

In Spring 2019, Medford Conversations launched its 3rd Series, *Community, Connection, & Place: Conversations about Identity and Belonging in Medford and Beyond*. Over the course of four facilitated dialogues, members of the Medford community met in small groups to share their stories and discuss barriers to community engagement and generate ideas on how to overcome those barriers. On April 7, 2019, members of the public, as well as participants from the small group dialogues came together for a final “Closing Event” to share the learnings from their conversations. The chart below represents the ideas generated by the circles as well as attendees’ “votes” on which barriers and connectors are most important.

Barriers to Community & Connection	Votes
Communication (18% of total votes)	46
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication (Category) 	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge (What are the events/ spaces; Advertising; Business consumer awareness/duty; Enforcement; Community organization/ help engage high schools for community service; Sports team) 	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing what’s going on 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transparency 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information about City Government 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications channels 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People without computer access 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of city/city govt info 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of info-sharing 	1
Transportation/Traffic (18% of total votes)	46
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility (walking, driving, biking; Organizing group travel; carpooling/public transportation) 	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation/Traffic (Category) 	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Bike Lanes 	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe passage for pedestrians and bicyclists 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellington Circle - Traffic 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking: no meters, nowhere to park 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public transit (medford especially) 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving is stressful 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to use parking meters; lack of parking in the square 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Limits 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some neighborhoods lack buses 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus/public transportation routes 	1
Not belonging/Exclusion (13.7% of total votes)	35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not belonging/Exclusion (Category) 	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of segregation by identity (includes economic, language, ethnicity) 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-Christmas at City Hall in December- excluding 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurocentric/Patriarchy Representation 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear Medford Identity 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labeling outsider 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Groups and Out-groups (aka Inclusion v. exclusion) 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentrification 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic separations cause tension 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to appear normal in a eurocentric society 	1

• Representation vs tokenism (not real belonging)	1
• Racist Public Displays	1
• Neighborhood regionalism/divisions	1
• History, stereotypes, and misinformed perceptions	1
Institutional Barriers (10.6% of total votes)	27
• Lack of transparency/diversity in government	9
• City needs to do more to foster community	4
• Institutional Barriers (Category)	4
• Bureaucracy inflexible	3
• No adult education	2
• School Culture - grade levels feel separate	1
• Parental permission	1
• Financial/Time Off	1
• Few community organizations that foster cohesion	1
• City Hall bureaucracy	1
Lack of Gathering Spaces/Public Events (9% of total votes)	23
• Lack of Gathering Spaces/Public Events (Category)	8
• Not a lot of nightlife, live music	7
• Not much to do in Medford Square	6
• Spaces to meet/gather	2
Physical Barriers (7.1% of total votes)	18
• Physical Barriers (Category)	6
• Snow clearing	2
• Lack of Public Spaces	2
• Few playgrounds with water play	2
• Route 93	1
• Poor lighting and signage	1
• Physical Barriers	1
• Not enough access to river	1
• Lack of Sidewalks	1
• Distance	1
Change/resistance to change (6.3% of total votes)	16
• Change/resistance to change (Category)	7
• Tradition, resistance to change; tradition over progress	6
• Population/participants leave - attrition; lack of continuity	2
• Habit	1
Social Barriers (5.5% of total votes)	14
• Social Barriers (Category)	6
• Motivation	2
• Lack of trust and anonymity re: neighbors	2
• Treating others as equals	1
• Reliance on digital/social media	1
• Not wanting to intrude	1
• Embrace others	1
Language (3.9% of total votes)	10
• Language	3

• Language (Category)	3
• Language Barrier (exchange back and forth)	2
• English only environment	2
Economic Barrier (3.5% of total votes)	9
• Money	9
Stress/Time (2.7% of total votes)	7
• Burnout	3
• Time conflicts	1
• Time	1
• Lack of energy	1
• Stress/Time (Category)	1
Fear & Safety (1.6% of total votes)	4
• Safety for women	3
• Fear	1
	255

<i>Ideas to address barriers and foster community connections</i>	Votes
Communication & Transparency (24.8% of total votes)	59
• Communication & Transparency (Category)	16
• Better communication/publicity (More posters; cross-group/resource to bring things together; Community calendar; Share what is already happening and promote)	10
• We think that lack of knowledge of events, activities, and spaces could be solved by an online information center that has an online responder and multiple points of access (mailed, phone #, languages)	9
• Free weekly paper of City Calendar of Events like Somerville Resistat	6
• We think that feeling intimidated and not knowing what to expect from new situations could be solved by: 1) Making it clear that all are welcome; 2) Going with a friend; 3) Being brave; 4) Clarifying what to expect; 5) Making extra efforts towards inclusion; 6) Providing information on accessibility	5
• We think a lack of community participation could be solved by a central listing of events around the city. For example, Somerville's Resistat, or a free weekly paper with complete listings.	5
• Overcoming barrier of reliance on digital/social media: 1) Use varied methods of communication; 2) Make accessible to multi-generational and different levels of digital literacy	3
• More opportunities for conversation	1
• Guide to public spaces, events, resources, walking paths	1
• Community processes for big hires; goals for hiring in city hall	1
• Communication about opportunities	1
• Better sharing of information - constantly working to share factual information	1
Public Events & Gathering Spaces (23.1% of total votes)	55
• Public Events & Gathering Spaces (Category)	17
• We think that lack of community could be solved by more free public events like this one (Medford Convos), arts, park events, online forums, etc.	10
• More events like Medford Conversations with more inclusion	4
• Offering more spaces for groups (like West Medford Community Center) - centrally and in different neighborhoods	3
• More public art, inclusive and city-wide - murals	3
• Improve walkability - clean up, light	3

• Arts Center	3
• Food!!! (this one kept surfacing)	2
• Dog parks	2
• City doing more things at night	2
• Overcoming barrier of money: 1)Free offerings (e.g., first Saturday); 2) Library passes	1
• Outdoor beer garden	1
• Outdoor activities (parks, ponds, the Fells)	1
• Family activities	1
• Create space to welcome folks	1
• City-sponsored block parties	1
Leadership/Elections (12.2% of total votes)	29
• Make charter review an election issue (Rank choice voting, etc.; Local district v. at-large)	18
• Public officials → advocacy for public transit	4
• Need vision	3
• Local elections can move the needle	2
• Leadership/Elections (Category)	2
Community Building (11.8% of total votes)	28
• Community Building (Category)	10
• Set goals for where we want with connection, etc. -- research how others have done this -- creating engagement and set a goal	6
• We think that that unclear Medford Identity can be solved by/with Medford Chamber of Commerce as resource/Central Community Center/Library/Medford Newspaper/Website/Cable TV/low-cost mini bus line (express in Lexington)/Tell Medford History	4
• Specific outreach to specific groups and organizers from the community	3
• Empower people to write and share their history	3
• Food, music, laughter, dance	2
Equity/Accessibility (6.3% of total votes)	15
• Acknowledge that we all have power and how to use it to make an equitable community	6
• Mandated training work for people in power to end bias (teachers)	4
• Equality of opportunity	2
• Clearly define social justice vocabulary	1
• Barrier failing to acknowledge bias	1
• Equity/Accessibility (Category)	1
Translation/Interpretation (4.2% of total votes)	10
• Language: Offering interpretation	6
• Run a meeting in a different language accessing another culture	2
• Translation/Interpretation (Category)	2
Neighborhood Organizing (4.2% of total votes)	10
• Grassroots organizing and outreach (Block parties; Neighborhood parties)	9
• Neighborhood Organizing (Category)	1
Local Organizations (3.8% of total votes)	9
• Libraries	3
• Local Organizations (Category)	3
• Senior centers	2
• Affinity groups and clubs	1

Funding (3.8% of total votes)	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More awareness of how budget is allocated 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medford officials should look at budget; are renters treated differently? 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding (Category) 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding from the city 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money has a huge influence on what gets done 	1
Volunteerism (2.5% of total votes)	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We think that snow clearing (geographical barrier) could be solved by creating a SNOW SQUAD of community members (ex. High school students for community service hours) who voluntarily clear snow of those who need help. 	6
Transportation (2.1% of total votes)	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation (Category) 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We think that transportation can be solved by: 1) Facilitating carpooling (uncomplicate it; address it at beginning of event); 2) Strategizing event locations and times; 3) Engaging in conversations about more and better commute options 	1
Personal Steps (0.8% of total votes)	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more open with neighbors, less judgemental 	2
Childcare/Support to Young Families (0.4% of total votes)	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Welcome wagon" package for families with newborns 	1
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