



Agenda

Comprehensive Planning Committee

August 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM

Council Chambers Second Floor Auburn Hall

1. **ICE BREAKER QUESTION**
2. **ROLL CALL:** Committee Members, City Staff, and Consultants
3. **MINUTES:** Minutes from July 22, 2025
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
5. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Data Update + Meeting-in-a-Box Check-In (BerryDunn)
6. **INVENTORY & ANALYSIS v3:** Outstanding Items & Feedback from July Meeting (BerryDunn)
 - a. Process for sharing the Inventory – post chapters to Social Pinpoint and embed StoryMap version of the Inventory on Social Pinpoint
7. **HOUSING STUDY REPORT:** Brief update (City Staff)
8. **VISIONING WORKSHOP:** See agenda and instructions below (BerryDunn)

Minutes
Comprehensive Planning Committee
Tuesday, July 22, 2025

1. ICE BREAKER QUESTION

If a genie came and descended on the City of Auburn and granted each of you one wish, what wish would you make?

2. ROLL CALL: Committee Members, City Staff, and Consultants

Denis Bergeron, Riley Bergeron, Kelly Butler, John Cleveland (Chair), Beckie Conrad, Jane Costlow, Matt Duvall, Jeff Harmon, Paul Jacques, Virginia Keel, Adam Lee, Dana Staples, and Rex Rhoades

Absent: Heidi Bertels, Tim Cowan, Bruce Rioux, and Rick Whiting

Staff Members Present: Lauren Caffé (Long Ranger Planner), David Hediger (Director of Planning), Phil Crowell (City Manager), and Denis D'Auteuil (Assistant City Manager).

Consultant Members Present: Ali Tobey of BerryDunn.

3. MINUTES: Minutes from June 17, 2025

Matt noted that an "l" needs to be added to Duval and Denis noted that an "n" needs to be removed from Dennis.

Motion to Approve June 17, 2025, minutes as amended: Matt Duvall **Second:** Denis Bergeron **Vote:** 13-0 Motion Carries

4. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

5. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS: Update on Second Version

Ali gave a report on the Inventory and Analysis stating that in the packet there is a table of committee comments that were made during sub-committee meetings as well as responses to those and those outlined in red are places where we're still waiting for additional information.

John reminded everyone that July 31st is the deadline to get final information, suggestions, and edits so that BerryDunn can incorporate those and get them published on the website for the public to see it.

There was discussion regarding the projected population change, draft housing study, availability of medical care and services, low rating of Auburn schools received in real estate sales websites, law enforcement growth & costs, changes in types of crimes and severity of crimes, and municipal tax burden compared to similar size cities.

Ali said all the data will be put into Version 3 and that the full document will be shared online. They are also going to put together an Arc GIS story map version of it with maps, text and data that will make it easier for the community to read.

6. COMMUNITY SURVEY: Summary and Full Responses

Ali gave a report on the Summary, Full Responses, and results stating that there were 1217 total inputs, 898 website visitors, 44 email signups, 56 idea wall posts, 41 map posts, 541 survey responses, 285 middle school survey responses, 143 high school survey responses, 77 that attended focus group meeting, and 30+/- that attended the Natural Environment open house. Of the 541 total responses, 478 are full residents and 63 are people that work, visit or attend school in Auburn.

There was discussion regarding groups that work in the community that were in the Focus Group and spoke on behalf of their constituents that expressed concerns and needs. Lauren said she would love to meet with individuals one on one or in a meeting in a box. It was suggested to reach out to constituent groups that have their own meetings and suggest that they have a guided conversation using a meeting in a box. To reach out to those who were not included in the survey, Lauren has some engagements lined up:

- ❖ August 6 - Drop-in-Center - doing listening session with people dropping in and then meeting with service providers
- ❖ August 8 – the 3 interns are setting up a youth forum and inviting parents
- ❖ August 13 – PAL Backpack Drive - will be tabling to get feedback from the 300-400 people that will be attending

Affordability and tax burden are a high concern for people that took the survey. It was suggested to work on strategies and have conversations about what affordability means to them.

7. JULY 9 FOCUS GROUP: Summary of Focus Group

There was a lot of positive feedback about the Focus Groups from attendees and committee members. Some comments were that it was a great event and turnout, well designed and run, a good strategy, very useful and valuable, there were productive conversations, it was impressive how many people were there with so many different backgrounds and expertise, and that there were a lot of people there that would never show up to a public event but their business or organization is an integral part of the community. Lauren and BerryDunn were given recognition and congratulated for an excellent job of doing the legwork necessary to put it all together, getting it organized, and getting the right mix of people there, which created the great dynamic of conversation.

Some suggestions and concerns were:

- *Having smaller focus groups meetings instead of one large one so everyone can be involved in more of the conversations
- *Encouraging a place where everyone feels a part of the community where they can work, dine, and enjoy entertainment
- *The need for transportation as related to economic development and keeping young professions here.
- *The need for housing for everyone, from people who have no shelter to someone looking for upscale luxurious housing
- *Moving more amenities, development, investment, and entertainment from downtown to Exit 75
- * Concerns about what the future holds for the youth due to cuts in funding and positions
- *Concerns about threats to the natural environment such as devastating rain events, garbage, and climate change.
- *Finding a way for groups within the community to work together and not duplicate efforts

8. JULY 19 PUBLIC INPUT MEETING - LAKE GROVE PARK: Update & Summary

Lauren gave a review of the public meeting stating that about 30 people were in attendance, it was a beautiful day, Natalie did an amazing job having a children's station, and there was great live music from Brian Soucy.

There was a lot of positive feedback about the event. Some comments were that it was a great place to have a meeting, it was a good way to capture people's thoughts and ideas you may not get otherwise, and there was a lot of good discussions regarding the Ag zone, city parks, sustainability and recycling, land use, climate change and resilience.

David said several people wanted more time to think about the questions being presented and that after the focus groups and vision sessions, we will put them all online for people who may have missed it and wanted more time to reflect on it.

Lauren said she tabled at the farmers market for about 3 hours and received a range of views from people.

9. COMP. PLAN SCHEDULE: Update Process to Date

Ali reviewed the process stating that Phase 1 (Inventory) and Phase 2 (Public Engagement & Visioning) are on schedule to wrap up at the August meeting. She said next month there will be a workshop to put together a draft version of the vision statement and then transition into an action plan and final plan development. She said the vision statement becomes the vision for the plan over the next decade and can have some specific goals or priorities. All the input will go into policies and actions, future land use map, will incorporate state requirements, and then will create the implementation plan. From September through early next summer, they will be spending time building out the action plan, how to implement the community vision, and how that plan is going to be implemented and next spring they will be building implementation strategies and plan.

It was suggested to do some additional advertising for the upcoming 2 community meetings as most of the advertising was focused on the previous event.

10. VISION STATEMENT EXAMPLES: Purpose & Preparation for August Workshop

Ali provided example vision statements and said after all the engagement, they will compile the information into a very large document and summary information and will send along guiding questions or thoughts. She said next month they will spend

some time going through individual brainstorming and larger group discussions to start grouping themes and ideas together.

11. EXAMPLES OF CLIMATE CHANGE OR RESILIENCE IN COMP. PLANS

The committee supports including climate change and resilience in the comprehensive plan.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE: August 26, 2025

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:58 pm: Paul Jacques **Second:** Dana Staples **Vote:** 13-0
Motion Carries



AUBURN

2026 Comprehensive Plan

MOVING AUBURN FORWARD: **TOGETHER.**

City of Auburn, ME

Engagement Summary

August 18, 2025

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Community Surveys	9
General Community Survey	9
School Surveys	11
Open House and Community Events.....	12
General Visioning.....	13
Natural Environment.....	17
Water and Natural Resources.....	17
Agriculture and Forestry	18
Recreation.....	18
People and City Services	20
Built Environment.....	22
Auburn’s Economy:.....	22
Housing in Auburn.....	24
Transportation:	25
Auburn’s History	25
Drop-In Center.....	26
Community Focus Groups	27
Hospitality and Retail.....	27
Strengths.....	27
Challenges	27
Goals	28
Essential and Social Services.....	28
Strengths.....	28
Challenges.....	28
Goals	28

Education and Youth Services.....	29
Strengths.....	29
Challenges.....	29
Goals.....	29
Environment and Sustainability.....	29
Strengths.....	30
Challenges.....	30
Goals.....	30
Agriculture and Food Systems.....	30
Strengths.....	30
Challenges.....	31
Goals.....	31
Real Estate, Housing, and Development.....	31
Strengths.....	31
Challenges.....	31
Goals.....	32
Transportation and Mobility.....	32
Strengths.....	32
Challenges.....	32
Goals.....	33
Future Investment Priorities Dot-Voting Activity.....	33

Introduction

As part of City of Auburn’s (City) comprehensive plan update, City Staff, Comprehensive Plan Committee members, and BerryDunn conducted a public engagement effort to obtain input from Auburn’s residents, workers, and visitors. The goal of this effort was to identify community values and priorities, provide information to inform the creation of the City’s vision statement, and guide plan development and policy recommendations. The engagement strategy included the following events and activities:

- A comprehensive survey of adult residents and workers
- A youth survey of local middle and high school students
- A focus group event with 11 different focus areas
- Tabling at community events, including National Night Out, the PAL Center Backpack Drive, and Lewiston Farmers Market
- Three open house events aimed at the general population
- Listening sessions at the Drop-In Center and focus group with staff
- A youth forum
- Poster and dot engagement at various locations in Auburn, including City Hall, Drop-In Center, and New Beginnings
- Online engagement via a Social Pinpoint website

To help inform the community of the project, there were several methods used to engage participants in the process:

- Mailings were sent out to roughly 11,000 households to inform them of the project and community survey.
- Roughly 1,500 organizations, businesses, and individuals were invited to participate in the focus group event.
- Over 1,500 organizations, businesses, and individuals were directly invited to participate in the open house events. Physical posters or social media posts about the events were also shared at City Hall, Senior Community Center, Norway Savings Bank Arena, the Auburn Community Facebook Group, Taylor Pond Association website and Facebook, the Lewiston-Auburn Metro Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, the Auburn Public Library, Edward Little High School, and on City of Auburn social media accounts.
- City staff also tabled at local community events, provided engagement activities at local organizations, and held listening sessions. Staff tabled at the Lewiston-Auburn Farmers Market, National Night Out, and PAL Center Backpack Drive. Posters with dot activities

were placed at City Hall, Drop-In Center, and New Beginnings. A listening session was conducted at the Drop-In Center.

The table below summarizes outreach totals and engagement event totals from March through August 18, 2025.

Event	Total Engagements or Participants
Outreach	
Mailings	~11,000
Focus Group Invites	~1,500
Open House Invites	~1,500
Social Pinpoint Website Visitors	1,087
Engagements and Inputs	
Social Pinpoint Email Sign Ups	46
Social Pinpoint Ideas Wall and Forum Posts	85
Social Pinpoint Map Posts	105
Social Pinpoint Budgeting Tools	16
Social Pinpoint Form Responses	50
Community Survey Responses	541
Middle School Survey Responses	285
High School Survey Responses	143
Focus Group Attendees	77
Natural Environment Open House Attendees	30
People and City Services Open House Attendees	15
Built Environment Open House Attendees	9
Photo Contest	3
Drop-In Center Listening Session	11
Farmers Market Interactions	22
National Night Out Interactions	125
Youth Forum Interactions	15
PAL Center Backpack Drive Interactions	185
Total Invites and Mailings:	15,087
Total Engagements or Inputs:	1,763

This high-level summary details each engagement as well as its results, aimed at summarizing feedback received from community members. Across all engagements, several themes emerged. Below, they are broken up into subject matter specific categories.

General Vision

- The Auburn community believes in a future where Auburn is a safe, exciting, and friendly place to live, and an appealing destination for visitors.
- Community members want to prioritize protecting natural resources, parks, and rural areas.
- Residents stressed that Auburn should be affordable for all of its residents, with housing, food, and transit options that are accessible to those making a variety of income levels.
- Community members, especially parents, want to make Auburn a place for young people to thrive, grow, and stay. This might include improving recreational opportunities for those ages 5-25, keeping educational quality high, and investing in future infrastructure, services, and housing.

Housing and Affordability

- Cost of living and overall affordability was of the top priorities across engagement activities.
- Residents would like to see for more housing at a variety of income levels, including low- and moderate-income housing.
- Participants indicated support for a variety of housing types to meet the needs of residents moving forward.
- Housing shortages are seen as a barrier to livability and economic development.
- Participants expressed a desire for new development to be located where existing buildings and infrastructure exist to provide both new housing and to protect natural resources and agricultural land.

Transportation, Walkability, and Connectivity

- Increased walkability and bikeability are desired goals for the future.
- Public transit is seen as underdeveloped and critical for access to jobs, education, and services (especially to areas outside of Lewiston-Auburn).
- Residents expressed a desire for safe streets, sidewalks, traffic calming, and bike lanes.

Parks, Recreation, and Natural Assets

- Residents, particularly younger residents, value parks, trails, lakes, and outdoor recreation access and would like to expand access to recreation amenities.
- Residents want to preserve natural beauty and access to open space as Auburn grows.
- Climate change and environmental sustainability are rising concerns, with support for conservation, water quality improvements, and health of forests and agricultural lands.
- Lake Auburn is seen as an asset that should be protected.

Economic Development and Local Business Support

- The community wants Auburn to become a destination rather than a pass-through community, with more shopping, dining, and entertainment.
- There is a desire to revitalize downtown and bring in more traffic.
- Businesses expressed that Auburn lacks foot traffic and retail spending power, tied to affordability issues.
- Businesses expressed that workforce challenges are common, including staffing shortages, especially in restaurants, construction, and trades.

Services

- Residents want better support for unhoused individuals, mental healthcare, and addiction recovery.
- Focus group participants cited a need for better coordination among providers and with the City.
- Youth services and activities are believed to be lacking.

Education and Youth Opportunity

- Participants consistently identified education quality, affordability, and access as key to Auburn's future.
- There is support for adult education and job training, particularly trade programs.
- Youth surveys and focus groups highlighted a need for more teen-focused entertainment and gathering spaces, particularly those in walking distance from denser residential areas.

Infrastructure and City Services

- Roads and infrastructure maintenance are repeatedly cited as a core concern.
- Participants want the City to focus on traffic flow, safety, litter control, pothole management, and responsive services.

- Visual quality, especially of entry corridors like Washington Street, was seen as important to Auburn’s economic future.

Community Identity

- Residents appreciate Auburn’s sense of community, friendliness, and small-town charm.
- Events, festivals, and civic spaces are seen as ways to strengthen community ties and support local businesses.
- Respondents were overall undecided on what Auburn’s identity is today.

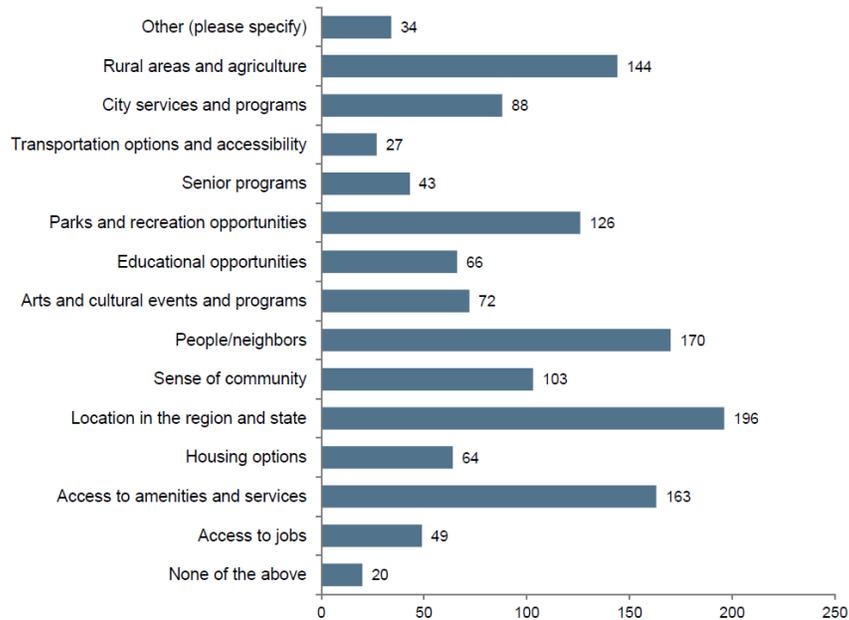
Community Surveys

General Community Survey

The City distributed a community survey via postcards mailed to residents, flyers posted at several locations, and social media outreach. The survey generated 541 responses and covered a variety of topics related to the comprehensive plan.

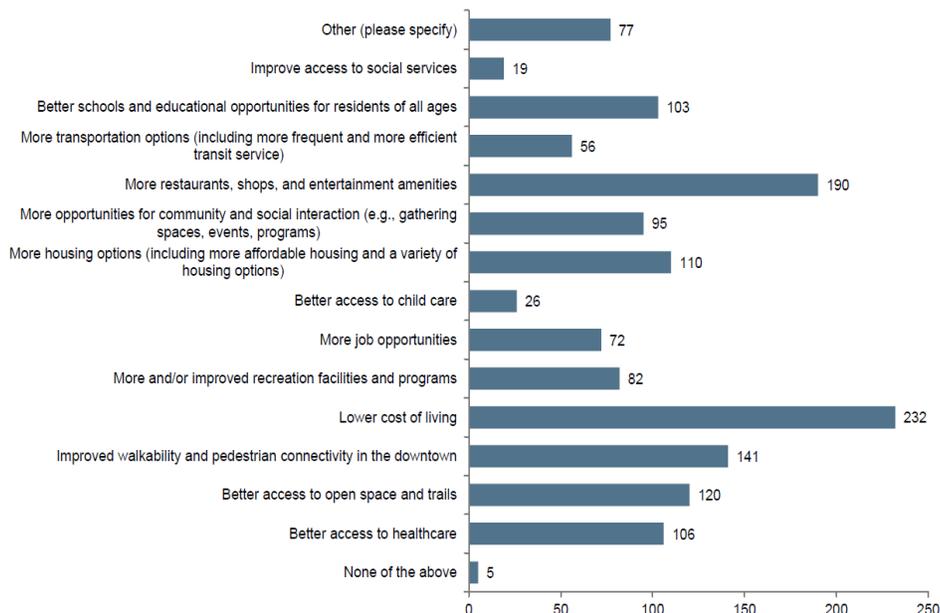
When asked what they value most about Auburn, respondents highlighted the City’s location within the region and state, its strong sense of community, and the friendliness of neighbors. Parks and recreational opportunities, along with access to amenities and services, were also frequently mentioned as important aspects of life in Auburn.

What do you value most about Auburn?



In terms of desired improvements, residents expressed a strong need for a lower cost of living, more entertainment and dining options, and increased housing availability, particularly affordable housing. Improved walkability and better access to healthcare were also seen as key factors that could enhance quality of life.

Which changes would most improve your quality of life?



Looking ahead to the next decade, many respondents indicated a desire for more walkable and bikeable infrastructure, as well as expanded public transportation options both within Auburn and to surrounding areas. Housing needs are expected to shift, with some residents seeking larger homes to accommodate family changes, while others anticipate downsizing or transitioning to more affordable or accessible housing.

Survey participants also shared their priorities for City spending. High-priority areas included road and infrastructure maintenance, public safety services, housing affordability, and recreational programs. Enhancing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure was also seen as a valuable investment.

Overall, most respondents rated their quality of life in Auburn positively. Positive feedback centered on the City’s location, community spirit, available amenities, and access to nature and education. However, concerns were raised about the tax burden, road conditions, safety, affordability, and support for unhoused individuals.

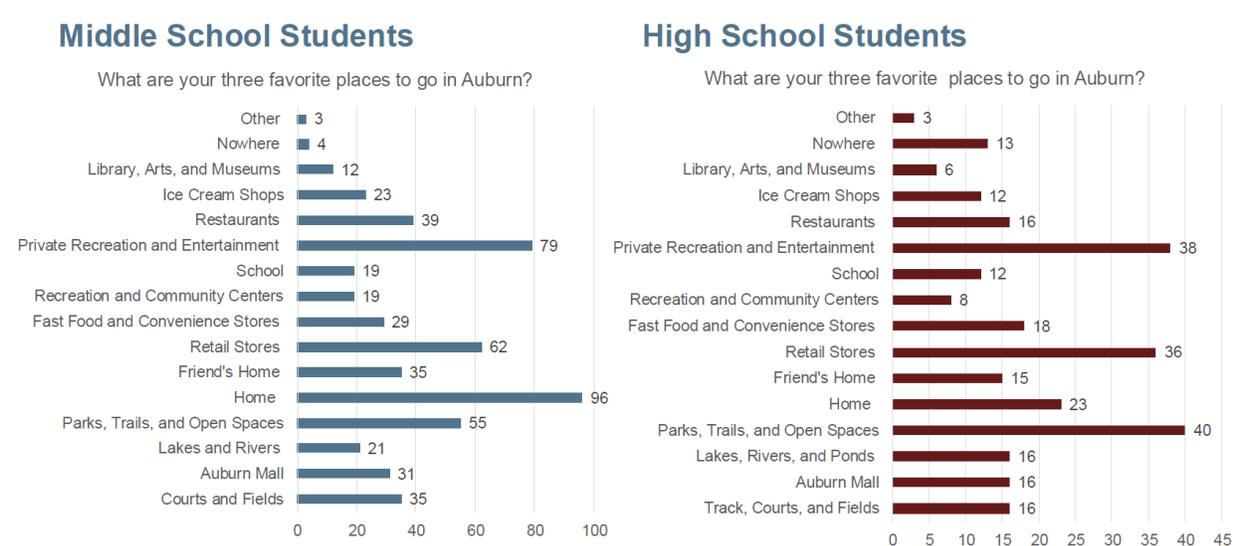
When envisioning Auburn’s future, residents emphasized the importance of increasing affordability, maintaining infrastructure, expanding parks and recreation, and supporting local businesses. Improving education, walkability, and environmental sustainability were also common themes. The overarching vision is to make Auburn more affordable, accessible, and environmentally conscious, while preserving its natural beauty and fostering a vibrant, inclusive community.

School Surveys

The City conducted two surveys among students in Auburn, one targeted at middle schoolers, and one at high schoolers. A total of 423 students participated in the survey, with 285 from middle school and 143 from high school.

Students’ favorite places in Auburn include parks, trails, lakes, and recreational centers. Middle schoolers especially enjoy fast food spots, retail stores, and entertainment venues like Lost Valley and trampoline parks. High schoolers also favor parks and the Auburn Mall but show slightly less interest in private entertainment venues. When asked how they get around the City, middle schoolers primarily rely on rides from adults or walking, while high schoolers also include driving themselves and using public transportation.

Middle and High School Students’ Favorite Places in Auburn

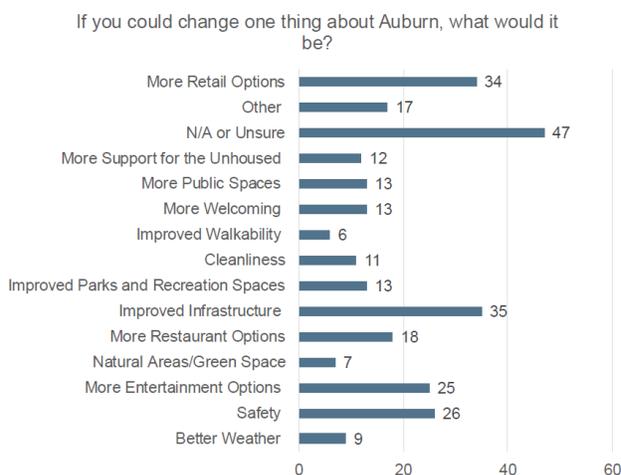


When asked what they would tell a newcomer their age about Auburn, responses varied. Middle schoolers often described the City as “nice,” “walkable,” and “friendly,” though some noted it can be “boring” or “cold.” High schoolers echoed similar sentiments, with a mix of appreciation for the community and critiques about limited entertainment and retail options.

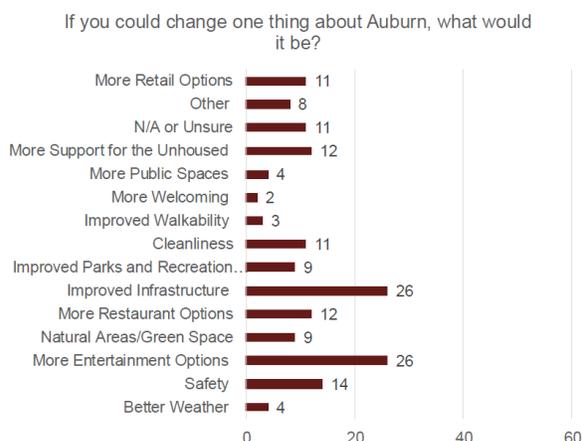
Students were also asked what they would change about Auburn. Both groups emphasized the need for more entertainment, better infrastructure, and improved parks and recreation. High school students were particularly vocal about the need for more public spaces and support for the unhoused. Infrastructure concerns included roads, traffic, and public transit.

What Middle and High Schools Students Would like to Change in Auburn

Middle School Students



High School Students



When imagining new spaces for youth, students expressed a desire for more entertainment venues, restaurants, retail options, and teen-focused activity centers. Middle schoolers also showed interest in amusement parks and improved libraries, while high schoolers leaned toward outdoor recreation and cultural amenities.

A key question asked high schoolers whether they would choose to stay in Auburn as adults. The majority said “no” or “maybe,” citing reasons such as boredom, a desire for better job opportunities, and Auburn’s cold weather. Those who wanted to stay appreciated the community and proximity to family.

Open House and Community Events

The City of Auburn and the Comprehensive Plan Committee held a series of open house events to discuss priorities for the next comprehensive plan with community members. The events included a natural environment open house, a people and City services open house, and a built environment open house. All three events were held in person, with the natural environment event held at Lake Grove Park in Auburn, the people and City services held at Edward Little High School, and the built environment event held at the Auburn Senior Center.

Participants were given a series of interactive ways to express their opinions, concerns, and hopes for Auburn’s future, and were also offered the opportunity to provide feedback on general questions about challenges and priorities for Auburn in conversations with City staff and Comprehensive Plan Committee members.

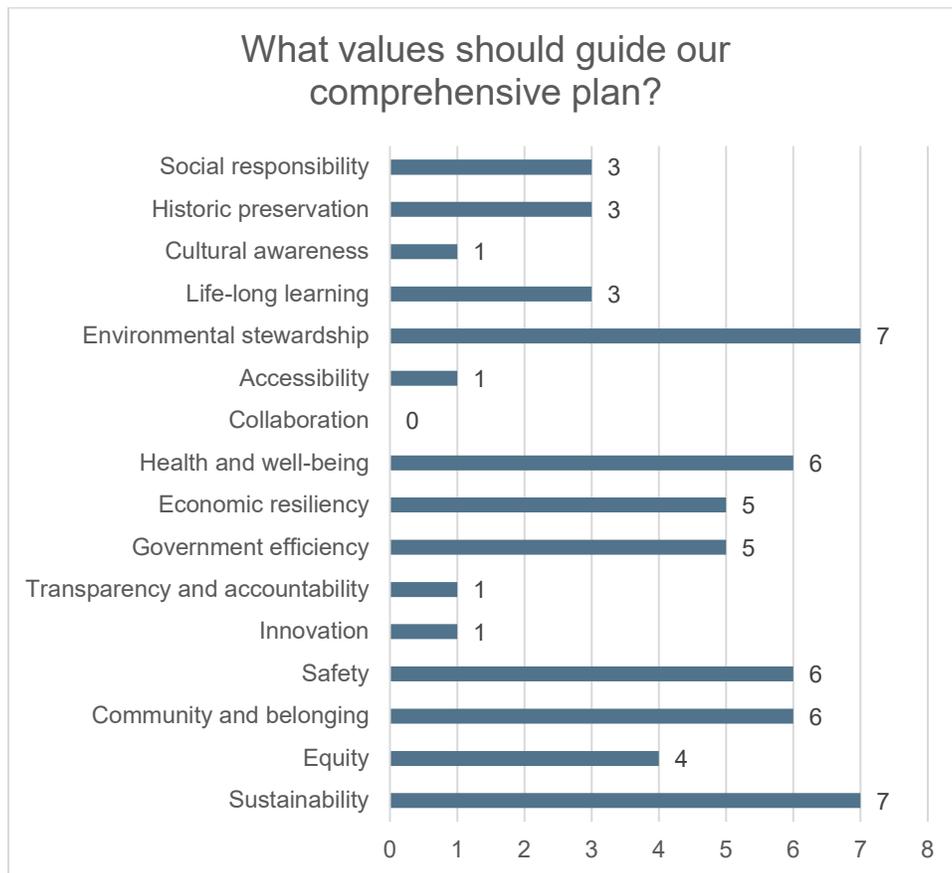
Each activity conducted at open house events was recreated on Social Pinpoint to allow those who were unable to attend and opportunity to provide feedback on the same questions and topics.

City staff also attended several community events, including National Night Out, PAL Center Backpack Drive, and Lewiston Farmers Market. Additional engagement was conducted at the Drop-In Center and at a youth forum, and PAL Center. Dot-voting activities were also displayed at City Hall, New Beginnings, and the Drop-In Center.

Similar activities and questions were used at open house events, community events, on dot-voting activities, and on Social Pinpoint. These activities and responses were aggregated and compiled into four categories: general visioning, the built environment, the natural environment, and people and City services. Information gathered from all community and open house events and Social Pinpoint are summarized below:

General Visioning

At each open house, community event, and online, a set of questions were asked to help inform the creation of the vision statement. Results from all events and online activities were compiled into the summary below.



How would you describe Auburn’s Identity today? (12 responses)

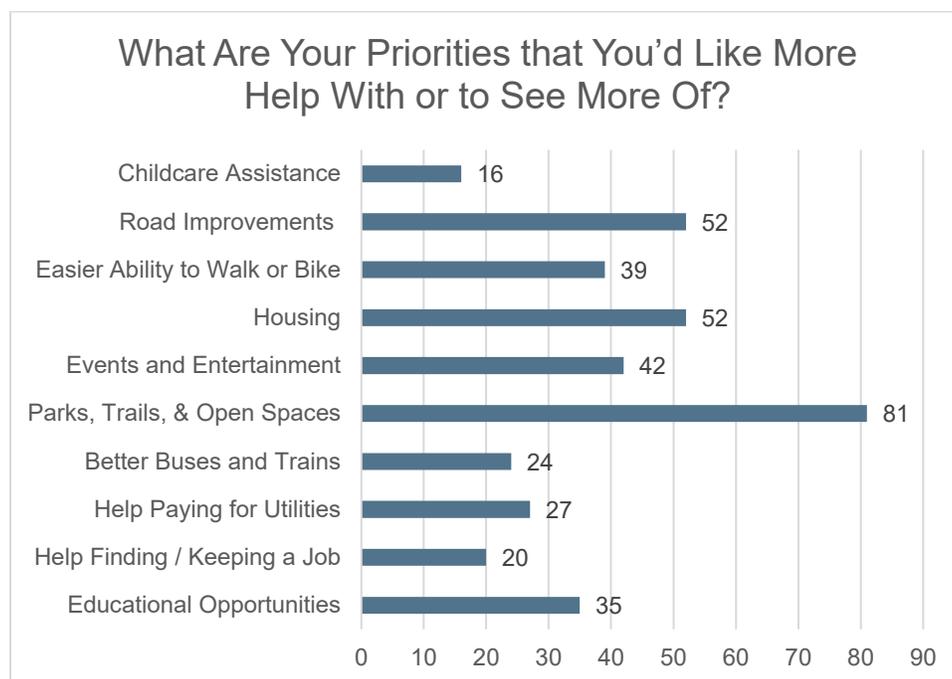
- Residential or neighborhood oriented (four responses)
- Rural or small-town (two responses)

- Retail (three responses)
- Friendly (two responses)
- In transition (three responses)
- Other: diverse, accepting, hardworking, authentic, and opportunistic

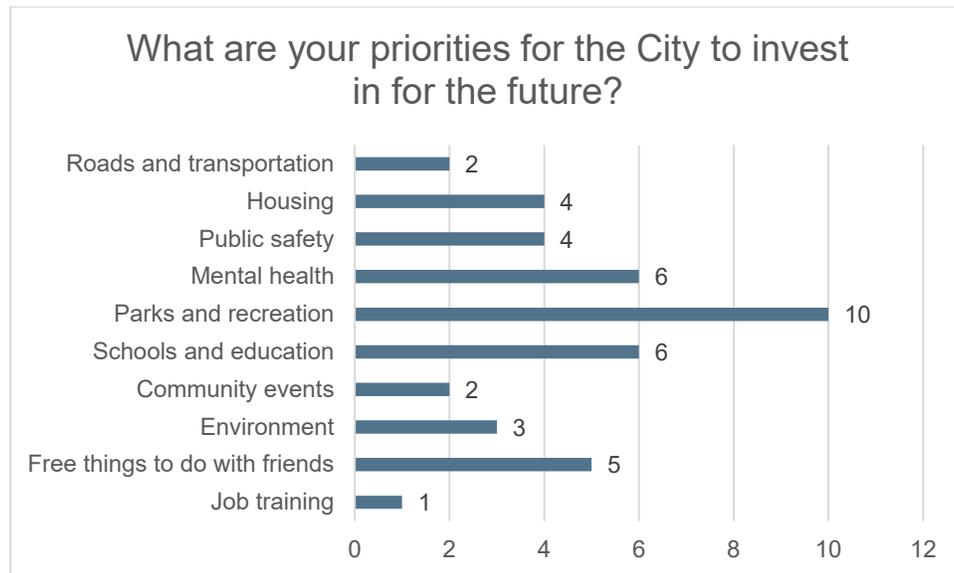
How would you like people to describe Auburn in 10 years? (24 responses)

- Great outdoor access and recreation amenities (six responses)
- New or exciting businesses – business friendly (three responses)
- Affordable or accessible to everyone (two responses)
- A strong downtown (two responses)
- Great schools (two responses)
- A destination (two responses)
- Other: family friendly, peaceful, vibrant, likeable, reduced homelessness, growth

Future priorities (PAL Backpack Drive)



Future priorities (youth forum)



What does the term "affordability" mean to you? (34 responses)

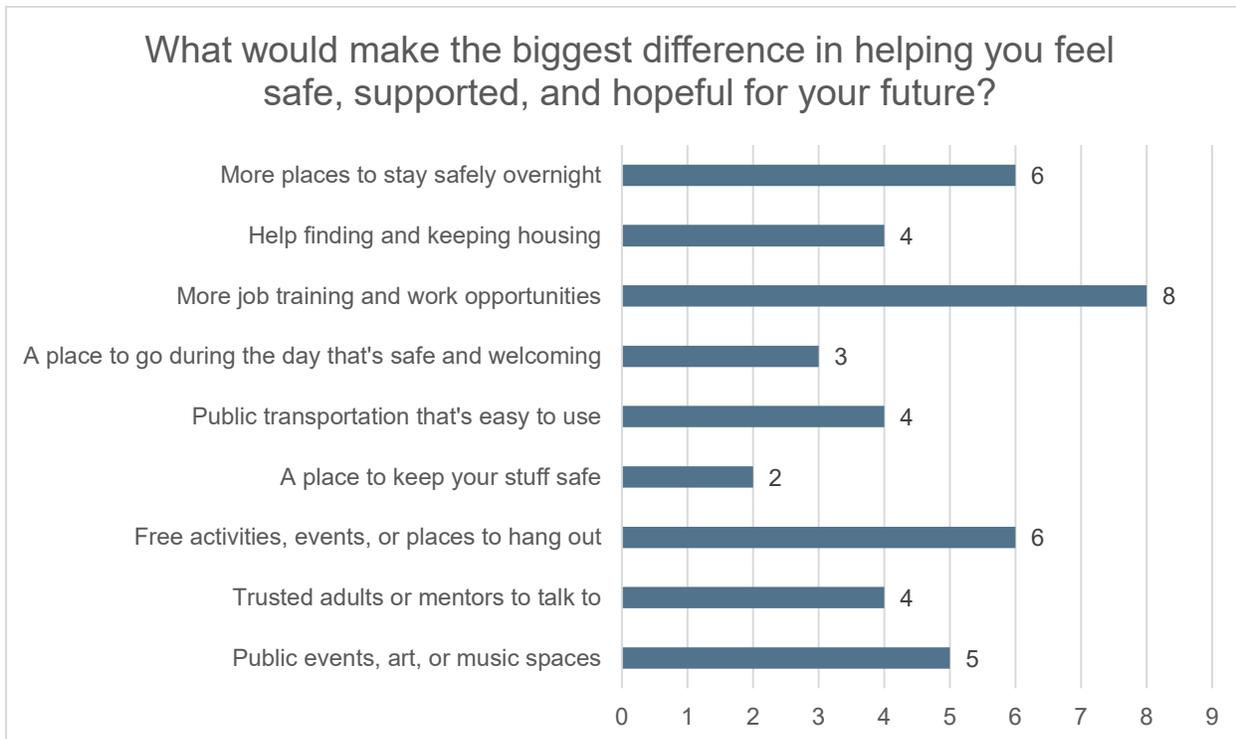
- People are able to afford basic needs like housing, food, taxes, electricity, clothing, and transportation and have extra money left over (eight responses)
- Costs within means of average residents
- Food and housing security
- Better prices for groceries or housing
- Making purchases within ones budget

What are Auburn's strengths? What is missing? (eight responses)

- Strengths
 - Access to stores
 - Access to medical care
 - Location in the State
 - Farmland and watershed protection
 - Transportation
 - Relative affordability
- Missing
 - Activities for people age 18 – 30

- Neighborhood design and form
- Pedestrian-friendly streets
- High taxes
- Strong downtown

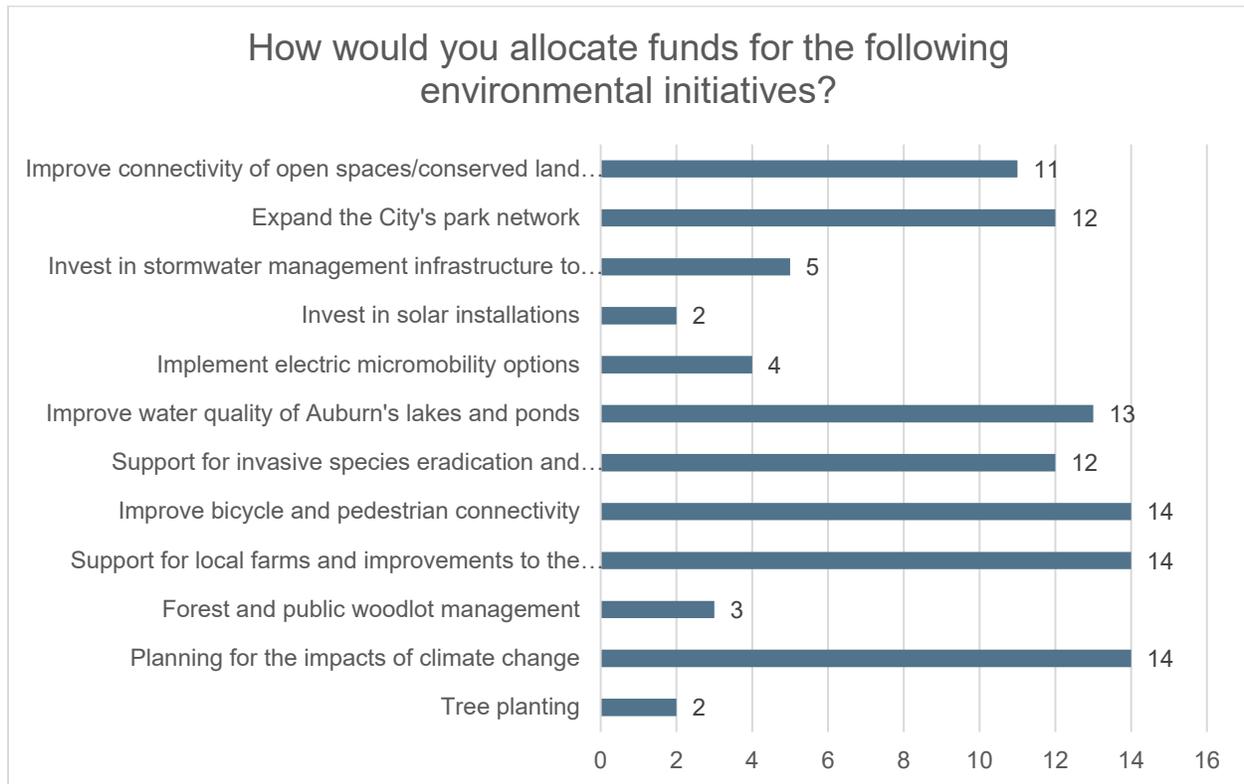
What would make the biggest difference in helping you feel safe, supported, and hopeful for the future? (New Beginnings Dot Board)



Natural Environment

Water and Natural Resources

Investment priorities



What do you value most about Auburn's natural environment? (14 responses)

- Trails and greenbelt (four responses)
- Agriculture and Resource Protection Zone (three responses)
- Trees (two responses)
- Other: Natural beauty, country roads, wildlife, Lake Auburn

What do you think the City to do to protect water and natural resources (21 resources)

- Protect and improve Lake Auburn water quality through limited development, stormwater management, strong agreements with towns in the watershed, and education resources (eight responses)
- Improved education and involvement in environmental initiatives (three responses)
- Improve stormwater management (two responses)

- Other: improve policies, increase recreation access, preserve the agriculture zone with some expanded uses

Agriculture and Forestry

How can we better protect forested areas from development or climate impacts? (23 responses)

- Strong zoning requirements (two responses)
- Direct growth to areas with existing buildings or housing (five responses)
- Conserve forests and open space (five responses)
- Limit new development (two responses)
- Natural resource protection (e.g., wetland and vernal pool protection) (two responses)
- Other: Research PFAs, eliminate invasive species, protect the agriculture zone

How can the City better support local food systems? (nine responses)

- Community infrastructure for processing (two responses)
- Other: Community gardens, incentives for farmers and producers, plant fruit trees, develop a directory of producers and farms, develop an urban food hub

What is the future of the Agriculture and Resource Protection zone? (nine responses)

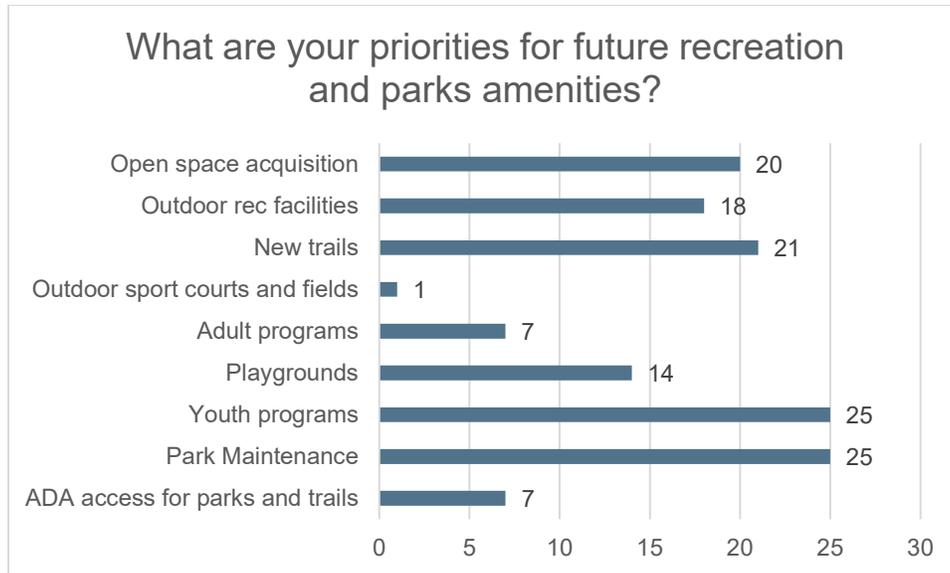
- Diversity uses (three responses)
- Keep it as it is (six responses)

What are barriers to accessing local food in your neighborhood? (three responses)

- Venue for local farmers to sell food or Auburn farmers market

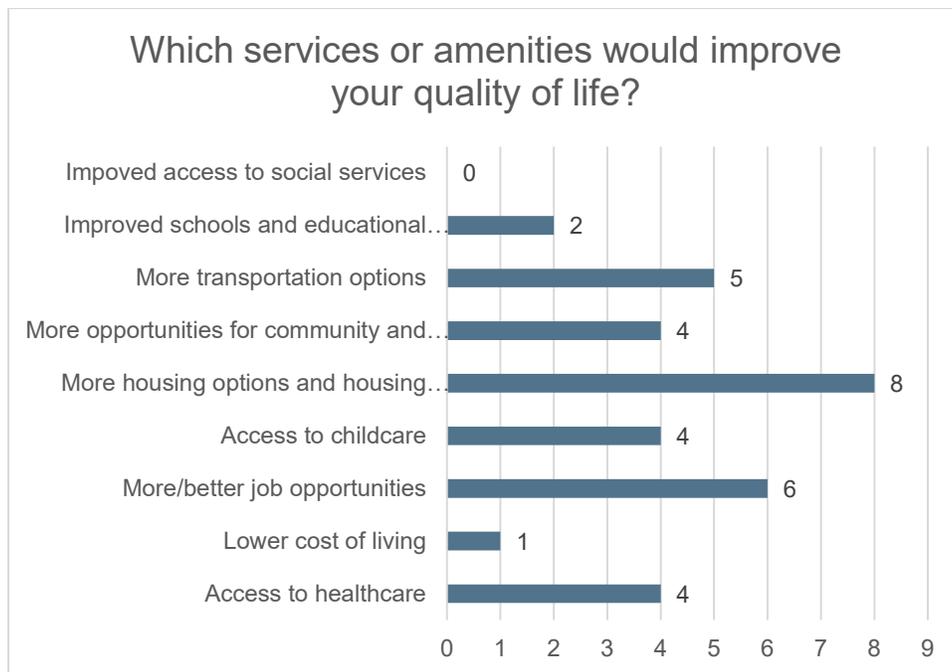
Recreation

Recreation priorities

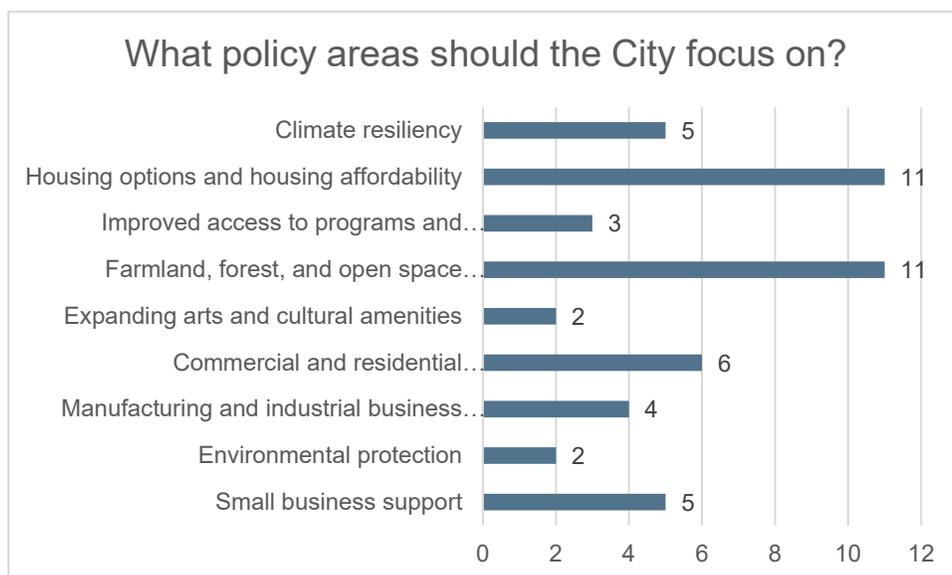


People and City Services

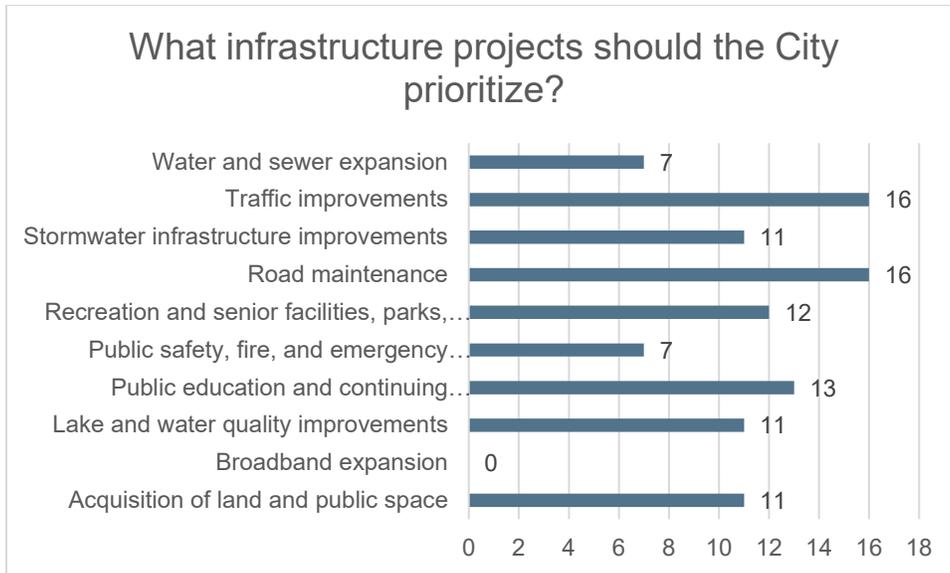
Which services or amenities would improve your quality of life?



What policy areas should the City focus on?



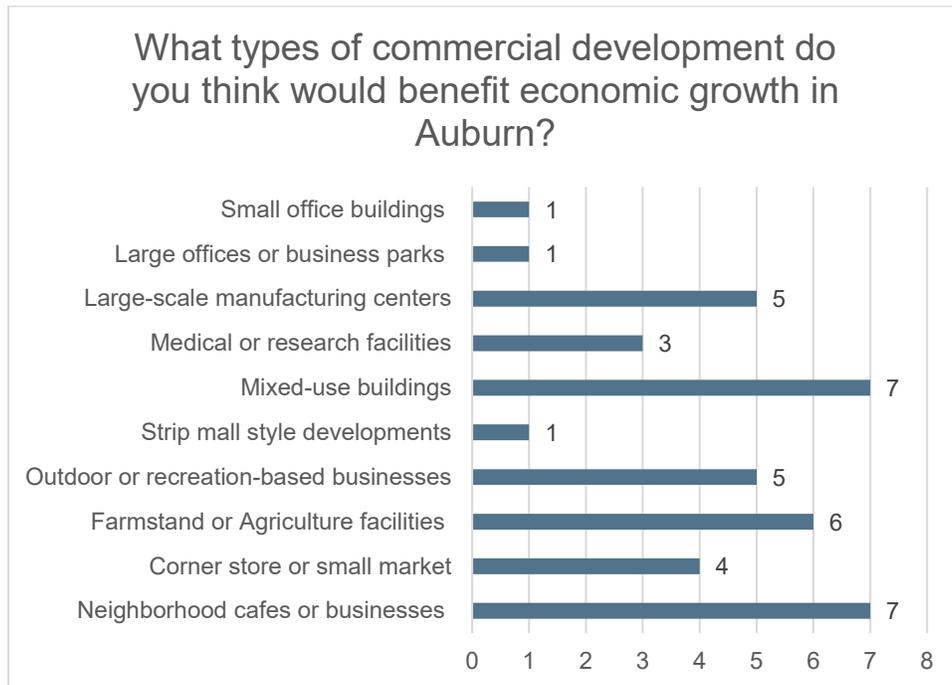
What infrastructure projects should the City prioritize?



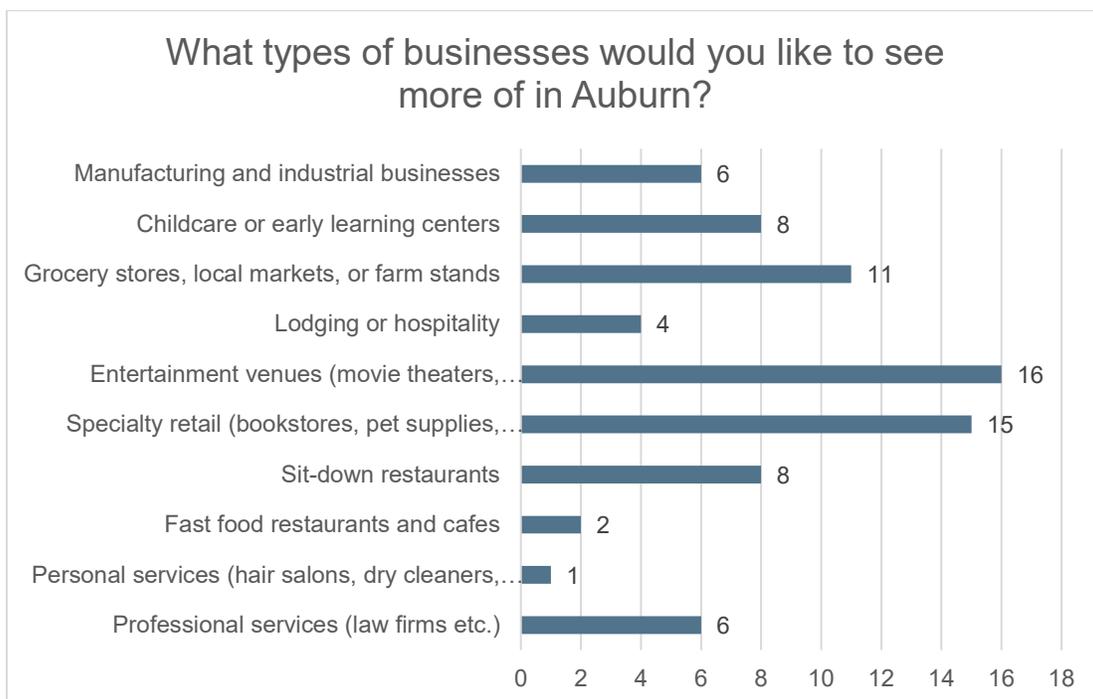
Built Environment

Auburn's Economy:

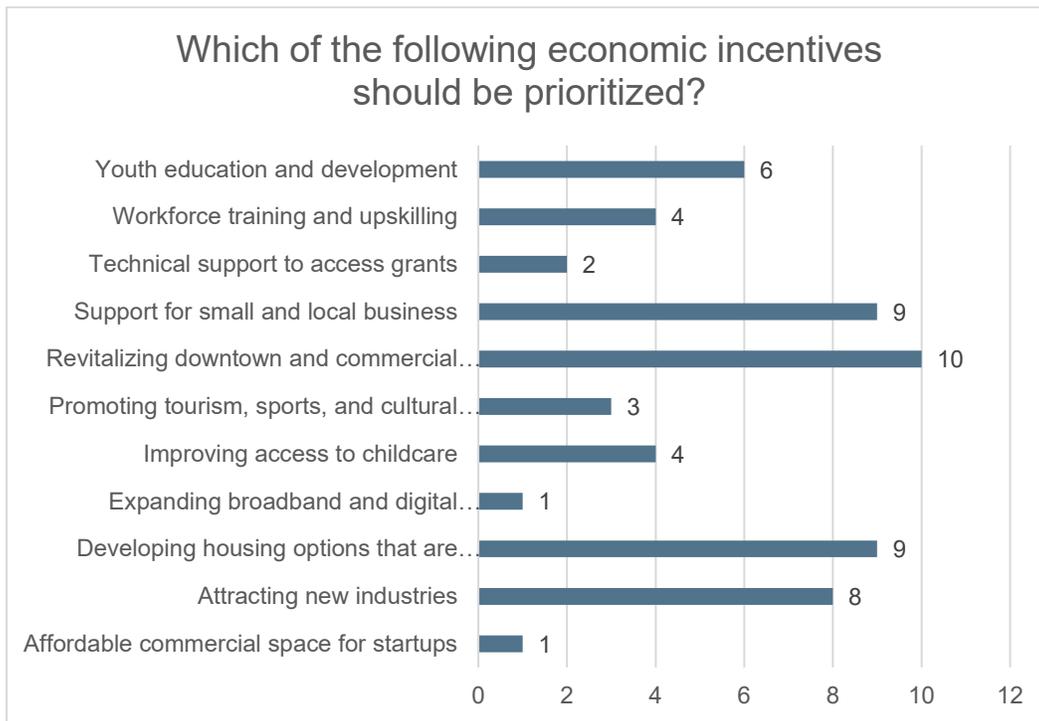
Future commercial development



What types of businesses would you like to see more of in Auburn?

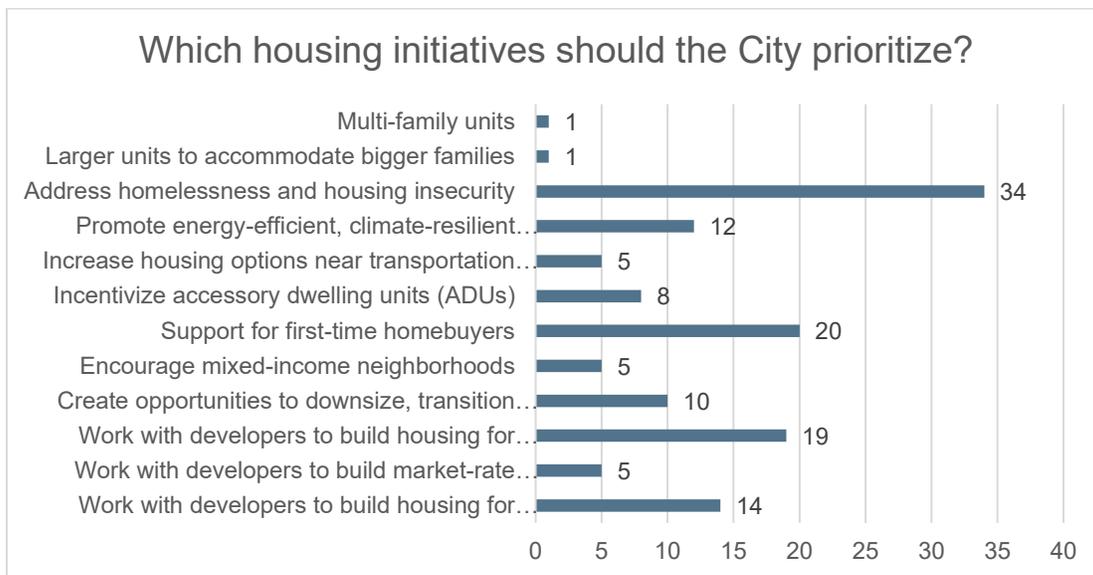


Which economic incentives should be prioritized?

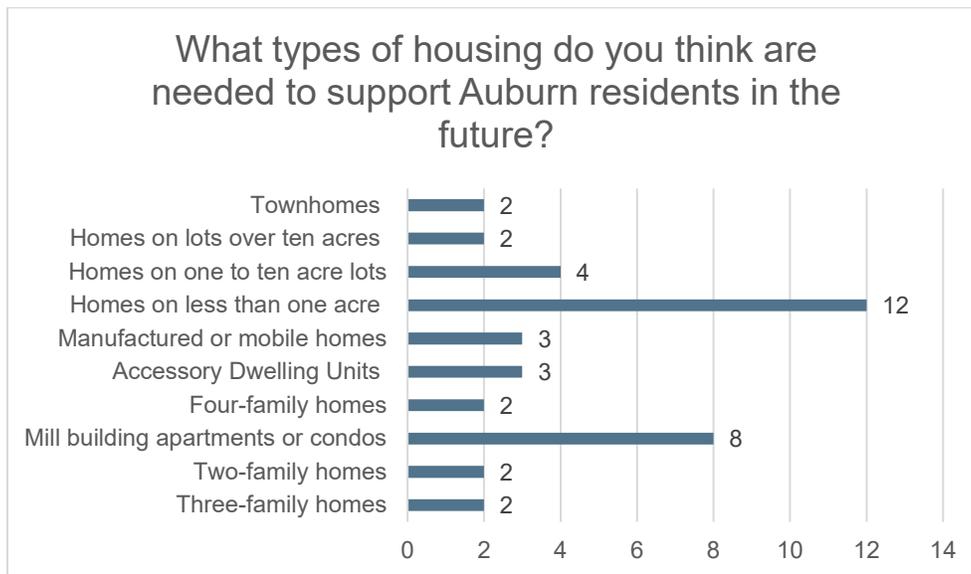


Housing in Auburn

Which housing initiatives should the City prioritize?

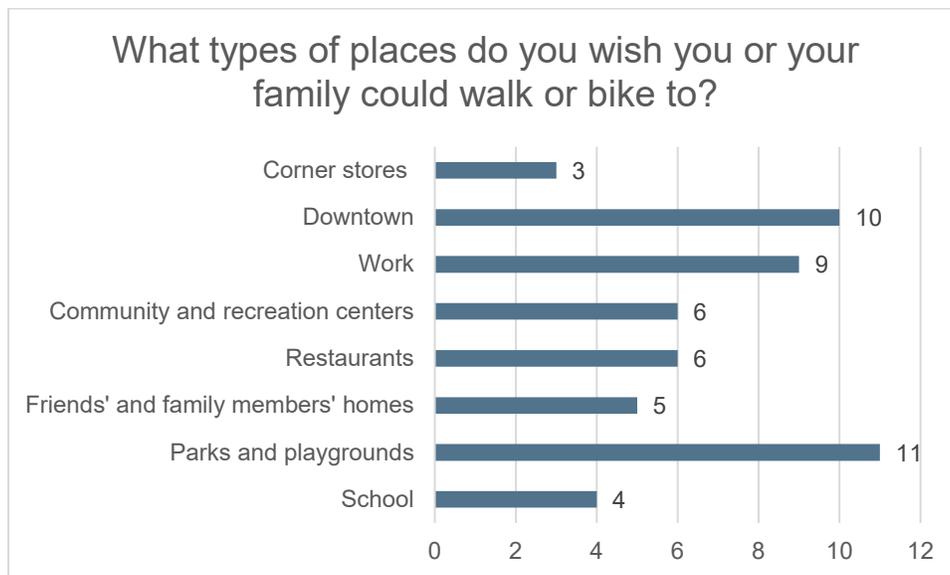


What types of housing do you think are needed to support Auburn residents in the future?



Transportation:

What types of places do you wish you or your family could walk or bike to?



What are your transportation challenges? (four responses)

- Traffic congestion (four responses)

What barriers exist to getting where you need to go?

- Traffic volume
- Road maintenance
- Lack of passenger rail
- Access between New Auburn, downtown, and Lewiston

Auburn's History

What are your favorite historic sites or buildings in Auburn?

- Library
- Barker Mill
- City Hall
- Engine House

Drop-In Center

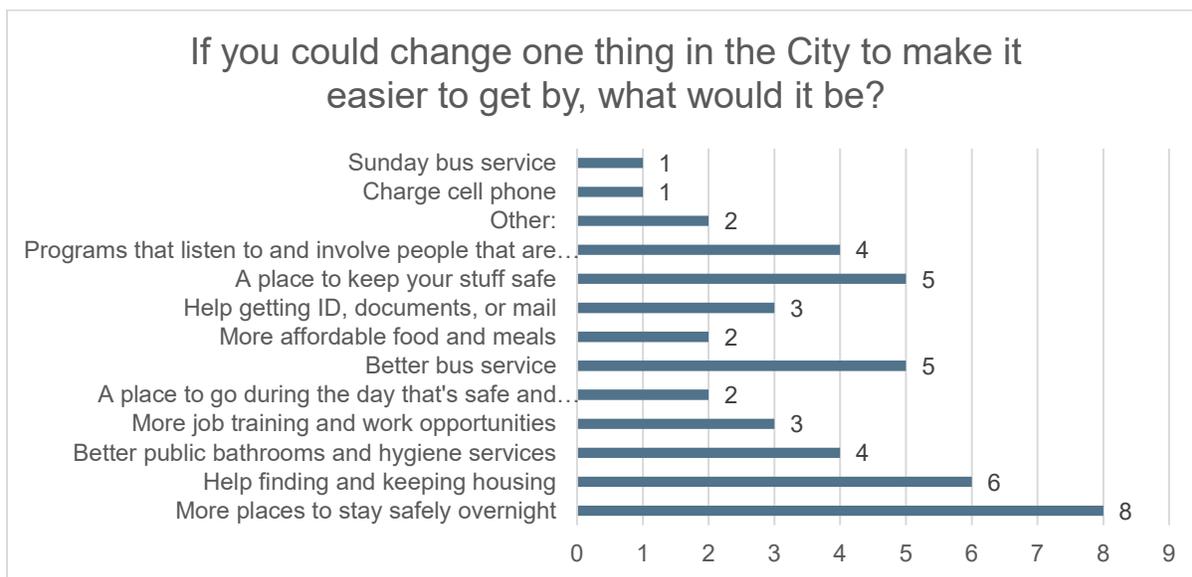
The Drop-In Center serves as a low-barrier physical space for unhoused individuals to rest and replenish. The Center is open two days a week and serves nearly 100 individuals in those two days. The engagement materials for the comprehensive plan were available and displayed for the month of July.

Safety

Concerns about safety and a desire for more resources promoting safety emerged as a common theme. More places to stay safely overnight was the most frequently cited change that individuals at the Center vocalized would make daily life easier. Many individuals also expressed the need for a place to keep belongings safe.

Resources to Promote a Path Forward

Unhoused individuals frequently voiced an interest in resources that might provide a path out of homelessness, such as assistance obtaining documentations or mail and more work opportunities. Underpinning the issue of houselessness, however, is the need for more affordable housing and resources to connect unhoused individuals with housing opportunities.



In addition to the dot-voting activity, City staff conducted listening session with unhoused residents (five residents) as well as six service providers. Key themes from these conversations include the need for improved collaboration, increased education, and expanded services.

1. Collaboration: There is a need for a gap analysis of social services provided by both the City, private, and nonprofit organizations to determine overlaps and gaps.
2. Education for the public about the unhoused community to help improve support and reduce stereotypes or stigmas around the unhoused.

3. Services: Provide services and improve communication and awareness around services to help people access services. Some ideas included a mobile care truck and lockers for people to store their belongings.

Community Focus Groups

The City of Auburn and the Comprehensive Plan Committee held a focus group event on July 11, 2025, to discuss priorities for the next comprehensive plan with community leaders. The meeting was held in person at Edward Little High School and consisted of discussions in table groups divided by discussion topic, as outlined below. There were more than 70 participants in attendance, including community service providers, industry leaders, City elected officials and staff, small business owners, and other community members. Participants were also offered the opportunity to provide feedback on general questions about challenges and priorities for Auburn in conversations with City staff and CPC members. The following is a summary of key themes heard from participants in each group and other feedback collected.

Hospitality and Retail

The hospitality and retail group included a variety of small businesses in Auburn across a variety of sectors, including restaurants, trades, outdoor recreation, retail operations, and more. **Thirteen participants attended this meeting.**

Strengths

- The local restaurant community in Auburn has a keen sense of community, and a real interest in helping each other when challenges arise.
- Many businesses have a consistent, repeat customer base. People support local businesses repeatedly when they choose to visit them.
- The Auburn/Lewiston area is the second largest metro area in Maine providing a large, local customer base.

Challenges

- Many local businesses feel as if Auburn is a commuter area, with residents leaving the City for everything but their housing. They worry that Auburn is not a destination, and that there are not enough local events and amenities to attract tourism.
- Businesses are concerned with the availability and suitability of the workforce. Many restaurants and trades have had trouble retaining qualified employees.
- With many Auburn residents earning lower wages than nearby communities, leisure activities and services have become unaffordable to most people in the area. When residents’ rent, taxes, and transportation costs are too high, they won’t spend money on food, entertainment, and luxury services.

- Businesses raised public safety concerns and noted that employees have felt unsafe in some areas of downtown Auburn. They emphasized the need for drug treatment options and an increased public safety presence.

Goals

- Businesses expressed a desire for Auburn to be a destination City. They suggested festivals, events, and amenities to draw in visitors, with special interest in the idea of a music venue. They expressed a desire for events like the Balloon Festival, where businesses would benefit from increased traffic.
- Increase availability of all types of housing—from low-income, affordable units to luxury developments. Support the development of a range of options to aid in Auburn’s growth as a diverse and sustainable community.
- Local leaders emphasized a need for climate resiliency efforts, as changing weather patterns have already begun to impact sales for a variety of local businesses.

Essential and Social Services

This group included service providers from a variety of organizations, from New Mainers support networks to local senior service providers. Fifteen community members participated in the discussion.

Strengths

- The Auburn/Lewiston area has a large community of local organizations that serve a variety of populations.
- Individuals in Auburn have a strong desire to improve their community, opening the door to increased support and funding from the City.

Challenges

- There is a growing unhoused population in Auburn, with a variety of contributing factors. The largest areas of service needed include addiction services, mental health resources, employment opportunities, and low-income housing opportunities.
- Auburn has several organizations that provide similar services, risking duplicating efforts. There is a need to work together on initiatives to best serve the community. The group discussed asset mapping in Auburn to help identify duplicate or missing services.

Goals

- Participants supported a new position for City-level navigator, who would be responsible for helping residents locate and obtain support that they qualify for.

- The development of diverse housing options is needed—including low-income, multigenerational, mixed-use, high-end, rental, and other housing options.
- Participants supported the community’s continuing investment in current issues, with special attention paid to shaping youth development and sustainable economic growth to support necessary services.

Education and Youth Services

This group was comprised of representatives from local schools, community colleges, educational nonprofits, and more. Seven participants contributed to this group.

Strengths

- The existing collaboration between educational and youth services is a strength, with a variety of organizations represented.
- Existing support services, like the Purple Bus from Central Maine Community College, were identified as strong drivers of success in the community.

Challenges

- Many teens lack structured opportunities and transportation access, leading to worse career outcomes.
- Post-secondary education and child care are increasingly unaffordable to many Auburn residents.
- Recreational activities for young people are limited in the area.

Goals

- Create a collaborative effort with community organizations to create more recreational activities for young people in the community, with potential for a teen center, collaborative efforts with Parks and Recreation, and the addition of new transportation options, all gaining support from the group.
- Explore creating a shelter for unhoused youth in the community, potentially to be shared with Lewiston.
- Identify and develop opportunities for education for adults in Auburn, both trade-related and academic.

Environment and Sustainability

Several groups in Auburn representing environmental efforts were present, along with City staff and interested individuals. The group had nine members, with written comments submitted by community members who were unable to attend the discussion.

Strengths

- The existing natural resources present in Auburn were discussed as strengths, with Lake Auburn and its associated watershed highlighted.
- Auburn’s existing network of parks and trails provides a strong environment for outdoor recreation.
- A strong community of local organizations works in Auburn to help the community work toward long-term protection and engagement with the natural environment.

Challenges

- There is an increasing threat of climate change and associated damage to local natural resources, along with threats from invasive and displaced species.
- As Auburn grows, urban noise generation and pollution will grow with it, harming surrounding natural areas. Urban sprawl will increasingly threaten agricultural areas.
- Increased extreme weather events will disproportionately affect lower-income and vulnerable communities in Auburn.

Goals

- The group strongly supported enhancing the local tree canopy, adaptive reuse of wastewater, flood assessments, water quality management, and other climate resilience measures.
- Increased efforts to educate the Auburn community on climate change, extreme weather preparedness, invasive species management, and outdoor recreation resources were also supported.
- The group supported an inventory of parks and natural resources, and other open spaces, with a dedicated City staff to coordinate the resources (e.g., Urban Forester, Sustainability Coordinator).

Agriculture and Food Systems

In this focus group, local farmers, nonprofit representatives, and City staff discussed issues relating to local agriculture efforts, food access, and climate. Nine community members were present.

Strengths

- There is a strong community of local farmers, environmental groups, and community organizations that are actively working to better serve Auburn’s communities.

- Auburn has a significant percentage of its land that is zoned for agricultural purposes, creating opportunities for local businesses.
- Small-scale farming tax breaks and grants exist and are extremely important to local farmers.

Challenges

- Climate change is a concern, as it may significantly affect food production and farm infrastructure in the coming years.
- The overall profitability of local farming is a challenge, with small-scale agriculture unable to charge fair prices without risking becoming unaffordable to local communities.
- Auburn residents may not have access to local foods where they shop, especially those who have less disposable income.

Goals

- Community members support allowing a diverse set of uses for farmland to allow farmers to continue to produce while bringing in additional revenue through commercial ventures (agrotourism, small-scale nonagricultural business on farmland).
- Building infrastructure that is climate-resilient and diverse to combat known climate risks.
- Investigate re-zoning agriculture zones to allow for different uses on some land, including small businesses and limited development.

Real Estate, Housing, and Development

A group of developers, construction company executives, local service providers, and City staff participated in this group. Fourteen group members were present.

Strengths

- The group was able to find common ground for a variety of possible development initiatives and collaborated to identify needs and potential solutions.
- The City's sewer and water infrastructure is well-maintained and supports current uses.
- New Mainers can fill employment gaps within the City, with the City employing roughly 150 New Mainers on various projects with staffing shortages.

Challenges

- Housing is a paramount concern, with a significant need for housing at every level (low-income to luxury).

- Staffing construction and infrastructure projects is also a concern, with many potential employees unable to afford to live in Auburn.
- City staff involved in the discussion expressed a concern that the best areas for development have been utilized, leaving areas with low utility-connectivity and natural resources as the only realistic development sites.

Goals

- Increase development, as it would be beneficial to the City’s economy. Explore mixed-use developments and infill developments as potential ways to maximize available resources. Consider new ways to incentivize land development using tax incentive programs.
- Group members expressed a desire for more high-income housing to attract residents with disposable income, who would boost Auburn’s economy.
- The group also supported developing industrial areas, particularly around the airport, to provide high-quality employment opportunities for locals.

Transportation and Mobility

The transportation and mobility focus group was made up of local transit advocates, community organizations, and City staff.

Strengths

- Auburn’s central location within Maine is an asset, with potential transit to Lewiston, Portland, and other communities as a likely and welcome proposal.
- Existing access to natural areas and trails for transportation and recreation is strong.
- Ongoing traffic calming initiatives are steering the City in the right direction for public safety and walkability.

Challenges

- The group was concerned about safety, especially surrounding bikeability. Several incomplete bike lanes were mentioned, along with absent sidewalks.
- The lack of public transit options is a barrier to employment, education, and livability in Auburn.
- Planned traffic calming measures have been slow to implement, with many projects stalled on State-owned routes.
- The areas surrounding downtown Auburn are visually unwelcoming, especially along Washington Street.

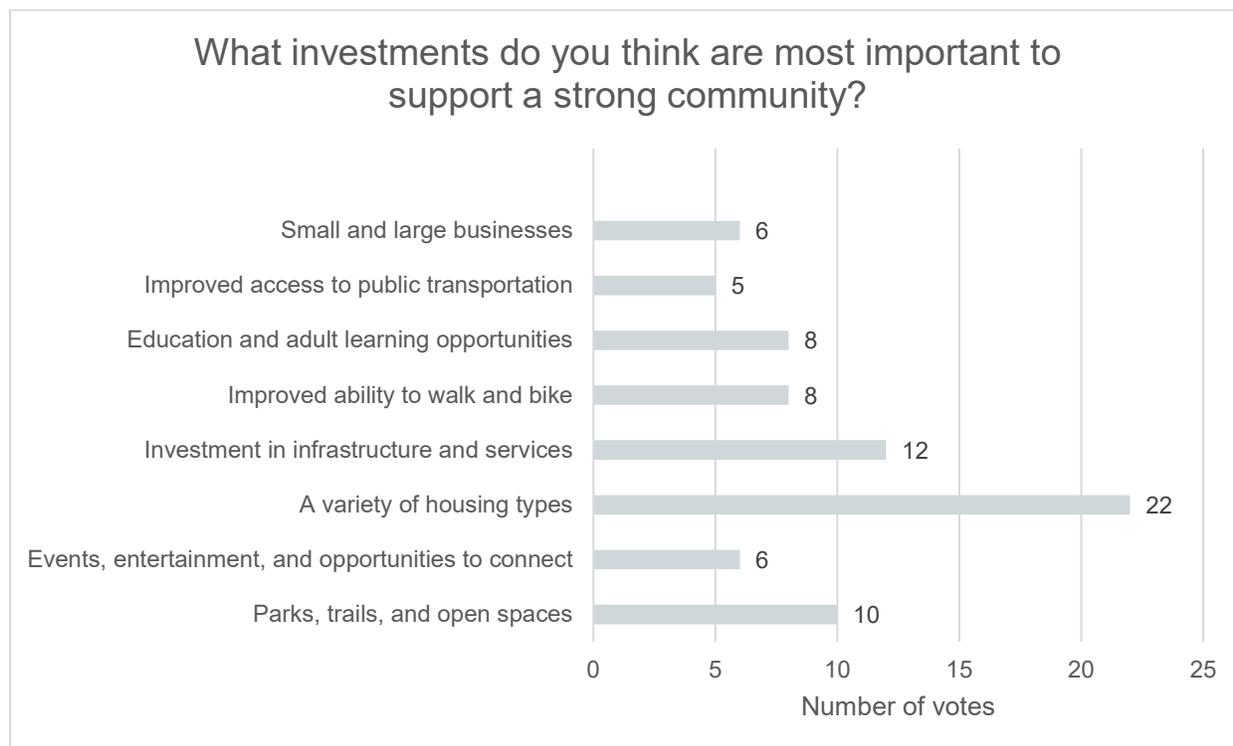
Goals

- Increase local and regional bus services, especially to the Portland metropolitan area.
- Implement climate protection measures, including increasing the electric vehicle infrastructure in the area.
- Focus on walkability and bikeability in land use planning, along with ensuring roads are well-maintained and visually appealing.

Future Investment Priorities Dot-Voting Activity

Separately from their table-group discussions, attendees were given the opportunity to express preferences for future investments through an interactive voting activity. Several areas for potential investment were provided, with residents placing dot stickers beneath the topics they most agreed to funding.

Housing was the most popular area for investment (22), with infrastructure and services next (12), followed by parks, trails, and open spaces (10), improved ability to walk and bike (8), education and adult learning opportunities (8), events, entertainment, and opportunities to connect (6), small and large businesses (6), and improved access to public transportation (5).





City of Auburn

Comprehensive Plan Committee Visioning Workshop

The purpose of the visioning workshop is to review community engagement themes, define community values, establish priorities for the future, and develop a vision for the future. The Comprehensive Plan Committee will identify values, priorities, and initial vision concepts at the August 26 meeting. Following the meeting, BerryDunn will compile ideas generated through this work session into draft vision statements for the Committee to review.

What is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement is a required component of a comprehensive plan and is informed by community engagement outcomes. The Vision Statement sets the overall direction for priorities, goals, policies, and actions in the plan. A vision statement can also define the structure of the plan.

- Focuses on shared community values and illustrates a sense of identity.
- Aspirational and motivates a community toward a desired outcome
- Depicts the desired future conditions and qualities of a community, including physical, environmental, and social factors.

A vision statement should...

- Project a period of 10 – 20 years into the future
- Use positive, present tense language
- Have qualities that speak to Auburn's uniqueness or desired identity
- Expresses inclusiveness of the community's population
- Be clear and concise
- Be general enough to capture the community's strategic direction rather than a specific achievement that can be met and discarded (this is what goals, policies, and actions are for!)

Activity #1: Identifying Community Values and Priorities

Values are deeply held beliefs of what is fundamentally important to the community. Values typically do not change over time.

1. On your own, brainstorm and identify community values that you can draw from community engagement results. Write one value per sticky note. Place your sticky notes on the chart board at your table. (3-4 minutes)

2. In a small group, discuss the values that each member came up with. On the board, move sticky notes around to group similar items. Label these grouped items on the chart paper. (10 minutes)

Priorities refer to the condition of being regarded as more important or having higher precedence (i.e., something is more important than something else.) Priorities may change over time, but core values typically do not.

For example, a community may value a healthy environment. A priority might be improving water quality or conserving open space. The community will likely value a healthy environment over time, but the means to achieve a healthy environment may change over time based on new conditions.

1. On your own, brainstorm and identify community priorities identified during community engagement. Write one priority per sticky note. Place your sticky notes on the chart board at your table. (3-4 minutes)
2. In a small group, discuss the priorities that each member came up with. On the board, move sticky notes around to group similar items. Label these grouped items on the chart paper. (10 minutes)

Large Group Discussion

1. Each group will report on their identified values and priorities.
2. BerryDunn will facilitate an exercise to identify common themes between groups. (15 minutes)

Activity #2: Developing a Vision

On your own...

1. Based on the priorities identified, write down answers to the following questions on a sticky note. Write one topic or theme per sticky note (10 minutes):
 - a. What should define Auburn in 10 years?
 - i. Examples may include items like a strong economy, access to a variety of housing types, recreation and sports destination, transportation access, preserved rural areas, strong schools, etc.
 - b. What should Auburn look like in 10 years?
 - i. What kinds of homes, neighborhoods, businesses, and buildings exist?
 - ii. Are there parks, open space, or rural areas?
 - c. What will it feel like to be a part of the Auburn community?
 - i. How do people interact with each other?
 - ii. How or where do people go to connect with their community?

In your group...

2. In your small group, discuss your answers to each question. Group common themes together on the chart paper. (15 minutes)

Large Group Discussion

1. Each group will report on key themes identified on their chart paper.
2. BerryDunn will facilitate an exercise to identify common themes between groups. (20 minutes)

Logistics:

Materials:

1. Large sticky notes
2. Chart paper
3. Note pads
4. Pens/markers
5. Hard copies of the engagement summary

At each table:

1. 3-5 committee members
2. 1 City staff member
3. 1 BerryDunn team member

Total time: 1.5 hours

- 20 minutes for individual brainstorming
- 35 minutes for small group discussion
- 35 minutes for large group discussion



City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan Update

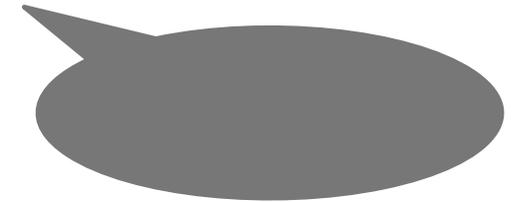
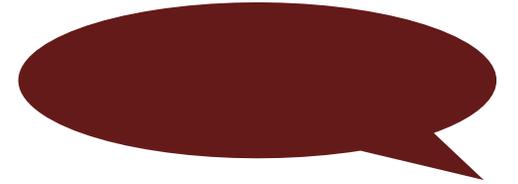
Vision Statement Overview and
Guiding Questions

August 18, 2025

What is a Vision Statement?

A Vision Statement...

- Focuses on shared community values
- Illustrates a sense of identity
- Is aspirational and motivates the community to a desired outcome
- Depicts the desired future conditions and qualities of a community, including physical, environmental, and social attributes
- Sets the overall direction and structure for goals, policies, and actions of the plan
- Tells a story and paints a picture of an ideal future



What is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement should...

- Project a period of 10 to 20 years into the future
- Use positive, present tense language
- Have qualities that speak to the community's uniqueness
- Express inclusiveness of the community's population
- Be clear and concise
- Be general enough to capture the community's strategic direction rather than a specific achievement that can be met and then discarded

What is a Vision Statement?

Plano, TX

VISION STATEMENT

"Plano is a global leader, excelling in exceptional education, abounding with world class businesses and vibrant neighborhoods."

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following set of Guiding Principles to the Comprehensive Plan establish overarching themes that apply to all policies and actions and express values for **Plano Today**, **Plano 2050**, and **Plano Together**. These principles are not intended to stand alone but to be used in concert with one another and carry across the Plan as a whole. Each principle must be judged through a lens that incorporates all of the other principles to be fully and accurately understood.



Guiding Principle #1 PLANO TODAY

- 1.1 The Plan enhances the quality of life in the near term, continually striving to meet the needs and priorities of current residents, businesses, and institutions of Plano.
- 1.2 The Plan promotes the safety, viability, and vibrancy of Plano's existing neighborhoods, managing growth and shaping change that complements the city's suburban character and rich history.
- 1.3 The Plan promotes the educational, recreational, and cultural centers of the community, providing an environment for world-class facilities, businesses, entertainment, and institutions that support a vital economy.
- 1.4 The Plan respects the suburban character of Plano and seeks to preserve and enhance the built environment.
- 1.5 The Plan acknowledges that Plano is mostly developed and does not anticipate



Guiding Principle #2 PLANO 2050

- 2.1 The Plan enhances the quality of life in the long term, preparing for future generations of residents, businesses, and institutions of Plano who may not yet have a voice but are impacted by the decisions of today.
- 2.2 The Plan successfully manages Plano's transition to a mature city, seeking innovative approaches and best practices to accommodate emerging trends, technologies, and opportunities that improve the quality of life and allow the city to remain attractive and vibrant into the future.
- 2.3 The Plan builds on Plano's strong history of thoughtful planning, guiding future development and redevelopment where it is



Guiding Principle #3 PLANO TOGETHER

- 3.1 The Plan serves people of all backgrounds, striving to meet the needs of an inclusive and vibrant community that calls Plano "home."
- 3.2 The Plan promotes a community that is safe, engaged, and rich in educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities that are highly desirable to residents and visitors alike.
- 3.3 The Plan embraces Plano's position as a leader in the region, demonstrating the city's standard of excellence and supporting our neighbors through linkages including health, economy, culture, transportation, and sense of community.
- 3.4 The Plan manages growth and redevelopment in a gradual manner, ensuring changes are beneficial to

Ellsworth, ME

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Connected community

Sustainable growth

Economic vitality



Cultivate a community rich in the arts and promote the cultural history of Downeast Maine



Protect and preserve the natural environment and rural lifestyle and encourage sustainable, resilient growth.



Prioritize affordable and attainable housing to meet the needs of a diverse population.



Support a vibrant and safe downtown that renews the connection to the waterfront and enhances the City as a regional destination.



Address infrastructure and facility needs by proactively developing safe, reliable, and sustainable solutions.



Support educational assets and increase access to learning opportunities for community members at all stages of life.



Support health and wellness and foster community connections through all phases of life.



Create and maintain a balance between a resilient year-round economy and robust tourism economy.



Expand active and vehicular transportation options and develop local traffic management solutions.

What is a Vision Statement?

Bangor, ME

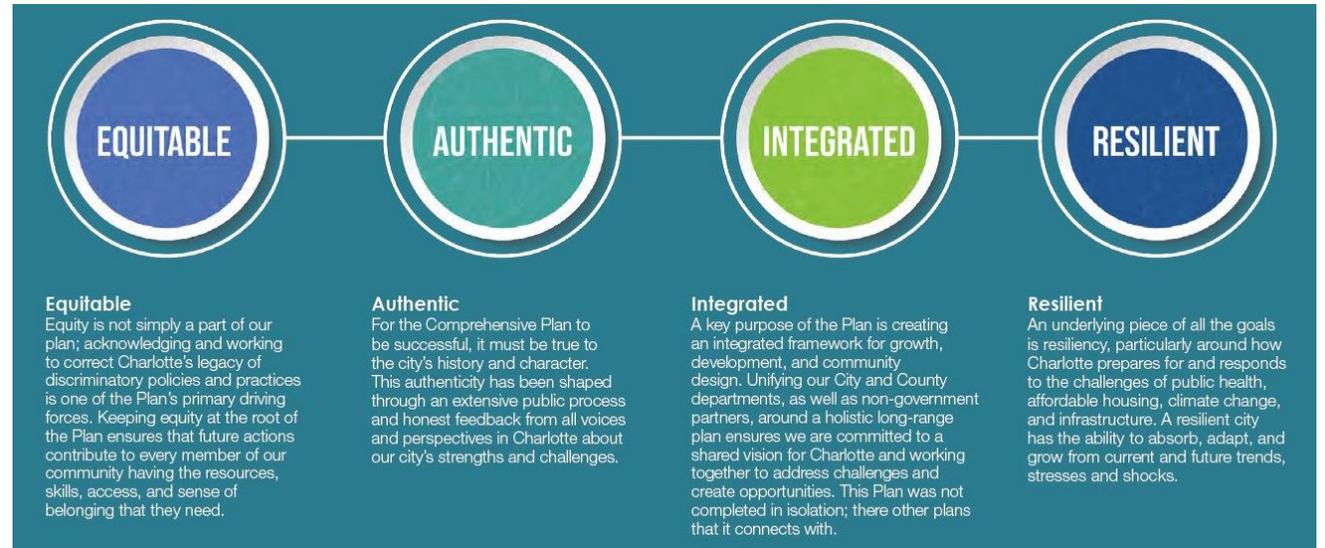
VISION STATEMENT

Bangor is a compact and vibrant city that balances the economic and cultural amenities of a large city with the friendliness of a small town. Bangor will continue to grow its population and workforce while strengthening social connectedness through its neighborhoods, downtown, institutions, and other assets. Bangor will enhance its position as a destination for arts and entertainment, a hub for transportation and industry, a center for education, healthcare, and innovation, and a gateway to Northern and Eastern Maine.

Bangor will be open to new methods for addressing the needs of residents and progressive in its approach to guiding growth and development while preserving what makes Bangor unique. Bangor will continue to be adaptive to modern technologies and new markets to enhance the commercial and industrial fabric of our city and support the needs of working families. The City will incorporate sustainable, climate-friendly policies into its approach to enhancing the City's growth, development, and services. The City will continue a collaborative approach that engages residents and stakeholders in decision-making to ensure that Bangor is an equitable place for all.

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/comp_plans/Bangor_2022.pdf

Charlotte, NC

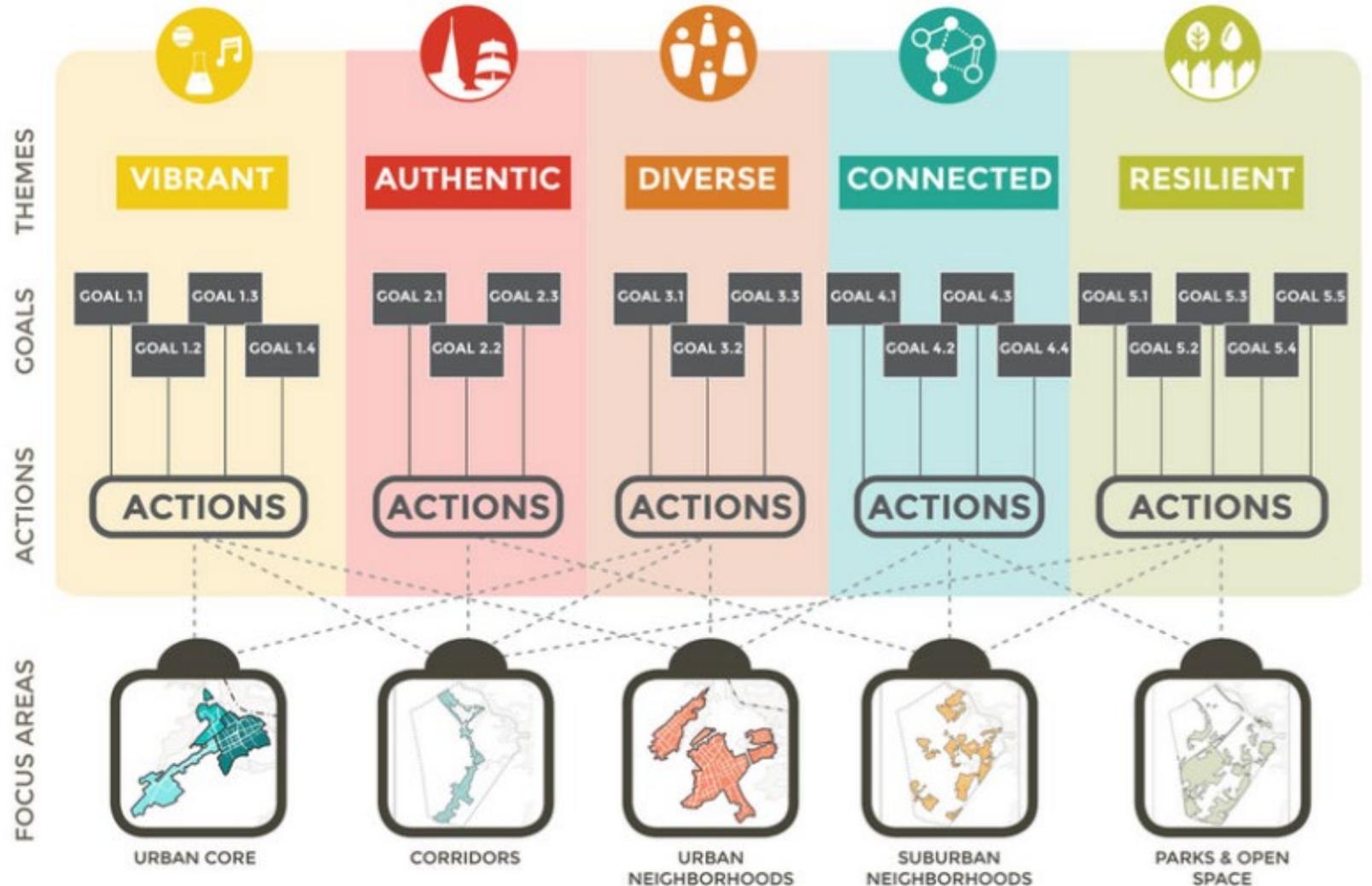


<https://charlottefut.wpenginepowered.com/01-community-based-vision-0/12-community-values-vision-and-goals-1/>

What is a Vision Statement?

Portsmouth, NH

Portsmouth developed a vision for each theme. The graphic (right) shows how each part of the plan builds on these themes and works together.



Values

- *Values* are deeply held beliefs of what is fundamentally important to the community.
- Community members know what their values are – they may not know how to articulate a vision for the community.
- *What are the core values of the community?*

Priorities

- *Priorities* refer to the condition of being regarded as more important or having higher precedence (i.e., something is more important than something else.)
- Priorities may change over time; core values typically do not.
- *What are the community's priorities?*

Developing a Vision:

- What characteristics best describe Auburn in 10 years?
 - E.g., Vibrant, Activity Center, Welcoming
- What should Auburn look like in 10 years?
 - E.g., downtown, residential neighborhoods, agricultural areas
- What will it feel like to live in Auburn and be a part of the community?
 - E.g., strong volunteerism, safe to get around, access to jobs, access to a variety of housing types