

Destination Groton

Exploring the Possibilities



The Destination Groton vision is to celebrate the Town's rich history and build a sustainable economic base for the future development of all Stakeholders.

September 8, 2021



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Executive Summary

With the arrival of the Indian Hill Music Center in the fall of 2022, the Town of Groton will continue to expand the many facets of the community that have made it a “Destination Community”, a place where people come from other places to enjoy the town’s culture, history, art, and natural resources. This report, begun in the fall of 2020, is designed to be a resource for the Town as it faces the opportunities and challenges the future holds. **That future is now.** How we engage as a community of Stakeholders (***Town Residents, Business Community and Town Leaders***) over the coming year will determine whether we get out in front of it or sit back and wait to react to it.

A Working Group of six individuals and several consultants led by the Groton Business Association (GBA), is responsible for the report’s contents and its findings and conclusion.

Information in this report has been collected in the following areas: Profile of Groton; Economic Considerations; Views of Key Stakeholders; Case Studies of MA Destination Communities; Regional Partners; and Groton Planning Documents.

23 Findings in 6 groupings are presented in Chapter IX and summarized below.

1. **Learn from other Destination communities:** Successful Destination Communities have the support and collaboration of all Stakeholders (Town Residents, Business and Non-profit Communities and Town leaders) and can contribute to a greater sense of community, quality of life and civic pride.
2. **Pay attention to local constituencies:** Stakeholders interviewed for this study are very enthusiastic about Groton becoming a Destination Community but wish to do so without losing the historic, rural small-town character of our Town.
3. **Access outside sources of funding:** Groton should pursue program and infrastructure funding opportunities that can assist Destination Groton.
4. **Market strategically:** Destination Communities focus on developing strategic plans which include guiding change and assisting visitors through a Visitors Center and social media.
5. **Retain the character of the town:** Groton has many wonderful assets that already appeal to visitors and they must be preserved.
6. **The time to move forward is now:** Groton has the opportunity to celebrate the Town’s rich history and build a sustainable economic base that embraces the future, if it acts now.

Based on the Findings, the GBA Working Group concludes that an individual, and a new Town Destination Groton Committee be established, and be responsible for coordinating and managing the Destination Groton concept and bring it to reality.

I. Introduction

Groton has a fabled history whose narrative helps tell the American story. Throughout its long history, Groton has managed to maintain its rural character and its storied New England charm. This report attempts to capture the many reasons to celebrate Groton's past as well as envision its future as a Destination Community.

The Town of Groton has an extraordinary landscape with access to open space, a fascinating and important history with numerous historic buildings and sites, two prestigious prep schools, highly rated public schools, farms, orchards and a quintessential New England town center. Groton also has a strong sense of community with a rich tapestry of non-profit organizations providing regular community events and helping to support and make accessible Groton's history, open space, cultural and recreational opportunities.

In recent years, the advent of new restaurants for fine dining has contributed to creating Groton's strongly positive "destination" reputation. In the fall of 2022, the anticipated opening of the Indian Hill Music Center, a world class music education and performance location now under construction, will accelerate the pace, and increase the geographic range of people coming to Groton.

In the fall of 2020, a small Working Group organized through the Groton Business Association (GBA), began to discuss, and explore the potential benefits and challenges these changes will bring to Groton, including the potential for positioning Groton as a successful "Destination Community". (GBA Working Group Bios in Appendix 1.)

In a letter to the Select Board and the Town Manager, dated November 20, 2020 GBA President Jeff Gordon stated, "The Working Group will produce a study that will identify economic issues facing Groton's business and nonprofit community, and the effect of increased tourism on the local tax base". (Letter and Press Release in Appendix 2.)

In its analysis, the GBA Working Group has:

- Researched how other Massachusetts communities manage issues related to being a Destination Community such as Lenox (Tanglewood), Sturbridge (Old Sturbridge Village), and North Adams (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art).
- Conducted focus groups and surveyed Stakeholders from the greater business, nonprofit and town communities about opportunities and concerns.
- Identified potential for commercial and retail development and the effect this economic growth would have on local job creation and the local tax base.

The GBA Working Group looks forward to working collaboratively with town and community leaders to address opportunities and infrastructure implications. In the end, we believe engaging the greater Groton community in this broader conversation now will better our collective readiness and thereby help determine Groton's future quality of life.

Let the conversation begin.

II. Groton Profile

Chapter Findings

- Groton has a rich 365-year history and a quintessential New England charm that can serve as a solid base for making Groton a successful Destination Community.
- Groton has many assets and attractions that already draw people to our town. Nature, agriculture, and the arts prevail throughout the community. A growing reputation for fine dining and Ecotourism has increased the appeal of visiting, exploring, and staying in Groton.
- Groton celebrates a number of events throughout the year that attract not only local residents but outside visitors as well. These include Grotonfest, the Fireman's Muster, Farmer's Market, Groton Road Race and July 4th Fireworks. These events help define our community.

Groton Yesterday

After Native Americans used the land for many centuries as a primary hunting ground, European settlers officially founded Groton Plantation in 1655. The town then became a regional center driven by stagecoach, and then train, access. After the more commercial area of Groton Plantation became the separate town of Ayer, Groton developed as a quiet agricultural community, whose charms were appreciated largely by local residents. Major growth in the late 1900's, spurred significant efforts to preserve Groton's open space and scenic beauty.

Groton's history of settlement reflects America's early life on the frontier beginning with King Phillip's War which nearly destroyed the town and later Groton's important involvement in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. History permeates all of Groton, with historic houses and monuments to historic events in many places and numerous historically important people with many stories including:

- John Tinker, a founder of Groton, established the first trading post and for whom a recently created accessible trail near the location of the trading post was named.
- Col. William C. Prescott, in 1775 led Minutemen gathered on the Town Green in front of the First Parish Church to Concord and then took command of the colonial forces at

Bunker Hill. The Prescott School, Groton's first High School is named for him and today houses the Prescott Community Center.

- Governor George Boutwell, who served as Secretary of the Treasury under President U. S. Grant and was a noted abolitionist and environmentalist and whose 1851 residence is now the Groton History Center.



- The nationally recognized cleanup of the Nashua River by Groton resident Marion Stoddart, who founded the Nashua River Watershed Association, headquartered in Groton, was recognized by the United Nations as one of 500 most important local conservationists worldwide.

- West Groton Center, a classic small mill village along the Squannacook River.
- The Lost Lake Community, founded in the 1920's as an innovative way for city residents to own and enjoy land in the countryside.
- First Parish Church, known as the Old Meeting House, that served as the site of town government in Groton's early years.
- Lawrence Academy, one of the first private and most important educational institutions in the country.

Groton Today

Assets and Attractions

Groton has numerous assets and attractions which naturally position the town to become a Destination Community. The key assets include Groton's Town Center, natural resources, history, cultural/artistic features, business/non-profit communities and events and activities. With the arrival of Indian Hill Music in late 2022, there exists an exciting opportunity to build upon Groton's assets, envision the changes that Indian Hill Music will bring to Groton and plan how Groton could position itself to best take advantage of becoming a Destination Community.

Town Center

Groton's Town Center has retained the quintessential image of a New England Village. Framed by the Gibbet Hill drumlin, the Old Meeting House and the historic buildings of Lawrence Academy, the center includes historic homes, small shops, church spires, small parks, various places of interest and direct access to open space. A few of the places of interest within walking distance of Groton Center include:

- The Groton Inn restored on the site where a fire destroyed the original Stagecoach Inn (circa 1685)
- Prescott Community Center, including a Visitors Center
- Boutwell House / Groton History Center, including Georgie's Garden, a wildflower meadow with spectacular views to Gibbet Hill
- The Old Burying Ground with Revolutionary sites and a book documenting the history of the graves. This was a filming location for the 2019 movie of Little Women
- Gibbet Hill with 180° views to the west and Bancroft "Castle" to explore
- Direct access to the Nashua River Rail Trail



Natural Resources

Groton has some of the most remarkable geologic features, biodiversity and access to open space in this region. Eighty-eight percent of Groton has been designated by the state as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). One half of Groton's 33 square miles is protected landscape, including two rivers and numerous ponds. With more than 100 miles of maintained trails, this marvelous landscape is accessible to the public. Some of Groton's special, publicly accessible properties are listed below, a small sampling of Groton's 200+ conservation properties:

- **Nashua River Rail Trail:** a 12.5-mile paved trail from Ayer, through Groton Center to NH, with stretches along the Nashua River.
- **The Nashua and Squannacock Rivers** host miles of canoeing and kayaking in the wilderness environment.
- **Mass Audubon Rocky Hill Sanctuary:** a 440 acre preserve with 3 miles of trails by rocky ledges, beaver ponds and vernal pools.

- **Bates/Blackman Conservation Area:** across from the Indian Hill Music Center, the trail crosses James Brook, traverses open meadows to a wooded picnic area before climbing a drumlin hill to afford spectacular views to Mounts Wachusett, Watatic and Monadnock, with the Music Center below.
- **Groton Town Forest:** 500+ acres, bounded by both the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers, with 14 miles of both flat and undulating trails through forests and by kettle ponds.
- **New England Forestry Foundation Wharton Property:** 700 acres of sustainably managed woodlands with miles of trails, including along an esker ridge where some of the best examples of glacial landforms anywhere can be viewed.
- **General Field and Wildflower Meadow:** the 265-acre General Field / Surrenden Farm properties have open agricultural fields with long open views to the west.



- **Shepley Hill and the Soapstone Quarry:** connected to the rail trail, a network of hiking and equestrian trails traverse around and over two drumlin hills and lead to the Soapstone Quarry, a hidden jewel of Groton's landscape.
- **Angus Hill Lookout:** a short but steep trail leads to the top of an open drumlin hill with 360° views to a sculptural cluster of drumlins, overlooking a horse farm below.
- **Rich State Forest:** 500 acres of managed forests along the Nashua River and a connected oxbow pond.

- **Groton Place / Sabine Property:** managed trails with plantings connecting to forested land, all along the Nashua River.
- **Groton's vast open spaces and forests** host abundant wildlife including; black bears, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, deer, turkeys, several endangered species and seasonal denizens.

Cultural and Artistic Features

Perhaps drawn by the landscape and history, Groton has been a home for artists for many years. The addition of the Indian Hill Music Center brings Groton into an even higher level of arts and culture. Works by local artists are on display in many places and can even be found in the landscape. A few examples include:

- The Indian Hill Music Center will not only have a world class Concert Hall, it will also be a center of music education and a gathering place for musical artists.
- The NOA Galleries and School of Fine Art, where local artists display their works and art lessons for students of all ages are offered.
- Matisse Forest Bells. A work of art located on a wooded parcel of conservation land by Groton resident and world-renowned artist Paul Matisse.
- The Groton History Center's JD Poor Murals, donated by Indian Hill Music and preserved with CPC funds, on public display at the Groton Inn.
- A growing number of local artists have rented studios at Prescott Community Center.
- The Grotonwood Camp and Conference Center, set on 180 acres on Lost Lake, provides a site for camping, retreats, conferences and weddings.
- Outdoor concerts at the Smith Social Pavilion on the Town Fields in Groton Center.
- The Groton School and Lawrence Academy, nationally recognized prep schools, both with magnificent campuses.

The Business and Non-Profit Communities

Groton's business community consists of a number of mostly small businesses along Rt.119 in four major areas: Groton Center, Mill Run Plaza, CVS area and Four Corners. The businesses include: Restaurants (16), Liquor Stores (3), The Groton Inn, Supermarket (1), Hardware Store (1), Hairdressers (6), a number of professional offices and a handful of small shops. It is estimated that Groton has several hundred home-based businesses. Groton residents have access to a plethora of shopping choices within 15 to 20 minutes in Nashua to the North and Littleton/Westford/Acton to the East.

Groton's Non-Profit Council was created as a liaison organization linking the non-profit organizations in Groton to Town government, with a mission to "explore and expand the ways in which the non-profits and the town can support each other's objectives, and to enhance awareness of the many benefits and forms of support which the non-profits provide to the town and its citizens". There are over two dozen major non-profit organization in Groton, with a range of focuses including:

- **Education:** Groton School, Lawrence Academy, Groton Community School, Groton/Dunstable Education Foundation
- **Faith:** First Parish Church of Groton, New England Shirdi Sai Parivaar, Grotonwood, St. James R.C. Church, Union Congregational Church, First Baptist Church, Shepard of the Valley Lutheran Church, and the Christian Union Church.
- **Preservation:** Nashua River Watershed Association, Groton Conservation Trust, Old Groton Meeting House Preservation Fund
- **Town Organizations:** Groton Historical Society, Friends of Prescott, Indian Hill Music, Groton Business Association, Grange #7, Groton Interfaith Council, Groton Neighbors, Groton Garden Club, Arts Nashoba, Pages for Peace Foundation, Groton Elders, Groton Neighborhood Food Project, Mountain Lakes Club, Girl Scouts - Nashaway Service Unit, Seven Hills Foundation, Groton Public Library Endowment Trust, Shanklin Music Hall, Groton Electric Company and Groton Fire Department.



Events and Activities

Groton has a year-round series of events and outdoor activities, including:

- **Grotonfest:** an annual event in late September to celebrate Groton's small businesses, showcase local artists and their crafts, and introduce local non-profit organizations.
- **Agriculture**
 - farms with farm stands and orchards with apple picking
 - cut your own Christmas tree
- **Williams Barn:** located at the entrance to a 94-acre preserve is a magnificently restored barn used for gatherings and presentations, as well as the site for a regular Groton Farmer's Market.
- **The Fireman's Muster:** an annual community event held over Labor Day weekend in West Groton.
- **Canoeing and kayaking:** boat launches are available on the Nashua River and local lakes and ponds. Canoes and kayaks are available for rent.
- **Fishing:** the Nashua River is a popular fishing site, especially for large and small mouth bass. The Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers are rare, eastern Massachusetts cold water fisheries for trout.
- The **Groton Country Club:** nine-hole public golf course that includes a function hall, swimming pool, pickle-ball courts, located on a cluster of drumlins, offering some of the best views anywhere.
- **Trails:** Groton has an extensive trail network for hiking, cross country skiing and snow shoeing.
- The **Hazel Grove Equestrian Area** along the Nashua River.
- **Sargisson Beach** on Lost Lake.



III. Economic Considerations

Chapter Findings

- Opening in 2022, The Music Center at Indian Hill will be a unique place designed to invigorate the cultural landscape and be a magnet for attracting visitors from a broad region to come and enjoy not only the music education and performances but also all that Groton and the surrounding area has to offer.
- Groton has almost no available undeveloped land zoned commercial. Of Groton's available building space 90% is residential, 6% is exempt, and 1% is industrial, leaving only 3% of the total available building space for commercial development.
- Unless Groton develops a broader business base to serve Destination Groton customers, surrounding towns may realize a majority of the economic benefit.
- Some existing commercial uses are likely to shift over time to businesses oriented to providing services or sales to visitors such as increased dining options or boutique type stores.

An Economic Snapshot (Town Annual Report 2020)

The Town of Groton is a picturesque community of about 10,600 residents nestled between the major highways of Route 495 to the east, Route 2 to the south, Route 3 to the north and Route 190 to the west. Groton has a supportive business climate with room to grow in Groton Center and the Four Corners area at the intersection of Boston Road/Route 225. To encourage businesses to locate in Groton, the Town established an expedited permitting process, and compiled a Guide to Permitting aimed at helping them navigate the permitting process in a timely fashion. Town Meeting voted to rescind the Concept Plan, making it easier for businesses to work directly with the Planning Board without having to wait for Town Meeting. The Town also has a single tax rate and is part of the Fort Devens, Ayer and Groton Economic Target Area (ETA), which offers a wide range of State incentives to benefit businesses wanting to set up shop or expand in Groton.

Meals Tax/Room Occupancy Tax: These taxes generated over \$200,000 in Fiscal Year 2020. The Groton Inn and the new restaurants in Town have been very successful and generated a healthy new revenue source for the Town. Originally, the Town budgeted \$300,000 in Fiscal Year 2021, but due to the pandemic, has reduced this estimate as the Groton Inn and most restaurants were closed for many months.

Indian Hill Music as a “Renewed” Community Asset

Indian Hill Music is a non-profit organization and one of only a few organizations in the U.S. that combines a community music school, professional symphony orchestra, diverse concert series, and high-impact outreach.

The story of Indian Hill Music is one of a remarkable 36-year journey. Founded in Groton in 1985, Indian Hill Music moved its school and performance center to Littleton when the organization experienced a rapid period of growth. Today, Indian Hill Music has come full circle relocating to the wonderful Town where the organization was founded, nestled into a magnificent 110 acre setting of rolling hills and open vistas.

Indian Hill Music’s mission is to share the transformative power of music through teaching and performing, and giving music generously when there is need. This mission reflects the impact of music on people’s lives, and its ability to strengthen, heal, and inspire.

The new Music Center will provide programming opportunities well beyond those that are currently offered in Indian Hill Music’s Littleton facility and should have a much broader geographic reach. Some examples of how Indian Hill Music will expand its programming include:

- With 35 teaching studios (compared to 21 at present) including several larger spaces, Indian Hill Music will increase its private lesson student base and also increase its group opportunities. Youth orchestras, wind ensembles, choruses and the like will span a much broader regional base. Adult ensembles and bands will also become much more regionally focused. Beyond the weekly lesson or rehearsal, private lesson and group learning students will be featured in multiple recitals and concerts held in world-class performance spaces. These events will draw large audiences of proud and excited families and friends to come to Groton for student events and perhaps enjoy what the town has to offer before or after these recitals and concerts.
- The Music Center is a convening place where community groups from the region could be invited to participate in educational and performance opportunities. These could be youth or adult community days where public school or adult community ensembles are invited to Groton to join together for a day of music, learning, and performing for an audience. These events would not be limited to Indian Hill Music students but would be a broader regional invitation.
- The Music Center will include a 1,000-seat concert hall with additional lawn seating for summer concerts and a smaller 300-seat performance hall. Both halls will feature world-class acoustics to enhance the concert experience. In these new spaces, Indian Hill Music will now present professional artists of a higher caliber who attract audiences from all over. In the performance world, audiences travel to see favorite artists in world class venues. Given the many assets that Groton and the surrounding communities have to offer, these professional concerts present an ideal catalyst for

audiences coming to the region and having an extended stay beyond the day of the concert.

- Summers at Indian Hill Music will feature music festivals that include workshops, masterclasses, lectures, and events, all culminating in a concert that includes a lawn audience. The concert will typically feature higher caliber professional artists who attract audiences from a wider geographic area to come to Groton and experience not only the music but also the attractions that the region has to offer.

There is no question Indian Hill Music will become a major new center of activity in Groton when it opens in 2022. How much Groton changes or adapts can either be a laissez-faire approach where we are reactive, or a managed approach - where we envision a plan to guide us.

Implications and Challenges for Existing Groton Businesses

Indian Hill Music School

Indian Hill Music students are not expected to provide a significant benefit to Groton businesses due to the current limited offerings for short-term visitors and students. This challenge will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Prior to 2020, Indian Hill Music students have been drawn from surrounding towns.

- 95 percent of students live within 25 minutes of Groton
- Nearly all of these students and families will pass through Ayer or Littleton and their business centers to reach Groton. North, South and East routes will typically be used:

- Students from towns designated as 'north' will commute to Indian Hill Music by way of Rt. 40 or Rt. 495/110 in Littleton: 36 – 40%

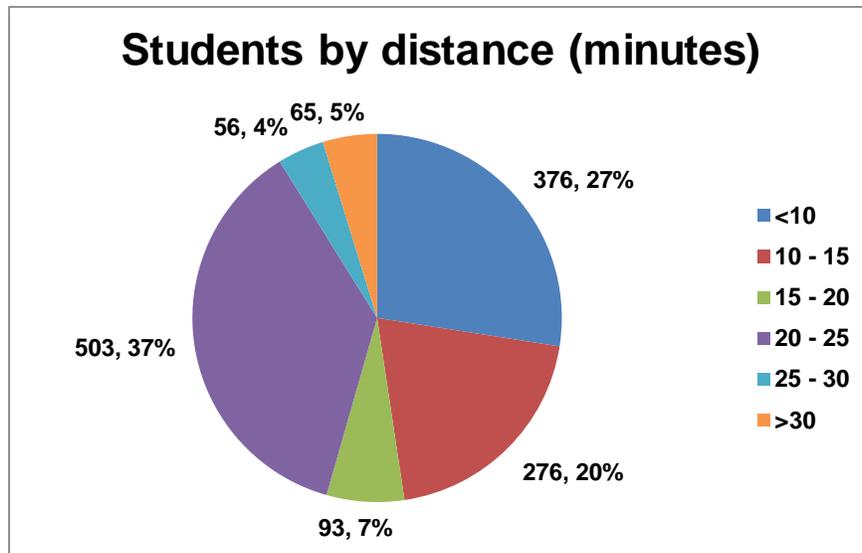
These could be customers of Groton Center or business to the east on 119

- Students from towns designated as 'south' will commute through Ayer and then to Rt 2A or Rt 2 west in Harvard: 23 – 23%

These patrons are unlikely to be a major customer for Groton businesses.

- Students from towns designated 'east' will commute either to Rt.119 or right through Ayer to Rt 2 east in Harvard: 28 – 32%

- Groton business will be in competition with both the Point in Littleton and Ayer.



2019 Total: 1,369

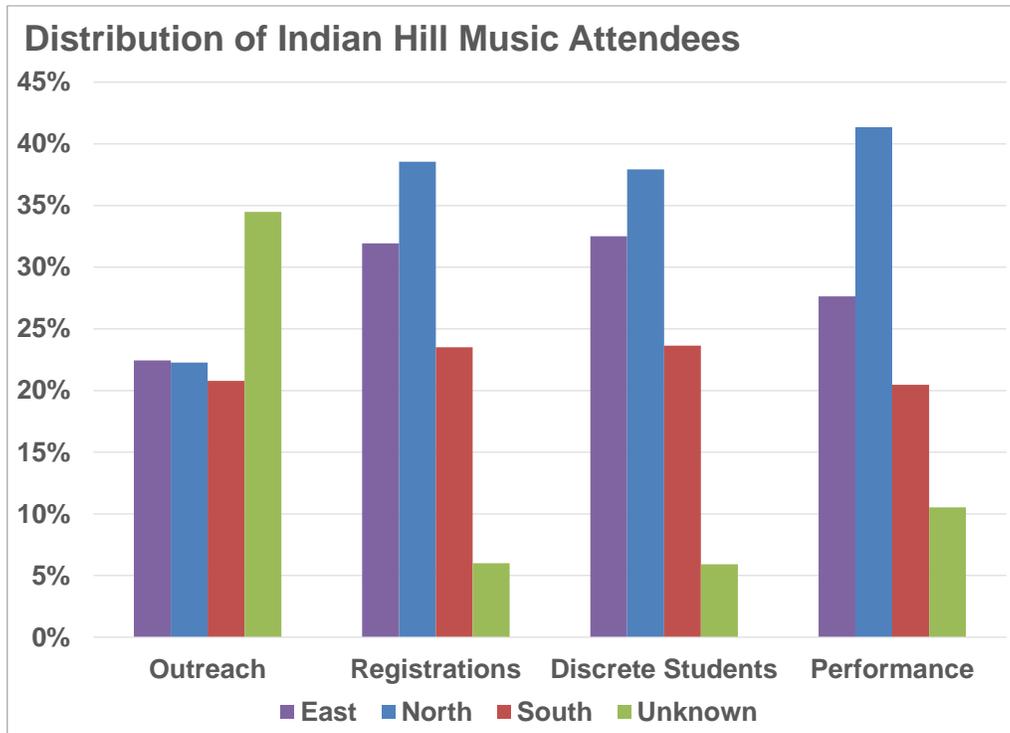
Patrons

Indian Hill Music attendees or patrons fall into two general groups; concert attendees and students. Prior to 2020, Indian Hill Music concert attendees were largely from within 25 miles of Groton:

- 91% came from less than 25 miles from Groton
- About half came from less than 15 minutes away
- Most of the attendees came from 20 – 25 minutes away are Acton

The new Indian Hill Music Center in Groton is expected to attract concert goers from greater distances due to better-known artists performing several times per year.

While most of the concert goers will be drawn from the current towns, those who come from greater distances could become patrons of Groton businesses and those of surrounding towns. As the number of concert goers coming to Indian Hill Music increases, there will be a gradual recognition by Groton businesses that Groton has become a destination. As a result, new business opportunities stemming from Indian Hill Music concerts will develop.



2019

It is important to note that Indian Hill Music when it opens in Groton (2022) will have a significant increase in capacity in order to accommodate the potential for an increase in the number of students and patrons than at its current facility in Littleton.

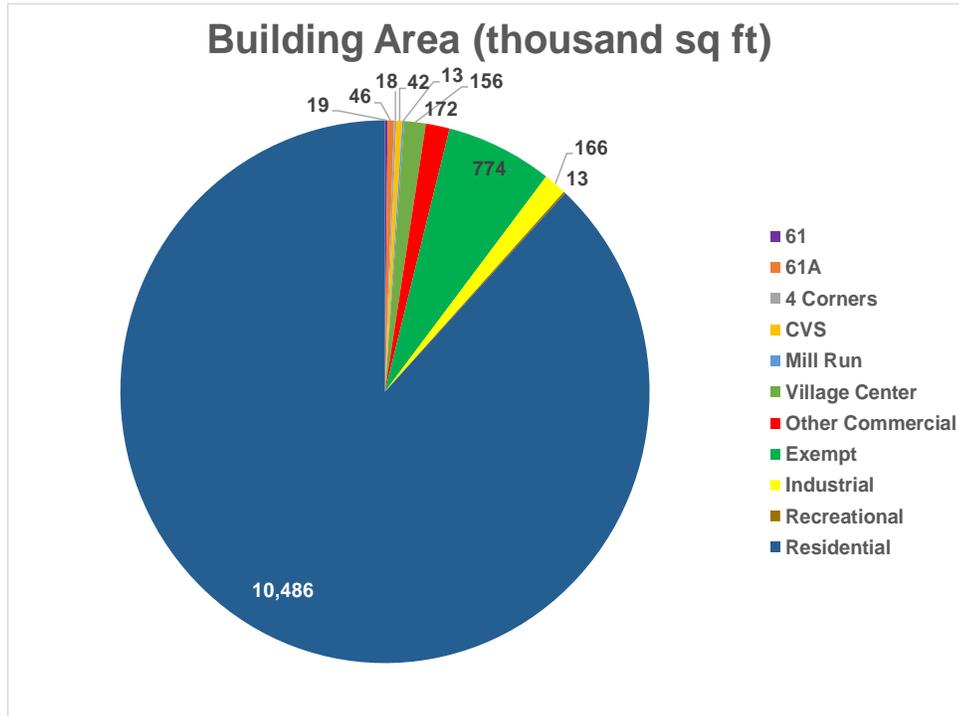
Indian Hill Music concert goers are likely to benefit some existing Groton businesses such as restaurants and the Groton Inn which will in turn increase meals and room tax revenue to the Town.

Indian Hill Music must not be viewed in isolation as a stand-alone attraction. From the beginning of its analysis the Working Group identified “Groton as the Destination” which means every new visitor that attends Indian Hill Music as a student, parent, or patron is a potential spin off visitor to take in and enjoy the rest of the assets and attractions in Town along with out-of-Town vacationers and/or residents.

Existing Areas for Commercial Growth

Groton is very much a residential and open space community. This is demonstrated by the lack of both existing building space and available undeveloped commercial and industrial land.

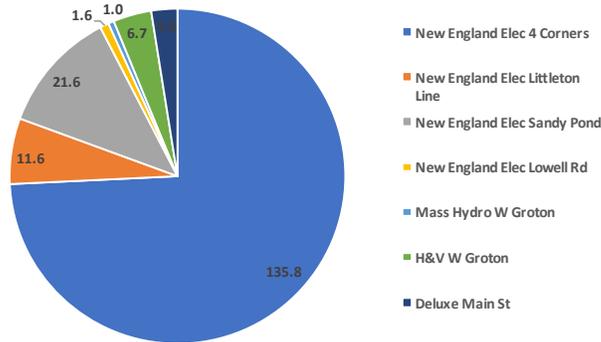
Of Groton's available building space 90% is residential, 6% is exempt, and 1% is industrial, leaving only 3% of the total available building space for commercial development. The four main commercial areas are: 1.) **Groton Center**, 2.) **CVS area** on Rt. 119 immediately East of Groton Center, 3.) **Mill Run Plaza** on Rt. 119 immediately West of Groton Center and 4.) **Four Corners**, at the intersection of Rts.119 and 225.



Today, commercial development in Groton is severely limited by the lack of undeveloped land that is zoned commercial. Nearly all the undeveloped land zoned industrial/commercial (93%) is owned by New England Electric. The remaining land is not located along Rt. 119 except for three sites at the Shaw's Four Corners location and at the former Donelan's supermarket site. Creating additional space for new business development will take time and will only be practical once the Groton Destination concept has been successfully demonstrated and is sustainable.

93% of Groton's undeveloped land zoned commercial and industrial is owned by New England Electric and located in the 4 Corners area

Groton undeveloped Commercial/Industrial Zoned Land (acres)



Demand for Food and Lodging Options

While Groton has the best high-end dining in the region which will likely be attractive to Indian Hill Music performance patrons, it does not have a full service of offerings. There are limited choices for eat-in dining and little family dining. Groton has no fast food. The Ayer rotary could draw student patrons going east or south to or from Indian Hill Music. For Indian Hill Music performance patrons, take out is of limited interest. The Indian Hill Music in-house dining facility with 110 indoor and 40 outdoor seats will compete with Groton businesses. There are a number of restaurants within a few minutes of Indian Hill Music at the Point in Littleton and in Ayer.



Groton Food Offerings Compared to Surrounding Towns

Fine Dining	+ ¹	Gibbet Hill Grill, Station House, Forge & Vine, Herbal Lyceum, The Groton Inn
Take-Out	-	Bruno's Pizza, Groton House of Pizza, Main House, Dunkin' Donuts, The Country Butcher
Eat-In	-	Filho's Cucina, Ixtapa, Publick House, Blackbird Café, Johnson's Restaurant, Salt and Light Café, Groton Wellness Café, Dolce Amar
Fast Food	-	None

¹ + more than other towns. - less than other towns

It is unlikely a new hotel will be needed in Groton as Indian Hill Music performance attendance increases. There are nearly 700 hotel rooms in and near Groton. The Groton Inn has 60 rooms. Devens has two hotels, the Hilton Garden Inn with 118 rooms and the Springhill Suites by Marriott with 120 rooms, as well as Courtyard by Marriott with 115 rooms is located at the Point in Littleton, and the Westford Regency on Route 110 with 193 rooms. A bit further away is the Boxboro Regency with 143 rooms.

Conversion of Existing Buildings and Property

As Groton feels the effects of becoming a Destination Community it is probable that the needs of visitors will alter the current offerings of meals, lodging and shopping. This may lead to changes of use for existing buildings along Main Street and connecting streets such as Station Avenue or Hollis Street.



There may be a demand for overnight lodging which spurs growth of bed & breakfast establishments or room rentals. While B&Bs are welcome, their combined incremental impact on town tax revenue is likely to be very small. Increased dining options or boutique type stores may spring up as the highest and best use for properties shifts.

IV. Key Stakeholder Views of Groton's Future as a Destination Community

Chapter Findings

- Stakeholders participating in our Focus Groups or Survey, representing for-profit, non-profit, and governmental organizations overall are very enthusiastic about Groton becoming a Destination Community but wish to do so without losing the historic, rural small-town character of our Town.
- Stakeholders believe that Groton has many assets that can appeal to visitors, especially the unique historic character of Groton Center and Groton's natural environment.
- Stakeholder participants believe that change can be good, and that Groton will become an even more vibrant community as it becomes a Destination Community. They indicated with careful planning and communication, we can keep pace with the change and lead it.
- Concerns were expressed repeatedly in all Stakeholder sub-groups about the need for traffic mitigation strategies and infrastructure investments including: traffic calming, traffic noise reduction, directional signage, and the need for more parking in Town Center and at recreational trails.
- Participants expressed the need for a strong, visible Visitors Center and other municipal services such as public bathrooms

Objectives

Groton's potential as a Destination Community in great part lies in the community's view of its future and its support for change and so it was decided that members of the community themselves should be able to give voice to the challenges and opportunities for Groton as a Destination Community.

To accomplish this, key stakeholders drawn from non-profit organization, local government and from businesses were invited to take part in focus groups and in a survey.

One set of 30 stakeholders participated in one of four "live" Zoom focus groups held through the on-line Zoom platform. They were asked in advance of their participation to think about what they wanted most to "keep" about Groton as it changed; what Groton should "stop" so it

might facilitate progress; and what things the Town should “start” doing to achieve productive change.

Another set of stakeholders were sent a survey and asked to respond to question that would help determine:

1. the cultural and economic advantages to the Town of Groton, Groton’s business community and Groton’s non-profit organizations of increased visits.
2. the challenges associated with an increased number of visitors.
3. the 'synergy' among Groton's resources for people visiting Groton, for example, if a visitor comes to Groton for a musical event or other reason, will that person shop, eat or visit other resources if information about them is readily available?
4. opportunities, including potential for commercial and retail development, and the effect this economic growth would have on job opportunities and the local tax base.
5. investments that should be considered to increase the benefits and reduce potential problems associated with increased numbers of visitors.
6. Groton's assets for becoming a Destination Community.

While results differed according to the questions posed, it can be concluded that the Key Stakeholder’s who participated in focus groups and completed surveys were enthusiastic about the future of Groton and wanted to make sure that adequate planning was done to not only provide for success to the Town, but also to make sure that the Town retained its positive characteristics. (List of 37 participants see Acknowledgements A.)

A. DESTINATION GROTON FOCUS GROUPS

METHODOLOGY

Using the on-line platform of Zoom, participants joined the virtual groups having been asked in advance to think about their responses to these questions:

- What do you most want to KEEP about Groton as it becomes a Destination Community?
- What should Groton STOP doing as it develops as a Destination Community?
- What should Groton START doing to become a Destination Community?

Participants were invited from three basic demographic groups: Town officials/leaders; Businesses; and Nonprofits.

Each participant’s responses to these three basic questions were recorded exactly “as is” with no alternation in meaning from the Focus Group leaders. This was done to make sure we heard what people really said and meant and not to impose a pre-set of assumptions to their comments. After all the responses were recorded the Focus Group leaders grouped the responses into categories that seemed to capture the sense of the comments themselves. These categories included: Historic Character; Natural Resources; Sense of Community; Businesses; Non-Profits; Traffic/Parking; Public Services/Information; Regulations, and Communications/Collaboration.

The responses to each of these categories were then tabulated according to KEEPS, STOPS AND STARTS and from this data, priorities assigned for each.

RESULTS

The results from the four focus groups are as follows:

	TOPIC	KEY WORDS
KEEPS		
#1	Sense of Community	inclusive rural community, small town feel
#2	Natural Resources	conservation, trails, open-space
#3	Historic Character	Main Street, buildings, appearance
STOPS		
#1	Regulations	Licensing, zoning, cost of housing, tax base
#2	Traffic/Parking	Too much noise, speed; inadequate parking, lack of sidewalks
#3	Communication	Divisive negative rhetoric, complaining
STARTS		
#1	Public Services	Info and visitor centers, public bathrooms, centralized town events calendar, marketing
#2	Traffic/Parking	Address traffic challenges: reduce speeds, calming, signage, public transportation.

Participants basically want to keep what is best in Groton - its rural, small-town historic and environmentally friendly character; while eliminating governmental blocks to development, traffic problems and negative communications; and beginning the development of more public facilities.

The number of responses given to each category is as follows. From this, the focus group leaders assigned the priorities as summarized.

		KEEPS	STOPS	STARTS
A	Historic Character	9	0	1
B	Natural Resources	14	2	8
C	Sense of Community	16	8	4
D	Businesses	3	2	8
E	Non-Profits	6	0	4
F	Traffic/Parking	1	10	17
G	Public Services/Information	8	0	17
H	Regulations	1	11	2
I	Communications/Collaboration	7	10	8

The responses are shown as topic summaries, but each response contained information that would be helpful to a more detailed interpretation of its meaning.
(All responses are listed in Appendix 3.)

Historic Character

Participants referred to the “unique character of downtown” and the “overall appearance of the town” and support for the “historic districts with public oversight”. Maintaining “adaptive reuse of historic buildings” was proposed as was to “bury Utilities from CVS through Main Street.”

Natural Resources

“Accessibility” to open space, waterways and conservation areas often was stressed. The Town should “continue green or environmental initiatives” while “preserving Groton’s natural resources, rivers, greenways, lakes and other conservation lands.” The “wide open spaces” and “system of trails” was valued.

Sense of Community

The “wonderful small-town feel”, and its “rural farm character” were commented on, as were the wish to “Keep Groton as an inclusive community” with its “spirit of volunteerism”. The Country Club was seen as “valuable for the destination concept” as were the “welcoming signs” at multiple entrances to Town. “Small town activities such as Grotonfest, the Groton Road Race, the fireman’s muster” etc. were alluded to and as were the “police blotter and animal control blotter” in the local paper “because they reflect the best our small towns’ caring about people”.

Businesses

Comments related to Businesses included having “smaller business opportunities so people have things to do, places to eat and stay” and “encourage businesses that meet the culture of the town” and that “more retail business, especially walkable in the center of town” should be encouraged. The lack of the “number of places to eat” was noted. Specific suggestions included we “encourage food trucks or ice cream on the rail trail and canoe launch and have” more places for people to stay with a range of affordability”.

Non-Profits

The focus on non-profits included Groton’s “value on education and lifelong learning” and its “really rich adult education.” It was hoped we “continue the Nonprofit Council” and “keep recognizing the variety of contributions of non-profits”. Outdoor “public art installations” were encouraged.

Traffic/Parking

“Stop not dealing well with traffic issues” was cited often including a wish for “traffic calming strategies”, “Lower speed limit in Town Center; less wide roadways” and the “impact of the Route 40 / Route 119 intersection”. The need to “provide signage for people who don’t know where things are”, “public parking areas marked” and “more directional signs” were comments. Parking comments included the need for “improvement of parking to encourage walkability” and “sidewalks for walking between places”.

Public Services/Information

The Destination Community theme elicited comments about a “welcoming and visible “Visitors Center” with a “Visitor Center Map of places to see in Groton”. Also “electronic mapping access such as Groton trails and other apps” and “information about religious opportunities” was mentioned. Keeping the “high quality for Police, Fire and DPW” plus the “vibrant Library” was stated as was keeping “town website relevant” with a “calendar of events kept up-to-date for things that are happening in town”. The marketing of regional opportunities as Groton as the “Vermont of Massachusetts” and a “strategy to promote opportunities in all four seasons” was promoted as was the need for public services such as restrooms and a transportation system.

Regulations

Many of the comments regarding regulations related to the easing or elimination of current restrictions imposed by the Town. Zoning was mentioned in several places along with “difficulties from town government for new businesses coming in.” Some perceived there were too many “hoops for licensing, for example liquor licensing, and cited the “conflict between town and Indian Hill Music” as poor implementation of regulations.

Communications and Collaboration

Stakeholders examined the current communications and advised stopping “divisive rhetoric, including online” and working on “collaboration among town government and all organizations in town”, plus “getting people more engaged and participating in town”. One participant suggested we “reach out to other towns in the area to partner and share ideas” and another advocated for a “key person to assist business development”.

B. DESTINATION GROTON SURVEY

METHODOLOGY

The survey was intended to broaden the range of responses by asking participants to consider Destination Groton from the perspective of a business or a non-profit organization with which they are associated or from the perspective of the town. Ten questions were developed and sent to participants through Survey Monkey, an online application developed to facilitate this type of survey.

Based on the organizations with which respondents indicated they associated, responses were then categorized with one of the following five groups:

1. Cultural Assets Group
2. Ecotourism Group
3. Education Group
4. Town Group
5. Business Group



RESULTS

Although participants were selected to reflect a wide range of groups with different specific interests, a number of themes were consistent across all groups as reflected in the General Summary of Results below. Summaries of the results specific to each survey question follow. (Survey Responses are presented in Appendix 4.)

Questions 1 and 2: Participant names and self-identified sub-groups.

Question 3: *Do you think that increased visitors will be a benefit or detriment to your business, group or the town?* Net Benefit - 18; Net Detriment - 3

Summary of Comments:

1. Visitors to Groton will benefit businesses and many non-profits and will generate some increased revenues for the town.
2. People will increasingly appreciate Groton's natural and historic resources, and this can lead to increased stewardship and funding.
3. Concerns were raised that increased traffic, congestion and noise could degrade the character of the town.
4. Increased numbers of visitors and the changes this will generate will make Groton a more vibrant community year-round.

Question 4: *What challenges may arise?*

Summary of Comments:

1. Issues associated with traffic, parking and sidewalks were mentioned repeatedly in all sub-groups.
2. Potential overuse of some locations, such as Petapawag Boat launch, rail trail, Nashua River, and parking at conservation properties and trails.
3. Need for new infrastructure, such as parking.
4. Need for better directional signage.
5. Stress due to overuse of natural resources.
6. Increased litter.
7. Increased noise.

Question 5: *Are there investments or actions your business, group or the town can take to leverage a potential increase in visitors?* Yes - 22 No - 0

Summary of Comments:

1. Directional signage.
2. Traffic calming.
3. Visitor information about what is available in Groton.
4. Improved parking in the Town Center and at recreation/activity locations.

Question 6: What new businesses or groups would be beneficial for Groton as a Destination Community?

Summary of Comments:

1. Family Restaurants: moderately priced; all kinds.
2. Food trucks; ice cream shops.
3. Boutique retail; gift and craft shops; recreational items; bicycle rental / repair.
4. Art exhibit opportunities, including art walks.
5. Expanded Visitors Center.

Question 7: Would it be beneficial to be promoted in marketing materials about Groton as a Destination Community? Yes - 24 No - 0

Summary of Comments:

1. All groups felt that investment in marketing was essential to making a Destination Groton concept work and that good branding and marketing will benefit their business, group or the town.
2. An informative Visitor Center is seen as essential components of marketing.

Question 8: What can the Groton Business Association do that would be beneficial?

Summary of Comments:

1. Help increase awareness and exposure of assets.
2. Advise business groups and the town of benefits and issues.
3. Develop and promote positive branding.

Question 9: What should the Town of Groton be doing to prepare for Groton increasingly becoming a Destination Community?

Summary of Comments:

1. Groton should be billed as a destination town that embodies harmony of nature, history and a culturally active community of today.
2. Investigate and implement infrastructure strategies for traffic management and parking.
3. Promote a welcoming, tourist friendly atmosphere.
4. Put up directional signs.
5. Develop and promote positive branding.
6. Promote positive business-friendly environment.
7. Enforce regulations that protect the character of the town.
8. Demonstrate "green" attitude.

Question 10: What Groton Assets support a Destination Community?

Summary of Comments:

1. Eighty-seven individual assets in Groton were named by survey participants, many of those multiple times.
2. The named assets are presented in Appendix 5. The assets were divided in lists relating to: Arts; History; Culture; Ecotourism; Visitor Services; and Tourist Attractions and Events.

V. Case Studies:

Three Massachusetts Destination Communities

- Old Sturbridge Village
- Tanglewood
- Mass MoCA



Chapter Findings

In order to understand the opportunities and challenges that exist when a community becomes a destination, we researched and interviewed other Destination Communities to help frame our discussion and to learn from their experiences. (List of 7 interview participants in Acknowledgements B.)

- We found that Destination Communities can contribute to a greater sense of community, quality of life, and civic pride.
- Increased visitors to Destination Communities can benefit businesses, non-profits, create jobs, and generate increased revenues for the town and the region.
- Successful Destination Communities have the support and collaboration of all stakeholders.
- Destination Communities must establish strong lines of communication among venues, public safety and Town officials, residents, businesses and local business associations on upcoming events.
- Destination Communities focus on developing strategic marketing plans which include promoting themselves through websites, maps, visitor centers, and merchant brochures.
- Destination Communities consider identifying Federal, State, Local and Private grant and/or program funding opportunities that can assist in their success. These may include Tourism, Transportation, Infrastructure, and other potential funding sources.



Destination Community Case Study 1: Old Sturbridge Village

Old Sturbridge Village:

Old Sturbridge Village, established in 1946, is the largest outdoor history museum in the Northeast. It depicts a rural New England town of the 1830s. Step inside more than 40 original buildings, and explore homes, meetinghouses, a district school, country store, bank, working farm, three water-powered mills, and trade shops – all situated on more than 200 scenic acres.

Talk with authentically costumed historians and see heritage breed farm animals. Old Sturbridge Village, with 200 employees, is a museum and learning resource of New England life, inviting each visitor to find meaning, pleasure, relevance, and inspiration through the exploration of history.

Business Model:

Old Sturbridge Village is a Non-Profit organization with annual attendance of over 260,000 and annual operating revenues of \$11,000,000 - including admissions, memberships, lodge, food, rents, events, gifts, grants and bequests.

Tax Revenue:

For the year ending June 30, 2019 Sturbridge reported local option meals tax receipts of \$481,991 (6.0%) and hotel and motel room tax of \$1,082,908 (0.75%) for a combined total of \$1,564,899.

Local Community:

The Town of Sturbridge has a population of 10,208 and is 38 square miles. Old Sturbridge Village is located within the Town of Sturbridge on 200 acres. Situated in Central Massachusetts, the Town is easily accessible to the Mass Pike (90) and Rt 84, Rt 20, Rt 131.

The Town website states: This industrial growth away from Sturbridge Center has preserved this area much as it appeared in 1840. In a book published in 1942 on the old bay paths, the author wrote: "Sturbridge is an unspoiled village, a rare example of what New England villages ought to be. Its shaded green is unmarred by filling pumps or other unsightly encumbrances." The Common area has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Sturbridge citizens continue to work to preserve this jewel today.

Surrounding Attractions:

Basketball Hall of Fame – Springfield, MA

The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame is home to more than three hundred inductees and more than 40,000 square feet of basketball history, many of its interactive exhibits include skills challenges, live clinics, and shooting contests.

Ecotarium, Worcester, MA

The Ecotarium is a family-friendly, indoor-outdoor museum, offering three floors of interactive exhibits, live animal habitats, hikes through forest and meadow nature trails and much more.

Optical Heritage Museum, Sturbridge, MA

The Optical Heritage Museum is filled with thousands of collection items and displays including microscopes, lensometers, multifocal and antique spectacles, highlighting incredible moments in history where these scientific discoveries were made.

Six Flags, Springfield, MA

Six Flags New England has more than 100 rides, shows, attractions, and is home to New England's largest water park, Hurricane Harbor.

Storrs Adventure Park, Storrs, CT

The Adventure Park at Storrs provides family fun for ages seven and up. This aerial forest adventure is fun, exciting and safe for all participants.

Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA

The Worcester Art Museum is world-renowned for its 35,000-piece collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings and new media. The works span 5,000 years of art and culture.

Area Lodging:

There are over a dozen accommodations in Greater Sturbridge including three that are also business partners of Old Sturbridge Village:

- The Public House Historic Inn
- Comfort Inn & Suites
- Southbridge Hotel & Conference Center

Shopping:

Old Sturbridge Village Museum Store and New England Book Shop

Village-made redware pottery. Tin products. Contemporary housewares. Fresh-made fudge. Toys and apparel. Old Sturbridge Village provides guests with a rich variety of shopping, including many goods handmade right in the Village.

Handmade iron items, forged in their own blacksmith shop, are available for purchase. Including iron hooks, candle snuffers, and iron sets, candle dishes and mulling irons.

Events:

Phantoms and Fire

Explore the museum after hours where you will find spooky delights from bats and bonfires to cauldrons and candy, from ghosts and guitars to horror and...maybe even...a headless horseman! Take your entire family, as this Halloween, there is something for every age around every corner.

Autumn Harvest Weekend

Celebrate the harvest and the beautiful New England autumn. Learn how food makes its way from the farm to the dining room table. Join our costumed interpreters as they grind apples with the Ox Powered Cider Mill, pick and cut corn, dig up potatoes, and put the gardens to bed.

Oxen, Fields and Farmers

Celebrate the harvest and beautiful New England Autumn at the peak of fall color! Meet and greet multiple teams of guest oxen and their teamsters and learn about plowing and field preparation. You can also meet the Village's other farm animals (sheep, cattle, pigs, and chickens), talk with tradespeople.

Evening at the Village

Enjoy being outside and spend a summer evening at the Village after our normal hours of operation! Stroll through our scenic campus, explore our gardens, take a horse-drawn wagon ride, and enjoy period music. Feel free to bring a picnic to enjoy on the Village common!

Christmas by Candlelight

More than 27,000 people visited Old Sturbridge Village this December for Christmas by Candlelight, a celebration of the season and New England Christmas traditions of the 19th century and today. This record-breaking attendance is a testament to the popularity of the program, which has quickly become a yearly tradition for many.

Nature Trails:

River Walk

Along the River Walk, visitors get a chance to witness how 19th-century New Englanders were able to tame the river and harness the power of water for economic and agricultural benefit. A short walk along the banks of the Quinebaug River leads to the Wight Family Dam and surrounding mill pond.

Pasture Walk

The Pasture Walk provides another look into how the landscape varies between the 19th, and 21st centuries. The mostly agricultural population of the 1830s required great tracks of land for grazing animals such as cows and sheep, whose primary source of food was either fresh pasture or cut hay.

Woodland Walk

Throughout the woodland walk, you can see the vast changes made to the landscape by humans through evidence of old stone walls and the new growth of fairly young pines, hemlocks and beech trees.

Community Events:

Sturbridge has an abundance of year-round outdoor and recreation activities including a virtual 5K, weekly farmer's market, and a July 4th celebration.

Community Benefits and Challenges:

The Town of Sturbridge and Old Sturbridge Village have worked together to support their mutual interest in promoting tourism in the region. In an economic report titled *Sturbridge Economic Assessment & Strategy* (Appendix 6), an analysis of the Leisure & Hospitality and Retail sectors showed they were the #1 and #2 leading employment sector, and that Leisure & Hospitality was also #1 in total wages with Retail #4:

	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Establishments</u>	<u>Total Wages</u>
Leisure & Hospitality	1,518 (28%)	56	\$33,672,016
Retail	1,026 (19%)	47	\$24,728,052

The Leisure and Hospitality sectors have not fully recovered from the Great Recession. Since 2015 the number of establishments has declined 9.7% and Retail 29%.

Conversation with Jim Donahue, President and CEO of Old Sturbridge Village, November 11, 2020

Overview:

When Jim joined Old Sturbridge Village (OSV) in 2007, the organization was in significant financial distress. The number of visitors to OSV had declined over time and this led to a loss of local jobs as well as the closure of many businesses in town. Town administrators, elected officials, the Chamber of Commerce, businesses, and residents recognized how critical OSV was to their local economy so they gave a huge amount of support to Jim as the new CEO of OSV. The town was fearful that OSV would close and that this would have a significant impact on the local economy so they all worked with a common goal to turn things around at OSV.

They applied for a grant from the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism and received \$375,000 over a 3-year period. This money was used on a joint effort to create a branding strategy as well as a social media presence. These efforts were very successful in gaining visibility for the town as a destination. Specifically, at OSV, Jim added several programs and successfully turned OSV around to a profitable, viable and well visited attraction.

Before Jim's arrival at OSV, Main Street in Sturbridge was not a thriving place for businesses. It could be described as a ghost town of sorts. After the revitalization of OSV and a focus on tourism by the town, Main Street is now a bustling location. They have very successful businesses and have a food scene of sorts with all the restaurants that are now successfully operating on Main Street.

Jim's overall comment was that the town recognized that "everyone wins when OSV does well."

Specific answers to questions:

1. How does your Destination Community manage the following related issues (events, traffic, parking, and public safety)?

When OSV schedules very high admission events, those dates are shared with public safety officials in advance in order to prepare for issues surrounding traffic, parking, and public safety. Police details are used whenever there are very high admission events. OSV works closely with public safety officials on a regular basis.

- 2.) What are some challenges you face regarding infrastructure, local complaints, over use of resources?

These were not identified as major challenge areas. Jim said that when they introduce a new high admission event which was defined as over 3,000 people, if unforeseen issues arise (which Jim said does not happen often), OSV adapts to try to correct the issue in the future. When asked how residents feel about these instances, Jim said that if something does not go 100% smoothly, certainly residents may become aggravated but OSV works with public safety officials or others to adapt and improve for the next time. Overall, Jim's feeling was that residents are happy that OSV is doing well because that helps everyone.

- 3.) Describe the benefits your community received from being a tourism destination (local room / meal taxes, commercial / retail development, image / reputation, grants)

- The tax benefit was outlined separately in the initial research of Sturbridge as a Destination Community.
- As indicated in the overview, OSV brings visitors to Sturbridge which in turn creates thriving businesses and jobs. It was clear from the conversation that the town considers OSV to be critical to the local economy.
- Also as mentioned in the overview, Sturbridge received a grant from the Mass Office of Travel & Tourism.
- Another benefit is quality of life because residents attend events. For instance, OSV had a Christmas program that included the Budweiser Clydesdales. Town residents loved that program.

- 4.) What are some lessons you have learned from being a tourism destination?

- The economic benefits of being a Destination Community were very visible when comparing Sturbridge during the time that OSV was doing poorly to OSV now as a thriving destination.

- Also, open communication with public safety officials, working closely with them, and getting their advice are important.
- Partnering with local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce and collaborating with them is also beneficial.
- Branding and visibility for the town as a destination goes a long way to help attract visitors.
- The success they have had was because of the joint efforts of the town with OSV.

5.) Do you have any recommendations for other potential Destination Communities?

- This was really answered through the above information.



Destination Community Case Study 2: Tanglewood

About Tanglewood:

Tanglewood is a music venue in the towns of Lenox and Stockbridge in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. It has been the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) since 1937. Tanglewood is also home to the Tanglewood Music Center (TMC), the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and the Tanglewood Learning Institute. In addition to classical music, Tanglewood offers concerts in other genres including contemporary music and jazz. It also features concerts by popular artists.

The organization is situated on 529 acres. The Koussevitzky Music Shed (“the Shed”) is an open-air venue with a roof that covers 5,100 seats. Seating capacity of the Shed including the lawn is 15,000. Most BSO and some TMC orchestra concerts are held in the Shed. Seiji Ozawa Hall opened in 1994 and includes 1,200 seats with additional lawn seating as well. Most Tanglewood chamber concerts and TMC orchestra concerts take place in Ozawa Hall. Tanglewood also has several eating establishments on site included the Tanglewood Grille, Tanglewood Café, Highwood Manor House Dining, Cindy’s Café, concessions, meals to go, and a creamery. They also offer exclusive supper clubs for donors. There are two gift shops on the campus that offer a variety of clothing items as well as small gifts and CDs.

Business Model:

The BSO is one of the premier orchestras in the world and also one of the oldest. According to a 2017 report: *The Economic Impacts of the BSO* (Stephen Sheppard) (see Appendix 6.) total revenue for the entire BSO organization was \$261M. Tanglewood annually draws over 350,000 visitors and contributes \$103 million in economic output to the region and employees 1,100 people. It is the summer location of the BSO which is a Non-Profit organization.

Local Community:

The Town of Lenox has a population of about 4,600. The Town of Stockbridge has a population of about 2,000. The Chambers of Commerce in both towns have well developed marketing type websites that are designed to attract people to visit and live in the region and to frequent chamber member businesses. Both Chambers take a regional approach and highlight the community offerings across a broader list of towns including Stockbridge, Lenox, Lee, Pittsfield, Great Barrington, and West Stockbridge. This approach expands the overall appeal of the region.

The Stockbridge Chamber of Commerce created a 24-page guide titled “Stockbridge Welcomes You”. The guide highlights local businesses as well as where to stay, dine, and shop. The town’s marketing message is “The Stockbridge area is blessed with a line-up of cultural attractions that rivals that of many metropolitan areas: internationally renowned summer festivals of music, theatre, and dance; major art museums and galleries, and historic homes and gardens. The spectacular Berkshire countryside that provides a backdrop for the cultural showcase is itself a destination, with numerous trails and back roads for hiking,

cycling, bird watching, cross country skiing and snowshoeing.” The guide also includes a map of the town along with a walking/biking/riding tour of Stockbridge and its surroundings.

The Stockbridge Annual Town Report indicated that tourism drives the town’s economy. The Chamber of Commerce promotes Stockbridge “as a destination for Every Season, Every Age with Endless possibility.” They target visitors through print, digital and online advertising campaigns. Through their promotional efforts, “in 2019 Stockbridge earned titles of: Small Berkshire Town with a Big Artistic Reputation, Best Inns in the Berkshires, Festive New England Town, The Best for Romantic Couples, Best Romantic Getaways -Berkshires, Most Beautiful Small Town in America, Best Christmas in Massachusetts, Small Town with some of the Best Food in Massachusetts, The Most Beautiful Town in Massachusetts and Best New England Christmas Town.”

The Lenox Chamber of Commerce entices people to visit with the following language. “Lenox is for all seasons! Spring, summer, autumn or winter – we have so much to offer, it is no wonder Lenox is a destination that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors a year. Whether it’s your first visit or fiftieth, you’ll find many reasons to return again and again. We welcome your visit any time. Centrally located in the region, Lenox is a great place to stay. Our award-winning lodgings offer an unparalleled world-class range of choices, from family-friendly motels to exclusive spas and resorts properties. Well known for its restaurants Lenox is at the center of the locally-grown food movement (check out Berkshire Grown for more info on our region’s farms). The summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra is Tanglewood, which spans both Lenox and Stockbridge and attracts fans of great classical and contemporary music to the region. A not-to-miss jewel of Lenox is The Mount, Edith Wharton’s Home, with over 50 beautiful acres, 2 gardens, and a gilded-age historic home and museum.” Lenox also hosts a whylenox.com website which promotes economic development in the town. Area attractions in addition to Tanglewood include a Mass Audubon Sanctuary, Lilac Park, Norman Rockwell Museum, The Mount (Edith Wharton’s home), Historical Societies, Berkshire Museum, Shakespeare & Company, Berkshire Botanical Gardens, lakes, rivers, and hiking trails.

Lodging:

Tanglewood’s website has an extensive guide showcasing its Business Partners including an online index and search function. Tanglewood lists 22 lodging establishments on its website. Most of these are small inns but recognizable hotel chains include Courtyard by Marriott, Hampton Inn, Hilton, and Holiday Inn. These chains are located in Lenox. The Lenox Chamber of Commerce lists a total of 24 establishments. The Stockbridge Chamber of Commerce lists 6 inns. There is overlap between these three websites but not all locations are listed on all three sites.

Tanglewood visitors on average spend 3.8 days in the Berkshires and visit approximately 2 additional attractions (See Sheppard Report - Appendix 6).

Food & Beverage:

Tanglewood lists 25 restaurant partners on its website. Most are in Lenox or Stockbridge but some are in Lee, Pittsfield or Great Barrington. The Lenox Chamber website lists 14 restaurants including cafes, taverns, bakeries, and grills. The Stockbridge Chamber website lists 7 eateries including restaurants, bistros, cafes and a bakery. It is likely that there are many more options but the Chambers likely lists members only.

Retail / Business:

There are many retail establishments listed as business partners on the Tanglewood website and also on the chamber websites. Stockbridge describes the offerings as: "Boutiques, galleries, and charming shops line the streets of Stockbridge, a picturesque village that still looks much the way it did when artist Norma Rockwell was working in his studio overlooking Main Street. From upscale clothing to antique jewelry, unique gifts to specialty foods & wine, original art to home furnishings, this area offers something of interest to antique lovers, souvenir hunters or serious art collectors, alike. Browse through the unique shops of Stockbridge and its surrounding towns." Other businesses prominently noted on the Tanglewood website include a private car / limousine service, bus service, and a tour company. Overall, Tanglewood's Business Partner directory includes several business categories with links to Business Partner sites. The categories include accounting, advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, antiques, audio visual, special effects, automotive, aviation, banking, building supplies, catering, education, energy, financial services, food and beverage, insurance, legal, lodging, manufacturing, medical, moving and storage, nursery, florist, printing, resorts, restaurants, retail, salons, security, transportation, video, wellness, and yoga.

Recreation:

Both communities have an assortment of activities. In addition to Tanglewood and the ability to visit the area attractions noted earlier, items that were highlighted include hiking, biking, swimming, kayaking, yoga, farms, visual and performing arts camp, arts school, botanical gardens, and a sculpture garden.

Community Events:

Events include a summer arts and crafts show, holiday shopping weekend, colonial carriage and driving society events, Lenox Art Walk, Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas, Lenox Winter Land, and weekly seasonal farmer's market.

Tax Revenue:

For the year ended June 30, 2019, Lenox reported hotel room occupancy tax receipts of \$2.1M. The town embeds its meals tax in other receipt categories but based upon an article from 2018, the town's combined receipts for hotel occupancy and meals were \$2.2M. A conservative estimate for 2019 could be combined tax receipts of about \$2.3M. For the year ended June 30, 2019, Stockbridge reported meals tax receipts of \$77,000 and hotel room occupancy tax of \$353,000 for a combined total of \$430,000.

Tanglewood itself generates \$15 million in Federal/state/local taxes and attracts \$43 million in tourism spending in the region (See Sheppard Report – Appendix 6).

Community Benefits & Community Challenges:

Both communities seem to have embraced the role of Destination Communities and have positioned themselves as wonderful places to live, work, and visit. They appear to have very active chambers of commerce with a primary focus on marketing the town, the region, and the businesses within the region. There is also an organization called 1Berkshire who describes their role “as the official regional Economic Development Organization and Regional Tourism Council of Berkshire County, we are here to assist you in becoming a part of our dynamic region in Western, MA which is well positioned for investment, growth, and development.”

The Town of Stockbridge considered the issue of economic development through a report prepared for the town’s Zoning Review Committee. The 2019 report: *Stockbridge Zoning Bylaw Diagnostic Report* by Joel Russell (See Appendix 6), indicated that “by working together to recommend and review proposed zoning bylaw revisions, the result can better serve the interests of the town as a whole, to ‘keep Stockbridge Stockbridge’ while coming to terms with the challenges of the 21st Century.” The report was designed to help address the need to balance economic development growth with preservation of the town’s character.

Conversation with Michael Canales, Town Administrator, Town of Stockbridge, MA

Overview:

Mike has been the Stockbridge Town Administrator for only two months. Prior to coming to Stockbridge in September, he was the Town Administrator for the Town of North Adams.

Specific answers to questions:

1.) How does your Destination Community manage the following related issues (events, traffic, parking, and public safety)?

Mike gave a similar answer as Jim. When large events are scheduled at Tanglewood, all parties coordinate with public safety officials on traffic, parking and public safety. From his experience in North Adams (Mass MoCA), the vendor will often hire local school busses to shuttle people from designated parking areas to the venue event site.

2.) What are some challenges you face regarding infrastructure, local complaints, over use of resources?

Many of the local destinations around Stockbridge are in residential neighborhoods and given traffic conditions during major events can cause concern by local residents. In addition, many that have “Entertainment Licenses” can stay open until 11 pm.

3.) Describe the benefits your community receives from being a tourism destination.

Stockbridge benefits from its reputation as a year-round quintessential New England village. The local residents pride themselves as being the home of Edith Wharton and Norman Rockwell, and near all the attraction the Berkshires has to offer.

4.) What are some lessons you have learned from being a tourism destination?

Mike related from his experience that working closely with all Town partners is the key to success.

5.) Do you have any recommendations for other potential Destination Communities?

Mike recommends good communication about upcoming events with the local public.

Conversation with Barbara Zanetti, Executive Director, Stockbridge Chamber of Commerce

Overview:

Barbara raised many of the same issues as Mike. While the pandemic has had an ongoing negative effect on the regional economy, she believes it will bounce back next year. She has noticed a pickup in Day Trippers walking the trails as a result of the pandemic. People want to just get outside. The Chamber of Commerce has begun a "Get out and Walk" marketing theme.

Specific answers to questions:

1. How does your Destination Community manage the following related issues (events, traffic, parking, and public safety)?

Barbara reiterated that coordination and communications across public safety, the venue and the Town is critical. There are major traffic jams when there is a major event such as 60,000 people attending a James Taylor concert at Tanglewood. But for the most part people deal with it.

2.) Describe the benefits your community receives from being a tourism destination.

Stockbridge has many attractions on its own but when combined with the Greater Berkshires attractions like skiing in the winter it adds to a year-round benefit.

3.) What are some lessons you have learned from being a tourism destination?

One lesson is to learn how to adapt for example: The Red Lion Inn has increased its take-out menu, brought down some prices and expanded its market to serve more local residents.

4.) Do you have any recommendations for other potential Destination Communities?

Try to think of yourself as a year-round destination and plan accordingly.

Conversation with Jennifer Nact, Director, Lenox Chamber of Commerce

Overview:

Jenn states that Tourism drives the local/regional economy. Lenox alone has 14 Restaurants and 24 guest lodgings. When the BSO is in Town it's like a light switch goes on and people are walking Main Street.

Specific answers to questions:

1.) How does your Destination Community manage the following related issues (events, traffic, parking, and public safety)?

Jenn offered a similar response as the others: working with all parties is essential for Public Safety Officials to do the best job possible given the fact traffic at times can be a "nightmare".

There is only one main two lane Highway entering in and exiting out of Tanglewood. One James Taylor concert can attract 60,000 people.

2.) What are some challenges you face regarding infrastructure, local complaints, over use of resources?

There are occasional complaints about traffic from some of the older residents but for the most part people grin and bear it. Parking in Town can be a challenge for retail staff.

3.) Describe the benefits your community receives from being a tourism destination.

The 0.50% meals and lodging tax generates \$2 million to the Town. We are beginning to see increased investment in commercial and retail businesses in the region.

4.) What are some lessons you have learned from being a tourism destination?
Be sure to communicate with Town residents. Let them know if they have a complaint, they will be heard.

5.) Do you have any recommendations for other potential Destination Communities?

Right now, the general market for Tanglewood is 60 years and older. Lenox is trying to expand the market to younger people to visit the Town.

Conversations with Alexandra Fuchs, Chief Operating Officer, Boston Symphony Orchestra, December 17, 2020, and Larry Oberwager, Director, Tanglewood Business Partners, December 22, 2020

Overview:

As the COO of the BSO, Alexandra oversees a large Non-Profit organization with many moving parts. While the Berkshires has been a vacation area for well over 100 years, Tanglewood has helped position the region as a world class Artistic and Cultural destination. Tanglewood alone generates more the \$103 million in total economic output for the region.

As the Director of Business Partners, Larry Oberwager is Tanglewood's' local "Ambassador" to the region. Larry manages the 300 local business partners who through their "philanthropy" help underwrite the operations. Larry is visible and active in the community. He is a member of the Lenox Chamber of Commerce and 1Berkshire, the regional tourism organization.

Tanglewood has long been recognized as the jewel in the crown of Berkshire tourism. While everyone in the region has suffered from the pandemic this past year, Tanglewood's leaders remain hopeful for a return to a normal 10 week season this summer.

Specific answers to questions:

1.) How does your Destination Community manage the following related issues (events, traffic, parking, and public safety)?

Tanglewood has a long- standing professional relationship with public safety officials. With major events they work closely with local officials and notify the community. Tanglewood has sufficient on-site parking to accommodate its audience.

2.) What are some challenges you face regarding infrastructure, local complaints, over use of resources?

The BSO works to partner with the local communities by formally meeting twice a year with Town officials and they try to build relationships with neighbors to address complaints.

3.) Describe the benefits your community receives from being a tourism destination.

Tanglewood generates over \$103 million in total economic output; more than 1,100 jobs for the region, and \$15 million annually in federal/state/local taxes.

4.) What are some lessons you have learned from being a tourism destination?

Stay involved and engaged with the regional community. Be sure to participate in civic pride.

5.) Do you have any recommendations for other potential Destination Communities?

Find local “champions” in the community besides the venue itself.



Destination Community Case Study 3: Mass MoCA

About Mass MoCA:

Based in North Adams, Mass MoCA stands for the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. It opened in 1999. The organization is situated on 16 acres and includes 250,000 square feet of gallery space as well as a café, full-service restaurant, ice cream, coffee, microbrewery, and retail space. They also lease another 100,000 square feet to businesses including food & beverage, retail, professional services, and space for artists.

Mass MoCA specializes in visual art exhibits by both well-known and emerging artists, focusing on large-scale immersive installations that would be impossible to realize in conventional museums. They also present more than 75 performances year-round including contemporary dance, alternative cabaret, world music dance parties, indie-rock, progressive bluegrass, outdoor silent films with live music, documentaries, and avant-garde theater. Their educational programs include participatory learning opportunities for all ages.

Business Model:

Mass MoCA is a Non-Profit organization with annual attendance of over 160,000 and annual operating revenues of \$17M.

Local Community:

The City of North Adams has a population of about 13,000. While Mass MoCA is located in North Adams, it appears that Williamstown which is only 4 miles from Mass MoCA seems to be the more prominent Destination Community (and also seems to have a feeling closer to that of Groton.) Williamstown is smaller with a population of about 8,000.

The area is surrounded by Mount Greylock, the Appalachian Trail, scenic trails, rail trails, state parks, and lakes. The area has a significant educational focus with Williams College and the Clark Art Institute both in Williamstown and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) in North Adams. Williams College enrollment is approximately 2,000 students. MCLA's enrollment is about 1,345 students. Williamstown is also the home of the Williams College Museum of Art and the Tony Award winning Williamstown Theatre Festival. Williamstown seems to have done a better job promoting tourism. They have created a Visitor's Guide which includes a map of the town. They also have a website called destinationwilliamstown.org as well as a digital magazine and an events calendar. On the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce website is the following quote:

"Discover Williamstown, a unique village where world-renowned art, culture, and academic venues thrive in a setting of great natural beauty. Explore the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Williams College Museum of Art! Hike or bike miles of trails and delight in restaurants and shops that line the charming streets."

North Adams has a website called explorenorthadams.com but the website is not easy to navigate and is highly informational based, a bit difficult to navigate, and without much marketing feel. North Adams does have a mobile app called Historic North Adams where you can do a self-guided walk through the town's history.

Lodging:

Mass MoCA lists on its website 78 locations within 40 miles of Mass MoCA. Their website includes links to those establishments. The locations are listed based upon distance from the Mass MoCA facility. Four of these establishments are in North Adams with three small local inns and one Holiday Inn. In Williamstown, there are 14 establishments with 13 of those listed as manors, inns, guest houses, motels, or bed and breakfasts. One establishment is a Fairfield by Marriott and is the only major hotel chain in the town.

Food & Beverage:

Mass MoCA lists on its website 38 eateries, most in North Adams. Website links are included when available. These establishments include everything from restaurants, cafes, pubs, taverns, and grilles, to dairy bars, pizza places, and hot dogs. The Williamstown Visitors Guide list 23 locations in the guide although there are likely many more in the town. The establishments listed offer a large assortment of food & beverage options including restaurants, pubs, bistros, grilles, dairy bars, bakeries, and cafes. There are also country markets with locally grown produce.

Retail:

Williamstown seems to have a much more robust assortment of retail options than North Adams but that may be a perception based more upon marketing than reality. The Williamstown Visitor's Guide lists boutiques, gift shops, jewelers, potters, antiques, book stores, family game store, yarn shop, novelties, sport gear, home goods, country store, and a spirit shop. Given the large focus on visual art from Mass MoCA and the surrounding colleges, there are many galleries and art shops as well.

Recreation:

Both communities have an assortment of activities. Items that were highlighted include massage & day spas, fitness & wellness centers, yoga, horse farms, corn maze, apple picking, scenic plane flights, golf courses, wine tastings, farmer's markets, walking tours, biking, hiking, train rides, bowling, and a collegiate summer baseball team. There are also historical museums, watershed associations, rural lands foundation, barns rented out for private events, and a small independent movie theater.

Community Events:

North Adams has free weekly outdoor summer concerts, a fall foliage festival and fall foliage parade, annual downtown celebration, downtown art exhibits, and Winterfest. Both communities have 4th of July celebrations and Williamstown also noted an annual holiday walk. Both communities also have a weekly farmer's market.

Tax Revenue:

For the year ended June 30, 2019, Williamstown reported meals tax receipts of \$177,000 and room occupancy tax receipts of \$453,000 for a combined total of \$630,000. For the year ended June 30, 2019, North Adams reported meals tax receipts of \$218,000 and room occupancy tax of \$379,000 for a combined total of \$597,000.

Community Benefits & Community Challenges:

The Williamstown Economic Development Committee did a major economic development study that was released in December 2015. The report: Strategies for Economic Growth in Williamstown, MA (See Appendix 6), indicated that the town's major assets included the existence of their educational institutions (Williams College) and their arts and cultural institutions (Mass MoCA, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown Theatre Festival). They also indicated that their natural resources (beauty of the landscape as well as outdoor recreational activities) were a major asset as was their commitment to education.

Their challenges included low population growth and low job growth. They also noted that the town is relatively far from urban areas, highways, and hospitals and this was a significant negative economic driver. Another negative economic driver was the low share of population under 18 years. On the flip side though, their school's student to teacher ratio and their solid graduation rates were positive economic drivers.

The key recommendations of the report included sustained excellence at public schools by continuing to invest in infrastructure, depth of programming, and quality of education. The need to create more housing for low- and middle-income families through moderately priced homes was also identified. The study referenced zoning statutes that limited the creation of this housing. Additionally, the report recommended that the business community be supported, rather than penalized, for operating in Williamstown. It was recommended that town government update their policies and procedures to assist with the growth of businesses, to encourage relocation of businesses to the town, and to generate new businesses in the town. It was also noted that expanding transportation options in the future would be beneficial to address the town's rural location.

The report encouraged measures that would grow and diversify the population and normalize the age demographic. To do this, the report recommended that excellent schools, more accessible house prices, and jobs provided by a strong business community would attract more young families. When referencing the cultural, educational, and recreational benefits of the area, the report indicated that there should be a focus on increasing the awareness of these benefits, not only to attract tourists, but also to attract residents and businesses.



VI. Regional Partners

Chapter Findings

- Collaboration with regional attractions and organizations focused on bringing visitors to this region benefits all partners.

Collaboration

Successful Destination Communities develop their own branding and marketing plans to promote their communities. On a local level collaboration among the business community, the non-profit community, town government, the community at large and, of Indian Hill Music is required. However, promoting attractions beyond Groton's boundaries is also beneficial in attracting visitors. On a regional level collaboration is also essential both with individual attractions and with organizations that attract visitors to the region and that can provide planning, assistance and experience. Four potential partners are discussed below.

Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce Chamber (NVCoC) service area includes Ayer, Berlin, Bolton, Boylston, Clinton, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Littleton, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, Sterling, Townsend, West Boylston, and Westford. NVCoC supports and promotes businesses, stimulates economic development and serves as a resource to improve the quality of life for the region.

Since tourism is an existing economic driver in this region, NVCoC has promoted tourism and assisted businesses and organizations that support tourism for many years. NVCoC notes on its website that the region contains a cross-section of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including major destination Museums and Art Galleries: in Harvard (Fruitlands Museum), as well as Fitchburg, Worcester, Gardner and Clinton; major Festivals from a variety of Musical Concerts to Arts & Crafts; Farmers Markets; Orchards; Nature Trails; River Paddling, Camping and Mount Wachusett Skiing. The eastern portion of the region is within metropolitan Boston and offers commuters direct rail and highway access into the city. The region's terrain, including Mt. Wachusett, the tallest mountain in the state outside the Berkshires, helps to support both an expanding tourism industry, including skiing, and a growing agricultural-food production sector.

Melissa Fetterhoff, President and CEO, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce expressed serious interest in partnering with Groton to promote itself as a Destination Community along with the wider region. Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit last year, NVCoC began discussing how best to begin marketing the region for tourism growth. She indicated the timing could not be better to work together. She noted that it is important to tell our region's story through marketing and to understand who is the audience. She also noted that by partnering with all

parties' benefits everyone. She recommended developing a regional map of attractions and using social media for promotion.

One of the NVCOC's most popular events - Taste of Nashoba - is held annually in March at Lawrence Academy. This partnership with local restaurants, breweries, caterers and bakeries - allows the 1,000+ attendees to enjoy the best our region has to offer.



North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce: Visit North Central Massachusetts

Groton is also within the area served by the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce that includes the towns of Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Barre, Bolton, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Petersham, Phillipston, Princeton, Royalston, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend, and Westminster.

As a part of its central mission of supporting business within its region, MVMCC is affiliated with Visit North Central Massachusetts, Johnny Appleseed Country, that promotes tourism within this region.

As noted on its website, "Visit North Central Massachusetts is the official destination marketing organization representing the 27 communities of North Central Massachusetts. Our primary mission is to promote North Central Massachusetts as an area where visitors can take advantage of the character and hospitality of the region and foster regional economic development by raising awareness through collaborative efforts to assist venues with their marketing to send a collective message for the region."

The website goes on to say "This four - season destination is quickly becoming a hotspot for travelers. Made up of the 27 communities along the Route 2 corridor, North Central Massachusetts is a four - season destination long known for the abundance of outdoor activities. One hour from major hubs in New England, Boston, Providence, and Manchester, our central location makes North Central Massachusetts a perfect destination for your weekend travel needs. From the farms, orchards and hiking trails, to the world class museums and budding craft beverage industry we have something for everyone."

Freedom's Way National Heritage Area

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Management Plan, prepared in 2015, states, "Encompassing forty-five communities in North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area was established by Congress in 2009 to foster a close working relationship between local and regional partners, governmental agencies, and the private sector to preserve the special historic identity of the region."

The report goes on to state "Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is home to a richly textured mosaic of historic, natural and cultural features and sites that reveal the region's story and its role in the shaping an American identity. Its history can be read through the land and the imprints of human habitation and influence on the region. Throughout much of the heritage area, natural and cultural areas are intimately blended; forests, topography and rivers combine with settlement patterns to create a rich landscape of historic city and town centers, scenic roadways, agricultural ensembles and conservation properties."

The mission of the non-profit Freedom's Way Heritage Association is to connect the people, places and communities of the Heritage Area through preservation, conservation and educational initiatives to protect and promote our shared resources and encourage residents and visitors to explore our landscape, history and culture.

The Association is located at Devens where its work includes organizing events to encourage tourism throughout the National Heritage Area. Partners include organizations, community groups, local governments, agencies, businesses, or nonprofits, especially those that address the needs of local heritage in a variety of ways – including nonprofit organizations, government agencies, businesses, and such civic groups as local trail committees or organizers of local festivals and events. Over the past few years events in Groton have included trail hikes, a "Gifts of the Glacier" presentation by Bob Pine and Mike Roberts about the remarkable geology, ecology and human history of Groton, and presentations about local history.

The Freedom's Way website states " The story of Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is intimately tied to the character of the land as well, as those who shaped and were shaped by it. Their stories can be found on village commons, along scenic roadways lined with stone walls, in diaries and artifacts, in a cabin by a pond, along a battle road, or hidden deep within a secret glen by the bank of a meandering river. Known or yet to be revealed, these stories provide a narrative that links the past to the future, reinforcing the region's sense of place.

Freedom's Way connects the people, places and communities of the Heritage Area through preservation, conservation and educational initiatives that protect and promote the natural, historic and cultural resources of the region."

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission provides technical planning assistance to the 22 member communities in the Montachusett Region, Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner and the towns of Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Clinton, Groton, Harvard, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster and Winchendon.

Located in Fitchburg, the MRPC was formed in 1968 under the State Enabling Legislation Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B and is one of thirteen regional planning agencies across the Commonwealth. MRPC has assisted Groton in a variety of capacities ranging from physical planning to affordable housing to general governmental issues. The range of services they can provide is broad, including assisting their communities with applications to secure federal and state grant funds.



VII. Additional Sources of Information

Chapter Findings

- Existing planning documents for Groton, including past Master Plans, provide numerous important observations and recommendations that relate to current Destination Groton concepts. Some of these have been accomplished, such as the Town Center Overlay District, but many others, such as burying the powerlines on Main Street, and installing decorative period street lighting are still needed.
- The Town should consider fully funding the 2021 Master Plan update to reflect Groton as a Destination Community.

A. Charles Eliot Master Plan, 1963

- The plan described the importance of Groton's "rural character" including the tree-lined roads that follow the natural topography and the four villages, the Town Center, West Groton, the Four Corners and Lost Lake.
- The plan emphasized the importance of the historic, economic, residential and open space components of each area and the way those components combine to create sense of community.
- The plan led to the establishment of Zoning and Historic Districts and laid the framework for protecting Groton's character.

B. The Character of Groton Study, 1979

- The study was conducted by the Groton Growth Policy Committee and was later published and distributed by the Groton Planning Board as part of the Board's Growth Management Program. The study emphasized the importance of the diversity of Groton's landscapes, buildings and people, including the need for diversity of housing; its relationships among buildings, roads, and productive land to the natural landscape; and its sense of community.
- The document led to major revisions of Groton's Zoning Bylaw, including the adoption of the Flexible Development bylaw, limitations on the rate of development, and increased flexibility in home occupation requirements.

C. Conway School of Design Landscape Study of Groton Center, Circa 1980

Students and faculty from the Conway School of Design carried out a study of the landscape qualities of Groton Center. Three primary recommendations made in their report to the Planning Board were:

- Create a park between Station Ave and the Groton Town Hall. This was one of very few locations where a small park could be created. A few years later the Town did create a park that has become a popular gathering place and creates an attractive setting for the Town Hall.
- Bury the powerlines in the Center: The participants felt that the overhead lines were a significant distraction that diminished the quality of the views along Main Street. This idea has resurfaced periodically since then.
- Create 'bump-outs' along Main Street to reduce the visual impact of the wide swath of Route 119 pavement that runs through the Center, in order to slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety. Strategically located and properly designed and landscaped protrusions would delineate parking areas and allow pedestrians to safely move beyond parked cars to be visible to oncoming cars. Drivers tend to drive more slowly in more narrow ways than along wide pavements. One such bump-out has been created at the corner of Station Avenue and Main Street.

D. Groton Master Plan, 2011

General Selected Recommendations

- Although no final report could be located, the Plan reiterated and expanded earlier recommendations, such as from the Conway School of Design study, that utilities should be placed under ground. This recommendation led to formation of the former Underground Utility Study Committee.
- The Plan recommended exploring options for Ecotourism in Groton.

History-Related Selected Recommendations

- Seek funding for reuse and preservation of Town-owned historic resources.
- Consider Architectural Preservation Districts for some areas of Groton.
- Continue the Groton Historical Commission's efforts to complete a comprehensive inventory of Groton's cultural and historic resources, including areas, structures, buildings, objects, and historic landscapes.

- Develop a comprehensive database of historic resources that includes local historic districts, National Register properties, and inventoried properties, and integrate the database with the Groton's Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Provide efficient public access to historic resources information.
- Increase the effectiveness of Scenic Roads review.

Natural Resources Selected Recommendations

- Groton has a long and successful history of protecting open space, but ecologically significant parcels remain unprotected, particularly along waterways. Finding new ways to protect them will remain challenging due to competing demands for funding.
- Develop a connected trails system that supports both passive recreation and alternatives to driving within the town.
- Increase the inter-connectedness of the town-wide trail system.

Business - Related Selected Recommendations

- Develop business owners and developer guidance materials for permitting.
- Provide for mixed uses, both within a building and for more than one building on a lot, with uses distributed among the buildings, in each village business center. (This was accomplished in part with the Town Center Overlay District that provides significant flexibility and opportunities while protecting the existing character of the Town Center.)
- Collaborate with regional planning associations; forge a North-Central regional economic development partnership
- Create and conduct an educational outreach program on economic development for Groton residents.
- Promote agritourism, for example for agricultural establishments to promote other outdoor recreational activities in Groton.
- Promote short-term rental housing. (Rental housing creates opportunities for B&B rentals that, in turn, can encourage increase overnight stays, especially associated with concerts. This was accomplished with approved zoning changes that allow creation of small attached or detached units.)

E. Groton Center Design Guidelines, 2014

After adoption of the Town Center Overlay Zoning District by Town Meeting, the Planning Board created a select committee to work with the Planning Board's consultant, Dodson and Flinker, to develop design guidelines for the district. The document, adopted by the Planning Board, includes a statement of Core Values as well as specific guidelines, including: Consistency with the Groton Center Vision: Design of the Streetscape; Architecture: Landscape; and Vehicular Access and Off-Street Parking; Lighting; and Signage.

- The vision for the Town Center includes the statement, "The Town envisions a place where more of the townspeople's needs and wants can be satisfied in the town center. 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."
- The purpose of the guidelines includes the statement, "Town Center Overlay District (TCOD) is designed to promote a socially and economically vibrant town center by enabling civic, commercial and residential development that is consistent with these Design Guidelines and with the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan. It provides landowners with the opportunity to elect an alternative form of development which provides greater flexibility and density in exchange for advancing the town's design and land use goals."



VIII. Preparing for Destination Groton



Chapter Findings

- There are things that can be done to begin realizing Groton as a Destination Community. Developing current Groton events and celebrations in partnership with Indian Hill Music will appeal to people outside of our community. Additional new events and celebrations can be added with time.
- As visitors to Groton increase, changes are likely to be required to accommodate their needs and allow Groton to become a sustainable Destination Community.

Positioning Groton to be a Destination Community

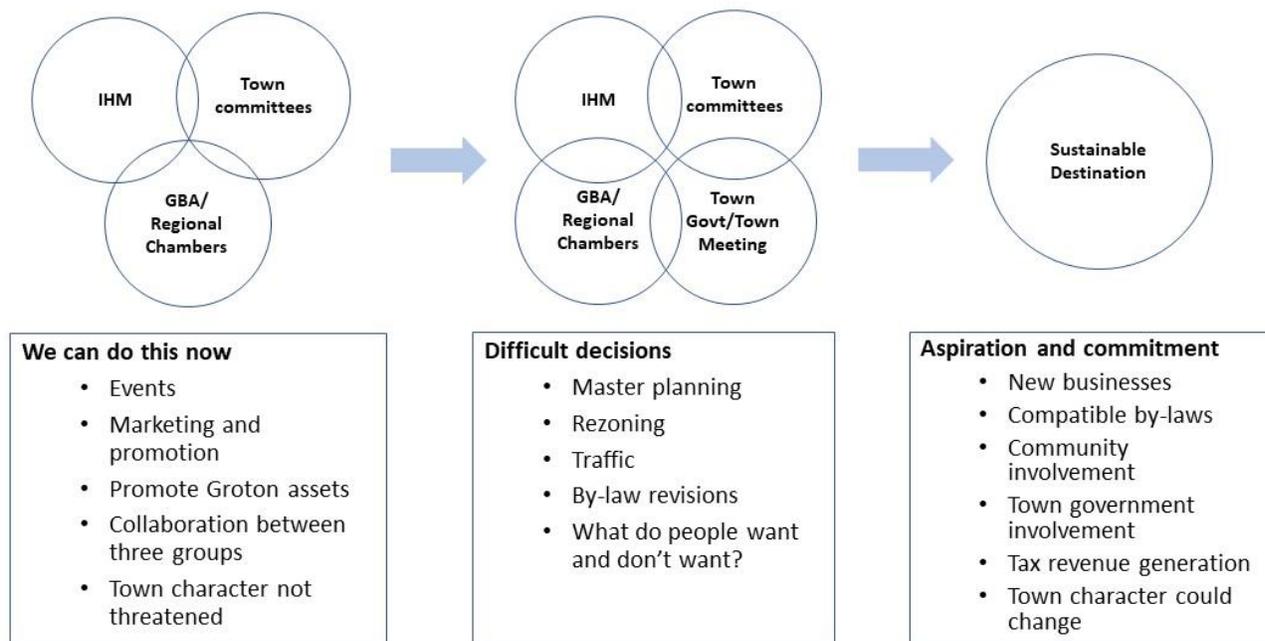
Destination Groton is a long-term aspiration that requires a solid plan, resources, and commitment from key stakeholders and the community to be successful. Indeed, Destination Groton has the potential to transform Groton in the coming years. Over time, Indian Hill Music may create the demand for new businesses in Groton. At this time, however, Groton has almost no available land zoned commercial, and few businesses that will cater to the broader Indian Hill Music students and patrons. As a result, over the next few years Groton is more likely to see new businesses that cater to visitors move into existing commercial space than new construction for such businesses. This may limit the number of such businesses short term and may stall the economic benefits to the Town.

Destination Groton will grow over time and can be illustrated in three stages assuming the path is well-planned and well-managed.

- Stage 1 – We can do this now.
- Stage 2 – We may need to make difficult decisions.
- Stage 3 – We need to develop an ongoing commitment to make Groton a sustainable destination.

Each of the stages will require close cooperation and involvement from all of the Stakeholders.

The Path: Groton as a Destination



Stage 1: We can do this now

This stage can be characterized as primarily a marketing and promotion stage. Groton's engagement at this stage will be to:

- Leverage and grow current Groton events that already attract people. These can include:
 - Grotonfest

- Fireman's Muster
- Groton Road Race
- New events around seasons or historic dates

These events could be sponsored or promoted by town committees, GBA, Indian Hill Music and Prescott Community Center, with other entities drawn in. They will have:

- Minimal impact on town culture and facilities
- Minimal town government involvement and changes to existing rules

Stage 2: We may need to make difficult decisions

Moving to Stage 2 will only occur if Stage 1 is successful, which may make the difficult decisions easier. One additional key Stakeholder is important:

- Town Government/Town Meeting
 - Rezoning may be required
 - More traffic regulation and management
 - Dedication of land for parking
 - By-law revisions
 - Master planning makes Stage 2 and the progression to Stage 3 critical components

In this stage, the Townspeople and, subsequently, town government become agents of the necessary changes to make Groton a destination.

Stage 3: We need to develop an ongoing commitment to make Groton a sustainable destination

In this stage, Groton businesses, citizens, government and Indian Hill Music have successfully built the infrastructure; legal, administration, physical assets, marketing and promotion that are needed to keep-it-going. People take ownership of the process and continue to work to develop and improve it.



IX. Findings and Conclusions

This report set out to discover how to learn from and manage community challenges while embracing the economic opportunities Groton's future holds as a Destination Community. **These Findings and Conclusions are meant to help guide the Town in a conversation about the future.**

The GBA Working Group's Findings and Conclusions come from our original research, interviews, Focus Group input, and Survey results as well as a review of several relevant documents listed in Section VI, and in Appendix 7, including previous Town Reports and Committee Studies.

The GBA Working Group, over its nearly ten months of discussion, identified a comprehensive list of important categories indicative of issues raised and lessons learned in the course of our research and analysis.

Findings:

1. Learn from other Destination Communities

- Destination Communities can contribute to a greater sense of community, quality of life and civic pride.
- Successful Destination Communities have the support and collaboration of all stakeholders.
- Increased visitors to Groton will benefit businesses and many non-profits and will generate increased revenues for the town and the region.
- Some existing commercial uses are likely to shift over time to businesses oriented to providing services or sales to visitors such as increased dining options or boutique type stores.
- Destination Communities must establish strong lines of communication among venues, public safety and Town officials, residents, businesses and local business associations on upcoming events.
- Collaboration with regional attractions and organizations focused on bringing visitors to this region benefits all partners.

2. Pay attention to local constituencies

- Stakeholders participating in our Focus Groups or Survey, representing for-profit, non-profit, and governmental organizations overall are very enthusiastic about Groton becoming a destination community but wish to do so without losing the historic, rural small-town character of our Town.
- Stakeholder participants believe that change can be good, and that Groton will become an even more vibrant community as it becomes a Destination Community. They indicated with careful planning and communication, we can keep pace with the change and lead it.
- Concerns were expressed repeatedly in all Stakeholder sub-groups about the need for traffic mitigation strategies and infrastructure investments including: traffic calming, noise mitigation, directional signage, and the need for more parking in Town Center and at recreational trails.
- Participants expressed the need for a strong, visible Visitors Center and other municipal services such as public bathrooms
- Existing planning documents for Groton provide numerous important observations and recommendations that relate to current Destination Groton concepts. Some of these have been accomplished, such as the Town Center Overlay District, but many others, such as burying the powerlines on Main Street, and installing decorative period street lighting are still needed.

3. Access outside sources of funding

- Groton could consider identifying Federal, State, Local and Private grant and/or program funding opportunities that can assist Destination Groton, including with respect to Tourism, Transportation and Infrastructure.

4. Market strategically

- Destination Communities focus on developing strategic marketing plans which include promoting themselves through websites, maps, visitor centers, and merchant brochures.
- Groton has a rich 365-year history and a quintessential New England charm that can serve as a solid base for making Groton a successful Destination Community.
- Groton has many assets and attractions that already draw people to our town. Nature, agriculture, and the arts prevail throughout the community. A growing reputation for fine dining and Ecotourism has increased the appeal of visiting, exploring, and staying in Groton.

- Groton celebrates a number of events throughout the year that attract not only local residents but outside visitors as well. These include Grotonfest, the Fireman's Muster, Farmer's Market, Groton Road Race, Taste of Nashoba and July 4th Fireworks. These events help define our community.

5. Retain the character of the town

- Stakeholders believe that Groton has many assets that can appeal to visitors, especially the unique historic character of Groton Center and Groton's natural environment.

6. The time to move forward is now

- Opening in 2022, The Music Center at Indian Hill will be a unique place designed to invigorate the cultural landscape and be a magnet for attracting visitors from a broad region to come and enjoy not only the music education and performances but also all that Groton and the surrounding area has to offer.
- Groton has almost no available land zoned commercial. Of Groton's available building space 90% is residential, 6% is exempt, and 1% is industrial, leaving only 3% of the total available building space for commercial development.
- Unless Groton develops a broader business base to serve Destination Groton customers, surrounding towns may realize a majority of the economic benefit.
- There are things that can be done to begin realizing Groton as a destination. Developing current Groton events and celebrations in partnership with Indian Hill Music will appeal to people outside of our community. Additional new events and celebrations can be added with time.
- As visitors to Groton increase, changes are likely to be required to accommodate their needs and allow Groton to become a sustainable Destination Community.
- Various previous planning documents, including the 2011 Master Plan contains many pertinent recommendations, and the Town should consider fully funding the 2021 Master Plan update to reflect Groton as a Destination Community.

Conclusions:

The GBA Working Group's vision is to celebrate the Town's rich history and build a sustainable economic base for the future as a Destination Community. That future is now. How we engage as a community over the coming year will determine whether we get out in front of it or sit back and wait to react to it.

Opening in the fall of 2022, The Music Center at Indian Hill will be a unique place designed to invigorate the cultural landscape and be a magnet for attracting visitors from a broad region to come and enjoy not only the music education and performances but also all that Groton and the surrounding area has to offer.

This report provides a basis for moving forward, but to be successful, the Town must take action. Based on our studies and the experience of successful Destination Communities, the GBA Working Group believes it is essential that an individual be appointed, and that a new Town Destination Groton Committee be established, and be responsible for coordinating and managing the Destination Groton concept and bringing it to reality.

This new effort should begin immediately and should be charged by the Town Manager and appointed by the Select Board and work with the Planning Board and all standing Town Committees and Commissions that can contribute to its success.



Acknowledgements

The GBA Working Group wishes to thank all the individuals who participated in this study.

- 37 Stakeholders participated in our Focus Groups (4) or Survey, representing for-profit, non-profit, and governmental organizations.
(See List of 37 Stakeholder participants)
- The Working Group reached out to a number of local officials from several Destination Communities. These personal interviews included Town Officials, Chamber of Commerce leaders, and destination venue managers.
(See List of 7 Interview participants)

Groton Business Association

The GBA is a group of storefront businesses, farmers/agricultural business owners, corporations, home-based businesses, professionals, and organizations working together to foster ties between Groton businesses and residents.

The primary goal of the GBA is to foster business and agricultural growth that enhances both the cultural and economic qualities of life in the Town of Groton. The GBA plays an active role in developing Groton, expanding the tax base and creating local jobs.

The GBA is dedicated to promoting economic progress for its members and advocating for a positive business environment within the Town of Groton.

The GBA Working Group

See Bios in Appendix 1.

Front Row:

Mary Jennings

Jeff Gordon, Chair

Lisa Fiorentino, Advisor

Back Row:

Kevin Lindemer

Greg Sheldon

John Amaral, Advisor

Bob Pine

Steve Lane



List of 37 Stakeholder Participants

Participant

Richard Chilcoat
Lauri Johnson
Linda Coleman
Peter Cunningham
Bruce Easom
Connie Sartini
John Amaral
Halsey Platt
Gus G. Widmayer
Mike Bouchard
Elea Kemler
Pat Parker-Roach
Diane Carson
Vanessa Abraham
Bud Robertson
Ted Lapres
Linda Kosinski
Melissa Fetterhoff
Marlena Gilbert
Joshua Vollmar
Paul Funch
Mike Luth
Russell Harris
Daniel Everitt
Bonnie Marchesani
Jason Kauppi
Stacey Chilcoat
Julie Platt
Takashi Tada
Pete Carson
Chip Detwiller
Joanie Parker-Roach
Art Prest
Rob Moore
Patrick Kiley
Cheryl Townsend
Jeff Garibotto

Non-Profit, Activity or Business

Groton History Center
Nashua River Watershed Association
Salt and Light Cafe
Council on Aging, Squannacook Rail Trail, Select Board
Conservation Commission, GELD, Prescott
Groton Reporter
Groton Inn and Forge & Vine Restaurant
Platt Builders
Kilbourn Place
Town Clerk
First Parish Church
NOA Gallery and Gallery School
Nashoba Paddler
Groton Public Library
Groton Finance Committee
Groton Conservation Trust
Groton Community School
Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee
Groton History Research
Groton Trails Committee
Groton Police
Groton Herald
Grotonwood Camp and Conference Center
ArtsNashoba Youth Theater
Town Moderator
River Classroom, NRWA Education
Platt Builders
Groton Land Use Director/Town Planner
Nashoba Paddler
Lexvest
NOA Gallery and Gallery School
Great Ponds Advisory Committee, Finance Committee
Lawrence Academy
Grotonfest
Event Planner, Musician/Educator
Publick House

List of 7 Interview Participants

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Jim Donohue	President/CEO	Old Sturbridge Village
Michael Canales	Town Administer	Town of Stockbridge
Barbara Zanetti	Executive Director	Stockbridge Chamber
Jennifer Nact	Executive Director	Lenox Chamber
Alexandra Fuchs	Chief Operating Officer	BSO
Larry Oberwager	Director	Tanglewood Bus. Partn's
Melissa Fetterhoff	President and CEO	Nashoba Valley Chamber

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Appendix 1: GBA Working Group Bios

JEFF GORDON

15 Whiting Avenue, Groton, MA

Profession

For the past 20 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 both Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Industrial Engineering, University of Lowell

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 almost 8 years. Jeff is also responsible for Grotonfest, an iconic town event and tradition. Jeff has served on Groton's Capital Planning Committee, and currently serves on the Board of Friends of Prescott, Inc.

GREGORY M. SHELDON

62 Whispering Brook Road, Groton, MA

Profession

As President of Sheldon Collaborative, a strategic consultant to industry, government, university, research institutions, and nonprofit organizations, Sheldon Collaborative has for over thirty years achieved numerous public/private partnerships; developed and secured programmatic funding; performed strategic government and public relations; provided market strategies for industry, research, education, and workforce development initiatives focused on expanding regional growth and greater opportunities for its clients. A recognized leader with proven success in positioning the Massachusetts innovation education ecosystem for growth across industry, government, and academe.

Education

Masters 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. Both attended the GDRSD. 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*. He was a member of the Town Meeting Senior Center Building Committee.

BOB PINE

100 Hollis Street, Groton, MA

Profession

Bob is a landscape architect and soils engineer. As a Principal of Pine and Swallow Environmental he has worked on major landscape developments throughout the United States. In 2012 Bob was elected a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects

Education

Master of Landscape Architecture, Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Master of Science in Geotechnical Engineering, Cornell University

Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, Cornell University

Community

In 1974, Bob and his wife Becky moved to Groton, where they raised three children. Bob has been a Trustee of the Groton Conservation Trust for more than 40 years, a Board Member of the NRWA for more than 25 years and is also currently a Board Member of Groton Neighbors. He is a former Chair of the Groton Planning Board and served as Director of the Town's Growth Management Program which rewrote Groton's Zoning Bylaw in the 1980s. He served as Chair of the NRWA Committee that wrote the 2020 Master Plan for the Nashua River and he chaired the Nominating Committees for the Squannassit and Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. He has helped conserve numerous environmentally sensitive parcels in Groton.

STEVE LANE

67 Common Street, Groton, MA

Profession

For the past 40+ years, Steve has worked as an entrepreneur, founding companies in the consumer electronics, cellular communications and consulting industries. He has also held senior executive positions with companies across numerous business sectors. Currently, Steve is CEO of Masy BioServices, a company located in Pepperell which provides five critical services to the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, English, Princeton University

Community

Steve and Marie moved to Groton in 1985 with their two young sons, Christopher and Michael. During the 1990's, Steve was appointed by the Groton Board of Selectmen to the committee which reviewed and recommended the purchase of the Wang Country Club, was subsequently appointed to the Groton Country Club Committee, and elected its Chairman for the club's first year of existence. He was also Chairman of the original Groton Capital Planning Committee for several years and again Chaired the new Capital Planning Advisory Committee during its inaugural year in FY2020. In 2010, Steve was a Founder of the Groton Business Association and served on its Board of Directors for seven years. He has also served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Groton Community Foundation and a Trustee of Groton Community School. Currently, Steve serves the Friends of Prescott as Vice President of the Board of Directors.

MARY ATHEY JENNINGS

62 Blossom Lane, Groton, MA

Profession

Retired now from education, having served as the Superintendent of Schools for the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District for eleven years, Mary oversaw the growth of the school district from 600 students in 1994 to over 1200 in 2005. During that time, Mary revised the system-wide curriculum and renovated and/or built new schools throughout the District. Over her forty-three years of public service, she has been an educational administrator in the Minneapolis MN area; Cambridge, MA; Andover, MA; Brookline, MA; Westport, CT; and Amherst/Mt Vernon New Hampshire.

Education

Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Administration, University of Minnesota
Certificate of Advanced Study, Educational Administration, Harvard University, Bush Leadership Fellowship
Masters of Arts, Education Leadership, University of Minnesota
Bachelor of Arts, English Literature, Phi Beta Kappa

Community

Coming to Groton twenty-five years ago with her daughters Miranda and Arielle, Mary began residency as the Superintendent of School. After retiring from that position, she began volunteer service throughout the community, and founded in 2015 the Friends of Prescott, Inc. This non-profit organization has created a community center in the Prescott School in Groton that features educational, recreational, and commercial spaces along with an emerging visitor center for the town. She currently serves as President of the Board of Directors for that organization and has previously served at the Chair of the First Parish Church Board of Trustees, the Chair of the Groton Cultural Council, and the Town of Groton Personnel Committee.

KEVIN LINDEMER

227 Boston Road, Groton, MA

Profession

As Vice President of Downstream Oil for the Americas at IHS Markit, Kevin has worked with industry, investors, government and other stakeholders on such issues as market analysis, strategic planning, investment due diligence and consulting. In addition to working for IHS Markit and its predecessor companies, Kevin has worked for two refining companies in his career. Kevin's subject matter expertise includes energy, petroleum refining and marketing, and biofuels and renewable energy.

Education

Master of Applied and Agricultural Economics, University of Wyoming
Bachelor of Science, Plant Pathology, University of Minnesota

Community

Kevin and his wife, Christine, have been residents of Groton for nearly 25 years. Kevin has been a Commissioner for Groton Electric Light Department for over 20 years.

ADVISORS

LISA FIORENTINO

4 Wyman Road, Groton, MA

Profession

As Chief Executive Officer of Indian Hill Music, Lisa provides strategic leadership, vision, and direction for all aspects of the organization including programming for education, performance and outreach, marketing, financial management, fundraising, human resources, policy creation, planning, and strategic growth. Prior to joining Indian Hill Music, Lisa was Vice President of Finance and Administration and Chief Accounting Officer of NETSCOUT in Westford, MA. In this capacity, Lisa facilitated the corporation's initial public offering, managed the organization through a time of tremendous growth, and maintained overall responsibility for all facets of financial and operational management.

Education

Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Business Economics, Bentley University
Bachelor of Science, Business Management, Merrimack College

Community

Lisa and her husband, Joe, have been residents of Groton for more than 20 years. They moved to Groton in 1999 to raise their children, Brianna and Joshua. Both Lisa and Joe were very active in the Town's youth sports organizations serving in volunteer coaching or administrative roles for both the GD youth soccer and GD youth basketball programs.

JOHN AMARAL

62 Flavell Road, Groton, MA

Profession

John is a founding partner of Omni Properties, LLC. He has managed the permitting and development of multiple real estate projects including uses such as medical, education, retail, and hospitality. Prior to starting Omni, John worked for fifteen years in the C&I and commercial real estate lending industry.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Economics and Finance, Bentley University

Community

John and Diane moved to Groton in 1998 raising their son and daughter here. He has participated in the Concord-Carlisle High School Mentorship Program for five years. Closer to home, he is President of the Groton Community School Board of Trustees. John has served on Town committees including the Senior Center Building Committee and the DPW New Building Committee. Through his Company, he managed the design, permitting and construction of The Groton Inn whose mission includes collaborating with local businesses to spur economic development within the local community.

Appendix 2: GBA Letter to Town Officials, November 20, 2020 GBA Press Release, November 24, 2020



November 20, 2020

Town of Groton
Attn: Select Board Members and Town Manager
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

Dear Select Board Members and Town Manager:

A few weeks ago, I convened a small group by Zoom to discuss an idea that has been raised in the past. The idea, given Groton's natural beauty and many attractive assets, is how can Groton become a true Destination Community? With the advent of Indian Hill Music Center projected to open in the fall of 2022, it would seem that now is a good time to begin this conversation with our Town leaders.

A GBA Working Group and Advisors has been formed (see list below). The Working Group will produce a study that will identify economic issues facing Groton's business and nonprofit community, and the effect of increased tourism on the local tax base. We believe this study will help inform the Town and the public of this potential.

In its analysis, the Working Group will:

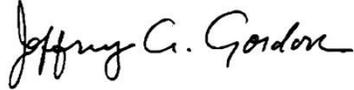
- Research how other Massachusetts communities manage issues related to being a Destination Community such as Lenox (Tanglewood), Old Sturbridge Village, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams.
- Conduct Focus Groups and Survey the greater business and nonprofit community about opportunities and concerns.
- Identify potential for commercial and retail development and the effect this economic growth would have on local job creation and the local tax base.

Although the GBA has engaged in this study to assist local businesses and non-profits in understanding the opportunities and challenges of Groton becoming a Destination Community, it is also our hope to assist the Town to better our collective readiness and thereby help facilitate Groton's future quality of life. The Working Group intends to submit its final report to the Select

Board and Town Manager this coming summer/fall and will be glad to collaborate with the Town in any ways that are helpful.

GBA appreciates your consideration and ongoing support.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Gordon
President, Groton Business Association

Working Group Members

Jeff Gordon, Chair
Greg Sheldon
Bob Pine
Mary Jennings
Steve Lane
Kevin Lindemer

Advisors

Lisa Fiorentino
John Amaral

Serving Groton's community of businesses, farms, and charitable causes

161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 GrotonBusinessAssociation.com



For Immediate Release: Contact: Jeff Gordon 508-864-7487, jeff@EXITassurance.com

Groton Business Association to Study Future Economic Opportunities

Groton, MA – November 24, 2020 – The Groton Business Association (GBA) announced today that it has formed a Working Group to begin an effort to explore the economic opportunities that exist for Groton businesses and non-profit organizations given Groton's natural beauty, its many attractive assets, and additional visitors to the town as a result of the future Music Center at Indian Hill.

“With the advent of Indian Hill Music Center projected to open in the fall of 2022, it would seem that now is a good time to begin this effort and engage in a conversation with our Town leaders”, Jeff Gordon, President of the Groton Business Association said.

In a letter to the Town Manager and the Select Board, dated November 20, Gordon stated, “The Working Group will produce a study that will identify economic issues facing Groton’s business and nonprofit community, and the effect of increased tourism on the local tax base”.

A GBA Working Group consisting of Jeff Gordon, Chair, Greg Sheldon, Bob Pine, Steve Lane, Mary Jennings, and Kevin Lindemer have begun meeting. Advisory members include Lisa Fiorentino, John Amaral and Michelle Collette. The Working Group plans to submit its study to Town Officials by the summer/fall 2021.

In its analysis, the Working Group will:

- Research how other Massachusetts communities manage issues related to being a Destination Community such as Lenox (Tanglewood), Old Sturbridge Village, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams.
- Conduct Focus Groups and Survey the greater business and nonprofit community about opportunities and concerns.
- Identify potential for commercial and retail development and the effect this economic growth would have on local job creation and the local tax base.

The GBA has engaged in this study to assist local businesses and non-profits in understanding the opportunities and challenges of Groton welcoming visitors to the community. “It is also our hope to assist the Town to better our collective readiness and thereby help shape Groton’s future quality of life,” Gordon said. “We will be glad to collaborate with the Town in any ways that are helpful. We believe this study will help inform the Town and the public of this economic potential,” Gordon added.

###

Appendix 3. Focus Group Responses by Category

Comments by Focus Group participants were recorded verbatim and then grouped by Categories that arose from these comments. The participants are listed by number next to the comments made. The categories that the comments are sorted by include:

- A. Historic Character
- B. Natural Resources
- C. Sense of Community
- D. Businesses
- E. Non-Profits
- F. Traffic
- G. Public services/Information
- H. Regulations
- I. Communications/Collaboration

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "STOPS"

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
24	B	overuse of some conservation properties (such as "dog park")
31	B	lack of access for camping-type opportunities
1	C	stop exclusivity of organizations
13,11,12	C	being resistant and change as default attitude
13	C	idea that in a small town we are separate from the world
26, 21	C	stop being insular, need to see regional aspect
29	C	not being welcoming to socio-economic diversity
1	F	allowing excessive speed in center
2	F	trucks from going through town
7,8, 11 4,5,6	F	noise and speed of traffic downtown
4	F	sidewalks being close to the road
19	F	insufficient parking in some areas, like on route 40 by Gibbet Hill castle
2	F	uncontrolled residential development
3, 10	H	difficulties from town government for new businesses coming in
12	H	increasing taxes on services businesses especially
8	H	rising costs of living so diverse people can live here

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "STOPS" CONT'D

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
20	H	hoops for licensing, example: on-premises Liquor licensing
19	H	gentrifying residential areas
23	H	town is expensive, perception that it is less welcoming to people of lesser means
25	H	conflict between town and with Indian Hill Music
31	H	adherence to restrictive 2-acre zoning so need more housing opportunity
22	H	participating in regional school district
2	I	being a town that is and is perceived as negative on business development
3, 5, 6, 7, 10,9 14 15	I	divisive rhetoric including online
19	I	comparing Indian Hill to Tanglewood and Sturbridge
17	I	complaining about how the town is doing things
18	I	assume that everything "will take care of itself"

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "STARTS"

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
22	A	bury utilities from CVS though Main Street
4	B	woodlands being actively managed
9	B	leveraging Wild and Scenic designation of rivers
11	B	ways for community to support businesses
11	B	opportunities for collaboration of small businesses
9	B	strengthen climate resilience using nature-based solutions
10	B	nurture arts ecosystem around Indian hill
24, 29	B	picnic tables and such on conservation properties to increase ways to use properties
1	C	having Townwide recognition that community is changing
11	C	more things to do in Groton
4	C	move post office back downtown

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "STARTS" CONT'D

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
29	C	welcome wagon - type organization to provide information to newcomers
2	D	create better business opportunities for people in town
3	D	Encourage development of businesses within the town without violating our culture
12	D	encourage food truck, or ice cream on rail trail canoe launch
13	D	more places for people to stay with range of affordability
13	D	making sure everything that is needed is available in town
5	D	encourage more retail business, especially walkable in the center (start)
30, 21	D, E	more visitor opportunities along Main Street - e.g., small shops
6	E	sidewalk artwork day to help support sidewalks
8	E	Groton history museum started
5	E	designate places for people to paint
7	E	outdoor public art installations
7	F	viable public transportation
12, 3	F	provide signage for people who don't know where things are
15	F	improvement of parking to encourage walkability
4	F	reconfigure parking lot of post office
30, 31	F	traffic calming strategies
27	F	environmental sustainability - such as charging stations, sidewalks for walking between places
31	F	lower speed limit in Center, less wide roadways
	F	public parking areas marked
28	F	more directional signs
30	F	look at impact of Route 40, especially at intersection with 119 and Old Ayer Road
27, 30, 26, 29	F	stop not dealing well with traffic issues
2	F	internal mini-bus (transit) system
12	F	public restrooms
1	G	engage wider audience in what organizations do
2	G	welcoming and visible visitors center
5	G	town website to have calendar of events kept up to date for things that are happening in town

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "STARTS" CONT'D

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
13	G	youth center with vibrant youth programs
3	G	start a visitors' center
14	G	have people promote businesses and opportunities outside of Groton
5	G	arts compass showing art opportunities within 1/2 hour drive
8	G	sharing and discussion of historic information about the town
25	G	strategy to promote opportunities of a Destination Community in all 4 seasons
26	G	marketing of regional opportunities "Vermont of Massachusetts"
28	G	community calendar
23, 25	G	list of places to eat with links, shops and things to do, like canoeing
31	G	public bathrooms - porta-johns in key locations, including conservation areas
22	G	more trash pickup throughout town
	G	inventory of business opportunity locations
2	H	architectural review board to ensure new building is consistent with character of the town
22	H	affordable housing
10	I	increasing our efforts for diversity
6	I	engage people to suggest ideas to improve town center
10	I	strengthen regional alliances
28	I	being more inclusive
21	I	be more regional
23	I	coordinate opportunities among organizations
26	I	civility initiative
	I	key person to assist business development - GBA

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "KEEPS"

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
1	A	Historic districts
8, 14	A	keep historic fabric of town both center and town as a whole
8	A	maintain adaptive reuse of historic buildings
25	A	unique character of downtown
26	A	overall appearance of the town
31	A	Groton Historic Districts with public oversight with commission
1	B	accessible open space (open to all)
1	B	accessible waterways (open to all)
3, 9,10	B	preserving Groton's natural resources, rivers, greenways lakes and other conservation lands
10, 9	B	outdoor activities
9	B	continue green or environmental initiatives
23	B	conservation accessibility
27	B	wide open spaces
22	B	maintain critical mass of conservation-oriented people
24, 30	B	system of trails
31	B	variety of access opportunities to open space (horses, wheelchairs, bikes walking, etc.)
2	C	rural farm character of the town
2	C	small town activities Grotonfest, road race, fireman's muster, etc.
2	C	Groton Country Club kept and open to all
13	C	police blotter and animal control blotter, because they reflect best of small towns caring about people
4	C	keep as inclusive community
10	C	wonderful small town feel
12	C	welcoming signs
6	C	balance to rural - urban atmosphere (suburb)
7	C	keep spirit of volunteerism
21	C	community feeling
22	C	rural character
29	C	family opportunities
27,25	C	keep the country club, valuable for destination concept
26	C	access to fishing
26	C	celebration of history especially revolutionary war

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS. "KEEPS" CONT'D

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>CAT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
3, 11	D	smaller businesses so people have things to do, places to eat and stay
3	D	encourage of new businesses that meet the culture of the town
24,21	D	number of places to eat
9	E	keep recognizing the variety of contributions of non-profits make to town
9	E	continue non-profit council
13	E	keep really rich adult education
5, 11	E	destination for the arts
28	E	value on education and life long learning
12, 15	E	pedestrian crossings and sidewalks and expansion that has been going on
7	G	Maintaining high quality of Police, Fire and DPW
8	G	Keep a newspaper in town
14	G	keep town website and keep it relevant
10	G	vibrant library
29	G	information about religious opportunities
30	G	Groton visitors center
23	G	Groton visitors center map of places in Groton
31	G	electronic mapping access such as Groton trails and other apps
4	H	Keep strict residential zoning, 2 acres standard, 5 acres hammerhead
7, 5	I	keeping coordination of all the 'gems' like NOA and Groton Inn and Indian Hill of Groton together
6	I	think about unintended consequences of decisions
6	I	both cooperation and competing (coopetition)
15	I	collaboration among town government and all organizations in town
4	I	destination for education
28	I	community involvement including among organizations
29	I	outreach - groups helping people

Appendix 4. Survey Responses

Q3

Do you think that increased visitors will be a benefit or detriment to your business, group, or the town?

Net Benefit - 18 Net Detriment - 3

Cultural Assets Group

- 13 Hopefully some of them will visit our Sunday service or other programs we offer.
- 6 As a retail establishment there are myriad benefits to our business benefits associated with Groton continuing to become a 'destination' community. Our art gallery business will soon have 3 venues that we will curate; our Main Street Gallery, The Gallery at The Groton Inn and the new Indian Hill performing arts center. More people coming to Groton = more eyeballs on our artists and their work = more sales. Foot traffic will naturally flow between these venues and our storefront also increasing business.
- 28 Not a detriment; we are looking forward to all the cultural offerings coming into Groton! We will probably see more use, but even if simply for bathrooms or directions or help finding a place to eat, we are happy to help!
- 8 An increase in visitors can lead to increased traffic for businesses and cultural attractions, and an increase in tax revenue from rooms tax and the like.
- 14 Perhaps a small amount. Our productions are usually one weekend in November, one weekend in March. If Indian Hill has concerts that coincide, we will make every effort to attract new audience members.

Ecotourism Group

- 9 In the long term, visitors to Groton who appreciate the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers, greenways, and trails may choose to support work to protect them or be attracted to live in the area and become stewards of these resources.
- 17 I think it will be a benefit by exposing folks who might not otherwise visit Groton to come here and partake of what our community has to offer.
- 35 I do believe that increased visitors would benefit the whole town, if managed correctly.
- 12 Benefit.
- 23 Benefit. People will find out about the opportunity to rent canoes/kayaks and paddle such a special river.

Education Group

- 29 Benefit - more visitors, more families, more exposure, more business

- 31 Groton's natural environment has so much to offer and will be a natural draw for people visiting Groton. As an educator, I believe it is only a positive to expand the attention to the value of natural spaces and the importance of water protection.
- 32 Increase revenues and diversity within our town.

Town Group

- 26 The pros will outweigh the cons, which can be managed with leadership and vision.
- 25 business increase resulting in more tax revenue for the town. the downside will be an increase in traffic.
- 19 It would help marginally but not significantly because our focus is on the politics, events and culture of the town.
- 34 I think restaurant and hotel businesses will benefit, for which I am happy. I am concerned about changing the character of the town with traffic, increased expenses due to new services, and general congestion

Business Group

- 11 Increase visitors would mean more visibility and growth of the business.
- 2 I think it will be a BENEFIT to my business and the Town.
- 7 Will create more demand for room nights at The Inn and all of the restaurants in Town.
- 4 Increased traffic brings greater visibility and additional customers to my tenants
- 30 I think that more visitors will be a real boost to the economy, especially during the summer when schools - public and private- are on summer break. It will keep Groton vibrant year-round.

Q4

What challenges may arise?

Cultural Assets Group

- 1 No challenges anticipated
- 13 I don't think we will have challenges from having more visitors.
- 6 Increased traffic may add congestion and noise pollution raising a backlash from our neighbors. The increased influx of people w/ cars, bikes, hiking may put an added strain on our infrastructure. Wear on our already shoddy sidewalks is the first thing that comes to mind.
- 28 Parking can, during peak activities in Town, create a problem at the library and around, but as situations arise, we will address as needed.

- 8 With increased use of infrastructure, some pieces may wear out faster. Also, controlling noise and traffic in the center of town will become increasingly difficult, even as it becomes increasingly necessary with more pedestrians.
- 14 Again, we perform only 2 weekends. Perhaps we could develop opportunities for our young actors to assist with other events in town?

Ecotourism Group

- 9 Significantly increased usage of select resources could result in degradation of those resources. For example, overuse of the Petapawag Boat Launch, sections of the Nashua River Rail Trail, and the Nashua River itself.
- 17 Obviously dealing with the traffic impact during major events.
- 35 Increased traffic, higher demand for parking, increased litter, extra wear and tear on roads and buildings. More noise
- 12 Increased usage of trails creates some problems, but the overall benefit to citizens and visitors is much greater. Challenges are more trash, conflicts between different users (bikers vs. equestrians and hikers, XC skiing vs. snowshoeing, etc.), dogs vs. other dogs and people, crowds at popular places, problems from limited parking, etc.
- 23 Parking is limited at our location.

Education Group

- 29 Traffic - making access more difficult.
- 31 Overuse of recreational sites could be an issue. Parking is clearly limited in all of our outdoor conservation properties and the need for more attention to trash, parking, signage could be relevant.
- 32 Balancing growth and preservation of our beautiful natural resources.

Town Group

- 26 Traffic and impact on the surrounding neighborhoods may be the biggest impact, but this is not the Comcast Center or Gillette Stadium.
- 25 managing the increase in pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- 19 If we market the town as a 'destination' and do not make the investment in handling an influx of tourists, the town could become a more difficult place to live for current residents.
- 34 Traffic, need for unfunded services, congestion

Business Group

- 11 Crowded area
- 2 Traffic control and access.
- 7 Increased vehicular traffic, demand for parking in the Town center and visitors seeking more retail shopping opportunities.
- 4 I cannot think of any. Perhaps congestion on Main Street?
- 30 Traffic flow, need for more unique businesses that cater to the visitors, trash, possibly stretch the police during concert days or nights

Q5

Are there investments or actions your business, group or the town can take to leverage a potential increase in visitors?

Yes 22 - No 0

Cultural Assets Group

- 1 Increased frequency of history programs
- 13 more outreach and pr to reach visitors
- 6 There is an as-yet-to-be-explored area for cross-business collaborations that will leverage each other. The Groton Inn/NOA Gallery collaboration is just a small example of these kinds of synergies; the Inn gets beautiful art rotated through their common areas and NOA gets sales. A win/win. There is a Sense of Place collaborative currently being created to link the art history of Groton to the thriving arts community that is here today. It is a regional endeavor centered here in Groton. Lots of visibility that will help Groton be known as an arts destination sustaining existing and emerging arts venues here in Town. I am reminded of the phrase - cooptation - coined by author and management consultant, Charles Savage. Cooperation by competitors where it makes sense and competition based on individual core competencies.
- 28 Directional street signs are key to drivers not familiar with Groton. We finally got library street signs up and they have helped reduce the calls from people lost, unable to find the rear parking lot.
- 8 There are many actions that can be taken. These range from small things like better signage, to large projects looking to fill an unmet need. For example, food outlets to cater to those using the Rail Trail are needed.
- 14 If we were to have our actors assist in town, we could have them wear ArtsNashoba shirts and share info about our group when asked. We will also develop a brochure for the Information Booth.

Ecotourism Group

- 9 The town may wish to support improving access at select sites, in anticipation of higher visitation, potentially reducing traffic to more environmentally sensitive areas.
- 17 I see a benefit of the proximity of the Nashua River Rail Trail to the Indian Hill venue and the town should take advantage of that.
- 35 Increase our advertising through town signs/banners.

12 More provisions for parking near popular locations. Signage to remind about courtesy and carry in-carry out. Trash bins for high use areas with town pick-up.

23 Collaborate with other businesses or organizations to offer packages

Education Group

29 just expanded and included a "shell" for a future community room. would love to welcome community use as well as offer school sponsored community activities and events.

31 Focus on signage, good public information through social media, and providing educational materials at visitor booth at Prescott SCC, hotel, Indian Hill, etc.

32 Extend hours of operation of restaurants and gas stations. Advertise in travel magazines or websites.

Town Group

26 Find ways to invite visitors to stay in Groton rather than only visit the music center. Collaborate with restaurants, visitors, hotels and attractions in Groton and the surrounding towns to create this region as an overnight destination under a single brand, such as "Vermont in Massachusetts."

25 safely manage the increased traffic flow

19 The town needs to make parking facilities and associated law enforcement investments to handle an influx of visitors, if they come.

34 A visitor's bureau will perhaps highlight other businesses and recreational activities in Groton. I am concerned that our infrastructure is not ready (parking, roads, maps, etc.)

Business Group

11 The town can work toward making retail more accessible on Main Street
2 New property or businesses.

7 The Inn will collaborate with Indian Hill Music to offer guest packages; consider providing a shuttle for guest transportation to/from Indian Hill and The Inn; collaborate with other local businesses (NOA Gallery, Nashoba Paddlers, Facets, Lavender) to provide guests with incentive to shop at these businesses

4 I am doing a full renovation to the former Donelans building in time for the opening of the Indian Hill Music School.

21 Regional marketing

30 Spread the word that Groton is a good place to do business

Q6

What new businesses or groups would be beneficial for Groton as a Destination Community?

Cultural Assets Group

- 1 Moderately priced restaurant options
- 13 more restaurants of all price points, ice cream shop, bookstore (please!), local theater group, independent movie theater (so lots more weekend opportunities for entertainment for people who come to concerts.)
- 6 Retail establishments to support the desire of Groton Inn guests to shop within walking distance. Bike rental Music store/school/instrument repair to support Indian Hill I could imagine a "bundler" to put together cross business "packages"; train from Boston, rail trail-based transport to the Inn, golf/tennis at Country Club, guided tour of trails, etc.
- 28 Restaurants, special town-wide events like ArtWalks, special boutique-like retail shops like Lavender on Main Street.
- 8 It would be beneficial to have a Groton History Museum with regular hours sharing the rich history of the town. Also, it could be useful to have a group that created flyers with all the events going on in town in a particular time period that could be handed out to visitors.
- 14 Within walking distance to the Inn/downtown, a pastry shop, unusual shops - selling chocolates, perhaps postcards of Groton, juices. New Signage that clearly points out where small stores like Facets, and so forth, can be found. Perhaps Prescott School could especially plan 3-4 events that rotate on weekends for something to do during the day. I apologize for not covering many new businesses.

Ecotourism Group

- 9 A Visitor group focused on providing information to visitors, online, and at a visitor center, could enhance visitor experience and appropriate use of town resources.
- 17 Businesses that emphasis the recreational opportunities that exist in town and perhaps exposes first time visitors to Indian Hills to these.
- 35 More dining, bars, and boutique retail. Improved/expanded public sporting/recreation venues.
- 12 Food trucks. Street vendors. More restaurants in general. More retail stores in general (clothes, food marts, bicycle rental & repair, XC skis and snowshoe rentals, etc.).
- 23 Shops downtown to encourage people to walk around

Education Group

- 29 recreation, shopping, eatery, visiting center with accommodations
- 31 I feel that Prescott SCC is a great resource that needs to be cultivated as a central location offering information, etc. I really feel we need to totally support the efforts of that use and the building as a valued resource.

Town Group

- 26 With a new influx of visitors, more gift and craft stores, instead of banks, lawyers, professional and medical offices along main street.
- 25 a town destination group made up of safety and business officials to manage the safety and business opportunities that will result from being a business destination.
- 19 Groton has incredible historical assets, not known far beyond the borders of the town. Perhaps, investments in a good museum of Groton history and available tours of the town.

Business Group

- 11 Added retail
- 2 A good Chamber of Commerce. A visible, central, and welcoming Visitor Center.
- 7 Boutique retail, art galleries, Town center green grocer
- 4 Grocery, medical, clothing, and other retail.
- 21 Nashoba Valley Chamber

Q7

- # **Would it be beneficial to be promoted in marketing materials about Groton as a Destination Community?**
Yes 24 - No 0

Cultural Assets Group

- 1 Could promote increased awareness and visitation to our History Center
- 13 We always appreciate more exposure.
- 6 As long as the materials were for a more regional audience in order for them to know what a great destination we are.
- 28 Because we are! We are beautiful, historic, we have the great new Inn, great restaurants, excellent schools, hiking trails, artwork, a wonderful library, etc.!

- 8 Promoting Groton as a Destination Community and highlighting its attractions could help spur tourism, as there are many tourist destinations, and marketing could help Groton stand out.
- 14 Tanglewood promotes many museums, historic places - this literature prompted return visits and events to do on the day of a concert. We need to present the wonderful things in the Groton area -

Ecotourism Group

- 9 Visitors planning a trip for one purpose, Indian Hill or a school visit, may not be aware of outdoor recreation opportunities available in Groton, and might choose to modify their visit or length of stay plans.
- 17 To inform people to what Groton has to offer.
- 35 To reach more people
- 12 Isn't that the whole point?
- 23 It will spread awareness of our business and the opportunity to access the river if people don't have their own boats

Education Group

- 29 exposure - sharing, community, service to offer
- 31 We are on our way there already....it only makes sense to be ahead of the changes and do appropriate promotion to create the flavor, care, and expectations for visitor experiences.
- 32 Marketing materials would help increase visitors especially on travel websites like TripAdvisor.

Town Group

- 26 The music center will attract people who have a choice of what to do with their time and dollars before and after concerts. It would be best to keep them in the area, otherwise the town has all the negatives of a large venue without tapping into the benefits.
- 25 once we figure out #6 above, we should promote
- 19 There are pros and cons here. New business vitality could provide employment opportunities, but would also increase congestion, making life a little bit harder for current residents.
- 34 I think restaurants and hotel would benefit, which also benefits the town with local taxes. There aren't a lot of activities. However, a further thought on one of the previous questions an opportunity might be to organize more events like Grotonfest and the Road Race

Business Group

- 2 Would bring new business and new tax revenue to the Town.
- 7 Yes, as long as research is conducted to identify the most effective marketing methods (internet, social media etc.) to access the target market/consumer
- 4 Increased exposure is the name of the game for most businesses.

21 But as a regional promotion. not exclusive to Groton.

Q8

What can the Groton Business Association do that would be beneficial?

Cultural Assets Group

- 1 Could promote increased awareness and visitation to our History Center
13 We always appreciate more exposure.
6 As long as the materials were for a more regional audience in order for them to know what a great destination we are.
28 Because we are! We are beautiful, historic, we have the great new Inn, great restaurants, excellent schools, hiking trails, artwork, a wonderful library, etc.!
8 Promoting Groton as a Destination Community and highlighting its attractions could help spur tourism, as there are many tourist destinations, and marketing could help Groton stand out.
14 Tanglewood promotes many museums, historic places - this literature prompted return visits and events to do on the day of a concert. We need to present the wonderful things in the Groton area -

Ecotourism Group

- 9 Visitors planning a trip for one purpose, Indian Hill, or a school visit may not be aware of outdoor recreation opportunities available in Groton, and might choose to modify their visit or length of stay plans.
17 To inform people to what Groton has to offer.
35 To reach more people
12 Isn't that the whole point?
23 It will spread awareness of our business and the opportunity to access the river if people don't have their own boats

Education Group

- 29 exposure - sharing, community, service to offer
31 We are on our way there already....it only makes sense to be ahead of the changes and do appropriate promotion to create the flavor, care, and expectations for visitor experiences.

- 32 Encourage local businesses to collectively encourage guests to rate experiences on TripAdvisor, YELP, etc.

Town Group

- 26 The music center will attract people who have a choice of what to do with their time and dollars before and after concerts. It would be best to keep them in the area, otherwise the town has all the negatives of a large venue without tapping into the benefits.
- 25 once we figure out #6 above we should promote
- 19 There are pros and cons here. New business vitality could provide employment opportunities, but would also increase congestion, making life a little bit harder for current residents.
- 34 develop coordinated strategy with local businesses; identify infrastructure needs

Business Group

- 2 Would bring new business and new tax revenue to the Town.
- 7 Yes, as long as research is conducted to identify the most effective marketing methods (internet, social media etc.) to access the target market/consumer
- 4 Increased exposure is the name of the game for most businesses.
- 21 But as a regional promotion. not exclusive to Groton.
- 30 Welcome new businesses. Share resources such as town by-laws or whom to ask everything from who are local sign makers to a trustworthy cleaning service for instance

Q9

- # What should the Town of Groton be doing to prepare for Groton increasingly becoming a Destination Community?

Cultural Assets Group

- 1 investigate opportunities for traffic management in the town center
- 13 see above. I think the gate keeping and multiple hoops, and permission getting is excessive and a huge obstacle. I applaud all the work in diversity training that is happening town wide. As our community becomes more open to visitors from all over, we need to welcoming to all kinds of people.

- 6 A few things pop to mind. The realization of becoming a Destination Community will involve a lot of change from a lot of people; newcomers and people who have lived their whole lives here. Change can be a very difficult thing. Over the years I have developed a person theory of change - "People do not mind change as much as they mind being changed!". As much as they may be unhappy with the way things are, they are fearful of the uncertainty of what change may mean to them. I have always found the best way to deal with this dynamic is to engage the people who will be impacted by the change in the design of the change. It gives people a sense of control in a rapidly changing world. This initial effort is a great step. I would like to see it spiral outward; forums, talks, engagement of civic groups/churches/etc., dialogues, etc. If people hear about it enough, and talk about it enough, it will eventually be more and more accepted. Just a few of my thoughts to think!
- 28 Any traffic improvements along 119 would be great. Directional street signs would be enormously helpful so that people don't miss critical turns and have to drive around lost, not knowing where to turn around.
- 8 The Town of Groton should focus on making the community tourist-friendly, which signage that makes cultural sites, businesses, and natural attractions easy to find, and sidewalks and parking that make them easily accessible.
- 14 Determine available financial sources/grants to support the Destination Community brand?

Ecotourism Group

- 9 Engage in thoughtful planning about how best to manage visitor impact so that the small town feel, rural character and excellent quality of life in Groton are maintained.
- 17 Create a positive business friendly environment for businesses that focus on making Groton a Destination Community.
- 35 Have a plan for the challenges listed in A4. Be available and encourage new business development
- 12 Traffic, sidewalk, bike lane, and parking improvements.
- 23 Address traffic management and parking

Education Group

- 29 traffic study main street safe access visitor accommodations/facilities
- 31 Support Prescott SCC, support funds to improve town commitment to public handling of recycling materials, trash, provide advanced recycling receptacles in appropriate locations, encourage all businesses that provide products and food to go green as much as possible. Reduce all plastic waste...there are so many other options that are better.
- 32 Budget for advertising. More financial incentives for small businesses to open in town.

Town Group

- 26 The town can focus on infrastructure that makes Groton more walkable and less car dependent, linking Main Street, the rail trail and Indian Hill into an easy and intuitive circuit for walking and cycling. This includes additional off-street parking, traffic-calming measures, and distinct signage to guide visitors.
- 25 form #6 as soon as possible
- 19 See above
- 34 we know that traffic will be an "issue" on event nights, and some changes are in the works. I don't think we're prepared to answer the question "what else can the visitor do here" if they came back the next day

Business Group

- 11 Accessibility for retail on Main Street as opposed to a hub for professional services and business offices... There at least needs to be a balance of these places.
- 2 Keep the aesthetic beauty and appeal that has made this town special and different than most others.
- 7 Identify and implement improvements to roads and sidewalks to ensure safety. Collaborate with the GBA and local businesses to assist in attracting visitors. The Town will benefit through an increase in food and beverage tax, rooms tax and retail sales tax.
- 4 Clamp down on zoning. There will be enormous pressure to ease restrictions, which would be detrimental to the Town's character.
- 21 recognize and partner with Nashoba valley chamber
- 30 Encourage people to get excited- this will be a new era for Groton!
Directional signs for Public Parking (i.e. behind Prescott) Paint lines along 119 to slow traffic - embrace traffic calming measures along Main St.
Map/booklet of Groton

Appendix 5. Town Assets

Arts

Indian Hill Music Center
Arts Community
Kaleidoscope Gallery,
The Groton History Center's JD
Poor Murals, donated by Indian
Hill Music and on public display at
The Groton Inn.

Ecotourism

High Visual Quality
"Textbook" glacial geology
Extraordinary biodiversity
Habitat for protected species
Great Ponds
Two ACECs, 88% of Groton
Audubon Sanctuary

NEFF Wharton property
Rich State Forest
Town Forest
50% of Groton is protected
Matisse Bells
NEFF Dumaine and Sabine
properties
Fishing
Boating
Nashoba Paddler
100+ miles of trails
Nashua River Rail Trail
Squannacook Rail Trail

History

Historic Interest
History Center
Attractive, historic, walkable Town
Center
The Old Burying Ground with
Revolutionary sites and a book
documenting the history of the
graves
Great, and historic homes.
Nashua River history
Devens History Museum.
John Tinker Trail,
Longley Stone on Longley Road
GPL Historic Room
The new Cemetery with Civil War
burial sites
The Military Museum (Devens)
History Center and Museums.
Historic Cemeteries

Visitor Services

Groton Inn
Restaurants
Prescott including Visitors Center
Groton Herald promoting visitor
services, upcoming local events
and local businesses.
Park benches
Nashoba Valley Chamber of
Commerce
Grotonwood
Hairdressers,
Coffee Shops,
Playgrounds

Culture

United Native American Cultural
Center (Devens)
Hindu Temple
Council of Churches
the two historic and attractive private
schools -- Lawrence Academy and
Groton School -- in town.
Grotonwood
First Parish Church
Groton Conservation Trust

Tourist Attractions & Events

Film Locations
Memorial Day honoring Vets –
Sawyer
Concerts at the Pavilion
Groton should be billed as a
destination town that embodies
harmony of nature, history and a
culturally active community of today.
Apple Orchards
Llama Farm
Fireworks – 4th of July
Grotonfest
Fireman's Muster
Boutwell wildflower gardens and
maze/labyrinth
NRWA

Ecotourism Cont'd

Off- and on-road biking
Equestrian use of trails, Hazel
Grove, Shepley
Groton Country Club
Squannacook River Wildlife
Management Area
Cross country skiing (country club,
trails) "local" downhill skiing and
tubing (Westford)
General Field - Wildflower
Meadow
Gibbet Hill
many farms & orchards,
Williams Barn,
Swimming sites –any areas
identified for out-of-town use?
Nashua and Squannacook Rivers

Visitor Services Cont'd

Gibbet Hill Tower
Shops – Lavender, Natural Market,
Salt etc.
Real Estate Offices
Groton Business Association

Appendix 6. Reference Communities and Economic Studies

- Sturbridge Economic Assessment & Strategy, Town of Sturbridge, 2021
- The Economic Impacts of the BSO, Stephen Sheppard, Williams College, 2018
- Stockbridge Zoning Bylaw Diagnostic Report by Joel Russell, 2019
- Strategies for Economic Growth in Williamstown, MA - Williamstown Economic Development Committee, December, 2015
- Small Towns Big Ideas, Will Lambe, UNC at Chapel Hill, December, 2008

Appendix 7. Reference of Existing Groton Planning Documents

- Charles Eliot Master Plan, 1963
- The Character of Groton Study, 1979
- Conway School of Design Landscape Study of Groton Center, 1980
- Groton Master Plan, 2011
- Groton Center Design Guidelines, 2014