

Stakeholder Interviews

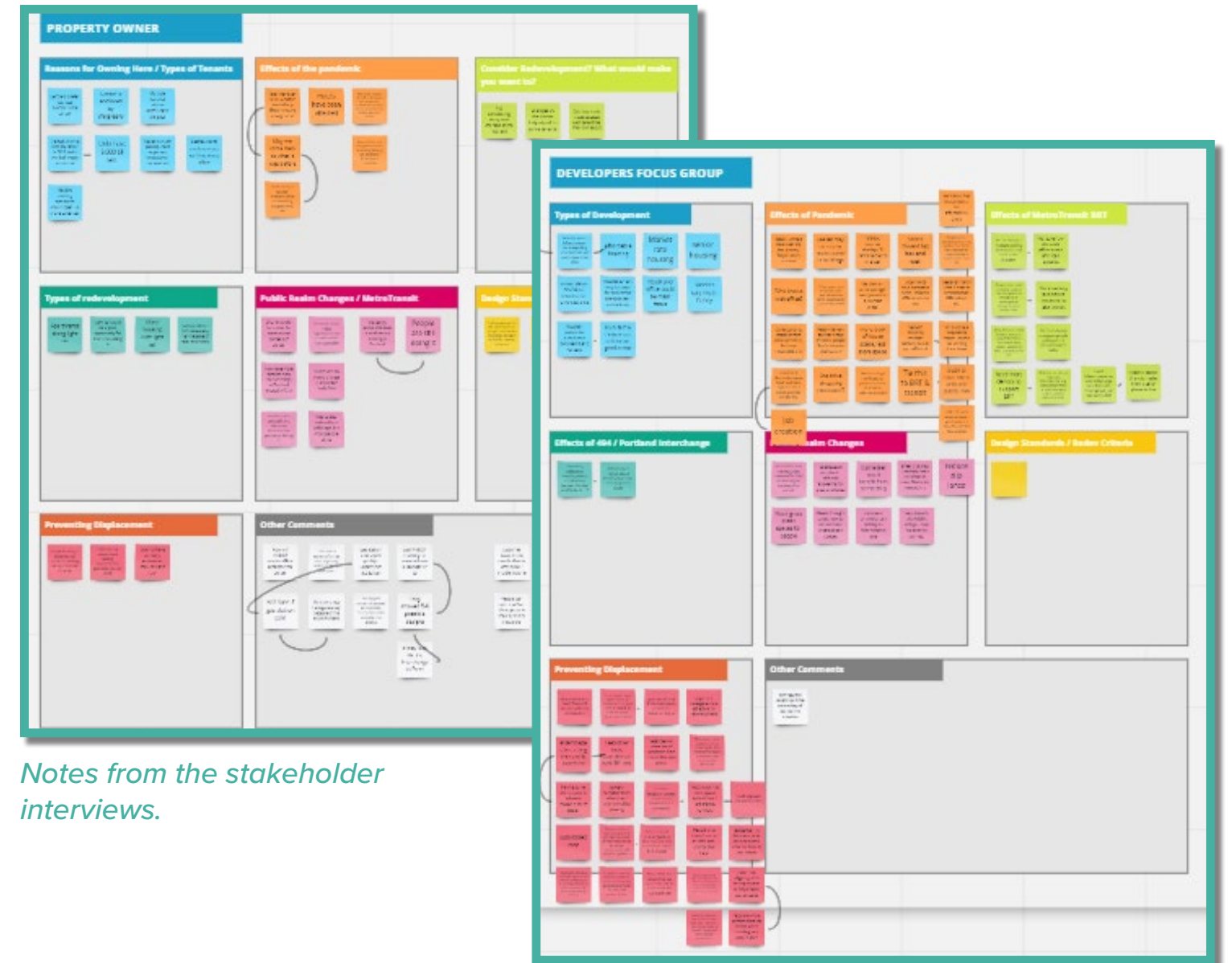
VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

TSW and the Cities of Bloomington and Richfield met with stakeholders via video conference meetings during February 2021 before the Public Meeting. The stakeholder interviews and focus groups included business owners, property owners, developers of mixed-use developments, and agencies that are currently coordinating on multiple projects in the area. Questions were related to how the pandemic has affected business in the study area, which public realm improvements are most important to consider, how the MetroTransit and MnDOT projects could affect Portland Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods, the best ways to address displacement of existing businesses and residents.

market and affordable housing is necessary to retain residents. The MetroTransit D-Line project was largely seen as a benefit to the area because of the redevelopment it could catalyze and number of residents who may use the system. Finally, while most stakeholders expressed a need for aesthetic and design improvements in the area, they also mentioned that too many standards and design requirements can become costly and / or discourage investment. They suggested that the cities find a balance or assist business owners, property owners, or developers to reduce the cost burden.

OUTCOMES

As noted in the box to the right, walkability and bikeability are key to connecting Richfield and Bloomington over I-494, particularly as MnDOT's project at Portland Avenue is designed and eventually constructed. The current streetscapes in the area do not provide safe or pleasant walking conditions. Most of the interviews noted that the shift in retail toward online shopping has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and certain types may no longer be valid. However, housing is still a strong



Notes from the stakeholder interviews.

COMMON THEMES:

- Public realm is important to consider
- **Walkability and bikeability** are key to connecting Bloomington and Richfield
- MetroTransit D-Line is a big opportunity for the area
- Housing may be more successful and necessary to add than retail
- Pandemic has affected retail space significantly
- Some public realm improvements add cost burden to property owners and developers