



Lowell Plan Public Matters®
A Program in Civic Engagement
January – June, 2024

Program Description: The Lowell Plan Public Matters® program provides a setting for experiential learning in the context of the City of Lowell. We focus on Lowell National Historical Park as we seek to examine, understand, and appreciate the city’s industrial past, the current cultural revitalization, and historic preservation efforts. Members will observe, define, analyze and practice leadership skills through a variety of activities following a progression that begins with ME, expands to YOU, and culminates in US. The course will encompass demonstration, lecture, video presentation, simulation, cooperative learning, class discussion, observation and analysis of Lowell-based case studies, interviews of community leaders, and field trips.

Public Matters Sponsors: Lowell Plan Public Matters® is made possible through the generous support of The Lowell Plan, Inc., and the Lowell National Historical Park.

Project Team: Joseph Banh (PM ’17), The Lowell Plan, joey@lowellplan.org; Allison Lamey (PM ’10), Executive Director, The Lowell Plan, allison@lowellplan.org; and Frank Clark (PM ’14), Park Ranger, LNHP. Public Matters is administered by The Lowell Plan, Inc., 660 Suffolk Street, Suite 120, Lowell, 01854.

Program Requirements: Program participants will meet 4:30 – 7:30 pm on two Wednesdays each month, unless otherwise indicated, beginning January 10 and concluding June 19, 2024. Three extended sessions will be held on Saturdays with a tentatively planned fourth Saturday in June for a canal tour with the Lowell National Historical Park. Members are expected to commit themselves to the course schedule and participate in meetings, lectures, presentations, and field trips. Members should be accessible to their cohort who seek professional advice and counsel and be willing to share their experiences regarding working and/or living in Lowell and the challenges facing emerging leaders in the city.

Confirmation of attendance: You will receive a bi-weekly email confirming session locations and notice of any meeting cancellations due to inclement weather. Please confirm your attendance by responding to the email.

Course Materials: A shared Google Drive has been set up for this class. The contents of the Drive provide supplemental material related to our discussion topics. While these are not

required readings, you may find that they help you prepare for a session and inspire questions for the presenters.

Additional Reading: Additional materials have been provided to enhance what you'll learn in these sessions. *Mill Power*. Paul Marion. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Refreshments: A light supper will be provided for each evening session and lunch will be provided for the Saturday sessions.

Program Schedule

(Subject to change based on availability of presenters)

Wednesday, January 10

America's First Planned Industrial City The Intentional City

Location: Boott Cotton Mills Museum,

America's First Planned Industrial City: Dilemmas, Choices, Consequences

Presenter: Lowell National Park Ranger

Overview: Lowell National Historical Park preserves and interprets the places, the buildings, the machines, and the stories that represent one of the most important turning points in American History—the industrial revolution. Lowell, as America's first large-scale planned industrial city, played a critical role in leading this country from its start as an agricultural, mostly rural, traditional society just after the Revolution to a fully-fledged industrial urban modern society by the later part of the 19th century. With a tour through the working weave room and the Boott Cotton Mills Museum, this session will highlight Lowell's significance in our national history and the unique confluence of nature, technology, labor, and capital that created and sustained the city. The tour will also focus on the human stories of dilemmas and leadership choices, and how the consequences of those choices have shaped the city's past and present.

The Intentional City – A discussion on the entrepreneurial and partnership spirit of Lowell in the 70s and 80s and an assessment of the City today.

Panelists: Steve Joncas, Principal of Joncas and Associates and Director of Real Estate Development for Common Ground Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Community Teamwork, Inc.; and Paul Marion, former Executive Director of Community Relations and Co-Director, Center for Arts and Ideas, UMass Lowell and author of *Mill Power: The Origin and Impact of Lowell National Historical Park*.

Overview: Many post-industrial cities have never fully recovered from the boom and bust cycles. They were dominated by single industry bases such as the textile industry, automobile

manufacturing, etc. Lowell, on the other hand is known as a place that has seen numerous recoveries since the days that textile operations moved south in the early 20th century. Beginning with an overview of Lowell's historical significance and its designation as the nation's first urban national cultural park, this session will examine how Lowell has developed a long-lasting strategy for reinventing itself and how that vision was developed through layers of partnerships.

Objectives: (1) gain perspective of the historical significance of Lowell as the first planned industrial city in America; (2) understand Lowell's renaissance from perspectives relating to business, government, and the private non-profit community interests; (3) recognize the key ingredients that brought positive change to Lowell in the 70s, 80s, and 90s; and (4) recognize the challenges and opportunities Lowell faces today.

Wednesday, January 24

Introduction to the Lowell Plan and the Lowell Development and Financial Corporation (LDFC)

Location: The Lowell Plan Offices, 660 Suffolk St., Suite 120, Wannalancit Mills

Panelists: Jim Cook, Executive Director of the Lowell Plan and the LDFC; Diane Silva, Vice President of the LDFC and Executive Vice President of Enterprise Bank.

Overview: The Lowell Development & Financial Corporation (LDFC) and the Lowell Plan are private, non-profit organizations that were established in 1975 and 1979 respectively, to assist in the economic revitalization of Lowell.

Partnerships link Lowell's past successes to its current promise. The fundamental contribution of the Lowell Plan through the years has been to provide an opportunity for community leaders to gather and identify challenges, agree on objectives, and devise strategies to accomplish goals related to economic development. Many of Lowell's most significant achievements of the past few decades began with community conversations about downtown development, education, housing, tourism and entertainment, transportation, and more.

One constant in the LDFC's history is its ability to form partnerships to achieve goals that benefit the community. LDFC loans complement private lending and can spur investment by distributing risk broadly. From providing incentive financing for downtown building restoration to the support for the River's Edge on the Concord housing development and to the current initiative to provide financing to startup businesses working in UMass Lowell's Innovation Hub, its mission has remained true: to improve the quality of life in Lowell.

Objectives: (1) understand the origins of the Lowell Plan and the LDFC; (2) learn about the roles each organization played in Lowell's renaissance; and (3) understand how each organization responds to changing needs.

Saturday, February 3

Reinventing a New England Industrial City – Bus Tour of Lowell

Location: Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union, One Tremont Place

Presenters: Peter Aucella, Assistant Superintendent, Lowell National Historical Park; and Yovani Baez-Rose (PM '11), Assistant City Manager/Director of Planning and Development.

Overview: A bus tour will establish the context for a preservation movement that has blended with the City's economic development strategy. Lowell, because of its rich history and legacy of architecturally significant buildings has a particular history to protect and retain. The tour will establish the context for a preservation movement that has led to economic development and the development of a strong cultural economy. It will also include a discussion of the 15-acre Hamilton Canal District.

Objectives: (1) understand how an historic preservation effort blends with the city's economic development strategy; (2) establish the context for the preservation movement by touring specific examples in the city; and (3) see the real-life application of theory by touring the city.

Wednesday, February 14

Public Narrative – The Story of Self

Location: UMass Lowell Hoff Building

Presenter: Joey Banh (PM '17)

Overview: Public Narrative is a leadership practice. It is the art of translating values into action – a discursive process through which individuals, communities, and nations learn to make choices, construct identity, and inspire action. Leadership often requires telling a new public story, or adapting an old one: a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now. A story of self communicates the values that are calling you to act. A story of us communicates values shared by those whom you hope to motivate to act. And a story of now communicates the urgent challenge to those values that demands action now. Leaders use public narrative to interpret their values to others, engage others in a sense of shared community, and inspire others to join them in acting on challenges their community must face.

Objectives: (1) explain public narrative as a leadership art, describe its structure, and the reasons why leaders draw on narrative to inspire action; (2) evaluate public narrative based on practical and analytical understanding; (3) construct a Story of Self around choice points--moments when you faced a challenge, made a choice, experienced an outcome and learned a moral; and (4) develop a framework for constructing your own public narrative--to translate your values into action.

Wednesday, February 28

Civic Engagement in Action

Location: TBD

Presenters:

Overview: Civic engagement is a cornerstone to any healthy community. It can take many forms: running for elected office, volunteering in the community, taking a public stand on an issue important to you, etc. In this session we'll take a deeper look into what those forms of civic engagement can look like while also learning about important moments in Lowell's recent history that have shaped contemporary projects and policy, including the

debate over the location of a new high school and the way we elect our local city council.

Objectives: (1) understand the techniques, resources, and tools used to lead a grassroots campaign; (1) understand the challenges and opportunities to making Lowell a more inclusive community; (2) recognize barriers BIPOC populations currently face when seeking paths of influence; (3) consider Lowell's current local election system; (4) consider ways to improve voter turnout and public engagement.

Wednesday, March 13

Governance

Location: Lowell City Hall/Mayor's Reception Room

Presenter: Tom Golden (PM '09), Lowell City Manager

Overview: Lowell is one of only three municipalities in Massachusetts that operates under the Plan E form of government. A City Manager, appointed by an elected City Council is responsible for the day to day operations of the city. A ceremonial Mayor serves as the President of the City Council and Chairs the School Committee. This session will focus on citizen engagement and democracy.

Objectives: (1) acquire a general understanding of the operation and structure of government, finance, housing, health and social service resources in Lowell; (2) understand the theory and practice of good governance as essential elements in meeting the needs of the broader community; (3) develop a richer understanding of the people, resources and processes needed for an organization to achieve its goals; and (4) identify the challenges faced by leaders in serving and meeting the needs of the broader community.

Wednesday, March 27

Lowell: An Educative City

Location: TBD

Presenters (Pending Availability): Julie Chen, Chancellor University of Massachusetts, Lowell; Phil Sisson, President of Middlesex Community College

Overview: With two public institutions of higher education in the city, it's often touted that one can go from pre-school to a PhD in

Lowell. UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College are two of Lowell's largest employers; provide research and work force development opportunities to area businesses; and contribute to the city's vibrancy and culture. This session will explore the roles both schools have played in the growth of the city; explore the town and gown dynamics; and discuss Lowell as a college town.

Objectives: (1) understand the role that higher education plays in the City; (2) recognize the benefits and challenges that come when large public institutions operate in a community; (3) understand the town-gown dynamics.

Saturday, April 6 or 13

White Water Rafting

Location: Concord River/UMass Lowell ICC

This is an early spring rafting trip on the Concord River offering an incredibly unique opportunity to experience white water rafting through downtown Lowell. The urban whitewater ride plunges over three major class III-IV rapids (Twisted Sister, Three Beauties, and Middlesex Dam). When the water level is right, Three Beauties becomes an intensely fun surfing hole. Surfing involves paddling upstream into a wave or hole with the goal to fill the boat with water, splash the entire crew, or maybe even have the boat stand on end. There will be two runs made. The Concord River rafting trip concludes with passage through the Lower Locks, an 1850's lock chamber between UMass Lowell's Inn and Conference and Middlesex Community College. A portion of the proceeds from this trip benefit the Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, working to preserve greenspace in Lowell.

Objectives: (1) experience one of the most significant natural resources in the Lowell; and (2) function as a team.

Wednesday, April 10

Immigration: The Big Move

Location : Mogan Center/One City Many Cultures Exhibit

Panelists: Public Matters Class Members/Alumni TBD

Facilitator: Bob Farrant, PhD, History, UMass Lowell

Overview: Central to Lowell's story is this ever-changing workforce through the periodic rise and fall of mill employment through the 1920s followed by the city's rebirth as a high technology showcase, the home to the Lowell National Historical Park and its attendant historical preservation, numerous private-public partnerships building on the city's wonderful "old bones," and more recently as a city intent of playing a leading role in cultural production. Throughout these various transformations newcomers have been in the middle of the action, starting businesses, restoring old neighborhoods through their sweat equity, and contributing in numerous ways to the sorts of cultural activities that make Lowell an exciting place to be.

Objectives: (1) recognize how individuals seek out ways to imagine and maintain their cultural identities; (2) understand that this is done through preservation, creation, re-invention of traditions, ways of life, customs, and practices; and (3) understand that Lowell's immigrant and refugee story is broad, complex, and on-going.

Wednesday, April 24

Lowell, A City of Arts

Location: Western Avenue Studios

Panelists: Various

Overview: Arts and culture are critical components to Lowell's economy. In the early 2000s city officials made a deliberate decision to actively recruit artists to live and work in Lowell, through changes in land use policies and direct marketing campaigns. Fast forward the cultural economy is a major economic driver in Lowell and plays an important role in the city's tourism and hospitality industries. This session will explore how those early decisions have shaped the city and in turn how the city has influenced artists.

Saturday, May 8 or 18

Neighborhood Walks

Location: Cambodia Town or the TDI District/Acre Neighborhood

Overview: Lowell is a city defined by its many neighborhoods, each with their own characteristics. Over time the physical and cultural characteristics of neighborhoods have changed. Participants will select a neighborhood they would like to learn

more about and pair up with a tour guide who will share stories of growing up in the neighborhoods, noting historic landmarks and significant points of interest.

Objectives: (1) recognize the richness of cultural diversity and explain the relationship between immigration and the physical development of Lowell; and (2) understand how Lowell's neighborhoods developed their individual identities and ways in which those identities have been represented, redefined, or challenged.

Wednesday, May 8

Downtown Revitalization

Location: Lala Books, Market St.

Presenter: Various

Overview: Downtown Lowell serves as the city's central business district. It's the home to some of the city's largest employers, local and state government offices, non-profit social service providers, residents, and small businesses. Nation wide central business districts, especially in mid-sized cities, have struggled to compete with regional shopping centers and the convenience of suburban malls. Yet downtowns serve as the cultural hub for most communities and in a post-COVID era are seeing a rejuvenation.

This discussion will focus on the challenges specific to Lowell's downtown as well as its strengths and opportunities. We'll hear about the work that the city and other stakeholders are doing to strengthen downtown.

Objectives: (1) understand the role that central business districts can play; (2) understand some of the tools and resources available to strengthen downtowns; and (3) recognize the planning challenges and opportunities to implement strategies.

Wednesday, May 22

The Power of Social Capital

Location: Studio 26 Associates, Merrimack St.

Presenter: John Wooding, former Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UMass Lowell. Former Chair of the Department of Regional and Economic and Social Development.

Overview: We often use the term “social capital” but are sometimes confused about what it actually means. Some view it as the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development. Social capital has also been defined as the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. In this session we will explore these ideas and examine where they are part of the fabric of the Lowell community.

John Wooding is the former Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UMass Lowell. He is the former chair of the Dept. of Regional Economic and Social Development. He was trained as a political scientist and received his PhD from Brandeis University and his undergraduate degree from the London School of Economics. John is or has been a member of the boards of: Merrimack Repertory Theatre; the Lowell Community Software Labs; Tsongas Industrial History Center; Mill City Grows; Lowell Food Security Council; Lowell Film Festival; and for several years, he chaired the Cultural Organizations of Lowell (COOL).

Objectives: (1) understand the definition of social capital within the context of Lowell; (2) understand the concept of social capital within Lowell’s changing demographics; and (3) recognize the opportunities Public Matters presents in terms of social capital.

Wednesday, June 5

What Do We Do Now? – The Story of Us and the Story of Now

Location: UML Allen House

Overview: ME, YOU, US wrap-up/lessons learned/how to build the network forward.

During this session we'll talk about what kind of impact you, as a class, would like to have on Lowell and help you identify some of the first steps to get started.

Objectives: (1) construct a "Story of Us" and a "Story of Now" based on the last six months; and (2) develop and articulate a "Promise of Commitment" that brings the class to a unified purpose.

Saturday, June 1 or 8

Waterpower: Lowell's Canalway System

(Note: This session is pending seasonal availability)

Location: Pawtucket Canal Tour; Mill No. 5

Overview: Lowell's early growth as a city centers around its intricate system of canals. The canals have long served as a major power source with a unique and complicated ownership structure. This session builds on Lowell's industrial history introduced at the start of the program; explores the complexity of the ownership and maintenance of the canals; and challenges the class to consider ongoing stewardship needs and uses of the canals.

Objectives: (1) understand complex ownership and operations associated with Lowell's canal system; (2) consider the changing roles of the canals in Lowell's economic development.

Wednesday, June 19

Concluding Ceremony

Location: tbd