Zoning Proposals for Economic Development

CITY COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MAY 18, 2026

Agenda

- Goals and Objectives
- Policy Proposals (draft)
- Next Steps

Photos: City of Malden (top left), Malden Festivals (right), The Boston Globe (bottom left)

Goals and Objectives

Streamline Decision Making

Allow for What We Want

Support Business Growth

Streamline Decision Making

- Sign Control Ordinance
- Demo Delay / Historic Properties

Sign Control Ordinance

Issue

- Nearly all signs require approval of the Sign Design Review Committee, even though current ordinance sets clear dimensional allowances

Recommendation

- Allow administrative approval for signs that meet the Ordinance regulations
  - Approval by Building Commissioner
  - Option retained to require Sign Design Review Committee approval

Photo: The southwest corner of Maplewood Square, Kim Brookes

Allowances and Dimensional Controls Clearly Specified

Sec. 4.16.080.B. Wall Signs:

1. No portion of a non-illuminated wall sign shall project more than eight (8) inches from the wall to which it is affixed.
2. No portion of an illuminated wall sign shall project more than 10 inches from the wall to which it is affixed.
3. Except as provided, wall signs shall not exceed, in the aggregate, more than 25% of the surface area of the wall or walls to which they are affixed, excluding window and door areas.
4. No portion of a wall sign shall be mounted less than eight (8) ft. above the finished grade, except if the sign projects less than three (3) inches from the building wall on which it is affixed. Unless stated otherwise, the maximum sign height shall be equal to the roof line or the bottom of the second story window, whichever is lower.

Example of wall sign design submission

Demo Delay / Historic Properties

Issue

- All properties, regardless of age subject to Historic Properties review
- Administrative process is not clearly defined
- Overly prescriptive requirements for applicants

Recommendation

- Institute a building age requirements
- Clarify administrative procedures/allowances
- Set objective measures for decision making

Photo: Browne-Masonic Building, 126-150 Pleasant Street, looking west up Pleasant Street, Residences at Malden Center

Demo Delay / Historic Properties

Set Building Date

- Institute a cut off rolling age or static year for buildings to be considered (i.e. 50 years or 1945)
  - Several peer communities (Chelsea, Somerville, Everett, Medford) use approx. 75 years or older.

- Set criteria for buildings built after agreed age/date to be included:
  - Listed on or eligible for the National Register
  - Surveyed, or within surveyed area, per the MHC
  - Listed on, or identified for future surveying, the List of Significant Buildings

Photo: 54 Eastern Ave (2017) Bread of Life (Google)

Demo Delay / Historic Properties

Clarify administrative procedures/allowances

- 4.24.070 WRITTEN DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
- The Commission shall, within fourteen (14) calendar days after receipt of the Application, make a written determination of whether the Building is a Significant Building. The Commission may delegate its authority to make a determination of Significance to one or more members of the Commission or to a municipal employee.
- If the Commission does not make a written determination and notify the Building Commissioner within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt of the Application, the Building Commissioner may proceed to issue the Demolition Permit or Building Permit for Alteration.

Demo Delay / Historic Properties

Set objective measures for decision making

- Updated requirements for Preferably Preserved Buildings during imposed demo delay:
  - Commission requests written updates or meetings, not required monthly
  - Remove requirement to locate a new purchaser
  - Clearly demonstrate efforts to preserve the buildings through
    - Rehabilitation
    - Restoration
    - Replication or reuse

Allow for What We Want

- Use Allowances for Non-Residential Uses in Business and Industrial Districts
- Updated Medical Center Use
- Updated Parking Requirements for Non-Residential Uses in Industrial Districts

By-right commercial uses in appropriate zones

Issue

- Many commercial or industrial uses require a special permit or not allowed in Business/Industrial Zones

Recommendation

- Allow uses by-right or site plan review in appropriate zones
- Include dimensional controls (i.e. size limits) for certain by-right allowances

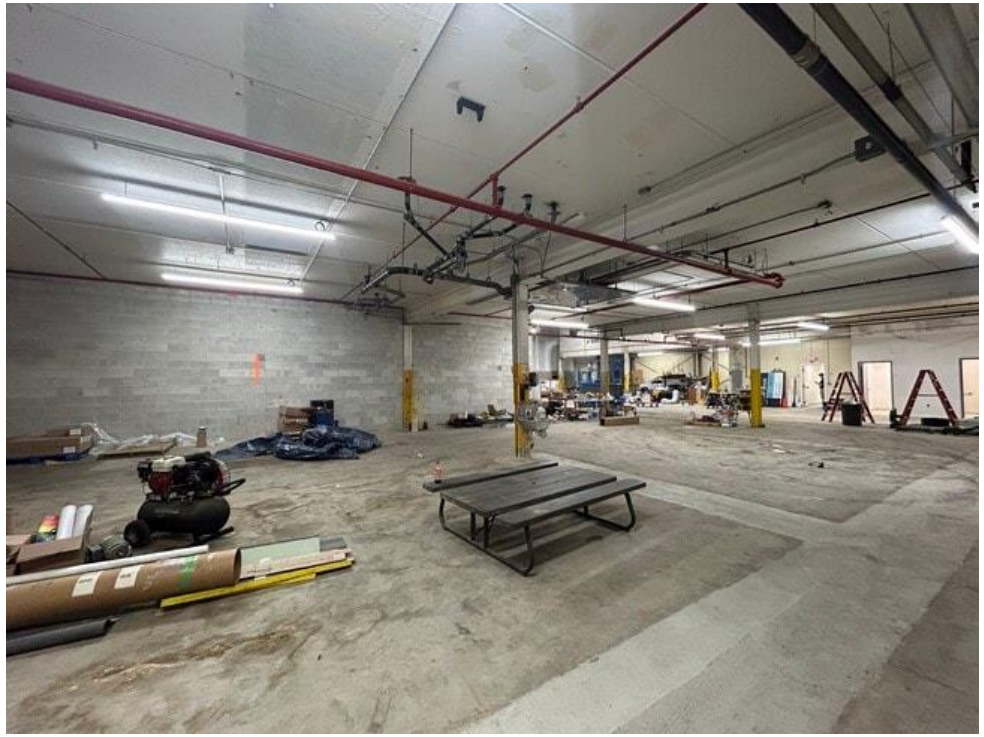


Photo: Vacant warehouse space in Industrial Zone, where warehouse use requires a special permit (CoStar)

Neighborhood Business (BN)

Allow by-right

- Club or Lodge
- Recreation, Gainful Business, Secondary to Principal Club/Lodge
- Body Art
- Licensed Massage Therapy Salon

Intimate Whispers Hair Salon in Maplewood Square offers massage therapy in a BN zone

Neighborhood Business (BN)

	Total Parcels	% of Parcels Citywide	Total City Parcel Area (acres)	% of City Parcel Area
Neighborhood Business (BN)	**240**	**1.78%**	**35**	**1.47%**

Source: Malden Assessor Database, Malden GIS

Maplewood Square (Source: Neighborhood View)

Central Business (BC)

Allow By-Right

- Medical Center
- Recreation, Gainful Business, Secondary to Principal Club/Lodge
- Retail Sales (less than 10,000sf)*
- Body Art
- Licensed Massage Therapy Salon
- Research and Development

Allow by Site Plan Review

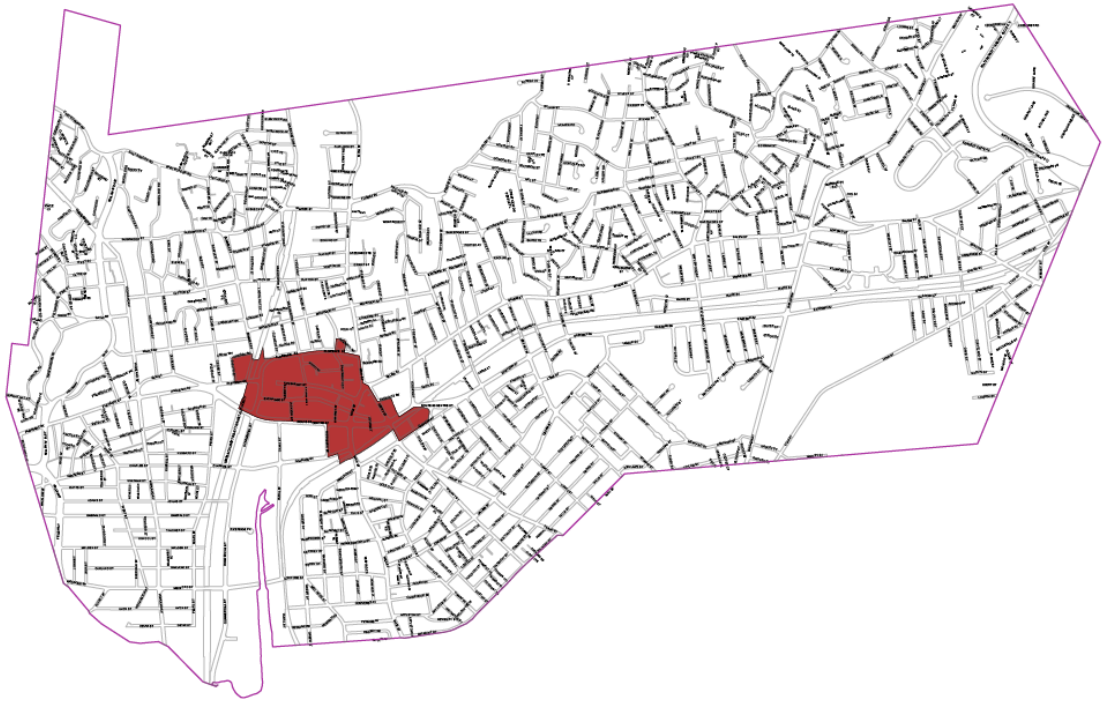
- Hotel

City Center (389 Main St) contains numerous dental practices, currently classified as Medical Center Uses requiring a special permit

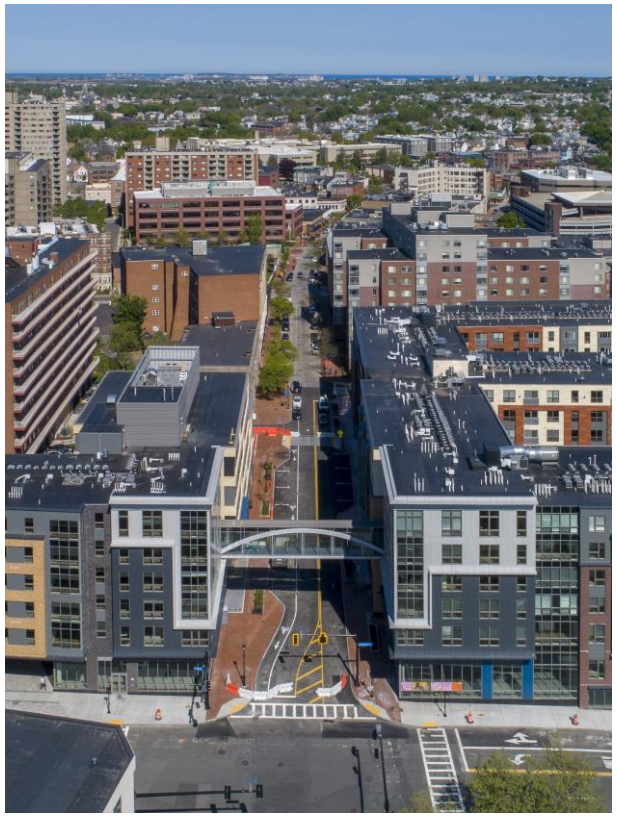
*New size tier thresholds

Central Business (BC)

	Total Parcels	% of Parcels Citywide	Total City Parcel Area (acres)	% of City Parcel Area
Central Business (BC)	**124**	**0.92%**	**51**	**2.13%**



Source: Malden Assessor Database, Malden GIS



Pleasant St, Downtown Malden
(Source: Wicked Local)

Highway Business (BH)

Allow By-Right

- Medical Center
- Recreation, Gainful Business, Secondary to Principal Club/Lodge
- Restaurant
- Retail Sales (less than 10,000sf)*
- Body Art
- Convenience Store
- Licensed Massage Therapy Salon
- Adult Day Health Center
- Kennel
- Research and Development

Allow by Site Plan Review

- Hotel
- Supermarket

Sun Kong, regularly recognized as a best dim sum restaurant in the region is in a Highway Business zoning district

*New size tier thresholds

Highway Business (BH)

	Total Parcels	% of Parcels Citywide	Total City Parcel Area (acres)	% of City Parcel Area
Highway Business (BH)	**315**	**2.33%**	**115**	**4.85%**

Broadway Plaza (Source: WS Development)

Source: Malden Assessor Database, Malden GIS

Industrial 1 & 2 (I1 & I2)

Allow By-Right

- Medical Center
- Recreation, Gainful Business, Secondary to Principal Club/Lodge
- Restaurant
- Fast Food Restaurant (without drive-thru)
- Body Art
- Adult Day Health Center
- Kennel
- Warehouse (less than 20,000 sf)*
- Wholesale and Distribution (less than 20,000 sf)*

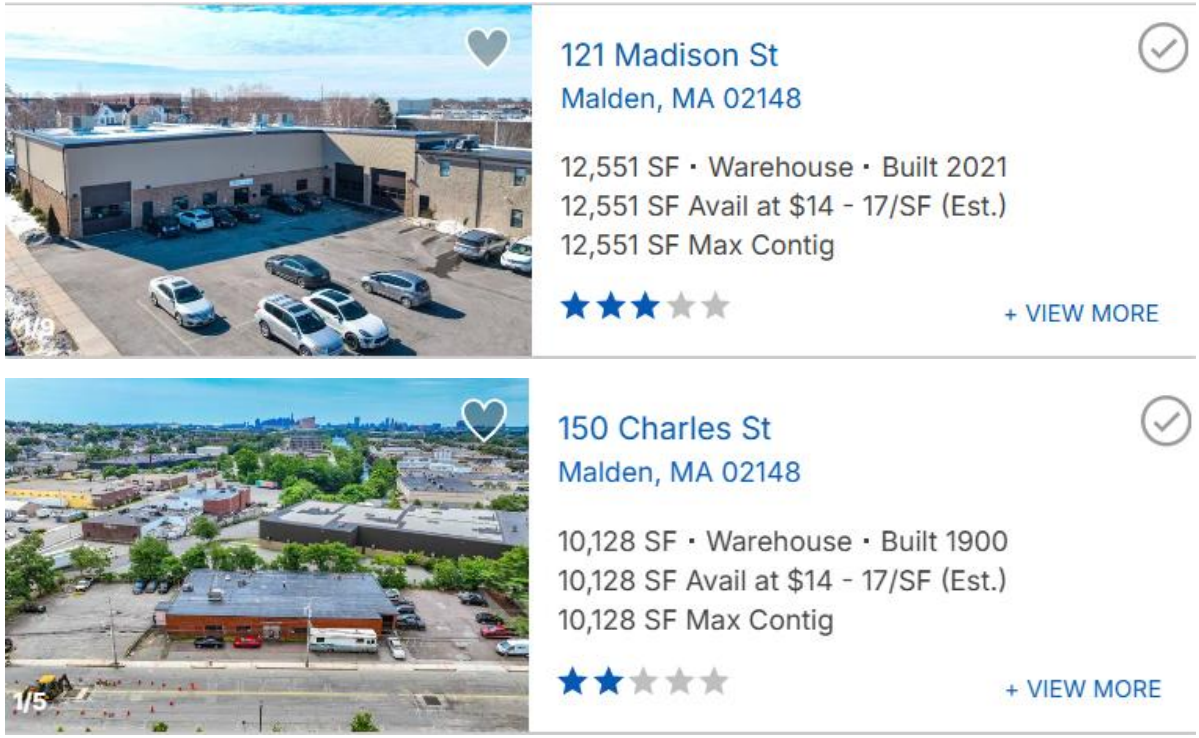
Allow by Site Plan Review

- Hotel
- Supermarket

Allow by Special Permit

- Hospitals

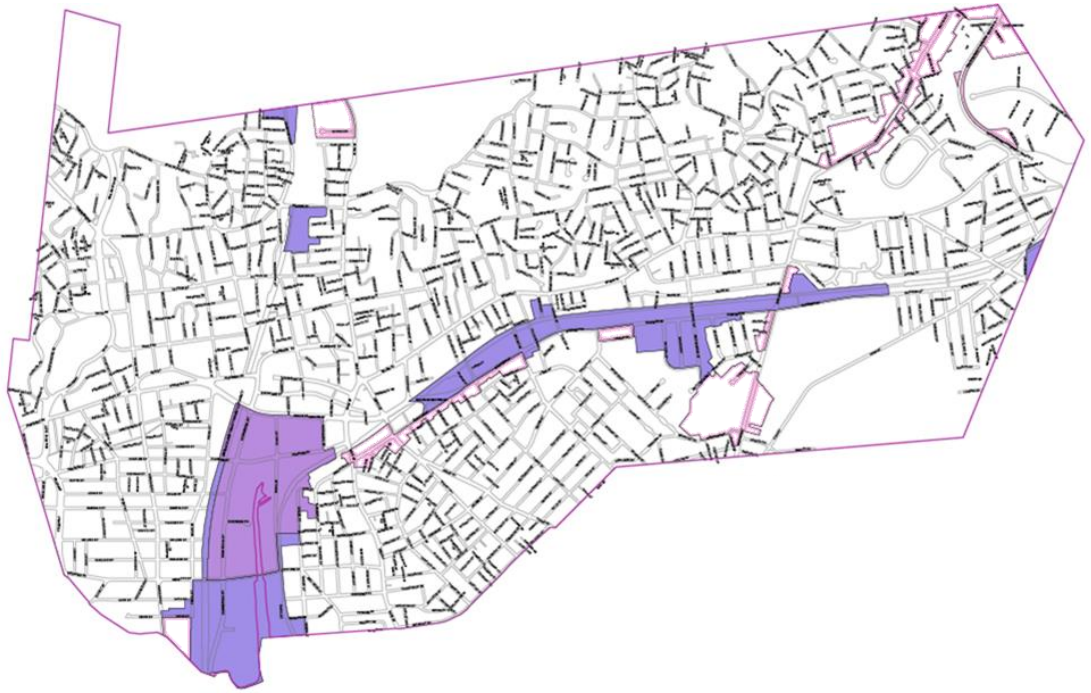
*New size tier thresholds



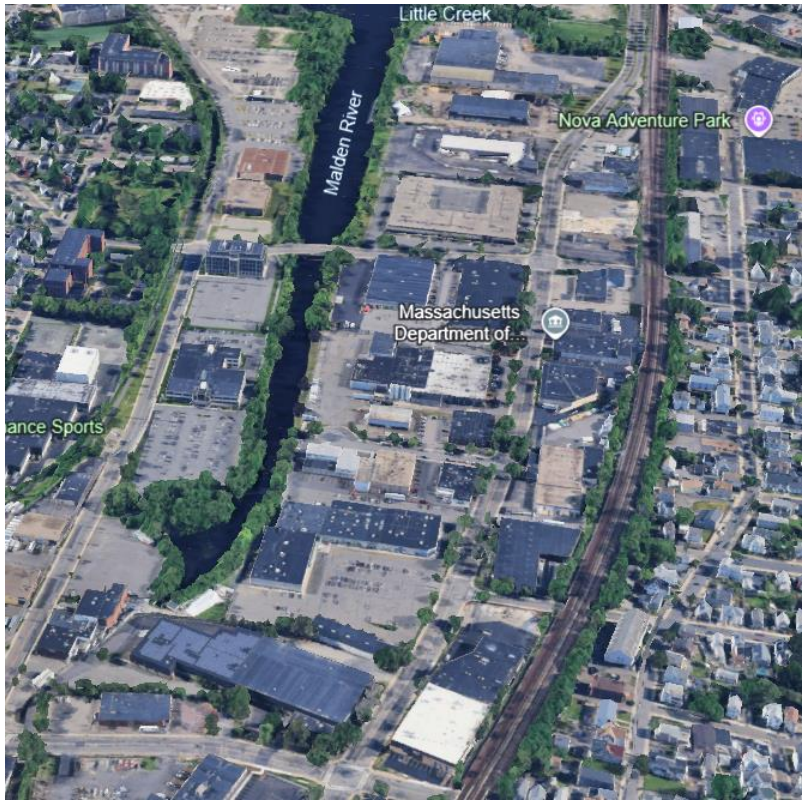
CoStar listings for two vacant warehouse spaces in Industrial zoning districts. All warehouse or wholesale and distribution uses require a special permit in industrial districts.

Industrial 1 & 2 (I1 & I2)

	Total Parcels	% of Parcels Citywide	Total City Parcel Area (acres)	% of City Parcel Area
Industrial 1 & 2 (I1&I2)	**166**	**1.17%**	**188**	**7.91%**



Source: Malden Assessor Database, Malden GIS



Commercial Street, Looking South
(Source: Google Earth)

Parking Requirements for Non-Residential Uses in Industrial Districts

Issue

- Commercial uses required to provide off-street parking spaces (except in Central Business District)

Recommendation

- Do not require, or reduce, off-street parking for by-right non-residential Industrial Zones

Parking Reform in New England

	# of Municipalities	
State	Removed - Parking Minimums	Reduced - Parking Minimums
Connecticut	**28**	**85**
Maine	**8**	**3**
Massachusetts	**63**	**62**
New Hampshire	**6**	**1**
Rhode Island	**7**	**25**
Vermont	**18**	**10**
Grand Total	**130**	**186**

# of Cities/Towns that have removed or reduced parking requirements within their Zoning Ordinances
Source: Parking Reform Network

Note: Not requiring parking within zoning does not mean parking will not be provided

Parking Requirements for Non-Residential Uses in Industrial Districts

Special permit and non-conforming uses still require parking

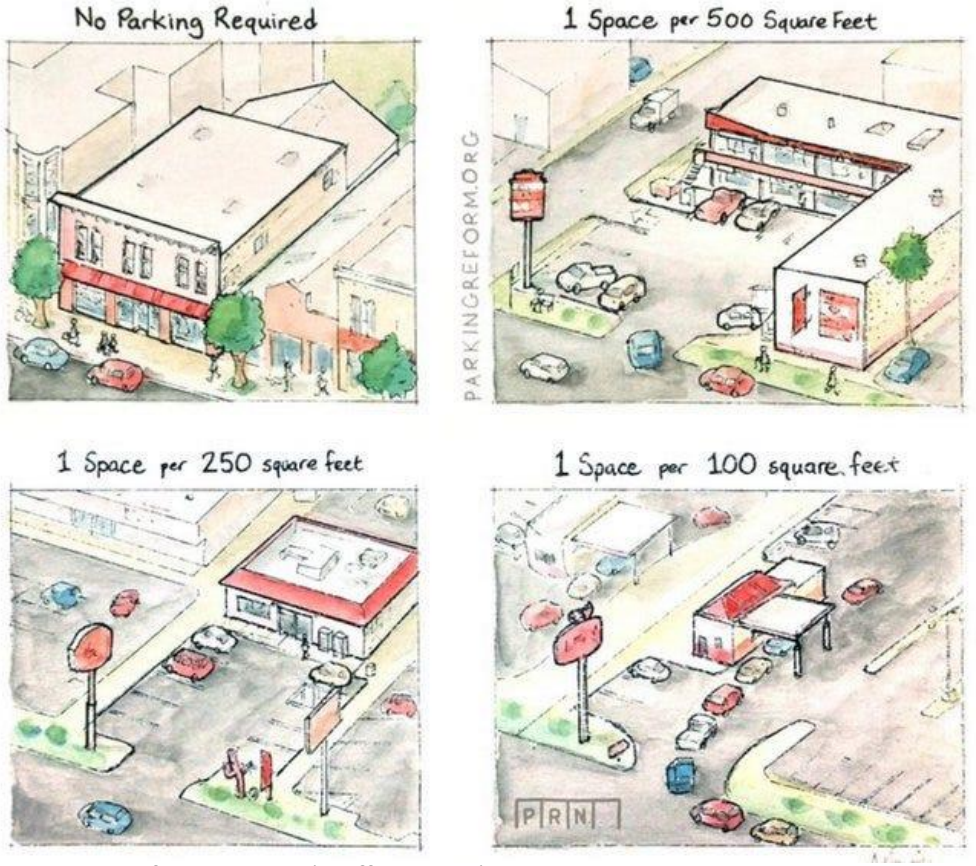
Distribution Center (more than 20,000 sf) at 378 Commercial St
(Source: Combined Properties)

Car Repair Shop at 30 Charles St (Source: Google)

Parking Requirements for Non-Residential Uses in Industrial Districts

Rational for Parking Reform

- Improve design outcomes
- Required parking leads to more traffic/driving
- Reduce cost of development
- Reduced parking requirement does not mean no parking provided



Design Configurations with Different Parking Requirements
(Source Parking Reform Network)

Support New/Existing Business Growth

- Updated City website
- Opening a business in Malden guidebook

THE RETAIL PLAYGROUND

Our online community, The Retail Playground, offers access to peer support, expert insights, and real-time collaboration that extends beyond structured coursework. It serves as an ongoing resource for connection, accountability, and practical guidance to help members take action and scale with confidence.

THE POP-UP PLAYBOOK

Our signature video-based masterclass, offered within The Retail Playground, covers everything you need to dream up and launch a pop-up. With step-by-step instructions and a robust companion workbook, you can create your very own pop-up shop in as little as three weeks, backed by best-in-class industry expertise.

ALSO INCLUDED IN THE RETAIL PLAYGROUND:

POP-IN HOST STRATEGY

Learn smart strategies for offsetting your rent and expanding your reach by hosting workshops, events, and other brands as pop-ins within your retail shop via this easy-to-complete, instantly downloadable PDF workbook.

RETAIL MARKETING FOUNDATIONS

In this crash course, we will help you create a detailed and executable marketing plan without feeling like you have to constantly create content, send emails and post on ALL the social platforms.

Photo: Business resources provided by UpNext, UpNext and Project Pop-Up

Next Steps

- Historic/Demo Delay
  - Additional analysis and engagement
  - Develop language and file for Ordinance amendments
- Sign Control Ordinance
  - Refine language and file for Ordinance amendments
- Zoning Proposals (Uses and Parking)
  - Input feedback and file for Ordinance amendments