Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD)

Community Study

Appendix A

greatblue | Report of Findings | 12 January 2016
Confidential & Proprietary

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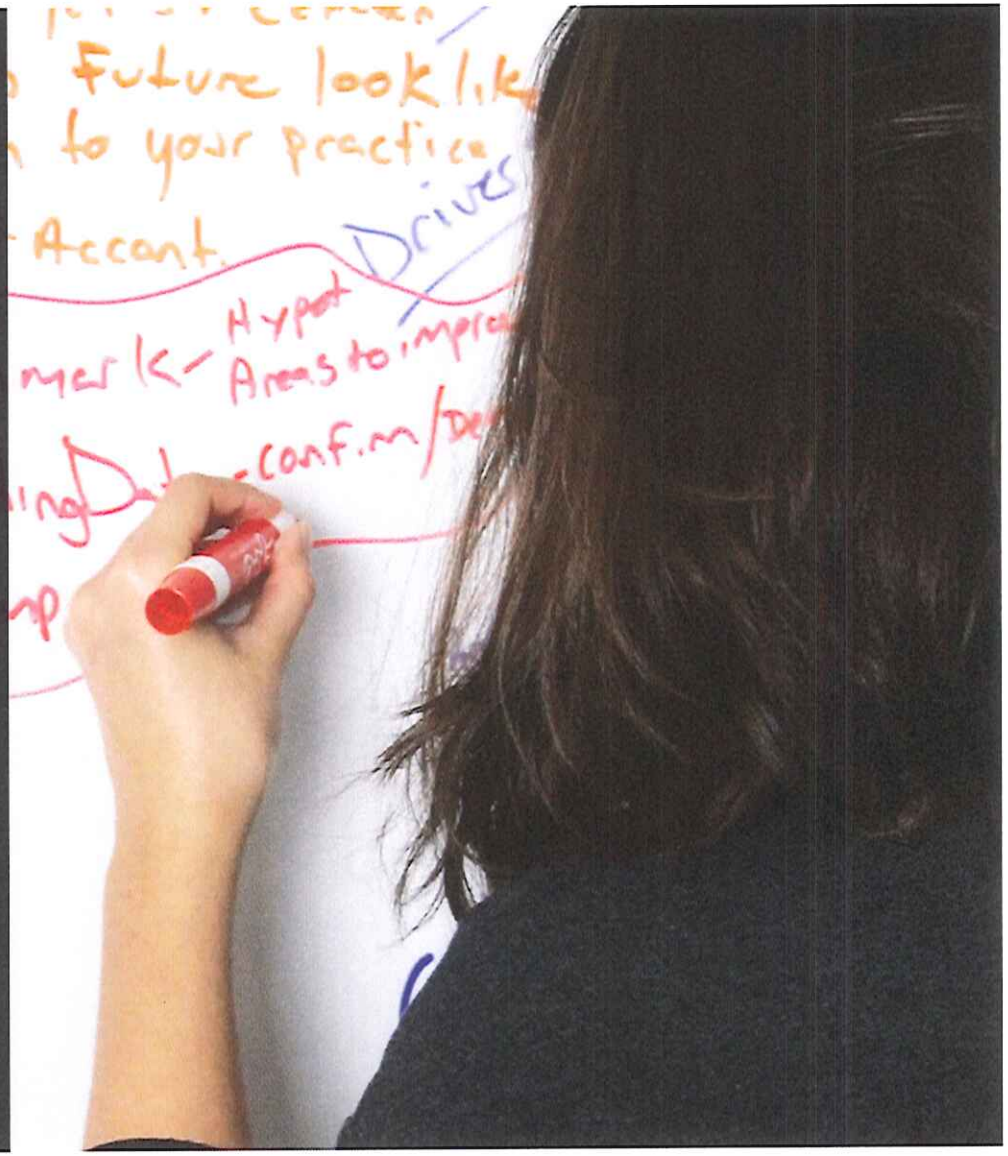

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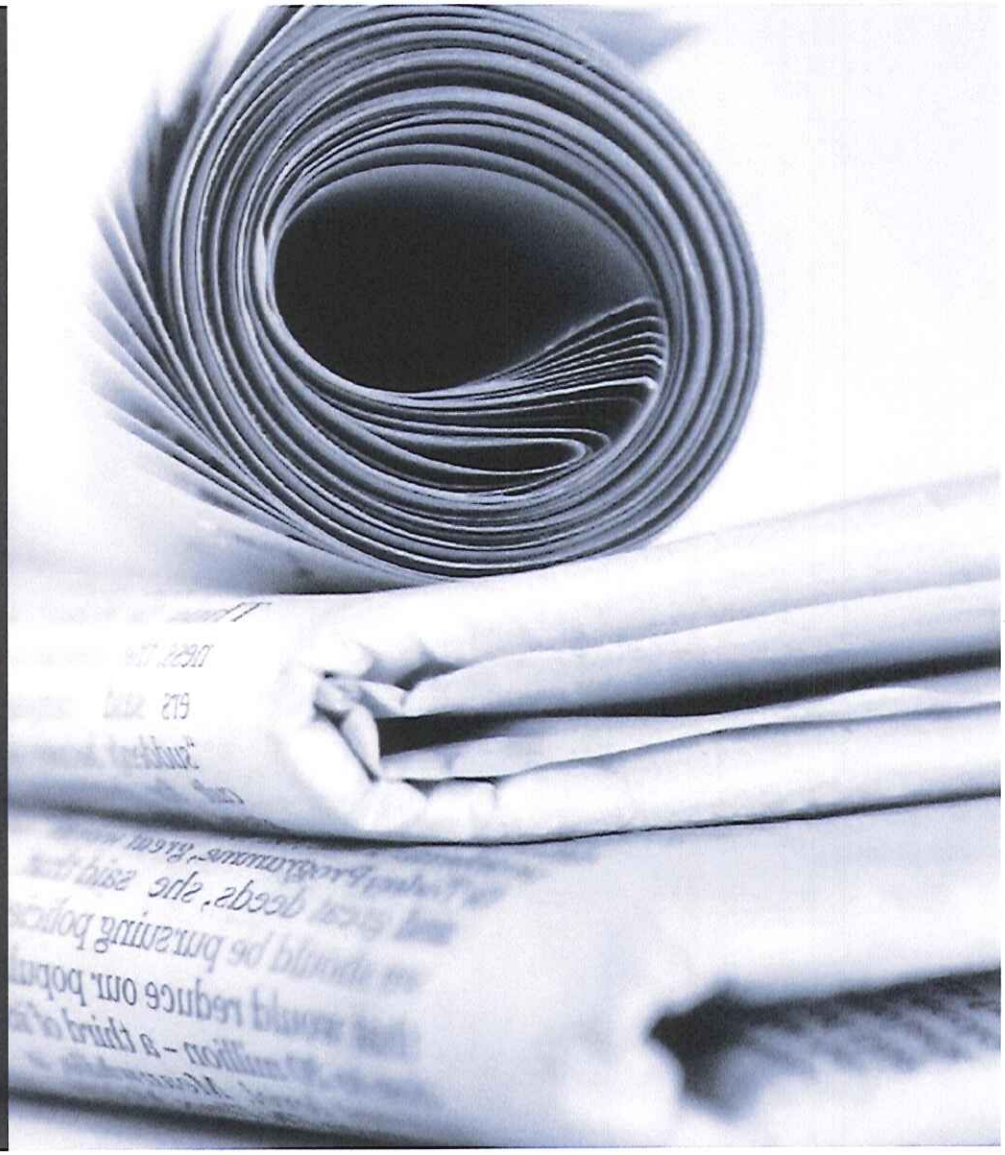
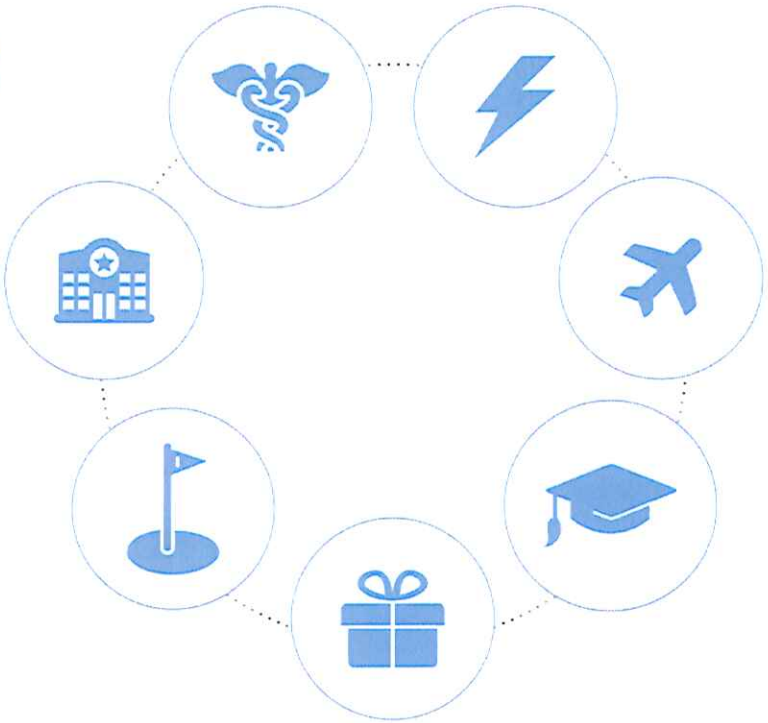


Evidence-based research across diverse industries

Our experience in instrument design affords our clients actionable analytics to help them identify, address, and improve offerings to, and the way they communicate with, their key constituents.

With more than 35 years of experience in diverse markets, our consultative approach ensures our data can be the basis to make important business decisions.

Cross-functional engagement teams ensure a complete view of the issues and solutions.



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Expertise in a diverse set of research methodologies

Having conducted millions of surveys and thousands of focus groups over the past 30+ years, our experience in instrument design, data collection and the presentation of those findings in manageable, actionable ways allows us to serve our clients across the spectrum of research studies.

Telephone Interviews
In-house, multi-lingual interviewing capabilities

Digital Surveys
Web + mobile-based survey programs

Focus Groups
State-of-the-Art facilities in CT and MA

In-Depth Interviews
Trained researchers allow us to dive deep in a 1:1 setting

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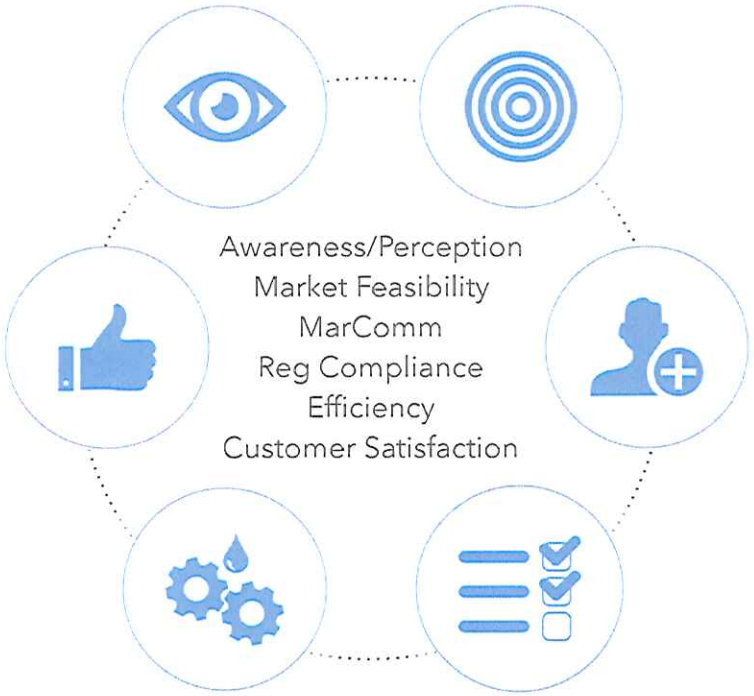

Solutions that focus on strategic and operational needs of clients

Whether direct to clients or through their agencies, we apply our core research methodologies, often applying a mixed methodology to ensure a study that captures both quantitative and qualitative information, to ensure our solutions exceed client expectations.

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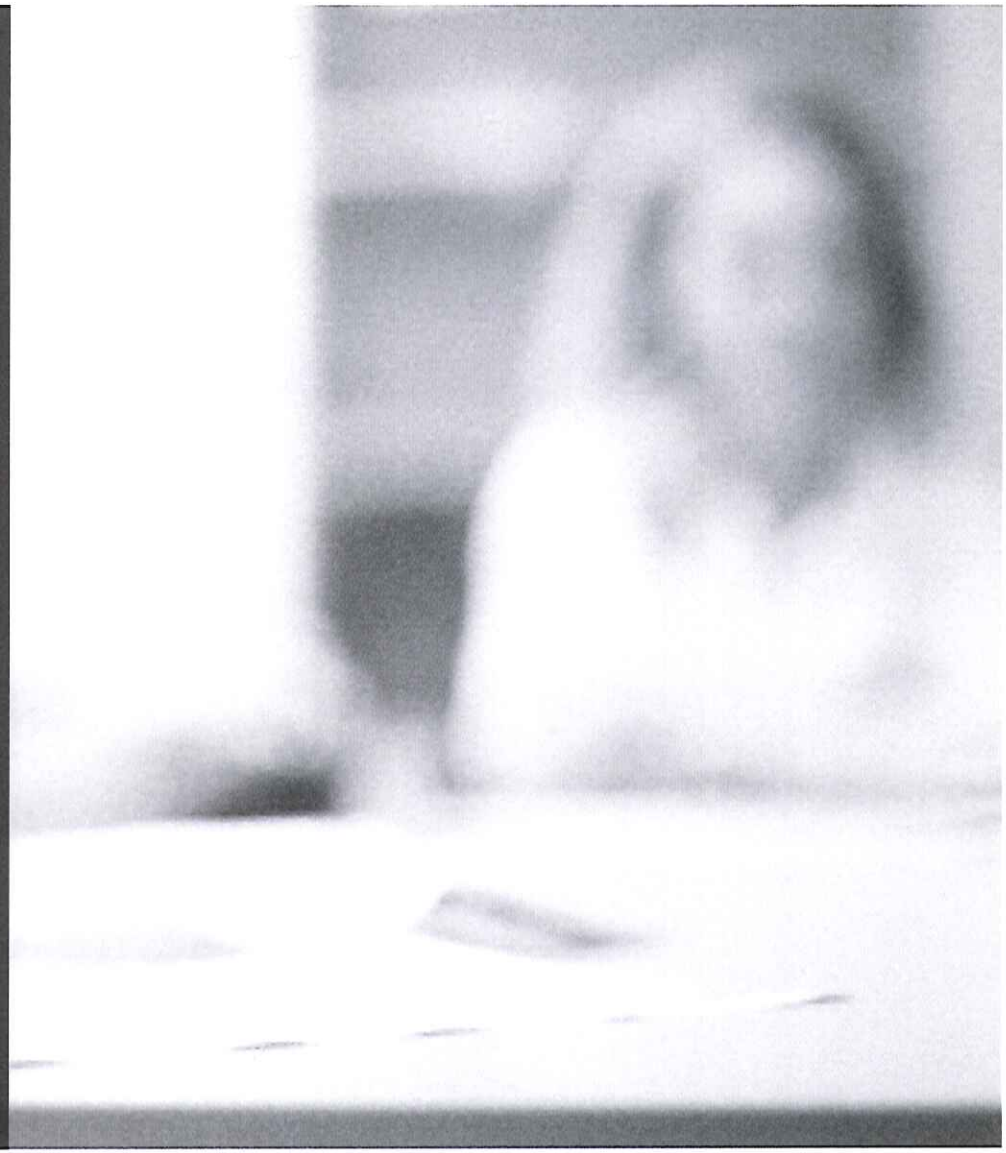

Project Overview

- GreatBlue was commissioned by the Town of Avon, Connecticut (hereinafter, "the Town" or "Avon") to conduct comprehensive research among its residents to gain a deeper understanding into satisfaction with Town amenities and favorability among various development propositions.

- The primary goal of this research study was to assess the perception of current Town services and priorities for investing in additional or improved services.

- In order to service this research goal, GreatBlue conducted telephone interviews among randomly selected registered voters in Avon, and collected digital surveys from a link placed on the Town website.

- The outcome of this research will enable the Town of Avon to a) clearly understand the key elements that affect quality of life in the town, b) uncover opportunities to improve services and, c) identify near-term strategies to implement or reallocate available funding for programs and services.

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Areas of Investigation

The Town of Avon POCD Community Study leveraged a quantitative research methodology to address the following areas of investigation:

- Reasons for and future plans for residency
- Importance of resources to the community
- Satisfaction with current business landscape and suggestions for future planning
- Attitudes toward current and future plans for commercial developments
- Strengths and weaknesses of the open space policy
- Overall town opinions
- Demographic profiles of respondents

Research Methodology Snapshot

Methodology	No. of Completes	No. of Questions	Incentive	Sample
Telephone & Digital link	334	70*	None	Residents

Target	Quality Assurance	Margin of Error	Confidence Level	Research Dates
Residential	Dual-level**	5.3%	95%	Nov 9 - Dec 21

* This represents the total possible number of questions; not all respondents will answer all questions based on skip patterns and other instrument bias.

** Supervisory personnel in addition to computer-aided interviewing platform ensure the integrity of the data is accurate.

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Research Methodology Snapshot

Methodology	No. of Completes	No. of Questions	Incentive	Sample
Telephone	250	70*	None	Registered voters

Target	Quality Assurance	Margin of Error	Confidence Level	Research Dates
Residential	Dual-level**	6.2%	95%	Nov 20 - Dec 21

* This represents the total possible number of questions; not all respondents will answer all questions based on skip patterns and other instrument bias.

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Research Methodology Snapshot

Methodology	No. of Completes	No. of Questions	Incentive	Sample
Digital link	84	70*	None	Website visitors

Target	Quality Assurance	Margin of Error	Confidence Level	Research Dates
Residential	Dual-level**	10.7%	95%	Nov 9 - Dec 21

* This represents the total possible number of questions; not all respondents will answer all questions based on skip patterns and other instrument bias.

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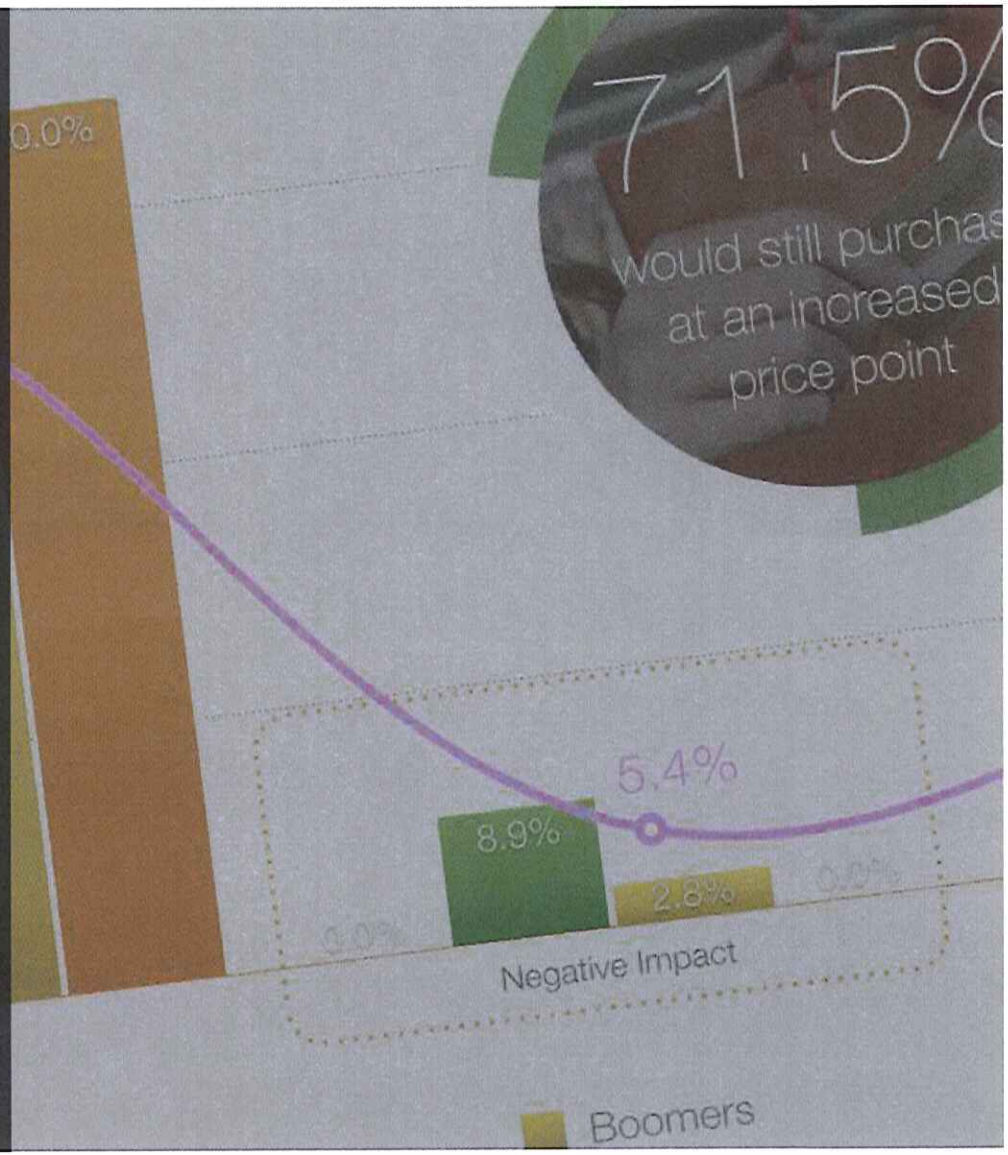

Key Study Findings

- When asked to rate the quality of life in Avon, 93.1% provided a rating of either "excellent" or "good." The most frequently reported perceived issue facing Avon was "managing development/preserving open space" (24.9%).

- The preservation of open space by purchasing undeveloped land was important to more residents (88.0%) than commercial (51.2%) or industrial development (32.9%). Most residents were accepting of an incurred annual tax increase of $50 (74.3%) up to $100 (71.6%) for up to 10 years in order to purchase more open space.

- Re-zoning undeveloped areas from residential to commercial use was largely unfavored (35.0%). Residents were most enticed by the development of small retail businesses (65.8%) when taking into consideration the impact on town character (39.2%) and the impact on traffic (22.2%) when planning for any commercial development.

- Most residents provided a positive rating for the network of roads in Avon (67.4%); however, 25.1% of residents believed the roads were only "fair." Traffic flow was seen as a major problem by 28.7% of residents and Route 44 was viewed as the largest driver of this congestion.

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Key Study Findings, continued

- More residents were able to stay in Avon "always" or "most of the time" (77.6%) when in need of retail shopping compared to professional services such as medical and accounting (67.7%). However, when considering the commercial options for the Town Center, residents largely preferred small shops and leisure activities to services.

- While the number of multi-family homes and apartment rentals seemed appropriate to most residents (68.8% and 60.5%, respectively), more residents felt there could be a need for additional rentals rather than additional multi-family homes. In addition, residents were less certain that there was enough elderly housing available (48.8%).

- The establishment of crosswalks along Route 44 (72.2%) and the expansion of sidewalks to other areas of Avon (70.7%) were seen as consistently important by residents. These are in alignment with the percentage of residents who believe it is important that Avon make changes to become more pedestrian-friendly (69.2%).

- The majority of residents who use open space for hiking were satisfied with the trail networks (90.9%); however, opportunities exist to enhance the areas used for recreational use in Avon. In particular, 67.4% of residents support the creation of bike lanes throughout Avon.

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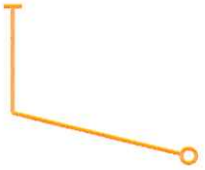
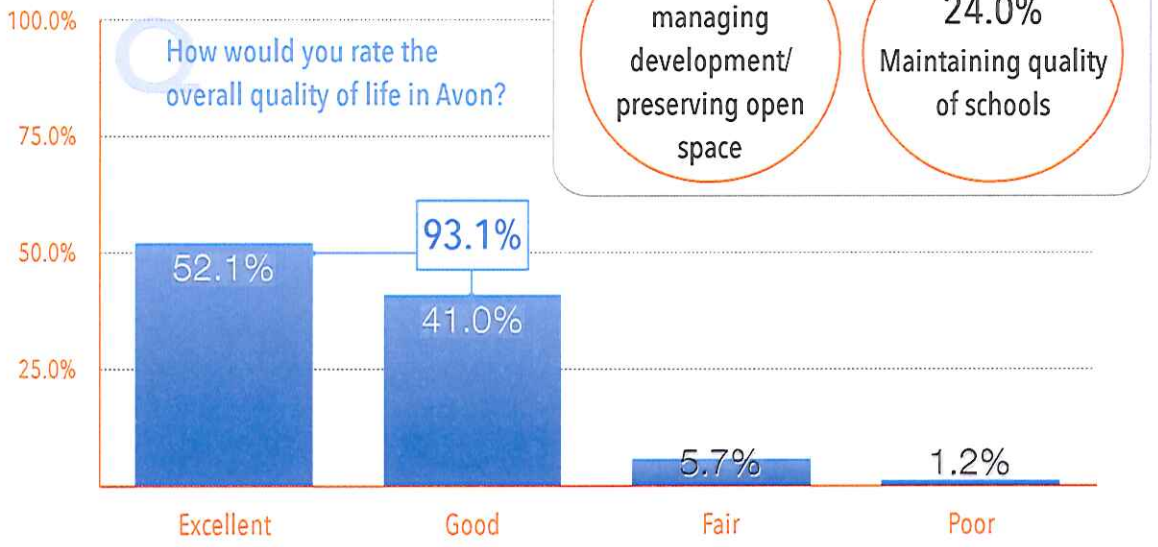
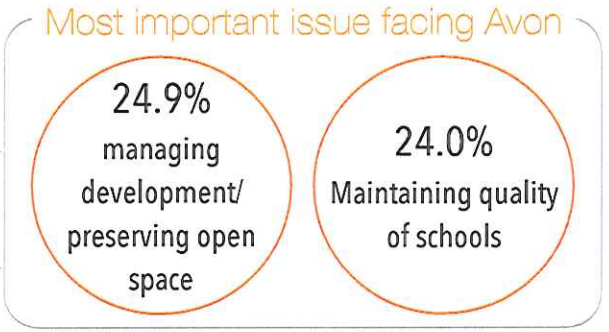
Very high quality of life

The majority of Avon residents rated the quality of life in Avon as either "excellent" or "good" (93.1%). While the perceived quality of life was high, residents believed the "managing development/preserving open space" and "maintaining quality of schools" were important issues to be considered in efforts to maintain the quality of life in town.







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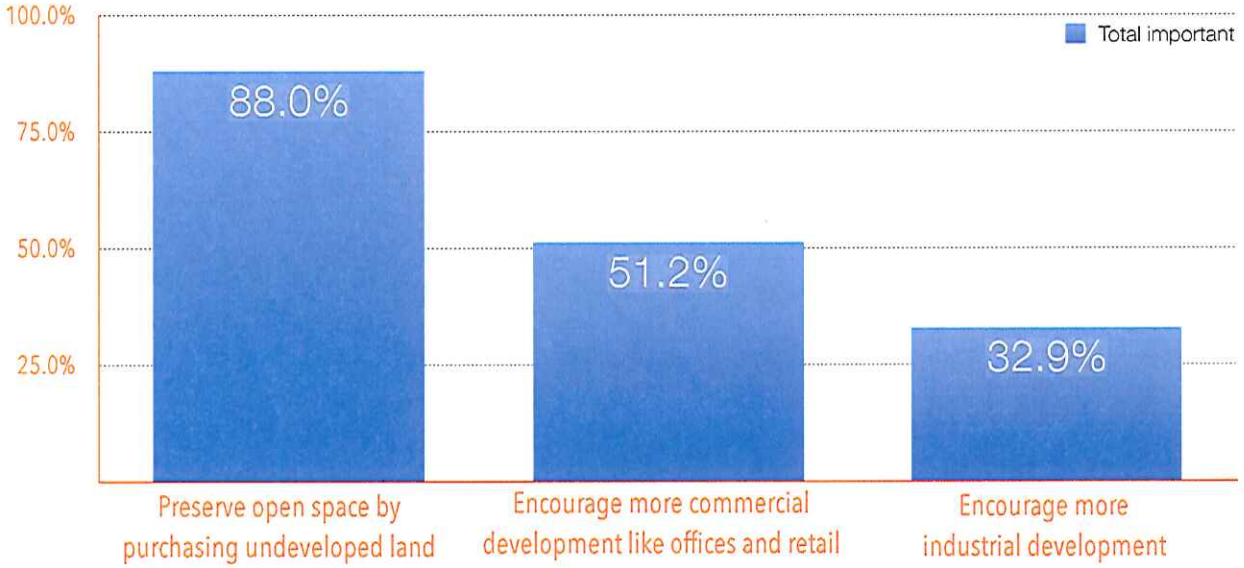
Development should preserve open space

More residents placed importance on "preserving open space by purchasing undeveloped land" (88.0%) than development of commercial or industrial sites. In order to preserve open space, the largest frequency of residents were generally more agreeable to an increase on household taxes between $50 to $100 per year for up to 10 years.



57.5%	think Avon should purchase more open space for a tax increase of **$200/year** for up to 10 years
71.6%	think Avon should purchase more open space for a tax increase of **$100/year** for up to 10 years
74.3%	think Avon should purchase more open space for a tax increase of **$50/year** for up to 10 years

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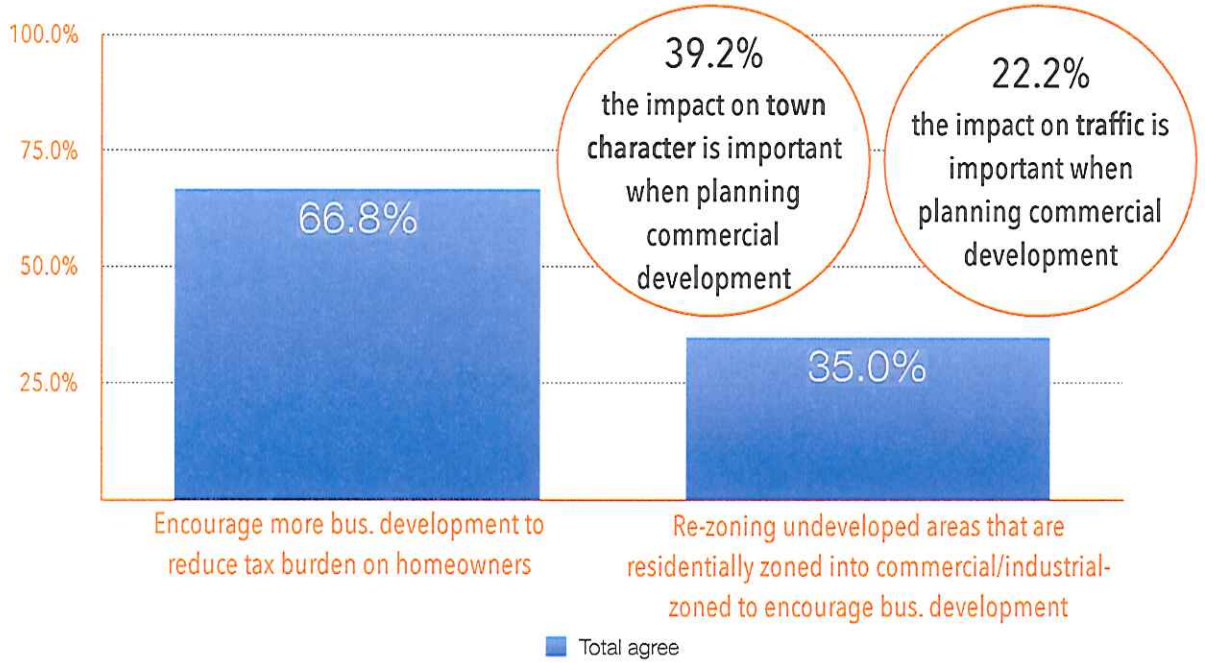
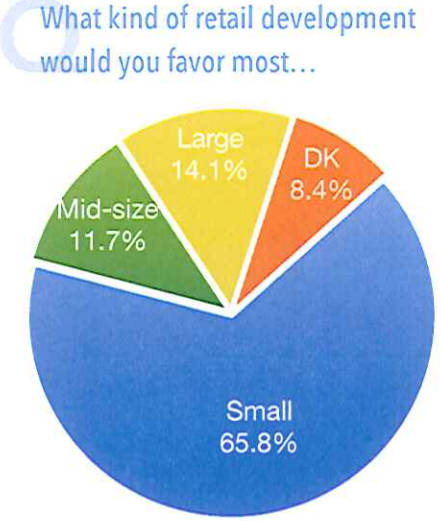
Commercial development

When commercial development takes place, few residents agreed that Avon should re-zone residential sites for commercial use (35.0%), and preferred to maintain the original zoning plans. Small retail development was favored by more residents (65.8%) and would be well-received if the town character is preserved in the process (39.2%) and causes little effect on traffic flow (22.2%).





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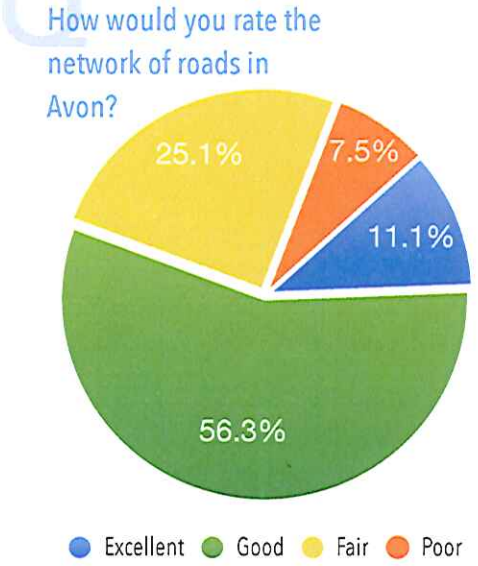
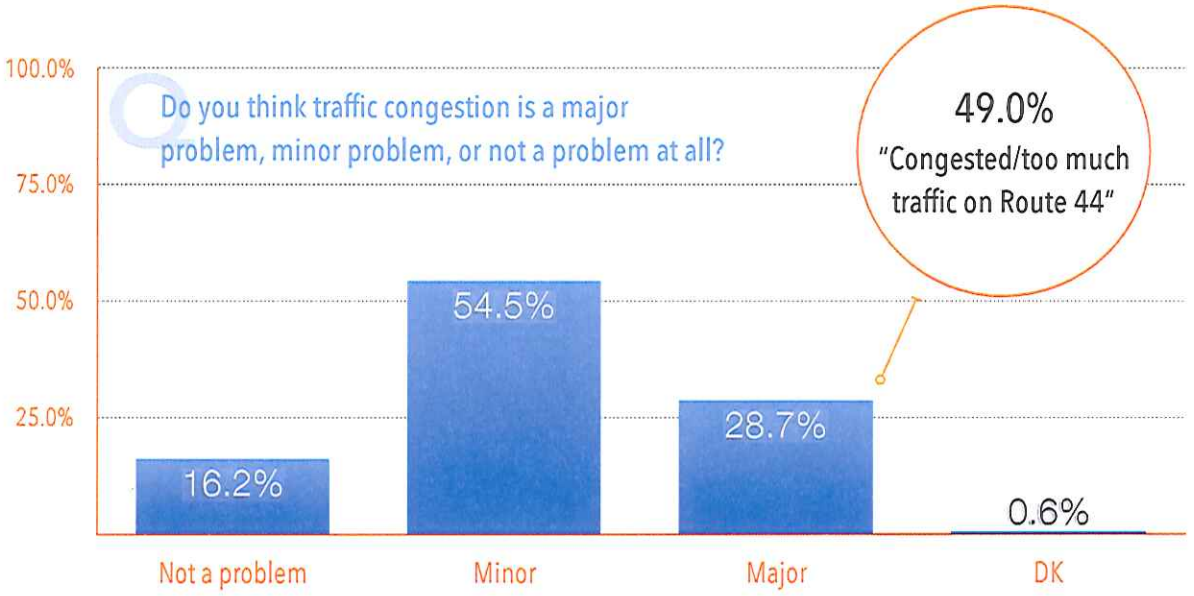
Traffic causes problems

While 67.4% of residents rated the network of roads in Avon as "excellent" or "good," a large segment rated the roads as "fair" (25.1%). A similar percentage reported that the traffic congestion is a "major" problem, particularly on Route 44. This perception of traffic flow should be considered when planning commercial development - both during any construction as well long lasting effects after completion - as it was a top priority for residents.





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In-town shopping meeting most needs

Overall, residents are spending the majority of their time for retail shopping or for various services such as doctors or accountants within Avon. While more retail shopping opportunities may exist for residents in the area than professional services, 65.0% of residents report being able to conduct between 75% (52.7%) to 100.0% (12.3%) of their typical shopping requirements in town.

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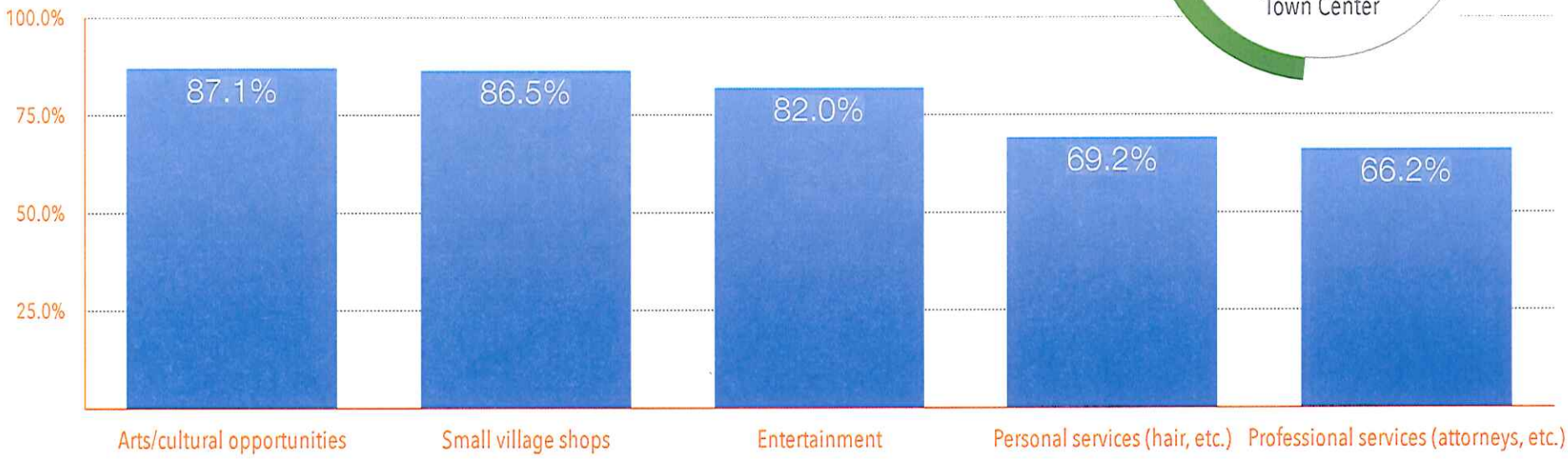
Town Center to be cultural

When asked about a variety of types of stores or commercial options for the Avon Town Center, residents were more in favor of development that would provide a leisurely or cultural experience. This desire was further supported when 61.7% of residents placed importance on improvements to the physical appearance of the Town Center.



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Sufficient housing opportunities

Residents generally felt the variety of housing units was sufficient and less than half of residents felt it was important for Avon to develop more moderately priced homes. However, there were slightly more residents who believed there should be more apartments and rentals than those who believed there should be more multi-family homes, and only 48.8% felt there was the "right amount" of elderly housing.

47.0%

important that Avon encourages developing more moderately priced homes

48.8%

Avon has "just the right amount" of elderly housing

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Pedestrian-friendly improvements

Residents expressed a desire for greater walkability around town, particularly with the establishment of crosswalks and sidewalks in front of retail sites along Route 44. In addition to Route 44, residents believed it was important to widen the coverage of sidewalks to other areas of town beyond West Avon Road, Country Club Road, School Road, and portions of Avon Center.

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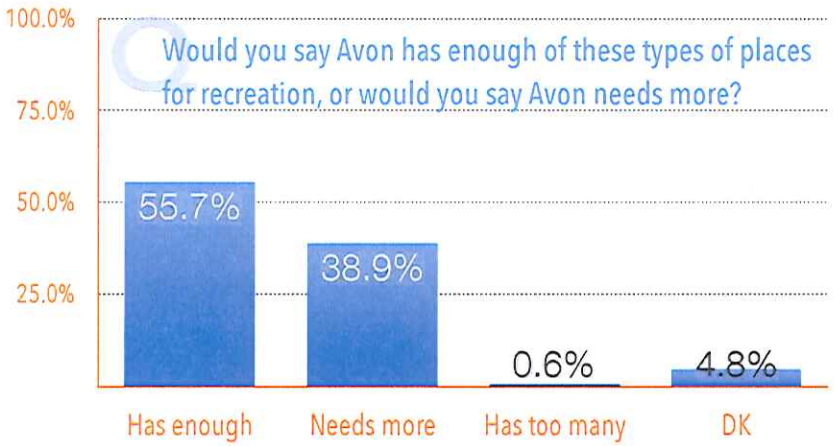
Opportunities for more recreation

While many residents felt Avon had enough places for recreation and expressed satisfaction with these resources (especially with the trail networks), 38.9% believed there was room for improvement. In particular, the creation of bike lanes in Avon was well received by 67.4% of residents.



19.6% use "Rails-to-Trails" most frequently for walking or hiking

90.9% satisfied with the trail networks (N=275)

67.4% support the creation of bike lanes in Avon

23.6% believe "West Avon Road" would be the best candidate for the creation of bike lanes

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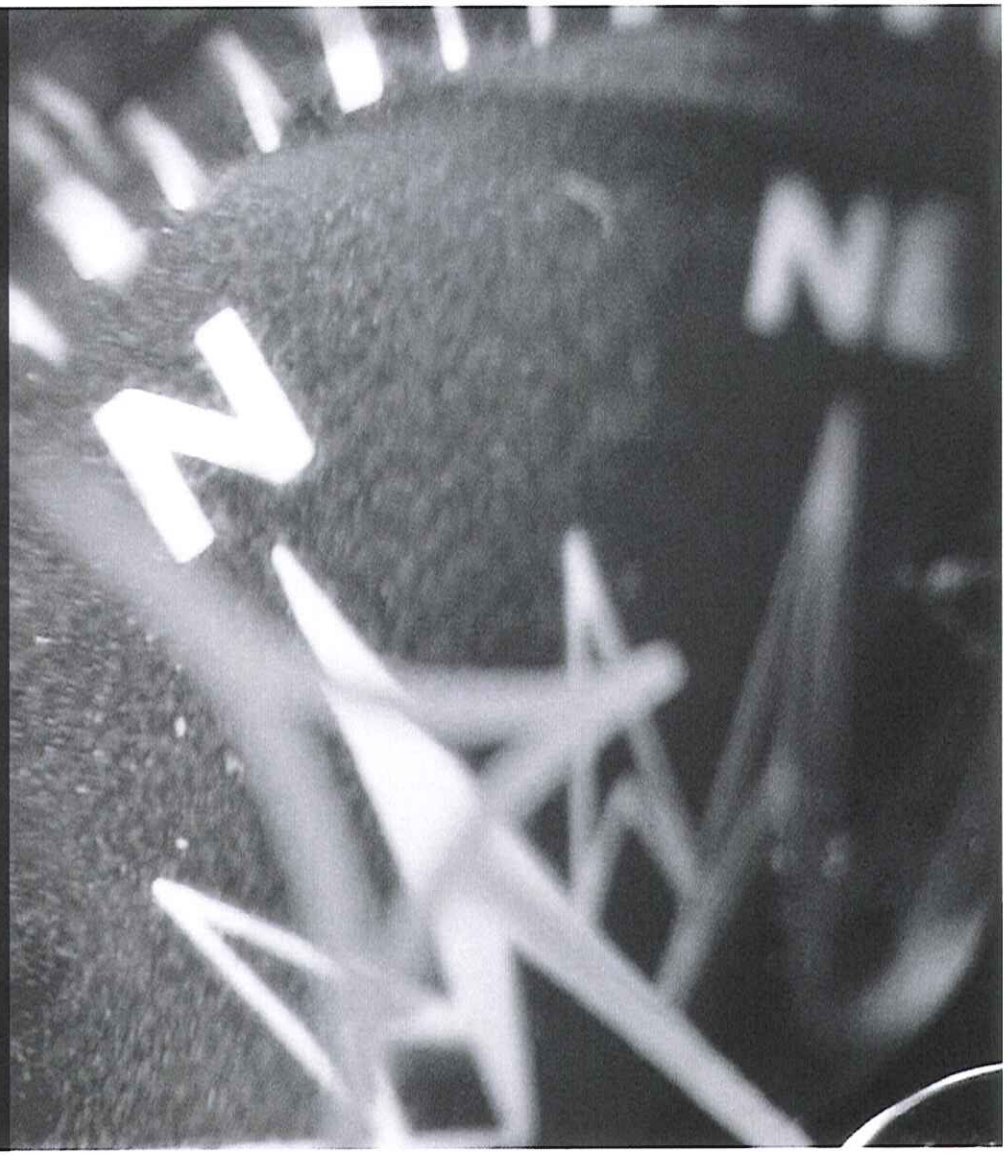

Considerations

- **Preserve open space.** With the heavy importance on preserving open space, it is a viable option for Avon to purchase undeveloped land for this purpose. Many residents are comfortable with a household tax increase of between $50 and $100 per year for up to 10 years, however support drops considerably at an increase of $200. Any discussions regarding future plans for open space development should be cognizant of this range.

- **Minimize impact from commercial development.** Small retail businesses would be most welcomed by residents especially if the town character is maintained and traffic experiences little impact. These small businesses would be most successful if they are developed within the current zoning regulations, as re-zoning residential areas to be used for commercial development was largely opposed.
  - Consider implementing a "code" or design review process to maintain character and a "sense of place." It is not uncommon in preserving a look and feel to a community.

- **Use Town Center to fill "niche" market.** Introducing commercial options that are cultural in nature and provide an entertainment piece would be most prosperous in the Town Center. This may draw the segment of residents who currently feel their typical shopping needs are not being met in Avon, as well as pull residents from neighboring towns whom desire certain niche shops not available in their local area.

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Considerations, continued

- **Establish crosswalks and sidewalks.** Improvements to make Avon more pedestrian-friendly should focus on establishing crosswalks in front of retail stores on Route 44, followed by an expansion of the sidewalks to other areas of town. Because traffic was a concern to many residents, these crosswalks should be strategically placed to minimize the impact on congestion while maximizing safety and accessibility to businesses.

- **Expand recreational activities.** The creation of bike lanes throughout Avon would be a suitable addition to the current activities available for recreation. While West Avon Road was seen as the best candidate for accommodating a bike lane, all roads under consideration for the implementation of a bike lane should continue to be mindful of the impact on traffic and the network of roads.
  - Should the Town elect to purchase undeveloped land to preserve open space, it may be worthwhile to consider a bike path be developed in this area rather than utilizing areas near proposed roads. This may reduce the risk of increasing congestion and help substantiate any incurred tax increases.

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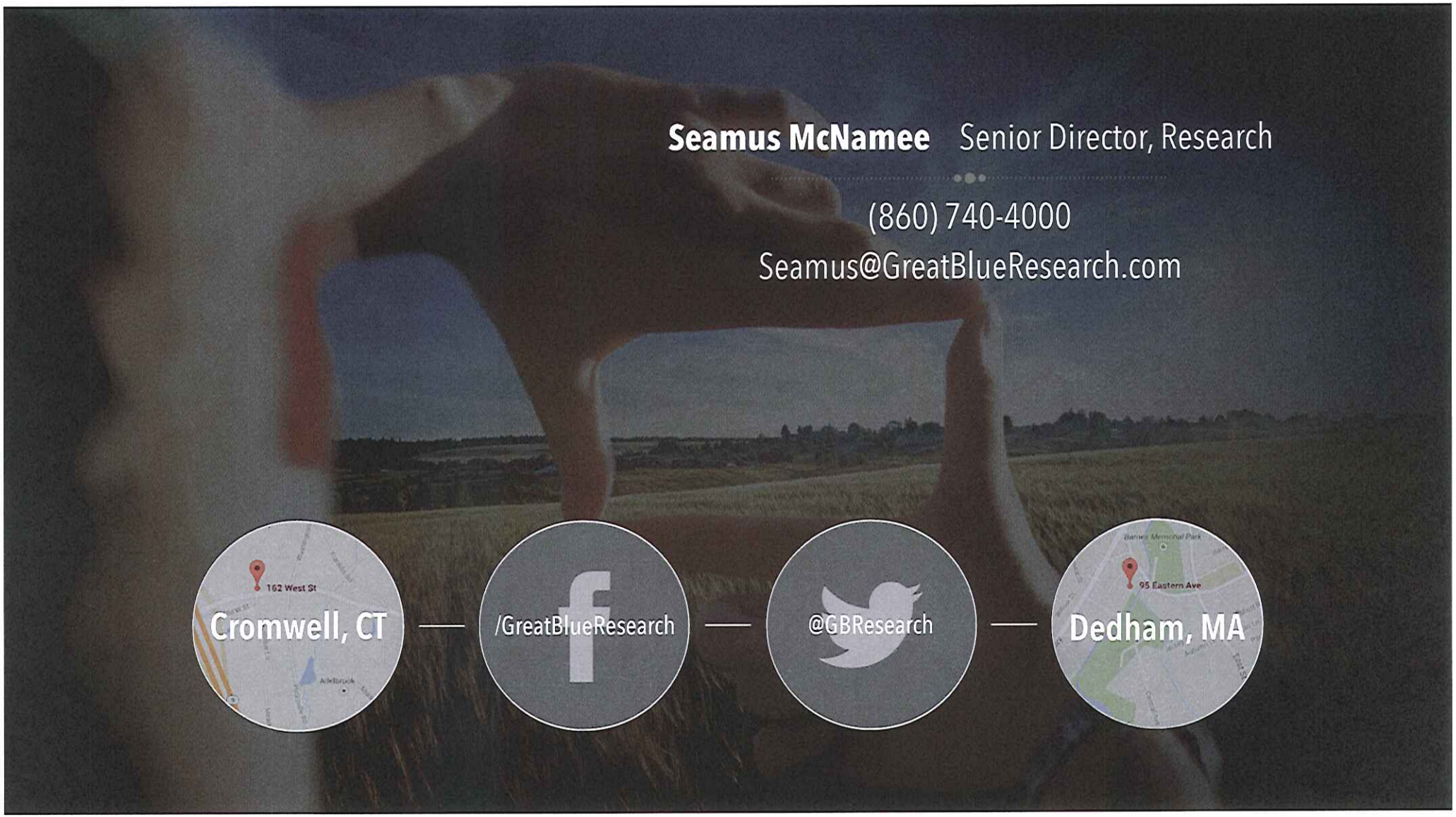
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