



Town of Harrison Comprehensive Plan Public Workshop Analysis

Prepared by the Greater Portland Council of Governments

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Introduction

The first community workshop for the Harrison Comprehensive plan took place on Saturday April 11, 2026 at the Harrison fire station community room and aimed to receive input from the community on how and where the town should grow and how to address housing needs in Harrison. Around 68 community members attended the event and participated in 5 activities: a residential visual preference survey, residential and commercial growth mapping activities, and a town investment prioritization activity, and a vision statement activity.


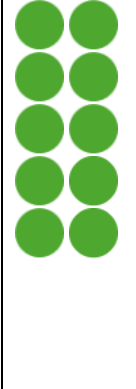

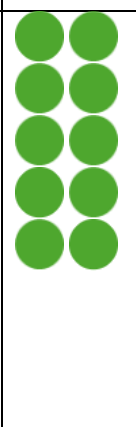

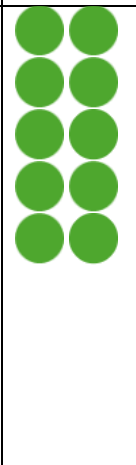
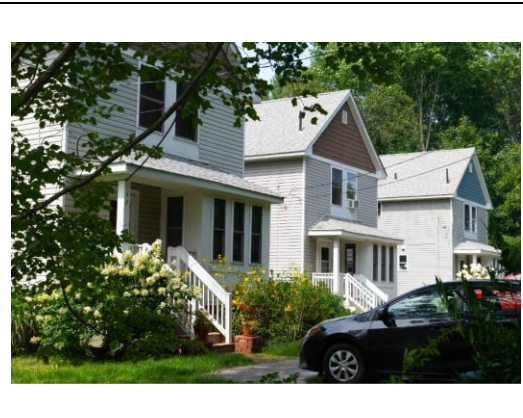
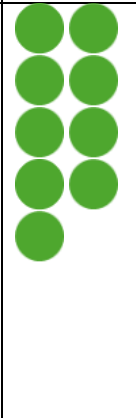

Residential Visual Preference Survey

The visual preference survey allowed community members to visually identify types of residential development they would like to see or not like to see in Harrison. Participants generally prefer housing development that maintains the style of a small New England town while increasing the affordability and slight density of housing in certain areas while preserving open space in others.

Positive Opinions on Housing

Picture	# Likes	# Dislikes	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nice look for a duplex and affordable housing.” • “Yes, livable space for families.” • “Great community feel.”

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Protect farmland and open space.” • “Harrison has a rich farming and equestrian history.”
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Like it; small, efficient.” • “Affordable. Shouldn’t have a whole acre, though.”
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Modest and attractive.” • “Nice, economical, efficient.” • “Smaller, more affordable homes for younger couples”
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nice little neighborhood and able to help your neighbors when needed!” • “Only in village.”

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Participants valued Harrison's rural character, favoring both photos of farmland/undeveloped land and of slightly denser residential development styles that prevent sprawl and allow for conservation of land elsewhere. Participants favored smaller single-family homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and modest duplexes/multifamily homes, highlighting their values of affordability and conservation. Participants favored development styles that, while denser, still incorporate yards and access to nature.

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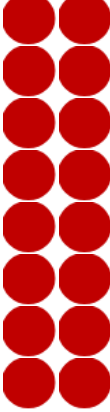

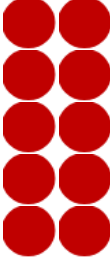


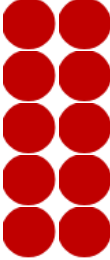
Mixed Opinions on Housing

Picture	# Likes	# Dis-likes	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lots of room” • “Great. Okay with duplexes too!” • “This is NOT rural. Its bloated suburbs. Spread out. Waste of wildlands.”
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like it. Just would not live there. “ • “Appropriate for certain settings” • “Suburbia” • “Cookie cutter McMansion”

The two photos that received the most mixed reactions were an aerial image of large spread-out single-family homes with large yards, and a photo of a large single-family home. Some participants appreciated the larger lot size in the aerial image, while others found it sprawling and contrary to their values of conservation. While some participants thought that the large single-family home would be appropriate in Harrison, others expressed concern at the “cookie-cutter” style of the home, a theme that was present in comments on other photos as well.

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Negative Opinions on Housing

Picture	# Likes	Number of Dislikes	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Not a good use of land.” • “Too dense.” • “Looks like “little boxes on a hillside” - too much. Too close together.” • “If subdivisions could be coupled with open, shared space, this might not be so bad.”
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cookie-cutter housing. Generic and sterile. Thumbs down.” • “Too large and clustered” • Too dense.”
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There is a need in the community/ school for this type of affordable housing.” • “No, too dense.” • “Not for Harrison.”

Participants opposed large single-family homes and single-family development with no tree buffers. They disliked suburban development with no housing diversity. Most were opposed to mobile home communities, although some pointed out a need for affordable housing.

Residential Growth Mapping

Participants had the opportunity to show where they would like residential growth to occur in Harrison by placing stickers on a map where they want to see growth and where they do not want growth. Participants could specify the type of growth they would like to see ranging from most dense (1) to least dense (3) using the images below as reference:



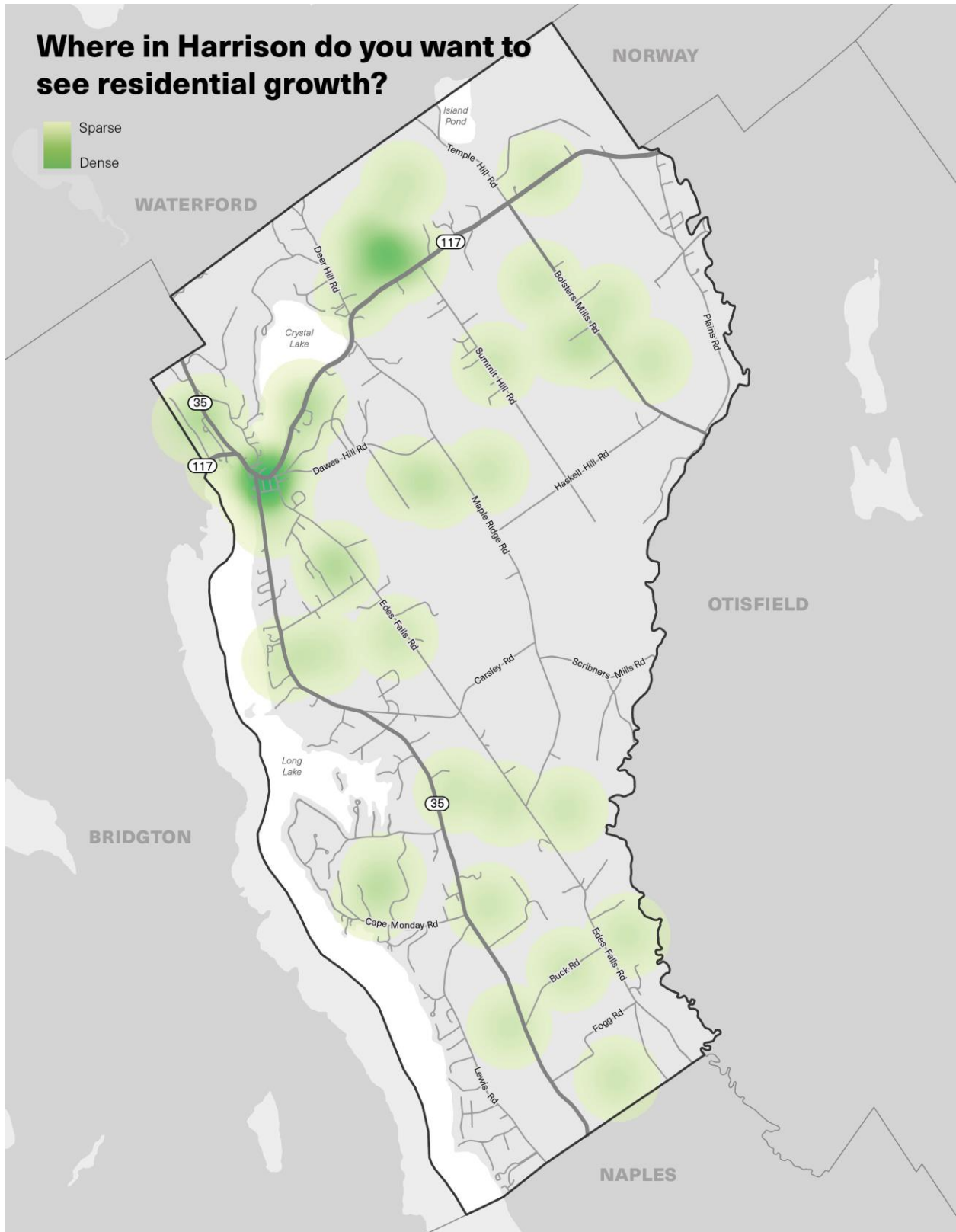
1) *Most dense – multifamily*

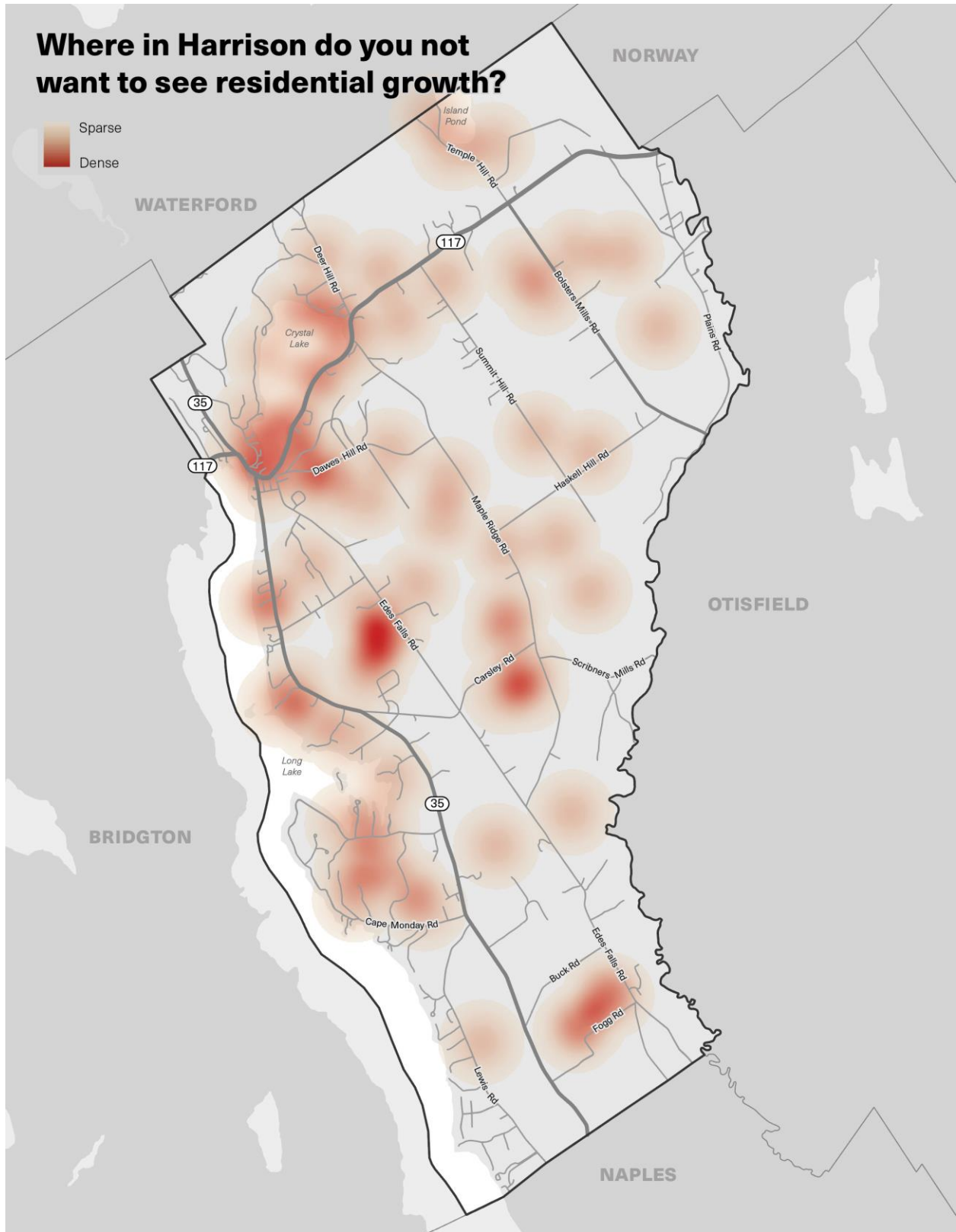


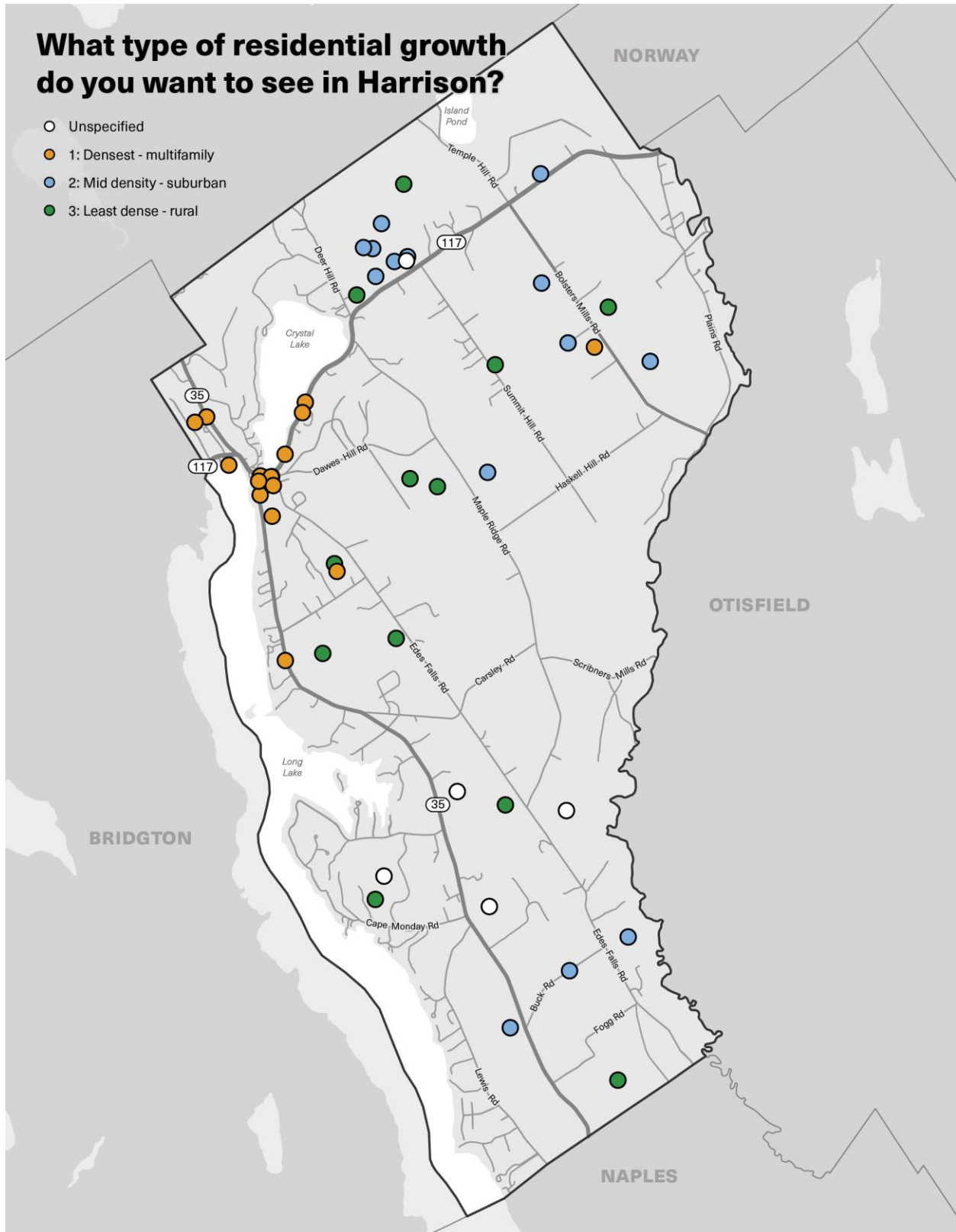
2) *Mid density - suburban*



3) *Least dense – rural*





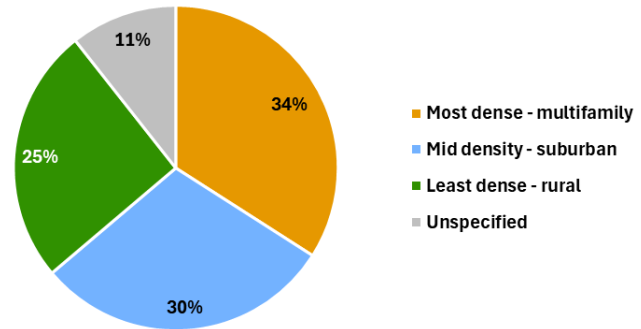


Participants were divided on where they would like residential growth to occur in Harrison, with significant overlap of the growth and non-growth areas. Around 40% of the 117 points

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identified in the residential mapping activity were growth areas. Potential growth areas were spread throughout the town with slightly more clustered around major roads (Rt 35, Rt 117, Bolsters Mills Rd).

Participants were drawn to all 3 types of residential development (high density, mid density and low density). Denser multifamily housing was slightly more popular than the other development types and preferred in the village center. Elsewhere, participants would like to see a mixture of mid-density and low-density residential development.



These development types were spread relatively evenly throughout the town, except for a cluster on the north side of Rt 117 between Deer Hill Rd and Summit Hill Rd, where participants said they would primarily like to see mid density (type 2) growth.

Around 60% of the points identified in the activity were non-growth areas. These points were even more dispersed throughout the entirety of the town. Participants were opposed to growth around Crystal Lake and the northern section of Long Lake including Cape Monday. Clusters emerged between Edes Falls Rd, Rt 35, Carsley Rd and Town Farm Rd, between Edes Falls Rd, Maple Ridge Rd, and Carsley Rd and in the village center.

Commercial Growth Mapping

This activity aimed to pinpoint the areas that community members want to see and avoid commercial growth in Cumberland. Participants placed stickers where they want and do not want commercial growth, and had the option of identifying the type of commercial development they'd like in that area using the pictures below:



1) *Stand-alone small business*



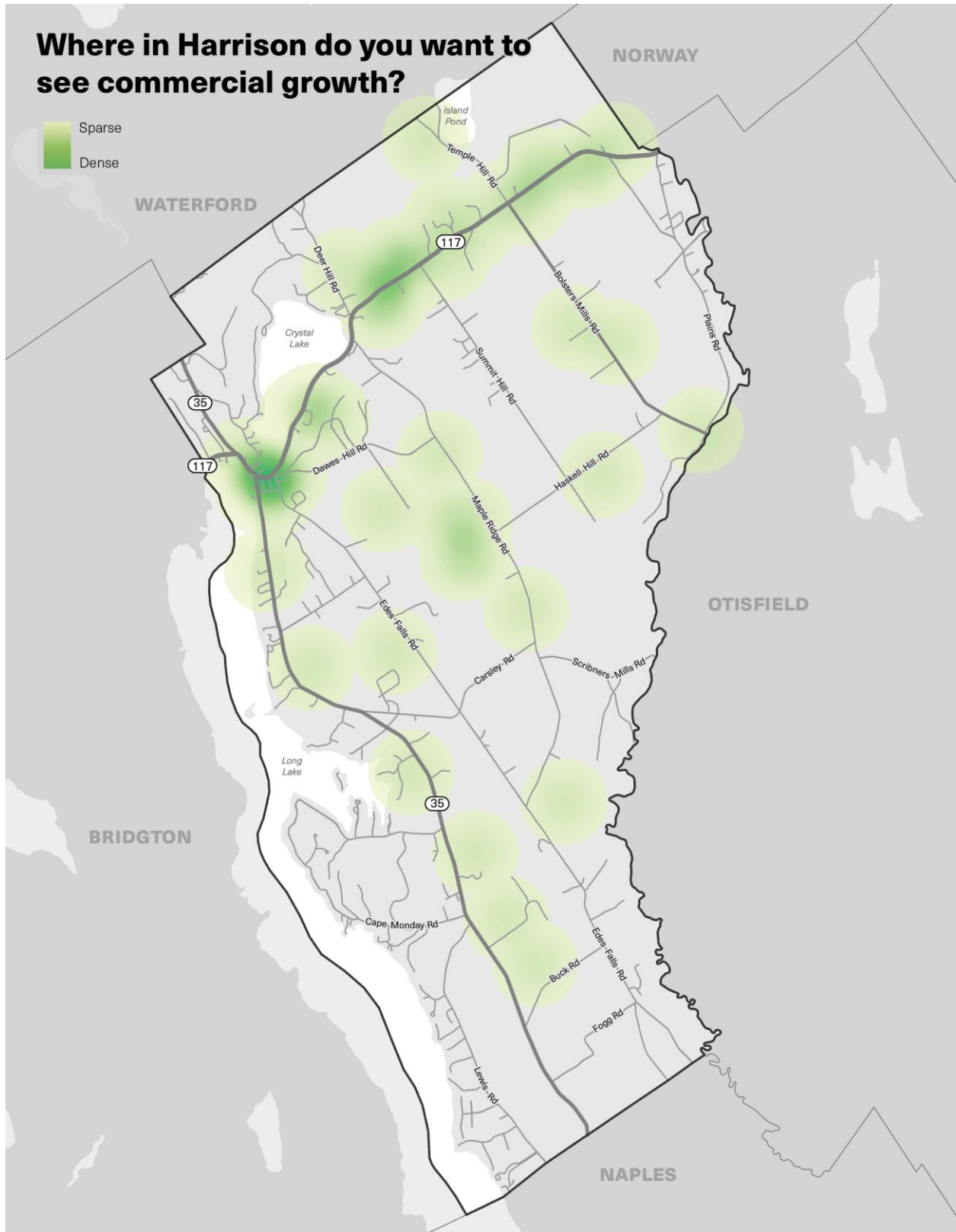
2) *Mixed-use village center*

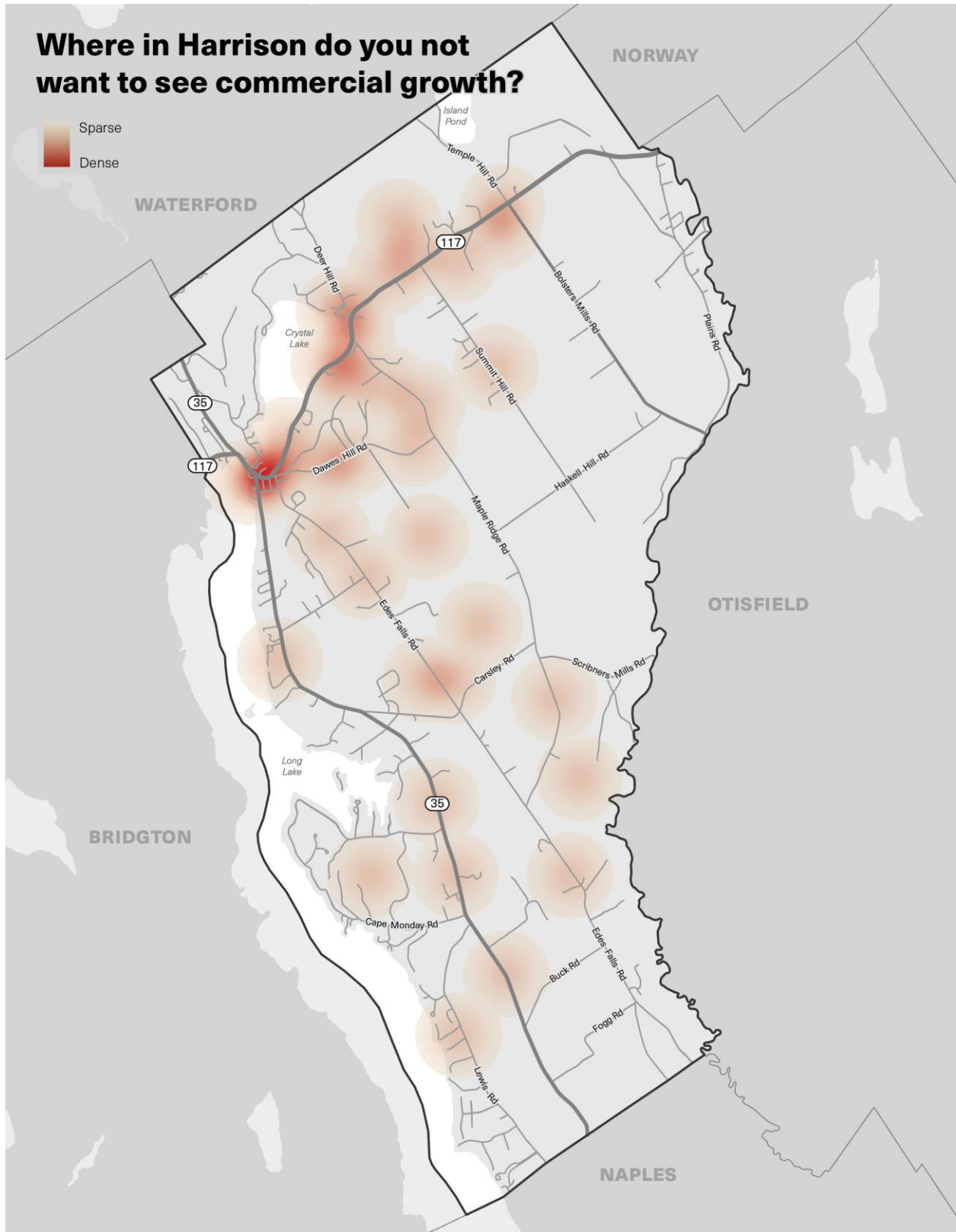


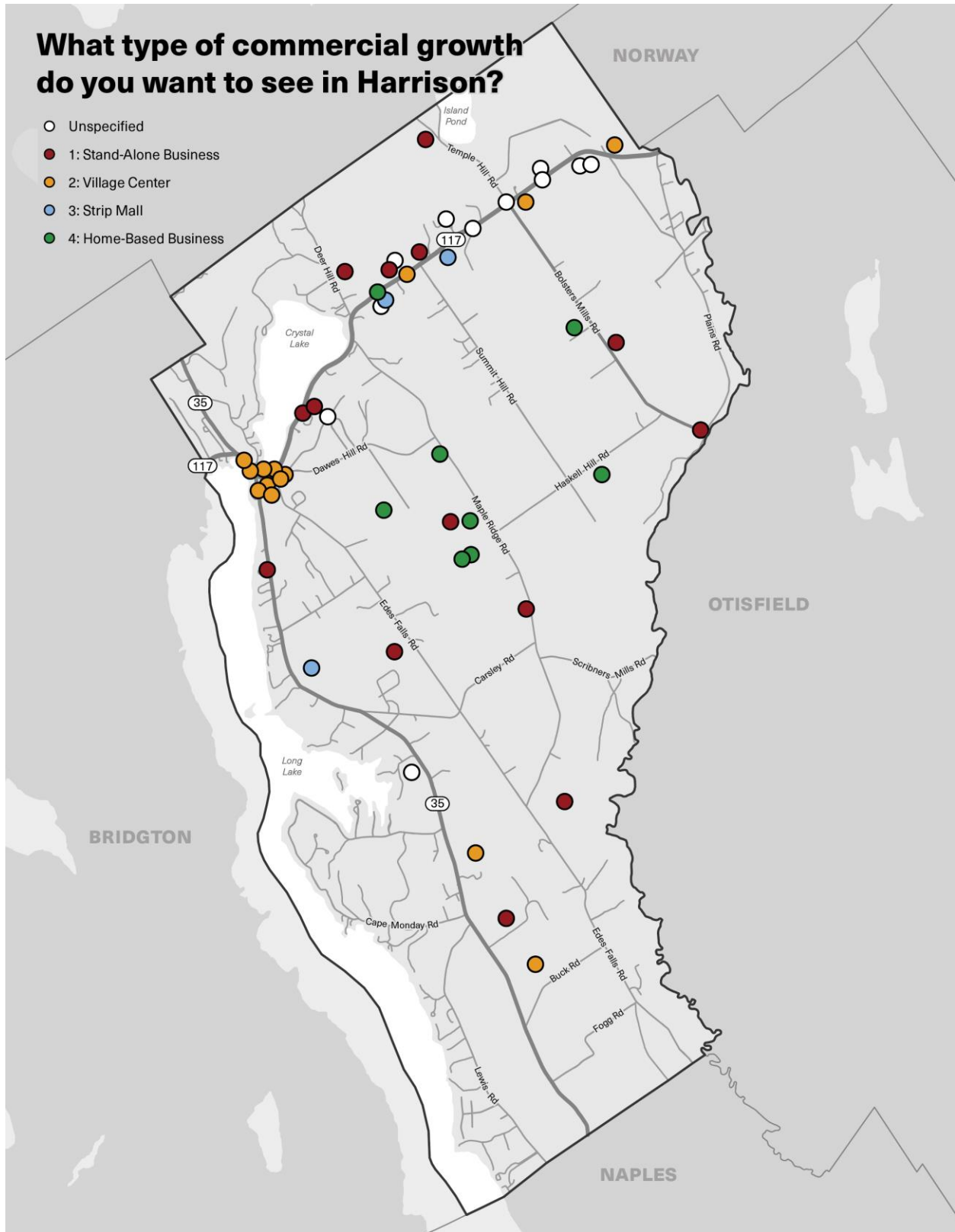
3) *Strip mall*



2) *Home-based business*



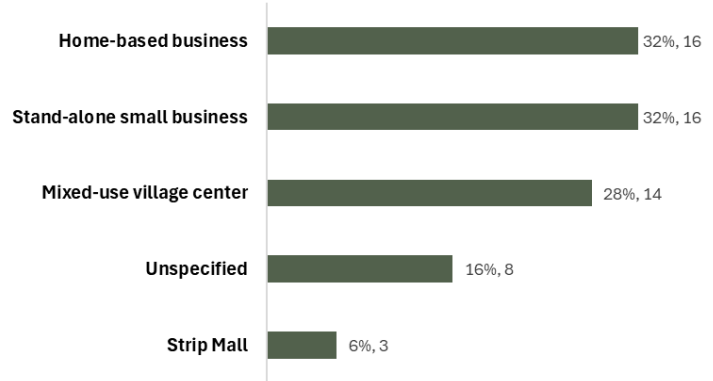




Participants were divided on where they would like commercial growth to occur in Harrison, with significant overlap of the growth and non-growth areas.

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More participants identified growth areas than non-growth areas, accounting for 57% of the 87 points identified in the commercial mapping activity. These points were concentrated in the village center and along the Rt 117 corridor and to a lesser extent the Rt 35 corridor. In general, participants favored stand-alone small businesses (type 1) and home-based businesses (type 4). These development types were concentrated along major corridors but also occurred in the more rural areas of Harrison in a relatively even, though diffuse, spread. Participants also favored mixed-use village center style development (type 2) in the Harrison village center and to a lesser extent along major corridors. Few participants wanted to see strip mall style development (type 3) in Harrison.



Participants identified 37 non-growth areas dispersed throughout the town. There was a slightly higher concentration of non-growth points along Rt 117, and a small cluster occurred at the village center. These areas were also the most popular locations for growth areas, indicating that commercial growth may be controversial. However, pro-growth dots significantly outnumbered anti-growth dots in both the village center and along the Rt 117 corridor.

Town Investment Prioritization

Participants were asked to decide how to prioritize town investments in various funding categories. Adult participants received \$400 in monopoly money and children received \$4, which they could distribute into any category or combination of categories based on what they felt was most important to prioritize in the future. There were 5 investment categories they could choose between, or they could choose to return money to the taxpayer, effectively reducing taxes.

Funding Category	\$ Amount	Percent
Acquire Land for Open Space and Habitat Protection	\$4,995	26%
Expand Recreational Opportunities	\$3,714	19%
Expand Town Services	\$3,234	17%
Fund Housing Solutions	\$3,104	16%
No Investment – Return to Taxpayer	\$2,312	12%
Other	\$2,100	10%

Participants allocated 88% of the tax increase to town investments and chose to not invest 12%, indicating that a majority of participants would be willing to increase taxes by some amount to fund town investments. Participants most highly valued land acquisition for open space and habitat protection. Investment in expansion of recreational opportunities, expansion of town services, and funding of housing solutions all received moderate support. Other areas of potential investment identified were downtown revitalization and beautification, and installation of energy production and storage facilities (solar and battery).

Vision Statement

The Vision Statement exercise asked residents to write down their hopes for Harrison's Future. Participants then used green dots to agree with a statement and red dots to disagree with a statement.

The most popular Vision Statements were “clean and healthy waterways” (34 agree) and “keep rural, friendly town feel” (30 agree). The least popular were “growth economy at any cost” (26 disagree), “compact development” (16 disagree, 8 agree), and “cluster developments (Large – 5 or more units)” (8 disagree, 2 agree). Common themes were nature and conservation; preservation of rural/small town character; and slow, intentional growth.