



# **Topsfield Downtown Revitalization Plan**

Prepared for the Town of Topsfield  
by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

**October 9, 2019**

# Outline

**01** Plan Update

**02** Open House  
Feedback

**03** Review of Vision and  
Goals

**04** Short and Long-Term  
Options

**05** Next Steps

# Planning Process

The Downtown Revitalization Plan will take 8 months to complete.

We will have opportunities for community members to provide feedback throughout the process.

## SPRING '19

Meeting with Board of Selectmen

Formation of the Working Group

## SUMMER '19

Business/Property Owner/Developer Roundtable

Outreach

## FALL '19

Community Visioning Session for the Downtown

Draft Plan Development

Working Group Feedback on Draft Plan

Final Plan Written

## WINTER '20

Final Plan presented to Board of Selectmen



## Work Done To Date

### Updates

- Discussions with property owners
- Storefront improvement program



# Community Feedback







## Business Roundtables

- **24 People Attended**
  - Mix of Brick & Mortar, Service
  - Mix of downtown and Rt. 1
- **General Themes**
  - Positive
    - Chose Topsfield because of community feel, rural/small town character
    - Loyal customer base, employees
    - Some liked that it wasn't on Rt. 1 (made it feel more like a town center, less busy).



## Business Roundtables

- **General Themes**
  - Recommendations
    - Improve Town signage (downtown and from Rt. 1/97)
    - Improve parking
      - Management (signage, potential use of DPW lot?)
      - Share parking/municipal parking at mall
    - Some expressed interest in housing downtown (if parking were managed well)
    - Improve look and feel
      - Benches, signage



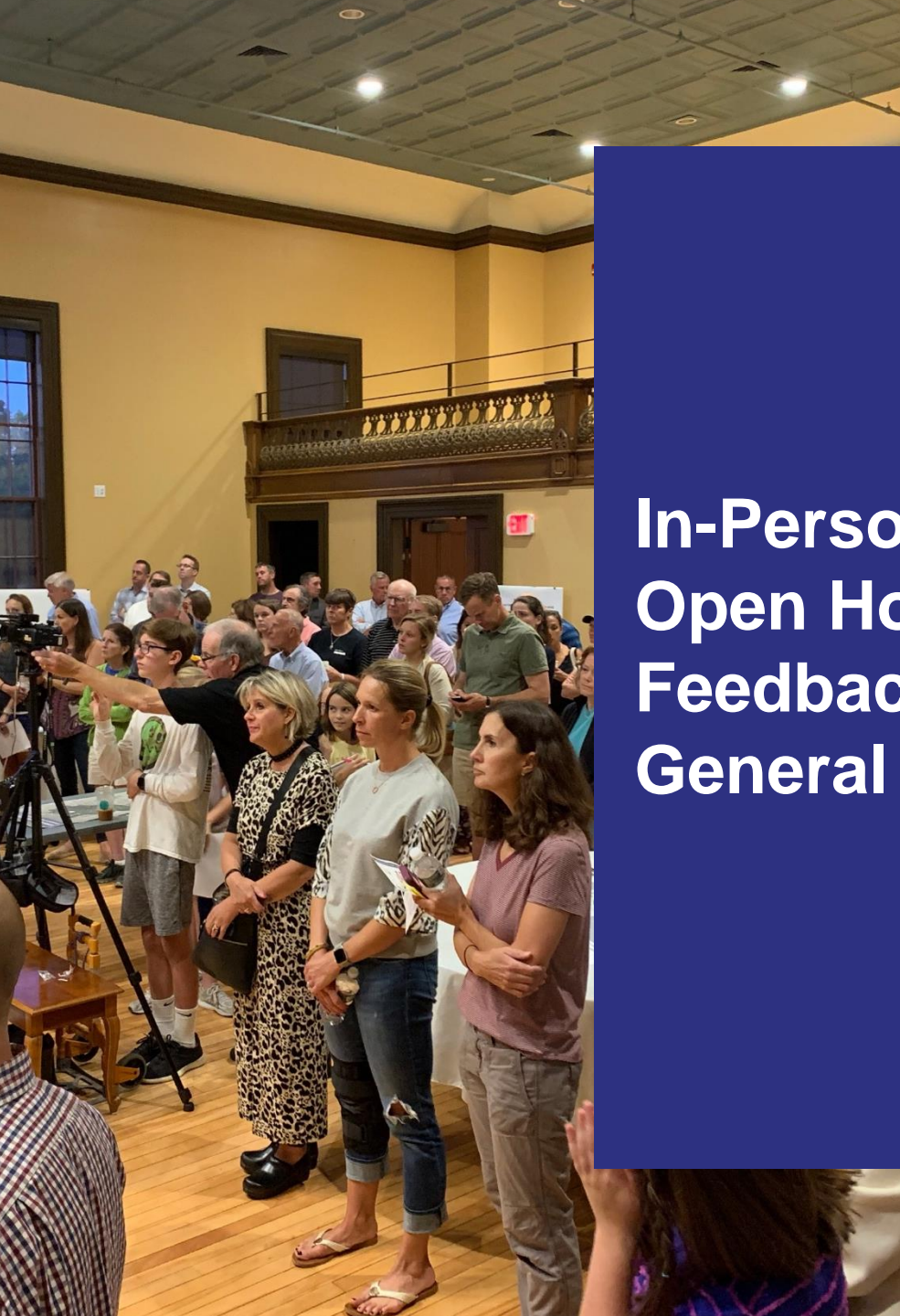
## Business Roundtables

- **General Themes**
  - Recommendations
    - Improve Town communications with and services for small businesses
      - Communications between depts. to make process easier for businesses
      - Part-time planner
      - Change sign regulations
    - More communication between business owners
    - Expand zoning of the business district, but maintain character of district



# WHAT DO YOU DO IN DOWNTOWN TOPSFIELD?

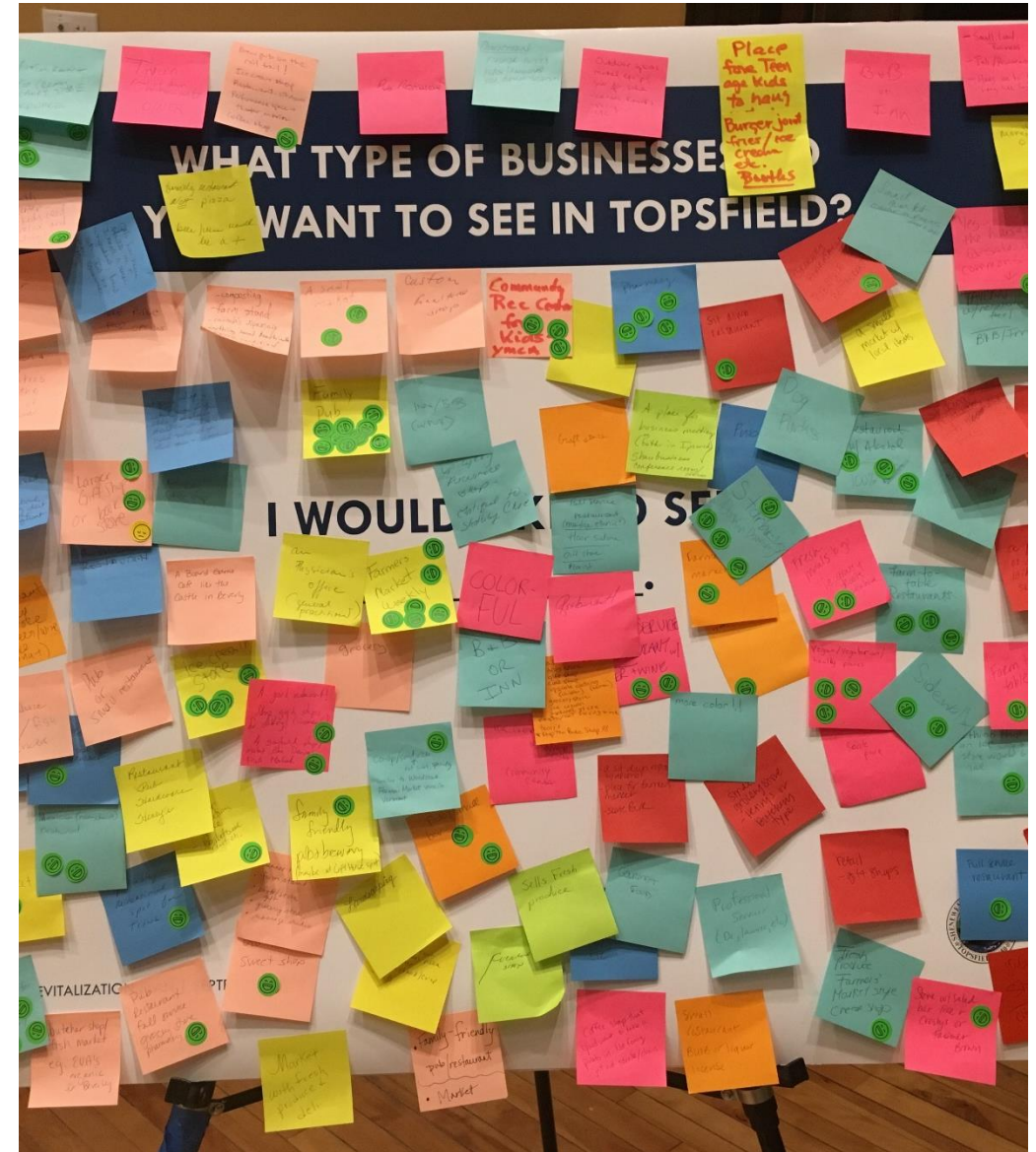
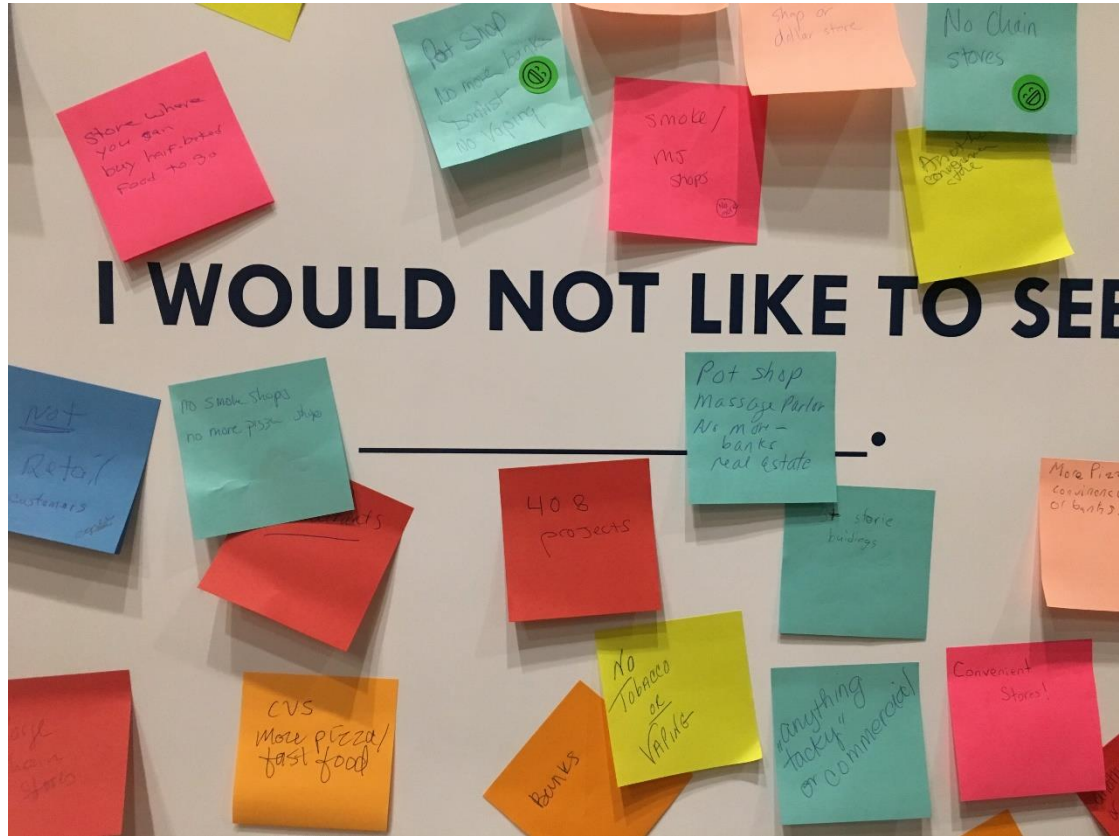




## In-Person Open House Feedback: General

### 138 people signed in

- Incredible turnout!
- Activities generally well-received
- Information was educational but engaging
- Was facilitation needed?







## In-Person Open House Feedback: Businesses

1. Boards asking for open-ended ideas (what kind of businesses do you want to see, do you not want to see in Downtown). Top themes included\*:

### Businesses you DO want:

Themes drawn from 166 responses

Restaurant with Alcohol	27
Restaurant	23
Market	14

### Businesses you DO NOT want:

Themes drawn 69 responses

Banks	19
Tobacco or Vape Shops	18
Chain Stores	13

2. Business list intended to generate ideas was used as a check-list. Top responses included\*:

### Food Service Businesses:

254 responses

Pub Food Restaurant	25
Full-service Restaurant	22
Fresh Produce Market	16

### Retail Businesses:

254 responses

Book Store	18
Stationary Store	11
Arts + Crafts Store	9
Children's Clothing Store	9

*\*Note that some answers were counted towards more than one theme and respondents could answer favorably towards more than one choice.*





**HAT OTHER USES WOULD YOU WANT TO  
TOPSFIELD SUCH AS AROUND THE COMM**

DOG park

Outdoor Sculptures / Art Installations

Bike Park near Rail trail / Proctiv

Make a roundabout or a complete street to be more pedestrian oriented

Please - much more classy, uniform signs!

ART!!!

sidewalks for vehicle friendly

Dog walk Drip + Read

Need to consider waste disposal for public gathering spots to prevent litter

F.N. TOWN HALL CLOCK

WN TOPSFIELD REVITALIZATION PLAN | SEPTEMBER 2019

OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE SPACE

## OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE SPACE

FOOD TR

SEATING AREAS

SEATING AREAS

## WAYFINDING SIGNS

Image Sources: MAPC, Photo via Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, Photo MAPC, Photo via Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism



MAPC

**YOU LIKE TO SEE IN DOWNTOWN TOPS**

## BETTER STORE SIGNAGE

PUBLIC RESTROOMS

Image Sources: Photo via Adrian Trechler; Flickr; Photo via Hirs; Flickr

**WHAT OTHER USES WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE IN PUBLIC SPACE: TOPSFIELD SUCH AS AROUND THE COMMONS AND TOWN HALL**

[illegible]

DOWNTOWN TOPSFIELD REVITALIZATION PLAN | SEPTEMBER 2019







## In-Person Open House Feedback: Public Space

1. Vote by public space uses with images (ranked by proportion voted yes). Top responses included:

771 total responses

Seating Areas	86
Street Festivals	80
Outdoor Performance Spaces	75
Outdoor Parks	75

1. What other uses would you want to see in public spaces in Topsfield such as around the Commons and Town Hall?
  - Town Hall Clock
  - Better signage
  - Outdoor seating

*\*Note that some respondents answered favorably to more than one choice.*





## In-Person Open House Feedback: Parking

### Parking Issues and Opportunities

#### Selection of Issues

- Public parking lot on School Street gets full
- No sign directing to public parking on School Street
- Lack of public access to Topsfield Shopping Center lot makes it difficult to find parking
- Difficult to park on Main Street because employees park all day

#### Selection of Opportunities

- Consider time restriction on Main Street, but longer than hour to accommodate dining/spa services
- More signs pointing to public parking
- Share parking in Shopping Center for public use
- Add on-street parking to Central Street



# TOPSFIELD HOUSING VISION

Having a variety of housing options can boost the local economy. For example, a corner grocery needs at least 1,000 households to support its customer base.

$$\text{House Icon} \times 1,000 =$$

Mixed-use housing is a combination of commercial and residential uses, often with retail on the ground above. This kind of housing ensures local businesses will have a reliable customer base that is always w



Image Source: MA Office of Travel and Tourism



Image Source: MA Office of Travel and Tourism

If Topsfield pursued mixed-use housing in the downtown, what density would you like to see?



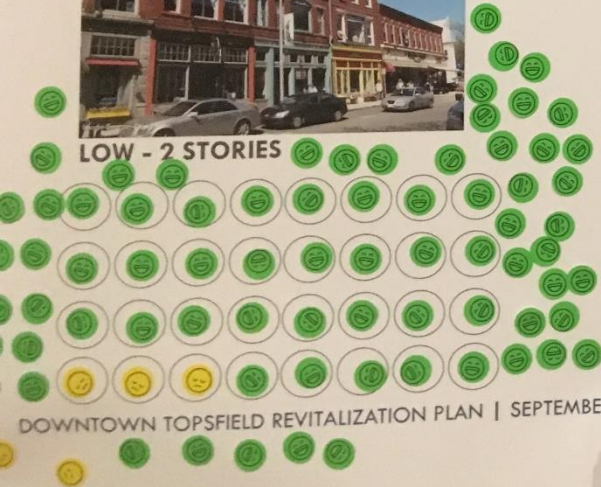
LOW - 2 STORIES



MEDIUM - 3-5 STORIES

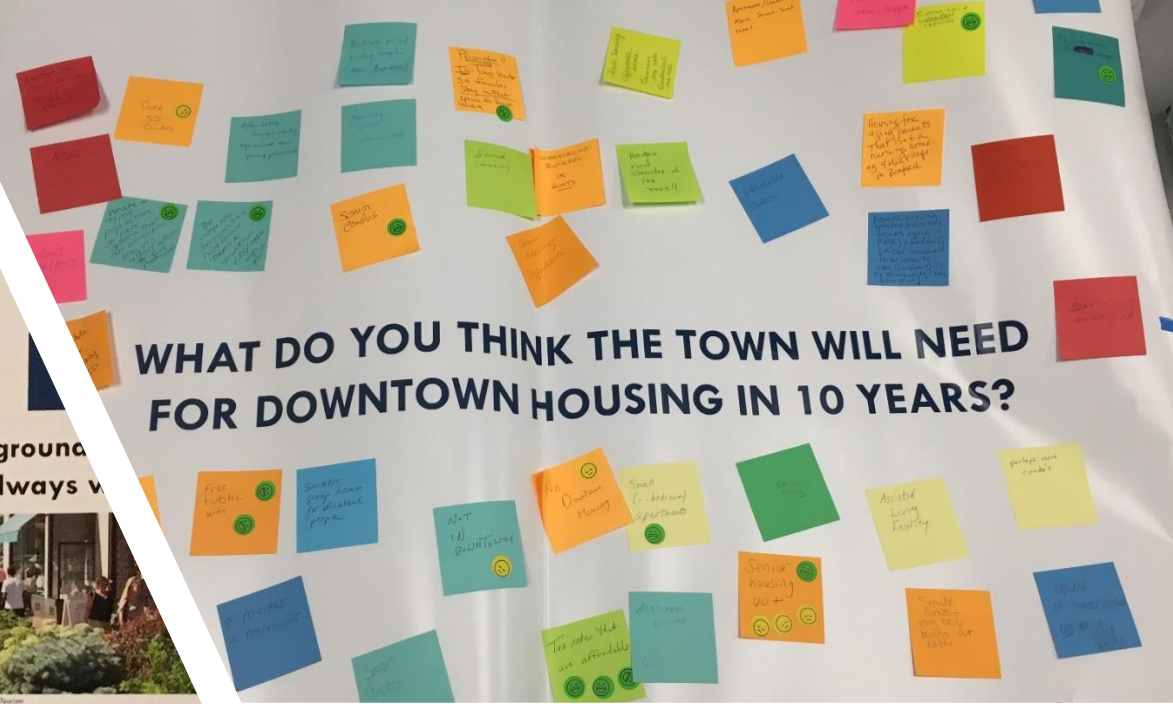


HIGH - 6+ STORIES

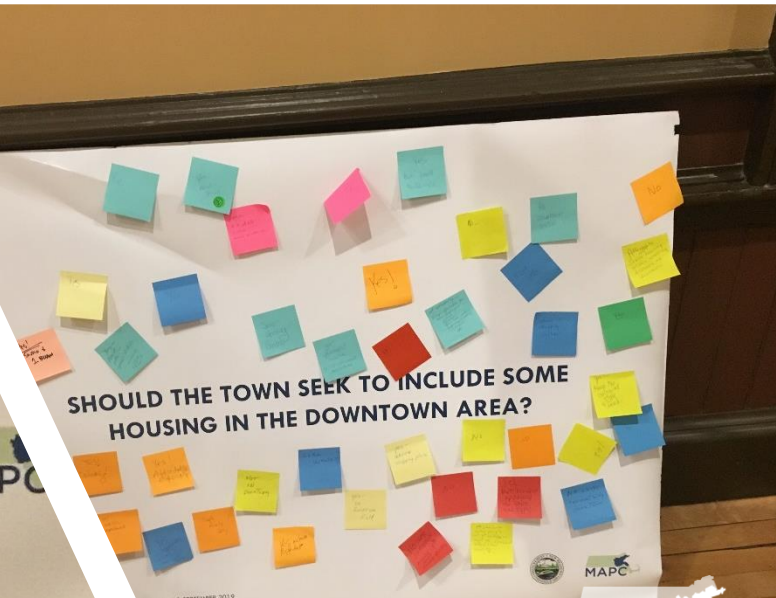


DOWNTOWN TOPSFIELD REVITALIZATION PLAN | SEPTEMBER

## WHAT DO YOU THINK THE TOWN WILL NEED FOR DOWNTOWN HOUSING IN 10 YEARS?



## SHOULD THE TOWN SEEK TO INCLUDE SOME HOUSING IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA?





# In-Person Open House Feedback: Housing

## 1. Should the town pursue housing downtown?

45 total responses

Yes	31
No	10
Maybe	4

## 2. What are the town's housing needs in the next 10 years? Top themes included\*:

Themes drawn from 46 responses

Senior Housing	5
Assisted Living	4
Senior, Affordable	4
No housing downtown	4

*\*Note that some respondents answered favorably to more than one choice.*





## In-Person Open House Feedback: Housing

1. What is your density preference for mixed-use housing\*?

218 total responses

Low – 2 stories	80
Medium – 3-5 stories	42
High – 6+ stories	2

2. Should the town seek to include some housing in the downtown area\*?

149 responses

Yes	53
No	18
Business Village	39
Commercial areas behind street lots	39

*\*Note that some respondents answered favorably to more than one choice.*



## In-Person Open House Feedback: Housing

1. What size units would you personally consider desirable if you imagine yourself to be in the market for housing\*?

These are the averages from where people voted on a 0-5 scale.


<b>Small studio</b>	<b>3.32</b>
<b>Large studio</b>	<b>3.74</b>
<b>1 Bed</b>	<b>4.10</b>
<b>2 Bed</b>	<b>3.96</b>
<b>3 Bed</b>	<b>2.94</b>

2. What type of housing do you think is needed in Topsfield\*?

These are the averages from where people voted on a 0-5 scale.

<b>Condos</b>	<b>3.53</b>
<b>Market-rate rental housing</b>	<b>3.43</b>
<b>Deed-restricted affordable housing</b>	<b>3.39</b>
<b>Age restricted 55+</b>	<b>3.56</b>

*\*Note that some respondents answered favorably to more than one choice.*

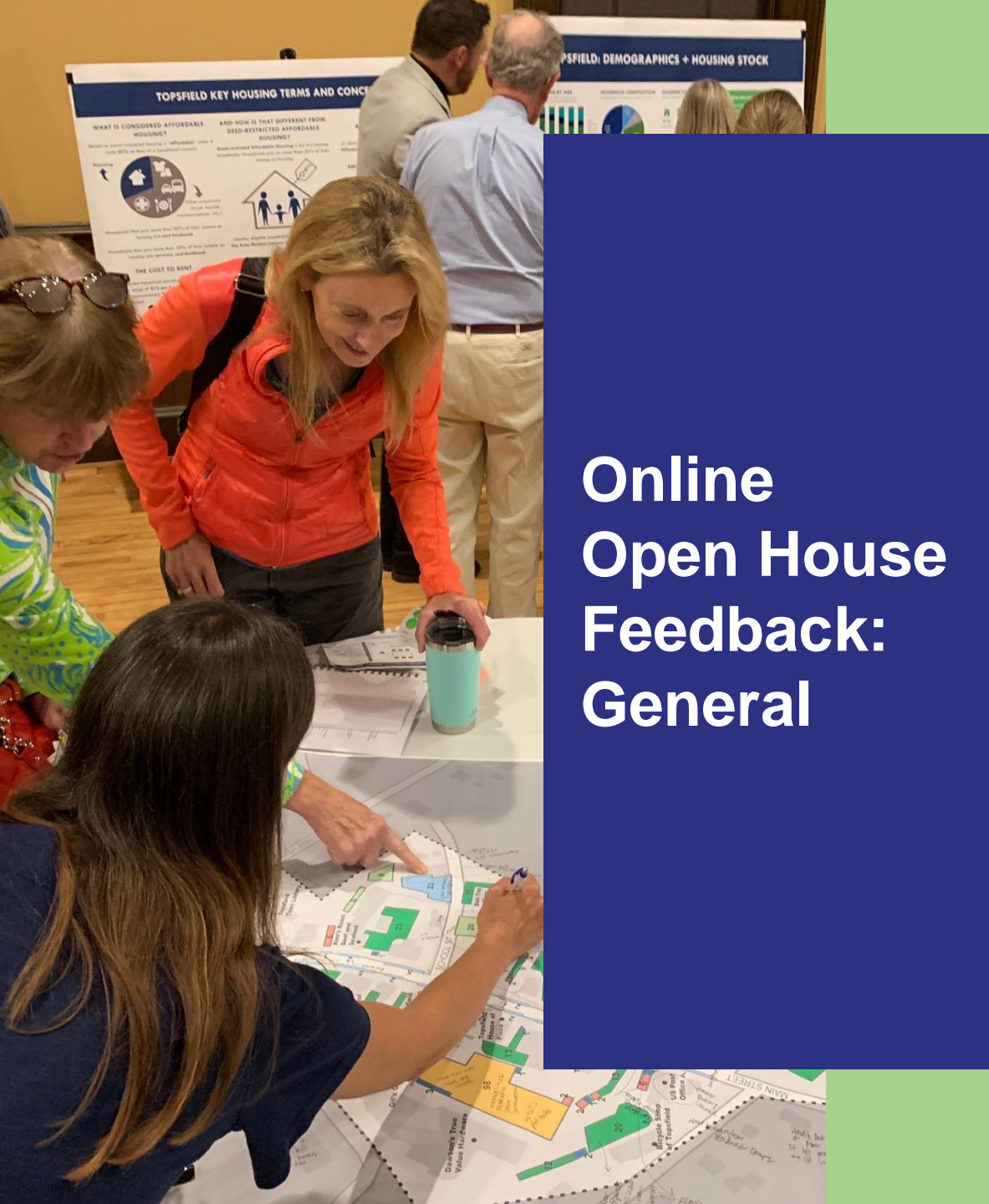


## In-Person Open House Feedback: Sixth Graders

Sixth grade students worked in small groups to develop a plan for gathering feedback from students at Proctor and Steward. Sixth graders then surveyed children in grades 2-5 either in person or via Google Hangouts. They synthesized the feedback into an overall list of recommendations, here is a glance at some of their ideas:

<b>Dining/Food</b>	<b>Casual dining restaurant, Ice Cream Shop, Smoothie Shop</b>
<b>Public Space</b>	<b>Flower pots, more crosswalks and sidewalks, outdoor seating</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<b>Tiny homes, apartments above businesses</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Dog park, rec center, giant backyard games near gazebo</b>
<b>Community Events</b>	<b>Road races, festivals</b>





## Online Open House Feedback: General

### Online Open House ran from 9/25 – 10/1

- 114 people answered at least one answer
- 54 people gave their emails for future updates
- Responses were generally more mixed but with opportunity for more thoughtful responses

*"I think that an influx of younger professionals into the town is important. Adding a fun pub or restaurant/bar to the downtown area could provide a place for adults to hang out. I've lived in Topsfield and Ipswich and Topsfield is severely lacking anything for adults to do at night, whereas Ipswich has things like the Choate Pub and Ipswich Ale Brewery that drive people to the town and attracts a younger population to the town. This is key for long term growth, success, and economic sustainability."*



## Online Open House Feedback: Businesses

Survey question asking for open-ended ideas (what kind of businesses do you want to see, do you not want to see in downtown). Top themes included\*:

### Businesses you DO want:

Themes drawn from 66 responses

Restaurant	25
Restaurant w/alcohol	11
Market	9

### Businesses you DO NOT want:

Themes drawn from 60 responses

Tobacco and Marijuana	11
Banks	10
Chain Stores	9

*"I would like to see a nice restaurant, besides the typical pizza/fried food places, possibly a nice tavern. Some upscale boutique type stores would improve the feel of the downtown. Hamilton is a good model of how I think Topsfield could look. We also need some basic needs type establishments like a grocery store or a replacement for the hardware store."*

*\*Note that some answers were counted towards more than one theme.*





## Online Open House Feedback: Public Space

1. Vote by public space uses with images (ranked by proportion voted yes). Top responses include\*:

450 total responses

Seating Areas	72
Festive Lighting	69
Outdoor Parks	63
Outdoor Performance Spaces	59

2. What other uses would you want to see in public spaces in Topsfield such as around the Commons and Town Hall?
  - Dog Park
  - Natural and recreational amenities
  - More seating

*\*Note that some respondents answered favorably to more than one choice.*



## Online Open House Feedback: Parking

### 1. Where do you typically park when you come downtown?

95 total responses

On-Street	59
Off-Street in a lot for specific business	19
Off-street in a public lot, but not the commuter lot	15
Off-street in the MBTA commuter lot	2

### 2. After you park, how far is the typical walk to your destination?

132 total responses

1-2 minutes	57
Right outside the door	31
3-5 minutes	9
Over 5 minutes	0





## Online Open House Feedback: Parking

1. Which of the following statements about parking applies to Downtown Topsfield? Check all that apply\*.

132 total responses

I park and walk to multiple locations in Downtown Topsfield	68
Parking is easy in Downtown Topsfield	43
It is always difficult to find a place to park	14
I can find a place to park, but it is too far from my destination	5
I would like to see more signage and wayfinding in Topsfield	2

2. Would you rather:

87 total responses

Be able to quickly find parking, and walk a little bit farther to get to activities	68
Have parking right out front and businesses separated by parking lots	19

*\*Note that some respondents answered favorably to more than one choice.*



## Online Open House Feedback: Housing

### 1. Should the town pursue housing downtown?

83 total responses

Yes	25
No	31
Maybe	9
Need more information	18

### 2. What are the town's housing needs in the next 10 years? Top themes included\*:


Themes drawn from 52 responses

Does not need housing	14
Senior housing	6
Multi-family Housing	4
Need more business first	4

*"I don't think downtown housing is a priority in Topsfield. If Topsfield were a larger town with more of a business district it might be a priority but I think Topsfield is a sleepy commuter town where people sleep and raise their kids but commute out of town for work. I don't think many people are looking to move to Topsfield to downsize, retire, and find a place to live in the downtown."*

*\*Note that some answers were counted towards more than one theme.*






## Online Open House Feedback: Housing

### 1. What is your density preference for mixed-use housing?

119 total responses

Low – 2 stories	84
Medium – 3-5 stories	33
High – 6+ stories	2



## Online Open House Feedback: Final Comments

*"Thank you all very much. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. I think we need not look too far for an excellent example, Hamilton. Topsfield needs to support a pleasant downtown area, void of all the terrible Jersey barriers and anger over the unkempt village. We need to work together to support a grocery store, a hardware store, and a few restaurants that have at least a beer and wine license to serve their patrons. We have more than enough banks, insurance agencies, and terrific sub/sandwich shops."*

*"Thank you for listening! Change is scary. But I do think that what has attracted most of the residents to Topsfield is the small-town rural feel we have. My wife and I call it "Pleasantville". Really the ultimate Bedroom Community. Nothing but Mini-vans and SUV's loaded with kids going through town late afternoon on their way to different playing fields. There is no real hardship to shop, go out to eat, find things to do etc.. We may not have much in town but we are surrounded by communities that do. Its only 20 miles to Boston. Cleaning up and making a few tweaks to the Town is OK. A complete commercial overhaul changes it irreparably."*



# Review of Vision + Goals







## Downtown SWOT

### Strengths

- Topsfield's strengths lean towards the **natural and civic amenities** the town offers. Natural amenities include accessible open space and water in the area, and civic amenities include community spaces like the town hall and festivals that are held in town.

### Weaknesses

- Topsfield's weaknesses are largely centered on the size of the business district, a **lack of resources for the town governance** as well as procedural limitations (or the perception of) that have disallowed commercial development.

### Threats

- Topsfield's threats focus on the perception of issues from community and **lack of commercial and residential incentive for businesses** to come to Downtown.

### Opportunities

- Topsfield's opportunities are focused on **physical revitalization of underused open spaces, investment in new type of businesses**, and **more community-building events**.





## Goals and Objectives

### **Attract new businesses to the downtown**

- Update downtown septic and utilities
- Improve the look and feel of the downtown (including civic/rec spaces)
- Increase marketing/promotion of the downtown (marketing, events)
- Explore adding housing to the downtown
- Improve parking management in the downtown
- Improve Town support for new and existing businesses
- Other goals?



# Short + Long-term Options







## Goals

### **Update downtown septic and utilities**

- Short-term options:
- Long-term options:

### **Improve the look and feel of the downtown (including civic/rec spaces)**

- Short-term options:
- Long-term options:

### **Increase marketing/promotion of the downtown (marketing, events)**

- Short-term
- Long-term

### **Attract new businesses to the downtown**

- Short-term options
- Long-term options



## Goals

### **Explore adding housing to the downtown**

- Short-term options
- Long-term options

### **Improve parking management in the downtown**

- Short-term
- Long-term

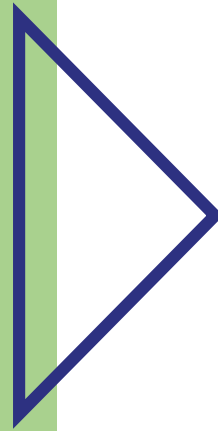
### **Improve Town support for new and existing businesses**

- Short-term options
- Long-term options





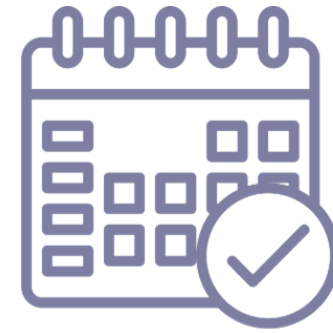
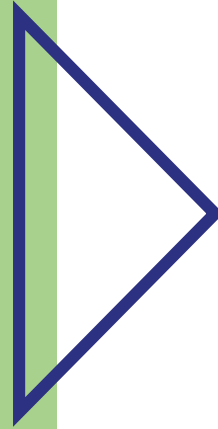
## Next Steps



## Volunteer Opportunities



## Next Steps



## Scheduling



# Questions?

