

Townsend Master Plan

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December 2, 2021

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Approved by the Townsend Planning Board on July 18, 2022.

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Signed:

August 22, 2022
DATE

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The 2021 Townsend Master Plan is respectfully submitted by the Master Plan Committee on December 2, 2021

The Master Plan Committee appreciates the efforts of all those that contributed to the development of the Townsend Master Plan through attending meetings, completing the survey, participating in interviews, supplying information, and reviewing drafts.

We believe this document captures ideas and thoughts of a broad and diverse group of community members (from students to seniors), business owners, elected and appointed officials, and department heads who actively engaged in the process.

This document would not have been possible without the assistance of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, the Planning Board, and Beth Faxon, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals Administrator.

Completing this process and the resulting document during the Pandemic certainly presented challenges, but as a committee and community we were able to persevere and complete the Master Plan for the Town of Townsend.

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Townsend Master Plan

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 41 § 81D requires that the Town develop a Master Plan that includes a section on the goals of the plan along with chapters on land use, housing, economic development, transportation and circulation, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and implementation.

The town of Townsend Planning Board, an elected board in town, is responsible for creating and updating a Master Plan. To accomplish this task, the Planning Board appointed a Master Plan Committee to develop a Master Plan to guide future decision making with regard to growth, economic development, circulation/transportation, housing, national and cultural resources, open space, recreation, infrastructure and other applicable areas.

To accomplish this task, the Master Plan Committee reviewed earlier plans, open space plans, housing plans, held community forums, and conducted a community wide survey. The Master Plan Committee also solicited the input of other appointed and elected boards, commissions, and employees to obtain information to inform the plan while at the same time creating a plan that conforms to applicable state laws and guidelines. The Master Plan was further developed through the use of consultants, and collaboration with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission.

Contained in the appendix is the full results of the survey, a copy of the accessory apartment bylaw that was recently passed, a copy of the consultants' economic development report, and a report from the community listening sessions.

Community Goals and Policies

The Master Plan provides an overall vision and high-level goals, along with an implementation strategy. While the Master Plan was created by a committee, the work to meet the goals in the plan is largely left to the various town departments, elected boards and commissions, and appointed committees.

Goal

The town of Townsend will be a sought-after community to live in, work in, and visit. To reach this goal, the following will be foundational principles.

- Community members will actively engage in civic and recreational activities.
- Public events and celebrations that give value to tradition and will instill a strong sense of community.
- Committees, town departments, elected officials, and concerned community members will work to maintain the historical buildings, landmarks, character, and open space.
- Town Hall will serve as the central point of the community, offering accessibility to governmental, cultural, and social resources.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion will ensure that Townsend is a community that welcomes community members of all ages, origins, faiths, orientation, and financial means.
- Department personnel will put the best interests of citizens and the community above all else.
- Volunteer boards and committees will work together to provide timely resolution to public matters while considering the ideals of our community as a whole.
- Agricultural establishments, existing and proposed will help preserve the landscape of woodlands, fields, and other natural resources.
- Businesses will be supported in their efforts to come to Townsend and offer services and employment.

Policies

The Master Plan suggests the following overarching policies to assist Townsend with reaching the goals outlined in the Master Plan.

Services and Facilities

- Townsend will ensure that all community members have access to appointed and elected officials along with department heads allowing them to benefit from town services.
- Townsend will ensure that facilities are maintained in order to protect the investment of the townspeople.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Townsend will ensure bylaws, along with growth and development practices protect the groundwater, recharge areas, and wetlands to ensure safe and ample water supply.
- Townsend will identify and protect wildlife and their habitats.
- Townsend will address climate change, by protecting air, water quality, noise, light, and other environmental pollution, while establishing practices that use less harmful solutions that support everyday living needs.
- Townsend will preserve historic and cultural structures and support their ongoing maintenance and use.

Open Space and Recreation

- Townsend will increase the options for financial sustainability of existing agricultural enterprises, and will identify, monitor, and inventory Chapter 61 land in order to preserve this land as open space.
- Townsend will ensure that open space is maximized for recreation for those that live, work, and visit our community.

Circulation and Transportation

- Townsend will strive to have safe streets by investing in infrastructure such as road repair and sidewalk development, developing partnerships for alternative forms of

transportation, supporting bicycle transportation, applying for grants, and working with non-profits to create its transportation system.

Economic Development

- Townsend will employ a specialist(s) to ensure a bright economic future for all that live and work in town.
- Townsend will partner with the non-profit and business community to ensure the community assets are marketed to boost economic vitality.

Housing

- Townsend Zoning by Laws will ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion, by increasing housing options for all community members through innovative strategies such as mixed-use developments, expanded opportunities for apartments and/or cluster type developments.

Land use

- Townsend will maintain a balance of mixed uses; agricultural, forest and open space land; and small neighborhoods, and commercial development, while preserving its rural and historic character.

Implementation

- Town boards, committees, commissions, and departments will integrate the recommendations of the Master Plan into the entire operation of the Town and the Master Plan will serve as a basis for new bylaws, grants, and programs.

About the Town of Townsend Massachusetts

Townsend, a rural community, occupies 32.83 square miles of land and surface water in north central Massachusetts. It is the largest land area community in the County. The Town is at the western end of Middlesex County on the New Hampshire border, just north of the City of Fitchburg and east of the Town of Ashby. The Town is also bordered by Pepperell and Groton to the east, Shirley to the southeast and Lunenburg to the south.

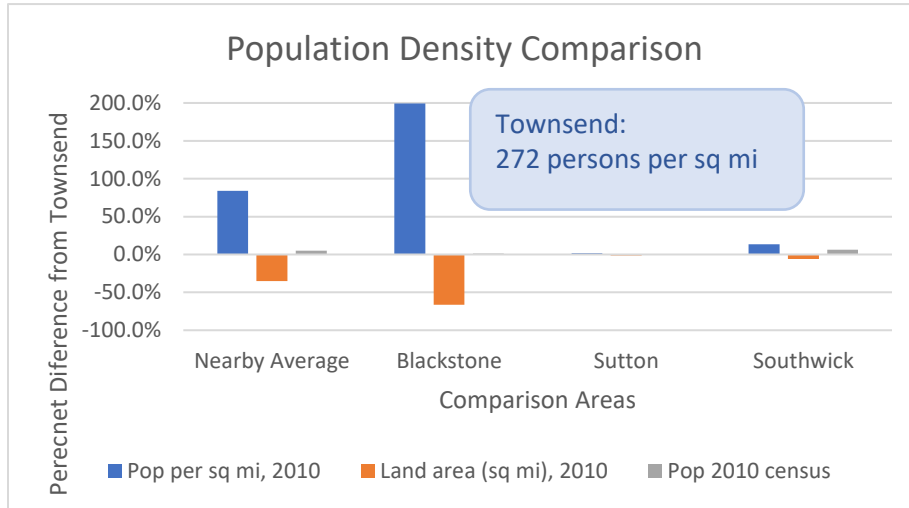


Townsend is located 39.5 miles northwest of Boston and provides convenient access to surrounding business, cultural, recreational, and scenic opportunities. Middlesex County is located in the New England physiographic province of the Appalachian Highlands physiographic division, and Townsend is located in the Central Uplands. The Central Uplands cover extreme northwestern Middlesex County, extending eastward almost to the Nashua River. The landscape is characterized by steep hills dissected by deep, narrow, interconnected valleys.

The area includes the Squannacook River, the Townsend State Forest, Pearl Hill State Park and several smaller parks. With a population of 8,926 according to the local census, there are 272 persons per square mile, which is just a quarter of the state average and less than other comparable towns.

The following chart shows the population density of Townsend according to the 2010 Census as compared to nearby communities as well as three communities comparable in population.

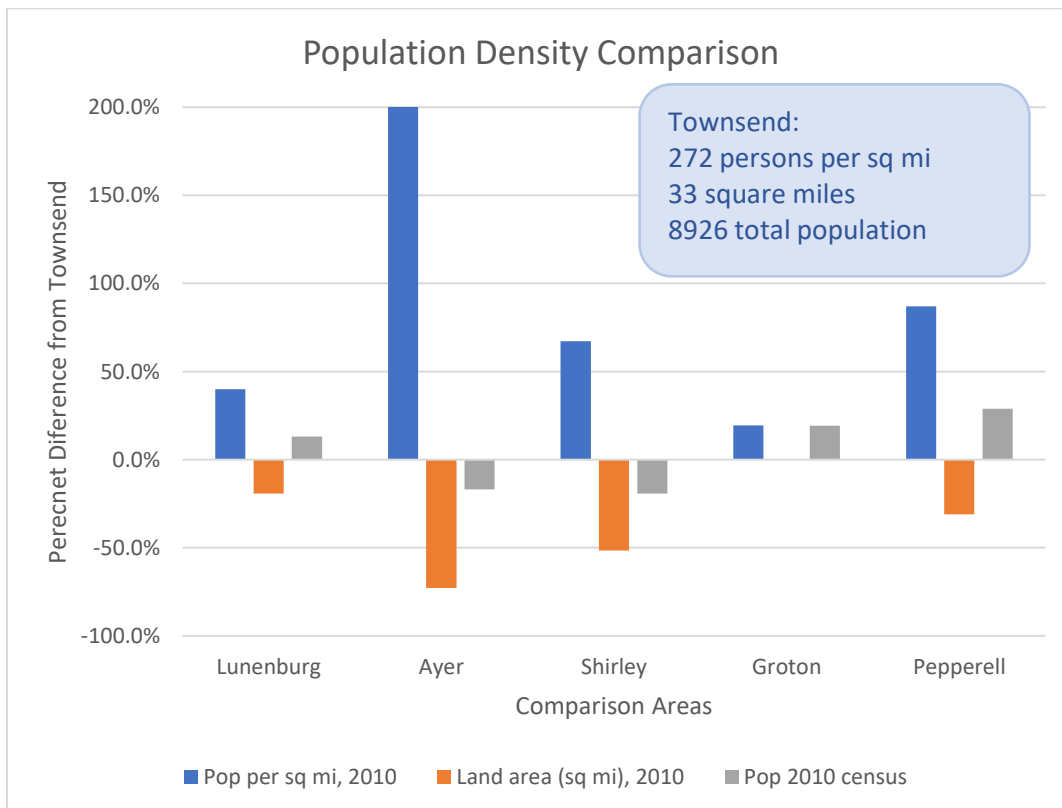
Chart 1: Population Density Comparison – Comparison Communities



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

The table below shows the population density of Townsend as compared to its neighboring communities.

Chart 2: Population Density Comparison – Neighboring Communities

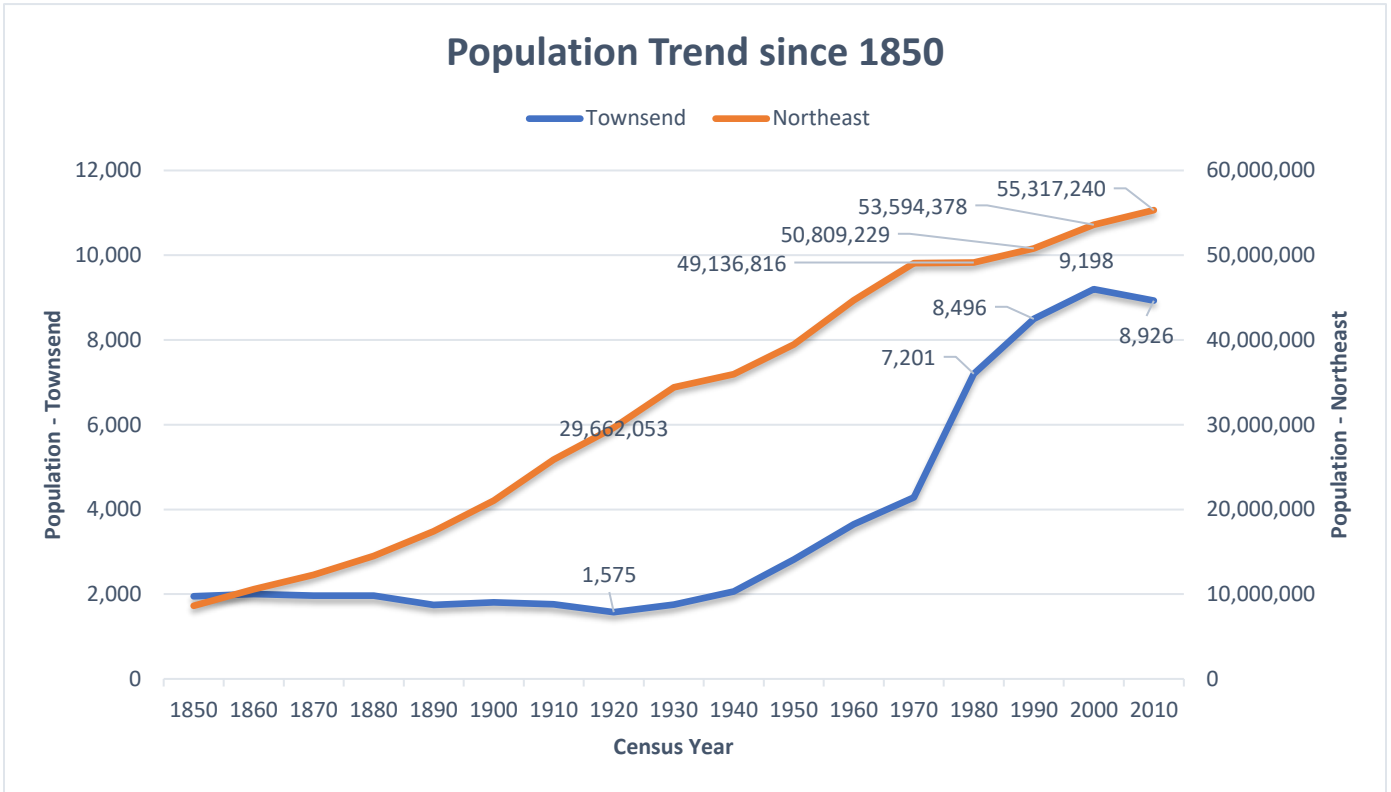


Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

For analysis, the nearby towns of Lunenburg, Ayer, Shirley, Groton, and Pepperell were used as comparison communities. Rather than viewing each individually, a composite average is used. Additional communities from across the state that were best-matched in terms of geography and population. These are Blackstone, Sutton, and Southwick. All are separated from major highways and towns and 2 are on a border. All are also in eastern Mass. and are very close in population to Townsend. Lastly, county, state, northeast-US, and US statistics as appropriate were evaluated. Sources are primarily from national Census data (census.gov). Population figures for Townsend are most recently available from 2010, and other statistics are more recent, from 2012 to 2019.

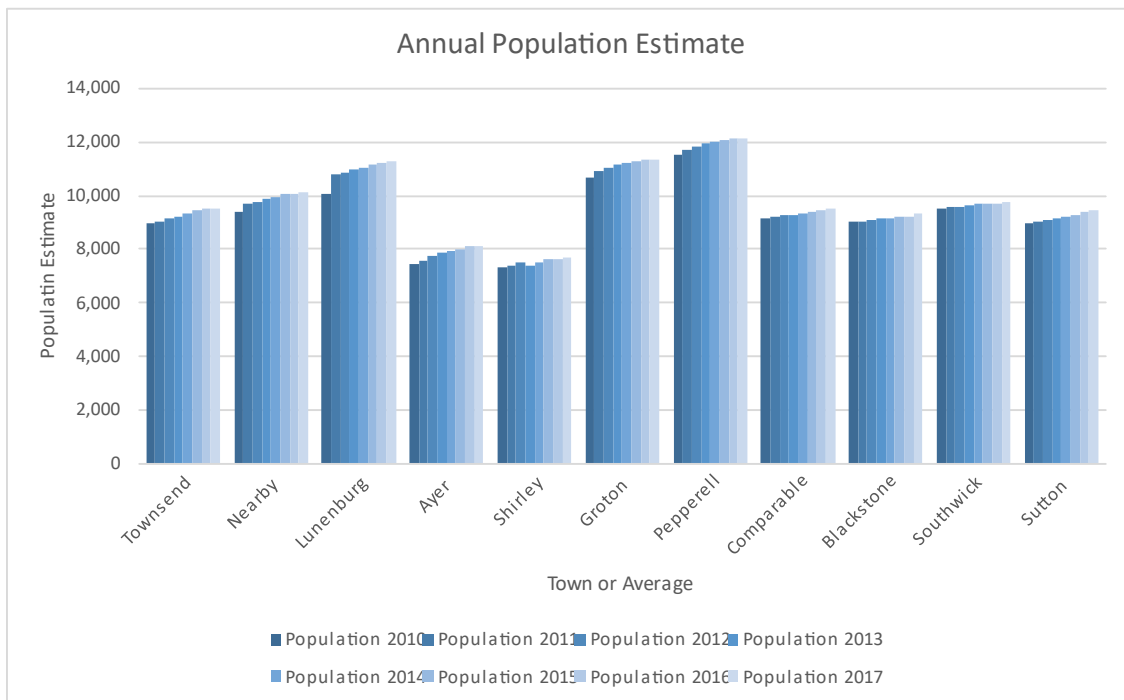
Population trends from 1850 as depicted in the chart below show increasing growth along with the nation. The Northeast region provides a best-comparison as national figures are more skewed by westward expansion. The most recent census figure of 8,926 dropped 3% from 9,198 in the 2000 census, while the Northeast region was increasing. In the decades prior to 2000, Townsend saw steep rise in growth for decades, outpacing the region. The region began its growth after a low point in the 1920 census at just 1,575 residents. While the population trends are upward, the rate of growth differs within the region.

Chart 3 Population Trend Since 1850



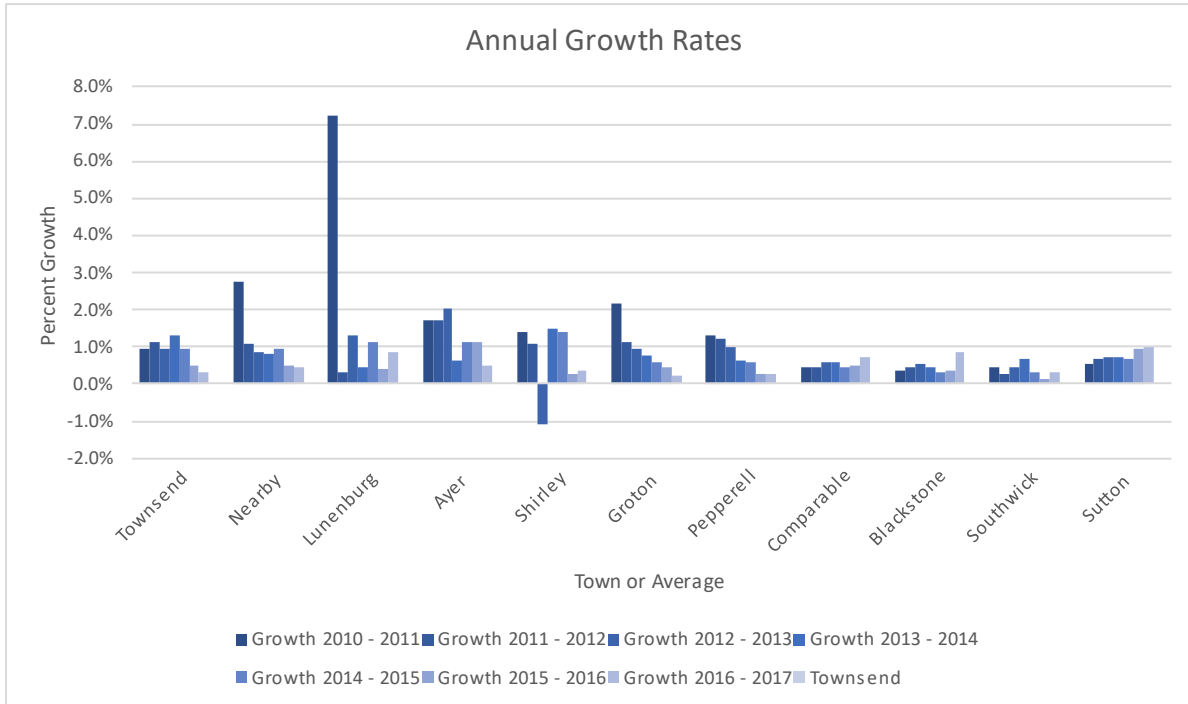
Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Chart 4: Annual Population Estimate Comparison



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

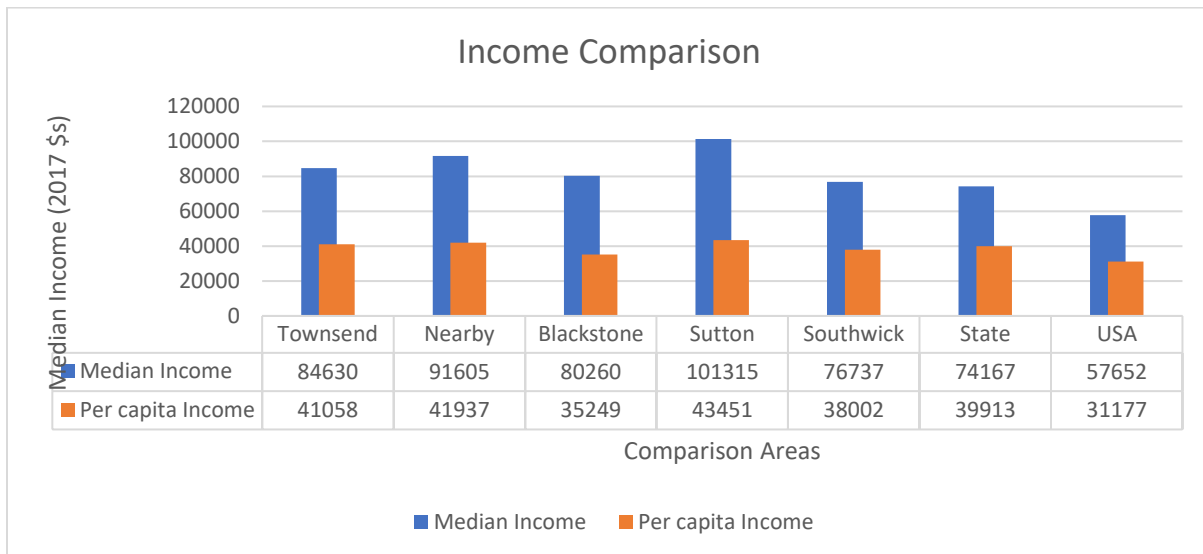
Chart 5: Annual Growth Rate



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

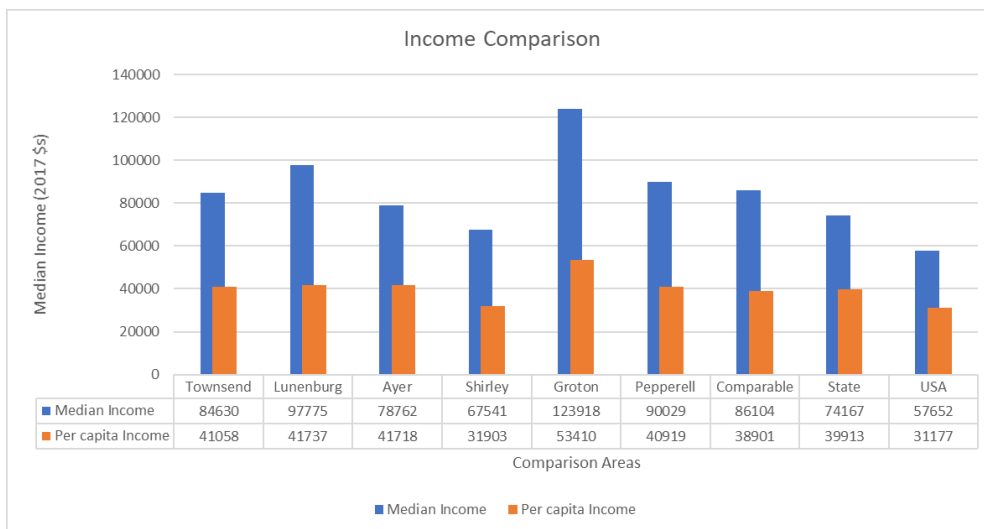
Compared to the average of nearby towns, Townsend performs better than Shirley in both median household income and per capita income and reflects similar income statistics as other comparable towns. However, Townsend is ahead of both state and national median income statistics.

Chart 6: Income – Comparison Communities



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

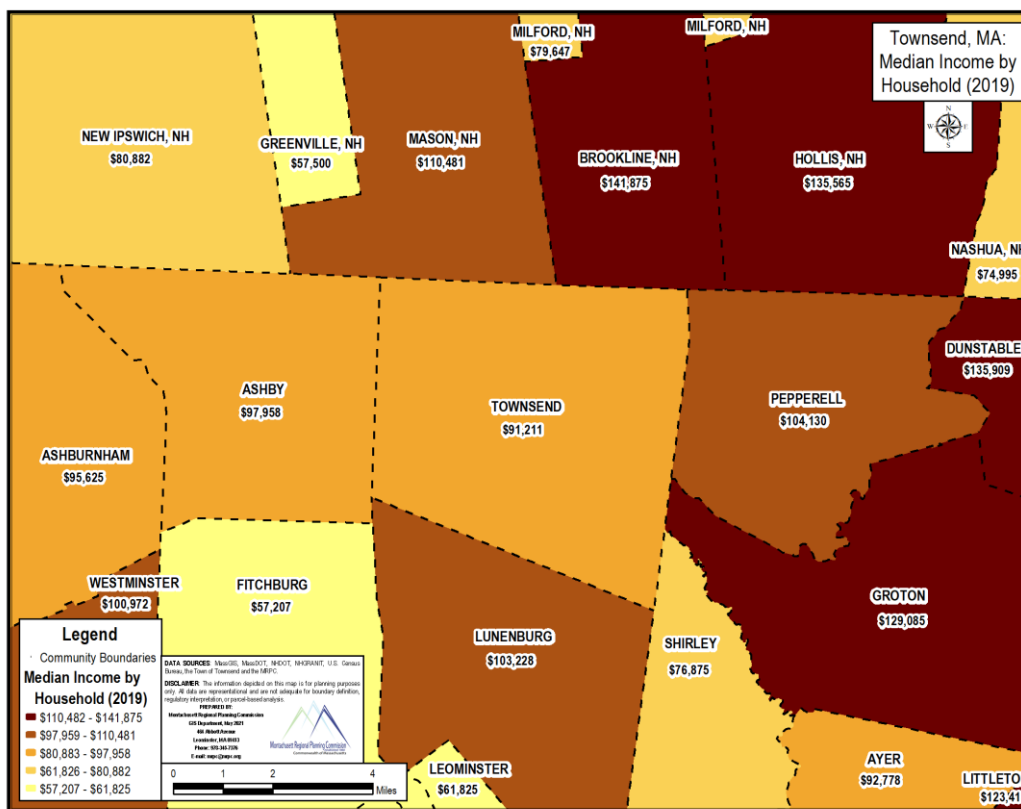
Chart 7: Income Comparison – Local Comparison



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

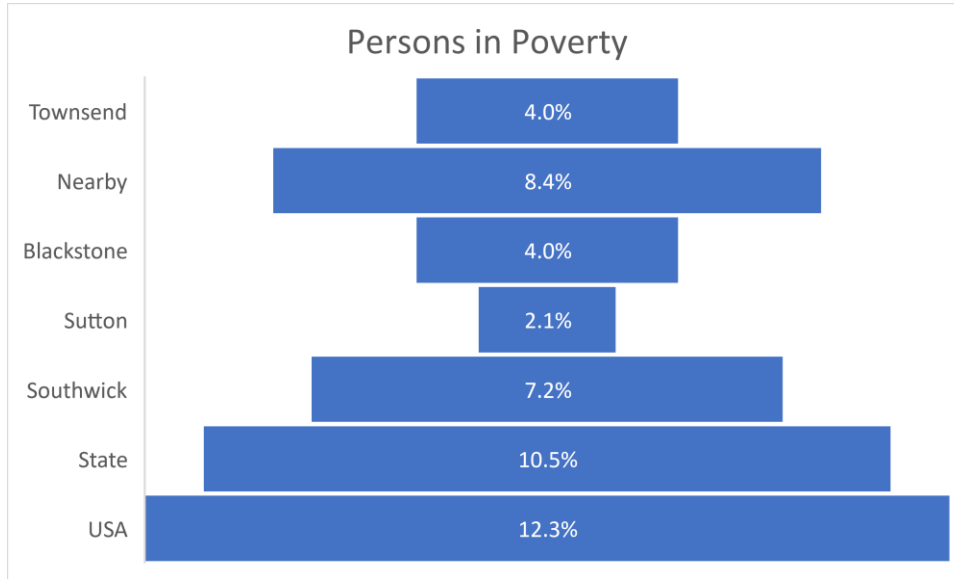
Median income in the surrounding area is shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Median Income, Townsend and Surrounds



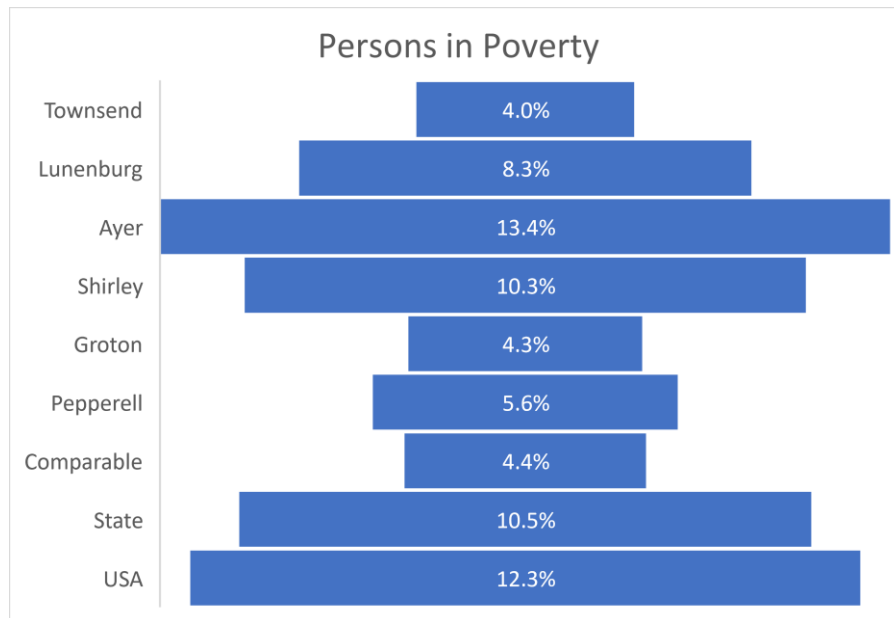
Townsend has just one-third the poverty rate of the US and a significantly lower rate than nearby towns.

Chart 8: Poverty Rate – Comparison Communities, State, USA



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Chart 9: Poverty Rate - Local Comparison



Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

A number of statistics offer insight into the economic success of Townsend. Education and labor rates in Townsend present different statistics. High school graduation is on par or ahead of other areas, but bachelor's degrees are less than surrounding areas and the state as a whole. Labor force participation is better than most comparison areas.

Households with computers and broadband connection are generally better than comparison areas, locally and nationally. Despite generally-favorable economic indicators, Townsend lags significantly in number of firms located in the area.

Table 1: Education – Labor Indicators – Comparison Communities, State, USA

	HS graduates	Bachelor's Degree	Labor, Total	Computer Households	Broadband Households	Firms, All
Townsend	95.1%	34.3%	69.7%	94.7%	88.8%	547
Nearby	94.2%	43.1%	66.5%	92.9%	89.8%	979
Blackstone	95.5%	35.4%	76.2%	94.6%	90.7%	719
Sutton	96.7%	41.0%	70.7%	94.1%	91.7%	732
Southwick	92.4%	35.8%	61.9%	85.6%	80.3%	946,
State	90.8%	43.7%	67.3%	91.4%	86.4%	607664
USA	88.0%	32.1%	63.4%	90.3%	82.7%	27,626,360

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Table 2: Education – Labor Indicators – Local Communities

	HS graduates	Bachelor's Degree	Labor, Total	Computer Households	Broadband Households	Firms, All
Townsend	95.1%	34.3%	69.7%	94.7%	88.8%	547
Lunenburg	93.9%	37.1%	69.5%	93.5%	90.3%	1126
Ayer	94.6%	48.7%	74.4%	90.3%	84.9%	938
Shirley	89.9%	24.4%	52.9%	92.6%	90.8%	631
Groton	97.0%	64.2%	65.8%	95.4%	93.4%	1020
Pepperell	95.8%	41.1%	70.0%	92.8%	89.6%	1178
Comparable	93.5%	36.6%	71.0%	89.6%	84.4%	799
State	90.8%	43.7%	67.3%	91.4%	86.4%	607,664
USA	88.0%	32.1%	63.4%	90.3%	82.7%	27,626,360

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Looking more closely at cost of living, Townsend median owner-occupied housing values are much less than comparable areas, with comparable related costs. Without a

mortgage, rent is in line with other areas with comparable costs. Also relevant is the level of uninsured persons, which is much higher than comparable areas.

Table 3: Cost of Living – Comparison Communities – State - USA

	Housing Median	Costs with Mortgage	Costs without Mortgage	Median Rent	Uninsured ¹
Townsend	\$291,200	\$2,070	\$757	\$961	2.5%
Nearby	\$353,200	\$2,264	\$815	\$1,179	1.9%
Blackstone	\$291,100	\$2,032	\$764	\$978	2.0%
Sutton	\$351,900	\$2,210	\$790	\$1,104	1.1%
Southwick	\$277,500	\$1,902	\$717	\$1,105	2.1%
State	\$381,600	\$2,225	\$812	\$1,282	2.7%
USA	\$217,500	\$1,595	\$500	\$1,062	8.8%

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Table 4: Cost of Living – Comparison Communities – Local – State - USA

	Housing Median	Costs with Mortgage	Costs without Mortgage	Median rent	Uninsured
Townsend	\$291,200	\$2,070	\$757	\$961	2.5%
Lunenburg	\$308,800	\$2,047	\$760	\$1,580	1.1%
Ayer	\$326,600	\$2,131	\$822	\$1,097	1.8%
Shirley	\$314,200	\$2,244	\$699	\$810	2.5%
Groton	\$473,000	\$2,665	\$1,000	\$1,296	2.1%
Pepperell	\$343,400	\$2,235	\$793	\$1,113	2.1%
Comparable	\$920,500	\$2,048	\$757	\$1,062	1.7%
State	\$381,600	\$2,225	\$812	\$1,282	2.7%
USA	\$217,500	\$1,595	\$500	\$1,062	8.8%

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

¹ Uninsured indicates those lacking health care insurance. Those without insurance tend to have lower income and are more vulnerable.

Looking at the housing population, we see Townsend at the top of a small range at 2.69 persons per house. One-year residence is at 91.7% (which is decreasing), also at the top of comparable areas, and marginally better than the average of nearby towns.

Table 5: Persons per Household – Comparison Communities – State - USA

	Persons per Household	1yr Residence ²
Townsend	2.69	91.7%
Nearby	2.58	91.2%
Blackstone	2.61	90.9%
Sutton	2.75	94.7%
Southwick	2.54	92.4%
State	2.52	87.3%
USA	2.62	85.8%

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Table 6: Persons per Household – Local Communities – State - USA

	Persons per Household	1yr Residence
Townsend	2.69	91.7%
Lunenburg	2.64	93.3%
Ayer	2.27	93.2%
Shirley	2.52	88.2%
Groton	2.74	89.2%
Pepperell	2.71	92.2%
Comparable	2.63	92.7%
State	2.52	87.3%
USA	2.62	85.8%

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

² Residence 1 year ago is used in conjunction with location of current residence to determine the extent of residential mobility of the population and the resulting redistribution of the population across the various states, metropolitan areas, and regions of the country

Townsend has a well-distributed age demographic. In the Town, the population was spread out with 16.2% under the age of 18, 64.0% of the population fell within the age range of 18-64, and 14.8% were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 43.2 years. For every 100 females, there were 98.2 males. For every 100 females aged 18 and over, there were 95.9 males.

Census demographics show almost double the population under 5 in Townsend as compared with Shirley. The older population was at the low end, however that demographic is changing. It is relevant to note that Townsend, even when compared to nearby neighbors has negligible racial diversity, with the white population well over 90%. The proportion of those who are foreign-born and not speaking English at home are each under 6% and much lower than comparable areas.

Table 7: Population – Comparison Communities – State - USA

	Population under 5	Population 5-18	Population 18-65	Population over 65	White not Hispanic	Foreign-born	Non-English at home
Townsend	5.0%	16.2%	64.0%	14.8%	94.4%	4.9%	5.5%
Nearby	5.4%	19.7%	65.1%	15.2%	85.9%	7.0%	9.7%
Blackstone	4.4%	22.2%	63.3%	14.5%	93.5%	3.7%	6.6%
Sutton	4.3%	23.7%	60.1%	15.3%	92.3%	5.0%	6.6%
Southwick	5.1%	19.8%	58.5%	21.7%	92.8%	3.9%	6.7%
State	5.3%	20.0%	63.8%	16.2%	71.6%	16.8%	23.1%
USA	6.1%	22.6%	61.8%	15.6%	60.7%	13.6%	21.3%

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Table 8: Population – Comparison Communities - Local

	Population under 5	Population 5-18	Population 18-65	Population over 65	White not Hispanic	Foreign-born	Non-English at home
Townsend	5.0%	16.2%	64.0%	14.8%	94.4%	4.9%	5.5%
Lunenburg	4.4%	23.0%	60.1%	16.9%	88.4%	5.8%	9.3%
Ayer	7.3%	18.9%	66.2%	14.9%	82.4%	10.2%	10.4%

	Population under 5	Population 5-18	Population 18-65	Population over 65	White not Hispanic	Foreign-born	Non-English at home
Shirley	2.5%	12.0%	74.1%	13.9%	74.9%	8.9%	16.2%
Groton	7.3%	23.3%	61.8%	14.9%	91.0%	5.7%	7.4%
Pepperell	5.5%	21.2%	63.3%	15.5%	93.0%	4.2%	5.2%
Comparable	4.6%	21.9%	60.6%	17.2%	92.9%	4.2%	6.6%
State	5.3%	20.0%	63.8%	16.2%	71.6%	16.8%	23.1%
USA	6.1%	22.6%	61.8%	15.6%	60.7%	13.6%	21.3%

Source: 5-Year 2016-2019 ACS

Respondents to the survey distributed by the Master Plan Committee want a safe community (99%). The Respondents rated the following as strengths: town character (64%), along with the schools (54%). Areas noted as needing improvement include Housing (38%), Municipal Services (37%), recreation (33%), shopping (14%), tax rate (12%), streets and sidewalks (7%), employment (6%).

To keep the rural feel, respondents favored restrictions on tree cutting on scenic roads (68%). Supporting this survey result was the passage of the Scenic Roads Bylaw at the Spring 2021 Town Meeting.

History of Townsend

Originally part of an area called Wistequassuck by the Native Americans, the land which eventually became Townsend, Massachusetts was first surveyed by Jonathan Danforth in 1676. The land had been granted to Major William Hawthorn of Salem as a political thank-you gift. Although the major never saw the land, it was known as “Hawthorn’s Grant” for many years.

By 1719, the House of Representatives decided to divide an area called Turkey Hill, of which Hawthorn’s Grant was a part, into North Town (Townsend) and South Town (Lunenburg). The first meetinghouse to serve the 200 settlers of North Town was built in 1730 on Meetinghouse Hill, and on June 29, 1732, the Town was incorporated as Townshend. It was named after Charles Townshend, the second Viscount of Raynham, and a former British Secretary of State (the viscount was also known as Turnip Townshend for introducing England to the large-scale cultivation of said vegetable).

In 1733, a dam was built on the Squannacook River at the place now known as Townsend Harbor (harbor referring to a place of refuge, comfort or security), and a gristmill and sawmill were erected along the river. This part of Townsend was the first to be settled even prior to the incorporation of the Town, and a tavern built by the Conant family around 1720, known as the Old Mansion, still exists today. Throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries, Townsend Harbor was the industrial heart of the town.

Through the 18th century, the boundaries of the Town changed. A triangle of land in the northeastern part of town was lost to Dunstable. In 1741, a third of the Town was lost when the border between Massachusetts and New Hampshire was moved south. The final change occurred around 1767 when the western boundary was moved to the east to make way for the town of Ashby.

That same year, the Townshend Acts, proposed by Charles Townshend’s grandson, were passed by England’s Parliament. These acts placed a tax on common items imported by the colonies, and further infuriated the colonists, who were already suffering under the

Stamp Acts of 1765. Eventually, most of the Townshend Acts were repealed, but the seed for revolution had been planted. Townshend sent 73 soldiers toward Concord on April 19, 1775, nearly 10% of the population of 821 (1776 census). As the war progressed and patriotism took root, the “h” began to drop out of the spelling of the town’s name in the written record, and soon Townsend was the accepted spelling.

After the war, growth in the Town began to shift to the west. Because of the earlier boundary changes, the geographic center of the Town had moved, and so the second meetinghouse, built in 1771, was moved in 1804 to Townsend Center. The first floor of the building was used as the town hall until the 1890’s, when Memorial Hall was built to commemorate those residents who fought in the Civil War.

As the 19th century progressed, most commercial and manufacturing interests moved closer to the center of town as well. These interests included the production of stockings, clothing, pails and tubs. But the major industry in town was the production of coopering stock. The B. and A.D. Fessenden Company became the largest employer in the Town, running lumberyards and sawmills in addition to the cooperage factory. The company finally closed in 1960 after many productive years.

The development of West Townsend, the third village in town, was linked to the turnpike which passed through the area on its way to western Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Several taverns were built, and by 1806, the Joslinville Tavern on Main Street was a main stop on the Boston to Keene Stagecoach. In the 1830’s, the West Village Female Seminary was built, which helped West Townsend become the cultural center of the town.

The railroad came to Townsend in 1846 and had a unifying effect on the town. Many of the goods manufactured in town were now shipped via the railroad, which further enhanced the development of these industries. By 1900, three trains ran in and out of town each day.

With a quick mode of transportation now available, farms were able to increase their production. Cranberries were raised in a bog off Spaulding Street, the Harbor Farm on

Main Street produced milk, apples and produce, and several poultry farms became major suppliers to the New England egg market. Many of these businesses lasted well into the 20th century.

The booming manufacturing and agriculture industries created other needs. By 1871, the Town district schools made way for its first high school located near the center, which also housed primary and intermediate grades. The first bank was chartered in 1854, and the fire department was established in 1875. The first police department came fifty years later in 1926.

As was true all across New England, by the middle of the 20th century many of the manufacturing and agricultural businesses began to slow. The train ran only three times a week. The Fessenden Company closed in 1960. The poultry industry waned until only one farm remained in operation in the 1970's. The last Boston and Maine train left Townsend in 1981.

By the end of the century, Sterilite was the largest industry remaining in town. Sterilite, in operation for more the 75 years, is the largest manufacturer of plastic housewares in the world.

With the decrease in industry, Townsend has become a residential community with many of the requisite service providers while retaining much of its rural character. The Town adopted its governing charter in 1999, and Memorial Hall was beautifully restored ten years later.

Over the centuries, Townsend has had some famous artists take up residence. Rufus Porter (1792-1884) was a traveling folk artist who decorated walls with stenciled images and original paintings throughout New England during the first half of the 1800s. Some of his work can be seen at the Reed Homestead in the Harbor and two other private homes in the area. Mr. Porter was also a prolific inventor, creating such things as an air pump, chair cane, a churn, fire alarm, life preserver, and rotary plow just to name a few. (Townsend Historical Society) Winslow Homer, the painter, visited his family in West

Townsend in the summer of 1879 and chose a local girl to be the subject of one of his paintings, "Girl with Laurel".(Divinity and Dust) Samuel S. Thorpe, Jr.(1933-2005) was a well-known and highly collected local artist. He kept an active studio in Townsend, MA and Kennebunkport, ME for many years and his work has found its way into many private and corporate collections throughout the country. Sam Thorpe was known for his classic New England scenes which include sawmills, fishing shacks, maple sugar houses, town commons, and seasonal landscapes. Townsend has become a residential community with some services, while retaining its rural and historical character. In 2007, Townsend celebrated its 275th Anniversary with many activities, culminating with a grand parade in September of that year.

In 2004 a new Harbor Fire station was built on land donated by the Shepherd family.

Mr. Albert Stone, Chairman of Sterilite Corporation, approached the Town with an offer to build a new complex including an 18,000 square foot Library, a Senior Center, and a Meeting Hall in addition to building a new highway garage. The Complex was dedicated on October 31, 2009. The gift to Townsend was the largest in its history. In 2015 Mr. Stone and the Sterilite Corporation gifted the new Central Fire Station to the town. In 2021, construction of an addition to the Library and Senior Center Complex began.

In 2015, the annual town meeting approved purchase of the former female seminary (American Legion) for \$159,000. The building was demolished to make way for new West Townsend Fire Station, which opened in 2018.

Services and Facilities

This section discusses the services and facilities maintained by the Town of Townsend.

Services

The town Charter governs the Town and was first adopted in May of 1999. The Charter Committee recently updated the document, and the suggestions were accepted at the spring 2021 Town meeting. Currently Townsend has 17 Elected Boards/Committees and 25 Appointed Committees. The legislative powers of the Town are vested in a town meeting open to all voters. Oversight is through a three-member Board of Selectmen with a Town Administrator having day-to-day administrative duties.

Respondents to the survey conducted in 2019 did not feel the Board of Selectmen was easy to work with / approachable as only 9% agree/strongly agree while 38% disagree/strongly disagree that they are easy to work with / approachable. There needs to be a process to improve the opinion of the community towards the Board of Selectmen and enhance communication and access. Areas for consideration, that would increase transparency and help foster positive relations for the town include:

- Creating a general email for correspondence and ensuring all elected and appointed officials have a town email.
- Developing a Board of Selectmen evaluation process that could include a survey or “suggestion box”
- Ensuring more communication.
- Continually updating the Website so that it is easy to navigate, find information and communicate with the various boards, committees, and town employees.

Respondents felt that town hall staff were easy to work with (54%). While this is positive, efforts should continue so that Town Hall and all town departments are seen as user friendly, open, and accommodating.

The Town is part of the North Middlesex Regional School District with Ashby and Pepperell, with the new high school sited in Townsend. Having a state-of-the-art school

contributes to the attractiveness of a community to those seeking housing and raising children. Townsend also belongs to the Nashoba Valley Technical High School District.

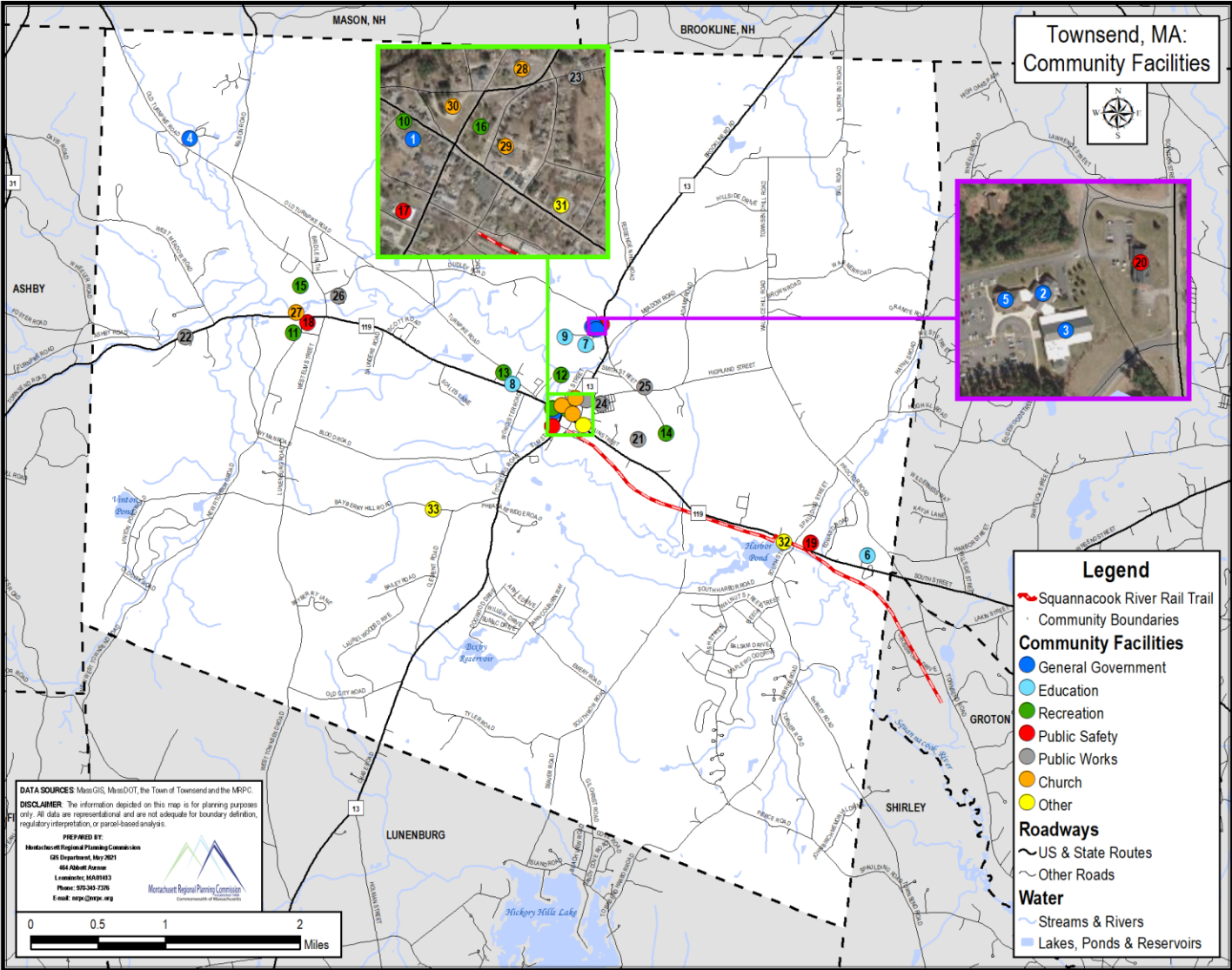
The Townsend Recreation Department is mainly self-funded and offers a variety of year-round programming. There is a robust library and senior center that also offer programs as well. Non-profits help support the Townsend community with recreational opportunities for children, and food and clothing for those in need. In addition, non-profits support the development of biking trails, hiking trails, and activities for business owners. Non-profits also are invested in the upkeep of town fields and recreational areas.

Facilities

The Town has many community facilities, which are shown on the Map 1 on the next page and services (the respondents felt the town buildings in the Town that are actively being used are in good shape). Specific ratings are listed below.

- Library (97%)
- Sr. Center (91%)
- Fire (89%)
- Town Hall (74%)
- Schools (64%)
- Police (64%)
- Highway Garage (57%)

Map 1: Community Facilities



While the town buildings that are currently in use are in fairly good repair, the Town needs a maintenance plan. Further, there are several Town buildings (Hart Library, Harbor Fire Station (the old station that is currently occupied by the state with their forestry equipment), and Squannacook Fire Station) that have been empty for a number of years. A redevelopment strategy is needed for those buildings.

Recently, the Town applied for an Americans With Disabilities Act Planning Grant to perform an ADA Self Evaluation that will determine areas for corrective action.

Services and Facilities Recommendations

- Townsend needs to develop policies and practices that ensure community members feel that the Board of Selectmen are approachable and easy to work with, and further that community members believe the members are working in the best interest of the town as a whole.
- The Board of Selectmen working through the Town Administrator should integrate public feedback loops- to include surveys on services provided into ongoing department and employee evaluations to foster a community-oriented approach to delivering town services.
- The Town has many municipal buildings, including several historic ones, and others gifted to the Town. In addition, the Town has been gifted recreational properties for use by community members. To preserve these facilities and prolong their use, Townsend needs to develop and fund a maintenance and preservation plan, that extends beyond routine actions to include projects for capital related expenses such as roofs, heating and cooling units, and related projects

Natural and Cultural Resources

The natural resources of Townsend include its aquifer, the wetland and floodplain areas, and woodland and meadow habitats. This section reviews the topics of water, climate changes, and historic and cultural resources. Information on habitat is in the Open Space and Recreation chapter.

Water

The Townsend Water Department currently services approximately 6,400 residents through approximately 2,000 service connections. The water service also supports the 362 hydrants in the town.

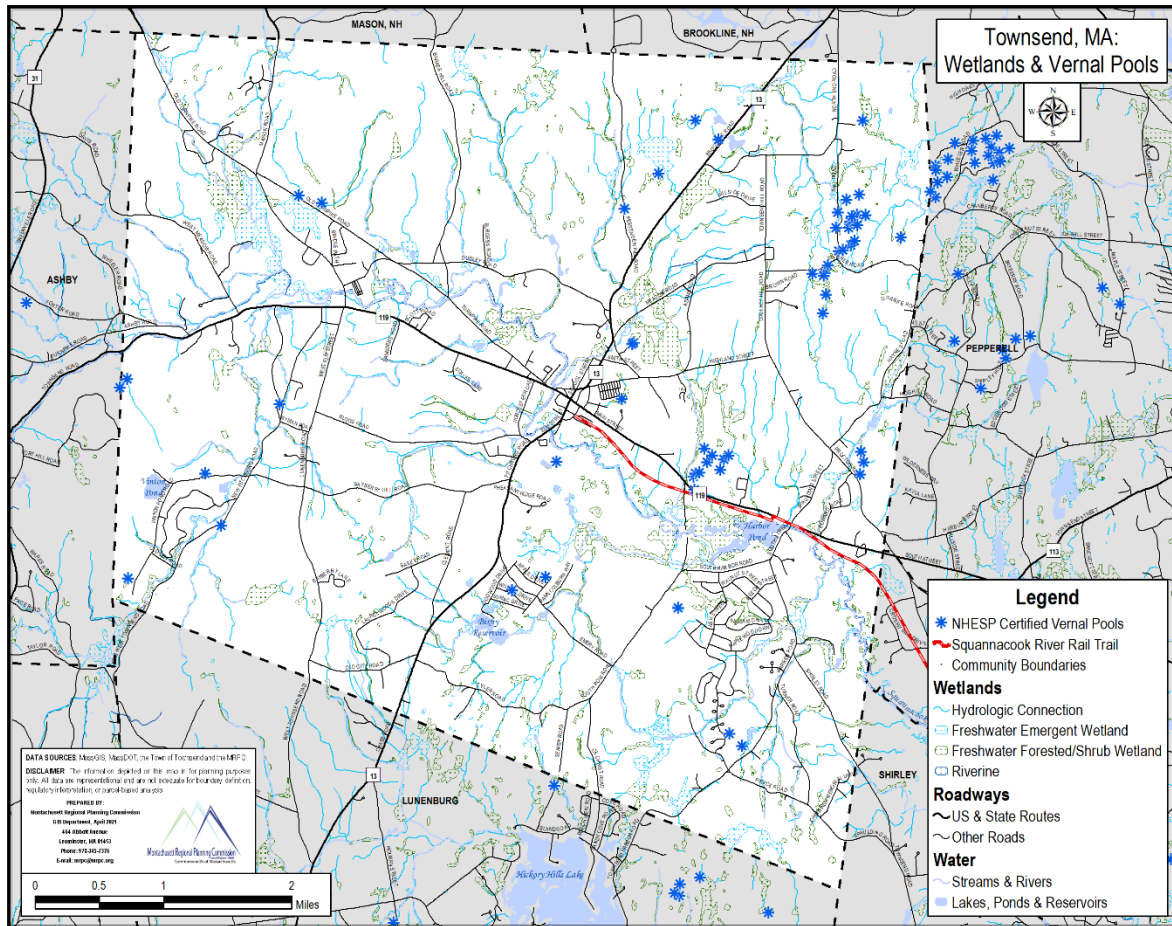
The system is supported by five groundwater distribution sources including Main Street Well Field, Cross Street Well, Harbor Trace Well, and Witch's Brook Wells 1 and 2. Only four were being used as the Cross Street Well had been offline since 2015 due to suspected elevated manganese levels, this has been corrected and the Cross Street Well is now back online, however the Harbor Trace Well has now been shut down due to the PFAS, leaving only four well operational at this time.

For each public drinking water source, two areas of critical protection are maintained, known as Zone I and Zone II. Zone I is a 400-foot radius around each well which is owned or controlled by the Water Department. Zone II is the area of an aquifer that supplies water to recharge a well under the most severe pumping and recharge conditions that can be reasonably anticipated (180 days of pumping at approved yield with no recharge from precipitation). In most cases, this is a very large area and is dependent on the topography, elevation, and hydrology surrounding the well.

In 1998 the Ground Water Protection District Bylaw was created to restrict or prohibit any activities that could possibly pose a threat of contamination to the wells. There is also an Aquifer Protection District that prohibits certain uses that would contaminate or threaten the water supply. The Wetlands and Vernal Pools appear in Map 2 on the next page.

The Water Department has two storage facilities, the Highland Street water storage tank which holds 1.0 million gallons of water, and the Fitchburg Road water storage tank which holds 0.5 million gallons.

Map 2: Wetlands and Vernal Pools (includes Hydrologic Connections)



The highest priority needs in the water system are to replace the Main Street tubular wellfield with gravel packed well, to assess the Cross Street Well for return to service, continue work on the Rt. 119 Water Main Replacement Project, rehabilitate the Highland Street tank, and relocate the Highland Street Water Main.

There are several initiatives underway to maintain and improve the water system. A leak detection program is being re-initiated, this will aid in decreasing the reduction of loss

system water. A Well Cleaning and Development plan for all the water department wells is being enacted that will include the treatment of manganese in the Cross Street Well.

The most recent investment in the water system has been the improvement/replacement of 3,300 feet of old circa 1934 cast iron water mains with modern material on a length of Main Street in West Townsend with an additional 1,000 feet of old cast iron water main replaced on West Meadow Road.

While maintenance of the existing structure is important, it is also necessary to protect the groundwater sources, which supply both public and private wells. Our drinking water is known to be excellent. Given the analysis of the MADEP's Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) report, contamination is one of the greatest risk factors, which could greatly affect the continuation of this excellent water quality. Chemicals and fertilizers known to be toxic should be banned but more concerning is the rise of emerging contaminants such as polyfluorinated compounds (PFAS) which can be found in many common everyday items.

In the March/April 2021 timeframe, PFAS was detected in the Harbor Trace Pump Station which has resulted in actions required by the water department. This is an on-going issue and for the latest information, refer to the Water Department page of the Townsend website.

Potential developments in low water capacity areas should be evaluated and the Water Department should be proactive when the Town Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Board Appeals review any projects that might have an impact on the groundwater resources of the town. When the Wetlands Bylaw and any other Bylaws that may include water are under consideration the Water Department should and must be included or consulted in these discussions.

With regulatory changes to the Water Management Act (WMA) to include the Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) of 2018, the department needs to be able to communicate what these changes mean to other departments and boards/commissions in terms of current and future development in Townsend. The Initiative basically requires evaluation of the impact on stream flows of new water withdrawals or increased water withdrawals from groundwater.

The town draws its water from the Nashua River Basin which includes 12 of its sub basins, all are designated as Cold-Water Fisheries by the State Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. SWMI is specific in its classification, with the classification running from 0 to 5, 5 being the worst. Under the Biological and Withdrawal Classifications, Townsend currently rates on average a 4 and 3 respectively. This means any changes developmentally that would further degrade those categories must be observed and commented on by the Water Department as it may impair its continued ability to withdraw water under the WMA. The Board of Water Commissioners hired the engineering firm Tighe & Bond to develop a water system Master Plan Report, which was drafted for review in May 2020 and completed in April 2021. Map 3 on the next page shows the Watersheds and Sub-basins.

Additionally, the impacts of Covid-19 on the shift of the demographics on where people are choosing to live needs to be further evaluated so that these water needs can be continue to be met.

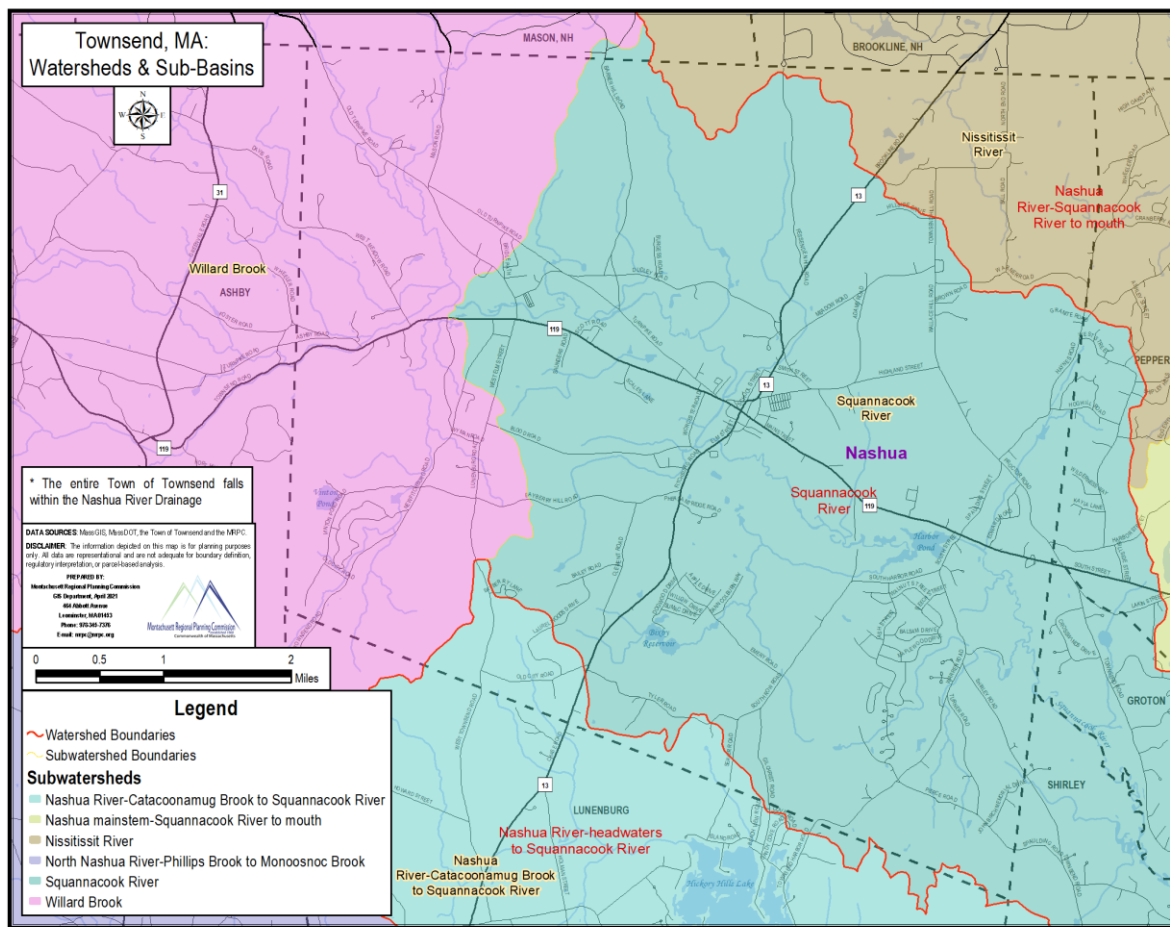
With its current population and needs, Townsend is in a difficult position with its water supply. The Water Department is in the process of replacing the Main Street well. If the project is not completed by summer 2022, there will be a full outdoor water ban. The Harbor Trace well, which is out of commission because of the PFAS, had previously supplied water to half of the town. The Cross Street and Main Street wells will only meet part of the need. Without a treatment plant for the Harbor Trace and Witches Brook there will not be enough water. Witches Brook 2 is just below the state level for PFAS. The treatment plant is a critical need.

An additional area of concern is the low water volume/pressure on Lunenburg Road which is a concern of the Fire Department.

The Water Department has identified tapping additional water sources on Greenville and Mason Roads as a potential solution to the decreased water supply. To accomplish this, it will require crossing over the Squannacook River. The project would be a joint project with the Highway Department.

To ensure redundancy and availability of water during electrical outages, generators are needed at the Cross Street and Main Street locations.

Map 3 Watersheds and Sub-basins



While maintenance of the existing structure and supporting the excellent reputation of our drinking water are important, it is also necessary to protect the groundwater sources, which supply both public and private wells. The survey responses support efforts to protect wells and limit chemicals in the aquifer recharge areas. One of the Open Space categories of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) relates to aquifers, recharge areas, and watershed land. Potential use of CPA funds, if enacted, might support purchasing properties to protect the water supply while preserving open space.

There were numerous questions and responses in the survey regarding water which highlight the importance the residents place on the water supply.

- Respondents were in favor of protecting the area around town wells (89%)
- Respondents were in favor of regulating chemicals in the aquifer recharge area (88%)
 - Conservation, Board of Health, and Water to meet and devise a strategy for developing policies / rules / bylaws
- Respondents were in favor of preventing road salt from going into the water supply (85%)
 - Water department should routinely test for salt levels in the water
 - Highway department should continue to explore best practices and strategies to reduce salt entering the water.
- Respondents were in favor of ensuring residents protect the ground water on their own property (81%)
 - Education campaign on what leaches into the water.
- Respondents were in favor of purchasing strategic properties to protect the water supply (80%)
 - Identify the key properties that could be purchased.
- Respondents were in favor of prohibiting the use of chemicals on town properties (89%)
 - Citizens approached the board of Selectman and in the next cycle to use organic fertilizer. This type of effort needs to continue.
 - The town Common and Cemeteries are already using organics.

- Respondents were in favor of keeping existing bylaw protections for the water supply (79%)
 - Conservation should continue to enforce the wetlands protection regulations.

Given the analysis of the MADEP's Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) report, contamination is one of the greatest risk factors, which could greatly affect the continuation of this excellent water quality. Chemicals and fertilizers known to be toxic should be banned and the use of organic fertilizers encouraged, but more concerning is the rise of emerging contaminants such polyfluorinated compounds (PFAS) which can be found in many common everyday items. Potential developments in low water capacity areas should be evaluated and the Water Department should be proactive when the Conservation Commission, Planning Board and the Board Appeals review any projects that might have an impact on the groundwater resources of the Town. When the Wetlands Bylaw and any other Bylaws that may include water are under consideration the Water Department should and must be included or consulted in these discussions.

Water Recommendations

- Ensure potential developments impacting water capacity are reviewed by including but not limited to the Water Department, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and the Board Appeals during projects review that might have an impact on the groundwater resources
- Continue work on the Rt. 119 Water Main Replacement Project
- Create Well Cleaning and Development plan for all the water department wells
- Maintain regular sampling and testing schedule of all our water sources for PFAS
- Continue the process to permit a new source (Main St. Well) planned for Spring 2022 to improve water capacity
- Plan for the new Harbor Trace Treatment Plant to include the Harbor Trace and the two Witches Brook Wells

- The Treatment Plant will be designed to remove PFAS and consolidate well operations
- Work to begin late summer-fall 2022, multi-phase project planned to continue until completion
- Increase water volume/pressure Lunenburg Road (joint project with the Fire Department)
- Tap additional water sources (Greenville and Mason Roads) running to the Canal Street bridge and connecting to Main Street (Joint project with Highway)
- Generators for wells (Cross St and Main Street) to supply water during electrical outages

Climate Adaptation Plan

Townsend has a significant amount of core habitat and natural landscape that requires preservation which is shown in the Biodiversity Map 4 on page 34. While much has been done to preserve open space and farmland, it is a continual process for the Town to protect these resources.

There are two parallel paths the town of Townsend needs to develop to minimize the impacts of climate change. The first is preparation for additional climate change, and the second is taking whatever steps the Town can to reverse the damage already created. In 2020 the town undertook a Hazard Mitigation Plan and a Municipal Vulnerability Assessment to make suggestions for preparing the town for hazards associated with a changing climate. This plan provides great detail about the steps Townsend has taken to date and steps it should take in the future. In addition to the recommended steps, the Hazard Mitigation Plan provides excellent guidance related to hazards Townsend will face, including increased flooding and severe winter storms. The Hazard Mitigation Plan provides an avenue to protect the bridges, dams, and other infrastructure that are shown on the map appearing on page 55.

Further the Hazard Mitigation Plan outlined several priority hazard mitigation and climate adaptation actions. These are outlined Table 9 which begins on page 35.

Map 4: Biodiversity

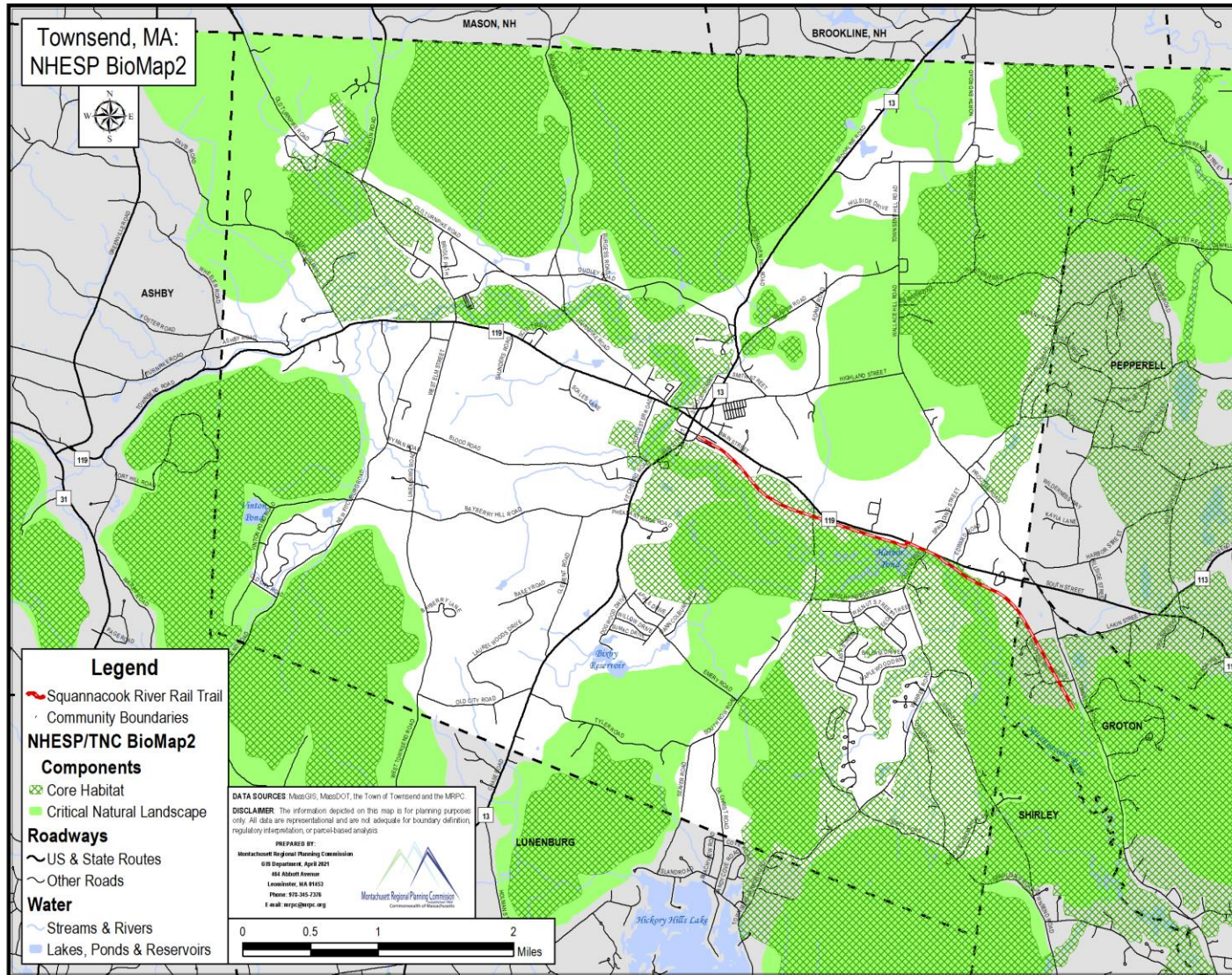


Table 9: Priority Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Actions

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
Dam Safety	Document dam conditions, ERPs, and potential impact and consider removing/restoring dams based on their current functionality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department • Planning • Private dam owners • DCR • Dep. of Fish and Game 	1-3	\$\$	H	EEA Dam and Seawall Repair Program, MET
	Pursue land acquisition in the floodplain once the non-functional dams are removed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation commission • Water Department • Planning and Development 	5-10	\$\$\$\$\$	M	LAND Grant
Electricity and Communication Infrastructure	Study feasibility of solar panel installations on Town buildings, parking lot at the high school and behind the library. Install solar panels with battery storage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Committee • Planning and Development • Emergency Management 	Study – 1-3 Implementation – 5-10	Study - \$\$ Installations - \$\$\$\$	H	Green Communities Grant program, MVP Action Grant
	Install electric vehicle charging stations in public areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Committee • Planning and Development • Emergency Management 	3-5	\$\$\$	H	MassEVIP, Green Communities Grant program

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Assess risk to cell tower to avoid any potential interference during emergency communications. Add repeaters to communication system to increase reliability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unitil • Emergency Management • Planning and Development • Cell phone companies 	Assessment – 1-3 Installation – 3-5	Study - \$ Installations - \$\$	H	Private funds, general funds
	Replace communications tower on Bayberry Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management 	5-10	\$\$\$\$\$	M	Private funds, general funds
	Develop a list of residents without efficient internet connections. Improve internet access and infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comcast • Emergency Management • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	Private funds, general funds
	Employ efficient communication systems to ensure public safety during emergency through AM radio network, reverse 911/ CodeRED, or cell towers on wheels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management 	1-3	\$\$	H	Private funds, general funds

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
Public Water Supply	Study well floor elevations and compare them with the new floodplain information to check if well stations need to be raised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department 	1-3	\$	H	FEMA BRIC
	Buy backup generators for pump stations and well houses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department • Planning and Development 	3-5	\$\$	H	General Fund
	Conduct aquifer study to find out the impact of drought on ground and surface water supply. Study other feasible water supply connections or rehabilitating Cross St Well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department 	1-3	\$	H	Water Management Act Grant, MVP Action Grant, DWSRF, 604b
	Ensure water supply during times of drought by connecting with a larger surface water system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department • Emergency Management • Planning and Development 	1-3	Study - \$	H	DWSRF, Water Department
	Study feasibility of land acquisition around Town wells.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Water Department 	1-3	\$	H	Land and Water Conservation Fund

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
Culverts and Stormwater Drainage	Identify culverts that are not adequately sized or are in poor condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Department • Water Department 	1-3	\$	M	General Fund
	Replace undersized culverts, possibly starting on Old Meeting House Road. Properly sized culverts can improve flow and wildlife passage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Department • Water Department 	1-3	\$\$\$\$	H	FEMA BRIC, DER Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant
	Install rain gardens to filter storm drainage, with particular attention to Town wells.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department 	3-5	\$\$	M	MVP Action Grant
	Enforce regulations to monitor the effectiveness of private stormwater system (detention pond, bioretention) maintenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Water Department 	3-5	\$	M	General Fund
Roads, Bridges, and Public Transit	Develop designs for cloudburst streets and sidewalks with creative storage for runoff in the floodplain areas near the river.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Department • Emergency Management 	5-10	\$\$- Study \$\$\$\$\$ - Implementation	M	MVP Action Grant, MassDOT STIP

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Develop plans to raise roads (coordinated with below-grade utilities) using pervious pavement in low-lying places. Meadow Road for example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Department • Emergency Management • Planning and Development 	5-10	\$\$- Study \$\$\$\$ - Implementation	M	FEMA BRIC, Chapter 90 Program
	Conduct studies to increase walkability in the center of the Town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Department • Energy Committee • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$\$	M	General Fund, Complete Streets
	Assess the condition and resilient design options for the two structurally deficient bridges identified by MRPC in 100-year flood zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Department • Emergency Management 	3-5	\$\$- Study \$\$\$\$ - Implementation	M	Municipal Small Bridge Program, STBG
Private Wells and Septic Systems	Assess current zoning and employ BOH regulations for best practice and sustainable development. Consider cost to track reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Health • Water Department • Highway Department • Planning and Development 	3-5	\$\$	M	EEA Planning Assistance Grant, MVP Action Grant

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Integrate public education and outreach related to water testing and arsenic in public wells.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Health • Water Department • Highway Department 	1-3	\$	M	General Fund
	Develop an inventory of all the private wells that will be impacted by stormwater drainage and designate recharge areas for those wells.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Health • Water Department • Highway Department 	1-3	\$\$	M	604b
	Assess all the water supply networks to create a list of faulty ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Health • Water Department • Highway Department 	1-3	\$	M	General Fund
Shelters	Designate cooling centers for residents, especially for vulnerable populations. Designate a pet-friendly shelter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management 	3-5	\$\$	M	General Fund
	Provide transportation to shelters for isolated residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health • Emergency Management 	1-3	\$	M	Community Transit Grant Program

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Inventory supplies and storage capacity at shelters to identify shortages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health • Emergency Management 	1-3	\$	M	EMPG
Residents at Risk of Isolation	Develop a plan to provide essential goods to people in remote locations as part of Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan update.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Public Health 	1-3	\$	H	MVP Action Grant
	Work with local partners to conduct in-home visitation services for medical assistance and regular check-ins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Public Health 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
Residents with Limited English Fluency	Conduct language classes for adults. Work with local faith-based groups to teach classes, host adult language classes at the Public Library or Senior Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Public Library • Senior Center • Housing Authority 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund, Private Funds
	Access available resources from neighboring communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Translate important documents and emergency communications into other languages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Emergency Management 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
	Seek funding to create an ongoing collaboration to reduce burden on current translators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
	Have translators ready to translate materials in a crisis and develop infographic signage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
Residents with Barriers to Preparing or Adapting (could include low-income residents)	Develop flood protection strategies for housing along the river.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Building 	1-3	\$	M	FMA
	Work with local volunteers to provide support to residents living in subsidized housing. Assess options for a formal program with Town staff, including helping with resume building and job searches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Authority • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$\$	M	CDBG, CCP, MassWorks

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Seek grant funding for flood hazard mitigation and assistance for low-income residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Authority • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	M	FMA, MVP Action Grant
	Include more local services in future affordable housing projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Authority • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	M	MassWorks
Municipal Buildings and Services (Police, Fire, Highway Department)	Relocate the Water Department Garage out of the floodplain or fortify. Improve municipal properties with climate resilient features (i.e. green infrastructure and cool roofs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Building 	1-3	\$\$	H	FEMA BRIC, MVP Action Grant
	Secure memoranda of understanding with similar departments in adjacent Towns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Planning and Development • Police Department • Fire Department • Highway Department 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
	Improve use of communication technology during extreme events (remote access, sustained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$\$	H	General Fund, Private Funds

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	internet access, ability to transfer phones).					
	Consider options for interconnectivity and regional collaboration (for example, regionalized police services with opportunities for training and growth or a mobile emergency response center).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Police Department • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$\$	H	General Fund
	Employ additional staff or training to improve services.	• All departments	1-3	\$\$	H	General Fund
Local Businesses	Introduce new businesses owners to the community by organizing community events and identifying local resources in order to improve the Town's financial health.	• Housing Authority • Planning and Development	1-3	\$	M	General Fund
	Create an economic center to help make business plans.	• Planning and Development	5-10	\$\$	H	MassWorks
	Hire a local Planner to focus on economic revitalization.	• Planning and Development	1-3	\$	H	General Fund

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Education for business owners related to reducing toxic chemical use, energy efficiency, water recycling in manufacturing, and carbon labeling of products. Share available best practices for resilient businesses and retail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	M	MVP Action Grant
Food Security (supply, delivery, and local farmers)	Create an Agricultural Advisory Committee and develop programs and incentives for local farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	FMPP
	Organize farmers markets and public outreach for gardening programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	RFSP
	Invest in a generator and walk-in refrigerator for Food Bank in one centralized location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management 	1-3	\$\$	H	General Fund
	Turn land into victory garden-style space for apartment residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Open Space and Recreation 	1-3	\$	H	LAND

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
State Forests	Study existing species as part of a forest health assessment. Identify species that can tolerate warmer conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Warden • Conservation Commission • Open Space and Recreation 	1-3	\$	M	General Fund
	Assess wildfire risk and plan for fire mitigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Tree Warden • Fire Department 	1-3	\$	M	FP&S, SAFE, Senior SAFE
Street Trees	Create a replacement plan for lost trees. Investigate appropriate replacement species that will be able to withstand future warmer climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Planning and Development • Open Space and Conservation • Tree Warden 	1-3	\$	M	MVP Action Grant
	Build a Town Committee that will involve local families and kids and help with planting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Tree Warden • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	M	Community Forest Grant Program
	Increase public awareness of Scenic Roads Act and on benefits of trees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Tree Warden • Open Space and Recreation 	1-3	\$	M	Community Forest Grant Program

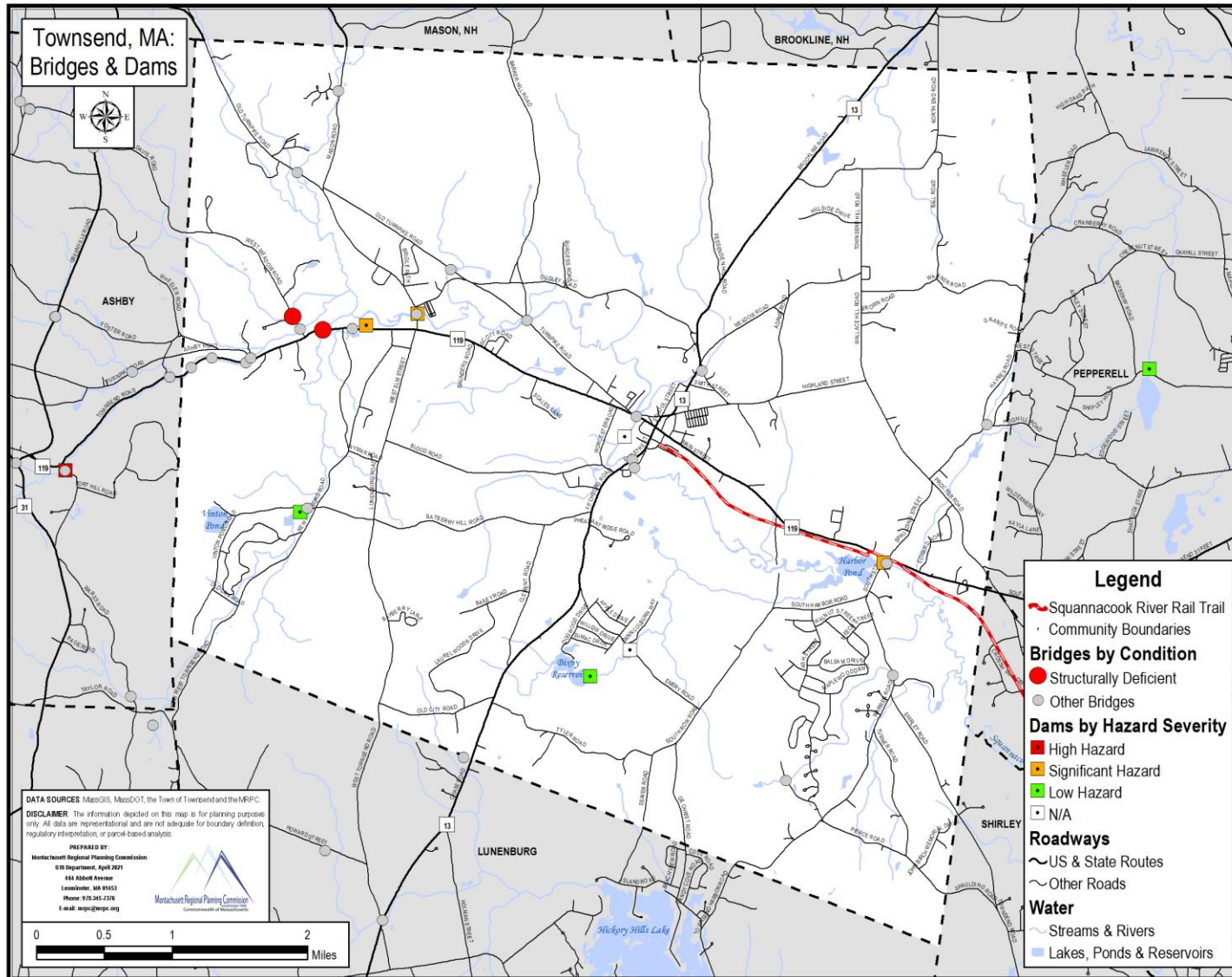
General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Design new street trees with adequate planters, root space, continuous planting subsoil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Tree Warden 	3-5	\$\$	M	TD Green Space Grant
Parks and Open Spaces	Work with the Townsend Open Space and Recreation Commission to assess parks that are not included in the OSRP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space and Recreation • Recreation Commission 	1-3	\$	M	CPA
Waterbodies and Wetlands	Preserve and protect wetlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$\$	H	EEA Planning Assistance Grant
	Allow developments that protect the wetlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	EEA Planning Assistance Grant
	Strengthen Zoning Bylaws to protect wetlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	EEA Planning Assistance Grant, MVP Action Grant
	Acquire land in the wetland areas to prevent development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission • Planning and Development 	5-10	\$\$\$\$	H	LAND Grant, MVP Action Grant
	Develop plans for bank restoration and stabilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Commission 	1-3	\$\$	H	MVP Action Grant

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	to protect waterways and support habitat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 				
Future Development, Regulatory Tools, and Planning	Protect against commercial uses in the Aquifer Protection Overlay district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
	Update the FEMA FIRMs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	General Fund
	Study options for regulations, waivers, zoning, low impact development, transfer of development rights to protect aquifers and incorporate other climate resilient measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development • Water Department 	1-3	\$	H	MVP Action Grant, EEA Planning Assistance Grant
	Update Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan with climate resilience and hazard mitigation strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	MVP Action Grant
	Update CEMP and simulate real time evacuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management 	1-3	\$	H	EMPG

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	scenarios with tool from MRPC.					
	Assess options for encouraging properties inside the floodplain to elevate buildings and critical components. Require resilient design specifications as a part of the Flood District permitting process for major redevelopment and new development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	H	FMA, EEA Planning Assistance, MVP Action Grant
	Increase public education and awareness of Massachusetts sustainable development principles, green building design and architecture, Scenic Roads Act, and resilient stormwater management strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	M	General Fund
Invasive Species and Vector-Borne Diseases	Increase public education and awareness related to tick exposure and protection against disease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$	M	MVP Action Grant

General Objective	Mitigation Action	Implementation Responsibility	Time Frame (years)	Estimated Cost	Priority	Potential Funding Sources
	Pursue removal of invasive species with volunteers and local groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space and Recreation 	1-3	\$\$	M	General Funds, Private Funds
	Reduce mosquito habitat through outreach and by removing standing water and regular cleaning of catch basins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space and Recreation • Water Department 	1-3	\$\$	M	MVP Action Grant, General Funds, Private Funds
	Host community education programs on how to use trails safely, share regular webinars on topics related to open space resources. Assess options for collaborating between departments to maintain these resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space and Recreation • Planning and Development 	1-3	\$\$	M	MVP Action Grant
	Address cyanobacteria or algal blooms on local surface water bodies. Assess impacts of climate change on these conditions and study best practices for management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Department 	3-5	\$\$	M	MassDEP Water Quality Monitoring Program, DWSRF

Map 5: Bridges and Dams



Tackling the issue of how Townsend can help reverse climate change is a complex issue. Utilities are a major contributor to climate change but are an essential part of everyday living. Currently, the only provider approved for both electric and natural gas is Unitil. Discussions about finding alternative companies occur frequently, but it appears that the process would be costly and time consuming, with possibly not a positive outcome. Alternatively, Townsend can look towards natural resources for its energy source.

A local community college, Mount Wachusett in Gardner, MA, added wind turbines in 2011. They generate 97% of the college's annual electricity needs, and return an additional 30% of power back to the grid. This is a good example – of literally – harnessing the wind for energy.

The town should encourage, alternative renewable power sources, to include solar and wind power, and other strategies as they are developed. This should take the form of a supportive regulatory environment, and the installation of solar panels on town buildings where feasible.

Waterpower via the Squannacook River has also been researched by the Townsend Historical Society. The historic Reed House sits on the banks of the Squannacook River. Discussion, in the past, seemed to indicate that waterpower could power the three historic buildings (Gristmill, Cooperage, and Reed House) in that area, as well as some of the surrounding structures.

Electric vehicle charging stations in town could help increase the popularity of electric vehicles, with their decreased carbon footprint. These stations could also increase tourism, as mentioned in the economic development chapter. The town should pursue grants to install electric charging stations.

The Energy Committee is just in their planning stage to establish an Energy Master Plan for the town. Their role is advisory services and oversight of our town's Green

Communities Designation. The members help the town reduce energy costs and carbon footprint by implementing clean energy projects in town and school buildings.

Energy efficient lights have replaced less efficient lights along the streets and in local schools. Outdoor lighting has followed the town by-law and has protected the night sky. No light above a horizontal plane through the lowest light-emitting part of the luminaire has been adhered to.

The town should maintain and support the energy committee as they seek out new opportunities to save money and reduce the town's carbon footprint. The town should continue to seek out alternate energy sources, for a reasonable cost, with eyes toward preserving our environment.

Climate Adaptation Recommendations

- Implement the recommendations in the Townsend 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan listed in Table 7-1.
- The town should encourage renewable energy as recommended by the energy committee. This should take the form of a supportive regulatory environment, the installation of solar panels on town buildings where feasible, and/or exploring programs such as solar co-ops, entering into a Power Purchase Agreement or similar efforts to promote a cleaner approach to energy.
- The town should pursue grants to install electric charging stations for both environment and economic development reasons.
- The town should maintain and support the energy committee as they seek out new opportunities to save money and reduce the town's carbon footprint.

Historic and Cultural Resources

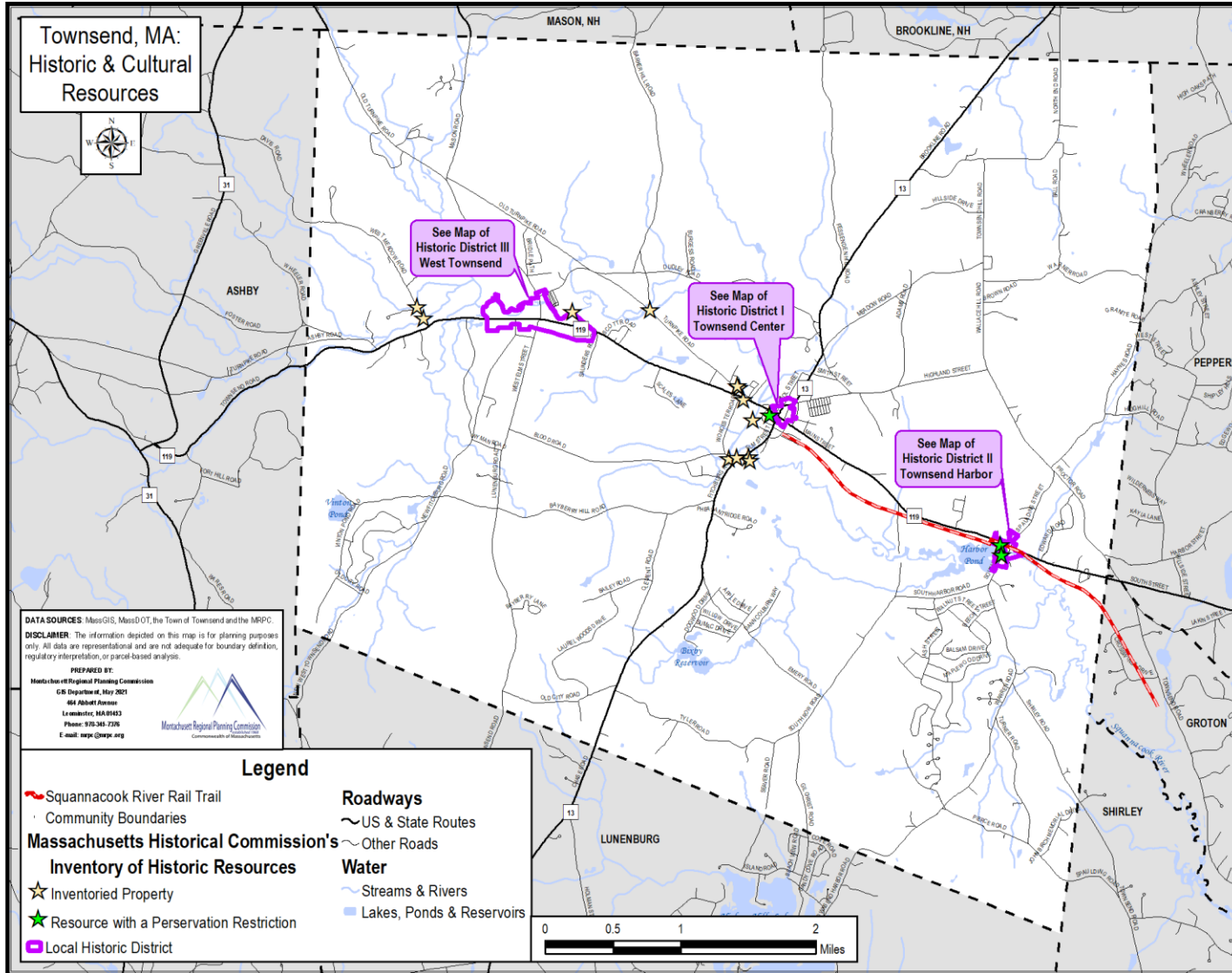
Townsend is rich in history and blessed with many historical resources that remain for all to experience and enjoy. These historical resources can serve both to enrich life in Townsend and can also provide a potential pathway to economic growth. This section shows the town has supported preserving its history and shows a willingness to develop efforts to expand preservation of its historic resources.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Native Americans included Townsend in an area called Wistequassuck. The land which later became Townsend, was first surveyed by Jonathan Danforth in 1676. The town was officially incorporated on June 29, 1732. A short history of Townsend can be found at <https://townsendhistoricalsociety.org/sharinghistory/briefhistoryoftownsend/>, and greater detail can be found in the books, "A Village Hooped in Steel" by Richard N. Smith and "History of the town of Townsend, Middlesex County, Massachusetts: from the grant of Hathorn's farm, 1676-1878" by Ithamar B. Sawtelle.

Townsend has three historical districts, one located in the area of Townsend Harbor, one in the center of Townsend, and the third in West Townsend. These locations are often referred to as the villages. The three districts contain nearly 100 structures, including 55 listed in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System. The three districts were created in 1975. By-laws are overseen by a seven-member Historic District Commission. The last known systematic survey of Townsend's historical resources was completed in 1975 - over 50 years ago.

The richness of Townsend's historical resources is illustrated in several maps which show the known historical resources in each of the three historical districts, and those outside those districts.

Map 6: Overview of Historic Districts



Unlike the adjacent towns, Townsend has a Historic District Commission³, but it does not have a Historical Commission. The development of a Historical Commission⁴ would create a body that would be responsible for the preservation, protection, and development of all the Town's historical assets. The preservation would include all areas of town, not just those in the three historical districts. Many communities have adopted the Community Preservation Act and 64% of respondents in Townsend were in favor of establishing the Act. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs for the Commonwealth's workforce, and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of the Commonwealth's historic and natural resources.

CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property, and municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. To date, 187 municipalities in the state have adopted CPA.

The CPA statute also creates a statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Revenue (DOR), which provides distributions each year to communities that have adopted CPA. These annual disbursements serve as an incentive for communities to pass CPA.

Each CPA community creates a local Community Preservation Committee (CPC) upon adoption of the Act, and this five-to-nine member board makes recommendations on CPA projects to the community's legislative body. The Community Preservation Act gives a community the funds needed to control its future.

CPA Accomplishments To-Date

- 187 communities have adopted CPA (53% of the Commonwealth's cities and towns)
- Of the total number of adopted communities, 34 are cities and 153 are towns
- 65% of the state population live in a CPA community
- Over \$2.65 billion has been raised to date for community preservation funding statewide
- 14,037 CPA projects have been approved by local legislative bodies
- More than 8,700 affordable housing units have been created with an additional 14,700 units supported
- 32,566 acres of open space have been preserved
- Over 6,300 appropriations have been made for historic preservation projects
- Over 3,000 outdoor recreation projects have been initiated

For towns that participate in the Community Preservation Act, once developed, Historical Commissions also play a key role in decisions about allocating Community Preservation Act funds.

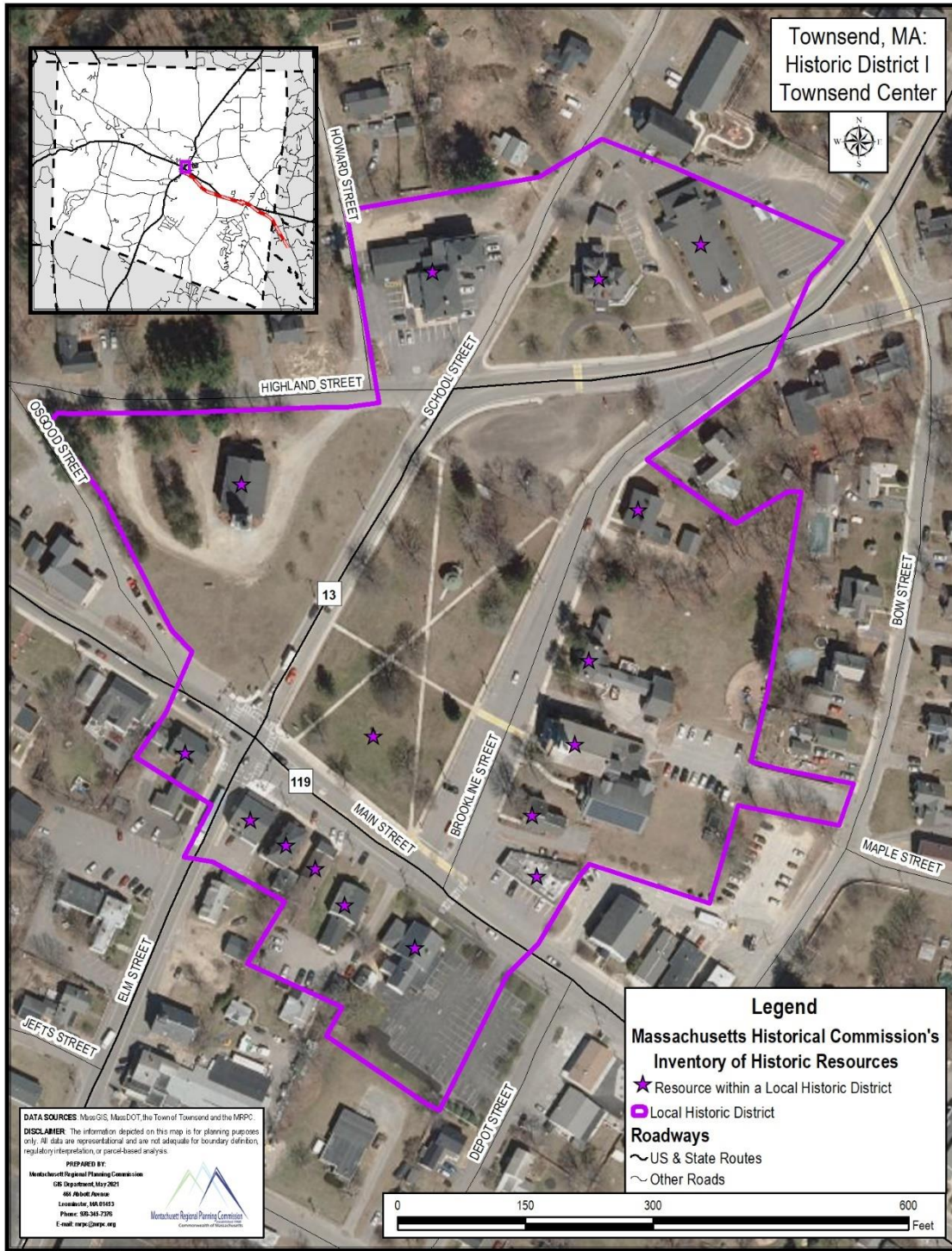
³ A Historic District Commission is responsible for a small number / specific properties.

⁴ A Historic Commission covers the entire town.

In the center of town is the Common. Surrounding the Common are three churches, (with an additional one in West Townsend). Off the Common, Town Hall, the Annex (current location of the Recreation Department), the Hart Library, the Fire Department, and several businesses. The Common is the location of a variety of community events including fairs, festivals, and band concerts.

A Historical Commission could be a great help in assisting Townsend to maintain its overall historic feel. A Historical Commission is tasked with creating a comprehensive survey of all historical resources in town. Since the historical survey for the three historical districts was last done in 1975, this new survey with modern data collection would include the entire town, all of the three historic districts and also all other areas of town. This information would be used to update Townsend's historical resources in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System. Money for this survey work could be available from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant

Map 7: Historic District I – Townsend Center



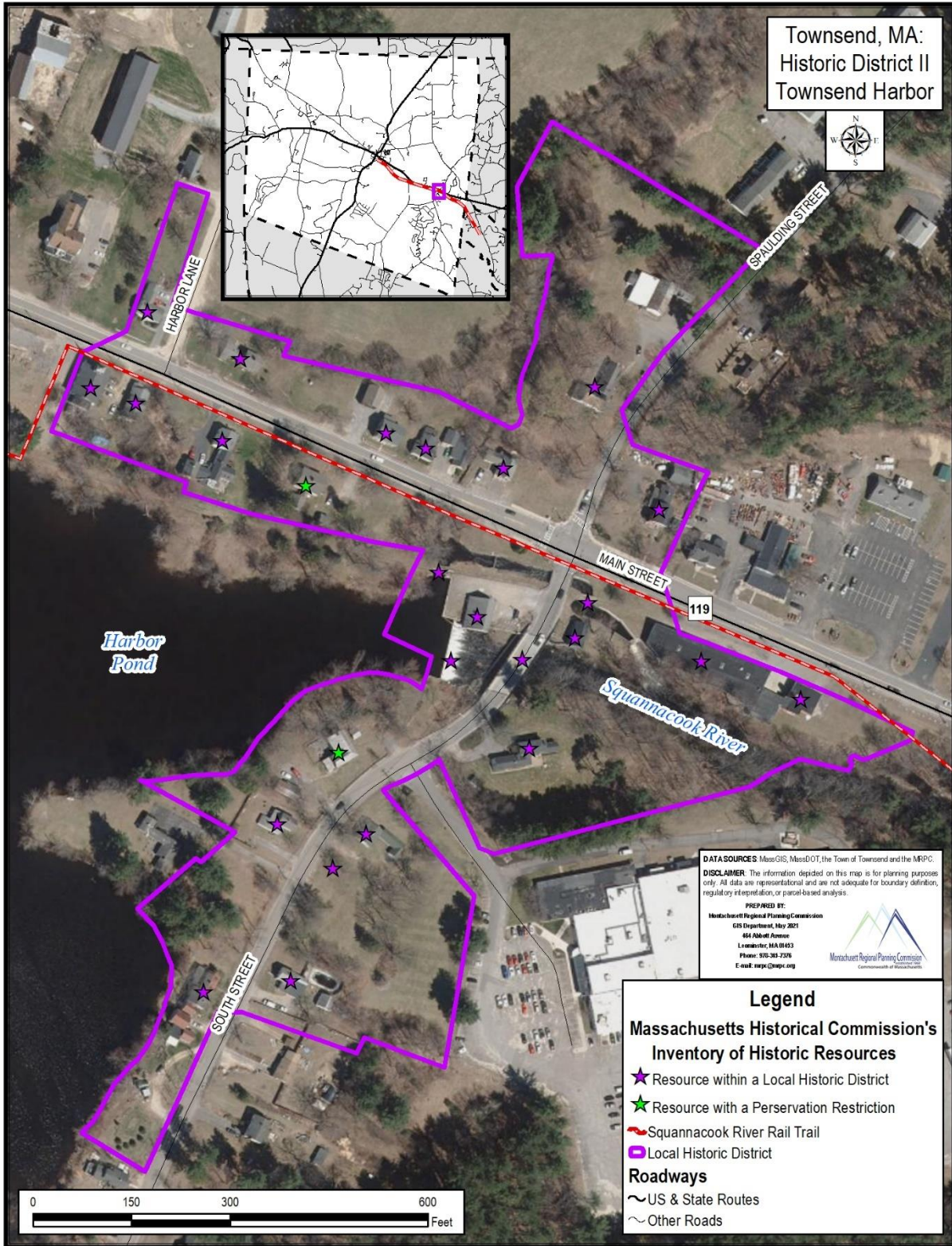
Program. Such updated information helps in general with securing grants, and any of the surveyed buildings eligible for the National Register qualify for rehabilitation tax credits. The Historical Commission would also help Townsend see itself as a historic town, rather than just a town with three historic districts. Should the town pass the CPA, the Historical Commission would be an advocate for directing CPA funds toward key historical resource projects.

The best-known historic building in Townsend is the Reed Homestead. This community asset is operated by the non-profit Townsend Historical Society as a museum. The Reed Homestead is a well-preserved circa 1809 federal-style dwelling located on the scenic banks of the Townsend Harbor Pond. The home contains murals by Rufus Porter (May 1, 1792 – August 13, 1884), itinerant painter and founder of Scientific American magazine. Experts consider the mural room in the Reed Homestead to be among the best examples of his work. The Homestead and mural are popular with visitors of all ages- many of whom remember visiting it first in grade school. Those visiting were transfixed by seeing firsthand what life was like 200 years ago.

Another Harbor located property owned by the Townsend Historical Society is the Cooperage. The Cooperage began as a mill for sawing boards, and now is leased as is home to a cooperative antique shop. The Cooperage is adjacent to the Reed Homestead.

Just across South Street from those two properties is another Townsend Historical Society property not yet open to the public, the Grist Mill. The Grist Mill contains a grinding wheel that was originally powered by the Squannacook River. If the Grist Mill were up and running, it would offer visitors the rare opportunity to see firsthand an original example of the industrial ingenuity which helped to form the foundation of our region. Together with the Harbor Church, these properties in Historic District II form an impressive historic area and unique experience for visitors to Townsend.

Map 8: Historic District II – Townsend Harbor



The Squannacook River Rail Trail, presently under construction, passes through this unique historic district. With the popularity of rail trails, The Squannacook River Rail Trail is a key asset which could potentially bring more visitors to this historic area which could have economic benefits to the town.

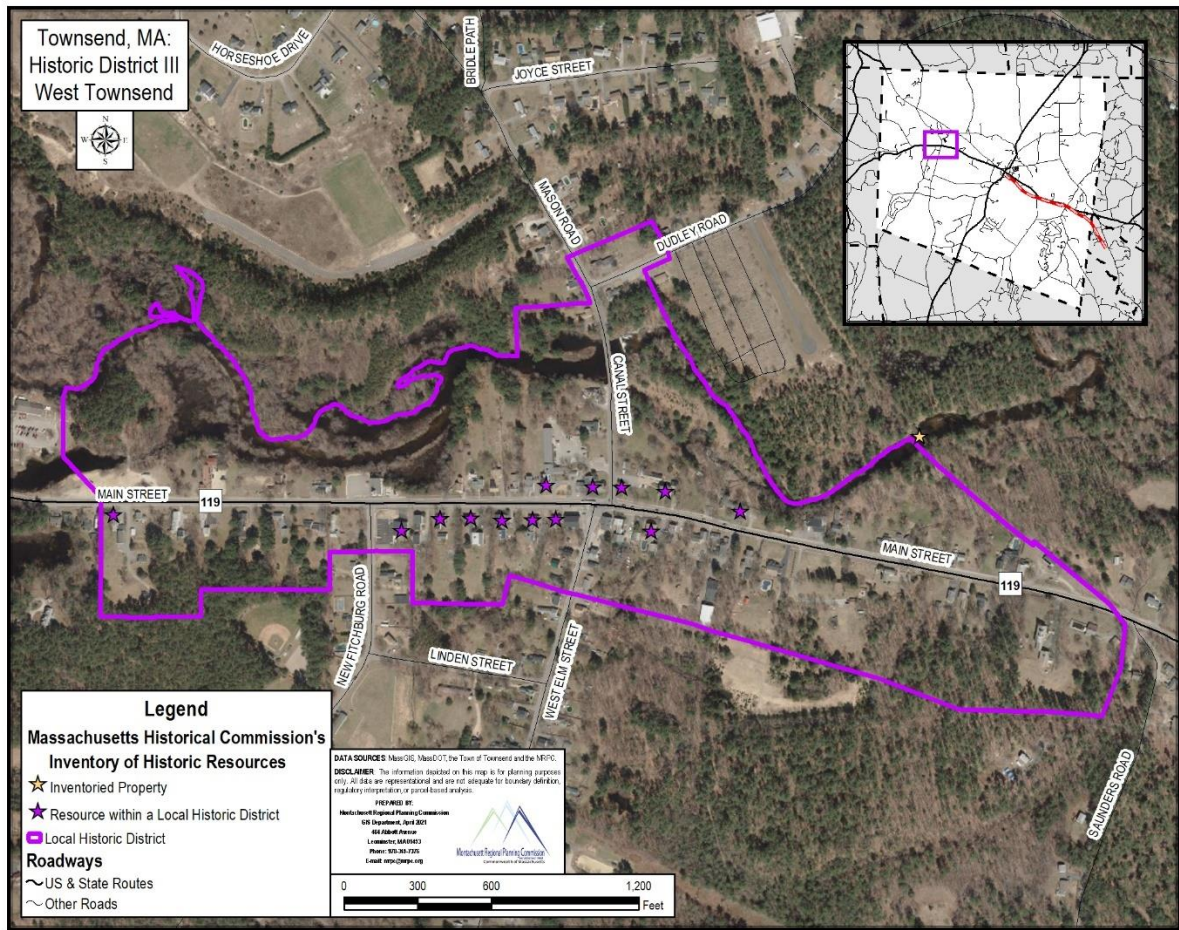
Townsend is also well known for its antique shops. Presently there are five such shops in town: four in West Townsend, and the previously mentioned co-op at the Cooperage next to the Reed Homestead, called HOME.

Preserving these historic resources is important to Townsend, as evidenced in survey question 6. Preserving each of the four historical properties near Harbor Pond, the Reed Homestead, the Cooperage, the Grist Mill, and Harbor Church, was rated as important by over 60% of respondents. Further, over 60% of respondents affirmed it was important to establish a fund to assist with preserving historic structures.

While the Townsend Harbor historical area is already impressive, it is important to note that only two of the four properties owned by the non-profit Townsend Historical Society are presently open to the public. According to Ryan Hayward, president of the Townsend Historical Society, the estimated cost of restoring the Grist Mill is \$100K. Restoring the Harbor Church would cost approximately \$150K to restore. While important assets to the community, even the presently open buildings are in need of work. The Cooperage requires approximately \$45K of funding, and the Reed Homestead will require approximately \$25K of rehabilitation in the future.

In West Townsend, there is the historic Canal Street Bridge (aka Stone Bridge), historic homes, Pearl Brook State Park, one of the town's churches, the West Townsend Reading Room, two youth sports fields, and the VFW.

Map 9: Historic District III – West Townsend



While this section of the master plan is focusing on historic and cultural resources, economic development based on these resources should also be considered. In nearby Groton, the world-class Indian Hill music center is planned for a fall 2022 opening. This regional venue, with its proximity to Townsend has a significant potential to increase local tourism business. The patrons of the new Indian Hill music center are likely similar to those that visit Tanglewood, and as such, could provide a significant source of historical tourism. Townsend’s antique shops, Harbor Pond historical area, and overall historic feel, along with Townsend’s proximity to the Indian Hill music center, could all work together to boost this form of economic development.

While the individual antique stores and the Townsend Historical Society may engage in their own outreach efforts, marketing the town as an overall historical tourism area is best done at the town level. Cost-effective ways to increase historical tourism may include sponsoring/advertising Indian Hill music center events, posting historical events more prominently on their website, and creating a more active presence on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Such minor investments could more than pay for themselves with increased economic activity in Townsend.

Townsend should consider grants to support preservation of its historic properties. In addition to the Community Preservation Act (CPA), Townsend should review the guidance in: *Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism in Housing and Community Development: A Guide to Using Community Development Block Grant Funds for Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism in your Communities*. Townsend works extensively with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, and through this alliance could develop a credible grant application for Historic Tourism.

One of the four central goals of the CPA is to aid in historical preservation. Historical preservation would serve two purposes: 1) it would help Townsend maintain its historical character, and 2) it could help spur economic growth by encouraging tourism. For example, if the CPA were to fund restoration of the Grist Mill, the Townsend Harbor historical area would be an even more effective draw for tourists. The Community Preservation Act is an especially efficient way of investing in historic preservation, since it leverages state funds that would otherwise be diverted to other municipalities. The survey showed the residents consider historic preservation a goal worthy of town funding.

Townsend's other tourism draw is its natural resources with forests, trails, waterways, and scenic vistas abound. These two district resources- its history and its natural beauty- come together in the Townsend Harbor historic area. The rail trail that connects the historic area will be a beautiful walk on its own, but it also leads to miles of hiking trails that connect a visitor to many vantage points along the scenic Squannacook River.

Combined historical and nature walking tours are a possible tourist draw. One example of this is the annual walk the Thoreau Society makes along what is now the rail trail to retrace Thoreau's 1850 train ride through Townsend as described in his diary.

Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations

- The town should consider passing the Community Preservation Act.
- The town should establish a Historical Commission.
- The town should look for cost-effective ways to promote its historic resources.

Open Space and Recreation

Townsend is a large, rural community with over 50% of its land mass consisting of open space. Between state, non-profit, town, and privately owned and protected land, Townsend offers much in terms of outdoor recreation. There are miles of trails for walking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Much of the town is prime farmland with significantly more land designated as prime forest as depicted in the next two maps.

The Cemetery & Parks Department manages the town's public parks and recreation areas including:

- The Town Common
- The Memorial Common (In front of Spaulding Elementary School)
- Howard Park, walking trails along the Squannacook River, access is at Hawthorne Brook Middle School and at the end of Howard Street
- The Kids Kountry Playground, located on the corner of Turnpike Road and Eastman Street behind Spaulding Elementary School
- The field between the new Library and Squannacook School

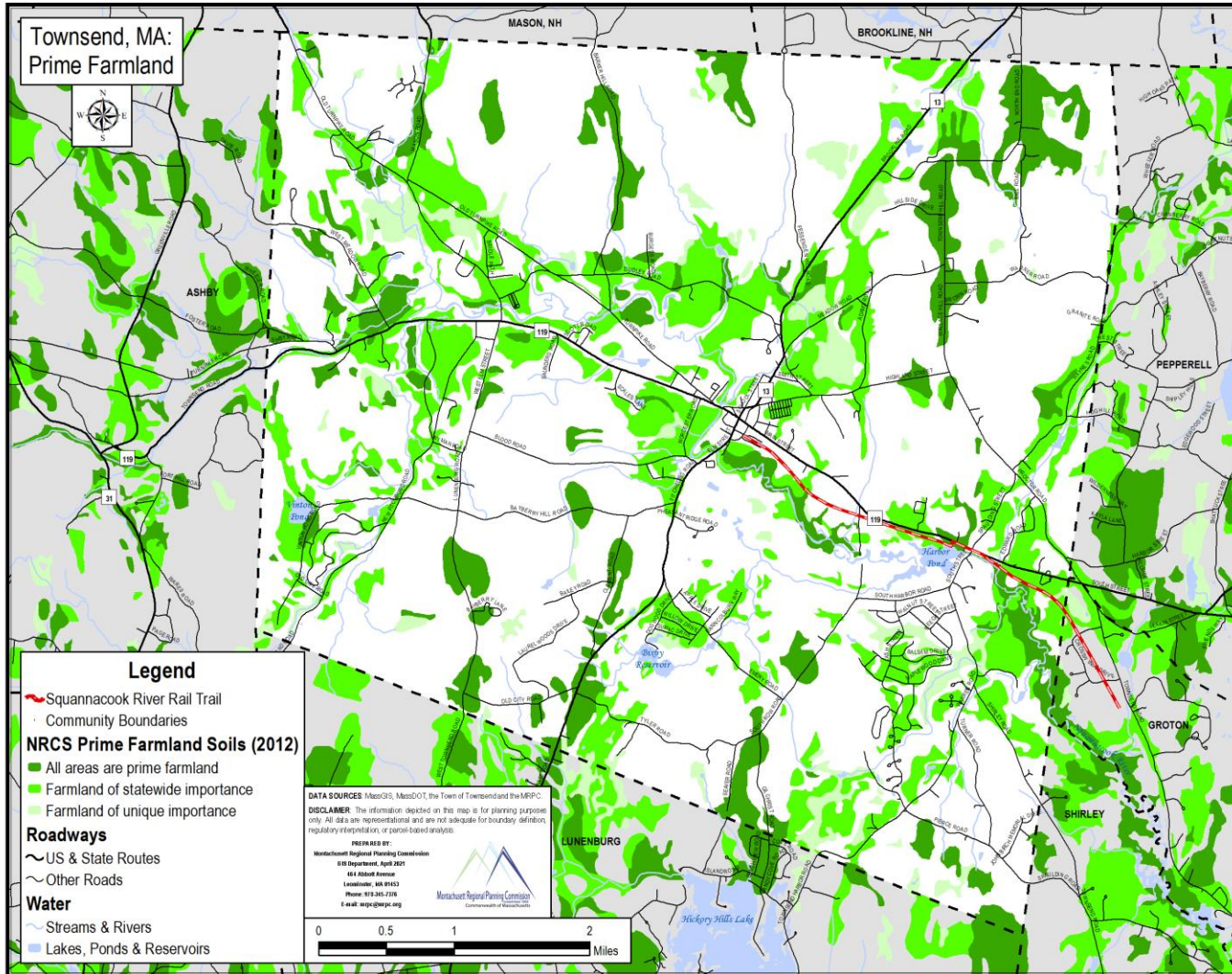
In addition to the town maintained recreational facilities, the town has a baseball field, Craven Field, in West Townsend and soccer fields at Squannacook Meadow and Holly's playground is also in West Townsend. These properties, gifted to the town, are maintained by non-profit youth sports programs.

Other recreation facilities not listed as open space:

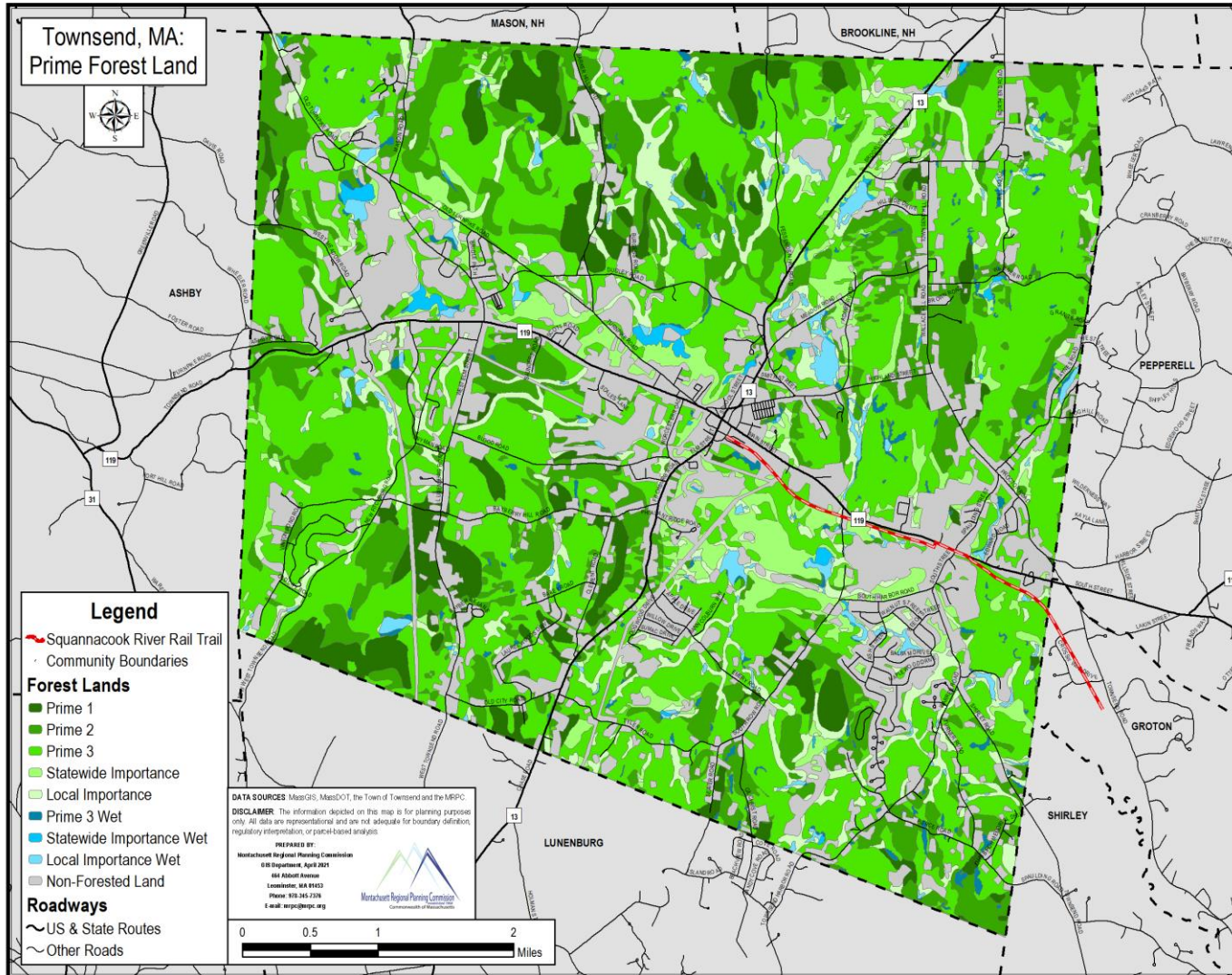
- The running track at the North Middlesex Regional High School football field (limited use)
- The tennis courts at Hawthorne Brook Middle School
- The VFW Park

In addition, there are numerous trails on conservation lands. While Townsend has a high percentage of open space, residents clearly would like the town to increase recreational opportunities.

Map 10: Prime Farmland



Map 11: Prime Forest Land



The survey asked residents to rate various aspects of Townsend. Only 43% of respondents rated *Recreational opportunities* as one of our strengths. However, 93% of residents rated *Having good quality parks, recreation, and open space* as important or The survey listed 31 recreation options, and asked residents to rate them according to whether Townsend should increase, decrease, or eliminate them. The top five favored for increase were:

- Bike trails
- Youth activities
- Hiking trails
- Canoe/kayak access
- Recreation center

When residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with Townsend's roads and sidewalks related to recreation, 54% of residents were dissatisfied with them for bicycling, and 67% were dissatisfied with them for walking.

Residents rated ten items that were important to Townsend. The highest rated was increasing tax revenues to reduce the residential tax burden. The next two highest were:

- Better pedestrian and bicycle access to stores
- Rail trail extension to West Townsend

The community perceives a threat to the town's rural nature and qualities due to residential sprawl. Land use impacts from septic systems, lawn fertilizer, and storm water runoff directly affect the surface water resources and lead to deterioration of water quality. As such, the town has established the following resource protection goals for land use:

- Encourage balanced land use consistent with New England character through periodic zoning and development review that is sensitive to wildlife corridors, cyclical review of zoning districts to ensure land use suitability, and preservation of agricultural resources.

- Promote business development in a manner consistent with protecting water supplies and preserving town character.
- Protect water supply and infrastructure through careful and comprehensive land use planning, by strengthening protections for wellheads and the Aquifer Protection Overlay District.
- Promote open space housing development that is consistent with Townsend's rural character, compact villages, and open space preservation goals.

Townsend residents support the preservation and enhancement of open space and the rural character of the town. The open space serves to protect water resources, and the forests and meadows support both the wildlife of the region and outdoor recreational opportunities. Four open space goals focus upon water resource protection, financing strategies for protecting open space, strategies for preserving the rural character through open space protection, and strategies for promoting recreational and educational opportunities associated with protected open space.

Recreation resources include organized sports for the youth of Townsend supported and run by non-profits, and a recreation program for school-aged children. The library and Senior Center also offer programming. Recommendations for enhancing recreational opportunities include:

- Development of a map of recreational areas and natural resources, and state supported improvements to the trail system with linkages.
- Sighting and design of recreation areas for several forms of recreation potentially including skateboarding, boating, hunting, biking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and equine activities.
- Expanding the Recreation Department to provide more opportunities for community members of all ages.
- Extending the rail trail to West Townsend.

While reaching these goals the Town would need to ensure that the water quality and ground water is protected.

The 2013 Townsend Open Space and Recreation Plan contains a detailed inventory of open space in Townsend owned by either public entities or non-profits in Section V: Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest. That section also inventories privately-owned lands under some sort of protection, including Chapter 61 (forest lands), Chapter 61A (agriculture) and Chapter 61B (recreation land) and other lands privately owned and protected. That section of the Open Space report can be found at <https://www.townsend.ma.us/sites/townsendma/files/uploads/a5section5.pdf>.

Since the 2013, significant changes to the open space inventory in Townsend include:

The MBTA Greenville Line from the Groton/Townsend line to Worcester Road was leased for a period of 99 years by the non-profit Squannacook Greenways, for the purpose of converting it to a stone dust rail trail which officially opened in September 2021.

In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife has been actively purchasing parcels in Townsend, including 9 parcels totaling over 425 acres (as of June 1 2021).

Residents would like improved recreational facilities in town, especially for the town's youth. Fortunately, there are a number of nonprofits and government agencies the town can partner with to make these improvements to our recreational facilities. The Squannacook River Rail Trail in Townsend and Groton is being built by the non-profit Squannacook Greenways, and there are many ways the town can support that extremely popular effort. Nonprofits such as the Townsend Conservation Land Trust and the Nashua River Watershed Association can also be partnered with to increase recreational access to Townsend's open space.

Since much of the Squannacook River has been designed as a federal Wild and Scenic River, there are funding opportunities for recreational facilities along the river, such as a canoe and kayak launch. Townsend also has a very active Recreation Commission, and

the town should consider financial support for their ideas and efforts for improved recreational opportunities for community members of all ages and abilities. .

Finally, Townsend should consider that its roads provide more than just automobile access. The town's youth use them for non-motorized transportation, both as bicyclists and pedestrians. Many people walk and bicycle the roads and sidewalks for recreation, and the town should consider them as recreational assets also. The town should work to improve the town's road for bicyclists and pedestrians, both to improve youth access to other recreational facilities, and to increase the roads' use as recreational facilities in and of themselves.

Recreation and Open Space Recommendations

- Encourage balanced land use consistent with New England character through zoning and development review that is sensitive to wildlife corridors, cyclical review of zoning districts to ensure land use suitability, and preservation of agricultural resources.
- Promote business development in a manner consistent with protecting water supplies and preserving town character.
- Protect water supply and infrastructure through careful and comprehensive land use planning, by strengthening protections for wellheads and the Aquifer Protection Overlay District.
- Promote open space housing development that is consistent with Townsend's rural character, compact villages, and open space preservation goals.
- Develop a map of recreational areas and natural resources, and state supported improvements to the trail system with linkages.
- Design recreation areas for multiple forms of recreation potentially including skateboarding, hunting, biking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and equine activities.
- Expand the Recreation Department.
- Extend the rail trail to West Townsend.

Economic Development

Based on the survey and public meetings, there are strong desires among residents both to increase the number of businesses in town to help the tax base, and also to preserve the rural character of Townsend. In response to these competing desires, the master plan committee has focused a great deal of attention on growing businesses in town that blend in well with the town's character. In particular, the Master Plan Committee examined economic opportunities tied to the town's wealth of environmental, recreational, historical, and cultural resources. Further, in the zoning chapter there are recommendations for zoning changes that will impact economic development. Given the intersectionality between housing and economic development, and the number of recommendations regarding zoning and the impact of zoning, there is a separate chapter dedicated exclusively to zoning.

The chapter on historical and cultural resources goes into great detail about how Townsend might combine economic development with preserving its historical and environmental assets. As described in that chapter, Townsend has sites that could draw historical tourism, especially the area around Townsend Harbor and the Reed Homestead. That chapter recommends steps toward preserving and enhancing Townsend's historical appeal, such as passing the Community Preservation Act and creating a Historical Commission.

Townsend is also rich with resources that could encourage environmental tourism. The Squannacook River, along with the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers, have recently been designated national Wild and Scenic Rivers. Less than one-half percent of all the rivers in the United States presently have such a designation. Not only is this designation a way to draw in environmental tourism, but it also creates an opportunity for Townsend to apply for grants to encourage use and preservation of the river. One example is the grant received in 2021 by the town of Townsend to protect the Squannacook River by restricting motor vehicle access along the riverbank and encouraging pedestrian access from a public parking lot at Jefts Street.

Townsend also benefits from the large amount of state-owned land. According to maps prepared by the MRPC, 31% of the area in Townsend is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation or the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. If land owned by the town or protected by Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B is included, then over 48% of the land area in Townsend is under some degree of protection. Trails abound in Townsend. The Squannacook River Rail Trail, which is presently partly completed creates a mechanism to develop connection points to the trails throughout the town. The rail trail also brings together the historic and environmental resources in town, by passing through key historic sites in its path along the Squannacook River.

In a study, *Home Sales Near Two Massachusetts Trails, Jan. 25, 2006* Craig Della Penna, conclusions were drawn related to the economic impact on homes sales. As reported, “Homes sales were examined in the seven Massachusetts towns through which the Minuteman Bikeway and Nashua River Rail Trail run. Statistics on list and selling prices and on days on the market were analyzed. The analysis shows that homes near these rail trails sold at 99.3% of the list price as compared to 98.1% of the list price for other homes sold in these towns. The most significant feature of home sales near rail trails is that these homes sold in an average of 29.3 days as compared to 50.4 days for other homes.”

An economic impact study of the 34-mile Virginia Creeper Trail from 2004⁵ revealed that non-local trail users generated \$1.6 million in economic impacts in Washington and Grayson counties in southwest Virginia and supported the equivalent of more than 27 new full-time jobs. In South Carolina’s Greenville County, tourists drawn by the popular Greenville Health System Swamp Rabbit Trail boosted the local economy by \$6.7 million.

In the Rural Policy Plan developed for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by the Rural Policy Advisory Commission in 2019, shared that, “economic sectors important to rural Massachusetts include agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, sustainable energy generation,

⁵ While the study is older, the concepts about the benefits of a rail trail remain.

outdoor recreation and the creative economy.” Further it reinforced that “rural municipalities are challenged in their ability to foster economic development because of limited professional capacity, lack of infrastructure, and an inability to be competitive for discretionary grants.” While there are limiting factors, Townsend non-profits have benefitted from grants as has the town itself, a collaborative working group between the entities would benefit the town in its quests for grants. There are several programs to investigate to determine how each can help the town, its businesses, and non-profits as they strive to improve community livability and the economic status of the town. Programs include:

- Opportunity Zone Program - A new federal tax incentive program
- Small Business Technical Assistance Program (SBTA) - Administered by the Mass Growth Capital Corporation
- MA Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) Network
- A partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Massachusetts Office of Business Development
- Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFI) - Federally and state funded non-profit small business lending organizations
- Opportunities for All - The EOHED statewide economic development plan
- Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) - Massachusetts tax credit program
- Collaborative Workspaces program. Administered by MassDevelopment

In the 2012 study, *Strategies for Economic Improvement in Appalachia’s Distressed Counties*, which examined rural counties throughout the country, the following steps a region can take to enhance economic vitality were identified:

- encourage dialog and partnership between towns and regions
- form strong partnerships with regional academic institutions
- secure broadband
- develop youth leadership programs
- share government services

- redevelop and reuse vacant industrial sites
- grow local jobs
- leverage local assets
- devote more money to education
- develop tourism and hospitality services
- promote racial diversity

While Townsend is not typically referred to as distressed, the concepts and practices discussed in the study are appropriate for consideration by all rural communities.

Another resource is the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities which is a planning assistance program to help communities develop strategies and an action plan to revitalize their Main Streets through outdoor recreation. In the New England region, among others, both Gloucester MA (Local Food, Local Places), and Millinocket ME (Cool & Connected – using broadband for revitalization) secured technical assistance to bolster their efforts.

While Townsend has a few roadside seasonal farm stands offering grown on property items, and is home to Gary's Too and Timberland Farms, it lacks a year-round farm stand. A model year-round stand in the region is SpringDell Farms in Littleton. SpringDell Farm is located on land that has been family owned and operated in the historic town of Littleton, Massachusetts since the 1700s. Over the past several years, SpringDell has undergone changes recently enlarging its footprint to offer a variety of locally sourced items – and offers brought in daily fresh seafood. North of the border, Lull Farms offers an array of grocery items to include fresh fruit and vegetables, locally raised meat, flowers, and a combined bakery/deli section. Neither of these venues are in the drive time radius that would make them competitors for Townsend, nor do they offer a rail trail, historic attractions, the antiques stores, or a specialty store like Evans on the Common, that are here in town.

While this report encourages the hiring of an economic development coordinator, keys to success in other areas include leveraging creativity and developing partnerships a

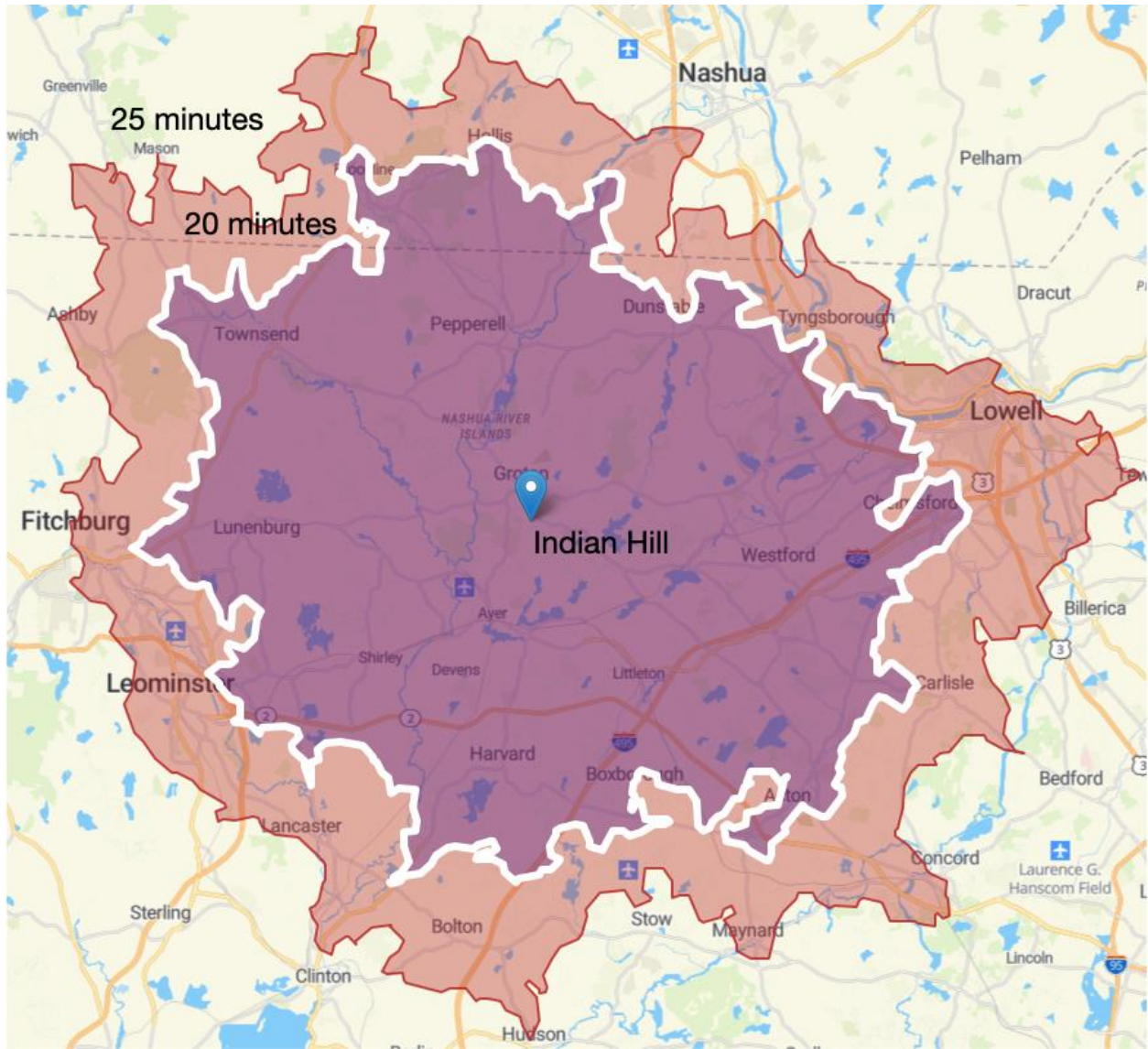
working group would enhance the process and leverage strengths of the various small businesses and non-profits in the town.

The ability of Townsend to draw in environmental and historical tourism is made much more realistic by the Indian Hill Music Center opening scheduled in 2022 in Groton. The Indian Hill Music Center will be a world class venue, luring tourists from across the US and the world. Economist Stephen Sheppard of Williams College estimated the economic impact of the new facility to the local economy to be \$21 million dollars per year.

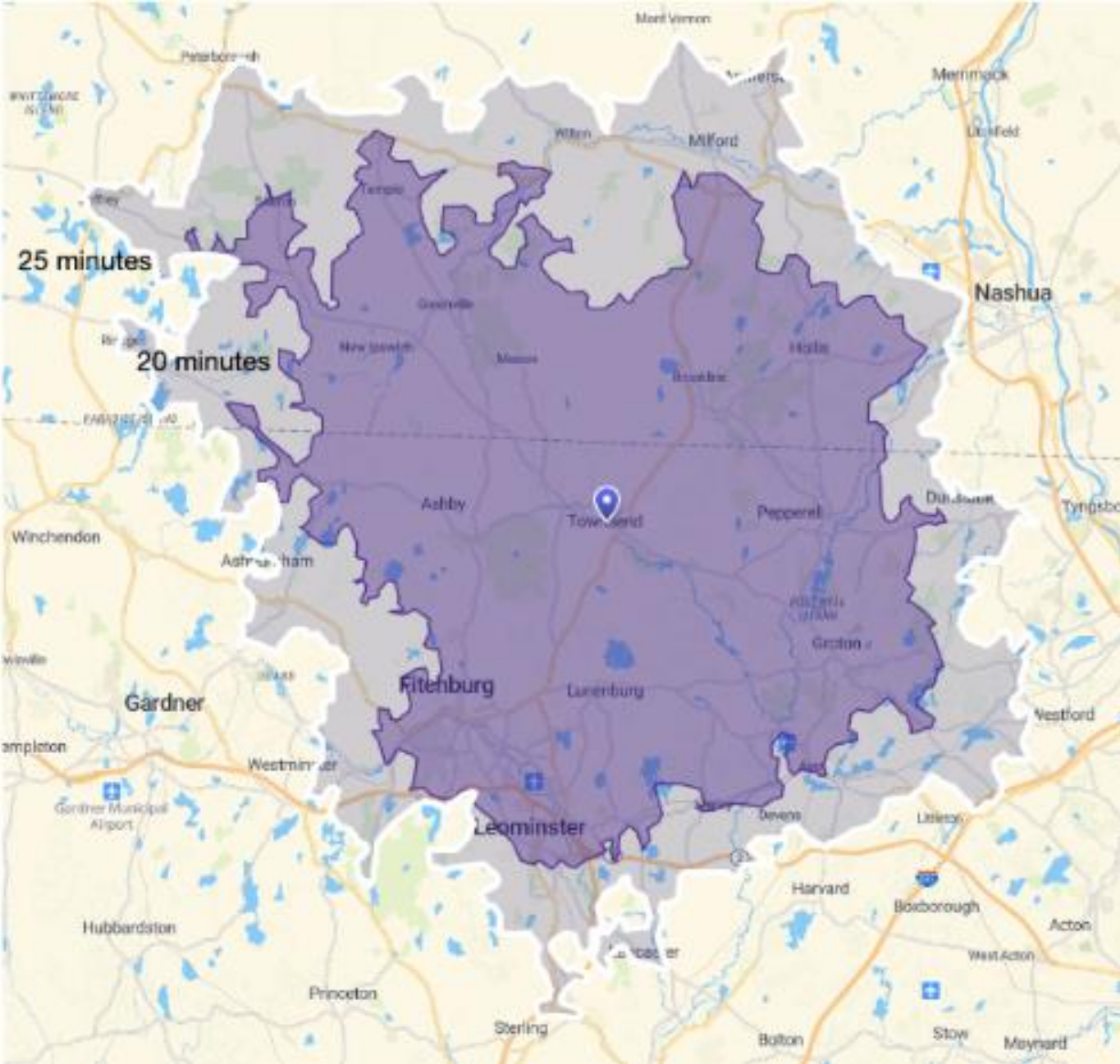
The demographics of the new Indian Hill Music center are expected to be similar to those of visitors to Tanglewood, which means visitors are likely to be attracted to historic and environmental activities, and likely to be interested in staying in the area. As shown in the map, Indian Hill Drive Time, the majority of Townsend is within a 20-minute drive of the new Indian Hill center, and all of Townsend is within a 25-minute drive. Given that, the town has a golden opportunity to capture a significant portion of that multi-million-dollar economic impact.

Business that could be boosted by this tourism include antique shops, craft and artisan shops, and stores selling or renting recreational equipment. In addition, The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) works to improve opportunities for U.S. growers and producers. Agritourism is a growing industry, and the USDA has an extensive manual *Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism - Farming for Profit and Sustainability*. Successful endeavors include farm to table dining; farming operational tours (to include onsite purchasing); farm tours that incorporate pick your own, animal feeding, nature walks, and other activities; and farm stays. New England examples include Liberty Hill Farm in Rochester VT, and Silverman's Farm, Easton CT. While the agritourism map for Massachusetts list 364 different locations, there are only 21 with farm stays and only one is in the eastern part of the state. This presents a unique opportunity for Townsend.

Map 12: Indian Hill Drive Time



Map 13: Townsend Drive Time Map

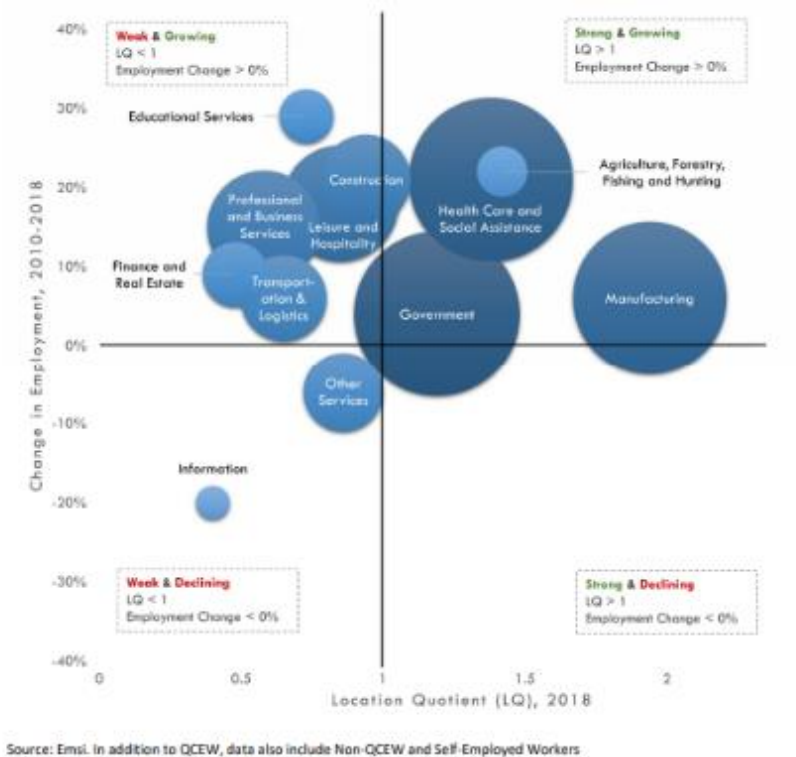


There would also be hospitality opportunities, including lodging for those attending Indian Hill and other tourists. Townsend needs to develop strategies to encourage bed and breakfast and AIRBNB types of rentals. The Planning Board should seek best practice example bylaws to encourage such businesses. People traveling to New England with recreational vehicles might look for a place to camp, and there are not any in the close vicinity of Indian Hill which presents an opportunity for property owners with open space.

Without considering Indian Hill, data shows that “Accommodation and Food Service Jobs are also projected to grow, requiring about 15,000 square feet of space.” The addition of Indian Hill provides a unique opportunity for restaurant growth in Townsend. Survey respondents felt strongly that Townsend was in need of a café/deli (80%), a bakery (77%), a year-round farmers market (62%), and more restaurants (61%). Given this information, coupled with Indian Hill, the rail trail, and outdoor / recreational opportunities in Townsend, a destination such as the Stone Cow Brewery in Barre, MA, with its farm setting, brewery, playground, outdoor dining, and entertainment could draw a significant number of Indian Hill visitors and those interested in the craft beer, winery, and distillery industry, a lot of which would fit in well with Townsend. The suggestions were not just generated from the Master Plan Committee but are also backed by the survey and economic data. Not only was there a desire for such a venue in Townsend as reported in the survey results, but an article, *Growing Rural Wisconsin's Economy, The Allure of Destination Breweries As Rural Economic Engines* also discusses the positive aspects of the brewery industry. In 2016, Travelocity established a "beer tourism index," which identified the top destinations for craft beer in the United States. Springfield MA, Burlington VT, and Bangor ME are currently on the list. In 2018, craft breweries contributed \$79.1 billion to the U.S. economy, according to the Brewers Association's 2018 Economic Impact Report (<https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/economic-impact-data/>) and in Massachusetts, craft beer generated about \$2 billion for the state's economy, according to the Brewery Association. Breweries generated about \$397 per legal drinker, the data show. More than 16,000 people work in the craft beer industry in Massachusetts, the Brewer's Association found. The average wage for a brewery employee in the state was \$51,584.

Below, in Figure 2, Changes in Employment 2010-2018, there is a summary prepared by the UMass Donahue Institute's Economic & Public Policy Research Group on employment changes from 2010-2018. Given the changing work environment emulating from COVID practices, there are likely to be more changes moving forward, the figure provides insight on the trends in employment.

Figure 2: Changes in Employment 2010-2018



Economic Development Recommendations

- The town should hire a town planner or economic development coordinator. In addition, the town needs to collaborate with the small business community and non-profits to facilitate discussion and agreement on projects and exploit the collective talents of members of these entities to benefit the town. In order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by Indian Hill, an economic development coordinator is critical. This person can assist in bringing new businesses to Townsend in line with the character of the town. This individual could also help existing businesses and the Townsend Business Association by publicizing

Townsend as a destination. Other neighboring towns, such as Ayer and Groton, have had strong economic growth with the assistance of a town planner. This person can take the lead in writing grants directly related to economic development, and assist other town entities in writing grants particular to their domain. This person can also manage working groups related to the effort.

- The town should enact the Community Preservation Act. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps communities preserve open space, historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. As such, it could directly help Townsend improve its historical, environmental, and cultural tourism in a cost-effective manner. The CPA is an especially efficient way of achieving these goals, since it leverages state funds that would otherwise be diverted to other municipalities.
- The town should look for cost-effective ways to promote tourism. The town should look to advertise the reasons to visit Townsend as a whole, rather than depending solely on individual businesses to advertise. One particular target of the advertising should be the Indian Hill patrons. The success of existing business in Townsend is an excellent way to bring additional similar businesses to town, and so this would be a good investment of tax dollars. Grants that promote higher-income visitors, such as the installation of electric charging stations, should also be pursued. Townsend should work with the MRPC to access historic preservation, historic tourism, and agritourism grants.
- The town needs to be business and developer friendly by evaluating and amending zoning bylaws to promote business activity and tourism and offering support through the building department to facilitate a streamlined permitting process.
- The land use zoning section describes bylaw changes that would support business while still responsibly caring for the environment. Other rural communities with

sensitive ecosystems have been successful with their efforts and Townsend needs to be proactive in order to bolster the economy.

- The town needs to evaluate its current open space and devise a plan that will encourage business uses consistent with the rural character and needs of the town
- Given Townsend has a large amount of preserved open space and existing housing inventory, the town needs to use the maps and resources in this plan to bring together groups of stakeholders to determine its housing strategy. Based on current zoning bylaws, there is little room for creative solutions to meet current housing needs and demand. Stakeholders should include the economic development director, business community, landowners, and neighbors to construct a plan that could incorporate new strategies – such as mixed-use properties, retirement style “villages”, and other strategies to keep Townsend competitive.

Transportation and Circulation

A local transportation system should provide efficient and safe mobility for all transportation modes as well as connections to regional facilities. The availability and quality of the transportation system is important to community members of all ages, businesses, visitors, and emergency services. Since the last adopted master plan for Townsend in 2001, the importance of making streets safe and accessible to all groups of users - walkers, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers - has been recognized as one of the key factors affecting quality of life in all municipalities.

Townsend has two state highways that meet in Townsend Center - Route 13 which traverses north and south 3.2 miles from Lunenburg north to Brookline, New Hampshire, and Route 119 which traverses 5.7 miles from Groton west to Ashby. These two state highways only have sidewalks along 1.7 miles, or 30 percent of the total roadway distances. Townsend also has 156 town roads totaling 104.49 miles of roadway .⁶These town roads only have sidewalks along 3.6 miles, or 3.4 percent of the roads.

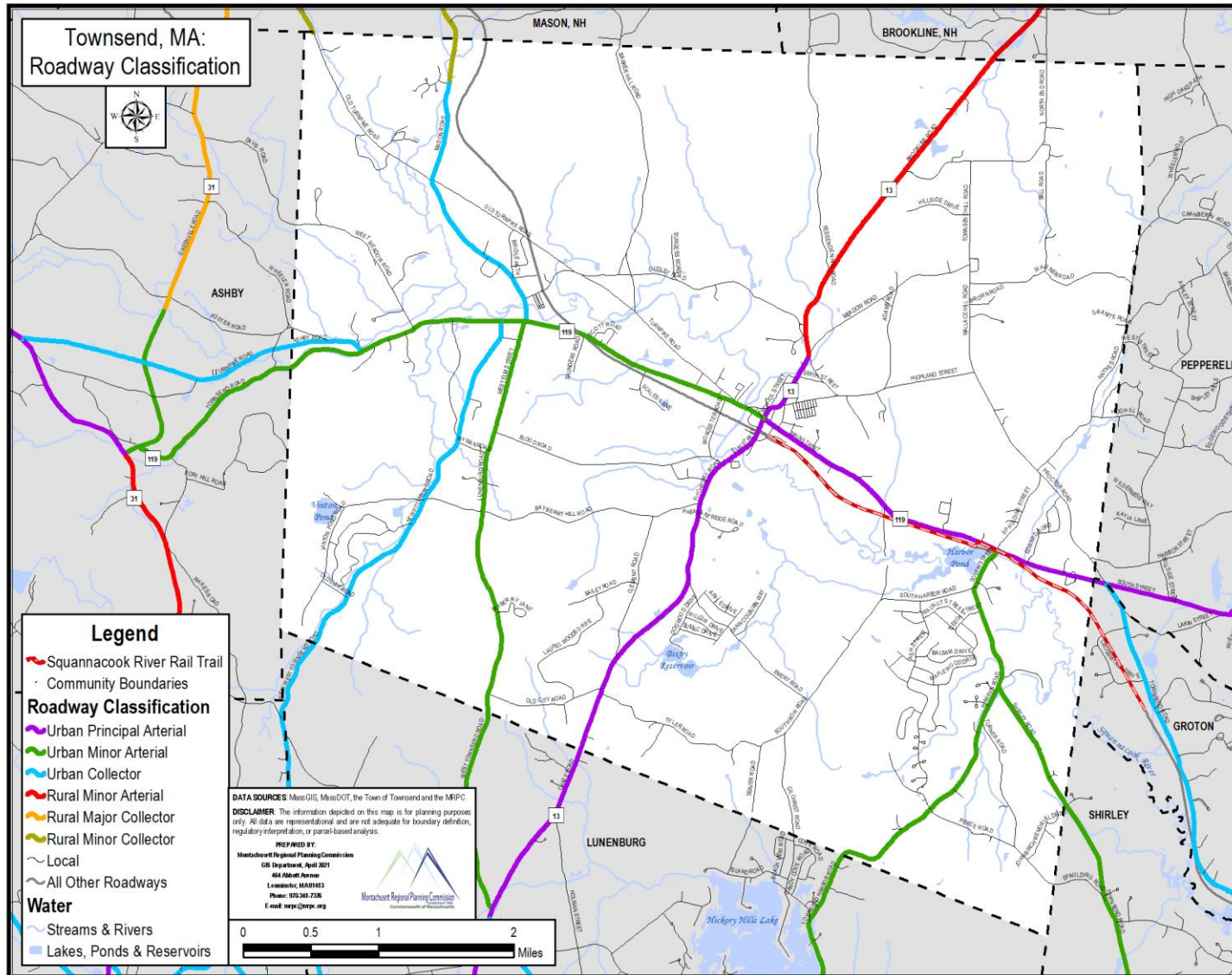
Two major highways that are closest to Townsend are Route 2 in Leominster and Route 495 in Littleton. Many people in Townsend commute to work via these highways. Route 2 is 10 miles from Townsend center to Route 2 in Leominster via Route 13, a 17⁷ minute drive without traffic, and up to 22 minutes at rush hour⁸. Route 495 is 15 miles from Townsend center via Route 119, and because of greater rush hour traffic along this route, drive time varies from 23 minutes off peak to 40 minutes at peak.

⁶ <https://www.townsendma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1331/f/uploads/roads.pdf>

⁷ Drive time calculations are based on Google Maps

⁸ Rush hour is designated as 0700.

Map 14: Townsend MA Roadway Classification



Townsend residents also use the MBTA Fitchburg commuter line to commute to work. The two closest stations to Townsend are Fitchburg and Shirley, in addition, the Ayer station is close to the Harbor and has parking. The Fitchburg station is 8 miles from Townsend center, a drive of 14 minutes, or about 16 minutes in rush hour. The Shirley station is 10 miles from Townsend center, a drive of 18 minutes, or about 22 minutes in rush hour. There is no shared shuttle service from Townsend to these stations nor is there easy access to ridesharing services.

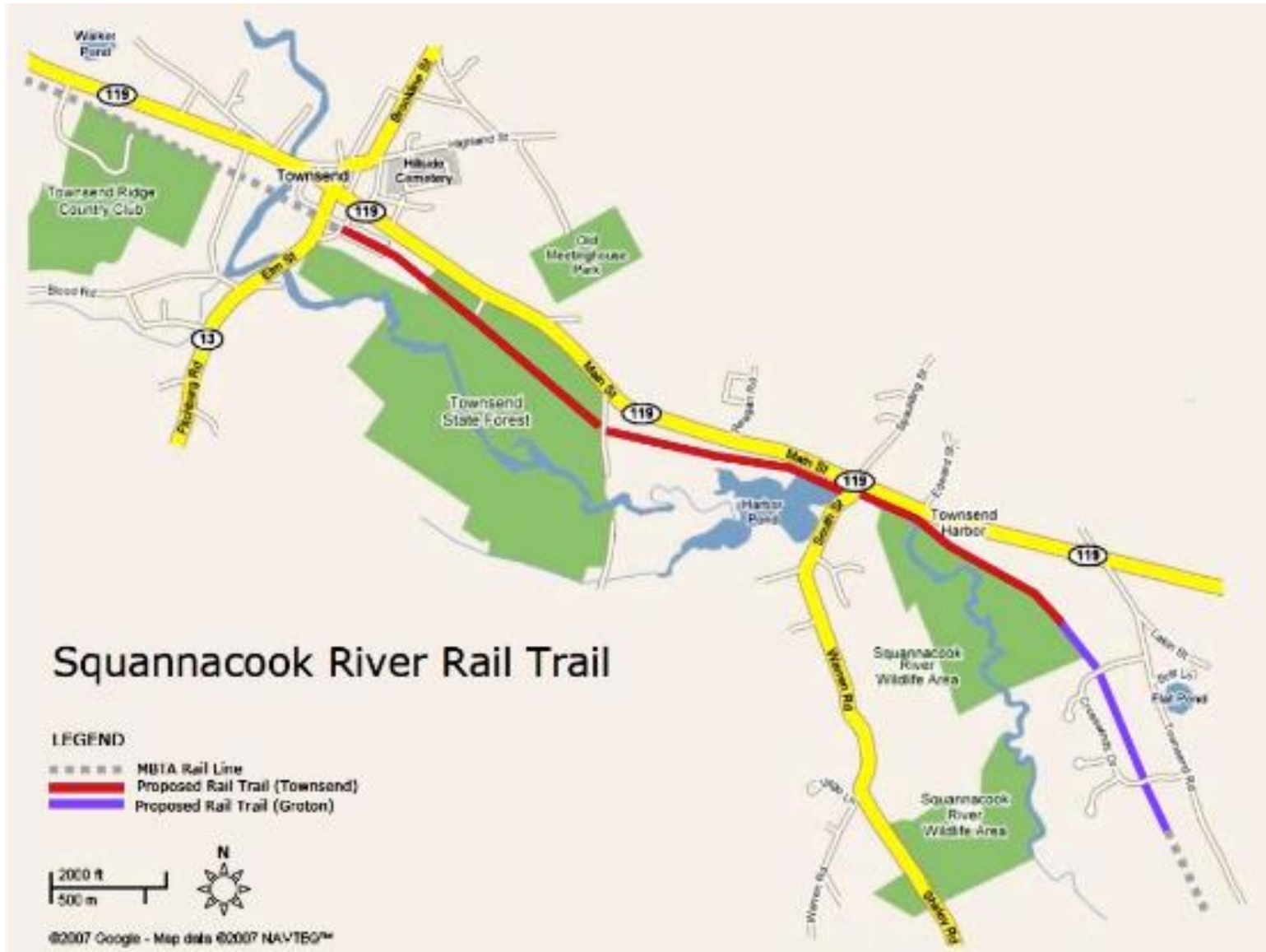
Townsend is a member of the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA). Despite being a member of the LRTA, there is not any fixed bus service, however, paratransit services are available for the elderly and disabled through LRTA's Road Runner program.

The unused MBTA line in Townsend is in the process of being converted to a stone dust rail trail called the Squannacook River Rail Trail, as shown in Map 15. Construction has been completed between Depot Street and Old Meetinghouse Road, and the rest of the trail is expected to be completed by the spring of 2024. Since this rail trail will parallel Route 119 from the Townsend/Groton border to Townsend center, it will offer a safe alternative to the busy- and shoulderless- Route 119 for pedestrians and bicyclists, allowing safe access to many town destinations for these user groups. This rail trail is being built by the non-profit Squannacook Greenways, that leased the corridor from the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) in 2015.

Traffic and Safety

Vehicle traffic in Townsend has been increasing steadily since the last master plan in 2001, as shown in the Traffic Volume Index and Rate Group map below, averaging about 1.5 percent increase per year except during the economic downturn between 2007 and 2010. The Traffic Count Map shows recent and former traffic count locations.

Map 15: Squannacook River Rail Trail



Map 16: Traffic Volume Index and Rate Group Locations

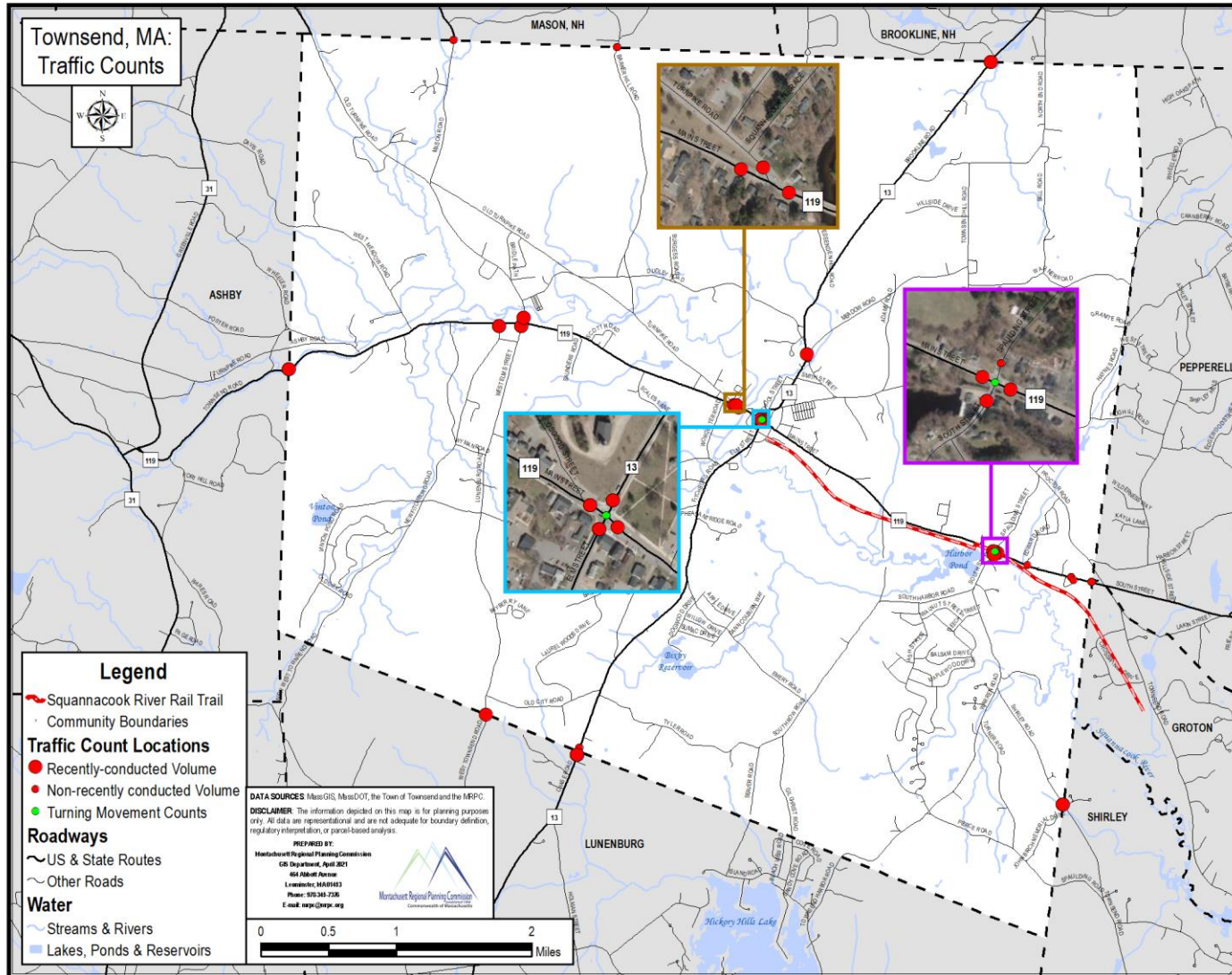
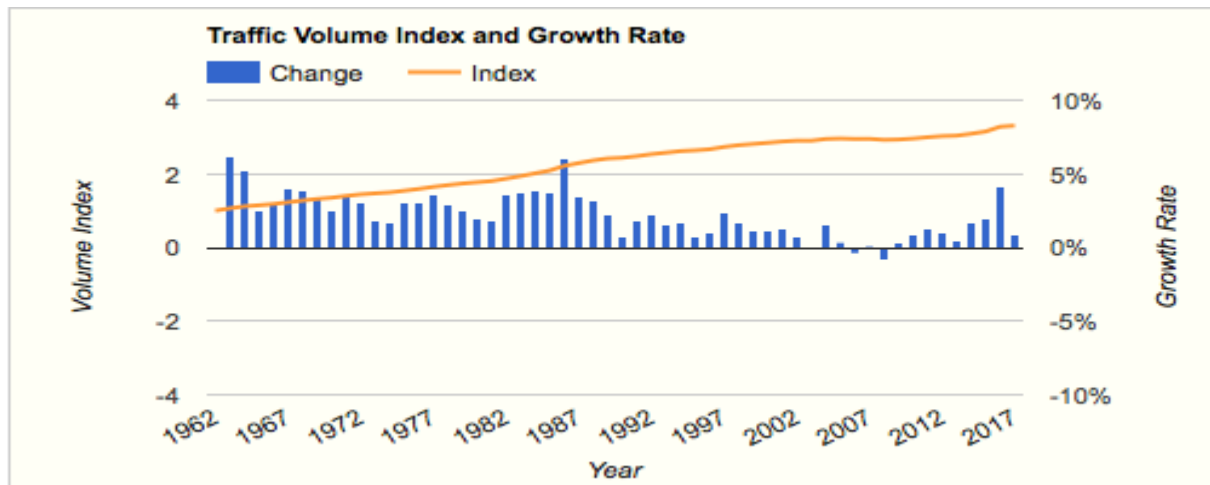


Figure 3: Traffic Volume Index and Growth Rate



(from <http://mhd.ms2soft.com>) shows that traffic growth in Townsend slowed following the 2007 recession, but is returning.

Automobile crashes in Townsend have significantly decreased since the 2001 master plan. The average number per year in Townsend between 2001 and 2003 was 202, but that average dropped to 134 between 2014 and 2016. This 34% decrease is well above the state average of 11% decrease.

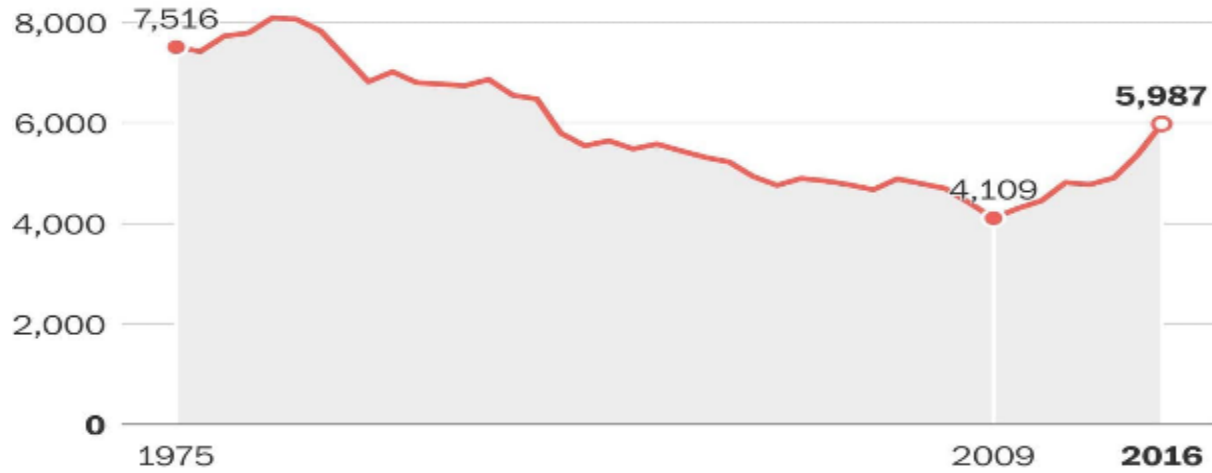
While Townsend is too small for statistically significant pedestrian safety data, the trend both statewide and nationwide has been toward significantly higher pedestrian deaths, as shown in Pedestrian Fatalities figure.

The same is true of bicycle crashes. Nationwide, there has been a six percent increase in bicyclist fatalities between 2006 and 2015.

Data and maps show the locations of pedestrian and bicycle accidents in Townsend for the past 10 years. There has been a noteworthy cluster of accidents in Townsend center, although the two fatal incidents occurred elsewhere. This is fairly typical as intersection crashes tend to occur at lower speeds and crashes along major roads occur at higher speeds causing greater risk of injury and death. This map makes clear that pedestrian and bicycle safety is a significant issue in Townsend, as is reflected in this chapter's recommendations.

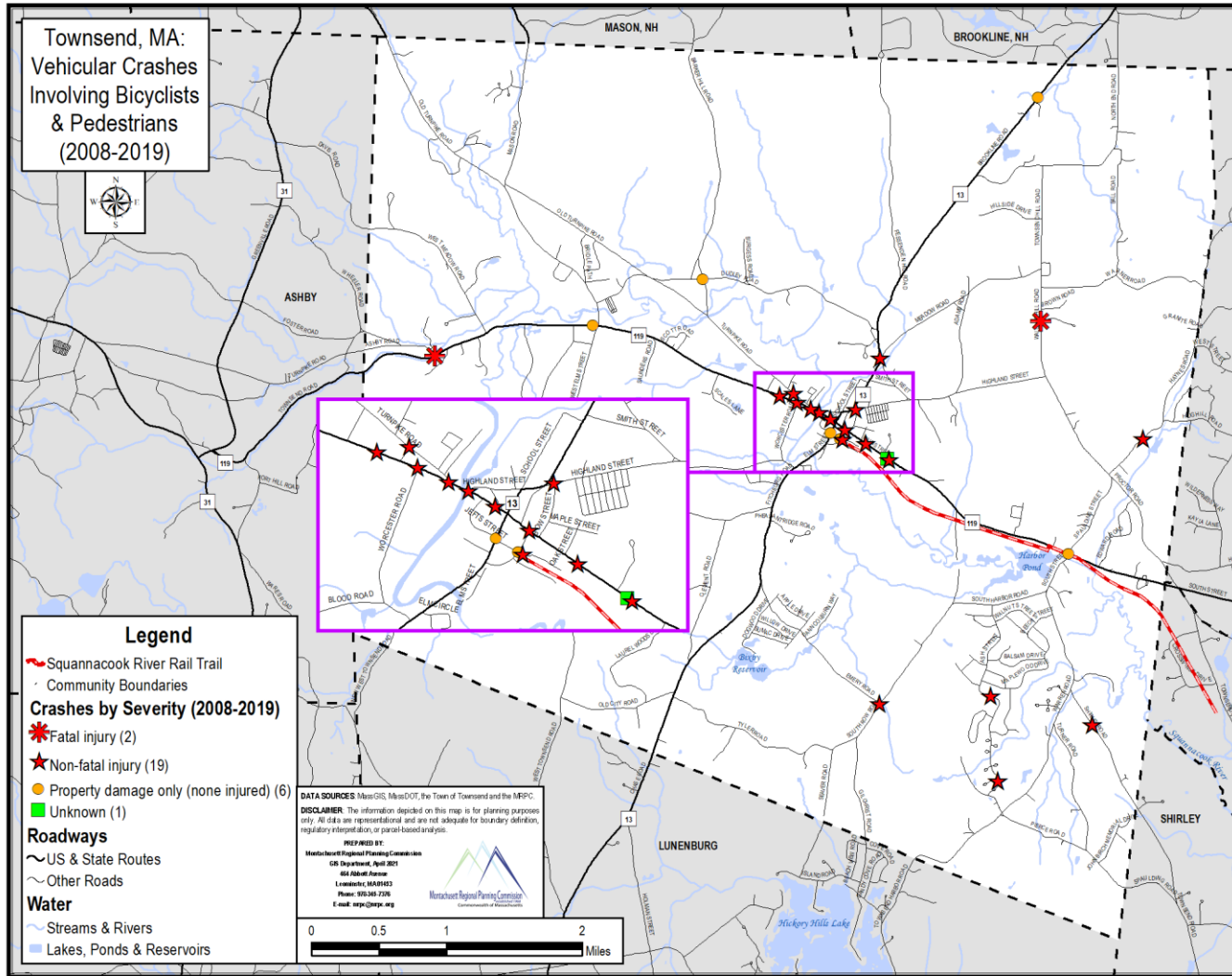
Figure 4:: Pedestrians Killed in Vehicle Crashes 1975-2016

Number of pedestrians killed in vehicle crashes, 1975-2016



Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, U.S. Department of Transportation
WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

Map 17: Pedestrian Crashes and Fatalities



Complete Streets

Since the last Master Plan in Townsend in 2001, there has been a considerable refocusing of the role of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) highway division from one that serves mainly automobile traffic, to one that serves all user groups, including pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit users. This refocusing has been driven by both the safety issues discussed above, and by the health effects on Massachusetts residents of a more sedentary, car-focused lifestyle. MassDOT calls this new vision Complete Streets. According to MassDOT:

“A complete street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes – walking, biking, transit, and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets improvements may be large scale such as corridor wide improvements or focused on the needs of a single mode.”

MassDOT is not only pushing design for more pedestrian and walker friendly streets at the state level, it has also recently been putting out a series of documents to help municipalities achieve the same goals. In July 2018, they published the Municipal Resource Guide for Walkability⁹.

In 2015, Massachusetts started the Complete Streets Funding Program¹⁰. There are three steps needed to secure funding for this program 1) develop a comprehensive Complete Streets policy and submit a commitment letter, 2) develop a Complete Streets prioritization plan, and 3) apply for Complete Streets funding. Townsend has completed the first two steps. Some high points of the Townsend Complete Streets prioritization plan appear below: New sidewalks on parts of Proctor Road, Spaulding Street, South Street, Dudley Road, Fitchburg Road, Emery Road, New Fitchburg Road, and Brookline Street.

1. Add bike lanes on Wallace Hill Road, in North Middlesex High School driveways, and on Fitchburg Road.

⁹ https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/09/17/MunicipalResourcesGuideForWalkability_2018-08-24.pdf

¹⁰ <https://masscompletestreets.com>

2. Reconstruct parts of sidewalks on Elm Street and Fitchburg Road.
3. Upgrade crosswalks at South Street, Main Street intersection with countdown indicators, etc.

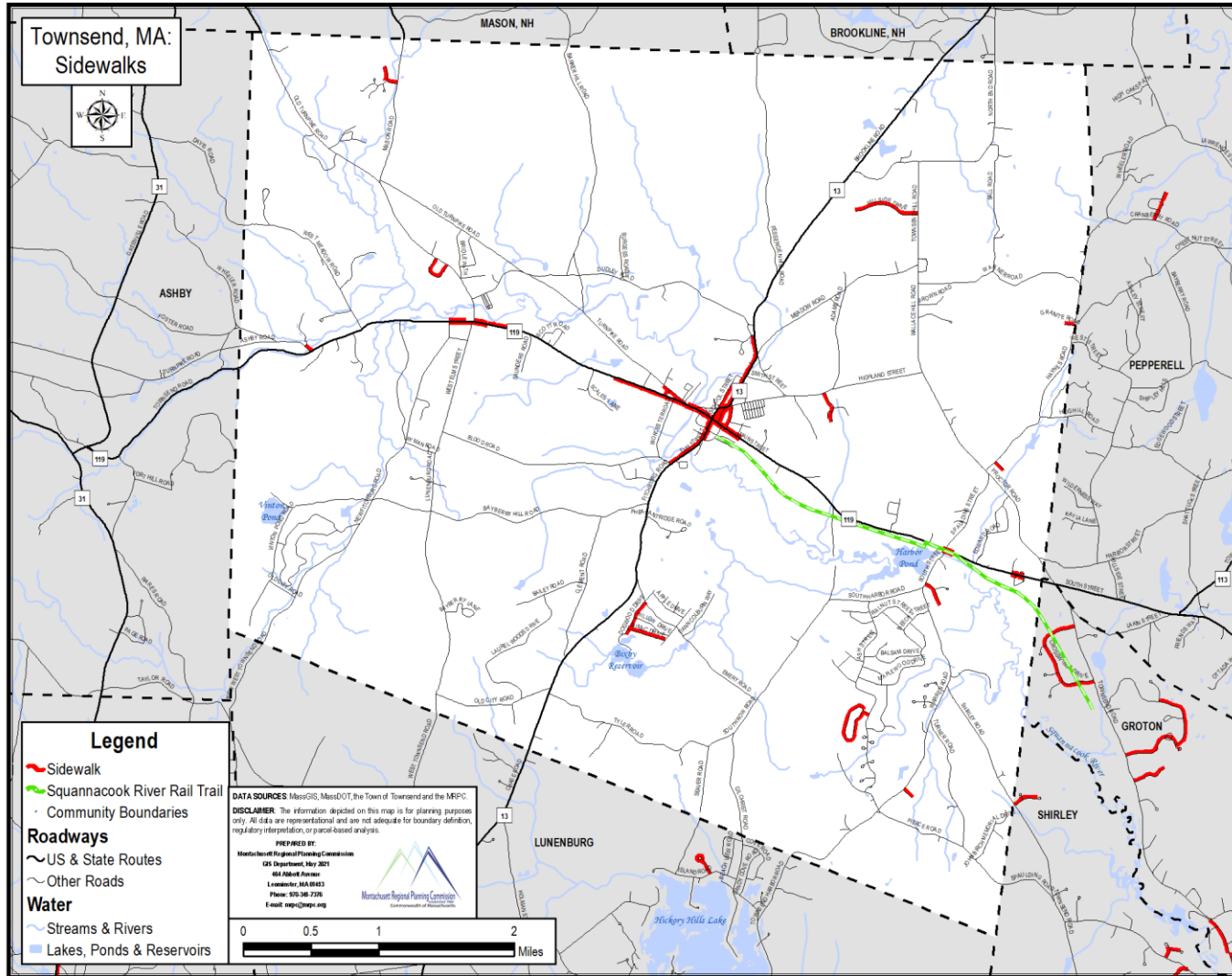
The Sidewalks Map 18 shows the limited location of sidewalks in Townsend.

In Feb 2021, the engineering firm of Kittleson & Associates did a review of pedestrian crossings focused in Townsend center. Some of their recommendations included:

- Based on the FHWA Field Guide for Selection Countermeasures at Uncontrolled Pedestrian Crossing Locations, a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) should be considered for three locations. This is based on speed and vehicular traffic volumes:
 - Route 119 & Softball Field (Eastman Street)
 - Route 119 & Spaulding Memorial School
 - Route 119 & Turnpike Road
- An RRFB is a candidate for:
 - Route 119 & Post Office

They also recommended crossing Islands or curb extensions in other areas and pointed out numerous places where pedestrian ramps were missing or deficient. Finally, they recommended crosswalk relocations for various locations along Route 119.

Map 18: Sidewalks



Upcoming Transportation Projects in Townsend

The main source of federal and state funding for transportation projects in Townsend comes through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Transportation projects are prioritized across the 22 towns in the Montachusett Region on an annual basis. In the 2019 TIP, there are two Townsend projects, 1) a bridge replacement on West Meadow Road over Locke Brooke, and 2) resurfacing and related work on Rt 119.

Transportation suggestions from public meetings:

There were a number of transportation themes that emerged clearly from the five public meetings.

- Road maintenance/pothole repair needs to be improved.
- Town needs more sidewalks, bike lanes, and bike trails to be more friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Public transportation should be addressed, with a possible park and ride to train stations or local cities/destinations.
- Better control of driving speed in town.

In addition, there were some specific recommendations. The senior group requested increased frequency for the Roadrunner service. The business group suggested integrating the rail trail into other forest trails to develop a recreational tourism destination.

The survey revealed two major dissatisfactions with Townsend's roads - 1) a dissatisfaction with their safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, and 2) a dissatisfaction with road quality. For example, over 77% of residents answered no to question 25, "Do you think the town has enough sidewalks?" When asked question 21, "How satisfied are you with Townsend's roads and sidewalks for:", 54% listed very dissatisfied/dissatisfied for bicycling, 67% for walking, and 71% for driving.

In addition, question 30 asked, “Which of the following are important for our town?” Of the ten choices, the top 3 were:

<i>Goal</i>	<i>Percentage of somewhat important/very important</i>
More business tax revenues to help ease residential tax burden	86
Rail trail to extension to West Townsend	71
Better pedestrian and bicycle access to stores	69

Question 25 also asked, “Do you feel there has been a marked increase in truck traffic on town roads?”, and 60% of residents answered agree/strongly agree.

Finally, there was also some interest in increasing public transportation in Townsend. Question 19 was, “Would you be interested in bus/van service to [the MBTA commuter rail station]?” Over 70% of residents said yes. Question 20 asked, “If you were to use bus/van service from Townsend, would you go to any of the following?” The two local airports (Logan and Manchester) and downtown Boston all had a better than 50% positive response.

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations

- The town of Townsend should seek out opportunities such as Prioritization Plan under the Complete Streets Program to increase pedestrian and bicycle friendliness of its town roads.
- The town should support grant opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle friendliness with engineering studies similar to the Kittleson & Associates study but covering the whole town.

- The town of Townsend should continue to support Squannacook Greenways in its work to build the Squannacook River Rail Trail, including building a sidewalk between South Road and Harbor Church to support the section presently under construction and its extension to West Townsend.
- The town of Townsend should continue to look for ways to improve the drivability of its town roads.
- The town should consider the banning of through trucking on residential town roads that are heavily used for through trucking, as trucking impacts safety in many locations.
- The town should look for private companies that might be interested in providing van service.
- The town should promote the need for ridesharing services as a way to entice gig-worker¹¹ (s) to see Townsend as a viable stop for and develop a local ridesharing hub.

¹¹ Gig workers are independent contractors or freelancers who typically do short-term work for multiple clients. In this case, the gig workers could provide transportation for Townsend which lacks an alternative transportation infrastructure.

Housing

Currently there are 3,385 units of housing in Townsend of which 3,240 are occupied of which 2,776 were owner occupied and 464 were rental units. At the time of the assessment in 2010, 145 units were vacant. Of the vacant units in 2010, 35 were rental units. The Master Plan Committee, based on its own research of open-source documents, showed no rental units actively available at the time of the plan development.

The Table10 below shows the age of the housing stock in town. The largest increase was during the 1970s followed by a decline of approximately 500 units in the 1980s, then steady building until 2010. The decline in 2010 could be from several factors, the recession that began in 2009, and the lack of available building lots.

Table 10: Housing Stock

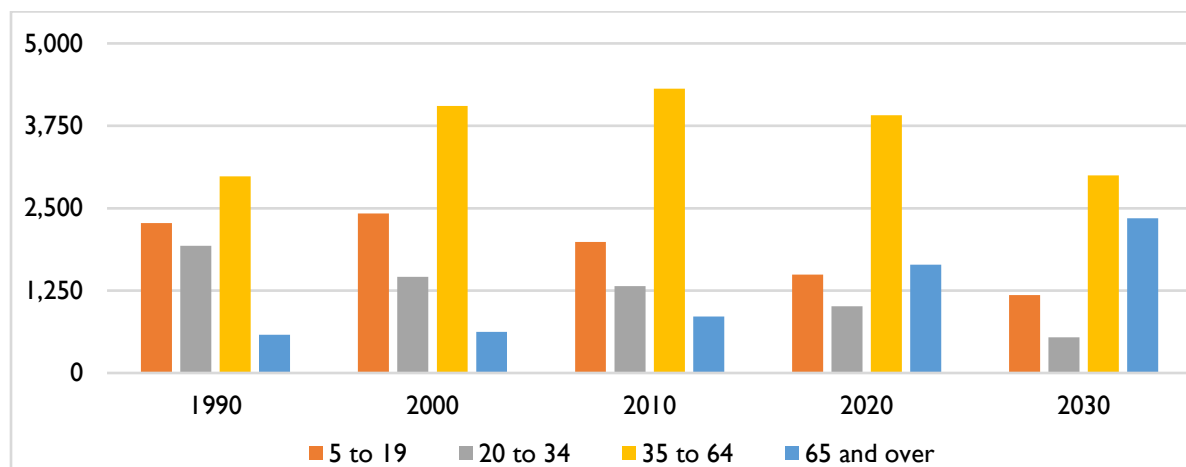
Year Built	Number
<i>Built 2014 or later</i>	42
<i>Built 2010 to 2013</i>	82
<i>Built 2000 to 2009</i>	274
<i>Built 1990 to 1999</i>	376
<i>Built 1980 to 1989</i>	455
<i>Built 1970 to 1979</i>	944
<i>Built 1960 to 1969</i>	304
<i>Built 1950 to 1959</i>	287
<i>Built 1940 to 1949</i>	257
<i>Built 1939 or earlier</i>	548

In the fall of 2019, Townsend hosted a public forum to discuss housing. During the meeting many viewpoints were shared on the strengths, weaknesses, and future needs related to housing. Strengths for housing included the variety of homes, home values, the

low crime rate, sense of community, and the open space. Weaknesses included the high cost of living with respect to utilities and taxes, poor infrastructure (private wells, septic, access to highways, lack of transit), and zoning regulations. Concerns related to housing included lack of housing that was affordable for both young and old members of the community.

Data projections in Chart 10 show a significant increase in the senior population (over age 65) by the year 2030. This projection will have a clear impact on the short-term plan for housing to accommodate those that are potentially downsizing. The decreases in younger population will likely change in subsequent years as – when the senior population begin to sell their homes, younger individuals – potentially with families will purchase those homes.

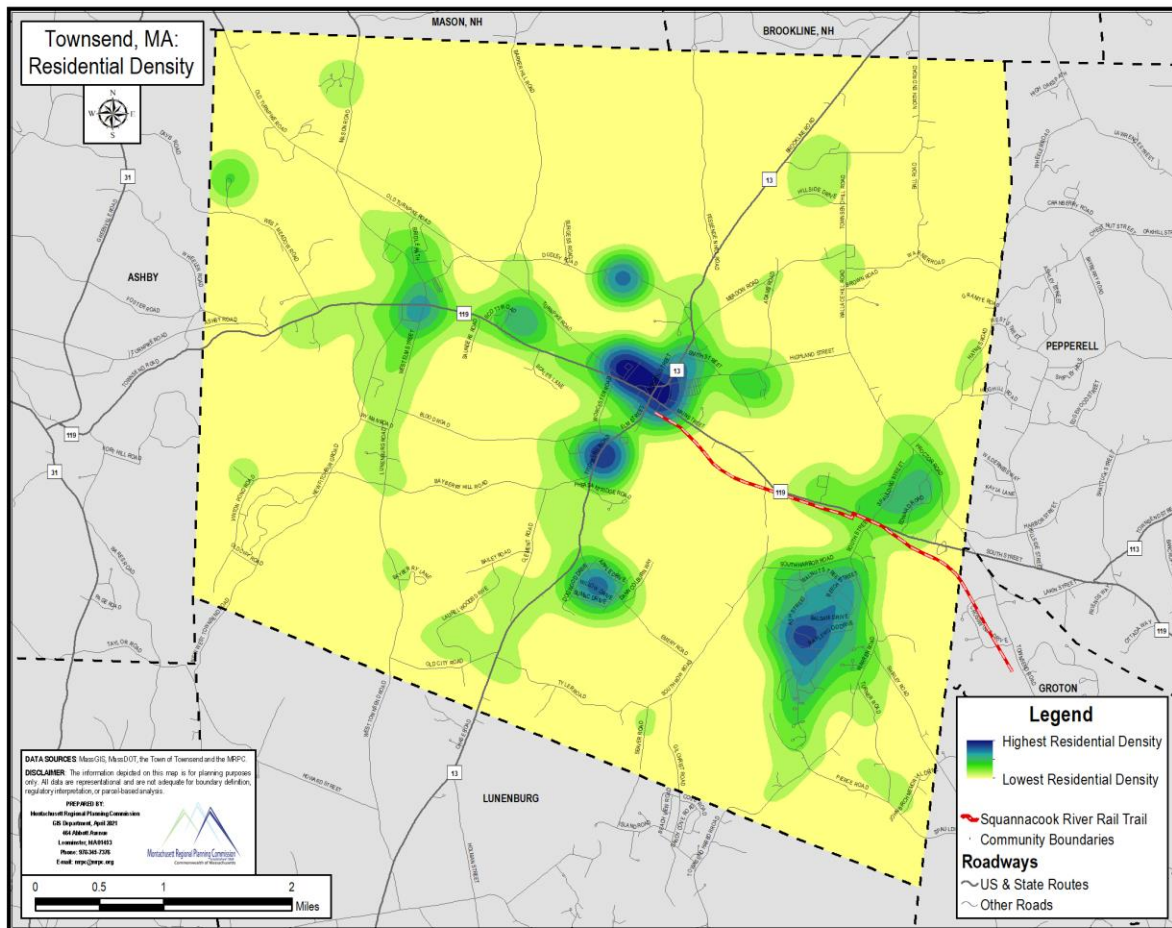
Chart 10: Population Projections by Age



The town of Townsend needs to determine a housing production plan that includes appropriate zoning to address the need to offer moderate and affordable housing. At the same time maximizing the opportunity to offer homes that are attractive to those that can no longer acquire homes in communities such as Dunstable, Groton, and Westford. Homes with higher values can help with the tax burden that comes with adding higher density housing. Increases in higher density dwellings can impact other areas of town operations such as public safety, water, highway, the senior center, library, recreations, and the schools.

In Townsend, there is a housing authority which studies the housing needs of the town and provides programs to make available low-income housing for families and the elderly. In December 2005, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) approved Townsend's Affordable Housing Plan (currently named the Housing Production Plan) which set a goal of producing 275 affordable units by 2020. In 2021, there were 145 subsidized housing units making up 4.3 percent of the housing stock. The locations include Atwood Acres (50), Townsend Woods (36), Turnpike Village (48) units, Benjamin Condominiums, Coopersmith Way (8) and a Habitat for Humanity property on Apple Drive (1). Units not counted include those at Pine Ridge, Country Estates, Deer Ridge, and other privately rental units. Map 19 shows the Residential Density in Townsend.

Map 19: Residential Density



As the Residential Density map shows, Townsend has three major population centers. Moving from west to east along Route 119, they are West Townsend, Townsend center,

and Townsend Harbor. In particular, the population centers of Townsend center and Townsend Harbor contain a large majority of the retail stores and public buildings in town. As noted in the Transportation and Circulation chapter, there is a push in Townsend to increase walkability in town, with a special focus on these population centers. Since residents in affordable housing often have less access to automotive transportation than more affluent residents, placing affordable housing in the existing population centers with greater walkability would be good policy.

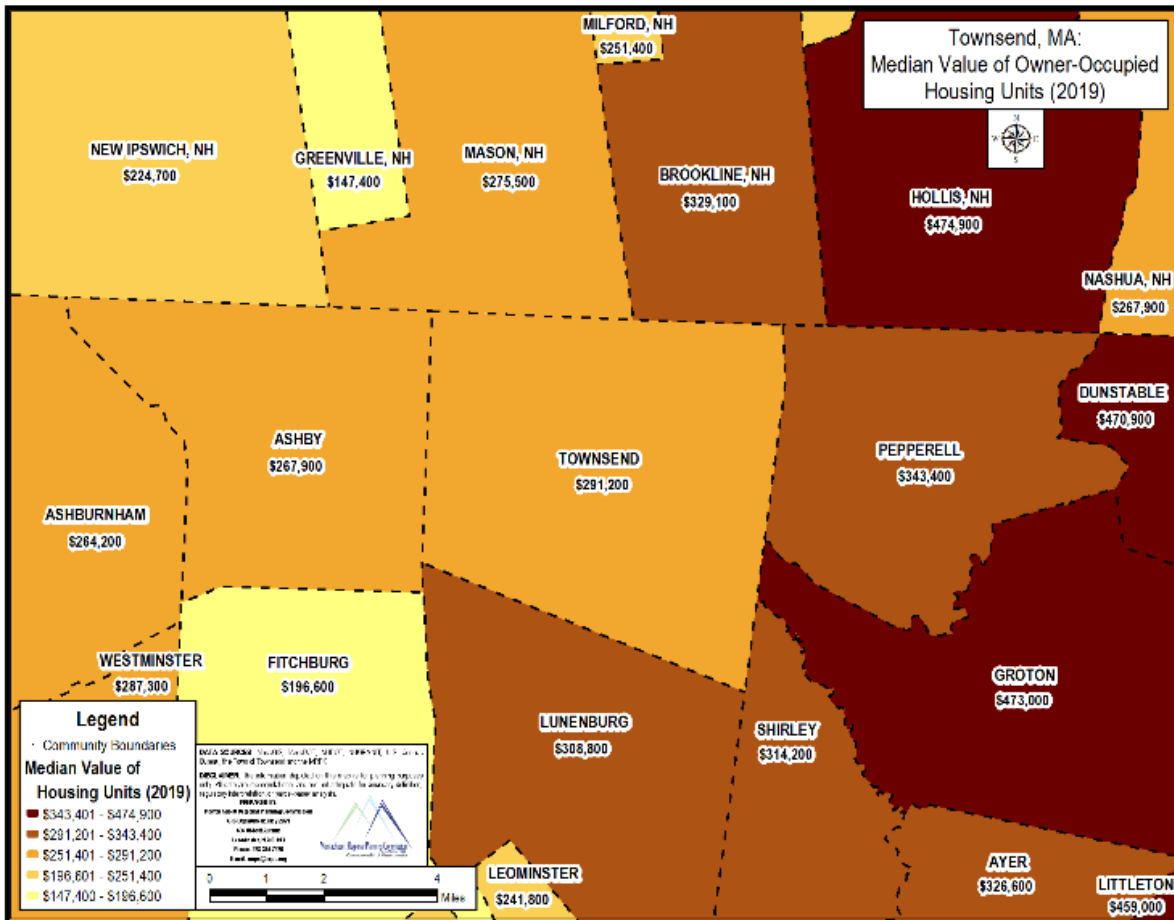
In line with this, in Townsend there are four higher density – non age restricted multifamily units in Townsend Center (Pine Ridge, Turnpike Village, Country Estates, Dudley Road), one on the north side of town, and one in Townsend Harbor (Spaulding Street). Most of the units are rentals. Over 20 rental units were destroyed in a fire in February 2019. The loss of units was significant for a town the size of Townsend. A cluster of “cottages” on the north end of town offers studio style units available for short term rentals.

Of survey respondents 27% believed housing to be a weakness and 38% felt it was a strength, with 35% sharing that housing was neither a strength or a weakness for the community.

While 94% of respondents desired affordable housing, what that means on an individual level is likely to vary significantly. The current housing market reflects little inventory and houses listed are often receiving multiple bids and selling over asking. The length of time for listed houses to move from for sale to pending/contingent is extremely short which is indicative of the high demand. Lack of inventory and historically low interest rates are drivers of the “hot” housing market.

Figure 5 shows the value of owner-occupied houses in Townsend. The map shows that Townsend is “next in line” for increased home values. As neighboring towns become more expensive, buyers are moving toward the west. This trend coupled with the likely flexibility of business when it comes to allowing remote employment, the upward value of housing is likely.

Figure 5: Median Value - Owner Occupied Housing Units



Zoning is perceived as restrictive in town, and the permitting and approval process for development perceived as difficult. Current zoning – depending on the location of the residential district - requires two and three acre lots. Survey input showed varying opinions for the types of future developments that were most favorable. Respondents felt single family homes with shared amenities and open space were important (25%), quality rentals (22%), large homes/lots (17%), mixed use (17%) and other (19%). Given the relatively close percentages of desirability of all types of housing, Townsend must design a plan that creatively utilizes the little space available for development. The town would be well served to reimagine its current zoning bylaws to offer more flexibility.

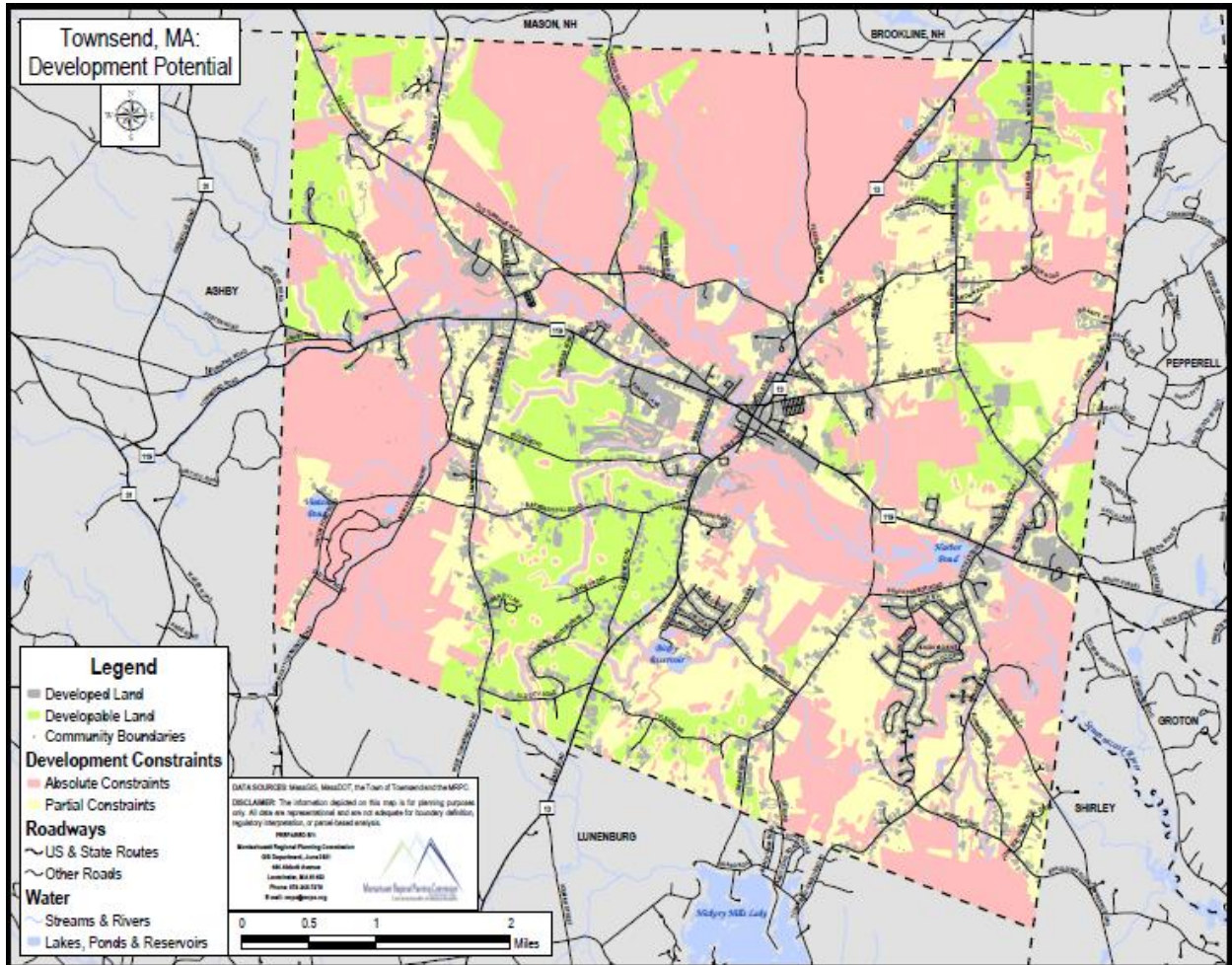
In 2019, a new bylaw was passed, 145-36 Accessory Apartments in Residential District that allowed in law apartments to existing structures renovation to an existing external structure for conversion to an “in-law” apartment. This bylaw restricted the renovation to structures that have been in place for ten or more years. Essentially, this would allow one property owner to renovate if the building was the requisite age, but not allow a neighboring property owner to add a structure for an accessory apartment – even if the property size was much larger and that an outbuilding would be permitted for non-residential use. The survey results showed support for in-law units. Seventy percent of respondents agreed that in-law requiring additions of new square footage should be allowed (20% neither agreed or disagreed) with the same percent in favor of renovation of existing out buildings (19% neither agreed or disagreed), remodeling – but without adding square footage was favorable to 57% of respondents (26% neither agreed or disagreed), and building a detached structure was favorable to 44% of respondents (32% neither agreed or disagreed). These results show responding community members had a high tolerance for allowing in-law type of additions to current lots. Revisiting these options and incorporating more flexibility in the zoning bylaws could have a positive impact on the housing needs in town. Bylaw adjustments in this area address housing, increase affordable units for rent, provide for multi-generational living, and help to overcome the challenge of lack of building lots/available land for building. The rural nature of Townsend could be preserved by still requiring larger lots for new units as appropriate, while at the same time reimagining spaces that already exist. Conditions could be incorporated as to the design of additions or new structures to ensure the town character was preserved.

With the Housing Choice law passed by the state in early 2021 as part of An Act Enabling Partnership for Growth, it will now be easier to pass zoning reform. With that law, a zoning law related to facilitating housing development can be changed with a simple majority vote at town meeting, where previously such a change required a 2/3 majority vote.

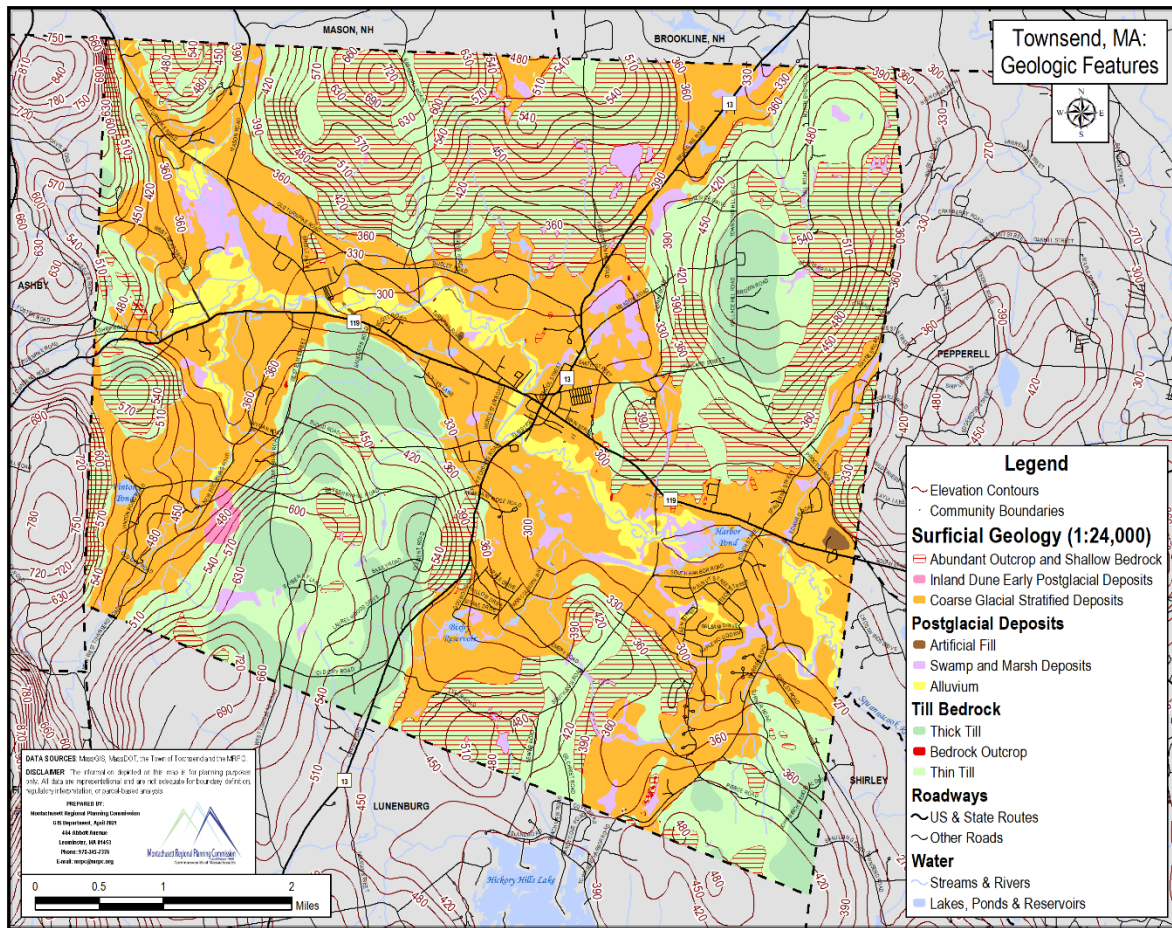
The Development Potential Map 20 shows broadly what land is available for development. What this map does not show is a parcel-by-parcel review of what land is

actually fit for development. Given geological issues many areas have limited build potential. The Geologic Feature Map 21 is very illustrative in showing the amount of land that is restricted.

Map 20: Development Potential



Map 21: Geologic Features



The Geological Features Map shows the various geology in Townsend. This map provides greater insight on prime building sites, and those that present greater challenges.

Housing Recommendations

Please note that given the intersectionality between housing and economic development and the number of recommendations regarding zoning and impact of zoning, there is a separate chapter dedicated just to zoning.

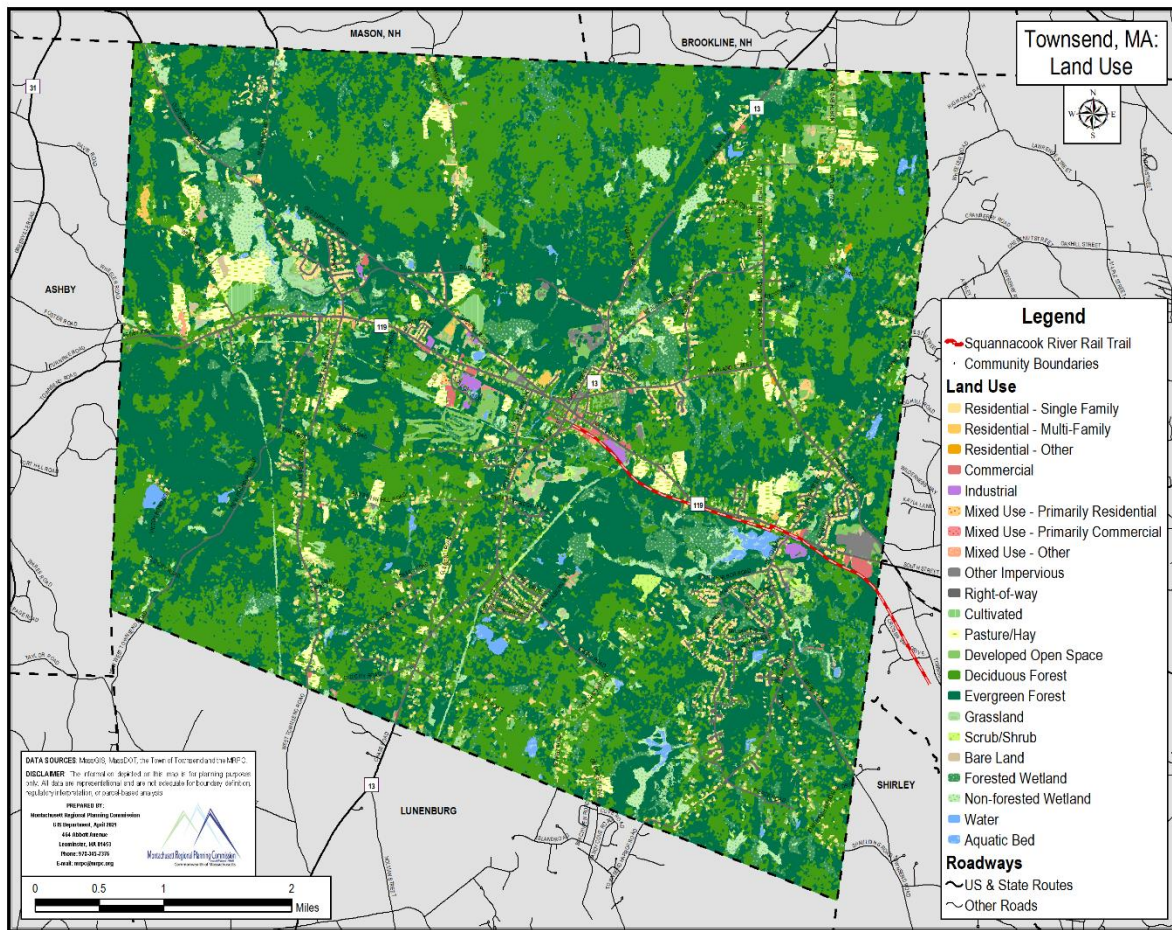
- Townsend should continue to look for ways to increase housing affordability that do not have major impacts on the environment or the local property tax rate. Making zoning laws more flexible should be an important part of that effort.
- Townsend should work to increase walkability around the population centers to increase overall livability, and to increase the area where affordable housing would be viable.
- Townsend needs to ensure that zoning laws that impact housing consider diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Land Use and Zoning

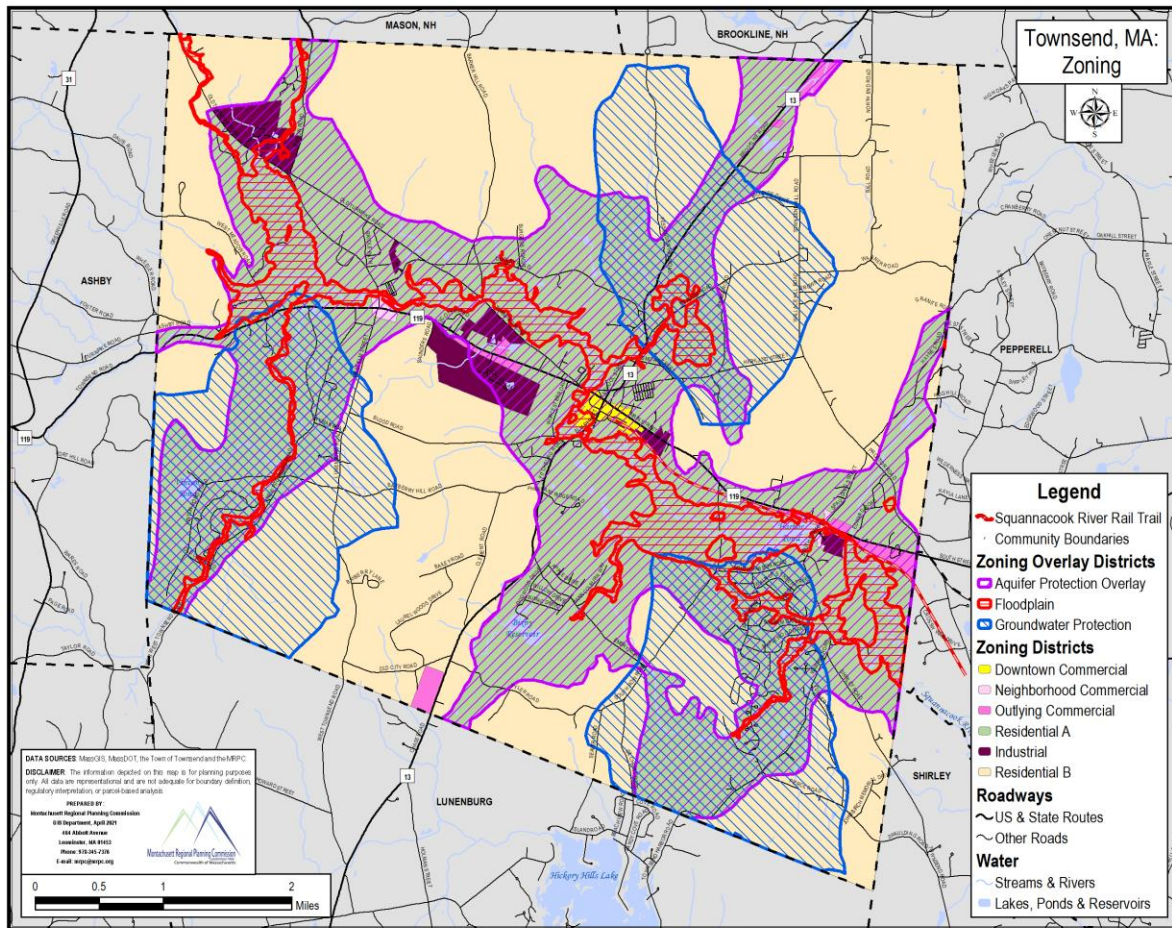
The purpose of this section is to identify regulatory opportunities and challenges for economic development and housing. Given the detailed assessment, this discussion is presented in a separate chapter rather than being integrated into various chapters. The changes in this chapter have implications for housing and economic development.

The land use maps show the vast amount of open space and forest land, features important to residents, as compared to the amount of land used, and available for housing. Maps 22 shows current Land Use and Map 23 current Zoning

Map 22: Land Use



Map 23: Zoning



The Townsend Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) is fairly typical of small, very-low-density towns in North-Central Massachusetts. It divides the town into five use districts. Over time, the town has adopted several overlay districts as well. The most notable is the Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA), which has the same use regulations as the Residential B (RB) District but reduces the allowable density of development. RA is a large district that extends almost the full length of Route 119 and along most of Townsend’s other major roads.

Townsend made extensive updates to the ZBL in 1987 and occasional amendments since that time including the adoption of Expedited Permitting under 43D. However,

Townsend's ZBL appears to still have a number of shortcomings simply because it is outdated.

The most important consideration for Townsend is conformance with the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A. Key changes in that law include defining, the term "as of right" is to identify activity that does not need zoning approval. These changes affect terms such as "multi-family housing" and "accessory dwelling unit". While they are still "as of right", they still need to adhere to Board of Health and other applicable requirements.

A significant change is that under the revisions to Chapter 40A, only a simple majority vote is needed for zoning amendments specifically to promote housing, at town meeting rather than a 2/3 majority vote.

Bylaws affecting the following are impacted by the change.

- Allowing multifamily housing or mixed-use development as of right or by special permit in "eligible locations".
- Allowing accessory dwelling units on the same lot as of right or by special permit
- Allowing open space residential development as of right.
- Increasing "permissible density of population or intensity of a particular use in a proposed multi-family or mixed-use development" by special permit".
- Allowing reduced parking requirements for residential or mixed-use development by special permit.
- Modification of regulations concerning the "bulk and height of structures, yard sizes, lot area, setbacks, open space, parking and building coverage requirements to allow for additional housing units beyond what would otherwise be permitted".

Townsend has already enacted bylaws impacted by the changes. To ensure compliance a review of these bylaws should be reviewed.

Several of these changes at the State level impact areas important to Townsend such as open space developments, multi-family and mixed-use developments, and accessory dwelling unit.

In Section 9 of the Zoning Act pertaining to special permits there are also changes. The language for granting a special permit to reduce parking requirements has changed to, “the public good would be served and [. . .] the area in which the development is located would not suffer a substantial adverse effect from such diminution in parking.” The granting of a special permit in Section 9 is reduced from a 2/3 vote of the permit granting authority to a simple majority vote for certain developments. One way this is affecting Townsend is:

- Mixed-use development “in centers of commercial activity within a municipality, including town and city centers, other commercial districts in cities and towns and rural village districts” if 10% of the housing is affordable.

As Townsend lacks a planner, assistance from MRPC would be helpful to the town to update the bylaws as needed to reflect these changes.

Land Use and Zoning Recommendations

The Master Plan Committee hired Fxm Associates, and one of its members, Judi Barrett a specialist in land use and zoning provided the following recommendations.

- Clarify the relationship between the Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA) District, the Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APD), and Groundwater Protection District (GPD)
 - It is very unusual for a town to have multiple water resource protection districts, and a district that limits residential density to a three-acre minimum lot requirement is rare in Massachusetts. The justification and need for all three districts should be revisited by the Town.
 - Usually, water resource protection districts reduce density by requiring a larger minimum lot area and reduce intensity of use by imposing a low maximum coverage ratio. In Townsend, it appears that only residential uses

are subjected to reduced density regulations while the minimum lot for commercial uses remains the same in or outside of a water resource zone.

- Determine if two districts are required.
- Define terms and uses. All of the uses referred to in the ZBL should be defined.
 - The ZBL would be much clearer and easier to follow if the existing outline or text-format sections of use regulations were replaced by a single Table of Uses.
- Review and revise parking requirements as off-street parking requirements are excessive.
 - Review and revise as of right some uses that currently require a special permit.
 - The ZBL defers to discretionary special permits in cases where a well-crafted site plan review bylaw could protect the Town's interests and send clearer signals to developers.
- Review and revise the Downtown Commercial (DC) District. Self-storage is a permitted use. The Town should consider whether this is the kind of use that belongs in a downtown commercial area.
- Review and revise Bed and breakfast and mixed use as they are allowed only by special permit in Townsend, yet these are the type of uses that would normally be encouraged (as of right) in a semi-rural town center.
- Review and revise multifamily dwellings (up to six units) permitting. Currently they are limited to buildings that existed some 30 years ago, and only by special permit. Typically, one would look to a downtown area as a good place for a mix of residential uses, including multifamily, but that is not the impression conveyed by Townsend's ZBL. Whether multifamily is even realistic in the downtown area is important to understand because the RA district overlays the entire town center.

The minimum lot area in this district is 15,000 sq. ft., which seems appropriate in a semi-rural downtown that does not have public sewer service. However, since the RA district overlays the downtown area, it appears that any dwelling would require a minimum of three acres per unit and eight acres per dwelling.¹² This type of density regulation runs counter to the purposes and function of a downtown and it should be revisited.

- Review and revise Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD)
 - Some basic business uses such as retail and restaurants are allowed by right *only* if located in a structure that existed in 1989. This needs to be revisited to encourage responsible development and fill the gaps with needed businesses in the town.
 - As with the DC district, Townsend limits multifamily and mixed-use buildings to a special permit. These kinds of uses are normally found in neighborhood-level business locations and they should be available as of right, subject to site plan review. The survey showed support for businesses such as antique stores, in home offices, small day care centers, bakeries, cafes, yoga studios, small stores, and florists to be located in neighborhoods.

- Review and revise the Outlying Commercial District (OCD)
 - The OCD is a general business district offering a wider range of uses than the other districts. Because the list of allowed uses is so broad, this district could evolve as a not-very-attractive collection of disparate uses – and uses that could easily conflict. The town needs to work with owners in the OCD to determine what types of integrated development is possible.

¹² Note that under Sec. 145-37, “apartment/multifamily” is limited to RA and RB, but “one to six dwelling units” is a special permit use in DCD and OCD. Since the RA district overlays both districts, the RA rules will apply and the inconsistent terminology is probably immaterial. However, this is a good example of inconsistent or conflicting provisions in the bylaw.

- An example of potentially confusing language can be found in this zone. The use regulations include “sale and rental of goods, merchandise and equipment” as an allowed use, but very similar language appears in the DCD and NCD: “*retail* sale and rental of goods, merchandise, and equipment” [emphasis added]. Does the Town intend for “sale and rental of goods, merchandise and equipment” to include wholesale in addition to retail?
 - In this district, a hotel is a permitted use *only* if it existed in 1970! All other hotels or motels require a special permit. The Town should consult with town Counsel to verify that the hotel provisions in OCD are not a violation of the uniformity clause under Chapter 40A, Section 5.
 - This district allows single-family dwellings as of right, but multifamily is prohibited. The policy justification is unclear.
 - The OCD area located in the southern part of town on Fitchburg Road appears to be the only nonresidential area that is not subject to the APD. Planned developments in this area need to be considered.
- Review and revise Industrial District (ID)
 - This district is the least restrictive zone in Townsend. It provides for a wide variety of commercial and industrial uses, and a concern similar to that noted for the OCD exists here, too: the potential for an incoherent development pattern with uses that do not complement each other well.
 - The land use terms should be updated and defined.
 - It appears that all ID-zoned land is in the APD but not the Groundwater Protection District (GPD). This is an example of unclear intentions in the ZBL because the objectives of the APD and GPD would presumably be the same.
- Review and revise Off-Street Parking
 - The minimum area requirement for an off-street parking space in Townsend is 200 square feet, which is excessive. It should be reduced to 162 (9' x 18').

Parking spaces at 200 sq. ft. per space contribute to water quality and stormwater management problems.

- Many of Townsend's minimum parking requirements are out of line with contemporary approaches to managing parking supply and designing attractive, safe commercial districts. For example, the Town requires retail uses to provide one space per 180 sq. ft. of sales floor area and at least 5 spaces per tenant. The typical retail standard is one space per 300 sq. ft. and less for very large retail developments. Also, business, or professional offices require a minimum of 5 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of floor area (essentially one space per 200 sq. ft.), but except for medical offices, the typical parking demand for professional offices is about one space per 300 sq. ft. and less for upper-story offices.
 - The ZBL does give the Planning Board authority to waive or reduce parking requirements on a case-by-case basis, and this is positive. However, if the ZBL's parking standards were updated, an applicant with a reasonable parking plan would not need a waiver.
- Review lots divided by District Boundaries
 - The ZBL places fairly restrictive limits on what can be done with a lot that falls within two zoning districts – presumably commercial or industrial and residential. Townsend limits the less restrictive use (say, commercial) to occupy only the commercially zoned portion of the lot. Many towns allow a less restrictive use to extend into the more restrictively zoned area by some distance in order to ensure that the commercial activity has a viable space to operate. An extension of 35 to 50 feet is fairly common. Of course, the *dimensional* rules of the more restrictive district would still apply.
 - Review and revise Site Plan Review
 - Townsend's site plan review (SPR) bylaw is a "site plan special permit," but SPR is not a special permit, and it should not be tied to a special permit

- process. For uses that require a special permit, reviewing the site plan should be taken up in the special permit process.
- Site plan review should be an administrative review process for as-of-right uses that might have a negative impact and therefore need a plan review mechanism prior to the issuance of a building permit. The purpose of site plan review is to ensure safe, efficient, and attractive development of new construction or expanded projects such as multifamily housing or commercial projects.
 - Review and revise bylaws related to housing and temporary accommodations
 - Townsend allows accessory apartments by special permit, but new or renewal units require an affordable housing restriction unless the unit will accommodate a member of the homeowner's family. There is a growing trend in Massachusetts to allow accessory dwellings as of right. Given the large lots that Townsend requires, perhaps moving to an as-of-right option should be considered. Accessory apartments do provide rental housing options in a fairly modest, inconspicuous way. An accessory dwelling also allows more flexibility with multi-generational properties.
 - A revocable special permit is a distinct disincentive to investing in construction of an accessory unit, this needs to be eliminated.
 - The Town's motel/hotel density standard, a maximum of 5 guest rooms per acre, is unrealistic. This is probative not only for a larger scale property, but even for a smaller scale bed and breakfast. Given the need for tourism accommodations, this needs to be revised.
 - A transfer-of-development bylaw with a sending-to-receiving ratio of only 1.2 is unrealistic.
 - Townsend currently limits multifamily dwellings to a maximum of six units and, in the RA district, multifamily development requires at least *three acres of lot area per unit*. This needs to be addressed as adequate workforce housing is a prerequisite today for successful economic development.

- It is unclear why the Town has both subdivision phasing and rate-of-development bylaws. The need for these restrictions should be evaluated against current development trends in Central Massachusetts.

Implementation

The Master Plan Committee realizes that a plan is only as good as its execution. To prevent the plan from existing only as document and to make it operational the Master Plan Committee suggest the following:

- A review of the recommendations by the appropriate elected officials, boards, committees, department heads, and other stakeholders to prioritize the recommendations and assign owners.

While the Master Plan Committee has listed the recommendations along with the responsible entity in Townsend's government and potential collaborators, an operational plan needs to be established with actual assignments given to board members, department staff, or committee members.

- Quarterly reviews of recommendations along with status updates from the appropriate entities.

Reviews should occur at the applicable department head or board/committee meeting.

- A Master Plan Review Committee, separate from the internal community of department heads, boards, and commissions, should be established to meet at least twice per year to assess the progress and update the document and implementation table as necessary.

The Master Plan Committee believes that taking this approach will ensure that recommendations outlined, and the priorities of the Town are considered and acted on at Town Meeting if required and at the department or board/committee as appropriate.

Table 11: Implementation Table

Focus Area	Responsible Entity	Collaborating Entity(ies)
Services and Facilities Recommendations		
Townsend needs to develop policies and practices that ensure community members feel that the Board of Selectmen are approachable and easy to work with, and further that community members believe the members are working in the best the best interest of the Town as a whole.	Board of Selectman	MRPC, MMA
The Board of Selectmen working through the Town Administrator should integrate customer service reviews into ongoing employee evaluations to foster a community-oriented approach to delivering town services.	Board of Selectman	Town Administrator, Department Heads
To preserve community facilities and prolong their use Townsend need to develop and fund a maintenance plan.	Board of Selectman	Department Heads
Water Recommendations		
Ensure potential developments impacting water capacity are reviewed by town/Conservation Commission, Planning Board and the Board Appeals during projects review that might have an impact on the groundwater resources	Water Department	Planning Board Zoning Board of Appeals
Continue work on the Rt. 119 Water Main Replacement Project	Water Department	
Create Well Cleaning and Development plan for all the water department wells	Water Department	
Maintain regular sampling and testing schedule of all our water sources for PFAS	Water Department	
Continue the process to permit a new source (Main St. Well) planned for Spring 2022 to improve water capacity	Water Department	
Plan for the new Harbor Trace Treatment Plant to include the Harbor Trace and the two Witches Brook Wells	Water Department	

Focus Area	Responsible Entity	Collaborating Entity(ies)
Increase water volume/pressure Lunenburg Road	Water	Fire Department
Tap additional water sources (Greenville and Mason Roads) running to the Canal Street bridge and connecting to Main Street	Water	Highway Department
Climate Adaptation Recommendations		
Implement the recommendations in the Townsend 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan listed.	Planning Board	Energy Committee, Department Heads, Local and Regional Nonprofits
The Town should encourage both solar and wind power in town. This should take the form of a supportive regulator environment, the installation of solar panels on town buildings where feasible, and/or exploring programs such as solar co-ops, entering into a Power Purchase Agreement or similar efforts to promote a cleaner approach to energy.	Planning Board	Energy Committee
The Town should pursue grants to install electric charging stations for both environment and economic development reasons.	Planning Board	Energy Committee, Townsend Business Association (TBA) , Squannacook Greenways
The Town should maintain and support the energy committee as they seek out new opportunities to save money and reduce the town's carbon footprint.	Board of Selectmen	
Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations		
The Town should consider passing the Community Preservation Act.	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen	Historic Committee Historic Society
The Town should establish a Historical Commission.	Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting	
The Town should look for cost-effective ways to promote its historic resources.	Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting	TBA, Historic Society, MA Tourism
Recreation and Open Space Recommendations		

Focus Area	Responsible Entity	Collaborating Entity(ies)
Encourage balanced land use consistent with New England character through zoning and development review that is sensitive to wildlife corridors, cyclical review of zoning districts to ensure land use suitability, and preservation of agricultural resources.	Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals	MRPC
Promote business development in a manner consistent with protecting water supplies and preserving the town's character.	Planning Board, Conservation Committee	Townsend Business Association, Committee of Businesses
Protect water supply and infrastructure through careful and comprehensive land use planning, by strengthening protections for wellheads and the Aquifer Protection Overlay District.	Water Department, Conservation, Planning Board	Nashua River Watershed Association
Promote open space housing that is consistent with Townsend's rural character, compact villages, and open space preservation goals.	Planning Board, Housing Authority	Committee of Community Members and Business
Develop a map of recreational areas and natural resources, and state supported improvements to the trail system with linkages.	Planning Board, Conservation Committee	Land Trust, MRPC
Design recreation areas for multiple forms of recreation potentially including skateboarding, hunting, biking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and equine activities.	Recreation Commission, Parks and Cemetary	Committee of Community Members and Non Profits involved in recreation Planning Board Town Properties Committee
Expand the Recreation Department.	Board of Selectmen, Recreation Commission	
Extend the rail trail to West Townsend.	Board of Selectmen (Town Meeting Article)	Squannacook Greenways
Economic Development Recommendations		

Focus Area	Responsible Entity	Collaborating Entity(ies)
The Town should hire a town planner or economic development coordinator.	Board of Selectmen (Budget Line Item)	
The town needs to collaborate with the small business community and non-profits to facilitate discussion and agreement on projects and exploit the collective talents of members of these entities to benefit the town.	Board of Selectmen, Planning Board	Townsend Business Association / Committee of Businesses
The Town needs to capitalize on the Indian Hill project in Groton.	Board of Selectmen, Planning Board	Townsend Business Association / Committee of Businesses
The Town should enact the Community Preservation Act.	Board of Selectmen, Planning Board (Town Meeting Article)	Conservation Commission, Historic Society, Non-profits, Recreation Commission
The Town should look for cost-effective ways to promote tourism.	Board of Selectmen	Townsend Business Association
The Town needs to be business and developer friendly by evaluating and amend zoning bylaws to promote business activity and tourism and offering support through the building department to facilitate a streamlined permitting process	Planning Board	Townend Business Association / Committee of Individual Businesses, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
The Town needs to evaluate its current open space and devise a plan that will encourage business uses consistent with the rural character and needs of the town	Board of Selectmen, Conservation, Planning Board	Land Trust, MRPC, Townsend Business Association
The Town needs to bring together groups of stakeholders to determine its housing strategy that promotes economic development.	Housing Authority	MRPC
The Towns needs to develop bylaws that support businesses while at the same time support the rural nature of the community and protecting the environment.	Planning Board	Zoning Board of Appelas, Townsend Business Association
Transportation and Circulation Recommendations		

Focus Area	Responsible Entity	Collaborating Entity(ies)
The town of Townsend should seek out opportunities such as Complete Streets to increase pedestrian and bicycle friendliness of its town roads.	Board of Selectmen	Police, Squanncook Greenways, Recreation, Senior Center
The Town should support grant opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle friendliness with engineering studies similar to the Kittleson & Associates study, but covering the whole town.	Board of Selectmen	Police, Squanncook Greenways, Recreation, Senior Center
The town of Townsend should continue to support Squannacook Greenways in its work to build the Squannacook River Rail Trail, including building a sidewalk between South Road and Harbor Church to support the section presently under construction.	Board of Selectmen	
The town of Townsend should continue to look for ways to improve the drivability of its town roads.	Board of Selectmen	Highway Department
The Town should consider the banning of through trucking on residential town roads that are heavily used for through trucking, as trucking impacts safety in many locations.	Board of Selectmen	Police, Highway Department, MRPC
The Town should look for private companies that might be interested in providing van service.	Board of Selectmen	
The Town should promote the need for ridesharing services as a way to entice gig-workers to see Townsend as a viable stop for and develop a local ridesharing hub.	Board of Selectmen	
Housing Recommendations		
Townsend should continue to look for ways to increase housing affordability that do not have major impacts on the environment or the local property tax rate. Making zoning laws more flexible should be an important part of that effort.	Housing Authority, Planning Board	

Focus Area	Responsible Entity	Collaborating Entity(ies)
Townsend should work to increase walkability around the population centers to increase overall livability, and to increase the area where affordable housing would be viable.	Planning Board	Police
Townsend needs to ensure that zoning laws that impact housing consider diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Planning Board	
Land Use and Zoning Recommendations		
Clarify the relationship between the Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA) District, the Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APD), and Groundwater Protection District (GPD)	Planning Board, Conservation, Water Department	
Define terms and uses. All of the uses referred to in the Zoning Bylaw should be defined.	Planning Board	
Review and revise the Downtown Commercial (DC) District.	Planning Board	
Review and revise Bed and breakfast and mixed use as they are allowed only by special permit.	Planning Board	
Review and revise multifamily dwellings (up to six units) permitting.	Planning Board	
Review and revise Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD)	Planning Board	
Review and revise the Outlying Commercial District (OCD)	Planning Board	
Review and revise Industrial District (ID)	Planning Board	
Review and revise Off-Street Parking	Planning Board	
Review lots divided by District Boundaries	Planning Board	
Review and revise Site Plan Review	Planning Board	
Review and revise bylaws related to housing and temporary accommodations to include motel/hotel density standards, transfer of development, multifamily units, and accessory apartments.	Planning Board	
Review the need for both subdivision phasing and rate-of-development bylaws.	Planning Board	

Appendix

Appendix 1: Survey Results

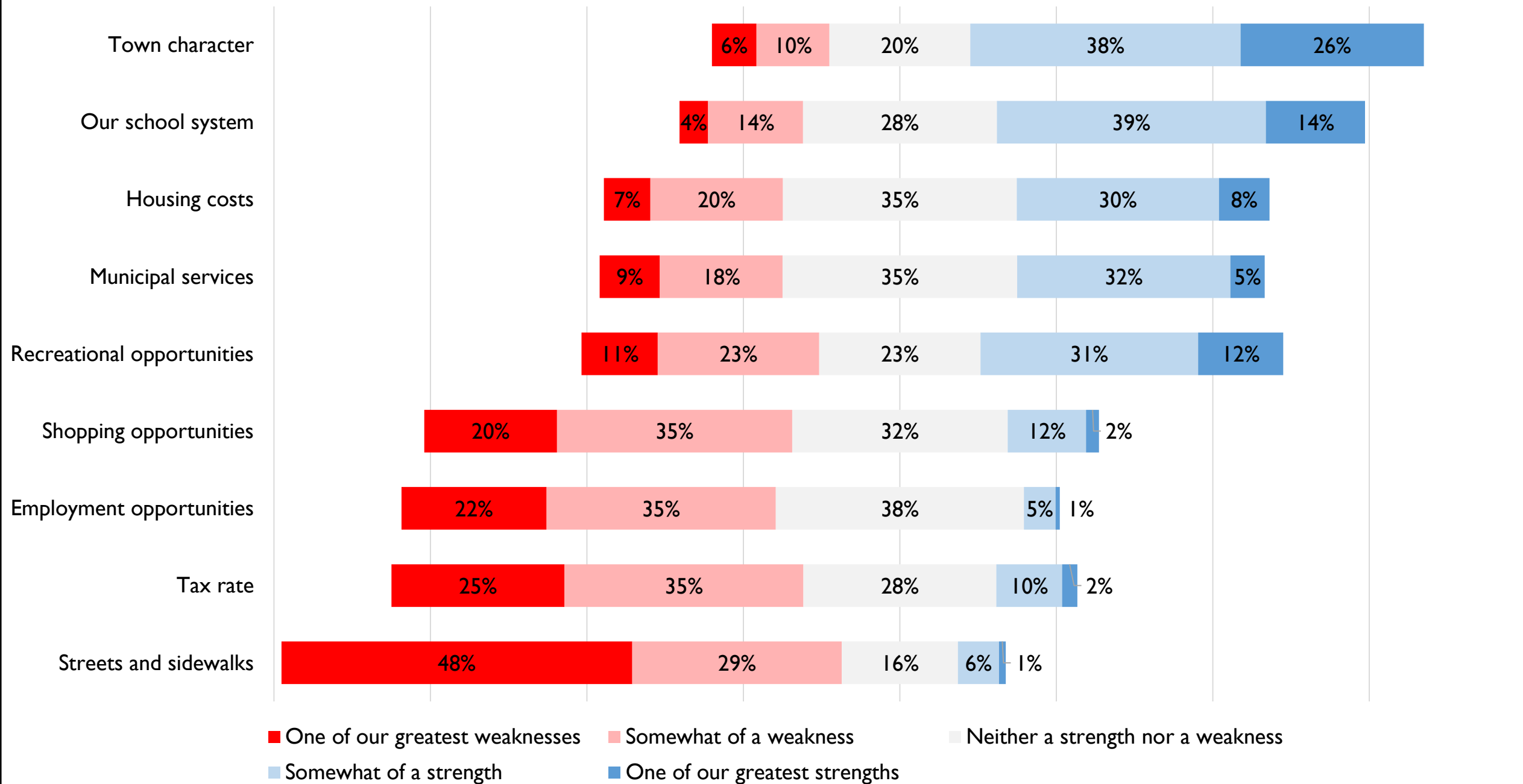
Q1. In a few words, what is the best thing about living in Townsend?

rural character Country life country Country setting much near thing living Townsend access
open areas used wildlife common hall atmosphere location close rural setting events
activities great excellent feel lots open space library nature country feel
Small woods Small town feel state forest rural
neighborhood town friendly people community friendly
Small
people great library town community atmosphere
living kids quiet Rural area nice family forests find land Affordable
Townsend caring community sense community cities love band concerts good
peaceful country living many best thing living recreation nothing Conservation land school
still life New England safe

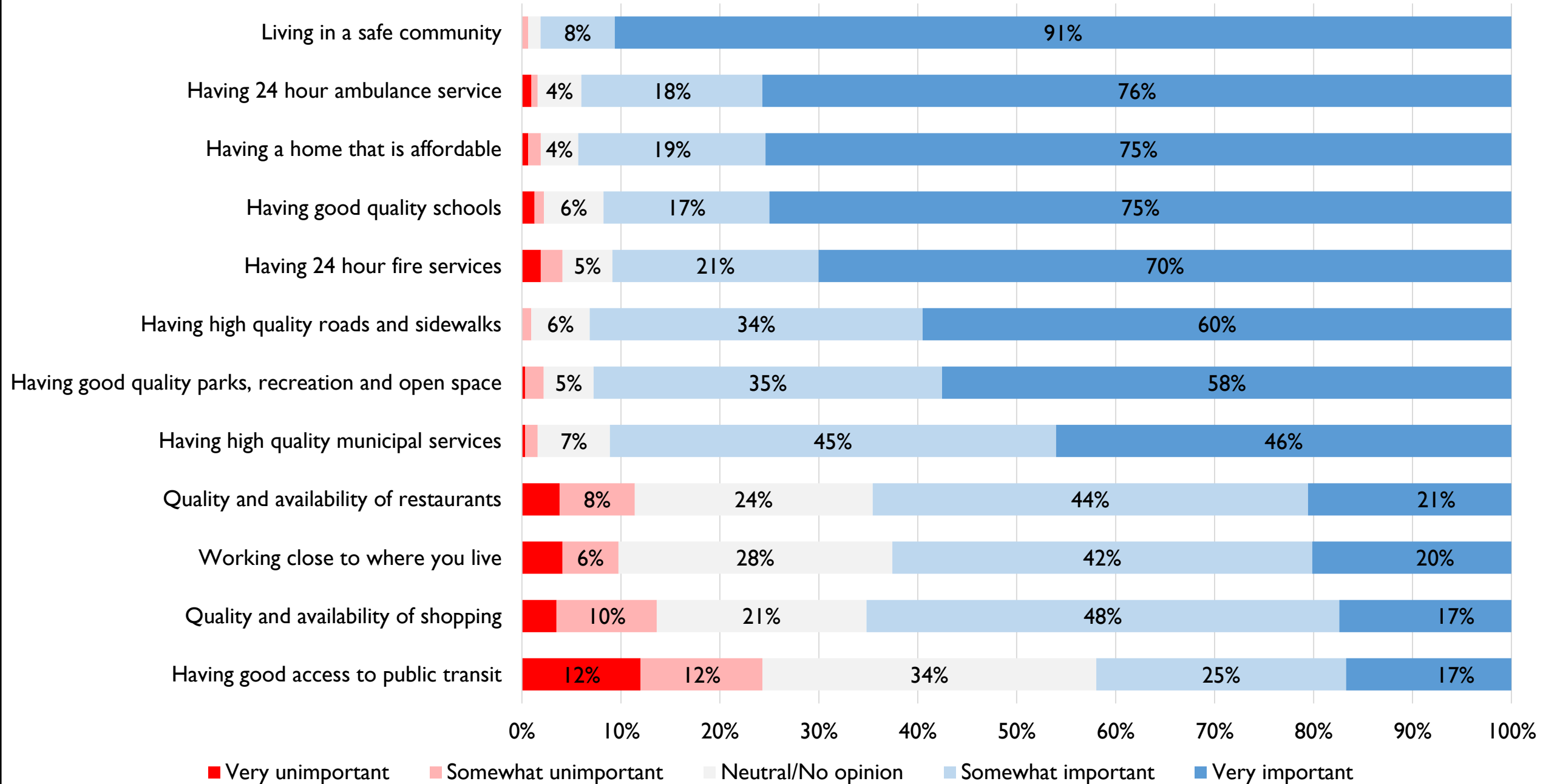
Q2. In a few words, what would you change here in town?

Traffic town
light Also repair front administrator local control fix Lower different etc land see Add
bring Rt Less Bring businesses school Selectmen center intersection new jobs
Road conditions love see restaurants love shopping replace high school
industry town government Townsend places old buildings nice taxes
take people keep businesses dangerous roads events
town things need upkeep Better go sidewalks times
make store small well small businesses Town meeting change
public transportation safe great politics live traffic town officials better roads improve roads
much around improve year housing d Fix roads think feel put town hall continue area use
many way drive lot Stop allowed

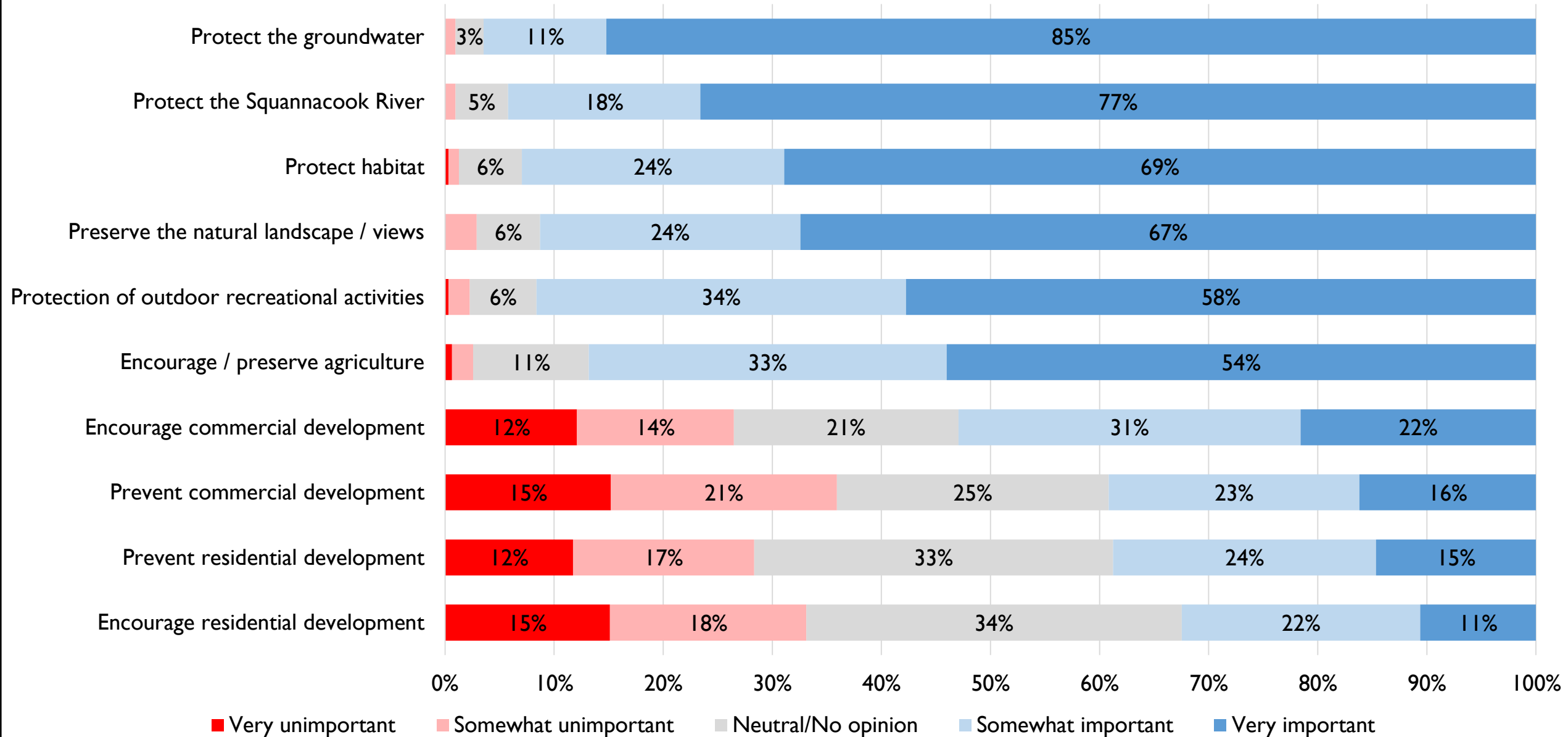
Q3. How would you currently rate the following in Townsend?



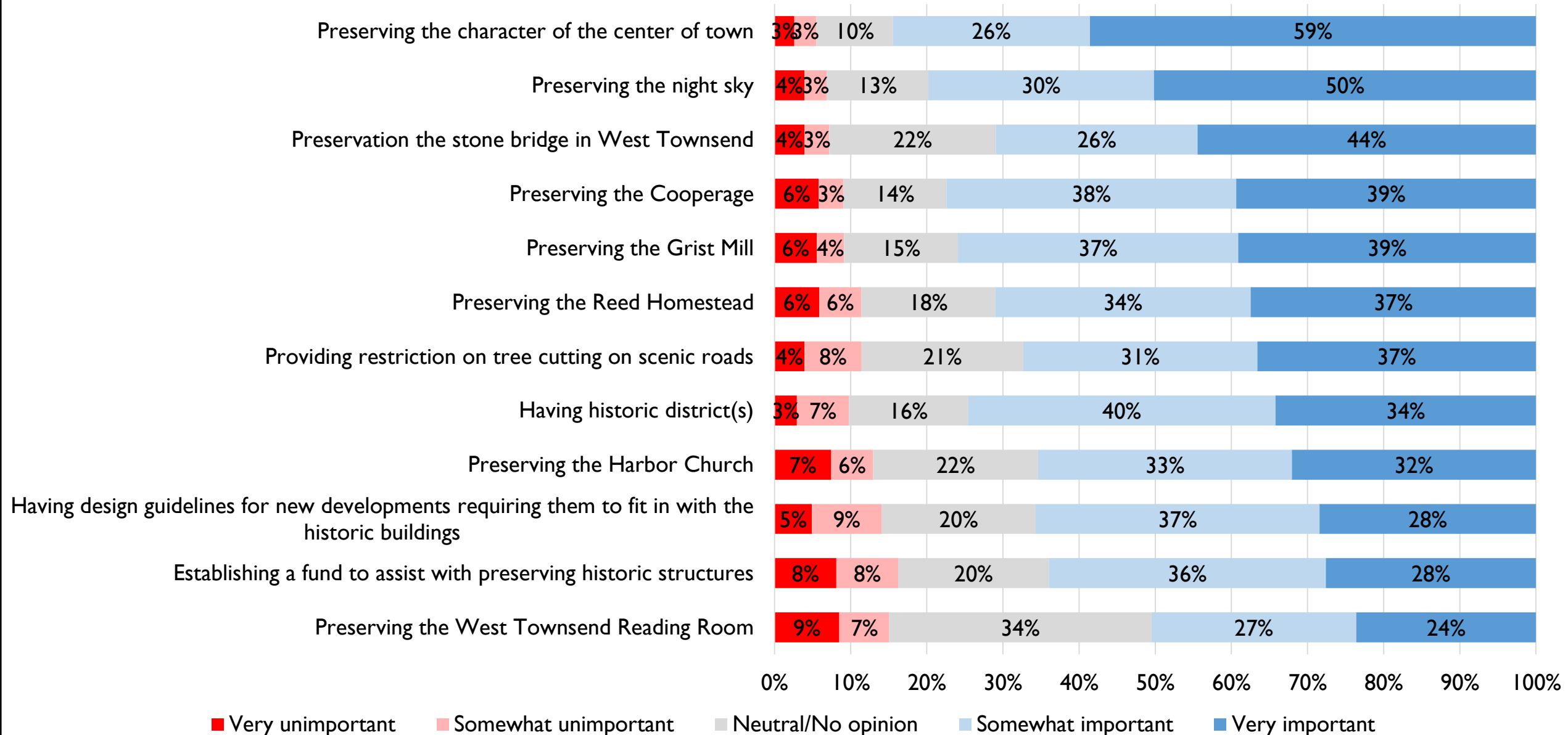
Q4. How important do you consider each of the following?



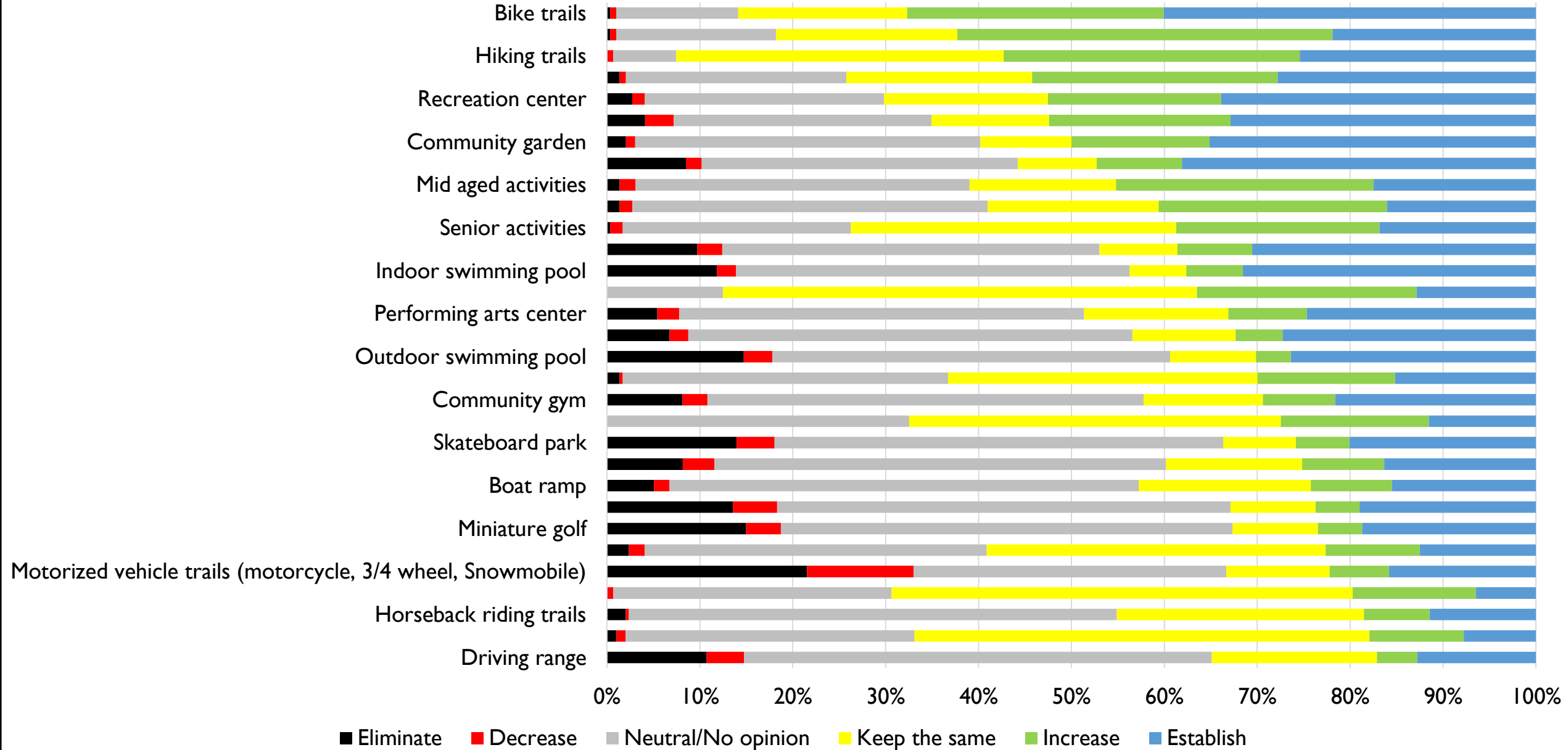
Q5. How do you rate the importance of each of the following?



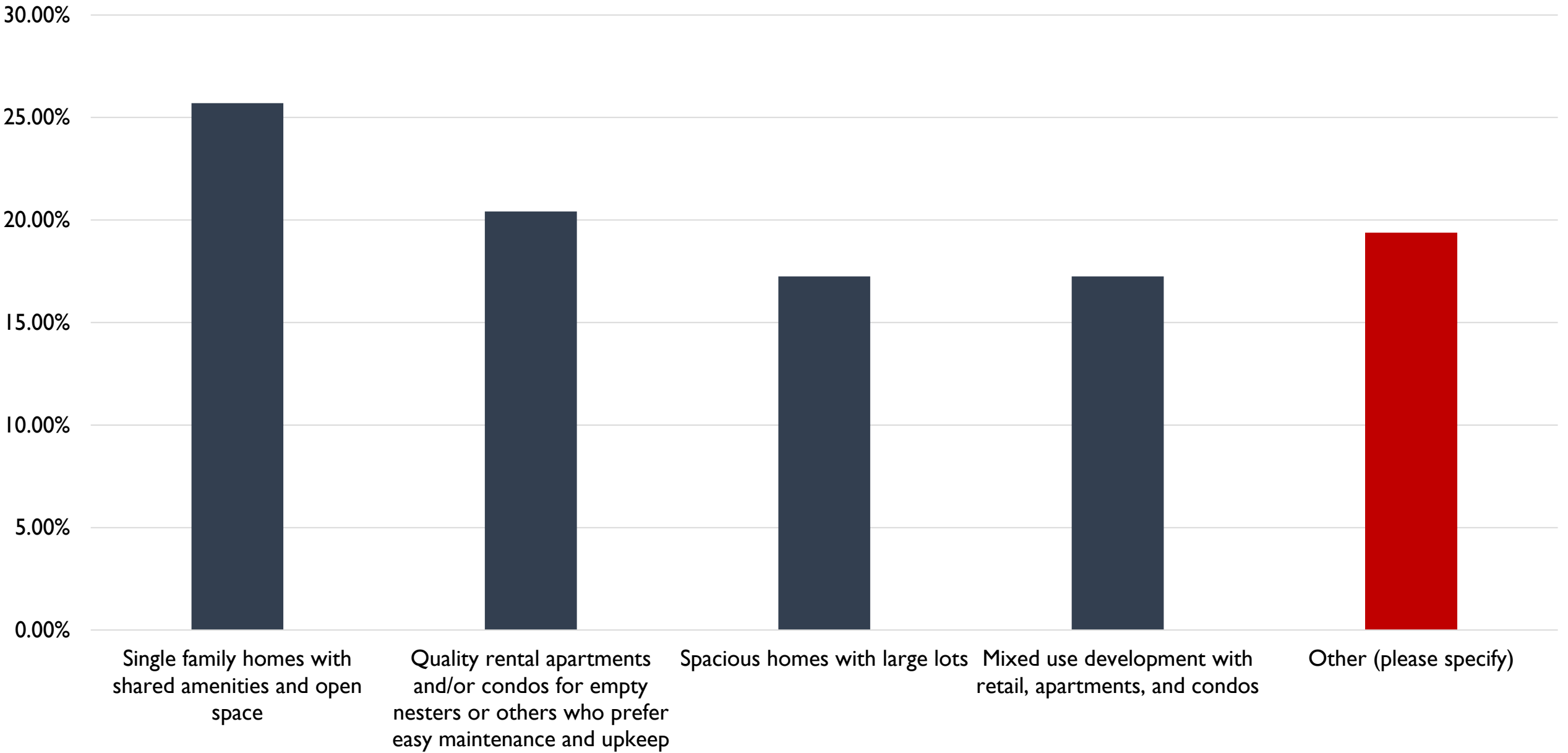
Q6. How do you rate the importance of each of the following to Townsend?



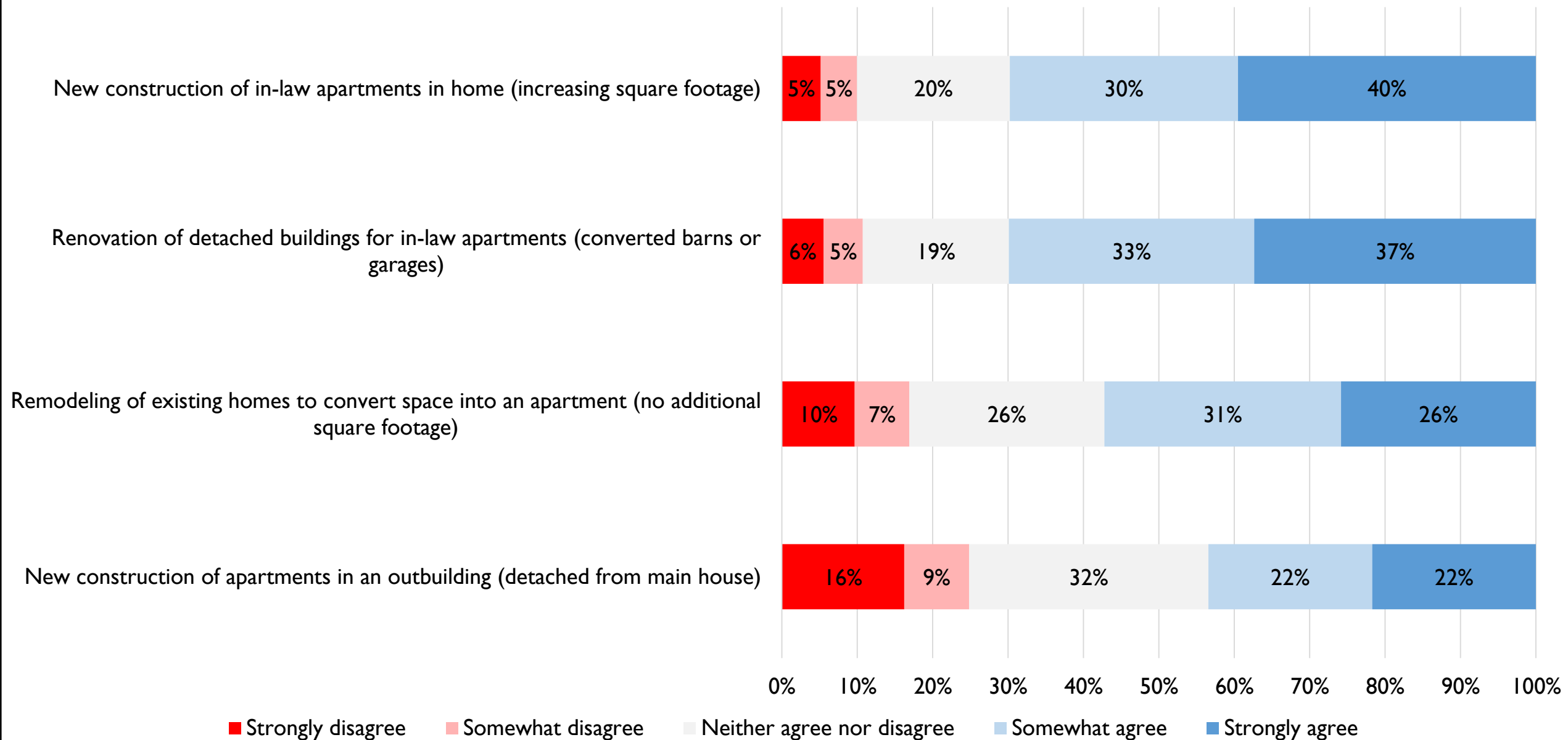
Q7. In terms of recreation, tell us if Townsend needs to establish, increase, decrease, or eliminate any of the following.



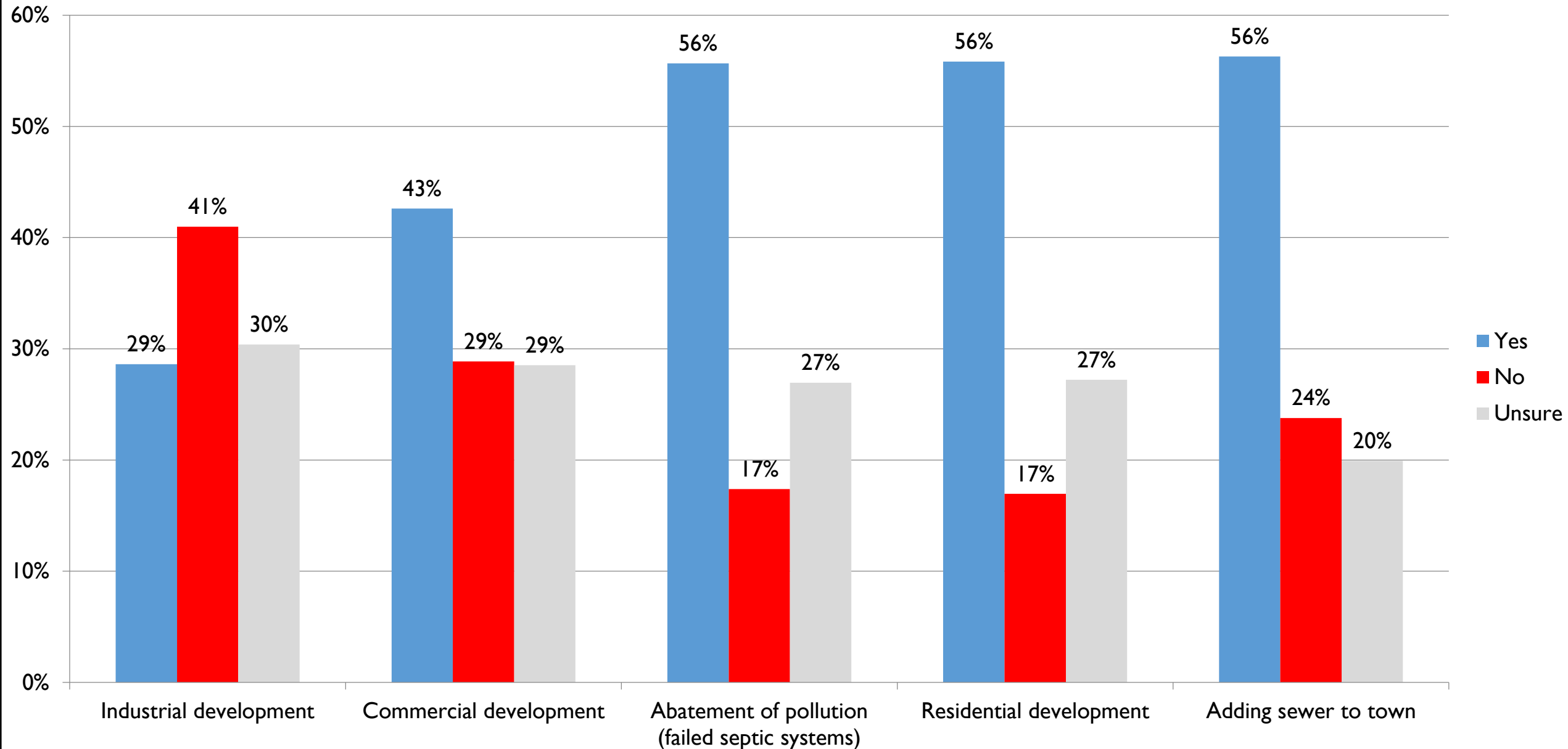
Q8. If you could plan the next subdivision in town, what would you like to see developed?



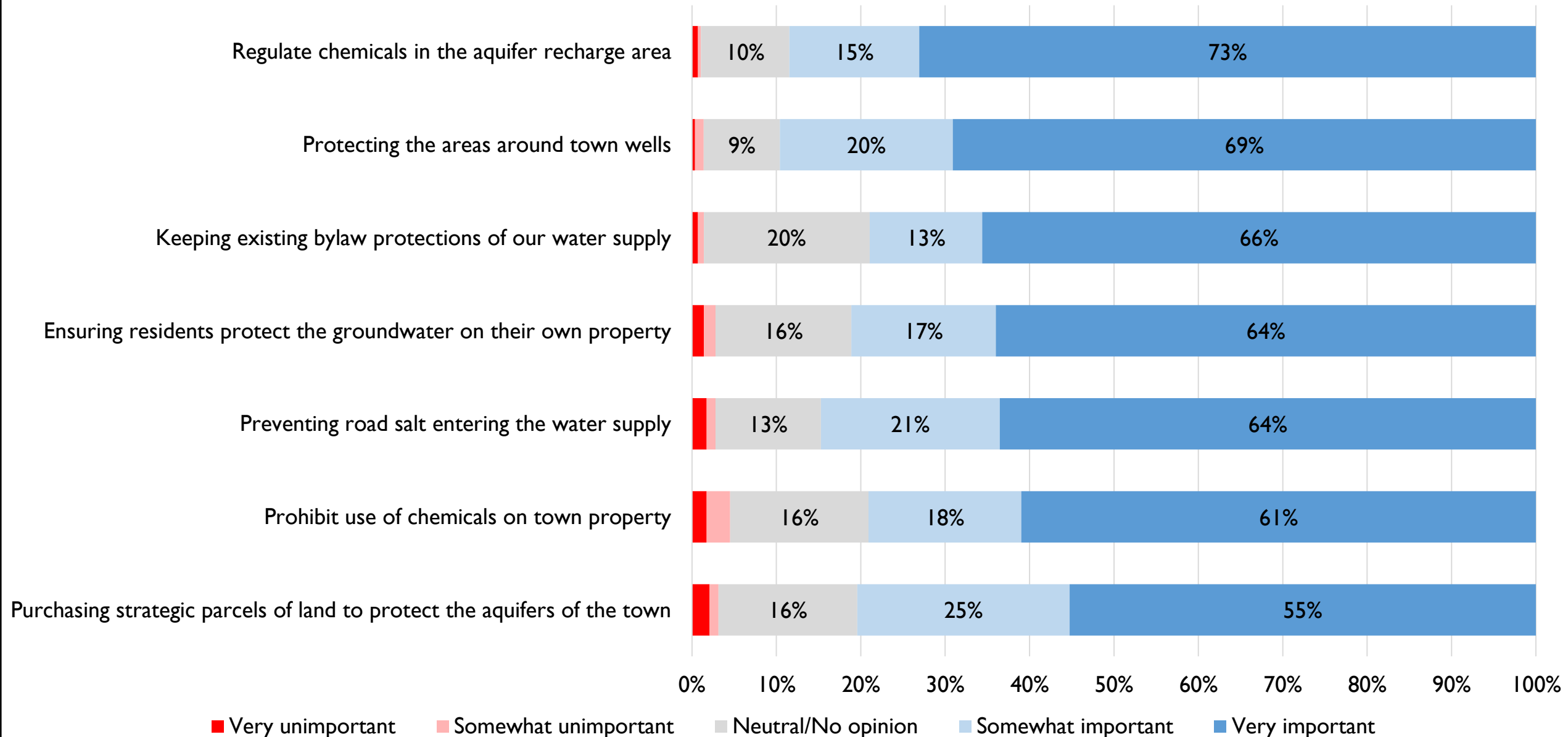
Q9. In your opinion, does Townsend need to support zoning to allow the following?



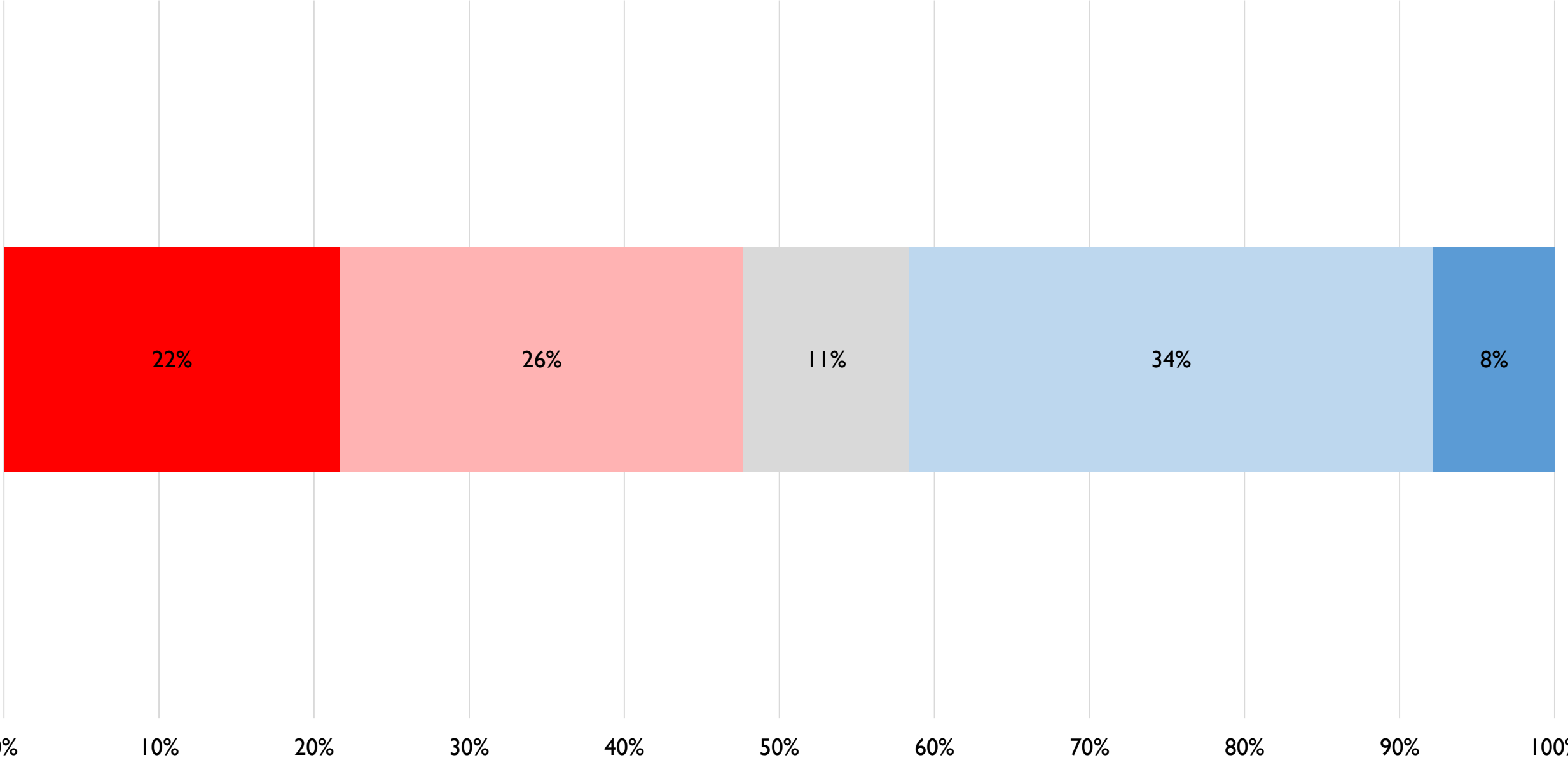
Q10. Would you be in favor of expanding the water systems for the following uses?



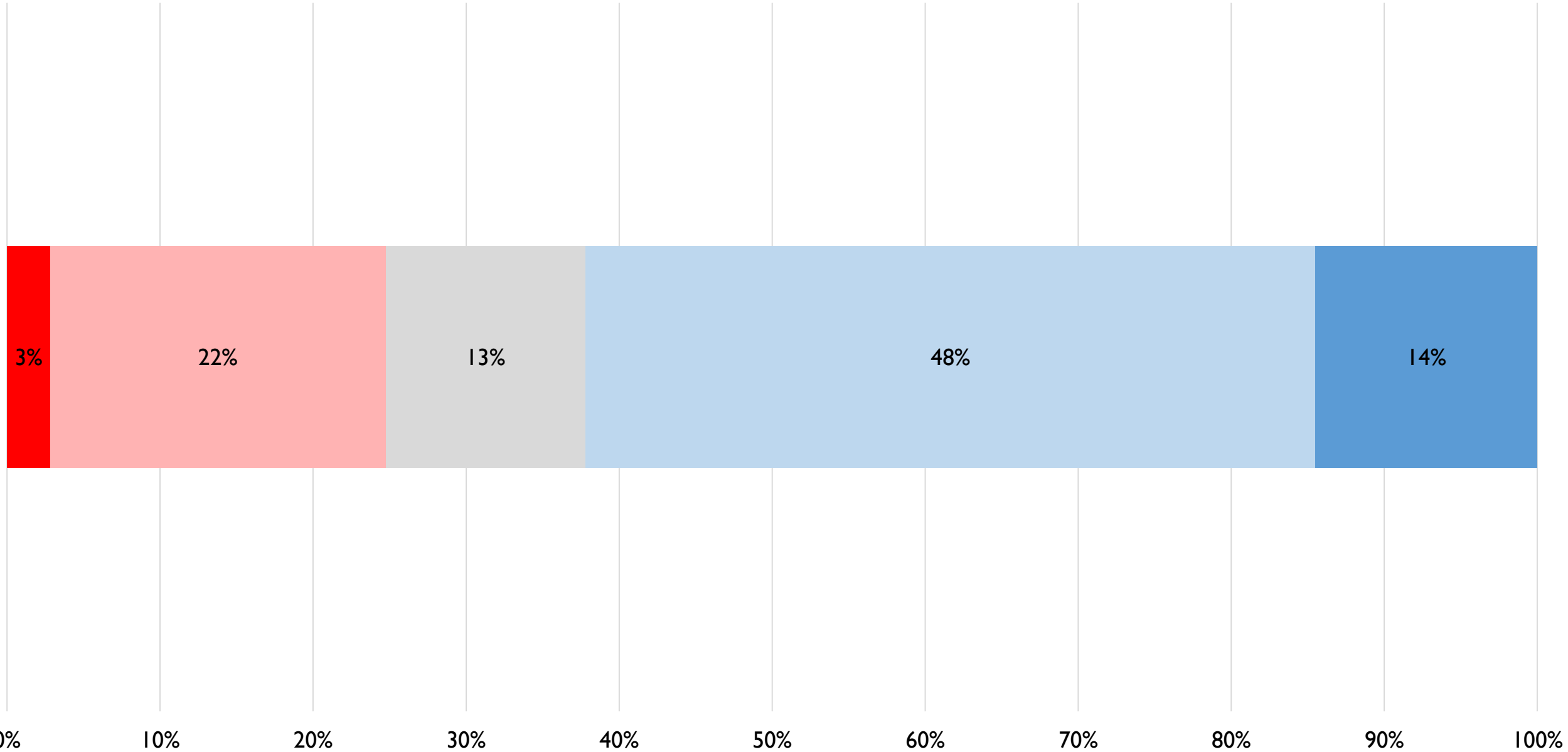
Q11. How do you rate the importance of each of the following to Townsend?



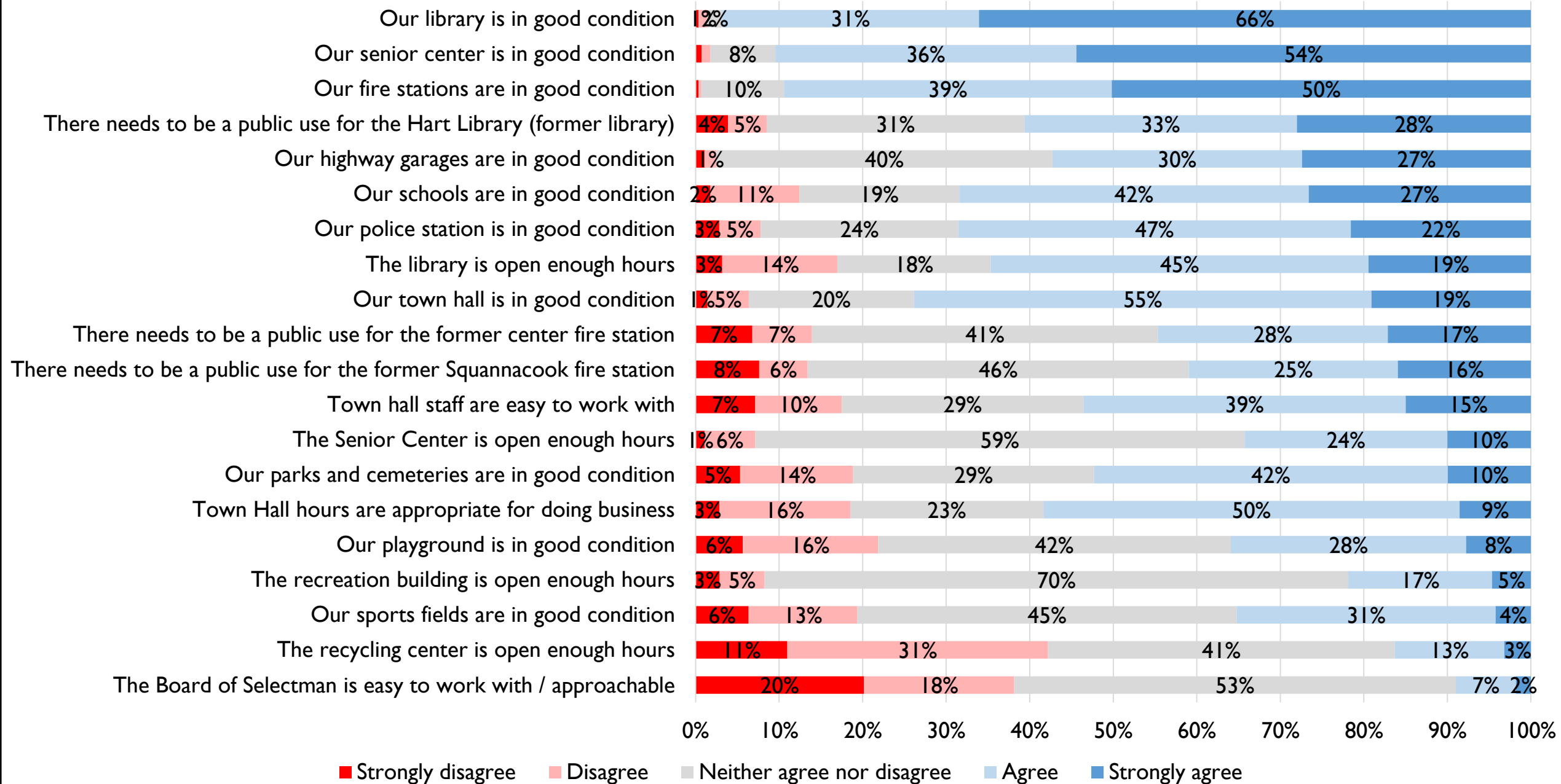
Q12. How satisfied are you with your internet access in Townsend?



Q13. How satisfied are you with your cellphone coverage in Townsend?

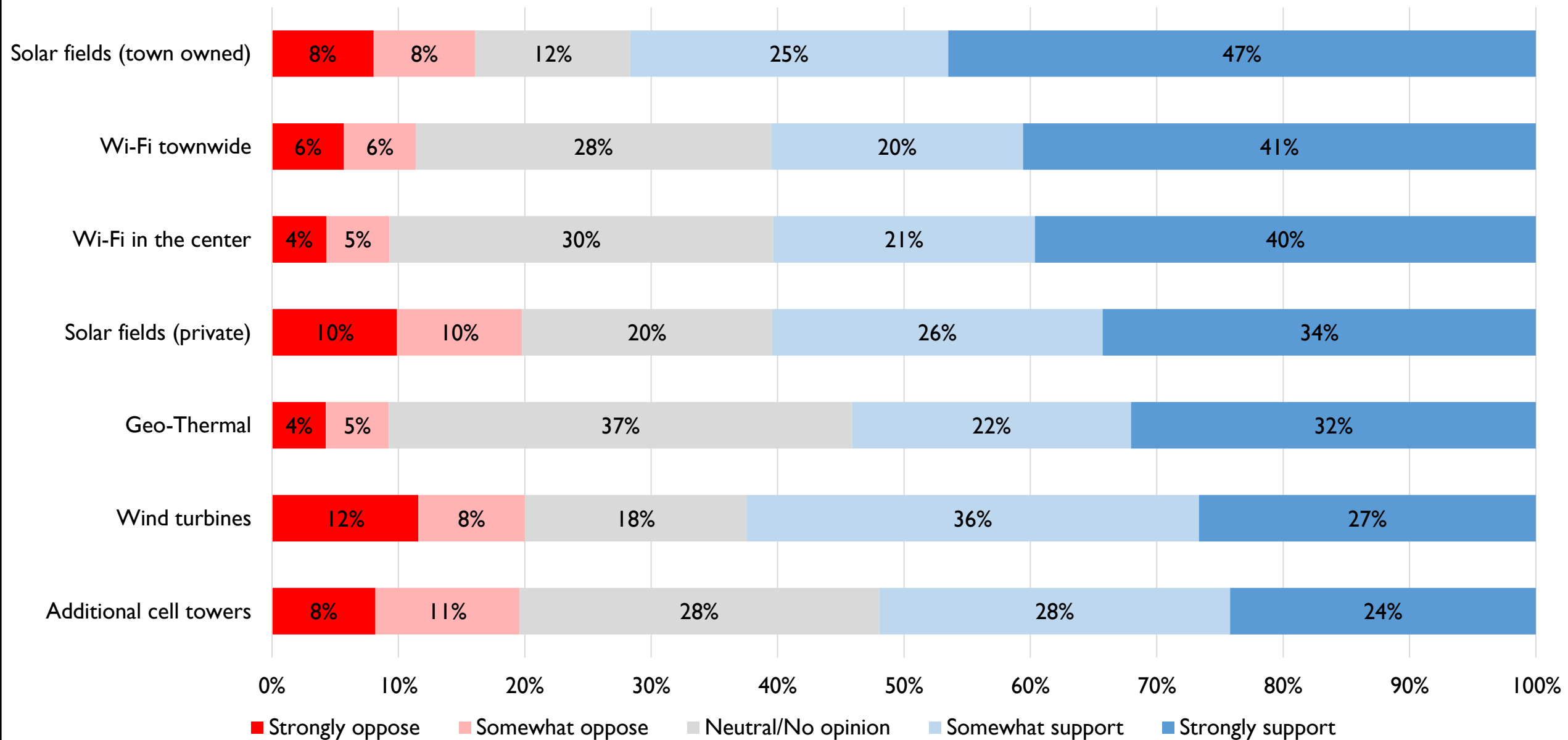


Q14. Tell us your opinion on the following statements

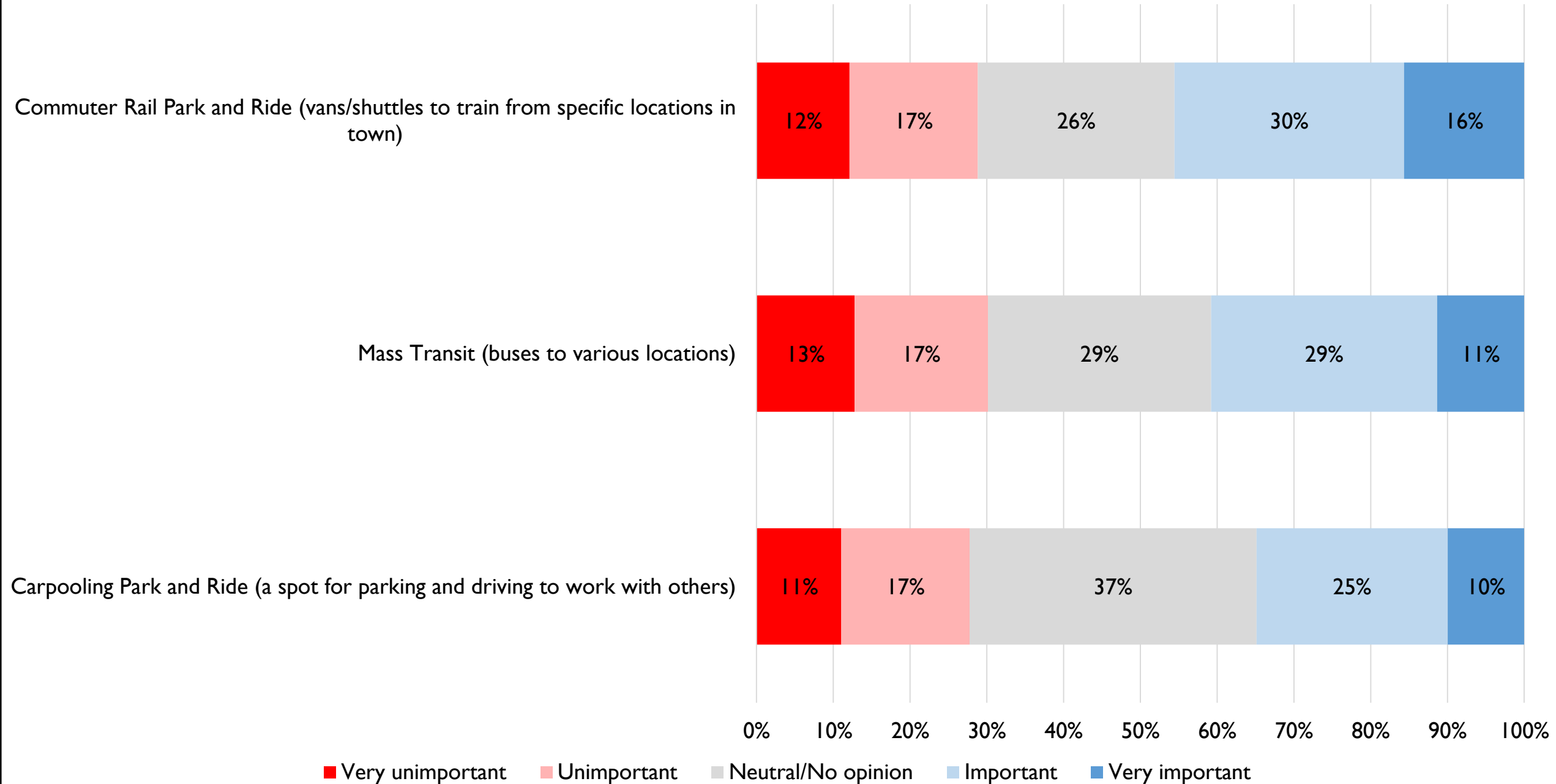


■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly agree

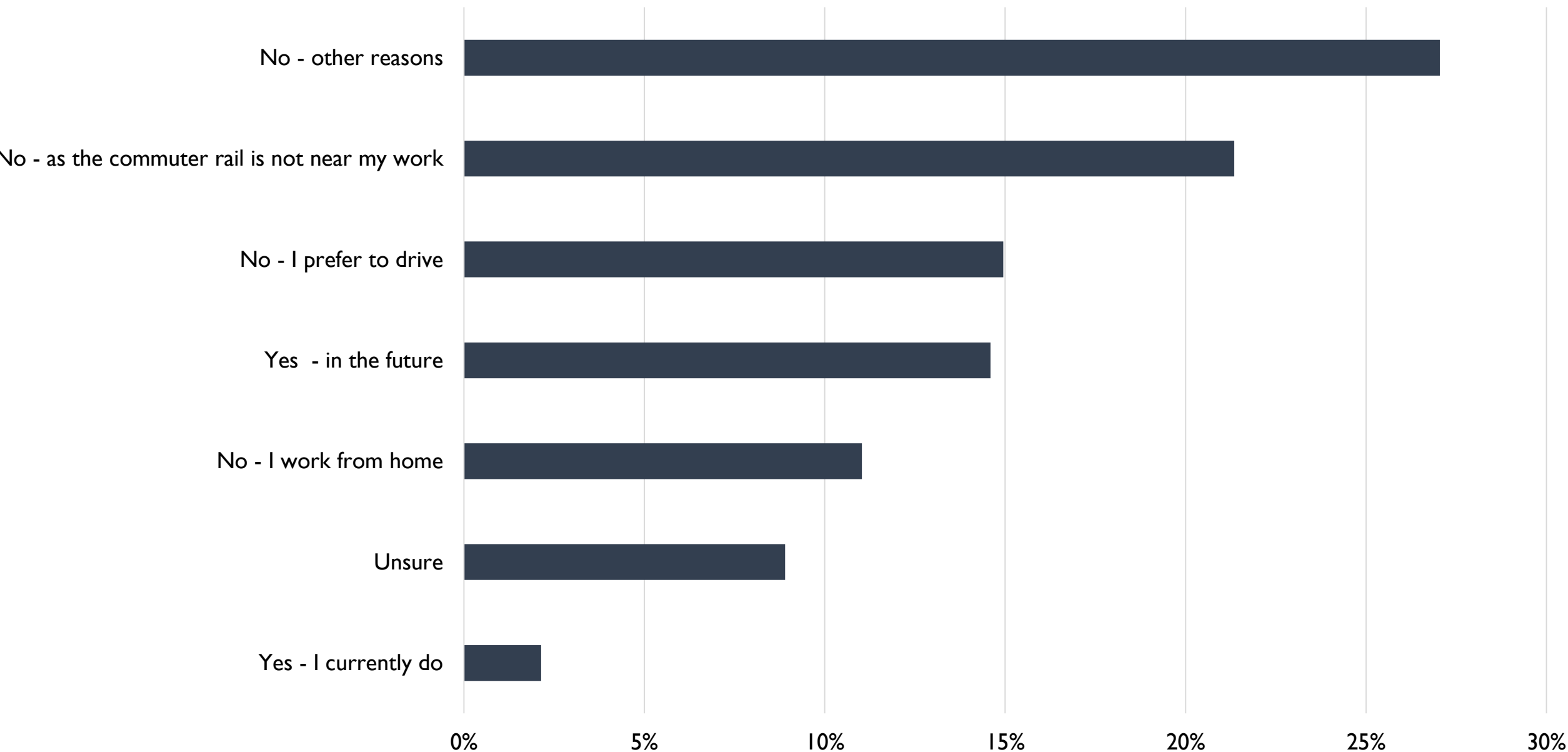
Q15. Do you support having any of the following in Townsend?



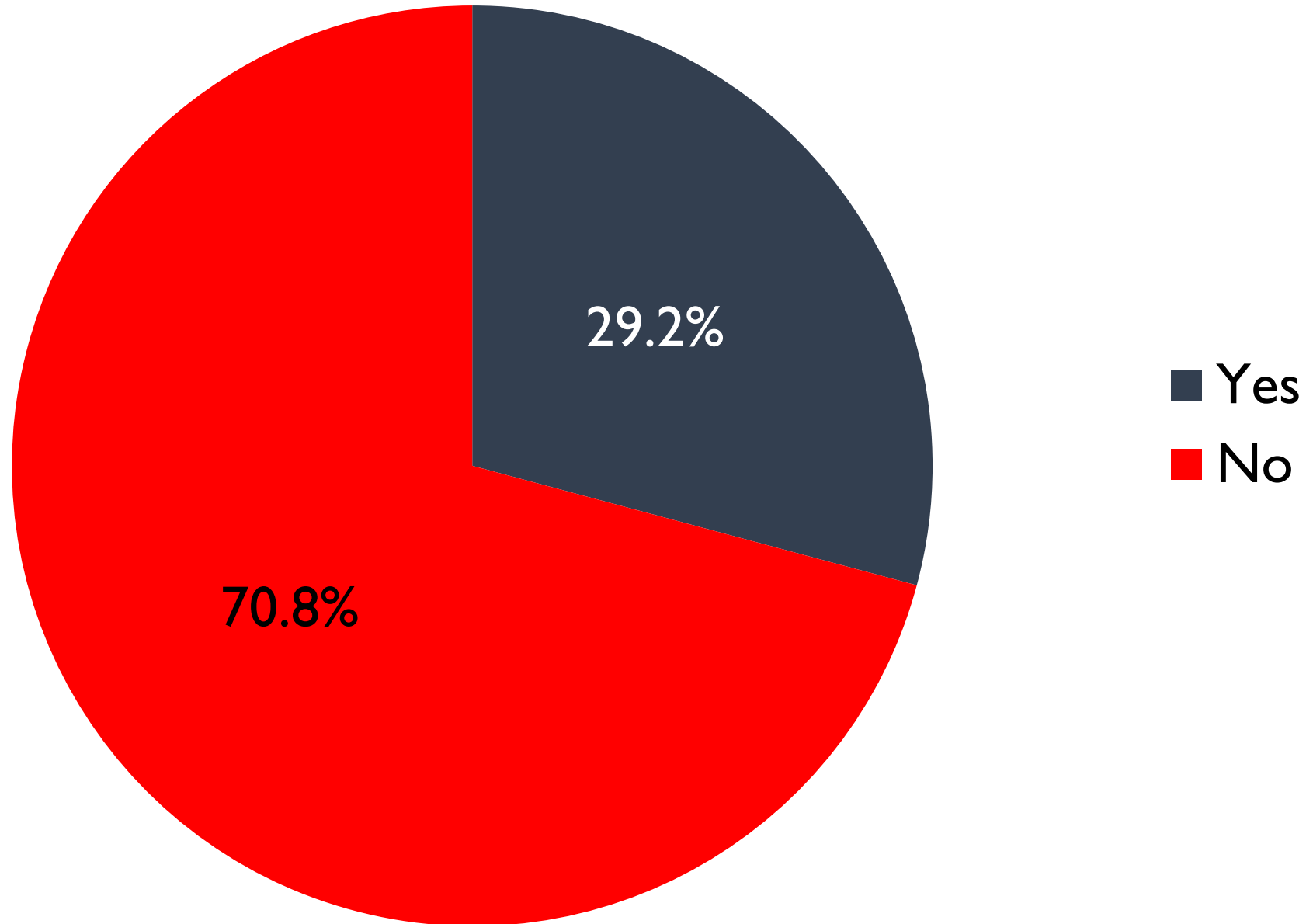
Q16. How important do you consider the following?



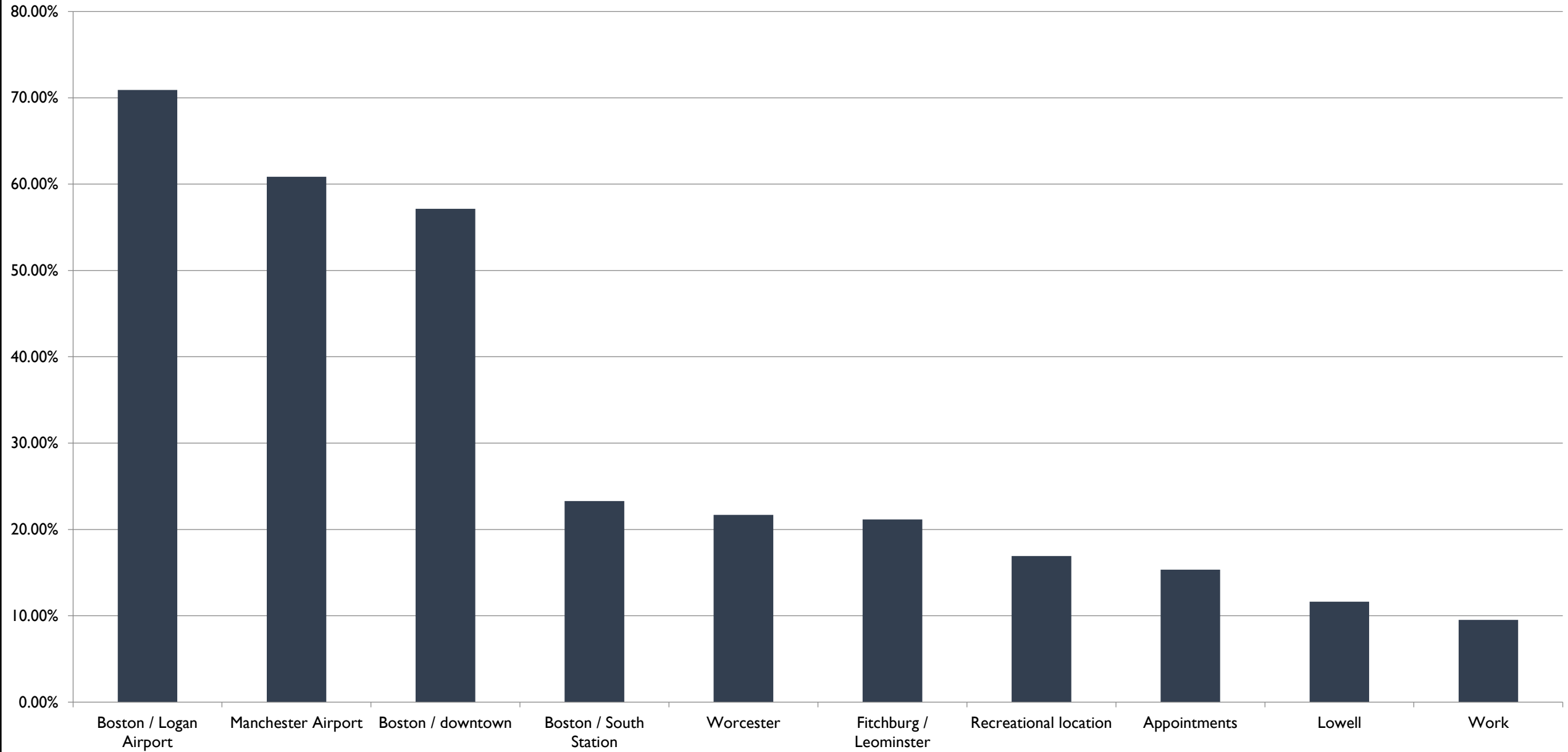
Q17. Would you be interested in using the commuter rail to get to work?



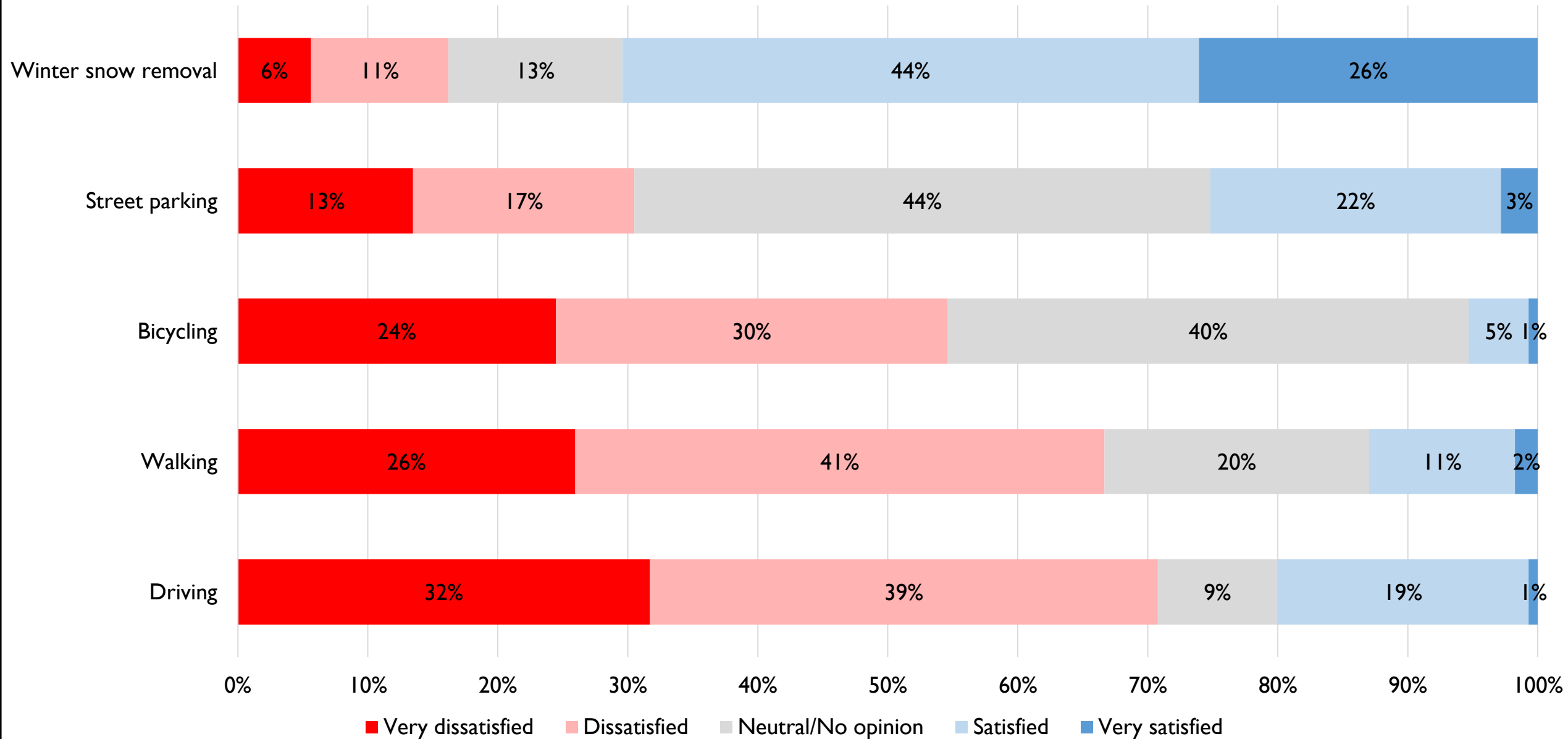
Q19. Would you be interested in bus/van service to that station?



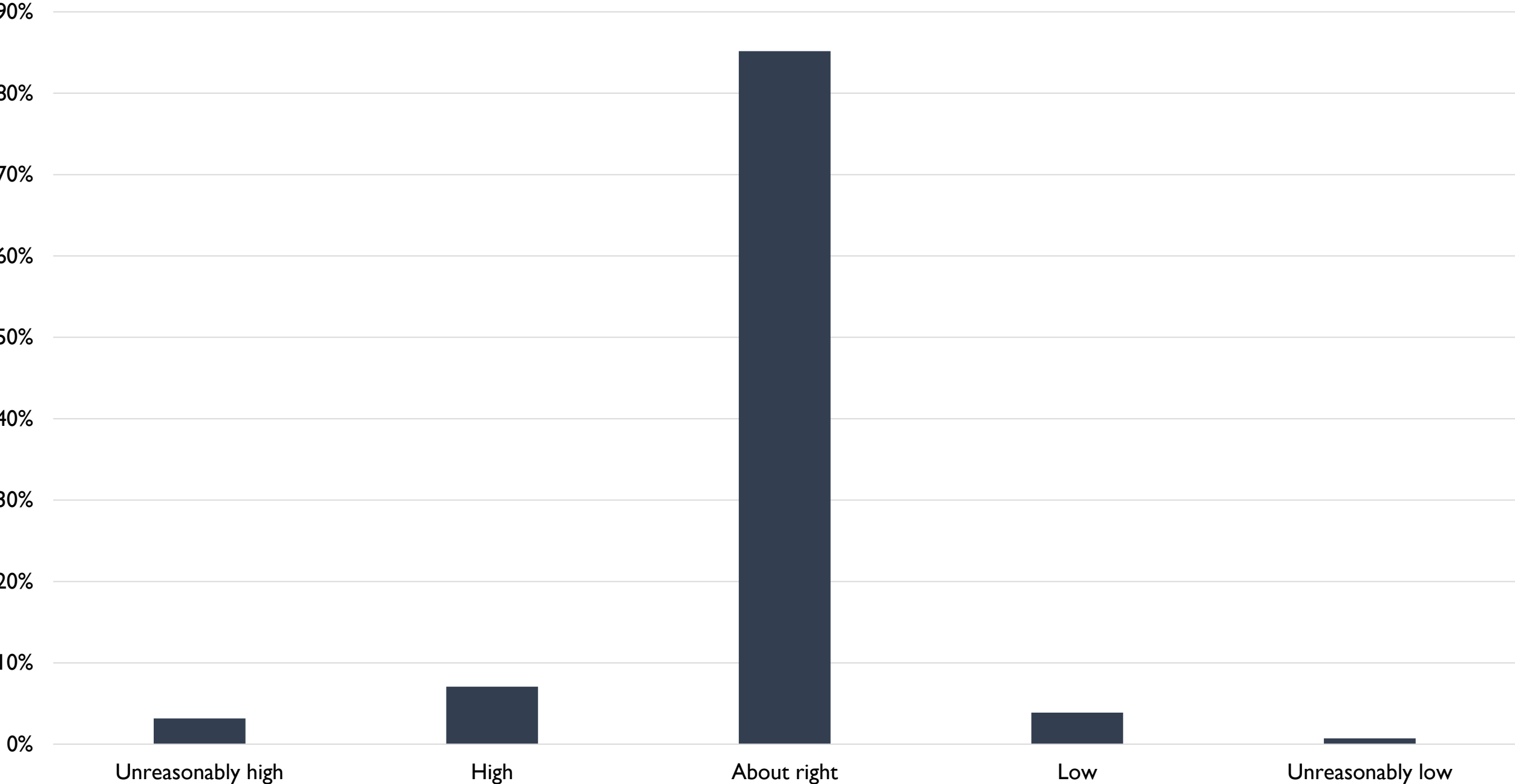
Q20. If you were to use bus/van service from Townsend, would you go to any of the following? Select all that apply.



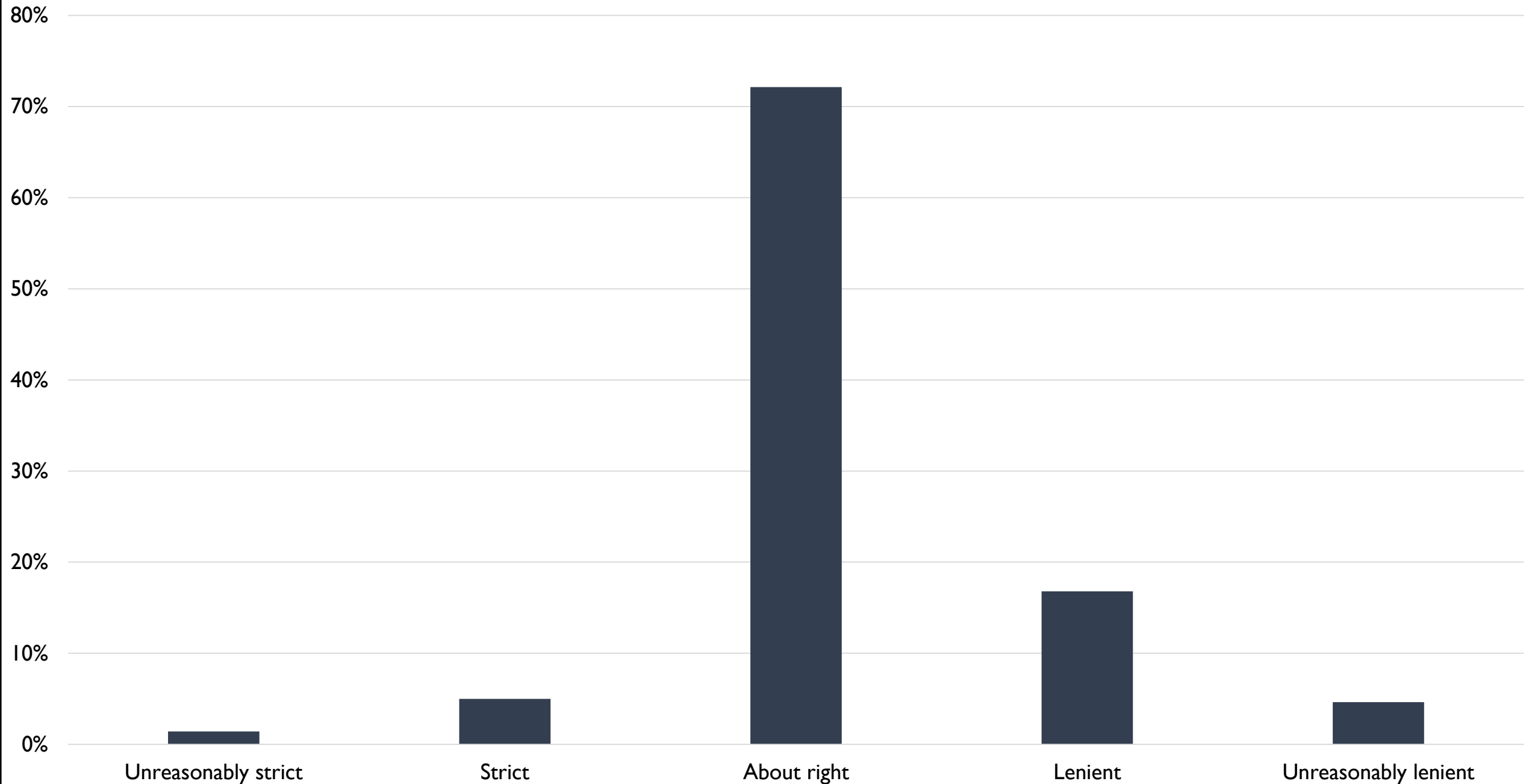
Q21. How satisfied are you with Townsend's roads and sidewalks for:



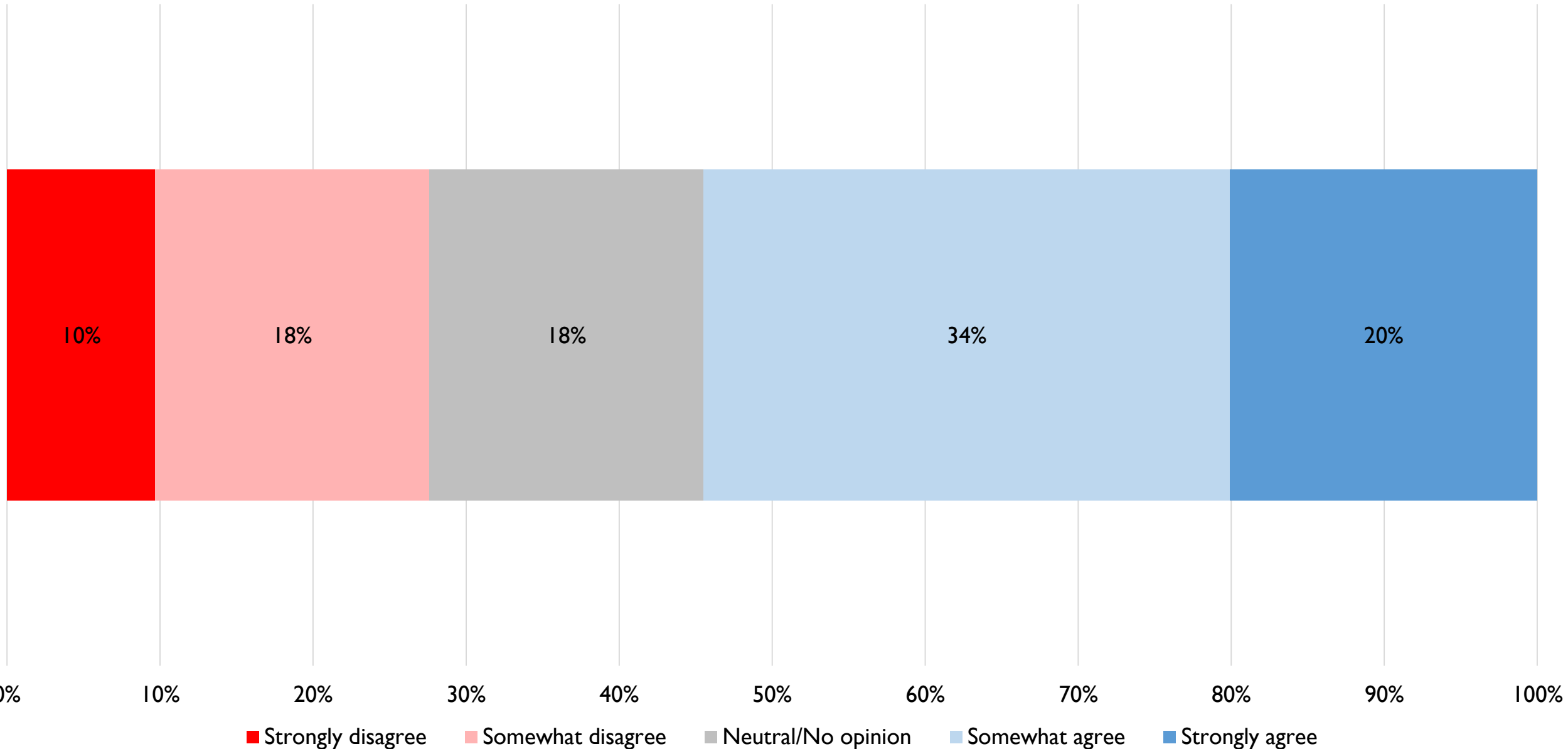
Q22. Townsend's speed limits are:



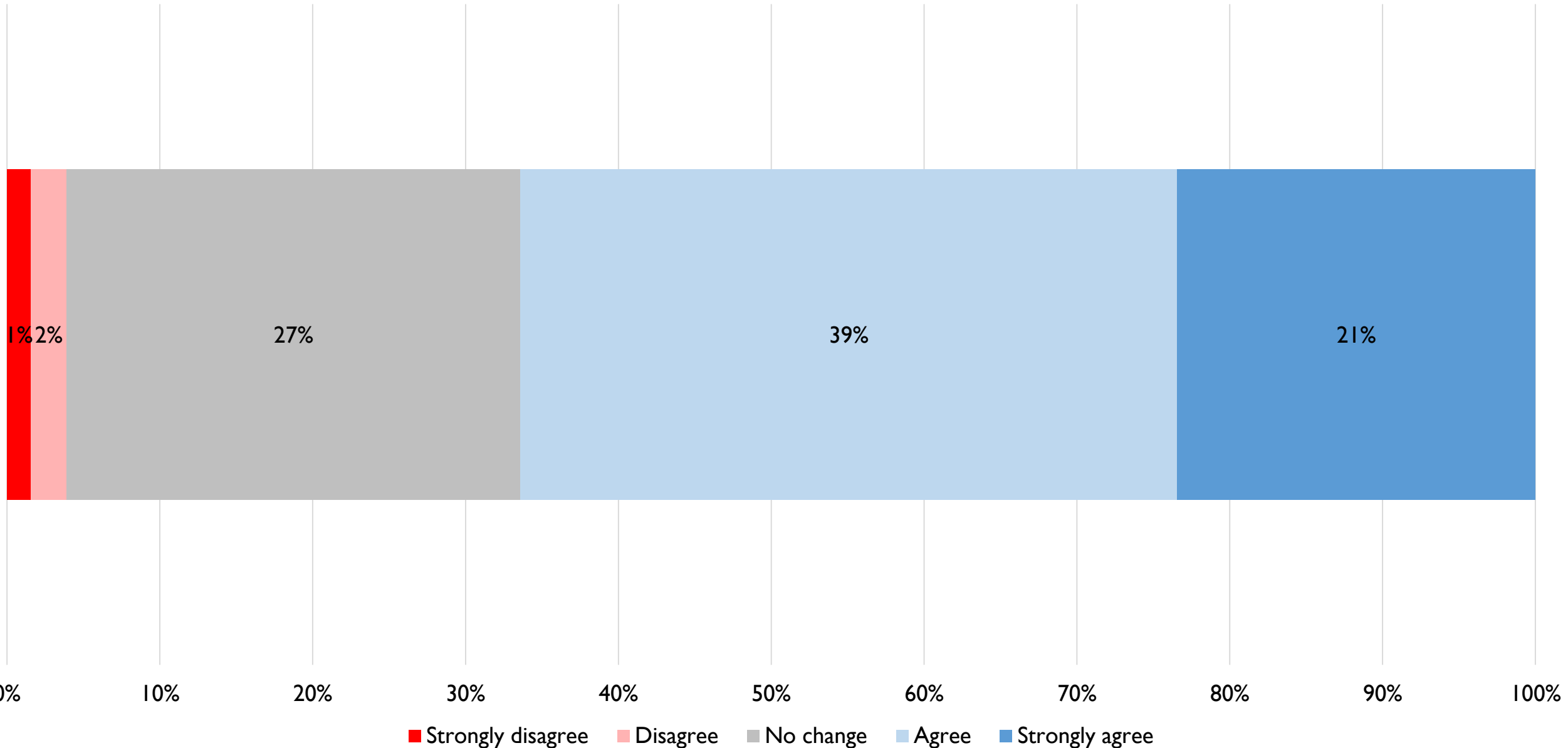
Q23. Speed enforcement in Townsend is:



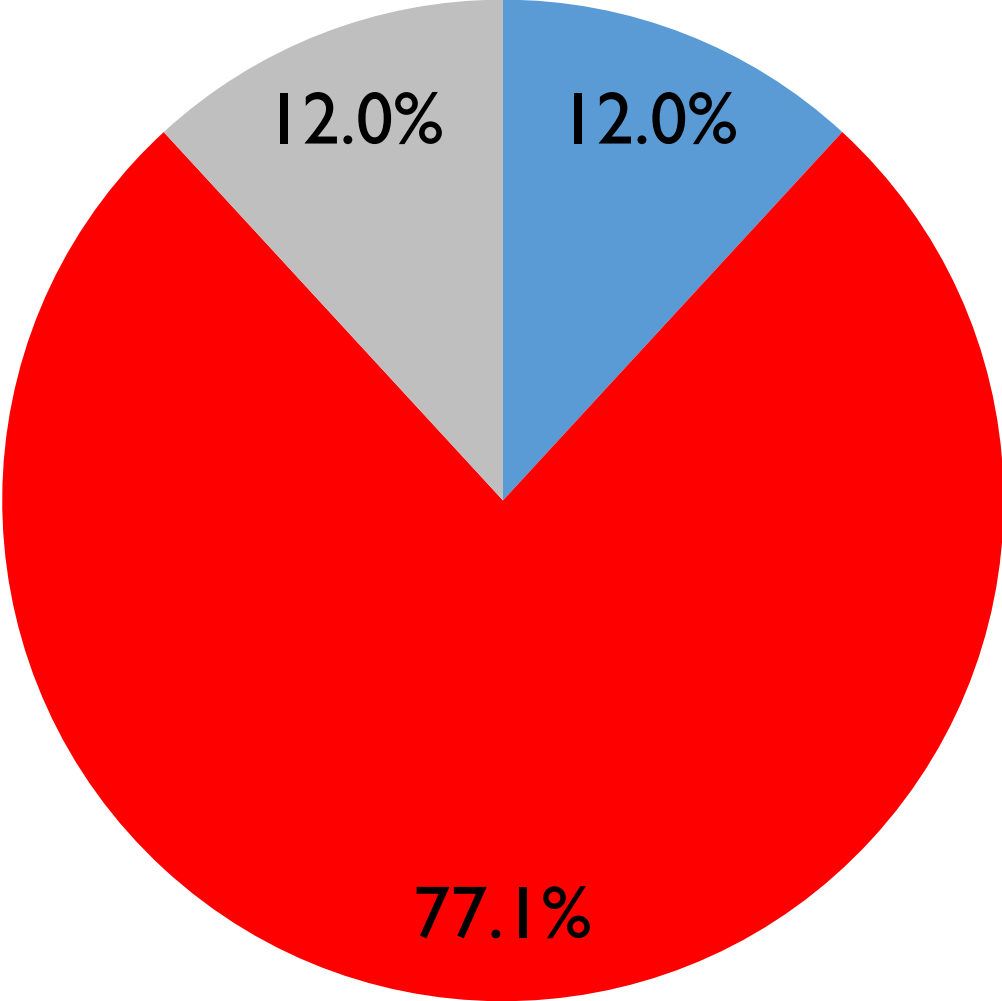
Q24. Do you feel that Townsend police are sufficiently visible to the public?



Q25. Do you feel there has been a marked increase in truck traffic on town roads?

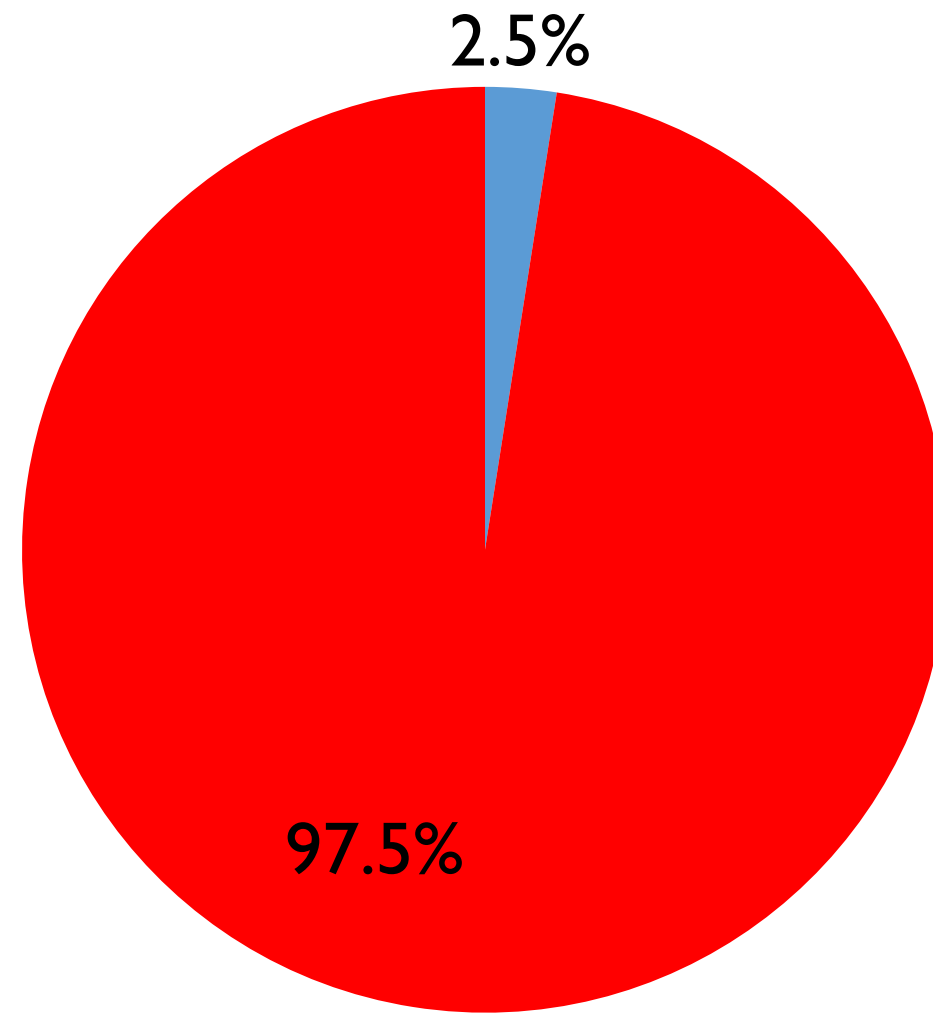


Do you think the town has enough sidewalks?



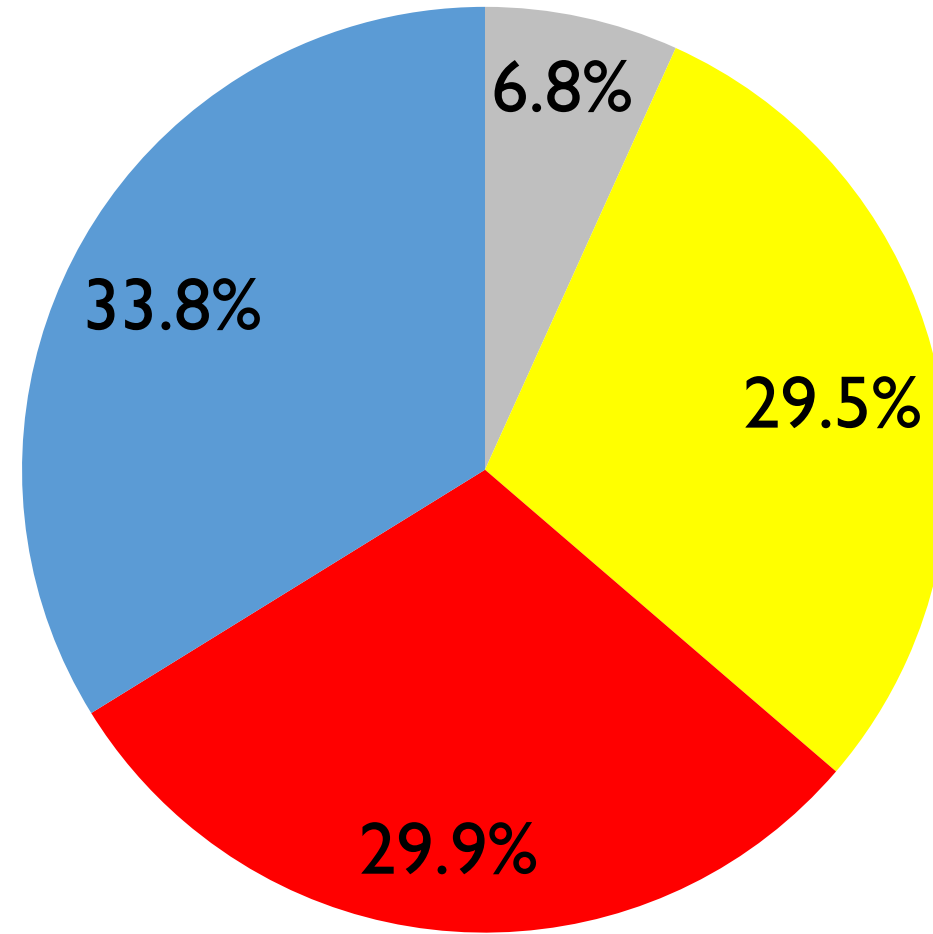
■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure/No opinion

Q27. Have you ever used the Council on Aging van service?



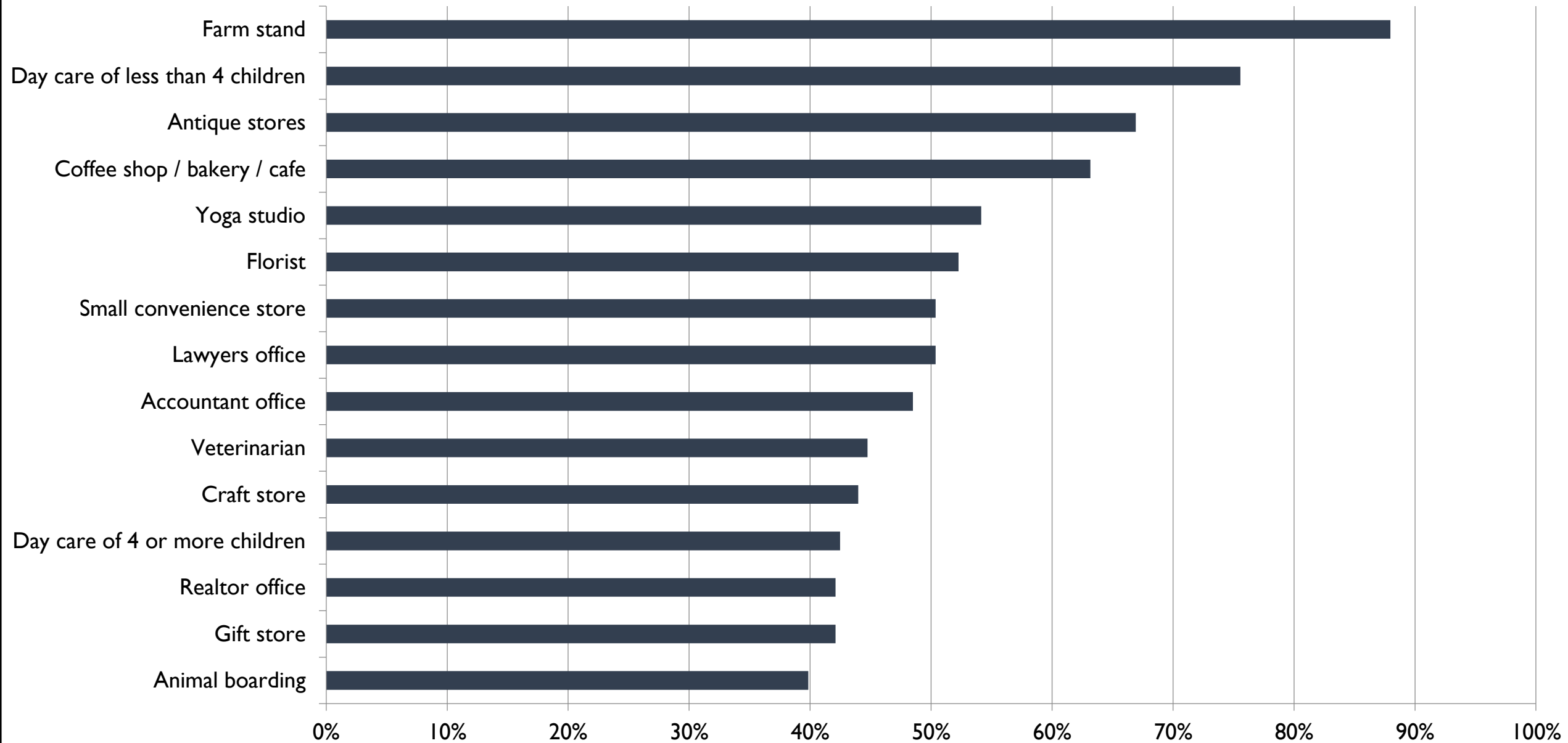
■ Yes ■ No

Q28. If available, would you ever consider using a ride share service in Townsend, such as Uber or Lyft?

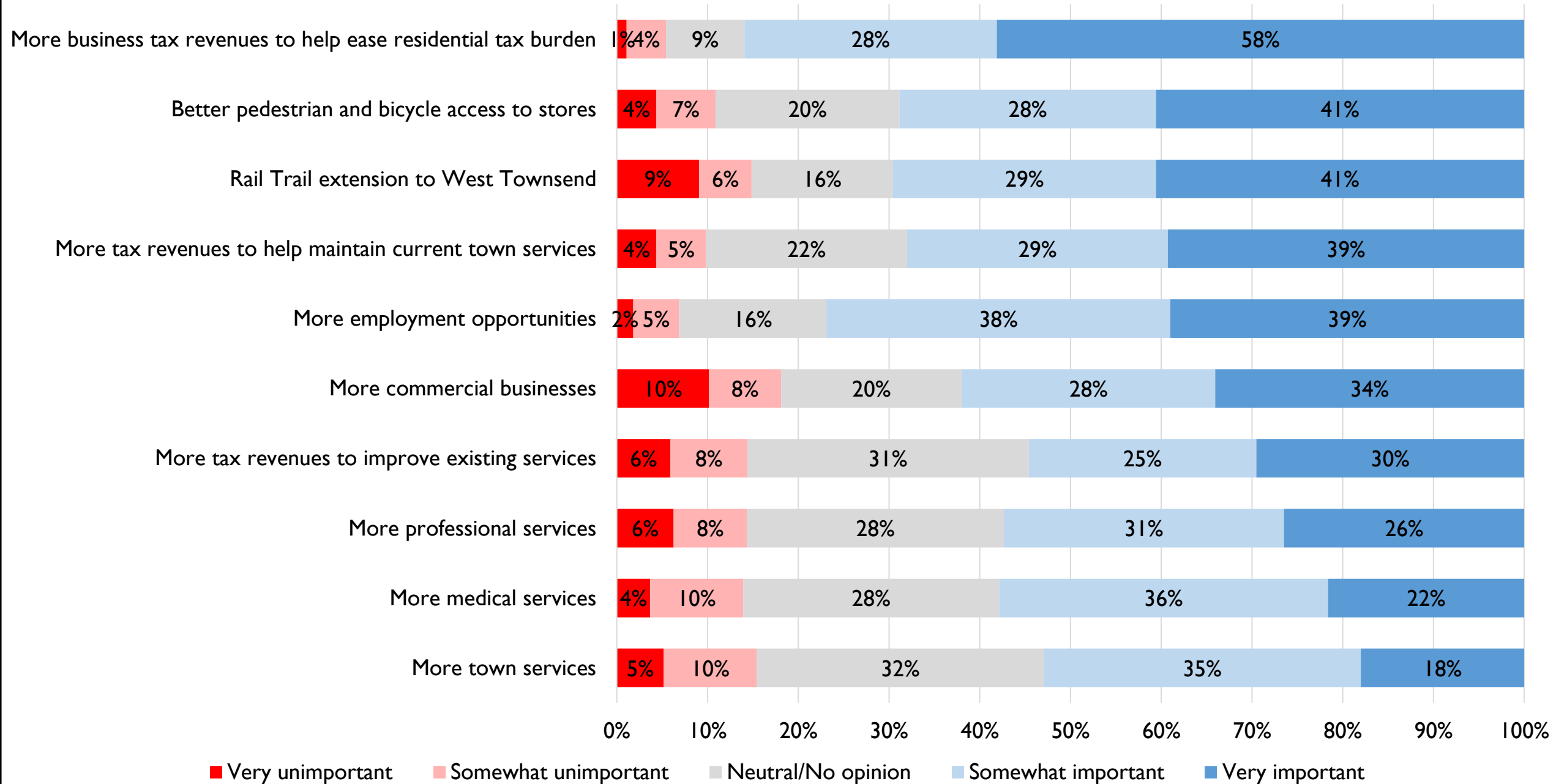


■ No opinion ■ Maybe ■ No ■ Yes

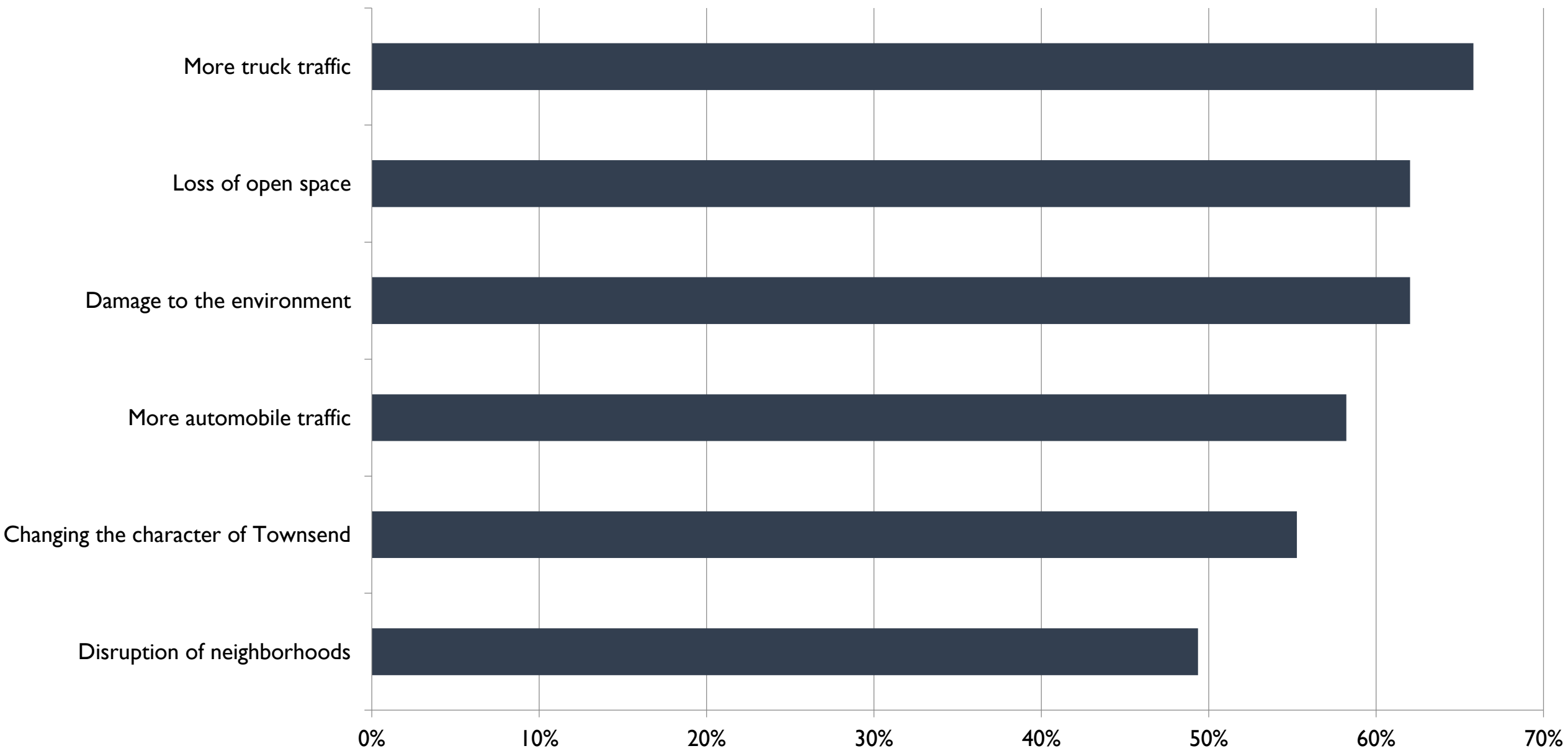
Q29. Which of the following businesses are appropriate in a residential area? Select all that apply.



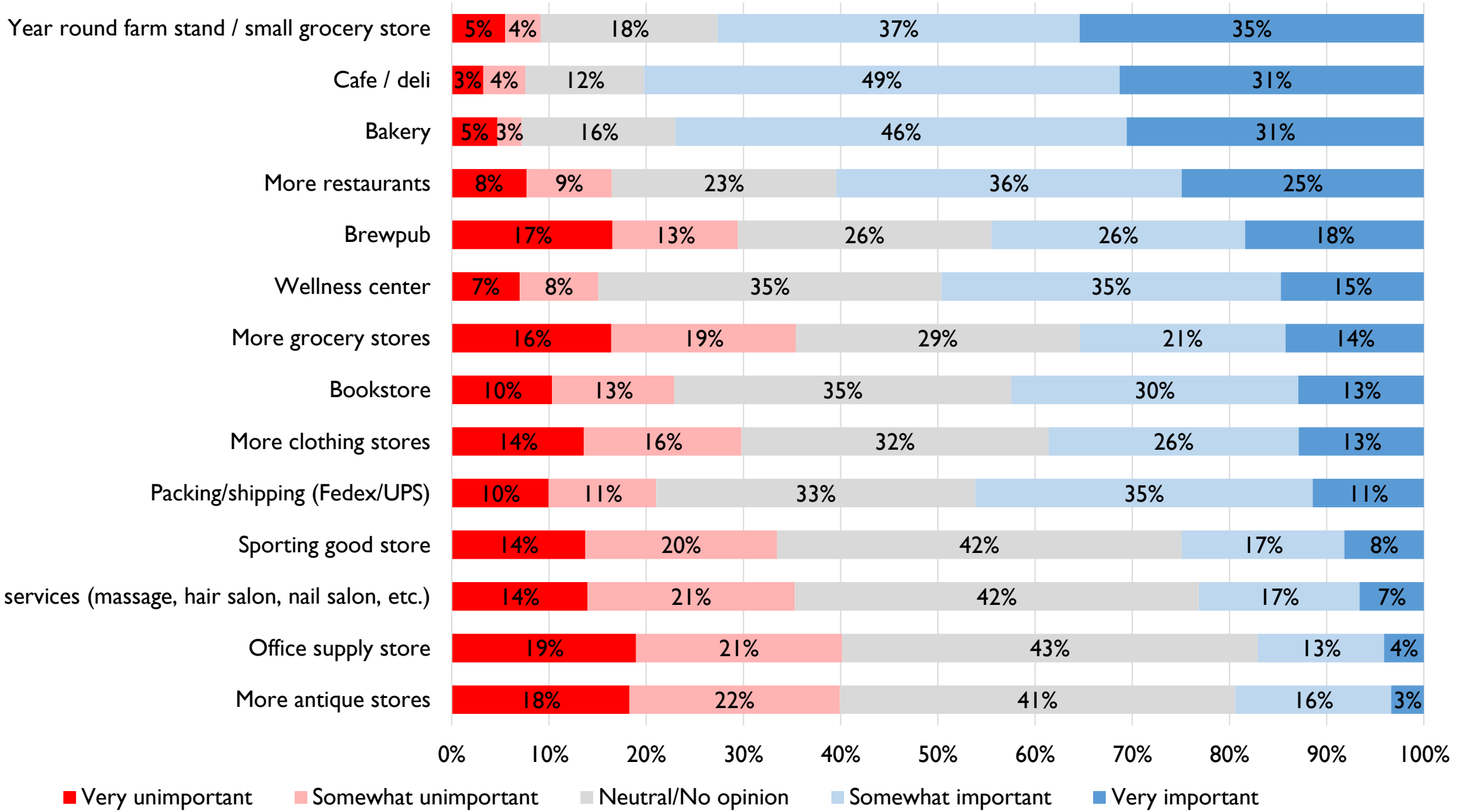
Q30. Which of the following are important for our town?



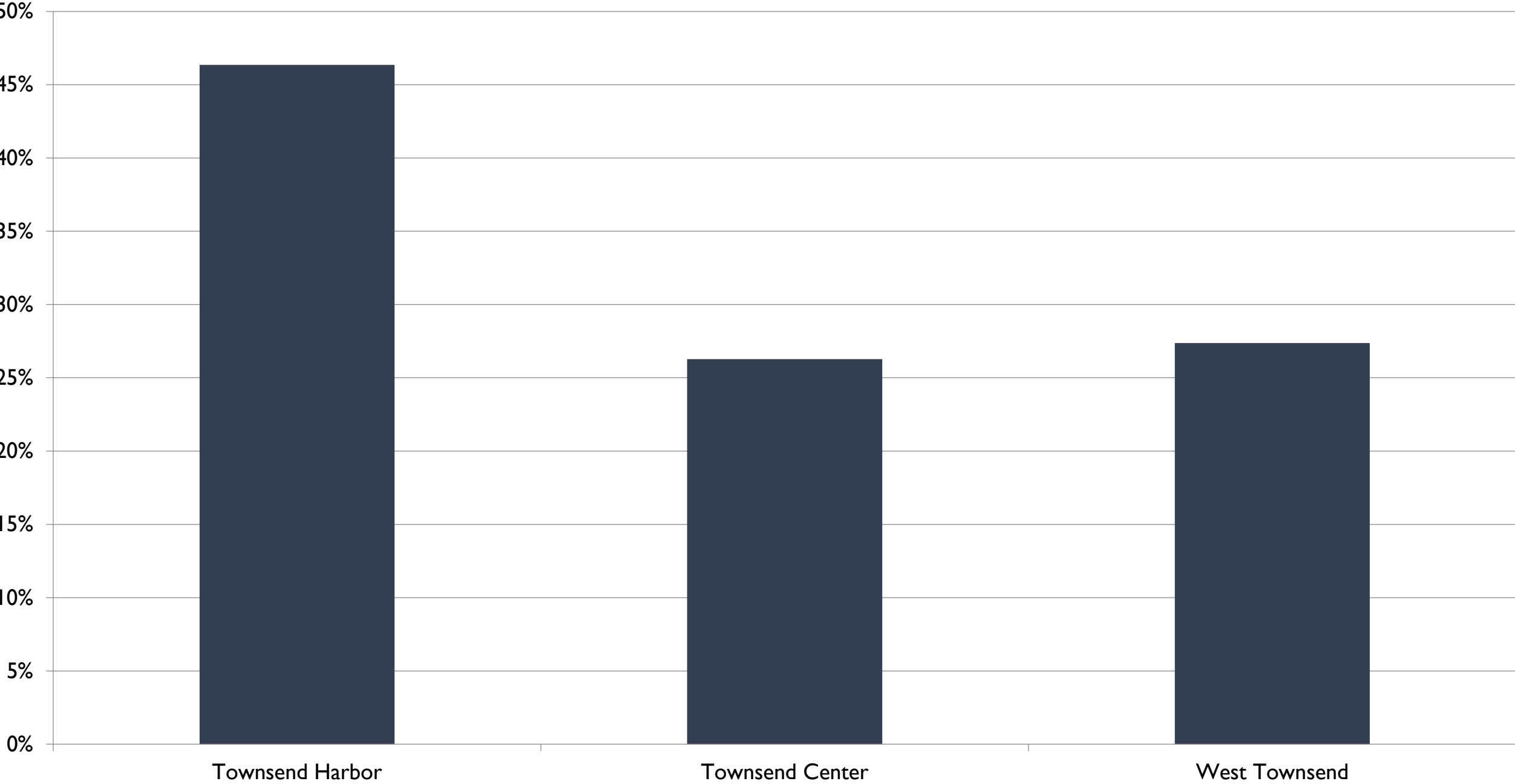
Q31. Are you worried about any of the following related to economic development? Select all that apply.



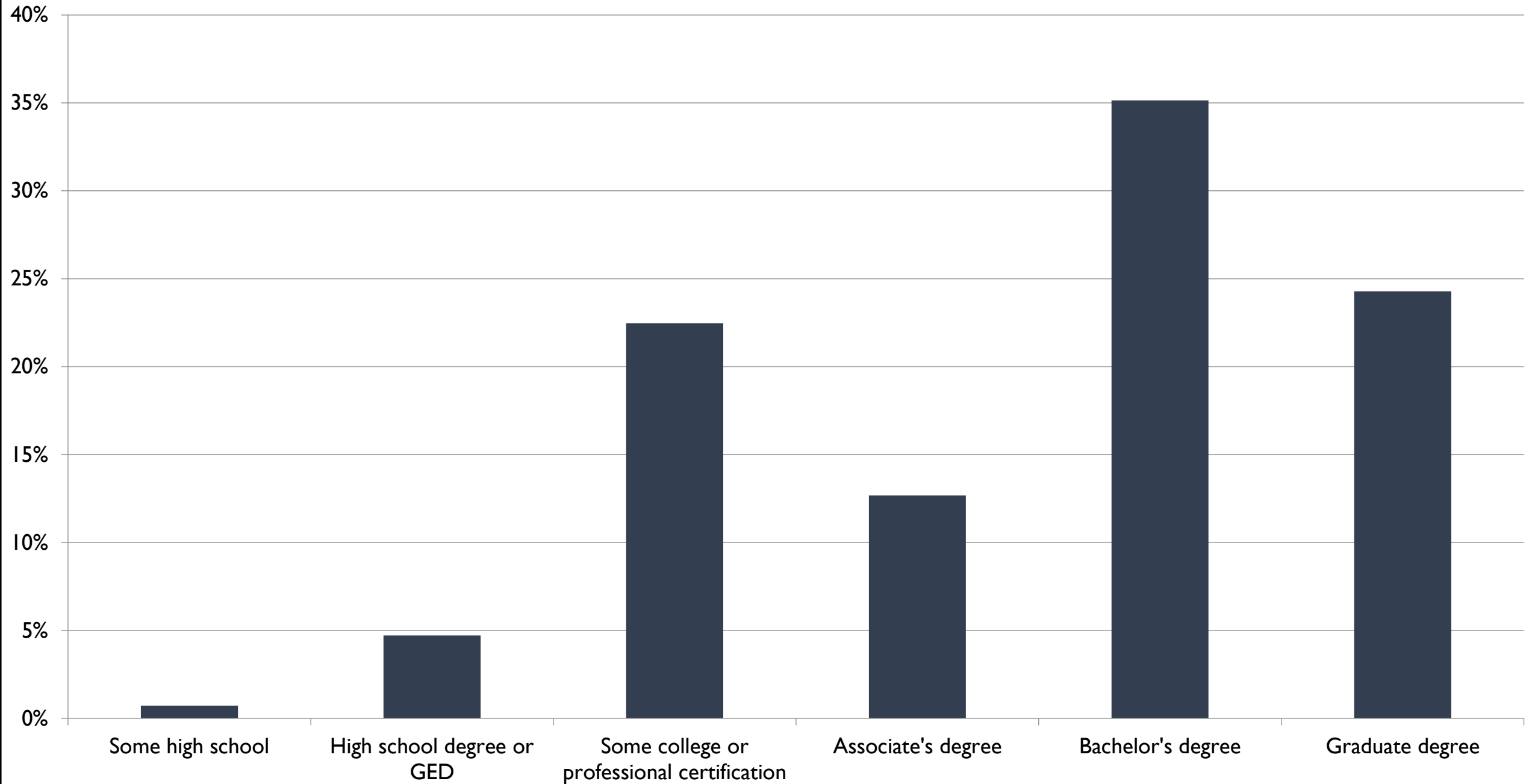
Q32. Which of the following are important for our town?



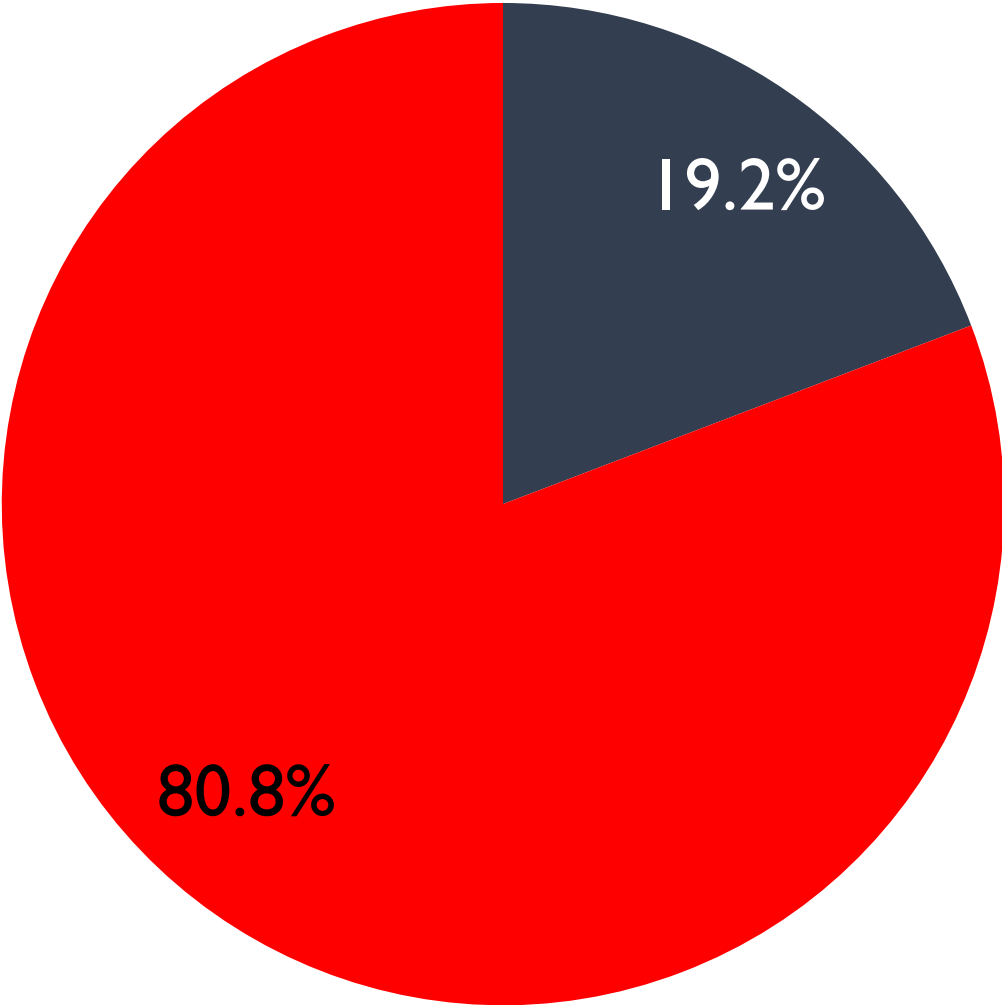
Q33. In what area of town do you live?



Q34. What is your highest level of education?

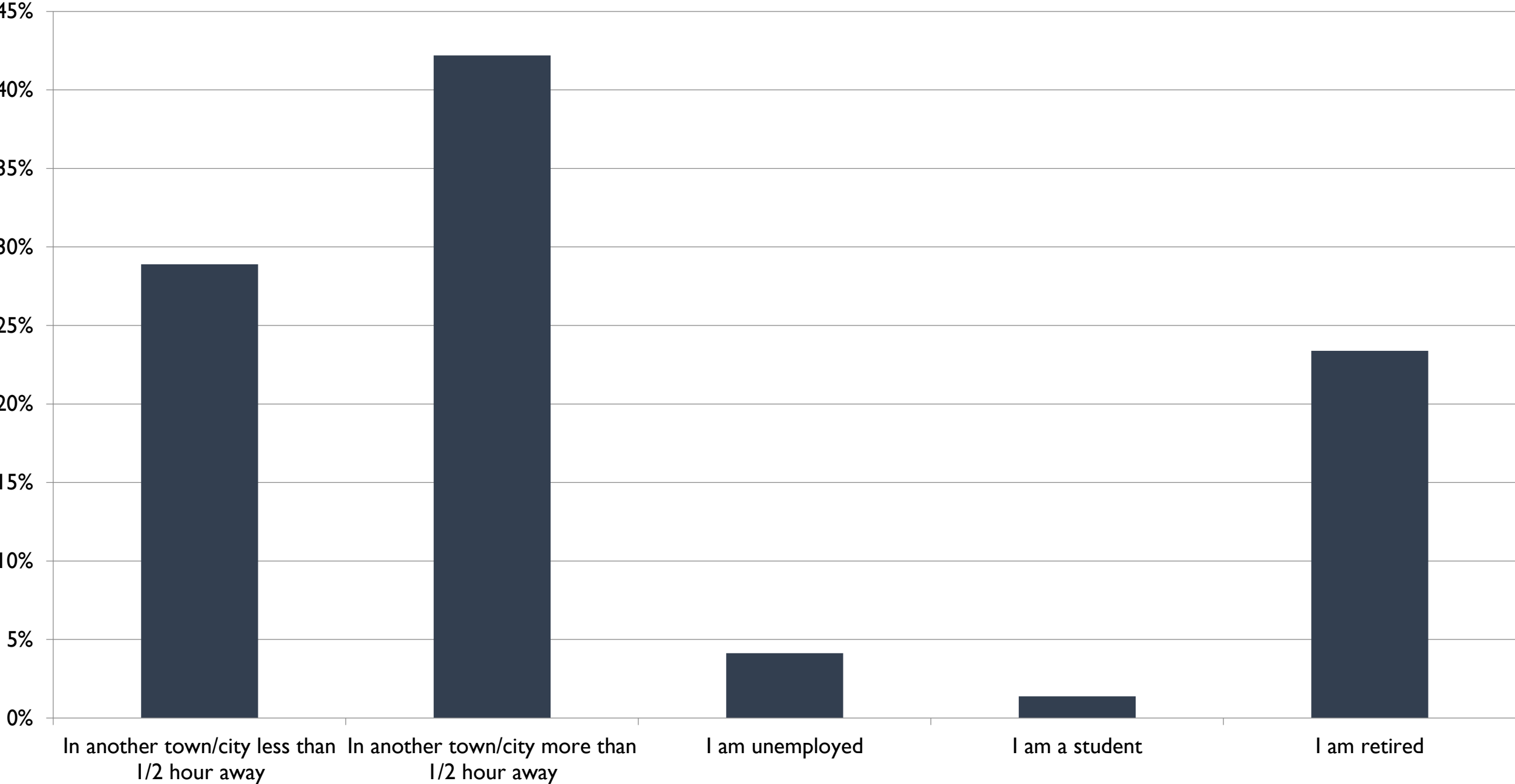


Q35. Do you work in Townsend?

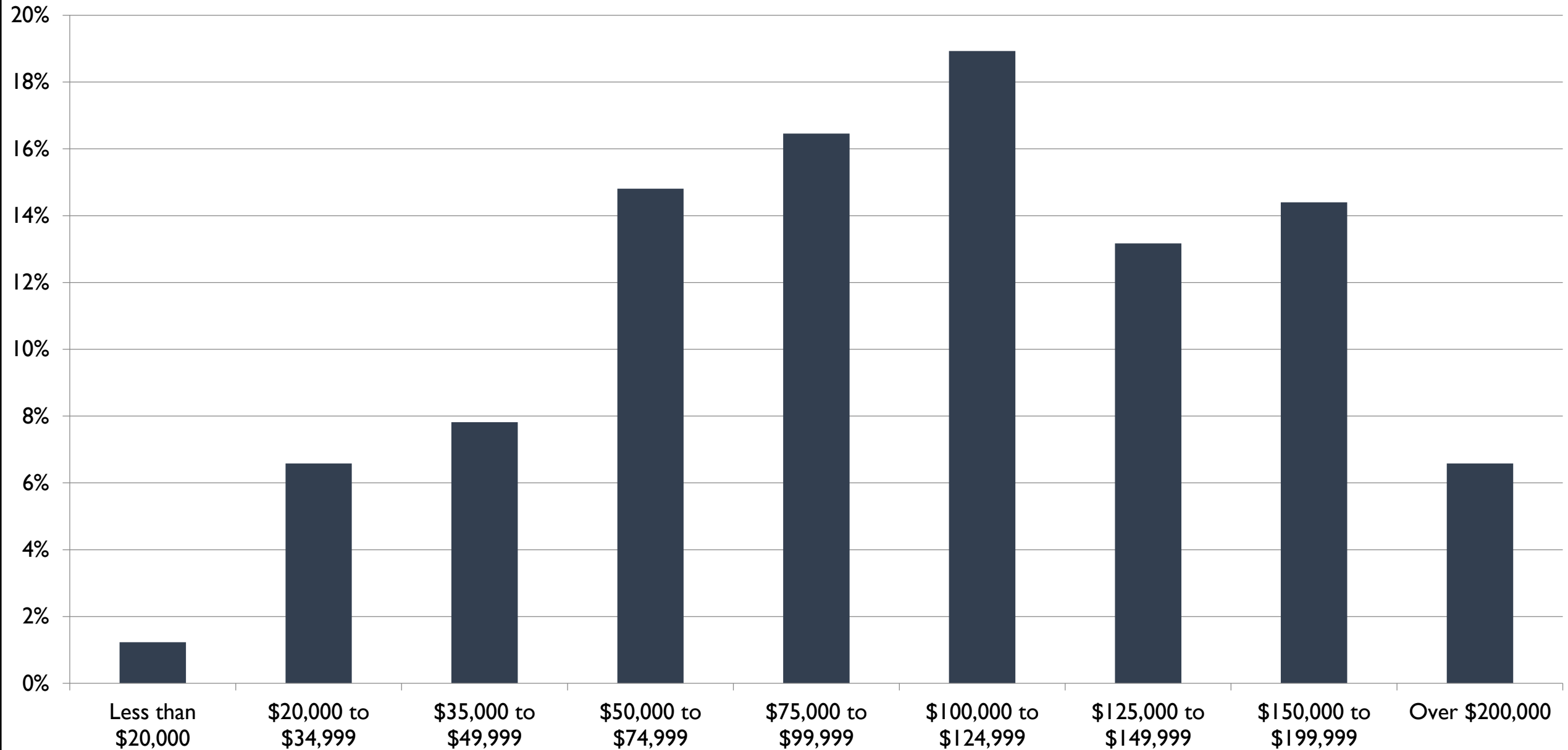


■ Yes ■ No

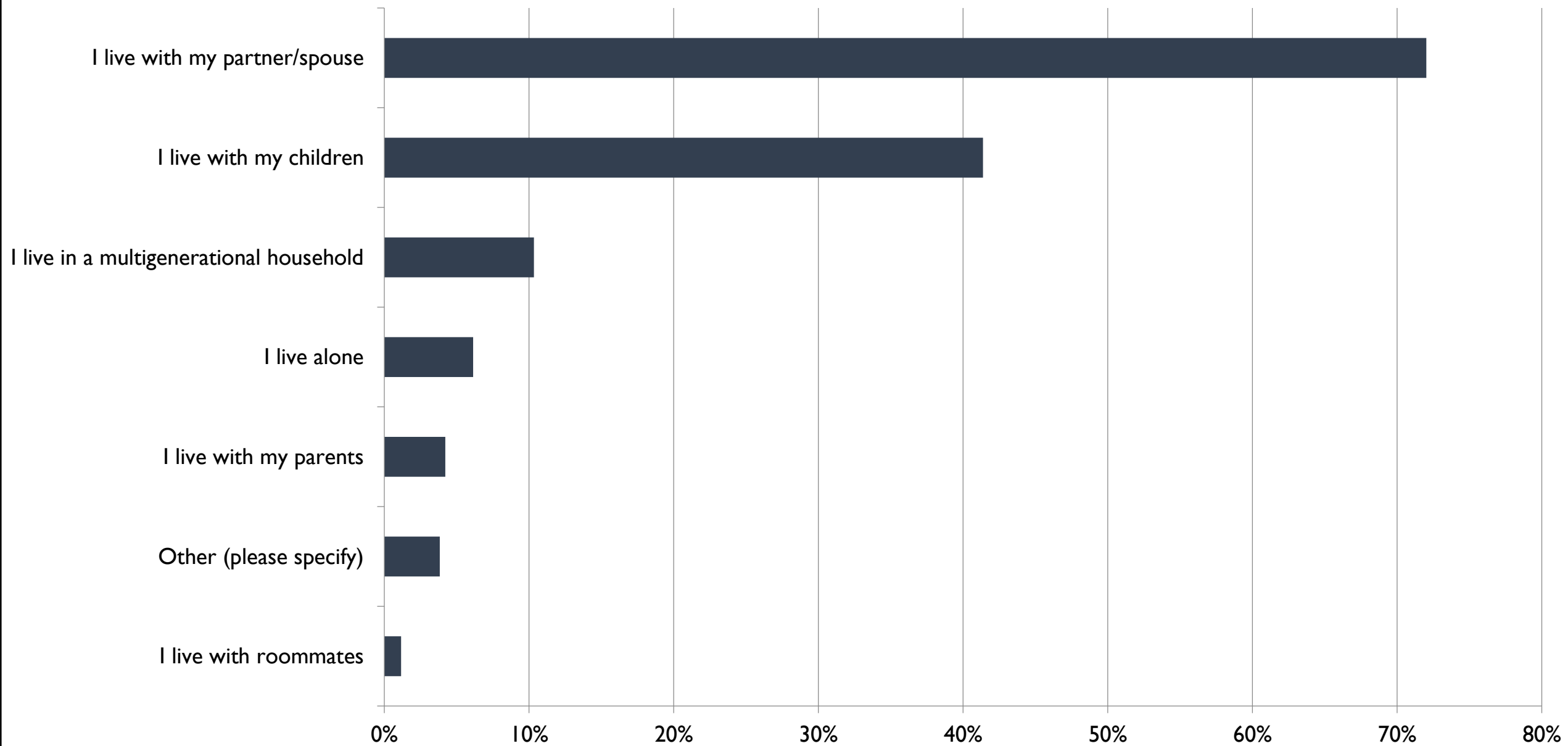
Q36. If no, where do you work?



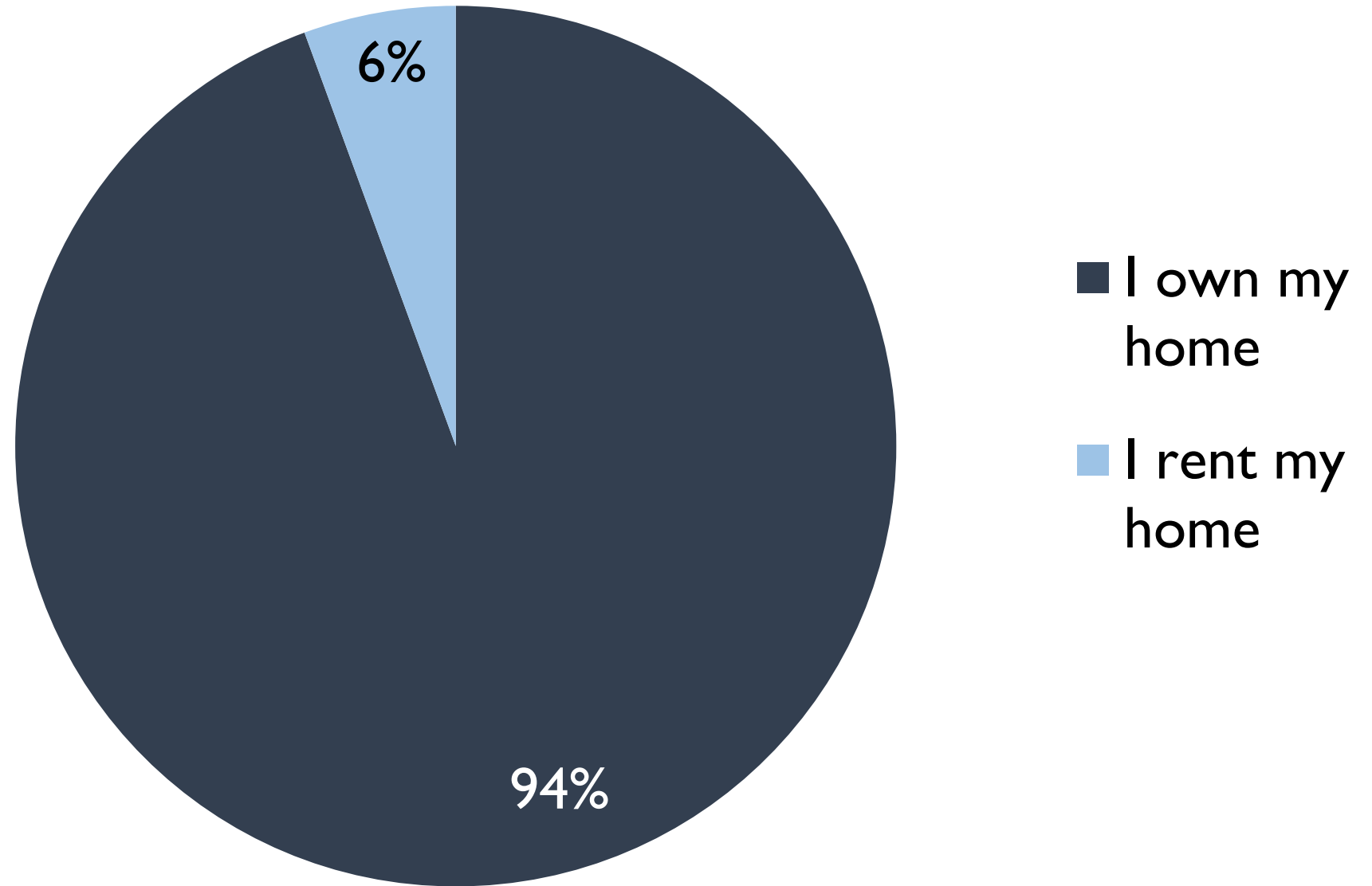
Q40. What is the range of your annual household income?



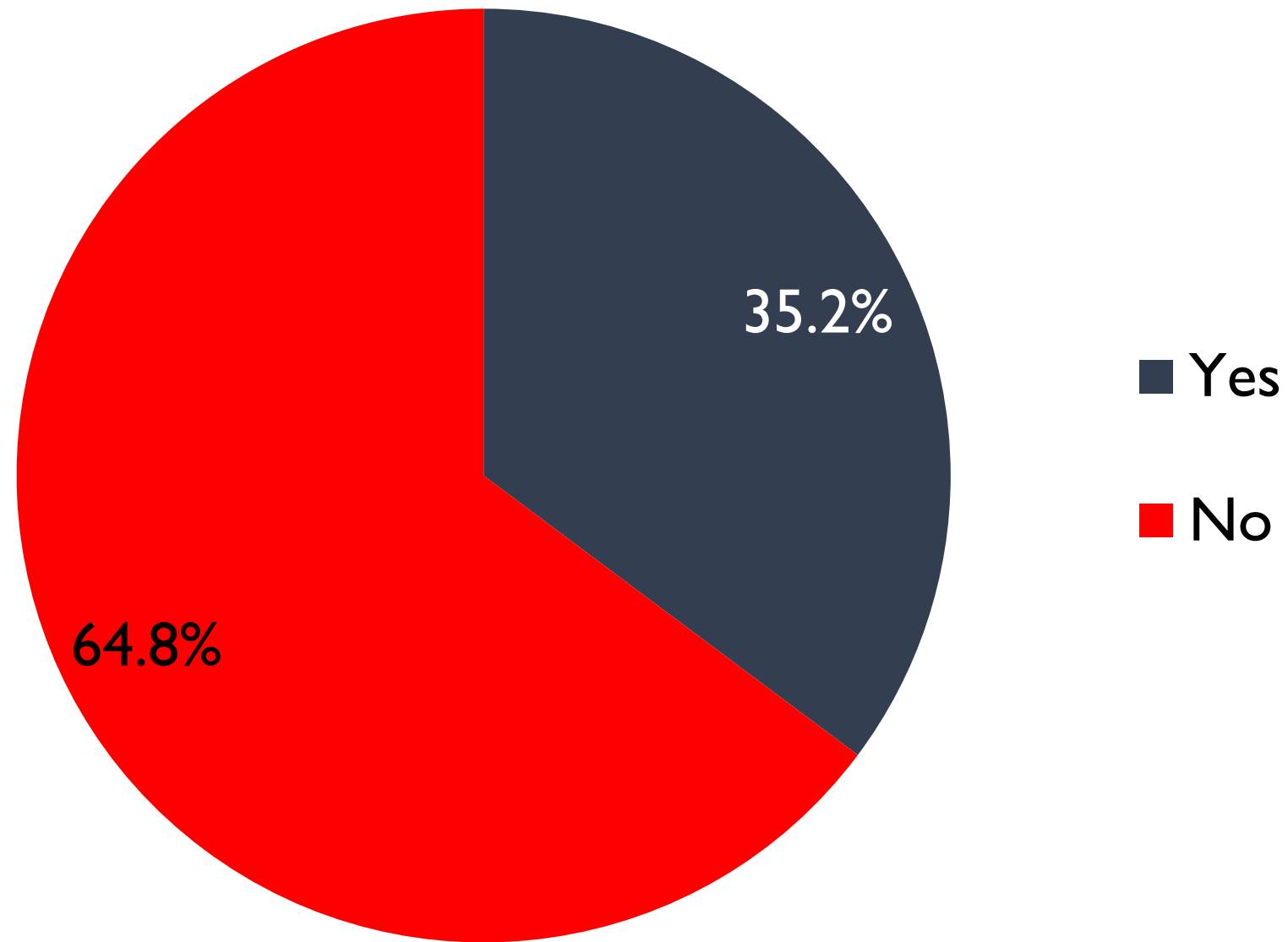
Q42. How would you describe your household? Select all that apply.



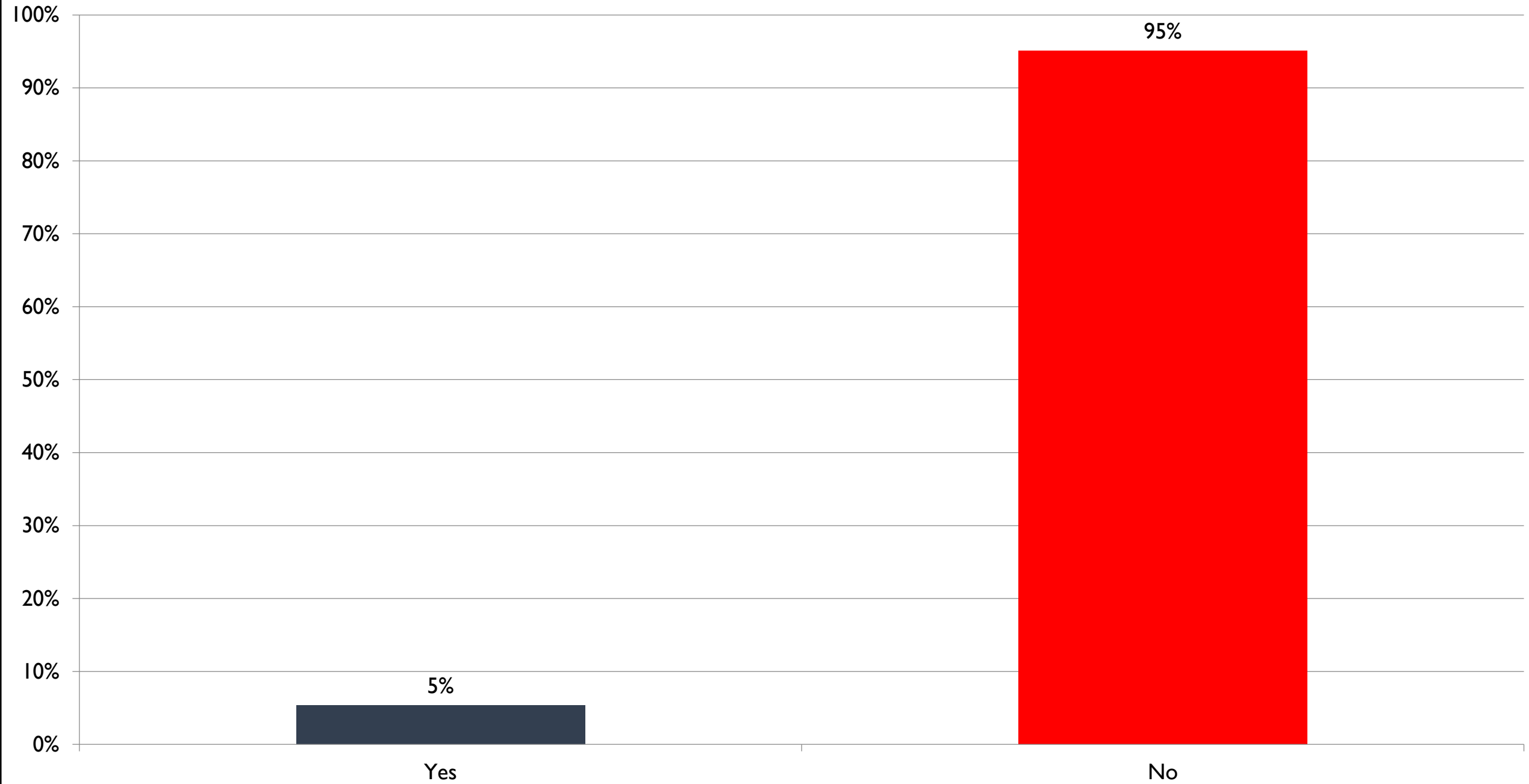
Q43. Do you own or rent your home?



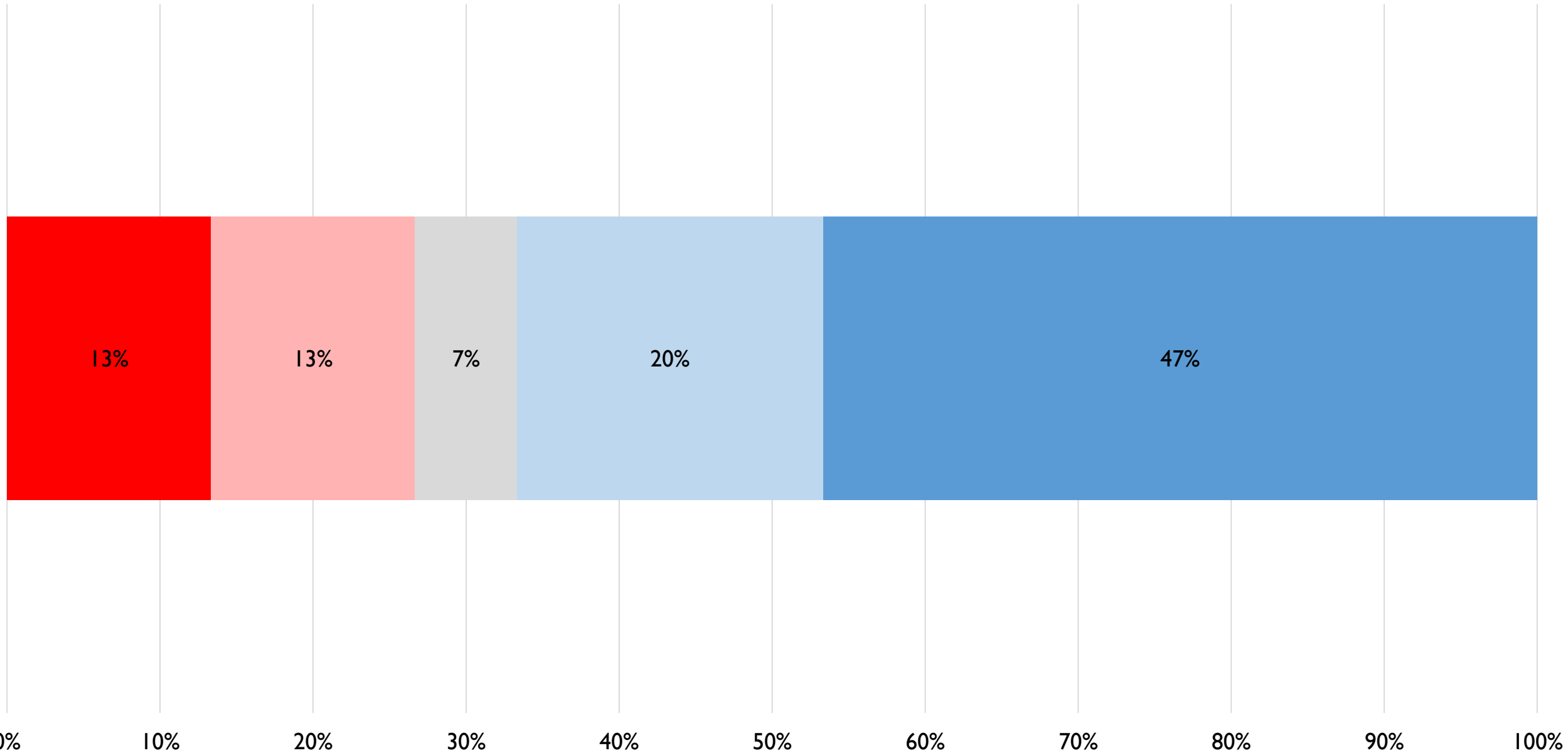
Q44. Do you normally attend Town meeting?



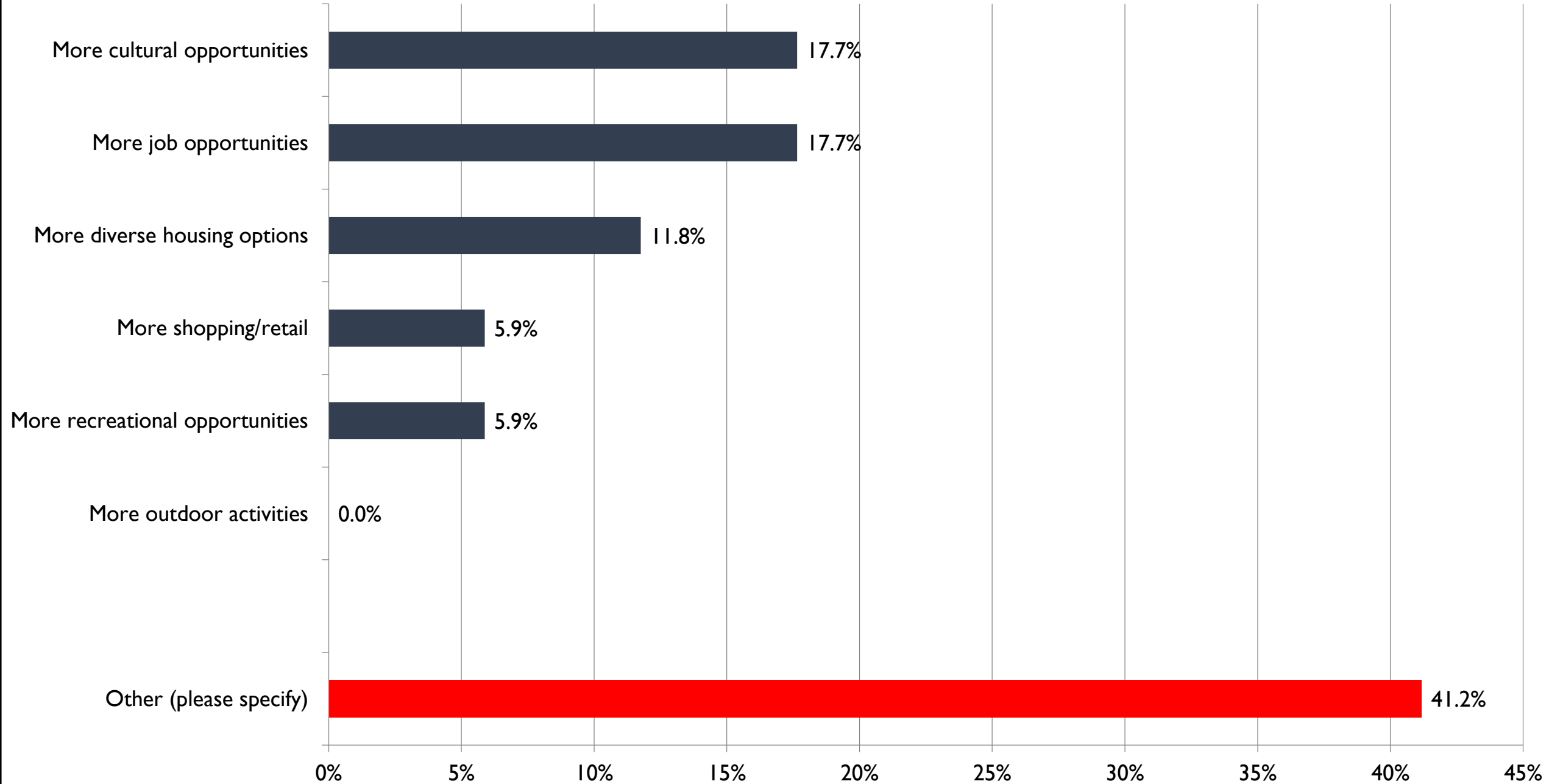
Q46. Are you a student?



Q47. How likely are you to live in Townsend after completing your education?



Q48. What would most encourage you to stay in town?



Appendix 2: Accessory Apartment Bylaw

§ 145-36 Accessory apartments in residential district.

[Added 1-17-1989 STM by Art. 38; amended 12-4-1990 STM by Arts. 9, 10, 11 and 12; 4-27-1991 STM by Arts. 7, 8 and 9; 5-7-2019 ATM by Art. 25]

- A. Purpose. Recognizing the need to provide alternative affordable housing for family members and affordable housing for the Town, the following regulations are established for accessory apartments in a residential district. It is expressly understood that this section does not provide for "two-family" or "duplex" type housing.
- B. An owner or owners of a single-family dwelling or of a single-family dwelling with a pre-existing outbuilding on the same lot in an RA or RB District may apply to the Board of Appeals for a special permit for the construction and occupancy of an accessory dwelling unit, hereinafter "accessory apartment," in such single-family dwelling or pre-existing outbuilding. In no case shall there be more than one accessory apartment established on a lot.
- C. In accordance with the provisions of Article **XI** of this bylaw, and after due consideration of the report and recommendation of the Board of Health (see Subsection **D**), the Board of Appeals may grant a special permit as follows:
- (1) Procedures.
 - (a) The applicant shall obtain and submit to the Board of Appeals a written report of the Board of Health, certifying that the conditions of § **145-36D** have been met.
 - (b) The Board of Appeals shall hold a public hearing on the application, in accordance with the procedures specified in MGL Chapter 40A and § **145-65**.
 - (c) The Board of Appeals shall give due consideration to the mandatory referral report of the Planning Board and, where its decision differs from the recommendation of the Planning Board, shall state the reasons therefor in writing.
 - (2) Requirements for an accessory apartment.
 - (a) Floor area; square footage.

[1] The accessory apartment in a single-family dwelling is accessory to the principal residence. The floor area of the apartment shall be the lesser of: (1) 800 square feet or (2) 35% of the floor area of the principal residence and the apartment combined. The residence shall retain the appearance of a single-family structure. It shall be further

required that the owner of the property shall occupy either the apartment or the principal residence as his/her primary residence, except for bona fide temporary absences.

[2] The accessory apartment in a pre-existing outbuilding shall not exceed 800 square feet, shall not cause the external appearance of the structure in which the accessory apartment is located to be significantly altered from the appearance of the existing structure and shall not increase the footprint of the structure in which the accessory apartment is located. It shall be further required that the owner of the property shall occupy either the apartment or the principal residence as his/her primary residence, except for bona fide temporary absences.

(b) Adequate provision has been made for the disposal of sewage, waste and drainage of such accessory apartment in accordance with the requirements of the Board of Health.

(c) Adequate provision has been made for ingress and egress to the outside from such accessory apartment.

(d) The construction and occupancy of the accessory apartment will not be detrimental to the neighborhood in which the lot is located.

(e) The lot on which the accessory apartment and principal residence are located contains at least three quarters of an acre.

(f) Adequate provisions have been made for off-street parking of motor vehicles in such a fashion as is consistent with the character of a single-family residence.

(g) There is no other apartment on the lot on which the accessory apartment is to be located.

(h) Any accessory apartment intended for occupancy by a person with a disability shall be subject to the provisions of MGL c. 40A, § 3.

D. In order to ensure compliance with Subsection **C(1)(a)** above, the applicant shall obtain and submit to the Board of Appeals prior to the hearing a written report of the Board of Health certifying that the conditions of Subsection **C(2)(b)** have been met.

E. Affordable Accessory Apartment Program.

(1) The intent of this section of the bylaw is to document the availability of low to moderately priced housing that qualifies for inclusion on the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory, thus allowing for access to a variety of housing to meet the needs

of low- and moderate-income families, Town employees, the young and the elderly.

- (2) The Affordable Accessory Apartment Program is a public/private partnership to maintain local control over housing development and to increase the Town's supply of low- and moderate-income housing.
 - (3) The Board of Appeals may approve a special permit for an affordable accessory apartment, according to the same procedures as in Subsection **C(1)**, above. An affordable accessory apartment shall meet the requirements set forth in Subsection **C(2)** above, with the following conditions:
 - (a) The affordable accessory apartment shall be approved by the Local Initiative Program (LIP) and comply with LIP requirements, including but not limited to those contained within the Comprehensive Permit Guidelines: M.G.L. Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Projects - Subsidized Housing Inventory, in effect on the date of application for a special permit and as may be amended from time to time thereafter;
 - (b) Before the affordable accessory apartment may be occupied, the owner(s) of the property shall execute a Regulatory Agreement and Declaration of Restrictive Covenants for Affordable Accessory Apartment Rental ("Regulatory Agreement"), enforceable by DHCD and the Town, or other form of affordable housing restriction as may then be in effect under the Local Initiative Program. The Regulatory Agreement shall be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds;
 - (c) The Regulatory Agreement shall have a minimum term of 15 years;
- [1] The agreement shall terminate upon sale of the property, which, for purposes of this subsection, shall not include:
- [a] A mortgage deed to secure repayment of a loan; or
 - [b] An interspousal transfer for nominal consideration where the transferor retains at least a 50% ownership interest in the property; or
 - [c] A transfer to a trust for minimal consideration where the owner holds at least a 50% beneficial interest in the property.
- [2] An owner may voluntarily terminate the Regulatory Agreement prior to its expiration with 60 days' notice, in accordance with the restrictions in such agreement. The owner shall notify the Town and DHCD and record a notice of cancellation of the special permit at the Registry of Deeds. The termination of the Regulatory Agreement shall not take effect until the expiration of the current lease between the owner and the tenant

occupying the affordable accessory apartment.

- (d) Upon termination of the agreement, additional restrictions shall apply regarding repayment to the Town of any funds received from the Town pursuant to a grant or loan agreement.
 - (e) An affordable accessory apartment may not be rented to an owner's family member (currently defined in DHCD regulations and guidelines as a parent, grandparent, son, daughter, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, or sibling);
 - (f) The affordable accessory apartment shall be subject to DHCD regulatory requirements, including requirements relative to pricing, tenant income eligibility, affirmative fair housing marketing and tenant selection plan, and maintenance. In particular, the affordable accessory apartment shall be rented to income-qualified tenants selected through an open process established in accordance with the affirmative fair housing marketing plan, and the monthly rent shall not exceed the maximum affordable rent for a household of the appropriate size, as prescribed in the LIP affordable accessory apartment program guidelines and other applicable state regulations and requirements.
- F. Any owner or owners of a single-family dwelling or a single-family dwelling with a pre-existing outbuilding in RA and RB Districts seeking a new or a renewal of an accessory apartment permit shall agree to abide by the terms of the Affordable Accessory Apartment Program defined in Subsection **E** above to ensure moderate income occupancy of the apartment thus created for a period of 15 years. The local housing agency or partnership shall permit deferral of the program if the homeowner wishes to accommodate initially a family member or members. For the purpose of this section, family member shall be defined as one of the blood, step or adopted relatives of the homeowner or spouse as follows: mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather and/or their spouses. Should the family member "vacate" the accessory apartment, the agreement with the local housing agency or partnership shall be voided, providing the accessory apartment is discontinued and the dwelling reverts back to compliance with § **145-26A(1)**. Otherwise, an application shall be made under the Affordable Accessory Apartment Program defined in Subsection **E** above. Any apartment proposed hereunder shall comply with all applicable provisions of this § **145-36**. Fines may be imposed by the Town for violation of this clause.

Appendix 3: Economic Development Report



TOWNSEND

Economic Development Strategy

May 2021

Prepared for

Townsend Master Plan Committee

Prepared by



This report is formatted for double-sided printing. Occasional blank pages are intentional.



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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Townsend engaged FXM Associates, in association with Barrett Planning Group LLC, to assess market conditions and trends that can affect economic development, to review current regulatory and other characteristics of the town compared to local competitive communities, and to suggest initiatives that can respond to issues raised by the Master Plan Committee. FXM submitted a draft final report in January 2020. Following receipt of comments from the Master Plan Committee in March 2021, the consultant team prepared this Final Report. Questions and issues raised by the Master Plan Committee in their RFP included the following:

- What are small businesses that can be sustained in a rural community?
- What would make Townsend a destination?
- What can be done with unoccupied retail space?
- What can be done to incorporate historic properties into our economic development plan?
- What can be done to incorporate recreational opportunities in Townsend into our economic development plan?
- What are strategies that have been proven effective in other communities similar to Townsend?
- What advantages or disadvantages does the current zoning provide to business locating in Townsend?
- Are there zoning changes required that would promote businesses while maintaining the rural nature of Townsend?
- What are the next steps in fostering a stronger economy in Townsend?

The consultant team proposed to address these questions based on a series of generally accepted analyses:

- Market conditions and trends by industry sector in Townsend and surrounding communities;
- Projected employment and potential space demand for office, industrial/warehouse, and retail uses;
- A site visit and work session with Town officials; and
- A 2019 survey of resident opinions on Townsend development, and discussions with a selection of local business and property owners.

Using secondary data sources, interviews from the site visit, and relevant reports, FXM prepared social, economic, fiscal, and business profiles of Townsend; analyzed trends in local industries;



estimated future demand for commercial space; identified retail growth potential; projected demand for market-rate rental housing, a potentially significant component of mixed-use development; and Barrett conducted a review of current zoning and regulatory requirements. The bulk of the report summarizes the data sources, analyses, and findings of this market and competitive assessment, which is at the core of successful economic development initiatives.

An Executive Summary, including observations and findings of the baseline and trend demographic and business analyses is presented below, followed by the full report sections. The final section of this report provides our responses to the RFP questions from the Master Plan Committee members and other participants.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

■ *Demographic and Economic Characteristics and Trends*

- Townsend's population increased by 7% between 2010 and 2019, to an estimated 9,470, and it is projected to increase by another 4% by 2024, to about 9,829 persons. Although the recent historical growth rates are lower than those for Middlesex County, Townsend's projected growth rate to 2024 is higher than the county's or Massachusetts's overall. Similarly, the number of households grew by 8% since 2010 to an estimated 3,483 in 2019, and is projected to grow another 4%, to about 3,629, by 2024. Household growth rates in Townsend have and are projected to mirror those of Middlesex County and Massachusetts overall. Implicit in these relative growth numbers is that Townsend is keeping up with the broader region and state in retaining and attracting people who want to live in Town. The projected population and household growth is also key to future economic growth.
- In 2019, the average annual income in Townsend (\$123,659) is almost \$18,000 lower than average incomes for Middlesex County (\$141,354), but \$8,600 higher than the rest of the Commonwealth (\$115,037). The estimated median income (\$98,067) is \$5,000 lower than that of Middlesex County, but over \$16,000 higher than that for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Townsend's poverty rate is lower than that of Middlesex County (3% versus 5%) and of the state as a whole (8%). There is also a low proportion of Families Below Poverty with Children (1%) versus that of the county (4%) and the state (6%).
- Most Townsend residences, 86%, are owner-occupied, higher than the 62% of Middlesex County and state residents who own. The estimated 2019 median value of owner-occupied structures in Townsend (\$317,070) is considerably lower than in the county (\$540,050) and in the state (\$409,078). The largest proportion of Townsend's housing is valued in the \$200,000 to \$299,999 range, while for the county and state, the largest range is \$500,000 to \$749,999. Competitive housing prices can be an attractive feature for workers and businesses looking to recruit.
- The characteristics of Townsend's workforce differ slightly compared to the county and state averages. For example, the proportion of Townsend residents age 25+ with a bachelor's degree or higher (37%) is one percentage point more than that of Middlesex County (36%) and six percentage points less than for the Commonwealth (43%).
- Townsend has a higher percentage of service, farm and blue-collar workers when compared to the County, but the same proportion as in the Commonwealth.
- Between 2007 and 2017, jobs in Townsend increased by 1.5% compared to 16% growth for Middlesex County and 15% growth statewide. During this period, job losses were experienced in Manufacturing and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. Employment gains were made in all other sectors and were particularly large in Accommodation & Food Services and Administrative Services. Noteworthy in the comparison of historical employment trends is that overall jobs in



Townsend bottomed out in 2012, at 1,752 jobs. Between 2014, when a steep upward trajectory began, and 2017, Townsend gained approximately 321 jobs, a 19% increase.

- At \$44,700 on average for all jobs, average annual wages paid in Townsend are 55% of those for Middlesex County overall and 66% of the statewide average.
- Travel times to work for those in Townsend are relatively long: 39 minutes, compared to 34 and 33 minutes at the county and state levels respectively.

■ Market Conditions and Trends

FXM uses two complementary approaches to assess potential market demand for commercial development. The first considers historical trends in jobs by industry sector, projects these trends forward, and then converts projected numbers of jobs into potential demand for space using space per employee norms. The second approach examines historical trends in the inventory, occupancies, vacancies, net absorption, and lease rates for each of the major types of space – office, industrial/warehouse, and retail – within the local real estate submarket.¹ The table below summarizes the results of these two approaches. The differences in forecasts reflect the typical range found when using two distinctly different data sources and projection methods but provides greater confidence in whether the overarching trends are positive or negative for each type of space as well as in the range of likely outcomes. Middlesex County is a significantly broader geographic area than the submarket used for the supply analysis but reflects the regional economy and labor market. In the case of both projection methods, and notwithstanding land availability, zoning, and other factors affecting potential development at specific sites, the results of the commercial market analysis suggest that there is market support for additional commercial development in Townsend, particularly if the town can capture a greater share of projected county-wide and Submarket potential. Based on current sales leakage, there may be significant opportunities to capture additional retail/restaurant uses as noted in Table 8.

Average Annual Projected Demand Through 2024

Type of Space	Based on Projected Jobs		Based on Absorption Trends	
	Townsend SF	Middlesex County SF	Townsend SF	Submarket SF
Office	1,200	2,800,000	500	2,900
Industrial/Warehouse	negligible	negligible	1,000	46,000
Retail/Restaurant	5,000	364,000	2,000	11,000
	Retail Opportunity Gap			
Townsend 2019 SF	135,000 (current leakage)			

Sources: MDOL ES202; BEA/REIS; CoStar Property Information System; and FXM Associates, 2019

Rental housing is an important asset to economic development because it enables a community to attract or retain its younger labor force, empty nesters and early retirees who want to downsize, and others not interested in or able to afford homeownership. Rental housing development can

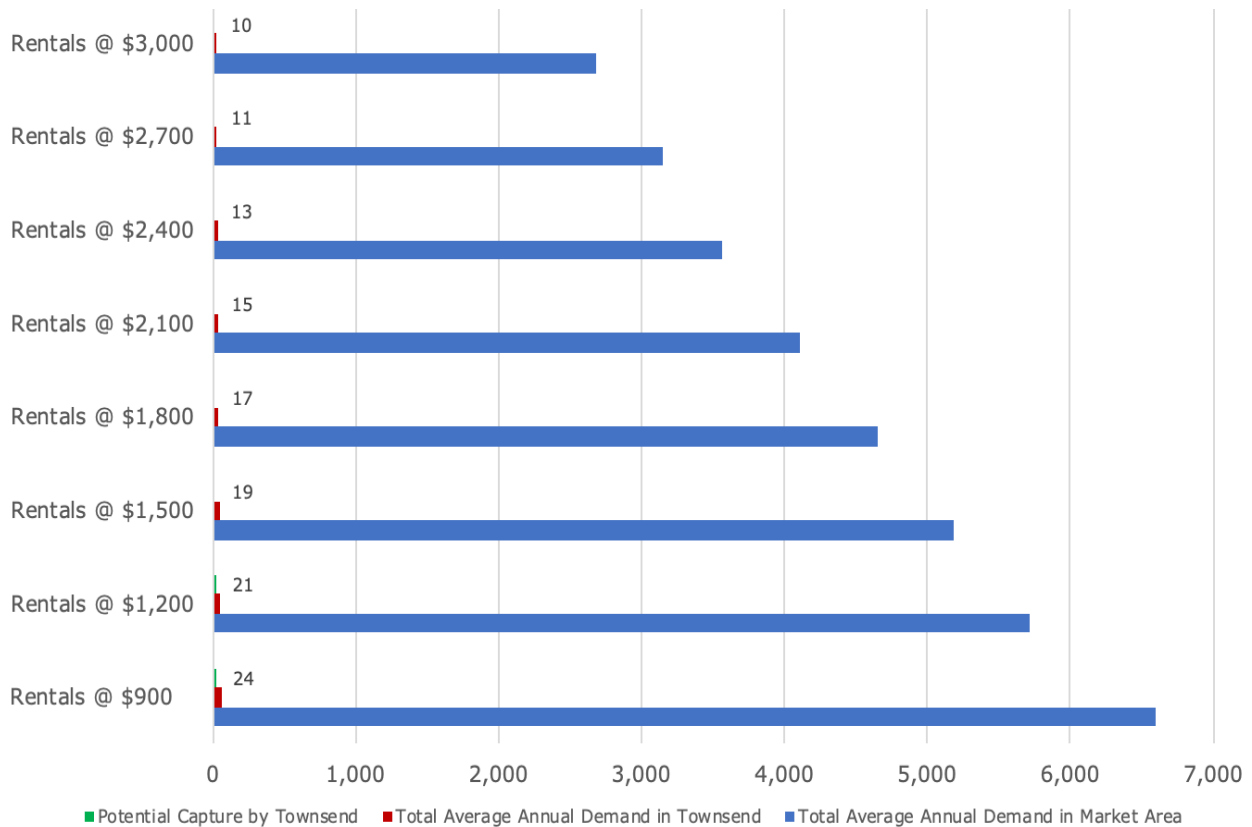
¹ The submarket is defined to include Ashby, Ayer, Groton, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend.



complement office, retail, and recreational uses and lend scale to achieve feasible development. In the case of a potential mixed-use development, it also represents an opportunity to upgrade underutilized commercial properties.

To estimate demand for rental housing in Townsend, FXM employed its proprietary *Housing Demand Model* which projects over the next five years the average annual demand for rental housing by age group, income and affordable rental rates. In addition to assessing the demand for rental housing FXM also analyzed historical trends in the inventory, absorption, and monthly rents for units within the Townsend market area. The graph below shows average annual demand and potential absorption/capture of new rental units in Townsend, which now holds a very limited supply of multifamily rental housing.

**Average Annual Demand for Rentals:
Townsend Market Area
New Rental Captures**



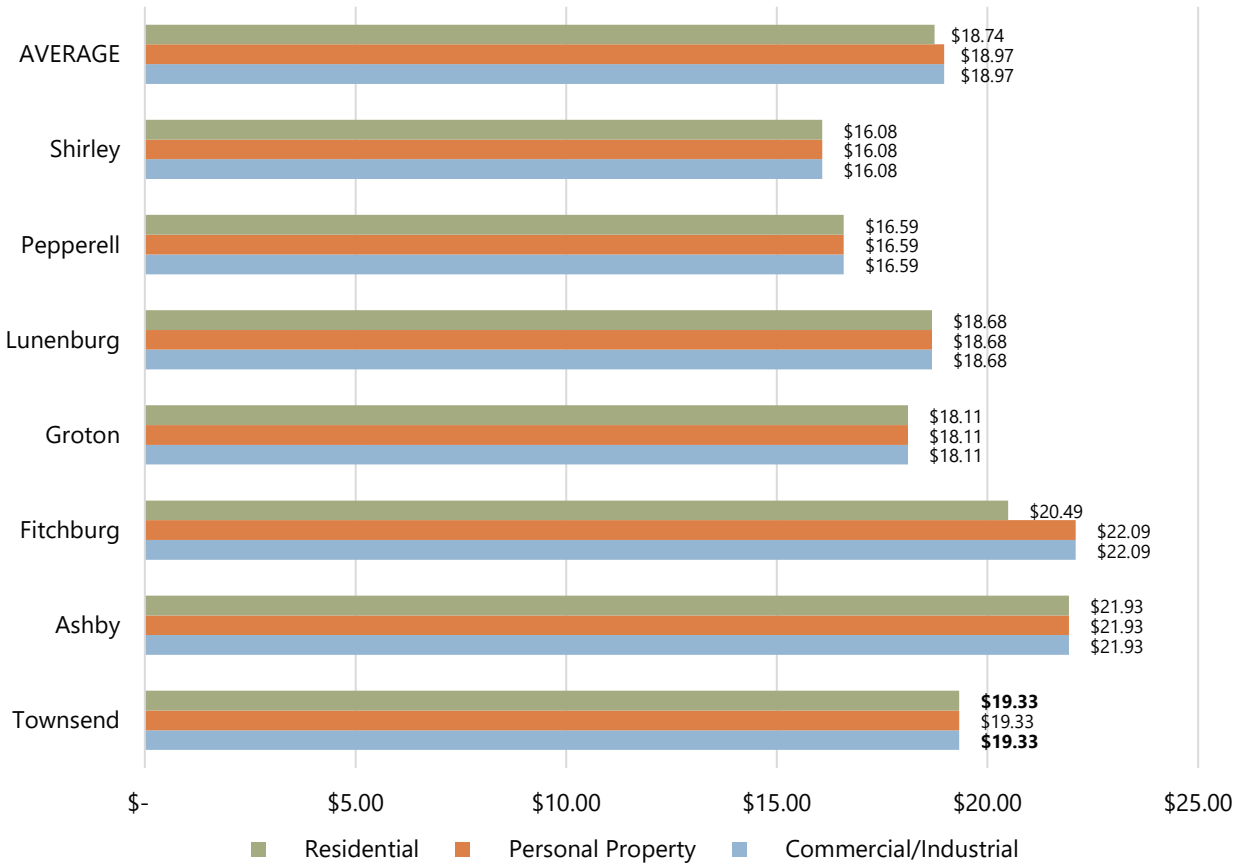
Source: FXM Associates' *Housing Demand Model*, 2019

■ Fiscal Comparisons

Townsend's residential and commercial tax rates are slightly above the average of surrounding communities, as shown in the following graph. Only Fitchburg and Ashby have commercial tax rates that are higher than Townsend's. The difference is not a significant competitive disadvantage. Townsend derives 8% its property tax revenues from commercial uses compared to an average 10% commercial for the surrounding communities. One of the objectives of an economic development



Tax Rates per \$1,000 Valuation FY 2019



strategy is to increase the commercial tax bases to lower the property tax burden on residents. The success of Townsend in supporting existing businesses and attracting new ones will make the community more affordable and attractive to new residents and businesses.

■ **Economic Development Strategy**

- Supporting existing businesses and focusing on attracting new businesses in the prospective growth industries identified in this report, as well as attracting additional retail uses identified for which there is a measurable sales leakage out of town, would give Townsend a foundation for working toward a stronger local economy. For example, some communities near Townsend such as Groton and Littleton, or Hollis N.H., have adopted well-organized, visible “Buy Local” programs to support local farms and business establishments. Businesses thrive when they have access to services and supports that are essential to their operation. Communities with a somewhat larger tax base than Townsend’s have created local economic development or community development positions inside town government, a move that helps them build capacity and compete for state resources. Having a town planner makes a big difference in a community’s ability to work on economic development, and many of the towns near Townsend have a planning department. Such efforts help because one challenge Townsend has is that many of the jobs available in businesses currently operating in town do not offer high wages, so keeping housing affordability and housing options in mind is very important. Housing is an



integral part of any economic development strategy, so diversifying Townsend's housing supply will go hand-in-hand with efforts to strengthen the local economy. In addition, zoning and permitting requirements should be designed to encourage businesses that can thrive in a small town, e.g., allowing bed-and-breakfast establishments as of right, subject to an administrative site plan review bylaw.

- Even if Townsend does not hire a professional planner a town official or designated community volunteer should immediately initiate contact with the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, and the North Central Massachusetts Economic Development Corporation, and participate in the various committees, data bases, roundtables, and targeted meetings comprising the current and anticipated future efforts of these organizations. A recent report² describes the ongoing and new initiatives, led by the Chamber, to support local economic development within their constituent communities – which include Townsend. The comprehensive strategy included in this report includes ongoing and planned new initiatives that Townsend could benefit from in business recruitment, small business/entrepreneurial growth, existing business retention and expansion, workforce development, asset development, and marketing. The plan is designed to allow local communities with limited economic development personnel and other resources to engage with Chamber professionals and others.

The report sections below provide the data and analyses underlying the strategy and recommendations and are essential to their full understanding.

² *One North Central: A Roadmap for Regional Prosperity*, June 2021, prepared for the NCM Chamber of Commerce, NCM Development Corporation, and Visit North Central Massachusetts, by RKG Associates, FXM Associates, Hodge Economic Consulting, and JM Goldson. www.northcentralmass.com



DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

■ *Population and Households*

In terms of elements key to economic growth, i.e., population growth and income, Townsend's growth is slightly lower than Middlesex County's and compares favorably to the State of Massachusetts.

As shown in Table 1, the estimated population of the Town of Townsend was 9,470 in 2019. The Town has gained 602 residents since 2010 (an increase of 7%), while Middlesex County has grown by 8%, and the State of Massachusetts has grown by about 6%. Townsend lost population (-3%) between 2000 and 2010, a period of growth for both Middlesex County (4%) and the State (3%). Townsend, however, is projected to grow at a rate of 4% between 2019 and 2024, compared to 3% growth projected for Middlesex County and the State. This growth is important to Townsend's economic health, which depends to a large extent on a growing population's demand for goods and services as well as a potential source of new businesses and of labor for town businesses.

The 2010 Census count of 3,222 households in Townsend represented a gain of 4% in the decade between 2000 and 2010, followed by a larger gain of 8% since 2010. The number of households is projected grow at 4% as the population rises to 2024. Average household size in Townsend is 2.7 people, similar to both Middlesex County (2.6) and that of the State (2.6).

As shown in Table 1, the average annual income in Townsend (\$123,659) is lower than average incomes for Middlesex County (\$141,354), but higher than the rest of the Commonwealth (\$115,037). The estimated median income (\$98,067) is approximately \$5,000 lower than that of Middlesex County, but over \$16,000 higher than that for the State of Massachusetts.

Townsend's poverty rate is lower than that of Middlesex County (3% versus 5%) and of the state as a whole (3% versus 8%). There is also a low proportion of Families Below Poverty with Children (1%) compared to that of the county (4%) and the state (6%)



Table 1. Townsend Population & Households Compared to Middlesex County and State Overall

Population & Households Compared

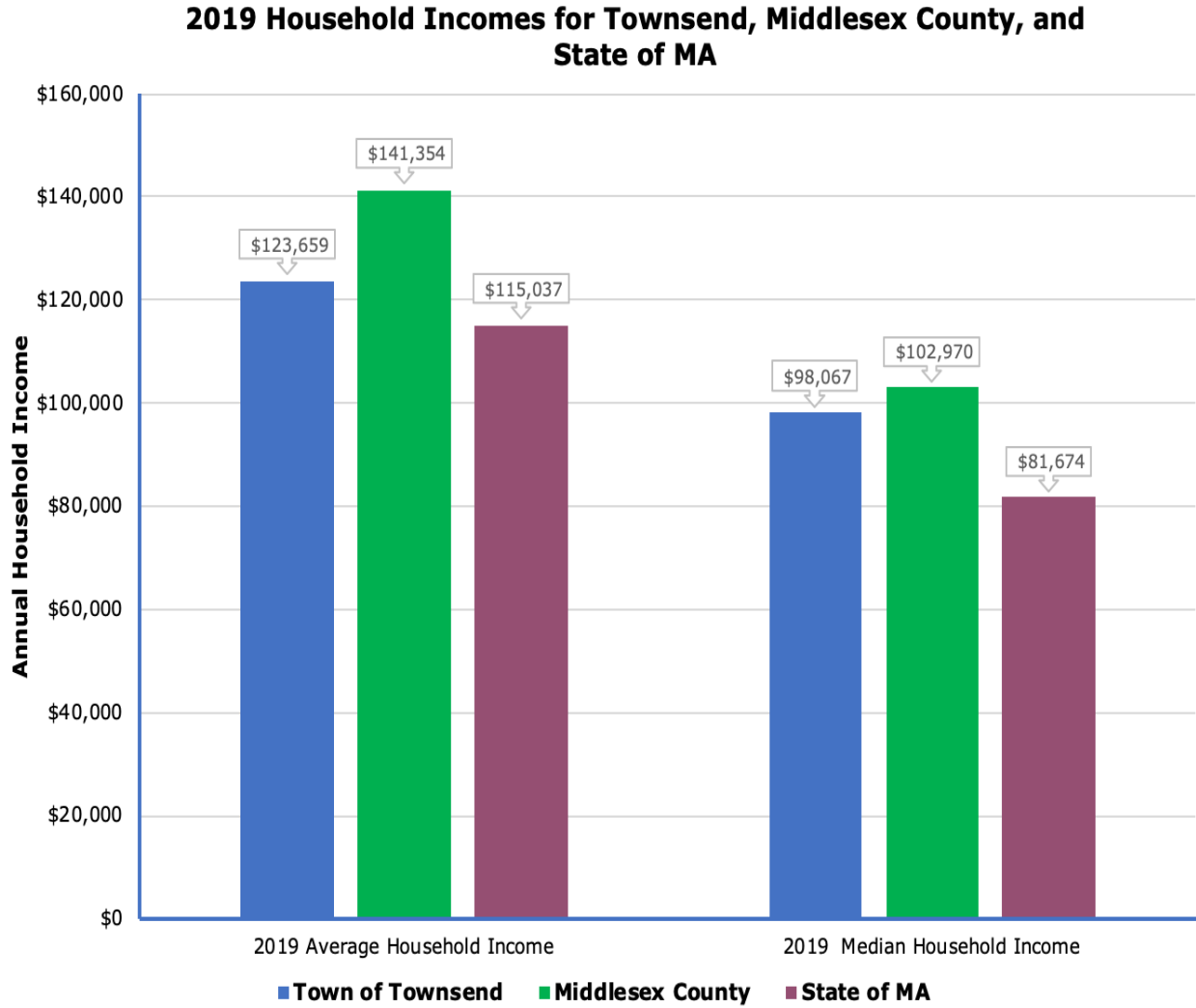
	Town of Townsend		Middlesex County		State of MA	
Population						
2024 Projection	9,829		1,680,009		7,131,739	
2019 Estimate	9,470		1,619,612		6,916,527	
2010 Census	8,868		1,503,085		6,547,629	
2000 Census	9,142		1,465,313		6,349,100	
<i>Projected Growth 2019 - 2024</i>		4%		3%		3%
<i>Estimated Growth 2010 - 2019</i>		7%		8%		6%
<i>Growth 2000 - 2010</i>		-3%		4%		3%
2019 Estimated Average Age	40.8		40.0		40.6	
Households						
2024 Projection	3,629		655,762		2,804,920	
2019 Estimate	3,483		630,126		2,710,577	
2010 Census	3,222		580,688		2,547,075	
2000 Census	3,096		561,205		2,443,572	
<i>Projected Growth 2019 - 2024</i>		4%		3%		3%
<i>Estimated Growth 2010 - 2019</i>		8%		9%		6%
<i>Growth 2000 - 2010</i>		4%		4%		4%
2019 Average Household Size	2.7		2.6		2.6	
2019 Estimated Household Income						
	3,483		630,126		2,710,577	
Income Less than \$15,000	157	5%	42,690	7%	249,280	9%
Income \$15,000 - \$24,999	101	3%	34,924	6%	197,422	7%
Income \$25,000 - \$34,999	171	5%	31,750	5%	177,436	7%
Income \$35,000 - \$49,999	271	8%	48,204	8%	263,460	10%
Income \$50,000 - \$74,999	537	15%	77,969	12%	376,903	14%
Income \$75,000 - \$99,999	543	16%	71,436	11%	320,387	12%
Income \$100,000 - \$124,999	411	12%	64,799	10%	271,919	10%
Income \$125,000 - \$149,000	316	9%	55,306	9%	216,612	8%
Income \$150,000 - \$199,999	474	14%	76,544	12%	262,249	10%
Income \$200,000 - \$249,999	239	7%	42,725	7%	137,018	5%
Income \$250,000 - \$499,999	203	6%	50,867	8%	151,232	6%
Income \$500,000 and over	60	2%	32,912	5%	86,659	3%
Household Income Less than \$25,000	258	7%	77,614	12%	446,702	16%
Household income more than \$150,000	976	28%	203,048	32%	637,158	24%
2019 Families by Poverty Status						
2019 Families Below Poverty	91	3%	21,020	5%	130,371	8%
2019 Families Below Poverty with Children	32	1%	14,404	4%	95,735	6%
2019 Estimated Average Household Income	\$ 123,659		\$ 141,354		\$ 115,037	
2019 Estimated Median Household Income	\$ 98,067		\$ 102,970		\$ 81,674	

Source: EnvironicsAnalytics, 2019 and FXM Associates



Figure 1 illustrates the relative annual incomes among Townsend, Middlesex County, and State of Massachusetts households.

Figure 1. Household Incomes Compared



Source: EnvironicsAnalytics, 2019 and FXM Associates



■ Housing

Table 2 summarizes housing characteristics in Townsend, Middlesex County, and the State of Massachusetts.

Table 2. Housing Characteristics

Housing Characteristics						
	Town of Townsend		Middlesex County		State of MA	
Tenure (Occupied Housing Units)	3,483		630,126		2,710,577	
Owner Occupied	2,988	86%	391,734	62%	1,683,516	62%
Renter Occupied	495	14%	238,392	38%	1,027,061	38%
Avg. Length of Residence (yrs)						
Owner Occupied	19		18		18.5	
Renter Occupied	7		7		7.5	
Owner-Occupied Housing Values	2,988		391,734		1,683,516	
Value Less than \$20,000	23	0.8%	3,153	0.8%	15,971	0.9%
Value \$20,000 - \$39,999	18	0.6%	1,437	0.4%	9,994	0.6%
Value \$40,000 - \$59,999	19	0.6%	1,288	0.3%	7,424	0.4%
Value \$60,000 - \$79,999	18	0.6%	922	0.2%	6,639	0.4%
Value \$80,000 - \$99,999	14	0.5%	887	0.2%	10,775	0.6%
Value \$100,000 - \$149,999	40	1%	4,171	1%	53,288	3%
Value \$150,000 - \$199,999	158	5%	7,788	2%	106,284	6%
Value \$200,000 - \$299,999	1,046	35%	29,275	7%	287,827	17%
Value \$300,000 - \$399,999	809	27%	57,948	15%	316,724	19%
Value \$400,000 - \$499,999	444	15%	66,993	17%	269,421	16%
Value \$500,000 - \$749,999	297	10%	107,043	27%	319,144	19%
Value \$750,000 - \$999,999	67	2%	57,713	15%	151,219	9%
Value \$1,000,000 or more	35	1%	53,116	14%	128,806	8%
Median Value	\$317,070		\$540,050		\$409,078	
2019 Est. Housing Units by Year Structure Built	3,634		662,397		2,981,030	
Built 2014 or Later	270	7%	45,815	7%	162,368	5%
Built 2010 to 2013	64	2%	8,840	1%	33,636	1%
Built 2000 to 2009	318	9%	47,286	7%	218,917	7%
Built 1990 to 1999	345	9%	45,305	7%	219,328	7%
Built 1980 to 1989	510	14%	59,348	9%	312,007	10%
Built 1970 to 1979	870	24%	65,479	10%	333,056	11%
Built 1960 to 1969	292	8%	68,958	10%	289,154	10%
Built 1950 to 1959	271	7%	74,599	11%	319,161	11%
Built 1940 to 1949	228	6%	35,483	5%	163,458	5%
Built 1939 or Earlier	466	13%	211,284	32%	929,945	31%
2019 Est. Median Year Structure Built	1976		1961		1962	

Source: EnvironicsAnalytics, 2019 and FXM Associates

The great majority of Townsend residences, 86%, are owner-occupied, higher than the 62% of Middlesex County and of state residents who own. The average length of residence for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units in Townsend is about the same duration as for those in the county and the state.

The median value of owner-occupied structures in Townsend (\$317,070) is considerably lower than in the county (\$540,050) and in the state (\$409,078). The largest proportion of Townsend's housing is valued in the \$200,000 to \$299,999 range, while for the county and state, the largest range is \$500,000 to \$749,999.



Townsend's housing stock is much newer than the housing stocks in Middlesex County and in the state: only about 13% the housing stock in Townsend was built before 1939, with a median construction year of 1976, compared to median construction years of 1961 and 1962 in Middlesex County and the state, respectively. Almost of third of housing in the county and state was built before 1939.

■ ***Workforce Characteristics***

The data in Table 3 show that the proportion of residents aged 25+ with a bachelor's degree or higher for the Town of Townsend is one percentage point more than for Middlesex County and six percentage points less than for the Commonwealth.

Townsend has a higher percentage of service, farm, and blue-collar workers when compared to the County, but the same proportion as in the Commonwealth. The proportion of households in Townsend without a vehicle (2%) is much less than that of the county (11%) and the state (13%) but households in Townsend are also more likely to have two or more vehicles (77%) than in the county (55%) or state (52%). Travel times to work for those in Townsend are longer than for the county and state: 39 minutes, compared to 34 and 33 minutes at the county and state levels respectively.



Table 3. Workforce Characteristics, 2019

Workforce Characteristics for Townsend, Middlesex County, and State of MA

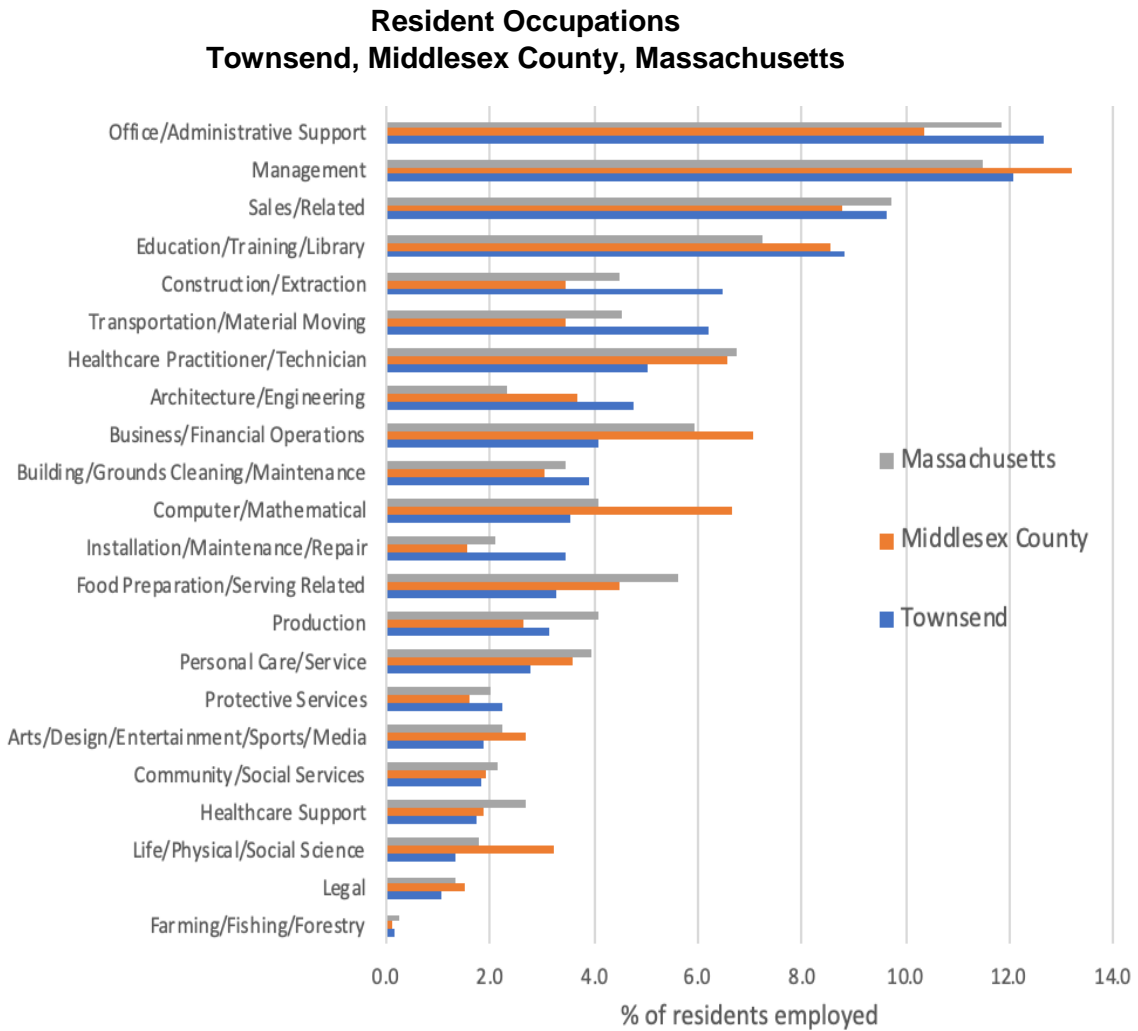
	Town of Townsend		Middlesex County		State of MA	
Education (Pop. Age 25+)	6,725		1,137,701		4,766,815	
Less than 9th grade	76	1%	41,887	3%	220,451	5%
Some High School, no diploma	199	3%	38,387	5%	248,368	5%
High School Graduate (or GED)	1,969	29%	226,097	29%	1,188,929	25%
Some College, no degree	1,301	19%	144,120	18%	753,381	16%
Associate Degree	680	10%	68,066	9%	372,047	8%
Bachelor's Degree	1,616	24%	308,250	23%	1,135,958	24%
Master's Degree	752	11%	210,862	10%	633,236	13%
Professional School Degree	55	1%	45,004	2%	141,317	3%
Doctorate Degree	77	1%	55,028	1%	127,174	3%
Less than high school diploma	275	4%	80,274	8%	468,819	10%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	2,500	37%	619,144	36%	2,037,685	43%
Occupation Classification (Pop. Age 16+)	5,515		881,599		3,584,409	
White Collar	3,675	67%	654,541	74%	2,398,182	67%
Blue Collar	1,063	19%	97,826	11%	544,368	15%
Service and Farm	777	14%	129,232	15%	641,859	18%
Type of Worker (Civ. Employed Pop. 16+)	5,515		881,599		3,584,409	
For-Profit Private Workers	3,791	69%	575,441	65%	2,382,663	66%
Non-Profit Private Workers	377	7%	125,276	14%	451,630	13%
Local Government Workers	566	10%	55,776	6%	245,505	7%
State Government Workers	113	2%	24,892	3%	128,385	4%
Federal Government Workers	96	2%	14,799	2%	57,543	2%
Self-Emp Workers	570	10%	84,672	10%	314,176	9%
Unpaid Family Workers	2	0%	743	0%	4,507	0%
2019 Est. Households by Number of Vehicles	3,483		630,126		2,710,577	
No Vehicles	87	2%	67,147	11%	339,251	13%
1 Vehicle	730	21%	219,182	35%	964,924	36%
2 Vehicles	1,549	44%	246,378	39%	982,077	36%
3 Vehicles	719	21%	70,643	11%	305,986	11%
4 Vehicles	292	8%	20,213	3%	88,841	3%
5 or more Vehicles	106	3%	6,563	1%	29,498	1%
Average Travel Time to Work (minutes)	39		34		33	

Source: EnvironicsAnalytics, 2019 and FXM Associates

Figure 2 shows the occupations of employed residents in Townsend compared to those in Middlesex County and Massachusetts overall. A measurably higher proportion of Townsend residents are employed in office/administrative support, education, construction, transportation, architecture/engineering, building/grounds, installation, and protective services occupations compared to residents of Middlesex County and Massachusetts overall. A relatively lower proportion of Townsend residents hold occupations in healthcare, business/financial, computer, food preparation, personal care, arts/entertainment, social services, science, and legal fields than do the overall residents of Middlesex County and the State of Massachusetts.



Figure 2. Occupations Compared



Figures 3 and 4 show the commuting origin and destination patterns for work trips out of (Figure 3) and into Townsend (Figure 4). The blue columns represent numbers of commuters by town, and the orange line is the cumulative percentage. The principal destinations for Townsend workers are, in addition to Townsend, Lunenburg, Fitchburg, and Worcester. The major origins for work trips into Townsend are after Townsend, Pepperell, Leominster, and Windham. Note that there are more New Hampshire workers coming into Townsend to work, mostly from Nashua, than Townsend workers to New Hampshire.



Figure 3. Townsend Commuters Destinations

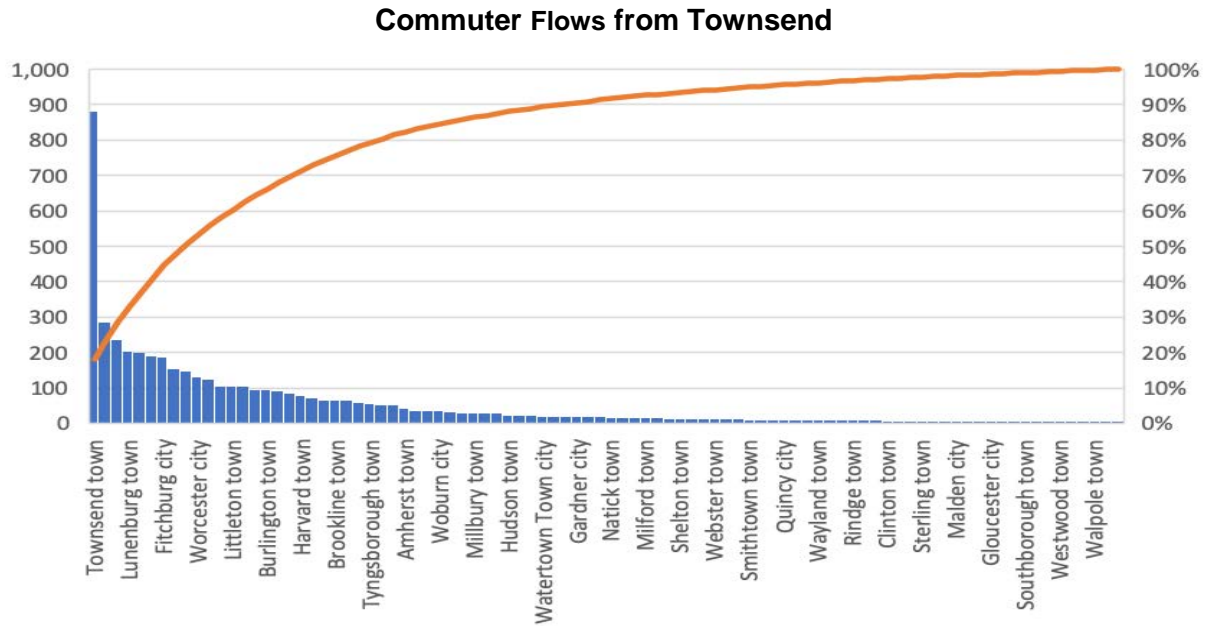
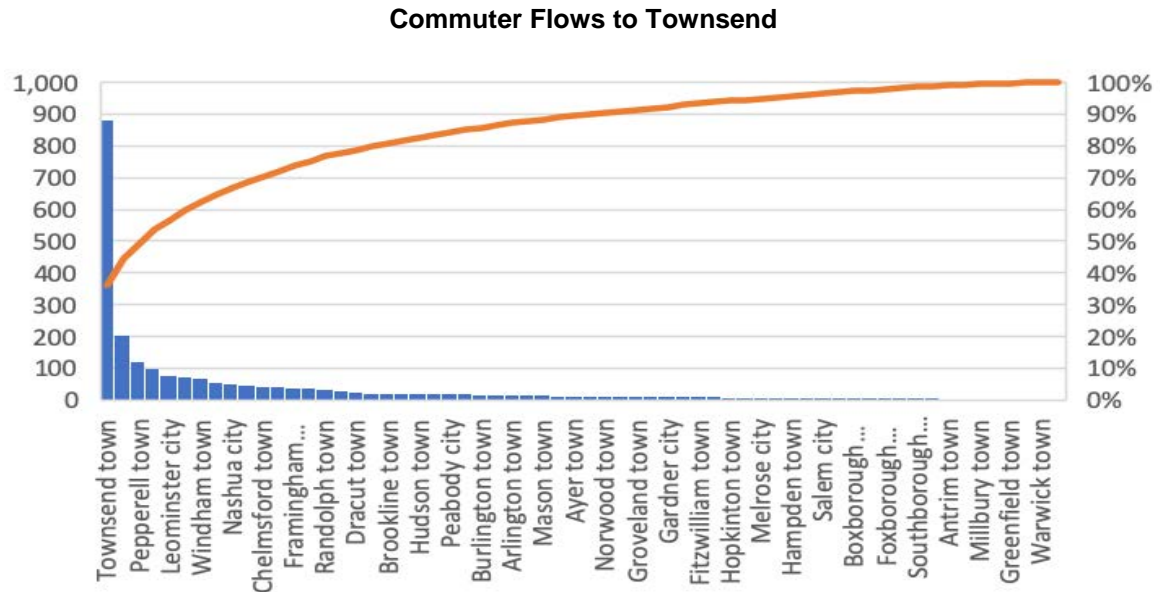


Figure 4. Origin of Commuters to Townsend





■ **Business Characteristics**

Table 4, below, lists the total number of employees and sales by major industry for 2007 and 2017 (the most recent year for which REIS data are available). The sectors with the highest number of employees in 2017 are Manufacturing, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services. The sectors with the highest employment growth rates were Accommodation and Food Services (115%), and Administrative Services (55%). The biggest drops in employment between 2007 and 2017 were experienced in the Transportation and Warehousing (-100%) and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (-61%).

Table 4. Townsend Employment Sectors

Employment Sectors for the Town of Townsend					
Sectors	2007 Employment	2017 Employment	Absolute Change in Total Jobs	% Change in Total Jobs	
23 - Construction	140	154	14	10%	
31-33 - Manufacturing	666	545	(121)	-18%	
42 - Wholesale Trade	47	49	2	5%	
44-45 - Retail Trade	318	329	11	3%	
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	113	-	(113)	-100%	
51 - Information	-	35	35		
52 - Finance and Insurance	43	48	5	13%	
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	107	42	(65)	-61%	
54 - Professional and Technical Services	62	74	11	18%	
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	99	153	54	55%	
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	92	97	5	5%	
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	78	69	(9)	-12%	▲
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	151	324	173	115%	
81 - Other Services, Except Public Administration	134	162	28	21%	
TOTAL All Industries	2,050	2,080	30	1%	
Total New Jobs			338		

Source: Mass Department of Labor, ES202 Data Series, Adjusted Values, 2007 and 2017; Regional Economic Information System, 2017; and FXM Associates



Figure 5 illustrates graphically the relative changes in employment in the top sectors between 2007 and 2017 shown in Table 4. The sectors are ranked by number of 2017 jobs.

Figure 5. Townsend Sectors Comparison
2007 and 2017 Employment Sectors Compared

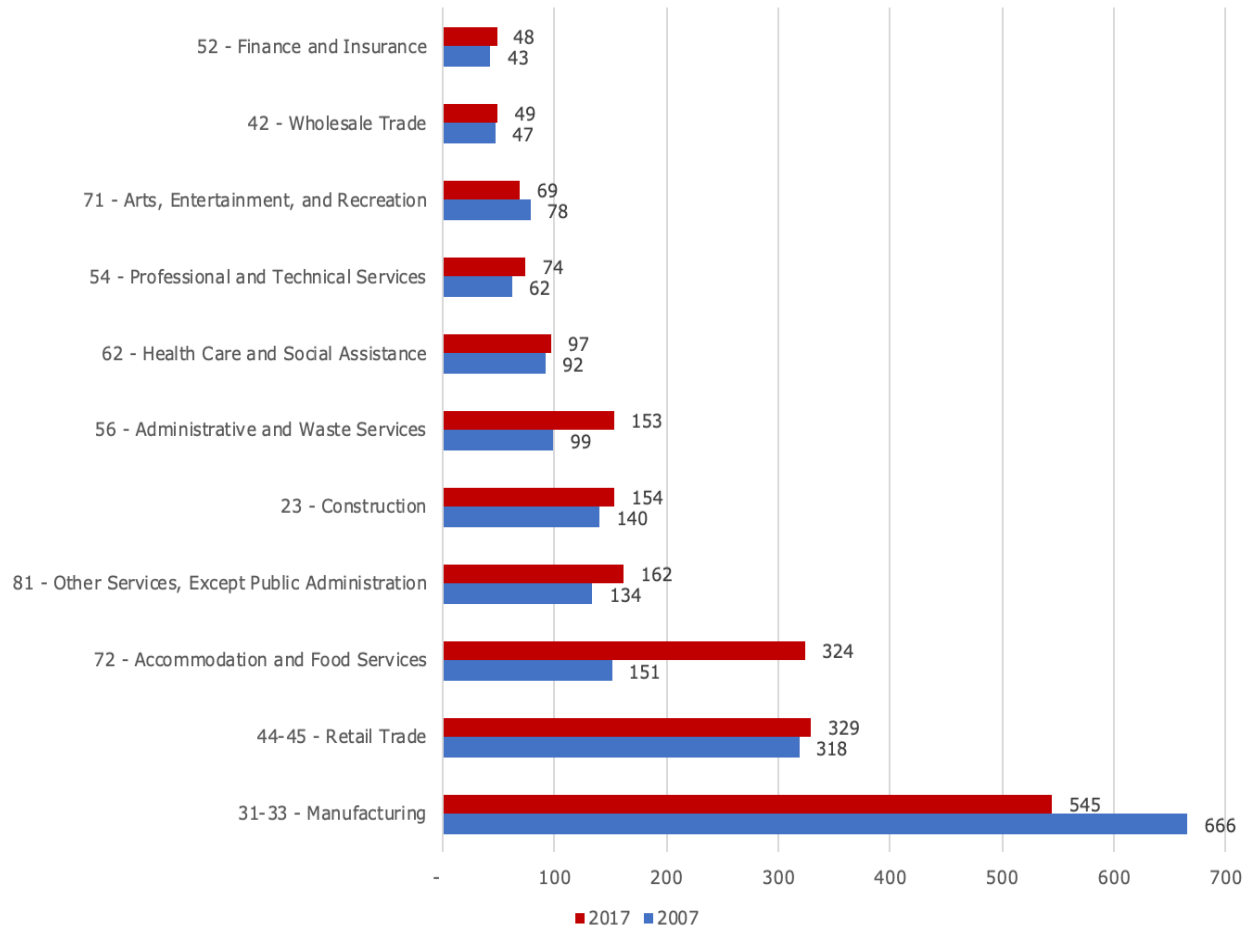


Table 5 shows average annual wages by industry in Townsend, Middlesex County, and the State of Massachusetts for 2018. Average wages paid to persons working in Townsend are closest to the county and statewide average annual wages for Retail Trade and Real Estate, Rental & Leasing, but are slightly lower even in those sectors. At \$44,700 on average for all jobs, average annual wages paid in Townsend are only 55% of those for Middlesex County overall and 66% of the statewide average. Even in high wage sectors like Professional and Technical Services and Information, Townsend wages are barely a third those in Middlesex County.

Figure 6 shows the same information graphically.



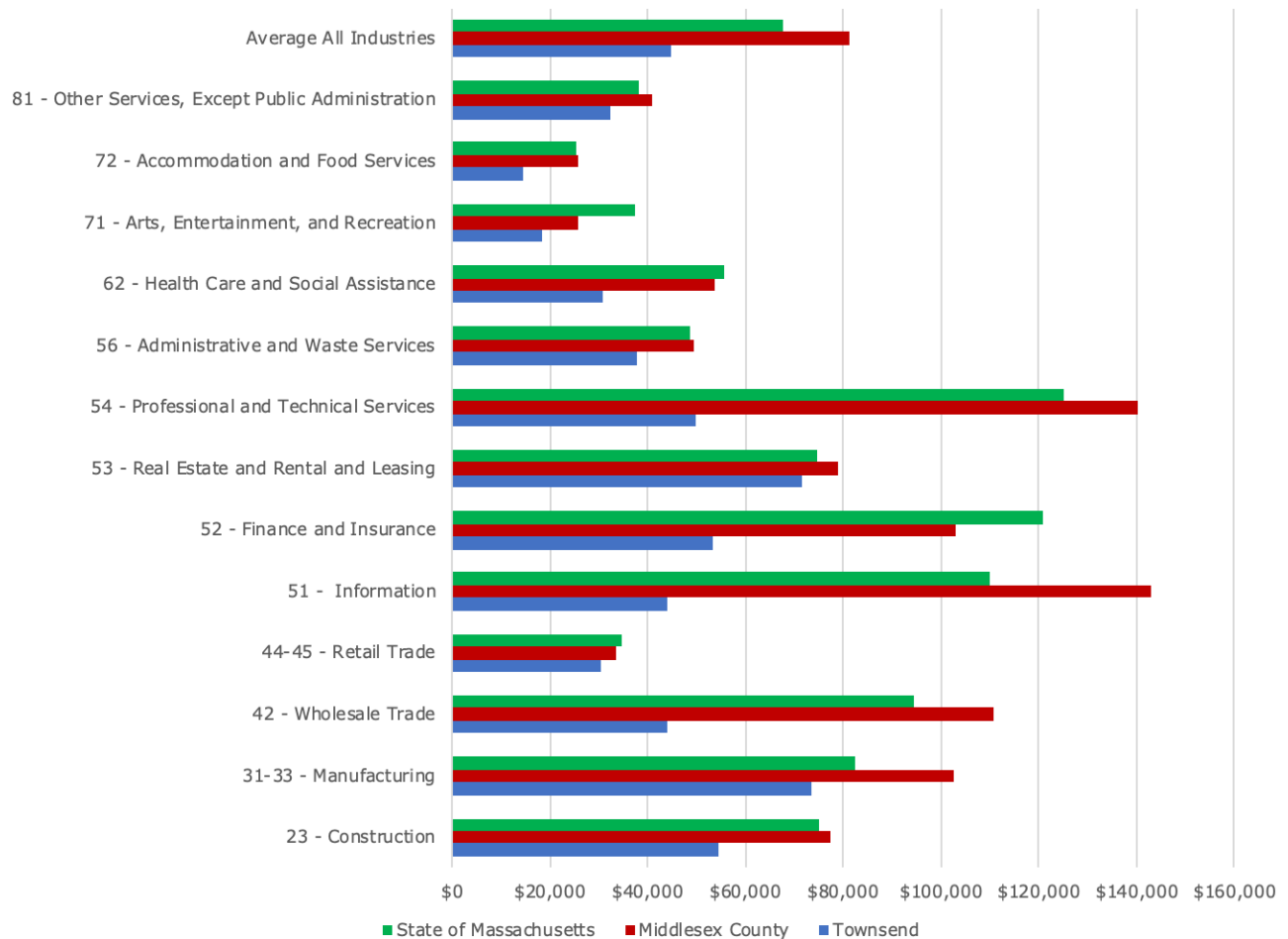
Table 5. Wages by Sector, 2018

Wages by Sector, 2018, Townsend, Middlesex County, and State of Massachusetts

Sectors	Townsend	Town as % of County	Town as % of State	Middlesex County	State of Massachusetts
23 - Construction	\$54,340	70%	72%	\$77,428	\$75,140
31-33 - Manufacturing	\$73,528	72%	89%	\$102,492	\$82,264
42 - Wholesale Trade	\$44,200	40%	47%	\$110,708	\$94,484
44-45 - Retail Trade	\$30,264	90%	87%	\$33,488	\$34,788
51 - Information	\$43,888	31%	40%	\$143,104	\$110,136
52 - Finance and Insurance	\$53,300	52%	44%	\$102,908	\$121,004
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$71,552	91%	96%	\$78,936	\$74,776
54 - Professional and Technical Services	\$49,920	36%	40%	\$140,244	\$124,904
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	\$37,700	76%	77%	\$49,452	\$48,672
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	\$31,004	58%	56%	\$53,612	\$55,484
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$18,252	71%	49%	\$25,584	\$37,284
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	\$14,664	57%	57%	\$25,844	\$25,532
81 - Other Services, Except Public Administration	\$32,292	79%	84%	\$41,080	\$38,376
Average All Industries	\$44,668	55%	66%	\$81,276	\$67,860

Source: MA Executive office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), ES202 Data, 2018, 3rd Quarter; and FXM Associates

Figure 6. Average Annual Wages by Industry, 2018





MARKET CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

This part of the report focuses on potential for growth in those parts of the economy which are likely targets for Townsend's real estate and economic development. The discussion includes:

- an analysis of historical trends in employment by sector;
- potential space demand based on historical employment trends;
- current opportunities to capture retail sales leakage; and
- analysis of trends in the inventory, vacancies, occupancy, and lease rates for office, industrial, and retail space in Townsend as well as in the surrounding submarkets for each type of space.

■ *Employment Trends*

The measure most widely used for market trends analyses is employment because historical and projected jobs are a good indicator of the current status and future direction of a given industry. Increasing employment indicates industries that are growing, whether through expansion of existing businesses or opening of new ones, and therefore are most likely to provide future employment opportunities in the community. Also, reasonably reliable historic data are readily available and can be used to project future employment opportunities. The two sources used here for the employment trends graphs are the ES202 reports from the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, modified by the more inclusive (because they include self-employment data) reports from the Regional Economic Information System (REIS) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The following graphs display trends and projections for Townsend and Middlesex County. Note that because of the size differences between town and county, the graphs should be read on two axes, the county on the right in orange and Townsend on the left in blue.

Figure 7 shows total employment trends for all industries. The R^2 values for the projections for Middlesex County are high, suggesting generally upward trends for the county since the recession.³

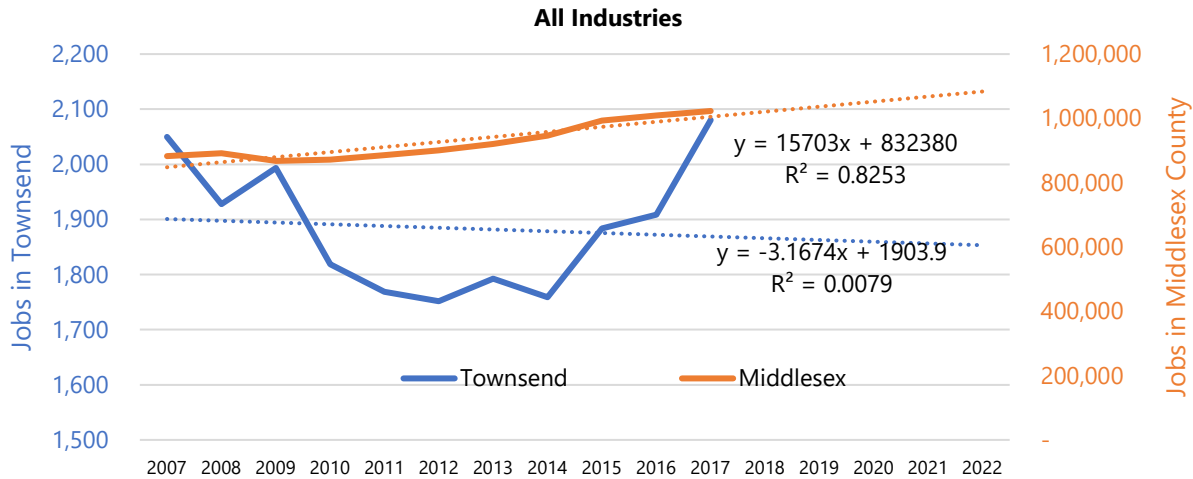
³ The method chosen to project near-term future employment is a linear auto-regression of the time series data of employment categories from the sources above. This method assumes that the overall economic factors influencing employment growth (or decline) in the recent past will continue into the near future and that the observed trends in employment will continue in a roughly straight-line fashion for the next few years. The statistic used to signify the confidence in a given projection is called the coefficient of determination (R^2) calculation and is presented alongside each projection given below. The closer the R^2 value is to 1, the better the predictive value of linear analysis of past performance.

A limiting factor on the level of confidence in the projections is the influence of the 2008-9 recession, which is still being felt in some sectors and which may also affect the accuracy of a linear trendline projection. For example, a sector might be showing strong growth since 2011 but the volatility introduced by the recession could pull down the projected future growth and also lower the R^2 value of the projection. Therefore, the historical trendlines may be adjusted to account for a shift in the level of employment due to the recession, or a rapid post-recession recovery



The confidence level for the Townsend projection, on the other hand, is very low because of the erratic performance of jobs in the Town overall, both since the recession and more recently.

Figure 7. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: All Industries, 2007-2022



Noteworthy in the comparison of historical employment trends is that overall jobs in Townsend bottomed out in 2012, at 1,752 jobs. Between 2012 and 2017 Townsend gained approximately 329 jobs, a 19% increase, showing a mix of job losses and gains across sectors. The greatest (and strongest) gain was in Accommodation and Food Services, which bodes well for increased tourism and retail activity.

Office-using industries are often a potential target for more growth and development, although that is less certain in the case of Townsend, according to local sources. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this analysis FXM has examined office-using sectors as defined by NAICS codes:

Professional Offices, Non-medical

- 51–Information
- 52–Finance and Insurance
- 53–Real Estate and Rental & Leasing
- 54–Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- 55–Management of Companies and Enterprises
- 56–Administrative and Support Services and Waste Management & Remediation

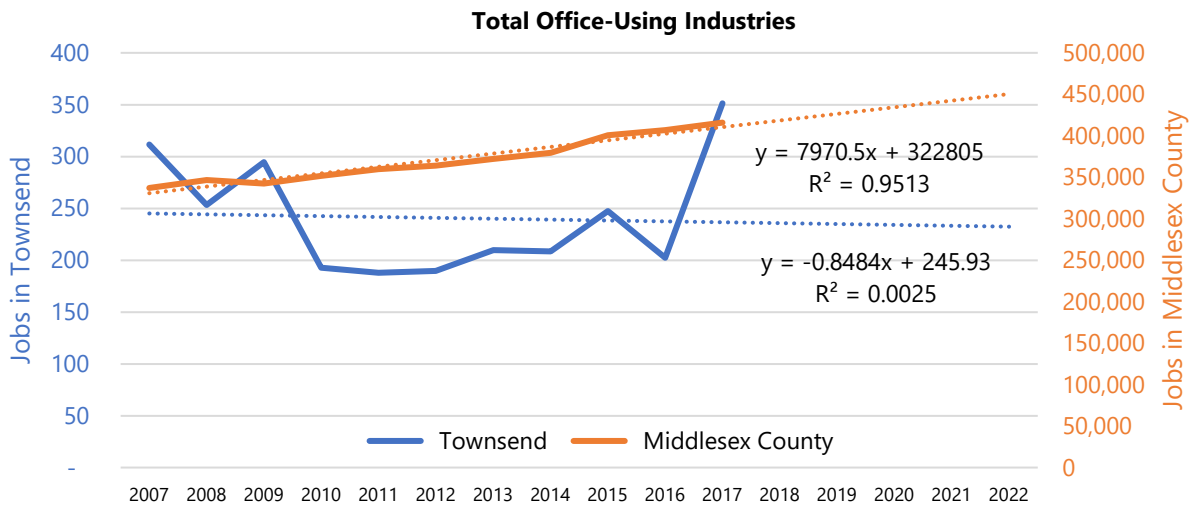
to the previous longer-term trend. Meanwhile, since this report was prepared, COVID-19 has upended employment, and it is still too soon to know whether and how the recovery will affect past trends. Over the next several years still other factors, whose quantitative effects are not foreseeable at this time, will affect the projections shown, including the impact of tariffs and other international trade policies, the real estate cycle (currently approaching 10 years, which is unusually long), and inflation/interest rate policies – all of which can influence business practices.



There is no graph for the Management of Companies and Enterprises, as there has been no employment in this sector in Townsend. There are also only spotty data on jobs in Real Estate and Rental and Leasing in Townsend, so no graph is displayed.

Figure 8 shows trends and projections for all office-using industries in Townsend and in Middlesex County. The projection for Middlesex County office-using employment is sound, with an R^2 value above 0.92 indicating a promising and reliable upward trend. Observations in Townsend are fewer and more variable and hence the trendline has a lower predictive value based on historic growth, an R^2 of only 0.13. Consequently, it is difficult to know with any confidence whether these sectors as a group have potential for growth by interpreting data from the past ten years that include the recession.

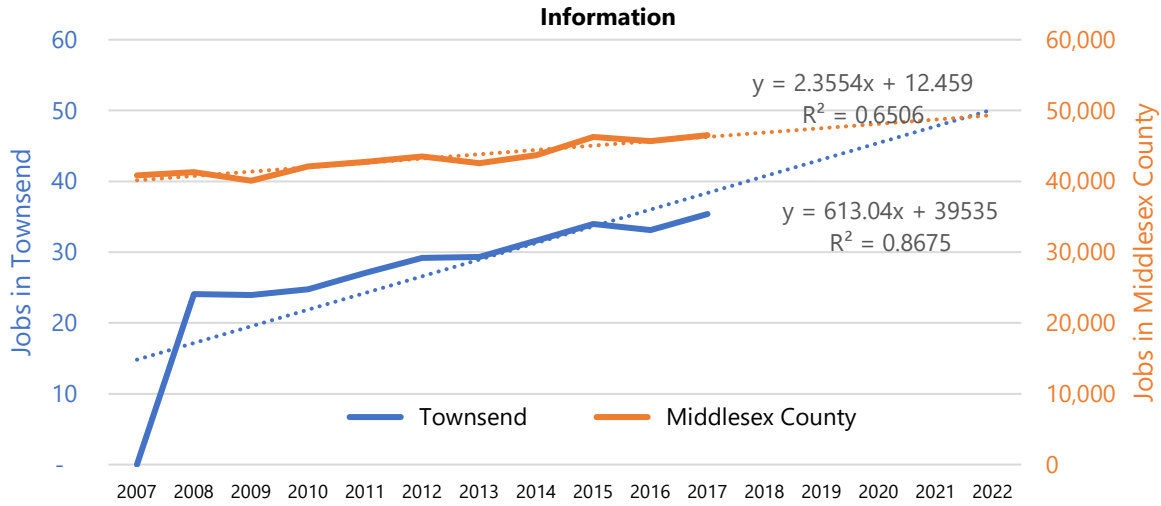
Figure 8. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Total Office-Using Industries, 2007-2022



Trends in the Information sector are shown in Figure 9. Both projections have a high level of confidence, with employment expected to increase in Townsend and in Middlesex County; however, it is a relatively small sector for the town.

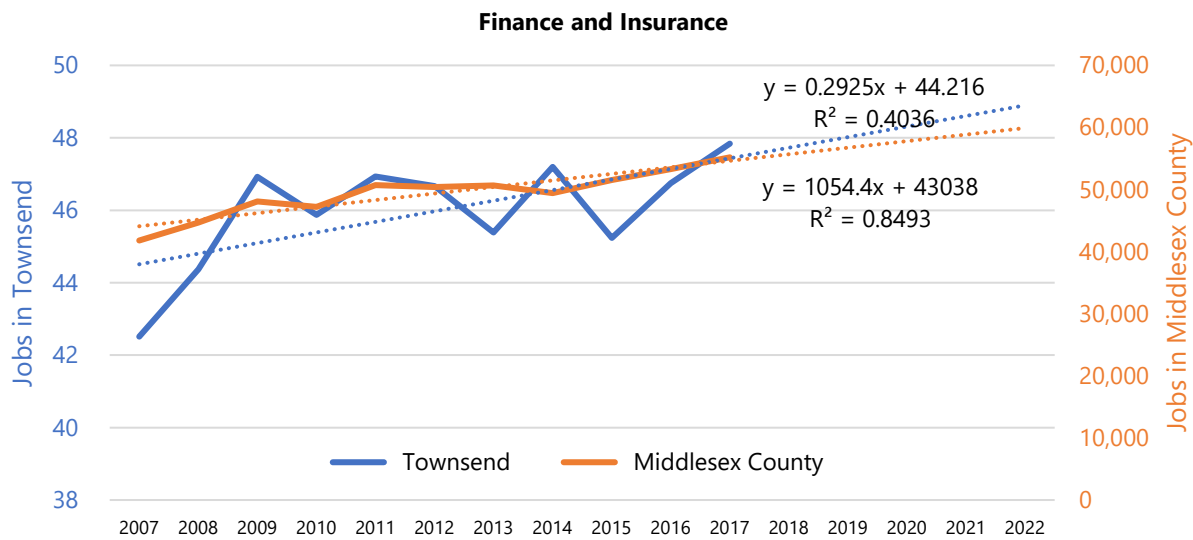


Figure 9. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Information, 2007-2022



Employment in Finance and Insurance is projected to grow in Middlesex County and in Townsend. Both projections, for town and county, are positive, with a strong R² at the county level. Townsend's is lower, but still indicates the sector is worthy of interest, although job numbers are quite low.

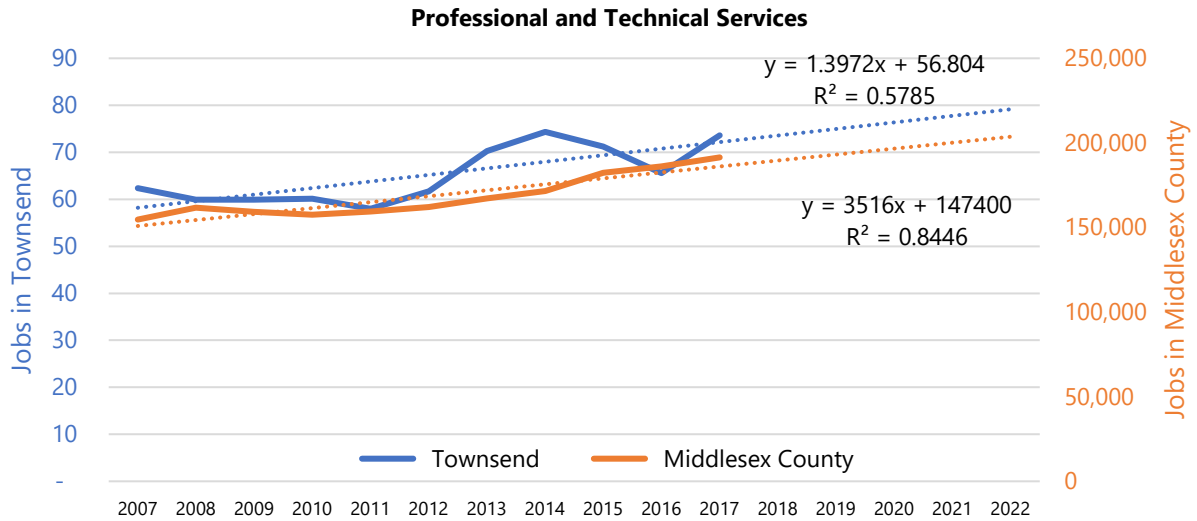
Figure 10. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Finance and Insurance, 2007-2022



The Professional and Technical Services sector is also fairly small in Townsend but is expected to grow in both locations, though at a higher level of confidence for Middlesex County than for Townsend. Nevertheless, a higher proportion of county growth might be captured by Townsend in this consistent growth sector locally and nationally.

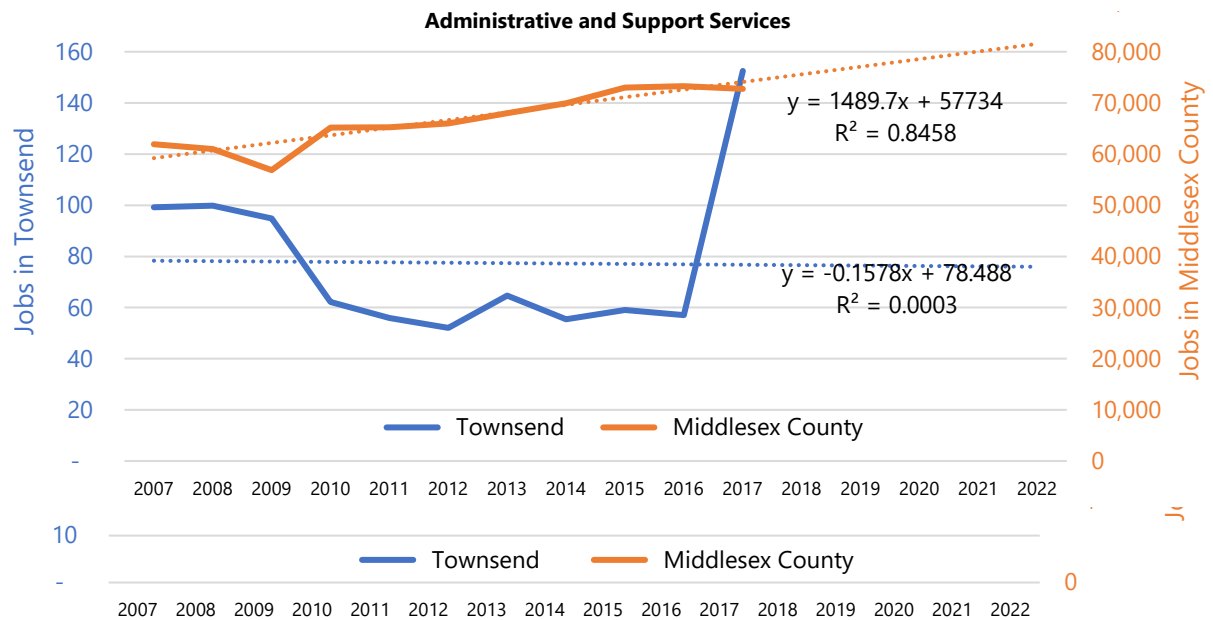


Figure 11. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Professional and Technical Services, 2007-2022



Although trends at the town level have been quite volatile, resulting in a low level of confidence in the projection, trends in Administrative and Support Services are upwards for the county, and at a level of reliability to warrant optimism that Townsend could capture a higher share of county-wide job growth. These jobs, however, are not typically high paying.

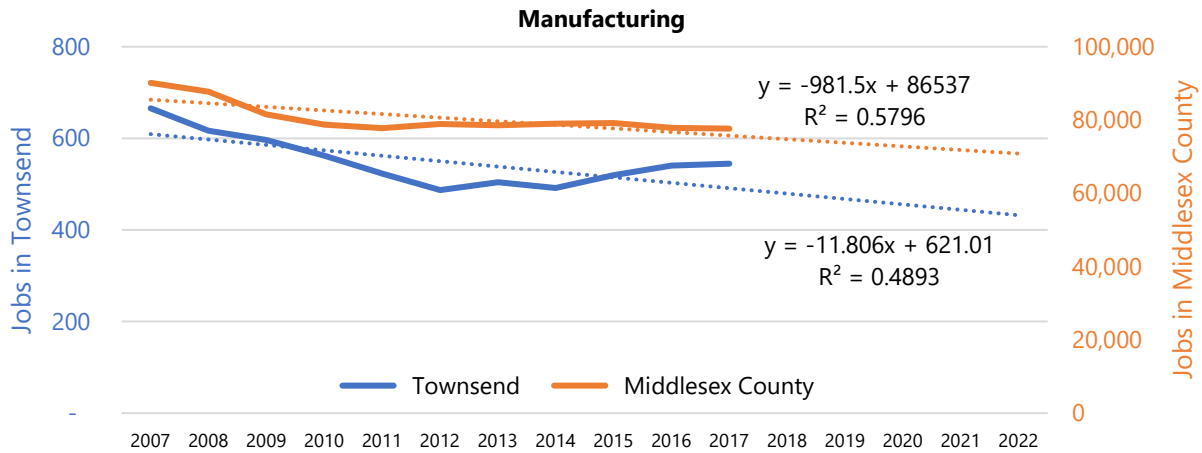
Figure 12. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Administrative and Support Services, 2007-2022





The following figures show historical and projected trend lines for the three largest employment sectors in Townsend: Manufacturing, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services.

Figure 13. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Manufacturing, 2007-2022

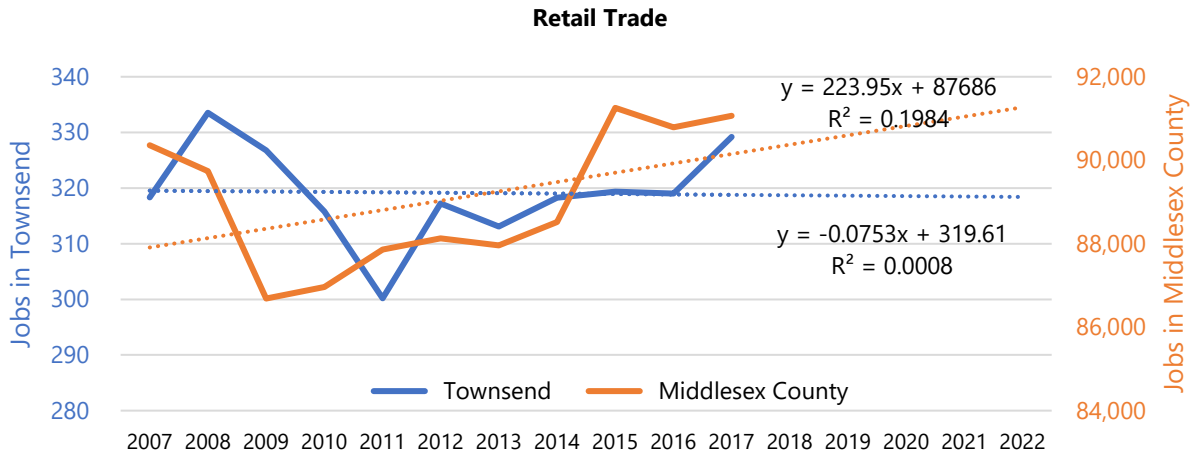


Based on historic employment levels, the Manufacturing sector is in decline in both the town and county. The levels of confidence, although not high, are substantial enough to suggest the direction of the trends is accurate. Townsend Manufacturing was trending upwards between 2014 and 2016, however, and there has been some leveling off between 2016 and 2017, so much will depend on what happens over the next few years as, hopefully, the negative effects of the tariffs dispute nationally get resolved.

The Retail Trade trend lines are extremely volatile for both Townsend and Middlesex County, yielding low R^2 scores. Both trends show the effect of the 2008 recession. While the sector shows some recovery at both town and county levels, the overall trend projected for Townsend is downward, while Middlesex County is upward. It may take several more years to get beyond the volatility introduced by the recession for more stable trends to appear, and there is much uncertainty over the future of many bricks & mortar retail establishments. As will be noted subsequently in the Retail Opportunity Gap sections, there are, however, immediate opportunities for existing or new retailers in Townsend to capture current sales leakages.



Figure 14. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Retail Trade, 2007-2022



The Accommodation and Food Services trends are both upward, with very strong R^2 for the projections, particularly for Townsend. This sector is an important one for future tourism and retail development, particularly restaurants.

Figure 15. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Accommodation and Food Services, 2007-2022

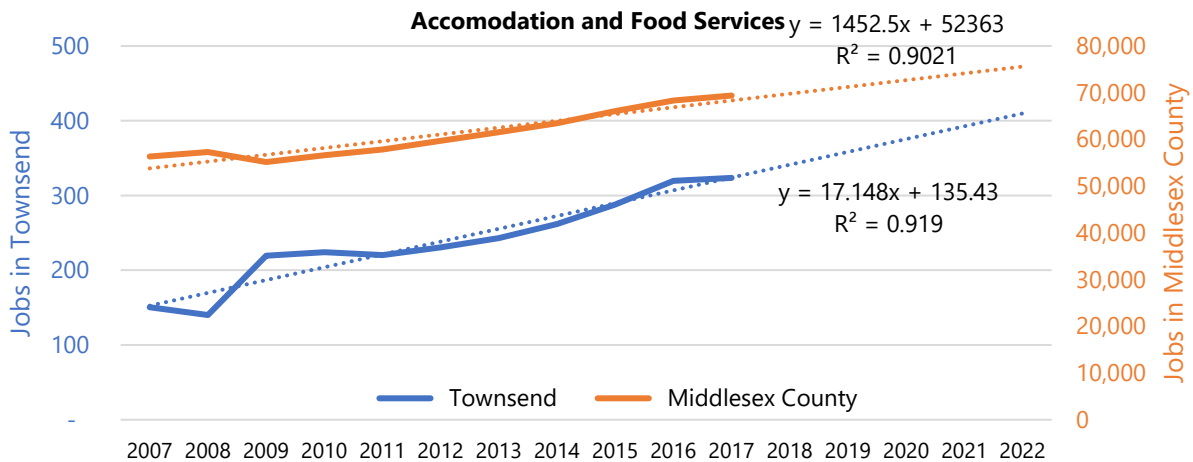
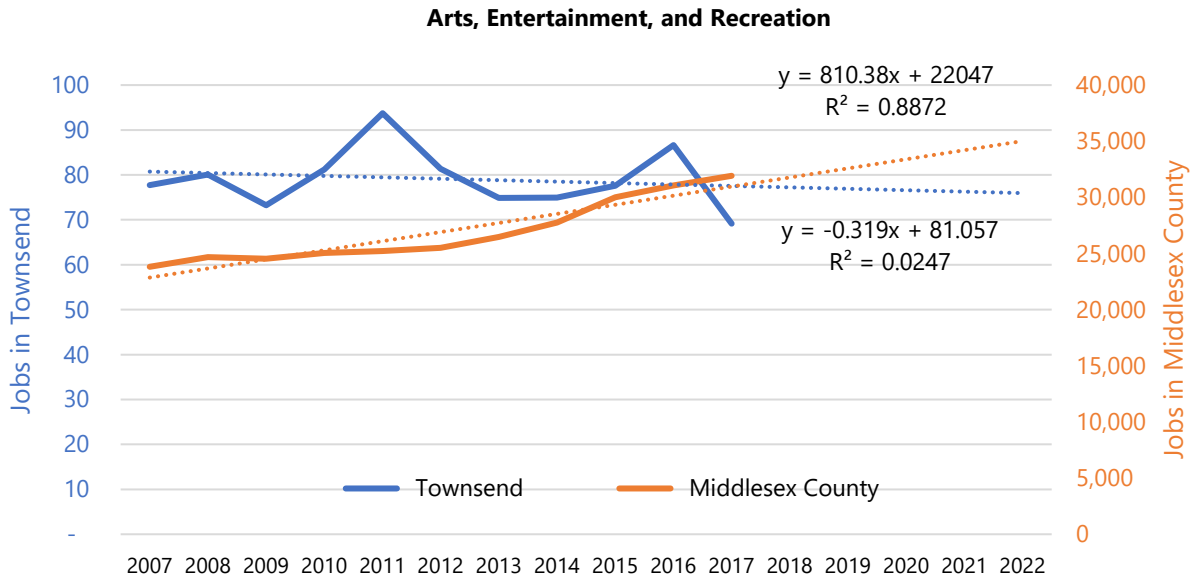


Figure 16 shows trends and projections for a sector that, while not expected to lose numbers of jobs over the next five years, is on a downward trajectory overall in Townsend: Arts, Entertainment, and



Recreation.⁴ (Manufacturing is also projected to lose employees. It is shown in Figure 13 above, as it is also the largest single sector in Townsend.) In the county, however, this sector is expected to grow.

Figure 16. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, 2007-2022



Conversely, the Construction industry, which is projected to have fewer jobs in Townsend in 2022 than in 2017, is nevertheless trending upward over the entire period analyzed. This reflects the drop in employment during the recession years and the subsequent recovery. The upward recent trend line reflects strong real estate development throughout Greater Boston which may or may not continue in the foreseeable future but is not expected to decline as it did in the great recession period.

⁴ Transportation and Warehousing is projected to lose jobs in Townsend, but the data are so erratic that they suggest there may be issues with accuracy, and so the chart is not displayed. Several years of data are missing for Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing in Townsend, which is also not shown.



Figure 17. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Construction, 2007-2022

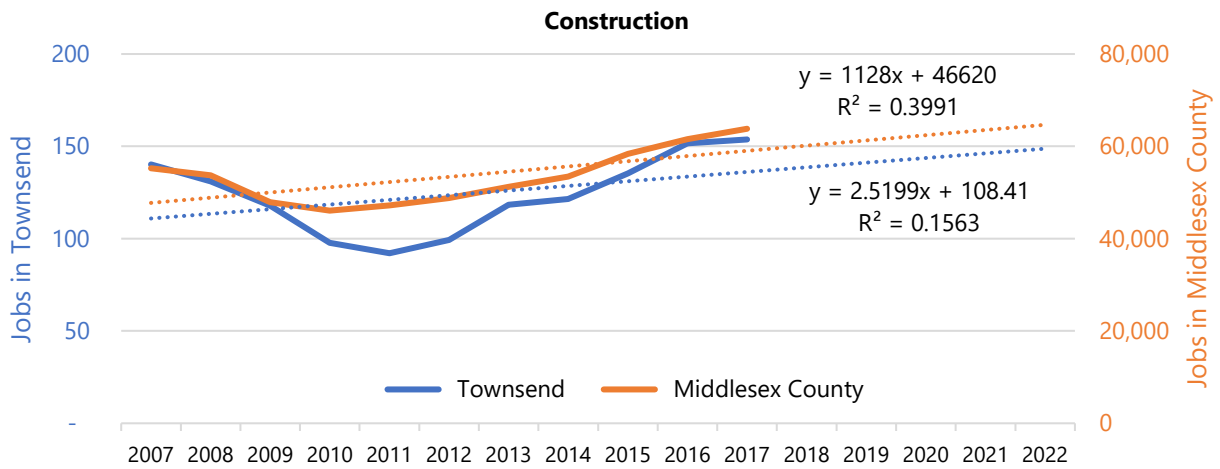
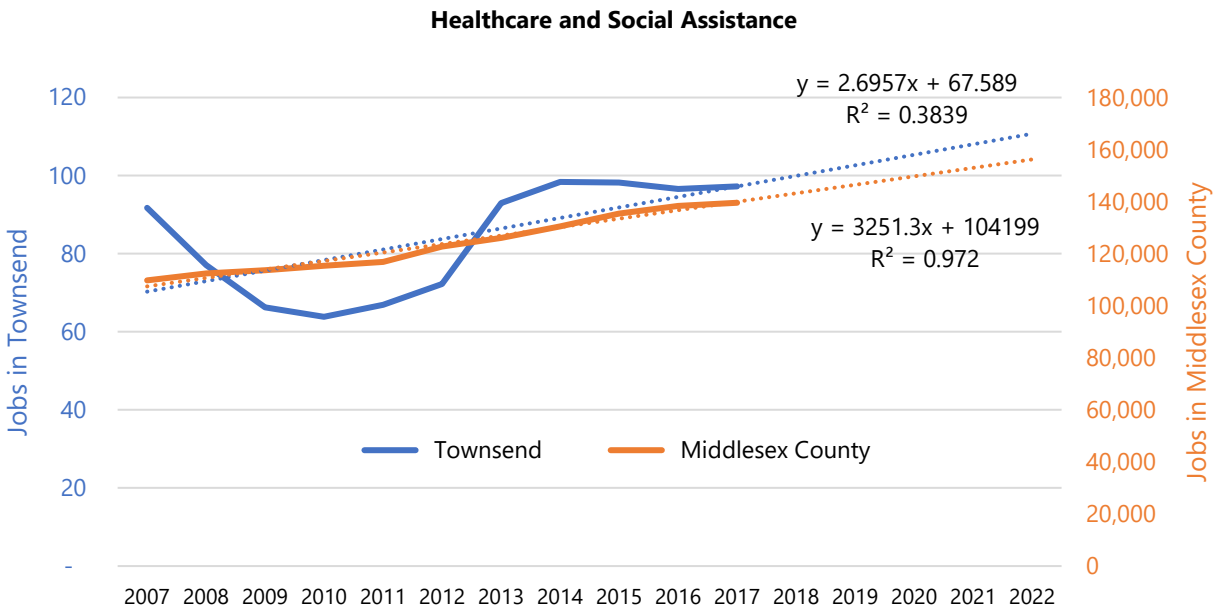


Figure 18 bears a special note because the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is a growth industry in most parts of Massachusetts, as it is in Middlesex County, at a very high level of reliability. Growth is also projected for Townsend, but the R2 is much lower, probably because of the deep dip in the recession years.

Figure 18. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Health Care and Social Assistance, 2007-2022

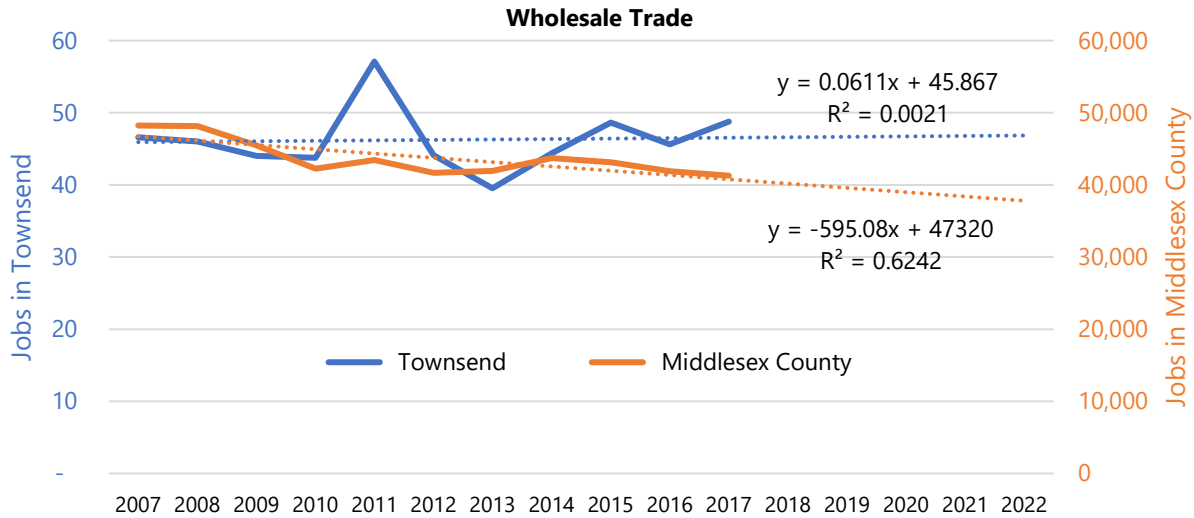


Figures 19 and 20 following show trends and projections in the other sectors of Townsend and Middlesex employment: Wholesale Trade and Other Services. Wholesale Trade in Townsend has been somewhat erratic over the past 10 years and is expected to grow slightly over the next five, albeit



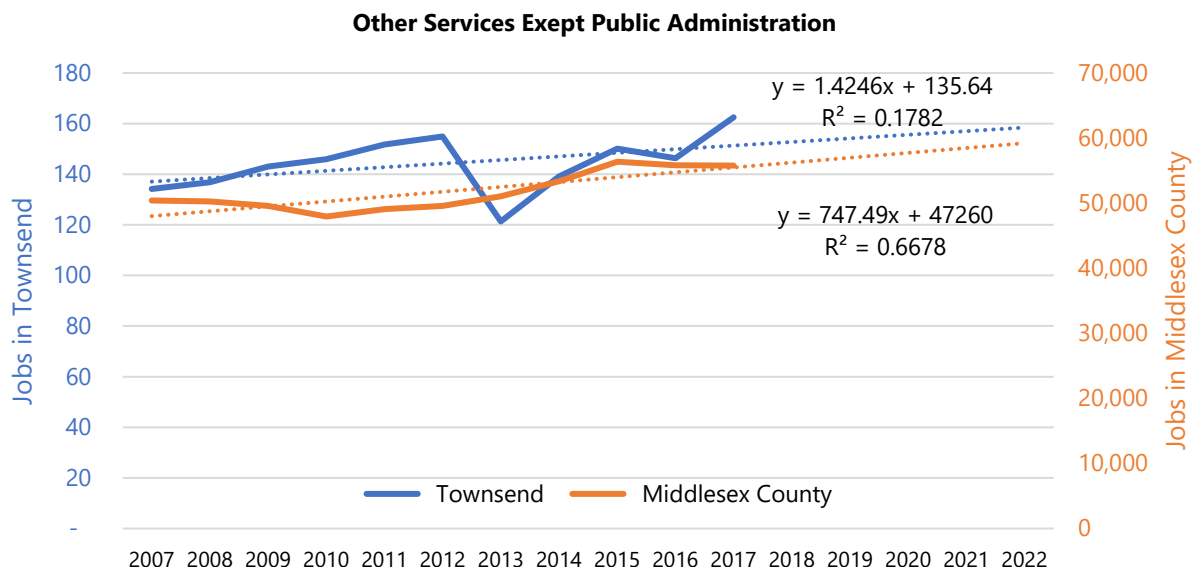
with a weak R2. The trend is downward in the county. The sector does not employ many people in Townsend.

Figure 19. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Wholesale Trade, 2007-2022



Repairs and maintenance services make up the majority of employees in the Other Services Except Public Administration category. Figure 20 shows historical trends and projections, which are not at all predictive for Townsend.

Figure 20. Town of Townsend and Middlesex County Employment: Other Services Except Public Administration, 2007-2022





Public Administration jobs are not covered by unemployment insurance and so are not reported to the Massachusetts Department of Labor for their quarterly ES202 reports. Historical trend data are therefore not available.



PROJECTED SPACE DEMAND THROUGH 2022

The above employment projections, with their relevant caveats regarding reliability, can be translated into estimates of future demand for commercial space using industry norms for square foot per employee. Table 6 compiles these projections. (Zeros are shown for sectors in which job losses are projected.)

**Table 6. Townsend Projected Space Demand Through 2022
Based on Historical Employment Trends**

Sector	Townsend		Middlesex County	
	Projected New Jobs	Projected Space Demand (SF)	Projected New Jobs	Projected Space Demand (SF)
44-45 - Retail Trade	0	0	202	101,000
Office-using				
51- Information	7	1,750	2,818	704,500
52-Finance & Insurance	1	250	4,715	1,178,750
53- Real Estate and Rental Leasing	0	0	5,881	1,470,250
54 - Professional, Scientific, & Technical	6	1,500	12,212	3,053,000
56-Administrative & Support	0	0	8,814	2,203,500
Subtotal Office-using	14	3,500	34,440	8,610,000
62-Health care and Social Assistance	14	5,600	16,649	6,659,600
71-Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7	2,800	3,093	1,237,200
72 - Accommodation & Food Services	86	15,136	6,201	1,091,376
81- Other Services (Except Pub Admin)	0	0	3,452	690,400
TOTAL NEW JOBS	121	27,036	63,835	18,288,576

Source: Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, ES202 reports (adjusted by REIS), 2017; FXM Associates

In the table, office-using industries are grouped together since they require similar kinds of space. Note that net job growth for Townsend in office-using industries is expected to be positive and is expected to add 14 jobs and demand 3,500 square feet of office-space over the next few years. Accommodation and Food Service Jobs are also projected to grow, requiring about 15,000 square feet of space.



RETAIL OPPORTUNITY GAP/SURPLUS

The retail opportunity gap analysis is a tool used by major retailers and chain restaurants to gauge market demand and competition within a specified geographic area. It presents a snapshot of the current consumer spending on various retail categories within a specified geographic area alongside actual retail store sales in those same categories within the same geographic area. Where expenditures by households in the market area exceed sales in that market area, a gap or opportunity exists for stores within the market area to “capture” more of those household expenditures. (This loss of potential sales is also called “leakage”.) Conversely, where market area household expenditures are less than actual sales categories, it indicates that stores in that retail category in the market area already attract consumer dollars from outside the market area and opportunities for additional retail activity would be more limited.

The retail gap analysis is a picture of current opportunities for retailers to newly locate or expand facilities based on a well-established principle drawn from many empirical studies. This analysis shows that people will usually purchase goods and services within the shortest available walking or drive time from where they live. The principle applies to comparable and competitive goods, services, and pricing: there is no guarantee of success based strictly on location advantage, which simply presents the opportunity.

Retailers typically define market areas in terms of drive times, with a 15-minute drive time considered the maximum time consumers would be willing to drive for all but the largest stores and store types. Market support within a 5-minute drive time is considered the maximum time consumers would be willing to drive to smaller, convenience type retailers, and market demand within a 10-minute drive time is considered essential for most medium sized stores and restaurants. In the case of Townsend, however, in consultation with town officials, 10- and 15- and 20-minute drive times were examined as the most likely areas from which to draw additional retail activity, with 15- and 20-minute drive times from the center of Townsend used in the analysis.

The 10-, 15-, and 20-minute drive times are shown in Figures 21, 22, and 23.



Figure 21. 10-Minute Drive Time Map

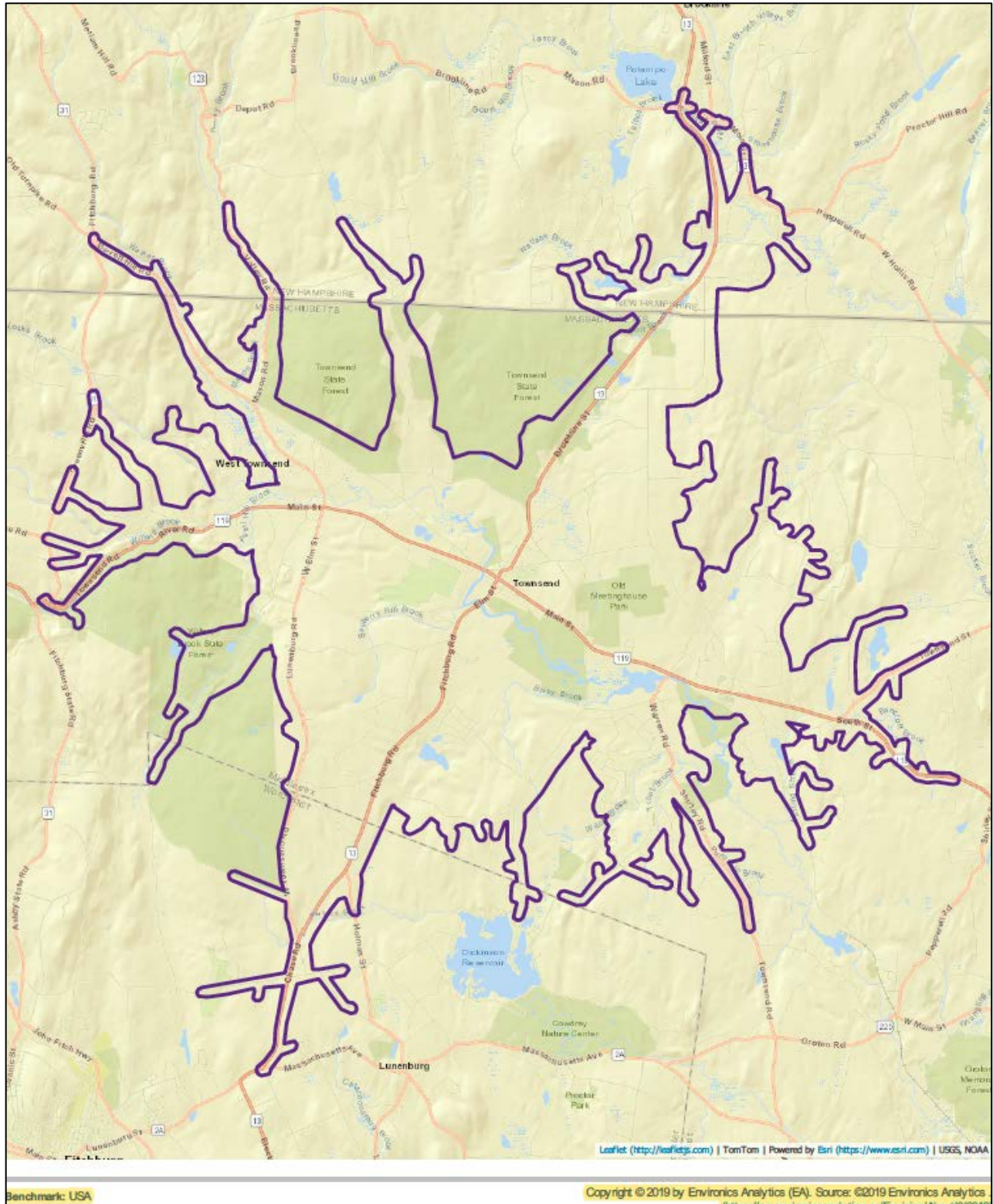




Figure 22. 15-Minute Drive Time Map

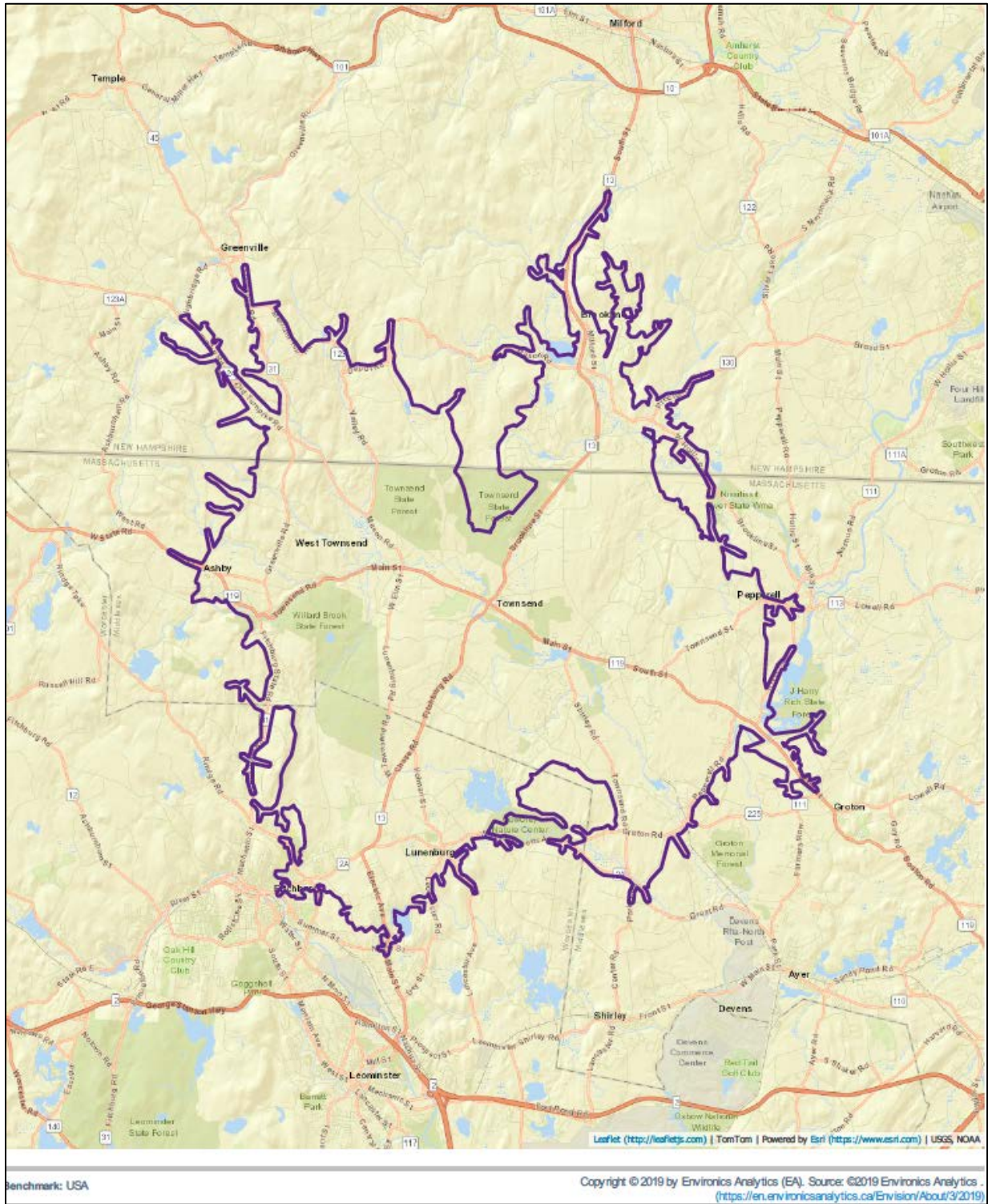




Figure 23. 20-Minute Drive Time Map

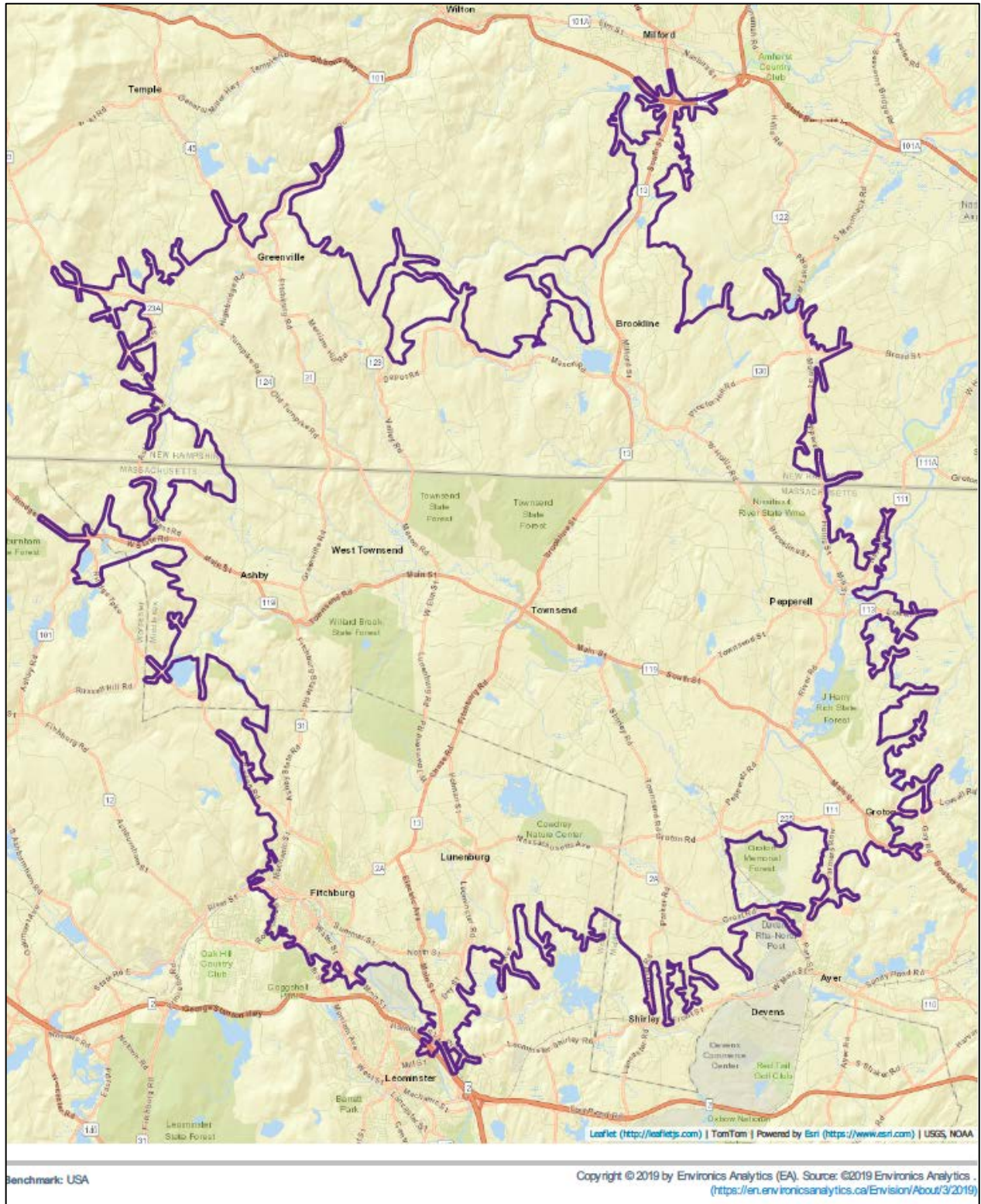




Table 7 below shows the total population, income, retail expenditures (demand), retail sales (supply), and the total gap within the 10-, 15-, and 20-minute drive times defining the market areas.

In the market area defined by the 10-minute drive time, a relatively small area for Townsend, businesses are selling less than the resident population is spending, indicating some opportunities to capture additional sales from surrounding areas. Likewise, in the 15- and 20-minute areas merchants are selling less than the resident population is spending, with expenditures “leaking” into nearby areas.

Table 7. Overview of Townsend Retail Market

	10-Minute Drive Time	15-Minute Drive time	20-Minute Drive Time
Population	9,275	32,296	81,409
Median Income	\$ 98,317	\$ 96,118	\$ 81,873
Total Retail Expenditures*	\$ 199,142,948	\$ 688,711,096	\$ 1,568,791,240
Total Retail Sales*	\$ 167,186,695	\$ 536,350,921	\$ 1,380,361,246
Total Opportunity Gap	\$ 31,956,253	\$ 152,360,175	\$ 188,429,994

*Includes restaurants

Source: EnviroAnalytics Spotlight Reports and FXM Associates, 2019

The sector level shows which types of spending businesses within these two areas might attract more resident spending. Data in Table 8 summarize FXM’s analysis of those sectors in which current consumer expenditures (demand) exceed actual store sales (supply) within the local retail market areas. The analysis shows where the gaps between supply and demand are sufficiently large to indicate some opportunities to capture sales leakages, either by new stores or expansion of existing businesses. The market areas for these sectors are within 15- or 20-minute drive time limits.

Table 8. Potential Retail Opportunities in the Townsend Retail Market Area

Retail Stores	10-15-20-Minute Market Area Gap	Supportable SF	Potentially Captured SF	Potentially Supportable Stores	Estimated Growth Rate in Retail Market Area, 2019-2024
Furniture stores (NAICS 4421)	\$10,237,055	28,201	4,900	1	3.0%
Home furnishings stores (NAICS 4422)	\$10,363,865	28,551	4,809	1	3.0%
Electronics stores (NAICS 443142)	\$10,405,897	22,720	5,500	1	2.3%
Home centers (NAICS 44411)	\$9,289,794	20,750	5,000	1	2.9%
Nursery, garden center, and farm supply stores (NAIC	\$8,154,398	35,319	3,200	2	2.8%
Supermarket (small) (NAICS 44511)	39,092,760	60,797	50,000	1	2.3%
Beer, wine, and liquor stores (NAICS 4453)	\$3,039,539	6,280	2,648	1	3.0%
Pharmacies and drug stores (NAICS 44611)	\$14,500,336	26,606	11,000	1	2.8%
Cosmetics, beauty supplies, and perfume stores (NAIC	\$2,333,503	7,277	1,500	1	2.9%
Optical goods stores (NAICS 44613)	\$2,860,484	7,776	1,900	1	2.6%
Clothing stores (NAICS 4481)	\$22,169,313	99,067	9,273	3	1.0%
Shoe stores (NAICS 4482)	\$3,578,039	15,894	3,500	1	1.7%
Sporting goods stores (NAICS 45111)	\$6,820,564	20,691	6,000	1	0.8%
Other miscellaneous store retailers (NAICS 4539)	\$5,094,800	15,405	6,000	2	2.2%
Drinking places (alcoholic beverages) (NAICS 7224)	\$3,253,149	6,721	1,750	1	2.9%
Full-service restaurants (NAICS 722511)	\$12,262,980	22,016	10,200	2	2.5%
Limited-service restaurants (NAICS 722513)	\$14,239,563	38,906	8,000	4	2.4%
Totals	\$177,696,039	462,979	135,180	25	

Source: EnviroAnalytics, Spotlight Reports, 2019 and FXM Associates

According to the estimates used in the calculations for the table, resident spending within Townsend’s market area could support 19 additional stores, or the corresponding square footage of existing store



expansion, and six additional restaurants, four of those full-service facilities, for a total of 135,000 additional square feet of retail/restaurant activity. The difference between the “Supportable SF” and “Potentially Captured SF” columns represents an estimate of how much of the square footage supported by new business potential in the market area might reasonably be captured by Townsend.

The final column in the table shows estimated growth rates for the retail categories over the next five years. All the retail sectors in which meaningful gaps exist are projected to grow between 1% and 3% annually over the next five years.



COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE MARKET OVERVIEW

This section assesses historical conditions and trends in the inventory, vacancies, occupancies, and pricing of office, industrial, and retail space in Townsend and surrounding communities. The quantitative analysis is based on data collected by CoStar, a subscription commercial real estate information service, widely used by real estate professionals, developers, and financial institutions in evaluating market potential and values.

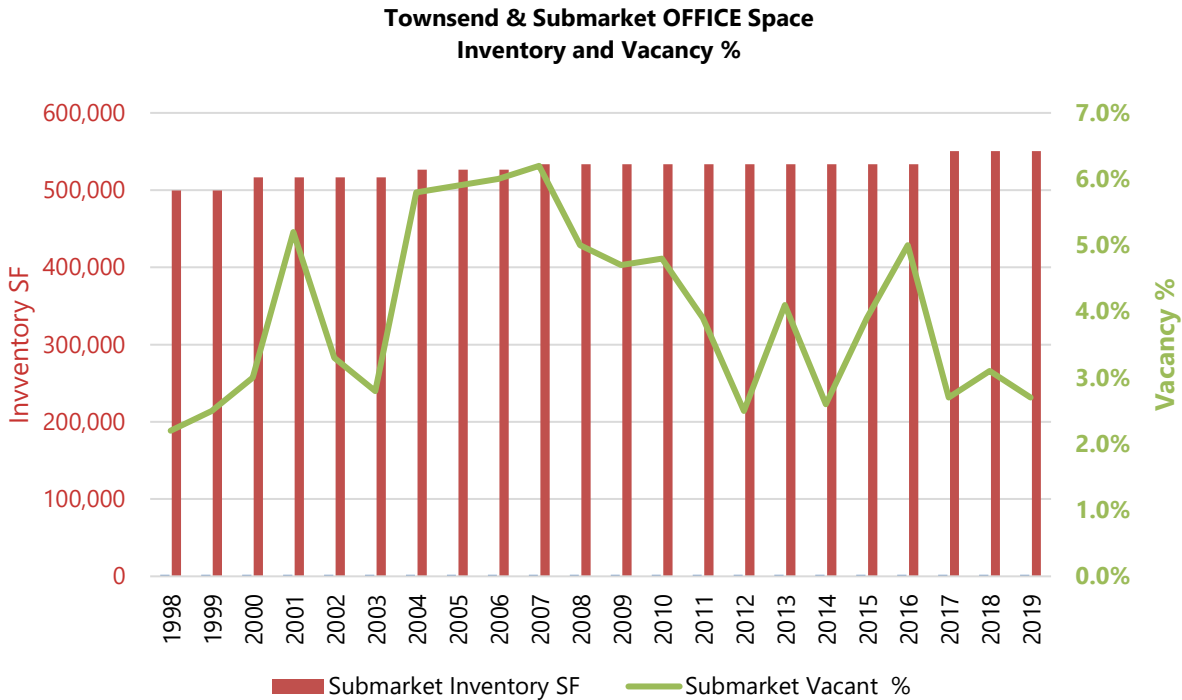
■ *Office Space Market Trends*

FXM analyzed trends in the supply, vacancies, occupancies, and pricing of office space within Townsend and surrounding communities, which are considered the broader area of competitive supply. The surrounding communities “submarket” includes Shirley, Pepperell, Lunenburg, Groton, Ashby, and Ayer, as well as Townsend.

Figure 24 shows trends in the inventory and vacancy rates of office space in Townsend and the Submarket overall between 1998 and the second quarter of 2019. The inventory of marketable office space in Townsend, according to CoStar, has been unchanged over this period and stands at 26,520 square feet (SF) in the 3rd quarter of 2019. The Submarket inventory is reported by CoStar to be just over 550,000 SF. *NOTE: The CoStar database only includes space that is now considered marketable and would not show vacant spaces no longer for rent or sale.* Over the past 10 years the inventory (gross leasable area) of office space increased by 17,000 SF in the Submarket overall while vacancies have declined to about 15,000 SF, a 2.7% vacancy rate. Occupancies between 2009 and 2019 increased by nearly 27,000 SF and are projected to increase by about 2,900 square feet per year over the next 5-years. If this trend is realized it would exhaust the current marketable supply of vacant office space in the Submarket. With a very low vacancy rate, historical and projected increases in occupancy, and a healthy average gross rent of \$26 per square foot, opportunities for increased office space either by new construction, conversion of existing underutilized commercial space, or revitalization of existing poor quality (unmarketable) space are possible. Based on comments received from local brokers and other participants, current demand for conventional office space is limited while prospects for coworking space may be promising.



Figure 24. Office Space Inventory and Vacancy Rates, Townsend & Submarket



Source: Co Star Property Information System, 2019, and FXM Associates

An increasingly important prospect for conversion of existing low performing office spaces, and for potential new development, is shared workspaces. These include incubators, makerspaces, co-working space and other specialty types that essentially allow multiple tenants to share equipment, conference areas, kitchen and fitness facilities, and other services and amenities alongside individual workstations. They not only provide relatively low-cost rental opportunities to small businesses but also the opportunity for commuters to spend more time close to home. With the availability of commuter rail service within relatively short drive there are likely market supportable opportunities now. While large firms that are now acquiring conventional office buildings for conversion to shared workspaces in both major cities and suburban areas are unlikely to find the limited market demand in Townsend and surrounding communities attractive for investment, individual property owners could make such conversions of existing underperforming assets and newly construct co-working office space. The \$26 per square foot average rent for office space in the Submarket is another favorable market indicator for additions to the current supply—as such rents could support new construction or rehabilitation of existing space -- as well as the lack of available office space. Average rents for office space have been increasing, on average, 10% per year since 2009.

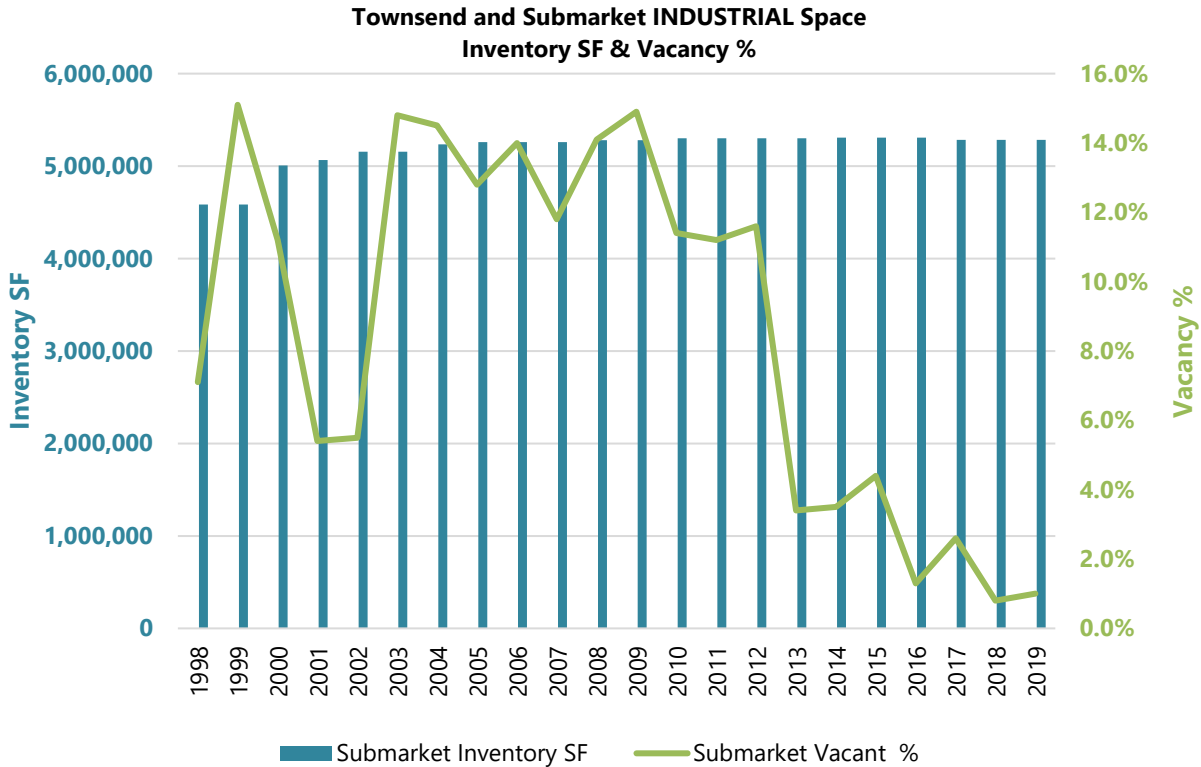
■ Industrial Space Market Trends

Figure 25 shows trends in the inventory of industrial space (primarily distribution & warehousing but also including manufacturing) in Townsend and the surrounding communities competitive Submarket. The supply of industrial space in Townsend currently stands at 733,000 square feet, unchanged since



1998. At 5,300,000 square feet the supply of industrial space in the Submarket overall has increased by nearly 700,000 square feet over the 20-year period, but only by 1,500 square feet since 2009.

Figure 25. Industrial Space Inventory and Vacancy Rates, Townsend & Submarket



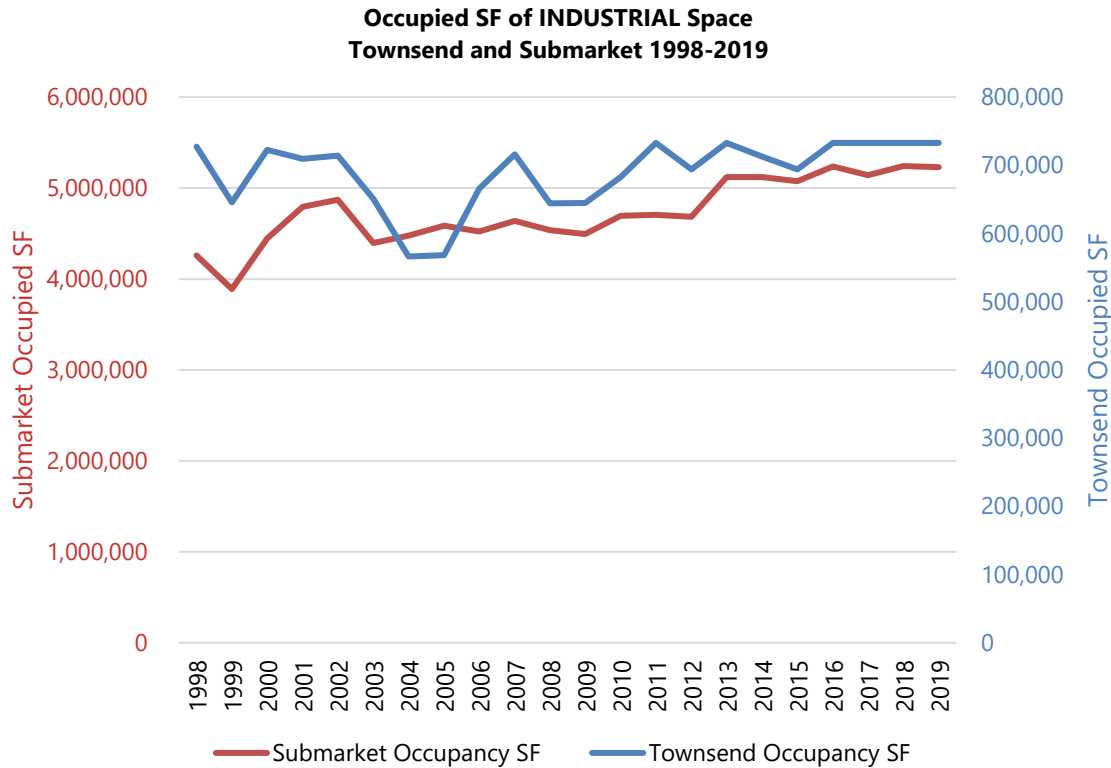
Source: Co Star Property Information System, 2019, and FXM Associates

Also shown in Figure 25, vacancies have declined precipitously in both Townsend and the Submarket since 2009. By the 2nd quarter of 2019 industrial space vacancies in Townsend were reported to be zero by CoStar and less than 52,000 square feet in the Submarket overall, an extremely low 1% vacancy rate.

As expected with a precipitous decline in vacancies and no change in inventory, occupancies have significantly increased in both Townsend and the Submarket overall, as shown in Figure 25. In Townsend, occupied industrial space increased by 88,000 SF between 2009 and 2016 and has remained stable over the past three years. Within the Submarket overall, occupancies in industrial space increased by 737,000 square feet over the most recent 10-year period and are projected to increase by an average of 46,000 square feet per year over the next 5 years (through 2024). At this rate of growth, the current supply of vacant industrial space would be exhausted in just over one year. Rents (NNN) now stand at an average of \$7.50 per SF and have been increasing by an average 4% per year over the past 10 years.



Figure 26. Industrial Space Occupancy, Townsend & Submarket



Source: Co Star Property Information System, 2019, and FXM Associates

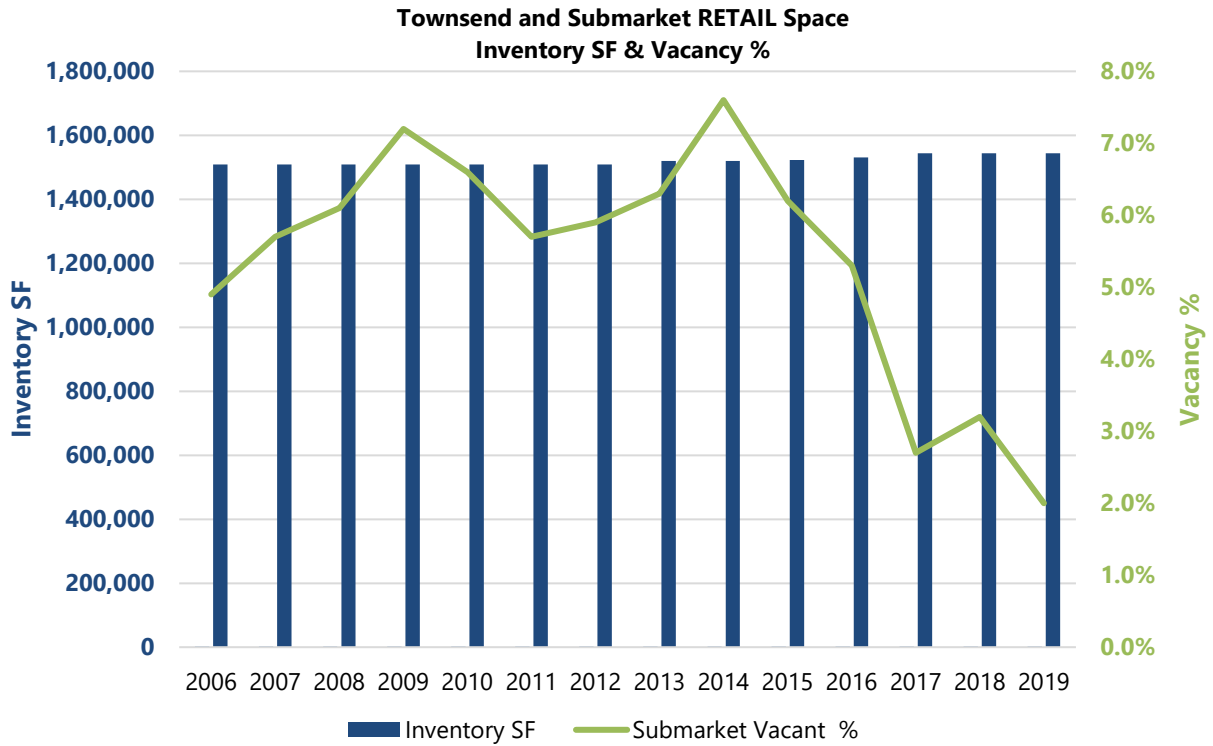
The very low vacancy rates and projected continued increase in occupancies bode well for expanding the supply of industrial space (with concomitant gains in tax base and jobs) in Townsend and the broader Submarket, assuming developable industrially zoned land is available. At the current overall Submarket rent of \$7.50 per square foot per year, expansion of existing buildings or new buildings to accommodate projected demand appears feasible for the owners of developable, industrially zoned land.

■ Retail Space Market Trends

Figure 27 shows trends in the inventory of retail space in Townsend and the surrounding Submarket, which stood at 226,000 SF in Townsend and 1,543,000 SF in the submarket overall in the 2nd quarter of 2019. According to CoStar there has been no change in the inventory of marketable retail space in Townsend since 2015 and none in the submarket overall since 2017. Vacancies in Townsend of marketable retail space were reported by CoStar to be under 2,000 SF and only 30,000 SF in the Submarket overall, as reflected by the vacancy rates also shown in Figure 27. Although such low vacancy rates suggest opportunities for expanding the current supply of retail space, there has been very little increase in occupancies since 2009 – about 2,000 SF per year in Townsend on average and 11,000 SF per year in the Submarket overall. Average rents, at about \$15 per SF NNN, are also very low and would not support new construction or rehabilitation.



Figure 27. Retail Space Inventory and Vacancy Rates, Townsend & Submarket



Source: Co Star Property Information System, 2019, and FXM Associates



RENTAL HOUSING DEMAND AND SUPPLY TRENDS

Rental housing is an important asset to economic development, particularly as it enables a community to attract or retain its younger labor force and others not interested in, or able to, afford homeownership in traditional single-family neighborhoods. To the extent that rental housing development can complement mixed uses in older downtown and neighborhood commercial centers, it also represents an opportunity to upgrade underutilized properties. Younger households and empty nesters are also able and willing, and often prefer, to live in areas that enable them to walk to restaurants, retail shops, recreational opportunities and even jobs that might not be suitable for traditional family housing. Employers are increasingly looking to communities that will enable their current and prospective employees to live and work close to the business location.

The residential component of a mixed-use project can make or break its financial feasibility,⁵ especially when trying to upgrade older downtown/village centers where retail/commercial rents are not adequate to support rehabilitation.

FXM's *Housing Demand Model* projects over the next five years the average annual demand for rental housing by age group, income and affordable rental rates. FXM's model is distinctive in that it captures mobility within the market area as well as net new growth. Over 90% of expected demand for rental housing in most market areas in New England is generated by households already residing in the area, who are looking to change from owners to renters, upsize or downsize from the current unit, or change location for family or work reasons. FXM's model explicitly accounts for propensity to own or rent and frequency of moving by householder age and income.

In addition to assessing average annual demand based on householder characteristics and tendencies, this section also analyzes recently available rental units within the market area by unit size, number of bedrooms, and rental rates; and analyzes historical trends in the inventory, vacancy rates, and monthly rents for rental units by number of bedrooms. The objective of the analytic exercise is to assist planners and developers understanding residential development potential, and to target types of rental units, in terms of cost and size and amenities, to various age groups of potential renters.

For the purposes of this analysis the market area is defined as the area within a 40-minute drive time of 272 Main Street in Townsend. The Housing Demand Model normally uses the area within a 20-minute drive time of a town center, the area consistent with the generally accepted view of the primary geographic area within which communities offer similar economic development attributes and constitute the competitive region for attracting jobs and households. In the case of Townsend,

⁵ Virtually all the major real estate developments recently completed, currently underway or proposed, in greater Boston's superheated real estate market involve residential, retail/restaurant, and office components rather than stand-alone single uses.



however, because of the unique features of the market area, a 40-minute drive time is used. This market area is shown graphically in Figure 28. For this geographic area, FXM obtained proprietary data from EnvironicsAnalytics Spotlight Reports, estimating the number of households by age of householder and income ranges in 2019 and projected to 2024. Data in Table 9 provide an overview

**Table 9. Housing Demand Context
Townsend 40-Minute Market Area**

2019 Population	498,692	
Households	190,932	
Renter Households	54,351	
	% Renters	28%
Renters Moving in Average Year	5,393	
% of All Households	3%	
Median Household Income	\$89,159	

*Source: EnvironicsAnalytics Spotlight Reports, 2019
Estimates, and FXM Associates*

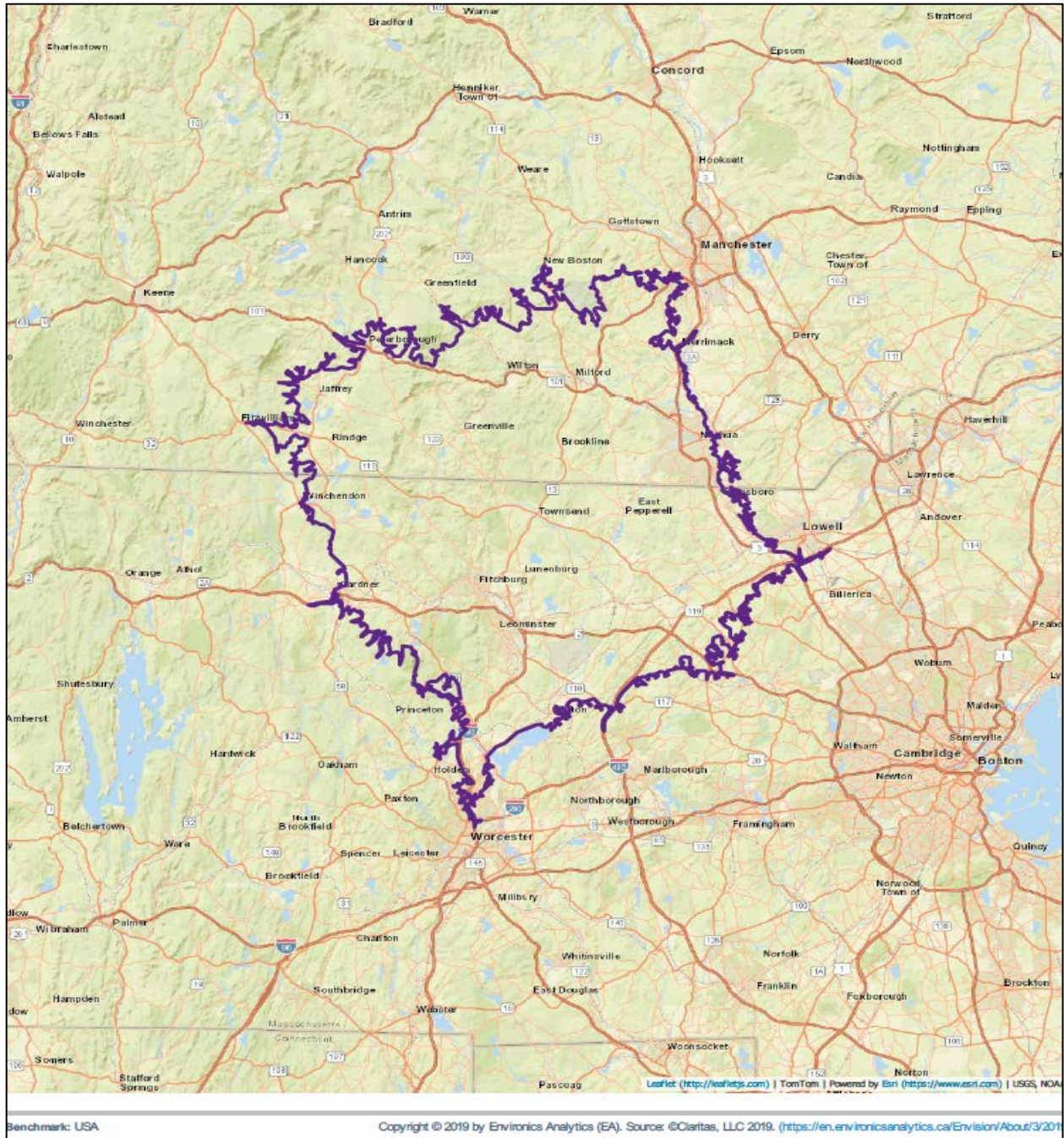
of population, households, and renters within this market area.

The following demand assessment is segmented by age and affordable rents. Rent levels needed to support rehabilitation or new construction will vary depending upon the development costs of a specific project, which may include tax credits, favorable financing terms, land write-downs and other mechanisms to assure feasibility.

Households within the under 35 and 55 to 74 age groups are the ones frequently targeted by developers for urban and specialty rental housing, such as re-use of formerly commercial and institutional structures, because they are less likely to have school age children and therefore more open to units with fewer bedrooms in locations that are not necessarily ideal environments for children. They are also likely to be attracted to denser urban environments that allow walking distances to restaurants and retail shops. Households in other age groups, however, also generate demand for housing within the market area, and this analysis assesses potential demand for all age groups.



Figure 28. 40-Minute Market Area



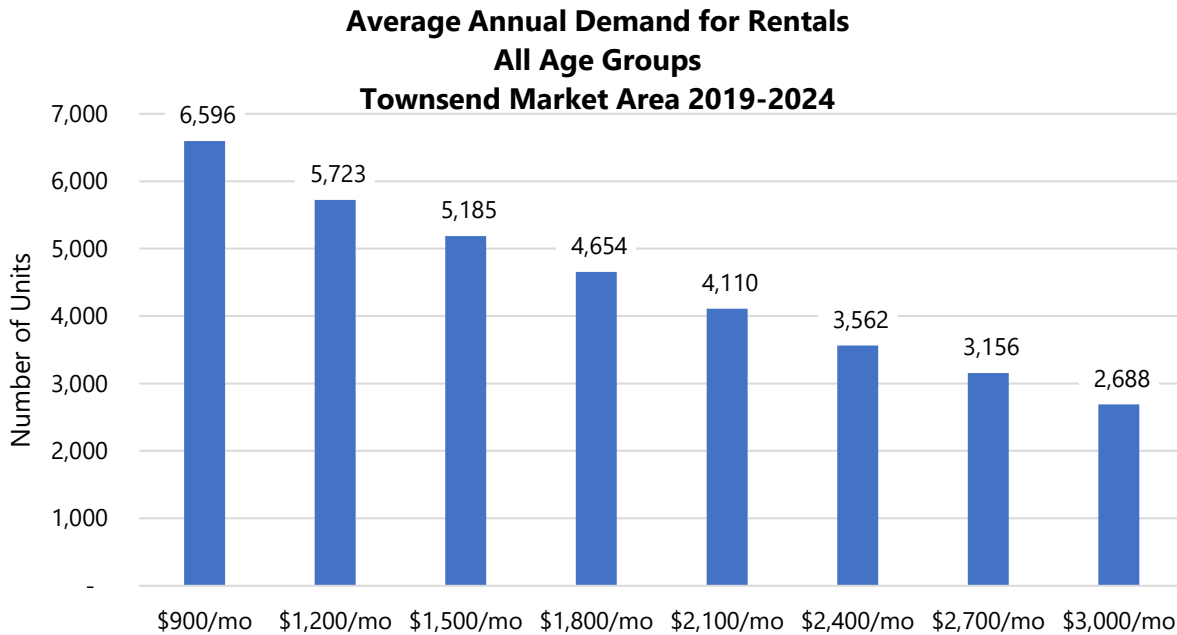
As previously noted, FXM's proprietary *Housing Demand Model* incorporates data on mobility rates by age of householder, propensities to own or rent by age of householder, current and projected number of households by age and income, and the qualifying income standards of commercial rental management companies.



Finally, model results for potential rental demand are compared to a sampling of market area units currently listed for rent. Finally, trends in the supply of rental units are analyzed, including numbers and average monthly rents for 1, 2, and 3 BR units.

Figure 29 shows the average annual demand for all rentals by all age groups in the Townsend Market Area, taking into consideration affordability, propensity to move in any given year, and propensity to rent.

Figure 29. Average Annual Demand for Rentals, All Age Groups



Source: FXM *Housing Demand Model*, 2019

For example, of the total number of households, 6,596, expected to move to rental housing each year within the 40-minute market area and able to afford at least \$900 per month rent, approximately 4,654 would be able to afford monthly rents of up to \$1,800; 4,110 would be able to afford \$2,100; 3,156 would be able to afford \$2,700, and so forth.

As shown in Table 10 below, based on Townsend’s current share of rental housing in the market area and recent absorption rates in comparable projects, an estimated 32 households able to afford up to \$2,400 a month rent might be absorbed by additional rental development in a competitive rental property in Townsend each year. Table 10 presents these estimates for each of the rental points shown in Figure 29. (Note that the figures in the demand columns are **not** additive. They are cumulative, with the “Rentals @ \$900” figure representing total estimated average annual demand in both Figure 29 and Table 10.)

The same data are shown graphically in Figure 30.

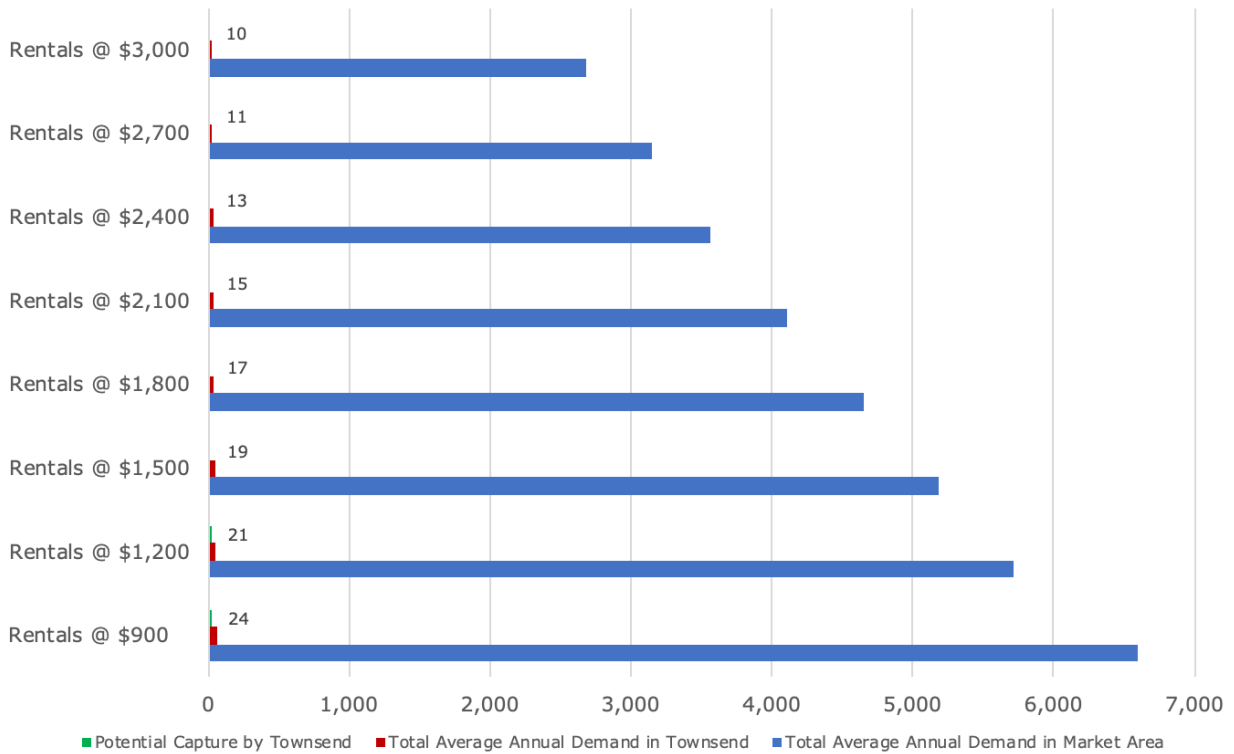


Table 10. Potential Annual Demand for Rental Housing in Townsend, 2019-2024

	Total Average Annual Demand in Market Area	Total Average Annual Demand in Townsend	Potential Capture by Townsend
Rentals @ \$900	6,596	60	24
Rentals @ \$1,200	5,723	52	21
Rentals @ \$1,500	5,185	47	19
Rentals @ \$1,800	4,654	42	17
Rentals @ \$2,100	4,110	37	15
Rentals @ \$2,400	3,562	32	13
Rentals @ \$2,700	3,156	29	11
Rentals @ \$3,000	2,688	24	10

Source: Environicsanalytics *Spotlight* Reports, 2019; and FXM Associates

Figure 30. Rental Captures
Average Annual Demand for Rentals:
Townsend Market Area
New Rental Captures



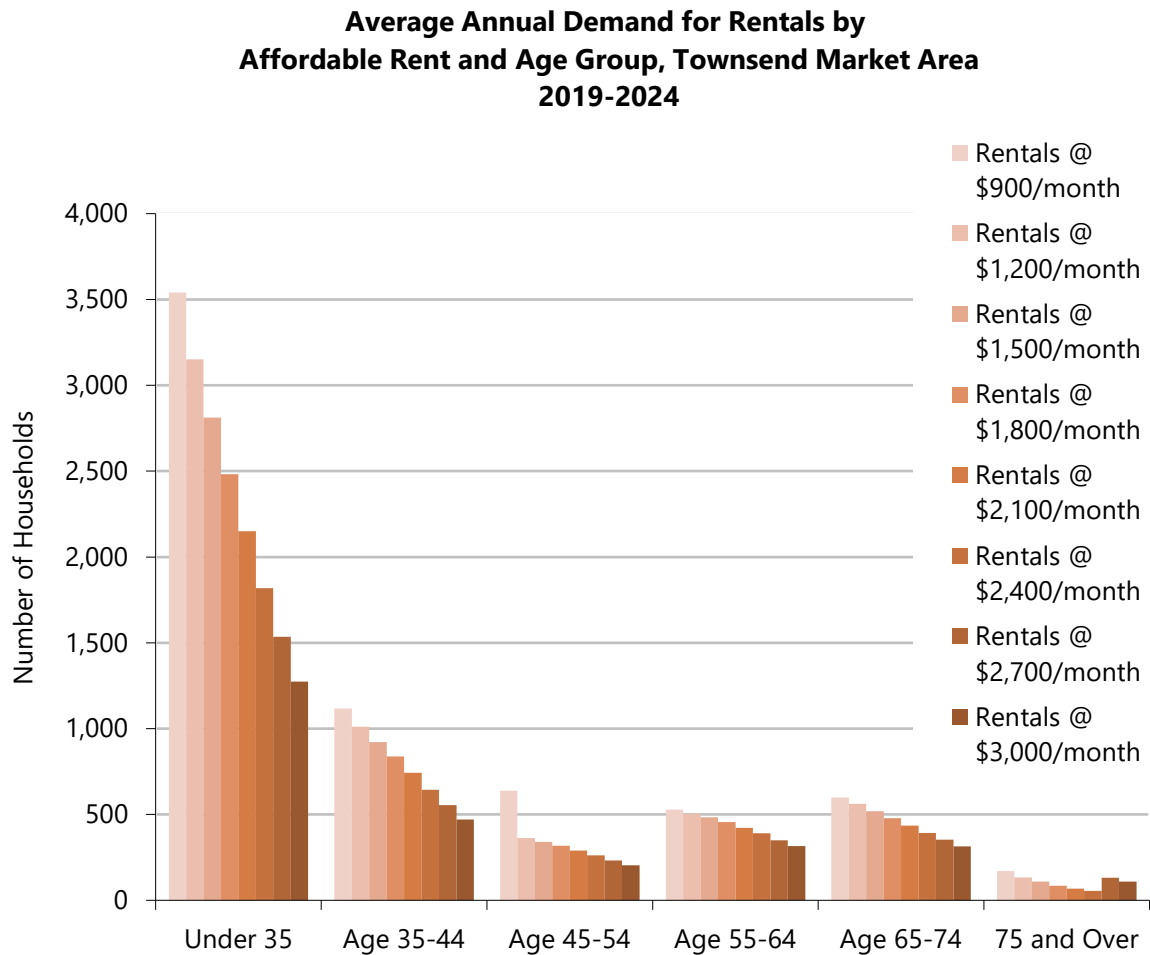
Source: FXM *Housing Demand Model*, 2019



The actual number of units that might be captured at these rental prices in a development or redevelopment project in Townsend would depend on the quality and size of the units, site and building amenities, pricing, marketing and other factors.

The information in Figure 30 and Table 10 can be further broken down into age groups, which may be useful to marketing efforts based on the relative numbers of households by age group. Figure 31 presents these data by age group.

Figure 31. Average Annual Demand by Age and Affordable Rent



Source: FXM Associates, *Housing Demand Model*, 2019

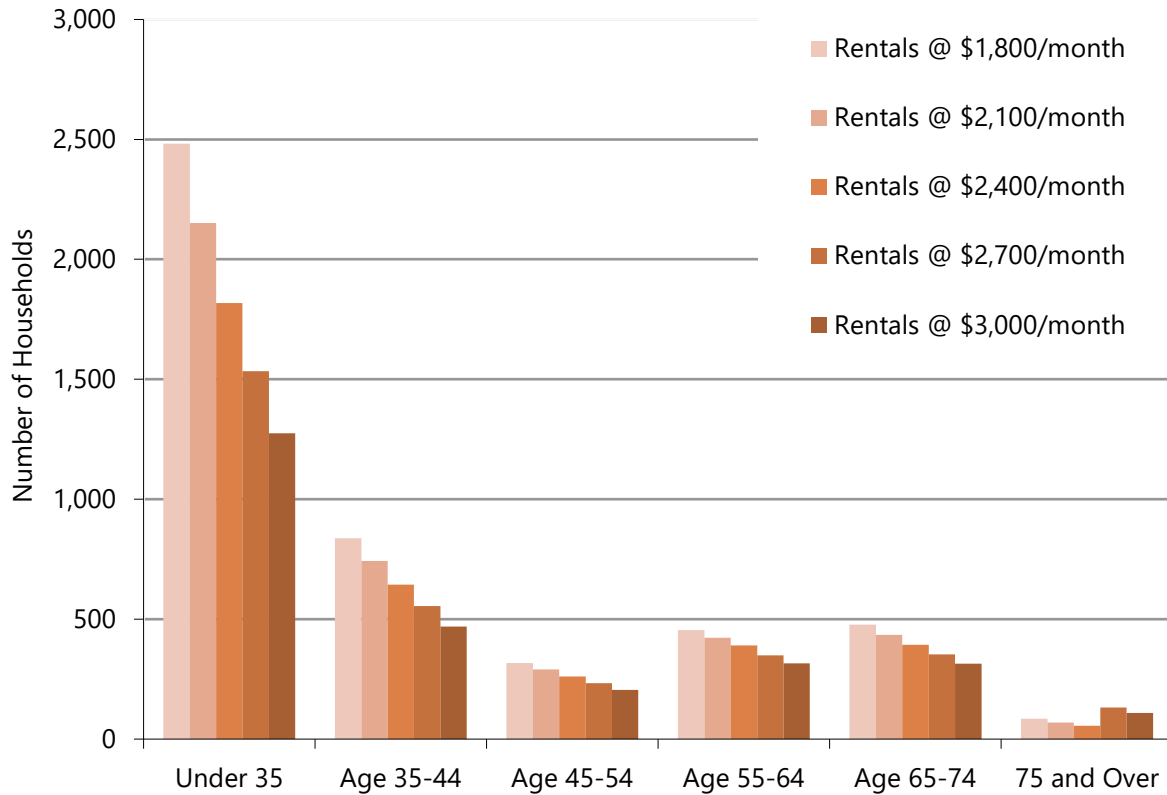
The graph reflects the greater propensity of younger households to rent and the frequency of their moving compared to older households, as well as the sensitivity of levels of demand to varying rental prices.



Figure 32 offers the same kind of analysis, but with the data for rents in the upper ranges only.

Figure 32. Average Annual Demand, Selected Rents

**Average Annual Demand for Selected Monthly Rents
by Age Group, Townsend Market Area
2019-2024**

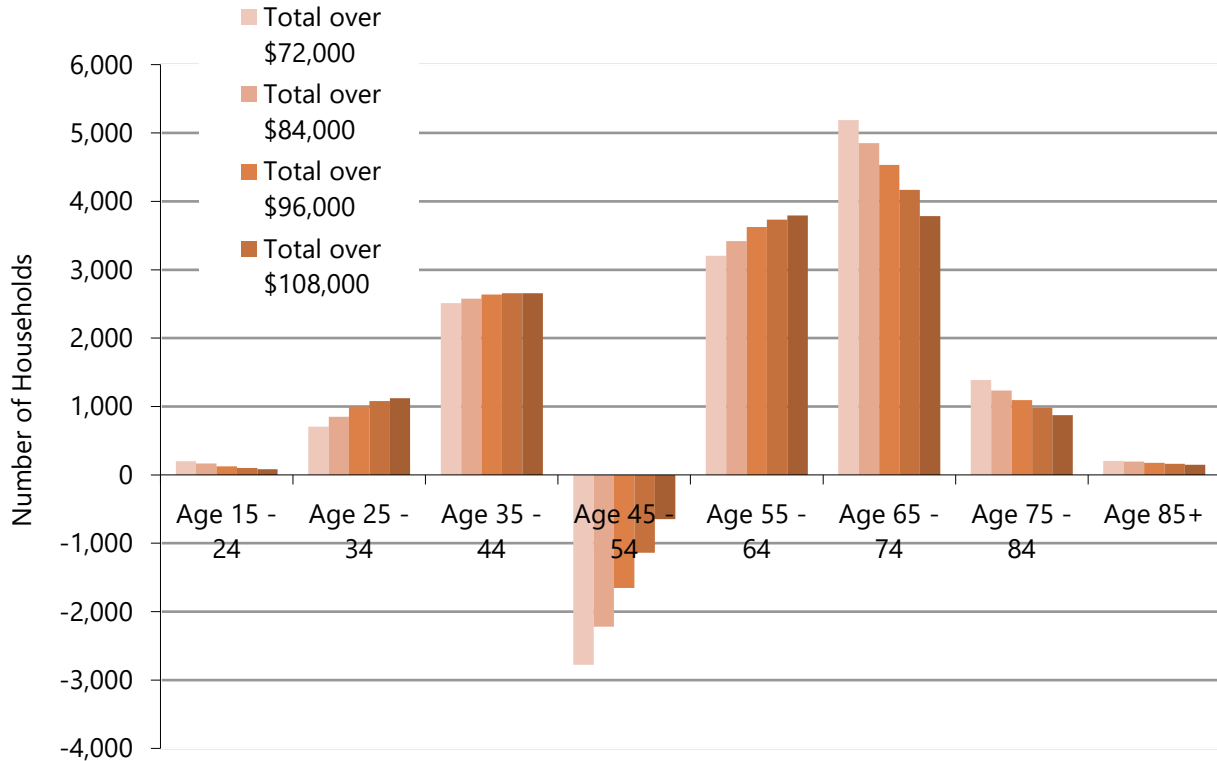


Source: FXM Associates, *Housing Demand Model*, 2019



Figure 33 shows another dimension to the estimation of future rental demand: the changes projected over the next five years in numbers of households by age and income. The incomes chosen are in the upper ranges, since these households could afford the rents necessary to support rehabilitated or newly constructed housing.

Figure 33. Change in Households 2019-2024
Change in Number of Households by Age and Income,
Townsend Market Area
2019-2024



Source: FXM Associates, *Housing Demand Model*, 2019

Particularly striking is the projection of changes in age cohorts in the market area over the next five years: the greatest gains across all four income categories are estimated to be in the age 55 to 74 cohorts, while the age category 45 to 54, typically a population segment at peak earning capacity, would lose households in all categories of income selected above, except for those making over \$120,000 per year. The age cohort 25 to 34 is projected to also have strong increases in the upper income categories.

Households with incomes of over \$72,000 can afford a monthly rent of \$1,800; those with incomes over \$84,000 can afford a monthly rent of \$2,100. These households are projected to lose population in the age 45 to 54 cohort over the next five years.

These projections, if they prove to be accurate, provide an indication of robust ability to afford reasonable rents, except for the 45 to 54 age group. Households in the income category over \$120,000



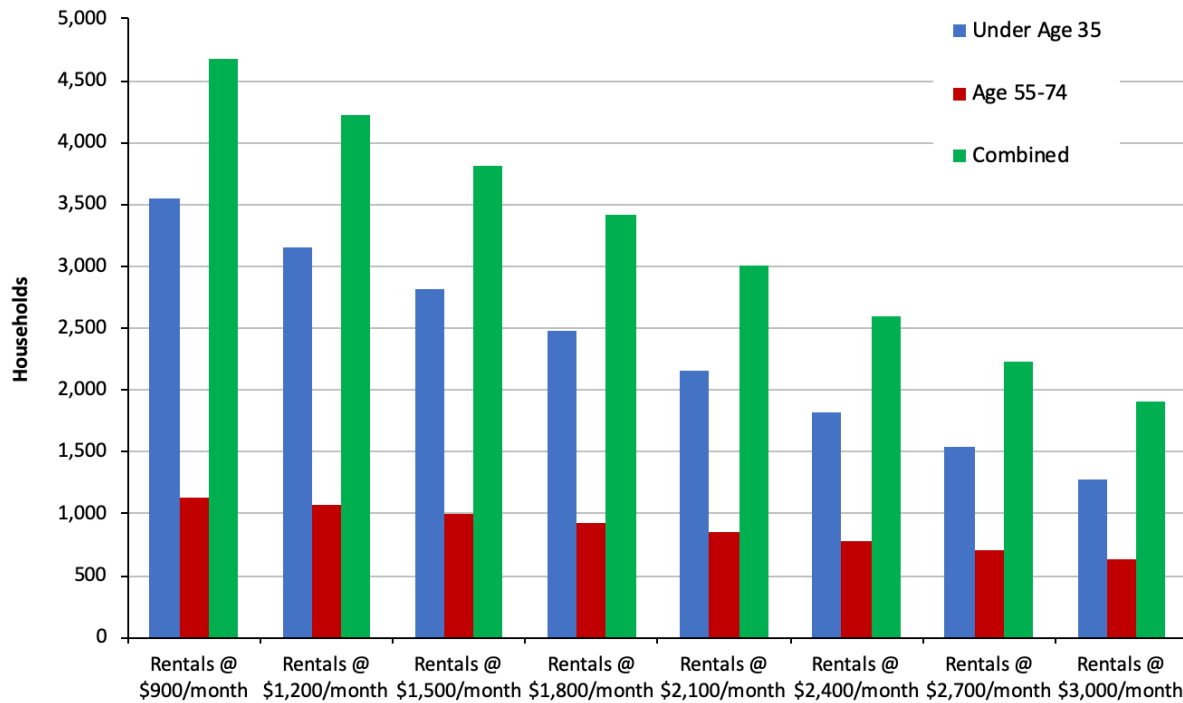
– who could afford rents up to \$3,000 per month – gain population and households in all age categories, indicating a future demand for high quality rental housing for a variety of lifestyles.

Some developers in recent years have targeted rental units, especially within urbanized areas, to households under age 35 and age 55 to 74, who often mix well within the same developments. Both groups show a higher propensity to live within walking distance of retail stores, restaurants, and transit if possible. The households under age 35 are more mobile on average and more likely to rent, so they comprise a relatively large share of potential demand. The number of younger households, however, is projected to experience modest growth over the next five years.

Conversely, as shown by the data in Figure 33 above, the baby boom generation households are growing in number within the 55 and older age categories, and these households have shown an increasing propensity to rent in recent years as they become empty nesters and sell their single-family homes for smaller, more manageable units. Others want to cash in the equity of their former dwellings because they need liquid income in the absence of the pensions enjoyed by prior generations of retirees. Many also continue to work part time.

Data in Figure 34 show the average annual demand by selected rental rates for the under 35 and 55- to 74-year-old householders, and their combined demand.

Figure 34. Demand by Under 35 and 55-74
Average Annual Demand by Affordable Rent 2019-2024
Householders Under Age 35 and Ages 55-74
Townsend Market Area



Source: FXM Associates, *Housing Demand Model*, 2019



■ Prices and Sizes of Recently Available Rentals

In order to get a sense of the sizes and prices of units actually on the market, FXM sampled listings of rental units in apartment complexes in towns approximately within the 40-minute drive time of central Townsend. The listings were gathered in August 2019. Available rental units were one- to three-bedroom units, and rents averaged around \$1,600 for one-bedroom units and \$1,900 for three-bedrooms. Studios and larger units were very scarce. Table 11 shows these results. Figure 35 is a frequency distribution by number of bedrooms.

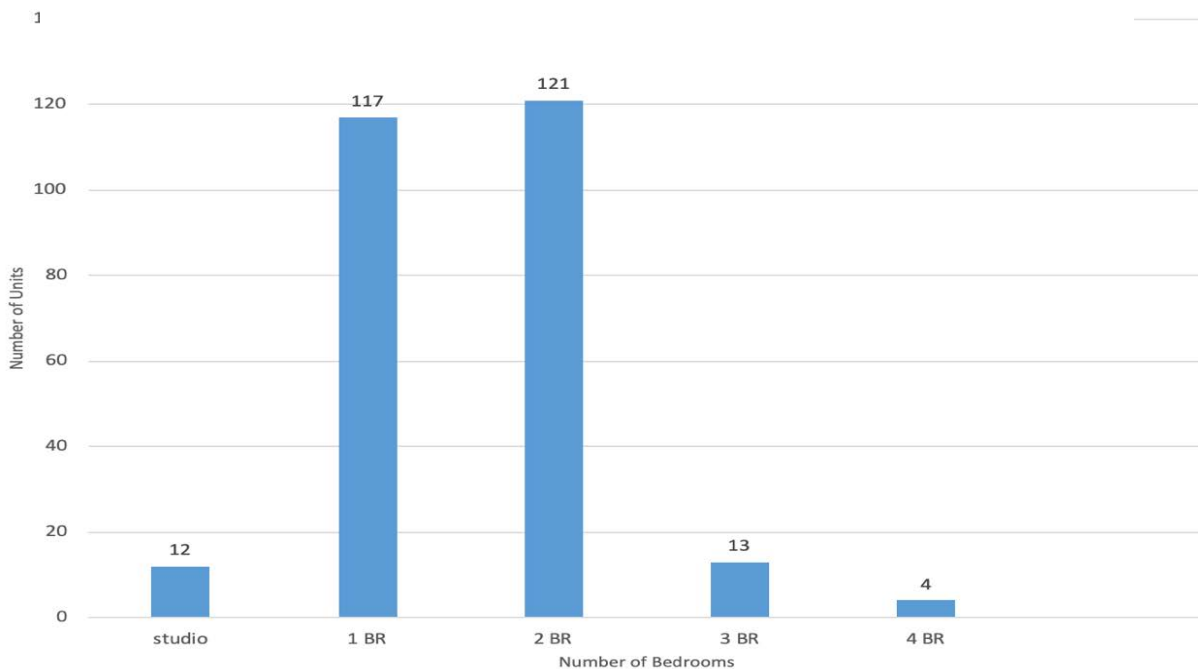
Table 11. Sample of Rental Listings, Townsend 40-Minute Area

# BRs	Rent	Price		
		# Units	High	Low
studio	\$1,652	12	\$2,144	\$1,085
1 BR	\$1,668	117	\$3,549	\$700
2 BR	\$1,913	121	\$4,538	\$1,050
3 BR	\$2,387	13	\$3,549	\$1,325
4 BR	\$3,325	4	\$3,500	\$3,100

# BRs	SF	Size		
		# Units	High	Low
studio	532	12	818	300
1 BR	851	111	1,870	400
2 BR	1,180	118	2,000	650
3 BR	1,623	14	4,593	1,200
4 BR	2,660	4	2,977	2,342

Source: rent.com, zillow.com, apartments.com, August 2019 and FXM Associates

Figure 35. Available Units by Number of Bedrooms

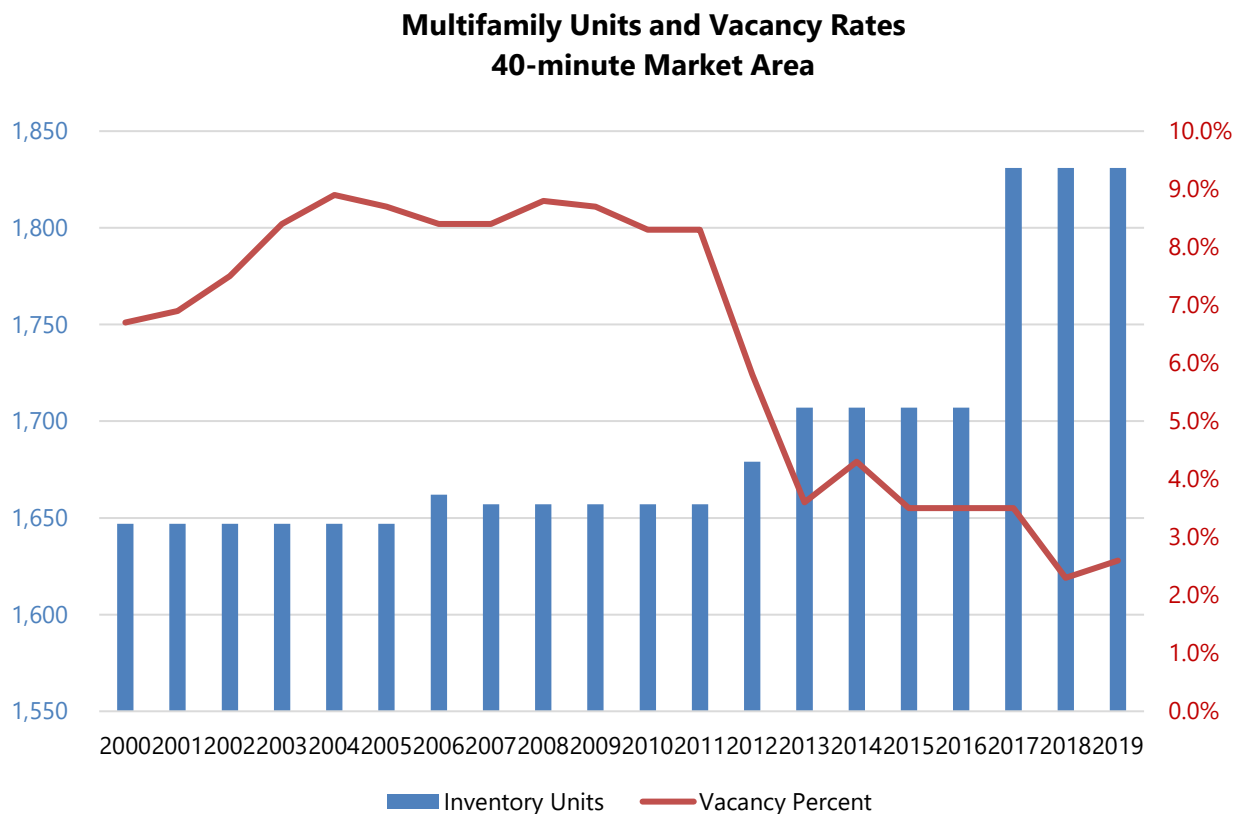




■ Rental Housing Supply Trends

A further component of the residential market assessment is analysis of trends in the inventory, vacancy rates, and monthly rents of multi-family rental⁶ properties within Townsend and the 40-minute drive time market area used in this analysis. Figure 36 shows trends in the inventory and vacancy rates of multi-family rental housing in Townsend and surrounding communities. Within this market area overall, 184 multifamily rental units have been added since 2000 as of the 2nd quarter of 2019, an average annual gain of 10 units per year. According to CoStar there are only 62 multifamily units in 3 buildings within Townsend, numbers that have not changed since 2000. At 2.6%, vacancy rates are about average for Greater Boston rental housing.

Figure 36. Inventory and Occupancy of Multi-Family Rental Units (All BRs), 40-Minute Market Area



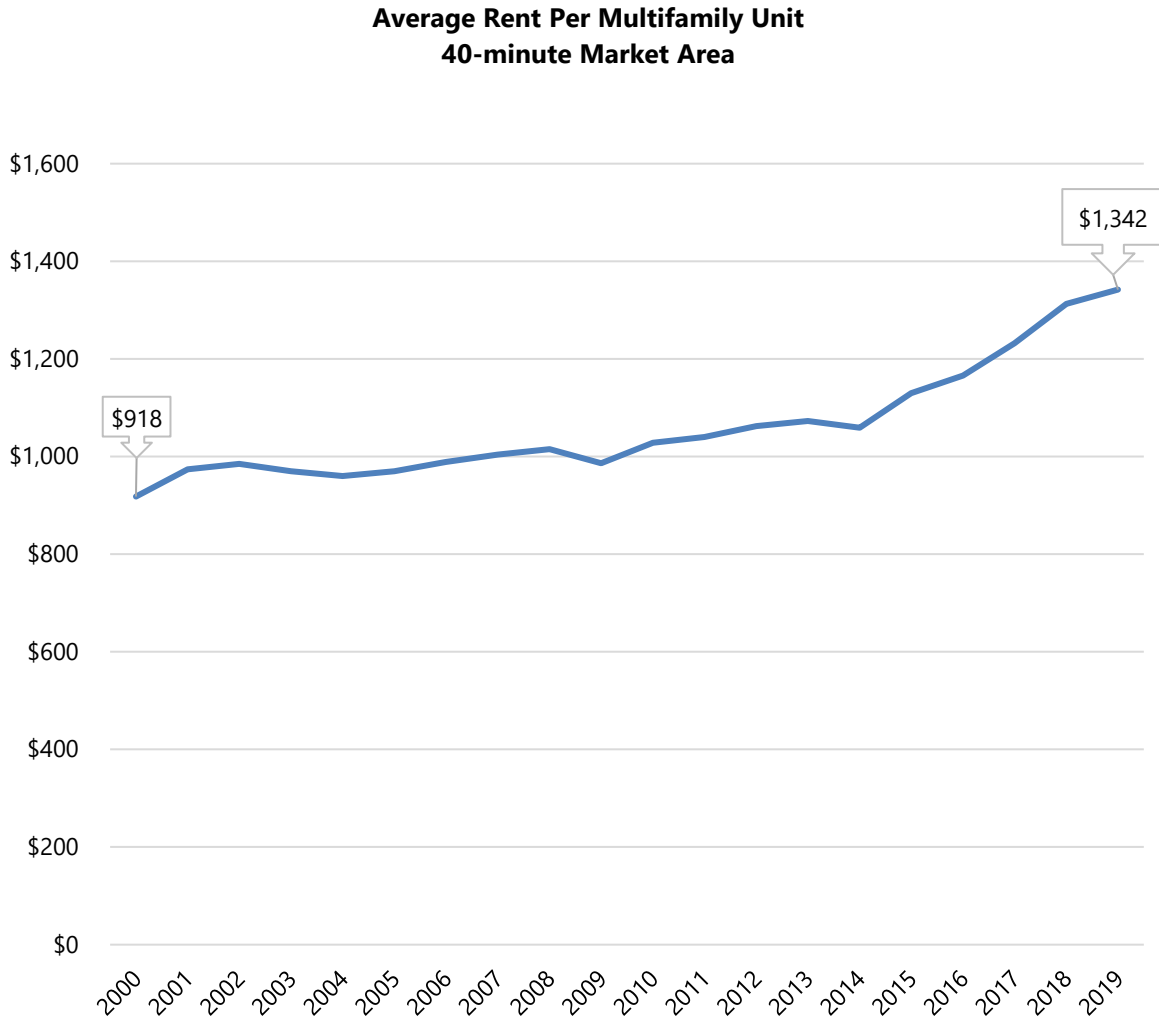
Source: Co Star Property Information System, 2019, and FXM Associates

⁶ These data are from CoStar which includes only commercial rentals and not those in homeowner-occupied properties.



Figure 37 shows trends in average monthly rents for all bedroom and unit sizes reported by CoStar. Units average about 900 square feet. Rents increased in the market area overall by an average of 3.7% per year over the past 10 years (2009-2019).

Figure 37. Average Monthly Rents, All Multifamily Units, 40-Minute Market Area



Source: Co Star Property Information System, 2019, and FXM Associates



FISCAL COMPARISON

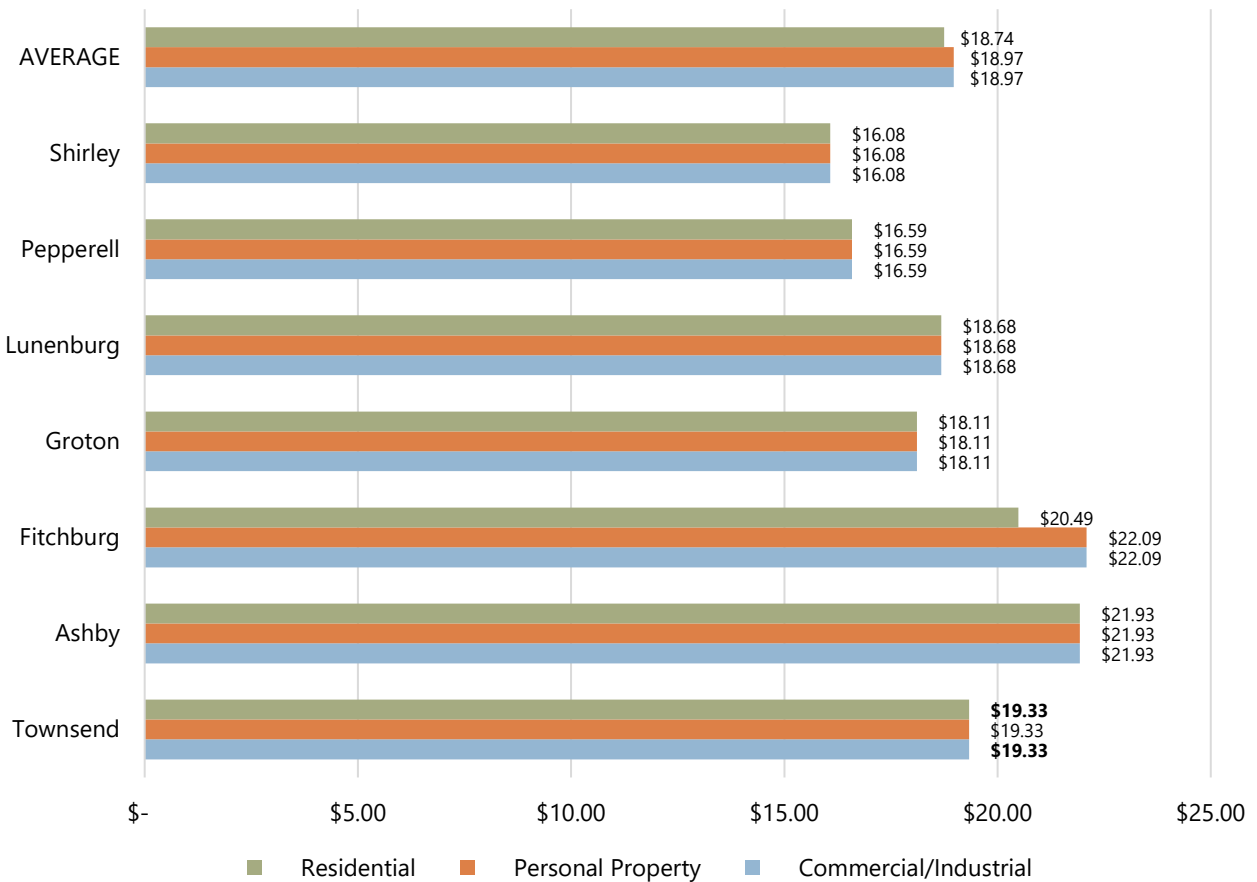
This section presents an analysis of where Townsend stands in terms of its existing tax policy compared to that of surrounding communities: Shirley, Pepperell, Lunenburg, Groton, Fitchburg, and Ashby. Tax rates and tax policies are competitive factors for both business and resident location decisions.

■ Tax Rates

As shown in Figure 38, Townsend’s 2019 commercial/industrial tax rate and residential tax rates are the third highest of the seven communities. Only Fitchburg and Ashby have higher rates.

Figure 38. Residential & Commercial Tax Rates

Tax Rates per \$1,000 Valuation FY 2019



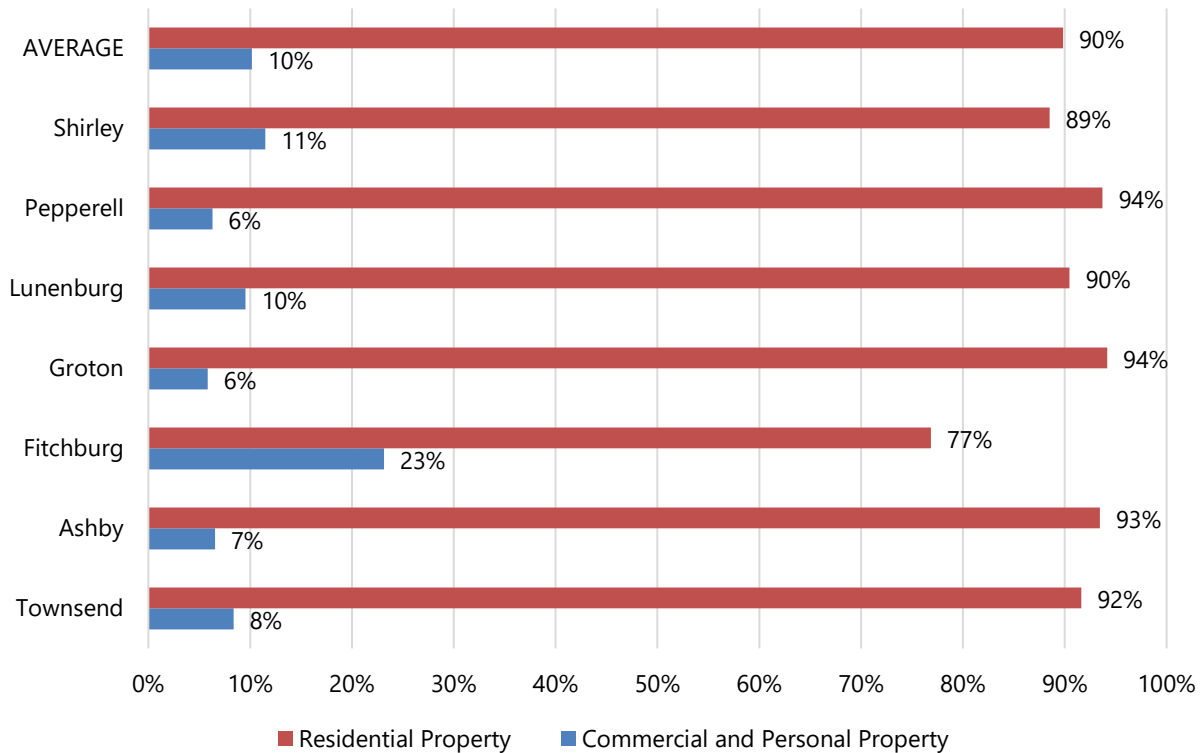


Source: Mass Department of Revenue, Divison of Local Services, Municipal Data Bank, 2019, and FXM Associates

■ Residential and Commercial Property as Percent of Total Assessed Valuation and Tax Levy

As shown in chart below, 8% of the assessed value of all property in Townsend is commercial. In this measure, Townsend is at approximately the same level as Ashby (7%). Groton and Pepperell have the lowest proportion of commercial/industrial/personal property assessed values. Fitchburg has the highest proportion of its assessed value classified as commercial.

Figure 39. Taxes by Sector
Sector % of Assessed Value FY 2019



Source: Mass Department of Revenue, Divison of Local Services, Municipal Data Bank, 2019, and FXM Associates

The proportion of total tax levies that come from commercial and residential properties is the same as the proportion of assessed values.

■ Revenue by Source

Figure 40 shows the proportions of total municipal revenue by source (adding to 100%). As shown in the graph, Ashby is the most reliant on property tax receipts, Fitchburg the least, among the other



communities shown. With 76% of its revenues from property taxes, Townsend ranks slightly higher than the 7-community average of 65% and is about half as reliant on state aid.

Revenues by Source FY 2019

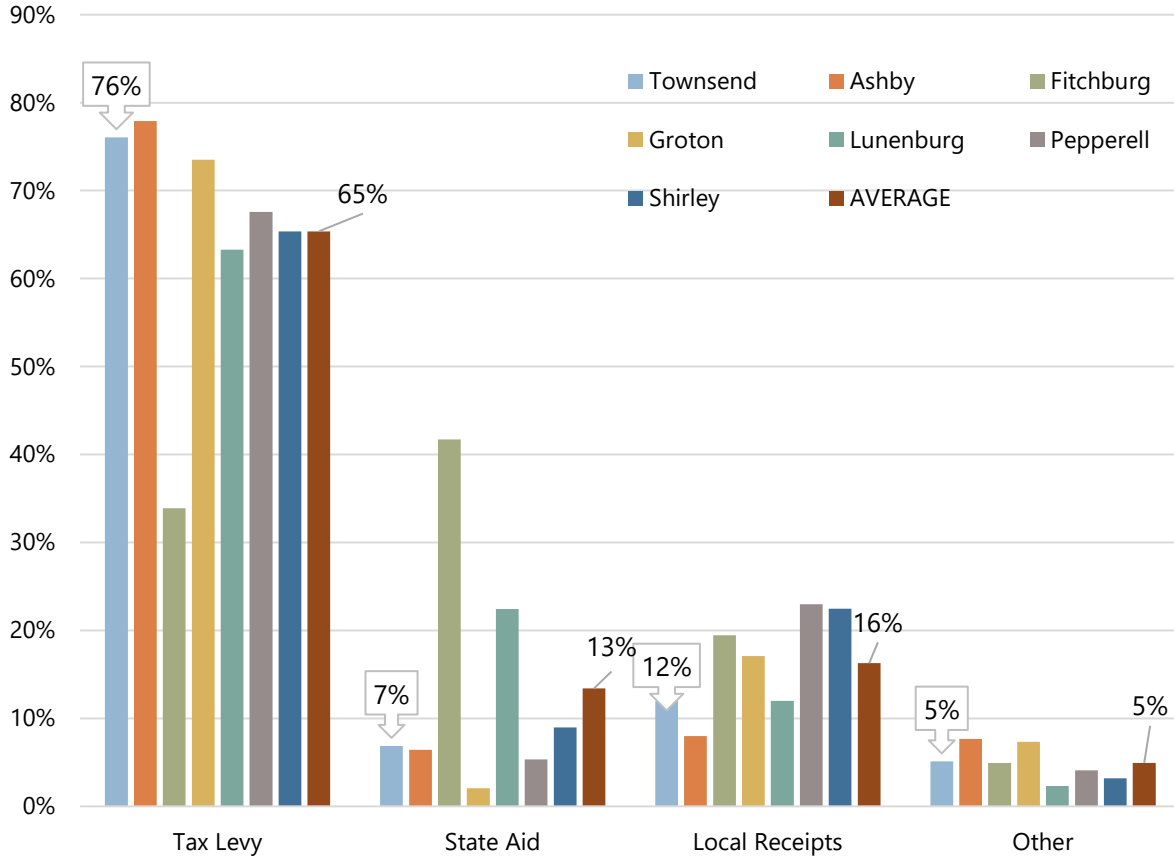


Figure 40. Revenues by Source

Source: Mass Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Data Bank, 2019, and FXM Associates



ZONING REVIEW

Townsend Regulatory Review

The Townsend Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) is fairly typical of the small, very-low-density towns in North-Central Massachusetts. It divides the town into five use districts, all shown on the Zoning Map, and over time, the Town has adopted several overlay districts as well. The most notable is the Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA), which has the same use regulations as the Residential B (RB) District but reduces the allowable density of development. RA is a large district that extends almost the full length of Route 119 and along most of Townsend's other major roads.

The purpose of this review is to identify regulatory opportunities and challenges for economic development. Understanding how zoning can help to encourage or discourage investment may be important to the Town's long-term community development goals. It is important to note that overall, the issues identified in Townsend's zoning exist in many small towns in Massachusetts, which means Townsend is roughly on par with most communities in its peer group. The Town will need to decide if it wants to be more competitive than, or about the same as, its peers.

It appears that Townsend made extensive updates to the ZBL in 1987 and occasional (though frequent) amendments since then. Townsend's ZBL appears to have a number of shortcomings simply because it is outdated. Not all of its shortcomings relate to the Town's economy, so a review like this should be conducted for other elements of the Master Plan, too.

■ **General Observations**

1. Townsend's zoning needs to be updated to conform with recent changes to the Zoning Act (Chapter 40A) and judicial decisions, and to reflect current practices in planning and economic development.
2. The relationship between the Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA) District, the Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APD), and Groundwater Protection District (GPD) is not clear. It is very unusual for a town to have multiple water resource protection districts, and a district that limits residential density to a three-acre minimum lot requirement is rare in Massachusetts. The justification and need for all three districts should be revisited by the Town.
3. Usually water resource protection districts reduce density by requiring a larger minimum lot area and reduce intensity of use by imposing a low maximum coverage ratio. In Townsend, it appears that only residential uses are subjected to reduced density regulations while the minimum lot for commercial uses remains the same in or outside of a water resource zone. This apparent inconsistency also clouds the purposes of the water resource districts.



4. All of the uses referred to in the ZBL should be defined.
5. The ZBL would be much clearer and easier to follow if the existing outline or text-format sections of use regulations were replaced by a single Table of Uses.
6. Off-street parking requirements are excessive.
7. Consideration should be given to allowing as of right some uses that currently require a special permit. The ZBL defers to discretionary special permits in cases where a well-crafted site plan review bylaw could protect the Town's interests and send clearer signals to developers.

■ **Districts and Uses**

1. Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA)

- a. The relationship between the Residential Aquifer Protection Overlay (RA) and Groundwater Protection [Overlay] District is not well defined. The Town should consider whether it actually needs two water resource protection districts. If the goal is resource protection, a single district should be able to address the Town's valid planning objectives.

2. Downtown Commercial (DC) District

- a. Self-storage is a permitted use. The Town should consider whether this is the kind of use that belongs in a downtown commercial area.
- b. Bed and breakfast and mixed use are allowed only by special permit in Townsend, yet these are the type of uses that would normally be encouraged (as of right) in a semi-rural town center.
- c. Multifamily dwellings (up to six units) are limited to buildings that existed some 30 years ago, and only by special permit. Typically, one would look to a downtown area as a good place for a mix of residential uses, including multifamily, but that is not the impression conveyed by Townsend's ZBL. Whether multifamily is even realistic in the downtown area is important to understand because the RA district overlays the entire town center.
- d. The minimum lot area in this district is 15,000 sq. ft., which seems appropriate in a semi-rural downtown that does not have public sewer service. However, since the RA district overlays the downtown area, it appears that any dwelling would require a minimum of three acres per unit and eight acres per dwelling.⁷ This type of density regulation runs counter to the purposes and function of a downtown and it should be revisited.

3. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD)

- a. Some basic business uses such as retail and restaurants are allowed by right *only* if located in a structure that existed in 1989. This needs to be revisited.
- b. As with the DC district, Townsend limits multifamily and mixed-use buildings to a special permit. Again, these kinds of uses are normally found in neighborhood-level business nodes and they should be available as of right, subject to site plan review.

⁷ Note that under Sec. 145-37, "apartment/multifamily" is limited to RA and RB, but "one to six dwelling units" is a special permit use in DCD and OCD. Since the RA district overlays both districts, the RA rules will apply and the inconsistent terminology is probably immaterial. However, this is a good example of inconsistent or conflicting provisions in the bylaw.



4. Outlying Commercial District (OCD)

- a. The OCD is a general business district offering a wider range of uses than the other districts. Because the list of allowed uses is so broad, this district could evolve as a not-very-attractive collection of disparate uses – and uses that could easily conflict.
- b. An example of potentially confusing language can be found in this zone. The use regulations include “sale and rental of goods, merchandise and equipment” as an allowed use, but very similar language appears in the DCD and NCD: “*retail* sale and rental of goods, merchandise, and equipment” [emphasis added]. Does the Town intend for “sale and rental of goods, merchandise and equipment” to include wholesale in addition to retail?
- c. In this district, a hotel is a permitted use *only* if it existed in 1970! All other hotels or motels require a special permit. The Town should consult with Town Counsel to verify that the hotel provisions in OCD are not a violation of the uniformity clause under Chapter 40A, Section 5.
- d. This district allows single-family dwellings as of right, but multifamily is prohibited. The policy justification is unclear. The risk of land use conflicts is much greater with single-family homes than multifamily dwellings.
- e. The OCD area located in the southern part of town on Fitchburg Road appears to be the only nonresidential area that is not subject to the APD.

5. Industrial District (ID)

- a. This district is the least restrictive zone in Townsend. It provides for a wide variety of commercial and industrial uses, and a concern similar to that noted for the OCD exists here, too: the potential for an incoherent development pattern with uses that do not complement each other well.
- b. The land use terms should be updated and defined.
- c. It appears that all ID-zoned land is in the APD but not the Groundwater Protection District (GPD). This is an example of unclear intentions in the ZBL because the objectives of the APD and GPD would presumably be the same.

■ Site Development Regulations

6. Off-Street Parking

- a. The minimum area requirement for an off-street parking space in Townsend is 200 square feet, which is excessive. It should be reduced to 162 (9' x 18'). Parking spaces at 200 sq. ft. per space contribute to water quality and stormwater management problems.
- b. Many of Townsend’s minimum parking requirements are out of line with contemporary approaches to managing parking supply and designing attractive, safe commercial districts. For example, the Town requires retail uses to provide one space per 180 sq. ft. of sales floor area and at least 5 spaces per tenant. The typical retail standard is one space per 300 sq. ft. and less for very large retail developments. Also, business or professional offices require a minimum of 5 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of floor area (essentially one space per 200 sq. ft.), but except for medical offices, the typical parking demand for professional offices is about one space per 300 sq. ft. and less for upper-story offices.



- c. The ZBL does give the Planning Board authority to waive or reduce parking requirements on a case-by-case basis, and this is positive. However, if the ZBL's parking standards were updated, an applicant with a reasonable parking plan would not need a waiver.
- d. Landscaping of lot and street needs to be more flexible

7. Lots Divided by District Boundaries

- a. The ZBL places fairly restrictive limits on what can be done with a lot that falls within two zoning districts – presumably commercial or industrial and residential. Townsend limits the less restrictive use (say, commercial) to occupy only the commercially zoned portion of the lot.
- b. Many towns allow a less restrictive use to extend into the more restrictively zoned area by some distance in order to ensure that the commercial activity has a viable space to operate. An extension of 35 to 50 feet is fairly common. Of course, the *dimensional* rules of the more restrictive district would still apply.

8. Site Plan Review

- a. Townsend's site plan review (SPR) bylaw is a "site plan special permit," but SPR is not a special permit and it should not be tied to a special permit process. For uses that require a special permit, reviewing the site plan should be taken up in the special permit process.
- b. Site plan review should be an administrative review process for as-of-right uses that might have a negative impact and therefore need a plan review mechanism prior to the issuance of a building permit. The purpose of site plan review is to ensure safe, efficient, and attractive development of new construction or expanded projects such as multifamily housing or commercial projects. Number of parking spaces may be a trigger that requires SPR, but it is not the only one.

9. Housing and Accommodations

- a. Townsend allows accessory apartments by special permit, but new or renewal units require an affordable housing restriction unless the unit will accommodate a member of the homeowner's family.
- b. There is a growing trend in Massachusetts to allow accessory dwellings as of right. Given the large lots that Townsend requires, perhaps moving to an as-of-right option should be considered. Accessory apartments do provide rental housing options in a fairly modest, inconspicuous way. A revocable special permit is a distinct disincentive to investing in construction of an accessory unit.
- c. The Town's motel/hotel density standard, a maximum of 5 guest rooms per acre, is unrealistic.
- d. A transfer-of-development bylaw with a sending-to-receiving ratio of only 1.2 is unrealistic.
- e. Adequate workforce housing is a prerequisite today for successful economic development. Townsend currently limits multifamily dwellings to a maximum of six units and, in the RA district, multifamily development requires at least *three acres of lot area per unit*.
- f. It is unclear why the Town has both subdivision phasing and rate-of-development bylaws. The need for these restrictions should be evaluated against current development trends in Townsend's part of the state.



RESPONSES TO THE RFP QUESTIONS

1. What are small businesses that can be sustained in a rural community?

Townsend is a rural community, but not all rural communities have the same characteristics. Unlike the second-home hamlets of Berkshire County or the distressed rural areas southwest of Worcester, Townsend is largely a bedroom community that exports the vast majority of its working-age people to out-of-town jobs. The good news is that Townsend residents have access to and can compete for decent jobs in regional employment centers, but the bad news is that there are not many people in town on a daily basis to support local establishments. The daytime population in Townsend (2,611) is less than 28 percent of the total population (9,418) – a statistic far below that of the Commonwealth (52 percent) or Middlesex County (58 percent).

The class of “rural” that includes communities like Townsend lies along the outer edge of the Boston metropolitan area. They are sparsely populated, semi-suburbanized towns sandwiched between Rte. 495 and the Rte. 190/Rte. 395 corridors, offering small-town charm, affordability, and proximity to the region’s cities, but very few have a well-developed, “branded” identity that draws people for a cherished or unique experience. Groton with its farms and private schools and Bolton with its orchards are notable exceptions. Any attempt to answer the question, “what are small businesses that can be sustained in a rural community?” must recognize Townsend’s development maturity, existing assets and drawbacks, and regional context.

We know from the Market Conditions and Trends section above that certain industries have been performing well in Townsend, such as accommodation and food services, and some that have the potential to perform well in the future:

- Construction trades
- Accommodations, e.g., a bed and breakfast or a small inn
- Destination restaurant or farm-to-table restaurant
- Small regional market or year-round farm store
- Specialty retail, such as custom home furnishings

Supporting existing businesses and focusing on attracting new businesses in these industries would give Townsend a foundation for working toward a stronger local economy. For example, some communities near Townsend such as Groton and Littleton, or Hollis N.H., have adopted well-organized, visible “Buy Local” programs to support local farms and business establishments. Businesses thrive when they have access to services and supports that are essential to their operation. Communities with a somewhat larger tax base than Townsend’s have created local economic development or community development positions inside town government, a move that helps them build capacity and compete for state resources. Having a town planner makes a big difference in a community’s ability to work on economic development, and many of the towns near Townsend have



a planning department. Such efforts help because one challenge Townsend has is that many of the jobs available in businesses like those currently operating in town do not offer high-wage employment (see Table 5 above), so keeping housing affordability and housing options in mind is very important. It is very important to remember that housing is an integral part of any economic development strategy, so diversifying Townsend's housing supply will go hand-in-hand with efforts to strengthen the local economy. In addition, zoning and permitting requirements should be designed to encourage businesses that can thrive in a small town, e.g., allowing bed-and-breakfast establishments as of right, subject to an administrative site plan review bylaw.

2. What would make Townsend a destination?

Communities function as destination areas when they offer special or unique experiences. Groton, Lincoln, Concord, Shelburne Falls, Lenox, and the regionally branded "South Coast" towns are good examples of this. Some examples pertinent to Townsend that could benefit from branding include:

- Destination restaurant or farm-to-table restaurant
- Ice cream shop or other specialty food shop: a cheese store, butcher shop/premium meats, artisan breads or similar specialty foods made from locally sourced ingredients
- Eco-tourism, if linked well to eco- and recreational tourism offerings in the region (north-central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire)
- Cultural establishment, if integrated with the North-Central region's historical societies and fine and performing arts venues

Having a destination business is not the same as being a destination, however. To be a destination community, a place needs to offer a collection of experiences or opportunities that draw visitors and lure them to return. Townsend would do well to work closely with regional organizations that promote North-Central Massachusetts as a recreational tourism and cultural destination spot. Commercial groups like Visit North Central Massachusetts and the North Central Chamber of Commerce have resources for marketing and promotions that no small town would have on its own. As a result, while any of the businesses listed above could be profitable in Townsend, their collective ability to help make the town a destination will hinge on a good marketing strategy, regional alliances, and offering distinctive products and services.

3. What can be done with unoccupied retail space?

The market study identifies the types of retail for which there is evidence of unmet demand in Townsend, and those retailers should be the focus of efforts to attract new retail to the community. Townsend currently loses retail sales for home furnishings, electronics, groceries, cosmetics, shoes, sporting goods, and other products to nearby towns and cities. There is evidence in the Retail Opportunity Gap/Surplus analysis that Townsend could potentially support growth in these areas. While vacant spaces continue to exist, however, the town could work with property owners to activate ground floor commercial space through any of the following means:

- Window displays



- Short-term events and storefront activation
- Technical assistance for property owners on tenant attraction strategies, appropriate asking rents, property management
- Collaboration with the region's cultural establishments to set up temporary exhibits
- Work with MRPC to develop a storefront improvement program with CDBG resources

These are tested, workable techniques for reducing the impression of vacancy and improving a property owner's prospects of luring more viable tenants.

4. What can be done to incorporate historic properties into our economic development plan?

Historic properties can contribute to the local economy in many ways: as part of a heritage tourism initiative or used for purposes such as accommodations, office, or housing. To be regarded as historic in a way that creates economic value, the property must offer an authentic experience. Accordingly, the first step toward incorporating historic properties into any economic development strategy is to protect them. Unless protected by a local historic district or a preservation restriction recorded with the Registry of Deeds, a historically significant building that plays a role in a community's economy is vulnerable to demolition or repurposing in ways that may not be compatible with the town's goals for its future. The town should consider the following actions:

- Seek technical assistance from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). MHC staff routinely work with communities – especially small towns like Townsend – to identify realistic options and resources for preservation, including heritage tourism.
- Nominate historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a district (this process usually requires a consultant).
- Adopt and enforce demolition delay (the properties have a story to tell only if they're still standing).⁸
- Depending on the properties and willingness of private owners, organize an annual house tour as a destination event. Many communities have done this, and while historic house tours do not usually draw lots of visitors, they do make a statement about a community's interest in culture and recognition of the value of local history. Historic properties are an amenity that can attract tourism if they are part of the community's branding and marketing efforts.

Historic homes are classic opportunities for bed and breakfast establishments. They also can be used for professional office space, specialty museums, rooming houses, and some types of personal services.

5. What can be done to incorporate the recreational opportunities in Townsend into our economic development plan?

The market study indicates that these endeavors are on a downward trend in Townsend. If the town wants to keep recreation viable in the future, the activities listed below should be pursued. Building a

⁸ Demolition delay is a basic historic preservation tool to prevent properties from falling into disrepair and ultimately requiring demolition rather than preservation. Towns can put such tools in place prior to needing them.



viable base for recreational tourism is a long-term proposition, and while it may be important to the town, other strategies discussed in this report should be seen as higher priorities.

- Collaborate with regional organizations that are marketing North Central MA as a place to visit, shop, and play, e.g., North Central MA Chamber of Commerce and Visit North Central Massachusetts.
- Support efforts by Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to develop a comprehensive trails guide. There are sizeable, organized hiking groups in the North Central - Wachusett area and southern New Hampshire, so the town should make sure that Townsend trails are mapped and marketed along with other trail/hiking opportunities in the region.
- Consult with neighboring communities to promote the state forests in Townsend, Ashburnham, and Leominster.

6. What are strategies that have been proven effective in other communities similar to Townsend?

Communities with successful economic development programs provide professional staff, resources, and a regulatory environment that supports small business development. Townsend does not have a professional town planner or economic development coordinator, so as a first order of business, the town needs to invest in economic development capacity.

Any or all of these small-town economic development strategies could be considered in Townsend if adequate local capacity were in place:

- Support (technical assistance and mini grants) for home-based entrepreneurs. Several years ago, a group of towns in South Berkshire County obtained a grant to brand and market the cottage industries in that part of the state.
- Collaborative marketing, e.g., collaborative online sales platform for local artists, custom manufacturing, etc.
- Surveying adjacent and nearby communities for existing, profitable businesses in the industries with unmet demand in Townsend and approaching them about expanding into Townsend. Use the market study to focus this type of effort.
- A branding and wayfinding initiative.
- Technical assistance from USDA Rural Business Development (note: towns are eligible applicants for these grants).

7. What advantages or disadvantages does the current zoning provide to business locating in Townsend?

There are two main concerns about Townsend's present zoning as a tool for economic development:

- The town relies too much on special permits to manage development; and
- The zoning bylaw has obsolete provisions and is also missing features that are found in other



zoning bylaws around the state, including in small towns similar to Townsend.

1. Are there zoning changes required that would promote businesses while maintaining the rural nature of Townsend?

There are several zoning changes needed in Townsend in order to remove regulatory barriers and modernize the zoning bylaw. The types of changes needed are outline below. It is important to remember that updating regulations alone does not change the economic climate in a town. Better zoning makes the rules clearer and the permitting process more efficient.

- As a first order of business, the zoning bylaw needs to be reorganized and updated. It is very difficult to follow in its present form.
- Townsend needs to move toward more as-of-right uses subject to administrative site plan review and reduce dependence on special permits.
- A site plan review bylaw for as-of-right uses can help to make the permitting process predictable and clear, and at the same time foster great projects by establishing design standards.
- It will help Townsend to focus on building form more than land uses per se. In most towns, buildings that people love are often buildings that do not comply with current zoning and/or were built prior to the adoption of zoning – those historic buildings that Townsend would like to integrate within its plan for economic growth. Buildings that last will eventually be used for purposes other than their original use.
- The zoning map needs to be cleaned up and symbolized clearly. Wherever possible, district boundaries should follow property (parcel) lines to avoid split lots.
- Implement zoning for small-scale multifamily development and mixed-use development (top-of-the-shop housing) as part of a placemaking strategy for the center of town.

8. What are the next steps in fostering a stronger economy in Townsend?

- Focus on potential opportunities identified in the market study. There are some industries with unmet demand in Townsend, so any strategy to fill vacant spaces should be organized around attracting those industries.
- Work on a branding strategy for the town. There are grant resources from the Department of Housing and Community Development that Townsend may be able to qualify for to obtain branding and wayfinding assistance.
- Work with property owners to fill vacant spaces and activate those spaces until the owners have new tenants. The vacancies that exist will discourage new businesses from coming to Townsend.
- Initiate discussions with the North Central Chamber of Commerce about regional eco-tourism and heritage tourism opportunities.

Appendix 4: Community Listening Sessions Report

Townsend Master Plan Public Forums Report

June 28, 2018



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Introduction

The Town of Townsend is in the beginning stages of updating its Master Plan. A Master Plan is instrumental to a community for a variety of reasons including the orderly expansion of municipal services, your community's plan of action for the next ten years, and acts as the foundation of your town's zoning scheme. Townsend signed a contract with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to assist the town to facilitate five Public Forums.

Public input is essential to the Master Plan, and Townsend initiated public input at the beginning of the Master Plan Update process by holding two Public Forums with local officials and Town Residents on May 30 and June 2, 2018, a forum with seniors on May 30, Townsend businesses on June 7, and in conclusion, a meeting with Townsend High School students on June 8. Twenty-five people signed in at the Senior Meeting, 13 at both the May 30 and June 2 Community Meetings, 8 at the Business Meeting, and 12 students participated at the Student Meeting. A Public Forum needs to be held in a suitable location in an accessible facility. The first and second Public Forums were held in the Townsend Senior Center and the third and fourth were held at the Townsend Town Offices. The fifth and final meeting was conducted in the new North Middlesex Regional High School.

The purpose of these Public Forums was to solicit public input to gain insight regarding Townsend's housing, economic development, open space and recreation, services and facilities, natural and cultural resources, land use, and transportation. The Forums were open to the general public (with the exception of the school forum) and everyone with an interest in the community was highly encouraged to attend including residents, students, local officials, business owners and others. The Townsend Master Plan Committee advertised the forums which included a flyer (see Attachment 1, Flyer) distributed to local officials, the Townsend Public Library, and Council on Aging along with press coverage, cable tv, and even road signage near Townsend Center.

This report has been completed with the intention of documenting the Public Forums, the methodology that was utilized, and all of the recorded input provided by the participants to be integrated into the Master Plan Update.

Process and Methodology

The Public Forum Agenda was distributed as a handout at each of the five forums (See Attachment 2, Agendas). The forums started with a welcome and introductions (Kym Craven, Townsend Chair of the Master Plan Committee), Goals of the Master Plan Public Forum and Process of the Day (John Hume and Molly Belanger, MRPC), and breakout sessions into small discussion groups.

John Hume indicated that participants would divide into three smaller groups and each group would answer eight (8) Master Plan related questions. He also stated that the forum is a brainstorming session and there were no right or wrong ideas and that any local politics need to be set aside.

Participants divided themselves into three tables. There was one facilitator per group, and each participant received a hand-out sheet of questions. Large pads of newsprint paper were also provided to record participant responses. All groups were instructed by facilitators that as a group, participants should discuss, and then answer each individual question.

In the next part of the process, with the exception of the Senior Forum, participants returned to reconvene in the large group. A reporter from each group presented the responses to the participants. During and after each presentation there was an opportunity for discussion. Photographs were taken throughout the Public Forum. This method was utilized for five Public Forums.

Meeting One

Senior Citizen Meeting

May 30, 2018 11:30 A.M.- 1:00 P.M.

Held at the Townsend Library/ Senior Center

Summary of Findings Based Upon Input

Comments made by the Public Forum's participants have been documented and categorized by eight (8) questions posed for the three breakout groups. The questions are followed by the responses of each of the three individual groups.

Question #1: What can the Town do to better support seniors?

Group 1:

- Group 1 appreciates the senior center and believes that the town does an excellent job providing services for seniors.

Group 2:

- Seniors are about 25% of the Townsend population. The Senior Center is a great resource, and the town should continue to support the Center's budget, as well as the COA financial support program. Some seniors are not able to attend various senior programs due to associated fees. The town should work on the affordability and subsidizing of these programs. The town should also apply for various grants in order to bring in more funding for the Senior Center and its programs.
- To increase awareness about senior programs, there should be a newsletter that is mailed to residents because many seniors do not have email addresses. The town's website should also be integrated with the Senior Center website.

Group 3:

- The town should lower taxes or do away with them for seniors. This would lessen the financial burden of seniors in town. There are also many potholes that need to be filled in. Potholes are a safety concern

and need to be addressed more quickly. A town sewer system should be installed, and it should follow the town water system.

Question #2: What issues need to be addressed in terms of roads, infrastructure, public transportation?

Group 1:

- Group 1 indicated the Roadrunner service is a great service and should be offered more often. The group also indicated a need for many potholes in town to be filled. The issue with potholes in Townsend was mentioned as a serious road danger.

Group 2:

- People are speeding through the library and Senior Center. The roads should be designed to slow cars down in this area. Various roads in town should also be painted with lines to indicate the lanes and shoulders. There are many potholes that need to be fixed.
- Townsend's lack of public transportation should be addressed. There should be more than one mode of public transportation offered. There should be buses and trains offered to decrease traffic congestion on Route 119 and Route 13. Public transportation should also offer rides to larger cities. This would allow residents to travel to cities, and also bring people to the town from these cities. A Park and Ride would also benefit the town and decrease cars traveling to work and school.

Group 3:

- Elm Street and Proctor Road need yellow lines to make lanes easier to see. The town roads should also be fixed for potholes and be maintained at a more consistent rate. Also, the gas tax should be used as it was intended, and funding from this tax should be separated from the town's general funds.
- There should be additional transportation services, other than the Roadrunner. A taxi services is needed. Public transportation may not

be used in Townsend. If not used, then public transportation would not be cost effective.

Question #3: How can Townsend support housing for seniors?

Group 1:

- Build smaller homes that are more user friendly for seniors. Downsizing existing large homes into multifamily.
- The group also discussed the importance of affordable homes for seniors. Finding an affordable home is often an issue for seniors of Townsend.

Group 2:

- A three-stage living complex would benefit seniors of all abilities and needs. New construction for seniors should be only one story. Accessory apartments should be better supported by bylaws. The town should also continue to support “Aging in Place” to fund small house repairs for seniors.
- A communication support website should be available to seniors. A designated person with office space who can call or visit seniors.

Group 3:

- Veteran housing should be looked into. If there were to be veteran housing, it should be kept separate from traditional senior housing. There needs to be additional senior housing that resemble Atwood Acres. Some existing apartments should be made into low-income housing or income adjusted housing. There should also be an assisted living facility that allows seniors to live in individual apartments. These facilities should provide assisted living and health care.
- More tours of places such as museums, sporting events, and Kimball Farm. Additional businesses in the Town Common would also aid seniors who can’t travel far. New businesses should capture the “small town” feel.

Question #4: In terms of recreation, historic preservation, cultural needs what would you like to see?

Group 1:

- Group 1 discussed introducing a bus line to the town to transport residents to different locations around town. Could be used to transport residents to recreational areas, retail, jobs, schools.
- The town should reuse old buildings for new things, instead of building additional buildings. The old library should be refurbished and used for something new. This will keep more historic buildings in good condition.

Group 2:

- Pickleball court lines should be repainted. The town should also increase access to the Squanacook River for canoeing and hiking. The river should be stocked with trout to allow fishing. Provide special access and parking to the canoe race to improve participation. The town should purchase property to provide additional parking areas for other recreational areas. Land should also be purchased by the town to ensure historic preservation.

Group 3:

- There needs to be a constant funding source for the maintenance of natural resources. Older kids need additional recreational areas that are not sports-based such as a movie theater or bringing back the old Townsend Circus.

Question #5: In terms of economic development, what would you like to see?

Group 1:

- More small businesses in town would aid the town in economic development, as well as lower taxes for residents. The group expressed that large businesses such as Walmart, were not the businesses the group had in mind. The group indicated that the “small town” feel should not be compromised.

Group 2:

- The town should enable opportunities that will create more long-term jobs that enable growth. These jobs should also have entry-level positions for younger residents. The group indicated the town’s need for more “light industry” that will employ part-time employees. The town should also encourage the general opening of businesses for home and building supplies, clothing, books, and restaurants.

Group 3:

- There needs to be more support for businesses. The current lack of support is limiting economic growth. Additional restaurants should be encouraged. An increase in businesses could allow tax breaks for seniors.

Question #6: In terms of municipal services/facilities in town, what areas could be improved?

Group 1:

- The group repeated the need for a bus line/ public transportation. Roads of Townsend also need a lot of fixing. Additionally, Townsend Road, and Lunenburg Road need to be re-striped, because the yellow lines are not visible. Without these lines, it is difficult to decipher which lane ends where. These roads are very narrow, and curvy at times.

Group 2:

- The current internet and TV providers need competition to keep costs down for quality service. A yard waste disposal service should also be provided to residents. There is also a general lack of parking available for churches and town meetings. If there were additional parking spaces, the town's involvement in church and town meetings would increase.
- Youth should be engaged in town management and affairs. Their input in town decisions should be better sought out. Engaging youth will also keep residents involved in policies so that board and communities can be sustained. A monthly newsletter should also be created to keep residents updated on current events in town.

Group 3:

- Unused, old buildings should be renovated for new uses to preserve historical properties. The Public Works Department should be more active with projects in the town, and possibly.

Question #7: What are town strengths and limiting factors?

Group 1:

- Strengths include the senior center, library, small town feel, and the natural resources. Group 1 indicated that town politics were a limiting factor to Townsend. Residents are not getting along and it does not seem as though everyone is on the same page. There is also a drug problem in town, and the police department is not properly manned to handle this, along with other issues. The group expressed dislike for the regionalization of the Town.

Question #8: How can the Townsend foster growth and development while protecting resources?

Group 1:

- Sterilite has been an asset to the community. The Town would benefit from more organizations that aid the town such as Sterilite.

Group 3:

- The town is increasing development by cutting trees and building new structures. There needs to be a town sewer system so that the town water and river are not polluted further.

Question #9: Most significant natural resources? How can they be better used?

Group 1:

- The Townsend State Forest is a great natural resource. The town would benefit from more hiking trails and rail trails in the area.

Group 3:

- More solar energy should be used by residents. The town should own a solar field to give energy to the community.

Meeting Two

Community Meeting

May 30, 2018 6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M.

Held at the Townsend Library/ Senior Center

Summary of Findings Based Upon Input

Comments made by the Public Forum's participants have been documented and categorized by eight (8) questions posed for the three breakout groups. The questions are followed by the responses of each of the three individual groups. These responses were presented by a representative of each group when participants reconvened into the larger group.

Question #1: What are Townsend's strengths and limiting factors (i.e. what do you like and dislike about our town)?

Group 1:

- Strengths include the small-town atmosphere, and friendly neighbors. The community is a good place to raise kids, and there is lots of land.
- Challenges include an improper balance between a small town feel and economic growth. Lack of economic growth in town has held back the town from building a tax base. Zoning is an issue for new businesses coming into town, as well as current businesses staying in town. Large gaps between neighbors also creates "urban sprawl" developments and does not leave enough land for conservation.

Group 2:

- According to Group 2 strengths are the large amounts of open space as well as the river. The location of town is relatively close to cities that offer many jobs such as Lowell. The library and Senior Center offer many programs for the community and the Town Offices and Town Common are great places. School and athletic fields are nice for the town's youth.
- Challenges are the heavy traffic and noise from Route 119. Roads are poor quality and in need of repairs. Walking on these roads is also

difficult and there are few sidewalks. Additionally, the job and tax bases are limited, and there are limited places for young people to work. There are also limited places for young people to seek entertainment or night life. Historic areas of town could be better utilized and there are many empty stores and businesses. Having a single cable provider is also a setback.

Group 3:

- Townsend's strengths include the woods and wild spaces as well as the Squanacook River. The small-town charm is a benefit to the town and tourists are attracted to the antique shops. The Townsend Ridge Country Club is a great asset.
- Challenges include the lack of affordability for youth who want to live in town. They must find more affordable housing elsewhere. The town lacks activities for youth and there are very few sidewalks. There is also little funding for the town to create repairs or developments.

Question #2: In terms of Economic Development (jobs, retail, office, business), what do you want/need in Townsend?

Group 1:

- Additional transportation modes would connect residents and visitors to retailers, night life, recreational activities, doctors, work, and schools. However, the demand for transportation should be researched to prevent access services that are not being used. Currently, school buses only transport a small number of children and are costing the town money.
- Businesses should be developed in relation to the town's bike trails so that residents and visitors are encouraged to both visit local businesses and utilize the bike trails for biking and walking.

Group 2:

- This group indicated the need for more jobs and office spaces in town. Coffee shops with longer hours and internet access would also benefit the town. In general, better internet coverage is needed throughout Townsend. Additional businesses that fit the small-town feel should be encouraged, and a microbrewery should be added. Restaurants should be open late, and the general number of restaurants should increase. Online forms and information could aid those who would like to start their own business in town.

Group 3:

- The town should dive into the tourist industry and promote its natural resources and local business. The town should also research successful economic growth of other small towns and try to attract capital investment. Additionally, the town should explore prohibitive commercial rent to make spaces more affordable for small business.

Question #3: In terms of recreation, historic preservation, and cultural needs, what would you like to see in Townsend?

Group 1:

- The town's youth need additional places to play and seek entertainment such as a teen center. Additional places should be developed for all residents to utilize as well, such as farmers markets, community bands, and sidewalks. Old buildings could also be renovated into new recreational developments. Clear parking rules are also needed, as a lack of signs creates confusion about whether residents and visitors can park in a particular place. An online resource may be useful to outline public parking areas.

Group 2:

- The recreation department needs more facilities with swimming pools. Additional programs for children and teens are needed from the library. Other programs for children and teens are needed such as

sport programs. Existing sport field should be updated, an bike lanes should be added to roads.

Group 3:

- Historic buildings should be restored instead of torn down. Historic preservation should be a top priority of the town. The town could possibly partner with the Trustees with historical sites such as the Reed House, Cooperage, or Grist Mill. Additionally, updated state forest trail maps should be available. Memorial Hall should show movies, theater plays, and music.
The town should host more special events such as author talks, lecture series on current events and politics, and music performances. Also, there should be a coffee house near Memorial Hall, the library, and town churches.

Question #4: What issues need to be addressed in terms of roads, infrastructure, and public transportation?

Group 1:

- Pot holes are a significant issue in town and need to be better addressed. Roads are also very narrow, and there are often times not enough room for cars in both lanes to travel past each other. Sidewalks are also needed on these roads, so pedestrians can safety travel. Route 119 in particular is very dangerous and the town needs to re-design a more pedestrian friendly design.
- There is currently no public transportation and the town would benefit from buses and trains. The town is “car-heavy” and buses would lessen traffic and cars driving on the road. The town should also encourage the use of bikes. Parking should be provided for residents to park and then take the bus to work, school, etc.

Group 2:

- Road surfaces should be better maintained and bike lines should be painted on roads to encourage people to use bikes. Heavy traffic and speeding must also be reduced and road signs should be increased. More sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes would increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Additionally, the town should have a sewage system as well as additional parking near the town center and Howard Park.

Group 3:

- The area surrounding the highschool needs sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian traffic lights. The general town would benefit from sidewalks, bike lanes, and a sign to welcome people to Townsend. Additionally, there needs to be public transportation that will take passengers to Fitchburg (connecting to other trains, and activities). This public transportation should be offered to all residents and not just seniors. Currently, there are only transportation services for seniors. Traffic lights in the center of town would also help ease the dangers of big trucks turning onto various roads.

Question #5: How can the Town foster growth and development while at the same time protecting natural resources?

Group 1:

- A lot of land located in Townsend, belongs to the state. The town must have a more organized plan for development on available land. The town should also share more information with residents about the usage and plans for land. User friendly zoning would benefit the community.

Group 2:

- The town should have a plan for businesses and economic development, that allows for economic growth at a stable rate. A list of unused buildings should also be available online. The Conservation Commission should continue to work on growth and preservation.

Group 3:

- Group 3 indicated that the town must protect drinking water, as well as wildlife habitats and endangered species. Additionally, wetlands and coldwater fisheries must be taken care of. Mixed use buildings should also be implemented in commercial areas with businesses on lower floors and apartments on upper floors. Parking areas behind buildings would also attract more people to local businesses. Hiding parking behind buildings would also help Townsend keep its New England character intact. Utility lines should be buried in downtown and historic districts, and a more natural stormwater structures should be built such as rain gardens.

Question #6: How can Townsend support housing for lower income residents while at the same time ensure the housing supports our needs in terms of taxes to support operations?

Group 1:

- The town must work with state agencies to lessen restrictive zoning regulations. Elderly need more housing that is affordable and spacious. Additionally, minimum housing lot sizes should be reduced, allowing housing prices to decrease.

Group 2:

- Cluster housing should be a priority, and affordable housing should be increased to override 40B. The issue of few affordable housing units should be addressed and the town should create a plan to increase affordable housing.

Group 3:

- The town should partner with building owners to ensure lower rent for business. This will create a more affordable environment for businesses. Additionally, the town should have knowledge of the

town's demographics. Older residents make up a majority of the population, and residents over 55 years of age prefer smaller homes.

Question #7: Identify Townsend's most significant open space/ natural resource assets. Can open space/natural resources be better utilized in Townsend? How?

Group 1:

- Existing resources can be better utilized if bike lanes and rail trails are built. The town's website should also be up to date on natural resources and open spaces. The website should become a reliable source for information.

Group 2:

- Howard park is a great asset and should be better maintained. Wild and scenic rivers should also be taken care of. Maps should be provided for hiking trails and the town should advertise its natural resources. The maps should be distributed through the library and Senior Center.

Group 3:

- Developments should be added to town, such as a dog park, a bed and breakfast, hostels, canoe and kayak rentals, and river walks. With an increase in development, wildlife should also be better protected to ensure new development does not affect these areas.

Question #8: In terms of municipal services /facilities in town – what areas could the Town improve upon and how?

Group 1:

- The existing recreation center should increase its hours and be made more available to the public. The town would benefit from taking advantage of this resource. For safety, LED or solar street lights should be installed on roads. The town could also develop a solar field

that residents could use energy from. Additionally, a dog park would be a great asset, and bring residents together.

Group 2:

- There are issues with Unitil and they need to be addressed. Roads need to be repaved, potholes should be fixed, and new road lines should be painted. Residents should also have a better introduction to town. A welcome packet and link to online information about town resources would be beneficial. Additional locations are needed for posting flyers for town meetings. General town communication needs to improve, and an online town meeting experience could increase participation. Town email addresses should be updated and have a reasonable response time.

Group 3:

- Town departments should increase their accessibility by extending their office hours. Larger meetings and voting should be moved to the high school and middle school. Community services (tax collection) should be kept in town so that additional recreational facilities may be built. Additionally, a pool, weight room, and indoor walking track should be added to the Squanacook Elementary School.

Meeting Three

Community Meeting
June 2, 2018 9:30 A.M.- 11:30 A.M.
Held at the Townsend Memorial Hall

Summary of Findings Based Upon Input

Comments made by the Public Forum's participants have been documented and categorized by eight (8) questions posed for the three breakout groups. The questions are followed by the responses of each of the three individual groups. These responses were presented by a representative of each group when participants reconvened into the larger group.

Question #1: What are Townsend's strengths and limiting factors (i.e. what do you like and dislike about our town)?

Group 1:

- Strengths are the strong sense of community of the town. The town and its residents also value preserving historical buildings and protecting natural resources. There are great natural resources that are used for hiking, biking, and fishing. There are also many summer recreational activities to keep busy with, and the library has great programs for the community.
- Challenges are a lack of residents attending town meetings. There is also a low number of residents voting or volunteering. The lack of businesses adds to the challenges of Townsend. Group 1 indicated that businesses and residents should pay equal taxes. Additionally, Townsend should provide motorized off-road trails that connect to larger areas of business and recreation. The lack of public transportation and open space also created challenges for residents.

Group 2:

- Strengths include the large open space areas and nature trails. The town also has a friendly atmosphere and a quaint small town theme. The school systems are doing well and the housing is generally affordable. Local stores have general necessities.
- Challenges include a lack of trail maps for visitors or residents. Trail maps are also hard to find online. Also, the small-town feel can

prevent some residents from being open to more businesses coming in. This lessens the chance for economic growth (tax base). Many parents in town are also sending their children to private schools. There is not a lot of entertainment such as movie theaters or family activities such as bowling or mini golf.

Group 3:

- Strengths are the caring nature of townspeople. The town has the capability to accomplish the goals of residents, and the town saves money from residents volunteering to do work that other towns hire staff for. The housing is also more affordable than surrounding cities and towns. Additionally, the library and Senior Center both provide excellent programs.
- Challenges are the small town thinking of some residents, and the distance to larger cities or highways. The town is also tied to Unifi and Comcast, which creates a monopoly for their services. There are not enough athletic fields, businesses, or youth activities. Communication within the town is also limited.

Question #2: In terms of Economic Development (jobs, retail, office, business), what do you want/need in Townsend?

Group 1:

- Group 1 expressed the need for the rezoning of commercial and industrial districts. Traffic calming and additional parking should also be considered when rezoning.
- Businesses aimed at kids should be encouraged. Recreational activities in the town center, as well as nighttime entertainment such as movies, shopping, and restaurants. Townsend should also encourage residents to shop local. Lastly, internet availability needs to be improved. There are limits to the quality and accessibility of the current internet program.

Group 2:

- There is currently very slow growth, and many stores have left. Specialty businesses for sports, toys, books, pubs, bars, restaurants, etc. should be encouraged. There also needs to be additional parking, and more walkable and bikeable roads to increase access to businesses. Adding attractions and businesses to create a downtown area would be beneficial. Also, the Road Race should have an additional festival, to increase participation.

Group 3:

- Increased opportunity for jobs in Townsend for various ages including youth. Open opportunities for new business that will expand the limited retail options in town. This could include multiple businesses for clothes, food, as well as adding new businesses for recreational activities such as field house with swimming pools. There should also be a better focus on keeping businesses here once they have come. A transition from manufacturing businesses to retail and recreational businesses needs to be made.
- Small businesses should be relieved of their unfair burden to help local causes. Businesses already have many barriers to operating in Townsend. The town should also provide assistance with marketing needs of local businesses. This could be done through an economic development plan.

Question #3: In terms of recreation, historic preservation, and cultural needs, what would you like to see in Townsend?

Group 1:

- The Recreation Center should increase its hours to become more accessible to residents. There should also be afterschool activities, pool tables, and ping pong added to the center. The school should add a music program to put on concerts. Additionally, the town and schools should practice better communication with each other to promote meetings, programs, and events. A town community calendar may also help inform residents of important events.

- Encourage “destination recreational businesses” such as paintball, go-cart track, zip lines, batting cages, mini golf, skateboard parks, and ice rinks. This will provide residents with recreation as well as attract people from other towns.
- The town should encourage the restoration of old buildings, in order to keep historic preservation as a priority.

Group 2:

- The Harbor should be better utilized to show history of the underground railroad. There should also be a resource for finding historical and recreational activities. The town center should have a family culture/recreational center that acts as a resource for finding activities. The town should advertise these resources (fishing, canoeing, nature trails) with signs.
- The town should make a more user-friendly website. Town meetings and events should all be displayed on the website’s calendar. An option to opt into event/meeting reminders from the calendar would increase participation.

Group 3:

- The Harbor Church holds opportunities for economic development. The town should look into advertising and promoting the Harbor Church. An improved recreation facility would improve the community, and encourage residents to be more involved. A skate rink should be added to the recreational center, among other activities. The town should provide more ways for youth to be active.

Question #4: What issues need to be addressed in terms of roads, infrastructure, and public transportation?

Group 1:

- Townsend could partner with neighboring towns to install street lights on both Proctor and Main Street. Many potholes throughout the town need to be filled in. If not filled in, they can cause damage to cars.

- Each town organization should also have their own email address to better communicate with residents. These emails should be kept updated and have a reasonable response time requirement.

Group 2:

- Road shoulders have been reduced, leaving no room for pedestrian or bicyclists. There is generally no place to walk on the sides of roads, and a sidewalk going from Meeting House Road to Ash Street would benefit the town. Another sidewalk should be built from Meeting House Road to Route 119 along Highland Street, up to Wallace Hill. Also, along Wallace Hill, Townsend Hill, and Proctor Road.
- To address speeding, there should be lower speed limits in residential areas, and more speed limit signs posted around town. Public transportation would be an asset to the town, with buses to Fitchburg, Groton, Littleton, and the commuter rail.

Group 3:

- Encourage the Complete Streets Committee to continue working on funding for Complete Streets projects. Pedestrian safety needs to be addressed in areas around the high school, the Town Common, and the brick store. This is a major safety concern. Funding for Complete Streets could address this issue. Additionally, Complete Streets could aid in improving traffic designs for both West Townsend and the Center of town. The truck traffic is very loud, and a load limit should be placed on many town roads. Additional lines being painted on these roads would also help with safety, as well as a designated bike lane.

Question #5: How can the Town foster growth and development while at the same time protecting natural resources?

Group 1:

- A public boat launch should be installed. When issues with town water arise, there needs to be transparency in the town. The town should notify the public by posting in papers. Water issues should be

located and mediated. Group 1 indicated a need for a full-time Land Use Coordinator.

Group 2:

- Structures that are not currently being used should be renovated for new uses, before additional buildings are built. A tax incentive could encourage businesses to move into empty buildings. Businesses should also more accurately cater to the demographics of the town.
- Street lights in busy areas would allow people to walk safely at late hours. Developments should also include activities for younger residents, especially summer activities. A playground would be a great addition to the Town Common. The town should also encourage businesses that will take advantage of natural resources such as fly-fishing, canoeing and hiking. Additional spaces for businesses is also needed.

Group 3:

- The town's conservation protection is serving as a double edged sword to the town. Conserving land is a priority to the town, however there is so much conserved land that the town is limited with land that it can fully utilize. There should be a larger emphasis for homes to be clustered together, so that large open spaces can be conserved. Group 3 mentioned again, that there should be an economic development plan as well as an economic development Planner who is paid by the town.

Question #6: How can Townsend support housing for lower income residents while at the same time ensure the housing supports our needs in terms of taxes to support operations?

Group 1:

- Foreclosed homes in the area should be bought by the town and turned into rental properties. The town could use the revenue from rental fees to provide more services for residents. Zoning for homes should be

reviewed and lot size requirements should be lowered. There should be less sprawl development and more clustered housing. This will free up even more area for open space, while bring the community closer together. Going forward, there should also be no developments which resemble Timberlee.

Group 2:

- The town should recognize affordable accessory apartments, to keep track of current rates of affordable housing.

Group 3:

- Buildings should be used for both businesses and housing. Apartments on the second floor of businesses would provide better access to local businesses, and attract more people to the town center. Houses that are abandoned and foreclosed should be renovated for new housing before additional units are built. Affordable housing should fit into the community to aid youth and seniors. These two demographics should be prioritized when renovated or building housing.

Question #7: Identify Townsend’s most significant open space/ natural resource assets. Can open space/natural resources be better utilized in Townsend? How?

Group 1:

- n/a

Group 2:

- Strengthening the Conservation Commission would lead to the better utilization of natural resources. An informational resource should be easily accessible for residents and visitors to find information about the town forests, Squanacook River, state parks, and land trust areas.

Group 3:

- The Squanacook River and Townsend Harbor are great assets to the community. The town should promote these areas, as well as buy

additional land to create recreational development near Harbor Pond. The town should also encourage the development of a microbrewery.

Question #8: In terms of municipal services /facilities in town – what areas could the Town improve upon and how?

Group 1:

- Response time for emergency services is too long. This issue needs to be addressed with more staff, or closer facilities. Additional health issues include the current opioid crisis. Roadside trash has become a problem as well. It would be useful to have information available to the town on trash and recycling services. Also, police should be equipped with body cameras.
- Additional services should be offered to high school students such as driving lessons, and a mentor program for seniors and school aged children. Internet availability should also be increased.

Group 2:

- Hiring a communications director to ensure town departments and residents are cooperating and communicating with each other. A user-friendly website should also be created to provide information on town resources. A kiosk in the common with the same information would be beneficial. The town should also build sidewalks, shoulders and bikeways to increase accessibility to various locations throughout town. Additional recreational activities are needed such as a swimming pool and recreation center for all ages.

Group 3:

- The permitting process should become more user friendly.

Meeting Four

Business Meeting

June 7, 6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M.

Held at the Townsend Memorial Hall

Summary of Findings Based Upon Input

Comments made by the Public Forum's participants have been documented and categorized by eight (8) questions posed for the three breakout groups. One group consisted of business owners of Townsend, and two groups consisted of non-business owning residents. Business owners received their own set of questions. The questions are followed by the responses of each of the three individual groups. These responses were presented by a representative of each group when participants reconvened into the larger group.

Question #1: What are Townsend's strengths and limiting factors (i.e. what do you like and dislike about our town)?

Group 1:

- Strengths include the town's open space and conservation. Homes are generally affordable and there is curbside trash and recycling.
- Challenges include a lack of unified information. There are many different resources for information but these sources can conflict with one another. One, unified resource would avoid this issue. Residents must also drive far distances to go shopping.

Group 2:

- Strengths include various natural resources such as open space, fishing, rail trails, and food resources (farm land). The center of town is also a great asset and has a lot of potential for improvement.
- Challenges include a lack of use for open space. This land is not being used to its potential, and the town could improve this by promoting this land for dog walking and picnics. Tourists are also not attracted to town. The community's desire to keep Townsend rural, hurts many chances for economic growth.

Question #2: In terms of Economic Development (jobs, retail, office, business), what do you want/need in Townsend?

Group 1:

- The town is in need of an industrial park and additional manufacturing. Both would bring jobs to town and lessen the tax burden for residents. The town should also promote Townsend's rural character as a benefit for tourism and business development.

Group 2:

- Townsend has great fishing locations. The town should advertise this, and encourage developments that would support visiting fishers, such as hotels and campgrounds. Land should be set aside as "fair grounds" for outdoor music venues. The town could also develop an intermunicipal co-op with Ashby and Pepperrell. Additional food venues and retail businesses should be developed to create a "village shop". These restaurants and retailers could utilize local resources from farms. The town needs to develop a marketing plan to attract these businesses into town.

Question #3: In terms of recreation, historic preservation, and cultural needs, what would you like to see in Townsend?

Group 1:

- The Rail Trail should be connected to other trails in town, to open up accessibility. Businesses should also be connected to the rail trail. This will encourage bikers to visit local businesses. It will also encourage those are visiting businesses, to travel through the rail trail. The town should encourage a development for cross country skiing and snow shoeing. Historical properties should also host holiday tours to attract residents and visitors. The town also needs to find a use for Harbor Church.

Group 2:

- An outdoor recreation area with a zip line and ropes course would be a great destination activity that would attract both residents and

tourists. The town is also in need of night time activities such as movies, food venues, and entertainment for all ages. Having additional activities for kids may lessen the town's opioid crisis. Additionally, a new recreation center should be managed separately from the school, to avoid scheduling conflicts. The Harbor Church must be better taken care of to preserve the town's history.

Question #4: What issues need to be addressed in terms of roads, infrastructure, and public transportation?

Group 1:

- There is a lack of light near Hannaford, which is very dangerous. Additional lights should be installed. Pot holes should be repaired in a timely manner. Additionally, a Park and Ride should be developed in Townsend, for residents to get to trains.

Group 2:

- There is currently no public transportation in town. The town would greatly benefit from a transportation service that is accessible to everyone. Townsend may also focus on increasing accessibility to various town locations without implementing public transportation, by building sidewalks and bike lanes. Poor road conditions should also be improved.

Question #5: How can the Town foster growth and development while at the same time protecting natural resources?

Group 1:

- The current zoning regulations should be reviewed, and the two-acre minimum lot size for housing should be reduced to one acre. The town should plan for future development with open space preservation.

Group 2:

- Group 2 indicated the need for hotels and campgrounds for visiting fishers. The town should encourage development that will allow tourists to use existing natural resources.

Question #6: How can Townsend support housing for lower income residents while at the same time ensure the housing supports our needs in terms of taxes to support operations?

Group 1:

- Expand opportunity for more seniors to stay in town. The development of additional senior housing would decrease the current waiting list for senior housing. Some seniors must leave town because they are stuck on a wait list.

Group 2:

- Low income residents will need public transportation, and local retail businesses. New businesses must be encouraged to come and stay in Townsend. Uber and Lyft must be offered to residents.

Question #7: Identify Townsend's most significant open space/ natural resource assets. Can open space/natural resources be better utilized in Townsend? How?

Group 1:

- Townsend has great natural resources such as Black Rock, the Squanacook River, and the town's various farm lands. Howard Park is also a great asset to the town. The town should put on monthly walks and hikes to show off these resources.

Group 2:

- Townsend has excellent fishing. The town does not advertise this resource enough and it would be beneficial to do so.

Question #8: In terms of municipal services /facilities in town – what areas could the Town improve upon and how?

Group 1:

- An organic food store would benefit the town. Some residents must drive far distances to other stores because there are little options in town for organic groceries. Alternative energy sources should be introduced, such as wind and solar energy. The town could sell this energy back to the town at reduced rates.

Group 2:

- Town wells must be better protected. The more protected these wells are, the less treatment they require. This keeps fees down for those who receive their water from town wells. Additionally, sanding and plowing services should continue. These services do an excellent job of clearing roads after snow fall.

Business questions:

1. What are Townsend’s strengths and limiting factors (i.e. what to you like and dislike about our town)?

Group 3:

- Strengths include the towns small size and affordable homes and business spaces. There is also a low crime rate in town and lots of land. Because Townsend is such as small town, there is a community feel and outstanding customer service. Business owners really get to know their customers.
- Challenges include the typically long commutes that residents face. There is also a great amount of unusable land in town, which limits where homes and businesses can be developed. Additionally, there needs to be more support for local businesses. Often times, residents drive to New Hampshire or Fitchburg to purchase items that local business owners sell in their stores.

2. In terms of Economic Development do you see your businesses expanding and if so what do you want/need in Townsend?

Group 3:

- An office supply store and print center would benefit businesses. They could purchase needed supplies while shopping locally. One stop permitting, and online permits would also be beneficial for business owners. The current permitting process is too complicated and should become more user friendly. The town would also benefit from apply to cultural and tourism grants.
3. What other types of businesses need to come to Townsend?

Group 3:

- Empty store fronts should be filled with clothing retailers, and a business supply store that caters to the middle class. There is the Dollar Store, and high-end stores, but there are few stores whose prices range in the middle. A car wash would also be beneficial to residents, and more cafes and restaurants would be great for all ages. Additionally, an effort needs to be made to attract businesses that will target teenagers.
4. How can the Town support businesses?

Group 3:

- The town should apply for more grants that will aid small businesses and economic development. There needs to be a better way for businesses to advertise for themselves around town. More bulletin boards may help with this issue. Also, Townsend should offer businesses incentives for contributing to the town, such as a store installing ADA ramps.

5. What issues need to be addressed in terms of roads, infrastructure, and public transportation?

Group 3:

- There is currently no public transportation and offering a bus service to residents would lighten car traffic. Car traffic is a huge issue in town and morning and evening commutes are long.
6. How can the Town foster growth and development while at the same time protecting natural resources?

Group 3:

- The town should have less restrictive property regulations and should instead judge properties on a case by case basis. Additionally, there should be more neighborhood- commercial districts and an industrial park should be developed for more commercial space. When applicable, businesses should also be encouraged to include natural resources such as kayaking in rivers or locating themselves near rail trails. The town should hire a part-time Planner to help lead new business development rather than create obstacles for business owners.
7. How can Townsend support housing for lower income while at the same time ensure the housing supports our needs in terms of taxes to support operations?

Group 3:

- An assessment needs to be made on town housing so the town may better understand housing needs. Currently, there is a great need for high end housing that will bring tax revenue to the town.

8. In terms of municipal services/facilities in town - what areas could the Town improve upon and how?

Group 3:

- Municipal trash services should offer businesses a discounted service rate, because they are already providing services for town residents. The town should also look to the state for ideas on forward thinking. New ideas should be consistent with state goals. Also, a museum should be developed that show cases various town treasures that are currently being underutilized.

Meeting Five

Student Meeting

June 8, 2018, 10:00 A.M.- 11:00 A.M.

Held at the North Middlesex Regional high School

Summary of Findings Based Upon Input

Comments made by the Public Forum's participants have been documented and categorized by nine (9) questions posed for the two breakout groups. The questions are followed by the responses of each of the three individual groups. These responses were presented by a representative of each group when participants reconvened into the larger group.

Question #1: What are Townsend's strengths and limiting factors (i.e. what do you like and dislike about our town)?

Group 1:

- Strengths of the town include the safe and quiet atmosphere. The recreation program is a great asset to the town, and the schools are installing new turf fields. The turf fields will enable the school to host games, and Townsend youth programs can utilize the field in the summer. The town common is also a great place for activities such as fairs and farmers markets.
- Challenges include the lack of activities in town. The town and school could use their resources to provide more programs and events for youth and adults. Additional recreation facilities, such as a basketball court, should be located close to the center of town. Also, more retail stores are needed. Various businesses should be centralized to create accessibility. Public transportation is also needed to increase accessibility. There are many students that do not own cars and will not otherwise be able to find a ride to various places in town.

Group 2:

- Challenges include a lack of public transportation and bike lanes/sidewalks. Additionally, roads are in poor condition and many pot holes have not been filled. A lack of teen jobs forced students to travel outside of town for work. More information about town activities and facilities should be available on the town website. There is a lack of places for teens to hang out,

and few places for event flyers to be posted around town. The school should coordinate with the town to create a calendar of events.

Question #2: In terms of Economic Development (jobs, retail, office, business), what do you want/need in Townsend?

Group 1:

- Currently, there are few jobs for students in Townsend. Most students must go to other towns to find jobs. This is often a challenge, because some students don't have their own cars and rely on their parents to drive them to work. The school should provide resources for students to find jobs during and after their time at high school. The town could also speak to students about various government jobs. More clothing stores are also needed. There are minimal retail options in town and stores that sell clothes and sports equipment should be more abundant, and closer to the high school.

Group 2:

- There are few jobs for students, and students are traveling out of town for work. The town should partner with Pepperell and Ashby to promote mutual businesses.

Question #3: In terms of recreation, historic preservation, and cultural needs, what would you like to see in Townsend?

Group 1:

- The town should plan more festivals that take place in the Town Common. Additional events in town would bring the community together, such as fireworks on the 4th of July, theater shows, and concerts. The school should also show movies on the weekends. These movies should attract both child and adult audiences.

Group 2:

- The town should host tours of historic properties in town, to attract residents and visitors. Internet cafes should be encouraged in town, as it allows residents to socialize. A recreation center should also be built in town, with basketball courts. The town could fundraise so that there would be little to no cost of using the recreation center. Movie nights would also allow residents to interact with their community.

Question #4: What issues need to be addressed in terms of roads, infrastructure, and public transportation?

Group 1:

- A bus should be provided to students both after school and during the summer. Most students would depend on this service for rides to activities and retail. The town could partner with surrounding towns such as Ashby, to bring students to various locations across all partnered towns such as the Pepperell Recreation Center. Additionally, speeding is an issue in town and should be addressed with radar speed counters. More bike trails and sidewalks would be beneficial near the center of town.

Group 2:

- There needs to be faster response time to pot hole reports. Pot holes are a safety issue and are often not addressed in a timely manner. Litter is often found on the sides of roads. The town should take measures to decrease litter in town. Additionally, the town should move to clean energy such as solar, wind, and water energy. A new bus program in town could utilize unused school buses, which would reduce carbon emissions if less residents are using cars.

Question #5: How can the Town foster growth and development while at the same time protecting natural resources?

Group 1:

- Snow removal should become more consistent. Main roads are plowed well, and quickly. However, less used roads are not plowed with the same urgency.

Group 2:

- The town should utilize its local resources and encourage the forestry industry to harvest trees and plants. The town should also continue to protect other natural resources such as rivers, and limit developments from building around rivers and water ways. The town trails need to be better marked and should be promoted to residents and visitors.

Question #6: How can Townsend support housing for lower income residents while at the same time ensure the housing supports our needs in terms of taxes to support operations?

Group 1:

- The new schools are a great asset and make students want to come here.

Group 2:

- The school is lacking teachers to staff enough classes for students. The school should allocate more funding for additional staff to be hired. New housing developments should be smaller, duplex developments. Additionally, more condominiums should be developed in town.

Question #7: Identify Townsend's most significant open space/ natural resource assets. Can open space/natural resources be better utilized in Townsend? How?

Group 1:

- Open space should be used for dog walking, picnics as well as other low impact activities. Open space should also be made family friendly and user friendly. The town could make these resources known in order to attract residents, while still conserving land.

Group 2:

- The town should make its state forests more accessible by providing signage for directions and parking areas. Town rivers should be used for recreational activities such as kayaking and canoeing.

Question #8: In terms of municipal services /facilities in town – what areas could the Town improve upon and how?

Group 1:

- The town's cellular coverage needs to improve. Many places in town do not have cellular service. Street lights should also be installed on roads, to improve safety. The library needs to advertise more of their programs to high school age children. Library programs are generally developed for younger children, and additional programs should be developed for older children.

Group 2:

- There are issues with Unitil and they need to be addressed. Roads need to be repaved, potholes should be fixed, and new road lines should be painted. Residents should also have a better introduction to town. A welcome packet and link to online information about town resources would be beneficial. Additional locations are needed for posting flyers for town meetings. General town communication needs to improve, and an online town meeting experience could increase

participation. Town email addresses should be updated and have a reasonable response time.

Question #9: After college graduation, do you intend to stay in Townsend, or move elsewhere?

Group 1:

- Group 1 unanimously agreed they would like to live closer to cities, after they graduate high school and college. The city offers different experiences, such as public transportation, and many events. In order for the students of Group 1 to stay in town, they expressed the need for a modern town. Group 1 also indicated their preference for newer housing which is developed close together. This type of development offers more of a community feel.

Group 2:

- Some students of Group 2 would like to leave town after graduation because of the lack of job opportunities, recreational activities, and affordable housing. Other students would prefer to stay in Townsend due to the town's safe environment that is family friendly.

Meeting Trends

Many of the groups shared several common responses in areas such as transportation, recreation, economic development, housing and natural resources. However, all ideas are worthy of merit and the previous pages should be read in their entirety so as not to disregard individual ideas that were not part of an overall trend. Taking this into consideration, a summary of some of the major trends are expressed below.

Transportation:

Almost all groups, including students, verified that pot holes serve as a safety issue and the community did not see the Town filling pot holes quickly and frequently enough. Additionally, public transportation was requested by almost all participants. Especially for children who are looking for recreational activities, and transportation modes that would aid in traffic calming during rush hour. There is also a need for additional sidewalks in the downtown area and near the high school.

Recreation:

In each meeting, additional recreational activities for all age groups was important. Most requests involved family friendly activities such as movies, fairs, festivals, and concerts. Activities for children of all ages was the main concern of participants, as there are currently very few activities to keep children busy. The Student Meeting expressed these same concerns regarding their lack of available activities. Both the Community Meetings and the Student Meeting listed a recreation center as something that Townsend needs in its community. The need for a dog park was also frequently mentioned. Group discussions also commonly mentioned the Senior Center and municipal library as very strong assets to the community that provide excellent programs.

Economic Development:

Many Community Meeting participants expressed a need for additional retail stores that would give residents increased options for shopping. For example, the student meeting discussed clothing stores and a sports equipment shop. The Business Meeting listed their wish for office supply stores. Additional stores and businesses were suggested across all meetings such as restaurants, an organic food store, bars, movie theaters, and bowling.

Most thought that there was a lack of job opportunities in the community, and additional businesses could increase the number of jobs in Townsend.

It was observed, that a few meeting participants thought larger scale economic development opportunities i.e. office/industrial parks could benefit the town, but most expressed a strong interest in economic development that would retain the small-town character of Townsend. This included bed and breakfast hotels and campgrounds for fishers and nature enthusiasts, since Townsend has excellent fishing, open space areas, and the Squannacook River.

On numerous occasions, the availability and quality of internet services was referred to as inadequate - it needs to be improved. Some participants also noted that the Town needs an Economic Development Plan and a Town Planner and that more municipal communication is needed to promote meetings, programs and events and email addresses on the town website need to be updated on a continuous basis.

Natural Resources:

Townsend's natural resources were pointed out as its biggest asset, along with and contributing towards its small-town charm. Many participants listed the Town's natural resources as a way to promote recreational activities, such as fishing and hiking but there is a lack of hiking/trail maps available to the public. Additionally, destination attractions such as zip lines and ropes courses would create businesses that would allow for economic development. Most participants recognized the desire to continue conserving land.

Housing:

A number of residents suggested that housing bylaws should be reviewed and updated. These updates should include lessening the minimum lot size for residential properties which would also make housing more affordable. Neighbors would be closer to one another which may result in an increased sense of community. Also, if houses are clustered more closely together, the town will have more open space to dedicate to conservation land.

Affordable housing was a common topic between each meeting. The town would like to offer affordable housing for young families, students, seniors,

and low-income persons. Affordable housing for seniors was mentioned by most groups because of the Townsend's large population of seniors. Seniors prefer smaller housing and there is a need for assisted living.

Additionally, some groups expressed concern for younger residents leaving the town after school because of a lack of appropriate housing. Students expressed their desire for new, affordable apartment buildings and condominiums in town that would feature modern homes and a better sense of community between neighbors.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Flyer

Community Input Needed



**What would you like to see for the future of
Townsend?
Let us know.**

Community Meetings

May 30, 6:30PM-8:30 PM Meeting Room - Library/Sr.
Center

June 2, 9:30AM-11:30AM Memorial/Great Hall - Town
Hall

Senior Citizen Meeting

May 30, 11:30-1:00PM - Senior Center

Business Meeting

June 7, 6:30PM-8:30PM Memorial/Great Hall - Town
Hall

We will talk about housing, education,
infrastructure, recreation, open space, energy,
transportation, natural resources, economic
development and historic and cultural resources.

Attachment 2: Agendas

Townsend Master Plan Public Forum

AGENDA

May 30, 2018 – Meeting Room – Library/Sr. Center

- I. 11:30 AM – Introductions and Overview
 - A. Welcome and Goals of the Master Plan Public Forum:
Kym Craven, Chair, Townsend Master Planning Committee.
 - B. Process of the Meeting:
John Hume, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
 - II. 11:40PM – Public Input Session

Break Out Sessions
 - III. 12:30PM - Break Out Information Review
 - IV. 12:50PM - Next Steps
- 1:00PM – Adjournment

Townsend Master Plan Public Forum

AGENDA

May 30, 2018 – Meeting Room – Library/Sr. Center

IV. 6:30 PM – Introductions and Overview

- A. Welcome and Goals of the Master Plan Public Forum:
Kym Craven, Chair, Townsend Master Planning Committee.
- B. Process of the Meeting:
John Hume, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

V. 6:40PM – Public Input Session

Break Out Sessions

VI. 8:00PM - Break Out Information Review

IV. 8:25PM - Next Steps

8:15PM - Adjournment

Townsend Master Plan Public Forum

AGENDA

June 2, 2018 Memorial Hall/Great Hall – Town Hall

VII. 6:30 PM – Introductions and Overview

- A. Welcome and Goals of the Master Plan Public Forum:
Kym Craven, Chair, Townsend Master Planning Committee.
- B. Process of the Meeting:
John Hume, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

VIII. 6:40PM – Public Input Session

Break Out Sessions

IX. 8:00PM - Break Out Information Review

IV. 8:25PM - Next Steps

8:15PM - Adjournment

Townsend Master Plan Business Forum

AGENDA

June 7, 2018 – Memorial/Great Hall – Town Hall

- I. 6:30 PM – Introductions and Overview**
 - A. Welcome and Goals of the Master Plan Public Forum:
Kym Craven, Chair, Townsend Master Planning Committee.**
 - B. Process of the Meeting:
John Hume, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission**

- II. 6:40 PM – Public Input Session**

Break Out Group Discussions

- III. 8:00 PM - Break Out Information Review**

- IV. 8:25 PM - Next Steps**

- 8:30 PM – Adjournment**

Townsend Master Plan NM Forum

AGENDA

June 8, 2018 – North Middlesex Regional High School

- IV. **10:00 AM – Introductions and Overview**
 - A. **Welcome and Goals of the Master Plan Public Forum:**
Kym Craven, Chair, Townsend Master Planning Committee
 - B. **Process of the Meeting:**
John Hume, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
- V. **10:05 AM – Student Input Session**

Break Out Group Discussions (5-6 minutes per question)
- VI. **10:40 AM - Break Out Information Review**
- IV. **10:55 AM - Next Steps**
- V. **11:00 AM - Adjournment**

CHAPTER 2: HOUSING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

A Housing Production Plan can help communities shape the location and type of future housing development and address affordable housing needs. Townsend’s housing goals and strategies go beyond meeting minimum requirements for producing housing units eligible for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). This plan also emphasizes the need for a mix of housing options for a variety of housing preferences, including accessible housing and housing choices for seniors.

These goals and strategies are based on a comprehensive housing needs and development constraints analysis, other current local plans and policies, as well as the consultant’s recommendations and best practices. The HPP’s goals and strategies are intended to provide guidance for local housing policies and initiatives as well as a path for certification (a.k.a., safe harbor), but do not bind future actions or decisions of local officials or Town Meeting.

How could Townsend protect natural, rural, and historic assets of the community while still creating more housing options to address local housing needs?

This question is at the heart of this planning effort and the goals and strategies described here are intended to address these questions.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS

The goals of this plan are consistent with the Comprehensive Permit Regulations (760 CMR 56) as required by DHCD for Housing Production Plans:

- a) *a mix of types of housing, consistent with local and regional needs and feasible within the housing market in which they will be situated, including rental, homeownership, and other occupancy arrangements, if any, for families, individuals, persons with special needs, and the elderly.*
- b) *a numerical goal for annual housing production, pursuant to which there is an increase in the municipality’s number of SHI Eligible Housing units by at least 0.50 percent of its total units (as determined in accordance with 760 CMR 56.03(3)(a)) during every calendar year included in the HPP, until the overall percentage exceeds the Statutory Minimum set forth in 760 CMR 56.03(3)(a).*

As explained in detail below, this plan includes the following five goals:

1. Promote incremental housing production to meet the state’s goals and preserve existing affordable units.
2. Address changing local needs, including an aging population, with a greater variety of housing options as alternatives to conventional single-family houses.
3. Minimize environmental impacts of new development by promoting new housing options in strategic locations and through reuse opportunities
4. Support older adult residents, veterans, and other vulnerable populations by promoting affordable, accessible housing and needed support services
5. Increase Townsend’s capacity to implement housing initiatives through enhanced local and regional coordination and community outreach.

1. PROMOTE INCREMENTAL HOUSING PRODUCTION TO MEET THE STATE’S GOALS AND PRESERVE EXISTING AFFORDABLE UNITS

Townsend will actively strive to create a minimum of 17 homes annually that count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) towards the state’s 10 percent goal per MGL c.40B. This minimum incremental rate of production would enable the Town to enter one-year periods of “safe harbor” with the certification of this

HPP and help the Town reach the 10 percent goal in about 11 years or less by creating at least 191 units that are eligible for listing on the SHI. The Town will also work to actively preserve and maintain the existing affordable housing stock.

The Town will strive to ensure that all affordable housing produced shall be in accordance with DHCD's Comprehensive Permit Guidelines and regulations including with long-term affordability restrictions.³

2. ADDRESS CHANGING LOCAL NEEDS, INCLUDING AN AGING POPULATION, WITH A GREATER VARIETY OF HOUSING OPTIONS AS ALTERNATIVES TO CONVENTIONAL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES

The Town needs a greater variety of housing options to meet local housing needs and to help promote a socio-economically diverse population. This includes housing for older adults, individuals with special needs, low/moderate-income (LMI) households, and smaller (one to two-person) households. The Town will continue to promote and encourage initiatives to create affordable housing to help meet local housing needs, especially smaller market-rate rental housing units such as studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments, as well as rental housing affordable for households at or below 30 percent and 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

The Town will continue to promote a variety of housing options including affordable opportunities for older adults to downsize as well as accessible and service-enriched housing for individuals and families with special needs, again including older adults.

3. MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF NEW DEVELOPMENT BY PROMOTING NEW HOUSING OPTIONS IN STRATEGIC LOCATIONS AND THROUGH REUSE OPPORTUNITIES

Townsend has significant environmental development constraints. About 89.6 percent of Townsend has environmental constraints including land important for drinking water protection, wetlands, flood zones, and habitat resource areas including the Squannassit Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Townsend's wastewater infrastructure relies on individual private septic systems and about half of properties have private wells for drinking water and half are served by Town wells.

Strategic areas for accommodating a variety of housing options are areas with minimal environmental constraints and those that provide redevelopment opportunities, particularly in Town Center, West Townsend, and along the Route 119 corridor.

Protection of open space, water resources, and habitat land is a critical need for long-term sustainability and resilience⁴. Areas for new residential development opportunities include minimally constrained land in the southeast central area of Townsend, south of Route 119, near Blood Road, Bayberry Hill Road, Clement Road, and Fitchburg Road, as shown in the map later in this chapter.

In addition, reuse of the existing building stock as opportunities arise to create affordable housing and other housing options including smaller market-rate rental units should be prioritized.

4. SUPPORT OLDER ADULT RESIDENTS, VETERANS, AND OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS BY PROMOTING AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE HOUSING AND NEEDED SUPPORT SERVICES

Assist older adult residents, veterans, and other vulnerable populations with housing costs including fuel/heating, taxes, transportation, rent, and home efficiency and accessibility improvements and expand assistance to provide more support, particularly as Townsend's older adult population grows. Leverage

³ As described in Section 9 on page VI-10 of the MGL c.40B Comprehensive Permit Guidelines, December 2014.

⁴ Per the US Environmental Protection Agency's definition, sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations. Resilience means the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions.

state and other public/private programs to maximize such support and creation of affordable, accessible, and service-enriched housing options.

5. INCREASE TOWNSEND’S CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES THROUGH ENHANCED LOCAL AND REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Townsend has demonstrated a great ability to produce housing and implement local initiatives with limited resources. However, increasing local capacity will benefit the town so it can successfully reach local housing goals. Additional and ongoing professional planning support, predictable revenue for the new Affordable Housing Trust, community outreach, and coordination among local entities will strengthen the town’s ability to continue its strong track record.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES MATRIX

The strategies, which are described in greater detail on the following pages, are summarized in the matrix below that indicates which goal or goals each strategy could help Townsend to achieve.

Type	#	Strategy	Production	Local Needs	Strategic Locations	Vulnerable Populations	Capacity
			G1	G2	G3	G4	G5
Planning, Policies, & Zoning	1	Consider amendments to the accessory apartment provisions to remove affordability requirements and create a by-right option.		X	X		
	2	Work with the Board of Health to investigate alternative and innovative individual or shared wastewater treatment systems and potential regulatory changes, such as to create more flexibility per the Sub Surface Sewage Disposal Regulations in areas with minimal environmental constraints.	X	X	X		
	3	Consider amendments to zoning regulations to create more flexibility for new housing development in areas with minimal environmental constraints.	X	X	X		
	4	Adopt local guidelines for development applications for the Local Initiative Program.		X		X	
	5	Conduct a planning area study to investigate the possible creation of a 40R district in two villages and along the Route 119 Corridor.	X	X	X		
	6	Consider zoning amendments to allow for development of affordable housing on nonconforming lots.	X	X	X		
	7	Consider adopting an Inclusionary Zoning bylaw based on a study evaluating options and identifying best practices.	X	X	X		
	8	Study options for compliance with the new multifamily zoning requirement for MBTA communities.	X		X		
Local Initiatives & Programmatic	9	Investigate the feasibility of promoting smaller developments on several parcels owned by the Townsend Affordable Housing Trust (TAHT).	X	X		X	
	10	Create a process to maintain an updated inventory of tax title properties and promote housing development on tax title land.	X	X	X		
	11	Investigate feasibility to develop Veteran’s housing.				X	
	12	Continue to seek CDBG funds to preserve and maintain older existing housing stock through the local rehab program.		X		X	

Type	#	Strategy	Production	Local Needs	Strategic Locations	Vulnerable Populations	Capacity
			G1	G2	G3	G4	G5
Capacity, Education & Coordination	13	Produce educational information to promote ADUs as a housing option throughout the community.		X	X		
	14	Collaborate regionally with neighboring towns and the MRPC to provide information to promote community understanding of housing needs and opportunities and the regulatory framework of 40B.					X
	15	Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act to provide funding for community preservation including eligible community housing initiatives.					X
	16	Ensure continued funding for the reinstated Land Use Coordinator position (which is budgeted as full-time, 35 hours per week).					X
	17	Create a regular, predictable funding source for the Affordable Housing Trust and a five-year action plan to enhance the Trust's effectiveness (CPA, IZ payments, and ARPA funds).					X
	18	Develop and maintain relationships with local and regional developers to pursue collaborative initiatives for housing production.					X
	19	Designate the Housing Authority as a local HPP oversight entity and perform annual review of status of HPP goals and strategies.					X