

MEMORANDUM

To	Steering Committee
CC	
From	Arterial, LLC
Date	
Subject	Public Open House Summary

On Tuesday, May 13th from 5:00-7:00pm and on Sunday, May 18th from 1:00-3:00pm, Arterial hosted a public open house at the Cranford Community Center on behalf of the Township and DMC. The following memo provides a brief overview of the various stations as well as detailed feedback collected at the two public meetings. Immediately below, we have restated the purpose and format overview for context.

PURPOSE

- Inform the community about the scope of the project
- Engage the public and get them excited about becoming involved
- Understand the community's concerns and aspirations for Downtown Cranford
- Solicit feedback on specific elements of the Vision Plan

FORMAT OVERVIEW

- Both public meetings utilized an open house format
- People were able to come at any time within the session
- There were four stations with unique activities that engaged the public, gathered their concerns, and explored ideas for the future of Downtown Cranford
- Each station was color coded (using boards, balloons, etc.) and was given a number
- Each participant received a handout upon signing in that had survey questions for the last two stations

STATION 1: ABOUT THE PROJECT

Objective: Orient people as they come in and provide a brief overview of the scope and timeline for the project.

Format: 5-10 minute board presentation and open discussion.

STATION 1: RESULTS / FEEDBACK:



‘About the Project’ was the first station, where attendees were briefed about the project. Attendees were informed of the vision that was done by Arterial in 2023 and that the project stems from the fact that it has been 40 years since the downtown streetscape was last looked at. It was emphasized that everything being shown was from the vision, and that nothing was set in stone. A key point that was shared was that the Capital Improvement Plan completed in 2023 was used by the Township to secure a \$2.7M grant from the State.

STATION 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Objective: Understand existing assets and areas of concern.

Format: A large map of the downtown where people can identify assets and concerns geographically using sticky notes and markers.

Also included at this station was a board that highlighted a variety of opportunities and constraints. The images are categorized by sidewalk, roadway and parking, and crossings and intersections. People were encouraged to discuss our analysis and correct us or inform anything we missed on the large map.

STATION 2: RESULTS / FEEDBACK



The mapping activity was held at station No. 2 where participants were encouraged to leave their comments by relating their concerns or suggestions to specific points within the city depicted on a 3ft by 4ft map.

- Participants left over 30 comments on the map, which were later transposed to a Google Map ([Link](#)) divided into the following groups: Traffic, Public Space, Lighting, Parking/Road, and Sidewalks.
- Comments left on the map that were not specific to a particular location are not included in the Google Map and are summarized below.
- **The following represent patterns in the comments made on the map (i.e. similar comments)**
 - The intersection of Eastman Street and North Avenue is confusing and dangerous.
 - The intersection of North Union Avenue and North Avenue is large and dangerous.
 - There is not enough bike parking in the downtown.
 - Street parking is very important.
- **Patterns derived from conversations at Station 2**
 - Attendees were interested in a “test run” for the conversion of Eastman Street prior to committing to closing the street.
 - Attendees were interested in a more flexible approach where Eastman Street is closed to cars on weekends and open during the week.
 - Attendees were generally concerned about the potential loss of parking on Eastman Street as well as near the Post Office.
 - Attendees stated that they prefer not to park in the municipal garage on South Union because it is not well kept.

STATION 3: A RESILIENT DOWNTOWN

Objective: Understand how attendees utilize the existing public spaces and any concerns they have with the recommended design elements that would promote economic and environmental resiliency.

Format: The 'A Resilient Downtown' station showed images of various stormwater management techniques, of historic Downtown Cranford, and of local examples of streets that were converted to public spaces. The questions on the handout associated with this station asked attendees how often and why they visited Post Office Plaza and Clock Plaza, as well as any concerns or favorite things about the potential conversion of Eastman Street.

STATION 3: FEEDBACK



- Most attendees visit the plazas at least once a week, if not more frequently.
- Most attendees visit the plazas for leisure (coffee, shopping, Post Office) or for a special event.
- A few attendees noted that they visit the plazas for a lunch break.
- Primary concerns regarding the conversion of Eastman Street include impacts to traffic and parking. Attendees were wary of changes to the traffic pattern, mainly concerned that it would get worse. Several attendees were concerned about losing the parking spaces in front of the Post Office.
- Pedestrian safety was a common concern that came up, particularly when crossing North Avenue and crossing Eastman Street between Clock Plaza and Track 5. It was suggested that some type of barrier be installed along North Avenue to keep kids from running into the street.
- A few attendees noted maintenance as a concern. They were worried that a lot of effort would go into the project for it to be left improperly maintained.
- Multiple attendees mentioned concerns about the project getting watered down because of a few loud naysayers.
- Common aspects of the conversion of Eastman Street that were exciting to attendees included the increase in public spaces, improvements to safety for pedestrians, and more shade and places to sit in the downtown.
- The following represent patterns derived from conversations at Station 3
 - Crossing between Track 5 and Clock Plaza is difficult and dangerous.
 - Backing out of parking spaces onto North Avenue is difficult and dangerous.
 - Closing only the Clock Plaza segment was something several attendees mentioned as a preferred option because it would have less of an impact on traffic. One caveat that was brought up is that Eastman Street and the sidewalk are often in the shade and are not very comfortable or inviting.
 - There are residential units on Eastman Street adjacent to Clock Plaza. A stage in front of Track 5 would be too disruptive. Access to these residences would also need to be maintained.

STATION 4: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: THE VISION

Objective: Obtain feedback from participants on the vision that was developed in 2023.

Format: Four (4) boards were presented at Station 4. One board showed the furniture and materials that were selected for the vision plan, along with a historical collage that inspired the palette. The other three boards displayed a concept plan and two perspective renderings to show what the vision could look like when complete.

STATION 4: FEEDBACK



- Generally, attendees were in favor of the conceptual furniture and materials palette. Those who were not in favor felt that the palette was too modern.
 - 15 participants, or 37%, strongly agree that the proposed furniture and materials palette is appropriate for Downtown Cranford.
 - 11 participants, or 27%, agree that the proposed furniture and materials palette is appropriate for Downtown Cranford.
 - 4 participants, or 10%, felt neutral about the proposed furniture and materials palette.
 - 6 participants, or 15%, disagree that the proposed furniture and materials palette is appropriate for Downtown Cranford.
 - 5 participants, or 12%, strongly disagree that the proposed furniture and materials palette is appropriate for Downtown Cranford.
- Several attendees liked the engraved granite pavers. Some liked the wave but wanted to see other engraving options.
- Many attendees were very concerned about the impacts that closing Eastman Street would have on traffic on both North Avenue and South Avenue.
- Several attendees were concerned about losing parking spaces and how it would impact the businesses on Eastman Street.
- Several attendees mentioned that they were hoping to see a larger emphasis on bicycle infrastructure. These attendees would like to see more bicycle parking. Some attendees mentioned utilizing the space under the train tracks as covered bicycle parking.
- Some attendees were concerned about the town's capacity to maintain the proposed public spaces, specifically planting, cleaning and trash removal.
- Most attendees were excited about the improvements to pedestrian safety in the downtown.
- Many attendees were excited about the increase in open space and additional trees in the downtown.
- It was noted that Clock plaza is more used than Post Office Plaza, with a few members of the community feeling it should be prioritized. Clock Plaza is not large enough for the events that it hosts currently.
- A few community members felt that closing Eastman Street would make it difficult to get to the parking garage.
- Attendees were generally concerned with the space under the train tracks. It's dark and wet. Some noted that this could be a potential location for covered bike parking.
- It was noted that a lot of kids walk through this area of town to get to/from school.
- Several attendees shared their concerns that the project would stall out because of a few community members who loudly oppose the project.
- Some attendees felt that the funding could be better spent in other locations, including the Gazebo area and the area near Riverside Inn.
- Several residents noted that this project would enhance the aesthetics of the downtown.
- A few attendees expressed concern about the cost of the project and its potential impact on taxes.

MEETING MINUTES

Called by	Downtown Cranford
Subject	Downtown Business and Property Owners Meeting
Location	Garlic Rose Bistro
Time/Date	8:30am, June 11, 2025
Note Taker	Lexi Smaldone, James Ribaudo, Arterial
Attendees	
CC	File

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

Discussion Points

A focused stakeholder meeting was held for all downtown business and property owners to meet and discuss the specifics regarding the streetscape project. The meeting was held at the Garlic Rose Bistro where four stations were set up with information about the project. Approximately 30 business and property owners attended the event.

- The primary concerns about this project were regarding the loss of parking and the potential for more traffic.
- One attendee shared concerns about flooding that occurs in Lot 7 and on South Avenue and would like to see it addressed with this project.
- Many attendees continued to mention that the area underneath the train tracks is very uncomfortable and would benefit from more lighting and beautification.
- An additional concern that was mentioned was that some businesses in this area rely on uber, doordash, and drop-offs and pickups. With the loss of parking, they're wondering how their take-out orders will be fulfilled.
- There is a parking lot behind the businesses adjacent to Clock Plaza that would need access maintained. The driveway is used for loading, and there is garbage stored in the parking lot that gets brought out to the street.
- An attendee who lives near the train station shared concern about the increased activity this project would bring, particularly at night.
- It was noted by a few attendees that Cranford's downtown is very young. There are a lot of families and school-aged children in the area.
- One attendee suggested prioritizing the Post Office Plaza side. They mentioned that this area is currently underutilized, and this project would create a lot more foot traffic that isn't there now, while there is currently foot traffic around Clock Plaza.
- Several attendees were supportive of the reverse angled parking and felt that the current parking configuration is unsafe.

- Several attendees were happy to see that the project included more trees and shaded seating.
- Most attendees were in favor of the project overall.

Action

Person Responsible

Arterial

- Type up meeting minutes and share with Downtown Cranford/Township.

MEETING MINUTES

Called by	Downtown Cranford
Subject	Downtown Cranford Streetscape: Stakeholder Meeting #2
Location	Virtual Zoom Meeting
Time/Date	12pm, June 23, 2025
Note Taker	Nicole Vuono, Lexi Smaldone, Arterial
Attendees	Chelsea Martin, Dan Rogers, Ali Welch, Matt Wisser
CC	File

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

Discussion Points

Arterial presented the vision to four residents/committee members who attended the call.

Lighting

- The fixtures downtown give off a strong glare – it is great for facial recognition and uniformity, but the poles are too close together and the color temperature is on the cooler side.
- The existing poles/locations were kept when the lighting was retrofitted to LED.
- A warmer and more inviting color temperature is preferred to match the character of downtown.

Bike Parking/Cyclists

- Provide places where people who want to cycle into town can park.
- Dedicate areas for bikes to be locked up properly (ie. bike rack, not light pole, parking meter, etc.)

Traffic/Pedestrian Safety

- Existing traffic signals are not synced; parking downtown can take a long time due to this, especially if you're trying to find street parking. Better direct drivers to municipal lots so that street parking will become less frustrating.
- Considering Cranford is such a walkable town, losing a few parking spaces should not be a problem.

Sense of Place/Art

- Connecting the South and North side of the tracks through art will help to create a more comfortable pedestrian experience.
- Incorporate hide and reveal elements in the design – variation in materials, textures (patterns/stamped details – ie. animal paw prints in concrete, river wave in pavers, hopscotch

activity built into ground plane, sensory pathways, musical elements.) Great for families with young children and for people of any age!

- One attendee shared that a reference to the Rahway River is not present in the streetscape currently, the water is a beautiful representation of the community.
- Decorated utility boxes are appreciated by residents – bringing in local artists for this work is a great way to celebrate artistic talent in the area.

Clock Plaza/Eastman

- The planter around the clock is dangerous – many kids climb up and have been injured.
- Several attendees noted that a stage would be a huge addition to the downtown – the current setup is not conducive to a live music performance.
- The concept design appears to solve this issue – it would be better acoustically and visually.
- One attendee was concerned about access to the driveway near Track 5.

Other

- The Cranford Complete Streets Advisory Board is putting together a video to emphasize that as a pedestrian you must press the button on a traffic light to get the pedestrian walk signal.
- Budget – We will be working with the township to determine what they would like to prioritize, given our budget and extensive project scope.

Action

Person Responsible
Arterial

- Type up meeting minutes and share with Downtown Cranford/Township.

MEETING MINUTES

Called by	Downtown Cranford
Subject	Downtown Cranford Streetscape: Stakeholder Meeting #3
Location	Virtual Zoom Meeting
Time/Date	12pm, June 25, 2025
Note Taker	Nicole Vuono, Lexi Smaldone, Arterial
Attendees	Andrea Gelber, Deb Murphy, Stephen Dunn, Vicki Sweeney, Conor, John Zebrowski
CC	File

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

Discussion Points

Arterial presented the vision to four residents/committee members who attended the call.

Streetscape

- Pavement and sidewalk changes will make the downtown experience more pedestrian friendly.
- Priority #1 of the Complete Streets Board is to close the two streets. Eastman Plaza would not exist if it weren't for converting parking spaces into a plaza.
- Several attendees would like to see the widening of sidewalks across downtown – right now it is difficult to walk without obstructions.
- One attendee mentioned the use of permeable pavers for stormwater management.

Trees/Vegetation

- Several attendees would like to see diverse, native tree species, with enough room to grow and prevent root/soil compaction. It would be nice to have slower growing shade trees; ornamental trees do not contribute enough shade to the overall streetscape tree canopies.

Traffic/Pedestrian Safety

- There is concern over traffic backing up near Post Office Plaza. Several attendees asked if a temporary trial can be done before making the road closures permanent – to see how it affects traffic.
- One attendee expressed concern about traffic backing up to the point of blocking the pedestrian crossing on North Ave.

- Several attendees mentioned that Cranford is a biking town and a lot of kids ride their bikes through downtown. They would like to see bike lanes and more bike parking.
- Several attendees were interested in the idea of 15 minute parking that was dedicated for uber, uber eats, doordash, etc.
- One attendee asked if the Traffic Engineer could look into converting some streets to one-way to help with traffic flow.
- One attendee would like to see pedestrian islands to reduce crossing distances and wider turn radii where possible.
- Several attendees had questions about the traffic study, and what new traffic patterns will look like.
- Reverse angle parking is recommended, but how safe will it be for pedestrians? Option to convert this to parallel parking or to get rid of these spaces entirely.
- Several attendees were strongly against reverse angled parking. They would rather the parking be parallel or lose it all together than it be reverse angled.

Sense of Place/Art

- Without resolving the bird issue under the train tracks, the space underneath is unusable.
- Murals have been done in other towns, under the tracks in NJ – Westfield, S. Orange, etc.
- How can we work with NJ Transit to clean up the train underpass? Many events connect North and South through this walkway.

Clock Plaza/Eastman

- Something must be put in place to prevent cars from accidentally turning into either of the pedestrian plazas that were previously active roadways.
- Retractable bollards would be great to protect pedestrians and allow emergency vehicle access.
- Millburn is a good reference for a temporary road closure.
- One attendee stated that they were more in favor of closing the Post Office Plaza side of Eastman Street than the Clock Plaza side.

Other

- There is concern whether the project will increase resident taxes, and how the overall 2.7 million will be spent.
- What are the next steps – a comprehensive plan of project areas and budget/timeline could be helpful to see what could happen now versus with later funding.

Action	Person Responsible
	Arterial
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Type up meeting minutes and share with Downtown Cranford/Township.	

MEMORANDUM

To	Township of Cranford, Downtown Cranford
CC	Caren Demyen,
From	Arterial, LLC
Date	7/3/25
Subject	Common Questions and Misinformation from Outreach

During the Stakeholder Interviews, there were questions, comments and some misunderstanding regarding the following topics:

1. What will the proposed traffic pattern be and what turns will be permitted? (Where you will and will not be able to turn, etc.)
2. Why does the streetscape need to be replaced at all? It seems like it is in fine condition.
3. What is reverse angled parking and why can't we just have regular angled parking?
4. Will this project address the issue of the birds beneath the train tracks?
5. What stage of this project are we in? (Many people seemed to think that the project is farther along than it is.) Is this design a "done deal"? (Some people asked if the project would be voted on).
6. How is this project being funded? Will it raise taxes?
7. What is the scope / limits of this project? Does it include Swan Cleaners / Gazebo / Florist site?
8. Are the plazas seasonal? Will they be useful / programmed during colder months?
9. Can the streets be flexible and closed temporarily?
10. Can there be a test run of the new traffic patterns before we commit to something so permanent?