

Topsfield Downtown Revitalization Plan

Downtown Strategic Plan Working Group Meeting

July 25, 2019

Topsfield Town Hall

Attendees

- Tim Collins
- Josh Rownd
- John Spencer
- Andrea O'Reilly
- Brian Woodland
- Lynne Bermudez
- Sarah Lodewick Guido
- **Metropolitan Area Planning Council:** Betsy Cowan, Chief of Economic Development and Jenn Kaplan, Economic Development Planner
- Members of the public were also in attendance.

The Meeting began at 6:35pm

Introduction

Betsy Chief of Economic Development, MAPC, and project manager for the Topsfield Downtown Revitalization Plan introduced herself. Betsy introduced Jenn Kaplan, Economic Development Planner MAPC. Then each member of the working group (listed above) introduced themselves to Jenn.

Presentation: (posted on the Town website)

Betsy Cowan presented a recap of the key elements of the Downtown Revitalization Plan and the planning process. The Working Group discussed the timing for the Business/Property Owner/Developer Roundtable in the Fall. A September date was determined to be best. Betsy also gave an update to the group on the initial analysis for the parking study currently being conducted by Stantec.

Brian Woodland gave a recap of his work with the 2015 Working Group that put together a list of recommendations to revitalize the downtown. The group had met with the town planner from Ipswich to share success stories and lessons learned. The group also conducted a survey with customers at Luxe Nails to learn more about the customer experience in the shopping center.

Betsy then presented answers to key questions asked in the last meeting, including an overview of the process by which projections for population are made, telecommuting data for Topsfield residents, and the opportunities for a traffic study in Downtown Topsfield.

Lynne Bermudez updated the group that she was working with the Chief of Police to track the numbers of cars driving through the downtown to gauge how much commercial activity they might

be capturing. The data will be captured in August and September and will provide car counts going both north and south, as well as the speed of the cars.(The speed of the cars will help estimate the number of cars passing through town vs slowing down to park or leaving a parking space).

Business District Comparison:

Betsy Cowan and Jenn Kaplan presented a series of slides that analyzed the size and business mix of the Topsfield Downtown District to the central business districts of nearby towns including Georgetown, Hamilton, Ipswich, Newburyport, and Beverly. They also presented comparisons to the size and business mixes of the shopping center off of Route 1 in Peabody and the Liberty Tree Mall in Danvers to show not what Topsfield should aspire to be, but what services and shops residents may be seeking when they leave Topsfield.

Key takeaways from the comparison data included that (1) Topsfield's business district encompasses a relatively small percentage of the town's land, (2) retail, food and accommodation in Topsfield represent a smaller percentage of existing businesses and (3) service businesses represent a higher percentage of businesses in Topsfield. This analysis showed that there are opportunities to add additional amenities and products and services to complement existing offerings.

The discussion following the Business District Comparison focused on the following questions:

- How could Topsfield capitalize on the existing strong cluster of finance and insurance companies?
- Does the Working Group want to focus on expanding the business district size?
- Is accommodation allowed in the Downtown?
- Would it be helpful to reach out to the Town Manager in Hamilton given their success with building out retail and accommodation in a town of a similar size to Topsfield?
- How does Topsfield tackle the challenge of being bisected by Route 1?
- Is there opportunity to utilize property on the fairgrounds as a restaurant?
- Can Topsfield apply for state funding to help with the environmental remediation of properties that could be potential development opportunities?

Photo Exercise:

The group transitioned to the Photo Exercise facilitated by Betsy. Several dozen photos of key spaces in Downtown Topsfield were spread across the table and Working Group members wrote observations about the spaces as well as some thoughts on how it could be improved. The discussion following the exercise focused on key opportunities for improving the Downtown, which will be discussed at the next meeting.

Next Steps:

The Working Group scheduled their next meeting for August 26th at 6:30 pm. The agenda for the next meeting will be for MAPC to present the results of a SWOT analysis of Topsfield's downtown, as well as key next steps for public space improvements. The group will also discuss preparation for a business roundtable with business owners, property owners, and developers in

the first week of September, as well as discussion/preparation for a community visioning session to be held later in September.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:35.