Disaster Response and Recovery: Community and Business Assistance

House Community and Economic Development Committee

Mark Barkley

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIVISION

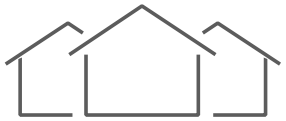
Chris Green

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMPETITIVENESS

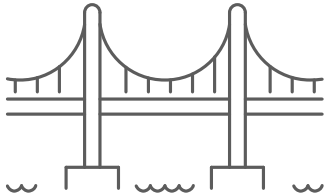
FEBRUARY 1, 2022

Washington State Department of Commerce

We strengthen communities



HOUSING HOMELESSNESS



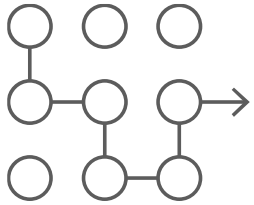
INFRASTRUCTURE



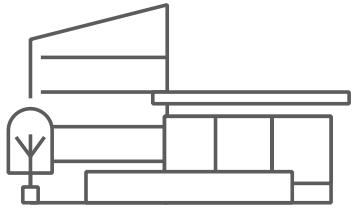
BUSINESS ASSISTANCE



ENERGY



PLANNING



COMMUNITY FACILITIES



CRIME VICTIMS & PUBLIC SAFETY



COMMUNITY SERVICES

A community approach to recovery

Malden

- Wildfire
- Drought
- Flooding
- Water security

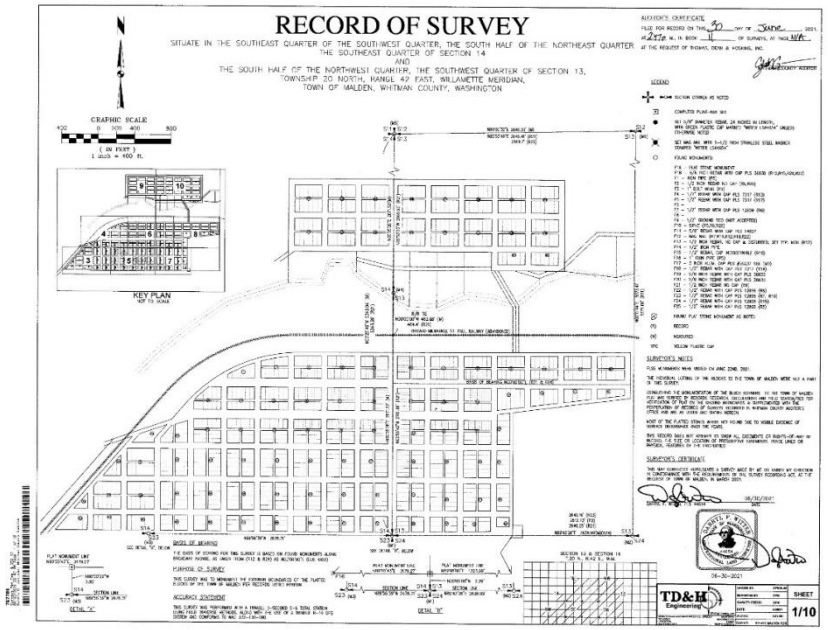


Town of Malden 2020, Photo permission from Pine Creek Community LTRO

Growth Management Services

- Emerging Issues Planning Grant for Malden, Whitman County.
  - $55,000 to survey the town and establish lot lines after the fire.

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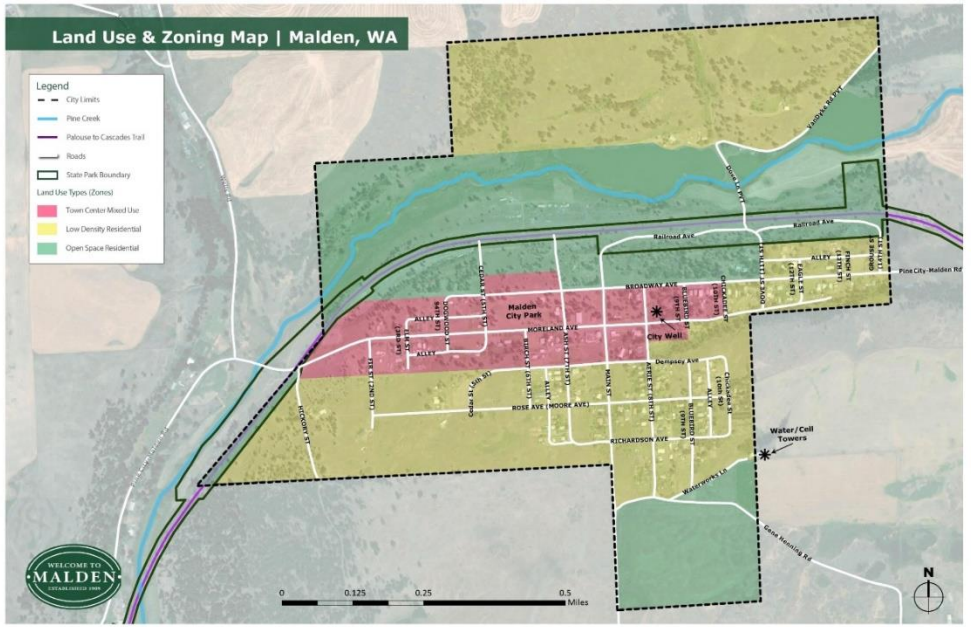


Figure 6: Land Use & Zoning Map

Malden -Water System Improvements Project



Malden Well and Water Storage	
Public Works Board (PWB) Grant	$3,696,000
Project Cost	$3,696,000

Project description:

The project not only repairs the water system damage, but also provides system redundancy and more fire hydrants to fight fires in the future.

Strengthening community resiliency:

Completing this project ensures adequate water resources for the town, ensures public health and safety, preserves property values, and allows for economic revitalization.

Washington State Public Works Board
Infrastructure is Fundamental

Malden – Post Office and Community Center





- US Postal Service to replace the burned post office that was on at 1 S Main Street in Malden.
- A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) of $900,000 has been awarded by the state to build a permanent fire station.
- A CDBG planning grant of $30,000 has been awarded by the state for a master park plan for the town park.

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Malden – Broadband Project

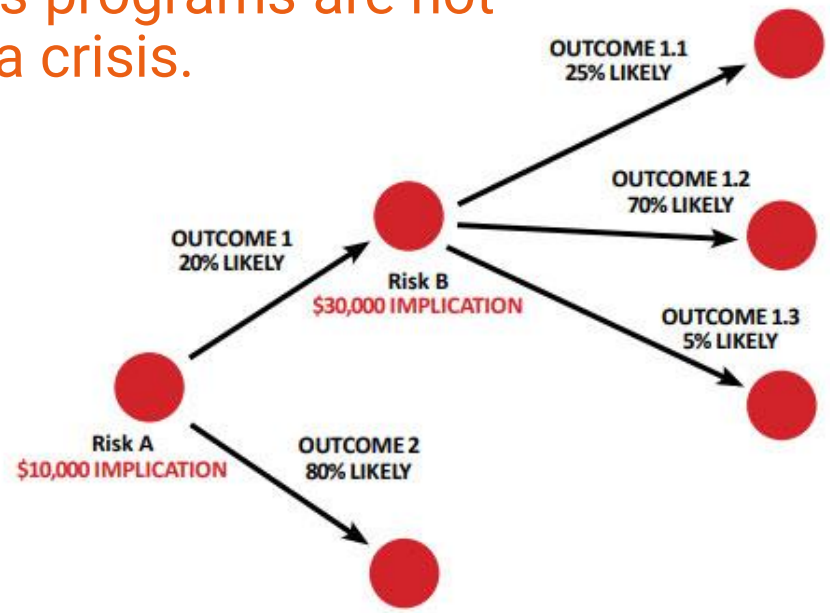


Port of Whitman was awarded $1.7 million from the Community Economic Revitalization Board.

Broadband brings work-from-home, e-learning, online business, telemedicine, and other features as viable options for area residents.

Existing toolset not set up for recovery

- Economic development efforts historically targeted to growth, expansion and retention of businesses.
- Export vouchers, and traditional small business programs are not suited for business recovery efforts following a crisis.
- Disaster planning tools limited to self-guided resources on MyStartup365.com.



Strategic Reserve Fund use

- The Strategic Reserve Fund (SRF) has been used periodically for business recovery, including the Skagit River collapse and Oso landslide.
- This fund is not sufficient to get grant funds directly to businesses due to statutory design.
- Funds had typically been used for marketing style “open for business” campaigns to encourage patronage of impacted businesses.



Economic response to the pandemic

- Working Washington grants provided $371 million to 25,591 businesses statewide. $50 million more planned for 2022.
- $90 million additional support for agriculture industry, tourism, chambers, associate development organizations, veteran non-profits, Resiliency Network, youth organizations, the arts, shellfish and farm worker paid leave.
- $30 million public investment (which leveraged an additional $70 million in private capital) in Small Business Flex Fund for low-interest loans.
- $10.6 million investment in tourism recovery technical assistance, training, festivals and events grants and disaster planning mobile app.
- Nearly the entire Office of Economic Development staff team pivoted to focus on grant administration and business reopening and response work during the pandemic.

Economic response to the pandemic

- Commerce expanded and leveraged an extensive network of partners at the regional, local and federal level to help businesses navigate the public safety orders, access federal funding programs and prepare applications for aid.
- The agency played a central role in shifting manufacturing to provide personal protective to small businesses.
- Commerce teams staffed the Joint Information Center (JIC), responding to more than 40,000 inquiries from businesses and employees as part of the coordinated response by state agencies.

Ongoing unmet need

- There are no “on demand” state grant funds to assist small business disaster recovery. In emergencies, some federal agencies have existing programs to help small businesses rebuild and recover.

- Floods and wildfires among other expected or unexpected disasters will continue to cause demand for small business support.

- Commerce regularly responds directly to local leaders’ requests for funding to assist small businesses. We coordinate with other state staff, directing them to existing programs, such as the shared work program at Employment Security Department to assist employee retention.

Long Term Needs

- Businesses need technical assistance, training, education and support related to financial management, credit, marketing, operations and disaster planning/mitigation to navigate future crises.
- If additional on-demand type resources were available, Commerce would coordinate with local organizations on deploying funds.
- Use of state funds for this purpose will need to take into account constitutional prohibitions on gift of public funds.
- Each recovery initiative is different and flexibility will be needed to determine how best to distribute funds in coordination with local leaders.

Considerations for future programs

- Funds provided through on-the-ground network vs. direct to business
- Establishing a rapid and appropriate trigger to allow fund deployment
- Developing a program that works in alignment with federal resources
- Addressing equity in development and deployment of new programs

Thank you.

Washington State Department of Commerce

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