



Littleton Station Village Interim Report

June 6, 2019

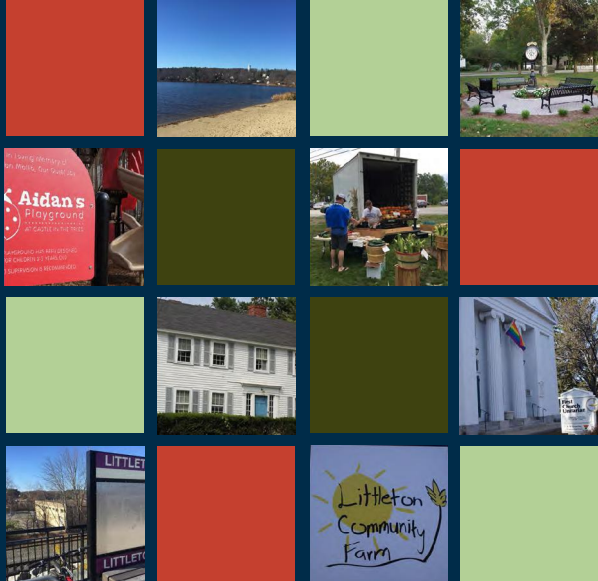


Contents



Brief review

- Littleton Station is one of three “opportunity areas” in Littleton Master Plan (2017)
- Littleton’s designation as Housing Choice Community (2018) opened the door to MassHousing grant for Littleton Station Village plan and potential for new zoning





Littleton Master Plan

cultivating the future

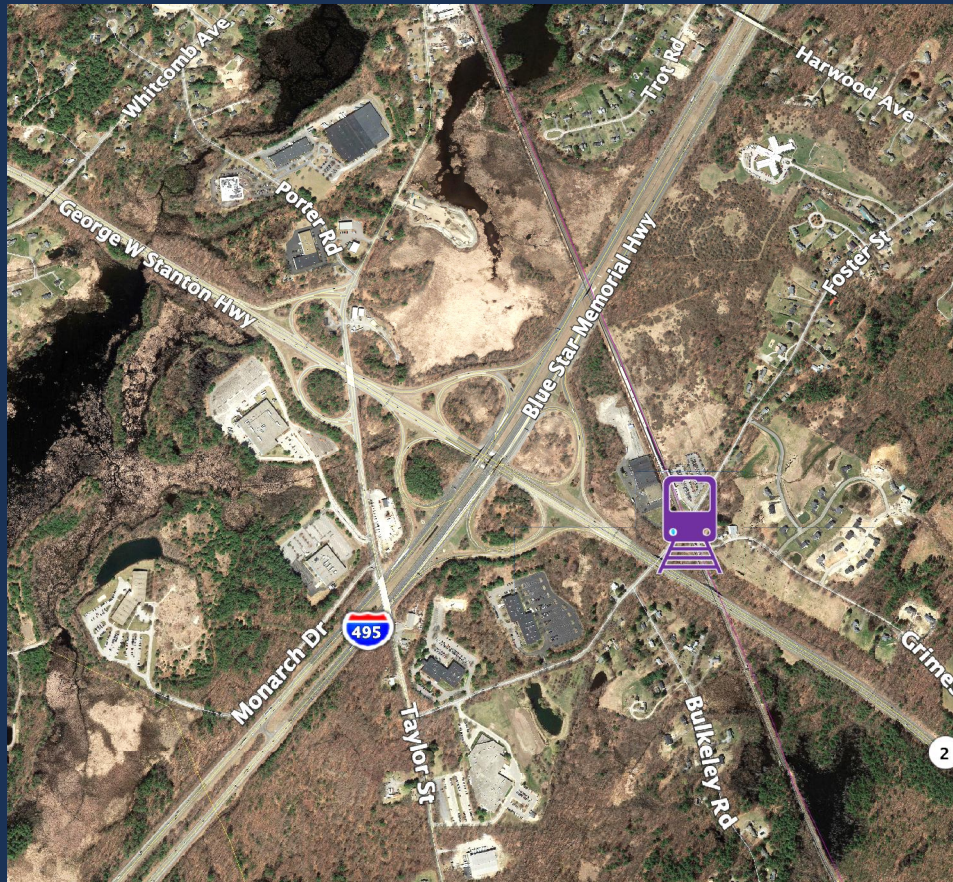
April 20, 2017

Prepared for:
Littleton Planning Board
Master Plan Update Steering Committee

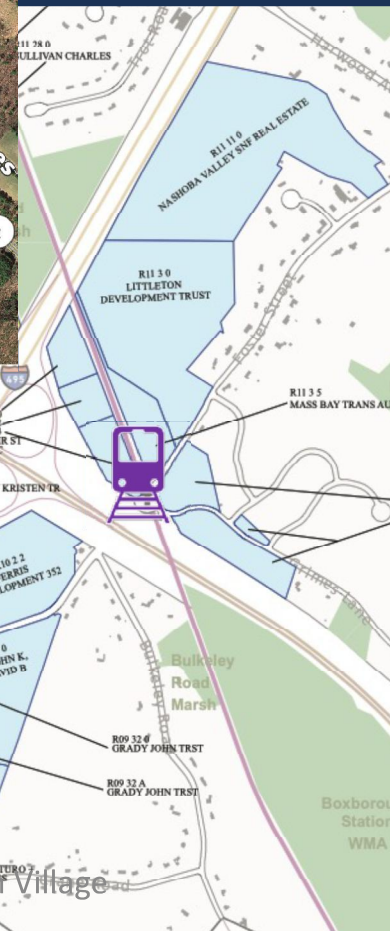


RKG
in association with:
Dodson & Flinker
Community Circle
Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

Study area



Approximately
263 acres



Planning for Littleton Station Village

Study area metrics

Location / Quadrant	Parcel ID	Acres
Southeast - East of Taylor Street	R10-2-2	19.34
	R10-2-1	10.32
	R10-33	18.86
	R10-32	2.76
	R10-32-A	2.85
	R10-34	6.34
	subtotal and % of Total	22.8% 60.47
Southeast - West of Taylor Street	R10-8	0.82
	R10-6	10.98
	R10-7	1.27
	R10-5	1.80
	R10-3-1	1.04
	R10-3-2	14.03
	R10-3-3	1.92
	subtotal and % of Total	12.0% 31.84

Southwest - West of Taylor Street	R10-14	28.80
	R10-16-A	8.97
	R10-16-A	23.90
	R10-16-B	11.11
subtotal and % of Total		27.4% 72.79
Northeast - East of Tracks	R8-15-5	0.72
	R8-15	5.00
	R11-3-5	6.00
	R11-3	33.94
	R11-11	42.70
subtotal and % of Total		33.3% 88.37
Northeast - West of Tracks	R11-1-3	4.05
	R11-1-2	3.33
	R11-1	4.58
	subtotal and % of Total	4.5% 11.96
Total Acreage		265.43

Source:Barrett, RKG and Patriot Properties (2018)

Project goals

Understand development opportunities at the train station

Understand community & neighborhood needs

Understand constraints

- Location
- Regulatory
- Infrastructure
- Market

Identify options

Make recommendations to the Town

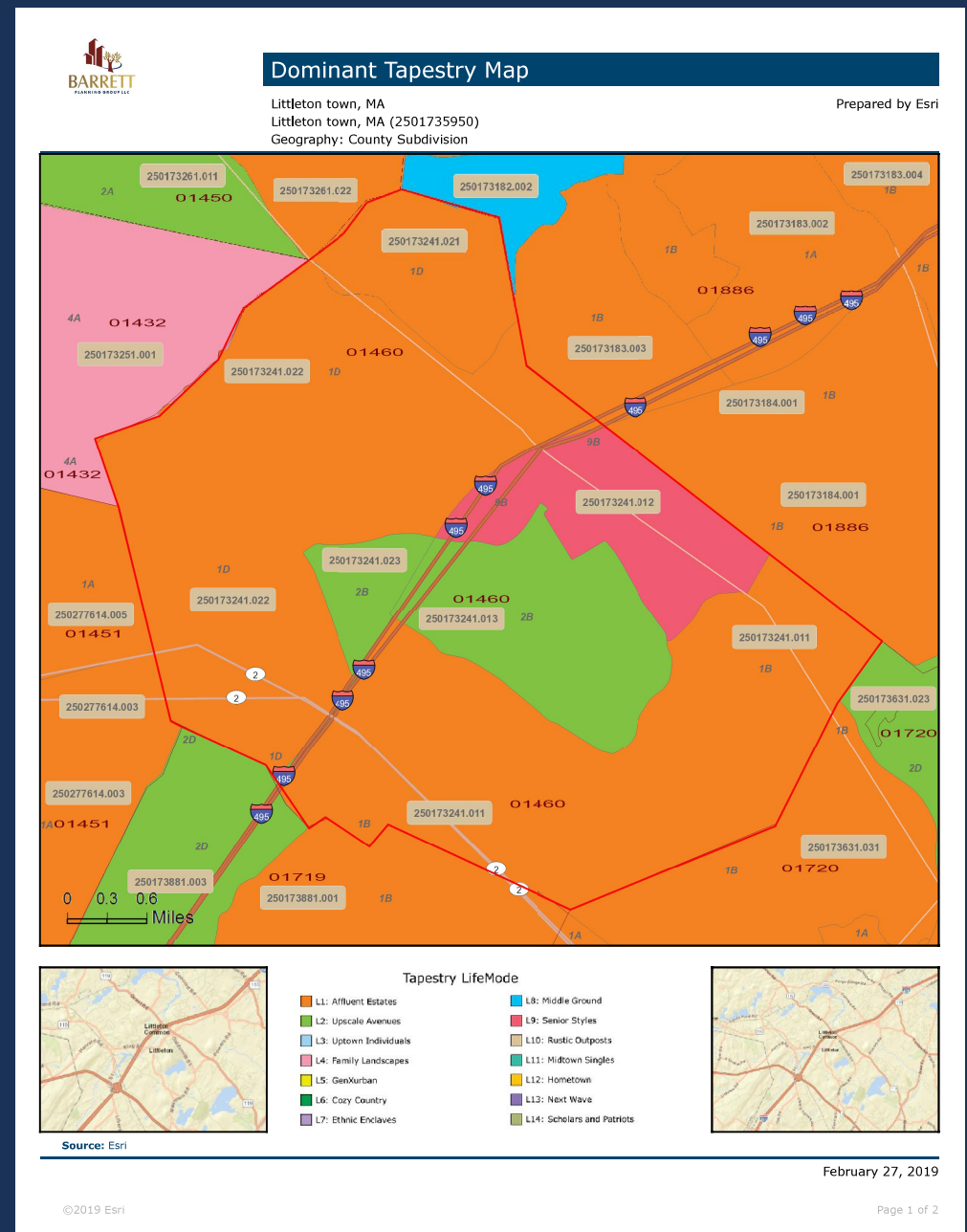
Taking the town's pulse

- Market, demographic, and geographic data analysis
- Site visits and interviews
- Suburban transit development case studies
- Interviews at town hall
- Project working group



Market overview

Planning for Littleton Station Village



Market observations

- Retail opportunities in the Train Station area will be limited by inadequate visibility, access, regional competition, and other locational factors ... any future retail in this study area [should] focus on serving a local customer base and offer convenient access and visibility where possible.
- The continued growth of online sales activity will drive demand for distribution and warehousing space . . . additional industrial development appears to be the most viable commercial development option but . . . consider how industrial uses co-exist and interact with residential or mixed-use if those too are desired.



Market observations

- Demographically, Littleton's population composition is changing.
- ...Encourage future housing developments to incorporate age-friendly design ... it is best to design and build units that can be marketed to a wider resident base.



Market observations: single-family and condominiums

The median selling price of single-family homes has increased 20 percent since 2012. Prices for condominiums in Littleton have skyrocketed at the same time, jumping 160 percent. The median selling price for condominiums increased from a low of \$165,660 to \$430,000 in 2018. In 2017, the median condominium sale price surpassed the median single-family sale price.



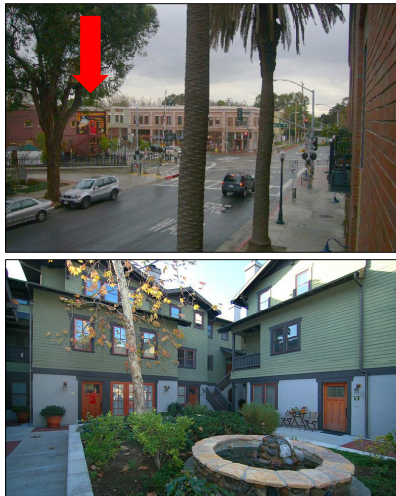
Market observations: rental

Rents at both Pondside and Village Green are generally equal ... [yet] Pondside is quite a bit older than the new Village Green and contains fewer amenities. This could speak to demand for rental apartments in Littleton since prices and vacancy are nearly identical in two rental complexes that were built at different times and have differing levels of amenities.



Mission Meridian Village

Located across the street from a light rail station servicing the Gold Line to Los Angeles from South Pasadena, the Mission Meridian Village development is an award-winning mixed-use village development in Southern California. The site consists of 67 condos and 5,000 square feet of retail over a 1.65-acre site. There are two levels of subterranean parking, providing 280 spaces in total for residents and nonresidents. The housing types located on-site range from single-family homes, to bungalows, duplexes, mixed-use lofts, and courtyard housing¹. Mission Meridian Village is distinctive in placement, as it is between the historic neighborhood center and a traditional single-family-home neighborhood, forming a connection that was previously unrealized while preserving the local historic character. The development has won the following awards for its intelligent design, proactive approach to transit-oriented development, and commitment to new-urbanism: the Charter Award from the Congress for the New Urbanism (2006), the "Tranny Award" from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans, 2006), five Golden Nugget Awards from the Pacific Coast Builders Conference (2006), and it was selected as an Outstanding Transit Project in America by Urban Land Institute (2006).²



Conclusions from this study were as follows:

- Develop a clear time frame and strategy for implementation
- Capitalize on the existence of opportunities such as large parking lots or vacant land. They are less useful for an area with limited scope.
- Conduct a clear visioning process with extensive community feedback, particularly before building. This will avoid delays at time of approval which can increase the cost of development.
- Work closely with single-family homeowners in the area, remaining sensitive to their needs and expectations

- Allow for "by-right" zoning when and where possible
- Consider incorporating a "transit-district" or "transit-village" overlay zone to affirm certain TOD criteria is met
- Establishment of a "floating" TOD overlay zone allows for fluid planning of the station area and the surrounding corridors, while avoiding higher land speculation costs

University Station

Situated along both Route 128 and I-95, and adjacent to the Route 128 Commuter Rail station, University Station has blossomed into one of the most multifaceted and frequently-visited mixed-use developments in the Greater Boston Area. The 120 acres in Westwood, MA are zoned for uses including hotel, office, retail and residential use, with 750,000 square feet dedicated to retail and restaurants and 350,000 square feet dedicated to office space. Current tenants range from Wegmans, to Del Frisco's Grille, to Target and Nordstrom Rack¹. Brigham and Women's Health Care Center is also located there. The announcement of the University Avenue Mixed-Use District acquisition was made in 2012 by Charles River Realty Investors in partnership with New England Development, Eastern Real Estate, and Clanton Partners². The site officially opened in March of 2015 and is one of Massachusetts's largest mixed-use development projects today.

University Station was a comprehensive effort on the part of the developers, the municipality and the community to re-envision and rejuvenate an area that was previously an old industrial site. In coordination with town officials, a new master plan for the area was created from the existing that was better suited to the financing feasibility and permitting processes involved in bringing the site to fruition. A new zoning overlay district was established upon agreement from the community and town staff, and development was divided into several phases.³ Housing options now include assisted living residences and luxury apartments, with two 4-story condominium buildings currently under construction.

Conclusions from this study were as follows:

- Align re-permitting in coordination with re-envisioning to create cohesion and improve overall efficiency
- Establish strong communication channels with all invested parties to ensure a smooth transition and avoid unnecessary pitfalls. For example, the MBTA, the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen
- Understand what is feasible to your specific project and the needs of those living nearby who will actively eat, work and play at the site
- Partner with interested vendors early in the process
- Strongly analyze station area data during initial assessment to scale the style and growth of proposals, particularly when a plan is being carried out in phases

¹ University Station, New England Development, 2019, P 01

² "New Team, New Vision for Westwood, MA Mixed-Use Development," Charles River Realty Investors, April 13, 2012, P 01-03

³ "Case Study- University Station," New England Development, 2019, P 01

Happenings in other towns

Concord Commons

Concord Commons is a transit-oriented, mixed-use development in West Concord that was developed in conjunction with Concord Crossing in the downtown. This 1.93-acre site is ideally located not only adjacent to the train tracks, but to a nearby industrial park and active/passive recreation resources. Community members were very receptive to this project as the previous site was the former Atlantic Pre-Hung-Door factory, and was a major eyesore in the town. The site was made possible in the early 2000s because of a provision for a special permit process which allowed for a combination of uses in an industrial zone.¹ The Commons consists of 20 apartment units, 5% of which are affordable, as well as restaurant, retail and office uses. Under the plan, 146 parking spaces were provided, totalling a 15% parking reduction. There are 15 spaces dedicated strictly to commuter parking.

Walkable connections to the West Concord Center Village, the Concord commuter rail station and the Concord-Acton Industrial Park have vastly expanded options for residents, affianced local businesses, and created job opportunities, particularly along Thoreau and Sudbury Roads. A push on behalf of the town for more greening has made these connections more pleasant and popular. The town also advocated for a reduction in lot size from 2.15 to 1.93 acres, hugely contributing to these pathway improvements.²

Concord Commons demonstrates an almost effortless transition from an underutilized lot to a quaint yet activated space. The development fulfilled the goals of revitalizing the West Concord Center Village, strongly engaged with the community throughout the development process, and provided more affordable housing options with funding provided solely by private developers.

Conclusions from this study were as follows:

- Town's must advocate for uses they know will best service their constituents, despite the fact that it might not be the developer's first option
- Transparency and proper community outreach can virtually eliminate pushback throughout the TOD (re)development process
- Reduction of impervious surfaces can have multiple economic benefits including on stormwater management systems and on parking requirements
- Continue to engage those property owners interested in furthering smart growth initiatives throughout the town
- Integrate tactics that employ form over use, not only to create human-scale spaces, but spaces that are uniform with existing development outside the station area plan
- Advocate for greening/landscaping and streamlined architectural design in new connections to encourage usage and promote smart growth. Also request commercial businesses to follow these guidelines.

¹ Concord Commons and Concord Crossing, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2019

² "Concord Commons, Concord MA", Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Success Stories, Massachusetts Government Smart Growth Toolkit



Imagine Upton—A Vision for Revitalizing Upton Center



Slower Traffic, Simplified Intersections, Walkable Streetscapes

1 Reconfigure the north end of Grove Street
Instead of intersecting with Route 140 across from Church Street, Grove St is shown making a left hand turn just past the bridge over Center Brook and intersecting with Route 140 south of the Risteen Building. Without the cross street building at 4 Main Street currently sits. This simplifies the complexity of the intersection at the heart of Upton Center and opens land along Route 140 for redevelopment.

2 Close Warren Street
Warren St is closed and converted into a double-banked parking lot adjacent to Town Hall.

3 Reconfigure the intersection of North Main Street/Church Street and Route 140
North Main Street is straightened out to intersect with Church Street at a right angle. This increases the size of the Commons while providing space for on-street parking on both sides of North Main Street. Church Street intersects with Route 140 at a right angle. These changes eliminate the confusing junction of North Main Street and Church Street while improving sight lines for entering Route 140. A round intersection at the new junction of Church Street and Route 140 increases the visibility of the town's central commons, allows cars entering the Center and other routes for pedestrians and other vehicles to use Route 140.

4 Improve streetscapes throughout the Center
Streetscapes are improved throughout the Center with trees, planting beds, and decorative lights. Space for sidewalks and benches are created in front of new buildings. Cash hangouts at commons locations narrow crossing distances and increase the visibility of pedestrians while on-street parking buffers sidewalks from traffic.

New Buildings for Local-serving Businesses, Places to Live, and an Expanded Tax Base

5 Add two new building between Knowlton-Risteen Building & Holy Angels Church
An approximately 6,000 square foot building is shown with space for commercial use with apartments above. The buildings have outdoor seating areas and landscaping and are well connected to town hall and other commons. Parking is located behind the buildings in a shared lot.

6 Replace the existing building at 4 North Main Street
The new 6,000 square foot building reinforces the look of a traditional New England Village Center, houses the southern side of the Commons and provides space for on-street commons use with apartments above. Parking is located behind the building and/or is shared with United Parish Church. Until the building is replaced, the existing building can remain with a front driveway access off of the relocated Church Street.

Add two new buildings at 0 Millford St

The buildings provide about 25,000 square feet of space for mixed uses where there is currently a town parking lot. The front building has great visibility on Route 140 and would be appropriate for an active ground floor use like retail, restaurant, or a personal service. The upper stories of these buildings could house residential or additional commercial space. 50 parking spaces are located between the two buildings. Alternatively, a new library and/or Community Center could be located on this parcel. The playground is moved but remains on the site.

New Life for Historic Buildings

8 Renovate and reuse the Knowlton-Risteen Building
The building is renovated for the library, other municipal services, or commercial use such as a co-working space, business incubator or office. Retail could be located on its ground floor.

9 Renovate and reuse Holy Angels Church
Potential new uses include a performance space, restaurant, co-working space, business incubator, offices, or a daycare facility. A small outdoor sitting space along Center Brook west of the building takes advantage of views of the Brook and the building itself. A Northridge crosses Center Brook to connect with new buildings, the playground and playing fields at 0 Millford St.

Better Library or a New Community Center

10 Build a new Community Center on Grove Street (blended Library & Senior Center)
The site can accommodate up to a 35,000 square foot building footprint. Center Brook wraps around the building on the north and east sides. Short-term parking and a van drop-off area located on Grove Street. The main parking is located north of the building across a Northridge over Center Brook. A sitting area on the east side of the building has views of an attractive landscaped yard and parking. It connects to a Northridge that crosses the Brook and is worked to connect with the playground and playing fields at 0 Millford St. Alternatively, the site could provide places to live or space for food trucks that can serve high school students locally.

OR: build a new Community Center at 0 Millford Street (not shown)
The site can accommodate up to a 15,000 square foot building footprint with adjacent parking and playground. This option is not shown on the drawing.

OR: renovate and/or expand the Knowlton-Risteen for the library (not shown)

Adequate Parking in Convenient Locations

11 Build a new central shared parking lot on Grove Street
A double-banked parking lot is located between Center Brook and Route 140. In total that is currently vacant and/or occupied by Grove Street. The parking lot has about 100 spaces. It sits on land that is not feasible to use for new buildings because it is within the floodplain of Center Brook.

12 Expand the parking lot adjacent to Town Hall
Warren St is closed and converted into a double-banked parking lot (20 spaces) adjacent to Town Hall. A parking dock could be built west of Town Hall on land that is now primarily vacant. The parking dock could provide about 40 spaces on two levels—the lower level accessed from the former Warren St and the upper accessed from Town Hall.

13 Add on-street parking throughout the Center
About 40 on-street parking spaces can be added in the Center.

New Green Spaces and Improved Connections to Existing Open Spaces

14 Create a trail loop along and across Center Brook
A trail loop runs along both sides of Center Brook with footbridges that connect the Grove Street area to the hall fields and playground over the VFW. Sitting areas along the Center Brook trail provide places to rest and relax.

15 Relocate and improve Veterans' Memorial Playground
The playground is moved south of its current location to open space for new buildings. The new location is closer to the VFW hall and could be worked among existing mature trees. The playground connects to a trail and boardwalk that keeps back across Center Brook to Grove Street.

16 Add a trail to connect Upton Center to Heritage Park
The trail runs on Millford Street just east of Rose Garden Restaurant and Pub and crosses a wetland parcel to the southern end of Heritage Park. A canoe and kayak launch could be added where the trail meets Mill Pond.

What's Next?

At Town Meeting on May 2 at 7:00 pm at Nipmuc High School, voters will be asked to endorse this Vision and to direct the Selectboard to take appropriate steps to implement it. Please attend and voice your support.

Smaller towns planning for village development

COME PLAN WITH US!

Join us to discuss:

- **Housing**
- **Business development**
- **Commuter rail parking**
- **Creation of a true Littleton Station Village**

Littleton Middle School
55 Russell Street
Friday, April 5: 6:30-8:30 pm
Saturday, April 6: 9 to Noon



BARRETT
PLANTING GROUP LLC

DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning
RKG
ASSOCIATES, INC.

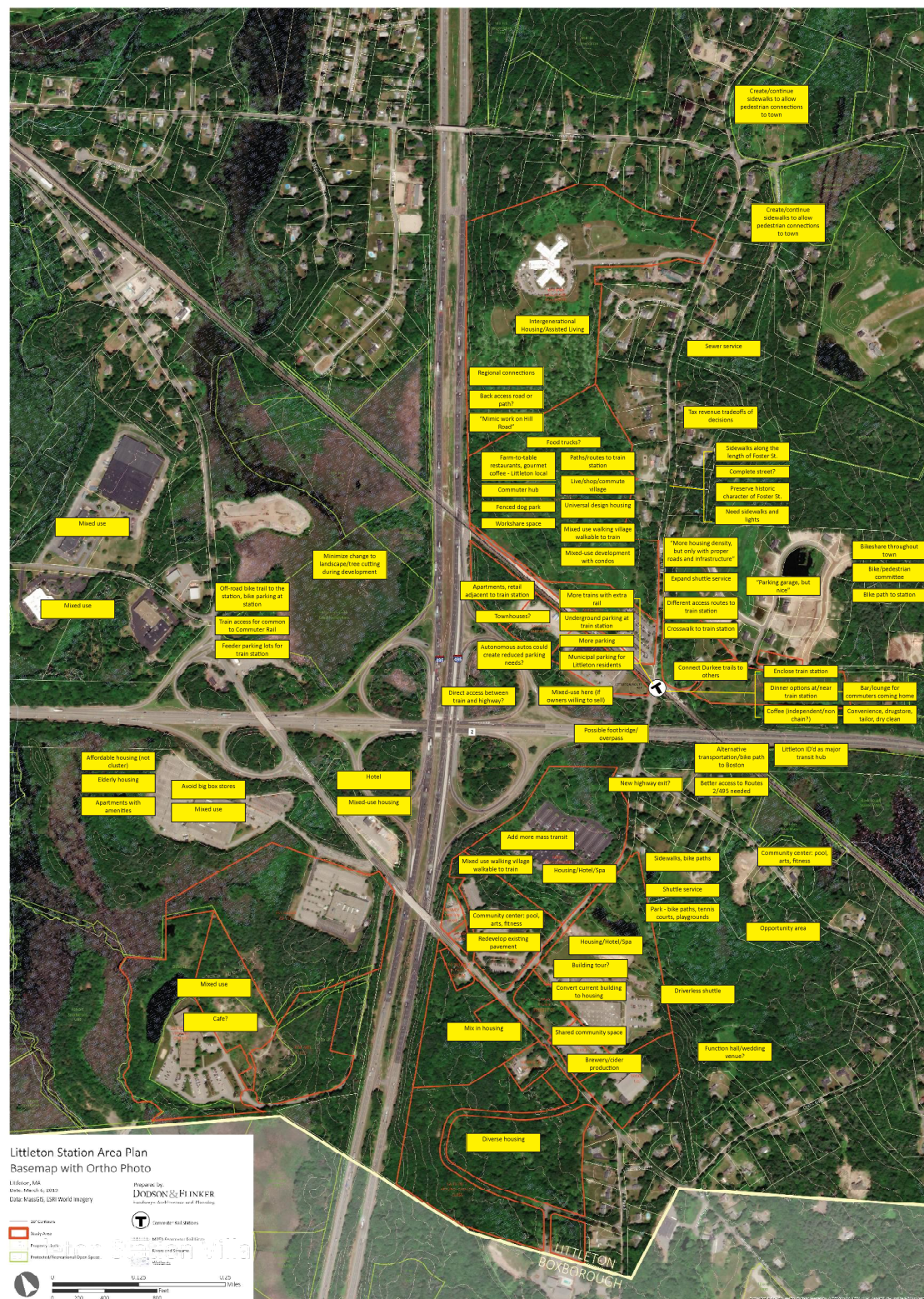
For more information contact the Planning Office, MToohill@littletonma.org or 978-540-2425

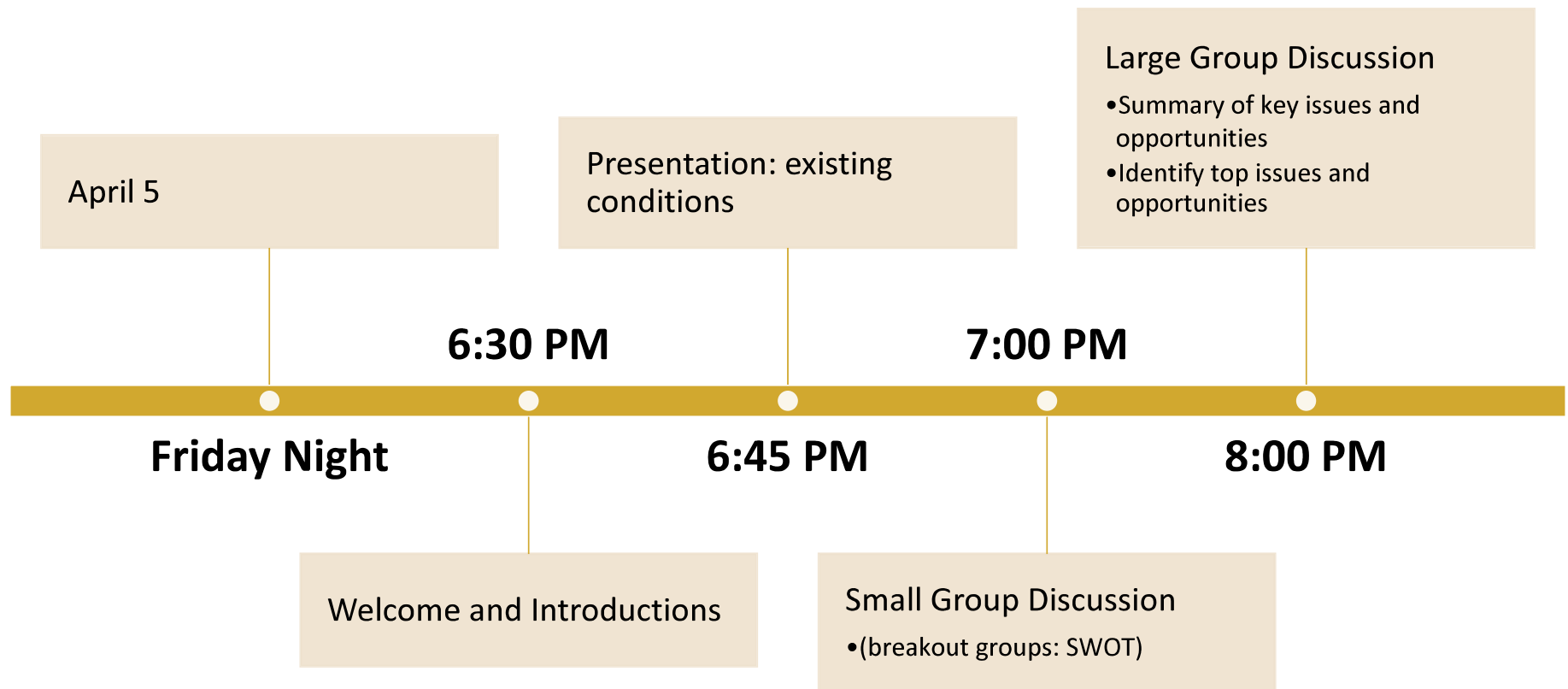
Community visioning

Planning for Littleton Station Village

6/6/19

Planning for





What we did

Planning for Littleton
Station Village

6/6/19



Strengths

- Rural character
- Historic sites, buildings and agricultural landscape
- Winding rural roads lined with trees and stone walls
- Beautiful woods with walking trails
- Train station
- IBM shuttle
- High real estate values
- Family-friendly town



Weaknesses

Not enough parking at the train station!

Foster Street narrow, dark and bumpy

No sidewalks

Half-full office/industrial buildings

Indirect highway access

Dangerous intersections

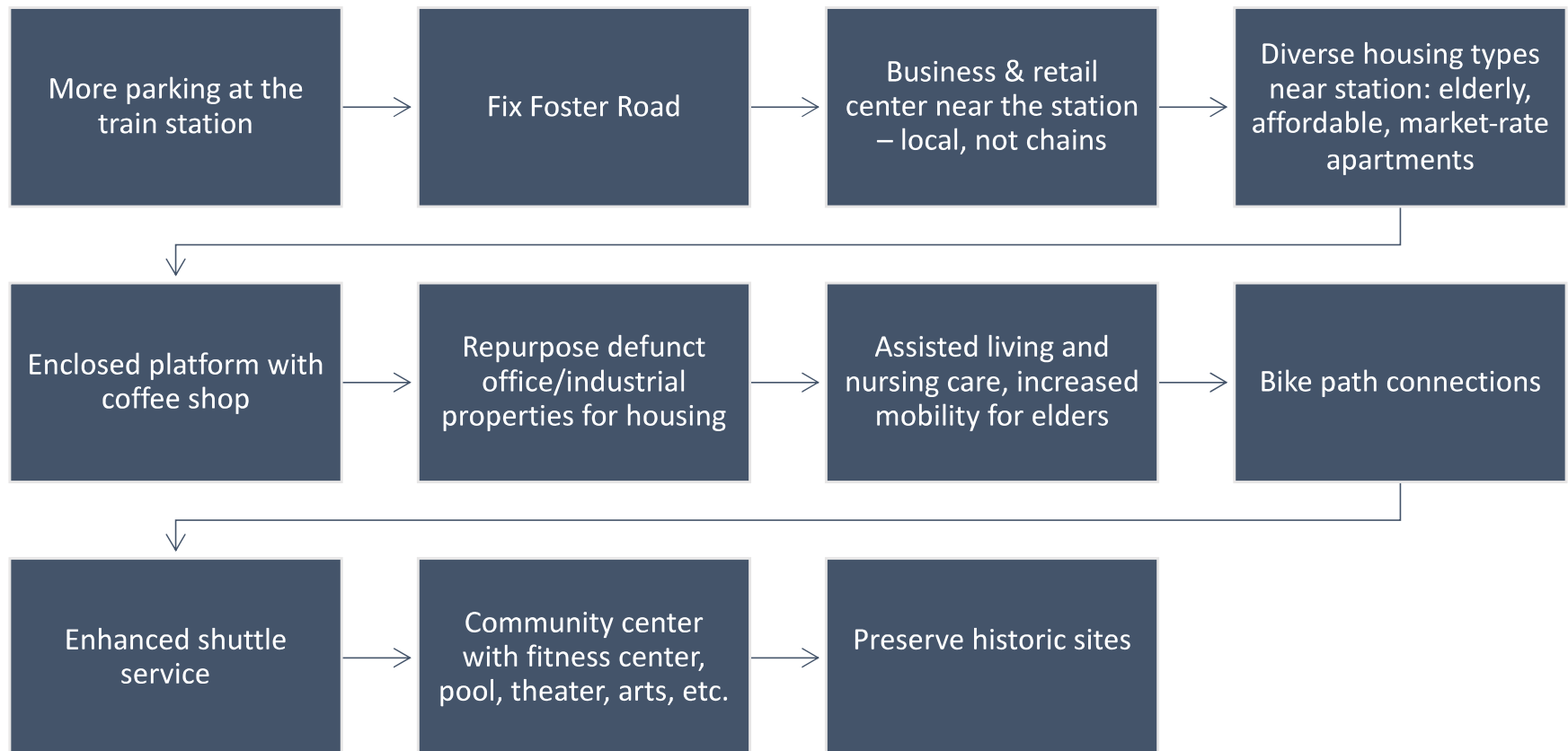
Difficult office/retail market

Too many big houses with no place to downsize to

Lack of sewer

Soils, ledge and wetlands constrain development

Opportunities





Housing & Social Connections



Recognition that Littleton has many types of households and families, but hard for some people to find housing



Smaller units at the train station could benefit older adults, young adults, small families



People need places to socialize: coffee shop, brew pub, restaurant



People want things to do: arts/culture, easy access to groceries, places to walk



People want to get around without a car when possible

Neighborhood

Residents
appreciate “peace
and quiet”

Value homes with
yards, gardens

Many concerns
about traffic,
Foster Street, train
station parking

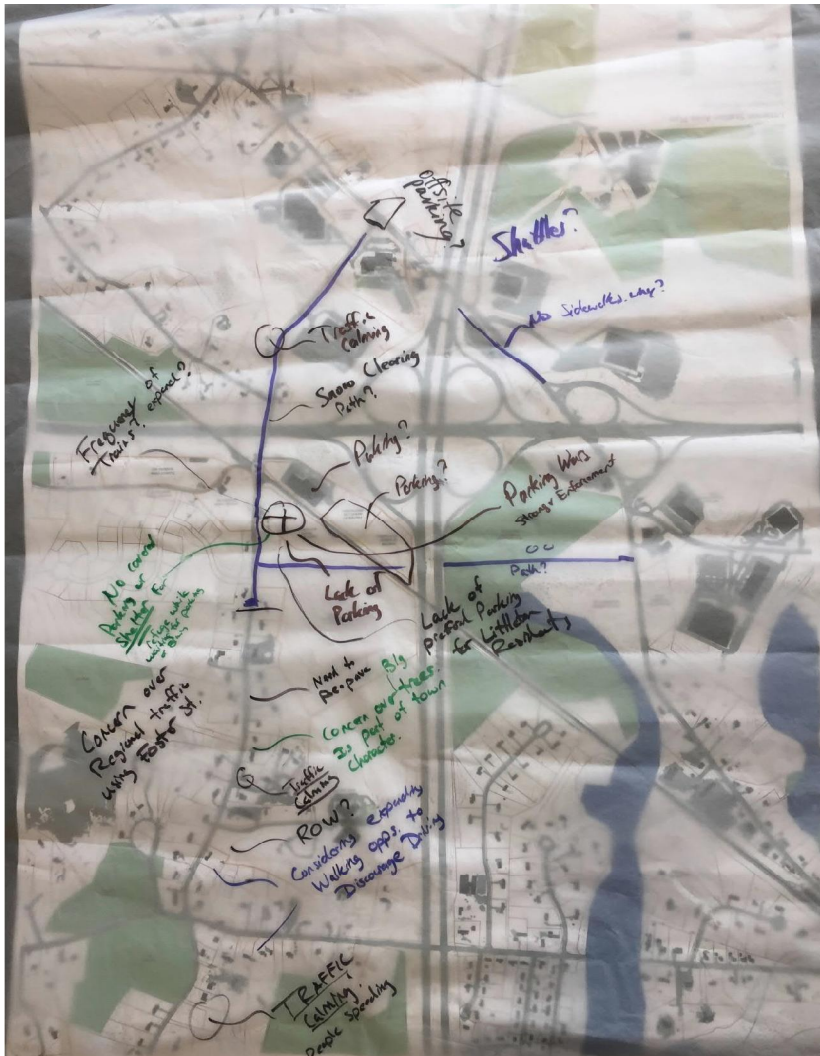
Goods & Services

- Café
- Yoga studio
- Community athletic center
- Tech/start-up incubator
- Artisan space
- Health care
- Holistic medicine

And many others ...



Transportation & Mobility



- Biggest issues we heard:
 - Lack of train station parking
 - Lack of shelter/awning
 - Need for traffic calming on Foster Street
 - Street lighting between train station and parking areas across Foster Street

What now?

Planning for Littleton Station Village

Community Surveys

- Three over six weeks
- Mirror topics at Saturday 4/6 vision session
 - Social/housing, economic development (closed)
 - Transportation/mobility, open space (open)
 - Visual preferences, master plan ideas (soon)

Key questions

- What is Littleton's appetite for change?
- Housing is a market opportunity. Is it an acceptable one?
- Limited food service/retail is a potential market opportunity, mainly targeted at commuters. With more housing, more possibilities.
- Is the town open to ideas like District Improvement Financing (DIF) to address some infrastructure needs in the study area?
- What role(s) does the Town want to play in addressing the future of Littleton Station Village? Activist? Moderate? Indirect?

