



**Master Plan Steering Committee**

**AGENDA**

**Tuesday, December 3, 2024**

**6:00 PM**

**City Hall,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Council Chambers**

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Minutes of Previous Meeting – October 1, 2024
- III. Future Summit Debrief
- IV. Online Discussion Boards
- V. Strategic Pillar Task Forces
- VI. Phase II Schedule
- VII. New Business
- VIII. Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 7, 6:00 PM – *to be confirmed*

1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

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5 MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

6:00 PM

Council Chamber,  
City Hall

Members Present:

Alex Henkel, Vice Chair  
Councilor Michael Remy (arrived late)  
Joshua Meehan  
Elizabeth Wood  
Emily Lavigne-Bernier  
Joseph Perras  
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV  
Juliana Bergeron  
Kenneth Kost, Alternate (voting)  
Mayor Jay Kahn, Alternate (voting)

Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community Development  
Director  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager

Members Not Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair  
Councilor Catherine Workman  
Councilor Michael Remy  
Armando Rangel  
Cody Morrison  
Leatrice Oram  
Joe Walier  
Councilor Philip Jones, Alternate

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9  
10 **1) Call to Order & Roll Call**

11  
12 Vice Chair Henkel called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

13  
14 **2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – September 3, 2024**

15  
16 A motion by Vice Chair Henkel to adopt the September 3, 2024, minutes was duly seconded by  
17 Mr. Von Plinsky. The motion carried unanimously. Councilor Remy was not present for this  
18 vote.

19  
20 **3) Outreach & Engagement Overview**

- 21 **A) Review of Outreach & Engagement Activities to Date**  
22 **B) Recap of Recent Tabling Activities**

23  
24 Ms. Brunner led a presentation on Master Plan activities to date. She mentioned that City staff  
25 had been tabling at events throughout the community, including the City’s Ward Optimization  
26 Weeks (WOW), and she said there had been great feedback. City staff also met with a couple of  
27 different groups, including residents of the Hundred Nights shelter. Ms. Brunner described the  
28 meeting with shelter residents as a great conversation, noting that she was a bit blown away by  
29 how passionate the residents at the meeting were about Keene; specifically, most of the residents  
30 at the discussion were lifelong residents, meaning they were born and raised in Keene. They  
31 each—all unprompted—shared their housing stories that included a lot of great input. Ms.  
32 Brunner summarized that there was useful feedback about how the City could better serve its  
33 residents in a memo she shared with the Committee. City staff also met with the Mayor’s Youth  
34 Council and students self-selected into groups to talk about the different strategic pillars  
35 identified in this Master Planning process. Staff were in the process of scanning and sharing the  
36 community comments from tabling events with the project consultants. The consultants will be  
37 typing the comments up, which will then be sent to the Committee. Ms. Brunner explained that a  
38 focus on safety stood out to her in the community comments. People mentioned safety is a  
39 reason they love Keene or safety is something they think Keene needs to improve on. Many also  
40 talked about the importance of having amenities in their own neighborhoods. She stated that  
41 having parks to walk to was an example of an amenity community members conveyed was  
42 important to them. Other tabling activities included the Sentinel’s event on September 7 and the  
43 International Festival and Clean Energy Fair.

44  
45 Mr. Meehan thanked City staff for having the conversation with the guests at Hundred Nights,  
46 which he said was important. He stated that one of the values they had been trying to uphold as  
47 part of this process is talking not only with people who elect to provide feedback within surveys  
48 online, but also reaching people who will be profoundly impacted by the Master Plan but might  
49 be more difficult than others to reach for their feedback.

50  
51 Mayor Kahn said that this was the second time the Youth Council had participated in a Master  
52 Planning conversation, and he thought this time was enlightening because they had pillars to  
53 discuss and group themselves into. He was also interested in seeing the Hundred Nights memo  
54 and asked Ms. Brunner to share it with the Committee. He said the shelter residents were an  
55 important focus group. Mayor Kahn also spoke about a tabling event at the Monadnock  
56 International Festival that Ms. Brunner set up and attended for three hours. Mayor Kahn stated  
57 Mr. Meehan and himself had tabled at the event afterward. Mayor Kahn also noted that he was  
58 struck by how many people were new to Keene, which he said was nice to see.

59  
60 **4) Review Draft Key Themes / “Strategic Pillars”**

61  
62 Next, Ms. Brunner reviewed the draft “Strategic Pillars” that the Steering Committee and Staff  
63 had been working on over the past few months of workshop-style meetings. Staff and consultants  
64 had developed draft language for the pillars using the Steering Committee’s feedback. She  
65 sought the Committee’s input on the drafts before they would be presented at the Future Summit.

66 She showed the matrix framework that was used in the Think Tank workshop in May when the  
67 community was asked to consider various possible future scenarios. The four quadrants in the  
68 matrix included “Innovative and Intentional Change2,” “Growing Older; Growing Smarter,”  
69 “Keep On Keeping On,” and “Thoughtful Community Based Innovations.” Specifically, the  
70 feedback in the matrix that Ms. Brunner showed included the expected future in green, preferred  
71 future in blue, and least preferred future in red. Overwhelmingly, the consensus for the most  
72 preferred future was in the middle of the top right quadrant, and the expected future was in the  
73 center of the matrix. Then, Staff and the Steering Committee identified key themes within those  
74 future scenarios. Ms. Brunner presented a diagram prepared by consultants regarding the  
75 preferred future, “Innovative and Intentional Change2,” developed at the Think Tank. Based on  
76 feedback collected up to August, consultants identified six key themes. Then, Staff asked the  
77 Steering Committee if anything should be changed, and Ms. Brunner showed what notes came  
78 out of their discussion..

79  
80 Ms. Brunner continued, explaining that the themes identified by consultants include: (1)  
81 community collaboration & strategic positioning, (2) housing availability and affordability, (3)  
82 economic & business development, (4) transportation & neighborhood/regional connectivity, (5)  
83 workforce & community development, and (6) environmental stewardship & climate adaptation.  
84 Next, Ms. Brunner presented two stages of edits and the most recent, revised future scenario title  
85 and key themes based on feedback from the Steering Committee. The preferred future was re-  
86 named “Regional Magnetism: Collaborative approaches that generate innovative change,” after  
87 the term “magnetism” was used by Mayor Kahn at one of the workshops. One of the themes  
88 from the Steering Committee and outreach in the community was an emphasis on regional  
89 collaboration, and that Keene is the center that draws people in. Ms. Brunner stated this is not  
90 finalized, but a step closer to what the final version of the “preferred future” diagram will be.  
91 The pillars, or key themes, around the title had also been refined based on feedback from the  
92 Steering Committee in September. The pillars are as follows:

- 93     ▪ Livable Housing – Expand enticing housing options for all.
- 94     ▪ Thriving Economy – Grow a dynamic economy of the future that spans local to  
95       international.
- 96     ▪ Connected Mobility – Build local and regional connectivity, transportation, and  
97       recreation networks.
- 98     ▪ Healthy Community – Support vibrant community neighborhoods that reflect their  
99       unique identity.
- 100    ▪ Adaptable Workforce – Foster a future-ready, abundant, and adaptable workforce.
- 101    ▪ Flourishing Environment – Champion environmental stewardship and climate action.

102  
103 Ms. Brunner stated that the visual diagram would also include the underpinning values of  
104 sustainability and collaboration.

105  
106 Ms. Brunner sought Committee feedback on the changes.

107

108 Mr. Von Plinsky said he was pretty happy with the new language, particularly underpinning  
109 sustainability and collaboration. While he said everything Ms. Brunner showed was important,  
110 he thought sustainability and collaboration should be the solid foundation of everything else  
111 listed and subsequent decisions made.

112

113 Dr. Perras commended the staff and consultants for their impressive progress on this since his  
114 last attendance.

115

116 Mr. Kost agreed that the diagram looked nice. He reflected on the recent hurricane impacts on  
117 the southern U.S. and the “Flourishing Environment” Strategic Pillar listed. He thought about the  
118 potential for devastating floods in Keene that could change the City in a moment. He said it  
119 would be good to capture that aspect of Keene’s environment and really focus on stormwater.  
120 Mr. Kost was unsure how concrete the concepts Ms. Brunner displayed would become in the  
121 Master Plan, but he believed this issue would need a lot of attention in the Master Plan because it  
122 impacts everything else: development, land use, housing, etc.

123

124 Mayor Kahn spoke to Mr. Von Plinsky’s point, stating that the central pillar of Regional  
125 Magnetism would also be focused on collaboration and sustainability. The Mayor thought the  
126 diagram began to capture the difference between the best outcome and the most likely outcome,  
127 and that people are looking for *sustainable* change—not just *change*. He thought that “Regional  
128 Magnetism” starts to take on the common elements in the Strategic Pillars. Regarding safety  
129 issues and the “actualizing parts” of the community’s desires, Mayor Kahn said the safety  
130 component does not show up currently in this version of the diagram. He stated that community  
131 safety (e.g., health and educational institutions) is a key component, and he did not want to take  
132 it for granted as an important part of the community’s lifestyle.

133

134 Councilor Remy agreed that safety is an important concept and could fit under many of the  
135 Strategic Pillars, so he thought it would be good to make that clear somehow. He stated that if  
136 the concept of “safety” were to be included in the environment pillar, the concept of  
137 “environment” could extend beyond the natural world and also include our “living environment.”  
138 He stated that he likes the buckets (key pillars) as they are right now; however, he could go  
139 either way on the concept of pulling “safety” out on its own or solely acknowledging that it is  
140 connected to all the other pillars.

141

142 Next, Ms. Brunner reviewed the next steps in the Master Planning process. These Strategic  
143 Pillars would be reviewed at the Future Summit on October 5th, which is the transition from  
144 Phase 1 (Visioning) to Phase 2 (Implementation). She displayed a schematic of what would  
145 occur during Phase 2, when the actual Master Plan will be written. During the October 5th Future  
146 Summit, Task Forces will be formed for each Strategic Pillar to develop specific action items; for  
147 example, Mr. Kost’s mention of flooding could be an action item. Specific ideas had already  
148 come from the community, and those ideas would be summarized in a Vision Report on the City  
149 website (emailed to the Committee after this meeting). Ms. Brunner stated a handout, including  
150 an overview of each pillar and feedback from the community, was distributed to the Committee.

151 The October 5th event will connect the vision with the Pillars. The period of October–December  
152 2024 will include a lot of consultant research on case studies and best practices, forming the  
153 Task Forces, and launching online discussion boards and the project website. The period of  
154 January–February 2025 will include Task Force meetings and establishing goals for each  
155 Strategic Pillar. Then, there will be a community survey to confirm/test those goals and strategies  
156 developed through the Task Forces. The consultants and Staff will work on the implementation  
157 matrix for each pillar to build out the Implementation chapter of the Master Plan. During April–  
158 May 2025, there would also be a process for the Future Land Use chapter, using ArcGIS  
159 StoryMaps. Ideally, Ms. Brunner said the Master Plan would be ready for the adoption process  
160 by July 2025.

161  
162 Ms. Brunner sought Committee feedback on the proposed approach for phase two of the Master  
163 Plan process.

164  
165 Mayor Kahn recalled a recent conversation during the Planning Board meeting, after which he  
166 and Chair Farrington discussed the need for data to inform this Master Planning process. Mayor  
167 Kahn felt that in this process so far, the goal setting had been grasping at ideas that were not  
168 grounded in data. He thought that at some point, a different consultant would come into this  
169 process to presumably offer that information, which he said would be important. Returning to the  
170 concept of the Master Plan in Keene being a regional idea, Mayor Kahn stated that the region  
171 Keene is attracting its workforce from is not just Cheshire County, which he said was well  
172 tapped out. He stated if Keene wants to fill positions and be a regional magnet, the City needs to  
173 stretch its boundaries, which he thought was happening. He said Keene needs to define its  
174 boundaries, because no one else would define multistate boundaries. He stated Keene and  
175 Cheshire County is 6% of the population of NH, but the City is drawing from a region that is  
176 much larger than the 74,000 people in Cheshire County.

177 Mayor Kahn referred to Dr. Perras' knowledge of the topic.

178  
179 Dr. Perras stated that He provided some context. Every two weeks, Dr. Perras orients new  
180 employees at Cheshire Medical Center for 30–45 minutes. He stated there is a mix of new hires  
181 from outside of Cheshire Country, those who grew up here, and those who left and are coming  
182 back. He explained that if a line was drawn 100 miles around any direction from Dartmouth  
183 Hitchcock Lebanon, there would be 17,000 healthcare jobs available, 5,000 of which are nursing.  
184 He stated there are about 20,000 people in NH are actively looking for work. He said that  
185 Cheshire Medical Center is always looking well beyond Cheshire County to fill positions. Still,  
186 based on these experiences, Dr. Perras said there is something special about Keene that keeps  
187 bringing people back.

188  
189 Ms. Lavigne-Bernier said that the period between October–December, like Mayor Kahn had  
190 stated, seems like the time in which more data would come in through case studies, numbers, and  
191 facts. Ms. Brunner answered in the affirmative. She clarified there will be consultants from three  
192 firms working on the Master Plan process, in which one consultant will be assigned to each Task  
193 Force. The consultant will be tasked with researching specific key-pillar topics. She stated there

194 will be an opportunity in that time frame to request specific information the Committee is  
195 looking for. Consultants would also be developing the Snapshot Report, which does not look at  
196 the broader region that Dr. Perras mentioned Keene is drawing its workforce from, but rather  
197 compares Keene to NH and national statistics.

198

199 **5) October 5 Future Summit**

200

201 Ms. Brunner reviewed the upcoming Future Summit agenda, which would begin with a  
202 presentation from the consultants on the entirety of the Master Plan project to date. Then, an 18'  
203 x 16' map of Keene would be displayed with materials, such as colored Legos, yarn, sticky  
204 notes, and tape. The materials would be associated with a key to mark neighborhood centers,  
205 transportation corridors, parks, among other amenities. Then, there would be consultant-  
206 facilitated breakout groups for each Strategic Pillar before returning as a full group for a report  
207 out.

208

209 Vice Chair Henkel opened the floor for comments from the Committee.

210

211 Ms. Wood asked if there would be a way to display the large map during the Pumpkin Festival  
212 the following weekend so community members could see it.

213

214 Ms. Brunner stated that she was unsure if Staff will be tabling at Pumpkin Fest. Discussion  
215 ensued about who might be available to facilitate tabling, , whether a large photo of the map  
216 could be used, and other ways the community might interact with it during the festival. Ms.  
217 Wood placed emphasis on interacting with the map as a more approachable way for people to  
218 engage with the Master Plan process compared to a facilitated working-session.

219

220 Deputy City Manager, Rebecca Landry, mentioned that the Revenue Office on the first floor of  
221 City Hall has large glass windows along the ramp going up to City Hall. This area could be used  
222 to display the map, pending facilities permission. She suggested getting creative to collect  
223 feedback from the public, potentially with a QR code.

224

225 Councilor Remy noted that the City was also invited the participate in Trick or Treating with  
226 downtown businesses. He stated Trick or Treating could be a good opportunity to draw people  
227 into a booth that also has the map displayed for a few hours, if a member of City staff is  
228 available. The businesses participating in the Trick or Treat event put a sticker in their windows  
229 to be included on the Trick or Treat map. Councilor Remy suggested a City table could be  
230 included on the map. Ms. Wood suggested that the City's booth could hand out candy with a QR  
231 code on the back for feedback on the Master Plan map.

232

233 **6) New Business**

234

235 None presented.

236

237 7) **Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 5 at 6:00 PM – to be confirmed.**

238

239 The regular November meeting date would conflict with the General Election. The Committee  
240 was hesitant to skip a monthly meeting. The Committee was open to meeting on a Monday  
241 instead and proposed November 18. Ms. Brunner would be in communication to confirm.

242

243 8) **Adjournment**

244

245 There being no further business, Vice Chair Henkel adjourned the meeting at 6:45 PM.

246

247 Respectfully submitted by,  
248 Katie Kibler, Minute Taker  
249 October 8, 2024

250

251 Reviewed and edited by,  
252 Emily Duseau, Planning Technician