



Statement of Strategy

2024 - 2028

Nashua Regional
Planning Commission
2024

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NRPC Vision, Mission, and Values



Vision

We are the leader in transportation, land use and environmental planning for a thriving region, in support of its communities and its people.

Mission

We provide leadership, facilitation, guidance, and technical assistance to foster collaboration in support of a vibrant future for our region.

Values

Through the planning process, stakeholders helped articulate the following core values to help guide NRPC efforts:

- Support unique character of each community
- Balance community character and growth
- Coordination between our communities and the state and federal governments.
- Impartiality
- Excellence/expertise
- Service to communities
- Sustainability
- Data accuracy
- Transparency
- Responsiveness

Early in 2023, the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) began to assess the current and future land-use and related needs of the region and how its work supports those needs.

The region is adapting to a “new normal” as it continues to put the pandemic in the rear-view mirror. In addition, social, economic, environmental, and political “forces of change” continue to have significant impacts on many aspects of community life.

The main purpose of this document is to provide a *high-level* roadmap of planning-related strategies for the next five years for the Commission itself. The intent of this strategy is to support the prioritization of goals and to help organize these goals within the broader picture.

This document can serve several functions. As an articulation of strategic priorities, it can help NRPC employees align their efforts where they will make the most impact and help guide the development of scopes of work to better address Commission and member community needs. Further, it provides a benchmark against which all Commission progress may be compared through time.

Finally, we need to be clear that this is a plan of strategy for the Commission itself. A separate comprehensive plan for the region will be developed in the near future.

The Strategy Going Forward (2024–2028)

For the foreseeable future, the Commission’s work will continue to evolve as it helps to foster a socially, economically, and environmentally vibrant future for the region, its communities, and its people. Careful consideration will be given to strategies that support planning for older people as well as those which are welcoming to young adults and families.

Though the 2024-2028 Statement of Strategy identifies priority areas (see below) to guide NRPC’s efforts in the coming years, the following principles will continue to underpin NRPC’s programs and services:

1. As an MPO, NRPC will continue to prioritize transportation planning including administration of the federal transportation process, support for public transportation, mobility management and local technical assistance.
2. NRPC will continue to advance a robust GIS program, including data management and mapping, to support all NRPC programs - as both a resource *and* service to our communities.
3. NRPC will continue to offer comprehensive local land-use and environmental planning services through our Circuit Rider program, in addition to preparation of master plans, capital improvements programs and other planning studies, as well as technical assistance to member communities as needed.

Priority Areas

The priority focus areas described below have been identified through the strategy planning process. Some of these are new focus areas for NRPC while others are not new but will receive greater emphasis in the coming years.

1) Grant Funding

Implement a **grant funding** information and assistance program.

Long-term impact: NRPC and its communities are able to finance projects that contribute to and support their health and vitality.

Short-term impact: There is clear access to potential funding for a variety of projects that contribute to socially, environmentally, and economically strong communities.

Action 1: Establish a grant-writing assistance program which provides technical assistance to member communities in preparing grant applications.

- Action 2:** Design, develop, and manage a database of community-relevant grant information which includes kinds of projects, names of grants, due dates, and other pertinent information.
- Action 3:** NRPC provides regular updates to communities on potential grant opportunities through its website, newsletter, and other communication platforms.

2) Manage, Protect & Enhance Water Quality/Supply

Advance efforts to **manage, protect and enhance water quality and supply** (including drinking water, rivers, lakes, streams, and groundwater) from potential threats which may impact the region's water resources including, but not limited to contamination, over-use, and effects of climate change.

Long-term impacts:

- NRPC communities have sufficient supply of clean water to meet current and future needs.
- The region's surface waters are fishable/swimmable and resilient to potential threats including impacts from changing weather conditions.

Short-term impacts:

- Local land-use regulations are updated to reflect changing conditions, state and federal rules, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) related to potential water resource threats.
- Stormwater mitigation and management practices identified and implemented within each community, including assistance from NRPC in achieving MS4 (municipal separate storm sewer system) compliance.
- Businesses and property owners are aware of the impact of potential challenges and threats to water resources.
- Best Management Practices (BMPs) implemented.

Action 1: Raise awareness of pollutants such as PFAS, stormwater management and other key topics and practices related to water issues by developing and managing a multi-channel (e.g., Workshops, white papers, other) education program for communities and their leaders.

Action 2: Complete three to five Water Resources Management plans, including the Souhegan River Corridor Management Plan and Robinson Pond Watershed Management Plan, by 2028.

Action 3: Provide technical assistance to communities to identify and map stormwater management assets.

Action 4: Provide technical assistance to communities for protecting water supply including source-water protection planning, local land-use regulation updates and mapping.

Action 5: Obtain funding for further watershed and river management plans.

Action 6: Pursue opportunities to engage and collaborate with potential regional partners to address water quality issues for inter-regional and interstate waterways.

Action 7: Provide technical assistance to communities subject to MS4 requirements.

3) Expanded Choices in Places to Live

Facilitate and support expanded choices in places to live for all family types and income levels by location, design, and price point.

Long-term impacts:

- Each community has places to live that meet the current and future needs of its residents.
- Employers can hire at all wage levels and their employees can find places to live in close proximity to employment centers.

Short-term impacts:

- Communities and their decision-makers are aware of the housing needs of current and future residents.
- Communities and their decision-makers are familiar with various kinds of places to live (by design, location, and price point) consistent with community character and available infrastructure support.

Action 1: Provide technical assistance to inform and develop Master Plan Housing Chapters and updating local land-use regulations as needed.

Action 2: Maintain and disseminate updated housing-related data for municipal leaders and community members.

Action 3: Offer housing-related workshops and roundtables and disseminate related information and materials to communities and their leaders about all aspects of expanding home options, from site choices to writing regulations.

4) Energy Planning

Advance **energy planning** to increase access to alternative energy sources, reduce energy costs for municipalities, residents, and businesses, and reduce energy-related carbon emissions.

Long-term impact:

- Carbon emissions are on track to reach the national greenhouse gas reduction net zero emissions goal by 2050.
- Energy use and costs are reduced, based on measurements reported in the 2022 NH 10-year State Energy Strategy:
 - “cost effective” as determined by the PUC, meaning that each dollar spent on reduction programs yields at least one dollar in savings.
 - regional energy usage is reduced from growth of 1% per year to a 1% of gross consumption decrease by 2030.
- The region’s energy comes from renewable, reliable, and cost-effective sources.

Short-term impact:

- Carbon emissions are on track to reach national greenhouse gas reduction targets of 50- to 52% below 2005 levels by 2030.

- NRPC communities have increased access to viable, reliable, and cost-effective alternative sources of energy to help support households, businesses, and municipalities for buildings and transportation.
 - Action 1:** Provide technical assistance to municipalities pursuing Community Power and other similar strategies while continuing to offer NRPC's Energy Aggregation program.
 - Action 2:** Provide technical assistance and other support to communities in identifying viable alternative energy sources for heating, cooling, and electricity generation.
 - Action 3:** Provide technical assistance and support to communities to advance their goals for deployment of alternative-fuel vehicle infrastructure, municipal fleet conversions and other strategies.
 - Action 4:** Provide workshops and other sources of information to communities and their leaders about data, trends, and thinking related to sources of energy, as well as emissions, including regulations, technical requirements and more.

5) Economic Development

Foster **Economic Development** in the region and its communities.

Long-term impact:

- The region and its communities are thriving economically.
- Each community has identified its unique set of economic conditions, economic goals, and opportunities.
 - Action 1:** Provide technical assistance and develop toolboxes for use by communities to address specific economic needs such as fostering thriving downtowns and town centers, promoting entrepreneurship, marketing, tourism, and similar strategies.
 - Action 2:** Update and enhance NRPC's Spark webpage as the regional primary vehicle for disseminating economic development-related resources and data, as well as marketing of the region's assets.

Implementation Considerations

To implement this Statement of Strategy over the next three to five years, **each priority area** will require the allocation of sufficient resources to achieve success. To advance current and future efforts, the NRPC will:

- Continuously evaluate overall staff levels and competencies in relation to current, new and/or expanding programs or services.
- Make hiring decisions based on skill sets needed to advance strategic priorities.
- Promote professional and competency development through continued education, encouraging staff participation in appropriate conferences and workshops and supporting professional certifications.

- Continuously monitor current and future programs and services for value-added opportunities to support a fiscally healthy organization.
- Identify potential partner consultants, agencies, and other organizations to enhance programming and services.
- Identify and secure necessary funding to maintain existing programs and initiatives as well as to implement new ones.

The Process

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) Executive Committee initiated a comprehensive update of its 2016 Statement of Strategy in the spring of 2023. The process began with an online survey of over 400 NRPC stakeholders, including NRPC Commissioners, Selectboard members, local land-use board members, municipal staff and other stakeholders, a brainstorming session, and conversations that involved all the Commission's stakeholders, including staff. To facilitate the process, RHL Strategies was hired, a consulting firm with a specialty in "strategic planning." A summary of the outreach efforts that informed the process is provided below.

WHO	ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME
Approximately 400 on mail list	Online survey	April – May 2023
NRPC staff	Review and discuss Vision, Mission, Values, and work	19 April 2023
NRPC Management staff	Further discussion Vision, Mission, Values, and work	9 May 2023
NRPC Executive Committee	Update re Vision, Mission, survey results (97 respondents)	17 May 2023
Selected representatives of thought leaders in the region	Seven one-on-one interviews with RHL Strategies re further thoughts on work going forward	6-7 June 2023
Full NRPC Commission meeting	Updates re survey results, interviews, Vision and Mission and preliminary thoughts on work going forward	21 June 2023
Exec Committee and self-selected participants	Online forum to talk further about work going forward	13 July 2023
Executive Committee	Review of work to date and thoughts on findings	16 August 2023
Executive Committee and self-selected interested others	Review of Mission, Vision, Values, and work going forward	28 September 2023
Executive Committee	Review of Mission, Vision, Values, and work going forward	18 October 2023
Executive Committee	Review first draft of final Plan	15 November 2023
Full Commission	Review Strategic Plan	20 December 2023

Who is the Nashua Regional Planning Commission?

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) was founded in 1956 by the City of Nashua and the Town of Hudson and is the oldest of the nine planning commissions in the state. The region now also includes Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Litchfield, Lyndeborough, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, Mont Vernon, Pelham, and Wilton. Overall, the Commission focuses on developing and implementing innovative planning strategies that preserve and improve the quality of life in Southern New Hampshire.



What are the duties and responsibilities of the Commission?

The original intents of the Commission were to address highway congestion and to coordinate land-use development. Today, that same spirit of regional cooperation and problem-solving characterizes the commission's activities.

As set forth in NH RSA 36:45, the Regional Planning Commissions' duties ...

... shall be to prepare a coordinated plan for the development of a region, taking into account present and future needs with a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land, such as for agriculture, forestry, industry, commerce, and housing; the facilitation of transportation and communication; the proper and economic location of public utilities and services; the development of adequate recreational areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds. The aforesaid plan shall be made to promote the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the region and its inhabitants.

Boiled down:

... an RPC's primary duties are to:

- prepare a comprehensive master plan for the development of the region,
- provide technical assistance to local municipalities,
- compile a Regional Housing Needs Assessment every five years, and
- conduct other studies as needed to implement the provisions of the Regional Plan.

In addition to providing specialized planning services for member communities, NRPC serves as a liaison between communities and a number of state agencies, including, but not limited to:

- the NH Department of Transportation
- NH Department of Environmental Services
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- NH Office of Planning and Development
- University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension

In addition, Regional Planning Commissions review [Projects of Regional Impact](#) under NH RSA 36:54-58, review energy facilities in accordance with [NH RSA 162-H](#), and receive [Advanced Pipeline Notification](#) under NH RSA 674:75.

NRPC is also an MPO

The NRPC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Nashua NH Urbanized Area (UZA). The MPO is the transportation policy-making organization for the region. It is made up of representatives from local government and transportation-related authorities including NH Department of Transportation, NH Department of Environmental Services, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, the Nashua Transit System, and the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative.

The purpose of the MPO is to administer the federal transportation process, ensuring that investments in transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C”) planning process. The MPO must successfully administer this process in order for federal dollars to be spent on transportation improvements in the region. The MPO provides our communities and residents with a voice in how federal transportation resources are prioritized and allocated in the region.

In 2012, the Nashua MPO was designated as a Transportation Management Area (TMA) under federal rules because the MPO area had surpassed 200,000 people based on the 2010 Census. As a TMA, the Nashua MPO must administer a Congestion Management Process and is afforded the opportunity to program Surface Transportation Program funds and Transportation Alternatives funds which are sub-allocated to the region.

Commission Governance

According to the [Commission’s By-laws](#), the Commission is made up of those municipalities who have chosen to join and fulfill requirements as outlined in RSA 36. The Commission is governed by a Chair, Vice-chair, and Treasurer, an Executive Committee and between two and four Commissioners for each NRPC community. The MPO is governed by an MPO Policy Committee whose membership includes all Commissioners and one representative each from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the Nashua Transit System (NTS), the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) and one non-voting representative each from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. NTS and SVTC representatives may also serve as municipal representatives.

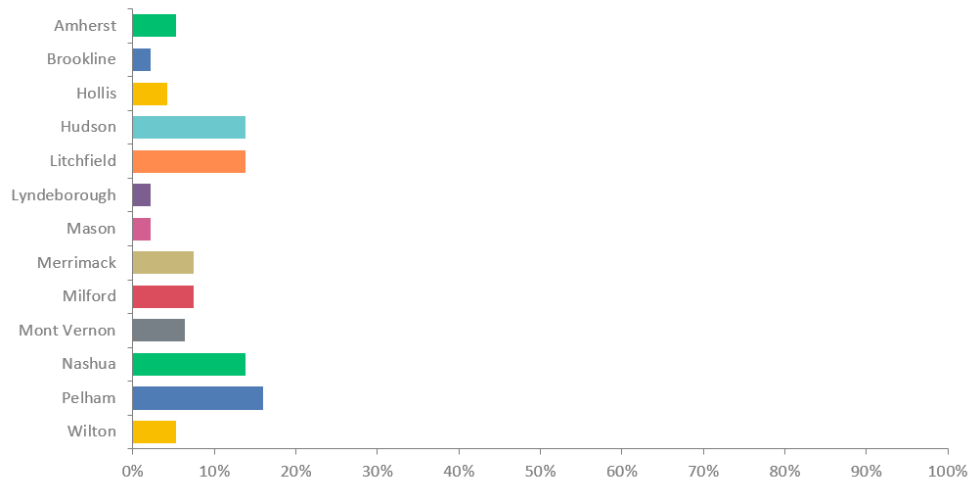
APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY of Terms & Abbreviations

3-C Planning Process	Required for federal transportation funds. As outlined in Mass.gov: - Continuing – Planning must be an ongoing activity. It should address both short-term needs and the long-term vision for the region; - Cooperative – The process must involve a wide variety of interested parties through a public participation process; and - Comprehensive – The process must cover all transportation modes. It must be consistent with regional and local land-use and economic-development plans
BMPs	Best Management Practices. In the words of encyclopedia.com: <i>Best management practices (BMPs) are methods that have been determined to be the most effective and practical means of preventing or reducing non-point source pollution to help achieve water quality goals. BMPs include both measures to prevent pollution and measures to mitigate pollution.</i>
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization, the transportation planning organization for the region.
MS4	Municipal separate storm sewer systems.
Master Plan	States the Vision a community has for itself and then the goals and objectives for each of the components of the community (e.g., transportation, housing, open spaces, other) to contribute to achieving the Vision.
NTS: Nashua Transit System	Provides fixed-route bus services as well as “demand response” and paratransit services to qualified individuals.
PFAS	Polyfluoroalkyl substances. According to the EPA, these are widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. PFAS are found here in New Hampshire and all over the world, in our water, air, and soil. - Because of their widespread use and their persistence in the environment, many PFAS are found in the blood of people and animals everywhere and are present at low levels in a variety of food products and in the environment. - Scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.
Planning	The process of setting goals and objectives to achieve a larger vision or goal, and the steps and timelines to achieve them.
Regional Housing Needs Assessment	Provides a comprehensive overview of population trends, existing housing characteristics and conditions, market trends, and future housing needs. There is also a specific focus on populations of interest such as people experiencing homelessness. Further, it is a tool to assist municipalities in complying with New Hampshire’s Workforce Housing statute (RSA 674:58-61).
Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC)	A curb-to-curb, “dial-a-ride” type bus service available to residents of Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Milford, Mont Vernon, and Wilton NH. (from the website)
Transportation Management Area (TMA)	An urbanized area with a population of over 200,000. The population is defined by the Bureau of the Census and the area is designated by the Secretary of Transportation. Further, it could be any additional area where TMA designation is requested by the Governor and the MPO and designated by the Secretary of Transportation.
Urbanized Area (UA)	An area with a population of 50,000 or more.

APPENDIX B – Survey Results

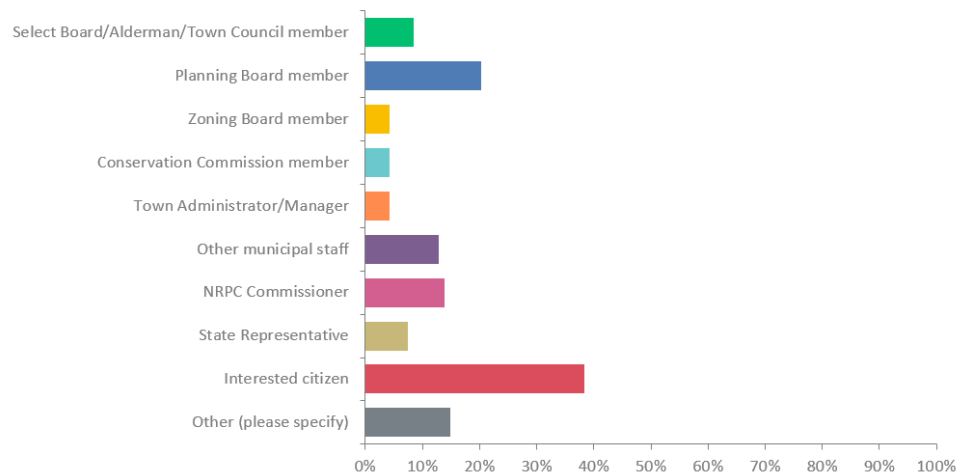
Q1: In which NRPC community do you reside or are employed by?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0



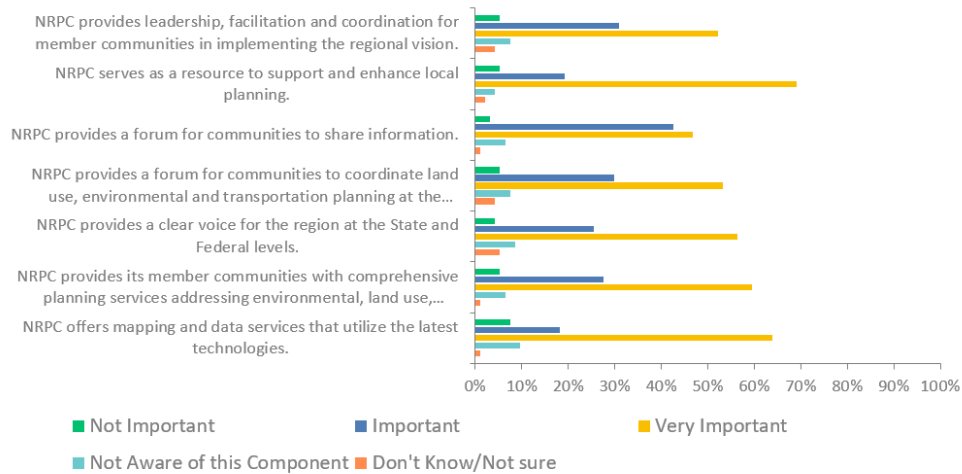
Q2: In what capacity are you answering these questions (check all that apply)?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0



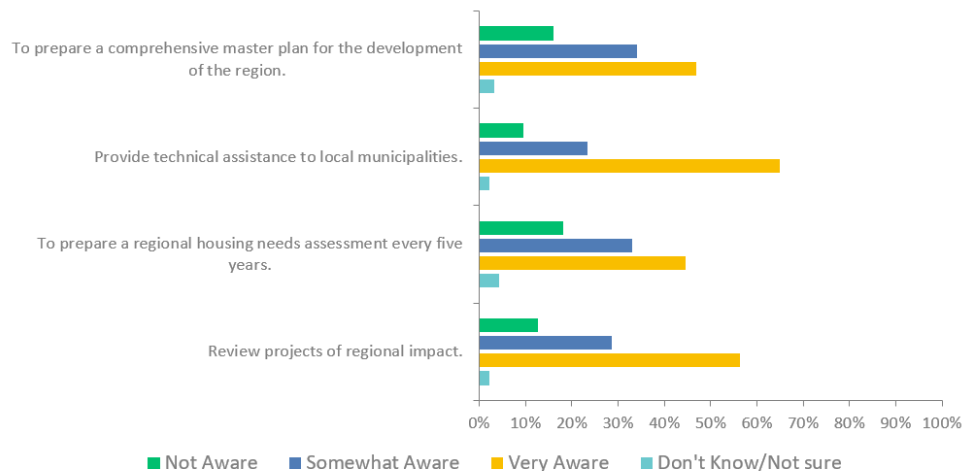
Q3: Each of the components listed below is part of the Current Mission of the NRPC. How important do you think each of these components are?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0



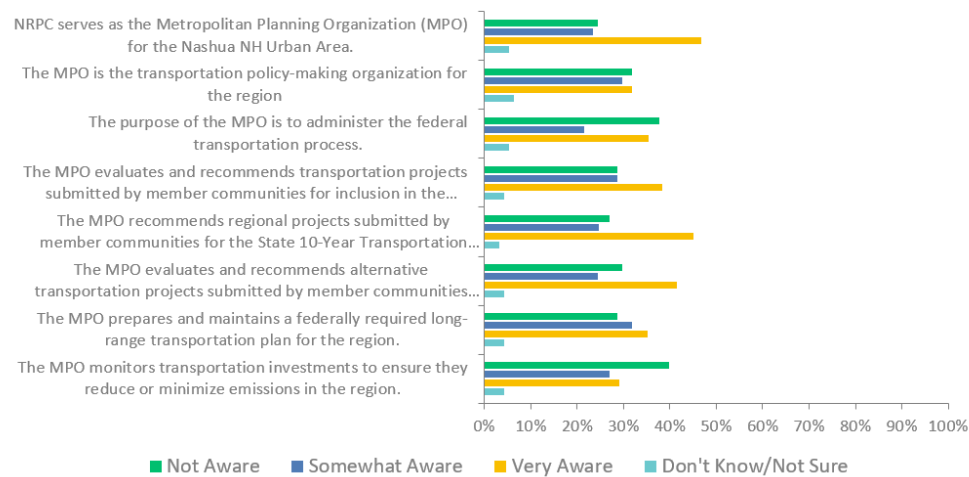
Q4: NRPC is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire, receiving their legislative authority from RSA 36:45-53. How aware are you of each of the responsibilities the NRPC has by law?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0



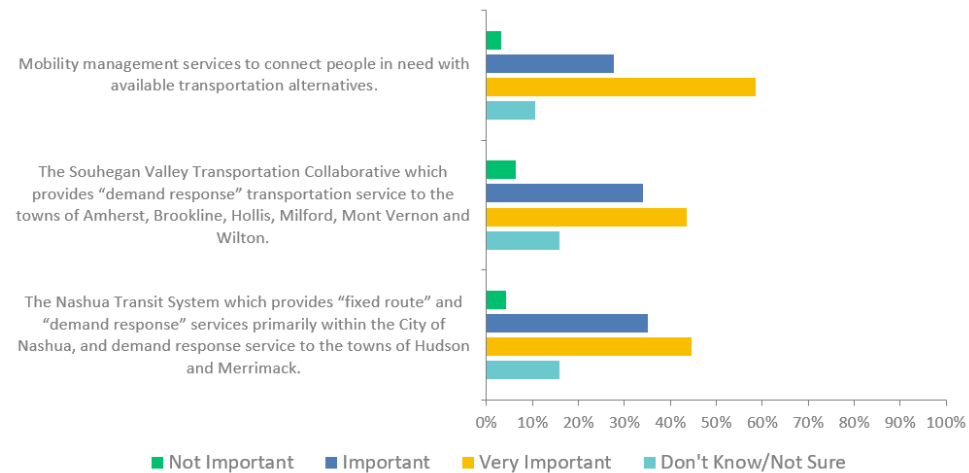
Q5: Transportation is one of the NRPC’s largest areas of concentration, particularly because the NRPC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Nashua NH Urban Area under federal law. Please indicate your awareness of each of the following related responsibilities:

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0



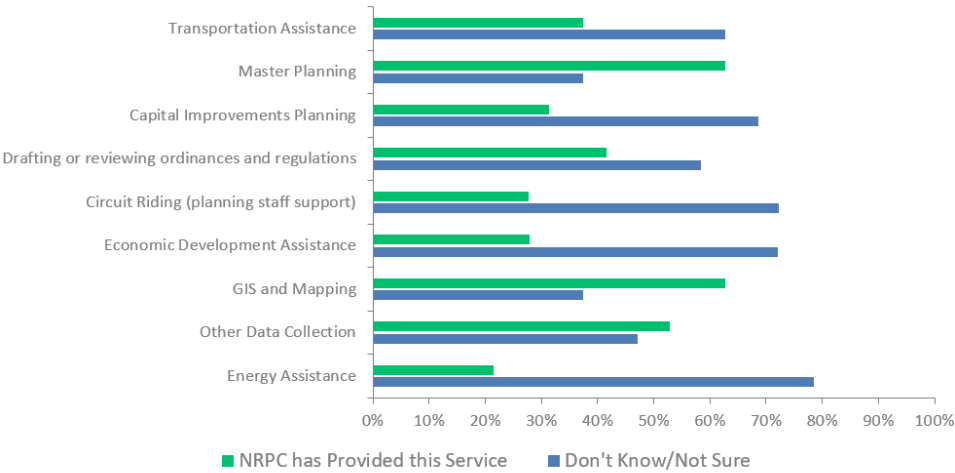
Q6: NRPC helps support improved, cost-effective, coordinated transportation services for people with disabilities, older adults, veterans, those with lower incomes, and others who need them. How important do you believe the following topics are related to this program?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0



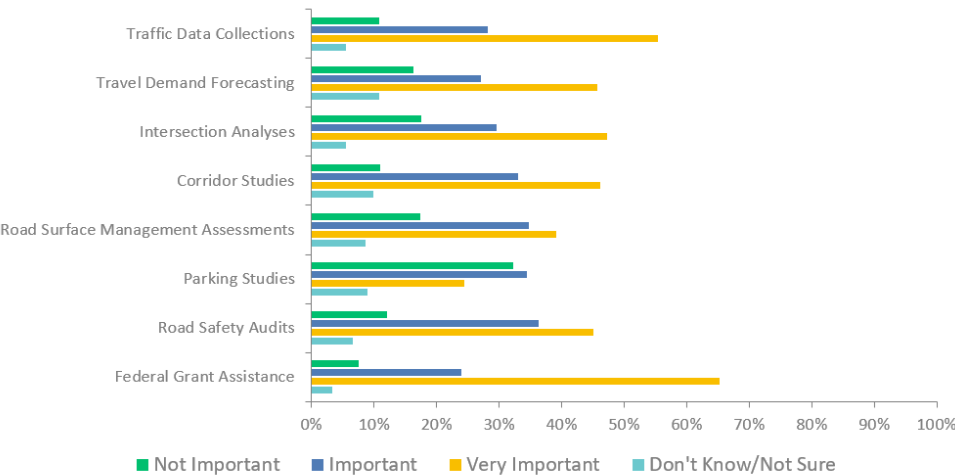
Q7: For which of the following services has your community engaged the NRPC for assistance within the past five years or so? Please check all that apply.

Answered: 93 Skipped: 1



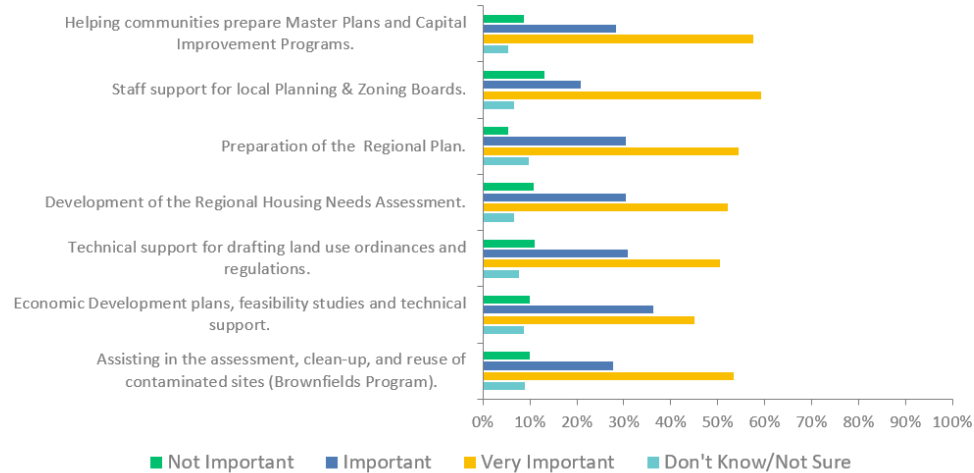
Q8: How important do you believe the following NRPC functional areas are to your community?

Answered: 92 Skipped: 2



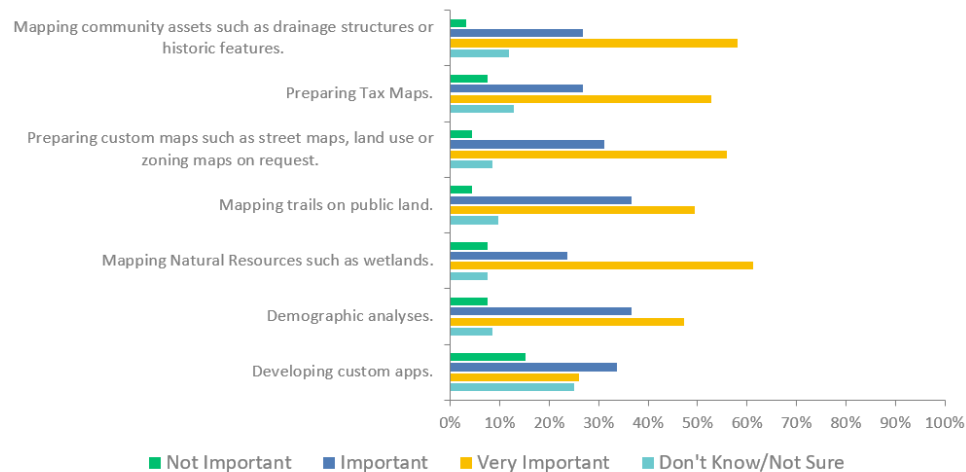
Q9: How important do you believe the following NRPC Land Use functional areas are to your community?

Answered: 92 Skipped: 2



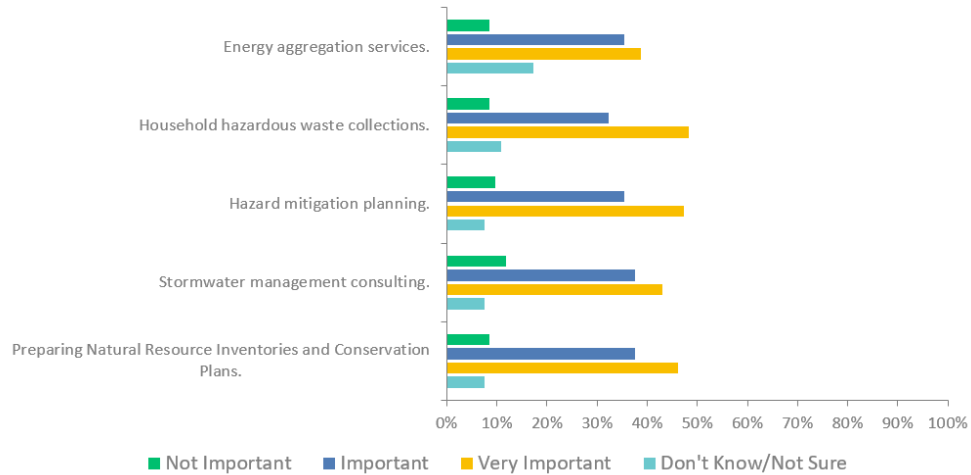
Q10: How important do you believe the following NRPC GIS & Mapping functional areas are to your community?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 1



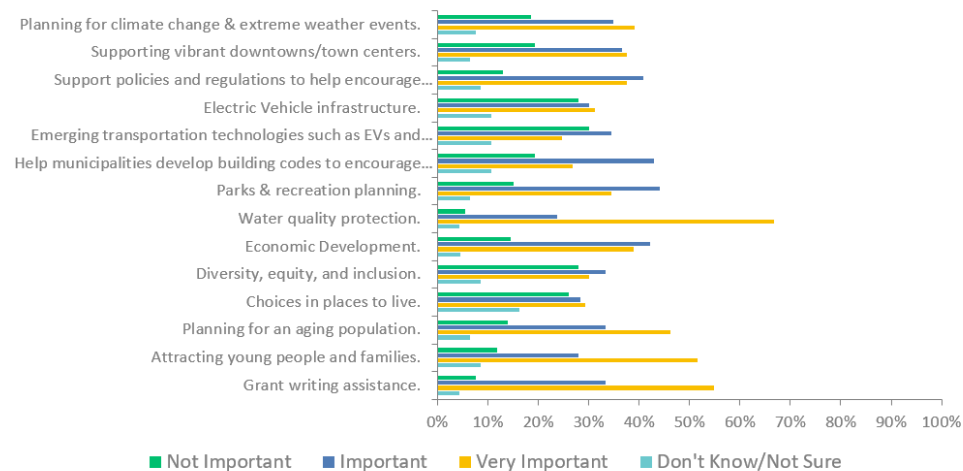
Q11: How important do you believe the following NRPC Energy and Environmental Planning functional areas are to your community?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 1



Q12: What OTHER areas could/should, in your opinion, NRPC emphasize in the coming months and years? Below are some suggestions – please indicate the importance of each item to you or your community.

Answered: 93 Skipped: 1



APPENDIX C – LOOKING Forward (responses by weighted average)

NRPC Strategic Plan Update

What **OTHER** areas could/should, in your opinion, NRPC emphasize in the coming months and years? Below are some suggestions – please indicate the importance of each item to you or your community.

	Not Important	Important	Very Important	Don't Know/Not Sure	Weighted Average
Water quality protection.	5.38%	23.66%	66.67%	4.30%	2.7
Attracting young people and families.	11.83%	27.96%	51.61%	8.60%	2.57
Grant writing assistance.	7.53%	33.33%	54.84%	4.30%	2.56
Planning for an aging population.	13.98%	33.33%	46.24%	6.45%	2.45
Support policies and regulations to help encourage generation of Alternative Energies (wind/solar/hydro).	12.90%	40.86%	37.63%	8.60%	2.42
Planning for climate change & extreme weather events.	18.48%	34.78%	39.13%	7.61%	2.36
Choices in places to live.	26.09%	28.26%	29.35%	16.30%	2.36
Economic Development.	14.44%	42.22%	38.89%	4.44%	2.33
Parks & recreation planning.	15.05%	44.09%	34.41%	6.45%	2.32
Supporting vibrant downtowns/town centers.	19.35%	36.56%	37.63%	6.45%	2.31
Help municipalities develop building codes to encourage Net-Zero buildings.	19.35%	43.01%	26.88%	10.75%	2.29
Electric Vehicle infrastructure.	27.96%	30.11%	31.18%	10.75%	2.25
Diversity, equity, and inclusion.	27.96%	33.33%	30.11%	8.60%	2.19
Emerging transportation technologies such as EVs and autonomous vehicles.	30.11%	34.41%	24.73%	10.75%	2.16
Other (please specify)					

APPENDIX D – LOOKING FORWARD (additional responses)

Other:

- Try not to let new people come in and change this state into CA, NY, or PA
- Please help communities identify and protect endangered wildlife species in sensitive areas of their Towns before they are logged and developed leading to decrease in the presence of rare species.
- We in Pelham need regulations/ordinances re watershed-based zoning.

Also:

- When anyone talks about housing in NH, they nearly always delete property taxes from the conversation. The property tax is at the root of why housing in NH is so expensive. No one talks about it when they talk about rental units. No one seems to understand that the landlord is going to pass on the tax to the renter. If my wife and I didn't own our house, we would be in deep trouble. The crash of 2008 cleaned out our 401K. Electric cars only add more cars on the highway. Rail can be electric, diesel, and even steam. The most important goal should be to rebuild the miles abandoned rail lines. I should be able to drive or take a bus at a local RR station. From there I should be able to go almost any place in the US.
- In addition to Brownfields programs, consider programs aimed at business expansion/retention, market analysis, facilitation of adaptive reuse/redevelopment of buildings.
- Stop trying to control everything.
- As a town with a volunteer Planning Board that does not have the funds for a full-time planner, we truly appreciate the services and guidance NRPC provides. Thank you!
- Pelham has access to this and doesn't seem to take advantage. They'd rather stick their head in the sand "because that's the way they've always done things."
- Towns, non-profits (churches, etc.), families and individuals will need/need assistance with engaging in financial supports via the IRA [Inflation Reduction Act] and other federal dollars available for a variety of energy conservation, more efficient appliances, access to renewable energy sources, etc. etc.
- I hope the Town of Pelham can be educated on matters that are of critical importance to our future. An invigorated media effort might help citizens to become more aware and informed.
- Our town is running out of open land, reducing home values.
- I think more effort needs to be shown/demonstrated in the proactive vs reactive management of land use in the region, and beyond the region. We are in the crosshairs of climate change impacts on land use and migration between now and say 2100. NRPC may be the only organization with the reach and the smarts to actually do proactive work to get everyone ready for the next stages in their growth.
- NRPC should advertise more regarding hazardous waste collection.
- It seems redundant to what local boards should be doing so it's unclear if it's really important to do at a regional level because it can always be done at a local level with a municipality seeking assistance from their neighbors. It seems like it can override the will of the people.
- There is a serious disconnect between NRPC and Mont Vernon.
- You should never think you are more important than the towns you represent.
- I believe introducing more innovative thinking and research to all you do would help propel our towns to the future. We should be the leaders and innovators and not constantly playing catch up.
- In my 25 years of working with NRPC I have found your organization to be a critical resource for all planning and transportation issues for all your member municipalities, especially small and medium towns with modest budgets. Your mapping services are top notch and remain invaluable to Pelham!

APPENDIX E – NRPC Interview Notes

The following notes are from a series of one-on-one conversations between the Consultant and eight different individuals, representing communities of all sizes across the region. Each interviewee has had extensive experience in various positions of community leadership.

These discussions were to glean additional information about their views of what the NRPC might focus on going forward. Notes are in order of the flow of the conversations. Names and other identifying information have been deleted to protect anonymity.

JUNE 6, 2023

**Role: Town
Administrator (TA)**

This TA was familiar with the NRPC through previous work with planning and zoning, and in their new role sees the benefits of services the circuit rider can provide this understaffed town. This circuit rider provides the bulk of planning work, as the town planner works just a few hours a week.

What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	• The Master Plan sections are very old. There Needs to be community outreach and in-depth evaluation by residents to update them. • No sewer or natural gas. • Only commercial activity are mom and pop shops (limited) i. Where do we want commercial and what kind? ii. Where to put big residential development? • Education [of town leaders] will be important (e.g. modifying zoning regs) to maintain integrity and not destroy tax base. • Financial impact of all decisions is a huge challenge – how to fund growing services and salaries while addressing on-going maintenance issues? i. Can we do it all on existing tax base? • NRPC does a good job but they serve a LOT of communities i. They are the experts. We rely on their knowledge, especially since our own staff is small to lacking.
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• Water quality, e.g., monitoring for PFAS and then mitigating, if needed. • Education for volunteers who sit on zoning and planning boards. i. There are lots of misconceptions and lack of knowledge about how to do basic things. ii. Leaders don't know what resources are out there. 1. Could NRPC encourage them to look at resources available? iii. NRPC does a great job with GIS – people in this community don't even know what it's all about. What are the possibilities here? • A huge fear of development. Need education. There's a way it can be done. i. For example, some leaders believe that this community has done its fair share re housing stock. We need education!
In addition:	• Future: will come down to NRPC needing to supply a staff member, then NRPC training them. They have historical knowledge. • Grants: we need more assistance with grant writing. i. A number of grant opportunities come to us too late to respond. Is there a way to develop a system of what grants are available so we can start preparing earlier? • Final thoughts: i. they must have a pretty limited staff, too! Will be a continued challenge. ii. We "don't know what we'd do without them."

JUNE 6, 2023

Role: Planner

What is your relationship with NRPC?	• Knew of them from a position in another community – primarily their Circuit rider program and planning services. • Now, in this new position in the new community, am working with different NRPC staff to review potential re-writes of requirements, zoning changes and more. Also: i. HOP grant ii. Hazard mitigation plan iii. Downtown village plan
What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	• Capacity. I am one person, not full-time as planner, and have other responsibilities. A lot of hard work needs to be done – more ordinance changes, Master Plan and more. • need to make sure we have services to support the needs of the community – e.g. roads, staff etc. • Keep special needs students here. • Lack of parking in town center • Lack of brand identity in the downtown. • Make it easier to open home businesses downtown.
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• Nothing on the table except housing right now. • Aside from that: how can we make our communities more age friendly? i. E.g., AARP? How can we as a region adopt some of those things? ii. Our town has fully accessible trails and fishing docks. Edge of water safely. iii. What else can we do to be welcoming for people of all ages? 1. At town hall, businesses iv. Share info re job openings for teens, retirees = part time. v. Needs region-specific toolbox. • Need assistance mapping trails. People can come in and use trails for hiking, biking, equestrian, snow mobile. i. Economic development around those resources. Attract businesses that support that. Wants TOOLBOX.
In addition:	Final thoughts: I am not the only planner that's a dept of one. Would like opportunities to network with other planners. "How do you do this?" I would like a strong network of people to reach out to.

JUNE 6, 2023

Role: Community development, Transportation, alternative energies

What is your relationship with NRPC?	• For contracted, on-call services, e.g., natural resources update • Active role in T services – mapping, data support, i. Asset planning for Transit, coordinated plan, regional plan ii. They are a direct conduit for formula funding • Also brownfields assessment stuff
What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	Our issues are also regional issues: • Transportation i. Funding a problem 1. Programming a limited pool of funding • Rail i. Bus service – now flies under the radar 1. On-demand services in some towns: must have that access. 2. Bus should be a regional issue

	• Comprehensive regional planning – we do local planning but need regional plan • NRPC is trying to do all the right things to bring people together to talk about these issues • Housing a major regional issue – and certainly in our community i. Only some communities really willing to take on role of more housing. ii. Some are still density averse. iii. An affordability need across all member communities of the region iv. Every community should provide so don't have to move to Nashua or other larger communities. • Environmental planning not at top of list now.
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• I think they should focus on stability re personnel. i. Need to build relationships with community members and vice versa. • Huge priority to keep people on board for as long as possible to ensure relationships are built. i. Jay, Ryan, Matt, Camille have been there longer – have built relationships. • Grant identification – what's out there, when is it due? Forward to communities who may benefit. i. Grant writing. But first need to know what's out there. ii. A funding opp'y to administer grant programs?? • Housing – all communities need to discuss. i. Regional Planning Commissions may have an opportunity to showcase best practices
In addition:	Final thoughts: ▪ Always one question: what do we (Commission members) get from our dues? i. We get a lot, but what about other towns? ii. Would like more regular engagement re what services are there and not taking advantage. • Good to have a conversation with the Commission: what COULD we get? i. E.g., how many grant applications. ii. What are the expectations? Clarity. iii. Are we getting what we are paying? 1. No idea what's available? 2. Constant communication: what is and is not available for dues. i. NRPC is an incredibly well-run planning organization. ii. Jay is doing things RIGHT 3. Communities value the Commissions.

JUNE 7, 2023

Role: Former Select Board Member

What is your relationship with NRPC?	• Worked with them on Con Com effort in another community. • As part of another committee there, read a lot of NRPC work re highways. • Wanted to develop a biking rail, reached out to NRPC for information
What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	• My previous town: uncontrolled, unbounded growth because it has decent land i. Needs better guidance and support re zoning, etc. 1. E.g., giant storage unit in downtown • My current town is sleepier. A little commercial, which won't bring in a lot of taxes but that's okay. i. Higher income/more educated. More apt to support con coma efforts

	ii. Local govt more educated, better structured. iii. Doing a good job all around. 1. But some want water infrastructure for more commercial.
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• Water quality – in response to both human activity and climate i. Poor drainage - E.g. salt ii. MS4 permit trying to correct – but not in rural areas. Hurting wetlands • How can any decision take into consideration floods, etc. i. 100 year floods – need to plan • Young people and families i. Housing? ii. Don't know if we want low-income housing per se. • Grant writing assistance: some orgs have grant writers. Some do not. Would be a great help esp. for smaller boards etc. fair stab at \$
In addition:	Final thoughts: • Generally, doing a good job. i. Controversy: Is NRPC more for growth and development? But they do some conservation efforts. Need to come across as balanced – highlight it publicly. 1. E.g., annual meetings give time to both sides

JUNE 7, 2023

Role: Chair of Select Board

What is your relationship with NRPC?	• Not well connected. • Look at a map of region – we are on periphery, unlike the other towns. i. Much smaller ii. Not a large population, no commercial activity iii. Not in common with rest of the area of RPC. iv. A lot of what they do seems irrelevant to us. v. Not center part of their attention span.
What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	• Geographically small. • No commercial tax base, so property taxes of 900+ homes pay for everything. i. Small general store, a couple of farms ii. Can be difficult to keep up with things. • A lot of growth over last 30 years. 900 -> 2700 in past 50 years. i. Nature of town/demographics have changed. People from elsewhere. • Maintenance not kept up i. Roads ii. Municipal buildings need renovation and/or re-purposing iii. Trying to get a new library built. Current one built in 1907. Arts and crafts style, beautiful but tiny. iv. Basically the core downtown area that needs attention. 1. A lot of resistance
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• Transportation planning. i. No one works in our town – all get in cars and drive elsewhere. 1. There is one road that leads out of village. That road maintained somewhat by state. 2. Roads carry a lot of traffic and are not efficient.
In addition:	Final thoughts: • Might be worth their while to develop a better relationship with our community • Need to have set policies and procedures on SB, for example. i. Trying to make it more professional, more orderly, and business-like. • Need serious update of land use regulations.

	• Strategic Planning Committee – i. Capital Improvements – how could we get this done?
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JUNE 7, 2023

Role: Co-Chair of Planning Board

What is your relationship with NRPC?	• Circuit rider program • Got a HOP grant in January - NRPC providing consulting assistance • Also other research outside of circuit riders stuff • We are “a consumer of NRPC service”! • Could provide more services – YET, in general, most people are not aware of the services they offer. i. E.g., updating a natural resources inventory. Good for small towns ii. Also, GIS info: towns not aware of additional info related to what they map. • Many think of NRPC as transportation related. But that does not pertain to us and there is much more they offer.
What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	• Affordable housing – housing opportunities i. Tension: increasing housing units vs rural character • No useful data to project housing needs specific to Wilton i. State does not look at data that could inform housing needs 1. Re population growth ii. Need to do our own research to get data we need. • Rural community relies on small town services and taxes • Poor quality of school system • Conservation commission and others do not have expertise
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• Focus appears to be on urban-based work. i. Rail, parking, etc. ii. But work needs to be done in rural towns • Need to scope out issues in more rural towns i. E.g., planning and zoning, conservation issues, etc. • Stormwater responsibilities of smaller towns i. Have a stormwater manager for a bunch of different towns, pay by hour. ii. Regulations in most towns are pretty undeveloped • Planning and zoning – being able to access a library of rural zoning ordinances
In addition:	Final thoughts: • Focus tends to be supported on urban areas. • Could they develop expertise in rural planning? i. Example: circuit rider is great but has urban background. • A terrific group. i. Need to publicize all areas of expertise useful for small towns. ii. Need rural-based planning.

JUNE 7, 2023

Role: Select Board Chair

What is your relationship with NRPC?	• The Circuit Rider program i. Also someone once a week as on-site planner – walk people thru application process
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	ii. Also do their tax maps (long time) iii. Also help with road system studies iv. Also requirements re hazard mitigation plan, currently working with them on a safety hazard-type situation – like a disaster preparation plan v. Also just starting update re Master Plan – NRPC to provide data vi. Cannot do all this on their own. • Sits on T committee
What are the biggest challenges facing your community?	• Keeping taxes at reasonable level while maintaining services and infrastructure • Background history - do what you want, ignore the rules i. Balance regulation with common sense. • Housing – smallest is two acres, some five acres. i. Need to improve it ii. No place for “elderly” but no sewer, no water iii. Adu’s but don’t currently allow detached iv. We want to keep rural – need to find a balance. Density vs rural. • Areas that are prone to flooding (due to beavers) and stuff comes off mountains i. Bridges out, culverts • Transportation – one state road in our community i. No access to buses. ii. Would be nice to figure out a way to get older adults to larger communities for food, medical appointments. Nothing official right now.
What would be important for you/your community for NRPC to focus on for the foreseeable future?	• For our community specifically: how to keep younger families in town and ALSO keep older adults i. No place with support for older adults ii. Now have entire town on broadband iii. Need to ask them! iv. Properties sold have been cash only v. School small – does not provide things like football 1. A problem with younger families. Send kids to private middle and high schools.
In addition:	Final thoughts: • We get a lot out of NRPC. They provide a lot of services that are part of the package (e.g., traffic counts) that we otherwise could not afford. • Struggle hard to not change tax rate. • Good data source – if we have something we don’t understand, can call them. i. Such a good service, especially for small towns ii. Towns around us utilize them quite a bit. iii. Very respected – even among communities in other regions • Don’t forget about the little guys.

APPENDIX F – Notes from Forum Groups

Notes from NRPC Focus Group A – July 13, 2023

Question #1: What do you think would be important for the NRPC to focus on in the next 3 – 5 years?

Question #2: Beyond what you just talked about for the previous question, what else should the NRPC take into consideration to inform their planning for the next 3 – 5 years?

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- Electrification and related items in the list.
 - Grant writing assistance – it intersects with many of these as you will need resources to implement many of this.
 - How will Hudson get grants for EV?
-
- Water quality. He lives near Robinson Pond but is not eligible for PFAS mitigation if he learns from testing that there is PFAS in his well water.
 - Zoning is a mess in their community. You can put a business next to a house. The town needs help to work out its zoning. He comes from MA and zoning is better managed there.
 1. NRPC is a planning organization and could help with zoning
 - Do other towns have zoning issues and need new ordinances?
-
- Alternative energy and zoning, transportation.
 - Attracting young people and families is a political problem. People are now working out of MA in order to afford to buy a medium price house in their town.
 - Non fossil fuel and solar planning
-
- Electrification Infrastructure, especially in our rural member communities
 - Eversource has 3 phase electricity along Rt. 13 but not much infrastructure otherwise, making home charging more difficult
 - People may not visit or support rural community restaurants and stores if there is no place to recharge their EV vehicles
 1. Both infrastructure and distribution are important
 2. Generation is also important and needs to be addressed as we may not have enough electricity
 - Planning for aging population
 1. How do older people get around especially if they can no longer drive
 - Grant writing
-

Question #3: What else do we need to be thinking about?

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- “Whole thing about DE&I” – Equity in EV infrastructure. If you live in a condo or apartment, where do you charge your EV?
 - Housing, climate change, NRPC can be helpful with planning that is regional not just with one municipality
 - Should we explore more formal circuit rider services for member communities that don’t have the staff/resources to do that on their own effectively.
 - Concerned that we don’t compete for staff with communities that have internal staff doing that work
 - NRPC needs to continue to do its circuit rider work. He knows the rural towns need help this along with ordinance support.
 - Agrees with using these resources with plans for the region
 - Should offer to assist towns
 1. Look at this more holistically
-
- Surprised that Economic Development was not mentioned in our group
-

Question #1: What do you think would be important for the NRPC to focus on in the next 3 – 5 years?

Question #2: Beyond what you just talked about for the previous question, what else should the NRPC take into consideration to inform their planning for the next 3 – 5 years?

The list of issues was comprehensive:

- Water quality is degrading the quality of life. The increase in housing is causing stress to the infrastructure in towns – especially water.
- Maintaining the rural character of a town is very important.
- More roads bring more people. One town wants a moratorium on roads. They feel they have the burden for people to get from one place to another.
- The need to balance growth with why people move to NH.
- Towns feel that they are brought into the process too late. Instead of being in on decision-making, they are being told what has been decided. They want all the stakeholders brought together so the best decisions can be made for their towns.
- Water & housing are linked. Resistance to improving water infrastructure because it will lead to more growth.
- NRPC work seems to be slanted towards the needs of the state not the towns.
- Building codes need to be updated. Old codes lead to developers creating developments that don't fit with the town character. OR what developers say they plan to build doesn't match what actually gets built.

Notes taken from when Group B presented:

- Water Quality on regional basis and how you could do this
- Maintain the character of the towns, rural towns

Some comments captured when all discussed what they heard before closing the forum:

- Without newspapers, how is information shared?
 - If you are not on social media, how do you know what is happening without newspapers or other means?

Talked more about zoning and how zoning regulations could drive some of the things we would want to see:

- Zoning is definitely a problem with how easy it is to get an exception or variance
 - NRPC can provide inputs and provide education
 - Why is growth good?
 - Can NRPC play a role in reusing vacant buildings and what he sees as critically unfettered growth
 - Low wage floor in NH, political problem. NRPC can help mitigate with planning
 - If the Internet works well we could have more workers
 - Traffic and more ways to cross the Merrimack River. Hudson has the only 2 bridges in the region
-