



January 7, 2025

Greg Sheldon, Chairman  
Destination Groton Committee  
Town Hall  
173 Main Street  
Groton, MA 01450

Dear Mr. Sheldon:

I am pleased to submit this report summarizing the stakeholder interviews completed on behalf of the Town of Groton through the Groton Destination Committee (GDC). MRPC applauds Groton, the GDC, stakeholders, and inhabitants for conducting planning related to supporting existing and new businesses in the community thus fostering job retention and creation. It has been MRPC's pleasure to work with a great local team.

Under the MRPC's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program, MRPC engaged with a dozen local stakeholders representing the private and public sectors and posed the same questions to all interviewees to learn about the current perspective of the local economy. All questions and answers can be found attached to this correspondence.

Sincerely

Glenn Eaton  
Executive Director

**1. Have you noticed more activity since 2022 (opening of Groton Hill Music Center) ... Thematic Responses Include:**

- A. For those businesses that are in the food, lodging, and entertainment industry ... the Response was "Yes." (Restaurants, lodging establishments, and other businesses see a direct impact from the influx of Groton Hill Music Center Patrons visiting Groton for concerts). For those businesses outside of this industry ... the answer is "No."
- B. Some businesses adjust their hours of operation to accommodate the patrons of Groton Hill Music Center.
- C. Yes, there is more traffic in town, but it appears to be outside of the "AM" and "PM" commuting times. There does not appear to be a large impact on Main Street.
- D. Local businesses should partner with Groton Hill Music Center and, at least, cross-market.
- E. For those businesses that are in the food, lodging, and entertainment industry ... the Response was "Yes." (Restaurants, lodging establishments, and other businesses see a direct impact from the influx of Groton Hill Music Center Patrons visiting Groton for concerts). For those businesses outside of this industry ... the answer is "No."
- F. Some businesses adjust their hours of operation to accommodate the patrons of Groton Hill Music Center.
- G. Yes, there is more traffic in town, but it appears to be outside of the "AM" and "PM" commuting times. There does not appear to be a large impact on Main Street.
- H. Local businesses should partner with Groton Hill Music Center and, at least, cross-market.
- I. The "split" for many businesses seems to be about 75% from folks from out of town and 25% from in-town. ... Groton is a center for regional economic activity, whether patrons are from Pepperell or Boston!
- J. There are many commercial vacancies that we don't fully understand why they're still vacant.
- K. There is not a lot of commercial permitting activity presented to Town Hall's various permitting authorities.
- L. The local permitting process is time-consuming. Schedule unpredictable. (MRPC recommends that every community publish a Local Permitting Guidebook and adopt "43D" [G.L. of MA, c. 43D, Expediting Permitting]. Lay out the process. Address the permitting timeline issue for all applicants.)

**2. What was the effect of the COVID19 pandemic on your businesses and other businesses in the community? Did business return at all, or more, or differently? ... Thematic Responses Include:**

- A. As expected, the majority of the businesses interviewed suffered through the COVID19 pandemic.
- B. The vast majority have exceeded their "pre-COVID19" business levels while the minority are at their "pre-COVID19" level.
- C. We had to close, relocate, and reopen.
- D. There is a great hunger for people to be out of their houses again and leave the "shut-in" period behind them.
- E. Groton's inhabitants got used to making online purchases and depending less on visits to brick-and-mortar establishments. This has had an adverse impact on retailers in Groton.
- F. Finding employees has been a challenge since COVID.
- G. Cost of maintaining facilities has increased.
- H. Thinner margins, now.

- I. It's difficult to have business in the Town Center. Signage permitting requirements. Historic Commission.
- J. West Concord Center was identified several times as a place where there is more of a mix of businesses than in Groton Center and where signage is done in a way to adequately balances the historic character of an area with proactive business development.
- K. "Way beyond positive what my business was pre-COVID!"
- L. We see the "BOA" building is vacant as are some other commercial spaces. How can we work cooperatively with local government to reuse our vacant commercial spaces?

**3. What ideas you might have that you would like to share regarding the potential small retail growth of Groton ... Thematic Responses Include:**

- A. "The Town is fantastic to work with! Public safety, permitting, licensing a plus."
- B. "Groton doesn't want development in the downtown area. They only want it on Station Avenue."
- C. "Town needs to get behind a new plan and encourage new businesses to come in." We in the business community want to be on the same page as our local officials.
- D. "GDC (is a) solid effort on the town's part to take on some of the challenges with GHMC coming online. Smart and capable group on a focused mission. Will continue to do good work."
- E. The business community applauds local master planning and town center planning efforts!
- F. Bike shops and other similar businesses supporting rail-trail use.
- G. We miss Donelan's. We must leave town to buy groceries.
- H. We small business owners would like to connect with larger businesses. Can we be their suppliers? Are there other mutual benefits?
- I. Grow a self-supporting business cluster that meets the needs of inhabitants and visitors.
- J. Bring art on Main Street (static and performing).
- K. Grow the emerging hub of health- and wellness-related businesses.
- L. More off-street parking would be beneficial for patrons of local businesses and civic institutions.
- M. Tap into tourism-related promotional funding from the State.
- N. State legislators do not understand tax impacts on small businesses. If the proposed new wages/tips law had passed, we would have had to lay off employees.
- O. Paint parking spaces on Main Street for on-street parking.

**4. Would you support an effort over the next ten years to secure federal, state, and local funding to address infrastructure challenges and economic opportunities while preserving the Town's charm? ... Thematic Responses Include:**

- A. We understand that "Groton cannot fund (all necessary improvements) on its own."
- B. "This is a no-brainer."
- C. Many resounding "Yes!" Responses were Received.
- D. "We'd support infrastructure improvements with Federal, State, and Local funding 100%!"
- E. "Silly not to pursue the funding."