

## *Economic Vitality - 2024 Accomplishments*

**GOAL: Renew and improve village centers as vital pedestrian-friendly, economic, and social hubs that enable community engagement on a wider scale.**

Age-Friendly Business Initiative to expand accessibility and inclusion within Concord's business districts with particular attention to the needs of older residents and visitors. Project to support individual businesses, nonprofits, and other public facing spaces to make their establishment more accessible to older adults, to share the best practices of Concord's venues as a model for others through the creation of a Age-Friendly Business Strategies Toolkit, and build cross-sector relationships between businesses, Town staff, Senior Center, and town committees such as the Disabilities Commission and Council on Aging.

- Secured grant award of \$40,000 from the Massachusetts Community Compact to fund the program.
- Contracted with Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for technical support.
- Outreach to resident focus groups, social service organizations and town committees to inform the program design.
- Hosted workshop training with older residents to serve as Age-Friendly Business Ambassadors.
- Survey of older residents and visitors. Key findings:
  - Roughly 15% of respondents aged between 60 and 90 are visiting Concord business daily, demonstrating the social as well as economic relationship with local businesses.
  - Providing more benches and age-friendly seating as the most requested improvement from all respondents.
- Age-Friendly Business Check-list developed and tested with two businesses.
- Work to continue in early 2025 with one-on-one meetings with local businesses and completion of the Age-Friendly Business Toolkit.

Public Art to build capacity and equity in the commission of public art as a tool of creative placemaking and economic vitality

- ***Freedom's Silhouette***
  - Artwork installed in Monument Square The new work of public art by Liz Helfer installed in Monument Square in September, 2024. Artwork selection informed by a Steering Group and a public presentation by three finalists.
  - Funded by the New England Foundation for the Arts and Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- **Activation Projects**
  - Executed by the *Freedom's Silhouette* artwork in Monument Square. Facilitated funding by the Massachusetts Cultural Council through the Concord Center Cultural District
  - Wright Tavern Pub Choir – over 100 people joined a community sing and reception.

- Robbins House Artmaking – Two gatherings led children in collective artmaking, learning about Concord’s civil rights leader Ellen Garrison and understanding the role of the “upstander”.
- Terry Borderline and the Suns – Concert and community conversation about racial justice.
- Day-long Workshop led by Cate McQuaid and Madeleine Eno.
- Video Shorts by Megan Carroll is dramatized educational programs for youth about Ellen Garrison, Henry David Thoreau and the theme of freedom.
- **Public Art Process**
  - Procurement and town approval process developed and detailed to facilitate future art commissions.
- Facilitated work of the **West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee** in three projects:
  - *West Concord Poetry Phone* installed beside the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in May 2024 with rotating curation of audio recordings of works by local poets.
  - *Out of the Box* commissioned local artists for their first public projects to creatively decorate three traffic signal switchboxes in West Concord in July.
  - *West Concord Art Loop* launches their Call for Art in December for a series of more than 100 sidewalk decals to be installed through the summer of 2025.
- Facilitated the work of the **Concord 250 Committee**:
  - Creative wayfinding map designed by Steve Bermundo installed in in front of the Visitor Center in October 2024.

Public Infrastructure to support pedestrian-oriented activity in and around the business districts

- **Benches Project**
  - Secured funding from the Mass Office of Travel and Tourism to install age-friendly benches to support pedestrian movement in and around Concord Center.
  - Facilitated approvals and contracting for installation in Spring, 2025.
  - Identified sites for additional seating should resources become available.
- **Concord Center Streetscape and Roadway Improvements**
  - Construction to improve pedestrian safety, upgrade infrastructure and resurface roadways brought a fresh and welcomed new streetscape.
  - With other town staff, frequent communication helped minimize negative impacts.

## **GOAL: Deepen understanding of commercial environment of Concord as part of the overall community**

Industry Analysis

- **Concord’s Agricultural Business Landscape**
  - Assisted by summer college intern Zacharian Elmasri conducted study and profile of Concord’s farms and agricultural resources.
  - Study highlights:

- 10% of land in Concord is engaged in commercial farming, dwarfing the 3% of land otherwise zoned for business uses.
- Long standing efforts to protect land for agriculture have been vital to the continuation of Concord farms.
- Farm stands are a potential centerpiece for agritourism.
- Instituting the protection of farmsteads (housing and the structures for a base of operations) is critical if Concord for farms to remain centered in Concord and to weather generational changes.

### Business Inventory

- Annual Update of Concord’s Businesses
  - 544 businesses recorded
  - 8 new businesses, 27 closed businesses, 6 moved businesses

## **GOAL: Create a business-friendly community**

### Policy – Zoning

- Working with the Economic Vitality Committee and Planning Board identified two key areas to address.
  - Warrant article proposed to remove requirements for new parking for changes of allowable uses within existing properties of businesses districts.
  - Warrant article to allow retail as an accessory use in industrial zones.

### Business Assistance

- **Web portal**
  - Completed new section on the Town of Concord website to provide a singular gateway to resources for businesses.
- **Email Newsletter**
  - Launched in May 2025 with monthly mailings. Content is business focused while accessible and of interest to a general audience. Includes updates on business assistance programs, local business news, relevant regulatory and legislative updates, commercial real estate highlights, and topics of interest.
  - Ended 2025 with 612 subscribers and an open rate of 57% which is 40% greater than peers’ average.
- **One-on-One and General Business assistance**
  - In 2024 provided to 23 business and commercial property owners.
  - Communication maintained regularly with the Concord Business Partnership, Concord Chamber of Commerce, as well as Concord250 Committees.
- **Concord MCI Redevelopment:** Ongoing resource to the Select Board, Town Manager and MCI-Concord Advisory Board regarding the future development of the site.
- **Regional and State Partners:** Maintained regular communication with relevant networks such as the MAGIC team of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

## **GOAL: Nurture Concord business clusters**

### Cultural Sector

- **Concord Center Cultural District**
  - Facilitated renewal of this district, designated through the Mass Cultural Council
  - Working with town committees and Select Board, supported development of a new charge and technical assistance to committee members.
- **CreativeGround**
  - Working with West Concord Cultural District Committee, boosted Concord's profile within the sector directory maintained by the New England Foundation for the Arts
    - 91 Arts and Culture entities promoted

### Agricultural, Retail Food, and Cultural Sectors

- **Food Safety Program**
  - Executed using ARPA grant funding and in partnership with the Health Division advanced.
  - Program launched in 2024 with grants and training to be executed first quarter of 2025.
    - Training and certification in ServSafe and Allergen Awareness
    - Equipment grants of up to \$3,000 for agricultural producers
    - Equipment grants of up to \$1,500 for businesses and organizations doing mobile food vending at events. Economic Development Expertise