

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Statewide Snapshot

Residents from all corners of New Hampshire shared their visions for the future of the state during the Granite State Future Project.

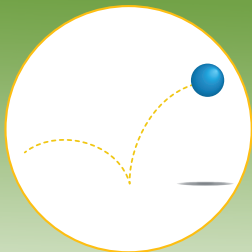
Impassioned thoughts, ideas and opinions were provided through discussion, online surveys, and written submissions. The visions they shared are reflected in a suite of documents culminating in *The Statewide Snapshot*. The document before you is a summary of this integrated review of local and regional planning priorities across New Hampshire.

*The Granite State Future Project represents a three year effort to look, listen and gain insight into the past, present and future of New Hampshire and the people who live and work here. The information in this document gives an overview of the themes, issues, concerns and ideas that were referenced repeatedly throughout the three-year project. **

The Granite State's Future

As New Hampshire navigates into the heart of the 21st century there are both great opportunities and daunting challenges. How our great state addresses both will set the stage not only for our own future but that of our children and theirs beyond that. It will determine how well our state will keep and expand its “New Hampshire Advantage” in a globally dominated 21st century economy. It will determine if we can hold on to that unique New Hampshire way of life or if the tides of change will alter our beloved New Hampshire landscape.

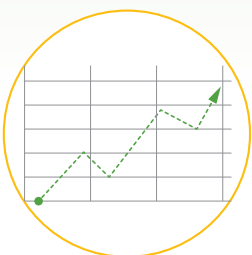
Several common themes emerged from the nine distinct regional planning efforts conducted across New Hampshire's diverse landscape.



Resiliency – New Hampshire and its people adapt well to ever changing conditions from political and socioeconomic developments, to natural disasters and environmental changes. Change, and how we influence it, is part of what has made New Hampshire attractive to both people and businesses for the last several decades. This resiliency will be a critical element in the Granite State's future and will allow us to make informed decisions that will ensure practical and efficient use of ever dwindling resources.



Collaboration – In this landscape of dwindling resources, working together across local, regional and state lines will maximize efficiency. Reducing bureaucracies while ensuring that all stakeholders have a seat at the table will challenge policymakers, but it also offers an opportunity to find new and innovative ways to deliver services, distribute information and keep people close to their government and decision makers.



Demographic Shifts – The “Graying of New Hampshire” is a term many in both government and social service may be familiar with but it is becoming more relevant across business, education, transportation and housing sectors as well. This also represents both a challenge and opportunity as we try to plan for the needs of an aging population while we search for opportunities to make New Hampshire attractive to younger people and stem the “brain drain” of young students and families migrating to other states.



Equity – Maintaining and enhancing opportunity for all Granite Staters represents both a success story and an opportunity. While many New Hampshire residents enjoy both economic prosperity as well as an enjoyable quality of life, there are still pockets throughout our state that have not fared as well. From mill closures in the North Country to inner city migrant populations, the challenge going forward will be to remove barriers and develop policies that will open the doors of opportunity to everyone in the Granite State.



The Project

Throughout the state, communities and regions face difficult decisions and fiscal constraints regarding investments in the future. Decision makers are faced with prioritizing issues such as transportation and land uses, economic development and resource management, as well as housing, public health, energy, and cultural, historic, and natural resources. Municipalities are constantly challenged to ensure that investments will produce the highest returns on taxpayer dollars.

New Hampshire's 9 Regional Planning Commissions (RPC's) were created by municipalities, in part, to advise and assist communities with these decisions. RPC's conduct technical studies and provide data analysis to help local decision-makers plan for their futures.

Through Granite State Future (GSF), the regional planning commissions had the opportunity to utilize a collaborative approach to regional planning, share resources, and prepare and update regional plans as required by NH RSA 36:45. Each region has over the course of the last three years developed its own independent regional plan.

To support the development of the nine regional plans, regional planning commissions worked together with many state partners to compile research on major issues and needs.

As part of this process, several studies and reports were authored, including:

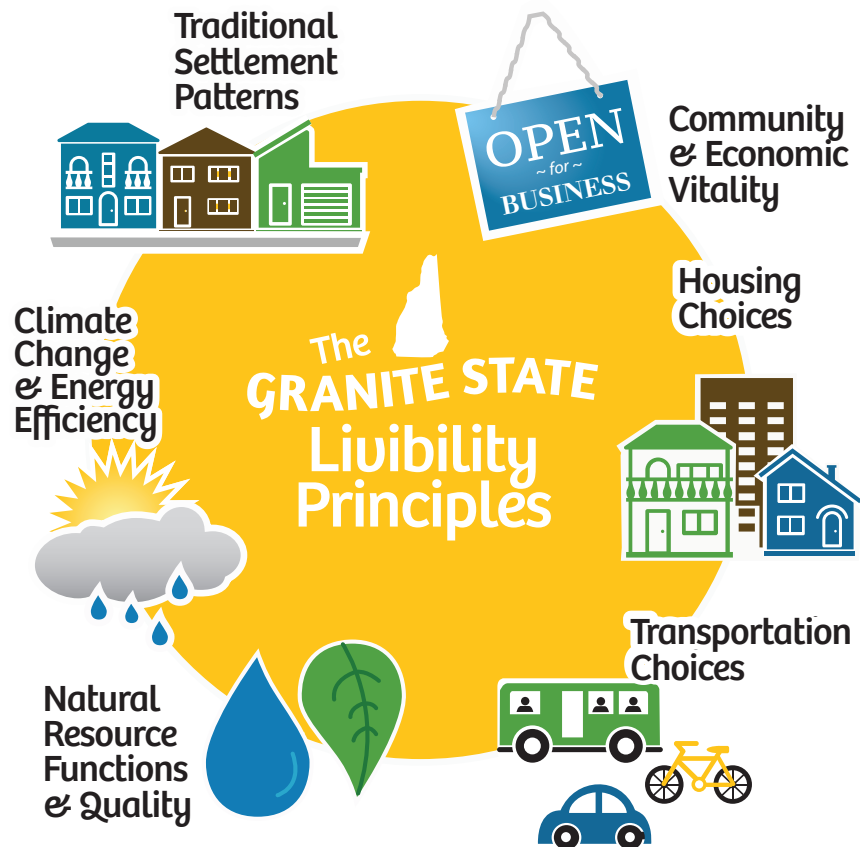
- ***Regional Plan Framework catalogue of existing resources, policies and goals***
- ***Statewide Existing Conditions and Trends Assessment***
- ***Housing Preferences study by NH Housing***
- ***Regional Climate Change Assessments for Southern and Northern NH***
- ***The Equity and Engagement Checklist***
- ***Report out of the Statewide Listening Sessions conducted by NH Listens***
- ***Granite State Future Survey Results conducted by UNH Survey Center***

Outreach for Granite State Future employed a two-tiered statewide and regional approach in order to maximize resources and reach the largest audiences. *The UNH Survey Center* conducted a statewide survey to capture a representative sample of NH's population regarding public opinions on major planning and policy issues. *New Hampshire Listens*, a civic engagement initiative of the Carsey School of Public Policy at UNH, conducted a series of sessions with local organizations that serve low-income and disabled communities, minorities, veterans, and other underrepresented populations as well as larger public listening sessions held across the state. A comment card system was distributed across the state asking what people liked best about their region and what could make it better. The RPC's then developed an online map-based forum for residents to comment on specific locations. At the regional level, each RPC customized the process to best capture local voices. Additionally, the regional plans' collected data, information, and public input will ultimately save New Hampshire's communities valuable time and money when updating their own local master plans.

Now at the conclusion of the project, *The Statewide Snapshot* outlines the nine regional plans, highlights numerous statewide technical studies and outreach efforts conducted at the state and regional level to present the citizens of New Hampshire with the relative priorities of different subjects across the state.

Livability Principles

Each of the regional plans, and *The Statewide Snapshot* utilized the *New Hampshire Livability Principles* as a common set of organizing ideas and concepts. The NH Livability Principles represent a merger of the NH Smart Growth Principles found in NH RSA 9-A, the HUD-EPA-DOT Federal Partnership Livability Principles, and common themes identified in NH municipal master plans as well as other relevant regional and state planning documents. The Livability Principles acknowledge that no one comprehensive plan chapter can be viewed in isolation, but that there is overlap and integration between many of the plan components. Each Livability Principle is to some degree relevant to each and every chapter of the regional plans.



Setting the Stage

Our diverse state shares many assets and challenges. Varying geographies and landscapes, regional economies and populations, can make it challenging to identify shared planning themes that impact all communities across the state. Rural communities confront challenges distinct from urban ones, and coastal communities face very different issues than mountain retreats. Planning considerations in tourist destinations are likely to be divergent from those in suburban communities. While cities like Portsmouth and Lebanon wrestle with significant development demands, many communities are facing the prospect of declining populations. The following four themes – resiliency, collaboration, demographic shifts and equity – represent areas of broad agreement that are already impacting, and will continue to impact, all communities and all regions of the state.

“It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be.”

-Issac Asimov (1983)



Traditional Settlement Patterns

“What’s Great about New Hampshire? Small town settings, city options, lots of recreational options, good economy, proximity to a major metropolitan area.”

- Windham, New Hampshire Resident

Traditional Settlement Patterns & Development Design refers to keeping the traditional New Hampshire landscape intact by focusing development in town centers and village areas while leaving open and rural areas for agriculture, recreation, and other suitable uses. Maintaining this New England style of development is a key reason people choose to live in our communities.

Innovative land use regulations along with investments in, and coordination of, various infrastructure initiatives can provide the base for smart development while historic preservation and natural resource conservation goals can be aligned to maintain our uniquely Granite State environment.

The key here is coordination and planning with an eye towards the future.

Trying to meet the growing demands of an aging population while also trying to attract young families will be both a challenge and an opportunity for New Hampshire in the coming years. Insuring that intelligent, data based decision making is coordinated on the state, regional and local level will be key to future success.





Housing Choice

Housing Choice ensure that everyone, no matter their income level, enjoys convenient and affordable choices wherever they choose to live. This includes a variety of housing options and ownership types that appeal to people at any stage of life and is convenient to where they work, shop, and play.

New Hampshire’s predominant housing supply of large single family homes is poorly aligned to meet the needs of both millennials as well as aging baby boomers, both of which will be competing for smaller houses closer to needed services. By 2025, 1 in 3 housing units are expected to be occupied by seniors. Issues such as more limited mobility and lower fixed incomes will challenge seniors’ ability to “age in place”, and there is an overall shortage of housing that is suitable for people with disabilities, be it seniors, disabled veterans, or younger people.

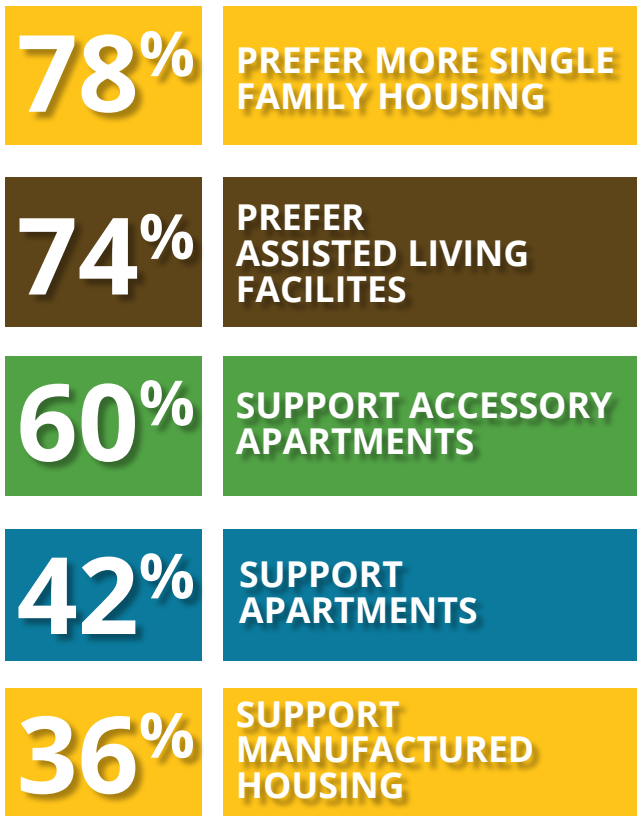
Only 9% of residents statewide found housing is very affordable to buy in their community with only 7% finding rents very affordable. With both manufactured housing and apartments being among the least preferred housing types the challenges in this area are significant. That being said, an adaptable or flexible regulatory environment that can support the needs and wishes of individual communities could be helpful in meeting the needs of fixed income seniors and younger households with less financial means.

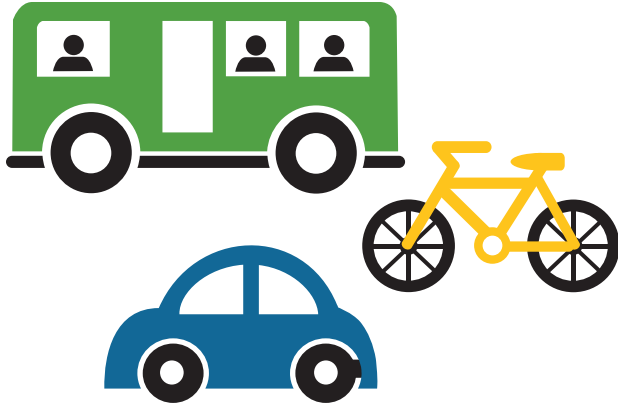
Creating a regulatory environment at the state, regional and local level that can adapt to both changing demographics as well as market demands will be a key focus in the coming years. Coordinating those efforts with local non-profit housing providers provide an opportunity to meet communities changing housing needs. Studying the impact of transportation centers on housing values is potentially another opportunity for improvement as there is little data currently available on this.



New Hampshire voiced opinions about housing needs in the state.

The majority of residents think future development should occur in areas already developed. In those areas they support a variety of types of housing.





Transportation Choice

Transportation Choices provide a number of options that help people travel safely and efficiently where they need to go, whether it is by walking, driving, biking, public transportation, carpooling, or taking a train or plane. Transportation networks should make it easy to get from one place to another, and should also allow the efficient movement of goods to support the economy.

With driving being the primary mode of transportation throughout the state, it's easy to understand why transportation is the most widely discussed planning issue. New Hampshire's glaring lack of transportation options represents a significant economic liability as well as a barrier to vulnerable populations.

New Hampshire is also not keeping pace with road and bridge maintenance and miles of roads and bridges are falling into poorer condition with each passing year. Continued deferred maintenance will undoubtedly result in higher costs for future generations of tax payers.

While maintaining roads and bridges are residents top priority, 55% also support senior and special needs transportation. A forum conducted by NH Listens showed that residents felt investing in transportation connections between Concord, Nashua and Manchester would provide both economic and social benefits. Similar benefits could be realized from connecting communities in the Upper Valley as well as creating east-west corridors.

While funding for both maintaining existing infrastructure and expanding transportation options remains scarce, resources must be found to maintain both economic vitality and meet the needs of disadvantaged, younger and aging populations that are limited by available transportation options.





Community & Economic Vitality

Community and Economic Vitality is the development of hard and soft infrastructure, including financial investment, to attract and retain economic opportunity that fosters community growth and ensures the highest quality of life for New Hampshire residents. This principle asks how to continue to make New Hampshire a great place in which to do business, raise a family, recreate, visit, and retire. Our neighborhoods and communities offer opportunities for an

excellent education, good health, cultural happenings, and social connections.

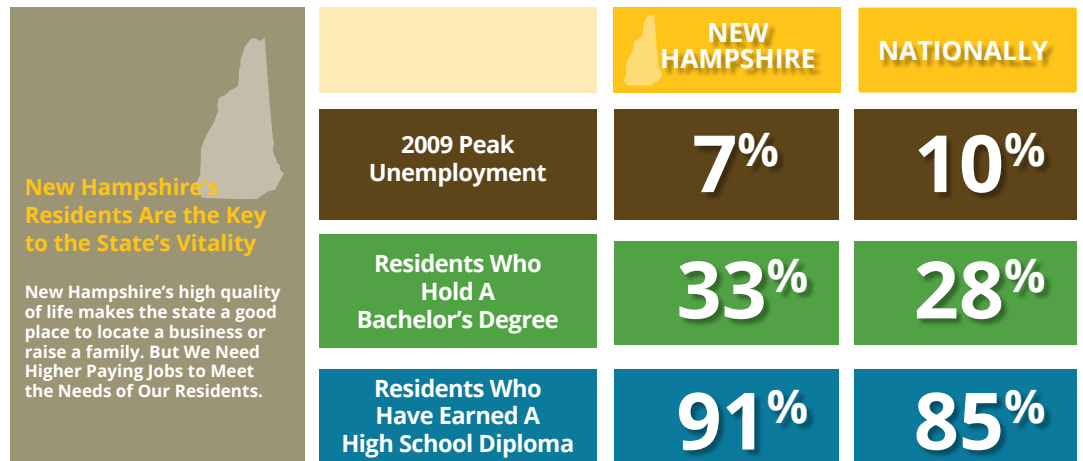
Access to affordable housing and transportation choices impacts the availability of reliable jobs that pay a living wage. Family sustaining, career oriented jobs are in short supply in the Granite state which impacts our state's ability to attract and keep younger residents.

The New Hampshire economy has been evolving over time with a rebounding manufacturing base but a high percentage of the manufacturing workforce is nearing retirement age and there is a shortage of young adults to fill these jobs. Effective job training programs are essential to meeting the needs of a shifting economy.

The high quality of life in our state makes it both a good place to locate a business and raise a family. High quality schools are consistently seen as the most important feature of a community (93%) as well as job opportunities (86%) and small businesses and retail stores (85%).

Once again, priorities on this issue vary by region. While the Lakes Region and North Country identified protection of natural resources as key to their economic future, the Rockingham region noted an aging workforce population with projected jobs expected to grow. And while the southern region of the state is focused on cost effective infrastructure improvements such as roads, water and wastewater systems, the northern part of the state is focused on improving access to broadband and cell services.

Care must be taken to ensure that all of these diverse needs are addressed if we want continue to see an unemployment rate well below the national average. Additionally, ways must be found to attract and keep younger people and families in all regions of the state to ensure a solid workforce to meet the demands of a vibrant economy and promote job growth.





Natural Resources Functions & Quality

“What’s Great about New Hampshire?
Natural Resources: forest, lakes,
mountains, wildlife.”

- Lakes Region, New Hampshire Resident

Natural Resource Functions & Quality ensures that we protect New Hampshire’s beautiful natural landscape and wide diversity of wildlife species for the benefit of future generations. This includes protecting and improving the water we drink, the air we breathe, the forests we love, the farmland that sustains us.

New Hampshire’s natural beauty is something dear to nearly all residents and it keeps environmental and natural resource protection as a top priority for investing public dollars. Water quality for both drinking as well as recreation along with air quality and farms and agriculture are a part of the very fabric of the Granite

State. Though the state lost about half of its farmland between 1967 and 1995, the recent popularity and focus on locally grown and raised food has seen an annual growth rate in farmland of 1.7% between 1997 and 2007. Moreover, 90% of residents believe promoting local agriculture should be actively promoted in their communities. This sentiment stretches through every region of the state as well throughout all income levels as well.



Our Natural Resources are Important to Us.

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

2ND

MOST FORESTED STATE IN THE U.S.

1.7

BILLION DOLLARS ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT FROM FORESTRY PRODUCTS & MANUFACTURING

17

THOUSAND MILES OF RIVERS & STREAMS

96%

OF RESIDENTS PLACE A HIGH PRIORITY ON PROTECTING OUR WATER QUALITY



Climate Change & Energy Efficiency

Climate Change and Energy Efficiency identifies opportunities to save energy and costs and reduce risks to our communities, businesses and citizens. In recent decades, New Hampshire has seen an increase in extreme storms and flooding coupled with steadily rising fuel and energy prices. How can we reduce dependence on outside sources of energy, construct homes and buildings that are more efficient, and reduce impacts to our communities and infrastructure from extreme storms and flooding?

In 2013, New Hampshire spent nearly \$5.9 billion on energy, nearly 9% of our state GDP. It's no wonder that residents feel energy efficiency and energy choices are the second highest priority for investing public dollars. With no native source of fossil fuel or nuclear materials, New Hampshire must import 90% of its energy. Not only is this costly, but the burning of fossil fuels can have an impact on climate change.

Research at UNH has documented significant changes in key climate indicators over the past 100 years with intensification in the last 40 years. Overall, temperatures are rising and the frequency of more intense storms has increased. This has a direct effect on our health, economy and environment. Increased costs to the state and municipalities due to the impacts of severe flooding and snow events are consuming larger portions of their respective budgets.

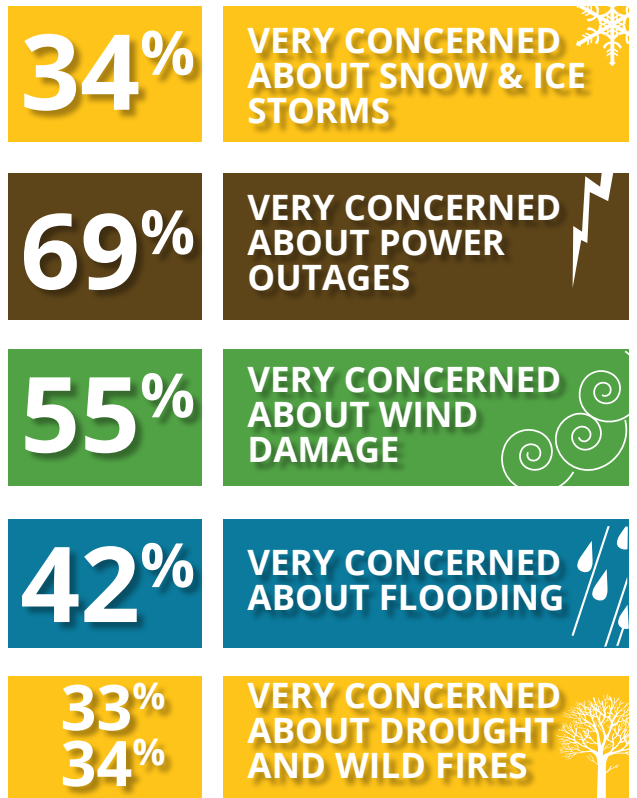
Climate adaptation is viewed as essential to protecting municipal assets from storm and climate impacts. Initiatives like vulnerability assessments, protecting floodwater storage lands and ensuring adequate stormwater infrastructure will be key in the effort to minimize climatological impacts.

Green building initiatives are an opportunity for new construction to promote efficient use of resources and reduce both energy costs and pollution. Local energy committees and land use boards can encourage energy efficient development and retrofits for existing buildings



New Hampshire Residents are concerned about climate change.

Overall, temperatures are rising and the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events have increased. These changes will have a direct effect on our health, economy and environment.



Opportunities for the Future

The state is in the midst of a demographic paradigm change which is resulting in impacts to our local economies. New Hampshire benefits from its relative small size as a state where collaboration among state, regional and local governments and organizations is highly feasible.

There are four key opportunities for future action whether planning for traditional settlement patterns, housing and transportation, economic vitality, the environment, or climate change and energy efficiency that will maximize impacts while using fewer resources.



A Few Ways to Take Action

Align program rules for technical assistance and funding to support local and regional priorities.

- Take advantage of state and federal tax credit programs that provide financial support for housing development while reducing tax liability.
- Exempt affordable housing from fees and building caps, and create flexibility in other requirements, such as density allowances, to reduce the cost of housing development.
- Promote and assist the inclusion of alternative fuels and advanced technology vehicles in school and municipal fleets in order to improve regional air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Form strategic partnerships to maximize the impact of existing programs through collaboration.

- Promote accessibility and multi-modal transportation proximate to jobs and housing in municipal and regional master plans.
- Work with the private sector to provide young workers incentives to remain or relocate to the state, including financial aid forgiveness or childcare assistance.

- Support educational initiatives financially including workforce training and skills development and early childhood initiatives.

Build technical assistance expertise through continued and expanded learning opportunities.

- Study real estate market trends relative to transportation centers to provide decision-makers complete information on the tax benefit or impact of housing development.
- Increase local capacity for economic development through training opportunities for local officials to promote economic development.
- Work with municipalities and regional planning agencies to promote use of stretch building energy codes to minimize energy consumption in buildings.

Sustain engagement opportunities to ensure all voices are heard in the planning process.

- Engage and utilize the Creative Economy and other nontraditional enterprises for a more complete economy.
- Develop a state-level strategic plan to preserve agricultural land and farming operations in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire residents had so much to say about the state.

“I love the farms and rural character, wildlife, home/farm foods, local foods.”

- Alexandria, New Hampshire Resident

“We have many resources, like the Rochester Fair, the Roger Allen Park, the Opera House; a great economic base which includes advanced manufacturing, natural resources, and easy access to Route 16.”

- Rochester, New Hampshire Resident

“Small town settings, city options, lots of recreational options, good economy, proximity to a major metropolitan area.”

- Windham, New Hampshire Resident

“I love how convenient it is to find shopping and even job opportunities!”

- Merrimack, New Hampshire Resident

“Many things to love! Merrimack River, State Capitol politics, Good business opportunities, Lots of open space, Great local and state government services, A sense of place & community.”

- Concord, New Hampshire Resident



Statewide Snapshot of the Granite State Future Project
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**For an in depth look at the results of the study and please read the “Statewide Snapshot” available at www.granitestatefuture.org/our-plans/. Encapsulated within the “Statewide Snapshot” document is a plethora of data as well as insightful analysis and many real world “Granite State Success Stories” that highlight some of the organizations, people and places that make New Hampshire a state so many proudly call home.*

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