



LOWELL

FORWARD

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Lowell Today

Interim report from the Lowell Forward
planning process

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Part I

What is Lowell Forward?

Lowell Forward is our city's comprehensive planning process—an initiative to help us create a shared vision and guide for how we can grow and invest in the community over the next twenty years.

The Planning Process

Lowell Forward is an initiative to update our current comprehensive plan, Sustainable Lowell 2025. A comprehensive plan, also known as a master plan, is a document that provides a strategic roadmap for a city's growth and development. This planning process will engage our community in creating a shared vision, values and goals for Lowell and outline an implementation framework for how we can achieve them.

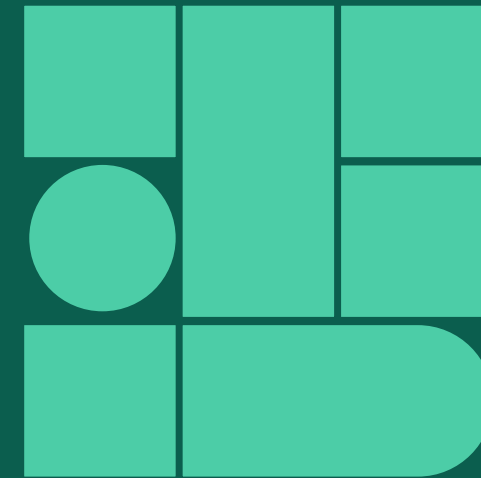
Lowell Forward will become an important communication tool and guiding document helping City staff and elected officials with future decision making. It will also act as a gateway for other communities to learn about who we are and what we envision for Lowell in the next 20 years. The plan will knit together past, present, and future planning efforts across areas in the city, from Downtown to our unique and celebrated neighborhoods, to our transportation networks, open space, and natural resources.

What Will Lowell Forward Include?



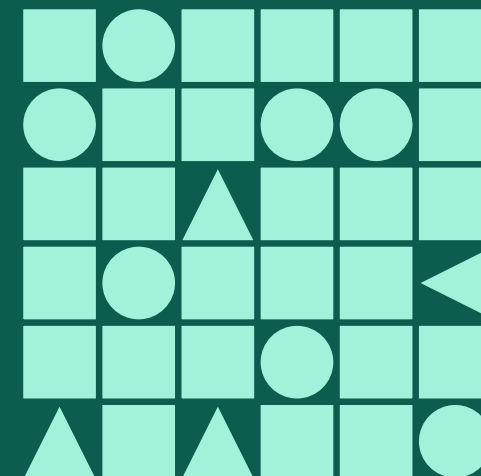
Vision & Values

A shared vision for the city and its neighborhoods



Goals & Objectives

Coordinated goals that support the vision



Action & Strategies

A guide for policymaking and investments in the near future

Overview and Background

Why plan now?

A wave of changes in the decade since the publication of Lowell's current Comprehensive Plan, Sustainable Lowell 2025, has prompted us to prioritize the creation of an updated Plan, Lowell Forward. Like so many communities around the world altered by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lowell is experiencing trends amplified by population growth, demographic change, shifts in economic conditions, aging infrastructure, and effects of climate change. These range of issues have ripple effects across Lowell's physical and social fabric including its housing stock, transportation networks, and community livelihoods. Updating Lowell's Master Plan now will give us an advantage as we prepare for the next wave of unforeseen challenges and opportunities.

What is the Lowell Today document?

Lowell Today is an overview of existing conditions analysis for topics related to the Lowell Forward planning process. This report looks at urban form, demographics, housing, economic development, mobility, open space, and environment conditions in the city today and in relation to local and statewide trends. The document contains a mix of original research conducted by the consultant team using publicly available datasets, information provided by the City of Lowell including previous plans, and other sources as noted.

More importantly, Lowell Today sets the stage for community dialogue and discussion around the most important opportunities and challenges facing the city of Lowell today, and provides a basis for developing future strategies that will help us achieve a shared community vision.

What is a Comprehensive Plan in Massachusetts?

Comprehensive Plans are required by Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 41, Section 81D) and must include topics such as land use, housing, economic opportunity, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and transportation and mobility, as well as a goals and policy statements, and implementation program.

Within this general framework, there is plenty of room for a comprehensive plan to be carefully designed to fit individual needs and desires of a given community.

Building on Other Planning Efforts

The first step toward establishing a vision for the future is to examine past priorities. Lowell Forward will update the city's current master plan, Sustainable Lowell 2025. A range of other citywide and smaller-scale planning efforts across the city will also inform and advance the comprehensive vision and goals we develop through this process. This comprehensive master plan update will aid in assessing the implementation status of Sustainable Lowell 2025 and other plan recommendations, and identify new goals and priorities that address the current challenges and opportunities within the community. The outcome of the process will be a coordinated roadmap that ties all of these components together.

A snapshot of some important Lowell planning efforts are highlighted here. You can access the full reports on the Lowell Forward website at <https://forward.lowellma.gov/library/>

See timeline below which includes:

- [Previous Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Other city-led plans](#)
- [Plans led by other organizations](#)

Pawtucketville Neighborhood Master Plan

Completed: 2006
This plan aimed to create a unified vision for development, transportation, open space, housing, and institutional expansion in Pawtucketville, which was identified as a key development area in Lowell's previous comprehensive plan.

2006

Hamilton Canal District Master Plan

Completed: 2008
The Hamilton Canal District Master Plan envisions a vibrant, mixed-use district that is well-connected to transit. Development in the area will support additional tax revenue and create opportunities for economic development and affordable housing production.

2008

Sustainable Lowell 2025

Completed: 2013
The City's previous Comprehensive Master Plan was completed and officially adopted in 2013. The Sustainability Plan established long-term policies and a shared vision for smart, responsible development within the city. Working with the community, the Plan's vision was based upon the following principles: Livability, Place-making, Longevity, and Responsibility.

2013

Building on Other Planning Efforts

2016 **UMass Lowell Strategic Development Plan**
 Completed in: 2016
 The UMass Lowell Strategic Development Plan 2016-2021 specifies objectives related to master planning, facility renewal and maintenance, and sustainability. The 2022-2027 Strategic Development Plan was submitted to the Commonwealth in December 2022.

2017 **Small-Scale Manufacturing & Place-Based Economic Development**
 Completed in: 2017
 The City of Lowell commissioned the Small-Scale Manufacturing and Place-Based Economic Development study to explore the potential of small-scale manufacturing in the Acre. Final recommendations focused on strategies for the City and its partners to support and attract small-scale, walkable businesses to the Acre. The study also emphasized the importance of a walkable urban fabric to support a dynamic economy.

2018 **Ayer's City Industrial Park Urban Revitalization & Development Plan**
 Completed in: 2018
 The Ayer's City Industrial Park Plan charts a course to revitalize a traditional industrial area in the heart of Lowell. Recent efforts, such as the ongoing cleanup of the Silresim superfund site, aim to bring this vision to reality. The plan calls for brownfield cleanup, new zoning to support redevelopment, new parks and a greenway, improved access, and enhanced street design.

Open Space & Recreation Plan
 Completed in: 2018
 City of Lowell Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Staff prepare an Open Space and Recreation Plan every seven years to establish a vision for Lowell's parks, open spaces, and recreational programming. This 2018 plan updates the 2013 edition and covers the next seven years 2019-2026. The plan identifies the changing needs of Lowell residents, and sets a course to respond to them.

2020 **Gallagher Terminal Transit-Oriented Development Study**
 Completed in: 2020
 This study assessed the feasibility of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in the vicinity of the Lowell Gallagher Transportation Terminal and explored what government actions might be necessary to achieve feasible TOD. The Lowell Planning and Development Department identified eleven example TOD sites within a five-minute walk/quarter-mile radius of the Terminal. These sites represent a variety of challenges and opportunities developers might face when considering projects with density appropriate for TOD.

Timeline includes:

- Previous Comprehensive Plan
- Other city-led plans
- Plans led by other organizations

Lowell Regional Transit Authority Comprehensive Transit Plan Update

Completed in: 2021
 The Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) updated its comprehensive transit plan in 2021. The report focused on measuring change in ridership and other agency metrics, especially as they relate to the impacts of COVID-19.

GoLowell

Completed in: 2021
 GoLowell is Lowell's multimodal Complete Streets plan. The planning effort assessed transit use, walkability, and bicycle safety throughout the city. The final plan can be read in its entirety on the City of Lowell's website. GoLowell identified 10 high-priority corridors which will be assessed in detail for the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists.

2021

Lowell Parking Study

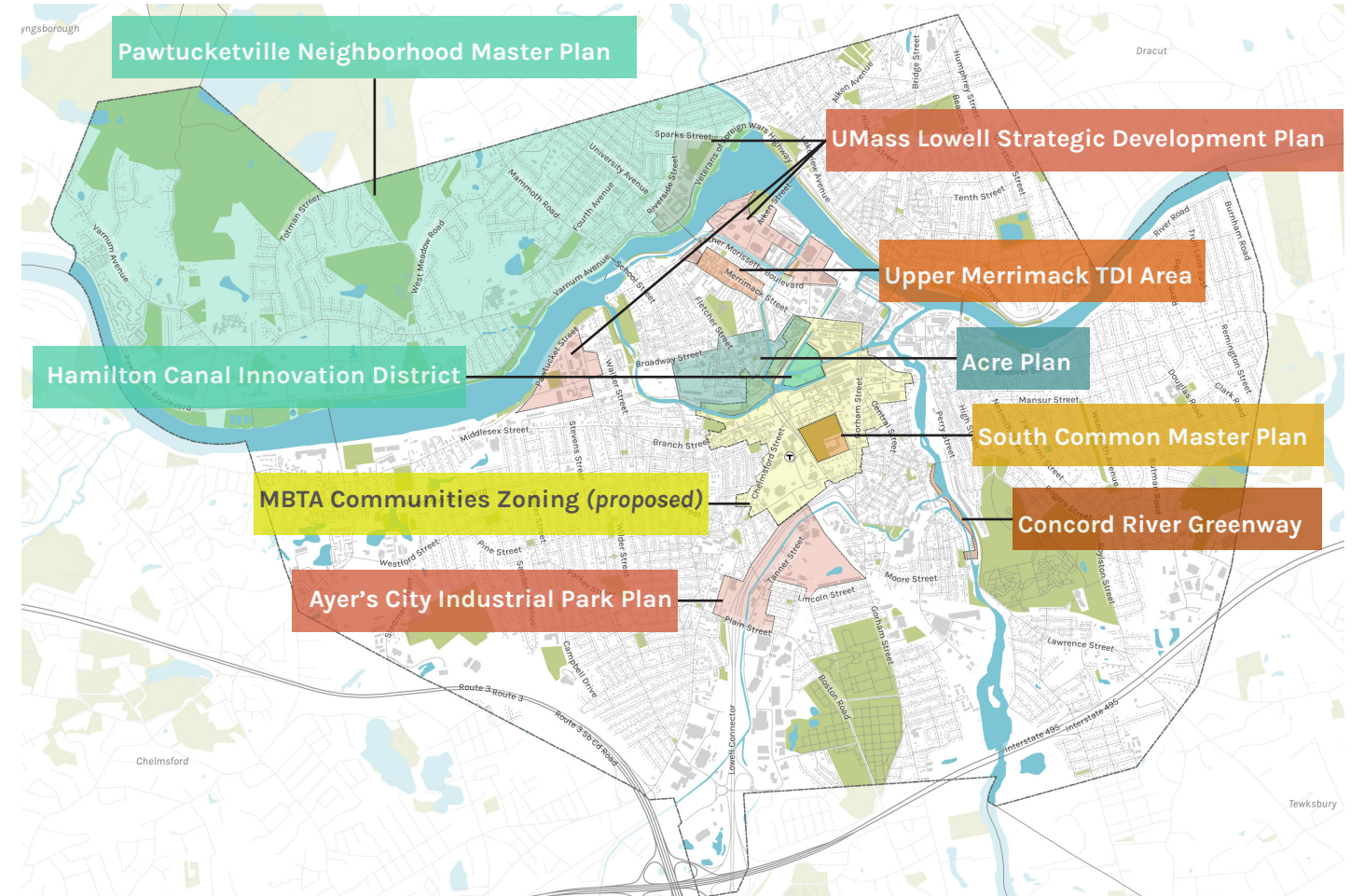
Completed in: 2021
 Recommendations to better manage parking demand, introduce more user-friendly practices into the parking system, and ensure pricing for on-street parking, garage passcards, and residential permits reflect system costs, and incorporate a greater degree of fairness and equity into our parking policies.

Mosaic Lowell

Completed in: 2022
 An Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy Plan for All of Lowell. The Lowell Forward plan will continue to strengthen and advance these ongoing efforts both as an economic development strategy and as a central aspect of what makes Lowell a wonderful place to live or to visit.

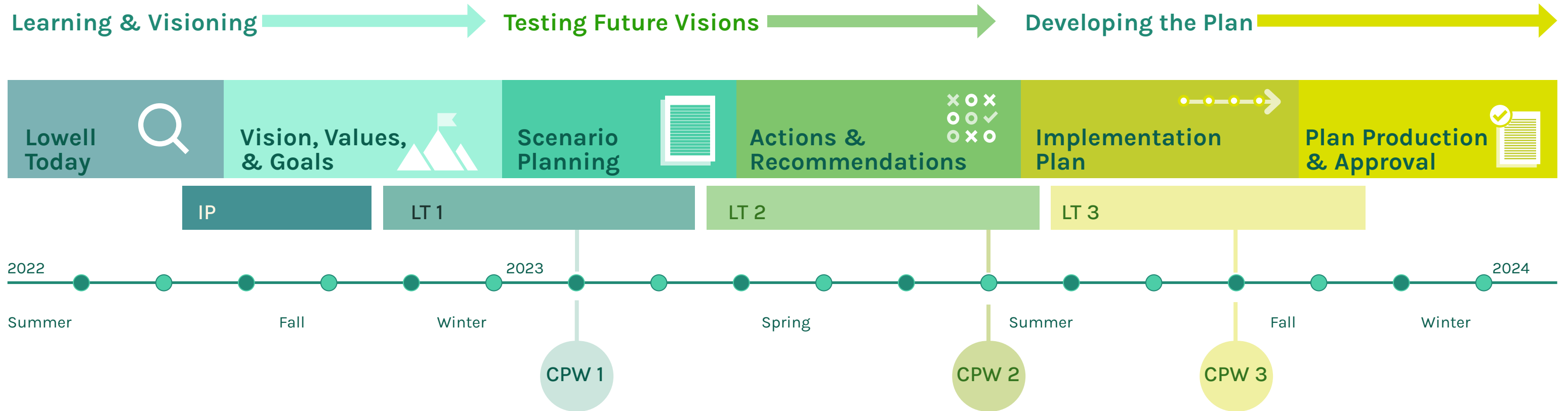
2022

▼ The map identifies other relevant place-specific plans:



Project Timeline

Lowell Forward is planned to be an eighteen-month initiative with many opportunities to share your input throughout the process. Remember to visit the plan website (<https://forward.lowellma.gov/>) often for upcoming events and engagement activities!



CPW Citywide Public Workshop
 IP Initial promotion
 LT Listening Tour

Community Engagement

Lowell Forward presents an opportunity to celebrate the unique qualities of Lowell's diverse neighborhoods while bringing together community groups, nonprofits, institutions, municipal departments, external agencies, business leaders, and members of the public at-large to craft a shared vision and set of goals for the city as a whole. Community outreach and engagement will be built into every step of this planning process.

Social Justice and Equity Lens

Social justice and equity will foreground the Lowell Forward community engagement process and be a lens through which we approach planning topics across the city. Lowell has been a gateway and landing point for immigrants coming to this country for generations and diversity sets it apart from most other American Cities. However, simultaneously Lowell's built environment has been shaped by centuries of policy that systematically discriminated against and excluded people of color, immigrants, low-income households, and other groups. Lowell Forward will work to address these disparities by researching and building a network of stakeholders representing communities across the city at the start of the planning process.

Lowell Forward aims to celebrate the unique qualities of each distinct neighborhood in our city and acknowledges that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution in Lowell. This process will help identify where neighborhood goals and priorities align and where they diverge. A variety of traditional and non-traditional public engagement and outreach strategies with language translation and interpretation will be used to provide flexibility for community members and increase accessibility to the process.

An equitable planning process in Lowell should...

- Be grounded in Lowell's **historical and neighborhood context**, understanding the role that city plays in shaping community trust and planning.
- Prioritize and recognize the need to **plan for unique and diverse neighborhoods** that feature residents who do not typically participate in local government in Lowell, with a particular focus on its immigrant communities, low-to-moderate income residents, and BIPOC residents and communities of color.
- Develop recommendations and collect community insight on opportunities that promote both **equitable mobility and equitable economic opportunity** for all Lowell residents regardless of socioeconomic status.
- Create **intentional pathways to equitable community participation** that accounts for the lived experiences of residents through varied and diverse engagement opportunities.

Key Values & Network-Building Approach

Phased Approach to Network-Building.

One key element of this community engagement strategy is that it is phased and iterative, with later phases building on the foundation set in earlier ones.

Building on Existing Relationships and Assets.

The first is the relationships organizers already hold within the community. The second is the relationships held in existing community groups.

Consistent Communication and Data Management Within the Project Team.

If two organizers work on this project, they should meet regularly, and should ensure that every community member has a single clear point of contact for questions about the project.

Varied and Low-Threshold Opportunities for Engagement.

An accessible community process should meet residents where they are not just physically (via a listening tour) but also temporally, via low-time-commitment engagement points that are available at the time where a person has a question or feedback to offer.

Trust

Accessibility



▲ "What is your dream for Lowell?" Lowellians share their thoughts at the Lowell Forward Kick-Off held at the Senior Center on February 1, 2023

Community Organizer: Mercy Anampiu

Our team has hired a long-time community resident to lead our grassroots engagement and organizing efforts for Lowell Forward. As the Lowell Forward Community Organizer, Mercy Anampiu brings decades of experience within the Lowell community as an immigrant, woman of color, and expert in the field of engaging with Lowell residents around issues of public health and equitable outcomes. She will ensure ongoing insight and feedback of residents is incorporated into real-time analysis and design of the master planning process.



In addition, our team will supplement Mercy's grassroots efforts with traditional forms of engagement including meeting pop-ins as listening tour stops with existing groups, digital engagement opportunities, and two plan-defining public workshops.

▲ Mercy Anampiu, Community Organizer for Lowell Forward

Get in touch with the Lowell Forward's Community Organizer and share your thoughts on the process. Email Mercy at:

lowellforward@utiledesign.com



▲ Mercy in action at the Lowell Forward Kick-Off!

Engagement is built into every step...

- Lowell Forward is an 18-month process to set a **comprehensive plan for the future** of the city of Lowell, and **community engagement is built into every step** of the process.
- This process makes **substantial investments** of time and resources in **equitable community engagement**, including a full-time community organizer, listening tours throughout the city, and two citywide public workshops.
- As Equity and Engagement Consultants, Rivera Consulting is advising the project team on issues of **inclusive public participation practices, equity policy prioritization and development, and community baseline ground-truthing** in order to strengthen elements of social justice across key aspects of the Comprehensive Plan

Steering Committee

The Lowell Forward Steering Committee is composed of members who have rich ties to the Lowell community, have experience working with and advocating for Lowell neighborhoods, and each member represents a diverse set of voices across the city. The Steering Committee will work closely with the City planning team and the Consultant team to provide oversight and guidance on the plan's content, and expand community outreach throughout the Lowell Forward process.

- Adam Baacke, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Campus Development at UMass Lowell
- Bopha S. Boutselis, Resident & Educator at Lowell Public Schools
- Joseph Boyle, Resident & Project Manager at Coalition for a Better Acre
- Leslie Briones, Resident
- Yun-Ju Choi, Resident & Executive Director of Coalition for a Better Acre
- George DeLuca, Resident
- Melissa Desroches, Resident & Educator at Lowell Public Schools
- Jackie Doherty, Resident & School Committee Member
- Perry Downs, Resident & Conservation Commission Member
- Maxine Farkas, Resident
- Neyder Fernandez, Student Body President at UMass Lowell
- Gerard Frechette, Resident & Planning Board Member
- Suzanne Frechette, Resident & Development Director of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell
- Levenia Furusa, Resident
- Valerie Galvao, Resident
- Ron Gentle, Resident
- Ryan Gilday, Resident
- Amada Gregory, Resident
- John Hamblet, Resident
- Christopher Hayes, Resident & Housing and Economic Development Planner and Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
- Austin Hill, Resident
- Cormac Hondros-McCarthy, Resident & Lowell Sustainability Council Member
- Vaughn Horn, Resident
- Carl Howell, Chief Operating Officer at Community Teamwork, Inc.
- Dean Jenkins, Local Developer
- Kerry Jenness, Resident, Lowell Historic Board Member, & First Assistant City Solicitor at City of Lowell
- Wayne Jenness, Resident & City Council Member
- Belinda Juran, Resident
- Felice Kincannon, Resident
- Lauran Lamarre Anderson, Resident & Business Owner of Lala Books
- Allison Lamey, Resident & Executive Director of the Lowell Plan/Lowell Development and Financial Corporation
- Matt Lucas, Resident
- Dennis McCarthy, Resident & Zoning Board of Appeals Member
- Rita Mercier, Resident & City Council Member
- Dennis Mercier, Resident & Chair of the Pawtucketville Citizen Council
- Vivian Merrill, Small Business Owner of E&V Merrill Insurance Group
- Steven Thurston Oliver, Resident & Professor at Salem State University
- Tania Ormonde, Resident
- Luciano Paskevicius, Resident
- Sanary Phien, Resident & Program Coordinator at Coalition for a Better Acre
- Michelle Rivera, Resident
- Juan Carlos Rivera, Director of Operations at Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell
- Narin Sinuon, Resident
- Beth Tripathi, Resident
- Bobby Tugbiyele, Resident & CEO of The Leap Network, LLC
- David Turcotte, Resident & Research Professor at UMass Lowell
- Mona Tyree Harris, Resident
- Enrique Vargas, Resident & Associate Director at Mill City Grows
- Louisa Varnum, Resident & Conservation Commission Member
- Mary Wambui-Ekop, Resident
- Barbara Warren, Division Director of Housing and Homeless Services at Community Teamwork, Inc.
- Ethan Yang, Resident
- Allison Chambers, VP of Finance and CFO at Middlesex Community College

Outreach and Engagement Activities

The community engagement plan is an essential part of the Lowell Forward process, and is designed to provide multiple avenues and forums for community dialogue, discussion and sharing of ideas. Below are some different events, activities, and channels for engagement that we have planned for the Lowell Forward process—please feel free to share with any other ideas you may have for how we can connect with your community via the Plan’s website!

Public/Citywide Workshops

We will hold three citywide workshops at convenient locations to engage the community at each milestone stage of the planning process including: Plan Kick-Off and Visioning, Plan Goals and Scenario Planning, and finally to discuss Plan Actions and Recommendations.

Listening Tours

You will see the words “Listening Tour” mentioned a lot as part of the Lowell Forward planning process. This is an overarching term we are using to describe and plan for continued engagement between public workshops. We want to listen and learn from you throughout this planning process: What do you love about Lowell and your neighborhood today and what changes could make it better? Listening to the community will take many forms including:

- Surveys (digital and in-person) to collect feedback about the Plan’s vision, goals, actions and recommendations,
- Neighborhood/Smaller focus workshops to discuss and share ideas about the plan together in smaller informal settings,
- Stakeholder Interviews to better understand the status of ongoing planning work across different topics and hear from different stakeholders on ground,
- Community Mapping to collectively brainstorm the most important assets and networks in Lowell and create a shared understanding of how the city works for each of us,
- Social Media Outreach to conveniently share and collect photos, videos, ideas, and feedback from the community as the planning process unfolds,
- Meeting you where you are including at planned community events and festivals in your neighborhood, and
- Website and Email to provide opportunity to send any comments, questions and feedback you have directly to the Lowell Forward planning team.

Community Engagement Timeline

Phase 1: Learning & Visioning

Fall and Winter 2022

Listening Tour 1

Objective: Build shared citywide and neighborhood visions

Public Workshop 1

Objective: Kick-Off & build a shared citywide vision

Phase 2: Testing Future Visions

Spring and Summer 2023

Listening Tour 2

Objective: Identify place-based opportunities and challenges

Public Workshop 2

Objective: Evaluate alternative development scenarios for strategic sites

Phase 3: Developing a Plan

Fall and Winter 2024

Public Workshop 3

Objective: Prioritize actions and recommendations and build an implementation plan

Listening Tour 3

Objective: Build stewardship for implementation of the plan



▲ Previous public engagement event in Cambodia Town

Your Voice Will Help Shape This Plan:

As the Lowell Forward process unfolds, there will be many opportunities to join the conversation and share your thoughts. The plan website is an important resource and platform to share your feedback as the project progresses.

Please visit <https://forward.lowellma.gov/> to learn about:

- The planning process
- Upcoming and past events
- Previous planning efforts
- Email sign up list
- Comment submission

Follow us on:

Facebook: Lowell Forward

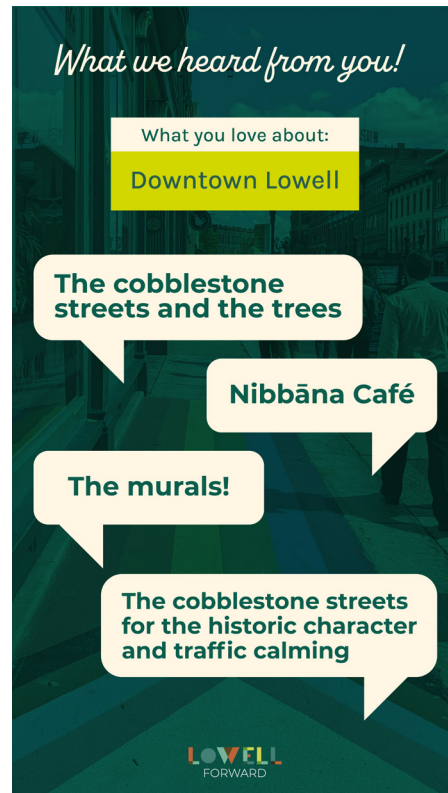
Instagram: @lowell_forward_plan

Sign up for the plan's Newsletter:

<https://mailchi.mp/utiledesign/lowellforward>

Submit a comment at any time during the process! Follow this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/forwardcomments>



▲ Interactive stories as part of initial plan promotion

Part II

Lowell Today: Existing Conditions

This section highlights existing conditions in Lowell along multiple axes including demographics, arts and culture, sustainability, housing, economic development, transportation and mobility, open space and environment, and land use and urban form.

Existing Conditions Overview

While the purpose of Lowell Forward’s overall engagement and outreach effort is to hear from the community and use that information to inform the goals and plan development, a parallel effort is to combine original research and analysis with a collection of the most important facts we have drawn from existing and ongoing planning efforts in Lowell.

This report represents a first version of existing conditions analysis across the city. The Lowell Forward planning team fully expects this analysis to evolve as the plan continues to take shape. For each topic area, the planning team has identified a set of data points that highlight key issues we expect to address in the plan’s goals, actions, and ongoing community engagement efforts.

The Lowell Forward team welcomes community feedback on this report, whether requests for clarification or suggestions for additional research and information that will help inform the Lowell Forward planning process!

Where Is This Data Coming From?

No data source is perfect. However, when combined with insights from people’s lived experiences, data can help ground our conversations about the future of Lowell. Here are some of the main sources we use in Lowell Today:

US Decennial Census

This is the nation’s census taken every ten years. It’s meant to count everyone and collect some very basic facts about everyone. Unfortunately, the census tends to undercount people in areas with low-income households, in places with large communities of color, and in areas with lots of immigrants. Only limited data from the 2020 census has been released so far.

American Community Survey (ACS)

The ACS is a survey conducted by the US Census Bureau every year. It surveys one in 60 households every year, and then uses data from the last five years and statistics to estimate counts for the whole population. The ACS asks much more detailed questions than the Census, and so it is one of the most useful sources. But it has problems. Like the Decennial Census, it tends to undercount people in communities of color, in areas with many immigrants, and in low-income areas.

Previous Analysis and Engagement Efforts

Where possible, and to avoid reinventing the wheel, existing conditions draw from recent studies and engagement efforts the City and other organizations have undertaken across the city.

When we use these and other data sources, we have to keep in mind that many in Lowell are not counted. The data provides a baseline to work from, but they are never a definitive picture of Lowell.

Demographics

Population Change + Racial Diversity

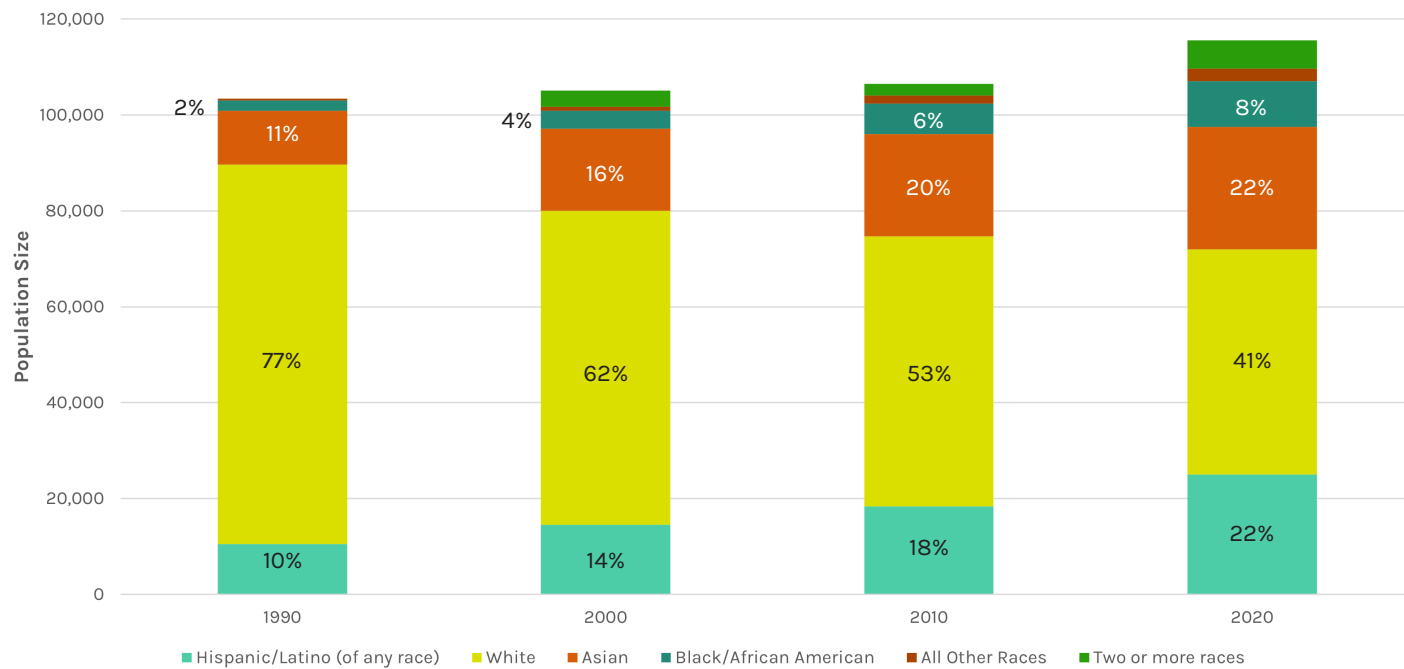
Lowell is growing and becoming more racially diverse.

Lowell is growing, and its population growth is outpacing the growth seen in most other Massachusetts gateway cities. In 2000, Lowell had a population of 105,000 people. By 2020, the population grew by nearly 6% to 115,000 residents.

As Lowell grows, it is also becoming more racially and linguistically diverse. 41% of Lowell residents identify as non-Hispanic white, down from 77% in 1990. All other racial groups have grown as a proportion of the total population since 1990. Communities of color tend to live in central neighborhoods and some pockets on the city's edge.

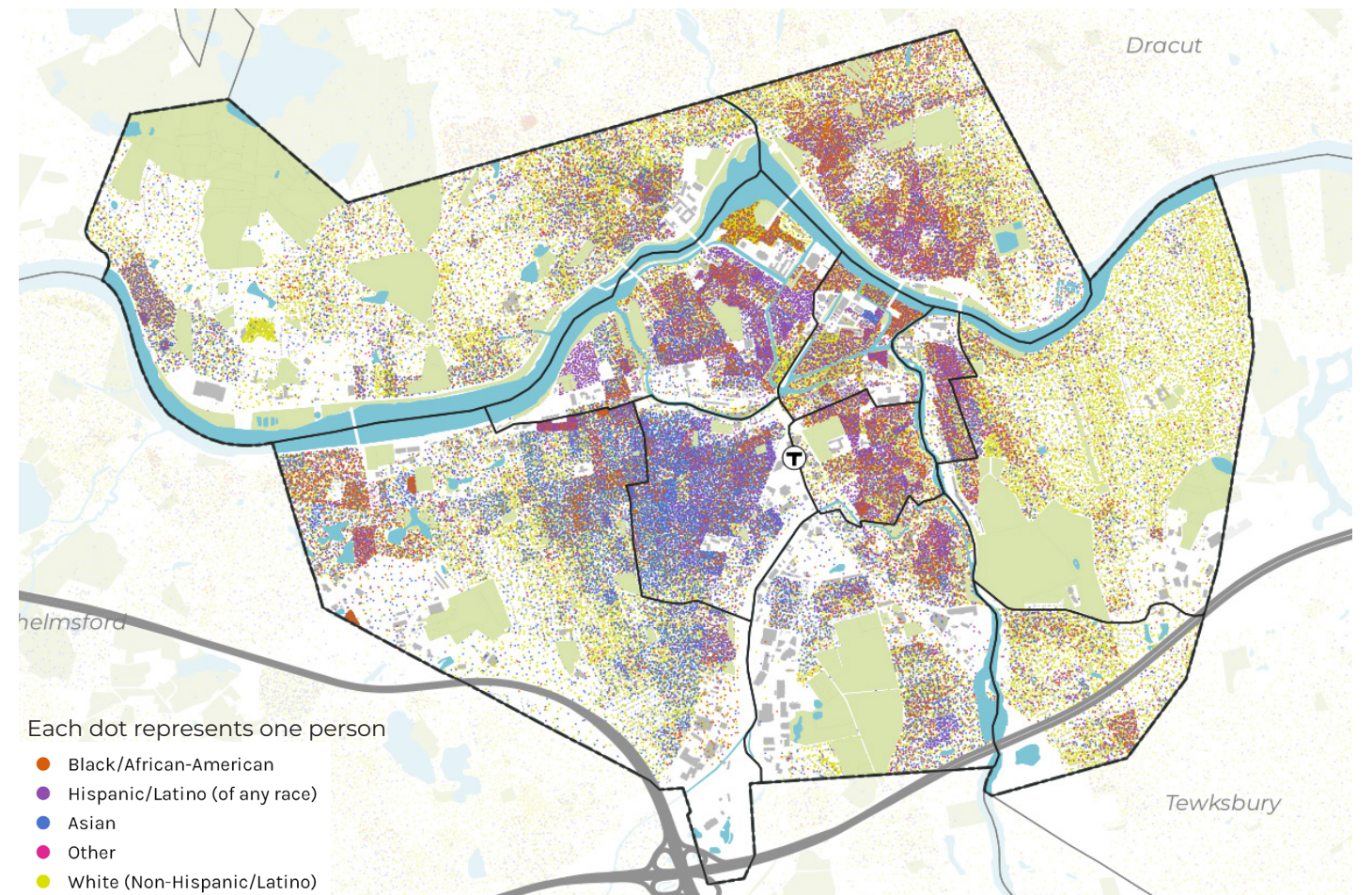


Lowell's Racial Composition Since 1990



Source: 1990 - 2020 Decennial Censuses; Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding

Racial Identity in Lowell



Source: U.S. Census

Demographics

Income + Employment

Income growth in Lowell has outpaced other gateway cities.

Along with population growth, Lowell's median household income has risen over the past few decades. In 1980, the median household income in Lowell was just above \$45,000 (in 2020 inflation-adjusted dollars). Today, the median household income is over \$60,000. This growth has outpaced most other gateway cities, which saw declines or more modest increases in income since 1980. However, income growth across communities has not occurred evenly over time. Asian and White households saw consistent income gains from 2000 to 2020. Hispanic/Latino and Black households experienced more modest growth over the same 20-year period.

Denser neighborhoods are home to a wider mix of income ranges.

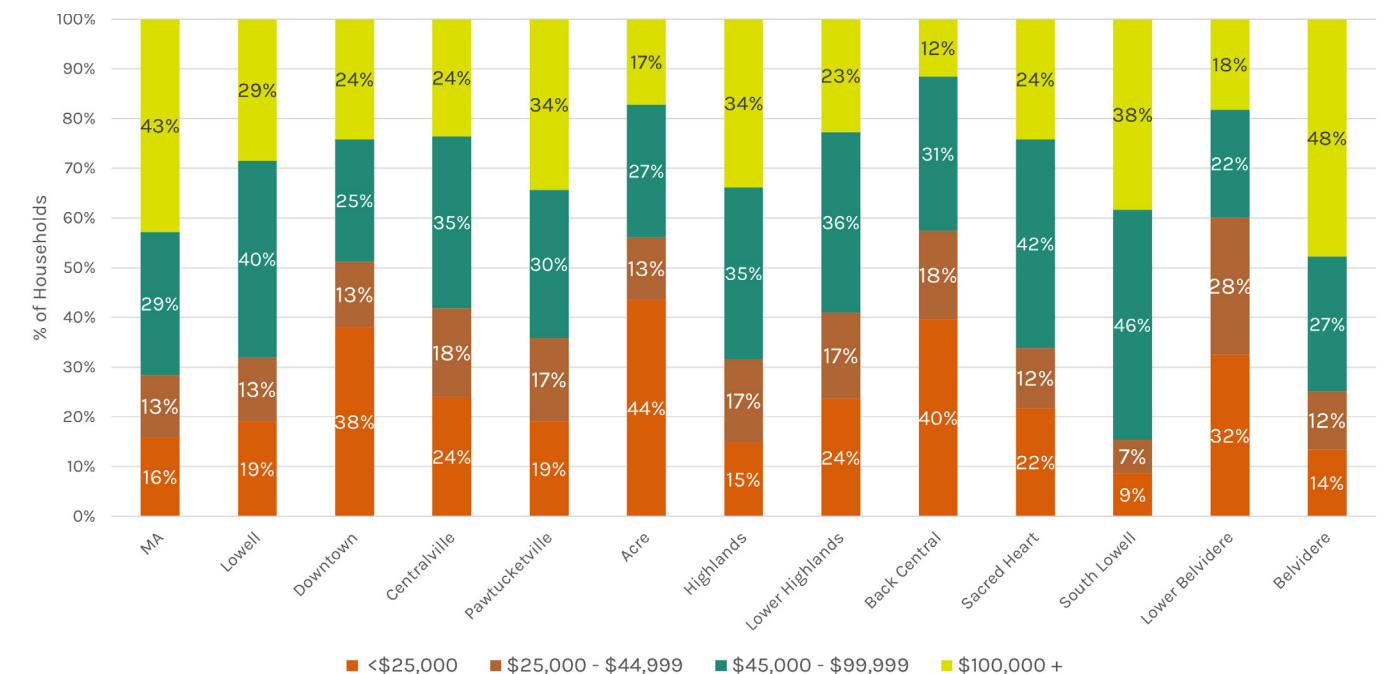
All of Lowell's neighborhoods contain a mix of income ranges, though denser central neighborhoods are more likely to house the lowest income residents. 50% or more of the households in Lower Belvidere, Back Central, Acre, and Downtown earn less than \$45,000 per year. Most households in other neighborhoods (Belvidere, South Lowell, Sacred Heart, Lower Highlands, Highlands, Pawtucketville, and Centralville) earn \$45,000 or more per year.

Unemployment rates are lower than other gateway cities, but unemployment is not equally distributed within Lowell.

Lowell's unemployment rate is lower than the Commonwealth average and substantially lower than many other gateway cities. However, unemployment rates vary substantially by neighborhood. Neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown (Back Central, Lower Belvidere, and Lower Highlands) have the highest unemployment rates, exceeding the citywide unemployment rate of 3%. Acre and Downtown are the only neighborhoods that have a lower unemployment rate than the citywide rate, suggesting that these neighborhoods are critical to providing Lowell residents with access to jobs.



Income Distribution by Neighborhood



Source: ACS 2020 5-Year Estimates; Note: Census tract boundaries do not always line up with neighborhood boundaries. South Lowell and Belvidere percentages are approximations.

Arts & Culture

Lowell is a city that takes great pride in its history, celebrating its historic landscapes, diverse communities and neighborhoods, cultural resources and the arts. Promoting Lowell as a regional hub for arts, culture and history is an important goal outlined in the previous master plan, Sustainable Lowell 2025 and continues to be a priority for Lowellians across the city.

The City's Office of Cultural Affairs & Special Events (CASE), non-profit organizations such as the Lowell Plan, and Greater Lowell Community Foundation have placed a growing value on promoting and supporting arts and culture throughout the city through initiatives such as the The Like Lowell campaign and Mosaic Lowell - An Arts, Culture and Creative Economy Plan for All of Lowell. The Lowell Forward plan will continue to strengthen and advance these ongoing efforts both as an economic development strategy and as a central aspect of what makes Lowell a wonderful place to live or to visit.

In Action: Mosaic Lowell Goals

Mosaic Lowell is a collaboration of stakeholders working to develop and implement an arts, cultural & creative economy plan for Lowell to enhance the quality of life for all and elevate Lowell into an even more exciting place to live, work, and visit.

Learn more: <https://mosaiclowell.org>

- 1 **Illuminate Lowell arts, culture, and creativity** to the city, region, and world through marketing and other efforts.
- 2 **Create a strong network of communications, collaborations, and partnerships** across organizations, businesses, sectors, cultures, and demographics.
- 3 **Grow the available resources and support** for arts, culture, and creativity in Lowell.
- 4 **Enhance lifelong learning opportunities**, including school opportunities, in arts, culture, and making for Lowell residents.
- 5 **Identify and capitalize on new funding and revenue opportunities** for the City and businesses.
- 6 **Bring arts programming and opportunities to every neighborhood** and support culture and independent businesses throughout the city.
- 7 **Integrate arts and culture** in mainstream City planning initiatives and investments.
- 8 **Increase the presence of publicly accessible art** in the city and facilitate a greater diversity of types, subjects, and creators of publicly accessible art.
- 9 **Make arts and cultural spaces easier to find and access, and accessible to all.**
- 10 **Build on existing events and festivals** to make the city a showcase for these activities and ensure local businesses and creatives benefit from these events.

Source: Mosaic Lowell Arts, Cultural, and Creative Economy Plan

An important note on Arts and Culture:

While we provide a sneak peek here of Lowell's incredible historic, arts, and cultural landscape — the Lowell Forward team sees this topic area less as a stand-alone element, but one that has ancillary benefits related to housing, education, mobility and open space, regional desirability, and competitive advantages relative to neighboring communities. Lowell Forward aims to strengthen and better integrate the arts and cultural sector into planning and decision-making across all City departments in Lowell.

Mosaic Lowell Arts, Cultural & Creative Economy Plan

“This plan provides a roadmap to support and celebrate arts, culture, and creative endeavors and entrepreneurs to enhance quality of life, support local businesses and economic development, and celebrate local cultural practices and traditions.” – *Mosaic Lowell Vision*

Read the plan at <https://mosaiclowell.org/plan>

Cultural Assets

Lowell has many cultural, art, and creative assets throughout its unique neighborhoods.

- More than 80 nonprofit organizations working in arts, culture, youth development, health, and education
- Over 150 food and restaurant options
- Over 30 festivals and events for food, music, art, and cultural celebrations

How important is the creative economy?

The recently completed Mosaic Lowell Cultural Economy Plan for Lowell outlines how a growing creative economy builds wealth in Lowell and the region by creating jobs, generating tax revenue, increasing tourism and consumer purchases, and attracting people to live and invest in the city.

In 2019, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that the arts and culture sector contributed \$25.5 billion to the Massachusetts economy, representing 4.3% of the state's GDP and more than 140,000 jobs. This was more than other large industries, including construction, education services, and agriculture. In Lowell alone, the nonprofit arts and cultural industry contributed more than \$12 million to the economy in Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15). This supported the equivalent of 500 full-time jobs, paid out \$8 million in household income to residents, and generated nearly \$500,000 in revenue for both the local and state governments.

Does your organization or business want to collaborate with the Lowell Forward Team's community engagement efforts to envision a future for the city?

Let us know!



Historic Preservation in Lowell

Preservation is the basis of much of Lowell's economic development, tourism, and marketing efforts. Extensive public programming, interpretive and educational programs, wayside exhibits, and public art add to the vibrancy of the city and reinforce Lowell's history and culture, helping weave together the significant areas and structures along the Lowell National Historical Park Canalway path system, Riverwalk, and throughout the Downtown Lowell Historic District. Many sites in Lowell are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the nation's resources worthy of preservation for their historic, architectural, or cultural value. Lowell has a total of 14 districts listed on the National Register and an additional 26 individually-listed properties as well as one National Historic Landmark district.

History is incredibly important to Lowell's identity, and the Lowell National Historical Park and Lowell's unique Historic Board have significantly contributed to the city. Lowell has the first urban national park in the country. The creation of the park and the historic board played an important role in shaping the city's built environment.

14 districts & 26 properties
in Lowell are listed on the National Register of Historic Places



Lowell Cemetery (Source: Google Maps)



Jerathmell Bowers House (Source: Tim Pierce)



Hoyt-Shedd Estates (Source: Daderot)



Howe Building (Source: Tim Pierce)

The planning team takes a walk downtown during a city tour ▶



Planning for a Resilient Future

Resilience

Lowell needs to be prepared to face future adversities and adapt in the face of change, whether that change is social, environmental, economic, or health-related. A resilient Lowell will have the ability to recover from future stresses to its social, economic, environmental and infrastructure systems. Effective urban planning and urban design will play a critical role in understanding the risks a place like Lowell will face and being prepared for them. The goals and recommendations that will be included in Lowell Forward seek to prepare and build capacity within communities, government institutions, and individuals to survive and adapt from the shocks and stresses that they experience.

Climate protection

Lowell needs to be prepared for future climate hazards and reduce risks that are related to climate change. Some of the main climate risks that Lowell faces are flood risk and the heat island effect. See the Open Space and Environment section for more information.

An important note on Sustainability:

The Lowell Forward team sees sustainability less as a stand-alone element, but one that relates to all the other topic areas: housing, land use and urban form, education, mobility and open space.

Lowell Forward aims to better prepare the city of Lowell to become resilient in the face of unforeseen future shocks or stresses.

Merrimack River ►



Housing

Housing Types + Density

67% of Lowell's residential land contains single-family housing, mainly in the city's outer neighborhoods. Housing density also tends to be highest in Lowell's downtown and inner neighborhoods, with lower densities in predominantly single-family neighborhoods such as Pawtucketville and Belvidere. However, a number of larger-scale multifamily housing developments have been constructed on larger parcels along the Merrimack River and at the edges of the city.



Triple decker



Residential street with multiple housing types



Duplex



Multifamily building

Housing Age

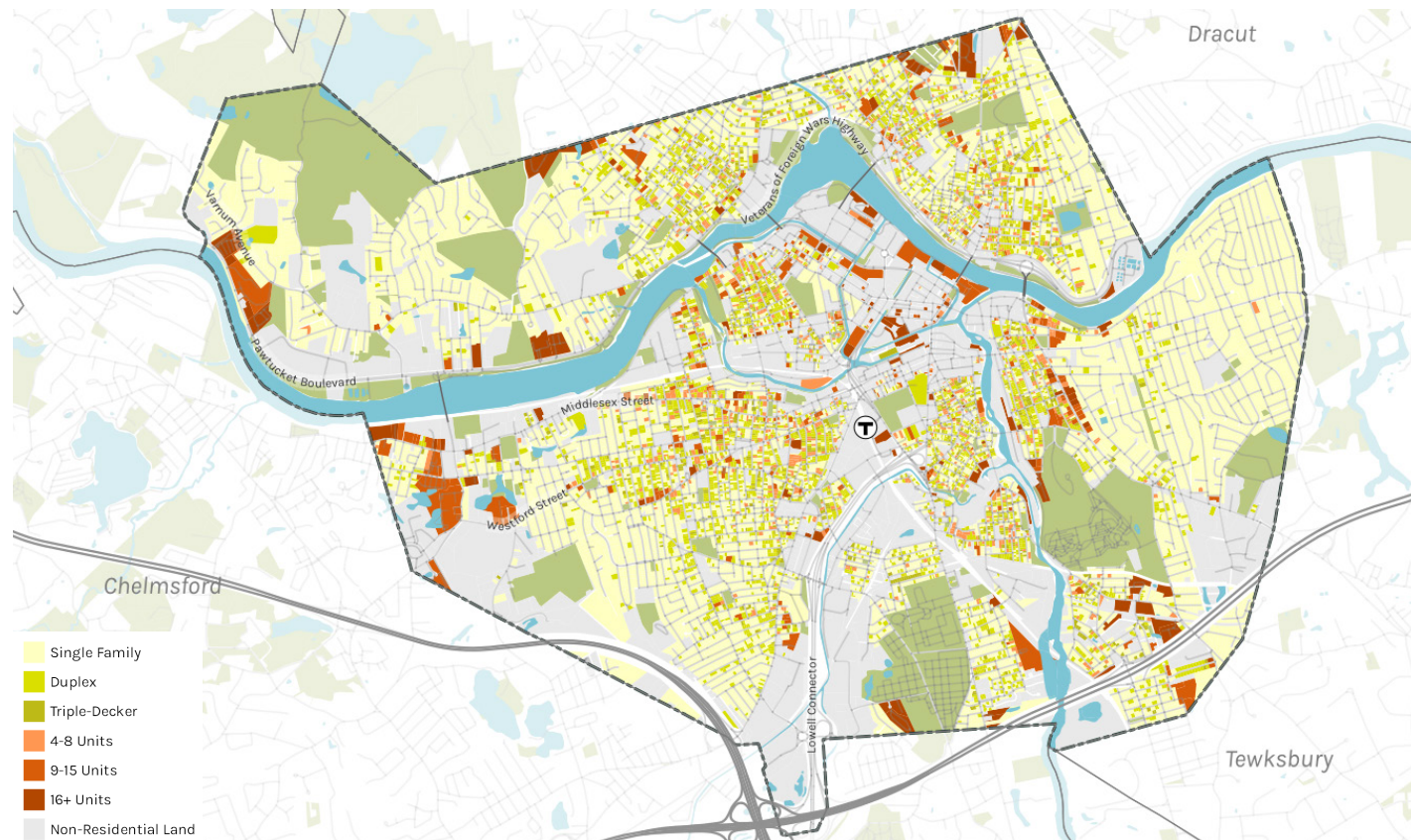
Much of Lowell's housing stock is historic.

77% of Lowell's housing was built before 1960. Some of the oldest housing stock is located where communities of color reside, and where some of the lowest household incomes are present.

Older buildings can be more affordable to buy or rent than new construction, but older buildings also tend to be less energy efficient than newer structures. Older buildings are also less likely to meet modern standards for safety and accessibility than newer homes. These challenges make older buildings more costly to maintain and renovate.

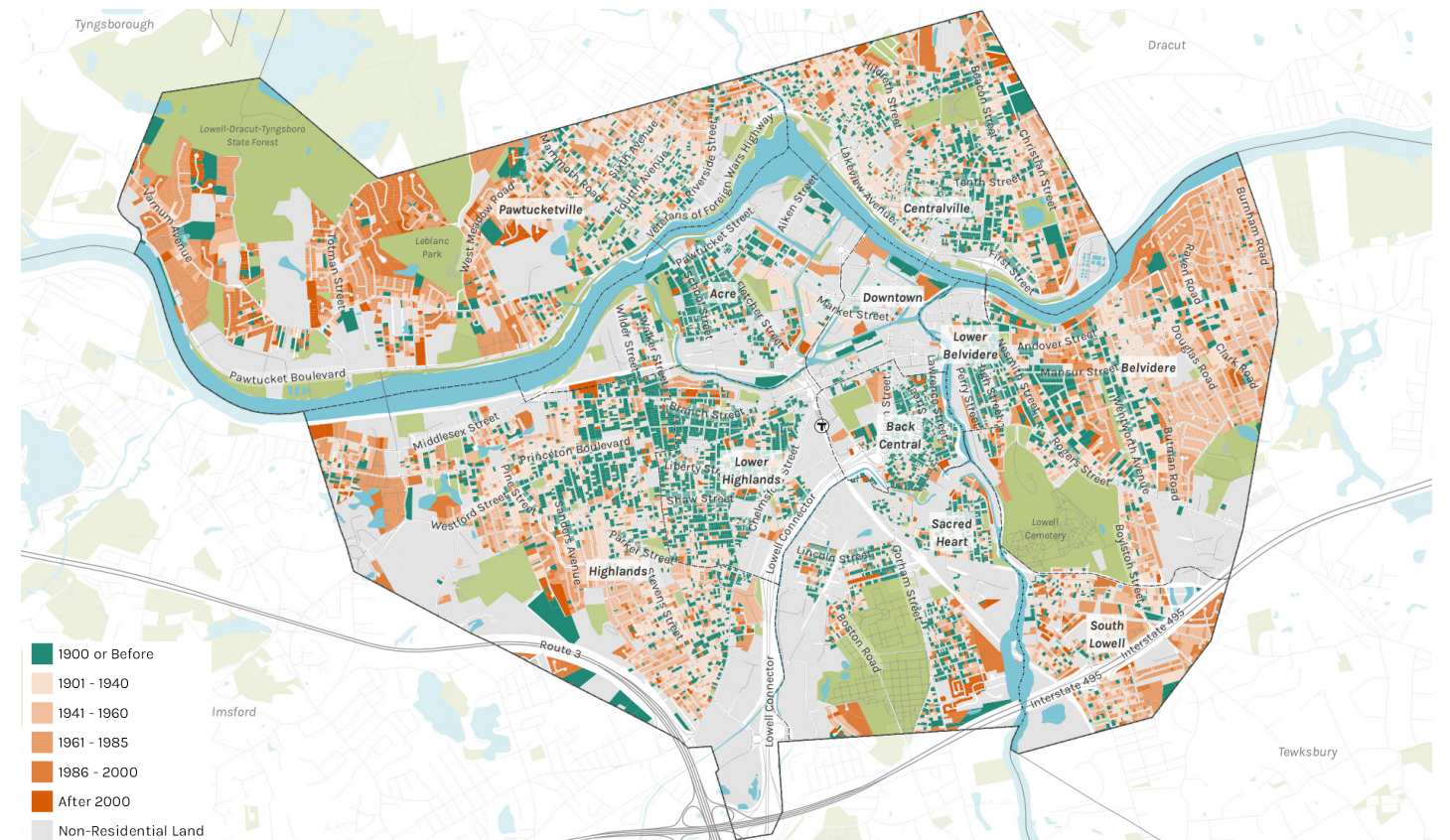


Housing Types



Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Housing Age



Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council

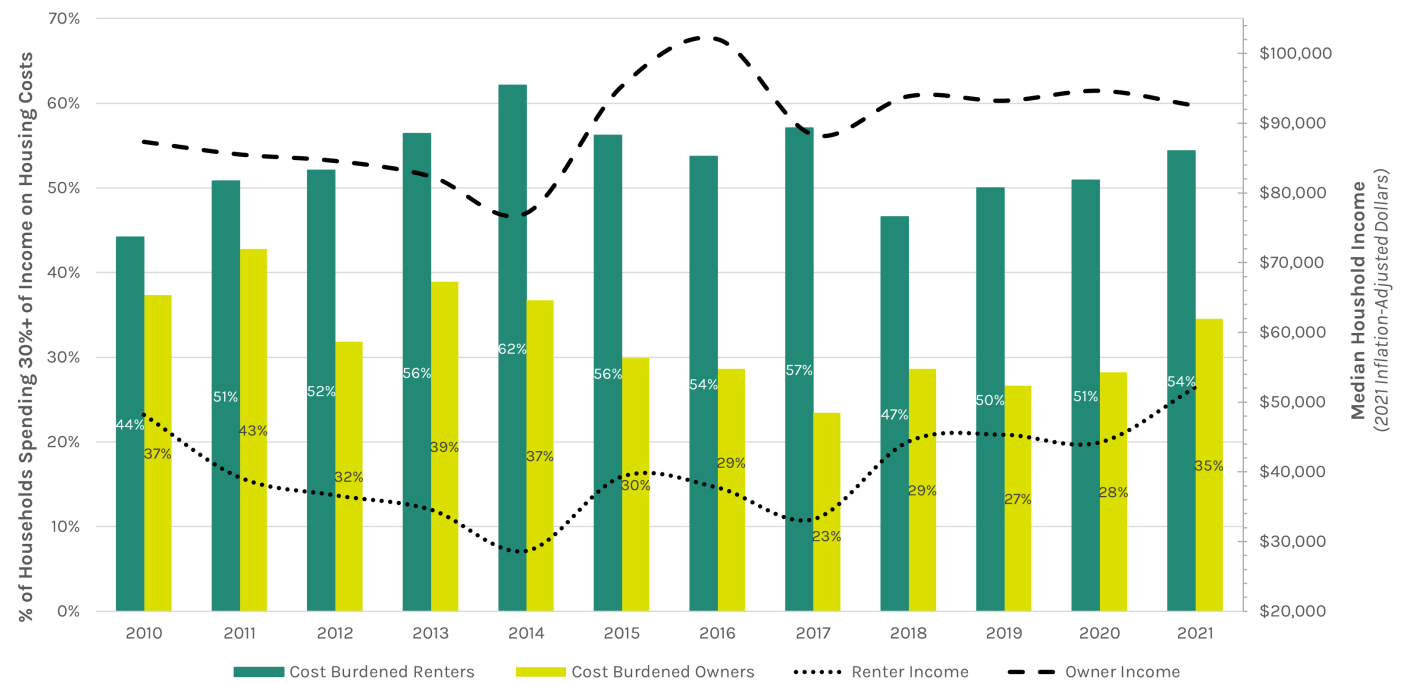
Housing Affordability & Tenure

Renters are increasingly cost-burdened as incomes stagnate.

In 2021, 54% of renter households and 35% of owner households spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs as “cost burdened.” When households have to spend too much of their income on rent or other housing costs, income available for other expenses—surprise medical costs, entertainment, recreation, etc.—decreases. Since 2010, at least 40% of Lowell renters have been cost burdened every year, and the proportion of cost-burdened renters increased by 10% from 2010 to 2021.

Owners are cost-burdened at lower levels than renters, with 35% of owner-occupied households qualifying as cost burdened in 2021. Homeowners have higher incomes overall than renters.

Household Incomes & Rent Burdens



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates

Local shop in residential area ▶



Economic Development

Business and Real Estate Context

Businesses in downtown continue to experience the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Lowell continues to recover from the economic, health, and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, residents and business owners have called attention to the state of downtown businesses. The Rapid Recovery Plan identified vacant storefronts and surveyed downtown business owners, who reported revenue decline, reduced operating hours, additional expenses, and temporary or permanent closures as major impacts of the pandemic. 79% of downtown businesses surveyed had fewer on-site customers in 2021 than in 2020. 60% of downtown businesses were operating at reduced hours or capacity in April 2021.

Despite these trends, office and retail rents in Lowell have grown more in the past six years than countywide rents. However, vacancy rates that are slightly more volatile than countywide rates are better indicators of the difficulty that Lowell commercial uses have experienced. Lowell office vacancy jumped from 5% to 9% from 2020 to 2021.

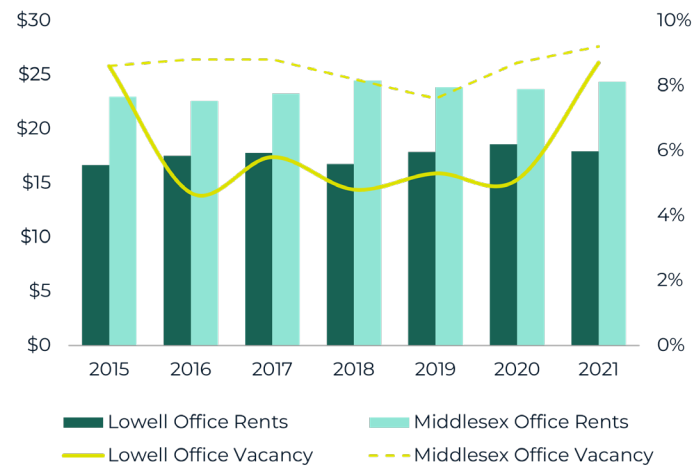
These results emphasize a need to further understand the obstacles faced by downtown businesses in the coming years. These results also indicate a need to understand Lowell's larger entrepreneurial ecosystem and the steps the City and its partners can take to support local, small-scale businesses.

79%
Downtown businesses have fewer on-site customers after COVID-19

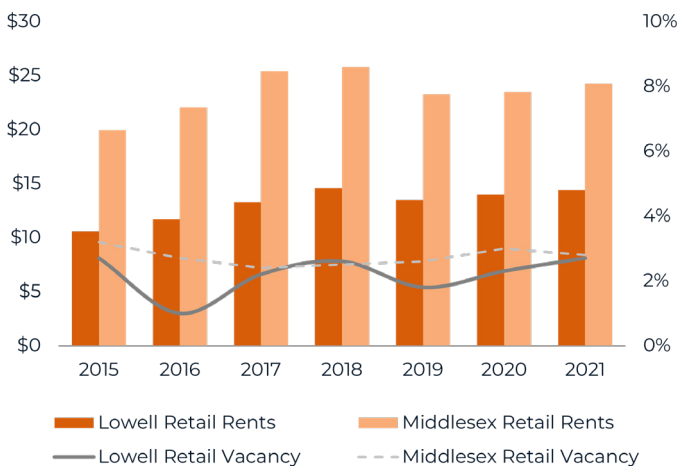
5.7 Million
Total Office Square Footage in Lowell

3.9 Million
Total Retail Square Footage in Lowell

Office Rents and Vacancy (2015-2021)



Retail Rents and Vacancy (2015-2021)



Source: Co Star

Employment Analysis & Growth Sectors

Jobs have grown slightly less in Lowell than statewide in the past decade.

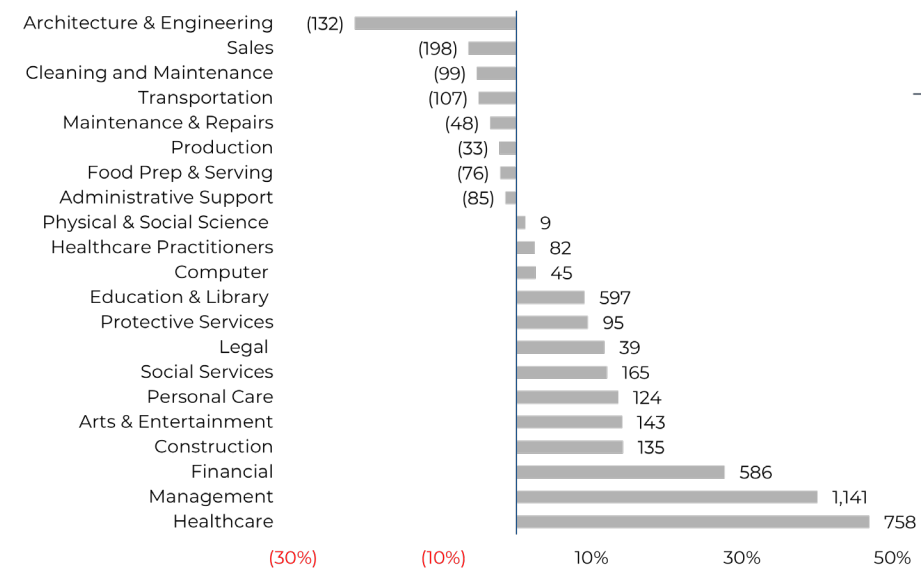
Jobs in Lowell grew by 7% between 2010 and 2020, lagging slightly behind the Commonwealth, which experienced 9% job growth in the same period. However, Lowell is well-positioned to benefit from regional and statewide trends in employment and job training. As is the case in the Boston region and Massachusetts overall, healthcare is one of the fastest growing sectors in Lowell. Lowell healthcare employment grew by almost 50% between 2010 and 2020, adding 758 jobs. Other growing industries include management, finance, construction, and arts/entertainment. The average earnings within each of these industries, which ranged from approximately \$40,000 to \$77,000 in 2020, exceeded Lowell's median household income of \$30,241, indicating that the city is attracting and retaining high-paying occupations.

7%
Lowell job growth between 2010-2020 as compared to statewide job growth (9%).

Lowell's institutions are critical to the city's growing role in the regional economy. The largest institution of higher education in the city, UMass Lowell successfully provides training that aligns with key in-demand jobs, such as those in healthcare-related occupations. Among the programs with the most number of degrees or certificates conferred at UMass Lowell are healthcare-related occupations, management, architecture and engineering, computer sciences, and protective services. However, UMass Lowell does not offer programs for other in-demand occupations, such as those in legal professions, social services, and construction. Lowell has an opportunity to capitalize on its strong position as a regional education hub by continuing to provide job training and degree programs that align with high-demand industries. Middlesex Community College and the Greater Lowell Technical High School may offer other programs that do support some of those industries.

\$30,241
Median Annual Income in Lowell (2020)

Job Growth by Occupation (2010-2020)



| Fastest Growing Occupations in Lowell in 2020 | 2020 Jobs | Avg. Annual Earnings (2020) |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Healthcare | 2,373 | \$40,558 |
| 2) Management | 3,990 | \$142,447 |
| 3) Financial | 2,704 | \$96,749 |
| 4) Construction | 1,090 | \$73,408 |
| 5) Arts & Entertainment | 1,158 | \$77,624 |

Source: Lightcast

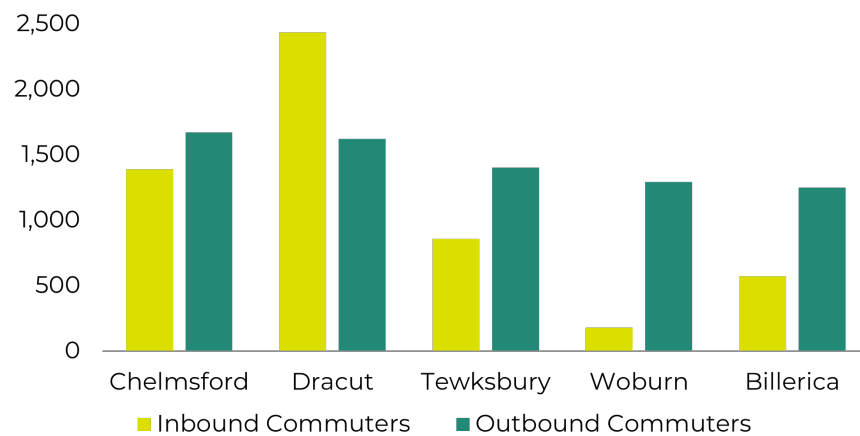
Commuting patterns

Approximately 20% of Lowell residents live and work in Lowell. 8% of Lowell residents work elsewhere in the Merrimack Valley, such as Lawrence, Wilmington, Methuen, and Haverhill. 8.3% of residents travel to Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, or Waltham for work. In 2020, 33,000 people commuted into Lowell regularly for work. 35,000 Lowell residents traveled outside the city for work that year. Lowell's commuting patterns suggest that the city is both an attractive place to live and work. The city's educational institutions, creative economy, and unique amenities attract employers and workers to Lowell. As the city continues to grow, maintaining a balance of opportunities for employment, affordable housing, and accessible transportation will be critical.

It is also important to note that work from home policies have most likely impacted commuting patterns referenced in this section. It may be difficult to predict how far into the future these work from home trends will continue.

Just 5% of outbound commuters go into Boston for work

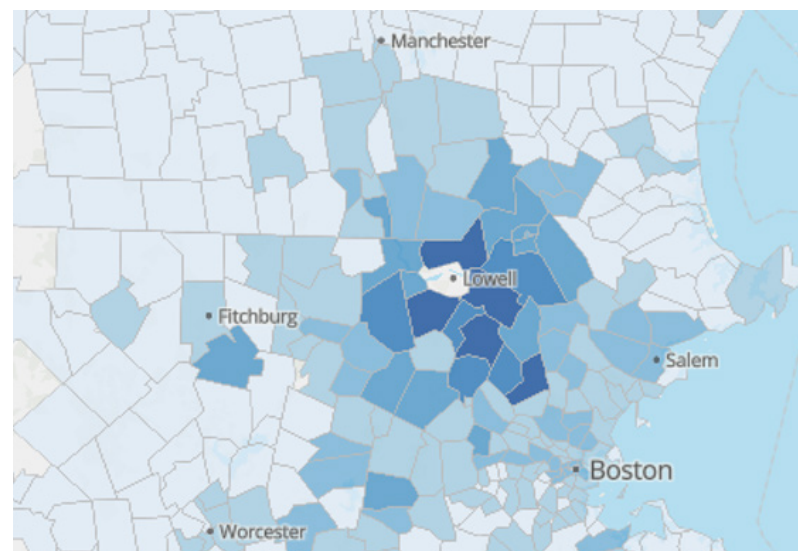
Top Destinations & Origins for Lowell Commuters, 2021



33,057
Total Inbound Commuters (2020)

35,483
Total Outbound Commuters (2020)

Destinations of Outbound Commuters



Number of Outbound Commuters

- 0 - 56
- 57 - 201
- 202 - 523
- 524+

Source: Lightcast

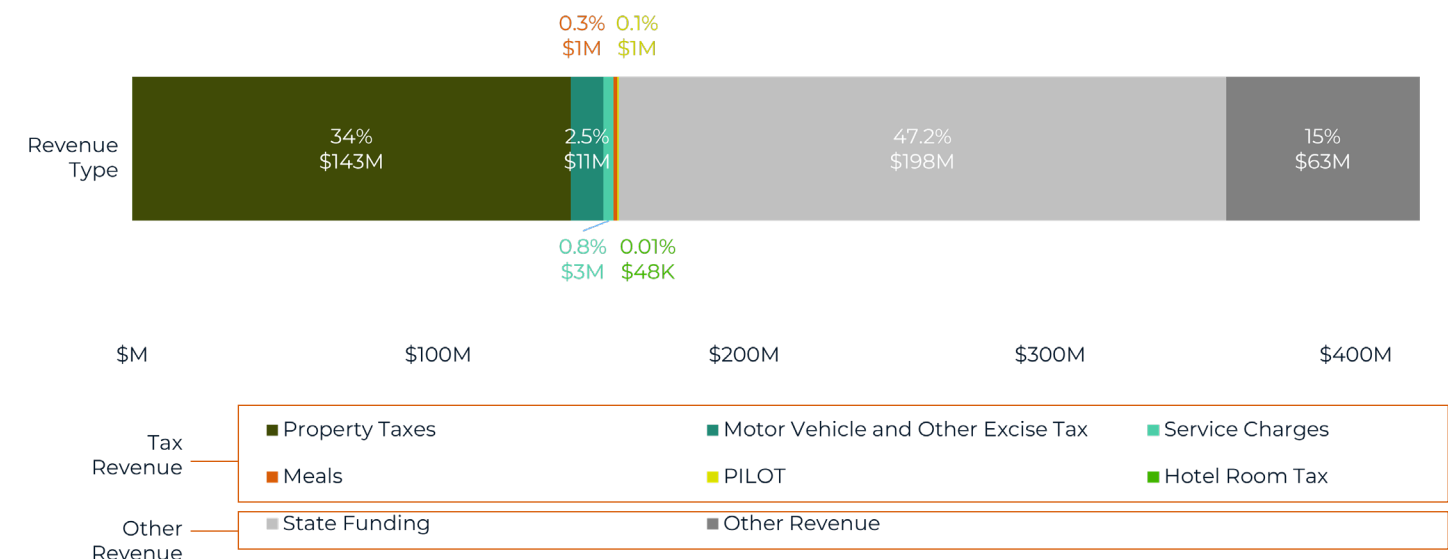
Fiscal sustainability

Lowell has an opportunity to capitalize on strong growth to generate additional revenues for public services.

Sound fiscal management is crucial to enable the City of Lowell to continue serving its residents and expanding the scope and quality of public services. Nearly half of the City's revenue comes from state funding. Just 38% of the City's revenue is generated from taxes and other fees. Nearly all tax revenue comes from property taxes on residences and businesses.

Lowell's strong development momentum provides an opportunity to capitalize on new streams of tax and fee revenue. Targeted public investment in development, infrastructure, and local amenities can support property values, and in turn, generate greater resources for public services and major capital projects.

City of Lowell Revenues, Fiscal Year 2021



Source: City of Lowell

Mobility

Existing Transportation Network

As much of its workforce commutes in from other areas of the Merrimack Valley and the majority of Lowell's residents commute to surrounding towns and cities for work, Lowell's transportation network services a strong regional commute pattern. The regional mobility network also serves an essential role in equitable access for education and employment opportunities. The MBTA Commuter Rail serves Lowell's Gallagher Terminal, providing access to the Boston region and inter-modal connections to the Kennedy Bus Transfer Center. The Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) provide bus services to Lowell and its surrounding communities.

Buses ran by the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) typically only arrive at stops every 30 minutes to 1 hour and the latest route ends operation before 10pm. Lowell residents who take transit to work spend 50 or more minutes commuting on average, twice as much time as drivers.

Lowell has many recreational trails and greenways, but does not have a complete network of connective biking facilities designed for the comfort of people of all ages and abilities. And while many streets have compact grids and sidewalks, many streets could benefit from enhanced facilities and improved crossings. Low transit frequencies and longer transit travel times, as well as lagging investment in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure have resulted in most Lowellians today driving alone to work. A transportation system prioritizing driving convenience poses disproportionate burden for the one in six Lowell households who do not own vehicles. These Lowellians rely disproportionately on carpooling, walking, and public transit to get to work.

Sustainable Transportation

Lowell Forward will promote sustainable transportation options in order to increase environmental protection, economic efficiency, and social equity.

There is a strong link between transportation and greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing access to sustainable travel by providing Lowellians with a suite of mobility options, and encouraging and promoting ride sharing options will reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Safety

Lowell's streets, like those of other cities, have been built to prioritize the movement of vehicles over the safety of road users. Those who walk and roll—pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility aid users—are more vulnerable to serious injury and death than motorists in the event of a crash. A majority of crashes involving people walking and biking have occurred along arterials that carry higher volumes of vehicle traffic, such as Andover Street, Westford Street, and Route 38.

The City's recent multimodal Complete Streets plan, GoLowell, assessed street safety throughout Lowell and analyzed safety trends at many key intersections and streets throughout the city. The plan included concept diagrams for street safety improvements and prioritized implementation for new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. To learn more about the GoLowell plan see the next page.

1 in 6 Lowell households do not own a vehicle.

Reported Pedestrian and Bicycle Crashes (2002-2021)



Source: MassDOT

Existing & Recently Completed Initiatives

The City has worked to improve safety, accessibility, and mobility for all road users since the completion of the previous comprehensive plan. Those efforts include:

GoLowell

GoLowell is Lowell’s multimodal Complete Streets plan. The planning effort assessed transit use, walkability, and bicycle safety throughout the city. The final plan can be read in its entirety on the City of Lowell’s website. GoLowell identified 10 high-priority corridors which will be assessed in detail for the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists. GoLowell also proposed new bus routes and improved bus stop amenities:

- Crosstown Express route – connects Belvidere to Downtown & Gallagher Terminal to Highlands
- Downtown busway – Circulator from downtown to Gallagher Terminal
- New complete streets prioritization plan forthcoming

Finally, the GoLowell plan proposed a connected network of bicycle infrastructure, from on-street protected lanes to off-street greenways and trails. The plan recommended projects at key locations, such as crosswalk safety improvements and separated bike lanes on Bridge Street. Read the full GoLowell plan here: <https://www.lowellma.gov/1340/GoLowell>.

2021 Shared Streets Pilots

MassDOT awarded the City a \$165,755 Shared Streets Grant to enhance safety for walkers, rollers, bikers, and drivers. Using this grant, we installed two quick-build projects with temporary materials in 2020, and two in 2021. These projects align with the goals of GoLowell and will enable us pilot the changes, learn from you, and decide whether to make them permanent in the future. The two 2021 Shared Streets Pilots were:

- The Pawtucket Boulevard project narrowed the road to one travel lane in each direction with concrete barriers, expanding the shoulder to increase safety of pedestrians on the sidewalk from Sampas Pavilion to the Varnum Avenue intersection. The pilot was removed in October 2021. MassDOT is continuing to study the impact of road diets on vehicle speed and traffic volume.
- The project along Merrimack Street at Cardinal O’Connell Parkway implemented crosswalk safety improvements including curb extensions with flex posts and paint, and transit stop enhancements like moving a bus stop to a safer location. The flex posts in the pilot were removed in December 2021. Feedback and other data collected will hopefully contribute to making some or all of these changes permanent at a later date.

Traffic Calming Program

This program was developed to provide effective and consistent guidelines for the implementation of traffic calming measures throughout the City to decrease vehicle speeds and increase the safety and livability of the residents of Lowell. The Traffic Calming Program provides a clear process by which citizens of Lowell are able to request that their street or neighborhoods to be evaluated for traffic calming.

Citywide Parking Study

Recommendations from this 2021 study aimed to better manage parking demand, introduce more user-friendly practices into the parking system, ensure pricing for on-street parking, garage passcards, and residential permits reflect system costs, and incorporate a greater degree of fairness and equity into parking policies.

Existing Street & Transit Network



Source: MassDOT and MBTA

Open Space & Environment

Open Space and Recreation Network

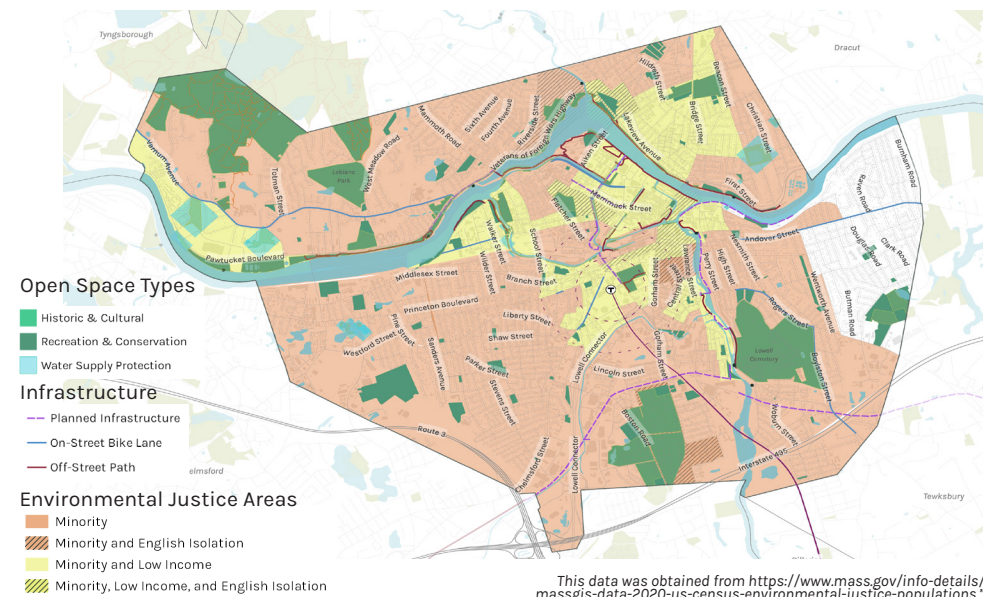
Lowell is an urban center in a natural setting and its open space and recreation network is a vibrant collection of parks, greenways, riverwalks, historic cemeteries, canal walks, and natural spaces. Lowell's unique natural and manmade assets such as the Merrimack River, the Concord River, and the canals anchor the city's open space to its culture and history. Access to open space and recreation opportunities is closely related to the mobility network.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

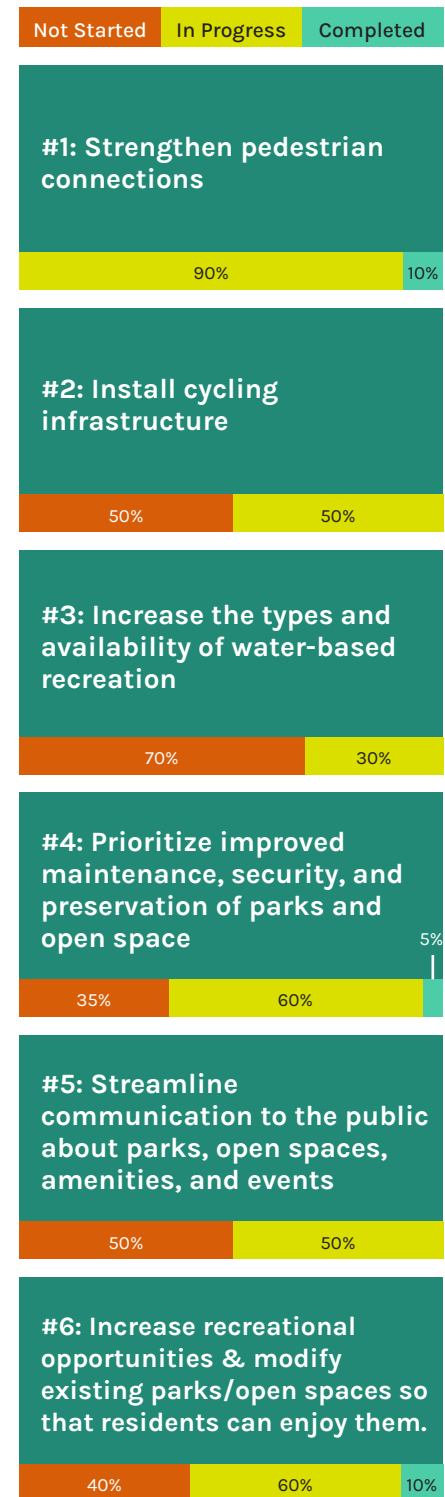
The City completed an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2018, which aims to achieve a more equitable distribution of quality open spaces and recreational facilities across Lowell's neighborhoods. Priorities include improving connectivity, general maintenance, streamlining communications, and increasing the diversity of recreational opportunities throughout Lowell's park system. As stated in the OSRP, funding of the departments responsible for maintaining and also, advancing the OSRP goals, is limited. It is also worth noting that given the fact that Lowell is mostly built out, adding new or dramatically changing existing open spaces opportunities can be a challenge.

While the OSRP does identify important goals and objectives, there are couple other topic areas that could be considered, such as an expanded discussion on the Urban Canopy, Green Infrastructure Opportunities, and possibly prioritizing cross-city connections for pedestrian and bicyclists.

Existing Open Space & Recreational Facilities



OSRP Goals Implementation Status



Northern Canal ▶



Heat islands and tree coverage

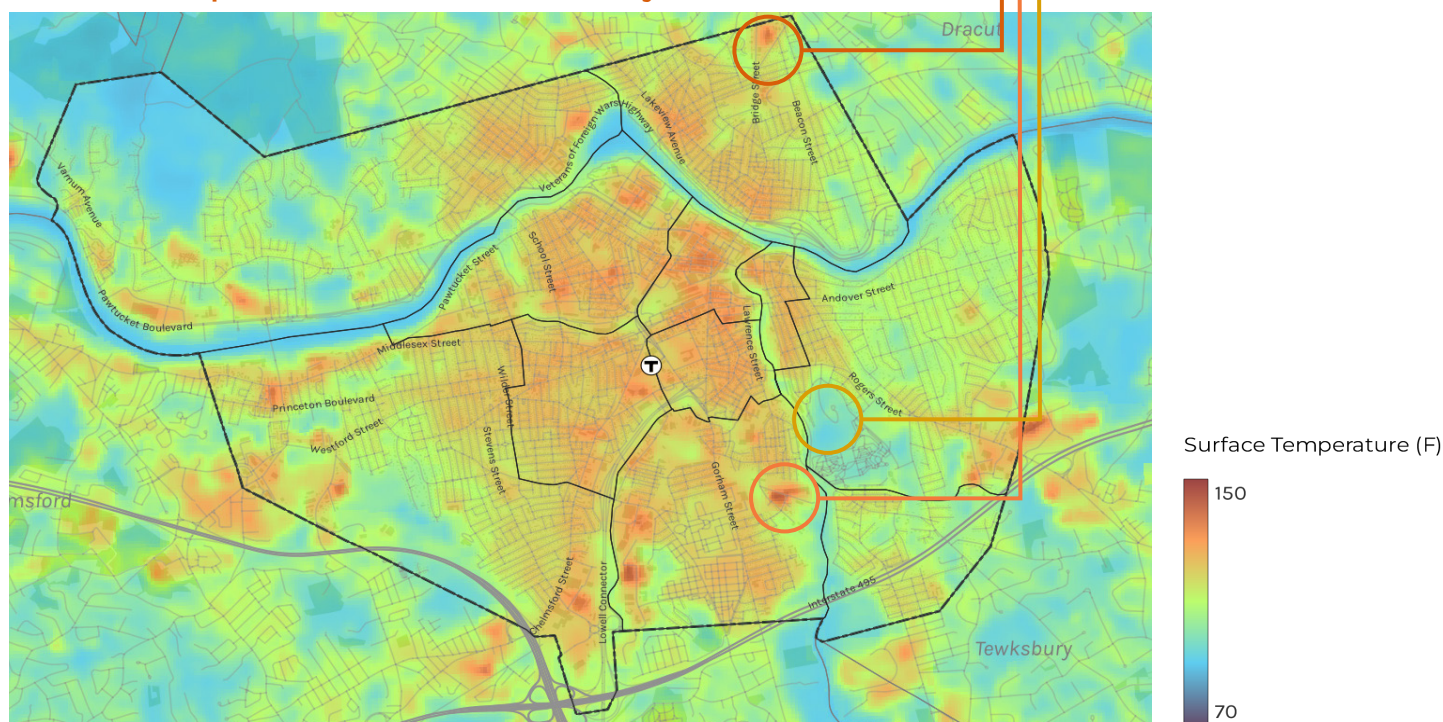
Heat islands pose an increasing public health risk.

In addition to increased flooding, climate change will cause temperatures to rise in Lowell over the next few decades. Both the frequency and intensity of extreme heat events will increase. High temperatures can trigger health complications such as heat stroke and exacerbate existing cardiovascular or respiratory conditions. Extreme heat events are especially dangerous for small children, the elderly, outdoor workers, and people with chronic health conditions.

The built environment plays an important role in mitigating or exacerbating the effects of extreme heat. Places with lots of exposed pavement, such as parking lots, tend to retain heat the most. Places near water or tree cover can be dramatically cooler than most areas of the city on a hot day. For instance, on July 22, 2022, the surface temperature of the Centralville Market Basket parking lot reached 133 degrees Fahrenheit. Meanwhile, Rogers Fort Hill Park—a green space with substantial tree cover—reached just 92 degrees, a 41 degree difference!

As we prepare for more extreme heat events, developing a system of cooling infrastructure to mitigate heat stress, such as street trees, green infrastructure, drinking fountains, green roofs, open space, splash pads, pools, and public air-conditioned facilities will be crucial. Tree planting and retention of existing trees is a critical tool to mitigating heat island affect, thus developing a street tree program could be something to prioritize.

Surface Temperature (°F) in Lowell on July 22, 2022



Source: U.S. Geological Survey Landsat Data

Ongoing Resilient Urban Forest Master Plan led by the City

The goal of this plan is to understand the condition of the existing urban forest, identify geographic regions with environmental justice populations or critical infrastructure like community centers and transit stops, and create a planting and maintenance plan that will promote tree equity and help mitigate negative climate impacts.

133°
Centralville Market Basket

124°
Industrial yard

92°
Fort Hill Park

Green Infrastructure:

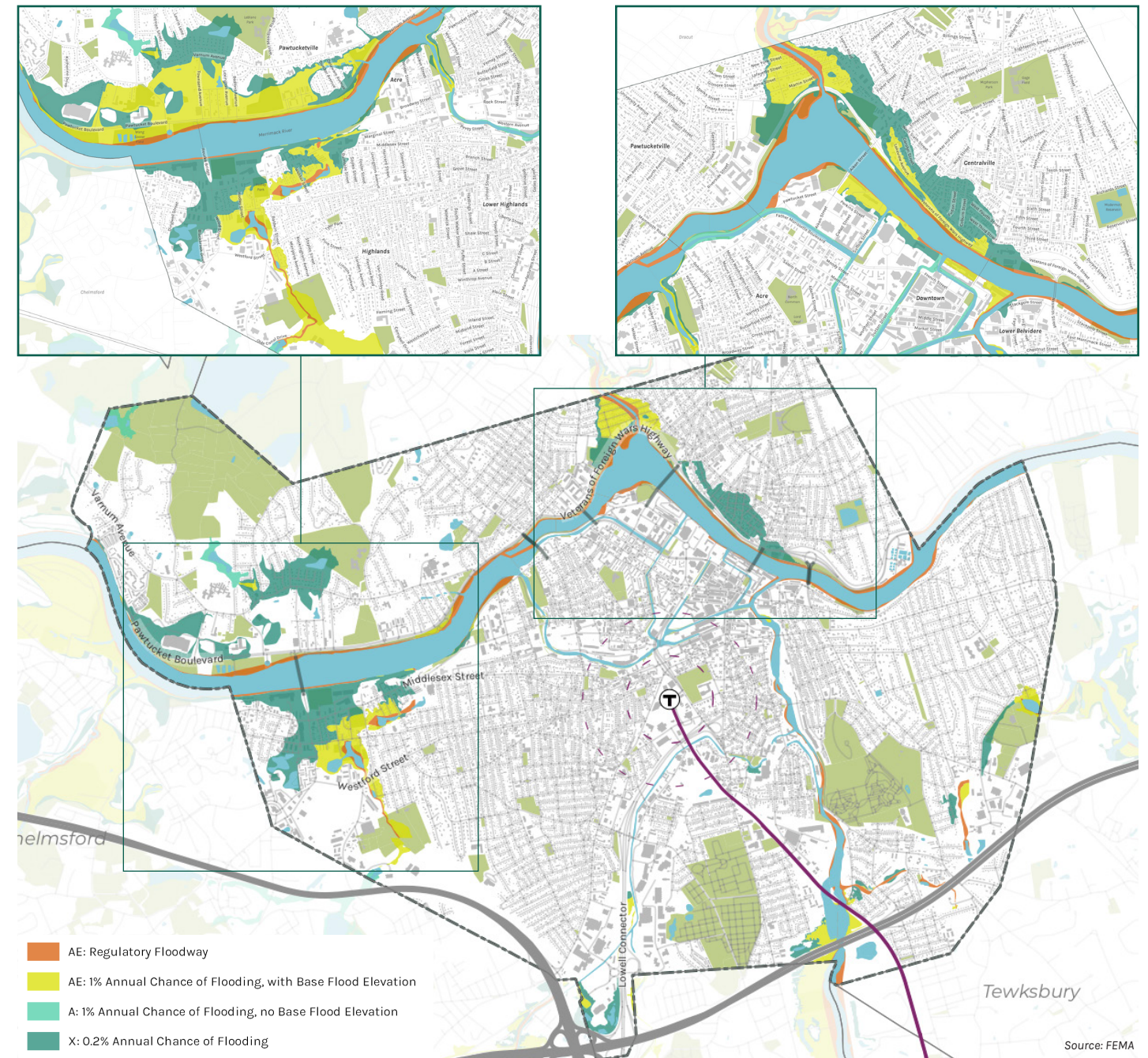
Green Infrastructure (GI) is a set of tools and practices that mimic natural methods of storing, infiltration and/or filtering stormwater. As more development occurs across Lowell, integration of these practices into new and redeveloped areas will help mitigate flooding, contribute to adaptation to increased rainfall, and where plants are present, will increase the filtration of urban stormwater before returning it back to groundwater reservoirs.

Flood risk

Several communities in Lowell face a risk of flooding.

Parts of the Highlands, Centralville, and Pawtucketville are at elevated risks for flooding. Much of Lowell's flood risk is due to low lying land adjacent to an active river. Damage potential from floods will continue to rise as extreme weather events become more common due to climate change. We have an opportunity to adapt to the impacts of existing flood zones and set regulations for new development, infrastructure, and green infrastructure that could mitigate future flooding.

Flood Zones in Lowell



Source: FEMA

Land Use & Urban Form

Comprehensive plans help us plan for and shape future development in the city. Establishing a shared understanding of spatial patterns and physical form in Lowell will be a central focus of the Lowell Forward process as we work together to craft a roadmap for how we want to invest in our community over the next 20 years.

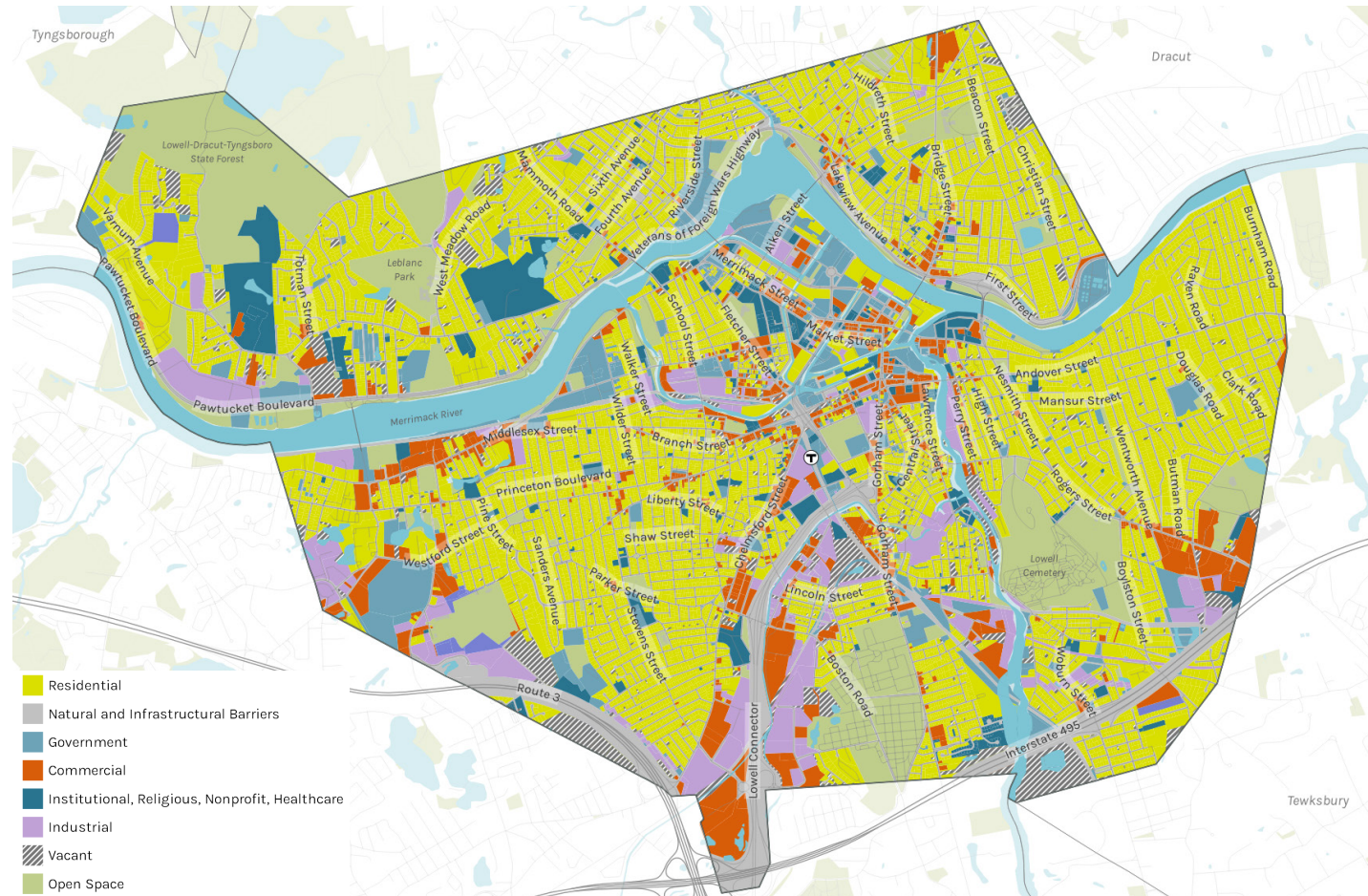
Land Use

Land use distribution in Lowell is reflective of typical New England city patterns.

Residential use is the single largest type of land use in Lowell, making up 39% of the city's land area. 6% of Lowell's land is dedicated for commercial uses, which range from compact urban main streets nestled within neighborhoods to big box shopping malls on the city's edges. Downtown and its surrounding areas contain a strong mix of uses including dense residential fabric, commercial uses, compact industrial districts, and institutional developments. Despite the preservation of Lowell's historic urban center, infrastructural and ecological barriers such as the Merrimack River, the Lowell Connector, the VFW Highway/Pawtucket Blvd., and the city's industrial zones create breaks in Lowell's urban fabric. These gaps affect access and connections to amenities, jobs, and between neighborhoods.

Understanding how different land uses contribute to or negatively affect their surrounding contexts will be key to developing a path for future development in Lowell.

Existing Land Use



Source: City of Lowell

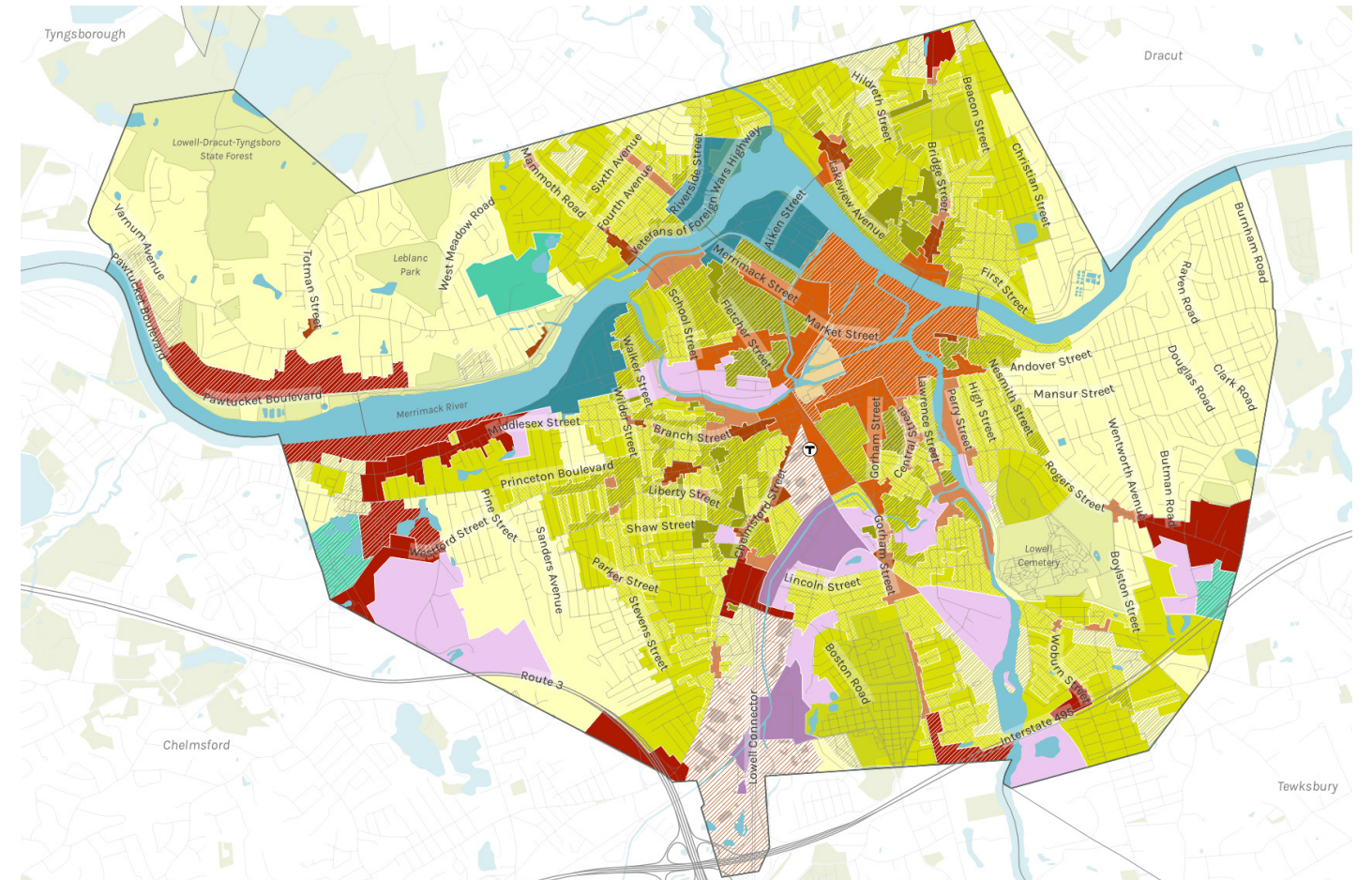
Zoning

Lowell's zoning code, last amended in 2022, regulates land use (residential, commercial, industrial, mixed use, etc.) and the physical form of new development in different parts of the city. Much of the older building stock was constructed before the first zoning ordinance was enacted, meaning that these older structures do not conform to the newer zoning regulations (these are referred to as nonconformities). This is the case in most cities in the U.S., as building construction/demolition and tenant/owner turnover happen slowly over many decades.

A key goal of a comprehensive plan is to assess the current zoning code and set the stage for a future zoning update. This planning process will use community input, City staff feedback, and previous planning effort data to develop an understanding of how Lowell's zoning code serves the city today and where the code may be updated to align with long-term community development priorities.

- DMU -Downtown Mixed-Use District
- HRC -High-Rise Commercial District
- HCD -Hamilton Canal District
- UMU -Urban Mixed-Use District
- UMF -Urban Neighborhood Multi Family
- USF -Urban Neighborhood Single Family
- TMU -Traditional Mixed-Use District
- TMF -Traditional Neighborhood Multi Family
- TTF -Traditional Neighborhood Two Family
- TSF -Traditional Neighborhood Single Family
- SMU -Suburban Mixed-Use District
- SMF -Suburban Neighborhood Multi Family
- SSF -Suburban Neighborhood Single Family
- RR -Regional Retail District
- NB -Neighborhood Business District
- INST -Institutional Mixed-Use District
- OP -Office/Research Park
- PDMI -Planned Development Medical/Institutional
- GI -General Industry
- LI -Light Industry, Manufacturing & Storage

Existing Zoning Districts



Source: City of Lowell

Ongoing and Planned Sub-Area Initiatives

Recent and ongoing planning efforts are mostly located in central areas.

Recent planning initiatives are mostly concentrated in the central neighborhoods of Lowell. Many different planning efforts are underway, but not all of them have been coordinated. Lowell Forward will stitch together past planning efforts, integrate with existing projects, and coordinate a framework for coordination and implementation of these diverse planning efforts.

2018–2022

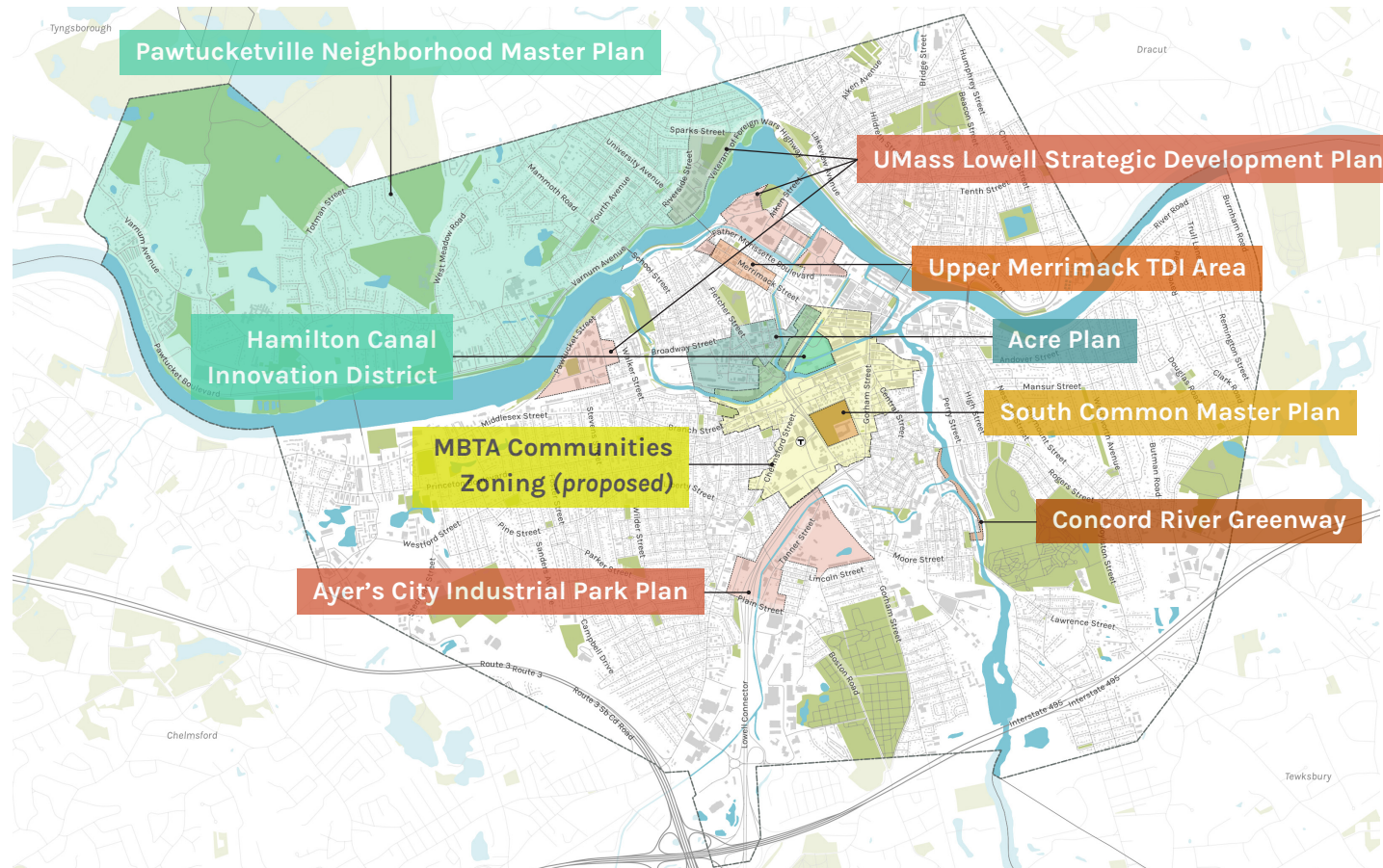
- Upper Merrimack TDI Area
- MBTA Communities Zoning (proposed)
- Lowell Parking Study
- LRTA Transit Plan Update
- Gallagher Terminal TOD Study
- Open Space & Recreation Plan
- Acre Plan

2010–2017

- Hamilton Canal Innovation District
- Sustainable Lowell 2025 - Previous Comprehensive Plan
- Ayer's City Industrial Park Plan

2000–2009

- South Common Master Plan
- Jackson-Appleton-Middlesex Plan
- Concord River Greenway



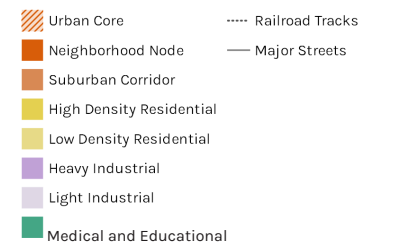
Source: Utile

Place Types

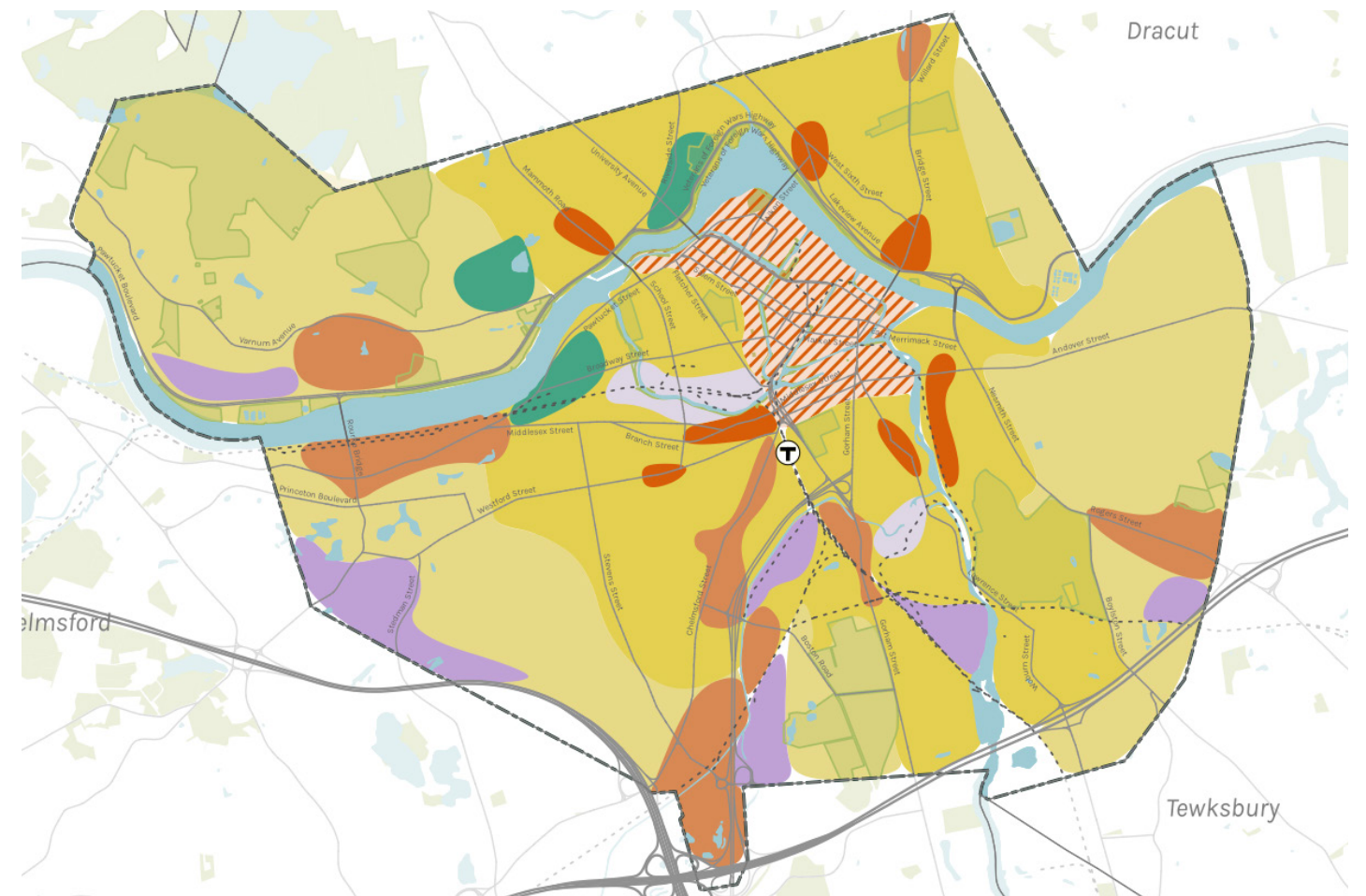
Lowell is composed of a diverse set of places with different built forms and land uses.

Each place plays a different role in the daily lives of residents, workers, and visitors. Together, these places define the physical and social infrastructure of the city. Throughout this process, the planning team will work with the community to identify the most important places that define Lowell's structure and create a shared mental map that will help us visualize how the city works. Identifying and categorizing various types of places will help us begin to prioritize what kind of improvement or change we want to see in different areas of Lowell.

Below is a first pass at envisioning a mental map of Lowell. Place types/categories are not definitive and are subject to change.



Place Types



Source: Utile

Place Types

Neighborhood Nodes



Downtown



Cambodia Town



Back Central

Residential areas



High density residential - Appleton Mills



Medium to High density residential - Back Central



Low density residential- Belvidere

Corridors and Streets



Merrimack St (walkable corridor)



Bridge St (neighborhood corridor)



Chelmsford St (suburban corridor)

Open space and natural resources



South Common (Back Central)



Merrimack River walk (Downtown)



North Common (Acre)

Urban Form + Land Use Observations

Our preliminary mental map of Lowell suggests a strong need to consider the relationship between Lowell's unique neighborhoods to downtown, the river, and each other, across the different topic areas analyzed in this report.

What do you think?

Throughout this process, we want to learn from you and your experience of Lowell today. Here are some questions to think about as we create this plan with you:

- What role does downtown play for neighborhoods today? How can we diversify the ways people access downtown and central neighborhoods physically?
- How can we better connect our communities with economic opportunities?
- As a result of historic development patterns and new infrastructure development, there are many physical and spatial gaps (like vacant lots, industrial areas, non-walkable areas, highways, canals, and other infrastructure) present in Lowell's fabric today that heighten disparities and connections between areas in Lowell.
- Is this a lived reality for Lowellians and a meaningful path for the plan to pursue?
- Are there other opportunity areas in the city that we should consider? For example, there are many underutilized areas along the river, which could help highlight this natural asset beyond what is downtown.

Bridge Street across
Merrimack River



Part III

Plan Roadmap: Next Steps

The next stage of the Lowell Forward process will engage the community in a robust conversation about the vision and values we hold today, and the kinds of goals and policy shifts we will have to consider to meet the needs of our growing community.

Next Steps

This early phase of the Lowell Forward process has brought to focus some of the most salient opportunities and challenges facing the city today that will help guide us in shaping future goals and strategies. There is, of course, more that embodies Lowell's community than data points and past policy priorities. The next stage of the Lowell Forward process will engage the community in a robust conversation about the vision and values we hold today, and the kinds of goals and policy shifts we will have to consider to meet the needs of our growing community.

Co-creating a Vision

The first part of this process will involve co-creating a vision for Lowell and its neighborhoods together. What is important to our community? What are the strengths and assets we want to preserve? Where would we like to see change and transformation? How do we envision Lowell 20 years from now? Establishing a shared vision will help us outline the ideal quality of life we envision for the Lowell community and will guide, interlink and reinforce all components of the Lowell Plan.

Co-creating a Spatial Framework

While we plan for Lowell's future 20 years from now, it is especially important that the benefits of that vision and growth are experienced equitably across the community. The next phase of the plan will engage the community in thinking about where and how growth and change occurs in the city. This includes ideas about where to concentrate resources, where to prioritize redevelopment, and places for conservation and adaptation. Strategic land-use planning and urban design considerations will play a big role in this phase, and we're excited to co-create a sustainable and equitable spatial framework guiding future-decision making in Lowell with you!

Final outcome

Lowell Forward is an initiative to update our current master plan, Sustainable Lowell 2025. This citywide planning process will help us create a shared vision, values and goals for Lowell and outline an implementation framework for how we can achieve them over the next 15 to 20 years.

