

Town of Littleton Nagog Hill Orchard

MAPC Community Convenings Summary Report

July 25, 2025



Littleton Nagog Hill Orchard Community Covenings Summary Report

Executive Summary

In August of 2024, the Town of Littleton engaged the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to lead a community engagement process focused on identifying options and defining the criteria for successful future use of the municipally owned Nagog Hill Orchard property. The goal of this initiative was to ensure that uses align with community values while also establishing clear, transparent criteria for evaluating proposals.

As part of this effort, MAPC facilitated community meetings and conducted surveys to gather community input. In addition, based on community input, MAPC developed an evaluation matrix to help guide the Town's future decisions regarding the stewardship, programming, and long-term management of the property.

The Nagog Hill Orchard property is in on land that has clear connections to the legacy of Indigenous people that predates the formation of the town. While more recent history refers to the property as the former farmstead of John and Eunice Morrison, the Nagog Hill Orchard presents a meaningful opportunity to reconnect the community with the land and to honor the area's Indigenous history. The property offers the potential to foster a deeper appreciation for Littleton's agricultural heritage while acknowledging and integrating the cultural significance of the land's original stewards.

It is important to note that the shared priorities of the community have been evolving since the termination of the lease with the Nagog Fruiterers. In the time that MAPC has been engaged in the process, the shared priorities of the community have become more clearly defined and have been consistently expressed through the community meetings and surveys. Many community members prioritize the inclusion of the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI) as part of the future of the property.

This summary report presents the findings of the MAPC process and offers a concise overview of the property's historical and cultural significance, legal and conservation status, current land use and management practices, as well as the feedback and priorities expressed by the Littleton community.

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Property Description

The Town of Littleton is located at the junction of State Route 2, which runs west from Boston, and Interstate 495. Covering 16.5 square miles, Littleton is home to approximately 10,200 residents. The town has a proud agricultural legacy and was once widely known for its apple orchards, food crops, and dairy farms.

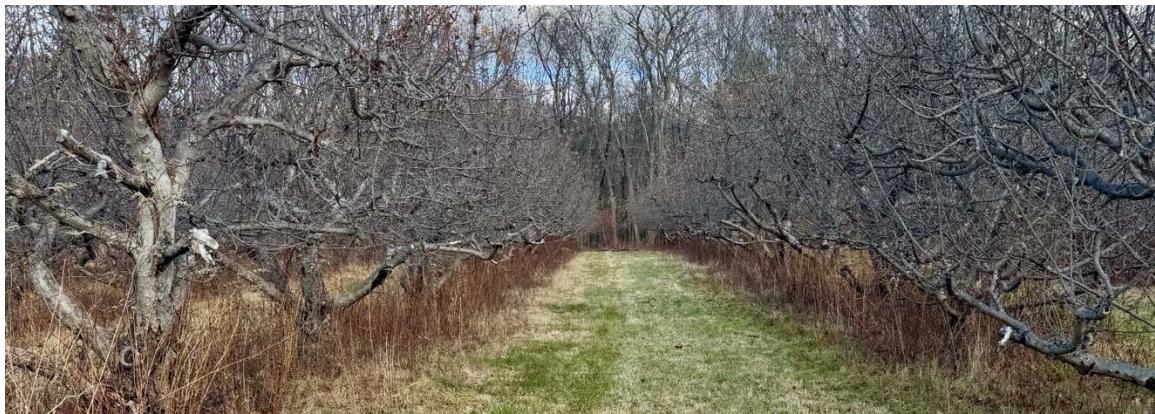


Photo of orchard, MAPC

Located in the southeast portion of the town of Littleton, the Nagog Hill Orchard property is comprised of six (6) parcels (R02-9-1, R04-8-0, R02-3-0, R02-4-0, R04-5-0 and R02-10-0). The property spans both the north and south sides of Nagog Hill Road, near the intersection with Nashoba Road, consists of 94.2 acres with fruit tree orchards consisting of apple, peach, plums, pears and nectarine varieties, undeveloped land, forested open space and Conservation Land.



Diagram of property, MAPC

The property also consists of several structures, including a residential structure at 70 Nagog Hill Road/Lot 104, a barn “Main Barn” and farm stand at 75 Nagog Hill Road, a smaller barn typically referred to as the “Lower Barn” and a small cottage located at 94 Nagog Hill Road/Lot 107. The orchards were last actively farmed circa 2020, primarily for apples but also containing peach, plum, pear, and nectarine varieties. In total, the property encompasses approximately 129 acres. The property has a previously installed irrigation system, though it is no longer operational. A well on the property was historically used to irrigate select fields; however, its current condition is unknown. The main house and barn are currently connected to the municipal water supply.

The Main House, built in 1900, is a late Colonial-style home at 70 Nagog Hill Road. It features classic elements of traditional New England architecture, including clapboard siding, wood detailing, and a side-gabled roof. The structure offers approximately 4,900 square feet of living space across three floors, along with a basement level that includes a separate living area with rear access. While the exterior remains largely intact and retains its historic character, the interior is in poor condition and currently uninhabitable. A burst pipe caused extensive flooding and water damage, and the home now requires significant updates, including HVAC system repairs, electrical upgrades, and replacement of the roof and gutters. Despite these challenges, the property offers an opportunity for historic preservation and adaptive reuse.



Photo of house, MAPC

The Main Barn, built in 1940, is a three-level structure totaling over 8,000 square feet. The lower level (approximately 2,400 sq. ft.) opens onto Nagog Hill Road and includes a retail space, general storage, and temperature-controlled cold storage. The main floor

offers about 3,260 sq. ft. of space, primarily used for storage and workshop activities. Stairs lead to the upper level (approximately 2,400 sq. ft.), which serves as additional storage and features two exterior sliding doors that allow forklift access. Attached to the south side of the barn is a 540 sq. ft. single-story residential unit with a small kitchen and bathroom.



Photo of main barn, MAPC

Constructed in 1950, the Lower Barn is a three-level structure with approximately 6,600 square feet of space. The main level is accessed via a large sliding door and includes a generous open area, a dedicated workshop to the right of the entrance, and a partially finished rear section. Overhead, a loft accessible by ladders offers additional storage and is designed to accommodate forklift access. A connected three-car garage extends from the barn, providing additional utility space. The lower level is reached by a side driveway and features multiple garage doors that secure various storage areas within the barn.



Photo of lower barn, MAPC

Situated on the same parcel as the Lower Barn at 94 Nagog Hill Road, this small one-story cottage offers approximately 500 square feet of living space and includes a kitchen and bathroom. The structure is not connected to a public water supply.



Photo of cottage, MAPC

Although residential and commercial development has expanded across portions of the community, the farming landscape along Route 2A has remained largely preserved. In 1999, a notable piece of agricultural land, Nagog Hill Orchard, became available for acquisition. Recognizing its value, residents voted at a Special Town Meeting in December 1999 to purchase the property. Today, the site is municipally owned and permanently protected through conservation restrictions, preserving a meaningful part of Littleton's farming heritage for future generations.

MAPC Process

As a discrete process that is part of the larger and continuing Nagog Hill Orchard property's stewardship, the Town and MAPC organized and facilitated a series of events to engage the community and document community criteria. The events included a property tour, background interviews, community meetings, and online surveys.

Property Tour

The MAPC project team visited the site on November 22, 2024. The tour was facilitated by Sarah Seaward of the Conservation Commission, Matthew Nordhaus of the Select Board, Mark Rambacher of the Select Board, and Eric Derba, Facilities Director. The tour walked through all fields and entered each of the buildings on the property.



Photo from property tour, MAPC

Background Interviews

MAPC conducted 15 community stakeholder interviews to gather background information about the property. The following people were engaged in interviews: Brad Austin, Jen Clancy, Delia Delongchamp (MDAR), JoAnn Derry, Ryan Ferrara, Erin Jade, Kristen Kazokas, Don Maciver, Brad Mitchell, Dustin Neild, Rob Rounce, Vin Stolo, David Sullivan, Amy Tarlow-Lewis, and Jim Walsh. A high-level summary of the themes of these interviews includes expressions of frustration and concern and enthusiasm and opportunity. Frustration and concern were expressed regarding the lack of property management and oversight, the financial and budgetary strain on the Town, the overall process regarding community involvement and transparency, and the exclusion of Indigenous perspectives and advocacy. Enthusiasm and opportunity were expressed for the historical and cultural significance of the property, the opportunity for improved stewardship and land

management, compliance with the agricultural preservation and food access, and the legacy of conservation and sustainability on the property.

Community Meetings

The Town of Littleton hosted and MAPC facilitated two community meetings to hear from community members and gather feedback. The first was held Thursday, March 6, 2025, and the second was held Monday, April 14, 2025. The purpose of the community meetings was described as to convene community conversations, gather feedback from the community, define shared objectives and criteria to evaluate town options, and to discuss future options for the orchard. In each of the community meetings MAPC prepared and presented materials to guide discussion and facilitated an interactive meeting to gather feedback. The meetings featured small group discussion, full room discussion, and responses from attendees noted on post it notes. The feedback from the community meetings is compiled in this summary report.

To facilitate respectful and thoughtful conversation, MAPC established community meeting norms as part of the meeting presentation. The community meeting norms were initially presented by MAPC as:

- Be fully present
- Presume welcome and extend
- One mic
- Listen for understanding
- Take space, make space
- Use “I” statements
- Suspend judgement
- Use “oops” and “ouch”

At the first community meeting and through the first community survey feedback was gathered on the community meeting norms. The most frequent responses are compiled below to provide a list of community meeting norms that are based on feedback from Littleton residents. These community norms could be used for future meetings hosted in the town. Littleton’s community meeting norms include:

- Virtual attendance options
- Clear communication and data
- Safe and respectful environment
- Time limits for speakers
- Respect gender pronouns
- Equal time and attention
- Respect for others’ perspectives

- Start and end on time
- Be concise and on-point
- Honest and transparent communication
- Outreach and inclusion
- Consideration of cultural sensitivity

A summary table of the community engagement opportunities that were open to all residents is provided below.

Engagement Opportunity	Date /Time	Location	Participants
Community Meeting 1	Thursday, March 6, 2025 6:30 - 9:30 PM	Reuben Hoar Library	40+
Community Wide Survey	Available March 6 to April 1, 2025	Online	375+
Community Meeting 2	Monday, April 14, 2025 6:30 - 9:30 PM	Reuben Hoar Library Virtual	30+
Community Wide Survey	Available April 14 to May 15, 2025	Online	160+

Community Meeting 1 Summary

At the first Community Meeting on March 6, 2025, MAPC introduced the agenda which included an introduction to the MAPC portion of the process, a recap and context of the property, defining shared criteria, near-term outcomes, and next steps. MAPC gathered feedback through small group conversations.

Community Survey 1 Summary

The first Community Survey was available from the date of the first Community Meeting on March 6, 2025, through April 1, 2025. The survey questions followed the outline of the presentation from the Community Meeting. For those who were unable to attend the meeting, they were able to add to the feedback received. For those who were able to attend the meeting, they were able to expand their thoughts and offer further reflection. The community survey gathered feedback from over 375 participants. The results of the feedback are compiled in the following section, “Feedback and Priorities Expressed by the Littleton Community.”

Community Meeting 2 Summary

At the second Community Meeting on April 14, 2025, MAPC introduced the agenda which included a recap and context of the property, summary of compiled feedback from Community Meeting 1, presentation of a community-based evaluation matrix, the process

moving forward, and next steps. MAPC gathered additional feedback on the community-based evaluation matrix and the process moving forward. The meeting was attended by residents who had attended Community Meeting 1 and that were very familiar with the property, and residents who were joining the conversation for the first time.

Community Survey 2 Summary

The second Community Survey was available from the date of the second Community Meeting on April 14, 2025, through May 15, 2025. Like the first survey, the second survey questions followed the Community Meeting presentation and people who were unable to attend the meeting were able to provide feedback, while also giving attendees the opportunity to expand and reflect further. The community survey gathered feedback from over 160 participants. The results of the feedback are compiled in the following section, “Feedback and Priorities Expressed by the Littleton Community.”

Property History and Background

Historical and cultural significance

Nagog Hill Orchard holds deep historical significance for the Town of Littleton. It occupies the ancestral land of the Massachusetts Natick-Ponkapoag Nashobah Praying Indians, later became part of a traditional New England farmstead and for decades functioned as a commercial orchard.

Act of incorporation for the Town of Nashoba (now Littleton) in 1714 states: “And that Five hundred Acres of Land be reserved and laid out for the Benefit of any of the Descendants of the Indian Proprietors of the Said Plantation, that may be surviving; A Proportion thereof to be for Sarah Doublet alias Sarah Indian.”

Indigenous Roots

In the 17th century, present-day Littleton was part of the Nashobah Praying Indian Village, one of several “Praying Villages” established by missionary John Eliot in 1645. The village was located within a 16-square-mile area between Lake Nagog and Fort Pond, known in the Algonquin language as Nashoba (also Nashope, and other spellings and pronunciations), meaning “land between the waters.”

During King Philip’s War, the General Court ordered the forcible removal and internment of Indigenous residents from Nashobah, who were sent to a prison camp on Deer Island in Boston Harbor. Many perished during the harsh winter due to starvation and disease. In May 1676, the Massachusetts General Court ordered the release of the Praying Indians who had been imprisoned on Deer Island. Some survivors, including a woman named Sarah Doublet, returned to the area in 1677.

Agricultural Heritage

By 1714, the colonial government had asserted ownership of the Nashobah lands and incorporated the Town of Littleton, formally displacing Native governance and stewardship. A smaller, 500-acre Native settlement known as the New-Town Indian Village was later established nearby. Sarah Doublet was the last member of the Nashobah community known to Colonists and heir to the New-Town lands. She died in 1734, and with her passing, the last legal ties between the Nashobah and their land were severed under English property law. Indigenous connections to the Nashobah homelands, however, have persisted through family, community, and cultural knowledge.

The legacy of this land lives on through the Sarah Doublet Forest and Nature Reserve, a 96-acre property once part of the New-Town Indian Village. It was later acquired by Fanny Knapp and Edith Jenkins—two retired nurses who recognized its cultural significance and generously bequeathed it to the Littleton Conservation Trust. Today, the land is publicly accessible and managed by the Littleton Conservation Trust.

Through the 18th and 19th centuries, Littleton was known for its apple orchards, food crops, and dairy farms. The arrival of the Fitchburg Railroad in the 1840s provided access to broader markets, spurring both agricultural and industrial growth. Irish immigrants settled in town, and local industries expanded to include sawmills, and grain mills contributed to the town's economic growth.

Despite industrial expansion, Littleton retained its rural character well into the 20th century. The town became home to several apple-related enterprises, including Veryfine, a well-known New England cider and juice company founded in the town.

The Morrison Era

The Nagog Hill Orchard site was widely known throughout the mid-20th century as the Morrison Orchard, named for the family that owned the property. For many years, it served as a beloved pick-your-own destination and farm stand, attracting visitors in search of fresh apples, peaches, and cider. For longtime residents, apple picking at Nagog Hill was a cherished annual tradition. By the 1970s, the farm had shifted its focus almost entirely to fruit production and was one of the most productive orchards in the region.

Town Acquisition and Conservation

By the late 1990s, Nagog Hill Orchard was one of the last active commercial orchards in Littleton. Following the passing of John Morrison, the Town of Littleton purchased the property from the Morrison estate. Recognizing its cultural significance, agricultural heritage, and environmental value, residents voted at a Special Town Meeting in December 1999 to approve the acquisition.

The acquisition was made possible through a combination of funding sources:

- A borrowing article approved by voters (requiring a Proposition 2½ override)
- A Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant (formerly known as the Self-Help Grant Program)
- Support from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program

The purchase aligned with key goals outlined in Littleton's 1997 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), including:

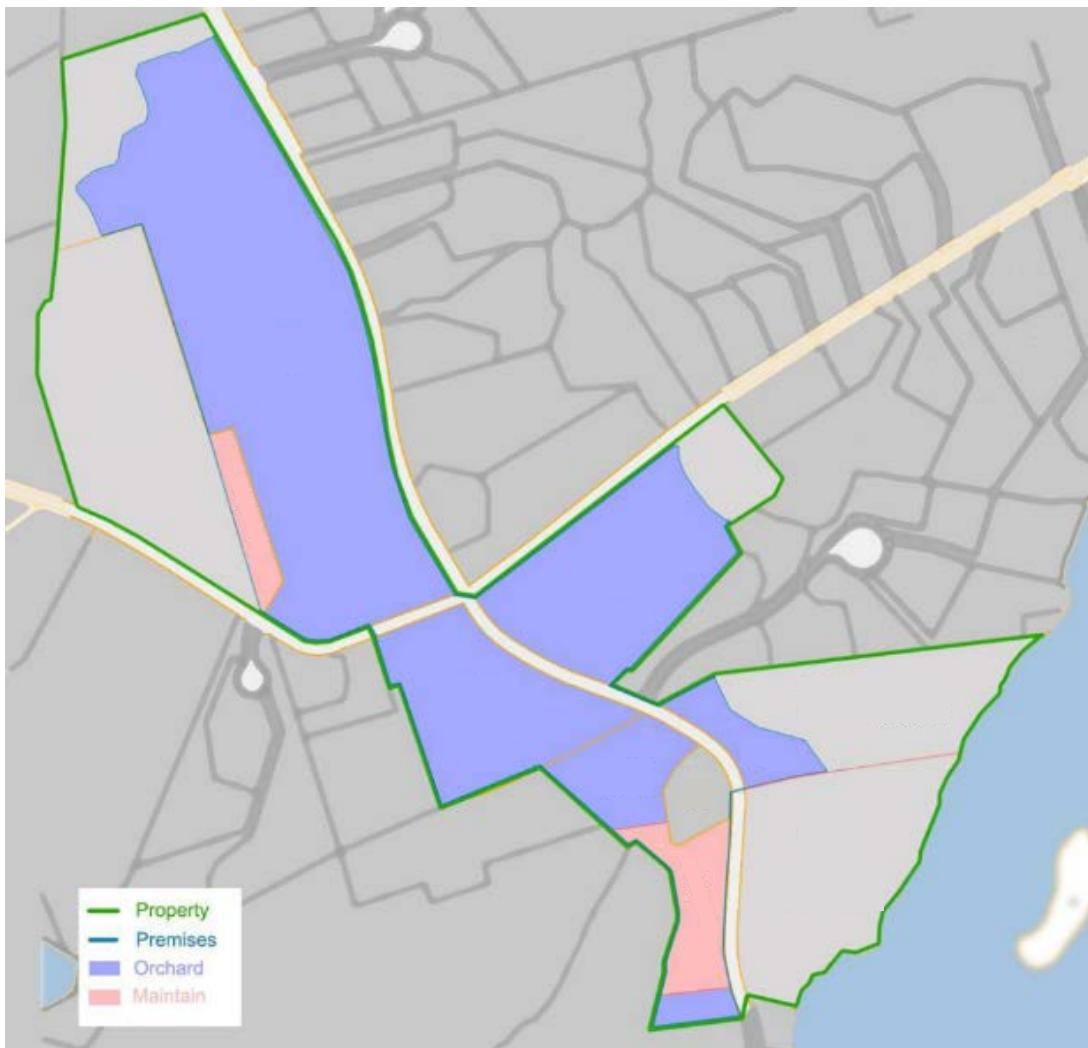
- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- Securing clean groundwater for current and future needs
- Expanding access to quality recreational opportunities for all residents
- Preserving the town's rural and agricultural character

Following the acquisition, the Town entered a ten-year lease with Nagog Fruitters, Inc. to manage the orchard, buildings, and farmhouse for a fee of \$1 per year. This arrangement was later extended, but in May 2020, the Town terminated the lease due to the tenant's failure to maintain the property. Since that time, the property has received only minimal care and continues to experience a growing number of maintenance and stewardship challenges.

Legal and conservation status

APR Land and Conservation Land

In 2002, the Town placed an Agricultural Preservation Restriction with Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value ("APR") on approximately 49 acres of the property consisting of some redrawn portions of the following: Lot 102-A, Lot 104, Lot 105, Lot 111 and Lot 109.



Property Diagram, Town of Littleton

The state requires that any future use of the land be in compliance with the APR under Massachusetts General Law.

State Regulations

Criteria for APR Eligibility

Eligibility for the APR program is based on a state statute which requires APRs to be land actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses as defined in sections 1 to 5 of Mass General Law Chapter 61A. Land must be actively farmed and meet the following requirements to be eligible for the APR program.

Minimum Eligibility Requirements

- Be at least five acres in size
- Have been devoted to commercial agriculture for the two immediately preceding tax years
- Have produced at least \$500 in gross sales per year for the first five acres plus \$5 for each additional acre

Special Permit

MDAR may grant a special permit if:

- The APR farmland is actively used for full-time commercial agriculture.
- The activity is minor, ancillary and subordinate to the agricultural use of the APR property.
- The use or activity does not conflict with the purpose of the APR.
- The request does not require new construction.

Compliance

If it comes to MDAR's attention that the terms of the APR agreement are not being upheld, procedures for enforcement of the terms include but are not limited to the following:

- A site visit by MDAR staff.
- If a violation of the APR terms is identified, a written notice is sent to the landowner requesting voluntary restoration or reparation of the property. MDAR's goal is to communicate and work cooperatively so that the landowner and MDAR will achieve mutually acceptable solutions. If a satisfactory agreement is reached between the landowner and MDAR, an inspection will be made to confirm satisfactory implementation, and the landowner will receive written correspondence to confirm resolution of the issue.
- If MDAR and the landowner cannot reach a satisfactory resolution, MDAR may pursue resolution through legal means. An APR agreement defines prohibited uses, acts, and structures on the APR property. These may include, but not be limited to

residential dwellings, dumping of waste, earth mining/removal, storage of vehicles, and easements

Current land use and management practices

Zoning Regulations

Residential District

The Nagog Hill property is located within Littleton's Residence (R) District, which primarily permits as-of-right development of detached single-family homes. The district also allows for age-restricted housing (Over-55 developments) by special permit from the Planning Board and includes provisions for nursing homes with a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA).

In addition to residential uses, the Residence District permits certain agricultural and civic uses, including farms, farm stands, schools, religious institutions, wholesale activities, educational programs, public functions or gatherings, and agritourism-related activities.

The R District requires a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet. Additional dimensional standards include a maximum building height of 32 feet and a lot coverage of 60 percent, including all impervious surfaces areas (buildings and paving).

Scenic Roads Regulations

Massachusetts General Law (MGL c. 40, § 15C) authorizes cities and towns to designate roads as "scenic roads" if they feature elements such as stone walls and mature trees within the public right-of-way that contribute to the community's historic and visual character. The Scenic Road Act applies to both public and private entities.

In Littleton, both Nagog Hill Road and Nashoba Road have been officially designated as scenic roads due to their natural beauty, panoramic views, and rural setting. These designations reflect the Town's commitment to protecting the distinctive landscape and historical character of the area.

Current Management of the APR Lands

Following the termination of the Nagog Fruiterers lease, the Town was in search of a steward for the portions of the property under the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). The APR is a binding agreement between the landowner and the State. It binds all future owners and exists in perpetuity. It requires the active use of the land for commercial agriculture. The property was currently not in compliance with the requirements of the APR. In 2021, the Selectboard elected members to create a new Nagog Orchard Ad Hoc Working Group to review and propose a course of action the Town may take regarding the disposition of the Orchard. The Working Group met frequently from 2021 to 2024 and worked diligently to research and explore the towns options for the property. The Working Group released Requests for Proposals (RFP) for lease in 2021, 2022, and re-

issued one again in 2022. These RFP releases did not attract enough responses to proceed. In January 2024, the Working Group posted a Request for Information (RFI) for parties to express potential interest in the property, either for lease or purchase of the property. In February 2024, the Town hosted a public walking tour of the orchard. In March 2024, the Town received 15 responses to the RFI. Among the responses, 5 were for lease/lease to purchase, 2 were unknown/other, and 8 were for purchase of the property.

Based on this information and other research and analysis, the Working Group decided the to pursue sale of the property. The disposition process included, first, seeking permission from the Town Meeting to declare the property surplus to sell it. Then, to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify and select a buyer. In May 2024, Town Meeting voted on declaring the property surplus to sell and voted down the article by two votes. Based on this result, the Working Group changed its approach and released an RFP for lease of the property in August 2024. The Town received four responses in August 2024. One of the responses was incomplete resulting in the Town officially receiving three responses to the RFP. The remaining Working Group members evaluated the responses and determined it was most advantageous to pursue lease negotiations with Jonathan Bransfield. The evaluation criteria from the 2024 RFP for Lease were experience operating and/or managing a farm, capital investment plan for equipment that respondent intends to use in the farming operations, experience and licensing for pesticide application, and comprehensiveness and quality of proposed management plan. Members of the Select Board entered lease negotiations and executed a lease in April 2025, while MAPC was conducting this community engagement process.

Due to the support and advocacy for the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI) to have a meaningful role on this property, their ancestral land, it is noted that the NPI responded to both the RFI in March 2024 and the RFP in September 2024.

As detailed above, the APR program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). During the time that these processes have taken place the property has not been actively commercially farmed. The Town has been in communication with MDAR to both coordinate options and to communicate progress on reestablishing commercial farming on the property. In early 2025, MDAR sent a first letter of notice to the Town that the property was not in compliance with APR requirements. MAPC frequently heard the narrative that the Town was at risk of losing the property to MDAR, which based on our interviews was an unlikely outcome.

Bransfield Lease

On February 12, 2025, the Select Board held a public session for Littleton residents to present the proposed lease arrangement and gather input from community members. The

MAPC team did not participate in the discussion, a summary of the meeting minutes is provided below.

The primary focus of the meeting was a discussion regarding the future use and stewardship of the Nagog Hill Orchard. Jonathan Bransfield of Bransfield Tree Company shared his proposal to lease Nagog Orchard property for use as a native tree nursery. According to the proposed management plan, the company would grow native tree species in containers using minimal or no pesticides. The plan also called for the removal of invasive plant species over a three- to five-year period and the gradual phase-out of the existing apple trees on the site.

During the public comment period, several residents raised questions and concerns regarding the lease terms, long-term management of the property, and mechanisms for oversight. Some asked whether the Select Board would establish a formal process for monitoring the lease and provide annual updates to the public.

Several residents also urged the Town to consider repatriating the culturally and ecologically significant land to the Nashoba Praying Indians, who have expressed a commitment to managing it for conservation purposes. Representatives from the Littleton Conservation Trust echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the strong public support for returning the land to the Indigenous community for cultural and historical uses.

Bransfield will lease the APR portions of the land for a tree nursery. The use of the land will include building soil on the property for use in a potted tree nursery. The potted trees will be on the property for about 2 to 6 years and then sold. The lease is for a 20-year term with up to two 5-year extensions. The lease terms include Town oversight, and the Town is exploring third-party review of activities on the property on an annual basis.

Feedback and Priorities Expressed by the Littleton Community

The following feedback was compiled during the MAPC process. It is important to note that the shared priorities of the community have been evolving since the termination of the lease with the Nagog Fruiterers. In the time that MAPC has been engaged in the process, the shared priorities of the community have become more clearly defined and have been consistently expressed through the community meetings and surveys. The consistency of priorities is clear in the themes that are compiled from the Community Meetings and surveys below. Many community members prioritize the inclusion of the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI) as part of the future of the property.

The feedback MAPC gathered focused on defining objectives and criteria and for future uses and stewardship of the property. In evaluating future opportunities for use and stewardship of the property it is important to be clear about shared objectives and criteria. Objectives are the desired results. They are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound. Criteria are the measures used to evaluate how well the objectives are met. They are quantifiable, verifiable, and consistent.

MAPC identified initial shared objectives during the background interviews that were performed. They included:

- Sustainable stewardship of the land
- Fulfill promises to honor the legacy of the land
- Comply with requirements on the land (Agricultural Preservation Restriction)
- Engage a partner or partners to manage the property

MAPC identified initial shared criteria during the background interviews that were performed. They included:

- Land kept in productive commercial agriculture
- Plant and grow seasonal crops
- Use of sustainable agriculture/best environmental practices
- Perform integrated pest management
- Ability to run agricultural operation of comparable size
- Economically viable business with funding or financing available to support operation
- Operated consistent with Town's values as a community, as defined in documents such as the Town's Master Plan

Community Meeting 1 and Survey

Participants in the first Community Meeting and online survey were asked "why did you attend or participate?" The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses among 85 combined responses. They are included below in order of frequency:

- Preservation of the orchard and land
- Support for the Nashobah Praying Indians
- Community and local impact
- Interest in the Orchard's future and status
- Cultural and historical importance
- Transparency and process concerns
- Personal connection to the orchard and land
- Concerns about the Orchard's management

Participants were asked “what is one question you bring to the meeting?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses among 85 combined responses. They are included below in order of frequency:

- Nashobah Praying Indians involvement and land rights
- Preservation and protection of the orchard and land
- Transparency and decision-making process
- Future of the orchard and its management
- Town's role and accountability
- Role of the community and public input
- Economic and long-term sustainability
- Historical and cultural significance
- Land use alternatives

Participants were asked to define shared objectives for the future use of the property. The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses among 114 combined responses. They are included below in order of frequency:

- Opportunity to recognize, honor, return Nashobah Praying Indian stewardship of the land
- Long term sustainability and viability of stewardship and agricultural uses of the land
- Fulfill promises to honor the legacy of the land, Littleton's agricultural history, role of apples
- Comply with requirements of the land (APR)
- Restore, protect, maintain as orchard/fruit producer
- Make portions of the land available for public access, use, and passive recreation
- Engage a partner or partners to manage the property
- Involvement of community on the land, an attraction, or place for gathering
- Strict and formal oversight of the property
- Use does not significantly increase impacts

- Protect clean, drinkable water supply, aquifers, and nearby waterways
- Keep the land in Town's possession in perpetuity
- Organic farming/agriculture with minimal pesticides

Participants were asked to define shared criteria for the future use of the property. The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses among 113 combined responses. They are included below in order of frequency:

- Indigenous connection to the land, acknowledgement and support for Nashobah Praying Indians
- Town monitor activity closely to make sure plan is adhered to
- Experience with sustainable farm management, pesticide certification, native crops, organic farming
- Interest in historical background of property
- No harm to the land, do not strip resources
- Maintain community access (pick your own, educations, etc.)
- Preserve scenic views, especially of water, Nagog Hill Road
- Protect and conserve the soil and water sources
- Minimal pesticides, integrated pest management
- Ability to comply with APR
- Agricultural business experience, resources, and training

Participants were asked "what else to consider?". The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses among 37 combined responses. They are included below in order of frequency:

- Return of land to the Nashobah Praying Indians
- Cultural and historical preservation
- Community and collaborative involvement
- Ethical considerations and social justice
- Land preservation and sustainable use
- Transparency and accountability in decision-making
- Historical and cultural education
- Alternative land uses for the orchard
- Long-term solutions for land management
- Frustration with current processes

Community Meeting 2 and Survey

The second community meeting focused on developing a shared community criteria for use of the property. The MAPC team also gave space for clarifying questions about the

Bransfield lease. The lease was executed the week before the meeting. The meeting presented the feedback from the first community meeting and confirmed the results. The first question asked, “what is your reaction to the updated community objectives?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Strong support for Nashobah Praying Indian (NPI) recognition and stewardship
- General agreement with the objectives as defined
- Desire for conservation and low-impact land use
- Disagreement or skepticism about retaining or restoring a functioning orchard
- Calls for greater transparency and clarification of decision-making and community involvement
- Interest in multi-use or shared stewardship models

The next question asked, “what is your reaction to the updated community criteria?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Strong support for prioritizing the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI)
- Concerns about land use constraints due to the executed lease
- Frustration over the lack of transparency and mixed messaging
- Environmental concerns and opposition to orchard use
- General approval and positive reactions to the updated community criteria
- Calls to preserve the historic structures on the property

The next question asked, “what are your suggestions to define the process for monitoring the land?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Regular, transparent reporting and public involvement in the reporting process
- Use of professional and qualified monitoring
- Involvement of key local and regional organizations with the expertise needed for oversight
- Monitoring focus on environmental health and invasive species
- Engaging the community prior to decisions to gather input and inform planning
- Involvement of MDAR for state-level guidance
- Sentiments of frustration and disappointment over past neglect

The next question asked, “what criteria/metrics for success and triggers for corrective action?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Compliance with Lease, Laws, and Regulations including compliance with APR requirements, town bylaws, environmental laws, and agricultural regulations
- Environmental health indicators such as pesticide use, soil and water quality, health of crops and trees, impact of mismanagement on the ecosystem
- Physical maintenance of the land and structures (note the structures are not subject to the current lease)
- Community impact and compatibility including noise, traffic, odors, public access, visual appeal, and public benefit
- Need for clear, shared metrics defined by experts or committees and the need for third-party oversight
- Concern about non-farmers evaluating farm operations, personal biases influencing judgement and general concern about overreach

The next question asked, “what are your suggestions for inclusive discussion with the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI)?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Center NPI voices – ask what *they* want. The most common theme was a strong call to center the Nashobah Praying Indians in the process, rather than prescribing solutions for them
- Include NPI in all decision-making including having NPI representation at the table for all relevant decisions
- Practice active listening and cultural respect and acknowledge cultural differences and opportunities for mutual learning
- Transparency and ongoing communication
- Consider land return or co-stewardship
- Host shared or joint meetings including the lessee, town, and NPI
- Clarify roles, goals, and capacity to better understand what role the NPI would like to take on and what support would be helpful for them to participate fully

The next question asked, “what are your suggestions for use of the land not subject to the lease?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Return or transfer of land to the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI) with a recognition that the land is sacred and culturally significant to the NPI
- Support for cultural, educational, and ceremonial use
- Passive recreation and public enjoyment
- Conservation and ecological stewardship

- Use of structures (house and barns) included diverging opinions with some advocating for transferring ownership to the NPI and others suggesting selling the structures
- Retain Town ownership with broader input

The next question asked, “what suggestions do you have relative to historic preservation restrictions?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- Broad support for historic preservation restrictions on the structures
- Focus on exterior/architectural integrity
- Historic restrictions at time of sale
- Interest in shifting to focus on pre-colonial history
- Caution or calls for more detailed evaluation
- Frustration with process fatigue
- Deference to experts and the Littleton Historical Society

The last question asked, “what is your overall vision for how all the pieces work together on this property?” The following themes summarize the most frequently repeated responses in order of frequency:

- The most common vision expressed focused on coexistence and collaboration between the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI) and a commercial agricultural operator (Bransfield) responsibly using the leased land
- Many visions support NPI stewardship emphasizing a vision of returning land to the Nashobah including transferring care or ownership of all or part of the property and recognizing this as an opportunity for reconciliation, healing, and cultural education
- Visions highlighted environmental health and sustainability and the health of the land itself calling for sustainable farming or land use practices, protection of nearby water resources and broader ecological integrity.
- Visions focused on the process and highlighted collaboration, an ongoing dialogue, and respect as key features moving forward
- Some expressed a vision rooted in equity, where the town moves away from traditional models of ownership and moves toward stewardship that is shared with an emphasis on community and indigenous values
- Other visions were practical with a focus on selling or transferring the buildings with a desire for fiscal responsibility and minimal burden on the town

Conclusions and Next Steps

The need for a vision and coordinated plan for the Nagog Hill Orchard property has not been reduced by the execution of the Bransfield lease. Many decisions must still be made for the care and stewardship of the non-APR portions of the property and the care and stewardship of the buildings and structures on the property.

The community objectives and criteria defined in this process can be used to guide future decisions. The updated community objectives include:

- Opportunity to recognize, honor, and return Nashobah Praying Indian stewardship of the land
- Long term sustainability and viability of stewardship and agricultural uses of the land
- Fulfill promises to honor the legacy of the land and Littleton's agricultural history
- Comply with the requirements of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)

The updated community criteria include:

- Indigenous connection to the land
- Acknowledgement and support for the Nashobah Praying Indians
- Plan to monitor activity closely with clear metrics and benchmarks
- Experience with long-term sustainable farm and land management including native crops and plantings, and restorative land practices
- Minimize impacts to resources, views, and neighbors

As overwhelmingly supported by the community, the next steps for the property should center the Nashoba Praying Indian voices to learn from them the outcomes that would align with their vision for the property. Of all the next steps that is the most important and most widely supported by the community.

Additional next steps include building trust and engagement with the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI), defining the process for monitoring the lease, defining the plan for the long-term stewardship of the property, strengthening town engagement practices, and centering equity in future town decision-making processes.

Build trust and engagement with Nashobah

The Select Board should continue to openly communicate with the Nashobah Praying Indians (NPI) to strengthen trust and understanding. The Select Board should give public updates on how the talks are evolving and outline the options the Town can take to support NPI goals. With the immediate pressure of the compliance with the APR reduced, these conversations should be allowed to proceed at the pace of building trust and should not

impose assumptions about how best to engage, the outcomes that are desired, or how the town can best support the NPI.

Plan for monitoring the lease

The Town should continue to discern the type of external third-party expertise and oversight that is required to monitor the lease with Bransfield. This type of oversight is important to decrease the likelihood of an outcome like what occurred with the Nagog Fruitors where the lessee was not performing on obligations to the Town, and the Town was not monitoring the property. The community's recommendations for parameters included that monitoring should occur annually. That the process of reporting and reviewing the report should be public and transparent with the ability for the community to provide input and feedback.

If the annual monitoring procedures result in follow-up processes or decisions, then those processes or decisions should be undertaken in a transparent manner that provides opportunity for community feedback. Engagement processes should provide public information early in the decision-making process and provide clear procedures for providing feedback and clarity in how the feedback will be used. This type of approach should clarify who is responsible for the final decision and on what timeline. Following the decision, a transparent explanation of how feedback was incorporated or considered and how the decision aligned with the feedback received.

Plan for long term stewardship

Beyond the APR portions of the property, planning for the long-term stewardship of the Nagog Hill Orchard will need to continue. In particular, the Town will need to manage the structures on the property which have created a growing number of maintenance and stewardship challenges since the termination of the previous lease. A long-term plan for sustainable stewardship of these town assets should be determined alongside planning for the non-APR portions of the property, and contingency planning for the APR portions of the property if the current lease agreement would need to be revisited due to nonperformance.

An overall vision for how all the components of the property can work together should be one of the goals to help provide direction and coordination. The long-term stewardship of the property should be reframed and informed by the conversations that center the NPI perspective. The Indigenous concept that emphasizes the impact of present-day decisions on the well-being of future generations, specifically the seventh generation from now, should be a part of the long-term planning for the property.

Components of the property that have been highlighted in the MAPC community convenings include use and stewardship of the land not subject to the Bransfield lease, use and stewardship of the buildings and structures on the property, and the use of historic preservation restrictions. These components are relatively detail oriented and should be considered alongside other more holistic approaches. Some of these approaches have been highlighted by community members and include Indigenous land rights, land conservation through Land Back strategies, and cultural respect easements.

The Land Back movement involves Indigenous tribes working to reclaim ancestral lands and assert greater sovereignty to determine the future of their lands and communities. Community land trusts and partnerships with conservation organizations are strategies used to implement the movement with approaches such as land repatriation, co-management, and conservation easements. Another approach would be to establish a right of first refusal for land purchase for Indigenous people. A cultural respect easement (CRE) is a legal agreement that allows Indigenous people safe access to ancestral lands for cultural and spiritual practices while maintaining the land's conservation status. Importantly, the easement grants access to specific lands for traditional practices and activities and grants that access in perpetuity. For example, the Native Land Conservancy has partnered with the Dennis Conservation Land Trust to establish a CRE on over 80 properties in Dennis, MA. It is also important to notify and educate the Littleton Police Department about CREs as they are implemented. While applicable to the Nagog Orchard property, these approaches could be used for other properties in Littleton as well.

Strengthen engagement practices

The need for strengthened community engagement practices more generally were revealed through this process. The Town can expand these reflections to other decision-making processes. In most decision-making processes it is helpful to develop a community engagement plan. The plan should be clear about who decision-makers are and what power the community has to provide input and to influence the decision. Anticipated timelines of an engagement process, periods of gathering feedback, and decision-making milestones should be identified and clearly communicated. Engagement should be set with clear boundaries and expectations.

In this process, challenges in decision-making and transparency were present. The decision to execute the Bransfield lease was made but was not clearly connected to the convening of the MAPC community conversations and the influence of community feedback on the decision-making process was not articulated.

One of the principles of engagement that is represented by this summary report is full circle communication. Full circle communication emphasizes two-way, reciprocal dialogue

where all participants feel heard and valued, leading to a stronger sense of community and shared ownership of outcomes. Much of this summary report is focused on documenting the feedback that was received through this process. Another important aspect of this approach is creating opportunities to strengthen the network of communication and to build connections in the community. This approach strengthens the overall health of the community network and can strengthen engagement.

Center equity in future processes

Finally, although it has been defined in much of the reflection above in relationship to the Nashobah Praying Indians and the Nagog Hill Orchard property, it is important to center equity in all future processes in the Town. Centering equity means prioritizing fairness, justice, and inclusion when making decisions and evaluating outcomes. To do so, systemic inequities must be recognized and named so that all individuals in Littleton will have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or identity. One approach to center equity is to shift from providing equal opportunities to striving for equitable outcomes. For example, in the Nagog Hill Orchard RFP process, respondents (including the Nashoba Praying Indians) were given equal opportunity to provide a proposal, but a shift to equitable outcomes may have resulted in changing evaluation criteria or weighting them differently for respondents from marginalized communities. A marginalized community is a group of people who are systematically excluded or disadvantaged within a society, facing barriers to resources, opportunities, and social participation due to factors like race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or disability.

Another approach to centering equity is to tailor support to the needs of a particular group. Different groups may have different experiences and different needs, providing targeted support may help to create more equitable outcomes. Another important aspect to centering equity is to expand the inclusivity of participation in engagement processes. All voices need to be heard to better understand diverse perspectives and in particular perspectives of marginalized groups who may not typically be involved. For nearly all decision-making processes a pair of questions helps to move the process toward equitable outcomes. The pair of questions are:

- Who benefits from this decision?
- Who is harmed by this decision?

For example, a decision that benefits the majority of residents in the Town, may disproportionately harm a minority group. Even if not accompanied by a detailed analysis, this type of thought-exercise can help move decision-making toward equitable outcomes. More detailed equity scorecards could be developed to help guide and evaluate decision-making toward more equitable outcomes.