



## Meeting Notes

### **PUBLIC MEETING 2: Montague Mixed-Use Village Center Study**

Date: Wednesday, November 8, 2023

Place: Great Falls Discovery Center

Notes Taken By: Jennifer Nelson

#### ATTENDEES:

- › Montague Community
- › Luke Mitchell, VHB
- › Jennifer Nelson, VHB
- › Christa McGaha, VHB
- › Maureen Pollock, Montague Planner

#### Program

- › Maureen Pollock (MP) provided a brief introduction of the project and the project team.
- › Luke Mitchell (LM) and Jennifer Nelson (JN) presented a slideshow featuring the following contents:
  - Team Introduction
  - Key Project Outcomes
  - Existing Conditions
  - Community Needs
  - Draft Vision Statement
  - Site Concept Planning
- › Attendees split up into three groups for breakout discussions, each led by a VHB representative.

#### Findings

- › The event was well-attended, with around 70 attendees from the community. An informal poll found ~50% of the attendees were from Montague City.
- › Attendees provided many comments, transcribed directly as follows.

## Breakout Discussion Group #1 (Moderator: Christa McGaha)

### › RESIDENTIAL

- Density
  - Concepts could show a 4th category of "very low density" with some buildings/retail but keep 60% of the site for park
  - Match existing density
  - Do not want higher densities or big buildings - would create too much traffic
  - Worried about the traffic the proposed concepts will cause
  - 32 units in a building is comfortable
- Types of housing
  - Veterans housing
  - Utilize existing building for cohousing shared kitchen/energy use/ future maintenance needs
  - Senior housing should be considered
    - Senior center/senior housing
    - Thoughts that the statistic that "older adults live in single family housing" is incorrect
    - Building senior housing would address need and affordable housing goals
- "Not a lot of jobs in Montague to support new housing"
- Building design
  - U-shape park concepts do not allow for privacy - do not like U-shape design

### › COMMERCIAL

- Medical offices would be useful
- Make sure any rezoning protects against big box stores and industrial uses.

### › CIVIC

- Civic uses - Town office, school?
- GCC - satellite campus? Kindergarten?
- Outdoor recreational pool
- Park
  - Community gardens (although, may not be good farmland due to previous medical uses on site)
  - Every village in Montague has a park EXCEPT Montague City
  - Edible perennial landscaping
  - Public park space
- Senior or community center

- Would like to see a new senior center - a new senior center could connect with Mass in Motion for transportation link (like Erving, MA)
- Arts + Culture
  - Site should be a 3rd place - a free place that is not work or home (park, rec, senior center)
  - Open space used for performances, art, craft fair, within a recreational park
  - Sculptors in town - property could be a tourist destination utilizing bike path and honoring the trees and partnering with DCR
  - Beautify the area - senior center, rec center, place for sculptors & art
- Bike path
  - Re-route bike path down Masonic Ave across property
  - Reroute bike route by site (seconded by multiple people)
- Communal learning
  - Site to be a pioneer place of ecological landscaping "grow food not lawns"

› **OTHER**

- Resilience and sustainability
  - Ecological research center to use site for innovative partnership
  - Mature classes, gardens to grow food for schools
  - Proximity to river could be used for climate research
  - Consider climate change in new building and site design
- Site design
  - Keep pillars/stone wall on site and incorporate into new design (but get rid of crosses on railing)
  - Will the outdoor gazebo/patio be preserved and incorporated into the design?
- Consider performing archeological tests
- Project sentiment on project approach
  - Property should benefit residents not developers - The beauty of the site is the potential for park/open space and connection to bike path. No rush should be made to develop the property, it could be preserved for park or civic uses such as a library
  - Slow down - reserve land for future town use
  - The neighborhood is already established - it seems like the concepts are trying to impose a new neighborhood in the existing neighborhood
  - 20-30 ideas stated in first meeting were not incorporated - feels like there is a disconnect
  - Keep monument to what was there before with description of history
  - Town should be more transparent about process and costs/infrastructure needs for reuse of site
  - Do not want to keep lot empty
- Who would be institutional partners for this?

## Breakout Discussion Group #2 (Moderator: Jennifer Nelson)

### › RESIDENTIAL

- This group very interested in residential options
- How/Who determines the percent of Affordable Housing in the new development? Is this through the RFP?
- It would be great to have intergenerational housing
  - Treehouse in Easthampton sited as an example:
  - [Intergenerational Community Model : Treehouse Communities : What We Do : Treehouse Foundation](#)
    - Seniors and foster/adoptive families
    - 12 family homes with 3-5 beds
    - 48 are bed cottages
    - Also features a community center
- Could there be units for neurodivergent residents? For example, families with children with autism.
  - Are there any local examples of these kinds of projects?
- Unit ownership vs rentals

### › COMMERCIAL

- The Town needs a daycare
  - A current daycare in the area (noted location “on the hill”) has a waitlist of approximately 80 kids
- Food is a great avenue to create third spaces
  - Drive thru is not currently permitted by zoning, but Town should investigate permitting this
- Is there a way to make sure that business spaces are prioritized first to local businesses?
  - VHB can look more into this, but the Town will not have much say about who exactly can lease spaces
- Mixed-use businesses should directly address the needs of new residents

### › CIVIC

- A recreation space would be great
  - Should be an organized, safe space for kids
  - Should also be affordable
- Civic spaces should be a “destination” (pool or healthy recreation site)
- Bike path should be mapped along an alternate route that goes either in front of the development (along Montague City Road) or behind the development (closer to Cabot Station)
- There should be some free outdoor space that’s open to the public

› **OTHER**

- VHB, Town, or future developer should research Indigenous claims to land
- Limit cars to perimeter as much as possible so most of the site is car-free
- Space for agriculture- community gardens, rooftop gardens, fruit/nut trees. Community able to produce food for its residents
- Solar panels (rooftop, on top of car parking, etc.)

## Breakout Discussion Group #3 (Moderator: Luke Mitchell)

### › **RESIDENTIAL**

- The location of this site means it should be seen as a gateway to town.
- The Town has not met its 10% Subsidized Housing goal, so developer have the option to build 40B housing.
- "Cluster housing" should be considered
- Multi-generational, mixed-income housing is popular
  - Mix of ages = vibrancy
- Housing for veterans
- Housing for families
- Some attendees feel that the density should be higher; others feel it should be lower.
  - Mixing Density within the site could be a good compromise -> for example, one multifam building, with other housing being more low-density
- Age-friendly development is desired:
  - Ramps
  - Elevators
  - Shuttles
- Safety is a priority
- People in Massachusetts are moving west; the development can capitalize on this
- Market conditions are seen as challenging

### › **COMMERCIAL**

- Lodging would be a great asset for the community
- The team should not rule out light industrial development – there is demand for this product type in town
- Mixed-use community hub – meeting space
- Coffee shop

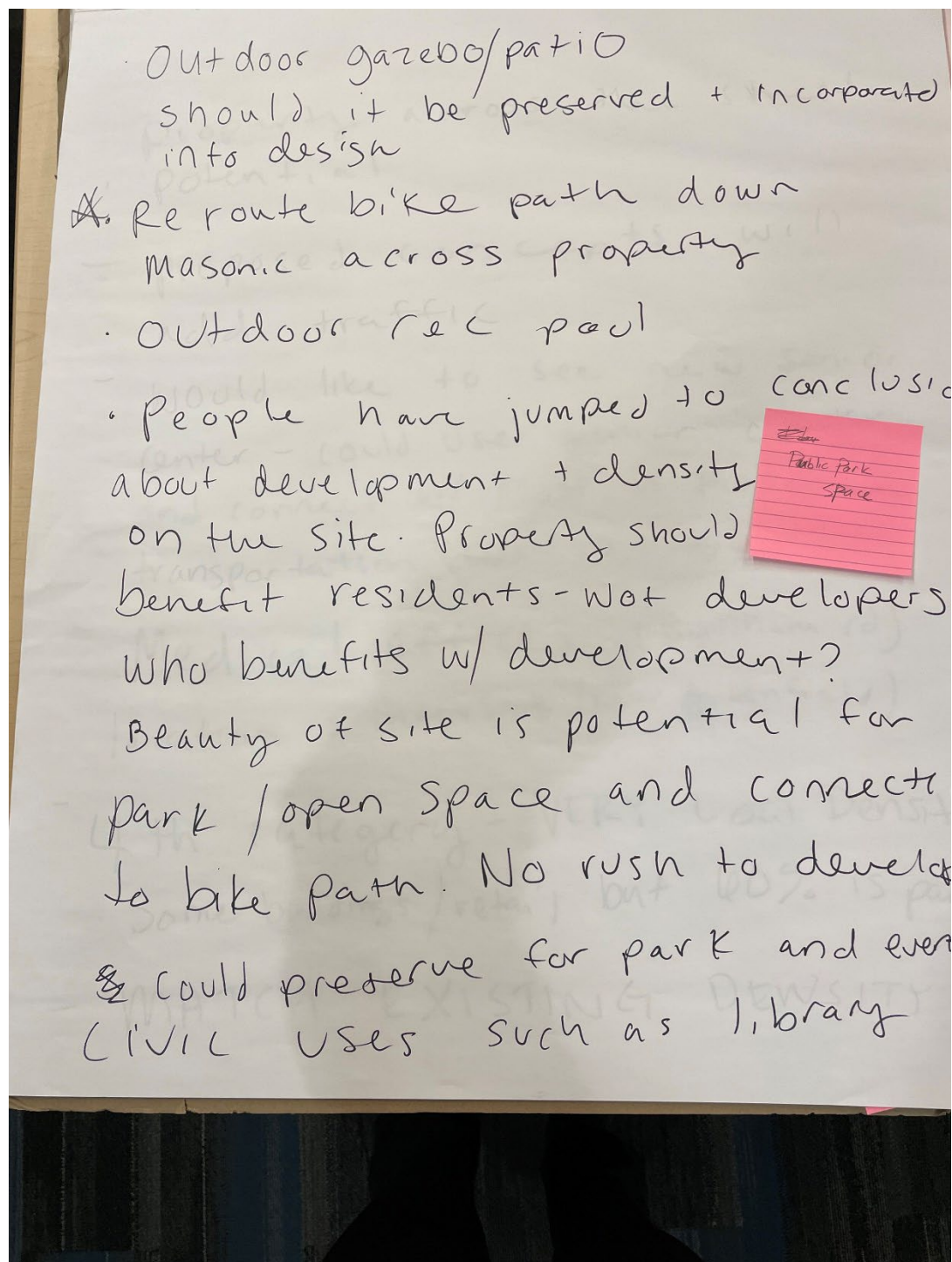
### › **CIVIC**

- Community Center
- Park
- Pool
- Access to bike path
- Cultural/heritage center
- Venue
- Memorial to Farren Hospital and to those who worked there – for example, Rhonda Thompson

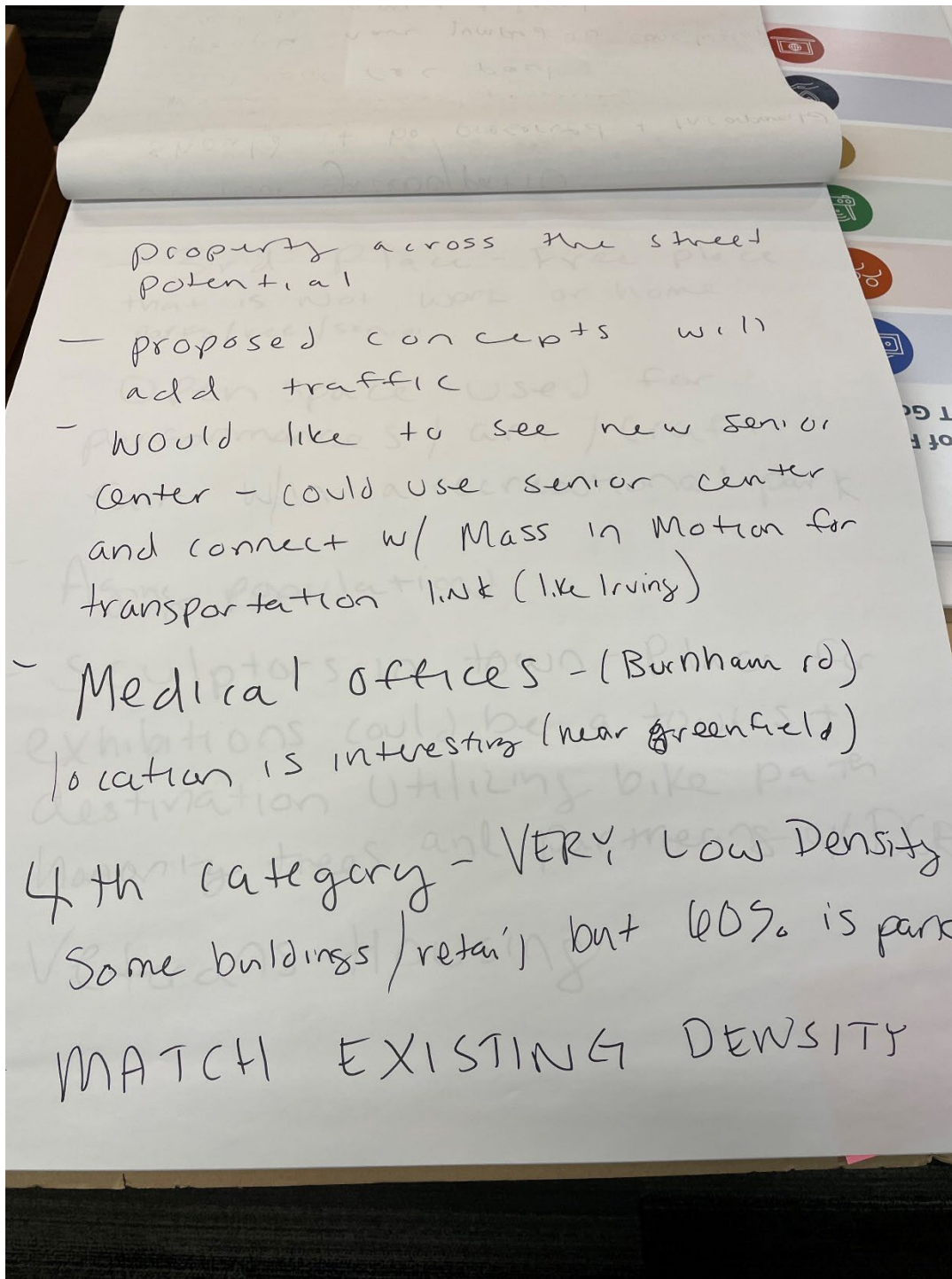
› **OTHER**

- Not enough for residents to do
- "I like the village green better than blocks. I think medium – high density would be most appropriate but not townhomes – mixed use! Open space (park/garden/playground) with community center + housing + (limited) retail. Make it accessible and connect to bike path. Make design consistent with surroundings. Incorporate solar on buildings. Any opportunity for resident-owned to built equity (vs. rental) along with affordable rental? Mixed income and ages. Don't want developer to be absentee landlord!"

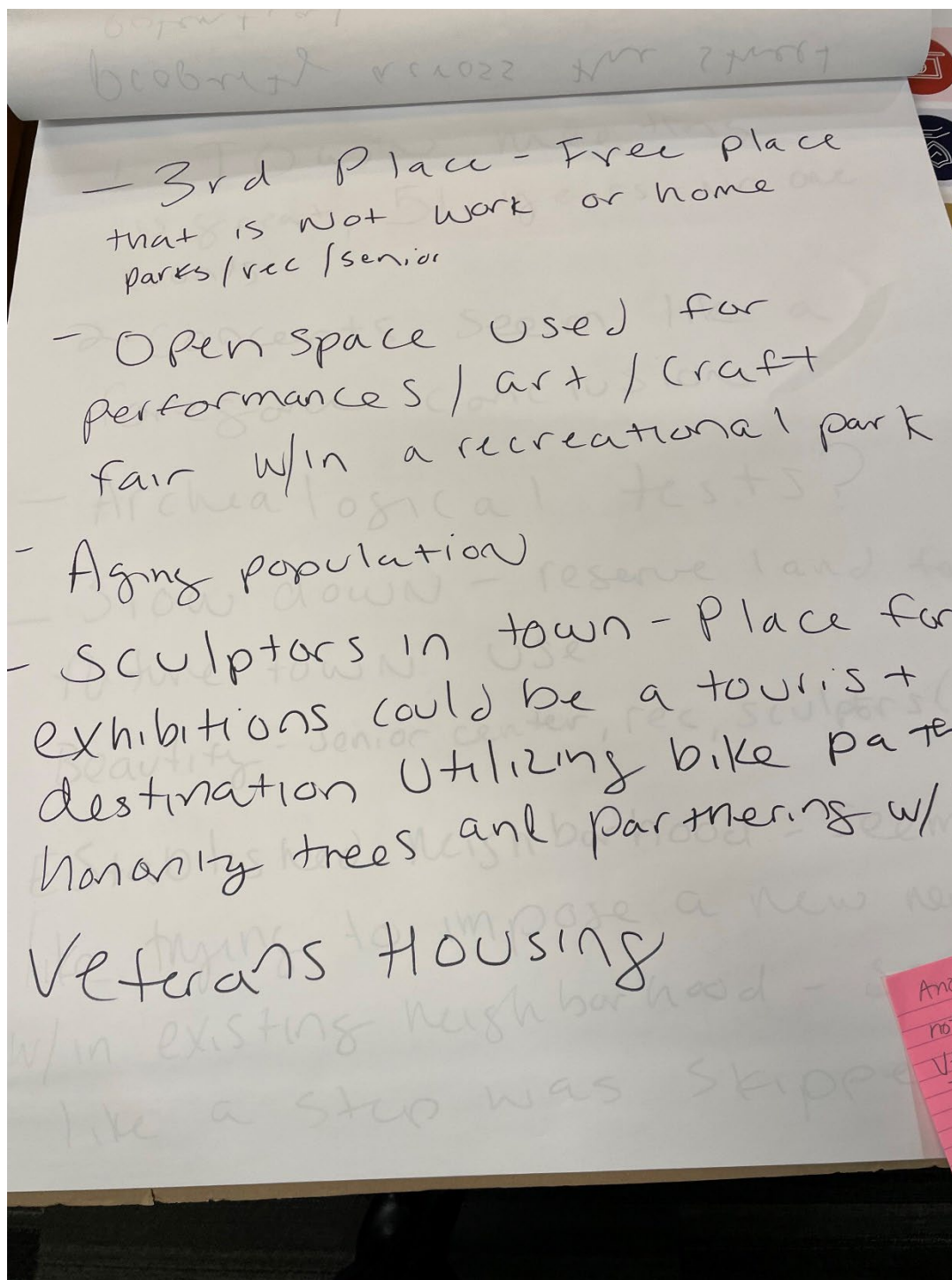
## APPENDIX I: PHOTOS

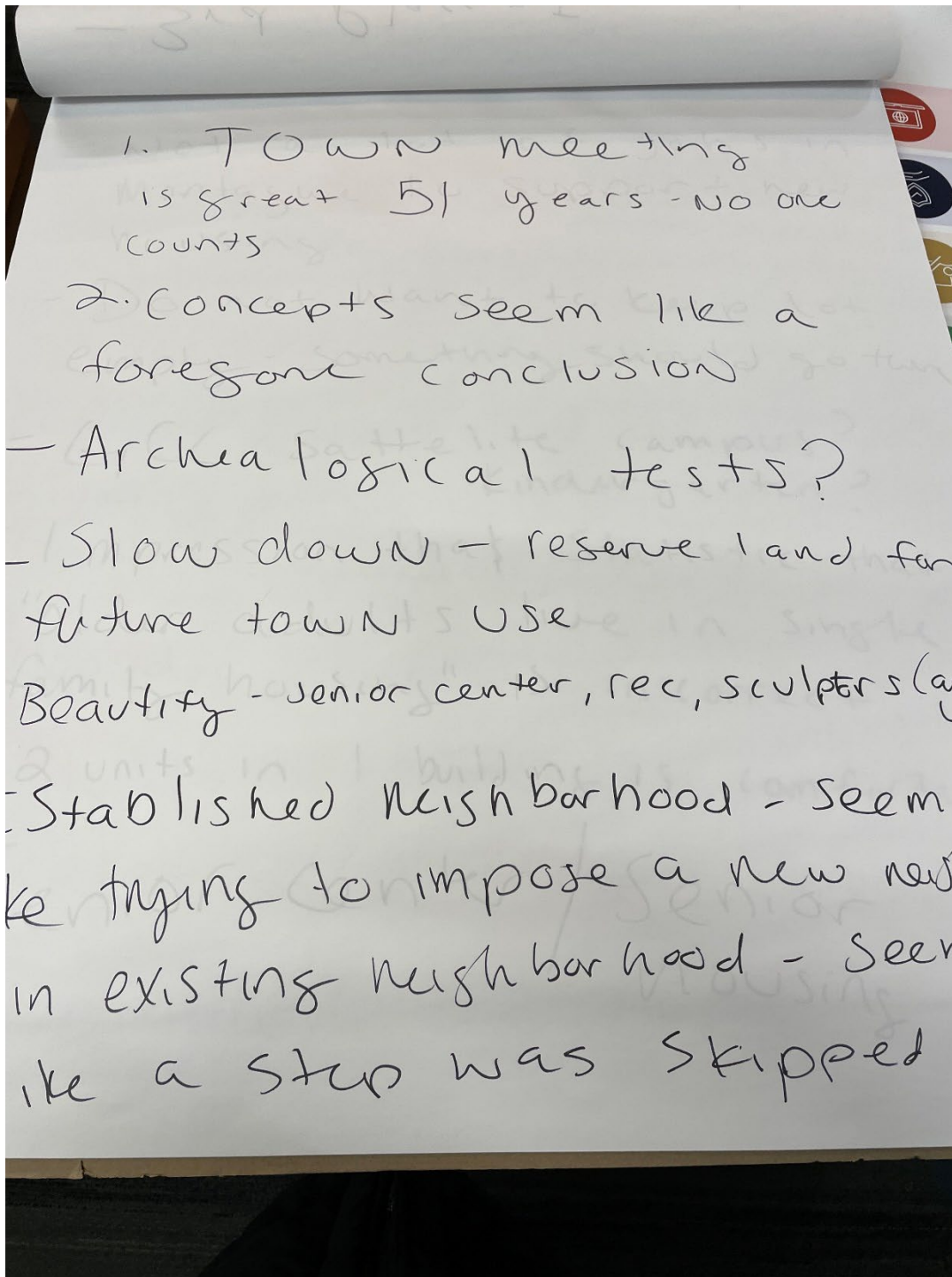






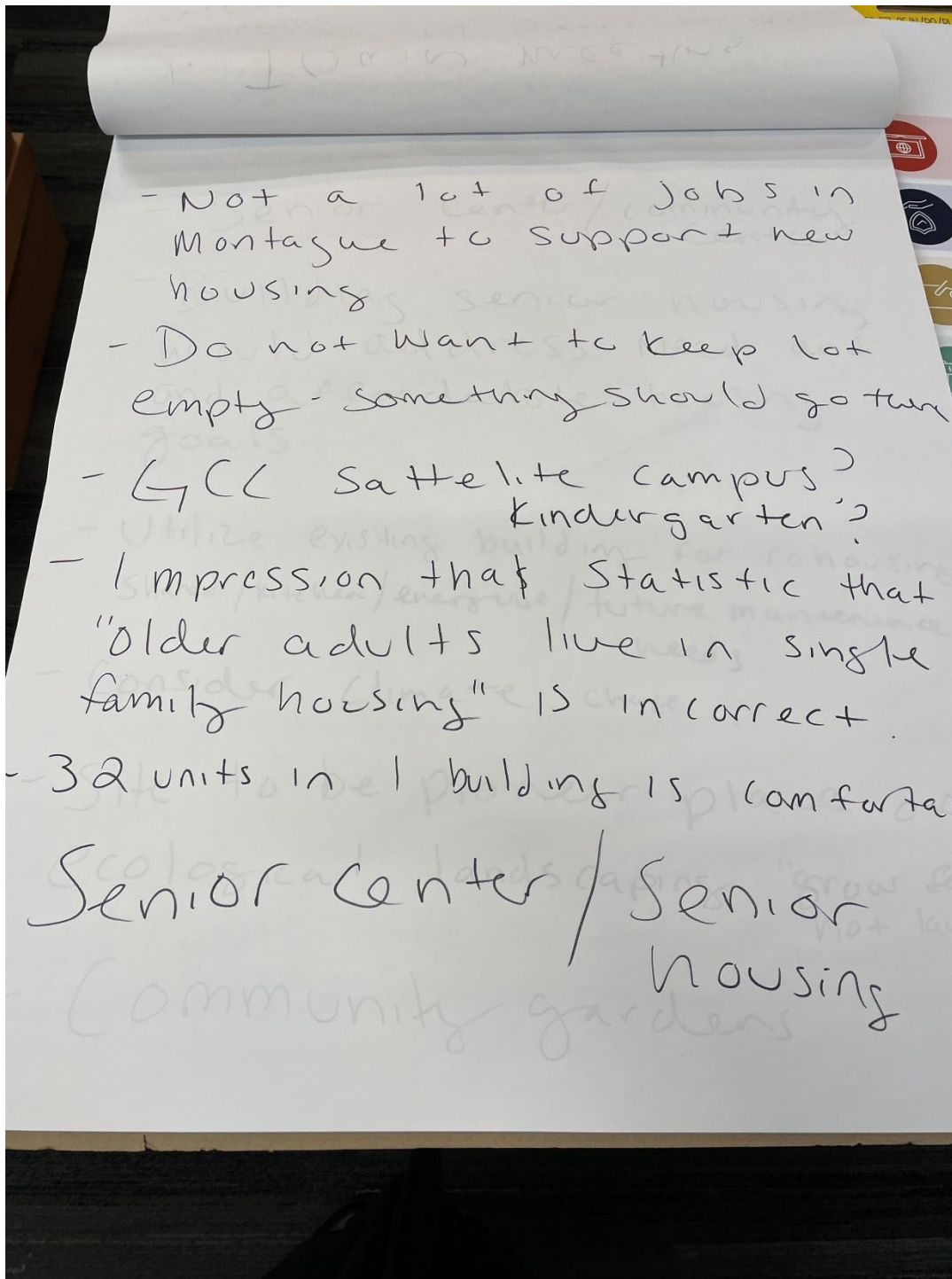
2. Christa's flip pad page 2



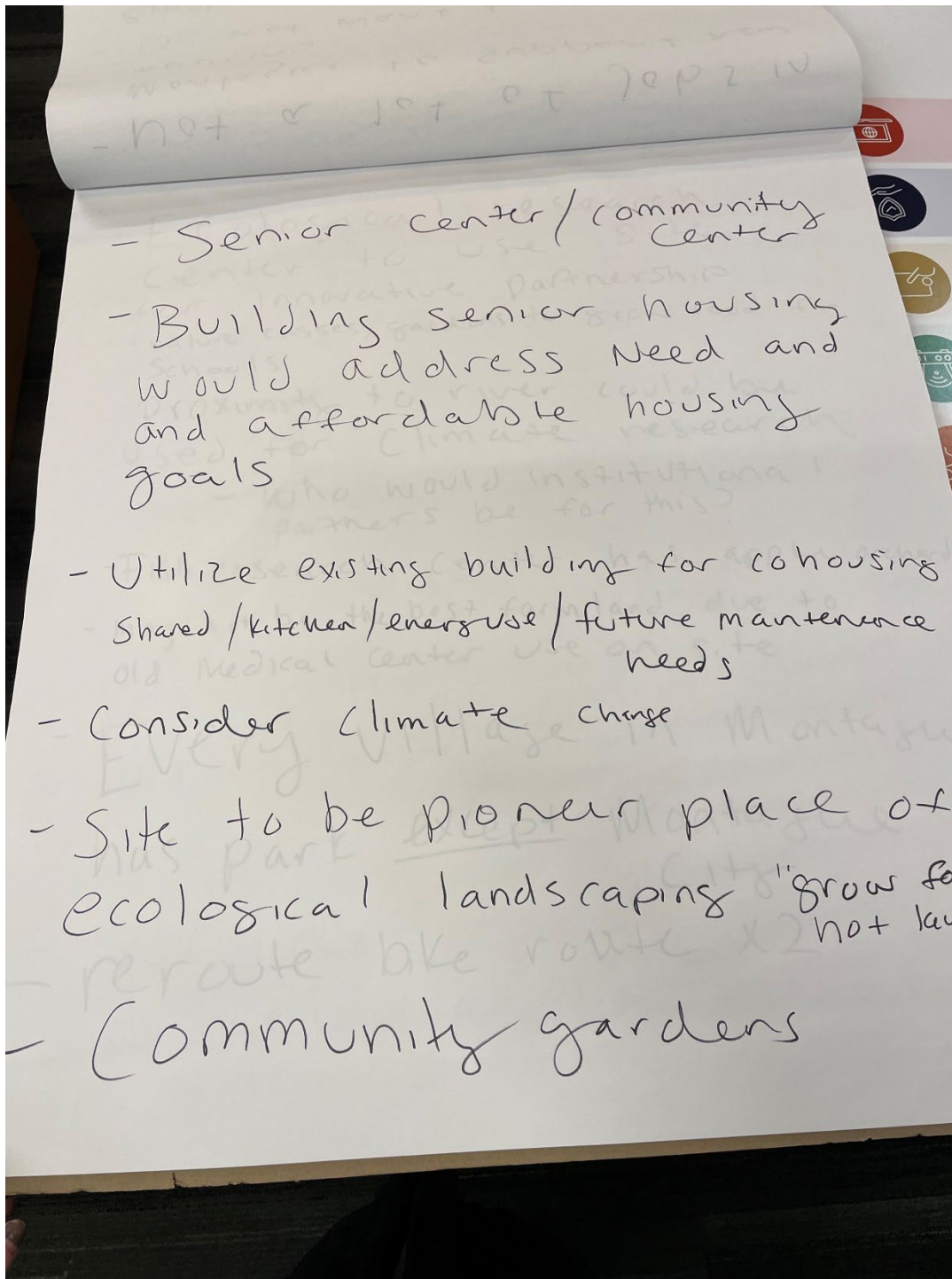


4. Christa's flip pad page 4

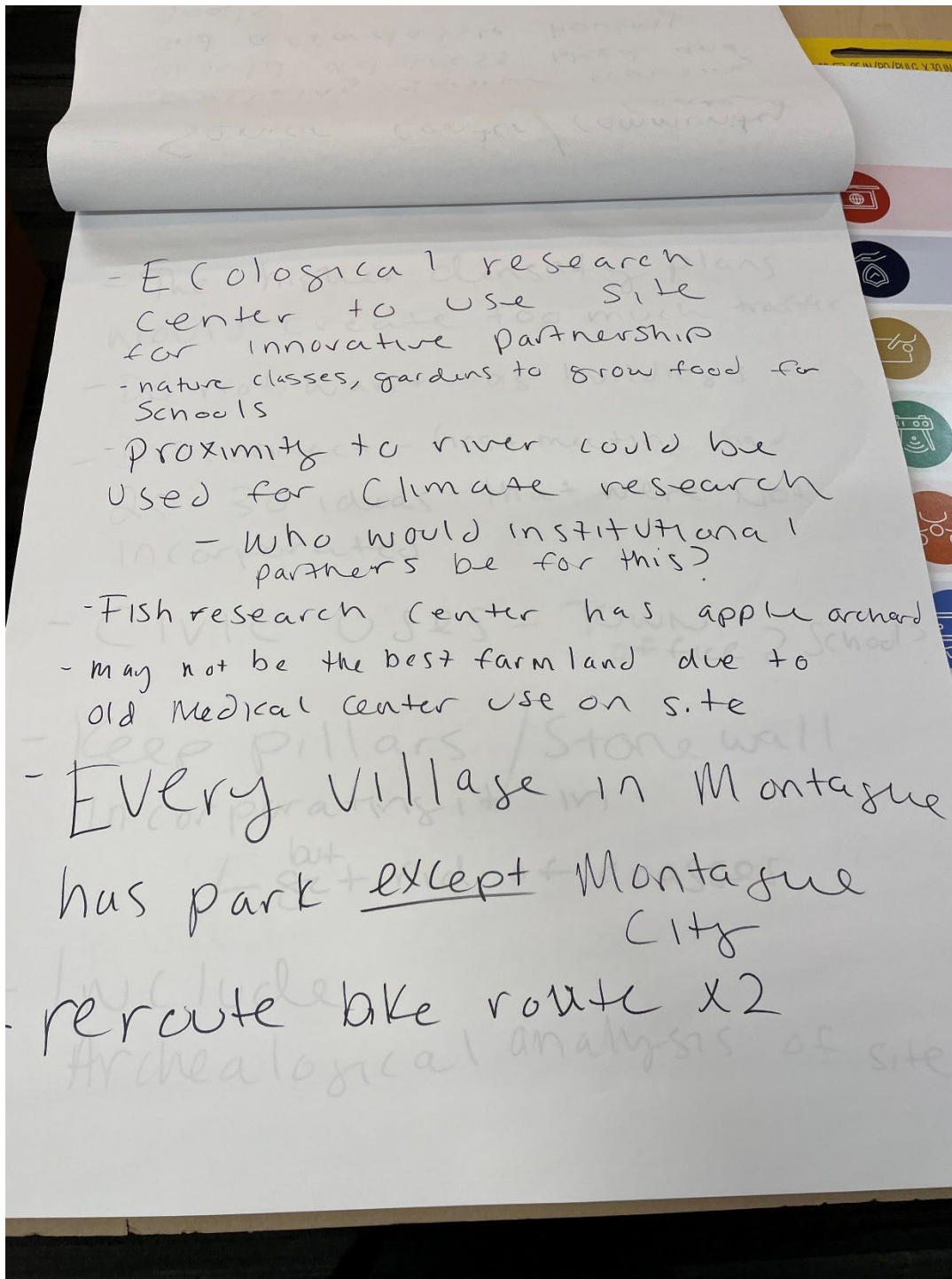




5. Christa's flip pad page 5

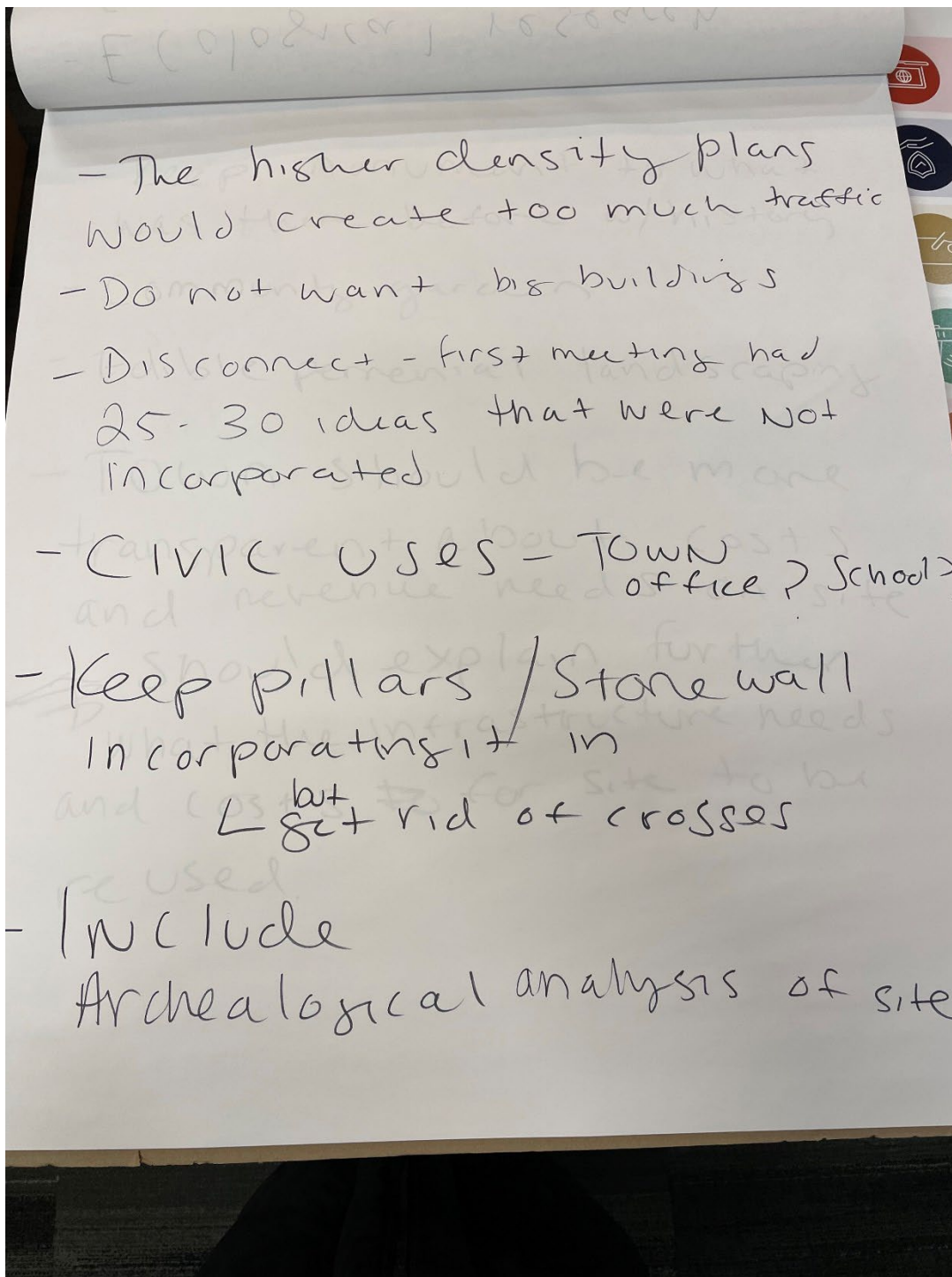


6. Christa's flip pad page 6

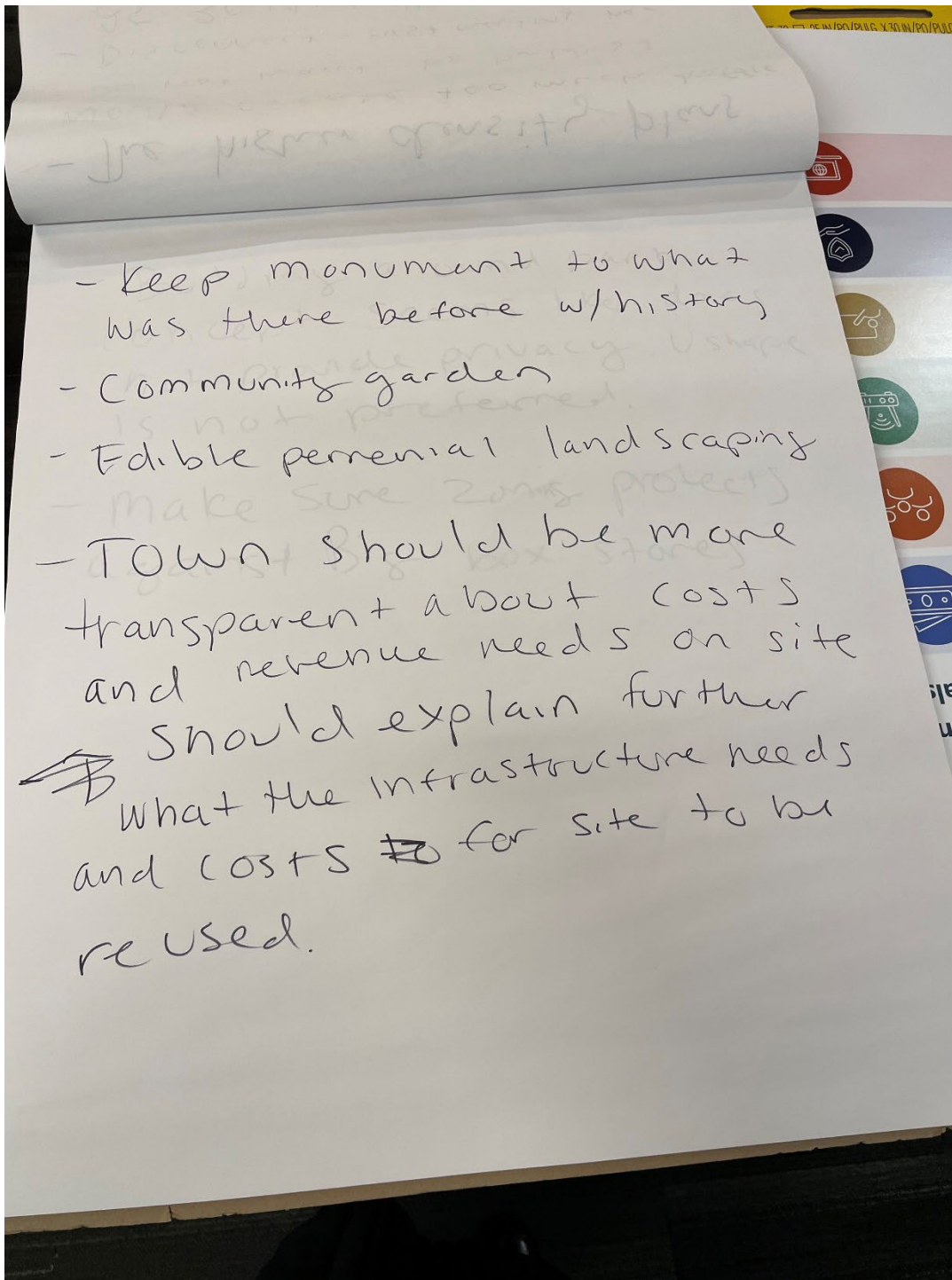


7. Christa's flip pad page 7



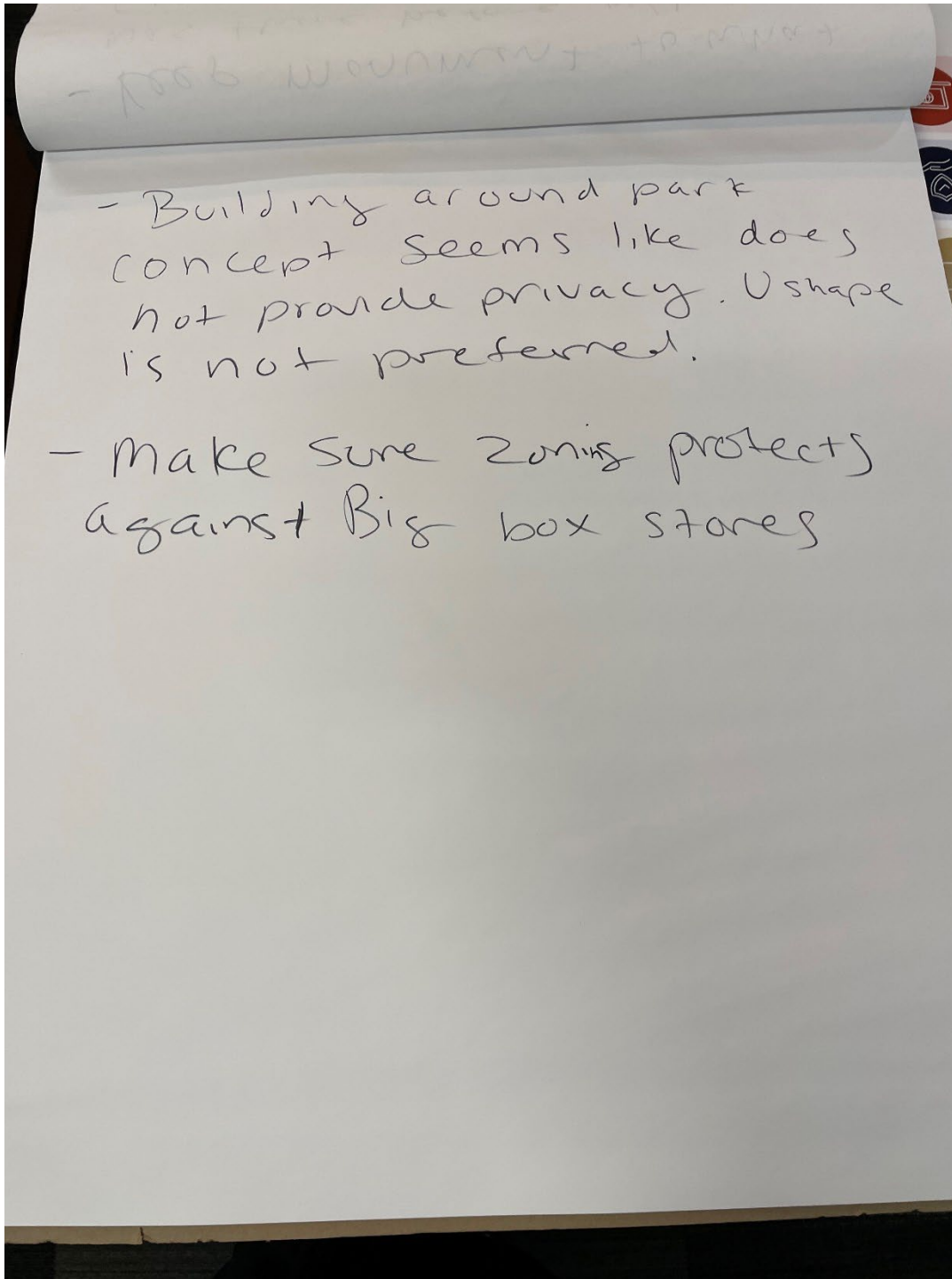


8. Christa's flip pad page 8

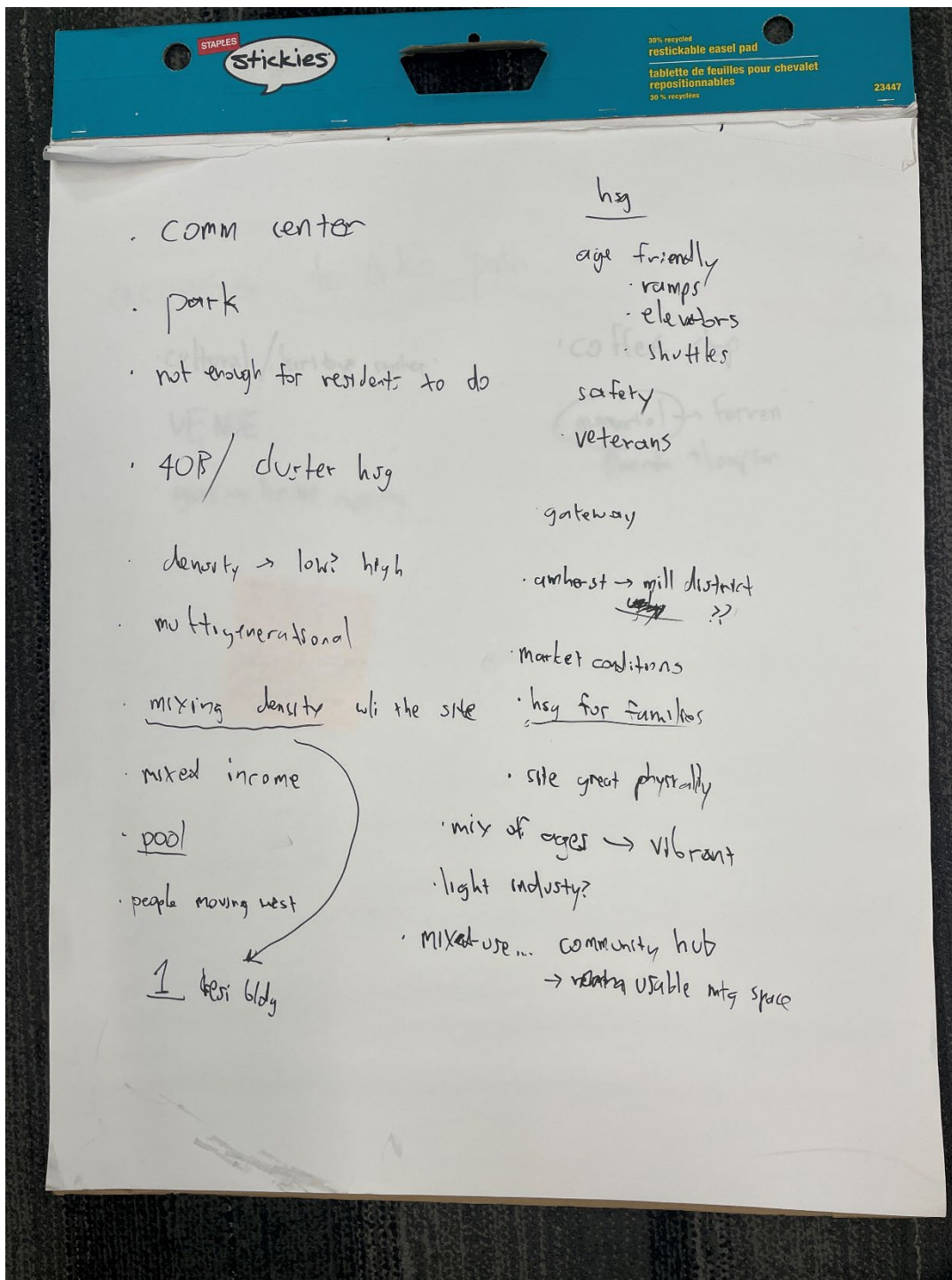


9. Christa's flip pad page 9





10. Christa's flip pad page 10



11. Luke's flip pad page 1





I like the village green better than blocks.  
I think med <sup>(hi)</sup> density would be most  
appropriate but not town homes  
mixed use! open space w/ community  
<sub>(park/garden/playground)</sub>  
center + housing + (limited) retail.  
make it accessible & connect to bike  
path.  
Make design consistent w/ surroundings.  
incorporate solar on buildings.  
Any opportunity for resident-owned  
to build equity (vs. rental) along  
w/ affordable rental?  
mixed income & ages  
Don't want developer to be absentee  
landlord!

13. Luke's flip pad, sticky note

Post-it SUPERSTICKY EASEL PAD  
TABLEAU À FEUILLES MOBILES SUPERCOLLANTES  
SUPERADHESIVAS BLOC DE HOJAS REPOSICIONABLES

30 25 IN/PO x 30 IN/PO  
63,5 cm x 76,2 cm  
5.2 SQ FT/PPF (0.48 m²) 3M

Create a "destination": pool, nearby rec site

Residential

Review zoning w/ Neighborhood, Planning Board, Selectboard

Indigenous claims to land

Section 8

Determine % Affordable Housing through RFP

Distinction H/s Med 10/s High

Daycare (90+ artist)

Rec Space

- safe space for kids
- affordable

Food

- Drive Thru?

Local Business

Mixed Use

Business should directly address new resident

Neurodivergent households/units?  
Local Projects?

Intergen House

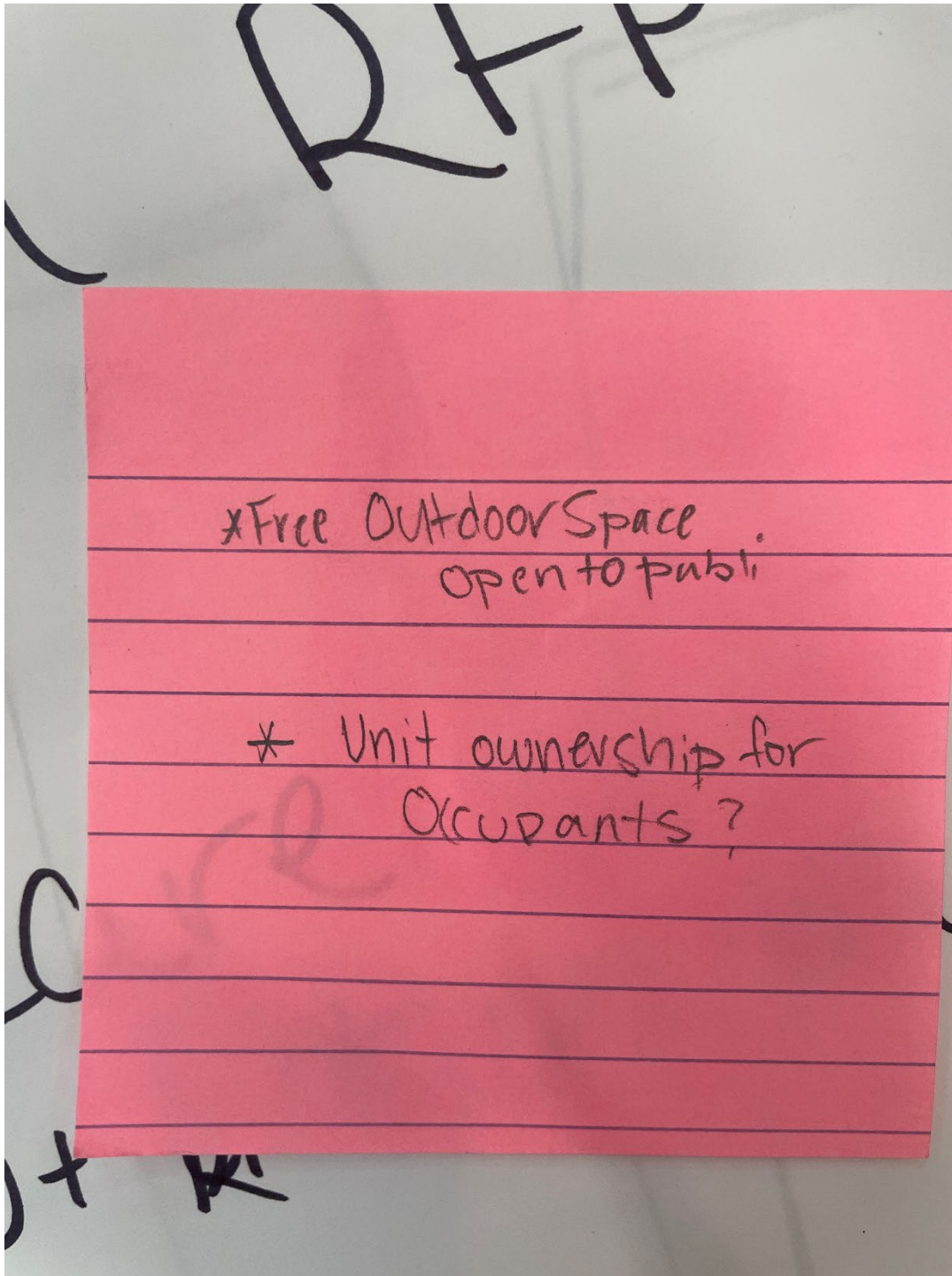
Inter-generational living:  
Seniors + Foster and adoptive families  
12 - family homes w/ 3-5 beds  
4-8 one bed cottages  
if community center model is too basic in Easthampton, MA

Small trees to perimeter as much as possible, so most of the site can be here  
Space for agriculture, community gardens, sheep pens etc. should have community area to produce food for residents  
Solar panels + rooftop on top of car parking area

NO PARKING

14. Jennifer's flip pad





15. Jennifer's flip pad, sticky note 1

## Intergenerational living

Seniors + foster and  
adoptive families

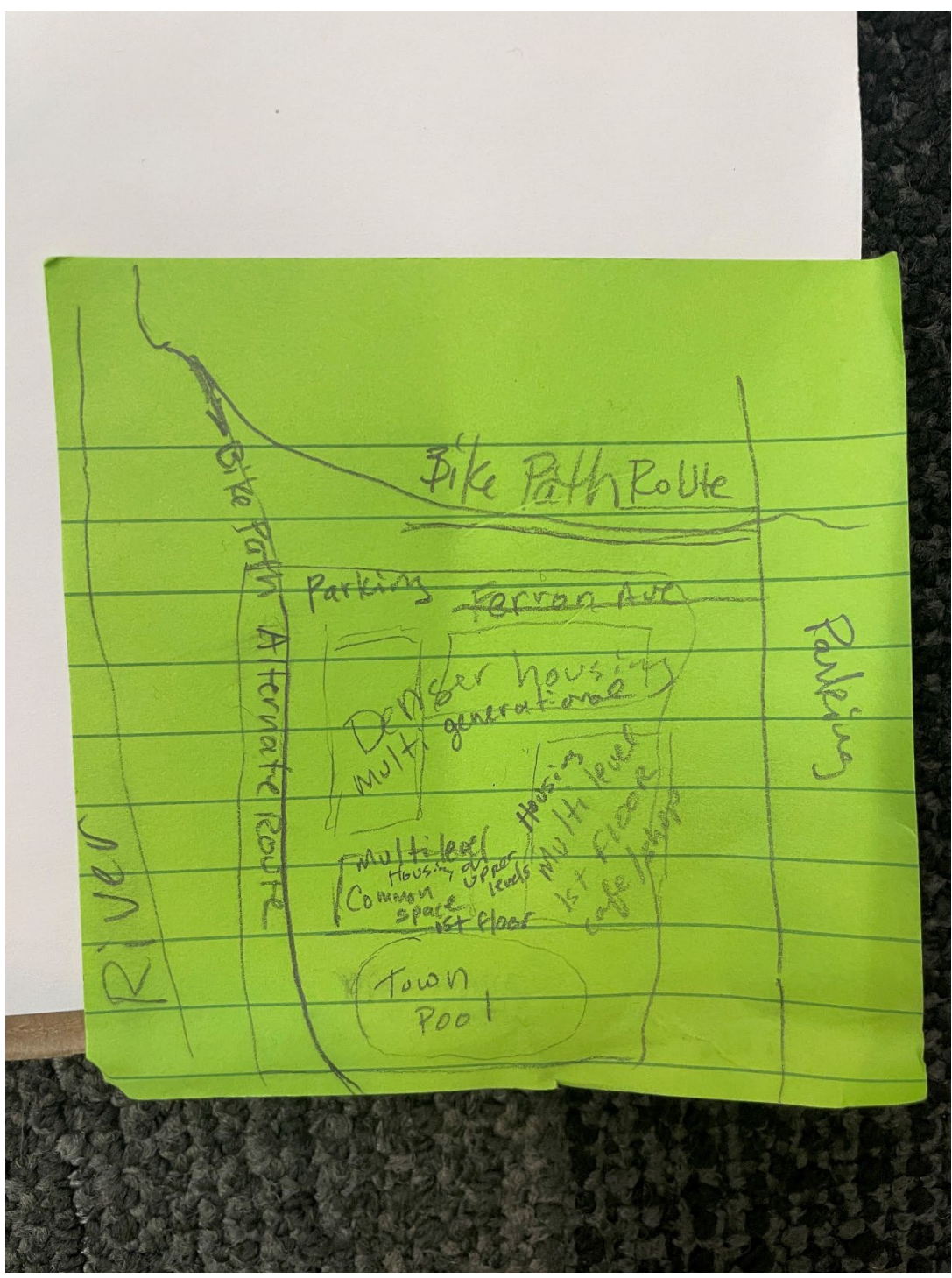
12 family homes w/ 3-5 beds

+ 48 one bed cottages

+ community center

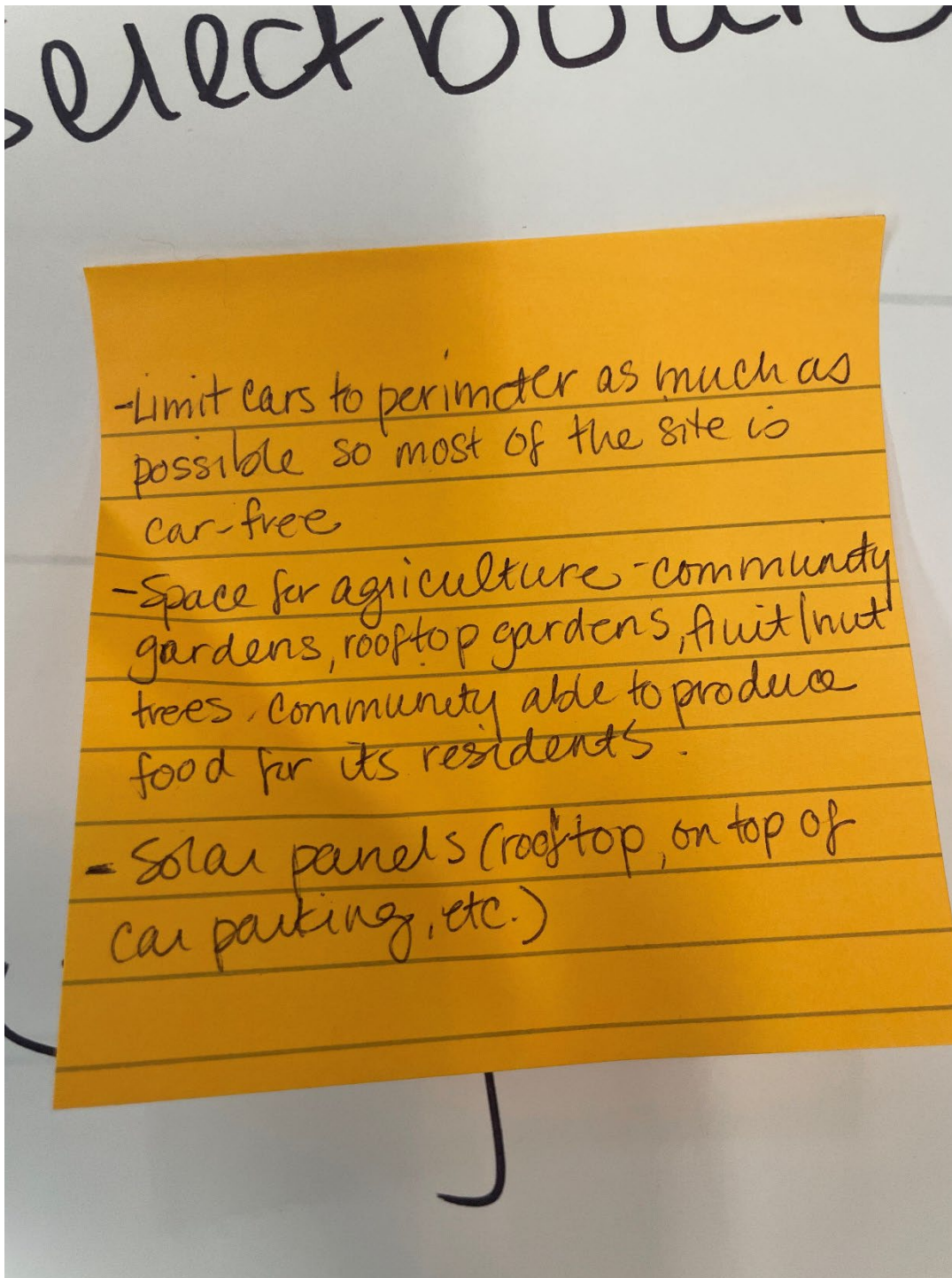
model is treehouse in  
Easthampton, MA





17. Jennifer's flip pad, sticky note 3





18. Jennifer's flip pad, sticky note 4



19. Luke presenting to residents of Montague



20. Luke facilitating a breakout discussion





21. Christa facilitating a breakout discussion



22. Jennifer facilitating a breakout discussion