



A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REGIONAL PLAN

The Nashua Regional Comprehensive Plan is a three year project (2012- 2014) to develop the master plan for the region. An ambitious undertaking, the plan will be based on the best and most recent data available and will feature the same chapter topics as found in most municipal master plans. The goals, strategies and recommendations will be shaped by the residents and communities in the region and the plan will ultimately be adopted by the NRPC Commissioners who are appointed by the governing body of each municipality.

At all stages of this process, involvement by our municipalities is welcomed and strongly encouraged. Only with your active help and participation can the Comprehensive Regional Plan be a true success.



PROJECT TIMELINE

2012

Draft Public Outreach Plan
Community Events/Open House
Public Meetings
Data Gathering

2013

Topic Workshops
Focus Groups
Regional Needs Assessment
Future Investment Priorities
Technical Analysis

2014

Chapter Development
Draft Plan
Public Hearings
Regional Plan Adoption



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DEVELOPING THE PLAN



To help guide the narrative of the regional plan, NRPC will look to input from both municipalities and residents of the region. One of the best sources to understand what municipalities want for the future is found in the municipal master plans. NRPC analyzed the 13 municipal master plans in region and developed common themes and strategies for each topic. The summaries can be found here: www.granitestatefuture.org/regions/nashua-region/documents/

Vigorous public involvement is also critical to the development and implementation of the regional plan, and to this point it has been extensive. Consider our participation so far...



820

Number of residents who have submitted written comments for the regional plan



679

Number of residents NRPC has engaged at an outreach or community event



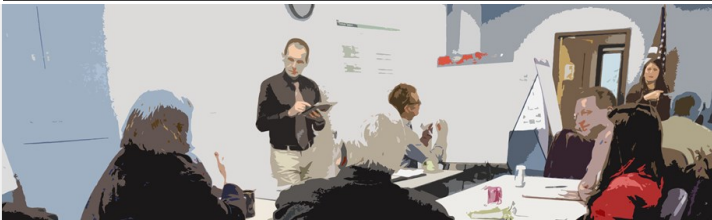
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Attendance at workshops and meetings for the regional plan

NRPC will continue to engage residents and gather public input as we draft the regional plan. In the meantime, this document offers a glimpse into our progress by summarizing some of the major regional needs that have emerged from residents. This information has been reviewed in relation to major themes identified in the 13 municipal master plans.

REGIONAL NEEDS

While not discussed significantly in master plans, education and regional coordination have emerged as major themes in public outreach efforts.



Regional Coordination

- ❏ Market historic destinations across region, highlight historic corridors
- ❏ Develop land use and transportation plans for major road corridors in region (especially 101A)
- ❏ Develop a bicycle/sidewalk and trail master plan for entire region
- ❏ Employ an events planner to coordinate major community events across region
- ❏ Develop a regional economic development plan, hold regular regional roundtable meetings on subject
- ❏ Region needs a stronger brand, identity. Why should people visit area?
- ❏ NRPC should serve as a major regional information and news source for region
- ❏ Assess if some infrastructure needs could be provided more cost effectively at a regional level













Education/ Workforce Development

- ❏ Ensure community college and high school technical programs address regional employment needs
- ❏ Support a diverse housing stock to support regional workforce
- ❏ Invest in public schools, particularly in low income areas
- ❏ Develop and implement plan to attract and retain young people in region to meet employment needs
- ❏ Assess area nightlife options to ensure work/life balance
- ❏ Lobby for reductions to state colleges/universities tuition
- ❏ Develop work programs to help graduates pay down student loan debts
- ❏ Provide employment opportunities to the mentally ill and other vulnerable populations
- ❏ Promote internship programs, more entry-level jobs
- ❏ Promote lifelong learning opportunities



Transportation

Regional Needs Identified by Residents

-  Implement commuter rail service to Boston
-  Develop more bicycle lanes, safe places to bicycle
-  Develop better connected sidewalks
-  Build more bridge crossings over the Merrimack River
-  Support a viable regional public transit system
-  Improve east-west travel options
-  Intermodal access to Manchester / Manchester Airport
-  More alternative travel options because car ownership is increasingly expensive and undesirable for young people
-  Promote sustainable transportation funding sources
-  Invest in technology to better manage traffic

Master Plan Goals

Eight consistent themes related to transportation are detailed in the master plans across the region.

- Preserve rural character
- Improve safety of the transportation system
- Minimize traffic congestion
- Minimize environmental effects of transportation system
- Coordinate land use and transportation decisions
- Implement pedestrian friendly site design standards
- Encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel
- Encourage public transit options










Analysis

The region's master plans are largely consistent with transportation needs identified by residents in that both advocate expanding access to alternative travel options, minimizing transportation-related environmental effects and investing in transportation management technology. Residents did express significant concern regarding the sustainability of transportation funding sources and that a lack of transportation options dissuades young people from moving to the region.



Housing

Regional Needs Identified by Residents

-  Re-orient land use codes and zoning to support affordable housing. Build political support for workforce units.
-  Incentivize mixed-use development, live-work units
-  Better define a town's "fair share" of affordable housing
-  Embrace the trend of young people and baby boomers moving to downtowns
-  Consider micro-housing, assess if regulations support it
-  Incorporate transportation expenses into housing costs
-  Assess housing design standards, ensure they support community character but also support affordability
-  Assess if senior housing developments are too saturated
-  Develop more desirable rental units near downtowns

Master Plan Goals

Six consistent themes related to transportation are detailed in the master plans across the region.

- Encourage affordable and workforce housing development
- Encourage a diversity of housing types
- Manage fiscal impacts associated with new housing
- Preserve neighborhood, community and rural character
- Preserve rural features and open space
- Encourage housing to meet needs of all age groups

Analysis

Both residents and the region's master plans identified additional workforce housing and a diversity of housing types as major needs. Residents consistently identified certain zoning and land use controls as impeding workforce housing development. Residents also noted significant support for mixed-use housing and compact housing units located close to town centers and commercial areas. Finally, residents noted concern that the region is aging too rapidly and that senior housing may be saturated.



Community Character

Regional Needs Identified by Residents

-  Promote walkable/bicycle-friendly communities
-  Embrace riverfronts as assets and centers for economic development. Make riverfronts destinations.
-  Preserve and promote historic buildings and landmarks
-  Hold more community events
-  Tie in parks with downtowns and town centers
-  Support acoustic nights, coffee houses, fun activities
-  Provide water-focused venues like rowing and crew houses
-  Support places and attractions oriented to young adults
-  Redevelop parking lots into 'vertical development'
-  Support arts and cultural businesses to help make the region a destination

Master Plan Goals

Seven consistent themes related to economic development are detailed in the master plans across the region.

- Preserve historic and rural character
- Maintain aesthetic qualities
- Embrace environmental stewardship
- Promote small and 'human scale' businesses
- Support downtowns and town centers and maintain them as centers of community life and activity
- Support and promote community events
- Ensure access to conservation lands, recreation opportunities

Analysis

Both residents and master plan goals agree that environmental stewardship, vibrant downtowns and town centers, frequent community events and historic preservation are critical to maintaining and strengthening community character. Residents appeared to focus more on redeveloping riverfronts as activity centers, fostering walkable and bicycle friendly communities and converting surface parking lots into office and residential developments as needs related to community character in the region.



Economic Development

Regional Needs Identified by Residents

-  Invest in a regional start-up business incubator
-  Invest in infrastructure to attract businesses, particularly commuter rail and downtown amenities
-  Highlight business community's support for rail service
-  Focus new development in or near downtowns
-  Support niche and home-based businesses
-  Provide free WiFi in region's downtowns, gathering areas
-  Promote the region's reverse commute advantage
-  Provide more affordable daycare options
-  Support more mixed-use developments to allow residents to live closer to employment centers
-  Develop internship/apprentice programs

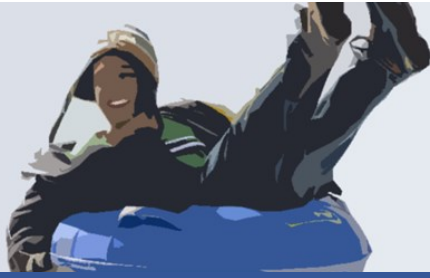
Master Plan Goals

Seven consistent themes related to economic development are detailed in the master plans across the region.

- Promote a diversified economic base
- Balance economic development with preservation of rural character
- Maintain high quality of life
- Focus new development in already developed areas
- Promote vibrant town centers and downtowns
- Promote a creative economy
- Ensure municipal processes are transparent and 'business-friendly'











Analysis

Regional needs identified by residents and municipal master plan goals are largely in agreement that economic development should (a.) augment and not detract from the region's high quality of life; (b.) support creative fields; and (c.) be centered as much as possible in town centers and already developed areas. Residents appeared to focus more on the importance of investments in infrastructure, including downtown amenities, broadband and commuter rail, in attracting economic development to the region.



Arts/Cultural and Recreational Resources

Regional Needs Identified by Residents

-  Expand arts and cultural offerings and venues
-  Market existing arts and cultural destinations better
-  Expand after work activities and offerings
-  Region needs a big draw like the Newport Folk Festival
-  Expand summer concert series
-  Promote regional destinations like wineries, drive-in theaters, art galleries, performing arts centers
-  Strengthen riverfronts, make them destinations
-  Promote high energy activities that enliven region
-  Promote region's conservation areas, rural character
-  Region needs more activities for non-shoppers / men

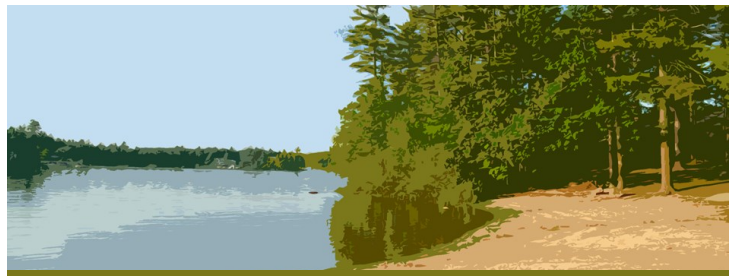
Master Plan Goals

Five consistent themes related to cultural and recreation resources are detailed in the master plans across the region.

- Maximize attendance at community events
- Support or expand cultural venues
- Act as environmental stewards, lead by example
- Preserve valuable undeveloped lands when feasible
- Provide recreational opportunities for all age groups









Analysis

This particular subject area was discussed by members of the public a great deal more than it is reviewed by municipal master plans in the region. Many master plans do not include chapters in this area and mention goals related to arts/cultural and recreational offerings only in passing. However, this theme was frequently mentioned by residents, who felt that increasing arts and cultural offerings would enhance the regional economy and draw younger people to the region. Embracing a creative economy was generally viewed as enhancing the region's quality of life and providing more opportunities for visitors to explore the region.



Environment / Conservation

Regional Needs Identified by Residents / Officials

-  Assess whether current zoning and land use regulations encourage sprawl patterns of development
-  Partner with public health community for private well testing
-  Ensure consistency in municipal aquifer protection regulations
-  Support public education campaigns on storm water threats and water conservation benefits
-  Collaborate regionally to address MS4 regulations
-  Promote building in developed areas/downtowns, avoid new greenfield development when possible
-  Incentivize energy efficiency upgrades, green building and low impact development
-  Encourage alternatives to car travel to improve region's air quality

Master Plan Goals

Seven consistent themes related to economic development are detailed in the master plans across the region.

- Ensure water bodies and drinking water is protected
- Limit environmental effects of new development
- Preserve rural character
- Protect valuable undeveloped lands
- Promote public education of environmental stewardship and conservation
- Promote and invest in renewable forms of energy
- Promote alternative modes of travel to improve air quality








Analysis

Both residents and master plans are in agreement related to major environmental and conservation goals, including the importance of protecting undeveloped areas, promoting public outreach and improving water and air quality. Generally, residents placed a higher emphasis on evaluating land uses and encouraging downtown development in relation to meeting environmental goals.



Community Facilities / Land Uses

Regional Needs Identified by Residents

-  Continue to invest in high quality school systems for which the region is known
-  Evaluate regional opportunities to provide services
-  Continue to invest in crime prevention
-  Invest in low impact development when updating or building new facilities
-  Ensure facilities are well designed and pedestrian accessible
-  Consider regional investment in higher education, invest in lifelong learning opportunities
-  Center activities on riverfronts, invest in boathouses




Master Plan Goals

- Manage energy needs, invest in sustainable forms of energy
- Coordinate town and school planning projects
- Continually evaluate community facility needs
- Promote cost effective delivery of services
- Explore regional solutions to some service needs
- Adequately maintain town facilities, particularly historic ones, so that costs don't escalate over time
- Consider fiscal impact of new development related to town facilities and services
- Examine opportunities for multi-purpose town facilities
- Locate new facilities in centralized, accessible areas
- Re-use old town buildings, examine opportunities for private investment

Analysis

Both residents and master plans focus on the overarching goal of providing very high quality services in the most efficient manner possible. Residents noted the region is attractive because of its excellent school systems and low crime rates, and master plans appear to reflect the goal of maintaining excellence in these areas. Both also shared the goal of locating services in town centers and exploring regional approaches to some infrastructure needs.

How can YOU get involved?

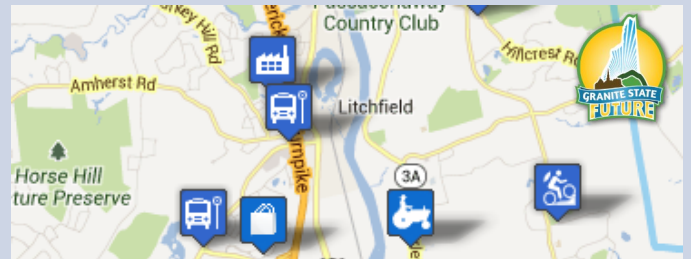
-  Participate on one of the regional plan sub-committees on transportation, housing, economic development or natural resources
-  Attend one of the Fall 2013 regional forums (stay tuned for more details!)
-  Provide comments on draft chapters of the plan in 2014

Win FREE Land Use Handbooks!

Provide valuable input to the regional plan from home!



Step 1: Visit our interactive regional map at <http://nashua.granitestatefuture.org>



Step 2: Navigate to your community and add a point! What's best? What could be better? All ideas are valuable and appreciated.

Step 3: Repeat! Read and comment on what others are saying!

The community with the most points entered in the NRPC online forum by October 31 will receive FREE 2014-2015 editions of NH Planning and Land Use Regulations for their planning board!

nashua.granitestatefuture.org