



Watertown

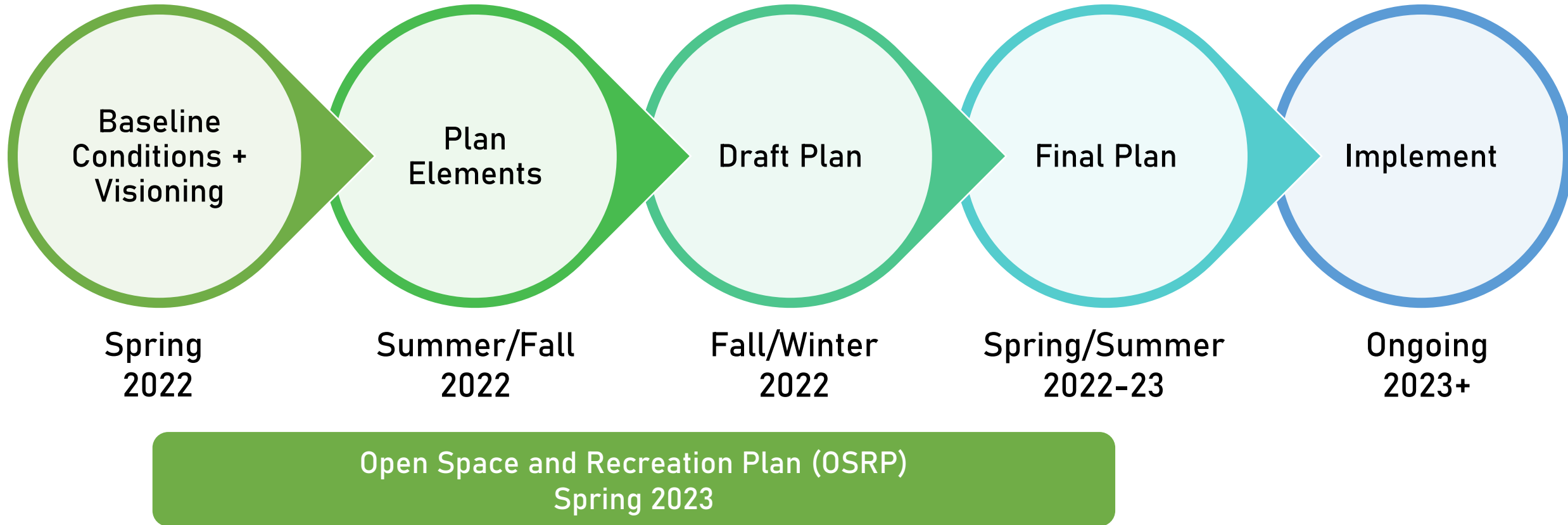
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

**JOINT MEETING OF WATERTOWN
CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING BOARD**

September 21, 2023



Comprehensive Plan Process



74

Participants
In-person + online



Community Workshops – Sept. 20 & 29, 2022



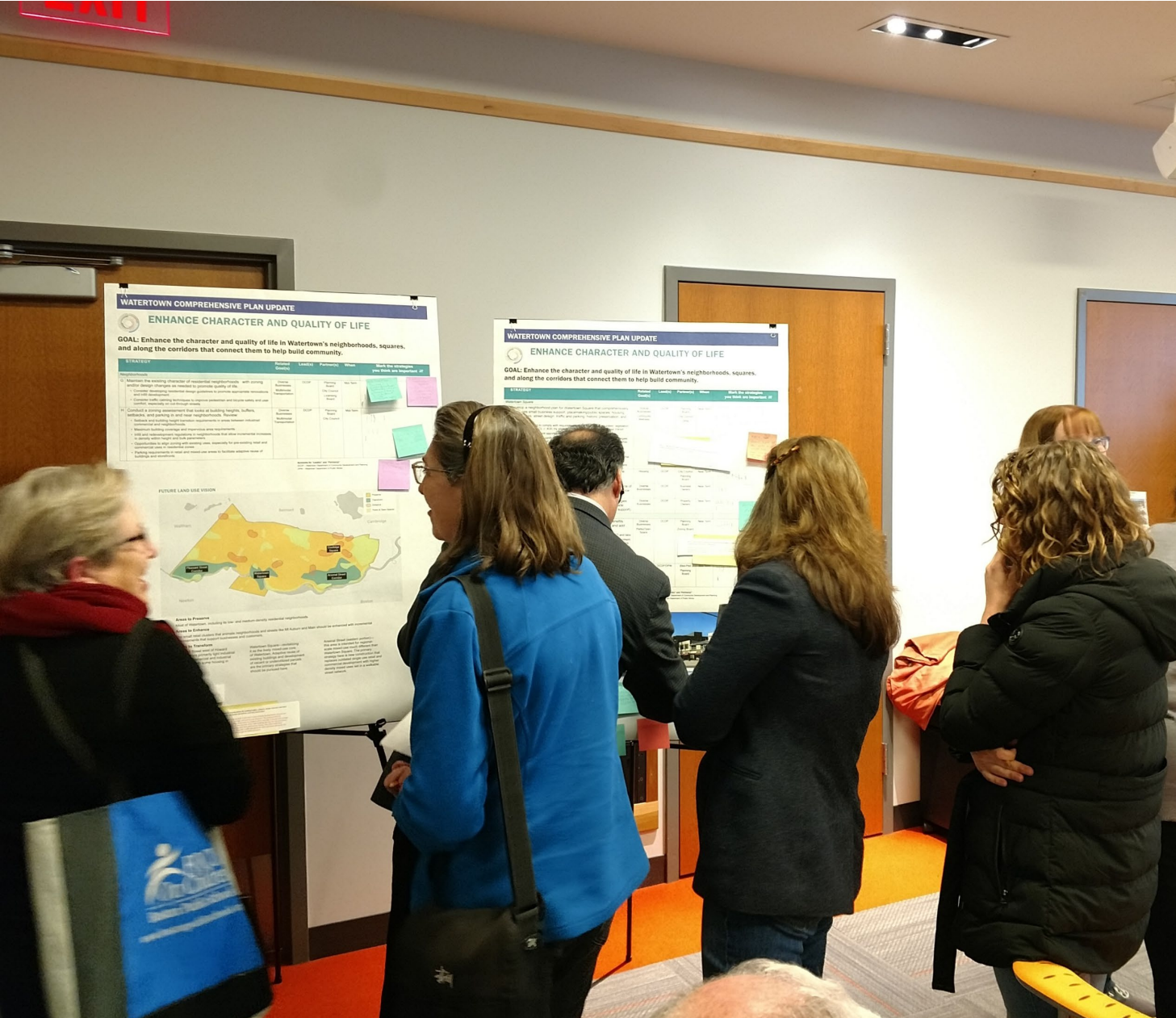
100+

Participants
In-person + online



105+

Participants
In-person + online



watertown-ma.gov/comp-plan

Since mid-March 2022:



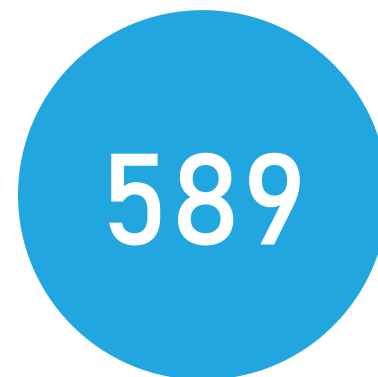
Website
Visits



Document
Downloads



Unique
Visitors











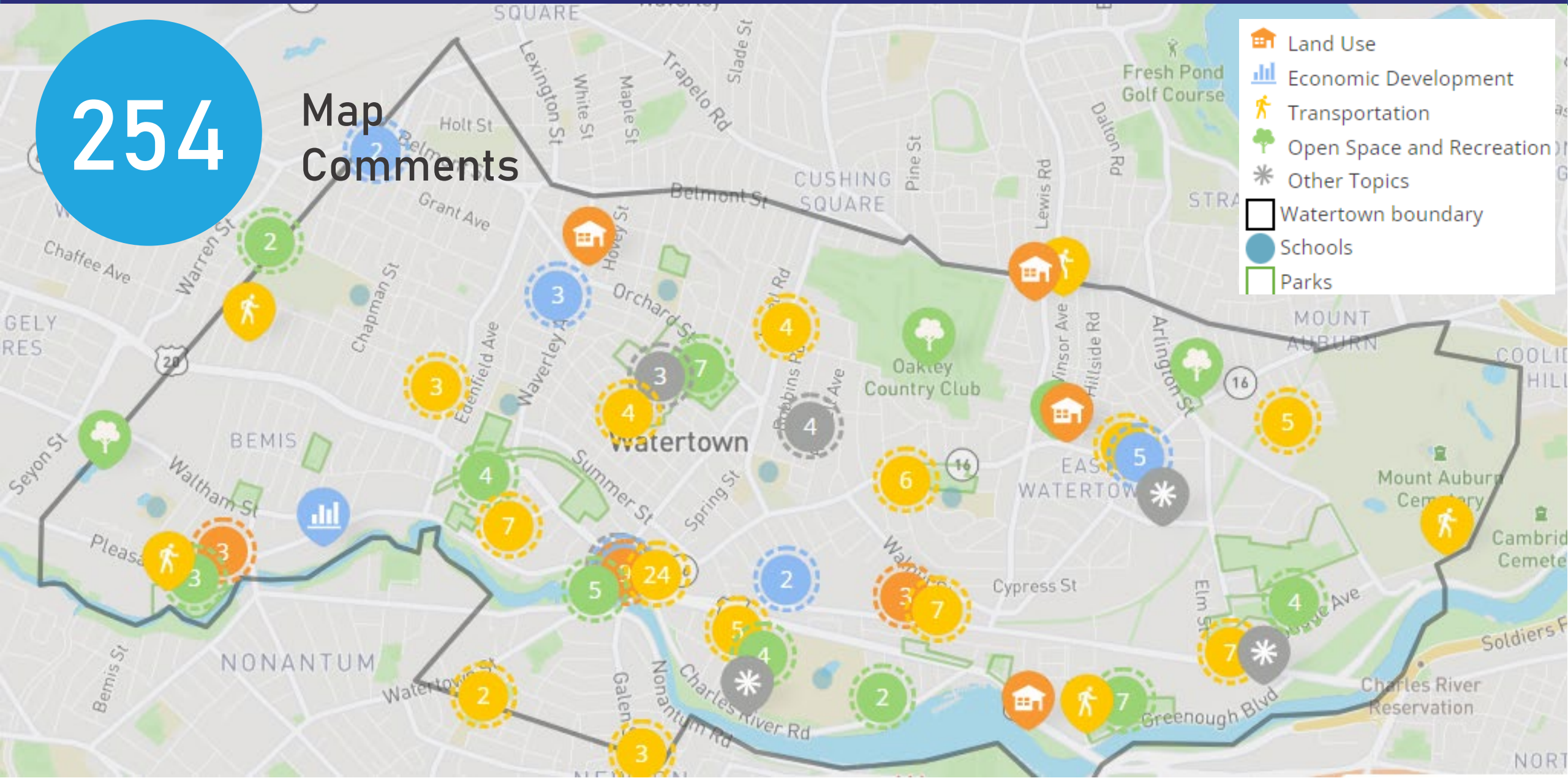
Unique
Stakeholders

Online Engagement – Interactive Map

254

Map
Comments

-  Land Use
-  Economic Development
-  Transportation
-  Open Space and Recreation
-  Other Topics
-  Watertown boundary
-  Schools
-  Parks



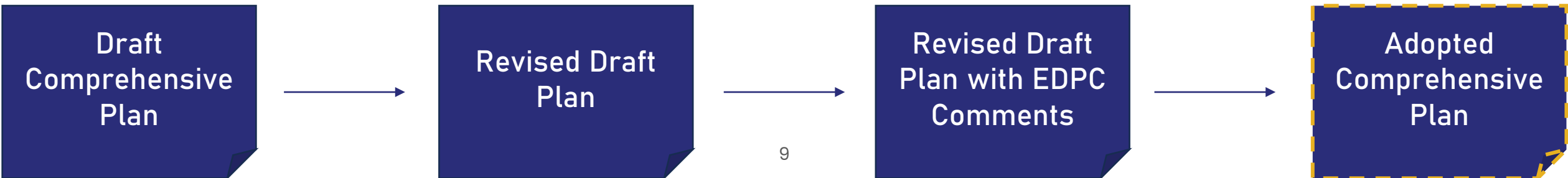


PAC Meetings

PAC Members

Name	Affiliation
John Airasian	City Council
Jeff Brown	Planning Board
Maria Rose	Conservation Commission
Andreas Aeppli	Resident (transportation)
Bob Airasian	Watertown Business Coalition
Dan D'Amico	Resident
Inés Gonzalez-Romero	Resident

Recent Progress

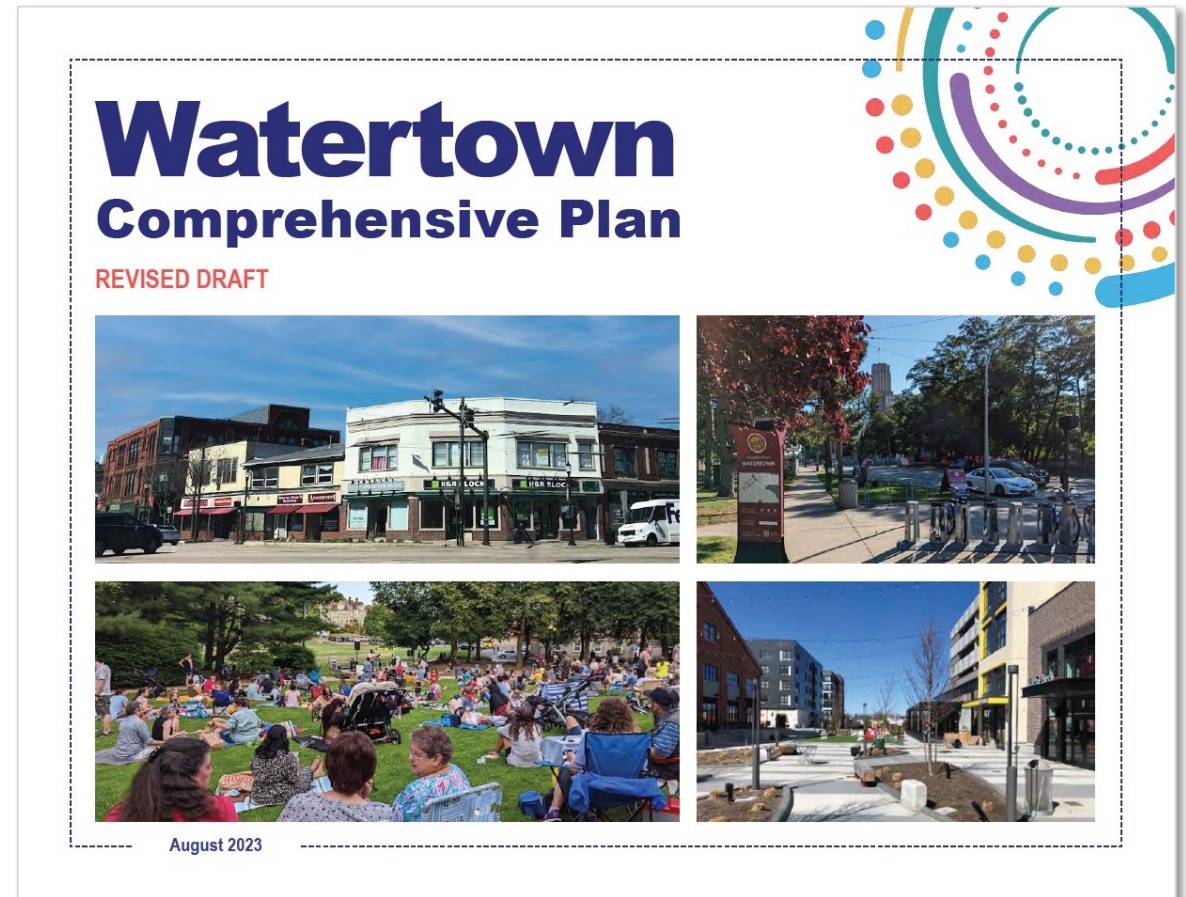




**Revised Draft
Comprehensive Plan**

Framing the Comprehensive Plan

- A living document to revisit and update as needed—like this replaces the 2015 plan
- Integrates the many topic-specific plans recently completed and makes higher-level policy recommendations
- 2022 Baseline Assessment is the foundation for data and trends





WATERTOWN BASELINE ASSESSMENT

July 14, 2022

Watertown Comprehensive Plan

REVISED DRAFT



August 2023



Our Vision

Watertown is an inclusive and sustainable city that has vibrant neighborhoods, a mix of new development and rejuvenated traditional commercial districts, and that embraces the Charles River. Watertown continues to foster and strengthen community, anchored by a built environment with diverse institutions, high quality schools, celebrated arts and cultural amenities, and recreational facilities that each foster connections important to the community.

Our Goals

- 1. Be a leader on municipal sustainability** and managing climate change impacts.
- 2. Enhance the character and quality of life** in Watertown's neighborhoods, squares, and along the corridors that connect them to help build community.
- 3. Cultivate a mix of diverse businesses** that strengthens our community by providing jobs, services, and support for City infrastructure.
- 4. Promote safe, efficient multimodal transportation options** that provide access to homes, jobs, amenities, and services.
- 5. Facilitate a range of housing** types and affordability.
- 6. Ensure high-quality parks, recreation, and open spaces** that meet the needs of residents and the environment, and encourage active and passive use.
- 7. Support community wellness** through inclusive programs and events, diverse arts and culture, enhanced natural and historic resources, and livelier public and private spaces.
- 8. Proactively maintain and improve infrastructure and services.**

Our Action Plan – Strategies, Leads and Partners, Timeline

Action Plan		Related Goal(s)	Lead(s)	Partner(s)
3. Cultivate a mix of diverse businesses that strengthens our community by providing jobs, services, and City infrastructure.				
<i>Leadership for Economic Development Initiatives</i>				
A	Create a new staff position (e.g., economic development senior planner) to lead initiatives that support small business and attract/retain a mix of businesses. Responsibilities should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on maintaining a thriving small business community serving residents and other customers. 2. Provide a single point-of-contact for businesses, including assistance with permitting and maintaining up-to-date business resource information online 3. Focus on diversifying Watertown's innovation economy, by industry cluster and company size. 	Character/QoL Infrastructure/ Services	DCDP/ City Manager	CC
<i>Innovation Industries</i>				
B	Support the existing lab and life science cluster in Watertown so that it is successful and more connected to the community. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote a distinct Watertown identity for the cluster. 2. Provide amenities that both help companies attract and retain workers and that benefit residents. E.g., public gathering places that also help companies and employees collaborate and exchange ideas. 3. Encourage diversity in lab space sizes so that companies can start and grow in Watertown. 4. Support partnerships between Watertown Public Schools and local companies to provide apprenticeships, high school and middle school mentorship, and other opportunities for industry exposure. 5. Continue to monitor and reassess safety requirements for life science buildings as needed (e.g., existing requirement that new labs do not exceed biosafety level 2 and are reviewed by fire and other inspectors with lab specialization). 	Character/QoL Community Wellness	DCDP	Lab life science companies WPS H

Action Plan				
Strategy	Related Goal(s)	Lead(s)	Partner(s)	When
C	Continue to diversify our economic base beyond the robust life science cluster by supporting and attracting other industry clusters, particularly those that require varying job and building types. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a new study to update the 2011 <i>Strategic Framework for Economic Development</i>, which identified four target clusters (life sciences, information and media, design, and advanced manufacturing). 2. Build on industries already in Watertown and/or areas of regional growth (such as climate-tech, management and technical consulting services, medical devices, advanced manufacturing, digital health and information technology-related industries). 	-	DCDP PB CC	Mid-term
D	Support expansion of the jobs pipeline by connecting new employers to workforce development organizations and local schools. Promote local/regional skills training programs to encourage residents to develop the skills needed in well-paying, in-demand fields.	Community Wellness	DCDP Community groups and non-profits WPS	Near-term

3B. Industry-Community Connections

CoLAB is a partnership between Watertown Public Schools and numerous life science companies. Over the last two years, CoLAB has grown from tentative conversations to a non-profit dedicated to helping Watertown students understand what is involved in life science careers exclusively on fostering connections with Watertown High School. This may expand to other WPS sites in the future. In the last two years there have been 102 career presentations; 7 field trips to companies; 4 mentoring partnerships; 2 summer internships; and 2 job shadowing experiences.

3C. Economic Diversification

About 15 years ago, Watertown started an economic development review to think about how best to attract new businesses that would bring needed tax revenue and help clean up its aging and vacant industrial parcels. That plan targeted four potential industry clusters (including life sciences) and positioned Watertown for the present economic boom. Now is the time for a new study on the city's commercial future. While market forces largely drive locational decisions, the City can influence the calculus. <https://tinyurl.com/5n6thcte>

More emphasis on existing plans and implementing their recommendations

Revised plan:

- Adds new strategy to several goals about implementing existing plans
 - Resilient Watertown
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
 - Complete Streets Prioritization Plan
 - Parking Management Plan
 - Housing Plan
 - Open Space and Recreation Plan
 - Public Arts Master Plan

Highlight links between quality of life, local businesses, and sustainability

Revised plan:

- Goal 2 better identifies and discusses these connections
- “15-minute neighborhood” concept presented as a planning model

Fifteen-Minute Neighborhoods

Urban planners have championed the concept of a 15-minute neighborhood where most daily needs such as work, shopping, education, medical, and recreation can be reached by a 15-minute walk or bike trip. Watertown aspires to use its streets and paths to make that true for residents in every neighborhood. The 15-minute neighborhood is a unifying theme for tying together our squares, corridors, and neighborhoods and promotes the climate and community wellness goals elsewhere in this plan.

<https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2021/02/08/defining-15-minute-city>

Concern about scale and character of many recent development projects

Revised plan:

- Goal 2 revised to emphasize identifying shared benefits (2F) and assess zoning controls (2H)
 - “Managing redevelopment” and “Neighborhoods” subsections

Concern about prevalence of life science projects

Revised plan:

- Goal 3 modified:
 - Recommends new in-depth economic development study to identify other industry clusters (3C)
 - Promotes need for new economic development staff (3A)
 - Emphasizes continued oversight of life science operations (3B)

More emphasis on supporting local and small businesses

Revised plan:

- Goal 3 modified:
 - Recommends toolkit of policies and funding opportunities (3E)
 - Highlights need for new economic development staff (3A)
- Goal 2 emphasizes physical improvements to squares to support customer activity and business operations (2A, 2C)



Highlight links between transportation and climate goals

Revised plan:

- Goal 4 emphasizes connection between transportation choices and climate goals (especially GHG emissions)
- *Resilient Watertown* goals referenced (VMT reduction and increased EV)
- Microtransit strategy added (4L)

4B. Consider using metrics for success, such as:

- Increase in active transportation mode share (biking and walking)
- Percentage of residents living within a five- to ten-minute walk (approx. quarter-mile) of a bike share station
- Percentage of residents within a ten-minute walk (approx. half-mile) of a transit option
- Linear feet of improved sidewalks and bicycle facilities

In addition, *Resilient Watertown* establishes two goals for 2050:

- Reduce personal vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 50%
- Have 100% of Watertown-registered vehicles be electric

Desire for more ‘action’ rather than ‘consideration’ in transportation strategies

Revised plan:

- Goal 4 changed from “Promote” to “Provide” safe, efficient multimodal transportation
- Multimodal policy goals (4B) and Vision Zero strategies (4C) changed to ‘adopt’ and ‘develop’

General support for more housing and greater affordability

Revised plan:

- Goal 5 encourages more housing at all scales



More emphasis on importance of trees

Revised plan:

- Tree preservation and new planting integrated into several strategies
 - Tree canopy as climate mitigation
 - Shade trees in commercial areas
 - Preserve/expand tree canopy in neighborhoods
 - Preserve/expand tree canopy on public land



Identify community partners

Revised plan:

- Live Well Watertown (LWW) added as implementation partner to several strategies in Goals 6 and 7



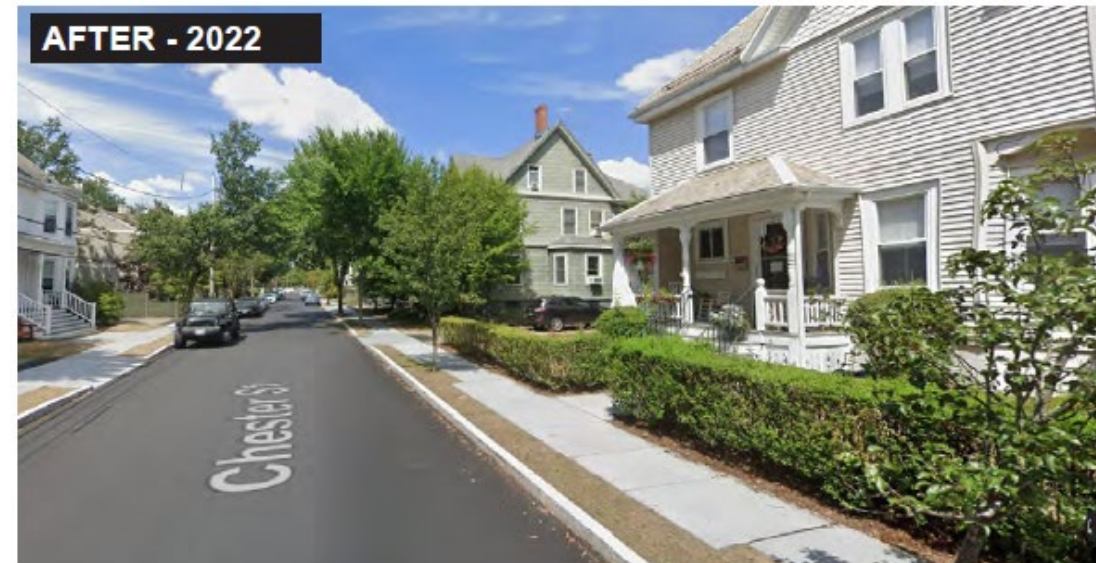
City Council's Economic Development & Planning Committee

- Numerous public comments – most appreciative of changes made from initial public draft
- Several suggestions for further changes that were discussed by Committee members

Goal 4, Strategy J

Revised plan:

- “Expand” annual capital plan commitments[...] to “protect existing and new planting strips”, thereby improving pedestrian safety.



A recent roadway project added granite curbing, a planter strip, and a concrete sidewalk to beautify the street and improve the pedestrian experience.

Goal 6, Strategy D

Revised plan:

- Add “the Charles River Watershed Association” as one of several partnerships to continue for expanded access and recreational use of River



Goal 7, Strategy E

Revised plan:

- Support and expand “health and human services, including:
 1. Mental health and stress management resources
 2. Social services, programming, and other resources to reduce substance use
 3. Increase in food security
 4. Access to healthcare”

Goal 7, New Strategy F

Revised plan:

- “Be a welcoming community for all, one that celebrates and fosters diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do. Work in partnership with the Human Rights Commission, the Commission on Disabilities, and dedicated community groups to ensure continued progress.”

Goal 8, New Strategy F

Revised plan:

- “Update the City’s ADA self-assessment and transition plan.”

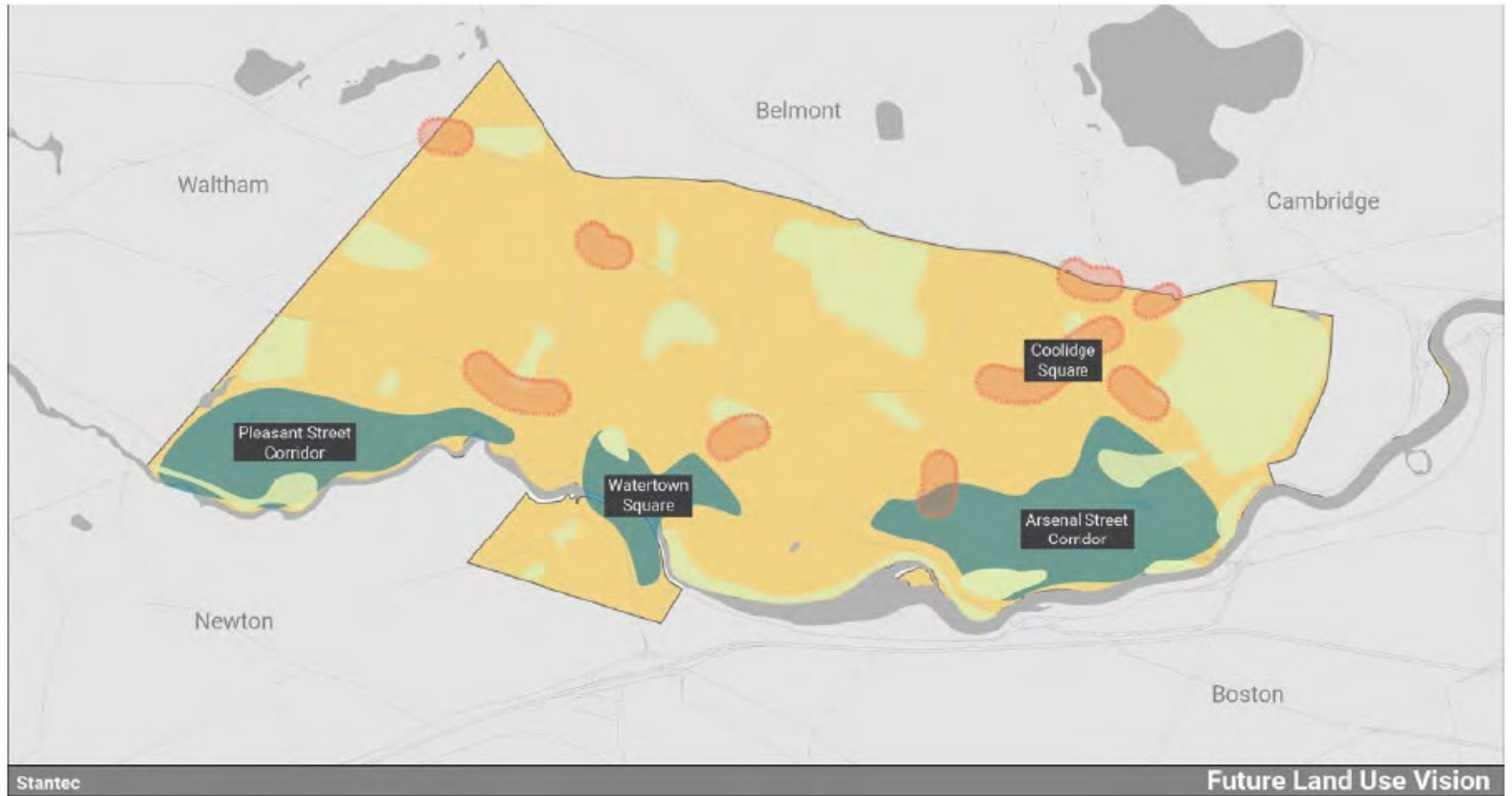


Future Land Use

Revised plan:

- Change from “preserve” to “conserve” neighborhoods through incremental changes.
- Low and Medium Density Residential: Add to descriptions “Incremental and context-sensitive changes may be appropriate to modestly increase housing supply.”

Figure 3: Future Land Use Vision

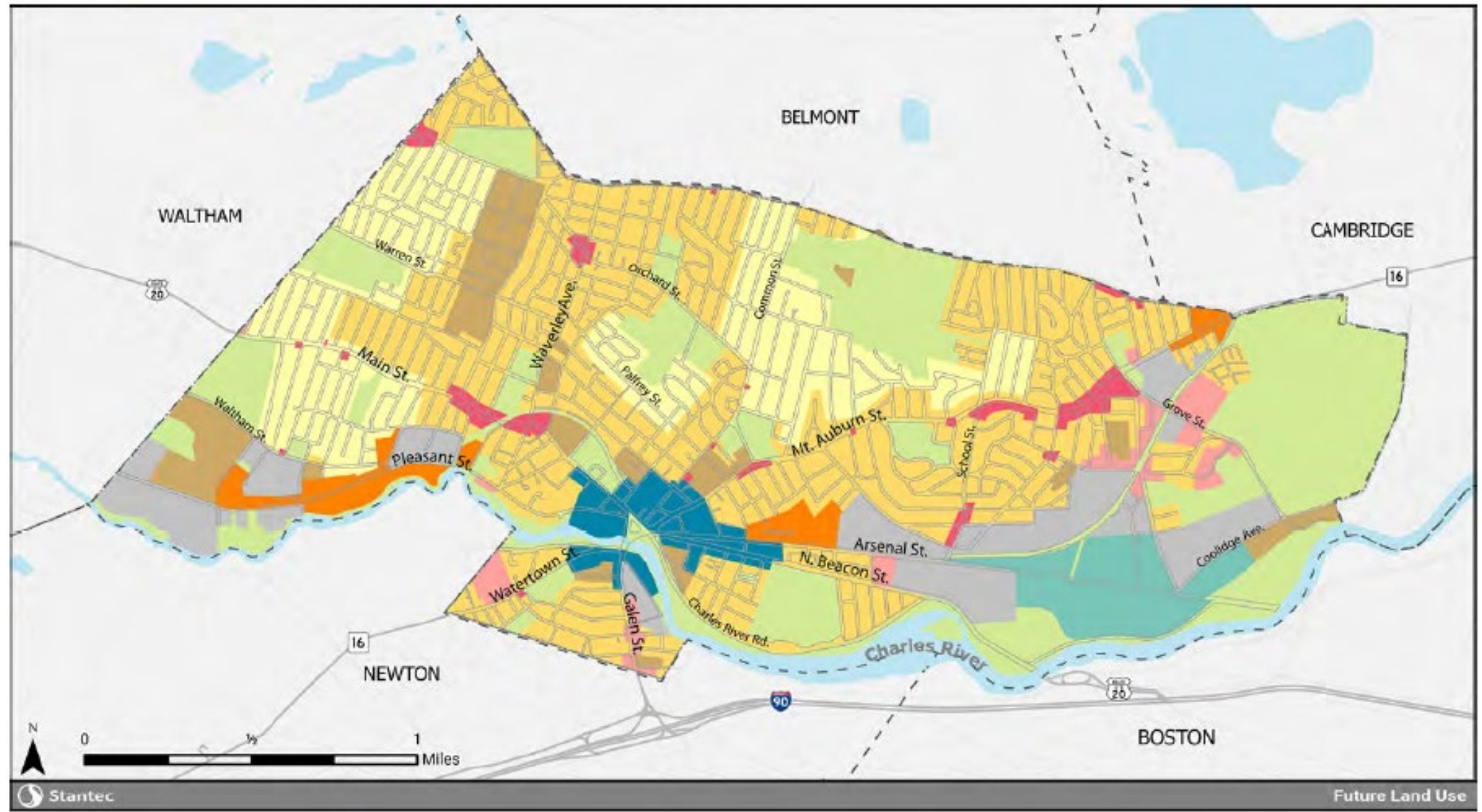


- Conserve
- Transform
- Enhance
- Parks & Open Spaces

Source: MassGIS
January 2023
Future Land Use Vision
Watertown, MA



Figure 4: Future Land Use



Legend

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Community Amenities Schools | High Density Residential | Commercial Mixed-Use | Regional Mixed-Use |
| Low Density Residential | Residential Mixed-Use | Office-Industrial | |
| Medium Density Residential | Neighborhood Commercial | Watertown Square Mixed-Use | |

Source: MassGIS
February 2023
Future Land Use
Watertown, MA



Plan Implementation

After adoption...

- Plan informs budgeting
- Departments work on action items
- Progress evaluated

Comprehensive Plan is a living document to periodically revisit





Discussion