

# Portsmouth Master Plan

## Draft Recommendations

Draft for Public Review: April 22, 2026

### Structure & Formatting

**Goals** (broad, thematic statements with direction/vision) > **Objectives** (clear actionable statement to achieve the goal) > **Action/Strategy** (how you achieve the objectives; discrete steps) > **Supporting ideas** (to provide additional context/specificity - these will be included as an appendix to the plan).

Example:

Goal 1. Invest in Quality of Place (Q)

**Objective Q-1. Cultivate a more balanced mobility network that supports independence, safety, and strong connections for all ages and abilities.**

- **Q-1.1. Shorthand.** Action/Strategy 1.  
Supporting Ideas:
  - Idea 1
  - Idea 2
- **Q-1.2. Shorthand.** Action/Strategy 2.  
Supporting Ideas:
  - Idea 1
  - Idea 2
- **Q-1.3. Shorthand.** Action/Strategy 3.  
Supporting Ideas:
  - Idea 1
  - Idea 2

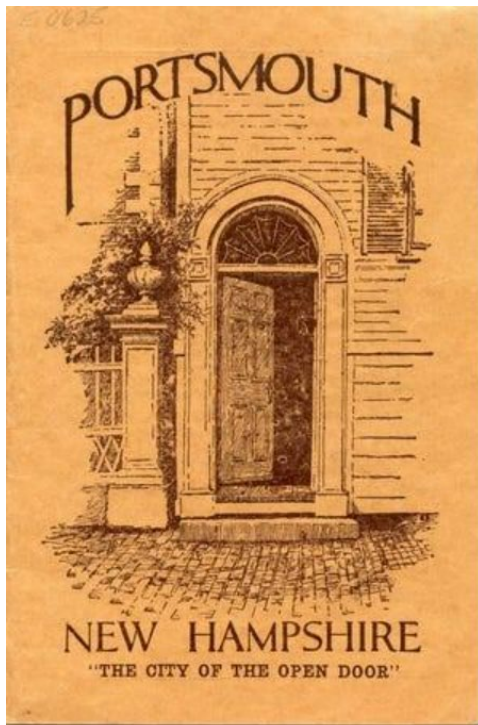
## Draft Plan Framework

### **Vision Statement**

Portsmouth will continue to cultivate our role as the Seacoast region's cultural and economic hub, protect the places that anchor our shared identity and historic character, and invest in sustainability, resilience and environmental justice.

As the *City of the Open Door*, we will support the people who create our community, expand attainable housing options for residents at every stage of life, and ensure our City is accessible and inclusive.

Together we will work to keep Portsmouth a beautiful, vibrant, and welcoming home for all people for generations to come.



<https://www.seacoastonline.com/story/lifestyle/2021/04/19/portsmouth-nh-advertising-pamphlet-city-open-door-j-dennis-robinson/7253354002/>

## Core Values

We value...

- **Vibrancy:** Our rich variety of organizations, businesses, and activities.
- **Authenticity:** Our City's historic character and our ability to contribute to the City's ever-evolving identity through self-expression.
- **Inclusivity:** Welcoming and supporting the full range of ages, incomes, abilities, and identities of Portsmouth community members.
- **Connectivity:** Transportation and communication systems that work for everyone and bring our City together.
- **Sustainability:** Our commitment to being an Eco-Municipality by ensuring our actions protect and reduce our impact on the environment while supporting the needs of all people in Portsmouth today and for generations to come.

About Portsmouth's Eco-Municipality Commitment:

*The four systems conditions of sustainability according to The Natural Step underpin Portsmouth's commitment to being an Eco-Municipality.*

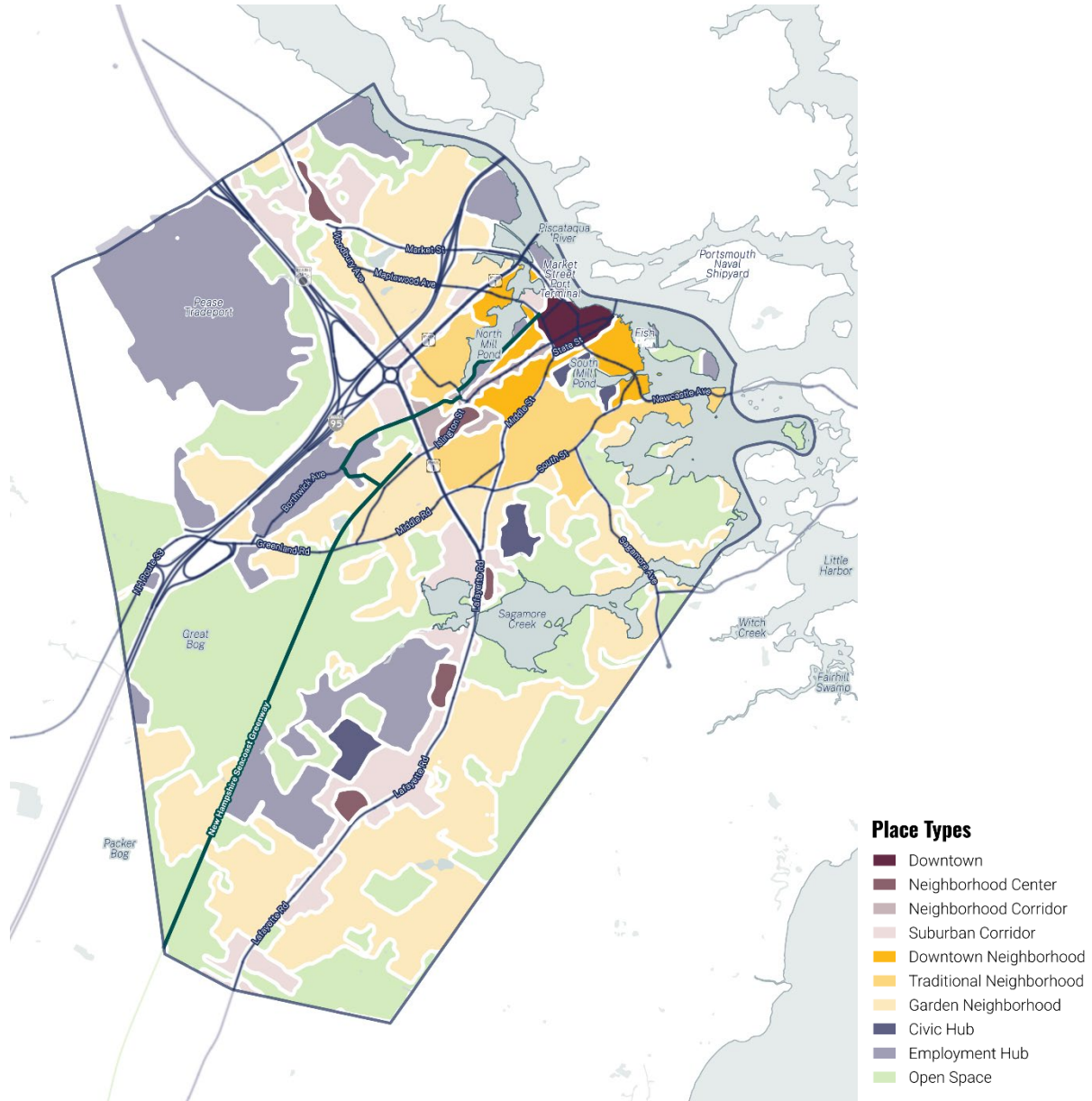
- *Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels and extracted underground metals and minerals;*
  - *Reduce dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in nature;*
  - *Reduce dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining eco-systems; and*
  - *Meet the hierarchy of present and future human needs fairly and efficiently.*
- **Resiliency:** The capacity of our residents, built, and natural environment to adapt to a changing climate.

## Goals

1. **Invest in Quality of Place (Q)**: Improve the everyday lives of residents and visitors and fulfill the community's desire for a sustainable future by investing in and connecting them to Portsmouth's environmental and cultural amenities.
2. **Retain and Create Diverse Housing (H)**: Enable, incentivize, and support diverse and attainable housing for all ages and incomes that will support current residents and welcome newcomers.
3. **Promote Fiscally Responsible Development (D)**: Promote "smart growth" development patterns and processes that contribute to fiscal health and manage residential property tax burden through aligned land use policy and municipal capital investment.
4. **Cultivate Our Economy (E)**: Support the local artists, small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and anchor employers that enrich Portsmouth and its regional importance.
5. **Protect Core Identity (I)**: Safeguard the cultural, historic, and environmental assets that make our City unique and beautiful, and ensure that future development contributes to Portsmouth's character.

# Spatial Development Framework

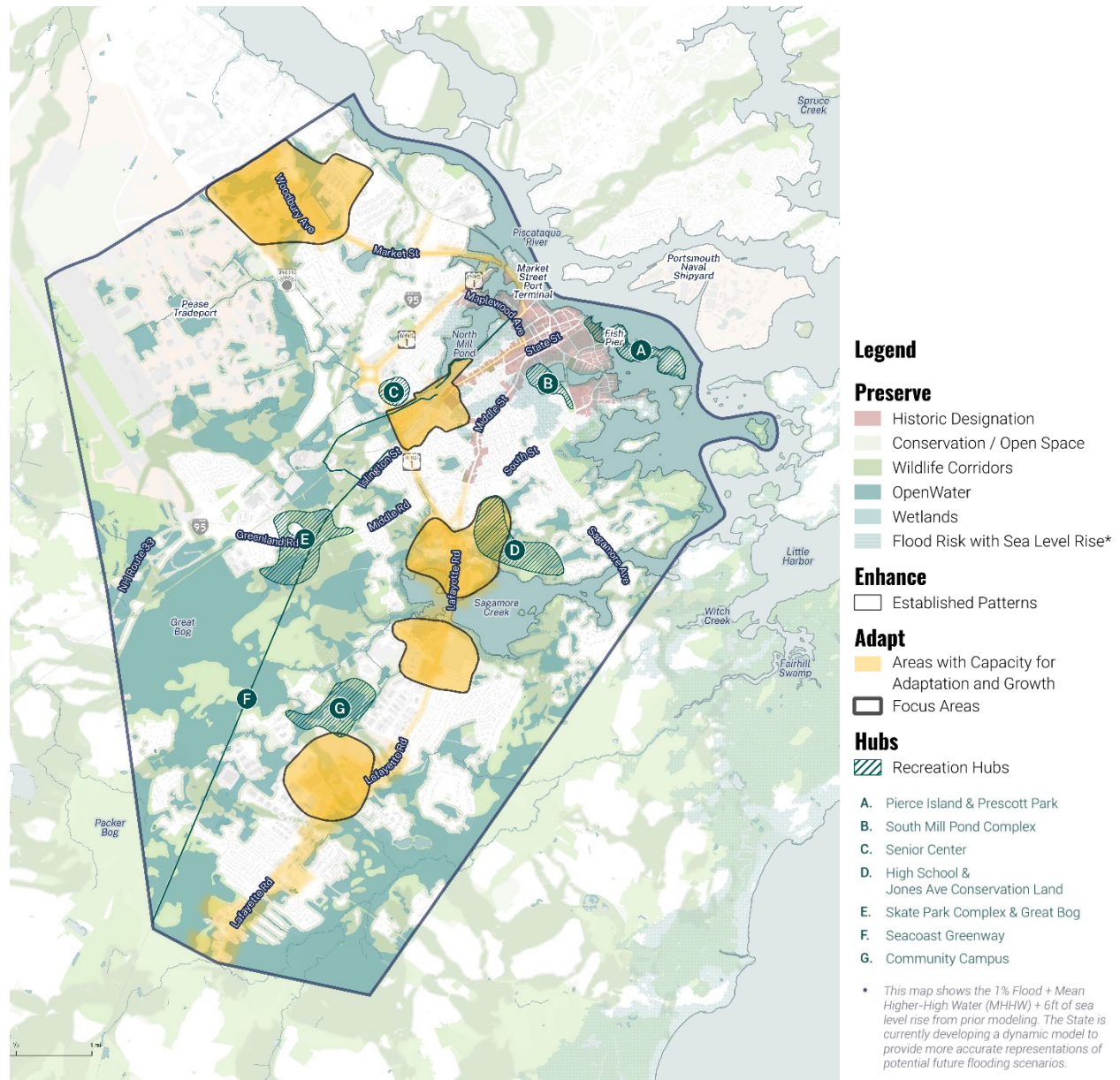
## Future Place Type Vision



- **Centers**
  - **Downtown** - Regional destination with dense and dynamic mix of housing, commercial uses, public spaces, institutions, and infrastructure.

- Civic Hub - Citywide hubs of civic activity, including places like City Hall, government departments, schools, libraries, nursing homes, and community centers.
- Employment Hub - Regional hubs of governmental, industrial, and commercial jobs and services that support the region.
- Neighborhood Center - Local destination with a dynamic mix of housing, commercial uses, public spaces, institutions, and infrastructure serving the immediate neighborhood surrounding it.
- **Corridors**
  - Neighborhood Corridor - Mixed-use, linear local destination of limited length that is a hub of social and commercial activity with resident-oriented services, amenities and small businesses, mixed in with compact multi-family housing.
  - Suburban Corridor – Mixed-use linear regional destination for recreational, commercial, and industrial businesses that rely on automobile access mixed in with compact multi-family housing.
- **Neighborhoods**
  - Downtown Neighborhood - Residential neighborhoods characterized by walkable street networks with buildings close to the street, often with no front yard and minimal if any space between buildings. Current examples are mostly historic from the colonial era.
  - Traditional Neighborhood - Residential neighborhoods characterized by small front yards, modest spacing between buildings, and a network of generous streets for transit, driving, biking, and walking. Current examples are mostly from before WWII, commonly referred to as “pre-war” neighborhoods.
  - Garden Neighborhood - Residential neighborhood patterns characterized by larger lots with more generous landscaped front yards, off-street parking, and larger blocks interspersed with conservation and natural areas. Current examples are mostly from after WWII, commonly referred to as “post-war” neighborhoods.

## Degree of Change



- **Preserve.** encourage adaptive reuse, restoration, conservation
  - Characteristics: significant collective ecological and historical value to Portsmouth's identity, quality of life, sustainability, and resilience.
  - Investment: focus on functional and experiential improvements within environmental, infrastructural, and cultural resource constraints
  - Regulation: align allowable future development to constraints
- **Enhance.** targeted improvements for flexibility and quality of life

- Characteristics: built out and have strong existing development patterns and norms, capable of supporting Portsmouth's needs in the coming decade
- Investment: enhance mobility, public realm, and amenities and services for quality of life
- Regulation: calibrate zoning to support diversity and flexibility where needed.
- **Adapt.** promote a shift in development pattern
  - Characteristics: single-use or mobility-limited areas where the development pattern is more fragmented or less versatile and flexible in supporting the full range of Portsmouth's needs (these tend to be more auto-oriented with disconnected street networks)
  - Investment: promote connected street and trail networks, with supportive utilities, services, recreation, and open space amenities
  - Regulation: promote denser, clustered development at a pedestrian scale with clear mixed-use commercial cores, priority natural resource protection or enhancement, and diverse housing types

## Public Investment Framework

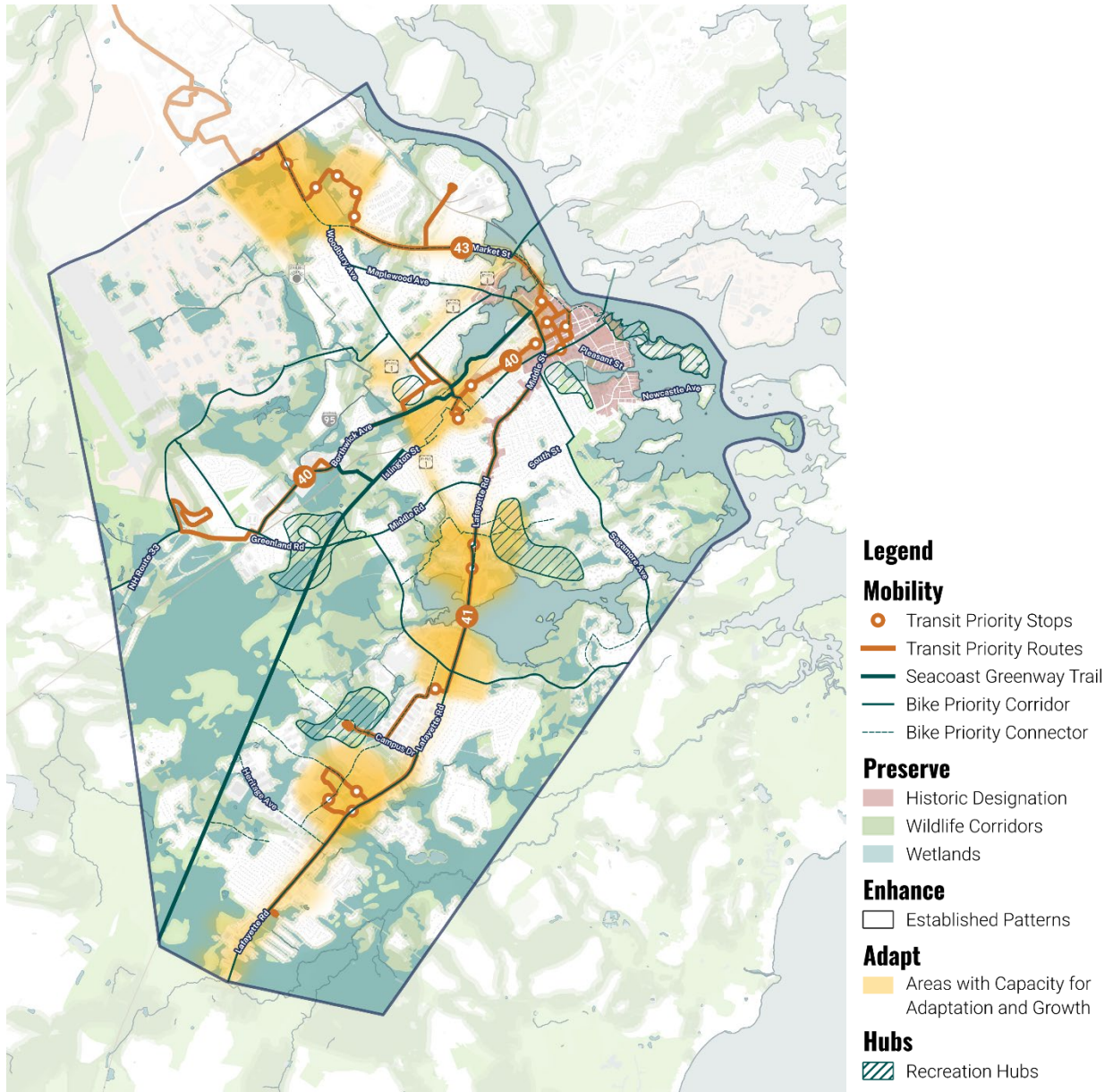
**Adaptation Focus Areas.** (see black outlines in Degree of Change map above) Areas that have unmet potential or unaddressed issues and need more guidance and direction to effectively shape future development and/or investment in infrastructure and quality of life amenities and services.

Key areas of public investment within the Adaptation Focus Areas include:

- Water and sewer capacity and conveyance system
- Power and communications infrastructure
- Mobility enhancements, focused on safety, accessibility, transit, and active mobility
- Enhancements to ecological health, sustainability, and resilience (green infrastructure)
- Recreation and quality of life amenities (parks and open spaces, community centers)

*NOTE: Generally, these are areas that have already been experiencing market-driven redevelopment or transition of uses and have been mapped as Gateway Corridor and Gateway Center districts in recent rezoning. In this context, the Master Plan can be an effective tool to address the pressures and feeling of being in flux by providing clear vision and direction for these areas.*

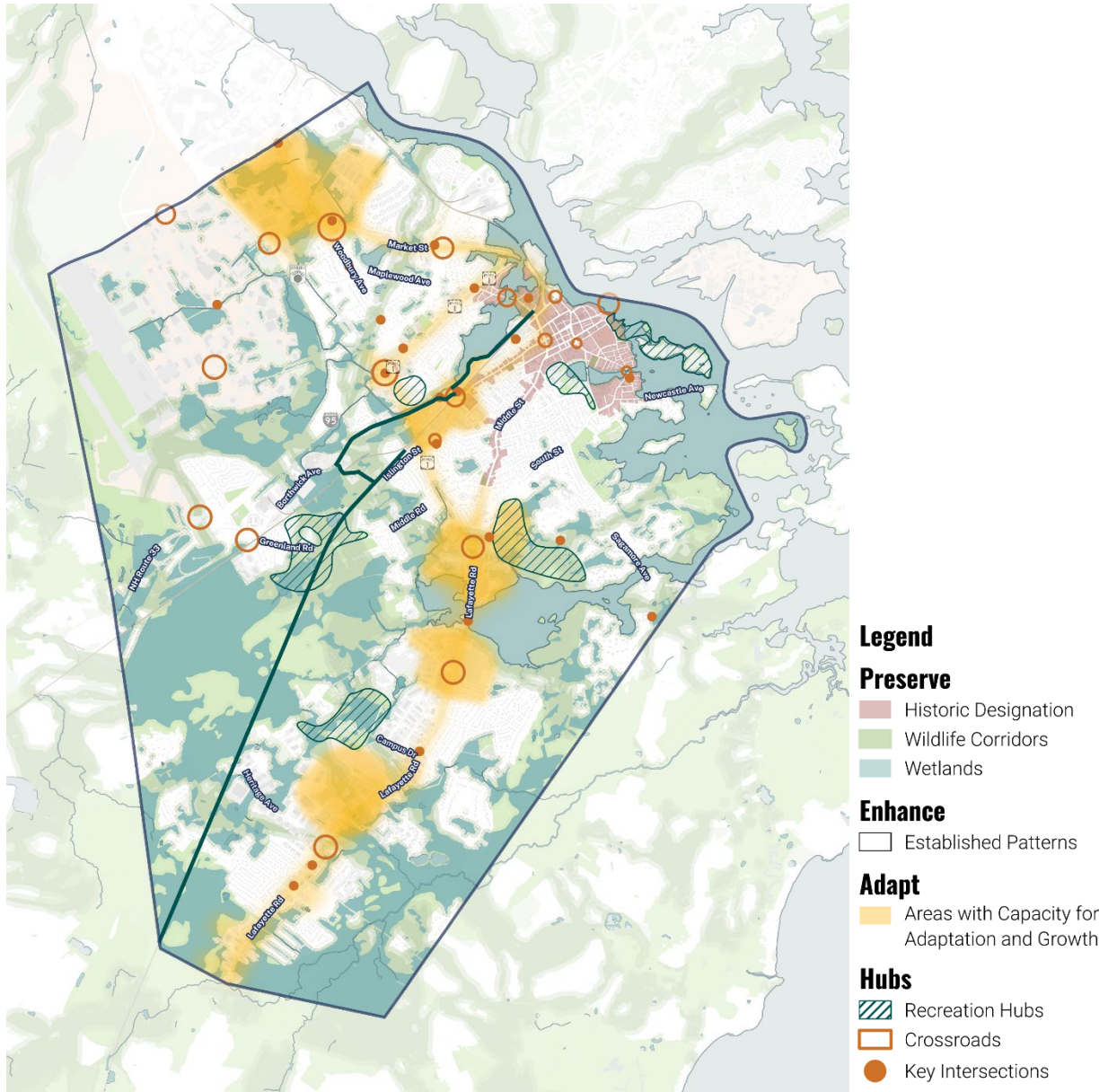
### Stronger Network Connections.



- **Transit Priority Network.** Routes and stops that are critical to establishing a high-quality, reliable, and frequent transit service connecting downtown to gateway neighborhood centers and other regional destinations.
- **Bike Priority Network.** A coherent, linked and easy-to-follow network of safe, comfortable, and convenient bike connections leveraging both on and off-street routes to link key employment and recreational destinations to neighborhood centers.
- **Crossroads.** Key intersections that are important areas of transition, and access points that would benefit from safety, wayfinding, and public space enhancements to address the complexity of use and overall experience. These are often characterized by

a change in character from one Place Type to another or traversing a transportation barrier such as a highway or rail line.

*Generally, these transitional areas were chosen because they have an outsized impact on citywide perceptions and behavior and play an important role in connecting the transit and bike priority corridors to key destinations throughout the City.*



## Draft Recommendations

### **Goal 1. Invest in Quality of Place (Q)**

*Improve the everyday lives of residents and visitors and fulfill the community's desire for a sustainable future by investing in and connecting them to Portsmouth's environmental and cultural amenities.*

#### **Q-1 Cultivate a more balanced mobility network that supports independence, safety, and strong connections for all ages and abilities.**

- **Q-1.1. Active Mobility.** Systematically advance active mobility network enhancements throughout Portsmouth in partnership with the new Blue Ribbon Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee. This includes everything from sidewalk network maintenance and improvement to intersection redesigns to new protected bike connections to the Seacoast Greenway.

*The Portsmouth City Council voted to establish a Blue Ribbon Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee at their March 2, 2026 meeting as recommended in the 2025 Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan. The committee will have dedicated City staff from the Planning & Sustainability and Public Works Departments to support the committee in improving the safety, comfort, and experience of people who are walking, biking, and using motorized micro-mobility devices in the City.*

##### Supporting ideas:

- *Continue to expand Portsmouth's bike and pedestrian network by implementing the 2025 Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan.*
  - *Continue increasing active mobility connections to the Seacoast Greenway and other multi-modal paths from Portsmouth neighborhoods and popular destinations.*
  - *Continue introducing traffic calming measures prioritizing safety for pedestrians and cyclists, focusing on high injury corridors.*
  - *Work towards a more coherent and complete sidewalk network to promote walkability with a particular focus on the following Place Types: residential neighborhoods, Urban Core, Neighborhood Centers, and Civic Hubs. Review sidewalk condition throughout the City, repair sidewalks in poor condition, consider adding sidewalks where they are missing, and explore widening sidewalks where feasible.*
  - *Continue to enhance and explore targeted expansion of summer weekend road closures in high-pedestrian-use areas of downtown, building on the Pleasant Street approach and Market Square Master Plan.*
- **Q-1.2. Micro-Mobility.** Develop and implement an integrated infrastructure and policy strategy to promote safe and responsible use of motorized micro-mobility devices as

an alternative to private vehicle travel in urban areas. This includes, but is not limited to, motorcycles, motorized scooters, e-bikes, hoverboards, motorized skateboards, and electric unicycles.

Supporting ideas:

- *Develop and enforce policies and ordinances to ensure safe and responsible use of micro-mobility devices.*
  - *Conduct an audit of current micro-mobility device usage and parking behavior throughout the City and develop recommendations for focus areas within the City where micro-mobility use should be promoted and prioritized.*
  - *Allocate on-street and off-street public parking spaces for micro-mobility device parking close to popular destinations and in high-traffic areas.*
  - *Provide dedicated parking areas and racks with charging and space sufficient for larger electric devices.*
- **Q-1.3. Universal Design.** Ensure accessibility and ease of navigation for all modes of travel by adopting universal design approaches for sidewalks and intersections that enable people of all ages and abilities to travel safely with comfort, confidence, and independence.

Supporting ideas:

- *Regularly audit the ADA compliance of roads, sidewalks, and intersections and integrate improvements into routine maintenance and capital projects.*
  - *Establish a prioritized workplan to bring all rights of way and public amenities into compliance with ADA including curb cuts, ramps, and walkways with sufficient width for comfortable pedestrian, wheelchair, and stroller access.*
  - *Continue to balance outdoor dining with accessibility of public sidewalks.*
  - *Coordinate public handicap and veteran parking spot locations with popular destinations (e.g. senior center, veterans memorial, pharmacies) and ensure necessary accessibility enhancements are made to link the parking spots to the destinations. Promote broad awareness and understanding of discounted parking programs for seniors, veterans, and handicapped individuals.*
  - *Conduct an audit of all audible crosswalk signals for visually impaired individuals to ensure they offer sufficient clarity on direction and duration of safe crossing, have standardized sound, and are sufficiently signed to control driver behavior.*
  - *Promote ease of navigation throughout the City by improving wayfinding with a focus on gateways to the City. Focus on private vehicle navigation to dedicated parking, bicycle and pedestrian wayfinding outside of the downtown core, and accessible pathways throughout the City.*
- **Q-1.4. Public Transit.** Strengthen Portsmouth's public transportation service in alignment with urban land use patterns to create a more sustainable system. This includes funding and implementing enhancements to roadway design, bus stop design and operations that improve bus frequency, reliability, and experience.

Supporting ideas:

- *Advocate for increased operational and capital funding for COAST through public and private sources to support increased frequency, reliability, and sustainability of service along routes that are aligned with denser job and housing clusters.*
  - *Attract private investment to improve frequency and use of the system based on who stands to benefit.*
  - *Identify and implement road design changes that could enhance service reliability and frequency by re-prioritizing efficient bus operations relative to private vehicle level of service, especially along Transit Priority Corridors.*
- *Pursue sustainable funding sources to provide free or low-cost public transportation that enables marginalized populations to access natural outdoor recreation environments, fresh and salt water bodies, and beaches for health, wellness, and cooling. This would ideally focus on consistent access to citywide recreation hubs.*
- *Complete and monitor implementation of the RPC audit of COAST bus stops and establish a prioritized joint investment framework to improve pedestrian access to and ADA accessibility of bus stops including sidewalks, crossings, and lighting as well as shelters to provide protection from sun, wind, and precipitation.*
- *If additional funding becomes available, work with COAST to enhance the existing service network, focusing on higher service frequency on key corridors connecting to Focus Areas at the core hours of the service day. As identified in the CIP (item BI-26-PL-29), conduct a feasibility study for expanded public transit using Microtransit, a Shuttle Loop Bus, or a hybrid approach. Continue to monitor and revisit whether a loop concept would be a valuable evolution of this service. Current priority bus routes are:*
  - *Rt 41: Connects to Route 1 Gateway / Lafayette North, Elwyn Crossing, and Constitution Ave / Portsmouth Green*
  - *Rt 43: Connects to Outer Woodbury / Commerce Way*
  - *Rt 40: Connects to West End*
- *Work with COAST to examine ridership and funding conditions, and to identify opportunities for improvements on current bus routes.*
- **Q-1.5. Connected Street Networks.** *Continue to evaluate and pursue road network redesigns that balance network connections and private cul-de-sac designs with safety and connectivity at the local level like the recent redesign of the intersection of Lafayette and Route 1 Bypass.*

*Suggested Ideas:*

  - *Continue to pursue design changes to the Route 1 / Lafayette corridor that enhance bike and pedestrian connectivity.*

- *Explore conversion of portion of Route 1 Bypass from rotary to Maplewood Ave as a boulevard with intersections and/or multi-use path(s) similar to the northwestern stretch of Market Street.*
- *Continue to study Woodbury & Maplewood to deter cut-through traffic on southern stretch of Woodbury.*
- *Explore redesign of Bartlett/Islington intersection as a roundabout or other redesign to improve clarity of vehicular movements and safety of bicycle and pedestrian users. Explore new connection from Outer Woodbury to Pease across Route 4.*
- *Encourage new roads that increase connectivity as part of new development or City projects providing such opportunities.*

## **Q-2 Foster a network of supportive recreation and gathering spaces throughout Portsmouth.**

- **Q-2.1. Strategic Growth to Support All Neighborhoods.** Grow the network of recreational and conservation land offering residents access to natural open space, recreation, fresh and salt water, and cooling.
  - Supporting ideas:*
    - *Partner with private developers and landowners to improve access to open space, recreational amenities, and public gathering spaces in outer neighborhoods, with a particular focus on Neighborhood Centers.*
    - *Partner with schools and other landowners to enable public access to existing open space and recreational facilities that fulfill unmet local needs.*
    - *Increase the amount of recreational, ecological, and conservation land under City ownership. Acquire land that strengthens neighborhood access to open space, water, and cooling, protects sensitive natural areas, and supports long-term climate resilience.*
      - *Confirm the location for, fund, and build a splash pad in the areas of the City that currently have the most barriers to accessing the Pool. Explore strategies to pair this with public art through the City's Percent for Art program.*
      - *Explore feasibility of offering free public access to fresh water at the former City well and pump station located near Skate Park / Bike Park. The goal would be to enable it to function as a pond with public swimming, fishing, kayaking, and winter ice skating.*
- **Q-2.2. Privately Owned Community Spaces.** Audit Community Spaces received from projects and evaluate their utility and performance relative to meaningful and valued community space types to inform future spaces and improve existing spaces.
- **Q-2.3. Awareness.** Enhance public awareness and use of recreation and open space assets, regardless of their ownership.

*Supporting Ideas:*

- Evaluate and develop strategy for digital and physical hubs of information on the recreation and open space assets of Portsmouth and its region. Emphasize the network over ownership to create stronger unified understanding of all assets.
- Enhance signage, maps, and other promotional strategies to promote public use of approved community spaces.
- Promote less commonly known Recreation Department services, facilities, and passive programs like daycare, after-school care, and café.
- **Q-2.4. Existing Space Maintenance & Enhancement.** Work with public, private, and nonprofit partners to continue investing in the maintenance and enhancement of existing civic and recreational gathering spaces for residents, workers, and visitors while considering impacts to sensitive natural areas and wildlife habitat.

Key areas of potential enhancement include:

- Identify opportunities to mitigate impacts to natural resources and wildlife from increased open space use.
- Accessibility and Universal Design, including evaluating and planning for municipally-supported recreation programs for persons with developmental disabilities and dementia.
- Continue to invest in physical and operational infrastructure necessary to maintain and grow the Recreation Department's significant role in supporting the arts by providing venues and organizational capacity for exhibiting, education, events, and rehearsals.
- Amenities for user comfort for longer visits (trash cans, benches, public bathrooms)
- Lighting
- **Q-2.5. Non-Vehicular Access Improvements.** Enhance non-vehicular access to Portsmouth's existing municipal and regional recreation and gathering spaces by investing in safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and on-demand ride service connections and requiring such connections for new developments where feasible.

Supporting Ideas:

- Continue to invest in improving awareness of and access to citywide recreation hubs:
  - Pierce Island (including Municipal Pool)
  - South Mill Pond Complex (Playground / Rec Complex / Connie Bean)
  - Community Campus
  - High School / Jones Ave Conservation Land
  - Senior Center
  - Skate Park Complex / Great Bog
  - Seacoast Greenway
- Especially for more remote locations, identify safe and convenient drop-off areas for on-demand ride and ride share services.

- *Strengthen connections between the Great Bay, Great Bog and the neighborhoods of Portsmouth.*

### **Q-3 Continue to work to ensure Portsmouth's built and natural environment are healthy and sustainable.**

- **Q-3.1. Carbon Emissions Reductions.** Continue decreasing carbon emissions throughout the City by implementing recommendations from the Climate Action Plan's sections on Building Energy Conservation and Efficiency, Decarbonizing Transportation Systems, and Renewable Energy Production.
- **Q-3.2. Waste Management.** Continue minimizing Portsmouth's solid waste output and optimizing food waste management processes by implementing recommendations from the Climate Action Plan's section on Sustainable Waste Management.
- **Q-3.3. Green Infrastructure.** Identify opportunities to increase tree cover and permeable surfaces within the City's Public Rights of Way and public properties, especially along high-heat and high active mobility corridors, to provide shade, high heat mitigation, flood mitigation, traffic calming, air quality, and other benefits.

*Supporting ideas:*

- *Build on Portsmouth's existing urban forest inventory by adding canopy coverage analysis, establishing neighborhood-level canopy targets, and developing a prioritized planting strategy that directs resources to gaps identified in high-heat and high-mobility corridors.*
- **Q-3.4. Air and Water Quality.** Continue working with local partners to monitor local air and water quality, and Portsmouth's biggest sources of pollution, collaborate with these groups to keep contaminants low.
- **Q-3.5. Education and Empowerment.** Support public education initiatives that empower residents and businesses to reduce emissions, participate in sustainability programs, and prepare for extreme weather.

*Supporting ideas:*

- *Partner with Portsmouth Public Schools, the library, and community organizations, higher education and environmental groups to integrate climate literacy and local sustainability content into programming for residents of all ages.*

### **Q-4 Invest in Portsmouth's resilience to the impacts of climate change.**

- **Q-4.1. Implement Climate Action Plan Resilience Recommendations.** Continue preparing Portsmouth for future water and heat events by implementing recommendations from the Climate Action Plan's sections on Flood Resilience, Heat Resilience, and Energy Resilience.
- **Q-4.2. Sea Level Rise Scenario Selection.** Select sea level rise planning scenarios based on updated projections and guidance from New Hampshire DES and the Woods

Hole group (coming 2026) and align plans and policies to the selected scenario.

Supporting ideas:

- *Evaluate scenarios based on the relative flood risk tolerance and development time horizon of uses and development types.*
  - *Align future planning processes and zoning updates with selected scenarios.*
  - *Develop a communication strategy to explain selected sea level rise scenarios to the public, property owners, and the development community to build shared understanding.*
- **Q-4.3. Enhanced Flood Risk Modeling.** Enhance flood risk modeling by incorporating updated coastal storm surge and wave action data, projected stormwater volumes under high-intensity rainfall events, and the capacity of the City's piped infrastructure and outfalls.

Supporting ideas:

- *Update municipal flood risk models to reflect current projects and align design standards to new models. Explore options for regional coordination to expand this model along the full New Hampshire coastline.*
  - *Integrate flood risk modeling results with GIS-based mapping tools accessible to City staff, boards, and the public to support data-driven decision-making.*
- **Q-4.4. Resilience Zoning.** Update zoning and site design standards for new development and redevelopment to better manage risk from coastal and stormwater floods, high heat events, and fires. Consider adoption of 79-E:4 Coastal Resilience Incentive Zone.

This might include:

- Coastal Flooding:
  - *Update the Floodplain Ordinance and/or Extended Flood Hazard Areas to align with selected sea level rise scenarios.*
  - *Evaluate the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) or other incentive program to encourage voluntary relocation of structures out of the highest-risk coastal flood zones over time.*
  - *Establish guidelines or regulations to balance historic preservation needs with environmental protection measures.*
- Stormwater Flooding: *Strengthen Site Plan Regulations to encourage Low Impact Development practices, open space, and tree planting.*
- High Heat:
  - *Adopt tree canopy and planting standards (including open space, pervious area, and/or planted area requirements),*
  - *Adopt shading standards for public rights-of-way and parking areas,*
  - *Adopt roof material standards (Solar Reflective Index),*
  - *Adopt paving and hardscape material standards (Solar Reflective Index).*
  - *Align standards with findings from the City's urban heat study.*



## **Goal 2. Retain and Create Diverse Housing (H)**

*Enable, incentivize, and support diverse and attainable housing for all ages and incomes that will support current residents and welcome newcomers.*

**H-1 Dedicate staff time to the creation of a Housing Action Plan to identify housing needs and to create actionable strategies for the City to increase housing production and affordability.**

*On February 17 of 2026 the City Council approved the creation of a Portsmouth Housing Action Plan (HAP) with the goal of adoption in July of 2026 due to the urgency of the need for action on housing. Once adopted, the HAP will be treated as an extension of the Master Plan with clear prioritization of concrete actions supporting the Master Plan's goal of retaining and creating diverse housing.*

**H-2 Protect Portsmouth residents' ability to stay in their homes amidst a highly competitive housing market.**

- **H-2.1. Resident Tax Burden.** Explore and evaluate innovative strategies to manage resident tax burden.

Supporting ideas:

- *Study potential of a two-tiered residential tax system designed to provide financial relief to year-round residents while shifting a larger portion of the tax burden onto seasonal residents and short-term rental investors.*
  - *Expand property tax deferral or exemption programs for seniors on fixed incomes.*
  - **H-2.2. Rental Registration.** Require registration of all rental units to track conditions, ownership, and pricing trends.
  - **H-2.3. Short Term Rental Enforcement.** Continue to enforce short-term rental (STR) regulations and enhance tracking systems to better understand and manage the impact of STRs on the availability and price of full-time resident housing and tax burden.
- Supporting ideas:
- *Use online data collection to inform enforcement.*
  - *Allow suspected illegal STRs to be reported through an online portal.*
  - *Implement a fee and fine system capable of funding the cost of enforcement.*
  - *Explore implementation of a cap on the number of allowable STR.*
  - *Track the impact of STR conversions on long-term housing supply, price, and tax share.*
- **H-2.4. Subsidized Housing Preservation.** Proactively engage owners of federally subsidized housing approaching subsidy expiration to develop preservation plans.

Potential preservation tools and strategies include recapitalization, ownership transfer, extended use agreements.

- **H-2.5. Displacement Prevention Services.** Continue to identify funding and partner with social service agencies capable of offering legal, financial, and technical assistance programs that help protect and support residents at high risk of displacement.

Tools and strategies worth considering include:

- *Pursue tenant legal protections within NH legal authority. For instance: just cause notice periods, relocation assistance, source of income protections, tenant notice and right of first offer/refusal when rental properties are sold or converted to condos.*
- *Identify funding sources and partner with social service agencies to offer integrated emergency technical and financial assistance for at-risk residents (rent, security deposit, foreclosure prevention, and tenant legal aid).*
- **H-2.6. Supportive Services Integration.** Encourage integration of on-site supportive services for affordable housing developments to promote financial and housing stability of at-risk residents.

Supporting ideas:

- *Expand on-site social services at PHA properties: mental health, job training, case management.*
- *Continue to partner with Cross Roads House and homeless services to coordinate rapid rehousing with housing production.*
- *Partner with PHA and other qualified area developers and service providers to locate and develop supportive housing for veterans, persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and those in recovery.*

### **H-3 Support the maintenance and adaptation of existing housing stock to better meet our evolving needs.**

- **H-3.1. Condition and Needs Assessment.** Pursue grant funding for systematic condition assessment of pre-1960 housing stock to identify common issues that impact resident health and safety, unit habitability and affordability, and building longevity and performance.

Likely needs include:

- *Lead paint abatement*
- *Rehabilitation and upgrading of major systems (e.g., mechanical systems, heating, cooling)*
- *Weatherization (roof, siding, windows, insulation)*
- *Green or "climate-conscious" retrofitting for energy efficiency, sustainability, comfort, and affordability*
- *Accessibility retrofits*
- *Code compliance (fire safety, habitability)*

- **H-3.2. Housing Stock Preservation Program.** Partner with social service agencies to design, pursue funding for, and establish an integrated program for both homeowners and small landlords that supports common maintenance, repairs, and upgrades to improve the health, safety, and building performance of Portsmouth's existing housing stock. This program should provide holistic, integrated support leveraging grants, low-interest loans, tax relief, and technical assistance.

Suggested approach:

- *Identify sustainable funding streams that could provide the right mix of grants, low-interest loans, tax relief, and technical assistance.*
- *Enhance code enforcement targeting health and safety concerns in older buildings that are most at risk of loss due to deterioration or flipping to the top of the market.*
- *Tie code violations to resources and programs available to address documented issues.*
- *Study expanding restrictions on demolition of existing multi-family buildings.*
- **H-3.3. Multi-Family Rental Protection Program.** Explore grant opportunities and partnerships with local public, nonprofit and mission-oriented housing developers to proactively preserve existing small multi-family rental buildings (e.g. duplexes) by discouraging tear-downs and conversions into single-family homes, and incentivizing renovations that address issues of energy cost burden, sustainability, resilience, code enforcement, and quality of life.
- **H-3.4. Incentivize Adaptive Reuse of Oversized Housing.** Update zoning and explore financial incentives designed to encourage context-appropriate renovations of existing buildings that increase housing units.

Supporting ideas:

- *Identify areas close to jobs and services where conversion of larger single-family homes to small multi-family "manor homes" would be aligned with the Future Place Type Vision.*
- *Explore historic preservation and teardown prevention incentive zoning tied to housing production under RSA-79E.*

#### **H-4 Enable and promote a variety of unit and building types across Portsmouth to better meet housing needs.**

- **H-4.1. Zoning Refinement.** Continue to revisit, refine, and selectively re-define the boundaries of the existing Gateway Neighborhood Mixed-Use Districts to include new neighborhood centers and other areas as described in this Master Plan to incentivize attainable and diverse housing development in the form of mixed use projects that also provide commercial space, multi-modal connections, recreational and open space amenities, and a sense of place in identified Adaptation Focus Areas and beyond.

Consider:

- *Incentives and bonuses (e.g. increased allowable height, reduced parking requirements) to promote affordable housing and commercial-residential development balance.*
- *Targeted incentives (e.g. increased allowable height, reduced parking requirements) to incorporate compatible light industrial, arts, and cultural uses in areas that have the potential to support Portsmouth's creative economy and community.*
- *Process and design guidelines to promote genuine mixed-use, alignment with infrastructure delivery, and increased connectivity and pedestrian-focused design.*
- *Potentially re-aligning and introducing more G2 districts nested inside G1 to convey desired Neighborhood Centers, aligned to Future Place Types Vision.*
- *Continue to selectively expand Gateway Districts to promote transit-oriented development strategies near Transit Priority Corridors and transit stops that are capable of offering high-frequency transit service.*
- **H-4.2. Residential District Refinements.** Pursue changes to dimensional requirements and allowable uses in single-family and low-density residential zoning districts that are well connected to amenities, services, and infrastructure to enable contextually-appropriate housing variety and incremental evolution of existing housing stock to better meet Portsmouth's needs.

Suggested ideas:

- *Reduce minimum lot sizes and other dimensional requirements like minimum frontage, setbacks, and lot coverage, that are out of sync with current built patterns or that are preventing common single-family "starter homes" and small multi-family housing typologies. Rhode Island, for instance, recently enacted a law that allows owners of sub-standard lots to scale dimensional zoning standards proportionally according to the degree to which their lot is under-sized.*
- *Allow two-family and small multi-family typologies (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes) by-right with clear dimensional standards and streamlined form-based standards for neighborhood compatibility.*
- **H-4.3. Selectively Enable Housing in Commercial Areas.** Continue to pursue zoning changes to enable high-quality multi-family housing in underutilized commercial districts while protecting commercial uses at risk of housing-driven displacement.
- **H-4.4. ADU Regulations and Resources.** Promote widespread community participation in the development of context-appropriate Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) through streamlined regulations with aligned technical and financial support systems.
- **H-4.5. Parking Requirement Refinement.** Right-size parking requirements to unlock housing potential in well-connected, walkable neighborhoods. Consider targeted reductions to parking minimums, required "un-bundling" of parking cost from unit cost, targeted parking maximums, and promotion of shared parking, market-responsive standards, and allow payment-in-lieu to support shared municipal parking. Parking

requirement reductions can also be used as an incentive to encourage inclusion of design features or uses that are community priorities.

- **H-4.6. Housing-Focused Zoning Refinement.** Continue to work with the Housing Committee to evaluate Portsmouth's zoning holistically to identify provisions that constrain housing production and work to enable more diverse housing options.

Potential strategies to consider:

- Review and selectively increase building height limits in appropriate areas of the City. Consider using increased allowable height as an incentive to encourage inclusion of design features or uses that are community priorities.
- Reduce minimum lot size, lot area per unit, frontage, and setback requirements in targeted zones for infill development to enable more compact development patterns with greater housing price and design variety.
- Review and reduce minimum unit size requirements to encourage smaller, more affordable units.
- Evaluate Portsmouth's existing form-based code districts for opportunities to expand permitted uses and enable a wider range of housing types without requiring variances or Conditional Use Permits.
- Evaluate barriers to and explore ways to enable innovative housing models and configurations via updated zoning districts and standards, such as:
  - Offsite and manufactured housing: expand permitted or conditional uses beyond the current GA/MH zoning district and update the ordinance to address next-generation manufactured housing, including Cross-Mod HUD code manufactured housing and modular housing.
  - Cottage clusters: small, detached units around shared open space.
  - Non-traditional seasonal worker housing solutions (e.g. dormitories, single-room-occupancy or group housing) in hospitality-adjacent areas to support workers in the hospitality and tourism industries.
- **H-4.7. Developer Partnerships.** Seek opportunities to partner with area housing developers to increase housing production that directly addresses unmet needs. These opportunities may include, but are not limited to: workforce housing, 3-4 bedroom "family-sized" units and ADA-accessible units.

Examples of market gaps could include:

- Moderate-income workforce housing multi-family housing projects within walking distance of job centers, grocery stores, and other amenities.
- Family-sized (3-4 bedroom) "workforce housing" projects within walking distance of schools, daycares, and other family-friendly amenities.
- ADA-accessible units in suitable for aging in place, including 55+ communities and supportive living facilities, in areas that don't require a car to meet basic needs.

Examples of City tools to secure developer commitments could include:

- Donating municipally owned land
- Offering tax incentives

## **H-5 Increase the number of affordable and attainable housing options for everyone looking for a home in Portsmouth.**

- **H-5.1. Affordable Housing Incentives.** Incentivize protected affordable and workforce housing production, using the 2024 Inclusionary Zoning Feasibility Analysis as a guide for what the market can support.

### Suggested ideas:

- *Explore the adoption of an inclusionary zoning policy offering density and/or parking incentives for projects committing to delivering income-restricted affordable units at an agreed upon percentage and income level. Define affordability thresholds (e.g., 80% AMI) and duration. For reference, the 2024 RKG report found that a requirement of 10-15% affordable units at 80% AMI was feasible without incentives. Density and parking concessions could offset costs and allow for additional affordability.*
  - *Adopt or strengthen local workforce housing ordinance consistent with applicable NH statutes.*
  - *Consider advocating with the State to allow Portsmouth to shift from a system of voluntary "incentive zoning" toward a more formal and mandatory "inclusionary zoning" framework requiring a percentage of new multi-family developments of a certain size to be "inclusionary units". This is currently in a state of active transition and study.*
  - *Regularly update any incentive or inclusionary zoning policies in response to changes in the economic environment.*
  - *If mandatory inclusionary zoning is implemented, consider offering a payment-in-lieu option funding the Housing Trust Fund.*
- **H-5.2. Diverse Housing Incentives.** Evaluate other incentive opportunities available to Portsmouth locally to promote diverse housing types.

### Potential points of municipal leverage to offer incentives:

- *Density bonuses*
- *Parking requirement relief*
- *Time-limited property tax exemption or deferral*
- *Small grants via the Housing Trust Fund or other available sources*
- *Expedited review and approval of qualifying projects*

### The following may be worth incentivizing given the market:

- *Universal design and ADA-accessible units beyond minimum requirements.*
- *Senior and age-restricted 55+ communities*
- *ADUs*
- *Infill housing on underutilized parcels*
- *2-3 bedroom unit production in new multifamily to address unmet demand for larger units while pipeline skews toward 1BR/studio.*

- **H-5.3. Fund Affordability.** Expand resources to support workforce and affordable housing.

Strategies could include:

- *Pursue expansion of 79E:4-c Housing Opportunity Zones to enable workforce housing incentives.*
- *Consider establishing a voluntary or incentive-based commercial development contribution program supported by a nexus analysis to encourage investment in workforce housing, particularly where new employment-generating uses create measurable demand for local housing.*
- *Explore the use of project-specific development agreements to secure contributions toward workforce housing or related infrastructure, particularly for large-scale commercial developments that significantly expand local employment.*
- *Work with anchor employers to support and expand programs that offer direct support for attainable employee housing.*
- *Continue to advocate for State-level actions that would expand the policy and taxation-based tools available to Portsmouth.*
- *Advocate for state-level legislation that expands the tools available at a municipal level, such as enabling a municipal transfer tax for high-value real estate transactions (from State or by introducing a local option bill).*

### **Goal 3. Promote Fiscally Responsible Development (D)**

*Promote "smart growth" development patterns and processes that contribute to fiscal health and manage residential property tax burden through aligned land use policy and municipal capital investment.*

#### **D-1 Balance growth with the preservation of municipal resources to ensure the community remains economically viable and resilient.**

- **D-1.1. Protect High-Value Uses.** Protect the community's primary economic engine and highest "value per acre" tax revenues. Seek to keep downtown commercial space and housing occupied with a resilient mix of ages, incomes, renters and owners to maintain downtown value and vibrancy.

Supporting ideas:

- *Incentivize or require "small format" commercial uses in new developments. Carving out a portion of the ground floor into 200–500 SF "incubator" or "micro retail" spaces for small and local business opportunities.*
- *Encourage the development of micro units and studios, which allows for more units per building and typically yields higher net revenues.*
- **D-1.2. Grow Non-Residential Tax Base.** Grow the commercial and industrial tax base in ways that balance historic charm with the modern needs of high-value industries.

Supporting ideas:

- *Rezone aging commercial corridors into denser mixed-use hubs to yield value where there are currently underutilized single-story strip malls.*
- *Continue to encourage redevelopment and job creation in underutilized areas by leveraging State incentives like the designated Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZ).*
- *Target high-value clean industries which require high-cost specialized equipment and high-value building improvements (labs, clean rooms), which command much higher property assessments than standard warehouses.*
- **D-1.3. Encourage High Value per Acre Residential.** Encourage smart growth housing development strategies which enhance value per acre yields to the City through residential density.

Supporting ideas:

- *Allow multi-family housing in commercially zoned areas with adequate infrastructure like aging strip malls or office parks (consistent with State requirements) to increase value per acre.*
- *Encourage new construction infill and adaptive reuse add multi-family housing that preserves neighborhood feel but improves value per acre. This should focus on housing typologies at a "middle" scale and cost.*

- *Consider zoning refinements in existing residential zones that would add density and increase value per acre without significant adverse impacts. Use ADUs to add "gentle" density and increase value per acre for existing single-family properties (consistent with allowances provided by State law).*

**D-2 Continue to promote streamlined, resource-efficient regulatory review, approval, and permitting for development that is aligned to the Master Plan.**

- **D-2.1. Streamline Zoning.** Simplify and streamline Portsmouth's zoning ordinance and associated procedures to promote clarity of intention, internal consistency, efficiency of process, and consistency of outcomes. Identify opportunities to consolidate districts to improve the conceptual clarity of the zoning maps and allow for reasonable flexibility of use and dimensional standards.
- **D-2.2. Strengthen Design Review Process.** For districts with strong form-based and design goals, like the Character and Gateway Neighborhoods Districts, explore strategies to improve design quality while maintaining efficiency and predictability of the process.

*This most likely requires a multi-step process:*

- *Conduct an audit of recent as-of-right development that met the letter of the law but fell short of the broader goals of the zoning districts.*
- *Refine zoning to address specific shortfalls or gaps that, had they been addressed, would lead to better results.*
- *Publish clear, objective design guidelines.*
- *Create an enhanced design review process with clear submission requirements and criteria to guide staff, board, and committee processes. This may require adopting an additional layer of design review and oversight in the permitting process.*
- **D-2.3. Continue to Promote Efficient Process.** Continue to enhance alignment, efficiency, and predictability in the development review and permitting process. Identify opportunities to expand administrative approvals, optimize digital intake and review systems, and provide resources and supports that improve application quality.

*Supporting ideas:*

- *Enhance the online permitting portal with features like status tracking, automated checks, and online payment.*
- *Provide integrated, standardized applicant and staff review checklists.*
- *Continue to facilitate concurrent and unified interdepartmental review where Planning, Fire, Building, DPW review simultaneously through the TAC process.*
- *Explore feasibility of expanding administrative approvals with no board hearings to the degree possible.*
- *Pre-application meetings. Formalize optional pre-application conferences for projects to identify issues before formal submission.*

- *Identify and review commonly granted variances and replace with by-right standards where possible.*

### **D-3 Align investment in core public facilities and services to smart growth principles and projected changes in development and demographic patterns.**

Continue to monitor and plan for necessary upgrades, expansions, and modernization of core City of Portsmouth services and facilities that will have to adapt to shifts in demographics and development patterns in alignment with the Degree of Change and Future Place Type Vision.

- **D-3.1. Coordinated Street Resurfacing.** Continue to coordinate condition assessments and improvements for street resurfacing with safety and utility improvements through the Pavement Management Program, prioritizing investments within Adapt areas.
- **D-3.2. Schools.** Continue to invest in strategic Capital Improvement Programs for Portsmouth Public Schools facilities that reflect community needs and changes. Continue to work with schools to maximize their potential to support broader community needs beyond their function as a school.
- **D-3.3. Cultural & Recreational Facilities.** Continue to invest strategically in Portsmouth's cultural and recreational facilities that are serving areas of greatest need and growth, working towards more equitable access for all neighborhoods, ages, and incomes.
- **D-3.4. Public Safety & Emergency Management.** Develop a framework for sustainable, strategic investment in public safety and emergency management services, personnel and infrastructure to support the Future Place Type Vision.
- **D-3.5. Community Resilience.** Develop and maintain a coordinated community-wide emergency preparedness system that ensures public facilities are equipped and accessible to serve as safe, functional hubs during all kinds of emergencies.

*Suggested Ideas:*

- *Partner with COAST to ensure citywide cooling and warming centers are located where they can be serviced by accessible, well-located bus stops with amenities to increase comfort and safety.*
- *Add cooling and warming centers for underserved populations where access to existing centers is insufficient.*
- **D-3.6. Complete Streets.** Adopt formal complete streets checklist for evaluation of enhancement opportunities whenever capital expenditures for streets including the utilities along them are considered.

### **D-4 Continue to monitor and invest strategically in the water, sewer, stormwater and utility infrastructure necessary to support Portsmouth's development vision.**

- **D-4.1. Infrastructure Capacity Assessment.** Conduct an infrastructure, facilities, and services capacity assessment for sewer and water infrastructure at minimum, possibly

schools and recreation as well. Align future growth with confirmed availability and plan for upgrades where needed.

- **D-4.2. Water Supply Protection.** Continue to protect and strengthen the municipal water supply by mitigating risks to the aquifer and modernizing water system infrastructure to support long-term reliability and resilience.

Supporting ideas:

- *Continue to pursue permanent protections around Bellamy Reservoir on priority property list.*
- *Align future growth and water demand with sustainable aquifer yields.*
- *Explore opportunities for expanding recharge zones and establish LID standards in these locations.*
- *Study the feasibility of replacing pipes off Constitution Road to improve water quality and supply.*
- **D-4.3. Water Systems Resilience and Reliability.** Increase resilience and reliability of wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water systems by transitioning away from diesel only backup generators, piloting solar and battery microgrids at pump stations, and elevating critical infrastructure above projected floodplain. These measures can be integrated into future city standards for critical infrastructure construction.
- **D-4.4. Wastewater Conveyance System.** Continue to address wastewater system conveyance issues by identifying and fixing conveyance pinch points and prioritizing known bottlenecks, especially in the City's southern area and Adaptation Focus Areas designated for future growth. This effort can be coupled with capacity analysis from D-4.1.
- **D-4.5. Stormwater Management.** Continue to enhance stormwater management infrastructure and programs to improve water quality and reduce flood risk.

Supporting ideas:

- *Address capacity constraints and system conveyance bottlenecks.*
- *Continue to restrict and reduce surface application of pesticides and pollutants. Identify target areas such as the North Mill Pond area for landowner educational outreach about chloride applications. Adopt city practices to safely reduce chloride applications to set an example.*
- *Reduce risk of localized flooding from high-intensity, short-duration storms by*
  - *Updating stormwater design criteria to account for cloudburst-scale events.*
  - *Piloting green infrastructure projects that explicitly address cloudburst rainfall.*

## Goal 4. Cultivate Our Economy (E)

*Support the local artists, small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and anchor employers that enrich Portsmouth and its regional importance.*

### **E-1 Strengthen the collection of small local businesses and nonprofit organizations that create Portsmouth's vibrancy.**

- **E-1.1. Business Displacement Prevention.** Proactively manage and establish supports to prevent displacement of existing small local businesses and organizations. This could include policies, regulations, technical assistance programs and financial support.

Supporting ideas:

- *Create and promote technical assistance programs to proactively prevent displacement of existing Portsmouth-based small businesses during periods of disruption and redevelopment, especially for Downtown and West End businesses. This most likely involves assistance with identification of "swing space" opportunities that allow businesses to remain in contact with their customer base.*
  - *Examine regulations that limit the displacement of small, locally-owned businesses from national or international corporations. This might include formula business bylaws designed to limit or control "chain" stores and franchises in key areas like downtown.*
- **E-1.2. Affordable Ground-Floor Commercial.** Explore and implement strategies to increase access to affordable ground-floor commercial spaces for small local businesses and organizations. This could include a mix of zoning incentives and flexible financing for tenant fit-outs.

Supporting ideas:

- *Investigate zoning incentives to encourage affordable commercial space such as reduced parking requirements, additional density allowances, or micro-retail space.*
  - *Explore feasibility of creating a loan program offering flexible financing and below-market interest rates to lower initial costs for tenants to fit out vacant ground floor commercial spaces.*
- **E-1.3. Activate and Beautify Underutilized Spaces.** Identify and seek grant funding to activate underutilized spaces in City or institutional real estate portfolios with new, experimental or pop-up retail, market, food concepts, shared kitchens, incubators and display of local artwork and products. Partner with the Chamber Collaborative and others to identify and support incubator strategies that can lower the barrier to entry and support entrepreneurs in Portsmouth's nonprofit and for-profit sectors.

Supporting ideas:

- *A site downtown site could serve as an incubator-type public sector subsidized market space (Precedents: Farm Fresh RI, Cleveland Public Market).*
- *Build on the Goodwork Seacoast framework that has been successful model for nonprofits.*
- **E-1.4. Active Use Requirement Areas.** Require active uses to prevent "dead zones" (areas where the street is lined with blank walls, garage doors, or private spaces that don't interact with the public) and promote diverse and vibrant commercial areas downtown and beyond.
 

Supporting ideas:

  - *Review boundary of Downtown Overlay District and adjust as appropriate.*
  - *Calibrate zoning to reinforce focused retail districts within and beyond downtown that are surrounded by more flexible "active use" frontage areas.*
  - *Evaluate incentives to preserve and promote the creation of smaller retail spaces in walkable urban areas that are more affordable and supportive of smaller local businesses.*
  - *Identify opportunities to bring artwork into these spaces to activate and beautify them.*
- **E-1.5. Live-Work Zoning.** Continue to review and update zoning to facilitate development of live-work spaces for artists and entrepreneurs, including those with public-facing, income-generating uses.
- **E-1.6. Technical Assistance.** Partner with the Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative to provide free or discounted technical assistance to small local business owners and nonprofit organization leadership to help them navigate regulations, permitting, and more.

## **E-2 Optimize the economic impact of the tourism and hospitality sector.**

- **E-2.1. Improve Visitor Infrastructure and Services.** The "magnet" effect is reinforced when the "hassle" of visiting is minimized. This should include modernized visitor services, digital integration, and improving first impression points and transportation infrastructure.
- **E-2.2. Waterfront as Multi-Dimensional Destination.** Transform the waterfront from a "view" into a functional, multi-dimensional destination zone. This includes activating the North End waterfront, deepening maritime-tourism links, and considering resilience measures as economic protection.
- **E-2.3. Grow Shoulder Season Tourism.** Drive tourism during the "shoulder seasons" (late fall, winter, and early spring) to provide year-round stability for hospitality workers and local businesses. This could be done through programs which package experiences and accommodations, as well as promotion.
- **E-2.4. Value-Per-Visitor Strategy.** Consistent with the Cultural Plan, move away from growth through increased "volume" of visitors and instead focus growth on sustainable, culturally-integrated tourism. Any growth strategies beyond the existing tourism

should prioritize the depth of spending and engagement per visitor (a.k.a. "yield") over the volume of visitors by encouraging visitors to extend their stays or add an activity hosted by a local business or organization to their visit.

- **E-2.5. Support Workforce.** Partner with the Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative and the Department of Health to support the hospitality, service, and health and human services and caretaking workforce by addressing housing costs, transportation gaps, and career stagnation.

Suggested ideas:

- *Housing - Pursue funding for workforce housing from room and meals tax (from State or by reintroducing a local option bill).*
  - *Transportation – Promote, evaluate, and evolve the downtown workforce parking program as parking infrastructure, demands, and industry needs shift. Study supplemental services that might help bridge the area-wide shift-transit mismatch (late nights, Sundays and holidays).*
  - *Career - Support workers by shifting from a model of jobs to career ladders with opportunities for promotion, training, and micro-credentialing. This could be done with third-party partnerships with business groups and nearby institutions.*
- **E-2.6. Strengthen Feedback Systems.** Create systems and explicit opportunities for input on municipal tourism policy and marketing strategy from business owners and locals.

Suggested ideas:

- *Create a formalized, recurring feedback loop that connects the City's economic development team directly with business owners. This could include a Task Force or Working Group to turn pain points into municipal policy.*
- *Offer an opportunity for locals to weigh in on strategic plans for marketing Portsmouth as a destination, and visitor infrastructure and services which can be mutually beneficial to residents by conducting a Resident Sentiment Survey.*

### **E-3 Position Portsmouth as a premier regional job hub for growing industries by strengthening core sectors, cultivating an innovation hub, and securing high-impact anchor tenants.**

- **E-3.1. Anchor Employers.** Protect and support Portsmouth's existing anchor employers through a mix of favorable policies and shared housing and infrastructure investment partnerships that are mutually beneficial to the City and anchor employers.

Suggested ideas:

- *Portsmouth Regional Hospital (PRH) - Accommodate the unique needs of PRH - a regional safety net, modern medical campus, and one of the City's top major employers. Work with the hospital to understand district needs for facility expansion, ancillary services, access protection, mobility, and workforce housing.*

- *Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNS) - While PNS is technically located on Seavey's Island in Kittery, Maine, the City of Portsmouth considers it an "anchor institution" and a cornerstone of its own economic identity. Work with the Navy to accelerate middle income housing development, modernize multi-modal transportation infrastructure, undertake joint climate resilience planning, participate in legislative advocacy, and foster a "defense tech" business hub.*
- **E-3.2. Working Waterfront and Industry.** Strengthen the "working waterfront" and preserve the industrial soul of the City through a mix of protective land use controls and infrastructure investments to retain competitiveness.

Suggested ideas:

- *Implement protective land-use controls that specifically insulate industrial land from the market pressures of luxury residential and high-end commercial development.*
- *Continue partnering with the Pease Development Authority to support upgrades and modernizing of port infrastructure as is being done with the Market Street Marine Terminal, to maintain the port's status as a vital link for regional industry.*
- **E-3.3. Pease International Tradeport.** Physically integrate Pease International Tradeport into the City fabric of Portsmouth in ways that can benefit the local economy, housing market, and transportation networks.

Suggested ideas:

- *Economy - maintain City involvement in long-term oversight discussions occurring at State level about the future of the Pease Development Authority.*
- *Housing - rezoning "fringe" parcels or underutilized surface parking into housing or mixed-use where deed restrictions do not prohibit.*
- *Transportation - Strengthen multi-modal mobility connections to and from Pease by closing the last mile gap, overcoming physical barriers that discourage walking and cycling where possible, and studying better transit service integration.*
- *Work with legislature to update the statutory responsibilities of the Pease Development Authority.*
- **E-3.4. Growing Industries.** Retain and attract growing employment industries, such as advanced manufacturing, life science, biotech, professional services, management, finance, and wholesale trade, through thoughtful planning and investment in the infrastructure and development patterns they require.

Suggested ideas:

- *Seek to increase desirability and relevancy of existing office parks and commercial spaces by incorporating mixed-use.*
- *Evaluate the value of high-speed fiber optic internet infrastructure as an economic development tool to attract and retain innovative 21st century industries.*

- **E-3.5. Workforce Training.** Strengthen partnerships and pathways between regional education institutions and business leaders. Identify potential gaps in workforce training, ensuring that training and educational programs align with local industry and are well-located for visibility and accessibility.
- **E-3.6. Future of Work.** Support initiatives and partnerships that create the physical and organizational infrastructure necessary to support a thriving, stable gig economy aligned to the future of work, including increased work-from-home and hybrid work arrangements.

Supporting Ideas:

- *Electrification, high-speed fiber*
- *Co-working spaces (e.g. Kendall Square Cambridge Innovation Center, Seaport District Hall Boston, Providence 195 District CIC Providence / District Hall, COVE, oHive)*

## Goal 5. Protect Core Identity (I)

*Safeguard the cultural, historic, and environmental assets that make our City unique and beautiful, and ensure that future development contributes to Portsmouth's character.*

### I-1. Conserve and steward the sites that embody Portsmouth's ecological richness and scenic setting.

- **I-1.1. Protect.** Protect existing open space and wildlife habitat.  
Suggested ideas:
  - *Explore feasibility of rezoning undeveloped "greenfield" and natural areas like the Great Bog to municipal conservation land to preserve informal wildlife corridors and habitat and encourage future development to be more low-impact and compact in alignment with the Future Place Type Vision.*
- **I-1.2. Restore Natural Areas and Ecological Assets.** Take multi-pronged action to restore public and private natural areas that could generate more ecological value.  
Supporting Ideas:
  - *Seek grant funding to restore environmental assets that could generate more ecological value, such as Puddle Dock, North Mill Pond and South Mill Pond.*
  - *Restore natural areas across the city to remove trash and hazards, including on private property. This requires the passage of an enforceable trash ordinance.*
  - *Explore municipal support to organize volunteer groups that help implement cleanups.*
- **I-1.3. Enhance Ecological Buffers.** Leverage zoning, grants, and partnerships to systematically enhance ecological buffers and living shoreline along waterways, wetlands, and tidal areas.  
Suggested ideas:
  - *Conduct a citywide land identification and prioritization effort to map existing buffer conditions, ecological value, and vulnerability.*
  - *Identify opportunities to expand ecological buffers through zoning updates that strengthen development standards within sensitive buffer areas.*
  - *Continue to partner with regional and local organizations, such as the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP), to identify additional locations for living shoreline strategies along coastal and riverfront areas to reduce erosion, improve habitat, and adapt to sea-level rise. Build on precedent projects, including the Great Bay Living Shoreline Project.*
- **I-1.4. Public Access Guidelines.** Develop guidelines for passive public access in sensitive ecological areas, including trail design, wayfinding, and access and seasonal restrictions, to balance recreation with long-term conservation goals.

- **I-1.5. Promote Public Stewardship.** Develop wayfinding and public education resources to promote awareness and understanding of sensitive ecological areas and increased visitation to public open space resources.

## **I-2. Safeguard and steward Portsmouth's historic places.**

- **I-2.1. Protect Historic Properties from Flooding.** Implement the recommendations from the 2018 Historic Properties Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment after assessing sea level rise scenario guidance following the state's release of the updated coastal flood risk hydrodynamic model. Protect Historic properties by strengthening flood resilience requirements and incentives in historic districts.
- **I-2.2. Significant Historic Sites.** Continue to inventory, protect, and invest in physical and interpretive enhancement of significant historic sites to ensure that the City continues to have a strong understanding of and connection to its complex history well into the future.

### *This could include:*

- *Continually monitor and evaluate whether additional sites or districts should be added to local and national programs for historic preservation.*
- *Partner with local archives and research institutions to develop publicly accessible exhibits and interpretive signage that continue building a broad public understanding of Portsmouth's history.*
- **I-2.3. Uplift Underrepresented Histories.** Uplift underrepresented aspects of Portsmouth's history by identifying, promoting, investing in, and partnering with the individuals, organizations, and programs that are the keepers and stewards of these histories and ongoing cultural traditions.

### *Examples include:*

- *The Black Heritage Trail*
- *Pre-urban-renewal North End*
- *Pre-urban-renewal Puddle Dock and Strawberry Banke*
- *The indigenous peoples of the land Portsmouth is sited on, including the broken 1713 Treaty of Portsmouth with the Wabanaki Confederacy.*
- *Portsmouth's history as part of the country's maritime and defense networks*
- *Consider City support for coordination among the several historic properties to enhance visitor, educational and other opportunities.*
- **I-2.4. Innovative Preservation Policies and Tools.** Explore innovative local regulatory tools to promote preservation of Portsmouth's unprotected historic buildings and landscapes while accommodating adaptive reuse and complementary new development.

### *Some examples include:*

- *Expand current historic preservation district boundaries to allow for an additional area of demolition review only to preserve character beyond current district.*

- *Continued use of 30-day demolition delay with optional demolition committee review, which is currently in place if land use board approval is not sought.*
- *Preservation and restoration incentives like density bonuses, tax credits, as enabled under 79E:4-b)*
- *Technical assistance and training programs.*

### **I-3. Protect the places and organizations that anchor Portsmouth's creative community.**

- **I-3.1. Creative Community Space Inventory.** Inventory current public and private spaces that provide foundational support for the creative community such as studios, rehearsal spaces, galleries, and performance venues, including their risk of displacement and notable gaps.
- **I-3.2. Arts Districts.** Work with the creative community to establish art districts based on current and anticipated new areas with creative businesses and programs that have increased regulatory protections, incentives, and planning support to facilitate long-term stability, accessibility, and vibrancy.
- **I-3.3. Public Art.** Promote public art through accessible processes, identification of designated spaces for public art, and investment in diverse partnerships.

*Suggested ideas:*

- *Continuously maintain and improve efficiency and accessibility of public art permitting so that more artists can create public art.*
- *Identify public spaces that can consistently provide accessible opportunities for public visual and performing art as well as livelihood-supporting commercial and cultural programming.*
- *Involve diverse community members and artists in the design of shared public spaces and commemorative installations with the intention to embed a broader range of aesthetic preferences and cultural references in shared spaces.*
- **I-3.4. Art Education and Programs.** Work towards the 2023 Cultural Plan goals by partnering with existing creative organizations as well as Portsmouth schools to protect and promote the places and programs that support art education, cultural programs, and creative livelihoods.

### **I-4. Reinforce the welcoming culture that makes Portsmouth a magnet for visitors, residents, and businesses alike.**

- **I-4.1. Inclusive Information and Design.** Consistent with the Cultural Plan, expand the welcoming culture through inclusion, making the City welcoming to everyone. This should include diverse historical narratives, accessibility information, accessibility improvements to public spaces, and multilingual resources.
- **I-4.2. Authentic Working Seaport.** Maintain and enhance the authenticity of a “working seaport” that draws people to Portsmouth. Preserving water-dependent land uses,

providing opportunities for passive waterfront recreation, and maintaining the atmosphere of a bustling port with street life is all part of the draw.

- **I-4.3. Accessible and Affordable Events.** Prioritize events and community traditions that are "admission-free" or "community-minded". With events accessible to locals, the City maintains the authentic social fabric that visitors find attractive.
- **I-4.4. Cultivate Considerate Travel.** Follow and encourage State of NH's "Wildly Responsible" principles for responsible, sustainable travel.

## **I-5. Promote context-sensitive development that complements Portsmouth's historic development patterns.**

- **I-5.1. Character-Based Regulations.** Continue to monitor and refine the existing historic and character-based protections in the Downtown core to balance preservation of heritage with promotion of vibrant, walkable urbanism and utility for modern uses.  
*Suggested ideas:*
  - *Update and simplify Historic District Commission's rules to improve legibility and to better balance utility with preservation, ensuring that Portsmouth's core remains walkable and beautiful.*
  - *Examine Character Districts and evaluate whether they capture all of Portsmouth's most important historic places.*
- **I-5.2. Residential Neighborhood Pattern Protections.** Establish a stronger form-based framework for protecting residential neighborhood patterns beyond the historic downtown core.
- **I-5.3. Maritime and Manufacturing Pattern Protections.** Extend some use and character protections to Portsmouth's maritime and manufacturing development patterns to ensure future maritime industrial uses can thrive in Portsmouth.
- **I-5.4. Recent Neighborhood Pattern Adaptation.** Examine suburban wartime and postwar neighborhoods to determine which components merit protection and which components would benefit from tailored and context-sensitive improvement.