



GREATER LOWELL STRONGER TOGETHER

2025-2030 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

ADOPTED BY THE NMCOC COUNCIL FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 16, 2025 THROUGH JULY 16, 2030



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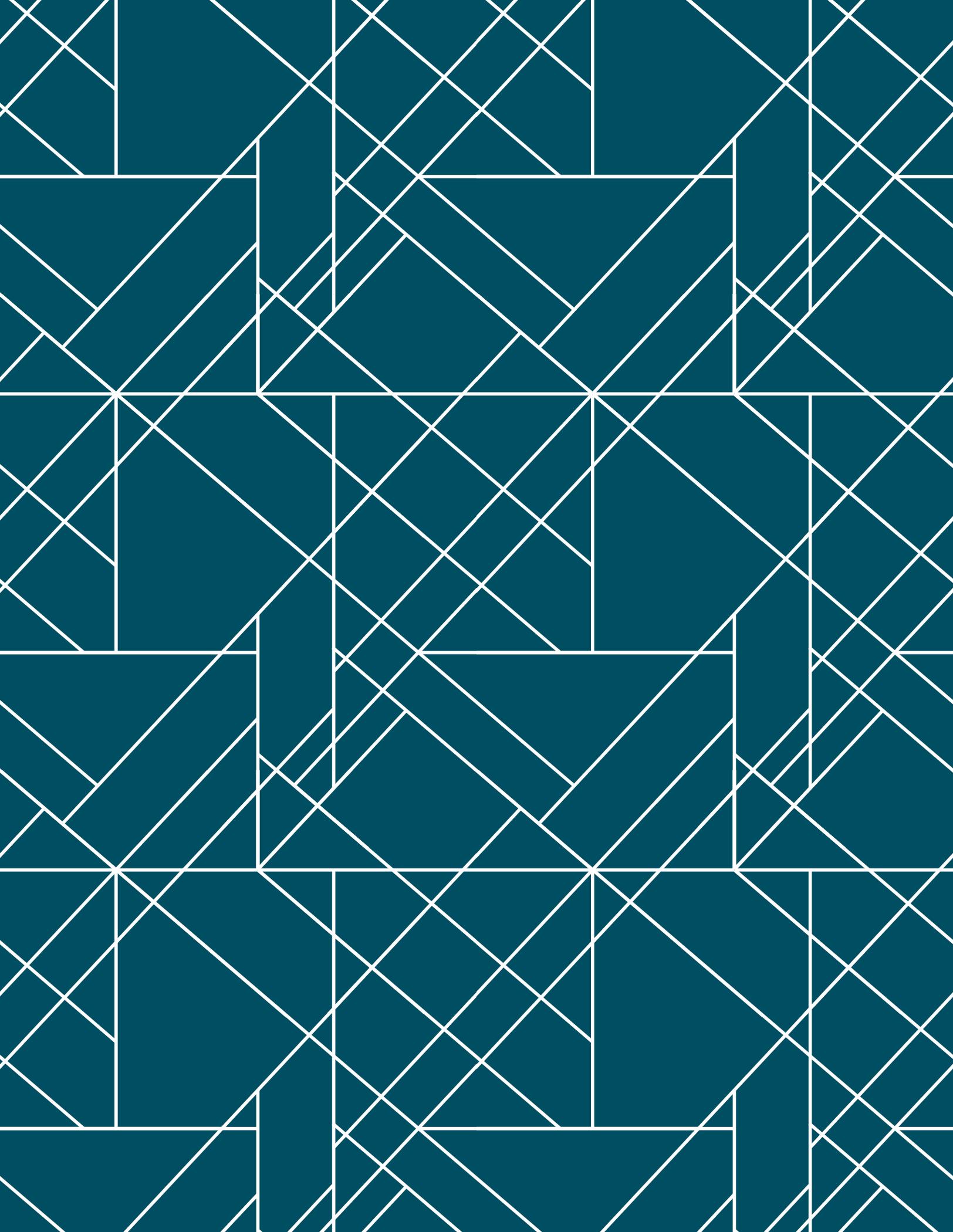
Fourth Economy is a national community and economic development consulting firm. Driven by a vision for an economy that serves the people, our approach centers on the principles of competitiveness, equity, and resilience. We collaborate with communities and organizations, both public and private, that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

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

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION





INTRODUCTION

About the CEDS

Greater Lowell's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is designed to enable the region to become more economically resilient, prosperous, and competitive. The plan, **Greater Lowell Stronger Together**, is dedicated to working regionally to create economic resilience, improve quality of life, and champion economic growth that benefits all members of the community. A CEDS is a vital component of establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by building regional capacity – through hard and soft infrastructure – that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. It provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, learning institutes, and private industry to build strategies that will best serve economic development in the region.

Hard and Soft Infrastructure: This report considers both “hard” and “soft” infrastructure. Hard infrastructure is physical, tangible assets like roads, pipes, and power lines. Soft infrastructure is made up of the institutions and systems that maintain the economy such as educational systems, economic development organizations, and governmental agencies.

*Image Source: Executive Office of
Housing and Livable Communities*



Planning Process

Greater Lowell Stronger Together was crafted through a nine-month planning process that centered on unique regional characteristics, stakeholder perspectives, and the development of actionable strategies that can improve economic outcomes. Key components of the planning process included:

1. Review of Existing Conditions

To craft the Summary Background portion of this CEDS, Fourth Economy led a robust review of existing reports and plans, regional data, and relevant programs and incentives in the Greater Lowell region. The analysis included a review of existing conditions relevant to economic competitiveness, industry trends, workforce, housing development, infrastructure, and more.

2. "Listening Tour" Stakeholder Engagement

Over 60 interviews were conducted with regional businesses, civic leaders, and community members. Interview topics ranged from economic and workforce development to transportation, entrepreneurship, real estate development, and public health.

3. CEDS Committee Meetings

The CEDS Committee convened four times during the duration of the planning process, providing critical feedback and perspectives to drive a nuanced, region-specific plan.

4. Greater Lowell Economic Summit

On March 20, 2025, over 70 economic leaders and community members attended the 2025 Greater Lowell Economic Summit in Lowell. NMCOG and Fourth Economy facilitated several topic-based sessions using Fourth Economy's Build Session approach - an interactive method to brainstorm, prioritize, and build solutions, moving past talking about problems and toward actionable ideas.

5. Strategy Development

Using insights from throughout the planning process and strategies developed during the Build Sessions, the team created a core listing of aspirational and achievable economic development strategies for the region to take on. These strategies were vetted by the CEDS Committee and stakeholders during a month-long public comment period.

6. Public Comment Period

From late May through June 2025, this plan was posted online for a mandatory 30-day public comment period. Public comments were captured via an online survey and direct engagement with CEDS Committee members. Public comments were aggregated and prioritized before final edits to the plan were made.





ABOUT GREATER LOWELL

Greater Lowell includes the City of Lowell and the surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough and Westford. Together, these communities have a land area of approximately 195 square miles. The region is defined by its location along the Merrimack, Concord, and Nashua Rivers in northeast Massachusetts.

Greater Lowell is a growing region with more than 310,000 residents. The City of Lowell is 26 miles from Boston, and the region is well-served by Route 3 and Interstates 93 and 495. It also is connected to Greater Boston through two commuter rail stations. It is a hub for advanced manufacturing, life sciences and medical technology, data technology, and engineering. Even as the region embraces these growth industries, it retains a high quality of life through its historic links to nineteenth century mills, agriculture, its rivers and large open wooded areas, and small businesses featuring a wide variety of traditions.

Where do Greater Lowell residents work?

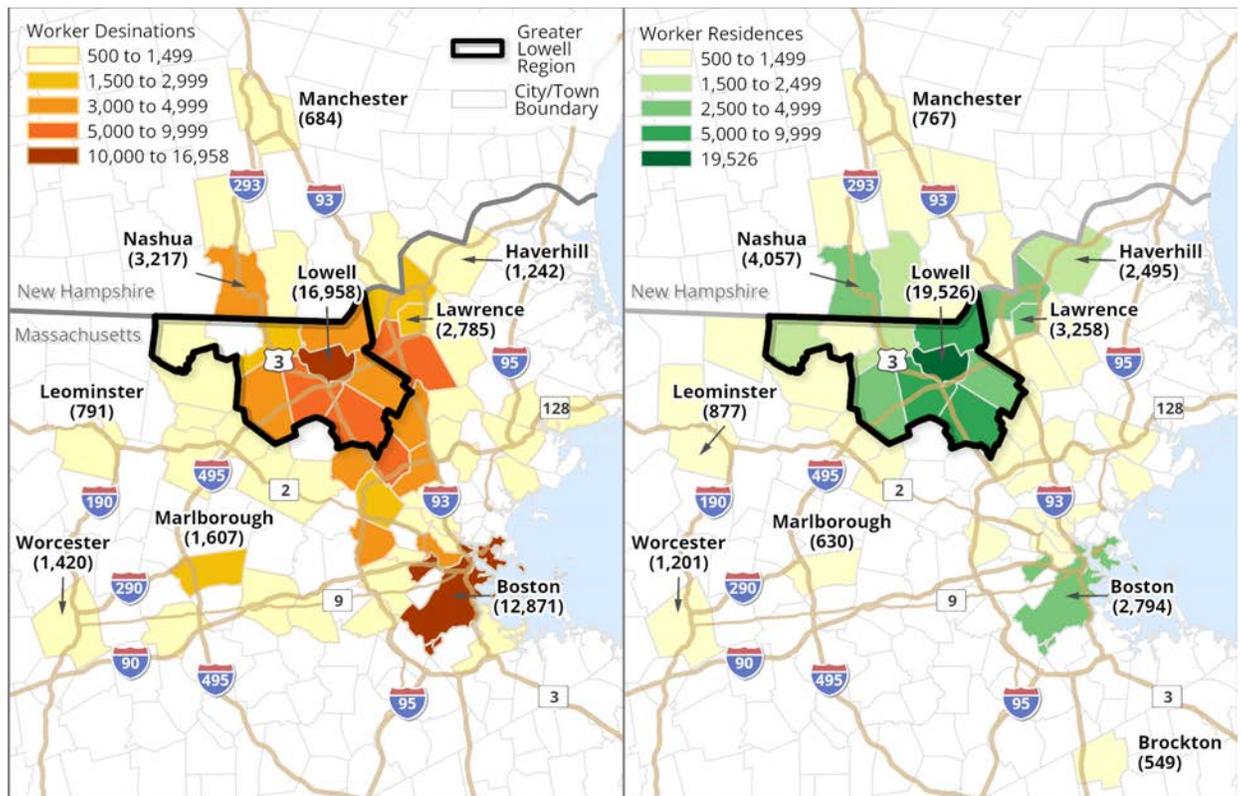
An estimated 75,000 workers commute into the NMCOG region for work, and nearly 100,000 commute out of the region. In fact, 70% of employed Greater Lowell residents over 16 years old work outside of Greater Lowell. The residences of all those who work in the region are in Figure 1 below, mapped in green.

Those who both live and work in the region are often employed in locally-focused services such as healthcare, education, restaurants,

and retail in addition to the high-tech industries located within the region. These jobs are concentrated in central Lowell and along the I-495 and US-3, especially at the junction of those two highways.

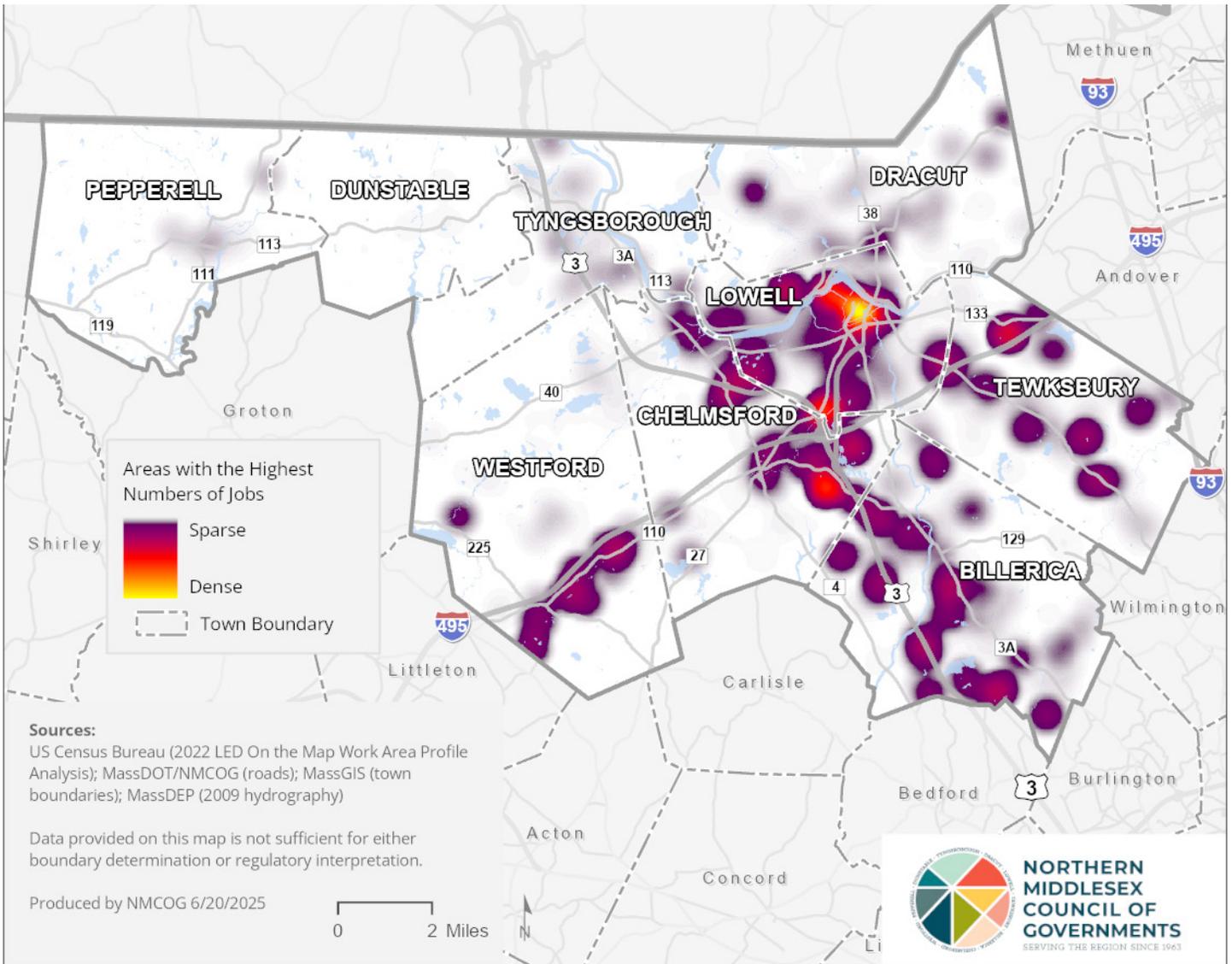
The workplaces of those who live in the region are mapped in red. Of the 100,000 who commute out of the region, many work in higher-income, high-tech industries clustered along the MA-128/I-95 corridor.

FIGURE 1: GREATER LOWELL WORKER DESTINATIONS AND ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Numbers are workers that work in or are from each municipality. Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

FIGURE 2: GREATER LOWELL EMPLOYMENT DENSITY



Greater Lowell Commercial Development Opportunities

Greater Lowell's mix of urban, suburban, and rural amenities provide a range of opportunities from agri-tourism to life science campuses to logistics hubs. The following page showcases business parks, major retail and mixed use centers, and historic town, village, and neighborhood centers. The Middlesex 3 Coalition maintains a list of [priority development sites](https://www.middlesex3.com/m3-priority-development-sites)¹, many of which are in these centers.

Greater Lowell Stronger Together aims to strengthen these historic centers as amenity-rich places for missing middle housing, small business development, and high quality of life. These centers would be connected via multiple modes of transportation to major job centers at major commercial, industrial, or retail parks. These parks also have strong access to Boston via interstate highway and, in some cases, commuter rail.

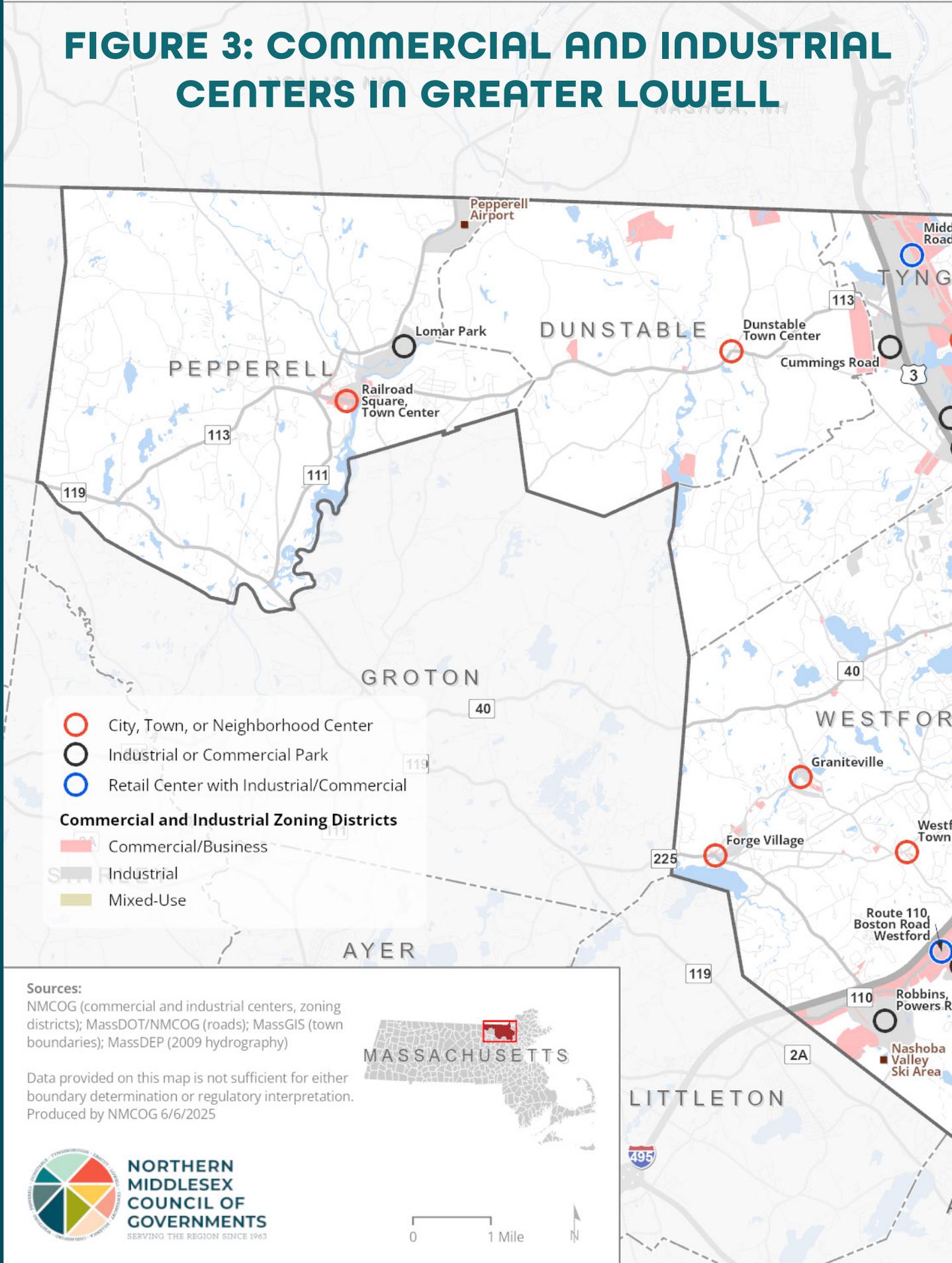
1. <https://www.middlesex3.com/m3-priority-development-sites>

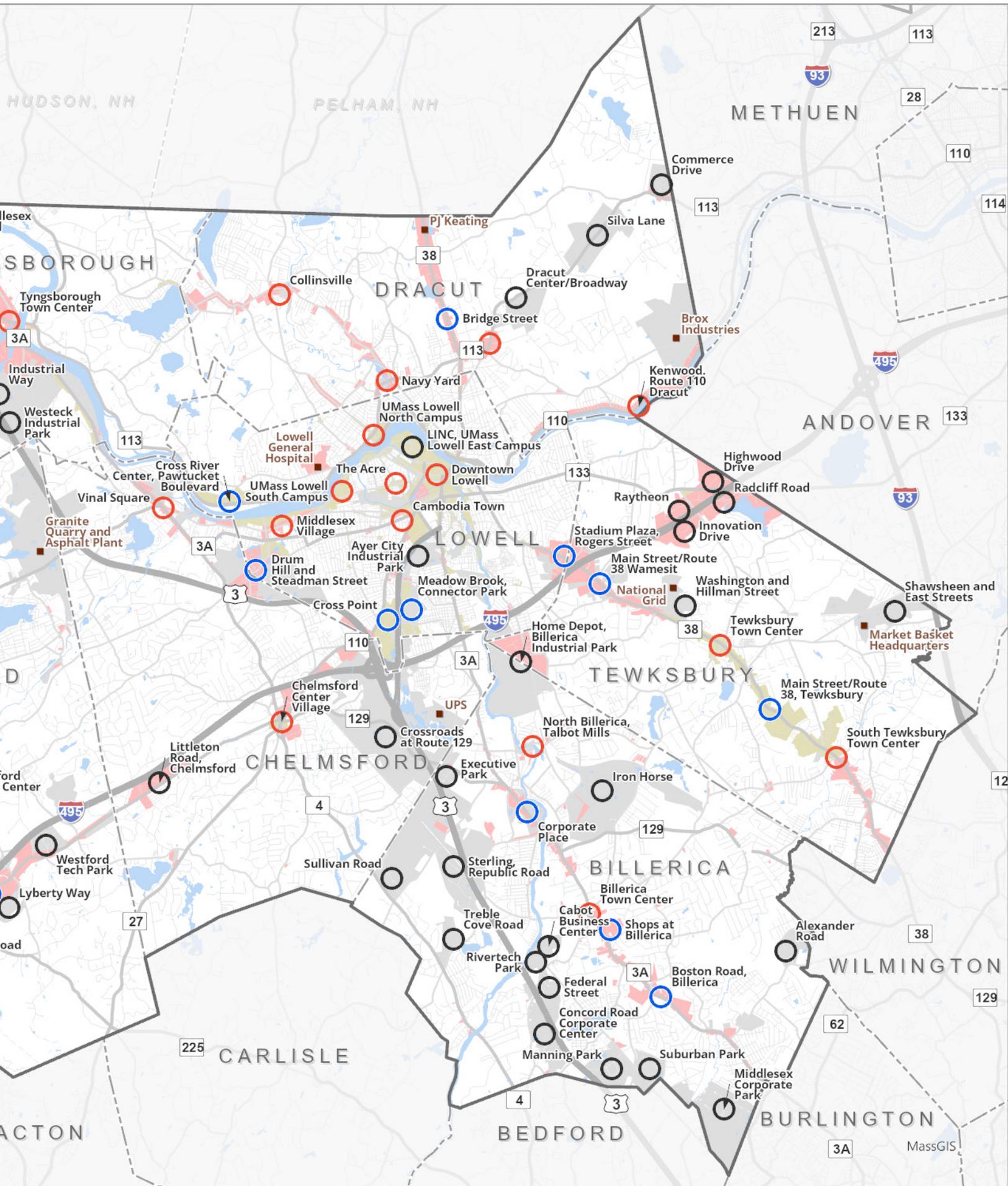
Image Source: UMass Lowell - Lowell Innovation Network Corridor





FIGURE 3: COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CENTERS IN GREATER LOWELL







BILLERICA

Billerica is a mid-size town with a population of approximately 41,619, and has a thriving economy with significant sectors in technology, manufacturing, and retail. In addition to its historic Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors Center at the Talbot and Faulkner Mills, Billerica has many notable business parks. The Town displays a high quality of life between major employment centers of Lowell and Burlington.

Billerica's major employers include medical and technology-focused firms such as Entegris, Inc., and EMD Serono. Another major employer is the Middlesex House of Corrections. The town boasts a suburban built environment with key assets like the Billerica Town Common and numerous parks. Billerica is leveraging its prime location along MA Route 3 to attract high-tech and life sciences companies, supported by recent market analysis and development incentives.

Billerica residents tend to work in Billerica or in employment centers along MA-128 such as Waltham, Burlington, or Woburn, as **Figure 4** illustrates. Billerica firms tend to employ people from the Greater Lowell region, especially along MA-3, as **Figure 5** illustrates.

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Computer and electronic product manufacturing	2,517	7.2%
Specialty trade contractors	2,412	6.9%
Administrative and support services	1,362	3.9%
Merchant wholesalers, durable goods	991	2.8%
Food services and drinking places	927	2.7%

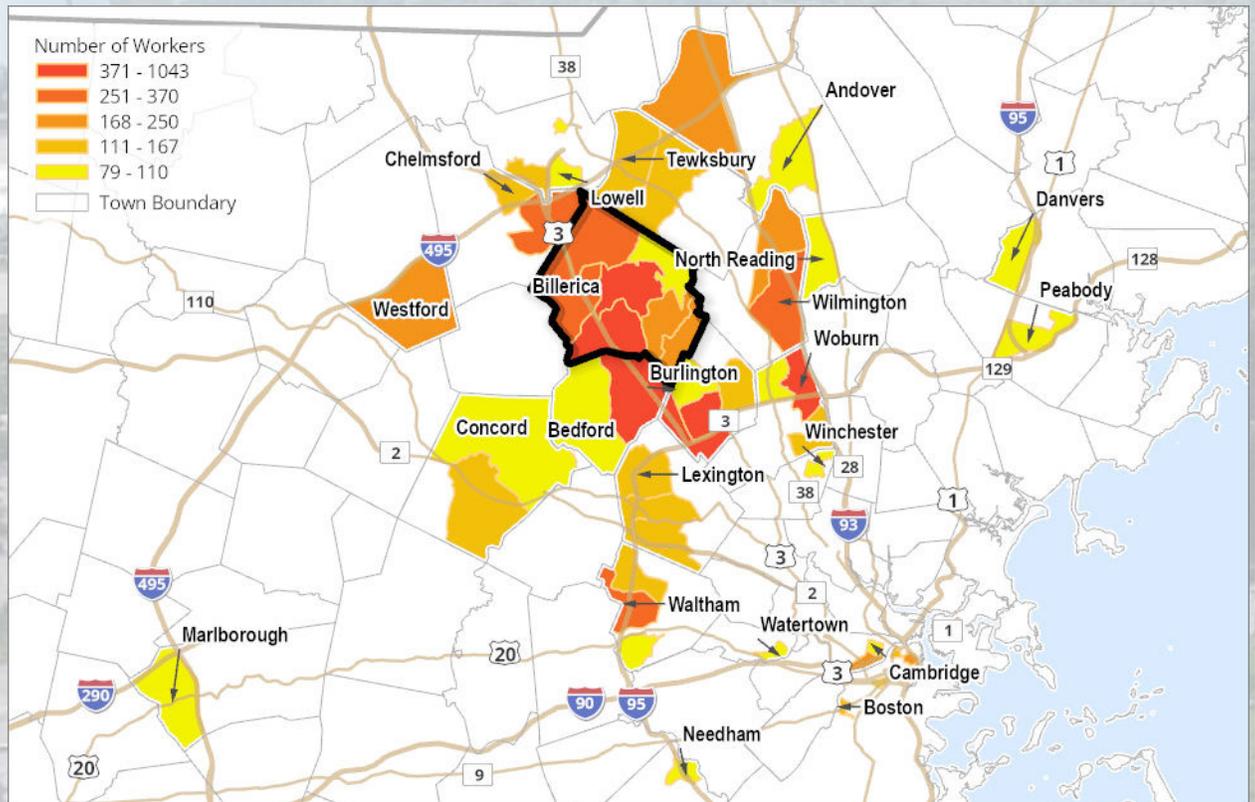
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Management	3,420	14.0%
Office and Administrative Support	2,916	11.9%
Business and Financial Operations	1,902	7.8%
Other	1,793	7.3%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	1,674	6.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

FIGURE 4: BILLERICA RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: EMD Serono



Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany operates its biopharmaceutical business as EMD Serono in the U.S. It invested \$70 million in 2019 to expand its research & development facility in Billerica. The R&D team in Billerica works on biopharma compounds. The Town played a critical role in collaborating with the private entity to expand its R&D campus.

Source: EMD Serono

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Curriculum Associates	611699	1,904
Parexel International	621511	1,292
EMD Serono Inc	456110	863
Bruker Corporation	561110	744
Entegris Inc*	541330	700

Source: Lightcast Q2 2025 Data Set. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately. Closed/moved firms removed from list. *Supplemented by information from Town of Billerica.

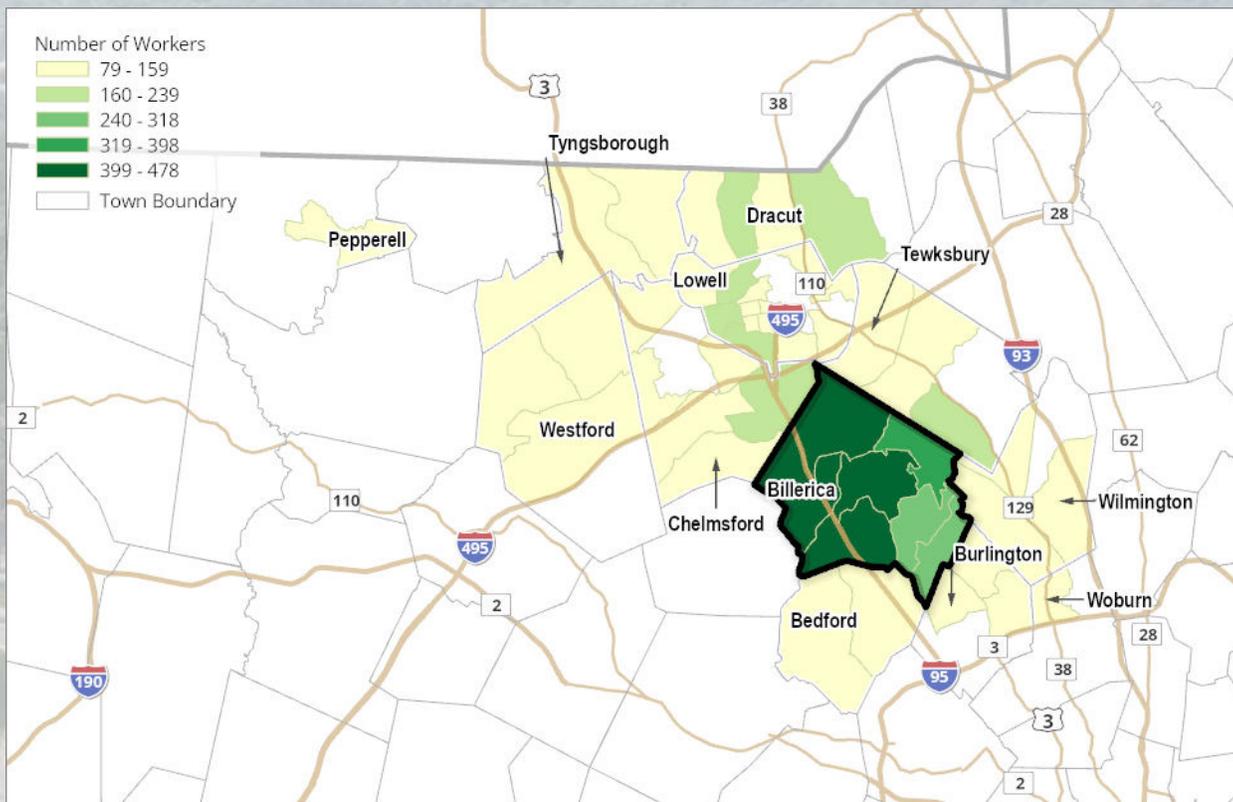
Economic Development Newsletters

The Town of Billerica's Planning and Community Development Department publishes a monthly e-newsletter to feature current events regarding Billerica businesses. They spotlight different businesses each month, from ribbon-cuttings of major R&D facilities to small businesses winning Best In Town contests. The newsletters also connect businesses with various resources as well as celebrate the strong quality of life Billerica's workforce enjoys, like robust open spaces and award-winning championship schools.



† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 5: BILLERICA-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Town of Billerica



CHELMSFORD

Chelmsford, a town with a population of 36,180, has a robust economy centered around technology, healthcare, and retail. Despite being a major population and job center, Chelmsford highlights its strong sense of community and quality of place.

Chelmsford features a primarily suburban landscape, but has some areas with a traditional development pattern: its charming village centers - Chelmsford Center Village and Vinal Square - are key assets. It also boasts other assets such as the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and several historic sites. Chelmsford is enhancing its largest commercial district with new zoning overlays and flexible permitting to attract and support commercial expansions.

Figure 2 shows the top 50 census tracts in which Chelmsford residents work. Outside of Chelmsford, Westford and Tewksbury are major employment centers, along with towns along MA-3 toward Boston. Chelmsford firms tend to attract residents of the Greater Lowell region, extending into Nashua and Littleton.

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Computer and electronic product manufacturing	2,435	7.2%
Ambulatory health care services	1,870	5.5%
Food services and drinking places	1,149	3.4%
Administrative and support services	1,147	3.4%
Specialty trade contractors	992	2.9%

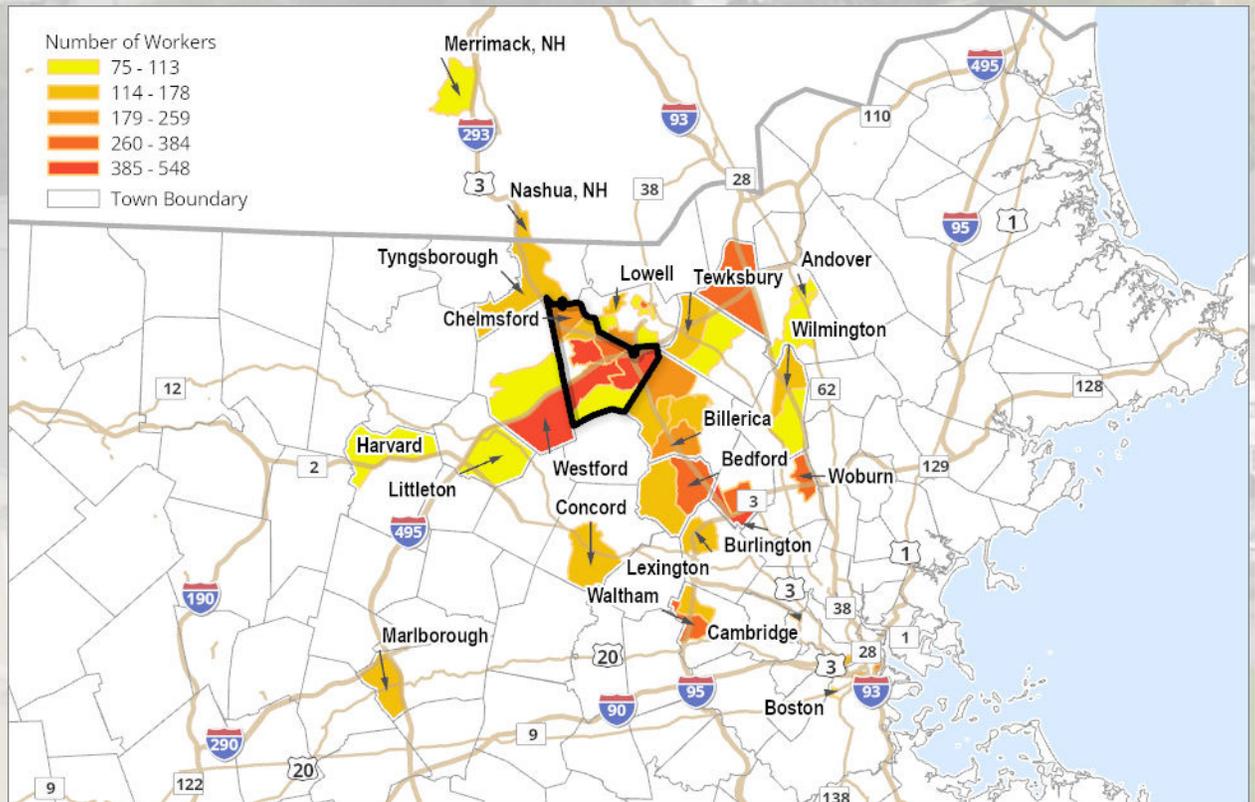
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Management	3,125	16.2%
Computer and Mathematical	1,717	8.9%
Office and Administrative Support	1,634	8.5%
Sales and Related	1,622	8.4%
Educational and Library	1,578	8.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

FIGURE 6: CHELMSFORD RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: Lockheed Martin



Lockheed Martin's Chelmsford facility is a design and manufacturing center supporting critical technologies related to missile defense. More than 350 employees support engineering and production of missile systems. In November 2012, it was selected as a recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for performance excellence and quality achievement.

Source: Lockheed Martin

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
United Parcel Service*	492110	1,600
Brooks Automation	339999	731
LGH Medical Services Inc	621111	545
Zoll Medical Corp*	561110	500
Waddington North America	322219	400

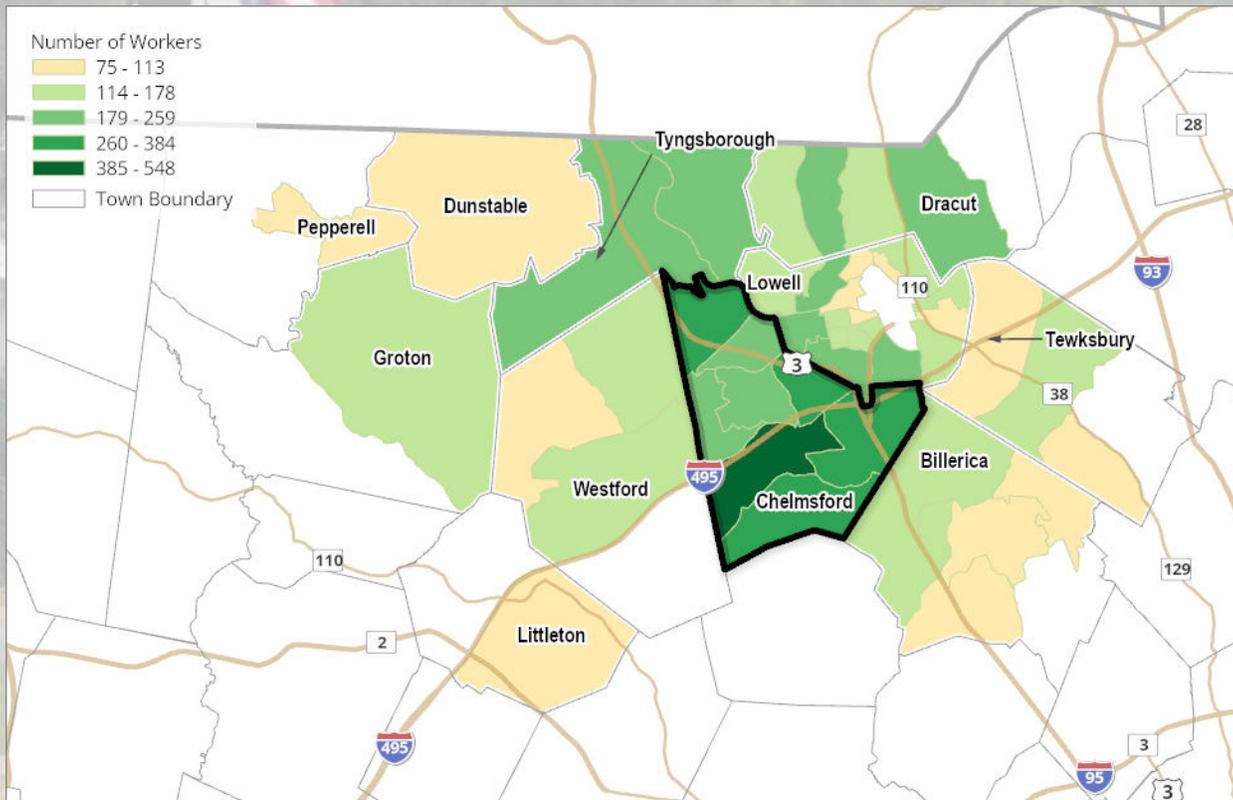
Source: Lightcast Q2 2025 Data Set. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately. *Supplemented with NMCOG analysis.

Chelmsford Permitting Guide

Chelmsford created a general permitting guide for food establishment, retail, services, or office businesses. The purpose of the permitting guide is to assist small business owners, homeowners, and developers wishing to develop projects in the Town of Chelmsford. The goal is to streamline the permitting process for both applicants and Town staff by providing clear, easy to follow procedures and processes required for proposed development activities in Chelmsford. In addition, this guidebook assists the applicant in determining the feasibility of a project by identifying the basic timeframes and expenses associated with the permitting process. Additional contacts for Community Development, Business Development, or the Building Department staff are listed to help with specific questions.

† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 7: CHELMSFORD-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG; 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Town of Chelmsford



DRACUT

Dracut, population 32,291, has a diversified economy with key sectors in education, healthcare, and retail. It prides itself on its agricultural heritage, farm stands, and unique neighborhood business districts.

Major employers include the Dracut Public Schools and local healthcare facilities. The suburban town has assets such as the restored textile complex known as Beaver Brook Mill. Dracut is working to expand its industrial zones and introduce more mixed-use developments, aiming to boost local density and economic activity.

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Food services and drinking places	797	9.2%
Specialty trade contractors	602	6.9%
Social assistance	361	4.2%
Truck transportation	275	3.2%
Administrative and support services	228	2.6%

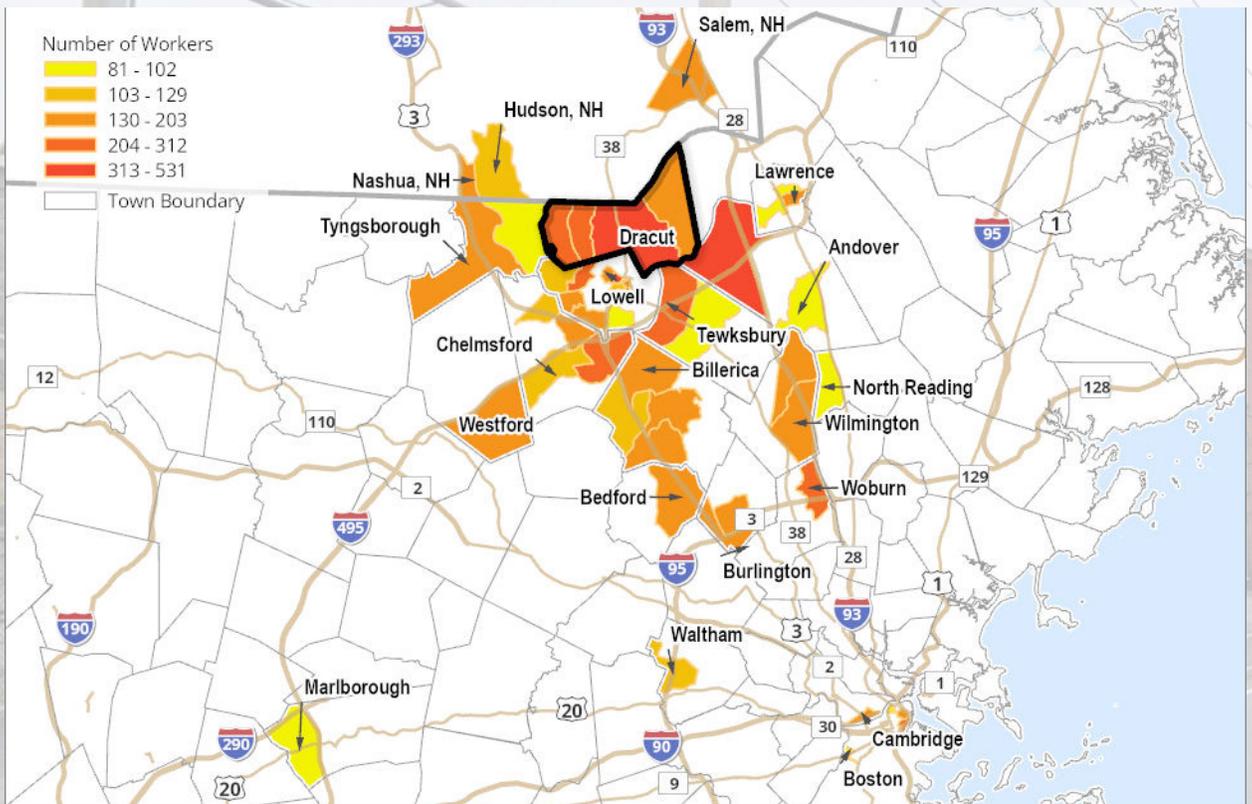
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Office and Administrative Support	2,126	12.4%
Management	2,075	12.1%
Sales and Related	1,515	8.9%
Educational and Library	1,225	7.2%
Other	1,209	7.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

FIGURE 8: DRACUT RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: Farmer Dave's



Farmer Dave's started in Dracut, but has since grown to Tewksbury and Westford to grow a variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers. It offers Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, food for farm stands, farmers markets, pick-your-own, and school tours. Farmer Dave's mission is growing healthy food, building strong community and creating lifelong traditions.

Source: Farmer Dave's

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Brox Industries Inc	339999	170
Verizon New England	517112	160
Hannaford	445110	150
Old Dominion Freight Line	484121	120
Dakota Systems Inc	339999	110
Majilite Corp	424310	110

Source: Town of Dracut, Data collected 2023. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately.

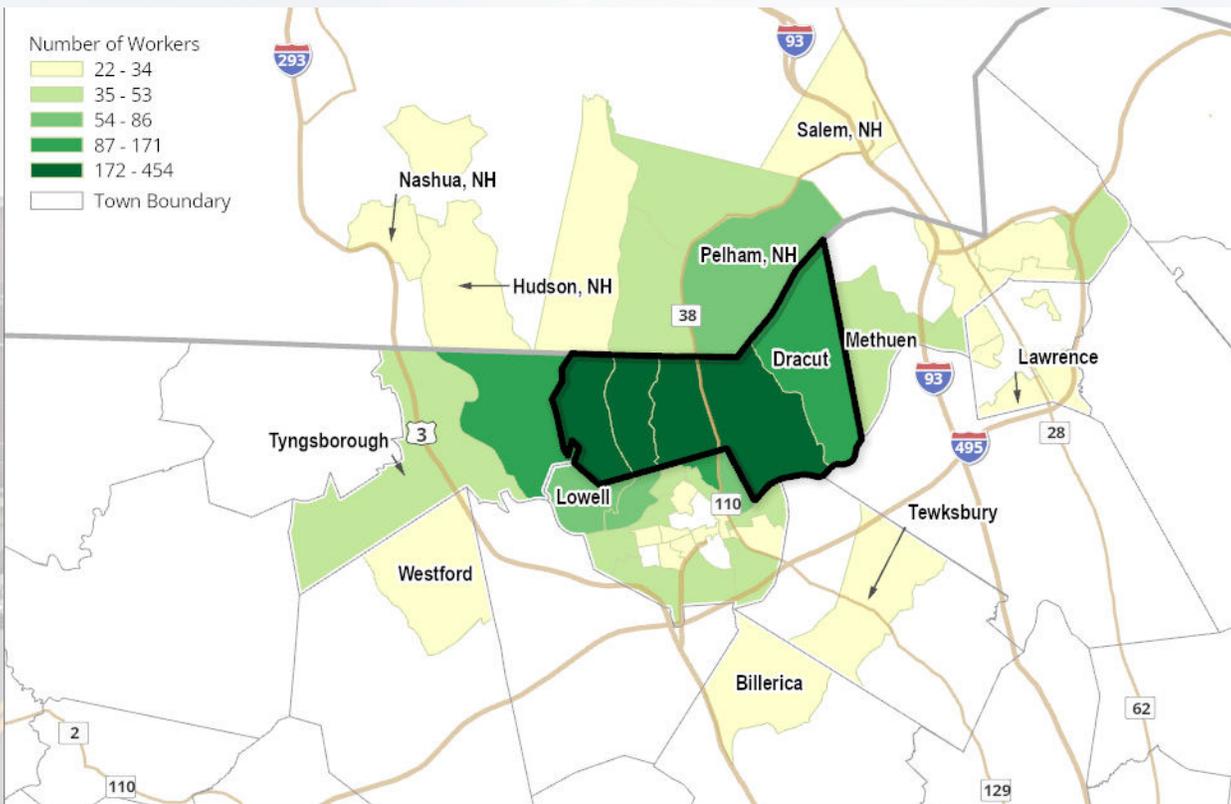
Make it Dracut

The "Make It Dracut" tagline and program were designed during the outset of 2020 as a way to support small businesses and the community at large by encouraging people to do things locally, and help people show pride in their community. The Dracut Economic Development office created merchandise with the "Make It Dracut" tagline available for sale as a means to showcase community pride and support economic development initiatives throughout Dracut. The tagline serves as an easy to remember stand-in for activities in and around Dracut.



† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 9: DRACUT-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG; 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Google Maps



DUNSTABLE

Dunstable, a small, rural town with a population of 3,359, has an economy primarily composed of blue-collar jobs. It boasts natural beauty, local agriculture, and open spaces, home to a large portion of the Petapawag Area of Critical Environmental Concern along the Nashua river.

Employment sectors include farming, education, and local small businesses. The largest employers in town are in the public sector, such as the elementary school and fire department. The town's built environment is predominantly suburban and rural, featuring open spaces, farms, and historic sites. Dunstable recently established an Economic Development Committee focused on attracting small businesses that align with the residential and institutional mix of uses along the town's main roadway, Route 113.

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Management	366	18.4%
Other	210	10.6%
Educational and Library	157	7.9%
Office and Administrative Support	153	7.7%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	150	7.6%

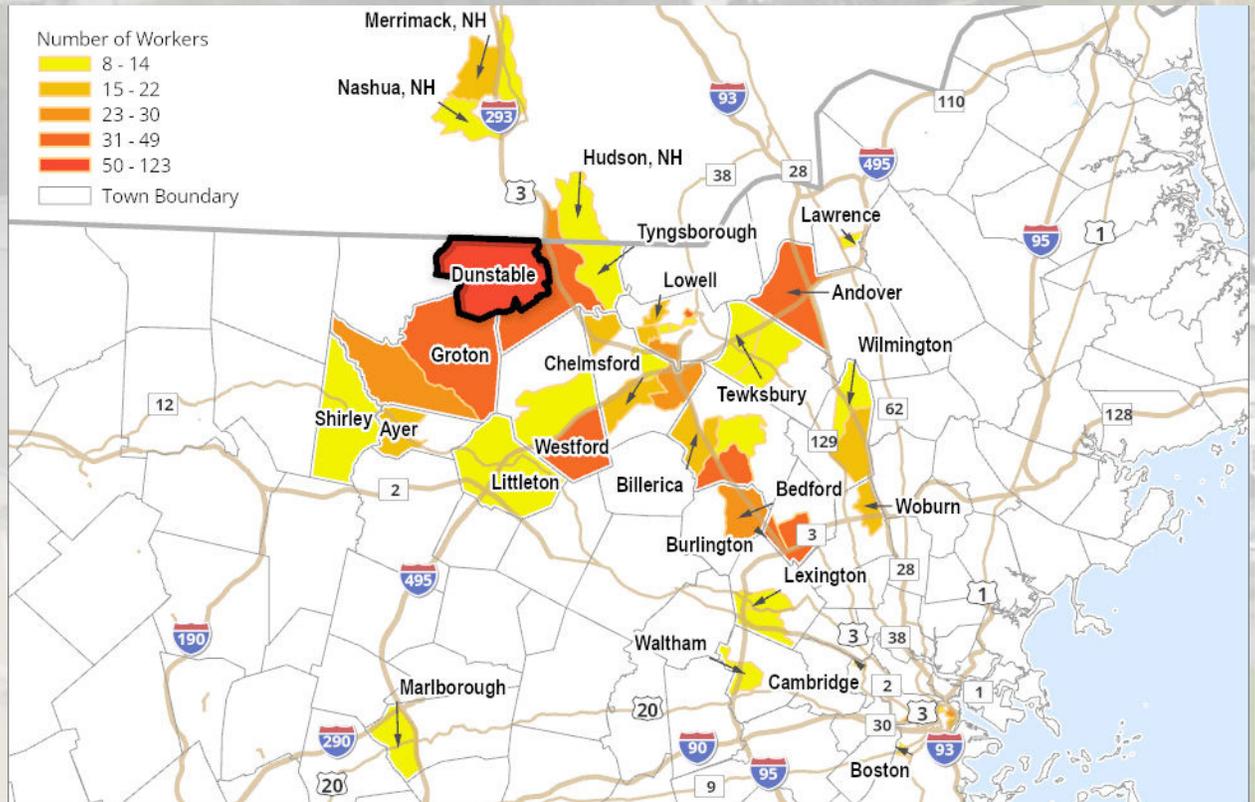
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Heavy and civil engineering construction	39	14.6%
Specialty trade contractors	29	10.8%
Food services and drinking places	25	9.3%
Construction of buildings	25	9.3%
Administrative and support services	22	8.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

FIGURE 10: DUNSTABLE RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: Union Building



The Union School Building was built in 1895, unifying five one-room schoolhouses. The Town partnered with NMCOG and a private consultant when the school district no longer needed the property for a rehabilitation and reuse plan.

It concluded that the Union Building is a beloved structure that should be preserved and that using the building for a mix of community focused uses and private revenue-generating uses is ideal. The Town has since appropriated \$1.1 million to restore the building for a mix of uses, including possible second-floor art studio or office use.

Source: NMCOG

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Swallow Union Elementary	611110	65
Dunstable Town Fire Department	922160	26
Child Care Center	624410	20
Mass Motorcycle School	611110	12
YMCA Camp Massapoag	721214	12

Source: Data Axle 2023, Excluding Town of Dunstable and Groton-Dunstable Regional School District(Multiple Locations)

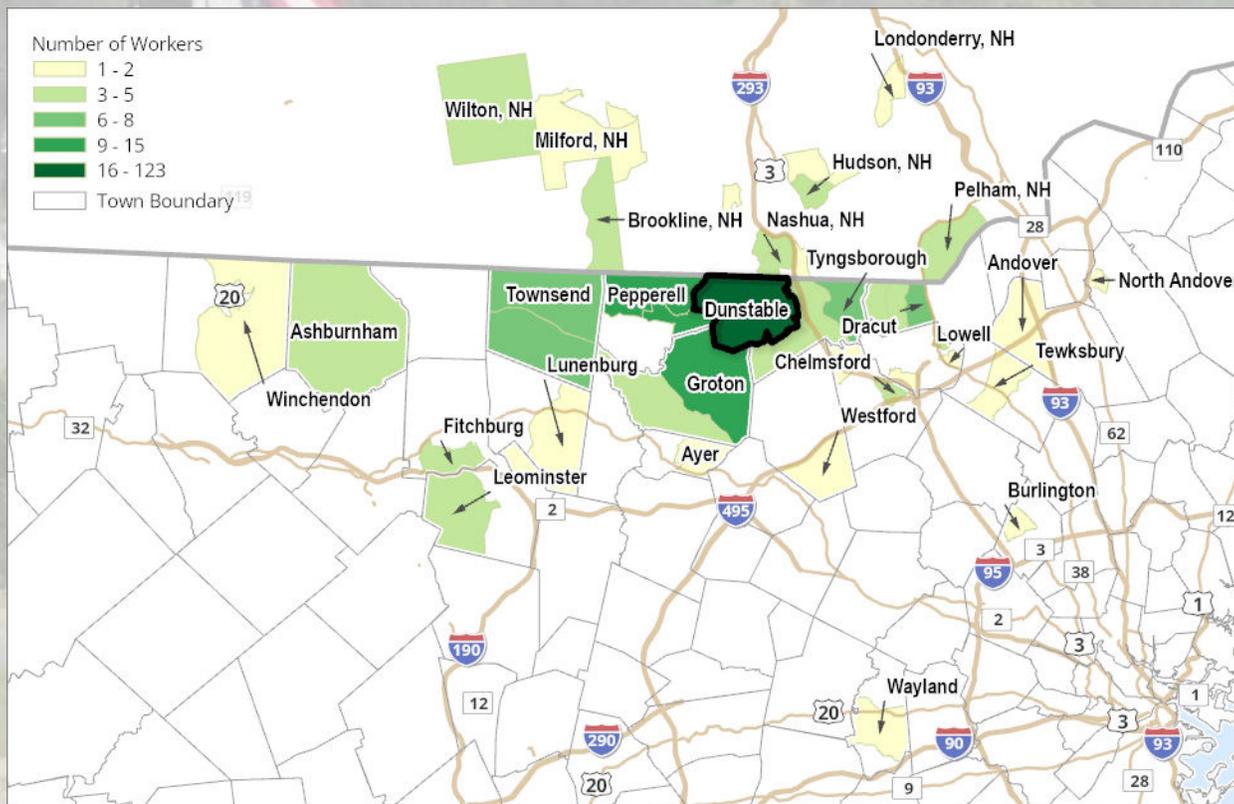
Main Street Improvement Project

The Route 113 Planning project was completed in 2023. It improved the roadway and pavement along Main Street in Dunstable Town Center. The project, led by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), included the repaving and widening of the roadway, new concrete sidewalks, granite curbing, and guardrails. The project is intended to improve safety and accessibility for all of the roadway corridor's users while protecting, enhancing and reinforcing the corridor's existing village character, rural landscape, and historic features.

Dunstable worked closely with MassDOT for these important infrastructure upgrades. The Town is now working with NMCOG to proactively plan to leverage these improvements for economic development while maintaining Dunstable Town Center's unique sense of place.

† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 11: DUNSTABLE-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Town of Dunstable



LOWELL

Lowell is the largest municipality served by NMCOG, with a population of approximately 114,296. It is the center of commerce for the Greater Lowell Region: a vibrant, multicultural hub that epitomizes Lowell National Historical Park's tagline, "The continuing revolution," in that it constantly reinvents itself while maintaining its founding values of innovation, industry, culture, and quality of life.

Lowell has a dynamic economy with major sectors including education, healthcare, and manufacturing. Prominent employers include the UMass Lowell and Lowell General Hospital. The city features a mix of urban and suburban environments, with the Merrimack and Concord Rivers running through the city offering a plethora of recreation opportunities.

Lowell's main economic development projects include the Hamilton Canal Innovation District and the recently announced Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC), including Draper Laboratory as an anchor tenant. The latter development is projected to generate over \$3.7 billion in economic activity and create thousands of regional jobs.

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Production	5,844	9.9%
Office and Administrative Support	5,057	8.6%
Other	5,051	8.6%
Sales and Related	4,638	7.9%
Management	4,525	7.7%

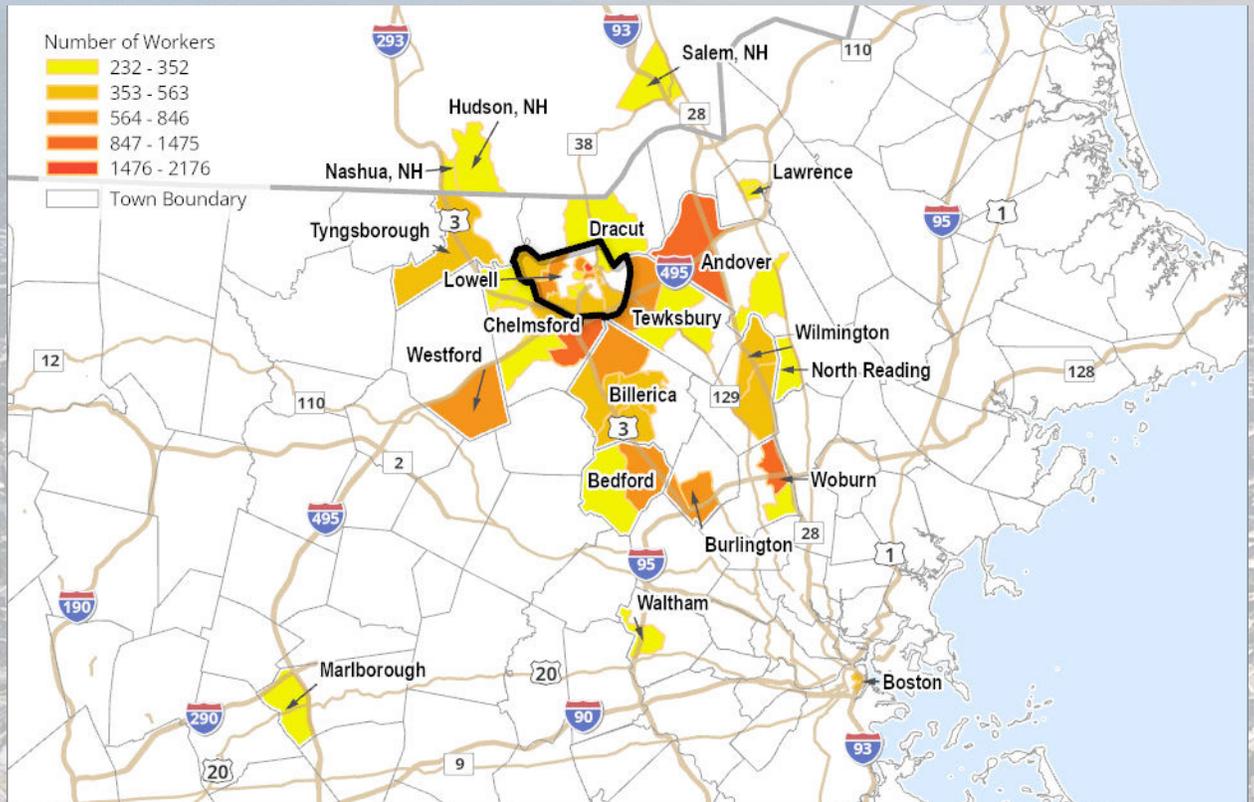
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Social assistance	3,394	6.5%
Ambulatory health care services	3,245	6.2%
Administrative and support services	2,457	4.7%
Food services and drinking places	2,402	4.6%
Nursing and residential care facilities	1,322	2.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

FIGURE 12: LOWELL RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: UMass Lowell



The University of Massachusetts Lowell started as a technological school for the textile industry, and has continued its innovation focus for over 125 years. It has 120+ undergraduate programs, 77 graduate programs, and nearly 17,000 students. It spearheaded the Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC) project, a 1.2-million-square-foot mixed-use development aiming to foster an innovation ecosystem to transform the region's economic future.

Image Source: Google Maps

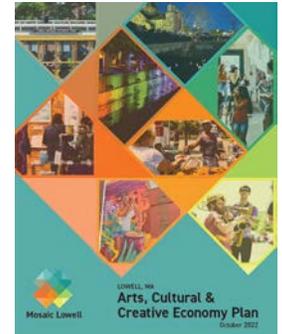
Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Lowell General Hospital*	622110	2,386
University of Massachusetts Lowell	611310	2,260
U.K.G. (Formerly Kronos)	513210	1,199
IBM	541512	1,200
Community Teamwork (CTI)	624190	669

Source: City of Lowell, 2022, based on City of Lowell Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Data, February 2025, *Data Axle, 2023

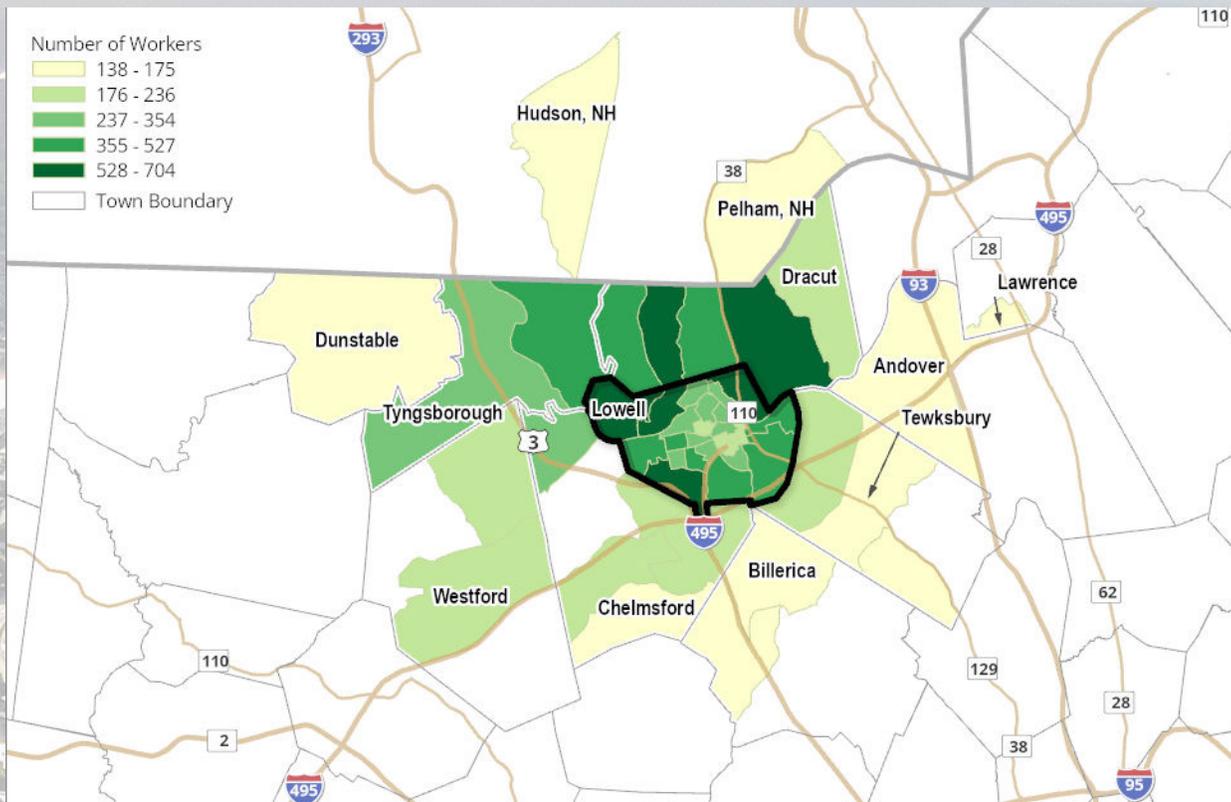
Mosaic Lowell

The Mosaic Lowell Arts, Culture & Creative Economy Plan was launched in October of 2022 after a two-year planning process featuring local arts & culture organizations and residents. The plan set out to provide a roadmap to support and celebrate arts, culture and creative enterprises throughout Lowell. The plan's aims include raising new revenues for the City and creative enterprises through increased visitorship and sales and by attracting new businesses; engaging youth with arts and culture, critical elements for a complete education, and a happy and successful life; and positioning arts, culture, and the creative economy as core elements of the City of Lowell's strategic master planning for the future.



† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 13: LOWELL-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: City of Lowell



PEPPERELL

Pepperell, with a population of 11,710, has a small manufacturing base and growing sectors in professional services and healthcare. It has a classic town center around the now-vacant site of a paper mill, including architecture reflecting multiple eras of New England history, and is pursuing local-food-based economic development among other initiatives.

Key employers include small to mid-size manufacturing firms and regional healthcare providers. The town has both suburban and rural areas. Key assets include the Nashua River Rail Trail and several conservation areas. One of Pepperell's key opportunities is a 454,750-square-foot industrial logistics park, marking the largest industrial development in the town's history.

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Management	850	13.1%
Office and Administrative Support	578	8.9%
Computer and Mathematical	559	8.6%
Educational and Library	538	8.3%
Other	507	7.8%

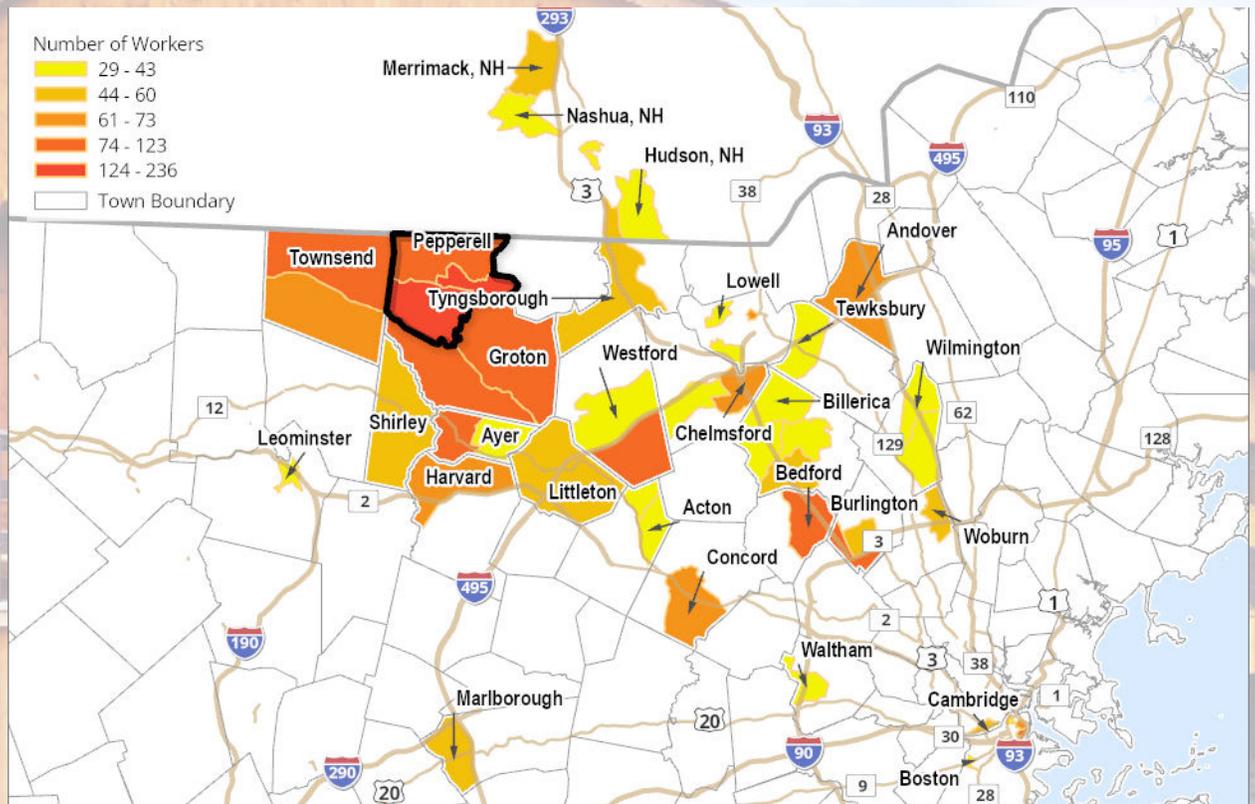
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Specialty trade contractors	170	10.6%
Food services and drinking places	116	7.3%
Ambulatory health care services	90	5.6%
Administrative and support services	80	5.0%
Social assistance	74	4.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

FIGURE 14: PEPPERELL RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: The Bakery



The Bakery was established in a prominent old gas station at the rotary in the heart of Pepperell's town center. Not only is this a unique adaptive reuse, it responded to a need for allergy-safe baked goods in Pepperell.

Source: HappyCow, The Bakery

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Nissitissit Middle School	611110	85
Varnum Brook Middle School	611110	80
Pepperell Fire Department	922160	65
Wilson Bros Heating & Air Conditioning	213112	35
Pepperell Braiding Co.	313220	35

Source: Data Axle, 2023. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately. Two firms omitted due to data errors.

Regional Food Hub and Commercial Kitchen

Pepperell's Planning Department, in partnership with the Fitzpatrick Collaborative, are working together to establish a food hub and commercial kitchen in the town of Pepperell, MA. The purpose of the food hub and commercial kitchens is to provide a space where local farmers can collaborate with one another to expand into new markets, along with providing buying opportunities for local residents who want to buy local foods and support the growth of local agriculture. The food hub would help to grow local capacity and expand market reach by synergizing and cross sharing

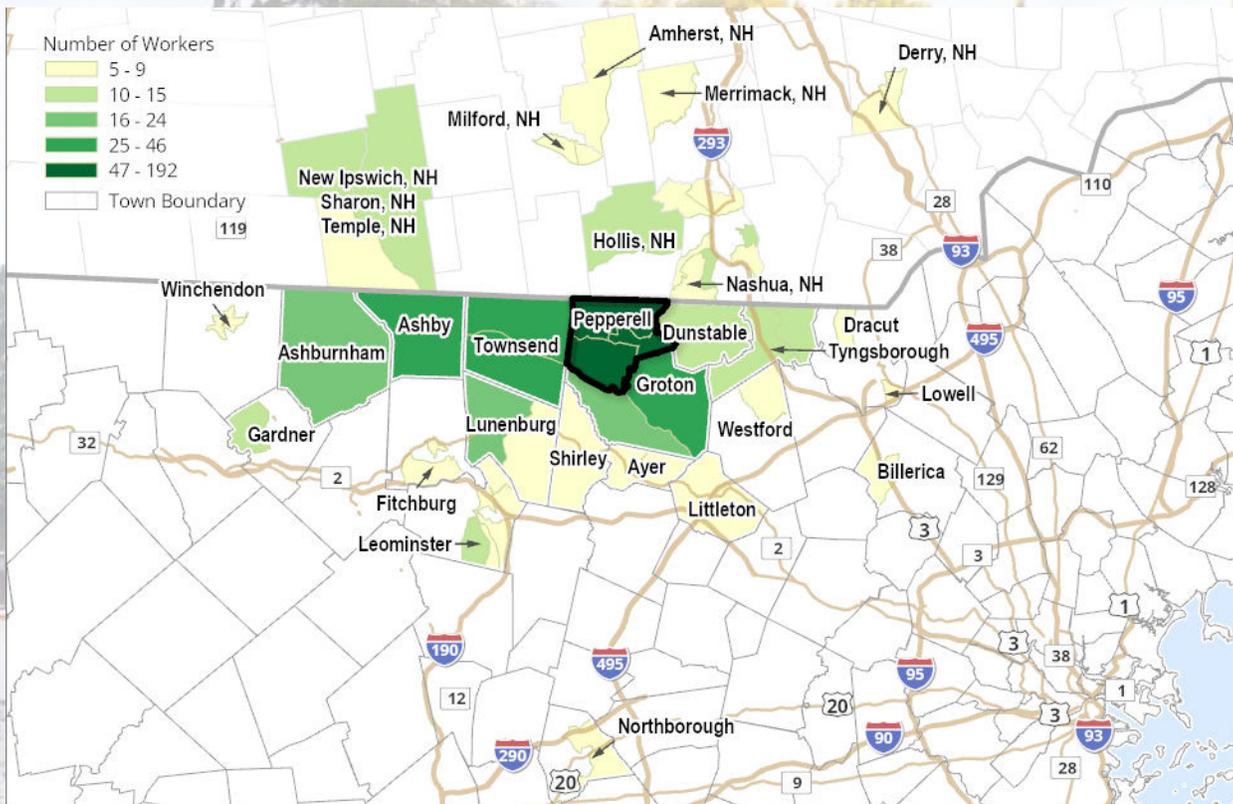
production, distribution and marketing responsibilities and allowing local farmers to pool resources.



The hub, combined with a thriving commercial kitchen, would connect local residents to fresh local produce. The collaborative initiative would venture to offer cooking and farming classes and workshops to support the development of the next generation of farmers and agricultural workers. The collaborative is currently in the process of securing further funding and seeking out additional partners before launching the initiative.

† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 15: PEPPERELL-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG; 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Town of Pepperell



TEWKSBURY

Tewksbury was once known as the “Carnation Capital of the World.” With a population of 31,243, those deep agricultural roots have transformed into a flourishing suburban community with a focus on health care, manufacturing, and a wide-ranging mix of regional retail establishments. Tewksbury is famous for being the home to Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller’s teacher, and also boasts significant attractions such as the Public Health Museum.

Tewksbury has a number of significant regional employers such as Tewksbury Hospital and Raytheon. The primarily suburban built environment features numerous parks and recreation areas. Tewksbury is actively promoting new business opportunities and infrastructure improvement along its I-93 and I-495 corridors.

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Office and Administrative Support	2,016	11.7%
Management	1,752	10.2%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	1,602	9.3%
Other	1,593	9.3%
Sales and Related	1,510	8.8%

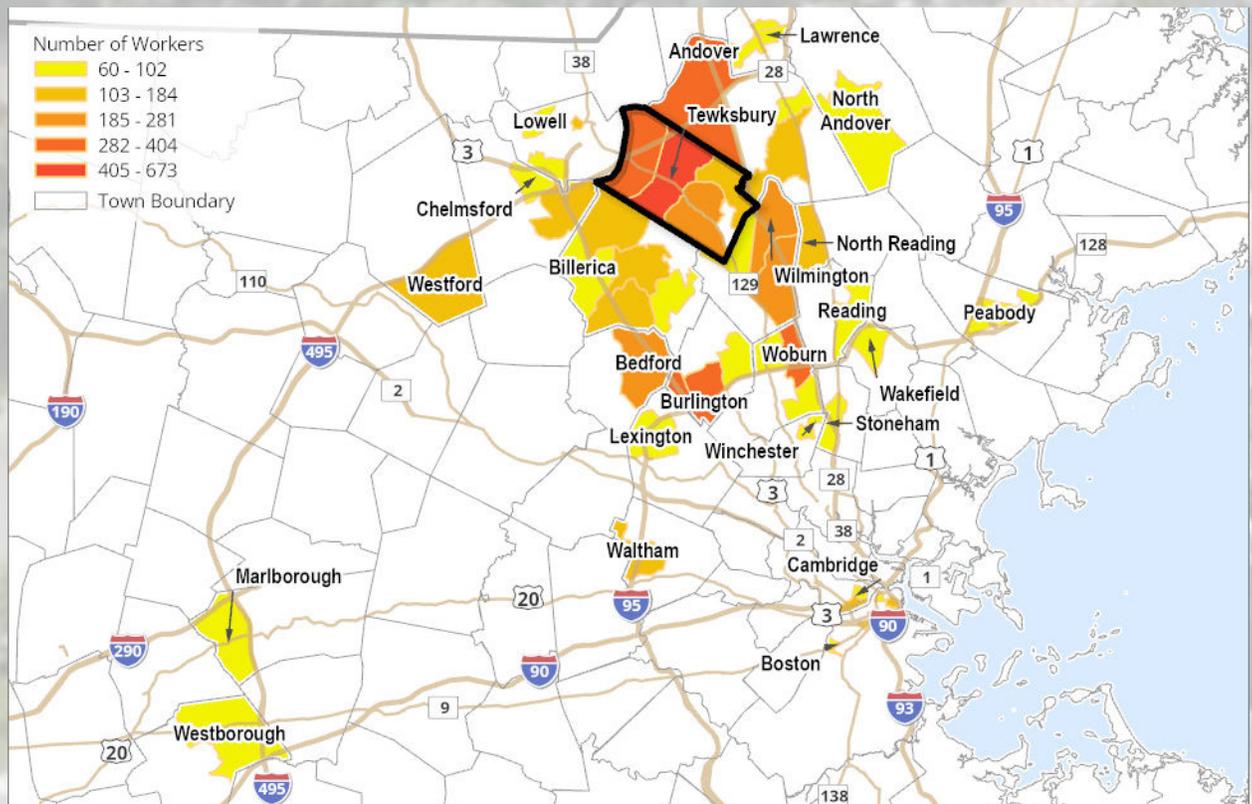
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Food services and drinking places	1,269	7.7%
Specialty trade contractors	1,043	6.3%
Administrative and support services	528	3.2%
Social assistance	465	2.8%
Nursing and residential care facilities	450	2.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

FIGURE 16: TEWKSBURY RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG; 5/7/2025

Profile: Raytheon



Tewksbury is home to Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems headquarters. In 2019, Raytheon expanded by 134,000 square feet in Tewksbury, with an option for another 135,000 - space in an office formerly occupied by Wang Laboratories for 600 employees.

In addition to defense systems, Raytheon is an innovator in civilian technology: for example, it produces Massachusetts's electronic tolling system.

Source: Google Maps, Tewksbury Patch

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Tewksbury Hospital	622110	1,620
Worldwide Techservices	541511	725
Raytheon*	334419	600
Demoulas Super Markets Inc (Headquarters)	551114	365
Walmart Supercenter	455110	300

Source: Lightcast Q2 2025 Data Set. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately. *Supplemented with NMCOG analysis.

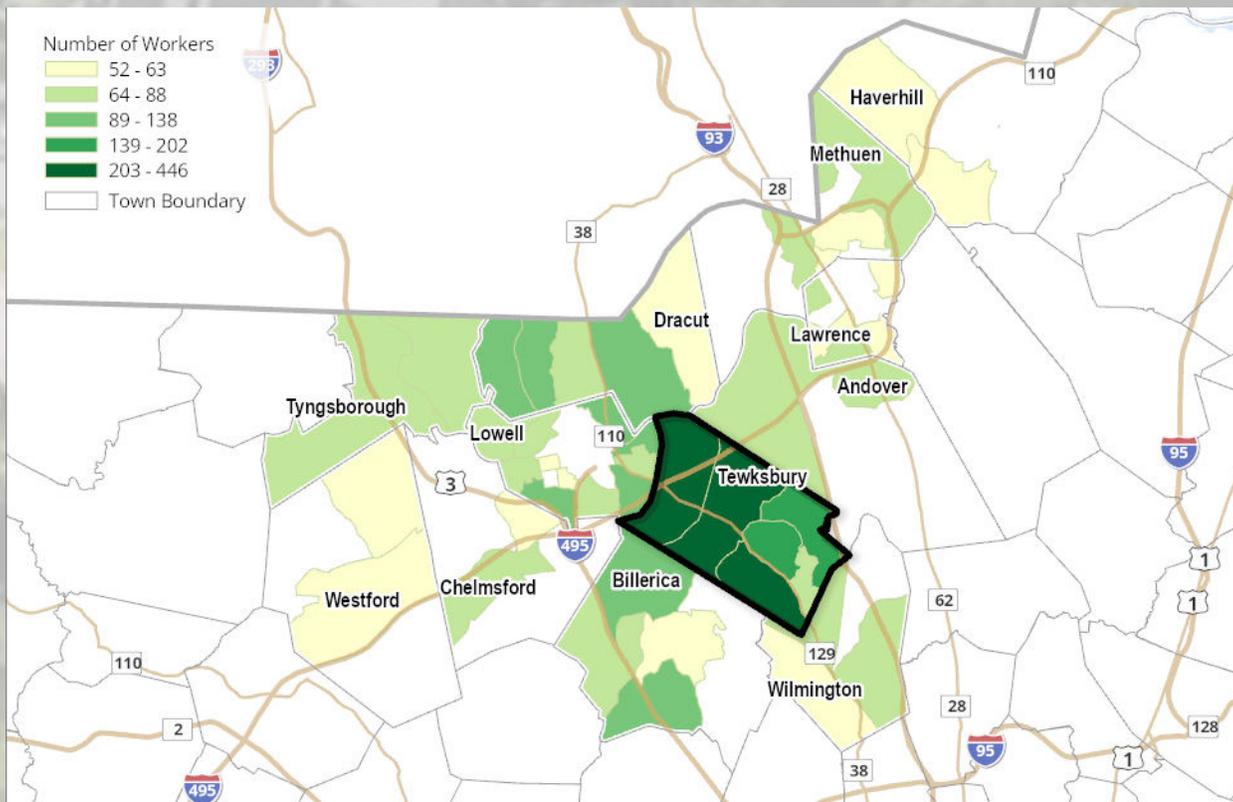
Tewksbury Community Market

The Tewksbury Community Market is a weekly marketplace gathering featuring nearly 40 local vendors each week, including local farms, food trucks, prepared foods, and artisans & crafters. Throughout the Community Market's existence, a different community group has been featured each week. The Tewksbury Community Market is organized through the Community Development Office and the Tewksbury Public Library, in cooperation with the Senior Center, Health Department and Town Manager's Office.



† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 17: TEWKSBURY-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Greater Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce



TYNGSBOROUGH

Tyngsborough is a town with a rich history dating back to 1809 and a population of around 12,475. Although facing significant competition from adjacent, sales tax-free New Hampshire, Tyngsborough has developed an industrial and commercial base centered around MA Route 3 and 3A, including large retail and restaurant centers. It balances this growth with its historic and natural charm, perhaps symbolized best by the signature 1931 Tyngsborough Bridge.

Key employment sectors include education, healthcare, and retail, with significant employers such as the Tyngsborough Public Schools and local healthcare providers. The town's infrastructure supports a suburban lifestyle with easy access to transportation routes, including MA Route 3. Tyngsborough is experiencing steady growth anchored by local business expansion and new housing development.

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Management	809	12.2%
Business and Financial Operations	677	10.2%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	584	8.8%
Computer and Mathematical	527	7.9%
Sales and Related	527	7.9%

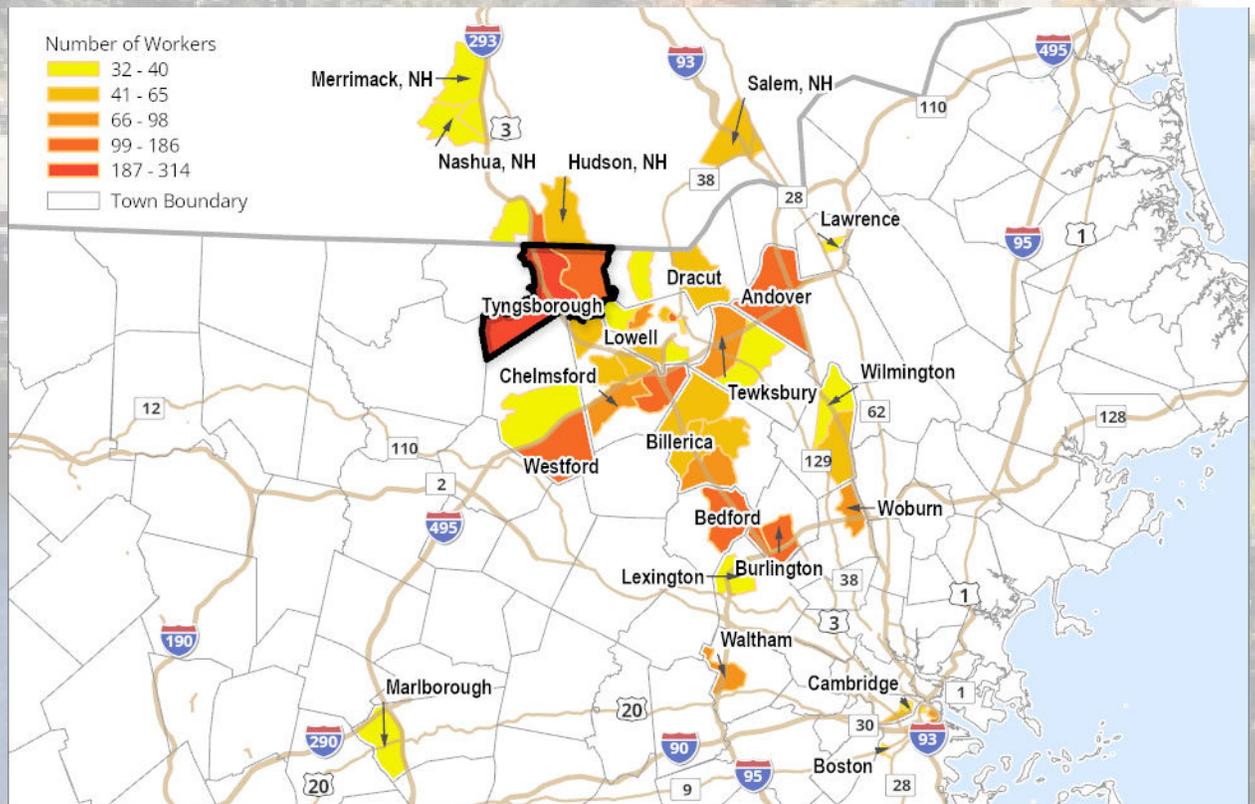
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Food services and drinking places	552	9.2%
Specialty trade contractors	482	8.1%
Administrative and support services	355	5.9%
Merchant wholesalers, durable goods	206	3.4%
Waste management and remediation services	185	3.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

FIGURE 18: TYNGSBOROUGH RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG; 5/7/2025

Profile: Tyngsboro Sports Center



The Tyngsboro Sports Center is a family owned recreational facility based in Tyngsboro, MA. The 155,000 square foot center contains two multi-use hard surface courts and five turf fields that accommodate sports programs, leagues, seasonal camps, and community events. In April 2024, the U.S. Small Business Administration named the Tyngsboro Sports Center as the Family Owned Business of the Year for the state of Massachusetts. The Sports Center has announced plans to expand its facilities to include a new restaurant and additional sport amenities.

Source: Town of Tyngsborough

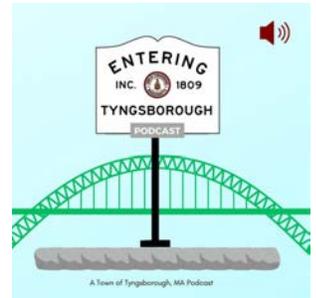
Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Greater Lowell Technical High School	611110	501
Republic Services	562119	200
Tyngsborough Elementary School	611110	180
Olive Garden Italian Kitchen	722511	120
Knowledge Management Inc	541511	96

Source: Data Axle, 2023. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately.

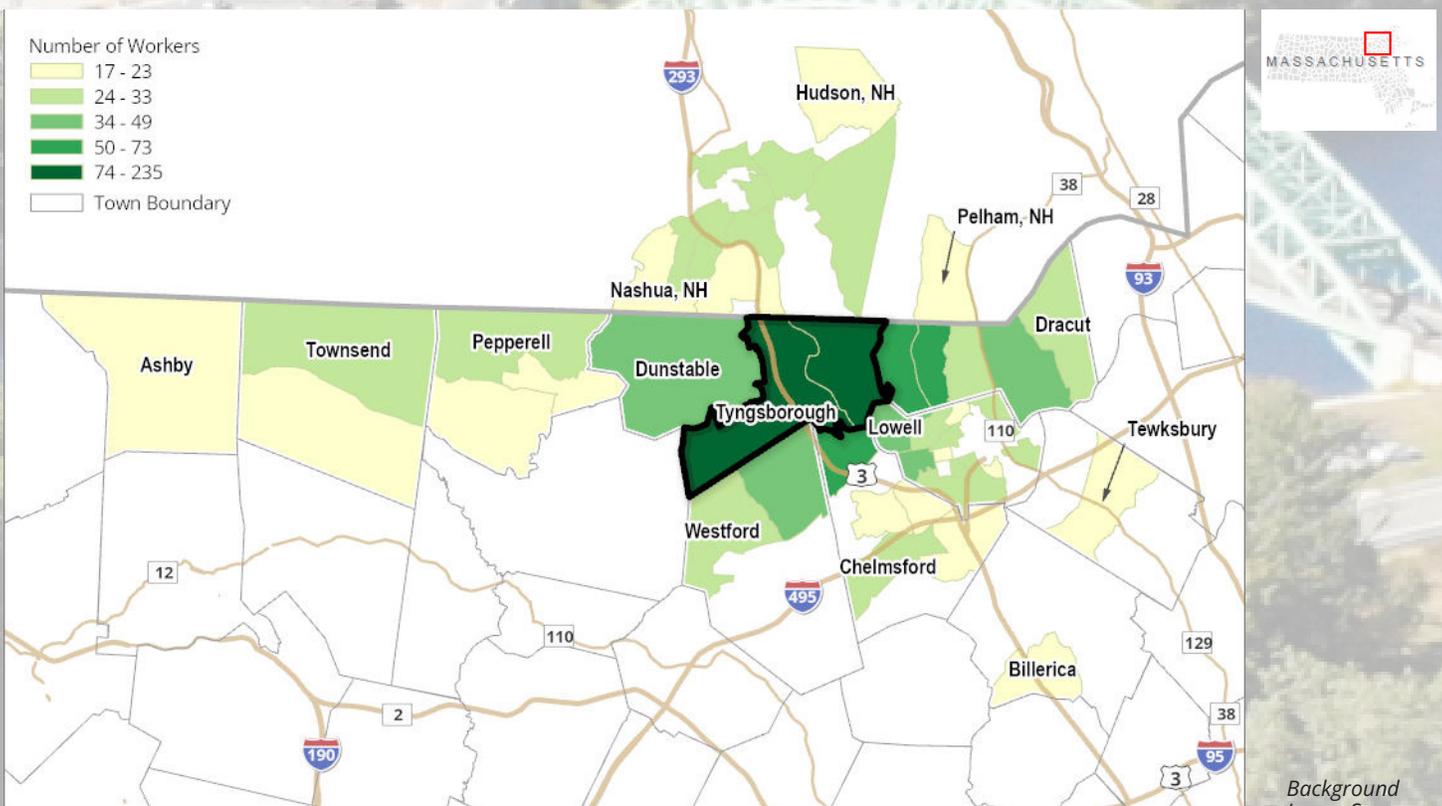
Entering Tyngsborough Podcast

In 2024, the Entering Tyngsborough Podcast started sharing news and information about Tyngsborough's local government and the community. It includes interviews with government and community leaders and is available on Spotify, Youtube, and other services.



† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 19: TYNGSBOROUGH-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Town of Tyngsborough



WESTFORD

Westford is a historic, suburban town with a population of 24,282. It highlights its innovation and technology sectors, along with its expansive open spaces and conservation areas, as dual core parts of its identity. Major employment sectors include technology, education, and healthcare, with prominent employers such as Netscout and Unisphere Networks.

The town boasts a well-developed built environment, featuring key assets like the Nashoba Valley Ski Area and Kimball Farm. Westford is actively promoting new business opportunities and infrastructure improvements, leveraging its strategic location near I-495, including through its recently adopted MBTA Communities Multi-family Housing Overlay District.

Top 5 Occupations

Occupation	Employees	Percent of Total
Management	2,639	20.2%
Computer and Mathematical	1,477	11.3%
Other	1,363	10.4%
Business and Financial Operations	1,019	7.8%
Educational and Library	994	7.6%

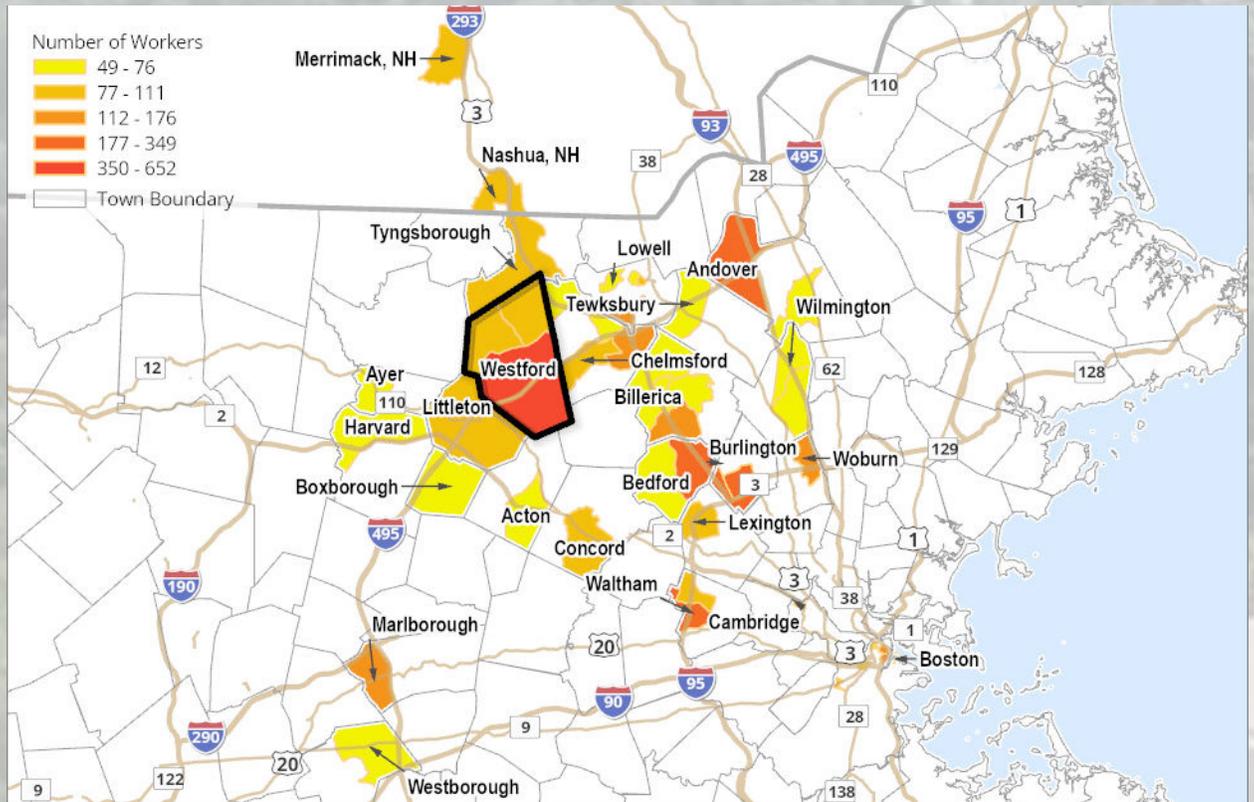
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey, Table B24010

Top 5 Industries

Industry	Employees	Percent of Total
Computer and electronic product manufacturing	1,304	8.8%
Food services and drinking places	947	6.4%
Food and beverage stores	572	3.9%
Social assistance	409	2.8%
Administrative and support services	404	2.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Q2 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (Level 3 NAICS)

FIGURE 20: WESTFORD RESIDENT WORK DESTINATIONS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Profile: Netscout



Netscout is a provider of application performance management and network performance management products, employing roughly 350 people in Westford. They are also active in civic leadership, participating in Westford's Business Association and charitable programs such as hackathons, STEM awareness education, and Tech Goes Home for young people who might not be regularly exposed to technology.

Source: Marc Tassin, Google Maps

Top 5 Employers

Name	NAICS †	Employees
Unisphere Networks Inc	334111	700
Netscout Systems Inc	513210	340
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care	524114	300
Materion Precision Optics	334413	280
Westford Regency Inn and Conference Ctr.	721110	250
Nashoba Valley Ski Area	713940	250

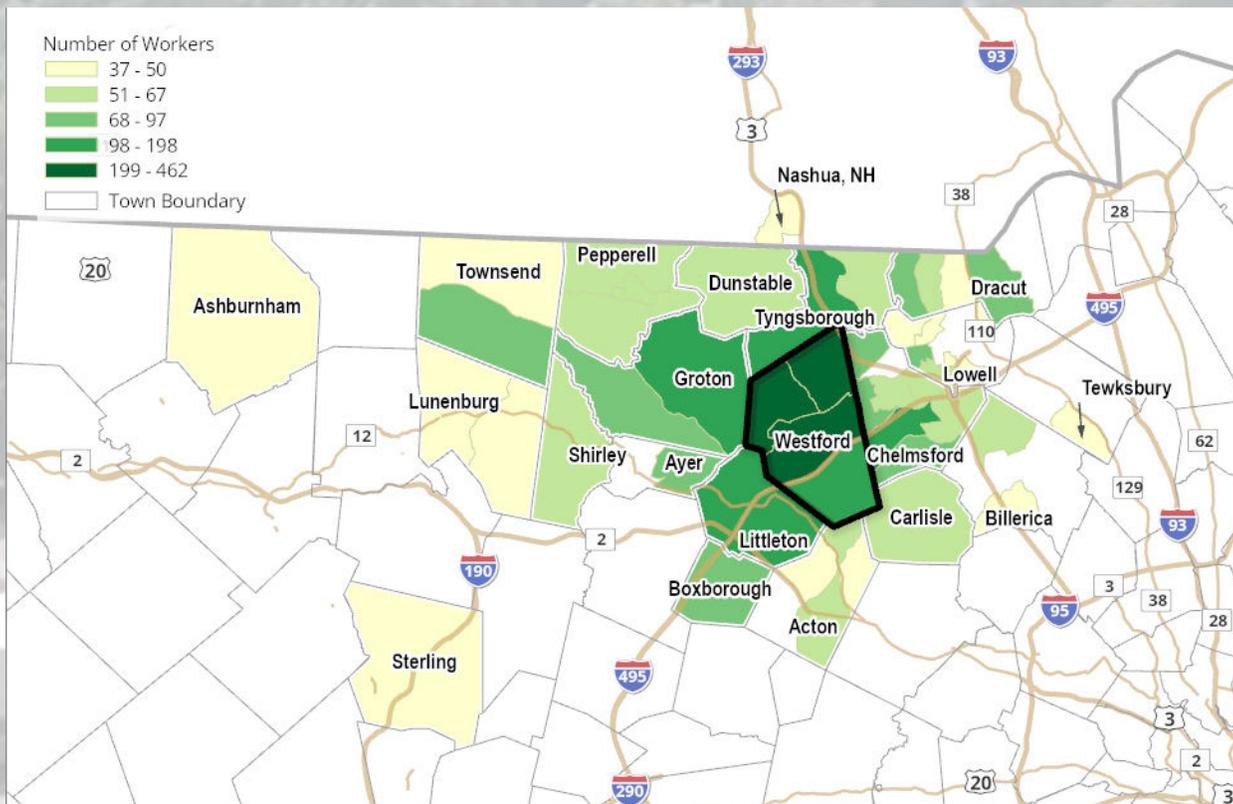
Source: Data Axle, 2023. List is by location, i.e., two franchises of the same company are counted separately.

MBTA Communities Catalyst Award

In March, 2025, the Town of Westford was awarded \$300,000 through the MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund (CCF), as part of the state of Massachusetts's initiative to support communities in advancing housing development and critical infrastructure improvements. The CCF is a new funding source created by the Healey-Driscoll Administration for local infrastructure projects and improvements to help unlock housing production. The funding will allow Westford to conduct pre-development activities for critical transportation connectivity in its 3A district to leverage new development; identify strategic connections to existing trails and sidewalk networks; and educate the public about the benefits of thoughtful multi-family development and redevelopment.

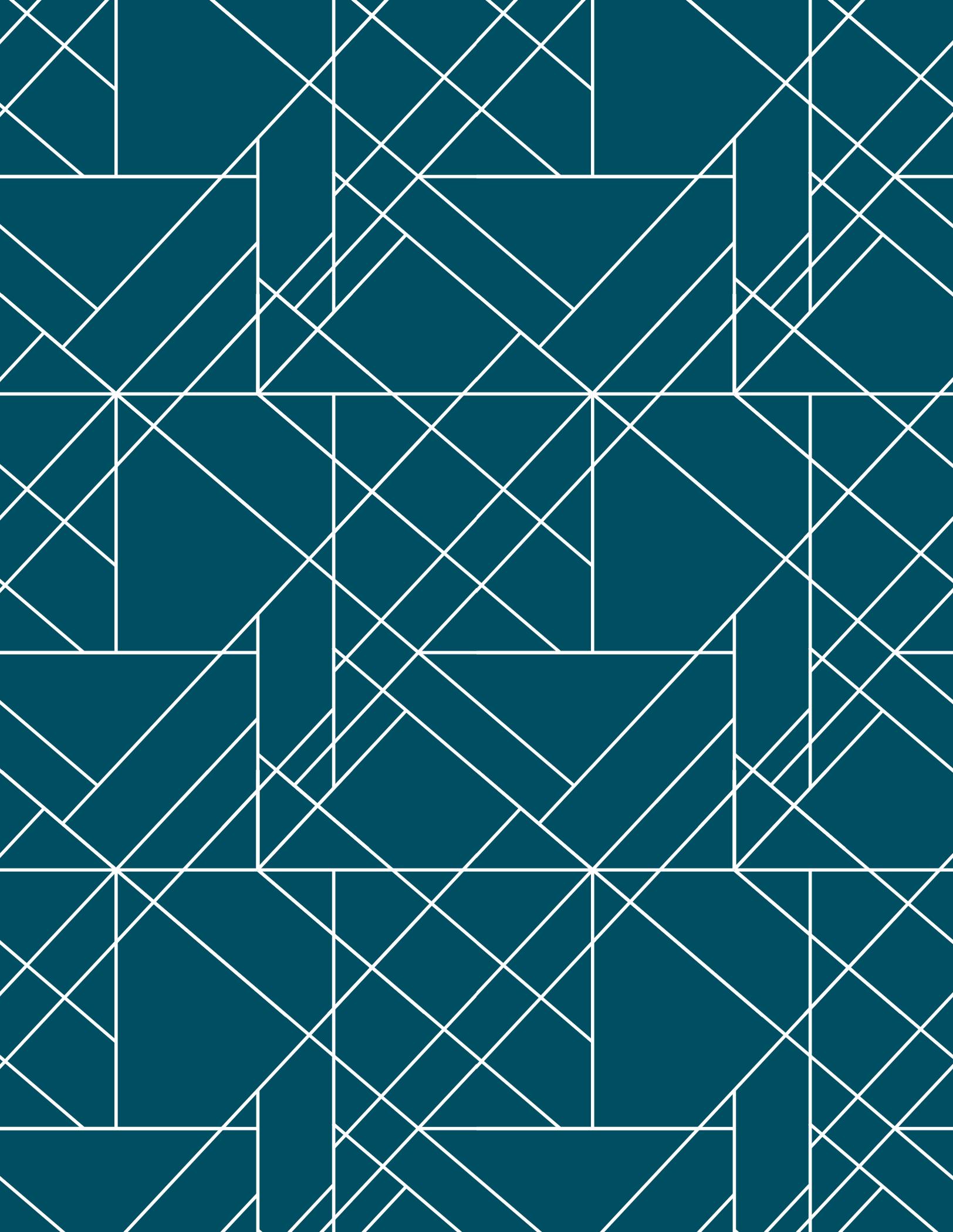
† North American Industrial Classification System. This 2- to 6-digit code classifies businesses based on their primary activities. Find more information at <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

FIGURE 21: WESTFORD-BASED FIRMS WORKER ORIGINS



Sources: LEHD (2022 On the Map destination analysis); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP (2009 hydrography). Produced by NMCOG: 5/7/2025

Background Image Source: Greater Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce



SECTION 2

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND





SUMMARY BACKGROUND

This section provides a brief overview of the critical findings that make up an economic snapshot of the Greater Lowell region. This does not only provide facts and figures, but answers the question “What have we done?” It provides support for the analysis of strengths and opportunities in the next section - paired with the aspirations and desired results we heard in stakeholder outreach.

Overall, the region has a strong economy that has pockets of distress and room for growth. Its core industries are strong, but more employment can be centralized in the region to create additional opportunities for economies of scale, mixing of ideas, and specializing the labor pool.

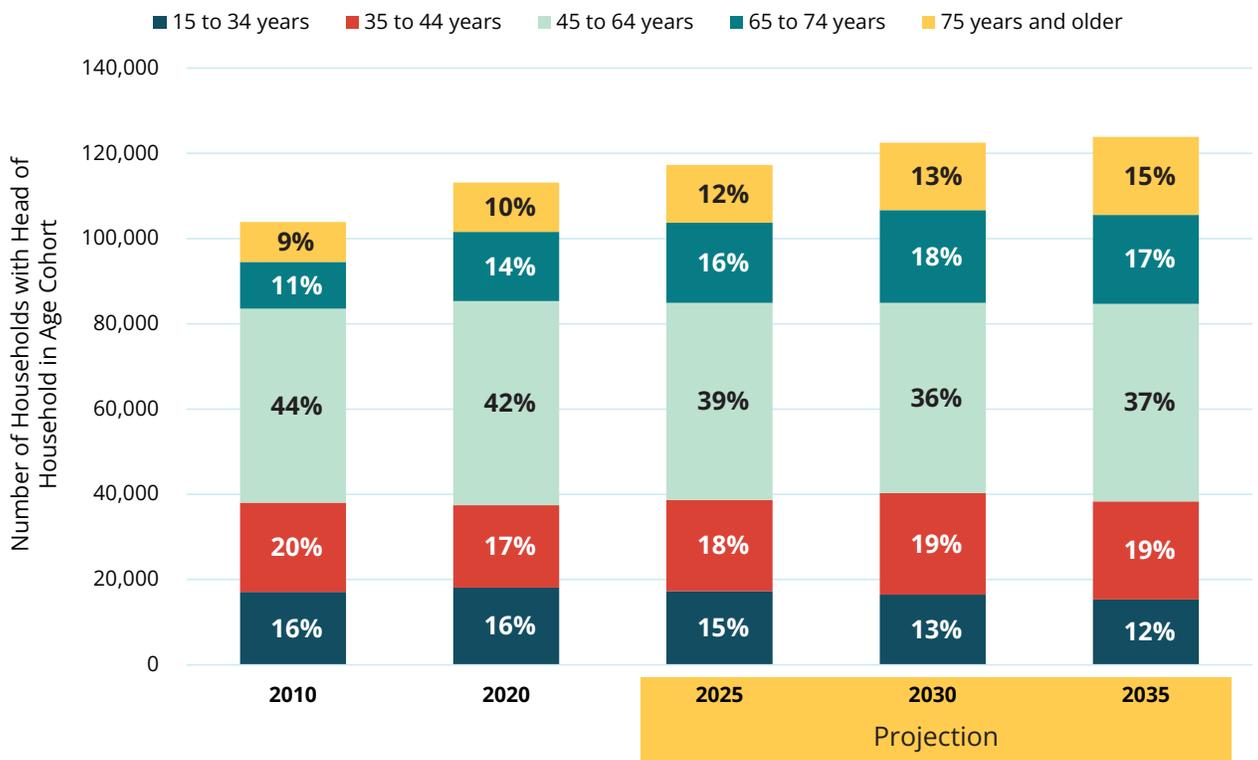
Population and Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, the total population for the proposed District was 310,009 in 2020. This is an 8.1% increase from 2010, when the population count was 286,901. Assuming existing conditions continue, Greater Lowell's growth is expected to slow in the coming years. With an aging population, the region is projected to grow less than 0.5% in the coming decade, with the City of Lowell seeing the biggest projected population loss in the long term. Suburban communities such as Dunstable, Tyngsborough, Westford, and Billerica are expected to see the largest increases in population. The share of people aged 65+ will only grow across the region in this same time frame, potentially representing

one out of three regional households by 2040, up from one in four in 2020.

The region houses many different cultures and demographics, driven by the population center of Lowell. As a whole, the region is 67% white, 14% Asian, 9.3% Hispanic, and 5% Black, compared to state averages of 69%, 7%, 6.5%, and 12.5%, respectively. 17% of Lowell residents live below the poverty line. All municipalities in the region other than Lowell have a higher median household income than the state average of \$100,000, including Dunstable (\$201,500) and Westford (\$181,600) with the highest median household incomes.

FIGURE 22: PROJECTED CHANGE 2010-2035, HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD AGE



How is Population Projected? The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the UMass Donahue Institute, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC), with input from NMCOG, developed projections for every community in Massachusetts for 2030, 2040, and 2050. They are based upon a statewide model that uses the prior five years of data to estimate birthrates, deathrates, and migration rates for each region to project population and household change, including age, household type, and income categories. Analysts then assigned that growth to census block groups through a computer model based on the block groups' attractiveness and zoning capacity. More detailed projections of household and employment growth are available from NMCOG.

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





Key Industries

Life sciences, advanced manufacturing, defense, resilience technology, other technology, and professional, scientific, and technical services are leading industrial clusters within Massachusetts. These industries have been identified as priorities by statewide organizations like [TeamMA](#) and [MassEcon](#), as well as regional economic development priorities in plans including [MassHire's Northeast Regional Blueprint](#) and [Middlesex 3 Industry Clusters](#).

This mix of industries is a sign of a competitive, resilient economy. These are especially important because they are traded industries – meaning they sell goods and services outside of the region – in contrast to local industries that serve local customers and needs. Traded industries can help grow the economic base by contributing to overall GDP. They tend to have high productivity and wages among workers.

Location Quotient: A measure of how concentrated an industry is compared to the state as a whole. It compares two figures: the percentage of workers in the region who work in each industry, and the percentage of workers in the state who work in that industry.

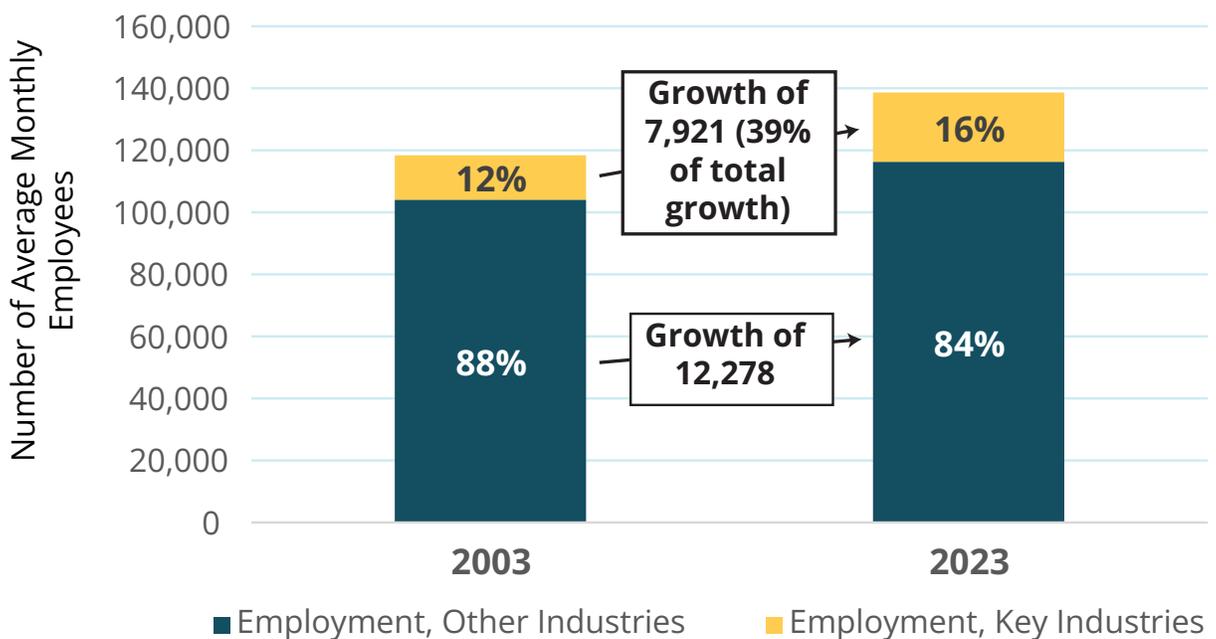
As much as these industries are strengths within Massachusetts, they are especially a strength in the Greater Lowell region.

This analysis identifies several sectors of interconnected industries that are regional strengths. The sectors below represent areas of strategic growth because of overall employment and industry specialization, concentration of related industries, and opportunities for employment and GDP growth.

To determine which traded industries rank among Greater Lowell's most important, industries were analyzed by level of employment, employment growth, and employment concentration, also known as "location quotient" (See sidebar). This analysis identified Greater Lowell's specific industrial strengths as Telecommunication and Data Technology, Life Sciences/Med Tech, Advanced Electronic Manufacturing, and Engineering. This is detailed on the **Industrial Strengths in Greater Lowell** Table on the next page. Sectors within these industrial strengths contribute to each of the clusters identified by the MassHire Northeast Regional Blueprint and Middlesex 3.

Within Greater Lowell, these key industry sectors employ workers at nearly 2 times the rate of Massachusetts as a whole. Regional employment within these industries includes 1 in 6 workers, totaling 22,304 employees in the region.

FIGURE 23: INDUSTRIAL STRENGTHS IN GREATER LOWELL - IMPORTANCE



Source: Fourth Economy Analysis of Lightcast, Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Data, 2023

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTHS IN GREATER LOWELL

NAICS Code	Description	Jobs, 2023	Employment Concentration, 2023
Advanced Electronic Manufacturing: 5,077 Employees			
334413	Semiconductor and Related Device Manufacturing	346	1.88
334416	Capacitor, Resistor, Coil, Transformer, and Other Inductor Manufacturing	463	28.35
334511	Search, Detection, Navigation, Guidance, Aeronautical, and Nautical System and Instrument Manufacturing	734	6.36
334513	Instruments and Related Products Manufacturing for Measuring, Displaying, and Controlling Industrial Process Variables	346	1.88
334516	Analytical Laboratory Instrument Manufacturing	2,803	66.86
Life Sciences and Med Tech: 5,664 Employees			
339112	Surgical and Medical Instrument Manufacturing	358	2.76
541380	Testing Laboratories	337	2.13
541714	Research and Development in Biotechnology (except Nanobiotechnology)	2,367	9.01
541715	Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (except Nanotechnology and Biotechnology)	2,603	5.33
Engineering: 1,853 Employees			
541330	Engineering Services	1,853	1.80
Telecommunication and Data Technology: 9,710 Employees			
513210	Software Publishers	3,586	6.11
516210	Media Streaming Distribution Services, Social Networks, and Other Media Networks and Content Providers	1,067	5.22
517111	Wired Telecommunications Carriers	577	1.36
517112	Wireless Telecommunications Carriers (except Satellite)	470	6.01
517810	All Other Telecommunications	404	9.88
518210	Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	446	1.01
541511	Custom Computer Programming Services	1,195	1.19
541512	Computer Systems Design Services	1,677	1.62
541519	Other Computer Related Services	289	2.45

Source: Fourth Economy Analysis of Lightcast, Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Data, 2023

These industrial strengths have been critically important to industrial and employment growth within the Greater Lowell Region (See **Figure 23** on previous page),

In the past 20 years, Greater Lowell has added 20,198 jobs – and 7,921 of those jobs, representing 39% of the growth, came from these handful of important industries.

Despite Greater Lowell's traded industries having a particularly strong mix of growing sectors, the relative size in employment of all traded industries is still small. The region has a high concentration of local-focused jobs, which provide services directly to local residents.² These jobs often require less formal education, but they pay less. This indicates an opportunity to grow the amount of traded sector industry to drive economic growth, bringing in new money into our regional economy (see **Workforce and Talent** section on the next page.)

² Fourth Economy Analysis of Lightcast Industry Data

That said, there are several critical local-focused sectors of key importance to Greater Lowell because they provide jobs or other economic benefits to the region even though they are not traded:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Education
- Construction

This CEDS considers these key industries in addition to the industrial strengths identified above.

The region is in the midst of a major economic opportunity, anchored by a strong industry mix and attractive, developable sites that can catalyze innovation and growth. Still, to realize this economic opportunity, intentionally aligning economic development services is essential.



Workforce and Talent

While the region has a higher level of educational achievement than the U.S.—for example, the region’s percentage of people with a bachelor’s degree and above (40.5%) is 6 points higher—the region’s rate of attainment of a bachelor’s degree or higher is still below the Massachusetts state average of 46%.³

Nevertheless, educational achievement in the Greater Lowell region continues to rise, with the most recent American Community Survey data showing increases in those holding bachelor’s or graduate degrees in both the City of Lowell and the suburban/rural towns. Lowell has also made progress in attainment of a high school diploma or equivalent.

Greater Lowell also has a strong educational and workforce development ecosystem. The Greater Lowell Workforce Board serves eight of the nine Greater Lowell communities. It enrolled 335 community members in workforce or skills training programs and provided services to 1,059 employers in FY 2024. It also cooperates with major educational providers such as the University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell), Middlesex Community College,

excellent high schools, and three technical high schools (Greater Lowell Technical High School, Nashoba Valley Technical High School, and Shawsheen Valley Technical High School).

With that said, Greater Lowell’s workforce sees a high rate of inflow and outflow for daily employment. 70% of Greater Lowell residents are employed outside of the region, with the majority of this out-flow going to the Greater Boston Region.⁴ 64% of regional employees live outside of Greater Lowell’s communities, with communities such as Nashua, New Hampshire; Lawrence; Boston; and Methuen providing the highest volumes of workers to the Greater Lowell region. This mismatch is likely due to the types of employment available in the region, especially in Lowell.

The likely trend is that the region’s more educated workers, who live in communities such as Westford, Dunstable, and Chelmsford, exit the region for traded sector work. Meanwhile, the region’s less educated workers, who are heavily concentrated in Lowell, fill many of the locally available jobs.

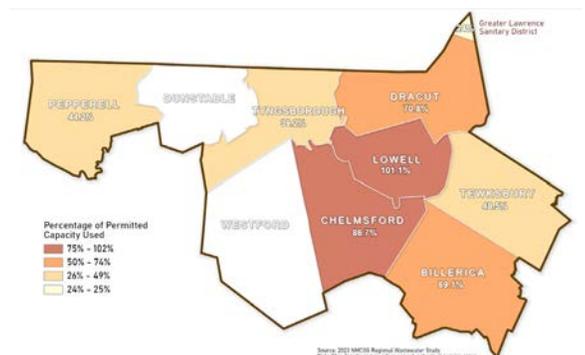
Key Infrastructure and Assets

The Greater Lowell region is well-positioned between Boston, Manchester, and Worcester, with “hard” infrastructure and assets—roadways, transit, and utilities—to support economic development. However, this infrastructure needs upgrading to serve twenty-first century needs.

Greater Lowell is served by an extensive highway network, and a vast majority of commuters travel to work in automobiles, mostly driving alone. Interstates 93 and 495, as well as US Route 3, serve as the major highways providing connections between the region and the Boston-Cambridge area, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island and other locations throughout the northeast. The Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) provides fixed route bus service in the City of Lowell and the Towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough and Westford. All fixed routes originate and end in Lowell. Two commuter rail stations, Lowell and North Billerica, provide additional connections through the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail to Boston.

3 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 5-Year Estimates

FIGURE 24: PERCENT OF PERMITTED CAPACITY USED



2023 NMCOG Regional Wastewater Study. Map depicts communities served, not actual service areas.

The Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility serves the City of Lowell and Towns of Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Chelmsford, and Dracut. The Towns of Billerica and Pepperell also have wastewater treatment plants. The Towns of Dunstable and Westford rely on private septic tanks. A similar patchwork of water providers and private wells provides potable water to the nine municipalities. National Grid serves the region’s electrical needs.

4 U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Much of this physical infrastructure is aging and often inadequate for future growth and changing needs and demands. Lowell is currently undertaking a major, nearly decade-long project to update its sewer system, yet much will still be obsolete or otherwise in need of expansion or upgrade. The Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility is at or near capacity for most of its communities, creating a barrier to economic development in the region, in addition to costly requirements to address environmental impacts (See Natural Resources Section). Many towns are at their maximum sewer capacity or have no sewer system, hindering village-style or larger-scale growth. The existence of pollutants has impacted municipal wells and complicated water delivery.

From a transportation perspective, across the region and particularly outside of Lowell, roadway infrastructure and investments have historically been vehicle-oriented, which has detracted from much needed pedestrian, cyclist, and transit-rider infrastructure. Reductions to the regional transit system service frequency, which already had hour-long headways on many critical routes, has also affected the ability of people to move from between homes to and jobs. Despite the high number of workers employed outside of the region, the transit system does not connect the region well to other job centers such as Burlington, Bedford, Cambridge, Somerville, South Boston, and Nashua, New Hampshire. Transfers are required in most cases, including travelling into and then out of Boston to reach Somerville or Cambridge by transit.

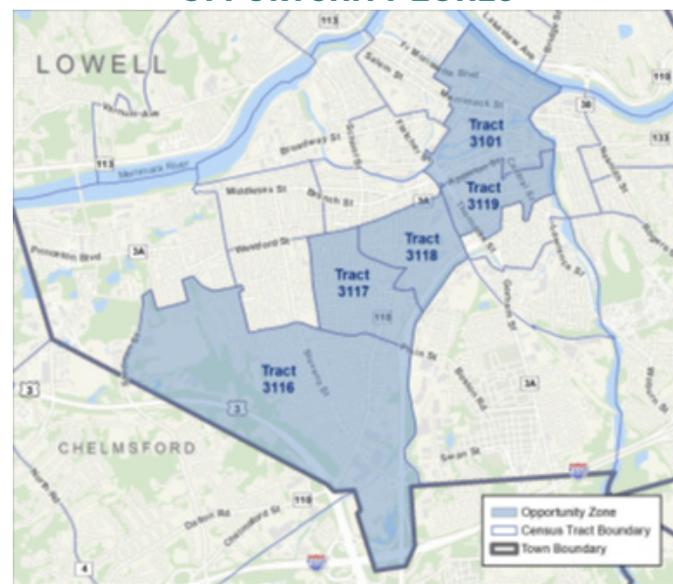
The segmented nature of the region makes large infrastructure projects challenging. To date, the region has no solution to funding infrastructure updates en masse, with state and federal funding unable to fully subsidize needed improvements. The lack of adequate infrastructure often stems from a lack of administrative capacity, minimal alignment on the specific improvements needed, and a concern that large infrastructure projects are not aligned with local goals and do little to improve residents' quality of life.

Municipal staff and budgets are also limited, which hinders the large scale of investment that is required to initiate and maintain infrastructure assets throughout the region.

Costs for core services such as education and public safety are expanding faster than the 2.5% tax levy cap for Massachusetts municipalities, not accounting for growth. The Commonwealth's Chapter 70 (education) and Chapter 90 (roadway) funds have not seen substantial increases in decades, requiring that municipalities allocate limited funds across services and infrastructure that only increase in need. In addition, the region's Opportunity Zones have failed to see a high rate of renewed investment.

Finally, the region faces competitive pressure from New Hampshire, which has no sales tax and certain other costs that are lower than in Massachusetts. Communities in the region could otherwise benefit from the introduction of a greater volume of commercial properties to bolster local revenue and economic activity. Smaller and more rural towns often feel they can be put into positions where they are competing against each other for infrastructure project funding, employment site placements, and commercial tax revenue. Such communities express a desire for more joint opportunities to collaboratively apply for major grants to allow for investment in large scale infrastructure projects that serve as the foundation for economic development and growth.

FIGURE 25: GREATER LOWELL OPPORTUNITY ZONES



Sources: US Census/MassGIS (Census 2010 tracts); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads, structures, open space); MassGIS (town boundaries); MassDEP (2005/2011 hydrography). Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation. Produced by NMCOG 2/12/2020.



HOUSING

The region’s housing shortage, and continued need for housing moving forward, is a direct deterrent to economic growth.

There are 117,000 total housing units in the region, with a projected demand of 19,250 more housing units needed by 2035. While 10,700 of these units may be created through existing development patterns, there is a projected gap of ~8,500 units that the region currently does not have the capacity to develop.⁵

Housing options are also limited in terms of typology, affordability, and suitability for various life stages. This includes housing oriented toward transit; smaller units for smaller familiesm individuals living alone, or older people; units for people with disabilities; and housing in walkable neighborhoods outside Lowell.

Existing housing region-wide is newer than the state’s average, presenting options to those with access to both rental and for-sale options. 51% of regional units were built before 1970, compared to 58% of statewide units. However, 67% of Lowell’s housing units were built before 1970. Lowell, Dunstable, and Pepperell have the least expensive rental and for-sale housing options. The region’s homeownership

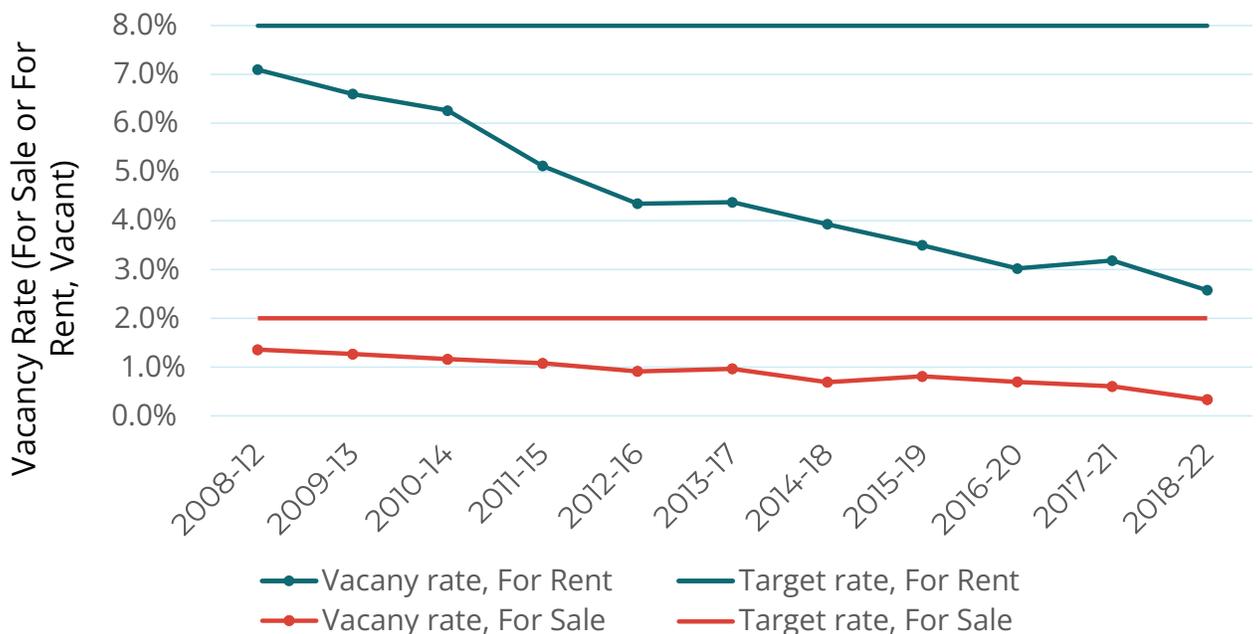
rate is high, at 68% total compared to 62% in Massachusetts, but is only 43% in Lowell, where 38% of regional housing units are located.

Relative to Greater Boston, Greater Lowell’s housing stock is less expensive. This provides a competitive alternative to housing closer to or within Boston. This complements the lower cost of commercial rent in Greater Lowell, providing an attractive set of similar amenities at lower costs. That said, this does create a complication: the cost to construct new developments is similar to Boston, but anticipated rents or sales prices are lower, creating gaps between cost and revenue in pro-formas that make financing more difficult and/or potential revenue not worth the known risk.

An even larger challenge is that compared to the region’s wages and the United States generally, Greater Lowell’s housing is expensive. This makes the region less competitive than comparable regions elsewhere in the United States, as firms struggle to pay wages that allow workers to afford housing in the region. This also pushes many to live in nearby New Hampshire, extending commute times and diluting the concentration of talent and labor.

⁵ At Home in Greater Lowell Part 1: Data and Strategies, NMMCOG

FIGURE 26: RESIDENTIAL VACANCY RATES, 2008-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. “Target” levels represent the vacancy rate goals of At Home in Greater Lowell, which are within the range of vacancy rates that are considered “healthy” for a functioning market. These rates provide enough units on the market to provide attainable housing choice to buyers. See *The Empty House Next Door*, Alan Mallach, 2018.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Regional quality of life is high, with most communities hosting essential services, healthcare offerings, cultural experiences, and access to the outdoors. The City of Lowell struggles the most in terms of health outcomes, with issues surrounding opioid overdoses, alcohol abuse, and depression leading to the city having a slightly lower than average life expectancy compared to other regional municipalities, the state, and the country as a whole. Regional health data suggests that the region's largest health-related problems include mental health, chronic health and wellness, and substance abuse. The region, like many, also suffers from a shortage of childcare that hinders the workforce participation of parents.

As a historic region, ample historic and cultural attractions are present throughout and anchored by the Lowell National Historic Park. Ongoing efforts for maximizing the cultural and creative economy of the City of Lowell are led by Mosaic Lowell, and the surrounding towns have expressed interest in collaborating on marketing and other efforts. An abundance of parks and year-round outdoor assets create ample access to recreation, from hiking and biking to kayaking and apple-picking.

NATURAL RESOURCES

As a primarily suburban region with ample river frontage, farmland, and open space, Greater Lowell is uniquely positioned to maintain and leverage environmental assets for economic development.

The region's prioritization of parks, increased riverfront access, a connected trail system, existing ski areas, and agritourism opportunities is elevating its status as an outdoor recreational hub.

The presence of working farms is also unique for a region so close to Boston. With the state's push to subsidize existing farmland to preserve this legacy industry, Greater Lowell is well positioned to capture state agricultural grants and financial assistance programs that will help its more rural communities, like Dunstable.

Economic hurdles related to the environment stem from outdated infrastructure. Lowell has received multiple fines from the federal government in the last decade due to violations related to the Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility which transports, treats, and disposes of wastewater, stormwater, and domestic septage from the City of Lowell and the surrounding towns of Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury, and Tyngsborough. While Lowell continues to work towards compliance with a consent decree and address combined sewer overflows (CSOs), generally, the repair and replacement of aging or much needed increases in capacity or expansion of regional infrastructure is seen as a massive financial burden for the region moving forward, with no clear solution identified for financing this effort.



Image: Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

SECTION 3

SOAR ANALYSIS





SOAR ANALYSIS

A SOAR analysis is a type of visioning exercise that focuses on Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results.

Strengths are the resources and capabilities of the region and its stakeholders.

Opportunities are external or new factors or circumstances that could be leveraged.

Aspirations are statements of what the region wishes to achieve. These will help develop the vision statement and goals.

Results are the specific, measurable outcomes that can help the region know if it's achieving its aspirations. These will help to develop tracking measures.

It is a positive and forward-looking analysis to help identify and leverage strengths to capitalize on opportunities to achieve goals. Although acknowledging challenges in the region, it seeks to identify what opportunities those challenges represent. Through analyzing the Summary Background, discussions with nearly 60 economic development stakeholders as part of the listening tour, and comments from the CEDS Committee, the CEDS team undertook this analysis.

<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong regional planning 2. Attractive communities with vibrant small businesses 3. Various lifestyle options 4. Developed industry clusters 5. Top-in-class educational systems 6. Collaborative, competent, and ambitious economic development partners 7. Cultural and historic offerings 8. Eco-tourism and outdoor assets 9. Welcoming communities with vibrant culture 	<p>Aspirations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best-in-class economic development ecosystem 2. Recognition as a place of vibrancy, innovation, and excellence, including the City of Lowell 3. Better live-work opportunities 4. Twenty-first century, resilient infrastructure 5. A region that achieves and celebrates high educational attainment, lifelong learning, and excellence 6. A high level of local government capacity 7. Affordable, accessible housing that supports the needs of all life stages 8. Unparalleled quality of life, health, safety, and transportation access
<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC), including the Hamilton Canal Innovation District 2. Statewide investment in economic development 3. Momentum for development 4. Workforce funding and emergence of knowledge economy jobs 5. Increasing educational levels and workforce funding 6. Regional growth of key industrial clusters 7. Increased interest in local business and quality of place 	<p>Results</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Higher rate of business attraction, retention, expansion 2. Younger region population 3. Higher in-region employment levels 4. Better community sentiments on growth, reflected in zoning and permitting 5. Stronger environmental and infrastructure conditions 6. Expanded funding for infrastructure updates 7. Larger variety, availability, and affordability of homes 8. A more connected region

Strengths

Strong regional planning: From the regional level to individual municipalities, Greater Lowell is incredibly well planned for. Relevant planning efforts include:

1. May 2020 – May 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2020)
2. Greater Lowell Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan (ERRP) (2024)
3. Regional Strategic Plan (2011)
4. Greater Lowell Vision Zero (2024)
5. At Home in Greater Lowell: A Regional Housing Strategy (In progress)
6. Mosaic Lowell: Arts, Cultural, and Creative Economy Plan (2022)
7. Greater Lowell Tourism and Marketing Report (2024)
8. Northeast Massachusetts Regional Labor Force Blueprint (2024)
9. Community Needs Assessments from Community Teamwork (2021)
10. Greater Lowell Digital Infrastructure Plan (In progress)
11. Municipal Master or Comprehensive Plans
12. Municipal Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans
13. Municipal Economic Development Strategies
14. Regional Transportation Plans

Attractive communities with vibrant small businesses: Many of the region's communities have seen population growth in recent years, including many residents with high educational attainment and well-paying occupations. These attractive communities often draw people who live and work on or within the MA-128 corridor, a hub for high-paying jobs. Small businesses are key to economic growth in these communities: In Massachusetts, March, 2024, nearly 15% of jobs were in firms of fewer than 10 employees.⁶

Various lifestyle options: The Greater Lowell region offers numerous lifestyle choices and opportunities to a variety of demographics. Suburban neighborhoods, rural farmland and open spaces, urban mixed-use developments, and affordable housing options all exist within the region and its municipalities. These options can meet essentially any preference, making the region an attractive destination for living.

Developed industry clusters: Through both legacy industries and emerging sectors, Greater Lowell is a commercial hub where a variety of occupations comprise a robust, competitive economy. Key clusters include life sciences, advanced manufacturing, defense, creative technologies, health care, education, technology, defense, and professional, scientific, and technical services. Specific industrial strengths include:

1. Advanced Electronic Manufacturing
2. Life Sciences and Med Tech
3. Engineering
4. Telecommunication and Data Technology

Top-in-class educational system: Greater Lowell has an excellent Pre-K-12 and higher education system anchored by Middlesex Community College and University of Massachusetts Lowell. U.S. News and World Report ranks Massachusetts' Pre-K-12 system #2 in the United States, and the region boasts some of the state's best schools. Middlesex Community College provides excellent workforce education and certification programs. UMass Lowell has 120+ undergraduate programs, 77 graduate programs, and nearly 17,000 students. It also has a major role in workforce development, business development, and commercialization of university research in life sciences, engineering, and other industrial sectors.

Collaborative, competent, and ambitious economic development partners: The region has a network of skilled organizations related to economic development. NMCOG handles economic development planning efforts, Middlesex 3 excels in contacting and gathering key business and civic officials to discuss economic issues, and MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board is among the most innovative workforce boards in the state, with strong connections to business, labor, and education. Other entities provide entrepreneurship and small business assistance. These entities routinely work together. This collaborative spirit provides a foundation for deeper partnerships.

Cultural and historic offerings: In the eyes of both residents and tourists, Lowell is a historic centerpiece of Massachusetts and New England as a whole. Anchored by the Lowell National Historic Park as a major attraction, the Greater Lowell region's history and mosaic of cultures is a key part of its identity. This sentiment is backed by numerous cultural experiences throughout the region, including museums, festivals, and theaters.

Eco-tourism and outdoor assets: For a region with such close proximity to a major metropolitan area, Greater Lowell has ample farmland and outdoor assets that drive an agricultural economy and eco-tourism. Assets such as Kimball Farm; various mills; Nashoba Valley Ski Area; trails along the Merrimack, Concord, and Nashua River such as the Lowell Riverwalk, Nashua River Rail Trail, and Concord River Greenway; and countless other regional trails such as the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail are attractive to residents and tourists alike. These assets and their corresponding experiences add to the region's identity as a high-quality area to live outside of Boston.

Welcoming communities with vibrant culture: The Greater Lowell region has a reputation as a vibrant, welcoming community for all populations. From Downtown Lowell into the suburbs, the multicultural region offers a strong destination for new and existing Americans alike.

6. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, BLS



Opportunities

Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC), including the Hamilton Canal Innovation District: Two related projects offer the opportunity for catalytic economic growth in the Greater Lowell region, extending beyond their location in the City of Lowell. First, the Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC), backed by ample state support, will bring an unprecedented volume of commerce and mixed-use residential offerings to the heart of Lowell, alongside major employers and R&D activities. The planning area for LINC includes the pre-existing Hamilton Canal Innovation District, which aims to revitalize canal-side, transit-oriented property in Lowell for both commercial and residential uses.

Statewide investment in economic development: As a state, Massachusetts is pouring an unprecedented volume of capital into a multitude of investments aimed at catalyzing increased economic development outcomes. Regions across the state, including Greater Lowell, stand to benefit immensely from the programmatic dollars allocated by the Mass Leads Act. Specific programs that may directly benefit Greater Lowell include expansions to the MassWorks Infrastructure Program, Mass Impact, Rural Development Fund, Local Economic Development Grants, and incentives relevant to life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

Momentum for development: Backed by developments in Lowell, the region has recently created ample momentum for development. Stakeholders engaged throughout this process highlighted the strong opportunities that exist for commercial development and redevelopment activities not just in Lowell, but across the region. Key opportunities include business parks, commercial sites, and Main Streets. Middlesex 3 maintains a list of [Priority Development Sites](#).

Emergence of knowledge economy jobs: The number of knowledge economy jobs related to life sciences, manufacturing, engineering, and R&D adjacent to the region is growing, providing a unique opportunity to capture some of that growth and create a stronger rate of live-work in Greater Lowell. This would be paired with recruiting the workers of these jobs to live in the region. This opportunity could reduce Greater Lowell's workforce leakage, as the majority of residents currently leave the region daily for higher-paying employment in and around Boston.

Increasing educational levels and workforce funding: The average educational attainment throughout Greater Lowell is high and is increasing. In addition, Massachusetts has programs that can support workforce development activities, including the Workforce Investment Trust Fund and other offerings through the Massachusetts Educational Financing Agency (MEFA). This opportunity could assist organizations upskill existing regional residents, including through "connecting activities" with regional educational institutions. This would connect people disconnected from jobs, which are especially concentrated in inner Lowell neighborhoods.

Regional growth of key industrial clusters: The CEDS analysis showed that in the United States, and in Massachusetts, the key industries Greater Lowell is strong in are growing. Through the LINC project and other economic activities, the Greater Lowell region has already begun to increase its support for key industries (see **Key Industry section of Background Summary**). This provides a perfect opportunity for more coordinated governance and programming to accommodate growth in existing and target industries. This may look like leveraging state incentives related to our key clusters and industrial strengths, creating regional sub-committees focused on the growth of target industries, or working with municipalities to align zoning and permitting to opportunities, create hyper-local incentives, and develop incubation programs that help to create, attract, and retain these target industries and their businesses.

Increased interest in local business and quality of place: The region is no exception to national retail trends that increasingly prize quality of place, authentic local businesses, and unique experiences. Fortunately, Lowell's numerous commercial corridors and the Main Street offerings of the region's smaller municipalities are in a good spot to take advantage of this opportunity. Small businesses such as restaurants, entertainment venues, and personal service providers already are authentic and unique. However, the many services that exist to support the creation and long-term stability of these businesses could still be expanded - which would contribute to local spending and overall community vibrancy. Additional offerings could include the creation of a local business incubator, local grants for business beautification, infrastructure, and technological upgrades, and more hands-on technical assistance for small business owners.

Profile: Chelmsford Cross Roads at Route 129



The Town of Chelmsford's largest business park was built piecemeal beginning in the era of Urban Renewal. It was popular at the height of traditional suburban office parks, with access to I-495 and Route 3, abundant space for parking, and self-contained buildings. However, by 2018, the office park had begun experiencing chronic vacancies as commercial and industrial needs changed.

The Town of Chelmsford, through a grant from MassDevelopment, hired Camoin Associates to complete a market analysis and strategy. Through research, data analysis, a building/tenant inventory, stakeholder interviews, and case studies, the team

created eight recommendations.

The Town immediately began implementation, including a branding signage project, updating of social media and website campaigns, attraction of new amenities such as Pressed Café, and identification of leads and possible expansions. The Town also updated its zoning and expedited permitting in the park. Since then, the amount of vacant space dropped by nearly half.

Source: Town of Chelmsford



Promising Practice: Evansville Regional Economic Partnership



The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (E-REP) is a prime example of what collaborative economic development looks like across numerous partners. The region has a similar metropolitan population of nearly 360,000. In 2021, three organizations formally merged to establish E-REP, an organization that oversees all regional economic development. These activities range from convening businesses to community visioning, business attraction to management of a regional development authority. By combining these operations under one roof, Evansville was able to bring clarity and organization to a complex economic development ecosystem. E-REP is also a strong partner to numerous other stakeholders in the region, including the regional planning commission, community foundation, and multiple universities. While Greater Lowell has no need to merge existing organizations, different organizations can partner to create even more effective, collaborative economic development systems.

Source: Evansville Regional Economic Partnership

Aspirations

Best-in-class economic development ecosystem:

Greater Lowell aspires to have an economic development ecosystem among the most high-functioning in the United States. Municipal stakeholders and private businesses both voiced a strong aspiration toward this, including coordinating economic development activities even more than Greater Lowell's current level. This might include standardizing or formalizing regional economic development services related to site selection, business attraction, and business retention and expansion (BRE). These services help to grow the volume of businesses and jobs in the region, increasing local tax bases through directly supporting both potential and existing businesses.

Recognition as a place of vibrancy, innovation, and excellence, including the City of Lowell:

Tourists and out-of-state businesses alike describe the City of Lowell as a vibrant place for leisure and commerce. In addition, the CEDS analysis revealed that both the city and region have a high quality of life and level of opportunity. Despite this, local and nearby residents have developed a perception over time that the city is not a suitable place to live and do business. Work is needed to improve these perceptions of Lowell, improving them to a level similar to those who do not live in the area. This may include marketing, changing internal "self-talk", and making targeted investments in quality of life issues.

Better live-work opportunities:

The majority of the region's employees come from outside of the region every day for work. Changing this is a major aspiration for the region. To work towards a region with a higher rate of live-work opportunities, a multi-faceted strategy is necessary. This can focus on increased housing development, better transportation, stronger workforce development, developing and expanding traded industry jobs within the region, and a more supportive, higher quality of life.

Twenty-first century, resilient infrastructure:

To support a modern economy, the region aspires toward surpassing the New England average in quality and reliability of infrastructure. Currently, regional infrastructure is aging – in some cases over 100 years old – and often cannot accommodate new development opportunities. Specifically, wastewater and water infrastructure is outdated and inadequate in many locations. More recently, energy infrastructure is a limiting factor, as increasingly expensive substations and grid upgrades are needed for critical industries. Although comparable to other Massachusetts regions, the expense of this infrastructure, and the lack of suitable revenue source to fund these utilities, creates a hurdle compared to other areas in the U.S. Greater Lowell aspires to update infrastructure en masse, including providing affordable, plentiful energy.

A region that achieves and celebrates high educational attainment, lifelong learning, and excellence:

Lowell has been working toward earning a UNESCO "City of Learning" designation, and this spirit was found across the region. Greater Lowell has higher educational attainment levels than the U.S. average, creating a strong base toward this aspiration. However, attainment levels vary across the region. The region's rate of attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher (40.5%) is far below the state average of 46%, but still slightly above the US average. Some municipalities such as Westford (72.4%), Dunstable (59.2%), and Chelmsford (53.6%) excel above the state average, while Lowell's rate is 34.4%. Educational attainment also varies across demographic groups. The region not only aspires to improve its high school and higher education attainment rates, but to provide educational and academic excellence to all community members from Pre-K through higher education.

A high level of local government capacity:

Town managers, land use planners, Select Board members, and volunteer boards work tirelessly to undertake economic development activities, but capacity at the local level is severely limited. We aspire to break past this issue by practicing more collaborative economic development that creates strong outcomes for municipalities and the region as a whole. This includes aligning an economic development vision, hosting expertise, and providing support on a regional level to effectively engage in localized economic development activities.

Affordable, accessible housing that supports the needs of all life stages:

The region aspires toward a housing ecosystem that provides varied housing options that meet the needs of its changing population. There is a projected gap of ~8,500 units by 2035 that the region is not anticipated to build without systemic changes. Greater Lowell knows it can shape growth to conserve resources while increasing housing options in terms of typology, affordability, and options for various life stages.

Unparalleled quality of life, health, safety, and transportation access:

The ultimate aspiration is to improve quality of life, and the region aspires toward a modernized, twenty-first century public transportation system; ample childcare availability; stronger mental health outcomes; and safety and security. Multi-faceted investments aimed at shifting these paradigms can help to create more positive sentiments of the region as a whole, attracting more population and businesses. These investments could include expansions to health services, ties between major companies and regional childcare spots, access to job centers, and increased safety within population centers. Additionally, a more robust, active public transit system, and corresponding bike lanes, could increase regional connectivity and live-work opportunities.



Results

Higher rate of business attraction, retention, expansion: Economic growth in any setting is primarily due to the attraction of new businesses, the creation of new jobs, and the expansion of existing enterprises. These outcomes are key for the Greater Lowell region to achieve its priority economic development vision. Through more coordinated economic development activities, NMCOG and its numerous partner organizations can work to achieve this. These services could be provided through a coordinated regional economic development partnership or a cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA) between economic development agencies. This would result in more formalized and predictable information sharing, better coordination, and a system that is more than the sum of its parts.

Younger regional population: The region is projected to see low, if any, growth in the coming decade, caused by an aging population, a low birth rate, low movement into the area, and a lack of infrastructure to accommodate household formation and ability to move to homes that fit families' changing needs. This reality directly threatens the continued economic development of the region. Maintaining or growing the working age population is critical to economic vibrancy.

Higher in-region employment levels: There is a mismatch between locally available jobs and the jobs held by local residents, causing most residents to leave the region for daily employment. This reality threatens the region's ability to be resilient in the face of future economic shocks. More live-work opportunities can increase economic stability and keep economic impacts local.

Better community sentiments on growth, reflected in zoning and permitting: Numerous suburban communities in the region have prevalent sentiments that resist new growth, particularly residential development. These opinions directly prohibit incremental and long-term progress on issues related to housing, infrastructure, and commercial development. While each community should have a right-sized, "smart" approach to economic development, the region desires a result of a prevailing sentiment that regional economic growth, when guided carefully, can help all municipalities advance their individual municipal goals and can and will actually enhance quality of life. This should be reflected in municipal zoning and permitting policy.

Stronger environmental and infrastructure conditions: The region's aging infrastructure, specifically related to water quality and wastewater systems, has caused multiple environmental impacts, leading to fines directly from the EPA. The health of the Merrimack River has been improving in recent years, though. The region must continue to work towards strong water quality and systems to maintain its livability and business climate.

Expanded funding for infrastructure updates: Currently, the region has little funding or capacity to proactively update aging infrastructure. With many infrastructure systems already over 100 years old, many municipal leaders do not see a path forward not only for accommodating new developments, but also for maintaining existing ones. A collaborative effort to help fund infrastructure improvements across the region will benefit all municipalities in achieving better outcomes related to economic development.

Larger variety, availability, and affordability of homes: The region's housing shortage, projected to continue into the future, directly deters economic growth. If future residents are unable to find suitable housing for their needs in the region, they will consistently choose to live and work in alternative locations that surround Lowell - or leave for different regions entirely, disincentivizing business growth. 64% of regional employees live outside of Greater Lowell's communities already, many in cheaper communities such as Nashua, New Hampshire; Lawrence; and Methuen. Building the right and enough homes for local workers can not only enhance the local workforce, but also create a more attractive, livable destination in the long-term. The *At Home in Greater Lowell* Regional Housing Strategy establishes a number of metrics including housing choice, housing cost burden, and more that must be improved to improve regional quality of life and support continued economic activity in the region.

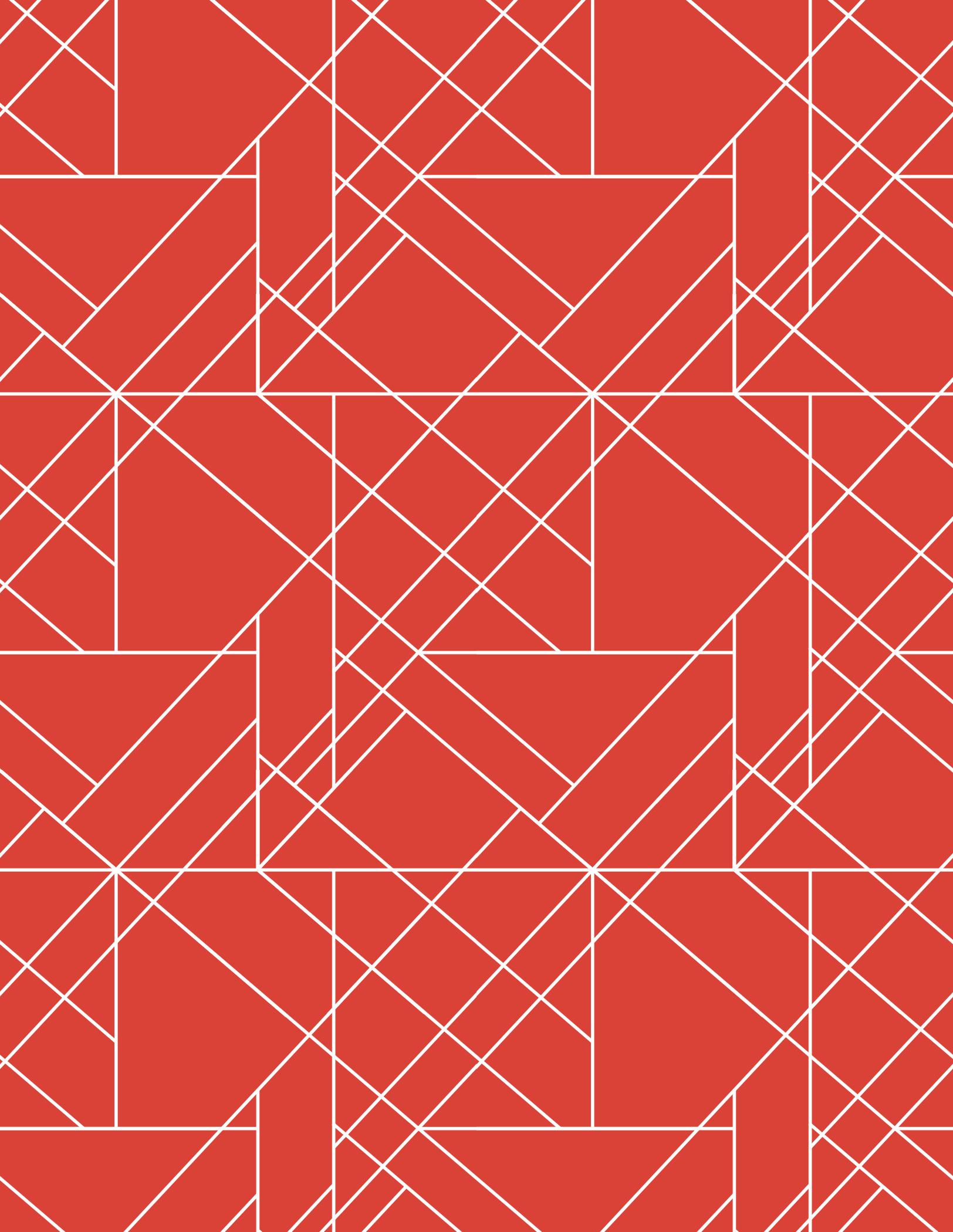
A more connected region: The transportation system has for decades deprioritized transit and active transportation, and further reductions in public transit options during the COVID-19 pandemic have lingered, limiting the connectivity between population and job centers across the region. This reality hinders live-work opportunities. To ensure regional workers can also be regional residents, increased transit options - whether busses, bike lanes, or other options - will be critical.

Profile: Home Depot Distribution Facility



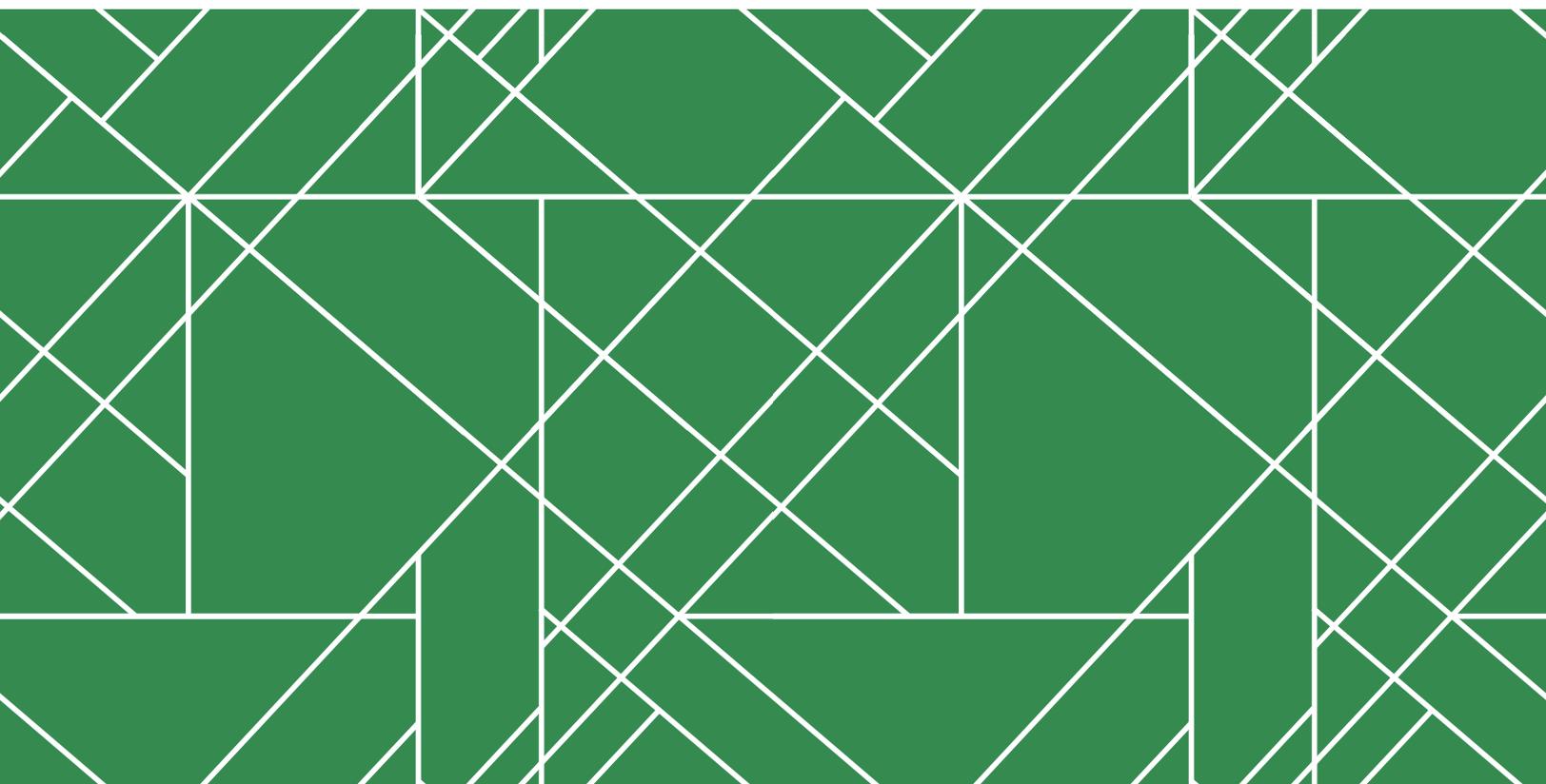
In 2022, Home Depot completed construction of a major distribution facility for Home Depot. The 775,000-square-foot, nearly \$100 million project was built on a 120-acre parcel spanning Billerica, Tewksbury, and Lowell. Middlesex 3 assisted the developer connect with all three communities to advance the project through three different sets of permitting processes. The three municipalities and developer collaborated to make sure the processes were in alignment to bring hundreds of jobs to the region.

Source: Middlesex 3



SECTION 4

VISION AND STRATEGY





GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Vision and Goals

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:

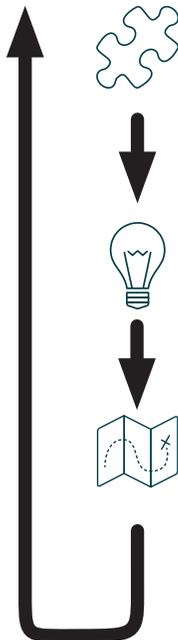
1. **Creating Economic Development Capacity:** Increase economic development competitiveness, tools, and capacity throughout the Greater Lowell region.
2. **Developing Strong Places and Towns:** Ensure all of Greater Lowell’s municipalities are vibrant, attractive places to live through increased access 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.

Each of the above goals are explored in the following strategy framework.

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?

Implementation Matrix

Each strategy has an implementation matrix. The matrix includes what role NMCOCG should take in the action, how much investment is anticipated to be needed for that action, 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 next section includes an evaluation framework, with key metric outcomes.

An explanation of the columns in the matrix is as follows:

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.
"Subtasks," or smaller steps toward an action, are listed under each action. These could form a workplan for the region.					

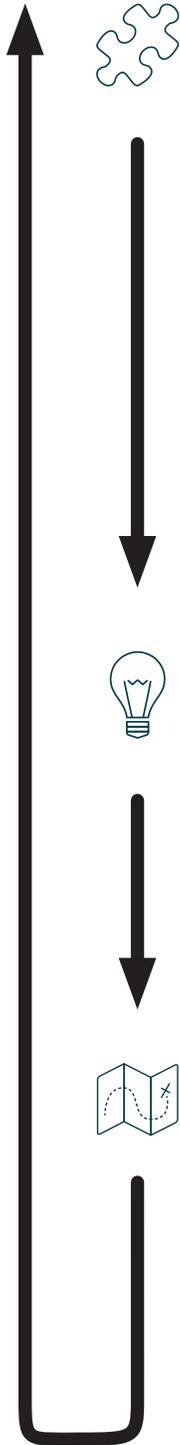


STRATEGY 1

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.					

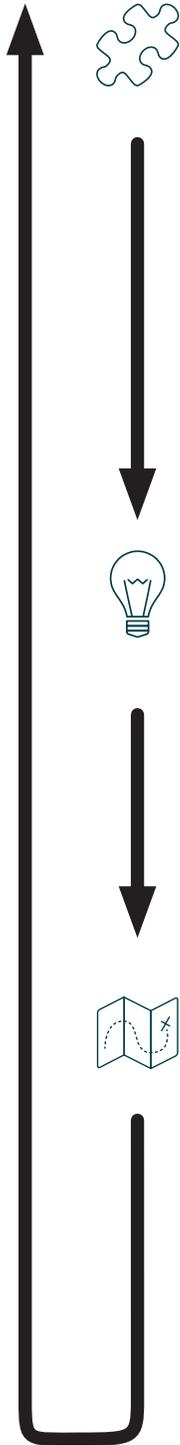


STRATEGY 2

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).					

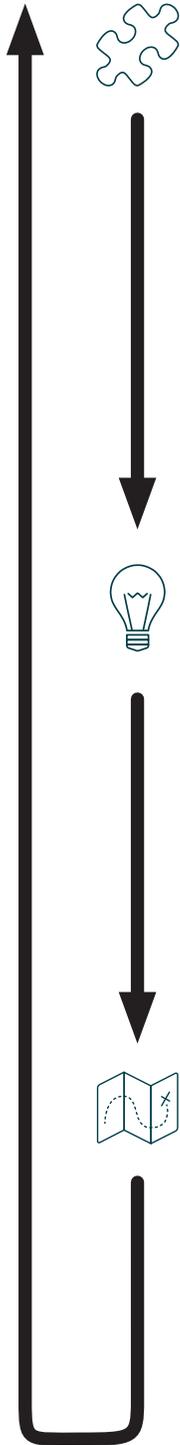


STRATEGY 4

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					

SECTION 5

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK





EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Alignment with EDA Investment Priorities

The evaluation framework starts with considering how the CEDS' four key pillars directly align with the Economic Development Administration's (EDA's) core investment priorities. Through a tailored, regional approach to economic development, the CEDS works towards the domestic priorities of:

Critical Infrastructure

Economic development planning or implementation projects that support development of public facilities, including basic public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, or telecommunications infrastructure.

Strategy 4, Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents, directly addresses the region's basic public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, and digital telecommunication infrastructure needs. **Strategy 2, Developing Strong Places and Towns**, also highlights actions to develop infrastructure that supports special places such as Main Streets and downtown Lowell.

Workforce

Economic Development planning or implementation projects that – Support job skills training to meet the hiring needs of the area in which the project is to be carried out and that result in well-paying jobs; or Otherwise promote labor force participation.

Strategy 3, Leveraging Signature Opportunities, directly address skills training through MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board's work, connecting activities, matchmaking, and customized training programs.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Economic development planning or implementation projects that – Support the development of innovation and entrepreneurship-related infrastructure; Promote business development and lending; or Foster the commercialization of new technologies that are creating technology-driven businesses and high-skilled, well-paying jobs of the future.

Strategies 3 and 1, Leveraging Signature Opportunities and Creating Economic Development Capacity, highlight actions that will increase the capacity of the region to plan and implement "soft" infrastructure focusing on key industries such as life sciences and technology. This includes leveraging LINC, the University of Massachusetts Lowell Innovation Hub, and Massachusetts Medical Device Center, programs developed to connect cutting-edge research, economic development resources, and businesses that can commercialize technology and provide high-skilled, traded industry jobs.



Economic Recovery Resilience

Economic development planning or implementation projects that enhance the ability of an area to withstand and recover from adverse short-term or long-term changes in economic conditions, including effects from industry contractions or economic impacts from natural disasters.

Economic recovery resilience is an important outcome of all four strategy pillars, including:

“Steady state” initiatives that bolster economic durability such as the industrial diversification that would result from **Strategy 3, Leveraging Signature Opportunities**, and the resilient water, sewer, energy, and transportation infrastructure created by the actions in **Strategy 4, Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents**; and

“Responsive” initiatives that encourage communication and collaboration among stakeholders and the public during and after economic impacts - initiatives such as the frameworks to respond to industry contractions and natural disasters that would result from **Strategy 1, Creating Economic Development Capacity**.

Manufacturing

Economic development planning or implementation projects that encourage job creation, business expansion, technology and capital upgrades, and productivity growth in manufacturing, including efforts that contribute to the competitiveness and growth of domestic suppliers or the domestic production of innovative, high-value products and production technologies.

Advanced manufacturing industries and the engineering industries behind manufacturing are the key industries targeted in **Strategy 3, Leveraging Signature Opportunities**, and **Strategy 1, Creating Economic Development Capacity**. These partnerships and collaborations will result in interventions that will upgrade capital and grow productivity.

Image: Rendering of Shops at Billerica. Source: Town of Billerica



Evaluation Framework Metrics

The following represent the metrics for which the overall CEDS will be evaluated. Unlike the outcomes listed in the implementation matrix, these are Greater Lowell's desired outcomes—the desired results arising from the SOAR Analysis. The following table notes which strategy pillars are intended to make a positive impact on each outcome metric.

TABLE 1: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK METRICS

	Metric	Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents
1	Target Industry Employment	X		x	
<p>Base Year Estimate: 22,304 as of 2023 <i>Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)</i></p>					
2	Gross Regional Product	X			
<p>Base Year Estimate: \$27.2 Billion as of 2024 in the following ZIP codes: 1463, 1821, 1822, 1824, 1826, 1827, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854, 1876, 1886 <i>Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).</i></p>					
3	Business Births	X	X	x	
<p>Base Year Estimate: 3,652 annual average firm births in Middlesex County, MA from 2018-2022 <i>Source: Census Business Dynamics Statistics</i></p>					
4	Regional Tourism		X		
<p>Base Year Estimate: 2002 Greater Merrimack Valley 1. Expenditures \$1,232 Million 2. Employment 7.4 Thousand 3. Payroll \$341.1 Millions 4. State Tax Receipts \$80.9 Millions 5. Local Tax Receipts \$38.8 Millions <i>Source: Economic Impact of Domestic Travel on Massachusetts</i></p>					
5	Downtown Lowell Visitation		X		
<p>Base Year Estimate: 264,456 in 2024 <i>Source: National Park Service Lowell NHP Annual Visitation Statistics Release</i></p>					
6	Resident Employment	X	X	x	X
<p>Base Year Estimate: 160,164 Living in the Selection Area in 2022 <i>Source: Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (OnTheMap)</i></p>					
7	Workforce				X
<p>Base Year Estimate: 175,132 in Labor Force in December 2024 <i>Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research Labor Force and Unemployment Data</i></p>					
8	Unemployment Rate				X
<p>Base Year Estimate: 4.1% Unemployment in December 2024 <i>Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research Labor Force and Unemployment Data</i></p>					
9	Origin-Destination: Live and Work in Region				X
<p>Base Year Estimate: 47,965 Living and Employed in the Selection Area in 2022 <i>Source: Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (OnTheMap)</i></p>					
10	Building Permits				X
<p><i>Source: Local Data</i></p>					

APPENDIX 1

FUNDING MATRIX



Ample local, state, and federal funding opportunities are available for the Greater Lowell region to leverage as it continues to work towards its strategic priorities. These programs are highlighted below.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Municipalities	MassWorks provides grants to communities to help them prepare for success and contribute to the long term strength and resilience of our Commonwealth. The MassWorks Infrastructure Program is a competitive grant program that provides the largest and most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities and other eligible public entities primarily for public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur private development, and create jobs throughout the Commonwealth.
Urban Agenda Grant Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Local organizations and coalitions	Through the Urban Agenda Grant Program, the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) funds projects or programs that build leadership, collaboration, and capacity within Massachusetts cities and towns. Successful applications come from a group of local organizations working together in a single city, town, or neighborhood.
Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Municipalities	The Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. Currently, MDI provides assistance through Ongoing technical assistance on downtown-related issues is provided by staff via telephone, fax, and written materials based on requests from communities as well as referrals from DHCD staff. Recent requests have included how to develop business recruitment programs, upper story spaces, and downtown organizational bylaws.
Rural Development Fund	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Rural towns	The RDF is a competitive grant program created to provide financial support for a variety of activities related to economic and community development in rural communities and small towns throughout the Commonwealth. The Rural Development Fund provides grants for community projects in rural and small towns – specifically towns with a population density of 500 persons per square mile and/or a total population less than 7,000.
Housing Choice Grant Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	Municipalities	The HousingWorks Infrastructure Program is a competitive grant to municipalities and other public entities for a variety of infrastructure related activities to support and unlock housing opportunities. This grant program awards funds based on the project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, and community development needs.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Community Planning Grant Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	Municipalities	The Community Planning Grant Program funds a variety of activities related to community planning. This competitive grant program awards funds based on the project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, and community development, including funding for MBTA Communities compliance activities.
HousingWorks Infrastructure Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	Municipalities	The Housing Choice Grant Program rewards municipalities that have produced a significant number of housing units in the last five years and that have adopted or established Best Practices that encourage housing production. This competitive grant program awards funds based on the project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, and community development.
Underutilized Properties Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Municipalities and their agencies, CDCs, EDICs, EDAs, and certain nonprofit organizations	For the purpose of funding "projects that will improve, rehabilitate or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant or underutilized properties to achieve the public purposes of eliminating blight, increasing housing production, supporting economic development projects, increasing the number of commercial buildings accessible to persons with disabilities".
Site Readiness Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Municipalities	Aims to increase the state's inventory of large, well-located, project-ready sites; to accelerate private-sector investment in industrial, commercial, and mixed-use projects; and to support the conversion of abandoned sites and obsolete facilities into clean, actively used, tax-generating properties.
Brownfields Redevelopment Fund	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Municipalities and their agencies, CDCs, EDICs, EDAs, and certain nonprofit organizations	Finances the environmental assessment and remediation of brownfield sites. Awards of up to \$250,000 in site assessment funding, and/or up to \$750,000 in remediation funding are available.
Collaborative Workspace Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Commercial and industrial property owners	Through the Collaborative Workspace Program, MassDevelopment awards matching grants for the planning, development, and build-out of different types of collaborative workspaces. Collaborative workspaces are shared work environments that catalyze community, inspiring collaboration, exploration and experimentation among and between local entrepreneurs, artists, designers, scientists, inventors, and small business owners.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Real Estate Services Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Municipalities	MassDevelopment works with municipal officials, planners, local stakeholders, and others to provide technical assistance aimed at addressing site-specific and/or district-wide economic development challenges. Through MassDevelopment’s in-house expertise and contracts with third-party consultants, our real estate services team provides creative solutions and feasible steps for municipalities and other public entities to effectively address planning and development projects.
Mass Broadband Institute	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassTech Collaborative	Municipalities	Our mission is to make affordable high-speed Internet available to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices, and other public places across the Commonwealth. MBI works closely with the Administration, the state legislature, municipalities, broadband service providers, and other key stakeholders to bridge the digital divide in Massachusetts. The Commonwealth created the MBI as a division of the MassTech Collaborative when signing the Broadband Act into law in August 2008.
Community Development Block Grants	Federal	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	Municipalities	The Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. There are two primary Massachusetts CDBG funding programs, the Community Development Fund (CDF) and the Mini-Entitlement Program (ME) Program. The CDF is a competitive program and awards grants to eligible communities throughout the Commonwealth, helping cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development and public social services. Municipalities selected for the ME Program are determined by using a formula calculation based on high statistical indicators of need, poverty rate and population size.
Last Mile Infrastructure Grant	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Eligible towns	The Last Mile Infrastructure Grant program provides funding for eligible towns for municipally-owned broadband networks. Towns can use these grants for design, engineering and construction services.
I-Cubed	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Department of Revenue	Municipalities	The Infrastructure Investment Incentive Program (“I-Cubed”) is an innovative public-private partnership created to spur economic development and job growth in the Commonwealth through support for large-scale private real estate development projects with significant new public infrastructure requirements estimated to be in the range of \$5 million to \$50 million. Enabling legislation was initially passed in 2006, and has since been amended in 2008, 2012, and 2016. The program is administered by the Secretary of Administration and Finance and the Commissioner of the Department of Revenue in partnership with MassDevelopment.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Chapter 43-D - Expedited Local Permitting	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Municipalities	This program offers communities a tool to promote targeted economic and housing development. Chapter 43D provides a transparent and efficient process for municipal permitting, guarantees local permitting decisions on priority development sites within 180 days, and increases visibility of your community and target development site(s).
Community Investment Tax Credit Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	Community development corporations	CITC is designed to enable local residents and stakeholders to work with and through community development corporations (CDCs) to partner with nonprofit, public, and private entities to improve economic opportunities for low and moderate income households and other residents in urban, rural, and suburban communities across the Commonwealth. CDCs accomplish this through adoption of community investment plans to undertake community development programs, policies, and activities.
Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Nonprofits on behalf of a local coalition of organizations	This program seeks to develop, strengthen, and invest in community-led efforts to bring positive economic outcomes to communities that face historically disproportionate challenges to economic growth. Specifically, the program was developed to support communities with high rates of criminal justice system involvement, widespread poverty, and large groups of disadvantaged and underrepresented populations.
New Market Tax Credits	Federal	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Community Development Financial Institutions Fund	For-profit and nonprofit developers	The NMTC Program attracts private capital into low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their federal income tax in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries called Community Development Entities (CDEs). The credit totals 39% of the original investment amount and is claimed over a period of seven years.
Commonwealth Places	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Municipalities and nonprofits	Commonwealth Places, a collaborative initiative from MassDevelopment and Patronicity, is a crowdgranting challenge program to activate new or distressed public places and community spaces. The program is open to municipalities and nonprofits to improve low- and moderate-income communities in Massachusetts.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Cultural Facilities Fund	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Municipalities, nonprofit cultural organizations, and public or private educational institutions that own cultural facilities	Managed in collaboration with MassDevelopment, the Cultural Facilities Fund provides major improvement grants to nonprofit cultural organizations, in recognition of their profound economic impact on communities across Massachusetts. Since 2006, the Fund has encouraged sound growth, supported important development projects, played a crucial role in the growth of local tourism, created thousands of jobs, and driven millions of dollars in private investment.
TDI Equity Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Gateway Cities	The Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) is MassDevelopment's signature place-based economic development program for Gateway City downtowns and commercial districts—places that have extensive cultural and community capital, and that, post-industrialization, will benefit from greater access to economic capital and wealth-building opportunities for residents. TDI uses a toolbox approach, hanging multiple sub-programs for TDI Districts on a frame of partnership building and community engagement
Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Regional economic development organizations	The Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) Program is established to support regionally based efforts to grow and retain existing businesses and attract new business to the Commonwealth. To be eligible for funds from the REDO Program, the applicant must be a duly organized corporation, foundation, organization, or institution that is exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue; have a primary focus on economic development, operate regionally, engage primarily in activities that promote jobs and business retention; have a history of collaboration with area stakeholders, has other financial support, and agrees to serve their whole region.
Vacant Storefronts Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Municipalities	The purpose of the program is to help municipalities of the Commonwealth in their efforts to revitalize their downtowns and commercial areas. Municipalities may apply to the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) for certification to designate a defined downtown or other commercial area, as a Certified Vacant Storefront District. After achieving such a designation, and achieving a commitment of local matching funds, businesses or individuals may apply to the EACC for refundable EDIP tax credits for leasing and occupying a vacant storefront in that district.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Housing Development Incentive Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	For-profit and nonprofit developers in certified Gateway Cities	<p>The Housing Development Incentive Program provides Gateway Cities with a tool to develop market rate housing while increasing residential growth, expanding diversity of housing stock, supporting economic development, and promoting neighborhood stabilization in designated areas. The program provides two tax incentives to developers to undertake new construction or substantial rehabilitation of properties for lease or sale as multi-unit market rate residential housing:</p> <p>(1) A local-option real estate tax exemption on all or part of the increased property value resulting from improvements (the increment), and</p> <p>(2) State tax credits for Qualified Project Expenditures (QPEs) that are awarded through a rolling application process.</p>
Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities	Designated commercial centers within municipalities	<p>The Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) Program is a statutory program authorizing cities and towns to promote housing and commercial development. The UCH-TIF Program provides real estate exemptions on all or part of the increased value (the "Increment") of improved real estate. Tax increment financing may be combined with grants and loans from local, state and federal development programs.</p>
Property Assessed Cleaned Energy (PACE) Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassDevelopment	Commercial and industrial property owners	<p>Property Assessment Clean Energy (PACE) Massachusetts is an innovative program to help commercial and industrial property owners in Massachusetts finance energy improvements. The program lets you agree to a betterment assessment and lien on your property, sufficient to repay the financing extended by a private capital provider. If the property is sold before the financing has been repaid, the assessment stays and is transferred to subsequent property owners.</p>
BioReady Community Program	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	MassBio	Municipalities	<p>MassBio has developed a rating system to determine a municipality's readiness to host biotechnology facilities based on the community's zoning practices and infrastructure capacity. BioReady® rates these communities in four tiers from Bronze to Platinum. Lowell is certified as Platinum.</p>
MA Rehabilitation Historic Tax Credits	Statewide	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Massachusetts Historical Commission	Individual projects and properties	<p>Under the program, a certified rehabilitation project on an income-producing property is eligible to receive up to 20% of the cost of certified rehabilitation expenditures in state tax credits. The property must be listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places. If the building is not currently listed in the National Register, the MHC must certify that it is a historic building that is eligible for listing.</p>

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Neighborhood Improvement Loans	Local	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Lowell Development & Financial Corporation	Companies	A low interest loan program for the acquisition, construction, restoration and/or renovation of commercial property that may also have a residential component.
Down Payment Assistance Program	Local	Community, Real Estate, and Economic Development	Lowell Development & Financial Corporation	Homebuyers	A no-interest loan for 2.5% of the purchase price (based upon a 5% down payment requirement) of a home by a first-time homebuyer.
Massachusetts Growth Capital Lending Products	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	Small businesses	MGCC believes that small businesses are instrumental in the economic vitality of Massachusetts. We specialize in lending solutions for your community's existing small businesses to stay on track. Providing individualized service to each client, our expert lending team seeks creative solutions by understanding a business beyond its financials.
MassDevelopment Lending Products	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassDevelopment	Municipalities, nonprofits, developers, and companies	Our loans and guarantees offer low rates and flexible terms to help foster real estate and business expansion projects that generate jobs and economic benefits for communities across Massachusetts.
MassVentures Venture Capital Investments	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassVentures	Deep tech startups	MassVentures invests in academic spinouts and early-stage deep tech companies based in Massachusetts. Deep tech innovates scientific and engineering breakthroughs that address big societal challenges, often creating new markets or disrupting existing ones, and have the vast potential to fuel Massachusetts' innovation economy.
CDFI and CDC Capital Match Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	Nonprofit lenders	The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is seeking experienced nonprofit lenders to assist established and start-up small businesses in the Commonwealth in obtaining capital. The Commonwealth's funds are meant to facilitate lending to small businesses that are unable to obtain traditional sources of capital. This grant program seeks to increase the flow of capital into Massachusetts's small businesses and to continue to foster recovery, long-term stability, resilience, and growth.
Economic Development Incentive Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	Companies	The Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) is designed to foster job creation and stimulate business growth. A company that participates in EDIP may receive state tax credits and/or local property tax incentives in exchange for a commitment to new job creation, existing job retention, and private investment in the project.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Empower Digital Grant Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	Small businesses	This program provided grants for the needs of Massachusetts-based small businesses seeking relevant capital expenses, tools, and services to develop their digital capabilities. Businesses received grants of up to \$10,000 - up to \$5,000 for digital services and up to \$5,000 for digital capacity-building capital expenses.
Biz-M-Power Crowdfunding Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	Small businesses	The Biz-M-Power crowdfunding matching grant program offers small businesses in Massachusetts financial assistance with their acquisition, expansion, improvement or lease of a facility, purchase or capital lease of equipment, or with meeting other capital needs for the business. Eligible applicants will be empowered to advance their business with an innovative approach to obtaining capital.
State Trade Expansion Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Executive Office of Economic Development	Small businesses	The STEP grant is intended to offset international business development and related marketing costs for small businesses. Grant proceeds may be used for specific international business development and marketing costs. Grants under the STEP program are capped at \$15,000 per business to reimburse for costs associated with export related international projects, activities or services consistent within the STEP guidelines.
SBIR Targeted Technologies Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassVentures	Companies w/ SBIR and STTR contracts	The SBIR Targeted Technologies (START) Grants help Massachusetts-based startups convert research developed under SBIR and STTR contracts into businesses and jobs in Massachusetts. START offers MA-based, SBIR Phase II companies grants and business guidance to help them commercialize their technologies.
Small Business Technical Assistance Grant Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	Nonprofits providing technical assistance to small businesses	The MGCC Small Business Technical Assistance Grant Program builds operational capacity and skills of organizations that are providing technical assistance, education, and access to capital to small businesses. The grant program strengthens ongoing business-development activities in underserved communities across the state.
Entrepreneur Mentoring Grant Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassTech Collaborative	Nonprofits supporting entrepreneurial activity	The Innovation Institute supports entrepreneur mentoring as means to build regional start-up ecosystems and communities of innovation across Massachusetts. The opportunity to engage in a strong mentoring relationship builds the confidence and success of new businesses and plays a crucial role in lowering the barriers to entry for owning and running a business.
Research Infrastructure Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Nonprofits supporting the life sciences industry	The design of the Research Infrastructure program (formerly known as the Open or Competitive Capital Program) is to provide grants for capital projects that support the life sciences ecosystem in Massachusetts by enabling and supporting life sciences research and development in the Commonwealth. Up to \$10 million in capital dollars is available to support capital projects ranging from \$1.5 - \$5 million across the state for not-for-profit partners.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Life Sciences Tax Incentives	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Life sciences companies	The Tax Incentive program is open to companies engaged in life sciences research and development, commercialization and manufacturing in Massachusetts. The program provides incentives to companies, of all sizes, looking to expand their efforts by creating new, long-term jobs in Massachusetts.
Bits to Bytes	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Not-for-profit applicants collaborating with at least one for-profit life sciences company	The MLSC launched Bits to Bytes to provide grants for scientific projects that generate and analyze large datasets to answer pressing life science questions, and to attract and train data scientists in the Commonwealth. Investment in generating well-annotated datasets and training data scientists for life science research is required to sustain Massachusetts's global leadership position in life science research and development.
Women's Health Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Women's health companies	The Women's Health Collaboration Program is part of the MLSC's Women's Health Initiative. This program supports collaborative projects that aim to improve the discovery, technical innovation, and/or analysis of datasets to answer pressing life science questions around women's health.
Novel Therapeutics Delivery Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Therapeutic startups	The Novel Therapeutics Delivery program fosters the development of novel technologies and techniques for the delivery of existing or innovative therapies by working at the intersection of engineering, biology, chemistry, and medicine. Specifically, it strives to capitalize and incentivize translational projects to address complex challenges in "therapeutic" delivery – from biomanufacturing, to targeted delivery, to biomaterials and more.
Life Sciences NIIMBL	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	NIIMBL member-organizations	The MLSC has partnered with the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL) to accelerate biopharmaceutical manufacturing innovation, support the development of standards that enable more efficient and rapid manufacturing capabilities, and educate and train a world-leading biopharmaceutical manufacturing workforce, fundamentally advancing U.S. competitiveness in this industry.
Massachusetts Next Generation Initiative	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Life science entrepreneurs	The Massachusetts Next Generation (MassNextGen) Initiative is building off the success of its first five years with a new iteration to support a larger pool of entrepreneurs with a broad, more accessible focus. Awardees of the program will receive a year-long customized package of support, which includes non-dilutive grant funding and access to a network of seasoned professionals from the life sciences ecosystem helping them to refine their business strategies and effectively raise capital.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

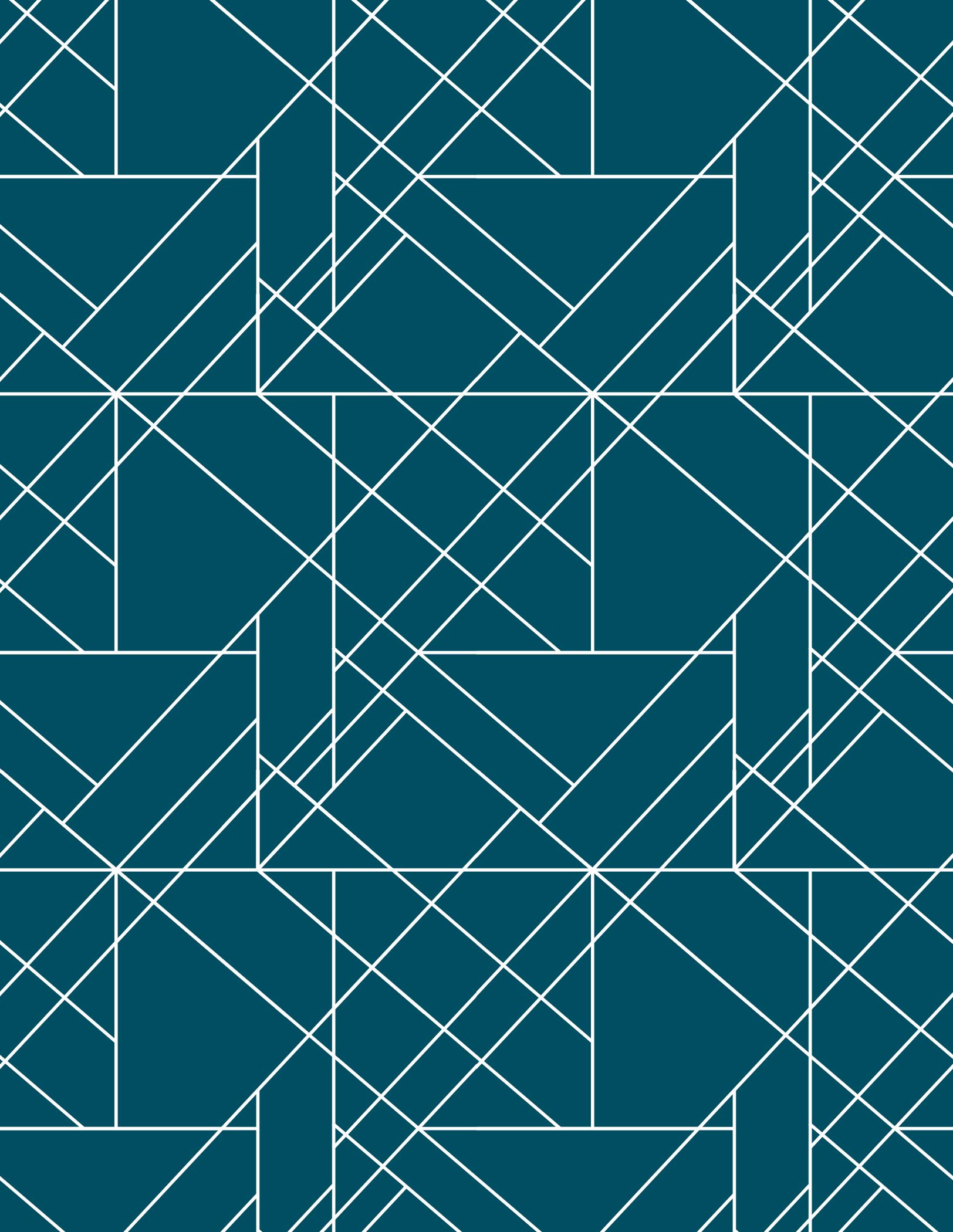
Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Mass Manufacturing Innovation Initiative	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassTech Collaborative	Hardtech manufacturers	The Massachusetts Manufacturing Innovation Initiative (M2I2) provides state grant funding to help Massachusetts innovators who are ready to begin manufacturing their hardtech technologies. M2I2 supports innovators across sectors, from electronics to bioindustrial manufacturing to robotics to additive manufacturing.
Mass Manufacturing Accelerate Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassTech Collaborative	Small to medium-sized manufacturers	The MMAP program aims to help Massachusetts-based small to medium-sized manufacturers prepare their businesses to meet the demands of Industry 4.0 and the manufacturing of new technologies and innovations that align with key industries in the state. Grant funding can be used for capital expenditures under GAAP.
Emerging Technology Fund	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassDevelopment	Technology companies	The Emerging Technology Fund (ETF) is designed to help growing companies like yours find the capital you need. The ETF makes loans of up to \$4,000,000 to technology companies for expansion, working capital, or equipment purchases. Combined with MassDevelopment's other offerings, we can help you deliver the products essential for a thriving economy.
Collaborative Research & Development Matching Grant Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	MassTech Collaborative	Research university, non-profit research institution, or other non-profit	MassTech Collaborative administers the Collaborative Research Matching Grant Program to support research and development projects by investing in critical research & development (R&D) infrastructure. These investments support R&D partnerships that bring together the Commonwealth's world-class research institutions with the state's leading technology firms.
STEM Equipment and Professional Development Grant Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Schools	Through this program, the MLSC awards grant funding to schools and curriculum providers for the purpose of teacher professional development and the purchase of equipment, materials, supplies, and technology needed to support new or expanded curriculum. Funding will enable schools to educate students in real-world scenarios that will prepare them for career opportunities in the life sciences. Professional development funding will ensure that educators receive the technical training needed to effectively use newly acquired equipment and technology.
Massachusetts Research Tax Credit	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Department of Revenue	Companies	Research Credit may be available to business corporations subject to the corporate excise that incurred "Massachusetts qualified research expenses" in Massachusetts. Generally, "Massachusetts qualified research expenses" include wages paid to employees, a portion of wages paid to contractors, and amounts paid for supplies.
Massachusetts Investment Tax Credit	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Department of Revenue	Companies	The investment tax credit (ITC) may be available to certain corporate excise taxpayers in Massachusetts. Corporations may earn a credit for the purchase or lease of "qualifying tangible properties," which include tangible personal property and other tangible property, including buildings and their structural components.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Angel Investor Tax Credit Program	Statewide	Business and Innovation	Massachusetts Life Sciences Center	Angel investors	The Angel Investor Tax Credit program is offered to investors interested in funding early-stage companies engaged in life sciences research and development, commercialization and manufacturing in Massachusetts. The program provides a taxpayer investor a credit of 20% of the qualifying investment, or 30% if the business is located in a gateway municipality, in a business that has no more than \$500,000 in gross revenues in the year prior to eligibility.
Incubator Loan Fund	Local	Business and Innovation	Lowell Development & Financial Corporation	Technology and life science startups	A low interest loan program targeted towards technology and life science startup businesses looking to expand in Lowell with a priority given to businesses who intend to create jobs.
Downtown Venture Fund	Local	Business and Innovation	Lowell Development & Financial Corporation	Downtown Lowell retail shops and restaurants	The Fund is set up specifically to assist those ventures that add value and diversity to the retail and restaurant climate of Downtown Lowell by making available low-cost financing. The initiative will create the critical mass needed to encourage others to open new ventures in Lowell.
Industrial Improvement Loans	Local	Business and Innovation	Lowell Development & Financial Corporation	Companies	A low interest loan program for the acquisition, construction or renovation of commercial, industrial and office facilities containing at least 10,000 square feet.
Launch in Lowell Startup Loan Pilot Program	Local	Business and Innovation	Lowell Development & Financial Corporation	Startups	This low interest loan program for startup businesses that have participated in EforAll and Lowell Makes programing and are looking to expand in Lowell with a priority given to businesses who intend to create jobs.
Research & Development (R&D) Tax Exemption	Local	Business and Innovation	City of Lowell	Companies in Lowell	Any small or large company located in Lowell that is currently engaged in research & development, such as design and development of new products or processes, can now qualify for full exemption on personal property taxes! A company receives 100% tax exemption on its core equipment, defined as the equipment used directly related with R&D activities (i.e. computers, lab equipment, machinery, etc.).
Workforce Training Fund	Statewide	Workforce Development	MassHire	Companies	Massachusetts employers, of any size, may apply for grants of up to \$250,000 to train new or existing workers. If approved, the program will reimburse employers for the actual cost of training: 100% reimbursement for companies with up to 100 employees or 50% for companies with more than 100 employees.

TABLE 6: FUNDING MATRIX

Program Name	Geography	Program Type	Funder	Funding Recipient	Description
Advanced Manufacturing Training Program	Statewide	Workforce Development	Executive Office of Economic Development	Regional consortiums	The Advanced Manufacturing Training Program provides funding to qualifying consortiums to develop, coordinate, and maintain comprehensive manufacturing workforce development systems. Regional systems will provide workforce development services in advanced manufacturing, such as recruitment, job training, placement activities, and supportive services.
HireNow	Statewide	Workforce Development	Commonwealth Corporation	Companies	HireNow provides funding to eligible Massachusetts employers who hire and retain Massachusetts residents. Funding is awarded at a flat rate of \$4,000 for each eligible newly hired employee. The goal of HireNow is to address hiring challenges experienced by Massachusetts employers because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
UMass Lowell Corporate Training Programs	Local	Workforce Development	Companies	UMass Lowell	UMass Lowell has partnered with more than 1,400 companies and organizations to provide high-quality customized training and professional development.
Middlesex Community College (MCC) Corporate Training Programs	Regional	Workforce Development	Companies	Middlesex Community College	For over three decades we have educated and trained thousands of employees in hundreds of industries and municipalities throughout Middlesex County. Our goal is to provide you with the educational and training tools you need to make the best use of your most important assets, your employees.
Work Opportunity Tax Credits	Federal	Workforce Development	MassHire	Companies	WOTC is a Federal tax credit incentive that employers may receive for hiring individuals from certain groups who have consistently faced barriers to employment. The main objective of this program is to enable the targeted employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers, while participating employers are compensated by being able to reduce their federal income tax liability.
Workplace Safety Grant Program	Statewide	Workforce Development	Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development	Companies	The Department of Industrial Accidents (DIA) Workplace Safety Grant helps employers reduce the risk of injury and illness to workers and promote safe and healthy conditions in the workplace through training, education, and other preventative measures.



APPENDIX 2

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



LISTENING TOUR PARTICIPANTS AND TAKEAWAYS

NMCOG and Fourth Economy engaged a series of key local and regional stakeholders across the Greater Lowell region to inform the development of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

The purpose of the 30-minute interviews were to learn more about the sentiments, and perspectives of local practitioners; and to gather community input from residents to identify gaps, key stakeholders and explore opportunities for addressing community challenges and needs. The cumulative takeaways from the community engagement process will guide the region's economic priorities and direction for the next decade.

Interviews included:

TABLE 1: LISTENING TOUR INTERVIEWEES

Name	Title	Organization
Jason Palitsch	Executive Director	495/MetroWest Partnership
Bernard Gibbons	Senior Vice President	Associated Brokerage Group
Fred Faust	Principal and Broker	Bell Tower Commercial Real Estate
Jim Dymant	Executive Director	Brush Gallery
Sothea Chiemruom	Executive Director	Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association
Allison (Ali) Carter	Director of Economic Development	City of Lowell
Daniel Rivera	Executive Director	Coalition for a Better Acre (CBA)
Connie Martin	Division Director, Energy and Community Resources	Community Teamwork, Inc.
Ani Vong	SBA Prime Coordinator & Business Coach	CTI Entrepreneurship Center/Business Assistance
Sophan Smith	Executive Director	E for All
Patty Wilson	Regional Commercial Lending Manager	Enterprise Bank
Chris Kluchman	Director, Livable Communities Division	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)
John Power, Kelly Puccia, Steve Horan Jr.	Principal, Regional Property Manager, Vice President of Leasing	Farley White Interests
Bopha Malone	Executive Director	Girls Inc of Greater Lowell
Danielle McFadden	Executive Director	Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce
Jay Linnehan and Howard Amidon	President/CEO and Vice President for Philanthropy	Greater Lowell Community Foundation
Katie Enright	Associate Principal, Senior Civil Engineer	Howard Stein Hudson
Alison Hughes	Community Engagement Officer	Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union
Laura Lamarre Anderson	Owner	Lala Books
Demetrius Spaneas	President	Land and Sea Real Estate, Inc.

TABLE 1: LISTENING TOUR INTERVIEWEES

Name	Title	Organization
Diego Leonardo	Founder and Executive Director	Latinx Community Center for Empowerment
Lee Viliesis	Executive Director	Lowell Festival Foundation
Amy Hoey and Angela Putnam Strunk	President and Director of Communications	Lowell General Hospital/Tufts
Peter Aucella	Former Assistant Superintendent	Lowell National Historical Park
Allison Lamey	Executive Director	Lowell Plan/LDFC
Justin Howard	Director of Transit Operations	Lowell Regional Transit Authority
Carmine Tomas	Principal	LT Development
Alessandra Fisher	Director of Immigrant Integration and Elder Services	Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers
Winton Pitcoff	Deputy Commissioner	Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
David Foss	Statewide Brownfields Coordinator	MassDEP
Geetha Rao Ramani	Vice President Business Development	MassDevelopment
Nate Robertson	Transformative Development Fellow	MassDevelopment
Derek Krevat	Manager of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Activities	MassDOT
Kevin Coughlin	Executive Director	MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board
Shannon Norton	Executive Director	MassHire Lowell Career Center
Elise Rapoza	Research Associate	MassInc
Brian Bradbury	Executive Director	Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau
Ian Burns	Community & Economic Development Program Manager	Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)
Angela Brown	Chief of Economic Development	Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
Stephanie Cronin	Executive Director	Middlesex 3
Courtney McSparron	Co-Executive Director	Mill City Grows
Jessica O'Hearn	Director	Mosaic Lowell
Melissa Fetterhoff	Executive Director	Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
Jeff Bush	President	New England Heritage Properties
Stephen Themelis	Owner	Niklaus Painting and Construction Company, Inc.
Meghan Tenhoff	Principal Planner	NMCOG
LZ Nunn	Executive Director	Project LEARN
Katherine Malgieri	Interim Director of Planning and Community Development	Town of Billerica
Marlies Henderson	Planning Board Member	Town of Billerica
Evan Belansky	Town Planner	Town of Chelmsford
Paul Cohen	Town Manager	Town of Chelmsford

TABLE 1: LISTENING TOUR INTERVIEWEES

Name	Title	Organization
Alison Manugian	Acting Town Manager/Community Development Director	Town of Dracut
Dan Phelps	Economic Development Project Planner	Town of Dracut
Jason Silva	Town Administrator	Town of Dunstable
Andrew Maclean	Town Administrator	Town of Pepperell
Alexandra Lowder	Community/Economic Development Planner	Town of Tewksbury
Colin Loiselle	Town Manager	Town of Tyngsborough
Steve Sadwick	Assistant Town Manager, Community Development	Town of Tyngsborough
Joe Giniewicz	Town Planner	Town of Westford
Kristen Las	Town Manager	Town of Westford
Julie Chen, Anne Maglia, Patricia Coffey	Chancellor, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, Director of Community Relations	University of Massachusetts Lowell
Craig Thomas	Director of Urban and Community Development	University of Massachusetts Lowell
Jim Hogan	President/CEO	Washington Savings Bank

A summary of these ideas, insights, and takeaways is provided below.

Economic Development

Key Challenges

- The different cities, towns and boroughs throughout the Greater Lowell region have different visions of economic development and growth for their communities. For example, some want to develop industrial parks, some do not. Others want to recruit major companies and corresponding office parks, others do not. Some want to expand eco-tourism attractions and offerings, others do not. Some communities want to remain residential, others want more commercial development. Some want “measured growth”, others. Therefore, continuing to come together to build a shared set of common goals is really important for building a shared sense of regionalism, and getting buy-in.
- Regions often feel they might be competing against each other for job placements, tax revenue, and some residents feel they would benefit from more regional collaboration to apply for grants, build regional transportation systems, and influence state policy collectively.
- Newly elected, and tenured elected officials seem to be limited in their understanding of the technical nuts and bolts of planning
- Some of the smaller local municipalities have limited budgets. Many of these municipalities are having difficulty raising revenue for economic development projects, because elected

officials seem to be opposed to raising revenue or approving traditional economic development projects

- There are gaps in the small business finance ecosystem where immigrant business owners who lack trust, often borrow from friends and family, and end up in difficult debt situations as a result.

Capacity Notes

- The Greater Lowell region is a composite of 26 post industrial cities with sizable immigration populations. Different resources are available to those communities.
- Small businesses are struggling in the post pandemic period. There are less shoppers and tourists who frequent and patronize downtown Lowell, which has contributed to a decline in commercial activity and revenue.
- There is a sense that LINC is not large enough already, and some companies don't want to wait until 2026.

Existing Promising Practices or Initiatives

- There are 12 Regional groups in the Commonwealth - which are made up of public and private organizations working together to support economic development.
- The renovation of the bridge that connects Chelmsford is expected to be economically transformative

Key Partners

- NMCOG is seen as a trusted convener and agenda setter for the region. So are others such as Middlesex 3.
- [Acre Partnership](#)
- Community Teamwork
- Lowell Development & Financial Corporation

Assets and Opportunities

- LINC was mentioned as a bright spot for the region, a testament to what's possible when parties across the region come together to accomplish goals collaboratively.

Housing

Key Challenges

- The shortage of housing is a broadly shared major concern across the region. The major concern is housing supply. The region is broadly underproducing housing, for example Tewksbury has a 0% vacancy rate. Affordability is a challenge as well, as housing prices have risen across the region.
- With a high concentration of single family homes, there is a high need for "missing-middle" styled homes.

Existing Promising Practices or Initiatives

- UMass Lowell is planning to host a one-day training for local government stakeholders before they take on their new roles.
- Lowell First Time Homebuyer Program, which provides 1st time Lowell home buyers with downpayment assistance

Assets and Opportunities

- The Greater Lowell region has comparatively more affordable housing and real estate compared to Boston and Somerville. Lowell is perceived as a lower cost place to live, work and raise a family.

Education and Workforce

Key Challenges

- A number of working age adults are not connected to workforce apparatus - many are unemployed, or underskilled.
- Across the region, Lowell is seen as a gateway city, where people settle down, and then the first or second generation leaves. This presents a challenge for workforce retention and retainment.
- There is a greater need for private sector stakeholders and educational institutions to build strong school to work pipelines.

Capacity Notes

- Some municipalities throughout the region have positions dedicated to economic development, others do not.
- Prop 2 ½ put a year-over-year cap on property tax increases in 1980, however in a high inflation environment with rising costs, this can lead to budget cuts that impact teacher salaries and limited school budgets.

Existing Promising Practices or Initiatives

- Building more programmatic connective tissue between economic development infrastructure and diverse audiences across the region – Latino and Hispanic, Cambodian, young people/students, etc.
- Mass Development Transformation Development Initiative
- A potential area of focus for growth is in the industry niche of “small scale manufacturers” or home-based makers
- Incubators and entrepreneurship centers are working together in some capacity, but can continue partnering more meaningfully, to combine and leverage shared resources to build a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem throughout Greater Lowell.
- Middlesex 3 hosts meetings regularly focused on each of its 5 identified industry clusters.

Key Partners

- MassHire of Greater Lowell
- EforAll

Assets and Opportunities

- Greater Lowell has a comparatively highly educated population and workforce compared to regions of similar size & makeup.
- The life sciences industry is well represented in Greater Lowell.

Town Planners/Managers

Key Challenges

- Some smaller municipalities feel left out of the broader economic development ecosystem, and often feel overlooked in favor of larger cities, such as Lowell
- The new state government leadership is coming across as heavy handed, and less interested in local control, and that is causing friction with local governments.
 - When state officials attempt to fix a problem, it can backfire because when the state pushes down one-size-fits-all mandates, it conflicts with home rule culture and process, along with the preferences of local communities.

Capacity Notes

- Tax loss is a thorn in the side of cities/counties that are bordering New Hampshire
 - As a result, some municipalities are having difficulty raising revenue for economic development projects
- Home rule is critical in most localities. Most local changes can only be made with the approval of a body of residents approving a change - i.e.. tax increases.
- From a cultural standpoint, Town managers indicate that residents are skeptical of traditional economic development approaches and do not want haphazard or sprawling economic growth for the sake of growth itself. Towns like Pepperrell, Billerica, Chelmsford and others want to grow while also preserving their rural character.

Existing Promising Practices or Initiatives

- Some towns, like Pepperrell are leaning into the region's connection with the history of the American Revolutionary war - and developing pathways for eco or educational tourism
- Some small cities, like Pepperrell and others, are involved in town collaboratives that are spaces for cities and townships throughout the region to collectively apply for grants and resources

Assets and Opportunities

- Mass Development Transformation Development Initiative

Transportation

Key Challenges

- Getting workers in and out of Lowell is a challenge. Specifically building complete streets models and converting existing limited roadways to complete streets that can transport a large volume of vehicles quickly.
- Key transportation priorities include safety, destination reliability, social and geographic fairness, and interconnectivity.

Capacity Notes

- The bus system seems to be underutilized, according to regional travelers.
- There's often a large gap between rural and smaller communities who tend to have to "scrape the bottom of the barrel" to do basic transportation infrastructure projects - and MassDOT is trying to get more funding to those communities to fund design, and getting projects ready to be funded in the first place.

Existing Promising Practices or Initiatives

- There is a shared regional goal of bolstering Regional Transit Authority interconnectivity and reliability.
- MassDOT and transportation partners are beginning to think about transportation not just for transportation's sake but connecting transportation imperatives and planning to economic development writ large.
- MassDOT, in prioritizing fairness, is undertaking projects to make transportation more accessible for the traditionally underserved - whether that be gearing state investments to geographies with the highest need.

Key Partners

- MassDOT
- LRTA

Quality of Life, Arts, Recreation, Tourism

Key Challenges

- Local leaders mention that there needs to be done to market & promote the initiatives and activities being done to bolster quality of life throughout the region.
- Lowell has a perception problem - and specifically one bifurcated by age. Older residents of Lowell, in the 40-60 year old range, who were born in the 80s and 90s, and experienced Lowell when it had a rougher reputation, don't share the same POV with younger residents of Lowell who know of the city's reputation after 2000, when investment, excitement and vibrancy returned to the city.

Existing Promising Practices or Initiatives

- The richness and diversity of cultures is a major plus for the region.

Assets and Opportunities

- There are latent opportunities to leverage outdoor recreation assets throughout towns in the region.
 - For example, there is more opportunity to leverage the region's rich history tied to the American Revolutionary War to become a historical tourism destination for the region

Infrastructure

Key Challenges

- Key infrastructure across the region is aging. Water and wastewater infrastructure is an urgent and core need that is quickly rising to the top of the priority list for the region.

Capacity Notes

- There is a massive need for infrastructure upgrades, but the select cities across region don't have the staff capacity and capital to invest in long overdue infrastructure projects

2025 GREATER LOWELL ECONOMIC SUMMIT

On Thursday, March 20, over 70 economic leaders and community members attended the 2025 Greater Lowell Economic Summit at UKG in Crosspoint Towers in Lowell. NMCOG and Fourth Economy facilitated several topic-based sessions, using Fourth Economy's Build Session approach. A Build Session is an interactive workshop to brainstorm, prioritize, and build solutions. Build Sessions emphasize the focus on moving past talking about problems and toward building solutions.

Build sessions featured discussions about business engagement and development, strong places and towns, municipal capacity, and work and resident support. The event also featured a networking event with guest speakers, Demetrius Spaneas and Jeff Bush, a special guided tour of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and Connector Trail by Marlies Henderson, and an "Agents of Change" happy hour with additional, informal discussion about the region's economy. The event was hosted by UKG, a provider of HR and workforce management solutions.

The following represent the top strategies from the Build Sessions.

Build Session Topics

	Resilient Places and Networks	Economy 2.0: The New Paradigm	Regional Collaboration on Wicked Problems
	8 am - 10 am	10 am - Noon	1 pm - 3 pm
Business Engagement and Development	Future of Business Parks	LINC and Emerging Industries	Business Attraction and Retention
Municipal Capacity	Rural and Small-Town Economies	Leveraging State Funding, including LEADS	Infrastructure: Water, Sewer, Energy
Strong Places and Towns	Downtown Lowell	Town, City, and Neighborhood Main Streets	Arts, Culture, and Outdoor Recreation
Worker and Resident Support	Cars, Transit, and Active Transportation	Workforce Development	The Intersection of Economy and Housing

Business Engagement and Development

- **Future of Business Parks**
 - Address business park vacancy by strengthening recruitment efforts, expanding financial tools for retrofits, and creating teaming between local EDOs, planners, and utilities to close deals.
 - Create a financial support product for commercial to commercial retrofits. There are state financial incentives for commercial to residential

redevelopment, but no incentives for retrofitting existing buildings for different types of commercial uses.

- Improve upstream relationships and sourcing of tenants/firms. Develop upstream relationships with brokers and the state of Massachusetts to coordinate the process of identifying and connecting with potential tenants. This relationship should work two-ways: (1) the state and brokers should understand the current site availability and potential desires; and (2) an entity in the region should understand the statewide site selection process and typical needs brokers are requesting on behalf of firms.
- Regional and local teaming to close on deals. Historically, many potential tenants have exited the process of locating at a business park because of a host of issues. Many of these deals have been lost in the region because of factors like zoning, redevelopment cost, infrastructure (electrification, water, wastewater, etc.). A team of planners, business park representatives, economic development officials, and infrastructure companies could help facilitate the process to close deals.
- Enhance zoning flexibility to allow mixed-use and innovative business park models, e.g. MBTA zoning to allow for residential alongside commercial zoning

- **LINC and Emerging Industries**

- Position LINC as a high-tech hub with a strong focus on talent and business attraction.
 - More frequent town halls or public communication. Excitement for LINC is evident, but questions around project timeline and phases of the effort can create a sense of uncertainty about the effort. More widely sharing less sensitive information about the project could ease concerns, or help those who will be affected by the construction and phases of the project plan to support the LINC effort and minimize disruption.
 - Connectivity between LINC and small businesses in Lowell. The LINC project could bring immense benefits outside of the development of LINC, including spending and connectivity to The Acre and Downtown Lowell. LINC workers will bring increased income and spending to the area, and the capture of that spending could expand beyond LINC with better connectivity to downtown and the Acre, via safe pedestrian sidewalks and crosswalks, and possibility of shuttle service.
 - Leverage LINC for industry and workforce growth. Launch a business recruitment campaign targeting life sciences, tech, and manufacturing firms. Establish a workforce pipeline program with UMass Lowell and local training centers.

- **Business Attraction and Retention**

- Support business attraction and retention efforts by acting as willing partners and assisting businesses through technical assistance and monitoring business needs.
 - Attraction: Agile permitting and concierge service provided by towns to streamline development and business permitting processes. Take a coordinated “everyone in one room” approach to assist businesses with development and new business permitting. Minimize surprises for businesses by assisting companies that are navigating political processes or approval boards.
 - Attraction: Partner with Commonwealth on the Business Front Door program. Massachusetts operates and is piloting a statewide concierge service; the NMCOG regional version could gain from lessons learned with this program, and supplement the statewide effort with region-specific programming.
 - Attraction: Articulate zoning uses so less discretionary review. Within this strategy, NMCOG has a role to support towns by providing technical assistance, helping communities understand best practices from throughout the region, and creating local permitting guides.
 - Retention: Dedicated Costar/MLS tracking for upcoming lease expirations, matched with a business calling program. This could eliminate surprise moves from businesses. Often, the municipalities are the last to know when a key business is going to terminate its lease and move.

Municipal Capacity

- **Rural and Small-Town Economies**

- Work to create codified regional economic development efforts through:
 - The hiring of a regional economic development director that works on behalf of smaller towns. This position can be collectively paid for by municipalities that lack capacity for their own leadership.
 - This employee can take on regional site selection, marketing, Main St. development, and more.
 - Coordinating marketing and placemaking efforts across all towns.
 - Monthly economic development meetings between all NMCOG municipalities.
- This work can bring much-needed capacity, economic development “wins”, and tax revenue to towns that lack the resources to take on economic development themselves.

- **Leveraging State Funding, including LEADS**

- Close in on 2-3 regional priorities that numerous stakeholders can agree on. These priorities can be formed through:

- Robust communication and alignment with employers, local governments, elected officials, and civic leaders
 - Regional visioning sessions that prioritize a bold vision for the future
 - Creating an existing public-private economic development coalition that is prepared to aggressively pursue the fulfillment of these priorities and corresponding goals.
 - These priorities can be used to:
 - Better pursue state and federal grant opportunities as they come out.
 - Track funding opportunities over time to gauge the region's competitiveness.
 - Guide local and regional planning efforts, from comprehensive to topic-specific plans.
 - Potential Priorities listed for consideration include:
 - Maintaining regional affordability
 - talent retention
 - stronger governments
 - competitive industries
- **Infrastructure: Water, Sewer, Energy**
 - Establish creative, usable business attraction, retention, and expansion incentives that accommodate the challenges municipalities face with infrastructure development, modernization, and expansion. Ideas for achieving this include:
 - Continuing to use TIF's at the municipal level, especially in small towns that struggle with infrastructure development
 - Work w/ National Grid to forecast for regional energy demand based on economic development projects in the pipeline
 - Explore a more regional, collaborative approach to infrastructure development - following the lead of towns along the Cape
 - Get strong representation from utility providers at community meetings to connect-the-dots between utility needs and business attraction and retention projects

Strong Places and Towns

- **Downtown Lowell**
 - Start with the basics: Improve sidewalk, safety and movement infrastructure to make the experience of moving through downtown Lowell more accessible and pleasant
 - Create outdoor green spaces that are vibrant and inviting to residents and tourists
 - Parking adjustments
 - Increase services for unhoused population
 - Create a one-stop centralized information hub that provides local residents with information about the suite of events happening in and around downtown Lowell

- Cultivate a culture of exploration across downtown Lowell through targeted space activations to increase density and a sense of wonder and dynamism
 - Tell and broadcast a better and more positive story of what Downtown Lowell has to offer
 - What would need to be added:
 - Business Improvement District
 - Parking Benefit District
 - TIFF
- **Town, City, and Neighborhood Main Streets**
 - Create an information sharing platform that exchanges key event information between consumers and business owners
 - An events calendar would help to create a cross-Greater Lowell regional identity and encourage organizations to collaborate
 - Lean into traditional methods of communication that are working
 - Residents need better public transportation infrastructure to get to main streets, to encourage participation
 - Transit
 - Sidewalks
 - Bike paths
 - There's a need for education and expectations around parking
 - Need to re-frame parking mindset
 - "Just because you can't get parking in front of a business shouldn't impede you from getting to know the area!"
 - There needs to be a greater emphasis on attracting young people, and residents in the 20-40 age range
 - Leverage and get information through social media
 - Lowell isn't seen locally as a community space for residents in their 20s and 30s residents that aren't small families
- **Arts, Culture, and Outdoor Recreation**
 - Increase visibility of vibrant arts, culture and outdoor recreation assets throughout the region
 - Create a centralized information hub and calendar for arts, culture and outdoor recreation events to share information with residents and market events
 - Create a central calendar digital application where community members can submit and post events
 - Leverage community organization connections to apply for shared grants and share funding opportunities

Worker and Resident Support

• Cars, Transit, and Active Transportation

- Better last-mile connections
 - Especially live-work jobs accessibility transit analysis
 - Do transportation options allow for workers to access jobs via transit
 - Cross-town connections, rather than hub and spoke. Shuttles or direct forms of connection. Build from existing links
- Leverage transportation and multi-modal transit for placemaking
- Inspire regional collaboration on transportation issues related to:
 - Sidewalk projects
 - Bikeshare
 - Public transit
 - Trailways
 - On-street bike facilities
- This effort can occur through:
 - The creation of a regional transportation dashboard
 - Coordinated efforts between towns
 - Intensive interviews with users, companies, educational institutions, and transportation operators
 - Closer alignment w/ MassDOT programs
 - Understanding and making progress on goals, tracking MassDOT projects

• Workforce Development

- Expand Connector Programs
- Continued manufacturing training programs and support for companies
- Training for training Programs

• The Intersection of Economy and Housing

- Use more form-based zoning and neighborhood-level mixed-use development to drive housing density and development. Tools and ideas for accomplishing this effort include:
 - Achieving zoning reforms at the local level.
 - Education planners and zoning officials on regional goals and how to accomplish them.
 - Setting regional priorities and goals for planning outcomes that go beyond town level.
 - Aggregating sites and planning for their development, making them shovel-ready.
 - Engaging the public and local leaders through participatory planning (i.e. charrettes).
 - Developing municipal support for broader regional goals
 - Establishing creative incentives that catalyze churn in the housing market, such as a downsizing incentive for empty-nesters who own a single-family home.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The draft *Greater Lowell Stronger Together 2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* was released on May 29, 2025 for public comment. The public comment period closed at 5:00 pm, Monday, June 30. The public comment period, including a link to an electronic comment submission form and the CEDS, was advertised through the NMCOG website, NMCOG mailing lists, social media platforms, a press release to major media outlets, partner organizations, and member municipalities and the CEDS Committee.

The team received 12 comments from four members of the public. Those comments, included resolution when applicable, are listed in the **Public Comments Table** below.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Section	Comment	Resolution
2: Summary Background	A lot of good data highlighting the opportunities and challenges. The aging, outflow and inflow of employment, and housing numbers are quite concerning for the future.	No response necessary.
3: SOAR Analysis	Housing, while clearly a significant challenge, feels underrepresented here and throughout the plan. It seems to warrant more attention and focus.	Provided additional emphasis on housing in the “Opportunities” section of Strategy 4 and <i>At Home in Greater Lowell</i> Regional Housing Strategy implementation in Strategy 4.6 (create a larger variety of housing).
4: Vision and Strategy	I am surprised to not see adding one or more hotels to downtown Lowell called out at least once (section 4.2 seems natural of this.) The ability for visitors and business people to have a place to stay in proximity to downtown Lowell, UML, LINC, etc. would seem like a boon to economic development.	No edits, however, incentives or support for hotel development could be an element of groups considering how to implement Strategy 2.3 (uplift downtown goals) or 3.2 (leverage LINC and other projects).
Plan in general/Process	As it is the center of so many potential successes and challenges housing would seem to warrant its own implementation matrix.	Provided additional emphasis on the separate but related <i>At Home in Greater Lowell</i> Regional Housing Strategy in Strategy 4.6 (create a larger variety of housing). This separate plan has six goals and related strategies that is incorporated into the CEDS by reference.
Strategy 1: Creating Economic Development Capacity	Consider zoning and bylaw updates as an economic development tool	Put additional emphasis on permitting and zoning policy in Strategy 3.4 (use innovative tools and incentives).
Strategy 1: Creating Economic Development Capacity	Is anyone working on pop-up and incubator space implementation outside of Lowell?	No response necessary, question answered directly to commenter.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Section	Comment	Resolution
Strategy 2: Developing Strong Places and Towns	We lack a "vibe" - need to establish a cohesive identity as a region	Clarified this as an element of destination development in the "What's Next" section of Strategy 2.
Strategy 3: Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Work with municipalities to connect local residents with employment opportunities in cities and towns	Included municipal partnership in the actions of Strategy 3.5 (connect residents with regional employment opportunities).
Strategy 4: Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents	We should be prioritizing sustainable energy and green initiatives	No edits, does not align with EDA's current strategic priorities.
Strategy 4: Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents	Consider implementing orientation/information for key stakeholders (builders, realtors, etc.) to connect with municipal staff (planning, building, public health) to share info on bylaws (see Tewksbury's example)	No edits, this is included by reference in recommendations of <i>At Home in Greater Lowell</i> .
Plan in general/Process	I think it's a great plan, would like to see more actionable items in the surrounding suburbs outside Lowell	No response necessary.
Plan in general/Process	I browsed the report. Wow. Very impressive and well structured. Happy to see the mention of attention for multimodal infrastructure. Page 77 mentions the BFRT, however it also included the new Lowell Connector Trail	Added trail tour to Public Outreach section.
Strategy 4: Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents	I would add my thoughts on Strategy 4 that the LRTA is also currently starting work on a Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan, and a full fixed Route system analysis study to give us a roadmap to better serve people who live and work in the region. This may include changes to routes including addition or subtraction of routes, expanded service hours and potential Sunday service.	Added information to Strategy 4.2 (improve the transportation network) and included Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan and Fixed Route System Analysis to Priority Project matrix.
1: Introduction	The introduction sets a strong foundation for the CEDS by clearly explaining the purpose and importance of regional economic planning. It emphasizes collaboration among stakeholders, data-informed decision-making, and a nine-month planning process that included community input, committee guidance, and a public summit. The description of the process is thorough. As a partner in the development of this draft, the MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board suggests that briefly highlighting core regional challenges, such as infrastructure gaps and workforce displacement, early in the document could help frame the stakes and enhance shared understanding.	Integrated discussion of these elements into the executive summary.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Section	Comment	Resolution
2: Summary Background	This section provides a comprehensive overview of Greater Lowell's demographic trends, economic assets, infrastructure, housing, and quality of life. It effectively highlights the region's diverse population, strong education, workforce development resources, and competitive traded industries like advanced manufacturing and life sciences.	No response necessary.
3: SOAR Analysis	The SOAR analysis is a well-executed and forward-thinking assessment that effectively connects the region's assets with its future aspirations. It reframes traditional SWOT analysis by focusing on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results, fostering a more action-oriented mindset. This section could benefit from clearer, measurable targets and potential timelines for each outcome.	No edits, targets are included in implementation matrices for each strategy and key performance measures.
4: Vision and Strategy	This section outlines a clear and comprehensive vision for the Greater Lowell region. The Evaluation Framework (pg. 46) identifies broad outcome categories, but it may benefit from additional detail regarding specific metrics, timelines, and roles. Providing more defined structures could support effective implementation and ensure that progress is tracked transparently.	Included refining performance metrics, timelines, and roles as a subtask of Strategy 1.1 (a collaborative economic development initiative).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

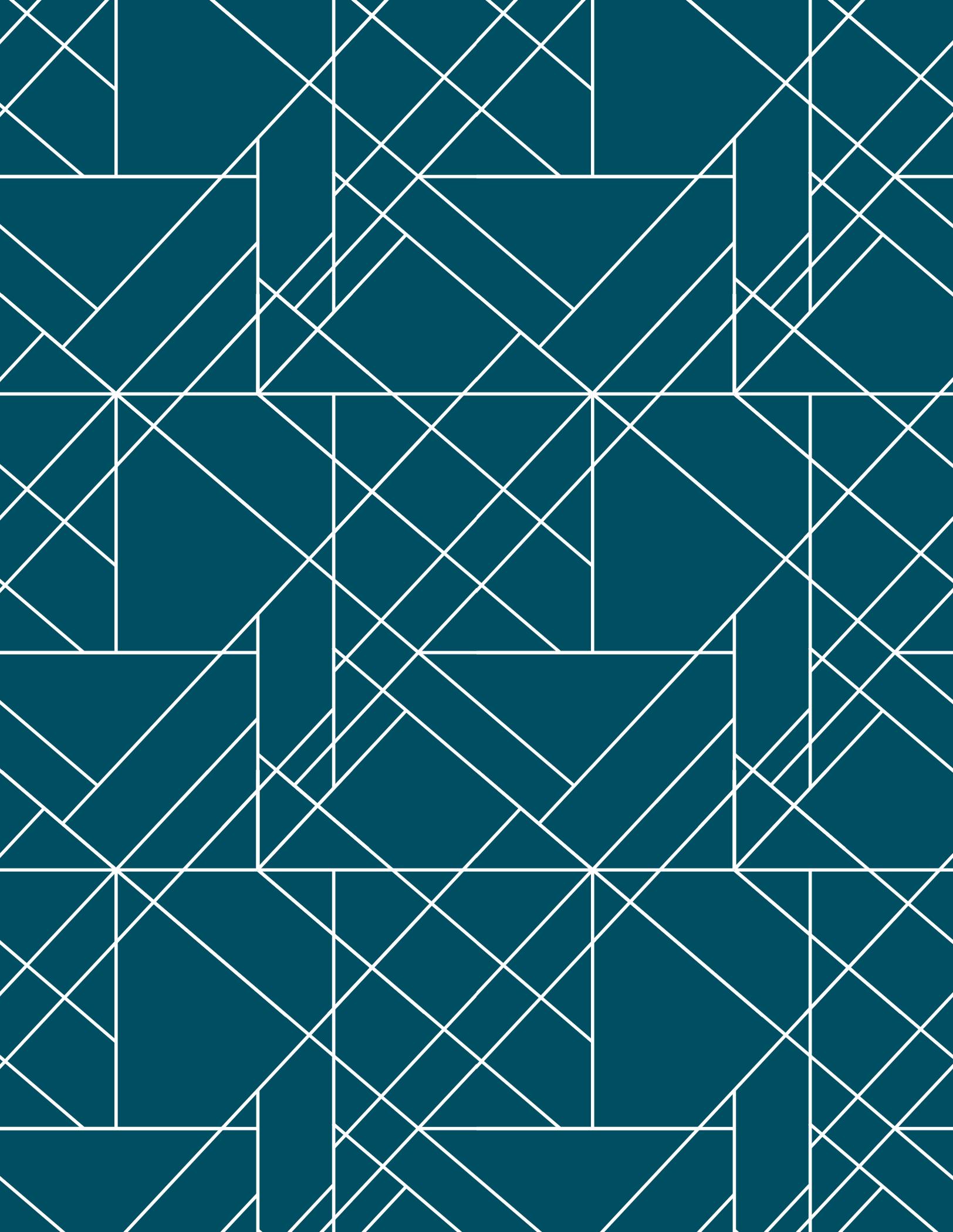
Section	Comment	Resolution
<p>Strategy 1: Creating Economic Development Capacity</p>	<p>This strategy justly identifies the need for a more cohesive and collaborative regional approach to economic development. In addition to improving coordination among municipal and regional partners, the strategy should more explicitly integrate skill development and career pathway programming as a component of creating economic development capacity. As reflected in the Northeast MA Regional Blueprint and the MassHire Greater Lowell WIOA Local 4-Year Plan, the healthcare and social assistance sector remains the largest employment sector in the Greater Lowell region, accounting for over 21% of total jobs. The strategy should support continued investment in training and career pathways to address labor shortages and to meet the region's growing healthcare needs. Along with the healthcare industry, Advanced Manufacturing, Professional & Technical Services, Education, and Construction are other top industries. Given the expanding labor force, the strategy should mention the importance of apprenticeship programs and industry-aligned training. Alignment with Middlesex Community College and UMass Lowell can help deliver customized programming that meets local labor market demand. Furthermore, greater investment in vocational-technical high schools can expand access to these schools and support their facilities and curriculum in order to help equip students with in-demand skills in priority fields. Closer alignment between vocational schools, community colleges, apprenticeships, and 4-year colleges can overall increase career readiness for growing sectors. Lastly, by analyzing labor trends and anticipated workforce needs, such as the Manufacturing sector that is facing a high demand for replacement workers due to an aging workforce, the region can build an adaptive ecosystem that supports both economic growth and workforce inclusion. These adjustments can ensure that Greater Lowell is not only competitive economically but also prepared to meet the needs of its diverse residents and industries.</p>	<p>Included the new MassHire Greater Lowell WIOA Local 4-Year Plan by reference in Strategy 3.5 (connect residents with regional employment opportunities). Summary Background already identified these additional industries as key industries, which are referenced throughout the plan.</p>

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Section	Comment	Resolution
<p>Strategy 2: Developing Strong Places and Towns</p>	<p>This strategy appropriately highlights the importance of increasing the vibrancy of the Greater Lowell region for regional economic health. Greater Lowell’s municipalities each offer distinct cultural, historical, and recreational assets, and leveraging these collectively can make the region more appealing to residents, tourists, and employers. However, the strategy could benefit from a clearer commitment to equitable placemaking. The Greater Lowell region contains many underrepresented and historically marginalized communities, particularly in the City of Lowell, where a significant percentage of residents are immigrants, low-income households, or people of color. It is essential that vibrancy and revitalization efforts also extend to neighborhoods and spaces that have long been underinvested in. Equitable placemaking should invest in safe, inclusive, and welcoming public spaces that reflect the cultural diversity of the region. This could include expanding support for culturally relevant festivals, local businesses, and improving basic infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks, lighting). Regional placemaking efforts could also integrate community-led planning processes to ensure that local voices contribute to decisions about what vibrancy looks like in their neighborhoods. Building capacity within community-based organizations and neighborhood groups can support long-term sustainability and community ownership of these projects.</p>	<p>No edits, however, support of census tracts that qualify as distressed could be considered during destination development planning, and destination development planning includes identification of authentic, local assets and deep community engagement.</p>
<p>Strategy 3: Leveraging Signature Opportunities</p>	<p>The need to mobilize around transformational regional projects, such as the Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC), is important to drive economic growth across Greater Lowell. The strategy could highlight the intentional alignment of public-private initiatives with workforce pipelines, such as biotechnology, life sciences, and cybersecurity. The recent partnership between UMass Lowell and Bioversity illustrates this, as Bioversity established an eight-week biotech workforce training program as part of LINC. This initiative is explicitly designed to train underrepresented and low-income residents of Greater Lowell for entry-level roles in life sciences. By offering hands-on laboratory instruction, industry mentoring, stipends, and job placement support, LINC and other projects such as the aforementioned Hamilton Canal Innovation District Plan are supporting the growing life science industry.</p>	<p>No response necessary.</p>

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Section	Comment	Resolution
<p>Strategy 4: Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents</p>	<p>This strategy is perhaps the most foundational to long-term regional resilience. Greater Lowell’s aging infrastructure, particularly in transportation, housing, water, sewer, and energy systems, is a significant barrier to economic growth. The strategy can be strengthened by highlighting recent advancements in clean energy and public transit infrastructure that signal a forward-looking approach to sustainable regional development. In 2023, the MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board (MGLWFB) launched the “GET A \$2 RYDE” pilot program in partnership with QRyde to support local businesses and their employees by offering subsidized transportation. The MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board hopes to continue this program with a 2nd phase, and is currently seeking funding to advance this transit initiative. The MGLWFB also recently announced their support for the Lowell Regional Transit Authority’s (LRTA) \$7.1 million plan for transitioning to hybrid-electric buses, replacing older diesel buses with cleaner, more efficient vehicles while cutting emissions and long-term operational costs. This initiative is part of a \$22 million federal funding package for clean energy upgrades, with around \$15 million for energy-efficient upgrades to schools, such as HVAC improvements to Lowell Public Schools. These investments support both climate goals and environmental equity, particularly in urban neighborhoods where residents are more likely to rely on public transit and be affected by air pollution. Additionally, the LINC project is poised to bring not only commercial innovation space but also hundreds of new housing units to the region. These projects demonstrate the potential for Greater Lowell to lead in building a modern infrastructure system that is clean, efficient, and inclusive. To fully realize this potential, the strategy should emphasize the importance of aligning infrastructure investments with housing, workforce, and climate goals.</p>	<p>No response necessary.</p>



APPENDIX 3

PRIORITY PROJECTS



PRIORITY PROJECTS

The project team circulated a call for priority projects with the CEDS Committee, municipal economic development planners, the NMCOG Council, and Town and City Administrators and Managers, requesting submissions of potential projects that advance one or more of the *Greater Lowell Stronger Together* strategy pillars and one or more EDA Investment Priorities. This call was opened on May 21, 2025 and closed at the end of the Public Comment period on June 30, 2025. The project team confirmed alignment with one or more priorities and added additional priorities based on existing planning documents.

The table below does not represent all possible projects that could be funded by economic development grants, but rather a sample of projects that align with the plan’s four strategic pillars that would be good candidates for economic development grants. Stakeholders are encouraged to bring additional priorities to NMCOG to evaluate their alignment with this CEDS and their suitability for funding from the Economic Development Administration or other economic development funding sources.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

ID	Location	Name of Project	Short Description	Economic Development Pillars				Strategic Pillars				
				Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Critical Infrastructure	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience
1	Region-wide	AHGL Implementation	Implement At Home in Greater Lowell Regional Housing Strategy elements	x	x	x	x					x
2	Region-wide	Capital Corridor Expansion	Extend MBTA line to Nashua, NH or beyond				x	x			x	x
3	Region-wide	Greater Lowell Bike/Ped Implementation	Implement the Greater Lowell Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan		x		x	x				x
4	Region-wide	Greater Lowell Workforce Board Priorities	Implement the Greater Lowell Workforce Board 2025-2029 Strategic Plan	x		x			x	x	x	x

PRIORITY PROJECTS

PRIORITY PROJECTS				Creating Economic Development Capacity				Critical Infrastructure				
Location	Name of Project	Short Description		Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents						
5	Region-wide	Intermunicipal Trail Connections	Designate, prioritize, design, and implement new bike and pedestrian connections to close gaps in trail network and connect housing, recreation, and jobs	x	x	x		x				x
6	Region-wide	Nashua River Rail Trail Connections	Develop trail connections along Route 113 or other routes to connect town centers to the Nashua River Rail Trail	x		x		x				x
7	Region-wide: LRTA	Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements	Improve accessibility of bus stops as indicated by bus stop study			x		x			x	x
8	Region-wide: LRTA	Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan	Update 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan including public outreach and service, policy, capital, and other recommendations.			x					x	x
9	Region-wide: LRTA	Route System Analysis and Service Expansion	Undertake study to provide roadmap to better serve people who live and work in the region, including possible expansion of frequency and days of service of LRTA busses.			x					x	x
10	Region-wide: Middlesex 3 Coalition	Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction	Create business attraction campaign and engage with regional leaders to strengthen the region's target industries, improving business attraction. Coordinate and connect companies with resources and development sites. Maintain internal database of businesses. Expand to understand challenges, opportunities, plans, and needs. Connect with regional job-seeking resources.	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Location	Name of Project	Short Description	Creating Economic Development Capacity				Critical Infrastructure				
			Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience		
11	Region-wide: Middlesex 3 Coalition	Emerging and Key Industry Clusters	Outreach to companies in key clusters to attract, retain, and expand development, including roundtables, networking, and other targeted events. Build upon M3 regional task force of public and private sector leaders to support industrial growth. Work with existing and new economic development partners to ensure joint efforts in attracting, retaining, and expanding businesses within these industries. Connect target industries with local residents and the Connecting Activities program to improve workforce development and enhance job opportunities.			X	X		X	X	X
12	Region-wide: Middlesex 3 Coalition	Site Selection, Development, and Promotion	Build upon the M3 Priority Development Sites to develop a comprehensive inventory of key sites and parcels to focus future development projects in the region, including promoting and marketing these opportunities to corporate site selectors and developers and building a network of regional/national selectors that represent companies with an interest in operating in the region. Work with developers to study opportunities, challenges, and solutions to develop vacant and underutilized sites.		X			X		X	
13	Billerica	Billerica Town Center improvements	Improve infrastructure and placemaking at Billerica Town Center to support small business and other town goals.				X	X			X
14	Billerica	Gateway Mixed Use Districts along Route 3	Develop master plans and make recommended infrastructure improvements to mixed use centers on MA-3 including Republic Road and other areas.			X	X	X	X	X	X
15	Billerica	North Billerica Station Underpass	Improve roadways including the Mt. Pleasant Street underpass under the MBTA rail line and plan and implement mixed use development at MBTA Station.			X	X	X			X

PRIORITY PROJECTS

PRIORITY PROJECTS			Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Critical Infrastructure	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience
Location	Name of Project	Short Description									
16	Billerica	Yankee Doodle Trail	Complete Phase 2 and design and advance a Phase 3 from North Billerica to Lowell of a major bicycle/pedestrian trail for recreation and commuters.	x		x	x				x
17	Chelmsford	Center Village Revitalization	Support infrastructure and placemaking to promote safety, small businesses, and other town goals at a traditional neighborhood center.	x			x				x
18	Chelmsford	Chelmsford Route 3 Highway Interchange	Make improvements to the interchanges at Route 3 and MA-40, MA-4, MA-110, and MA-129.				x	x			
19	Chelmsford	Chelmsford Wastewater Study	Study and develop plan to increase wastewater capacity for Town of Chelmsford.				x	x	x		x
20	Chelmsford	North Chelmsford Commuter Rail Station	Plan, design, and develop a rail station in North Chelmsford if and when MBTA service is extended.	x			x	x			
21	Chelmsford	Route 110 complete streets to Westford Border	Enhance multimodal infrastructure along Route 110 from Chelmsford Center Village to Westford border to link job and housing centers.	x			x	x			x
22	Chelmsford	Vinal Square Revitalization	Support infrastructure and placemaking to promote safety, small businesses, and other town goals at a traditional neighborhood center.	x				x			x

PRIORITY PROJECTS

			Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Critical Infrastructure	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience
Location	Name of Project	Short Description									
23	Dracut	Collinsville - Lakeview and Mammoth Improvements Plan, design, and implement safety improvements at intersection and placemaking/village center improvement in Collinsville neighborhood near mill.		x		x	x				x
24	Dracut	Dracut Farm and Agricultural Support Initiatives Plan and develop initiatives such as marketing, workforce support, regional agricultural connections, or other "soft infrastructure" to support farm stands and agritourism in Dracut, a right-to-farm community.	x	x				x		x	x
25	Dracut	Navy Yard Safety and Beautification Design and complete capital placemaking and safety improvements in the Navy Yard Business District of Dracut, a vibrant district that lacks cohesiveness. A lack of sidewalks and a dangerous intersection at Lakeview Avenue and Pleasant Street also detract from the area.	x	x			x				x
26	Dunstable	Dunstable Town Center Improvements Improve town-owned properties (Union Building, Fire Station, others) and support other placemaking, safety, and policy improvements to support small businesses and other town goals.			x	x	x				x
27	Dunstable	Town Center Trail Loop Create a safe, offroad pedestrian pathway loop in Town Center making important connections to elementary school, library, and municipal buildings, along with recreational and conservation opportunities.	x	x		x	x	x			

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Location		Name of Project	Short Description	Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Critical Infrastructure	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience
28	Dunstable	Route 113 Complete Street Improvements	Redesign and reconstruct Route 113 to improve pedestrian and bicycle access, safety, and to encourage additional private investment along Route 113.	x	x		x	x	x			x
29	Lowell	495 at Woburn Street Improvements	Design and construct traffic improvements for safety and capacity for nearby commercial/industrial district.			x	x	x		x		x
30	Lowell	Appleton/Church/Gorham/Central Street Improvements	Complete city-initiative project to improve safety near and at the intersection of several streets in Lowell's downtown.		x	x	x	x				x
31	Lowell	Combined Sewer Overflow Project	Complete all phases of Lowell's Combined Sewer Overflow project, separating sewer and adding storage tanks to reduce storm event runoff into Merrimack River.				x	x				x
32	Lowell	Lowell Innovation Network Corridor (LINC) Improvements	Make infrastructure improvements for Lowell Innovation Network Corridor including but not limited to bridge improvements and complete streets at Father Morrisette.		x	x	x	x				x
33	Lowell	Lord Overpass/Thorndike Street Improvements	Complete design and construction of improvements at junction of Lowell Connector and Thorndike Street.				x	x				x

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Location	Name of Project	Short Description	Economic Development				Infrastructure			
			Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Critical Infrastructure	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce
34 Lowell	Ayer's City Industrial Park (ACIP) and Tanner Street Implementation	Implement Lowell Ayer's City Industrial Park (ACIP/Tanner Street) Urban Renewal Plan, as updated as part of Urban Renewal study	x	x	x	x	x			x
35 Lowell	Connector at Gorham Improvement	Complete MassDOT initiated project to improve the intersection of the Lowell Connector at Gorham, a major gateway to the City of Lowell.		x	x	x	x			x
36 Lowell	Hamilton Canal Innovation District (HCID) Implementation	Implement the Lowell Hamilton Canal Innovation District Master Plan, as updated through coordination with developers and stakeholders.	x	x	x	x	x			x
37 Lowell	Jackson Appleton Middlesex (JAM) Plan Implementation	Implement Lowell Jackson Appleton Middlesex Plan Urban Renewal Plan, as updated as part of Urban Renewal study.	x	x	x	x	x			x
38 Lowell	Lowell Neighborhood Business Improvements	Support infrastructure and placemaking to promote safety, small businesses, and other town goals at a traditional neighborhood center.		x		x	x			x
39 Lowell	Multimodal Connection Improvements	Improve streets and sidewalks near Gallagher Terminal and other transit stops.			x	x	x			x

PRIORITY PROJECTS

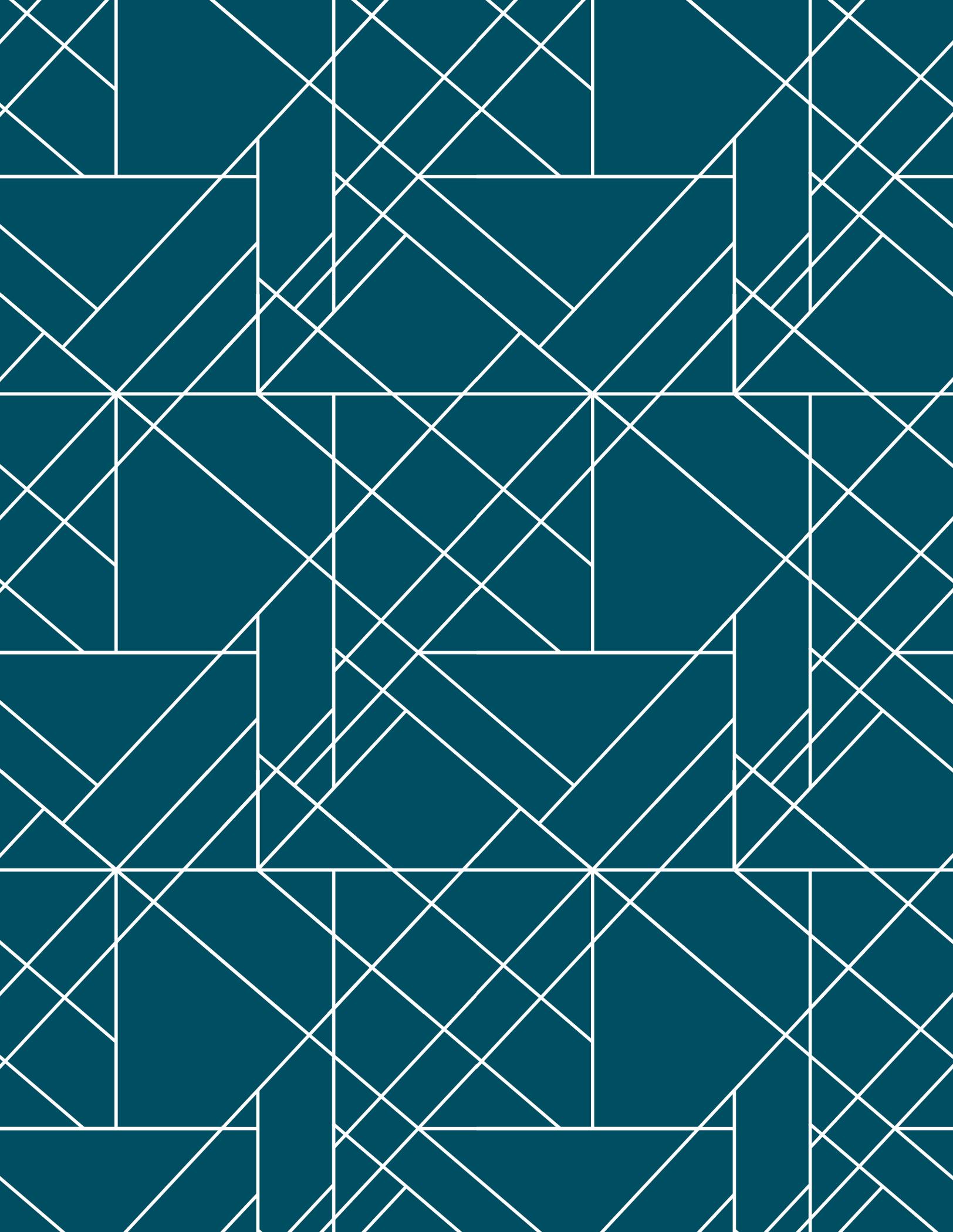
PRIORITY PROJECTS			Creating Economic Development Capacity				Critical Infrastructure				
Location	Name of Project	Short Description	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience		
40	Lowell	Upper Merrimack Street Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) District Support program improvements including small business coordination, arts and culture, and other "soft infrastructure" promoted by the TDI District on Merrimack Street.	x	x		x				x	
41	Pepperell	Fitz Community Center Support improvements at the Fitz in Pepperell, including its community programming, commercial kitchen, and other potential uses.		x		x	x	x	x	x	
42	Pepperell	Food Hub Support developing a food hub, i.e., a distribution center for small farms to farm-to-table programs.				x				x	
43	Pepperell	Railroad Square/Town Center Support infrastructure and placemaking to promote safety, small businesses, and other town goals at a traditional neighborhood center.		x	x	x				x	
44	Tewksbury	Complete Streets Route 38 Complete project to enhance multimodal facilities on Route 38 in Tewksbury.			x	x				x	
45	Tewksbury	Reuse of Old Center Fire Station Study Explore the commercial viability of possible reuse of the Old Center Fire Station building and site.	x	x			x				

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Location		Name of Project	Short Description	Creating Economic Development Capacity	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Critical Infrastructure	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience
46	Tyngsborough	MBTA Communities District Infrastructure	Complete master plan and infrastructure study to create potential for transit-oriented development near Pheasant Lane Mall in Tyngsborough.		X		X	X				X
47	Tyngsborough	Update of Special Rules & Regs	Streamline processes and reduce regulatory burdens can serve as powerful tools to attract development by updating Special Rules and Regulations to create a more efficient, predictable, and transparent permitting process.	X				X				X
48	Westford	12 North Main Street	Complete selective building demolition and stabilization, remaining hazardous material cleanup, and an off-site wastewater connection to utilize an approximately 32,000 square-foot vacant granite mill.		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
49	Westford	Discover Westford Business Initiative	Continue efforts of branding and marketing, town-wide business database, and business community focus groups. Continue momentum with local businesses, find opportunities business efforts to grow, and attract new businesses to fill vacant commercial space in town.	X	X				X		X	X
50	Westford	Graniteville Revitalization Plan	Conduct a robust study that including several key properties in the area, with the 12 North Main Street project acting as a catalyst project for revitalizing this area of Westford.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

PRIORITY PROJECTS

			Creating Economic Development Capacity				Critical Infrastructure			
Location	Name of Project	Short Description	Developing Strong Places and Towns	Leveraging Signature Opportunities	Infrastructure that Supports Workers and Residents	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Manufacturing	Workforce	Economic Recovery Resilience	
51	Westford	MCMOD Pedestrian Improvements Plan Implementation Implement the pedestrian improvement plan in and around its MBTA Communities Overlay District to improve its infrastructure and make the district more walkable and better support existing and future residents and businesses.	x	x	x	x	x		x	
52	Westford	Neighborhood Business Revitalization Make targeted investments in its neighborhood businesses in a global effort to boost economic vitality in its commercial districts where unique and local businesses can thrive.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
53	Westford	Power Capacity Needs – Route 110 Work with National Grid to address the existing availability and stability of electrical power for redevelopment, particularly high-tech industries.	x		x	x	x	x	x	



APPENDIX 4

APPROVAL AND ADOPTION





July 28, 2025

Ms. Debra Beavin, EDR for Massachusetts
U.S. Department of Commerce
EDA, Philadelphia Regional Office
N.C, Nix Sr. Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
900 Market Street, Room 602
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: *Greater Lowell Stronger Together*, the 2025-2030 Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Dear Ms. Beavin,

We are pleased to submit *Greater Lowell Stronger Together*, the Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2025-2030 to you for your review and approval. We undertook this nine-month planning process with the assistance of Fourth Economy Consulting. The end result is a user-friendly, bold, and achievable roadmap to strengthen the economic resilience and competitiveness of our region.

The planning process included economic analysis and development of a summary background before undertaking a “listening tour” in which we conducted over 60 interviews with regional businesses, civic leaders, and community members. This initial input helped us craft the SOAR (Strength, Opportunity, Aspiration, Result) analysis and design the Greater Lowell Economic Summit. This summit took place on March 20, 2025, and drew together roughly 80 economic leaders to build upon the SOAR analysis through collaboratively developing specific, actionable strategies. From May 30 through June 30, 2025, the plan was posted online for a 30-day public comment period and announced via a press release, emails to stakeholders, the NMCOG newsletter, and social media. Throughout the process, our CEDS committee guided us, making sure the plan and its process reflected the capabilities, capacities, and values of the region’s economic ecosystem.

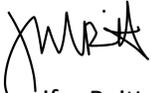
The result is a 66-page CEDS document with an introduction including a roster of the CEDS Committee and profiles of the communities in the region, a summary background, a SOAR analysis, goals and strategies, and an evaluation framework. The appendices include a funding matrix, a summary of public engagement including comments received during the 30-day comment period, and a list of exemplary local and regional projects aligned with our goals and strategies. We have also attached:

- A separate 13-page summary document that highlights key findings and the goals and strategy,
- A draft copy of the minutes of the NMCOG Council meeting of July 16, 2025, in which the Council unanimously voted to adopt *Greater Lowell Stronger Together* as the Greater Lowell CEDS for 2025-2030,

- A copy of the press announcement verifying the 30-day comment period, and
- A completed copy of the EDA CEDS Checklist provided to NMCOG on May 19, 2025,

We appreciate your guidance through the development of our Five-Year CEDS and look forward to working with you in supporting the continuing to strengthen the capacity, prosperity, and economic resilience of the Greater Lowell region. Please feel free to contact me directly at (978) 454-8021 ext. 120 or jraitt@nmcog.org if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Raitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer Raitt
Executive Director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regional Economic Plan Released for Public Comment

“Greater Lowell Stronger Together” aims to prioritize key government and private sector actions to enhance the region’s resilience, competitiveness, and prosperity.

Lowell, MA- The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) is proudly announcing that Greater Lowell Stronger Together, the 2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, is available for public review and comment. This plan provides a blueprint for NMCOG, its member communities, and public and private sector partners to work together to target investments to enhance the region’s economy.

Through a partnership with the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), NMCOG and its consultant, Fourth Economy Consulting, interviewed nearly 70 business leaders, public officials, and nonprofit experts in a listening tour to better understand the region’s economic strengths, opportunities, and aspirations. The team then held the first Greater Lowell Economic Summit last March at UKG in Lowell, bringing together roughly 80 participants, including members of the public, economic experts, and stakeholders. This discussion, along with economic data and analysis, informed the four strategic pillars of the plan:

- Creating Economic Development Capacity
- Developing Strong Places and Towns
- Leveraging Signature Opportunities
- Building Infrastructure to Support Workers and Residents

“This plan wouldn’t have been possible without extensive cooperation of so many partners,” said Jennifer Raitt, NMCOG Executive Director. “We are confident that it will not only be a framework for funding priorities, but also a guide to working even more closely together to create positive economic outcomes for the region.

The draft is open to public comment until June 30, 5:00 pm. The public comment form, including a link to download the plan, is available at <https://www.nmcog.org/strongertogether>.

About the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

NMCOG is one of thirteen regional planning agencies within Massachusetts. Formed under Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws, NMCOG serves the municipalities of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Lowell, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford to support and enhance a wide range of planning objectives related to land use, environmental protection and resiliency, economic development, housing, municipal service delivery, and transportation.

NMCOG's professional staff assist member communities in designing, facilitating, and implementing programs and planning initiatives which further the interests of the overall region. NMCOG staff also serve as staff to the Northern Middlesex MPO, to which they provide comprehensive transportation planning services for the region under contract with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

Media Contact:

Jennifer Raitt

Executive Director, NMCOG

(978) 454-8021 x 120

jraitt@nmcog.org.

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COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) REVIEW & ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST *(for EDA-funded CEDS)*

Planning Organization Information

Name:	Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
Address:	672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854
POC Name, Title:	Christopher Glenn Hayes, Director of Housing and Economic Development
POC Telephone, Email:	(978) 454-8021 x122, chayes@nmcog.org

Organizational Review & Approval Process *(to be completed by Organization)*

Strategy committee roster included/attached: Yes No
(Page 2)

Copy of CEDS provided to affected Regional Commission: Yes No NA

Dates of public review & comment period (at least 30 days): 5/30/2025-6/30/2025

Date CEDS adopted by organization’s governing body: 7/16/2025

Attached documentation of public comment and adoption:

- Governing body adoption of CEDS (minutes or resolution): Yes No
(Minutes)
- Verification of 30-day public comment on the CEDS: Yes No
(Press announcement)
- Copy of all public comments received on the CEDS: Yes No
(Appendix 2)
- Explanation from the Planning Organization stating how comments were incorporated into the final CEDS: Yes No
(Appendix 2)

CEDS self-assessment checklist completed & attached (optional): Yes No

EDA Review & Approval Process *(to be completed by EDA)*

Reviewer Name, Title, RO:

Reviewer Phone, Email:

Date CEDS Received by EDA:

Date CEDS Review Completed:

CEDS Review Determination: Approved Deficient

Date CEDS Review Letter & Checklist Sent to Organization:

CEDS, Review Letter, & Assessment Checklist Filed at RO: Yes No

CEDS Receipt, Review Notification, & Status Entered in OPCS: Yes No

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) REVIEW & ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (for EDA-funded CEDS)

Overview

“A CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.” This definition comes from the “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS,” published by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 2015. It frames the nature and purpose of a CEDS. The checklist below is an optional assessment tool intended to help area/regional development organizations prepare viable strategies that meet EDA’s guidelines. Likewise, it is a tool for EDA staff to use in reviewing and approving a CEDS. Although it is not a required form, it is a useful tool.

Structure

The checklist follows the structure of EDA’s CEDS guidelines. The assessment elements relate to the stated requirements and recommendations contained in the guidelines. **Requirements, which are noted as such, are few. Most of the elements are recommendations.**

Instructions

The following instructions will optimize the use of this checklist for CEDS reviews and self-assessments:

- Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not the element is present and has been satisfactorily addressed. For certain elements not applicable to the area/region, indicate “NA.”
- Where requested, note the location of the element in the CEDS by showing the section or page number(s) where the topic is addressed.
- Include comments to clarify the review, as needed, or to indicate deficiencies to be addressed, or to acknowledge exemplary treatment of the element.

Self-Assessment

It will be helpful for a CEDS-preparing organization to conduct a self-assessment of its strategy using this CEDS checklist. In so doing, the organization should be able to identify and address deficiencies prior to submitting the document for EDA review and approval. It will also be helpful for the organization to submit a copy of its self-assessment with its CEDS.

References

“Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS,” <http://www.eda.gov/ceds/>

EDA Regulations: 13 C.F.R. § 303.7; http://www.eda.gov/pdf/edas_regs-13_cfr_chapter_iii.pdf

CEDS REVIEW & ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

1. OVERVIEW

In accordance with EDA’s regulations and guidelines, the following sections must be included in the CEDS document:

Summary Background	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 32-40
SWOT Analysis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 41-50. Takes the form of a SOAR Analysis.
Strategic Direction/Action Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 51-62
Evaluation Framework	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 63-66. Includes strategy matrix within the Action Plan on pages 51-62.

Comments:

The CEDS must incorporate the concept of economic resilience (i.e. the ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, the impacts of climate change, etc.)

The CEDS meets this requirement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Major theme throughout the plan and specifically noted on page 65.
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Comments:

2. CONTENT

The CEDS meets the following general criteria:

It was developed with broad-based community participation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Appendix 2, Pages 81-102
It is readily accessible to regional stakeholders.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	CEDS posted on project website: nmcog.org/ceds
It is usable to stakeholders as a guide to the regional economy and for action to improve it.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 51-53 outline the Vision, Goals, Strategy Framework, and

Seen through the lens of economic resiliency, the four required elements (see 'Overview' above) logically build upon each other to result in a coherent, targeted document.

Yes No
Location:

Implementation Matrix.
Pages 67-79 Appendix
1: Funding Matrix.

N/A

Comments:

2-A. SUMMARY BACKGROUND

The "Summary Background" section meets the following criteria:

Answers the question, "Where have we been?" and presents a clear understanding of the local economic situation, supported by current, relevant data. Yes No

The information is presented in a clear and concise manner, and can be easily understood by the general public. Yes No

Data presentation allows for clear, relevant connections to the SWOT analysis and strategic direction. Yes No

Comments:

The "Summary Background" section provides information in the following areas that affect the regional economy, as applicable:

Demographic & socioeconomic data Yes No
Location:

NA

Environmental, geographic, climatic, and cultural information Yes No
Location:

NA

Infrastructure assets that relate to economic development Yes No
Location:

NA

Emerging or declining clusters or industry sectors Yes No
Location:

NA

Relationship of the area's economy to the larger region or state Yes No
Location:

NA

Page 32.

Page 39.

Pages 36-37.

Pages 34-35.

Pages 31-40.

Factors that directly affect economic performance in the area (e.g. workforce, innovation assets, industry supply chains, etc.)

Yes No
Location:
 NA

Pages 34-37.

Other factors that relate to economic performance (e.g. housing, health services, etc.)

Yes No
Location:
 NA

Pages 38-39.

Comments:

The CEDS includes content that meets the following related criteria:

It is a vehicle that promotes the integration of economic development with other regional plans (e.g. sustainability, transportation, land use, housing, environmental protection, etc.)

Yes No
Location:

Page 43 (references ten specific plans and four additional local plan categories)

It identifies opportunities for the integrated use of local, state, private, and federal funds.

Yes No
Location:

Pages 67-79 Appendix 1: Funding Matrix.

The research for the CEDS includes a review of the long-term trends of the area.

Yes No
Location:

Pages 32-40 Summary Background. Pages 8-29 are Community Profiles

Comments:

2-B. SWOT ANALYSIS

The “SWOT Analysis” (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Strengths) section meets the following criteria:

Answers the question, “Where are we now?” and identifies the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s unique assets and competitive positioning.

Yes No

Pages 43-44

Considers economic resiliency, specifically, factors that can ensure the long-term success, viability, and durability of the regional economy.

Yes No Location:

Pages 41-50

Comments:

The “SWOT Analysis” assesses a wide-variety of regional attributes and dynamics, including the following specific areas and tools:

State of the regional economy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 43.
Regional clusters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 43-47
External trends and forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 44
Workforce considerations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 43-48
Spatial efficiencies/sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 47
Broadband needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 61-62
Energy needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 47, 60-62
Natural hazards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 43 (reference to hazard mitigation plans previously adopted)
Partners for economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 43 and 48, plus Implementation Matrices of strategies Pages 54-66
Resources for economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 43, 44, and 48, plus Appendix 1, Pages 67-80

Comments:

2-C. STRATEGIC DIRECTION/ACTION PLAN

The “Strategic Direction/Action Plan” section meets the following criteria:

Answers the questions, “Where do we want to go?” and “How are we going to get there?” by applying the SWOT analysis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Pages 52-62
Includes a vision statement, goals, and objectives.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 52
Includes an action plan for the implementation of the stated vision, goals, and objectives.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 54-62

Comments:

The Vision Statement, Goals, and Objectives meet the following criteria:

They respond to the analysis of the area’s development potential and problems (i.e. SWOT analysis).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 52
The process used to create the vision statement involved broad community participation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 52; Pages 81-102 Appendix 2: Public Engagement.
The draft vision statement was widely circulated for review and comment to ensure maximum stakeholder engagement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 81-102 Appendix 2: Public Engagement.
The goals are statements of broad outcomes and general intentions that build upon the vision statement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Page 52
The goals reflect the desires of most regional stakeholders, are realistic, and are limited to a manageable number.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 51-62
The objectives are specific, measurable, concrete, and support the attainment of the stated goals.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 51-62
The goals and objectives are prioritized, with consideration for the factors outlined in the CEDS guidelines.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 63-66

Comments: (Note: Objectives are called **Actions** in this CEDS and are integrated into the action/implementation plan)

The Action/Implementation Plan meets the following criteria:

It <u>must</u> be clearly linked to the prioritized goals and objectives stated in the framework for strategic direction.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 54-62
It identifies and describes a limited number of key projects with the highest priority and potential for regional impact.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 53-62 Implementation Matrix; Pages 103-114 Appendix C: lists Priority Projects

Comments: Each goal is organized under a “strategy.” Objective/actions are also organized under “strategy.”

The Action/Implementation Plan describes explicitly how the region will work together to achieve its goals and measurable objectives by including the following elements:

An outline of the steps required to take each selected high-priority activity from inception to successful completion.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 53-62. Each strategy has a number of actions with subtasks.
A roster of the key individuals and institutions that will be responsible for implementing and supporting these steps.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 53-62. Partners column.
A reasonable estimate of the costs associated with implementing the activity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 53-62 Cost column.
A list of the integrated funding sources (public, private, non-profit) to support the costs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 67-79 Appendix 1: Funding Matrix.
A realistic time frame for execution (i.e. implementation schedule), with relevant benchmarks and performance measures that address overall impact.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 53-62 Timeline column and Output column.
The identification of prioritized activities includes broad-based participation from regional stakeholders, including those affected by the proposed activities and those that can ensure their success.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Location:	Pages 81-102 Appendix 2: Public Engagement.

Comments:

2-D. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The “Evaluation Framework” section meets the following criteria:

It answers the questions, “How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?” by applying the SWOT analysis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Page 48, “Results” of SOAR analysis, and pages 64-66, Evaluation Framework.
It cascades from the strategic direction and action plan.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Pages 64-66.

Performance measures are identified to evaluate the progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals and objectives.

Yes No
Location:

Pages 63-66 and Implementation Matrix Outputs column.

Performance measures go beyond job creation to address linkages to other important factors, such as conditions the region needs to reverse or create, and what regional assets can be leveraged.

Yes No
Location:

Page 66.

Comments:

2-E. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The “Economic Resilience” section addresses the following two approaches in harmony with the principles outlined in EDA’s CEDS Content Guidelines:

“Steady State” Initiatives: Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region.

Yes No
Location:

Pages 65-66

“Responsive” Initiatives: Establishing information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors. The “Economic Resilience” section demonstrates how the region serves as a source of information to deal with an economic challenge and a convener of regional stakeholders to gather data and encourage collaboration in the post-disruption stage.

Yes No
Location:

Pages 65-66

Comments:

3. FORMAT

The structure and presentation of the information in the CEDS takes the following factors into consideration:

Keeps the audience in mind with respect to the length of the document, the presence of an executive summary, the placement of supporting data, etc.

Yes No

Communicates creatively by having a professional and appealing look and feel, by including attractive and informative graphics and photos, and by using both hard-copy and electronic formats.

Yes No

Thinks beyond the document by finding ways to use it to engage stakeholders in meaningful conversations, and to leverage its relevance and use through social media.

Yes No

Comments: Includes separate 13-page summary.

4. PREPARATION

The preparation of the CEDS included the following key steps and elements:

A strategy committee, which broadly represents the main economic interests of the region, was formed to facilitate the planning process, and to develop and update the CEDS.

Yes No
Location:

Page 2
Acknowledgements
Section.

The CEDS documents how the planning organization collaborated with its diverse set of stakeholders in the formation of its strategy committee and the development of the CEDS.

Yes No
Location:

Page 2
Acknowledgements
Section. Pages 81-102
Appendix 2: Public
Engagement.

The planning organization has or will collaborate with EDA and other entities funded by EDA (e.g. University Centers, Economic Development Districts, Tribes) on the development and implementation of the CEDS.

Yes No
Location:

N/A

Comments:



**NORTHERN
MIDDLESEX
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**
SERVING THE REGION SINCE 1963

Jennifer Raitt
Executive Director
NMCOG

Stephen Themelis
Chair
NMCOG Council

August 12, 2025

Ms. Debra Beavin, EDR for Massachusetts
U.S. Department of Commerce
EDA, Philadelphia Regional Office
N.C, Nix Sr. Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
900 Market Street, Room 602
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: *Greater Lowell Stronger Together: 2025-2030 Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*

Dear Ms. Beavin,

On behalf of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), I hereby submit this letter to affirm the NMCOG Council's adoption of *Greater Lowell Stronger Together*, the 2025-2030 Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). At its meeting on July 16, 2025, based on a motion by Mr. Wayne Jenness, seconded by Mr. Christopher Tribou, following a roll call vote, the Council unanimously approved the motion to adopt *Greater Lowell Stronger Together*, the 2025-2030 Greater Lowell CEDS.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with NMCOG staff, the CEDS Committee, and other economic development stakeholders to create a user-friendly, bold, and achievable roadmap to strengthen the economic resilience and competitiveness of our region. Please feel free to contact me directly at (978) 852-8520 if you have any questions about this letter.

Sincerely,

Stephen Themelis
NMCOG Chair

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

Meeting Minutes of July 16, 2025

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The July 16, 2025, meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) was held via Zoom and in person at NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, in Lowell. Stephen Themelis, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM. Roll call was taken, and the following people were in attendance:

Councilors:

Christopher Tribou, Billerica, Planning Board
Mary McBride, Clerk, Billerica, Alternate
Pat Wojtas, NMMPO Rep, Chelmsford, Select Board
John Sousa, Chelmsford, Planning Board
Douglas Bruce, Chelmsford, Alternate
Don Plummer, Dracut, Select Board
Tim Savage, Dracut, Planning Board
Philippe Thibault, Vice Chair, Dracut, Alternate
Wayne Jenness, Lowell, City Council
Gerard Frechette, Treasurer, Lowell, Planning Board
Chuck Walkovich, Assistant Treasurer, Pepperell, Select Board
Stephen Themelis, Chair, Pepperell, Alternate
Rich Russo, Tewksbury, Select Board
Jonathan Ciampa, Tewksbury, Planning Board
Alexandra Lowder, Tewksbury, Alternate
Adele Coughlin, Tyngsborough, Select Board member, Alternate
Kimberly O'Brien, Tyngsborough, Planning Board
Joanie Croteau, Westford, Planning Board

Staff:

Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
Kelly Lynema, Deputy Director
Christopher Hayes, Director of Housing and Economic Development
Donna Vieweg, Executive Assistant

Guest:

Chris Worley from Forth Economy

II. Announcements:

NMCOG Council welcomed Don Plummer, Select Board, Dracut

III. Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the Council Meeting on June 18, 2025, were distributed to all Councilors for review. Administrative corrections were made. Based on a motion by Mr. Frechette, seconded by Ms. McBride, following a roll call vote, the Council approved the minutes of the June 18, 2025, Council Meeting as amended.

IV. Financial Report and Warrant

Ms. Raitt presented the July Financial Report and Warrant for review and approval. Based on a motion by Mr. Walkovich, seconded by Ms. McBride, following a roll call vote the Council unanimously approved the July Financial Report and Warrant.

V. Adoption of Greater Lowell Stronger Together, the 2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (Vote Required)

Ms. Raitt introduced Mr. Hayes and noted that he would be presenting an executive level overview of the document being presented to the Council to vote to adopt the plan. Once the plan is adopted by the Council it will be submitted to the EDA. Once approved by EDA, NMCOG will then be eligible for additional annual funding to assist with implementing the CEDS and other grants. Mr. Hayes outlined the four pillars of the plan and the grants that NMCOG and the region could be eligible for. A request to adopt the CEDS plan was requested.

Based on a motion to adopt by Mr. Jenness, seconded by Mr. Tribou, following a roll call vote the Council unanimously approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

VI. Executive Director's Report

The Report was distributed for review to the Council in advance of this meeting. Ms. Raitt shared some highlights:

Introduction of Don Plummer, Select Board Member, Dracut

On July 15, Mr. Hayes was promoted to Director of Housing and Economic Development. Mr. Hayes has been with NMCOG since 2021, was promoted to Housing and Economic Development Program Manager in 2023 and has been a key NMCOG team member. Congratulations Chris.

- Ms. Raitt shared that Amanuel Regassa was certified as a Road Safety Professional which will be helpful as he develops and implements the Greater Lowell Vision Zero safety toolkit. He will also be able to lead forthcoming road safety audits. Additionally, the MPO endorsed the UPWP for the next Federal Fiscal Year starting October 1. The UPWP is informative and includes many new and continuing initiatives and projects.

- An amendment to the current FFY25 UPWP is still out for public comment and released TIP Amendment #4
- The first public forum for the Greater Lowell Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was held on July 8 at the Lowell Senior Center. It was a success; we had a great dialogue in small groups with nearly 20 people in attendance. The Transportation Planning team has also been talking to people at various pop-up events across the region, including tabling at farmers markets, 5K runs, and festivals. Ms. Lynema shared that the team has logged 50 hours of outreach time in the communities and engaged with more than 1,000 people.
- NMCOG submitted the Economic Development District application which was voted on by the Council at the June meeting. We are waiting for the EDA's acceptance and next steps in the designation process.
- With MAPC, the NMCOG team completed the Greater Lowell Digital Equity Plan and are working on the scopes of work for implementation which will begin this summer.
- In collaboration with consultant Wright Pierce, the region now has a completed stormwater asset inventory.
- Christian D'Amelia, Regional Housing Coordinator, has been working with the Regional Housing Services Office Advisory Committee which includes staff and volunteers from NMCOG member communities. There will be significant discussions in the fall to determine how we will move forward with this initiative beyond the pilot phase.
- NMCOG has been providing a lot of direct technical assistance to your communities for various projects and two are working towards completion. They include the Chelmsford HPP and the Dunstable ORSP. Michelle Zelenka, Regional Energy Manager, is assisting Pepperell with an assessment of the capital planning process and plan to identify ways to reduce energy consumption at Town buildings.
- The Annual Meeting is on October 15 at the Chelmsford Center for the Arts, and we will have an inaugural awards ceremony with awards going to a NMCOG staff member, a NMCOG Council member, a regional organization, and a legislator. Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Secretary Ed Augustus will be the keynote. Thank you to the planning team: Ms. Wojtas, Mr. Bruce, Ms. McBride, Ms. Lynema, Ms. Scheiber and Ms. Vieweg.
- The Northern Middlesex CEO group is planning a meeting with representatives from National Grid to discuss grid capacity across the region and hosting a

transportation forum with State Representative James Arciero and MassDOT CEO and Secretary Monica Tibbitts-Nutt.

VII. Community Exchange

Representatives shared several initiatives, community engagement events, and successes.

Billerica: Ms. McBride expressed her gratitude for Transportation Improvement Program funds for the reconstruction of Boston Road, Route 3A.

Chelmsford: Ms. Wojtas shared that the Farmers Market had a great turnout and that it was nice to see Ms. Lynema and Mr. Regassa there speaking with people about the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. She also stated that MassDOT had a meeting in Chelmsford regarding the reconfiguration of Route 3 and Princeton Street. Chelmsford will be hosting the Little League regional championship welcoming people from across New England.

Mr. Sousa noted that the Planning Board discussed the mall property on Route 110. There are new owners, and they want to have fast casual restaurants.

Dracut: Mr. Plummer shared that MassDOT started the Route 110 project. People can download the app or go to www.mass511.com for project details and traffic advisories.

Mr. Thibault noted that the Campbell School plans are being finalized and will be sent to MSBA for approval. The Town continues to review the charter which will be presented at a later date.

Lowell: Mr. Jenness invited everyone to attend the Lowell Folk Festival, July 25 to the 27th, which is the largest Folk Festival in the country. Mr. Jenness also shared that a delegation from the Urban Economic Forum was in Lowell to continue advancing Lowell's efforts as a Frontrunner City which may result in more sustainable development.

Mr. Frechette shared that the Planning Board adopted the Lowell Forward Master Plan which was referenced as a guiding vision in relation to the Frontrunner City efforts. He also noted that July 15, MassDOT held a meeting regarding the Rourke Bridge and provided a timeline for the activity that starts this month. The bridge is anticipated to be ready for use in 2029 with final completion by 2030.

Pepperell: Mr. Walkovich shared that Pepperell is excited about their 250th anniversary with several activities planned in August.

Tewksbury: Mr. Russo indicated the Select Board reviewed roundabout designs related to the intersection improvements at Main Street, Pleasant Street, North Street, and East Street in collaboration with MassDOT.

Mr. Ciampa shared that the Planning Board is considering moving forward with a new Master Plan process. NMCOG attended the last meeting to share a memo they prepared related to starting a new master planning process, the scope of work, and estimated project costs.

Tyngsborough: Ms. O'Brien shared that the Greater Lowell Technical High School was awarded a \$700,000 grant from Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development for career and technical initiatives. In addition, for the second year the Town starts a Civic Leadership Academy on August 13th. The Party at the Bridge will be on August 23rd.

Ms. Coughlin indicated that the Select Board encouraged people to take the Greater Lowell Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan survey .

Westford: Ms. Croteau shared that the Planning Board's public hearing for 37 Powers Road continued. The Affordable Housing Trust is working with NMCOG on a detailed housing needs assessment.

VIII. NMCOG Reminders and Announcement

NMMPO Meeting is on August 27, at 2 PM (hybrid on Zoom and at NMCOG)

NMCOG Council Meeting is on September 17, at 7 PM (hybrid on Zoom and at NMCOG)

The Annual Meeting will be October 15.

IX. Other business not known at the time of posting this agenda.

Mr. Themelis announced the Ms. Raitt received her annual review receiving a 3% increase (the highest percentage in accordance with the NMCOG FY26 budget) and an outstanding review.

X. Adjourn

Following a motion by Mr. Frechette and seconded by Ms. McBride, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM, which was unanimously approved.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of July 16, 2025.

Attest: _____

Mary K. McBride, Clerk



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economic Development Administration
Robert N.C. Nix Sr. Federal Building and
U.S. Courthouse, Room 602 900 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

August 13, 2025

Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
272 Suffolk Street
Suite 100
Lowell, MA 01854-3659

Dear Ms. Raitt,

Thank you for the recent submission of your CEDS document. EDA appreciated the opportunity to review your CEDS document for the period of 07/16/2025 through 07/16/2030.

We are pleased to inform you that EDA's review of your CEDS document and process align with the regulatory and programmatic requirements and your CEDS has been accepted by EDA. The priorities and focuses outlined within your CEDS document will help form the foundation of how EDA reviews applications for Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs from your region.

We greatly appreciate the work of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Board and CEDS Committee to develop this innovative, regionally driven economic development strategy. EDA looks forward to continuing to work with you to help support the goals and priorities outlined in your recently submitted CEDS.

Sincerely,

Debra Beavin, Economic Development Representative, CT, MA & RI
Philadelphia Regional Office