

Public Visioning Open House

Portsmouth Master Plan
September 15, 2025



Agenda

Public Visioning Open House
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1. Welcome & Introductions (5 min)

2. Orientation Presentation (20 min)

- a. Plan Purpose & Focus (10 min)
 - What a comprehensive Master Plan is and isn't
 - Planning Foundation
 - Topics

- b. Planning Process (10 min)
 - Project Timeline & Phases
 - Visioning Engagement So Far
 - Tonight's Format

3. Open House (10 min)

4. Wrap Up & Next Steps (5 min)

Introductions

Consultant Team Members Here Today



Anne Weidman
Local Community
Organizer

You may know Anne from one of her many roles in the Portsmouth community:

- Access Navigators
- Labrie Family Skate ice rink
- City of Portsmouth Economic Development Commission
- Portsmouth Athenaeum
- Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
- Portsmouth CTE
- Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Committee to Reopen Portsmouth
- Strawberry Banke Museum
- PechaKucha Portsmouth
- Krempels Center

utile

Urban Planning and Design, Engagement, and Management



Matthew Littell,
LEED AP
Principal-In-Charge



Zoë Taft Mueller,
AICP
Project Manager &
Senior Urban Planner



Pete Robie
Deputy Project
Manager, Senior Urban
Planner & Designer



Tommaso Wagner
Urban Planner



Courtney McCracken
Architectural & Urban
Designer



Jon Tremontozzi
Principal
Landwise



Albert Zhang
Planning Analyst
Landwise

LW

LANDWISE

Economic Analysis

Consultant Team

Utile is serving as the lead consultant to the City, supported by a team of specialists that has collaborated on several recent Master Plans like this one. Team members with an * at the end of their names are prior or current New Hampshire residents.



City of Portsmouth

Urban Planning and Design, Engagement, and Management

utile

Matthew Littell, LEED AP
Principal in Charge

Pete Robie
Deputy Project Manager, Senior
Urban Planner & Designer

Tommaso Wagner
Urban Planner

Zoë Taft Mueller, AICP
Project Manager, Senior Planner

Jose Cotto
Director of Community
Engagement and Design Justice

Courtney McCracken
Urban Designer

Transportation

Economic Analysis

Infrastructure Advising

Community Organizer



Alyson Fletcher
Principal in Charge

Bill Schwartz*
Project Manager

Kelsey Tustin*
Senior Associate



Jon Trementozzi
Principal in Charge

Amy Fater*
Project Manager / Senior Planner



Brian Creamer, AICP, SITES AP
Project Manager

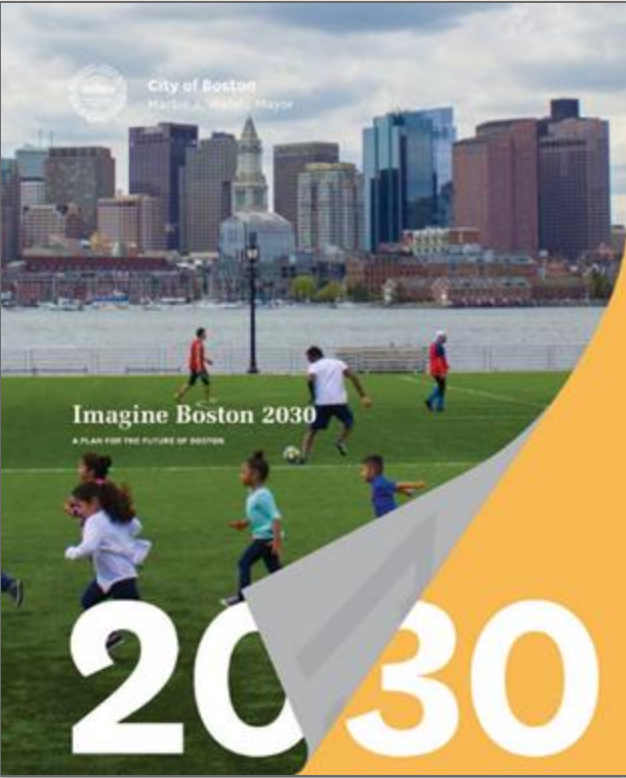
Allison Evans, AICP
Public Engagement Specialist



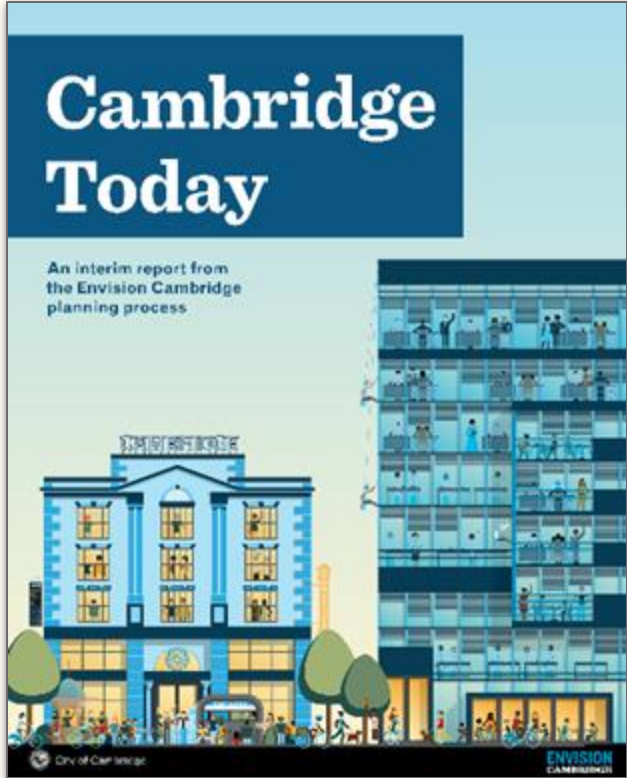
Anne Weidman*



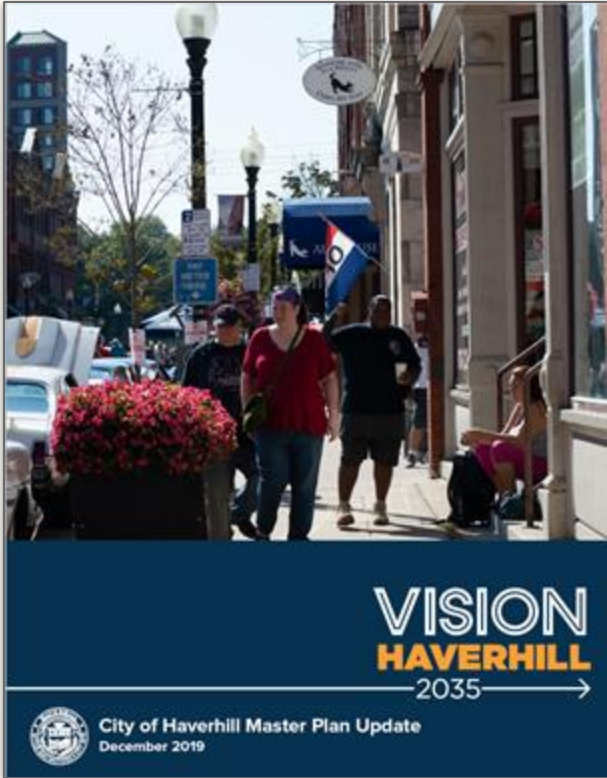
What other Master Plans has this consultant team worked on?



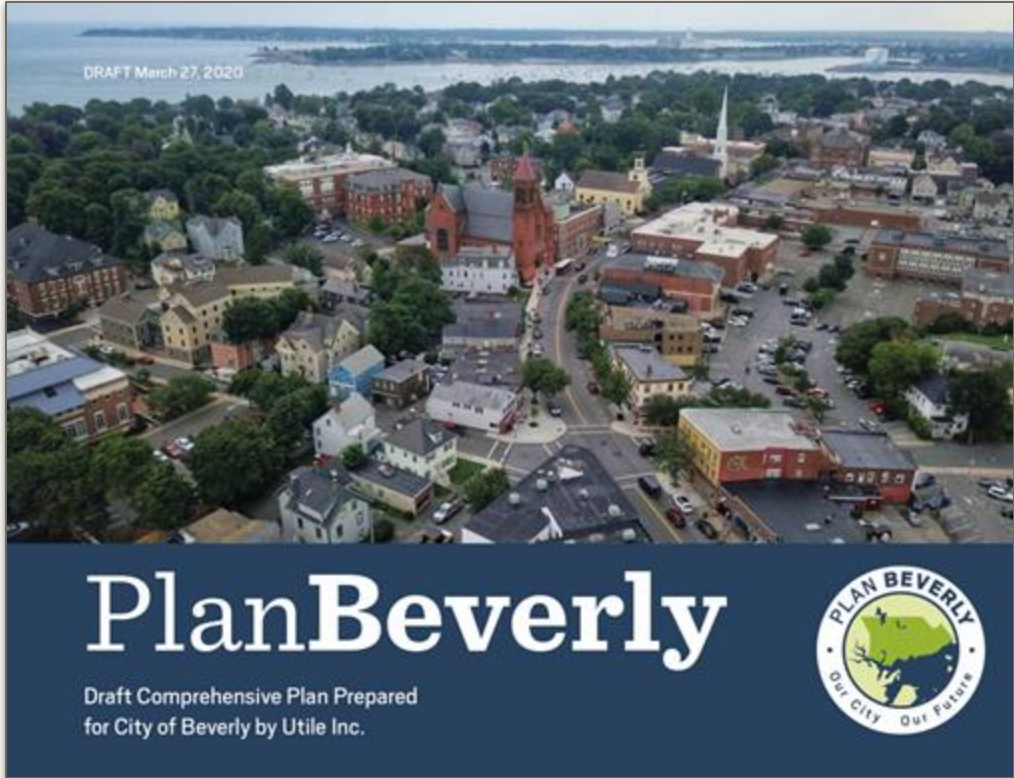
Imagine Boston 2030, 2017



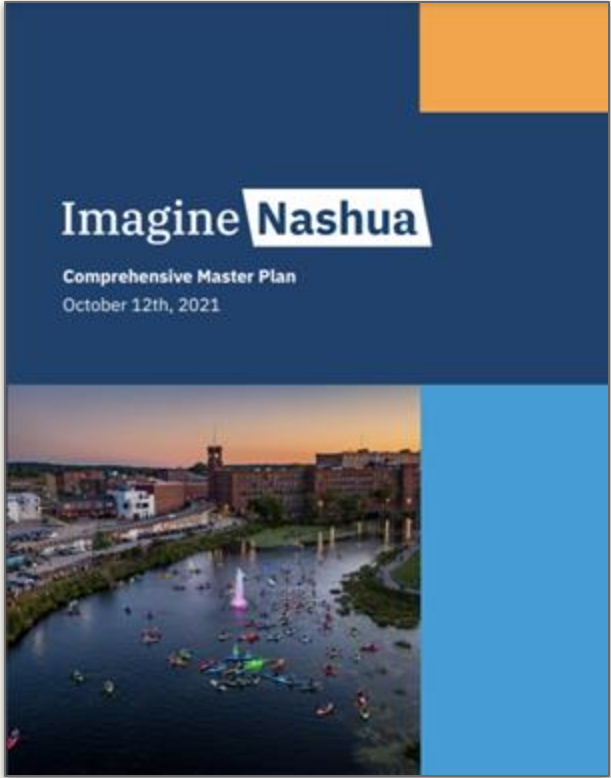
Envision Cambridge, 2019



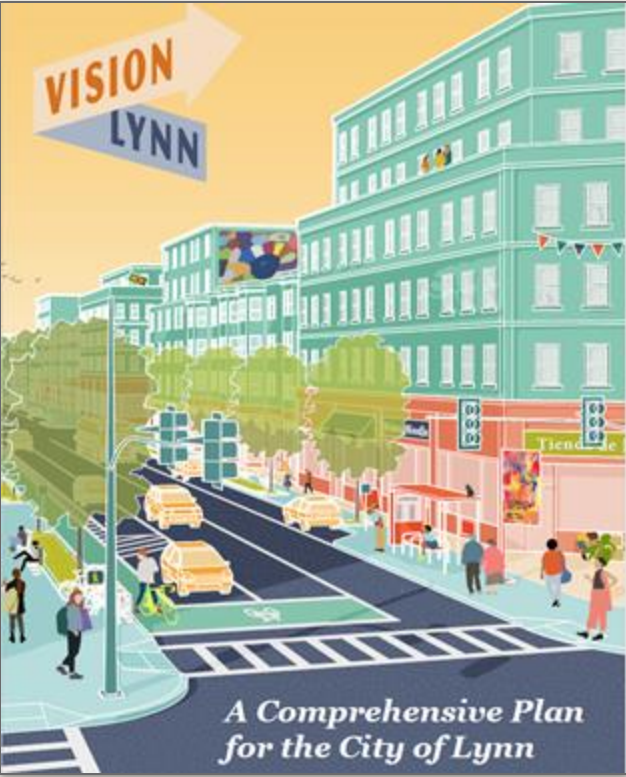
Vision Haverhill 2035, 2019



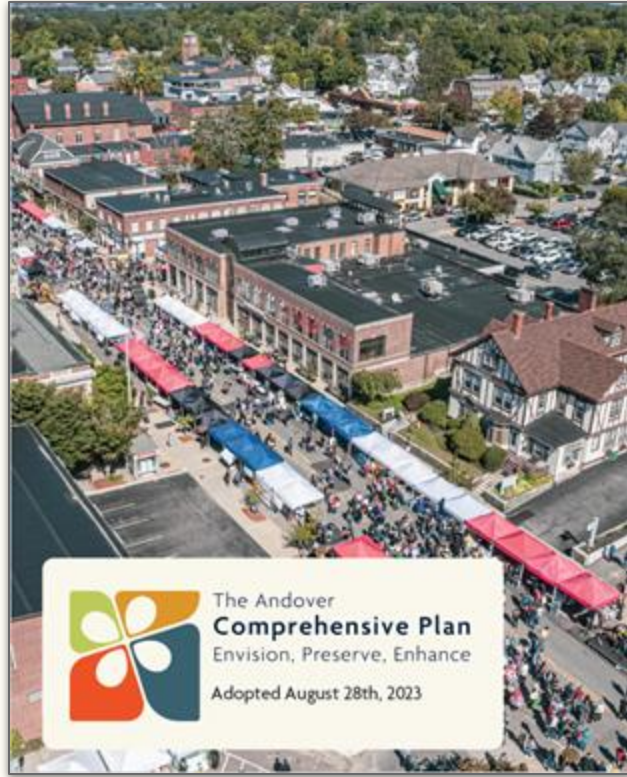
PlanBeverly, 2020



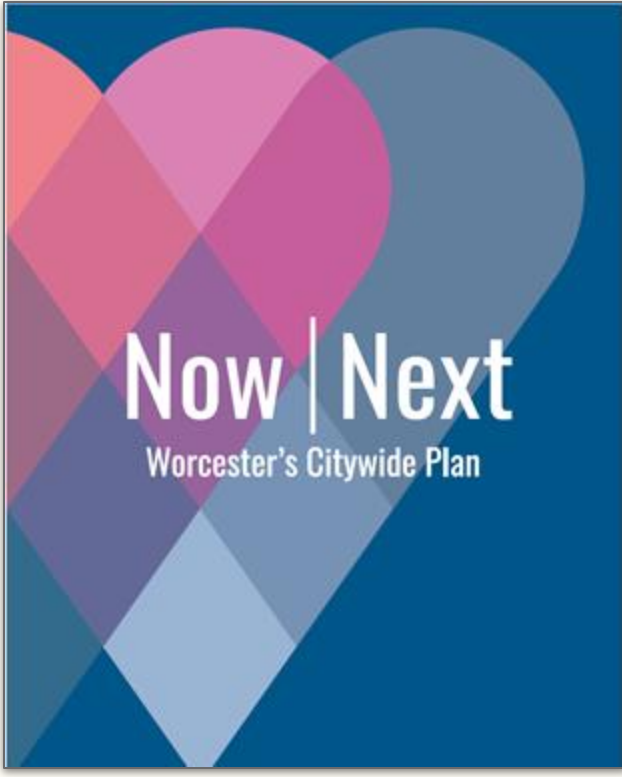
Imagine Nashua, 2021



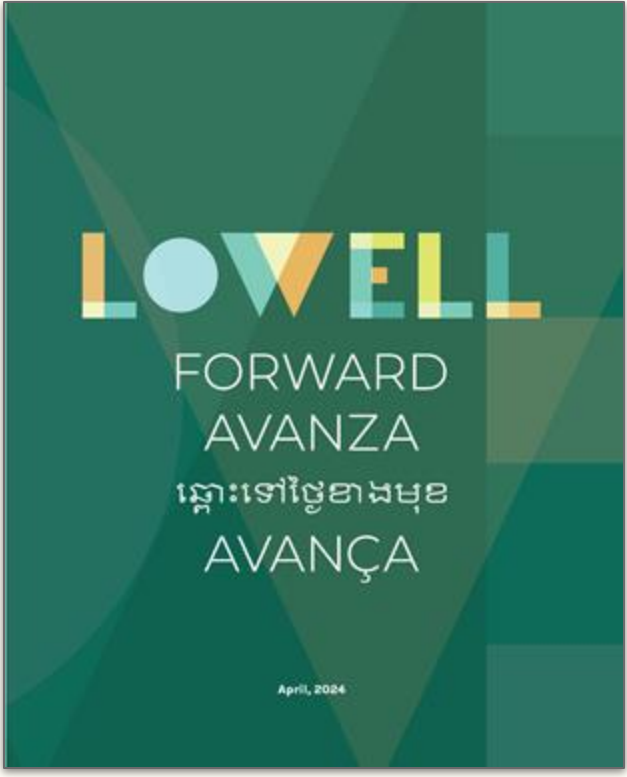
Vision Lynn, 2023



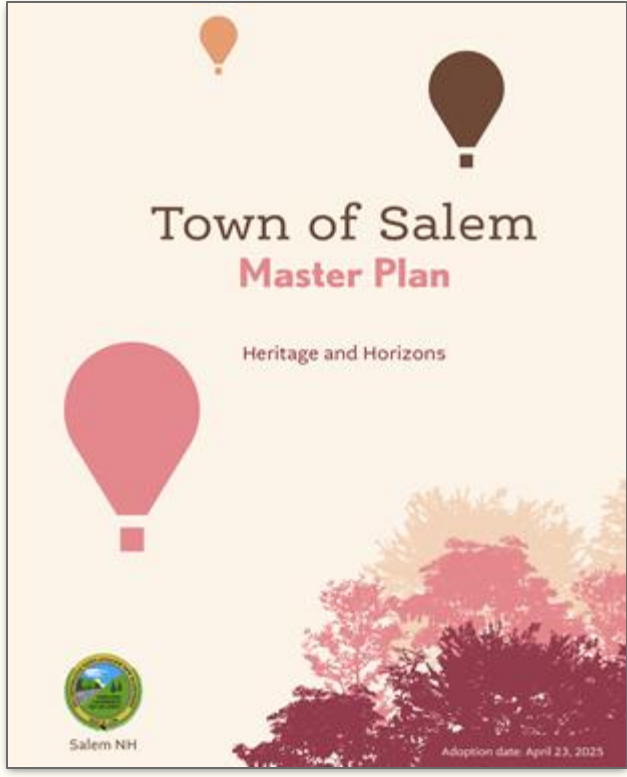
Andover Comprehensive Plan, 2023



Worcester Now | Next, 2024



Lowell Forward, 2024



Town of Salem Master Plan, 2025

Plan Purpose & Focus

What a comprehensive plan is and isn't
Portsmouth 2025 Overview
Planning Foundation & Focus

What a comprehensive “master plan” is and isn’t

Think of it like a strategic plan for where and how the City should develop and invest over the next 10 years.

Master Plans are powerful tools to align development regulations and investments in infrastructure and quality of life with a unified vision.

The planning process will help us shape and create:



A statement of shared values



A strategic vision and roadmap for the future of the city



A framework for implementation

The final plan will establish:

Growth Framework
(Preserve, Enhance, Adapt)

Foundation for changes to land use and zoning regulations

Capital investment priorities

Policy and program priorities

Framework for more detailed district and topic-specific plans

The plan will NOT:



Provide a zoning rewrite



Generate detailed topic-area or place-specific plans



Decide exactly how local resources will be spent

What topics does a comprehensive “master plan” focus on?

The Master Plan will focus on **filling gaps and making connections** between the City’s many recent topic- and area-specific planning efforts.

The **Foundational Topics** will be the primary focus of this plan due to the:

- lack of recent plans addressing these topics holistically
- urgency of needs
- need for more analysis and community conversation

The **Cross-Cutting Topics** will be integrated throughout based on existing plans.

Foundational Topics

A ***unified strategy*** for land use, zoning and community design, integrating:

- Economy
- Housing
- Transportation & Mobility
- Land Use & Built Form

Cross-Cutting Topics

Topics that are ***integral to and woven into*** the unified strategy articulated for the foundational topics.

- Sustainability & Resilience
- Public Utilities, Services & Facilities
- Natural Resources & Conservation
- Arts, Recreation & Amenities
- Culture & Historic Preservation

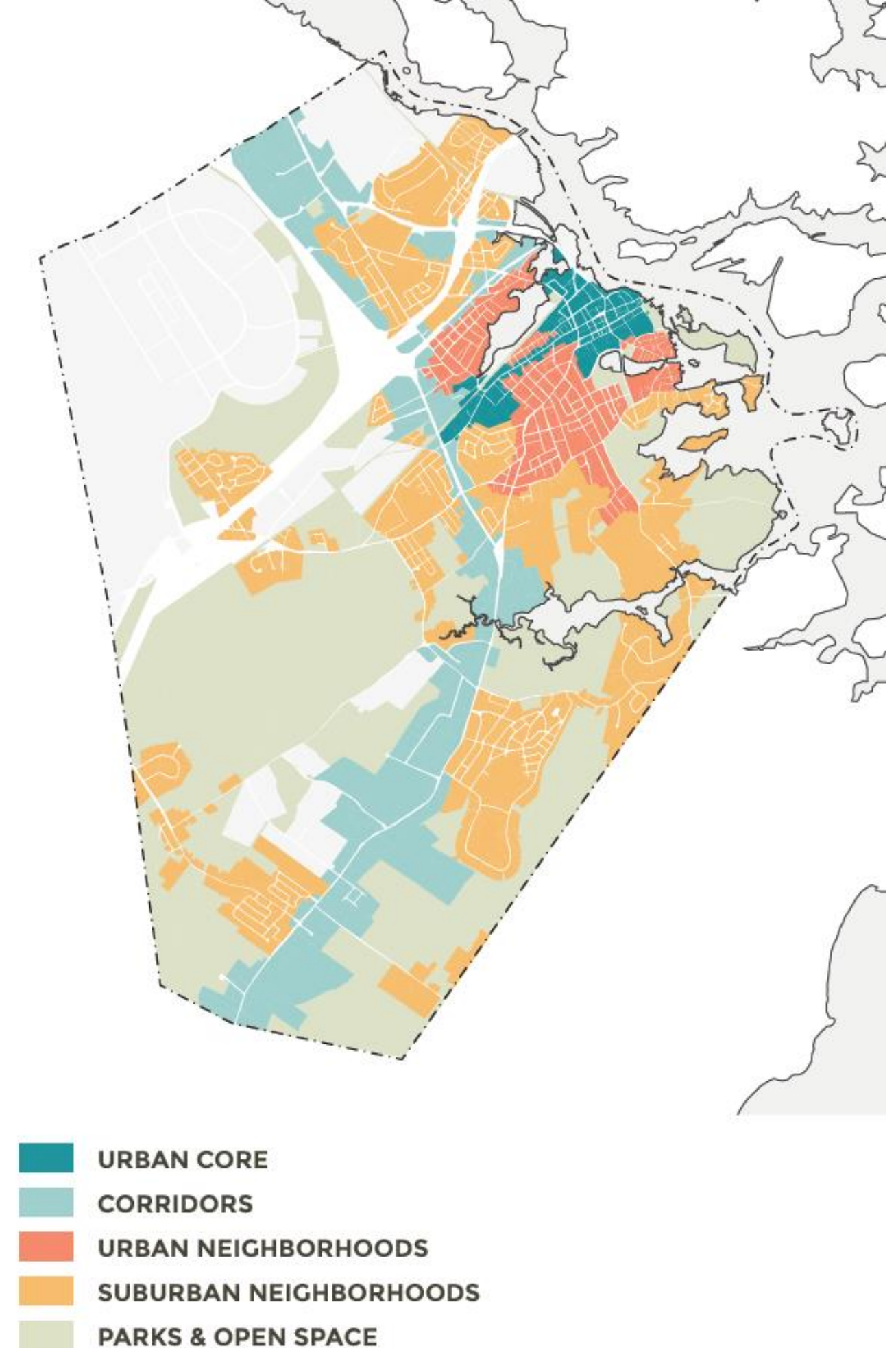
Prior Master Plan Overview

Portsmouth 2025 Master Plan

This process developed 98 action items for 19 different goals over the course of a two year participatory process involving a number of different engagement techniques from a web-based survey to a series of public meetings and dialogues.

Five Major Themes

- **Vibrant:** Support and strengthen the City's status as a strong tourist, employment, and cultural hub.
- **Authentic:** Protect and preserve the historic character of Portsmouth.
- **Diverse:** Welcome all residents by providing a variety of housing types and job opportunities.
- **Connected:** Provide safe and convenient ways to travel for all modes of transportation.
- **Resilient:** Defend residents, structures, and natural resources from environmental degradation and climate change.



Planning Foundation

Portsmouth has done a lot of recent planning – we are not going to be reinventing the wheel:

Transportation

Bicycle and Pedestrian

- Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Update (2025)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2014)
- Safe Routes to School Action Plan, February (2010)

Streets

- Market Square Master Plan (2025)
- US Route 1 Corridor Improvement Project (ongoing)
- Maplewood Avenue Complete Street Study (2014)
- Islington Street Corridor Improvement Action Plan (2009)
- Blue Ribbon Committee on Transportation Policy Report (2013)
- Market St Extension Gateway Streetscape Improvements Study (2008)

Parking

- Parking Utilization Study (2024)
- Deer Street Parking Garage & Deer Street Associates Development Traffic Impact and Access Study (2016)
- Parking Supply and Demand Strategies (2012)
- Parking Supply and Demand Analysis (2012)
- Downtown Parking Focus Group Report (2010)

Development & Real Estate Market Assessment

- Discussions on Places to Live in Portsmouth: Study Circle Dialogue Report (2024)
- RKG Inclusionary Zoning Feasibility Analysis (2024)
- RKG Market Assessment (2022)
- Economic Development Existing Conditions Report (2014)

Sustainability and Resilience

- Portsmouth's Climate Future (2024)
- Historic Properties Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (2018)
- Renewable Energy Policy (2018)
- Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Renewable Energy (2018)
- Coastal Resilience Initiative (CRI) (2013)

Open Space, Conservation & Recreation

- Stump Dump Park Master Plan (2021)
- Open Space Plan (2020)
- Prescott Park Master Plan (2017)
- Vaughan Worth Bridge Revitalization Strategic Planning Committee Final Report and Recommendations (2017)
- Recreation Needs Study (2015)
- Recreation Need Study - Athletic Field Matrix (2015)
- Public Undeveloped Land Assessment Report (2010)
- Comprehensive Recreation Needs Assessment Study (2010)
- Portsmouth Vernal Pool Inventory (2008)

Arts & Culture

- Cultural Plan (2023)

Focus Area Land Use & Zoning Studies

- North End Vision Plan (2015)
- West End Vision Plan (2015)

Infrastructure & Facilities

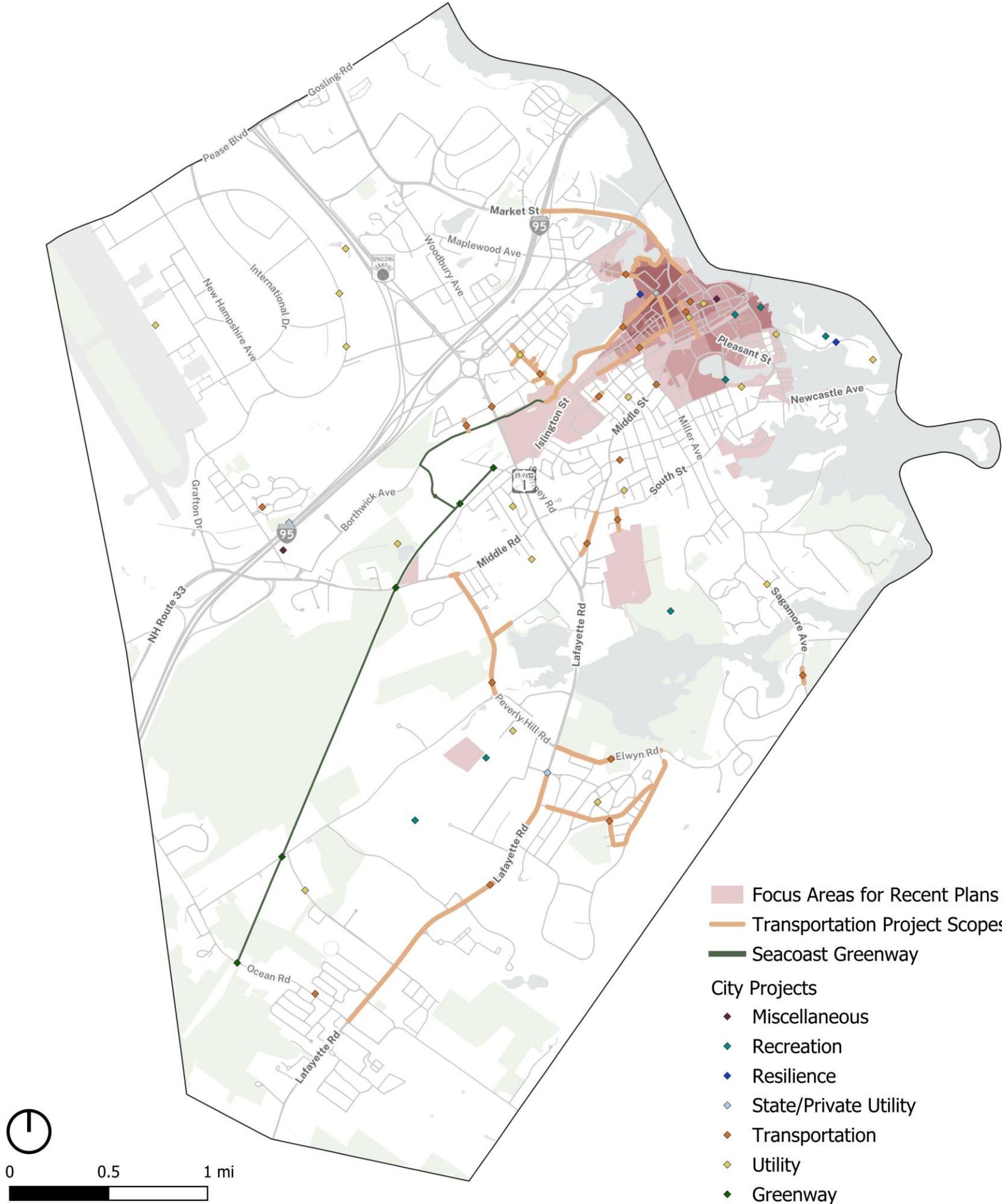
- Capital Improvement Plan

Geographic Focus of Recent Projects & Planning

Citywide
~25 Plans

Downtown
~9 Plans

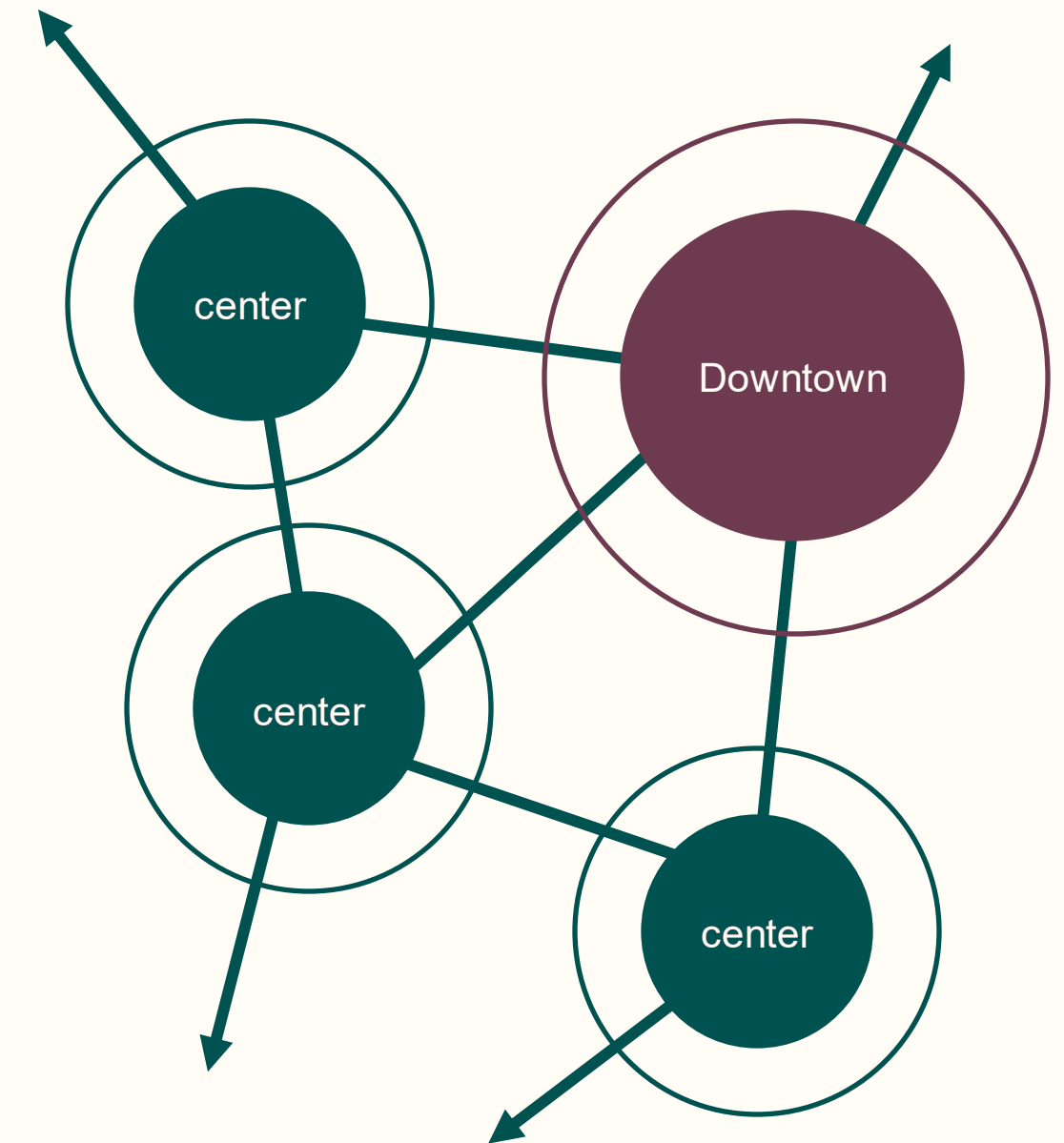
Other Districts & Neighborhoods
~3 Plans



Plan Focus

In addition to baseline obligations, the Master Plan will focus on **filling gaps and making connections** between the City's many recent topic- and area-specific planning efforts. The following key issues will be the primary focus of this plan due to the urgency with which they need to be addressed and a need for more analysis and community conversation around these important topics:

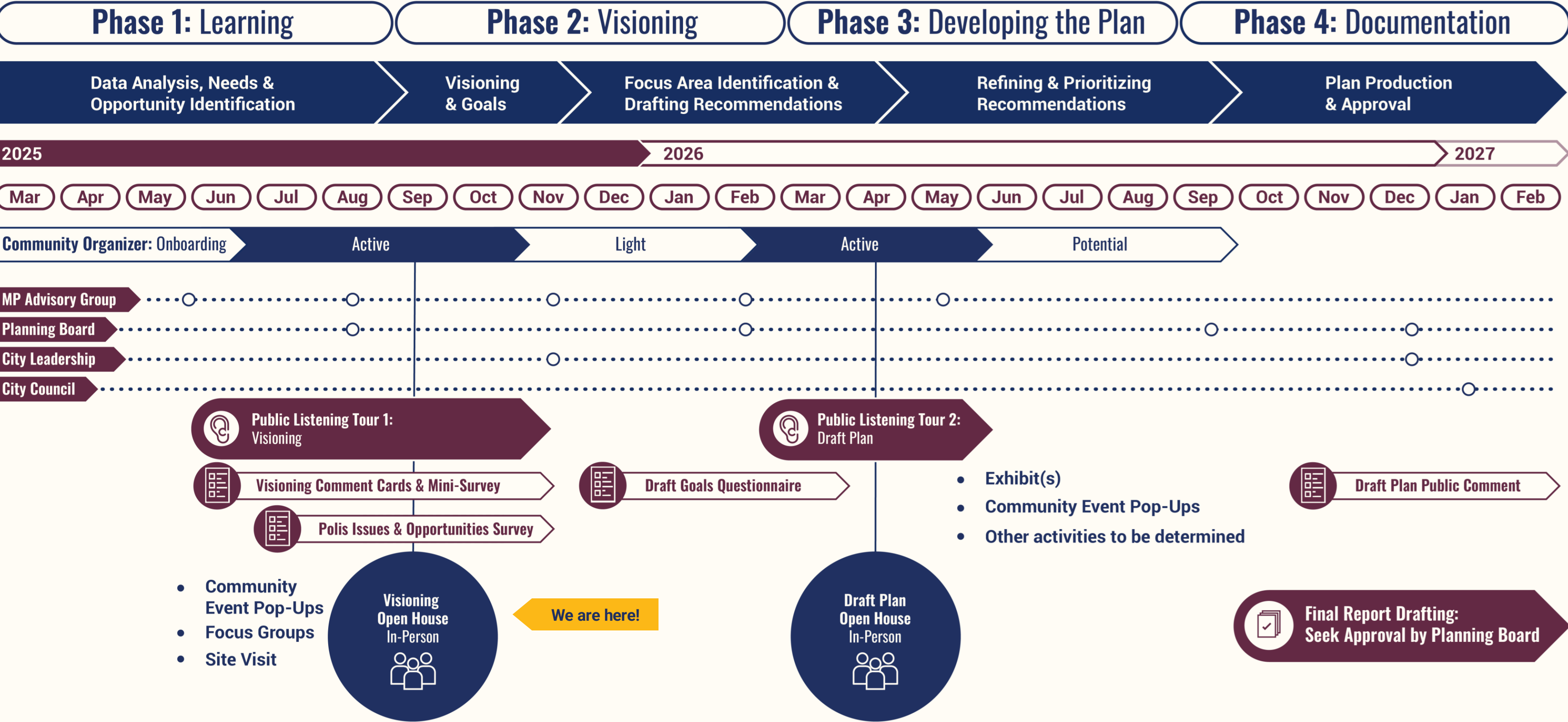
- **Housing** What are Portsmouth's housing needs? What types and price points will best support the City's workforce and the evolving age and household size of residents? How can we best enable and encourage these types of housing in the City?
- **Economy** Where is Portsmouth's economy headed over the next decade? What types of industries and jobs support it now, and which are best positioned to support it in the future? How does this impact workforce housing and training needs? What can Portsmouth do to encourage and support the kind of economic opportunities that make the community stronger, more stable, resilient, vibrant, and desirable?
- **Development Patterns & Urban Form** How and where should Portsmouth grow? What is the right scale, location, and form of future development? How should this relate to investments in mobility, infrastructure, recreation, and community services that support a high quality of life for City residents? How should this respond to and reflect climate resilience, environmental conservation, and sustainability priorities?



Planning Process

- Project Timeline & Phases
- Who is involved & Roles
- Ongoing & Upcoming Engagement

Planning Process



Who is Guiding the Plan?

City Planning Department

Direct and manage both the process and outcomes on behalf of Planning Board and community members.

- Daily guidance and coordination
- Directly shape focus and process
- Monitor and manage consultant team contract

Master Plan Advisory Group

Representative cross-section of advisors that serves as a sounding board to support a productive community process.

- Advise on key issues and priorities the plan should address.
- Assist with coordination and alignment with existing policies as well as ongoing or future projects and initiatives.
- Assist with outreach, communication and increasing awareness of the planning process to boost participation and understanding with key stakeholders, agencies, and members of the public.
- Review and provide constructive feedback on proposed process, initial findings, interim deliverables and final recommendations.

Planning Board

Provide ideas and feedback at key milestones to ensure the final plan is worthy of adoption and will serve the City, Planning Board, and community well.

- Promote interest in, and understanding of, the Master Plan.
- Provide input to shape the focus, research and recommendations at the outset, midway and final stages of the planning process.
- Guide formal public comment and revisions to the draft Master Plan as part of the adoption process.
- Vote on adoption following public comment and any revisions made in response to Planning Board and public comment.

Outreach & Engagement Update from **Anne Weidman**, our Community Organizer!



The numbers so far....

17+ events attended

410+ 1:1 conversations & visioning comment cards

340+ polis issues & opportunities surveys

Event Participation

General Events

- Market Square Day
- Juneteenth
- Pride Festival
- Prescott Park Festival Shows
- Farmers' Market
- National Night Out
- BIPOC Festival

Targeted Events

- 100 Club member social
- Plan NH lunch
- Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative Board Meeting
- Senior Summer Cookout
- Soul Models
- StreetLife / Portsmouth Chamber
- Seacoast Online / Portsmouth Herald Reader Advisory Group
- Krempels Brain Injury Center

Outreach Hubs

In-Person

- City Hall
- Library
- Community Campus
- Senior Center
- Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA)

Digital

- Project Website
- City E-Newsletter
- City Social Media
- City Press Releases

Organizer Business Card



Site Visit

August 1st

Itinerary

Friday

- **AM: Downtown Walking Tour:**
 - Meet Up: Popovers On the Square
 - High St / Ladd & 1 Congress St development
 - Maplewood Ave & Portsmouth Historical Society, speak with Emma Stratton, ED
 - Bridge Street & Foundry Place development
 - Vaughan St & Vaughan / Raynes / Green St development
 - Portwalk Place 7 Vaughan Mall
 - Penhallow St via Commercial Alley
 - Bow St, Memorial Park, Marcy St.
 - Prescott Park & Strawberry Banke
 - State Street to Ceres Bakery – Lunch & Discussion
 - Jimmys Jazz Club, speak with Michael Labrie
- **PM: Outer Neighborhood Driving Tour**
 - Islington Creek & West End
 - Rt 1 / Lafayette St
 - Spinnaker Point
 - Woodbury, Maplewood & Market St Corridors
 - Bike Trail
- **Evening: Art 'Round Town**

Saturday

- **AM: Farmers' Market**



Engagement Tools:

Visioning Comment Cards & Online Mini-Survey

Purpose: These help us get people engaged and interested, and capture evocative quotes in response to open-ended questions. This helps us shape a vision statement that highlights what people value most, and identify issues and opportunities the plan should address.

Activity:

- 1. What do you love about Portsmouth?
- 2. What would you change about Portsmouth?
(What would make Portsmouth better?)

Options:

- 1. Fill out online at the project website:
portsnh.co/masterplan
- 2. Fill out & return at an event
- 3. Fill out & return at a collection location:
Community Campus, Library, City Hall, and PHA properties



Portsmouth Master Plan Visioning Comment Cards



Example use of visioning comment cards at the Worcester, MA Tercentennial Festival

Emerging Themes:

Visioning Comment Cards & Online Mini-Survey

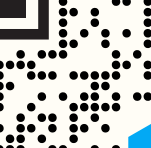
What do you love about Portsmouth?

- The community and the people
- The history
- The art
- The restaurants and activities
- The walkability
- The feeling of small city with the vibrancy of a big city

What would you change about Portsmouth?

(What would make Portsmouth better?)

- Lower housing prices
- Less big development and construction
- Less traffic, especially downtown
- More parking options with lower prices
- More options for walking, biking, and public transit.
- Nothing at all!



Emerging Themes:

Online Issues & Opportunities Survey (Polis)

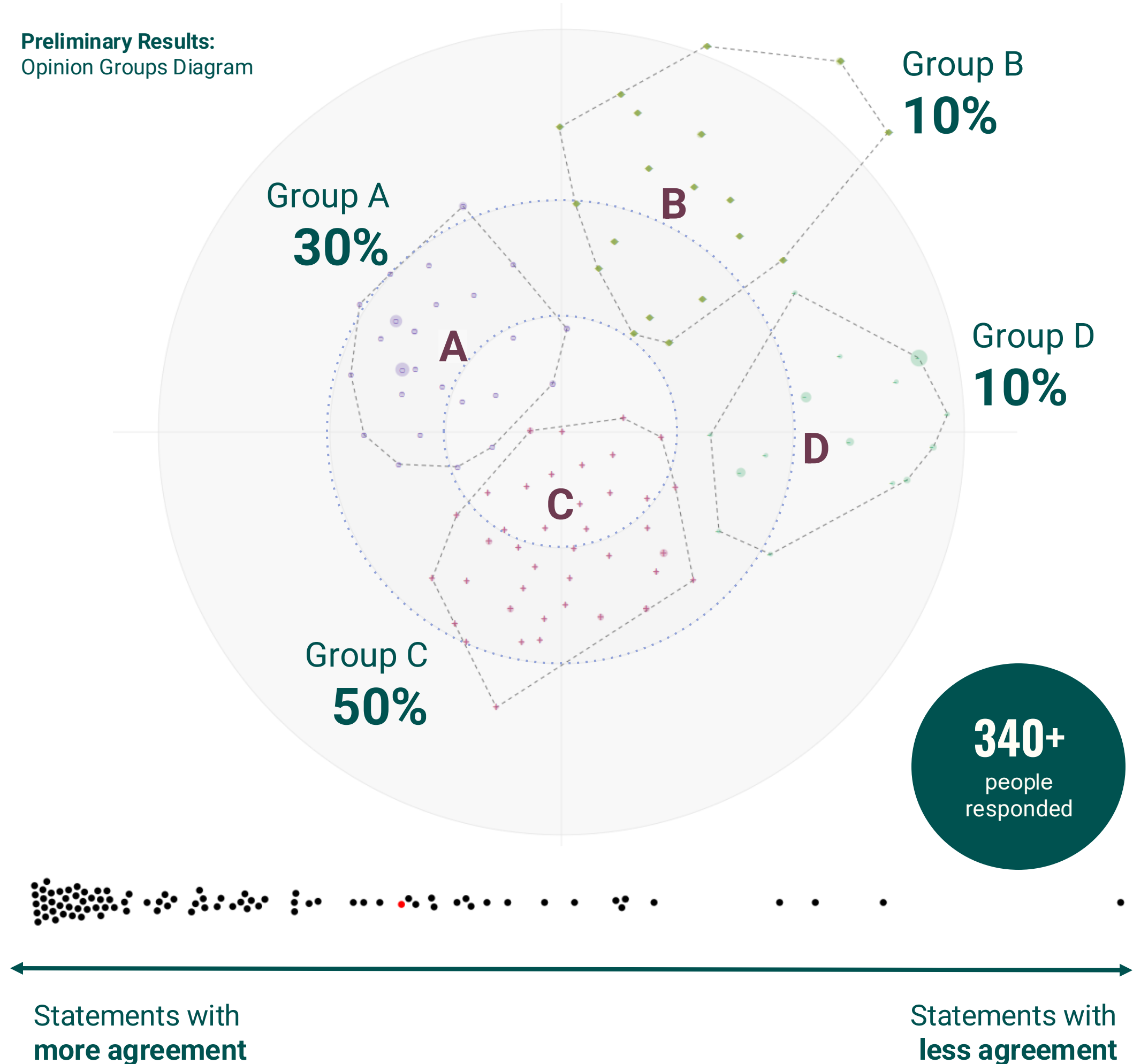
Areas of Consensus

- Lack of housing affordability and availability
- Promotion of local arts and creative industries
- A desire to improve multimodal transportation
- Maintaining and improving connected natural spaces
- Development should preserve Portsmouth's basic identity

Areas of Disagreement

- The City's capacity for more development
- The impact of development on Portsmouth's character
- Whether the City needs more workforce and family-oriented housing
- The amount of City resources dedicated to tourism

Preliminary Results:
Opinion Groups Diagram



Tonight's Format

Self-directed conversations and engagement activities at different thematic boards or stations.

There is no correct order, spread out and go to the boards that interest you most!



Boards with this symbol are informational.

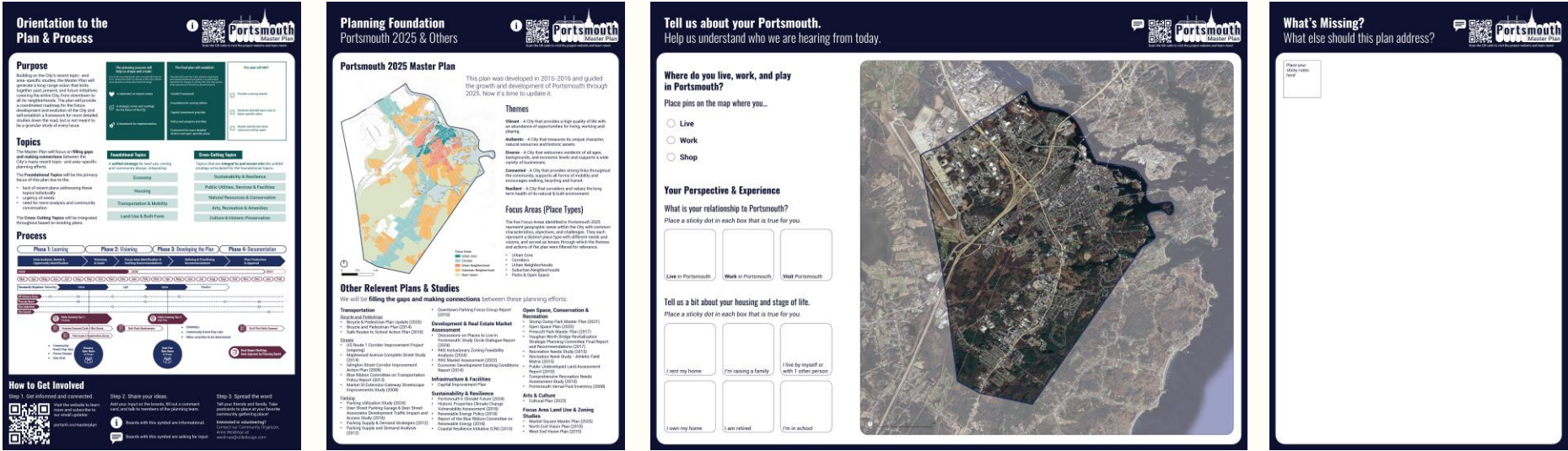


Boards with this symbol are asking for input.

Open House Display Board Guide: Foundations

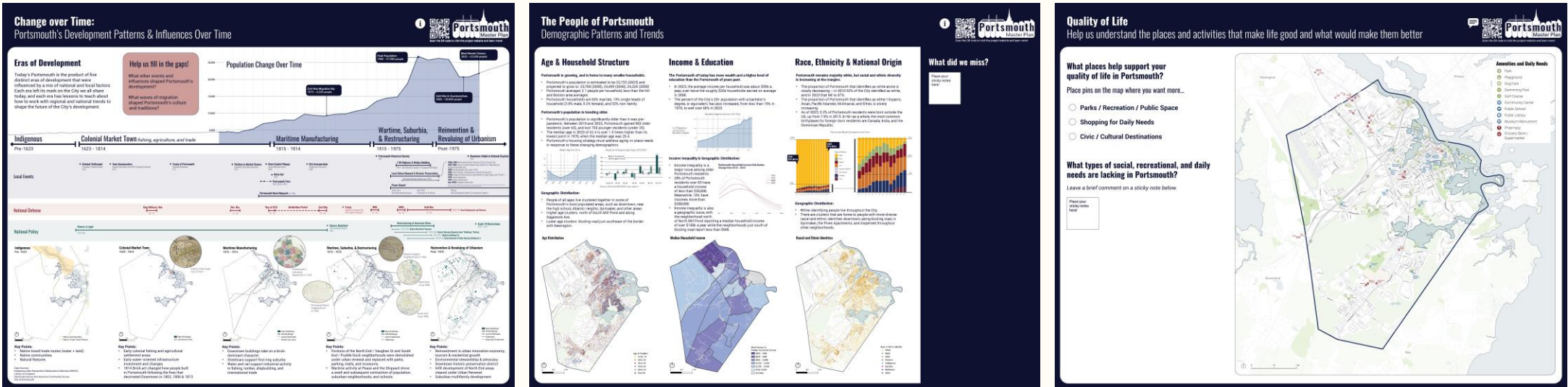
Orientation / General

- Plan Intro
- Portsmouth 2025 Overview
- Tell us about your Portsmouth (live/work/shop mapping & who's here demographic data)
- What's Missing?



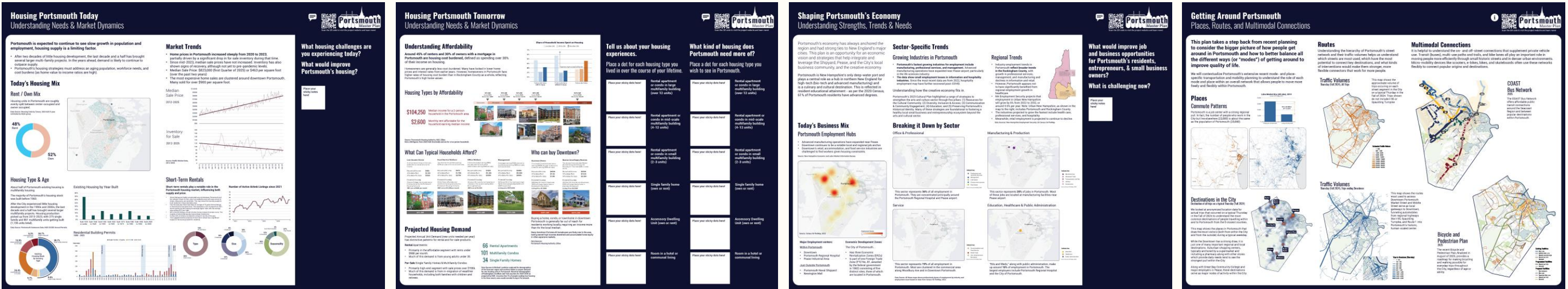
Contextual Analysis & Input

- Eras of development timeline
- Key demographic patterns & trends
- Quality of life mapping



Thematic Analysis & Input

- Housing patterns and trends
- Economic patterns and trends
- Mobility network analysis (commute & betweenness)



Open House Display Board Guide: Development Visioning

Urban Form & Focus Areas

- Environmental mapping
- Development Constraints / Capacity
- Place Types Today
- Preserve / Enhance / Adapt Framework, Identifying Focus Areas & Gateways

Ecosystem, Environment & Climate Change

Open Space and Water Bodies

Portsmouth has a rich spread of open space

- Just over a quarter of all the space in the City of Portsmouth is open space
- Open space includes recreation, conservation, and undeveloped or vacant land

Portsmouth has a complex network of water bodies and wetlands

- Nearly 30% of the City is water
- From the Piscataqua River, Sagamore Creek, the North and South Mill ponds, and many wetlands and marshes, water shapes much of the space within the City's boundaries.

Preparing for Climate Risks

- Portsmouth faces risks associated with sea level rise, more frequent and severe storms, and rising temperatures
- As much as 15% of Portsmouth's land will face flood risk, much of which falls within the Downtown Historic District.

Wildlife Habitats and Corridors

Portsmouth is home to many endangered species, including

- Piping Plover
- Island Scaup
- Banding's Turtle
- Plus species like the Right Whale which live nearby

Protecting Ecosystem & Habitat

Natural areas including wetlands are most prominent along Portsmouth's western and southern boundaries, along with the Piscataqua waterfront along its eastern boundary. These natural areas are fragmented, though contiguous areas of habitat and protected open space exist.

Portsmouth is home to many endangered species, including

- Piping Plover
- Island Scaup
- Banding's Turtle
- Plus species like the Right Whale which live nearby

Animal habitats and ecological corridors protect these species

- Portsmouth has many important habitats from the forests behind Pease Airport to Pease Island
- Most of the modeled ecological corridors are not part of Portsmouth's open space map, suggesting that animals may be especially vulnerable when moving between habitats.

What did we miss?

Place your sticky notes here!

Development Capacity

Environmental Constraints on Development

Environmental regulations that protect natural lands include

- 1000 Wetland Buffer (Portsmouth Wetland Buffer Ordinance)
- 2500 Shoreland Protection Area (New Hampshire 2500 Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act)
- FEMA 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Area & projected increase with 6 feet of sea level rise

These regulations protect critical natural resources that provide important ecological value and function, but also restrict development within their buffers, decreasing developable area.

Infrastructure Constraints on Development

Water Supply

Portsmouth serves as a regional water provider, serving neighboring communities including Durham, Greenland, Madbury, New Castle, Newington, etc. Residents and businesses receive water through over 170 miles of pipe.

Portsmouth has two water systems operated by the City:

- Portsmouth Regional Water System, supplied from Bellamy Reservoir (80%), and its groundwater wells
- Pease Tapwater Water System

Water quality is ensured through source protections and treatment at two facilities:

- Madbury Water Treatment Facility
- Crafton Road Water Treatment Facility (Pease)

A wellhead protection area extends over much of the Pease area, where several community wells are located. This protection restricts more hazardous uses such as landfill and contaminated soil processing facilities, and has regulations around stormwater systems within its area.

Wastewater Treatment Capacity

Portsmouth has two treatment plants:

- Pease Wastewater Treatment Facility (WTF) Capacity: 1.2 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) Maintenance & Improvements, scheduled to be upgraded over the next several years, and has been studied for anaerobic digester feasibility
- Pease Island Wastewater Facility (WTF) Capacity: 4.8 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) Maintenance & Improvements, identified as a critical facility in the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan (2016). While the facility is above the 500-year flood zone elevation, multiple wastewater pumping stations are currently at risk from coastal flooding.

The City recently completed construction of major upgrades to its combined sewer overflow long-term control plan.

What did we miss?

Place your sticky notes here!

"Mental Map" of Place Types

Today's Development Patterns & Characteristics

Centers & Corridors

Centers and corridors are the mixed-use activity hubs of Portsmouth.

Urban Core

Regional destination with dense and dynamic mix of housing, commercial uses, public spaces, institutions, and infrastructure.

Neighborhood Corridor

Mixed-use, local destination with a mix of social and commercial activity with residential, services, amenities and small businesses.

Suburban Corridor

Auto-oriented (near regional destination for "big box" recreational, commercial, and retail) businesses that typically have large surface parking lots, and are disconnected on-site street networks.

Neighborhoods

Portsmouth's residential neighborhoods offer distinctive lifestyles and patterns.

Urban Neighborhood

Portsmouth's oldest residential fabric characterized by colorful row houses, streets with hard-edge curb, often with up-front yards.

First Ring Suburb

Portsmouth's core was residential fabric characterized by small front yards and a network of generous streets for walking, driving, biking, and walking.

Second Ring Suburb

Portsmouth's post-war residential fabric characterized by auto-oriented development with large front yards and disconnected on-site street networks.

Special Use Districts

These are destination districts typically dominated by a primary use type.

Civic Hub

Hub of civic activity, including places like City Hall, government offices, schools, libraries, housing, and community centers.

Employment Hub

Regional hubs of governmental, residential, and commercial jobs and services that support the region.

What did we miss?

Place your sticky notes here!

"Mental Map" of Place Types

Today's Development Patterns

Place Types

- Urban Core
- Neighborhood Corridor
- Suburban Corridor
- Urban Neighborhood
- First Ring Suburb
- Second Ring Suburb
- Civic Hub
- Employment Hub
- Major Streets

Focus Areas & Gateways

Where should Portsmouth plan for and invest in improvements?

How much should current place types evolve? What future development patterns do we want?

Map of Recent Development

Notable Patterns:

- Mixed-use residential, commercial and hotel infill Downtown in the former North End Urban Renewal Area and along Irvington and the West End.
- Multi-family residential infill along Rt. 1 near and/or commercial and open space amenities.
- Manufacturing at Pease and along industrial corridor west of Rt. 1.

Legend

Preserve

- Historic Designation
- Conservation / Open Space
- Wildlife Corridor
- Open Water
- Wetlands
- Flood Risk with Sea Level Rise (1% Flood + 6 ft Sea Level Rise at High Tide - MHW)

Enhance

- Established Patterns

Adapt

- Areas with capacity for adaptation and growth

Initial Degree of Change Categorization

Preserve

These areas have clear environmental, historical, or cultural resources to limit future development and focus on improvements within the constraints of each area highlighted in this category. Generally, these are areas with significant ecological and historical value to Portsmouth's identity, quality of life, sustainability, and resilience.

Enhance

These areas are largely built out and have strong existing development patterns and norms that already are capable of supporting Portsmouth's needs in the coming decades. These areas are ideal for more targeted improvements to enhance mobility, public realm, and amenities and services for quality of life as well as collaborating zoning to support diversity and flexibility where needed.

Adapt

These areas are generally more single-use or mobility-limited areas where the development pattern is more fragmented or less versatile and flexible in supporting the full range of Portsmouth's needs. In most cases, these areas were built during the "Machine, Suburbia, and Restructuring" era when Portsmouth's population increased dramatically in response to job growth at Pease, the Shipyard and other major employers. These tend to be more auto-oriented with disconnected street networks.

We want to hear from you!

Place dots on the map in places that have Citywide importance and need direction from the Master Plan.

- Focus Area**
- Gateway**

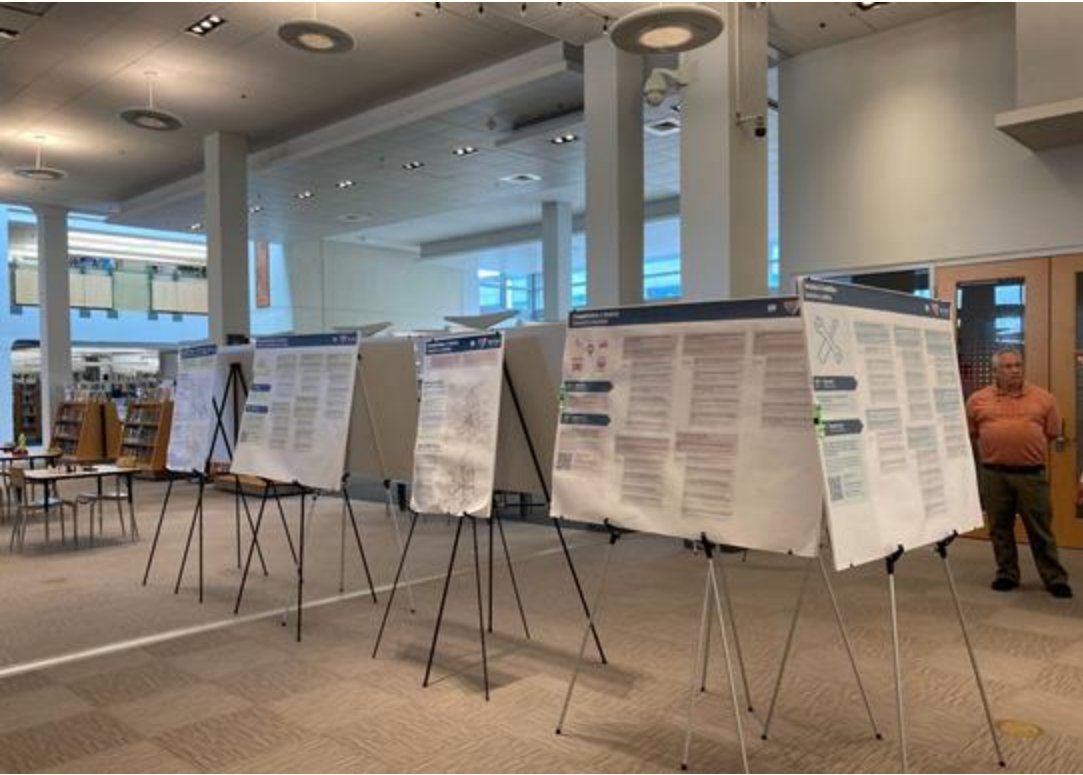
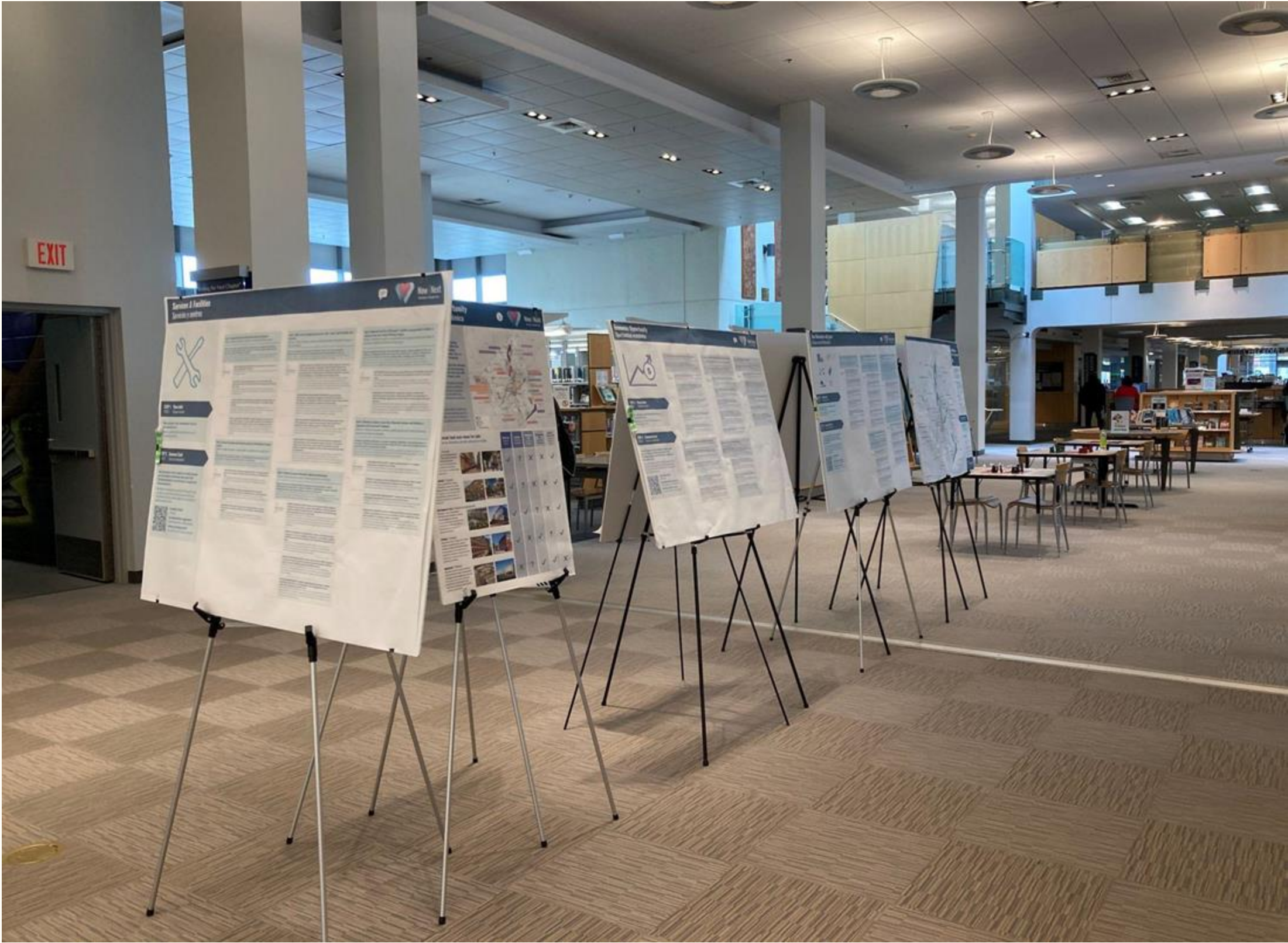
How did we do?

Talk to a member of the planning team about places you think should be in a different category!

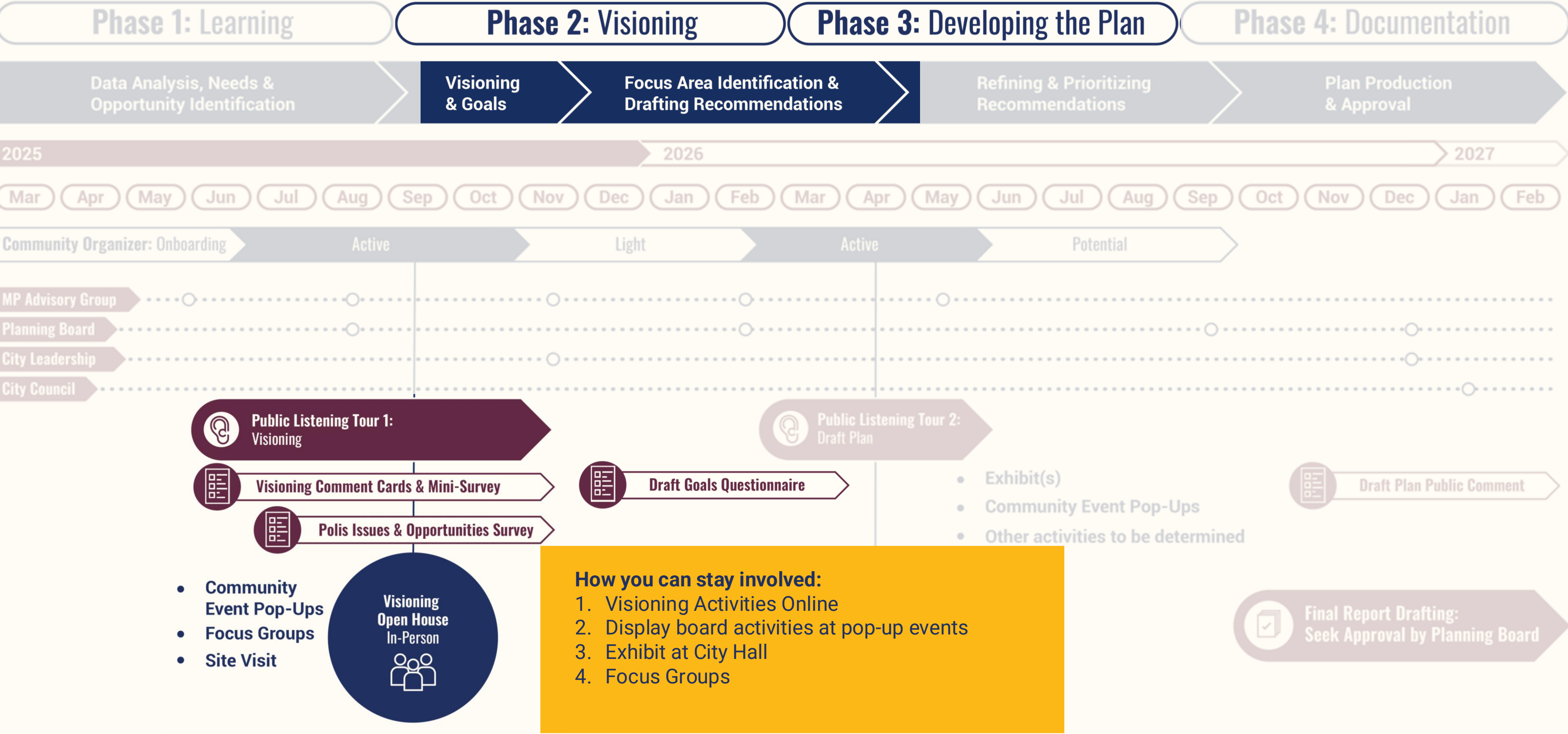
Exhibit Extension of Open House

Location: City Hall

An example of open house display boards being used for a month-long exhibit at the Worcester Public Library, doubling participation!



What's Next?



How can you stay involved and connected?

1. Look for us at Community Events & Gathering Places

Visit the website to see where we'll be next!

Look out for the exhibit and focus groups.

- i. Seniors & Accessibility Focus Group: Sept. 29th, 1pm at Senior Center
- ii. Visioning Open House Boards Exhibit: City Hall
- iii. More to come!

2. Complete Visioning Activities:

Promote these in-person and online tools with your network:

- i. Online Issues & Opportunities Survey (Polis)
- ii. Visioning Comment Cards (postcards & online form)

3. Spread the Word!

- i. Talk to friends and family about the Master Plan, encourage them to participate!
- ii. Reach out to Anne if you are interested in supporting outreach activities or have an idea: weidman@utiledesign.com





Thank You!

Stay in touch with our outreach leads:

Anne: weidman@utiledesign.com

Monte: mrbohanan@portsmouthnh.gov

Let us know if you notice something we can be doing better to promote understanding and participation.



Get informed &
take the Polis survey!

Scan QR code to visit the
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