

Town of Hyde Park  
Retrofitting Hyde Park's Town Center  
NYSERDA Cleaner, Greener Communities (CGC) Program Phase II, Category 2  
CGC41658/Contract # 60265

Final Existing Conditions Summary Report

Attachment: Open House and Online Survey Summary

(see following pages)

# Revitalizing Hyde Park's Town Center

Public Input Summary (Open House & Online Survey)

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## Open House Input

### Executive Summary

Approximately 100 people participated in the Hyde Park Town Center Plan Open House on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Participants shared their ideas on a variety of topics including retail, housing, recreation, design, arts, and others. Overall, the feedback from the Open House indicates a strong dislike with the current study area and a desire to create a unique Town Center that is pedestrian friendly and features a variety of businesses including restaurants, specialty food stores, and small shops mixed with different housing options and community uses such as outdoor event, farmers market space. Participants expressed a vision for a Town Center that is unique, reflective of the area's history, family-friendly, well-designed, and attractive to both residents and visitors to the area.

### Likes & Dislikes Now

Participants were asked what they like and dislike about the current study area. Participants strongly dislike the current condition of the study area and the majority of negative comments focused on the abandoned building as well as the overall lack of visual appeal. Many comments expressed a sentiment of "lacking" and "emptiness" especially with respect to businesses. Another common theme was the lack of pedestrian friendliness in the area and no sense of place. Comments on liking the existing area were far fewer and many focused on areas outside of the study area although some like the current shops available now.

### Vision

Using 3-5 words, participants were asked to express their vision for the future of the Town Center. One of the most persistent themes was the idea of a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly town center (i.e., one that is "walkable"). There were also a significant portion of comments focused on creating a community identity and a sense of place and destination. Though expressed in several ways, specific comments included incorporating historical elements and adding community uses such as parks, recreation center, and other gathering places. Many also expressed a vision for a Town Center with a diversity of businesses – especially restaurants and shops.

Some common keywords include: *walkable, retail, family-friendly, community, historic, restaurants, shops, farmers market, parks, art*

### Retail and Business

Residents were asked about what businesses they would like to see in the Town Center and how they would like commercial development to look. The overwhelming priority among participants was for a new (small) grocery store in the Town Center with specific brands such as Trader Joes, Shop Rite, and Adams being mentioned often. Another priority theme was the desire for restaurants, specifically including cafes, coffee shops, delis, brew pubs, and restaurants with outdoor dining. Several comments

emphasized local and fresh foods. Both family friendly and upscale dining was mentioned. Many participants also expressed a desire for specialty food stores. Bakeries, tea rooms, butcher, produce store, meat and fish market, and cupcake shop were among those specifically mentioned.

Few participants expressed a need for any other types of retail. A clothing store and a bicycle shop were the only the other retail desires expressed, aside from “more stores and shops” generally.

Overall, participants were largely in favor of new commercial development but expressed a strong desire for smaller scale boutique retail rather than larger format uses. The vast majority of participants expressed a desire for “Main St” style retail that is walkable versus strip-mall style retail. Similarly, a large proportion of participants prefer “mixed-use” style commercial development with ground floor retail uses and housing above. There was virtually no preference given to professional office building use.

## Housing

Housing, as a future use, saw strong support from participants with 33 out of 40 respondents (83%) indicating support for housing (or support conditional on the type). Two types of housing were the overwhelming choice – apartments over retail (mixed-use) and live/work loft style apartments. An Age 55+ Community and townhouses had some support. Apartment complexes and buildings had the least support.

While the Age 55-plus community concept received only moderate support in the dot census, comments indicated that support for senior apartments and age 55-plus housing may be greater. Several comments indicated support for senior housing that is more upscale in nature and mixed with a rich set of amenities including gardens, trails, and in an overall pedestrian-friendly setting.

Affordable housing was recognized as a need, but many comments expressed a dislike for the existing concentration of Section 8 housing currently in the community. Many comments indicated support for “nice” or “upscale” housing units.

## Tourism

Participants were asked to indicate their support for certain types of tourism-uses in the Town Center. The top ranked uses included (in order of support):

- Outdoor Event Space
- Expanded Farmer’s Market
- Outdoor Dining
- Small Retail Shops

Tourism uses in generally saw strong support with a substantial number indicating interest also in a visitor’s center, trolley, and fine-dining. Comments regarding tourism were mostly focused on events such as an annual festival, a winter festival, or art events.



## Arts/Cultural/Recreation/Community

This category saw the greatest response rate compared to private sector uses in the study area. Generally, participants see a an unmet need in the community for additional recreation. For the Town Center Plan, a community or recreation center was suggested frequently and as a place for seniors, teens, and/or children. The need for youth activities and spaces was one of the most frequently mentioned need with the adjacent Pine Woods Park being seen as woefully inadequate.

Public open spaces such as park/green space, public plaza, event space, band stand, and dog park were all mentioned multiple times as desired uses. Related to public open spaces, participants expressed a desire for the area to be walkable and bikeable with trail and other connections throughout the study area and to areas outside of the study area (discussed under Design).

History and arts were also a common theme with many wishing to see public art in the Town Center including sculptures, murals, and art-related events.

## Design & Connections

Overall, participants expressed a desire for a pedestrian-scale, mixed-use town center. Single-use commercial buildings were seen much less favorably compared to mixed-use style buildings with ground floor retail and housing above.

Participants were asked to respond to pairings of photos illustrating different design approaches. Participants responded positively to the two architectural styles shown – one modern and one more “village” looking. Several open house participants expressed a desire for a “historic look” for the town center.

Participants had a strong dislike of traditional parking lots in front of existing buildings, and were split close to even on having parking in front but with a landscape buffer. Participants seemed to strongly prefer smaller, perimeter parking lots.

Participants also desired connections to and from the Town Center. A pedestrian connection to Pine Woods park to the north of the study area was a popular suggestion. Several participants also desired a connection to the river. Safer connections across Route 9 were also desired by some, including adding crosswalks – especially in front of Park plaza at Rogers Place.

## Creative & Open Thinking (miscellaneous)

Participants were asked to provide comments on anything else that was not otherwise covered. Common topics included:

- The need to improve Pine Woods Park
- Sustainability and green practices including adding green infrastructure and solar elements
- Adding parks and art elements
- Amtrak connection/Metro North expansion
- Other miscellaneous comments (see next section)

### From the Kids

Several children came to the event and shared their ideas at the kids station. The ideas included places for kids such as parks, picnic areas, go-karts, and sports. Other ideas aligned with those of their adult counterparts including doing something about the abandoned buildings, adding flowers (landscaping), and a dog park.

# Survey Input

An online survey was developed to collect additional public input. A total of 123 individual survey responses were received.

The following survey questions were asked:

- 1) What do you like about the current Town Center Study Area?
- 2) What do you dislike about the current Town Center Study Area?
- 3) Please give us 3-5 words that describe what the Town Center should be in the future
- 4) Should housing be part of the Town Center Plan?
- 5) If housing is part of the plan, do you have a preference in the type of housing?
- 6) What types of retail and businesses would you like to see in the town center?
- 7) Do you have a preference for the type and design of commercial uses?
- 8) What tourism-oriented uses would you most like to see in the town center?
- 9) What arts/culture/recreation/community uses would you most like to see in the town center?
- 10) Is there anything else that you want to share with us as we develop plans for the future of Hyde Park's town center?

Results for each of the questions are summarized below

## 1. What do you like about the current Town Center Study Area? (80 responses)

This was an open ended question with the ability to write in answers. Several common themes emerged from responses including:

- Historic buildings and stone walls that remain in the area
- Landscaping that has been done in the past
- Presence of sidewalks
- Existing businesses
- Good location and proximity to neighborhoods
- Signage is minimal
- Many "not much" responses

## 2. What do you dislike about the current Town Center Study Area? (71 responses)

Similar to the above, this was an open ended question with several common themes:

- Empty and unattractive buildings/vacant space
- Lack of restaurants and retail businesses
- Poor road conditions
- Lack of destination/sense of place/charm

- Lack of grocery store
- Lack of landscaping/pedestrian friendliness

### 3. Please give us 3-5 words that describe what the Town Center should be in the future. (87 responses)

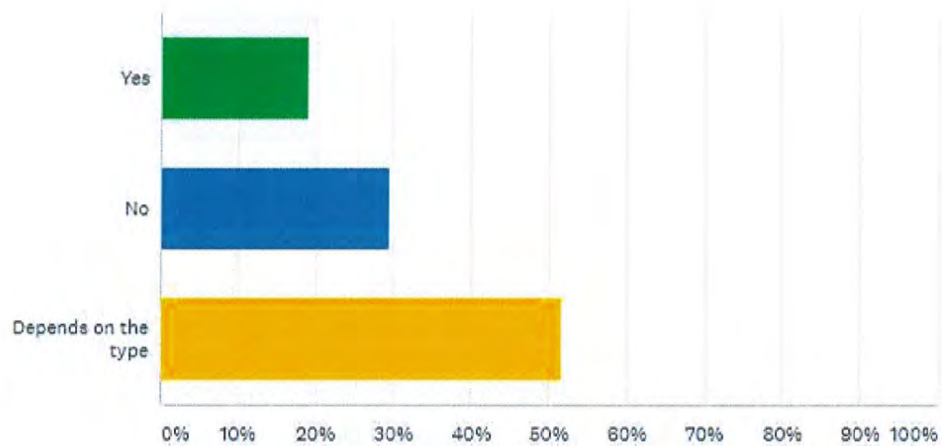
The most common words included:

- Walkable/Pedestrian-friendly
- Vibrant/alive/thriving
- Attractive/Beautiful
- Welcoming
- Quaint/Charm(ing)/Classy
- Green/trees
- Historic
- Family-Friendly
- Business
- Accessible
- Like Rhinebeck
- Clean
- Modern/Contemporary
- Restaurants/eateries
- Shopping
- Tourism/Tourist-friendly
- Fun

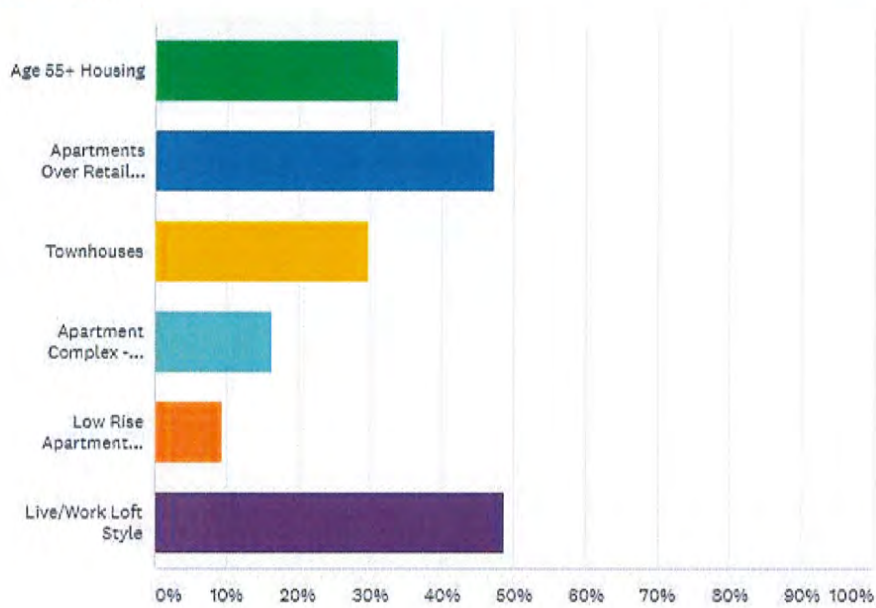
### 4. Should Housing be part of the Town Center Plan (95 responses)

70% indicated support or conditional support for housing based on the type of housing that would be on the site.





5. If housing is part of the plan, do you have a preference in the type of housing (74 responses)



| ANSWER CHOICES                       | RESPONSES |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| ▼ Age 55+ Housing                    | 33.78%    |
| ▼ Apartments Over Retail (Mixed-Use) | 47.30%    |
| ▼ Townhouses                         | 29.73%    |
| ▼ Apartment Complex - Garden Style   | 16.22%    |
| ▼ Low Rise Apartment Building        | 9.46%     |
| ▼ Live/Work Loft Style               | 48.65%    |



6. What types of retail and businesses would you like to see in the town center? (86 responses)

The most common answers to this question included:

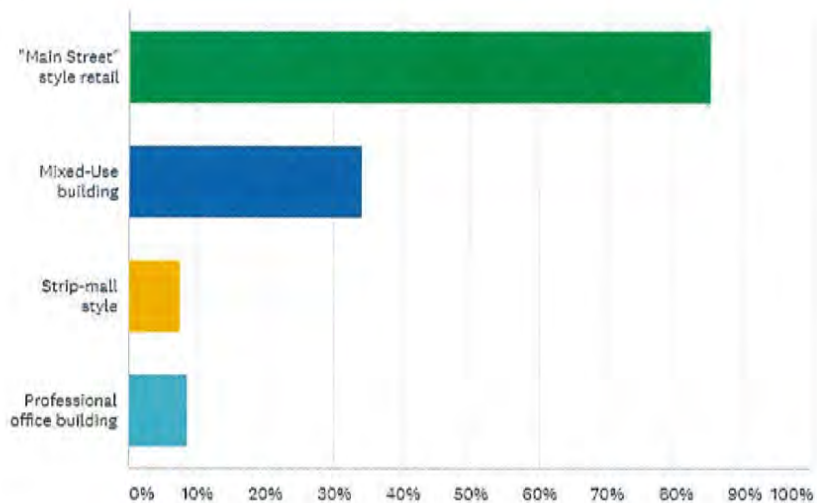
- Restaurants with specific mentions of:
  - Outdoor seating
  - Upscale
  - Cafes/coffee shops
- Specialty Food Stores with specific mentions of:
  - Bakery
- Grocery Store (Aldi, Trader Joes)
- Small shops
- Clothing store
- Bike shop
- Antiques
- Small businesses/boutiques
- Gifts

7. Do you have a preference for the type and design of commercial uses? (94 responses)

“Main Street” style retail was the overwhelming favorite followed by mixed-use buildings.

Do you have a preference for the type and design of commercial uses?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 6

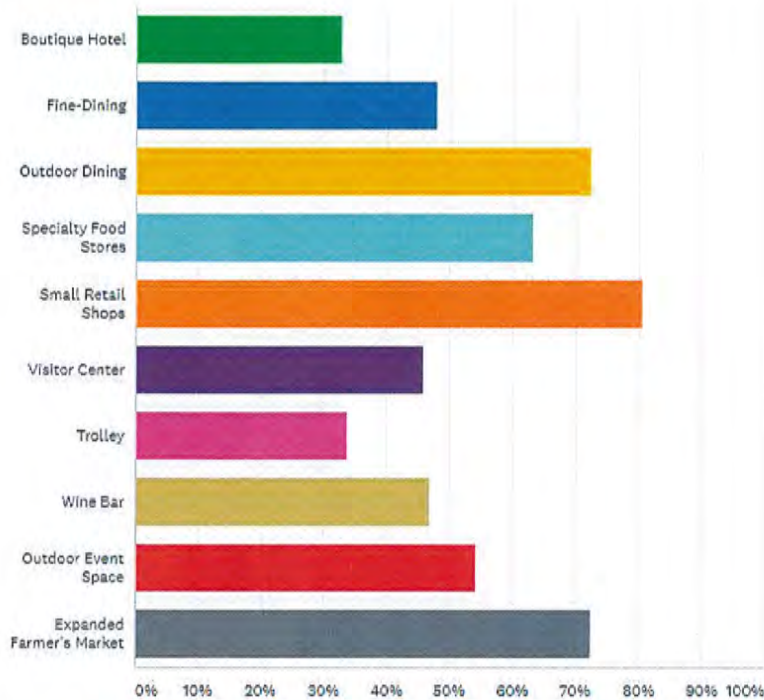


8. What tourism-oriented uses would you most like to see in the town center? (98 responses)

The top 3 responses were small retail shops (first), outdoor dining (tied for second), and expanded farmer's market (tied for second).

What tourism-oriented uses would you most like to see in the town center?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 2

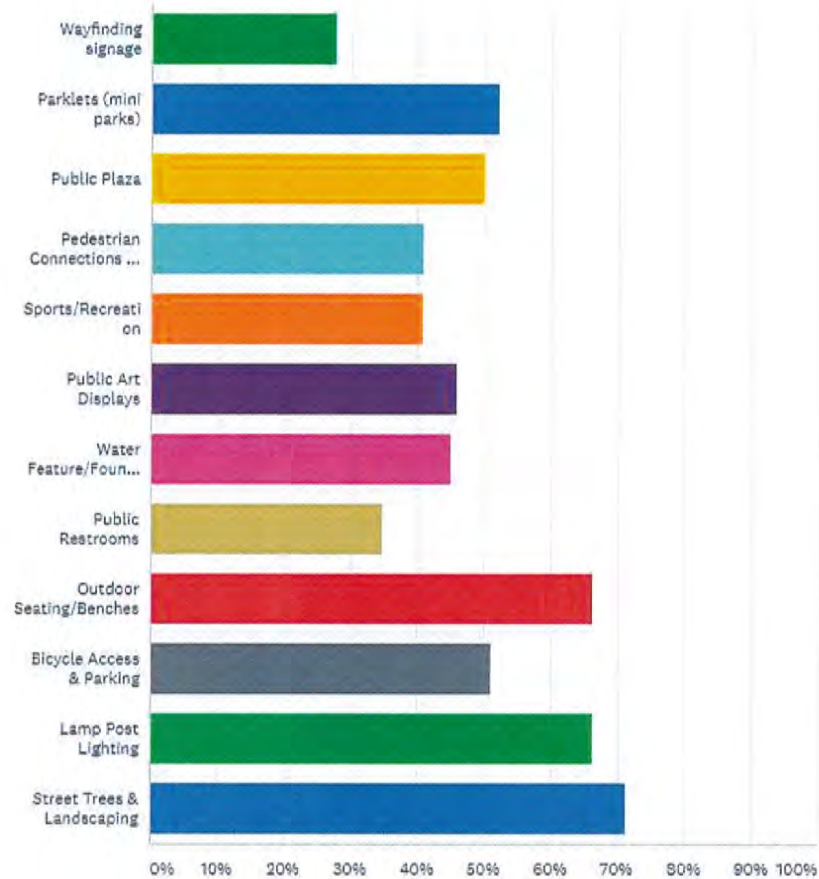


9. What arts/culture/recreation/community uses would you most like to see in the town center? (98 responses)

The top answer was street trees and landscaping followed by outdoor seating/benches and lamp post lighting, respectively.

## What arts/culture/recreation/community uses would you most like to see in the town center?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 2



### 10. Is there anything else that you want to share with us as we develop plans for the future of Hyde Park's town center? (55 responses)

This question was a write-in questions to gather any additional input that was not covered in the previous questions. Answers varied widely, but there were several responses that were provided by multiple respondents. These included:

- Need to provide sewer service to accommodate/attract the desired types of uses
- Preference for small/locally owned business versus chain/larger retailers
- Desire for a dog park