



2016 Downtown Technical Assistance Application Cover Sheet

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program

Application Deadline: 5:00 p.m. on December 4, 2015

Table with 2 columns: Field Name, Value. Fields include Community Name (Town of Wellesley), Date of Application (December 3, 2015), and Title of Project (Wellesley Square Wayfinding and Branding Project).

Principal Contact: Please print clearly.

Table with 4 columns: Field Name, Value, Address, Value. Fields include Name (Imaikalani Aiu), Title (Assistant Planning Director), Phone (781-431-1019 x 2238), Email (iaiu@wellesleyma.gov), and Address (Planning Department, Town Hall, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, MA 02482).

Name & Signature of the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Elected Official (Required):

Table with 2 columns: Field Name, Value. Fields include Name & Title (David Murphy, Chair, Board of Selectmen) and Signature (handwritten signature).

(REQUIRED FOR SUBMISSION) Check one box for the type of assistance being requested:

- Checkboxes for Business Improvement District, Design, Economics of Downtown, Housing, Parking, Small Business Support, and Way finding/Branding (checked).

See attached program description for more information relating to the designated topics.

Summary Statement: Please describe your request in 25 words or less: Technical Assistance for the development of a Wayfinding and Branding program to improve placemaking, accessibility, and orientation within Wellesley Square.

**2016 Downtown Technical Assistance Application
Wellesley Square Wayfinding and Branding Project
December 3, 2015**

OVERVIEW OF APPLICATION

This application is seeking consultant assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) Technical Assistance Program for the development of a Wayfinding and Branding program for Wellesley Square. Per the Technical Assistance Program announcement, assistance may be sought for Wayfinding/Branding projects to "address any aspect of developing a public way finding system and the creation of a distinguishable image or logo that carries through the various streetscape elements, including but not limited to: creation of public design elements that will be used throughout the downtown, way finding plan, cost analysis for implementation, and branding of a downtown through historic elements."

DOWNTOWN/TOWN CENTER TARGET AREA MAP WITH AREA DELINEATED

The targeted area for the project is the commercial center known as Wellesley Square; the following maps identifying the area are attached:

- Attachment 1 - Wellesley Square Target Area Map
- Attachment 2 - Wellesley Square Delineation Map
- Attachment 3 - Wellesley Square Sub Districts Map

LIST OF INDIVIDUALS COMPRISING A DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION OR COMMITTEE THAT WILL ASSIST WITH IMPLEMENTATION

Wellesley Square Initiative Executive Committee

Town Representatives

Barbara Searle, Board of Selectmen
Deborah Carpenter, Chair, Planning Board
Jeanne Conroy, Planning Board
Johnathan Law, Chair, Planning Board
Hans Larsen, Executive Director
Michael Zehner, Planning Director
Imaikalani Aiu, Assistant Planning Director

Merchant Representatives

Demian Wendrow, Chair, Wellesley Square Merchants Association/Owner, London Harness
Sturdy Waterman, Owner, Waterman Gallery
Rob Skolnick, Owner, EA Davis & Member, Design Review Board
Brian Wasik, Owner, Wasik's Cheese Shop

Property Owner Representatives

Brad Perry, Owner, Holman Block, 573 Washington Street
Jessica Wolfe, Owner, 65R Central Street
Stuart Swan, Owner, 103 Central Street
Dennis Dischino, Owner, 53 Central Street

NARRATIVE

Description of Issue to Be Addressed

The Town of Wellesley, in collaboration with the Wellesley Square Merchant's Association, is seeking technical assistance for the Wellesley Square Wayfinding and Branding Project. The intent of the project is to develop a wayfinding and branding program that improves 1) the placemaking of the district, 2) vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist accessibility and mobility within the district, and 3) the orientation of visitors, ensuring recognition of the full range of shopping, services, and entertainment opportunities within Wellesley Square.

Wellesley Square is the historical and defining commercial and institutional village district within the Town of Wellesley. Wellesley Square is located adjacent to the MBTA commuter rail, abuts Wellesley College, and is surrounded by residential properties. Wellesley Square is home to approximately 200 businesses, which include a broad mix of office, retail, and service establishments, restaurants and specialty food shops, as well as a church, post office, library, train station, and Town Hall. Given that Wellesley is home to three colleges (Wellesley College, Babson College, and Mass Bay Community College), many out-of town visitors are drawn to the area for shopping, dining, and leisurely strolls through the charming streetscape.

Locating convenient parking, civic buildings, and the various businesses within Wellesley Square is a challenge because the village has evolved into three segmented areas: Upper Square, Lower Square, and Church Square (*See Attachment 3*). With limited directory signage, many visitors are unaware of the boundaries of Wellesley Square and may miss shopping and dining experiences located within one of the three areas that are within walking distance, but may not be immediately apparent to visitors.

The challenges have been compounded in recent years by the construction of the Linden Square development, which is a significant commercial area held by one owner and within walking distance of Wellesley Square. Historically, Linden Street was an important service center for the Town, with a lumber yard, hardware store, and the community's primary grocery store. In 2005, a single owner redeveloped the land into Linden Square, a 274,000 square foot lifestyle-center retail shopping district with plenty of convenient off-street parking. In comparison, Wellesley Square is owned by numerous property owners with individual leasing plans and lacks the same cooperative organization, marketing, and branding that makes Linden Square successful. The proposed Wayfinding and Branding program would help to unify the Wellesley Square merchants and property owners, while providing visitor guidance on all of the wonderful businesses Wellesley Square has to offer.

Proposed Project Cost and Scope of Service

The proposed project cost is expected to be \$10,000. The proposed scope of service for technical assistance offered by the consultant is expected to include the following tasks:

- Meet with the Wellesley Square Initiative Executive Committee to develop a clear understanding of the goals of the project;
- Develop a familiarity with Wellesley Square and the transportation routes leading to the Square;
- Review relevant documents, including, but not limited to, the Sign Bylaw, previous studies for the Square, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Parking Regulations Report;
- Prepare a draft report outlining best practices and draft recommendations for branding concepts and wayfinding signage;
- Solicit input on the draft report from the Wellesley Square Initiative Executive Committee, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Design Review Board, and Historical Commission;
- Hold a public forum to present the draft report and solicit feedback and input on draft branding concepts and wayfinding signage designs; and
- Prepare a final Wayfinding and Branding Program Report that includes, at a minimum:
 - Findings;
 - Recommendations for brand identity, signage designs, and signage locations; and
 - Implementation plan, including estimated costs and timelines.

Evidence of Strong Public/Private Partnership

Over the past 15 years, the Town of Wellesley and the Wellesley Square Merchants have worked together to improve Wellesley Square and to create a vibrant and thriving commercial district, as seen by the following collaborations:

- **Wellesley Square Forum 1997** (Vision) - Recommended creating directory signage and a flyer to identify Wellesley Square and abutting civic resources.
- **Wellesley Square Action Plan 1998** - Identified a number of areas for parking signage in the Appendix in relation to a 1998 Wellesley Square Parking Study, conducted by McDonough and Scully. Highlighted a few potential areas for way finding and identified several types of acceptable signage. One key element raised in the study was that the Square is composed of sub-districts which needed to be unified. In the current analysis of Wellesley Square it has been determined that it is imperative to unite the sub-districts through consistent branding.

- **Organizing Wellesley Square Partnership 2000** - Identified the mission of the proposed public/private partnership, included improving the appearance of Wellesley Square and recommended implementing a public parking plan.
- **Creation of Wellesley Square Commercial District Zoning 2004** - Created a new zoning district to allow for redevelopment in Wellesley Square and grandfathered in current Floor Area Ratios to those on site as of March 22, 2004.
- **Post Office Square Framework Plan 2003** - Urban design study of the Post Office Square area of Wellesley Square.
- **Wellesley Square Initiative 2011-Present** - In early 2011, there was heightened awareness among Town representatives of increased vacancies in Wellesley Square. Unsure whether vacancies were caused by the national economic downturn, newly constructed and available square footage at Linden Square, other reasons or a combination of factors, the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board, along with their staffs, established the Wellesley Square Initiative (WSI) in May of 2011; the mission of the WSI is as follows:

“...to ensure the continued vibrancy and long-term vitality of Wellesley Square, its tenants, and its property owners for the benefit and enjoyment of the Town, its residents, and visitors. As with many areas of the country, the Town of Wellesley has not been immune to the impacts of the current economic downturn, serving as the impetus for our renewed attention to Wellesley Square. Grounded in the findings of previous studies, the Wellesley Square Initiative intends to take a measured, collaborative approach to pursuing current problems, identifying solutions, and taking actions that are beneficial to the Square and its stakeholders - merchants, property owners, residents, and the Town.”

Throughout the summer of 2011, members of the Wellesley Square Initiative met individually with various business and property owners from Wellesley Square in an attempt to determine the factors contributing decline. After nearly 30 meetings the key issues were narrowed down to maintenance, wayfinding and branding, parking, events, and safety.

The above efforts, but especially the most recent Wellesley Square Initiative, have solidified the partnership between the Town and property and business owners. Prior to the Wellesley Square Initiative, several existing entities, such as the Wellesley Chamber of Commerce and a few merchants and property owners, were separately attempting to solve many of the same issues. Aided by the Town’s facilitation, many property owners have become more engaged, the Wellesley Square Merchants Association was formed and has evolved into an active leader in the Square, and community volunteers, such as the Wellesley Community Art Project, have also become involved. A strong public/private partnership is expected to continue as both entities work together on the implementation of several action items, including wayfinding and branding.

Positive Outcomes Expected as a Result of Assistance

The overall goal of the Wellesley Square Initiative and the Wayfinding and Branding Project is to “*ensure the continued vibrancy and long-term vitality of Wellesley Square, its tenants, and its property owners for the benefit and enjoyment of the Town, its residents, and visitors.*” The ability to attract more visitors, students, retailers, restaurants, and business opportunities to Wellesley Square will expand sales and create jobs while maintaining the village character. It is believed that development of a unifying brand and comprehensive wayfinding signage program will further these positive outcomes.

Further, while there have been discussions as part of the Wellesley Square Initiative to formulate a branding campaign and develop signage for the Square, the opportunity to utilize professional consultants would allow for the development of a professionally designed brand, the establishment of realistic cost estimates, and the creation of a strategic plan for the location and installation of wayfinding signage based on best practices. It is expected that consultant assistance with the above will bring professional and knowledgeable experience to the project, resulting in improved placemaking, visitor orientation, and overall economic development benefits.

Demonstration of Community’s Ability to Begin Implementation of Recommended Action(s)

Given the scope of service for the project, as well as the continued engagement between the Town, property owners, and merchants in activities to improve Wellesley Square, there is strong support for implementation of recommended actions. Additionally, there are examples of an existing commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Wellesley Square Initiative, including a reduction of the liquor license seating requirements, changes to parking meter rates, and improved utilization of employee discounted parking, to name a few. Finally, merchants and businesses have recently indicated the availability of private funds to pay for the fabrication and installation of some anticipated signs. Based upon the above, it is believed that several recommended actions would be pursued in the first three months following completion of the technical assistance project, with additional funding for implementation appropriated within the first six to nine months.

Wellesley Square Target Area Map



