

Public Engagement: Audience Input/Feedback by Vision Session

September 17 (two sources: Zoom + Groton Channel)

- **Parking configuration & structured parking options.** An audience member asked why parking counts assume only ground-level spaces and whether parking “beneath” or “on top of” buildings was considered. The response acknowledged the question, noting those options were largely set aside except in larger apartment contexts; feasibility would be limited but not impossible.
- **Traffic calming specifics (raised crosswalks).** A resident suggested raised crosswalks to flip the default—drivers “entering a pedestrian area,” not the other way around. Stantec Presenter liked the concept but said it didn’t “make the cut” here due to congestion/peak-hour impacts and local appetite for delay.
- **Safety priority vs. delay tolerance.** Comments emphasized that added travel time is acceptable if it prevents injuries: “If that’s gonna save someone’s life or leg, I’m good with that.”
- **Make Main Street “ours,” not just a thoroughfare.** Public safety and reclaiming Main Street from pass-through traffic were framed as core aims.

October 1

- **Quick-wins for crosswalk safety.** Audience urged immediate, low-cost steps like “no-blocking” paint buffers at crosswalks; a couple of gallons of paint could start the job.
- **Roundabout support.** Multiple comments supported a roundabout to keep traffic moving while calming speeds; encouragement to start with less expensive items to build momentum.
- **Enforcement appetite.** Several comments pushed for strong enforcement: a dedicated officer “living” on Main Street issuing tickets with zero-warning tolerances; the aim is to build a reputation town-wide that speeding isn’t tolerated.
- **Small business perspective (parking scarcity + safety).** A Main Street shop owner described daily “screeches,” near-misses, and half-day school congestion. She tied safety and parking directly to business performance and asked the group to weigh crosswalk set-backs/visibility against the loss of on-street spaces, noting

customers often can't find parking and other businesses' patrons occupy curb space for long durations.

October 8

- **Why isn't the speed limit reduction a top priority?** During open Q&A, residents pressed for lowering—and actually enforcing—the limit as the highest-impact, near-term action. Calls for both a legal reduction (e.g., to 25 mph) and visible enforcement were repeated.
- **(Context from the same meeting block)** The facilitation opened the floor for “what’s missing” and invited specific concerns; the discussion gravitated quickly to speed and safety.

October 15 (Groton Channel recording)

- **Data transparency & timing.** A resident asked what period the traffic data covers and whether the town can unilaterally reduce speeds on the segments it controls; the response: confirm MRPC time window, and state involvement is likely required for formal reductions on state routes.
- **Short-term “do-now” measures.** Multiple speakers urged “quick hits”: visible police presence (including simply parking a cruiser with periodic lights), narrowing via painted edge/parking lines, and bump-outs/cut-backs that visually constrict lanes to slow traffic with minimal cost.
- **Benchmarking another town center (Lexington).** One speaker cited Mass Ave in Lexington (posted 20 mph in the center) as proof that narrower, traffic-calmed main streets with bump-outs and re-contoured curb lines are feasible and effective.
- **Petition effort to lower speeds.** A commenter announced a petition to reduce the center’s limit to 25 mph (or less), with signatures to be gathered at Town Meeting; the group discussed process and timeline uncertainty.
- **Through-traffic & town-wide travel time concerns.** Some residents reminded the group that not everyone lives in the center; extra 10–15 minutes of delay can burden those traveling from Four Corners/other neighborhoods to schools and services. Facilitators acknowledged the trade-off analysis (“how much time for how much safety”).
- **Everyday hazard anecdotes.** Several comments detailed near-misses: difficulty backing out/turning from driveways on 119, crosswalks where drivers “slam on the brakes,” and risky CVS/Old Ayer movements.

- **Private property & overlay zoning (value vs. compulsion).** Clarification that zoning changes (e.g., Station Ave overlay) increase potential value/options for owners but don't force anyone into specific uses; owners may sell, partner, or develop—but are not compelled.

Cross-Cutting Themes (what kept coming up)

1. **Safety first—especially for kids and pedestrians.** Near-miss anecdotes, school-day stress, and curb-cut hazards came up repeatedly.
2. **Lower speeds + visible enforcement.** Persistent calls to cut limits to ~25 mph, plus highly visible enforcement (even “zero-warning” ticketing) and low-cost optics (narrowed painted lanes, parked cruiser).
3. **Do the quick wins now; pursue capital fixes in parallel.** Paint, signs, crosswalk daylighting/no-parking zones, bump-outs, and lane narrowing were urged as immediate actions while bigger changes (roundabout, geometry, signals) are studied/funded.
4. **Parking trade-offs are delicate.** Safety improvements that remove curb spaces create friction for Main Street retailers; some asked for structured parking consideration (even if limited feasibility).
5. **Town-wide equity vs. center-area traffic calming.** A recurring tension: how far to slow Main Street when many residents must travel through the center to reach schools/services. Attendees asked for explicit “delay vs. safety benefit” quantification.
6. **Economic lens in the background.** Leakage/capture and destination-economy opportunities were mentioned (especially Oct 8), but public comments gravitated back to safety and livability as prerequisites.

Overall Tone & Tenor

- **Broad alignment on the problem and urgency.** Across all dates, the room generally agreed that current conditions are unsafe and need near-term action. Words like “time bomb,” “dangerous,” and “make Main Street ours” set a clear urgency.
- **Constructive but pragmatic.** People offered practical fixes (painted edge lines, cruiser presence, crosswalk daylighting) while asking the town to pursue formal speed changes and geometry over time.

- **Empathetic—anchored in lived experience.** Small business owners and residents described daily hazards, kids crossing, and driveway egress struggles—giving the conversation a grounded, “we live this” quality.
- **Healthy tension, not hostility.** You can hear respectful debate around *how much* to slow and *where*—with several voices asking to weigh the town-wide travel-time impact against safety gains. The facilitators repeatedly acknowledged and invited this trade-off analysis.
- **Optimistic about feasibility.** References to Lexington and other precedents bolstered confidence that the plan’s traffic-calming concepts are doable, with the right state coordination.

Here’s a detailed synthesis of **town center development–related feedback and discussion** extracted from all four Destination Groton Vision Process meeting transcripts (Sept 17, Oct 1, Oct 8, and Oct 15). This section focuses on *development, zoning, housing, retail, and land use visioning*, complementing your earlier traffic-centric summary.

1. Foundational Framing (September 17 kick-off)

Grant Context & Economic Rationale

The Moderator introduced the dual state grants (\$50 K + \$25 K) supporting the study of Groton’s *Town Center economic and infrastructure potential*. The goal: pursue “**village-style, small-scale development — not strip malls or big boxes**” while preserving character.

Two studies (FXM Associates + MRPC) had found that **\$60 – 77 million** in spending leaks outside Groton annually; capturing even one-third could yield \$20 – 25 million in local revenue potential, equivalent to roughly **12 new stores / 37 000 sq ft** of commercial space.

Overlay & Mixed-Use Vision

Stantec and Studio Institu outlined how the **Town Center Overlay District** could better encourage **housing over retail**, shared parking, and improved site connectivity. Participants were asked to react to test-fit models and long-range form-based design concepts.

Audience Reactions

Residents questioned:

- **Parking-requirement reductions:** one attendee cautioned that lowering minimums without analysis might cause shortages and asked for rationale behind current ratios.
 - **Density trade-offs:** several voiced concern that higher density could strain **schools, police, and fire infrastructure**, asking whether benefits outweigh costs.
 - **Private-property assumptions:** some renderings placed new buildings where current owners exist; residents asked how acquisitions or partnerships would be handled and highlighted **wetland constraints** near Broad Meadow.
 - **Tree and open-space preservation** was repeatedly emphasized as non-negotiable.
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2. Town Center Overlay & Development Feasibility (October 1)

Studio Institu consultant Tim Hess revisited why the **2007 Town Center Overlay** has underperformed: “eighteen years after adoption, the changes it was meant to stimulate have not come to pass.” It offers *optional density bonuses* tied to public-realm goals but hasn’t yielded significant mixed-use growth.

He described test-fits for **167 Main Street (Bank of America parcel)** showing the development math:

- Current cap = 14 units / acre, 1.5 parking spaces / unit, 3 spaces / 1 000 sq ft retail.
- One-story retail fits zoning but **over-parks and under-utilizes** land.
- Adding **3 apartments** above retail requires relaxing parking to 2.5 / 1 000.
- A two-story version (16 units) doubles allowed density yet demonstrates that **parking standards suppress mixed-use viability**.

Hess concluded that “**allowing more housing widens the district’s appeal and stabilizes retail**”, but only if Groton relaxes parking by right or via flexible design review.

Public Commentary

Participants acknowledged that *housing can sustain local business* but pressed for:

- Guarantees that housing would remain **appropriately scaled and architecturally consistent** with the historic district.
- Exploration of **shared parking or municipal lots** to offset private-parcel constraints.

- Proof that the overlay would not erode the town’s “rural-village” aesthetic.

3. Refinement of Design Concepts (October 8)

Discussion here blended **built-form and economic activation** themes. Studio Institu presented “streetscape cohesion” models—continuous street walls, infill on gaps like **Dunkin Plaza** and **Moison**, and **light-industrial/artisanal uses near Station Avenue**. Residents responded positively to uses like **micro-breweries, small restaurants, and artist/maker spaces** that extend vitality to the rail-trail edge.

The facilitation team noted that these small-format, mixed-use concepts require a **more permissive parking framework and predictable review process** to be attractive to investors—echoing earlier feedback about clarity and consistency.

4. Vision Scenarios & Build-Out Modeling (October 15)

Studio Institu revisited the **overlay’s patchwork geography**—non-contiguous parcels straddling historic-district boundaries—which has made implementation uneven. Through a detailed *build-out scenario*, they compared alternate parking regimes:

Scenario	Retail + Dining	Dwellings	Required Spaces	Potential Relief
Current overlay	26 000 sf retail + 8 900 sf dining	67	382 spaces	—
Concord-style reduction	same	same	~264 spaces (-118)	Trim 1BR ratio to 1 space
Easthampton smart-growth	same	same	~201 spaces (-181)	1 space / dwelling + shared municipal lots

These comparisons underscored that **Groton’s current standards inhibit compact development** and that re-defining “height” and “parking minimums” could unlock mixed-use viability.

Visual/Design Highlights

Renderings showed:

- New mixed-use buildings at **Dunkin Plaza, Moison**, and the **former Tory Block**, scaled to complement historic architecture.
- **Narrowed curb cuts**, shared parking, and a **loop trail connection from Adams → Court → Station → Rail Trail**.
- A proposed **pavilion/common at Station Avenue**, aligned with **Boutwell House**, envisioned as a civic amenity for markets, performances, and trail visitors.

Audience Feedback (Development-Specific)

Residents and business owners generally welcomed the design language but asked:

- Whether **overlay adjustments (density, parking)** would apply automatically or require case-by-case waivers.
- How to **balance new residential vitality with retail preservation** given limited market depth.
- To **protect historic-district review authority** so infill “enhances, not overwhelms” existing buildings.
- Clarification on **ownership incentives**—zoning enables but does not compel redevelopment; several wanted assurance that existing owners could “opt in” voluntarily.

5. Overarching Themes & Tone on Development

1. **Strong interest in modest, character-based growth.** Residents repeatedly affirmed support for small-scale, walkable, mixed-use infill that sustains downtown businesses while preserving architectural heritage.
2. **Pragmatic skepticism.** Many doubt that developers will act without clearer incentives or relaxed parking/height rules, citing 18 years of minimal results under current overlay language.
3. **Housing as both opportunity and anxiety.** Seen as essential for vitality but feared for infrastructure strain and cultural change.
4. **Desire for implementation clarity.** Calls for specific pathways—e.g., streamlined site-plan waivers, public-private partnerships, grant pursuit—to move from “vision” to action.

5. **Consensus on aesthetics and stewardship.** Any new building must “fit Groton,” use traditional massing, and integrate landscaping and shared public space.

Overall Tone

The meetings conveyed a **constructive, data-informed, and largely supportive** mood toward rejuvenating Town Center through controlled mixed-use development. While some residents voiced caution about density and wetlands, the majority of comments were forward-looking, urging the town to “**fix what makes investment impossible now—parking, permitting, and predictability—without losing our charm.**”

Meeting Minutes - Destination Groton Committee (DGC) Meeting

Four Corners Neighborhood Focus Group Input/Feedback Meeting

Meeting Date: January 13, 2026

Attendees:

- **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton, Heather Puksta
- **Sub-Committee member:** Karen Tucker-Barisano
- **Other Attendees:** Members of the Four Corners Neighborhood Association

Meeting Summary: This meeting was held as a neighborhood feedback session between the Destination Groton Committee (DGC) and fourteen residents of the Four Corners area to gather input on local needs, concerns, and future opportunities. The committee provided background on its mission to support a walkable, economically viable town while addressing traffic, planning, and quality-of-life issues. Residents emphasized long-standing concerns related to traffic safety, lack of neighborhood amenities, limited recreational infrastructure, and the future of undeveloped parcels in Four Corners. Significant discussion focused on preserving neighborhood character, addressing perceived planning gaps, and identifying community-driven ideas to be incorporated into Destination Groton's emerging 10-year vision. The committee reaffirmed its intent to integrate Four Corners feedback into its planning report and future recommendations to town leadership.

To-Do List

1. **Incorporate Four Corners feedback into Destination Groton planning report**
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee
Next step: Include neighborhood priorities and notify the state of expanded scope beyond Town Center.
2. **Meet with West Groton stakeholders to gather parallel neighborhood input**
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee
Timeline: Scheduled for the following week.
3. **Research and summarize funding opportunities for neighborhood infrastructure** (playgrounds, sidewalks, Complete Streets projects)
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee
Timeline: To be determined.
4. **Coordinate with the Complete Streets Committee** to ensure Four Corners projects are included in the next submission cycle
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee and Complete Streets Committee
Timeline: Next Complete Streets project list.
5. **Develop a proactive marketing approach for vacant pads and storefronts** in Four Corners and other gateways

Responsible: Destination Groton Committee

Next step: Identify target uses and potential tenants consistent with neighborhood character.

6. **Document the concept of an agricultural / therapeutic learning center** (including nature-based and special-needs programming) as a long-term vision item

Responsible: Neighborhood Association Member

Next step: Capture concept with noted zoning and regulatory constraints.

7. **Share visual materials of the undeveloped Four Corners parcel** with neighborhood representatives

Responsible: Destination Groton Committee

Next step: Email image/graphic to designated contact.

8. **Encourage neighborhood advocacy and written input to town leadership** supporting inclusive planning and Destination Groton involvement

Responsible: Four Corners residents and neighborhood group

Timeline: Ongoing.

9. **Recommend inclusion of an economic development staff role or entity** in final report

Responsible: Destination Groton Committee

Next step: Include as an implementation recommendation.

Detailed Discussion

1. Purpose and Context of the Meeting

The Destination Groton Committee clarified that the session was intended as a listening forum rather than a formal committee meeting. Committee members outlined their role as a cross-cutting, volunteer body working across town silos to address traffic, economic vitality, and long-term planning, supported by recent state grants focused on town planning and traffic mobility.

2. Neighborhood Identity and Equity Concerns

Four Corners residents expressed concern that their area has historically felt overlooked in town planning and investment decisions. Several speakers noted that the neighborhood generates significant tax revenue but lacks basic amenities found elsewhere in town, such as playgrounds, sidewalks, and community gathering spaces. There was repeated emphasis on the desire for equitable distribution of town resources.

3. Traffic, Safety, and Enforcement

Traffic safety was a dominant theme. Residents described high speeds, frequent red-light violations, difficulty exiting neighborhood roads, and limited enforcement along Route 119 and adjacent streets. Concerns were raised that additional development without traffic mitigation would exacerbate existing safety risks. Committee members referenced traffic study findings indicating that a majority of traffic is cut-through traffic, reinforcing the need for long-term mitigation strategies.

4. Land Use and the Undeveloped Fourth Corner Parcel

Significant discussion focused on the undeveloped parcel at Four Corners. Residents strongly opposed commercial development on this residential/agricultural-zoned land and expressed concern about marketing that suggests otherwise. Ideas proposed included town acquisition for public use, a park or visitor gateway, or an educational/agricultural learning center. Zoning constraints, land cost, and proximity to a cannabis retailer were identified as major challenges.

5. Community Amenities and Recreation

Residents highlighted the lack of playgrounds, sidewalks, and recreational facilities suitable for young children and families in Four Corners. Comparisons were made to neighboring towns with successful, inclusive playgrounds and recreation spaces. The need for safe pedestrian connections and neighborhood-scale amenities was emphasized as critical to attracting and retaining families.

6. Economic Development and Retail Character

Participants discussed vacant storefronts and pads, particularly within the Shaw's Plaza area, and the absence of a proactive strategy to attract desirable tenants. Residents expressed a preference for small-scale, character-driven uses such as bookstores with cafés, family-friendly restaurants, arts-related businesses, and complementary uses tied to Groton Hill Music Center and the town's cultural assets. Concerns were raised about incompatible adjacencies, such as family uses near liquor or cannabis retailers.

7. Governance, Planning, and Implementation

Multiple speakers criticized what they perceived as reactive decision-making by existing boards and a lack of long-term vision enforcement. The idea of a proactive development or economic development body, supported by professional staff, was repeatedly raised. Committee members acknowledged these concerns and noted that recommending improved implementation capacity would be part of the final Destination Groton report.

8. Next Steps and Ongoing Engagement

The committee emphasized that this input would be captured as part of a 10-year vision rather than an immediate development plan. Residents were encouraged to remain engaged, participate in follow-up meetings, and advocate to town leadership for inclusive planning and investment. The meeting concluded with mutual acknowledgment of the value of continued dialogue between the neighborhood and Destination Groton.

Meeting Minutes - Destination Groton Committee (DGC) Meeting

West Groton Focus Group Input/Feedback Meeting

Meeting Date: January 24, 2026

Attendees:

- **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton
- **Other Attendees:** West Groton Residents

Meeting Summary: The Destination Groton Committee held a neighborhood feedback meeting with seven West Groton residents on January 24, 2026 as part of its broader Town Center Visioning Process. The meeting focused on gathering localized input related to traffic safety, infrastructure needs, trail connectivity, and modest neighborhood-scale economic activity. Residents emphasized the importance of preserving West Groton's quiet, village-like character while addressing long-standing safety issues at key intersections and improving pedestrian and trail access. Ideas were also shared regarding potential adaptive reuse of underutilized properties, public amenities, and connections to the town's trail network.

To-Do List

10. **Prepare a written summary of West Groton neighborhood feedback** and include key themes and recommendations in the Town Center Vision Report
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee
Next step: To be completed prior to final report publication
11. **Share West Groton safety and sidewalk concerns with the Complete Streets Committee** for review and potential follow-up
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee
Next step: To be determined
12. **Incorporate West Groton-specific infrastructure priorities** (sidewalk continuity, crosswalks, sightline improvements) into the broader implementation framework
Responsible: Vision Plan drafting team
Next step: To be determined
13. **Invite residents to submit additional written feedback by email** for consideration before finalizing the report
Responsible: Destination Groton Committee
Next step: Ongoing
14. **Include trail connectivity and recreational ideas** (rail trail extensions, river access, skating areas) in the report's findings and recommendations
Responsible: Vision Plan drafting team
Next step: To be determined

Detailed Discussion

9. Purpose of the Meeting and Visioning Context

Committee members reviewed the origins of Destination Groton and the ongoing visioning effort, emphasizing that the process is intended to produce a flexible, long-term (10-year) vision rather than a fixed development plan. Members reiterated that public input is essential and that recommendations will ultimately guide, not mandate, future decisions by town boards and residents.

10. Traffic Safety and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Residents raised significant concerns about traffic safety in West Groton, particularly near the bridge, Pepperell Road, and West Main Street. Issues cited included poor sightlines due to vegetation, misplaced stop signs, speeding vehicles, and discontinuous sidewalks. Specific attention was given to the lack of sidewalk continuity near residential properties and the need for safer pedestrian crossings. Participants supported forwarding these concerns to the Complete Streets Committee for evaluation and potential action.

11. Trails, Recreation, and Connectivity

Discussion highlighted the extensive trail network in and around West Groton, including informal trail connections to the Squannacook and Nashua Rivers, town forest areas, and existing rail trail segments. Residents expressed interest in better signage, safer bridge crossings, and formalized trail connections that could link recreational users to the village area. Ideas included improving access to scenic river areas and enhancing trail-related amenities without over-commercialization.

12. Community Amenities and Public Spaces

Participants proposed several community-oriented amenities, such as seasonal or informal skating areas, small dog parks or off-leash areas, benches, and gathering spaces near existing parks and trails. These ideas were framed as quality-of-life improvements rather than revenue-driven projects, with an emphasis on accessibility for families, seniors, and residents.

13. Neighborhood-Scale Economic Activity

Residents generally supported the idea of very small-scale, neighborhood-serving uses—such as a convenience store, café, or similar establishment—provided they align with West Groton’s character and do not introduce excessive traffic or noise. Adaptive reuse of underutilized or town-owned properties (including the former fire station area) was discussed conceptually, with strong caution expressed about the need for early and ongoing neighborhood engagement before any development proposals.

14. Preservation of Character and Historic Context

Residents stressed that West Groton's appeal lies in its quiet, historic, and low-density character. Any future changes should prioritize safety, walkability, and aesthetics while avoiding large-scale or intrusive development. Participants emphasized that improvements should enhance, not transform, the neighborhood.