

## MEETING SUMMARY

Community Workshop  
Bridgewater: Vision to Reality  
Tuesday, September 26, 2023  
George H. Mitchell Elementary School



115 Broad Street  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02110  
† 617.282.4675  
800.286.2469  
f 860.533.5143

[www.fando.com](http://www.fando.com)

Connecticut  
Maine  
Massachusetts  
New Hampshire  
New York  
Rhode Island  
Vermont

## Table of Contents

<b>About the Meeting .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Results from Public Comment Boards .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Station 1: Central Square Revitalization .....	5
Station 2: Redevelopment and Housing .....	8
Station 3: Downtown Circulation .....	10
Station 4: Infrastructure .....	14
<b>Summary and Analysis of Public Comments.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Methodology and Terminology .....	16
Station 1: Central Square Revitalization .....	16
Station 2: Redevelopment and Housing .....	17
Station 3: Downtown Circulation .....	17
Station 4: Infrastructure .....	18

## About the Meeting

The Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop held on September 26, 2023 at the George H. Mitchell Elementary School was focused on getting the community's input on the upcoming improvements for the Heart of Bridgewater; the area surrounding Campus Plaza, Central Square and the historic Downtown (see **Figure 1**). The purpose of the initiative is to transform the Heart of Bridgewater into a vibrant hub of business and community. The strategic, community-driven initiative addresses many of the objectives from the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan completed and adopted in 2022 which promotes the rehabilitation and redevelopment of downtown. The principal concepts of the initiative include increasing pedestrian safety via infrastructure improvements and creating opportunities for economic development to achieve broad-based community rejuvenation. See **Appendix A** for the workshop agenda and project background.



Figure 1 - Map of project area



## Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023

Over two hundred and fifty (250) community members including residents and business owners attended the workshop. Attendees received a welcome address from Erik Moore, Town Council President, followed by a presentation by Bob Rulli, Bridgewater's Director of Community & Economic Development (see **Figure 2**). The presentation covered details on the background and goals of Vision to Reality. See **Appendix B** for the presentation slides. Following the presentation, the majority of the workshop time was spent sharing ideas, comments, and visions at four different workshop stations.

- Station 1: Central Square Revitalization
- Station 2: Redevelopment and Housing
- Station 3: Downtown Circulation
- Station 4: Infrastructure

Attendees were able to express their thoughts through discussions with the project team, by writing ideas down on 3" x 5" post-it notes which were captured on public comment boards under two categories: positive aspects they would like to keep and/or enhance, and negative aspects they would like to change and/or improve, and by writing notes directly on large, printed project area maps.



*Figure 2 - Council President Erik Moore giving the welcoming address*

## Results from Public Comment Boards

The public comments listed below are grouped by station, and within each station the comments are further separated into key themes that emerged.

---

### Station 1: Central Square Revitalization

*This station was designed to provide information and solicit public comments on topics that relate to the revitalization of Central Square including character, economic growth, Old Town Hall restoration, the Town Common, placemaking, and smart growth. Attendees shared their ideas on elements related to Central Square that they believe are currently Positive that they would like to keep or enhance, or Negative that they would like to change or improve (see **Figure 3**). These ideas are listed by topic.*

#### Historic Character

- Maintain historic feel
- Maintain and preserve the commons
- Design that is historically appropriate
- Maintain/ preserve any and all historic sites
- Get CS storefronts fixed up, historically appropriate

#### Public Space and Recreation

- Developed recreation facilities for kids
- Make center student friendly- open day and timed convenient to students
- More light. Crossway light. Music.

#### Landscaping and Greenspace

- Add more civic green- trees, bushes and benches
- Keep green spaces
- Clean up common, neat- clean look landscape
- More green spaces
- 1. Central square should be engaged to one side, southside of downtown 2. Therefore the Northside would have two way traffic, thru traffic 3. This would eliminate the island that exists and create an engaging accessible park
- Immediate beautification
- More trees on streets
- Keep green space/common as is

#### Traffic

- Improve traffic flow
- Need staff traffic engineers
- Level at Central Square where traffic is heavy? Unhealthy levels I expect let's monitor it
- Central square traffic signalization – traffic calming, sidewalk bump-outs, road markings need to be more prominent, simplification of signage from central square to campus plaza

## **Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023**

### Pedestrians/Walkability

- Traffic at central square – bike/ped, crosswalks
- Conant Street does not have side walk.
- Keep walkable
- Improved pedestrian crossing for pedestrians and drivers
- Improve ped safety

### Trucks

- Re-route truck
- Downtown- I wish I could enjoy a cup of coffee in front of Restoration. Trucks make that impossible!

### Parking

- Improve access to parking
- Better parking info and signage
- Reconfigure municipal parking lot and make more accessible
- Increase/improve signage to parking access
- Parking where fire station is currently
- What is being done for electrical vehicle recharge centers?

### Buildings

- Incentivize owners to rehab buildings
- New construction (housing) should have green roofs on top- for birds and heating/cooling
- Tax break for building that comply
- Need: facade improvements, PED improvements
- Are tax payers expected to pay for private businesses façade renewal?
- Façade/structure improvements- funding sources?
- Update facades of building
- Will town people vote on what the outer structure of building will look like?

### Businesses

- Small Businesses
- More upscale dining options, encourage small business over corporations
- [Trans]form business signage
- More family restaurant businesses
- Town should buy Cumberland farm and KFC
- Need to improve business signage, currently flat on businesses. No one knows it's there

### Precedents

- Check Huntington Village, NY downtown setup
- Bristol, RI Downtown
- Similar to Court St in Plymouth keep small town historic charm with a 'facelift'
- Campus plaza- something similar to patriot place (on smaller scale) with business on bottom and residential apartment on top. All walking distance to train. Parking (plenty of spaces)
- Look at City of Quincy

**Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023**

- Look at Alpharetta, GA

Other

- Show immediate progress and redevelopment
- Help seniors w/ housing – develop new units so they can sell too-large houses and still stay in town
- What renewable resources are being considered? Solar, wind, etc.
- Improve Broad Street properties

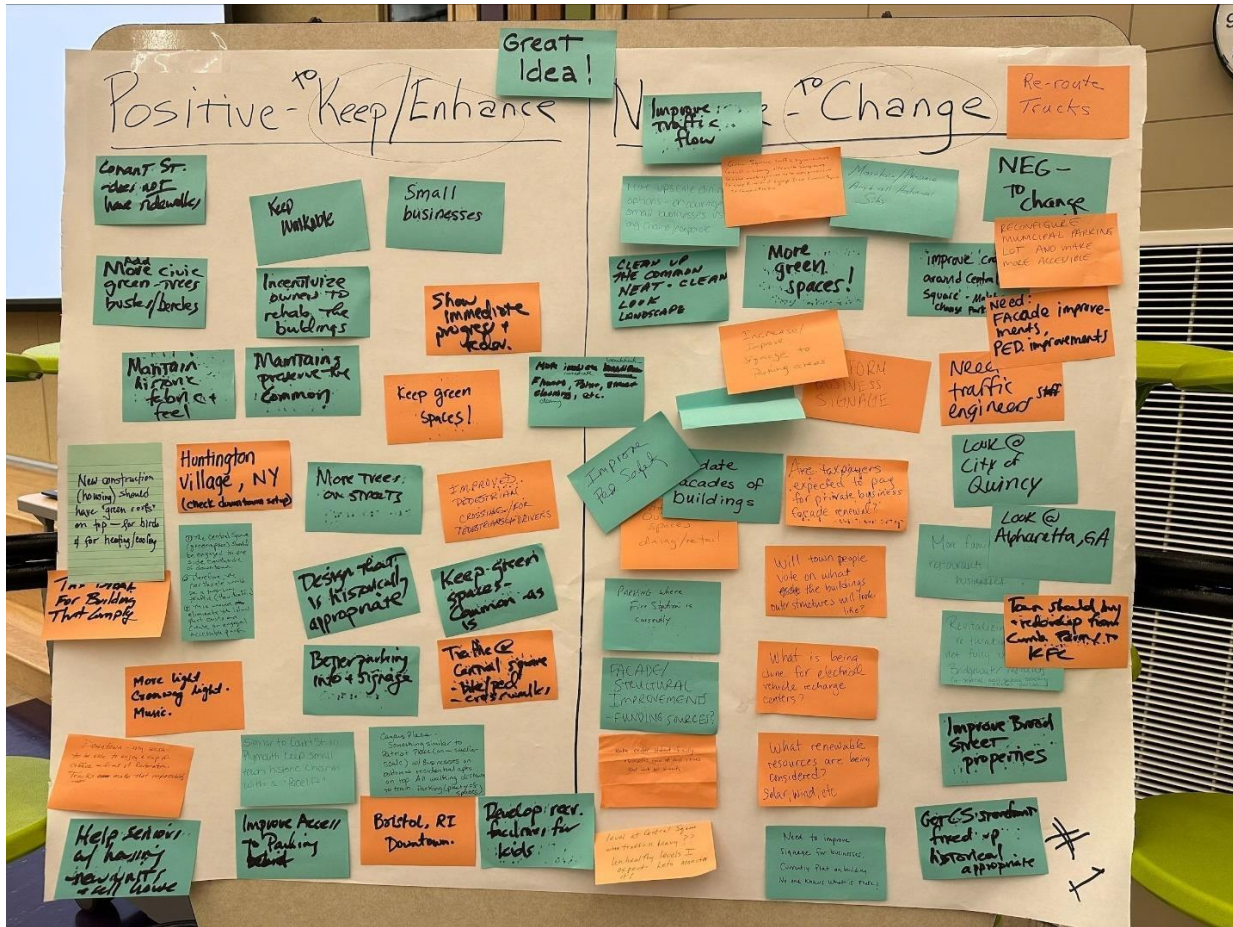


Figure 3 - Station 1 Community Comment Board



---

## Station 2: Redevelopment and Housing

*This station was designed to provide information and solicit public comments on topics that relate to redevelopment and housing including the Town's plans to encourage redevelopment around the MBTA line, the MBTA Communities program, and housing availability and cost in Bridgewater and the region. Attendees shared their ideas on elements related to redevelopment and housing that they believe are currently Positive that they would like to keep or enhance, or Negative that they would like to change or improve (see **Figure 4**). These ideas are listed by topic.*

### Housing

- Housing for adults with disabilities
- Housing close to amenities (stores, post office) = walkable community
- More housing near downtown. Walk way and cycle path
- Housing too much
- No more housing
- How will renters assist with tax burden?
- Traffic by the Nip, no more housing in that area

### Development

- No housing on Campus Plaza, businesses only. Parking not just parallel.
- Don't feel campus plaza should be mixed use, concern about zoning that doesn't protect areas
- No more development at the Nip, keep lake beautiful

### Buildings

- Will tax payers be expected to pay for private business buildings?
- How high of buildings would be zoned?

### Historic Character

- Central Square has a charming NE/historic aesthetic
- Keep buildings on Broad Street from Friendly's to other end of Common alone. Keep Colonial/Historic.
- Needs a more cohesive aesthetic
- Keep height 3 stories, keep building colonial feel

### Amenities

- Roche Bros keep
- Keep Roche Bros or a grocery store in town. Otherwise shopping will be awful at Market Basket – no options.

### Traffic and Parking

- If fire station needs to be demolished make it parking, free for town people
- Traffic ADDTL
- Parking- where will people park? Where will residents park?

### Other

- How will we handle additional burden on school system?



Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023

- More crime, trash
- We can't have everything people want. If we did we would be a city.

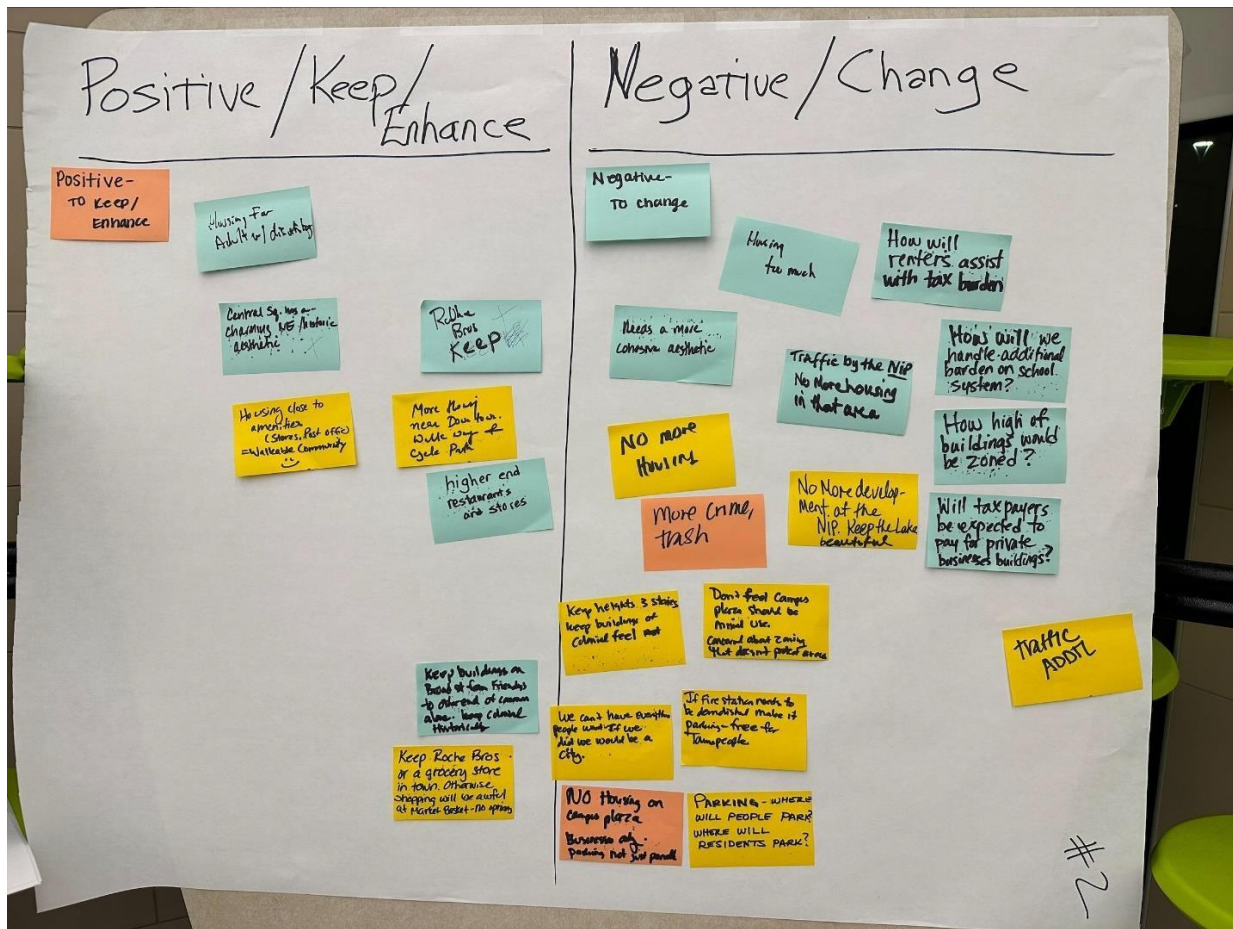


Figure 4 - Station 2 Community Comment Board

---

## Station 3: Downtown Circulation

*This station was designed to provide information and solicit public comments on topics that relate to downtown circulation including the Town's plans to improve transportation systems around Central Square and the MBTA line, and parking in and around central Bridgewater. Attendees shared their ideas on elements related to downtown circulation that they believe are currently Positive that they would like to keep or enhance, or Negative that they would like to change or improve (see **Figure 5**). These ideas are listed by topic.*

### Parking

- Will there be additional parking downtown?
- Parking where the fire station is, once moved potential parking behind Blue Stone Bank in the current empty lot and behind Mexican restaurant. No sign or blind turn
- More free public parking spaces near center square
- Change or get rid of parking around square
- Minimize EV charging stations
- Afraid of parallel parking
- Limited access to parking (move to RR Drive site?)
- Use parking behind buildings/fire station, repair the lot
- More parking behind stores
- Current parking lot behind the music loft etc. is a fee parking- free lot parking should be available
- Back out parking spaces very dangerous
- Current parking situation in center is extremely difficult- nearly impossible to back out of spaces
- I don't go to the center of town. I go to the other town centers because of lack of parking or difficult spots with limited time

### Traffic Calming

- Add speed bumps
- Slow down traffic coming through the commons
- Slow down speed of traffic
- Traffic calming safety- speed bumps – curb extensions – pedestrian/bike oriented vs vehicle dominated – need to make easy to pass through – destination not drive through

### Traffic Circulation

- How will the congestion at Route 104 and South Street be improved?
- Like the concept of the rotary proposal, but curious about the impact to traffic leading to center from Route 18. It's already congested with two lanes
- Need a plan to address/improve congestion
- Is one lane enough? Concern about bikes w/ trucks, unsafe
- Can't go through center of town
- Central square should not have two way traffic one side with pedestrian on the other- too much congestion
- Traffic flow - leave new train station
- Church St. street light near church
- Difficult taking Route out of Church St
- MBTA relocation creates more traffic on Spring Street

## **Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023**

- Small vans circulating through out all town streets, delivering folks to center/train station connection, connection to bus/public transit. Lose the cars better ped and bike access

### Trucks

- What will be done to reduce/avoid heavy truck traffic diversion specifically using the entire Union Street
- Where can truck relocate?
- Big truck coming at common- to confusing -getting from one aide to the other – can't see around them

### Pedestrians/Walkability

- Sidewalks- florescent crosswalks
- Lightning at crosswalks
- Raised crosswalks
- Add bump outs to increase visibility for common pedestrian
- Need to add: flashing lights at crosswalk behind Williams school at basketball court
- Pedestrian over pass or bridge or tunnel for college students on public street
- Main St/Perkins Ave ped red and yellow crossing lights
- Elevated pedestrian walkway for college students over Route 104 connecting to new MBTA station
- Sidewalks everywhere, ezflow of traffic around the square, bike paths and walker friendly
- Hard to see pedestrians trying to cross at town center and at cross walk by library (big pole right to crosswalk)
- We need better side walks
- Summer St. x-walk between Sander bank and Fiesta- shift this x-walk east towards CVS to accommodate desire line and eliminate near misses from the channelized right or off of Central Square
- Cross walks are dangerous, cars don't stop
- Enforcement at crosswalks, paint cross walk more frequently
- Difficult to the cross street
- Pedestrian death zone now at intersection of Summer/Main/Bedford and Common now
- Center is very dangerous/difficult for pedestrians – cars come around rotary too fast
- Heavily used x-walk south at Hall Street at 104- continuous ped crossing causes vehicle congestion, BSU parking is on one side and classroom buildings are on the other.

### Biking

- Look at interior bike lanes, bump out
- No bikes because it's dangerous
- Bike lanes not safe, no room truck traffic
- Recommend protected bike path through center, between drive lane and parking spaces seem dangerous

### Businesses

- Good coffee shop needs more attractions, need more attraction and businesses- diesel fumes/trucks- widen sidewalks, not pleasant
- Variation of business so people, like it is gathering spot

## **Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023**

- Green space enhance, expand small biz- maybe less nail salons (sorry), more diverse small business

### Town Common

- Common itself to “Noah’s Ark’ no changes.
- Keep the town festivities on the common
- Move park close to town hall so it can be better used for music alley and business
- Engage town square (green space) to one side, engage to North Side- thru traffic on oner side of Southside

### Precedents

- Look at Keene, NH- like widening side walks
- Make Central Square more like downtown Portsmouth, NH
- Don’t copy west Bridgewater intersection (by Macy’s, liquor parking lot and war memorial park) unsafe for drivers and peds

### Other

- Concerns with heavy equipment and use of side streets during any (re)construction
- If firehouse is relocated, choose a location far from neighborhoods, maybe elm street commercial area
- less people, no more housing
- Turn all empty buildings into something, remove trash, overgrown trees/grass remove- can’t get wheel chair by



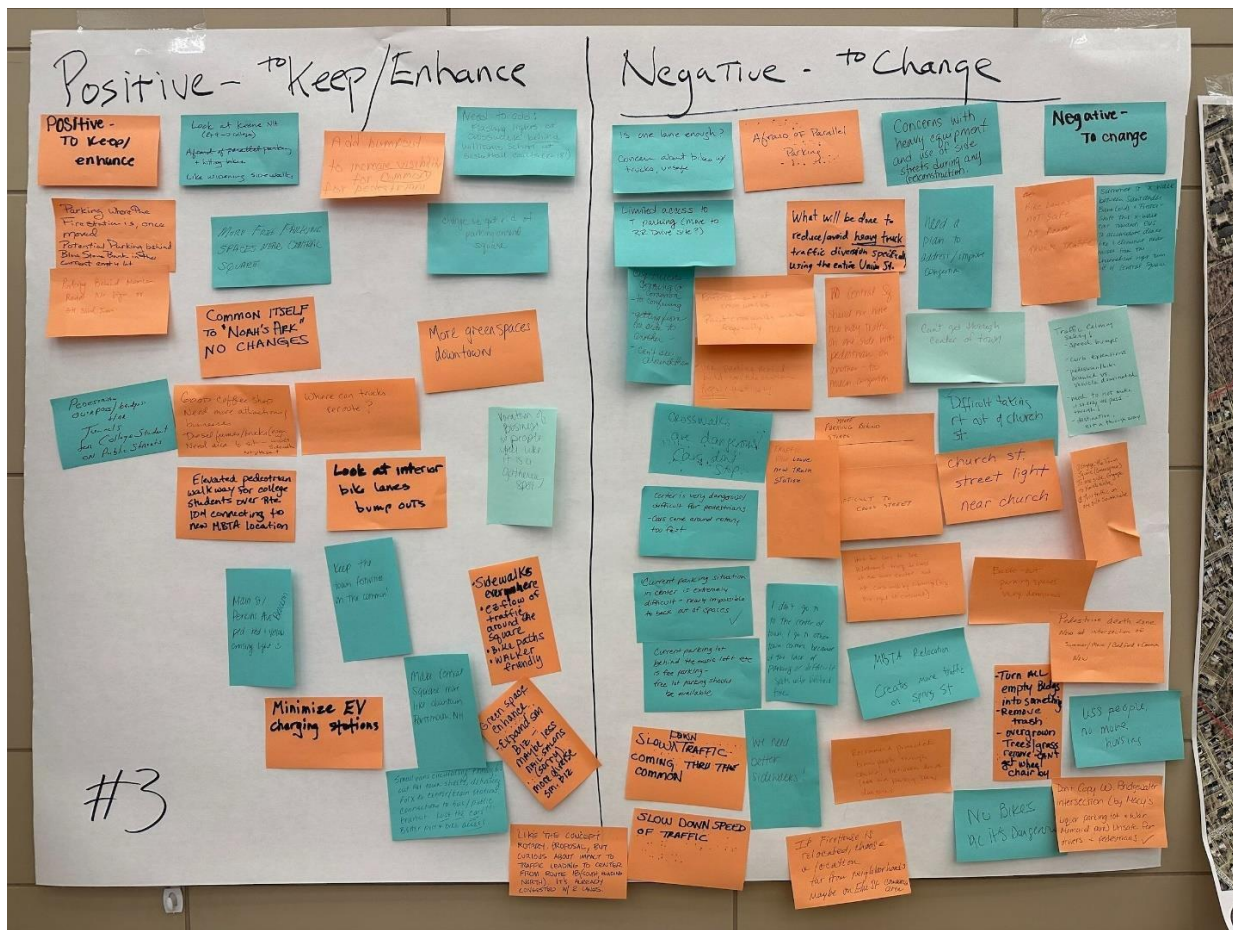


Figure 5 - Station 3 Community Comment Board

---

## Station 4: Infrastructure

*This station was designed to provide information and solicit public comments on topics that relate to infrastructure including maintenance and improvements to infrastructure systems, existing demands and capacities in infrastructure systems, and potential financial implications for future demand scenarios. Attendees shared their ideas on elements related to infrastructure that they believe are currently Positive that they would like to keep or enhance, or Negative that they would like to change or improve (see **Figure 6**). These ideas are listed by topic.*

### Water

- Preserve Carver's pond, no building on land, keep our drinking water safe
- Until water levels are corrected, building should be limited. Don't keep adding if can't support them.
- Concerns for drain on water supply - ground water levels more wells have potential to effect water table, private wells can effect water table
- Can we increase the amount of water we can extract? Will the Vernon Street wells allow an increase?
- What is the effect to the existing water table with construction?
- How will the town handle the additional demand on water and sewer?

### Open Space

- Keep open space not space Town needs to maintain – space left alone
- I live at 357 Summer Street. There is a parcel of land behind me that is buildable for one house. It butts up to Carver Pond. What I would like to see is it become conservation land...the crown jewel.

### Staff and Labor

- Quality of labor (PLA)
- How will the changes impact budgets, staffing for police, fire, etc.

### Waste

- Trash, recycling and yard disposal- make it easier for young professionals and better for environment
- Town trash pick up
- Town compost
- Transfer station

### Flooding/Drainage

- What will be done to mitigate drainage to surrounding homes?
- What are plans for risk of flood? Due to construction water main break.

### Roadways

- Bike and ped friendly road connections
- Need a solution for crosswalk on Spring St, too much traffic backs up into town with crosswalk

### Other

- Keep Mike as town manager
- Build in climate resilience

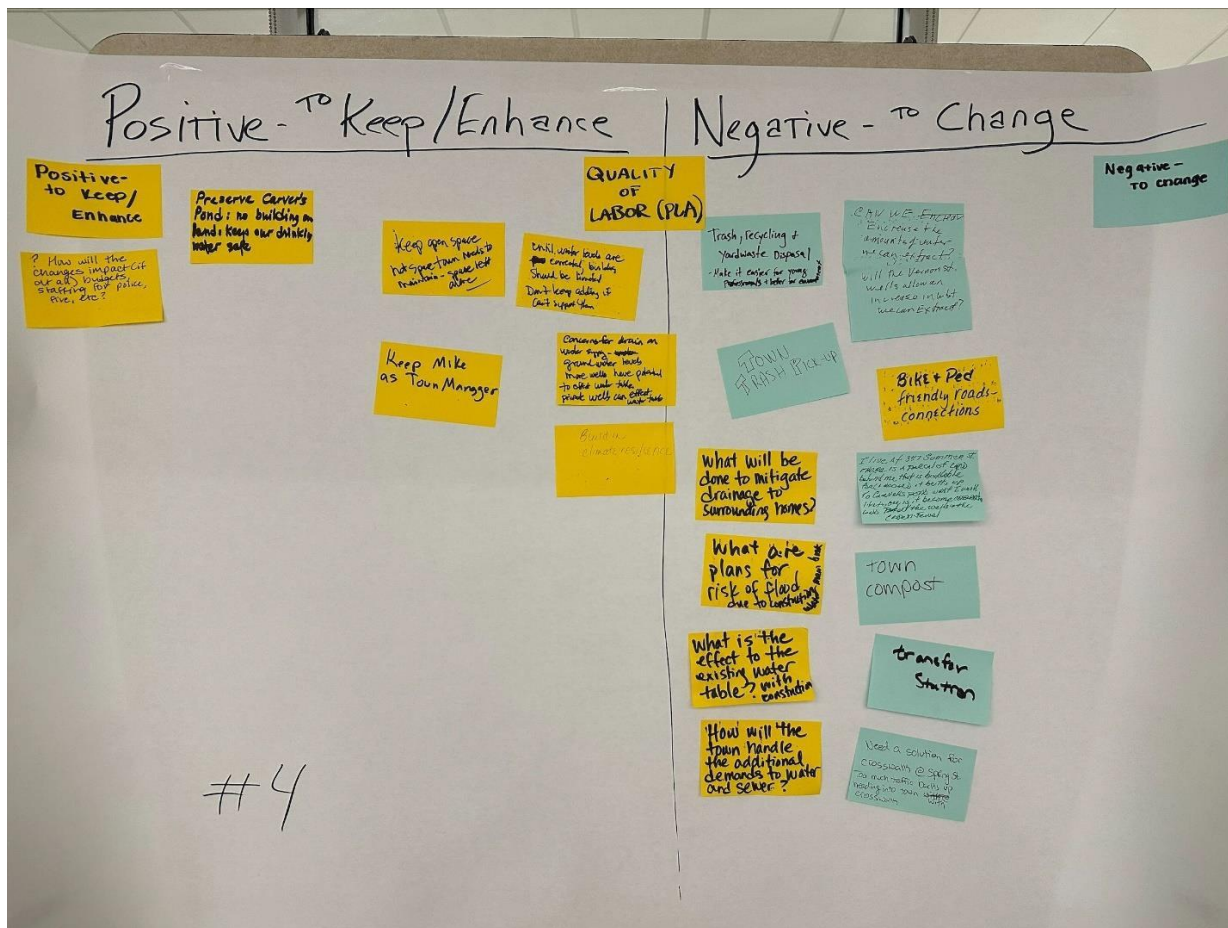


Figure 6 - Station 4 Community Comment Board

## Summary and Analysis of Public Comments

This section summarizes the public comments based on our tabulation and analysis of the public comments made by attendees at the September 26<sup>th</sup> Community Workshop.

---

### Methodology and Terminology

We have summarized our analysis of the public comments based on a range of expressed opinions at the September 26<sup>th</sup> Community Workshop:

- Unanimous support
- Strong support (but not unanimous)
- Mixed support and opposition
- Strong opposition (but not unanimous)
- Unanimous opposition

---

### Station 1: Central Square Revitalization

#### Historic Character

- Unanimous support to maintain the historic character of Central Square

#### Public Space and Recreation

- Strong support for creating inclusive public space for college students
- Strong support for creating accessible recreation space for children

#### Landscaping and Greenspace

- Unanimous support to enhance the Town Common greenspace
- Strong support for street trees and landscaping

#### Traffic

- Unanimous support for improved traffic flow

#### Pedestrians/Walkability

- Unanimous support for pedestrian/walkability improvements

#### Trucks

- Unanimous support for reducing or rerouting large truck through-traffic

#### Parking

- Unanimous support to make existing parking lots more accessible and easier to find

#### Buildings

- Unanimous support for structural and façade improvements to Central Square buildings

#### Businesses



## Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023

- Strong support for small business attraction and retention
- Strong support for diverse business options, from high-end to family-friendly
- Strong support for increasing business awareness through improved signage

---

## Station 2: Redevelopment and Housing

### Housing

- Mixed support for and opposition to additional housing around the central business district

### Development

- Mixed support for/strong opposition to mixed use at Campus Plaza, and additional housing at Campus Plaza

### Buildings

- Mixed concerns regarding funding and zoning/design restrictions

### Historic Character

- Unanimous support to maintain the historic character of downtown

### Amenities

- Strong support for keeping Roche Brothers, or another grocery store, in Campus Plaza

### Traffic and Parking

- Mixed concerns regarding parking and impacts to traffic

### Other

- Strong opposition to perceived residual impacts of development including increased school capacity, trash, and crime

---

## Station 3: Downtown Circulation

### Parking

- Unanimous support to make existing parking lots more accessible and easier to find
- Strong support for converting or removing angled parking
- Strong support for free parking

### Traffic Calming

- Unanimous support for traffic calming measures including speed bumps and bump outs

### Traffic Circulation

- Unanimous support for improved traffic flow
- Mixed concerns regarding the solution to traffic congestion

### Trucks

## **Bridgewater: Vision to Reality Community Workshop - September 26, 2023**

- Unanimous support for reducing or rerouting large truck through-traffic

### Pedestrians/Walkability

- Unanimous support for pedestrian/walkability improvements
- Unanimous support for enhancing pedestrian/crosswalk visibility

### Biking

- Mixed support for and opposition to cycling infrastructure improvements

### Businesses

- Strong support for more diverse businesses
- Strong support for improving the outdoor environment for customers/visitors

### Town Common

- Mixed support for and opposition to changing the Town Common

---

## **Station 4: Infrastructure**

### Water

- Unanimous support for addressing existing water demand

### Open Space

- Unanimous support for preserving open space

### Waste

- Strong support for making the waste stream better for the environment

### Flooding/Drainage

- Strong support for addressing drainage issues associated with existing and proposed development

### Roadways

- Strong support for enhancing bike/ped safety

### Staff and Labor

- Strong support for ensuring staff capacity/quality of labor