



Presenters & Moderators

Mayor James Donchess, Mayor
Sarah Marchant, Community Development Director
Julie Chizmas, Long Range/Transportation Planner
Amber Logue, Chair of Masterplan Committee
Will Cohen, Utile
Taskina Tareen, Utile
Elizabeth van der Els, Utile

Imagine Nashua Citywide Master Plan
Public Kick-off Meeting

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome & Introduction
- Master Plan Overview & Timeline
- Community Engagement
- Where we are Today
 - Existing Conditions & Trends
- Public Survey #1
- Next Steps
- Public Comment

Meeting Date, Time, and Location

- November 05, 2020
- Convened: 6:00 pm
- Adjourned: 7:20 pm
- Zoom web conference

Mayor Donchess' Welcome

Mayor Donchess introduced the Imagine Nashua Master Plan, noting the plan as an important opportunity to take a fresh look and collectively decide a future direction for the city. The Mayor acknowledged that many Nashua neighborhoods are well established and will not require significant changes. However, there are areas of the city with opportunities for redevelopment, including the evolving Downtown area and inner city neighborhoods such as Tree Streets and French Hill, as well as future commercial development opportunities on Amherst street. The Mayor also mentioned the Daniel Webster College site, and noted that the master plan will study ways in which the privately-owned property can be best used to benefit the Nashua community. Mayor Donchess stressed the importance of having Imagine Nashua be a citizen-led effort, and introduced the Master Plan Steering Committee, composed of Nashua residents from each ward and representing many organizations and programs across the city.

Project Team and Attendance

The City team is led by Sarah Marchant (Community Development Director) who will be supported by the Mayor, Julie Chizmas (Long Range/Transportation Planner), Matt Sullivan (Planning Manager), Tim Cummings (Economic Development Director), Justin Kates (Emergency Management Director), Doria Brown (Energy Manager) and Jay Minkarah (Executive Director, NRPC). The consultant team that was selected through competitive bids include Utile (project lead), Ninigret Partners (economic & housing policy), Viva Consulting (economic & housing policy), Brown Richardson & Rowe (site engineering & infrastructure), Horsley Witten (site engineering & infrastructure) and Toole Design (transportation & mobility).

The Master Plan Steering Committee consists of 23 members of the Nashua community, representing each ward and various stakeholder groups. The committee is led by Amber Logue, a resident of French Hill. The kick-off meeting was well attended by the public with over 100 attendees.

Master Plan Overview

Utile (lead consultant) provided an overview of the Imagine Nashua Master Plan. The process will combine comprehensive community engagement with other planning efforts created in the past 20 years, with a focus on equity, resilience and climate protection as overarching guiding principles. The master plan is a document, focused on land use policies, outlining a vision for the future of Nashua, with clear strategies and tactics to guide future decision-making and programs across the community. The plan will engage in an inclusive citywide discussion, relying on key existing conditions, trends and spatial analysis and input from the public and steering committee, to achieve a well rounded perspective on key policy decisions.

should place a focus on the Downtown area as a way to generate more economic value without compromising issues of sprawl, that may be a concern to Nashua residents.

Scope and Timeline

The Imagine Nashua Master Plan will be a year-process running from fall 2020 to fall 2021, and will generally follow six parts: project initiation, existing conditions analysis, future trends analysis, plan development, plan implementation, and plan approval. The state of New Hampshire requires all citywide master plans to have an overarching vision statement guiding the comprehensive plan. Imagine Nashua will focus on equity, resilience, and climate protection as guiding principles woven throughout the plan and used as a lens through which the plan is implemented and evaluated. The plan will also focus on the following topics: land use & development (required), housing, economic growth, mobility & transit, open space & natural resources, and arts & culture.

Community Engagement

There will be numerous opportunities for community engagement throughout the planning process. Public outreach and engagement tools include three citywide workshops following major milestones in the project, two citywide surveys gathering public feedback on visioning and goals, and scenario development and recommendations, an interactive mapping activity, and several focus groups and targeted outreach to ensure that the plan's efforts represent a broad community outreach. Due to COVID-19, many of these engagement activities will take place virtually until in-person meetings can be scheduled.

Where we are Today

Utile presented an overview of where the City of Nashua is today through a snapshot of key existing conditions and trends.

While this is a comprehensive plan primarily focusing on the city, Nashua does not stand alone in this region. There have been several regional planning efforts recently including a New Hampshire statewide analysis report, looking at Nashua's role relative to other major cities in the state, such as Concord and Manchester. A key takeaway from this report indicates that Nashua's Downtown value per acre isn't as high relative to the other cities. The master plan

Land Use and Zoning: A broad land use plan of Nashua shows patterns of development representative of many communities in the United States including large residential neighborhoods, with concentrated strips of development consisting of commercial, heavy commercial and industrial development. The land use plan is an important tool and lever that the City can use to guide future policy decisions. Along with land use, zoning rules and regulations play a major role in informing on-the-ground policy decisions. While this master plan will not involve a full zoning rewrite, recommendations from this plan will directly affect future zoning code and policy in the city.

Housing Affordability: A recent study on housing affordability and the state of the housing market in Nashua reveals that about 50% of Nashua residents fall into an upper household income category (\$75k-100k+) and can afford higher rent (\$1900+) and home prices (\$250k+). Nashua residents representing moderate to lower household income categories approximately make up the other half. When looking closer at the renting and purchasing capacity of Nashua households, it is clear that home ownership vs. having to rent, is largely a matter of economic stratification. Median gross rent in the city is \$1,287, which falls in the midpoint of affordability range for residents in the moderate income category, while median sales price in the city is \$321,300, which falls in the higher band of affordability and purchasing power of residents in the upper income category.

Demographics: A broad generational shift is occurring throughout the nation, and in the City of Nashua. Between 2011 and 2019, persons between the age of 18-24yrs and 25-34yrs, collectively representing millennials, have been moving into the city at a high rate. Additionally, the age cohort between 55-64yrs and 65+years, increasingly empty nesters, are making up a larger percentage of the population. In many cases, millennials and empty nesters are looking to live in smaller locations, and seek lower price points. This generational shift is a long-term trend, and indicates that new housing production should place a focus on meeting the needs of these two population groups.

Sustainability Initiatives: Nashua is continuously working to be more sustainable with 450 solar installations in the last 4 years both on public and private properties. Additionally there are 3 ongoing municipal installations, and solar at schools including Fairgrounds Middle School and Dr Crisp

Elementary (currently in planning phase). City vehicles are increasingly becoming electric including 9 CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) buses and 2 electric hybrid buses. Nashua has experienced a significant increase in the number of EVs registered between 2015 and 2019, with the current total at more than 400. In addition to private charging stations, there are 10 locations in Nashua equipped with 1-3 public charging stations each. The master plan will continue to look at issues surrounding solar generation, alternative fuels and carbon mitigation.

Economic Growth: It is important to note that while the Imagine Nashua Master Plan will focus on addressing issues within city borders, a lot of what is happening economically is intrinsically tied to neighboring and regional communities. A work-commute map showing where Nashua residents work, reveals that there is a healthy number of residents that work within the city, as well as along major highways within New Hampshire. It is key to note that this network also extends heavily to show Nashua residents working in the Greater Boston area, including the Inner Core. On the flip side, when looking at where Nashua workers live, the majority of those employed in Nashua also live in Nashua, indicating an attractive work/life balance with shorter commute times. However, there is also a significant number of workers commuting to Nashua from surrounding New Hampshire communities, as well as workers from Massachusetts cities such as Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell and Boston. The Master Plan will delve into analyzing present and future economic opportunities, taking into account past patterns of commute as well as during the current pandemic environment.

Mobility & Access: The Master Plan will not only look at commuting modes and patterns in terms of traffic and motor vehicles, but will look into enhancing access to all other modes including public transit, bicycle and pedestrian use. The City has been working on the Nashua Bicycle and Pedestrian Project, that seeks to promote opportunities for safe and efficient non-motorized travel around the city. Currently, the City's bike share program has 200 dockless bikes, and in 2018, there were 16,300 rides covering 8,300 miles.

Open Space & Natural Resources: A major outcome and achievement of the City's previous master plan includes the conservation of natural resources and open space that Nashua residents enjoy today. Nashua has a robust park system with over 50 public parks, 1292 acres of conservation land, and 48 miles of trails. The next task for the Master Plan will be to consider ways in which the City can continue to best use these open spaces, both in terms of resources as well as assets for economic development

and community well-being in relation to the other plan topic areas.

Arts & Culture: This is not a stand-alone topic and in many cases is linked to all other topic areas, more specifically to economic development in the City. Findings from a recent study show that Arts and Cultural events greatly benefit Nashua's economy with \$4.1 million in revenue between 2018-2019. The Master Plan will approach Arts and Culture both in terms of economic development and small business and organization support, as well as leverage Nashua's role as an arts and culture destination and an attractive place to live, work and play.

Public Survey #1

Utile introduced the first Public Survey seeking preliminary feedback from the Nashua community on initial goals, aspirations and issues surrounding the city. The survey is presented as a digital tool, seeking to understand where Nashua residents currently stand on general issues facing the city as well as issues more focused on certain topic areas. The survey not only asks users to vote on various items but also gives the opportunity to submit new or more nuanced goals that other residents can vote on. The survey results will be used to inform initial draft vision and goals for the City of Nashua across the various topic areas.

Under normal circumstances, the Master Plan process would also ideally involve on-the-ground, in-person engagement activity gathering feedback from across the city. However due to the pandemic environment, larger in-person outreach will be on hold until further notice.

Next Steps

The consultant team will continue to work on existing conditions and trends analysis for the city and will use the analysis and public survey results to inform and outline preliminary goals and vision in the Master Plan. The updated analysis and draft goals will be presented for discussion at the next public meeting tentatively scheduled for January 6th.

The website will be the primary means for soliciting community feedback as the project progresses. Please visit <https://imagine.nashuanh.gov> to learn about: upcoming and past events, previous planning efforts, email signup list and comment submission

Public Comment/Questions & Answers

- Regarding Public Survey #1: Is every vote on Polis weighted equally?
 - *Every vote is weighted equally, but not everyone sees questions the same way. The statements appear semi-randomly.*
 - Daniel Webster Campus: Great opportunity to use land and make vibrant campus, but also renewable sustainable wards. Where would that fit in? (Latha Mangipudi)
 - *City does not own the property, but is looking to do a deep dive into understanding: if we had the opportunity, what would be the best use for the community and how do we envision that? How does that lay out and affect the surrounding neighborhood? how does it play off the airport and Amherst street and direct access to Route 3? (Sarah Marchant)*
 - Would Nashua get affordable housing? We need more affordable housing and transportation needs to be more affordable - \$18 dollars to go home (Scott McCullough)
 - *We are certainly going to include a lot about affordable housing and transportation in this conversation. The City just completed an Affordable Housing Study, which is available to view on the City website. (Sarah Marchant)*
 - Is this group restricted to current Nashua residents, or can it be broadened? (Peggy)
 - *Yes, we would be very interested to hear from others. This plan and process is open to those who live, work, and play in Nashua as part of the larger fabric of the community. (Sarah Marchant)*
 - Will there be a parking survey? (Michael O'brien)
 - *We are not doing a parking survey. The City is working on a parking survey study, which is on hold because of COVID. There has been a question about street parking in the winter - how do people feel/agree or disagree with this/how would it work? That kind of feedback will be good for this process, but not necessarily comments on existing parking conditions.*
- (Sarah Marchant)*
- Is it within the scope of the master plan to look at amenities that the city might need as we move forward, and identifying where we can locate them like the performing arts center? We have a solid waste issue, we don't really have a recycling center or environmentally focused resources. (Tom Lopez)
 - *The idea of understanding whether people are accepting of/supporting these ideas is part of scope. There is a lot of detailed study required for locating recycling centers, landfills etc. That would be too deep for this study. Part of this process, includes understanding broad preferences - looking at what exists on the ground. The future land use map that comes out of this process will have broad directions for what the community prioritizes. The answers would be reflected in potential zoning changes that come about after this master plan process. (Sarah Marchant)*
 - Many cities have taken advantage of their riverfront more than Nashua has. Part of the problem is the railroad. I hope this plan will look at the railroad and impact on the city and focus on the Merrimack riverfront.(Gene Porter)
 - *This study will not be an in depth transportation study of the rail corridor. That is in progress - State has put out an RFP. (Sarah Marchant)*
 - How are we addressing the homeless population and people with mental health issues? How are we getting them involved? (Laura Saluja)
 - *We will have some focus groups with participation from organizations such as the Greater Nashua Mental Health. We will also look for ways to engage beyond digital means with as many partners and groups as possible and harder to reach populations.*
 - *Printed paper surveys at the NPL would reach some folks this doesn't. (John Noiln)*
 - *The Greater Nashua Continuum of Care may be a good opportunity to reach out.*
 - Is the survey offered in a different language?
 - *The Imagine Nashua website is translated in Portuguese and Spanish. The survey is on the website, which will detect your device/browser's language and translate accordingly.*
 - Important in terms of diversity - I love the idea of including every aspect of our great community. How

do we leverage that? How do we capitalize this?
(Latha Mangipudi)

- Is the plan including all individuals with special needs, our culturally diverse population? Have you contacted Gateway Community services for input?
 - *Yes, we have contacted Gateway Community as part of our non-profits. We are also setting up focus groups with the Plus company. We have planned focus groups with a wide range of groups including the Muslim community, Interfaith counsel, Senior Center and also Teens/Youth. If there are other groups you think we should be partnering with, please share your feedback on the website. (Sarah Marchant)*
- Health and Human Services: So much that falls under this, there are broader services including education, emergency response infrastructure, early childhood development programs and services and health care facilities etc. needed by vulnerable populations and important to know where to locate/how to access. Are they being thought of cohesively in the plan?
 - *These are valid concerns. This plan will not necessarily address all these issues together. We will look at many different things. The Community Health Impact Plan within the Public Health and Community Services department gets to address that. The idea of where services are located to where transportation is - those aspects are going to be in the plan, but more in terms of mobility and transportation. We won't dive into specific services like health and education.*
 - *Both hospital reps are included and involved in this meeting.*
 - *The things addressed in the Imagine Nashua plan still addresses the social determinants of health from what I see. It may not have "health" in it but it does impact it. (Boddy D. Bagley)*

privately owned Natural Resources. This Inventory has not been updated for 15 years so that effort is consistent with Imagine Nashua. This should include the extensive Pennichuck Brook and Pond complex owned by the City by virtue of its ownership of the Waterworks. (Gene Porter)

- *WRT Solar, don't forget the new 1 MW installation on the City's Water Works land*
- The "where do you work" map is likely to look like this "where do you live" map post COVID. (Justin Kates)
- The Fire Department also is completing a Fire Department Master Plan that should be complete soon. (Justin Kates)

This memorandum represents our understanding of the events which transpired and the actions which were taken. If they do not conform to a recipient's understanding, prompt written notice must be communicated to the writer. If no corrections or objections are made, this memorandum will be relied upon as a factual interpretation of this meeting.

Other comments:

- There is a great sampling of people in this meeting. Several outreach workers, faith community, public house reps, people who do direct service with minority populations.
- With regard to Natural Resources, the Conservation Commission is responsible for establishing and maintaining an Inventory of important public and