



LEBANON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMISSION

JULY 21, 2026 - 6:00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM

LEBANONNH.GOV/LIVE

1. Call to Order

The July 21, 2026, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEI) Meeting is hereby called to order.

2. Approval of Minutes

A. April 21, 2026

3. Old Business

A. Welcoming Lebanon Task Force

B. Priorities and Goal Setting for 2026

C. Farmers Market table/Community Engagement

4. New Business

A. Dr. Kendra LaRoche presentation on accessible housing in the Upper Valley policy proposal

5. Open to the Public

Any member of the public who desires to speak on any item may do so when the item is taken up by the Commission and will be allowed to speak on the subject for not more than three minutes. (Note: Speakers are asked to state their name, ward of residence, and to use the microphone provided.)

6. Future Agenda Items

7. Other Business: None

8. Adjournment

Meetings are open for in-person and remote attendance. Members of the public who wish to attend remotely may do so by going to LebanonNH.gov/Live where you will find instructions on how to enter the meeting. Members of the public will be able to participate and ask questions through the City's virtual platform or by phone. Please note: Should technical difficulties occur during the meeting that disrupt virtual or phone connection(s), the meeting will continue without remote access capabilities.

Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs additional accommodation, please contact the ADA coordinator at City Hall by calling 603-448-4220 at least 72 hours in advance so that the City can make any necessary arrangements.

DRAFT

CITY OF LEBANON
DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION
April 21, 2026— 6:00pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL or
Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/LIVE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kellen Appleton (City Council Representative); Lucas Mendelsohn (Public Representative); Keiselim Montas (Public Representative); Bise Wood Saint Eugene (Public Representative); Devin Wilkie (Vice-Chair); Tia Winter (Chair)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Ford Burley (Secretary); Karen Zook (City Council Alternate), Simone Whitecloud (Public Representative Alternate)

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Andrew Hosmer

1. CALL TO ORDER

The April 21, 2026 meeting of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission (DEI) was called to order by Chair Tia Winter at 6:00 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of March 17, 2026 meeting.

A MOTION by Devin Wilkie that the DEI Commission approve the minutes of the March 17, 2026 meeting of the DEI Commission as amended.

Seconded by Bise Wood Saint Eugene.

**The Motion passed with 5-0 with one abstention (Tia Winter)*

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. New Member Introductions

Kellen Appleton is a member of the City Council. Lucas Mendelsohn is Patron Services and Events Manager at Lebanon Opera House and sits on the Arts and Culture Commission as Vice Chair, and is a new member of the Welcoming Lebanon Task Force. He is also a Board Member of the Upper Valley Music Center and owns his own arts business.

B. Welcoming Lebanon Task Force

Vice Chair Devin Wilkie announced that the first meeting of the Welcoming Lebanon Task Force will take place Thursday, April 30, 2026. The agenda will focus around goal setting and scheduling. There are still some open seats on the Task Force. They expect to provide a report to the City Council by the end of September.

C. Priorities and Goal Setting for 2026

Juneteenth Update: No new updates.

Taste and Traditions: Lucas Mendelsohn announced that there is now an online form for vendors and artist/performers to sign up.

NEXUS Festival: Lucas Mendelsohn said that the Saturday morning opportunity is still on the table, and that there will hopefully be sign-up forms available soon.

Tabling at Farmers' Market: Vice-Chair Devin Wilkie said that they had not yet heard back from the coordinator. Their understanding is that the first market is May 14. In the past, the coordinator has said that the Commission was welcome to table there, so members should select some dates that they are willing and able to attend. Lucas Mendelsohn reported that confirmations are now out to vendors. He also noted that he will need to be in attendance some of the days for other reasons and volunteered to do "double duty" if those are the days the DEI Commission selects for tabling.

"Govinity": City Manager Andrew Hosmer indicated that Govinity is still in its "rollout" phase. Any hiccups should be smoothed out in the coming months.

Community Engagement 411: Discussion was resumed after being tabled at the previous meeting. Bise Wood Saint Eugene reported on UVEAR's challenges and successes. Discussion also centered around the degree to which the DEI Commission could be helpful without hampering their efforts. Keiselim Montas suggested that members of the Commission might volunteer to be contacted with questions from newcomers to the area. Lucas Mendelsohn suggested reaching out to Vital Communities. Bise Wood spoke about a UVEAR pilot project to help understand what is needed in the community that will be completing soon. Chair Tia Winter asked what a partnership with UVEAR or Vital Communities could look like. Lucas indicated that there appear to be two distinct ideas being discussed: 1) connecting newcomers with or listing resources including community groups who are doing important work, and 2) creating a platform to connect new arrivals to established community members. Kellen Appleton pointed out that Vital Communities is already running the Upper Valley Welcome Wagon. Lucas suggested someone from the DEI Commission with Vital Communities to discuss what a partnership could look like or entail. Bise Wood and Devin Wilkie will invite someone from Vital Communities to an upcoming DEI Commission meeting. Lucas also added that there has been an influx of people coming in and looking for support, and Lebanon Opera House would be interested in who to call other than emergency services, e.g., shelter, support hotlines, etc. Commission members should keep an ear to the ground and report back if they hear of any resources.

Legislative goals: City Manager Hosmer gave an update. He began by explaining that a bill under consideration, HB1788-FN, “An act holding state contracts with DEI provisions to be void as a matter of law and establishing a right of action for citizens where public entities or state agencies engage with contracts with DEI provisions,” had been remanded to committee for interim study and will not likely be passed this year. The City Manager then explained that the City has entered into a contract with a named plaintiff in a federal case, Dr. Dottie Morse, of Keene State College, to offer multiple trainings to the City over the coming year. Being a party to the case, the contract and the City itself are both protected by a preliminary injunction and is exempt from RSA 21-I:112, II.

4. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Prior to opening public comment, City Manager Andrew Hosmer praised Chair Tia Winter as running a meeting with “ruthless efficiency.”

6. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Vice-Chair Devin Wilkie suggested that at the next meeting, Commission members should confirm plans for Taste and Traditions. Devin also suggested the Commission finalize dates for tabling at the farmers’ market.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Keiselim Montas asked whether the Welcoming Lebanon Task Force should be reporting regularly to the DEI Commission. Vice-Chair Devin Wilkie agreed it would be a good idea.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tia Winter adjourned the meeting at 6:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Ford Burley, DEI Commission Secretary



July 13, 2026

To: Lebanon City Council, Planning Board, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council, Housing Commission, and City Leadership

From: Dr. Kendra LaRoche, Executive Director, Special Needs Support Center

Re: Proposed Housing Resilience, Aging in Place, and Universal Design Policy

Dear City Leaders,

Lebanon has already demonstrated its commitment to inclusion by adopting its resolution to become a Disability-Friendly Community. The enclosed Housing Resilience, Aging in Place, and Universal Design Policy is offered as one practical way to advance that commitment while preparing our community for one of the most significant demographic changes of the coming decades: an aging population.

At its core, this proposal is about helping people remain in their homes safely and independently for as long as possible.

This is **not** a proposal to expand City government, create a new department, or establish a new tax-funded program. Instead, it builds upon planning tools the City already has in place and encourages thoughtful design choices that reduce future costs for homeowners, families, and the community.

New Hampshire is one of the oldest states in the nation, and the number of older adults in Lebanon will continue to grow. National research consistently shows that nearly three out of four adults over age fifty want to remain in their homes as they age. Yet many homes were never designed to accommodate changing mobility needs.

Simple features such as one step-free entrance, wider interior doorways, a first-floor bathroom, and reinforced bathroom walls often determine whether someone can continue living independently or must relocate to assisted living or nursing care.

These features are also remarkably affordable when incorporated during construction. Communities across the country have demonstrated that basic visitability standards typically add little to the cost of a new home when planned from the beginning, while avoiding expensive renovations later in life.

The proposal is intentionally phased and collaborative.

During the first phase, the City would focus on education, voluntary participation, and builder



incentives. It also recommends expanding Lebanon's existing **Pattern Zones Book**, which is already administered by the Planning Department, by developing a collection of architect-designed Universal Design homes. Working with architects, builders, disability organizations, aging services organizations, and community partners, the Planning Department could offer attractive, marketable home designs that already incorporate visitability principles while streamlining the design and permitting process.

Only after education and voluntary participation would the City consider requiring these standards for larger residential developments before eventually establishing them as the community standard for new housing.

Importantly, this proposal does **not** require new taxes or major municipal expenditures. Rather, it leverages existing planning processes, existing Pattern Zones resources, and partnerships with organizations that already possess expertise in housing accessibility and aging in place.

By investing in better housing design today, Lebanon can help residents remain independent longer, reduce future healthcare and long-term care costs, strengthen neighborhoods, and continue demonstrating leadership as a Disability-Friendly Community.

Accessible housing is not simply about disability. It is about ensuring that every resident has the opportunity to age with dignity, remain connected to their community, and continue calling Lebanon home.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kendra LaRoche

Executive Director

Special Needs Support Center



City of Lebanon

Housing Resilience, Aging in Place, and Universal Design Policy

Purpose

The City of Lebanon recognizes that housing should support residents throughout every stage of life.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage residential development that promotes independence, housing stability, community belonging, and long-term resilience through the incorporation of Universal Design and Visitability principles.

This policy advances the City's commitment to becoming a Disability-Friendly Community while supporting older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, families, and individuals recovering from illness or injury.

Section 1. Findings

The City finds that:

1. New Hampshire has one of the oldest populations in the United States, and the number of older adults in Lebanon is expected to continue increasing over the coming decades.
2. Most adults over age fifty wish to remain in their homes as they age.
3. Many existing homes contain barriers that make aging in place difficult or impossible.
4. Accessible housing reduces falls, injuries, premature institutionalization, and housing instability.
5. Local Accessible Housing Upper Valley research found that accessibility needs are practical and common, with the greatest needs including step-free entrances, wider doorways, first-floor living spaces, and non-slip flooring. Survey participants also identified cost as the primary barrier to making modifications, with many homeowners reporting expenses between \$20,000 and \$100,000 and none receiving financial assistance.
6. Incorporating Universal Design features during construction is substantially less



expensive than retrofitting homes after construction. Municipal examples show these features often cost less than \$3,000 when included during initial construction.

7. Housing accessibility is essential to achieving Lebanon's Disability-Friendly Community goals.

Section 2. Policy Goals

The City shall pursue housing policies that:

- support aging in place
- reduce unnecessary institutionalization
- improve housing stability
- expand housing choice
- reduce future public and private expenditures
- strengthen neighborhood resilience
- encourage attractive, marketable housing that serves residents across their lifetimes

Section 3. Phased Implementation

Phase I

Education and Voluntary Participation

Years One and Two

The City shall:

- educate builders and developers regarding Universal Design
- recognize projects voluntarily incorporating Universal Design standards
- explore permit fee reductions and expedited review
- begin development of the Lebanon Universal Design Pattern Home Collection
- identify funding opportunities for accessibility improvements
- publish annual implementation reports



Phase II

Large Residential Developments

Years Three through Five

Residential developments of ten or more dwelling units seeking Planning Board approval should demonstrate compliance with the City's Universal Design standards as part of the site plan or subdivision review process.

The Planning Board may approve reasonable modifications where documented site constraints make strict compliance impractical.

Phase III

Community Standard

Beginning Year Six

The Planning Department shall evaluate whether additional Universal Design standards should be incorporated into future zoning ordinance amendments consistent with RSA 674 and the City's Master Plan.

Section 4. Minimum Universal Design Standards

New residential construction subject to this policy shall include:

Exterior Access

- At least one zero-step entrance connected to an accessible route from parking or the



public sidewalk.

Interior Circulation

- Interior doorways with a minimum thirty-two-inch clear opening.
- Hallways generally thirty-six inches wide where feasible.

Main Floor Living

The primary living level shall include:

- living area
- kitchen
- accessible bathroom

Whenever practical, a bedroom or flexible room capable of future bedroom conversion should also be located on the primary floor.

Bathroom Readiness

Bathrooms on the main floor shall include reinforced walls to support future grab bar installation.

Controls

Electrical outlets, switches, and thermostats shall be placed within accessible reach ranges consistent with current accessibility best practices.

Section 5. Lebanon Universal Design Pattern Home Collection

The City shall direct the **Planning Department** to expand the existing Pattern Zones Book by developing a collection of architect-designed Universal Design homes that incorporate the standards contained in this policy.

The Planning Department shall collaborate with:

- local architects



- residential builders
- Special Needs Support Center
- AARP New Hampshire
- disability organizations
- aging services organizations
- housing advocates

The Universal Design Pattern Home Collection should:

- include homes of varying sizes and price points
- maintain neighborhood character
- demonstrate attractive, marketable Universal Design
- reduce architectural costs
- simplify permitting
- encourage broader adoption of accessible housing

Homes selected from the Pattern Home Collection may be eligible for expedited review or other incentives established by the City.

Section 6. Accessibility Financing

The City shall explore partnerships to increase financing opportunities for accessibility improvements in existing homes.

Potential partners include:

- New Hampshire Community Loan Fund
- New Hampshire Housing
- AARP New Hampshire
- local financial institutions
- philanthropic organizations
- state and federal housing programs

The City should evaluate the feasibility of establishing a low-interest home accessibility loan program modeled after successful programs in other states.



Section 7. Relationship to Disability-Friendly Community Certification

Implementation of this policy shall be recognized as a significant component of Lebanon's Disability-Friendly Community initiative.

The City recognizes that accessible housing is essential infrastructure that enables residents of all ages and abilities to participate fully in community life. By integrating Universal Design into housing policy, Lebanon advances its commitment to becoming a community where everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute, and thrive.

Section 8: Fiscal Impact

The City finds that implementation of this policy is intended to make use of existing planning processes and resources.

This policy does not create a new municipal department, establish a new regulatory agency, or require new local tax revenues.

Implementation shall rely primarily upon:

- existing Planning Department responsibilities
- updates to the City's existing Pattern Zones Book
- collaboration with community partners
- voluntary participation during Phase I
- integration into existing Planning Board review processes during subsequent phases

The City may pursue grants, state funding opportunities, philanthropic partnerships, or other external resources to support educational materials, development of Universal Design Pattern Homes, or future accessibility financing programs, but such funding is not required for adoption of this policy.



Section 9. Review

The City shall review this policy every three years and evaluate:

- housing production
- construction costs
- builder feedback
- resident outcomes
- demographic trends
- implementation of the Universal Design Pattern Home Collection
- opportunities for continuous improvement based on emerging best practices.



Appendix A

City of Lebanon Universal Design and Visitability Design Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this appendix is to provide practical guidance for architects, builders, developers, homeowners, and City staff implementing the Housing Resilience, Aging in Place, and Universal Design Policy.

The standards described below are intended to promote housing that can adapt to changing needs over time while maintaining attractive neighborhood design. They represent minimum visitability standards and are not intended to replace requirements contained within applicable building codes or the Americans with Disabilities Act where those laws apply.

Guiding Principles

Housing should allow people to:

- Enter the home safely.
- Move throughout the primary living spaces.
- Use essential rooms independently.
- Adapt the home over time with minimal renovation.
- Remain in their community throughout their lives whenever possible.

Universal Design benefits people of every age and ability.

Core Visitability Standards

1. Step-Free Entrance



Every home should include at least one entrance without steps.

Recommended Design

- Connected by an accessible route from:
 - driveway
 - sidewalk
 - garage
- Maximum slope:
 - 1:20 preferred
 - 1:12 maximum where a ramp is required
- Stable, slip-resistant walking surface
- Covered entrance whenever practical

Benefits

- Older adults
- Parents using strollers
- Grocery carts
- Wheelchairs
- Temporary injuries
- Emergency responders

2. Accessible Interior Route

The primary living level should allow continuous movement without encountering stairs.

Recommended Features

Doorways

- Minimum 32-inch clear opening

Hallways

- Minimum 36 inches wide

Flooring



- Stable
 - Firm
 - Slip resistant
 - Minimal transitions between flooring materials
-

3. Main Floor Living

The primary level should include:

- ✓ Living room
- ✓ Kitchen
- ✓ Bathroom

Preferred

- ✓ Bedroom

or

- ✓ Flexible room capable of future bedroom conversion
-

4. Bathroom Readiness

Bathrooms should be designed for future adaptability.

Recommended Features

- Reinforced walls surrounding toilet and shower for future grab bars
- Curbless shower where practical
- Five-foot turning space preferred
- Lever faucet handles
- Non-slip flooring

These features add very little cost during construction but significantly reduce future renovation expenses.



5. Kitchen Adaptability

Recommended features include:

- Wide circulation paths
 - Pull-style cabinet hardware
 - Variable countertop sections where practical
 - Easily reachable electrical outlets
 - Good task lighting
-

6. Stairs

Where homes include stairs:

- Install structural blocking for future stair lift installation.
 - Provide adequate electrical access nearby.
 - Maintain sufficient stair width for future adaptation.
-

7. Lighting

Homes should maximize:

- Natural light
- Even illumination
- Limited glare
- Exterior lighting at entrances
- Motion-activated lighting where appropriate

Good lighting improves safety for everyone.

8. Controls



Recommended mounting heights

Light switches

Approximately 42 inches above finished floor

Electrical outlets

15–18 inches above finished floor

Thermostats

Accessible from a seated position

Lever door handles are preferred over round knobs.

9. Exterior Site Design

Recommended features include:

- Accessible route from parking
- Slip-resistant walkways
- Good drainage
- Limited cross slopes
- Space for future ramp installation if needed

Universal Design Pattern Home Collection

The City should expand its existing Pattern Zones Book by developing a Universal Design Pattern Home Collection.

The collection should include:

Cottage

900–1,200 square feet



Suitable for:

- first-time buyers
 - retirees
 - accessory dwelling units
-

Family Home

1,400–2,000 square feet

Suitable for:

- growing families
 - multigenerational households
-

Townhome

Attached housing

Visitability incorporated into every unit where feasible.

Workforce Housing

Smaller homes designed for affordability while incorporating all visitability standards.

Accessible Duplex

Designed to support:

- caregivers
 - aging parents
 - multigenerational living
 - shared ownership
-



Recommended Incentives

Projects using approved Universal Design Pattern Homes may receive consideration for:

- expedited permit review
 - reduced review costs
 - recognition through the City's Disability-Friendly Community initiative
 - future financial incentives established by City Council
-

Best Practices for Builders

Universal Design works best when considered at the beginning of design.

Builders are encouraged to:

- grade lots to eliminate steps whenever practical
 - use standard framing techniques that accommodate wider doors
 - reinforce bathroom walls during framing
 - locate laundry on the main floor whenever feasible
 - design flexible rooms rather than specialty rooms
 - think about how the home will function over a 50-year lifespan
-

Aging in Place Considerations

By 2030, one in five Americans will be over age 65, and New Hampshire is among the oldest states in the nation. Most older adults wish to remain in their homes for as long as possible.

Homes that include Universal Design features are more likely to support:

- independent living
- reduced falls
- fewer hospital readmissions
- delayed institutional care
- stronger neighborhood stability



- lower long-term healthcare costs

Designing for aging in place benefits not only today's older adults but also future generations of homeowners.

Implementation Checklist

Builders may use this checklist when submitting plans.

Feature	Included
One zero-step entrance	☐
Accessible route from driveway or sidewalk	☐
32-inch clear door openings	☐
36-inch hallways where feasible	☐
Main floor bathroom	☐
Reinforced bathroom walls	☐
Main floor living area	☐



Main floor kitchen ☐

Flexible room or bedroom on first floor ☐

Accessible switches and outlets ☐

Lever door hardware ☐

Slip-resistant primary flooring ☐

Future stair-lift blocking (if stairs included) ☐

Appendix B

Not yet created. It will include:

- A sample floor plan for a 1,200-square-foot universally designed home.
- A diagram of a compliant zero-step entrance.
- Bathroom layouts showing reinforcement for future grab bars.
- Typical doorway and hallway dimensions.
- Examples of attractive exterior designs demonstrating that universal design does not alter neighborhood character.
- Before-and-after cost comparisons showing the expense of incorporating features during construction versus retrofitting later.