

**GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, September 29, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.
Gloucester City Hall - Kyrouz Auditorium
9 Dale Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930
and
Remotely via Zoom
-Minutes-**

Councilors Present: Council President, Councilor Tony Gross; Councilor Scott Memhard; Councilor Hannah Kimberley; Councilor Jason Grow; Councilor Francesco Margiotta; Councilor Dylan Benson; Councilor Marjorie Grace

Absent: Council Vice President, Councilor Sean Nolan; Councilor Patti-Ann Page

Planning Board Present: Chair, Rick Noonan; Vice Chair, Jane Remsen; David Rosen; Beverly Bookin; Steve Yost; Douglas Cook (remote); Shawn Henry (remote)

Also Present: Mayor Paul Lundberg; CAO Kelly Dolan (remote); City Clerk, Grace Poirier; Community Development Director, Alex Koppelman; State Representative, Dru Tarr

*This meeting was conducted with the City Council in person
and the public participating in person and remotely via Zoom.*

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Councilor Gross stated the following:

“This public meeting of the City Council is recorded on zoom with a link that is posted on the agenda. If you are calling in on a phone, you can press Star 9 to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device, there is a “raised hand” button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications and public hearings to be recognized to speak.

If technical difficulties arise and the Zoom link is interrupted during an in-person hybrid meeting of the City Council and a quorum is present, the meeting may continue after efforts have been made to reestablish the link. The minutes shall note the interruption.

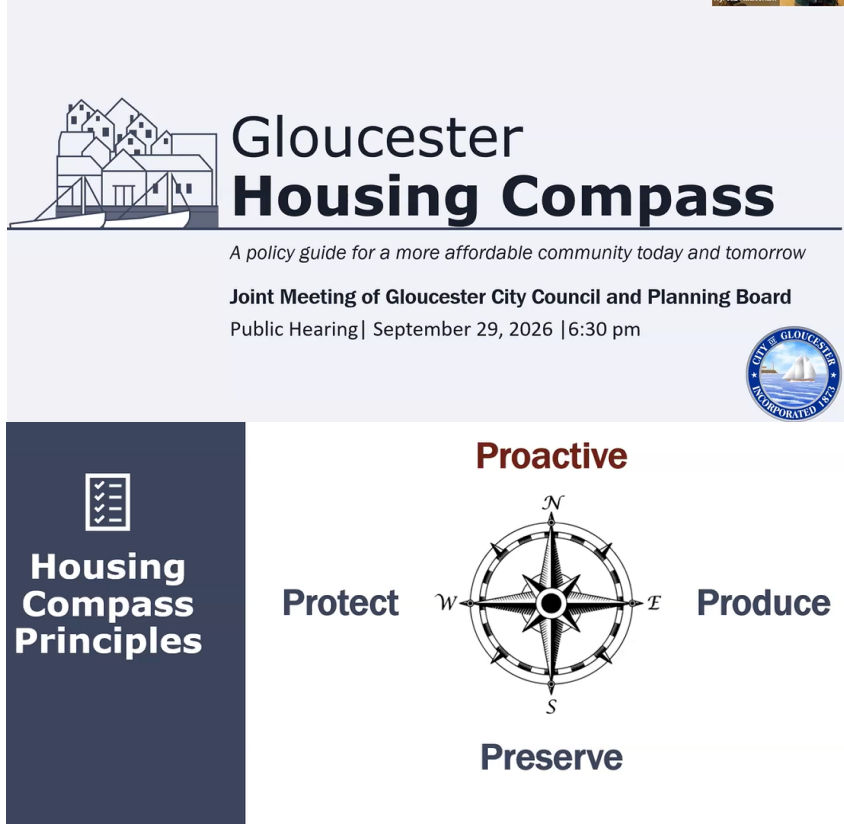
It is the finding of the City of Gloucester that no individual should be denied equal treatment or opportunity because of their age, ancestry, color, disability, including intellectual and developmental mental disability, family status, immigration status, gender identity or expression, military status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.”

FLAG SALUTE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE: Councilor Margiotta led the flag salute.

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. PH2026-023: Consideration of the 2026 Housing Compass Plan

- **City Council Public Hearing Opened:** 6:34 p.m.
- **Planning Board Public Hearing Opened:** 6:34 p.m.
- **Speaking in Favor:** Community Development Director, Alex Koppelman shared his screen.



Gloucester Housing Compass

A policy guide for a more affordable community today and tomorrow

Joint Meeting of Gloucester City Council and Planning Board
Public Hearing | September 29, 2026 | 6:30 pm

Housing Compass Principles

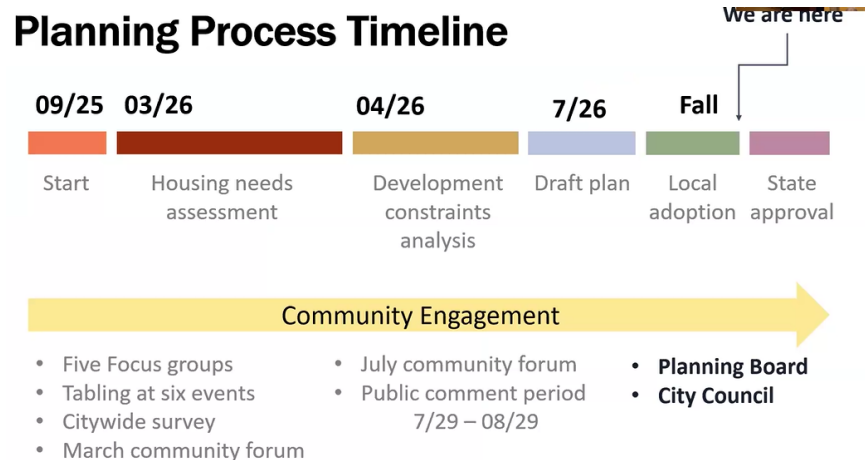
Proactive

Protect **Produce**

Preserve

The graphic features a compass rose with the cardinal directions labeled: North (N), South (S), East (E), and West (W). The word "Proactive" is at the top, "Protect" is on the left, "Produce" is on the right, and "Preserve" is at the bottom. To the left of the compass is a dark blue vertical box with a white icon of a checklist and the text "Housing Compass Principles". To the right is a circular seal for the City of Gloucester, Massachusetts, with the text "CITY OF GLOUCESTER" and "INCORPORATED 1827".

Alex Koppelman stated that the Housing Compass Plan was a proactive approach to the City's housing needs and it was written to State standards.



Alex Koppelman stated the above. He stated that if approved by the State it would give the City greater control over local housing.

Plan Advisory Committee

- **Peggy Hegarty-Steck**, *Action Inc.*
- **Erin George**, *Action Inc.*
- **Deanna Fay**, *Affordable Housing Trust (GAHT)*
- **Traci Thayne Corbett**, *Art Haven*
- **Colleen Murdock**, *Chamber of Commerce*
- **David Calvo**, *Committee for the Arts*
- **Fred Cowan**, *Council on Aging*
- **Jen Hapgood**, *Gloucester Housing Authority*
- **Maiuza Alves**, *Human Rights Commission*
- **Sunny Robinson**, *Housing for All Gloucester*
- **Jay McNiff**, *McNiff Company*
- **Shawn Henry**, *Planning Board*
- **Ben Lummis**, *Former Gloucester Public Schools*

Alex Koppelman stated the above were the members of the Plan Advisory Committee.

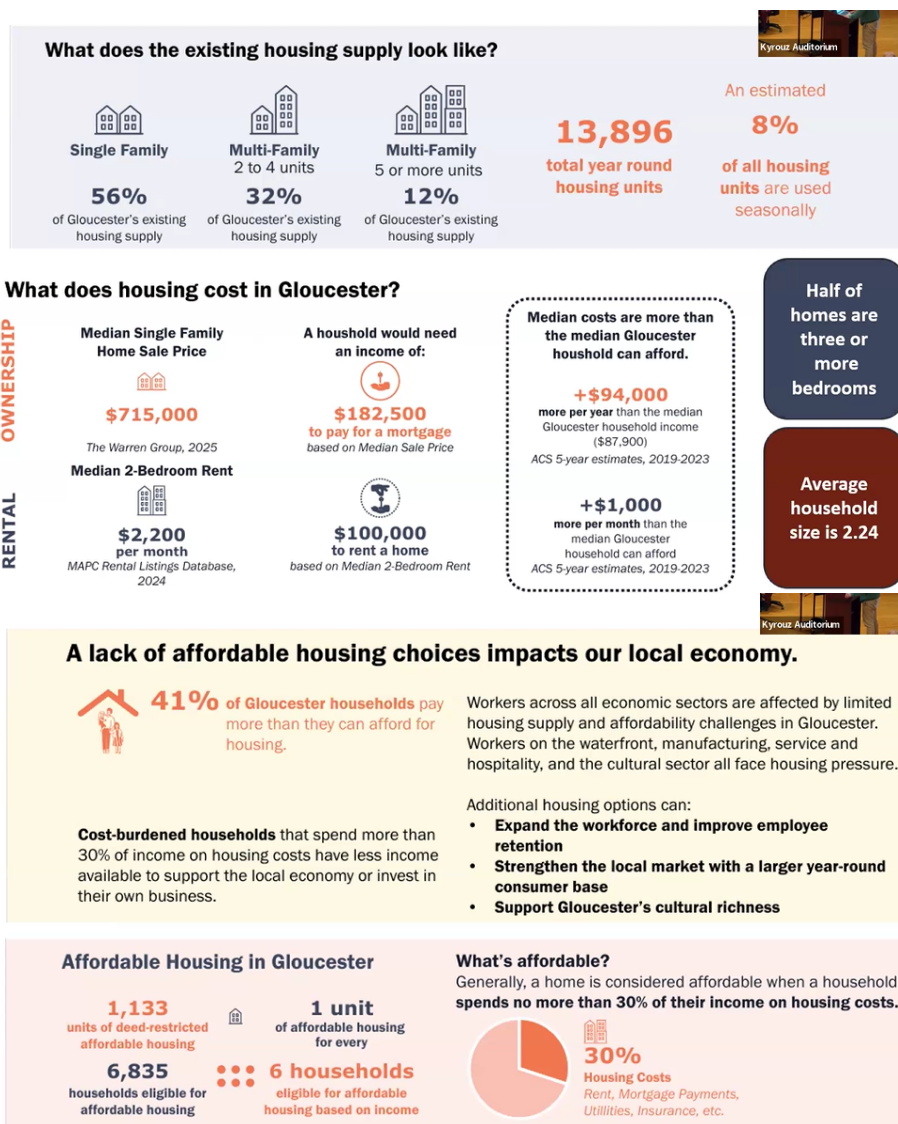
Plan Components

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Current Housing Toolkit
- Housing Goals
- Development Constraints and Opportunities
- Recommendations



Alex Koppelman stated the above.

Housing Needs Assessment



Alex Koppelman stated the above. He stated that there was a mismatch between housing needs and what was available in the housing stock. He stated that there was a lack of affordable options, which led to local workers not being able to afford to live in the City, which created traffic, and made for a weaker local economy.

Community Engagement Activities



Pop-up Events



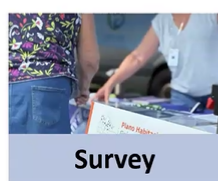
Community Forums



Video Series



Focus Groups



Survey

Gloucester Housing Compass Draft Plan for Public Comment



Public Meetings and Comment

Community Engagement Activities

Meeting people where they are

Over 600 people engaged

Timing	Engagement	Purpose	~ Number of Participants
Fall 2025	Housing Focus Groups	Unhoused and housing-insecure residents	6 – 10 per group
	Roadshow – Phase 1	Tabling at community events	75+
Oct. 2025 – Apr. 2026	Citywide Survey	Needs, aspirations, and preferred housing types	224
Jan. 2026	Roadshow – Phase 2	Senior Center, GHS, and Sawyer Free Library	100+
Spring 2026	Targeted Focus Groups	Creative sector, Brazilian community & local employers/workforce housing	6 – 10 per group
Mar. 23, 2026	Community Forum #1	Housing needs assessment and locations	100 attendees
Jul. 29, 2026	Community Forum #2	Review and feedback on draft Housing Compass Plan	75 attendees
Jul. 29 – Aug. 29, 2026	Public Comment	Feedback on draft recommendations	91 total comments

Alex Koppelman stated that the Housing Compass Plan had been created with a heavy emphasis on community engagement.

Plan Goals



Housing for an Aging Community

Support and create housing that meets the needs of an aging population, especially limited-income seniors.

Downsizing choices, smaller home types, connected neighborhoods



Diverse Housing Choices

Expand attainable housing choices, especially for young adults and young families who lack housing choices in Gloucester's housing market.

Supports for homeownership, small multifamily home types, year-round rental choices



Affordability for Gloucester households

Expand the supply of Affordable homes, especially for vulnerable households and essential workers at the heart of Gloucester's economy and small businesses.

Deeply affordable homes, workforce housing, opportunities for attainable homeownership



Build Local Capacity

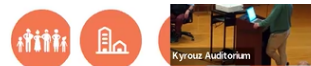
Improve local capacity to monitor and maintain Affordable Housing, resources, and supports for residents

Regional collaboration, strengthen, coordinate, and promote existing tools

Alex Koppelman stated the above.



★	1	Expand opportunities for homeownership				
	1.1	<i>Strengthen and promote first-time homebuyer & Affordable homeownership programs</i>	Programs & Resources	✓	✓	✓
★	2	Protect vulnerable households from displacement				
	2.1	<i>Adopt a Tenant Rights & Resources Notification Ordinance (TRRN)</i>	Local Policy	✓	✓	✓
	2.2	<i>Advocate for statewide Older Adult Housing Bridge program funding</i>	State Policy	✓	✓	✓
	3	Protect and support local workers and creatives				
	3.1	<i>Modernize home occupation zoning</i>	Zoning		✓	✓
	3.2	<i>Extend the existing allowance for "Arts, crafts and sale of arts or crafts if made on the premises" to other appropriate districts.</i>	Zoning		✓	✓
	3.3	<i>Adopt an Agent of Change Sound policy</i>	Local Policy		✓	✓

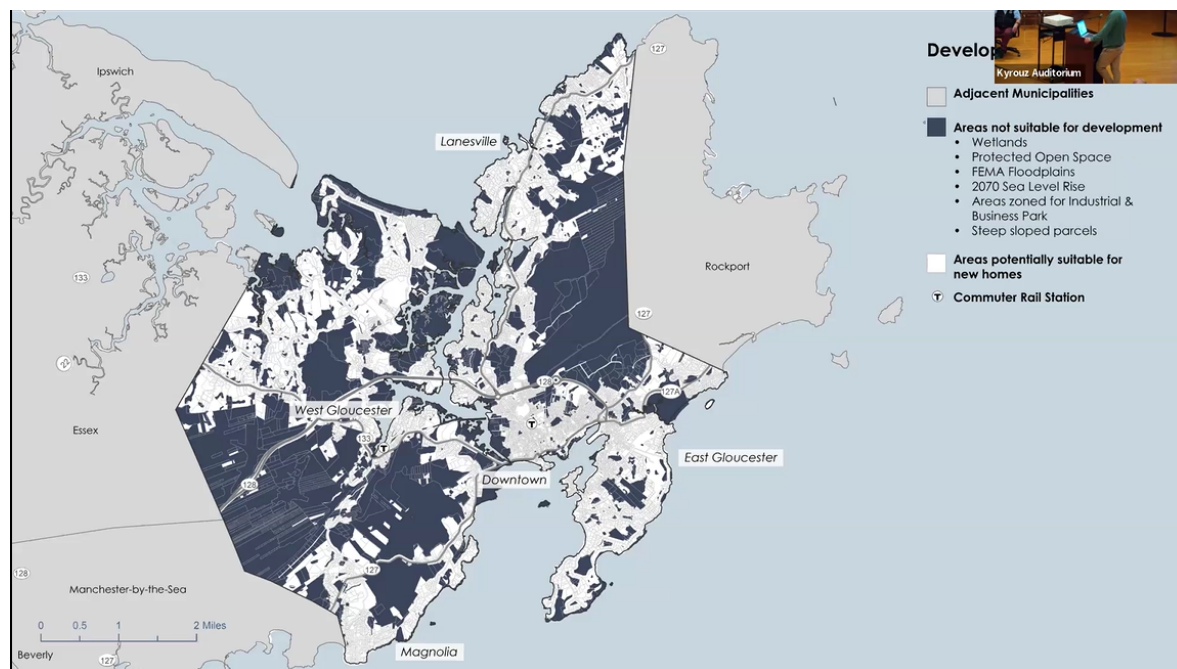


★	4	Strengthen Affordable Housing monitoring			✓	✓
	4.1	<i>Evaluate and establish municipal standards for regulatory agreements for Local Action Units</i>	Municipal Capacity		✓	✓
	4.2	<i>Advocate for statewide regulations limiting rent increases for Affordable Housing</i>	State Policy		✓	✓
	5	Monitor short-term rentals and consider a lease-to-locals program		✓	✓	✓
★	5.1	<i>Monitor Short-Term Rental permitting and rental registry data</i>	Municipal Coordination	✓	✓	✓
★	5.2	<i>Consider implementation of tools to incentivize year-round rentals</i>	Local Policy	✓	✓	
	5.3	<i>Explore a voluntary artist lodging or cultural residency lodging partnership</i>	Local Policy	✓	✓	
★	6	Increase local housing capacity through a regional housing service	Regional Collaboration	✓	✓	✓
★	7	Consider establishing a "Buy-down" program	Local Policy	✓	✓	✓

★	8	Create a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay for Railroad Ave	Zoning	✓	✓	✓
	9	Right-size Zoning Requirements	Zoning	✓	✓	✓
	9.1	<i>Consider an Infill Housing Overlay</i>	Zoning	✓	✓	✓
	9.2	<i>Right-size dimensional requirements to match existing built conditions</i>	Zoning	✓	✓	✓
	9.3	<i>Streamline Special Permit process</i>	Zoning		✓	✓
	9.4	<i>Consider adoption of pre-approved or pre-vetted plans for infill and small multifamily housing types</i>	Local Policy	✓	✓	✓
	9.5	<i>Advocate for changes to the state building code to support infill and small multifamily housing types</i>	State Policy		✓	✓
★	10	Establish an Affordable Housing Loan Pool	Local Policy		✓	✓
	11	Continue to support the Gloucester Affordable Housing Trust (GAHT)	Local Policy	✓	✓	✓

★	11.1	Create a lending product to help finance ADUs for homeowners, as well as other small housing types.	Local Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
	12	Advocate for state designations to build access to tools and resources		✓	✓	✓	✓
	12.1	<i>Gateway City Designation</i>	State Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
	12.2	<i>Seasonal Community Designation</i>	State Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓

Alex Koppelman stated the above.



Alex Koppelman stated the above was a map of the development constraints within the City.

Promoting attainable housing for Gloucester's neighborhoods

Recommendation

Consider an area specific attainable housing overlay district to allow for smaller homes like ADUs, cottages, and small multifamily

Consider a 40Y "Starter Home District"

Recommendation

Offer financial support for income-eligible households through the Affordable Housing Trust to close the financing gap for building small attainable homes

Utilize the **ADU Incentive Program** from Massachusetts Housing Partnership providing property owners with **technical assistance** to determine **feasibility** of ADU development



Alex Koppelman stated the above. He stated that while neighborhoods outside of Downtown could not support large scale developments due to infrastructure, they could support smaller scale development such as ADUs.

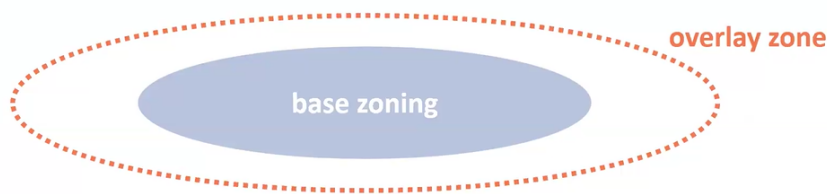
Identifying Opportunity Sites for Downtown Gloucester

Kyroux Auditorium

Address	Recommendation Summary	Timeframe
272 Washington St	Consider a smart growth overlay zone to facilitate clustered small multifamily	Near-term
7 Railroad Avenue	Consider a smart growth overlay zone to create a smaller grocery store with housing above	Near-term
100 Gloucester Crossing Rd	Utilize current multifamily overlay zone for medium-scale multifamily	Near-term
33 Emerson Avenue	Consider a smart growth overlay zone for medium-scale multifamily	Mid-term
58/58R Prospect St	Support small-scale multifamily or vertical mixed-use	Mid-term

Alex Koppelman stated the above were possible areas of development. He stated that these were privately owned, but the City could encourage development in a number of ways.

Smart Growth Overlay District (40R)

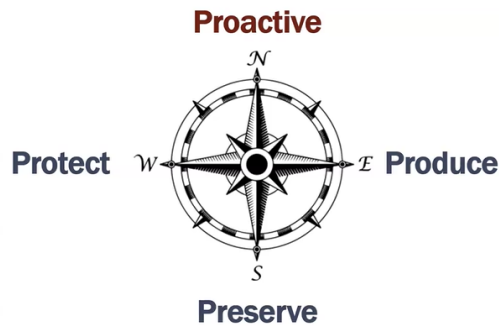


- Locally adopted, meets state standards
- Planning Board + City Council collaboration with a development partner
- Local dimensional and design standards
- When process is complete, development is permitted by right

Smart Growth Overlay District Incentives

Allowed housing units	Payment for zoning adoption	Payment once built	School-aged children
Up to 20	\$10,000	\$3,000 per unit	Annual reimbursement
21 - 100	\$75,000		
101 – 200	\$200,000		
201 – 500	\$350,000		

Alex Koppelman stated the above. He stated that Smart Growth Overlay District's worked best when they were designed with a development partner. He stated that any incentive payments from the State would go into the City's General Fund.



Alex Koppelman stated the Housing Compass Plan was a roadmap for the City and was not binding. He stated that any implementation of recommendations would require a public process.

Mayor Paul Lundberg stated his support for the Housing Compass Plan.

Laura Bacchia, 10 Dale Avenue, stated her support for the matter. She stated her concerns for a grocery store being included in any redevelopment of the former Shaw's building on Railroad Avenue.

Deanna Fay, 3 Barberry Lane, stated she was the Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust. She stated that the Affordable Housing Trust had voted to support the Housing Compass Plan. She stated that the Housing Compass Plan identified the Affordable Housing Trust as a key partner in its strategies, which was appropriate. She stated the Affordable Housing Trust was meant to be a flexible municipal resource to help create affordable housing in the City.

Deborah Frontierro, 216 Washington Street, stated her support for the matter. She stated that the plan was very detailed and specific.

Henry Harrison, 49 Sumner Street, stated he was a High School senior and that he and his peers had a hard time staying in the City due to housing costs. He stated he supported the matter.

Barnaby Prendergast, 61 Fernald Street, stated his support for the matter.

Valarie Nelson, 7 Sunset Point Road, stated her support for the matter. She stated that the cost of ADUs was prohibitive and the City should look into incentives for modular or manufactured housing.

Peggy Hegarty-Steck, CEO Action Inc., 180 Main Street, stated she had been part of the advisory committee. She stated her support for the matter. She stated through Action Inc's own studies, the cost of housing was one of the main concerns across all groups.

Nick Fay, 33 Emerson Avenue, stated his support for the matter.

•Speaking in Opposition: Jane Fox, no address given, stated that the current plan did not include a fiscal impact analysis, or how increased housing would affect the tax levy. She stated that the plan did not contain an infrastructure capacity assessment and the City had aging infrastructure. She stated that the plan did not include a school enrollment model, and if new housing would put a strain on the schools. She stated that the plan did not address short term rentals. She stated that the plan did not include estimates for the cost of funding programs, and without funding the recommendations were not actionable. She stated that the plan should be revised to address these concerns.

Beverly Palmacci, 8 Commonwealth Avenue, stated her opposition regarding the matter. She stated that Downtown had already been rezoned and should not be further developed.

•**Communications:** None.

•**Questions from Councilors to Applicants/Staff:** **Planning Board Member David Rosen** asked how long would the Housing Compass Plan be good for. **Alex Koppelman** stated that the State considered it good for five years.

Councilor Benson asked for clarification regarding what a Gateway City designation was. **Alex Koppelman** stated a Gateway City was a State designation for grant giving. He stated that the designation was for municipalities that had a decline in industry, and had criteria based on population size and income. He stated that the City met all the criteria except for population size, which was 5,000 below the threshold.

Councilor Grow asked for clarification as to what priorities the City Council should set regarding the Housing Compass Plan. **Alex Koppelman** stated that the City needed to continue robust community engagement. He stated that the financing related recommendations were already being evaluated by the Affordable Housing Trust. He stated the Housing Subcommittee of the Planning Board was also looking at zoning recommendations. He stated that the creation of smart growth districts would also be a benefit to the City.

Councilor Kimberly asked how much affordable housing would have local preference. **Alex Koppelman** stated that when affordable housing was created then the City could request up to 70% of units have local preference, which could include veterans and seniors.

Councilor Benson asked for clarification on the 40Y Starter Home zoning. **Alex Koppelman** stated that the Housing Subcommittee was already looking at cleaning up the cluster zoning which would be a good starting point. He stated that there were areas within the City where such zoning would be appropriate considering the infrastructure.

Councilor Grace asked if the grants that were being cited as funding sources within the Housing Compass Plan were in danger of changing in the future due to shifts in the Federal government. **Alex Koppelman** stated that they were currently safe and funded through the State.

Councilor Gross asked for clarification on the 40R zoning and its relation to a grocery store downtown. **Alex Koppelman** stated that in the 40R zoning the City could make a list of allowable uses. He stated that whoever developed the project would also have to work with the City.

Councilor Gross asked if the City needed to be concerned regarding adding conserved land and reducing the amount of developable land. **Alex Koppelman** stated that conservation and development were in conflict and it would be up to policy makers to make those decisions.

Councilor Benson asked if there were possible funding sources for critical infrastructure such as sewer. **Alex Koppelman** stated that the State had several programs to fund infrastructure, but it would require an affordable housing development to be proposed to apply for that funding.

Planning Board Member Shawn Henry stated that the Housing Compass Plan addresses the tension between conservation of land and development in the section regarding right size development.

Councilor Margiotta asked if financial concerns had been considered by the administration considering rising costs. **Alex Koppelman** stated that the DPW and the Board of Health had been consulted and it had been determined that with the upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant Downtown had the ability to be further developed.

Councilor Margiotta asked if there was a deadline for the Housing Compass Plan to be submitted to the State. **Alex Koppelman** stated that there was no deadline, but with an approved plan the City would have more control over Chapter 40B applications.

Councilor Gross asked who the City needed to lobby to create a task force to examine building codes within the State and improve them. **Alex Koppelman** stated that the State should create a panel of experts.

•**City Council Public Hearing Closed:** 7:47 p.m.

•**Planning Board Public Hearing Closed:** 7:47 p.m.

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Jane Remsen, seconded by Steve Yost, the Planning Board voted by ROLL CALL 7 in favor, 0 opposed, to adopt the 2026 Housing Compass Plan.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Grow, seconded by Councilor Kimberley, the Planning & Development Committee voted 2 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent to recommend that the City Council accept the draft Housing Compass Plan as submitted by the Community Development Director and presented on September 2, 2026.

Summary of Discussion: Councilor Gross proposed an amendment.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Grow, seconded to Councilor Kimberley, to accept the draft Housing Compass Plan as submitted by the Community Development Director and presented on September 2, 2026.

MOTION TO AMEND: On a motion by Councilor Gross, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the City Council voted 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent, to strike the word “accept” and insert the word “adopt.”

Summary of Discussion: Councilor Grow stated his support for the matter.

Councilor Benson stated his support for the matter.

Councilor Gross stated his support for the matter.

MOTION AS AMENDED: On a motion by Councilor Grow, seconded by Councilor Kimberley, the City Council voted 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent, to adopt the draft Housing Compass Plan as submitted by the Community Development Director and presented on September 2, 2026.

MOTION: On a motion by David Rosen, seconded by Jane Remsen, the Planning Board voted by ROLL CALL 7 in favor, 0 opposed, to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Grow, seconded by Councilor Benson, the City Council voted 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent, to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Submitted by: Lynds Jones, Legislative Aide

Items submitted at the meeting: None.

Meeting Recording: <https://www.gloucester-ma.gov/1097/Past-Remote-Public-Meetings>