New Bedford Town Hall

Community Feedback Summary — April 27, 2026

Dots Exercise

Participants placed colored dots to indicate their support (Green), concerns (Yellow), or opposition (Red) for each activity. Items are listed in their original order. Dot counts are shown where recorded.

Transportation & Wayfinding

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Move the bus station to the train station area to create a multimodal hub	20	1	6	*"great idea!" "I tell people it's unsafe to take a bus to NB. Don't do that!"*
Establish a free shuttle that loops through the downtown and includes the train station	17			*"re-establish" "buses are already free"*
Better manage street and sidewalk construction	9			*most green dots for "advance notice"*
Slow down Route 18 for safer pedestrian crossings	8			
Have buses for Umass-Dartmouth students to visit downtown on weekends, especially evenings	6			
Create a system for clearing all sidewalks and intersections of snow	6			
Make it easier to find attractions	5	1		
Make sure all street corners have signs	2			
New: Missed opportunity… but someday? Train station should be a proper station at the foot of Union St				

Services & Amenities

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Establish a drop-in facility for the unhoused to be able to access services, charge phones, take a shower	18			*2 green dots "x100"*
Provide more public toilets to serve families, visitors, and the unhoused	17			
Provide more social service outreach on the streets to address mental illness, addiction, and homelessness	16			*1 green dot "x100"*
Better landscaping, more trees and flowers	9			
Identify appropriate locations for tour buses to drop off, pick up, and park	8			
Cleaner streets, sidewalks, pick up garbage	7			
Establish a visitor center, or work with the National Park to provide more local information about businesses and activities	7	1		
Snow removal for all sidewalks and intersections	6			
Allow businesses to store outdoor dining furniture and materials off-season at City/DPW facilities and assist with removal and installation	4	1	2	
New: Trash pick-up when we actually need it--weekends!				

Policing & Public Safety

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Increase community policing	15		4	*most green dots for "bike cops" and "more beat cops downtown"; 1 red dot "x100"*
Increase security presence and social service outreach in key locations that feel unsafe	15			*"bus station too unsafe for tourists, people afraid of station"*
Improve lighting and visibility in these areas and corridors connecting Purchase Street and lower Union	4			
Expand police substation at the bus station	4		3	*1 red dot "x100"*
Aggressively enforce local ordinances to address vacant and problem properties	4			
New: Absolutely more policing--living there is not safe if you're a 75 year old female!				*1 red dot*
New: Crime goes down when you take care of people's needs--no more police!				*2 green dots*
New: Policing does not equal safety				*2 green dots*

Street Life & Business Activity

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Attract a small grocery store and full-service pharmacy	13	3		
Create one consolidated events calendar and downtown map with businesses and destinations	8			*1 green dot "with stars"*
Provide grants to independent artists and local festivals	7			
Develop walking paths that highlight different themes (i.e. history, culture, fashion, fishing industry, world culture, etc.)	6			*"downtown Salem does well with walking lines"*
Have a café open after 4 pm	6			*"maybe ask why more cafes aren't open later: $$"*
Maintain consistent opening hours	4			
Re-establish a downtown farmer's market	4			
Create more frequent programming bringing people downtown and extend the duration to include more businesses and partners	4			*"rely on community already here: increase access, negate gatekeeping"*
Activate vacant ground-floor storefronts	4			
Encourage more "pop-ups" and art installations	4			
Extend business hours into evenings and throughout week	1	3	1	
Convene a "downtown reinvention group" to address how to support a stronger retail sector and attract companies downtown				

Families & Youth

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Develop more welcoming green spaces and safe spaces to hang out	12			
Make public spaces downtown more family friendly and generate activitythat increases foot traffic	11			
Work with local nonprofits and businesses to develop more "drop-in" activities for young people, or time they can reserve for self-directed activities with friends	10	1		
Recruit more family destinations and activities to the downtown	8			
Support independent artists to work with young people on transforming underutilized spaces				
New: Develop more third places where it is free to hang out				
New: Provide a grocery store for local immediate residents to walk to. Make people aware that there are other necessities i.e. clothes stores				

Housing & Development

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Reduce favoritism among developers and property owners	11			
Assign a liaison to work with businesses on permitting and other issues	10			
Incorporate artists into the planning and design process for infrastructure improvements	8			
Modernize municipal systems and speed up permits and applications	6			
Develop more housing downtown for a mix of incomes	5	3	1	
Support the efforts of smaller developers to access local and state grant funding	5			
Avoid surprise fees and requirements with a more consolidated permitting process	4			
Promote housing above first-floor uses	3			
Assign a liaison to work with each property owner to work with city departments and abutters on redevelopment projects to smooth process	1	3	2	
New: More low-income housing				
New: Require new housing to have 50% affordable units, more than current 5%. Equality for all				
New: Diversify developers i.e. no one company owning it all				

Marketing & Branding

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Create a unified online portal with AHA!, dNB Inc., City Tourism office and others (comment: including New Bedford Historical) that provides a "one stop" for event and programming information`	10	1		
Market the city via the MBTA to bring more visitors on the train--and make it easier to get from the station to downtown with signage, shuttles, a safe and well-marked pedestrian pathway	10	1	4	
Create itineraries and walking trails through online maps, printed brochures, artist-designed stickers for buildings, QR codes, or painted lines or symbols on sidewalks	5	1		
Develop positive shared messaging and materials for all community partners to use	5			
Hire a PR firm to promote media stories about New Bedford's downtown to compete with peer communities like Plymouth and Quincy	4		1	
New: Yes to PR firm but only if hired locally!	4			
Take inspiration from places like Portland, Maine and Providence	3	1		
New: AHA! needs an app!				
New: Lean into New Bedford's own strengths: history, culture, entrepreneurship, and innovation!				
New: Actively seek feedback from residents of local towns				
New: Fully fund the City of NB office of marketing and tourism so the city is a full participant at the table				

Parking

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Move bus station and turn it into a garage	9	1	4	
Establish dedicated, discounted off-street parking for downtown employees	7			
Make short visits easier by charging only 25 cents for the first 30 minutes	6			
Be clear and consistent with parking hours of enforcement	6			
Make it clear to visitors where to park downtown and provide wayfinding for getting to key destinations from there	5			
Leverage private lots for other users at off-peak times (example: employee parking during the day, resident parking at night)	5			
Make it easier to pay for on-street parking with a credit card	3			
Deck over the YMCA parking lot	3		5	
Provide more security presence at the garages, especially at night	2		1	
Provide some free pick-up/delivery spaces for restaurants	2			
Stop ticketing expired inspection stickers when there is no parking violation	2			
New: Make a validated parking program for people who actually spend money at downtown businesses				
Establish a new downtown garage			5	
New: Put parking underground--save space for other stuff!				

District Mgmnt & Coord

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Establish an integrated email list to share information among all downtown stakeholders	9			
Get more people on the street, whether that is an ambassador program, the police, social workers, or partnerships with local organizations	9		1	
Be transparent about what the City already collects in fees and taxes and how that money is spent, and how any new revenue collected would add value on top of that	8			*1 green dot had "x100"*
Promote better coordination, teamwork, and a positive "can-do" attitude among everyone involved	8			*2 green dots had "x100"*
Hire an experienced full-time professional to manage the downtown effort	4			
New: multiple part-time professionals would create better relationships and better coverage				
New: Locals to the front! Should be at least collaboration with locals. Locals care more about NB than an outsider will				

Waterfront & Connectivity

Activity	Green	Yellow	Red	Notes
Improve the Route 18 pedestrian crossing at Union Street	9			
Provide directions and opportunities for visiting downtown to cruise ship visitors	9		1	*1 comment "no cruise ships"*
Encourage downtown pedestrians to visit the waterfront and vice versa through clear walking paths and signage; make clear were visitors are welcomed and where they should respect active working areas	8			
Work with fishing industry to identify opportunities to tell story of the working waterfront and make it live for visitors and New Bedford residents, especially local youth	5			*"partner with local research SMAST"*
Explore feasibility of local marina improvements	1			
New: Water taxi to Fairhaven				
New: Press the Whaling Museum to build and activate a real and meaningful presence on Union Street!				*1 additional green dot*
New: Fill in the gaps along Union Street				*2 additional green dots*

Vision Sheet

What's Your Vision? What are some words to describe what you would like downtown to be in the future? What are the values that should be embedded in that vision?

Response	Notes
Provide basic services to the immediate and surrounding residents. Attracting others to participate in downtown. I.e. groceries	*nan*
Not the same people in charge of communication; and teamwork ought to mean everyone is a part of the decision, ideation, representation of the community as a whole…	*5 green dots*
More protected bike lanes!	*3 green dots*
No gentrification! All New Bedford residents have a say, especially disenfranchised people	*nan*
Third places: free and not home or work	*nan*
Attracting florist, specialty food markets, pharmacy, bakery, children's museum	*"but we have a florist and a bakery…"*
Belonging	*nan*
Equality	*nan*
More green space	*nan*
More pedestrian friendly	*nan*
Creative spaces, inspirational spaces for all ages	*nan*
Build a city for people, not cars	*nan*
Bike infrastructure also means good bike parking: in front of stores, not "ring and post" style, bike lockers/garages for longer storage	*nan*

Additional Comments

Comment	Notes
Study Wareham downtown. Get rid of meters!	*nan*
Support and elevate family and youth programming & collaboratives that are already happening	*nan*
Advisory committee needs to learn about similar initiatives in similarly sized MA cities: talk to community leaders to hear the good, bad and ugly; take field trips to go see and feel it	*nan*
The city local government tries to take over any ideas of the people and shop owners	*nan*
What studies have been done on the effects of rents and taxes on the historically displaced (route 18) Cape Verdean residents adjacent to downtown?	*nan*
What does community policing entail?	*nan*
If we can't afford to live here who is this for?	*nan*
Keep the main bus terminal downtown and fix it	*nan*
More housing	*nan*
More spaces for people	*nan*
Less parking	*nan*
Our community is suffering	*nan*
What about our elderly?	*nan*
Put parking underground if you must add	*nan*
Less car-dependency in general	*nan*
Homeless prevention not just after the fact	*nan*
Bicycle parking!	*nan*
Tourism is fine, but not if it affects badly the people who already live here. If you push out every resident/business that helps make NB unique, then NB becomes another cookie cutter city and we lose our community. When we make sure we include the locals and take care of them, we will see positive impact. This includes the houseless population	*7 green dots*
ICE is hurting our small businesses	*nan*

Comment	Notes
Policing does not equal safety, healthy communities do. When people are cared for, have what they need to survive and thrive, crime goes down, economic health goes up, and we keep flourishing	*1 green dot "x100"*
Work with local businesses to put local artists on their walls and sell on the spot (where the buyer leaves with the piece) through their point of sale systems. Good for local artist, extra income for business, simple to do. Do not do as "free wallpaper"	*nan*
There is zero coordination between: the whaling museum, national park, downtown stores, art museum, fishing heritage center, historical society. Everyone is in their own fortress and doesn't appear to do anything as a unified New Bedford	*"agree 100%"*