



Master Plan Steering Committee

AGENDA

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

6:00 PM

**City Hall,
2nd Floor Council Chambers**

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Minutes of Previous Meeting – September 3, 2024
- III. Outreach and Engagement Overview
 - a. Review of outreach & engagement activities to date
 - b. Recap of recent tabling activities
- IV. Review Draft Key Themes / “Strategic Pillars”
- V. October 5 Future Summit
- VI. New Business
- VII. Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 5, 6:00 PM – *to be confirmed*

1 **City of Keene**
2 **New Hampshire**

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5 **JOINT PLANNING BOARD & MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**
6 **WORKSHOP**
7 **MEETING MINUTES**
8

Tuesday, September 3, 2024

6:00 PM

Heberton Hall, Keene Public Library

Master Plan Steering Committee Members

Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair

Josh Meehan

Joe Walier

Leatrice Oram

Councilor Michael Remy

Cody Morrison

Sparky Von Plinsky

Juliana Bergeron

Kenneth Kost, Alternate (Voting)

Councilor Phil Jones, Alternate (Voting)

City Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community Development

Director

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

Councilor Catt Workman

Elizabeth Wood

Alex Henkel, Vice Chair

Emily Lavigne-Bernier

Joe Perras

Mayor Jay Kahn, Alternate

9
10 **I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

11 Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM and asked for roll call. Chair Farrington
12 invited Councilor Phil Jones and Ken Kost to participate as voting members.
13

14 **II. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – August 6, 2024**

15 A motion made by Mr. Von Plinsky to adopt the August 6, 2024 minutes as presented was duly
16 seconded by Mr. Walier. The motion passed unanimously.
17

18 **III. Workshop (led by staff)**

19
20 a) **Review of Draft Key Themes**

21 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner, gave a brief overview of the project for attendees who were not
22 present at previous meetings. She noted that the project is currently in “Phase 1,” which is focused
23 on updating the community’s vision for the future. Engagement efforts to date included a first

24 community survey, which garnered 648 responses, interviews with key members of the
25 community, a workshop that took place in May, and visioning sessions that were held throughout
26 the summer and are ongoing. She explained that the results of the visioning sessions and the
27 second survey regarding different future scenarios revealed that most respondents would like
28 Keene to move towards the scenario called “Innovative & Intentional (Change²).” This is the
29 scenario that includes the most change; however, there is a very clear consensus that people want
30 to be in the middle of the scenario – in other words, they want change, but not extreme change.

31
32 Based on the public input received throughout the first phase, the consultant has identified six
33 draft “Strategic Pillars,” or themes for the Master Plan, which are as follows:

- 34
- 35 • Pillar 1: Community Collaboration & Strategic Positioning
 - 36 • Pillar 2: Housing Affordability
 - 37 • Pillar 3: Economic & Business Development
 - 38 • Pillar 4: Transportation & Regional/Neighborhood Connectivity
 - 39 • Pillar 5: Workforce & Community Development
 - 40 • Pillar 6: Environmental Stewardship & Climate (leadership) & Adaptation

41
42 Ms. Brunner explained that the majority of these pillars were discussed at the August 6 Master
43 Plan Steering Committee meeting. At that meeting, the Committee was asked to discuss whether
44 these are the appropriate themes and whether they should be re-worked or re-worded. The next
45 step in the process is to further discuss the proposed pillars and identify action steps that can be
46 taken towards achieving each of them. This will set the stage for the Future Summit on October 5,
47 which is when the community vision will be unveiled and presented to the community,

48
49 **b) Breakout Groups**

50 Meeting attendees were separated into three breakout groups and each group was assigned two
51 pillars to discuss. Ms. Brunner gave each group a sheet with notes related to their specific pillar
52 that were taken during last month’s meeting. Each group was also given a worksheet and asked to
53 write down at least five key action ideas related to their strategic pillar.

54
55 Report-out on Economic & Business Development (Theme #3)

56 Leatrice Oram did the report-out for this group and stated that key action areas discussed by her
57 group included developing communication and support plans for neighborhood businesses;
58 identifying industries of various sizes (small- to mid-sized) that align with Keene’s resources;
59 investing in technological infrastructure to expand the potential capacity for remote workers;
60 capitalizing on existing resources (such as the Dillant-Hopkins Airport) to make incremental
61 strides towards building/attracting businesses to the area. She noted that her group felt that this
62 theme tied in closely with the Community Collaboration & Strategic Positioning theme.

63
64 Report-out on Housing Affordability (Theme #2)

65 Josh Meehan did the report-out for this group and stated that the key action areas his group
66 discussed included performing an inventory of taxed/untaxed land in the City; creating a housing

67 trust fund; and making zoning and other code changes related to parking, density, fire suppression
68 system installation requirements, and mixed-use sites to help encourage development in Keene.
69 He also mentioned potentially creating a specific housing concierge position that could be used to
70 help guide developers in the area. He also mentioned the potential usefulness of social impact
71 bonds. Another member of the group noted that while there is a lack of developable land left in
72 Keene (“green fields”), there is a lot of potential for adding additional dwelling units on already-
73 developed commercial sites, such as above existing big box stores in commercial shopping plazas
74 or by converting surface parking lots to housing. The group discussed the need to create more
75 housing options in Keene and not just rely on other towns to fill this gap/need.

76

77 Report-out on Community Collaboration & Strategic Positioning (Theme #1)

78 Councilor Mike Remy explained that his group felt that collaboration is already intrinsic to how
79 the City of Keene operates. He went on to state that his group would like to see the development
80 of housing in Keene to help financially support the services that the City provides. Additionally,
81 the group discussed that Keene’s strategic position moving forward will need to answer the
82 question of, “*Who do we want to be when we grow up?*” He also mentioned that the group would
83 like to see purposeful/intentional population growth in the future and not just population growth
84 for the sake of increasing the number of residents living in Keene.

85

86 Report-out on Environmental Stewardship & Climate (leadership) & Adaptation (Theme #6):

87 Sparky Von Plinsky explained that this group discussed prioritizing existing infrastructure and
88 networks, including in already developed areas where transportation currently exists. In addition,
89 the group brought up the idea of mitigating environmental hazards through the creation of
90 public/private partnerships, ensuring that sustainable development is a priority, and preparing for
91 emerging technologies (i.e. – smart buildings). For this group, the bottom line is that in order to
92 attract young people to the area, the City needs to be designed to have amenities, such as bike
93 lanes, lakes, parks, etc. Additionally, invasive species need to be controlled in public areas, such
94 as at Pat Rusell Park. An invasive species management plan and/or environmental stewardship
95 position (and if not a position, then a partnership) would be helpful. Ms. Brunner noted that the
96 City may be able to do a Flash Vote poll in the future related to invasive species.

97

98 Report-out on Workforce & Community Development (Theme #5)

99 Mr. Meehan stated that this group discussed matching training opportunities to available jobs;
100 coordinating further between local businesses/employers and institutions of higher education to
101 create these opportunities; creating a forum for neighborhood groups to meet together and flourish;
102 and expanding the accessibility of childcare using emerging opportunities (such as home-based
103 daycares) by removing regulatory barriers. Mr. Kost noted that it will be important to intentionally
104 attract new populations to the area. Mr. Remy noted that skill-matching between jobs and available
105 employment opportunities is a challenge currently faced within the community.

106

107 Report-out on Transportation & Regional/Neighborhood Connectivity (Theme #4)

108 Ms. Oram stated that the community may need to recognize the challenges associated with
109 providing traditional public transit (e.g., fixed-route bus service) in a rural area where the demand

110 does not justify the cost. Instead, attendees agreed on the need to encourage walkability by having
111 parking at the rear of buildings and encouraging/offering more ride-share options or other solutions
112 appropriate for rural areas.

113

114 **IV. October 5th Future Summit**

115 Ms. Brunner explained that the next phase of the Master Plan Process will start at the Future
116 Summit scheduled for Saturday, October 5th from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm in Heberton Hall at the
117 Keene Public Library. She noted that sign-up sheets are available to volunteer to serve on a “task
118 force” related to each of the six pillars.

119

120 **V. Fall Outreach & Engagement**

121 Ms. Brunner noted that volunteers are needed for tabling a number of local events coming up,
122 including the Keene Sentinel anniversary celebration on Saturday, September 7th.

123

124 **VI. New Business**

125 There was no new business to be discussed.

126

127 **VII. Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 1st at 6:00 PM**

128

129 **VIII. Adjournment**

130 There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 7:52 PM.

131

132 Respectfully submitted by,
133 Megan Fortson, Planner
134 September 10, 2024

135

136 Reviewed and edited by,
137 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner



September 24, 2024

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee
THROUGH: Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director
FROM: Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
RE: Vision Keene 20-Forward Outreach and Engagement Update

Recommendation: Informational.

Background

The Vision Keene 20-Forward project, which aims to update the City’s long-range plan for the growth and development of Keene, launched in early 2024. Since that time, the public has been asked to engage with this project through a variety of methods, which are detailed on the [project website](#) and summarized in Figure 1. These include a community survey, which garnered 648 responses, a two-day “Think Tank” workshop at the end of May, a series of 15 visioning sessions, tabling at various events, and interviews with 11 individuals to gain more in-depth perspectives on key issues facing the city.

For most of the visioning sessions (14/15), attendees filled out a “heatmap” survey to indicate their preferred future. The final visioning session, which was held on September 16 at the Hundred Nights Homeless Shelter and Resource Center, occurred after the heatmap survey had concluded. However, valuable input and feedback was obtained during this session, which is summarized below.

A total of seven residents/clients and the Executive Director (eight people total) participated in the conversation at the Hundred Nights Shelter. While there was a large focus on housing, the conversation also stretched to other topics such as mental health and other services, experiences in the city and long-term goals.

Four of the seven attendees were lifelong Keene residents who had only recently lost their homes as they aged. These residents focused on both the spirit of Keene as a giving place and on how the community has changed as it has grown. Their focus was on the danger faced by many residents on the edge of homelessness and on the small number of decisions that can end with people losing their home or in need of supportive services.

The group also mentioned the barriers to accessing housing. This was an especially illuminating discussion because even with access to shelter, any number of issues with mental health, past substance misuse, or legal or financial status can bar a person from an opportunity to rent a place to live. Issues such as the need for deposit funds, issues with previous landlords as well as past criminal records meant that people trying to get back on their feet cannot access housing.

The group identified the large number of festivals and celebrations as a positive for the community. They only wished that the spirit that comes from those events could be extended year-round. The group connected these events with the services provided by the community through non-profits as some of the great things that make them want to stay in the community that has been their home for most, if not all, of their lives.

We spoke to the group for about an hour and a half. The conversation reinforced the strategic conversations that the Master Plan Steering Committee has been discussing, but with additional evidence that showed the many hurdles the community faces to improve housing access and employment opportunities.



Figure 1. Community outreach and engagement methods utilized during the "Visioning" phase of the Vision Keene 20-Forward project.