Medford Conversations: New Opportunities for Inclusion
Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

The City of Medford, Massachusetts is negotiating changes in demographics, public infrastructure, and political leadership, all within a larger context of gentrification and global climate change. The Medford Conversations organization, a coalition of many leaders throughout Medford, coalesced with the belief that deliberative democratic practices were key in ensuring Medford navigated these challenges and opportunities in a just, equitable, intentional way. The coalition’s mission is “to include and actively engage a multiplicity of voices in our community … [and] to encourage people to create and act on visions for a sustainable, just, and thriving Medford.”

In this report, we have focused on the first part of the organization’s mission: How can Medford Conversations recruit many different voices from the community, including those who may not have traditionally participated in Medford politics, and ensure that they are able to effectively participate in deliberative processes?

By interviewing key contacts, many of whom are directly involved with Medford Conversations’ work; conducting research at one of Medford Conversations’ events; and exploring case studies of deliberative democracy, we were able to identify four key themes related to event participation. For each of these themes, we synthesized what event participants and steering committee members had shared with case studies and other secondary research to develop actionable recommendations for Medford Conversations. We believe these recommendations will help the organization design, plan, and promote future public events that will bring a multiplicity of perspectives to the table in a meaningful way.
Our recommendations are summarized here:

**Tying Conversation to Action**
- When designing conversations, strive for fidelity to a study circles model when possible.
- Consider implementing conversations in varying scales and contexts.
- Draw clear connections to power structures and policy development.

**Incorporating Intergenerational Perspectives**
- Diversify communication tools.
- Intentionally include youth and seniors in leadership roles.
- Reach out to local resources and organizations.

**Resolving Barriers to Participation**
- Independent from a specific event, lay the groundwork for best practices in event promotion.
- Strategically expand online social networks.
- Further build the Medford Conversations coalition across many different communities.
- Think beyond the “rational debate.”
- Consider formats that allow residents to debate within their home language.
- Research translation options that might be available.

**Setting the Agenda**
- Draft the priorities for the Medford Conversations by integrating previous and ongoing commitments.
- Advertise the agenda through a variety of channels.
- Clarify available event services in the agenda.
- Indicate where background information is available.
- Design questions in a solution-oriented way.
- Make the follow-up plan known.
Section 1: Introduction

It is an exciting time to be a Medford resident.

The Wynn Casino in Everett and the potential MBTA Green Line extension through Medford offer both promises and perils, and will undoubtedly affect Medford's residents. These new development efforts coincide with the closing of beloved small Medford businesses and stores within the Meadow Glen Mall. The political structure is also in transition, as Medford voted in its first new mayor in twenty-eight years, Mayor Stephanie M. Burke.

Any community would be dizzy keeping up with so many changes and hot-button issues. Medford Conversations hopes to establish deliberative democratic processes and forums to ensure that residents can have a say in how Medford navigates these challenges and opportunities. However, the added dimension of a changing Medford population further complicates matters; the demographics of the city are increasingly diverse, hailing from many different countries and speaking many languages.

In considering how Medford Conversations might best pursue deliberative democracy, we focused specifically on the challenges of including a multiplicity of voices in a meaningful way.
The Role of Participation in Deliberative Democracy

These questions of participation and inclusion permeate the writings on deliberative democracy. Some of the most seminal works on deliberative democracy were written in the 1970s, but the discourse started attracting many theorists in the 1990s, in conjunction with the rise of a politics of identity and difference (Dryzek, 2000). A history of deliberative democracy as a concept, with the level of detail and nuance it deserves, is beyond the scope of this report. Our work relies on a definition put forth by Ercan and Dryzek (2015) put forth, in part because it incorporates recent theoretical debates about the importance of inclusion in deliberative democracy. They write:

“That core [of deliberative democracy] is defined by putting communication at the heart of politics, recognizing the need for effective justification of positions, stressing the pursuit of reciprocal understanding across those who have different frameworks or ideologies, valuing of inclusion and reflection, and suspicion of coercive, deceptive, and strategic uses of language” (p. 241).

This definition is a long way from early deliberative democracy thinkers like Habermas and Rawls, whose works were interested in the idea that thought exchange could result in “uniform preference change, ending in consensus” (Elstub 2010, p. 291). Ercan and Dryzek instead focus on communication, transformation, and sincerity. Their definition also mentions inclusion, which is a recurring theme in discussions of deliberative democracy and a key consideration in our research.

Young (2000) introduces the idea of external and internal exclusion. External exclusion regards who is in the room, so to speak. Participatory events tend to gather a disproportionate amount of white males and professionals (Fung 2004), indicating external exclusion of those who do not belong to these categories. In a printed interview, Young pointed out the folly of expecting that labeling an event “open to all” would be enough to gather a diverse enough group to be representative of the wider community. “Because structural inequalities make taking advantage of formal opportunities more difficult or costly for members of some groups than for others,” Young
says, “deliberative planners who wish to overcome these biases need to take special measures to include them in the process” (Fung 2004, p. 49). As champions of more deliberative processes in Medford, Medford Conversations will need to identify and address the ways in which these mechanisms of external and internal exclusion affect the health of public participation.

Internal exclusion is the idea that even when someone is in the room, they still might not be able to effectively participate in the dialogue. If a participant does not express their ideas with the “rationality, reserve, cautiousness, quietude, community, selflessness, and universalism” (Sanders 1997, p. 348) associated with the “rational thought exchange” of deliberative democracy, they can often be ignored. Of course, as Young points out, “neutral, universal, and dispassionate expression” is a total fiction, and “actually carries the rhetorical nuances of particularly situated social positions and relations” (Young 2000, p. 63).

Yet, in real moments of deliberation and communication, “people sometimes reject claims and arguments not on their rational merits, but because they do not like their modes of expression” (Young 2000, p. 70). A person with the “improper” accent or demeanor, or who prefers signs and songs over solemn letters to the editor might be ignored and rejected, thereby excluding her even when she is in the room.

These concerns around inclusion do not undermine the aspirations of deliberative democracy, but they surface key challenges that Medford Conversations will want to wrestle with as the coalition plans future events. As Phillips points out, “Deliberation matters only because there is difference” (1995, p. 150-1), and part of Medford Conversations’ mission is to leverage the many different voices in the community to develop and pursue a compelling vision for Medford’s future. Measuring inclusion is a near-impossible task, and “perfect” representation will always be an elusive goal, but considering how internal and external exclusion might be affecting Medford’s participatory processes is a necessary exercise in the journey towards establishing meaningful deliberative democratic processes in the city.

Our hope is that our research will not fall into the trap common to deliberative democratic thinking, wherein
broad assumptions are made about what factors are required for deliberative democracy, without consistent consideration about how these conditions can be achieved (Phillips 1995, p. 154). This report, then, begins in Section 2 with a brief introduction to Medford, which helps us ground our work in the specific context of the community at this moment. In Sections 3 and 4, we describe the research we undertook; field research at a public event and interviews with key informants helped us assess who participates at events currently, and what vision community leaders hold for future events, while case studies provided insight into how other communities improved participation at their events. In Section 5, we synthesize the results from our three research methods into four themes: tying conversation to action, incorporating intergenerational perspectives, resolving barriers to participation, and setting the agenda. For each of these, we review how these themes appeared in the field research and provide recommendations for the Medford Conversations Steering Committee moving forward, drawing primarily from our case study research.
Medford comes with a deep sense of history as one of the oldest cities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Yet, the emergence of Medford Conversations and this deliberative democracy initiative are happening during a time of significant change in the city.

While many aspects of Medford are broadly celebrated, many emerging or evolving conditions may elicit different values or visions for the city’s future. Medford Conversations will have to contend with how stakeholders across the community are understanding this local and regional context.

**Community Conditions**

**Neighborhoods and built environment**

Medford’s neighborhoods, which tend to defy consistent categorization, generally center around local squares, quadrants of the city, or around natural and built landmarks. Some neighborhoods also reflect cultural or demographic bases—South Medford is home to a generations-old Italian-American community, while Station Landing is a mixed-use development near the Wellington MBTA station.
The West Medford neighborhood, a hub of community activity and historic preservation efforts, is recognized as a cultural and residential base for the state’s oldest historically-Black community.

Medford’s built environment is that of a “streetcar suburb,” with growth patterns reflecting the gradual subdivision of seventeenth-century pastoral estates into the dense suburban fabric of today. Today’s roads and neighborhoods largely reflect those subdivisions, molded over time by the community’s demands for both urbanization and stewardship of its substantial green and open spaces. On this latter point, Medford’s natural spaces are indelible parts of the city’s identity. The seven-mile Mystic River runs through the center of Medford, and a large portion of the 2,575 square mile Fells Reservation sits in the northern part of the city.

Demographic Change and Social Cohesion

While Medford has a deep sense of history, changes in the composition of residents have in part prompted Medford Conversations to argue for a new paradigm for community participation. Resident tenures vary, with 57.5% owner-occupied households in addition to and inclusive of recent immigrant arrivals, young professionals, young families, and a transient adult student population (ACS 2010-2014).

Because of the nature of U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) racial categories and estimates, some rapidly growing communities within Medford—particularly immigrant populations—may be undercounted. Residents with insufficient legal documentation may not be represented due to their apprehension about interacting with perceived government entities (Lowenthal, 2014). Census and ACS surveys also lack a defined ethnic category for Arab Americans, which can lead to undercounting and the subsuming of this group within Census categories of White, Asian, or Other (Lowenthal, 2014; Arab American Institute, 2015).

Yet another expression of diversity that may not be reflected in census data is the diversity represented in the public school district, where 62.6% of of its 953,429 students identify as white, 14.5% Black or African American, 8.7% Asian, 0.3% Native American, 9.8% Hispanic or Latino of any race, and 4.1% mixed race (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015-16). Within the same overall district population, 25.2% of students speak English as a second language and 7.9% are English Language Learners (Ibid.).
Like so many rapidly growing, diverse urban communities, Medford also faces challenges in building social cohesion and active participation in community affairs. Though many observers identify Medford’s diversity as an asset, some have identified it also as a source of tension. With diversity comes a corresponding multiplicity of voices, interests, communication styles, or barriers to social, economic, or political participation. Residents and other advocates, such as a Latino parent group that has been advocating for more bilingual staff in local schools, also have argued that Medford’s many cultural, commercial, and political institutions have been slow in adapting to an increasingly diverse community (Thomas, 2015).

Thus, capturing a “multiplicity of voices” will require organizers to be cognizant of how a wide range of dimensions of income, race, citizenship status, race, language, religion, and identity may affect community conversations.

Development and Neighborhood Change

While it is an old city of neighborhoods with a strong sense of its historical identity, development and change loom large for Medford, its built environment, and its residents. On the one hand, Medford’s proximity to Boston affords the city and its residents significant access to the resources and opportunities of the metropolitan region (AECOM, 2012). On the other, Medford’s challenges are also tied closely to those of Boston and other communities in the region (Ibid.). Communities like Medford are increasingly serving as a release valve for those priced out of Boston’s real estate market (Bluestone et al., 2015). An improving regional economy has accelerated neighborhood change in Medford, threatening rapid gentrification and displacement of the city’s “traditional” working class (Teitell, 2014).

Feared and actual gentrification impact not only lower-income and renter residents but also many of Medford’s smaller businesses. Rising property values and increased demand for compact, mixed-use, and Millennial-friendly development (as typified by Medford’s transit-oriented Station Landing) have coincided with the

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### Key Facts about Medford:

- **Population:** 58,000
- **Median Household Income:** $77,868
- **Poverty Rate:** 10.5%
- **Racial Makeup:**
  - 78.6% white
  - 8.8% Black or African American
  - 6.9% Asian
  - 4.6% Hispanic or Latino of any race
  - 2.7% mixed race

Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey
closure of often locally-owned small businesses in the city. Reactions to the closing of Bestseller’s Books or non-anchor tenants in Meadow Glen Mall, due to unaffordable rents for the former or new development opportunities for the latter, have elicited outcry from residents concerned with the impacts of new development and neighborhood change on existing community networks and social cohesion (Raelin and Brereton, 2015; Ruppenthal, 2016). The 2015 closing of Bestseller’s bookstore has already galvanized a response among residents, a number of whom have organized into the Medford Community Coalition, a field project partner and Medford Conversations stakeholder (Raelin and Brereton, 2015).

Medford will likely experience significant impacts in relation to a range of regional developments and troubling global trends. Many residents express trepidation over the planned Wynn casino development in neighboring Everett, which in addition to offering potential remediation funding for Mystic River improvements also portends many traffic, environmental, public health, and fiscal concerns related to the casino’s construction and operation (McCabe, 2014; Mass Gaming Commission, 2014).

Medford, a community under served by public transit, is also an expected beneficiary of a MBTA Green Line extension that has been delayed by budgetary concerns but may ultimately also have implications for economic development and housing affordability (Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, 2014; McLean, 2016). These potentially transformational developments also complicate and may even conflict with ongoing climate adaptation and resilience strategies that are being spearheaded by local activists and the Medford Office of Energy and Environment (MAPC, 2016; City of Medford, 2013).

Political Change

The City of Medford also has a new executive administration for the first time in twenty-eight years, following the election of Stephanie M. Burke, a former City Councilor and Director of Budget and Personnel for the City of Medford. In her inaugural address at Medford High School, Mayor Burke spoke of her eagerness “to chart a new course for a city full of potential.” Citing Medford’s combination of “generations of family history alongside fresh new faces,” Burke asserted that this “combination of perspectives creates an environment of optimism, expectation and civic engagement” (Inaugural address, 1/4/2016). This formal shift in the city’s leadership—and in all likelihood, the city’s governance practices—presents a unique window of opportunity for the Medford Conversations project.
Our Partners: The Medford Conversations Project

In light of the change and uncertainty described previously, community leaders have identified a need for increased dialogue across groups in the city. The Medford Conversations Project emerged as a grassroots coalition in early 2015, and it has been gaining increased traction in Medford through the commitment of volunteers. It continues to build capacity for the emerging coalition and the deliberative democracy model through regular governance and planning meetings, conversation facilitation trainings, fundraising, and community-based advocacy.

Champions of this project include a strong base of local stakeholders, many of whom sit on its steering committee. All come to the leadership table with experience as activists or facilitators in areas such as Medford’s public schools, faith-based organizations, cultural associations, or municipal departments. The steering committee includes among its stakeholders the Human Rights Commission and the Medford Community Coalition; our primary communications were with representatives of each of these entities.

Since its inception, Medford Conversations has supported events such as the Arts and Culture Summit in 2015, and has more directly co-sponsored community events such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day with Mystic Valley Area branch of the NAACP, Envision Medford with the Medford Community Coalition, and a World Cafe with Medford High School, all in 2016. While it spearheads its own facilitated community conversations, Medford Conversations also functions as a resource for fellow community members seeking strategies on how to handle emerging issues or concerns among Medford’s residents.

Our research aims to inform Medford Conversations’ planning of future events. Specifically, we are focused on the part of the mission statement that seeks to “engage a multiplicity of voices.” As the demographics of Medford continue to evolve, Medford Conversations will need to intentionally include different communities within Medford in order to most equitably and effectively tackle the many important issues the city faces.

Medford Conversations’ mission is to include and actively engage a multiplicity of voices in our community. Through conversations, the project hopes to encourage people to create and act on visions for a sustainable, just, and thriving Medford, Massachusetts (Mission, 2016).
Section 3: Methods

Our research incorporated three different methods.

Our event research and interviews helped us better understand who is participating currently and what Medford Conversations’ Steering Committee members envision for the future. From these data, we identified four themes. We then looked to relevant case studies to find ideas, recommendations, and best practices. Medford Conversations could use in their work to tackle the challenges identified. In this section, we describe these methods in detail.

![Figure 2: Research methods]

- **Research at Envision Medford**
  - Who participates now, and why?

- **Interviews with Key Contacts**
  - Who participates now, and why?

- **Case Studies**
  - What can Medford Conversations do to improve participation?

- **Identify Four Key Themes**
  - What central themes require further consideration?

- **Locate Possible Strategies and Generate Recommendations**

- **Tying Conversation to Action**
  - Incorporating Intergenerational Perspectives
  - Resolving Barriers to Participation
  - Setting the Agenda

Section 3: Methods
Research at Envision Medford: Who Participates, and Why?

Envision Medford took place on February 28, 2016 at Medford High School, and was billed as a “collective conversation about economic development in Medford.” The main organizing force behind Envision Medford was the Medford Community Coalition, but it was supported by Medford Conversations in the setup and facilitation of the event. Organizers hoped for 100 attendees, and ultimately an estimated 140 people participated. Participants were assigned at random to tables of about eight, at which trained facilitators guided discussions about visions for economic development in Medford and about the actions required to achieve these visions.

We collected data in two different ways at this meeting: through public infographics and exit surveys. The public infographics were three poster boards at the entrance of the room, each with a question: “How long have you lived or worked in Medford?”, “What neighborhood do you live or work in?”, and “What topics would you like to discuss at future events?” Each board had a few different categories listed and room for participants to write in other answers. Every attendee was given a few stickers to place in the category that suited them.

Creating a list of categories proved to be a complicated task for the neighborhood poster board; it became apparent in our conversations with event organizers that there are not clearly-defined neighborhoods in Medford. Many neighborhoods have many different names, and it appears that residents might identify more strongly as Medford residents rather than belonging with specific neighborhoods. We ultimately created a list of neighborhoods compiled from both real estate websites and input from event organizers.

To analyze this data, we counted the stickers in each category. Participants did not always place stickers clearly in line with the given categories or responses, so analyzing this data was not perfectly precise. Additionally, because of the differences in neighborhood identities, it is impossible to determine, for example, whether no one attended from a certain neighborhood or no one calls their neighborhood by the name we listed.

The exit surveys were administered at the end of the event by facilitators to their groups. The survey asked respondents why they attended the event and what their general
feedback was for organizers. We also asked respondents to rate how representative the event was of Medford as a whole, who seemed to be missing, and why these people might not be present. The full survey is included in Appendix A.

To analyze the open-response answers, we read through all of them and generated several categories that captured the different sentiments. To better assess the frequency of a given sentiment, we coded some responses in multiple categories as necessary. For example, if a respondent said they attended the event because they had a civic duty to improve Medford, their comments would count in both the “To improve Medford” and “Out of a civic, personal, or professional duty” categories. We also endeavored to capture the granularity of attitudes; for example, some respondents cited the fact that Medford seemed to be changing in a positive way, mentioning a “New infusion of people—primed for change in a positive way,” or saying, “I wanted to be a part of the Renaissance I believe is coming to Medford.” These responses were counted differently than those who talked about the fact that Medford needs to change, which were more pessimistic about its current context, like one respondent who wrote that the city is not moving forward as it needs to be. These two categories can both be counted together as being about change, but also help assess those who are attending out of concern versus those who are attending out of optimism for the future.

Limitations

One obvious limitation to this research is that the sample is entirely from people who knew about the event and were able to attend. Those who had been externally excluded are, by extension, excluded from our data. Naturally, we do not want to overvalue the results of this research because of this limitation, but it still provides helpful insight into the quality of participation in a given Medford public event. Additionally, this data was collected at only one event, and cannot be taken as representative of all public events in Medford or of all Medford Conversations events.
Interviews of Key Contacts: What Is the Vision for Participation in the Future?

The interviews allowed us to explore further how public participation works in Medford currently, and what our key contacts envisioned for future participatory processes. With the exception of two interviews, everyone was on the steering committee. The interview questions were designed to explore interviewees’ thoughts about Medford, its changes, and its public processes. We also asked about how interviewees envisioned Medford Conversations’ role in the future. For the full list of questions, see Appendix B.

After conducting all of the interviews, the responses were recorded into a matrix with each response in a row with other interviewees’ responses. This allowed us to visually scan the responses to identify patterns of what was emerging in general through the interviews. We then gathered every response respective to each question and counted the number of times each topic came up through them. They were analyzed based on the number of times they were repeated, as well as when a something only emerged once.

Table 1: Key contacts interviewed

- Laura Brereton: Project Client, Co-Chair, Medford Community Coalition
- Dale Bryan: Project Client, Human Rights Commission, Medford Conversations
- Stephanie M. Burke: Mayor of Medford
- Noah Evans: Rector and Pastor of Medford Grace Episcopal Church
- Ronny Flores: Medford Resident
- Alicia Hunt: Office of Energy & the Environment
- Timothy Klein: School & Community Partnership Counselor, Medford High School
- Ken Krause: Chair of Mayor Burke’s Cultural Affairs and Recreation Committee
- Gary Roberts: Chair of the Medford Arts Council
- Rebecca Sapolsky: Boys And Girls Club of Medford
Since our intention of conducting interviews was to gain as much information about the steering committee and Medford as possible, we did not limit respondents to one answer, rather, we gathered every comment and analyzed them all as part of a collective response.

Throughout the report, the interviews are used to provide anecdotal details to support or challenge other data collected. The interviews provide in-depth information about the opinions and views of the steering committee, largely, but also of the city government; they are not, however, intended to be used to speak about the larger community in Medford.

Limitations

Though our interviews were instrumental in weaving together different pieces of data we collected and adding a personal depth to our report, there are some limitations that arise in both instrument design and representation. In regards to the former, it is a challenge to design questions that do not prompt the interviewee but also are specific enough to inform the research question. For the latter, there are several logistical barriers that need to be overcome to make an interview possible. Scheduling conflicts, available time, transportation and many others all impacted those we were able to interview and those we could not.
The case study research attempts to draw lessons from real examples of participatory processes in practice that Medford could employ in pursuit of deliberative democracy, including practical strategies, innovations and solutions for increasing and improving participation at these events. To this end, our research initiated potential case studies first and then ultimately chose cases based on their fit with the themes taken from research at Envision Medford and interviews with key contacts.

Case study research focused on the dataset available on “Participedia” which has crowdsourced 512 cases on democratic innovations from around the world. To ensure relevance to the Medford Conversations, the following factors, as well as related keywords, were applied to locate the case candidates.

Location keywords: “The United States” and “Local.” For similar cultural context and geographical scope, the cases at the local level in the U.S. were selected, like neighborhood, city and town, or metropolitan area.

Language content keywords: “English.” This research selected cases with English content.

Method of recruitment keywords: “Open to all.” One of the Medford Conversations objectives is to make participatory processes as inclusive as possible, so the method of recruitment is open to all.

Purpose keywords: “Community building.” Medford Conversations is for engaging a multiplicity of voices in the community to create and act on visions for a sustainable, just, and thriving Medford.

Process keywords: “Discussion, Dialogue, or Deliberation” and “Face-to-Face, Online or Both.” To increase and improve the diversity of participation in Medford Conversations, both face-to-face conversations and online forums may be involved to engage all members of the Medford community.
Section 4: Results

In this section, we discuss the results of our research at Envision Medford, including the public infographics as well as the exit surveys. Next, we discuss the key findings from our interviews with Steering Committee members. Finally, we share which case studies were surfaced in our research as relevant to Medford. These are discussed in further detail throughout Section 5, where we apply the lessons from these cases to the specific themes that arose from our other research methods.

Research at Envision Medford

The research at Envision Medford targeted all event attendees, about 140 people in total. Not everyone participated in every piece of the research or answered every question, so total percentages for each question are calculated based on the number who answered that question.

As previously mentioned, the data analysis for some of the public infographics is complicated because it is not always clear which sticker corresponds with which category (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Public infographic about future conversation topics

Source: Envision Medford research. In the “Add your own” section, the many topics make it difficult to assess which sticker is a vote for which topic. Categories were generated by the research team based on feedback from event organizers. There are 303 responses listed because participants were encouraged to vote multiple times.
Public Infographics

Most of the participants have been in Medford for over a decade. Confirming a hunch that many of our interviews had surfaced, long-time residents made up the majority of event attendance. Over a third had been in Medford for over twenty-one years, and 27% reported being in Medford from eleven to twenty years (See Table 2).

West Medford was the most strongly represented neighborhood. As mentioned in Section 3, this was a complicated infographic to interpret because of the unclear neighborhood identities—is it true that no one from Brooks Estates attended, or did they simply call their neighborhood by a different name? Our conversations with the client and research online indicates that there is not a uniform understanding of neighborhood identities or locations throughout the city. However, the data suggests that West Medford had the strongest representation, given that over a third of respondents identified with this neighborhood. See Table 3.

Attendees wanted to discuss development at future events. Many of those who participated in this public infographic voted multiple times, and added their own topics.

Of the topics listed, development (fifty-three votes), diversity (thirty-nine votes), and transportation (thirty-four votes) received the most votes. Of the topics generated by the audience, redesigning Medford Square was the most popular, tying with transportation (thirty-four votes).

Table 2: Length of time attendees lived or worked in Medford

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21+ years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Envision Medford research. N = 111. Categories were made available on the public infographic.
Exit Surveys

The exit surveys (see Appendix A) were distributed by group facilitators at the end of the event. Of the 140 people in attendance, 109 returned an exit survey, providing a response rate of 78%. As described in Section 3, we counted responses across multiple categories as needed, so totals are captured as mentions rather than as respondents.

Participants attended the event to be involved in Medford; the topic of economic development was comparatively less of a draw. Although Envision Medford was focused on economic development, comparatively few people mentioned this as a key motivator for their attendance (ten mentions). Broader sentiments about duty, civic involvement, and the future of Medford itself were more common reasons cited by respondents.

Many respondents seemed to feel that this event was a key avenue for getting involved in Medford’s evolution (twenty-six mentions). These respondents described wanting “to be involved in next steps to improve the city,” “to be part of solutions in our city,” and “to involve myself in Medford’s future.” Eighteen respondents cited a civic, personal,
or professional duty to attend; many of these respondents mentioned being involved (presumably in Medford’s community, although unclear in many instances) for decades. In the context of deliberative democracy, this is promising to hear—it suggests that there is an appetite for participatory meetings and a belief that these events are an important part of civic engagement.

Twenty-five respondents specifically cited the event as a way they could help improve Medford—few were specific about what they meant by “improvement.” Others said they were interested in considering Medford’s future, and some discussed the fact that Medford was changing, suggesting that this event might help them grapple with that. Fifteen respondents said they were present because they were excited about Medford and cared about it; five others used slightly more critical language and seemed more concerned about the city.

There were some respondents who saw the event as a valuable learning experience. Five mentioned that they wanted to learn more about the issues Medford is facing, and one of whom also explicitly mentioned being new to the community. Although it is not a substantial difference, more people said they attended to hear others’ perspectives (thirteen respondents) than those who explicitly said they attended to express their own opinions (eight respondents).

Figure 4: How representative of Medford was today’s meeting?

Source: Envision Medford exit surveys. N = 77. 70% of respondents rated the event a 3, 27% of respondents rated the event a 2, 27% of respondents rated the event a 4, 7% rated the event a 5, and 6% rated the event a 1.

Section 4: Results
Respondents were neutral about whether participants were representative of Medford as a whole, but sought more cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. When asked to rate how representative the event was of Medford as a whole, respondents selected the middle value; the results are a perfect bell curve around the middle value. This contrasted with our interviews, wherein all interviewees who attended the event felt it was not representative of the community. This could suggest that community members have different understandings of the demographics within Medford.

When asked who they wanted represented at future events, the most common answer was a wider variety of races, ethnicities, and cultures. The second-most cited answer involved age ranges; of those who were more specific, most mentioned youth. Another interesting response was that of the four people who mentioned the neighborhoods of Medford. Presumably, without the public infographic, respondents would not have known which neighborhoods participants were from. See Table 4 for more detail about who respondents felt was missing from the conversation.

Table 4: Who would you like to see represented at future events?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More racial, ethnic, or cultural perspectives</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider age range</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider variety of income levels</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who speak languages besides English</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wider variety of professions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People from different neighborhoods</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents not usually engaged in politics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wider variety of educational backgrounds</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who live in public housing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More LGBQT representation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Envision Medford exit survey. N = 152 answers from 95 respondents. Categories were generated based on the responses received, and many responses were coded into multiple categories.
Marketing or promotional failures was the most commonly cited factor in preventing people from participating. Given that the event had higher-than-anticipated attendance, it is interesting to see respondents cite marketing failures as the cause for why someone might not have attended. Many mentioned that they had a personal connection with the organizers, which meant they were aware of the event or more inclined to attend: “If your friends are into this you’re more likely to go,” wrote one respondent. Another pointed out that, “[The] invitation [is] not getting to everyone. [There are] no relationships across cultures. Why would they come without relationships?” Another theorized that, “We rely on some limited lists to get the message out.”

The second-most cited obstacle was language barriers, and the close third was that would-be participants just did not have the time. See Table 5 for more detail.

Many attendees were optimistic about the event and its format, and wanted additional events in the future. When asked for general feedback to share with event organizers, thirty-seven of the eighty-six respondents wanted to congratulate the organizers for a great job.

Table 5: Identified barriers to participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing or promotional failures</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of time/People are busy</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust in the format of the event</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care*</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling conflicts</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathy, or perceived agreement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public transit</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear agenda or expectations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of voicing opinion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated lack of diversity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccessible location</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Envision Medford exit surveys. N = 176 answers from 101 respondents. Categories were generated based on the responses received, and many responses were coded into multiple categories.

*Child care was available at Envision Medford, but some mentioned not knowing about this ahead of time.
Over a dozen of respondents mentioned issues of representation: “Number one task [must be to] bring marginalized residents to the table,” said one respondent. Another wrote, “While participants spoke of lower-income residents, it was majority middle class [group participating]. Nice people, but we need to have blue collar [workers] speak for themselves.”

The other common response can be summarized as “prove that this event mattered.” For some, this was merely a request to see a compilation of the results of the conversation or to sustain the momentum with future events. Other responses in this category included:

- “[I] would love to have next steps, [to know] how to get involved.”
- “To see this mattered.”
- “Share progress of what this resulted in; people need to see this mattered.”
- “If there are concrete results of these conversations, it would be empowering to know.”
- “Tell us what the next steps are. Action items?”
- “Many great ideas—now can we [affect] real positive changes in Medford?”
- “Next steps on how we can get involved to help make a difference.”
- “It was a nice discussion/jumping off point, but does it actually hold weight with stakeholders?”
- “The key is to turn ideas into action.”

Other responses included miscellaneous operational suggestions, including input on the location, the city government’s involvement, and the agenda.
Interviews of Key Contacts

As previously discussed, the interviews allowed us to explore further into public participation and Medford. The follow section provides summaries of the responses and are organized by interview question.

What Medford Means to You

Everyone we interviewed is a resident of Medford, with the exception of one who only works in Medford. The reasons that brought them to Medford vary, though many cited housing opportunities and five mentioned employment opportunities directly. With the exception of one recorded response, everyone we spoke with had lived in Medford for at least seven years; the longest residency was thirty-two years.

The key contacts we interviewed are involved in many organizations throughout the community. Though there was some overlap, it became very apparent that the group as a whole are involved with a large range of organizations that address an array of topics. Though the degree of involvement for each organization is unknown, the diversity alone is a great indicator of the reach these individuals have into the community.

There were many strengths identified in Medford. Three people cited geography, specifically the proximity of Medford to Boston, as a strength. Many also mentioned other assets that Medford has, such as open spaces and natural resources such as the Mystic River. Many discussed how Medford managed to maintain a community and small town feel while being diverse, offering access to good schools and shopping. Diversity was expressed in different ways through interviews, though socioeconomic diversity and ethnic diversity were cited most often.

When interviewees were asked about things in Medford that they did not like or would like to see change, responses were split into two main categories. One can be understood as government responsibilities. More specifically, the topics mentioned were road conditions, vehicle traffic and poor alternatives to having a car. Along with city infrastructure, communication between the government and the public was also addressed as a concern. More specifically, respondents discussed issues with the dissemination of information due to the lack of modern services and technology, a lack of an overall plan, and inefficient use of assets and City Hall.
The second area of concern for Medford stems from a tension arising from the changing demographics. Our interview respondents described a resistance from those who consider themselves old residents to the influx of new residents and their impact on shaping Medford’s collective identity. One described Medford as an insular community, which makes it difficult for new residents to be engaged.

**Current Events**

Our next set of questions asked how Medford’s population is changing, how long-term residents feel about these changes and what issues Medford is going to need to address over the next five years.

There was an overwhelming response from those we interviewed that Medford’s population is becoming more diverse. Diversity, specifically ethnic/racial diversity, came up in almost every interview; many described growing immigrant communities and international perspectives. Amongst all of this discussion around increasing diversity in Medford, it came up during one interview that the African American community is shrinking.

One individual mentioned that Medford has at least thirty different houses of religion. One woman mentioned the influx of artists and musicians coming into the community as well. These all combine to tell a larger story of what Medford is experiencing and are in no way an exhaustive list.

The second most common element that came up was that a group of younger, educated professionals were moving into Medford. A few speculated as to why there was this influx of population, citing affordable living options as people are moving away from Medford after their parents pass, which opened up space for new homeowners to move into the city. A couple of individuals cited gentrification specifically as a way that Medford is changing.

**How long-term residents feel about these changes.** There is an assumed division between those who consider themselves long term residents and almost an adversarial reaction to those who are new Medford residents, though the definitions of what it means to be long or short term are vague. One resident informed us that he has been
living in Medford for eleven years and considers himself a long-term resident; however, another person we spoke with said she had been a resident of Medford for twelve years and did not consider herself a long term resident. One interviewee distinguished a difference between the length of time versus feelings of investment in community.

**How the population is changing.** This question, unlike the previous ones, stirred a vast number of very different responses. Though there were some common themes such as a general unhappiness with change and resistance to change, most responses sought to understand perceptions though very different lenses. A concern over the rising cost of living also came up due to the influx of new residents.

**Issues for Medford Over the Next Five Years**

Four main themes emerged from our interviews when asked about issues Medford will be facing or will need to address over the next five years: diversity, development, climate change and participation.

**Diversity and participation** were often discussed in tandem with one another. Through our interviews a pattern emerged when thinking about the next five years: a discussion of the increasing diversity in Medford and a need to include diversity in terms of the community, religion, and work towards building inclusivity. “We tend to be scared about what we don’t know,” one interviewee mentioned.

Many residents have concerns about the Middle East, she pointed out, and sometimes seem to project these on Medford’s growing Arab-American population. “The Muslim/Arabic community really need to feel safe in Medford,” she emphasized, “We need people in leadership to keep an eye on this dynamic.”

**Development** is another topic that emerged through several interviews. Though discussed in different terms, gentrification and potential housing affordability issues were the main disconcerting outcomes of new development in Medford. Housing affordability specifically came up as well as concerns about development and as one interviewee described it, “stewardship of resources.”

This sentiment of stewardship ties into remarks made regarding the role of the city government in how Medford moves forward in the next five years. Some responses discussed the need for improving city services. Another interviewee described the City’s website as a place that would
benefit greatly from an update and a shift away from thinking of it as a static resource.

Thinking to the next five years the topic of climate change and environmental concerns were brought up in two separate interviews.

An interesting pattern emerged from the interview responses regarding the verbs that were used to describe how Medford needs to move forward on the previously described themes. In general, their sentiment was very aspirational and optimistic. For example, building was used often in terms of building inclusivity, building understanding, building representation, building acceptance and tolerance. A majority of the responses commented that though Medford has its obvious and sometimes not-so-obvious areas to work on, there is a momentum to move it in the right direction.

**Medford Conversations**

As discussed in the section Our Partners: The Medford Conversations Project, the organization emerged as a grassroots coalition in early 2015, and it has been gaining increased traction in Medford through the commitment of volunteers. We thought asking about why this organization is emerging now would provide insight into both the organization’s development and what is happening in Medford.

**Why Medford Conversations now.** Transition, change, momentum, leadership, and enthusiasm all came out when we asked about why Medford Conversations is emerging as an organization now. It is a unique moment in the political climate with Mayor McGlynn retiring and Mayor Burke coming into office. Many discussed how they feel the change opened up a new way of thinking about the administration and feel it is an opportunity to try new things. This feeling of newness, combined with the changes Medford is experiencing in regards to demographics as well as development projects such as the Green Line extension and the Everett casino, has contributed to this moment where people are aware of these changes and feel they can get involved and be part of shaping the change in a positive way for Medford.

Many of our interviewees also mentioned Dale Bryan as a catalyst person for this project; they credited his leadership and vision as crucial to building momentum for Medford Conversations’ beginnings.
What will Medford Conversations achieve. Though many of our other questions solicited a diverse set of responses, when asked about what people hope Medford Conversations will achieve, there was an overall agreement across each interview we conducted. Medford Conversations will be an organization that brings together diverse voices to discuss issues and get to know each other on a deeper level, with the larger goal in mind of creating understanding within the community and building capacity. Interviewees felt that facilitating conversations with people who do not normally speak with one another will foster stronger relationships:

“I think that conversation can lead to people collaborating and leading to greater understanding. People who may have different opinions - this can lead to greater respect among people. I think the longer term result could be that the conversations would continue, and bring the community together more.”

“I just think, I feel like, the country as a whole is getting more and more polarized and more and more isolated by political ideology, and ethnic identity and socioeconomic status. It’s getting more isolated. That’s not necessarily happening in Medford.”

Some interviewees made a connection between this community building and the role of the City of Medford itself. One interviewee hypothesized that, if people understood each other’s needs better, then the city’s allocation of resources would be more equitably distributed within the community.
Envision Medford Feedback

We asked interviewees for feedback about the Envision Medford event because it was co-hosted by Medford Conversations. The input we received was very positive overall. People thought it was very well-organized; for example, many liked that there was a randomized seating arrangement to encourage attendees to meet new people. Specific areas that were identified as strengths included that there were many people who attended and got into a room together to have conversations; one noted that conversations had inherent value.

The event pre-registration for Envision Medford brought both positive and more constructive critiques. According to some interviewees, the registration could be a potential way to collect more information from attendees in order to diversify the tables in a more intentional way. Some suggested it could also be a useful measure of how the events are doing in reaching a wider audience. However, others pointed out that asking the public to provide such information may be intimidating or exclusive, particularly for undocumented individuals. In some, it could deter those who would participate if the Medford Conversations event did not involve a registration process.

Our interviews supported our own observations and were in line with the exit survey data we collected about the vibrant smaller table conversations and larger discussion. The event attendees were enthusiastic and engaged. Along with formal table discussions, one individual we interviewed mentioned they thought the unstructured participation boards which were located at the entrance of the room was a great way to get people engaged from the beginning.

We learned from our interviews that the way the table questions were written did not feel accessible to everyone involved. On a similar note, one suggested that the tables and room size could be set up better for conversations.

Diversity at the event came up during several interviews. One interviewee said the event itself was not very diverse and was attended by mostly white residents, and they would like to see wider participation.

Other topics that emerged about Envision Medford from our interviews included a comment that the mayor’s attendance sent participants a big message about the legitimacy of the event. Some mentioned that the event also focused on business economic development instead of community economic development. A few interviewees mentioned the
role that social media played in Envision Medford’s success but qualified that success by noting that it also contributed to the self-selection of attendees as being business, entrepreneurial, and social media savvy people.

**Representativeness of events in Medford.** When we asked about how representative community events and meetings are in Medford, the overwhelming response was that they are not. There were a few different descriptions given of missing demographics, including residents who speak English as a second language, or different income groups. There was also a sentiment shared that those who are attending events and meetings are those who are already involved.

One interviewee mentioned the people at the events are “not the ones who need to go there,” implying that the people in attendance were already involved and they would like to see individuals who were not the usual participants present. This notion of wanting to meet and hear from individuals who are not the usual public meeting participate came up often in the interviews and across our research.

Another interviewee juxtaposed their sense of public event participation with their experience in a diverse public school setting, reflecting that “I’m in close contact [with the schools] you stand there and watch kids come in and out you get a sense of what Medford looks like today which is very diverse. I believe. Which is not what I see in a meeting.” This individual is speaking to the diversity represented in Medford High School, which several interviewees also spoke to as they reflected about the role youth play in their community.

**What made previous events successful or unsuccessful.** There were varied responses when we asked individuals to speak to what makes an event successful or not. Two interviewees did not have an answer to the question. Some cited specific events Medford has held and what they did or did not like about them. The interviews surfaced a few main themes around successful events: the appropriate number of people for the capacity of the event, communication in terms of outreach, and diversity—is the event representative of the larger community? These elements tie into each other and overlap throughout the responses.

For example, one respondent described that the more people at an event the better, but also mentioned the number of people who participate at an event can act as a deterrent to some attending because of crowding and congestion.

Similar to many other questions, the concern over diversity
and events being representative of the community surfaced. One interview specifically said events need to have representatives from different groups to be successful. Another stated they hardly ever get non-English speakers out to events.

City-organized events were brought up and discussed often, with interviewees citing a mixed review of how successful they were. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—which was co-hosted by Medford Conversations—was mentioned as a very successful and diverse event but also as a unique situation.

An interesting comment shared about a successful event was that it focused on generating thinking around what could be and not on what was broken or wrong.

**Defining successful public participation.** When asked what successful public participation looks like, the most common response was that it engaged as many people as possible. Three different interviews emphasized that high participation numbers was most important, though they included additional comments that participants should also represent a wide scope of the population. Some elaborated more specifically that successful participation meant individuals new people and shared something, such as an activity, goal, value or location. Another highly valued the potential for a multiplicity of perspectives generating innovative solutions. For another respondent, the goal for successful public participation was more about the event looking representative of the community, or using inclusion metrics to measure success.

One respondent indicated that a successful event or public participation should widen the sense of “we” in Medford and is inclusive of every community. Further, successful public participation more than just hears a diversity of voices - it values them.

Among the necessary ingredients, the following were suggested: diversity of participants, proper event branding (who is organizing the event, sponsoring it, etc.), influential people and a networking component were listed by one respondent. These elements surfaced throughout the interview and were echoed by others’ responses to this question. Some elaborated more specifically by discussing the importance of meeting new people and sharing something such as an activity, goal, value or location. One put high value on having different perspectives interacting with one another to come to innovative solutions.
For another respondent, the goal for successful public participation was more about the event looking representative of the community, or using inclusion metrics to measure success.

**Role of the City of Medford in events.** During our interviews, we asked respondents what their thoughts were on the role of the City of Medford in hosting events. The responses seemed to fall into two categories: communication outreach and providing physical support in the form of venue spaces.

The most referenced topic surrounds outreach and communication. Individuals felt the city should communicate to the community in more ways about events and things going on in and for Medford. Communication also came up as a tool for the promotion and endorsement of events since they are in a position to reach a wider audience. One described the city’s name as something that validates an event and reaches across a spectrum, and another spoke to the mayor’s name having cachet.

There were two opposing views of how the city should plan specific events. One informant felt the city should plan events on a monthly basis to get people together from all different backgrounds to share experiences. He specifically mentioned the need for young people to participate as well. Another felt that, due to turnover in civic leadership, it is too early for the city to plan events: “They really need to take the lead of communication, facilitating and engaging the community, it’ll make it that much more successful.”

**Barriers to Participation**

When we asked why people do not participate in public events and community meetings responses can be understood in four main themes: information dissemination, busy schedules, the perception of complacency or sentiments that nothing will change, and responses that spoke to cultural or social barriers.

On the topic of information dissemination, two mentioned the need for better ways to communicate with senior residents as there is no public television channel and many do not have smart phones. One asked, “How do you get information to them?” Another shared that there does not seem to be a direct way for the City of Medford to communicate with its residents, and further shared that he would like to see more information about topics he is specifically interested in.
In two separate interviews, it came up that people were simply just too busy. It was noted that some people work multiple jobs and overtime to afford to live, so attending meetings is really difficult. One respondent said that some legitimately do not have the energy to participate. Another said that time is the biggest barrier to participation.

The more complicated responses tried to describe how there is a perception that participation is for a certain demographic group within the city. Respondents described it as groups either feeling unwelcome or that there needs to be more of an effort to make people feel welcome. Others described it as a difference in how people feel in different public settings and the impact that perception may have on their decision to participate. Speaking in public to a large audience, for example, can be a very uncomfortable situation for many people.
Case Studies

Our research initiated potential case studies first and then ultimately narrowed cases based on the fit with the themes taken from research at Envision Medford and interviews with key contacts, as we describe in Section 5. Our case studies provide many lessons that Medford Conversations could consider in its pursuit of including a multiplicity of voices in its events.

Appendix C lists the case studies that we considered in-depth in our efforts to find solutions for the problems identified.

Primary attention was given to cases that aimed to improve the number and diversity of participation and create a shared vision. Also included were cases in which organizers sought to achieve collaborative governance and solicit ideas for planning.

The target groups. Almost all the cases are open to all citizens and stakeholders. Specifically, more engagement of young people, people of color and immigrants are emphasized.

Methods used. In most of the cases, both face-to-face topic-driven dialogs and online forums are employed. In addition, a 21st Century Town Meeting served as a conclusion meeting for large-scale participation in a series of conversations (like in the case of Envision Prince George’s). Technology may engage more people (for example, a 3-D immersive game succeeded in involving more youth in the case of Participatory Chinatown).

Key strategies. Appendix C lists the case studies including selected key strategies which Medford Conversations may find relevant. Particular, two selected cases, Envision Prince George’s and Hampton (Virginia) Deliberative Governance will be discussed in Section 5 for more details on potential solutions or innovations for Medford Conversations.
Section 5: Recommendations

In reviewing our public meeting research, interviews, and case studies, we suggest Medford Conversations consider four different themes as they plan future events: Establishing a clear connection between conversation and action; encouraging intergenerational engagement; mitigating various barriers to participation; and establishing an agenda inclusively.

First, we heard many discuss the importance of connecting deliberative meetings with real-world action. Although deliberation is valuable in of itself, our research seemed to indicate that many wanted the conversations to lead to action. Our first theme, therefore, explores how Medford Conversations might design its events to incorporate both conversation and action.

Second, our research indicated that intergenerational diversity was both missing at Envision Medford and sorely wanted at future events. We consider models of successful intergenerational participation that Medford Conversations could borrow from.

In the next theme, we look to secondary research, participant feedback, and case studies to explore how Medford Conversations could mitigate a variety of barriers to participation.

Finally, we consider the agenda of future Medford Conversations events. Given how many major changes and events are occurring in Medford, it can be difficult for organizers to select a topic for an event that will be compelling to everyone. We research how other participatory processes set their agenda and make recommendations for both processes and specific topics for Medford Conversations moving forward.
Our recommendations are summarized here:

**Tying Conversation to Action**
- When designing conversations, strive for fidelity to a study circles model when possible.
- Consider implementing conversations in varying scales and contexts.
- Draw clear connections to power structures and policy development.

**Incorporating Intergenerational Perspectives**
- Diversify communication tools.
- Intentionally include youth and seniors in leadership roles.
- Reach out to local resources and organizations.

**Resolving Barriers to Participation**
- Independent from a specific event, lay the groundwork for best practices in event promotion.
- Strategically expand online social networks.
- Further build the Medford Conversations coalition across many different communities.
- Think beyond the “rational debate.”
- Consider formats that allow residents to debate within their home language.
- Research translation options that might be available.

**Setting the Agenda**
- Draft the priorities for the Medford Conversations by integrating previous and ongoing commitments.
- Advertise the agenda through a variety of channels.
- Clarify available event services in the agenda.
- Indicate where background information is available.
- Design questions in a solution-oriented way.
- Make the follow-up plan known.
Tying Conversation to Action

An important theme that emerged from our research was the mix of perceptions among community members about the role and value of dialogue in Medford. Given the evolving purview of Medford Conversations and of deliberative democracy in Medford, a candid appraisal of community members’ perceptions and assumptions about dialogue is essential to transforming how residents engage with one another and with government. While Medford Conversations proposes dialogue as a pillar of deliberative democracy in Medford, residents and other power brokers may not recognize or equally value its potential benefits in the long term.

This section identifies some of the challenges that Medford Conversations may face in building support for increased dialogue; it also offers three frameworks for how other communities have succeeded at embedding deliberative behaviors into both public reflection and decision-making.

Bridging Gaps in Deliberative Democratic Behavior

As deliberative democracy evolves in Medford, Medford Conversations will want to consider the current gaps between their and the general public’s answers to the following questions: what problems stand to be solved or ameliorated through dialogue, and how is the approach of Medford Conversations a meaningful addition to or departure from current civic practices? Ultimately, why is dialogue understood to be the best way to help construct visions for a “sustainable, just, and thriving Medford”?

Our interviews with steering committee members suggest that they come to the table with clarity and consensus on the problems that dialogue will help to address. These problems are those of insufficiently democratic behavior and structures in the city, or what Fagotto and Fung (2009) might identify as “democratic deficits” within civic life and governance. Building a just and thriving Medford demands that attention be paid to the deficits cited by interviewees: weak social cohesion and its implications for equity and connectivity; unrepresentative participation due...
to omission, disenfranchisement, or lack of interest; and a very fragile trust in the capacity of city government to fairly and systematically incorporate all voices for effective governance.

On a positive note, the hoped-for goals of using dialogue to fill these deficits were also clear to those interviewed. Steering committee members cited goals of increased connectivity, communication, and collaboration across the community in the short and long run. They also expressed a hope for better accountability, more policy innovation, and stronger collective governance between the community and the City in the long run. Much of the feedback from Envision Medford validates those short-term goals, with participants and interviewees expressing a sense of hopefulness for future opportunities to engage on community issues.

Why Deliberation Matters for Participation in Medford

Based on public event research, the concrete ways in which dialogue will help achieve those goals in the long run seem less clear to some community members. Envision Medford feedback indicates some ambivalence about the prospects for dialogue, suggesting broad enthusiasm for increased engagement but also some skepticism about continued conversation that has an “unclear connection between recommendations and action” and is “uncoupled with an action plan.” Our research also suggests that the political honeymoon of a new mayor has served as an important condition for exciting interest among residents to imagine Medford’s future and participate in community conversations.

Furthermore, residents may often enter community conversations with expectations shaped by prior experiences in public and often city-led forums, or in process-engineered planning and design charrettes. The connection between the time and energy commitment of participating in one or a series of events, and the contributions they are able to make to policy change, are not often clear in a community that has grown accustomed, even if begrudgingly, to the ad hoc governance style and sporadic community engagement of the twenty-eight-year administration that preceded the administration of Mayor Stephanie Burke.
An understanding of this intersection of individual participation and political behavior and the argument for Medford Conversations’ investment in deliberation comes via more deliberative democracy theory. Elster’s (1997) discussion frames this individual investment as such:

“How political deliberation requires citizens to go beyond private self-interest of the ‘market’ and orient themselves to public interests of the ‘forum’, and that deliberation from this civic standpoint is defensible only if it improves political decision making, especially with regard to achieving common ends.”

How will Medford Conversations weave together a community-specific narrative of dialogue, democracy, and policy to attract and sustain participation in the “forum”? Abstract questions such as these are challenging to consider, but critical to address in order to understand people’s incentives and disincentives for participation. Addressing them effectively will allow Medford Conversations to bridge dialogue as a civic behavior with deliberative democracy for Medford in the long term.

Recommendations for Improving Process and Policy through Deliberation

The concept of embedded deliberation offers a helpful tie-in between the dialogue-driven goals and methods of Medford Conversations and the priorities of an ever-evolving Medford that needs to expand its capacity to manage and affect positive change. Embedded deliberation represents a case in which conversations are not only building resident experiences of social connectivity, cohesion, and community capacity but also serving as the default mode of problem solving and decision making within the city (Fagotto and Fung, 2009). For Medford Conversations, this interpretation of how conversation and action strengthen one another may be helpful for communicating its visionary mission to establish buy-in from residents, community groups, and city government.

Moving forward, Medford Conversations has exciting opportunities to build on its experiences with supporting or co-sponsoring public events within the community conversations format. Its steering committee brings deep knowledge and insights about community issues, engagement, and participation. Those who have attended and especially those who have facilitated at these events should be lauded for actively modeling conversation and action by virtue of their own leadership in the governance and implementation of Medford Conversations. As these leaders and organizers...
continue to promote their mission in the community, members of this coalition might consider the following recommendations from local and national examples successful deliberative practice and how they might apply to Medford.

**When designing conversations, strive for fidelity to a study circles model when possible.** Deliberative democracy and even more straightforwardly, community conversations models, can gain increased power and validity by modeling a study circles approach that emphasizes deep and sustained engagement over time. Study circles’ topic or issue-driven discussions empower participants most when they provide background information, strong facilitation, and multiple conversations to build the exposure, understanding, and trust that makes study circles so appealing in connecting people across a diverse community like Medford.

This study circle model, however, requires time investment from its facilitators and participants and may not be suitable for all topics or members of the community. Medford Conversations so far has been strategic in planning or co-sponsoring dialogue in Medford; going forward, it must also remain cognizant of how it is measuring success for each event or series of events, and how those measures may change over time. Some conversations, such as visioning discussions, may benefit from maximal turnout and be viewed as a success if organizers are able to incorporate a high volume of participation that is generally representative of the community. Other discussions, particularly concerning sensitive topics such as religion or emerging concerns like crime in the community, will still benefit from a diverse and representative set of perspectives but may be more successful with lower numbers of participants who can sustain a more engaged participation style over time.

Envision Medford, a widely celebrated event reflecting a high degree of engagement from attendees and civic entrepreneurship among its organizers, offers an early case

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**About Study Circles**

Study circles have been used by a wide range of communities, both in the U.S. and internationally, to address local issues of concern. While there is a growing body of academic literature on the model, two free online resources designed for community practitioners can be found at Everyday Democracy (http://www.everyday-democracy.org) and at the University of Kansas’s Community Toolbox (http://ctb.ku.edu/en).
study in this tension. Feedback from participants tended to focus on the excitement of being in the room and of meeting with so many others, rather than the specific content of their conversations. A question-framing that looked at visions for economic development and possible activities to achieve those visions was compelling for many, but the ambiguous tie-in to a follow-up strategy for organizing action, resources, and identifying or building connections after the event left many participants may represent a lost opportunity to build on the event’s momentum.

All of these dynamics may also be related to event scale; are the benefits of high participation in conflict with organizers’ ability to maintain fidelity to the small conversation circle model? Is it inherently challenging to get additional time or resource commitments from participants when they can be anonymized by a large group? This is unclear from our research, but variables of event size and issue scope are worth reviewing for future events.

Consider implementing conversations in varying scales and contexts. Potential concerns about trade-offs related to event size, combined with the difficulty of engaging residents from communities who are often underrepresented at public events, present a case for thinking smaller – not in vision, but in terms of event logistics and potentially providing a more familiar and actionable scope. While barriers to participation will be addressed in a later section, Medford Conversations may want to consider replicating this strategy of promoting robust dialogue through smaller-scale conversations within communities in Medford, with the potential benefits of:

- Building exposure to and experience participating in dialogue within communities;
- Attracting new facilitators and building leadership in spaces that may feel more comfortable and less intimidating to those not typically engaged in public conversations;
- Reducing the burdens and required resources for outreach, coordination, and/or facilitation that complicate the organizing of community-wide events;
- Connect conversations to a group-defined action or advocacy campaign;
- Building community capacity over time to improve the quality and quantity of participation in citywide conversations.

An excellent example of this in Medford’s own practice was the World Café held at Medford High School in 2016, which proposed ‘real talk’ about class, race, and religion. Forty
youth facilitators partnered with adult faculty members to encourage open and safe engagement with these often challenging social issues (Saulnier, 2016).

Medford Conversations can model this strategy by defining an initial set of criteria – such as an age group, as the World Café did, or perhaps a physical neighborhood or set of city blocks – and explore perspectives and strategies for action within that population. One neighborhood-based model in practice is NeighborCircles, which are used by community development corporations and adapt the Study Circles model to emphasize neighborhood networks, resident-defined issues, and resource mobilization (NeighborWorks, 2009). Explicit in this model are the components of connectivity, problem-solving, and leadership building, all of which were identified as hoped-for outcomes in our research.

Conversations structured in this way may help to mitigate some of the exclusionary barriers to participation like age, transportation accessibility issues, or discomfort or fear of being in an unfamiliar social environment, while yielding some of the benefits listed above. Ultimately, building capacity in localized or well-defined communities may contribute to a civic empowerment that may also have the benefit of amplifying their voices in broader public conversations.

**Draw clear connections to power structures and policy development.** Success in tying conversation to action comes with at least two necessary conditions: that an issue be deeply understood in its local context and that it be of enough personal salience for a sustained civic effort to move from conversation to action. Members of the steering committee also recognize that increased voice and understanding of community issues are important goals of dialogue but are not enough to reach the vision set for a sustainable, just, and thriving Medford.

Moving from conversation to action may need to follow the trajectory set forth by one interviewee, who celebrates that community conversations represent a cultural shift in Medford but proposes that conversations will need to “evolve into knowledge of power, organizing, leadership, and community leadership.” Conversations can begin this work by incorporating explorations of political, individual, and institutional power in the city through question design and facilitation, or through more comprehensive tools like power mapping. Access to resources and institutional power are an important part of decision making in Medford as they are anywhere else, and understanding what these are in Medford and how to leverage them are also an important part of building deliberative democracy in Medford.
Incorporating Intergenerational Perspectives

The following section seeks to provide Medford Conversations with ideas and ways to move forward as an organization in their approach regarding senior citizens and youth. Medford Conversations’ mission is to “include and actively engage a multiplicity of voices in our community.” Along with taking into consideration the great ethnic diversity that makes up Medford’s population, it is also important to consider incorporating intergenerational perspectives. According to American Survey Data, 21% of the population is under the age of twenty-one and 14.3% is over the age of sixty-five. This accounts for a collective 35.3% of Medford’s entire population (ACS, 2014).

We felt it was important to focus a section on these intergenerational perspectives as a result of our data collection, which pointed to both the absence of these voices as well as a desire to be more inclusive of them. Though there is no one universal definition of what youth means, we are considering anyone under the age of twenty-one as a youth and those over sixty-five as a senior citizen.

About 35% of responses from the Envision Medford exit survey expressed a desire to see a wider age range represented when asked Who would you like to see represented at future events? Within those responses, fifteen mentioned youth, nine mentioned a wider age range in general and seven responses discussed both senior citizens and people in their twenties. At the event itself there were very few youth in attendance from our observations. Additionally, we have heard from members of the steering committee that they would like to see a more active youth voice in public participation. The interviews also exposed an interest that there was an intergenerational piece missing in the larger conversation taking place in Medford.

Though Envision Medford itself did not have a large amount of youth participation, this does not mean youth do not participate. The previously mentioned World Cafe event, at Medford High School, was a very successful event. Over forty students facilitated discussions focused on race, class and privilege, religion, and many things in between (Saunier, 2016). Student facilitators took their roles very seriously and went through a facilitator training to prepare. For the event to be successful it took a great deal of work...
from student leadership organizations, community members from inside and outside the school. One salient take away from the event is many of the students’ goals and vision for what they want in their community aligns so directly with Medford Conversations’ own goals which is having important conversations to seek understanding and an embracing of Medford’s diversity.

Some barriers that elders or youth may face are described in the section below, “Resolving Barriers to Participation.” Here, we will discuss the importance of intergenerational perspectives followed by a case study look in Hampton, Virginia, which takes a deliberative democracy approach to engaging youth.

Why Youth and Senior Voices Matter

Youth matter in participation because many of the decisions that are made will impact them either immediately or in the future; decisions made today impact future generations.

Involving youth provides benefits to the community in a multitude of ways. On the one hand, having a new perspective and fresh outlook can add value to community visioning processes and perspective to local governments.

On the other, engaging youth in meaningful ways begins creating civic minded citizens and gives them an opportunity to develop leadership and community building skills at a young age. Senior citizens also have a unique and valuable perspective to add. Often they bring to the table years of experience and wisdom to share about how they have seen things change and the direction they see their community and city heading. The Hampton case study provides an intriguing account of one way a city incorporated youth into their civil life and might provide inspiration to the Medford Conversations Steering Committee.

Case Study: Hampton (Virginia) Deliberative Governance

The need to engage youth into conversations is highlighted in the research at Envision Medford and interviews with key contacts. We found the Hampton’s Youth Civic Engagement initiative an excellent model to examine with the Medford context in mind. It has won a prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. Further, the Coalition for Youth began in 1990, and so provides us with many successful lessons regarding young civic engagement in Medford Conversations (Hampton).
Hampton has built an entire system for educating youth for civic work. Its programming includes community service projects, advisory councils in each school, advisory panels for the mayor and police chief, a budget for grants allocated by youth, and paid positions for urban planners who are teenagers (Fletcher, 2016). From this model, we find three core areas youth can be included: volunteer opportunities, advisory roles and leadership opportunities.

The case describes including youth in monthly meetings and organizational procedures as leaders. The Citizens’ Unity Commission Youth Advisory group is an intricate part of the Citizens’ Unity Commission which has made youth representation a priority in their organization structure. They provide the youth the space to share their perspectives regarding diversity and inclusion (Hampton). An important next step in leadership is sharing power. The Hampton Youth Commission is appointed by Hampton City Council.

The goal is to share power and influence over decision making with the youth. In practice, this looks like the youth members acting as voting members on boards, planning, and even administering funds (Opening, 2013). This seems especially relevant to Medford Conversations because it highlights the importance of building youth capacity through including them in advisory roles.

The Hampton system of Youth Civic Engagement (YCE) is built upon three structured pathways for civic engagement (See Figure 5). To start, youth are recruited and encouraged to participate in service projects. Next, they are included in the youth advisory group to provide key input. Eventually, youth share leadership with adults.

Figure 5: The three structured pathways for civic engagement in Hampton

Source: Schor, 2011.
Our recommendations for increasing intergenerational perspectives are as follows:

**Diversify communication tools.** Many senior citizens do not have the same access to technology as other residents in the community. By diversifying communication tools used, organizers can ensure a wider diversity of residents will receive messages. As an interview respondent mentioned, when only online social media is used, it reaches a very specific audience. There are many different ways to reach residents including a public television channel as well as going out into these communities and speaking with people directly. We discuss this further below, in “Resolving Barriers to Participation.”

**Intentionally include youth and seniors in leadership roles.** As described in the Hampton case study, there may be three different levels of engagement: service projects, direct input in advisory roles, and shared leadership. Medford Conversations can consider where, whether in the steering committee or in organizing specific events, these demographics could be specifically included.

Medford High School has a wealth of students who are involved in various leadership clubs and organizations.

There is also a desire within the student body to shape their community and be a part of the larger discussion happening in Medford, as clearly evidenced during the World Cafe event. **Reach out to local resources and organizations.** Further, the City of Medford has many youth-focused organizations that may be great resources to look to. Students also have an energy and excitement to get involved in a meaningful way. The steering committee itself has access to local youth organizations either through contacts at the high school or other Medford based organizations and should seek to collaborate with these organizations to determine effective ways youth could participate. Similarly, Medford Conversations can work with Mystic Valley Elder Services and similar organizations to incorporate senior citizens.
Resolving Barriers to Participation

Our exit survey responses and interviews identified a number of different barriers to participation. Some of the issues identified were inescapable or relatively straightforward: scheduling conflicts and inconvenient locations, for example. In Appendix D, we endeavored to generate a comprehensive checklist for event inclusion that incorporates all of these logistical issues raised in our research. Of course, not every event can be convenient and comfortable for everyone, but this checklist will ideally assist event organizers in considering how their decisions might affect the ability of different communities to participate.

We focus this section instead on three more multidimensional barriers to participation identified in Medford: first, we look at marketing and communication failures. Next, we consider how events could better incorporate multiple languages. Finally, we explore a more nebulous barrier of undervalued participation, the idea that residents don’t participate because they doubt their ability to add anything of value. For each of these challenges, we review how they came up in our field research, and then introduce one or more case studies that offer ideas for Medford Conversations to consider in mapping their future strategy.

Marketing and Communications

Marketing and communications failures was the number one most-cited concern in our exit surveys at Envision Medford. As detailed previously, many respondents mentioned that they had personal connections with event organizers that directly influenced their decision to attend. Many framed this as a symptom of missing social connections: “[The] invitation [is] not getting to everyone. [There are] no relationships across cultures. Why would they come without relationships?” Because the communications are dependent on existing social networks, our survey results suggest, the same groups of people who already know each other appear to be attending meetings, while those not part of that network are inadvertently left behind.

Our interviews also surfaced this as an issue, teasing out other dimensions. Gary Roberts pointed out that older people who do not use the Internet are often left out of the loop; similarly, Noah Evans discussed how much of the activism, dialogue, and even general community building in Medford is occurring through Facebook groups or other online forums. Those who are not users, or who have not been invited to these closed
groups by friends, might have a hard time keeping up with the issues and events. Although we often associate the elderly as being disconnected from online communities, this is, to some extent, true for teenagers as well, who often frequent entirely different online networks than their parents; Tim Klein pointed out that few of his students check their emails and that nothing short of face-to-face conversations seemed to be effective at getting them involved in events or opportunities.

Many interviewees aired frustrations about few official communication channels, as well. There is no public television channel in Medford at the moment, as Ronny Flores mentioned in his interview, and even The Medford Transcript has relatively weak circulation numbers according to Noah Evans. More generally, many of the contacts we talked with believed that the municipal government should be playing a bigger role in promoting events and conducting outreach to different communities; the implicit theory seems to be that a more “official” communications channel might help keep everyone informed, not just those already plugged into the right social networks.

Our recommendations for tackling the marketing and promotional challenges are as follows:

**Independent from a specific event, lay the groundwork for best practices in event promotion.** Medford Conversations, the Medford Community Coalition, and many of the other groups who might be interested in future deliberative democratic practices are currently supported entirely by volunteers. The practical reality of this is that, when preparing for an event, there are finite resources available to strategize about its promotion. An event like Envision Medford required not only scheduling, designing, and locating, but also training of facilitators and organizing of child care. When juggling all of these priorities, volunteers would be wise to opt for the path of least resistance when it comes to marketing.

Unfortunately, the promotion of events requires much more legwork if it will successfully recruit a diverse population. Our research suggests that attendance at these events is heavily dependent on social networks, and tapping into new social networks may require more face-to-face promotion and personalized invitations. The real challenge of tackling this, we suspect, is knowing what to do and who to talk to. Therefore, we recommend that Medford Conversations launch an initiative to establish best practices in event promotion and recruitment separate from any specific event.

Medford Conversations, with its intimate understanding
of Medford’s communities and media, is well-equipped to undertake this task. The team might start by identifying key cultural and social organizations throughout the community, and establishing relationships with contacts in these groups who will help get the word out on future events. At a well-attended event like Community Day, Medford Conversations could set up a table to chat informally with attendees about how they heard of the event and how they access community news. They might also document online forums and email lists that can be tapped for maximum reach.

Regardless of the exact methodology, the outcome would ideally be a set of best practices and guidelines for promoting events in a way that reaches every corner of Medford’s community. The next time Medford Conversations is looking to promote an event, there will already be a foundation of research and thought to guide what needs to be accomplished. Furthermore, the findings could be posted to the Medford Conversations website as a resource for anyone in town looking to promote an opportunity or event.

**Strategically expand online social networks.** One of the issues surfaced is that, while many Medford activists and residents engage on Facebook groups or through other online communities, many are left out of these conversations because they are not aware of these forums or are not generally enthusiastic Internet-users. Online social networks are not always civil or productive, but they are becoming a key location of political dialogue, specifically in Medford. By ensuring that everyone is aware of these forums and helping underrepresented residents join, Medford Conversations could set up a table to chat informally with attendees about how they heard of the event and how they access community news. They might also document online forums and email lists that can be tapped for maximum reach.

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can make these organic dialogues more equitable and representative of the community at large.

One project, based in Minnesota, decided to embrace the trend of neighborhood engagement online. The Neighborhood Issues Forums recognized that low-income families and families of color were less likely to participate in online forums, including their own. As a result, they targeted communities that were least likely to be served by online engagement and actively recruited them into specially-designed neighborhood networks. “Inclusive outreach must be spread across online engagement efforts universally,” they write on Participedia, “or the harsh reality is that efforts to use the Internet in governance will bring anti-democratic results and simply raise the voices of the already powerful in society” (Clift 2013).

After identifying communities who may not be engaging online, Neighborhood Issues Forums organizers created an initial, closed, online forum for that community (see Figure 6). Next, organizers recruited a local, volunteer Forum Manager and 100 participants—all of this before the community was open to the public at large. This helps confirm interest and ensure that there are people to help tend to the community as it grows. Once the forum is open to the public, organizers recruit new users and conduct outreach to sign up as many people as possible. The Neighborhood Issues Forums bring paper forms to public events, which residents can fill out and turn in. Other volunteers can input this contact information into the forum and sign them up—removing hurdles for those who do not have smartphones and are not accustomed to creating accounts on new websites. This is presumably paired with other forms of outreach, with the end goal of signing up as many people as possible with their real names. Whether there is ongoing research about who utilizes these social networks after they are established is unclear.

Although it would be a large undertaking, Medford Conversations could pursue a similar project in Medford, either establishing a forum at e-democracy.org like Neighborhood Issues Forums did, or by simply identifying one of the many existing forums to promote. An added bonus is that, by increasing the number and diversity of these groups’ members, Medford Conversations is consolidating the communication channels needed to reach a broader swath of the community.

Further build the Medford Conversations coalition across many different communities. One of the strengths of the current Medford Conversations Steering Committee is its
diversity: members bring in the perspectives and skills of long-term residents, city officials, religious figures, and activists. To effectively promote events to the many different communities in Medford, however, might require additional, and different, diversity.

The Study Circles Resource Center offers useful suggestions about how to recruit a diverse set of participants to dialogue-based events. Martha McCoy and Michael McCormick, in discussing Study Circles focused on race, write about the importance of recruiting participants beyond the “choir” and engages “organizations, groups, and individuals not typically committed to working on race” (McCoy and McCormick, 2004, p. 140). The key to success in this effort, they argue, is in the makeup of the organizing coalition: “Such a coalition models the essence of the entire program and is the most important factor in recruiting racially diverse participants,” they write. “Community members will get involved when people they know and respect make it clear that their participation is important and that they will have a chance to make a difference on the issue” (McCoy and McCormick, 2004, p. 140).

To achieve a diverse coalition, they suggest organizing pilot study circles for community leaders. According to their experience, experiencing the pilot firsthand helps people understand the process and therefore more effectively promote it. Medford Conversations could make a concerted effort to invite additional community members onto the steering committee and conduct a pilot to explain Medford Conversations’ vision and share the concept of deliberative democracy to those who may be less familiar.

If the steering committee is able to recruit more members from a variety of different ethnic, socioeconomic, and racial communities in Medford, we believe that recruiting diverse participants for events will naturally become easier. As it stands, the steering committee members activate their social networks to recruit event participants—at least, that’s what we heard from our exit surveys. If more communities are represented on the steering committee, it follows that personal invitations to events will be extended to a more diverse base of residents.
Multiple Languages

The second most-cited barrier in our exit survey data was language barriers. Fourteen percent of students in the Medford Public School District are English Language Learners, and according to Medford Conversations’ website, the district’s students hail from 65 different birth countries (not including the United States). A few of our interviewees pointed out that many Medford residents do not recognize this growing linguistic and ethnic diversity; a common theory is that those who do not have children in the school district may be isolated from these changes in demographics. This is not an easy challenge to tackle, and language barriers will never be totally dismantled. But we recommend keeping the following ideas in mind:

Think beyond the “rational debate.” In her work about internal exclusion, Young (2000) advocates for deliberative democrats to expand the communication formats accepted in deliberative processes. Rather than only pursuing the “fiction” of rational debate, she introduces the concepts of storytelling, rhetoric, and greeting. By openly utilizing and valuing these different communication formats, event organizers can sometimes minimize internal exclusion.

Of particular importance here, some of these communication formats are more conducive to translation. For example, although translating a debate live can be a complex endeavor, ensuring that event organizers greet non-English speakers in their native tongue and acknowledging their presence can be very powerful, according to Young (2000, p. 57). It would also be fairly simple for a resident to share a personal story in her own language and translate this monologue into English for the rest of the room. These options are not enough—only greeting non-English speakers or providing a specific and limited time to speak can easily become tokenism—but Young’s ideas are helpful to consider in this context.

In one case, event organizers created a video game for participants, which was made available in both English and Chinese. This “Participatory Chinatown” event in Boston’s Chinatown utilized Second Life to create an immersive experience, wherein participants would play the game as one of fifteen characters seeking to accomplish one of three tasks: find a job, find a home, or find a place to socialize. As a part of the experience, participants were encouraged to play the game first together, in the same room, and to discuss their experiences with each other as they played (Hoffelder, 2013). Youth—who had developed the characters based on their interviews with
stakeholders—were on hand, along with translators, to mitigate technological challenges and overcome language barriers.

The Participatory Chinatown event was part of an extensive master planning process, and is not likely replicable for every simple participatory event. However, there are multiple lessons to be gleaned. First, the idea of creating an activity outside of an event, and ensuring this activity is accessible in multiple languages, might be more attainable.

Providing fact sheets, maps, articles, games or stories in multiple languages can ensure that everyone has access to key information and a foundation on which to attempt communicating with their neighbor.

Secondly, there is a lesson implicit here that, even if a debate is not entirely multilingual, small steps presumably make a difference. One can imagine that, at the Participatory Chinatown event, participants can laugh and point at their monitors together, even if they are not able to communicate directly to each other. Young, when discussing the use of greeting in deliberative democratic spaces, explains that, while acknowledging the presence of a group is not usually enough, it does make a difference (2000, p. 57).

Removing the language barrier is a noble, but elusive goal—organizers would do well to pursue incremental progress by acknowledging and embracing language differences.

Consider formats that allow residents to debate within their home language. At Envision Medford, the event organizers assigned participants at random to tables with the hopes of generating conversation among strangers. One could imagine a similar event where there is one table of Haitian-Creole speakers, and maybe another of Spanish speakers. Although each table would not likely consist entirely of strangers, and might have less diversity than other tables, participants would be able to brainstorm rapid-fire in their preferred language. Translation services would then be focused on the share backs to the entire group, both translating from English into Haitian-Creole for the table, and the Haitian-Creole table’s takeaways into English for everyone else. The share backs are a natural place to focus translation efforts because it involves monologues that can proceed at a slower pace; it is easier to keep up with these reports to the whole group than an intense debate.

By incorporating the element of language-based tables into an event design early on, promotional materials can be
generated to specifically target non-English speakers, likely increasing their representation at the event.

However, we recognize that translation services are not always feasible for every event. On that note, we also suggest Medford Conversations:

**Research translation options that might be available.** Medford Conversations could consider reaching out to the Boston Interpreters Collective or organizations like the Somerville Community Corporation, which provides translation services at most of its meetings and events. The steering committee should be aware what the costs would be for different translation services, for instance: translating a poster, translating a website event listing, providing a translator and necessary equipment at an event. Even if there is not enough of a budget to pursue all of these options all of the time, knowing the costs required and beginning to build those bridges is an important first step.

Another avenue to consider is incorporating the youth in the Medford Public Schools. Given the sheer number of birth countries represented in the district, it is probable that many students are bilingual, and perhaps assist their parents in everyday translation. By recruiting these students to volunteer or pay them to work at these events, Medford Conversations would be acknowledging the important role they play in navigating different linguistic traditions in Medford. Arguably, these students have more experience than many Medford adults with the changing demographics of the city, so there is something poetic about putting them in a leading role of mediating among these populations.

**Undervalued Participation**

Some Envision Medford survey respondents theorized that some would-be participants distrusted the event format, questioning whether everyone would feel that they could participate effectively and whether the event would actually influence policy. Others wondered if the anticipated lack of diversity might discourage people from attending; if there is a norm in the community that events are predominantly attended by white, middle-class, well-educated, long-term residents, someone falling beyond that category might be disinclined to participate. Of course, we do not have data from people who feel this way; as one interviewee pointed out, the best way to explore this would be to ask those who are uncomfortable with the format why they feel that way, and
what steps could be taken to mitigate this anxiety.

We collapse this sort of feedback into the concept of undervalued participation. We hope to capture the idea that some people might avoid an event because they do not feel their contributions will be meaningful, either because they lack the right skillset or communication tools to participate effectively or because they will not fit in with other participants.

**Think beyond the “rational debate.”** This recommendation about overcoming language barriers is equally valuable in tackling undervalued participation. As stated previously, event organizers should take care in considering what communication styles are permitted or encouraged at future events. Events that focus on deliberation and debate can overvalue the perspectives of people who are best-equipped for these kinds of conversations: often white, male professionals. Young (2000) discusses this at length: Even when marginalized groups are “formally included in a forum or process, people may find that their claims are not taken seriously and may believe that they are not treated with equal respect.”

Young believes that incorporating multiple forms of political communication beyond the mythological “rational argument” help respond to these challenges. The first political communication she details is greeting: the simple act of participants explicitly acknowledging other participants can make “more substantively inclusive” (2000, p. 57.) Secondly, she discusses rhetoric—deliberative democrats, she charges, often discourage the use of rhetoric and frame it as a threat to reasoned debate. Her reply is that all debate uses rhetoric to some degree, and explicitly noticing and embracing different kinds of rhetoric is a first step to noticing “how some people can be excluded from the public by dismissal of their style” (2000, p. 70). Finally, she discusses storytelling, which can help foster mutual understanding in a forum where people often make assumptions about each other’s experiences.

**Further build the Medford Conversations coalition across many different communities.** This is a duplicate recommendation from the previous discussion about marketing and promotional challenges, but it is equally relevant here. It will be difficult for Medford Conversations to tackle some of the assumptions that our exit survey respondents theorized existed about public events. If a person truly doubts that she can add something of value
to the event, or distrusts the event’s ability to affect change, organizers would need to dismantle these assumptions before even dreaming of recruiting her to an event.

The Study Circles Resource Center example mentioned previously, wherein event organizers held pilot study circles with a diverse set of community members, seems like a promising model. Medford Conversations could recruit a few contacts from a population that has been missing so far—the Bangladeshi Muslim community, for example—and conduct a facilitated debate in the style of a future event. This could also provide an incredible opportunity to gain feedback into what would make a public event more appealing and inclusive to these populations. Ideally, if the pilot went well enough, these leaders could then return to their communities and more enthusiastically and knowledgeably recruit others to attend. If these leaders are convinced that their opinions will be valued and may have an effect on the process, they will be best-equipped to convince their communities of the same.

Some questions for Medford Conversations to keep in mind moving forward:

- Are facilitators trained to accept many communication styles and formats in conversation?
- Is a given event able to incorporate multiple communication tools?
- What can steering committee members and facilitators do to model the valuing of different communication styles?
Setting the Agenda

As Medford Conversations plans future events, they must determine what topics are to be discussed. This section seeks to analyze agenda-setting, which was identified as an issue in our field research through four data sources including public infographics, the exit survey, observations of the discussion and key informant interviews. We then use selected case studies to draw out lessons that Medford Conversations could consider in its work. At the end, two recommendations are included: what topics should be prioritized in an agenda and how to improve the process of making an agenda. The framework for this section is laid out in Figure 7.

Figure 7: The research framework of setting the agenda

[Diagram showing the research framework with sections for Research at Envision Medford, Key Informant Interviews, Public infographics, Exit surveys, Observations of the discussion, Findings, Case Studies, Topics: What topics should be prioritized in an agenda?, Process: How to improve the process of making an agenda?]

Section 5: Recommendations
Prioritizing topics in an agenda

Findings from the research at Envision Medford. Based on research at Envision Medford, “Development” received the highest ranking among the five general themes that were presented as options by the field project team. In addition to these designated topics, fourteen more topics were added and highlighted by the participants themselves. Of these fourteen, “Redesign Medford Square” received the highest ranking, attracting more votes than most of the designated topics.

The topics of building competencies and partnerships and creating an inclusive plan were highlighted frequently in the discussion. Many respondents asked for an inclusive and broadly shared vision of Medford as a whole rather than a vision just focusing on economic development. Also, many respondents viewed the conversations as valuable opportunities not only to learn about the issues Medford is facing but also to build and improve the ability to get involved in the conversations, and to help build networks between individuals or organizations.

Findings from the key informant interviews (See Table 6). We found that many topics were highlighted by interviewees when asked what issues they think will be most important in Medford in the next five years. Most interviewees are both residents and organizers in Medford, so the collection of related topics could be a good source for understanding how stakeholders may seek to prioritize topics in future conversation agendas.

The collection of the topics (See Table 6) includes some of the general ones identified in the infographic at Envision Medford, such as “Youth” and “Diversity.” The collection also shares some highlights with those added by attendees at Envision Medford, such as “Gentrification/Affordability” and “Redesign Medford Square.” Also, some more specific topics came up, such as “Improving the website” and “Promote and brand the city.”

Similar to the research at Envision Medford, the topics of “Competence and partnerships building” and “Create an inclusive/master plan” are highly recommended for consideration in future conversations.
### Table 6: A collection of topics highlighted in the key informant interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Topics</th>
<th>Selected Quotes From Key Informant Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>“There’s a significant Muslim/Arab community - they really need to feel safe in Medford. Multicultural diversity, especially religion and acceptance are an important issue.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>“I would love to see connecting students to issues that impact Medford population on the ground so that they can get emotionally invested in that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentrification/ Affordability</td>
<td>“It’s becoming more expensive to live in Medford.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic properties</td>
<td>“Its assets like historic buildings and properties can be changing for better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would like to see more efforts on the stewardship of historic properties.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign Medford Square</td>
<td>“More mixed businesses in Medford Square.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td>“Need to talk about resiliency, vulnerability, and engage public.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the infrastructure</td>
<td>“Like a complete streets plan. Huge demand for the downtown district to be more vibrant, more attractive, integrated with development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive participation</td>
<td>“It’s not just the community, but anyone, demographic, ethnic, historic group, gender, race, occupation, and so on. It’s all. So, how do we expand the sense of We?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There should be efforts to bring all or many of members of the community to have representation in local activities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City services</td>
<td>“Improving the human resources of the city by better city services.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence and partnerships building</td>
<td>“Build the network of people, for example, non-profit community groups, and the Community Coalition.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It is a very significant network and a cluster of highly motivated volunteers who are interested in fostering positive change in the city.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would like to see that community organizations support different groups.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an inclusive/ master plan</td>
<td>“I would like to see strong economic development with a master plan for the city, which it doesn’t have, a vision tying into my comment about creating an identity, a mission, having a plan.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship of resources</td>
<td>“How Medford utilizes resources properly for the public safety for the benefit of all residents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the website</td>
<td>“I hope we improve the website with all the features that make it easier for people to be engaged.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote and brand the city</td>
<td>“I would like to see Medford do a better job promoting itself and improving the reputation.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggestions for the agenda-making process

Many suggestions pertaining to how Medford Conversations can improve its process of the agenda-making emerged from the research of both Envision Medford and key informant interviews. They can be summarized into five fields (See Table 7).

Table 7: A summary of suggestions on the agenda-making process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Suggestions</th>
<th>The Exit Survey at Envision Medford</th>
<th>Selected Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising the agenda better</td>
<td>&quot;Flyers should be distributed to families through public schools three weeks ahead of the event.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;For elder people who don’t have the internet or smart phones, how we get them to have information.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Not knowing about it. Communication of what’s happening in all things in Medford extremely fragmented and ineffective.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;An older generation that might not go to a website for information. When running events and trying to market something, you have to do it in lots of different ways.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Lack of marketing of the event.”</td>
<td>&quot;Whether someone who picked up a flyer leading them to feel that it’s something they can be welcomed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Lack of information. Not everyone has access to email.”</td>
<td>&quot;Lacking dissemination of information. Medford doesn’t have a public TV channel actively to put out the information with what efforts are being made and how you can participate.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Posters needed.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including services information</td>
<td>&quot;Publicize your childcare. Make it known during registration process online.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Make sure people are aware that there is childcare available.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting background information</td>
<td>&quot;May not know about it, especially the previous commitment.”</td>
<td>&quot;Getting people to know what’s happening is the biggest challenge.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Lacking of knowledge, afraid of the Same Old, Same Old.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing better questions</td>
<td>&quot;Make better questions.”</td>
<td>&quot;Some designed questions were not formulated in a way the table could use to actually come up with ideas, encourage people to be analytical about problems.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Thinking about what could be rather than focusing on what is broken or wrong.”</td>
<td>&quot;Thinking about what could be rather than focusing on what is broken or wrong.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making it known the follow-up agenda</td>
<td>&quot;If there are concrete results of these conversations it would be empowering to know.”</td>
<td>&quot;Be able to discuss an issue and discuss it multiple times.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Tell us what the next steps are.”</td>
<td>&quot;Have a large citywide event.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Send or post follow-up info/links.”</td>
<td>&quot;There are things which could be done better - better diversity, more diversity. That’s something continually coming up in several meetings involving diverse organizations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Would love to have next steps, how to get involved.”</td>
<td>&quot;I would like to see the dominant agenda of resources allocation for the benefit of the community.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Having ongoing meetings.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;More events building on this one: focus on individual areas and specific topics.”</td>
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</table>
Case Study: Envision Prince George’s

On the basis of research at Envision Medford and interviews with key contacts, many responses refer to how to make a more inclusive and inviting agenda. Even though Envision Prince George’s and Medford Conversations are not precisely matched in terms of the type of territory or scope of the project, some agenda-making strategies employed by Envision Prince George’s could be useful to Medford Conversations.

Overview

Envision Prince George’s (ENVISION PG’s) was an initiative launched by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, aiming to develop and implement a vision for the county with a vibrant economy and a high quality of life for all. Over the course of six months, from the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2010, ENVISION PG’s engaged over 1700 participants to provide input into the direction of the county’s future, through educational activities, community forums, online discussions, and a countywide town meeting (Um, 2013). At the end, a

Figure 8: How the agendas helped create a shared vision

- Drafting the agendas of topic-driven forums
- Participatory discussion to define the agenda of the final meeting
- Define the priorities and the action agenda

Area 1: “live”
Area 2: “work”
Area 3: “learn”
Area 4: “serve”
Area 5: “enjoy”
Area 6: “sustain”

Housing and Community Development and Consolidated Plan
Livable Communities Initiative
Countywide Master Plan of Transportation
Historic-Sites and Districts Plan
Parks and Recreation Plan
The Prince George’s Business Roundtable
Other events...
countywide vision and an action agenda framework were developed based on the outcomes.

Clear agendas to elicit public input and keep participants informed. Based on input from residents and other stakeholders received over the past year through a variety of interviews, public meetings, and other events, a framework of six areas as well as the most important assets, opportunities, and challenges were created based on a shared vision for the future of all the participants (See Figure 8).

Lesson 1: Drafting the agenda for topic-driven meetings. Based on input from residents and other stakeholders received over the past year through a variety of interviews, public meetings, and other events, a framework of six areas were drafted for the participants to discuss (See Table 8).

Lesson 2: The final agenda was created through conversations. The six areas including “live”, “work”, “learn”, “serve”, “enjoy” and “sustain” were initiated, but the agendas of the final topic would be created through discussion and dialog among all the participants.

Table 8: The six areas of the Envision framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Serve</th>
<th>Enjoy</th>
<th>Sustain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Envision the communities in which we live—or want to live—and how we contribute to a high quality of life. Topics in Live include: Housing, Health, Public safety, and human services</td>
<td>Envision what is a sustainable, vibrant economy that benefits all should look like in the future. Topics in Work include: Economic development, Small business development and entrepreneurship, and Urban planning</td>
<td>Envision what is a quality education for everybody—our children, young adults, and lifelong learning—should look like. Topics in Learn include: Preschool learning, K-12 schools, and Higher education</td>
<td>Envision how everyone can find a way to serve the county and how residents, leaders, and organizations can work together to serve the county more effectively. Topics in Serve include: Governance, Citizen engagement, and Faith-based organizations</td>
<td>Envision how we would like to spend our time with family and friends enjoying community amenities and natural green spaces. Topics in Enjoy include: Parks and Recreation, Heritage, and History</td>
<td>Envision how to sustain a higher quality of life for ourselves and for future generations, including our children, grandchildren, and new residents. Topics in Sustain include: Transportation and other public facilities, Climate change, and Natural environment</td>
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Lesson 3: Identifying potential assets, opportunities, and challenges for the agenda of the final shared conversation. The additional assets, opportunities, and challenges produced during discussions were also added to the final agenda.

Recommendations about Prioritized Topics

Draft priorities for Medford Conversations by integrating previous and ongoing commitments. For Medford Conversations, it would be helpful to pool and integrate previously discussed and ongoing topics. Then, draft the agenda for Medford Conversations and solicit feedback from participants to create new agendas for further discussions. This approach may let participants know how their input could matter in a participatory process.

For example, the previously discussed topics that emerged from research at Envision Medford and key informant interviews could serve as a source of pooled topics (See Table 9).

Table 9: Pooled topics from Envision Medford and interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Topics</th>
<th>Specific Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Fostering resources (i.e. Arts and culture; Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Healthy food access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Preservation (i.e. Historic/Community preservation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior residents</td>
<td>Pedestrian-friendly/Walkability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign Medford Square</td>
<td>Improving infrastructure (i.e. Brooks Estate restoration; Green Line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing/Gentrification</td>
<td>Improving city services (i.e. Leadership; Public safety; Police department; Websites)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build competencies and partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an inclusive/master plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make inclusive participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for the Agenda-Setting Process

Advertise the agenda through a variety of channels. In addition to making the agenda public in a digital way, non-digital means could be more efficient for reaching out to those who have no access to the internet or smart phones. In particular, the practice of distributing flyers and posters around places frequently visited by residents could improve the advertisement of an agenda, including examples such as schools for reaching out to students as well as their families, and grocery stores or community centers for seniors.

Clarify available event services in the agenda. In each agenda, it will be helpful to make clear what supporting services are available, such as child care or language translation. Making this information available in this way also raises awareness for those who may need to request specific services. This practice may encourage people to play a more active role in resolving some of their own participation barriers.

Indicate where background information is available. In addition to introductory comments at the beginning of each conversation, organizers may want to include some supplements such as booklets or videos to help explain the evolution of Medford Conversations. It may help to publicize where these materials are or provide online links to the agenda.

Design questions in a solution-oriented way. Instead of asking what is broken or wrong, formulate questions for Medford Conversations in a way which could encourage people to come up with solutions or innovations. For example, organizers may frame a question in terms of what factors would contribute to the revitalization of Medford Square rather than what is not working about Medford Square now.

Make the follow-up plan known. Given that Medford Conversations is likely to organize individual events as well as a series of events, the agenda could include:

- A dominant agenda for the whole process, which presents cornerstones and a timeline expressed in general timeframes. This agenda could be part of branding Medford Conversations, and give a taste to the public of
what their participation in Medford Conversations might be like.

- Several secondary agendas for the topic-driven conversations. Organizers may draft a general agenda for the individual conversation, but it would be important to make known how previous public input helps tailor the upcoming agenda for the next conversation and what the updated agenda is for.

- Inspired by the case lessons of Envision Prince George's, creating an action agenda based on a participatory process could itself be one of the intended outcomes of Medford Conversations.
Section 6: Conclusion

Medford Conversations is already beginning to establish itself in the city of Medford after co-hosting several well-received events. Our research affirms the value of hosting more conversational events in the future, given the appreciation the coalition has already received for its work and the appetite for future events visible in our exit surveys.

We strongly believe, as do the members of the steering committee, that considerations of participation and inclusion must permeate Medford Conversations’ planning and event design moving forward. In many ways, this coalition is at the beginning of its journey, and we believe now is the time to establish broad networks and engage a multiplicity of voices. This will ensure that Medford Conversations builds a reputation for inclusion at its events.

The challenges of inclusion and participation are never really “solved”; metrics for “good” participation are elusive, and shifting demographics will continuously change who should be recruited. We hope that our research provides specific insights into how Medford Conversations can effectively recruit from throughout the city and build events that are inclusive, but our work has clear limitations.

In particular, our research has targeted those who are already engaged in public events and participatory processes. To better understand how to include voices not traditionally engaged, we would have ideally researched these communities directly. As one of the individuals we interviewed shared with us when asked why people do not participate, “You should really ask them.” Unfortunately, our research capabilities are limited by the short time-frame of this project. However, we hope that this report proves to be a useful resource as organizers continue to wrestle with these issues in the future, even if the exact contexts and needs change over time.

The fact that so many respected leaders from throughout Medford are participating in Medford Conversations lends it credibility even in its embryonic stages. We believe that Medford Conversations can build on this reputation and position itself as a mechanism for engaging the community at large, rather than just those who usually attend public meetings. By engaging with the challenges of participation and inclusion in its events now, we believe Medford Conversations can build on this credibility to quickly establish itself as a valuable asset to a changing Medford.
Appendix A: Envision Medford Participant Exit Survey

Thank you for participating in this event! Please answer the following questions and turn in this survey to help us improve our future events.

1.) Why did you choose to attend this event today?

2.) In your view, were participants at this meeting representative of Medford as a whole? Please circle one.

Not At All Representative ![Circle] [Circle] [Circle] [Circle] [Circle] [Circle] Extremely Representative

3.) If you answered something other than “Extremely Representative” in Question 2, who would you like to see represented at future events?

4.) In general, what might prevent a person from attending a community event like this?

5.) Are there any suggestions or comments you would like to share with us about this event?

6.) Is there anything you would like event organizers to keep in mind for future events?
Appendix B: Full List of Interview Questions

First, I’d like to get a sense for what Medford means to you.
Are you a Medford resident? (Do you consider yourself a long-term resident?)
How long have you lived or worked in Medford?
Why are you/your organization based in Medford, and not somewhere else?
What do you like about Medford? What do you dislike about Medford?
What activities and organizations are you involved with in Medford?

Next, I’d like to discuss some of the current events in Medford now.
How is Medford population’s changing?
How do you think long-term residents might feel about this?
What issues do you think will be most important in Medford in the next five years?
What do you think caused Medford Conversations to start as an initiative in this particular moment?
What do you hope Medford Conversations will achieve?

Now I’d like to ask you a little bit about how public participation works in Medford.
What did you think about the Envision Medford event?
Do you think the people who participate in public events in Medford are representative of the entire community? Why or why not?
What are some previous public events you have hosted or attended? What about these events were successful, and what about them were less so?

In your opinion, what would successful public participation look like in public events in Medford?
What role might the City of Medford play in public meetings?
Why do you think some people do not participate in public events?

Those are all of the questions we have at this moment. May we follow up with you via email if we think of anything else? Thank you so much for your time.
## Appendix C: Case Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Candidates</th>
<th>Methods Used</th>
<th>Key Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth Kautz’s Civic Initiatives (Burnsville, MN)</td>
<td>1. Citizen Dialogue</td>
<td>1. Engaging policy-makers in the whole process of the participation to make results achievable. The broad city redesign involved many stakeholders, and the mayor had overseen a process of public agency redesign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Building the brand and logistics of conversations to make them workable. The deliberation process for the CAPS program is focused around meetings known by locals as “Beat Meetings”. The five steps of the process include: identify and prioritize problems, analyze problems, design response strategies, implement response strategies, assess the success of response strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Policing in Chicago (Chicago, IL)</td>
<td>1. Citizen Dialogues; 2. Public Hearings/Meetings.</td>
<td>2. A clear agenda of every Beat Meeting to keep all participants in the track. Every beat community meeting should follow an agenda: (1) Feedback on progress made on problems since the last meeting; (2) Discussion of current crime conditions and new problems; (3) Development of strategies and coordination of responsibilities; (4) Schedule next meeting and working groups for ongoing problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envision Prince George’s (MD)</td>
<td>1. Interactive community forums; 2. Online discussions; 3. A 21st Century Town Meeting</td>
<td>1. Identify the priorities of conversations on a basis of a participatory process to improve diversity. 2. Create the action-oriented agenda to make the results of conversations achievable. 3. Making inclusive agendas to reach out diverse topics. 4. Trying different methods to remove the barriers to participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-Year Plan to Increase Community Involvement in Portland (OR)</td>
<td>1. Surveys; 2. Community meetings; 3. Focus groups; 4. One-on-one interviews.</td>
<td>1. Solicit ideas for change and preferred priorities from extensive community outreach. The Community Connect review process was undertaken by a diverse, 18-member volunteer group that worked for more than two years. The group engaged in extensive community outreach, including surveys, community meetings, focus groups, one-on-one interviews and a city-wide summit of neighborhood leaders, to identify obstacles to greater involvement and solicit ideas for change. 2. Make a comprehensive road map for strengthening the civic life and identify the goals. A comprehensive road map for strengthening Portland’s civic life—the “Five-Year Plan to Increase Community Involvement” in Portland was made, where thirty strategies grouped in three goal areas: (1) Increase the number and diversity; (2) Strengthen community capacity; (3) Increase community impact on decision making through a major focus on creating a government that is more willing and able to partner with the community. 3. Combine with funding to implement initiatives and fund neighborhood coalitions. “Involvement in Portland” combined with significant additional funding, allowed the city to join with neighborhoods and community-based organizations to implement a wide range of new initiatives and programs, and fund neighborhood coalitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton (Virginia) Deliberative Governance</td>
<td>1. Neighborhood planning groups; 2. Deliberative forums; 3. Charrettes; 4. Service projects</td>
<td>The Hampton System of Youth Civic Engagement (YCE) is built upon three structured pathways for civic engagement. 1. Engages thousands of young people every year in service learning or in episodic volunteer activities that provide a concrete service to the community. 2. Engages youth in advisory capacities on boards and leadership groups, where they meet at least monthly regarding policy, procedures, organizational and community issues. 3. Engages youth in shared leadership, the highest level of participation and influence - to share power, responsibility, and accountability with adults for delivering outcomes.</td>
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Appendix D: Checklist for Event Inclusion

Not every event can be 100% accessible and convenient to every single participant. We hope this basic checklist, which incorporates feedback from previous public meeting participants and best practices developed in other communities, will help event organizers be conscious and deliberate about being as inclusive as possible.

- **Event Scheduling**
  - Is the event at a time that ensures the maximum amount of people can attend?
  - Does the date conflict with any religious holidays? ([interfaithcalendar.org](http://interfaithcalendar.org))
  - Does the date conflict with any other important city meetings?
  - If a person cannot attend, how else can they participate? (For example, can they submit feedback in writing? Can they sign up to receive information about what people discussed?)

- **Event Planning**
  - Is the location accessible by public transportation?
  - Is the location accessible for people of varying physical abilities?
  - Are the facilities comfortable? If, for example, the facility has benches without a back, will different chairs be made available?

- **Accessibility**
  - Will the event be accessible to those who are hard of hearing?
  - Will the event be accessible to those speaking different languages? Could translation be provided with advanced notice?
  - Will childcare be provided? Will children be invited?

- **Marketing**
  - Is the event framed in such a way that someone who has never been to such an event will feel welcome?
  - Are all of the services offered (translation, childcare, etc.) made clear in the event communication?
  - Is the agenda of the event clear to those who are not familiar with the event organizers?

- **Promotional Efforts**
  - Has the event been promoted through:
    - Online channels
    - Print channels
    - Churches
    - Community groups
    - Email lists
    - Posters around town
  - Has a personal, verbal invitation been made to traditionally-underrepresented communities?
  - Have event organizers been tasked with personally reaching out to people who have not attended an event previously?
  - Have event registrants been asked to help promote the event? (For example, event organizers could email everyone who has registered a week before the event and ask them to consider inviting someone.)
Sources

Introduction
Section 1: Introduction


Tying Conversation to Action

Incorporating Intergenerational Perspectives
Resolving Barriers to Participation


Setting the Agenda

Um, Kevin. (2013). The case study of the Envision Prince George’s. Source: http://participedia.net/en/cases/envision-prince-georges. This part is summarized by the Field Project team based on the source.