

CITY OF KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE



2025 COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

JUNE 2025



CITY OF KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

This report presents the City of Keene's comprehensive master planning process that took place from February 2024 to June 2025.

This report and the associated data analysis are available on the project portal:
keenemasterplan.com

REPORT PREPARED BY:

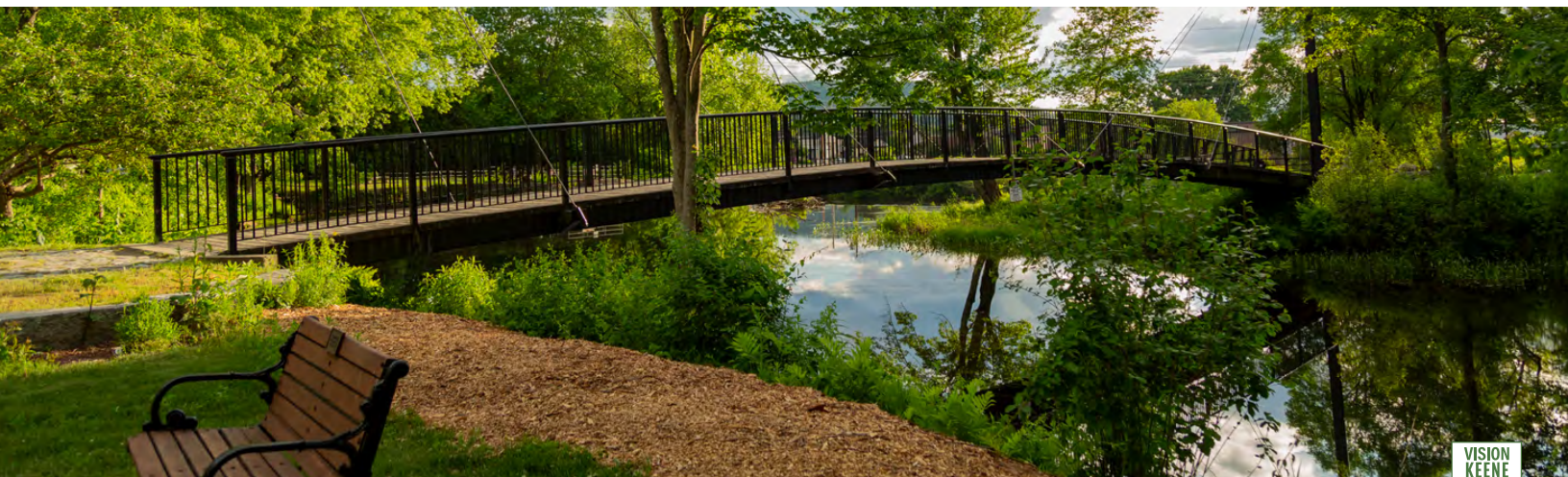


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FORWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Dear Reader:

After countless information gathering sessions, the challenge is making Keene's Master Plan understandable, actionable and accessible. The document in total is daunting and tough to embrace at once. One needs to find an entry point, the section that matches your interests. Once there, you'll see that the chapters are interconnected, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

For me, my 40 years in Keene draw me to recommendations and strategies that link education, workforce and economic development. So, my interests gravitate towards the Thriving Economy and Adaptable Workforce chapters. You'll observe, though, that the region's economy and workforce are dependent on Keene and its surrounding area adding more Livable Housing for all income levels. The Livable Housing chapter leads a reader into Vibrant Neighborhoods, where zoning enables residential communities to conveniently access shopping, parks and the Natural Environment, yet another chapter. The Master Plan includes a sixth pillar on Connected Mobility, a perspective on Keene being a hub into which residents in surrounding towns come on a regular, if not a daily, basis.

Together these chapters describe Keene as the Regional Magnet of the Monadnock Region. A place where over hundreds of years roads, rail lines and bike paths meet and link residents and small independent towns of southwestern New Hampshire together for work, education, shopping, entertainment and festivals. While technological advances have expanded and diversified our social connectedness, Keene provides a sense of place, steeped in America's foundation and paved with a guide to its future. Where the natural environment provides a soothing and safe place to live, work, and recreate; to explore education, culture and artistic opportunities; and to establish personal relationships.

Keene provides people with a welcoming, progressive environment where all can contribute to its future. This Master Plan serves as a guide to our place in Keene's future.

- Jay V. Kahn
Mayor, City of Keene



To my fellow citizens of Keene,

If you ever find yourself on the northern end of Wilson Street, you may see a mural honoring the Trinity Bicycle Company. This is just one of the sixteen Wall Dog murals painted in June 2019 that commemorate important people and organizations in Keene's past. Trinity Bicycles was founded in 1897 and produced, well, bicycles. At the turn of the 20th century Trinity employed 100 workers and produced 40 bicycles per day and was one of the anchor employers in the city. But within a generation, bicycle production became widespread throughout the country and Trinity faded into obscurity. However, Keene's industrial vitality did not.

In fact, since the industrial era started right around the time of the Civil War, Keene has a history of national and even global market leadership. This has included a variety of vastly different industries and products with just one thing in common. They do not arise from any natural resources; it is the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of Keene's citizens. This has led us through producing the first wooden pails made by machinery, to clothes pins manufacturing, through textiles, and furniture to today's varied and high technology companies. We have seen many companies and even entire industries come and go and yet Keene thrives to this day. Today some of our industrial leaders can be found in ball bearings, precision machining systems, diamond turning machines, lens production and food distribution systems.

One important way that the city tries to nurture this type of growth and re-invention is to develop and follow a comprehensive Master Plan. Of course, the Master Plan addresses many critical areas beyond the business climate including the use of land and the housing market, the arts and culture scene, the environment and sustainability and more. Within these pages you will see how the city has laid out a high-level road map to prioritize and set in motion implementation plans to improve all aspects of life in Keene. I have had the privilege to chair the seventeen-person committee orchestrating this effort to update the Master Plan which was last published in 2010.

I would be remiss if I did not express my appreciation to the community leaders who volunteered to help in this effort over the past eighteen months. Their commitment to giving their time, expertise and wisdom has been invaluable. I also would like to thank the elected city officials and the city staff, particularly the Planning Department for doing most of the heavy lifting in preparing the new Master Plan with great assistance from the city's consultants, namely Future IQ, WGI and JS&A. But most of all, I want to thank the people of Keene who engaged repeatedly and with amazing passion. So many citizens genuinely give of their time and talent to collaborate toward making Keene the wonderful city that it is. Citizen engagement is the "special sauce" that sets us apart from all other places.

We have come a long way from the Upper Ashuelot company chartered in 1735 to sixty-some intrepid settlers by the Colonial Governor of Massachusetts. In the intervening almost 300 hundred years, Keene has continued to adapt and even evolve dramatically to maintain our thriving economic strength, cultural and environmental stewardship, in a word, wonderful livability. I have no doubt that this will continue and I hope that this Master Plan will help us steer our way forward.

- Harold Farrington

Chair, Master Plan Steering Committee and Planning Board



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

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				Jay V. Kahn Keene City Mayor

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VISION KEENE 20-FORWARD INTRODUCTION



To the Keene Community:

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you for showing up every day to make this community such a vibrant and distinctive place to live, work and visit. This plan is for you as much as it is for city government.

Back in 1927, Arthur Shurtleff wrote of Keene *“To see Keene at its full worth, one must be familiar with other cities of New England and with the small rapidly growing cities of the West ... Familiarity with these towns and cities explains the **interest and wonder** with which the long-distance tourist sees Keene. **Keene is delightful because it is different.**”*

What Shurtleff identified almost a hundred years ago is still true today. The Master Plan consultant team, led by Future IQ, calls this Keene’s strategic position. Shurtleff attributed this difference to things like visitors’ positive first impressions, tree-lined streets, a distinctive Main Street and Central Square, prospering businesses and industry, and charming, historic architecture. I would like to add to this list what is arguably the most important factor of all: a highly engaged citizenry.

Of the 14 years that I have lived and worked in Keene, I have yet to meet someone who doesn’t care deeply about this community. I’ve lost count of the number of conversations I’ve had with people who decided to move here because they happened to visit and decided “they just had to live here.” What Keene has is special, and it is due in large part to the unrelenting civic participation of the Keene community, which has helped guide the growth and development of the city in a positive way.

As the world continues to change and evolve at an increasingly rapid pace, it is more important than ever to take an active role in shaping our future. With well over 100 years of thoughtful planning under our belts, Keene is well-equipped to meet this challenge and thrive. Here’s to the next 100 years of being “delightfully different!”

- Mari Brunner

Senior Planner, City of Keene



➤ 1.0 | IMPORTANCE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN PROCESS

Throughout the process of developing this plan, a broad swath of citizens and community partners were asked to join with the city to articulate a shared vision for the future and identify priority goals and action steps.

Vision Keene 20-Forward is a visioning and comprehensive master planning project that updates the City of Keene's 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). The process for the Vision Keene 20-Forward project was forward-looking, people-focused, and data-driven. This means that the plan is built on solid research, takes account of rapidly emerging trends, and reflects the aspirations, goals, and priorities of the community it is meant to serve. A fundamental premise is that the world is changing fast, and the city needs collaborative approaches and decisive forward-thinking to help envision how it will thrive over the next 10-15 years.

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

A Master Plan is a long-range plan for a community that provides guidance for city-wide growth and development patterns, investments, and initiatives. It provides the foundation for determining effective public policy, master planning, and land use decisions for the future. In addition, it serves as the guiding policy document for many of the City's most critical decisions, such as redevelopment decisions, zoning changes, and capital investments. A Master Plan should reflect the needs, values, and priorities of the community while safeguarding the City's sense of place, history, and natural resources.

WHY IS THE MASTER PLAN IMPORTANT?

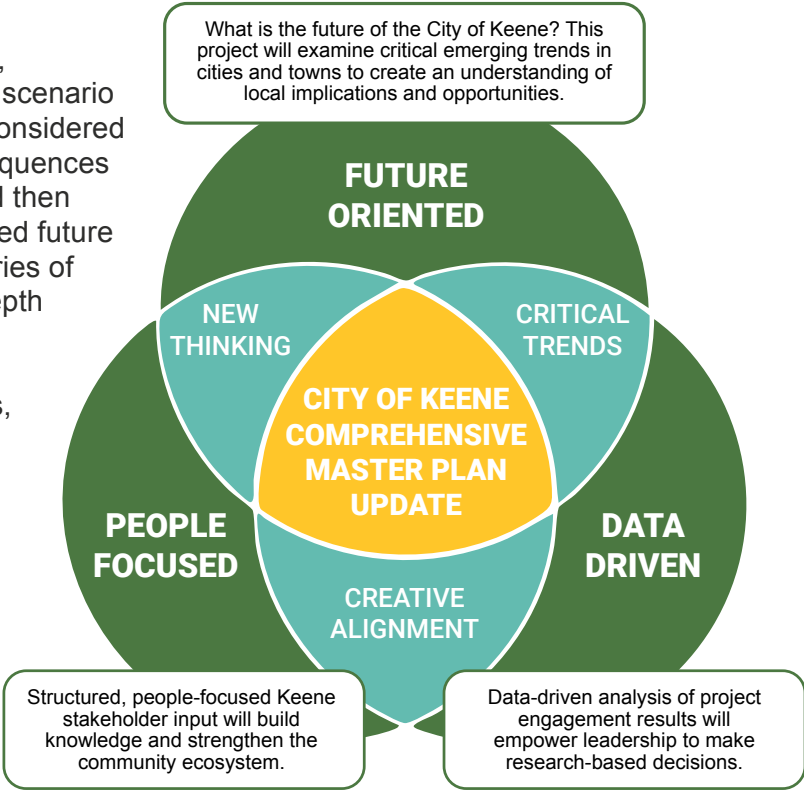
While the Master Plan is not a legal document, it does provide the legal basis for zoning and other land use regulations. In New Hampshire, a Master Plan with a Vision Section and a Future Land Use Section is required in order for a local community to enact zoning, establish a capital improvement program, or adopt a historic district. The Master Plan also establishes the legal standing for implementation of ordinances and other planning board regulations. State statute recommends that communities update their master plans every 5-10 years.

'Learn from the past, plan for the future!'

The City of Keene sits on what was once a large glacial lakebed and the ancestral homeland of the Abenaki people, with archeological evidence of Paleo-Indian settlements dating back more than 12,600 years. Colonists arrived in Upper Ashuelot in 1736, and the city became incorporated in 1753. Keene's central location positioned the city as a crossroads for commerce and it has grown into a primary hub for the region. As the sixth largest of thirteen cities in New Hampshire, Keene has a population of approximately 23,000 that enjoy beautiful natural landscapes, safety, a healthy pace of life, numerous outdoor recreation opportunities, good restaurants, access to educational and healthcare resources, thriving cultural arts, and a strong sense of community and collaboration. It is on this foundation that the residents of Keene continue to plan for the future with this new Keene 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan.

The two-phase process to update the 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan formally began with the creation of a Master Plan Steering Committee in December 2023.

Phase one, which lasted through early October 2024, identified the community’s preferred future through a scenario planning Think-Tank workshop where stakeholders considered possible future directions and the impacts and consequences of those directions. By collaboratively developing and then exploring several possible future scenarios, a preferred future scenario was identified and then tested through a series of 17 visioning sessions. This phase also involved in-depth data analysis to understand Keene’s current context as well as varied public engagement opportunities, including a community survey, stakeholder interviews, comment cards and online comment form, and tabling at events. **The preferred future identified through this process presents an exciting and compelling vision for how Keene could evolve as a community looking out to 2040.** The vision also established the organizing framework for the plan, the six pillars of Livable Housing, Thriving Economy, Connected Mobility, Vibrant Neighborhoods, Adaptable Workforce, and a Flourishing Environment.



Phase 1: Community Vision & Community Snapshot



In Phase 2, goals and action steps were developed for each of the six pillars based on input received from the Master Plan Steering Committee, online discussion boards, city staff and elected officials, and six Task Forces that met three times each.

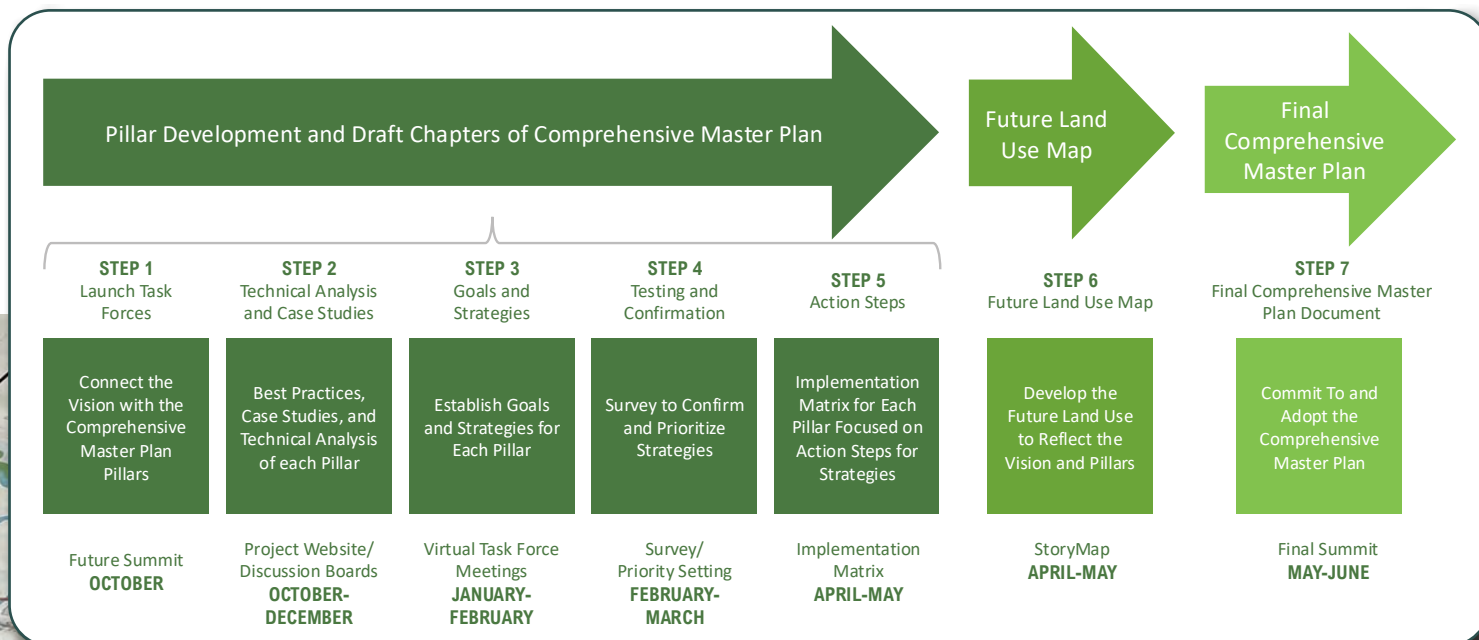
The results of this process were shared with the broader community through an online StoryMap accompanied by a brief survey. A more detailed survey was conducted with City leadership, elected officials, Task Force members, the Planning Board, and the Master Plan Steering Committee to further refine and prioritize the strategies and action steps.

Public involvement and input were a critical component of both planning phases, with a focus on public engagement throughout the city combined with strategic visioning around the future of Keene's downtown and growth areas/nodes. Throughout the process, citizens and community partners were asked to join with the city to identify priorities and establish a list of goals and action steps for implementation under each strategic pillar of the Plan. This input informs the development of an actionable implementation section that outlines and prioritizes strategies for achieving the Plan's new goals and objectives. In addition, a future land use map was developed with the Master Plan Steering Committee to visually portray the desired future growth and development of the city.

According to the American Planning Association, the comprehensive planning process should "engage all members of the community to create a more prosperous, convenient, equitable, healthy, and attractive place for present and future generations." The Vision Keene 20-Forward project was a robust, inclusive, and forward-looking planning process. The project's objective was to produce a Comprehensive Master Plan that positions the city on a continued path of becoming a diverse, resilient, and vibrant community. The process explored the future strategic positioning of the city and created an enduring and collaborative roadmap to the future.

"Remember the challenges we face and focus on what will address them. Some may be tempted by the status quo, and Keene has much about it that's wonderful, but we can't keep the current dynamics around car usage and housing if we want to deal with climate change, homelessness, and cost of living. Be bold in envisioning a better future and the steps we need to take to get there."
- Community Survey Respondent

Phase 2: Comprehensive Master Plan & Future Land Use Map



1.1 | HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

This section lays out the findings from each key step in the CMP planning process. The process moved from background analysis and exploration, to identifying key priorities for the future of Keene. It should be noted that this plan is organized around six Strategic Pillars, rather than ‘traditional’ sections listed in NH RSA 674:2 (e.g., transportation, community facilities, economic development, natural resources, etc.). This plan recognizes that the issues facing Keene are complex, regional, and interrelated. Therefore, the plan and the recommended goals and actions are structured to encourage innovative the collaborative solutions.

More details about the overall planning process may be viewed on the Vision Keene 20-Forward project portal at <https://keenemasterplan.com>.

From day one, the people of Keene expressed the desire for an updated CMP that is actionable and accountable. The new CMP provides implementation roadmaps for each of the strategic pillars in a way that can be measured and followed for the next 10-20 years.

Steps in the process

Acknowledging the many contributors to the CMP process

Overview & summary of the CMP process

Summary of demographic, socioeconomic, and economic findings for Keene

Exploration of seven community themes that are woven throughout Keene’s community fabric

Six strategic pillar chapter analyses in terms of importance, community aspirations, emerging trends, challenges, opportunities, trade-offs, planning goals and actions

Description of Keene’s distinct character areas of its new Future Land Use

Determining, with the community, what actions should be taken with more immediacy

Planning for accountable implementation of the new CMP

City contact information and additional report access

Sections of the report

Acknowledgements

Vision Keene 20-Forward Introduction (Chapter 1)

The People of Keene (Chapter 2)

Distinctly Keene (Chapter 3)

Leveraging the Strategic Pillars - Livable Housing, Thriving Economy, Connected Mobility, Vibrant Neighborhoods, Adaptable Workforce, Flourishing Environment (Chapter 4)

Planning for Future Land Uses (Chapter 5)

Action Prioritization (Chapter 6)

Implementation Matrix & Summary (Chapter 7)

For More Information (Chapters 8 & 9)



➤ 1.2 | ROADMAP FOR READING THIS PLAN

Keene's Comprehensive Master Plan builds upon the community's vision for the future, 'Regional Magnetism: Collaborative approaches that generate innovative change.' The vision celebrates the culture of the city and what makes Keene distinct while recognizing key pillars of the city's future.

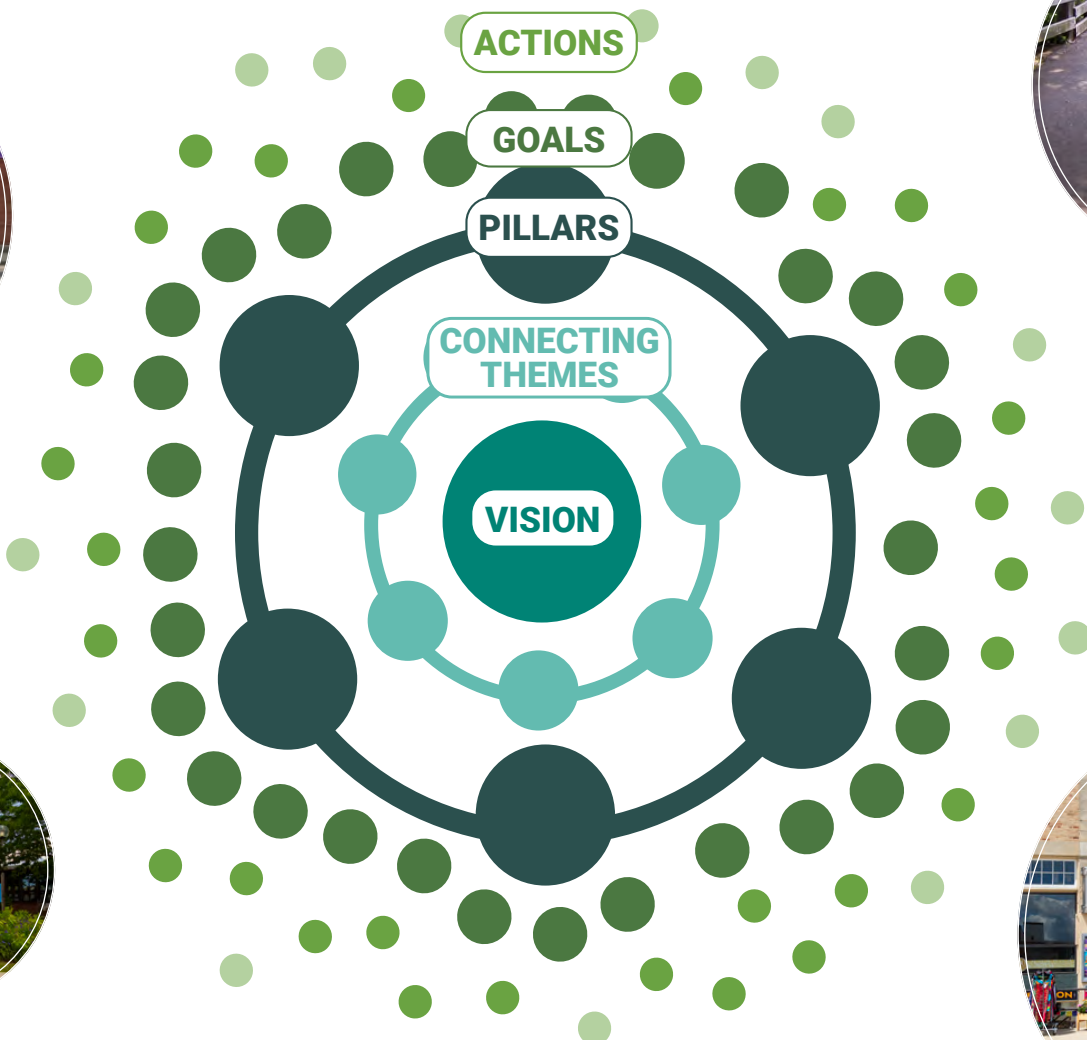
VISION: The long-term, aspirational picture of what the community hopes to achieve or become in the future.

CONNECTING THEMES: Overarching themes and values that are embedded in the city's policies and practices. These themes are woven throughout all six pillars of the plan.

PILLAR: Core, foundational elements or principles that underpin the vision. These are the key focus areas that are used to group goals and actions.

GOAL: A broad, general statement of what we hope to achieve.

ACTION: Specific steps or actions we can take to achieve a specific goal or outcome.



1.3 | VISION, STRATEGIC PILLARS, AND GOALS

1.3.1 | COMMUNITY VISION

The Community Vision was developed based on a scenario-planning methodology involving extensive community involvement from February 2024 – October 2024. The process allowed community members to explore the future evolution of the community around the two main themes of ‘Community Evolution’ and ‘Development Trajectory’. Over the course of the visioning process, the resulting vision or ‘preferred future’ evolved in its definition from ‘an innovative and intentional future’ to ‘Regional Magnetism – Collaborative approaches that generate innovative change.’ (For more information on how the preferred future was selected, please see the Community Vision Report on the project website at <https://keenemasterplan.com>).



The annual Keene International Festival showcases and celebrates the rich cultural diversity of the Keene, NH community.

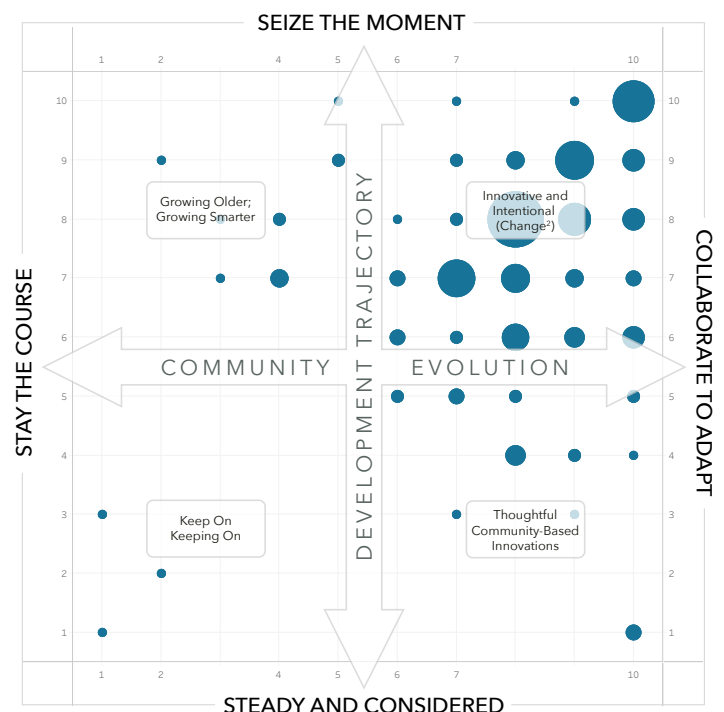
The ‘Preferred Future’ narrative was generated from the work carried out in the Vision Keene 20-Forward Think-Tank and was defined as an innovative and intentional future.

This ‘Preferred Future’ scenario forecasts a future where the community actively and intentionally explores new ways to build opportunities that position the community as environmentally sustainable, innovative, and forward-looking. It operates as a regional hub and draws in new people and investment. There is a collaborative approach to adapting to change. With a focus on building climate resiliency and smart infrastructure, new housing options flourish and affordability increases. The population becomes more diverse, and schools grow. Climate refugees are drawn to the area. Education levels become higher and educational options broaden. Keene State College partners with local businesses and industry to expand experiential learning options for youth, and life-long learning opportunities for older residents. Transportation is expanded to include multimodal options and connectivity to other areas in New Hampshire and beyond. Agricultural land, environmental areas and green space is preserved. There is more local food production, and healthy foods are broadly accessible. The community values health and wellbeing through its upkeep and support of neighborhood parks and recreation opportunities.

The Keene Heritage Commission and the Historical Society of Cheshire County worked together on the ‘Recovering Black History in the Monadnock Region’ project. To learn more, contact the Historical Society of Cheshire County or visit www.BIPOCmonadnock.org.

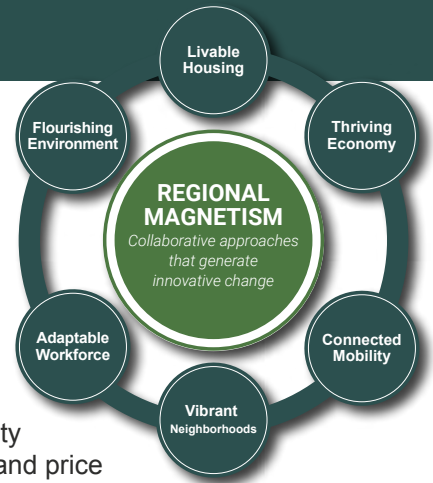
SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- The community is welcoming to newcomers, with a reputation of inclusivity and collaboration.
- There is strong investment in future-oriented infrastructure that prepares the community to adapt to climate change.
- Housing, utilities, and transportation options are expanded, and local character and culture is celebrated.
- The local economy expands, with businesses and ventures that span from local scale to international.



1.3.2 | STRATEGIC PILLARS AND GOALS

The Vision Keene 20-Forward strategic pillars were developed at the Future Summit in October 2024, and further defined by the Strategic Pillar Task Forces that met in January, February, and March 2025. The pillars provide a framework to apply best practices to key areas of focus and represent the major topic areas that underpin the preferred future for the community. The strategic goals are structured around these six key strategic pillars and are the fundamental building blocks for future actions that support the community vision.



- Boost infill development and redevelopment
- Remove barriers to housing development
- Promote sustainable and healthy housing standards that align with the community's character
- Increase the diversity of housing options and price points
- Address the housing needs of all residents, current and future



- Encourage and recruit businesses in targeted industries
- Attract and grow Keene's businesses of all scales, from entrepreneurs to businesses that span internationally
- Strengthen Keene's position as an economic development leader
- Foster an inclusive economy
- Prioritize economic sustainability and resiliency



- Create a connected and accessible network of multi-modal transportation infrastructure
- Prioritize vulnerable road users in infrastructure design, operations, and maintenance
- Expand and promote environmentally sustainable mobility options that are convenient and attractive
- Expand Keene's connectivity to support economic growth



- Support a built environment that encourages social connections and interactions
- Foster community relationship-building and collaboration
- Foster a high quality of life for all residents
- Ensure safe and efficient movement around town
- Create opportunities to encourage the creation of neighborhood businesses



- Attract talent to grow Keene's workforce
- Expand credential pathways and skill development opportunities
- Play a proactive role in de-siloing efforts, broadening partnerships, and increasing collaboration between partners that serve and support Keene's workforce
- Meet quality of life needs and reduce workforce barriers, such as housing availability, childcare, and transportation
- Prioritize workforce and community health and wellness

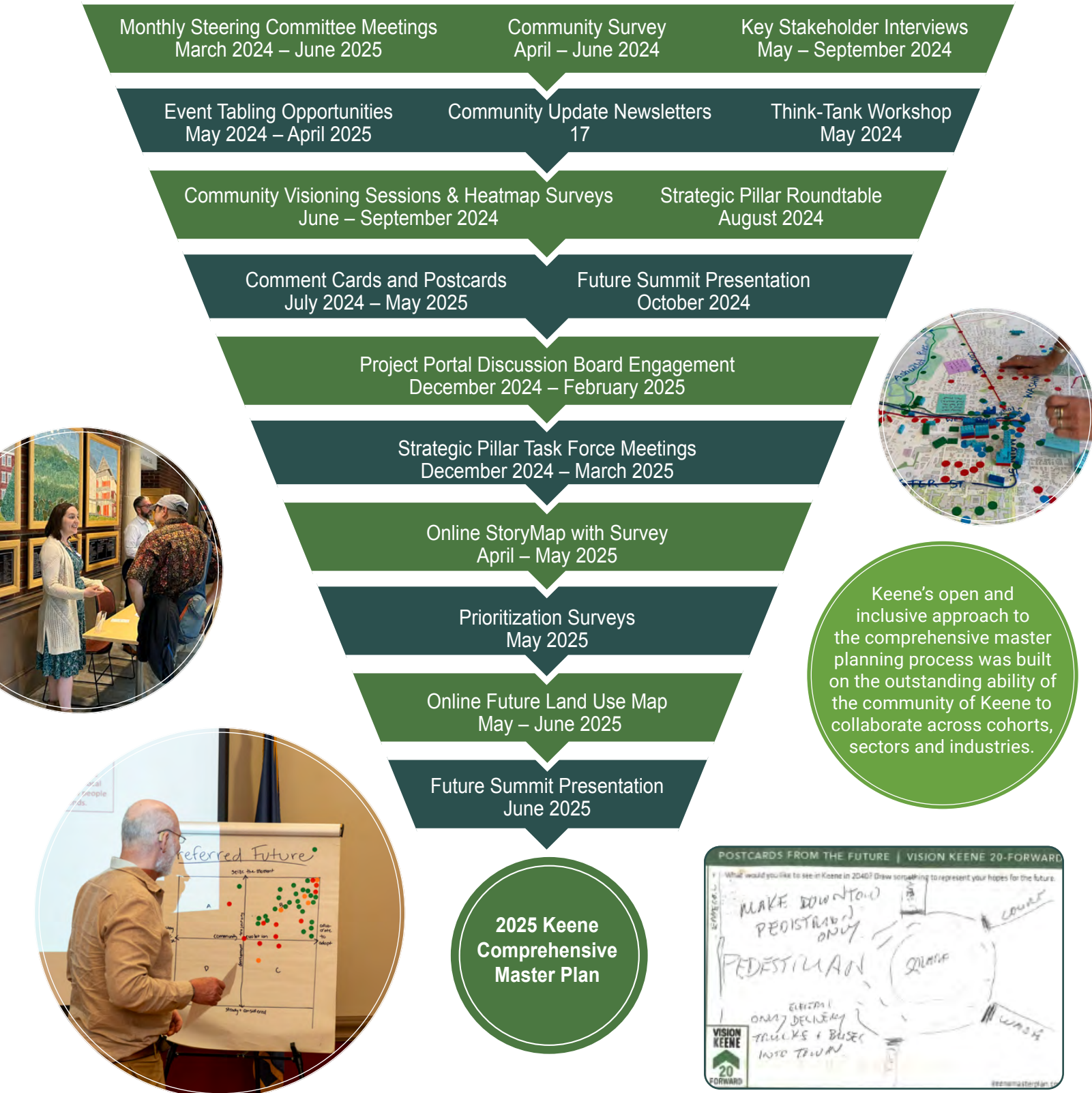


- Promote smart land use and development
- Prioritize environmental protection and sustainability
- Integrate green technologies and best practices in Keene's built environment
- Expand community and infrastructure development
- Strengthen Keene's local leadership and collaboration to build resilience at the regional, state, and wider levels

The Vision Keene 20-Forward Comprehensive Master Plan is built upon the community's vision for the preferred future and is intended to guide decision making looking out to 2040.

1.4 | PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

A key element of the CMP process was its extensive community engagement. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project included numerous opportunities for community members to help shape the vision, goals, and actions. This engagement process was intended to create consensus and buy-in for the community vision that serves as the foundational support for the final 2025 Keene Comprehensive Master Plan.





➤ 1.5 | PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The Vision Keene 20-Forward comprehensive master planning process has involved a wide, deep and transparent engagement process. Reports and survey results were published on the Vision Keene project website/portal, and the project was widely promoted across the city.

The Vision Keene 20-Forward comprehensive master planning process was built on extensive stakeholder input. The engagement and data-driven methodology progressively focused the discussion on emerging key themes and stakeholder aspirations for the future. The purpose of the process was to arrive at a 'point of consensus' that represented the shared vision for the future of Keene and the actions needed to get there. The result is a Comprehensive Master Plan that guides the city on the path to that preferred future.

A key feature of the engagement and planning process was the mixture of surveys, online meetings, comment cards, and in-person sessions to reach the broadest range of stakeholders as possible.





THE PEOPLE OF KEENE

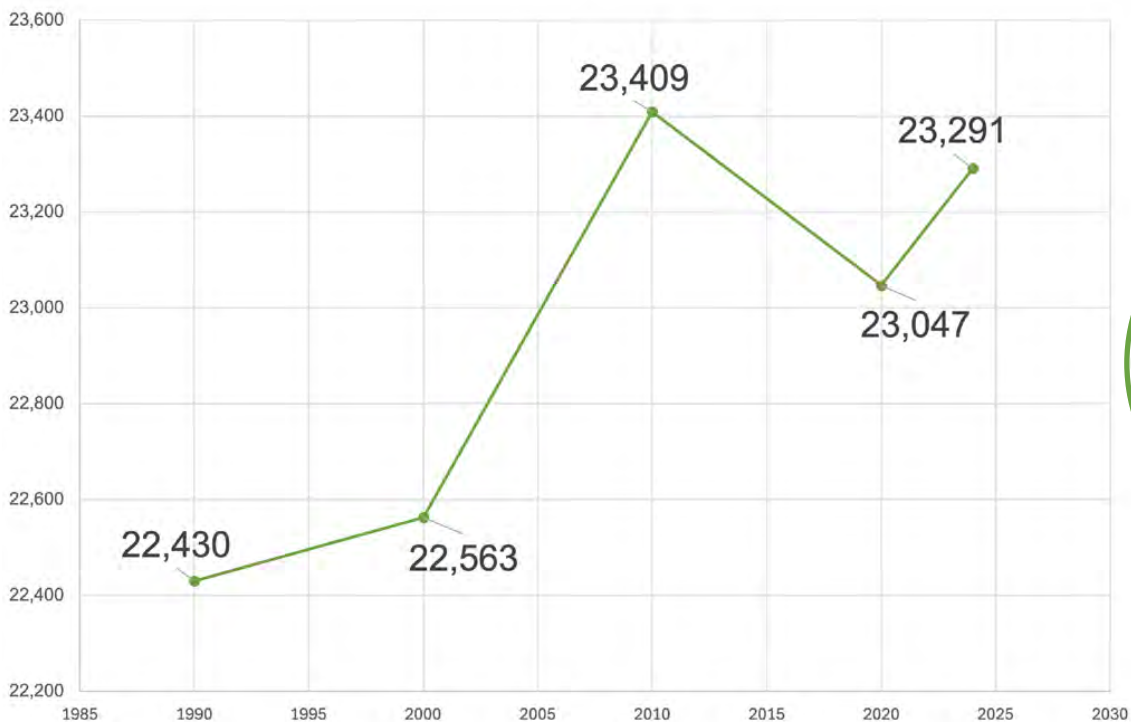


2.0 | THE PEOPLE OF KEENE – COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

2.1 | CURRENT SNAPSHOT – THE PEOPLE OF KEENE

Keene's overall population size has remained relatively unchanged over the past 30 years. In 2020, its population hovered around 23,000 residents, with a slight decline of about 2% from 2010 to 2020. This population decline just outpaced Cheshire County, which experienced a slight population loss of 1%.

Overall City Population 1990 - 2024



There is a strong desire by the community and city leadership to grow Keene's population over the coming years.



Data Insights

- Although a small share of people left Keene and Cheshire County between 2010 and 2020, the overall state population increased by 5% during this same period.





2.2 | POPULATION AND KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

Keene’s population is aging, with smaller households and fewer children than in past decades. Keene’s residents have become increasingly educated over the past decade, with more residents obtaining bachelor’s, master’s, or advanced degrees than in 2010. Income levels have increased yet still remain below county and state levels. Keene’s diversity has remained relatively unchanged since 2010. However, there has been a slight increase in the share of residents representing two or more races.

Keene Demographic and Socioeconomic Insights (2024)	
Total Population	23,291
Total Households	9,758
Average Household Size	2.16
Median Age	38.5
Share of Population Under the Age of 18	16%
Percent of Population Over 65	20%
Median Household Income	\$68,968
Median Home Value	\$296,728
Educational Attainment (Associate’s Degree or Higher)	54%

Population by Race/Ethnicity (2024)	
White Alone	88.3%
Black Alone	1.6%
American Indian Alone	0.2%
Asian Alone	2.6%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.3%
Two or More Races	5.9%
Hispanic Origin	3.3%

Data Source: ESRI Community Analyst (2025)



“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).”

- StoryMap Survey Respondent



2.3 | KEENE'S ECONOMY

Today, approximately 1,425 businesses call Keene home. The top industries in Keene include retail; service-oriented businesses; healthcare and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services. These top four industry sectors comprise nearly half of the city's businesses (49%).

Total Businesses by Industry NAICS Code* (2024)			
Retail	209	Educational Services	54
Other Services, Excluding Public Admin	203	Manufacturing	50
Health Care/Social Assistance	165	Arts, Entertainment, Rec.	44
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	127	Information	42
Accommodation/Food Services	109	Admin,Support, Waste Management, Remediation	40
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	88	Wholesale Trade	39
Construction	74	Transport./Warehouse	20
Finance & Insurance	66	Ag., Hunting, Fishing, Forestry	4
Public Administration	56	Utilities (NAICS22)	1

Keene features a strong arts and culture scene that plays into the city's economy. In 2024, 44 businesses were part of the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry sector.



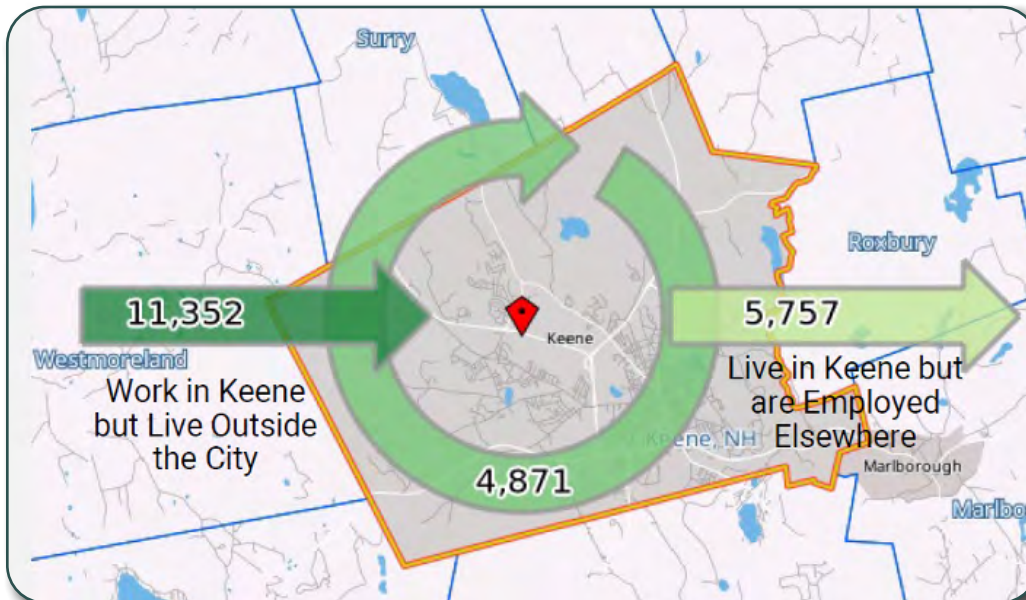
* The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments.

Data Insights

- While Keene's economy includes major employers, like Keene State College and Cheshire Medical Center, small businesses are also critical to the city's economy. The University of New Hampshire Survey Center surveyed small businesses throughout the state to assess the needs and challenges of small businesses. The survey specifically highlighted how healthcare organizations struggle to hire more staff – a challenge cited by Keene stakeholders – while employees report difficulties accessing affordable housing and childcare, two topics critical in conversations during the Vision Keene 20-Forward initiative. Other core issues relevant to small businesses include concerns surrounding inflation, maintaining revenue, energy costs, and supply chain issues.

2.4 | ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS INDICATORS

The city sits as the densest employment cluster in Cheshire County, accounting for more than half of the jobs in the county overall. Top industries by employment include health care and social assistance, retail, government, restaurants and accommodation, and manufacturing. Keene draws jobs and workers into the city, with more than 11,000 people coming into Keene for work.

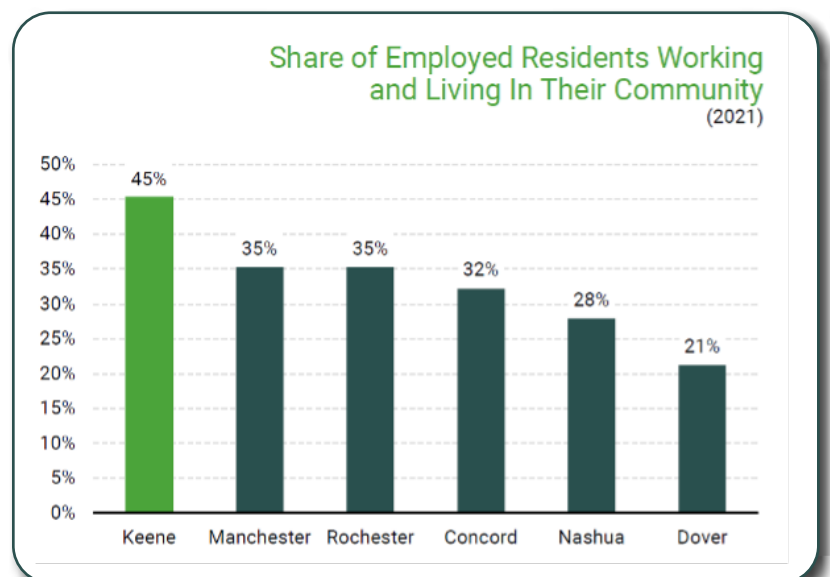


Keene residents' jobs are close to home. 62% of Keene residents commute less than 15 minutes to work, far lower than the national average of 27 minutes.

Data Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (2021)

Living and Working in the Community

Keene has above-average numbers of people living and working in its community. When examining the number of employed Keene residents, Keene has the highest share of employed residents living in their respective residential locations compared to larger cities in New Hampshire. This strong cohort of residents helps strengthen the city's community character and social fabric.



Data Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (2021)

Future Insights

- Recent trends in remote and hybrid work patterns are shifting these traditional inflow-outflow models. Capturing a stronger daytime population, including Keene residents working from home, can help support more local businesses in the community.








2.5 | KEENE'S LIVABILITY INDEX

Keene's demographic and economic conditions position Keene to be more "livable" than the average city across the country based on AARP's Livability Index, a leading source that helps communities understand how they compare across a broad range of factors that influence community quality.

The city scores higher on AARP's Livability Index than the median US neighborhood. The community's high engagement levels, outdoor recreation and environmental considerations, and its transportation network are the highest-ranking elements. Livability Index Metrics showcase opportunities to continue improving the city for residents and workers.

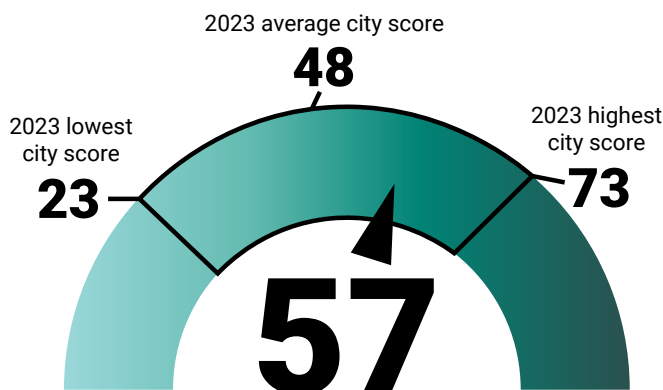
In the community survey, when asked what people most enjoy about Keene and the Monadnock Region, 76 people wrote about how easy it is to get around and access amenities such as outdoor recreational areas, and 50 people specifically mentioned the walkability of Keene.

AARP Livability Index Metrics Across Peer Communities

Livability Metrics	Keene	Median US Neighborhood	Regional Peer Communities				
			Manchester	Rochester	Concord	Nashua	Dover
Overall	57	50	56	52	58	55	54
 Housing Metrics and initiatives that promote affordability, availability, and accessibility.	54	56	60	49	56	54	47
 Neighborhood Metrics and initiatives that focus on destinations, safety, and mixed-use development.	51	36	58	44	50	55	49
 Transportation Metrics and initiatives concerning convenience, safety, and options.	61	45	62	55	52	62	61
 Environment Metrics and initiatives regarding air and water quality, energy efficiency, and hazard mitigation planning.	65	59	61	54	54	59	50
 Health Metrics and initiatives that promote healthy behaviors, like exercise and smoking cessation.	50	44	52	47	59	52	60
 Engagement Metrics and initiatives such as cultural engagement, voting rights, and human rights.	67	45	53	51	67	46	55
 Opportunity Metrics and initiatives regarding job availability, government creditworthiness, and graduation rates.	53	52	49	62	66	57	60

The overall livability index score for Keene, New Hampshire is 57.

This is in the top half of communities in the United States.



"Livable communities provide a host of advantages that enhance the quality of life of residents, the economic prospects of businesses, and the bottom lines of local governments"

- AARP Livable Communities, The Livability Economy

2.6 | KEENE 2040 POPULATION PROJECTIONS

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 residents.

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, these figures are derived from a range of projection models to provide a range of growth scenarios that may occur.

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.

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>

Methodology Insights

- This methodology analyzes population projections based on various 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.



DISTINCTLY KEENE

3.0 | DISTINCTLY KEENE - COMMUNITY THEMES



SUSTAINABILITY



EDUCATION



ACCESSIBILITY



PUBLIC HEALTH



COLLABORATION



REGION



LEADERSHIP

Regional Magnetism is the centering vision for all themes and strategic pillars of the new CMP.

Throughout the community engagement process, seven themes emerged that reflect the core values and culture of the community. These themes also reflect how the community works and how it makes decisions. They have helped shape the deliberations and the actions in the Comprehensive Master Plan. Some examples include:

- Sustainability is a long-established value in the community that is fundamental to the success of all six pillars in this plan. It connects to all goals and strategies, from ensuring that existing and new housing is resilient, the wise use of land and natural resources, promoting walkability, attracting diverse industries, and ensuring our infrastructure can stand the test of time.
- Keene serves as the service hub for activity and services for the Monadnock region. This theme has been expanded to explore how Keene is the 'magnetic center' that can draw expertise and investment that benefits the whole region and can become a location that 'punches well above its weight'.
- Collaboration is a key Keene behavior and is regarded by many as the 'superpower' that allows Keene to achieve big outcomes.

As a community, Keene has worked hard over many years to build a set of core community themes that help shape how the community works and makes decisions.

"Go vast, fast and creative! Make Keene green, colorful and quirky! I grew up here – I want to see this place flourish"
- Community Survey Respondent



The City and Keene community have a long-established approach to local decision-making that integrates economic, environmental, and social considerations into its local decision-making processes.

The six pillars of this plan are no exception to this commitment, with this theme of sustainability woven throughout. Additionally, the Flourishing Environment Pillar sets forth ambitions, goals, and strategies to continue leading in this area.

One of the city's notable initiatives is the 100% Renewable Energy goal.

This ambitious goal reflects Keene's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and promoting clean energy solutions. The City has taken several steps to work towards this goal such as promoting solar energy adoption through participation in initiatives like U.S. Department of Energy SolSmart program (Gold designation), and the Solar Coaching Program, which encourages businesses to install solar energy systems and reduce reliance on non-renewable energy. Many residents are also contributing to the city's energy goals by participating in the Keene Community Power Program, which purchases extra renewable energy (above the minimum required by the state). Keene's sustainability efforts extend beyond energy initiatives such as the rail trail network and food security efforts. Additional examples include the City's proactive approach to stormwater management, efforts at waste diversion, collaboration with community garden programs, and formal commitment to creating safe streets for everyone, regardless of travel mode. These collective efforts demonstrate Keene's dedication to creating a sustainable community that balances economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social well-being. By prioritizing sustainability, Keene is paving the way for a healthier, more resilient future for its residents and the environment.

Keene's commitment to sustainability is paving the way for a healthier, more resilient future, with ambitious goals like 100% Renewable Energy and widespread solar adoption.

"A sustainable community is one that is **economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient**. It meets challenges through integrated solutions rather than through fragmented approaches that meet one of those goals at the expense of the others. And **it takes a long-term perspective**—one that's focused on both the present and future, well beyond the next budget or election cycle."

- Institute for Sustainable Communities



"I'd like Keene to be a hub for sustainability awareness and community practices that people from the entire Monadnock region will look up to as an example."

- Community Survey Respondent

"We need to be better prepared for the multifaceted impacts of climate change, not just enhancing our ability to weather extreme climate events, but also enabling us to produce much more of our food and other necessities locally, weaving in climate migrants (both rich and poor, domestic and international), eliminating dependence on fossil fuels, and creating a wide range of green jobs."

- Community Needs Survey Respondent



Quality education and life-long learning opportunities are defining elements in Keene's quality of life and value proposition for the community.

All six pillars of this plan are intricately tied to the theme of education. Over the past decade, Keene residents have become increasingly more educated. In 2022, more residents have bachelor's, master's, or advanced degrees than in 2010. 44% of the city's population over 25 years old have a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to just 34% in the county and 39% in the state overall. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022) This correlates with increasing incomes in the city.

In Keene, education goes beyond formal schooling and training programs.

The city and greater Monadnock Region are fortunate to have many locally owned and controlled news outlets, such as the Keene Sentinel, that have helped build a well-informed and highly engaged citizenry that prizes life-long learning opportunities.

A concerted effort was made to include the voices of youth in the CMP planning process. City staff facilitated workshop sessions with classes and youth groups at the middle school, high school, and college level in Keene. Young people had a lot to say about their aspirations for the future and suggestions for building a better future for Keene. Common themes include the need for quality job opportunities, affordable housing options, and creating a more walkable city.

To learn more about the youth engagement during the CMP planning process, read the [project newsletter linked here](#).

During the CMP process, access to childcare, early childhood learning, credentialing tied to employment, and adult continuing education emerged as key elements that the community needs to increase in order to maintain its commitment to life-long learning for area residents.

"I really like the idea of including an educational aspect into this plan....there is a great benefit to teaching students about sustainability and involving them in the care for public spaces. Education is the foundation of change!"
- **Flourishing Environment Discussion Board Participant**



"This is the perfect moment to align the efforts of our schools, colleges, and businesses of the region in an effort to raise curious, hopeful, and engaged young people."
- **Community Survey Respondent**





3.3 | ACCESSIBILITY

Keene takes an expansive approach to accessibility, prioritizing not only accessible movement but also accessible opportunities and lifestyles across the pillars of Vision Keene.

The theme and importance of accessibility expanded through the Vision Keene 20-Forward planning process, resonating with a wide variety of perspectives and lived experiences. Community members initially circulated conversations advocating for improved and accessible pathways and buildings, reflecting the accessibility of the built environment. But these conversations morphed into broader and more complex definitions of accessibility, with insightful and vital questions for planning Keene's future:

- Are homes accessible for a wide range of price points and lifestyle choices?
- How can visitors landing in Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport or traversing the region's rail trails better access Downtown Keene to shop, dine, and explore and support the business environment?
- Can Keene's outdoor recreation experiences expand to include adaptive opportunities, like adaptive mountain biking, allowing more participation across ability levels?
- Does Keene's bicycle and multimodal network allow those who don't own a car to have access to grocery stores, places of employment, and more?
- How can we plan for food security and ensure that Keene's residents have access to fresh food and a resilient food network?
- How can we provide better access to job opportunities for credentialed youth, neurodivergent people, and people who do not own a personal vehicle?

Questions like these underscore the community's commitment to accessibility for the coming decades. Continuing to prioritize and evaluate accessibility through this comprehensive lens will add additional dimensions to Keene's community, social, and physical fabric.

In Keene, accessibility prioritizes not only accessible movement within the city, but also accessible opportunities and lifestyles.

"From my perspective, the largest issue facing Keene is accessibility in physical and digital form. The disability community has said at the rate we are moving overall, it will be at least another 80 years before we have solved a fraction of the barriers."

- Community Survey Respondent

"For as long as I can remember, Keene has been community-oriented and charming. It is an urban environment without the large-city feel of a concrete jungle where you are just another number. There is a trade-off of conveniences and advancements in Keene compared to Manchester. Why not strive for charm and preservation along with convenience and accessibility?"

- Keene Resident Email Quote





3.4 | PUBLIC HEALTH

"[I] would like to keep community and population health as key components in the planning."

- Vibrant Neighborhoods Discussion Board Participant

In line with municipalities nationwide, Keene aims to incorporate health into its long-term goals and strategies to foster better physical and mental health outcomes for its residents.

This theme is part of the broader Vision Keene 20-Forward initiative, emphasizing six strategic pillars, including livable housing, connected mobility, vibrant neighborhoods, and flourishing environment, which are crucial for the city's public health.

Public health encompasses the extent to which all residents have access to nutritious food, recreational activities, and healthcare services to enhance their well-being. The city's built environment, resources, and programs are integral to the overall health of the community. This guiding principle shapes health outcomes to create a more livable city in the future. Communities with access to recreational opportunities and health resources tend to experience improved health outcomes and are viewed as more livable.

Keene's Vision 20-Forward initiative integrates health into its long-term goals, ensuring access to and security of nutritious food, recreational activities, and healthcare services for a more livable and healthy community.





3.5 | COLLABORATION

"The core of the strategic framework for the plan is called 'REGIONAL MAGNETISM' - Collaborative approaches that create decisive action.' This captures how collaboration is key to successful implementation in Keene."

**- David Beurle,
Future iQ**

As a community, Keene has demonstrated the ability to address complex issues through partnerships and cross-cutting initiatives.

This collaborative approach is a strong value among the community and leadership groups. This was identified from the very first engagement steps where people saw the potential for the community to create deeply collaborative approaches to help drive innovative local solutions and absorb new people and workplace trends.

The planning work has engaged with many stakeholders, and the development of the vision, strategic focus areas, and the actions have been a collaborative process with residents, city staff, and interested groups. This collaborative model also flows through into the implementation of actions in the Comprehensive Master Plan. Almost all the actions require collaboration between the city and other institutions and levels of government.

The ability to collaborate has been described as Keene's 'super-power'. Having key groups come together to tackle the big challenges will be essential to the future success of the community.



"This is an historic place and the people are rooted in and celebrate their heritage. In addition to history, we celebrate the ecological richness of the area. There is opportunity for education both in institutions of learning and in participation in the joy of community."

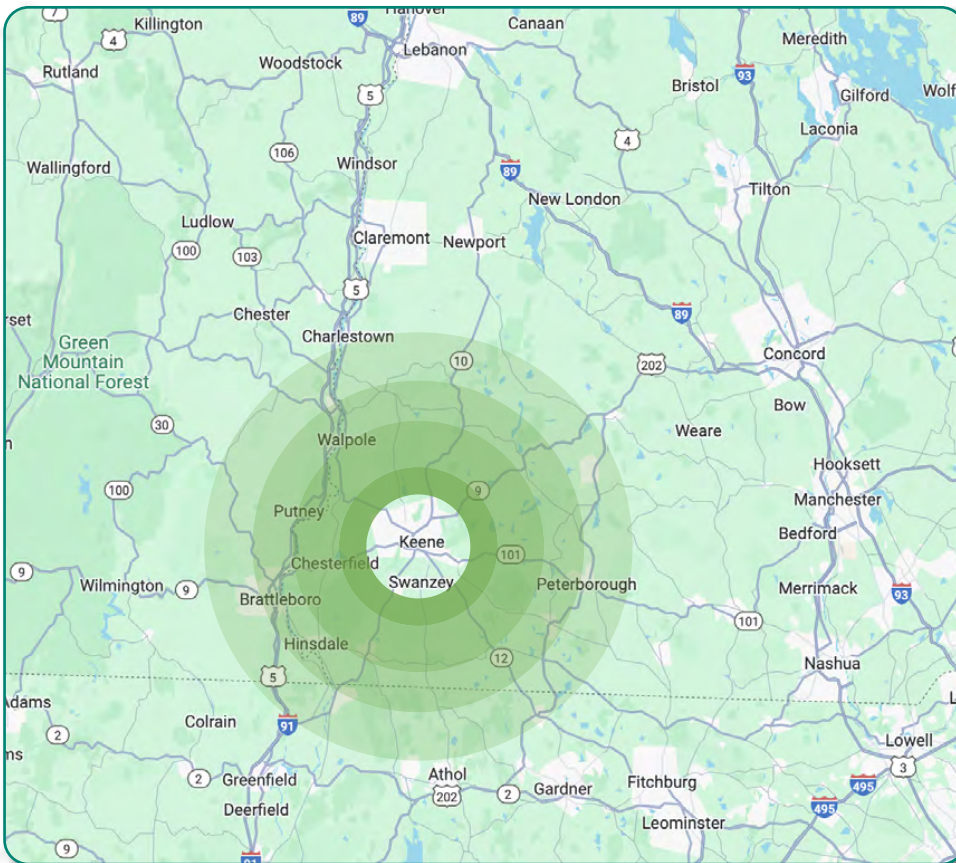
**- Community Survey
Respondent**



The Monadnock Region and Keene are inextricably linked, and while this Comprehensive Master Plan focused on Keene, it has been crafted with the regional context in mind and a view towards cross-community collaboration.

The relationships between Keene and the surrounding communities are critical and are mutually beneficial. Keene acts as the hub and heavily influences the ‘brand’ for the region, and the surrounding areas provide important aspects such as housing and workforce, transportation links, and room for expanded economic development.

The regional approach is especially important to some of the focus areas in the plan, especially the ‘Thriving Economy’ and ‘Connected Mobility’. However, the other topics of housing, workforce and the environment are similarly connected to regional outcomes and solutions. In a broader context, the region has great potential as a center for emerging opportunities in the recreation economy and nature-based and resource-based industries in food and biosciences.



“Keene has been and will continue to be the heart of the monadnock area. ...KEENE has it all. From shopping big and small, outdoor adventures, farms, history and its walkable spaces. It’s what brings people from all over to our little corner of NH.”

- Community Survey Respondent

As an important regional hub, Keene has the potential to build on its existing successful economy and stimulate new levels of economic vitality.

“Keene to me feels like the heart of the region. ... By leaning in to the things that make the core downtown area so attractive (density of shops/restaurants and residential, historic charm/character, walkability) Keene can become even more of a draw.”

- Community Survey Respondent

“We have been a hub to the region for well over 150 years. We have the resources and potential to be a different kind of hub; modeling and putting into practice projects which enhance climate resilience, food security, renewable energy, alternative transportation, and cultural diversity.”

- Community Survey Respondent



3.7 | LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

"Keene is the seat of our region – progressive consistent leadership is key to ensuring that the Monadnock Region and our residents thrive."

- Community Survey Respondent

The development of effective leadership by example is important in any community, and Keene has a long history of steady, effective and inclusive leadership, both within the community and within the Monadnock region.

This type of leadership works to bring in new voices, build alignment and create participatory processes. These approaches have all been on display during the development of the Comprehensive Master Plan.

There is another successful aspect to the leadership style, in that it is forward looking. This can be seen in how the city explores its current and future role in the region and thinks about how it can evolve and serve future needs and aspirations of the community. This speaks to the desire for Keene to be innovative and bold, and to build the reputation of the city in a positive way to attract people. The planning process has worked to expand on this forward-looking style, and has helped examine important emerging trends, explore long term vision and drill down to future strategic positioning.

The community's vision of Regional Magnetism presents Keene as a community that is forward-looking and continually seeking to understand and improve its 'strategic position' in the broader New England context.

"I come from North Carolina and Virginia, where most of the old architecture has been erased in small towns. The beauty of towns like Keene are truly rare in that context. If Keene can keep its beauty, its historical buildings, and small businesses, it will stand out in America. It will be the center gem of the Monadnock region attracting tourists, entrepreneurs, and keeping our young people."

- Community Survey Respondent



LEADERSHIP

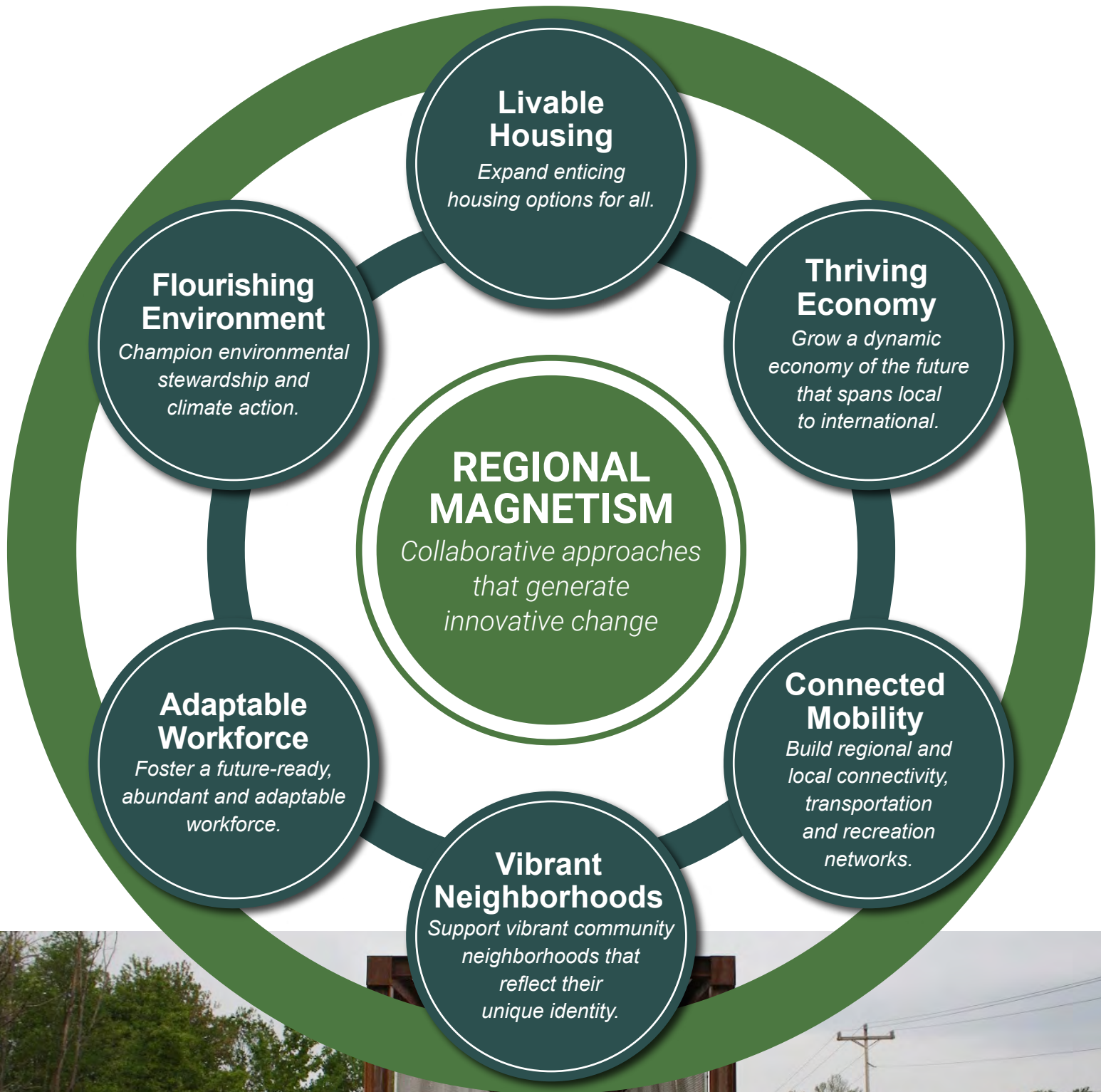




STRATEGIC PILLARS



4.0 | LEVERAGING THE STRATEGIC PILLARS



OBJECTIVE: EXPAND ENTICING HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ALL.

4.1.1 | IMPORTANCE OF LIVABLE HOUSING

The current lack of suitable and attainable housing is seen as a significant constraint on the growth of the Keene talent pool and population. Throughout the planning process, the existing housing shortages in Keene have been highlighted as a major impediment to growth and resident attraction. The issue is a combination of the lack of available residential units and a mismatch between the type of units people want and the units available. Housing availability and affordability are national issues, driven by growing populations in urban and regional centers, and the increasing number of smaller households. There is persistent market failure in providing new housing options that suit the various age groups and personal needs. Cities across the United States are now mobilizing new resources and innovative approaches to solve this challenge. Keene has an opportunity to leverage successful models elsewhere and use its collaborative approach to take some bold actions to address the current and future housing needs.

While Keene has anchor institutions and attractive features that will draw in potential residents, affordable housing options remain a major deterrent in attracting and retaining new residents. Housing is a key area of focus, and the city is strategizing to improve the market and housing opportunities. In 2023, the City of Keene completed its Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy. The assessment highlighted key housing issues across Keene and articulated recommended action steps to address the issues. The city is underway in implementing recommendations.

Affordable housing is vital for Keene's growth and inclusivity. It attracts new residents, supports local businesses, and enhances the quality of life, making the city more vibrant and resilient.

KEY FINDINGS FROM HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY (2023)

- Home sales prices surged over the past decade.
- Low availability and declining time on market indicate a very strong housing market.
- Keene has experienced a tight rental market for years.
- Rents, traditionally stable, have accelerated upward.
- Keene earns statewide recognition for tackling housing challenges. In December 2024, Keene was named a "Housing Champion" by the State of New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), acknowledging the city's leadership in expanding housing opportunities for residents at all income levels.

Data Insights

- Keene's overall residential population of 23,000 remains relatively unchanged over the past 30 years. The city's population has stagnated while the overall state population increased by 5% during this same period.
- Although Keene still has a high share of residents between 18 and 24, the overall population is aging. The median age of residents increased from 32 to 36 between 2010 and 2022. This is likely attributable to the decline in enrollment at Keene State College; the college student population dropped from 5,738 to 2,863 students over this time period. At the same time, the number of residents between 65 and 74 and over 85 doubled. Similarly, nowadays, fewer children are living in Keene.
- Over the coming 20 to 30 years, Keene's projected population is expected to grow ever so slightly and then decline to its current levels. However, New Hampshire's population is expected to grow, with projected growth in the state's southeast region signaling opportunities to capture growth in Keene.
- Most Keene residents own their homes, but Keene has a higher share of renters than the county and state. 43% of Keene's housing units are occupied by renters, higher than the 25% share in Cheshire County and 24% across New Hampshire.



4.1.2 | COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Livable Housing

The following five goals reflect community aspirations that emerged throughout the planning process and are designed to accelerate solutions to the housing challenges and build the character of the community.

GOAL 1: BOOST INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT.

Aspirations

- Smart and sustainable land use planning and design principles reduce the financial impact of new housing on the tax base.
- Community nodes of walkable mixed-use development are found throughout the city, which contribute to a high quality of life for new and existing residents as well as visitors.
- The housing development process is transparent and easy to navigate.



GOAL 2: REMOVE BARRIERS TO HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Aspirations

- City-backed financial mechanisms and incentives are creatively leveraged to boost the housing supply.
- The development approval process is continually improved to be predictable, effective, and streamlined.

"I love the idea of addressing all elements of the housing crisis through intelligent, infill development. We have an opportunity to create a 'right-sized' Keene in a way that also creates a cozier, more walkable, and more community-driven city for all of us."
- Livable Housing Discussion Board Participant

GOAL 3: PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY HOUSING STANDARDS THAT ALIGN WITH THE COMMUNITY'S CHARACTER.

Aspirations

- New housing construction is sustainable, climate-resilient, efficient, and of good quality.
- The city acquires funding to expand the capacity of code enforcement, specifically for housing inspectors, to hold landlords and property managers accountable for providing high-quality housing options and facilitate a rental registration program.
- Existing city committees, such as the Energy and Climate Committee, continue to advocate and educate community members and local businesses on green energy and weatherization initiatives.
- The existing housing stock is reinvested and modernized to preserve existing units.

GOAL 4: INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS AND PRICE POINTS.

Aspirations

- The existing housing stock is reinvested and modernized to preserve existing units.
- The city collaborates with local businesses, major employers, and higher education institutions on strategies and initiatives for employee housing and the transition from student to professional.
- The housing supply offers options for all ages, incomes, and physical abilities, and the city collaborates with underserved populations to better understand their housing needs.

GOAL 5: ADDRESS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS, CURRENT AND FUTURE.

Aspirations

- Keene addresses housing based on a regional approach.
- Housing is accessible and well-connected to nearby amenities. Housing development supports connections between residents to build a resilient community.
- Those who are particularly affected by housing insecurity, such as unhoused residents or those who experience poverty, have a voice in housing policy and initiatives.
- Resources are leveraged to facilitate aging-in-place organizations or repairs for senior residents.

COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS (CONT.)

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY

- Under the **Economic and Built Environment** topics in the Community Survey, 76% of respondents identified both expanding the supply of affordable housing and offering different types of housing as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- The rise in multi-use developments in communities nationwide is becoming an increasingly popular economic development tool in providing more affordable housing options. 64% of survey respondents identified exploring multi-use developments as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- Under **Community and Social Fabric** topics in the Community Survey, 69% of respondents identified accommodating aging-in-place as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- Building new livable housing is important to addressing the housing shortage in Keene. Under the **Environmental and Landscape** topics in the Community Survey, 70% of survey respondents identified focusing on environmental sustainability, and 56% identified adopting green building standards as important to shaping the future of Keene.

“A lack of housing cascades to impact everything else. We should be doing everything we can to develop housing, especially in the core where people can walk and bike to what they need without driving.”
- Community Needs Survey Respondent

Planning Insights

- There is a mismatch between incomes and housing costs, and the issue is exacerbated by extremely low inventory.
- The city is a key partner in solving housing challenges and needs to continue investing, communicating, and advocating for housing.
- There is minimal room for new “greenfield” development in Keene, but opportunities exist for renovation of older housing stock and repurposing of space.
- Lack of housing is negatively impacting employers and worker recruitment and retention.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult for housing projects to pencil out for developers in Keene, especially at price points that are affordable to most residents.

Expanding housing availability will help Keene build its talented workforce and attract new residents.

Working on expanding the available types of housing stock will also help existing residents by providing more choice and helping people to have the right kind of housing for their life stage.

Housing is not just about quantity; it is also about quality. This means livable housing that offers the amenities and functionality people are seeking. It also means housing that is environmentally sustainable and able to offer energy efficiency and adaptability in a changing climatic world. Keene has an opportunity to bring together key partners in a collaborative approach to seek and implement bold solutions. This will require a willingness to explore new areas for housing development, increase density in some areas, and build a regional approach with surrounding communities.

Prefabricated home modules and tiny homes are growing in popularity across the United States and Canada. Many are being used as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), but their affordability is attractive to many younger prospective home buyers for whom larger homes are out of reach.

Many communities are wrestling with housing availability and affordability, and are seeking innovative solutions to balance density, open space, and housing types. Of particular importance to many communities is what is termed the 'missing middle' housing, which provides housing on smaller, more affordable lots. Another example is the concept of 'gentle density,' where higher-density developments are designed to create some sense of space. Another example is the concept of urban growth boundaries, which is applied in Portland, Oregon.



4.1.4 | PLANNING GOALS AND ACTION AREAS

Not Starting from Zero

The City of Keene has already implemented various initiatives to strategically prepare for the future including:

- Allowed accessory dwelling units by-right in all zoning districts
- Conducted a Neighborhood Parking Study and reduced residential parking requirements
- Adopted a the Cottage Court Overlay to encourage 'missing middle' housing types
- Leveraged federal funding sources to create permanently affordable housing
- Earned statewide recognition as a "Housing Champion" for leadership in expanding housing opportunities for residents at all income levels
- Increased building heights allowed in various areas of the city
- Removed residential density factors from zoning
- Allocated funding for the Downtown Infrastructure Project to serve existing and future housing in the downtown





Livable Housing

Planning Goals and Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations

The following five goals reflect community aspirations that emerged throughout the planning process and are designed to accelerate solutions to the housing challenges and build the character of the community.

GOAL 1: BOOST INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT.

Actions

- Utilize GIS to create a map that communicates existing development regulations, incentive opportunities, and environmental constraints.
- In collaboration with the Thriving Economy Pillar, advertise Keene, its quality of life, and recent housing initiatives to increase local developers/builders' interest in developing in Keene. Assist private owners with development opportunities who express interest in locating projects in Keene.
- Identify potential neighborhood nodes of mixed-use activity and rezone parcels to encourage desired development.
- Explore place-based opportunities to improve walkability throughout Keene, with priority given to areas around schools, public parks, and neighborhood nodes.

GOAL 2: REMOVE BARRIERS TO HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Actions

- Identify and assess revenue sources to boost residential construction, including new ADUs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of recently passed code amendments and assess opportunities for further amendments to promote housing.
- Collaborate with stakeholders, such as project managers, financial analysts, community leaders, and investors, to pinpoint opportunities where financial resources can be transformed into a user-friendly and impactful development fund.
- Support and advocate at the state level for smart housing initiatives and/or financial mechanisms that fall outside of local jurisdiction, such as inclusionary zoning.
- Explore opportunities with state and local representatives to incentivize the development of empty lots or vacant buildings.
- Identify areas suitable for increased housing density and update the zoning map and/or code to encourage desired development.
- Continually review and assess the city's permitting and approval process to ensure it is predictable, fair, and efficient.



GOAL 3: PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY HOUSING STANDARDS THAT ALIGN WITH THE COMMUNITY'S CHARACTER.

Actions

- Conduct a community-driven process to identify and define Keene's unique visual, physical, and environmental qualities.
- Review zoning code and development regulations to ensure clear language that is easy to understand.
- Identify organizations looking to divest of facilities/land and create an action plan to repurpose for use as new housing.
- Conduct a study on the feasibility of adopting a form-based or hybrid zoning code in residential or mixed-use areas outside the downtown and implement recommendations from the study.
- Create development plans for potential development or redevelopment sites to showcase possibilities to developers when they have expressed interest in developing in Keene.
- Create a catalogue of pre-approved, high-efficiency housing units with approved floorplans and architecture to streamline new housing construction and boost investments of small/local developers. Opportunity to engage higher education institutions in Keene, New Hampshire, or other nearby communities to connect with students interested in collaborating on these pre-approved plans.
- Support initiatives to preserve the historic character and features of the Downtown Keene Historic District and areas/structures outside the district that contribute positively to Keene's sense of place and unique architectural identity by prioritizing and incentivizing the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- Host workshops or develop informational materials to inform homeowners about the risks of lead-based paint and mold, the importance of remediation, and other resources to provide guidance. Host similar informational sessions or produce fact sheets that give renters the knowledge of their rights and resources available to address poor housing conditions and/or unresponsive landlords.
- Pursue grants and/or funding partnerships to provide financial assistance to low-income residents, childcare facilities, and other vulnerable populations dealing with lead-based paint and/or mold remediation.
- Collaborate with higher education systems and local landlords in Keene to create a rental registration program, benefiting off-campus students and other renters.

GOAL 4: INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS AND PRICE POINTS.

Actions

- Actively participate in or create a multi-community group to spearhead housing efforts.
- Create a catalogue of pre-approved ADUs to increase the predictability of housing options and increase the efficiency of the approval process. Opportunity to collaborate with ongoing initiatives at the regional level through the SWRPC.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships and updates to regulatory requirements to support the removal of barriers to group living arrangements.
- Promote and support home upgrade programs like the Southwestern Community Service's 21 in 21 Home Upgrade program to help residents improve the quality and longevity of existing housing stock.

GOAL 5: ADDRESS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS, CURRENT AND FUTURE.

Actions

- Centralize resources for housing upgrades or grants for improvements (solar, insulation, Energy Star) into a more user-friendly approach. The city takes an active role in providing educational resources that make it easier for everyday residents to understand and take part in the programs.
- Invest in, or partner with, an aging-in-place initiative to assist home retrofits for seniors and disabled residents.
- Encourage and support the formation of resident-led neighborhood groups or associations in neighborhoods where they do not already exist.
- Collaborate with higher education agencies to assess and respond to student housing needs and provide partnerships to close the gap.
- Facilitate or support collaborations between existing organizations, such as Keene Housing and city committees/community groups.
- Encourage the expansion and maintenance of affordable housing in Keene by utilizing the city's zoning tools and code enforcement mechanisms.
- Ensure that zoning and development regulations allow for a diversity of housing options, from small ADUs to high-end housing.
- Employ a "housing concierge" or "housing navigator" as a city employee to serve as the direct liaison between city departments and developers, improving coordination and expediting the approval process.

OBJECTIVE: GROW A DYNAMIC ECONOMY OF THE FUTURE THAT SPANS LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL.

4.2.1 | IMPORTANCE OF A THRIVING ECONOMY

Today, Keene's economy is a story of success from many lenses. The storefront-lined downtown is filled with restaurants, boutiques, services, and cultural amenities, like the Colonial Theater, that Keene's residents and visitors cherish. Significant institutions, such as Keene State College and Cheshire Medical Center, anchor the city's economy and have historically offered stability to Keene and its region. Keene's industrial base, including advanced manufacturing with the legacy and continued leadership of precision optics, showcases cutting-edge technology uncommon in many rural communities. Yet, while Keene has experienced favorable economic conditions, rapidly changing industries and shifting macroeconomic forces require Keene to intentionally invest and prioritize continuing to build a Thriving Economy.

A Thriving Economy in Keene means more than simply traditional industry growth; it comprehensively protects and supports the elements of Keene's economy that have led to success today while proactively planning for future economic needs. A Thriving Economy ensures that Keene remains a place for small businesses and entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, while also recognizing that large employers and key industries provide an important backbone and stability to the local economy. Community residents and visitors will also have expanded opportunities to shop, dine, and enjoy local businesses, and legacy industries will continue their success in Keene while gaining the support they need to ensure they are future-ready. A Thriving Economy also ensures that residents have access to jobs with meaningful employment opportunities that support Keene's high quality of life. Taking an inclusive approach to economic development can encourage Keene to embrace principles such as economic stewardship and an inclusive economy that prioritizes community wellbeing, bridging economic development with community development.

Maintaining a Thriving Economy in Keene is contingent upon an Adaptable Workforce where a strong employment base is readily available for businesses to grow and expand. In turn, ensuring Livable Housing will support this workforce and thus help support a growing economy. Connected Mobility is vital to the transportation of goods, services, and workforce, and Vibrant Neighborhoods are not only important to residents but paint the charm of Keene that will capture the attention of prospective businesses and employees. Protecting Keene's Flourishing Environment while leaning into the community's sustainability priorities and aspirations will continue to be critical as the city's commercial and industrial infrastructure and development expand to meet an evolving economy.



Data Insights

- In 2025, over 1,420 businesses call Keene home, and over 19,900 employees work in the city. Keene sits as the densest employment cluster in Cheshire County, accounting for more than half of the jobs in the county overall.



These five goals position Keene's economy to thrive in the coming years. These goals, derived from the community's aspirations, prioritize not only traditional business, industry, and economic growth, but also prioritize celebrating what makes Keene's economy distinct – such as the vibrant arts and cultural scene, adventurous and active outdoor recreation opportunities, and legacy businesses, industries, and institutions that have built Keene into the economic center it is today.

GOAL 1: ENCOURAGE, RECRUIT, AND RETAIN BUSINESSES IN TARGETED INDUSTRIES.

Aspirations

- Industries central to Keene's economy – such as manufacturing, precision optics, healthcare, and education – continue to grow and remain a core part of Keene's economy.
- Keene's industry mix evolves and expands over time to meet economic shifts and growing sector clusters.
- Industry growth provides higher wage employment opportunities for Keene's residents.
- Foster a nexus of specialized firms to promote and attract large-scale employers to the region.

GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY.

Aspirations

- Keene's reputation and efforts around sustainability advance through economic development initiatives.
- Economic stewardship is central to Keene.
- Local businesses and workers navigate unforeseen economic challenges and events, building the resiliency of the city's economy.
- New business and partnership opportunities around agriculture and food systems expand food access for Keene's residents.
- Local and regional supply chains are strengthened with targeted efforts to promote economic self-sufficiency.

"There are too many rules regarding starting a small business and not enough flexibility in the permitting process."

- Community Needs Survey Respondent

GOAL 3: ATTRACT AND GROW KEENE'S BUSINESSES OF ALL SCALES, FROM ENTREPRENEURS TO BUSINESSES THAT SPAN INTERNATIONALLY.

Aspirations

- Keene remains a place where entrepreneurs, small, medium, and large businesses can succeed.
- Downtown storefronts continue to be filled with vibrant businesses, and the success of downtown expands into more parts of Keene.
- Growing businesses continue to call Keene home.
- Residents have expanded access to commercial amenities and employment opportunities.





**Thriving
Economy**

COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS (CONT.)

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN KEENE'S POSITION AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEADER.

Aspirations

- The city expands its role in economic development, demonstrating commitment and proactively meeting industry and business needs and opportunities.
- Economic development partners foster quality relationships and partnership efforts.
- Keene is recognized nationally for its initiatives for rural economic development.

"The uniqueness of Keene's downtown sets it apart from other towns and cities and making this a more liveable/walkable area should continue to be a high priority as it attracts people like myself to visit and move."

- Community Survey Respondent

GOAL 5: FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY.

Aspirations

- Arts and culture remain a core part of Keene's identity. Cultural businesses and establishments are equipped to continue their success.
- Outdoor recreation in Keene and the surrounding region drives economic growth and remains a key aspect.
- Keene embraces a holistic economy, measuring economic success through an inclusive and comprehensive approach to account for social infrastructure and community wellbeing in addition to traditional economic indicators.



Planning Insights

- 84% of Keene residents identified encouraging and attracting desirable businesses as important to shaping the future of Keene. Similarly, 4 out of 5 residents want to see more local employment opportunities.
- While the community wants business and employment growth, balancing growth with environmental and landscape considerations is critical to the community. 82% of residents feel it is important to preserve land in Keene for habitat and recreation, and 79% of residents believe creating and protecting open and green space is critical for Keene's future. This environmental priority weaves into Keene's opportunities to expand its industry mix towards businesses that share similar priorities and values, emphasizing green practices, bioscience, and a sustainability focus.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Between recent transitions and new regional initiatives, momentum is building for new economic development leadership in Keene. Reinjecting energy into economic development will help Keene leverage the opportunity to take bold steps in proactively curating economic prospects while also embracing the competitive advantages that Keene offers today. Already recognized for its rural economic development efforts, Keene can continue to serve as a national leader and model for similarly positioned communities and showcase innovative approaches to supporting business and industry growth in the rural setting. Strategic alignment with broader partnerships and statewide economic development initiatives offers an opportunity for strong implementation and capacity support for years to come.

TRADE-OFFS TO CONSIDER

Balancing business attraction versus retention efforts will be critical when planning for Keene's economic future. Intentionally focusing capacity and resources to help foster growth for current businesses in Keene will help ensure the longevity and economic opportunity of the business community that's historically served as the backbone to the city's economy. Yet, opportunities exist to bring new businesses to Keene, aligned with regional and state priorities, and to continue investment in Keene. This intentional balance will continue in future decision-making to invest in Keene's historic industries while also preparing for emerging and future industries.

As businesses and industries evolve in their operations, their evolution will also manifest in the physical environment. Companies that may leave or cease operations may leave behind vacant buildings and underutilized properties. New businesses may want to transform parcels, build new buildings, or reinvigorate aging commercial buildings. Growing companies may need to expand their buildings or relocate to accommodate larger footprints or more advanced operations. As Keene evaluates commercial and industrial development and redevelopment opportunities, the city must also evaluate the highest and best use of properties not just for today but for years or decades to come. Fostering intentionality in land use decision-making and encouraging development regulation decisions with foresight to tomorrow's business needs will help steer the city towards continued economic success.



Future Insights: Connecting the Past to the Future

- **Transition Keene Advocates** launched in 2010 as a collective of Keene citizens to respond to threats to the community's quality of life and work together through participatory and community-led initiatives to improve ecological, social, and economic conditions. Today, the Transition Movement—a national and international network for communities reimagining the ways in which community-level efforts can lead to significant changes—is gaining new momentum in Keene through work at the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and other key partners in Keene.

Not Starting from Zero

The City of Keene has already implemented various initiatives to strategically prepare for the future including:

- Development Incentives: Tax Increment Financing Districts, Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Program (79-E District), Economic Revitalization Zones, and a federal Opportunity Zone
- Keene Economic Development Plan
- Airport Development Study and Resources
- Code + Keene Development Regulation Assessment (Land Development Code)
- U.S. DOE SolSmart Gold Designation (open for solar business)
- Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship
- Radically Rural Conference
- Monadnock Area Manufacturing Consortium
- Monadnock Economic Development Corporation
- Greater Monadnock Collaborative
- Southwest Region Planning Commission - Economic Development Planning



GOAL 1: ENCOURAGE, RECRUIT, AND RETAIN BUSINESSES IN TARGETED INDUSTRIES.

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participation in local, regional, and statewide industry groups to market Keene to prospective businesses in targeted industries and increase insights into industry needs. • Align Keene’s industry attraction efforts with New Hampshire BEA’s targeted industries, initiatives, and growth sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the needs of Keene’s current industries to help target expansion efforts and support. • Foster a nexus of specialized firms to promote and attract large-scale employers to the region.

GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY.

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and partner for the continued success of Keene’s major anchors, including Cheshire Medical Center, Keene State College, large employers, and Downtown Keene, recognizing these anchors as assets and competitive advantages of Keene’s economy. • Support efforts to make Keene a regional hub for repair, reuse, and remanufacturing, reducing waste, creating local jobs, and revitalizing essential trades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map existing essential products and service businesses within a regional footprint to determine gaps and identify ways to support businesses and other endeavors to meet these needs. Conduct an audit and map existing local economic assets and gaps to identify key leverage points for investment and support.



GOAL 3: ATTRACT AND GROW KEENE'S BUSINESSES OF ALL SCALES, FROM ENTREPRENEURS TO BUSINESSES THAT SPAN INTERNATIONALLY.

Actions

- Increase allocation of the city's budget for economic development staff to actively connect with current and prospective businesses, developers, and economic development partners across the city, region, and state.
- Review the city's regulatory processes to identify potential challenges or constraints prospective businesses and/or developers may face.
- Invest in proactive marketing to businesses and the development community, including unifying communication through the City's website and expanding online content around the city's economic development initiatives for current and prospective businesses, partners, and developers.
- Regularly conduct a business survey to monitor and understand evolving business needs across a range of factors, including industry, geographic location, size, tenure, and ownership. Incorporate best practices in survey development and administration to ensure representation of entrepreneurs, early-stage businesses, and underrepresented business owners, such as women and minority-owned businesses.
- Expand partnerships with local and regional Chambers of Commerce to support business attraction, technical assistance, tourism development, and marketing efforts.
- Review and revise home-based business regulations to support entrepreneurs and small businesses.

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN KEENE'S POSITION AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEADER.

Actions

- Launch an annual "State of Keene" event with regional and industry leaders focusing on economic and workforce development.
- Strengthen partnerships with local and regional economic development players, such as the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and the Greater Monadnock Collaborative.
- Facilitate regular roundtable meetings with key partners such as the Chamber, Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship, Keene Manufacturers Consortium, representatives from nearby communities, major employers, known developers, city leadership, and more.
- Support the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and city efforts to become a model for rural economic resilience and innovation. Communicate these successes through proactive marketing.
- Facilitate community-wide conversations, in collaboration with Radically Rural and otherwise, to deepen public understanding of the Transition Movement and co-create local strategies.

GOAL 5: FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY.

Actions

- Support the city's cultural events, ensuring funding and promotion by the city continue.
- Create an Arts and Culture Master Plan or Study with an economic and fiscal impact assessment of the role arts and culture play in Keene's economy to identify strategies to better support arts and cultural industries and increase the economic contribution of the arts sector.
- Work with regional entities and connect with statewide programs and initiatives for arts, culture, and outdoor recreation.
- Conduct a feasibility assessment for increasing shared-use infrastructure for small-scale producers and creators.
- Promote multi-day outdoor recreation experiences, leveraging places like Granite Gorge and Drummer Hill as regional destinations in marketing efforts.
- Identify new ways to capture economic benefits from visitors attending KSC ice hockey events and other events at Keene Ice.
- Expand economic development KPIs and metrics to assess a broader range of inclusive community development and livability considerations alongside economic indicators, such as well-being, resilience, ecological health, and sufficiency.

4.3 | PILLAR 3: CONNECTED MOBILITY

OBJECTIVE: BUILD REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONNECTIVITY, TRANSPORTATION, AND RECREATION NETWORKS.

4.3.1 | IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTED MOBILITY

Keene is the logical hub for mobility connections and an established regional center for the Monadnock Region. As the region grows, especially the surrounding areas, building this connectivity becomes essential to help the easy flow of the workforce and residents to Keene. While the Comprehensive Master Planning work is focused on Keene, topics like transportation require a regional approach and one that encourages public-private partnerships. This is further amplified by the expressed desire from residents to have highly walkable and potentially ‘car-free’ living options. This has implications for planning, as it requires the seamless linking of recreation, trail, bus, and trolley networks and coordinating with land uses to build multi-modal options that allow significant choice in how people ‘get around’ the community and the local region. This connected mobility is seen as one of the intriguing and appealing features of the preferred future that has been envisaged by residents in the planning work to date.

Keene’s Connected Mobility Pillar aims to build seamless regional and local transportation networks, promoting car-free living and enhancing accessibility for all. 62% of Keene residents commute under 15 minutes, highlighting the potential for car-free living options.

“When I hear ‘connected mobility,’ I imagine a community where I could bike across town and walk around. I could bike to work using the trail network then turnoff after crossing the highway on a bridge....”

- Connected Mobility Discussion Board Participant

Data Insights

- Keene residents’ jobs are close to home. 62% of Keene residents commute in under 15 minutes to work. This commute time is lower than the national average of 27 minutes. This leads to more potential opportunities for ‘car-free’ living options.
- The majority (79%) of Keene workers commute via motor vehicle, less than the 85% of Cheshire County workers and 83% of New Hampshire workers. The rate of Keene workers who walk or bike to work (4.6%) is just over two percentage points higher than both the state and county rates. (US Census ACS 2022)
- The average household in Keene travels 17,359 vehicle miles annually, about 2,500 miles less than the average Cheshire County and New Hampshire household. (Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2020)
- The average household in Keene takes 7 trips via public transit annually, compared to 4 trips for Cheshire County households, 8 trips for New Hampshire households and 96 trips for the average U.S. household. (Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2020)



For the Connected Mobility Pillar, four overarching goals have been developed over the course of the CMP planning process. The goals have been developed by community aspirations that have emerged throughout the planning process and are designed to accelerate solutions to the mobility challenges and provide accessibility and inclusion for people of all ages.

GOAL 1: CREATE A CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE NETWORK OF MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

Aspirations

- Accessibility features are working and operational.
- Residents have the option to live a car-free lifestyle.
- Transportation infrastructure and systems work for Keene today and in the future.
- Alternative ways to fund transit opportunities, like circulators or other micro transit, are available.
- The culture of safety is an on-going, broad effort that is sustained over time.
- Roadway safety is addressed in the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan, small area plans, and within zoning codes.
- The city's attention focuses on implementing the Roadway Safety Action Plan, measuring effectiveness, and adjusting strategies as needed to attain zero traffic-related deaths.

GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE VULNERABLE ROAD USERS IN INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN, OPERATIONS, AND MAINTENANCE.

Aspirations

- A responsive and effective on-demand mobility service and a reliable circulator system are means for residents and visitors to move about the city.
- The city is a stakeholder in state government legislation advocacy for mobility goals.
- Mobility options are connected throughout the area, increasing access to a wider segment of the population.

"One positive of improving multi-modal transportation options and making it easier to get around outside of a personal vehicle is that many groups benefit from the changes, including people with disabilities."

**- Connected Mobility
Discussion Board
Participant**





Connected Mobility

COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS (CONT.)

GOAL 3: EXPAND AND PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY OPTIONS THAT ARE CONVENIENT AND ATTRACTIVE

Aspirations

- Residents and visitors experience multimodal options daily, such as buses and micro transit.
- The transportation network functions for all users and needs.
- Nodes of walkability are integrated into Keene's transportation and land use framework.

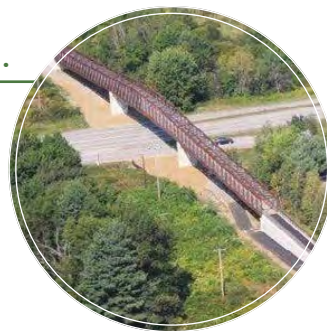
"I wish public transportation could be expanded past 4:30 pm."

- Community Needs Survey Respondent

GOAL 4: EXPAND KEENE'S CONNECTIVITY TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Aspirations

- Keene's transportation network attracts businesses and stimulates its economic growth.
- Technology is integrated and utilized to facilitate regional connectivity.
- A regional approach to mobility is undertaken with intercity buses, regional trails, and the airport.



KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY

- Under the **Community and Social Fabric** topics in the Community Survey, 53% of survey respondents identified assuming a greater leadership role in the Monadnock region and 50% identified connecting Keene to the greater regional identity as important in shaping the future of Keene.
- Connectivity is an important feature of highly desirable communities. Under the **Economic and Built Environment** topics of the Community Survey, 67% of survey respondents identified building a network of pedestrian-friendly sidewalks as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- Under the **Environmental and Landscape** topics of the Community Survey, 46% of survey respondents identified creating corridor connections between neighborhood areas, and 54% of respondents identified adopting zero-waste and net-zero carbon goals as important to shaping the future of Keene.



Planning Insights

- As societal values shift, driven by increased environmental sensitivity, it is expected that people will be seeking a greater range of mobility options that are climate-neutral.
- It is also important that planning considers the transport of goods and services to and from the community
- Keene's network of trails offers the potential to create a unique layer to the connectivity and mobility equation.

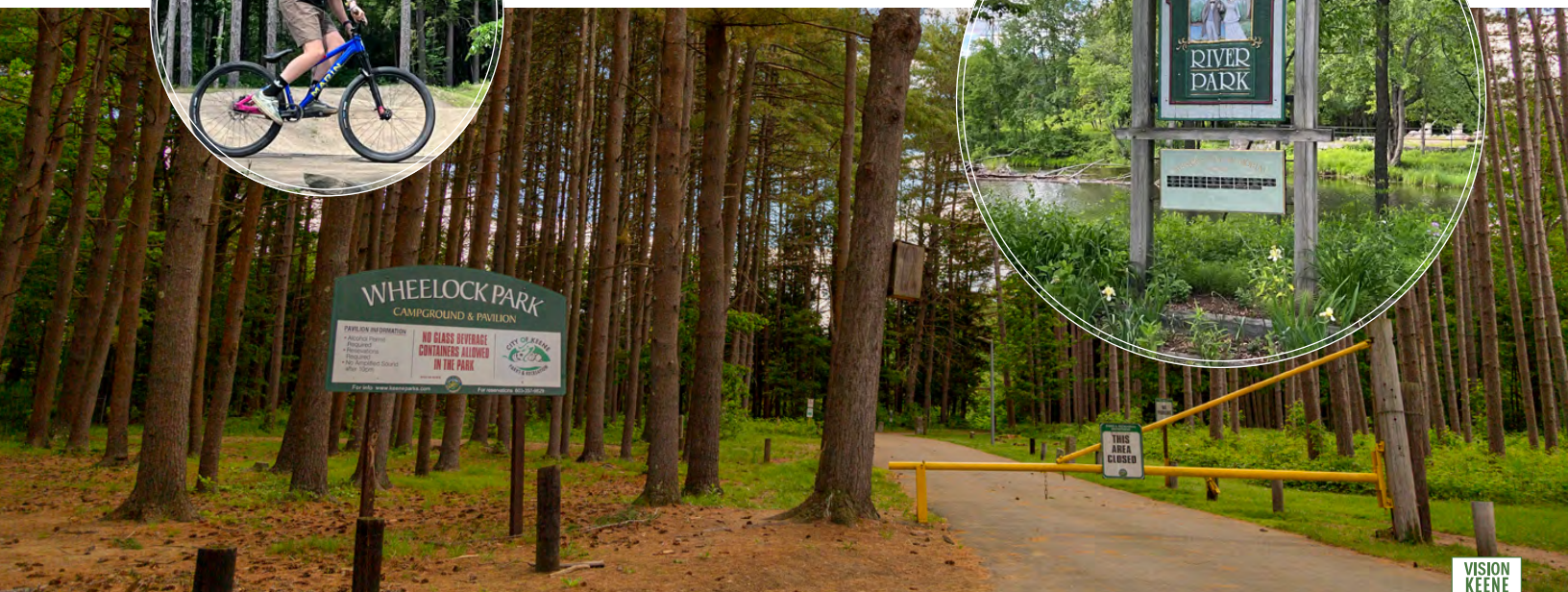
4.3.3 | EMERGING TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, TRADE-OFFS

Keene's network of trails offers the potential to create a unique layer to the connectivity and mobility equation.

There is a desire expressed by some residents to create a system, similar to some European cities, where these trails are a major part of the mobility system and serve a purpose beyond just recreation.

The last decade has seen explosive growth in new mobility technologies and trends, including the development of autonomous vehicles, e-bikes, e-scooters, on-demand transit, paratransit, micro transit, e-commerce, rideshares, and mass adoption of electric vehicles. The rise of Vision Zero and Complete Streets has also increased the emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle safety on public roads.

Keene has been proactive in its adoption of complete streets and building out its bike network. However, with the rise in new mobility options, the city may need to revisit its Complete Street Guidelines adopted a decade ago to see how these new modes affect the design principles outlined in the plan. For example, as the city continues to build out its network of bike lanes, new e-bikes, e-scooters, and pedal-assist bicycles use these lanes. The city may have to update the guidelines and local ordinances to ensure these new mobility options are used in the way the city prefers.



Not Starting from Zero

The City of Keene has already implemented the following initiatives to strategically prepare for the future.

- Complete Streets Policy & Design Guidelines
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee
- Neighborhood Parking Project & Report
- SWRPC Micro-Transit Study
- Strengthening Connections: Downtowns & Trails
- Roadway Safety Action Plan
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Master Plan
- Downtown Infrastructure Project

GOAL 1: CREATE A CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE NETWORK OF MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a walk audit to identify areas where safety improvements are needed. • Implement a snowplow tracker digital application. • Evaluate and update the comprehensive sidewalk and crosswalk maintenance plan to include a snow removal strategy for priority sidewalks and walkways to ensure accessibility during inclement weather and a striping and crosswalk maintenance plan to enhance multimodal mobility safety and accessibility, involving the community in the planning process to address local needs and encourage collaboration. • Develop a program such as “adopt-a-sidewalk” to encourage resident/business participation in shared maintenance of sidewalks during weather-related events. • Continue to offer and promote an online tool that offers a one-stop service for constituents, residents, and visitors to report service requests like sidewalk repairs, potholes, or traffic signal issues. • Implement strategies described in the Roadway Safety Action Plan. • Establish a crash analysis team, such as the Roadway Safety Plan Committee, to examine recent accidents, determine contributing factors, and gather data on near misses. Evaluate methods to gather this data by the potential use of optical sensors or other devices. • Enhance enforcement of traffic infractions like parking in bike lanes and speeding by implementing strategies like increased patrols, fixed and mobile speed cameras, and community reporting systems. • Conduct an ongoing study to determine the most effective messaging for different driver and traveler types, such as young drivers and those operating larger, heavier vehicles.
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GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE VULNERABLE ROAD USERS IN INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN, OPERATIONS, AND MAINTENANCE.

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the feasibility of instituting a circulator or trolley along high-use areas and neighborhood nodes that is in coordination with the pillars of Thriving Economy and Vibrant Neighborhoods. • Advocate for the creation of a user-friendly, one-stop-shop location for all mobility information with real-time updates. • Utilize a circulator during festivals to introduce people to alternative modes of transit, test out ideas, and gain feedback. • Engage the community in planning and decision-making to meet local needs and preferences by organizing surveys and public meetings to collect feedback on the desired frequency and operating hours of transit services • Partner with local organizations to reach underserved populations. • Track carbon emission reductions from increased public transit and non-motorized travel and assess the public health impacts. • Leverage grant and grassroots funding opportunities to advance trail planning and construction efforts.
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GOAL 3: EXPAND AND PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY OPTIONS THAT ARE CONVENIENT AND ATTRACTIVE.

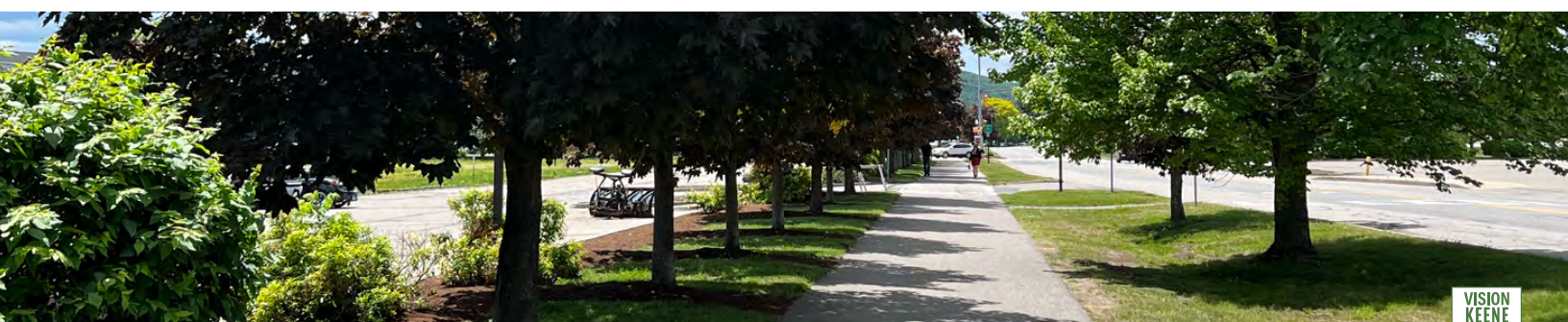
Actions

- Document the processes, successes, and challenges of the Marlboro Street Complete Streets demonstration project to create a comprehensive guide for future projects.
- Identify priority areas for pilot programs and conduct a transportation network study to find suitable roads for multimodal projects.
- Launch Awareness Campaigns to educate the public about the benefits of EVs and the availability of charging stations through social media, local events, and partnerships with community organizations.
- Building off the EV Charging Infrastructure Plan, expand the electric vehicle charging network by performing a needs assessment and pinpointing ideal locations for new chargers. Utilize data on traffic patterns, population density, and existing infrastructure to choose strategic sites, including downtown areas, neighborhood hubs, and entry points into Keene.
- Identify incentive mechanisms or development standards for development projects to be part of the city's overall enhancement of its electric vehicle charging network.
- Re-evaluate regulations to encourage citizen-led urbanism projects and promote community-driven solutions to multimodal improvements.
- Undertake quick-build projects to enhance street designs for multimodal travel, leveraging affordable, temporary materials such as paint, planters, and modular barriers to quickly implement changes.
- Support land use decisions that increase the effectiveness of Keene's transportation network in coordination with the pillars of Vibrant Neighborhoods and Thriving Economy.
- Launch targeted marketing campaigns to highlight the benefits of public transit, such as cost savings, environmental impact, and convenience. Use social media, local events, and partnerships with community organizations to reach a wider audience.

GOAL 4: EXPAND KEENE'S CONNECTIVITY TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Actions

- Assess the needs and feasibility of incorporating new technologies into the airport, like electric plane charging infrastructure and biofuels.
- Utilize the city's enhanced accessibility and mobility connections to boost the local economy by collaborating with the Magnify Monadnock Regional Promotional Organization for promotion.
- Assess the feasibility of an intercity bus service by exploring options or creative solutions with other entities.
- Assess how intercity transit could be leveraged to expand the labor pool and bring in workers from nearby communities.
- Integrate goods and services into the mobility network to streamline logistics and support local businesses.
- Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and regional authorities to coordinate transportation planning and infrastructure projects.
- Monitor changes in the number of new businesses and economic activity in areas with enhanced connectivity and track shifts in property values in areas impacted by transportation improvements. The following metrics may be used: number of new business registrations, changes in tax revenues, public transit ridership, average travel times, and traffic volumes.
- Implement smart traffic management systems to optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion.
- Enhance infrastructure at identified neighborhood nodes to support various modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, and public transit.



OBJECTIVE: SUPPORT VIBRANT COMMUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS THAT REFLECT THEIR UNIQUE IDENTITY.

4.4.1 | IMPORTANCE OF VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS

In the context of the Comprehensive Master Plan work, place-making is an approach that helps emphasize community neighborhoods and builds on their unique culture and identity.

Keene is a community that has retained some very important aspects of its culture and heritage. The downtown and main street areas are a highly visible example of a vibrant 'neighborhood' that has a unique identity, and this will be enhanced by the upcoming infrastructure improvements. However, Keene has other important neighborhoods and places. The city should work with the community to identify these places and help build more place-based experiences in the community. In today's world, these place-based approaches help build community connection points. This approach helps enhance the community fabric, people's sense of belonging, and being included in a community.

"For a small town, Keene has an impressive amount of cultural offerings, with lots of scenic parks and hiking spots, also an attractive downtown and a commitment to history and preservation. It is also welcoming to people of various cultures and beliefs."
- Community Survey Respondent

19% of Keene's population is identified as socially vulnerable, highlighting the importance of strong community bonds. As one community member shared, "Our neighborhoods are the heart of Keene, where culture and heritage come alive, making our city a truly special place to live."

"The city amenities (international cultural events, college events, theaters, music, enough shopping options, openness to diversity) with the small-town vibe (feels safe, welcoming, people know each other, charming). Also, I love all of the natural beauty and places to enjoy it."
- Community Survey Respondent



Data Insights

- 19% of the population in Keene is identified as socially vulnerable according to the US Census Bureau, more than the rate of 16% in Cheshire County, and slightly less than the national rate of 21%. Community resilience is the capacity of individuals and households to absorb, endure, and recover from the health, social, and economic impacts. ([About Community Resilience Estimates](#))
- According to the [US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey from August 2024](#), 88% of adults in New Hampshire reported getting the social and emotional support they need sometimes, usually, or always. This is compared to 79% of adults nationwide. The same survey shows that 38% of adults in New Hampshire reported feeling lonely sometimes, usually, or always, compared to 40% nationwide.



4.4.2 | COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Vibrant Neighborhoods

For the Vibrant Neighborhoods Pillar, five overarching goals have been developed over the course of the CMP planning process. The goals have been developed by community aspirations that have emerged throughout the planning process and are designed to accelerate solutions to retain important aspects of its culture and heritage. They reflect a comprehensive approach to enhancing the vibrancy of Keene's neighborhoods by focusing on community engagement, infrastructure, historic preservation, safety, economic vibrancy, public spaces, and effective communication.

GOAL 1: SUPPORT A BUILT ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND INTERACTIONS.

Aspirations

- Keene's walkable, mixed-use communities are places that encourage social gathering for all residents.
- Communal focal points ("third spaces") such as schools, youth centers, and parks are at the center of building community bonds.



GOAL 2: FOSTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND COLLABORATION.

Aspirations

- The city fosters intentional relationships with the public by being available and approachable to its residents.
- Partnerships and seamless communication between the city and residents build a sense of belonging.

"I'd love to see space where neighbors can naturally connect and develop community within neighborhoods. Cared for spaces make a neighborhood feel like home and inspire others to care about that neighborhood..."
- Vibrant Neighborhoods Discussion Board Participant

GOAL 3: ENSURE SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT AROUND TOWN.

Aspirations

- The 2025 Roadway Safety Action Plan is fully implemented.
- The city has a comprehensive multimodal transportation system that allows people to get out, meet people, and socialize.



GOAL 4: FOSTER A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL RESIDENTS.

Aspirations

- All residents have equitable access to passive and active recreation opportunities, including parks, facilities, open space, and programs that focus on active living, wise stewardship of natural resources, and healthy eating.
- Keene's residents have the resources to access high-quality food, housing, transportation, education, and employment.

GOAL 5: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESSES.

Aspirations

- Regulations provide flexibility to accommodate a diversity of businesses within neighborhood character areas.
- Keene offers students professional growth opportunities that align with the area's educational training and expertise.



KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY

- Under the **Community and Social Fabric** topics of the Community Survey, 75% of survey respondents identified fostering a sense of belonging to a community and 79% of respondents identified residents being part of key decision-making as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- Under the **Economic and Built Environment** topics of the Community Survey, 70% of survey respondents identified continuing to preserve and protect Keene's historic district and 63% of respondents identified developing the Downtown core area as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- Under the **Environmental and Landscape** topics of the Community Survey, 66% of survey respondents identified preserving Keene's existing look and feel and 78% identified fostering accessibility for all ages as important to shaping the future of Keene.

Planning Insights

- Communities that are the size and scale of Keene often include smaller, unique locations, places, and neighborhoods.
- Place-making is becoming more important in urban and city planning. It focuses on more than just physical elements and includes approaches to 'activate' these places to create unique experiences and purposes.



Downtown is usually the first neighborhood people think of when locals think of a vibrant neighborhood.

This is because of its walkability, historic character, and strong sense of place. The ground floor retail activates the street while the historic architecture is pedestrian-oriented. It is a social gathering place for all residents of Keene.

Traditional Euclidean zoning focuses on the separation of uses. This is counterintuitive to the creation of vibrant neighborhoods that have a mix of uses. The zoning code needs to be reviewed to ensure that targeted neighborhoods have land development regulations that allow for this type of development. Sacramento, California, approached this by proposing to decouple density from land use and instead use Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to regulate building size. This strategy ensures new housing is compatible with existing while allowing for the development of a diversity of housing options. They also legalized small neighborhood commercial developments within residential neighborhoods, promoting vibrancy and walkability.



Creating a sense of place is an important characteristic of a vibrant neighborhood.

Placemaking has become a more and more popular tool in the last decade to revitalize neighborhoods and promote social interaction. Placemaking has been initiated by several cities across the nation to boost the transformation of underutilized public spaces into vibrant places for people. Typically, many placemaking projects can include public participation, helping to bring the community together to improve their neighborhood. Charlotte, North Carolina, and Clearwater, Florida, are two examples of city-driven placemaking programs.

Another aspect of vibrant communities is their connection with nature and recreation opportunities. Interacting with nature is proven to help improve people's mental health. Incorporating nature into the built environment and everyday life can happen in many ways, such as using community gardens for strengthening food security, building pocket parks, improving connections to nearby parks, or improving the urban tree canopy. Increased greenery also improves the urban heat island effect, keeping communities cool during heat waves and protecting vulnerable populations like seniors.

Keene has participated in the Tree City USA program for over 40 years (since 1979). The city also has a great history around trees – it is known as the ‘Elm City’ – and the city’s current downtown has trees because of a citizen-led and funded effort to donate trees. More recently, the city partnered with its utility and the Arbor Day Foundation to give away a few hundred trees to residents. For additional history, read more at [the Daily Nutmeg](#).





4.4.4 | PLANNING GOALS AND ACTION AREAS

Not Starting from Zero

The City of Keene has already implemented or supported the following initiatives to strategically prepare for the future.

- 2010 Comprehensive Plan recommended “Neighborhood Village Activity Centers”
- Marlboro Street Rezoning Initiative
- Keene Sustainable Energy Plan and adopted 100% renewable energy goals (keeneenergyplan.com)
- Keene Public Library Strategic Plan
- Heritage Commission
- Neighborhood Parking Report
- WOW! Community Nights
- Formal and informal neighborhood associations
- Monadnock View Cemetery Community Gardens
- Active and Passive Recreation Plan



GOAL 1: SUPPORT A BUILT ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND INTERACTIONS.

Actions

- Identify ideal locations for community nodes in collaboration with residents.
- Conduct a public process to evaluate the permitted uses for neighborhood business nodes, encouraging the creation of neighborhood-scale businesses.
- Undertake multimodal improvements to West Street to improve access to downtown.
- Enhance communication and outreach efforts to increase community awareness of and involvement in city programs, events, services, and facilities.

GOAL 2: FOSTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND COLLABORATION.

Actions

- Create a contact list of community leaders and groups the city can partner with on community events.
- Support and invest in organically developed, community-led events and organizations.
- Establish a task force to work with business leaders to identify quality of life characteristics to improve in employee attraction/retention efforts.
- Host community events to build social cohesion and community bonds.
- Identify special events/community events to break the digital isolation that has increased since the pandemic.
- Support the development of existing and new citizen-led neighborhood groups.



GOAL 3: ENSURE SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT AROUND TOWN.

Actions

- Undertake mobility improvements between residential communities and job centers in coordination with the Connected Mobility pillar.
- Undertake a walk audit with community stakeholders, such as seniors, disabled persons, college students, families with young children, and other regular users, to identify mobility barriers.
- Explore and identify locations that support components of a city-wide bicycle share program.
- Test mobility options by employing quick-build or temporary installations.
- Identify funding opportunities to assist with the planning, design, and construction work of mobility improvements.
- Coordinate accessibility needs and protocols with city services during inclement weather events.
- Continue efforts with Safe Routes to Schools and expand initiatives for Safe Routes to Parks.

GOAL 4: FOSTER A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL RESIDENTS.

Actions

- Collaborate with healthcare and educational institutions to support community health initiatives and improve communication.
- Conduct a review of program and service offerings to streamline service offerings and enhance resource efficiency.
- Promote community gardens and expand active senior and young adult programs.
- Periodically evaluate community needs, desires, and satisfaction with programs and services.
- Review current revenue streams and their sustainability by determining and defining direct and indirect costs and developing a cost recovery plan.
- Support the pillars of Livable Housing, Connected Mobility, Thriving Economy, and Adaptable Workforce to provide a range of housing, transportation, educational, and employment options.

GOAL 5: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESSES.

Actions

- Assess appropriate locations to allow for small-scale commercial uses in neighborhood nodes and update regulations accordingly.
- Support business growth incubation by providing opportunities and resources for a start-up or home-based business to grow into a neighborhood-oriented brick-and-mortar location.
- Undertake a code audit to identify barriers to artisanal workshops, live/work facilities, breweries, coworking spaces, and other types of industries compatible with Keene's neighborhood areas.
- In coordination with the Thriving Economy pillar, evaluate the effectiveness of marketing efforts in reaching and engaging target markets for neighborhood-type businesses.
- Promote the city's quality of life characteristics to attract potential employees as identified in the Adaptable Workforce pillar.



4.5 | PILLAR 5: ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE

OBJECTIVE: FOSTER A FUTURE-READY, ABUNDANT, AND ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE.

4.5.1 | IMPORTANCE OF AN ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE

Keene's future competitive success will depend on its ability to develop and retain a skilled and future-ready workforce. Talent attraction is a key issue for many cities, especially in more rural regions, and a strong workforce is essential for a strong local economy. Keene's educational institutions attract young talent to the area, but Keene must work to retain these students upon graduation. The city is also experiencing an aging population, presenting opportunities for Keene to lean into the broad spectrum of workers to prepare for tomorrow's economy. With the foundation of Keene's education focus, a cherished arts scene, and cultural amenities and experiences that help market Keene as a desirable community to live, work, and play in, Keene has the potential to be a creative center that helps spur innovation and flexible thinking, qualities already embedded in the community culture.



Data Insights

- Over 19,900 people work in Keene, with nearly 11,750 people coming to Keene for employment, demonstrating Keene's regional importance and economic concentration.
- Keene State College enrollment has declined over the past 15 years. In 2010, 5,738 students were enrolled in the fall semester at KSC. This trended downward year-to-year; in 2023, student enrollment was down to 2,863. Despite enrollment decline, Keene State College continues to be a significant anchor and asset to Keene's employment base and workforce pipeline.
- Although Keene still has a high share of residents between the ages of 18 and 24, the overall population is aging. The median age of residents increased from 32 to 36 between 2010 and 2022. At the same time, the number of residents between 65 and 74 and over 85 doubled.
- Keene residents are becoming increasingly educated over the past decade, with more residents having bachelor's, master's, or advanced degrees than in 2010. Approximately 44% of Keene's population over the age of 25 has a bachelor's or advanced degree, a rate higher than Cheshire County (34%) and the State of New Hampshire overall (39%).
- Median household incomes in Keene remain below the county and state. The median household income in Keene is \$69,831 compared to the county's median at \$76,551 and the state's median household income of \$90,845.

An Adaptable Workforce requires three fundamental facets:

- Adaptable workers with access to evolving skill development and credential pathways throughout all stages of life.
- Adaptable institutions that offer flexibility and innovation in planning for future needs and responding to tomorrow's economy and workforce needs.
- An adaptable community that focuses on livability, where residents can live in Keene, commute to their workplace, remain involved in the community, and contribute to the high-quality community Keene is today.

Balancing these facets will position Keene with a future-ready, evolving, and abundant workforce for the years to come.



CONNECTION TO VISION KEENE PILLARS

An Adaptable Workforce is not a siloed pillar of Vision Keene. It is part of the foundation for a Thriving Economy. If Keene's workforce isn't substantial enough or attuned to its businesses and industry needs, economic opportunity will be halted or diminished in Keene. As Keene's economy evolves, the workforce must evolve to meet future needs. This evolution and growth of the workforce are contingent upon Livable Housing in Keene, where employees can live and work in the community. Growing the workforce will require having an adequate housing supply and desirable living options that meet today's and tomorrow's demographic needs. Connected Mobility in Keene can improve physical access to employment opportunities while recognizing the regional labor draw of workers coming into Keene daily.



4.5.2 | COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Adaptable Workforce

The Keene community recognizes that an Adaptable Workforce blends opportunities across all age cohorts from youth populations to its aging workforce and that tomorrow's economy will necessitate improved access to skill and career development opportunities so that Keene's labor pool continues to meet changing industry needs. Importantly, Keene aspires to work alongside its partners, recognizing that supporting industry, education, and regional partners will help Keene's workers achieve greater opportunities while breaking barriers in growing the labor pool. Through these aspirations, the community developed five Adaptable Workforce goals to concentrate efforts through 2040.

"I would not stay in Keene because there are not the job opportunities that I am looking for."

- Keene Student

GOAL 1: ATTRACT TALENT TO GROW KEENE'S WORKFORCE

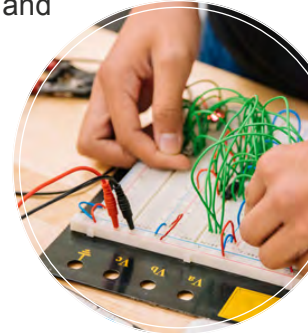
Aspirations

- Keene's economy grows and expands because of an adequate supply of workers and employees.
- New businesses want to locate in Keene because of the reputation of its talent pool across occupation levels.
- Youth find employment opportunities in Keene, and students stay in Keene after graduation, leading to the next generation of Keene residents.

GOAL 2: EXPAND CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Aspirations

- Keene residents and workforce have access to a wide range of skill and career development pathways throughout all stages of life and across all available resources.
- Keene State College and other nearby educational institutions evolve their curriculum and credentials to meet the needs of area industries and employers.
- Keene's aging population continues to participate in the workforce, gaining new skills and marketability in today's job market.
- Keene Public Library continues to meet the community's evolving needs, offering new education and learning opportunities.



COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS (CONT.)

Adaptable Workforce

GOAL 3: PLAY A PROACTIVE ROLE IN DE-SILOING EFFORTS, BROADENING PARTNERSHIPS, AND INCREASING COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARTNERS THAT SERVE AND SUPPORT KEENE'S WORKFORCE

Aspirations

- The “walls” between educational institutions and the community are broken down, and the broader community engages with educational offerings through various social learning opportunities.
- An increased awareness of how various partners and players support workforce development initiatives leads to strategically filling gaps.

“I don’t think I could make enough money to live the way I want in Keene.”

- Keene Student

GOAL 4: MEET QUALITY OF LIFE NEEDS AND REDUCE WORKFORCE BARRIERS, SUCH AS HOUSING AVAILABILITY, CHILDCARE, AND TRANSPORTATION.

Aspirations

- Keene employees have access to housing, childcare, and transportation, allowing employees to achieve a high quality of life in Keene.
- Keene trailblazes regional efforts to increase the housing supply and address housing challenges.



GOAL 5: PRIORITIZE WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Aspirations

- Workforce development extends beyond skill and career development and finds solutions to tackle broader community health and wellness objectives.
- Keene businesses and workers are highly engaged in the community.
- The city’s prioritization to improve walkability and multimodal infrastructure translates into a more active workforce, improving health conditions and activity levels in workers. Employers recognize the value of a healthy workforce and contribute to and participate in broader community health initiatives.
- The city expands its economic indicator tracking to encompass a more comprehensive set of metrics that help measure community wellness, social and community connection, and other important socioeconomic factors.



“Take more chances on younger people by being more willing to see what we can do and how well we could help the workforce.”

- Keene Career Ambassador

Planning Insights

- Access to quality jobs and incomes that yield livable wages and opportunities is intrinsically intertwined in Keene’s community and social fabric. Two-thirds of Keene’s residents believe lifelong learning opportunities are fundamental to the city’s continued success, and nearly 60% of residents emphasize the importance of equity and inclusivity principles.
- Approximately 81% of Keene residents identified developing more local employment opportunities as critical to shaping the city’s future. Similarly, 84% want to encourage and attract desirable businesses to the city. As more companies grow and locate in Keene, so does the importance of an abundant and quality workforce.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The accelerating rate of change within jobs and skills and technological advances with AI create a level of unpredictability for future workforce needs, underscoring the importance of an adaptable and flexible workforce for the coming years. Learning and growing are embedded in Keene's culture – characteristics that offer significant opportunities and the ability to support an adaptable workforce. Keene's commitment to education, from preschool-aged children to adults at Keene State College and nearby universities, offers partners and key assets to equip Keene to continue to meet evolving workforce educational needs.

Workforce approaches must address workers across all age groups, from students to those nearing retirement. Youth retention remains a challenge in Keene. High school and college students vocalize a perception that there isn't enough job diversity and employment opportunity in Keene, with students moving to different regions and job markets post-graduation. Increasing awareness of the diversity of industry and quality of employers in Keene, while also inviting students and youth more into Keene's community to build stronger connections, can showcase the abundance of Keene's offerings. On the other end of the spectrum, the growing aging cohort of Keene offers opportunities to continue lifelong learning and skill development to help workers nearing retirement choose to remain in the workforce. The emerging trend of "retire, rehire," where employees formally retire from their full-time positions and seek new employment opportunities in part-time or alternative jobs, can continue to provide a wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise within Keene's businesses.

Value of arts and culture in workforce development: "Combining the arts with workforce development programs helps create well-rounded workers who not only have 'hard' technical skills in their field, but also have creative thinking skills that foster innovation and drive our global economy." – Americans for the Arts (Arts Impact Explorer Fact Sheet)

TRADE-OFFS TO CONSIDER

Skills development and credential pathways can dramatically vary based on workers' available resources, time, and financial commitment. Balancing formal education and training opportunities with a comprehensive network of social learning and inclusive environments for different learning pathways and skill exposure will be essential to meet the needs of Keene's workers today and tomorrow.

The pace of change and magnitude of adaptability can vary across partners. Prioritizing longer-term interventions with institutional partners and the nimbleness and quick responsiveness of nonprofit organizations and cohorts within these larger institutions will help Keene's workforce advance careers, pivot into new industries, and expand employment opportunities.



Future Insights

- With the rising costs of higher education, more young adults are looking for alternative pathways for job readiness. Skill and vocational trades are becoming more popular for Gen Z, with this cohort earning the label "the Toolbox Generation".
- The emergence of artificial intelligence and new technologies, rapid economic disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cybersecurity, sustainability, and broader macroeconomic factors have led to a rapid rate of skill changes necessary for the workforce. Between 2021 and 2024, the average job experienced one-third of its skills changing. (Lightcast, 2025)

Not Starting from Zero

The City of Keene has already implemented or supported the following initiatives to strategically prepare for the future.

- Keene Economic Development Plan
- Cheshire Career Center
- Magnify Monadnock
- Keene State College
- Antioch University New England
- River Valley Community College
- Keene Community Education
- Keene Arts Core Project



GOAL 1: ATTRACT TALENT TO GROW KEENE'S WORKFORCE.

Actions

- Continue regional partnerships to help market Keene to prospective workers and the labor force.
- Increase experiential learning opportunities in Keene, connecting students across all levels with businesses and available internships within the city. Expand summer youth employment opportunities to build pipelines for permanent positions.
- Explore ways to partner with and expand the Chamber's promotional efforts geared toward visitors, businesses, and students.
- Advocate for NH's state university system to improve affordability.
- Facilitate partnerships between Keene State College programs and area employers like the Cheshire Medical Center.

GOAL 2: EXPAND CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

Actions

- Advocate and collaborate with Keene State College to develop a 2-year accredited degree program.
- Convene city leadership, area chambers, industry leadership, and education institution representatives to form a working group that regularly meets to identify needed industry skills, credentials, and other workforce challenges.
- Strategize with relevant partners to identify opportunities to enhance lifelong learning with Keene's senior population.
- Work to help ensure that the Cheshire Career Center has the necessary resources for students and continues to meet changing industry needs.
- Bolster support for and the expansion of educational services within Keene Public Library, such as its makerspace.



GOAL 3: PLAY A PROACTIVE ROLE IN DE-SILOING EFFORTS, BROADENING PARTNERSHIPS, AND INCREASING COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARTNERS THAT SERVE AND SUPPORT KEENE'S WORKFORCE.

Actions

- Launch and routinely facilitate a “State of Keene’s Workforce” event to bring industry partners, education institutions, regional and state players, and other key workforce development leaders to discuss workforce needs and challenges and cross-collaborate to identify solutions.
- Invest in partnerships with the National Rural Network to develop peer relationships with communities addressing similar workforce development challenges and contribute to successful models.
- Conduct a workforce development audit to identify resources and gaps in workforce development efforts. Develop and regularly update a centralized repository of relevant programming and resources.
- Encourage the development of a community-based public lecture series with Keene State College, Antioch University, and other nearby education institutions following models such as Profs and Pints. Contribute marketing support, staff attendance, and other available assistance.



GOAL 4: MEET QUALITY OF LIFE NEEDS AND REDUCE WORKFORCE BARRIERS, SUCH AS HOUSING AVAILABILITY, CHILDCARE, AND TRANSPORTATION.

Actions

- Engage regional partners to conduct a regional housing workshop to address housing challenges. Advocate for additional housing supply in Cheshire County.
- Conduct a childcare study to understand challenges, needs, and solutions to increase childcare opportunities and security.
- Support regional transportation initiatives to mitigate geographic and logistical barriers to job opportunities.
- Partner with the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and other key workforce partners to provide neurodivergent worker training(s) for employers.
- Support continued high quality-of-life in Keene to encourage youth return and labor retention.

GOAL 5: PRIORITIZE WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS.

Actions

- Strengthen the city’s relationship with the Healthy Monadnock Alliance.
- Take an active role in Community Health Improvement Plans, providing insights into initiatives and opportunities related to workforce and economic health.
- Increase support beyond emergency-level resources for addiction and mental health services to help individuals reach self-sufficiency.





Flourishing Environment

4.6 | PILLAR 6: FLOURISHING ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVE: CHAMPION ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND CLIMATE ACTION.

4.6.1 | IMPORTANCE OF A FLOURISHING ENVIRONMENT

Keene has a long history of being a leader in environmental stewardship and climate adaptation. This planning process aims to build on this solid foundation.

There is an established and strong environmental stewardship ethos in Keene. This is reflected in the priority this topic has been given in previous planning efforts. Throughout the current planning work, people have pushed on topics of climate adaptation, climate action, renewable energy sources, ecological protection, and sustainable development. This reflects a deep underlying value and desire to see Keene be a responsible community. As the climate changes, adaptation will be essential. Urban environments will need to be designed to handle a hotter world and more intense climate events. There will be a need to provide infrastructure to help transition to carbon-neutral transport and energy systems. Keene has an opportunity to build on the existing solid work and move the community to a more resilient and sustainable future.

Keene's Flourishing Environment Pillar promotes sustainability, food security, and climate action, addressing high climate vulnerability. Benefits include improved health and economic growth, but challenges like high costs and regulatory complexities exist.



Ashuelot River is an Abenaki word meaning "collection of many waters" or "between two places."



Data Insights

- According to the U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index produced by the Environmental Defense Fund, Keene is in the 12th percentile nationally in overall climate vulnerability, with the top drivers being storms, precipitation, infectious diseases, and wildfires. Cheshire County as whole is in the 6th percentile nationally in overall climate vulnerability. New Hampshire ranks 49th out of 51 States and districts in the U.S. at a 4th national vulnerability percentile.
- Residents in Keene emit, on average, 7.1 tons of greenhouse gas per household annually. This is about 1.4 tons less than the average Cheshire County and New Hampshire household. (Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2020)



For the Flourishing Environment Pillar, five overarching goals have been developed over the course of the CMP planning process. The goals have been developed by community aspirations that have emerged throughout the planning process and are designed to accelerate solutions for a strong community interest in sustainable development, green spaces, renewable energy, and climate resilience.

GOAL 1: PROMOTE SMART LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Aspirations

- Keene is walkable and bikeable city-wide and continues to support infrastructure for multiple modes of transportation.
- Smart growth, compact, walkable development, and infill are promoted to preserve green space and farms.
- Adaptive reuse of existing buildings is the common building strategy over greenfield development.

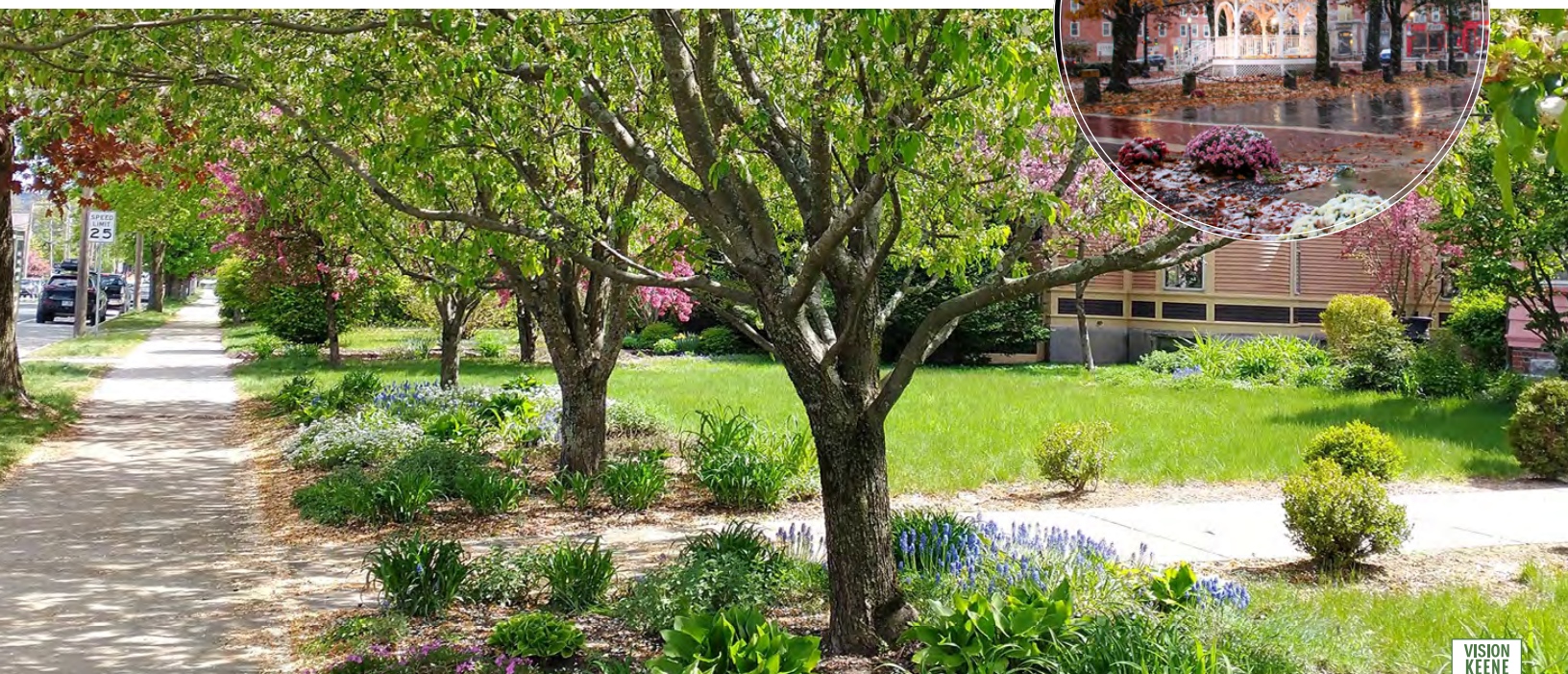
"I like that Keene wants to build on its strengths of maintaining great parks and protected areas, a really special network of bike paths and trails, and centering its conservation on the Ashuelot River area."

- Flourishing Environment Discussion Board Participant

GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Aspirations

- Wildlife habitats and corridors are protected from fragmentation.
- Agribusinesses are growing and supported by economic and land use initiatives.
- Economic growth includes the attraction and expansion of green industries, such as solar, clean manufacturing, food production, greenhouses, and vertical farms.
- Green or environmental projects are viewed as a long-term investment having a positive return on investment.
- Native plantings and pollinator plantings are found throughout Keene's developed areas
- Flood hazards and other vulnerabilities are mitigated.





GOAL 3: INTEGRATE GREEN TECHNOLOGIES AND BEST PRACTICES IN KEENE'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Aspirations

- Battery storage is integrated into the electrical grid to facilitate local renewable power generation.
- Sustainability elements are integrated at the onset of the development process.
- Elements of the “living buildings” concept are incorporated into local codes and standards.
- New technologies and best practices are incorporated to improve wastewater treatment and release.

GOAL 4: EXPAND COMMUNITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Aspirations

- The city's GHG reduction and energy pledges are fully implemented.
- Electric vehicle infrastructure is provided and accessible.
- The importance of Keene's natural history and connection to the river is known regionally.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN KEENE'S LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION TO BUILD RESILIENCE AT THE REGIONAL, STATE, AND WIDER LEVELS.

Aspirations

- Keene's younger generations are leaders in environmental issues and activities.
- The city is the local and regional liaison for partnerships and collaboration centered around sustainability initiatives.

“I love that environmental conservation and climate action are so important to the people of Keene. It makes me very proud of my hometown.”
- Flourishing Environment Discussion Board Participant

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY

- Under the **Environmental and Landscape** topics in the Community Survey, 82% of survey respondents identified preserving lands for habitat and recreation, and 79% identified creating and protecting open and green space as important to shaping the future of Keene. 78% of survey respondents identified fostering accessibility for all ages as important.
- Recognizing the importance of recreation and Keene's trails to the community, under the **Economic and Built Environment** topics in the Community Survey, 63% of survey respondents identified developing recreation trail networks as important to shaping the future of Keene.
- Under the **Community and Social Fabric** topics in the Community Survey, 53% of survey respondents identified assuming a greater leadership role in the Monadnock region and 66% identified creating.

Planning Insights

- Climate adaptation will become a defining issue in the coming decades.
- Environmental stewardship will allow Keene to be proactive in its environmental protection.
- The natural environment is a strength of Keene.
- Addressing food security requires a multifaceted approach involving technological innovation, sustainable practices, and robust policy frameworks.

4.6.3 | EMERGING TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, TRADE-OFFS

Flourishing Environment

The environmental stewardship focus offers a way to take a proactive and positive approach and think creatively about ways to improve Keene's community amenities while enhancing the environment.

The exciting challenge is to create urban landscapes that are highly livable and appealing to people, while also enhancing and improving the environment.

Keene is fortunate to have fantastic landscapes, ecosystems, and natural resources. These are a key part of the community value proposition and appeal and are prioritized and nurtured through this Comprehensive Master Plan.

As cities across the world grapple with the effects of climate change paired with the challenges of transitioning to green energy, opportunities are arising for municipalities looking to become more resilient and sustainable. Due to its history of environmental stewardship, Keene is well-positioned to take advantage of these new opportunities.

Reduction in GHG emissions from the energy sector happens in two ways: shifting to renewable energy production and the reduction of energy use. Due to Keene's older housing stock, weatherization and energy efficiency improvements have the potential to greatly reduce emissions. The 2015 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory identified that even though the number of households increased by 4% between 1995-2015, residential energy consumption increased by 20%. On the other hand, completing the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is a priority for the community. However, the public is concerned about expanding green energy production in ways that do not consume open space and productive agricultural lands. Therefore, regulating and incentivizing ways to concentrate energy production, like solar, onto rooftops and parking lots will be essential in boosting energy production while conserving undeveloped land. Maryland created its **Solar Canopy and Dual Use Technology Grant Program** for this reason.

The city has the opportunity to incorporate green infrastructure into future projects to help meet its environmental goals. This is especially true for stormwater management. Further utilizing rain gardens, bio-swales, and other rainwater capture methods can help preserve the water quality of local streams while increasing capacity to deal with climate change-induced heavy rainfall events, as identified in the 2007 Adapting to Climate Change Plan.

A major challenge with environmental sustainability is the decarbonization of the transportation sector. This can be done through the electrification of vehicles and the incentivization of non-vehicular transportation like walking, biking, e-bikes, e-scooters, and other options. The city can support the electrification of the transportation sector by encouraging the development of the infrastructure improvements needed to support EVs, especially charging stations. Several municipalities have decided to revamp their building and development regulations to assist in this transition. Denver, Colorado, updated its **building code** to require new homes with garages to have a 40-amp conduit installed to allow for easy installation of home charging systems. Boulder, Colorado, has EV requirements in its **parking regulations** that demand a certain number of spots include EV chargers and additional spots be EV capable, meaning the infrastructure and wiring are installed at the construction of the lot so a charging unit can be easily installed. The other way to decarbonize the transportation sector is to encourage non-vehicular modes of transportation. The city can encourage this shift through investing in dedicated bike lanes, high-visibility crosswalks, and other retrofits to existing roadways to make non-vehicular travel easier and safer.



Not Starting from Zero

The City of Keene has already implemented the following initiatives to strategically prepare for the future.

- Keene Sustainable Energy Plan and adopted 100% renewable energy goals (keeneenergyplan.com)
- Adapting to Climate Change: Planning a Resilient Community
- City of Keene 2015 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory
- Hillside Protection and Surface Water Protection Overlay Districts
- Participation in the FEMA Community Rating System program
- Installation of solar projects
- Participation in the U.S. DOE – SolSmart Program (Gold designee)
- Keene Community Power Program
- EV Infrastructure Plan and pursuit of grant funding for EV infrastructure



GOAL 1: PROMOTE SMART LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT.

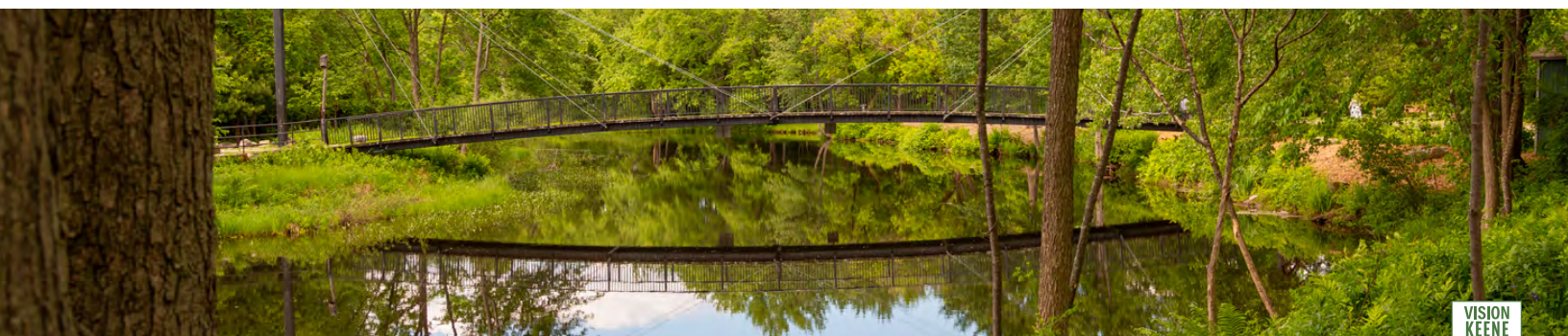
Actions

- Identify priority infill or redevelopment sites through a spatial analysis showing which parcels have minimal environmental constraints and are serviced by existing utilities.
- Incentivize the adaptive reuse of existing buildings in coordination with the pillars of Livable Housing, Thriving Economy, and Vibrant Communities.
- Create a list of prime agricultural lands and priority areas for environmental protection and conservation.

GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY.

Actions

- Expand and enhance buffer areas along natural features by conducting a specified environmental and land use assessment.
- Add a pollinator element to the city's conservation plan.
- Promote the Keene Community Power (CP) program to increase awareness of competitive electricity options that help move the community to 100% renewable energy.
- Work with partners to support and expand incentive programs for existing buildings to upfit for weatherization, energy efficiency, and renewable energy generation.
- Establish a green business incubator in coordination with the pillars of a Thriving Economy, Adaptable Workforce, and Vibrant Communities.



GOAL 3: INTEGRATE GREEN TECHNOLOGIES AND BEST PRACTICES IN KEENE'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

Actions

- Invest in battery storage and incorporate the storage capacity into the local electrical grid.
- Train staff and local contractors on new/innovative building methods and materials such as 3D printing, modular construction, and hempcrete.
- Identify and incorporate the latest technologies and best practices to improve wastewater treatment.
- Develop a community-facing environmental dashboard that tracks Keene's progress on climate and environmental goals.
- Conduct scenario planning and predictive maintenance models to understand potential flood implications and other vulnerabilities. Develop a resiliency and mitigation plan.
- Develop a city-wide vulnerability and resiliency plan.

GOAL 4: EXPAND COMMUNITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.

Actions

- Support the Connected Mobility Pillar of enhancing Keene's active transportation options by closing gaps in walking and biking networks.
- Conduct a walk audit in coordination with the pillars of Connected Mobility and Vibrant Neighborhoods to evaluate pedestrian needs city-wide.
- Solicit public feedback on appropriate locations for solar panels, green rooftops, and electric charging stations, and community gardens or other local food production sites.
- Pursue grant funding to provide electric vehicle infrastructure to support the transition from traditional vehicle infrastructure.
- Select and implement a dam replacement option for the West Street Dam.
- Install infrastructure and amenities like kayaking launches to improve access to the Ashuelot River.
- Fully implement the recommendations in the Sustainable Energy Plan.

GOAL 5: STRENGTHEN KEENE'S LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION TO BUILD RESILIENCE AT THE REGIONAL, STATE, AND WIDER LEVELS.

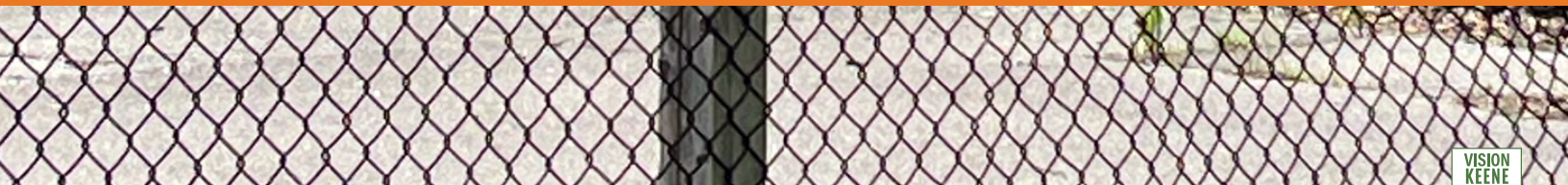
Actions

- Hire a Sustainability Coordinator to accelerate the city's progress on its environmental goals.
- Actively promote trails and natural areas through local and regional channels.
- Partner with local businesses to identify funding and ways to incentivize renewable energy solutions, such as solar over parking lots and agrivoltaics.
- Proactively develop and nurture a strong relationship between the city and local land trusts.
- Collaborate with local schools and businesses to develop pilot sustainability projects, environmental stewardship, and volunteering initiatives.
- Identify initiatives or projects that can be undertaken as a community event to bring in residents and children to get people excited about sustainability.





FUTURE LAND USE





5.0 | PLANNING FOR FUTURE LAND USES

How land is used is a foundational element of a comprehensive master plan. The six pillars of the plan firmly established the foundation for the development of Keene's future land use categories.

The City of Keene's future land use plan illustrates desired land use patterns given the aspirations, goals, and strategies expressed throughout the planning process. Generalized land use categories, or character areas, are used to identify the desired character for existing and future areas of growth and change.

Future land uses are not official maps or zoning maps, and they do not specify what an owner can or cannot legally do with their property. However, they are used as a guide for policymaking and reflect previously adopted plans, current development trends, established land uses and zoning patterns, and capture future desires.

The use of character areas as a planning tool provides an additional opportunity to further implement the vision and goals identified within the strategic pillars of the CMP.



It became clear through the planning process that the community is open to encouraging multifunctional land uses as well.



The downtown area remains the city's economic hub, featuring diverse architectural styles in neighborhood areas and strategically placed light-industrial and commercial buildings along key roadways.

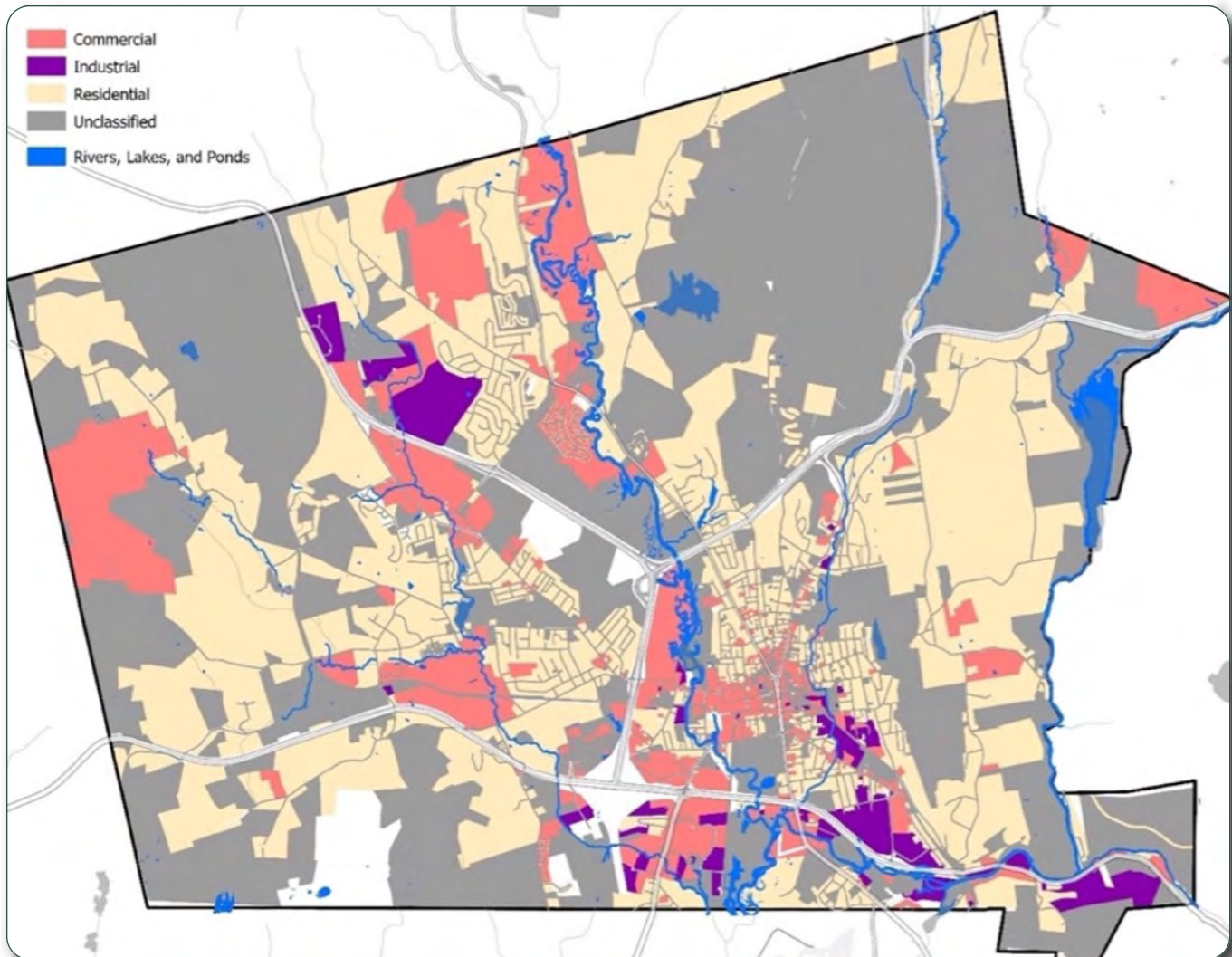
The City of Keene boasts a well-defined land use pattern, guided by its Land Development Code and Comprehensive Master Plan. The downtown area is a vibrant mix of residential, commercial, educational, and public spaces, serving as the city's main economic hub and a gathering place for residents, workforce, students, and visitors.

Radiating from downtown, you will find residential neighborhoods interspersed with local and regional commercial centers. Architectural styles in these areas range from historic Victorian to modern mid-century. Additionally, light-industrial and larger commercial buildings are strategically located along key roadways.

Keene's unique character is further enhanced by its natural systems, open green spaces, viewsheds, and working landscapes. These elements are predominantly found on the outskirts of the city's residential areas, creating impactful views and gateway experiences into the city.

Keene has a long-standing tradition of balancing growth with the preservation of its unique character and natural resources, as evidenced by its established land use patterns.

Existing Land Use Map



5.2 | KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND CHANGES FOR KEENE'S 2040 LAND USES

Land use planning faces several key challenges, such as population growth, environmental sustainability, land degradation, conflicting uses, infrastructure development, economics, and inconsistent or outdated regulations and policies.

To address these challenges, the Keene community considered these various aspects in the pillars, ultimately leading to Keene's 2040 land uses. Therefore, an intentional decision was made to move away from the traditional land use nomenclature and focus on the experience of a particular land use area. A mix of uses is found within all of Keene's 2040 land uses, but the land development pattern, area identity, means of transportation, and scale are unique.

Based on growth projections for the next 10 to 15 years, existing conditions, established land use patterns in the city, and the community's vision for the future, key considerations and changes for the 2040 future land uses conveys a scenario where the community seizes the moment to invest in future-oriented infrastructure that is climate resilient and sustainable while relying on collaborative approaches to help drive local solutions. A strong focus on new areas such as the biosciences, renewable energies, and local food systems positions the community as an innovative and forward-thinking place to live, work, and play.

Community feedback highlights the need to preserve Keene's unique identity while enhancing development. The 2040 land use plan tackles challenges like population growth and environmental sustainability with climate-resilient infrastructure and innovative solutions, positioning Keene as forward-thinking and collaborative.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

All voices are heard and collaboration is the norm.

- Living opportunities are affordable and childcare is available.
- A larger, diverse population causes schools to grow with a broad range of trades and training.
- 'Third spaces' exist throughout Keene (not school, not work, not home).



ECONOMIC AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Keene's economy is powered by local drivers and collaborative approaches to solutions.

- The city maintains robust multimodal transportation infrastructure that is climate sensitive.
- Local food is an attractive growth driver and the city is a strong leader in the regional food network.
- Food production is sustainable and equitable with access to healthy foods.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

Trails drive the economics of the city and attract new businesses.

- The city establishes a goal of maintaining a half-acre of park space for each person in the Keene.
- There is a focus on the development of neighborhood parks and recreation opportunities.
- Housing types are varied and sustainably built.

Effectively communicating the reasons behind Keene's need to pivot in its trajectory is crucial for implementing changes within the community. Participants in the planning process have acknowledged that shifting the current path to align with a diverse vision of the future will demand substantial collaboration, communication, and leadership. Given the long-term nature of Keene's 2040 land use plans, progress can be achieved in the intervening years, leading to cumulative positive impacts.



5.3 | KEENE'S CHARACTER AREAS

This CMP project is introducing the concept of character areas as a tool to describe and celebrate the various characteristics, conditions, and land use patterns throughout Keene. Keene's eight character areas are spread throughout the City and include the Downtown, Downtown Neighborhoods, Residential Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Business Nodes, Corridor-Oriented Commerce, Conservation and Low-Impact Recreation, Rural Residential and Working Landscapes, and Production and Innovation. Each character area has a unique set of conditions, challenges, and opportunities.

Defining character areas preserves unique traits and the look and feel of each district, supports strategic planning, and respects cultural and ecological significance, fostering pride and unity.

Character Areas of Keene



	Downtown
	Residential Neighborhoods
	Neighborhood Business Nodes
	Corridor-Oriented Commerce
	Conservation and Low-Impact Recreation
	Rural Residential and Working Landscapes
	Production and Innovation

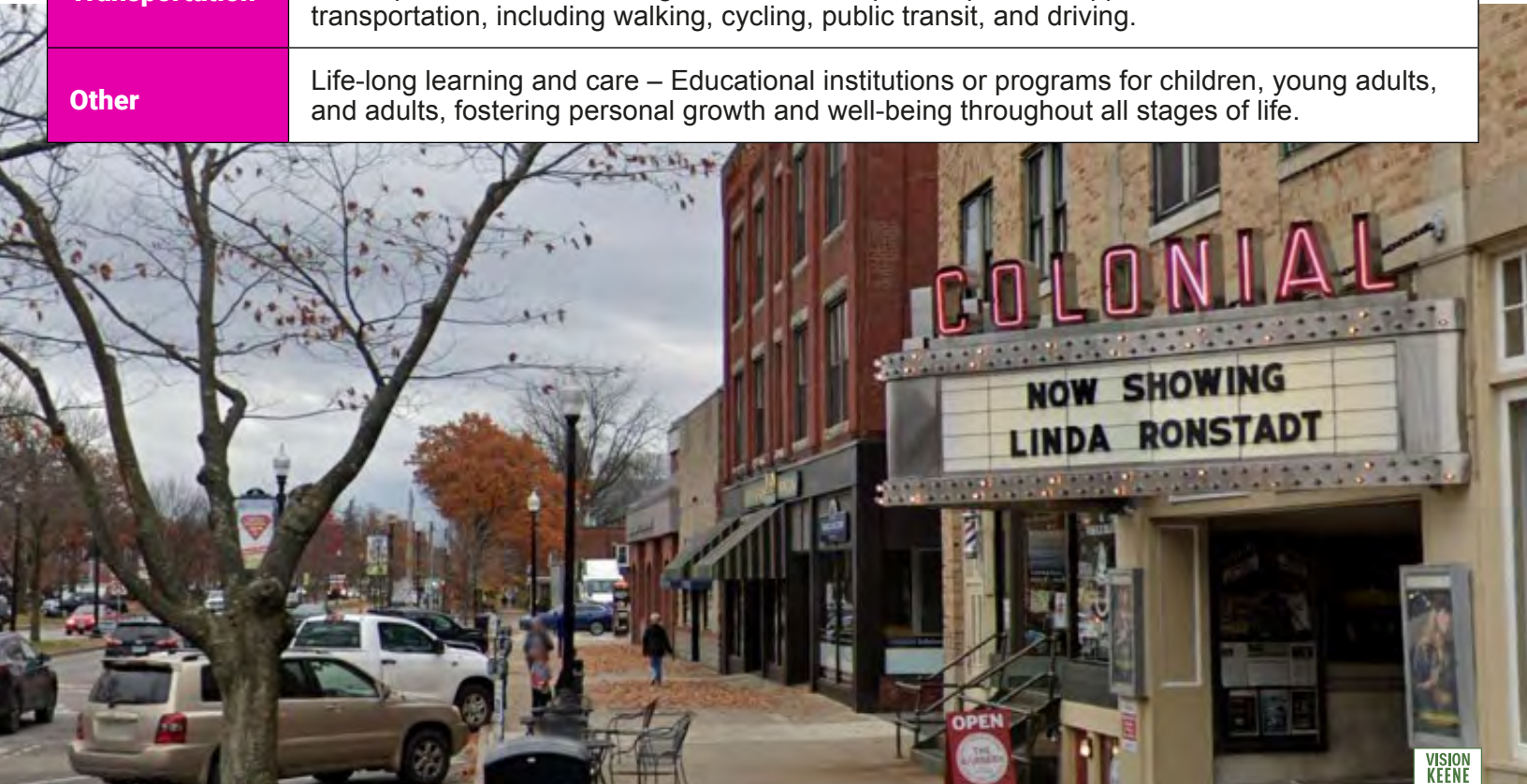




KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.1 | DOWNTOWN

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	City-center – Supports local businesses and offers a variety of shopping options, sustaining the local economy. Includes a variety of functions such as residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. Buildings often have residential units on the upper floors, with commercial or retail spaces on the ground level.
Area Identity	A hub for artistic and cultural activities, featuring galleries, theaters, museums, and events. Regularly hosts festivals and community gatherings, encouraging civic engagement. The area boasts historic buildings and architectural styles that add charm and character. Renowned for its unique dining and entertainment options, attracting visitors from the surrounding region.
Means of Transportation	Highly walkable, multimodal – Designed for easy navigation for all pedestrians, with well-maintained and accessible sidewalks and pedestrian crossings. Prioritizes human needs and experiences, with inviting and accessible public spaces. Supports various modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, public transit, and driving.
Other	Life-long learning and care – Educational institutions or programs for children, young adults, and adults, fostering personal growth and well-being throughout all stages of life.





KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.2 | RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	Early suburban areas with wide buildings facing the street, including ranch and split-level homes. Mainly single-family homes with amenities like a backyard, shed, garage, etc.
Area Identity	Neighborhoods have strong identities but less defined boundaries and are seen as separate from downtown.
Means of Transportation	Vehicle-oriented – Neighborhoods rely more on cars compared to downtown areas. More automobile-oriented/dependent than the downtown neighborhoods. Suitable for recreational walking but not for commuting. Biking for commuting is an option.
Other	Recreational access – Generally, have good access to larger city parks, rail trails, and class VI roads/hiking trails.





KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.3 | NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS NODES

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	Transitional form of development – Small nodal centers in neighborhood areas with higher densities that harmonize with adjacent residential structures, similar to transit-oriented developments (TODs). Residential units could be located above ground-floor commercial spaces or consist of “missing middle” housing types.
Area Identity	Neighborhood-serving commercial uses – Includes businesses such as hair salons, laundromats, dry cleaners, small auto repair shops, fueling stations, hardware stores, delis, neighborhood markets, cafes, and small restaurants.
Means of Transportation	Multimodal – Accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including biking, public transit, and pedestrian walking infrastructure. However, transportation focuses on the pedestrian and typically serves those residents within a quarter-mile radius.
Other	Life-long learning and care – Educational institutions or programs for children, young adults, and adults, fostering personal growth and well-being throughout all stages of life.





KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.4 | CORRIDOR-ORIENTED COMMERCE

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	Efficient use of space and development patterns serve as a transition between car-centric places to higher-density, interconnected spaces. Tend to be clustered along major thoroughfares, such as West Street, Winchester Street, and Route 101.
Area Identity	Mixed-use regional magnet – A combination of residential, such as multifamily developments, commercial spaces, and low-impact light industrial uses. Area is a regional magnet for chain developments, workforce, and consumers (i.e., Panera, Home Depot, Old Navy, Starbucks, Aroma Joe’s, Burger King, Walmart).
Means of Transportation	Multimodal – Accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including biking, public transit, and pedestrian walking infrastructure. It is easily accessible by car, but without congestion or major safety issues. Serve as connectors between downtown and the outskirt areas.
Other	Medical/Healthcare hubs – Availability of medical and healthcare facilities





KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.5 | CONSERVATION AND LOW-IMPACT RECREATION

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	Areas with lots of steep slopes, wetlands, vernal pools, streams, rock outcroppings, and soils that are not suitable for development. Large contiguous forested areas are also found.
Area Identity	Lots of scenic views and cultural features, like stone walls, and many natural environments, such as the highest ranked wildlife habitat in New Hampshire. Conservation of steep slopes, surface waters, high-quality wildlife habitat, and sensitive soils is a priority.
Means of Transportation	Limited access for vehicles and pedestrians. Main vehicle access is to historic and natural sites, while trails provide pedestrian access.
Other	Recreational access – Opportunities for low-impact recreation while balancing protection of water quality, erosion, and wildlife impacts.





KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.6 | RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND WORKING LANDSCAPES

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	Rural – Areas encompass the rural outskirts of town where low-population-density residential uses and agricultural uses are permitted.
Area Identity	Roads lined with trees and stone walls provide scenic views. Activities related to maple sugaring, forestry, farming, and agritourism.
Means of Transportation	Vehicle-oriented – Areas rely more on cars compared to downtown areas. Serves as connectors to adjacent areas.
Other	Working landscapes – Open fields with livestock and farmstands selling farm produce are common uses.





KEENE’S CHARACTER AREAS (CONT.)

5.3.7 | PRODUCTION AND INNOVATION

Feature	Description
Land Development Pattern	Areas designated for industrial, light industrial, and business incubation, often located on the outskirts of the downtown area. Typically developed as a zone or center, such as a larger mixed-use development.
Area Identity	Industrial and large-scale office activity in a park-like setting.
Means of Transportation	Vehicle-oriented – These zones or centers rely more on cars compared to downtown areas. More automobile-oriented/dependent than the downtown and neighborhood business nodes. Provide easy access to local amenities and transportation networks.
Other	Business incubation – Spaces designed to support new businesses by providing affordable space, resources, and mentorship. Flexible office environments can be easily configured to accommodate different business needs. Often part of larger multi-use developments.

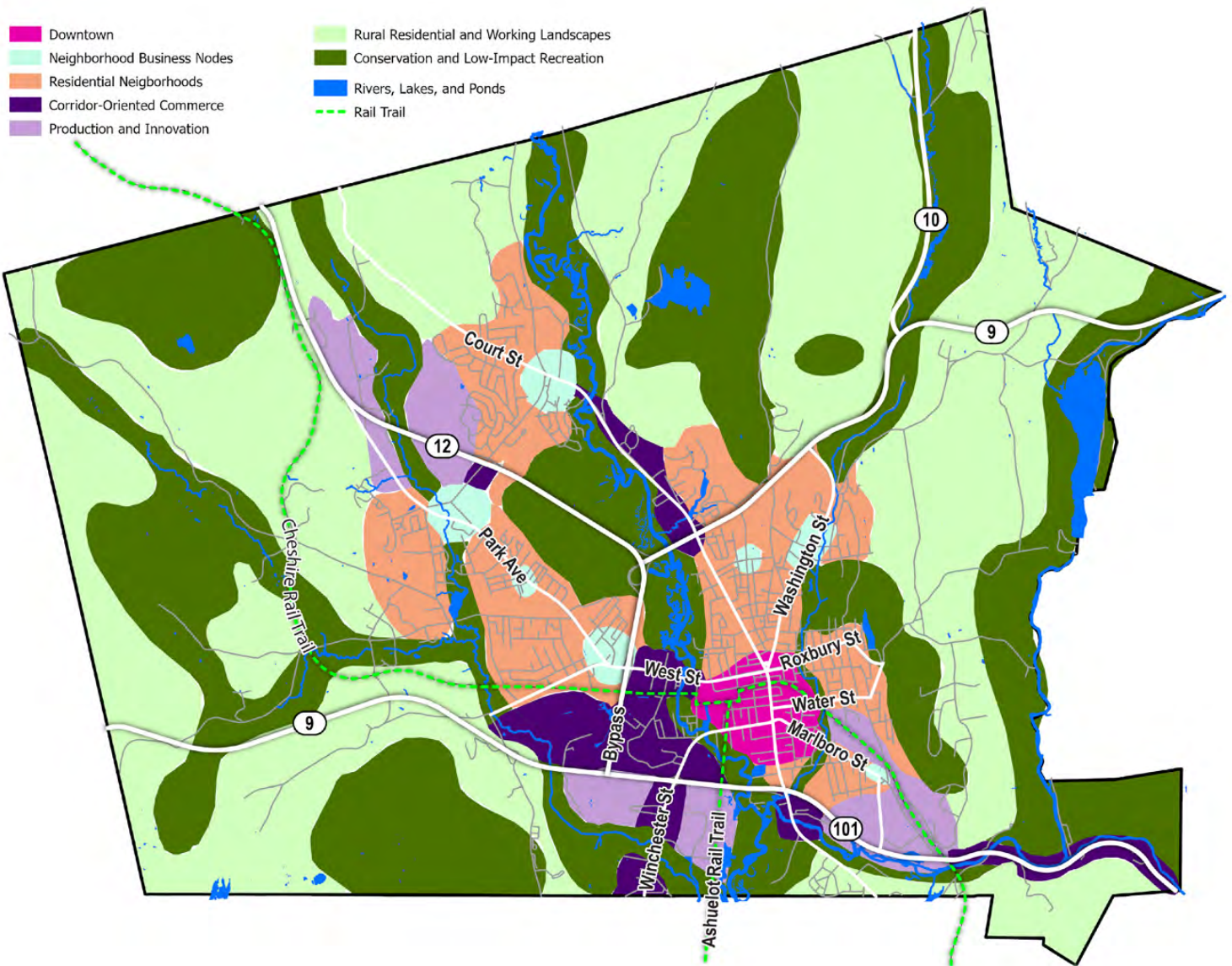




5.4 | FUTURE LAND USE MAP

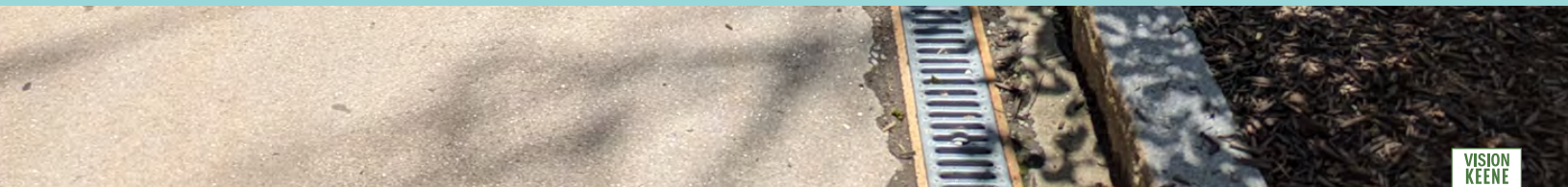
The future land use map reflects the principles, goals, and ambitions laid out in the Keene Plan. It establishes guidelines for future zoning adjustments to ensure any alterations in the City Code encourage the type of development that fulfills the vision residents have for their community.

Future Land Use Map





ACTION PRIORITIZATION



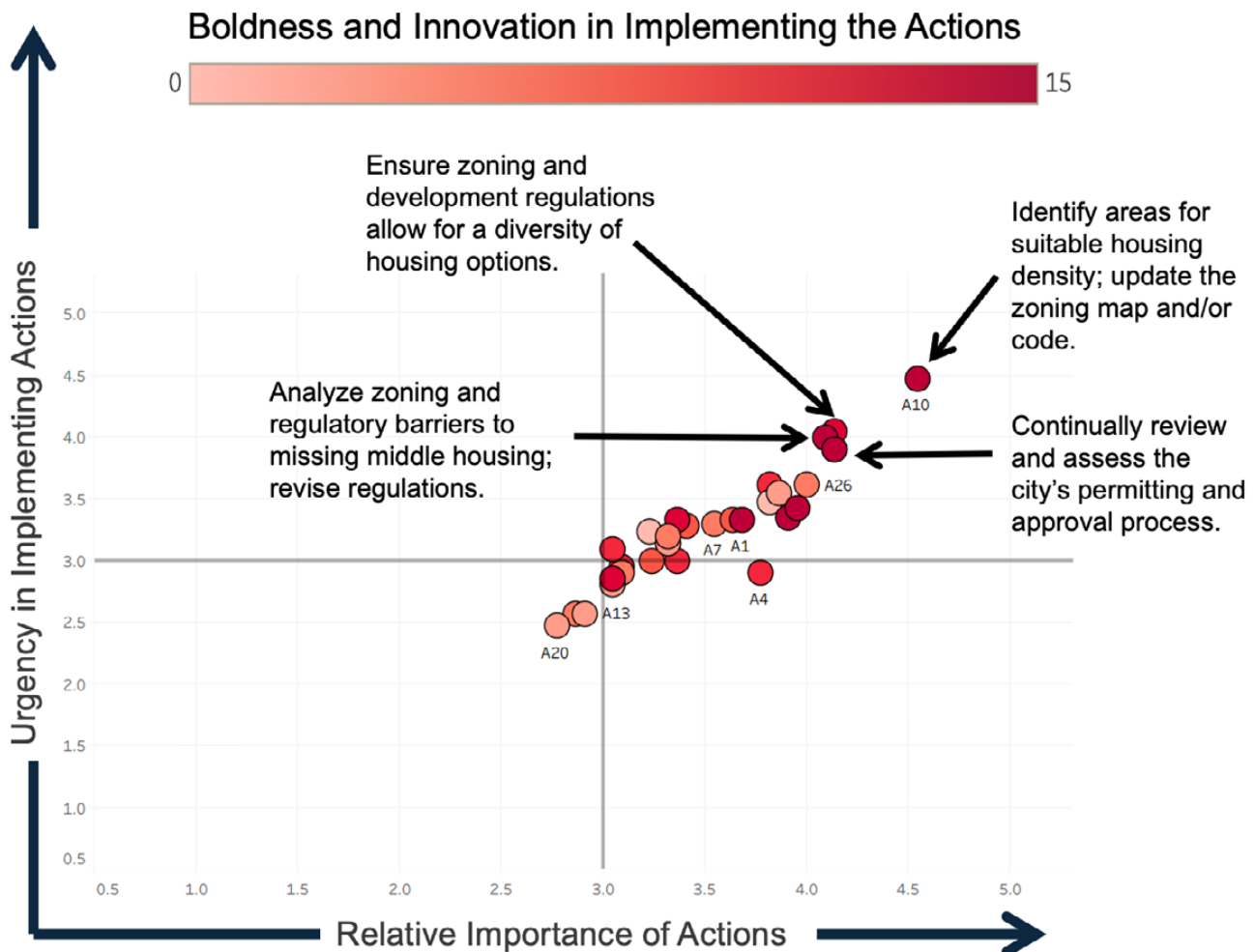


6.0 | WHAT'S IMPORTANT – PRIORITIZING ACTIONS

Each Strategic Pillar of the Comprehensive Master Plan is supported by the goals and strategies that enable the city to take the necessary action steps to achieve the preferred future for Keene. In May 2025, Council Members, Master Plan Committee Members, Task Force Members, and City Staff were asked to prioritize the goals and actions in terms of importance, urgency for implementation, and boldness. The following sections represent the prioritization of each pillar's actions.

6.1 | LIVABLE HOUSING PRIORITIES

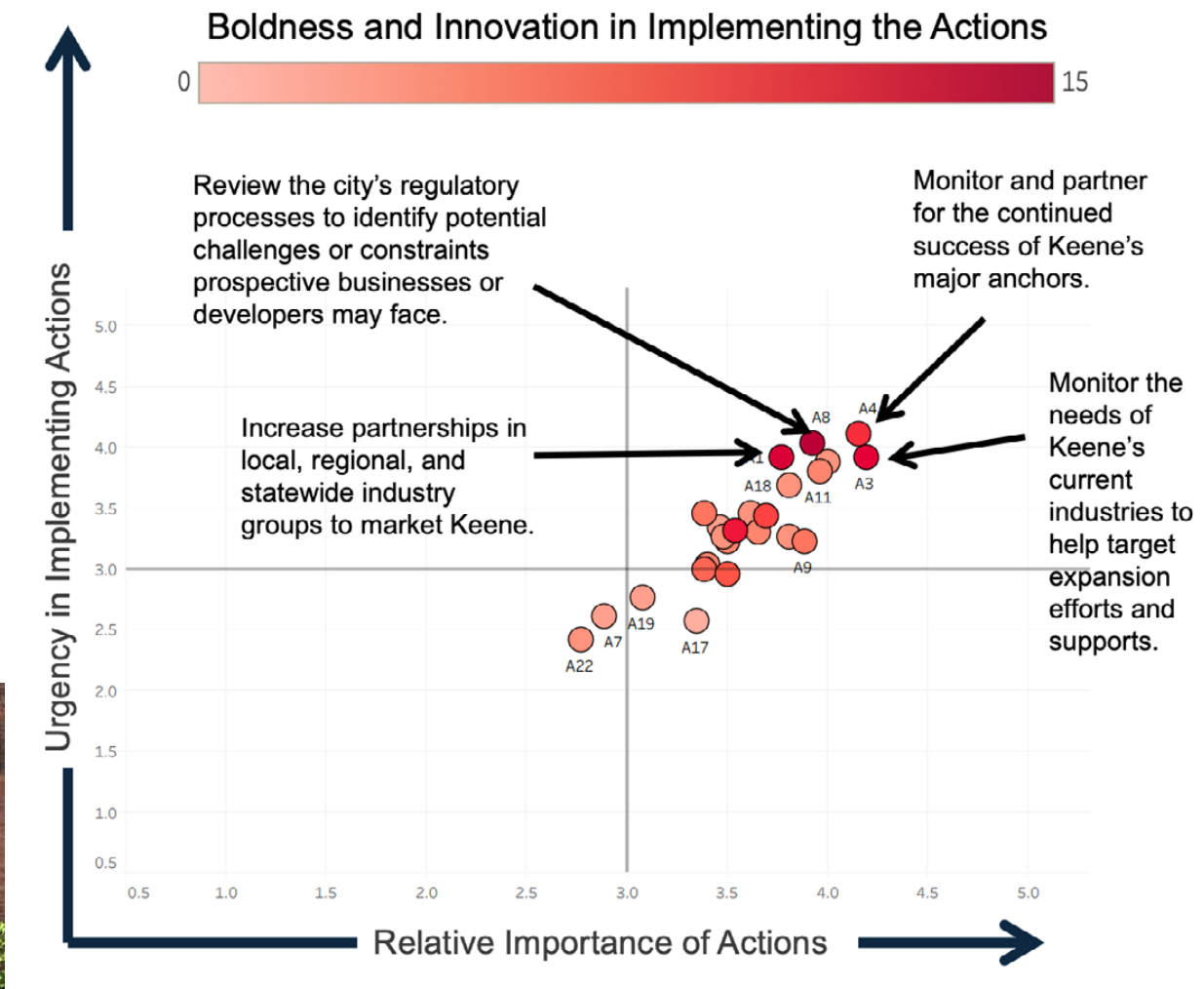
The following pivot chart represents the prioritization of the Livable Housing Pillar Actions. The x-axis represents the relative importance of actions, the y-axis represents the urgency in implementing the actions, and the darkness of color indicates the desired boldness and innovation in implementing the actions.





6.2 | THRIVING ECONOMY PRIORITIES

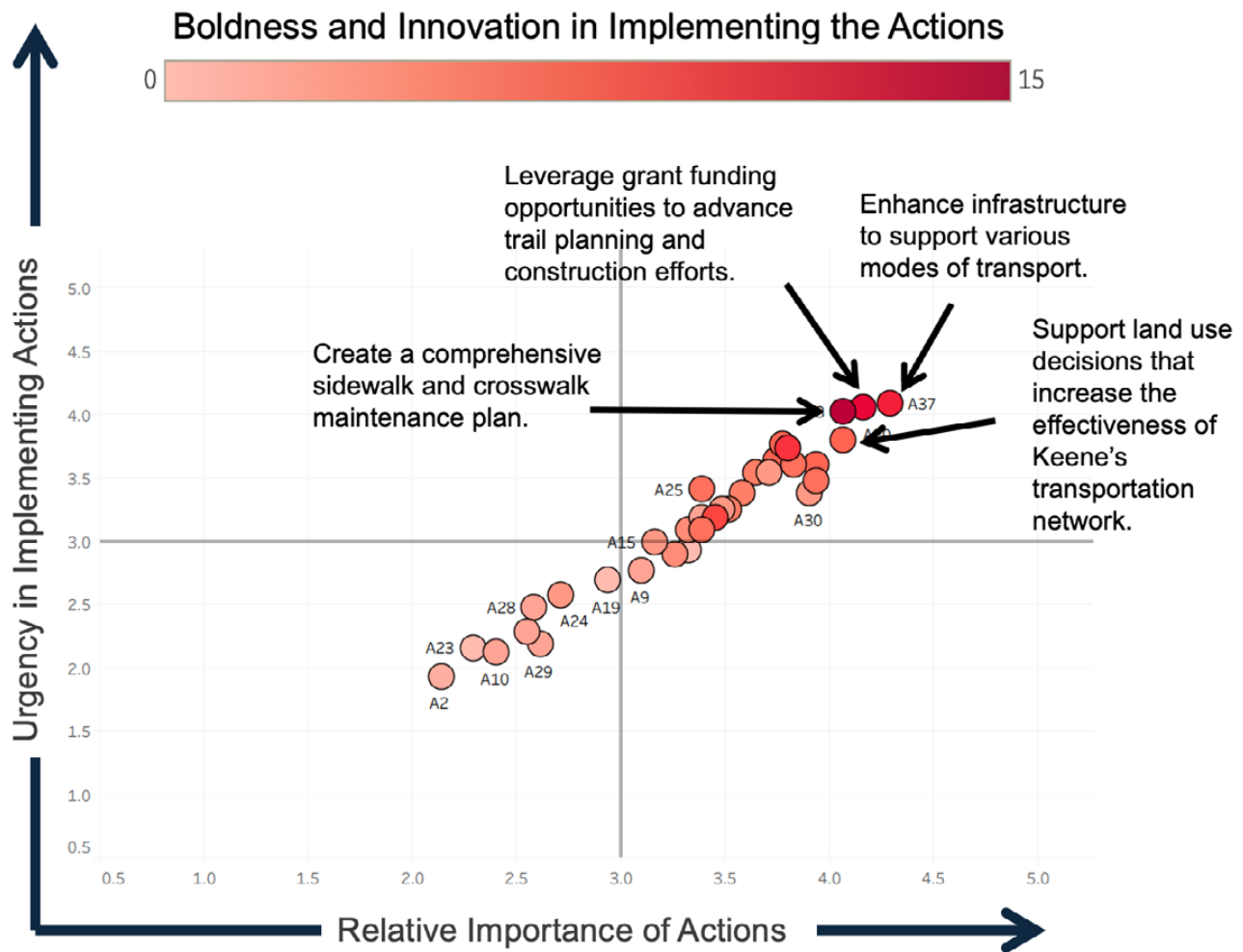
The following pivot chart represents the prioritization of the Livable Housing Pillar Actions. The x-axis represents the relative importance of actions, the y-axis represents the urgency in implementing the actions, and the darkness of color indicates the desired boldness and innovation in implementing the actions.





6.3 | CONNECTED MOBILITY PRIORITIES

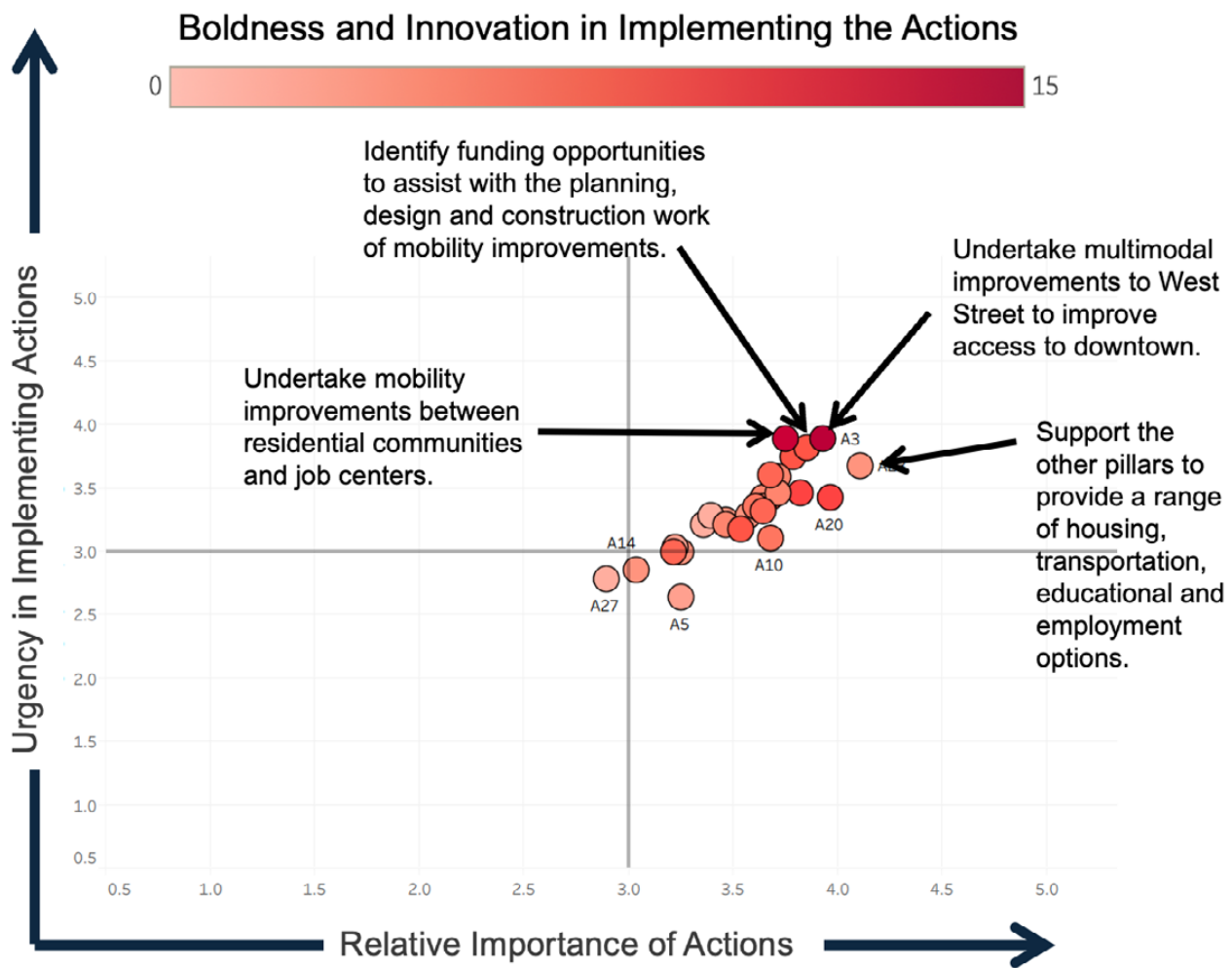
The following pivot chart represents the prioritization of the Connected Mobility Pillar Actions. The x-axis represents the relative importance of actions, the y-axis represents the urgency in implementing the actions, and the darkness of color indicates the desired boldness and innovation in implementing the actions.





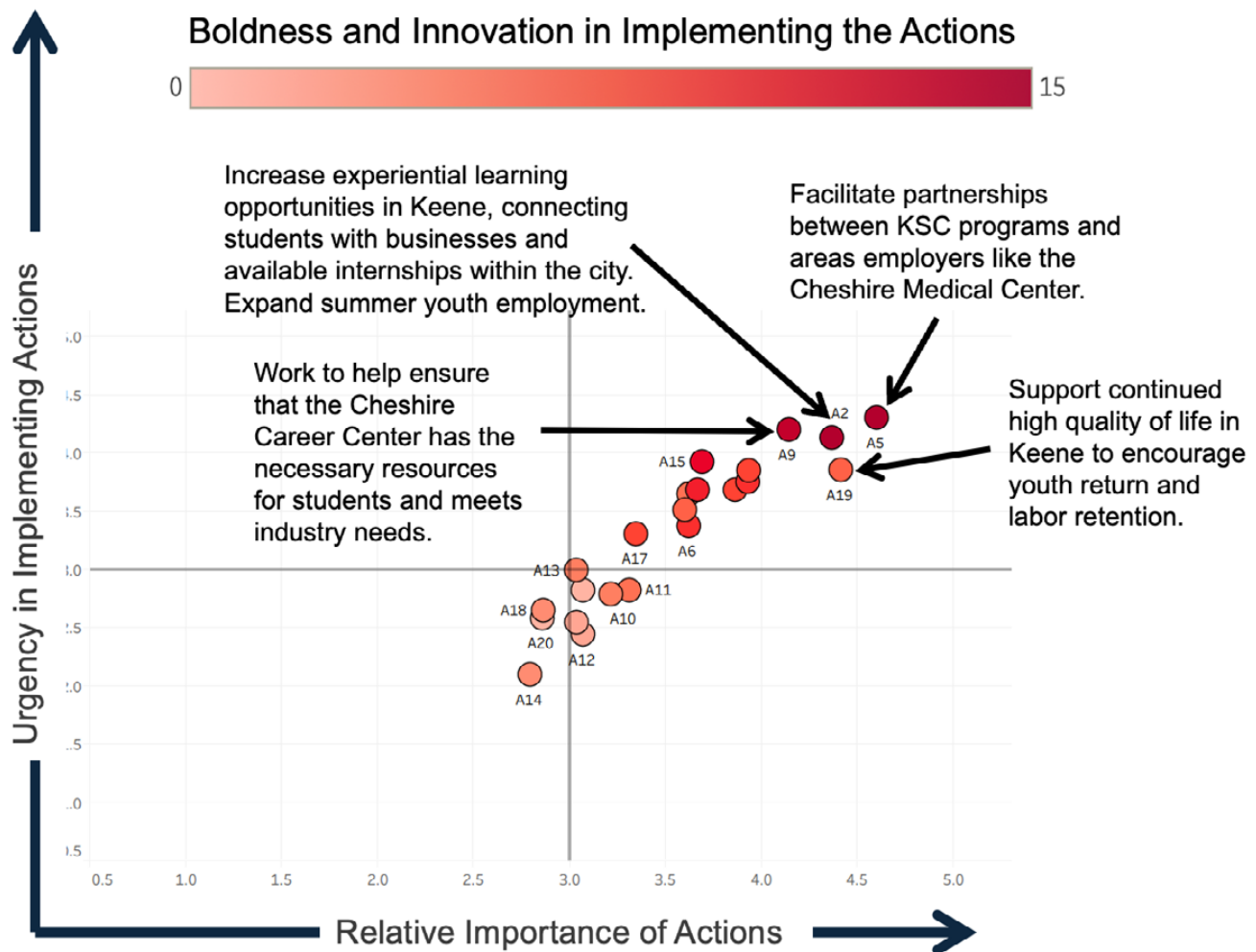
6.4 | VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS PRIORITIES

The following pivot chart represents the prioritization of the Vibrant Neighborhoods Pillar Actions. The x-axis represents the relative importance of actions, the y-axis represents the urgency in implementing the actions, and the darkness of color indicates the desired boldness and innovation in implementing the actions.



6.5 | ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

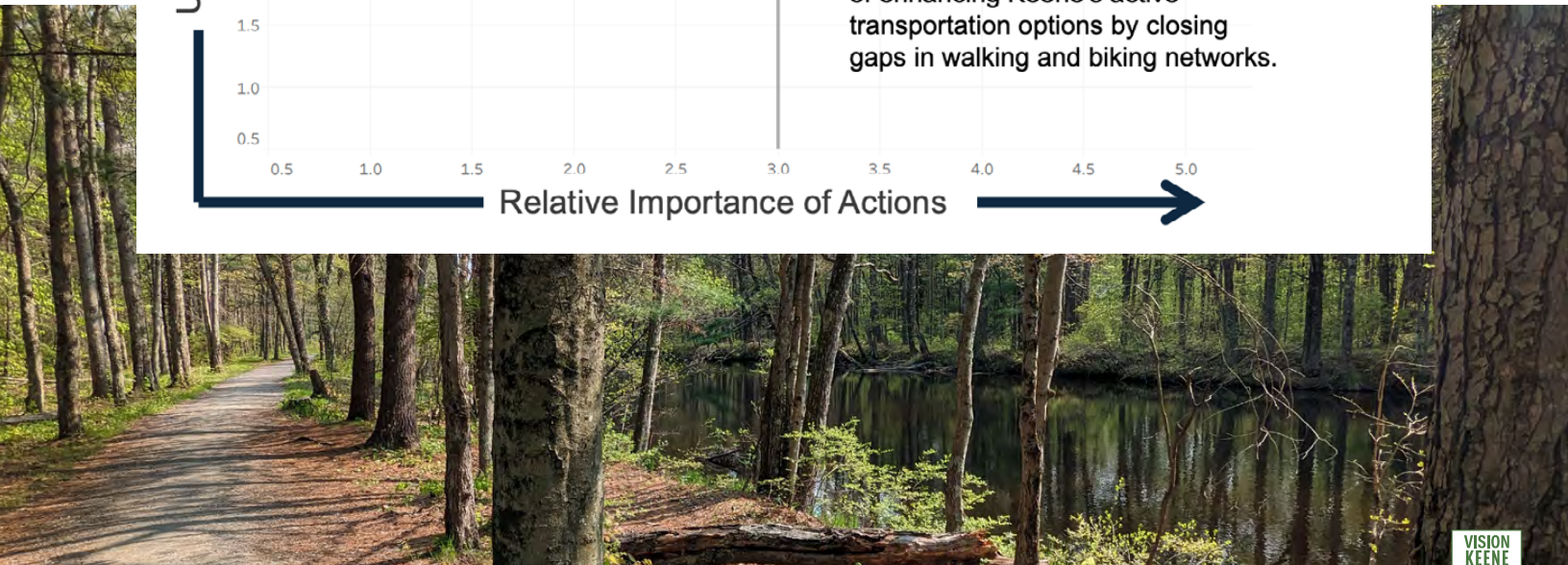
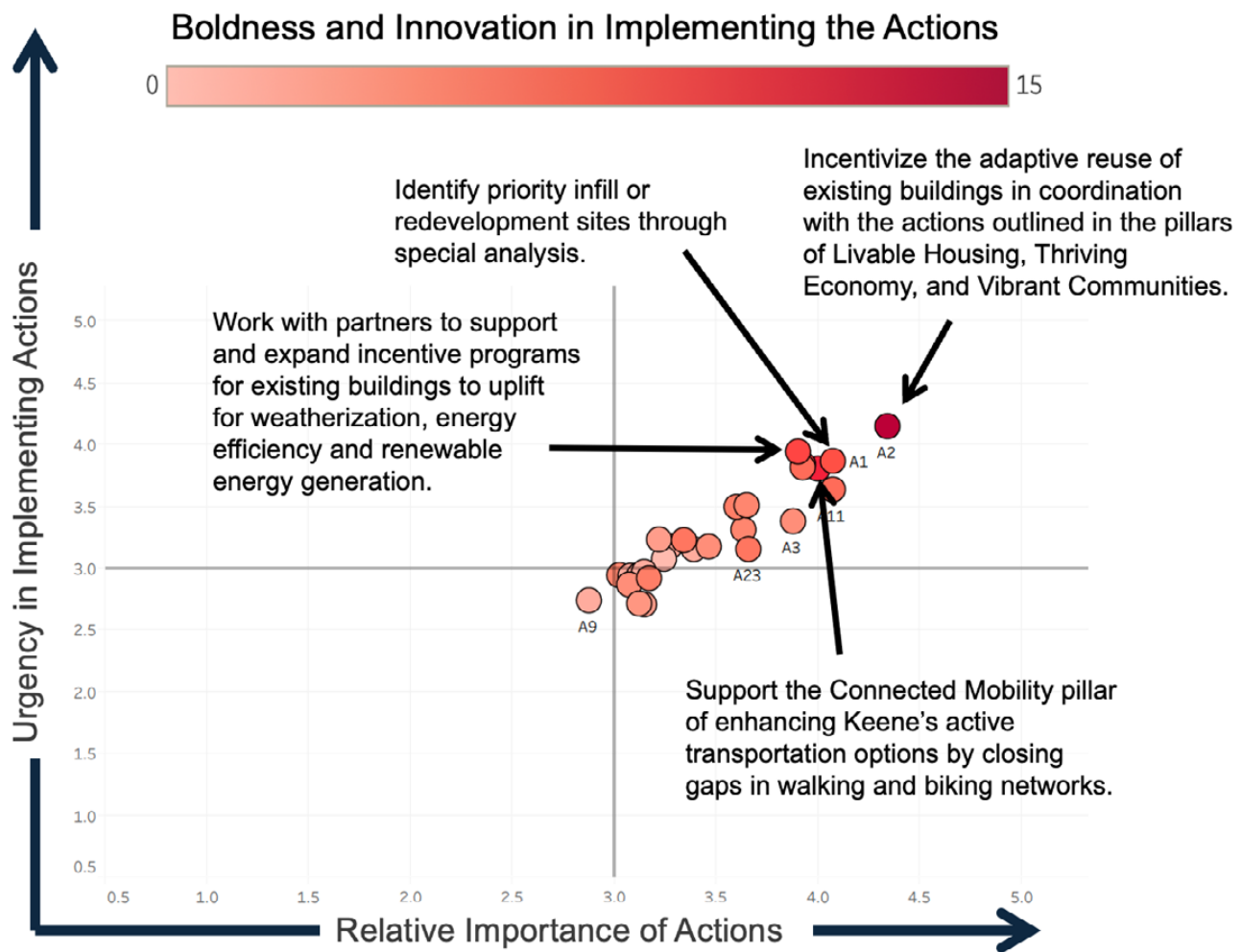
The following pivot chart represents the prioritization of the Adaptable Workforce Pillar Actions. The x-axis represents the relative importance of actions, the y-axis represents the urgency in implementing the actions, and the darkness of color indicates the desired boldness and innovation in implementing the actions.





6.6 | FLOURISHING ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES

The following pivot chart represents the prioritization of the Flourishing Environment Pillar Actions. The x-axis represents the relative importance of actions, the y-axis represents the urgency in implementing the actions, and the darkness of color indicates the desired boldness and innovation in implementing the actions.





IMPLEMENTATION



7.0 | IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX AND SUMMARY

What happens next? The following Implementation Matrix provides the framework for achieving the community's 2040 vision. Organized by Strategic Pillar, the matrix highlights implementation strategies or Actions for each of the identified Strategic Pillar goals. Prioritization of the Actions, as well as timeframe (short, mid, and long-term) are included for each Action to guide the coming years' implementation process.

It is important to note that implementation of this plan will be carried out by a host of partners including the City, residents, business owners, community groups, and stakeholders who will come together to work towards achieving these goals. Additionally, the City intends to hold itself accountable to the plan, with regular check-ins and assessments of progress over the identified short, medium, and long-term, and ongoing timeframes.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX LEGEND

GOAL: Each Strategic Pillar includes a series of planning goals providing the framework for accomplishing the Strategic Pillar.

ACTION TO ACHIEVE OUR ASPIRATIONS: All identified goals include a series of implementation strategies or Actions to achieve each goal.

PRIORITY: All Actions are ranked in importance to guide implementation. The prioritization of these actions was identified through prioritization surveys for each of the Strategic Pillars.

TIMEFRAME: All Actions are classified into short-term, mid-term, and long-term timeframes. These timeframes represent the encouraged timing and sequencing for each Action. Note some Actions may be ongoing throughout the entire timespan of this Comprehensive Master Plan.

- Short-term (1-5 years)
- Mid-term (5-10 years)
- Long-term (10+ years)
- Ongoing





7.1 | LIVABLE HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
Goal 1: Boost infill development and redevelopment.				
Utilize GIS to create a map that communicates existing development regulations, incentive opportunities, and environmental constraints.			X	
In collaboration with the Thriving Economy Pillar, advertise Keene, its quality of life, and recent housing initiatives to increase local developers/builders' interest in developing in Keene. Assist private property owners with development opportunities who express interest in locating projects in Keene.			X	
Identify potential neighborhood nodes of mixed-use activity and rezone parcels to encourage desired development.		X		
Explore place-based opportunities to improve walkability throughout Keene, with priority given to areas around schools, public parks, and neighborhood nodes.	X			
Goal 2: Remove barriers to housing development.				
Identify and assess revenue sources to boost residential construction, including new ADUs.	X			
Evaluate the effectiveness of recently passed code amendments and assess opportunities for further amendments to promote housing.			X	
Collaborate with stakeholders, such as project managers, financial analysts, community leaders, and investors, to pinpoint opportunities where financial resources can be transformed into a user-friendly and impactful development fund.		X		
Support and advocate at the state level for smart housing initiatives and/or financial mechanisms that fall outside of local jurisdiction, such as inclusionary zoning.			X	
Explore opportunities with state and local representatives to incentivize the development of empty lots or vacant buildings.		X		
Identify areas suitable for increased housing density and update the zoning map and/or code to enable and encourage desired development.		X		
Continually review and assess the city's permitting and approval process to ensure it is predictable, fair, and efficient.			X	
Assess the effectiveness of the newly adopted Cottage Court Overlay and modify standards if deemed necessary.		X		
Goal 3: Promote sustainable and healthy housing standards that align with the community's character.				
Conduct a community-driven process to identify and define Keene's unique visual, physical, and environmental qualities.	X			
Review zoning code and development regulations to ensure clear language that is easy to understand.	X			
Identify organizations looking to divest of facilities/land and create an action plan to repurpose for use as new housing.	X			
Conduct a study on the feasibility of adopting a form-based or hybrid zoning code in residential or multi-use areas outside the downtown and implement recommendations from the study.		X		
Create development plans for potential development or redevelopment sites to showcase possibilities to developers when they have expressed interest in developing in Keene.			X	
Create a catalogue of pre-approved, high-efficiency housing units with approved floorplans and architecture to streamline new housing construction and boost investments of small/local developers. Opportunity to engage higher education institutions in Keene, New Hampshire, or other nearby communities to connect with students interested in collaborating on these pre-approved plans.			X	
Support initiatives to preserve the historic character and features of the Downtown Keene Historic District and areas/structures outside the district that contribute positively to Keene's sense of place and unique architectural identity by prioritizing and incentivizing the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.	X			
Host workshops or develop informational materials to inform homeowners about the risks of lead-based paint and mold, the importance of remediation, and other resources to provide guidance. Host similar informational sessions or produce fact sheets that give renters the knowledge of their rights and resources available to address poor housing conditions and/or unresponsive landlords.	X			
Pursue grants and/or funding partnerships to provide financial assistance to low-income residents, childcare facilities, and other vulnerable populations dealing with lead-based paint and/or mold remediation.		X		
Collaborate with higher education systems and local landlords in Keene to reinstate a rental registration program, benefiting off-campus students and other renters.		X		



LIVABLE HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONT.)

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
Goal 4: Increase the diversity of housing options and price points.				
Actively participate in or create a multi-community group to spearhead housing efforts.		X		
Create a catalogue of pre-approved ADU designs to increase the predictability of housing options and increase the efficiency of the approval process. Opportunity to collaborate with ongoing initiatives at the regional level through the SWRPC.			X	
Explore opportunities for partnerships and updates to regulatory requirements to support the removal of barriers to group living arrangements.	X			
Promote and support home upgrade programs like the 21 in 21 Home Upgrade program, to help residents improve the quality and longevity of existing housing stock.	X			
Goal 5: Address the housing needs of all residents, current and future.				
Centralize resources for housing upgrades or grants for improvements (solar, insulation, Energy Star) into a more user-friendly approach. The city takes an active role in providing educational resources that make it easier for everyday residents to understand and take part in the programs.		X		
Invest in or partner with an aging-in-place initiative to assist home retrofits for seniors and disabled residents.		X		
Encourage and support the formation of resident-led neighborhood groups or associations in neighborhoods where they do not already exist.	X			
Collaborate with higher education agencies to assess and respond to student housing needs and provide partnerships to close the gap.			X	
Facilitate or support collaborations between existing organizations, such as Keene Housing and city committees/community groups.	X			
Encourage the expansion and maintenance of affordable housing in Keene by utilizing the city's zoning tools and code enforcement mechanisms.	X			
Ensure that zoning and development regulations allow for a diversity of housing options, from small ADUs to high-end housing.	X			
Employ a "housing concierge" or "housing navigator" as a city employee to serve as the direct liaison between city departments and developers, improving coordination and expediting the approval process.		X		





7.2 | THRIVING ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
Goal 1: Encourage, recruit, and retain businesses in targeted industries.				
Increase participation in local, regional, and statewide industry groups to market Keene to prospective businesses in targeted industries and increase insights into industry needs.	X	X	X	X
Align Keene's industry attraction efforts with New Hampshire BEA's targeted industries, initiatives, and growth sectors.		X	X	
Monitor the needs of Keene's current industries to help target expansion efforts and support.		X	X	
Foster a nexus of specialized firms to promote and attract large-scale employers to the region.		X		
Goal 2: Prioritize economic sustainability and resiliency.				
Monitor and partner for the continued success of Keene's major anchors, including Cheshire Medical Center, Keene State College, large employers, and Downtown Keene, recognizing these anchors as assets and competitive advantages of Keene's economy.	X	X	X	X
Support efforts to make Keene a regional hub for repair, reuse, and remanufacturing, reducing waste, creating local jobs, and revitalizing essential trades.		X		
Map existing essential products and service businesses within a regional footprint to determine gaps and identify ways to support businesses and other endeavors to meet these needs. Conduct an audit and map existing local economic assets and gaps to identify key leverage points for investment and support.		X		
Support and advocate at the state level for smart housing initiatives and/or financial mechanisms that fall outside of local jurisdiction, such as inclusionary zoning.			X	
Goal 3: Attract and grow Keene's businesses of all scales, from entrepreneurs to businesses that span internationally.				
Increase allocation of the city's budget for economic development staff to actively connect with current and prospective businesses, developers, and economic development partners across the city, region, and state.	X			
Review the city's regulatory processes to identify potential challenges or constraints prospective businesses and/or developers may face.		X		
Invest in proactive marketing to businesses and the development community, including unifying communication through the City's website and expanding online content around the city's economic development initiatives for current and prospective businesses, partners, and developers.	X			
Regularly conduct a business survey to monitor and understand evolving business needs across a range of factors, including industry, geographic location, size, tenure, and ownership. Incorporate best practices in survey development and administration to ensure representation of entrepreneurs, early-stage businesses, and underrepresented business owners, such as women and minority-owned businesses.	X	X	X	X
Expand partnerships with local and regional Chambers of Commerce to support business attraction, technical assistance, tourism development, and marketing efforts.		X	X	
Review and revise home-based business regulations to support entrepreneurs and small businesses.		X		



THRIVING ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONT.)

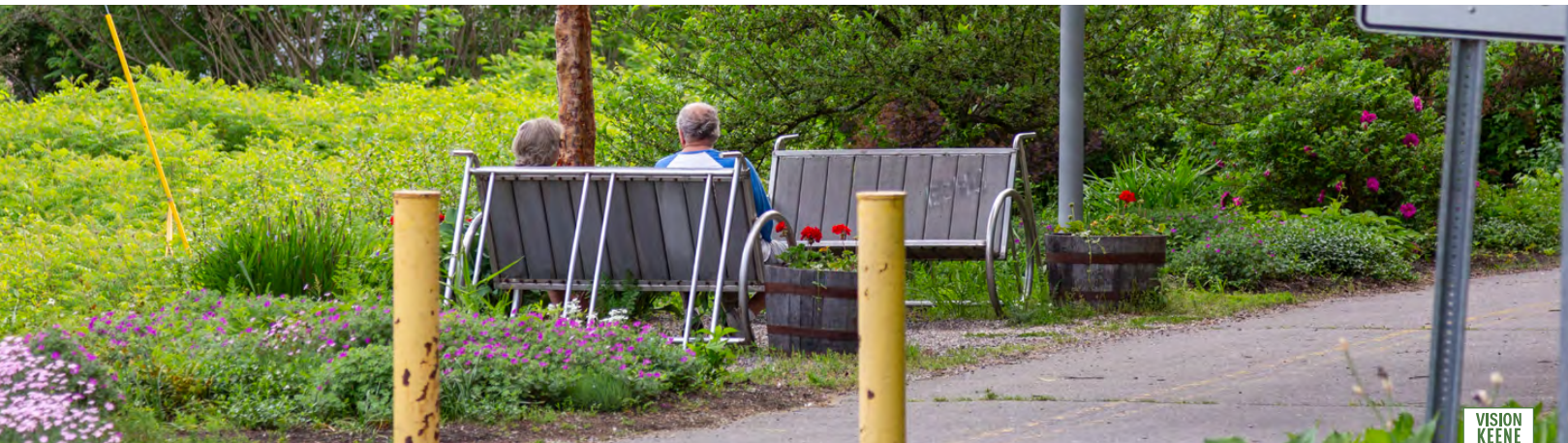
	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
Goal 4: Strengthen Keene's position as an economic development leader.				
Launch an annual "State of Keene" event with regional and industry leaders focusing on economic and workforce development.	X	X	X	X
Strengthen partnerships with local and regional economic development players, such as the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and the Greater Monadnock Collaborative.	X	X	X	X
Facilitate regular roundtable meetings with key partners such as the Chamber, Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship, Keene Manufacturers Consortium, representatives from nearby communities, major employers, known developers, city leadership, and more.	X	X	X	X
Support the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and city efforts to become a model for rural economic resilience and innovation. Communicate these successes through proactive marketing.	X	X	X	X
Facilitate community-wide conversations, in collaboration with Radically Rural and otherWise, to deepen public understanding of the Transition Movement and co-create local strategies.	X	X	X	X
Goal 5: Foster an inclusive economy.				
Support the city's cultural events, ensuring funding and promotion by the city continue.	X	X	X	X
Create an Arts and Culture Master Plan or Study with an economic and fiscal impact assessment of the role arts and culture play in Keene's economy to identify strategies to better support arts and cultural industries and increase the economic contribution of the arts sector.		X		
Work with regional entities and connect with statewide programs and initiatives for arts, culture, and outdoor recreation.		X	X	
Conduct a feasibility assessment for increasing shared-use infrastructure for small-scale producers and creators.	X			
Promote multi-day outdoor recreation experiences, leveraging Granite Gorge and Drummer Hill as regional destinations in marketing efforts.	X	X	X	X
Identify new ways to capture economic benefits from visitors attending KSC ice hockey events and other events at Keene Ice.		X		
Expand economic development KPIs and metrics to assess a broader range of inclusive community development and livability considerations alongside economic indicators, such as well-being, resilience, ecological health, and sufficiency.	X			





7.3 | CONNECTED MOBILITY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
Goal 1: Create a connected and accessible network of multi-modal transportation infrastructure.				
Undertake a walk audit to identify areas where safety improvements are needed.	X			
Implement a snowplow tracker digital application.			X	
Evaluate and update the comprehensive sidewalk and crosswalk maintenance plan to include a snow removal strategy for priority sidewalks and walkways to ensure accessibility during inclement weather and a striping and crosswalk maintenance plan to enhance multimodal mobility safety and accessibility, involving the community in the planning process to address local needs and encourage collaboration.		X		
Develop a program such as “adopt-a-sidewalk” to encourage resident/business participation in shared maintenance of sidewalks during weather-related events.	X			
Continue to offer and promote an online tool that offers a one-stop service for constituents, residents, and visitors to report service requests like sidewalk repairs, potholes, or traffic signal issues.	X			
Implement strategies described in the Roadway Safety Action Plan.			X	
Establish a crash analysis team, such as the Roadway Safety Plan Committee, to examine recent accidents, determine contributing factors, and gather data on near misses. Evaluate methods to gather this data by the potential use of optical sensors or other devices.		X		
Enhance enforcement of traffic infractions like parking in bike lanes and speeding by implementing strategies like increased patrols, fixed and mobile speed cameras, and community reporting systems.			X	
Conduct an ongoing study to determine the most effective messaging for different driver and traveler types, such as young drivers and those operating larger, heavier vehicles.	X			
Goal 2: Prioritize vulnerable road users in infrastructure design, operations, and maintenance.				
Explore the feasibility of instituting a circulator or trolley along high-use areas and neighborhood nodes that is in coordination with the pillars of Thriving Economy and Vibrant Neighborhoods.			X	
Advocate for the creation of a user-friendly, one-stop-shop location for all mobility information with real-time updates.	X			
Utilize a circulator during festivals to introduce people to alternative modes of transit, test out ideas, and gain feedback.		X		
Engage the community in planning and decision-making to meet local needs and preferences by organizing surveys and public meetings to collect feedback on the desired frequency and operating hours of transit services	X			
Partner with local organizations to reach underserved populations.	X			
Track carbon emission reductions from increased public transit and non-motorized travel and assess the public health impacts.		X		
Leverage grant and grassroots funding opportunities to advance trail planning and construction efforts.		X		



CONNECTED MOBILITY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONT.)

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
Goal 3: Expand and promote environmentally sustainable mobility options that are convenient and attractive.				
Document the processes, successes, and challenges of the Marlboro Street Complete Streets demonstration project to create a comprehensive guide for future projects.	X			
Identify priority areas for pilot programs and conduct a transportation network study to find suitable roads for multimodal projects.		X		
Launch Awareness Campaigns to educate the public about the benefits of EVs and the availability of charging stations through social media, local events, and partnerships with community organizations.	X			
Building off the EV Charging Infrastructure Plan, expand the electric vehicle charging network by performing a needs assessment and pinpointing ideal locations for new chargers. Utilize data on traffic patterns, population density, and existing infrastructure to choose strategic sites, including downtown areas, neighborhood hubs, and entry points into Keene.			X	
Identify incentive mechanisms or development standards for development projects to be part of the City's overall enhancement of its electric vehicle charging network.		X		
Re-evaluate regulations to encourage citizen-led urbanism projects and promote community-driven solutions to multimodal improvements.	X			
Undertake quick-build projects to enhance street designs for multimodal travel, leveraging affordable, temporary materials such as paint, planters, and modular barriers to quickly implement changes.		X		
Support land use decisions that increase the effectiveness of Keene's transportation network in coordination with the pillars of Vibrant Neighborhoods and Thriving Economy.		X		
Launch targeted marketing campaigns to highlight the benefits of public transit, such as cost savings, environmental impact, and convenience. Use social media, local events, and partnerships with community organizations to reach a wider audience.			X	
Goal 4: Expand Keene's connectivity to support economic growth.				
Assess the needs and feasibility of incorporating new technologies into the airport, like electric plane charging infrastructure and biofuels.			X	
Utilize the city's enhanced accessibility and mobility connections to boost the local economy by collaborating with the Magnify Monadnock Regional Promotional Organization for promotion.	X			
Assess the feasibility of an intercity bus service by exploring options or creative solutions with other entities.			X	
Assess how intercity transit could be leveraged to expand the labor pool and bring in workers from nearby communities.			X	
Integrate goods and services into the mobility network to streamline logistics and support local businesses.		X		
Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and regional authorities to coordinate transportation planning and infrastructure projects.	X			
Monitor changes in the number of new businesses and economic activity in areas with enhanced connectivity and track shifts in property values in areas impacted by transportation improvements. The following metrics may be used: number of new business registrations, changes in tax revenues, public transit ridership, average travel times, and traffic volumes.			X	
Implement smart traffic management systems to optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion.			X	
Enhance infrastructure at identified neighborhood nodes to support various modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, and public transit.		X		



7.4 | VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Short-term
Mid-term
Long-term
Ongoing

Goal 1: Support a built environment that encourages social connections and interactions.				
Identify ideal locations for community nodes in collaboration with residents.	X			
Conduct a public process to evaluate the permitted uses for neighborhood business nodes, encouraging the creation of neighborhood-scale businesses.		X		
Undertake multimodal improvements to West Street to improve access to downtown.			X	
Enhance communication and outreach efforts to increase community awareness of and involvement in city programs, events, services, and facilities.	X			
Goal 2: Foster community relationship-building and collaboration.				
Create a contact list of community leaders and groups the city can partner with on community events.	X			
Support and invest in organically developed, community-led events and organizations.	X			
Establish a task force to work with business leaders to identify quality of life characteristics to improve in employee attraction/retention efforts.	X			
Host community events to build social cohesion and community bonds.		X		
Identify special events/community events to break the digital isolation that has increased since the pandemic.		X		
Support the development of existing and new citizen-led neighborhood groups	X			
Goal 3: Ensure safe and efficient movement around town.				
Undertake mobility improvements between residential communities and job centers in coordination with the Connected Mobility pillar.		X		
Undertake a walk audit with community stakeholders, such as seniors, disabled persons, college students, families with young children, and other regular users, to identify mobility barriers.	X			
Explore and identify locations that support components of a city-wide bicycle share program.		X		
Test mobility options by employing quick-build or temporary installations.		X		
Identify funding opportunities to assist with the planning, design, and construction work of mobility improvements.	X			
Coordinate accessibility needs and protocols with city services during inclement weather events.	X			
Continue efforts with Safe Routes to Schools and expand initiatives for Safe Routes to Parks.	X			
Goal 4: Foster a high quality of life for all residents.				
Collaborate with healthcare and educational institutions to support community health initiatives and improve communication.	X			
Conduct a review of program and service offerings to streamline service offerings and enhance resource efficiency.		X		
Promote community gardens and expand active senior and young adult programs.	X			
Periodically evaluate community needs, desires, and satisfaction with programs and services.			X	
Review current revenue streams and their sustainability by determining and defining direct and in-direct costs and developing a cost recovery plan.		X		
Support the pillars of Livable Housing, Connected Mobility, Thriving Economy, and Adaptable Workforce to provide a range of housing, transportation, educational, and employment options.			X	
Goal 5: Create opportunities to encourage the creation of neighborhood businesses.				
Assess appropriate locations to allow for small-scale commercial uses in neighborhood nodes and update regulations accordingly.	X			
Support business growth incubation by providing opportunities and resources for a start-up or home-based business to grow into a neighborhood-oriented brick-and-mortar location.			X	
Undertake a code audit to identify barriers to artisanal workshops, live/work facilities, breweries, coworking spaces, and other types of industries compatible with Keene's neighborhood areas.		X		
In coordination with the Thriving Economy pillar, evaluate the effectiveness of marketing efforts in reaching and engaging target markets for neighborhood-type businesses.		X		
Promote the city's quality of life characteristics to attract potential employees as identified in the Adaptable Workforce pillar.	X			



7.5 | ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Short-term
Mid-term
Long-term
Ongoing

Goal 1: Attract talent to grow Keene's workforce.

Continue regional partnerships to help market Keene to prospective workers and the labor force.	X	X	X	X
Increase experiential learning opportunities in Keene, connecting students across all levels with businesses and available internships within the city. Expand summer youth employment opportunities to build pipelines for permanent positions.	X	X	X	X
Explore ways to partner with and expand the Chamber's promotional efforts geared toward visitors, businesses, and students.	X	X	X	X
Advocate for NH's state university system to improve affordability.		X		
Facilitate partnerships between Keene State College programs and area employers like the Cheshire Medical Center.	X	X	X	X

Goal 2: Expand credential pathways and skill development opportunities.

Advocate and collaborate with Keene State College to develop a 2-year accredited degree program.		X		
Convene city leadership, area chambers, industry leadership, and education institution representatives to form a working group that regularly meets to identify needed industry skills, credentials, and other workforce challenges.	X	X	X	X
Strategize with relevant partners to identify opportunities to enhance lifelong learning with Keene's senior population.	X	X	X	X
Work to help ensure that the Cheshire Career Center has the necessary resources for students and continues to meet changing industry needs.	X	X	X	X
Bolster support for and the expansion of educational services within Keene Public Library, such as its makerspace.	X	X	X	X

Goal 3: Play a proactive role in de-siloing efforts, broadening partnerships, and increasing collaboration between partners that serve and support Keene's workforce.

Launch and routinely facilitate a "State of Keene's Workforce" event to bring industry partners, education institutions, regional and state players, and other key workforce development leaders to discuss workforce needs and challenges and cross-collaborate to identify solutions.	X	X	X	X
Invest in partnerships with the National Rural Network to develop peer relationships with communities addressing similar workforce development challenges and contribute to successful models.		X		
Conduct a workforce development audit to identify resources and gaps in workforce development efforts. Develop and regularly update a centralized repository of relevant programming and resources.		X		
Encourage the development of a community-based public lecture series with Keene State College, Antioch University, and other nearby education institutions following models such as Profs and Pints. Contribute marketing support, staff attendance, and other available assistance.	X	X	X	X

Goal 4: Meet quality of life needs and reduce workforce barriers, such as housing availability, childcare, and transportation.

Engage regional partners to conduct a regional housing workshop to address housing challenges. Advocate for additional housing supply in Cheshire County.		X		
Conduct a childcare study to understand challenges, needs, and solutions to increase childcare opportunities and security.			X	
Support regional transportation initiatives to mitigate geographic and logistical barriers to job opportunities.	X	X	X	X
Partner with the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and other key workforce partners to provide neurodivergent worker training(s) for employers.	X			
Support continued high quality-of-life in Keene to encourage youth return and labor retention.	X	X	X	X

Goal 5: Prioritize workforce and community health and wellness.

Strengthen the city's relationship with the Healthy Monadnock Alliance.		X		
Take an active role in Community Health Improvement Plans, providing insights into initiatives and opportunities related to workforce and economic health.		X	X	
Increase support beyond emergency-level resources for addiction and mental health services to help individuals reach self-sufficiency.		X		



7.6 | FLOURISHING ENVIRONMENT IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Short-term
Mid-term
Long-term
Ongoing

Goal 1: Promote Smart Growth.				
Identify priority infill or redevelopment sites through a spatial analysis showing which parcels have minimal environmental constraints and are serviced by existing utilities.	X			
Incentivize the adaptive reuse of existing buildings in coordination with the pillars of Livable Housing, Thriving Economy, and Vibrant Communities.		X		
Create a list of prime agricultural lands and priority areas for environmental protection and conservation.	X			
Goal 2: Prioritize environmental protection and sustainability.				
Expand and enhance buffer areas along natural features by conducting a specified environmental and land use assessment.		X		
Promote the Keene Community Power (CP) program to increase awareness of competitive electricity options that help move the community to 100% renewable energy.	X			
Add a pollinator element to the city's conservation plan.	X			
Work with partners to support and expand incentive programs for existing buildings to upfit for weatherization, energy efficiency, and renewable energy generation.	X			
Establish a green business incubator in coordination with the pillars of a Thriving Economy, Adaptable Workforce, and Vibrant Communities.		X		
Goal 3: Integrate green technologies and best practices in Keene's built environment.				
Invest in battery storage and incorporate the storage capacity into the local electrical grid.			X	
Train staff and local contractors on new/innovative building methods and materials such as 3D printing, modular construction, and hempcrete.		X		
Identify and incorporate the latest technologies and best practices to improve wastewater treatment.			X	
Develop a community facing environmental dashboard that tracks Keene's progress on climate and environmental goals.		X		
Conduct scenario planning and predictive maintenance models to understand potential flood implications and other vulnerabilities. develop a resiliency and mitigation plan.			X	
Develop a city-wide vulnerability and resiliency plan.			X	
Goal 4: Expand community and infrastructure development.				
Support the Connected Mobility Pillar of enhancing Keene's active transportation options by closing gaps in walking and biking networks.		X		
Conduct a walk audit in coordination with the pillars of Connected Mobility and Vibrant Neighborhoods to evaluate pedestrian needs city-wide.	X			
Solicit public feedback on appropriate locations for solar panels, green rooftops, and electric charging stations, and community gardens or other local food production sites.		X		
Pursue grant funding to provide electric vehicle infrastructure to support the transition from traditional vehicle infrastructure.	X			
Select and implement a dam replacement option.		X		
Install infrastructure and amenities like kayaking launches to improve access to the Ashuelot River.		X		
Fully implement the recommendations in the GHG reduction pledge.			X	
Goal 5: Strengthen Keene's local leadership and collaboration to build resilience at the regional, state, and wider levels.				
Hire a Sustainability Coordinator to accelerate the city's progress on its environmental goals.		X		
Actively promote trails and natural areas through local and regional channels.	X			
Partner with local businesses to identify funding and ways to incentivize renewable energy solutions, such as solar over parking lots and agrivoltaics.		X		
Proactively develop and nurture a strong relationship between the city and local land trusts.	X			
Collaborate with local schools and businesses to develop pilot sustainability projects, environmental stewardship, and volunteering initiatives.	X			
Identify initiatives or projects that can be undertaken as a community event to bring in residents and children to get people excited about sustainability.	X			



MORE INFORMATION



8.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the Vision Keene 20-Forward comprehensive master planning project, please contact the Community Development Department at (603) 352-5440.



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Think-Tank Report



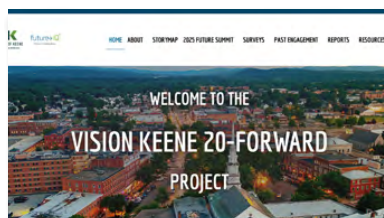
Community Vision Report



Strategic Pillars Summary



Community Snapshot Report



Project Portal



Project StoryMap

9.0 | CONSULTING TEAM – ABOUT FUTURE IQ, JS&A, AND WGI

Future iQ specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist municipalities, organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With nearly two decades of experience, the company has a global clientele spanning three continents. To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit www.future-iq.com or by email at info@future-iq.com.

For this project, Future iQ has partnered with the economic development and planning firm of Jon Stover & Associates (JS&A), and the planning firm of WGI. To learn more about JS&A, visit www.stoverandassociates.com. To learn more about WGI, visit www.wginc.com.

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VISION
KEENE



20
FORWARD



APPENDIX A: PRIORITIZATION SURVEY RESULT DATA

Each Strategic Pillar of the Comprehensive Master Plan is supported by the goals and strategies that enable the city to take the necessary action steps to achieve the preferred future for Keene. In May 2025, Council Members, Master Plan Committee Members, Task Force Members, and City Staff were asked to prioritize the goals and actions in terms of importance, urgency for implementation, and boldness. The following charts show which actions are considered the most important, urgent and bold for the purposes of planning. These interactive charts may be found on the project portal.

LIVABLE HOUSING PRIORITIES

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 1: Boost infill development and redevelopment.	Utilize GIS to create a map that communicates existing development regulations, incentive opportunities, and environmental constraints.	3.7	3.3	29%
	In collaboration with the Thriving Economy Pillar, advertise Keene, its quality of life, and recent housing initiatives to increase local developers/builders' interest in developing in Keene. Assist private property owners with development opportunities who express interest in locating projects in Keene.	3.0	3.1	19%
	Identify potential neighborhood nodes of mixed-use activity and rezone parcels to encourage desired development.	4.0	3.4	29%
	Explore place-based opportunities to improve walkability throughout Keene, with priority given to areas around schools, public parks, and neighborhood nodes.	3.8	2.9	19%
Goal 2: Remove barriers to housing development.	Identify and assess revenue sources to boost residential construction, including new ADUs.	3.6	3.3	14%
	Evaluate the effectiveness of recently passed code amendments and assess opportunities for further amendments to promote housing.	3.9	3.4	29%
	Collaborate with stakeholders, such as project managers, financial analysts, community leaders, and investors, to pinpoint opportunities where financial resources can be transformed into a user-friendly and impactful development fund.	3.6	3.3	10%
	Support and advocate at the state level for smart housing initiatives and/or financial mechanisms that fall outside of local jurisdiction, such as inclusionary zoning.	3.9	3.6	5%
	Explore opportunities with state and local representatives to incentivize the development of empty lots or vacant buildings.	4.6	3.2	10%
	Identify areas suitable for increased housing density and update the zoning map and/or code to encourage desired development.	4.1	4.5	29%
	Continually review and assess the city's permitting and approval process to ensure it is predictable, fair, and efficient.	4.1	3.9	29%

LIVABLE HOUSING PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 3: Promote sustainable and healthy housing standards that align with the community's character.	Conduct a community-driven process to identify and define Keene's unique visual, physical, and environmental qualities.	2.9	2.6	5%
	Review zoning code and development regulations to ensure clear language that is easy to understand.	3.8	3.5	0%
	Identify organizations looking to divest of facilities/land and create an action plan to repurpose for use as new housing.	4.1	3.9	24%
	Conduct a study on the feasibility of adopting a form-based or hybrid zoning code in residential or multi-use areas outside the downtown and implement recommendations from the study.	3.3	3.1	5%
	Create development plans for potential development or redevelopment sites to showcase possibilities to developers when they have expressed interest in developing in Keene.	3.4	3.3	24%
	Create a catalogue of pre-approved, high-efficiency housing units with approved floorplans and architecture to streamline new housing construction and boost investments of small/local developers. Opportunity to engage higher education institutions in Keene, New Hampshire, or other nearby communities to connect with students interested in collaborating on these pre-approved plans.	3.4	3.0	19%
	Support initiatives to preserve the historic character and features of the Downtown Keene Historic District and areas/structures outside the district that contribute positively to Keene's sense of place and unique architectural identity by prioritizing and incentivizing the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.	3.4	3.3	14%
	Host workshops or develop informational materials to inform homeowners about the risks of lead-based paint and mold, the importance of remediation, and other resources to provide guidance. Host similar informational sessions or produce fact sheets that give renters the knowledge of their rights and resources available to address poor housing conditions and/or unresponsive landlords.	2.8	2.5	5%
	Pursue grants and/or funding partnerships to provide financial assistance to low-income residents, childcare facilities, and other vulnerable populations dealing with lead-based paint and/or mold remediation. (Added after survey)			
	Collaborate with higher education systems and local landlords in Keene to create a rental registration program, benefiting off-campus students and other renters.	2.9	2.6	10%

LIVABLE HOUSING PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 4: Increase the diversity of housing options and price points.	Actively participate in or create a multi-community group to spearhead housing efforts.	3.4	3.0	14%
	Create a catalogue of pre-approved ADU designs to increase the predictability of housing options and increase the efficiency of the approval process. Opportunity to collaborate with ongoing initiatives at the regional level through the SWRPC.	3.3	3.1	24%
	Explore opportunities for partnerships and updates to regulatory requirements to support the removal of barriers to group living arrangements.	3.2	3.2	0%
	Promote and support home upgrade programs like the Southwestern Community Service's 21 in 21 Home Upgrade program, to help residents improve the quality and longevity of existing housing stock.	3.8	3.6	19%
Goal 5: Address the housing needs of all residents, current and future.	Centralize resources for housing upgrades or grants for improvements (solar, insulation, Energy Star) into a more user-friendly approach. The city takes an active role in providing educational resources that make it easier for everyday residents to understand and take part in the programs.	4.0	3.6	10%
	Invest in or partner with an aging-in-place initiative to assist home retrofits for seniors and disabled residents.	3.1	2.9	24%
	Encourage and support the formation of resident-led neighborhood groups or associations in neighborhoods where they do not already exist.	3.1	2.8	5%
	Collaborate with higher education agencies to assess and respond to student housing needs and provide partnerships to close the gap.	3.1	2.9	10%
	Facilitate or support collaborations between existing organizations, such as Keene Housing and city committees/community groups. (Added after survey)			
	Encourage the expansion and maintenance of affordable housing in Keene by utilizing the city's zoning tools and code enforcement mechanisms. (Added after survey)			
	Ensure that zoning and development regulations allow for a diversity of housing options, from small ADUs to high-end housing.	4.1	4.1	24%
	Employ a "housing concierge" or "housing navigator" as a city employee to serve as the direct liaison between city departments and developers, improving coordination and expediting the approval process.	3.1	3.0	19%



THRIVING ECONOMY PRIORITIES

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 1: Encourage, recruit, and retain businesses in targeted industries.	Increase participation in local, regional, and statewide industry groups to market Keene to prospective businesses in targeted industries and increase insights into industry needs.	3.8	3.9	46%
	Align Keene's industry attraction efforts with New Hampshire BEA's targeted industries, initiatives, and growth sectors.	3.3	3.5	19%
	Monitor the needs of Keene's current industries to help target expansion efforts and support.	4.2	3.9	42%
Goal 2: Prioritize economic sustainability and resiliency.	Monitor and partner for the continued success of Keene's major anchors, including Cheshire Medical Center, Keene State College, large employers, and Downtown Keene, recognizing these anchors as assets and competitive advantages of Keene's economy.	4.2	4.1	35%
	Support efforts to make Keene a regional hub for repair, reuse, and remanufacturing, reducing waste, creating local jobs, and revitalizing essential trades.	3.5	3.3	38%
	Map existing essential products and service businesses within a regional footprint to determine gaps and identify ways to support businesses and other endeavors to meet these needs. Conduct an audit and map existing local economic assets and gaps to identify key leverage points for investment and support.	3.5	3.0	27%
Goal 3: Attract and grow Keene's businesses of all scales, from entrepreneurs to businesses that span internationally.	Increase allocation of the city's budget for economic development staff to actively connect with current and prospective businesses, developers, and economic development partners across the city, region, and state.	2.9	2.6	8%
	Review the city's regulatory processes to identify potential challenges or constraints prospective businesses and/or developers may face.	3.9	4.0	54%
	Invest in proactive marketing to businesses and the development community, including unifying communication through the city's website and expanding online content around the city's economic development initiatives for current and prospective businesses, partners, and developers.	3.9	3.2	19%
	Regularly conduct a citywide business survey to monitor and assess business needs.	3.8	3.3	12%
	Expand partnerships with local and regional Chambers of Commerce to support business attraction, technical assistance, tourism development, and marketing efforts.	4.0	3.8	15%
	Review and revise home-based business regulations to support entrepreneurs and small businesses.	3.7	3.4	31%

THRIVING ECONOMY PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 4: Strengthen Keene's position as an economic development leader.	Launch an annual "State of Keene" event with regional and industry leaders focusing on economic and workforce development.	3.4	3.0	23%
	Strengthen partnerships with local and regional economic development players, such as the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and the Greater Monadnock Collaborative.	4.0	3.9	12%
	Facilitate regular roundtable meetings with key partners such as the Chamber, Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship, Keene Manufacturers Consortium, representatives from nearby communities, major employers, known developers, city leadership, and more.	3.5	3.3	12%
	Support the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and city efforts to become a model for rural economic resilience and innovation. Communicate these successes through proactive marketing.	3.7	3.3	15%
	Facilitate community-wide conversations, in collaboration with Radically Rural and otherwise, to deepen public understanding of the Transition Movement and co-create local strategies.	3.4	2.9	4%
Goal 5: Foster an inclusive economy.	Support the city's cultural events, ensuring funding and promotion by the city continue.	3.8	3.7	12%
	Create an Arts and Culture Master Plan or Study with an economic and fiscal impact assessment of the role arts and culture play in Keene's economy to identify strategies to better support arts and cultural industries and increase the economic contribution of the arts sector.	3.1	2.8	8%
	Work with regional entities and connect with statewide programs and initiatives for arts, culture, and outdoor recreation.	3.5	3.4	8%
	Conduct a feasibility assessment for increasing shared-use infrastructure for small-scale producers and creators.	3.5	3.2	15%
	Promote multi-day outdoor recreation experiences, leveraging places like Granite Gorge and Drummer Hill as regional destinations in marketing efforts.	2.8	2.4	12%
	Identify new ways to capture economic benefits from visitors attending KSC ice hockey events and other events at Keene Ice.	3.6	3.5	12%
	Expand economic development KPIs and metrics to assess a broader range of inclusive community development and livability considerations alongside economic indicators, such as well-being, resilience, ecological health, and sufficiency.	3.4	3.0	15%



CONNECTED MOBILITY PRIORITIES

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 1: Create a connected and accessible network of multi-modal transportation infrastructure.	Undertake a walk audit to identify areas where safety improvements are needed.	3.8	3.7	31%
	Implement a snowplow tracker digital application.	2.1	1.9	3%
	Evaluate and update the comprehensive sidewalk and crosswalk maintenance plan to include a snow removal strategy for priority sidewalks and walkways to ensure accessibility during inclement weather and a striping and crosswalk maintenance plan to enhance multimodal mobility safety and accessibility, involving the community in the planning process to address local needs and encourage collaboration.	4.1	4.0	50%
	Develop a program such as “adopt-a-sidewalk” to encourage resident/business participation in shared maintenance of sidewalks during weather-related events.	3.4	3.1	19%
	Continue to offer and promote an online tool that offers a one-stop service for constituents, residents, and visitors to report service requests like sidewalk repairs, potholes, or traffic signal issues.	3.9	3.5	19%
	Implement strategies described in the Roadway Safety Action Plan.	3.8	3.6	19%
	Establish a crash analysis team, such as the Roadway Safety Plan Committee, to examine recent accidents, determine contributing factors, and gather data on near misses. Evaluate methods to gather this data by the potential use of optical sensors or other devices.	2.6	2.3	6%
	Enhance enforcement of traffic infractions like parking in bike lanes and speeding by implementing strategies like increased patrols, fixed and mobile speed cameras, and community reporting systems.	3.1	2.8	6%
	Conduct an ongoing study to determine the most effective messaging for different driver and traveler types, such as young drivers and those operating larger, heavier vehicles.	2.4	2.1	6%

CONNECTED MOBILITY PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 2: Prioritize vulnerable road users in infrastructure design, operations, and maintenance.	Explore the feasibility of instituting a circulator or trolley along high-use areas and neighborhood nodes that is in coordination with the pillars of Thriving Economy and Vibrant Neighborhoods.	3.5	3.2	28%
	Advocate for the creation of a user-friendly, one-stop-shop location for all mobility information with real-time updates.	3.2	3.0	9%
	Utilize a circulator during festivals to introduce people to alternative modes of transit, test out ideas, and gain feedback.	3.3	2.9	13%
	Engage the community in planning and decision-making to meet local needs and preferences by organizing surveys and public meetings to collect feedback on the desired frequency and operating hours of transit services.	3.7	3.6	9%
	Partner with local organizations to reach underserved populations.	3.8	3.8	22%
	Track carbon emission reductions from increased public transit and non-motorized travel and assess the public health impacts.	2.9	2.7	0%
	Leverage grant and grassroots funding opportunities to advance trail planning and construction efforts.	4.2	4.1	38%
Goal 3: Expand and promote environmentally sustainable mobility options that are convenient and attractive.	Document the processes, successes, and challenges of the Marlboro Street Complete Streets demonstration project to create a comprehensive guide for future projects.	3.4	3.2	6%
	Identify priority areas for pilot programs and conduct a transportation network study to find suitable roads for multimodal projects.	3.5	3.3	9%
	Launch Awareness Campaigns to educate the public about the benefits of EVs and the availability of charging stations through social media, local events, and partnerships with community organizations.	2.3	2.2	0%
	Building off the EV Charging Infrastructure Plan, expand the electric vehicle charging network by performing a needs assessment and pinpointing ideal locations for new chargers. Utilize data on traffic patterns, population density, and existing infrastructure to choose strategic sites, including downtown areas, neighborhood hubs, and entry points into Keene.	2.7	2.6	9%
	Identify incentive mechanisms or development standards for development projects to be part of the City's overall enhancement of its electric vehicle charging network. (Added after survey)			
	Re-evaluate regulations to encourage citizen-led urbanism projects and promote community-driven solutions to multimodal improvements.	3.4	3.4	19%
	Undertake quick-build projects to enhance street designs for multimodal travel, leveraging affordable, temporary materials such as paint, planters, and modular barriers to quickly implement changes.	3.5	3.3	16%
	Support land use decisions that increase the effectiveness of Keene's transportation network in coordination with the pillars of Vibrant Neighborhoods and Thriving Economy.	4.1	3.8	22%
	Launch targeted marketing campaigns to highlight the benefits of public transit, such as cost savings, environmental impact, and convenience. Use social media, local events, and partnerships with community organizations to reach a wider audience.	2.6	2.5	6%



CONNECTED MOBILITY PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 4: Expand Keene's connectivity to support economic growth.	Assess the needs and feasibility of incorporating new technologies into the airport, like electric plane charging infrastructure and biofuels.	2.6	2.2	6%
	Utilize the city's enhanced accessibility and mobility connections to boost the local economy by collaborating with the Magnify Monadnock Regional Promotional Organization for promotion.	3.9	3.4	9%
	Assess the feasibility of an intercity bus service by exploring options or creative solutions with other entities.	3.7	3.7	22%
	Assess how intercity transit could be leveraged to expand the labor pool and bring in workers from nearby communities.	3.6	3.4	16%
	Integrate goods and services into the mobility network to streamline logistics and support local businesses.	3.2	3.1	13%
	Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and regional authorities to coordinate transportation planning and infrastructure projects.	3.9	3.6	22%
	Monitor changes in the number of new businesses and economic activity in areas with enhanced connectivity and track shifts in property values in areas impacted by transportation improvements. The following metrics may be used: number of new business registrations, changes in tax revenues, public transit ridership, average travel times, and traffic volumes.	3.3	2.9	0%
	Implement smart traffic management systems to optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion.	3.7	3.6	16%
	Enhance infrastructure at identified neighborhood nodes to support various modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, and public transit.	4.3	4.1	34%



VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS PRIORITIES

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 1: Support a built environment that encourages social connections and interactions.	Identify ideal locations for community nodes in collaboration with residents.	3.5	3.2	25%
	Conduct a public process to evaluate the permitted uses for neighborhood business nodes, encouraging the creation of neighborhood-scale businesses.	3.2	3.0	21%
	Undertake multimodal improvements to West Street to improve access to downtown.	3.9	3.9	50%
	Enhance communication and outreach efforts to increase community awareness of and involvement in city programs, events, services, and facilities.	3.5	3.2	14%
Goal 2: Foster community relationship-building and collaboration.	Create a contact list of community leaders and groups the city can partner with on community events.	3.3	2.6	7%
	Support and invest in organically developed, community-led events and organizations.	3.6	3.3	21%
	Establish a task force to work with business leaders to identify quality of life characteristics to improve in employee attraction/retention efforts.	3.6	3.4	18%
	Host community events to build social cohesion and community bonds.	3.6	3.3	11%
	Identify special events/community events to break the digital isolation that has increased since the pandemic.	3.2	3.0	7%
	Support the development of existing and new citizen-led neighborhood groups.	3.7	3.1	18%

VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 3: Ensure safe and efficient movement around town.	Undertake mobility improvements between residential communities and job centers in coordination with the Connected Mobility pillar.	3.8	3.9	46%
	Undertake a walk audit with community stakeholders, such as seniors, disabled persons, college students, families with young children, and other regular users, to identify mobility barriers.	3.7	3.6	21%
	Explore and identify locations that support components of a city-wide bicycle share program.	3.3	3.0	11%
	Test mobility options by employing quick-build or temporary installations.	3.0	2.9	11%
	Identify funding opportunities to assist with the planning, design, and construction work of mobility improvements.	3.9	3.8	25%
	Coordinate accessibility needs and protocols with city services during inclement weather events.	3.4	3.3	4%
	Continue efforts with Safe Routes to Schools and expand initiatives for Safe Routes to Parks.	3.7	3.5	14%
Goal 4: Foster a high quality of life for all residents.	Collaborate with healthcare and educational institutions to support community health initiatives and improve communication.	3.5	3.3	11%
	Conduct a review of program and service offerings to streamline service offerings and enhance resource efficiency.	3.6	3.4	14%
	Promote community gardens and expand active senior and young adult programs.	4.0	3.4	29%
	Periodically evaluate community needs, desires, and satisfaction with programs and services.	3.4	3.2	4%
	Review current revenue streams and their sustainability by determining and defining direct and in-direct costs and developing a cost recovery plan.	3.7	3.6	14%
	Support the pillars of Livable Housing, Connected Mobility, Thriving Economy, and Adaptable Workforce to provide a range of housing, transportation, educational, and employment options.	4.1	3.9	11%



VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 5: Create opportunities to encourage the creation of neighborhood businesses.	Assess appropriate locations to allow for small-scale commercial uses in neighborhood nodes and update regulations accordingly.	3.8	3.6	25%
	Support business growth incubation by providing opportunities and resources for a start-up or home-based business to grow into a neighborhood-oriented brick-and-mortar location.	3.6	3.4	14%
	Undertake a code audit to identify barriers to artisanal workshops, live/work facilities, breweries, coworking spaces, and other types of industries compatible with Keene’s neighborhood areas.	3.9	3.4	21%
	In coordination with the Thriving Economy pillar, evaluate the effectiveness of marketing efforts in reaching and engaging target markets for neighborhood-type businesses.	2.9	2.8	4%
	Promote the city’s quality of life characteristics to attract potential employees as identified in the Adaptable Workforce pillar.	3.8	3.5	29%



ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 1: Attract talent to grow Keene's workforce.	Continue regional partnerships to help market Keene to prospective workers and the labor force.	3.9	3.9	28%
	Increase experiential learning opportunities in Keene, connecting students across all levels with businesses and available internships within the city. Expand summer youth employment opportunities to build pipelines for permanent positions.	4.4	4.1	52%
	Explore ways to partner with and expand the Chamber's promotional efforts geared toward visitors, businesses, and students.	3.6	3.5	21%
	Advocate for NH's state university system to improve affordability.	3.7	3.7	34%
	Facilitate partnerships between Keene State College programs and area employers like the Cheshire Medical Center.	4.6	4.3	52%
Goal 2: Expand credential pathways and skill development opportunities.	Advocate and collaborate with Keene State College to develop a 2-year accredited degree program.	3.6	3.4	31%
	Convene city leadership, area chambers, industry leadership, and education institution representatives to form a working group that regularly meets to identify needed industry skills, credentials, and other workforce challenges.	3.9	3.8	31%
	Strategize with relevant partners to identify opportunities to enhance lifelong learning with Keene's senior population.	3.0	2.6	3%
	Work to help ensure that the Cheshire Career Center has the necessary resources for students and continues to meet changing industry needs.	4.1	4.2	48%
	Bolster support for and the expansion of educational services within Keene Public Library, such as its makerspace.	3.2	2.8	14%

ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 3: Play a proactive role in de-siloing efforts, broadening partnerships, and increasing collaboration between partners that serve and support Keene's workforce.	Launch and routinely facilitate a "State of Keene's Workforce" event to bring industry partners, education institutions, regional and state players, and other key workforce development leaders to discuss workforce needs and challenges and cross-collaborate to identify solutions.	3.3	2.8	17%
	Invest in partnerships with the National Rural Network to develop peer relationships with communities addressing similar workforce development challenges and contribute to successful models.	3.1	2.6	3%
	Conduct a workforce development audit to identify resources and gaps in workforce development efforts. Develop and regularly update a centralized repository of relevant programming and resources.	3.0	3.0	14%
	Encourage the development of a community-based public lecture series with Keene State College, Antioch University, and other nearby education institutions following models such as Profs and Pints. Contribute marketing support, staff attendance, and other available assistance.	2.8	2.1	10%
Goal 4: Meet quality of life needs and reduce workforce barriers, such as housing availability, childcare, and transportation.	Engage regional partners to conduct a regional housing workshop to address housing challenges. Advocate for additional housing supply in Cheshire County.	3.7	3.9	38%
	Conduct a childcare study to understand challenges, needs, and solutions to increase childcare opportunities and security.	3.9	3.7	28%
	Support regional transportation initiatives to mitigate geographic and logistical barriers to job opportunities.	3.3	3.3	28%
	Partner with the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and other key workforce partners to provide neurodivergent worker training(s) for employers.	2.9	2.7	10%
	Support continued high quality-of-life in Keene to encourage youth return and labor retention.	4.4	3.9	21%
Goal 5: Prioritize workforce and community health and wellness.	Strengthen the city's relationship with the Healthy Monadnock Alliance.	2.9	2.6	0%
	Take an active role in Community Health Improvement Plans, providing insights into initiatives and opportunities related to workforce and economic health.	3.0	2.8	0%
	Increase support beyond emergency-level resources for addiction and mental health services to help individuals reach self-sufficiency.	3.6	3.7	17%

FLOURISHING ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 1: Promote smart land use and development.	Identify priority infill or redevelopment sites through a spatial analysis showing which parcels have minimal environmental constraints and are serviced by existing utilities.	4.0	3.9	32%
	Incentivize the adaptive reuse of existing buildings in coordination with the pillars of Livable Housing, Thriving Economy, and Vibrant Communities.	4.3	4.2	61%
	Create a list of prime agricultural lands and priority areas for environmental protection and conservation.	3.9	3.9	15%
Goal 2: Prioritize environmental protection and sustainability.	Expand and enhance buffer areas along natural features by conducting a specified environmental and land use assessment.	3.5	3.2	15%
	Promote the Keene Community Power (CP) program to increase awareness of competitive electricity options that help move the community to 100% renewable energy.	3.7	3.5	17%
	Add a pollinator element to the city's conservation plan.	3.3	3.2	22%
	Work with partners to support and expand incentive programs for existing buildings to upfit for weatherization, energy efficiency, and renewable energy generation.	3.9	4.0	34%
	Establish a green business incubator in coordination with the pillars of a Thriving Economy, Adaptable Workforce, and Vibrant Communities.	3.2	2.9	20%
Goal 3: Integrate green technologies and best practices in Keene's built environment.	Invest in battery storage and incorporate the storage capacity into the local electrical grid.	2.9	2.7	5%
	Train staff and local contractors on new/innovative building methods and materials such as 3D printing, modular construction, and hempcrete.	3.1	2.7	12%
	Identify and incorporate the latest technologies and best practices to improve wastewater treatment.	4.1	3.6	24%
	Develop a community facing environmental dashboard that tracks Keene's progress on climate and environmental goals.	3.1	2.9	15%
	Conduct scenario planning and predictive maintenance models to understand potential flood implications and other vulnerabilities. Develop a resiliency and mitigation plan.	3.9	3.8	24%
	Develop a city-wide vulnerability and resiliency plan.	3.9	3.9	37%

FLOURISHING ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES (CONT.)

		Importance	Urgency	Boldness
Pillar Goals	Actions to Achieve Our Aspirations			
Goal 4: Expand community and infrastructure development.	Support the Connected Mobility Pillar of enhancing Keene's active transportation options by closing gaps in walking and biking networks.	4.0	3.8	41%
	Conduct a walk audit in coordination with the pillars of Connected Mobility and Vibrant Neighborhoods to evaluate pedestrian needs city-wide.	3.2	3.2	5%
	Solicit public feedback on appropriate locations for solar panels, green rooftops, and electric charging stations, and community gardens or other local food production sites.	3.2	3.0	5%
	Pursue grant funding to provide electric vehicle infrastructure to support the transition from traditional vehicle infrastructure.	3.2	3.2	10%
	Select and implement a dam replacement option for the West Street Dam.	3.1	3.0	7%
	Install infrastructure and amenities like kayaking launches to improve access to the Ashuelot River.	3.2	2.7	10%
	Fully implement the recommendations in the Sustainability Energy Plan.	3.1	2.9	5%
Goal 5: Strengthen Keene's local leadership and collaboration to build resilience at the regional, state, and wider levels.	Hire a Sustainability Coordinator to accelerate the city's progress on its environmental goals.	3.0	3.0	17%
	Actively promote trails and natural areas through local and regional channels.	3.7	3.2	22%
	Partner with local businesses to identify funding and ways to incentivize renewable energy solutions, such as solar over parking lots and agrivoltaics.	3.6	3.5	20%
	Proactively develop and nurture a strong relationship between the city and local land trusts.	3.2	3.1	0%
	Collaborate with local schools and businesses to develop pilot sustainability projects, environmental stewardship, and volunteering initiatives.	3.6	3.3	17%
	Identify initiatives or projects that can be undertaken as a community event to bring in residents and children to get people excited about sustainability.	3.3	3.2	7%