

### **APPENDIX F - 2022 Community Planning Grant Application** BD-22-1068-1068C-1068L-68403

### Please complete entire the Application

1. PROJECT INFORMATION						
A NAME OF AMINIOTALITY (OCUPANION TO	ITITY/DICTDICT AND VENDOR CORE					
a) NAME OF MUNICIPALITY/GOVERNMENT ENTITY/DISTRICT AND VENDOR CODE  City of Northampton, Massachusetts VENDOR CODE: VC6000192124						
City of Northampton, Massachusetts	VENDOR CODE. VC0000132124					
b) PROJECT NAME (LIMIT 10 WORDS)						
"northampton.live" Marketing Program FY20	D23 with COVID-19 Flexibility					
c) BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION (LIMIT 50 WO	RDS)					
Northampton Marketing Program for FY2023 levera	ging the northampton.live platform					
d) CONTACT PERSON(S)/TITLE (Persons with re	esponsibility for this grant)					
	<u> </u>					
Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor, City of Northampton						
Alan Wolf, Chief of Staff						
Annie Lesko, Economic Development Manager						
e) PHONE # AND EMAIL ADDRESS OF CONTACT	T PERSON(S)					
413-587-1212; alesko@northamptonma.gov						
() MANUAL ADDRESS OF CONTACT DESCRIPTION						
f) MAILING ADDRESS OF CONTACT PERSON(S)						
Mayor's Office						
210 Main Street, 2nd Floor						
Northampton, MA 01060						
L						

#### 2. IMPACT DESCRIPTION/CONNECTION TO GAMING FACILITY

#### a) Please describe in detail the impact that is attributed to the operation of a gaming facility.

Prior to the arrival of MGM Springfield, and the subsequent global pandemic, Northampton's entertainment and retail destinations attracted over 1.4 million people annually supporting hundreds of jobs and generating over \$8 million in annual state and city tax revenues. Since the pandemic, competition for extremely limited entertainment revenue has never been more profound. This competition has been made all the more challenging by MGM Springfield's ability to respond quickly to restart its marketing and event engines robustly as COVID restrictions begin to loosen, during a time when Northampton's small business community continues to struggle to simply keep their doors open on a week-to-week basis.

As detailed below, Northampton's entertainment, restaurant and retail economy has been financially devastated by the impacts of COVID-19. As our downtown businesses reopen, many do not have the resources to individually market their businesses at a level sufficient to even begin to compete with the marketing engine run by MGM Springfield – a marketing engine already up and running, and expected only to grow as we head into the busy summer season. The funding generously provided by the Casino Mitigation Grant Fund has never been more critical than in this tenuous post COVID-19 period, when our downtown small business community is unable to match MGM Springfield on its own.

Economically, Northampton is a valuable tourism and financial asset for the Pioneer Valley and the Commonwealth. In addition to providing direct and indirect employment to hundreds of residents, significant user tax revenues are generated. Total 2019 meals and hotel tax revenues for the Commonwealth were \$13 million and \$766,283.62 for the City of Northampton. Not surprisingly, these figures have taken a significant hit during 2020 and 2021 and we're already seeing that same hit going into 2022. Northampton's ability to maintain its value as a tourism asset to the Commonwealth, and to return to numbers approximating pre-pandemic levels, are profoundly hampered by the struggles facing our entertainment, dining, and retail small business community, who are the primary drivers of tourist activity within our city.

#### Casino Impacts:

The primary ongoing impact of the MGM Springfield casino has been the risk - never more relevant than now, as our small business community begins to try and recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic – that the casino's offerings will divert consumer spending and visitors from Northampton. The casino's size and financial backing mean that it has been able to adjust and rebound from the impacts of COVID almost seamlessly and at a larger scale than any of our downtown businesses could ever imagine. Thanks to a 2017 grant from the MGC and support in subsequent years, the "northampton.live" marketing platform established a first-ever continuous digital media presence to promote the attractions of Northampton to local and regional visitors. While originally an important means of keeping Northampton's message as a regional attraction ongoing, sustaining this marketing platform has become critical to the survival of our entertainment, dining and retail community during this period of rebuilding.

The City of Northampton seeks funding to support the "northampton.live" marketing platform in what was to have been a transition period from grant-supported funding to a sponsor and business-supported model. The platform, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has proven to be an invaluable resource, reaching

thousands of viewers near and far, as well as using social media sites and email communications to target visitors. The City of Northampton and its partner, the Downtown Northampton Association, have adapted the platform to provide critical assistance in marketing Northampton activities as we rebuild our local economy in a post-COVID-19 western Massachusetts world. As we slowly emerge from this pandemic and our businesses begin the recovery process, northampton.live provides a unique, critical means of marketing and outreach that would be inaccessible to most of our small businesses and beyond the resources of our City as a whole. Absent this platform, our individual entertainment, dining and retail establishments will be faced with competing for limited marketing attention with MGM Springfield - a business with substantial resources and monthly revenue far exceeding most of our businesses' annual gross income - while trying to address staffing needs, supply chain issues, rising costs, COVID-concerns and the multitude of other day-to-day realities facing a small business owner in this COVID recovery period. The disparity in marketing ability is staggering, and without the aid of the 'northampton.live' platform, there is no realistic way for our small business community to even begin to generate visibility, much less actively attract visitors.

b) Please provide documentation, specificity or evidence that gives support for the determination that the operation of the gaming facility caused or is causing the impact (i.e. surveys, data, reports).

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on all entertainment and food service venues, and to effectively recover, our shared goal must be to support efforts to rebuild. In order to keep our local economies solvent to the benefit of all, it will be critical to support smaller, local businesses, restaurants and entertainment venues that are the engine of a wider healthy customer base, to ensure that successes can be achieved by all in a recovering and post-COVID-19 world. Already in 2021, we have seen that the MGM Springfield casino's abilities to resume marketing and programming efforts to draw visitors to their venues is significant, and far outpaces the capacity of Northampton's small business community.

The City of Northampton is located less than 20 miles north of Springfield and is a popular arts, culture, entertainment, and retail destination attracting over 1.4 million visitors annually. Northampton offers over 230 retail shops and restaurants along with five musical entertainment venues and 331 hotel rooms. Northampton's unique cache attracts people from a wide area (Albany to Boston) and almost certainly benefits MGM by bringing people to the area. The pandemic has hit Northampton businesses hard. The City of Northampton's local receipts in FY2022 make up about 10.7% of the budget. In FY2021, the City saw a reduction of 34.8 percent in local receipts such as hotel-motel, meals, cannabis, and parking revenue. This represented about \$1.9 million in lost revenue for that one year. In FY2022, we are seeing some rebound in local receipts; however, they are still well below the FY2020 figures.

Since the start of COVID, 35 service-oriented businesses have closed or left the area, including 13 food and beverage establishments, 11 retail establishments, one arts and entertainment venue, and two health and beauty services businesses. Four of these closures were during the month of January 2022 alone. The northampton.live platform is a lifeline for the remaining small venues, restaurants and businesses to band together and do what they can to offset the \$247 million in gross revenue generated by MGM Springfield alone during 2021 (Mass Gaming Commission, MGM Springfield Revenue Report, December 2021).

MGM International's stated goal in a January 20, 2020, Boston Globe article is that they are "...in it for the long game," and that they "...[hope] MGM can market the Springfield casino much as it does its Vegas properties: first and foremost as a night out or a trip for entertainment." MGM also reports a shifting focus

toward geographically nearby customers as a response to travel restrictions which is by definition a market that heavily overlaps with Northampton's target customers. This expansive goal comes at a time when foot traffic in downtown Northampton is drying up due to closed businesses and COVID restrictions, and as MGM Springfield's offerings grow and its marketing increases.

MGM Springfield proudly heralded a return to "normal hours of being open 24 hours a day, seven days a week" as of January 29, 2021 ('MGM Springfield 'cautiously optimistic' about the future', The Reminder, Feb. 15, 2021). While MGM was offering 24 hour access to its casino, the small businesses of Northampton were struggling to keep their doors open at all. As of January 29, 2021, when MGM Springfield's doors fully reopened, our community had lost 18 retail and restaurant businesses, with 12 other restaurants alone remaining closed for a period of time during the winter months. Staffing challenges, supply chain issues, rising costs, and related COVID concerns meant that Northampton's small business community began 2021 still deep in the weeds of COVID closures and impacts, while MGM Springfield was ramping up its marketing engine and casino offerings, luring potential customers away from the minimal open entertainment offerings of Northampton, and down to Springfield.

MGM Springfield's return to life continued throughout 2021; as celebrated in the local media, MGM Springfield ran a successful summer free weekly outdoor concert series from June 4 – September 3, 2021; they extended these concerts indoors during the month of October, offering access to a diverse selection of food offerings inside MGM Springfield before and after shows. In contrast, Northampton experienced postponements of some summer concert dates and outright cancellations or postponement of numerous fall shows at multiple downtown Northampton entertainment venues. During this past December alone, MGM Springfield generated more than \$22M in revenue, through slots and table games, with poker having returned to MGM Springfield on October 29, 2021, the state's only venue offering poker at that time; and celebrated New Year's Eve with a large-scale indoor concert. In contrast, 2021 in Northampton ended with the cancellation of all indoor events at Northampton's First Night celebration, one of the cornerstone events that typically brings both tourists and locals to our downtown community.

Thanks to the pressures of the pandemic and the reduction of consumer activity in western Massachusetts overall, almost any marketing activity will have a deleterious impact on Northampton's ability to recover. The combination of a revived marketing engine and the return of in person events, dining and gambling activities coordinated by a professional international billion dollar corporation next door, as we are witnessing with MGM Springfield, will have a particularly significant impact on Northampton. We are counting on the northampton.live platform to at least slightly help to level the playing field, and believe this effort is very consistent with the MGC's community mitigation strategy.

#### c) How do you anticipate your proposed remedy will address the identified impact.

The northampton.live platform has taken root as an information source for many in western Massachusetts and beyond, about events, activities, and offerings in Northampton, Massachusetts. The "northampton.live" marketing platform is the City's first-ever marketing initiative that has reached thousands of potential visitors daily (see attached report titled: Northampton.Live High-level statistics March, 2019 - December, 2021). The site works with social media outlets such as Facebook and Instagram to reach targeted visitors by activity preferences, and visitors to the site may sign up for messages and promotions. Funding this platform through FY2023 will allow us to continue to grow the site to address the unique needs of COVID,

while working with the small business community to move to an independently-sustainable model for this platform, on a timeframe that is realistic given their current financial realities, the reality of how COVID recovery will progress within downtown Northampton – and the reality of a re-emerging MGM Springfield.

The goal of the City from day one, with grateful support from prior Massachusetts Gaming Commission grants, has been to hand operation and support of the platform off to the Downtown Northampton Association. Through the commission's generous support, the activities, advertising, and promotion of the platform have been expertly managed and grown by Rhyme Digital to a point where prior investment has succeeded in establishing the site as a 'go-to' resource for area consumers.

With the outbreak of the pandemic, efforts to launch the platform without support have stalled, and our efforts to capitalize on the wise support for this necessary effort have not been successful, exactly at a time when rapidly changing conditions have made the effort more difficult than ever. Resources that had been intended to provide permanent support for the site have evaporated and other resources are required to support the much greater staff time demanded to address changing conditions. The City of Northampton asks for an additional round of funding to ensure that local resources can be identified and obtained to keep this important local promotional engine functioning. This had been the intent in 2021, but with many of our local events canceled and local entertainment revenues so incredibly depressed, we are asking for additional time in the form of operating revenue to guarantee the initiative survives during this transitional recovery period.

- 3. PROPOSED USE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING FUNDS (Please attach additional sheets/supplemental materials if necessary.)
- a) Please identify the amount of funding requested. In determining the funding request, please round up to the nearest hundred dollars.

The City of Northampton seeks \$75,000 to fund the platform through FY2023 (July 2022 through July 2023). A detailed monthly budget starting in July 2022 is attached in order to demonstrate how these funds will be used (titled: Northampton 2022-2023 Casino Mitigation Grant Application. Scope and Budget Breakdown)

b) Please identify below the manner in which the funds are proposed to be used. Please provide a detailed scope, budget and timetable for the use of funds.

The grant will be used to fund the 'northampton.live' platform which was created and is now being populated and managed by Rhyme Digital of Easthampton, MA, including work to expand the site to respond to the ever-changing COVID landscape and the particular needs of our entertainment, dining and retail community as they make their way through this period of recovery. A detailed monthly calendar of services with budgeted costs has been attached (titled: Northampton 2022-2023 Casino Mitigation Grant Application.Scope and Budget Breakdown)

c) Please provide documentation (e.g. - invoices, proposals, estimates, etc.) adequate for the Commission to ensure that the funds will be used for the cost of planning to mitigate the impact.

Invoices detailing the work for FY2023 have been attached (titled: Northampton.Live FY2023 Invoices – City of Northampton)

d) Please describe how the planning request will address the impact indicated. Please attach additional sheets/supplemental materials if necessary.

As outlined in the scope and budget provided under item b above, the focus of this planning request is on the following items:

- Analysis of marketing strategy and efforts undertaken during COVID, and strategy and planning for how to maximize limited resources to market entertainment, restaurant and retail venues in the face of significant competition from the re-emergence of MGM Springfield's entertainment and dining options.
- Revising of marketing efforts targeting support of specific programs like outdoor dining, that were newly created because of COVID, and have become critical to the survival of our restaurant community during this continuing recovery period.
- Expansion of the more robust, substantive event calendar and entertainment presence on the website as live events continue to return to Northampton, combined with email marketing templates and strategies to highlight increased downtown entertainment activities.
- Finalization, launch, analysis and improvement of Promotional Packages, designed to be a primary vehicle by which financial support of Northampton.Live transitions to a community-supported endeavor. Sale of these packages will begin in October, 2022, with the first series of promotional ads scheduled to begin in January, 2023.
- e) For joint grant requests, please state the amount requested for the joint request. Please also state the amount of any Regional Planning Incentive Award requested and provide separate detail on the use of these additional funds.

N/A

#### 4. CONSULTATION WITH REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY (RPA)/NEARBY COMMUNITIES

a) Please provide details about the Applicant's consultation with the Regional Planning Agency serving the community and nearby communities to determine the potential for cooperative regional efforts regarding planning activities.

<u>Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC):</u> The PVPC will be consulted on this proposal. We are interested in exploring any ways that they can assist with this effort to promote our region.

#### 5. MATCHING FUNDS FROM GOVERNMENTAL OR OTHER ENTITY

a) Please demonstrate that the governmental or other entity will provide significant funding to match or partially match the assistance required from the Community Mitigation Fund.

There are no direct matching funds for the northampton.live platform from the City of Northampton, however City of Northampton Economic Development staff, the Planning & Sustainability Department staff, and the Northampton Arts Council staff are deeply committed and involved in planning, executing, and financially supporting programming and marketing of Northampton entertainment.

b) Please provide detail on what your community will contribute to the planning projects such as in-kind services or planning funds.

#### **City Contributions:**

The City of Northampton delivers financial assistance and support for the promotion and maintenance of Downtown Northampton.

<u>Financial assistance:</u> This totals approximately \$75,000 annually, and includes: (1) funding for the annual "First Night Out" fireworks display (\$10,000), (2) annual budgeted funding for a street maintenance position previously funded by the Northampton BID (\$35,000), (3) funding and administration of the Downtown Holiday tree lights (\$30,000).

<u>Northampton Arts Council:</u> The Northampton Arts Council, with budgeted city staff manages and delivers public events and concerts throughout the year such as First Night and the annual Summer Concert Series which all attract thousands of visitors annually.

<u>Northampton Economic Development</u>: In-kind support includes the work of the city's economic development staff, the work of which has been elevated to the Mayor's Chief of Staff and supported by the City's Economic Development Manager who together contribute five hours per week working in supporting the ongoing efforts of Rhyme Digital and the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) in supporting the Downtown community.

#### **Downtown Projects:**

The City is well underway with a major effort to redesign the downtown street and sidewalks in order to not only move vehicle traffic more efficiently, but also to make the downtown more open for walking, biking and outdoor commerce supported by Massachusetts Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), city and private funding sources termed the "Picture Main Street" project (<a href="http://www.northamptonma.gov/2015/Picture-Main-Street">http://www.northamptonma.gov/2015/Picture-Main-Street</a>), and a City funded (using cannabis mitigation fees) \$1 million rehabilitation of Pleasant Street, the gateway to downtown, a MassDOT \$1 million safe routes to school project to improve sidewalks near downtown, and a \$400,000 Community

Development Block Grant and tree mitigation project to improve placemaking and walkability in Florence, the City's second village center.

During the pandemic, the city sought and received \$200,000 in funding from the DOT Shared Streets and Spaces grant program (among other foundation and private funding) which facilitated the transformation of the public way and private spaces for outdoor dining and rapid modifications of parking spaces to facilitate take-out, providing guidance and permitting from the health, building, and fire departments, and physical modifications coordinated through the Mayor's Office and the Planning and Sustainability department executed by the Department of Public Works. Information about this project can be found here: <a href="https://www.northamptonma.gov/2190/Shared-Streets-Spaces">https://www.northamptonma.gov/2190/Shared-Streets-Spaces</a>.

Unfortunately, in spite of the city's large investments outlined above in supporting our downtowns and in helping businesses recover from COVID-19, the northampton.live project is not eligible for the grant and dedicated funding sources supporting these other initiatives.

#### **Economic Development:**

Significant financial and staff resources were spent assisting Northampton's business community's effort to survive the pandemic. The city facilitated the transformation of the public way and private spaces for outdoor dining and rapid modifications of parking spaces to facilitate take-out, providing guidance and permitting from the health, building, and fire departments, and physical modifications coordinated through the Mayor's Office and the Planning and Sustainability department executed by the Department of Public Works.

The city actively engaged in the Local Rapid Recovery Planning process sponsored by the Commonwealth and has identified multiple projects it is currently seeking grant funding to support. One of these projects identified was to support small businesses and organizations by growing capacity and opportunities for digital marketing and northampton.live does just that. However, additional funding is necessary to help update features on northampton.live. This next round of grant funding would be a means to sustain the platform long term by incentivizing the ownership of free business profiles on northampton.live and also to increase digital marketing, branding and social media training for small businesses.

The city continues to pursue a public dialogue about redesigning Main Street in both Florence and downtown Northampton.

#### Social Services and Economic Development Inextricably Linked Downtown

The pandemic exposed significant social service delivery gaps related to housing and food insecurity in Northampton. Because there is a profound need to minimize the potential impact of an outbreak among our most at-risk and difficult to track residents and on our local economy, the city invested significant resources and staff time addressing this issue. The Mayor dedicated significant financial resources and staff time to this effort, including joining a task force convened by the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness that brought unprecedented coordination and pressure to bear on state and federal resources to provide immediate relief.

**Housing, Quarantine & Isolation:** Task force efforts resulted in increased funding for local housing efforts and the location of a Quarantine and Isolation facility in western Massachusetts, and an

increase in shelter capacity in western Massachusetts overall, which greatly reduced pressure on Northampton's shelters. The city's housing efforts include opening a shelter for those experiencing houselessness at Northampton high school last spring, facilitating the opening of the shelter at First Churches this fall, and securing a secondary solution for shelter for individuals not suited for whatever reason to the larger shelters.

**Food insecurity:** The city provided significant financial assistance to local food providers such as Manna, the Survival Center, Grow Food Northampton, and Friends of the Homeless, as well as assistance securing a donation of bottled water from Coca-Cola for those who need it. It also stationed portable handwashing and toileting facilities around the city for public use given the lack of access to closed public and private options, sanitary and safety cleanups of abandoned camps.

**Social service delivery:** Looking forward, the city is aggressively pursuing the development of a Community Resilience Hub to centralize social services for better access in the future, with a desired 2021 opening date, again recognizing the interconnected nature of the needs of Northampton's most at-risk populations and our downtown economy. More can be found here: <a href="http://www.northamptonma.gov/2166/Community-Resilience-Hub">http://www.northamptonma.gov/2166/Community-Resilience-Hub</a>

#### **Downtown Northampton Association (DNA):**

The DNA has again committed \$10,000 to the costs of sustaining the "Northampton Live" platform and is contacting other community organizations and local businesses to contribute as well. The DNA will also commit to a significant in-kind contribution of staff labor. This work includes supervision of Rhyme Digital and ongoing collaboration around revision, enhancement and improvement of website, email and social marketing features to better reflect the needs of the downtown entertainment, restaurant and retail sector as they recover and reopen following COVID-19. Further, the DNA will be devoting time and resources to assist in the development and to market the promotional packages created by Rhyme Digital, and designed to move this platform to one funded through community contributions.

- 6. RELEVANT EXCERPTS FROM HOST OR SURROUNDING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND MASSACHUSETTS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA") DECISION
  - a) Please describe and include excerpts regarding the impact and potential mitigation from any relevant sections of the community's Host or Surrounding Community Agreement.

N/A

b)	Where applicable, please also briefly summarize and/or provide page references to the most relevant language included in the most relevant MEPA certificate(s) or comment(s) submitted by the community to MEPA.
N/A	
c)	Please explain how this impact was either anticipated or not anticipated in that Agreement or such MEPA decision.
N/A	
d)	If planning funds are sought for mitigation not required under MEPA, please provide justification why funding should be utilized to plan for such mitigation.
N/A	
7. II	NTERNAL CONTROLS/ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS

a) Please provide detail regarding the controls that will be used to ensure that funds will only be used to address the impact.

#### **Activity Controls:**

The City's Economic Development Manager works closely with the marketing agency, Rhyme Digital of Easthampton, MA, along with the DNA on this program and other issues affecting Northampton.

The Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce (GNCC) also serves as the Hampshire County Tourism Council and they participate and support the ongoing activities and operations of the marketing program. The DNA is a subsidiary of the GNCC.

#### **Funding Controls:**

The attached Northampton Marketing FY2023 Scope & Budget offers a detailed monthly itemization of specific services and costs to be rendered by Rhyme Digital.

Misuse of these funds can be avoided since payments are issued after services are delivered and detailed by a monthly invoice.

b) Will any nongovernmental entity receive funds? If so, please describe. If non-governmental entities will receive any funds, please describe what reporting will be required and how the applicant will remedy any misuse of funds.

The funds are distributed to the Downtown Northampton Association which administers the northampton.live platform. Their current vendor for this effort is Rhyme Digital of Easthampton, MA.

NO COMMUNITY IS ELIGIBLE FOR MORE THAN ONE COMMUNITY PLANNING REGIONAL PLANNING INCENTIVE AWARD.

8.	CERTIFICATION BY MUNICIPALITY/GOVERNMEN	TAL ENTITY	
func	pehalf of the aforementioned municipality/gove Is that are requested in this application will be u Application.		
Ву:	Signature of Responsible Municipal Official/Governmental Entity	Date:	1/31/22
	(print name)		
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# Northampton 2022 Casino Mitigation Grant Application Marketing Scope & Budget

#### Overview:

A breakdown of monthly tasks for the FY23 year, based on a grant award of \$72,000 for enhancement of the Northampton.live platform, including emphasis on post-COVID recovery period for downtown Northampton and transition to a community-supported model of operation.

Enhancements that will continue to be made include improving the content on the website to better highlight individual businesses via paid promotional opportunities, which will further enhance the search engine optimization that we continue to enjoy for popular Google searches, as well as provide a vehicle to financially support the project moving forward.

To continue to combat the effects of COVID-19, especially as downtown restaurant and entertainment venues reopen in a more robust capacity, other anticipated updates include enhancing the email marketing templates which reach our subscribers on an ongoing basis, as well as further categorizing the businesses on the site to better showcase and increase focus on events and dining.

#### **TASKS**

Month	Tasks	Est. Cost
July 2022	<ul> <li>Analysis of FY22 Strategy, Planning for FY23</li> <li>Evaluate platform performance from past fiscal year</li> <li>Evaluate website platform analytics to show which enhancements were successful and should provide a further benefit to the long-term survival of the platform</li> <li>Review impacts during COVID-19, planning for post-COVID-19 marketing adjustments</li> <li>Analysis and strategy for launch of promotional packages in light of COVID-19 impact.</li> </ul>	\$8,000
August 2022	Preliminary Planning of Holiday Marketing     Review of FY22 holiday performance     Strategize website content, including Holiday Shopping Guide     Outline social media marketing strategy, identify new content to be created     Discuss 2022 holiday marketing plans for downtown and how to maximize Northampton.Live's impact	\$4,000
September 2022	<ul> <li>Analyze performance of Holiday Shopping Guide, and revise and update</li> <li>Build and improve on extensive, multi-category holiday shopping guide feature on the website</li> <li>Include new designs/styling, update pages, categories and listings to reflect post-COVID downtown environment</li> <li>Identify target audiences beyond Northampton</li> <li>Work with the Downtown Northampton Association</li> </ul>	\$3,500

	<ul> <li>and small business community to refine design, categories, features</li> <li>Begin sourcing content from businesses who wish to participate, and organize on the website</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>Finalize Promotional Packages</li> <li>Finalize design options and marketing materials to be used in October roll-out of Promotional Packages</li> </ul>	\$2,500
October 2022	Launch Promotional Packages on the Site     Feature new paid promotional package options on the website     Present to the business community via the Downtown Northampton Association, and work to answer questions, address concerns and make any needed tweaks to the program.	\$3,000
November 2022	<ul> <li>Finalize and Launch Holiday Marketing Plans</li> <li>Feature new paid promotional package options on the website</li> <li>Present to the business community via the Downtown Northampton Association, and work to answer questions, address concerns and make any needed tweaks to the program</li> </ul>	\$2,500 \$2,000
	Continue to Revise and Boost Event Listings     Coordinate with the Downtown Northampton     Association, nonprofit and arts sector to maximize number of listings, shared marketing and reach.	
December 2022	Preparation for January, 2023 Promotional Packages content launch  Anticipating we will have an initial small round of businesses interested in paid promotion on the site, we will work with them to prepare a January 2021 launch of new promotional packages for these select businesses, including:  Business showcases  Prominent placement within key sections  Rotating ad space  Video spotlight section  Easy backend management of new promotions	\$8,000
January 2023	Begin Planning for Summer Dining and Entertainment Season     Revamp, update and enhance Outdoor Dining site features     Work with Downtown Northampton Association and restaurant community to design effective campaign and coordinate with individual business efforts     Will require site development as well as data-gathering from relevant businesses	\$5,000
	Launch "Promotional" Package content     Work with initial round of small businesses to launch	\$5,000

	their new promotional packages in January  Includes finalizing design/prep of materials to include in promotions	
February 2023	Enhance and Improve the Event Calendar/Event Section     As we move into Summer 2023, we anticipate a significant increase in the number of events coming through the website, and we anticipate needing to dramatically increase and expand the entertainment listings and promotions     This includes pulling events from more data sources, as well as pushing businesses to utilize the platform for their events.	\$3,500
	<ul> <li>Promotional Package Development</li> <li>Continued partnership with small businesses to fine-tune the design and marketing materials</li> <li>Analysis and evaluation of prior month launch of promotional packages</li> </ul>	\$3,000
March 2023	Continue Enhancement of the Event Calendar/Event Section     Enhancements to take advantage of Five College graduation season and potential future partnerships with the colleges	\$2,500
	Enhancement of Email Marketing Templates     Enhancements designed to better promote and take advantage of updated Event Calendar / Event Section, and anticipated significant increase in events during 2022.	\$2,500
April 2023	Launch Outdoor Dining Site Feature     Includes design/prep of materials to assist in promotion, timed to coordinate with April outdoor dining launch downtown	\$3,000
	Review of first quarter Promotional Package     performance, and conversations with business     partners and the Downtown Northampton Association     over adjustments.      Anticipated addition of new business partners during     this quarter, in advance of graduation season and     busy summer months	\$3,000
	Launch Event Calendar/Event Section Site Feature     Includes design/prep of materials to assist in promotion the new feature	\$3,000
May 2023	Evaluation of Promotional Packages (ongoing)     Continued addition of new business partners, including developing new content, design and marketing materials to reflect additional partners.     Continued analysis of prior months, and adjustments as necessary to ongoing promotional packages.	\$2,000

	Analyze Ongoing Performance of Outdoor Dining Site     Feature	\$2,000
June 2023	<ul> <li>Evaluation of Promotional Packages (ongoing)</li> <li>Includes design/prep of materials to assist in promotion the new feature</li> </ul>	\$2,000
	Analyze Event Calendar / Event Section Site Features and Email Marketing Enhancements     Analyze performance of event calendar and event section site features, and corresponding email marketing changes in order to adjust as needed to maximize benefit during busy summer entertainment season.	\$2,000

TOTAL \$72,000



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: July, 2022

Amount due: \$8,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with an analysis of FY22 strategy and planning for FY23 services.

#### Work includes:

- Evaluation of platform performance from past fiscal year
- Evaluation of website platform analytics to show which enhancements were successful and should provide a further benefit to the long-term survival of the platform
- Review of impacts during COVID-19, planning for post-COVID-19 marketing adjustments
- Analysis and strategy for launch of promotional packages in light of COVID-19 impact

Payable to: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association
99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: August, 2022

Amount due: \$4,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the preliminary planning of holiday marketing for FY 23.

#### Work includes:

- Review of FY22 holiday performance
- Strategize website content, including Holiday Shopping Guide
- Outline social media marketing strategy, identify new content to be created
- Discuss 2022 holiday marketing plans for downtown and how to maximize Northampton.Live's impact

Payable to: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association 99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: September, 2022

Amount due: \$6,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with analyzing performance of the Holiday Shopping Guide, and revisions and updates to same; as well as finalizing Promotional Packages in preparation for launch.

#### Work includes:

- Build and improve on extensive, multi-category holiday shopping guide feature on the website
- Include new designs/styling, update pages, categories and listings to reflect post-COVID downtown environment
- Identify target audiences beyond Northampton
- Work with the Downtown Northampton Association and small business community to refine design, categories, features
- Begin sourcing content from businesses who wish to participate, and organize on the website
- Finalize design options and marketing materials to be used in October roll-out of Promotional Packages

<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association 99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060

Phone: 413.387.5145 Email: amy@northamptondna.com



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: October, 2022

Amount due: \$3,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the launch of Promotional Packages on the Northampton.Live website.

#### Work includes:

- Feature new paid promotional package options on the website
- Present to the business community via the Downtown Northampton Association, and work to answer questions, address concerns and make any needed tweaks to the program

<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association
99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: November, 2022

Amount due: \$4,500

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with finalizing and launching Holiday Marketing plans, as well as work to revise and boost event listings.

#### Work includes:

- Feature new paid promotional package options on the website
- Present to the business community via the Downtown Northampton Association, and work to answer questions, address concerns and make any needed tweaks to the program
- Coordinate with the Downtown Northampton Association, nonprofit and arts sector to maximize number of listings, shared marketing and reach.

Payable to: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association 99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: December, 2022

Amount due: \$8,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with preparation for the January, 2023 Promotional Packages content launch.

#### Work includes:

- Anticipating we will have an initial small round of businesses interested in paid promotion on the site, we will work with them to prepare a January 2021 launch of new promotional packages for these select businesses, including:
  - o Business showcases
  - Prominent placement within key sections
  - Rotating ad space
  - Video spotlight section
  - Easy backend management of new promotions

<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association 99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060

Phone: 413.387.5145 Email: amy@northamptondna.com



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: January, 2023

Amount due: \$10,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the beginning of planning for marketing of the summer dining and entertainment season, as well as the launch of the Promotional Package content.

#### Work includes:

- Revamp, update and enhance Outdoor Dining site features
- Work with Downtown Northampton Association and restaurant community to design effective campaign and coordinate with individual business efforts
- Will require site development as well as data-gathering from relevant businesses
- Work with initial round of small businesses to launch their new promotional packages in January
- Includes finalizing design/prep of materials to include in promotions

Payable to: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Phone: 413.387.5145 Email: amy@northamptondna.com



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: February, 2023

Amount due: \$6,500

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with enhancing and improving the event calendar and event section of the website, as well as Promotional Package development

#### Work includes:

- As we move into Summer 2023, we anticipate a significant increase in the number of events coming through the website, and we anticipate needing to dramatically increase and expand the entertainment listings and promotions
- This includes pulling events from more data sources, as well as pushing businesses to utilize the platform for their events.
- Continued partnership with small businesses to fine-tune the design and marketing materials
- Analysis and evaluation of prior month launch of promotional packages

<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association 99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: March, 2023

Amount due: \$5,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the continued enhancement of the event calendar and event section, as well as enhancement of the email marketing template.

#### Work includes:

- Enhancements to take advantage of Five College graduation season and potential future partnerships with the colleges
- Enhancements designed to better promote and take advantage of updated Event Calendar / Event Section, and anticipated significant increase in events during 2022.

<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420

Downtown Northampton Association 99 Pleasant Street, Northampton MA 01060

Phone: 413.387.5145 Email: amy@northamptondna.com



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: April, 2023

Amount due: \$9,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the launch of the outdoor dining site feature, evaluation of promotional packages and the relaunch of the event calendar and event section site features.

#### Work includes:

- Includes design/prep of materials to assist in promotion, timed to coordinate with April outdoor dining launch downtown
- Review of first quarter Promotional Package performance, and conversations with business partners and the Downtown Northampton Association over adjustments.
- Anticipated addition of new business partners during this quarter, in advance of graduation season and busy summer months
- Includes design/prep of materials to assist in promotion the new feature

<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: May, 2023

Amount due: \$4,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the evaluation of Promotional Packages, as well as analysis of the ongoing performance of the outdoor dining site feature.

#### Work includes:

- Continued addition of new business partners, including developing new content, design and marketing materials to reflect additional partners.
- Continued analysis of prior months, and adjustments as necessary to ongoing promotional packages.
- Analysis of performance since start of outdoor dining
- Adjustments and enhancements to site feature and corresponding email marketing, to capitalize on height of summer outdoor dining season

Payable to: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420



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Northampton.Live Project - 2022 Grant Award

Period covering: June, 2023

Amount due: \$4,000

For services rendered by Rhyme Digital in connection with the evaluation of Promotional Packages, as well as analysis of the event calendar, event section site features, and email marketing enhancement.

#### Work includes:

- Includes design/prep of materials to assist in promotion the new feature
- Analyze performance of event calendar and event section site features, and corresponding email marketing changes in order to adjust as needed to maximize benefit during busy summer entertainment season.

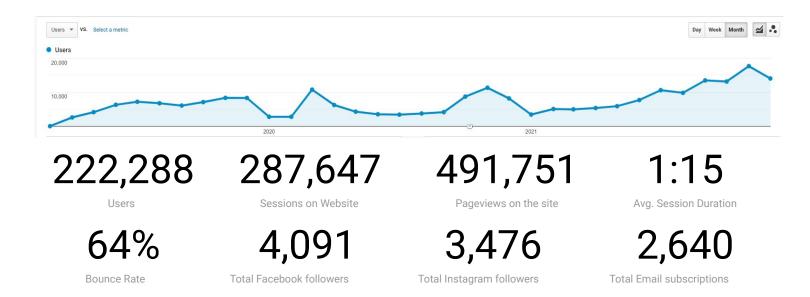
<u>Payable to</u>: Downtown Northampton Association

An affiliate of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

04-1679420



High-level statistics March 2019 - December 2021



Traffic channels 2019 - 2021						
Traffic Visits - Channels	2019 Visits	2020 Visits	2021 Visits	Totals		
Organic Search	11,457	26,414	76,819	114,690		
Direct	4,226	11,002	15,657	30,885		
(Other)	7,124	10,460	8,420	26,004		
Social	9,436	10,736	4,964	25,136		
Referral	623	4,321	1,998	6,942		
Display	11,784	1,854	1,786	15,424		
Email	2,638	3,056	146	5,840		
Paid Search	6,513	33	130	6,676		
Totals	53,801	67,876	109,920	231,597		
Growth Comparison	Baseline	26% Growth from 2019	61% Growth from 2020			

Social Growth 2019 - 2021						
Social/Email Growth	2019 *baseline*			2021	YOY Growth (vs 2020)	
Facebook Followers	2161	3408	57%	4091	20%	
Instagram Followers	1526	2628	72%	3476	32%	
Email Subscribers	1533	2389	55%	2640	10%	



High-level statistics March 2019 - December 2021

Most visited pages 2019 - 2021						
2019 Most Visited Pages	2019 Visits	2020 Most Visited Pages	2020 Visits	2021 Most Visited Pages	2021 Visits	
/food-drink	14,561	/covid19-response	21,765	Homepage	19,009	
/arts-entertainment	12,615	Homepage	18,330	/calendar	9,656	
				/businesses/iron-horse-music-		
Homepage	9,360	/food-drink	15,440	hall	9,563	
/shopping	8,771	/shopping	4,814	/food-drink	9,354	
/calendar	7,075	/calendar	2,352	/businesses/calvin-theatre	8,684	
/events/hot-chocolate-run	4,087	/businesses/the-deck-bar	2,079	/arts-entertainment	8,457	
/music-nightlife	2,329	/feedthefrontlines	1,594	/shopping	5,801	
/login	1,750	/login	1,562	/music-nightlife	4,961	
/holiday-shopping-guide	1,497	/arts-entertainment	1,489	/food-drink/outdoor-dining	3,966	
				/businesses/pearl-street-night		
/account/profile	1,103	/promotions/daily-specials	1,301	club	3,125	
Top 10 Totals	63,148		70,726		82,576	

Most visits based on location 2019 - 2021						
2019 Locations	2019 Visits	2020 Locations	2020 Visits	2021 Locations	2021 Visits	
Northampton	7,557	Northampton	16,162	Northampton	17,526	
New York	3,178	New York	2,530	Boston	7,053	
Springfield	3,037	Chicopee	2,283	New York	6,695	
Hartford	2,909	Amherst	2,206	Amherst	4,223	
Chicopee	2,009	Boston	2,004	Chicopee	3,380	
Amherst	1,891	Springfield	1,971	Springfield	3,327	
Boston	1,847	Holyoke	1,777	Chicago	2,926	
Holyoke	1,731	Hartford	1,452	Holyoke	2,370	
Providence	1,567	(not set)	1,367	Greenfield	1,626	
West Springfield	1,262	Easthampton	1,215	West Springfield	1,520	
Top 10 Totals	26,988		32,967		50,646	

#### Most business pages visited 2019 - 2021

2019 Businesses	2019 Visits	2020 Businesses	2020 Visits	2021 Businesses	2021 Visits
/the-majestic-saloon	229	/the-deck-bar	2,079	/iron-horse-music-hall	9,563
/studio-helix	174	/t-roots	608	/calvin-theatre	8,684
/calvin-theatre	173	/eastside-grill	540	/pearl-street-nightclub	3,125
/ced-clinic	158	/jakes	531	/oh-my-sensuality-shop	2,756
/captain-candy	149	/tim-s-used-books	527	/the-pines-theater	2,490
/academy-of-music-theatre	147	/joe-s-pizza-spaghetti-house	515	/cosmic-cab	2,324
/the-green-room	134	/highbrow	503	/the-deck-bar	1,737
/the-deuce	121	/local-burger	496	/t-roots	1,459
/northampton-brewery	113	/spoleto-restaurant	481	/the-green-room	1,011
/the-basement	113	/northampton-brewery	449	/tim-s-used-books	809
Top 10 Totals	1511		6,729		33,958



Organic Visits

### Northampton.Live

190%

High-level statistics March 2019 - December 2021

Paid Campaigns	2019	2020	2021
Facebook Clicks	16,759	16,589	12,553
Google Clicks	24,787	2,486	2,758
Total Clicks	41,546	19,075	15,311

Paid Campaign Ad Spend	2019	2020	2021
Google Ad Spend	\$12,118.17	\$660.57	\$953.65
Facebook Ad Spend	\$7,362.07	\$8,941.40	\$8,336.34
Total Ad Spend	\$19,480.24	\$9,601.97	\$9,289.99

### Organic Traffic Growth 2019 - 2021



26,414

130%

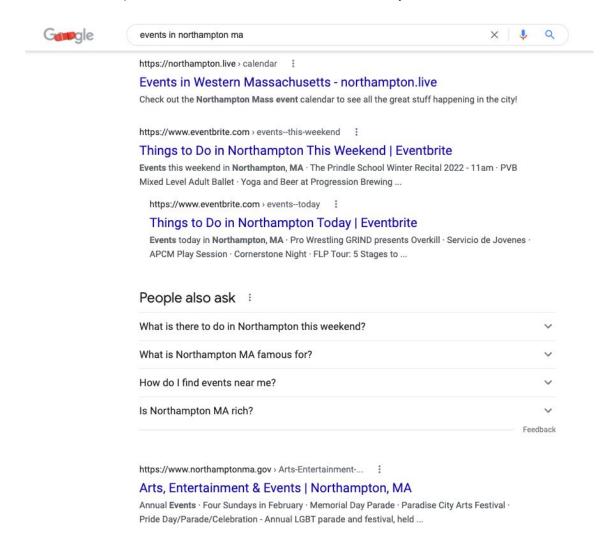
11,457



High-level statistics March 2019 - December 2021

#### **Notes**

- 1. Northampton.Live has seen steady growth in overall traffic since we launched the website in 2019, where we've increased visits by 26% in 2020 and 61% in 2021.
- 2. Our social media profiles on Facebook and Instagram have continued to grow over the past 2 years, where we are capturing followers on each platform by posting daily on both platforms.
- 3. We have seen consistent growth in people signing up for our newsletter, which is positive to see given the fact that we did not run a "lead generation" campaign on Facebook in 2020 or 2021 to generate signups. This means that people are signing up organically.
- 4. We ran paid ads on Google and Facebook in each of the years, which has generated a high volume of traffic to the website. However, less funding to use on paid ads in 2020/2021 led to fewer clicks compared to 2019. In spite of this, we continue to see a high volume of traffic to the website especially in 2021, which shows that people are using the website more frequently.
- 5. The most impressive statistic has been the increase in organic visitors each year. Over the course of 3 years, we are now outranking companies like "Eventbrite" and even the "Northampton" website, which shows the impact the website has had on the community.





High-level statistics November 2021



17,718 21,228 491,751 1:03 61%

Users

Sessions on Website

Pageviews on the site

Avg. Session Duration

Bounce Rate

Traffic channels				
Traffic Channels	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate
Organic Search	9,466	8,986	11,260	52.62%
(Other)	4,737	4,711	5,619	70.19%
Direct	1,798	1,728	2,135	67.31%
Social	889	761	940	74.47%
Display	866	865	1,000	93.70%
Referral	217	183	248	45.97%
Paid Search	16	16	19	73.68%
Email	5	4	7	28.57%

Most visits based on location				
City	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate
Northampton	2,366	2,139	2,924	56.40%
Boston	1,027	919	1,175	65.36%
New York	907	810	1,006	58.75%
Springfield	900	824	1,028	61.19%
Chicopee	678	638	795	63.27%
Amherst	645	605	746	54.56%
Holyoke	542	507	631	60.22%
Westfield	347	337	418	58.37%
Pittsfield	292	283	336	64.29%
Vest Springfield	292	282	344	55.52%



High-level statistics November 2021

Most visited pages					
Pages	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page		
/businesses/iron-horse-music-hall	2,513	2,131	0:01:52		
Homepage	2,354	1,940	0:01:10		
/holiday-shopping-guide-2021	1,478	1,344	0:00:56		
/businesses/calvin-theatre	1,461	1,271	0:02:17		
/calendar	1,412	1,026	0:00:42		
/arts-entertainment	844	736	0:01:27		
/music-nightlife	769	644	0:02:24		
/food-drink	707	590	0:04:25		
/businesses/pearl-street-nightclub	686	612	0:01:42		
/shopping	595	533	0:04:46		

Most visited business pages					
Businesses	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Bounce Rate	
/iron-horse-music-hall	2,513	2,131	0:01:52	43.05%	
/calvin-theatre	1,461	1,271	0:02:17	34.29%	
/pearl-street-nightclub	686	612	0:01:42	36.43%	
/oh-my-sensuality-shop	489	404	0:01:41	43.64%	
/cosmic-cab	316	279	0:04:27	56.38%	
/the-basement	88	74	0:01:17	46.03%	
/t-roots	84	79	0:04:41	51.95%	
/synergy	80	76	0:03:16	51.52%	
/25-central-modern-clothing	78	77	0:01:51	63.93%	
/ted-s-boot-shop	72	69	0:01:15	97.73%	