

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

Redevelopment Options for Central Square and Downtown Lynn, MA



December 2, 2014



Urban Land
Institute

Boston/New England



MASSDEVELOPMENT

Build. Create. Innovate.

Table of Contents

- Executive Summary.....3**
- 1. ULI and the TAP Process5**
 - a. Urban Land Institute (ULI)
 - b. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)
 - c. MassDevelopment Support
 - d. Panel Members
 - e. Stakeholders
 - f. TAP Process
- 2. Background and Assignment9**
 - a. Central Square
 - b. City of Lynn’s Objectives for the TAP
- 3. Assets and Opportunities11**
- 4. Recommendations.....15**
 - a. Focus on Quality of Life Improvements and Code Enforcement
 - b. Focus on Retail
 - c. Focus on Programming
 - d. Market and Financial Recommendations
 - e. Physical Planning Opportunities
- 5. Next Steps/Implementation.....21**

Executive Summary

Under the direction of the Urban Land Institute’s Boston/New England District Council, the Central Square Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened in Lynn, Massachusetts on December 2, 2014, bringing together stakeholders, community leaders, and a panel of planning, design, engineering, and development professionals for a day-long session focused on identifying the issues, constraints, and opportunities presented by Central Square and the surrounding area. The report that follows, which summarizes the TAP recommendations, comprises five chapters.

Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process gives an overview of the Urban Land Institute’s Boston/New England District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) and provides a detailed list of participants in the Central Square TAP, including City officials, stakeholders, and the panel of land use professionals.

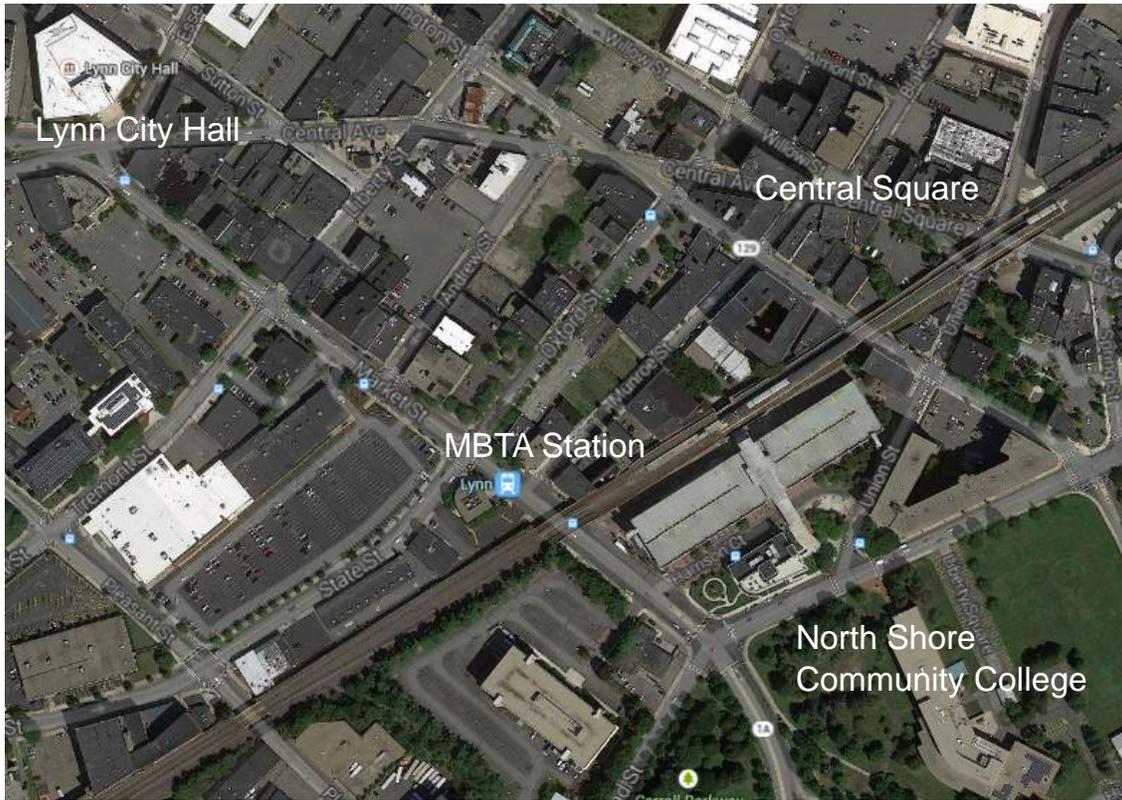
Chapter 2: Background and Assignment gives background information about Central Square and downtown Lynn and provides an overview of recent City and private investment in the area. This chapter also reviews the City of Lynn’s objectives for the TAP, as stated in its initial

application, which were to identify a targeted strategy that would lead to private investment in the area, to identify tools and resources to encourage owners to either redevelop or sell their properties, and to outline any additional steps the City should take to encourage investment in the area.

Chapter 3: Assets and Opportunities outlines the various positive attributes the panel observed about downtown Lynn, including existing employers, the MBTA commuter rail station, the nearby waterfront, North Shore Community College’s downtown campus, local arts organizations and the City’s Cultural District designation, diversity, an emerging restaurant district, the Lynn Memorial Auditorium, significant architecture, considerable public investment, and food manufacturing and service companies.

Chapter 4: Recommendations outlines the panel’s recommendations for the City, broken down into four categories: code enforcement, retail, programming, and market/financial considerations.

Finally, **Chapter 5: Next Steps/Implementation** discusses the near-term steps that the City can take to begin revitalizing its downtown.



This aerial photograph shows the study area in downtown Lynn. Important landmarks include City Hall (top left), Central Square (top right), North Shore Community College (bottom right), and the Lynn commuter rail station (center).

1. ULI and the TAP Process

a. Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has nearly 30,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service, including developers, architects, planners, lawyers, bankers, and economic development professionals, among others.

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities. The Boston/New England District Council serves the six New England states and has over 1,000 members.

b. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

The ULI Boston/New England Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of communities and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use challenges who benefit from planning and development professionals

providing pro bono recommendations. At the TAP, a group of diverse professionals specially assembled with expertise in the issues posed typically spends one to two days visiting and analyzing existing conditions, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

c. MassDevelopment Support

MassDevelopment is the state's finance and development authority. Both a lender and developer, the agency works with businesses, nonprofits, and local, state, and federal officials and agencies to strengthen the Massachusetts economy. Through these collaborations, MassDevelopment helps create jobs, increase the number of housing units, eliminate blight, and address factors limiting economic growth, including transportation, energy, and infrastructure deficiencies.

Recognizing the alignment between ULI Boston/New England's Technical Assistance Panels and MassDevelopment's mission to support sustainable redevelopment across the Commonwealth, in 2011 the two organizations partnered to support TAPs in four Gateway Cities throughout the Commonwealth. The success of that initial year's collaboration led to continued support.

MassDevelopment partnered with ULI Boston/New England to sponsor the Central Square TAP.

d. Panel Members

ULI Boston/New England convened a panel of volunteers whose members represent a range of the disciplines associated with the planning and development challenges presented by Central Square.

Disciplines represented include architecture, urban planning and design, development, and civil/traffic engineering. Members were selected with the intent of convening a robust array of professional expertise relevant to the City of Lynn's objectives for this TAP. The following is the list of panelists:

- Joseph B. Bator, Eastern Bank (TAP Co-Chair)
- Laurence S. Spang, Arrowstreet, Inc. (TAP Co-Chair)
- Francis X. DeCoste, Jr., TR Advisors
- David Bennet, David L. Bennet & Associates
- Hayley Suminski, Hunt Mortgage Group
- Richard Henderson, MassDevelopment
- Maureen McAvey, ULI
- Philip Giffie, NOAH

James Cowdell, executive director of the Economic Industrial Development Corporation of Lynn, served as the primary contact for ULI Boston/New England for the City.

Calvin Hennick served as the consulting technical writer, while Michelle Landers

of ULI Boston/New England provided organizational and technical support in preparation for and during the TAP event. Tania Hartford, director of real estate services for MassDevelopment, helped organize the TAP and participated in the discussions and recommendations.

e. Stakeholders

The TAP benefited from the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders — policy makers, City staff, business owners, property owners, residents, and representatives of area institutions — who met with the panel and shared information, ideas, and opinions on a range of issues affecting Central Square. Stakeholders at the session included:

- Brendan Crighton, State Representative Elect and City Council Member
- Robert Fennell, State Representative
- Charles Gaeta, Lynn Housing Authority, EDIC/Lynn
- Patricia Gentile, North Shore Community College
- John Gilberg, Bayview Realty Corp.
- Ted Grant, Lynn Daily Item
- Gordon Hall, Hall Management Company
- Corey Jackson, Resident and Artist
- Thomas McGee, State Senator
- Peggy Phelps, Lynn Housing Authority
- Emily Ruddock, Downtown Lynn Cultural District
- Alex Steinberg, RCG LLC
- Joe Torretta, D'Amici's Bakery
- Jeff Weeden, Lynn Housing Authority



Panel members touring downtown Lynn.

f. TAP Process

The Central Square TAP was held on December 2, 2014 at Lynn City Hall. In the morning, James Cowdell, executive director of the Economic Industrial Development Corporation of Lynn, welcomed the panelists. Panelists also had the opportunity to interview several representatives from the Lynn Housing Authority. Then, Bill Bochnak, project coordinator for EDIC Lynn, led a tour of Central Square and the surrounding area.

The tour began on foot at City Hall, proceeding north on Essex Street, then east on Washington Street and south on Liberty Street. During the walk, panelists

were able to view existing development, which includes a number of small stores and restaurants, auto-related businesses, and Lynn District Court.

The group stopped at D'Amici's Downtown Café & Bakery, where panelists spoke with owner Joe Torretta, who led a short tour of his business and of Rossetti Restaurant, a new and successful business in the building. The tour then proceeded to Willow Street, where panelists viewed the abandoned sites of Whytes Laundry and the Hawthorne Restaurant, before moving on to Central Square to see the City-owned property in development at 33 Central Square. The tour stopped for panelists to view the vacant Lynn Daily Item building and the viaducts under the MBTA tracks, then continued down Exchange Street to Broad Street (State Route 129) to see the campus of North Shore Community College and the recently constructed new office building for All Care VNA and Hospice. The tour then proceeded back to City Hall via Market Street.

After the tour, the ULI panel interviewed the stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the relevant issues, dynamics, and opportunities relating to Central Square and the surrounding area. The panelists then engaged in an intensive charrette to develop recommendations addressing some of the critical issues associated with attracting more market-rate residential development to the City's downtown. The TAP concluded with a presentation to the Workforce Development Committee of the Lynn City Council.

The presentation is available electronically at the ULI Boston/New England website <http://boston.uli.org>.

2. Background and Assignment

a. Central Square and Downtown Lynn

Downtown Lynn was once a bustling, vibrant city center. In the late 1800s, spurred by a leather-stretching machine invented by Dutch-African immigrant Jan Matzeliger, the City became known as the “shoe capital of the world,” and Lynn continued to be a hub of industry and commerce on the North Shore for much of the 20th century.

In the 1970s, however, shopping malls were built in the suburbs surrounding Lynn, depressing demand for retail stores in the City and driving many out of business, and the downtown has never fully recovered.

In the mid-2000s, the City rezoned the downtown to allow abandoned industrial buildings to be converted into housing, with a goal of bringing 500 new residents into the downtown – the number believed necessary to create a demand for new businesses. This strategy worked for a time, with new development drawing 250 residents to the area. However, the collapse of the development market in 2008 stalled that progress. Surrounding communities have seen increased development activity in the last several years, but that activity has not spilled over into downtown Lynn.

The City has invested considerable public resources in an attempt to revitalize the area in recent years, including nearly \$2 million in



33 Central Square, where Lynn’s EDIC is developing eight artist live/work units.

The vacant Lynn Daily Item building, as seen from the commuter rail station across the street.



infrastructure improvements, \$14 million for a new downtown police station, and \$1.5 million (through the EDIC) to renovate a Central Square building that will provide live/work space for eight artists. Also, the Lynn Housing Authority is planning to develop a 72-unit residential building near downtown.

The City applied for and received a Cultural District designation from the state, making downtown Lynn one of the first five such districts in the state. Additionally, the City renovated the 2,200-seat Lynn Memorial Auditorium, located in City Hall, and reopened the space in 2006.

Despite the City's considerable efforts, much of the land in downtown Lynn remains either vacant or occupied by businesses like gas stations and tire shops, which City officials don't believe contribute to an active and vibrant downtown. (These uses are no longer allowed under current zoning, but existing businesses were grandfathered in when zoning changes were made.) While these businesses provide important tax revenue and jobs to Lynn, officials believe they may be better suited to other areas of the City. In addition, a large number of properties are occupied by social service providers that do not generate economic activity.

Officials and residents are excited by the opening of D'Amici's Bakery and the high-end Rossetti Restaurant in the past several years, as well as the planned expansion of the downtown campus of North Shore Community College. However, the City has not yet found a way to spur additional residential development in the downtown.

b. City of Lynn's Objectives for the TAP

The Technical Assistance Panel was asked to identify a targeted strategy that would lead to private investment in Central Square and the surrounding area, taking into consideration the public investment that has been consistently applied to the target area for the past 15 years. Next, the City asked panelists to identify tools and resources to encourage private property owners in the target area – some of whom have refused or have been financially unable to redevelop their properties – to either sell their properties or redevelop them in a way that fits a “best and highest” use model. Finally, the panel was asked to outline any additional steps the City should take to encourage investment in downtown.

3. Assets and Opportunities

As the City seeks to revitalize its downtown, the panel identified a number of important and attractive assets to draw upon. These include:

Existing Employers

While the City desires new development to make the downtown a livelier place, there are already a number of employers and businesses that draw people into the area on a daily basis. These include large employers such as Eastern Bank and North Shore Community College, grocery stores, healthcare organizations, several busy restaurants, and the nationally famous Zimman's fabric and home décor store.

MBTA Station

Lynn's proximity to Boston via its downtown MBTA commuter rail station is a tremendous asset. While driving into Boston can take over an hour during rush hour, commuters on the train can be at North Station in 20 to 30 minutes. Moreover, the MBTA's 925-space parking garage, with an occupancy rate of only 21 percent, is an underutilized asset.

Waterfront

The waterfront's proximity to downtown presents great opportunity. Several panelists envisioned development along the waterfront leading the way for new development

downtown. The City has already pursued infrastructure improvements to facilitate waterfront development, and has leveraged the waterfront as a resource by creating a popular commuter ferry to Boston. However, the downtown is currently cut off from the water by the busy Lynnway roadway, and there is no intuitive pedestrian path connecting the waterfront to the City center.



The commuter rail tracks (shown here with a public art installation underneath) running through downtown Lynn are an asset that many communities would envy.

Concept design of the Lynn waterfront.



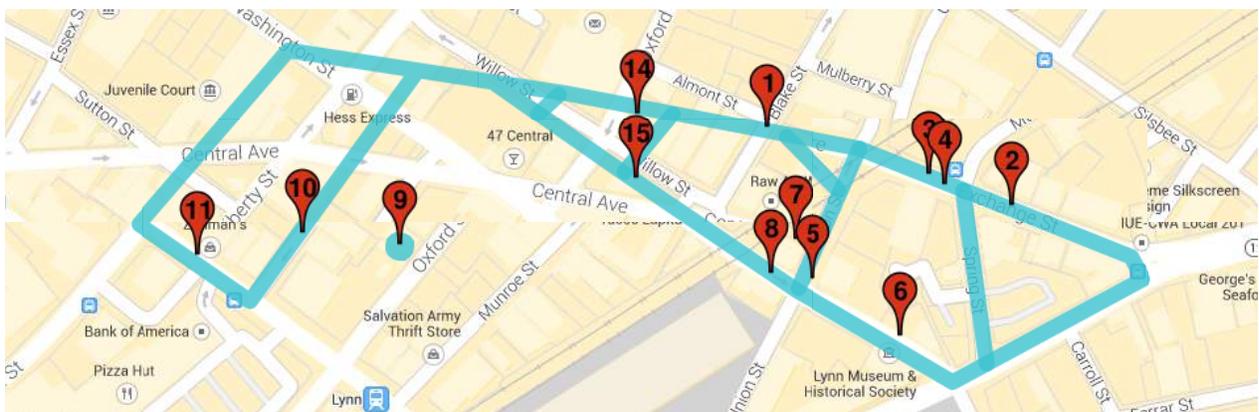
North Shore Community College

The downtown Lynn campus of North Shore Community College has an enrollment of 4,000 students. Panelists saw an opportunity to draw these students into downtown with activities and events aimed at the student demographic. NSCC President Patricia Gentile has committed to expanding the downtown campus (one of four on the North Shore, and one that local officials feels has received less attention in the past than some of the others). The school is planning to break ground on an expansion to its existing building in the spring of 2015, with a likely January 2017 opening date. That building will include office space and ten new classrooms. In addition, the school is starting a master planning process that will identify future growth opportunities for the green space adjacent to the existing buildings. Gentile also said that NSCC is home to Lynn’s only bookstore, and mentioned that she would like to turn it into more of a general-purpose bookstore, complete with a children’s section and a café.

Arts Organizations and Cultural Designation

The Downtown Lynn Cultural District was one of the first five such districts recognized by the state, and in May 2014, the City hired Emily Ruddock as the first director of the district. Organizations like LynnArts, Arts After Hours, and R.A.W. Art Works contribute to an active arts scene in the downtown by holding events that bring people into the area and creating public art projects like murals.

The map at the bottom of this page shows the Downtown Lynn Cultural District (outlined in blue). The district includes R.A.W. Art Works (1), LynnArts (3), Arts After Hours (4), and the Lynn Museum (5).



Diversity

Considerable diversity exists in Lynn, with more than 40 languages spoken by students attending the Lynn Public Schools. The City is 41 percent white, 20 percent black, 5 percent Asian, and around 35 percent multiracial or another race. Among all races, 35 percent of the City's residents are Latino. A number of the City's immigrants operate successful businesses in other areas of Lynn, and several panelists felt that there might be an opportunity to encourage those entrepreneurs to expand their operations to the downtown. While these entrepreneurs are often willing to take on the risk of opening and operating a small business in an underutilized area like downtown Lynn, they may lack access to traditional sources of capital. Immigrant-oriented businesses such as restaurants and grocery stores may help to bring economic activity downtown and integrate the immigrant populations with the rest of the City.

Emergence of Popular Restaurants

In particular, there appears to be considerable buzz around Rossetti Restaurant, which is said to be near capacity most days of the week. It has become a destination, drawing diners from outside of Lynn to the downtown at a level that many stakeholders said was unprecedented. The Blue Ox is also popular, and the longstanding Capitol Diner and newer D'Amici's Bakery provide good dining options during the day.

Lynn Memorial Auditorium

The 2,200-seat Lynn Memorial Auditorium, renovated and reopened in 2006 after a long dormancy, hosts national acts and brings large audiences downtown for these events. Stakeholders reported a significant boost in pedestrian activity and restaurant patronage during events at the Auditorium. Panel members saw an opportunity to further leverage this resource by bringing in family-friendly events, possibly by hosting weekend-long festivals centered around popular film series such as *Star Wars*.



The events lineup at Lynn Memorial Auditorium includes national acts like Martina McBride, Kenny Rogers, and Pat Benatar.

Significant Architecture

Downtown Lynn is home to a number of attractive historic buildings dating back to the City's heyday as the center of retail and economic activity on the North Shore. These buildings help to create a strong urban character and pedestrian-friendly streetscape that can contribute to the urban vitality of the City. The panel recommended that the City explore historic district or building designations to help foster economic development through historic tax credits.

Public Investment

The City and EDIC have invested considerable resources, including \$2 million in infrastructure improvements such as antique-style lighting, new sidewalks, and roadways, \$14 million for a downtown police station, and \$1.5 million to rehabilitate a building that will serve as live/work space for artists.

Food Manufacturing/Service

Panel members considered the number of food manufacturing and service businesses located in and around downtown Lynn a valuable asset, due to continuing growth in the food industry. It's possible that the food manufacturing businesses can benefit from recent interest in food products that are grown or manufactured locally.

4. Recommendations

The panel recommended that the City focus on three primary areas as it seeks to draw more activity and residential development to the downtown. Panelists also made several market and financial recommendations, as well as recommendations surrounding physical planning opportunities.

Ultimately, the panel concluded that increasing the demand for housing downtown is the best strategy for attracting sustainable private development to the area. Rather than spending limited funds on one-off projects or offering subsidies to private developers, the City should focus its efforts on improving public space and activities and recruiting desired businesses to the downtown. If successful, this strategy will lead to private developers investing in the area to expand inventory and meet the increased demand.

The recommendations are as follows:

a. Focus on Quality of Life Improvements and Code Enforcement

- The City should encourage streetscape improvements to increase pedestrian activity, including improvements of downtown parking lots, many of which overwhelm the sidewalks. The panel recommended establishing and enforcing standards for setbacks, fencing, landscaping, paving, and striping to help buffer the privately

owned parking lots from the sidewalks and improve the overall pedestrian safety and experience. A safer and more pleasant environment will encourage people to explore the downtown on foot and reduce the perceived need to find parking directly adjacent to their destination.

- To encourage landowners to redevelop (or, at the very least, maintain) their properties, the City should hold weekly meetings between its fire, police, health, and inspectional services department staff, along with downtown business owners, for the purpose of discussing problem properties and code enforcement. If landowners can no longer idly “sit on” their properties, but must instead perform regular upkeep and maintenance, they may decide to improve their properties.

b. Focus on Retail

- The City should conduct a detailed market study or survey to determine unmet needs and the demographics that could be best served by new development downtown, including both retail and housing. This could be a low-cost collaborative effort involving the EDIC, Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Lynn Neighborhood Association, and other partners. The panel also suggested that NSCC conduct a housing survey of its students to determine whether there is an unmet demand for local, affordable housing.

- The City should approach successful entrepreneurs who operate businesses in other parts of Lynn or other communities in the North Shore and encourage them to create a second location in the downtown. The downtown locations of both D’Amici’s Bakery and Rossetti Restaurant, for example, are parts of small chains with several successful locations in the City and surrounding area. In particular, immigrant entrepreneurs who have had success in one of the City’s other neighborhoods may be receptive to outreach from the City.

- To help property owners attract tenants, the City should consider providing low-interest loans for tenant fit-out of existing buildings. This could help fill a need for property owners who are not able to provide tenant improvement funds to assist with tenant build-out. The City should also identify and promote any resources for small business improvements that are available through community banks.

- To facilitate the City’s desired look and feel for the downtown, the City should create or update design guidelines for building facades and consider creating a Design Review Board to implement the guidelines.

- Seek out businesses that may attract commuters passing along the edge of the downtown district as they drive to and from work or use the MBTA station. For example, a health club would have the potential to bring people into the area outside of work hours on a regular basis.

- Build on the success of Zimman’s, the nationally recognized fabric and home décor store in downtown. The City might consider designating a design district to attract complementary retailers to the area, such as home goods, furnishing, or painting businesses.

c. Focus on Programming

The developers who were interviewed indicated that downtown housing units simply are not able to command the rents necessary to cover development costs. Therefore, ULI panelists recommended that the City take steps to increase the demand for housing downtown before shifting its focus to increasing the supply. The following steps could help to generate this demand:

- Creating a farmers market (and possibly flea market) in the viaducts underneath the commuter rail tracks. The City has been seeking an active use for this space, and several stakeholders mentioned the possibility of converting the viaducts to retail or office space. However, several ULI panel members have experience with similar spaces in other parts of the country and expressed doubt that the spaces could ever be made watertight and habitable in a cost-effective manner. Temporary uses like a farmers market or flea market could generate activity in the area without requiring a large investment of capital to upgrade the existing spaces.

- Locating movable kiosks on the plaza outside the viaducts, while using the viaducts themselves for kiosk and

product storage. This is another option for activating the viaducts space that wouldn't require significant investment.

- Bringing food trucks into the downtown for events. It was reported by several stakeholders that the restaurants in the downtown don't have the capacity to serve the crowds that come into the area for large events, such as concerts at the 2,200-seat Lynn Memorial Auditorium. Encouraging food trucks – which have proved popular in other cities – to set up in the downtown for large events will both fill an existing need and help perpetuate the image of the downtown as a fun, attractive area. Food trucks can also help demonstrate a demand for dining options that could lead to permanent restaurants.
- Leveraging the MBTA parking garage. The City might work with the MBTA to create a validated parking system, which would encourage garage users to make purchases downtown and perhaps stay in the area after work for dinner or drinks. The City should also investigate whether the MBTA would allow other parking uses in the short term until the garage becomes more attractive and fills on a regular basis. This might include use by local employees to help ease pressures for on-street or other surface lot parking.
- Attracting North Shore Community College's culinary program to the downtown Lynn campus. This program is currently located in Middleton, but its on-campus restaurant would provide another dining option to the downtown. Also, the City should consider whether the College could create an off-campus training restaurant in the downtown, which would help to generate activity.

- Keeping the LynnArts building arts-focused. The organization has had to lease space to social service organizations for the rental income. Finding a way to attract arts-focused tenants would keep the building a landmark arts destination in the City.
- Considering a Business Improvement District (BID) and/or Main Streets Program. This could help to fund downtown beautification, special events, or other programs that would help to generate retail activity. For example, a Streets Ambassador program could help to improve perceived security and keep the streets attractive to help make the downtown more inviting to patrons.

d. Market and Financial Recommendations

- Be proactive in securing tax credits for desired developments. Because developers currently see market-rate residential development in downtown Lynn as financially unfeasible, any such project will be dependent on some sort of subsidy or monetary incentive like New Markets Tax Credits or Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. The City should seek to make these tax credits as easily obtainable as possible. For example, the City may create a historic district that targets historic buildings to be redeveloped, or secure statements from local and state historical associations regarding the historical significance of such buildings. The City could also serve as an information resource to small developers who may be interested in Lynn, but lack experience with obtaining tax credits.

- Explore a District Improvement Financing (DIF) program for public infrastructure improvements.
- Aggressively market existing EDIC programs and tools. The City has programs to help entrepreneurs start and succeed in business, including tax incentives and a micro-loan program. However, these tools can only help encourage development if entrepreneurs know about them and they can be quickly and easily engaged.

e. Physical Planning Opportunities

The downtown is a large area that encompasses a variety of urban conditions. In places, there is a tight historic building fabric that well defines the streetscape. In other areas, the historic building fabric has been removed, and the resultant parking lots or vacant parcels do not contribute to an active urban area.

The ULI panel recommended that the City focus its attention on specific areas of the downtown to avoid diluting its energy over the entire area. In particular, there are two areas in downtown that are showing signs of activity: the area around the Auditorium, which benefits from the activities of the shows, and the arts area at Central Square (see diagrams on p. 20). The panel recommended that the City focus on improvements to Central Avenue to help connect these two anchor areas. In addition, improvements along Union Street could help to connect the North Shore Community College campus to the emerging Cultural District in and

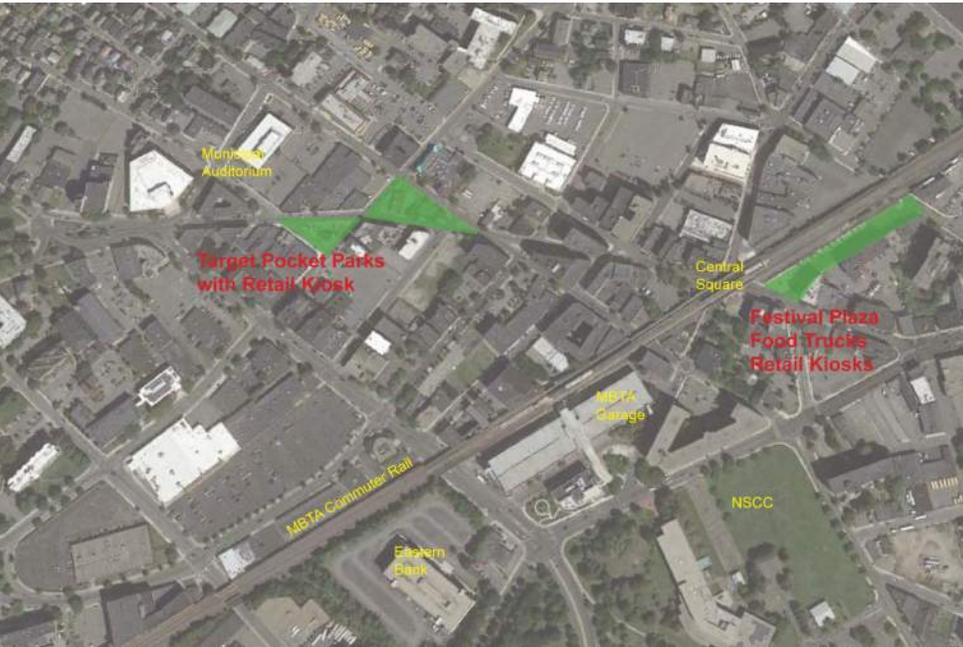
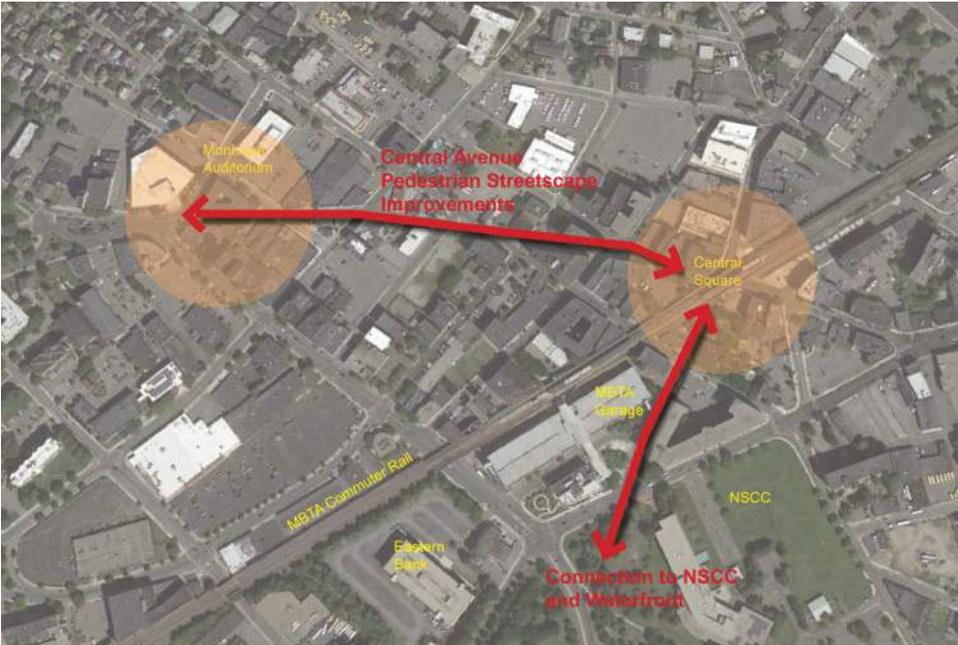
around Central Square. Potential planning recommendations include:

- Enforce parking rules to make sidewalks safer and more attractive to downtown visitors. Eliminate illegal curb cuts.
- Develop a streetscape improvement and sidewalk beautification program, including the addition of streetlights, plantings, and signage to help unify Central Avenue and create an identifiable connection between the Auditorium and Central Square.
- Actively seek to relocate existing non-conforming businesses such as the auto service stations and tire repair shops. Work with the business owners to find alternative locations elsewhere in Lynn to help free up space for other, more urban-oriented businesses.
- Look to convert some of the smaller triangular parcels to open space or active retail uses. For example, if the small auto service building located at the center of Liberty Street, Sutton Street and Central Avenue can be converted into a small restaurant or coffee shop, the open space surrounding the building could become an attractive public space. This would benefit all of the businesses surrounding the space, such as D'Amici's Bakery and Rossetti Restaurant.
- Consider ways to improve commuter access to downtown. Currently there is a stairway connection from Central Square to the train platform which is both uninviting to use and remote from the actual boarding area. There is a second, more attractive, connection to Munroe Street through the garage that

does not encourage pedestrians to frequent the downtown. Consider ways to improve both connections to help foster commuter activity.



Downtown Lynn is anchored by two emerging activity centers: the Lynn Auditorium and the Cultural District in and around Central Square.



Improvements along Central Avenue would help connect the two activity centers and help build pedestrian and retail activity through the downtown. In addition, improvements along Union Street would help connect the North Shore Community College campus to the Cultural District, helping to lure students, faculty and staff to other downtown venues.

5. Next Steps/Implementation

The ULI panel concluded that downtown Lynn has significant potential, but will require substantial work to create the type of attractive, vibrant downtown core that the stakeholders all desire. The panel concluded that large-scale, transformative projects, such as the extension of the Blue Line or development of the waterfront, are not likely in the foreseeable future, and the City should concentrate on small-scale, incremental changes that will help the downtown become more attractive. The panel also concluded that increasing housing supply was not as important as increasing housing demand. If the downtown can be made into a fun, exciting and attractive place to visit, shop, dine and live, the increased activity will push the demand for housing higher.

Immediate next steps that the City might take are summarized as follows:

- Work with North Shore Community College and the Chamber of Commerce to survey students, businesses and residents to determine what would make downtown more attractive and livable.
- Work on code enforcement and streetscape improvements to make downtown streets more attractive and walkable for residents and visitors.
- Begin a streets ambassador program to improve cleanliness and the sense of pedestrian security.
- Take an active role in identifying potential businesses to relocate to downtown. Like the owner of a suburban shopping center, take steps to improve the downtown shopping experience by luring and keeping tenants. Also, take steps to make empty storefronts look more attractive with posters or artwork.
- Work with the MBTA to improve the commuter experience, both in the garage and pedestrian connections to downtown. Seek out ways to make the underutilized garage help with downtown businesses.
- Develop a program of temporary retail kiosks, a farmers market and food trucks to activate the downtown core, particularly in the area of Central Square and the train viaducts.
- Learn from the successes of other communities. In particular, a number of stakeholders mentioned the recent successes of downtowns in other Gateway Cities. Confer with planners and Chambers of Commerce in other Gateway Cities of similar size to understand what steps were helpful in achieving their success.