

Hatfield MVP Climate Smart Comprehensive Plan

Community Drop-In Event - June 10, 2023

Summary prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) and

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)

Graphic depictions of conversations by DPict

Photos by various staff from project consulting team

Overview

Hosted by the Hatfield Comprehensive Plan Committee, the community drop-in event at Black Birch Vineyard complements other community engagement efforts conducted as a part of the Town's year 1 climate-smart comprehensive planning process. The planning process and event are made possible by a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The other engagement activities to date have included listening sessions and surveys with farmers, seniors, and youth, a community-wide virtual meeting, and a community-wide survey.

This document summarizes the highlights of the June 10 in-person event, where people could drop in to participate from 8:30 a.m. to noon on a Saturday morning and stay as long as they liked. The event included three programmed conversations around Enhancing Community and Social Connections, Planning for Climate Change and Understanding Flood Risks, and Housing and Land Use. There were also a series of eight interactive stations where participants could stop by, learn a bit about a given topic from conversation with person staffing the station, as well as maps and posters located at the station, and then provide their thoughts on the topic through comments on index cards, post-it notes, or indicate priorities with dot voting.

To start the event, Ona Ferguson from CBI welcomed all attendees and invited people to engage with the variety of activities and learning opportunities available at the event including the conversations, interactive stations, community survey (QR code provided), and event raffle.

Stephanie Slysz, Town of Hatfield Planning Board Chair, provided a project overview including Hatfield's planning history, the 2021 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (MVP) and current priority to develop a Climate Smart Comprehensive Plan that emphasizes a climate resilient town master plan and incentivizes climate-resilient farming.

Conversation #1: Enhancing Community and Social Connections

Patty Gambarini from PVPC introduced the topic of community and social connections by noting the following:

- During the Municipal Vulnerability Planning work, it was identified that residents who have lived in Hatfield for a long time and across generations contribute to strong community ties that people can call on when the town faces challenges.
- In the course of the current comprehensive planning process, the committee and consulting team have also been hearing how those relatively new to Hatfield, without those life-long ties, can be discounted.

- Why can't there be great value in both of these, the insights that come with having lived in one place for a lifetime and the insights that come from having experienced living in other places?
- Like many communities, Hatfield faces serious challenges:
 - Farming has become increasingly difficult with extremes in summer heat and the high cost of land
 - There are far fewer families with school-aged children within Town, impacting viability of the school system
 - Residents over 60 years of age now make up 33.6% of the population
 - The lack of housing diversity types means that there are not homes to serve people of varying needs, in particular older adults and young families

Patty suggested that in thinking about Hatfield's future, it seems important to create this space for conversation around community and social connections.

Ona Ferguson from CBI then invited attendees to share their ideas for: What could Hatfield do to improve community and social connection? Responses are summarized below:

- **Improve communication:** Residents expressed preference for a printed newsletter or independent Hatfield website over social media to Hatfield residents outside of downtown what is happening. Attendees also suggested:
 - Increase awareness of existing communication channels
 - Identify newcomers and provide a Welcome Letter from PTA, Town Administrator, etc. Potential formation of a Welcome Committee.
- **Provide reasons to gather during established events such as Town Meeting:** Conduct the Annual Town Meeting on a Saturday morning followed by a town BBQ. Older adults are hesitant to drive in the evening and follow-up BBQ is more likely to 1) engage families with children and 2) increase voter participation.
 - In other towns the Girl Scouts have been recruited to provide child care during the annual town meeting.
 - Connect with the school system to engage families.
- **Host more social/interactive events that attract and welcome diverse populations:** Participants suggested events such as block parties, reserving food trucks when the rail trail opens to provide a hangout spot for bikers, ice cream socials, and a midsummer "luminarium" type of event.
- **Establish Community Hubs where all age groups have a place to go**
 - Central recreation area that is well-maintained, currently basketball courts and baseball field are separated. Particularly to provide youth opportunities to socialize.
 - Park along the river
- **Strengthen connections with Hatfield private sector for social and economic benefits:** leverage the social and financial benefits of attracting, retaining, and growing local businesses (i.e., previous Master Plan was subsidized by a \$50,000 business grant)

- Directory of local businesses
- Hatfield used to have Ithaca Bucks/local currency – certain percent was given to charity
- **Address concerns of depopulation and community development:**
 - In the last year Hatfield lost 700 residents. Residents expressed concerns about Hatfield not meeting housing needs for current and potential residents and also identified welcoming of newcomers as an area of improvement.
 - There are paid staff positions tasked with furthering community development and the goals described above.

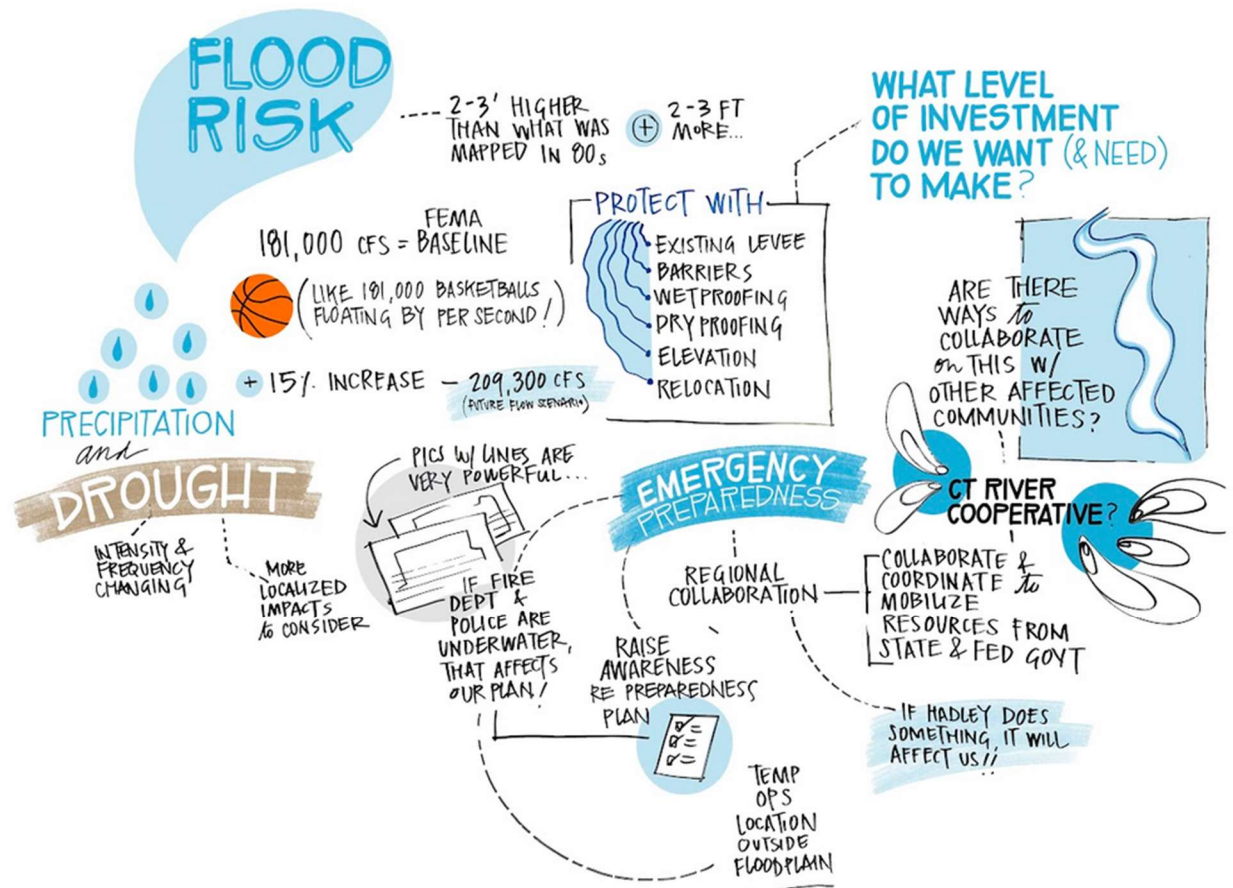


Graphic depiction showing content of conversation around enhancing community and social connections.

Conversation #2: Planning for Climate Change and Understanding Flood Risks

Rich Niles from Woodard & Curran described the current conditions for flood risk, showcased critical infrastructure as identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and reviewed an updated (current) and future flood scenarios based on changes in river flows, including flood depths and impact on critical infrastructure. In summary, what used to be the 500-year flood is now the “new or updated 100-year flood” with flood depths that are 2-3 feet higher than what was projected in flood maps from 1978 and another 2 feet increase in depth is estimated by 2100 due to increased precipitation and river flows. Mitigation efforts (such as levee, barriers, wetproofing, dry proofing, elevation changes, and relocation) must consider the protection level that can be provided and if that is the right level of investment for the community.

Attendees shared their thoughts on what they would like to see the town do considering the risks from flooding and climate change including:



Graphic depiction showing content of conversation about planning for climate change and understanding flood risks.

- **Regional collaboration:**
 - Identify other communities that have been proactive with dealing with this issue.
 - This is a huge endeavor for a small town due to lack of resources and funds. It would implicate consistent maintenance cost.
 - Town of Hadley is looking into adding a levee since their downtown is in a floodplain. It is important to consider what neighboring towns are doing because if Hadley builds a levee, it will affect the river flow and resulting floodplain in Hatfield.
 - Is there an opportunity to partner with the Connecticut River Valley Cooperative and/or learn from Resilient Mystic River's regional collaboration efforts?

- **Incorporate additional data analysis:**
 - Projections for change in the river course (flow path) in the event of a 100-year flood to assess the areas that will be affected and adjust future plans accordingly.
 - Are there projections about heat, drought, dryness?
 - Becoming more erratic, intensity and frequency are changing.
 - Leads to more localized impacts that should be considered.

- **Emergency preparedness**
 - Regional collaboration is a need for emergency preparedness.
 - Raise residential awareness about evacuation plans, which are managed by the fire department.
 - Old water department building can serve as a temporary emergency service station. Can also consider other temporary facilities or rehabbing an old building, although either option is an expensive endeavor.

- **Communicate the Issue:** Pictures with the fire department flood lines are extremely powerful. How are we supposed to rely on the fire department if it's going to be under water?

Conversation #3: Housing and Land Use

Ken Comia from PVPC described the current status of housing and land use in the town of Hatfield including the need for more affordable housing, preservation of agricultural heritage, boosting of economic development, and increased access to natural resources, open space, and recreation.

Ken shared how affordable housing is defined:

- Affordable housing is defined as at or below 80% of the area median income.
- Subsidized housing currently constitutes 3% of all homes, primarily senior housing, and consists of specific addresses filed with the executive office. Naturally occurring affordable housing does not count into this 3%.
- For towns that have less than 10% of affordable housing: developers who are going to help build affordable housing are able to bypass town regulations and go through an approval of comprehensive permits

Attendees shared what they would like to see in Hatfield with regard to housing, land use, economic development, and open space.

- **Infill programs to protect agricultural land** for 55 and over, if we can do that for younger families.
- **Make home ownership more accessible** to younger families, houses that are affordable for first time home buyers.
- **More engagement from renters** in civic processes and town boards.
- **Creative funding mechanisms:**
 - We should pursue **low-hanging fruit** - there is money within PVCV, a state match.
 - Existing **open space development program** that has only been used once. Requires preservation of half the land and you are able to develop the same amount on another parcel. Usually it costs less for the developer because the infrastructure for 5 acres is the same as 10 acres.
 - A **fundraising strategy** to meet the goals of the plan
 - We need **more financial capital** but can't continue to rely on our homeowners solely.
 - The Town should **develop a committee** that focuses on community and business development and assesses grant opportunities for every other committee
- **Rezoning of Route 5 and 10 to encourage development to come**
 - People are doing business in this area even though it is not zoned for it. Some residents would like for it to be business zoned but some residents don't want to lose their neighborhood.
 - Balance input from residents that live on Routes 5 and 10 and evaluate what further development and rezoning means for their quality of life and health
 - Can't put everything in Route 5, we have to think of other areas too.



Participants join for the conversation on Housing and Land Use.

Comments from Interactive Stations

The in-person event included eight interactive stations, providing opportunities for people to interact and/or comment on specific topics. At some stations, boxes were used to solicit input on index cards while at other stations participants could use post it notes to annotate maps or indicate preferences using sticky dots. Stations were: Station #1 - Starfish; Station #2 - Things to love; Station #3 - Climate change; Station #4 - Land use; Station #5 - Farms; Station #6 - Housing; Station #7 - Open space; Station #8 - Getting around. Following are the written comments provided at these stations by participants. Note that not all stations had written responses.

Also, brackets in this document indicate illegible comments.

Station #1 - Starfish

This station involved a series of five boxes where participants were asked short brief questions about Hatfield. One additional box asked participants for their comment on what they made of the event.

1. Start doing

- More sidewalks on the edges of town
- Land use/housing-identify target price range & % gas for the town. Set % as goals and develop incentives for that. Use [c...] rely on developers financial incentives to achieve the mix use [.ant]
- Land use/housing- consider housing for farm workers to support Ag, Hatfield needs attractive options for seasonal workers. Farms benefit from repeat workers
- REGIONAL COLLABORATION
- Protect more farmland
- Start [to] have cluster development to protect open space
- Smaller building lot sizes
- Participate in state complete streets program to get money to build sidewalks
- Be more encouraging of public participation in boards & committees
- Services for families, if you want families- support them. Before + after school programs + activities. Camps, etc. As a transplant... SO HARD to find support locally
- We have waterfront and no one would even know. Put in a beach! Invest in the boat launch! A new restaurant ON THE WATER would bring in \$\$\$ for taxes we need
- New technology
- Having town meeting on a weekend so young families can attend
- Given large % of disabled students + businesses focused on autism, prioritize disability access + training
- Increase marketing of communication channels (didn't know HOW to get information when I arrived)
- Develop a recreation Hub
- Open waterfront areas for business (e.g. restaurant) + park
- Increase business on Main Street to have more lively town center
- Build out educational opportunities across the lifespan

- Get some kind of facebook or instagram or weekly electronic newsletter for the town... there are a few but they're not maintained or curated. FD + PD are good though
- Build affordable housing

2. Keep Doing

- Encourage open space (cluster) development
- Update the Housing Production Plan
- Keep talking to evolve this town
- Events like this to raise awareness of these important topics
- Continue to be leary of spot zoning request
- Keep our school + library!!, This is our heart! With what is obviously an aging community- if we lose this... there will be no new blood
- Support public schools, protect farmland, remain farming/ ag community
- Support the schools
- Protect the local historic district
- WE LOVE the Friday concerts, school centric events, our library, fish trails
- Growing crops
- Having more kids

3. Stop doing

- Stop putting solar on farmland
- Stop building houses on good farmland. Stop putting solar on good farmland
- Do not allow uses that generate truck traffic in residential neighborhoods.
- Do not pave roads wider just make traffic go faster
- We attended our first town meeting this year. Wow- [thou] did not feel inclusive or welcoming. I don't know how to get involved or learn what's happening :(So STOP relying on word of mouth communication in town
- Pluteing
- STOP relying exclusively on volunteers to make community engagement happen. PTA, rec, ect... all volunteers and they only way we know about things.
- Pluting

4. More of:

- Protect farmers and the land, support our children and schools
- Fund a town plan to help to do all this work
- Community events
- Maintain + fortify levee
- Invite; encourage more businesses to make Hartfeild their home
- Affordable housing for young families
- Welcome new people [&] families to town to encourage diversity
- Advertise things outside of downtown. We live in west Hartfeild and feel very disconnected. How are we to know what is going on?
- Community building [&] things like community garden

- Infrastructure + staff to coordinate community engagement
- Funding the schools
- Advertise the great schools

5. Less of

- Infill housing may not be answer because people who live in town center may not want more density
- Less 55+ housing for people with fewer connections to the community
- Over 50 developments

What do you think of all this?

- Great event. Thank you for your community service. ♥
- This is great - getting input on the plan
- Thanks for this event and your efforts to get more community input

Station 3: Planning for Climate Change



Rich Niles, background, from Woodard & Curran staffs Station 3.

Rich Niles from Woodard & Curran staffed Station 3, helping attendees to understand the flood risk changes shown by more current delineations of inundation areas. Questions asked of participants at this station were as follows:

- What do you think about the flood damage and protection and adaptation measures?
- Do they seem adequate to manage flood risks, keeping in mind that they are larger, but less frequent floods?
- What are your thoughts on Town investments on flood preparedness?

Woodard & Curran will be providing a technical memo that will convey much of what transpired in the conversations at this station. Note too that there are good comments from discussion on this topic from Conversation #2 above.

Comments submitted on index cards at this station were as follows:

- We should invest in preparing for floods.
- Hatfield should cooperate with other towns regarding Connecticut river and rising floodings hazard/ levels
- Rich’s recommendations make sense. The investment should be proportionate to the risk
- Move all EMS- fire, police, ambulance to the SAME flood-safe place
- Important to maintain the dike

Station 4: Planning for Land Use and Economic Development

Planning Board Chair Stephanie Slysz staffed Station 4 where the two major questions for event participants were:
Do the priority conservation and development areas identified in 2014 still make sense?

How should we support small businesses and economic growth?

Written responses on index cards submitted at this station were as follows:

- Keep business growth balanced to all parts of Hartfield
- More businesses to make town center vibrant would be good
- Industrial development should go into the industrial park- in sites that are accessible to I91
- A lot of green on map. What can we actually develop?
- zoning changes. Grandfather 1) Do not penalize current



Planning Board Chair Stephanie Slysz, left, staffs Station 4

businesses + residents with them in 2) Businesses and commercial properties should be placed in higher traffic corridors and land that has lower agricultural land quality. High quality land should not be built upon

- Balance of residential business, high indus. Industrial
- Focus on better use of land near I91 and railroad tracks for larger companies to locate here to increase town bare of jobs!
- Support local small businesses by: - creating some promotional materials so people know what kind of goods & services they can buy locally, - talk to them to find out what they need
- Need to think/ plan for multi-family housing only building single family housing is not sustainable for the long term
- Complicated topic but importance of wetlands is increasing in time of climate instability. They protect us
- Industrial buildings going green
- We need more affordable housing not 55+, Please use cluster housing development with smaller homes

Station 5: Planning for Farms



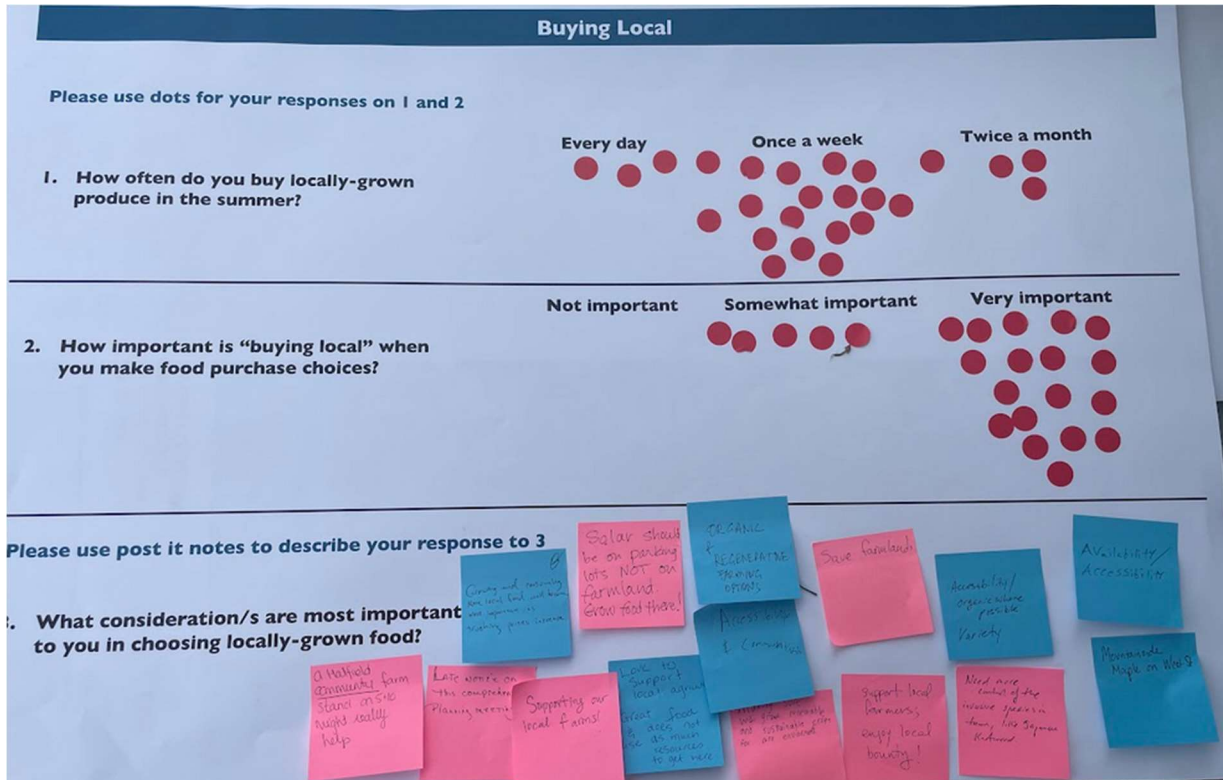
Agricultural Advisory Commission member John Pease, background, staffs Station 5.

Agricultural Advisory Commission member John Pease staffed Station 5 where participants were asked three questions:

- How often do you buy locally grown produce in summer?
- How important is “buying local” when you make food purchase choices? (

- What considerations are most important to you in choosing locally grown food? (write response on post-it note)

Responses to the first two questions are shown in the image and table below.



How often do you buy locally-grown produce in the summer?

Participants each put one dot in the cell that most appropriately represented their response.

Everyday		Once a week		Twice a month
3	2	16	1	3

How important is “buying local” when you make food purchase choices?

Participants each put one dot in the cell that most appropriately represented their response.

Not important	Somewhat Important	Very important
0	5	18

To the third question of what considerations are most important to you in choosing locally grown food, written responses were as follows:

- Mountainside maple on West St.
- Need more control of the invasive species in town, like Japanese Knotweed
- availability/ accessibility
- Accessibility/ organic where possible. Variety

- Save farmland
- Support local farmers; enjoy local bounty
- Making sure we grow renewable and sustainable crops for are environment
- Organic + regenerative farming options
- Accessibility & communication
- Solar should be on parking lots not on farmland- grow food there!
- Love to support local agriculture. Great food & does not use as much resources to get there
- Growing and consuming more local food will become more important as trucking prices increase
- Late notice on this comprehensive planning meeting
- Supporting our local farms!
- A Hatfield community farm stand 5 + 10 might really help

Station 6: Planning for Housing

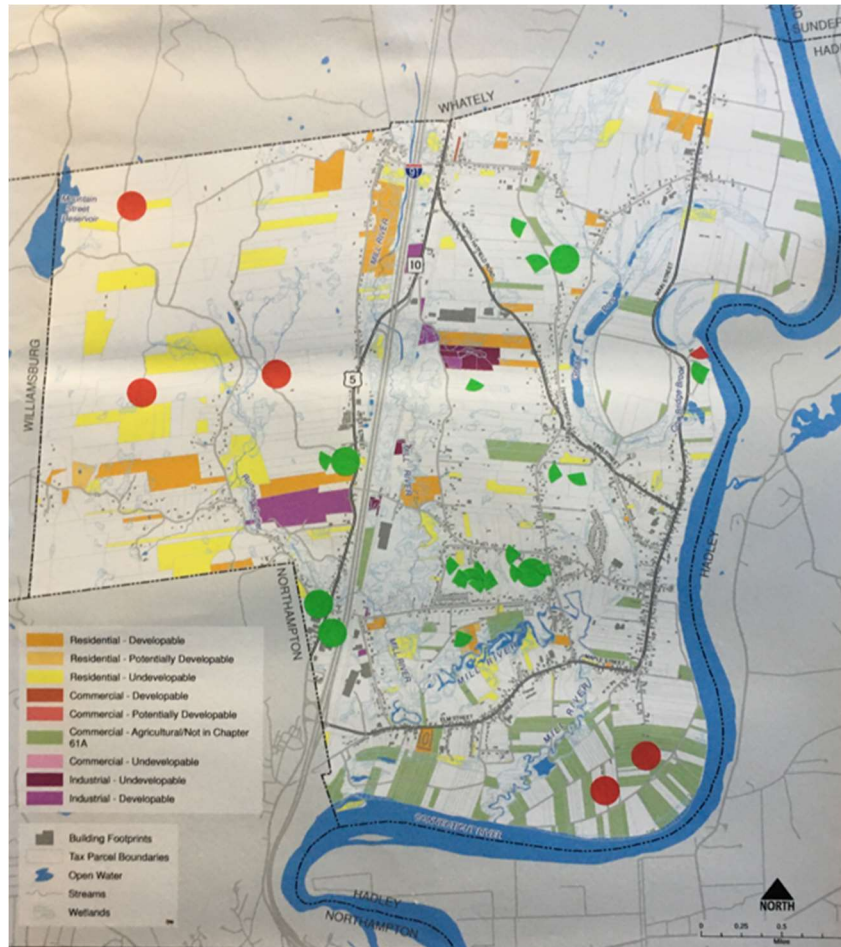
Historical Commission member Micki Sanderson staffed Station 6 where there were two questions for participants:

- Where would you support additional housing in Hatfield? (place green dot on map)
- Where would you NOT want to see housing developed and why? (place red dot on map and submit comment on post-it note).



Historical Commission member Micki Sanderson, middle, staffs Station 6.

The map below on development potential of vacant lands shows where participants indicated they would support (green dots) and would not support (red dots) additional housing in Hatfield.



Following are comments from Station 6 based on question of where would you NOT want to see housing developed and why?

- As long as it is done in an appropriate way environmentally sensitive! For the right particular location I think we need more housing & more people & diversity
- Need multi-family housing near transit and near sight family housing
- Let's look at landlocked farming parcels for limited development with increased density
- Smaller lots with open space. Affordable housing especially for families
- Create an ADU for Hartfield (plan 1)
- Assessors support tax for owner-occupied homes.

Station 7: Planning for Open Space and Natural Resources

Chair of the Open Space and Recreation Committee Richard Abbott staffed Station 7 where participants were asked to show what was most important to them from the priority recommended actions published in the recently completed Open Space and Recreation Plan. Participants could place up to three sticky dots in their voting. The following table shows list of actions and tally of votes for each.

Priority Actions from Open Space and Recreation Plan	Votes received
Goal A Continue promotion of farmland protection by meeting with farmers	11
Goal B Continue promotion of farmland protection by meeting with farmers	6
Goal C Advocate for the preservation of the Mill River dam to maintain the wetlands upland of the Mill River	3
Goal D Review zoning to ensure drinking water supply has adequate protection	10
Review zone A, B, and 2 maps and prioritize lands for protection	0
Acquire land or purchase development within zone A, B areas	0
Prioritize and acquire land within the Town well's zone 2 area	3
Goal E Contract with forest management consultant to combat invasive plants on Horse Mountain	5
Expand recently established trail system to other woodland areas of town owned land	5
Goal F Continue trail building	2
Promote increased use of trails by posting maps on town website, printing maps to be available at town hall, and improve trail signage	9
Goal G Construct a pavilion in the newly renovated Smith Academy Park	4
Construct tennis and pickleball courts on town owned land	3
Create multi use pathway connecting Hatfield to Northampton	7
Improve Day Pond by dredging and creating walkway access	3
Complete construction of Smith Academy recreational walkway	1



Chair of the Open Space and Recreation Committee Richard Abbott, left, staffs Station 7

Station 8: Transportation

Jeff McCullough from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission staffed Station 8 where people were asked three questions:

- Where are your favorite places to walk? Is there a sidewalk there?
- Where would you like more sidewalks or hiking trails?
- Are there places you'd like to see a bus stop?

In responding, people could mark up the map and leave post it notes. Two maps were updated with input from participants, a map showing sidewalks in Hatfield and a map showing bus stops. Written post it notes had the following comments:

- Sidewalk on North Hartfield Rd.
- Don't pave roads wider. We need to slow traffic down
- Bus service to center of Town with stops at locations where multi family housing and beforehand
- More sidewalks
- Sidewalks on the West. St. of Depot Rd.

- Bus stop down-town to grocery/ doctors etc.- help those unable to drive
- Hartfield is great place to walk
- Extensive of PVTA [semi] from Northayton a few there a day
- Too much traffic coming to town Elm St. too many trailer trucks!
- Sidewalks/ bike path up depot + the “S’s”
- Maintain what we have
- Bus stop at Depot Road
- Speed limit review + enforcement to promote walking on roads without sidewalks
- More sidewalks
- Sidewalks needed on West St.
- Depot Road Upper Main St.
- Fixing and redoing King St. sidewalks
- “On demand” bus service like the CORTA Hers in remote areas of Cape Cod
- “The Block”
- Extend FRTA Access Program into Hartfield
- FRTA/PVTA bus route along Main St.



Jeff McCullough, right, from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission staffs Station 8.



Several other fun interactive elements at the June 10th event included a poetry board where people could put words together about Hatfield. Another involved a portrait board where attendees could take their own photos on an instamatic camera and post their photos on a board and a Hatfield Future Hotline where people could use their cell phone to call and leave a message about their hopes and dreams for Hatfield in 2040.