

# SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS



Lowell will support the development of sustainable neighborhoods, which foster a sense of community cohesion and promote healthy lifestyles by design. Such neighborhoods will be welcoming and well-networked, connecting residents with the natural and built environment, with the city's rich history, with educational and work opportunities, with convenient transportation access and healthy homes, and with other daily amenities, such as recreational opportunities and local food. They will carefully balance the energizing benefits of new investments with the thoughtful preservation of neighborhood character.

Photo: CBA

# VECINDARIOS SOSTENIBLES

Lowell apoyará el desarrollo de vecindarios sostenibles que fomentan un sentido de cohesión comunitaria y promuevan estilos de vida saludables. Tales vecindarios serán acogedoras y bien enlazadas para que los(as) residentes se conecten con los entornos naturales y construidos, con la rica historia de la ciudad, con oportunidades laborales y educativas, con acceso conveniente al transporte y viviendas saludables, y con otras comodidades diarias tales como oportunidades recreativas y comida local. Cuidadosamente balancearán los beneficios energizantes de nuevas inversiones con la preservación bien meditado del carácter de los vecindarios.

# ការអភិវឌ្ឍសង្កាត់រស់នៅបាន

ឡូវែល នឹងគាំទ្រការអភិវឌ្ឍនៃការអភិវឌ្ឍសង្កាត់រស់នៅបាន, ជួយឱ្យជីវិតប្រយោជន៍នៃការអភិវឌ្ឍសង្កាត់រស់នៅ និងលើកកម្ពស់របៀបរស់នៅដែលមានសុខភាពល្អ ដោយមានគោលបំណងផ្សេងៗទៀត។ សង្កាត់រស់នៅដូចនេះ នឹងត្រូវស្ថាប័ន និងមានបណ្តាញយ៉ាងល្អប្រសើរ, គ្រាប់អ្នករស់នៅជាអចិន្ត្រៃយ៍ជាមួយនឹងបរិស្ថានធម្មជាតិ និងបរិស្ថានដែលបានស្ថាបនា, ដោយមានប្រវត្តិរស់នៅក្នុង ដែលសម្បូរណាស់, ដោយមានឱកាសខាងការសិក្សាអប់រំ និងការងារ, ដោយមានដំណើរការដឹកជញ្ជូនយ៉ាងងាយស្រួល និងគេហដ្ឋានមានសុខភាពល្អ, ហើយដោយមានភាពជាទីគាប់ចិត្តប្រចាំថ្ងៃផ្សេងទៀត, ដូចជាឱកាសលំហែកាយ និងម្ហូបអាហារប្រចាំថ្ងៃ។ ទាំងអស់នេះនឹងធ្វើឱ្យផលប្រយោជន៍របស់ការវិនិយោគមានផលប្រយោជន៍ ដោយមានគំនិតរក្សាការពារនៃលក្ខណៈសង្កាត់រស់នៅ។

# QUATEIRÃOS SUSTENTÁVEIS

Lowell apoiará o desenvolvimento de quateirões sustentáveis, que promoverão um senso de coesão da Comunidade e estilos de vida saudáveis. Estes quateirões serão acolhedores e acessíveis, conectando residentes com o ambiente natural e construído, com o patromónio cultural rico da cidade, com oportunidades de educação e emprego, com acesso conveniente aos transportes e habitação saudável e com outras amenidades diárias, tais como oportunidades de lazer e gastronomia local. Estes elementos irão cuidadosamente equilibrar os benefícios de energização de novos investimentos com a preservação do carácter do bairro.

# OBJECTIVES

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**Preserve the unique quality and character of each of Lowell’s neighborhoods.**

**Promote safe and welcoming neighborhoods.**

**Prioritize land-use policies that promote walkable, well-networked neighborhoods.**

**Support vibrant neighborhood business districts that are easily accessible to all residents.**

**Cultivate schools as models for community cohesion and self-sufficiency.**

**Foster neighborhood-level camaraderie, advocacy, and resource sharing.**

**Ensure the integration of nature, green space and high quality recreational resources into the urban landscape.**

**Celebrate, improve, and activate waterfront resources.**

**Develop policies and programs that facilitate the production, distribution, and consumption of locally grown food in the greater Lowell region.**



Suburban



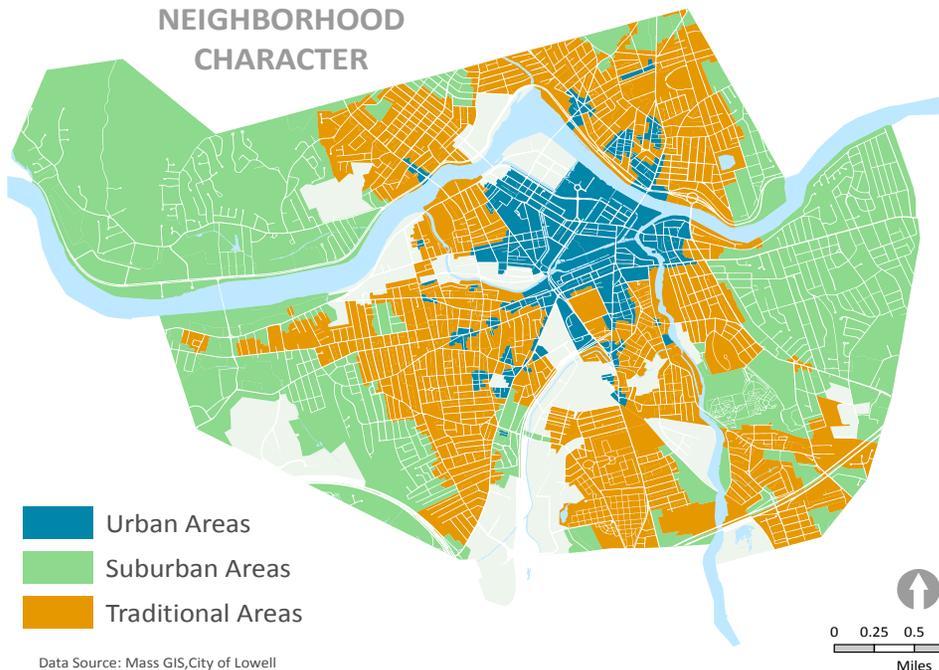
Traditional



Urban

# 1 PRESERVE THE UNIQUE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF EACH OF LOWELL'S NEIGHBORHOODS.

- ❑ Work with community stakeholders to identify neighborhood characteristics to be protected, preserved, and enhanced.
- ❑ Encourage the legislature to amend the Community Preservation Act to make local adoption more viable in low- and moderate-income urban communities like Lowell as a tool for protecting and strengthening neighborhood character.
- ❑ Offer programming and technical assistance to increase appreciation of Lowell's rich historical assets and architecture.
- ❑ Improve the appearance of public squares and facilities through community-supported initiatives such as Adopt an Island.
- ❑ Wherever feasible, develop unique signage, seating, lighting, trash and recycling receptacles, and other public infrastructure for each distinctive neighborhood.
- ❑ Continue to reform zoning codes to align with evolving and emergent community needs, land uses, and types of neighborhood character.
- ❑ Provide examples of sustainable design guidelines for private properties and public spaces that remain in keeping with the historic character of neighborhoods.



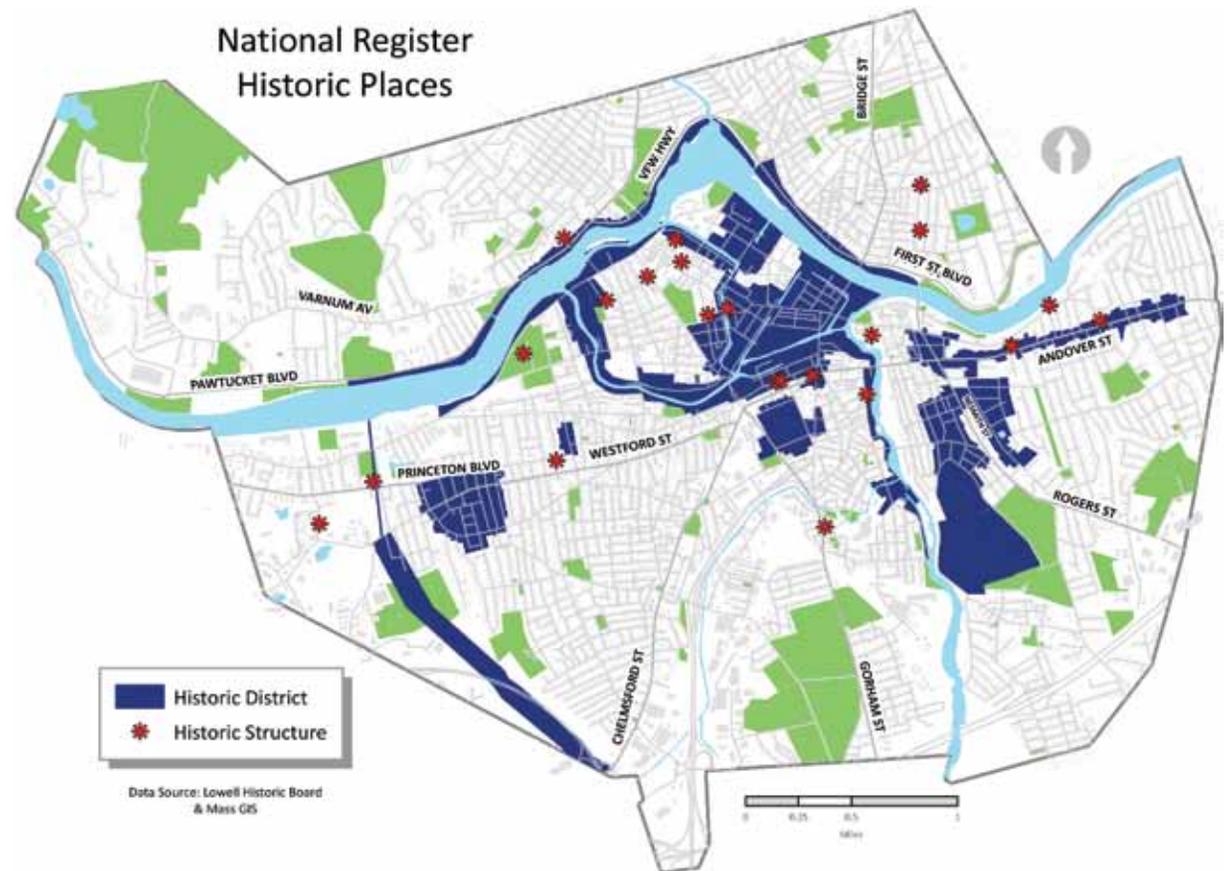
Data Source: Mass GIS, City of Lowell

- Provide clear, professional and consistent support to land-use boards, seeking to communicate information relative to the project proposal's context so as to ensure that a project's surroundings are respected and taken into account.
- Monitor and identify trends in variance and waiver grants in order to evaluate the impact of approved projects.
- Maintain existing public streetscape infrastructure and landscaping, partnering with volunteer and community groups wherever possible to reduce costs and leave the neighborhoods in better condition once construction activities are complete.
- Maximize consistent, fair and equitable enforcement of City codes and ordinances.
- Explore creative approaches to lessening the impact of auto-service establishments on residential and mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Routinely update, implement and develop new neighborhood plans in collaboration with the local community.



Improvements at Moulton Square

Photo: DPD



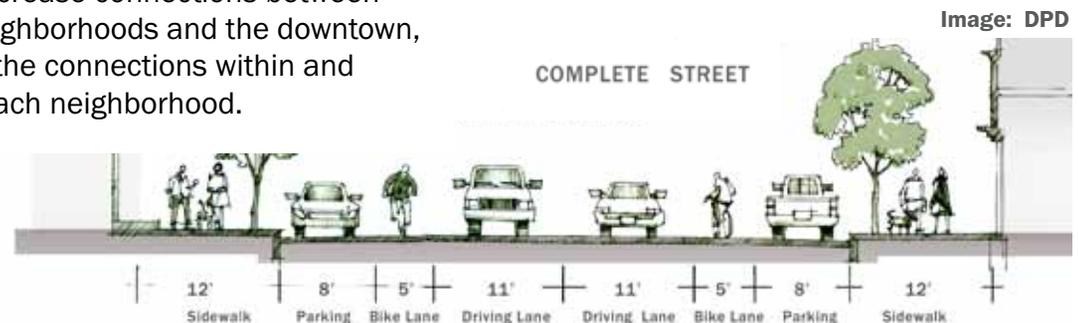


### 3 PRIORITIZE LAND-USE POLICIES THAT PROMOTE WALKABLE, WELL-NETWORKED NEIGHBORHOODS.

- Adopt and implement a Complete Streets policy to accommodate and encourage multi-modal transportation use.
- Develop and utilize public squares and gathering spaces to foster social connections.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment and encourage walkability by adapting landscaping requirements for new development projects.
- Improve the quality of the pedestrian experience in neighborhoods that are well-suited for walking by addressing existing property maintenance concerns, reducing fencing, planting additional street trees, increasing the removal of snow from sidewalks, preventing parking on sidewalks, and improving the physical condition of sidewalks.
- Revise zoning requirements to support the trend towards increased telecommuting and home-based businesses in a manner which preserves the residential character of Lowell's neighborhoods and prevents the commercialization of established residential areas.
- Explore the creation of a new commercial zoning district for areas that are not well-aligned with either Regional Retail or Neighborhood Business.
- Encourage mixed-use development, where it will enhance the viability of neighborhood commercial districts, add amenities to neighborhoods, and/or be consistent with historic land use patterns that helped shape and define certain neighborhoods.
- Develop a more sophisticated approach to parking regulation based upon market demand and economic principles in appropriate locations rather than relying on minimum requirements as the sole regulatory tool in all areas of the City.
- Strive to increase connections between various neighborhoods and the downtown, as well as the connections within and between each neighborhood.



Photo: Sharon Pruitt





Before and After Views of Delicias Paisas Restaurant  
Photos: DPD

Cupples Square Rehabilitation

Photos: DPD



## 4 SUPPORT VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS THAT ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL RESIDENTS.

- Conduct regular neighborhood business district inventories and audits to map assets, monitor vacancy rates, determine which types of businesses to attract, and improve the general vitality of the areas.
- Encourage a diversity of retail options within business districts that will provide local jobs and reinforce the livability of surrounding neighborhoods.
- Encourage the development of strong neighborhood business associations.
- Continue to work with economic development partner agencies to maintain existing small business assistance and incentive programs, and increase the outreach and marketing of these programs in neighborhood business districts.
- Encourage local businesses, institutional partners, and community members to organize and take part in “buy local” initiatives.
- Develop design standards that preserve and enhance neighborhood business districts as vibrant, walkable places, and implement development regulations that are most effective in meeting those standards.

- Improve the appearance of business signage through the update of the existing sign code, expanded support of the Sign and Façade program citywide, and the strengthening of code enforcement efforts.
- Provide free public Wi-Fi in neighborhood business districts to attract creative entrepreneurs and others that will establish a culture of innovation citywide.



Proposed Exterior Renovations for Neighborhood Market  
Image: DPD

Photo: DPD

- Fill vacant storefronts with pop-up galleries, satellite libraries and/or public art.
- Increase the amount and variety of outdoor public seating in neighborhood business districts, where appropriate.



Highly Visible Business Signage

Photo: DPD





Photo: City Sprouts



Photo: Sean Dreilinger



## 5 CULTIVATE SCHOOLS AS MODELS FOR COMMUNITY COHESION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

- Create a culture of high expectations and shared ownership for student achievement by working proactively to involve families and partnering organizations in the students' school life.
- Continue to explore changes to the school assignment policies that reduce busing distances and increase the number of students assigned to schools they can walk to.
- Support a broad range of education options for Lowell families, including charter schools, parochial schools, and other private schools, while striving to also offer the best urban public schools in Massachusetts.
- Explore the adoption of joint-use agreements and resource-sharing with community partners to expand available services.
- Utilize school spaces, including gymnasiums, auditoriums, cafeterias, health clinics, libraries, school yards, and classrooms for broader community purposes on nights and weekends.
- Maintain existing after school and summer programs and expand programming where feasible.
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements around schools for enhanced pedestrian accessibility.
- Capitalize on schools as learning labs for sustainability, drawing upon renewable energy, energy efficiency enhancements, and school gardens as educational tools which improve public health and operational efficiency.

With 94 programs spanning 217 Massachusetts school districts, the ever-expanding "Farm to School" program is a cost-effective way to support healthy lifestyles in our schools.

Photo: Mass Farm to School

# 6

## FOSTER NEIGHBORHOOD-LEVEL CAMARADERIE, ADVOCACY, AND RESOURCE-SHARING.

- Develop asset maps of community resources so as to more effectively foster collaboration and resource-sharing citywide.
- Encourage resource-sharing at a neighborhood scale (tools, expertise, Wi-Fi, energy, childcare, backyards, gardens, etc).
- Encourage resource-sharing citywide through the establishment of a Time Bank, Hour Exchange, or other similar initiative.
- Support active neighborhood and civic organizations, and encourage them to work both in partnership and independently to expand their focus to issues of broad civic impact and benefit.
- Support community-driven neighborhood improvement initiatives, such as the Neighborhood Innovation Grant Program.
- Encourage resident participation in and resident-driven volunteer initiatives.
- Sponsor and promote friendly neighborhood competitions (garden awards, bike-a-thons, etc).
- Support and promote neighborhood block parties and other gatherings which strengthen community pride.
- Support initiatives that bring together residents of different generations and backgrounds, particularly those that provide ways for older, retired residents to remain engaged in the life of the city.

Some residents are tearing down their backyard fences to create a more communal space for gardens and other shared uses in their neighborhood. This “pocket neighborhood”, Conover Commons Cottages was designed by Ross Chapman Architects and developed by the Cottage Company.

SUSTAINABLE LOWELL 2025



Time Banks are a wonderful way to share resources. Through such a system, members gain hours of service for each hour of service rendered, bartering their skills in exchange for those they lack.

Photo: Portland Hour Exchange

Photo: Coalition for a Better Acre



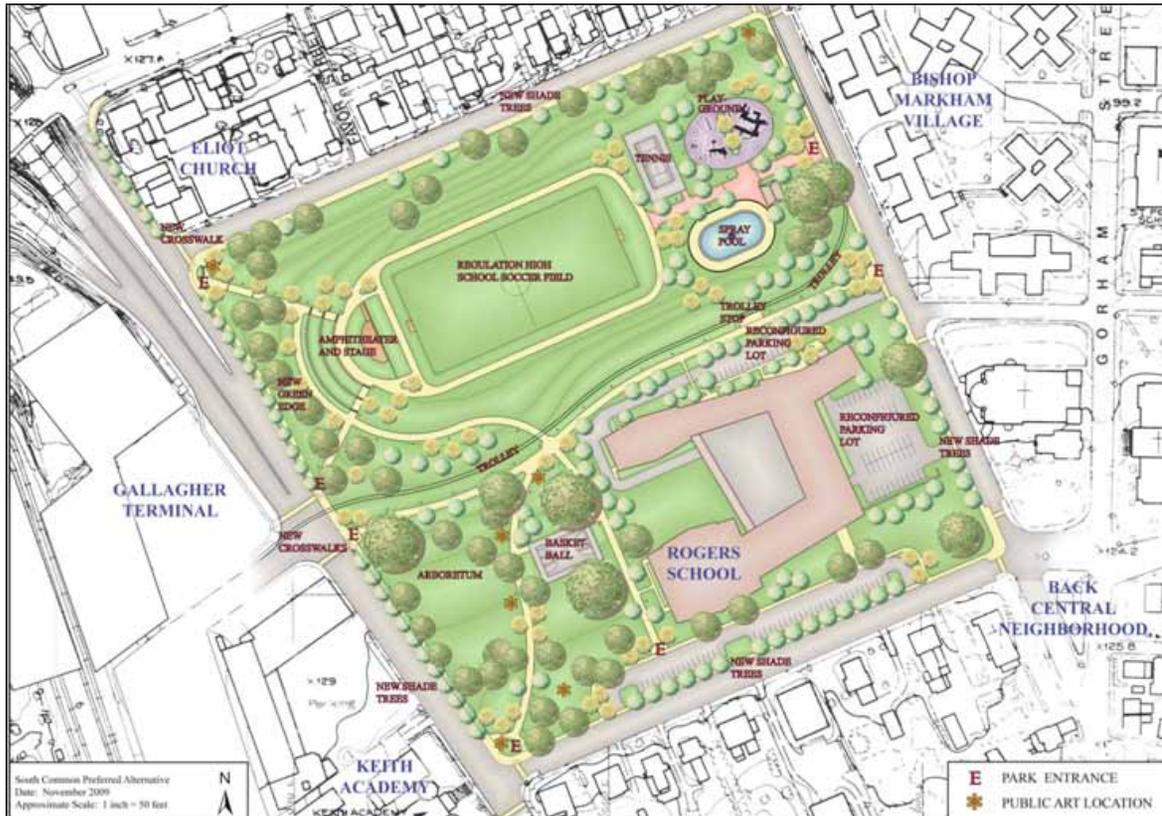


Photo: DPD

## 7 ENSURE THE INTEGRATION OF NATURE, GREEN SPACE AND HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL RESOURCES INTO THE URBAN LANDSCAPE.

- Ensure that every resident is within walking distance of a public park.
- Routinely update and implement the City's Open Space Plan.
- Identify and employ sustainable funding strategies to ensure long-term maintenance coverage for open space and recreational needs, such as engravers and advertising instead of dedications.
- Conduct regular audits and inventories of parks, playground equipment, and other recreational resources so as to best allocate available resources and meet the needs of the city's residents, drawing upon volunteers and interns who may benefit from such a learning experience.
- Ensure the protection of existing and endangered flora and fauna within the City.
- Expand the network of active and passive recreational spaces and forests throughout the City and region, and improve networks and connections between existing spaces.
- Identify parcels of land to permanently protect, prioritizing parcels that contain high value natural resource benefits.

Proposed improvements to South Common Image: DPD



- ☐ Increase access to recreational resources both within and beyond city limits by ensuring that transit service and parking amenities are available to residents and visitors, and that way-finding signage is enhanced.
- ☐ Explore use of under-utilized and non-traditional spaces for open space development.
- ☐ Creatively utilize recreational amenities throughout all four seasons.
- ☐ Improve the utilization and maintenance of existing pocket parks, and identify locations for future sites, particularly in areas of the City that are lacking in green space.
- ☐ Properly fund or establish appropriate responsibility for maintenance activities and programs offered at current public spaces.
- ☐ Identify funding for interactive and recreational water elements at appropriate places throughout the city to better activate and enliven these spaces.
- ☐ Diversify participation of active and passive recreational spaces by broadening outreach, expanding the mix of programs and amenities available, and encouraging use of spaces for events and activities by residents of all backgrounds.
- ☐ Support privately organized youth athletic, arts, and other programs available to the residents of Lowell's neighborhoods.
- ☐ Partner with local organizations and institutions to identify solutions for unique recreational needs.
- ☐ Consider adjacent buildings and their uses as a mechanism for activating public parks and open spaces.
- ☐ Identify funding and implement planned improvements at South Common.



Lowell's dog park Photo: Marianne Gries



Photo: Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust

Photo: DPD

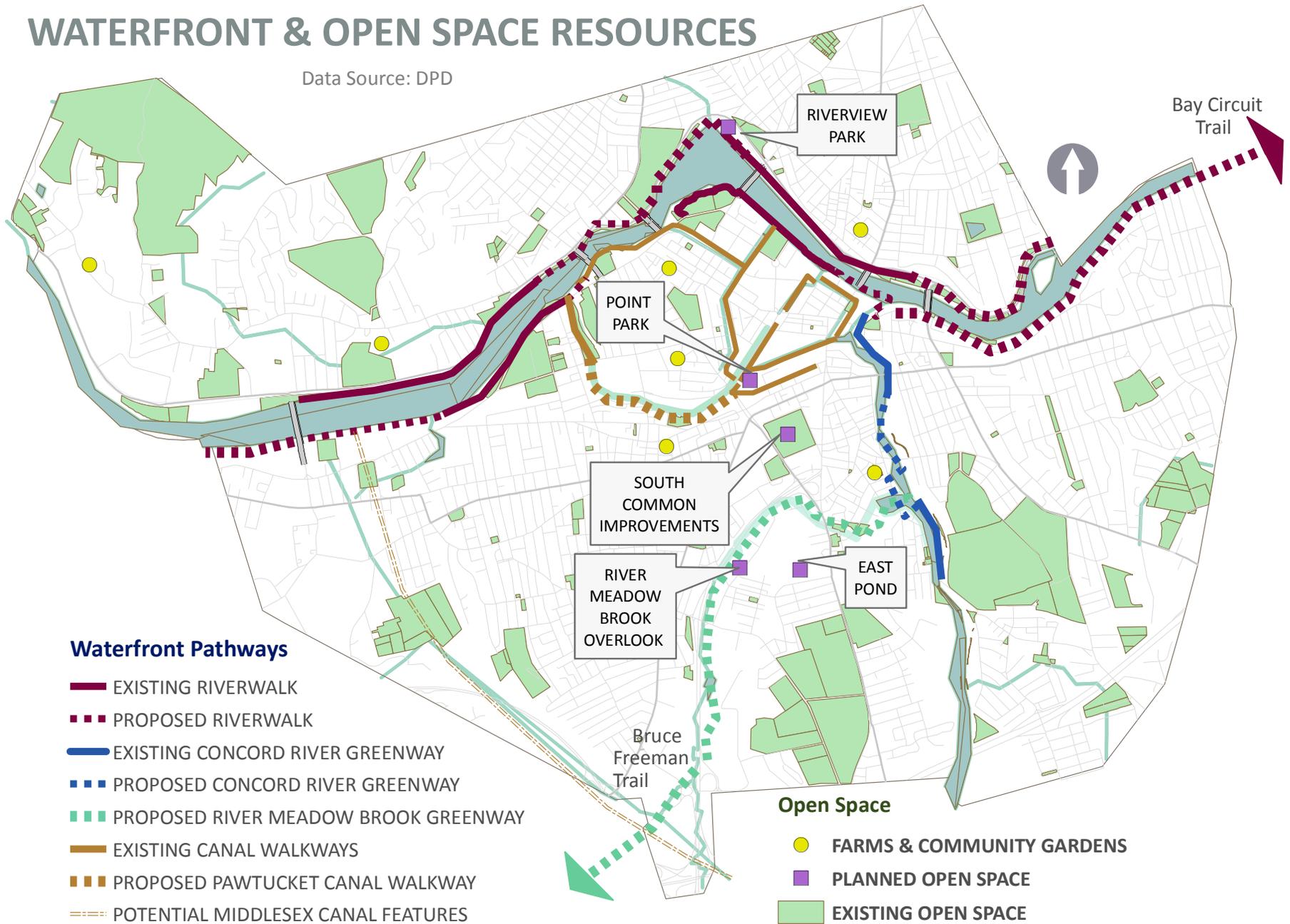


## 8 CELEBRATE, IMPROVE, AND ACTIVATE WATERFRONT RESOURCES.

- ❑ Expand existing trail networks to connect with the regional and statewide system of trails.
- ❑ Increase access to waterways from neighboring streets.
- ❑ Enhance waterfront recreational amenities and expand programming.
- ❑ Define responsibilities for and implement an improved maintenance program for rails, walkways, lighting, benches, landscaping and general cleanliness so as to provide safe and convenient access to the waterfront.
- ❑ Identify funding and implement planned improvements at Riverview Park and the accompanying extension of the Riverwalk along the north side of the Merrimack River, between University Avenue and Aiken Street, and plan for future connections to the Concord River Greenway.
- ❑ Complete the Concord River Greenway.
- ❑ Design and construct a walkway along the Pawtucket Canal which will connect the Downtown to the Merrimack River through the Acre Neighborhood.
- ❑ Design and construct a pathway along the River Meadow Brook between Cross Point Towers and the Concord River.
- ❑ Establish a Pawtucket Falls Overlook that is integrated with the City's existing bike and pedestrian pathway system.
- ❑ Explore the feasibility of developing a pathway and series of recreational spaces along the old Middlesex Canal.
- ❑ Explore the feasibility of extending the walkway through Sheehy Park along the Merrimack River to the Rourke Bridge, and extending the Pawtucket Boulevard walkway beyond the Rourke Bridge to the boat launch managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- ❑ Coordinate waterfront development with existing and future recreational amenities and transportation resources.
- ❑ Revise the zoning of selected waterfront areas to properly balance city-wide development objectives with neighborhood preservation priorities, including the establishment of a Suburban Waterview District along portions of Pawtucket Boulevard.

# WATERFRONT & OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Data Source: DPD





## 9

### DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT FACILITATE THE PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION OF LOCALLY GROWN FOOD IN THE GREATER LOWELL REGION.

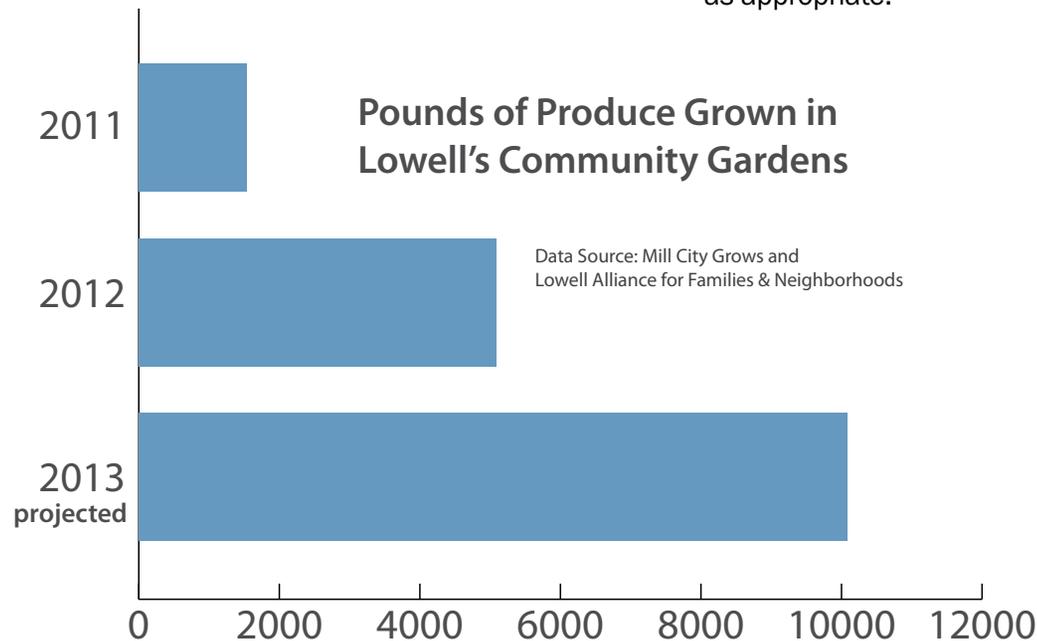
- ☐ Support the establishment, management, and maintenance of community gardens throughout the City.
- ☐ Amend zoning as required to support agricultural production or distribution as potential uses in appropriate areas of the city.
- ☐ Encourage the establishment and maintenance of urban farms within Lowell as well as production farms in the surrounding region.
- ☐ Support the establishment of a year round farmer's market as well as the expansion of satellite farmer's markets to the city's neighborhoods.
- ☐ Encourage more Lowell-based community supported agriculture, whereby individual consumers pledge to support local growers and share the risks and benefits of local food production.
- ☐ Support the establishment of a food coop in Lowell.
- ☐ Provide incentives for businesses offering food stamps for healthy produce.
- ☐ Encourage local sourcing of ingredients and food products by restaurants, institutions, and other food establishments in the local and regional marketplace.



Photo: Kusine

Urban farming is part of a growing movement to live more sustainably. Photo: Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust

- Support the establishment of a community seed and tool library, which encourages gardeners to save and exchange their seeds for future growing seasons.
- Prioritize the planting of public fruit trees, where appropriate, to encourage edible landscapes citywide.
- Partner with local organizations to promote and educate about healthy eating practices.
- Where appropriate, implement the recommendations of the Food Security Coalition's Community Food Assessment, and other initiatives that proactively address issues of food access and community health.
- Support the development of an Urban Food Production Plan in Lowell, and implement it as appropriate.



	HISTORIC CHARACTER & PRESERVATION	HOUSING QUALITY & VARIETY	PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY PRIDE	SOCIAL EQUITY	RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY	MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION	RESOURCE & INFORMATION SHARING	COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION	TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY	JOB CREATION	ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING & POLICY	NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION	CARBON EMISSION REDUCTION	EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT OPERATIONS	ARTS & CULTURAL OPERATIONS	SHOPPING & ENTERTAINMENT	
<b>SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS</b>																				
<b>PRESERVE THE UNIQUE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF EACH OF LOWELL'S NEIGHBORHOODS.</b>	●	●	●		●			●	●	●				●	●	●				
<b>PROMOTE SAFE AND WELCOMING NEIGHBORHOODS.</b>		●	●		●			●	●	●										
<b>PRIORITIZE LAND-USE POLICIES THAT PROMOTE WALKABLE, WELL-NETWORKED NEIGHBORHOODS.</b>		●			●		●					●		●	●	●	●			
<b>SUPPORT VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS THAT ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL RESIDENTS.</b>	●						●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●		●	●
<b>CULTIVATE SCHOOLS AS MODELS FOR COMMUNITY COHESION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY.</b>				●	●	●	●	●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●	●	
<b>FOSTER NEIGHBORHOOD-LEVEL CAMARADERIE, ADVOCACY, AND RESOURCE SHARING.</b>				●	●	●	●		●					●	●	●	●	●		
<b>ENSURE THE INTEGRATION OF NATURE, GREEN SPACE AND HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL RESOURCES INTO THE URBAN LANDSCAPE.</b>				●	●	●	●		●					●	●	●	●		●	
<b>CELEBRATE, IMPROVE, AND ACTIVATE WATERFRONT RESOURCES.</b>			●			●	●							●	●	●	●			●
<b>DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT FACILITATE THE PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION OF LOCALLY GROWN FOOD IN THE GREATER LOWELL REGION.</b>			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●			●