



Boston/
New England

MIDDLESEX ST

- ← South Common 4 min
- ↑ Lowell Justice Center 5 min
- Hamilton Canal District 3 min
- ↓ Central St 3 min

Lowell TAP

March 23-24, 2026



**CITY of
LOWELL**



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



**Terwilliger Center
for Housing**



**NATIONAL
LEAGUE
OF CITIES**

CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

About ULI – the Urban Land Institute

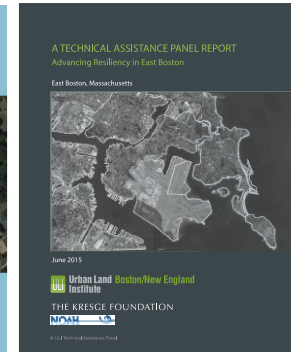
The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising nearly 50,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute’s mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI at the local level

Boston/New England District Council covers nearly all of New England with over 1,200 Members—developers, architects, planners, public officials, financiers, students, etc.

ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing

The mission of the TCH is to ensure that everyone has a home that meets their needs at a price they can afford. The Center’s activities include technical assistance engagements, forums and convenings, research and publications, and an awards program. The goal is to catalyze the production and preservation of a full spectrum of housing options..



About NLC – The National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America’s cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

Housing Supply Accelerator Challenge

The Housing Supply Accelerator Challenge is a nationwide network designed to accelerate the implementation of proven and innovative housing strategies and expand the supply of housing in communities across the country.

Participating communities will gain access to best practices, technical assistance, housing supply experts and a peer exchange.



Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

ULI Boston/New England is committed to supporting communities in making sound land use decisions and creating better places. A TAP brings together ULI members with a range of professional expertise to provide focused, collaborative consultation to a local government or qualifying non-profit organization. **All panelists have donated their time to participate on the TAP.**

TAP Impact on Communities:

- **82%** said their behavior and approach to **Municipal Planning and Economic Development Strategies** was affected
- **67%** said there were **increased municipal investments** related to the stated goals and recommendations of their TAP report.
- **62%** said at least **one key developable asset addressed in their TAP report had been redeveloped consistent with ULI Boston/New England recommendations**

Final Deliverable – Written report (10 - 12 weeks) will be available at <http://boston.uli.org>

PANEL SPONSORS:



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**Terwilliger Center
for Housing**



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Urban Land Institute **Boston/New England**

The Panel

Chairs

- **Scott Pollack**, OppCo
- **Melvin Vieira**, RE/MAX Real Estate Center | The Vieira Group

Panelists

- **Amelia Casey**, Arup
- **Keir Evans**, BXP
- **James Gray**, Stantec Architecture
- **Vineet Gupta**, City of Boston (Former)
- **James Rather**, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission
- **Sandi Wolchansky Silk**, MassDevelopment
- **Gretchen Von Grossmann AIA**, AECOM

TAP Auditor

- **Jovan Aigbekaen**, Arup

ULI Staff

- **Michelle Landers**, Executive Director
- **Fabiola Yurcisin**, Technical Assistance Program Director at the ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing

TAP Writer

- **Elizabeth Okeke-Von Batten**



The Process

Briefing Meeting

Panelists received briefing information from the City of Lowell and the NMCOCG regarding the study area including zoning, past studies, current conditions, etc.

Site Visit

Panelists toured from the Gallagher Terminal to the Thorndike intersection, down Appleton Street to Middlesex Street, to Jackson Street, across the canal to the Hamilton Canal District Street. The panel then boarded a bus to view downtown, The Acre, Cambodia town and back to Middlesex Community College.

Stakeholder Interviews

The panelists interviewed community members and public officials to better understand the needs of the neighborhood and the community.

Charrette

The panelists met in a closed-door session to explore all possibilities related to the assignment and develop recommendations.



Panel Assignment: Address These Questions

Key Questions

Regarding The Gallagher Terminal to the JAM District

- Why aren't more developments being built in the transit-oriented area of Lowell despite the City's assets and developer-friendly policies, zoning, and land use regulations?
- What else can the city of Lowell do to increase transit-oriented development in the city?
- What is a realistic scale of development for the transit-oriented area, and how can the city attract developer interest in the area?



What did we see?

Study Area – Gallagher Terminal Area



Study Area – JAM District



Study Area – JAM District



Study Area – JAM District



Study Area – Hamilton Canal District



Study Area – HCID District



Existing Conditions

Physical

- Available parking inventory – on street and garage
- Beautiful mill buildings and historic structures
- Strong, cohesive downtown
- Variety of commercial enterprises
- Nighttime lighting – very attractive
- Canals are a water amenity, and also separate neighborhoods
- Lack of street trees, pocket parks in JAM
- Setbacks from street - with chain link at the edge
- Commercial vacancies
- Connections can be limited
 - Lack of pedestrian and bicycle friendly infrastructure
 - Bridges in poor condition – driving and pedestrian
 - Scale of parcels vary by districts - transitions

Non-physical

- Diversity of cultures – food, festivals
- Strong community banking support
- Outside investment – Kerouac Center, ongoing development in HCD and beyond
- Few services/amenities – families, children, pets, pharmacy, grocery, urgent care
- JAM district and Hamilton Canal feel like different worlds

Existing Conditions Gallagher

- Good transportation intermodal connections – train, bus, parking
- Potential for TOD – longer term
- Feels separate from development areas and downtown
- Successful redevelopment of Thorndike Exchange
- Recent public investment of Thorndike Street – step in the right direction



What did we hear?

What did we hear...

- City is a good partner
- Permitting is easy
- Housing and commercial are difficult without a lot of subsidy
- Disagreement on need for affordable housing
- Lack of connectivity between neighborhoods
- Impressive food scene
- City suffers from perception issues
- Desire for hotel
- Disconnect between city's development vision and the market conditions



Opportunities and Challenges

Assets

- Pro development
- City parking investments leveraged by developers
- Historic context
- Built environment
- Developable land
- Train
- Arts, culture, and festivals
- Diversity of cultures
- University/workforce

Challenges

- Market conditions
- City perception
- University is disconnected to the urban core
- Low street activity – not many eyes on the street
- Prioritization



Recommendations

Key Questions

Regarding The Gallagher Terminal to the JAM District

- Why aren't more developments being built in the transit-oriented area of Lowell despite the City's assets and developer-friendly policies, zoning, and land use regulations?
- What else can the city of Lowell do to increase transit-oriented development in the city?
- What is a realistic scale of development for the transit-oriented area, and how can the city attract developer interest in the area?

Key Themes

Lowell is a city of diverse neighborhoods that are difficult to navigate between

Key Themes

Zoning incentives and Gallagher Station are not enough to spur robust demand for development.

Zoning incentives and Gallagher Station are not enough to spur robust demand for development

STEP 1

Leverage the upcoming zoning code audit to reconsider and amend zoning district boundaries to better incorporate the JAM / TOD districts

ACTION

Identify an existing or new internal entity to lead the implementation of the "TOD" zoning district (to spearhead the District Revitalization Initiative)

STEP 2

Take action to catalyze priority amenities in the district—working with partners (e.g., LDFC) to identify gaps and incentivize targeted infill uses such as grocery, pharmacy, hardware, and other daily-needs retail

ACTION

Launch an Assemblage / Site Selection Pilot Program on Appleton Street that combines, engaging both legacy and non-legacy owners/developers to start the conversation and unlock feasible development sites.

STEP 3

Develop a Developer-Focused District Marketing Package that equips developers to tell a clear, credible story to investors

ACTION

Identify approved and funded projects, timelines, available incentives, vendor / tenant collaboration efforts

Key Themes

Certain investments have not been prioritized in the district.

Focus and prioritize – Middlesex St. and Appleton St.

These recommendations first define what it means to invest in transportation/public realm in these two streets first



Transportation

Process:

Coalition of the necessary (public and private) – engage collaboration to create an advisory group for this area that meets on a monthly basis in the JAM district.

This Advisory group will be tasked to create a roadmap with milestones and priorities, that include:

- Actions and next steps in the public realm design process
- Community engagement
- Funding strategy (MassDOT has grants/funding for this purpose)

Tactical actions:

- Incorporating the existing institutions (e.g., shelter and school)
- Continue to partner with NMCOG for funding and planning capacity

Transportation Recommendations

Short Term:

- Address pedestrian experience (low hanging fruit):
 - Clean streets and curb appeal
 - Address lighting, patch sidewalks, paint crosswalks
- Work closely with the shelter and school to address public realm issues and security
- Partner with local artists to create a streetscape activation program – i.e. murals
- Show that these streets are a priority for the City



Transportation Recommendations

Mid Term:

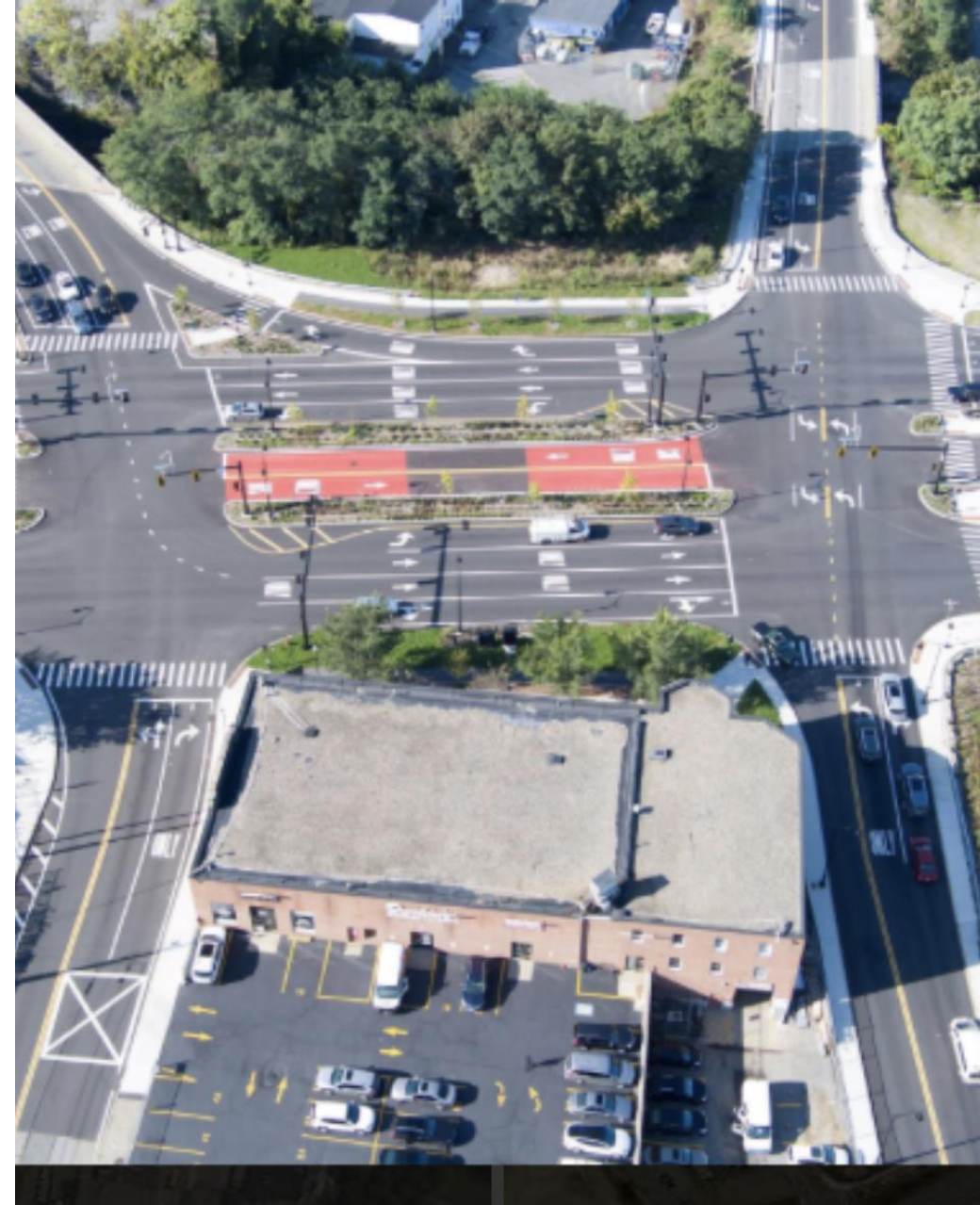
- Develop a Streetscape Design Vision
- Design a new streetscape, based on Complete Streets Guidelines
 - 25% design for community input
- Start to connect transit/shuttle from the JAM to Gallagher Center and Downtown
- Expand the shuttle to incorporate the festivals during the summer



Transportation Recommendations

Long Term: Station and Future of TOD

- Pedestrian Friendly Thorndike Connection
 - Road diet
 - Bike lane connection
- Work with state and MBTA (and others) for the redevelopment of parcels adjacent to the station
- Rethink the TOD zoning around the station



Key Themes

There is a perception issue
– not a just demand problem

Key Themes

Investment Community

- Lowell is a talent refinery and the region's economic service center
- The City is open for business and has a long time history as a willing partner to private sector and institutional actors
- Lowell's urban core has a built environment and architectural examples that would be the envy of many cities
- Many of the key nodes that the City seeks to reposition faces the 'Who will be the first one in' issue. Capital follows capital

Public Perceptions

- Long time city residents sometimes undersell the city and its potential. Status quo bias
- Regional perspective of Lowell frozen in amber from decades ago. Classic 'mill city perception lag' and Lowell is not alone in this

Key Themes

Perception - recommendations

- Public realm improvements in key locations can signal to the market that **you** should be the next one in
- Amenitizing the JAM/HCID areas with the right, site specific incentive and subsidy mix will get desired uses in place to catalyze further development. The big 'flywheel' of neighborhood revitalization will begin turning as more of the right projects come online
- Work with NMCOCG and the annual CEDS update process to position JAM/HCID districts as regional receiving areas for private and public investment
- NMCOCG can help tell the story with its member communities and funders that Lowell's success is their success!

Key Themes

A need to reshape Lowell's Image and Brand

It's about bringing people to Lowell

Branding and Perception Challenges

Internal/Locals

- "Community-scale low self-esteem"
- "Downtown isn't what it used to be"

External /Outside Investors

- "Data lags reality"
- Lowell isn't the place to be, if you "think" you know Lowell
- Investors who have no prior knowledge of the city are more likely to invest

Branding and Perception Opportunities

- What could Lowell be known for?
- What strengths can the city lean in to?
 - Vibrant Cultural and Food Scenes
 - History
 - Unique Canal System
 - Year-Round Festivals
 - STEM Presence and Reputation
 - Education and Innovation

An Opportunity: Lowell, Your Family-Friendly Destination

A family-friendly city is friendly to everyone

Tik Tok

Bicentennial

Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Youth-driven social media buzz for events	Activating and playful art installations	Marquee new playground/ park in the canal district
A "Day in Lowell" itinerary/series	Family-focused festival calendar	Accessible and inviting canal waterfront pathways
Collaboration with local businesses and cultural institutions	Expand cultural events to the public realm with specific family-focused activities	Connective graphic "tissue" for wayfinding

An Opportunity: Lowell, Your Family-Friendly Destination

Engage the youth to begin shaping the City's next 100 years



Activating public spaces
(The Outpost – The Presidio/San Francisco)



Using social media to highlight local gems
(Local Lowell food scenes and attractions)

How Does This Connect to Housing?

Improved perception =
More people – residents and visitors

More people
= support for local amenities experiential activities

More amenities and experiences
= increased appeal and demand

Improved Perception + More People + Amenities/Experiences + Demand + Investment =
Developer interest and investment commitments

An Opportunity: Lowell as a leader and convener

We heard that there could be more collaboration among organizations

- Bringing people to the table builds community and sense of place

Actions

- Expand communication cadence with key organizations like NMCOG, Lowell Plan, Chamber of Commerce, UMass, LRTA, Revolutionary Valley, Schools and service organizations
- Work towards consensus visions
 - Shared ownership, responsibility and delegation

Q&A

Lowell TAP
March 23 - 24 2026