-and-window-display/>)

How Others Are Doing It

How Others Are Doing It

Newton, MA | Needham, MA | Melrose, MA

UpNext is a Newton-based, woman-owned business that began a pop-up program in Newton, which has now expanded to Needham and Melrose. UpNext works with local real estate companies to identify vacant spaces and helps select the small businesses that will occupy those spaces.



In the three towns, over 100 emerging brands and entrepreneurs applied to be a part of Project: Pop-Up in the summer and fall of 2021. 15 brands were selected to occupy storefronts for two-to-three months at a subsidized rental rate. The project is funded by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development's (MOBD) Regional Pilot Project Grant Program.

Newton, MA opened four pop-up sites each hosting multiple brands, as well as artist displays. At the end of 2021, two sites were still open hosting five brands and one artist. Both Needham and Melrose opened two sites.

In addition to helping connect entrepreneurs with brick and mortar spaces, the project gives access to support services, marketing opportunities, and event stipends to help get the businesses started. Locations and brands are advertised on a central website.

Links for more information

The Project Pop-Up website lists the locations and links to media about the program: <https://www.project-pop-up.com/>

In addition to retail pop-ups, the program recruited artists to display their works in the spaces: <https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=69001>

UpNext works in many communities. <https://poppingupnext.com/spaces>

Successes

80% of pop-ups extended through the holiday

Multiple sites were leased long-term after the pop-up, even after years of vacancy

40% BIPOC-owned and 80% women-owned businesses were supported through the program



Images: UpNext, Project Pop-Up Instagram - Left images: Melrose, MA | Right images: Newton, MA

Franklin, MA | Wrentham, MA

The neighboring Towns of Franklin and Wrentham, MA partnered to fund and organize a pop-up shop program. The two towns, together, were awarded \$188,000 from the Regional Pilot Project Grant Program at the end of April 2021.

The Town of Franklin, MA opened two pop-up shops in highly visible locations in its downtown. These spaces allow small business owners the opportunity to test the market in a downtown brick-and-mortar space with no financial risk. Four businesses cycled through the spaces at 2A Main Street and 70 East Central Street.



"During Covid, so many small business owners had to pivot, and we know it's a big leap to go from running a business out of your home or only having a website to actually having a brick and mortar location. We're trying to bridge the gap."

~ Anne Marie Tracey, of the town of Franklin

The Town of Wrentham worked to attract home businesses to the program, and also worked with the Cultural Council to identify local artists and artisans. The Town entered into a six-month lease agreement with one vacant storefront. Payment terms were based on the owner's mortgage and utility fees, and was close to the amount of a typical rent. (The owner held the utility contracts and continued to pay those charges.) While multiple sub-leases could have been issued to fill the six-month timeframe, the Town found a pop-up tenant wanting the space for the entire six months.

Lessons learned in Wrentham

- ☑ Get the word out well ahead of time. It takes time to develop the relationships to recruit tenants and storefronts.
- ☑ Be flexible on the timeframes and work out a schedule that works for the type of activation. Allow longer activations if the business supports it.
- ☑ Understand the space you have and be creative with way you use it.

Links for more information

Franklin, MA program website:

<https://www.franklinma.gov/economic-development/pages/pop-shop-franklin>

Franklin, MA news:

<https://www.franklintownnews.com/2021/06/01/358117/franklin-wrentham-get-state-funding-for-pop-up-shops>

Cambridge, MA

Cambridge has a very proactive approach to vacant storefronts. Since even temporary vacancies through normal turnover can have a negative impact on the perception of a commercial corridor's vitality and quality of the consumer shopping experience, Cambridge works to activate vacant storefronts on an ongoing basis. The City has developed many resources

"The goal of activating vacant retail is maintaining street level activity, protecting property values, maintaining neighborhood integrity and accessibility, safeguarding against economic property blight, protecting city resources, and ensuring the safe and sanitary maintenance of ground floor vacant properties."

Vacant Storefront Initiative Website:
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/EconDev/VacantStoreFrontResources>

Vacant Property Database and Site Finder Form

Cambridge, MA maintains a database of vacant properties viewable by the public. This allows entrepreneurs to find spaces to occupy. Cambridge provides a form for businesses to fill out so the city can match them with an available space.

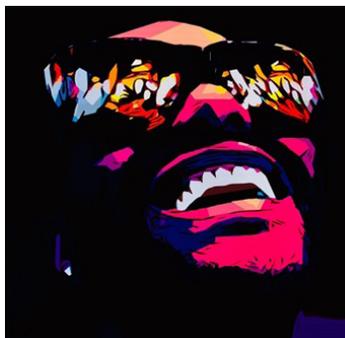
Vacant Storefront Creative Design Contest

In order to be ready to activate vacant storefronts as soon as they come up, each year the Community Development Department and the Cambridge Arts Council hold a contest, inviting local artists to submit their original artwork, photography, and designs. Five winners are selected, whose work can be reproduced and used for temporary window displays for vacant ground floor storefronts. This project enables property owners to choose and print artwork for use in windows while the store is vacant.

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/econdev/vacantstorefrontresources/vacantstorefrontcreativedesigntest>

[CDD/](#)

*Two of the 2020 finalists:
 True Colors by Greggy Bazile (left)
 Joy Revealed by Valerie Imparato (right)*



Key Resources

Key Resources

Sample Documents

Sample Program Descriptions and Tenant Applications

Referenced in the The Basics: "Step 7: Document your Program Plan" on page 14, documentation of your program along with the tenant application will help in recruitment.

Project description and application PDFs:

<https://www.sheboyganwi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Pop-Up-Shop-Application-2021.pdf>

<https://ctycms.com/wi-greenbay/docs/pop-up-shop-info.pdf>

Sample online application from West Town Chicago:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7BuDH3WHeydtH8XYIyQgFuFphY84v4m8xDAPwF71muxJFXw/viewform>

Sample Tenant Rental Agreements, Leases and Forms

Sample Rental Agreement:

<https://www.alittlebeaconblog.com/popup-event-rental-agreement>

Sample Tenant Lease:

https://4c0efff1-86f8-4e0f-a650-4a2a17e38775.filesusr.com/ugd/607e2e_e6bc987615744358a5e98cab2c514a0f.pdf

Sample Tenant Lease Rider:

https://4c0efff1-86f8-4e0f-a650-4a2a17e38775.filesusr.com/ugd/607e2e_00b0b95b443047cabf0160fe1923df4e.pdf

Sample COVID Rider:

https://4c0efff1-86f8-4e0f-a650-4a2a17e38775.filesusr.com/ugd/607e2e_4274ae544649451db2dd81a3e106a953.pdf

Long-term Vacant Storefront Management

While this toolkit covers temporary activations of vacant storefronts, management of vacancies for long-term occupancy is the end goal. The following programs can aid in management of vacant storefronts on an ongoing basis.

Massachusetts Vacant Storefronts Program (MVSP)

Under this program, municipalities may apply to the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) to designate a defined downtown or other commercial area as a Certified Vacant Storefront District. After designation, businesses or individuals may apply to the EACC for refundable EDIP tax credits for leasing and occupying a vacant storefront in that district. In the fall of 2021, 18 communities had registered Certified Vacant Storefront Districts.

For a property to be considered vacant, it must be unoccupied for a period of at least 12 months. The guidelines for the program indicate that:

"Temporary pop-up shops do not count against the 12 month vacancy timeline if:

- The space is offered to the pop-up at, or below, cost; and
- The pop-up shop is open for less than 2 calendar months; and
- The space hosts no more than two pop-up shops in each calendar year."

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-vacant-storefronts-program-mvsp>

Vacant Property Registration Ordinances

A Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO) requires that owners of vacant commercial properties in a community to submit information to a registry and pay an annual fee for each year that the property remains vacant. This enables the municipality to track and monitor vacant properties and work toward occupancy.

Best Practices Report

In 2018 the City of Cambridge published Storefront Vacancies Best Practices. This report outlines long-term regulatory strategies for working with vacant storefronts. The bulk of the document outlines implementation of a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance.

https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/EconDev/retailstrategy/cambridgevacancystorefrontreport_6302018.pdf

Other Resources

Resource for Retailer Looking to Add a Pop-Up

From shopify.com blog, the article [Pop-Up Shops Are Set to Surge \(and Everything Else You Need to Know to Try Temporary Retail\)](#) guides small businesses in how and why they should try a pop-up shop. This may be a useful resource to share while recruiting tenants.

<https://www.shopify.com/blog/pop-up-shop#5>

Help for Creating Community Pop-Up Spaces

From Culture House:

https://culturehouse.cc/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/culturehouse_manual.pdf

From Freespace:

<http://freespace-io.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/files/2013/10/freespace-toolkit1.pdf>

Friendly Storefronts Toolkit

From The Musicant Group, this toolkit provides ideas for activating occupied storefronts, but the tactics for improvements are applicable to pop-up spaces too.

<http://www.musicantgroup.com/free-ideas.html>

Covid Response Toolkit for Business Districts

From The Musicant Group and Hennepin County, this toolkit provides strategies and resources for businesses to respond to the challenges of operating during Covid.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VTM6M7GL8smIrkqtNuvn6KBtxkML00Nj/view>

Funding and Support

State of Massachusetts Programs

Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program#funding-resources->

Regional Pilot Project Grant Program (2021)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/regional-pilot-project-grant-program>

Resources for Grants for the Arts

New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)

<https://www.nefa.org/>

Mass Cultural Council

<https://massculturalcouncil.org/>



For more information, visit:

www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program

If you have questions about the RRP program, contact:

Emmy Hahn

MDI/RRP Program Coordinator, DHCD
elizabeth.hahn@mass.gov

Chris Kluchman

Deputy Director, Community Services Division, DHCD
chris.kluchman@mass.gov