

INTRODUCTION

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission conducted extensive public outreach in the Fall of 2012 as part of the NRPC's Comprehensive Regional Plan. The purpose of this phase of the outreach was to help understand the local values of the Nashua Region through the use of two surveys. The first survey was an opinion survey that asked two questions: "What is best about this area?" and "What could make this area even better?". The second survey was a Visual Preference Survey that asked respondents to identify which forms of housing, retail, office, and transportation they preferred.

How We Reached Out

Public Events – NRPC staff spoke with people around the region at the following events:

- Hudson Old Home Day, August 18
- Nashua Tree Streets Block Party, September 8
- Mason Old Home Day, September 9
- Pelham Old Home Day, September 15
- Hollis Old Home Day, September 15
- Lamson Farm Day, Mont Vernon, September 29
- Merrimack Fall Festival and Business Expo, September 29
- Milford Pumpkin Festival, October 6 and 7
- Southern New Hampshire Business Expo, October 18

Listening Boxes – Comment card boxes were placed in public places such as libraries, town halls, and restaurants throughout the region.

Website – Surveys were available on www.granitestatefuture.org.

Litchfield Community Survey – The two-question survey was incorporated in Litchfield's planning survey.

Small Group Meetings – NRPC staff met with smaller community groups such as Rotary Clubs, senior groups, a public health commission and meetings with local government staff and officials.

Major Themes

The input from these activities can be summarized into two major themes:

Rural Character, Economic Vitality

The people of the Nashua Region tend to enjoy living in rural, quiet places that feel like small towns, but also like to have access to conveniences of more urban settings, such as restaurants, shopping, and job centers.

Transportation Choices

Respondents consistently expressed a desire to get around in ways other than the automobile. Adding walking and biking infrastructure to communities was particularly popular, although there were plenty of comments regarding rail and bus travel.

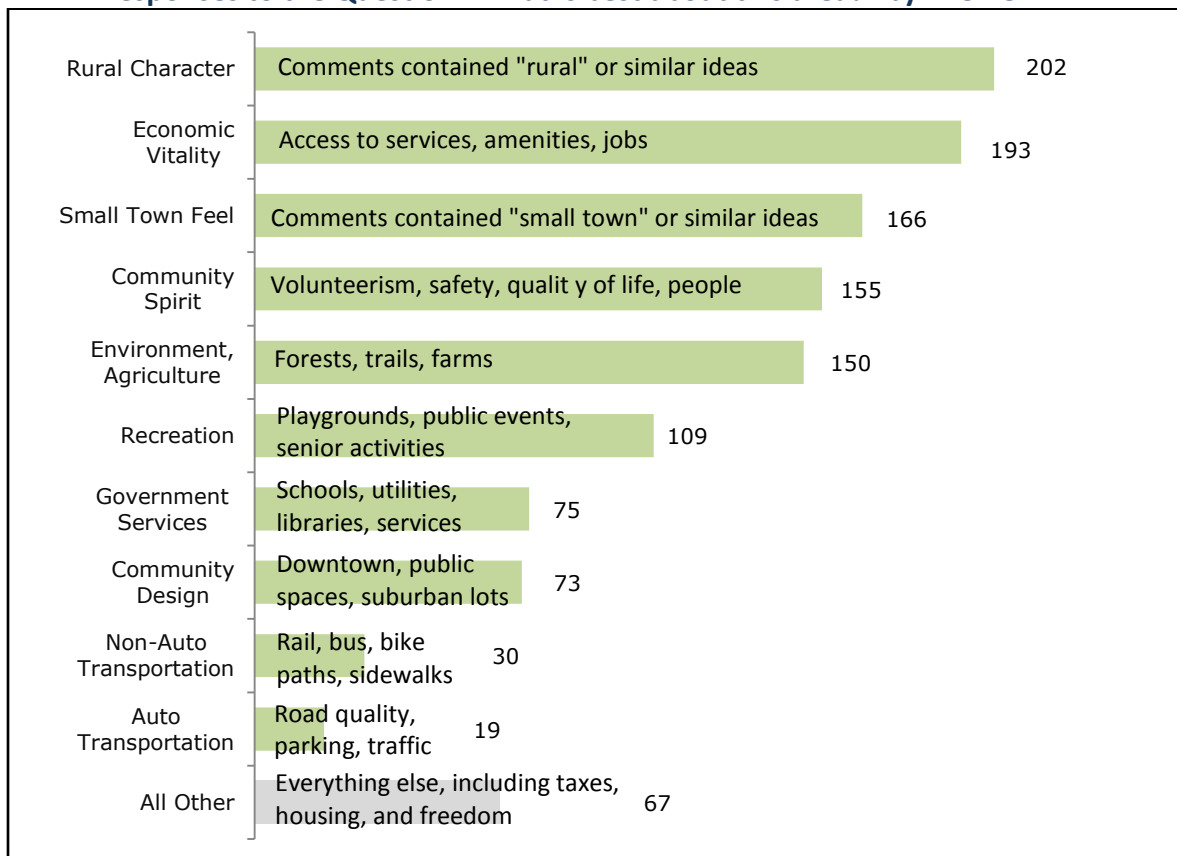
Opinion Survey

There were two questions on the Opinion Survey: (1) What is best about this area? and (2) What could make this area even better?. Respondents were asked to attribute their comments to any municipality in New Hampshire and checked whether they lived, worked, visited, or were a seasonal resident in that municipality. As of the date of this report, the Nashua Regional Planning Commission had received 771 responses to the opinion survey.

What is best about this area?

Responses to the question “What is best about this area?” describe the strengths of a community. These are the aspects of a place that make it special to its inhabitants and visitors and indicate what they would like to maintain going forward. The top three themes that arose in response to this question were “Rural Character,” “Community and Economic Vitality,” and “Small Town Feel.” These three themes together show an appreciation for both a quiet, rural setting with a low population and access to conveniences and jobs. This combination of both rural and convenience came up frequently throughout the survey responses.

Responses to the Question “What is best about this area?” by Theme



Rural Character

The most commonly expressed theme for what is best about communities in the Nashua Region was “rural character.” Comments assigned to this theme often contained the word “rural” and always expressed an interest in a quiet, bucolic setting. The word “country” also arose frequently in these responses. The desire to live in a rural setting is one of the most consistent themes that resulted from both surveys.

What We Heard:

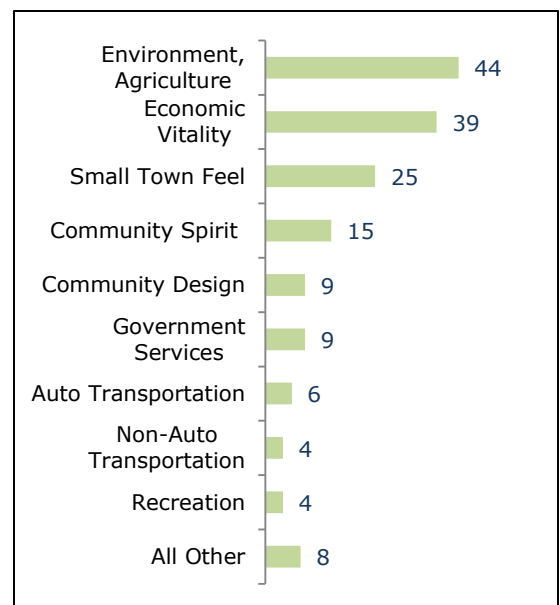
- *Quietness – rural – Amherst*
- *Ruralness (except that there is too much building and has been).* – Brookline
- *Rural feel, but close to shopping when you want.* – Hollis
- *That it is still rural.* – Hudson
- *Rural character (access to farm stands and berry patches).* – Litchfield
- *People, rural but close to things to do.* – Mont Vernon
- *Lots of space; rural & country living.* – Mason
- *Location! Still with a country feel.* – Milford
- *The rural beauty and nature of the area.* – Pelham
- *Country Setting – woods.* – Wilton
- *Schools, rural character.* – Amherst
- *Its quaint rural character.* – Hollis
- *Litchfield is well known for its quiet, picturesque, family oriented rural community.*
- *Rural, tree-area, privacy, country folk loving one another. Close to civilization without having a part of it.* – Mason

Related Themes:

The most frequently made comment along with “rural character” was a comment regarding the environment or agriculture. This shows the strong association between phrase “rural character” and open space like forests and farm fields.

The second most mentioned comment regarded “Economic Vitality,” which includes access to amenities both inside and outside the municipality, as well as access to employment. This shows that people like to live in communities that have rural, secluded atmospheres, but also want access to conveniences and jobs.

People who said “Rural Character” also mentioned these themes for what is best about their area:



Community and Economic Vitality

Second on the list of what was best about the area was “Community and Economic Vitality.” Included in this theme is a variety of amenities including restaurants, shopping, professional businesses, and cultural venues. The common thread running through this theme is access to services and employment.

Among the 193 responses related to community and economic vitality, 42 mentioned a municipality’s proximity to amenities outside of that municipality. Litchfield’s proximity to Manchester and Nashua spurred many of these comments, including, “Litchfield's location is one of its best features. You get the quietness of the country while still being within a short distance of essential retail places.” Similar comments were expressed in other municipalities, such as Merrimack, “Closeness to Boston, coast & mountains.”

“Safe community, good shopping and restaurants. Affordable housing and close proximity to other attractions.” – Hudson

These comments were included in the “Community and Economic Vitality” theme due to their association with access to amenities, but they suggest a desire to be close to conveniences while maintaining a residential, rural feel in the municipality itself.

What We Heard:

- *All the restaurants and friends.* – Amherst
- *Great location. Close to work and play. Good schools.* – Brookline
- *Restaurants. Hollis Auto, atmosphere.* – Hollis
- *Safe community, good shopping and restaurants. Affordable housing and close proximity to other attractions.* – Hudson
- *The fact is between Manchester and Nashua - everything is close by and yet it is quiet.* – Litchfield
- *Pickity Place. Annual barbeques.* – Mason
- *The shops and restaurants.* – Merrimack
- *A lot of small businesses.* – Milford
- *Diverse business community.* – Nashua
- *Small town feel with close proximity to businesses.* – Pelham
- *Wilton Town Hall Theater.* – Wilton

Small Town Feel

The third most commonly expressed theme was “Small Town Feel.” Like “Rural Character,” most of the comments categorized under this theme contained the theme’s specific words, “small” and “town.” Although many comments about small town feel came from the more rural or suburban communities in the region, the city of Nashua had nine such comments. It appears that some respondents used the phrase to refer to a residential or suburban community design while others used it to refer to a sense of neighborliness present in the people.

“Wealth of resources, urban area but remains naturally beautiful. Nashua has a small town feel for a city.”

What We Heard:

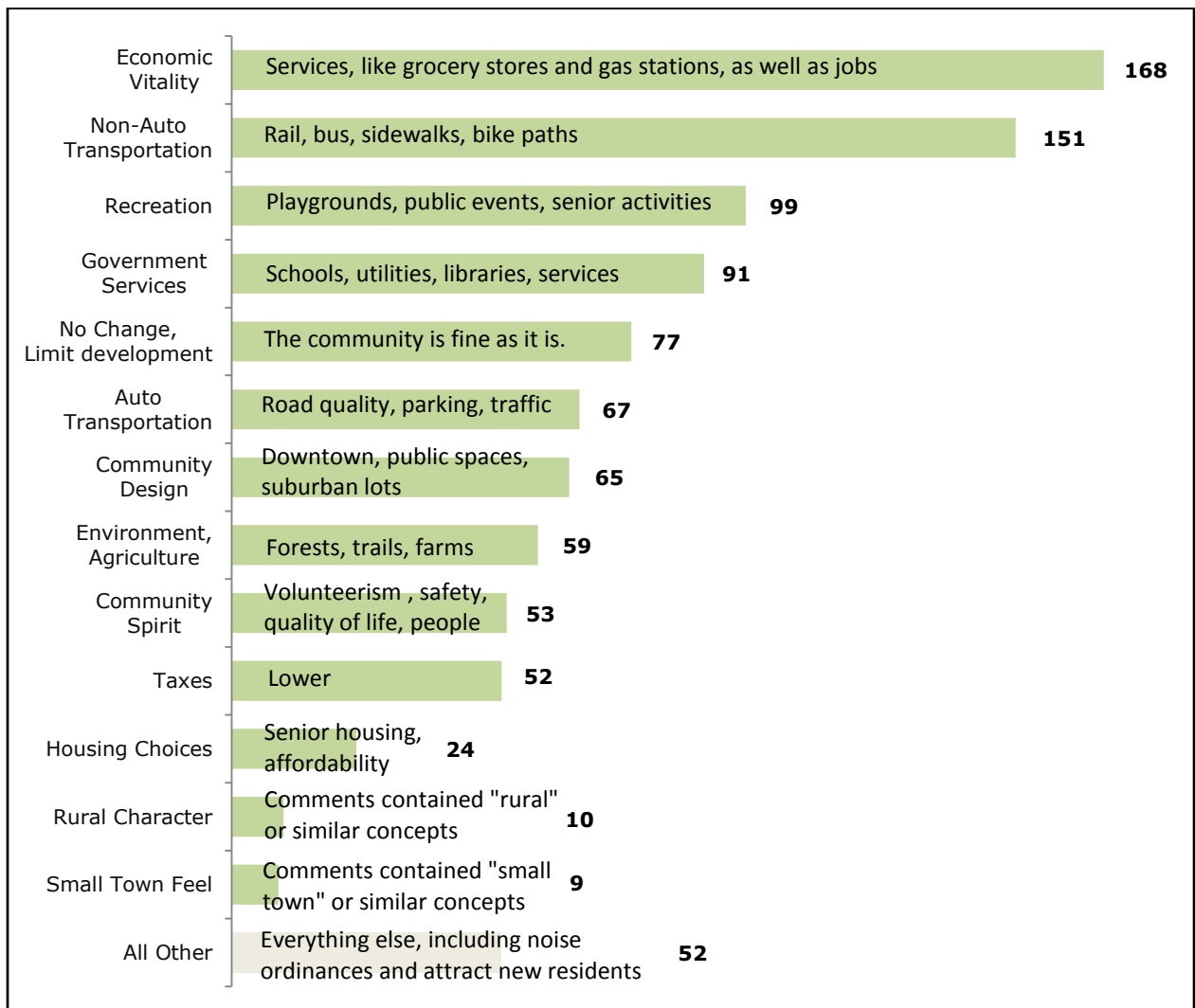
- *The small community setting.* – Hollis
- *Small town with great character. Good schools.* – Litchfield
- *Small town – close knit – slower lifestyle.* – Mason
- *Closeness to small town effect.* – Merrimack
- *I like the small town flavor and rural feel of Mont Vernon. Also the lack of commercial interests.* – Mont Vernon.
- *Wealth of resources, urban area but remains naturally beautiful. Nashua has a small town feel for a city.* – Nashua
- *Sense of community, small town feel.* – Pelham
- *Small town character surrounded by larger cities.* – Wilton
- *It is a small town without larger town headaches that come with ‘workforce’ housing.* – Litchfield
- *Small town atmosphere - nice center of town - history of the town - Twig Jones.* - Mason



What would make this area even better?

Responses to the question “What would make this area even better?” are prospective. They propose improvements that could be made to a community in the future and describe what people believe is missing. Two themes stood out among the others from all comments collected: “Community and Economic Vitality” and “Non-Auto Transportation.” Unlike the responses to “What is best about the area?”, which indicate an appreciation for rural, quiet, low-density communities; the responses for “What would make this area even better?” show that people want at least some of the amenities that go along with more developed areas. They want more businesses, both for services and for employment. They also want more access to public transportation and non-motorized transportation, like bike paths and sidewalks.

Responses to the question “What would make this area even better?” by Theme



Community and Economic Vitality

The most commonly expressed theme for what would make a community even better was “Community and Economic Vitality.” This theme is the same as in response to the question “What is best about this area?” except that, here, respondents would like to improve their communities by attracting more conveniences and jobs. Respondents frequently stated that increased access to amenities like restaurants and convenience stores would make their communities better, although job creation was also significant. Considering that “Rural Character” was the most popular response for what is best about a community and “Community and Economic Vitality” was the most popular response for what would make a community better, the results of the opinion survey indicate that people in the Nashua Region tend to like quiet, rural settings but also want access to conveniences offered by more urbanized areas.

What We Heard:

- *More small businesses – food related.* – Amherst
- *More City involvement with small businesses for promotion of business.* – Nashua
- *More quaint shopping and eateries.* – Hollis
- *Make it more attractive to business. Streamline the process of opening a store so that businesses want to open here.* – Hudson
- *More professional businesses, less industrial, more high-end dining.* – Litchfield
- *Closer grocery store. Finish second ball field.* – Mason
- *Fill up empty malls instead of building new ones. A different supermarket.* – Merrimack
- *Bring back a manufacturing base of business.* – Milford
- *Local restaurant.* – Mont Vernon
- *More stores.* – Pelham

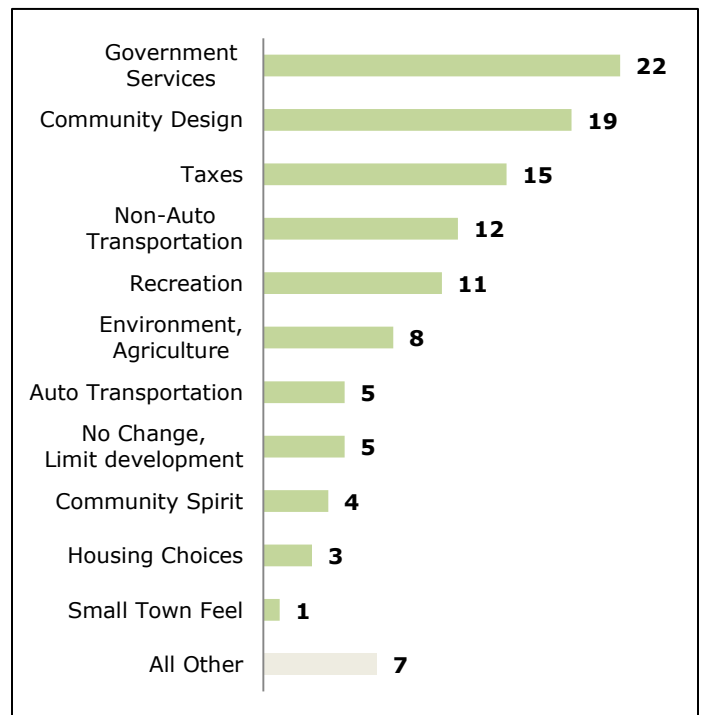
Related Themes:

The theme most frequently associated with “Economic Development” was “Government Services,” though the majority of those 22 comments were made about improvement to schools.

Most of the comments that combined “economic vitality” and “taxes” assumed that more businesses would lower residential tax rates; however, 15 responses are too few to pull this association out as a meaningful trend.

This data shows that the desire to add economic development to one’s community is a common aspiration among respondents with a variety of other interests.

People who said “Community and Economic Vitality” also said that these themes would make their Area even better:



Non-Auto Transportation

Almost as popular as “Community and Economic Vitality” was “Non-Auto Transportation.” Popular comments in this theme included sidewalks and bike paths, as well as rail transportation. Public transportation to Boston was also a frequent response. The most popular of all was “public transportation” which could mean either bus or rail.

What We Heard:

- *More access to public transportation.* – Amherst
- *More walkable.* – Hollis
- *Better public transportation options for commuters to Boston/south.* – Hudson
- *Multiple launch sites along the Merrimack so we could use our kayaks. Widen 3A at next paving so we could bicycle on it.* – Litchfield
- *More marked and paved bike trails. A train!* – Mason
- *Rail!!!!* – Merrimack
- *Rail transportation to Boston.* – Milford
- *Bicycle paths, share the road programs for bicycles between communities.* – Nashua
- *Sidewalks. Transportation for seniors.* – Pelham
- *Busses* – Wilton

Recreation

“Recreation” came in a distant third after “Community and Economic Vitality” and “Non-Auto Transportation.” Some commonly expressed improvements from the “Recreation” category included more activities for children and for seniors as well as more public events, like festivals.

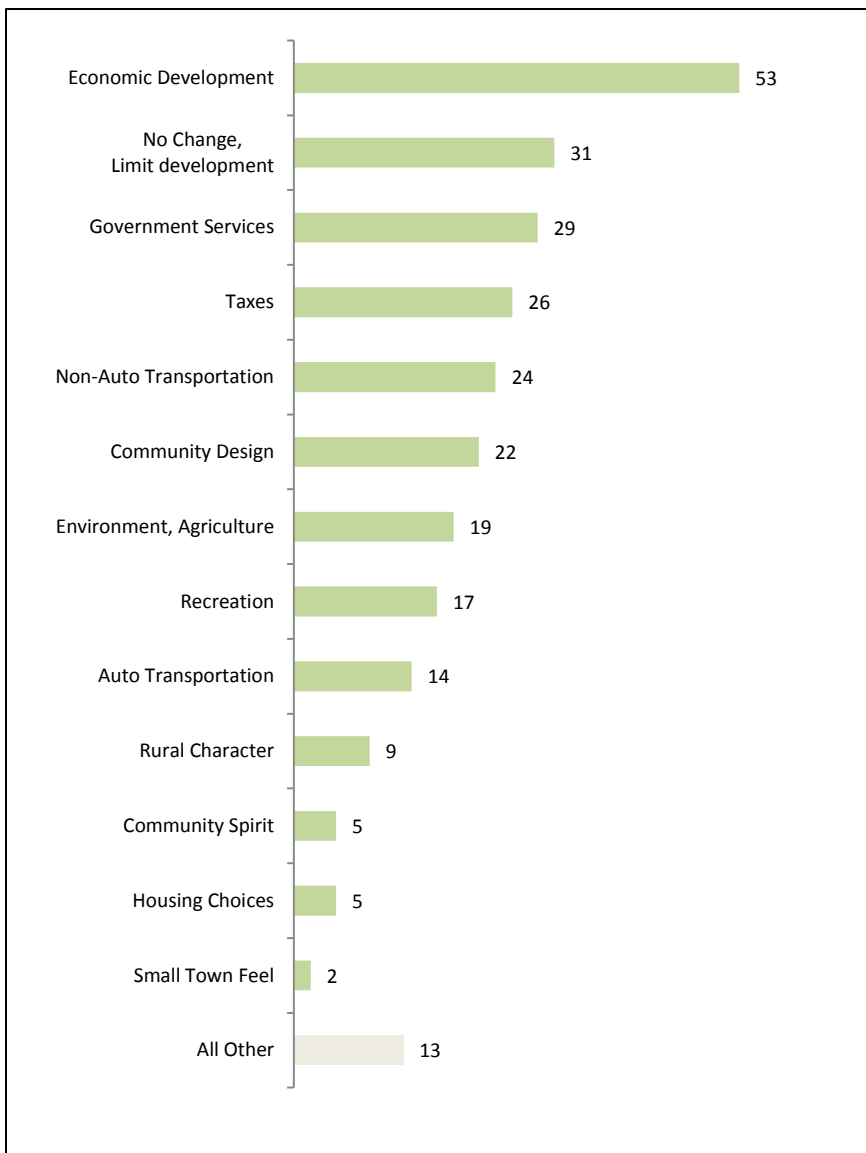
What We Heard:

- *Stay the same, add community pool.* – Hollis
- *More playgrounds and anything that appeals to young families.* – Litchfield
- *Recreational opportunities i.e., rail trail, etc.* – Mason
- *More family attractions.* – Merrimack
- *A park for younger kids, so teenagers don’t invade. Also something for teenagers.* – Milford
- *Something for older kids ages 12-18 to do other than the schools playground or the general store. A small hangout.* – Mont Vernon
- *More recreational buildings. Sidewalks.* – Pelham
- *More parks and recreation.* – Nashua
- *Adult/senior center.* – Litchfield
- *More recreational opportunities.* – Milford

Linking Comments Between What is Best and What Could Be Better

Taking a look what people like best about their communities and connecting to what could make it better gives additional information on how people perceive their communities currently and what they want to see improved in the future. The following graph takes the most popular response to the first question, Rural Character, and shows themes that appeared in the second question about what could make their communities even better.

For people who described “Rural Character” as being best about the area also mentioned these themes as what could be better:



Over 25% of respondents who said that the best thing about their communities is the “rural character” also said that what could make their communities better is to have more economic development, such as restaurants, grocery stores, and other conveniences, along with access to more employment. This is a strong association and provides additional evidence that residents of the Nashua Region want communities to balance rural character with conveniences.

With that said, the next theme down the chart is “No Change, Limit Development,” which is a distant second to “Economic Development,” but still shows that there is a contingent of people in the region who believe that the rural character of their communities is the best part about their communities and do not want their communities to become more developed, even if that means less access to conveniences.

Major Themes by Municipality

To provide a more localized perspective on the comments received, the following tables show the top three themes from each town for both survey questions with sample quotes.

WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
AMHERST	
<p>Rural Character – 6 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautifully rural, quaint country, but not far from larger cities. • Schools, rural character. • Quietness – rural. <p>Economic Vitality – 6 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Businesses, commerce</i> • <i>Amherst residential market is good for landscaping business.</i> • <i>All stores and amenities are close in town.</i> <p>Community Design – 5 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amherst - the village, the charm.</i> • <i>Sense of community - quintessential New England.</i> • <i>Quintessential N.E. town, no sidewalks. Nevertheless, people friendly.</i> 	<p>Non-Auto Transportation – 5 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Walking and biking paths.</i> • <i>More access to public transportation.</i> • <i>Public transportation, walkable shops.</i> <p>Auto Transportation – 4 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Better roads and infrastructure support. Towns are not paying for necessary maintenance.</i> • <i>Traffic congestion on 101A.</i> • <i>Rush hour traffic is too heavy.</i> <p>Community Design – 3 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Too much development on 101A.</i> • <i>Less big businesses - more small ones.</i> • <i>Public transportation, walkable shops.</i>
BROOKLINE	
<p>Government Services – 2 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great location. Close to work and play. Good schools.</i> • <i>The people I have met. The school system in Brookline/Hollis.</i> <p>Small Town Feel – 2 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It's home.</i> • <i>Ruralness (except that there is too much building and has been). Safety, neighbors.</i> <p>Community Spirit – 2 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The people I have met. The school system in Brookline/Hollis.</i> • <i>Safety, neighbors.</i> 	<p>Auto Transportation – 1 Comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Quicker route to Concord.</i> <p>Community Design – 1 Comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For our town (Brookline) Selectmen to have accepted your grant!!!</i> <p>All Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Less government</i> • <i>Less conservation land</i>

WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
HOLLIS	
<p>Rural Character – 10 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Its quaint rural character.</i> • <i>Rural.</i> • <i>Rural & sense of community.</i> <p>Environment, Agriculture – 7 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Natural resources, hiking trails, local farms.</i> • <i>The people, the landscape.</i> • <i>Trails.</i> <p>Economic Vitality – 6 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Restaurants. Hollis Auto, atmosphere.</i> • <i>Country feel but close to the city.</i> • <i>The rural feel but close to shopping when you want.</i> 	<p>Economic Vitality – 4 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More quaint shopping & eateries.</i> • <i>More places to go out and do things.</i> • <i>More art galleries</i> <p>No Change, Limit Development – 4 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minimal growth.</i> • <i>Stay the same.</i> • <i>Reduce development.</i> <p>Non-Auto Transportation – 4 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Train service to Boston.</i> • <i>More bike lanes - difficult to bike on 122 & So. Merrimack, etc.</i> • <i>Maintain agriculture, land preservation & schools and add rail stop to Boston. Add bike lane; sidewalks.</i>
HUDSON	
<p>Economic Vitality – 7 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not far from city conveniences, but easy to find quiet/natural places. Love downtown Nashua – great food and art.</i> • <i>Safe community, good shopping and restaurants. Affordable housing and close proximity to other attractions.</i> • <i>Proximity to coast, mountains and city. Places to escape the population.</i> <p>Environment, Agriculture – 4 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The blending of the natural environment and modern society.</i> • <i>Still has natural beauty, access to many options of all kinds.</i> • <i>Not far from city conveniences, but easy to find quiet/natural places. Love downtown Nashua.</i> <p>Rural Character – 3 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>That it is still rural.</i> 	<p>Non-Auto Transportation – 8 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Better public transportation options for commuters to Boston/south.</i> • <i>More public transportation.</i> • <i>I'd like to see better public transportation options for commuters to Boston/south.</i> <p>Economic Vitality – 2 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Make it more attractive to businesses. Streamline the process of opening a store so that businesses want to open here. There are a lot of empty stores in town and the community would benefit from more of them reopening.</i> • <i>More professional businesses, less industrial, more high-end dining.</i>

WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
LITCHFIELD	
<p>Rural Character – 87 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintains a rural small town feel with great water quality & air quality.</i> • <i>Rural feel with proximity to big towns. Limited government intrusiveness.</i> • <i>Rural character and school.</i> <p>Small Town Feel – 47 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Small town, agriculture community, safe environment, New England beauty.</i> • <i>Small town feel, farmland, small neighborhoods. Albuquerque Ave.</i> • <i>Small town with great character. Good schools.</i> <p>Environment, Agriculture – 37 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The farmlands and beauty of the land, particularly the view on Rt. 3A. Don't ever over develop.</i> • <i>Sustained farming culture. Rural character. Our school and outstanding sports.</i> • <i>We are within 20 minutes of Manchester, Nashua, Londonderry and Merrimack with access to all of the bigger city attractions and employment opportunities. We still embrace farming and produce truly locally grown food. We have relatively low crime.</i> 	<p>Economic Vitality – 58 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Some commercial development, grocery store, etc.</i> • <i>Add commercial/industrial for jobs and tax advantages.</i> • <i>The addition of some well planned and architecturally pleasing commercial/office development to bring service to town but while preserving our agricultural roots.</i> <p>Government Services – 34 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Transportation and sewerage system.</i> • <i>Better elementary school. My children have completed elementary school.</i> • <i>Expanded services such as city sewer, natural gas, etc. making commercial appeal along 3A corridor.</i> <p>Taxes – 26 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More businesses; lower property tax rate; improved education.</i> • <i>Lower taxes.</i> • <i>Slightly lower taxes, and town curbside trash pickup.</i>

WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
MASON	
<p>Rural Character – 28 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural, tree-area, privacy, country folk loving one another. Close to civilization without having a part of it. • That it is still mostly rural. Someday we will need land to grow food. • The rural character of the environment. <p>Environment, Agriculture – 24 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conservation land. • Conservation areas, nice wooded areas, country living. • Woodlands and walking trails. <p>Small Town Feel – 13 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The small town feel countryside. • Small town - close knit - slower lifestyle. • Love the rural, small-town atmosphere. 	<p>Auto Transportation – 14 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain roads poor condition, more local shops. • Improved roads. • Better roads. <p>No Change, Limit Development – 12 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave the country scene as-is. • Keeping area rural, strictly controlling development. • To continue the slow growth of commercialism. <p>Recreation – 11 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer grocery store. Finish second ball field. • Open at least one section of Rail Trail to ATV. • Fields/Parks, Pools (community).
MERRIMACK	
<p>Economic Vitality – 49 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenience to lots of shopping and jobs. • The shops and restaurants. • There are a lot of choices for food, fun, & shopping. The neighborhoods feel safe. <p>Recreation – 35 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events for the children. • Weston Park. • Parks. <p>Community Spirit – 29 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community & community activities. • People and location. • Friendly, low expenses. 	<p>Non-Auto Transportation – 28 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike & sidewalks, pathways to stay out of roads. • Expand public transportation through the area Nashua to Concord. Foster creation of diversified non-retail jobs that support home ownership. • Public transportation – Merrimack. <p>Economic Vitality – 26 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand public transportation through the area Nashua to Concord. Foster creation of diversified non-retail jobs that support home ownership. • More stores. • PF Changs. <p>Recreation – 22 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More recreational development and access to the Merrimack River. • More charity fun events. • More activities for senior citizens (affordable).

WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
MILFORD	
<p>Small Town Feel – 37 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is beautiful - small town - blue sky.</i> • <i>The small town atmosphere.</i> • <i>The friendliness of the community. The small town feeling.</i> <p>Economic Vitality – 35 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Convenience to lots of shopping and jobs.</i> • <i>The new mall.</i> • <i>The variety of places to go and things to do all within a couple hours' drive.</i> <p>Community Spirit – 33 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community, local businesses, farm produce year-round.</i> • <i>Community oriented.</i> • <i>Family & friends live in NH.</i> 	<p>Non-Auto Transportation – 44 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public transportation, including light rail & train.</i> • <i>Rail system (high speed) to Boston, fewer box stores.</i> • <i>More town centers. More public transportation.</i> <p>Recreation – 26 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More multi-sport athletic fields.</i> • <i>More social activities/stuff to do.</i> • <i>Public indoor pool and gym open during winter months.</i> <p>Auto Transportation – 19 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bike lanes, better roads, clean up Fletchers Paint, upgrade Keyes Fields, improved Oval traffic efficiency.</i> • <i>Oval traffic can be dangerous.</i> • <i>Traffic calming, pedestrian safety.</i>
MONT VERNON	
<p>Rural Character – 21 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rural character.</i> • <i>Rural quality.</i> • <i>Rural setting.</i> <p>Environment, Agriculture – 9 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Woods, trails, small town, great school with teachers who care.</i> • <i>All of the foliage, all of the nice buildings, not too fancy.</i> • <i>I like the scenery. I also like the country settings.</i> <p>Community Spirit – 6 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Friendly, rural community.</i> • <i>It's quiet and the people are fun.</i> • <i>The people and how friendly and helpful they are to each other.</i> 	<p>Economic Vitality – 10 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local restaurant.</i> • <i>I would like conveniences available.</i> • <i>Find a way to subsidize the general store.</i> <p>Non-Auto Transportation – 6 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public transportation capable of helping commuters get to Manchester, Nashua & Boston.</i> • <i>Public transportation.</i> • <i>I need to get a ride because I don't drive. Thank God for my church, for a ride, or a family member. I would like back up, in case I can't get a ride.</i> <p>No Change, Limit Development – 6 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Less McMansions, more dirt roads.</i> • <i>Keep control of growth.</i> • <i>Like the way it is.</i>

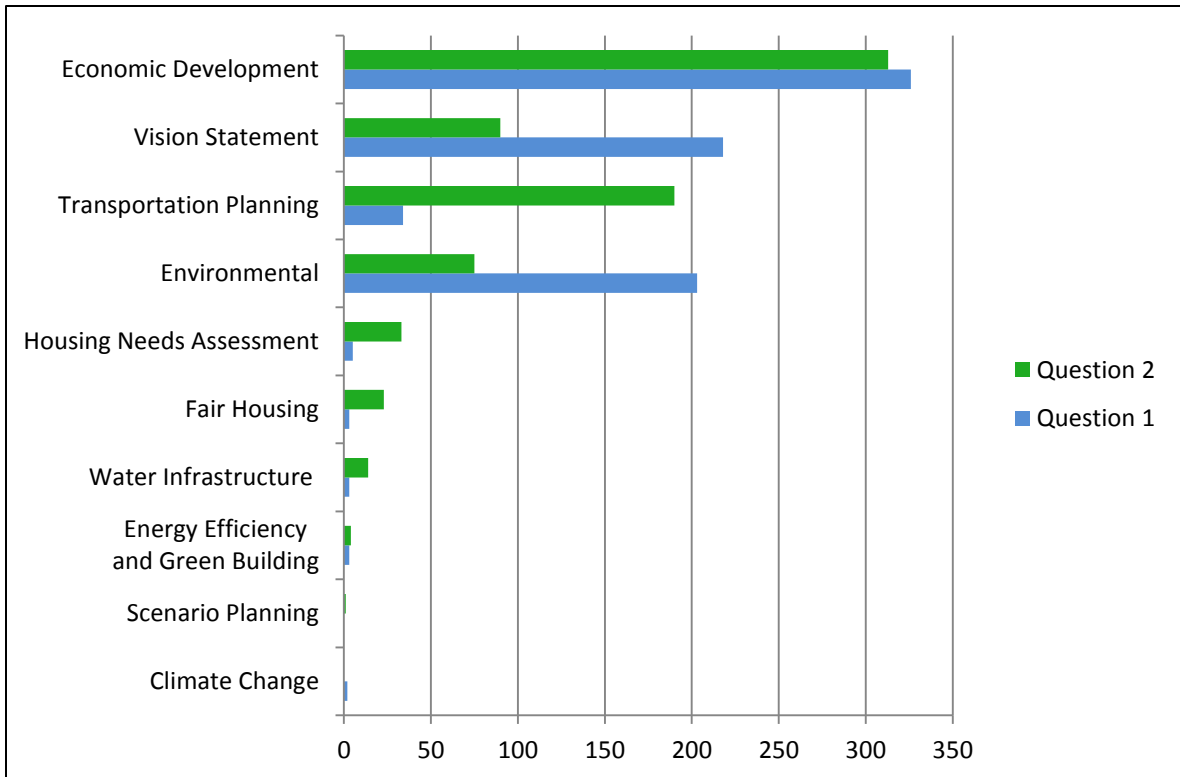
WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
NASHUA	
<p>Economic Vitality – 27 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fairly walkable downtown, charming shops/trolley busses/cafes. New England feel.</i> • <i>People – Jobs.</i> • <i>Culture/Food.</i> <p>Community Spirit – 24 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The people that actually help out to keep the community a family.</i> • <i>Everyone pitches in and helps out to watch over the kids.</i> • <i>The neighborhood.</i> <p>Government Services – 16 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The City of Nashua offers many different types of assistance, which is great.</i> • <i>I like all the support services, everything easily located, i.e. schools, stores, buses.</i> • <i>Accessibility to public transportation, aid services, & shopping.</i> 	<p>Community Spirit – 23 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Less violence and drugs on the streets.</i> • <i>Get rid of drug dealers & alcoholics that hang on the corners.</i> • <i>More family's involvement and community's opinions given and taken serious.</i> <p>Non-Auto Transportation – 16 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More walkability, expand on the charm to attract guests/tourists/shoppers.</i> • <i>Passenger rail service.</i> • <i>Putting more cross walks. Also slowing drivers down on Kinsley.</i> <p>Recreation – 12 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wish there were many more trees, public land for conservation and recreation.</i> • <i>More parks and recreation.</i> • <i>More things for the kids..</i>

WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THIS AREA?	WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AREA EVEN BETTER?
PELHAM	
<p>Community Spirit – 26 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sense of community, small town feel.</i> • <i>The people.</i> • <i>Small community, people are friendly.</i> <p>Small Town Feel – 22 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Small friendly town.</i> • <i>Sense of community, small town feel.</i> • <i>Quiet little town.</i> <p>Rural Character – 22 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rural town life-good place to raise a family.</i> • <i>Love the community – ‘rural’ feel.</i> • <i>Proximity to Mass. Rural areas.</i> 	<p>Economic Vitality – 33 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A brand new plaza - it can totally improve. Bring more stores to the area.</i> • <i>More restaurants - Good ones!</i> • <i>More businesses; especially options for professionals, to cut down on commuting. *Street Signs.*</i> <p>Non-Auto Transportation – 23 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More recreational buildings. Sidewalks.</i> • <i>Sidewalks/lights. More basketball courts & dog park.</i> • <i>Better public spaces. Bike Paths!</i> <p>Government Services – 21 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Having Fire Station (small) on the other side of Route 38 because if have a flood, Fire Department will have to go to Dracut to save us.</i> • <i>Water & Sewerage.</i> • <i>Make a better high school in Pelham.</i>
WILTON	
<p>Environment, Agriculture – 3 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Its scenic qualities including animals, trees, and the calming sounds of water!!!</i> • <i>Nature.</i> • <i>Country setting – woods.</i> <p>Small Town Feel – 2 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Quaint.</i> • <i>Small town character surrounded by larger cities.</i> <p>Economic Vitality – 2 Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wilton Town Hall Theatre.</i> • <i>Small town character surrounded by larger cities.</i> 	<p>Economic Vitality – 1 Comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More jobs that don't require computer skills...</i> <p>Auto Transportation – 1 Comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Less truck traffic - conflicts with residential uses.</i> <p>Environment, Agriculture – 1 Comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community events (especially those that include farms!).</i>

Plan Chapters

Another way to look at the responses was to see how they fit in with the Comprehensive Regional Plan for the Nashua Region. This plan will be comprised of components that are based on planning topics like Economic Development, Environment, and Transportation. The results of the Opinion Survey will help to inform the drafting of these components. The following graph shows how many comments applied to each of the plan components.

Number of Responses to the Opinion Survey that Applied to Plan Components



Comments related to Community and Economic Vitality theme were also categorized into the Economic Development component of the plan. Given the popularity of responses containing comments about Community and Economic Vitality in both questions, (1) What is best about this area? and (2) What could make this area even better; it is no surprise that the Economic Development chapter has hundreds of comments that applied to it.

Responses relating to what will eventually become the Vision Statement came up as the second most popular plan component. The Vision Statement describes the overall vision for the region over the next 20 years. This includes how the region would like to see the actual land take shape, like where development should occur and what places should be conserved. Accordingly, most of the comments relating to land use were applied to this component. Comments that were made about the Community Character, such as rural or small town feel, were also categorized into the Vision Statement as that is also part of what people like to see preserved over time.

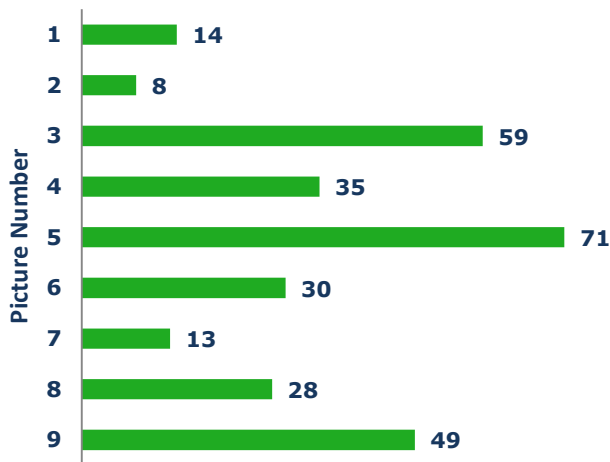
Visual Preference Survey

A total of 203 people from across the Nashua Region completed the Visual Preference Survey. The first three sections asked respondents to choose types of housing, retail, and work places that they found visually appealing and would want in their communities. The purpose was to understand preferred types of development and site design. The fourth section of the survey asked respondents to choose the mode of transportation and infrastructure that they preferred and would like to either have in their communities or use. Respondents could select multiple pictures from each category.

I. Housing

Respondents were asked the question, “What types of housing would you like in your community?” As shown in the chart, two of the three most frequently chosen options were houses on large lots in rural settings, although Picture 3 may have a smaller lot than the other two. The desire to live in a wooded, rural setting is consistent with the results of the Opinion Survey, where “rural character” was the most frequently stated aspect that was best about a community.

Total Respondents Who Chose Each Picture



II. Retail

Respondents were asked the question, “What types of places would you prefer to shop in your community?” In this instance, the most popular choice was Picture 1 – a walkable plaza with a two-story store as the focus. This result is consistent with comments from the opinion survey in that many people expressed a desire to live in a rural setting but have access to conveniences associated with a more urban setting. Close behind the most popular choice was Picture 6, a rural country store. Third was Picture 2, which is a main-street setting. The three top choices represented a mix of densities and development styles.

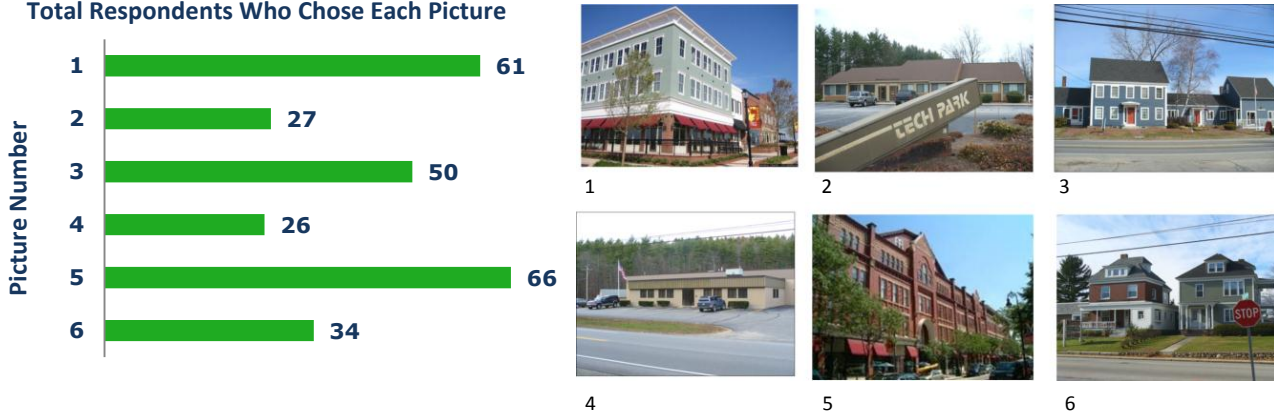
Total Respondents Who Chose Each Picture



III. Office

Respondents were asked the question, “What types of workplaces would you like in your community?” As with the retail pictures, the most popular choice for places to work was a downtown setting, Picture 5. This picture shows a traditional main street that has a mix of retail on the first floor and offices above. In second place was Picture 1, which is also an in-town building with a mix of office and retail uses and sidewalks in front. Picture 6 is more of a rural or suburban setting that is either home businesses or offices within buildings that were previously used as homes. All three of the top selections allow for parking behind the buildings, rather than in front.

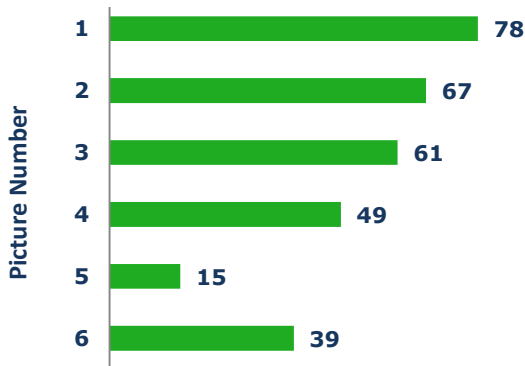
Total Respondents Who Chose Each Picture



IV. Transportation

Respondents were asked, “How would you like to get around?” and asked to choose all of the transportation options that they would prefer to use or have available. Picture 1, walking, was the most preferred form of transportation. The popularity of sidewalks and walking corresponds to the second-most mentioned major theme in the Opinion Survey, which was “Non-Auto Transportation.” 42 people stated in the Opinion Survey that sidewalks and a walkable community would make their communities better. Pictures 2 and 3 came next and indicate the importance of the automobile in New Hampshire, but also the desire for bicycling as an alternative.

Total Respondents Who Chose Each Picture



1



2



3



4



5



6

Summary

The primary trend evident from the results of both the Opinion Survey and the Visual Preference survey is that people of the Nashua Region enjoy living in rural, country settings, but like to have access to the conveniences and employment offered by more urban settings. This is apparent from the three most popular themes for the question “What is best about this area?” in the Opinion Survey being “Rural Character,” “Economic Vitality,” and “Small Town Feel.” It is also supported by the most popular choice for “What could make this area even better?” being “Economic Vitality,” which translates to a desire for more access to convenient services and jobs. This trend is also supported by the results of the Visual Preference Survey. There, the most popular choices were rural homes but urban retail and office buildings.

Another trend is a desire for improved non-automobile transportation. Although residents of the region expect good road maintenance and show no interest in diminishing automobile travel, they clearly expressed a desire in the two surveys to improve or provide more transportation options beyond the automobile. In response to the question, “What could make this area even better?” the close second choice was “Non-Auto Transportation,” just behind economic vitality. In other words, people of the region chose making sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transportation a priority almost as frequently as they chose to emphasize jobs and amenities. Those two themes of “Economic Vitality” and “Non-Auto Transportation” were by far the two most popular in the “Better” section of the Opinion Survey and show how important those two themes are to people of the region. The results of the Visual Preference Survey support the emphasis on non-auto transportation, as the most popular choice for transportation was walking, followed by car, followed by biking.

Appendix

Participation by Municipality

Town	Total Responses
Litchfield	158
Milford	132
Merrimack	130
Pelham	109
Nashua	75
Mason	65
Mont Vernon	35
Hollis	21
Amherst	20
Hudson	12
Wilton	8
Brookline	6
Lyndeborough	0

The five towns in which NRPC staff did not attend public events were Litchfield, Amherst, Wilton, Brookline, and Lyndeborough. With the exception of Litchfield, these municipalities were among those with the lowest participation in the survey. This is a reflection of two things. For Litchfield, the NRPC was able to include the two questions from the opinion survey in a greater planning survey conducted by that municipality. For the remaining twelve municipalities, the vast majority of the opinion surveys being completed as a result of NRPC staff prompting people in person to fill out the surveys. Nearly 98% of the responses were completed on a paper card, and the vast majority of those were completed with prompting

by NRPC staff at public events, rather than in a listening box. The remaining 2% were completed either on a computer or by mobile phone. Due to scheduling and availability of public events, staff did not attend events in some municipalities because none occurred during the NRPC’s outreach period or conflicted with other events.

Detailed Themes

The themes discussed above are “major themes,” which are composites of more detailed themes. These detailed themes provide a middle ground between the original 771 responses and the condensed major themes. The detailed themes allow for more nuance in the categorization of responses. For instance, the major theme “Non-Auto Transportation” is comprised of the detailed themes “Bike – Transportation and Recreation,” “Walkable Community,” “Public Transportation,” “Rail,” and “Sidewalks.” The detailed themes acknowledge there is a difference from a policy perspective in promoting rail infrastructure versus promoting walking infrastructure. There are over 80 detailed themes located in the following two tables.

As a note about methodology, adding up the totals of the detailed themes will not equate to the totals in the major themes. This is because individual comments containing multiple detailed themes were counted once by related major theme. For example, a comment that was allocated

to the detailed themes “schools” and “trash pickup” would only appear once in the “Government Services” major theme.

Detailed Themes for “What is best about this area?”

<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Themes</u>
202	Rural Character	10	Public festivals, old home days, gatherings, etc.
130	Community spirit	10	Public Spaces, like parks and town greens
118	Small Town Feel	9	Access to Employment
103	Access to Amenities, Conveniences	7	Reasonable Taxes
89	Access to Recreation	7	Walkable Community
48	Access to Culture	7	Public Transportation
47	Schools	7	Low Population
46	Environmental Conservation	7	Diversity
43	Agriculture	5	Housing Choices
42	Geographical Convenience - Proximity to amenities outside of municipality	5	Senior Center or Activities for Seniors
40	Community support/volunteerism	5	Improved Roadways
37	Environmental Quality	5	Historic Preservation
35	Village/Downtown Feel	5	Healthcare
31	Environmental Access	4	Nothing
25	Community or Neighborhood Design	4	No Commercial or non-residential development
25	Good for families	4	Cost of Living
25	Economic Development	3	Freedom
21	Scenery	3	Access to Boston
20	Government Services - Access	2	Less Development
19	Safety	1	No Development
16	Bike – Transportation and Recreation	1	No Multifamily Housing
14	Traffic - Good, Minimal	1	Growth management
13	Good Quality of Life	1	Communication (newspaper, etc.)
13	Suburban Setting		
12	Everything		
11	Activities for kids, seniors and others		
10	Social Services		

Detailed Themes for “What would make this area even better?”

<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Theme</u>
120	Economic Development	6	No Multifamily Housing
90	Access to Amenities, Conveniences	6	Parking
71	Public Transportation	6	Public festivals, old home days, gatherings, etc.
58	Access to Recreation	6	Growth management
52	Lower Taxes	5	Culture - Access
47	Improved Roadways	4	Public Spaces, like parks and town greens
37	Schools	4	Improve government efficiency
36	No Change	4	No tolls
33	Activities for kids, seniors and others	4	Historic Preservation
32	Bike – Transportation and Recreation	3	Low Population
29	Rail	3	Social Services
29	Walkable Community	3	Taxes (Less Concern with)
28	Better Villages/Downtown	3	Noise and lighting ordinances
27	Safety	3	No Development
25	Better infrastructure	3	Better Communication (newspaper, etc.)
24	Housing Choices	3	More Signs
23	Community or Neighborhood Design	3	Compact Development - more
19	Government Services - Access	3	Attract New Residents
19	Transportation to Boston	2	More efficiency in local government
19	Environmental - Quality	2	Scenery
17	Environmental - Access	2	ATV - Improve Access
16	Less Development	2	Good Quality of Life
16	Agriculture	2	Traffic - Good, Minimal
15	Environmental - Conservation	2	Unpaved roads
14	Community spirit	2	Healthcare
13	Sidewalks	1	Suburban Setting
11	Village/Downtown Feel	1	Good for families
11	Traffic	1	Diversity
11	Public Sewer - wanted	1	Cost of Living
10	No Commercial or non-residential development	1	Freedom
10	Drugs - less	1	Speed limits - increase
10	Rural Character	1	Boston - Access
9	Small Town Feel	1	Energy efficiency
8	Senior Center or Activities for Seniors	1	Places for Public Gathering
8	55 Plus Communities - Fewer	1	Less Conservation Land
8	Library - improve	1	Lodging -more
8	Community support/volunteerism	1	Everything
7	Trash pick up	1	Casinos
7	Internet Access		
7	Employment - Access		