

# Town of Northborough, Massachusetts



## Joint Meeting of the Select Board & MPIC

January 18, 2024

Weston & Sampson<sup>SM</sup>

**RKG**  
ASSOCIATES INC

# Meeting Agenda

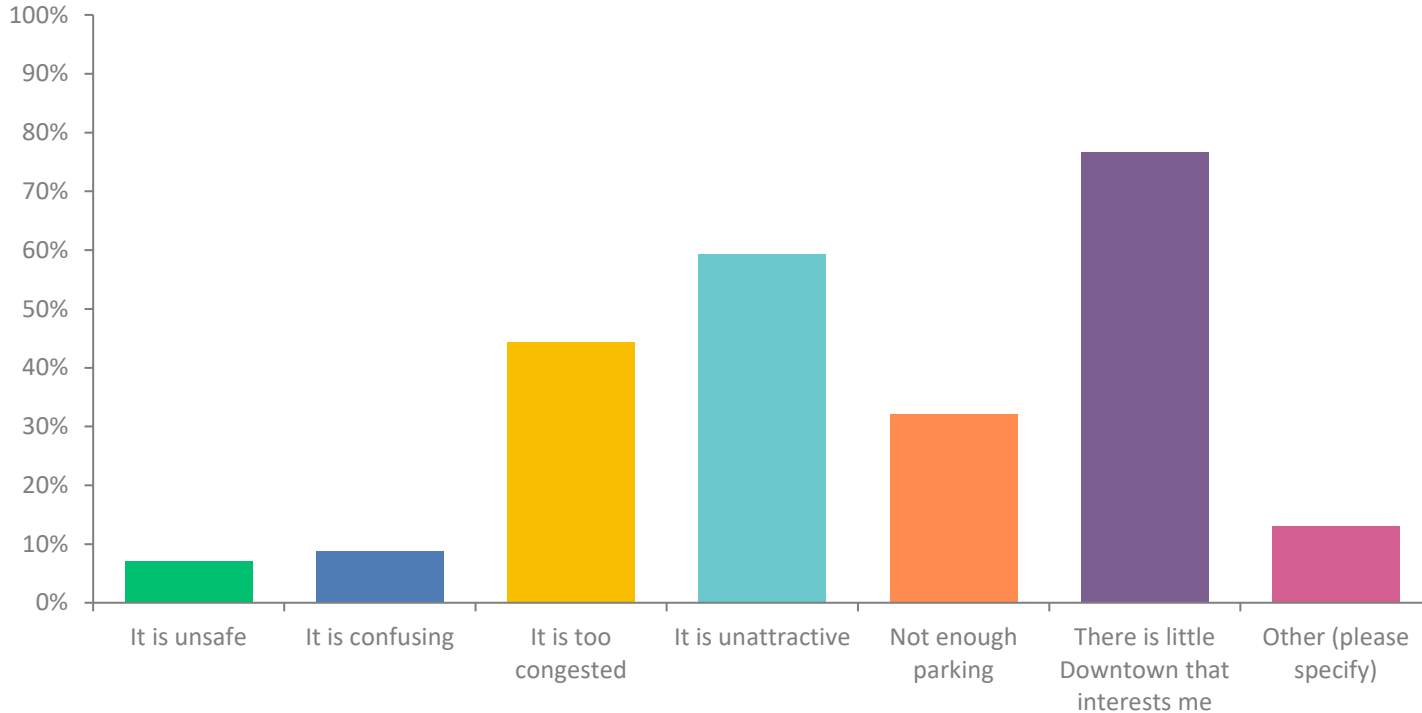
- Project Overview by Rick Leif MPIC Chairman
- Project Meetings and Feedback
  - Public/Stakeholder Engagement
  - Online Survey Results
  - Public Meetings Feedback
- Design Scenarios
  - Scenario 1: The Entertainment Hub
  - Scenario 2: The Downtown Extension
  - Scenario 3: Assabet Mill
- Implementation Strategies
- Blake Street Design by Laurie Connors

# Public/Stakeholder Engagement

- Public Meetings
  - Booth at Applefest
  - Public meeting #1 on January 26, 2023
  - Public meeting #2 on May 11, 2023
  - Public meeting #3 on June 20, 2023
  - Business Focus Group meeting on February 7, 2023
- Online Survey
  - Open from September 2022 to December 2022
  - 12-question digital survey
  - 636 responses received
- MPIC Meetings
  - Attended nine (9) committee meetings
- Other Outreach
  - Email blasts to raise project awareness
  - Project notifications and articles published in the local newspaper

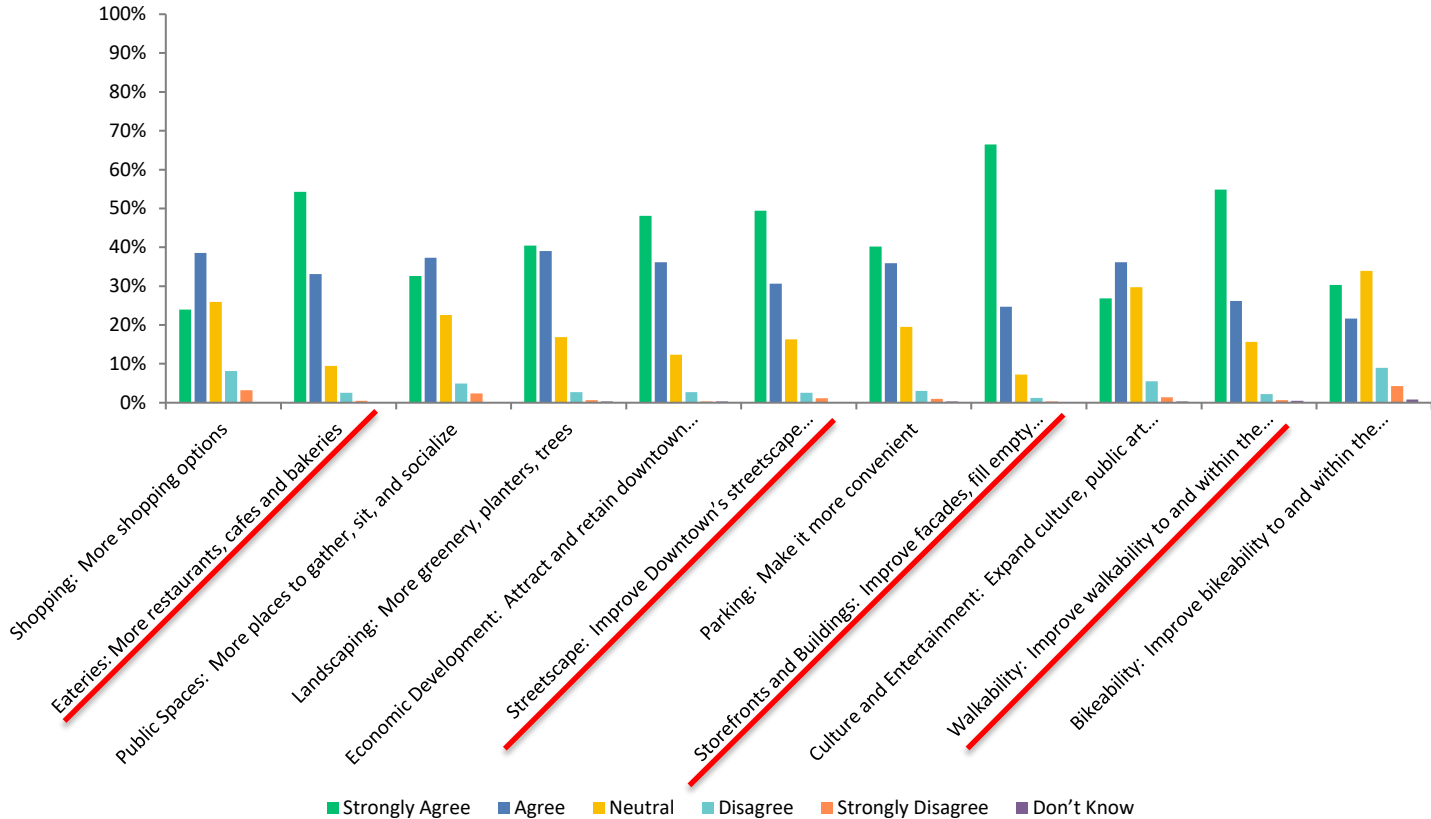
# Online Survey Results

If you do not like going downtown, please tell us why



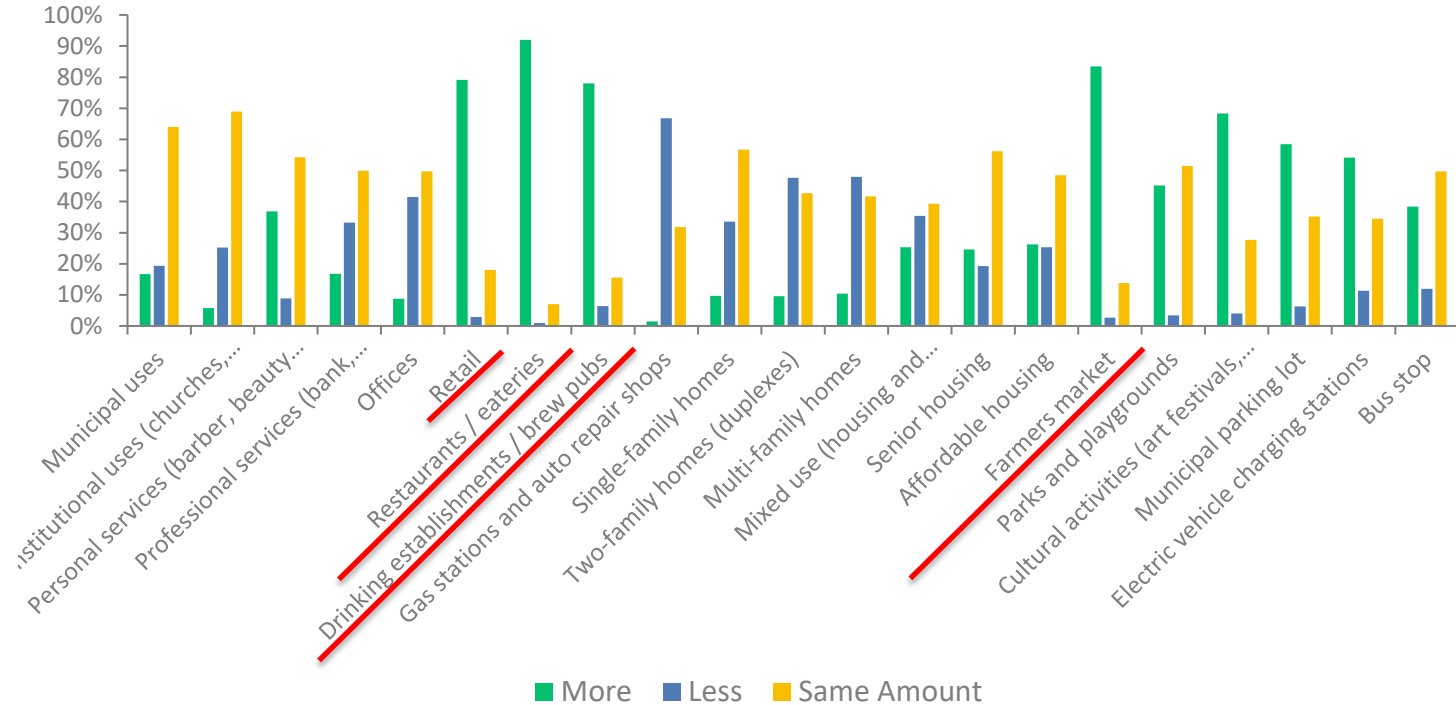
# Online Survey Results

When focusing on revitalization, what are your top priorities for Downtown?



# Online Survey Results

What type of development services does downtown need more/less of?



# Stakeholder Feedback: Downtown Issues

- Traffic volumes and disruptions occur mostly during the morning and evening rush hours. Route 20 is an important commuter route
- Heavy traffic makes for an “unsafe” pedestrian environment
- A lack of parking has made it difficult for some businesses to succeed
- The presence of gas stations on Main Street create potential redevelopment obstacles and contribute to vehicle congestion
- Local people seem skeptical about making positive changes to Route 20 because of MA DOT’s resistance in the past
- The Assabet River is seen as a valuable natural asset, but it is hidden from view and access is limited
- The town needs the ability to support and assist people in making investments in the downtown

# Stakeholder Feedback: Market Factors

- The town enjoys a regional competitive advantage by virtue of its location and access to major employment centers
- Land availability is limited throughout the Greater Boston Area, which makes Northborough an attractive development location
- Some believe the market would support greater residential in the downtown for “empty-nesters” and young households, more retail, dining and entertainment choices are needed
- People with young families need things to do and places to take their kids
- The building at 4 West Main and the surrounding properties could offer a significant redevelopment opportunity in the core, with properties across Main Street
- The Downtown Revitalization Plan needs to explicitly state what the town wants in the downtown so the development community can react accordingly
- Future plans for 4 West Main and the current Town Hall are very important to downtown and should be well thought-out. Creating an activity center at that location is very important to downtown’s future.



# Public Meeting #1: Strategy



MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING



MIXED-USE HOUSING



ADAPTIVE RE-USE HOUSING



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



CAR CHARGING



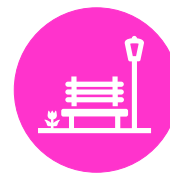
TRAILS



COMPLETE STREETS



BIKE LANES



POCKET PARK



FOOD TRUCKS



OUTDOOR DINING



RESTAURANTS



ON-STREET PARKING



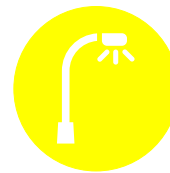
PARKING LOT



PEDESTRIAN STREETS



FLEXIBLE PLAZA



IMPROVED LIGHTING



WAYFINDING



BARs



RETAIL



FLEXIBLE GATHERING



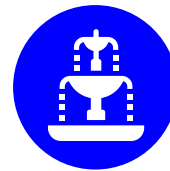
ACCESSIBILITY



FITNESS



ART



WATER FEATURE

# Public Meeting #1: Obtaining Ideas



# Public Engagement: Feedback

## Scenario #4



What we heard from you:  
Street Trees  
Sidewalk Furniture  
Improved Lighting

## Scenario #3



What we heard from you:  
Mixed-use Residential  
Housing  
Restaurants  
Flexible Gathering Space  
Improved Sidewalks  
Parking  
Green Infrastructure  
Art

## Scenario #1

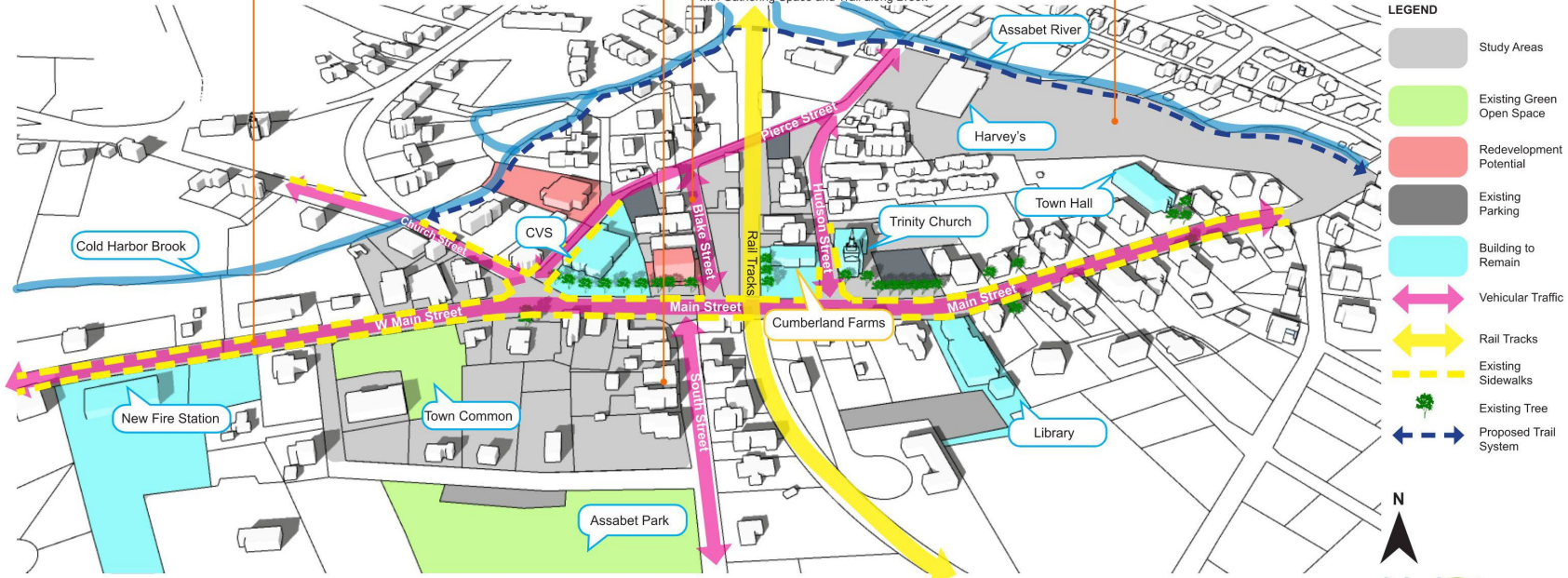


What we heard from you:  
Mixed-use Residential  
Retail  
Art  
Flexible Gathering  
Restaurants  
Green Infrastructure  
Parking  
Repurpose Fire Station as Brewery/Restaurant with Gathering Space and Trail along Brook

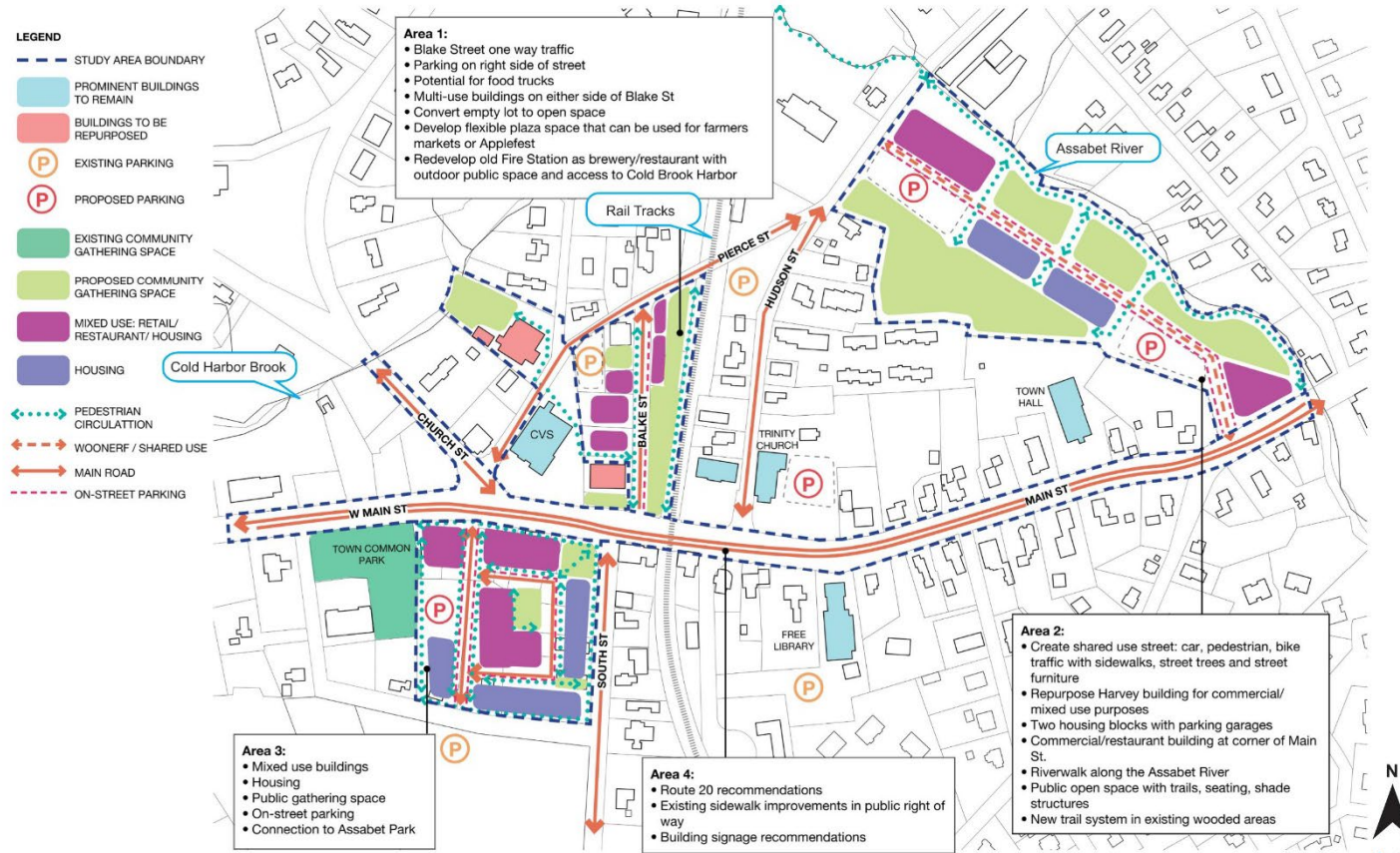
## Scenario #2



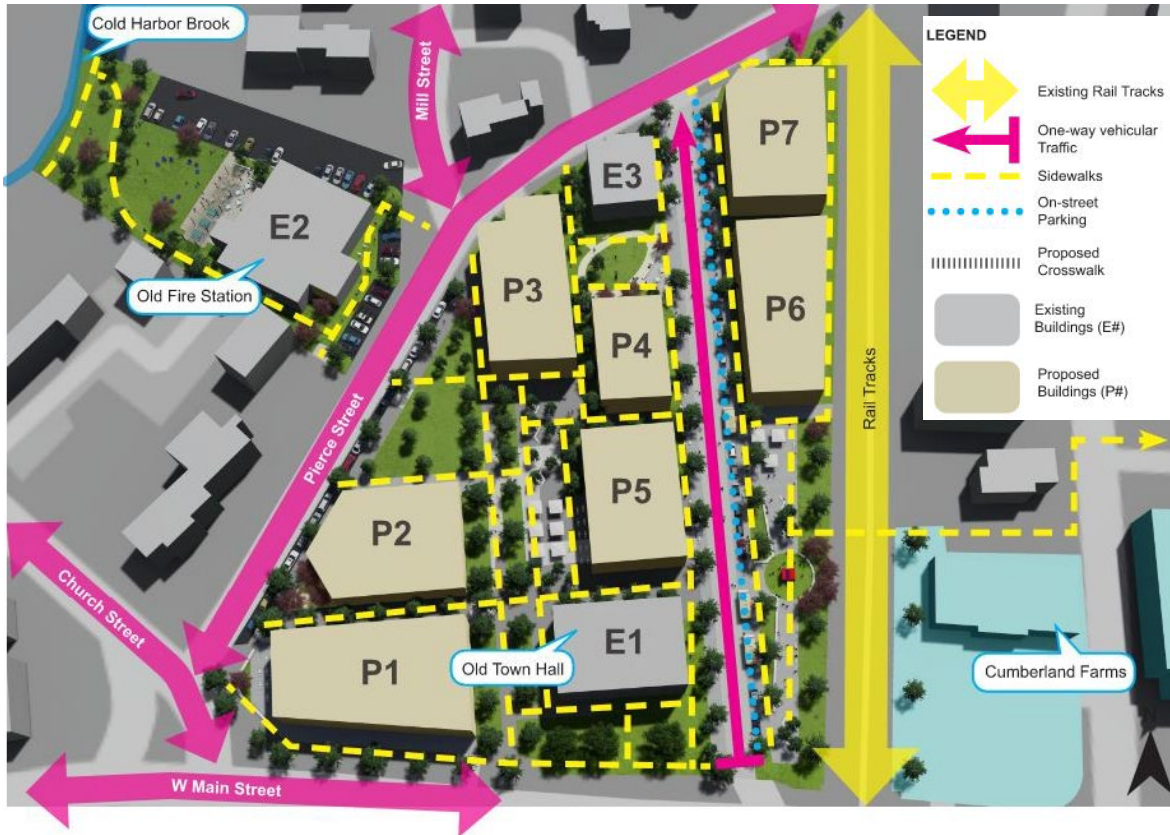
What we heard from you:  
Mixed-use  
Retail  
Trails  
Green Infrastructure  
Flexible Gathering  
Fitness  
Multi-Family Housing  
Parking



# Public Engagement: Outcome



# Scenario #1: The Entertainment Hub



## Summary of Findings/Wants:

- Bars, outdoor dining, restaurants
- More Parking with EV capabilities
- Multi-family housing along Main Street and near the fire station
- Connections to Cold Harbor Brook; restaurants/bars with views of this area
- Trail connections
- Burying utilities
- Improve character through sidewalk and aesthetic improvements
- Improve Church Street / Main Street intersection
- Pedestrian only streets
- Public gathering spaces
- Public art

# Scenario #1: The Entertainment Hub



# Scenario #2: The Downtown Extension



## Summary of Findings/Wants:

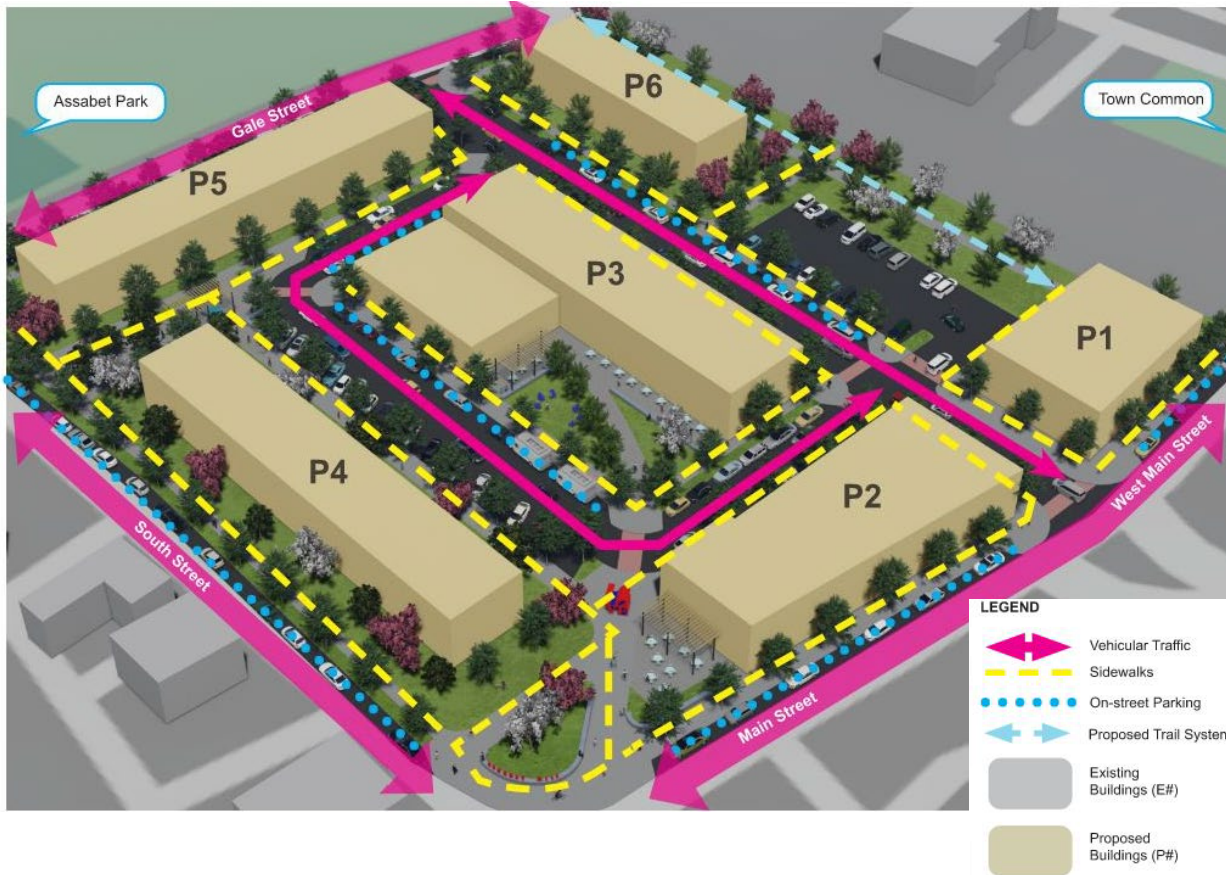
- Mixed-use housing
- Riverfront trails
- Flexible gathering spaces
- Pocket parks
- Make Assabet River an amenity by adding riverwalk, restaurants along the water
- Scenic views of the Assabet River
- Improved connections to the downtown core

# Scenario #2: The Downtown Extension





# Scenario #3: Assabet Mill



## Summary of Findings/Wants:

- Bars, outdoor dining, restaurants
- Municipal parking lots
- Areas for food trucks
- Improved lighting
- New sidewalk connections with granite curbing
- Street trees
- Housing
- Re-purpose empty buildings
- Public gathering spaces
- Public art

# Scenario #3: Assabet Mill



# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

## Short-term Objectives: Improve the aesthetics of Downtown Northborough through public and private actions

Action 1: Award \$1,500 seed grants to businesses and property owners willing to match those funds to make improvements to the front of their properties

Action 2: Draft program guidelines identifying the types of improvements eligible for seed funding including: new signage, planting boxes, awnings, etc.

Action 3: Develop a program to promote the planting and sustained growth of street trees, landscaping, and other green infrastructure in Downtown in coordination with the Northborough Garden Club

Action 4: Engender local buy-in through establishment of an Adopt-A-Tree and Adopt-A-Planter Program focused on Downtown Northborough

Action 5: Add benches, tables, trash receptacles, and pedestrian scale LED lighting, and attractive banners at key locations

Action 6: Commission local artists to paint murals on key sites in the district

Action 7: Consider adorning utility boxes with historic photos of downtown or custom artwork using vinyl wraps

# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

## Short-term Objectives: Hire an experienced Downtown Manager to lead Northborough's revitalization effort and coordinate activities with other community organizations and Town Government

Action 1: Hire an experienced downtown manager to kick-start implementation of the downtown master plan

Action 2: Create a strategic action plan to drive the Downtown Merchant's Association's annual action plan and provide leadership to committee groups

Action 3: Explore the budgetary needs of the Downtown Merchants Association over the next five years

Action 4: Undertake annual fundraising activities, including grant writing opportunities, to support Northborough's Downtown revitalization efforts

Action 5: Outreach to property owners to gauge their interest in pursuing the Town's catalyst redevelopment initiatives

Action 6: Seek a 5-year annual funding committee from the Town to support the operations of the Downtown Merchants Association, in addition to contributions made by local businesses and property owners

Action 7: Meet with real estate developers to explore their interests in making redevelopment investments in Northborough

Action 8: Meet with Town leadership regarding the need for land acquisitions and assemblage in catalyst redevelopment areas

# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

## Short-term Objectives: Review the Town's Zoning Regulations to allow for higher density mixed-use development in the greater Downtown area

Action 1: Investigate the need for changes in the Town's zoning to allow for increased density bonuses/density transfer credits and changes to parking requirements within the Downtown's catalyst redevelopment areas

Action 2: Consider adopting a minimum 10% of units in residential/mixed-use developments with 10 units or more should be permanently deed restricted for affordable housing to maintain the Town's Chapter 40B compliance

Action 3: Work with the appropriate boards and town residents to adopt necessary changes to downtown parking regulations (number of spaces per use), business signage bylaw and downtown design standards

Action 4: To ensure downtown revitalization success, work closely with the Town's land use boards to develop a collaborative process that is responsive and transparent to both the development community and the public

# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

## Short-term Objectives: Pursue adaptive reuse of the former Town Hall building at 4 West Main Street to become a new anchor for Downtown

Action 1: Complete the current feasibility study examining the Town's future space needs for Town Hall. If a decision is made to relocate town hall to 4 West Main Street, then investigate adaptive reuse options for the current town hall

Action 2: Retain an architect to prepare a feasibility study to adaptively reuse the building for a variety uses and evaluate the building's condition and future improvement needs

Action 3: Conduct a real estate appraisal for the 4 West Main Street property for future sale or ground lease to private developers

Action 4: Prepare a Request for Proposals for the sale or ground lease of the property for a new commercial center in Downtown

Action 5: Evaluate development proposals and select a development team based on qualifications, adaptive reuse experience and best deal for the Town

Action 6: Work with developers and property owners to plan for redevelopment and approve entitlements that meet the Town's revitalization goals

# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

**Short-term Objectives: Develop and Implement a multi-year, multi-phase effort to improve public infrastructure Downtown, including the streetscape**

Action 1: Work with MPIC to identify a Phase I streetscape and infrastructure improvement project

Action 2: Pursue ARPA funds to hire a consulting engineer to design a Phase I streetscape and infrastructure improvement project

Action 3: Form a focus group consisting of key stakeholders and Town staff to provide oversight and direction to the engineering consultant

Action 4: Pursue grants and municipal sources of money to finance construction of Phase I streetscape and infrastructure improvement project

# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

Short-term Objectives: Pursue adaptive reuse of the former Northborough Fire Station into a restaurant / craft brewery / entertainment venue

Action 1: Retain an architect to evaluate the building's existing condition, including structural, HVAC, electrical, and roof systems and identify and building improvements needed

Action 2: Conduct a real estate appraisal for the fire station property for future sale or ground lease to private developers

Action 3: Prepare a Request for Proposals for the sale or ground lease of the property for a restaurant / bar / entertainment venue for downtown

Action 4: Evaluate development proposals and select a development team based on qualifications, adaptive reuse experience and best deal for the Town

Action 5: Work with developers and property owners to plan for redevelopment and approve entitlements that meet the Town's revitalization goals



# Implementation Strategies (0-3 Years)

**Short-term Objectives: Create a Downtown Management Organization Plan, organize and coordinate Downtown revitalization activities and create key partnerships**

Action 1: Organize downtown merchants, property owners and local leaders to identify and prioritize on-going needs for downtown revitalization

Action 2: Establish a Northborough Downtown Merchants Association board of directors and create a volunteer committee structure to undertake important downtown initiatives and to partner with community organizations

Action 3: Organize an annual Downtown Merchants Association dues structure to undertake new projects and initiatives that benefit downtown

Action 4: Seek annual support from the Town of Northborough to provide seed funding for the merchant's association activities that benefit downtown and the community

Action 5: Establish volunteer committees focused on: (1) special events/festival planning, (2) district advertising and promotion, (3) beautification, and (4) government affairs

# thank you

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