

GROTON 2036

A TEN-YEAR VISION



MARCH 23, 2026



Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

TOWN OF GROTON

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Destination Groton Committee

Greg Sheldon, *Chair*
Jeff Gordon, *Vice Chair*
Brian Bolton, *Member*
Joni Parker-Roach, *Member*
Heather Puksta, *Member*



March 20, 2026

Mark Haddad, Town Manager
Select Board, Town of Groton
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

Dear Mark and Members of the Select Board:

It is with great pleasure that we submit for your review the Destination Groton Committee Report: **Groton 2036 - A Ten-Year Vision**. We began our journey through a series of ongoing "conversations" beginning soon after DGC was appointed by the Select Board in 2021 and continued through 2025.

In the fall of 2024, the DGC was awarded two state grants: MA Downtown Initiative (Traffic Mobility \$25,000) and the Rural Development Fund (\$50,000 Town Center Planning). While funded to focus on Town Center, we included review of potential sites around town including Four Corners and West Groton.

Our goal was to create a "Visioning Process" where through research and analysis we would study current conditions, explore market potential, and examine transportation mitigation strategies. We believe strongly that community engagement to gather input from residents, business owners, Town Officials and visitors through surveys, forums and interviews would help us translate feedback into concepts for how the town could evolve over the next 10 years.

We look forward to working with you and hope that **Groton 2036 - A Ten-Year Vision** will be viewed as a shared vision statement – producing a clear, inspiring document that can guide future decisions and policy makers while reflecting the community's values, identity and hopes for the future.

Sincerely,

Greg Sheldon

Jeff Gordon

Joni Parker-Roach

Brian Bolton

Heather Puksta

Karen Tucker Barisano



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Destination Groton Committee

Select Board Charge, January 2022

The primary objective of the standing Committee shall be to pursue a course of action intended to engage all Town stakeholders, including the business and non-profit communities, Town leaders, and Town residents in a series of public information forums in order to prepare for an increase in visitors to town while at the same time work to preserve its rural small-town charm.

The Committee's work should include but not be limited to the following:

1. The Committee shall be responsible for providing direction, coordination and guidance across the many opportunities such as commercial and retail development and job creation, and challenges such as, traffic, parking and infrastructure, as Groton becomes more of a destination community all with the goal of creating a greater sense of community, quality of life and civic pride.
2. Work closely with the Town Manager and in anticipation of working with an individual appointed as the new Director of Economic and Community Development, to identify and secure funding resources from federal and state grants, as well as, potential private and/or nonprofit funding sources to address issues pertaining to tourism programming, strategic marketing, infrastructure and regional transportation mitigation.
3. Work collaboratively with other Town Committees, Boards and Commissions that can contribute to the mission and to the overall success of Destination Groton.
4. Work closely with the Groton Business Association, Groton Visitors Center, the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce and other relevant regional organizations, attractions, and neighboring Towns, Groton Hill Music Center and other relevant town venues, attractions and assets to develop strategic informational and marketing materials that promote Groton's unique character and destination potential.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Groton Town Center Ten-Year Vision Report establishes a structured, evidence-based framework to guide policy and investment decisions from 2026 through 2036. The Report responds to a consistent and well-documented community priority: strengthening the Town Center as Groton’s civic and economic heart while preserving its historic character and small-town scale.

This Vision builds upon:

- The adopted 2025 Groton Master Plan;
- Sustained public engagement conducted by the Destination Groton Committee (DGC);
- Technical analysis prepared by Stantec, Studio InSitu Architects, FXM Associates, Professor Zenia Kotval, and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC).

Across these sources, a consistent conclusion emerges: Groton’s Town Center is at an inflection point. Longstanding mobility and infrastructure constraints now intersect with increased cultural activity, visitor traffic, and measurable retail leakage. Addressing these conditions requires a phased, coordinated, and character-sensitive approach.

This Vision Report does not propose large-scale redevelopment or substantial changes in building scale. Instead, it outlines incremental, safety-first improvements and modest economic growth aligned with documented market capacity and community values.

CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE BASE

Mobility and Safety Conditions

Main Street (Route 119) serves both as Groton’s primary Town Center corridor and as a regional connector. Traffic volume data and safety analysis demonstrate that the corridor’s current geometry and access patterns create recurring pedestrian and turning conflicts.

MRPC crash data (2021–2023) document 205 crashes at key intersections, including:

- Main Street / Route 40



- Main Street / Hollis Street
- Four Corners (Boston Road / Sandy Pond Road)

Walkability audits and engagement findings consistently identify:

- Speeding during off-peak hours
- Failure to yield at crosswalks
- Long crossing distances
- Sight-distance conflicts near curb cuts and parked vehicles
- Gaps in sidewalk continuity

Across consultant studies and public engagement, safety and walkability are consistently identified as foundational conditions. Without improving comfort and predictability on Main Street, other Town Center initiatives will have limited impact.

Retail Leakage and Market Capacity

Economic analyses conducted by MRPC and FXM Associates identify substantial retail leakage:

- MRPC estimates a retail gap exceeding \$77 million annually.
- FXM estimates a comparable gap of approximately \$60.9 million.

While methodologies differ, both analyses confirm that a significant share of resident spending leaves Groton for goods and services unavailable locally.

FXM estimates that Groton could support approximately 124,844 square feet of additional retail space townwide if full capture occurred. Under a conservative 30% capture scenario, this equates to roughly 37,000 square feet of additional small-scale commercial space over time, representing approximately \$20 million to \$25 million in retail sales.

Importantly, this capacity is townwide and should be distributed across appropriate nodes, including but not limited to the historic Town Center. The scale of opportunity is incremental, not transformational.

Community Mandate

Public engagement spanning multiple years — including townwide surveys, public forums, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews — demonstrates strong and consistent support for a phased approach.



2024 Public Survey Key findings include:

- Approximately 83% of respondents support a ten-year effort to secure funding for infrastructure and economic improvements while preserving Groton’s character.
- Roughly 88% support a vibrant, walkable Town Center vision.
- Traffic safety is identified as the highest recurring concern.
- Residents favor small-scale, locally oriented businesses and express opposition to large-format or chain-dominated development.

Community support is conditional and clear: improvements must be phased, data-driven, safety-first, and respectful of Groton’s historic scale.

CORE FINDINGS

Across technical studies and engagement, six findings consistently recur.

1) Safety-first is not optional. It is foundational.

Main Street’s current function and design lend themselves more to an out-of-town thoroughfare and regional pass-through than to a walkable civic center. Stantec’s findings consistently emphasize speeding, failure-to-yield behavior, and turning and curb cut conflicts as core operational challenges. Traffic conditions along Route 119/Main Street — particularly at Old Ayer Road, Route 40, Hollis Street, and Pleasant Street — pose a specific and ongoing challenge to pedestrian and vehicular safety. Without measurable improvements to safety and predictability, economic vitality and placemaking efforts will remain constrained.



[Accident video 1](#) [Accident video 2](#)

2) Groton’s economy has unmet “daily needs” demand.

FXM and MRPC estimate Groton’s annual retail gap at approximately \$60 million to more than \$77 million, reflecting substantial leakage of resident spending to surrounding communities. While methodologies differ, both analyses confirm real unmet demand. The scale of feasible growth is incremental: a conservative capture of existing leakage supports gradual additions of small-format retail and service uses aligned with daily resident needs and visitor-serving activity.

3) The feasible development scale is incremental, not transformational.



Groton’s Town Center Overlay District permits mixed-use development, but implementation has been limited. Market analysis consistently frames the 37,000-square-foot capture scenario (30% of supportable space) as a conservative, townwide opportunity that should be phased and tested rather than assumed. Adaptive reuse, modest infill, and context-sensitive redevelopment are more consistent with both market capacity and community preference than large, single-project transformation.

4) Infrastructure investments must support safety, vitality, and townwide balance.

Infrastructure improvements are necessary not only within the historic Town Center, but also in Four Corners, West Groton and other nodes, as consistently expressed by resident stakeholders in those areas. Sidewalk continuity, stormwater management, lighting, utility modernization, and roadway improvements directly affect safety, accessibility, and economic resilience. Coordinated infrastructure investment — phased and aligned with mobility and land use goals — is essential to strengthening both the Town Center and other key nodes without over-concentrating growth in the historic core.

5) Visitor and cultural activity is an asset but requires stronger “Town Center conversion.”

Groton’s cultural institutions, trail network, and scenic character represent substantial assets. Professor Kotval’s analysis notes that visitor-related revenues accrue through meals and accommodations taxes and ticket-related payments (including Groton Hill Music Center’s \$2-per-ticket structure) but also cautions that capture depends on visitor behavior and available lodging, dining, and shopping options. Clearer pedestrian connections, improved wayfinding, and basic comfort infrastructure are necessary to strengthen “visitor-to-downtown” conversion and extend dwell time without altering town character.

6) Implementation success depends on coordination and predictability.

The results of public engagement (forums, conferences, surveys and interviews) have emphasized that long-term success requires townwide support, cross-department alignment, and a practical sequence of incremental steps rather than a single fixed project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Specifically, this Vision Report supports the following actions:

- **Prioritize a “Main Street Safety and Walkability” early-action plan (0 - 2 years).** Use quick-build and near-term capital measures consistent with the findings of **Stantec** and the **Complete Streets Committee**, detailing safety and connectivity goals that focus on improved crossing visibility, speed management, clearer striping/edge delineation, and reduced conflict points where feasible.



- **Advance a parking and wayfinding clarity strategy to reduce frustration and improve traffic circulation (0 - 2 years).**

Engagement findings identify that “customers often don’t know where to park” indicating that legibility and signage can deliver meaningful benefits even before potential additional contiguous, off-street parking is created. Additionally, the potential to create an alternate circulation route between Broadmeadow Road, Station Avenue and Pleasant Street should be explored.

- **Eliminate barriers to entry for development (0 - 2 years).**

Identify and reduce regulatory, procedural, and physical barriers that limit incremental, context-sensitive development within the Town Center. This may include clarifying zoning and design expectations, improving permitting predictability, aligning infrastructure investments with desired scale and use, and ensuring that development standards and bylaws support reinvestment consistent with Groton’s character.

Reducing barriers to entry is intended to enable smaller, phased projects that respond to documented needs and market demand, rather than relying on large or speculative development proposals.

- **Improve visitor orientation and ease of use to support increased activity (0 - 2 years).**

Pursue improvements that make the Town Center and surrounding assets easier to navigate, understand, and enjoy for both residents and visitors. Priority actions may include enhanced wayfinding, trail and pedestrian connections, and modest destination-supportive features that reinforce existing assets rather than introducing stand-alone attractions.

- **Establish a Town Center Vision Implementation Commission with dedicated economic development capacity (0 - 2 years).**

Create a cross-departmental implementation body, appointed by the Select Board, that brings together representation and expertise from relevant Town Boards and Committees (e.g., Planning Board, Complete Streets, Destination Groton Committee, and other appropriate entities) to coordinate execution of this Vision Report.

Charge this body with advancing the Vision as a phased Action Plan, aligning mobility, land use, and economic development initiatives, and ensuring predictable cross-departmental coordination.

- **Authorize a Dedicated Economic Development Position (0 - 2 years).**

As part of this effort, authorize the hiring of a dedicated Economic Development staff person to focus on retail leakage capture, small business support, grant coordination, and long-term economic resilience consistent with the Vision’s goals.



- **Support local small businesses aligned with documented leakage (2 - 5 years).**
Use the retail leakage findings to prioritize daily resident needs and visitor-serving businesses at a scale Groton can absorb incrementally.
- **Increase townwide visitor opportunities through targeted improvements (2 - 5 years).**
Link mobility, wayfinding, and small retail experiences to increase dwell-time and local spending, while being realistic about existing lodging/dining capacity.
- **Enhance the “Experience” (2 - 5 years).**
Invest in infrastructure improvements including public rest areas, benches, dog parks, restrooms, sidewalks, burying powerlines for low-glare, dark-sky compliant period lighting. Explore the potential for the relocation of large trucks and buses from Station Avenue.
- **Make efforts to attract more tourism (5 - 10 years).**
For example, an observation tower, a Town Center boardwalk, trails, wayfinding, making Groton a DESTINATION and an enjoyable experience.
- **Use a phased implementation model grounded in measurable outcomes (0 - 10 years).**
Reinforce the community’s preference for incremental change and testable actions, consistent with the “plan for potential, don’t predict the market” framing expressed in public discussion.

IMPLEMENTATION AND LOOKING AHEAD

This Vision adopts a phased implementation model organized around measurable outcomes over the next decade.

Near-term actions (0–2 years) focus on safety, clarity, and capacity: quick-build improvements to crossings and striping, enhanced wayfinding and parking legibility, regulatory streamlining, and the establishment of coordinated governance and dedicated economic development capacity. These steps are designed to improve predictability and build momentum without requiring large-scale capital investment.

Mid-term actions (2–5 years) advance engineered intersection improvements, coordinated infrastructure upgrades, targeted small-format retail recruitment aligned with documented leakage, and stronger connections between the Town Center and Groton’s cultural and recreational assets. These efforts build on early safety gains and create conditions for incremental economic capture.

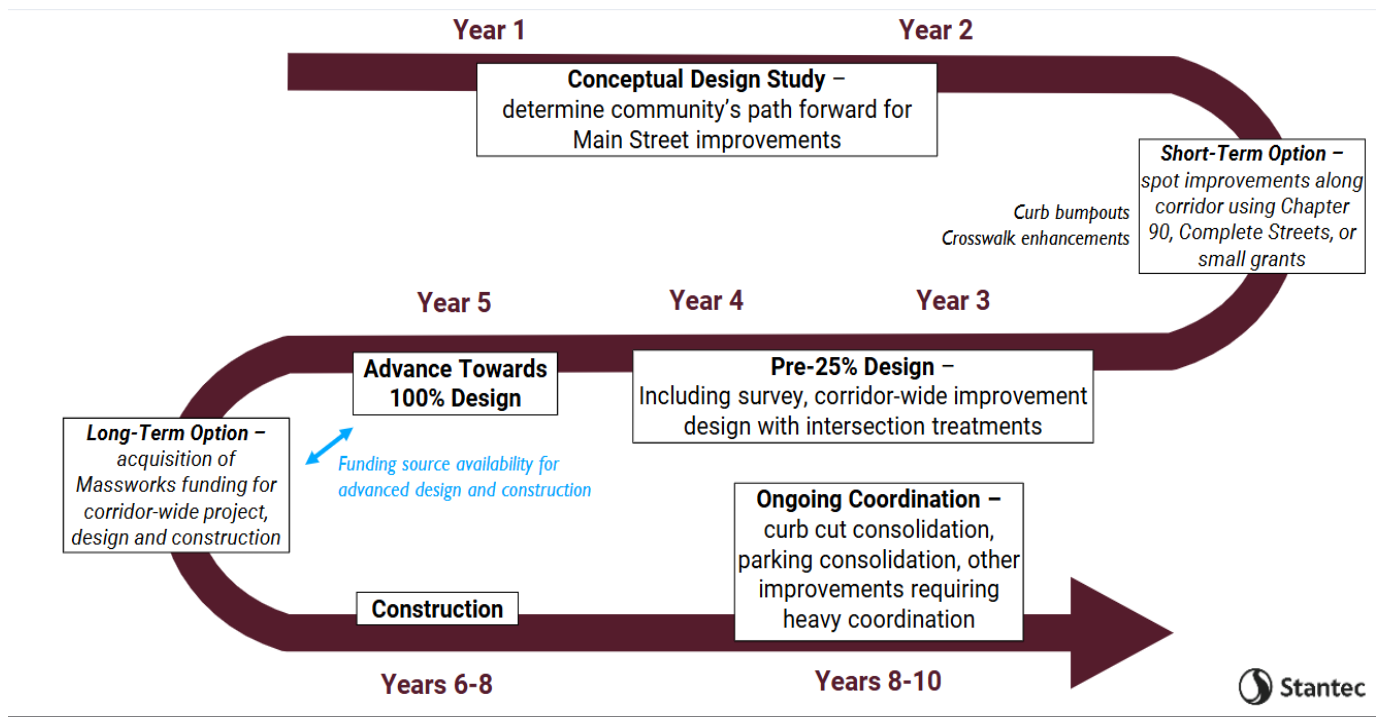
Long-term actions (5–10 years) include larger-scale roadway and public realm reconstruction, integrated utility and stormwater upgrades, and continued context-sensitive mixed-use infill



consistent with the Overlay District and community expectations. These investments are contingent upon demonstrated need, funding availability, and continued public support.

The central conclusion of this Vision Report remains clear: if Groton makes Main Street safer, more legible, and more comfortable for pedestrians, it will strengthen the Town Center’s ability to support modest economic growth, better serve residents’ daily needs, and responsibly capture benefits associated with Groton’s cultural and recreational assets.

The next decade presents an opportunity not for transformation, but for disciplined renewal — grounded in data, supported by community consensus, and implemented incrementally over time.



Source: Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study



CHAPTER 1.

VISION REPORT INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The Groton Town Center Ten-Year Vision Report establishes a roadmap for how Groton can balance preservation and progress from 2026 through 2036. Funding for this Vision Report came from a State Community One Stop for Growth **MA Downtown Initiative** grant (Traffic and Mobility Study: \$25,000) and a **Rural Development Fund** grant (Planning: \$50,000). While the grants are focused on Town Center, the Destination Groton Committee's (DGC) initiatives include input for townwide future growth. These grants respond to community priorities recently articulated in the 2025 Groton Master Plan — “to strengthen the Town Center as the civic and economic heart of the community” — and build on the extensive traffic, infrastructure and economic analysis, surveys, and public forums undertaken by the DGC over the past three years.

A “visioning process” is a shared statement of possibility — a roadmap of ideas and priorities that reflect the community’s values, identity, current and future needs, and hopes for the future. (Source: Appendix 1 Vision Process)

This **Vision Report** is intended to help guide policy decisions by the **Select Board, Planning Board, and Town Manager’s Office** concerning townwide zoning, land use, public safety, infrastructure investment, tourism promotion, and small business development. It integrates professional findings from **Stantec, Studio InSitu Architects, Inc., FXM Associates, Zenia Kotval, Ph.D., and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)** with



direct input from hundreds of residents who participated in two townwide surveys, ten public forums, two focus groups and numerous stakeholder interviews over the past three years.



Groton's Town Center today is a convergence point for education, the arts, community and small business. With its historic architecture, picturesque Town Center, and proximity to scenic trails and rivers, it offers both a strong sense of identity and capacity for sustainable growth. The purpose of this Vision Report is to define how Groton can welcome new investment without losing its soul — maintaining the “quintessential New England experience” that residents cherish.

PLANNING FOUNDATIONS

The Vision Report is rooted in four complementary frameworks:

- 1. Groton Master Plan (2025):**

Establishes policy objectives for economic resilience, cultural preservation, housing diversity, and infrastructure modernization.

- 2. Destination Groton Committee Initiative (2022 – present):**

A citizen-led movement formalized by the Select Board (2022) to enhance Groton's reputation as a destination for arts, culture, education, dining, weddings, tourism and recreation.

- 3. Regional Transportation and Economic Studies (2023–2025):**

MRPC's Walkability and Regional Safety Action Plan, combined with MRPC/FXM and Professor Kotval's fiscal impact analyses, provides data on traffic, employment, and spending potential.

- 4. Community Engagement:**

Ten public forums, two townwide surveys (500+ responses), and numerous stakeholder interviews created a shared vision of what growth could look like.

Together, these foundations ensure that this Vision Report is not just aspirational but **implementable** — anchored in measurable data and community consensus.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal of this Vision Report is to create a **vibrant, accessible, safe and economically sustainable Town Center**, while preserving the qualities that make Groton distinct.

Specific objectives include:

- 1. Preserve Character:** Protect Groton's historic architecture, scenic open-space vistas, and small-town ambiance.



- 2. Promote Balanced Townwide Economic Growth:** Capture regional retail leakage, support small business incubation, and attract uses that serve both residents and visitors identified through the visioning process.
- 3. Enhance Mobility and Safety:** Implement traffic-calming, pedestrian, and personal mobility improvements identified by MRPC and Stantec.
- 4. Strengthen Cultural Identity:** Leverage assets such as the Groton Hill Music Center, Rail Trail, and local arts and history organizations to grow cultural tourism.
- 5. Foster Civic Engagement:** Sustain two-way communication between residents, businesses, and local government throughout implementation.
- 6. Ensure Fiscal Responsibility:** Align growth with infrastructure capacity, grant opportunities, and long-term tax base stability.

Each objective links to the findings and recommendations in later chapters of this report.

VISION STATEMENT

“Groton’s Town Center will be a lively, walkable hub where culture, commerce, and community come together — a place that celebrates our history while embracing a sustainable future.”

This statement emerged directly from community feedback during the fall 2025 forums. Residents repeatedly described their ideal Groton Center as “vibrant but still Groton” — a phrase that has guided every consultant and working group throughout the process.

IMPLEMENTATION PHILOSOPHY

The Vision Report adopts a “Framework Over Blueprint” approach. Rather than prescribing a single development scenario, it defines guiding principles, desired outcomes, and decision-making criteria so that each project or policy proposal can be tested against community values.

The Vision Report emphasizes incremental progress — a sequence of achievable steps — rather than large, one-time transformations. Early actions focus on safety and mobility improvements; mid-term initiatives center on small-scale economic and cultural investments; and long-term goals address structural policy and zoning alignment.



Intended Use of the Vision Report

- **For Town Officials:** Provide data and direction for capital planning, traffic mitigation, zoning amendments, and grant applications.
- **For Residents:** Serve as a transparent record of community priorities and a roadmap for accountability.
- **For Business and Developers:** Clarify expectations around design, scale, and community benefit.
- **For Regional Partners:** Coordinate investment in transportation, tourism, and environmental stewardship.

Ultimately, this document is both a vision and a living framework for decision-making. Its success will be measured by how effectively it helps Groton translate shared ideals into tangible outcomes over the next decade.

GROTON VISION PLANNING TIMELINE

2008 | Station Avenue Design Guidelines

2011 | Town Center Overlay District

2014 | Groton Center Design Guidelines

2018 | The Groton Inn Rebuilt

2021 | GBA Report: Destination Groton -
Exploring the Possibilities

2022 | Destination Groton Committee Appointed

2022 | Groton Hill Music Center Opens

2025 | Groton Master Plan

2026 | Destination Groton 10-Year Vision Report





CHAPTER 2.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

ENVISIONING GROTON'S FUTURE – FIVE YEARS OF CONVERSATION

Public engagement is a foundational element of the Groton Town Center Vision Report. This chapter documents how resident, business, and stakeholder input was gathered over multiple years, beginning in 2021, with a Groton Business Association report: **Destination Groton - Exploring the Possibilities**, and how that input directly informed the Vision's priorities, assumptions, and implementation framework. Rather than relying on a single engagement moment, the DGC employed a layered approach that combined townwide surveys, public forums, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and ongoing digital outreach. This structure ensured that the Vision Report reflects both broad community sentiment and detailed, place-based experience.

The engagement effort was designed not only to identify desired outcomes, but also to understand underlying concerns, tradeoffs, and expectations related to traffic, safety, walkability, economic opportunity, and preservation of Groton's character. As documented in the sections that follow, community input shows a high degree of consistency across engagement formats and over time. These findings provide a clear mandate for a phased, safety-first, and character-sensitive approach to strengthening the Town Center, and they serve as a critical bridge between community values and the technical analyses, findings and recommendations presented in subsequent chapters.

2.1 | COMMUNITY SURVEYS

How to Interpret the Survey Results

The DGC conducted multiple public surveys at different stages of the Vision process, each with a distinct purpose. The **2023–2024 survey** was designed to establish baseline community priorities and to confirm townwide support for pursuing a long-term Town Center vision and associated



funding opportunities. Its results are presented in summary form to reflect its role in establishing broad direction and community input.

The **2025 survey**, by contrast, was intentionally designed as a more detailed diagnostic tool focused on Town Center conditions, tradeoffs, and development considerations. Although the 2025 survey has a smaller response count to date and remains open, it provides more granular, place-specific insight into issues such as traffic safety, walkability, infrastructure priorities, and desired uses. For this reason, the 2025 survey is analyzed in greater detail to inform the Vision Report's recommendations and implementation framework.

Taken together, the two surveys are complementary: the earlier survey establishes **what the community supports**, while the later survey helps clarify **how that support should be translated into action**.

2023–2024 Public Survey

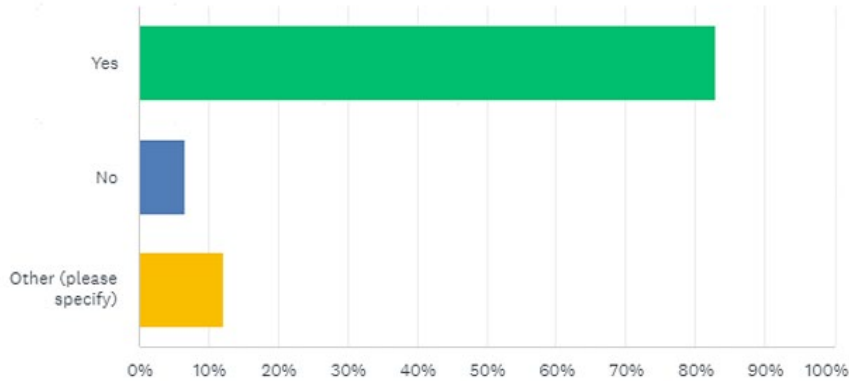
The DGC's public survey (hosted online and referenced throughout the 2025 forum series) received **400+ responses**.

Key takeaways documented in the survey analysis include:

- **Infrastructure and destination-readiness priorities.** When asked what would improve Groton's infrastructure and complement its reputation as a destination community, respondents most frequently selected:
 - **Additional small retail**
 - **Traffic mitigation**
 - **Walkability**
- **Open-ended themes emphasized community voice and identity.** In the open response analysis, the top themes included:
 - **Collective Aspirations and Needs (63%)** — emphasizing ongoing resident input and alignment with what residents "actually need and want."
 - **Town Identity and Community Cohesion (43%)** — emphasizing preservation of Groton's identity and "small-town charm."



- **Support for a ten-year funding effort.** Respondents “overwhelmingly answered yes (nearly 83%)” to supporting an organized ten-year effort to secure federal/state/local/private funding to address infrastructure and economic opportunities while preserving Groton’s character.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	82.87% 300
No	6.63% 24
Other (please specify)	Responses 12.15% 44
Total Respondents: 362	

These results reinforced a consistent engagement message repeated in later presentations: the community supports a **measured, multi-year approach** that pairs **traffic/safety action with small-scale, town character-consistent economic opportunity**.

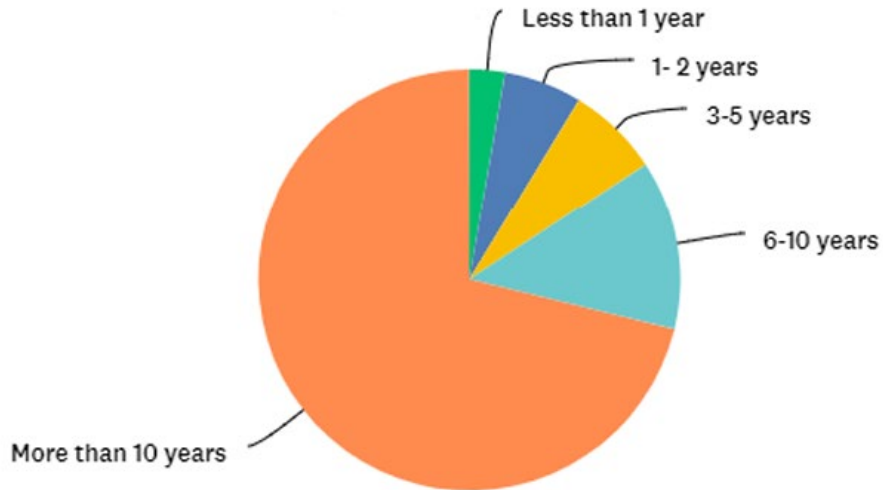
2025 Resident Survey

As part of the Groton Town Center Vision process, the DGC conducted a townwide online survey in 2025 to extend the public conversation initiated through earlier surveys, forums, and interviews. The survey received approximately 150 responses to-date. It focuses on current conditions along Main Street, priorities for infrastructure and safety improvements, and community support for a long-term Town Center vision. The survey responses reflect a strong representation of long-term residents (*see table below*), representing lived experience with Town Center conditions.



Survey Response Profile

Length of Residency (2025 Survey)



Traffic and Safety Conditions

Perceptions of Current Traffic Conditions

A strong majority of respondents indicated that **current traffic conditions on Main Street are problematic.**

Table 2.1 – Traffic Conditions on Main Street

Response	Share of Respondents
Yes, traffic conditions are problematic	~81%
No / Not problematic	~19%

Respondents most frequently cited:

Source: 2025 Groton Town Survey Responses



- High traffic volumes during peak commute times,
- Excessive vehicle speeds,
- Dangerous turning movements at key intersections (including Route 119/Route 40/Broadmeadow Road, Hollis Street, Old Ayer Road), and
- Conflicts caused by large trucks passing through Town Center.

Traffic as a Structural Issue

Many respondents described Main Street as functioning more like a regional connector than a Town Center street, noting that through-traffic undermines safety, walkability, and the overall Town Center experience.

Public Safety and Pedestrian Concerns

Concerns about public safety on Main Street were widespread.

Table 2.2 – Public Safety Concerns

Question	Yes	No
Concerns for public safety on Main Street	~84%	~16%
Concerns about pedestrian walkability and bikeability	~79%	~21%

Respondents most frequently cited:

- Failure of vehicles to yield at crosswalks,
- Poor sightlines due to parked cars near intersections,
- Excessive distances between crosswalks,
- Inconsistent or malfunctioning pedestrian flashing signals, and
- Lack of protected or clearly defined space for cyclists.



Lived Experience

Several respondents referenced daily walking routes, children or teens crossing Main Street for work or school, and long-term attempts to raise safety concerns, underscoring that these issues are experienced repeatedly and personally.

Traffic Calming and Infrastructure Priorities

Support for Traffic Calming

Support for traffic calming measures on Main Street was strong.

Table 2.3 – Support for Traffic Calming

Response	Share of Respondents
Yes, traffic should be calmed	~76%
No / Not necessary	~24%

Among those supporting traffic calming, the most frequently selected measures included:

- Improved striping and parking markings,
- Refuge islands and safer turning lanes,
- Roundabouts or signalized intersections at key locations,
- Reduced lane widths, and
- Increased speed enforcement.

Notably, open-ended comments show that opposition is typically directed at **specific solutions**, not the goal of safety itself.



Infrastructure Improvements to Prioritize

Respondents consistently identified a short list of infrastructure improvements.

Table 2.4 – Priority Town Center Improvements

Improvement Category	Approximate % Selecting
Public parking (new & better connected)	~62%
Signage and wayfinding	~55%
Burying powerlines	~48%
Public restrooms	~41%
Period-appropriate lighting	~38%

Respondents frequently noted that parking exists but is **confusing or poorly identified**, contributing to unnecessary circulation and frustration.

Support for the Town Center Vision

Long-Term Vision and Economic Direction

The survey demonstrates **very strong support** for the overall direction of the Town Center Vision.

Table 2.5 – Support for Town Center Vision (2025 Survey)

Vision Question	% Support
Create a vibrant, walkable, economically sustainable Town Center over the next 10 years	~88%
Increase available goods and services to reduce out-of-town travel	~85%
Attract small retail / mixed-use development phased over 10 years	~82%
Support mixed-use development in appropriate locations	~70%



Support is consistently paired with **clear expectations**:

- Preference for small-scale, locally oriented businesses,
- Strong opposition to big-box or chain dominance,
- Concern about overdevelopment and increased traffic without safety improvements.



Incremental Change Preferred

Many respondents explicitly supported the Vision, only if improvements are phased, data-driven, and respectful of Groton’s historic character and scale.

Desired Businesses and Services

Open-ended responses show remarkable consistency in desired Town Center uses.

Most frequently requested:

- Small grocery or specialty food market,
- Casual, affordable dining (cafés, pubs, bakeries),
- Ice cream shops and coffee shops,
- Bookstores and small retail boutiques,
- Bike-related businesses connected to the Rail Trail, and
- Family-friendly gathering spaces.

Respondents also consistently expressed **fatigue with medical offices, banks, and real estate offices**, citing missed opportunities for more active uses.

Implications for the Vision Report

The 2025 survey reinforces and sharpens findings from earlier engagement:



1. Traffic safety is foundational.

Without addressing speed, crossings, and sightlines, other Town Center improvements will have limited impact.

2. There is a clear public mandate for a walkable Town Center vision.

Nearly 9 in 10 respondents support a long-term, walkable, economically sustainable Town Center.

3. Economic development is welcomed when it is modest and local.

Residents favor small-scale retail and local daily-needs services.

4. Clarity and communication matter.

Mixed reactions to specific solutions (bike lanes, “circular traffic flow”) point to the need for visuals, pilots, clear explanations, and implementation phases.

2.2 | PUBLIC FORUMS (SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2025)

Purpose and Structure

The fall 2025 public forums were designed as **deliberative conversations**, not formal hearings. Their purpose was to test the emerging direction of the Town Center Vision, clarify community expectations, and explore tradeoffs associated with potential improvements. The DGC intentionally framed the forums as part of a **multi-year planning conversation**, emphasizing that the Vision Report is a guiding framework rather than a single development proposal or fixed implementation plan.

Each forum combined a concise presentation of context and findings with open discussion and facilitated questions. Presentations explained why Groton Town Center is at an inflection point, summarized preliminary consultant insights, and described how public input would shape the final Vision Report and subsequent implementation phases.

Forum Series Overview

The engagement series consisted of **four public forums** held between mid-September and mid-October 2025 at accessible community venues, including The Center (2), Grotonwood and the Prescott Community Center. In addition, we met with Four Corners Neighborhood Association and a West Groton focus group to capture their input/ideas. Together, these sessions provided multiple



opportunities for residents to hear consistent information, ask questions, and reflect on daily life across town.

Consultant materials from **Studio InSitu** and **Stantec** were used selectively to illustrate potential design concepts related to Town Center form, walkability, traffic safety, and phasing. These visuals were not presented as final designs, but as tools to help residents understand potential approaches and respond to them.

Key Insights Gained from the Forums

The public forums provided insights that surveys alone could not capture:

- **Support for planning now, not later.** Participants broadly acknowledged that recent changes — particularly increased visitor activity and traffic — have altered how the Town Center functions, making proactive planning preferable to reactive decision-making.
- **Safety as a prerequisite, not an amenity.** Discussion consistently reinforced that pedestrian safety, speed management, and visibility must be addressed before further economic development or placemaking initiatives can succeed.
- **Concern focused on unintended consequences.** Questions and comments revealed that hesitation is not opposition to change, but concern about congestion, spillover effects, and loss of character if improvements are not carefully phased and evaluated.
- **Need for clarity and trust.** Participants repeatedly asked what the Vision Report would *do* versus what it would *not* do, highlighting the importance of transparency, predictable governance, and clear implementation criteria.

Collectively, the forums functioned as a **stress test** for the Vision's direction, helping refine language, priorities, and assumptions before recommendations were finalized.

2.3 | FOCUS GROUPS, CONFERENCES AND INTERVIEWS

Purpose

Focus groups, conferences and interviews were conducted to supplement surveys and public forums by capturing **operational and experiential detail** from people and organizations that



interact with the Town Center regularly. This engagement layer was critical for understanding how issues manifest day-to-day, and for grounding technical analysis in lived experience.

Stakeholder Interviews (MRPC 2024)

As part of its technical and engagement work, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission conducted **twelve stakeholder interviews** with business owners, institutional representatives, and individuals with long-standing involvement in Town Center activities.

These interviews provided:

- Location-specific insight into traffic conflicts and safety risks,
- Detailed perspectives on parking patterns, customer behavior, and wayfinding,
- Observations about visitor flow associated with cultural events and trail use, and
- Feedback on regulatory processes and procedural uncertainty.

Focus Groups and Business Conferences

In addition to interviews, the DGC convened to gather targeted input from local stakeholders:

- Three focus groups (2024), and
- Two major business conferences
 - April 12, 2024: Creating Business Opportunities for Economic Growth (100 attendees)
 - November 21, 2024: Envisioning the Future of Town Center (90 attendees).



Creating Business Opportunities for Economic Growth (April 12, 2024)



Envisioning the Future of Town Center (November 21, 2024)



These sessions built on earlier DGC engagement efforts, including GBA's 2021 *Exploring the Possibilities* initiative, which established a consistent framework for discussing what the Town should **keep**, **stop**, and **start** doing to strengthen the Town Center while preserving character.

Operational Insights Informing the Vision

Unlike surveys, these conversations emphasized **how** issues are experienced in practice. Key insights included:

- Parking challenges are driven more by **perception and legibility** than by absolute supply,
- Visitors often lack clear cues connecting parking, events, trails, and businesses,
- Certain intersections and crossings feel unsafe regardless of crash statistics, and
- Predictability and clarity in zoning and review processes matter as much as market demand.

These insights directly informed the Vision Report's emphasis on safety-first improvements, parking clarity, incremental economic opportunity, and phased implementation.

2.4 | DIGITAL & ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Digital Tools

Digital engagement tools were used to broaden participation beyond those able to attend in-person meetings and to reinforce transparency throughout the process. These tools included:

- Online surveys,
- Public posting of presentations and materials, and
- Ongoing communication through the Destination Groton Committee's website.

The 2025 survey was explicitly promoted during the forum series as a way to extend the conversation and capture additional perspectives after residents had time to reflect on the information presented.



Engagement as an Ongoing Process

Throughout the Vision process, engagement was treated as **iterative rather than episodic**. Public input did not conclude with a single meeting or survey; instead, feedback loops were intentionally built into:

- Multiple survey efforts conducted over time,
- Successive public forums, and
- Refinement of consultant scopes, priorities, and assumptions.

This approach reflects an understanding that Town Center change occurs incrementally, and that sustained communication is essential to building trust, shared understanding, and long-term support.

2.5 | ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

Outcome 1: Clear and Consistent Community Priorities

Across all engagement formats — surveys, forums, interviews, and focus groups — a consistent set of priorities emerged:

- Improving traffic safety and pedestrian comfort,
- Strengthening walkability and accessibility,
- Supporting small-scale, locally oriented economic activity, and
- Preserving Groton's historic and rural character.

The consistency of these themes across methods and over time increases confidence that they reflect **shared community values**, not isolated opinions.

Outcome 2: Strong Support for a Ten-Year Vision Framework

Engagement confirmed broad support for a **long-term, phased approach** to Town Center improvement rather than short-term or ad-hoc actions. Residents expressed willingness to support



change when it is incremental, data-driven, clearly communicated, and aligned with Groton's character.

Outcome 3: Alignment with Technical Analysis

Public engagement findings closely align with consultant studies and planning documents.

Community input reinforces:

- The need for safety-first mobility improvements,
- The appropriateness of modest economic growth consistent with market capacity, and
- The importance of design coherence and infrastructure modernization.

Rather than conflicting with technical analysis, engagement helped validate and refine it.

Outcome 4: Engagement Informs Implementation, Not Just Vision

Importantly, engagement shaped not only **what** the Vision should be, but **how** it should be implemented. Preferences for piloting, phasing, evaluation, and transparency are reflected directly in the Vision Report's implementation philosophy and recommendations.

Outcome 5: Clear Conditions for Public Support

Across engagement efforts, support for Town Center improvement was consistently paired with clear conditions:

- Safety improvements must come first,
- Changes should be phased and testable,
- Impacts should be evaluated before permanent decisions are made, and
- Groton's character and scale must be respected.

These conditions provide essential guidance for decision-makers as the Vision moves from planning to phased implementation.



2.6 | SUMMARY

The public engagement effort underlying the Groton Town Center Vision Report was extensive, multi-layered, and sustained over several years. Surveys provided breadth, forums fostered shared understanding, and interviews and focus groups added depth and operational insight.

Together, these efforts demonstrate that the Vision Report is not an abstract planning exercise. It is grounded in lived experience, shaped by consistent community priorities, and designed to guide decision-making in a way that reflects both aspiration and caution. The findings of this chapter form a critical bridge between community values and the technical analyses and recommendations that follow.



CHAPTER 3.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities shaping a future vision of Groton’s Town Center. It synthesizes over a decade of planning documents, economic assessments, mobility studies, design guidelines, survey results, and public engagement materials. The intention is not to prescribe solutions but to present a clear, cohesive, and deeply contextual narrative of the structural issues confronting Groton, as repeatedly identified across studies prepared from 2008 to 2025.

Throughout this period, Groton has consistently expressed a desire to maintain its rural, historic identity while addressing the changing demands of residents, visitors, and regional economic trends. As the town has transitioned from a predominantly residential “bedroom community” into a cultural and recreational destination, pressures on the Town Center — its infrastructure, circulation, economic base, and public realm — have intensified. This chapter provides the analytical foundation the Vision Report will rely on to develop actionable strategies in later sections.

3.1 | BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT (2008–2025)

3.1.1 | The Long Arc of Town Center Visioning

Planning for Groton’s Town Center is not new. Early efforts, such as **the 2011 Town Center Overlay District**, sought to create a regulatory environment that enabled denser, mixed-use development consistent with the Town’s character. This zoning step reflected an acknowledgment that Groton needed to shape growth rather than simply react to it. The **2014 Groton Center Design Guidelines** expanded this approach by establishing a design framework that emphasized coherent streetscapes, pedestrian comfort, and a built form reflective of Groton’s historic identity. These guidelines articulated site planning and architectural principles intended to form a cohesive Town Center over time, even as individual parcels redeveloped incrementally.

“The Town envisions a place where more of the townspeople’s needs and wants can be satisfied in the Town Center. Nowhere in Groton is there a better place to do this than in the Station Avenue District, which has emerged after many years of planning as a unique and important opportunity to improve quality-of-life for town residents. We see a place where we can do errands, do business, and participate in cultural activities enriched by a strong sense of community. Adjacency to civic and social institutions will create additional activity and synergy between uses, weaving together a rich fabric of community and civic life.”

- Station Avenue Design Guideline Vision, 2008



Source: Studio InSitu

Despite these early initiatives, implementation remained limited. Many of the economic and mobility challenges identified in the early 2010s persisted throughout the decade. The 2011 Master Plan, much like the 2025 update, described the Town Center as an area with strong potential — yet



constrained by infrastructure limitations, fragmented land uses, and a mismatch between local spending power and available retail offerings.

Groton's Town Center remained visually appealing, historically rich, and culturally significant, but it lacked the small retail concentration, pedestrian infrastructure, and public spaces required to function as a vibrant civic anchor. The need for renewed planning attention became increasingly clear as external conditions changed.

3.1.2 | A New Era of Cultural and Economic Influence

Beginning around 2018, Groton entered a new phase of regional significance. The reopening of The Groton Inn marked the return of a historic hospitality asset that brought weddings, lodging, fine dining and events back to Main Street. The arrival of the **Groton Hill Music Center** in 2022 represented a transformative shift. The facility attracts thousands of visitors annually, many from outside the region, introducing entirely new traffic patterns and creating economic opportunities that had not previously existed.

Visitors arrived for rehearsals, concerts, masterclasses, community performances, and educational programming. Their presence heightened peak-hour traffic, evening activity, and demand for dining and local services, changing expectations for what our Town Center should offer. Yet many visitors spent limited time downtown before or after events. Much of the spending occurred elsewhere, a reflection of the limited retail and dining offerings within a short distance.

During this same period, regional trail usage increased. Groton's extensive conservation network and proximity to the Nashua River Rail Trail drew recreational users who also represented potential customers for Town Center businesses. As Massachusetts' statewide visitor economy recovered and then expanded post-pandemic, and as national interest in outdoor recreation and small-town cultural tourism grew, Groton's profile as a destination became more pronounced.

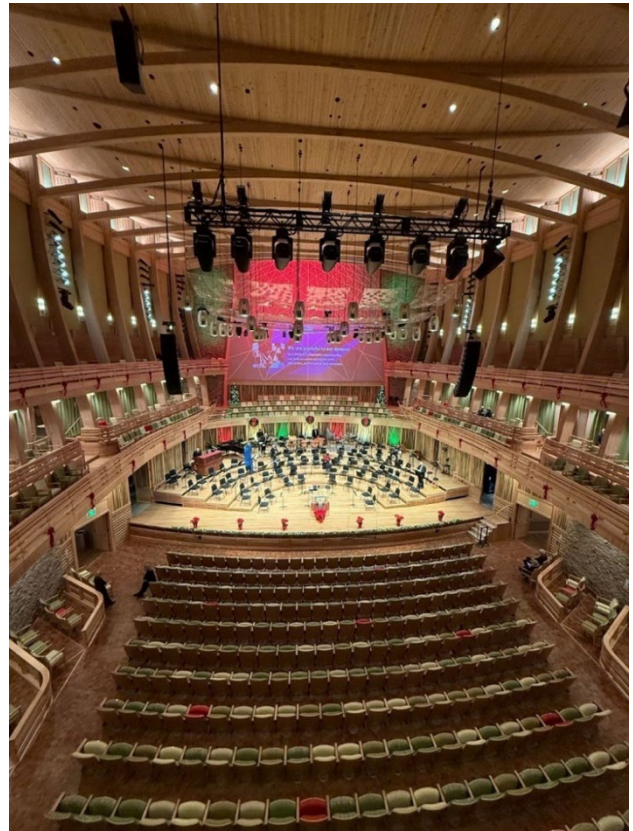




3.1.3 | A Moment of Convergence

By the time the **2025 Master Plan** was completed, a convergence of longstanding challenges and newly intensified pressures has brought Groton to a significant inflection point. Traffic and safety concerns have become more acute. Market retail leakage remains substantial. Meanwhile, visitor activity, cultural relevance, and economic potential are experiencing new demands.

Across all reports, one conclusion is clear: Groton’s Town Center is facing both its most significant set of challenges and its strongest opportunity for renewal in several decades. The Vision Report is therefore positioned not as a speculative exercise, but as a visionary framework for guiding the next phase of Groton’s civic, cultural, and townwide economic development.



3.2 | EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

The existing conditions influencing Groton Town Center can be characterized by **five overarching themes** — each of which appears consistently across transportation studies, economic assessments, planning documents, and community engagement feedback.

- 1. Mobility and safety issues** exert a defining influence on the Town Center’s functionality. Main Street remains heavily oriented towards motorized vehicles and is regularly described as difficult or unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers making turning movements. The physical layout reflects an outdated transportation design rather than a contemporary environment that prioritizes safety and multimodal travel.

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission 2019 Rail Trails Report noted that over the Memorial Weekend 3,995 people used the Nashoba River Trail. (see Appendix 2)



2. **The local economic environment is constrained by limited retail space** and significant leakage of spending to neighboring communities. Both market studies and municipal reports make clear that residents consistently shop and dine outside Groton because the Town Center lacks a sufficient mix of everyday retail, dining, and visitor services.
3. **The built form and land-use pattern of Town Center** — while visually appealing in many areas — feels fragmented and inconsistent. Architectural styles vary widely, building setbacks are irregular, curb cuts are numerous, and public gathering spaces are limited. These factors collectively diminish the sense of a unified downtown.
4. **Existing infrastructure** — including sidewalks, drainage systems, utilities, and lighting — shows signs of aging or inadequacy relative to modern expectations. Several reports note that even basic improvements, such as ADA-compliant crossings or upgraded stormwater systems (Broadmeadow Road), are necessary before more ambitious initiatives can be undertaken.
5. **Groton's cultural identity remains exceptionally strong.** Residents value the town's rural character, open spaces, historic qualities, and arts offerings. At the same time, these assets remain insufficiently connected to the Town Center, leading to missed opportunities for cultural activation and economic vitality.

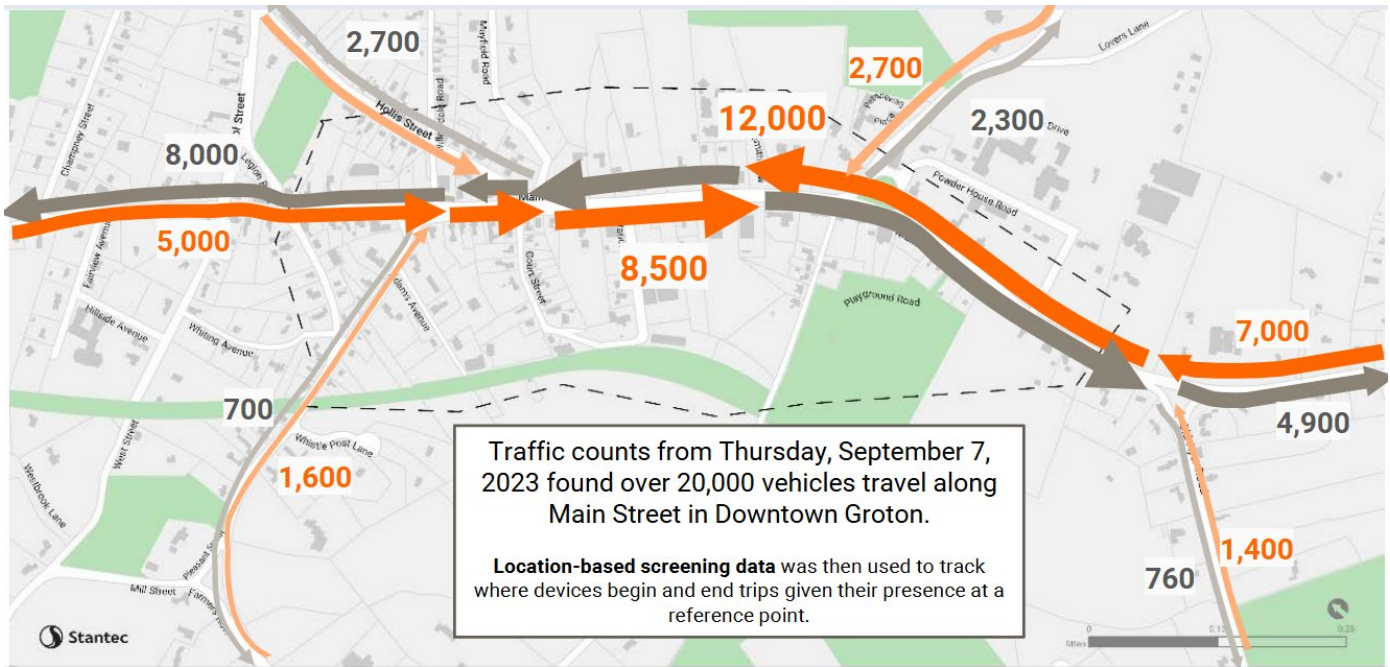
Together, these conditions define the challenge and potential of Groton's Town Center: a place rich in character and cultural resources but constrained by infrastructure, mobility, and economic limitations that must be addressed to fully realize its promise.

3.3 | KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

3.3.1 | Traffic and Mobility

Challenges

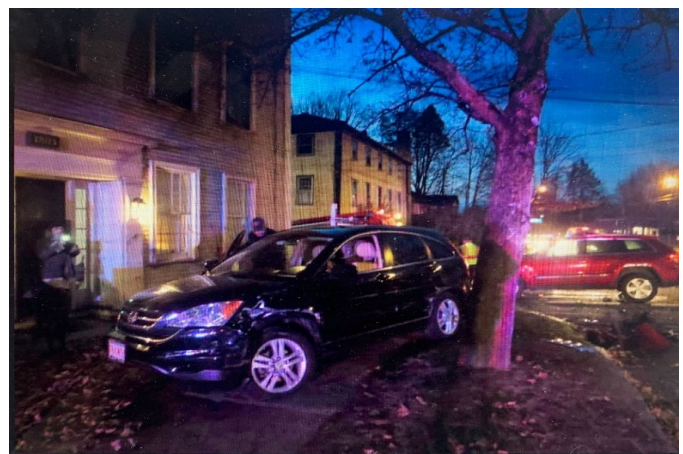
Across more than a decade of mobility and walkability assessments, Main Street has been consistently identified as one of the most challenging corridors in Groton. Although the Town Center serves as the civic and symbolic heart of the community, its transportation network is dominated by through traffic. Main Street acts as a conduit for drivers traveling between regional routes, resulting in volumes that exceed what is ideal for a pedestrian-oriented downtown environment.



Source: Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study

Drivers traveling at higher speeds, particularly during off-peak hours, create safety risks that discourage walking and make crossing Main Street feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Multiple studies document concerns from parents, merchants, and municipal staff about the difficulty children face when walking or biking to school or recreational destinations. Police, public safety staff, and business owners have all described regular incidents of failure-to-yield behavior at crosswalks.

Intersection performance is another long-recognized issue. The intersection of Main Street and Lowell Road, in particular, experiences frequent turning conflicts and visibility challenges. Historical



Images: Accidents at 119 / Route 40 / Broadmeadow



crash data show persistent patterns in areas with multiple driveway access points and limited sightlines. Several side streets feeding Main Street function as “difficult exits,” with long wait times that encourage risky driver behavior.

Pedestrian infrastructure presents its own challenges. Sidewalk continuity varies across short distances. Some segments are narrow or in poor condition. Curb ramps are inconsistent and crossing distances remain long in several key locations. These factors collectively create a pedestrian environment that feels disconnected and unpredictable.

Bicycle travel, while increasingly common given Groton’s trail network and recreational culture, is also constrained. Main Street offers limited shoulder width, no dedicated cycling facilities, and a traffic environment that many cyclists — particularly younger or less experienced riders — find dangerous and intimidating.

Finally, off-street and connected parking supply is unevenly distributed, and visitors unfamiliar with the area often report difficulty locating available lots. Local businesses have indicated that these perceptions can discourage patrons from exploring Town Center beyond a single destination.

Opportunities

In January of 2025, DGC hired the engineering firm, Stantec, to review previous mobility reports, conduct an analysis of current traffic conditions, public safety concerns, and present a series of traffic mitigation solutions that could address Groton’s many mobility challenges. As presented in the Groton Center Traffic Mobility Study, September, 2025, Stantec presents a range of options going forward.



[See Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study slides/presentation](#)

Despite these challenges, the Town Center mobility network presents significant opportunities for improvement. The consistency with which safety, speed, and visibility concerns appear across documents suggests clear priorities for the Town and strong alignment with community values.

Recent mobility studies outline a suite of best-practice interventions that could fundamentally reshape the user experience. These range from enhanced crosswalks with improved signage and lighting to curb extensions that shorten crossing distances and calm traffic by reducing the perceived width of the travel lanes. Traffic calming devices such as speed feedback signs, raised



crossings, and lane narrowing are commonly cited in national guidance and are frequently applied in settings similar to Groton.

 [See USDOT Traffic Calming Reports](#)

Intersection redesign represents another promising opportunity. Better defining travel movements, reducing curb radii, or reconfiguring driveways could reduce conflict points. Some reports suggest that modest re-striping or signal timing adjustments could improve flow without compromising safety.

As part of a long-term mobility strategy, explore the potential creation of an alternate circulation route linking Broadmeadow Road, Station Avenue, and Pleasant Street to better balance traffic distribution, support future development, and strengthen the resiliency of the Town Center transportation network.

Improved wayfinding is an additional opportunity. Visitors — including those attending events at Groton Hill Music Center — often struggle to identify available parking, pedestrian routes, or connections to businesses. A coherent signage strategy could reduce uncertainty and encourage visitors to explore Town Center more fully.

The Town Center's compact scale also makes it an ideal candidate for enhanced multimodal connections. Any future improvements to the sidewalk network, bicycle accommodations, or trail linkages could quickly strengthen Town Center's role as a hub for outdoor recreation users.

Taken together, these opportunities reflect a strong foundation for mobility transformation. They also align with state and federal funding priorities that support complete streets, pedestrian safety, and small-town downtown revitalization.

3.3.2 | Economic Growth and Market Leakage

Challenges

Economic assessments conducted for Groton Master Plans of 2011 and 2025 consistently conclude that Groton's Town Center struggles to sustain a vibrant retail base. Despite high household incomes, strong educational levels, and a substantial consumer spending profile, the local economy captures only a small portion of what residents spend. Studies by MRPC, FXM Associates, and independent analysts, such as Professor. Zenia Kotval, all document a persistent retail gap, with



Groton residents regularly travelling to surrounding communities for goods and services that are either limited, or entirely absent within town.

A defining constraint is the **limited amount of commercially zoned and developable land** within the Town Center. Parcels tend to be small, irregularly shaped, and already occupied by low-intensity uses. As a result, even businesses interested in locating in Groton often find few viable opportunities.

Another long-standing problem is the **lack of everyday retail or convenience services** in Town Center. The existing mix leans heavily toward dining, professional services, and civic uses. While these uses are valued, they do not meet the daily shopping needs that anchor sustainable retail districts. The result is a downtown that sees intermittent bursts of activity — primarily linked to dining and special events — but limited day-to-day foot traffic.

In recent years, rising visitor activity associated with the Groton Hill Music Center has introduced new opportunities but also new challenges. Thousands of visitors enter Groton for performances, rehearsals, and classes, yet many have little reason to visit Town Center. The pattern of “drive in, attend event, drive out” limits local economic spillover and places additional strain on transportation infrastructure without producing substantial retail benefit.

The business community also faces challenges associated with a limited workforce. Groton’s demographics skew older, and many residents commute long distances for work. Local employers often report difficulty in hiring entry-level and part-time employees. This issue is not unique to Groton, but it exacerbates challenges for small businesses with narrow profit margins.

Finally, the Groton Center Traffic Mobility Study (2025), Town Center planning documents such as Studio InSitu Town Center Vision Report, and community survey findings, consistently note that economic resilience — the ability of the Town Center to withstand market fluctuations — is constrained by the limited number and diversity of businesses. A business closure can have an outsized impact, both economically and psychologically, within such a limited ecosystem.

Opportunities

Before considering the role of the Town Center specifically, it is important to acknowledge that multiple studies conclude that **Groton as a whole has the capacity to absorb additional retail development**. While our grants were to study Town Center, the DGC is also looking at other areas



of the Town to attract small retail, including Four Corners, Mill Run plaza, CVS plaza, and West Groton.

Both the January 2024 MRPC Retail Leakage Study and the FXM Associates Technical Memorandum May 2024 analysis identify substantial, persistent outflow of resident spending. The MRPC study reports a **retail gap exceeding \$77 million** annually, reflecting the degree to which households meet their everyday shopping, dining, and service needs outside Groton's borders. The FXM analysis conducted for the 2025 Master Plan identifies a closely aligned **retail spending gap of approximately \$60.9 million**, representing an estimated **124,844 square feet of supportable retail**, if fully captured locally. FXM's findings note that even a conservative scenario — capturing **only 30%** of that opportunity — could reasonably sustain **approximately 37,000 square feet** of new commercial or retail space across Groton. Collectively, these analyses demonstrate that Groton's existing population, income levels, and spending patterns, already support additional small-scale retail growth. This townwide capacity forms the foundation for understanding how targeted, strategic development within the Town Center could recapture a portion of this leakage while remaining consistent with community character and planning goals.

Despite these challenges, all economic analyses point to meaningful opportunities for the Town of Groton. Market leakage is not merely a deficit; it represents unrealized potential that could be captured through strategic, incremental development. Even recapturing a modest share of existing spending could support more small retail spaces, service-oriented businesses, food establishments, and cultural amenities.

Several studies state that Groton's Town Center is well-positioned to capitalize on its growing role as a cultural, recreational, educational, health-and-wellness, and wedding-related destination. The Groton Hill Music Center draws a regional audience with significant disposable income. If the Town Center were more walkable, better signed, and programmed with compatible retail offerings, these visitors could meaningfully contribute to the local economy. Similarly, Groton's trail system and conservation assets attract outdoor recreation users whose spending typically benefits nearby restaurants, cafés, and small retailers.

Opportunities also exist in the realm of **adaptive reuse**. Multiple buildings downtown have the potential to accommodate new uses or increased density without significant new construction. Economic studies and the 2014 Groton Center Design Guidelines consistently emphasize that reusing and revitalizing older buildings can strengthen Town Center character while enabling



business growth and protecting the beauty and character of the town. This approach aligns well with community values around historic preservation and incremental change.

Partnership opportunities are also significant. Collaborations with regional tourism agencies, arts organizations, and cultural institutions could expand Groton's visibility and reinforce its position within the larger creative and recreational landscape. Economic development strategies elsewhere demonstrate that regional branding and coordinated marketing can significantly influence visitor patterns in small towns.

Ultimately, economic analyses suggest that Groton's Town Center can grow and diversify economically — but only through strategic, context-sensitive additions that align with its small-town identity. Large-scale commercial development is neither feasible nor desired, but small businesses, cultural enterprises, and visitor-serving amenities could thrive in a more supportive environment.

3.3.3 | Design, Character, and Land Use

Challenges

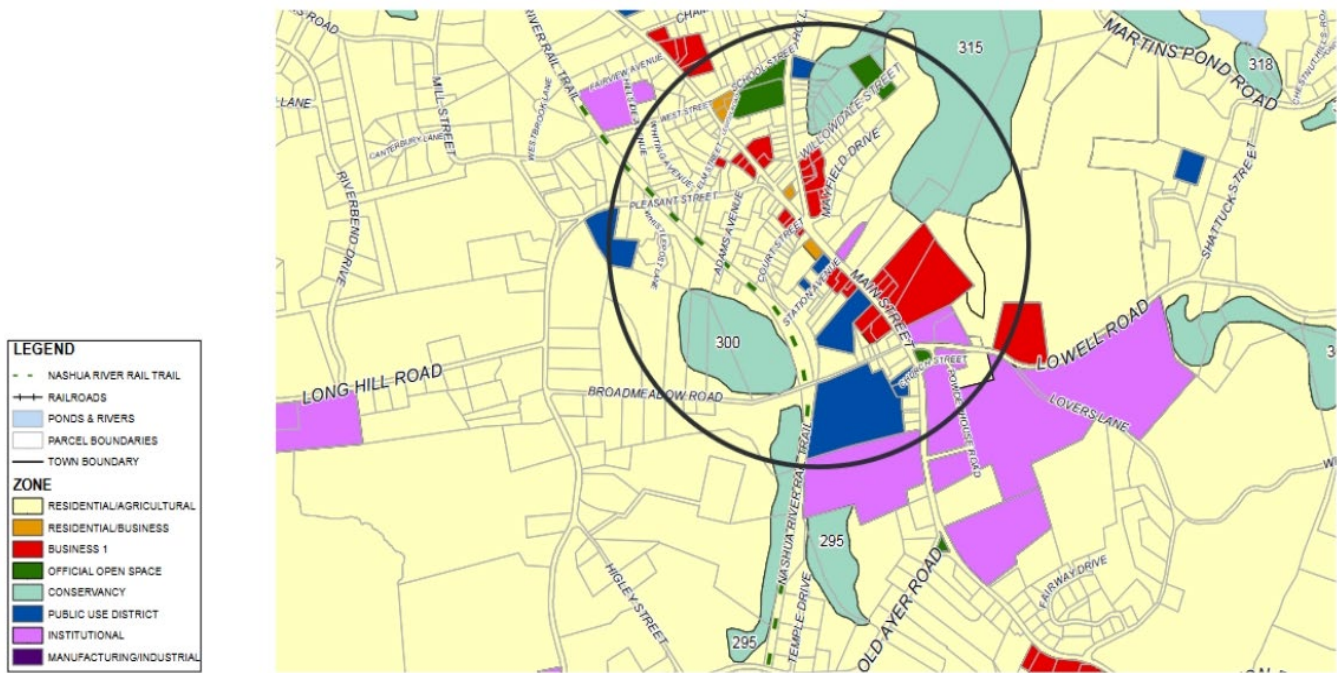
Planning consultant Studio InSitu Architects, in their analysis, points out Groton's Town Center has a distinctive identity, shaped by historic buildings, civic landmarks, and the scenic landscape. However, the physical arrangement of buildings, streets, parking areas, and open spaces presents several long-standing design and land-use challenges. These are not merely aesthetic concerns; they materially influence how people perceive and experience the Town Center.

One of the most frequently noted challenges is the **fragmented built form**. For example, buildings along Main Street vary in architectural style, scale, and orientation. Some sit close to the sidewalk, creating a traditional New England streetscape, while others are set back behind parking lots, weakening the sense of enclosure and continuity. The 2014 Groton Center Design Guidelines describe these inconsistencies in detail, noting that wide curb cuts, expansive driveways, and front-facing parking lots interrupt the pedestrian environment and create long stretches with limited visual interest. These automobile-oriented site patterns encourage drivers to move quickly through the area while discouraging walking from one destination to another.

Land-use patterns present their own set of constraints. The Town Center includes a mix of civic, retail, residential, and institutional uses, but the distribution and intensity of these uses do not create the kind of density or diversity typically associated with lively small-town centers. Several

parcels are underutilized relative to their location and zoning potential. Vacant upper stories, single-story buildings on prominent parcels, and large expanses of pavement reduce the overall vitality and street presence of Main Street.

Finally, historic preservation and community character considerations further limit the scale or form of desired redevelopment. While these values are deeply embedded in Groton's identity and planning documents, they also reduce flexibility, making it more challenging to introduce new building types or uses that might strengthen Town Center activity.



Source: Studio InSitu Architects Town Center Zoning Map

Opportunities

Studio InSitu's analysis indicates the design and land-use challenges of the Town Center — and the constraints they impose — also point toward significant opportunities. The existing built form contains several strong anchors: historic structures, civic spaces, established businesses, and notable architectural elements. These assets create a foundation upon which a more coherent and inviting downtown environment could be built. One example could be attaching the Rail Trail to Station Avenue and Main Street as another anchoring public space.

The Town Center Overlay District provides a regulatory framework that already permits mixed-use development, allowing residential units above ground-floor retail spaces. While usage of this zoning tool has been limited to date, primarily due to parking bylaws and requirements, it remains a



meaningful opportunity for modest growth that reinforces pedestrian activity and provides additional housing availability.

The 2014 Groton Center Design Guidelines outline specific strategies — related to building placement, façade design, signage, landscaping, and public realm elements — that could significantly enhance the Town Center experience if applied consistently. Streetscape enhancements, such as coordinated lighting, furnishings, and planting, could visually unify Town Center and improve comfort for pedestrians. Many towns of Groton’s scale have achieved transformational results through relatively modest streetscape investments, creating a stronger visual identity and encouraging longer visits.

In terms of public space, several parcels and street corners have the potential to serve as more intentional gathering places. Even small, well-designed pocket parks or plazas can become focal points. Such spaces could host community events, performances, seasonal markets, or quiet everyday use — activities that align with Groton’s cultural strengths.

Finally, design improvements are strongly aligned with mobility enhancements. Traffic calming measures, upgraded crossings, or reconfigured curb bumpouts could simultaneously improve pedestrian safety and create a more welcoming streetscape. Design and mobility improvements can therefore reinforce each other, creating a unified, character-rich Town Center.

3.3.4 | Infrastructure and Environmental Considerations

Challenges

Groton’s infrastructure challenges within the Town Center are both practical and structural. Several reports note that many sidewalks are aging, inconsistent, or insufficiently wide for comfortable pedestrian use. Changes in grade, uneven surfaces, and non-ADA-compliant curb ramps create barriers for seniors, children, and those with mobility limitations. These conditions are not uncommon in historic New England villages, but they impede walkability and constrain the Town Center’s functionality.

Stormwater management represents another significant challenge. Drainage issues, particularly near low-lying portions of Main Street and Broadmeadow Road, can lead to pooling or icing conditions depending on the season. The 2025 Master Plan identifies climate change pressures — including increased precipitation intensity and heat — as factors that will place additional stress on

already strained systems. Without modernization, these issues could worsen, making the Town Center less resilient over time.

Broadmeadow Revitalization Initiative, May 2022

Beautified utility infrastructure — including the need for improved dark-sky rated, period-lighting and burying the powerlines in Town Center — has been raised repeatedly across studies and engagement sessions. Insufficient street lighting affects pedestrian visibility, safety, and perceptions of comfort, especially during the evening hours.

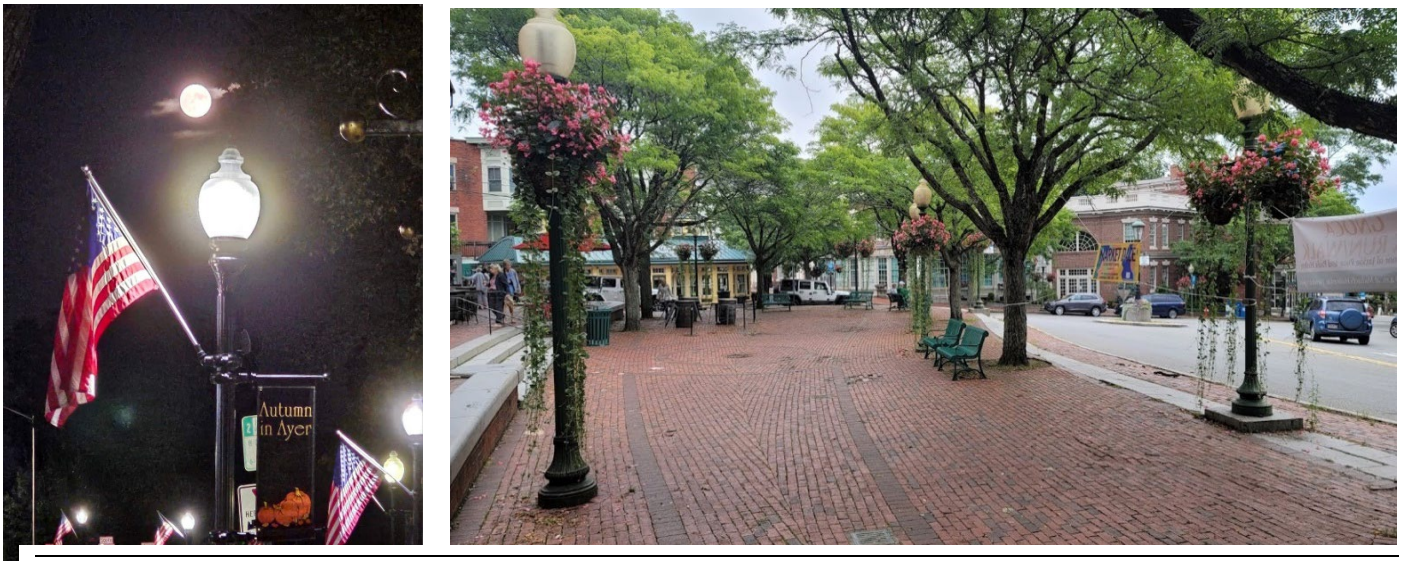


Image: Period Lighting Examples

Parking infrastructure presents further challenges. While total parking supply across the Town Center appears adequate on paper, its distribution is uneven. Some lots are underutilized, others appear full at peak times, and some visitors are simply unaware of available spaces. This lack of clarity contributes to unnecessary circulation and confusion, adding to congestion concerns. Several businesses note that customers perceive parking to be more difficult than it actually is, underscoring the need for clearer signage and wayfinding.

Bicycle infrastructure is minimal. The absence of dedicated lanes, bike parking, or signed connections between downtown and surrounding trail systems discourages cycling and limits opportunities to capture trail-based economic activity. As recreational cycling continues to grow regionally, this gap becomes more pronounced.



Opportunities

Infrastructure challenges also represent areas where investments could yield significant benefits. Sidewalk reconstruction, improved crosswalks, and ADA-compliant upgrades could dramatically improve downtown accessibility. These improvements would support families, seniors, schoolchildren, and visitors navigating the Town Center on foot.

Stormwater upgrades could be integrated into larger streetscape or roadway redesign projects, leveraging best practices such as green infrastructure, permeable surfaces, or bioswales. These techniques offer environmental benefits while improving aesthetics and reducing long-term maintenance burdens.

Lighting improvements represent another opportunity. Enhanced environmentally sensitive illumination at key intersections, crossings, and parking areas would increase safety and extend the usable hours of the Town Center. Evening activation is particularly relevant given Groton's growing cultural programming. Burying the powerlines in Town Center has been cited in several reports and Master Plans for over the last forty years. This would contribute to the overall character and beauty of experiencing Groton.





Parking management also offers practical opportunities. Clearer signage directing visitors to street parking, municipal lots, pedestrian connections between lots and Main Street, and shared connected parking agreements among businesses could collectively reduce circulation pressures.

Infrastructure modernization aligns with state and federal funding sources, including Complete Streets, Safe Routes to School, transportation safety grants, and resilience funding. Because many of Groton's infrastructure needs overlap with mobility and accessibility goals, there are opportunities to pursue multiple simultaneous objectives through coordinated projects.

3.3.5 | Cultural & Social Identity

Challenges

Groton's cultural identity is one of its greatest strengths, repeatedly emphasized in public engagement findings, economic analyses, and planning documents. However, the Town Center does not yet fully reflect or leverage this identity. While Groton Hill Music Center is not located directly on Main Street, it sits immediately adjacent to the Town Center and functions as a major cultural anchor. Despite this proximity, much of the visitor activity associated with the venue does not consistently extend into downtown. Visitors may lack a clear understanding of what the Town Center offers, and the limited presence of wayfinding or orientation materials contributes to this disconnect.

Public feedback often highlights the desire to preserve Groton's rural character. While this sentiment is central to community identity, it can create tension when proposals for new uses or programming are considered. Some residents express concern that increased activity could compromise tranquility or scenic qualities. Balancing cultural vibrancy with character preservation is therefore a recurring theme in Groton's planning efforts.

Opportunities

Cultural and social identity also represents a major opportunity for Town Center vitalization. The presence of the Groton Hill Music Center provides a unique anchor that few towns of Groton's size possess. Even modest improvements in wayfinding, pedestrian connections, or programming could encourage visitors to explore Town Center before and after events. This opportunity is particularly



strong given national research, including the Americans for the Arts – Arts & Economic Prosperity National Report, and demonstrates the economic value of arts and culture spending.

Groton’s extensive trail system is another asset that can strengthen the Town Center’s role. The Rail Trail and other trail network users often seek food, drink, and rest areas, and a more walkable Town Center with clear trail connections could serve as a natural hub for recreation-based tourism. The town’s scenic character, historic buildings, and conservation lands also provide a distinctive backdrop for cultural programming.

Public gathering spaces — whether small plazas, parks, courtyards, or shared spaces — could become focal points for community life. These areas could support live music, farmers markets, artisan fairs, or informal socializing. Planning consultant Studio InSitu recommends a trail loop around Town Center that would be anchored by an observation tower along the Rail Trail at Station Avenue. Even modest interventions, such as seating, shade, or interpretive signage, can elevate the user experience.



Source: Studio InSitu Groton Town Center Vision Plan



Finally, branding and identity are recurring opportunities across several reports. Coordinated signage, interpretive displays, and communication materials could help convey Groton's unique story — its history, culture, landscapes, and educational institutions. A clear, consistent public identity would benefit visitors, residents, and businesses alike.

3.4 | IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VISION REPORT

The issues identified across this chapter carry several important implications for Groton's Town Center Vision Report.

- 1. Improving mobility and safety is essential.** No matter how appealing Groton's businesses, cultural assets, or landscapes may be, the Town Center cannot thrive if visitors and residents do not feel safe or comfortable walking through it. Mobility improvements are a necessary foundation for all other objectives.
- 2. Economic potential** exists but requires a tailored approach. Groton will not support large-scale commercial development; the market simply does not support it, nor does the community desire it. Instead, small-scale, locally focused businesses aligned with Groton's cultural and recreational strengths represent the most realistic pathway to economic growth. The Vision Report must therefore emphasize incremental, human-scale development that fits the Town Center's context.
- 3. Design coherence and land-use compatibility** will shape the long-term success of any revitalization effort. Enhancing the public realm, improving building façades, and ensuring consistent application of design guidelines can significantly improve the perception and function of Town Center. A cohesive design strategy is not a luxury — it is a necessary component of economic and cultural vitality.
- 4. Infrastructure modernization** must be approached proactively. Addressing stormwater issues, improving traffic flow, sidewalk accessibility, and upgrading lighting will help create a safe and welcoming environment. These improvements also support long-term resilience as climate pressures increase.
- 5. Cultural identity** should be embraced as a central asset. Groton's arts institutions, historic character, scenic setting, and recreational networks offer a combination of attributes that few towns of its size can match. A Town Center Vision that centers these strengths — through programming, design, mobility, and economic development — can reinforce Groton's sense of place and create a lasting foundation for community pride.



3.5 | SUMMARY

Over the course of fifteen years, Groton’s planning documents, economic analyses, transportation studies, and engagement processes have identified a consistent set of challenges: a vehicle-oriented Main Street with safety concerns; substantial leakage in retail spending; fragmented land-use patterns; aging infrastructure; and unrealized opportunities to leverage the Town’s cultural assets in support of downtown vitality. Yet these same documents highlight significant opportunities. Groton has a strong cultural anchor, a highly educated and civically engaged population, scenic landscapes, growing visitor traffic, and a walkable village center whose potential is far from fully realized.

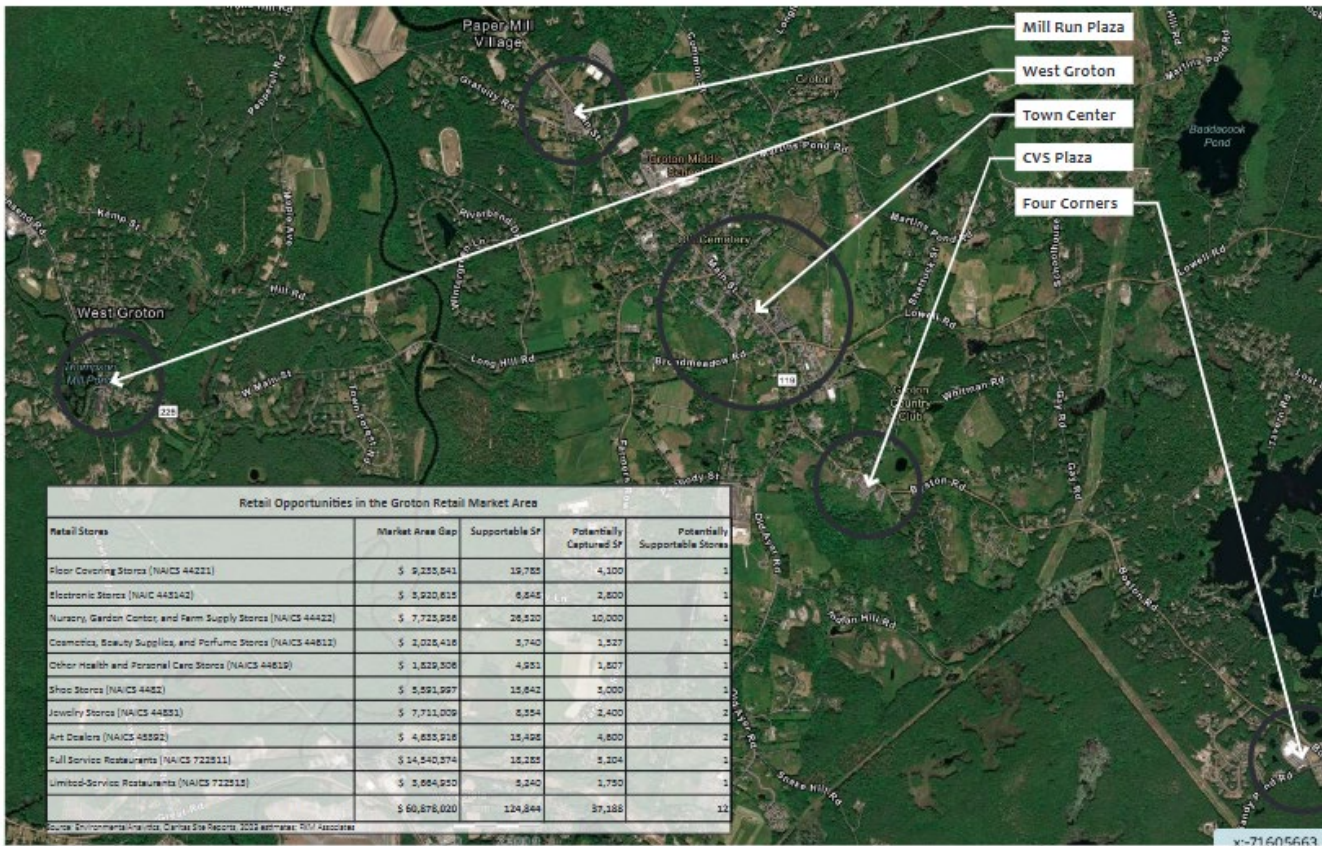
Taken together, these conditions show that Groton’s Town Center is poised for meaningful renewal — provided that future planning efforts are strategic, sensitive to community character, and rooted in the realities of local capacity and market demand. The Vision Report’s role is to translate the insights in this chapter into a coherent set of strategies that reinforce the Town Center’s identity as a cultural, civic, and economic focal point for the next generation and beyond.

CHAPTER 4.

CONSULTANTS SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Groton Town Center Vision Report is grounded in a coordinated body of technical analysis prepared by multiple consultants, regional agencies, and subject-matter experts. These studies were not intended to prescribe a single outcome, but rather to document existing conditions, test assumptions about future change, and establish a shared factual basis for decision-making. The Vision Report takes a deep dive looking at Town Center but it also includes citizen and stakeholder input from other potential areas, townwide.



Source: Studio InSitu Groton Town Center Vision Plan



This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the primary information sources used in the Vision Report. For each study, the chapter explains why it was commissioned, what it examined, and how its findings influenced the Vision Report’s direction. Throughout this chapter, figures, tables, and graphics drawn from these sources are referenced at the point where they most directly support the narrative discussion.

4.1 | STANTEC

Planning Framework: Traffic, Public Safety, Mobility, and Access

Study Summary

Topic	Description
Consultant	Stantec
Primary Focus	Traffic operations, mobility, and access in the Town Center
Geographic Scope	Main Street and adjacent corridors
Role in Vision Report	Established transportation constraints and safety priorities

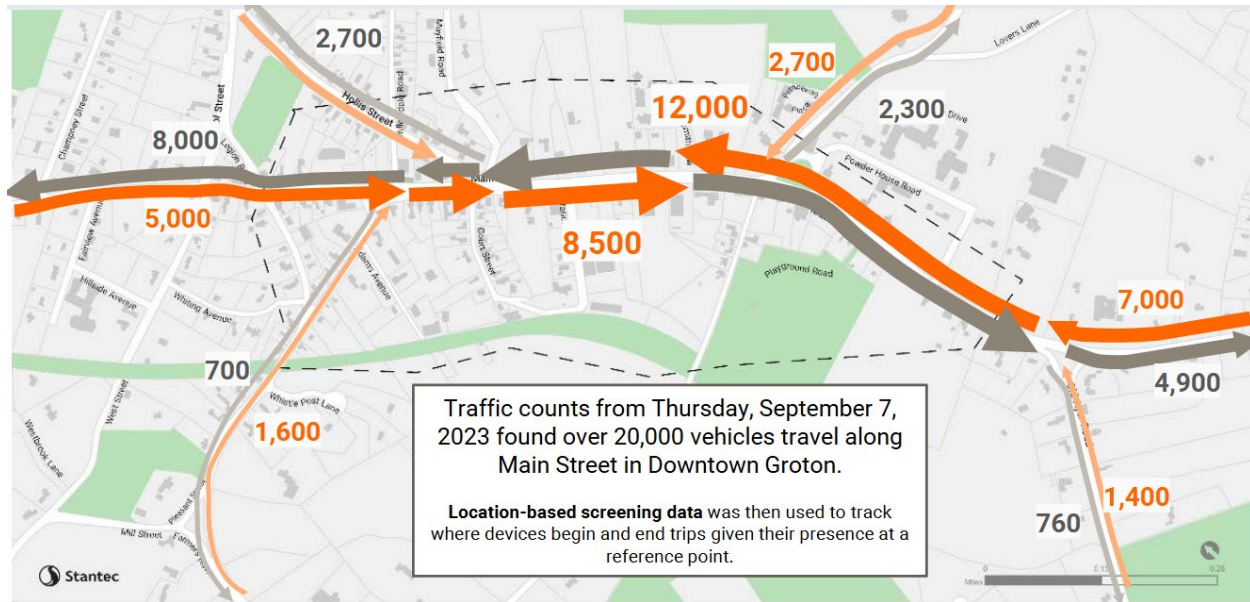
Narrative Discussion

Stantec was engaged to evaluate transportation and mobility conditions affecting Groton’s Town Center, with a focus on how traffic, access, and pedestrian conditions shape both safety and economic activity. The study intentionally moved beyond conventional traffic engineering metrics to consider how Main Street functions as a place, not just a roadway.

A central finding of the analysis was the **dual role of Main Street**. On one hand, it serves as Groton’s primary Town Center corridor, supporting local businesses, civic uses, and community destinations. On the other, it functions as a regional connector and informal cut-through route, particularly for traffic moving between Route 495 and north and northwest communities. This dual

function creates persistent tension between through-traffic and local activity, especially during peak travel periods.

Traffic volume data collected as part of the study illustrates this condition, showing steady daily flows that are high relative to the street's pedestrian-oriented context.



Source: Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study

These volumes, combined with roadway geometry and driver behavior, contribute to a Town Center environment that feels uncomfortable for pedestrians despite relatively modest physical distances.

Stantec's engagement with Town departments and stakeholders further documented **consistent safety concerns**, particularly related to vehicle speeds, passing on the right at intersections and driver failure to yield to pedestrians. These concerns were not isolated perceptions but recurring themes across police, public works, and community feedback. Crash patterns and operational observations pointed to conflicts at side streets and curb cuts, where frequent access points, limited sight distance, and turning movements increase safety risk.

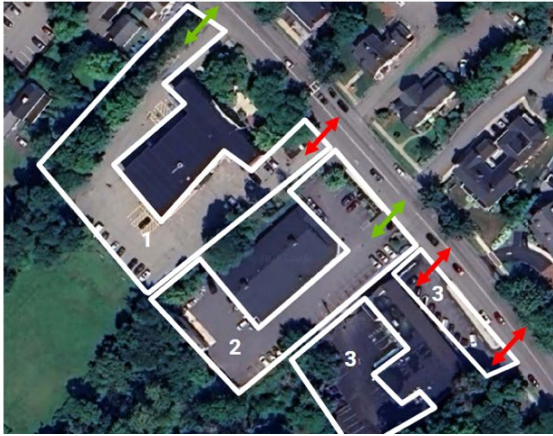
Parking and circulation access were also identified as influencing both safety and economic performance. While parking exists on and near Main Street, its location and availability are not always intuitive to visitors. This uncertainty contributes to unnecessary automobile circulation, hesitation at driveways, and reduced comfort for first-time visitors.

Stantec

Economic Vitality – Potential Targeted Solutions

Groton Mobility Study

Parking Consolidation



Secondary Access



Master Evaluation Matrix

Groton Mobility Study

Curb Bumpouts

Extending curb into Main St to shorten pedestrian crossings

Crosswalk Visibility

Pavement restriping, signage, and lighting for crosswalk visibility

Reduce Lane Widths

Reduce Main St travel lanes from 12 to 10 ft to slow vehicle speeds

Turn Pockets

Turn pockets at select locations on Main St to facilitate left turns

Parking Consolidation

Consolidation of private parking for a more legible parking supply

Secondary Access

Construct parallel street connecting Broadmeadow Rd + Station Ave

STOP Control

Four-way STOP control, esp. at the Lowell/Broadmeadow intersection

Curb Cut Consolidation

Reduce width of or consolidate curb cuts to force vehicles to turn in slower and reduce/eliminate pedestrian crossing distances

Geometric Improvements

To allow side streets (Old Ayer, Pleasant) to intersect Main St at a more traditional 90-degree angle

Roundabout

Roundabout, esp. at the Lowell/Broadmeadow intersection

Criteria -> Ideas ↓	Safety	Ped Comfort	Local Access	Bike Comfort	Side Street Queues	Wayfinding	Cost	Traffic Volumes	Vehicle Travel Time	Coordination	
Curb Bumpouts	+2	+2	+1	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	+6
Crosswalk Visibility	+2	+2	+1	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	+6
Reduce Lane Widths	+2	+1	0	+1	0	0	+2	0	N/A	-1	+5
Turn Pockets	+1	0	+1	+1	0	0	+2	0	0	-1	+4
Parking Consolidation	+1	+1	+2	0	0	+1	0	0	0	-2	+3
Secondary Access	0	0	+2	0	+1	0	0	0	0	-2	+2
STOP Control	+1	+1	0	+1	+1	0	0	-1	-1	0	+2
Curb Cut Consolidation	+1	+2	0	+1	0	0	-1	0	0	-2	+1
Geometric Improvements	+2	+1	0	+1	+1	0	-2	0	0	-2	+1
Roundabout	+2	0	0	+1	+1	0	-1	0	-1	-1	+1
	+14	+10	+7	+6	+4	+1	+1	-1	-1	-11	



Source: Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study

Rather than recommending capacity expansion or signalization, Stantec emphasized **context-sensitive mobility strategies**. These included traffic calming, clearer pavement markings, access management, connected and off-street parking, pedestrian crossing improvements, and improved wayfinding. The study concluded that transportation improvements in the Town Center should prioritize predictability and safety, reinforcing Main Street’s role as a walkable civic space.



These findings directly shaped the Vision Report’s transportation framework, establishing safety, walkability, and access management as foundational principles rather than secondary considerations.

4.2 | STUDIO INSITU ARCHITECTS, INC.

Urban Small-Town Design and Visioning

Study Summary

Topic	Description
Consultant	Studio InSitu Architects, Inc.
Primary Focus	Urban design, public realm, and Town Center form
Geographic Scope	Groton Town Center
Role in Vision Report	Informed physical framework and design principles

Narrative Discussion

Studio InSitu was engaged to provide urban design and visioning support focused on strengthening the physical coherence and public realm of Groton’s Town Center. The work examined how building placement, streetscape design, and public space contribute to identity, walkability, and civic life.

The study found that Groton’s Town Center contains strong individual assets — historic buildings, civic uses, and recognizable destinations — but lacks a cohesive spatial structure that clearly defines it as a unified place. Buildings do not consistently frame the street, and the public realm is interrupted by wide curb cuts, surface parking, large buses, utility vehicles and discontinuous sidewalks. As a result, the Town Center reads more as a collection of individual parcels than as a connected district.



Studio InSitu’s analysis emphasized that this condition is not the result of excessive development pressure, but rather the absence of consistent design reinforcement over time. Conceptual streetscape sections prepared as part of the work illustrate how relatively modest changes — such as improved sidewalk continuity, clearer building orientation, and enhanced streetscape elements, including signage — could significantly improve pedestrian comfort and spatial definition.



Source: Studio InSitu Groton Town Center Vision Plan



The study also identified **underutilized civic and public spaces** as an opportunity. While Groton has important civic institutions within the Town Center, their relationship to the street and to one another is not always apparent. Strengthening these connections was seen as a way to anchor activity and reinforce the Town Center’s civic role.

Importantly, Studio InSitu did not advocate large-scale redevelopment or excessive density. Instead, the work emphasized mixed-use, **incremental infill, adaptive reuse, softening commercial presence, and consistent application of design principles** as the most appropriate strategy for Groton. The Vision Report’s physical framework reflects this approach, prioritizing coherence, human scale, historic charm and character, and continuity over intensity.

4.3 | FXM ASSOCIATES

Technical Memorandum: Economic Development Component of Inventory and Assessment for Groton Master Plan: Assuring a Fiscally Adequate and Sustainable Economic Base (May, 2024)

Study Summary

Topic	Description
Consultant to 2025 Master Plan	FXM Associates
Primary Focus	Fiscal sustainability and retail market conditions
Geographic Scope	Groton and surrounding market area
Role in Vision Report	Established market realism and scale of opportunity

Narrative Discussion

FXM Associates evaluated Groton’s economic base, fiscal structure, and retail market conditions as part of the 2025 Groton Master Plan and related analyses. The purpose of this work was to assess



long-term fiscal sustainability and identify market-supported opportunities compatible with Groton’s character.

The analysis confirmed that Groton is fiscally stable but **structurally constrained by its reliance on residential property taxes**. Commercial and industrial uses represent a relatively small share of assessed value, limiting diversification of the tax base. This condition heightens sensitivity to residential tax burdens, and underscores the importance of modest, well-located retail growth.

Retail market analysis conducted by FXM, and corroborated by Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), **identified substantial retail “leakage”**, meaning that residents and visitors regularly leave Groton to meet retail and service needs. Using a conservative capture scenario, roughly 37,000 square feet of additional retail space (equating to approximately 12 new retail spaces) could realistically be supported within Groton, townwide. This scale of opportunity is illustrated in the retail gap and opportunity tables included in the analysis.

Table 3.6.7: Retail Opportunities in the Groton Retail Market Area

Retail Stores	Market Area Gap	Supportable SF	Potentially Captured SF	Potentially Supportable Stores
Floor covering stores (NAICS 44221)	9,233,841	19,785	4,100	1
Electronics stores (NAICS 443142)	3,920,615	6,848	2,800	1
Nursery, garden center, and farm supply stores (NAICS 44422)	7,723,956	26,520	10,000	1
Cosmetics, beauty supplies, and perfume stores (NAICS 44612)	2,028,416	3,740	1,527	1
Other health and personal care stores (NAICS 44619)	1,829,306	4,931	1,807	1
Shoe stores (NAICS 4482)	5,591,997	15,642	3,000	1
Jewelry stores (NAICS 44831)	7,711,009	8,354	2,400	2
Art dealers (NAICS 45392)	4,633,916	15,498	4,600	2
Full-service restaurants (NAICS 722511)	14,540,374	18,285	5,204	1
Limited-service restaurants (NAICS 722513)	3,664,590	5,240	1,750	1
	60,878,020	124,844	37,188	12

Source: EnvironicsAnalytics, Claritas Site Reports, 2023 estimates; FXM Associates

The analysis also highlighted softer but consequential issues, including perceptions that Groton is not business-friendly and demographic trends indicating an aging workforce. These factors suggest that predictability, clarity, and supportive infrastructure are as important as market demand itself.

FXM’s findings reinforced the Vision Report’s emphasis on modest, targeted development that incrementally strengthens the tax base while supporting local businesses and community needs.



4.4 | ZENIA KOTVAL, PH.D., FAICP

Economic Impact Modeling and Broader Community Value

Study Summary

Topic	Description
Consultant	Zenia Kotval, Ph.D., FAICP, Michigan State University
Primary Focus	Economic Impact of New or Additional Development in Groton
Geographic Scope	Groton and regional economy
Role in Vision Report	Broadened evaluation beyond municipal revenue

Narrative Discussion

Professor Zenia Kotval’s economic impact analysis examined the effects of capturing retail leakage, visitor spending, and activity associated with the Groton Hill Music Center. While the study quantified direct fiscal impacts, it explicitly acknowledged the limitations of municipal revenue as a sole measure of value.

Using an FXM conservative scenario in which approximately 30% of identified retail leakage is captured locally, the analysis estimated support for roughly 37,000 square feet of new and/or redeveloped retail space. The study applied standard economic multipliers to estimate indirect and induced effects, demonstrating modest increases in jobs, earnings, and regional spending.

The Town is likely to see a net annual fiscal gain in the range of \$31,682 (10,000 sq ft of new retail space) to \$63,363 (20,000 sq ft of new retail space). This estimate can go up to \$117,000 if the full potential capture of 30% (37,000 sq ft) of retail were to be absorbed by the Town. All these numbers would apply if this were to be built this year. As municipal budgets and taxes are subject to change every year, the numbers presented would change as well. Unlike economic impacts that are



regional in nature, property taxes are local and this fiscal gain is considered direct revenue to the Town’s tax base.

Table 1.3: Net Fiscal Impact Resulting from 37,000 sq ft

A	Total Revenue from Development	\$121,217.98
B	Total Costs due to Service and CIP	\$3,996.31
C	Net Fiscal Impact per Year	\$117,221.67

Table 1.4: Net Fiscal Impact Resulting from 20,000 sq ft

A	Total Revenue from Development	\$65,523.23
B	Total Costs due to Service and CIP	\$2,160.17
C	Net Fiscal Impact per Year	\$63,363.06

Table 1.5: Net Fiscal Impact Resulting from 10,000 sq ft

A	Total Revenue from Development	\$32,761.62
B	Total Costs due to Service and CIP	\$1,080.08
C	Net Fiscal Impact per Year	\$31,681.53

However, the analysis made clear that **direct revenues to the Town would remain limited.** Groton does not levy a local sales or income tax, and major cultural assets such as the Groton Hill Music Center are tax-exempt. As a result, property taxes, meals taxes, accommodations taxes, and ticket-related payments generate relatively modest municipal revenue.

Rather than viewing this as a deficiency, the study reframed the discussion around **broader community and economic benefits.** These include improved convenience and quality of life for residents, increased foot traffic and spending at existing businesses, longer visitor stays, and reinforcement of Groton’s identity as a “destination community.” Arts and cultural activity were identified as particularly important contributors to community vibrancy, social connection, and long-term economic resilience.

This framing strongly influenced the Vision Report’s evaluation criteria. The Report recognizes that Town Center investment produces value in multiple forms, many of which are not captured in municipal revenue tables but are essential to long-term community health.



As can be noted in the table below, the Town can expect approximately \$105,623 in tax revenue from accommodation and meal taxes with the anticipated 60,000 visitors. This combined with the \$120,000 from ticket sales (\$2/ticket multiplied by 60,000 tickets), the total revenue to the Town’s tax base is \$225,624. These estimates would hold true only if visitors stayed in hotels and patronized Groton restaurants. As such, they should be used for illustrative purposes only. An important caveat is that Groton does not currently have too many affordable options for visitors to stay, nor does it have many family-friendly restaurant options.

Unless this changes, Groton will be unable to capture the full potential from the meal and accommodation taxes illustrated above.

Additional Revenues for the Town with 60,000 visitors				
		Tax Levied	Overall Earnings	Additional Town Taxes Gained
Meal Tax	Direct Multiplier	0.75%	\$ 1,033,620.00	\$ 7,752.15
	Indirect Multiplier	0.75%	\$ 330,655.04	\$ 2,479.91
Accomodation Tax	Direct Multiplier	6%	\$ 1,255,800.00	\$ 75,348.00
	Indirect Multiplier	6%	\$ 334,042.80	\$ 20,042.57
	Total Earnings for the Town			\$ 105,622.63
	Direct Multiplier			\$ 83,100.15
	Indirect Multiplier		1.53	\$ 22,522.48

Groton’s Impact from Regional Visitors

Groton has many recreational, historic, and educational sites that are likely to draw visitors. A recent article published in the Groton Herald on July 17, 2025 touted Groton as a year-round destination for weddings. An accompanying Editorial “Faith, Labor – and Weddings? Groton’s Quiet Economic Engine” estimated 150 to 200 weddings a year with \$3 million in direct spending on florists, caterers, photographers etc. It goes on to say that a single wedding at the Groton Inn can generate \$1000 or more in meals and lodging taxes for the Town.

There are a number of recent studies that discuss the economic impact of tourism and visitors in the region. The Economic Impact of Visitors, prepared for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development, published in 2024, provides a good snapshot of visitor impacts on the State, regions and counties in Massachusetts. In this report, Groton falls in the Johnny Appleseed Regional Tourism Council. The report presents total visitor impacts — which include direct and



secondary spending, earnings, and employment attributable to visitor spending. Direct impacts are those that can be directly attributed to the visitors. Secondary impacts are the result of re spending of visitor-related revenues. Secondary impacts are presented in two categories: Indirect impacts represent effects associated with industries that supply goods and services to the direct businesses. Induced impacts represent effects of purchases made by employees in both the direct and indirect businesses.

A rough estimate of visitor impacts for the Town of Groton are presented here using a proportional scale down method. The numbers presented likely do not include Groton Hill Music Center as the report is based on 2023 numbers. Based on ESRI data, proportional share of sales, number of employees and businesses range from 3.7 to 5.2%. In 2022, the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce reported that while the 33-community region had \$291 million in visitor spending, Groton's share was \$21 million (about 7.2%).

The following tables are based on the lower estimates ranging from 3.2% and 5.7%.

Summary Direct Visitor Impacts on All Sectors 2023

	Direct Visitor Spending (mil)	Direct Earnings (mil)	Direct Employment
Jonny Appleseed	\$496.9	\$117.3	4300
Groton Share at 3.72%	\$18.48	\$4.36	160
Groton Share at 5.3%	\$26.34	\$6.22	228

As can be noted in the table above, Groton’s share of direct visitor spending on all industrial sectors ranges from \$18.5 to \$26.3 million. Earnings, which include wages and salaries paid to employees that can be attributed to visitors, range from \$4.4 to \$6.2 million and employment attributed to visitor spending ranges from 160 to 228 workers. In addition to the direct spending, earnings and employment impacts above, Groton could also see additional indirect and induced multiplier effect on earnings in tourism-related sectors. Visitor impacts are mostly felt in three sectors: Accommodation and Food, Arts and Entertainment, and Retail Trade.

The next two tables illustrate the potential direct, indirect and induced impact of 8 visitor spending in the region, scaled down to Groton. The first shows direct impacts on the three most affected sectors.



Direct Visitor Impacts for the Jonny Appleseed Region

Regional Visitor Impacts: Jonny Appleseed Region			
	Jonny Appleseed	Groton at 3.72%	Groton @5.3%
Direct Earnings (Mil)			
Accommodation & Food	\$75.6	\$2.81	\$4.01
Arts and Entertainment	\$15.6	\$0.58	\$0.83
Retail	\$17	\$0.63	\$0.90
Direct Employment			
Accommodation & Food	2740	102	145
Arts and Entertainment	860	32	46
Retail	480	18	25

The above table shows direct earnings in the three major sectors ranging from \$4.02 to \$5.74 million. This is approximately 90% of total earnings reported in Table 4.1. Direct jobs associated with these three sectors range from 152 to 216. Again, this represents approximately 95% of all jobs reported in Table 4.1.

The next shows indirect and induced impacts on the three major tourism related sectors. These numbers may be added to the direct impacts to get a full picture of visitor spending in the three major sectors.

Indirect and Induced Impacts of Visitor Spending

		Groton @3.72	Groton @ 5.3
		Indirect and Induced Impact	
Accommodation & Food	12%	\$349,654	\$498,162
Arts and Entertainment	14%	\$82,443	\$117,460
Retail	25%	\$159,550	\$227,316
Total Indirect and Induced		\$591,647	\$842,938

To summarize

- Groton’s potential share of additional earnings in all sectors is anywhere between \$4.46 and \$6.22 million.
- Added employment could potentially result in 110 to 228 additional jobs in all sectors.



- Groton’s share of direct earnings to be \$2.8 to \$4 million in the accommodation and food sector. Indirect and induced earnings could add an additional \$350 to \$500 thousand.
- The arts and entertainment sector could add \$0.6 to \$0.8 million from direct spending and \$82 to \$117 thousand from indirect and induced spending.
- The retail sales sector could add \$0.6 to \$0.9 million in direct earnings with an additional \$160 to \$227 thousand from indirect and induced spending.
- As for employment, Groton could potentially see an added \$150 to \$215 new part-time and full-time jobs in these three prominent sectors.
- The total secondary earnings impacts (indirect and induced) for the three major sectors are in the range of \$591,647 and \$842,938.

The numbers presented above are estimates for the Town of Groton, based on the proportional scale down method and should be used for illustrative purposes only.

Unlike sections 1 and 2 of this report, Groton specific data is not verified. However, estimates are based on defensible proportions and the regional numbers are verified in the 2024 Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development study titled The Economic Impact of Visitors.

4.5 | MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC) AND MART

Transportation, Walkability, and Safety

Study Summary

Topic	Description
Agency	MRPC and MART
Primary Focus	Safety, walkability, and regional mobility
Geographic Scope	Town Center and key corridors
Role in Vision Report	Validated safety and pedestrian priorities



Narrative Discussion

MRPC and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority provided transportation safety analysis, walkability audits, and data collection relevant to Groton's Town Center. These efforts documented crash patterns, pedestrian conditions, and non-vehicular travel demand.

Crash data analysis identified recurring patterns along Main Street and Boston Road from 2021 to 2023, including rear-end and angle collisions at the Main Street/Pleasant Street/Route 40 intersections (80 crashes), and the "Four Corners" Boston Road/Sandy Pond intersection (31 crashes). Contributing factors included speeding, passing on the right, failure to yield, and limited lighting in certain locations. These findings are illustrated in crash location and severity mapping prepared as part of the study.

Walkability audits documented gaps in sidewalk continuity, inconsistent crossings, and streetscape conditions that discourage walking as a primary mode of travel.

In contrast, Rail Trail usage counts (approximately 4,000 uses over a holiday weekend) demonstrated consistent pedestrian and bicycle activity, underscoring latent demand for safe, connected non-vehicular access to the Town Center.

 [See MRPC Groton Rail Trail Rider counts](#)

Recommended countermeasures focused on practical, implementable improvements rather than large-scale reconstruction. These included speed feedback signage, enhanced pavement markings, lighting upgrades, access management, and pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

These findings reinforced the Vision Report's emphasis on safety-first, incremental transportation improvements aligned with Complete Streets principles.

4.6 | SUPPLEMENTAL CONTRIBUTORS

**Supporting Surveys, Design Guidelines, Master Plans,
Arts & Tourism Research Documents**



These supplemental materials — including prior surveys, adopted plans, design guidelines, and economic and tourism research — provide essential historical and policy context for understanding current conditions and shaping long-term Town Center strategy. (See all documents in Appendix 2)

Collectively, these sources document a longstanding community interest in strengthening Groton's Town Center as a walkable, mixed-use focal point while preserving the town's historic character and small-town scale. Earlier planning efforts, design guidelines, and master planning documents consistently emphasize themes that remain relevant today, including pedestrian-oriented development, cohesive streetscapes, adaptive reuse of historic structures, and the careful integration of new development into existing patterns.

Regional and statewide reference materials further reinforce the relationship between cultural assets, visitor activity, and local economic vitality. These sources provide broader context for understanding how arts, tourism, and destination-oriented amenities can support local businesses and contribute to community identity, while also underscoring the importance of infrastructure, accessibility, and public realm quality in realizing these benefits.

In addition, supplemental economic and policy documents help situate Groton within wider demographic, fiscal, and market trends affecting comparable communities. These materials do not prescribe specific actions for Town Center but offer a reference framework for evaluating growth, investment, and public priorities over time.

Taken together, the supplemental sources serve to connect the Vision Report to Groton's planning history, adopted policies, and regional context. They reinforce the conclusion that the Vision Report is not a departure from prior thinking, but rather an evolution of long-established goals — updated to reflect current conditions, recent investments, and emerging opportunities — while maintaining continuity with the town's values and planning principles.

4.7 | SUMMARY

The technical studies documented in this chapter provide a consistent, evidence-based foundation for the Groton Town Center Vision Report. Together, they support a coordinated, incremental approach focused on safety, walkability, economic resilience, and preservation of community character.



CHAPTER 5.

FINDINGS + RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER PURPOSE

This chapter translates the Vision Report’s technical analyses (safety, mobility, walkability, economic and fiscal context, and planning policy) and sustained public engagement into **implementable findings and recommendations**. It is organized by topic area and is intended to guide the Select Board, Planning Board, Town Manager’s Office, and partner agencies in sequencing actions over the 2026–2036 horizon.

5.1 | TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

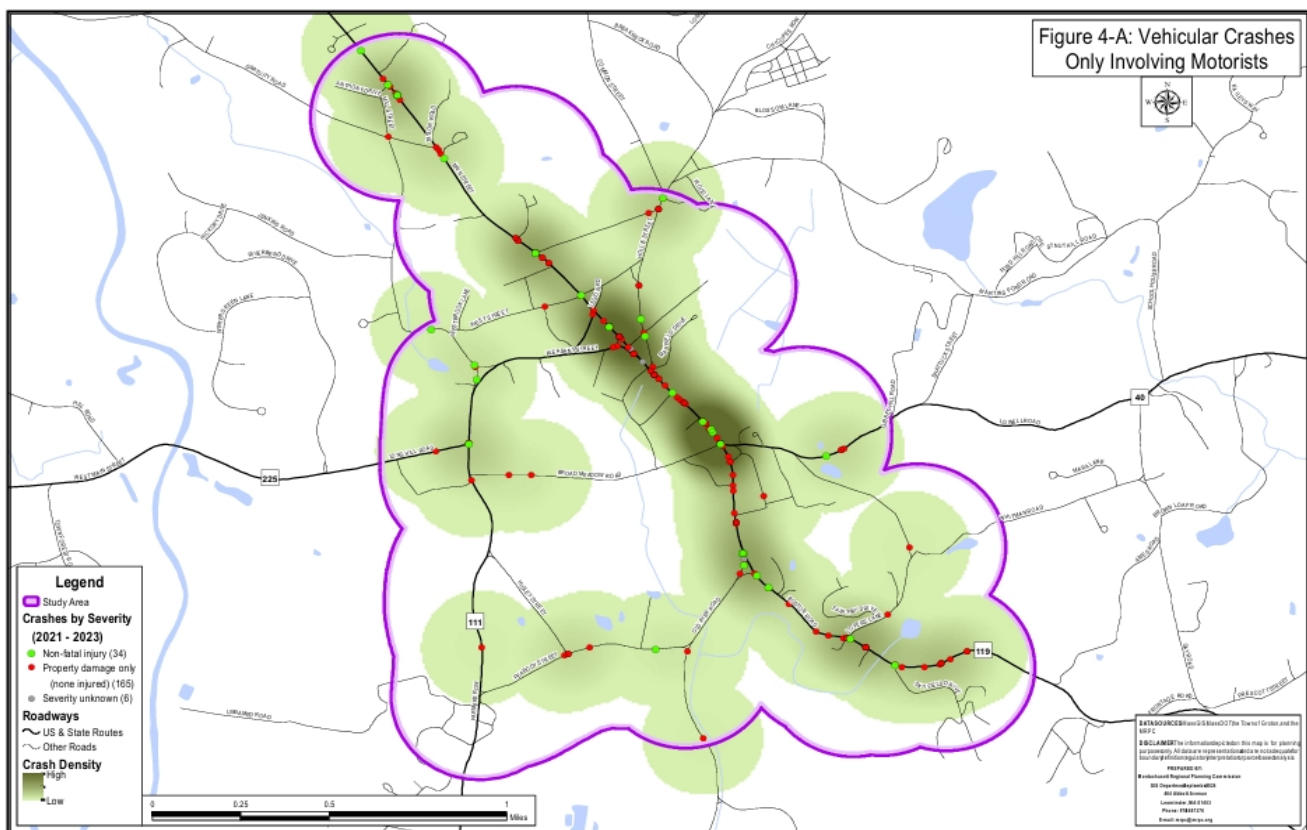
Key Findings

- 1. Route 119/Main Street’s geometry and access patterns create a significant and persistent pedestrian safety problem.** MRPC and Stantec documents wide crossings, many curb cuts, and cars parked too close to crosswalks, creating sight-distance issues. Recommended countermeasures include **bump-outs and raised crosswalks** to shorten crossings, ending “passing-on-the-right” behavior, improving visibility, and slowing vehicles.
- 2. Wide roadways and resultant speeding are recurring issues.** The MRPC walkability study explicitly notes speeding on Main Street and suggests that **adding edge lines** can help slow traffic naturally by narrowing traffic roadways.
- 3. Specific locations recur as priority risk points.** MRPC Safety Action Plan (2024) notes concentrated crash patterns along Route 119, with Route 40 and the Pleasant Street/Hollis Street area among the most concentrated locations.

The MRPC has accident data available from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for the years of 2021-2023. All recorded crashes in the study

area were mapped in Map Figure 4-A. For the Town of Groton there were 205 total crashes recorded within the study area. Of those 205 reported crashes, zero were reported as fatal injury crashes, 34 were considered non-fatal injury crashes, 165 were considered property damage only, six were considered unknown/severity unspecified.

As shown on the map, there are clearly an abundance of vehicle crashes that occurred along Route 119 at the intersection of Route 40 and the area around Pleasant Street & Hollis Street appearing to be the most concentrated. This is where three out of the six cyclist and pedestrian crashes occurred as well, making it the most dangerous location within the study area.



Source: Groton Walkability Report 2024

4. Parking challenges are partly “legibility” problems. MRPC documents that parking may exist (including behind buildings that should be connected), but visitors often do not know where it is; recommendations include signage for municipal lots and clearer on-street markings to prevent parking too close to crosswalks/intersections, driveways/curb cuts.



Recommendations

1. Implement a “Reclaim Main Street” action package in partnership with MassDOT.

Although the Town controls the Main Street segment between Old Ayer Road and Elm Street, the corridor connects directly to MassDOT-managed state highways and functions as part of the regional network. This presents an opportunity for the Select Board to proactively lead a collaborative effort with MassDOT to advance safety-focused improvements that reflect Groton’s local priorities. By grounding proposed changes in documented crash data, community engagement findings, and shared safety goals, the Town can position itself as a strong partner and move confidently toward a safer, more walkable Main Street that supports both residents and regional mobility.

A prioritized, bundled set of quick-build and early capital actions to improve safety while building public confidence include:

- Stripe or refresh crosswalks and add **edge lines** (e.g. parking, biking lanes) where appropriate to visually narrow lanes;
- Install **curb extensions (bump-outs)** and/or **raised crossings** at priority crossings to shorten crossing distance and improve yielding;
- Address sight-distance conflicts near crosswalks by clearly marking no-parking buffer zones and repainting parking space lines to improve visibility and compliance.

2. Target highest-risk intersections and crossings with design-level solutions.

Use vehicular crash concentration data (205 crashes from 2021 - 2023) and recurring community concerns as triggers to advance design improvements and funding options through grant applications for priority areas, including (at minimum) the Route 40, Pleasant Street, and Hollis Street intersections.



[Accident video 1](#) [Accident video 2](#)

3. Reduce pedestrian-traffic exposure created by parking proximity to cross walks, existing curb cuts, and driveway conflicts.

- Pursue curb cut reduction opportunities during redevelopment (shared driveways, interconnected parking) where feasible.



- Where curb cuts remain, and at crosswalks, improve crossing cues and pedestrian visibility and refuge.

4. Make parking “findable” and reduce vehicular circulation.

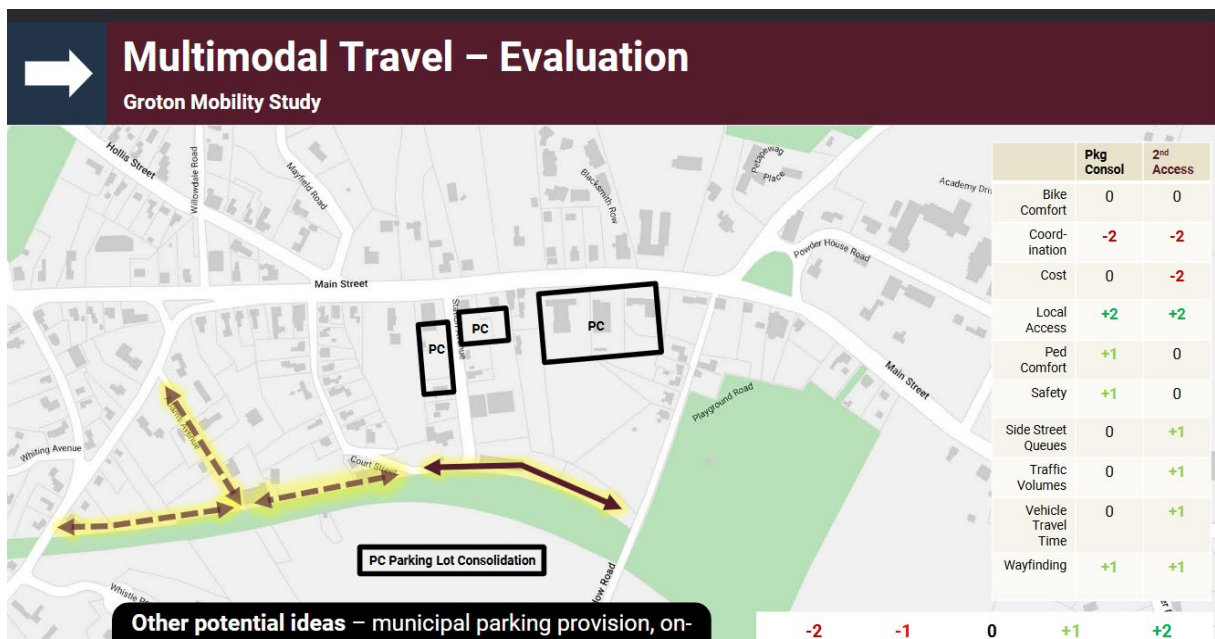
- Sign municipal lots and behind-building parking; create a consistent family of signs.
- Where feasible, connect off-street parking lots.
- Paint/mark on-street spaces in key areas to clarify where parking is allowed and protect crosswalk sightlines.

5. Strengthen trail-to-Town Center connections.

Close the identified sidewalk gap between Main Street (behind Prescott Community Center) and the Rail Trail parking area off of Broadmeadow Road to create a safe, continuous, and clearly signed walking route that encourages trail users to visit downtown businesses.

6. Explore creation of a parallel low-speed circulation route linking Broadmeadow Road to Pleasant Street.

Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a secondary local circulation connection near the Rail Trail corridor to reduce turning conflicts on Main Street, improve internal traffic flow, and provide safer, more intuitive access between parking areas, trailheads, and Town Center destinations. This effort should prioritize safety, neighborhood compatibility, and coordination with affected property owners.



Source: Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study



5.2 | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- 1. Retail leakage is large and persistent, but also represents realistic opportunity.** MRPC reports Groton's retail gap exceeds **\$77 million** annually, while FXM estimates roughly **12 stores** and demand for nearly **37,000 square feet** of retail/restaurant space, townwide, indicating potential economic development that can be captured incrementally.
- 2. Groton's income/demographic profile supports niche and higher-quality small-scale offerings.** MRPC notes higher local spending levels, which can support boutique/niche retail aligned with community character.
- 3. A "visitor" economy exists but requires better capture mechanisms.** Groton's shift toward destination activity (fine dining, weddings, trails, arts) is noted as a driver of opportunity, but local capture depends on the Town Center being easier to navigate and more inviting.

Recommendations

- 1. Adopt a "small-format retail recruitment" strategy aligned with leakage sectors.**

Using MRPC and FXM leakage findings as the basis, prioritize recruitment/encouragement for:

- Food services expansions and complementary daily-needs retail;
- Health, wellness, weddings and education retail;
- Arts, entertainment, and culturally linked retail; and
- Niche/boutique offerings suited to residents and visitors.

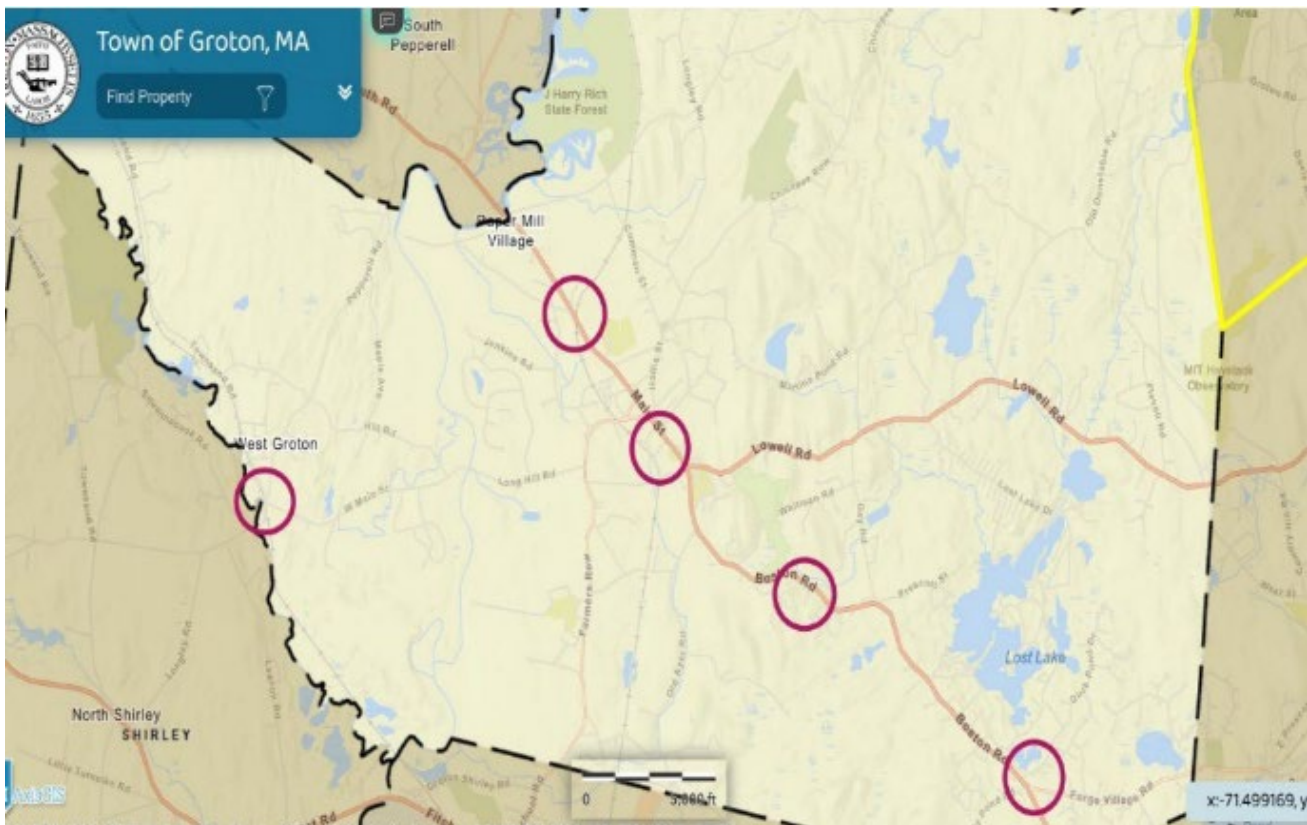
- 2. Improve "visitor-to-downtown" conversion.**



- Pair mobility + wayfinding + signage improvements with coordinated business hours and the increased visitor density related to seasonal offerings, major events and trail usage.
- Clearly communicate a coherent “arrival sequence” (where to park, where to walk, what’s nearby).

3. Treat economic development as townwide — while keeping Town Center improvements character-sensitive.

The DGC materials explicitly position Town Center planning as one part of a broader conversation about additional growth areas within town (e.g., Four Corners, West Groton, and other nodes). Continue a Townwide approach to avoid over-loading the historic core.



Source: MassGIS, 2026



5.3 | LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- 1. Groton has an established regulatory pathway for mixed-use, but implementation has been limited.** The Town Center Overlay District (2011) is repeatedly described as enabling a mixed-use, walkable center, yet the Town Center still functions as a set of individual parcels rather than a unified district.
- 2. The market opportunity is real, but the feasible scale is modest and should be phased.** Economic analyses, including the retail leakage studies, the Groton Master Plan economic assessment, and DGC research, identify significant unmet demand for retail and services townwide, but do not support a single large downtown development project. Instead, these sources point toward incremental, smaller-scale additions over time.
- 3. Downtown vitality is limited by local retail and accessibility gaps that impede the ease of daily use (safety, comfort, wayfinding) and present limited discovery opportunities.** The MRPC Walkability Studies (2017 & 2024) note that the Town Center has many attractions but also identify comfort and access gaps (crossing safety, curb cuts, and missing connections). Additionally, **the presence of buses and heavy utility vehicles in pedestrian, shopping, dining, and trail-oriented areas, suggest the need to explore alternative routing or relocation over time.**

Recommendations

- 1. Reinforce mixed-use, incremental infill as the preferred Town Center development pattern.**
 - Use Town Center Overlay District allowances to encourage **small footprint, mixed-use** projects (especially where they allow for active ground floor retail and second floor residential or office use).
 - Prioritize adaptive reuse and modest additions over large new footprints.
 - Relax Town bylaws pertaining to parking space requirements within the Overlay District.



- Encourage interconnected parking areas wherever feasible, for example Citizens Bank, Bank of America, Lily + James plaza, Moison ACE Hardware, and the Prescott Community Center.
- **Integrate Rail Trail connectivity into Town Center development strategy.**
Encourage site design, sidewalk extensions, signage, and shared access improvements that reinforce a clear, safe, and continuous connection between the Nashua River Rail Trail and Main Street destinations.

2. Tie development review to “Town Center functioning” criteria.

Adopt clear criteria (used consistently by town boards and committees) that any proposed development should:

- Improve pedestrian connectivity and safety at/near the site;
- Strengthen streetscape coherence and wayfinding; and
- Avoid creating new high-conflict curb cuts or unsafe turning movements (see mobility recommendations).

3. Focus retail and service growth on “daily residential and town visitor needs,” not duplicative office/service businesses.

This aligns with both leakage findings and the goal of capturing more “in-town” spending while preserving a “village-like” experience and scale.

5.4 | PUBLIC REALM & PLACEMAKING

Key Findings

1. **Small public gathering places exist, but connections and amenities are incomplete.**
MRPC notes positive gathering spots (Prescott Community Center, Pleasant/Main public areas, library/playground area, central dog park) but identifies a lack of **public restrooms and trash receptacles**, plus needs for seating/benches in specific locations.

- 2. Basic comfort infrastructure (benches, shade, receptacles, safe crossings) shapes whether people linger.** MRPC identifies specific bench locations and also highlights crosswalk/crossing comfort as central to the walking experience.

Recommendations

- 1. Build a “Comfort & Linger” toolkit for Town Center.**

Implement a coordinated set of public realm upgrades: benches, receptacles, bike racks, bury power lines on Main Street, dark-sky rated period lighting where feasible, and crosswalk comfort improvements (bump-outs/raised crosswalks where warranted).



- 2. Create a connected walking loop linking parking, civic spaces, and businesses.**

Focus on clear, continuous routes between: municipal parking → Main Street destinations → Prescott/Library area → Rail Trail access points.

- 3. Address “missing links” that break the walking network.**

MRPC identifies missing sidewalk links and difficult turns for strollers/wheelchairs; prioritize these fixes where they close critical gaps.

- 4. Add a feature walk, drawing visitors from the Rail Trail to Town Center.**

Studio InSitu recommends building a board walk with an Observation Tower near the Rail Trail to enhance a placemaking experience for residents and visitors.



5.5 | CULTURAL & TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

1. **Groton’s destination profile is established and expanding.** MRPC frames Groton’s evolution from bedroom community to destination, and ties this shift to arts and culture activities, fine dining, weddings, trail use, and lodging.
2. **Trail networks are significant assets and should be treated as economic connectors.** MRPC describes the Nashua River Rail Trail as a major connection to Ayer, Pepperell, and New Hampshire, with multiple access points in/near the center — but with gaps in signage and sidewalk connectivity at certain access points. In addition, Groton is known for its extensive trail network.

Recommendations

1. **Make “Town Center + Trails + Arts” a single, navigable visitor experience.**

Focus on clear, continuous routes between: municipal parking → Main Street destinations → Prescott/Library area → Rail Trail access points.

- Add trail-to-downtown signage and safe crossings where MRPC notes deficiencies (e.g., trail access points lacking signage/crosswalk improvements).
 - Coordinate downtown wayfinding so first-time visitors can easily find parking, restrooms, and a walking path to key civic/cultural destinations.
 - Pursue state designation as a Cultural District.
2. **Target low-impact programming that increases dwell time without changing town character.**
 - Seasonal markets, small performances, and family-friendly activities located in existing gathering areas, paired with walkability improvements.
 3. **Provide basic tourism-supportive amenities that improve comfort and usability without changing town character.**



- Incrementally add and coordinate simple public infrastructure — such as benches, bike racks, trash and recycling receptacles, public restrooms, and EV charging stations — at key downtown, trail, and civic locations.
- Prioritize amenity placement near trail access points, cultural venues, and existing gathering areas to support walkability, extend visitor dwell time, and reduce pressure on private facilities.
- Where appropriate, evaluate the feasibility of well-sited dog parks or designated off-leash areas, supported by waste stations and seating, in locations compatible with surrounding uses and maintenance capacity.

5.6 | GOVERNANCE & IMPLEMENTATION

Key Findings

1. **The Vision is explicitly framed as a shared, phased process requiring townwide support and market response.**
2. **The implementation challenge is coordination across boards, departments, and partners.** The Vision’s topic areas (transportation, land use, economic development, cultural programming) require integrated sequencing.

Recommendations

1. **Establish a Town Center Vision Implementation Commission (cross-departments/committees/boards).**

Charge: coordinate project definition, grant readiness, phasing, and public communications across Destination Groton, the Planning Board, Complete Streets, DPW, Police, Town Manager’s Office, and relevant departments/committees/boards.

2. **Adopt a consistent project-screening framework.**

Every proposed action/project should be screened against:

- Safety outcomes (crash reduction, crossing comfort);
- Town character/design fit;



- Feasibility and cost/maintenance capacity;
- Economic “capture” potential;
- Equity/accessibility (ADA, age-friendly walking).

3. Use pilots and quick-builds before permanent construction where feasible.

This is consistent with the community preference for phasing and testable changes described in the Vision philosophy and engagement narrative.

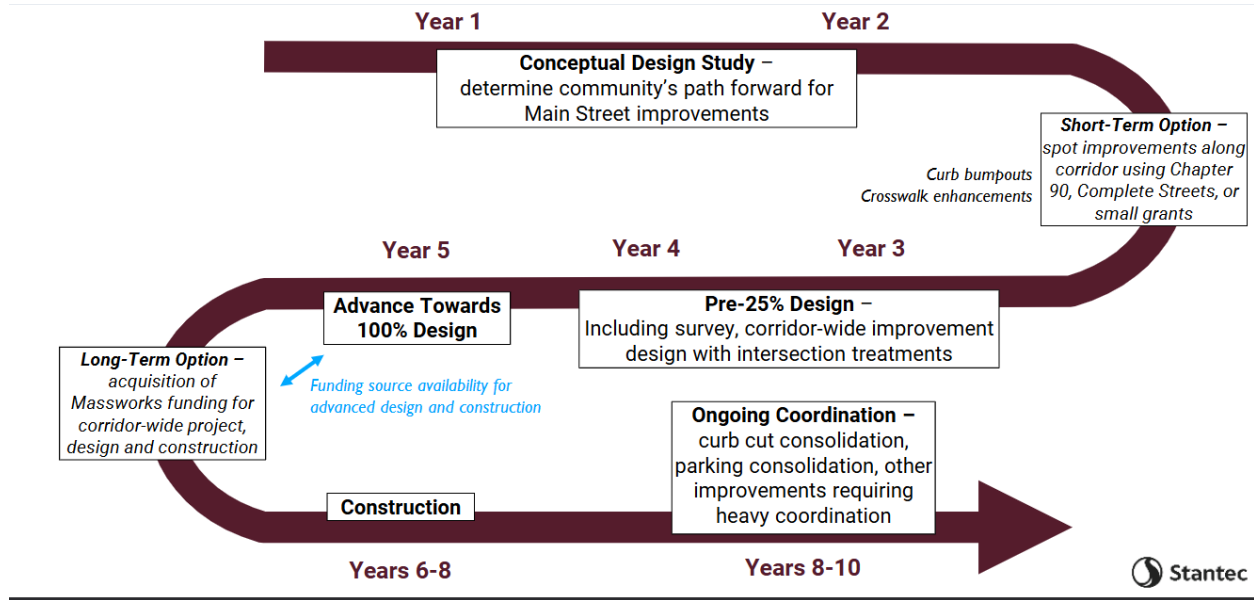
5.7 | FUNDING RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Key Findings

- 1. Groton has already successfully pursued state planning funds to support this Vision work.** DGC documents the \$50,000 Rural Development Fund grant (Town Center Vision Plan) and \$25,000 MA Downtown Initiative grant (mobility analysis).
- 2. Many recommended projects — including sidewalks, crossings, ADA upgrades, signage, trail connections, and streetscape improvements — align with common eligibility categories across transportation, economic development, public realm, and community infrastructure programs.** This positions the Town to competitively pursue additional private, state, federal, and regional funding opportunities through coordinated grant and partnership efforts.

Recommendations

- 1. Create a grant-ready project pipeline organized into three tiers.**
 - **Tier A (0–2 years):** quick-build safety and parking legibility (striping, signing, minor curb work).
 - **Tier B (2–5 years):** engineered intersection/crossing upgrades, sidewalk gap closures, trail connectors.
 - **Tier C (5–10 years):** larger coordinated roadway/public realm reconstructions tied to utility/stormwater work.



Source: Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Study

2. Formalize partnerships around trail connectivity and destination management.

Use MRPC trailhead access analysis to prioritize where partnership projects (signage, sidewalk links, crossings) yield the most connectivity benefit.

Potential Funding Alignment Matrix

The Destination Groton Committee, as well the Town and other committees, have already demonstrated capacity to secure state planning and technical assistance funding to advance Town Center and mobility-related initiatives. Building on this foundation, we have to-date received two significant grants under the state Community One-Stop For Growth “economic continuum” program and will continue to pursue more.

Many of the Vision Plan’s recommended actions align with common eligibility categories used by state, regional, and quasi-public funding programs. The matrix below illustrates how recommended project types correspond to known or typical funding pathways, without presuming specific grant awards and is derived from previously secured Groton planning grants, implementation frameworks in the Groton Master Plan, and the eligibility categories commonly referenced in state, regional, and downtown-oriented planning and transportation programs, rather than from a definitive list of active grant programs.



Project Type / Action Area	Likely Funding Category	Relevant Funding Source(s)	Notes on Applicability
Vision planning, feasibility studies, concept design	Planning & Technical Assistance	State planning grants (e.g., Rural Development Fund, Downtown Initiative-style programs)	Groton has successfully secured planning funds for similar work, demonstrating readiness and eligibility.
Sidewalk improvements, crossings, curb ramps, ADA upgrades	Transportation / Complete Streets / ADA	State and regional transportation and accessibility programs	Many recommendations align with safety, accessibility, and multimodal eligibility criteria.
Trail connections, trailhead access, trail-to-downtown links	Active Transportation / Recreation	Regional planning or transportation agencies	Projects often qualify when tied to safety, access, or economic vitality goals.
Wayfinding, signage, and visitor orientation	Placemaking / Economic Development	Planning or downtown-focused grant programs	Signage tied to navigation, safety, and accessibility strengthens eligibility.
Streetscape amenities (benches, bike racks, receptacles)	Public Realm / Streetscape	Capital or small infrastructure programs	Often bundled with sidewalk or streetscape improvements to improve competitiveness.
Public restrooms or comfort facilities	Community Facilities	Capital planning or phased implementation funding	Typically require clear siting, management, and maintenance strategies.
Mobility analysis and circulation studies	Transportation Planning	State mobility or downtown transportation programs	Groton has already secured funding for mobility analysis, establishing precedent.
Phased implementation and pilot projects	Incremental Implementation	Combination of grants, Town funds, and partnerships	Smaller pilots can demonstrate success and support future funding applications.



Partnership Considerations

In addition to grant funding, several project types may benefit **from partnership-based implementation**, including coordination with:

- Regional planning agencies for technical support and grant alignment
- Local institutions and cultural destinations for shared amenities or wayfinding
- Private property owners for shared access, signage, or maintenance agreements

5.8 | PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

To keep the Vision measurable, the following indicators are recommended for annual tracking (reported publicly):

1. Safety and Mobility

- Number of crashes and injury crashes within Town Center (tracked annually).
- Observed yielding rates at priority crosswalks (before/after improvements).
- Average speeds on Main Street at key segments (before/after edge lines, curb extensions, etc.).
- Linear feet of sidewalk repaired/added; number of ADA-compliant curb ramps upgraded.
- Number of signed/marked municipal parking spaces and wayfinding signs installed.

2. Economic Vitality

- Net change in number of ground-floor “active use” storefronts in Town Center.
- Net new small businesses in leakage-aligned categories (food service, arts-related retail, daily needs). In addition to Town Center, this would include other locations townwide.
- Event-day “capture” proxies (e.g., downtown foot counts during major event windows; participation in coordinated promotions).



3. Public Realm and Sense of Place

- Number of benches/receptacles/bike racks installed in priority locations; maintenance condition.
- Public satisfaction trend (repeat mini-survey every 2–3 years focused on safety, walkability, and downtown experience).
- Trail-to-center connectivity improvements completed (signed crossings, sidewalk links to trailheads) based on MRPC trailhead matrix.

5.9 | SUMMARY

Across the full planning record and engagement documented by the Destination Groton Committee, MRPC, and supporting studies, a clear and consistent conclusion emerges:

The viability of Groton’s Town Center depends first on making it safe, legible, and comfortable. Walkability, safety, and ease of movement are not secondary enhancements, but foundational conditions that shape whether the Town Center functions as a place for residents, visitors, and local businesses alike.

The record further indicates that **incremental, small-scale economic development — aimed at capturing a modest share of existing retail leakage — can be effective only when these foundational conditions are in place and Groton’s character is preserved.** Retail vitality is constrained less by lack of demand than by barriers to access, comfort, and intuitive navigation between destinations.

Accordingly, the recommended strategy is deliberately phased. **Near-term actions prioritize safety, accessibility, and legibility improvements** that strengthen the Town Center as a coherent, walkable environment. **More complex corridor, intersection, and redevelopment-support initiatives are positioned as subsequent steps**, to be advanced once the Town Center’s role as a safe and inviting public realm is clearly established. This sequencing reflects both community input and implementation realities and is intended to build momentum while managing risk and preserving Groton’s defining character.



APPENDIX 1

1. Destination Groton Committee (DGC) Overview

Formation and Purpose

DGC was established by vote of the Groton Select Board in January, 2022 to coordinate community, business, and government efforts around making Groton a recognized regional destination community. Its formation coincided with the opening of the Groton Hill Music Center, renewed interest in the Nashua River Rail Trail, and a broader desire to enhance the Town Center while maintaining Groton’s rural, historic character.

The Committee’s charge directs it to:

1. Engage residents, businesses, and nonprofits in shaping Groton’s future as a destination community.
2. Provide direction, coordination and guidance across opportunities such as commercial and retail development and challenges such as traffic, parking and infrastructure as it promotes tourism, small business vitality, and civic pride.
3. Coordinate planning and economic development activities with Town departments.
4. Identify and pursue state, federal, and private funding that supports infrastructure, cultural programming, and marketing.
5. Recommend strategies that balance visitor growth with preservation of Groton’s small-town charm.

Mission and Vision

The Committee’s mission is to preserve and promote Groton as the quintessential New England experience — a community where history, culture, nature, and innovation meet.

Endorsed by the Select Board, Groton Town Center will:

- Offer walkable streets with small shops, restaurants and cafés.
- Serve as a regional destination for music, arts, and outdoor recreation.
- Reflect architectural authenticity rooted in Groton’s heritage.
- Provide safe, accessible connections between neighborhoods, trails, and cultural venues.
- Strengthen the tax base while maintaining the Town’s sense of place.



Committee Composition

As of 2026, the Committee includes:

- Greg Sheldon, Chair
- Jeff Gordon, Vice Chair
- Joan E. Parker-Roach, Member
- Brian Bolton, Member
- Heather Puksta, Member
- Karen Tucker-Barisano, Sub-Committee member
- Julie Platt, Sub-Committee member
- Judy Romatelli, Sub-Committee member.

Additionally, the Committee works in coordination with Town Manager Mark W. Haddad and collaboration across departments such as Planning, Economic Development, and Public Works as well as several Town Boards, Commissions and Committees.

The group functions as both an advisory and coordinating body, bridging residents, business owners, and regional partners like the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), and Massachusetts Office for Rural Development, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT).



DGC Member Report Authors | Biographies

GREGORY M. SHELDON

62 Whispering Brook Road, Groton

Profession

As President of Sheldon Collaborative, a strategic management consultant to industry, government, university institutions, and nonprofit organizations, Sheldon Collaborative has for over thirty-five years achieved numerous public/private partnerships. Greg worked in senior level positions for three Gubernatorial Administrations (New York: Hugh Carey 1978-1982 as Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation; Mario Cuomo 1983-1987 as Senior Deputy Commissioner, Department of Commerce and MA: Michael Dukakis 1989-1990 as Deputy Secretary for Economic Affairs.

Education

Master of Public Administration, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, State University of New York, Stony Brook

Community

Greg and Leslie moved to Groton in 2000 to raise their two children, Thomas and Maureen. From 2015 - 2016, Greg Chaired the Municipal Building Committee for the Prescott School which issued its final report: *Building Community - A Strategic Blueprint for Prescott School*. In 2021, Greg participated in a Groton Business Association led effort to position Groton as a destination community and issued its report: *Destination Groton – Exploring the Possibilities (2021)*. The Select Board appointed the Destination Groton Committee in 2022, and Greg was selected to be its Chair. The DGC recently completed a multiyear effort based on research, public engagement and in March 2026 issued its final report: *Groton 2036 – A Ten-Year Vision*.

JEFF GORDON

15 Whiting Avenue, Groton

Profession

For the past 23 years, Jeff has been the Broker/Owner of EXIT Assurance Realty, located in Groton, MA. EXIT Assurance Realty is a Member Company of Assurance Realty Group, Inc. EXIT Assurance Realty is a professional real estate brokerage firm, specializing in Marketing Solutions, and sales of residential and commercial properties. Assurance Realty Group, Inc., d.b.a. EXIT Assurance Realty, is a registered corporation, and operates in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Industrial Engineering, University of Lowell
Certified Real Estate Negotiation Expert

Community

Jeff has been a resident of Groton since 2000, when he founded his Real Estate Brokerage, EXIT Assurance Realty. Jeff is a true civic partner, involved in many town initiatives and organizations. He has been a member of the Groton Business Association (GBA) since its inception in 2010. He is currently the President of GBA, and has served in this capacity for more than 10 years. Jeff is also responsible for GrotonFest Family of Festivals, an iconic series of town events and tradition. Jeff served on Groton's Capital Planning Committee for 2 years, and served on the Board of Friends of Prescott, Inc. for 10 years. He was the Vice President for 2023 & 2024, and President for all of 2025. Jeff also curates the meals for the Groton Community Dinner multiple times a year.



JOAN E. PARKER-ROACH

113 Main Street, Groton

Profession

Joni is an accomplished artist and co-owner of NOA Gallery, which she co-founded in her Groton Town Center home in 2002. She has developed the gallery into a welcoming venue where New England artists exhibit and sell their work. In 2006, she broadened its mission by creating an arts school for students of all ages, and in 2019 she relocated the gallery to the newly rebuilt Groton Inn as an invited partner. NOA Gallery also collaborates with Newbury Court in Concord to present ongoing exhibitions. In addition to her work as an artist and gallery owner, Joni teaches T'ai Chi with her husband.

Her earlier professional experience includes roles at the Society of Organizational Learning in Cambridge, work as a graphic artist for several small companies, and serving as a Print Production Specialist at Digital Equipment Corporation.

Education

Joni studied fine art and art history at Worcester State College, with additional coursework at the New England School of Art & Design, MassArt, and The Art Centre in Antibes, France.

Community

A Mayflower descendant raised in Westford, she and her family returned to Groton in 1992 after a decade in California and France. Since then, she has become a key figure in the local arts community, leading public art efforts, volunteering extensively, and helping promote Groton as an arts and cultural destination.

BRIAN BOLTON

1 Chicopee Row, Groton

Profession

Brian is a co-founder and CEO of StitchDX, a Greater Boston-based digital strategy firm focused on helping organizations improve communication, engagement, and growth through modern digital platforms. His career spans more than three decades in digital marketing, technology strategy, and brand development. Prior to founding StitchDX in 2016, Brian held senior marketing leadership roles at several technology and digital platform companies, including Bridgeline Digital, Solodev, and dSide Technologies. Earlier in his career, he was with John Hancock for 8 years in various management, digital marketing and business development roles.

Education

Master of Business Administration, Marketing — Boston College Carroll School of Management

Bachelor of Science, Finance and International Business — Northeastern University

Community

Brian and his family have lived in Groton since 2005. He and his wife are the stewards of one of Groton's historic homes, the Cragin-Ogilvie / North Meeting House (circa 1780). His wife Carrie is a children's librarian at the Groton Public Library, and their two daughters both graduated from Groton-Dunstable High School. Brian has served on the Destination Groton Committee for the past two years, where he manages much of the committee's digital outreach and marketing efforts, helping expand community engagement through online communications, social media, and storytelling that highlight Groton's character, history, and future opportunities.



HEATHER PUKSTA

Groton

Profession

Heather is the owner of Stage Careers, a Quality Consulting firm for the Life Science industry. She focuses on supporting Medical Device, Biotech, and Pharmaceutical manufacturers through large-scale organizational change, remediation, fiscal Quality planning, and building “right-sized” systems for Quality Management. Heather has worked with clients from Top 10 Pharm to small startups as a Project Manager, SME, or Head of Quality. She is passionate about providing career equity-building opportunities to teams through mentorship, professional development, and opportunity building.

Education

Bachelor of Science, Biomedical Engineering, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Community

Heather has been a resident of Groton since 2022 and is passionate about being involved in the town in which she is raising her two small children. She has been a member of the DGC since 2024 and is excited to continue supporting Groton-sized improvements for our wonderful Destination community.

KAREN TUCKER-BARISANO

15 Longley Road, Groton

Profession

Karen Tucker-Barisano retired in 2020 after a career in corporate event management. As Vice President of Community and Corporate Events at Commonwealth Financial Network, she led a team responsible for the planning and execution of global meetings and events as part of the company’s marketing strategy. Prior to this role, Karen spent fourteen years at Data General, where she developed and managed the company’s corporate meeting management team. She later founded and ran her own independent meeting management business, providing event planning and strategic meeting services to the technology sector.

Karen has served on the faculty of meeting management programs at Bentley University and Northeastern University. She served on the Board of Directors for the New England Chapter of Meeting Professionals International and was honored as the chapter’s Meeting Planner of the Year in 2000.

Education

Master of Education from Fitchburg State University

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Boston University

Community

After relocating from Littleton to Groton in 2019, Karen and her husband Jim quickly became active members of the community. Jim relocated his business, Wheels TV, from Acton to the Prescott Community Center. Karen is an active member of the Groton Garden Club and the Destination Groton Committee, where she contributes to grant writing efforts and the development of the committee’s Vision Plan.



Destination Groton Committee (DGC) 2025 Annual Report



Background Visit: www.destinationgroton.com DGC Town website: www.grotonma.gov/destination-groton

Groton has long been recognized for its rich history, extraordinary landscape, and small-town character. Over the years, the arts, culture, fine dining, recreation, education, open space, farming, and hospitality have enhanced Groton's destination reputation. The DGC's Mission is to tell Groton's quintessential New England story and help bring it to life. DGC's Goals include engaging all stakeholders; collaborating; communicating; celebrating; and building civic pride. DGC's Objectives include: conduct public forums; build regional partnerships; promote Groton's many attractions; maintain the Town's quality of life; and contribute to Town revenues.

Organization

The Committee will manage a series of specific communications, marketing, planning, infrastructure, development, event, and finance initiatives by working collaboratively with Town stakeholders and regional partners. DGC members Chair Greg Sheldon, VC Jeff Gordon, Clerk Brian Bolton, Joni Parker-Roach, Heather Puksta, and Karen Tuckerbarisano.

Destination Groton Committee Activities 2025

- Conducted interviews and Scope of Services review for two State One Stop for Growth grants: Rual Development Fund \$50,000 and MA Downtown Initiative \$25,000.
- Hired the engineering firm Standec to conduct Traffic Mobility and Studio InSitu Architects for Vision Planning.
- DGC submitted a Letter of Support to the CPC on behalf of the Historical Commissions request for \$325,000 to repair the Bankroft Castle. LOS for Sustainability Comm's - Groton Climate Change Resolution at Town Meeting.
- Montachusett Regional Planning Commission conducted a series of twelve stakeholder interviews on Vision Plan
- DGC produced four Quarterly Newsletters.
- Presented to Select Board DGC's 2024 Annual Report and DGC's 2025 focus on producing Ten-Year Vision Plan.
- Met with the Commemorations and Celebrations Committee to support Groton's America's 250th programs.
- Published a "Visioning Process" page on our website citing the 24 research and background documents utilized.
- To celebrate the 250th anniversary of Patriot's Day (April 19) DGC secured a Town Lecture Fund grant of \$5,000 to produce a talk by local historian Josh Vollmar; a reenactment Minutemen and Fife and Drum on the Common; and launched the Groton Historical Audio Tour of Fifteen Landmark Sites available on DestinationGroton.com.
- Attended Governor's Annual Tourism Conference and 1st Middlesex Small Town Collaborative monthly meetings.
- DGC interviewed for an open position and appointed Heather Puksta to join the DGC.
- Received MRPC Retail Leakage Report that identified \$77 M. Master Plan consultant FXM identified \$60 M.
- LOS for our MOTT 250th application from Senator John Cronin, State Reps. Scarsdale and Sena, Forge and Vine.
- Conducted a series of (10) Town Committee and Public Engagement "Visioning Forums" around the entire Town.
- Promoted the Jeffrey Boutwell lecture of his book *Boutwell - Radicle Republican and Champion of Democracy*.
- Conducted two Public Surveys to engage public opinion: 2024/25 had 400+ responses (83% support a ten-year effort to secure funding to address infrastructure challenges/economic opportunities; and 2025 160+ to date.
- DGC Participated in GrotonFest with a DGC booth. Engaged residents in the Ten-Year Vision Process.
- Hosted author Donald Ryan lecture at a packed Prescott Community Center on his new book *Colonel William Prescott Heroic Commander of the Battle of Bunker Hill*.
- Attended MRPC/MART Regional Safety Plan (traffic) session.
- DGC attended the Town Spelling Bee and the MOTT Tourism University on zoom.
- Organized a joint application from Prescott CC, the Historical Commission and Destination Groton to the Society of the Cincinnati to install historical markers of Revolutionary War landmarks.
- The DGC won several grants this year: MOTT 250th - \$20,000; Society of the Cincinnati-\$10,950; Groton Trusts - \$5,000; State RDF - \$50,000 and MDI - \$25,000. Total \$110,950.
- The DGC formally met 51 times in 2025 and collectively logged over 3,000 hours on DGC related work.



APPENDIX 2

1. Destination Groton Vision Process

 www.DestinationGroton.com/Groton-Vision-Process



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Groton Vision Process

This page offers access to key documents, presentations, and planning resources that collectively help shape the evolving vision for Groton’s town centers, infrastructure, housing, open spaces, and overall economic development.

Vision & Planning Framework

- What is a Town Center Visioning Process?
- Destination Groton Committee Town Center Vision Plan Presentation (July 9, 2025)
- InSitu Groton Town Center Vision Plan Presentation (July 9, 2025)
- Select Board Presentation (June 30, 2025)
- Groton Master Plan FINAL REPORT (April 2025)
- Destination Groton - Exploring the Possibilities (September 2021)

Mobility, Traffic & Walkability

- Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Slides (September 17, 2025)
- Stantec Groton Town Center Mobility Presentation (September 17, 2025)
- Groton Walkability Report
- Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (February 2017)
- Broadmeadow Draft Concepts - EnviroPartners (October 2022)
- Groton - Broadmeadow - Town_Meeting (January 11, 2023)
- MRPC-MART Safety Action Plan Potential Projects
- MRPC Groton Rail Trail Rider Counts
- USDOT - STEP Resources (Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian)
- USDOT - Traffic Calming ePrimer
- USDOT - Toolbox of Individual Traffic Calming Measures

Design & Aesthetic Guidelines

- Groton Center Design Guidelines

Public Engagement & Feedback

- Groton Stakeholder Interviews
- Groton Resident Survey Analysis
- Public Engagement Sessions |4| and Focus Groups |2| (2025)

Commercial & Economic Assessments

- Groton Economic Impact Report (August 2025)
- FXM Associates Technical Memorandum
- MRPC Retail Leakage Report

Technical/Supporting Documentation

- Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) National Report
- Economic Impact of Travel Report (Massachusetts 2023)