

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Argeo Paul Cellucci, Governor
Jane Swift, Lieutenant Governor
Jane Wallis Gumble, Director

Memorandum

To: Community Official
From: Robert J. Ebersole, Associate Director
Subject: Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
Date: March 27, 2000

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "RJE", written over the "From:" line.

For the many communities in Massachusetts seeking help on how to revitalize their downtown commercial districts and town centers, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is pleased to announce the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI), a network of information, resources, training opportunities and staff, working in concert with each other to provide assistance on the many interrelated aspects of downtown revitalization. MDI promotes a holistic approach to downtown revitalization; one which addresses both economic and community development, and provides a solid framework of interrelated activities which promote positive, desirable change in a downtown to keep it healthy and prosperous.

I am including a useful Fact Sheet for you to learn more about the different services and technical assistance components which are currently being offered by MDI. The MDI website, located at www.state.ma.us/dhcd/components/dcs/downtown, is another easy way to access extensive information on downtown revitalization, including over 120 internet links to resources, organizations and opportunities which focus on downtown.

For additional information on MDI, please contact our toll-free Community Response Line (CRL) at 1-877-CRL-DHCD (275-3423). In an effort to provide efficient MDI assistance, Emmy Hahn, one of the designated Regional Representatives for your community, will serve as your primary downtown contact. You may contact Emmy via the CRL number listed above, or at (617) 727-7001, extension 426.

As new challenges arise in the continuing evolution and development of your unique town center or downtown, I hope you will not hesitate to contact your state agency partner, DHCD. We look forward to working with you in the future.



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Massachusetts
Department of Housing &
Community Development
1 Congress Street
Boston, MA 02114

(617)727-7765
<http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd>

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

Fact Sheet

DHCD's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. The primary mission of the MDI is to make downtown revitalization an integral part of community development in cities and towns across the Commonwealth. MDI's guiding principle is that the most effective approach to downtown revitalization is a holistic one; one which addresses economic and community development needs, and provides a framework of interrelated activities which promote positive, desirable change in a downtown to keep it healthy and prosperous.

Successful downtown revitalization is comprehensive and includes a well-balanced community strategy composed of seven downtown building blocks:

- Encouraging Community Involvement & Ownership
- Preserving & Enhancing Downtown Character
- Ensuring Economic Vitality
- Promoting Downtown Assets
- Getting Into & Around Downtown
- Living Downtown
- Keeping Downtown Safe

How it works

Communities should call the toll-free Community Response Line (CRL) at 1-877-CRL-DHCD (275-3423) to access the technical assistance components of the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.

"Desktop" Technical Assistance

Ongoing technical assistance on downtown-related issues is provided by staff via telephone, fax and sent materials, based on written and telephone requests from communities, as well as referrals from division staff. Recent requests have included: how to develop a business recruitment program geared towards minorities; how to assess the impact of affordable housing on downtown revitalization efforts; and how to develop downtown organizational bylaws.

(continued)

TA Site Visit Program

The Downtown Technical Assistance Site Visit Program will provide 12 communities annually with on-site visits from a team of downtown specialists, including a written follow-up report. Downtown Technical Assistance Reports describe downtown needs reviewed during the site visit, and suggest specific actions and next steps the town should take in addressing them. Within the report, a summary of downtown priorities and how they relate to an overall revitalization strategy for the particular community are identified and discussed, followed by recommended steps and follow-up options.

Newsletter

MDI produces and distributes a periodic newsletter, *Downtown Directions*, to a state mailing list of 1500, including Planning Boards and Selectmen. The first 3 issues focus on getting started in downtown revitalization. Future issues will focus on specific revitalization topics.

Downtown Resources

MDI produces *Downtown Resources*, a publication listing over 100 different sources of financial and technical assistance relevant to downtown revitalization.

Website

Information is available on MDI's website: www.state.ma.us/dhcd/components/dcs/downtown

While currently being expanded, initial information includes FAQ's, a publications list, showcase community, downtown links, and the first 2 of 7 downtown revitalization building blocks.

Education and Training

MDI is currently developing a series of training workshops that will take place throughout the year on various downtown revitalization topics. Communities will be notified by mail when they are scheduled.

For More Information

Please contact DHCD's Division of Municipal Development at (617) 727-7001, or toll-free at 1-877-CRL-DHCD (275-3423).

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Consent Communication #3

A communication was received from Robert Ebersole, Associate Director of the Department of Housing & Community Development, regarding the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI), a network of information on revitalizing downtown commercial districts and town centers.

S-101

In City council April 24, 2000

PLACED ON FILE

*Referred to City Manager
Referred to Econ. Develop, Train
& Employment Committee*