

GOLDSTON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

In advance of any approach to the Town of Goldston by Sunrock about annexation of its proposed project, Summit Design and Engineering’s Planning Department conducted a public participation and visioning process with town residents. This report summarizes feedback from that process.

The process included:

- Creation of an informational website (mygoldston.com)
- Creation and promotion of an online survey
- Direct mailing of a card soliciting input and promoting the survey to all registered voters in town
- A \$10 Food Lion gift card sent to each survey respondent
- A Summit team member attending the March and April Town Board meetings to promote the process and discuss with Board members
- Conversations with the Town Mayor
- Direct mailing of a notification of public input sessions to all registered voters in town
- Two in-person public input sessions, on Thursday, April 13th (5pm to 7pm) and Saturday, April 15th (11am to 1pm)

SURVEY SUMMARY

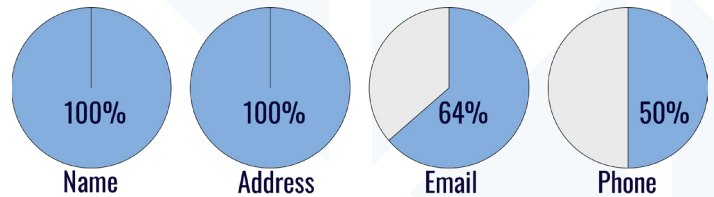
Twenty-one residents answered the online survey. Cards with the survey information were sent to each of the 186 registered voters in town. Every respondent included their address, and all were within Goldston town limits. Responses were submitted between March 6th and April 10th, 2023.

Most respondents answered all of questions six through 19. Occasionally one or two people skipped a question, with no consistency apparent in which person skipped which question. The only exception was question 11, “What do you wish Goldston had LESS of,” which 5 people skipped. Respondents typically spent 14 minutes to take the survey.



Questions 1-5: Basic Information

The first five questions on the stakeholder survey asked for respondents’ first name, last name, home or business address, telephone number, and email address. All respondents provided their names and addresses, 64% of respondents provided their email addresses, and 50% provided their phone numbers.



Question 6: In a few words, how would you describe Goldston?

Answers to this question were almost all very positive. Respondents appreciate Goldston for being safe, quiet, small, and friendly. Several respondents remarked that they believe the town to be on the cusp of significant growth, or that the town has the potential to grow. The word cloud below represents how many times certain words were used; the larger the size of the word the more commonly it was used.



Question 7: How has Goldston changed over the past decade?

Respondents mentioned the new sewer system, new

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growth in the surrounding area, and Dollar General as the most significant indicators of change. Several respondents indicated that they had not lived in Goldston long enough to answer the question.

Question 8: What do you like BEST about living in Goldston?

Respondents consistently said they like that Goldston is a small town, where they know people and have friendly neighbors. They like the fact that Goldston is safe and quiet. The word cloud below represents how many times certain words were used. The most frequently used word was “community.”



Question 9: What do you like LEAST about living in Goldston?

Respondents repeatedly answered that Goldston lacks amenities like a grocery store, a coffee shop, more restaurants, or things to do. Several people mentioned abandoned and run-down and a lack of street maintenance. Several people mentioned that lack of high-speed internet access is a deterrent, but the County is currently working with a private provider to implement high speed internet access in town, with Wi-Fi points at the park and at the flagpole on Main Street. Only one person mentioned “noise pollution from traffic,” which is an issue that repeatedly came up in open house conversations and in Town Board meetings.

Question 10: What do you wish Goldston had MORE of?

Respondents wish that Goldston had more shopping and dining options, as well as more recreational options. Responses mentioned specialty shops, kid-friendly things to do, parks and public green spaces, and walking trails. Several answers mentioned a grocery store.



Question 11: What do you wish Goldston had LESS of?

Five of 17 responses to this question mentioned heavy truck traffic. Five answers mentioned “blight,” or vacant buildings. Two answers mentioned “loose dogs” or pit bulls, which is not something came up in March or April Town Board meetings or public open houses. Two answers mentioned “gossip” and “less obvious favoritism against certain residents.”

Question 12: Where do you like to spend your recreational/leisure time?

There were many ways a person could answer this question. While several people mentioned the mountains or the beach, other localities in North Carolina, or other states, the majority of respondents mentioned amenities in town that they like to use. Of these amenities, respondents mentioned the library, town park, ballpark, side streets, and walking trails. One respondent specifically mentioned “outdoor spaces that are designed to provide comfortable seating.”



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Question 13: Where do you typically do your grocery shopping?

Respondents shop for groceries in Sanford, Siler City, and Pittsboro. One respondent stated that “no weekend would be complete without running to DG for something.”

Question 14: In a few words, describe your vision for Goldston’s future.

Respondents largely seem to have the same vision for Goldston! They envision a walkable downtown with multiple small businesses. They envision buildings being renovated and occupied, with multiple options for shopping and eating, in addition to other businesses. One respondent’s vision is to “stay true to the roots of Goldston [and] not be bought out by a lot of big-name stores.” Another respondent’s vision is that Goldston grows “with more affordable housing options and more retail.” Two respondents described their vision of Goldston as a “Hallmark town.”

Question 15: What do you see as barriers to Goldston realizing this vision?

Four respondents answered that older people in town do not want to see growth, which they see as a barrier to their vision of Goldston. Others mentioned lack of money for infrastructure, and the swift rate of growth in Chatham County. Other answers mentioned the expense of revitalization, County regulations, and too few people to patronize the envisioned businesses. One respondent answered that “1-2 large investors, already buying up much of the town, will have too much say in our growth and focus on profits rather than building a quality community.” Another replied that “the barrier is the fact that taxpayers’ dollars are being paid in but not being spent.”

The last response echoes comments made at public input sessions, and conversations among Board members at regular meetings. There is a sense that there is money to be spent but the Board is reluctant to spend the money. Again this is anecdotal. However,

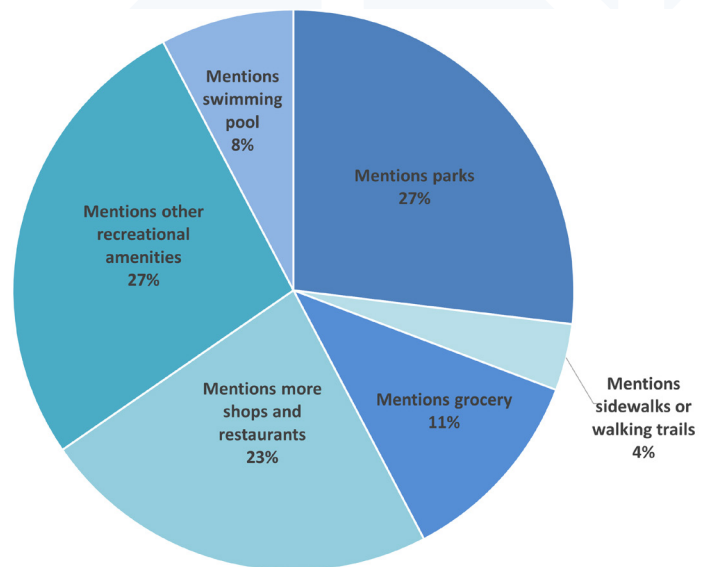
sometimes a perceived problem can be as detrimental as a quantifiable problem.

Question 16: What do you believe Goldston’s community needs are?

Four respondents mentioned groceries, and others mentioned more shops and businesses, including entertainment options for adolescents. Many respondents mentioned the need for investment in the downtown area, “fresh paint,” “road repair,” better lighting, and landscaping downtown. Other answers included new parks and a community building, town events, and better communication and more transparency from the Town to its residents. One person answered that they need “personnel to manage and direct the growth coming to the town.”

Question 17: What amenities (for example, public parks, swimming pools, theaters, shopping options, etc.) exist in other communities that you wish Goldston also had?

Respondents mentioned parks and other recreational amenities in most answers. Because the question was open-ended, the pie chart below displays the number of times an amenity was mentioned. Respondents mentioned amenities like pickleball, splash pads, or a bowling alley. The need for a grocery store or healthy food options (explicitly not Dollar General) was included in three responses. Three responses mentioned a community pool.



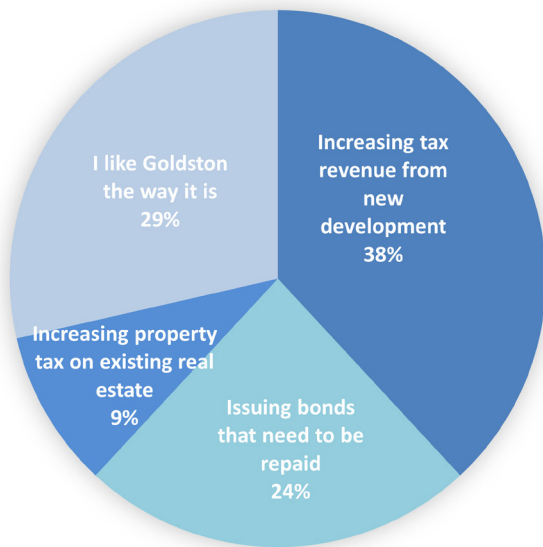
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Question 18: What communities in Chatham County do you wish Goldston was more like?

There was no strong common theme to these answers. 41% were unsure or had no opinion. 32% mentioned another Chatham locality like Bennet or Pittsboro, or “a smaller, more conservative version of Pittsboro.” 27% of respondents answered that they don’t want Goldston to be like other localities, but the best version of Goldston itself. An argument could be made that all those that were unsure or had no opinion on this leading question could be put into the third category of just wanting Goldston to be the best version of itself.

Question 19: What is the best way to fund community needs?

The final question was multiple choice. Responses are shown in the pie chart below.



PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS SUMMARY

The two in-person public input sessions were sparsely attended but were very productive conversations. Five people attended the Thursday session and three people attended the Saturday session. Most people



seemed suspicious of the process at first. However, after discussion about the subject property, Sunrock as a company, and the pros and cons of an annexation, most people opened up and we learned a lot about Goldston, residents’ vision for the future, and what it would take to get there. Please note that all information provided in this summary is anecdotal and has not been independently verified.

Once the conversation edged toward residents’ vision for Goldston, they were generally consistent with survey responses. Long-time residents lament the downward shift in population, industry, and amenities they have witnessed over decades. At one point in their memories, there was an active sawmill, a bank, a medical office, a hardware store, two grocery stores, a dry cleaner, a furniture store, and an auto parts store. The former Goldston Depot was moved to Moncure.

Residents are aware that one barrier to growth is a nonreceptive attitude toward outsiders and a reluctance to sell land for infill development.

Chatham County is currently working with Randolph Fiber to provide high speed internet throughout town and available for subscribers, as well as two WIFI hotspots at the park and at the flagpole on Main Street. There is a desire for a new gazebo near the flagpole for people to sit and access the WIFI.

Truck traffic through town is one of the most significant concerns and barriers to quality of life and revitalization. Currently trucks take a left from the Daurity Springs quarry onto S. Main Street and go through town to reach US Highway 421 because the design of the ramp to 421 south of town is not long enough for trucks to gain sufficient speed to enter the highway safely. Other trucks from other industrial sites may route through town for other reasons that should be identified.

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Truck traffic is not just an issue on Main Street. Residents have noticed heavy truck traffic at times on narrow residential streets.

Speeding is also a problem in town, with cars as well as trucks. The County does not enforce traffic laws in town, and residents believe it is not a County priority. There is no radar in Chatham County. The Town has added speed humps on Coral Street, which have proved effective. Participants reported that all roads in Goldston are not to DOT standards, are in bad condition, and need to be widened.

Residents are suspicious of new industrial development, largely due to negative experiences with past development, particularly the Daurity Springs quarry. That quarry has produced heavy truck traffic through town, and residents feel overwhelmed with the traffic and the lack of response from NCDOT. Truck traffic is generated by industrial sites throughout Chatham and neighboring counties. There is unregulated stormwater runoff coming from the Daurity Springs quarry affecting neighboring properties.

Parking in the downtown area is a significant concern; parking along Main Street is not technically permitted but is tolerated because there is nowhere else to park other than a gravel lot on Norfolk Southern property, which is also not technically legal. (Please note that this is anecdotal.) There was consensus in the Saturday open house that there should be somewhere for large trucks to park, since truck drivers patronize the two restaurants on Main Street and take up spaces residents would like to park. Because of truck parking, taking a left turn from Colonial onto Main Street is very dangerous.

Vacant, underutilized, and dilapidated buildings are of significant concern. The Town has received funding for a consultant to do code enforcement, which should make an improvement in buildings being kept to building and zoning code. However, the best outcome

would be new uses and businesses located in these buildings.

TAKEAWAYS

Though survey responses and turnout for public open houses were both low, the information is still very useful. Goldston voters turn out in very low numbers, according to public voter information as well as anecdotal information provided by elected officials. In addition to a tradition of low participation rates, the Town Board and public open house participants all relayed that they and their neighbors have all been suspicious and reluctant to be part of this process. Despite evidence of this suspicion, survey responses were positive and forthright, and input session conversation was respectful and productive.

Participants in the process seem hopeful that Goldston can have a bright future.

There seem to be two schools of thought in Goldston: some people want growth and revitalization, and some want nothing to change. Most participants in the public participation process represented the former group, but all indicated the latter is a significant force in town. Because of exponential growth of residential, industrial, and commercial growth in Chatham County, change in Goldston is inevitable. The question is whether Goldston is able to plan for the future and take control of the change that will occur to the benefit of the Town and its residents.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

1. Traffic and Speeding: Downtown is bifurcated by Main Street/Route 2333, Bellevue Street, and the railroad. One of the greatest barriers to revitalization, increased sense of place and

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community, pedestrian safety, and new development is high speed of all vehicles and heavy truck traffic through town. If traffic were significantly slowed through town and safe pedestrian passages were provided over the railroad tracks, downtown would be much safer and conducive to increased commercial activity.

2. **Lack of Businesses and Services:** Residents want more businesses, more access to jobs, restaurants, a coffee shop, and more activity downtown.
3. **Lack of Recreational Amenities:** Consistent themes in conversation and survey responses focused on a need for enhanced park spaces, new walking trails, and other amenities like swimming pools, splash pads, and pickleball courts.
4. **Lack of Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Enhanced sidewalks and walking trails would add to quality of life for residents.
5. **Dilapidated and Vacant Buildings:** Both the reality and the perception of an underutilized and dilapidated downtown are barriers to Goldston pride and new investment.
6. **Lack of Places to Gather:** Residents would like to have a community center for events, gatherings, and youth programming. The Town would benefit from a gazebo or other sheltered place for residents to sit and use high speed WIFI when the access point is provided at the flagpole.
7. **Town Hall:** The center of Goldston's civic life permits only a limited number of participants at meetings, and does not have amenities common to other municipalities like a projector and screen for presentations.
8. **Lack of Town Staff:** Whether for planning and zoning, code enforcement, administration, or other tasks, Goldston lacks staff to support residents and guide growth.
9. **Transparency and Meaningful Involvement:** Residents have expressed concern that their government is not responsive to them and are not available to hear their views and concerns.