

PLAISTOW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2022/2023 SURVEY – SUMMARY REPORT

DRAFT January 2023

The Plaistow Planning Board, is updating the economic development components of the Plaistow Master Plan as required under state law (RSA 674). The issuance of this survey and review of the survey results is the first step in the Master Plan update process.

RESULTS

Between October 25, 2022 and January 7, 2023 a total of 251 individuals took the survey and provided 10,476 responses or comments. The survey was an online survey with paper copies available at multiple locations around town. The survey link was posted on the Town website, social media, announcements at multiple municipal board meetings, and the library's social media. This survey is neither statistically nor scientifically valid, however, it does represent the most up-to-date insight into the needs and wants of Plaistow residents in regards to economic development.

The survey was intended primarily for residents, however, individuals who own property or business in Plaistow were also invited to provide their thoughts. Of the responses received, 46% have lived in Plaistow for 20 years or more, 18% have lived in Plaistow for 5 years or less, and 4% own a business in Plaistow. 68% of participants were between the ages of 35 and 64.

The full survey results are available at <https://publicinput.com/plaistowsurvey2022> and on the Plaistow Planning Board website at <https://www.plaistow.com/planning-board/pages/2022-economic-development-survey>.

NEXT STEPS

The Plaistow Planning Board is working on drafting updates to the Master Plan, beginning with evaluating the economic development sections of the master plan. **Any updates to the Plaistow Master Plan will require a public hearing prior to Planning Board adoption in accordance with RSA 674:1-4.**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Several major themes emerged from survey responses:

- **Increase in varied commercial businesses.** Throughout the survey, a common theme of supporting increase in diversity of business, particularly along the Rt. 125 corridor and the village. Types of businesses mentioned included restaurants, clothing shops, entertainment, manufacturing, and technology businesses, among others. There is general consensus among survey respondents that there are enough auto-related and medical emergency businesses in town and that respondents would like to see additional small businesses.
- **Concern about safety of streets, including traffic speeds, congestion, road noise, and walkability.** Survey respondents mentioned in multiple areas a need for reduction of traffic speeds, truck traffic, road noise, and a desire for sidewalks in certain areas of town to allow for safer pedestrian accessibility.
- **Housing is a challenge facing Plaistow.** Many expressed concerns over both the affordability of housing in Plaistow and the concern over lack of available land for additional housing development. Many survey respondents identified that they would not like to see higher density housing developed in town and that they do not believe there is much developable land remaining available for housing.

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Q3 - IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES IN PLAISTOW?

Top answers:

- 82% of respondents said that providing better town services for residents was Important or Very Important.
- 78% said that attracting non-residents to support business in town was Important or Very Important.
- 75% said that creating more jobs in town was Important or Very Important.

The following comments associated with Question 3 received the most support among participants:

- "Would like to see Plaistow remain the small town that it is with a wonderful country feel. Helping to keep our small business and farms to continue working." (45 Agrees)
- "Feel it is very important to maintain the village feel in town center out of respect to the elderly who have spent so many years enjoying this town. I also feel that we need to show the same respect to our younger generation and keep up w the times of progress. Never want to fall behind, hopefully our younger generation can help change the world and make a difference." (25 Agrees)
- Plaistow is in the unfortunate position that it's residential population is very small compared to the commercial burden on the town. That combined with the fact that we are a motoring "gateway" community and the fact the state makes it difficult to collect the true tax value of commercial property makes more commercial development hard to support. That being said I do not want 125 to turn into a commercial wasteland because it is outdated. Commercial needs and desires are changing and I would like to see existing local regulations changed to help the new style of development investors and residents are looking for looking." (19 Agrees)

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Q4 - THE TOWN SHOULD PURSUE **MORE** OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING?

Agreed

- Protected Open Space = 81% Agreed
- Conservation Efforts = 79% Agreed
- Farms/Farm Related Business = 71% Agreed
- Recreational Trails = 70% Agreed
- Small Retail Stores = 66% Agreed

Disagreed

- Automotive Repairs/Sales = 82% Disagreed
- Fast Food Restaurants (drive-through) = 75% Disagreed
- Large Retail Stores (box stores) = 62% Disagreed
- Wholesale Distribution/Warehousing = 62% Disagreed
- Health & Medical Services/Facilities = 58% Disagreed

The following comments associated with Question 4 received the most support among participants:

- "PLEASE ADD SIDEWALKS! Walking and bike riding is all but impossible on most Plaistow roads if you value your life." (27 Agrees)
- "Better restaurants and more entertainment options would be wonderful." (27 Agrees)
- "If adding rental housing, then mixed use development, with housing plus walkable shops and restaurants." (27 Agrees)
- "Take ownership of Main St to restrict weight limits of trucks/tractor trailers." (18 Agrees)
- "protect plaistow town forest" (17 Agrees)

Q5 - THE TOWN SHOULD PURSUE MORE OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING HOUSING TYPES:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Single family houses	38% Agree	35% Neutral	27% Disagree
Duplexes (2 units)	24% Agree	29% Neutral	47% Disagree
Multi-family homes (3 or more units)	18% Agree	22% Neutral	59% Disagree

- 59% of respondents Disagreed that the town should pursue more multi-family homes
- 47% of respondents Disagreed that the town should pursue more duplexes

The following comments associated with Question 5 received the most support among participants:

- "The law of mathematics, there is a finite amount of land available. Stop the building. It overwhelms our traffic, requires more public employees and it causes the loss of the once rural town feeling." (18 Agrees)
- "If 3 family or larger units start to become the norm the town will definitely lose its charm and feel. Along with other aspect that will effect those who live here in a negative way." (17 Agrees)
- "Some of our guidelines have made housing development so expensive, our children can't afford to live in the town they grew up in" (11 Agrees)

Q6 – HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF THE TOWN?

Very Satisfied or Satisfied

- Appearance of business signs = 34%
- Traffic speed and volume on local roads = 32%
- Types of development on Route 108 = 32%
- Types of development on Route 121A = 30%
- Traffic speed and volume on state roads = 29%
- Control of road noise = 21%
- Types of development on Route 125 = 17%

Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

- Types of development on Route 125 = 61%
- Traffic speed and volume on state roads = 59%
- Control of road noise = 53%
- Traffic speed and volume on local roads = 52%
- Types of development on Route 121A = 31%
- Appearance of business signs = 24%
- Types of development on Route 108 = 20%

The following comments associated with Question 6 received the most support among participants:

- “The speed limits on many of the heavily traveled roads is not enforced enough. People use Main st to avoid 125 with all its stop lights and traffic. In turn those of us who live on Main deal with lots of traffic, speeding, cars and motorcycles revving their engines or even racing. It takes away from the enjoyment of living on such a nice street and the enjoyment of being outside.” (12 Agrees)
- “I like the fact that the speed limit on most roads is 30MPH. Though North Ave is used as a cut through from Haverhill to avoid 125 and can get quite busy and a lot of vehicles go over the speed limit. I believe that 125 is getting very congested with large stores and I don't think we need anymore large businesses. We are a border Town and I would hate to see us go the way that Methuen has, we need to preserve our small town feel.” (12 Agrees)
- “121A constantly has loud vehicles and speeders inconsiderately revving engines. This noise echos back and keeps residents up at night, including myself and my child.” (12 Agrees)

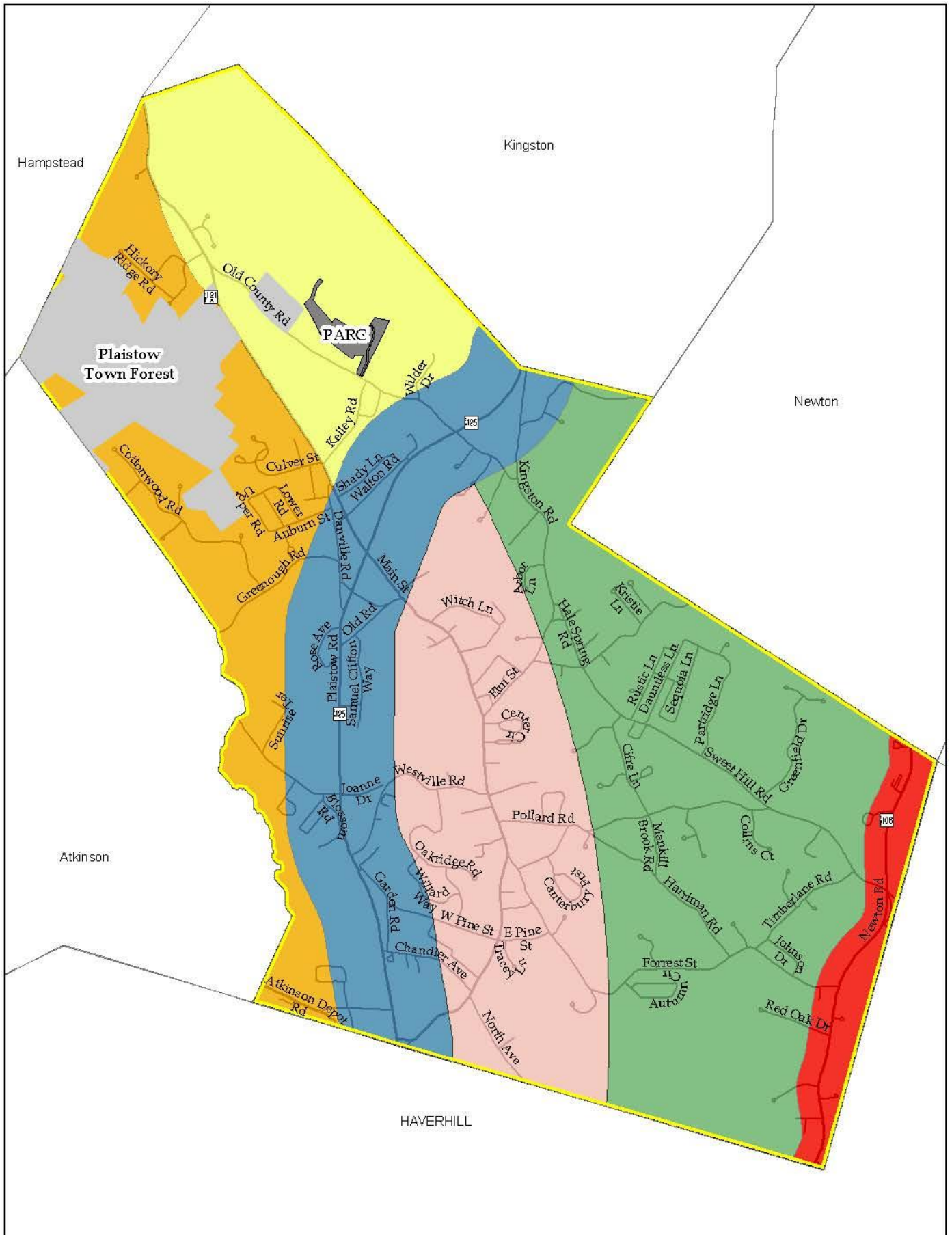
Q7 – INDICATE YOUR OPINION REGARDING GREATER DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF TOWN:

- There are no areas in Town in which more than 9% of respondents Strongly Agreed that greater development should occur.
- 67% of respondents Disagree or Strongly Disagree that greater development should occur in the Pink area.
- 65% of respondents Disagree or Strongly Disagree that greater development should occur in the Green area.
- 57% of respondents Disagree or Strongly Disagree that greater development should occur in the Orange area.
- 55% of respondents Disagree or Strongly Disagree that greater development should occur in the Yellow area.

The following comments associated with Question 7 received the most support among participants:

- “Stop the development and manage what we have.” (25 Agrees)
- “Somehow to cut down on automotive type business. Especially used cars.” (11 Agrees)

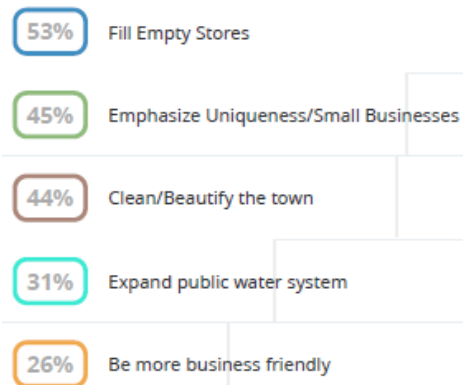
Section	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Yellow	7%	15%	23%	28%	27%
Orange	4%	14%	25%	31%	26%
Blue	9%	22%	22%	23%	23%
Pink	5%	7%	21%	33%	34%
Green	3%	9%	24%	29%	36%
Red	6%	19%	26%	24%	25%



Q8 – WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THE TOWN CAN DO TO BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE TO PROSPECTIVE BUSINESS OWNERS?

The following comments associated with Question 8 received the most support among participants:

- “Think we have enough big box stores and storage units. Support the local businesses” (10 Agrees)
- “Work with Haverhill to improve the access from 125. Expand the restaurant options and get the town water going.” (9 Agrees)



Q9 – INDICATE YOUR OPINION REGARDING THE EXPANSION OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN TOWN:

Infrastructure	Not Needed	Might Needed	be	Definitely Needed	No Opinion
Sidewalks	9%	22%		67%	2%
Crosswalks at critical areas	6%	28%		65%	1%
Public Water	14%	37%		41%	8%
Public Sewer	26%	36%		31%	7%
Natural Gas	17%	30%		34%	20%
Public Transportation	34%	34%		22%	9%

- 67% of respondents stated that sidewalks are Definitely Needed.
- 65% of respondents stated that crosswalks at critical areas are Definitely Needed.

The following comments associated with Question 9 received the most support among participants:

- “Sidewalks and safe crosswalks would greatly increase many people's ability to get around town without the need for a vehicle. Connect already existing sidewalks to the main sidewalk of 125 and make more and safe crosswalks. Improve the safety of the library crosswalks.” (15 Agrees)

Q12 – IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE STAY THE SAME, IMPROVE, OR CHANGE IN PLAISTOW?

The following comments associated with Question 12 received the most support among participants:

- “Stop taxing the homeowner and use 125 for what it was intended, to ease the burden on residents.” (23 Agrees)
- “Bring in tax revenue and relieve pressure off home owners.” (14 Agrees)
- “Compare Plaistow today to 20+ years ago. Has all the development made Plaistow a better place to live. I would suggest no.” (8 Agrees)

The Plaistow Economic Development Survey and summary report were developed by the Plaistow Planning Board, with assistance from Rockingham Planning Commission.