

Walpole Downtown Action Plan

August 2015

Acknowledgments

The Walpole Downtown Action Plan reflects the completion of a nine month collaborative planning process to identify a vision and accompanying goals and strategies to revitalize and energize Walpole's downtown. Thank you to all who participated throughout the process. This project was undertaken with funds from the Planning Assistance Toward Housing (PATH) program, District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program, and US Economic Development Administration funds. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council wishes to express our thanks to the Governor and the members of the Legislature for their continued support and funding of this program.

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I. Planning Context

The Town of Walpole is a mature New England Town. MAPC characterizes these communities as those with a mixed-use town center or downtown surrounded by compact neighborhoods, with conventional subdivisions elsewhere in the community. These towns tend to have large amounts of vacant developable land, and new growth tends to come in the form of new subdivisions. In some cases, these towns have experienced revitalization of their town center.

Downtown Walpole today continues to serve as the center of Walpole civic life with the Town Hall, library, post office and other Town facilities located in an almost campus-like area off of School and Stone Streets. Similar to many other suburban towns, the area lost much of its vibrancy during the second half of the 20th Century, as retail development shifted from downtown locations to larger, auto-oriented, single-use shopping centers along major highways, including to locations just north of downtown. Thus, although Main Street is lined with storefronts and provides many neighborhood-oriented retail and services; the mix could be improved to better serve and engage the community.

And although Walpole's Downtown has seen some reinvestment over the last decade, the area has not reached its full potential despite many initiatives intended to further enliven and spark development. Further, with new development proposed adjacent to the MBTA commuter rail station, the Town felt the time was right to conduct a comprehensive study of the entire downtown.

Thus, the purpose for the Walpole Downtown Action Plan was to better understand the current context of the downtown area and to identify a strategic set of

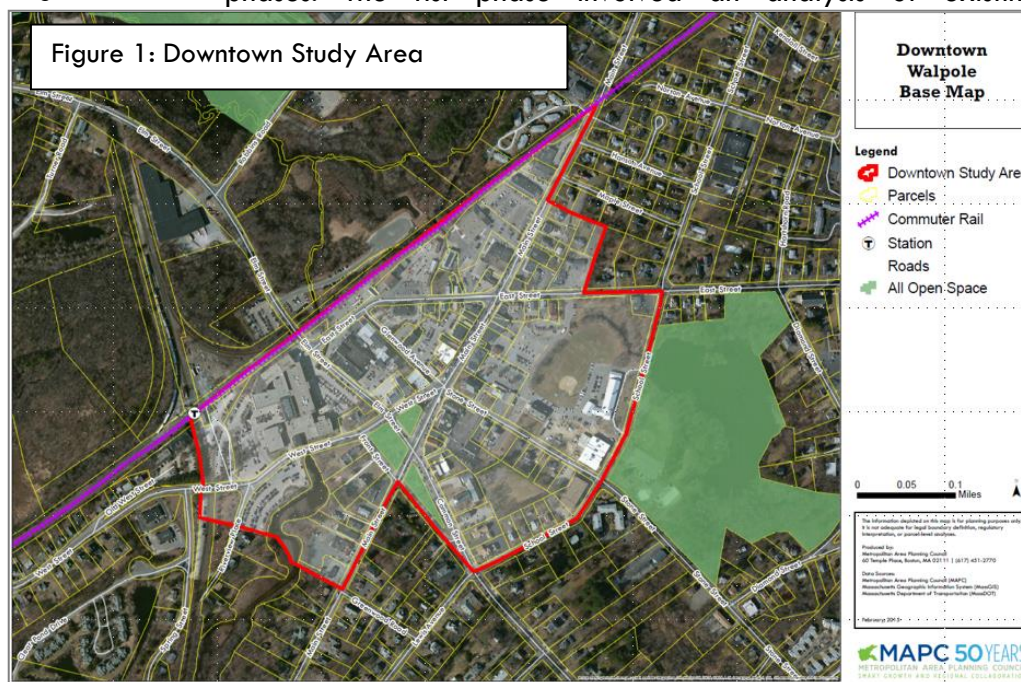
goals, strategies and actions to enable the Town and all area stakeholders to revitalize and reinvigorate the area to once again become a vibrant, live, work and play environment for the entire community.

Location and Study Area

As shown within the red line in Figure 1, the study area identified by MAPC and the Town focuses on the larger downtown and includes the Main Street spine and Town Common, Town Hall, the Library and vicinity, and the Commuter Rail Station and mill complex. All areas are within walking distance to the commuter rail station, which is a major asset for downtown.

The Plan Process

The Walpole Downtown plan has been conducted in several phases. The first phase involved an analysis of existing



conditions, existing land use and zoning and other criteria to inform the overall planning process. Next a general market analysis was performed to better understand the potential for new residential and retail development in the downtown – including the number and types of residential, and the amount and types of stores.

All existing conditions work was then presented at a Public Open House meeting in April, where over 60 people gathered to comment on the information, identify downtown’s strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, and to begin to set priorities and development preferences. This feedback helped to inform the goals, strategies and actions highlighted at the end of this document.

II. Current Conditions

A. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile

Population and Households

As will be discussed later in this document, there are few residents within the Downtown Walpole Study Area, thus for this study analyzed population and socioeconomic conditions for the town as a whole.

Population

In recent years, Walpole experienced modest population growth. Between 2000 and 2010, population increase 3%, or just under 700 residents. The greatest growth was in persons 35-54, which increased 35%. This age group is most likely to have children living at home, thus it is not surprising that school aged children increased by approximately 4% or 250 children. Additionally, the population over 55 also increased significantly – it doubled – and those over 65 increased as well.

Looking ahead; population is projected to increase 12%, or over 2,800 residents over the next 20 years. Significantly, the population is projected to age significantly, consistent with regional trends. Specifically, persons 55 and older are projected to increase by 52%, or nearly 3,500 people. At the same time, people 35-54, and children 18 and under are projected to decline. Interestingly, younger adults (25-34) are projected to increase by 17%, or 536 people.

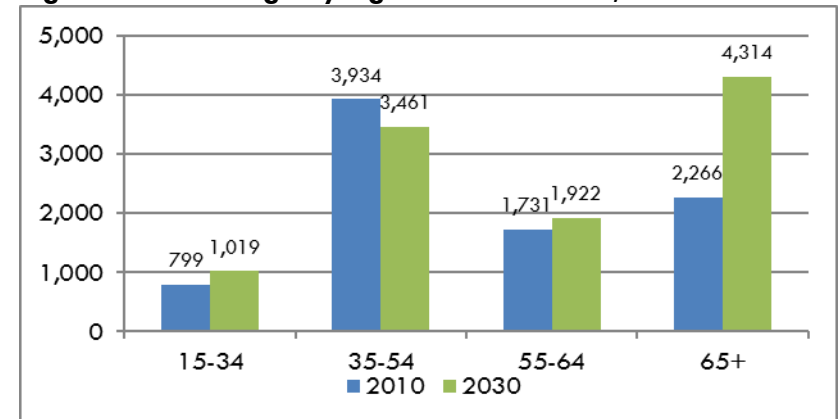
Households

Understanding future household trends is more important than overall population growth when considering future housing unit needs. Each household resides in one housing unit, no matter

their size. Thus, if more households are projected, more housing units are likely needed, or vice versa.

According to projections, the number of households in Walpole is projected to increase by 23%, or roughly 2,000 households, by 2030. The majority of growth will be households headed by persons 55 and older (2,239 more households). Young professional-aged households are also projected to grow (220 more households). At the same time, the number of households headed by persons 35 to 54 – those most likely to have children living at home and preferring larger single family homes – is projected to decline.

Figure 2: HH Change by Age of Householder, 2010-2030



This changing household composition will have a significant impact on the type of housing units needed to house existing and future residents. Older householders often prefer and seek out smaller homes or units in multi-family structures that include amenities, are more easily accessible (e.g. single story, elevator access), and that are easier to maintain. Rental units are also increasingly more attractive to this population. Interestingly, the same type of housing also tends to appeal to younger households headed by persons 20-34 (“Millennials”), particularly when in a walkable, transit-adjacent environments.

Younger households without children also tend to have more expendable income to support local establishments. Downtown Walpole has an opportunity to capture these households to create a more dynamic and successful downtown environment.

Income

At over \$92,000, Walpole’s median income is higher than that of both Norfolk County and the State. Its median family income is even higher, \$110,000. On the flip side, median non-family incomes (e.g. single persons) is much lower at just under \$44,000.

Table 1: Walpole Median Incomes

	Walpole	Norfolk County	State
Median Income	\$92,397	\$84,916	\$66,866
Median Family Income	\$109,206	\$108,943	\$84,900
Median Non-Family Income	\$43,982	\$45,415	\$38,862

Source: ACS 2009-2013

Walpole has more households earning over \$100,000 and fewer households earning less than \$25,000. Most significantly, there are more middle-income households earning \$50,000 to \$99,999. The key takeaway is that Walpole as a whole has significant buying power for retail goods and services and for housing expenditures. Attracting downsizing householders who are still in the workforce, along with younger households with more expendable income, would bring additional spending to the downtown area.

Educational Attainment

Walpole’s relatively high incomes reflect educational attainment levels, with nearly half of residents holding a college, master’s, or professional degree. This is comparable to Norfolk County, but higher than the State, where fewer pursue higher education.

Table 2: Educational Attainment, Persons 25+

	Walpole	Norfolk County	State
Some High School	6%	6%	11%
High School Diploma	22%	22%	26%
Some College	18%	15%	17%
Associates	8%	8%	8%
Bachelor's or Higher	47%	49%	39%

Source: ACS 2009-2013

B. Land Use & Zoning

Proper land use planning and zoning are essential to the future success of Downtown Walpole. They are also not the same. Land use reflects the use of a land parcel at any given time. Land use planning guides the type of use desired for a location in the future. This can include residential, commercial (retail, office, etc.), or industrial uses; municipal or institutional uses, open space and recreation, vacant land, and more. Zoning, on the other hand, is the regulatory tool that allows for the desired future use by regulating what can and can’t be built on a parcel of land in the future, including all allowed uses, the total amount of development, the massing, the height, the open space and parking requirements and more.

Therefore, before recommendations for future land uses can be made, it’s important to understand both what is currently built within a study area, and what can be built according to zoning. Should future development types not be allowed, or should undesirable building types be allowed, changes to zoning may be recommended to achieve desired results.

Land Use

Residential Uses

Residential density is essential to the success of a walkable, amenity rich, active downtown environment. Local residents in a downtown not only bring activity to an area, they bring spending power. They are a critical consumer base, particularly in suburban downtown environments, as they not only support establishments in hours outside of the 9-5 workday, they support businesses on weekends.

Currently, low-density, primarily single-family residential uses make up the majority of land around the downtown study area and there are few residential uses within it. As shown in Figure 3, there are a few single-family structures along the periphery of the study area along Stone and School Streets, and there are a few mixed-use buildings along Main Street. There is not a concentration of higher density housing – rental or condominium – that is often found in downtown environments, and which is needed to support a more robust retail environment.

Greater residential densities would better support a more active downtown environment – there would be more spending in the area – and provide more housing options in town, particularly those looking for smaller housing units like seniors and young professionals.

Institutional Uses

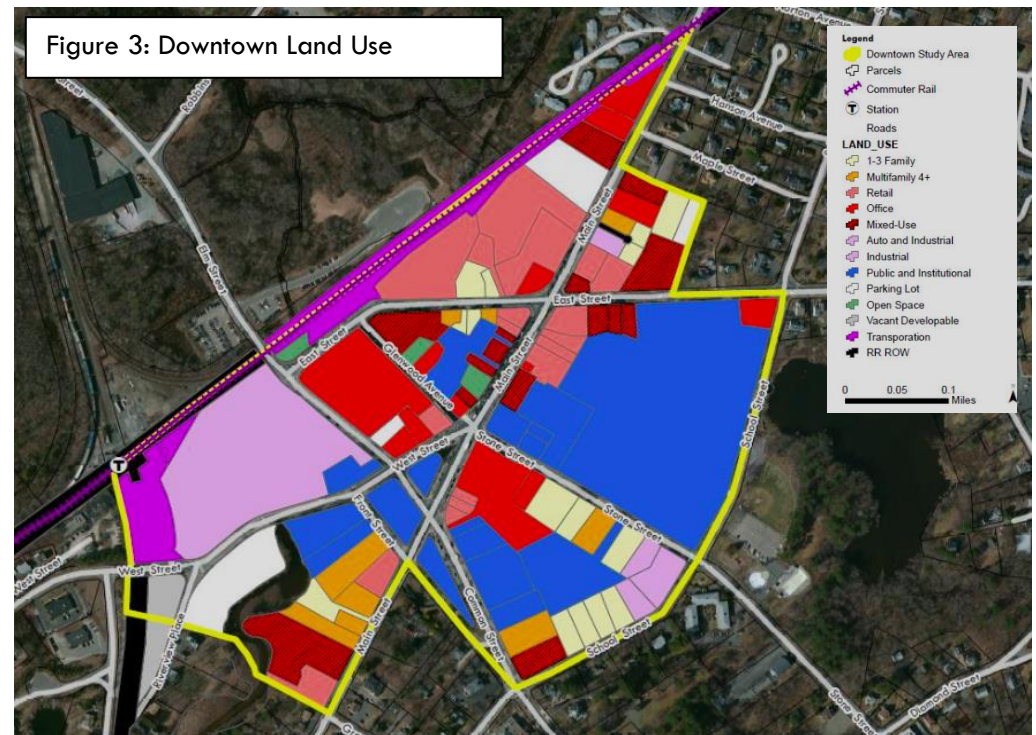
Notably there is considerable publicly owned and institutional land. This includes the Town Hall, the Library, the Police Station, the Town Common, but also institutional uses such as churches and the old Post Office. This is an advantage for Downtown Walpole,

as these uses are strong anchors for a downtown area – they draw people on a daily basis.

Commercial Uses

Land uses along Main Street, particularly the southern end, include primarily downtown-oriented retail and mixed use structures in a pedestrian –oriented environment. This includes everything from a pizza shop, to sit down-dining establishments (e.g. Jalapeno’s, Raven’s Nest, etc.), to banks, specialty shops, etc.

North of East Street, however, the area takes on a more suburban auto-oriented feel with strip-mall commercial and large surface parking lots. This is among the most underutilized land within the study area given its location in a transit-



adjacent, walkable, downtown environment.

Industrial Uses

And while industrial land, which is shown in light and dark purples looks to be significant, the majority of this land is actually occupied by commercial office uses, most notably at the “Walpole Station Business Center.” Important to mention, workers in this complex are a tremendous asset for a smaller downtown like Walpole. They bring in additional spending and can potentially help to support downtown businesses.

Zoning

The study area encompasses two zoning districts: Central Business District and General Residence.

Central Business District Zoning

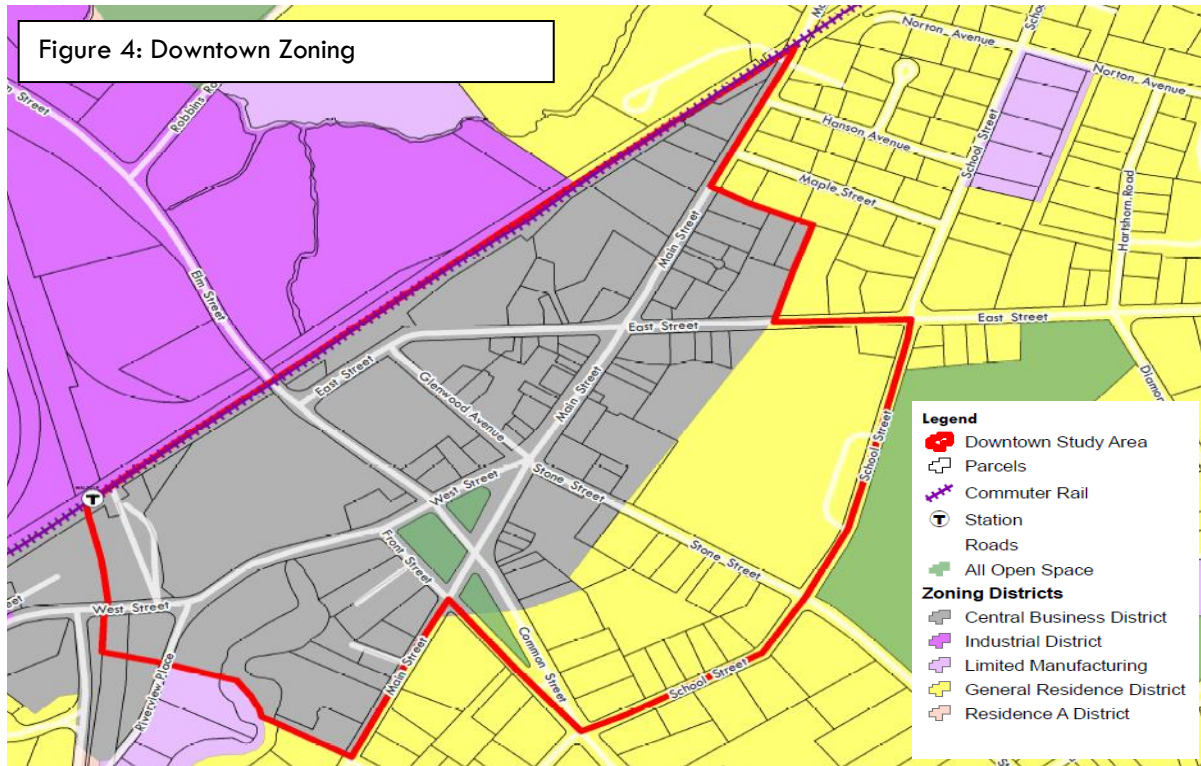
As shown in gray, the majority of the area and the focus of this study, is zoned as CBD. This area is the focus of our study. The purpose of the CBD zone is to provide for a center of business activity that is accessible by pedestrian travel, to provide a center for municipal and cultural activities, and to act as a landmark and symbol of the town.

The key finding is that the CBD is that it already incorporates many of the best practices needed to create an active mixed use downtown. For example, it allows the following as-of-right, meaning these uses can be built without a special permit as long as the proponent’s project fits within the dimensional and use requirements detailed in the zoning ordinance.

Allowed Uses (CBD)

Mixed use commercial (retail or office) with upper floor residential development is allowed in the CBD, up to 5 stories or 52 feet. Currently, there are structures that go up to 3 stories in height. More is allowed.

Retail and professional service uses you want to see in a downtown are also allowed. For example, general retail like clothing shops, convenience stores, hobby shops, along with banks, medical and professional offices (e.g. attorneys, accountants, etc.) are allowed as of right up to 10,000 sf. Restaurants are also allowed as of right. Even creative artisan uses are allowed as a secondary use.



Prohibited Uses

Just as important to what is allowed in a zoning district, is what is not allowed. Once again, the CBD includes many best practices. Most notably, retail and office uses larger than 10,000sf are not allowed. Thus, medium or big-box retailers – which typically are set back far from the roadway and include massive surface parking lots - are not allowed in the CBD. Further, automotive uses like repair and gas stations are not allowed, nor are most industrial uses.

One use that is not allowed in the CBD is multi-family only residential, even in the periphery of downtown. This creates an impediment to a thriving downtown as more residential development and the spending power of households that would live in it, would better support existing and potential future retail that is desired in the area (and which will be discussed later in this document.)

General Residence District

The General Residence (GR District) provides areas for high density, single or multifamily residential land use, public, semi-public, institutional and recreational uses and professional offices compatible with low density, residential land uses, and to provide a transition area between single family residential and commercial or industrial land uses.

Although it states multifamily residential is intended for these districts, it is only allowed by special permit, and must meet several requirements, including a minimum lot size of 30,000 sf (or three-quarters of an acre). The structure also requires a minimum 50 foot buffer from any single family residence. Thus, it is quite limited.

Within the study area, this includes land holding the Town Hall, the new public library, and Stone Field.

C. Transportation, Circulation & Connectivity

Transportation is crucial to the economic strength and success of a downtown. In particular, an efficient, multimodal system that includes automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and importantly public transit is needed to ensure businesses and customers are well connected.

Public Transportation

Public transportation options in downtown Walpole are robust, particularly for downtown in a more suburban community, with commuter rail and bus options that connect the area to surrounding communities and Boston.

Commuter Rail

Walpole is a Zone 4 station along the MBTA Commuter Rail's Franklin line, which provides service to jobs and cultural attractions in Boston via Ruggles, Back Bay, and South Station. There are 17 daily inbound trips, and 16 outbound trips. Trains run roughly every 30 minutes during inbound and outbound rush hours, and once every 1 to 2 hours during off-peak hours. Travel to and from South Station is approximately 50 minutes with a one-way fare of \$7.50. Monthly passes are \$239.00.

Commuter parking is available in several MBTA lots around the station for \$4 per day.

Bus Service

In addition to commuter rail, the MBTA operates bus service to and from Walpole. The 34 bus connects downtown Walpole residents to the Forest Hills Orange Line station in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood. The route also connect residents to shopping and job centers in Norwood, Dedham (including Legacy Place) and more. The route provides an alternative to the commuter rail for some.

Automobile Transportation

Walpole's downtown is accessible by car via State Route 1A, also known as Main Street. Route 1A is a regional roadway that links the town to surrounding towns like Foxborough, Norwood, Dedham and Boston, and runs essentially parallel to Interstate 95 and Route 1. Traffic generated by Route 1A – even during congested hours – is important to the future success of the downtown area.

Because Downtown Walpole is a suburban downtown, and is unlikely to support residential densities needed to solely support a thriving downtown environment, capturing Route 1 travelers attention – and their spending – is essential to the future success of the downtown.

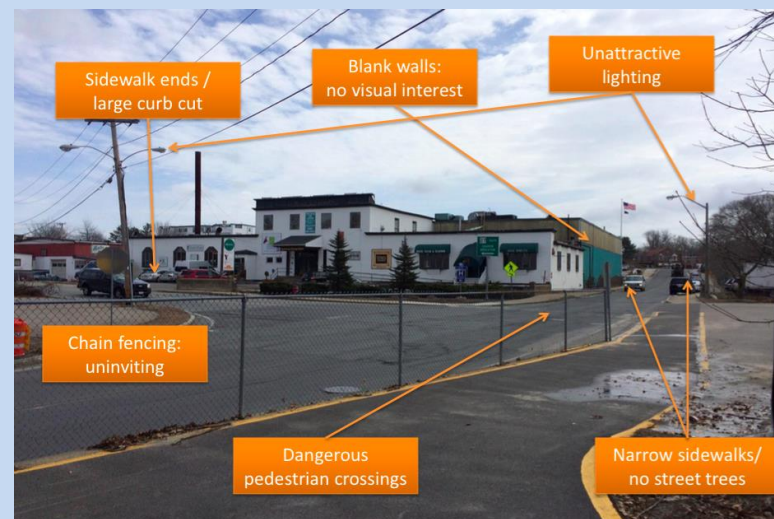
Parking

Parking availability and convenience is crucial to the success to suburban downtowns. Once again, Walpole has implemented many best practice parking policies, not only to capture shoppers, but to encourage development.

Parking lots along Main Street is behind structures, with large lots on both sides of the street. This provides ample opportunities for customers to park once and walk, and this keeps the focus of Main Street on pedestrian travel and store visibility. This is a best practice. Another best practice is wayfinding signage which directs drivers to parking. This has also been incorporated into the downtown.

In general, business owners said parking was plentiful downtown; however, some noted drivers from out of town don't know where the established lots are located, and that northern portions of downtown closest to the Common are a bit far from the larger lots. (See Retail Market Analysis sections for more on parking.)

Connectivity: Downtown and Commuter Rail



Connective corridors in Downtown Walpole are not attractive, intuitive or well maintained. For example, the approach to and from downtown from the MBTA station is not appealing, and there are some public safety issues. As shown in the above diagram, chain link fencing is unattractive and uninviting. There is no wayfinding signage pointing pedestrians to the downtown core. Key pedestrian crossings are dangerous – they are poorly marked or crosswalks are extremely faded. Sidewalks along East Street (to the left) are not contiguous, with gaps and large curb cuts breaking up the pedestrian environment. Further, sidewalks along Elm Street, the most direct connection to Main Street, are narrow, lined with inactive uses, and feature unattractive lighting more appropriate for a highway than a downtown.

A more dynamic, attractive, well maintained, and lively environment would better connect the MBTA to the downtown.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Environment

Successful downtowns typically offer a strong pedestrian environment with well maintained sidewalks, quality signage a, lighting and more. These amenities allow residents, shoppers and workers to move about easily on foot – both day and night – to support local business activity.

Although Main Street for the most part provides an inviting pedestrian environment with wide sidewalks, some attractive street furniture and recent improvements like new sidewalks, brick finishes, etc, other areas require significant improvement. In particular, sidewalks along Main Street near East Street are too narrow, and pedestrian connections to the MBTA commuter rail station are not intuitive to or from downtown, and many are unattractive, poorly maintained, and can feel unsafe.

For example, although the MBTA commuter rail is in the study area, it is essentially disconnected from the downtown, which presents a challenge to achieving a more invigorated downtown environment. Part of this is due to the Station Mills complex, which serves as a barrier – visually and physically – between the station and the larger downtown. In particular, with most commuter parking immediately adjacent to the station, away from downtown, the vast majority of commuters park and ride, and do not take advantage of downtown establishments. Additionally, pedestrians have to walk around the mill to get to and from downtown, and there is minimal signage or wayfinding to encourage pedestrians to enter downtown. Capturing more commuter spending would help to enliven downtown, as more spending would support a more active and successful business district.



Recent improvements along Main Street have improved the pedestrian environment in downtown, but more work is needed.

Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle facilities are lacking in the downtown. In fact, during a site visit, no specific bike amenities were noted. There are no bike lane or sharrows markings on any roadways, not even leading to the commuter rail station. To fully maximize the downtown environment, and encourage all modes of transit, bicyclists must be considered in future roadway improvements. In particular, local commuters who own bicycles may be more likely to ride them to the commuter rail, and/or to local shops and restaurants, before, after or during non-commuting hours.

In summary, robust pedestrian and bike facilities must be prioritized for downtown to be successful. This would not only make the area more attractive for existing residents and commuters, it could also appeal to prospective residents from

urban locations seeking a suburban setting that offers many city-like amenities – namely shop, restaurants and transit – that only a walkable downtown can provide.

D. The Public Realm

Open Space

Accessible, well designed and thoughtfully programmed open space is important in downtowns. Open space not only provides places for recreation and community gathering, it also helps to attract people to live in the area.

The study area has several open space amenities. The Town Green serves as the downtown open space centerpiece, and hosts numerous events throughout the year including summer concerts and the weekly Farmer’s Market. Stone Field, which sits between Town Hall and the Main Street retail spine includes recreational fields, is an important Town gathering space. It plays host to the annual Town Day and July 4th fireworks displays.

In addition to these amenities, downtown connects to walking trails around Memorial Pond just across from Town Hall. Recent investments, in particular the bridge over the Spring Brook, better connect downtown to these recreational amenities.

While downtown open spaces are used, and do attract residents and visitors to the downtown, they could be better designed, utilized and programmed to enhance the overall downtown living environment. In particular, Stone Field could be better maintained and become more visually appealing and offer more activity for town residents. It could be better utilized as a community assets. And while the Town Common is attractive and well maintained, it lacks a feature for daily gathering. For example, there is no playground for children in the downtown study area. Playgrounds draw families to an area year round,

and when placed in locations near local businesses, can increase consumer awareness and spending. Locating one – even a small one – would draw more people to the town center, or offer a recreational amenity for young families who may be interested in living in or within walking distance to Downtown Walpole and its walkable downtown.

Additionally, the Neponset River, is a missed opportunity. The river runs through the downtown, partially through a culvert under the Station Mills Complex – a unique, historical amenity that has a story. The river and its history could be highlighted more through better design, pocket parks, historical displays, etc.

Further, improved coordination with downtown merchants to better market themselves during events held in public open spaces would benefit the local business community. It was noted

A River Runs Through (and Underneath) It

The Neponset River was once the lifeblood of the community, providing power to local mills and building the communities early economy. Today, the river appears lost in the mix. Little

Greater emphasis could be placed to reconnect the downtown to the Neponset River and once again make it a centerpiece of the community. This could include small parks, historical markets, etc.



that the Town doesn't prioritize local businesses during events, and many don't see any benefit when they are held. For example, by holding Town Day in Stone Field and not incorporating Main Street into the day's events through road closures or other sidewalk events, the Town misses a key opportunity to promote not only its local businesses, but the overall curb appeal and convenience of its very walkable downtown.

Signage

We've already touched upon the importance of an inviting, well-maintained public realm in the pedestrian section and open space. However, the public realm extends beyond the physical design of the sidewalk. It extends into the design and location of lighting, grass or brick buffers between road surfaces and sidewalks, landscaping and decorative greenery, and more.

An important element of the public realm is signage. Signage provides directional guidance to pedestrians and drivers alike. It informs what is ahead, down a street or alleyway, or inside a storefront. When done successfully, with thought, creativity and guidance, it also creates a neighborhood aesthetic and identity. It can help to create a sense of place, a consistent but unique look and feel. Simply put, it can help to create or further a "downtown brand".

Unfortunately, signage in Downtown Walpole is inconsistent and not necessarily conducive to business. Most problematic is the more recent requirement that signage be flat against the wall of the buildings. Blade signs, those that are perpendicular to the building and stick out for improved business visibility, or that hang like the Jalapenos sign, are no longer allowed. Jalapenos sign is a grandfathered sign use – it existed before the regulations went into effect. However, Jalapenos is one of the most recognizable signs along Main Street, because it is visible to pedestrians far away up or down the same side of the street,

and to drivers as they pass by. Changes to the signage ordinance are needed to better allow merchants to be noticed by pedestrians and drivers. It is also essential that visual clutter be enforced. Many temporary signs – many simply taped onto store windows and doors - were noted during a site visit.

In summary, although there are many strong elements in the downtown – including successful restaurants and retailers, nice open spaces, and strong zoning – there are also several issues, most notably a lack of residential, poor connections, and problematic regulations around signage, and several retail vacancies. .

III. Market Assessment

To develop a strategic yet achievable plan for Downtown Walpole, it was important to understand how much investment the local market can potentially support. Thus, as part of this planning process, a general market assessment was performed to better gauge how much additional retail, office and residential can be supported in the downtown area.

Below are the major findings from the market assessment, including estimated demand for additional supportable residential, retail and office development. It is important to note that a market assessment does not predict what will be developed in the future. Findings from a market assessment offer a glimpse into what may potentially be supported within a given market area based on an analysis of current data, future population and economic projections, and market assumptions made during the analysis. Thus, the purpose of the market assessment is to help the Town better understand and estimate the level of investment that may be possible. Only then can the Town develop a set of goals and strategies needed to attract the types of development and business activity that can be supported, including policy and regulatory changes that may be needed to achieve desired results.

A. Residential Demand

Successful downtowns include a mix of complimentary uses that combine and feed off one another to create a successful, mutually beneficial ecosystem. Residential density is a crucial component of this ecosystem. Downtown residential in multifamily, mixed-use or higher density single-family alternatives brings a consumer base to support downtown businesses. For Downtown Walpole to truly revitalize and become a vibrant neighborhood, it is crucial to identify locations

and strategies for additional housing, particularly those types that the market will support.

Thus, the purpose of this residential analysis was to determine if the potential exists for more residential in the downtown area, the number of units that could be supported and the types of households that would most likely reside in a downtown environment.

As highlighted earlier in this document (and in the detailed Residential Market Analysis in the Appendix), demographic shifts within Walpole and the surrounding region, along with changing housing preferences nationwide, will drive housing demand in Downtown Walpole.

Existing Inventory

Downtown Walpole and adjacent areas of town have a greater diversity of housing unit types compared to the town as a whole. While this includes single family and townhouse style condominium units just outside the study area boundaries, it is the mixed-use structures with apartments above retail along the Main Street spine that are unique to the area. These units are in demand – there is a limited inventory - and lease quickly when they become available. Rents are competitive (\$1,100 and above); however, they lack amenities like fitness facilities, common spaces, and high end finishes. Units offering these types of amenities would rent for significantly more based on rents achieved in other suburban downtowns throughout the region.

Recent Sales

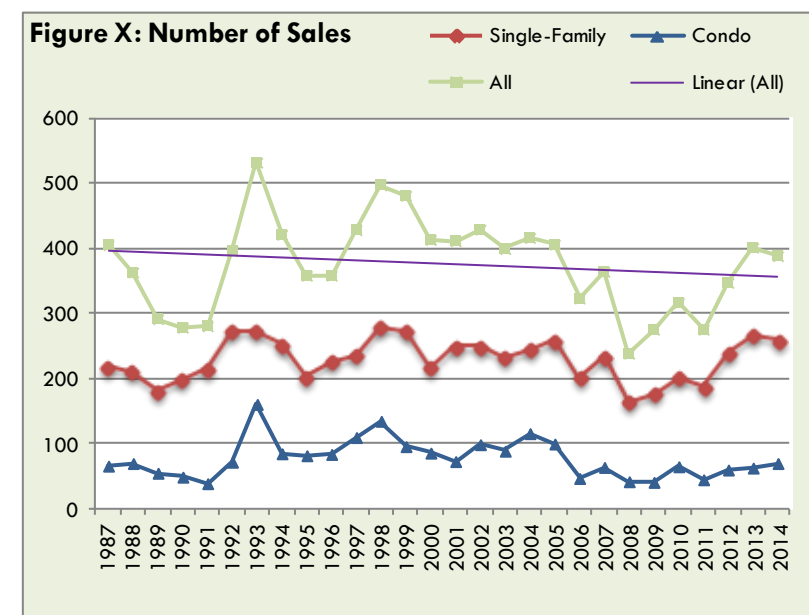
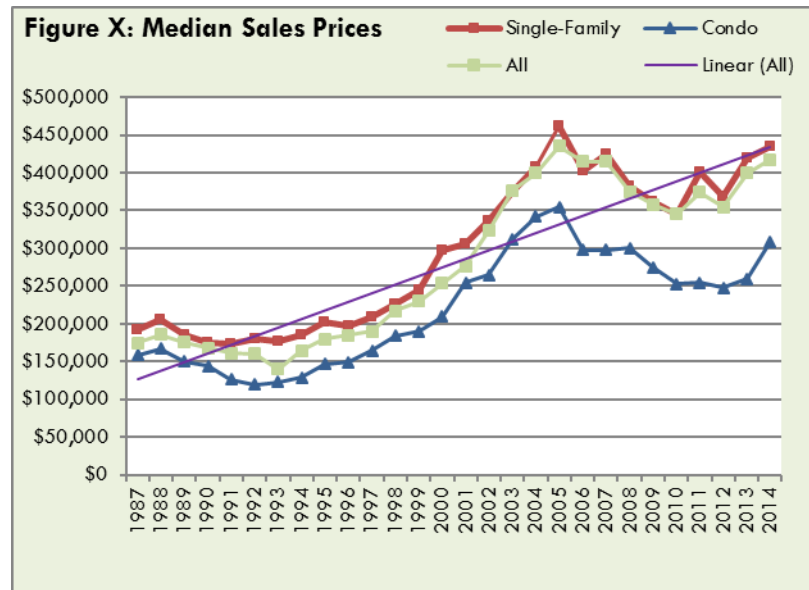
Given that Walpole is predominantly an owner-occupied community, for sale units – particularly single family alternatives such as town homes or condominiums in full-service buildings - should be a part of any future downtown residential mix, particularly for seniors looking to downsize.

Walpole’s for sale market has recovered significantly since the recession, both in prices and in total number of sales. However although sales volumes are up since the recession, the number of sales has decreased slightly over the last year. At the same time, sales prices have continued to rise, reaching near peak prices both for condos and single family homes. Price increases indicate a lack of available inventory and an opportunity for more housing in town, particularly at lower price points that would be attractive to smaller households such as downsizing seniors who wish to stay in town, or young adults looking to buy but who are priced out of the Boston’s core markets. Despite the demand, there is little opportunity for either group to do so. As permit data shows, little new inventory has been built in the downtown area in recent years. This is an opportunity.

Rental Inventory

Rental inventory in and around the downtown study area is low as well, and more units are likely needed as we will discuss shortly. As highlighted earlier, units in downtown are limited in number and rent quickly when available. For example, when looking for available units in the study area, only one was found at 1053 Main Street – a small 520sf 2 bedroom unit.

There is not only a lack of rental apartments downtown, there are few units available anywhere in town. And although some units were identified outside of downtown, many were single family homes or larger units. Unit types attractive to smaller households with amenities and transit accessibility are non-



existent. As indicated below, more units can be supported by current market needs.

Residential Demand

Given existing inventories, demographic changes and shifts in housing preferences highlighted earlier, there is significant opportunity in Downtown Walpole to develop or redevelop housing that is attractive to a range of household types that could be categorized as “urban inclined.” Urban-inclined households tend to include older households, both empty nesters and retirees, as well as younger households (singles, couples without children), and increasingly families with children, who are interested in living in walkable, higher density, amenity-rich (i.e. retail and restaurants), transit-accessible neighborhoods.

To identify the number of potential new units that could be supported in the study area, MAPC first defined a broader focus area of housing markets that might reasonably compete with Walpole in attracting residents. The area identified included Dover, Foxborough, Medfield, Norwood, Sharon, Walpole, and Westwood. Next, we considered projected housing unit demand through 2020 by combining total demand from the entire focus area by both housing type and tenure. Within the focus area, an estimated 3,170 units were projected by 2020.

We then assessed the total housing supply (housing units) added in the focus area by type - 500 units have been permitted across all communities since 2012. Then we calculated the percent of total focus area units that were permitted in Walpole (26%) which included 41% of all multifamily housing permits and 25% of all single-family housing permits. The key finding was that Walpole had a higher trend of permitting compared to other municipalities in the focus area.

Next, we subtracted the number of permits issued from the projected total demand. This resulted in the number of remaining units that could likely be supported within the larger market – the unmet demand – which totaled 2,670 total units. Given the unmet demand, and permitting trends, we assigned low and moderate capture rates of 15% and 20% to estimate the portion of the unmet area unit demand that Walpole could potentially meet and support. The capture rate represents those households that may choose to live in Downtown Walpole.

As shown in Table 3, based on the capture rates, and given growing preferences for urban living among smaller households, Downtown Walpole could potentially see somewhere between 399 and 532 additional multifamily and single-family alternative units over the next 5-10 years should the right unit types be constructed.

Unit Demand Mix

Given the diversity of households interested in downtown living, it is crucial that new residential development include a mix of unit types, including one-, two-, and three-bedroom options. One- and two-bedroom units in larger apartment and condominium developments will be most attractive to smaller households, including downsizing seniors and younger singles and couples, many of whom may wish to access the commuter

Table 3: Housing Unit Demand, Walpole

Regional Housing Unit Demand		Capture		Units	
Housing Unit Type	Regional Housing Unit Demand (# of units by next 10 years)	Low	High	Low	High
Multifamily	1,683	15%	20%	252	337
Single Family	977	15%	20%	147	195
Total	2,670			399	532

rail to job opportunities in Boston/Cambridge. Three-bedroom units, either in larger multifamily developments or in townhouse-style properties, would be most appealing to slightly larger households, such as those with children and downsizing households interested in smaller living spaces that still offer guest bedrooms for family visitors (e.g. grandchildren).

Proposed Development

As detailed, there is significant demand in Downtown Walpole for residential development, primarily in multi-family structures. And the market is responding. The Manzo Company, which owns the Station Mills complex, has proposed a 180- to 200-unit residential complex adjacent to the commuter rail station and its existing buildings. Interviews with the company support many of the findings in this report – with units likely marketed towards young professionals who commute to Boston but who are looking for a more affordable alternative than what is available in the city.

B. Retail Demand

Existing Retail Environment

The first step of conducting a retail market analysis is to survey the area of study to identify the current mix of uses. MAPC

Table 4: Existing Retail

	# of Establishments	% of Total in Downtown Walpole	%Typical Neighborhood/Community Center Mix
Shoppers Goods	9	11%	30-40%
Convenience Goods	7	7%	20-30%
Food Service (Restaurants)	13	17%	10-20%
Personal Services	28	35%	10-20%
Professional Services	21	26%	10%
Vacant	4	4%	5%

performed a windshield analysis, and documented all businesses within the study area.

The key finding is that the retail environment in Downtown Walpole is unbalanced, meaning it doesn't have a strong mix of ground floor retail you would expect in a thriving downtown retail environment. In particular, the area lacks shopper's goods – traditional retailers like clothing stores, sporting goods, gift shops, etc. Only 11% of shops fell into this category, far less than the 30-40% we would expect. Convenience goods – grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, etc. – were also lower than expected. While there is a good pharmacy, the area lacks specialty food establishments like a green grocer, cheese shop, or other food service establishment that local incomes could likely support. There is also a high percentage of personal services like hair and nail salons, fitness centers and other establishments in the downtown – over a quarter fall under this category, whereas 10% is more customary. (It should be noted that as big box stores and online shopping have increased over the years, downtowns have seen growth in personal service establishments to fill vacancies). And while there are many food service establishments, most are take out. There are essentially only 4 full-service eateries in the downtown. Finally, at 4%, the vacancy rate is about where you would want it for a downtown of this size, with nearly all retail spaces leased. However, when vacancy dips below 5%, it typically means more retail can be supported.

Interviews

To further estimate potential demand for retail, it is essential to not only look at data, but to seek perspective from current property and business owners. Thus, as part of the market component of this study, MAPC conducted numerous interviews with property and business owners to gain insight into the downtown retail environment.

Generally speaking, those interviewed reported to be doing well, but could be doing better. In particular, it was noted by some restauranteurs and other businesses along Main Street that full service restaurants (e.g. Jalapenos, Raven’s Nest and Conrads) are doing well and that more would be welcome. However, as noted by one owner, the lack of available liquor licenses in town makes it nearly impossible to open new establishments, not only downtown but anywhere in town – one available license is reportedly for sale upwards of \$50,000.

A common theme heard during interviews was that although many like current retail offerings and support them, a greater variety of store offerings would be helpful including. In particular, clothing stores and specialty boutiques were singled out.

Positively – and unlike many downtowns – most businesses interviewed said parking was not really a problem and that it is plentiful in lots behind buildings. This is a good sign for the downtown. In general, businesses closer to East Street and the larger public lots felt parking was a non-issue, whereas those closer to the Town Common said parking can be a slight challenge during peak hours, but even in those cases, this was perceived positively – business is good. However, and unfortunately, most said MBTA rail commuters are not a significant customer base – in large part because the station is disconnected from the larger downtown. This is a missed opportunity.

Gap Analysis

Next, the study focused on whether there was enough available spending in the Downtown Trade Area to support more retail, and if so, what types?

To identify the potential for additional retail, a gap analysis was performed. A retail gap analysis is essentially a supply and demand analysis of different retail sectors within a given

trade area – the area in which businesses are most likely to derive their customers. The demand is the buying power of trade area residents whereas the supply is the current sales within the trade area. If the demand is greater than the current supply, there is potential for more retail. If the supply exceeds the demand, there is likely little or no opportunity.¹

Given that consumers tend to seek out goods and services in convenient and nearby locations, the ideal trade area for a



Downtown restaurants are doing well and more could be supported. However, there are limited or no liquor licenses available. Petitioning the State Legislature for more licenses and prioritizing them for downtown could draw more restaurants to the area.

suburban downtown like Walpole would be a 10-minute drive. The ten-minute drive not only captures households who live within walking distance to the downtown, but those within a short drive. And although the 10-minute drive time is the Primary Trade area, we looked at three areas – local, primary and secondary trade areas – to better determine where there may be more or less retail opportunity. For example, if there is limited opportunity in the Primary Trade Area, but considerable

¹ It should be noted that for purposes of this analysis, only downtown-inclined retail sectors were analyzed. Auto-dependent sectors like General Merchandise (e.g. big box) and automobile dealers were removed since these retailers don’t typically locate in downtowns, nor do they encourage a walkable environment

Table 5: Retail Gap

	NAICS	LOCAL TRADE AREA	PRIMARY TRADE AREA	SECONDARY TRADE AREA
		5-minute Drive	10-minute Drive	15-minute Drive
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$6,432,993	\$16,490,265	\$25,274,360
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$5,627,684	-\$9,987,318	\$15,039,009
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$9,466,716	\$1,003,963	\$99,278,068
Health and Personal Care		\$13,639,853	-\$68,917,986	-\$85,823,622
Clothing & Clothing Accessories	448	\$19,877,495	\$63,735,892	\$101,129,022
Sporting, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	451	\$1,217,386	\$4,997,374	\$28,725,447
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$4,501,774	\$5,508,301	\$17,170,049
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$8,517,119	\$18,743,831	\$77,644,184

Source: Dunn & Bradstreet via ESRI Business Analyst

Table 6: Total Supportable Retail

	Avg Sales PSF	Avg Store Sizes	Primary Trade Area (10-minute)		
			Retail Gap/Surplus	Support- able SF (Capture 7%)	# of Stores
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	225	2,000-4,000	\$16,490,265	5,351	2
Electronics & Appliance Stores	225	5,500	0	0	0
Food & Beverage Stores*	360	2,000-25,000	\$1,003,963	2,637	1
Health and Personal Care	400	14,000	0	0	0
Clothing & Clothing Accessories	190	4,000	\$63,735,892	19,951	5
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	190	2,000-5,000	\$1,551,312	1,089	0
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	150	1,500-4,000	\$5,508,301	2,707	1
Food Services & Drinking Places	300	2,000-3,000	\$18,743,831	4,019	1-2
Totals			\$45,365,087	20,586	11

opportunity in the Secondary Trade Area (see Electronics and Appliance Stores below), there may be opportunity to capture shoppers from farther away. As shown in Table X, given the number of categories that show a retail gap – shown in green in all trade areas areas – there appears to be significant opportunity for additional downtown-oriented retail. However, more analysis is required to understand how much can be supported.

As shown in Table 6, to estimate the total supportable square feet of retail and number of stores by type, MAPC took the retail gap for each retail sector (e.g. remaining demand not met), and divided it by typical average sales per square foot by retail sector to estimate the total square footage of space that could be sported. That figure was then divided by common downtown store sizes for the type of store.

The result of this analysis showed strong potential exists for many retail types. In particular, the trade area can likely support and accommodate clothing and accessory shops including women's, men's and children's clothing in boutique style formats. There is also opportunity for home goods – such as like smaller furniture or decorative items – likely in combination with a gift shop. There is also an opportunity for a small specialty food store like a cheese shop or small green grocer. And finally there is opportunity to support 1-2 additional restaurants. In particular, restaurants that offer a different type of cuisine than what is currently offered would hold the greatest potential. (Important to note, and as mentioned earlier, there are limited or no liquor licenses available in town, thus restaurants are unlikely to locate in the downtown.) In total, the area could potentially support up to 15 shops across 20,000 sf.

It is important to note that this is not a prediction of what will happen. It is only what the market can potentially support. There are many additional factors that determine retail success

including customer visibility (essential for retail), appropriate store size and layout, business acumen of owners, lease rates and terms (must be competitive), availability of parking, and marketing is crucial. Further, additional retail development would be required to meet the total potential demand. And with existing retail spaces currently renting for \$14-\$19/psf (gross leases terms), developers/property owners would need to receive higher rents to justify construction costs, unless the retail was viewed as a loss leader to attract residents, or if a key anchor tenant could be attracted to a key location.

Office Findings

Finally, MAPC looked at the potential for more office space in downtown. Office space is not only beneficial to a community to further diversify its tax base, but the workers employed in them are valuable downtown assets. According to a study by the International Council of Shopping Centers², office workers are typically spend \$100 per week around their offices, primarily on food and convenience goods. Thus they support downtown businesses.

Fortunately for downtown businesses, there are just over 400 office workers in the downtown, the largest number work for Mortgage Masters in the Station Mills Complex. These workers may go to lunch at local food service establishments, pick up food or go to a dry cleaner on their way to, from or during working hours, or purchase convenience items or even gifts. In summary, they bring considerable spending power.

Based on Walpole's geographic location, and on interviews conducted as part of this planning process, there is little opportunity for significant additional office space in the

² Niemira, Michael P. and Connolly, John. "Office-Worker Retail Spending in a Digital Age" International Council of Shopping Centers, 2012.

downtown core. Most companies seek locations in larger cities or locations along major highways with direct or quick access. Thus, it is unlikely large office users with significant employment would choose to locate in Walpole. However, there could be some demand for additional professional office space for lawyers, accountants, financial services and other smaller boutique businesses. Flex-spaces for creative workers may also be possible should the area attract more residents, particularly for second offices.

Market Summary

In summary, Downtown Walpole has the potential to support additional residential and retail investment that would combine to create a more active, amenity rich, mixed use environment.

Up to 530 residential units could be supported – rental and ownership, market and affordable – primarily in multi-family structures (including townhomes) that appeal to market segments most interested in downtown living. This includes young professional and downsizing senior households, both of which are projected to increase over the next 10 years.

Approximately 11 new retail and service establishments, including full-service restaurants, clothing and home goods stores, and a specialty food store, could also be supported based on current household demand. New residential demand and construction would also bring more spending to the area to better support new retail growth.

There is little to no opportunity for additional office development beyond smaller flex spaces that could accommodate smaller enterprises or serve as second offices.

IV. Stakeholder Engagement

During the Walpole Downtown Action Plan process, input was sought from numerous stakeholders. This included input from the Economic Development Commission, interviews with local merchants and property owners, developers and the public.

A. Project Team

A local planning advisory group was established at the outset of the project. This included the Town's Economic Development Director, a member of the Economic Development Commission, the local Chamber and a large property owner in downtown Walpole. The group worked with MAPC throughout the process, provided feedback, engaged citizens, attended the public meeting, and provided feedback on the draft document.

B. Interviews

The planning team conducted several interviews as part of the planning process. This included restaurant owners, retailers, and service providers along Main Street.

Strengths

- Small town feel. Good customers.
- Restaurants doing well.
- Snow removal is good (by Town and by owners)
- Plenty of parking.
- Strongest hours are post work.

Weaknesses/Issues

- No big anchor in downtown.
- Permitting can be onerous. Town not particularly business friendly.
- No downtown business group charged with promotion.
- Signage an issue – no sandwich boards, etc.
- No public parking lot near Town Common end of Main.

Opportunities

- Residential in downtown to add more regular customers.
- Some property owners interested in redevelopment.
- Improved marketing and promotion of downtown.
- Capturing more regional pass through traffic, and more commuter rail riders.
- Diversify retail base to attract more customers – make it a destination.
- Family friendly activities to bring more people
- Better cooperation between Town events and local businesses.
- More restaurants. Existing (quality) restaurants are very crowded.
- Sports bar is needed.

C. Public Open House

The Town of Walpole and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) held an Open House public meeting on April 27th to engage the larger Walpole community and receive input for this action plan. More than 60 people attended and provided many thoughts, opinions and guidance about the future of Downtown Walpole.

In particular, there was widespread support for numerous improvements and amenities within the Downtown including a greater variety of shops, restaurants and activities; the desire for more attractive signage and streetscapes; the need for a comprehensive marketing strategy or “brand” to create buzz and draw more people to the area to live and to shop (both locals and from surrounding towns). Many commented on the need for increased engagement between the Town and residents and business owners, particularly around initiatives such as this action plan for downtown. Equally important, there is strong support for planning activities that end in results and

that a way to achieve results is through realistic, achievable goals and strategies that will help to improve and reenergize the area was also expressed.

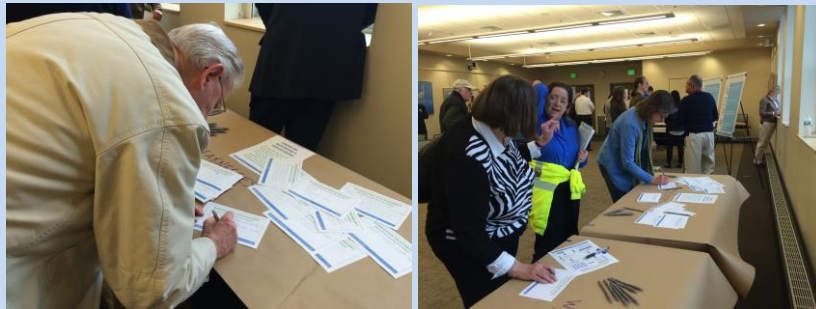
The meeting featured several “stations” where the public was able to offer input into the process. A few key findings from the input stations are below.

Station 1: Overview Presentation

After participants provided some general information about where they lived, worked, and how they commute (if they work), they viewed a pre-recorded presentation that highlighted findings from the existing conditions analysis and market study. The presentation ran on a loop so attendees could view it at a time convenient for them.

Station 2: Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities

Attendees at this engagement station were asked to provide feedback about what they liked most about Downtown Walpole (Strengths); what they liked least (Weaknesses); and what they felt would improve downtown most (Opportunities). Highlights include:



Participants at Station 2 indicated what they felt to be Downtown Walpole’s greatest Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities.

Strengths

- Proximity to commuter rail.
- Restaurants that are in downtown are good.
- Stone Field for big events
- Ample parking (but hidden)
- New library.
- Mom and pop businesses.

Weaknesses

- Not enough restaurants and lack of retail options. “Nothing I want to buy for sale” in downtown.
- Unattractive environment. “It’s tired,” not inviting and not cohesive. It “lacks character.”
- Poor signage, building facades, etc.
- Lack of distinct architecture and unattractive/poorly maintained buildings. Need more design guidance.
- Pedestrian environment is poor, including bad street crossings, crumbling sidewalks, and access to train.
- Traffic patterns and bad light timings.

Opportunities

- Redevelopment of single story buildings to increase downtown residents to support more retail activity.
- Multifamily housing, townhouses and mixed-use that takes advantage of proximity to the MBTA station
- More restaurants and outdoor dining, and specialty retail options like a cheese shop.
- Streetscape improvements to make more attractive and inviting
- More activities and events to attract people to downtown.
- Improved access to the MBTA station.

Station 3: Priorities

After identifying strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in Downtown Walpole, attendees were asked to review a set of draft strategies that the plan could address. Each participant picked their top four.

Based on the results, participants felt that improvements to streetscapes and the public realm, more restaurants and cafes, a greater variety of retail options, and more public transportation options should be prioritized to improve the Town Center.

Other important strategies included the need for a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract more customers to Town Center businesses, as well as more events programming, and recreational options. Low on the list was the need for additional housing, pedestrian improvements, and bike amenities and connections from other areas of town.



- Top priorities identified by Open House attendees included:
- 1) Improved streetscapes to make Downtown Walpole more attractive and inviting.
 - 2) More housing options to attract additional residents to the area.
 - 3) A greater variety of retail options.

Station 4: Visual Preference

At the fourth and final station, the Visual Preference engagement station, participants created collages of images representing preferred types of future development, as well as amenities and activities they would like to see in Downtown Walpole.

Participants perused over one hundred images that depicted different building types and styles ranging from townhomes to large multifamily complexes, to retail only structures and mixed-use buildings. Activities and amenity images included restaurants, active streetscapes, recreational options, signage options as well as art and music festivals and more.

Many participants indicated the need for a more cohesive built environment within the downtown. Although not stated as a priority in the previous exercise, many selected images depicting multi-story, mixed-use structures (3-4 stories) with residential and/or office above that was “traditional,” “historical” in character and “classy”. Others focused on the importance of retail on the ground floor. Many images were selected more than once. In terms of retail and amenities, many wanted outdoor dining options, entertainment, family-friendly activities, more events, and more.



The final engagement station allowed participants to identify building types, as well as activities and amenities they most wanted to see in Downtown Walpole.

Visual Preference Images Selected: Building Design and Scale



*“Consistent look, historic feel, nice streetscape.”
“Emphasize what’s unique to Walpole – use historical style to expand pride.”*



*“I like offices in downtown.”
“Downtown commuter train access apartments.”*



*“Retail on street level. Residential above.”
“Nice sidewalk that is not brick! Trees and plantings.
Mixed roof lines, small scale.”*



*“Clean cut, uniform. Promotes a close knit feel as
condo alternative.”
“More housing options.”*



No comments, but image selected more than once.



*“Modern, multiuse with shops and living space.”
“Nice scale. Second floor mixed use.”*



*“Nice look.”
“Street level retail. Office above.”*



*“Nice, historic mix. Could have colorful fronts like
English and Irish village.”
“Colonial look. Pear tree.”*



“Classy and historical (not too contemporary).”

Visual Preference Images Selected: Retail Amenities and Activities



*"Eating outside – food truck. Pop up café."
 "Outdoor space for people to mingle."
 "Appealing. Almost like a mini Faneuil Hall."*



*"Fun things for families to do together - more than just one day."
 "Classic New England family time."*



*"Good family appeal."
 "Capitalize on your world class agriculture school and be farm to table destination."
 "Stronger presence of food stores downtown."*



*"Attractive anchor store. (1 or 2)."
 "Well known anchor destination."*



*"Outdoor dining."
 "Good ambience."*



*"Community cultural activities."
 "Music/shows attracting patrons to boost retail/restaurants."*



*"More downtown events to draw diverse groups."
 "Varied fairs, can do periodically. Different appeal."*



*"Live music = vibrant business district."
 "Entertainment."*



"Low key entertainment. Places to hang out."

V. Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented in two parts. Part A is a narrative highlighting the goals, strategies, and actions to further enhance and revitalize Downtown Walpole. Part B (TO BE ADDED AFTER FINAL REVIEW) is an implementation matrix that provides suggestions for who is responsible for each strategy, when each strategy should be accomplished (short, medium or long-term), and potential funding sources available to achieve each strategy (e.g. general funds, grant funds, staff time, etc.

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Increase organizational capacity within downtown to advocate for revitalization and economic growth.

There are no organizations or groups currently focusing specifically on downtown revitalization. In order to achieve the goals and strategies within this and other plans, increased organizational capacity is needed.

Strategies:

1) Form a Downtown Walpole Committee or Working Group to advocate for the revitalization of the downtown area.

This group should include diverse perspectives and interests and be comprised of local residents, business owners, and Town staff to implement recommendations in this plan. The key role of this group would be to develop a yearly action plan of initiatives – big and small – that should be completed within any given year.

2) Form a Downtown Merchants Organization to advocate for local business initiatives and to promote downtown.

Such a group could either be an independent Merchants Association, or could be a sub-group of the local Chamber of Commerce. Business and property owners need to organize and advocate for their interests to fully realize downtown's potential.

3) Hold downtown specific networking events to improve interaction between local businesses, residents and potential future business owners.

Downtown Walpole needs to create a buzz. Networking and social events provide business owners an opportunity to build partnerships and discuss concerns about the overall business environment.

Goal 2: Create a more inviting, attractive and cohesive downtown environment.

Input received during interviews and the public open house focused on the overall poor quality and look of downtown. Many thought the area lacked cohesion, strong architecture, and that it looked “dated”.

Strategies:

1) Develop and adopt revised signage standards that would better serve downtown businesses.

Standards should allow for perpendicular “blade” signage to provide increased visibility, and temporary signage like sandwich boards to better attract customers to establishments.

2) Establish a storefront improvement program to assist business owners with costs of façade upgrades.

3) Allow for outdoor dining with attractive retractable awnings and other embellishments to create a sense of place and activity.

4) Create a cohesive wayfinding strategy to guide pedestrians and motorists to Downtown amenities.

- 5) *Encourage greenery (planters, hanging plants, etc) throughout the downtown.*
- 6) *Allow for public furniture to provide informal gathering spaces.*
- 7) *Work with local arts groups to develop a public art program to not only improve the streetscape, but to attract people to Downtown Walpole.*
- 8) *Ensure open space amenities are well maintained.*

Goal 3: Provide a diversity of housing options – market rate and affordable – that are attractive to smaller households including young professional and senior to meet market demand.

Downtown could support up to 650 more housing units over the next 10 years. Currently, 200 units are proposed, and more should be encouraged. New households would bring greater vitality to downtown, and more spending power to support existing and future retail and services.

Strategies:

- 1) *Work with property owners of priority development sites identified in the 2008 study to redevelop their properties with mixed-use and multifamily housing.*
- 2) *Reach out to all property owners in downtown to identify all who may be interested in redeveloping their properties.*
- 3) *Ensure the Town development process and permitting procedures are efficient, streamlined, and responsive to property owner and developer proposals.*
- 4) *Revise zoning to allow multifamily only housing in all areas of downtown, except along Main Street where mixed-use with ground floor retail should be required.*
- 5) *Ensure that a percentage of units in downtown are affordable to low- and moderate- income households. (20% would be recommended.)*

Goal 4: A re-energized Downtown with a robust mix of retail, dining, entertainment and office uses.

Based on input received as part of this process, residents and business owners in Walpole would like to see a more active, energized downtown environment. This can only be achieved through a coordinated effort to attract new residential, retail and service offerings to the area.

Strategies:

- 1) *Target retail recruitment/outreach to sectors identified in the market analysis as opportunities.*

The retail market analysis identified demand for boutique clothing stores, home goods and specialty food establishments within the downtown.

Compile a list of retail businesses in other communities that may be interested in opening a location in Walpole and then reach out to them

- 2) *Identify potential anchor establishments that will make Downtown Walpole a destination and attract larger numbers of people.*

This could be a prominent retailer, restaurant or even a cultural/entertainment entity. The purpose would be to increase foot traffic that could then also support other establishments in the downtown.

- 3) *Make Downtown Walpole a dining destination within the regions.*

Concentrations of restaurants often attract more patrons – there are options, even when one is full within walking distance – and generally improve performance of existing establishments. The Town through the EDC or future Downtown Committee should identify restaurateurs within

Walpole and throughout the region who may be interested in opening a new dining establishment in Walpole.

- 4) **Petition the State Legislature to obtain more liquor licenses, with some designated specifically for the downtown study area to support the opening of more restaurants in the area.**

A liquor license is often crucial to the success of a full-service restaurant. Currently there are no available liquor licenses (or none available at a reasonable cost to independent restaurateurs). More are needed to encourage restaurant growth in town.

- 5) **Identify additional programming options- including family-friendly options - to attract people to downtown.**

In addition to the weekly Farmer's Market, other events could include movies on the Common, ice skating in the winter (seek sponsors to help fund), more concerts, pop-up dinners, art installations and festivals. Events will bring more people downtown to support businesses. Working with existing business on event promotions/tie-ins (e.g. boxed dinners, dinner specials, etc.) Would provide greater benefit.

- 6) **Explore opportunities for live entertainment at local establishments to draw a larger customer base.**

Many commented that there are limited options for live entertainment, and that they must travel elsewhere for live music and other events. Adding entertainment could attract more patrons to local establishments.

- 7) **Market Walpole as a live/work/play destination (as more residential is developed) to attract a greater variety of retailers to locate in Downtown Walpole. (See goal 4 for marketing strategies)**

BEST PRACTICES: Dedham Business Guide



The Town of Dedham's APA-award winning "Dedham Business Guide" is an excellent tool to assist the small business community with navigating the Town of Dedham process for opening a business. The guide includes the following information in an easy-to-read format:

- **Getting Started:** Info on business certificates, taxes, zoning, signage, regulations, and technical assistance.
- **Town Contacts:** Contact and information for Town Departments and Business Resources.
- **Overall Process:** From Plan through Permitting.

There are also specific guides about:

- **Opening a restaurant:** Information about permits needed, parking requirements, obtaining common victualler License and Alcoholic Beverages License, signage, etc.
- **Opening a Small Store:** Information of getting a Business Certificate, Permits and Licenses, etc.
- Site Plan Review
- Design Review
- Special Permit or Variance process.

Goal 5: Improve marketing of Downtown Walpole to attract more customers to local businesses, and to attract more residents to live in downtown

Strategies:

- 1) **Create a Downtown page on the Town website featuring local businesses and events in downtown.**
- 2) **Identify funds (Town or grant funding) to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract more businesses to Downtown Walpole.**
Ideally this would be developed with assistance from a consultant.
- 3) **Develop a database of available retail spaces to market to potential businesses interested in locating in Walpole.**
- 4) **Create a “Doing Business in Walpole Guide” to change perceptions and become known as a business-friendly community.**

Business guides, like those developed by the City of Quincy and the Town of Dedham provide the step by step process for opening a business in a community. They can help to attract more investment by announcing that the town welcomes new business investment.

Goal 6: A better connected downtown that prioritizes pedestrian movement and that maximizes its proximity to the MBTA Commuter Rail station.

Strategies

- 1) **Improve connections to the commuter rail station including improvements to the access path off of Elm Street (improved lighting, fencing, landscaping, and signage), sidewalk improvements to and from downtown primarily along East Street and Elm Street, and better marked and striped pedestrian crossings on Elm Street.**
- 2) **Develop and adopt a Complete Streets policy that requires street design and construction to accommodate all users including cars, transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.**
- 3) **Identify locations for bicycle amenities throughout downtown (e.g. bike racks) to encourage bicyclists to support local businesses.**