

Lowell Downtown Plan Update Technical Deliverable 5:

Recommended Comprehensive Plan Policies

and

Code Amendment Recommendations

Planning Policies

Planning policies, in conjunction with goals and objectives, serve as a tool to help guide and implement downtown development decisions. These policies were developed through a participatory planning process with the community where planning patterns were established and then formed into implementable policies. The planning policies should be reflected in the zoning regulations and inform future approval processes in the downtown area.

QUAINT DOWNTOWN: Goal 1 Planning Policies

1.1 Lined Street Fronts

Buildings along main streets in downtown shall adhere to a consistent build-to line and have continuous or connected facades to form a single facade. Downtown setback requirements shall be consistent, consistent window size, and clear glass storefront windows on the ground floors of mixed-use buildings.

1.2 Safe Streets and Traffic Calming

To create safe, walkable streets in downtown, intersection crossings shall be clearly striped, helping to signal to cars and pedestrians where a designated crossing is. "Bulb-outs", or the narrowing of intersections by creating wider sidewalk areas and planting medians at corners, are also used to slow traffic and create a shorter crossing for pedestrians.

1.3 Gateways

Visible gateways are located at entries to towns and districts and help to announce to people who are coming into town that they have arrived. Gateways lend a sense of place and are indicative of the town's character. They can be made of local stone, be a sign, banner, or include other identifying features. They are appropriately scaled for their context and the speed at which vehicles will be entering town. They are clear, prominent, and concise and should incorporate plantings and/or lighting. Consistent signage should be appropriately scaled and visible throughout Lowell.

1.4 On-Street Parking

Place parallel parking spaces at least eight feet wide and 20 feet long along the edge of all streets in the downtown area.

1.5 Off-Street Parking

Off-street parking in the downtown area shall be placed behind new commercial and residential development, with clear passages linking the parking to entries and the front of the buildings. Only where there is no ability for parking to be located behind the building, it shall be placed to the side of the building, setback ten feet from the public right of way and adjoining properties. Appropriate landscaping or seating should be placed on the street-facing side in order to shape the public realm.

1.6 Planting Strips

Place planting strips on both sides of the street to absorb stormwater between street curbs and sidewalks.

1.7 Street Trees

Place deciduous canopy trees at regular intervals, approximately 25 feet on center, on both sides of a street in the space between the curb and sidewalk. Street trees shall align with local landscape standards and should be placed a minimum of 10' from fire hydrants and 20 feet from stop signs.

1.8 City Hall at the Center

A quaint and vibrant downtown has homes, businesses, schools, libraries, and local government close together, connected by safe, comfortable sidewalks. Lowell City Hall should relocate closer to the center of downtown to help define the area and promote community involvement and activity in downtown.

CENTRAL PARK: Goal 2 Planning Policies

2.1 Central Park street-to-street

Rolling Rock Park could become a vibrant heart of downtown by stretching between North Shore Drive and Main Street, allowing it to be framed by active streets and pedestrian paths. On-street parking around the square can serve the whole downtown.

2.2 FRAMED OPEN SPACES

Framed parks are bordered by public roads and perimeter trees to define space. The City of Lowell shall require that building fronts face parks in the downtown area, even from across the street. This provides a connection between the buildings and the park and increases safety by improving the opportunity for natural surveillance of the parks by building occupants.

2.3 Active Spaces

Downtown parks shall have programmed areas such as playgrounds, pavilions, and water features, as well as open spaces and places to sit and relax. Shoppers, employees, children, and seniors will have more reasons to walk and get exercise, promoting a healthier community.

2.4 CONNECTED PARKS

Further connection to downtown parks is achieved by connecting sidewalks to the park edges. Sidewalks connecting to parks should be on one side of the street, at a minimum.

MULTI-STORY, MIXED-USE BUILDINGS: Goal 3 Planning Policies

3.1 Mixed-Use Buildings

A mix of commercial and residential uses should be encouraged in downtown. Mixed-use buildings support active town centers by allowing for a mix of uses in a small footprint. Buildings along main streets shall have ground floor commercial or retail uses with offices or residential units above. Ground-floor retail fronts that face the street shall have large, clear windows, especially around entries, to encourage transparency and a sense of place along the pedestrian realm.

3.2 Flex-Use Buildings

Lowell shall use the Downtown Regulating Plan and identified zones in downtown to allow for the flexible use of buildings. Building size, height, and lot coverage should remain consistent while allowing for a range of uses in the flex-use zone.

3.3 Multi-Story Buildings

Plan for a minimum of two to three-story buildings along North Shore Drive in the downtown area to maximize land use efficiencies.

3.4 Covered Entries and Frontages

Buildings along main streets in downtown shall have covered front entries using canopies, awnings, roofs, or similar. Frontages facing the street should have awnings or overhangs to provide pedestrians protection from the elements.

VARIETY OF HOMES: Goal 4 Planning Policies

4.1 Diversity of homes

Residences in the downtown area shall include single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments or lofts. A connected townhome is an attached home of one to three levels with an individual entry, stoop, or porch from its connected neighbors. Garages can be on the first level, if accessed from the back of the home, or tucked under the first story, and may be a detached style if across an alley. Entryways shall face the street or adjacent greenspace.

Apartments and lofts should be a variety of sizes to provide for a range of affordability. In downtown, they should be in multi-story buildings, often above ground-floor retail.

4.2 Porches and Stoops

Homes with entrances on the ground floor shall have a porch or stoop that faces the street. Comfortable front porches are a minimum of 6' deep by 6' wide. They are elevated a minimum of 18" from the ground with a roof above. Porches and stoops help provide places for homeowners to sit and watch the neighborhood and allow for opportunities for social interaction

4.3 Balconies

Homes entirely above the ground floor shall have a balcony at least four feet deep.

CONNECTED, WIDE SIDEWALKS: Goal 5 Planning Policies

5.1 Safe Streets

Streets in downtown shall have pedestrian crosswalks, planting strips between curbs and sidewalks, and on-street parallel parking. This provides a comfortable pedestrian environment that is buffered from moving traffic. Crosswalks should be well marked and "bulb-outs" should be used to narrow the walking distance across wide streets.

5.2 Wide Sidewalks

Design sidewalks at least six feet in width on less traveled roads (local roads), such as Moss Street, and 15 feet in width in commercial areas, such as the north side of North Shore Drive. See the street sections of downtown for more detail.

5.3 Connected Sidewalks

Continuous sidewalks should be on one or both sides of the street and connect to at least two adjacent sidewalks to form a pedestrian grid in downtown. Sidewalks shall be separated from the curb by planting strips on higher-traffic streets and boulevards.

5.4 Connected greenspaces

Parks, open space, and recreation areas should be connected by pedestrian and/or multi-use paths. Trails can be designed as a soft surface (dirt, wood chips) or hard surface (concrete, asphalt, crushed stone) based on intended users and construction and maintenance costs. Lowell should prioritize connected pedestrian access to Dexter Lake from downtown. Additional connections to regional trail systems should be considered.

Downtown Regulating Plan

The Downtown Master Plan proposes a simplification of the planning process for downtown by combining the land use map with the zoning map to minimize confusion and inconsistencies. This is referred to as the Regulating Plan since it flexibly regulates development consistent with the community's vision and planning policies.

Using the Regulating Plan

A regulating plan can be viewed as an enhanced land use plan. At a basic level, this plan dictates building function within each area and also develops a land use typology for future growth. The regulating plan uses a standard land use and zoning methodology to ensure that there is proper separation between certain types of development, such as industrial and housing but also leaves flexibility for development to happen by designating building typology rather than use. In areas that are developed with housing already, the regulating plan does little more than indicate what type of housing may be developed there in the future.

In areas identified appropriate for future growth, where there is no current development, the regulating plan indicates the layout of the area as well, providing specific street layouts and open space requirements to ensure that future growth adheres to the master plan and helps meet the community's goals and objectives for downtown.

The Regulating Plan refers to building types rather than land uses. This Plan focuses on allowable building types and the built form which makes up the public realm. This includes build-to lines, setbacks, and minimum and maximum building heights. The regulating plan also designates layout such as parking locations and required entry zones and locations. This will further coordinate land use and zoning, creating consistency for planning and development decisions.

A key strategy has been to define the public realm in downtown, mainly on North Shore Avenue and Main Street. The proposed changes occur in commercial areas, to allow more flexibility to support appropriate development. Existing uses are always allowed and need not change at all. The Regulating Plan pertains to future development in all areas and the default is to support current property owners and their rights with respect to the currently allowed uses of their properties.

Zoning Code Implications

Specific development types, building heights, and where build-to-lines, parking locations, and required entry zones are indicated on the Regulating Plan. Zoning regulations for the downtown area should be updated to reflect and further define aspects of the Downtown Regulating Plan as well as the planning policies established during the Master Plan process.

Code Amendment Recommendations

The following code amendment recommendations will help update the zoning code to implement the downtown master plan vision. Updating Lowell's zoning code is an essential next step to achieving the community's vision and planning policies for downtown. The recommendations are organized by development typology on the Regulating Plan.

Flex-Use 1

1. Use
 - a. Commercial, Mixed-use, Residential
2. Height
 - a. Minimum number of floors: 2
 - b. Maximum number of floors: 3
 - c. Finished ground floor level: 0 inches minimum above sidewalk
3. Placement
 - a. Front required build-to line (RBL): 0 feet, where RBL is indicated on the Regulating Plan
 - b. Primary entries must occur where designated on the Regulating Plan along the RBL
 - c. Side setbacks: 0 feet
 - d. Rear setbacks: 0 feet
4. Coverage
 - a. Primary street façade built to RBL: 90%
 - b. Lot coverage: 100% maximum
5. Façade Transparency
 - a. Percent of façade area (ground floor): 75% minimum along RBLs
 - b. Percent of façade area (upper floors): 40% minimum
6. Parking
 - a. Parking shall occur in the parking envelop shown on the Regulating Plan

Flex-Use 2

1. Use
 - a. Commercial, Mixed-use, Required Residential
2. Height
 - a. Minimum number of floors: 1
 - b. Maximum number of floors: 3
 - c. Finished ground floor level: Refer to component building type
3. Placement
 - a. Front required build-to line (RBL): 0 to 10 feet, where RBL is indicated on the Regulating Plan
 - b. Primary entries must occur where designated on the Regulating Plan along the RBL
 - c. Side setbacks: 5 feet
 - d. Rear setbacks: 20 feet
4. Coverage
 - a. Primary street façade built to RBL: 80% minimum
 - b. Lot coverage: 70% maximum
5. Façade Transparency
 - a. Percent of façade area (ground floor): 70% minimum along RBLs

- b. Percent of façade area (upper floors): 40% minimum
- 6. Parking
 - a. Parking shall occur in the parking envelop shown on the Regulating Plan
- 7. Homes entirely above the ground floor should have a balcony at least four feet deep.

Townhome

- 1. Use
 - a. Residential (Single-Family Attached)
- 2. Height
 - a. Minimum number of floors: 2
 - b. Maximum number of floors: 3
 - c. Finished ground floor level: 18 inches minimum above sidewalk
- 3. Placement
 - a. Front required build-to line (RBL): 5 to 15 feet, where RBL is indicated on the Regulating Plan
 - b. Primary entries must occur where designated on the Regulating Plan along the RBL
 - c. Side setbacks: 5 feet
 - d. Rear setbacks: 20 feet
- 4. Coverage
 - a. Primary street façade built to RBL: 80%
 - b. Lot coverage: 60% maximum
- 5. Façade Transparency
 - a. Percent of façade area (ground floor): 40% minimum along RBLs
 - b. Percent of façade area (upper floors): 40% minimum
- 6. Parking
 - a. Required two (2) spaces per unit and parking shall be accessed from the rear, using alleys; no front access garages
- 7. Porch
 - a. Required covered stoop or porch: minimum six feet by six feet (6'x6') for each entry that can be extended beyond the RBL provided it does not encroach on the public right-of-way

Residential

- 1. Use
 - a. Residential (Single-Family Detached)
- 2. Height
 - a. Minimum number of floors: 1
 - b. Maximum number of floors: 3
 - c. Finished ground floor level: 18 inches minimum above sidewalk
- 3. Placement
 - a. Front setback: 10 to 30 feet
 - b. Side setbacks: 5 feet
 - c. Rear setbacks: 20 feet
- 4. Coverage
 - a. Lot coverage: 50% maximum
- 5. Façade Transparency
 - a. Percent of façade area (ground floor): 40% minimum
 - b. Percent of façade area (upper floors): 40% minimum

6. Parking
 - a. Required two (2) spaces off-street and parking shall be accessed from the rear, using alleys
7. Porch
 - a. Required covered stoop or porch: minimum six feet by six feet (6'x6') for the primary entry that can extend beyond the front setback provided it does not encroach on the public right-of-way

Streets

1. Street trees shall be planted on the planting strip between 25' and 30' on-center
2. Place parallel parking spaces at least eight feet wide and 20 feet long along the edge of all streets in the downtown area
3. Street trees shall be placed a minimum of 10' from fire hydrants and 20' from stop signs
4. Design sidewalks at least six feet in width on secondary roads and 15 feet in width in commercial areas, such as the north side of North Shore Drive.
5. Sidewalks shall be on one or both sides of the street and connect to at least two adjacent sidewalks
6. Bike lanes shall be a minimum of 5 feet wide and shared bicycle/vehicular roads shall be indicated with a "sharrow" painted in the center of the travel lane.

Projects and Implementation Plan

Years 1 – 5

1. Update the downtown zoning regulations to adhere to the Downtown Master Plan
2. Establish design standards for signage and gateways
3. Erect gateway on Pioneer Street
4. Rolling Rock Park improvements
5. City Hall and Library Concept Plan
6. Sidewalk Improvements along N. Shore (County plans?)
7. Paint parallel parking and bike lanes along N. Shore
8. Plant street trees along N. Shore Drive
9. Develop a green space connectivity network and plan for pedestrian and bicycle pathways
10. Expand pedestrian connectivity from the downtown area towards Dexter Lake

Years 6 – 10

1. Paul Fisher Park improvements
2. Sidewalk improvements along Moss and Main
3. Plant street trees along Moss and Main on both sides of the street
4. Expand pedestrian connectivity from the downtown area to the covered bridge
5. Work with the Lane County transportation on detailed plans for a round-about at N. Shore and Pioneer Street

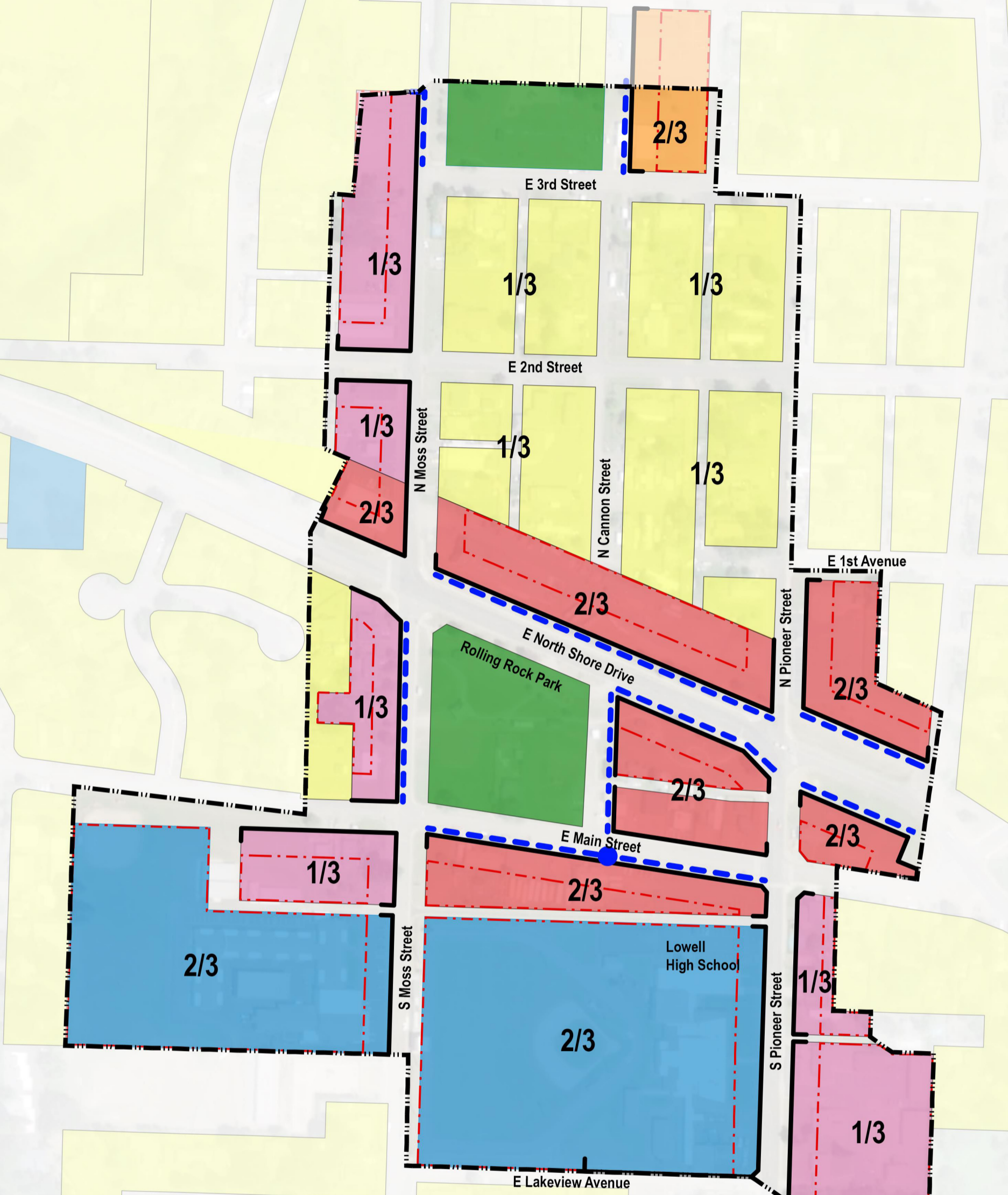
Years 11 – 15

1. Sidewalk improvements along Pioneer St.
2. Plant street trees along Pioneer St.












Years 16+

1. Round-about at N. Shore and Pioneer

City of Lowell
 Downtown Master Plan - Draft Regulating Plan



City of Lowell

-  Downtown Study Area
-  Build To Line
-  Entry Zone
-  Entry Point
-  Parking Zone
-  Townhomes/Single-Family Attached
-  Residential
-  Flex 2 (Commercial, Mixed-Use, Required Residential)
-  Flex 1 (Commercial, Mixed-Use, Residential)
-  Civic/Public
-  Greenspace/Parks

