

## Regional Themes

Nashua, NH April 30, 2013

*This project asks us all to consider the critical question: How should we plan for the future? What core considerations should be the basis of planning for a thriving future? UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Listens have been asked by NH's nine regional planning commissions to design and host an opportunity for neighbors to talk with neighbors to identify local assets, local needs, and ways to effectively use limited government resources. Our work focuses on the core principles of traditional settlement patterns; housing choices; transportation choices; natural resources; community and economic vitality; climate change and energy efficiency.*

- The most widely discussed topics include conversation about jobs and economic development in Nashua, and a discussion of New Hampshire's people and populations, with a particular emphasis on the trend of young people moving out of the state while aging populations stay put or migrate into the state.
- Other topics that many groups, though not all, focused on include transportation, affordable housing, city zoning and planning, the cost of higher education, taxes and spending, the environment, and making Nashua an attractive place for people to live, work, and enjoy recreationally.
- All of the groups in the conversation commented in some way about New Hampshire's changing populations. The particular focus and concern was the trend of young people leaving the state while elderly populations migrated in or stayed put.
- All the groups discussed the trend of young people leaving the community. Four out of six groups expressed interest in how Nashua could retain or attract youth to the community. Several groups (3/6) mentioned that the cost of higher education and subsequent debt was a challenge for young people.
- All of the groups took time to discuss how to best support aging populations in Nashua. In particular, there was concern from groups (3/6) that senior housing was too far away from the town and that seniors would not be able to access resources nearby.
- Four of six groups more broadly discussed the need for healthcare, mental healthcare, and child care for disadvantaged populations. Access to mental health was a concern for half (3/6) of the groups.
- All six groups discussed the need for increased jobs and further economic development. Five out of the six groups commented on the need for business development, and there were discussions about how this development could best be carried out. Half of the groups (3/6) expressed a concern that there were not enough jobs in New Hampshire and as a result Nashua was a bedroom community for commuters to Massachusetts.
- The majority of groups (5/6) spent some time discussing transportation in the Nashua area. There was an interest in both railways and bus systems, and one group commented also on the use of bicycles. In particular, groups (4/6) commented on the need for more effective transportation between regional cities such as Concord, Manchester, and Boston.
- Many groups (4/6) commented on Nashua's downtown and city layout. Several groups (3/6) expressed concern there was too much distance between residential areas and where people worked and shopped.
- Four out of six groups discussed a lack of affordable housing in the Nashua area. There was a discussion on the other problems this created for low-income and marginalized groups. One group commented that the town was segregated by income.
- The majority of groups (5/6) discussed concerns about the environment. Half the groups were concerned in some way about water. The conversation about water ranged from discussion of lack of water quality to a water shortage.
- Almost all the groups (5/6) had a conversation about how Nashua could become an attractive place to live, work, and enjoy. There was discussion on how to encourage and strengthen Nashua's local identity and charm.

**Compiled by *NH Listens* and *UNH Cooperative Extension***