

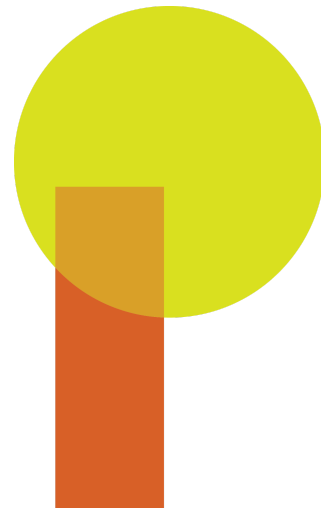
Attendees

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 Baacke
- 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 Cigliano
- Camilo Espitia
- Jess Wilson
- Dylan Ricker
- Sophie Mortimer

Consultant Team

- Matthew Littell
- Andrea Baena
- Taskina Tareen
- Mercy Anampiu (Community Organizer)

Notes

● Engagement So Far

- Utile provides an overview of the planning process so far and as the team heads to developing the implementation plan.
- Phase 2 Engagement results are shared. Key takeaways and themes include:
 - i. Land Use Urban Form: More mixed-use zoning, parks,
 - ii. Housing: Affordable housing, resources and tools for homeless, housing production including mixed use development
 - iii. Mobility: accessibility, public transportation, public safety, road conditions and maintenance, connecting people to economic activity
 - iv. Economic Development: Workforce training and business resources, mixed use development and Downtown, addressing homelessness, UMASS Lowell development coordination
 - v. Energy Environment: Sustainable building methods, renewable energy, increase transit options, protecting trees and natural resources
 - vi. Arts Culture: Supporting Artists and Cultural community, engaging in decision making, ensuring inclusivity in cultural planning

● Lowell Forward Framework (reminder)

- Utile provides a refresher for the Lowell Forward Framework. The Plan is in its third phase, developing actions and an implementation plan.
- Each topic area has associated top/priority goals
- Each goal, has associated metrics of success
- Priority actions to achieve goals and identifying responsible parties and resources and investments required
- Finally how goals and actions are connected to physical planning/growth strategies being identified through this process

● Goals, Metrics, and Actions by Topic

- Utile explains we are at the stage in the plan, where detail and more discrete actions are being identified in the plan, and hence the material becomes more dense.
- Utile is working with the City to identify appropriate metrics or targets for the city to aim for
- Each top goal and metric is associated with up to 5 priority action steps. Some of these are longer term, some are more specific that can be taken on sooner, some of these cost more money, some are studies, some are organizational. There is a wide variety/categories of action types.
- For instance, for Downtown Growth area - land use and urban form is an umbrella topic that encompasses all other topics - and downtown growth is something we've heard throughout engagement and cuts through all concerns

including housing, accessibility, sustainability, mobility and economic development

- Housing follows very closely to land use and urban form and is being coordinated with the housing production plan process
- Mobility is building off the very recent go lowell plan that already identified priorities for areas, and corridors and bike networks
- Economic Development focuses a lot around changing uses, vacancies, promotes small businesses and thinking about remaining building stock for conversion. In addition there are non spatial plans, increasing job opportunities and leveraging relationships with anchor institutions to educate the workforce and keep lowell residents in the city, and graduates.
- Energy, Climate and Environment become place specific. A lot of these targets are following statewide metrics and goals, aligning with statewide priorities.
- Parks and Open Space is another area building off ongoing initiatives in the city. Not only improving physical quality of open space but making them accessible both in terms physical access and quality of programming. There is also the aspect of increasing climate resilience.
- Arts and Culture is building off the Mosaic Lowell Plan, and also becomes more specific. There is a piece that overlaps with land use that recommends working with zoning to accommodate artist live work spaces.

● Breakout rooms by Goals and Actions topic areas

- Group 1 (Matthew, Fran, Mercy)
 - i. Land Use and Urban Form
 - How to measure revenue? How is this data collected?
 - Business downtown summit - notified, get together, what can city do to make city work? Share experiences and opinions
 - Upper story conversions to housing
 - Reduce # of vacancies
 - Targeted approach to business community downtown
 - Thinking about next steps
 - Consider metric of sq ft occupied by retail/residential/restaurant
 - Residential neighborhood vs regional center with canal side dining and boutique shops. Articulating that can help us fine tune the actions.
 - Plan is aspirational. What needs to be done to bring it to a point where in context of complex issues, we are able to understand where financial resources/Human Resources

- Action items are good with an enhanced community engagement process as described by Mercy and responding to questions by Rita
 - Regarding #4, Lowell needs to look physically like a destination. Needs to be discussed in those forums with business owners.
 - Is this a destination or neighborhood? Valid but perhaps conflicting goals.
 - Value of the historic district and regulations. Through looking at permit data, historic renovations are less expensive. That might be as big of a block as people think it is.
 - Be both a destination and well-rounded neighborhood
 - Making necessary zoning changes to make actions - smaller types of housing. More diverse options.
 - If we're trying to think about "destination" I've also wondered about focusing on a certain block. Make sure every storefront on that block is filled with attractive shops and restaurants (pop-up shops funded by cultural \$\$ if necessary). Make sure it's super-clean and super-connected to both parking and transit. Market that block like a special event over the summer. As it gets more established, grow out from there. Catalytic action. Demonstration of what is possible.
- ii. Housing
- Mary added that actions need to be clearly tied to wider housing goals and should be written in a way that is easily understandable. Need to be concrete and clear. Lacking in identifying exactly what action we are talking about. What are we going to do.
 - Camilo - added that we will be doing HPP. Be more specific about what sites. Lowell Forward - more general, HPP about zoning will come from the housing production plan. This is the comprehensive plan for the next 20 years. Making sure we understand what areas of the city need to be addressed. Need to be more specific.
 - Adding to numbers so we can measure against something.
- iii. Energy, Climate, and Environment
- Needs more specific goals and actions
 - Discussed further in the main room
- **Group 2 (Andrea, Jess, Sophie)**
- i. Mobility
- Metrics not specific enough

- Vision Zero safety action plan - what are those?
 - a. Plans to reduce/eliminate accidents on streets
 - Ways to relocate bus hub to downtown or increase ability to use bus network to get downtown without having to transfer at Gallagher. Threat to downtown vitality
 - a. Downtown bus hub should be priority
 - b. Echoed as something that should be a priority
 - Are items ordered by priority?
 - a. No. Actions have not yet been prioritized, open to feedback.
 - First one under safe and equitable - this is a big deal. Sidewalks need to be better, more ADA accessibility. The first action under the top goal: “safe, equitable and connected mobility...” should be a top priority (mentioned as someone who walks frequently)
 - Everything listed is a priority.
 - Equitability and accessibility - need more multilingual wayfinding signs. Difficult to take a bus or find your way around if you don't speak English.
 - Reducing transit cost should be a priority. City partner with LRTA to reduce cost burden.
 - a. Find ways to reduce cost at point of use for transit system similar to what other cities have done
 - Vision Zero - is that speed bumps? Signs?
 - a. Yes, some recommendations are for further planning/studies to find best solutions. Reducing distance of street crosswalkings, improve visibility.
 - b. Vision Zero is a nation-wide effort. Many communities are doing this.
- ii. Parks, Open Spaces and Trails
- A lot of items increase the number of people going to open spaces and participating in events. In the parks as an example, if you wanted availability to community group, is there always going to be a fee that you have to get a permit? Like if we wanted to do a community-wide kickball game. Do you always have to get a permit and pay for it?
 - a. Something we should look into. Development services have waivers for NPOs/those who can't afford fees.
 - b. Has this been a barrier to use?
 - i. Speaking for myself as a community member and part of a non-profit, it's an expense. It is a barrier.

- c. City is not always consistent in charging. CBA does not pay. Some organizations get their fees waived and others don't. Would be nice to have a guideline. Met with community members who had a difficult time using website to get on Board of Parks schedule to get a permit. All is in English, and need access to a computer. Also a question about cost.
 - d. City doesn't seem consistent in terms of enforcing/waiving fees. It would be helpful to have a guideline. It is difficult to understand how to navigate the permitting process, especially for those without computer access or those who do not speak English
- Action 3 - climate resilience. What does "require new development..." that would be in excess of current local, state, and federal wetlands regulations. What new regs do you have in mind beyond what currently exists?
 - a. Suggest make this more clear. 100' buffer from River. Only 25' in Lowell. Should expand 25' buffer along waterways/floodways. Brooks. Looking for something more specific. Or take this out, has no teeth. Only one other City (New Bedford?) has this exclusion.
 - b. The 100 ft buffer zone should be expanded to all Lowell and all other wetlands and waterways.
- Could include action - university is deep in the process of defining their campus as an urban arboretum. Should play into our urban forestry plan, UML owns a lot of land. Tying in would help us hit some goals to expand upon that opportunity. Can include to help City get better at replacing street trees and other public space trees before they die. Heat island impact. Help city, find funding, staffing to be more responsive.
 - a. Jane calvin LPCT gets funding
- Actions are very general, need a lot more specificity.
- Open space master plan for Pawtucket canal, we have one. Did it not refer to Pawtucket canal? Should be included in existing open space master plan.
 - a. We are working on a concept for a catalytic project along Pawtucket canal, meaning one project that touches on a lot of goals/actions. Interesting area because of nearby projects, canal walk, include existing parks. Will go into more detail.
 - b. Not seeing connection between this master plan, the OSRP, and the Lowell Forward Plan.

- City needs to improve the process of replacing street trees and park trees that die
 - a. Currently being addressed by urban forestry plan, maintenance plan, open space plan
- Metrics in this category are very broad, would be helpful to have more specificity in action plans and how some of them are being informed by existing plans
- Surprised there is no mention of the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough (L/T/D) forest. Include that. Used to have a forest ranger. Since they left there is a lot more vehicular traffic and bikes damaging the trails. Could do a lot to support the state to improve the forest. There are trails and open spaces and wetlands. Appropriate to include our largest resource. Should be a top goal.
- Then start looking at action plans, could apply a lot to state forest. Concrete measurable actions.
- We don't even have sidewalks in Pawtucketville. Pville not included in most of this planning. Not being included in mobility discussions.
 - a. You'd think it would be included, Pville is part of the City.
 - i. Very few in western Pville. Concentrating - map 4 or 5 areas mostly across the river. Too late to expand scope of study.
 - 1. We are looking at the whole City and that these goals and actions would address problems across the City. Focus on neighborhood center, one of them in pawtucketville, areas of higher commercial activity, gathering areas, industrial areas. Looking at several growth strategies. We are looking at Pawtucketville. The housing production plan is also looking at the whole City. Super open to all comments, anything around mobility that needs to be addressed.
 - a. Start filing motions, talk to City council rep
- Slides we're being shown just a sliver of everything that's going to be in the master plan? Very limited, more going on in the background that we're not seeing.
 - a. Very general goals, metrics and actions. A lot that goes on behind these, but not much specificity.

- b. Don't have a good grasp on how many open spaces and trails there are? Will there be plans and maps?
 - c. Master plan will have maps and visuals, OSRP will be more detailed.
 - d. Don't want to have too many actions, need to have a short actionable list of priorities. Find balance between specificity and flexibility.
 - *It seems like it needs to be made clearer that the Master Plan will encompass other plans that will be more specific
 - **Group 3 (Taskina, Camilo, Dylan)**
 - i. Economic Development
 - Not sure exactly where it goes, there should be explicit reference to the UMass Lowell East Campus initiative.
 - a. Best thing the university can do to foster economic development, second to maintaining its presence, is to leverage that and use it to attract companies and industry partners that others wouldn't be putting lowell on the list
 - b. Goal behind east campus project is to leverage underutilized land on campus for university and student opportunity, but also bring real economic investment to Lowell
 - c. Would be good to differentiate lowell's EC strategies from other area's strategies, with the work university is doing and potential public/private partnerships
 - d. How talent is developed the university is related to labor in the city
 - e. Other viewpoint: Overall we need to take a look at how UMass Lowell fit into the structure of the Plan
 - i. East Campus Initiative does not take into account current resident engagement. Residents are not being consulted about plans being taken forward with East Campus Initiative
 - ii. Public institution should be in cooperation with the city
 - f. **note: There isn't an East Campus plan officially confirmed
 - g. Ways for UMass Lowell to be more transparent about ongoing plans, especially for the Acre as a whole.
 - Curious about why two top actions in topics is weaken the historic regulations

- a. If we push developers, there is more active support for historic regulations to ensure quality development in a compatible way
 - b. City: we've heard that it can be a challenge to try develop housing or commercial development in the ground floor with existing floor plates that we have
 - i. These actions are asking to revisit those regulations at one hand to preserve our mill town character, but also think through design guidelines and accessibility challenges. How we think about preserving historic built environment while allowing new development that aligns with our economic goals now
 - c. Encourages team to revisit the language of actions associated historic guidelines (how to shape the regulatory package to be more supportive)
 - d. Look at back at historic regulations to ensure they are still practical
- Comprehensive marketing and branding package for Lowell should be an absolute top action
 - Question about Action 5 under Downtown Revitalization: "creating institutional spaces Downtown where students can spend time"...I think that's what our current downtown businesses should be. If not, that's what should be enhanced rather than create a college space that isn't integrated
 - a. City: TDI district initiative is one way to connect students to local businesses in the city
 - b. Ideally having a more physical presence of the university in the city
 - c. UMass students don't really frequent Downtown
 - d. Places like Nebana cafe, ramen 81, music happening at the Warden are specific things that pull students in
 - e. What about the unused office spaces in the businesses along the merrimack and downtown core, is there potential for universities to use that as learning spaces? Does UMass have urban classes for the students to learn about the city?
 - f. University shares the vision of having student and faculty engage with the city more
 - i. Would be more successful in the context of getting more businesses that cater interests of

students rather than just taking a class

Downtown

- ii. It is very challenging for logistical reasons for the university to offer a few classes remote from classes, transportation and tight schedules
 - iii. Upper merrimack and pawtucket street corridor needs to be addressed in terms of complete streets mobility
 - iv. Another challenge of universities occupying upper floors of downtown buildings has to do with accessibility. As a public institution we have to strictly abide by accessibility standards.
 - v. More explicit action to create incentive to have more improved accessibility standards in older buildings
 - vi. Maybe from this conversation connects a mobility goal tied to economic story. Also tied to urban form and design. Responsibility of multiple entities.
- ii. Arts and Culture
- We've been telling the story of canals more than 20 years, perhaps we want to tell the story of things happened after 1920s, is how are Downtown is supposed to look
 - Im not finding alot in this project that addresses an aging artist population
 - a. Including building accessibility
 - Helping artists in lowell, not just the ones that can afford to be a part of art associations

● Next Steps

- Please review Actions Matrix and email comments to Fran by Wednesday 9/13
- Public Workshop 3 confirmed for October 25, CHOP Dinner. Volunteer to help, join us and/or spread the word! This is the opportunity for in person conversations.
- Next virtual Steering Committee meeting will be in December.
- Stay connected with Lowell Forward! Website, social media and newsletter

