

# Case Studies

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## Study 1: Downtown Framingham Small Business

Small businesses generate growth, innovation, and are essential to the strength of local economies. In recent years, Downtown Framingham has become a hub for entrepreneurs from all over the world — having at least twenty different nationalities among its local business owners.

To recognize the diversity, contributions, and vibrancy that small businesses bring to Framingham, the Framingham Downtown Renaissance (FDR), the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC), Welcoming Framingham, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) worked together as part of the MetroFuture Walks & Talks to host the first Tour of Small Businesses in Downtown Framingham.



### Overall challenges in Downtown Framingham

- Apathy and disenfranchisement, especially among immigrant business owners;
- Disconnect from local government;
- Social problems such as drug consumption and homelessness;
- Poor pedestrian infrastructure;
- Perceptions of the downtown as a dirty and not welcoming place.

## Goals of the Event

- Create a space for participants from the public, private, and non-profit sector to connect around issues relevant to Downtown Framingham;
- Showcase how Framingham's diversity could give the Town a competitive advantage;
- Start the conversation about an upcoming Downtown Framingham Transit Oriented Development study;
- Have town leaders set priorities that directly support the growth of small businesses in Downtown Framingham.

## Project Partners

- **Metropolitan Area Planning Council:** MAPC is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston. MAPC's mission is to promote smart growth and regional collaboration.
- **Framingham Downtown Renaissance:** FDR's mission is to promote, drive, and implement the revitalization of Downtown Framingham by collaborating with residents, Town of Framingham officials, and private stakeholders supporting a shared vision. They are committed to making Downtown Framingham a great place to live, work and visit.
- **MetroWest Regional Collaborative:** As one of MAPC's subregions, the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC) serves the MetroWest region of Eastern Cochituate Aqueducts, Natick, from I-95 to I-495 along the Route 9 corridor. They facilitate inter-local collaborative planning and problem solving to enhance the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the MetroWest region.
- **Welcoming Framingham:** Welcoming Framingham is a community-wide initiative seeking to affirm Framingham as a welcoming place for all. They encourage conversations in an effort to promote understanding among diverse people and celebrate the positive contributions that individuals from various walks of life make to the community.

## Outreach to Participants

The focus was placed on inviting a broad spectrum of Framingham leaders to the tour, including Town staff, the business community, service organizations, immigrant advocates, news media, developers, brokers, local colleges, and active citizens. The tour was organized in this manner because collaboration among public, private, and the non-profit sector are key to the successful revitalization of any downtown area. An initial list of 60 attendees was created by FDR, MWRC, and MAPC.

## Outreach to Small Businesses

After canvassing over 80% of small businesses in the downtown area, a total of sixteen business owners agreed to participate in the tour. Entrepreneurs were prepared to share their stories and explain why they chose Framingham as a place to invest and grow. A special effort was placed in highlighting how their contributions strengthen the local and regional economy.

## Event Description

Over the course of two and a half hours, fifty five town leaders came together to learn about the diversity of businesses in its downtown area; and to hear the stories, challenges, and contributions of these entrepreneurs.

After a brief “Welcome and Introductions,” participants were divided into four color-coded groups and guided through four small businesses along the downtown area (sixteen small businesses in total.) Each group stayed a maximum of twelve minutes in each location before moving on to the next host.

**Group** ●

- Brandolini Shoe Repair (Ukraine)  
Tony  
56 Union Avenue
- Attitude Fashion (Brazil)  
Elias + Joanne  
137 Concord Street
- La Casa del Chicharron (Dominican Republic)  
Francisco  
16 Irving Street
- Padaria Brasil (Brazil)  
Elias + Tania  
61 Hollis Street

**Group** ●

- Anastasia's Oven + Grill (Egypt)  
Mena  
12 Union Avenue
- Party Flowers | Gaseta Photography (Brazil)  
Nubia + Roberto  
83 Concord Street
- Pupusas y Tacos Dona Sofia (El Salvador)  
Mirna Polanco Family  
20 Concord Street
- Ta Chic (Brazil)  
Jasmine  
55 Hollis Street

**Group** ●

- Pueblito Paisa (Colombia)  
Adieli Jaramillo  
66 Hollis Street
- Neca's Bakery (Guatemala)  
Neca  
22 Irving Street
- Urbano's Furniture (Brazil)  
John Oliveira  
84 Concord Street
- Crystal Nails (Vietnam)  
Ana and Winnie  
28 Union Avenue

**Group** ●

- Tropical Café (Brazil)  
Solange + Gil Moura  
85 Hollis Street
- Inter Latin (Colombia)  
Gabriel Ferraro  
68 Hollis Street
- Frescafe (Brazil Americana)  
Pablah Linhares + Vinicius DiPaiva  
82 Concord Street
- Pho Dakao (Vietnam)  
Dang Pham  
101 Concord Street

**Downtown Framingham  
August 14, 2014**

Once the visits were finished, participants gathered at the initial reception area to debrief, have small group discussions, and grab lunch.



## Outcomes

- MAPC strengthened relationships with the Town of Framingham and other project partners.
- Relationships between local entrepreneurs and community leaders were reinforced.
- Sixteen small business owners and fifty five town leaders were engaged in a conversation about priorities for Downtown Framingham, with a focus on its diversity as a competitive advantage.
- Increased participation of small business owners in subsequent public meetings about the future of Downtown Framingham.
- Coverage of the event by two local newspapers:
  - [Officials get familiar with downtown's vast array of businesses](#), *MetroWest Daily News*
  - [PHOTOS: Story Tour in Framingham](#), *MetroWest Daily News*
  - [Framingham Downtown Story Tour Highlights the People Behind the Businesses](#), *Framingham Patch*

## Timeline of Activities

TASKS:	June				July				August
	2-6	9-13	16-20	23-27	30-4	7-11	14-18	21-25	7 - Tour!
Team Check-in		X		X			X	X	
Event Logistics	X	X							
Outreach to Businesses	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Outreach to Participants		X		X		X	X	X	
Media						X		X	