



Master Plan Steering Committee

AGENDA

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

6:00 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Adoption of Meeting Minutes – May 6, 2025
- III. Story Map Survey Results
- IV. June 3 Future Summit Debrief
- V. Population Growth Goal Discussion
- VI. Review of Draft Comprehensive Master Plan
 - a. Planning process & public engagement
 - b. Pillar chapters
 - c. Implementation Plan
 - d. Future Land Use Map
 - e. Other Feedback
- VII. New Business
- VIII. Next Meeting: Date to be determined, if needed

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

6:00 PM

**IT Training Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair
Cody Morrison
Joshua Meehan
Emily Lavigne-Bernier
Juliana Bergeron
Councilor Philip Jones, Alternate (Voting)
Mayor Jay V. Kahn, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Paul Andrus, Community Development
Director
Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

Councilor Michael Remy
Alex Henkel, Vice Chair
Leatrice Oram
Elizabeth Wood
Dr. Joseph Perras
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV
Joe Walier
Kenneth Kost, Alternate
Councilor Catherine Workman, Alternate

1) Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM. Consultant Courtney Powell from WGI was present on MS Teams.

2) Adoption of Meeting Minutes – March 18, 2025 & April 1, 2025

A motion by Ms. Bergeron to adopt the March 18, 2025 and April 1, 2025, minutes was duly seconded by Ms. Lavigne-Bernier.

Revision to line 604 of the April 1st minutes: change “idea” to “ideal.” The motion to adopt the minutes, as amended, carried unanimously.

3) Story Map Survey Results

4) Draft Future Land Use Map

5) Population Growth Goal Discussion

26
27 **6) Next Steps:**

28 **A) Prioritization Survey/Decision-Making Tool**

29 **B) June 3 Future Summit, 5:00 PM, Heberton Hall**

30
31 **7) New Business**

32
33 **8) Next Meeting: June 10, 2025 – 6:00 PM**

34
35 **9) Adjournment**

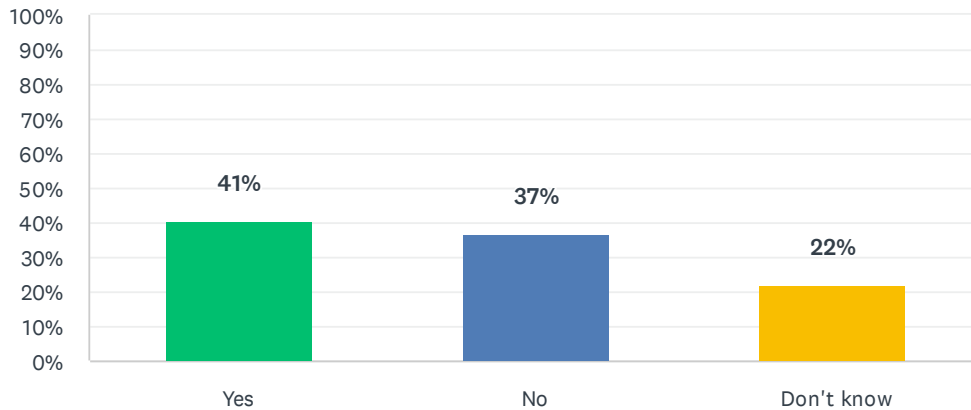
36
37 Mayor Kahn departed, and the Committee lost quorum at 6:09 PM, so Chair Farrington
38 adjourned the meeting.

39
40 Respectfully submitted by,
41 Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
42 May 12, 2025

43
44 Reviewed and edited by,
45 Megan Fortson, Planner

Q1 Do you think there is anything missing from the Vision Keene Strategic Pillar Goals?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41%	11
No	37%	10
Don't know	22%	6
TOTAL		27

#	PLEASE SPECIFY	DATE
1	Pillars 2 and 4. To help facilitate economic and community development, the city should improve our city's landmark, City Square. All cities need a landmark.	5/9/2025 8:08 AM
2	As someone who grew up in Keene, but has only recently moved back from Minnesota, I am so thrilled to see this work happening. I think these emerging goals are fairly comprehensive, and I am very aligned with the work that the city has been doing around this, but I do want to highlight a few points that bear special consideration. 1. Under Pillar 3 - I would love to see more direct, easy access from all neighborhoods to the rail trail. As a family with young children, the rail trail feels far safer than the bike lanes that have been put in, but it is hard to access directly to from our neighborhood in West Keene, which severely diminishes our ability to rely on bikes for our transportation. Bike lanes simply don't feel like enough - a road system dedicated to bikes (like the rail trail) feels far more unique and useful and could be a defining feature of Keene. I think imagining something like this would also really help to built a new, more eco friendly map of our wonderful city. 2. Connecting to Pillars 2, 3, and 4 - having all small, vibrant businesses located downtown (in a relatively narrow, and imagine rent-expensive strip) limits the walk-ability of outlying neighborhoods, and probably the growth of business as well. There is a similar issue with all of the grocery and supply outlets being concentrated in primarily car accessible areas. I would love to see more businesses popping up in outlying neighborhoods. Having downtown be the only major location for small business limits our potential, and means that only neighborhoods close to downtown are truly walk-able thus fully eco friendly. I see this is already in Pillar 4, but it feels utterly crucial to me. 3. Under Pillar 6 - I really don't think this pillar prioritizes the creative creation of green-space in every possible venue. Keene could be so much more forward looking if its downtown were a haven of clean air, pollinator sanctuaries, bio-diverse planting choices...etc. And as a teacher at a holistic school in the area, I would love to see more parks that embrace the model of Robin, working on cultivating natural beauty alongside nature play (please look into nature playscapes as elaborations on traditional playgrounds), and recreation. A park which I think exemplifies what not to do is Russel park - it has an enormous, open wasted space that I rarely see people	4/30/2025 10:42 PM

Vision Keene Storymap Survey

using as intended, and when brining children there there is no shade or ability for the children to fall into stories and imagination in their play - in short it lacks creativity. Robinhood on the other hand invites wonder, has plenty of shade, and a multitude of multipurpose spaces (though the playground is aging a bit). 4. Under Pillar 5 - yes to all of this! Please creatively work to elevate the mess in cost of housing that our states tax system has thrust upon the city and its denizens. And please do work on affordable childcare - it is such a struggle to afford housing and childcare as a young family! 5. This is not a pillar, but I really, really feel Keene needs to step up its game in terms of artistic, unique events and traditions. The pumpkin festival stands on its own in a great way and always will, but there is something so bland about the tree lighting festival in the way it is executed and the ice festival...etc. even art in the park feels sterilized and deadened, and I can only imagine this takes a toll on peoples experience of the community over time. The tree lighting festival stands out for it's blandness, boring tree, and lack of multicultural awareness. Even the farmers market could use some work - one only needs to go to the thriving Brattleboro farmer's market to wonder why Keene can't muster something equally wonderful. I would look to more successful events like the international festival, or events hosted at Terra Nova that don't feel cookie cutter and like they are just going through the motions. When people come to an event in Keene they should have a story to tell - they should leave saying "it was unlike anything I've experienced before". These festivals and the way they are implemented are crucial to this. I don't mean to be harsh about this - I do know how much work goes into these things, but I can't help but feel we could be so much more ourselves as a city than we are now. I think one thing that could help with this is opening up or transforming new spaces (both green spaces) and performance venues for events to develop in. 6. Thank you so much for your work on this, truly! I have so much faith in the city based on the work that has been done with this so far, and I would love to help where I can - I would specifically love to talk more about nature playscapes, or really any of the points I've addressed. I also really want to affirm that I would love to see these emerging goals enacted with boldness and beauty and courage - I know people can be resistant to change, but this is what the young people of our town, state, and country need, and folks will come round as it develops. The co-op is a clear example of this - look how long it took to get going and how beloved and central it has become in our community. I know there will be budget constraints and there is a great deal of process to go through, but on-wards boldly!

3	I guess it's in there but I still want to have more emphasis or thought into how to be more welcoming to people of color or how to better support the people of color who already make Keene their home (like myself).	4/30/2025 6:38 PM
4	Does "prioritize vulnerable road users" refer to bikers, motorized wheelchair users, crossing residents etc. along lower Winchester St? I think what's missing is implementation of permanent solar powered speed monitors like the ones popping up in western mass. Especially on Winchester street, where vulnerable road users and residents have lower quality of life due to speeding issues which have been reported and ignored by KPD. Adding crosswalks and green space to upper Winchester would promote community connection. Basically, let's make all of Keene walkable/rideable for everyone! You cannot put a price on a fully walkable town. Instant value increase.	4/29/2025 8:09 AM
5	If we take these pillars seriously they are well chosen.	4/28/2025 7:55 AM
6	Food security including local farms and expanded community gardens.	4/27/2025 8:06 PM
7	Not sure if it is part of the plan but a continuation of encouraging community artistic events including music events	4/27/2025 5:59 AM
8	Bike paths and bike access to all areas in town. Promote access to all areas in and around town for people without car access such as bus access and bike path infrastructure	4/26/2025 12:32 PM
9	Please ensure that all programs are open to all Keene residents, regardless of immigration status	4/26/2025 11:41 AM
10	Fiscal responsibility	4/25/2025 12:30 PM
11	Keep central square as it is	4/25/2025 9:28 AM
12	As the chapters are presented there is probably a connected order to consider. For instance, Economy, Workforce, Housing, Neighborhoods, Transportation and Environment. Here are some comments on the storyboard. Economy – The word manufacturing is absent and needs to find a place. Where it states Keene is an economic leader, add the word regional, hence "the regional economic leader," or the Monadnock Region's economic leader. Neighborhoods – Is	4/21/2025 8:10 AM

Vision Keene Storymap Survey

the overarching goal of neighborhoods to create unique identities? Workforce – It needs a KSC photo as well as the KHS photo, which could be the Career Center entrance rather than the High School entrance. The goal to attract workforce should include retain. Prioritize workforce and community health. The goal to live and work in Keene, should include visit. Environment - doesn't say encourage outdoor activity, enjoy the beautiful environment that Keene provides for all sorts of outdoor activity and healthy lifestyles.

13	Supporting Educational institutions at all levels	4/21/2025 7:22 AM
14	<p>Dear Mayor and City Planners, Thank you for this opportunity to be able to submit some suggestions regarding your Emerging Goals of Vision Keene 20-Fordward. A few things come to mind, so here's my suggestions: Invest and encourage in Tiny Houses throughout the city. Perhaps ease some Zoning restrictions or make some otherwise changes that'll encourage these affordable Tiny Houses. And of course it goes without saying that the City needs more low income, Senior Hud housing as well, as the waiting time to get into these facilities can take years, and unfortunately some of those poor seniors don't have that much time to waste on a waiting list, so if you can, invest in more low income and Senior Hud housing too. Think "Up", as in additional high-rise (and affordable) apartment buildings. It also occurs to me that both the Airport and Cheshire Fairgrounds are sorely underutilized. Where's the Air Shows, Craft Fairs, Music Festivals, Carnivals, Fairs, Trade Shows, Art Shows, Car Shows, and so many other attractions that could be promoted throughout the entire Spring, Summer and Autumn months? I really think that the City is missing an opportunity here at both locations. Better, more creative utilization of both of these facilities would benefit both the City of Keene as well as its citizens. I'd also like to see fewer parking meters downtown and more free parking. I realize that the City gets some revenue from the parking meters, but most folks I talk to say they're discouraged from shopping downtown because there are too many parking meters and are more of a nuisance. Why not designate that large parcel of empty City space directly behind Shipping Shack (corners of School, Gilbo Ave & Wilson St.) as a Free Parking zone (but no overnight parking) for downtown shoppers? Again, this is another example of a underutilized City plot that sits mostly empty throughout the year. Additionally, there are far too many empty storefronts, especially in the local shopping malls. The City needs to provide these shopping mall management companies an incentive to fill those empty properties. We need more diversification too, we've enough casual eateries and cafés, how about attracting small business like shoe shop repair, electronics repair (sales & service), electronics store like the old Radio Shack, perhaps some small manufacturing like glass blowing, or appliance repair, even more Thrift type stores, snowblower/lawnmower repair shop, more entertainment facilities featuring more live music, or dancing facility like the old Moose Cub, perhaps a Video Arcade, that were popular back in the early 80's. The bottom line is we need more diversity in the type of small storefront business's, both in downtown and in our shopping malls. Another idea: Granted, converting empty shopping mall storefront floor space into affordable housing isn't ideal, but it's not impossible either with some creative innovation (and some rezoning). And consider adding skylights for additional natural lighting to those deep interiors. Think about it, converting some of this empty storefront space into affordable housing benefits both the mall management company, City Hall, and helps solve some of our shortage of affordable housing. It's a 3-way win. The City needs to take a proactive approach to reintroducing the Trades in our High School or Vocational School, that being bring back basic carpentry, plumbing, electrical, masonry, auto mechanic and even electronic, or computer programming basic skills. We desperately need these skilled tradesmen/tradeswomen today more than ever, so let's give our young men and woman a choice other than just College...not everyone's suited for college, so we need to get back to providing them an alternate choice of careers. Overall, I think your Parks Department is doing a fine job but if I might offer one slight suggestion. Some parts of the bike trail (the one behind Target for instance) could use some more crushed stone, otherwise in rainy weather the rail/trail gets a bit muddy. And a couple more park benches would sure be nice too, like along the bike/rail/trail behind the college heading towards Krif road. And lastly, we need to get serious about how to deal with the homeless & jobless in our community. Providing them a room for the night at Hundred Nights or free food from The Community Kitchen simply isn't enough. The City needs a complete comprehensive program that'll take anyone willing and able to partake, the means to get back on their feet and become a tax paying member of society again. I understand that each case is unique, and perhaps the City already has a variety of different departments to handle such things as housing, medical, employment, training, substance abuse, and all the other needs of the jobless, homeless, and all I'm saying is perhaps a more centralized approach (a one shop stop approach so to speak), one singular department with the means to get that poor homeless, jobless soul a safe landing, but more importantly, give them a chance to get back on their feet, not just provide a handout... Someone in the City, someone much smarter than</p>	4/21/2025 4:49 AM

Vision Keene Storymap Survey

me, should be able to reach out to other communities all across America and get some creative ideas on what's working, and what's not and come up with a better means of helping these less fortunate souls regain their dignity and self-respect, and above all else, give them a workable path to getting out of being homeless/jobless. Anyway, those are my thoughts, and again, thank you for the opportunity to express them. Good luck. Cordially, Dennis Griffin

15	Proactively assisting vacant properties fill with temporary or long term occupants	4/19/2025 8:09 AM
16	Clarity - What the heck is a pillar. Make the presentation represent a reality that residents can connect to.	4/15/2025 4:55 AM

Q2 Any other thoughts on the Vision Keene Strategic Pillars Goals? Please explain here.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 19

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	In order to be a vibrant city, downtown needs to stay open at night. The city is being underutilized. Businesses should be encouraged entice people in the evening just as they do during the day.	5/9/2025 8:08 AM
2	Having recently moved to the the neighborhood behind Keene high school, we have been so utterly delighted by the community of families we have found here, and by the beautiful, tranquil shadow pond park. I would love to see a small children's nature play scape (i.e. nature integrated) playground their for children to play while they enjoy the sound of bird song. Perhaps this could be something small and beautiful nestled into the trees so that it doesn't disrupt the beauty of the neighborhood park.	4/30/2025 10:42 PM
3	I appreciate the goal of fostering a higher quality of life for all Keene residents and I pray the city will commit to these goals and not delay its plan to improve lower Winchester, which has been marginalized since I moved to keene in 2017. We are not "lower" in the figurative sense, although we've been treated as such.	4/29/2025 8:09 AM
4	Early resistance to bike lanes in central square shows how important it is to keep long-term goals in focus.	4/28/2025 7:55 AM
5	Honestly, it sounds good, but I am not optimistic much of it will pan out.	4/27/2025 8:06 PM
6	Pillar #3: My concern is mixed bike/pedestrian with vehicular traffic; particulary bike & vehicles...perhaps separate routes vs shared?	4/27/2025 10:06 AM
7	I want to see a drive in come to keene	4/24/2025 1:14 PM
8	Here are some things that would be useful if included in the master plan: Include a list of actions recommended in the plan and monitor progress against those. Perhaps twice a year agenda item for the planning board. We can also adjust, add or remove items as needed to keep the plan fresh and relevant over time. Capital projects will be one way to measure progress. Include some visioning images of nodes, development downtown (Gilbo, Kingsbury) Show a GIS layer with areas we do not want to build on (wetlands, flood planes, steep slopes, etc). And conversely areas we want to see growth (previously developed sites, underused land such as strip and big box commercial, infill areas). Great if we could do a quick estimate of how many housing units can be built in these areas using our zoning regs Calculate how many people can move here before we have to invest more in schools and infrastructure. That would be an important number to know. People moving here would bring tax money and other spending, all dropping to our bottom line with little cost against that income. This would preclude typical discussions people have against growth that we will need to spend money on schools, utilities and other services. This could be our growth target for the next 10 years. Just as example, 2000 housing, mostly in multi-story downtown units, taxed at \$10k, is \$20m "free" money to Keene per year!	4/24/2025 6:44 AM
9	Local, state and national government policy conditions affect all of these pillars. How do you build the political culture to support the goals?	4/21/2025 7:22 AM
10	Downtown parking (main and side streets) needs to be a top priority	4/19/2025 8:09 AM
11	great initiatives - key will be implementation and what does that look like, how will these monitored	4/15/2025 4:27 PM



Vision Keene 20-Forward Comprehensive Master Plan

Internal Memo: Population Projections

April 2, 2025

About This Memo

As part of the Comprehensive Master Planning process, JS&A assessed the city's population growth projections. This memo communicates the population projection findings and articulates methodological insights. ***Considering the significant number of factors that may impact future population growth and the unlikelihood of any source to predict the specific population of Keene in the future, this methodology explores multiple projection models to provide a range of growth scenarios that may occur.*** This memo, produced by JS&A, is provided to the City of Keene and the Vision Keene 20-Forward Project Team.

Methodology

This analysis explored a variety of key data sources and projection methodologies to understand the range of population and household increases that Keene may experience over the next 15 years. These population projections include data from leading providers such as ESRI and Census and state-supplied data from the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs.

Summary of Findings

Based on current conditions and forecasted growth, Keene's population is expected to remain stable over the next 15 years. By 2040, Keene may see a population change anywhere between growing by approximately 1,100 people to declining by approximately 600 people. The midpoint of the projection models forecasts approximately 200 fewer residents in 2040, and the average across projection models results in a very stable population with a change of only 22 people.

It is important to remember that these figures are merely projections. Actual population growth could vary considerably based on future market forces and economic conditions in the region and country, and Keene has an opportunity to be in the driver's seat of growth. Future residential development and the community's appetite for growth will be the primary factors determining the magnitude of Keene's population growth in the coming decades.

Implications to Consider

While projection models provide analytical forecasts for the future, cities can also help steer and guide the growth desired in a community. While Keene offers a strong value proposition to prospective residents, the current housing supply in Keene and the surrounding region has been identified as a barrier to the city's population and economic growth. Increasing residential development can provide additional inventory for new residents, and market dynamics can play a role in the population growth Keene experiences over the next 15 to 20 years. Similarly, upticks in student enrollment at Keene State College can also play a role in growing the city's population.

Methodology and Data Sources

This methodology analyzes population projects based on various projection models and data sources to understand a comprehensive picture of how Keene's population may grow over time. Each model forecasts a different scenario, and the range of the scenarios illustrates the growth patterns that may occur.

Notably, continuing ESRI's 5-year population forecasts into 2040 offers the most aggressive growth scenario, with a population increase of 1,074 residents between 2025 and 2024. Conversely, the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs projects a very stable population (the model illustrates a slight increase in population and then a decrease) with a slight decline in 213 residents by 2040.

When projecting population growth based on past trends, this methodology examined a continuation of population growth based on US Census data over three periods: long-term (2000-2020), mid-term (2010-2023), and recent years (2020-2023).

Methodology and Data Source		Projected Growth Rates		Projected Population (2040)		Forecasted Households (2040) ¹	
		Annual Rate	Total Rate	Total Population	Change in Population	Total Households	Change in Households
1	ESRI Population Forecast ²	0.30%	4.6%	24,434	1,074	11,208	492
2	State Projections for Keene ³	-0.06%	-0.9%	23,211	(213)	10,647	(98)
3	Continuation of Past Long-Term Growth, 2000-2020 (US Census)	0.11%	1.6%	23,334	368	10,704	169
4	Continuation of Past Mid-Term Growth, 2010-2023 (US Census/ACS)	-0.15%	-2.2%	22,340	(509)	10,248	(233)
5	Continuation of Past Recent Growth, 2020-2023 (US Census/ACS)	-0.18%	-2.7%	22,226	(609)	10,195	(279)
Population and Housing Growth Range		-0.18% to 0.30%	-2.7% to 4.6%	22,226 to 24,434	(609) to 1,074	10,195 to 11,208	(279) to 492

¹ Household forecasts assume that the current average household size in Keene remains consistent between 2025 and 2040.

² ESRI Population Forecast model assumes that ESRI's 2024-2029 projected annual growth rate will continue until 2040.

³ New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. (2022). *New Hampshire population projections: 2020–2050*. New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs. <https://www.nheconomy.com/getmedia/0205c62d-9c30-4b00-9c9e-d81d8f17b8b3/NH-Population-Projections-2020-2050-Final-Report-092022.pdf>