

Concord Master Plan Update

Planning Board Orientation
July 21st 2026

utile

N NELSON
NYGAARD



Understanding the Role of a Master Plan

The Purpose and Craft of Comprehensive Plans

The balancing acts at the center of comprehensive planning (aka “Master Plan”) efforts

Guiding Growth and Preservation

A tailored approach to accommodating growth and ensuring preservation.

- Defining what is worthy of preservation
- Identifying the benefits of growth for city residents
- Teeing up sturdy framing that can help you navigate future zoning changes

Finding the Right Level of Specificity and Flexibility

Determining where on the spectrum of vision to checklist the plan wants to land.

- Defining the role of the private sector in meeting economic and real estate development
- Calibrating the specificity of commitment for public investment in roads, infrastructure and mobility
- Building on planning efforts that are already underway

Building a Shared, Strategic Narrative

Guiding public narrative and conversation to drive shared action and implementation momentum.

- Building on consensus established in previous planning efforts
- Building a shared narrative of existing conditions
- Deep and varied engagement toolkit and matching of that to what the content and context require at different phases of the plan
- Memorable core storyline with clear spatial diagram that imprints on people's memories and resonates with each topic area
- Strength of graphic communication of findings

Legal Requirements of a Master Plan in New Hampshire

See State Statute, Section 674:2 for full legal language

Purpose

A tool to guide public and private actions towards the “best and most appropriate future development” - it is a roadmap for what should happen where and why.

A Master Plan gives legal standing and direction for regulations and decisions that work together to:

- Promote
 - Smart growth
 - Sound planning
 - Wise resource protection
- Preserve and enhance New Hampshire’s unique
 - Quality of life
 - Culture

Required Elements

Two elements are required. All other sections of the Master Plan must be consistent with these.

Vision

Directs the other sections of the plan

- Articulates the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan
- Includes guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision

Land Use

Basis of all following optional sections

- Translates the vision statements into physical terms
- Shows existing and proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use

Optional Elements

The Vision and Land Use elements typically incorporate and are closely related to these topics:

Foundational Topics
A ***unified strategy*** for land use, zoning, and community design integrating these.

Housing
Economic Development
Transportation
Community Design

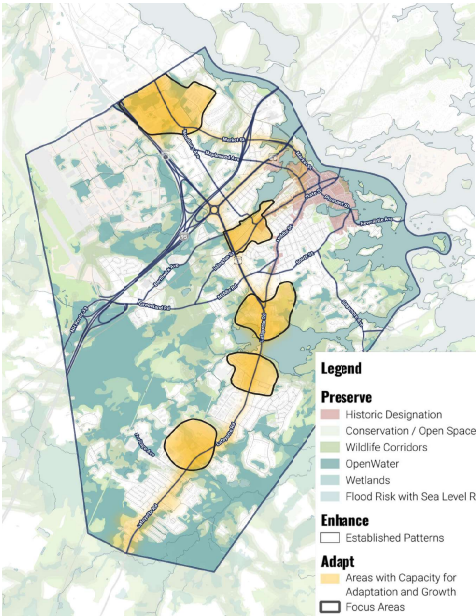
Cross-Cutting Topics
Topics that are ***integral to and woven into*** the unified strategy articulated for the Foundational Topics.

Utility & Public Services
Energy
Waste Reduction
Community Facilities
Recreation
Cultural, Archeological, and Historic Resources
Natural Resources
Natural Hazards
Coastal Management

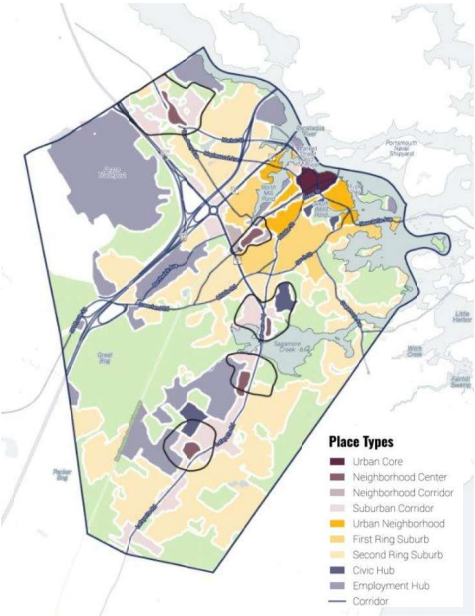
A memorable framework linking land use policy and public investment.

A good Master Plan provides a simple, memorable set of spatial frameworks that convey a vision for coordinated development and investment. The focus in Portsmouth, NH was on cultivating gateway neighborhood centers capable of offering equitable access to a high quality of life.

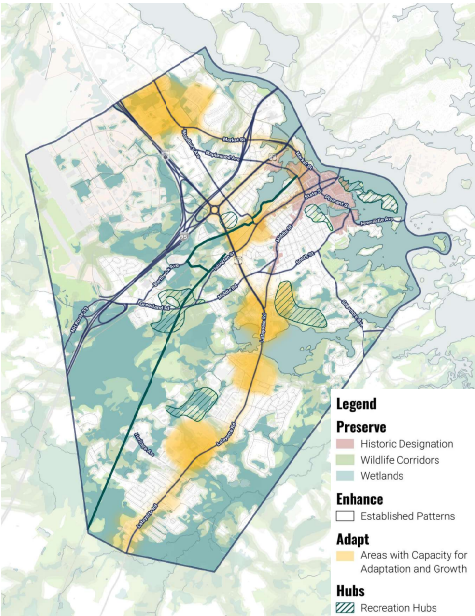
Unified Growth Framework
Degree of Change



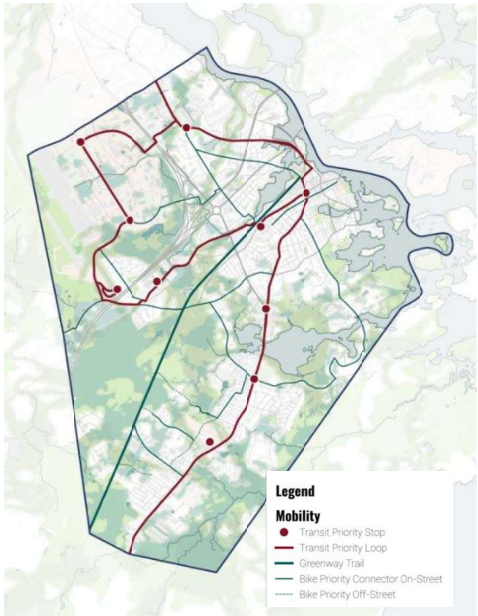
Future Land Use Vision
Housing + Jobs Strategy



Parks & Open Space Vision
Ecology, Recreation & Access



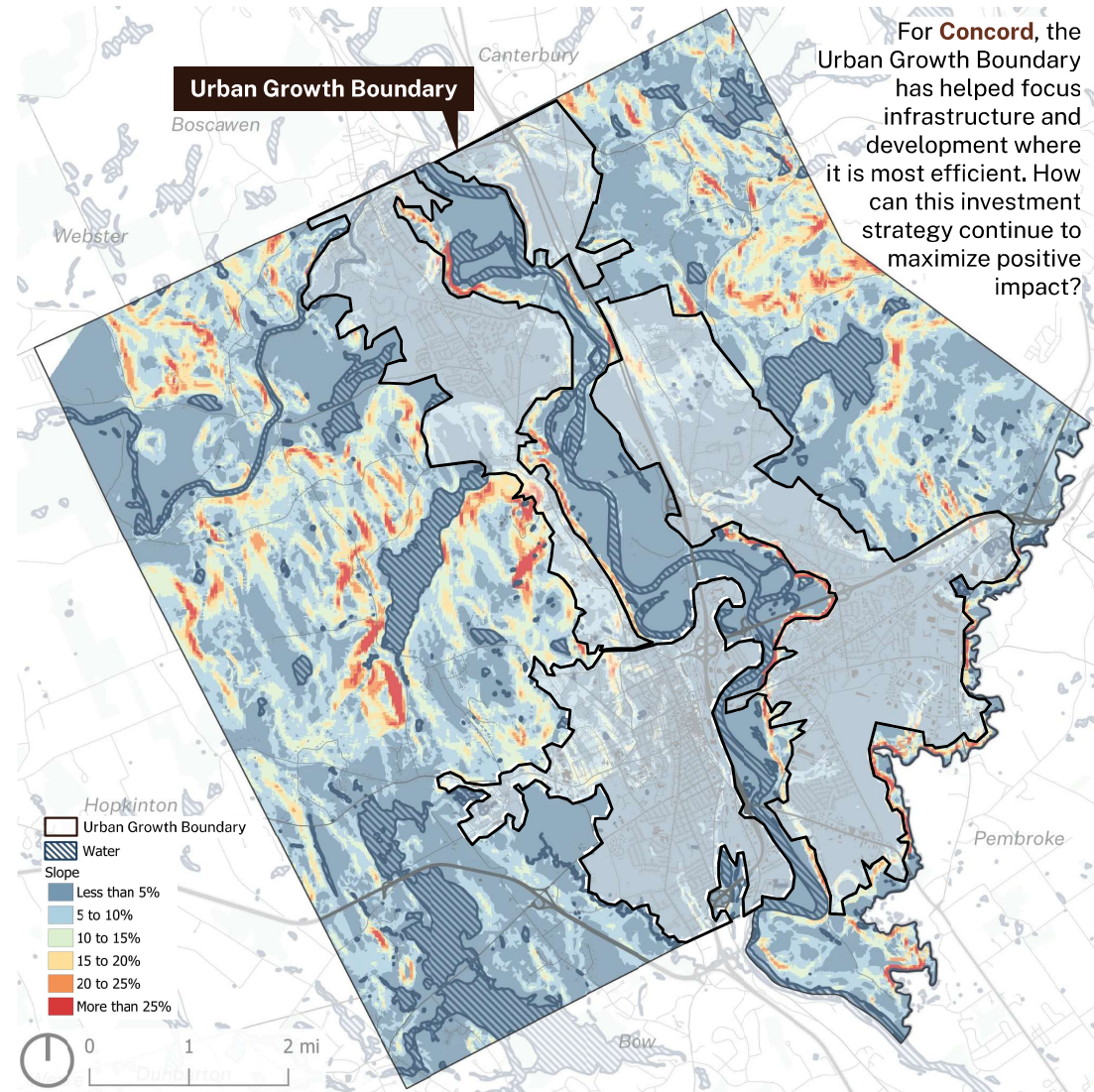
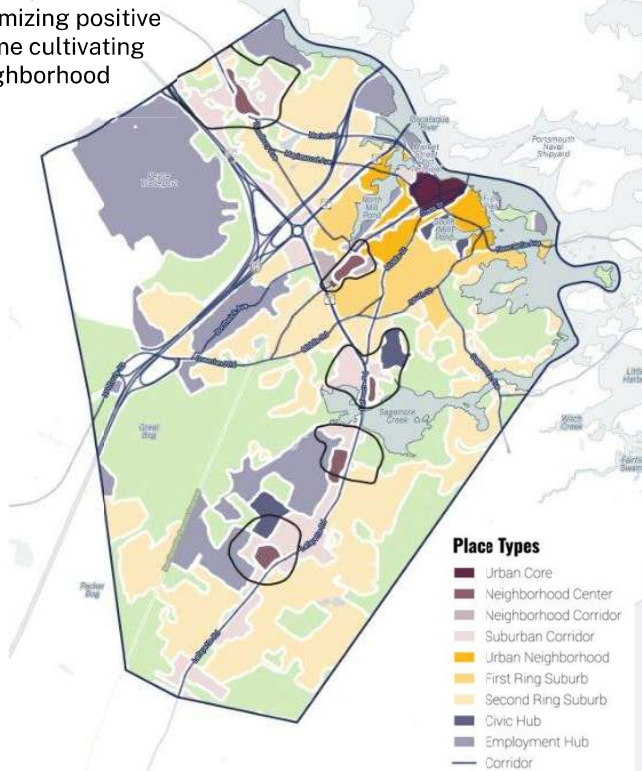
Mobility Network Vision
Transit, Bike & Pedestrian Priority



... that maximizes positive impact.

The Master Plan serves as a framework for prioritizing resources in a way that maximizes positive collective impact within the limited public resources available.

For **Portsmouth**, the central idea for maximizing positive impact became cultivating gateway Neighborhood Centers.

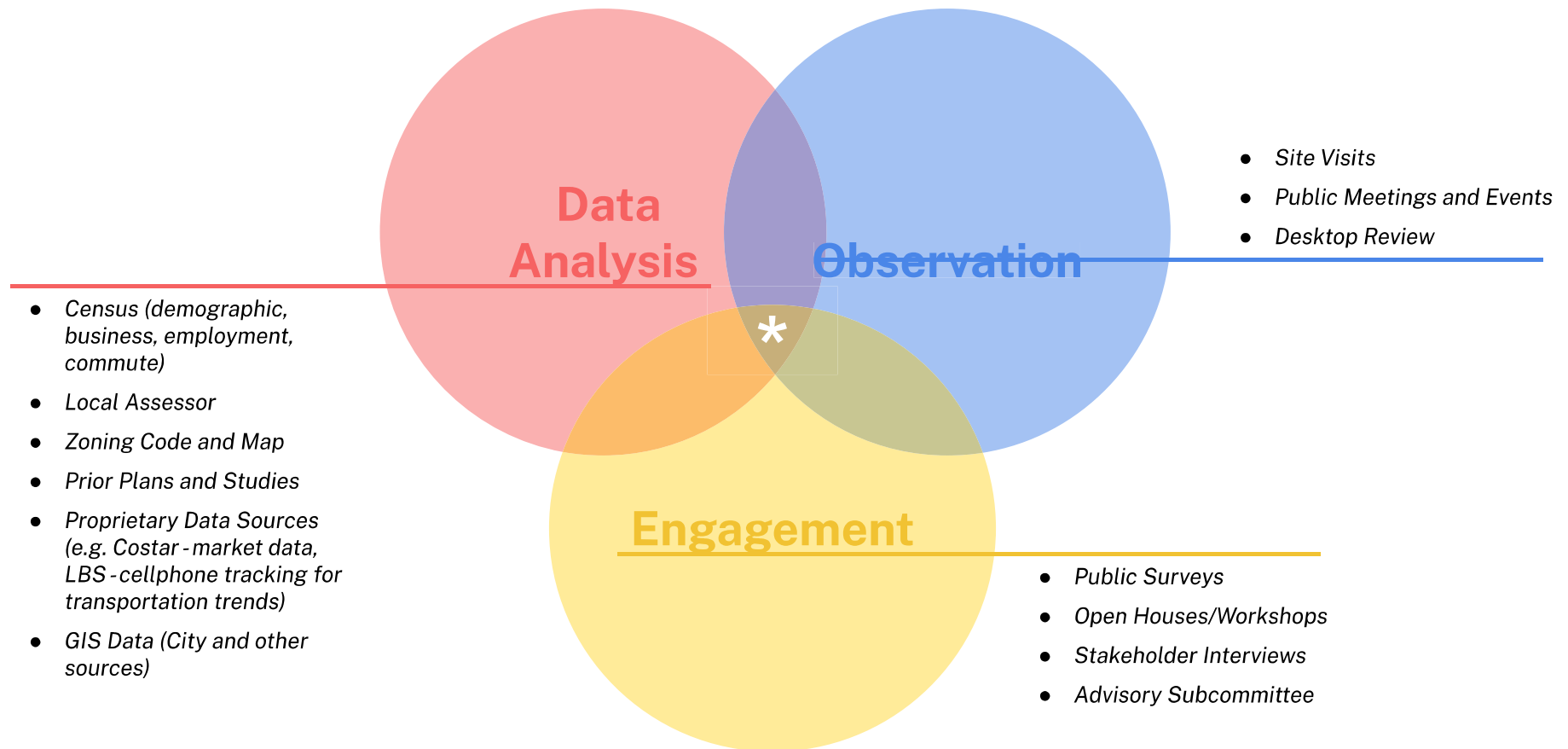


For **Concord**, the Urban Growth Boundary has helped focus infrastructure and development where it is most efficient. How can this investment strategy continue to maximize positive impact?

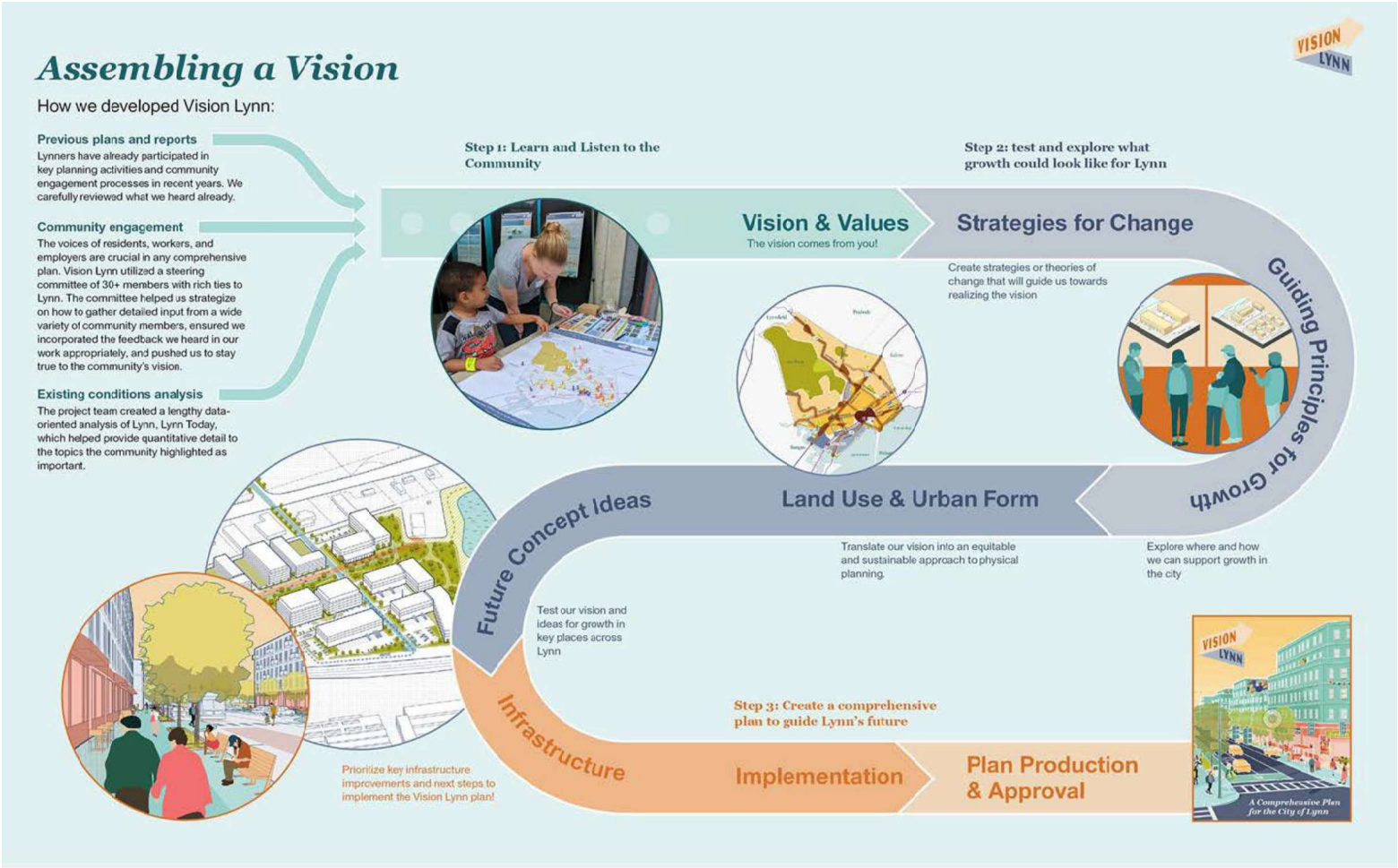
Proposed Process Overview

Integrated process that drives meaningful insights and impactful outcomes.

✱ We build a multi-dimensional understanding of community needs, issues, and opportunities through mixed methods



Holistic, strategic, and multi-disciplinary from start to finish.

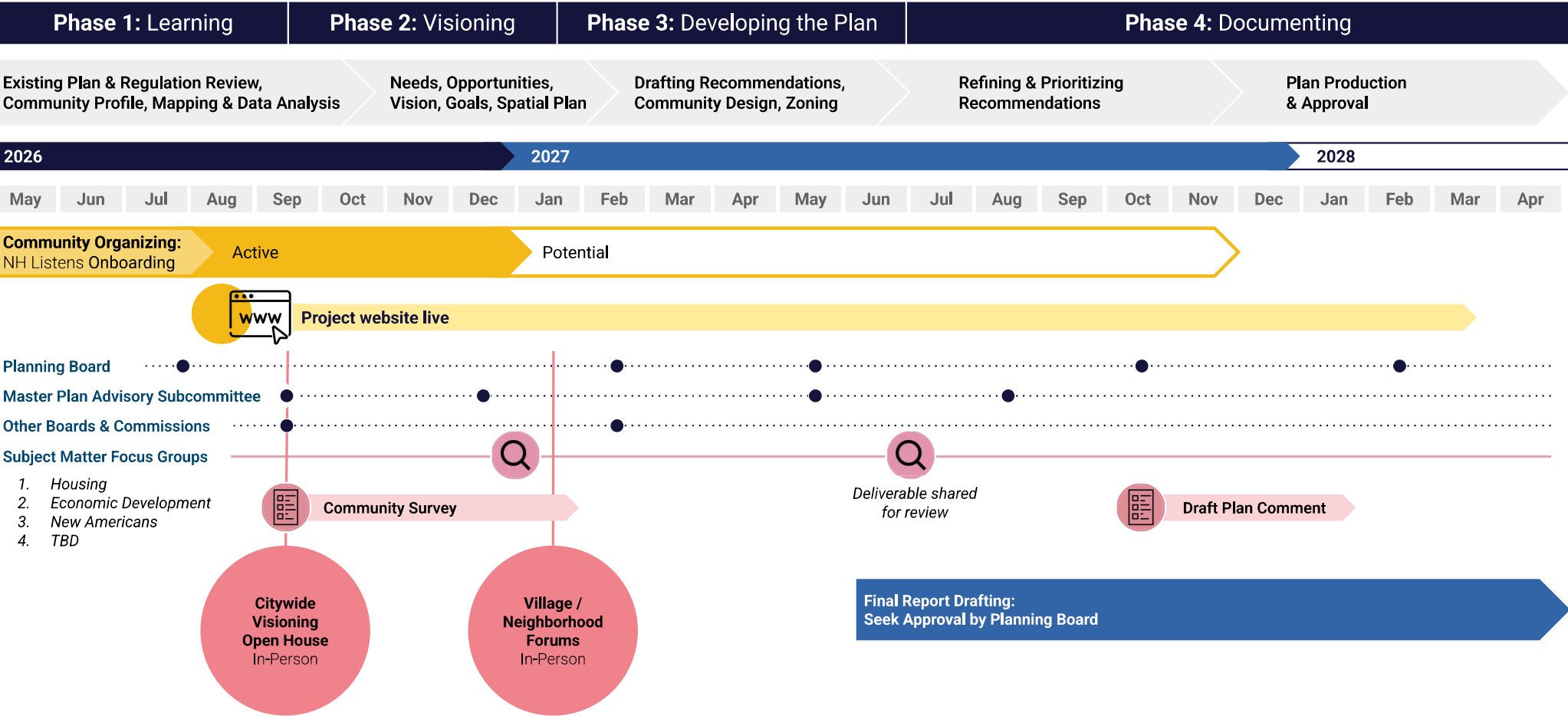


Our planning work starts from the assumption that our lives and communities don't fit into neat disciplinary and topical buckets.

The process starts with the big picture, then gets increasingly detailed. This graphic from the Vision Lynn plan (Lynn, MA) helps to explain a typical progression.

This helps us distill complex interrelationships into a unified strategic vision built from the specific issues raised through local engagement and analysis.

Proposed Schedule



What are the **public** engagement opportunities?



Information sharing and input opportunities will be available throughout the process on the project website and social media



Citywide Visioning Open House

Purpose:

- Build awareness and understanding of the planning purpose and process
- Allow the public to respond to and engage with draft findings and ideas in an informal, conversational, workshop setting
- Cultivate stronger collaborative problem solving and mutual respect

Format: in-person orientation presentation + “science-fair” style open house with optional facilitated small group discussions

How many? 1

When? Fall ‘26 (Sept/Oct)



Community Survey

Purpose:

- Build awareness and understanding of the planning purpose and process
- Seek broader community input on key issues and opportunities the plan should address
- Encourage engagement with anticipated trade-offs and priorities

Format: digital & paper, available in up to 3 languages including English (languages TBD)

How many? 1

When? Fall ‘26 - Winter ‘27



Neighborhood / Village Forums

Purpose:

- Build understanding of key patterns and trends for each neighborhood/village
- Confirm community vision for each neighborhood/village
- Receive input on the plan vision, goals, spatial plan for land use and infrastructure

Format: TBD, workshop and discussion-based interactive experience.

How many?

- Penacook Village
- West Concord
- Downtown / West End
- South End
- Concord Heights
- East Concord

When? Winter ‘27 (Jan/Feb)



Final Plan Public Comment

Purpose:

- Promote awareness and understanding of Draft Plan
- Receive input on final refinements needed prior to adoption

Format: verbal and written comment on posted Draft Plan via Planning Board Public Hearings and online form

How many? 1

When? Fall ‘27 - Winter ‘28

What are the **topic and expertise-specific** engagement opportunities?

Subject Matter Boards & Commissions

Utile will meet with each of the following Boards / Commissions / Committees during the master planning process. (2 meetings each)

- **Conservation Commission**
- **Economic Development Advisory Committee**
- **Energy and Environment Committee**
- **Heritage Commission**
- **Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee**
- **Transportation Policy Advisory Committee**



Subject Matter Focus Groups

Focus group meetings with a cross section of representatives in the following topical areas are included in the planning process. (1 meeting each + draft recommendation review)

- **Housing** (Affordable housing developers, for profit housing developers, homeless support services, special needs housing providers, Concord Housing & Redevelopment Authority)
- **Economic Development** (Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, Intown Concord, select major employers by sector, real estate brokers and developers, Capital Regional Development Council)
- **New Americans** (Members of New Americans community and agencies that support them)

One meeting with one additional focus group is budgeted in the project.

Other Stakeholders

Other community stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in the planning process via public participation process.

Other municipal bodies:

***Other Boards and Commissions** will be offered up to two (2) in-person combined briefings, one will serve as an orientation, the other as an overview of findings.*

***City Council** per State Law, is not formally involved in oversight or adoption, but will be provided with courtesy updates as the plan nears adoption and will be welcome to participate in public engagement activities.*

Who is **guiding** the Master Plan?

Community Development Department

Direct and manage contract and process.

This means leading both the process and outcomes on behalf of Planning Board and community members.

- Daily guidance and coordination
- Directly shape focus and process
- Monitor and manage consultant team contract
- Coordinates with other City departments and partners throughout the planning process



Planning Board

Guide plan content, adopt the final plan.

This means providing ideas and feedback at key milestones to ensure the final plan is headed in the right strategic direction, is worthy of adoption, and will serve the City, Planning Board, and community well.

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

Master Plan Advisory Subcommittee * (if appointed by Planning Board)

Sounding board for content and process.

A group of advisors that serves as a sounding board to support a productive community process.

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

Decisions & Discussion

The Role of a Master Plan Advisory Subcommittee

A sounding board to preview and fine-tune content before public rollout for engagement. Focused on process, awareness, and alignment.

Advise on key issues and priorities the plan should address.

Assist with coordinating and aligning the plan with existing, ongoing or future projects/initiatives.

Review and provide constructive feedback on the proposed process and plan materials while they are in development, including initial findings, interim deliverables, and final recommendations.

Amplify the outreach and awareness-building efforts of the City Staff, and Consultant Team to promote public trust and boost participation and understanding among the community.

The MP Subcommittee is not:

- Writing the plan.
- A shortcut to getting ideas into the plan.
- Serving as a stand-in for whole communities.
- Endorsing the content of the final plan, only the process used to create it.

Suggested Composition of Master Plan Advisory Subcommittee

A sounding board to preview and fine-tune content before public rollout for engagement. Focused on process, awareness, and alignment.

The Master Plan Advisory Subcommittee would be subcommittee of the Planning Board. All members would be appointed by the Board, and serve at the Board’s pleasure.

Guidance on MP Subcommittee Composition:

- No more than 15, ideally 12 to allow for organic discussion.
- Should have majority representation from the Planning Board.
- Other representatives should be part of existing standing boards, committees, or commissions that are aligned to plan content.
- The default appointee should be the chair. If the chair prefers, the relevant committee can nominate an alternate appointment to serve in their place, to be approved by the Planning Board.

Entity	Total Representatives
Planning Board	6
Conservation Commission	1
Economic Development Advisory Committee	1
Energy & Environment Committee	1
Heritage Commission	1
Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee	1
Transportation Policy Advisory Committee	1
TOTAL	12

Fall Citywide Visioning Open House

Typical Format

A science fair style open house with a brief orienting presentation followed by self-directed engagement with thematic display boards and small group conversations around the boards.

1. **Orientation Presentation** (~15 min)
2. **Self-Directed Exploration of Display Boards** (~1 hr)
Optional Facilitated Small Group Discussions
3. **Wrap-Up & Next Steps** (~15 min)

Key Decisions

We are aiming for a 1.5hr+ meeting in late September / early October.

Optimal Days/Times

What enables the most people to join and participate fully?

Suggest Saturday Morning - start times range from 9:00am - 10:00am

Candidate Dates

Are there any dates that you think we should avoid due to known conflicts and community events?

Currently avoiding:

- Back to School
- Labor Day (Mon, Sept 7)
- Indigenous Peoples Day (Mon, Oct 12)

Options being evaluated: Sept 19 / Oct 3 / Oct 17

Next Steps

1. Public Launch (Website Live) - August

We are finalizing the project branding, engagement plan, and website content now.

2. Civic Leadership Orientation

- Boards & Commissions kick-off - September
- Master Plan Advisory Subcommittee kick-off (if appointed) - Date TBD

3. Initial Public Engagement Opportunities

To be launched together in late September / early October

- Citywide Visioning Open House
- Community Survey

Thank You!

utile

N NELSON
NYGAARD

