

Lynn takes stock of itself

PHOTO BY PAULA MULLER

MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative fellow Joseph Mulligan speaks at Lynn Museum on Thursday.

BY GAYLA CAWLEY

LYNN — Consultants laid out their vision of the downtown Thursday night, which they hope will improve the image of that section of the city.

Gov. Charlie Baker has identified Lynn as one of his economic development priorities. He formed the **Lynn Economic Advancement and Development Team**, a panel that includes many of the state's department heads and others who have the power to transform the gritty city to a place where people want to be.

In March, the results of a study conducted by the **MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) partnership** and the city on how to improve the downtown were presented and the public's contributions were sought.

Scott Page, founder of Interface Studio, a **Philadelphia**-based firm consultant, presented the results and some of the ideas for the downtown.

Page said residents were asked to provide ideas on how to improve **Central Avenue**. Among the suggestions included better traffic patterns, more trees, making Central Avenue a pedestrian-only boulevard, improved lighting and more art and street festivals.

Residents were also asked to describe downtown in one word today and tomorrow. Today, people said it was dirty, disconnected, confusing, but that it had potential. For tomorrow, residents said they want to see it as vibrant, affordable and diverse. Some participants completed a survey and shared their experience in the downtown, their likes and dislikes. Residents said the area is dirty and unsafe. They also said it needs more retail. People said they come downtown to go to restaurants, attend events, live and work. "A lot of people come to downtown Lynn for one purpose," Page said. "They don't live here and then leave. They're coming in and then they're leaving."

Page said the team identified big picture goals to improve the downtown's perception, building on Lynn's history, culture and the arts and reinforcing the city's diversity. He said there are some great things already, including the **Lynn Museum & Historical Society**, **Raw Art Works** and restaurants, but they aren't connected.

To turn those goals into actions, Page said the city needs to create a unique downtown experience, complete streets and public spaces and encourage new housing to help fill the gaps.

Some ideas for creating a unique experience included having more events for children, having exercise classes and a winter festival near the museum and making it easier for businesses to use the sidewalks. Page said the top floor of the **MBTA** parking garage, which is usually empty, could be used as a space to have community events. Something more permanent there could also include a tree farm or community garden.

Page said the city should be thinking about **complete streets**, roadways designed not only for automobiles but also for cyclists, pedestrians and transit users. An idea floated was to transform **Market Street** into a true Lynn gateway by striping the lanes, narrowing the lanes by a couple of feet and creating enough space for a two-way bicycle lane. The sidewalk would be extended to make it safer to cross.

Another idea was to transform the area into a downtown Commons. A parking lot between **Liberty and Central streets** could be made into a playground. The lot between **Lynn Arts** and **Lynn Museum** could be transformed into a park. An area of one-way streets could be made into two-way streets to improve safety and traffic flow. Central Avenue could potentially be closed to traffic.

“We also need more housing,” Page said. “We need more development. We need more stuff that affects people.”

Page said there could be more opportunities provided for more downtown living on Buffum Street. **Central Square** could be made into more of a destination.

More input was sought after the presentation. The action strategy is set to be completed in June with a final public meeting scheduled for the same month.

“We wanted to keep the momentum going on this issue,” said **Joseph Mulligan, a MassDevelopment fellow**.

Mulligan said his team wants to focus on finding ways to energize and activate the downtown.

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