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Town of Bridgewater activates phase one of revitalization plan

October 06, 2023 - Front Section

Bridgewater, MA “Revitalizing the Heart of Bridgewater: Vision to Reality,” an initiative announced this summer by Bridgewater Town Manager Michael Dutton, focuses on transforming the town’s Central Business District, which includes Central Square and the area in and around Campus Plaza, into a vibrant hub of business and community. The strategic, community-driven initiative will address many of the objectives from the town’s Comprehensive Master Plan completed in 2022.

“Bridgewater is an extraordinary community full of bright minds, outstanding talent, hardworking dedicated business owners, exceptional educators, and committed residents who share our belief that there’s an opportunity right at our fingertips to invest in and grow this town to realize its full potential,” said Bob Rulli, director of the Office of Community & Economic Development. “After continued listening and learning with residents, business owners, university faculty, staff and students, and myriad stakeholders, Revitalizing the Heart of Bridgewater: Vision to Reality, will proactively advance us to realizing that vision, guided by that collective input.”

Town Manager Dutton, who oversaw the completion of the Comprehensive Master Plan, shares Rulli’s enthusiasm. “We’re committed to actualizing improvements downtown including pedestrian safety, beautification congruent with a high quality of life, and stewarding a business climate that supports existing local businesses while attracting new ones,” said Dutton. “The opportunity is now.”

On September 26th, nearly 300 residents, business owners and other stakeholders in Bridgewater came together for a community workshop held at George Mitchell Elementary School. Following a brief presentation on the project, attendees visited designated stations where they discussed the project with planners, engineers, and town leaders in more detail. The focus of the four stations were: Central Square Revitalization, Redevelopment and Housing, Downtown Circulation, and Infrastructure.

Rulli describes the revitalization plan as a holistic initiative as it addresses housing, transportation, small businesses, historic preservation, infrastructure, and cultural tourism. “The focus on Central Square allows us to protect and celebrate the historic character of downtown and to reimagine the area around Campus Plaza, including the relocation of the Town’s only MBTA platform, making it a model for suburban Transit Oriented Development, or TOD – a fast growing trend in creating vibrant, livable, sustainable communities,” he said.

The Town has organized multiple outreach efforts to garner community input and engagement, including polling conducted in conjunction with Bridgewater State University, and in tandem with its Office of Community & Economic Development, Bridgewater’s been leveraging its respective social media channels to regularly provide up-to-date information to citizens as well.

“I like to say we finally have the unique opportunity to create a ‘there, there,’ meaning the chance to give Bridgewater an identity – a place to gather, shop, work, and entertain; a place where young professionals can work and live, and university students might consider starting their post-collegiate life,” said Rulli.

The community workshop was one of many planned outreach efforts designed to engage those who live, work and do business in Bridgewater.

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