

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

**Norton**

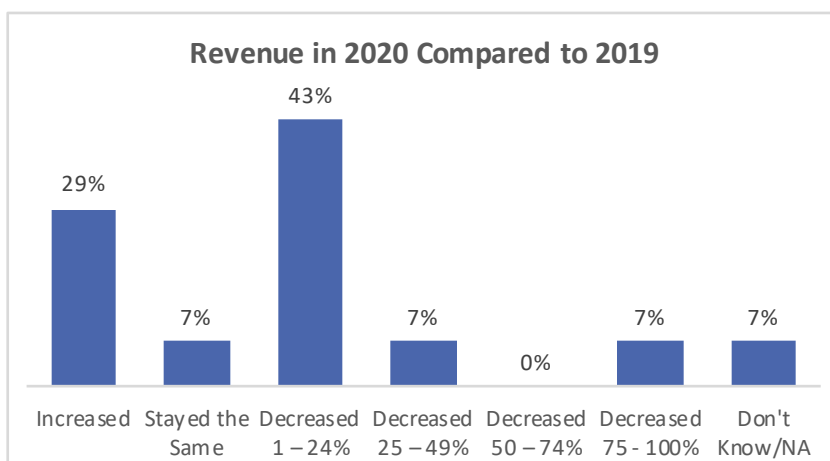
West Main Street

Responses: 14

**Impacts of COVID-19****Decline in Business Revenue**

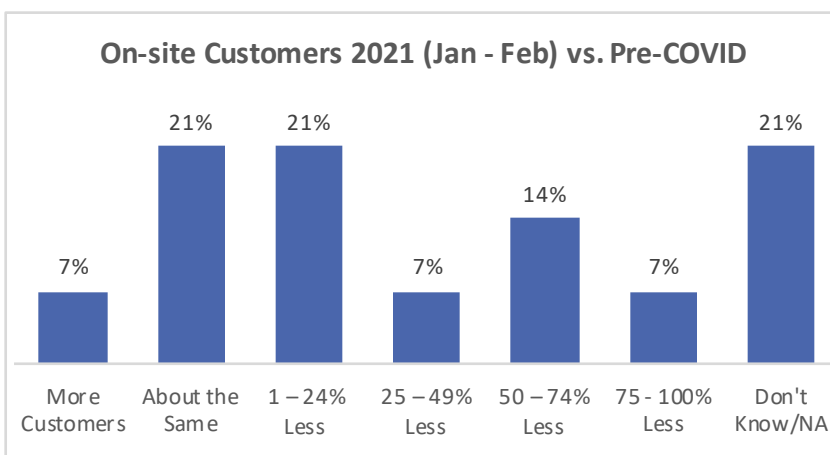
57% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.

For 14% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.

**Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area**

49% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

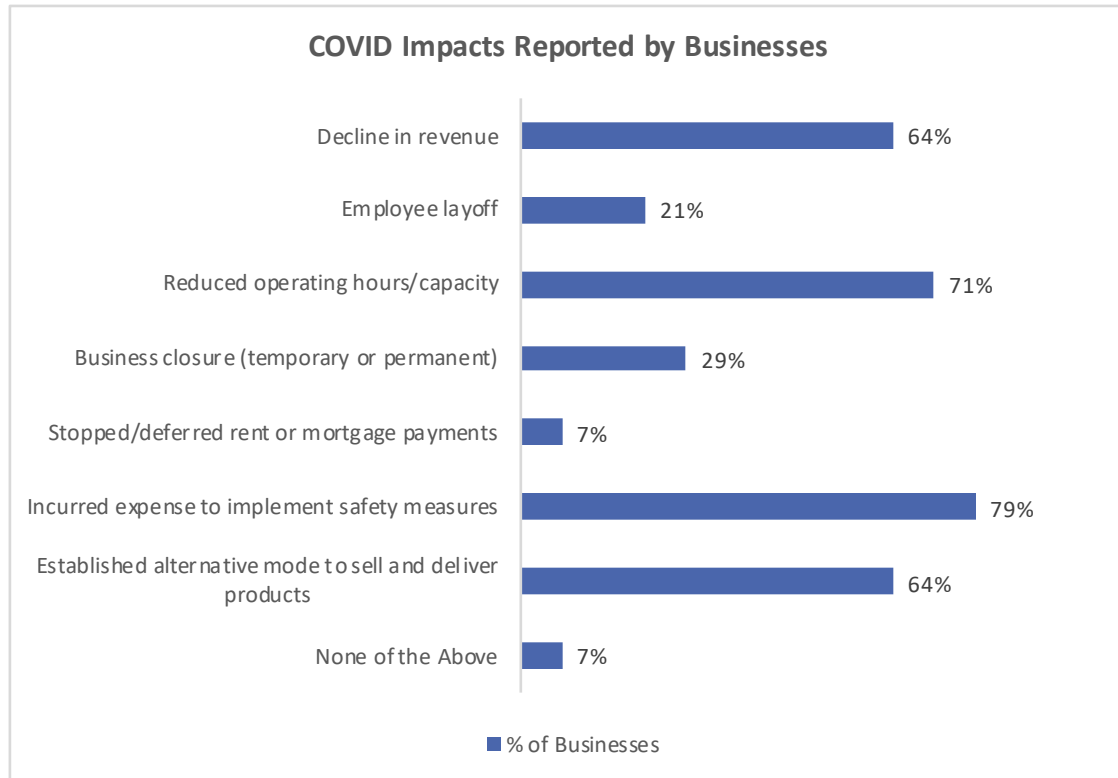
28% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



## Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

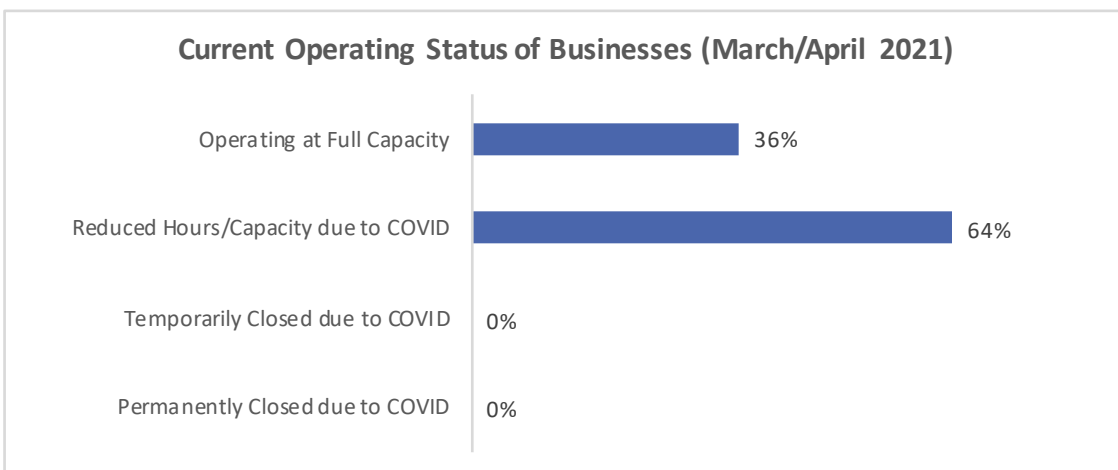
### Reported Impacts

93% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



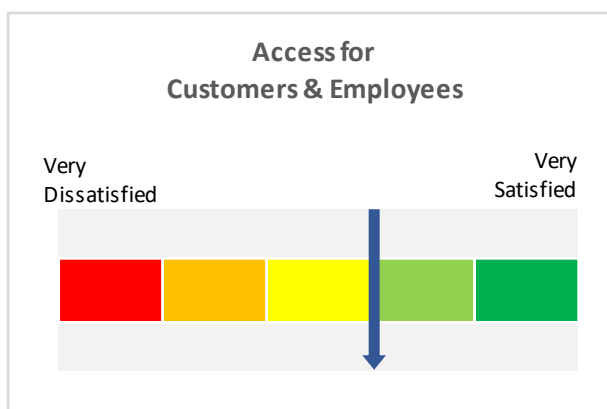
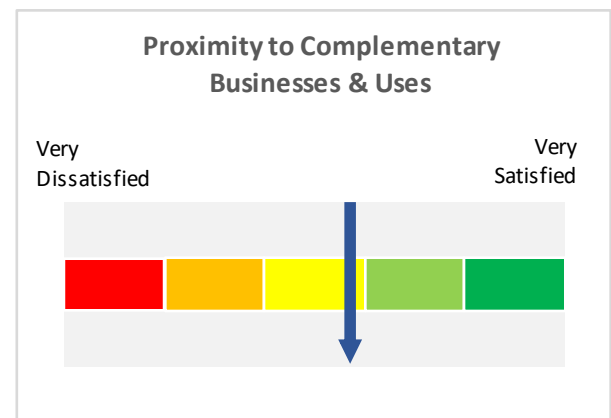
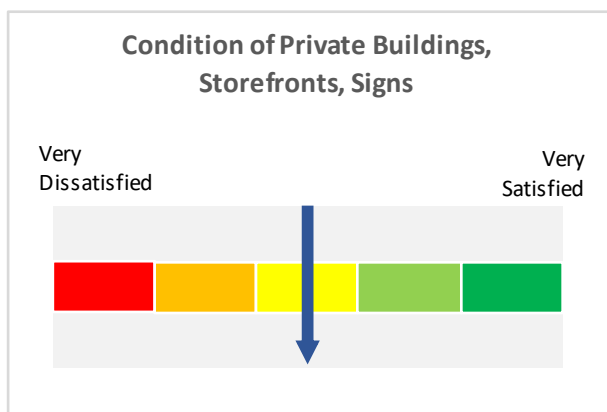
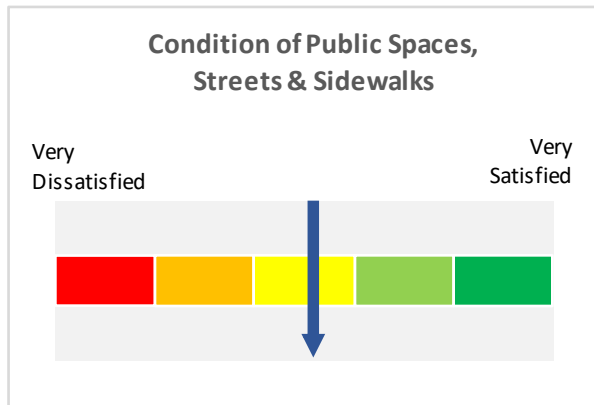
### Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 64% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.



## Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

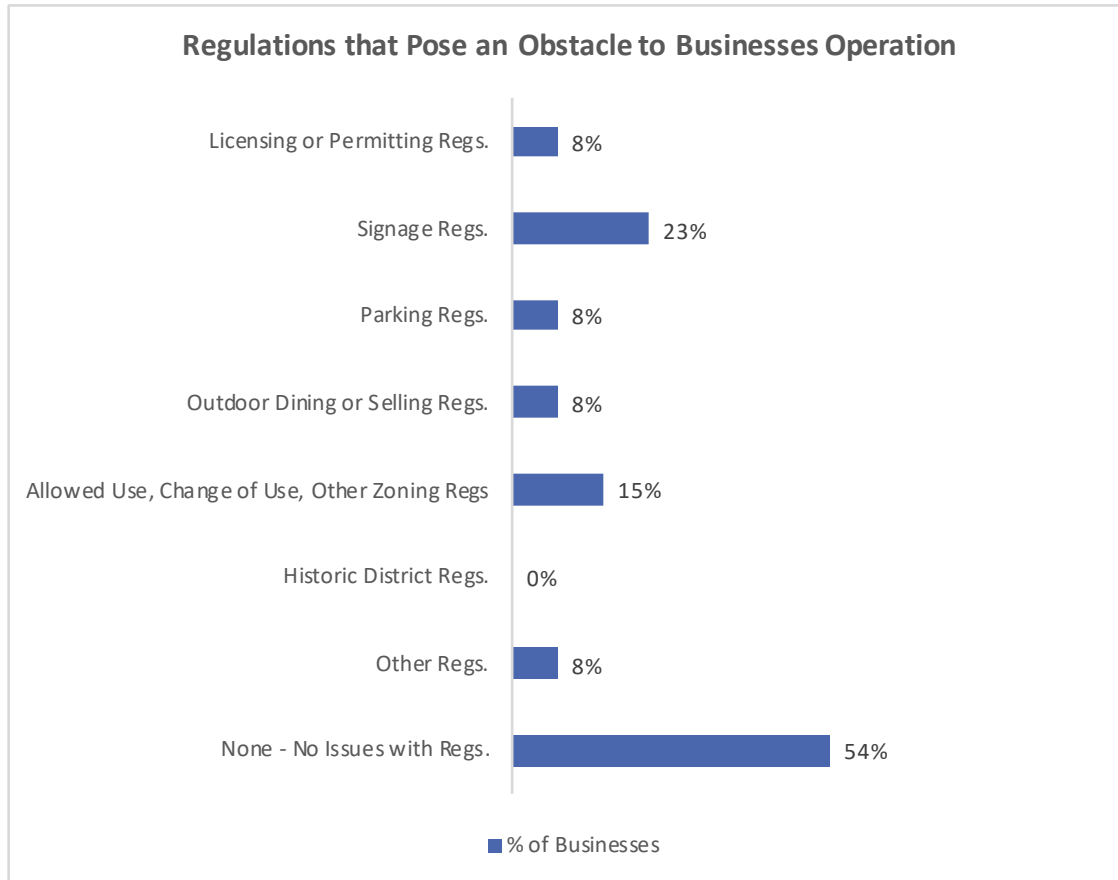
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



## Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

### Regulatory Environment

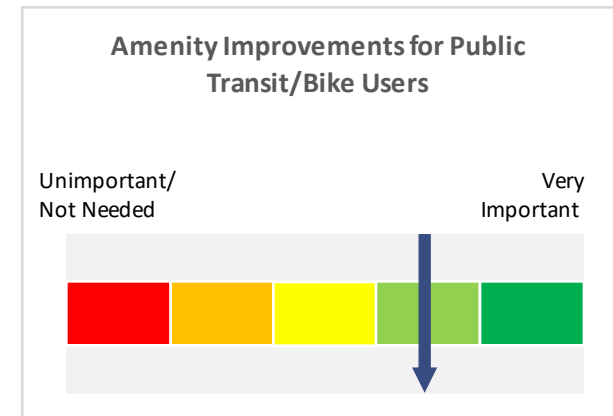
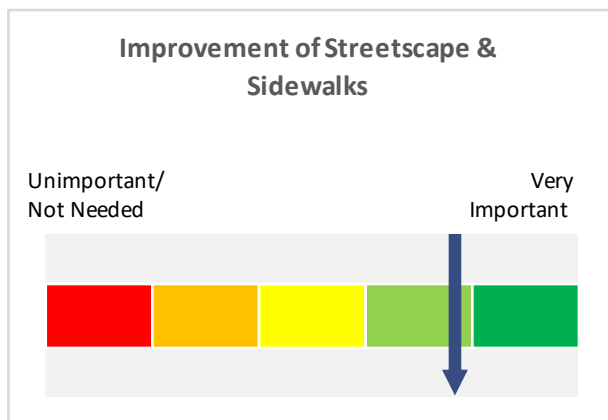
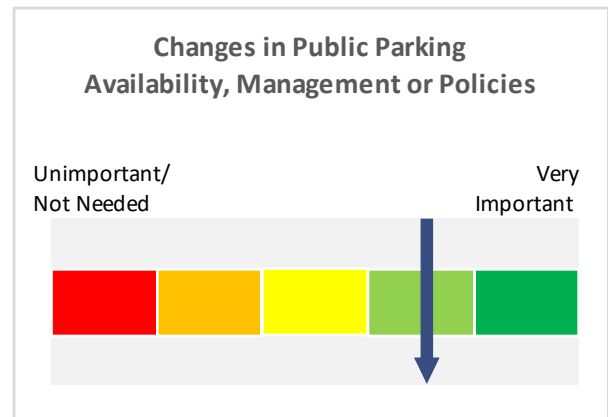
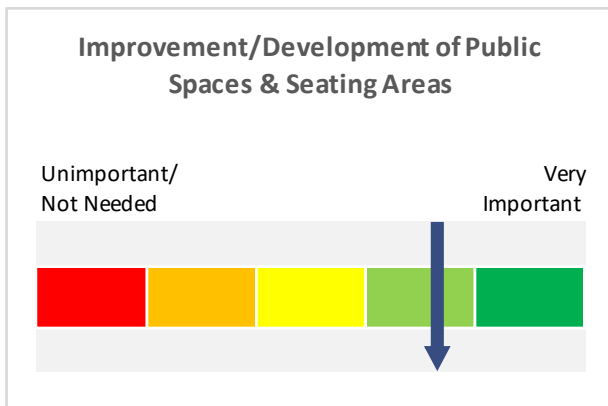
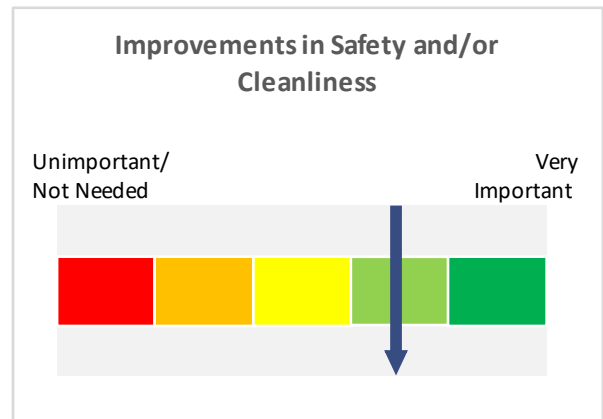
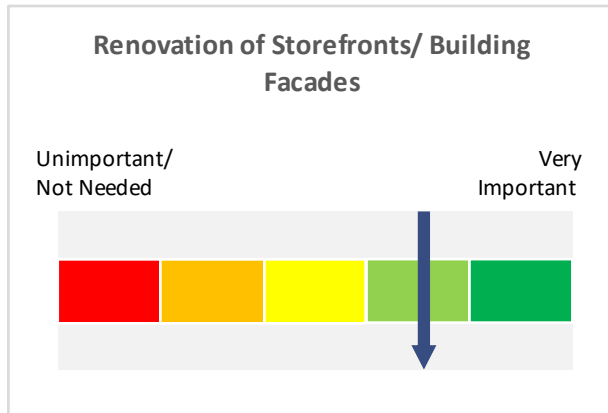
46% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

### Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

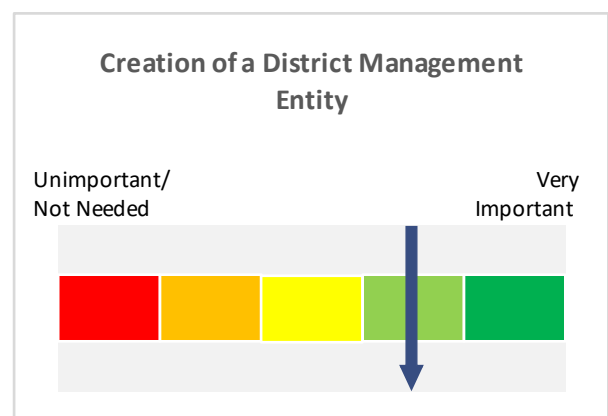
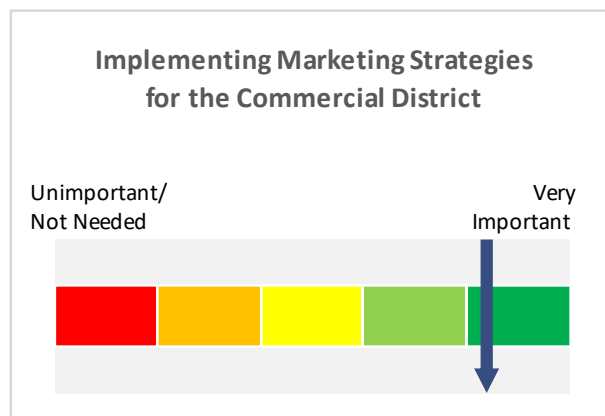
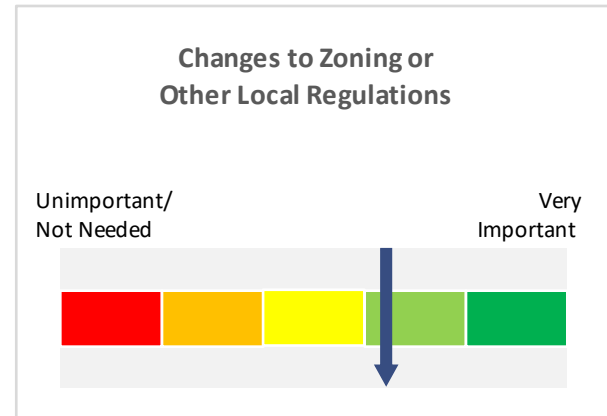
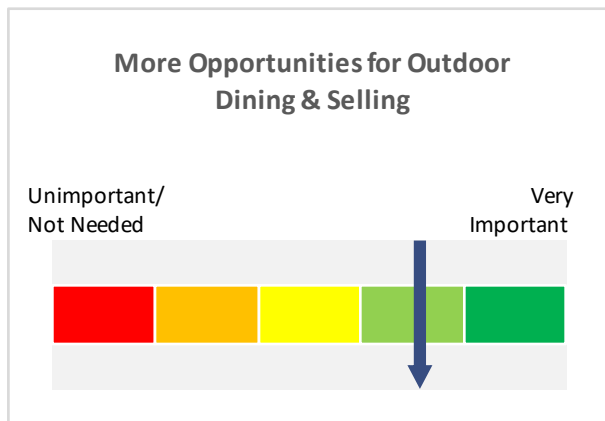
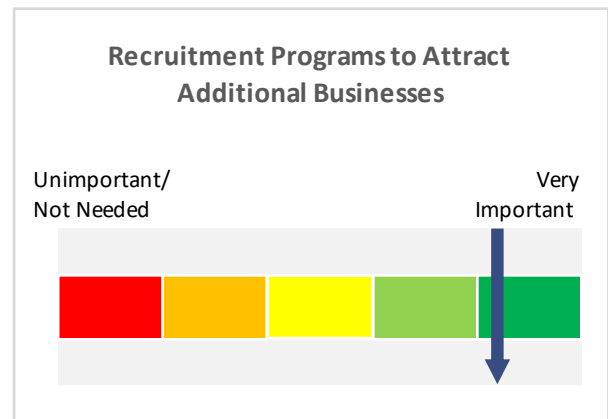
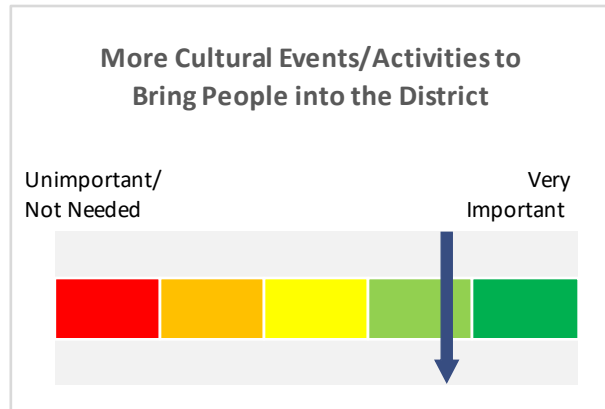
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

### Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

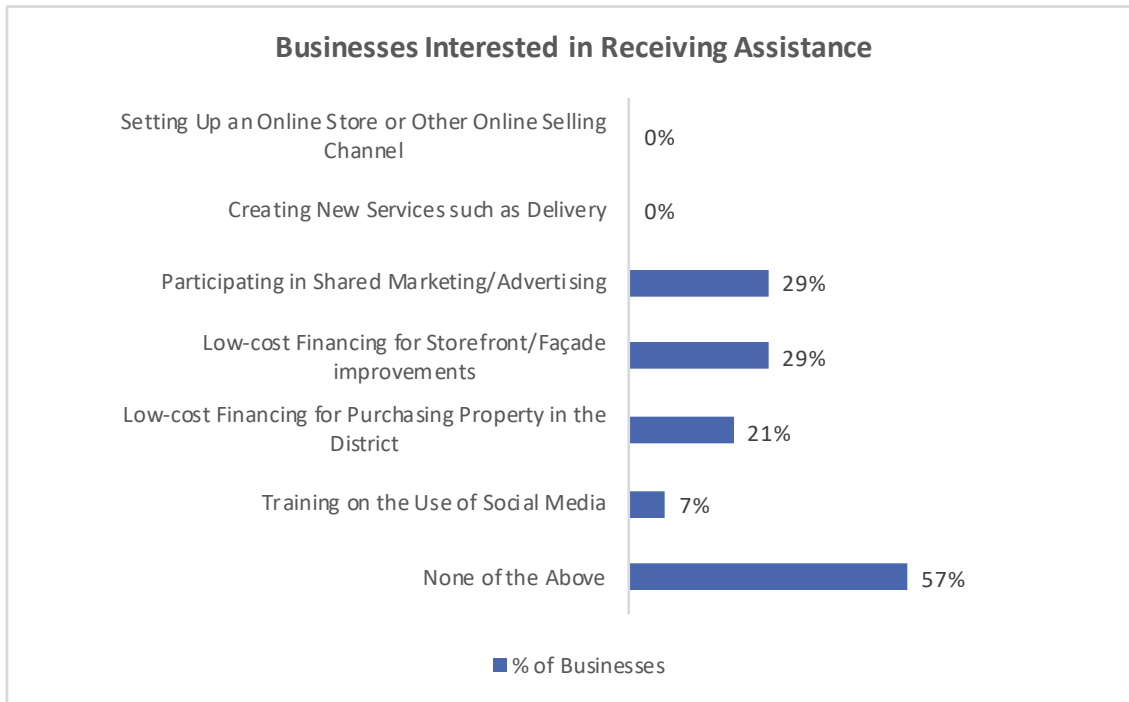
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

### Businesses Support

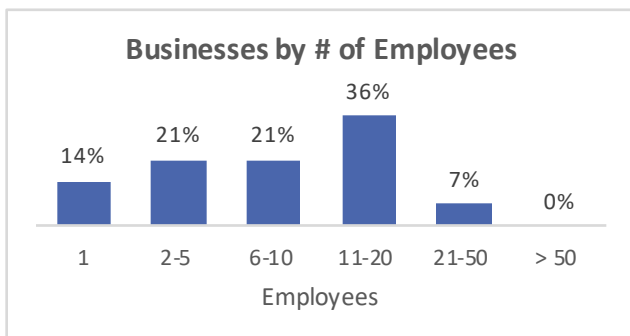
43% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



## Business Characteristics

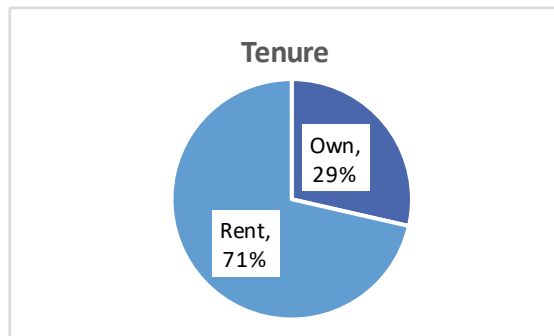
### Business Size

35% of businesses are microenterprises ( $\leq 5$  employees).



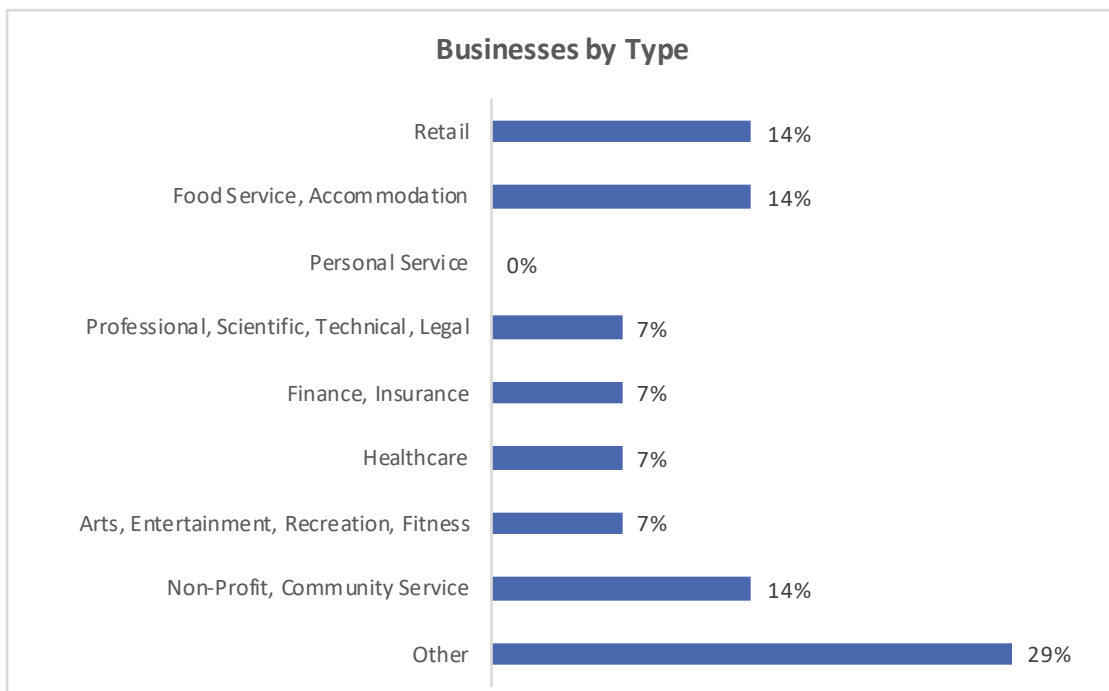
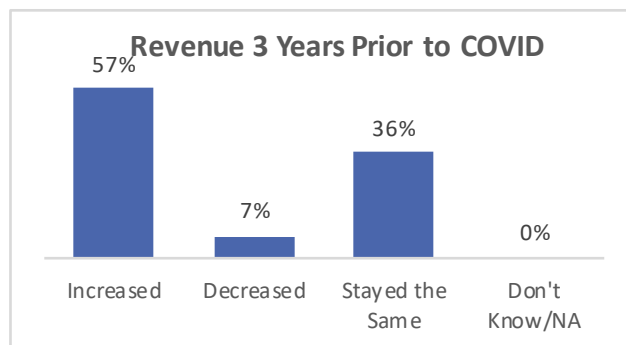
### Business Tenure

71% of businesses rent their space.



### Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

57% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.





## Business Survey Results - Data Tables

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### Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

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

Norton	14
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### Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

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

1	2	14%
2 to 5	3	21%
6 to 10	3	21%
11 to 20	5	36%
21 to 50	1	7%
More than 50	0	0%
Total	14	100%

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

Own	4	29%
Rent	10	71%
Total	14	100%

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

Increased	8	57%
Decreased	1	7%
Stayed about the Same	5	36%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	0	0%
Total	14	100%

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

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	2	14%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	2	14%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	0	0%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	1	7%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	1	7%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	1	7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	1	7%
Non-Profit, Community Services	2	14%
Other	4	29%
Total	14	100%

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

**Condition of public spaces, streets, sidewalks**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	4	29%
Neutral	6	43%
Satisfied	3	21%
Very Satisfied	1	7%
Total	14	100%

**Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	4	29%
Neutral	7	50%
Satisfied	2	14%
Very Satisfied	1	7%
Total	14	100%

**Access for Customers & Employees**

Very Dissatisfied	2	14%
Dissatisfied	0	0%
Neutral	5	36%
Satisfied	4	29%
Very Satisfied	3	21%
Total	14	100%

**Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	2	14%
Neutral	4	29%
Satisfied	4	29%
Very Satisfied	4	29%
Total	14	100%

**Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	3	21%
Neutral	5	36%
Satisfied	5	36%
Very Satisfied	1	7%
Total	14	100%

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

Licensing or permitting regulations	1	8%
Signage regulations	3	23%
Parking regulations	1	8%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	1	8%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	2	15%
Historic District regulations	0	0%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	1	8%
None - No Issues with regulations	7	54%

**Impacts of COVID**

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

Decline in revenue	9	64%
Employee layoff	3	21%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	10	71%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	4	29%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	1	7%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	11	79%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	9	64%
None of the Above	1	7%

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

Increased compared to 2019	4	29%
Stayed about the same as 2019	1	7%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	6	43%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	1	7%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	0	0%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	1	7%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	7%
Total	14	100%

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

More customers than before COVID	1	7%
About the same number as before COVID	3	21%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	3	21%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	1	7%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	2	14%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	1	7%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	3	21%
Total	14	100%

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

Operating at full capacity	5	36%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	9	64%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	0	0%
Permanently closed due to COVID	0	0%
Total	14	100%

**Strategies for Supporting Businesses and Improving the Commercial District**

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

**Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	1	8%
Important	6	46%
Very Important	4	31%
Total	13	100%

**Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	0	0%
Important	7	54%
Very Important	4	31%
Total	13	100%

**Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	1	8%
Important	6	46%
Very Important	5	38%
Total	13	100%

**Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	15%
Moderately Important	1	8%
Important	4	31%
Very Important	5	38%
Total	13	100%

**Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	0	0%
Important	8	62%
Very Important	3	23%
Total	13	100%

**Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	8%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	8%
Moderately Important	0	0%
Important	9	69%
Very Important	2	15%
Total	13	100%

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

**More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	7%
Moderately Important	2	14%
Important	7	50%
Very Important	4	29%
Total	14	100%

**More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	7%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	3	21%
Important	6	43%
Very Important	4	29%
Total	14	100%

**Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	1	7%
Important	7	50%
Very Important	6	43%
Total	14	100%

**Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	2	14%
Important	5	36%
Very Important	7	50%
Total	14	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	7%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	14%
Moderately Important	3	21%
Important	4	29%
Very Important	4	29%
Total	14	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	6	43%
Important	5	36%
Very Important	3	21%
Total	14	100%

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

Setting up an online store or other online selling channel	0	0%
Creating new services such as delivery	0	0%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	4	29%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	4	29%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	3	21%
Training on the use of social media	1	7%
None of the above	8	57%

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

**Comments**

- incentives (property tax?) ...not sure. 'Looking at this from a non-commercial (industrial) business stand point.
—
Norton Animal Hospital
—
—
Reconfigure Rt 123 and Rt 140 intersection into a Roundabout, eliminate red lights, include center common.
Septic Preservation Services
Regulate duplicate businesses (liquor, gym), increase dining and grocery access. Regulate owners allowing unkept store fronts/buildings.
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—
Public parking is critical and is totally nonexistent.
—
The town of Norton could and should support us as property owners, by mitigating unnecessary interference by other town entities.

[illegible]



