

TOPSFIELD MASTER PLAN

AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

MAY 2023



J M GOLDSON



TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Phase II of the Topsfield Master Plan aimed to determine the community's aspirations for the Town's future. The project team implemented three engagement tools throughout Spring 2023, designed to understand better what community members hope Topsfield will look and feel like in ten years.

Community engagement tools included a survey on the master plan elements, a Meeting-in-a-Box (MIAB) facilitation guide to generate community conversations, and a web-based Crowdfmap platform to collect place-based suggestions. The Topsfield Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and Town staff promoted these tools – which were all available on the Master Plan Project Website – through a variety of outreach strategies.

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

- **March 1, 2023**
Launch P2 Engagement Tools
- **March 30, 2023**
Mid-Engagement Representation Presentation at MPSC Meeting
- **April 27, 2023**
MPSC Mid-Engagement Check In
- **May 10, 2023**
Close Community Engagement Tools

PROJECT TEAM

This Master Plan is spearheaded by the Topsfield Master Plan Steering Committee and Town Planning Staff with support from the Planning Board, JM Goldson and Cambridge Econometrics Consultant Team.

Master Plan Steering Committee

Gregor Smith, Chair
Zillie Bhujju, Vice Chair
Jen Collins-Brown, Clerk
Gary Bergmann
Bradley Bissell
Rosalee DiScipio
Steve Hall
Marshall Hook
Andrew Mulholland
Elizabeth Mulholland
Tom Rosa
Josh Rownd

Planning Board

Martha Morrison, Chair
Steven Hall, Clerk
Greg Mellinger
Jennie Merrill
Josh Rownd

Town Staff

Kevin Harutunian, Town Administrator
Samantha Morin, Executive Assistant
Stephanie Bilotti, Digital Communications



77 MIAB PARTICIPANTS



756 SURVEY RESPONSES



127 CROWDFMAP SUBMISSIONS



**960 TOTAL
PARTICIPATION POINTS**



**137 PERCENT
OF ENGAGEMENT GOAL**

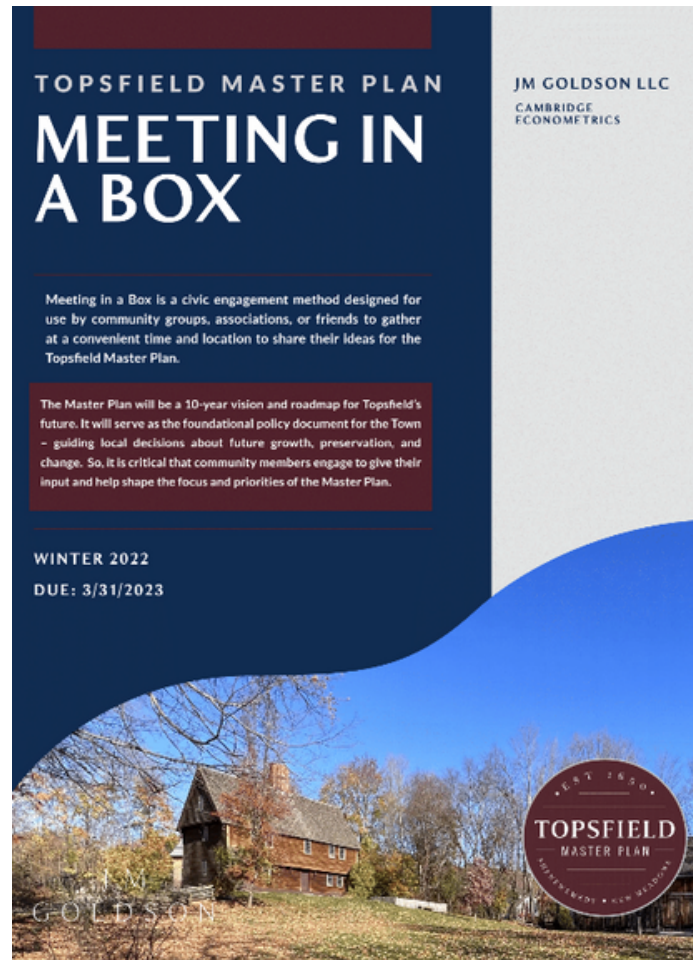
TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

MEETING IN THE BOX

The Topsfield Master Plan Steering Committee launched the Meeting-in-a-Box (MIAB) engagement tool in March 2023. MIAB is a civic engagement method in which community members are invited to host meetings with their friends, families, networks, and neighbors to share their ideas for Topsfield's future. The project team developed a facilitation guide taking participants through seven activities to foster discussion and feedback around the Master Plan. Facilitators could customize their discussions to focus on the group's main interests and were invited to complete any number (or all!) of the seven activities.

In addition to encouraging community members to host their own MIAB, Master Plan Steering Committee members hosted MIABs with special interest groups like Little Brook Village, Nike Village, and students in Topsfield's elementary schools.

A complete MIAB Summary is available in the Appendix.



 **5**
MEETINGS-IN-A-BOX

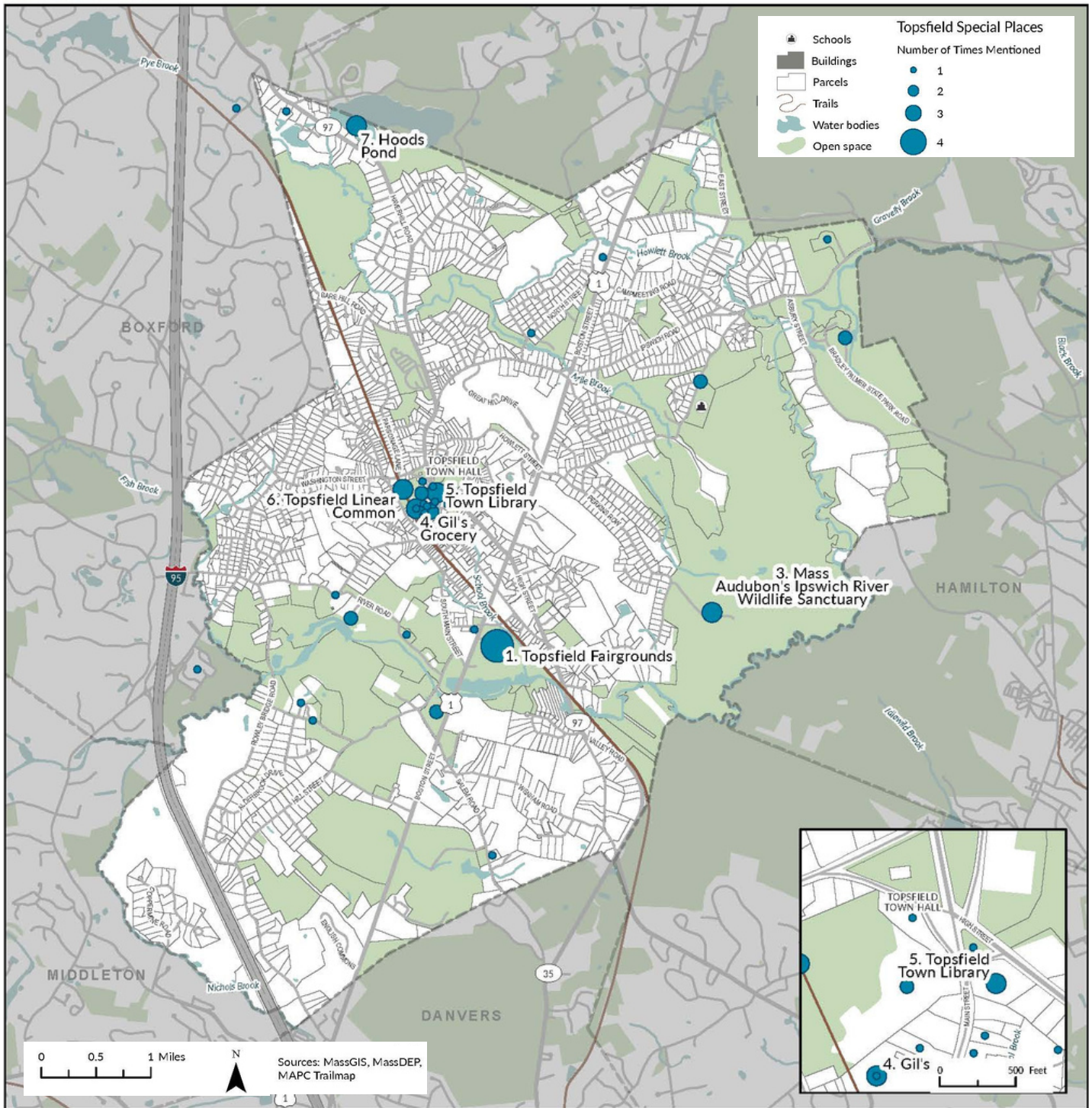
 **77**
PARTICIPANTS

COMMUNITY VISION

1. Preserving Topsfield's charm
2. Encouraging economic development and curating a walkable downtown
3. Embracing diversity
4. Increasing recreation opportunities and adding more things to do

TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

MEETING IN THE BOX SPECIAL PLACES MAP



Topsfield's Top Special Places

- Topsfield Fairgrounds
- Mass Audubon's Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
- Gil's Grocery
- Topsfield Town Library
- Topsfield Linear Common
- Hoods Pond

TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

MEETING IN THE BOX KEY FINDINGS

MIAB facilitators led their participants through a series of question prompts for four community goals. Groups were encouraged to conclude their discussions by reflecting on and identifying tensions and synergies between ideas. This page summarizes the main themes raised across discussions.

LIVE & WORK

1. Affordable diversification of housing stock
2. Adaptive reuse of existing structures
3. Local interest in restaurant/pub and grocery store

SERVE & CONNECT

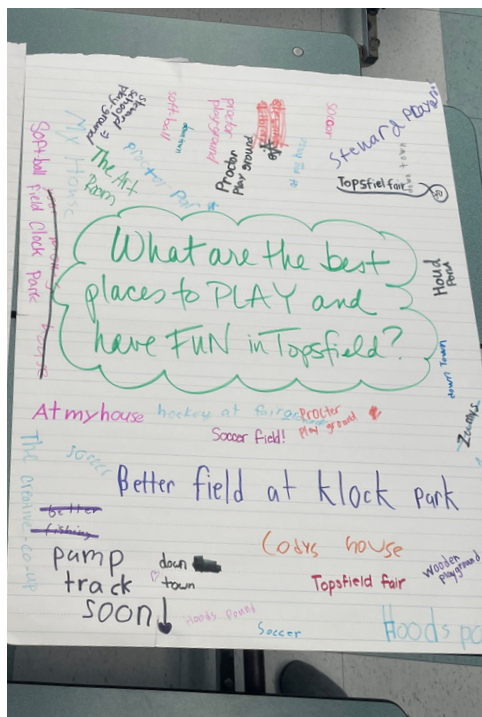
1. Preventing litter through an increased number of trash barrels
2. Promoting safe and accessible walking and biking options
3. Increasing public transportation

PROTECT & ADAPT

1. Protecting the historic and natural resources that define Topsfield's character
2. Creating solid waste disposal alternatives through increased recycling and composting programs
3. Exploring solar energy options in Town
4. Solutions for access to locally-grown food (community gardens) and improved drinking water taste

WAYS TO PLAY

1. Affordable recreation options for people of all ages
2. Better marketing of and increased access to recreation options in Town



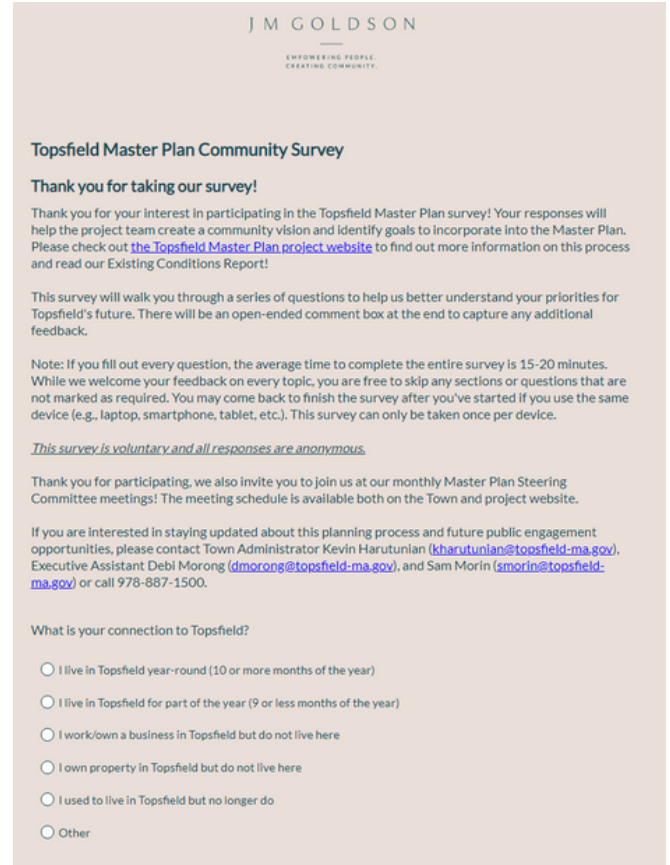
TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Topsfield Master Plan Steering Committee launched a community survey in March 2023 to solicit community members' perspectives on various topics and better understand the Town's priorities. Participants answered questions on housing, economic development, open space, natural resources, recreation, sustainability, transportation, Town facilities and services, and historic and cultural resources.

This survey was not intended to be a statistically significant poll but rather to reach more community members than may traditionally be heard at a public forum. The survey was active for one month and received 756 responses with a 68 percent completion rate.

A complete Survey Summary is available in the Appendix.



756
SURVEY RESPONSES



9.5 PERCENT
OF TOPSFIELD RESIDENTS (621
OUT OF 6,569) TOOK THE SURVEY

TOP PRIORITIES



OPEN SPACE, NATURAL RESOURCES & RECREATION



LAND USE, DEVELOPMENT, & SUSTAINABILITY



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

COMMUNITY SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

Community members used words like **SMALL TOWN**, **QUIET/PEACEFUL**, and **ACCESS TO OUTDOORS/OPEN SPACE** to describe what they most loved about Topsfield.



TWO OUT OF THREE RESIDENT RESPONDENTS MOVED TO TOPSFIELD FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.



28 PERCENT OF RESIDENT RESPONDENTS INDICATED THEY WERE LIKELY OR VERY LIKELY TO MOVE OUT OF TOPSFIELD IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

COMMUNITY VISION

1. Welcoming economic development
2. Lowering taxes
3. Improving the school system and buildings
4. Supporting transportation initiatives
5. Strategic growth and development

Participants were most interested in bringing **RESTAURANTS & PUBS**, a **GROCERY STORE**, **RETAIL**, **SMALL BUSINESSES**, and a **PHARMACY** to Topsfield.

Respondents felt **TOPSFIELD'S TOWN HALL WAS IN THE BEST SHAPE** out of all public facilities and that the **OLD HIGHWAY GARAGE NEEDS THE MOST IMPROVEMENTS**.

SURVEY RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

- 94 percent of respondents support economic development in Topsfield, 51 percent of which support economic development whether or not it lowers their taxes.
- 82 percent of respondents supported mixed-use buildings in Topsfield (52 percent in strategic locations; 30 percent across the Town).
- 72 percent or more of respondents supported development at four proposed locations.
- 66 percent of residents considering leaving cited high property taxes as their deciding factor.
- 64 percent of respondents would like improved Town services, 33 percent of whom are willing to pay higher taxes.
- 55 percent of respondents supported purchasing and protecting additional lands with public funds.

The most popular project and initiatives for each Master Plan element were:

NATURAL RESOURCES: Preserving and enhancing drinking water quality and quantity

RECREATION: Improvements to and additional amenities for outdoor recreation locations

SUSTAINABILITY: Reducing solid waste through reuse, recycling, and composting options

PUBLIC SERVICES: Expanding social services

PUBLIC FACILITIES: Renovations to public school buildings

CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES: More cultural events

HOUSING: Addressing the high cost of housing

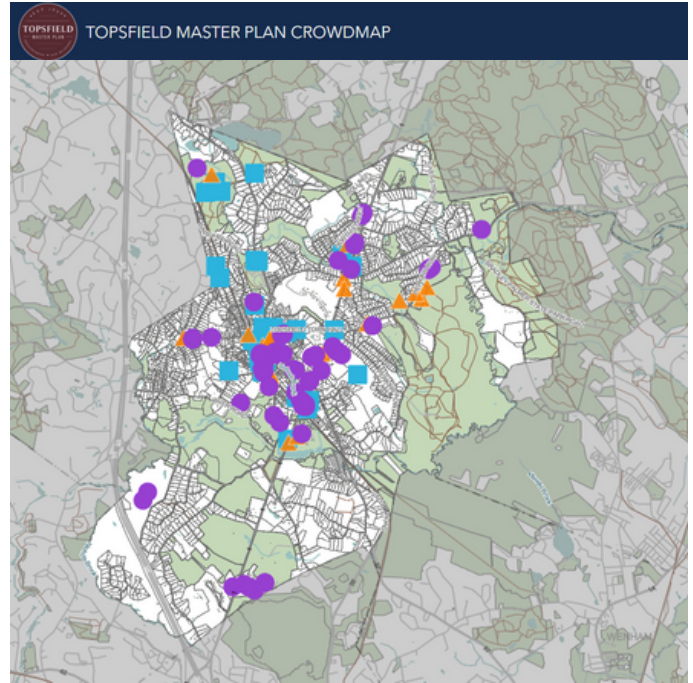
TRANSPORTATION: Improving and/or expanding the pedestrian network

TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

CROWDMAP

The Topsfield Master Plan Steering Committee launched the Crowdmap engagement tool in March 2023. The Crowdmap was an interactive mapping platform that encouraged Topsfield community members to answer three questions and make place-based recommendations for commercial and residential development, infrastructure investments, and general Town improvements.

A complete Crowdmap Summary is available in the Appendix.



62 LIVE & WORK
SUBMISSIONS



42 NEW IDEA
SUBMISSIONS



29 SERVE & CONNECT
SUBMISSIONS



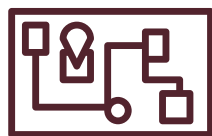
184 TOTAL
SUBMISSIONS

[CLICK HERE TO VISIT THE
VIEW-ONLY CROWDMAP AND VIEW ALL SUBMISSIONS](#)

TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

8 TOP LOCATIONS

1. Downtown Area (Main Street)
2. Topsfield Fairgrounds
3. Route One (north of Ipswich Road)
4. Steward School area
5. Old Highway Garage
6. Pye Brook Park
7. Nike Village Area
8. Route One (just south of Howlett Street)



62 LIVE & WORK SUBMISSIONS

Submissions could be sorted into four main categories:

1. Residential
2. Commercial
3. Mixed-Use
4. Other



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

1. Participants expressed interest in bringing a restaurant/bar to Topsfield.
2. There is a desire for mixed-use developments, particularly for small-scale residential and commercial development in the Downtown Area (Main Street).
3. Park and recreation improvement requests were popular including advocacy for youth sports turf infrastructure.
4. There is a need for a greater diversity of housing types, including mixed-use live/work developments, multi-family housing options, affordable units, tiny houses, and planned residential developments.
5. Participants are interested in reducing single-occupancy vehicle use through requests for additional bus service and safer/increased pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

42 NEW IDEA SUBMISSIONS

Submissions could be sorted into six main categories:

1. Residential
2. Commercial Development
3. Utilities
4. Historic and Cultural Resources
5. Parks and Recreation
6. Other



29 SERVE & CONNECT SUBMISSIONS

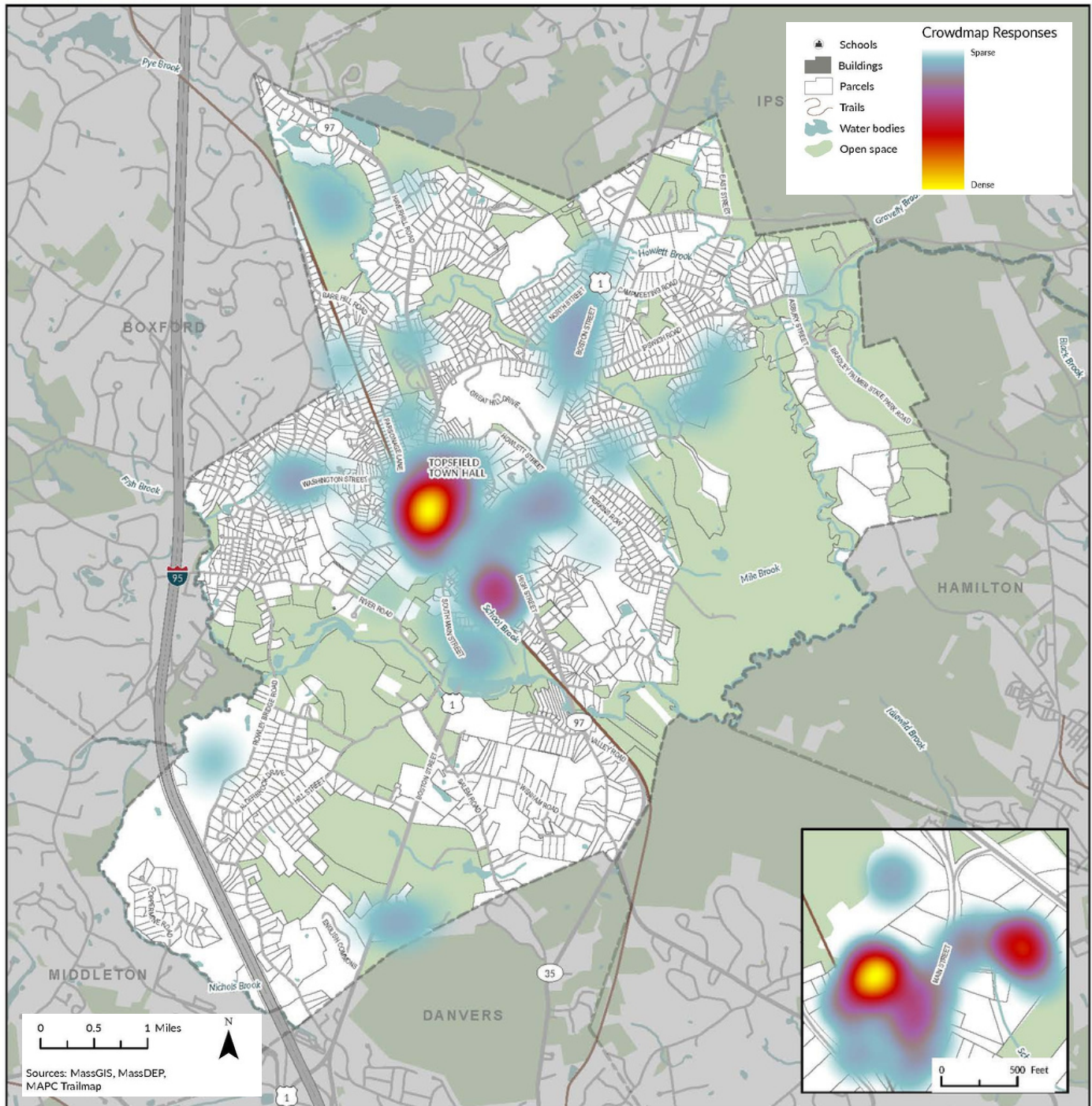
Submissions could be sorted into six main categories:

1. Utility Expansion
2. Open Space and Recreation
3. Transportation
4. Public Facilities
5. School Buildings
6. Other



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CROWDMAP FREQUENCY BY NUMBER OF TOTAL SUBMISSIONS

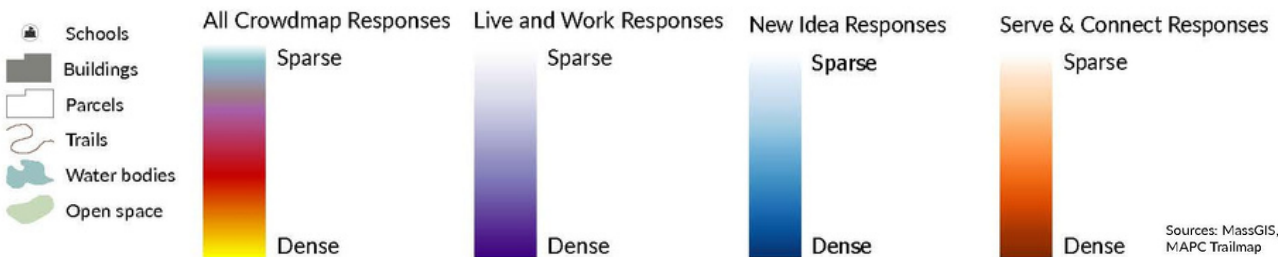
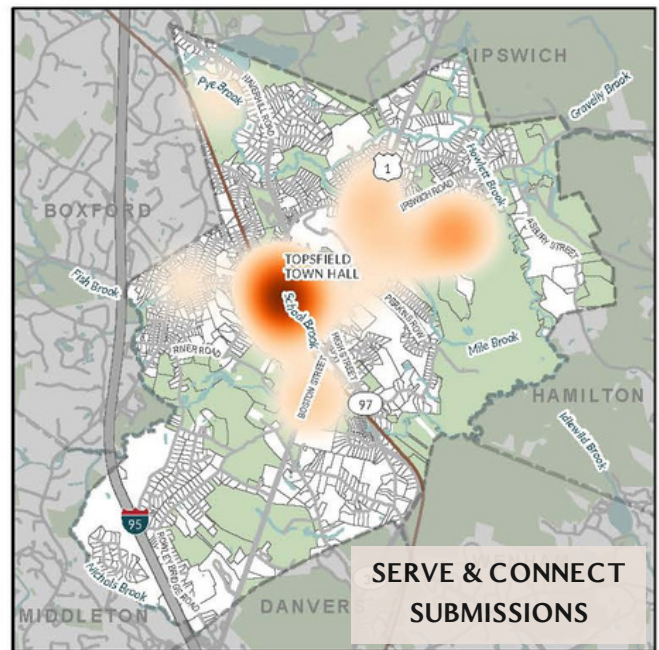
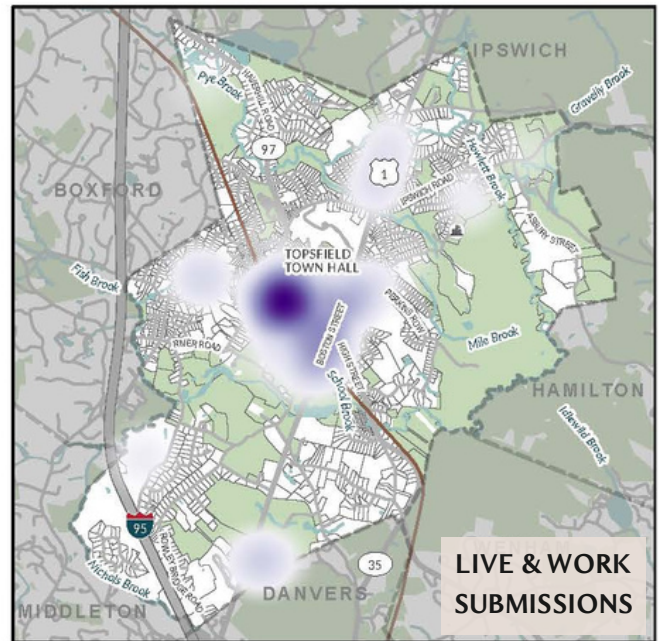
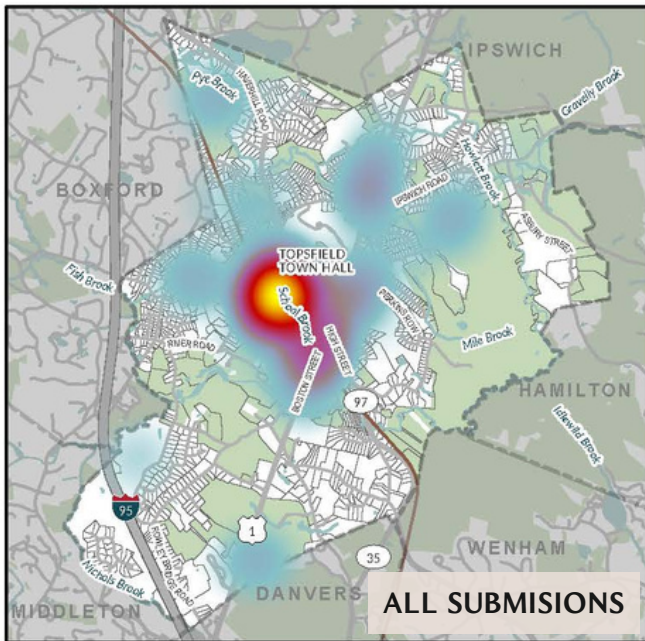


Crowdmap Comment Clusters

- Downtown Area (Main Street)
- Topsfield Fairgrounds
- Route One (north of Ipswich Road)
- Steward School Area
- Old Highway Garage
- Pye Brook Park
- Nike Village Area
- Route One (just south of Howlett Street)

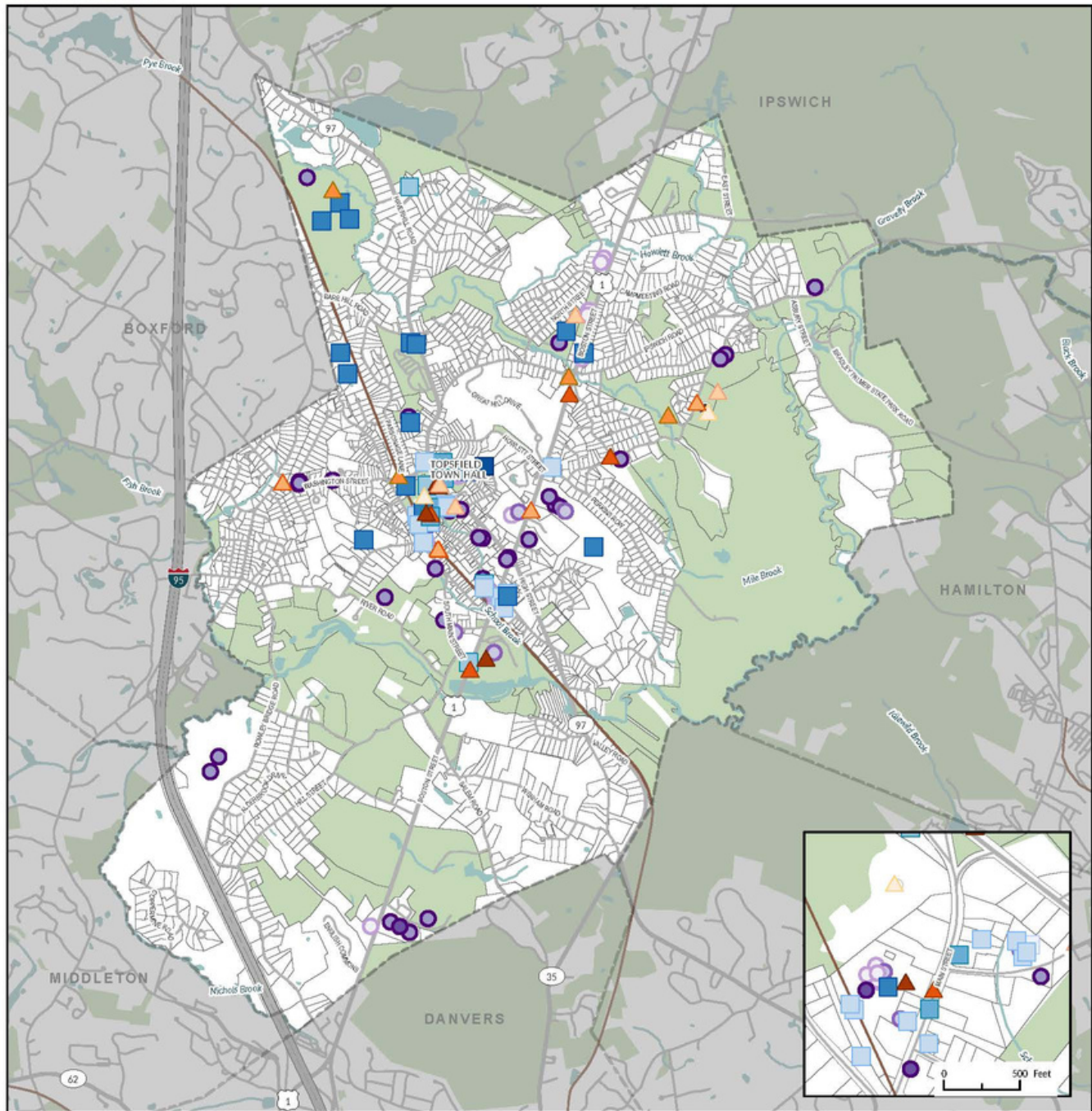
TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

CROWDMAP FREQUENCY BY QUESTION

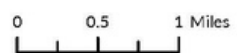


TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

CROWDMAP SUBMISSIONS BY CATEGORY



- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Buildings Parcels Trails Water bodies Open space | <p>Serve & Connect</p> <p>Category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Buildings Public Facilities Transportation Open Space and Recreation Utility Expansion Other | <p>New Ideas</p> <p>Category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Commercial Development Utilities Historic and Cultural Resources Parks and Recreation Other | <p>Live and Work</p> <p>category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed-Use Commercial Residential Other |
|---|--|--|---|



Sources: MassGIS, MassDEP, MAPC Trailmap

TOPSFIELD AGGREGATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

APPENDICES

1. Meeting-in-a-Box Summary
2. Community Survey Summary
3. Crowdmap Summary



Images on this page were submitted by Topsfield Meeting-in-a-Box hosts.