

GREATER LOWELL STRONGER TOGETHER

2025-2030 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**NORTHERN
MIDDLESEX
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**
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GREATER LOWELL STRONGER TOGETHER

Greater Lowell Stronger Together, the region's 2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), is a future-focused blueprint for creating a more economically resilient, prosperous, and competitive Greater Lowell Region. The CEDS, commissioned by the US Economic Development Administration, was crafted by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) in conjunction with a myriad of key economic and municipal partners and stakeholders. Planning Process

The CEDS planning process included robust engagement with regional stakeholders, a thorough analysis of past, current, and future economic trends, and a review of existing and ongoing planning efforts, policies, and programs within the region. Ultimately, these methods of capturing qualitative and quantitative data yielded core insights that will drive the future work of NMCOG and its key partners.

1. The Greater Lowell Region has a strong suite of offerings and activities related to economic development, workforce development, and industry growth, but work is often siloed.

Numerous organizations work to support economic growth, industry attraction and expansion, and the continued development of the region. However, much of this work occurs through informal coordination. Increased collaboration and visioning on programs, activities, and outcomes for the region to pursue can yield a more cohesive, impactful economic development ecosystem.

2. Municipalities across the region experience widely varying outcomes when it comes to economic and community development.

Budget constraints limit the capacity of municipalities to practice economic development, implement infrastructure improvements, and make communities more attractive to residents and tourists alike. A renewed focus on the municipalities that comprise the region and the assets they include - urban, suburban, and rural - can help to catalyze region-wide momentum.

3. The region has numerous opportunities that can be leveraged to increase economic competitiveness, industry strengths, and quality of life.

The Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC) project, an in-development mixed-use facility and research center in Lowell, is projected to drive \$3.7 billion in economic impact in the next decade. When paired with the region's industry strengths, development pipeline, redevelopment opportunities, workforce ecosystem, and a statewide commitment to funding economic development, this project gives Greater Lowell an unprecedented opportunity to catalyze growth.

4. Infrastructure development is a major regional hurdle to future economic development.

Many municipalities across the region are facing issues with housing development, the maintenance and development of water infrastructure, utility capacity, and a need to modernize the public transportation system. These infrastructure issues are a direct barrier to regional economic growth and resilience. A lack of affordable and available housing is a critical barrier for the workforce to live in the region. Creative solutions are needed to help municipalities and the region as a whole address these longstanding challenges.

Image Source: Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

Images on front cover, clockwise from upper-left: MassHire \$2 Ride Pilot Program Presentation, MassHire; Greater Lowell, UMass Lowell; Greater Lowell Economic Summit, NMCOG; Greater Lowell Economic Summit Walking Tour, NMCOG; Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail; Greater Lowell Economic Summit, NMCOG; Mills of Merrimac River Historic Postcard, National Park Service; Greater Lowell Economic Summit Walking Tour, NMCOG; Farmer Dave's, Farmer Dave's

To leverage these points of momentum, the CEDS establishes a human-centered **vision for the future** of the region, which is explored in a strategy framework in this executive summary and in Section 4 of the full CEDS.

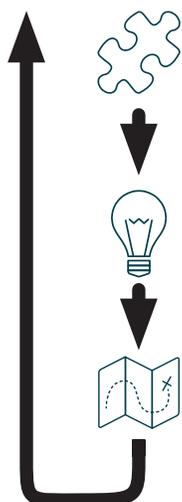
Greater Lowell is Stronger Together, with a regional economy that works for everyone, an increasingly competitive and innovative economy, a high quality of life for workers and residents, vibrant and connected places, and resilient and self-sufficient municipal governments. The region will achieve this through:

- 1. Creating Economic Development Capacity:** Increase economic development competitiveness, tools, and capacity throughout the Greater Lowell region.
- 2. Developing Strong Places and Towns:** Ensure all of Greater Lowell’s municipalities are vibrant, attractive places to live through increased access to key resources and assets.
- 3. Leveraging Signature Opportunities:** Make targeted investments with an influx of state funding and other resources toward marquee projects to drive regional industry and economic growth.
- 4. Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents:** Build a strong ecosystem of talent, employment opportunities, and infrastructure to accommodate a live-work lifestyle throughout the region.

What’s in the Strategy Framework?



Goal: What is the strategy trying to accomplish? What is the larger vision we’re trying to achieve by implementing this strategy?



What’s Already Happening:

What are the resources, groups, and institutions already doing work in this space? What is our starting point that we can build off of? What are the “inputs” needed to get this strategy off the ground?

What’s the Opportunity:

What special opportunity or challenge can the “inputs” take advantage of or help tackle? What are the barriers to achieving our goal?

What’s Next:

What is the big, overarching strategy we, as a region, need to undertake to apply the “inputs” to the “opportunity?” What system-level change do we need to make to achieve our goal?

In addition to the framework, each strategy pillar has an implementation matrix which includes several actions, NMCOG’s role in each action, how much investment is anticipated to be needed, and when the region should undertake the action. This section should be paired with Appendix 1, which contains funding sources that could aid in action plan implementation. The definition of each column in the matrix is described below:

Action and Subtasks	NMCOG Role	Cost	Timeline	Partners	Outputs
A major action needed to implement the strategy. This should be a single step on a workplan. The region could take any action independently of any other actions, but we will be stronger if we undertake the actions together.	<p>Lead: NMCOG should lead, or is already leading, this strategy’s implementation.</p> <p>Support: NMCOG should support a partner or partners that are already doing the work within the region.</p> <p>Cheer: NMCOG should use relationships and expertise to advocate/cheer for this strategy to be implemented within the region.</p>	<p>\$: This action can be achieved with little additional investment.</p> <p>\$\$: This action requires an attainable level of new investment.</p> <p>\$\$\$: This action requires a level of investment that may be hard to achieve.</p>	<p>Short: NMCOG and its partners should take this work on within the next 6-18 months.</p> <p>Medium: NMCOG and its partners should look to build out this work in the next 1-3 years.</p> <p>Long: NMCOG and its partners can work to achieve this effort in 3-5 years.</p>	Each action has a number of partners listed – these are agencies or entities that are anticipated to play a major role in implementing that strategy. For actions in which NMCOG is not the lead, a lead agency is listed. This agency would be a that action’s steward: it would track its progress and report it to the CEDS Committee annually through NMCOG. It may lead implementation, or it may just be a conversation-leader: each action is different.	Finally, each action has one or more “outputs.” These are the deliverables or concrete items that the action should produce. The region knows whether an action has been fully implemented if it has produced its outputs.

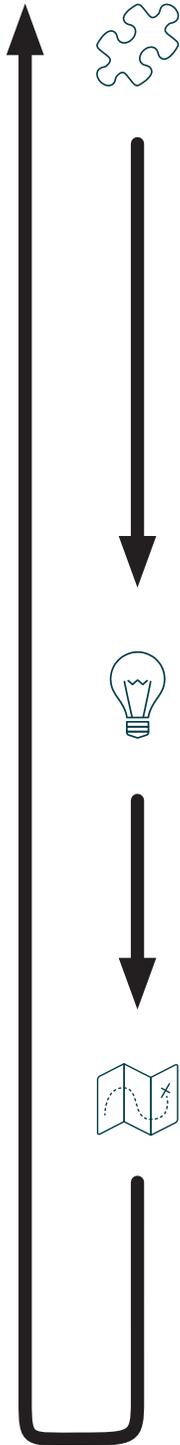


STRATEGY 1

CREATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY



Goal: Increase economic development competitiveness, tools, and capacity throughout the Greater Lowell region.



What's Already Happening:

Greater Lowell is flush with organizations, partnerships, and institutions that focus on the continued economic development of the region. For example, [Northern Middlesex Council of Governments \(NMCOG\)](#), as the regional planning agency and metropolitan planning organization, focuses primarily on economic development planning and liaising with the U.S. Economic Development Administration and state agencies including Executive Office of Economic Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. [Middlesex 3](#), as the Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) and transportation management association, convenes municipalities and businesses among key industries. [The Lowell Plan](#) and Lowell Development Finance Corporation as a nonprofit economic development corporation gathers public and private leaders to help solve key civic problems in the city of Lowell. MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board and Career Center connects employers, job-seekers, and career training. The [Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce](#) provides opportunities for its members through education, marketing, networking and advocacy. [UMass Lowell and its Lowell Innovation Network Corridor \(LINC\) project](#) focus on regional R&D, business creation, and talent development. Other regional entities focus on travel and tourism, business networking, philanthropy, or other sectors of economic development.

What's the Opportunity:

Despite a collaborative spirit, much of this work occurs in silos, hindering regional outcomes and economic progress. Two primary realities stem from this decentralized approach. First, outcomes fail to reach all portions of the region. Smaller towns with less capacity for these activities are unable to dedicate part- or full-time staff to economic development, yielding fewer project wins and sustained progress. Some of these communities may not see themselves in economic development efforts and fear development that might not reflect their unique and beloved attributes. This outcome can hinder community stability, municipal revenue, and government efficacy in the long-term. Second, the region fails to push for bigger, catalytic projects with widespread impacts. To fulfill the Greater Lowell vision, we need a regional economic development convening and the capacity to execute a plan for the future.

What's Next:

The Greater Lowell region has an opportunity to expand its economic development ecosystem, working collaboratively to build a new vision for economic development equipped with stronger governance, tools, and resources that support the success of small communities, bigger towns and Lowell, and the region as a whole. This effort can be jointly supported by key regional partners and work on behalf of all the region's municipalities. Core functions for this endeavor to take on include business attraction, site selection and development activities, business retention and expansion, and bringing capacity to rural and small towns. Its goal would not be to compete for limited resources, but instead "grow the pie." This initiative can also help the region pursue its economic development district (EDD) status, which would allow the region to better pursue funding opportunities from the EDA and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts moving forward.

STRATEGY 1: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action and Subtasks		NMCOG Role	Cost	Timeline	Partners	Outputs
1. Create a collaborative economic development initiative to refine regional activities, agenda-setting, and outcomes across municipalities.		Lead	\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 UMass Lowell MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board + Career Center Greater Lowell Community Foundation Local and regional chambers of commerce Municipal economic development representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host multiple annual convenings of key partners Sign a collaborative MOU or equivalent document
1.1	Convene key economic development partners to analyze, identify, prioritize, and pursue economic development activities and outcomes, including refining performance metrics, timelines, and roles.					
1.2	Build a set of agreements, a memorandum of understanding (MOU), and funding commitments for partners to sign on to.					
1.3	Consider the staffing requirements across organizations that are necessary to see through new activities.					
2. Craft and manage a business attraction strategy focused on emerging and opportunity industries in the Greater Lowell region.		Support	\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 (Lead) UMass Lowell MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board + Career Center Middlesex Community College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a full target industry analysis Finalize a new business attraction campaign
2.1	Study industry data and engage with regional leaders to define the region's target industries, building on MassHire's Northeast Regional Blueprint and Middlesex 3 Industry Clusters.					
2.2	Create a business attraction campaign, including branding materials, to assist with marketing the region at conferences, trade shows, and trade missions to other geographies.					
2.3	Engage with state economic development leaders to build relationships and knowledge that can yield a stronger business attraction pipeline.					
3. Develop an inventory of key sites and parcels to focus on for future development projects in the region, and market these opportunities to corporate site selectors and developers.		Support	\$\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 (Lead) UMass Lowell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize a study of regional development and redevelopment opportunities Conduct a site pre-planning fund feasibility study
3.1	Commission a study to review key development and redevelopment opportunities, including an understanding of common challenges and solutions to unlocking these projects.					
3.2	Study the feasibility of a site development and pre-planning fund that focuses on pre-construction improvements to jumpstart vacant and underutilized sites.					
3.3	Continue to grow a network of regional and national site selectors that represent companies with an interest in operating in the Greater Lowell region.					
4. Create a business visitation and calling program to understand the ongoing challenges, opportunities, plans, and needs of existing regional businesses.		Cheer	\$\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 (Lead) MassHire Greater Lowell Municipal economic development representatives Local and regional chambers of commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize a database of regional businesses Create a formal business retention and expansion plan
4.1	Create an internal database of regional businesses, including relevant contact information, for use in business outreach.					
4.2	Provide more consistency in business outreach and calling.					
4.3	Target specific industries and business sizes that may be at-risk of closure or interested in regional expansion.					
5. Provide under-resourced communities with increased attention and capacity to gain from regional economic development.		Lead	\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 Municipal economic development representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve economic development capacity for smaller towns Create a resource hub of educational materials for municipalities to utilize Build understanding among municipalities of relevant incentives
5.1	Inventory commercial and industrial opportunities within smaller municipalities that lack the capacity to catalyze projects themselves.					
5.2	Assess specific incentives and tools to use for economic development activities in smaller municipalities, such as facade improvement or infrastructure development grants.					
5.3	Represent rural and small communities in regional negotiations and activities related to site selection, business attraction, and business retention and expansion.					
5.4	Work with municipalities to better articulate their economic development vision in alignment with the regional economy and market and share examples of growth-positive scenarios in relation to housing and economic development.					
5.5	Provide access to training and education materials to help appointed and elected officials prepare for economic development opportunities.					

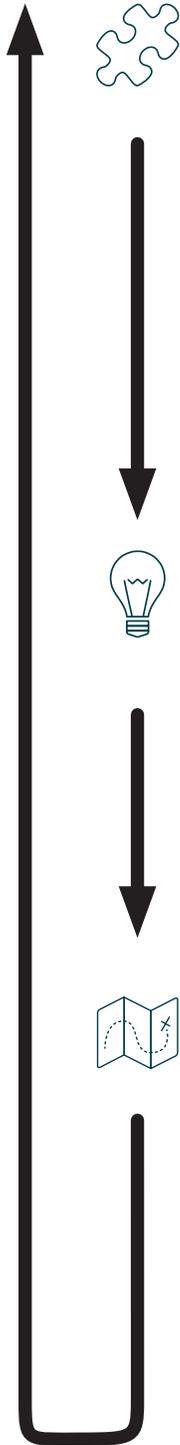


STRATEGY 2

DEVELOPING STRONG PLACES AND TOWNS



Goal: Ensure all of Greater Lowell's municipalities are vibrant, attractive places to live through increased access to key resources and assets.



What's Already Happening:

Vibrant and attractive communities, including town and neighborhood centers and downtowns are at the core of a healthy, competitive Greater Lowell region. The region comprises nine municipalities, each with unique attributes ranging from exurban farmland to charming mill villages and town squares to denser, urban cores. Greater Lowell's ample quality of place organizations work together to increase vibrancy and beautification across the region: Organizations such as [Mosaic Lowell](#), [Revolutionary Valley Visitors Bureau](#), [Lowell National Historic Park](#), and the [Lowell Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events](#) help to drive visitation, place branding, and culture throughout the region. However, with many local governments facing budgetary constraints and capacity issues, municipalities across the region vary in their capacity to drive placemaking, fill vacancies, and attract visitors. This reality hinders live-work opportunities, economic development, and commercial activity.

What's the Opportunity:

While these communities each require municipality-specific goals and planning efforts, there are cross-region priorities and tools that can help to increase the overall vibrancy of the region. At the core of this is creating compelling places that attract tourists and residents alike to patronize small businesses and visit cultural attractions, both during the daily 9-5 and after traditional working hours. In modern economic development, people often choose where to live, visit, and spend their money not based on the location of jobs - but the aesthetics, amenities, and attractions of a destination. Municipalities in the Greater Lowell region must continue to invest in adapting to this reality.

What's Next:

The Greater Lowell region is home to cultural assets, outdoor attractions, and a historic New England charm that makes it an attractive destination for nationwide visitors. The key to leveraging these assets lies in supplementing these activities and aesthetics with attractive commercial offerings and public spaces. Lively main streets, both in Downtown Lowell and through the region, can benefit from increased placemaking, investing in community gathering spaces, small business activity, and safety measures. A planning effort can be undertaken to develop a destination development strategy - not just focused on visitors, but also on current and future residents. This strategy could be in the form of a written plan or program, and should start with an evaluation of a regional identity that retains the unique charm of each town or neighborhood. Building from this, partners can identify targeted investments, possible marketing strategies, and a mapping of the region's existing assets.

STRATEGY 2: STRONG PLACES AND TOWNS IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action		NMCOG Role	Cost	Timeline	Partners	Outputs
1. Increase regional awareness of various arts, culture, and outdoor recreation-focused happenings and experiences.		Cheer	\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revolutionary Valley VB (Lead) Mosaic Lowell GL Community Foundation Lowell National Historical Park Local Cultural Councils MOOR and MOTT Other organizations that support arts, culture, and the outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize a regional Destination Development strategy Complete new signage and digital efforts that increase accessibility to arts and cultural experiences
1.1	Create a Destination Development strategy for the region.					
1.2	Create physical signage and digital applications that allow residents and tourists to better access and experience historic sites, cultural spaces, and public art.					
1.3	Foster meaningful collaboration between arts, culture, and outdoor organizations with one another to jointly apply for funding opportunities and build cross-organizational partnerships that enhance community impact.					
2. Better market Main Street offerings to residents across New England, positioning the region as an attractive place to live, work, and play.		Support	\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revolutionary Valley VB (Lead) Downtown Lowell Historic District City planners Organizations that support small business and real estate development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalyze development and beautification efforts along Main Streets
2.1	Increase regional marketing of Main Streets and the New England charm they offer for a tourist, daily visitor, or full-time resident.					
2.2	Prioritize the development of a variety of third spaces for community gathering along Main Streets and market these assets to younger residents and families.					
2.3	Consider programs such as facade improvements and beautification grants that increase vibrancy along Main Streets.					
2.4	Work to give capacity to region-wide planners for key projects and plans related to placemaking in and around Main Streets.					
3. Uplift the Lowell Forward comprehensive plan's downtown goals. Work to increase connectivity, mobility, and small business success in Downtown, paving the way for a more active, attractive center that benefits the entire region.		Support	\$\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Lowell (Lead) Downtown Lowell Historic District UMass Lowell Mosaic Lowell Organizations that support small business and real estate development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to see improvement in Downtown Lowell's infrastructure and livability Increase marketing of Downtown Lowell
3.1	Invest in entertainment venues, green spaces, bike paths, new sidewalks, lighting, public art, cultural sites, outdoor dining, and other placemaking activations to help increase vibrancy in Downtown.					
3.2	Continue to work towards a more attractive, cleaner Downtown District.					
3.3	Create a stronger brand for Downtown Lowell, including a one-stop centralized information hub that provides information about the suite of events happening in and around the area to local community members, regional audiences, and audiences outside the region.					
3.4	Support collaborations and initiatives to plan and grow downtown in collaboration with LINC, including such initiatives as creation of a Business Improvement District.					



STRATEGY 3

LEVERAGING SIGNATURE OPPORTUNITIES



Goal: Make targeted investments with an influx of state funding and other resources toward marquee projects to drive regional industry and economic growth.



What's Already Happening:

The Greater Lowell region has ample momentum for economic growth. Backed by a strong economy, emerging industries, signature economic development projects, a highly-educated and motivated workforce, an unprecedented state funding package for economic growth, and space to accommodate new businesses and expand existing ones, regional leaders have major cause for optimism. In addition, the region has one of the most innovative workforce boards in the state, with strong connections to business, labor, and education. These provide the foundation for a healthy economy: a talented workforce, ample employment, and upskilling opportunities. Greater Lowell's economy can grow in its industry mix and competitiveness, bringing high-quality jobs to existing and new residents alike.

What's the Opportunity:

To adequately leverage this momentum, a coordinated strategy for assessing and executing opportunities is key. First is a focus on the region's industry mix. Strengths in defense, creative technologies, and advanced manufacturing can be paired with emerging life sciences and technology sectors, backed by LINC, the Hamilton Canal Innovation District, and other regional initiatives focused on entrepreneurship. These industries and projects align well with the focus of statewide funding made available by the 2024 Mass Leads Act, a nearly \$3 billion investment into economic development activities, industry growth, and talent development. And, with creative incentives and tools, the region can make best use of its ample suburban business parks, many of which are a redevelopment or retrofit away from serving as an R&D facility for a life sciences corporation, an office for a technology startup, or a new business campus for a defense company. These incentives and tools should include expedited permitting, flexible zoning, or other land use policy adjustments as necessary. Similarly, workforce development funding can be targeted to eliminate barriers to those target industries experienced by neighborhoods in economic distress.

What's Next:

A more organized, intentional effort, coordinated through task forces—formal working groups with 1-2 year life spans—focused on the region's biggest opportunities, can guide the region to become a major hub for innovation, productivity, and talent. The most economically successful regions are coordinated and collaborative, equipped with a clear strategy for industry growth and development. These strategies are supported by incentives and programs designed to attract and expand target industries, initiatives to stimulate new business creation, and sites that are built and redeveloped to accommodate this commerce. Greater Lowell possesses the assets, industries, projects, and organizations necessary to become a best-in-class region. Enhanced collaboration and coordination around key opportunities will help realize this vision. The first step in realizing this collaboration is to develop a framework in concert with the CEDS Committee and economic development stakeholders for task force and advisory committee creation, facilitation, reporting, and tracking. These groups can be led by NMCOG.

STRATEGY 3: SIGNATURE OPPORTUNITIES IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action and Subtasks		NMCOG Role	Cost	Timeline	Partners	Outputs
1. Codify the region's target industries to pursue in business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts moving forward.		Support	\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 (Lead) MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board + Career Center Municipal economic development representatives State economic development officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host frequent regional task force meetings Increase the attraction of target businesses
1.1	Pursue life sciences, advanced manufacturing, defense, clean tech, health care, technology, defense, and professional, scientific, and technical services as the region's target industries – as echoed by MassHire's Northeast Regional Blueprint and Middlesex 3 Industry Clusters.					
1.2	Work with existing and new regional economic development partners to ensure joint efforts in attracting, retaining, and expanding businesses within these industries.					
1.3	Form a regional task force, composed of leaders from these industries, to lead efforts that support the growth of these industries.					
1.4	Expand upon existing working groups that develop and attract target industries, such as Middlesex 3's advanced manufacturing coalition.					
2. Leverage LINC and projects such as the Hamilton Canal Innovation District to drive the region's prominence as a major innovation economy in New England.		Support	\$\$\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UMass Lowell (Lead) City of Lowell (Co-Lead) Middlesex 3 (Co-Lead) Middlesex Community College MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board + Career Center Municipal economic development representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the attraction of target businesses Help local businesses win procurement contracts Increase communications channels between LINC and other stakeholders
2.1	Alongside the LINC effort, launch a regional business recruitment and talent attraction campaign targeting life sciences, technology, and advanced manufacturing firms and workers.					
2.2	Continue to build spaces that innovative technology, life science, and manufacturing companies can operate in, expanding the region's economic productivity and workforce in these sectors.					
2.3	Work to build procurement opportunities and connectivity between these signature developments and local small businesses.					
2.4	Invest in transportation and other physical infrastructure throughout the full corridor that increases the capacity of the corridor to accommodate residents and businesses and, most importantly, connects the corridor to adjacent Lowell neighborhoods such as the Acre, the Lower Highlands, and Back Central.					
2.5	Develop additional forums and communication avenues among LINC planners, companies locating in LINC, existing companies and developers, the region's municipalities, and the general public.					
3. Create a regional working group to collectively examine funding opportunities.		Lead	\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UMass Lowell Middlesex 3 Municipal economic development representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host frequent convenings of the advisory committee Pursue more grant opportunities across the region
3.1	Build alignment among key economic development partners on the region's vision and priorities in connection along with potential grants to pursue in the short to long-term.					
3.2	Form a regional advisory committee focused on relevant grant applications in support of regional initiatives and local priorities, giving capacity to local communities as they pursue these opportunities, too.					
3.3	Track funding opportunities that the region and individual municipalities are pursuing over time to gauge the region's competitiveness.					
3.4	Work to assess changes in the Opportunity Zones program and potential use and impacts to the region.					
4. Use innovative tools and incentives to modernize the region's business parks into flexible, in-demand space for various commercial uses.		Lead	\$\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex 3 Business park owners and tenants Real estate developers Municipal economic development representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host regional task force meetings Finalize an incentive or other financial product that helps to catalyze business park redevelopment
4.1	Create a financial support product for commercial retrofits of existing spaces in business parks.					
4.2	Develop upstream relationships with brokers and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to coordinate the process of identifying and connecting with potential tenants.					
4.3	Form a regional task force focused on the reuse of business parks and commercial areas, including local economic development partners and real estate developers, which may evaluate incentives and land use policy such as expedited permitting and flexible zoning.					
5. Focus on connecting local residents with regional employment opportunities within in-demand target industries.		Cheer	\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board + Career Center (Lead) Middlesex Community College UMass Lowell Secondary education institutions Local and regional chambers of commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase workforce development programming related to target industries Increase more live-work opportunities
5.1	Form municipal and stakeholder partnerships that align with the MassHire's Northeast Regional Blueprint on all regional workforce development activities, building on the Middlesex 3 Industry Clusters and implement the MassHire Greater Lowell WIOA Local 4-Year Plan.					
5.2	Expand local Connecting Activities to help educate local youth, under and unemployed, and racial and ethnic minority residents, on in-demand professions and connect them to available jobs within the region.					
5.3	Create more opportunities for matchmaking between regional educational institutions and jobs.					
5.4	Continue to support companies and educational entities in putting together customized training programs for manufacturers, such as those offered through the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC).					

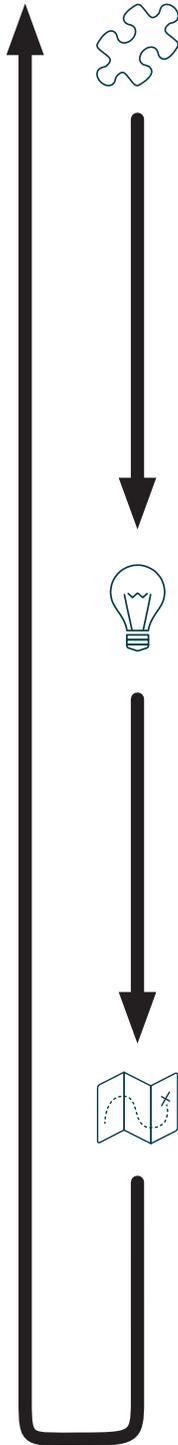


STRATEGY 4

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT WORKERS AND RESIDENTS



Goal: Build a strong ecosystem of hard infrastructure to accommodate twenty-first century economic needs and make the region more competitive for economic development.



What's Already Happening:

“Hard” infrastructure is critical to a strong economy, including roadways, bridges, transit, and utilities. Greater Lowell has an extensive highway network, and the majority of commuters travel to work in automobiles. The LRTA provides fixed route bus service, and the region has rail connections to Boston’s employment centers. Partners across the region recognize the importance of infrastructure through planning and policy. Furthermore, Lowell has undertaken a major investment in its wastewater infrastructure, boldly responding to challenges that led to federal fines. However, broader infrastructure upgrades are needed. For example, transit links both inside and outside the region need to be re-evaluated. Utilities and most other forms of infrastructure are adequate in many cases, but do not show capacity and opportunity for growth, including the bridges that close the divide created by the region’s many rivers and canals. The cost and availability of electricity has been cited as a particular barrier in the region and the state. Finally, this CEDS recognizes another critical infrastructure system supporting workers and residents: housing. Although many neighborhoods are prized for their quality of life, the region has a housing shortage that annual development patterns cannot catch up to.

What's the Opportunity:

Currently, the region is home to numerous high-profile companies, but many report difficulty recruiting employees. Many of the region’s workers commute from less expensive regions, while many of the region’s existing residents must commute outside of the region or are underemployed. Although continued focus on workforce development, discussed in Strategy 3, is one opportunity to address this challenge, another is upgrading infrastructure. The region has an opportunity to transform the transit system to meet twenty-first century needs and better connect potential workers and firms. This should include improving the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that interfaces with jobs and transit. Ultimately, better connections between job and population centers will unlock additional economic capacity in the region. Furthermore, creating housing choice, affordability, and availability can accommodate both an aging population and younger households to work in the region’s firms. Households are able to spend more at local businesses when housing costs are eased. Finally, investment in improvements to or expansion of water, wastewater, and energy infrastructure are needed en masse to accommodate redevelopment and new development.

What's Next:

To create a region that uplifts its workers and residents—a truly human-centered regional economy—intentional investments are needed to build local talent, house regional workers, and create better systems of multimodal mobility and infrastructure development. As a planning entity, NMCOG is in a strong position to lead regional planning efforts and support local ones that work to improve these ecosystems and their outcomes year over year. These endeavors must continue in partnership with regional economic development actors, political leaders, and civic influencers throughout Greater Lowell. Investments into homes, active transportation and transit systems, and other utility infrastructure are critical to our ability to retain and recruit firms to the region.

With limited municipal resources, these investments will need to be strategic and focused, allocated primarily to key development zones to guide growth and maximize efficiency of our infrastructure networks. This would start with a regional growth plan encompassing existing municipal plans. Only a collaborative, multi-pronged approach will yield success in the long-term. Although any of the actions in this strategy could and should be undertaken by any stakeholder at any time, the capacity for the region to undertake them will be enhanced by the collaborative entity created in Strategy 1, the plan developed in Strategy 2, and the task forces brought together in Strategy 3.

STRATEGY 4: INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Action and Subtasks	NMCOG Role	Cost	Timeline	Partners	Outputs
1. Serve as a regional convenor to advocate and plan for regional growth in coordinated planning and zoning; advocacy between local, state, and federal representatives; collaboration between utility providers and municipal planners, developers, and local leaders; transit providers; renewable energy providers; and broadband access.	Lead	\$\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal planners National Grid LRTA Broadband providers Other utility providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize a Regional Growth plan Increase regional funding for infrastructure maintenance and development
1.1	Create a 5-year master plan for regional growth that encompasses existing municipal plans.				
1.2	Work with municipalities to identify key areas for commercial, industrial, and residential growth and density.				
1.3	Target expanded infrastructure projects – roadway, transit, sewer, wastewater, energy, digital—to growth areas while maintaining other systems in a state of good repair.				
1.4	Apply for funding to expand infrastructure to targeted growth areas.				
1.5	Consider business retention and expansion incentives that can support businesses through longer-term infrastructure investments.				
1.6	Explore a more regional, collaborative approach to fund infrastructure development, following the lead of towns on Cape Cod.				
2. Improve the transportation network to connect all modes across the region and to markets in other regions. Strengthen connections between housing and employment centers to connect people to opportunity. Expand connectivity to dense population areas and job centers within and outside of the region, increasing mobility for live-work opportunities.	Lead	\$\$\$	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LRTA Municipal planners Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create better access of regional transit Increase live-work opportunities Complete a jobs-accessibility analysis
2.1	Advance recommendations in Envision 2050 and the next long-range transportation plan for Greater Lowell, Greater Lowell Vision Zero, and the Greater Lowell Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.				
2.2	Support municipalities in identifying and applying for funding to design and implement roadway and transit improvements, including funds to repair and maintain the region’s bridges.				
2.3	Complete jobs-accessibility analysis, Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan, and Fixed Route System Analysis, and work with transit providers (LRTA and Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVA) service, MBTA commuter rail, and RoadRunner) to improve connections, frequency, and hours of service between where people live and work in and outside of the region.				
2.4	Continue to pursue regional collaboration on transportation infrastructure related to sidewalks, bike paths, trails, and more.				
2.5	Leverage micro and multi-modal transit to catalyze active, attractive spaces throughout the region.				
3. Upgrade water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure to expand capacity for new industrial, commercial, and residential growth.	Lead	\$\$\$	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal planners and boards Town Meetings Legislative delegation LRWWU, LRWU, and MWRA Other utility providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize a study of water infrastructure constraints in the region Increase regional funding for water systems and infrastructure
3.1	Identify specific constraints on the system and obtain intermunicipal agreements on necessary improvements.				
3.2	Secure funding to upgrade and expand sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure, particularly at developable sites and neighborhoods.				

STRATEGY 4: INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX, CONTINUED

Action and Subtasks		NMCOG Role	Cost	Timeline	Partners	Outputs
4. Increase the future capacity of energy and electricity across the region to support business attraction and growth.		Support	\$\$\$	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Agencies (EEA, DPU) (Lead) National Grid Municipal planners Other utility providers Municipal planning boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase energy capacity across the region Consistently study energy demand as it relates to region-wide commercial and industrial development
4.1	Directly work with utility providers to better project energy demand and expand capacity around key economic development sites.					
4.2	Study and assist in grid improvements that can meet the needs of advanced manufacturing and all-electric residential development.					
4.3	Support appropriate siting of large and small scale energy generation alongside land use and hazard mitigation planning.					
4.4	Work to lower energy costs for residences and businesses.					
5. Work to ensure that all local residents and businesses have access to broadband.		Support	\$\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal planners (Lead) Broadband providers Municipal planning boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand broadband accessibility across the region
5.1	Advance recommendations in the Greater Lowell Digital Infrastructure Plan.					
6. Create a larger variety of housing at all levels of affordability through investment and policy, including modern zoning tools to allow for more flexibility in creating housing choice and affordability.		Lead	\$\$\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal planners (Co-Lead) Municipal planning boards Municipal housing authorities Community based and regional development organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase regional housing development Increase the utilization of form-based zoning
6.1	Prioritize the implementation of all recommendations of the <i>At Home in Greater Lowell</i> Regional Housing Strategy and municipal-level housing and master plans.					
6.2	Amend zoning in growth areas to allow neighborhood-level mixed-use and mixed-income development, enabling housing choice and new growth.					
6.3	Advance and implement MBTA Communities Zoning district adoption and development within the districts.					
6.4	Advance production in alignment with <i>A Home For Everyone</i> - the Massachusetts' State Housing Plan, and share information and resources that emerge from the <i>Building For Tomorrow</i> report to unlock housing production					

Image: CrossPoint, former Wang Laboratories Worldwide HQ and now home of UKG and other key industry firms. Source: Wikipedia



What's in the Full plan?

The full plan includes a process and public input description; summary background; analysis of strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and desired results; an evaluation framework with performance measures; a funding matrix; and a list of priority projects.

Ultimately, the success of **Greater Lowell Stronger Together** is a collaborative effort. Numerous partners, ranging from municipal planners to nonprofit leaders to industry representatives, are needed to help see through a coordinated suite of regional ideas and impacts. If completed in tandem, this CEDS will help to create a Greater Lowell region with a globally competitive economy, prosperous residents, and functional, attractive municipalities. This version of Greater Lowell can be home to an economy that truly works for all.

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CEDS Committee

The CEDS planning process was supported by an active committee of regional stakeholders who have helped to shape and implement multiple iterations of CEDS plans.

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Consulting Services Provided by Fourth Economy



Fourth Economy is a national community and economic development consulting firm. Driven by a vision for an economy that serves the people, our approach centers on the principles of competitiveness, equity, and resilience. We collaborate with communities and organizations, both public and private, that are ready for change, equipping them with tools and innovative solutions to build better communities and stronger economies.

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