



## **Granite State Future**

November 4, 2013 | 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

NH Local Government Center

Concord, NH

*What we've heard across the State and where we're headed.*

### **Summary of Presentation Findings**

As part of the first two years of the Granite State Future project, NH's regional planning commissions worked collaboratively with each other and many state partners to compile research on top issues and needs across the state and within each region. As part of this process, there has been several research studies conducted including the preparation of:

- Regional Climate Change Assessments for Southern and Northern NH
- Statewide Existing Conditions and Trends Assessment
- Housing Preferences Preliminary Findings
- Granite State Future Survey Results
- Report out of the Statewide Listening Sessions
- The Equity and Engagement Checklist

When this body of research is considered in aggregate, several themes and opportunity issue areas emerge. Within outreach conversations at all levels, both natural resources and transportation were key priorities for residents. Throughout the state there are however regional variations, some are as simple as road maintenance being the top transportation priority in the North Country versus transit in the south. In other instances there are greater dichotomies that point in conflicting directions.

#### *Setting the Stage – Demographics*

- New Hampshire is still growing but not nearly at the same rates of change that were seen in the past six decades.
- A high proportion of New Hampshire's workforce is near retirement age, its population is aging, and families are having fewer children.
- Less than half the State's population was born here and previously high in-migration is slowing, resulting in a shrinking, yet more diverse, workforce. As a result, market conditions will require a shift from accommodating growth to accommodating change.

#### *Land Use: Traditional Settlement Patterns and Development Design*

- New Hampshire's regions each have a mix of development patterns including rural, suburban and urban.

- New Hampshire's mix of development patterns each present different opportunities and costs for residents and businesses.
- New Hampshire is highly dependent on private wells for safe drinking water and the demand for resources and costs of maintenance is growing.

#### *Housing Choices*

- The housing stock in New Hampshire lacks affordable choices particularly within the rental market that remains strong and generally is not proximate to key employment centers in the State. However, the majority of NH residents wish to live in strictly residential neighborhoods.
- While homeownership is currently more affordable than years past, NH's young households are burdened by the highest level of student debt and high rental costs make it difficult to save and qualify for a mortgage.
- Universality is important, as is the need for a better balance between single-family and rental housing able to meet changing preferences and particularly a growing senior population that may be facing shortages of assisted living and long term care facilities.

#### *Transportation Choices*

- As a state, more people in New Hampshire drive to work than any other transportation mode. The State's lack of transportation alternatives presents a barrier to low income residents, youth, seniors and disabled individuals and potentially detracts from the ability to attract young people to the State.
- New Hampshire lacks infrastructure for other modes of transportation, and the infrastructure the state has is falling more and more into disrepair. Residents view maintaining our bridges and highways to be the most important priority for transportation funding, and are willing to pay more in taxes to do so.

#### *Environment: Natural Resource Functions and Quality*

- Residents believe that environmental protection and natural resource protection should be the top priority for investing public dollars, and a majority believes that all environmental protection measures mentioned should be high priorities for policymakers. Top priorities include protecting water quality for drinking and recreation, air quality, farms and agricultural land, aquatic habitats and access to recreation land.
- New Hampshire's high quality water resources, habitat, water and forest lands are intrinsically linked to the State's economy.
- Local agriculture contributes positively to the State's food security, environment, health and nutrition system.

#### *Community and Economic Vitality*

- New Hampshire residents, as a whole, are well off, however, there the jobs picture is unfavorable and there are pockets within the state where poverty levels are rising. Much of new job growth has been in part time, low-wage jobs.
- Our economy has been evolving over time – shifting to a manufacturing base. However, there is a high proportion of the manufacturing workforce nearing retirement and a shortage of young adults to fill those jobs. Effective job training programs are essential to meeting needs of a shifting economy.
- New Hampshire's high quality of life makes the state a good place to locate a business or raise a family.

- High quality schools are viewed as the most important feature of a community, following which residents feel other priority amenities include job opportunities, small businesses and retail stores, farms, farm stands, and forestry, as well as grocery stores.

#### *Climate Change and Energy Efficiency*

- Fossil fuels represent more than half the State's energy consumption, can be costly for households, and also result in the release of carbon dioxide.
- Initiatives are underway and future opportunities exist to lower State energy consumption and become more energy efficient.
- There have been significant changes in key climate indicators over the last 100 years and these trends are projected to continue and/or increase. Overall, temperatures are rising and the frequency and magnitude of extreme precipitation events have increased. These changes will have a direct effect on our economy and ecosystem.

The remainder of this report provides a summary of the key points presented by each of the speakers on of their respective reports and studies.

## Regional Highlights

### *Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission*

Community vitality is the most frequently appreciated value for what is best about the Central NH Region. Access to natural resources and the scenic beauty of area was mentioned next. There is a need for more economic vitality and transportation options. A decline in school district K-5 populations was noted.

### *Lakes Region Planning Commission*

Number 1 priority is protecting the environment and the region's natural resources, while allowing for planned economic development. Employment skills and employers' needs do not match for local economic development. Need investments in water infrastructure and multimodal transportation systems. Renewable energy as well as affordable housing is a concern. People enjoy the small town villages, the sense of community and the mountains the best.

### *North Country Council*

Low income, high unemployment, poor public health. Both seasonal and year-round residents value the people, scenic beauty and recreation opportunities. Need for better paying jobs that are consistent with the natural beauty and resource protection. Lack of public transportation so need for alternatives like Ride Share.

### *Nashua Regional Planning Commission*

Transportation is key in the region, not a lot of resources for public transit. People really like the region as it is, close to amenities but somewhat rural. Establish how to maintain what they do like and be resilient in the future. Continue having community conversations. No draw or identity to the region, but good agriculture. How can we market our region to attract more visitors; aging population is key.

### *Rockingham Planning Commission*

Web based survey for outreach, reviewing local masters for visions of communities and the differences expressed in community conversations. Need for diverse housing stock but lack of diverse housing stock. Need tool to help towns make their community plans better; make plan or a guiding tool or model for resilient communities.

### *Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission*

The values expressed to us during the public outreach efforts include a strong sense of community, a strong sense of place, the ability to make local decisions, and promote diverse settlement patterns. The region has a high number of commuters, more services and opportunities, and people like where they live but need greater transportation choices, i.e. such as passenger rail and the need for expanded and creative solutions for transportation choices in the future.

### *Southwest Region Planning Commission*

Maintaining community vitality and engagement in the face of changing demographics is number one, followed closely by the need to create and sustain economic opportunities for diverse populations of a living wage. The need for improved and increased transportation options and the protection and the responsible management of natural resources /systems are also high priorities.

### *Strafford Regional Planning Commission*

Want to reach 1% of population. Lots of comments resulted in folks liking community, recreation, and access to amenities. Also, rural environment, and natural resources. Improvements to schools and more

opportunity for recreation. Other concerns were taxes, affordable housing, need for public transportation. Want semi controlled housing development with conservation and open space in region; residents love access to cities.

*Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission*

Lots of small business, like the rural character, environmental awareness is importance, like privacy and individual resilience. Concern with decreased enrollment in high schools.

## Regional Climate Change Assessments for Southern and Northern NH

*Elizabeth Burakowski, University of New Hampshire Earth Systems Research Center*

Climate has varied throughout the earth's history, and will continue to change. However, the recent climate assessments for Northern and Southern NH prepared by UNH show the rate of change in the state has increased significantly over the last four decades, with the state getting warmer and wetter. To generate future climate projections for northern and southern NH, simulated temperature and precipitation from four Global Climate Models were statically downscaled using historical weather observations. Two different scenarios were generated based on two very different future global emission scenarios.

The frequency of extreme heat days is projected to increase dramatically along with higher average temperatures, depending on the projected emissions scenarios. The hottest days will be hotter, raising concerns regarding the impact of extreme, sustained heat on human health, infrastructure, and the electric grid.

Extreme cold temperatures are projected to occur less frequently and will be warmer. Winter warming may reduce heating bills and the risk of cold-related accidents and injury but will also reduce opportunities for snow and ice related recreation and related economic activity. It would also reduce cold temperature constraints that currently mitigate impacts of over-wintering pests and invasive species.

While the growing season may become longer, producing opportunities for farmers to grow new crops, it may also result in losses to existing crops or even crop failures due to extreme precipitation or inadequate winter chill for optimum fruiting.

Increased annual average precipitation could result in increased rapid snow melt, high peak stream flows, and flood risk.

Observed changes in climate over the last several decades have already had a significant impact on New Hampshire. The projected changes over the next century will continue to impact our environment, ecosystem services, economy and society. Because some future changes are inevitable, smart choices must be made to help communities adapt to the climate conditions.

Some key findings from the studies include:

### *Temperatures:*

What have we seen since 1970?

- Average maximum temperatures have warmed by 2.0° F (annual) and 2.9° F (winter)
- Average minimum temperatures have warmed by 3.2° F (annual) and 6.1° F (winter)

What can we expect?

- Warmer winters: 20-45 fewer days below 32° F
- Hotter summers:
  - 10-35 days above 90° F for northern NH (compared to 3 currently)
  - 16-47 days above 90° F for southern NH (compared to 7 currently)

*Rainfall and Flooding:*

What have we seen since 1970?

- Annual precipitation has increased 8-22%
- Both the frequency and magnitude of extreme precipitation events has increased

What can we expect?

- More precipitation (annual averages will increase by 15-20%)
- A two- to three-fold increase in extreme precipitation events
- More frequent and severe flooding

*Snow and Ice*

What have we seen since 1970?

- Fewer days with snow cover
- Lake ice-out dates are occurring earlier

What can we expect?

- Less snow and more rain
- Significant decrease in number of snow covered days:
- 20-30% decrease in northern NH; 20-50% decrease in southern NH

## Statewide Existing Conditions and Trends Assessment

*Jennifer Czysz, Nashua Regional Planning Commission*

The Existing Conditions and Trends document has been developed using the hard work of the 6 TASCs to compile existing resources, goals/policies, existing conditions, and metrics to measure success.

Using this work NRPC with assistance from the other 8 RPCs has written the Regional Plan Framework (a suite of resources to help start the research process), 51 core metrics computed for the entire state (an online home is in the works), and the Existing Conditions and Trends Assessment.

This report does not try to duplicate the many existing and exemplary resources currently available. Instead, it pulls together key trends and issues that exist in NH, as they relate to the livability principles.

### *Changing Demographics*

New Hampshire is still growing but not nearly at the same rates of change as in the past six decades.

- Peak growth in NH's population occurred from 1970-1980
- 2000 to 2010 growth was only 6.5%
- Most due to natural population change

A high proportion of New Hampshire's workforce is near retirement age, its population is aging, and families are having fewer children.

- Rapid increase in the size of the oldest population cohorts
- NH's birth rates have steadily declined and NH's death rates have increased
- Rural New Hampshire near the lowest percentage of residents who are ages 25-44 nationally and NH metro counties closer to the national median
- Rural NH 2<sup>nd</sup> highest % of residents over 65, metro NH in the bottom 1/3 of states

Less than half the State's population was born here and previously high in-migration is slowing, resulting in a shrinking, yet more diverse, workforce.

- Less than ½ of NH residents were born in state.
- In 2010 minorities comprised <8% of the State's pop but were nearly 50% of population growth
- Greater than 12% of children in NH are Minorities

### *Traditional Settlement Patterns*

New Hampshire's regions each have a mix of development patterns including rural, suburban and urban.

- Urbanized area expanded from 356,861 acres in 2000 to 412,185 in 2010
- Our urbanized footprint expanded from .24 acres/capita to .31 (1990-2010)

The State's mix of development patterns present different opportunities and costs.

- Proximity to grocery stores varies across the state – dense areas drive approximately 1 mile
- Approximately 2% of the population does not have access to a car or groceries within 1 mile
- Nearly all residents spend ~50% of their income on combined housing and transportation costs

New Hampshire is highly dependent on private wells for safe drinking water and the demand for resources and costs of maintenance is growing.

- 42% of NH's population rely on private wells, compared to national average of 14%
- 695 community water systems across NH, infrastructure 50-100 years old



### *Housing Choices*

The housing stock in New Hampshire lacks affordable choices and generally is not proximate to key employment centers in the State.

- Housing prices peaked in 2007 at \$252,000, now down to about \$200,000
- Rents have remained high, 2012 peak over \$1000; 24% increase over the last decade
- Most notable rent increases for homes with 4+bedrooms
- Across the state approximately 54% of rental homes and 11% of homes for purchase are affordable to those making 80% of the area median family income

Universality is important, as is the need for a better balance between single-family and rental housing able to meet changing preferences.

- No change in distribution of home types – 62% of homes are single family

### *Transportation Choices*

As a state, more people in New Hampshire drive to work than any other transportation mode.

- NH residents own more cars than the national average, but the number has recently decreased
- 82% of commuters drive alone
- Almost half of commuters drive less than 10 miles to work
- 2 of the 11 transit operators provide more than half of NH's ridership (UNH & Upper Valley)
- An estimated 34,000 residents have lost or turned down a job due to a lack of transportation
- 62,000 have missed a medical appointment without transportation

New Hampshire lacks infrastructure for other modes of transportation, and the infrastructure the state has is falling more and more into despair.

- Need an additional \$12mil./year to maintain the number of 2013 roads in good-fair condition
- 149 bridges are on the "red list", 256 are one step away
- NH provides the 8<sup>th</sup> lowest amount nationally toward transit

### *Natural Resources Functions and Qualities*

New Hampshire's high quality water resources, habitat, water and forest lands are intrinsically linked to the State's economy.

- 84% of the state landscape is forested
- Forest products: manufacturing equal to \$1.7 billion/year, tourism equals \$940 million
- 16,984 miles of rivers and streams
- 164,615 acres of lakes and ponds
- Value of swimming, boating and fishing to NH is \$379 million in sales, \$134 million in income and 5,990 jobs created

Local agriculture contributes positively to the State's food security, environment, health and nutrition.

- Local foods are 6% of state economy and 12% of crops sold at farmer's markets (0.5% nationally)
- NH's local food production can only support 6% of NH's population compared to a NE average of 10% and 39% in Maine

### *Community and Economic Vitality*

Hampshire residents, as a whole, are well off however, there are pockets within the state where poverty levels are rising.

- NH unemployment peaked in 2009 at just over 7% compared to 10% nationally
- Rates vary across the state with highest unemployment in the North country

- Per capita income in NH is higher than the national average but lower than the NE average
- 8% of residents though live below the poverty level in NH with the highest rates among Hispanics and African Americans (2-3 times higher)

Our economy has been evolving over time.

- Small businesses represent 87% of firms, but 22% of jobs
- More than half the State's jobs are either government, retail, health care, or manufacturing

New Hampshire's high quality of life makes the state a good place to locate a business or raise a family.

- NH is ranked as the most child friendly state in the country for 9 out of the last 10 years
- A third of NH residents have a Bachelor's degree, compared to 28% nationally and 91% have completed high school compared to 85% nationally

#### *Climate Change and Energy Efficiency*

Fossil fuels represent more than half the State's energy consumption, can be costly for households, and also result in the release of carbon dioxide.

- Fossil fuels represent 61% of NH's energy consumption
- In the last few years natural gas has increased to be 33% of electricity generation
- NH's renewable portfolio standard requires 23.8% of electricity sold to come from renewable sources by 2025 – in 2011 14% came from renewables
- 36% of energy is consumed for transportation and 28% for homes
- Nearly 90% of NH's energy comes from out of state sources

Initiatives are underway and future opportunities exist to lower State energy consumption and become more energy efficient.

- 5,758 energy star homes in NH
- Implementation of improved energy codes could lead to energy savings of .56 trillion BTUs per year and carbon dioxide emissions reductions of .03 million metric tons per year

## **NH's Housing Preferences Preliminary Findings**

*Dennis Delay, NH Center for Public Policy Studies, Russ Thibeault, AER*

New Hampshire Housing has contracted with the NH Center for Public Policy Studies and Applied Economic Research to conduct a Statewide Analysis of the Housing Needs and Preferences in New Hampshire including Independent and Assisted Living Need Indicators for an Aging Population. This study responds to the need to identify the impact of NH's slower growth and evolving demographics on housing demand, supply, and preferences, particularly among young and aging households and will ultimately include three main components:

- Update the existing housing production needs model to better reflect changes in demographics and employment.
- Produce a qualitative analysis of housing preferences by household age, income, make-up and geographic location.
- Review and develop the available need indicators specific to independent and assisted living.

The following summarizes some of the preliminary research findings from the study:

### *Demographic Shifts*

- Past high rates of migration are now slowing.
- If old ratios held, NH would have a greater number of younger owners, however this trend is changing.
- There is an expected increase in older populations in the next 10-30 years which will mean an increase in older home owners and renters.
- Additionally, older households have less income, nearly 52% of households where the head of household is over 65 is under 60% of the median area income.

### *Housing Production Needs*

Three models have been developed to estimate the projected future housing needs and are based on employment growth, an average of employment population, and lastly based on population projections. The models project the number of needed ownership and rental unit needed 10 years from now.

### *Synopsis of Market Conditions that will Impact Housing Needs and Preferences:*

- Focus will shift from accommodating growth to accommodating change;
  - Less growth overall
  - More senior households
  - Fewer young households
  - Strained first time buyers
  - Changing lending standards
- Ownership market is in recovery phase;
- State economy and lending standards are dampening home ownership affordability, despite some favorable macro trends;
- The rental market is strong, but affordability is weak.

### *Jobs and income*

- The jobs picture is unfavorable: of the NH job growth in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2001-2012 4,475 new jobs were those with below average wages compared to 2,375 that were above average wages.
- Poverty rates are high outside of urban counties

### *Home Ownership*

- On average home ownership is more affordable than in years past:
  - NH prices are down about 20% since the mid-2000s.
  - Interest rates are also down from their peak of 6.76% in 2006 to 4.18% in 2013
  - Equates to a 41% drop in mortgage payments for the median NH home from 2006-2013.
  - The income required to purchase the median NH home is now lower than the median household income where in 2006 this was not the case.
- However...
  - NH's Young households are burdened by highest level of student debt in the Nation;
  - Lending standards are more rigorous—Qualifying Mortgage, 43% debt to income limit, etc.;
  - With rents rising and mediocre job quality, more difficult to save and qualify;
  - Nearly 20,000 foreclosed units in past several years in the state—some will not qualify;
  - Lack of liquidity is keeping boomers in larger houses than they need;
  - Prices and interest rates are rising in past several months, blunting recent affordability improvements.

### *The Rental Market*

- Unlike home ownership, the rental market is strong and less affordable.
- Vacancy rates are falling, restricting the number of available rental units.
- Almost 40% of the State's renter households are paying more than 35% of their income for rent (approximately 50,000 households)
- The overpayment issue is statewide with the highest rental cost burdens in Carroll and Cheshire counties.

### *Senior Housing Perspectives*

- Senior household mobility has been low and aging in place is common, of Medicare recipients aged 75-84 only 7% live in assisted living or long term facilities and 22% of those age 85+
- As of 2010 there were 11,400 seniors in assisted living or long term care, which is projected to increase to 18,700 by 2025 – will there be room for those seeking such living facilities?
- 153,000 NH residents have a disability, including 31% of those over age 65

### *Qualitative Observations – Community Factors*

- Many feel that accommodating housing, especially innovative housing, will overwhelm rural character of State's smaller communities;
- Need about 5,000 units per year, state-wide
  - State land area is 5.7 million acres
  - Even at 2 units per acre, absorption is less than 2 percent of state's land area per decade
- There is a continuing perception that new housing is a fiscal burden, despite falling school enrollment and low student generation per unit in most communities;
- Cumulative impact of rising regulation is hampering development of a more adaptable housing inventory and perpetuating an adversarial planning board environment;
- Rural communities lack professional guidance, resulting in regulatory inertia and fear'
- Fiscal pressures limit infrastructure expansion;

- Property taxes loom large

*Qualitative Observations – Market Factors*

- Who will buy the boomers' houses
- Building new workforce housing remains challenging, despite strong demand;
- The housing preferences of younger households are not clear—do they prefer renting, or are they locked in—Generation Renters?
- Market Conditions are hampering housing mobility;
- There is not much assistance available for housing rehabilitation;
- Growth is increasingly focused close to major transportation corridors and communities with quality schools;
- Disparities between low wage service job growth and housing costs are growing—particularly north of Concord
- Need innovative ways to accommodate elderly population

## Granite State Future Survey Results

Tracy Keirns, UNH Survey Center

During May-July 2013, the University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted a survey for New Hampshire's nine Regional Planning Commissions, as part of the *Granite State Future* and *New Hampshire Broadband Mapping and Planning* initiatives. The specific areas of interest are New Hampshire resident's opinions on a range of issues facing communities around the State – transportation and broadband infrastructure, housing, economic development, natural resource management, energy and natural hazard mitigation. A survey of two thousand nine hundred and thirty-five (2,935) New Hampshire adults was conducted by telephone between May 9 and July 21, 2013. The response rate was 33% and the margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 2.2%.

### *Housing*

- A majority of residents (56%) would prefer to live in a strictly residential neighborhood while 42% would prefer a mixed residential/commercial neighborhood.
- Nearly ¾ of those that said they would like to live in a neighborhood with a mix of residences and business would prefer a smaller house with a short commute.
- A majority (60%) of those who chose a residential neighborhood where you have to drive to services also prefer a larger house with a longer commute.
- Higher income respondents were more likely to want a larger home with a longer commute than older adults and low-income persons that preferred a smaller home and shorter commute.
- Over three-fourths (78%) of residents think that their town should encourage single family detached housing, followed by assisted living facilities (74%), housing for adults over 55 (66%), clusters of single family homes (62%), accessory apartments (60%), housing in areas with business/residential mix (53%), townhouses (51%), attached homes (47%), apartment buildings (42%), and manufactured housing (36%).
- Households earning less than \$40,000, those aged 18 to 39 and those who are non-white are more likely to want their town to encourage apartments.
- Only 9% of respondents find housing to be very affordable in their town and 56% find it somewhat affordable.
- When it comes to renting, only 7% find it very affordable and 39% find it somewhat affordable.

### *Transportation*

- Residents view maintaining our bridges and highways to be the most important priority for transportation funding (74%), with 53% willing to pay more in taxes to do so.
- Residents were split on funding for other transportation initiatives, with a narrow majority favoring funding for senior and special needs transportation (55%) and availability of bike paths (53%), followed by expanding bus service between major cities (50%), improving the availability of public transportation (40%), sidewalks and crosswalk areas (38%), traffic safety (37%), and reduced congestion on major roads (37%).
- Those in the Northern and Upper Valley/Southwest regions are less likely to see reducing congestion as worthy of investment.
- Households earning less than \$40,000 are more likely to want investment in improving the availability of public transportation.

### *Community Development*

- Residents view quality schools as the most important thing to have in their community (94%).

- Other important aspects include having nearby job opportunities (86%), small businesses and retail stores (85%), farms, farm stands and forestry (83%), and grocery stores (82%).
- Over two thirds (67%) of residents favor using municipal funds to provide water lines to existing and potential development (although just 47% would be willing to pay more in taxes for it), followed by sewer lines (63%) and broadband access (42%).
- Residents (70%) think that future development should occur in already developed areas.

#### *Environmental Protection*

- Nearly all residents (96%) view protecting water quality for drinking as a high priority for their community, followed by protecting air quality (85%), preserving farms and agricultural land (79%), protecting water quality for recreational purposes like swimming and fishing (77%), protecting aquatic and marine habitats (76%), protecting access to recreation land and scenic views (67%), protecting forests for timber production (58%), managing shore land and waterfront development (58%).
- Those in Northern NH are *more* likely to say that protecting forests for timber is a high priority.
- Residents say that the top activity that their community should actively encourage is promoting local agriculture (91%). Majorities (86%) want to encourage many other activities, including protecting historic buildings and neighborhoods and promoting safe places to walk or bike
- Those who live or work in Northern and Central NH are *more* likely to say communities should actively encourage promoting tourism.
- Those who are non-white and households earning less than \$20,000 are *more* likely to say communities should actively encourage attracting more stores and shops.

#### *Energy Policies*

- Most residents (87%) think local governments should at least be somewhat involved in developing policies for renewable energy facilities.
- Three in four residents (77%) support expanding incentives for home energy efficiency improvements (with 52% who “strongly support”), followed by higher energy efficiency standards in new buildings (74%), and promoting renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and geothermal (73%). Meanwhile only 34% were in support of public charging stations for electric vehicles.
- Those who work at home are more likely to strongly support expanding incentives for home energy efficient improvements.
- Households earning less than \$40,000 are more likely to strongly support promoting renewable energy sources.

#### *Emergency Preparedness*

- Nearly three in four residents are concerned (34% “very concerned” and 40% “somewhat concerned”) with snow or ice storms in their community followed by power outages (69%), wind damage (55%), flooding (42%), drought (33%) and wildfires (32%).
- Only 12% of residents are very concerned about their community’s level of preparedness in weather-related situations, while 35% are somewhat concerned, 32% are not very concerned, 20% are not at all concerned and 1% said they don’t know.

#### *Priorities for Investing Public Dollars*

- Residents believe that environmental protection and natural resource protection should be the top priority for investing public dollars, and a majority believes that all environmental protection measures mentioned should be high priorities for policymakers.

- Residents view energy efficiency and energy choices as the second most important priority for investing public dollars. Residents are largely in favor of all the proposed energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, except for the idea of having public charging stations made for electric vehicles.
- Residents view safe and affordable housing as the third most important priority for investing public dollars. The development of single family housing and assisted living facilities were particularly favorable to residents while development of manufactured housing and apartments were the least favorable.

#### *Broadband*

- Nine in ten NH residents (91%) have internet access at home, and almost all of them (92%) consider their internet access adequate for their uses. Almost as many (85%) would not be willing to pay any additional money in exchange for faster internet speeds.



## Report out of the Statewide Listening Sessions

*Michele Holt-Shannon, NH Listens and Molly Donovan, UNH Cooperative Extension*

NH Listens conducted a series of listening sessions during 2012 and 2013. These included communities of interest and place. Communities of Interest are a community of people who share a common interest, goal or knowledge about something – common bond or interest. Communities of Place are a gathering of people who share a common local and regional geographic location. During the sessions the conversation centered on one question: “*How can we make our community the best place to live, learn, work, and play?*”

### *Communities of Interest:*

- Conducted December 2012– April 2013
- Small focus group at their location
- 20 organizations across the state
- 120 participants representing communities of interest

### *Communities of Place:*

- Conducted February 2013– May 2013
- 10 Locations with combined 45 Small Groups
- Over 500 participants
- Over 115 different towns represented

Throughout all of the sessions the combined top themes expressed included:

### *Transportation*

- The majority of groups were concerned about accessible and affordable transportation, and many mentioned the impact of long commute times on lifestyle.
- Use of private cars was discussed, with an emphasis on their high cost and the necessary reliance on cars to obtain food and health care and to get to jobs.
- Concerns for bicycling and pedestrian safety and walking access to schools, churches, shops, and other amenities were also mentioned often.
- A need was identified to ensure youth and seniors, as well as disabled and low-income individuals have access to affordable transportation.
- Many recognized the health and lifestyle improvements that can come with being able to bike or walk to work or to town centers.
- Many participants mentioned that young people are attracted to cities and towns where they have access to public transportation.
- Some groups discussed a need for more effective transportation among New Hampshire’s cities and employment centers, such as Concord, Nashua, and Manchester, valuing opportunities for communities to be connected for economic and social reasons.

### *Housing*

- There is a need for improved housing offerings, including more affordable, appealing, and available housing options in safe areas near public transportation.
- Focus group participants identified the need for a variety of affordable housing types to accommodate the needs of families and people with disabilities.
- Many groups expressed concern that housing in their communities is too expensive.

- Housing is often located far from jobs and town centers so that—without public transit—it is challenging for individuals without vehicles to work or access essential services.
- Although there was concern among some participants about government subsidized housing and transportation, more people were concerned about barriers to home ownership and having a variety of housing and transportation options for a mix of income levels.

#### *Jobs and Employment*

- Some participants felt that there is a lack of jobs overall, while others felt there is a lack of jobs that are an appropriate fit with the available skill levels in the state.
- Transportation and housing impact the availability of reliable, decent paying jobs.
- Well-paying jobs are in short supply, and the general lack of attractive jobs threatens the ability to attract and keep younger residents in New Hampshire.
- Many groups commented on a scarcity of adequate training for job requirements in the state. There is a need for access to more effective job training both for college educated and non-college educated individuals to remain current and competitive.
- Greater availability of part-time jobs is offset by their lack of benefits.
- People with low incomes, people with disabilities, and those who are homeless have particular difficulties in finding steady employment.
- A lack of transit and reliance on cars were seen as barriers to obtaining employment.

#### *Education*

- Quality K-12 education and affordable higher education were frequent topics that participants connected to employment opportunities.
- Some felt that the cost of higher education deters young people from remaining in the state. Others felt that there is a lack of job opportunities for youth and recent college graduates.

#### *Youth*

- Many expressed concern about youth migration out of New Hampshire and discussed ways that their communities can retain and attract young people.
- Some thought that the lack of affordable housing drives young people out of the state.
- Although there was no agreed-upon cause for youth migration from New Hampshire, there was some agreement that communities, as well as the state overall, should contemplate effective ways to encourage young people to work, go to school, and live in our state.

#### *Older Adults/Senior Citizens*

- The growing elder populations in the state will pose changes and challenges on communities.
- How seniors will access and afford health care, other services and general overall care?
- Many expressed concerns about how older adults who no longer drive will access transportation, yet maintain independence.
- Some felt that as the population ages, tax revenue and the growth of the economy may slow.
- There is a need for young people to be trained in health care careers relevant to senior citizens.
- Some participants felt that no government resources should be used to support seniors, as families, churches, and neighbors should serve in this role.

#### *Zoning and Development*

- Many groups expressed a desire to balance economic development with natural resource and local character preservation and a stated value in planning and zoning for future development.

### *Environment and Natural Resources*

- Across all groups and all regions, participants spent some time expressing their appreciation for the natural beauty of New Hampshire.
- Most were concerned about the future of the environment and natural resources in the state.
- Discussion of the environment ranged from pollution to water, climate change, energy, natural resources, and agriculture.
- Discussions about water included concerns for water quality, water shortages, storm water runoff, and pollution.
- Participants also talked about the importance of supporting local agriculture and maintaining the “rural character” of New Hampshire.
- Many groups discussed issues related to land use, and often participants spoke of both the barriers caused by regulations and conservation as well as a balanced need for both.
- Property rights were discussed frequently when issues of land use and natural resources were raised, particularly as related to water.
- For some participants, there was a desire to ensure that a tradition of individual rights and a libertarian culture continue to inform decisions. For others, balancing community and individual concerns were complicated, requiring ongoing and persistent efforts.

### *Infrastructure Needs*

- Many groups commented on a need for more effective and updated infrastructure within their communities, though regions viewed infrastructure differently.
- Some communities saw infrastructure as the upkeep of roads, bridges, and town buildings.
- Participants in more northern regions expressed difficulties with communication infrastructure, particularly reliable internet access.
- Technology infrastructure can change how we work and where we live.
- A number of regions mentioned creative and entrepreneurial opportunities linked to better broadband access across the state.

## The Equity and Engagement Checklist

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*Developed by Engagement and Equity TASC, December, 2012*

In order to assure maximum and equitable participation by all residents of a community or region, the Equity and Engagement Technical Assistance Subcommittee of the Granite State Future project has developed the following suggestions for conducting planning initiatives.

1. Strive for **demographically representative engagement** that reflects the community or region where planning is occurring. This may entail special efforts to reach out and engage groups that traditionally have not participated in such work, for reasons of place, economic status, age, education levels, mobility limitations or other disabilities, or cultural and ethnic differences.
2. To the extent that is legally permissible, create opportunities for **participatory decision making** as the first principle in planning activities. Planners have special expertise and knowledge. That expertise and knowledge should be shared with community partners as much as possible, in order to increase informed participation, a shared sense of investment in decisions and implementation, and equitable relationships. The goal of **mutual empowerment of planners and community members** is crucial
3. As planning goals are set and decisions are made, **consider the impact of those decisions (before they are finalized) on all constituent groups and sectors** in a community or region.
4. In public conversations, media releases, and reports published for public consumption, **use plain, everyday language accessible to anyone** (including considerations of reading level and translation from English to other languages as appropriate).
5. As plans and goals are developed, **take into account their impact on diverse groups**, including best judgments about what groups could be advantaged and what groups could be disadvantaged by those decisions, and taking steps to mitigate any anticipated losses of resources, status, or power by those who might be disadvantaged.
6. Design **effective feedback loops** to inform participants about the ways their input was considered and acted upon.
7. Respect the **core value of local control** that characterizes New Hampshire's political and community culture. Plans and goals that require regional collaboration (for example in areas such as transportation, natural resource management, public school governance, economic development) should strive to maintain community identity and integrity as much as possible.
8. Planning processes must **attend to the "soft infrastructure" of communities**—the people who live, work, and interact with each other, not just the built environment that serves those people.
9. Specific planning decisions concerned with principles of equity will take into account such matters as where stores and businesses are located with respect to walking and transportation routes used by less affluent or minority populations or those with special mobility needs; access to fresh, affordable foods; personal safety; and other criteria that reflect the goal of **maximum access and participation in community life**.
10. Practices of equitable engagement in local and regional planning efforts should be **sufficiently consistent across sites** so that residents moving from one community to another will have similar access to and be able to understand planning and decision-making processes.