

Ipswich Community Development Plan Public Forum 2 Summary of Results

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC 10/5/19

KEY TAKEAWAYS

on the SURVEY, participants were:

- surprised and concerned by the lack of youth representation and involvement and the survey's overall small sample size.
- concerned about the lack of open space in discussion.
- curious about how to achieve all of the needs and desires identified in the survey.

on the NEEDS ASSESSMENT, participants were:

- surprised by water usage data and projections and the proportion of housing cost-burdened residents.
- curious about water solutions, what is attracting seniors to the community, how to encourage alternative communiting and transportation patterns, and how to fund essential needs in the community.
- concerned about open space, transportation, education, housing, economic development, Ipswich's aging population and lowering incomes, and climate change.

in the DRAFT VISION STATEMENT, participants wanted to see:

- education, open space, and goals for carbon reduction added to the vision.
- more detail, definition, and contextualization in the vision.
- prioritize services and infrastructure, climate change issues, and business attraction and economic development.

SUMMARY + BACKGROUND

On Thursday September 26, 2019, the Town of Ipswich Community Development Plan Steering Committee (Committee) and project consultants JM Goldson LLC (JM Goldson) hosted a second public forum to report back on the first public forum (held in early May), the online community survey, and key takeaways from the needs assessment. The meeting was also designed to solicit feedback from the public on the draft vision statement and current findings of the project. Phase I, wrapping up this fall, is designed to lay the groundwork for Phase II which will kick off later this year and help determine key goals and strategies for 2030.

Lead consultants JM Goldson gave a presentation on key findings, densely packed with information. The presentation slides can be accessed on the project's online website: <https://bridgingipswich.com/3253/documents/6215>. Approximately 60 people attended the forum.



PHOTO CREDIT: JM GOLDSON LLC

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In small group discussions, participants were asked to indicate if there was anything from the survey results that they were surprised about, concerned about, or curious about. Key themes are highlighted below. Larger items indicate more frequent comments.

SURPRISED

Support for mixed-use

Underrepresentation of young people/youth

Need for parking

Disconnect in transportation needs: reduce congestion but increase parking; more space for cars but increase alternatives

Overrepresentation of residents with kids

Overrepresentation of female respondents

Smaller housing units not desired

Overdevelopment still an issue

CONCERNED

No mention of agriculture

Small sample size of survey - 3% of entire population

How to involve and include young people/youth

Little mention of education & schools

Lack of open space discussion

CURIOUS

Next steps: how to make decisions, fund, and implement/achieve

Housing adaptable to all ages, not compartmentalized

Housing close to amenities (walkable/downtown activity)

Tourism ideas

PLEASED

Recognition of climate change issues!

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

In small group discussions, participants were asked to indicate if there was anything from the needs assessment that they were surprised about, concerned about, or curious about. Key themes are highlighted below. Bolded items indicate more frequent comments.

SURPRISED BY:

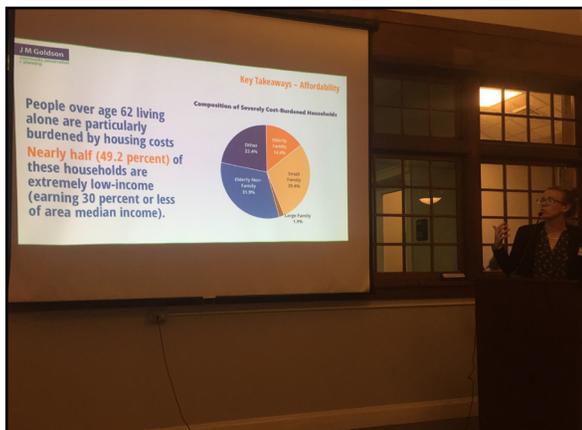
- School enrollment projections
- Lack of young professionals/millennials (age 24-34)
- Housing issues
- **Water use data and projections**
- Growing/large population despite projections
- **Proportion of population who are burdened by housing costs**
- View of downtown as vibrant
- View of schools as high-quality
- Proportion of the population that is aging
- Open space not emphasized as heavily as before

CURIOUS ABOUT:

- How is school capacity measured?
- What do “multifamily” and “affordability” mean as related to housing?
- How do we compare to similar communities in the number of retirees? our school trend?
- What are appropriate locations for housing development? for commercial development other than downtown?
- **What is attracting the 65+ population?**
- What are options for aging in place? How will our community’s needs change as the baby boomer generation moves on?
- What about short-term rentals?
- **How do we encourage more environmentally friendly commuting patterns (cycling, electric cars, carpooling or public transit)?**
- What about incentives to develop smaller homes? for shade trees?
- Regulations for pervious surfaces?
- **How do we pay for the things we need to improve or maintain with lowering incomes?** Why are incomes low with such an educated population?
- How do you achieve economic diversity? How do we attract the [types of] businesses we want?
- How has the tax burden changed over time?
- Sylvania Dam (take it out)?
- How do we implement/achieve the things we want? ensure this plan has teeth?
- **What is the plan (and solutions) for water?** for road conditions?

CONCERNED BY

- **Open space/natural resource preservation (including agriculture)**
- Value and invest in downtown
- **Desalinization**
- Lack of landlord support for sewer
- Vulnerable utility lines (above ground)
- **Parking**
- **Walkability and bikeability (many barriers)**
- Lack of 40B consideration
- **Education**
- **Housing options, adaptability, and affordability**
- Services & infrastructure
- **Economic development (including tourism)/business retention; more downtown activity**
- **Aging population; lacking young people and youth involvement**
- Lacking communication throughout town
- **Low/decreasing incomes**
- Invest in existing buildings/building quality
- Traffic congestion
- **Climate change: access, public safety and infrastructure**
- **Public transportation alternatives**
- **Zoning**
- Need carbon goals



ANNA CALLAHAN, COMMUNITY PLANNER, PRESENTING ON NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS. PHOTO CREDIT: JM GOLDSON LLC

2030 DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

In small group discussions, participants were asked to respond to the following prompts:

1. *Does this align/reflect your personal vision for Ipswich in 2030?*
2. *Does this align/reflect what you've heard from the community?*
3. *Given limited resources and the values reflected in the vision statement and community feedback, what is the most important need (or up to three needs) that you would focus on over the next ten years?*

DRAFT 2030 VISION STATEMENT

"In 2030, Ipswich remains a historic rural community defined by its agricultural and natural resources; its small-town local businesses; and vibrant historic downtown. Ipswich is equipped to quickly respond and appropriately manage change. Key infrastructure and vulnerable populations are protected—or able to easily bounce back—from flooding, heat waves, and other climate events. New development is environmentally-responsive—including being appropriately-scaled, sustainable, and well-designed. The community is able to balance increased economic activity with its small-town charms and provide high-quality town services in a transparent and equitable way."

RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE: *Working collaboratively with its partners throughout the North Shore, Ipswich in 2030 is resilient and prepared to meet future challenges. The Town's marshes, Ipswich River, wildlife corridors, and other ecological resources are healthy and thriving. Ipswich is energy independent with its public buildings—and many residential and commercial buildings—powered by clean, renewable energy.*

RESPONSIVE DEVELOPMENT: *New housing and business development continue to be concentrated in walkable areas, including the downtown and near the train station. Not only is new development sustainable, it pays special attention to the Town's historic character, natural green spaces, walkability, and access to services.*

MORE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES: *The town's housing stock in 2030 is a mix of apartments, condominiums, and single-family houses that can accommodate a range of socially and economically diverse households, including young adults, older adults, large families, and people with disabilities.*

ECONOMIC VITALITY: *Diverse commercial development offers new amenities, entertainment, and retail opportunities to residents and to increase the Town's commercial tax base*

IMPROVED SERVICES AND EXPANDED PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE: In 2030, Ipswich has improved and expanded its public services and infrastructure, particularly its waste management and water supply, to support development. An expanded bike network offers residents safe alternatives to move throughout Ipswich and to access most of the town's destinations, including its natural and recreational resources.

THRIVING DOWNTOWN: Downtown continues to be a popular gathering space for town events, programs, and performances for community members of all ages. The Town continues to foster social connections that celebrate the increasing diversity of its residents. Residents are able to stroll along the Ipswich River using the expanded Riverwalk. Downtown storefronts are still populated by local owner-operated businesses—and more Ipswich residents work from their homes or in town.

REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS: In 2030, regional collaborations and connections have improved, particularly around transportation and water supply. At least fifty-percent of Ipswich commuters use alternative transportation methods, including on foot, by bike, or riding the commuter rail or bus, to get to work. New residents are drawn to the community's small-town feel that provides easy transit connection to Boston and communities along the North Shore.

Forum participants generally expressed support for the draft vision statement (above). However, several common themes emerged from group comments, highlighted below in order of commonality.

1. **The need to maintain, support, and invest in schools should be included in the vision statement**
2. **A commitment to open space and agricultural preservation should be included in the vision statement**
3. **Add more specificity, including definitions and added context.**¹
4. **Efforts to reach carbon neutrality should be included in the vision statement**

Only some groups specifically identified their top priorities, outlined below. Bolded items indicate more frequent comments.

- Take care of what we own
- **Improve services and expand public infrastructure (including public safety building)**
- Attract young people
- Schools
- **Sea level rise & climate change issues**
- Public transportation
- Protect natural resources and recreational
- **Balance business attraction & economic development opportunities**
- Affordable and diversified housing
- Historic preservation

¹Both groups and individuals provided many specific comments with recommendations and clarifying questions