

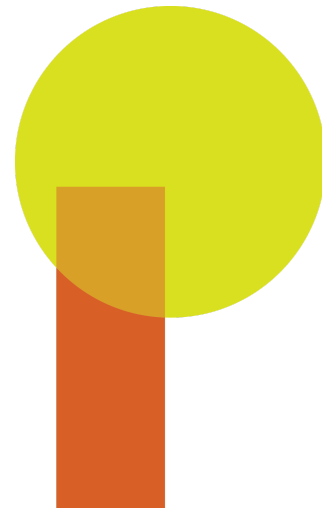
Attendees

Steering Committee Members

- Chris Hayes
- Rita M. Mercier
- Camilo Espitia
- Mona Tyree
- Narin Sinuon
- Perry Downs
- John Hamblet (Chip Hamblet)
- Jerry Frechette
- Joseph Boyle
- Adam Baaeke
- George Deluca
- Melissa Desroches
- Allison Lamey
- Matt Lucas
- Felice Kincannon
- Ethan Yang
- Wayne Jenness
- Michelle Rivera
- Bopha Boutselis
- David Turcotte
- Sanary Phn
- Louisa Varnum
- Steven Oliver
- Beth Tripathi
- Neyder Fernandez
- Tania O. (Valerie)
- Yun-Ju Choi
- Austin Hill
- Lauran LA (lala books)
- Luciano Paskevicius
- Mary Wambui (Ciiru Ekop)
- Carl Howell (he/his/him)

Agenda

01. Plan Process Update
02. Key Takeaways from Listening Tour 1
03. Draft Vision & Goals
04. Breakout Rooms
05. Debrief & Next Steps



- Cormac Hondros- McCarthy
- Amada Gregory
- Claire V. Ricker
- Matt Lucas
- ~~Wayne Jenness~~
- Ryan Gilday
- Allison Chambers
- ~~JC Rivera~~
- ~~Maxine Farkas~~
- ~~Suzanne Frechette~~
- ~~Enrique Vargas~~
- ~~Vivian~~

City Staff

- Francesca Gigliano
- Camilo Espitia
- Jess Wilson
- Dylan Ricker
- Sophie Mortimer

Consultant Team

- Matthew Littell
- Will Cohen
- Andrea Baena
- Taskina Tareen
- Rahi Patel
- Avery Robertson
- Kevin Chong
- Rafaela Reppucci
- Mercy Anampiu (Community Organizer)

Notes

● Engagement So Far

- Top themes from engagement so far: transportation efficiency and safety, affordable and diverse housing options, public infrastructure and maintenance, and downtown improvements.
- There is a survey out right now that is asking community members for feedback on the proposed Lowell Forward vision statement. The survey will stay live for a few more weeks.
- The City is leading many focus groups with different stakeholders across Lowell. These include other planning organizations, neighborhood meetings, institutional partners, nonprofit organizations, and many others.
- Mercy, the Lowell Forward Community Organizer, is working to have conversations with different neighborhood groups and individuals across the city.
- The City held a Citywide Housing Workshop, which echoed the themes that have surfaced so far in the Lowell Forward engagement process.

● Building on Sustainable Lowell

- Lowell Forward will build on the previous comprehensive plan, Sustainable Lowell, with a greater focus on a vision and framework for new development, as well as a clear path to implementation.

● Lowell Forward Framework

- Lowell Forward will set forth metrics of success for different goal areas connected to different actions and implementation strategies the City and its partners can take to support the vision and growth framework of the Lowell Forward plan.
- Growth helps support different aspects of the city - from financing infrastructure projects to supporting affordable housing development to creating new jobs to retain and attract workers.

● Growth Strategies

- **Strategy 1.1: Densify, Activate, and Connect Downtown**
 - i. Downtown has low residential density and high commercial vacancy.
 - ii. Actions include sidewalk repair and upgrades, ground floor activation through new development or renovation of existing structures, and by providing new services, wayfinding, and transportation infrastructure.
- **Strategy 1.2: Activate Riverfront and Canals**
 - i. Many riverfront and canal areas are underutilized, and should be easier to access and use.

- ii. Actions include identifying gaps in pedestrian and bicycle connections and considering activation projects to bring people closer to Lowell's unique canals.
 - **Strategy 1.3: Fill gaps in the Central Core- TOD Area**
 - i. The Gallagher Station Area is difficult to access by walking from surrounding neighborhoods. As the City submits its MBTA Communities Section 3A Zoning Overlay to the state for compliance, there is an opportunity to plan for new transit-oriented development within walking distance of the train station.
 - Strategy 2.1: Enhance Neighborhood Centers, Leverage Educational Anchors
 - i. Lowell's anchor institutions and minority-owned businesses provide a strong basis to power job creation and overall economic growth.
 - ii. Mixed-use development that brings foot traffic and public realm improvements can make neighborhood centers destinations in and of themselves - destinations that people would prefer to walk to because the street-level experience is so welcoming.
 - Strategy 2.2: Leverage Educational Anchors
 - i. Lowell's anchor institutions have a powerful impact on the city's economic growth. They can play a pivotal role in supporting small business growth.
 - Strategy 3.1: Redevelop Underutilized Industrial Areas
 - i. There are possible opportunities to redevelop underutilized industrial areas to support new jobs in various industrial sectors, life sciences facilities, and light manufacturing businesses.
- **General Discussion**
 - Dennis McCarthy: What kind of growth are we looking to accomplish? All uses? Or dealing with housing specifically? We're looking at 900 people entering Lowell per year now - so how are we accommodating that population growth and if so do we have the right goals and policies in place? I want to understand we're on the same page. I want to understand a little more.
 - i. Utile Team: It's good to question this idea of growth. We see growth as a path for the city to achieve the things it wants to. So yes, we're looking at growth for new types of housing - in terms of income levels and physical housing types. That has to be accompanied, though, by growth of jobs. Larger employers, small businesses, restaurants, retail- these things all need room to grow. It's also about growing the public realm - improving public spaces and infrastructure. One top-of-mind thing for residents is basic services. Those things get paid for through growth. It's about tax revenue, population, economic activity that happens in

the city. That's the overarching reason. Housing is definitely a big part of that - but not the only piece.

- ii. City Team: It's the responsibility of the city to plan to accommodate new residents and also ensure that existing residents have affordable place to live. Part of preserving community means new types of housing affordable to more income levels.
- iii. Dennis: I think I'm hearing that we're looking to grow to solve quality of life issues in the city. I don't know if growth is going to solve that. I don't know about looking at growth as a solution to increasing the quality of life in the city. I was hoping for more linking the dots - growth does X Y Z and this is why we need growth.
- o Adam Baccke: I appreciate a lot of what we're seeing here. There are a lot of good ideas. I like the work that was presented and shared to make sure that TOD really works. Building on what Dennis is looking for. I'm looking for a little more clarity to the vision. The vision is very broad and hard to disagree with. There's nothing that helps us understand, other than wanting more housing. That leads to clearer strategies- if we have a more precise vision for Lowell as opposed to a very broad vision. It's hard to answer the questions you posed for us without that precision. I'd like to see more of that as we move forward.
 - i. Planning Team: I totally agree. I think, together, we should craft a more specific vision for Lowell. Another thing to consider is that this vision looks very different for people across Lowell. So the idea of making it focus on who we're attracting - what we're hearing from the community isn't really touching those topics. So the vision is trying to reflect those first priorities. It's definitely very high level right now and it should be more specific.
 - ii. Adam: We all deeply care about the basic services that support the city. All of that is dependent on the fiscal stability of the city and I agree with the conclusion - that growth is an essential component of that fiscal stability. However, not all growth creates that fiscal stability. Unmanaged and unclear growth can have the opposite effect. The effect where you devalue areas of the city with poor or undesirable development. We need to get the kind of growth that delivers the resources necessary to sustain those public services.

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● Breakout Rooms

- o Downtown/River Canal: Rahi, Kevin, Fran
 - i. Hearing a lot about needing connections between downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods - connections over bridges and canals.

Steering Committee Meeting #4 Notes

3/29/2023 | 6:30 - 8:00pm

Agreement that there is dense housing near downtown - people could walk (or possibly bike) there, it's just not pleasant or easy to do so.

- TOD Area: Matthew, Avery, Camilo

See attached PDF

- Industrial Areas: Taskina, Jess, Dylan

See attached PDF

- Neighborhood Centers: Andrea, Sophie

See attached PDF

Facilitators: Andrea Baena, Rafaela Reppucci and Sophie Mortimer

Participants:

- Adam Baacke
- Dennis McCarthy
- Jerry Frechette
- Carl Howell
- John Hamblet

- Adam Baacke: Opportunity of locations where growth can be positive, accommodated, well-received: UMass Lowell is redeveloping about 10 acres of the East Campus to include mixed use. Growth can and should happen here.
 - Student housing
 - Multi-family housing
 - Innovation and economic development
- Adam Baacke: One argument to consider is that in many cases people have pointed to these neighborhood business districts as assets but people want to see more business diversity and more stable business to fill storefronts and keep them full. Best way to create local market is to develop housing in very close proximity. Need about 1000 housing units to sustain one block of neighborhood. A very large number of housing units need to exist within a short distance of that business district. As much as walkability and multi modal transportation is a priority, Lowell does not have a robust public transportation system to make a neighborhood center 100% walkable. Must also consider the unique neighborhood characteristics that people want to preserve.
- Dennis McCarthy: Important to preserve and support the unique culture and characteristics of each neighborhood. The ideas of growth must support the existing neighborhood characters so that they can persist. Need to develop mixed use but in a way that does not infringe on visible and significant neighborhood character.
 - Adds that cars are overstated in the city and pedestrians are understated (cyclists even less so). People have to wait several cycles at intersections to be

able to cross. It feels dangerous and discouraged to walk or bike as opposed to cars. If safe and secure multi modal pathways are provided, more people would be encouraged to use them rather than drive. The public bus system does not provide a sufficient service, and is not robust enough to be widely used. Must be free, convenient, and on time.

- Adam Baacke: Clarifies that he does not want to diminish the importance of pedestrian and bike friendly infrastructure. Just wanted to take into consideration that there will still be demand for vehicle traffic in the short term, especially if Lowell plans for significant residential growth.
- John Hamblet: In Pawtucketville, bike lanes were painted onto Varnum Ave. However there were no sidewalks, so pedestrians and cyclists were forced to compete for the roadway. People do not feel safe walking around their neighborhoods. People often convert their garages into living spaces and park instead in bike lanes.
- Carl Howell: Lowell does not have strong public transportation. Lowell can look to Cities like Portland OR that share some of the same physical characteristics for ways to connect more parts of the City (especially long term). There are creative ways to solve some of the issues that the current public transportation system does not address.
- Dennis McCarthy: The rendering of the improved neighborhood centers is harsh. He likes a lot of the components (multi modal transportations, greenery, balconies), but the new version seems to emphasize density rather than the neighborhood characteristics. The high buildings, for example, feel ominous.
- John Hamblet: There were some mixed use developments on Mammoth Road similar to what is shown in the rendering (commercial ground floor, residential above), but the above floor apartments that were intended for residential use have been illegally converted for office space. There is also insufficient parking to accommodate for the mixed uses.
- Adam Baacke: Notes that a large parking lot remains between a building and the sidewalk in the re-developed improved neighborhood center, which is one way that walkability feels discouraged. An improvement would be to have the building up against the sidewalk, and parking moved to behind, under, etc., the building.
- Dennis McCarthy: Would like to see more green spaces incorporated into neighborhood centers to make them feel more inviting, lively, and create transition between the public and private sectors. This will also help make neighborhood centers feel a little less dense than a Downtown area.
- Dennis McCarthy: Affordable housing needs to be better managed, and unhoused people need to be considered more.

● Next Steps

- Public Workshop 2 confirmed for June 21 at 6:30 pm at the Lowell Senior Center. Join us and spread the word!

- Survey 2 will close soon (one week before the Public Workshop 2). Help us promote the survey!
- Stay connected with Lowell Forward!

