

GPCOG Executive Committee

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

In-Person:

*Greater Portland Council of Governments
970 Baxter Boulevard, Room 201
Portland, Maine
(Lunch provided)*

Remote:

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86844969864>

Phone: 1 301 715 8592

Webinar ID: 868 4496 9864

*Participating by phone? Use *9 to raise your hand and *6 to unmute.*

As of April 26, 2022 GPCOG and PACTS are holding committee meetings in hybrid format, both in person at GPCOG's offices and via webinar. The remote portions of all meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of GPCOG Executive Committee policy, [LD 1772](#), [PL 2022 Ch. 666](#), and [1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1](#).

1. Welcome

This meeting is being recorded and will be made available at gpcog.org/AgendaCenter.

2. Public Comment

Members of the public are welcome to provide up to three minutes of public comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.

3. Approval of the 1/17/23 Meeting Minutes (Attachment A) 5 minutes

4. Spotlight: Ridership Recovery 20 minutes

Andrew Clark, Transit Program Manager, will discuss post-pandemic public transportation ridership and share strategies the region is using to encourage more people to try and to take transit.

5. Executive Director’s Report (Attachment B) 5 minutes

6. Regional strategy to expand housing choices (Attachment C) 20 minutes

Staff Report

Staff updated the housing strategy based on Executive Committee feedback. Attachment C is the revised approach.

Recommended Action

Review the proposed strategy outline, provide feedback, and approve or modify the housing effort it proposes.

7. Revolving Loan Committee Appointment 5 minutes

Staff Report

Paul Johnson, GPCOG’s Economic Development Director, continues to build the membership of GPCOG Revolving Loan Committee and recommends adding Demetria Pellegrino to the committee.

Mrs. Pellegrino is the Deputy Director of Economic & Community Development for the City of Westbrook. Demetria has a comprehensive background in the banking industry serving as Head Teller and Loan Officer. She managed a mini branch for TruChoice Federal Credit Union where she provided a range of services to customers and ensured the day-to-day operations. She is currently serving a three-year term on the Town of Limerick Planning Board where she participates in bi-monthly meetings. Demetria holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Southern Maine and is pursuing a Master’s in Policy, Planning, and Management from the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. Her appointment continues the effort to welcome more municipal staff members to the GPCOG Loan Committee.

Recommended Action

Appoint Demetria Pellegrino to GPCOG’s Revolving Loan Committee.

8. Scoping the Strategic Plan Update 15 minutes

Staff Report

GPCOG completed its 5-year [Strategic Plan](#) in May 2017, covering FY18 – FY22. In spring 2022, the Executive Committee reaffirmed the plan with an addendum and extended the strategic plan for two years, covering FY23 and FY24. Staff were directed to begin the process of preparing the new strategic plan in early 2023, with the aim of having the General Assembly ratify the plan in May 2024.

At today’s meeting, Executive Committee members will discuss what it hopes the strategic plan will address. Do you have questions the plan should answer? Do you have ideas on which themes to focus? Do you have ideas about how to gather input and from whom?

Staff will scope the strategic plan update, sizing the process and work to what the Executive Committee would like to accomplish, with the goal of providing a proposal for consideration at the March Executive Committee meeting.

Recommended Action

Discussion only.

9. Other Business

Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings	
March 21, 2023	Strategic Plan Update – Proposed Scope Executive Director Annual Review
April 25, 2023	Appoint Nomination Committee for Officers and Executive Committee FY24 Annual Budget – First Draft Executive Director’s Performance Goals
May 16, 2023	FY24 Annual Budget – Final Recommendation to General Assembly Nomination for FY24 Officers and Executive Committee Adopt Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy FY24 Meeting Calendar Affirm Investment Policy
May 25, 2023	General Assembly and Summit at St. Joseph’s College in Standish

Board and committee members, the public, and other stakeholders are encouraged to subscribe to the GPCOG Executive Committee calendar at gpcog.org/Calendar.

If you require accommodations to review materials or participate in this meeting (such as captioning or interpreting—at no cost to you), please contact: (207) 774-9891 or transportation@gpcog.org

Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will help us to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

Attachment A

GPCOG Executive Committee MINUTES January 17, 2003

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
John Hawley	Naples
Mary Fernandes	Casco
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Krista Chappell	Gray
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Mark Dion	Portland

Welcome

With Jarrod and the other officers remote for the meeting, Kristina opened the meeting.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Acceptance of 11/15/22 Minutes

Matt moved approval of the May meeting's minutes. Kate seconded. A roll call was conducted. All were in favor.

Spotlight: Broadband in our Region

Clara McCool, Regional Broadband Coordinator, said that 57% of households in Cumberland County are unserved, based on the state's definition. The Lakes Region, where GPCOG has been convening a subregional group to expand broadband access, is covered by Spectrum, but does not have high speeds or reliable service. The goal is to extend universal high speed internet coverage that is affordable. John Hawley, who has been working with Clara, said that towns can't address broadband issues alone because they are unable to get the attention of funders. Bigger projects attract grants and service providers. Nat asked whether GPCOG was funded through state money, and Clara said that federal funds are flowing through the state. Nat noted that the federal and state definitions of adequate speeds are quite different. Clara said that the Federal Communications Commission is aware that the federal definition is outdated. Clara used [this slide deck](#).

Executive Director's Report

Kristina announced that Gray, Durham, Bridgton, and Casco will receive new transportation studies via GPCOG's rural transportation program. Casco, Naples, Raymond, Sebago and Standish will all receive \$10,000 in

broadband planning funds, secured through a grant GPCOG wrote for the communities. She congratulated Yarmouth and Freeport for deciding to share a new Sustainability Coordinator. Upcoming guests on Let's Connect, the WMPG radio show Kristina hosts include Kate Lewis and Tom Hall.

Regional Strategy to Expand Housing Choices

Executive Committee members provided feedback on the draft regional housing strategy, noting that:

- We are in a crisis, or at least in a challenging and perpetual housing shortage.
- Not many tools are being used successfully by municipalities, so it's worth GPCOG addressing housing and encouraging towns to think longer term.
- Will it work? We don't know, but we should try.
- But, the Leadership Council isn't the way to go. Creating a Council would create, at best, another meeting or layer of government, and at worst, could provide an excuse for some to drag their feet, and put time in between ideas and action.
- The group suggested an alternative: a clearinghouse that was a more 'bottom-up' approach focused on a 'coalition of the willing' municipalities. Help/ technical assistance will be in the form of providing data, public education, best practices, tools, and a general ability to help towns answer questions they encounter. This will allow GPCOG to tailor help for different types of municipalities, ranging from cities to rural towns.
- Some towns, like Bridgton, need help developing relationships with developers, for example. South Portland has already done a lot on housing. Windham hired a consultant to look at its ordinances to see what might be impeding housing. This type of technical assistance is valuable.
- The barriers listed in the strategy are real issues, not just obstacles to overcome.
- One barrier to affordability is lack of access to capital. Developers need to be paid to produce affordable housing.
- One strategy could be the creation of a regional housing authority.
- Another consideration is ensuring long-term affordability of units.

Jarrod noted that cities and towns can't stop the growth that's coming. GPCOG's role is to share best practices, support the capacity of towns to shape the coming growth, including advocating for funding for municipalities, and cooperate regionally to address the shortage. We need to move with purpose.

Staff will bring back a revised housing strategy, reflecting this input, for Executive Committee consideration at the February meeting.

Proposed Brownfield Grant and Loan

Joined by Mike Hulse from the South Portland Housing Development Corporation, Paul presented the proposed \$500,000 grant and \$177,000 loan to clean up the brownfield at 149A Front Street in South Portland. Mike reported the Authority is planning to develop housing on the Yard South site. Carmen noted there is value in any brownfield being cleaned up and made usable. Kate requested information on whether the conditions of the grant and loan require that the land be used for affordable housing and asked if the clean-up will proceed if the site is not approved for a zoning change that would allow housing. She also asked if there's a timeframe within which the funds need to be used. Paul replied that the cleanup will, most likely, happen independent of the zone

change approval. Additionally, he would doublecheck the loan conditions in regard to affordable housing. Paul confirmed for Matt that GPCOG holds the first position on financing and that all other loans are subordinated. Kate noted that she will vote in favor of the grant and loan, but noted that she is not endorsing a change in zoning or indicating support for the proposed Yard South project.

Matt moved approval of \$500,000 in grant funding and \$177,000 in loan funding for the South Portland Housing Development Corporations clean-up of the 149A Front Street 3.16 acre parcel in South Portland. Mark seconded. The role was called, and all were in favor.

FY24 Member Dues Rate

Tony reviewed the proposal to increase the member dues rate to \$2.10 for FY24, with an intention of increasing the dues \$2.20 for FY25 and \$2.25 for FY26. and presented data in a [slide deck](#). Krista asked if the population was recently adjusted, and Kristina confirmed that dues were adjusted this last year (FY23) based on the new decennial census data. Kate expressed reluctance given the financial strains on South Portland. Nat noted that the proposed 5% increase covers a 4 year period, and the return on investment justifies and increase. Krista noted that the total increase for Gray is \$1,500, and that the services Gray receives more than makes up for this increase. Matt reminded the group that GPCOG had no dues increase for 27 years, and that hamstrung us and we left money on the table because we couldn't match grants. We don't want a repeat of that situation. The advice from our investment agency was to hold the line with the investment account to allow the fund to grow back.

Nat moved to recommend to the General Assembly a FY24 dues increase to \$2.10, with an endorsement of the concept to increase dues in future years. Matt seconded. The roll was called and all were in favor.

FY22 Audit Report

Jen Conners from Runyon Kersteen Ouellette reviewed GPCOG's FY22 financial statements and audit, including indirect costs, and used a [slide deck](#). The auditor has an unmodified opinion, noting that GPCOG has no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. In the audit team's testing, there were no compliance findings. The audit was very clean across the board. The Executive Committee opted not to ask staff to leave the room for a private discussion with the auditor, and offered their congratulations to Josh for his excellent work for the agency.

Matt moved to accept the audit, noting thanks to staff. Nat seconded. All were in favor.

The Executive Committee adjourned.

Attachment B

Executive Director's Report

Strategic Priority – Serve our Members

- Lakes Region Gathering. Thanks to **Carmen, John, and Sue**, the Lakes Region towns' leadership of **Bridgton, Casco, Naples and Cumberland County** convened to discuss the challenges of our rural Lakes communities and how the Lakes Region can collaborate.
- Chairs in a Circle. 18 Mayor, Chairs and Vice Chairs joined our annual Chairs in a Circle. This year's session focused on rebuilding trust in local government and featured Craig Freshley and Dan Demeritt. Participating members were: **Bridgton, Standish, North Yarmouth, Cape Elizabeth, Westbrook, Portland, Gorham, Saco, Freeport, Scarborough, Cumberland, Windham**.

Strategic Priority – Regional Prosperity

- Expanding housing choice. GPCOG has been meeting with state leaders on how municipalities, regional councils and the state can work together to expand housing choice. **Bridgton, Gray, Freeport** and staff recently met with the Governor's Office of Innovation and the Future.

On the legislative front, GPCOG testified in favor of technical assistance funding for the new Housing Opportunities Program. This will provide funds to regional councils and municipalities to address barriers to housing development. GPCOG, along with our peer agencies across the state, has been invited to a workshop with the Joint Select Committee on Housing to describe the role of regional councils, speak to what councils can do to support more affordable housing, and describe the Housing First model.

Kristina was an invited call-in guest to [Maine Calling](#) to discuss the end to Emergency Rental Assistance.

- Welcoming and housing New Mainers. This is one of the **Metro Region Coalition's** top priorities. Staff have been working to advance a bill that will fund transitional housing developments and wrap-around services at the nine state-designated service hubs across the state. Staff and **Portland** have also been in discussions with Maine Housing, GOPIF, and DHHS about the unsustainable burden on General Assistance and the need for state leadership and coordination. Belinda Ray will moderate the March Eggs & Issues on Welcoming New Mainers to the workforce. One of the panelists is Danielle West, **Portland**.

As part of the **Safe in Maine** initiative, Belinda Ray worked with **Habitat for Humanity** to submit a response to **Maine Housing's Long-Term-Solutions** funding opportunity. If the funding is granted, it will help to convert a 6,000 square foot warehouse space owned by Habitat into a permanent family emergency shelter able to provide transitional housing for 12-15 families at a time. There is also potential for the development of additional transitional housing at this site.

- Let's Connect. Let's Connect will be going live on WMPG starting in March. Several members have recently been on the radio show, including Kate Lewis, **South Portland**, Tom Hall and Jami Fitch, **Scarborough**, Chad Heid, **Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit**, Kristen Dow, **Portland**, and John Egan, **Freeport**.

Strategic Priority – Operate with Excellence

- Emily Ham has been hired as the Community Engagement Manager. Most recently, she served as the Executive Director of the Santa Cruz County Business Council. Before that, Emily developed deep experience in housing policy and planning, working both in California and in Maine for Avesta. She holds a master's in public administration.
- Grants & Contracts. Since the January report, GPCOG received notice that we were awarded \$263,000 for the federal Safe Streets for All. We applied for this funding collaboratively with the Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System (KACTS), who will receive \$98,000 of the funding. The remaining \$165,000 will support both PACTS's Vision Zero initiative and extend this work to all of GPCOG's rural communities. We expect to receive the funding in May.
- Banking Services Contract. Gorham Savings Bank won the competitive bid to provide GPCOG's banking services.
- Budget to Actual Update. On the following pages is the report on revenues received through 12/31/22 and expenses incurred during the same period, compared to the FY23 budget the General Assembly adopted last May.

GPCOG Budget to Actual (REVENUES)				
As of December 31, 2022				
Description	FY23 Budget	FY 23 Actual	Difference	% Recognized
Federal Funding				
U.S. Department of Transportation - Planning Funds	2,479,152	1,102,572	(1,376,580)	44%
U.S. Department of Transportation - Capital Projects	111,805	23,275	(88,530)	21%
U.S. Economic Development Administration	70,000	41,262	(28,738)	59%
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	-	4,658	4,658	#DIV/0!
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Loan Funding	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
U.S. Department of Energy	119,000	57,000	(62,000)	48%
U.S. Department of Commerce (Coastal Funds)	50,831	28,762	(22,069)	57%
Corporation for National & Community Service	312,000	130,059	(181,941)	42%
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	137,500	39,819	(97,681)	29%
State & Local Funding				
Maine Dept of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry	16,602	5,591	(11,011)	34%
Maine Department of Transportation - Planning Funds	244,326	91,994	(152,332)	38%
Maine Department of Transportation - Land Use	15,508	9,519	(5,989)	61%
ConnectMaine Authority	171,750	57,489	(114,261)	33%
Governor's Office of Policy and Innovation	38,500	55,993	17,493	145%
Municipal & Local Match	104,367	62,789	(41,578)	60%
Municipal & Other Contracts	160,100	151,265	(8,835)	94%
Member Services				
Member Dues	532,350	223,756	(308,594)	42%
Joint Purchasing Fees	30,000	-	(30,000)	0%
In-Kind Match	3,750	3,970	220	106%
Other Revenues				
Loan Fund Interest and Fees	85,063	38,203	(46,860)	45%
Bank Interest	3,413	26,864	23,451	787%
Miscellaneous Revenues	-	1,740	1,740	#DIV/0!
Projected New Revenues	331,450	-	(331,450)	0%
Total Revenues	\$ 5,017,467	\$ 2,156,579	\$ (2,860,888)	43%

GPCOG Budget to Actual (EXPENSES)				
As of December 31, 2022				
Description	FY23 Budget	FY 23 Actual	Difference	% Spent
Personnel				
Salaries	2,573,010	1,095,487	1,477,523	43%
Fringe Benefits	520,883	193,514	327,369	37%
Office				
Postage	1,000	850	150	85%
Utilities	8,500	4,550	3,950	54%
Office Supplies	6,000	4,178	1,822	70%
Printing & Copying	10,000	3,837	6,163	38%
Rent	141,270	70,882	70,388	50%
Cleaning	2,392	351	2,041	15%
Telecommunications	8,342	4,079	4,263	49%
Depreciation	3,523	-	3,523	0%
Payroll Processing Fees	3,500	2,277	1,223	65%
Copier Lease	5,053	2,527	2,526	50%
Equipment & Furniture	75,000	19,661	55,339	26%
Consulting Services				
Legal	20,000	12,876	7,124	64%
Audit/CPA	22,500	23,791	(1,291)	106%
Loan Underwriting	10,000	2,250	7,751	22%
Information Technology	102,000	47,682	54,318	47%
Equipment/Software Maintenance	20,000	6,655	13,345	33%
Website Fees	14,000	1,574	12,426	11%
Software Fees	91,217	34,382	56,835	38%
Consultants - Engineering	792,219	421,941	370,278	53%
Consultants - Other	348,147	245,846	102,301	71%
Meetings & Travel				
Travel - Mileage	8,000	3,177	4,823	40%
Travel - Hotel & Airfare	5,000	8,885	(3,885)	178%
Event Costs	20,000	2,755	17,245	14%
Meeting Registration Fees	5,000	5,123	(123)	102%
Meeting Supplies	10,000	6,522	3,478	65%
Other Direct & Indirect				
Memberships & Dues	15,000	7,338	7,662	49%
Insurance - Business Line	18,866	2,495	16,371	13%
Employee Screening	1,600	1,082	518	68%
Advertising	24,400	3,517	20,883	14%
Shredding	460	-	460	0%
Professional Development	20,000	5,467	14,533	27%
Bank Service Fees	95	-	95	0%
Miscellaneous Expense	1,500	129	1,371	9%
Auto Lease	1,440	729	711	51%
Subscriptions/Books/Publications	500	738	(238)	148%
Doubtful Accounts	-	46	(46)	#DIV/0!
Doubtful Accounts - RLF Loans	70,000	-	70,000	0%
Loan Forgiveness	8,750	11,250	(2,500)	129%
FAME Fee on Loan Funds	15,800	15,804	(4)	100%
In-Kind Labor from Partners	12,500	3,970	8,530	32%
Pass-through Expenses				
Brownfields Loans	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
FAME Loans	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
Total Expenses	\$ 5,017,467	\$ 2,278,215	\$ 2,739,252	45%

Attachment C

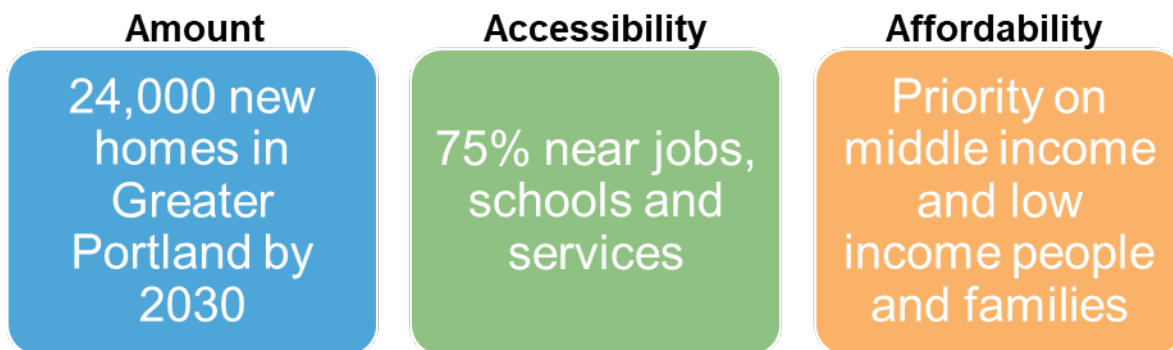
Regional Housing Strategy Draft 2/7/22

GPCOG’s Housing Strategy is designed to help our member communities build more housing in the right places, for all the people who need it, in ways that each community wants.

Our strategy will help our members by listening to their housing plans and challenges, and then advising them on how to build homes and apartments that make sense for their community and produce the best outcomes for their residents and the region.

- GPCOG will provide education, best practices, and planning expertise to interested communities.
- We’ll track the region’s housing progress and provide data-based reports.
- And we’ll tell the region’s housing shortage story through the voices and lived experience of the people who need and want housing but can’t find it.

Goals by 2030:



Problem: Our region has a critical housing shortage for low to moderate- and middle-income people. To meet current housing demand, we need 24,000 new homes and apartments built as soon as possible, and priced so that low to moderate- and middle-income people can afford them.

Why is the housing shortage so critical?

- Young people can’t find a place to live, and without homes and apartments they will leave. Our region is still too old – it can get younger, but only if young people can afford to live and work here. Without young people, our region’s vitality will drain away.

- Employers can't find employees, and without housing that workers can afford, they will leave. When current workers retire, there won't be new workers to take their place. New employers won't find the workers they need. Our economy will be hobbled.
- Low- and moderate-income people can't find a place to live, and without more affordable housing racial and social equity gets even worse, and our unhoused population grows. We can't be an equitable region without homes and apartments that everyone can afford.

Solution: Build more housing! But just building new housing anywhere and everywhere is not a good solution.

Problem: Not all housing is created equal. In the wrong locations, new housing can:

- Destroy community character with incompatible, poorly located structures.
- Increase property taxes with inefficient new buildings located far from infrastructure and services.
- Reduce open space by failing to coordinate new buildings with existing high value ecological and recreational lands.
- Add to climate change with more cars, commuting and congestion, and with poorly built energy-inefficient structures.

Solution: Well designed and well-located new homes and apartments can improve a community. Well located new homes and apartments can:

- Improve Municipal Fiscal Health. Locating housing near existing infrastructure, like water, sewer, public transportation, broadband and more, reduces fiscal demand on municipalities and the state to extend services further and further.
- Preserve Rural and Community character. By encouraging denser housing in villages and downtowns, we reduce growth pressure on farms, fields, and forests and preserve the places that make Maine so special.
- Increase Social and racial equity. Encouraging more affordable housing across all communities helps address historic inequities in housing and land use development that have segregated people by race and income.
- Advance Climate action. Providing housing choice in walkable and bikeable places, and in areas served by public transportation where possible, supports the goals of *Maine Won't Wait* by reducing reliance on cars and supporting cleaner ways of getting around.

Four Housing Strategies

1. Identifying local housing needs. Our first step is to listen to elected officials and professional staff in our member communities to find out what they need to make housing work for their community, and how (or if) we can help.

Every one of GPCOG's members are discussing housing in their community. Developers are bringing new projects forward in many places. State government has increased housing density in existing zoning (LD 2003), opening the door to new housing projects in places where they weren't expected. And teachers, police, and municipal employees in every community are struggling to find housing they can afford in the community where they work.

Finding solutions to any community's housing challenges starts with listening and understanding what the community needs and wants – and then finding a path forward.

2. Advising. As needed and where wanted, GPCOG has a wealth of technical expertise to share with our members to help them find housing solutions, including:

- LD2003 technical assistance to help communities prepare for and implement LD 2003, including reviewing, revising, and developing zoning and other land use ordinances.
- Housing assessment to help communities identify the types of housing they need, set goals, and align zoning and policies to encourage its development.
- Housing impact analysis can develop accurate information as to the costs and benefits of expanding housing choice, including impact on property taxes, municipal revenue, schools, traffic, and natural resources.
- Technical assistance to develop or use tools that negotiate obstacles, like TIFs, trust funds, municipal-owned land, housing authorities, and more.
- Village and neighborhood plans for priority centers identified in *Connect 2045* and in municipal comprehensive plans (in non-PACTS communities).
- Zoning and ordinance development to help encourage the types of housing municipalities value in places they want it.
- Site analysis and project development that provides information about the suitability of a site, including which sites are more valuable for preservation and open space. For promising sites, additional services could include market and return on investment analysis, matchmaking and/or facilitation between developers and municipalities, and support in identifying funding for needed infrastructure investments or brownfields clean-up.
- Short term rental tracking and policy development. With a new software package currently being piloted, GPCOG expects to offer communities a valuable tool to help communities. The software package assists in licensing, tracking, and enforcement of all short term rentals. It will be offered at no charge in 2023 for communities willing to be beta testers.
- Visualizations of multifamily and mixed use development in sites under consideration for new homes.

3. Assessing and Sharing. GPCOG will establish a Housing Solutions Clearinghouse that includes:

- Housing Data that tracks and reports on local and regional progress toward building more new homes and apartments in good locations and meeting the needs of communities and the region for greater equity and increasing economic opportunity.

- Best practices drawn from around the state and the country, including innovative housing ordinances, zoning models, tax policies, and housing support structures (like housing trusts) designed to advance good housing outcomes.
- Success stories that highlight local and regional housing accomplishments, sharing what works (and what doesn't), and enabling communities to collaborate on housing initiatives.

4. Engaging and Educating. Our housing shortage has many faces, and many different aspects. To help everyone in our region understand why the expanding housing choice matters, and what they can do about it, GPCOG will:

- Tell the region's many stories about why housing choice matters through people-centric stories and credible data, using various media and incorporating community-specific materials.
- Offer educational presentations upon request to help people understand how their community can shape new housing, instead of being shaped by it.
- Celebrate the progress that communities make toward a better housing future for all of us.