

NRPC REGIONAL PLAN



A Comprehensive Development Plan
For the Greater Nashua Region

ADOPTED: SEPTEMBER 2026

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Mont Vernon Center © Seth Dewey Photography

NRPC Regional Plan - Executive Summary

What is the Purpose of a Regional Plan?

New Hampshire has a long and storied tradition of planning at the local level. Planning efforts in the state are often characterized by residents, most serving in a volunteer capacity, meeting, and rolling up their sleeves to help draft a community master plan, adjust a zoning boundary, or review a development proposal. But many important planning issues transcend municipal boundaries and require regional partnerships and coordination.



Amherst Village © Seth Dewy Photography

Areas where regional cooperation is especially important include critical issues such as housing, transportation, economic development, and natural resource protection.

Recognizing the value of regional planning for the well-being and development of municipalities, the New Hampshire State Legislature passed regulation requiring the creation of a comprehensive development plan for regions (NH RSA 36:45). This plan represents a fulfillment of those responsibilities. More importantly, it provides an accurate and impartial portrait of demographic, environmental, and economic conditions in the region and offers goals and strategies for moving forward based on that information as well as public input gathered from a robust outreach campaign. The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) Region, illustrated in Map 1, includes the communities of Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Hudson, Litchfield, Lyndeborough, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, Mont Vernon, Nashua, Pelham, and Wilton.

Planning as a region, especially for issues that cross municipal boundaries such as transportation, environment, economic development and impacts from land use planning, helps communities to grow into the places that they aspire to become. Regional plans are advisory documents intended to assist communities in developing their own plans and in coordinating them with one another. In addition, state legislation (RSA 36:45) tasks regional planning commissions with the creation of a comprehensive development plan for their region. This document is a comprehensive update to the

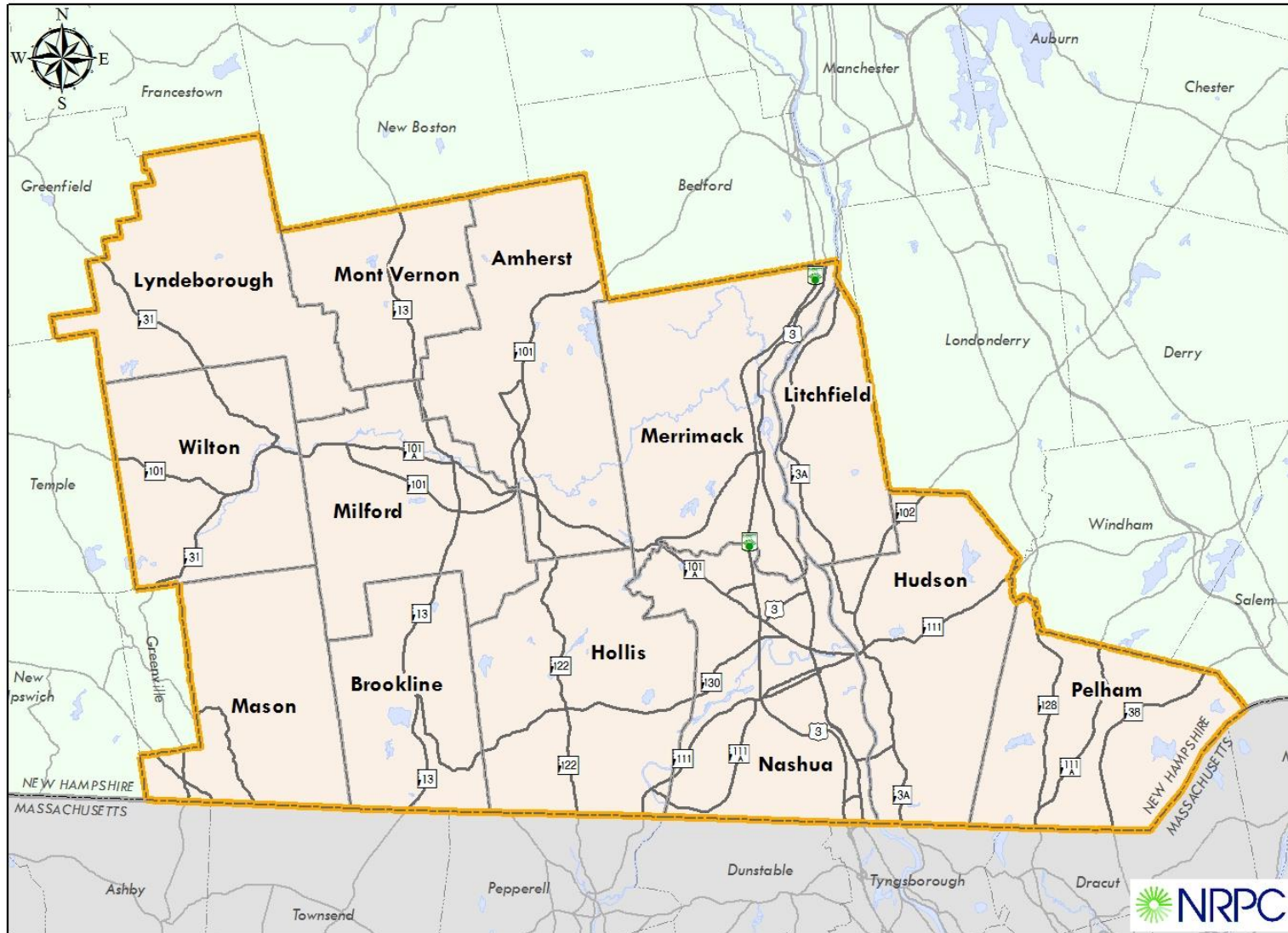
Nashua Regional Planning Commission's regional plan adopted in 2014, *NRPC: A Story Worth Telling*.

Demographic Profile

The Demographic Profile chapter provides an overview of population trends, demographic characteristics, and socioeconomic conditions within the NRPC region. Home to more than 217,000 residents, the region benefits from its strategic location between the Boston metropolitan area and central New Hampshire, offering a blend of urban, suburban, and rural communities. The chapter highlights how demographic changes will influence future planning decisions related to housing, transportation, economic development, public services, and community facilities.

The region experienced significant population growth between 1980 and 2020, increasing from approximately 139,000 residents to more than 217,000 residents. Growth was strongest during the 1980s and 1990s, driven by economic expansion and proximity to Greater Boston, but slowed considerably after 2000. Despite this moderation, the region continued to outpace statewide growth rates over the long term. Among individual municipalities, Brookline, Litchfield, Pelham, Hollis, and Mont Vernon recorded the highest percentage growth since 1990, while Nashua remained the region's largest community with more than 91,000 residents.

Map 1 – The NRPC Region



Looking ahead, population projections indicate continued but modest growth through 2050. The region is expected to add approximately 24,400 residents, reaching nearly 242,000 people. Growth is projected to be strongest during the 2020–2030 decade before slowing substantially. All thirteen municipalities are expected to grow, with Nashua, Merrimack, and Hudson experiencing the largest numerical increases. These trends suggest increasing pressure on housing, transportation systems, municipal services, and economic development efforts.

Population density patterns reveal a highly concentrated urban core centered on Nashua, with density decreasing outward into suburban and rural communities. Higher-density development is closely associated with major transportation corridors such as the Everett Turnpike, Route 3A, and Route 101A. Rural communities including Mason, Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, and portions of Wilton maintain low-density development patterns characterized by extensive open space, forests, agricultural land, and conservation areas.

One of the most significant demographic trends identified in the chapter is the aging of the population. The regional median age increased from 40.7 years in 2010 to 44.3 years in 2020, a larger increase than both Hillsborough County and New Hampshire as a whole. Lyndeborough had the oldest median age in the region at 49.7 years, while Brookline had the youngest at 39 years. The aging population is expected to increase demand for senior housing, healthcare, transportation services, accessibility improvements, and age-

friendly community planning, while also contributing to declining school enrollments in most communities.



The chapter also highlights growing racial and ethnic diversity, particularly within Nashua. Minority populations are concentrated in the city's urban neighborhoods, where some census tracts report minority populations approaching 40–50 percent. Diversity is generally lower in the region's suburban and rural communities, although demographic changes are occurring throughout the region. These trends have implications for housing, workforce development, public services, education, and efforts to promote equity and inclusion.

Economically, the NRPC region remains one of the most affluent areas in New Hampshire. Median household incomes

exceed state and county averages in most municipalities, with Brookline, Mont Vernon, Hollis, Amherst, and Litchfield reporting median incomes above \$150,000. In contrast, Nashua and Milford have lower median incomes due in part to their more diverse housing stock and greater availability of affordable housing. Income patterns generally show higher-income households concentrated in suburban and rural communities and lower-income households concentrated within Nashua's urban core.

Finally, the chapter examines poverty levels across the region. While overall poverty rates are relatively low compared to many metropolitan areas, poverty is concentrated in specific neighborhoods within Nashua, where some census tracts report poverty rates exceeding 20 percent. Most suburban and rural communities have poverty rates below 5 percent. The uneven distribution of poverty underscores the need for targeted investments in affordable housing, workforce development, transportation access, and social services to ensure all residents can benefit from the region's economic prosperity.

Overall, the demographic profile portrays a region that continues to grow and prosper but faces important challenges related to an aging population, housing affordability, demographic change, and equitable access to economic opportunity. These trends will play a critical role in shaping planning and policy decisions across the Nashua region over the coming decades.

Economic Development

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) Region benefits from a strong and diverse economy anchored by advanced manufacturing, healthcare, financial services, retail trade, and professional services. The region's strategic location within the Greater Boston metropolitan area, highly educated workforce, quality of life, low unemployment, relatively low taxes, and access to major transportation assets make it an attractive location for businesses and residents alike.

Despite these strengths, the region faces several economic challenges. Workforce shortages resulting from an aging population, high housing costs, limited housing supply, childcare availability, and persistently low unemployment rates constrain business growth and workforce recruitment. The continued shift toward online shopping and remote work has reduced demand for retail and office space, creating challenges for municipal tax bases and commercial property owners. Additionally, long-term trends such as manufacturing employment decline, automation, artificial intelligence, and global economic uncertainty will continue to reshape the regional economy.

Manufacturing remains the region's largest employment sector, employing nearly 17,000 workers and providing some of the highest wages in the local economy. Major employers such as BAE Systems, Hitchiner Manufacturing, Fidelity Investments, PC Connection, and numerous defense and

technology firms serve as important economic anchors. Significant recent investments, including Can One USA, Life is Good's new fulfillment center, and Target's 1.4-million-square-foot distribution facility in Hudson, demonstrate continued confidence in the region's economic future. At the same time, the closure of the Anheuser-Busch brewery in Merrimack highlights the need to adapt and reposition major industrial sites for future economic opportunities.

Employment projections through 2030 remain positive, with total employment expected to increase by more than 7,400 jobs. Growth is anticipated in healthcare, computer and mathematical occupations, management, and food service sectors, while manufacturing employment is expected to decline only modestly. Emerging opportunities include regenerative medicine, biotechnology, advanced textiles, robotics, artificial intelligence, and financial technology, supported by initiatives such as the ReGen Valley Tech Hub and partnerships with UMass Lowell and regional innovation centers.

To maintain economic competitiveness, the chapter recommends a comprehensive strategy focused on five key areas: encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation; expanding workforce development efforts; improving housing and childcare access; enhancing quality of place through investments in cultural, historic, recreational, and downtown assets; and adapting land-use policies to support evolving business needs. The plan also emphasizes the importance of preserving industrial land, increasing flexibility in commercial

development regulations, promoting business incubators and accelerators, supporting workforce training, and implementing coordinated regional marketing efforts.

Overall, the chapter envisions a future in which the Nashua Region continues to foster economic vitality by supporting innovation, attracting, and retaining workforce, strengthening quality of life, and positioning itself to capitalize on emerging industries while adapting to changing economic conditions.



Inside the ReGen Valley Tech Hub/ARMI

Natural Resources

The Natural Resources chapter of the Regional Plan emphasizes that the region's abundant natural resources—including its rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests, aquifers, wildlife habitats, and conserved open spaces—are fundamental to the

area's environmental health, economy, and quality of life. The chapter identifies the protection of water resources as one of the region's highest priorities, recognizing the importance of both surface water and groundwater for public drinking water supplies, recreation, flood protection, and wildlife habitat. Major water resources such as the Merrimack, Nashua, Souhegan, and Nissitissit Rivers, along with the Pennichuck Brook water supply system, play critical roles in serving residents while supporting diverse ecosystems.



Vibrant wetlands system at Monson Village – Hollis/Milford

The chapter discusses the growing threats facing these resources, including PFAS contamination, stormwater runoff, nutrient loading, underground storage tank leaks, aging infrastructure, household hazardous waste, invasive species,

and climate change. It highlights several local examples, including the long-term impacts of contamination from the former Merrimack Industrial Metals site and the regional response to PFAS contamination in Merrimack and Litchfield. The chapter also explains the importance of wetlands, riparian buffers, aquifer protection, and state shoreland regulations in maintaining water quality and reducing flood risks. Regional cooperation through programs such as the Lower Merrimack Valley Stormwater Coalition and household hazardous waste collection is presented as an effective and cost-efficient approach to addressing many of these challenges.

The chapter also places significant emphasis on protecting wildlife habitat, forests, and biodiversity. It describes the region's extensive network of high-value wildlife habitats, rare and endangered species, and more than 50,000 acres of forestland that provide ecological, recreational, and economic benefits. The plan identifies development, habitat fragmentation, invasive plants and insects, and climate change as the principal threats to these resources. Strategies such as forest management planning, conservation easements, invasive species management, and habitat connectivity are recommended to improve long-term ecosystem resilience.

Finally, the chapter concludes that land conservation is one of the most effective tools for protecting natural resources while accommodating future growth. Approximately 48,000 acres of conserved land are distributed throughout the thirteen NRPC communities, preserving forests, wetlands, farmland, water supplies, and recreational opportunities. The plan encourages

municipalities to expand conservation efforts through land acquisition, conservation easements, cluster (open space) development, and coordinated regional planning. Together, these strategies are intended to protect the Nashua Region's natural resources, strengthen climate resilience, safeguard drinking water, and preserve the rural character and environmental quality that define the region.



Protected farmland in Wilton

Overall, the chapter establishes a long-term vision for balancing environmental protection with sustainable economic growth. Through continued regional cooperation, strategic land conservation, watershed protection, responsible land use planning, and public education, the NRPC region can preserve its natural resources while maintaining the high

quality of life that has long distinguished southern New Hampshire. The conservation success stories highlighted throughout the chapter—including Beaver Brook, Durocher Farm, the Mason Forest Conservation Project, and Sullivan Farm—demonstrate how partnerships among municipalities, nonprofit organizations, landowners, and state agencies can produce lasting environmental benefits for future generations.

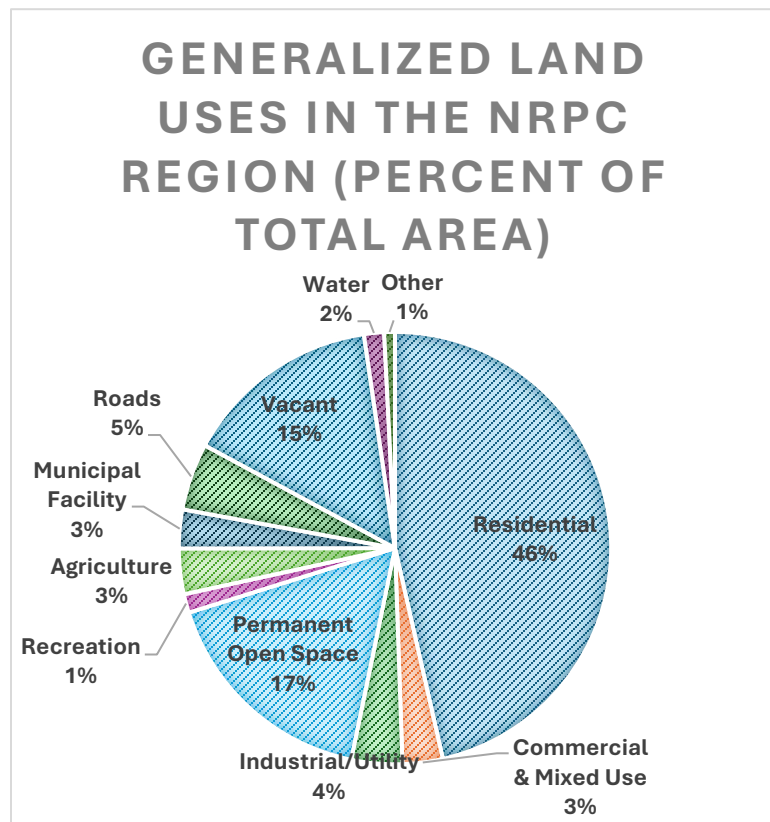
Land Use

Land use is central to the Regional Plan because it influences community character, economic development, housing opportunities, environmental quality, infrastructure costs, and the efficient delivery of public services. Over the past 50 years, the region has experienced significant residential and commercial growth, although the pace of development has slowed in recent years compared to previous decades.

Residential uses dominate the region, accounting for approximately 46% of the total land area, while permanently protected open space comprises nearly 17%. Industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreation, and municipal uses collectively occupy a much smaller share of the landscape. Development patterns vary across the region, with more urban and suburban development concentrated in the eastern communities and lower-density rural development characterizing the western communities.

Since the 2014 Regional Plan, residential land use has increased from 44% to 46% of the region's land area, while

recreation and open space have expanded from 15% to 18%. Industrial and commercial land uses have remained relatively stable at approximately 3% each. Vacant land has declined significantly from 25% to 15% of the region, reflecting continued development pressure. Recent major projects include new logistics and manufacturing facilities in Hudson, redevelopment of former industrial sites in Nashua, and continued commercial investment along key transportation corridors.



Local master plans across the region consistently emphasize preserving rural character, protecting natural resources and open space, supporting agriculture, enhancing walkability, fostering economic development, and maintaining community identity. Emerging trends such as remote and hybrid work arrangements are expected to influence future development patterns by increasing residential demand in rural areas while reducing demand for traditional office and retail space.

The plan encourages adaptive reuse of existing buildings, mixed-use development, and redevelopment of brownfield sites as strategies to accommodate growth while minimizing sprawl and preserving open space. Converting former mills, office buildings, and underutilized commercial properties into housing and mixed-use developments can help meet housing needs while strengthening downtowns and village centers.

Environmental stewardship remains a priority. Protecting water resources, wetlands, aquifers, wildlife habitats, and agricultural lands is essential as growth continues. The plan promotes coordinated regional planning to address housing shortages, transportation challenges, climate resilience, and resource protection across municipal boundaries.

Looking ahead, the region aims to increase permanently protected open space from 17% to 20% of the total land area by 2035 while accommodating more than 8,000 additional housing units identified in the Regional Housing Needs Assessment. Future residential growth should be directed toward areas with existing infrastructure, transportation access, and employment centers. The plan also recommends

preserving industrial land for employment-generating uses, supporting mixed-use redevelopment, encouraging higher-density housing in appropriate locations, and adopting policies that sustain active agricultural operations. Collectively, these strategies seek to balance growth, economic vitality, housing opportunity, and environmental conservation while preserving the qualities that make the NRPC region an attractive place to live and work.

Transportation

The transportation system of the Nashua Region is essential to supporting economic development, mobility, quality of life, and regional connectivity. The region's transportation network includes highways, local roads, transit services, freight and passenger rail corridors, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and emerging transportation technologies. As the state's second-largest economic center, the Greater Nashua region depends heavily on efficient transportation connections to Boston, Manchester, and other employment centers throughout New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

The F.E. Everett Turnpike remains the region's most important transportation corridor, carrying more than 112,000 vehicles daily near Exit 5. Other critical corridors include the Daniel Webster Highway (US 3), NH 101A, NH 111, NH 3A, NH 101, and NH 13, which provide access to major employment centers, commercial districts, residential neighborhoods, and regional destinations. While traffic volumes declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, most corridors have recovered

substantially, though traffic patterns continue to evolve due to remote and hybrid work arrangements. Persistent congestion remains a challenge along NH 101A, the Taylor Falls Bridge corridor, portions of Daniel Webster Highway, and several key intersections throughout Nashua and Hudson.



Congestion on Lowell Road in Hudson

One of the region's most significant transportation constraints is the limited number of Merrimack River crossings. The Taylor Falls/Veterans Memorial Bridge system and the Sagamore Bridge are the only crossings within the region and continue to experience significant congestion. The long-discussed Circumferential Highway project, originally envisioned to provide a third crossing and relieve congestion, was formally

abandoned by NHDOT in 2025 after decades of planning and environmental review.

Transportation safety remains a major priority. The 2025 Safe Streets for All Action Plan identified 52 fatal crashes and more than 19,000 additional crashes between 2018 and 2022. High-injury corridors are concentrated primarily in Nashua and Hudson, with Amherst Street (NH 101A), East Hollis Street, Main Street, Daniel Webster Highway, and several Hudson roadways among the region's highest-risk locations. The plan promotes a Safe System Approach that seeks to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries through roadway design improvements, policy changes, education, and enforcement.

Major transportation investments are planned throughout the region over the coming decade. These include continued widening of the Everett Turnpike, implementation of all-electronic tolling, NH 101A corridor improvements, East Hollis Street reconstruction, bridge and intersection upgrades, bicycle and pedestrian enhancements, and numerous safety projects throughout the region. Many projects incorporate Complete Streets principles designed to improve safety and mobility for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists.

Transit service remains limited outside Nashua. The Nashua Transit System provides fixed-route bus service within Nashua and limited service to Amherst, while demand-response transportation serves seniors and individuals with disabilities throughout much of the region. Approximately 58 percent of regional residents currently lack access to fixed-route transit.

Future opportunities include expanded bus service to Hudson, Merrimack, and Milford, shuttle connections to Lowell and Boston-area transit facilities, and eventual extension of MBTA commuter rail service through the proposed New Hampshire Capitol Corridor project connecting Nashua, Manchester, and Boston.



A heavily used section of the Heritage Rail Trail in Nashua

The plan also emphasizes the importance of expanding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. While downtown areas generally have good sidewalk networks, many suburban and rural areas lack adequate facilities. The region contains approximately 67 miles of sidewalks, 30 miles of trails, and only a half-mile of dedicated bicycle lanes. Major initiatives such as the Nashua Heritage Rail Trail extension, Nashua

Riverwalk, Baboosic Greenway, and numerous sidewalk projects seek to create safer and more connected non-motorized transportation networks.

Looking ahead, the transportation system will be increasingly influenced by emerging technologies including electric vehicles, intelligent transportation systems, adaptive traffic signals, connected and autonomous vehicles, shared mobility services, and e-commerce delivery networks. The Regional Plan encourages communities to prepare for these changes by investing in EV charging infrastructure, smart transportation technologies, and transportation systems that are safer, more efficient, more resilient, and more sustainable. Together, these investments will help ensure that the Nashua Region remains economically competitive, environmentally responsible, and accessible for residents, workers, and visitors through 2035 and beyond.

Community Facilities

Community facilities are essential to the quality of life, economic vitality, and long-term sustainability of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region. This chapter examines the public infrastructure and services that support the region's 13 communities, including water and sewer systems, parks and recreation, municipal buildings, libraries, schools, higher education, solid waste management, and public safety. Together, these facilities provide the foundation for healthy, safe, and prosperous communities while influencing patterns of growth, economic development, and

municipal investment. As the region continues to evolve, communities face the challenge of modernizing aging infrastructure, adapting to demographic changes, and maintaining high levels of public service despite increasing financial constraints.



Nashua Wastewater Treatment Facility

Public water and wastewater infrastructure remain among the region's most important community assets. The availability of public water and sewer service strongly influences where residential, commercial, and industrial development can occur. Urban communities such as Nashua, Hudson, Merrimack, Milford, and portions of Wilton contain the region's largest service areas, while more rural communities

continue to rely primarily on private wells and septic systems, reinforcing lower-density development patterns. Since the adoption of the previous Regional Plan, demand for public water has increased substantially due to PFAS contamination affecting hundreds of private wells in Merrimack and Litchfield, increased development pressures, and growing concerns about groundwater availability in communities such as Brookline and Pelham. Continued investment in water treatment, utility infrastructure, watershed protection, and groundwater management will remain critical to supporting future growth while protecting public health.

The chapter also highlights the region's extensive recreational resources, which contribute significantly to residents' health, tourism, and overall quality of life. Although only about 1.4 percent of the region's land area is devoted to developed recreation facilities, more than 37,000 acres of permanently protected open space provide abundant opportunities for hiking, biking, paddling, fishing, skiing, wildlife observation, and other outdoor activities. Regional assets such as Mine Falls Park, Benson Park, Wasserman Park, the Nashua River Rail Trail, numerous conservation areas, golf courses, athletic fields, and community recreation facilities form an interconnected recreational network that supports both residents and visitors. The chapter emphasizes expanding trail connectivity, improving accessibility, and acquiring additional recreational land to meet the needs of a growing population projected through 2050.

A significant portion of the chapter focuses on the challenges associated with aging municipal buildings. Many town halls, libraries, schools, and public safety facilities date to the nineteenth century or earlier and were not designed to meet modern accessibility standards, building codes, technology requirements, or the space needs of contemporary municipal government. Recent structural failures, hazardous mold, and other facility deficiencies in communities such as Brookline and Mont Vernon illustrate the growing need for long-term capital planning and investment. At the same time, these historic buildings remain important symbols of community identity, requiring municipalities to balance preservation with functionality, accessibility, and fiscal responsibility.



Mont Vernon's Town Hall - circa 1781

The chapter describes how libraries continue to evolve beyond their traditional role as book repositories into community centers offering digital resources, technology training, workforce development, educational programming, makerspaces, and public gathering spaces. Major investments are underway across the region, including the proposed renovation and expansion of the Nashua Public Library and the opening of Mont Vernon's new Daland Memorial Library. These projects reflect the continuing importance of libraries as centers for lifelong learning, community engagement, and digital access.

Education remains another defining component of the region's community facilities. Public school enrollment has declined steadily for more than two decades because of lower birth rates, an aging population, and demographic changes. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these trends, contributing to the region's largest annual enrollment decline in 2020. At the same time, enrollment in charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling has increased, reflecting changing educational preferences and the expansion of alternative educational opportunities. Higher education institutions, including Rivier University and Nashua Community College, continue to play a critical role in workforce development through expanded academic programs, new instructional facilities, partnerships with regional employers, and investments in high-demand fields such as healthcare, engineering, cybersecurity, aviation, and advanced manufacturing.

Solid waste management and public safety services also demonstrate the benefits of regional cooperation. Most communities participate in the Nashua Region Solid Waste Management District and collaborate on household hazardous waste collection, recycling, and waste reduction programs, while Nashua operates the region's only active landfill. Police, fire, emergency medical services, and public health agencies maintain extensive mutual-aid agreements that allow communities to share personnel, specialized equipment, and emergency response capabilities across municipal boundaries. This regional approach improves service delivery while helping communities manage costs and respond effectively to major emergencies.

The chapter concludes with a series of goals and recommendations that emphasize proactive capital improvement planning, protection of water resources, modernization of aging municipal facilities, expansion of recreational opportunities, adaptation to changing educational needs, and continued regional cooperation in public services. It also encourages communities to pursue grant funding, shared municipal services, expanded recycling programs, food waste composting, textile recycling, Styrofoam recycling, and improved land use planning to ensure that community facilities continue to meet the needs of current and future residents. Collectively, these strategies provide a comprehensive framework for maintaining and improving the public infrastructure that supports the region's economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and high quality of life.

Housing

The Housing chapter of the Regional Plan examines the region's current housing market, identifies future housing needs, and outlines strategies to create a broader range of housing opportunities while preserving the unique character of the region's communities. Building on the 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), the chapter concludes that housing demand continues to significantly exceed supply, resulting in historically high home prices, limited housing inventory, and affordability challenges for both homeowners and renters. Although rental vacancy rates have improved modestly since 2023, they remain well below healthy market levels and rising mortgage interest rates have further reduced homeownership opportunities for many residents.

The chapter estimates that the NRPC region will require approximately 9,400 additional housing units by 2030 and more than 14,000 units by 2040 to accommodate projected population and employment growth while restoring balanced vacancy rates. Meeting this demand will require residential construction activity to increase by roughly 60 percent above recent building rates. While several communities have made progress, the region remains behind its housing production targets. Merrimack has exceeded its projected housing goals due to substantial residential development, while many other communities, particularly Nashua, Milford, Amherst, Hudson, and Wilton, continue to face significant housing shortages.

Recognizing that no single housing type can address the region's diverse needs, the chapter highlights a variety of housing solutions, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs), mixed-use developments, multifamily housing, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, manufactured housing, workforce housing, and affordable housing developments. Recent projects such as Monahan Manor, 249 Main Street, Jackson Square, and Brookline Woods demonstrate successful partnerships that are expanding affordable and mixed-income housing options throughout the region. The chapter also describes how communities have used the state's Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) grants to modernize zoning ordinances, update master plans, and encourage housing development while maintaining community character.



Income restricted townhouse units in Litchfield



Inside a tiny home on wheels demonstration unit in Lyndeborough

Several municipalities are cited as examples of innovative local planning. Brookline adopted a new Village District to promote mixed-use development, Litchfield created a Mixed-Use Village Development ordinance, Wilton established an Adaptive Reuse Overlay District to encourage redevelopment of former mill buildings into housing, and Nashua is undertaking a comprehensive rewrite of its land use regulations through the re-Code Nashua initiative. These efforts are intended to increase housing opportunities in appropriate locations while supporting downtown revitalization and economic development.

The chapter concludes that solving the region's housing shortage requires a balanced approach rather than simply increasing housing everywhere. It recommends concentrating higher-density residential development in traditional downtowns, town centers, commercial districts, redevelopment sites, and areas served by public water and sewer while protecting rural landscapes, farmland, wildlife habitat, and environmentally sensitive lands. Flexible zoning regulations, support for alternative housing types such as ADUs, manufactured housing, and tiny homes, and continued regional cooperation are identified as essential strategies for improving housing affordability, supporting economic growth, accommodating an aging population, and preserving the high quality of life that defines the Nashua Region.

NRPC Regional Plan - Demographic Profile

Home to more than 217,000 residents, the Nashua Region is a dynamic and thriving part of the Southern New Hampshire landscape. Situated among the rolling foothills of the Merrimack River Valley, located less than 50 miles from Downtown Boston and within an hour of the Atlantic Coast, the region enjoys an enviable location that provides residents with urban amenities while retaining quality of life benefits common to suburban and rural areas.



Lyndeborough Center © Seth Dewey Photography

Encompassing the second largest city in New Hampshire as well as several suburban and rural communities, the Nashua Region is perhaps best characterized by the diversity of its landscapes. Thriving employment and commercial corridors pave way to charming and historic town and village centers, while scenic lakes, major rivers, hilltops, and several tracts of protected lands remain accessible to population centers.

Commitments to resource protection and conservation, education, arts, and cultural promotion as well as industry and Yankee efficiency help characterize the unique nature of the region and its people. Home to a thriving community of technological, financial, and manufacturing companies, the region commands the highest average wages in New Hampshire. Major retail corridors attract streams of visitors, while residents and visitors alike enjoy access to several cultural amenities, including one of the largest annual sculpture symposiums in the nation. Students in the region's public primary and secondary schools routinely outperform their peers in the state and nation, while post-secondary institutions prepare pupils for the economy of the 21st century. All these attributes are coalesced to provide residents of the Nashua Region with a high quality of life in an attractive and strategically positioned natural environment.

Historical Population and Growth Trends

The NRPC Region experienced substantial population growth between 1980 and 2020, increasing from 138,881 residents in

1980 to 217,543 residents in 2020. The most rapid growth occurred during the 1980s, when the region added more than 33,800 residents, representing a 24 percent increase. Growth continued during the 1990s at a strong but slower pace of 14 percent, bringing the population to nearly 197,000 by 2000. Population growth moderated considerably during the 2000s, increasing by just 4 percent, before rebounding slightly to 6 percent growth between 2010 and 2020.

The NRPC region's growth trends closely mirrored those of Hillsborough County and the State of New Hampshire, although the region generally grew at a slightly faster rate during the 1980s and 1990s. Hillsborough County's population increased by 21 percent during the 1980s and 13 percent during the 1990s, while statewide growth was 21 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Like the NRPC region, both the county and state experienced slower growth after 2000, with population increases ranging from 5 to 7 percent per decade. Overall, the data illustrate the strong population expansion that characterized southern New Hampshire during the late twentieth century, driven by economic growth and proximity to the Boston metropolitan area. While growth rates have moderated since 2000, the NRPC Region continues to attract new residents and has maintained a higher overall growth rate than the state as a whole over the four-decade period.

Table 1: Historical Population and Percent of Population Change by Decade

	1980 Pop.	1990 Pop.	1980-90 % Change	2000 Pop.	1990- 2000 % Change	2010 Pop.	2000-10 % Change	2020 Pop.	2010-20 % Change
NRPC Region	138,881	172,690	24%	196,935	14%	205,765	4%	217,543	6%
Hillsborough County	276,608	336,073	21%	380,841	13%	400,721	5%	422,937	6%
State of New Hampshire	920,475	1,109,252	21%	1,235,786	11%	1,316,470	7%	1,377,529	5%

Figure 1: Growth Rate by Decade

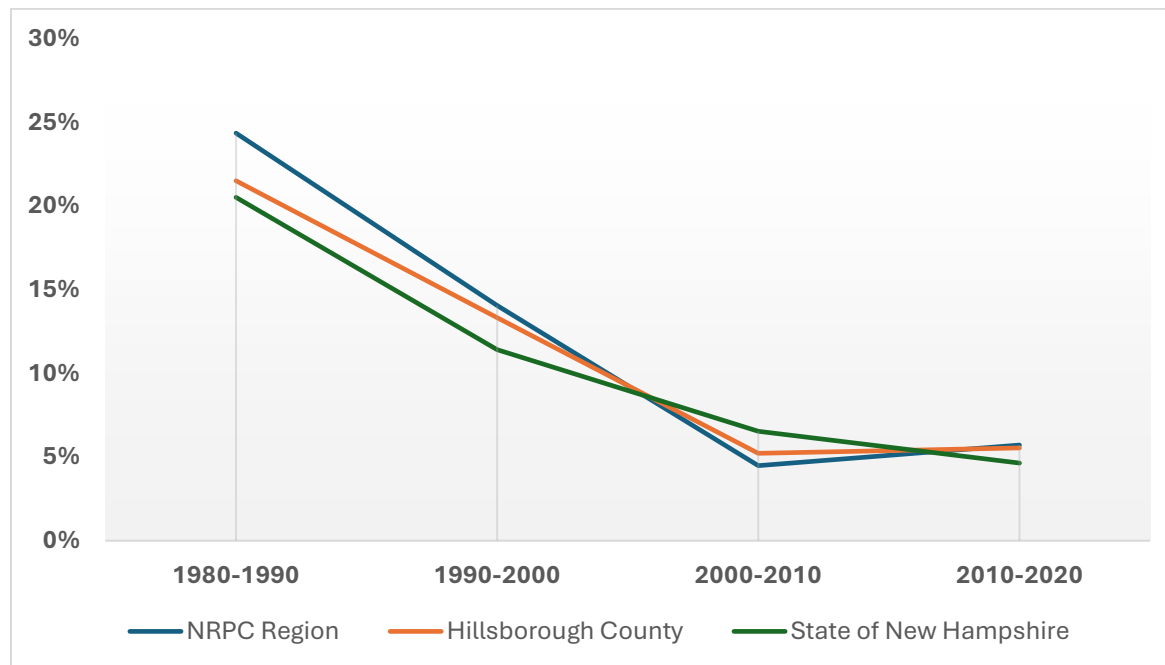


Table 2 - Population Change By Municipality 1990-2020

City/Town	2020	1990	Growth from 1990 to 2020	2000	Growth from 2000 to 2020	2010	Growth from 2010 to 2020
Brookline	5,639	2,410	134.0%	4,181	34.9%	4,991	13.0%
Litchfield	8,478	5,516	53.7%	7,360	15.2%	8,271	2.5%
Pelham	14,222	9,408	51.2%	10,914	30.3%	12,897	10.3%
Hollis	8,342	5,705	46.2%	7,015	18.9%	7,684	8.6%
Mont Vernon	2,584	1,812	42.6%	2,034	27.0%	2,409	7.3%
Milford	16,131	11,795	36.8%	13,535	19.2%	15,115	6.7%
Lyndeborough	1,702	1,294	31.5%	1,585	7.4%	1,683	1.1%
Hudson	25,394	19,530	30.0%	22,928	10.8%	24,467	3.8%
Amherst	11,753	9,068	29.6%	10,769	9.1%	11,201	4.9%
Wilton	3,896	3,122	24.8%	3,743	4.1%	3,677	6.0%
Merrimack	26,632	22,156	20.2%	25,119	6.0%	25,494	4.5%
Mason	1,448	1,212	19.5%	1,147	26.2%	1,382	4.8%
Nashua	91,322	79,662	14.6%	86,605	5.4%	86,494	5.6%
NRPC REGION	217,543	172,960	26.0%	196,935	10.5%	205,765	5.7%

Population Projections

Population projections for the Region prepared by the New Hampshire Office of Planning & Development, indicate continued but moderate growth through 2050. The region's population is expected to increase from 217,543 residents in 2020 to 233,630 in 2030, 241,339 in 2040, and 241,922 by 2050. Overall, the region is projected to add approximately 24,400 residents between 2020 and 2050, representing an 11.2 percent increase. Growth is anticipated to be strongest during the 2020–2030 decade, with a projected increase of 7.4 percent, before slowing considerably during the following two decades.

All thirteen municipalities in the NRPC region are projected to experience population growth through 2050. Nashua, the region's largest community, is expected to grow from 91,322 residents in 2020 to 101,683 residents by 2050, adding more than 10,300 residents. Hudson and Merrimack are also projected to experience substantial numeric growth, increasing by approximately 2,900 and 3,000 residents,

respectively. Smaller communities such as Amherst, Hollis, Milford, Brookline, and Pelham are expected to continue growing steadily, while the region's rural communities, including Lyndeborough, Mason, Mont Vernon, and Wilton, are projected to see modest but consistent population increases.

The projections suggest a continuation of the region's long-term growth trend, although at a slower pace than experienced during the latter decades of the twentieth century. Most municipalities are expected to grow by approximately 10 to 11 percent between 2020 and 2050, reflecting the maturity of the region's development patterns, limited availability of developable land in some communities, and broader demographic trends affecting New Hampshire and the Northeast. These population increases will have important implications for housing, transportation, municipal services, and economic development planning throughout the NRPC region over the coming decades. Population projections for the region and each NRPC community are provided in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3: Population Projections to 2050, by Municipality

Municipality	2020 Census	Population Projection			Population Change	
		2030	2040	2050	2020-2030	2020-2050
Amherst	11,753	12,625	13,043	13,075	7.42%	11.25%
Brookline	5,639	6,017	6,198	6,212	6.71%	10.16%
Hollis	8,342	8,940	9,227	9,249	7.17%	10.87%
Hudson	25,394	27,313	28,232	28,302	7.56%	11.45%
Litchfield	8,478	9,119	9,426	9,449	7.56%	11.45%
Lyndeborough	1,702	1,831	1,892	1,897	7.56%	11.45%
Mason	1,448	1,557	1,610	1,614	7.56%	11.45%
Merrimack	26,632	28,581	29,514	29,585	7.32%	11.09%
Milford	16,131	17,286	17,840	17,881	7.16%	10.85%
Mont Vernon	2,584	2,779	2,873	2,880	7.56%	11.45%
Nashua	91,322	98,159	101,435	101,683	7.49%	11.35%
Pelham	14,222	15,233	15,717	15,754	7.11%	10.77%
Wilton	3,896	4,190	4,331	4,342	7.56%	11.45%
NRPC Total	217,543	233,630	241,339	241,922	7.39%	11.21%

Source: NH Office of Planning and Development (State, County, and Municipal Population Projections: 2020-2050)

Population Density

The City of Nashua is the most densely populated municipality in the NRPC Region. Population density correlates largely with infrastructure availability (public water and sewer) and major transportation corridors running throughout the region. Map 1 on the following page depicts a heat map of population density by census block. This map illustrates population density across the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region based on 2020 Census data. The pattern of development reflects a clear concentration of population in the region's urban and suburban communities, particularly in and around Nashua, Merrimack, Hudson, and portions of Pelham and Milford.

The highest population densities, exceeding 500 people per square mile, are concentrated in central Nashua, where the region's most urbanized neighborhoods are located. Surrounding areas of Nashua, along with portions of Merrimack, Hudson, Pelham, and Milford, exhibit densities ranging from 101 to 500 people per square mile, reflecting established suburban residential development and access to major transportation corridors such as the Everett Turnpike, NH 101A and DW Highway.

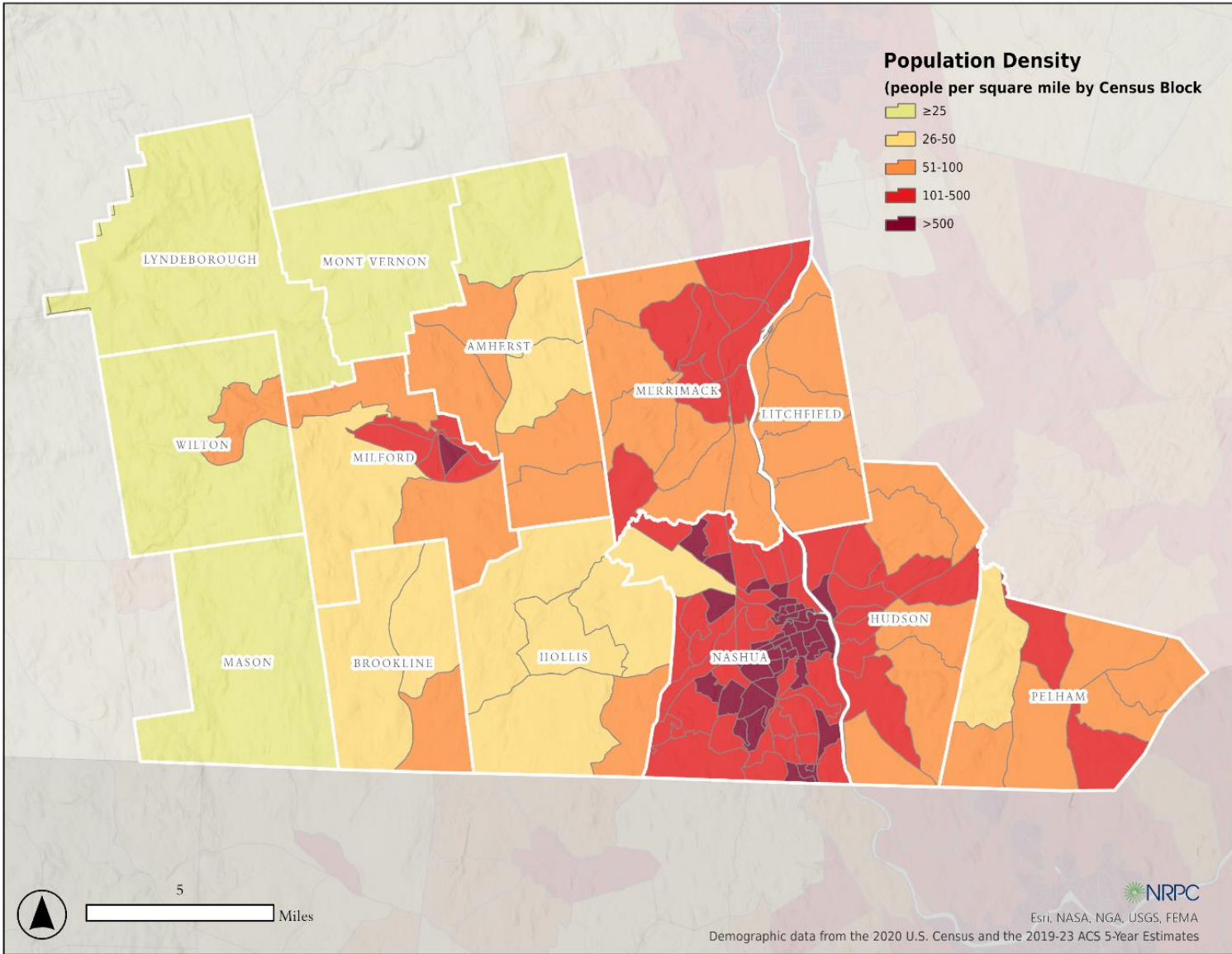
Moderate-density development, between 51 and 100 people per square mile, is found throughout much of Merrimack, Hudson, Amherst, Litchfield, and Pelham. These areas generally consist of suburban neighborhoods, commercial

centers, and mixed-use residential development. Lower-density areas, ranging from 26 to 50 people per square mile, are common in Brookline, Hollis, portions of Amherst, and the outskirts of the region's larger communities.

The least densely populated areas, with fewer than 25 people per square mile, are concentrated in the region's rural western and northern communities, including Mason, Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, and much of Wilton. These communities contain significant open space, forestland, agricultural land, and conservation areas that limit development intensity and contribute to their rural character.

Overall, the map demonstrates the NRPC region's distinctive settlement pattern, with population concentrated in the urbanized southern and eastern portions of the region and progressively lower densities moving westward and northward. This distribution reflects the influence of transportation infrastructure, employment centers, municipal land use patterns, and the preservation of rural landscapes, all of which shape current and future growth within the region. Outside of Nashua, the areas with higher population generally follow the Everett Turnpike, DW Highway in Nashua and Merrimack, and NH Route 3A north/south through Hudson and Litchfield, as well as NH Route 101A east/west through Amherst and Milford. The areas with the lowest population density in the region fall in the western portion of the region, including the towns of Mont Vernon, Lyndeborough, and Mason.

Map 1: Population Density in the NRPC Region, by Census Block



Median Age

The median age of residents in the NRPC region increased significantly between 2010 and 2020, reflecting the broader aging trend occurring throughout New Hampshire and the Northeast. The region's median age rose from 40.7 years in 2010 to 44.3 years in 2020, an increase of 3.6 years. This increase was greater than that experienced in Hillsborough County as a whole, where the median age rose by 1.6 years, and also exceeded the statewide increase of 2.5 years.

Most municipalities within the region experienced increases in median age during the decade. The largest increases occurred in Lyndeborough (+4.8 years), Litchfield (+4.3 years), Hudson (+4.1 years), and Pelham (+3.6 years), indicating a substantial aging of their populations. Communities such as Hollis, Mont Vernon, Merrimack, Milford, Nashua, Mason, and Wilton also saw notable increases. Brookline was the only municipality to experience a slight decline in median age, decreasing from 39.4 to 39.0 years, suggesting an influx of younger households or families. By 2020, Lyndeborough had the oldest median age

in the region at 49.7 years, while Brookline had the youngest at 39.0 years.

These trends suggest that the NRPC region is experiencing demographic shifts characterized by an aging population, longer life expectancy, and slower growth among younger age cohorts. As the population continues to age, communities throughout the region may face increasing demand for senior housing, healthcare services, transportation options, and age-friendly community planning, while also addressing workforce recruitment and school enrollment challenges. Since older people are more likely to experience one or more disabilities, the need for more accessible public facilities will also increase.

As noted in Chapter 7, Community Facilities, most of the region's communities are experiencing declines in public school enrollment. If these trends continue, some communities will need to address potential school closings and consolidations.

Table 3: Median Age by Municipality

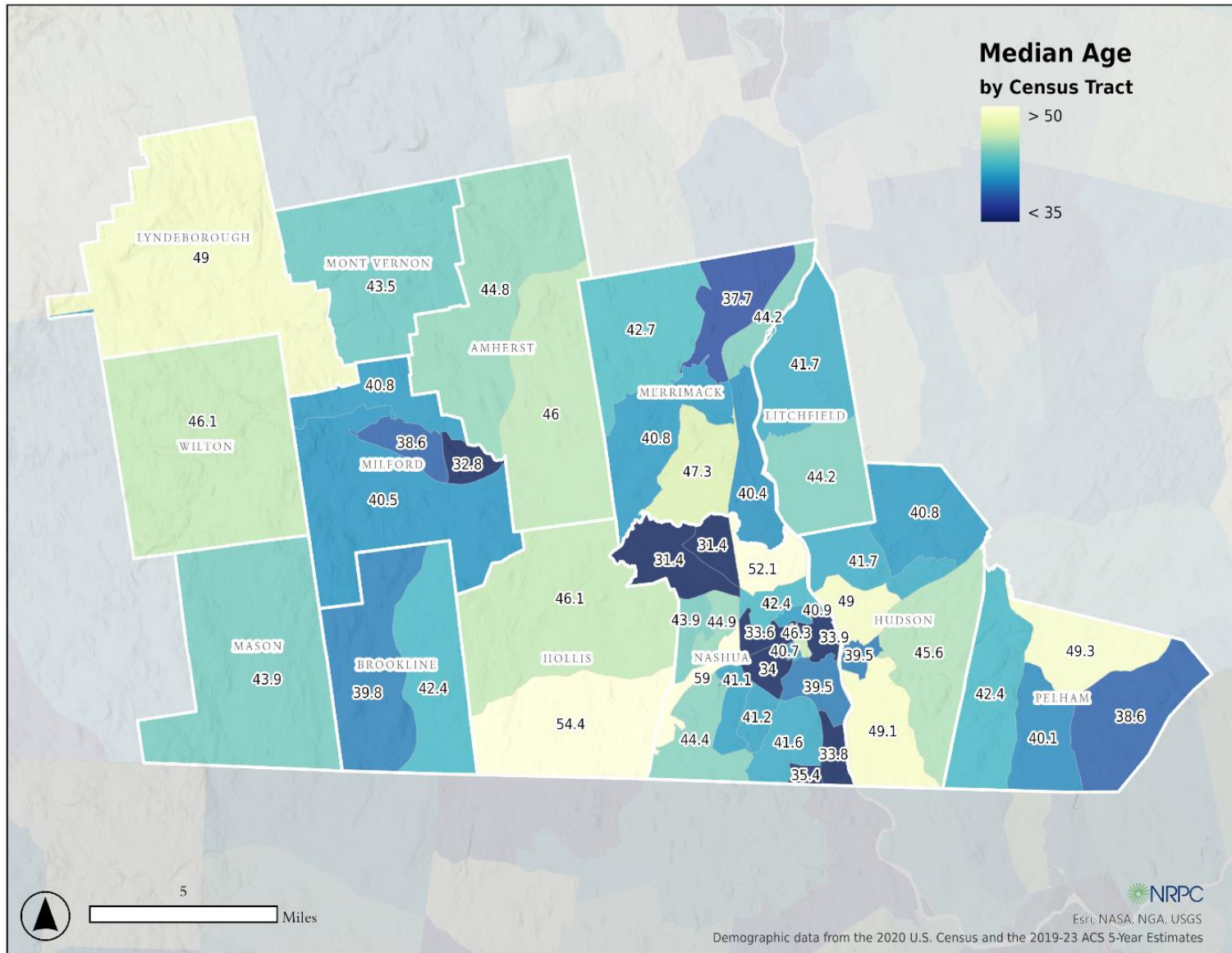
Municipality	2010 Median Age	2020 Median Age	Numeric Change
Amherst	44.4	45.6	1.2
Brookline	39.4	39	-0.4
Hollis	46.3	47.7	1.4
Hudson	39.6	43.7	4.1
Litchfield	40.1	44.4	4.3
Lyndeborough	44.9	49.7	4.8
Mason	44.7	46.5	1.8
Merrimack	40.7	42.9	2.2
Milford	39.0	41.0	2.0
Mont Vernon	43.2	45.5	2.3
Nashua	38.5	40.4	1.9
Pelham	40.7	44.3	3.6
Wilton	42.1	43.8	1.7
NRPC Region	40.7	44.3	3.6
Hillsborough County	39.3	40.9	1.6
New Hampshire	41.1	43.6	2.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census



Map 2 below illustrates the median age by census tract in each of the NRPC communities. The communities with the overall lowest median ages are Brookline (39 years) and Nashua (40.4 years). The communities with the overall highest median ages are Lyndeborough (49.7 years) and Hollis (47.7 years).

Map 2: Median Age in the NRPC Region, By Census Tract



Race and Ethnicity

Map 3 illustrates the percentage of minority residents within the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region based on 2020 Census data. The spatial distribution reveals a clear concentration of racial and ethnic diversity in the region's urbanized areas, particularly within Nashua, while the surrounding suburban and rural communities generally have lower minority population shares.

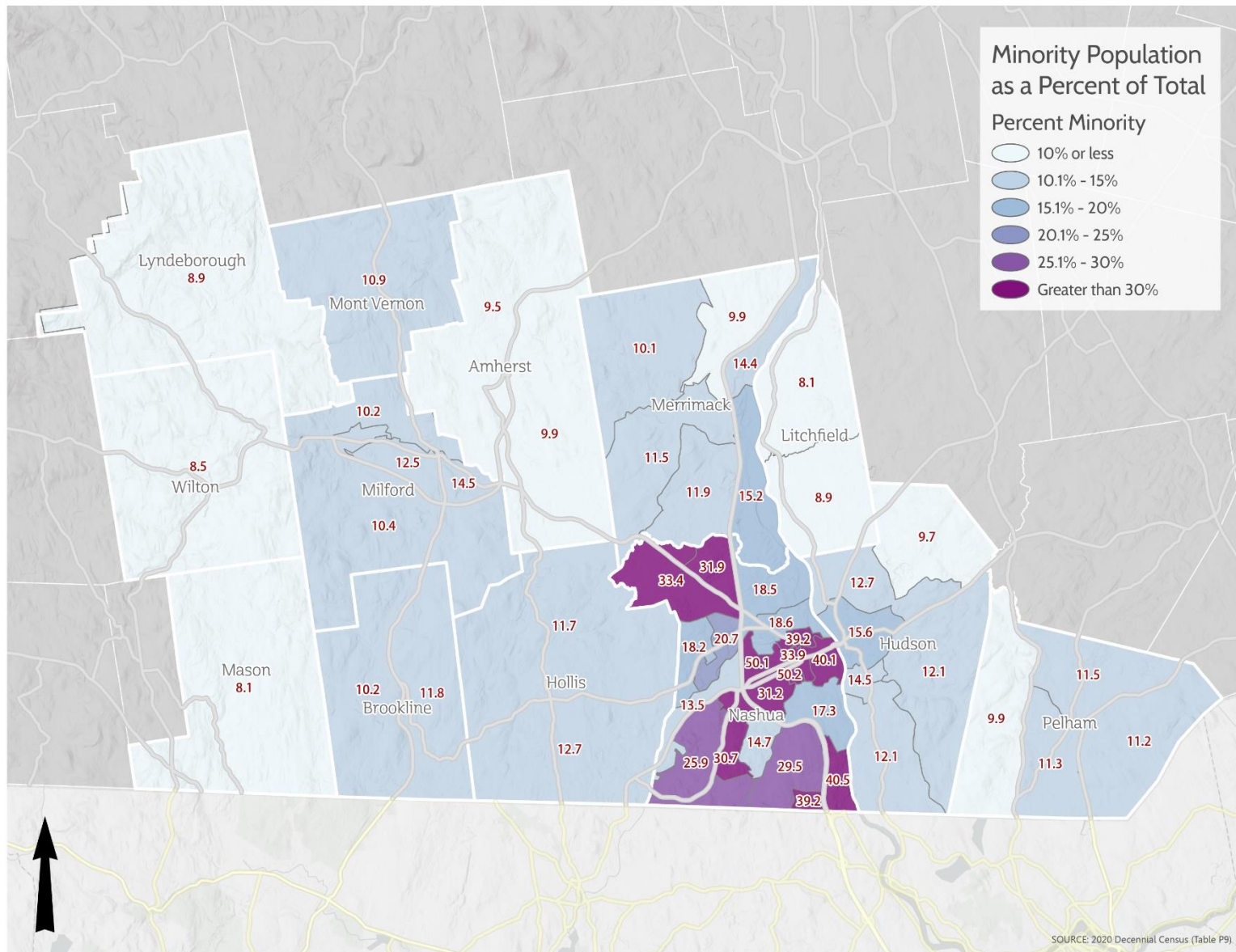
The highest concentrations of minority residents are found in central Nashua, where several census tracts have minority populations exceeding 30 percent, with some neighborhoods reaching approximately 40 to 50 percent. These areas represent the most diverse portions of the region and reflect Nashua's role as the region's largest city, employment center, and destination for immigrants and diverse households. Moderate concentrations of minority populations, ranging from 20 to 30 percent, extend into surrounding neighborhoods in Nashua and portions of adjacent communities.

Outside of Nashua, minority population shares generally range between 10 and 20 percent. Communities such as Hudson, Merrimack, Milford, Brookline, and Mont Vernon contain pockets of greater diversity, while more rural communities

including Lyndeborough, Mason, Wilton, Amherst, and Litchfield tend to have lower minority population percentages, generally below 15 percent. The lowest concentrations are found in Mason, Wilton, Lyndeborough, and parts of Litchfield, where minority populations account for less than 10 percent of residents.

Overall, the map demonstrates that the NRPC region is becoming increasingly diverse, although diversity is unevenly distributed across municipalities. The highest levels of racial and ethnic diversity are concentrated in the region's urban core, while suburban and rural communities remain less diverse. These demographic patterns have important implications for housing, education, transportation, public services, workforce development, and efforts to promote inclusion throughout the region.

Map 3: Race and Ethnicity in the NRPC Region



Income

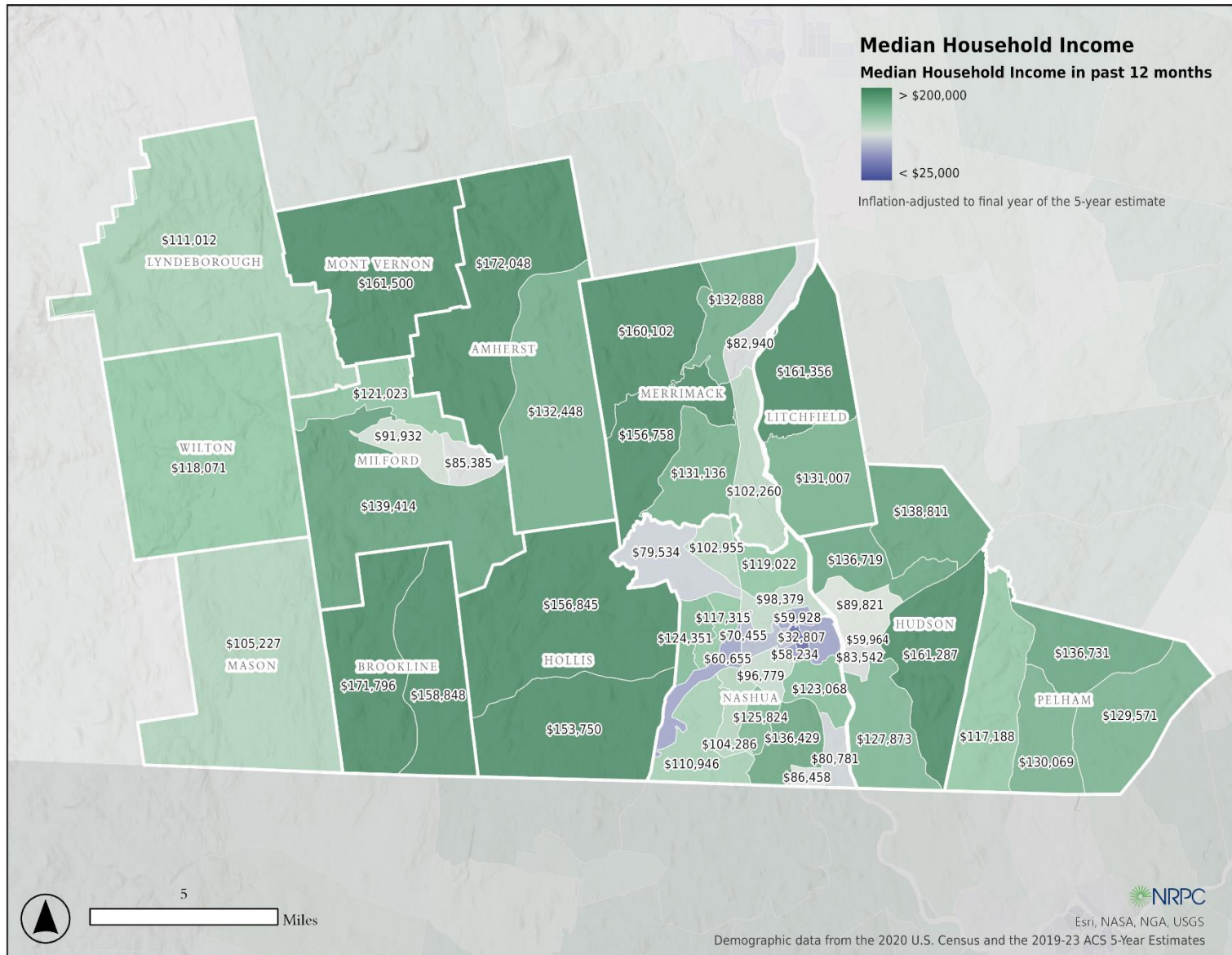
“Household” is a term used to describe people who occupy a single housing unit. Table 4 and Map 4 detail median household income by municipality and census tract. Median household incomes in most of the NRPC communities are higher than the state and Hillsborough County. Brookline, Mont Vernon, Hollis, and Amherst are the highest income towns in the region, with median incomes above \$150,000. On the other end of the spectrum, Milford and Nashua are both below the state and county median. In general, Milford and Nashua have a wider variety of housing options at different price points that accommodate a wider range of incomes, while some of the more rural communities predominantly have single-family housing which can be a barrier to lower income families. Nashua also has by far the largest concentration of income restricted housing developed for lower-income households as well as emergency, transitional, and supportive housing for families and individuals with a wide range of needs.

Table 4: Median Household Income by Municipality

Municipality	Median HH Income
Amherst	\$150,938
Brookline	\$165,942
Hollis	\$156,140
Hudson	\$124,973
Litchfield	\$155,881
Lyndeborough	\$111,012
Mason	\$105,227
Merrimack	\$129,302
Milford	\$94,514
Mont Vernon	\$161,500
Nashua	\$92,457
Pelham	\$126,804
Wilton	\$118,071
NRPC Region	\$126,804
Hillsborough County	\$100,436
State of New Hampshire	\$95,628

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1901

Map 4: Median Household Income in the NRPC Region, by Census Tract



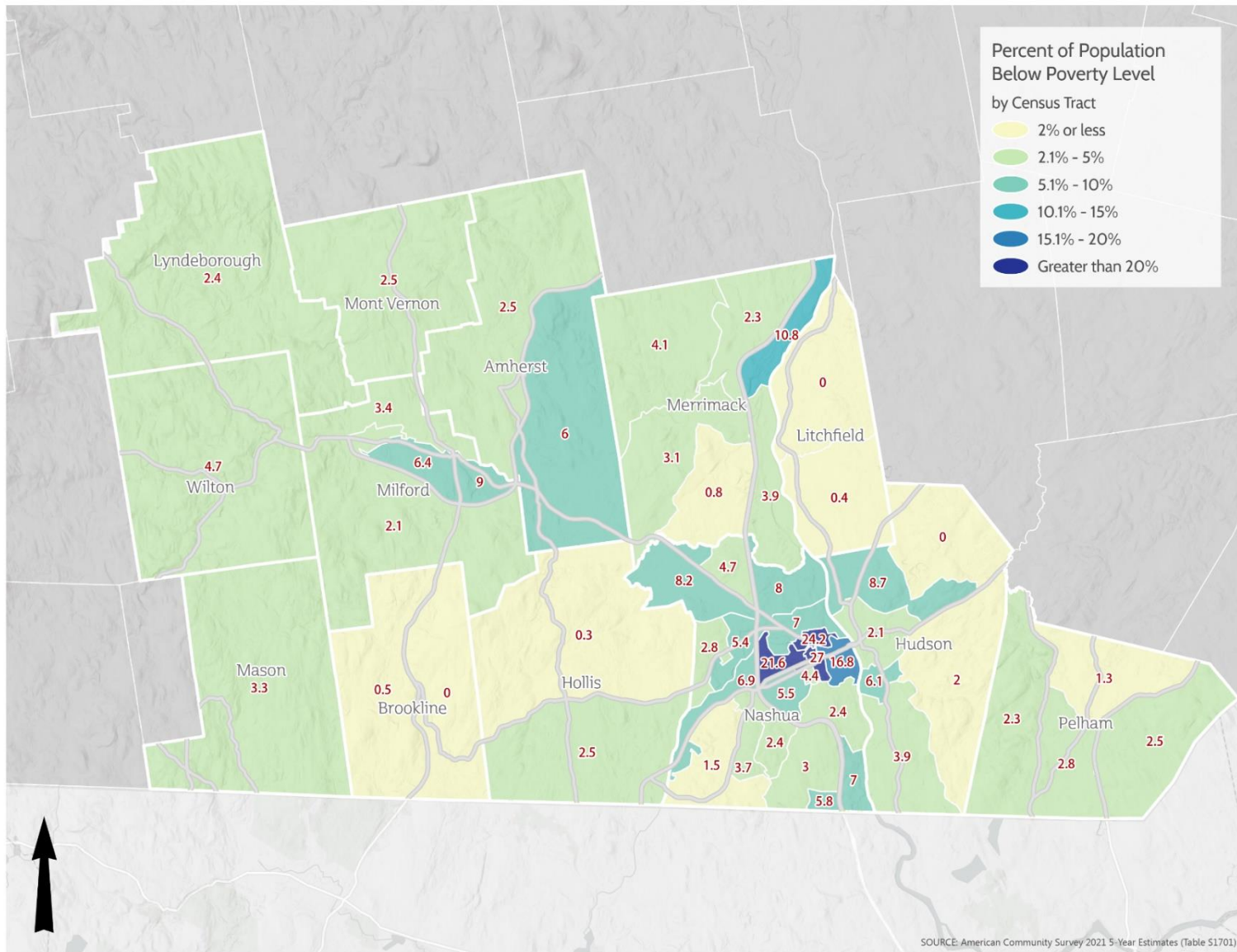
Map 4 on the previous page illustrates median household income across the NRPC region using American Community Survey estimates. The data reveal that the region is generally affluent, with most municipalities and census tracts reporting median household incomes well above state and national averages. However, significant variations exist between communities and within individual municipalities, particularly in the region's urban centers.

The highest median household incomes are found in several suburban and rural communities, including Brookline, Amherst, Mont Vernon, Hollis, Litchfield, Merrimack, and portions of Hudson, where many census tracts report median household incomes exceeding \$150,000 annually. Brookline and Amherst contain some of the region's wealthiest neighborhoods, with median household incomes approaching or exceeding \$170,000. These communities are characterized by high rates of homeownership, larger residential lots, and strong access to regional employment centers.

In contrast, lower median household incomes are concentrated primarily within portions of Nashua and Milford. Several census tracts in central Nashua report median household incomes below \$75,000, with a few tracts falling below \$50,000. These lower-income areas generally correspond to older urban neighborhoods with a greater share of rental housing, multifamily development, and economically diverse populations. Milford also contains a small area with median household income levels below surrounding neighborhoods.

The map highlights a clear spatial relationship between income and development patterns within the NRPC region. Higher-income households tend to be concentrated in suburban and rural communities, while lower-income households are more prevalent in the urban core of Nashua. Despite these differences, most areas of the region maintain relatively high household incomes, reflecting the strong regional economy, access to employment opportunities in southern New Hampshire and the Greater Boston area, and the overall economic prosperity that characterizes much of the Nashua region. The income disparities shown on the map underscore the importance of policies that promote housing affordability, economic opportunity, workforce development, and equitable access to services across all communities in the region.

Map 5: Poverty Levels in the NRPC Region, by Census Tract



Map 5 on the previous page illustrates the percentage of the population living below the federal poverty level across the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region based on American Community Survey data. In a pattern similar to the distribution of median income levels, the map reveals that poverty is generally concentrated in the region's urban centers, particularly within portions of Nashua, while most suburban and rural communities exhibit relatively low poverty rates.

The highest poverty rates are found in several census tracts in central Nashua, where more than 20 percent of residents live below the poverty level. Adjacent neighborhoods in Nashua and parts of the surrounding urbanized area display poverty rates ranging from 10 to 20 percent, indicating pockets of economic hardship within the region's largest city. These areas often correspond to older residential neighborhoods, concentrations of rental housing, and locations with greater socioeconomic diversity.

Outside of Nashua, poverty rates are generally lower. Most census tracts in Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Litchfield, Pelham, Lyndeborough, Mason, Mont Vernon, and Wilton report poverty rates below 5 percent, reflecting relatively high household incomes and stable economic conditions. Merrimack, Milford, and Hudson contain several tracts with moderate poverty rates between 5 and 10 percent, although these communities also include areas with very low levels of poverty. Notably, some census tracts in Brookline, Hollis, and Litchfield report poverty rates near or below 1 percent.

Overall, the map demonstrates that poverty within the NRPC region is not evenly distributed but is concentrated in specific neighborhoods, particularly within Nashua's urban core. While the region generally enjoys low poverty levels compared to many metropolitan areas, the presence of concentrated poverty highlights the need for targeted investments in affordable housing, workforce development, transportation access, social services, and economic opportunity to ensure that all residents can participate in the region's prosperity.



Monahan Manor, pictured above, is a recently completed Nashua Housing Authority development dedicated primarily toward low and very low-income families.

Demographic Goals and Implementation Strategies

The Demographic Profile chapter of the Regional Plan is primarily an inventory of demographic conditions rather than a policy chapter; however, it does identify several important implications for future planning. Overall, NRPC Region will continue to experience steady but moderate population growth through 2050, adding approximately 24,400 residents (an 11.2% increase). While growth is expected to continue in every municipality, the pace will be slower than in previous decades, requiring communities to plan thoughtfully for future housing, transportation, public services, and economic development needs rather than rapid expansion.



Among the most significant findings is that the region's population is aging rapidly. The increase in median age across nearly every municipality suggests a growing need for:

- Additional senior-friendly housing.
- Expanded healthcare and supportive services.
- Transportation options that accommodate older adults.
- More accessible public buildings and infrastructure.
- Age-friendly community planning that allows residents to remain in their communities as they grow older.

Though the aging of the population is a national trend, New Hampshire ranks as the nation's second oldest state suggesting that there is room to attract younger residents and efforts to retain younger people should also be stressed. The chapter also notes that the aging population, combined with declining numbers of school-aged children will likely result in continued declines in school enrollment, especially in traditional public schools. Communities should prepare for decisions regarding school consolidation, facility reuse, or potential school closures while balancing educational quality and municipal costs.

Population growth and development patterns indicate that future investment should continue to focus on areas already served by transportation infrastructure, public water, and sewer systems. Growth will remain concentrated primarily in and around Nashua and along major transportation corridors such as 101A, DW Highway and 3A. Communities in the western and northern parts of the region will likely retain their

rural character through lower-density development and continued conservation of open space.

The demographic profile also concludes that the region is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, particularly within Nashua. This increasing diversity has important implications for housing, education, transportation, workforce development, public services, and community inclusion. Local governments and service providers should continue planning for a broader range of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic needs.

Although the region is generally affluent, there are significant differences in household income and poverty between communities. To address these disparities, communities should consider policies and investments that:

- Promote housing affordability.
- Expand workforce development and economic opportunity.
- Improve equitable access to public services.
- Support transportation connections to employment.
- Target affordable housing and social service investments in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of poverty, particularly in Nashua.

Expanding housing affordability may also help attract and retain younger residents and families.

Overall, NRPC Region remains a prosperous and attractive area with continued population growth, a strong economy, and a high quality of life. However, demographic changes—including an aging population, increasing diversity, moderate long-term growth, and localized income disparities—will require coordinated regional planning. Future planning efforts should emphasize housing choice, accessible infrastructure, transportation improvements, workforce development, equitable public services, and sustainable growth management to maintain the region’s quality of life while meeting the needs of changing populations.



NRPC Regional Plan - Land Use



Hollis Center © Seth Dewey Photography

Chapter V, Natural Resources, focuses on the natural features of the land. This chapter addresses the ways in which people use and shape the land. To a great extent, land use is the core of local planning, and therefore, the subject is central to the Regional Plan. The

location, extent, and viability of homes, businesses and industries, farms and conservation land and their relationship to each other directly affect property values, the tax base, community character, and future development potential. Similarly, proximity of existing land uses to the transportation network and to community facilities such as schools, fire stations and parks influence our ability to provide efficient and effective public services.

The nature and intensity of land uses in the NRPC Region have changed dramatically over the last 50 years, as evidenced by the extent of residential development and expansion of commercial and industrial areas. While growth is expected to continue, economic and social changes over the last decade have led to a significantly slower pace of development than in prior decades. If the past is a guide, the highest demand for new development will be in the residential sector while the expansion of commercial and industrial areas will likely remain more or less stable.

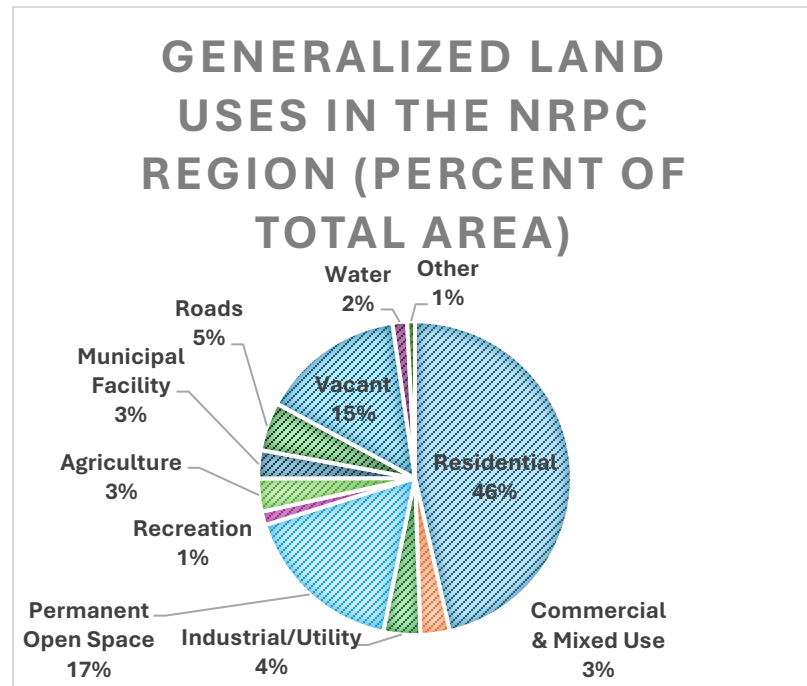
Existing Conditions

Currently, over 100,000 acres or nearly half (46%) of the total land area of the region is in some form of residential use. The eastern part of the region supports more urban and suburban residential areas while the communities in the western part of the region are more rural with larger lot sizes and lower densities. Single-family housing occupies approximately 41% of the region's total land area.

In almost every local Master Plan, communities emphasize the preservation of the area's rural character as a top priority. Conservation and the preservation of open space are also consistently a top priority. Currently, approximately 17% of the region (37,380 acres) is designated as permanent open space and approximately 3% of the region's land use is being used agriculturally (7,629 acres). An additional 1% of the total land area is devoted to recreation, a category that includes public parks as well as private facilities such as golf courses.

Not surprisingly, the largest share of commercial and industrial uses in the region are located in Nashua. Industrial uses in Nashua are concentrated primarily in the northwestern corner of the city south of the 101A corridor, near Exit 5 and in south Nashua. Large concentrations of industrial uses are also found along the DW Highway corridor in southeastern Merrimack, in south Hudson along the Lowell Road corridor and northwestern Milford. The most notable industrial expansions in the region in recent years include the conversion of 375 acres of the former Green Meadows golf course in Hudson to a new Logistics Center for Target (currently under construction), development of a 500,000 sq ft manufacturing and logistics center for the firm Life is Good, also in Hudson, and redevelopment of a former industrial site in Nashua into a 180,000-square-foot manufacturing facility for Can-One USA. Other expansions include two new distribution facilities in Merrimack. These increases are offset in part, by the redevelopment of former industrial sites, most notably in Nashua, to residential and other uses. Industrial uses occupy about 3.8% of the region's overall area.

Retail commercial development is concentrated most heavily in southeastern Nashua along the D.W. Highway corridor north of the Massachusetts border; an area that includes the Pheasant Lane Mall (by far the region's largest mall), several smaller shopping centers and big box stores. Other major retail concentrations are found along the 101A corridor in Nashua, Merrimack, and Amherst, along DW Highway in Merrimack and along Lowell Road and Derry Street in Hudson. The region's second largest mall, the Merrimack Premium Outlets, is located at Exit 10 in Merrimack. Commercial and mixed uses account for approximately 3% of the region.

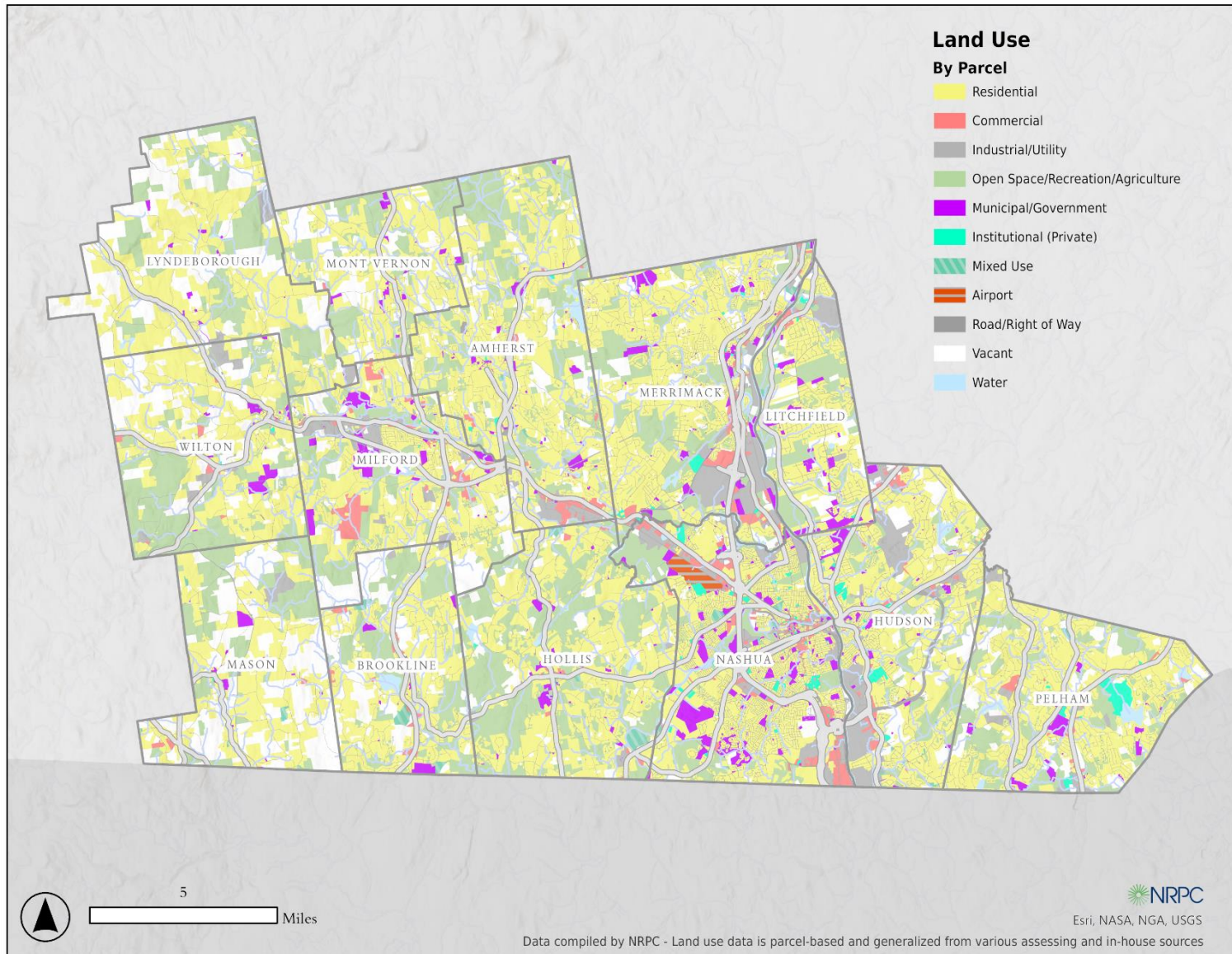


Generalized Land Use in the NRPC Region		
Residential	102,813	46.4%
Commercial & Mixed Use	6,692	3.0%
Industrial/Utility	8,419	3.8%
Permanent Open Space	37,380	16.9%
Recreation	3,133	1.4%
Agriculture	7,629	3.4%
Municipal, School, Other Government	6,464	2.9%
Roads	11,184	5.0%
Vacant	32,815	14.8%
Water	3,243	1.5%
Other	1,757	0.8%
Total	221,528	100.0%

Source: NRPC GIS Database & Municipal Assessing Data

*Other = Institutional (0.6%) and Airports (0.2%)

Map 1: Generalized Land Use in the NRPC Region



Office space, which is classified a commercial use, is concentrated primarily along the 101A corridor in Nashua, south Nashua and in south Hudson. The largest concentrations of offices are single-user campuses such as 1.2 million square foot Fidelity campus which sits on about 550 acres in Merrimack or the 627,357 sq. ft. BAE campus on an 80-acre site on Spitbrook road in south Nashua.



It is worth noting that water only covers 1.5% of our region. The Nashua region does not have any ocean coastline or large lakes. Surface water is comprised of smaller lakes, ponds, rivers, and brooks. The NRPC region has the least amount of surface waters of the nine regional planning regions. Major Rivers include the Merrimack River, Nashua River, and Souhegan River. Other major bodies of water include Little

Island Pond in Pelham, Robinson Pond in Hudson, Silver Lake in Hollis, Potanipo Pond in Brookline, Baboosic Lake in Amherst/ Merrimack, and Merrimack's Lake Naticook pictured below.

What Changed Since 2014?

In the past fifteen years, the eastern part of the region has experienced significant development, with a lot of land converting to urban development (as shown on Map 1). Merrimack, Hudson, Pelham, and Litchfield experienced the largest amount of development throughout large positions of their municipal boundaries. Nashua also underwent significant development throughout the city; however, there was a large concentration of urban development in the northern portion of the city as well as the southern portion of the city near the Massachusetts border. Most development activity in central areas of Nashua has been redevelopment of previously improved sites. Amherst saw some development in the southern part of town, especially near the Brookline border, as well as the Milford border. Milford experienced significant development in the northern part of town and near the Amherst border. Hollis saw growth as well in the central area of the municipality and along its border with Nashua. The more rural communities of Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, Wilton, and Mason experienced little to no urban development over the past 15 years.

Noteworthy changes between the 2014 Regional Plan and the 2026 Regional Plan:

- Residential uses increased from 44% to 46% of the region's land area. This is approximately 102,813 acres and stays on theme with residential being the most common use in the NRPC region.
- Recreation and open space increased from 15% in 2014 to 18% in 2026. Many communities prioritize conservation and preservation of open space in their master plans, and it also emerged as a common theme in outreach conducted for this plan update.
- Industrial uses stayed roughly the same, occupying around 3% of the region's land area in both 2014 and 2026.
- Commercial and Mixed-Uses stayed roughly the same, occupying about 3% of the region's land area in both 2014 and 2026.
- Agricultural uses stayed roughly the same, occupying about 3% of the region's land area in both 2014 and 2016.
- Vacant land decreased from 25% to 15% of the total area. There are about 32,815 acres of vacant land left in the region.

Future Land Use Considerations

What the Local Master Plans Say

Common goals throughout the 13 communities in the NRPC region:

- Preserve rural character.
- Expand on pedestrian-friendly/walkable areas.

- Protect natural resources and open space.
- Foster a sense of community.
- Support small businesses and economic development.
- Preserve historical and cultural resources.
- Preserve Agriculture
- Sustainability

Working from Home & Changing Development Patterns

The Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020-2022 dramatically changed how people work with the largescale introduction of work-from-home capabilities and hybrid work schedules. As a result, where and how development happens has been altered significantly. Daily commuting distance became less important, and people are less likely to prioritize proximity to employment when deciding where to live. Potential long-term impacts include growth spreading farther from highways and employment centers, and more residential demand and expansion in rural, low-density areas. Large-lot subdivisions may become more frequent in areas that previously had a weaker housing demand, and there could be additional pressure to convert forests and farmland into housing. The expansion of Broadband availability in rural areas, also in part a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, further promotes this pattern as more people can work from anywhere. Instead of largely functioning as a bedroom community for the Greater Boston area, southern New Hampshire and the NRPC region could see more residential growth and lifestyle-inspired development. These same trends have also reduced the

demand for office space, and the growth of on-line shopping has reduced demand for retail space. As a result, while more residential development is anticipated, significant expansion of commercial areas is unlikely.

Adaptive Re-Use & Mixed Use

Larger daytime populations in our communities create stronger demand for local recreational opportunities and other amenities while also helping to support local businesses. Balancing new development with conservation and preservation of natural and agricultural areas, a major priority for the NRPC region's residents, requires a more thoughtfully planned approach.

Many communities in the Region have embraced repurposing of existing structures like historic mills and former office buildings to create additional residential and commercial opportunities. Not only does this strategy preserve historical character and cultural identity, but it can also help prevent sprawling development and reduce the loss of open space. An increased emphasis on mixed-use development is helpful in creating walkable areas that support local economies while also broadening housing options. In a region where historic assets and village-scale development patterns are defining features, aligning adaptive re-use with mixed-use planning can support major regional goals while also reinforcing the distinct sense of the community.

Mixed-use development with commercial space on the first floor and residential space on the upper floors has long been a

feature of downtown Nashua, Milford, and Wilton, though its rarely found in new developments. In Nashua, several historic mill buildings have been converted to housing including Clocktower Place, the Cotton Mill and most recently, the Henry Hanger building. The Town of Wilton also just adopted an adaptive re-use zoning overlay district for their downtown during their 2026 Town Meeting. Litchfield recently adopted a Mixed Use Village Development option for new development in its Northern Commercial Zone. The first development under the new ordinance, Colby Farm, features 86 townhouse style rental units, a daycare center and a 10,000 square foot multi-tenant commercial building.



Traditional Mixed Buildings in Downtown Milford

Brownfields



View of proposed redevelopment of the Mohawk Tannery Brownfields site in Nashua

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a Brownfield as a property where the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of petroleum or hazardous substances. It is estimated there are more than 100 Brownfields in the Region. Brownfields range from large former industrial sites to small former gas stations or dry cleaners. They also often include junkyards and scrapyards that are found throughout the region. The redevelopment of Brownfields into viable new uses, including housing brings multiple benefits including remediation of threats to human health, increased tax base and economic activity and reduced pressure on undeveloped forestland and farmland (green fields). Large brownfields sites planned for redevelopment into housing include the Nimco

site in the Nashua Millyard and Nashua's Mohawk Tannery site. Site remediation and redevelopment are currently underway. When complete, the project will include 550 units of homeownership and rental housing, at least 20% of which will be reserved for low-income households. A rendering of the development is depicted to the left.

Resource Management

Water quality and supply are a primary concern among residents in the NRPC region. It is imperative to safeguard water quality as the region develops, especially in aquifer and wetland areas through proactive regulation and planning. Wetlands, shoreland protection, aquifer and watershed protection zoning overlays can provide added protection to manage development in environmentally sensitive areas. Regulations designed to minimize stormwater runoff are also key in protecting the water quality in rivers, lakes, and drinking water supplies. Another growing area of concern is the protection of priority wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors. Areas such as these can be identified (see chapter 6) and targeted for acquisition.

Most communities do not have the resources to acquire every priority parcel. Conversation, however, can also be achieved through local land use regulations. For example, reducing urban sprawl and focusing development in existing urban areas can be effective at reducing fragmented development. Open space subdivisions/cluster developments are also a useful tool. By integrating land conservation tools with strategic planning, NRPC communities can balance growth

with environmental stewardship while maintaining the natural landscapes that contribute to the region's high quality of life.



Large Wetland in Monson Center (Hollis/Milford)

Agriculture

Agriculture has played an influential role in New Hampshire's cultural and economic history. Maintaining farmland and supporting agriculture in local regulations will directly support the common goals of preserving rural character and community heritage. The need for additional residential development, however, could potentially be seen as conflicting with farmland preservation. Given that 14.8% of the Region is classified as "vacant" land while farmland comprises only 3.4% of the Region's total area, it is possible to meet our housing development goals while preserving active farmland.



Pomeroy Dairy in Mont Vernon

Regional Discussion

Regional coordination offers significant benefits by aligning local decisions with broader economic, environmental, and infrastructure systems that do not stop at town lines, especially when it comes to protecting shared resources like watersheds and wildlife corridors. Coordinated land use planning helps prevent fragmented growth patterns, reduces duplication of services, and ensures more efficient use of public investments. By working together, the NRPC communities can better manage growth pressures, share data and resources, and implement consistent zoning and

development standards that support housing availability, economic development, and environmental protection. This collaborative approach also strengthens long-term resilience, enabling communities to address current regional challenges like lack of housing, traffic congestion, and climate impacts in a more strategic and unified manner.

Land Use Goals & Implementation Strategies

Permanent Open Space & Protected Land

Whether for purposes of preserving rural character, protecting natural resources or for access to outdoor recreation, the preservation of open space is one of the most important goals of every community in the region. As noted previously, permanently protected open space comprises about 17% of the Region's total land area. Many protected properties are held as conservation land under municipal ownership. Some of the largest, however, are privately owned by groups such as the Beaver Brook Association, The Nature Conservancy, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and other organizations. Protected lands often include trails that are open to the public and can also include actively used farm and forest lands in addition to protected wildlife habitat.

To advance open space protection, the Region's communities are encouraged to work with nonprofit conservation partners and private property owners to increase the percentage of

protected open space in the region from 17% to 20% by 2035; an increase of 6,867 acres. In addition, approximately additional 350 acres of land dedicated to active recreation such as ballfields, playgrounds and other similar facilities is needed to meet accommodate anticipated population growth.



Merriam Cutter Trail in Pelham

Permanent protection can be accomplished through fee acquisition, conservation easements, covenants, and other means. This goal aligns with the goals of Chapter 4, Natural Resources, which describes priority areas for land conservation. Increasing protected land also aligns with the goals of Chapter 3, Economic Development, by helping to enhance quality of place and access to outdoor recreational amenities to attract and retain our workforce. Most

communities currently dedicate all or a portion of land use change tax revenues (fees that are assessed to property owners when land that is taken out of current use) to their Conservation Commissions which can be used for acquisition. Additional funding sources include New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), NH Moose Plate Program, Land and Water Conservation funds, and other grant programs.

In addition to protecting land through some form of acquisition, strategies for protecting open space can also include encouraging Open Space Developments, also known as Conservation Subdivisions or Cluster Developments that allow a portion of a site to be preserved as open space within a development with little or no increase in overall density.

Residential Land

To meet the housing development targets identified in the 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (See Chapter 9 – Housing), over 8,000 additional housing units will need to be developed by 2035. Inevitably, the amount of land devoted to residential uses in the Region will increase from 46.4% of the Region's total land area in 2025 to over 50% while the amount of vacant land will decrease. As previously noted, a significant number of needed housing units will be provided through the redevelopment of vacant commercial sites, office to residential conversions and redevelopment of Brownfields sites. To accommodate additional residential development while also increasing conservation land, residential growth should be targeted to areas most suitable to absorb new development

and increased opportunities for high-density housing, including multi-family housing will be required.



Corning Farm, a recent Multi-family Townhouse Development in Litchfield

Recommended strategies are outlined below.

- Residential development, especially at higher densities, should be targeted primarily toward areas in close proximity to major transportation corridors, large employment centers and areas served by public water and sewer.
- Encourage higher density housing in and around existing downtown and town center areas. This should include

providing opportunities for in-fill development at densities consistent with existing land use patterns.

- Provide realistic opportunities for multi-family development in or adjacent to existing commercial districts either as stand-alone projects or as part of mixed-use developments.



A single family in-fill house under construction in a historic Nashua neighborhood.

Commercial and Industrial Land

Chapter 3, Economic Development includes a detailed discussion of employment trends and industry sectors. The importance of manufacturing in particular is stressed. Though manufacturing employment has declined, it remains critical to the Region's economy due to the sector's relatively high wages and economic multiplier effects. The demand for retail and office space has declined due to the impacts of on-line

shopping and the growth of remote and hybrid work arrangements, respectively. In some communities such as Nashua and Merrimack, vacant or underutilized office space has been converted to multi-family residential uses. That trend is likely to continue. In some cases, vacant retail space and outmoded industrial space are being converted to personal service uses, fitness facilities, pet care facilities, and other similar uses. Overall, total acreage of commercial and industrial uses is likely to remain stable with expansions off-set by conversions to residential, municipal, or institutional uses. To address changes in demand for commercial and industrial uses, the following recommendations are offered.



A 500,000 sq. ft. Manufacturing/Distribution Center for Life is Good recently completed in Hudson. The site has public water, sewer, and good highway access.

- Preserve viable industrially zoned land for industrial uses wherever possible. A particular emphasis should be placed on keeping industrial land and buildings served by public water sewer with good highway access in industrial zoning use.
- Allow greater flexibility for mixed commercial/industrial uses in older less viable industrial areas as well as the conversion of older mill buildings to residential uses where possible.
- Permit multi-family residential and mixed residential/commercial uses in commercial and office districts wherever possible.
- Streamline the process for changes of use between retail, personal and professional service, and office uses in existing commercial zoning districts.
- Review permitted uses in commercial and industrial zoning districts to ensure that contemporary uses are addressed. Definitions should also be reviewed to ensure that contemporary uses are defined and archaic terms are removed.

Agricultural Lands

Active agricultural uses encompass only 7,629 acres of land in the NRPC Region or 3.4% of the Region's total land area. This figure does not include land in active forest management. Though agricultural uses do not encompass a large area, they are essential to maintaining the rural New England Character of the Region. The Region's farms are an important source of local produce and nursery products that are increasingly

valued by residents. Further, many farms offer farmstands, pick-your-own opportunities for produce such as apples and strawberries, and other experiential activities such as corn mazes, hayrides, and event venues. Preserving active agricultural land is especially challenging since it cannot be accomplished simply through acquisition; it requires people willing to farm the land. There are strategies for preserving active farmland, however, that communities and implement as described below.

- Adopt farm-friendly land use regulations including noise ordinance exemptions for farming activities, expedited site plan reviews, and simpler application processes for farm buildings.
- Permit farmstands, seasonal food and beverage stands, and agribusiness and agritourism uses such as event venues and facilities for overnight stays where possible.
- Explore acquisition of farmland or acquisition of conservation easements in partnership with area farmers to conserve the land while keeping it in active agricultural use. An example includes the Litchfield Conservation Commission's recent purchase of Durocher Farm which is actively farmed by nearby McQuesten Farm and Alvirne High School's CTE Agricultural program.

NRPC Regional Plan - Economic Development

The Nashua Region enjoys a vibrant and diverse economy with a thriving small business network and several large employers in key industries such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and financial services. Data markers confirm a healthy economic environment. A well-trained workforce, consistently low unemployment and poverty rates, strong health and well-being indicators, enviable built and natural environments, and comparatively low taxes contribute to making the region an attractive place to live and conduct business. The region also benefits considerably from its location within the Boston Metropolitan Area, one of the nation's strongest economies with its enviable concentration of life sciences, business and financial services, cultural offerings, and world-renowned education institutions and health care facilities. Proximity to

the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, Logan International Airport and the recreational opportunities of New England's mountains, lakes and beaches are additional attractions.

Despite its many advantages, the region also faces challenges. The labor force is aging and although New Hampshire and the region continue to experience net in-migration, especially from Massachusetts, the labor market remains tight as the state's unemployment rate is consistently below the national average. The growing shift to on-line shopping is impacting on the retail sector, which is the region's second largest employer and a key component of the tax base for many communities. The shift to remote work has reduced the demand for office space resulting in lower property values for another important component of the tax base in many communities as well.



Downtown Nashua © Seth Dewey Photography

These factors have had the effect of shifting a higher percentage of the tax burden to residential properties which have grown significantly in value in recent years; further exasperating already high housing costs. In addition to the high cost of housing of all types, low vacancy rates, and relatively low levels of new housing development limit growth of the workforce. Persistently high utility costs may also deter companies with significant energy needs from considering the region.

Like many parts of the country, the region's economy is changing, manufacturing employment, our largest employment sector, is contracting while health care and services jobs are growing. In an increasingly connected world, shifting geopolitics impacts trade relationships and supply chains. There are also cost impacts from tariffs and other market constraints. On the technology front, Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses both potential benefits and the possibility of job losses, particularly in traditionally "white collar" professions and automation impacts jobs in manufacturing and other industries. The region's businesses and community leaders cannot affect wider economic, technological, or geopolitical trends. It is important, however, that region positions itself to adapt to broader changes moving forward by fostering an economic environment that is entrepreneurial dynamic, and innovative.

To support an economy that is dynamic and innovative, the region's businesses and economic leaders should adopt strategies to spur business startup activity and innovation to

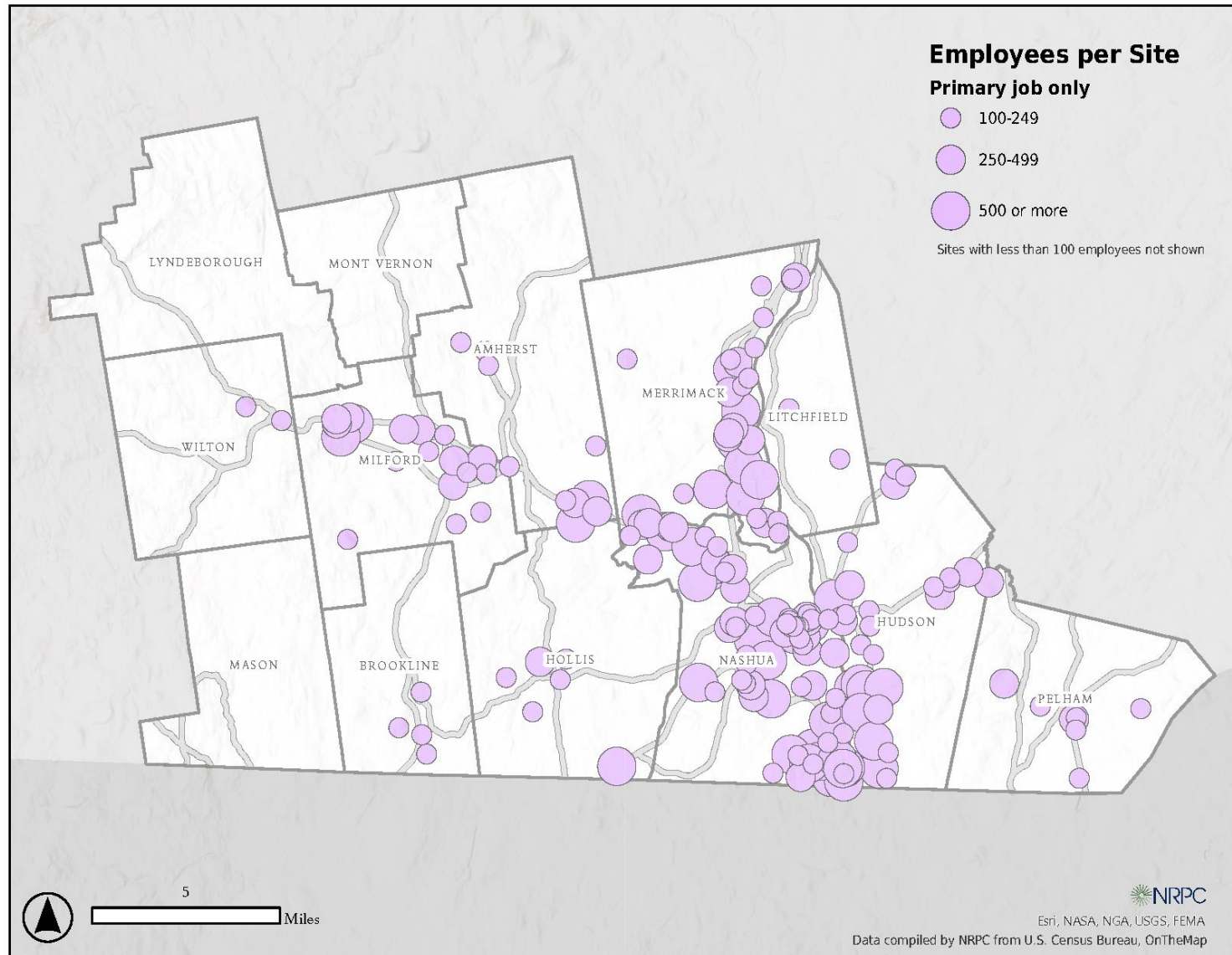
ensure that the region remains at the forefront of emerging trends in business and technology. The ReGen Valley tech Hub, an initiative centered around regenerative medicine (described in greater detail below), is an excellent example of a local initiative designed to drive growth of a highly innovative and advanced industry of national and international importance. Other industries that have expanded in the region include financial services, most notably through the growth of Fidelity Investment's Merrimack Campus, which helps to diversify and therefore strengthen our economy. Further, it is essential that the region remains an attractive and affordable place to live for all age groups, income levels, and family types. Workers are more mobile and more likely to base their relocation decisions on quality of life and livability characteristics than previous generations.

This chapter provides an overview of the region's economy followed by a series of specific goals and objectives and recommended strategies. Unless otherwise noted, the data referenced is sourced from the Labor Market Information Bureau, New Hampshire Employment Security.

Labor Force

The NRPC Region's total labor force in 2025 was just under 127,000 with the unemployment rate ranging between 3% and 4.1% over the course of the year with an average weekly wage of \$1,644. Map 1 on the following page depicts the largest concentrations of employment in the region.

Map 1 – Employment Concentrations



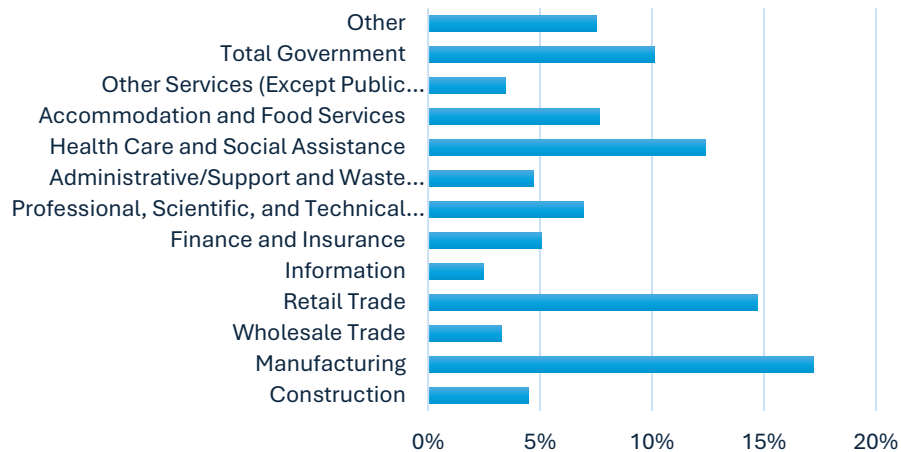
**Table 1: Average Annual Employment by Industry
NRPC Region - 2024**

Industry Title	Average Annual Establishments	Average Annual Employment	% of total Employment	Average Weekly Wage
Total Employment	5,885	97,806		\$1,615
Construction	657	4,374	4%	\$1,641
Manufacturing	339	16,828	17%	\$2,374
Wholesale Trade	376	3,186	3%	\$2,128
Retail Trade	784	14,409	15%	\$895
Information	94	2,435	2%	\$3,203
Finance and Insurance	233	4,970	5%	\$2,729
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	708	6,783	7%	\$2,760
Administrative/Support and Waste Management/Remediation Services	460	4,614	5%	\$1,345
Health Care and Social Assistance	578	12,120	12%	\$1,300
Accommodation and Food Services	450	7,489	8%	\$569
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	499	3,371	3%	\$893
Total Government	123	9,875	10%	\$1,359

Data Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). Data represent workers covered by unemployment insurance.
Prepared by: Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, New Hampshire Employment Security • 603-228-4124 • www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi

Table 1 on page 4 provides a breakdown of employment in the region by industry. Note that the figures in the table do not include certain self-employed individuals or unemployed workers. As can be seen in the table above, Manufacturing remains the largest employment sector in the region followed by Retail Trade and Healthcare and Social Assistance. Average weekly wages in manufacturing are significantly above overall average weekly wages and contribute greatly to the region's relatively high median household income. Average weekly wages in retail, on the other hand, are far below the overall average though this category tends

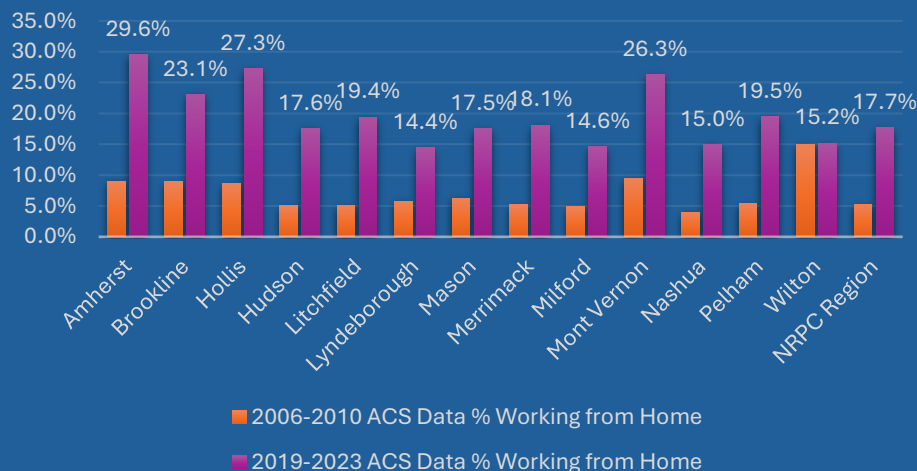
Employment by Industry



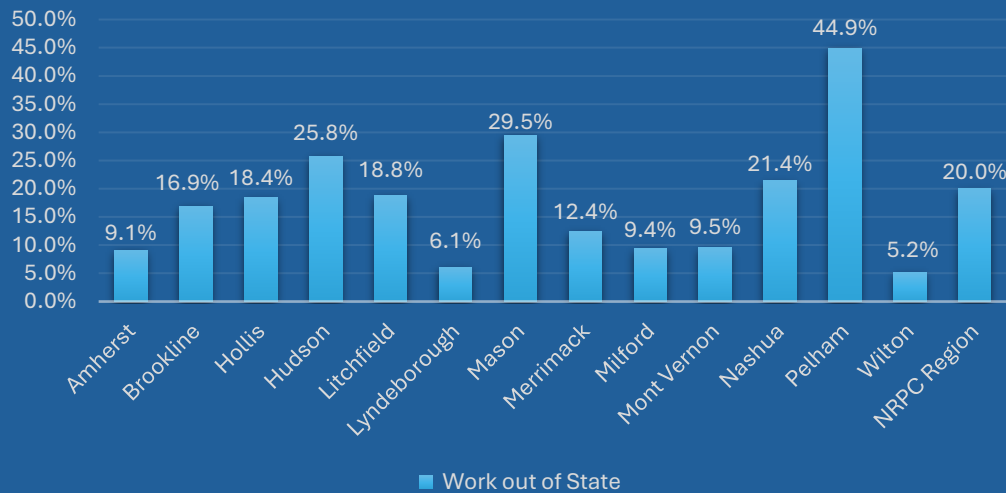
to include many part-time, younger, and transient workers. Healthcare and Social Assistance wages are also lower than the overall average in part because this category includes relatively high earners such as physicians and nurses as well as lower wage medical technicians and social workers.

The chart to the left illustrates employment by industry data shown in Table 1 on the prior page. A detailed description of the Region's workforce by place of employment can be found in the figures below and in Table 2. Employment patterns, and specifically commuting patterns, have shifted dramatically since the 2020-2021 Pandemic. As can be seen in the figure to the lower left, the percentage of people working from home jumped from just over 5% in the 2006-2010 ACS count to 17.7% in the most recent count. The largest percentages of people working from home are in the region's more affluent rural/suburban communities including Amherst (29.6%, Hollis at 27.3% and Mont Vernon at 26.3%. The economic implications of these changes are unclear although it does suggest that the region's labor force has a high degree of flexibility in where they work and choose to live.

% of Labor Force Working from Home



% of Labor Force Working out of State

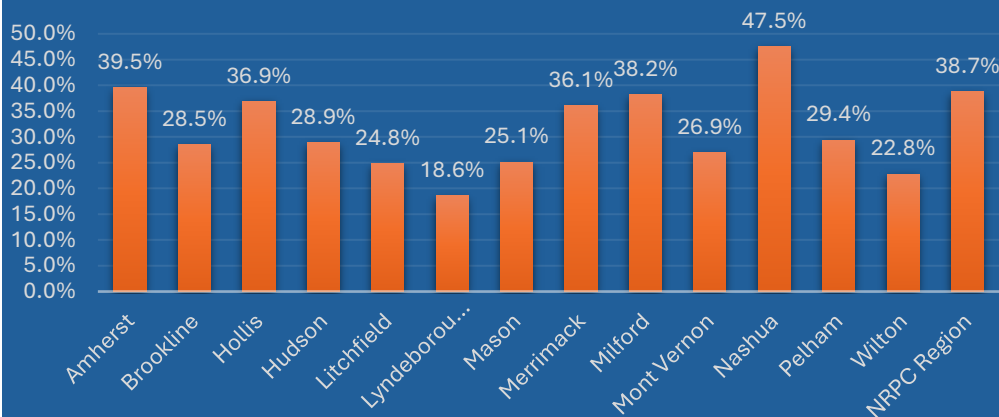


Changing commuting patterns have also had an impact on the percentage of the region's labor force working out of state which declined from just over 25% in 2014 to 20% in 2024. There is considerable variation town by town, however, as can be seen in the figure to the right. Pelham has by far the highest share of workers commuting out of state at 44.9%, likely due to its location on the Massachusetts border and proximity to I-93. Wilton has the smallest percentage at only 5.2%.

Given the region's proximity to the Boston Metro area and to a lesser extent, Manchester, a surprisingly high 38.7% of the region's labor force work within the communities in which they live. Note that this does include people who work from home. Not surprisingly, Nashua has the highest percentage of its labor force working within the City at 47.5% given its substantial concentration of employment centers. Amherst has the second highest percentage at 39.5; undoubtedly due to its high percentage of its labor force working from home (29.6%). Lyndeborough, which has a relatively small percentage of its labor force working from home and no large employment centers has the smallest percentage of its labor force working within the community at 18.6% followed by Wilton at 22.8%.

Overall, 61.3% of the region's labor force commute

% of Labor Force Working in own Community



to a workplace outside of their own community and 41.3% commute to a workplace within the state, primarily to destinations within the region. Providing more opportunities for people to work within the region is an important strategy for strengthening our workforce and increasing the region's competitiveness.

Table 2: Commuting Patterns

Town/City	Workers 16 yrs old+	Drove Alone	Carpooled	Public Transport	Walked	Other	Worked At Home	Mean Travel Time	Work in Community	Work in other NH Community	Work out of State
Amherst	5,947	61.8%	6.0%	0.0%	0.9%	1.7%	29.6%	30.7 mins	39.5%	51.4%	9.1%
Brookline	3,424	70.9%	4.4%	0.1%	0.4%	1.1%	23.1%	31.4 mins	28.5%	54.6%	16.9%
Hollis	4,568	67.2%	3.6%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	27.3%	28.3 mins	36.9%	44.7%	18.4%
Hudson	14,497	75.8%	5.2%	0.9%	0.3%	0.2%	17.6%	31.1 mins	28.9%	45.3%	25.8%
Litchfield	4,763	73.9%	4.9%	0.0%	0.8%	0.9%	19.4%	30.2 mins	24.8%	56.4%	18.8%
Lyndeborough	821	79.8%	4.6%	0.0%	1.0%	0.2%	14.4%	37.7 mins	18.6%	75.3%	6.1%
Mason	750	78.9%	2.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	17.5%	39.6 mins	25.1%	45.4%	29.5%
Merrimack	15,574	72.9%	5.9%	0.2%	0.8%	2.0%	18.1%	26.7 mins	36.1%	51.5%	12.4%
Milford	9,061	76.4%	6.5%	0.6%	1.8%	0.2%	14.6%	28.3 mins	38.2%	52.4%	9.4%
Mont Vernon	1,276	69.5%	2.8%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	26.3%	32.6 mins	26.9%	63.6%	9.5%
Nashua	50,532	72.0%	8.9%	1.3%	1.7%	1.2%	15.0%	25.3 mins	47.5%	31.1%	21.4%
Pelham	8,017	73.6%	4.9%	0.6%	0.8%	0.6%	19.5%	30.8 mins	29.4%	25.7%	44.9%
Wilton	2,194	80.3%	3.1%	0.0%	0.9%	0.5%	15.2%	30 mins	22.8%	72.0%	5.2%
NRPC Region	121,424	73.3%	4.9%	0.5%	0.8%	0.8%	17.7%	28.7mins	38.7%	41.3%	20.0%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS 2019-2023)

Key Industries

Manufacturing



Located in the heart of the American Industrial Revolution, manufacturing in the region dates back to the textile mills that began emerging along the Merrimack, Nashua, and Souhegan Rivers in the early 1800s. The largest of these was Nashua Manufacturing. A portion of the historic Nashua Millyard is pictured below. Though manufacturing jobs have declined in recent years, the sector remains a cornerstone of the region's economy. According to Colliers' Q4 2025 Industrial Market Report for New Hampshire, the Nashua area had the largest concentration of industrial space in the state at almost 21

million square feet with an average vacancy rate of 8.3% which is higher than state average of 5.8%. At the end of 2025, the region also had almost 3.2 million sq. ft. of additional industrial space under construction, a figure more than twice that of any other submarket in New Hampshire. Almost half of that total is the 1.4 million sq. ft. Target distribution center under construction in Hudson. The region's average lease rate of \$11.02 per square foot (NNN) is also slightly lower than the state average of \$11.26. It should be noted that the category of industrial space includes manufacturing at 3.2 million sq. ft., Flex/R&D space at 8.3 million sq. ft., and warehousing at about 9.3 million sq. ft. Though warehousing space is the largest in terms of square footage, as an employment sector, it employs far fewer people than manufacturing.

There were 339 manufacturing establishments in the region in 2024 with a total workforce of 16,828. Importantly, average weekly wages in manufacturing are among the highest of any occupational category at \$2,374. In contrast, the region's second largest employment category, retail trade with 14,409 employees (2024), had an average weekly wage of only \$895. In addition to relatively high pay, manufacturing is vital to the region's economy because it is a value-added activity that generates high economic output and keeps more wealth circulating locally than retail or service based industries. Manufacturing industries also tend to have relatively high economic multiplier effects because they purchase inputs from local suppliers, use local transportation and utilities, and their workers spend earnings in nearby retail, housing, and service sectors which thereby support many additional jobs and



businesses. Importantly, many manufacturing industries, including the region's largest, produce goods for national and global markets which brings outside money into the region which is essential for maintaining a strong local economy. Several of the region's largest manufacturers are highlighted on the following pages. Though manufacturing remains the largest employment sector in the region, employment in the critical sector has declined from a high of 32,400 in 2000 to just under 17,000 today.

Part of the historic Nashua Manufacturing facility in Nashua is pictured on the proceeding page. Historic Mills in Milford are pictured to the left. Both have been converted to housing.

BAE Systems

BAE Systems Inc. is the US subsidiary of London-based multi-national aerospace and defense contracting firm, BAE Systems PLC.

The company's Electronic Systems division is headquartered in Nashua. The firm focuses primarily on defense, commercial electronics, flight controls, electronic warfare, surveillance, and microelectronics. With approximately 6,500 employees in New Hampshire, BAE is the region's largest employer and the largest manufacturer in the state with facilities on Spit Brook Road and on Canal Street in Nashua and additional facilities in Hudson, Merrimack, and Manchester. An economic anchor in the region, the company contributes hundreds of millions annually to the economy, driven largely by relatively high pay and subcontracts with several local suppliers. BAE also attracts federal investment, such as recent CHIPS Act funding to



modernize its Nashua micro-electronics facility and receives substantial defense contracts that bolster the broader regional



defense industry. These activities support high-skill job creation, and strengthen local supply chains, making BAE a key contributor to the region's economy. Other significant defense and aerospace related manufacturing industries include Benchmark Electronics Inc. ARC Technology Solutions in Nashua, Elbit Systems of America (HiARC) in Merrimack and Mercury Systems in Hudson.

Hitchiner Manufacturing

Hitchiner is a well-established precision metal casting company. As described on its website, the company was founded in 1946 and has grown into one of the region's most prominent manufacturers, specializing in high-volume, complex thin-wall investment castings and fully-finished casting-based components for major industries including automotive, aerospace, and defense. Headquartered on Elm Street in Milford, the company is known for its innovative casting technology, which allows it to produce lightweight, high-performance parts with exceptional precision and efficiency. Over the decades, Hitchiner has expanded both technologically and physically, having recently opened a new state-of-the-art facility (pictured to the left) to support its growing operations. Hitchiner is the region's second largest manufacturing employer and a significant contributor to the regional economy. An estimated 637 employees work at the Milford plant.

Recent additions to manufacturing in the region include Can One USA, an aluminum beverage can manufacturer that recently opened the only aluminum can production facility in

New England in Nashua. The company employs over 100 people producing up to 1.5 million 12 oz and 16 oz cans per day for craft brewers, soft drink makers, and other beverage brands at its Burke Street plant. The firm *Life is Good* has recently made a big investment in Hudson with the opening of a new 500,000-square-foot production and fulfillment facility known as *The Factory*, planned to coincide with the company's 30th anniversary and marking a significant expansion of its operations in the region. Located adjacent to the Sagamore Business Park, the facility prints, finishes, warehouses, and ships thousands of custom apparel items daily. Though the company deploys around 100 robots that help automate order fulfillment, approximately 150 people work at the site. South of the Sagamore Business Park, a massive 1.4 million square foot distribution center for Target is currently under construction, by far the largest development project in the region. Though it is uncertain how many people will be employed at the site when it is completed in 2029, estimates indicate a potential for about 1,400 jobs.

Anheuser-Busch

Though the region is benefiting from new industries and the expansion of existing industries, the region has also experienced losses. In the fall of 2025, Anheuser-Busch announced that it will close its Merrimack facility in early 2026, ending more than 50 years of operations at the site. The Anheuser-Busch brewery in Merrimack was built to serve the Northeast market and support production of its flagship brands like Budweiser and Bud Light. Over the decades, the



roughly one million square foot facility grew into a community landmark and significant local employer. The facility included hospitality spaces for tours, tastings, and events as well as stables and paddocks for the famous Budweiser Clydesdales. Once a feature of local parades and events, the Clydesdales were relocated in 2018. Anheuser-Busch was also instrumental in the development of Merrimack's Wastewater treatment plant and invested heavily in improvements to the system.

At its peak, the Merrimack facility employed about 500 people. Employment totals declined over the years due to efficiency changes and automation, though the plant's closure will nevertheless result in a loss of 125 full-time workers. The shutdown is expected to have a notable economic impact on Merrimack, affecting local employment, tax revenues, and ancillary economic activity tied to the facility. If possible, the site should be preserved for industrial use. With almost 300 acres of industrially zoned land served by public water and

sewer with good highway access and adjacent to an active freight rail line, the site is ideally situated to attract new industrial users.



The largest concentrations of manufacturing industries in the region are located south of Amherst Street (101A) in northwest Nashua, near FE Everett Turnpike Exit 5 in Nashua, southeast Merrimack Along the DW Highway Corridor, in and around the Sagamore Business Park in Hudson and in northwest Milford.

Retail Trade

As previously noted, retail trade is the second largest employment sector in the region, employing over 14,000 workers. With a total of over 6 million square feet of retail

space, this sector is also a critical component of the tax base for many communities. However, average wages are relatively low, with current job posting data from Indeed, ZipRecruiter and other sites showing average hourly pay at roughly \$16.5–\$19/hour. Retail jobs tend to require relatively little education or training making them attractive to younger and less skilled workers. Many jobs in retail are also part-time, which can be desirable for some and an economic barrier for others. Though less of an economic driver than economic sectors such as manufacturing, retail establishments comprise a significant portion of the tax bases of many of the region’s communities.

By far the largest concentration of retail in the region is in south Nashua where retailers concentrate along DW Highway near the Massachusetts border in part to attract Commonwealth residents with convenient tax-free shopping. The largest of the area’s shopping centers is the one million square foot Pheasant Lane Mall with over 130 shops and food service establishments on two levels. Though changing retail dynamics have impacted the mall, three departments stores and a large sporting goods store remain as anchors and a vacant former Sears store has been transformed into the region’s largest casino. The area is also home to multiple furniture stores, big box retailers, and auto dealerships. Other large retail concentrations are located along the 101A corridor from FE Everett Turnpike Exit 7 in Nashua to Milford, the Nashua Mall area in Nashua, the Merrimack Outlets at Exit 10 and along Lowell Road in Hudson.

Healthcare & Social Assistance

Healthcare and social assistance is considered part of the tertiary (service) sector of the economy because it provides services rather than producing physical goods. In the NRPC



region, this sector mainly serves the local area. The Healthcare/Social Assistance sector employs 12,120 people in the region at an average weekly wage of \$1,300 which is below the overall average weekly wage of \$1,615. Though this sector includes relatively highly paid positions such as physicians, it also includes relatively low paying positions such as personal care assistants. The largest employers in the industry include Southern New Hampshire Health/Southern New Hampshire Medical Center with over 2,000 staff and St. Joseph Hospital employing approximately 1,700 people. Southern NH Medical Center operates an acute-care hospital with a licensed capacity of 188 beds at Main and Kinsley Streets at its campus in downtown Nashua along with related facilities throughout the region. St. Joseph Hospital, part of the larger Covenant Health system, operates an acute care community hospital licensed for 208 beds at its main campus on Kinsley Street, about a mile west of downtown Nashua. Other medical providers in the region include Dartmouth Hitchcock which operates an outpatient clinic on Southwood Drive in Nashua. The region also includes several large social services providers including Southern New Hampshire Services, Greater Nashua Mental Health, Waypoint, the Greater Nashua YMCA, the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter and others.

Other Major Employers

Fidelity Investments

Although Financial Services is not one of the region's largest employment sectors, Fidelity Investments in Merrimack, vies with BAE Systems as one of the state and region's largest employers with around 6,000 workers at its expansive Merrimack campus. It should be noted that many Fidelity employees are classified as working in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services and Information sectors. The Merrimack facility, located off of continental Boulevard near FE Everett Exit 10, serves as one of the company's major operational and technology hubs to support Fidelity's national and global financial services operations. The site was originally home to a large Digital Equipment campus that closed in the mid-1990s.

PC Connection

PC Connection, now branded simply as Connection, is a major technology solutions provider headquartered on 101A in Merrimack. According to their website, Connection's Merrimack headquarters serves as its corporate and operational hub with approximately 1000 employees. Founded in 1982, the company provides IT hardware, software, cloud solutions, and professional services to businesses, government agencies, and institutions nation-wide.

Employment Projections

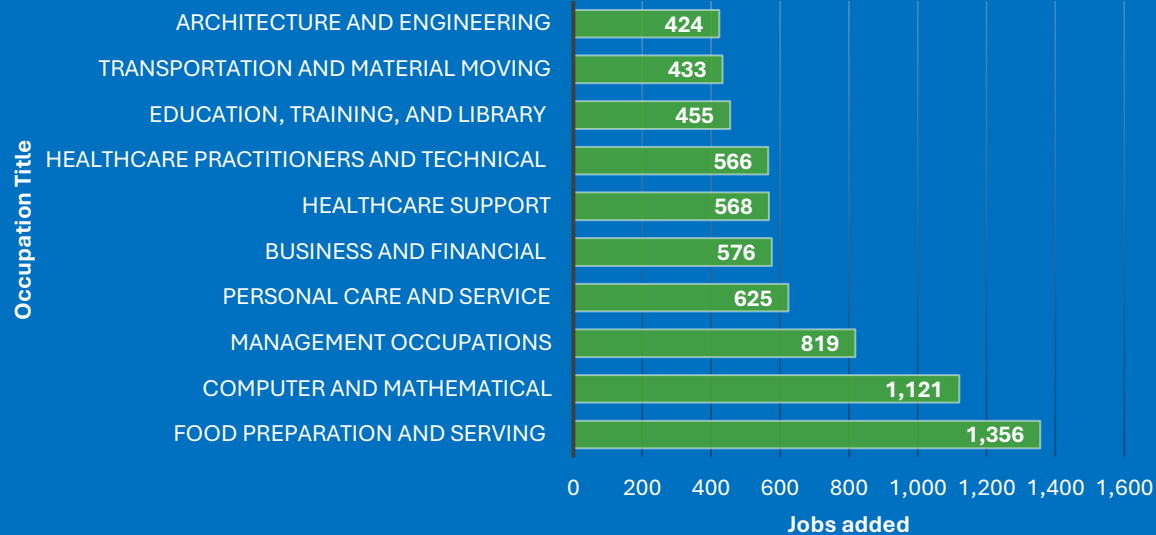
Between 2020 and 2030, total employment in the region is expected to grow by a healthy 7.3% or an addition of 7,482 new jobs. The largest growth, however, will be in relatively low-wage food service related occupations (1,356 new jobs), followed by an increase of 1,134 positions in the two healthcare related categories when combined, and 1,121 in relatively higher paying jobs in computer and mathematical related positions. Production related occupations (manufacturing) are projected to continue to decline with a modest estimated loss of 88 jobs.

Employment Projections by Occupation 2020-2030		
Occupation Title	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total, All Occupations	7,482	7.3%
Management Occupations	819	10.7%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	576	10.9%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1,121	17.4%
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	424	10.1%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	35	7.2%
Community and Social Service Occupations	130	11.1%
Legal Occupations	13	3.8%
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	455	8.0%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	129	12.3%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	566	11.8%
Healthcare Support Occupations	568	17.2%
Protective Service Occupations	125	7.7%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	1,356	20.7%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	267	8.6%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	625	23.2%
Sales and Related Occupations	-212	-1.7%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	-266	-1.9%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	15	7.5%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	155	5.1%
Production Occupations	-88	-1.2%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	433	5.8%

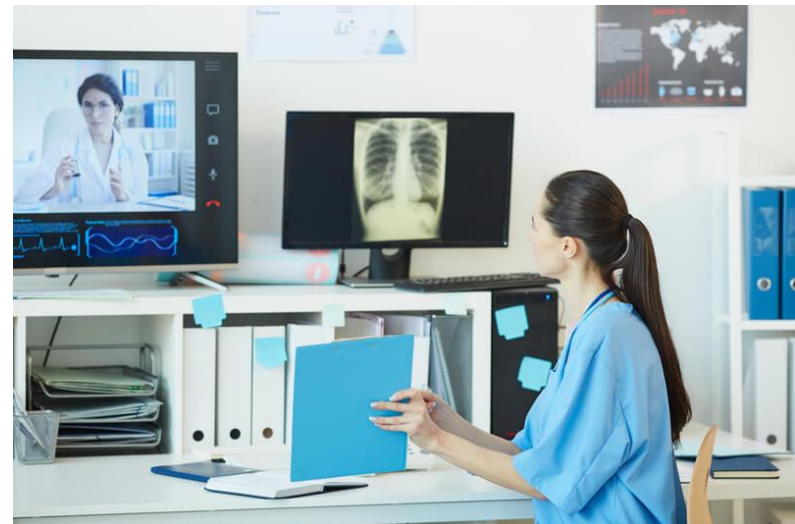


Food service-related occupations are projected to have the largest gains in employment between 2020 and 2030.

Jobs Added 2020-2030



The figure to the left illustrates projected job growth by sector between 2020 and 2030. Overall, the projected changes are positive for the region, and the region is fortunate to have a diverse economic base which can help the economy to avoid major impacts as a result of weakness in any one sector.



Commercial & Industrial Space

Demand for commercial and industrial space is changing across the nation, and the NRPC region is no exception. Online shopping has reduced demand for retail space while remote working has reduced demand for office space. Both trends have had significant impacts on the property tax bases of many communities, especially in larger central business districts and many urban suburban shopping districts. The demand for industrial space is also changing with less demand for manufacturing space and more demand for R&D/Flex and warehousing and distribution space. Though the region has been spared from the worst effects of these trends, commercial vacancy rates have increased, and property values have fallen in many areas, which shifts a greater share of the tax burden onto residential properties.

As previously noted, the NRPC Region has the largest concentration of industrial space in the state at almost 21 million sq. ft. with over 3 million additional sq. ft. under construction. This total includes manufacturing space at 3,172,736 sq. ft., Flex/R&D space at 8,267,929 sq. ft. and warehousing at 9,263,694 sq. ft. Of these categories, the greatest demand is for Flex/R&D space. The Vacancy Rate for industrial space will increase with the pending closure of the roughly 1 million square foot Anheuser-Busch facility in Merrimack, though given its ideal location, new users could be a realistic expectation. Another significant industrial property is the 337,391-square-foot industrial building on Northwest Boulevard in Nashua, that was purchased by NF North

America, a subsidiary of Nongfu Spring — one of China's largest bottled water and beverage companies. In January 2025, despite significant controversy over the sale, indications are that the long vacant building could be converted to a bottling plant.

Office space in the region totals 5,497,034 sq. ft., the second highest total in the state after Manchester according to Colliers Office Market Report for New Hampshire for Q3 2025. Overall, office vacancy rates have declined from 13.5% to 11.5%. Currently, demand is highest for more affordable Class B space in terms of positive absorption though Class B vacancy rates (11%) are slightly higher than the rate for Class A space (10.4%). Class C space has a vacancy rate of 16.3% and negative absorption rate indicating weak demand. Conversion of the less desirable Class C office space to other uses such as residential where feasible should be encouraged to help reduce office vacancy rates and increase the housing supply. Data on vacancy rates for the region's roughly 6 million square feet of retail space is not available, however, the market appears to be relatively stable though relatively little new space is under development.

Assets & Opportunities

The Nashua Region's employment base is concentrated in several high-paying industries, which contributes to wages in the region that are among the highest in the state. The region's high educational attainment, its convenient location, rural and historic character, and its relatively low tax burdens

provide several key economic advantages. Employment projections also indicate growth in important economic sectors such as computer sciences, management positions and healthcare and declines in manufacturing employment are expected to be minimal. The Region also enjoys close proximity to the Boston area. The Boston Region is an economic powerhouse that makes up the eighth largest labor market in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and with more than 100 colleges and universities, the area enjoys a highly-skilled workforce with strong footholds in biotechnology, education, and financial services. The region's high percentage of people working from home is also an economic advantage. People who work from home are effectively employed in the region even if their employer is outside of the area. They also obviously already have housing, support local retail and service establishments, and can potentially be recruited by local businesses and industries.

The ReGen Valley Tech Hub, led by the Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute (ARMI), centered in Manchester, is an opportunity for the region to grow into the Life Sciences Industry. According to their website, ReGen Valley “[] *aims to make New Hampshire a global leader in bio fabrication to produce cost-effective regenerative therapies that address chronic disease and organ failure. Amidst growing commercial demand for these therapies, this Tech Hub seeks to advance bio fabrication-related therapies, invest in manufacturing facilities, and incubate technology startups to secure domestic regenerative therapy development and bio fabrication.*” The initiative was catalyzed through a U.S. Department of

Commerce designation of the ReGen Valley (which includes the Nashua area) as one of 12 Tech Hubs across the country and a grant of \$44 million in 2024. The initiative includes BioFabUSA which is essentially an incubator for bio fabrication related industries.

The University of Massachusetts at Lowell (UMass Lowell) is home to the Massachusetts Medical Device Development Center (M2D2). M2D2 is a business incubator and accelerator for medical device, diagnostic, and health technology startups in Massachusetts led by UMass Lowell and UMass Medical School. Similar to BioFabUSA, M2D2's aim is to help early-stage companies advance new technologies from prototype to commercialization. Another UMass Lowell-related initiative is the 28,000 sq. ft. Fabric Discovery Center (FDC); an innovation and education hub focused on advanced textiles, smart fabrics, and wearable technology as described on their website. The goals of the FDC are “[] to drive innovation in functional fabrics, boost economic competitiveness and create more high paying jobs in the region.” Lowell is also home to the New England Robotics Validation and Experimentation (NERVE) Center, an accelerator focused on robotics testing and research according to their website. The region's location within the ReGen Valley Tech Hub, proximity to UMass Lowell based technology incubators and accelerators, and the nation's largest Life Sciences concentration in Metro Boston present significant opportunities for the growth of related industries in the area.



Inside the ReGen Valley Tech Hub/ ARMI

Along with its proximity to key industry and employment sectors, the NRPC Region benefits from an enviable location, situated less than an hour from the world class cultural institutions and major league sports venues in and around Boston and in close proximity to the Seacoast and to the recreational opportunities of New Hampshire's famed mountains and lakes. The Region also benefits from the cultural offerings and charm of its historic downtowns and traditional New England town centers as well as our extensive parks, recreation trails, and conservation lands. People have more choice than ever in choosing where to live. Protecting and building upon those assets that make the region a desirable



Jennifer "JB" Beck, *Chair, Wilton Economic Development, Wilton Conservation Commission NRPC Commissioner NHACC Board - Marketing and Legislative Committee Board Chair, Wilton Alliance Steering Committee, NH Wildlife Coalition*

"I truly believe we can accommodate all our human consumption needs and protect our natural resources — at the same time. But in order to do that, we can't let either of the initiatives that are conservation-oriented or development-oriented continue down separate paths as they have for so many decades. We need to figure out how we develop lands with a respect for the wild places and open spaces that also provide for human health and well-being. The number one reason people come to this state is our natural resources. If in the process of supporting development, we trample our natural environments, we've lost the game." IV-19

place to live, work and grow a business, therefore, is an essential part of any economic development strategy.

New Hampshire's lack of an income or sales tax is also an attraction to perspective residents and businesses, especially given the relatively high tax rates of other Northeast states. New Hampshire ranks 3rd on the Tax Foundation's survey of competitiveness. The organization's website states that:

"Like other states that forgo one or more major taxes, New Hampshire's lack of an individual income tax or sales tax yields an extremely competitive overall ranking despite relatively lower rankings on the corporate income tax and property tax components."

New Hampshire also consistently receives top ratings for child wellbeing, healthcare, public safety and economic freedom. Though Region's assets are many, there are also challenges to economic growth and prosperity.

Challenges & Threats

In multiple surveys, business and industry leaders in the region and statewide have consistently identified attracting workforce to be a top challenge together with the closely related issues of housing affordability and the cost and availability of childcare. Though a detailed discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this chapter, the overall lack of housing, high housing costs, and the lack of available, affordable childcare hinder workforce attraction. Addressing the high cost of housing in the region and lack of access to affordable

childcare must play a prominent role in any economic development strategy. Other challenges include the decline in manufacturing, threats to the region's retail base due to the growing trend toward online shopping and the unknown impacts of increased automation and Artificial Intelligence. The increase in remote work has a negative impact on the demand for office space, however, it does appear that the area has also benefited as is evidenced by the growth in the number of people working from home in the region.

Leveraging the economic opportunities that present themselves to the region while addressing both identifiable and unknown impacts of potential challenges and threats suggests the need for a multi-pronged approach. This approach should be centered on fostering an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation to develop new industries such as biofabrication, fintech, businesses that harness the power of AI and other emerging industries. It should also include efforts to ensure that the region offers commercial and industrial space that is flexible enough to be adapted to changing business needs as well as suitable for more traditional forms of manufacturing, retail, and service-related uses. To attract and retain the workforce needed to drive the economy, education and training programs must be aligned with changing industry needs, and it is essential that access to affordable housing and childcare needs be addressed. In a world where more and more people can work from anywhere, the region must also continue to foster a high quality of life and quality of place. Recommended strategies to meet these goals are outlined below.

Economic Development Goals & Implementation Strategies

The economic development strategy of this plan is rooted in the following vision statement and overall goal.

VISION: The residents of the Nashua Region enjoy a vibrant and dynamic economy with full employment, competitive wages, and a high standard of living.

OVERALL GOAL: The Nashua Region will foster economic well-being by supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, aligning job training with industry needs, marketing and promoting the region to prospective businesses, investors, and residents, and building workforce.

Encourage Entrepreneurship and Innovation

As described in greater detail above, the region's economy faces challenges due to the decline in manufacturing employment, threats to its retail sector due to a growing trend toward online shopping and unknown challenges due to increased automation and the growth of AI. There are also opportunities in the emergence of newer industries such as regenerative medicine, advanced textiles, fintech, robotics, and other technologies. To ensure a strong economy in the years to come, it is essential that the region foster an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. The following strategies are recommended.

- Deepen collaboration with the [ReGen Valley Technology Hub](#) through continued participation by NRPC, Nashua's Economic Development Department and other economic and business leaders in the ReGen Valley Consortium.
- Strengthen connections to UMass Lowell and to UMass Lowell based technology incubators and accelerator programs.
- Explore the feasibility of developing one or more business "accelerator" programs to support entrepreneurship in the region. Business accelerators such as Boston-based [MassChallenge](#), or the Lowell-based [Entrepreneurship for All](#) have a proven record of supporting new business formation through intensively structured peer-to-peer and business experienced mentorship. More recently ReGen's Valley's BioFab Startup Lab Core Program seeks to foster startup growth in the biofabrication industry.
- Explore the feasibility of developing one or more business "incubators" or "coworking spaces" in the region. Business incubators, often targeted toward a specific industry sector, provide office, lab, workshop, kitchen, or studio space along with support services to foster new business creation. Incubators can include makerspaces, community kitchens, or professional office-oriented facilities. Nashua's [MakeIt Labs](#) is New Hampshire's first and largest makerspace. Coworking spaces include smaller local facilities such as [CoHo -](#)

[Coworking House](#) in Milford, the landmark [Cambridge Innovation Center](#), as well as national for profit run spaces by companies such as WeWork. UNH Manchester has transformed its sixth floor into the Biotechnology Innovation Center, a coworking space designed as part of the ReGen Valley initiative. Other examples include the [Hanna Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship](#) in Keene, [Greentown Labs](#) and [Artists' Asylum](#) in Somerville, MA, and [Commonwealth Kitchen](#) in Boston.

- Increase collaboration with the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, the New Hampshire Tech Council, New Hampshire Life Sciences, the Small Business Development Center, Small Business Administration (SBA), Regional Economic Development Center (REDC), and other similar groups to increase support for local entrepreneurs.

Workforce Development

The NRPC Region is experiencing a significant labor shortage due to an aging labor force together with recruitment challenges due to housing costs and limited supply, lack of childcare, low migration and immigration, and challenges in attracting younger workers to live and work in the region. To help address these challenges, the following strategies are recommended.

- Attract workforce by marketing the region's locational advantages and high quality of life.

- Encourage the expansion of both home-ownership and rental housing opportunities to support a growing workforce including Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and multi-family housing, especially in and around commercial districts, downtown and town center areas and in areas served by public water and sewer.
- Encourage the expansion of affordable childcare offerings by working with area nonprofits, businesses, foundations, and other partners. Earlier this year, the YMCA of Greater Nashua completed a major renovation and expansion of its Merrimack YMCA Early Education Center, expanding its the Center to 19 classrooms, serving approximately 395 children from 6 weeks old through kindergarten making it the largest care facility in New Hampshire and the largest YMCA childcare center in the nation according to YMCA sources. Importantly, financial assistance is offered to families based on need. The \$2.7 million project was made possible through significant private contributions and \$625,000 in Business Tax Credits through New Hampshire's Community Development Finance Authority. Recently, the Granite YMCA based in Manchester launched its [Empowered Futures program](#), a childcare apprenticeship program created in partnership the ReGen Valley Tech Hub. The grant funded program helps you address the shortage of childcare workers through a 10-week program offers hands-on, paid training children from infants as young

as 12 weeks to school-aged youth. These examples emphasize the potential for cross-sector collaboration on issues critical to the Region's economic future.

- Work with state and regional partners such as *Stay, Work, Play NH* to enhance regional branding and promotion to young people, as well as to employers that employ young people and enhance young professional networking opportunities through area chambers of commerce.
- Leverage education and job training resources such as Rivier University and Nashua Community College to support development of a highly trained workforce that meets industry needs including certificate and nondegree educational programs.
- Encourage collaboration between social service providers and employers to expand reentry programs and work opportunities for formerly incarcerated people, people recovering from substance misuse, people transitioning out of homelessness and other challenged populations to expand the potential labor force.

Quality of Place

The rise of remote and hybrid employment has given workers far more flexibility in choosing where to live. To be competitive, therefore, it is essential that the Region actively strives to enhance the qualities that make the area a desirable

location. Below are recommended strategies to enhance the Region's quality of place.

- Work with the region's municipalities, arts and cultural organizations, conservation groups, historic and other stakeholders to preserve and protect those natural areas, parks, and cultural and historic assets that enhance the quality of life of the region's residents and strive to build upon and improve these assets.



Based on the National Independent Venue Association – Music Venue Economic Impact calculator, Nashua's Center for the Arts has had a regional economic impact of \$3,593,761 since its opening in 2023.

- The Region’s municipalities, Downtown and Main Street organizations such as Nashua’s *Great American Downtown*, and other community partners should continue to build upon the strength of our downtown areas, town centers and other unique places where people want to live, work and gather, and enhance efforts to promote local cultural assets, social experiences, and outdoor resources in the Region.
- Work with area chambers of commerce, downtown organizations and other stakeholder to market and promote destinations in the region, including historic places and arts and cultural attractions.

Land Use

As the Region’s economy changes, the way in which we use the land and buildings that support business uses must also change. This necessarily has implications for local land use regulations including zoning and planning board site plan review regulations. Recommendations for addressing land use strategies in the Region to support economic development are outlined below.

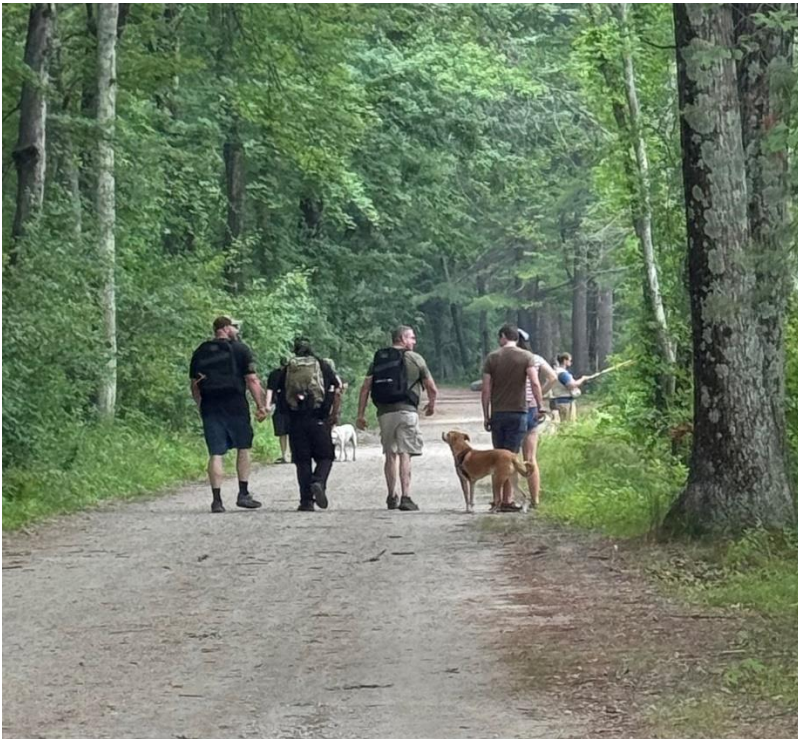
- Work with the region’s municipalities to maintain strategically located industrially zoned land for industrial purposes where possible; especially industrially zoned land with access to public water, sewer, and highways.

- Encourage flexibility in commercial and industrial districts to facilitate relatively seamless transitions between different types of business and industrial uses including flex/R&D space, warehousing & distribution and office uses.
- Work with the region’s municipalities to assess commercial and industrial district boundaries and requirements to ensure that they are consistent with changing market conditions and to identify opportunities to provide greater flexibility in commercial land use codes such as allowing certain light industrial or hybrid uses in commercial zones (e.g., micro-breweries), and conversion of commercial and office uses into industrial, residential or mixed-uses. use development.
- Work with economic and community development directors and other stakeholders to promote and facilitate the use of tax credits and other incentives available to developers and businesses including federal Opportunity Zones, New Markets Tax Credits, NH Economic Revitalizations Zones, NH RSA 79-E, and other incentive programs.

Marketing & Promotion

The NRPC Region is not as well known outside of the area as other parts of New Hampshire such as the White Mountains, our ski resorts, Lakes Region, or Seacoast, so many are not aware of the economic opportunities and attractive living

options available in the NRPC area. Nor are people outside of the region typically aware of our proximity to the Boston or to New England's other well-known attractions. The NRPC Region needs to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for different audiences: young professionals, businesses considering expansion or relocation, real estate investors and developers, tourists, and other target audiences.



The region enjoys an extensive network of trails that support active lifestyle; a feature that can be promoted to prospective residents.

To promote the region, collaboration among local Chambers of Commerce, community, economic development professionals, economic development committees, the state Department of Business & Economic Affairs and other community partners to develop a multi-pronged marketing strategy for the region should be encouraged. This strategy should include specific targeting aimed at attracting businesses, new residents, shoppers, and tourists.



Promoting established destinations such as Parker's Maple Barn in Mason is an important component of a marketing strategy for the region.

NRPC Regional Plan - Natural Resources

The NRPC region enjoys an abundance of natural resources. There are extensive surface and groundwater supplies, over 50,000 acres of forested lands, and numerous parks and protected open spaces. Protecting the region's natural resources is a common theme that runs through all of the chapters of the Nashua Regional Plan. The natural character evident in the region's farms and forests, river



Baboosic Lake, Amherst & Merrimack. © Seth Dewey

valleys and hills contribute to the high quality of life that residents value most about living in the Nashua Region. There are, however, also threats to the region's natural resources that come in a variety of forms. This chapter sets forth the vision, goals and strategies for preserving and protecting the region's natural resources.

Local efforts to preserve our natural resources and ensure adequate water supplies for all residents in the region have a demonstrated record of success, though challenges remain. Sustainable funding for preserving existing natural resources, conducting technical studies, implementing adaptation strategies for natural hazards, and completing energy efficiency projects remain a challenge for the region, as it is in many areas of the State. While not a new challenge, sustainable funding is a consistent obstacle to implementation. There are, however, many opportunities for communities to collaborate and pool resources. Regional coordination is a consistent theme heard among municipal officials and residents, and there are many excellent examples where it has saved communities time and money. The Lower Merrimack Valley Stormwater Coalition has supported communities with technical assistance and resources to meet federal stormwater requirements. There are other opportunities for communities to participate in regional coordination projects such as culvert assessment, household hazardous waste, and watershed planning.

This chapter provides a brief summary of some of the key natural assets within the NRPC Region along with a discussion

of prominent challenges and threats. The chapter also presents a series of solutions to support conservation efforts and planning practices that help advance natural resource protection. The findings of this chapter help to cement long-term regional goals for conservation, wildlife, and recreational opportunities.

Water Resources

The maintenance and protection of water quality and supply is one of the highest priorities for communities within the region. In recent years, contamination has impacted numerous public and private wells and aging water infrastructure, maintenance and treatment will be one of the highest costs of communities in the coming years to ensure that their water quality standards can be met. The protection of surface and groundwater throughout the region in order to safeguard drinking water supplies, as surface water quality for recreation and wildlife habitat is a paramount priority. Furthermore, rivers within the region are susceptible to flooding and incorporating pollution into their watersheds through stormwater. Ensuring that proactive steps are being taken, like protecting river corridors, proper zoning laws, and advocacy for water bodies, will be the strongest course of action for municipalities and advocacy groups.

Surface Water

Surface water bodies within the Nashua Region provide an essential part of the region's drinking water supply, provide important outdoor recreational opportunities, support wildlife

and habitat and stormwater management. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to protect our rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. There are four major rivers within the region: the Merrimack, Nashua, Nissitissit and Souhegan Rivers. The region also contains several lakes and great ponds including Baboosic Lake, Lake Naticook, Lake Potanipo, Robinson Pond, Little Island Pond and many smaller bodies of water.



Merrimack River at Merril Park in Hudson

Merrimack River

The Merrimack River is the defining waterway of southern New Hampshire and one of the region's most important natural, economic, and recreational resources. Originating at the confluence of the Pemigewasset and Winnepesaukee Rivers in Franklin, the Merrimack flows approximately 117 miles through central and southern New Hampshire before

entering northeastern Massachusetts and emptying into the Atlantic Ocean at Newburyport. Within the NRPC region, the river passes through communities including Merrimack, Litchfield, Hudson, and Nashua, providing drinking water, wildlife habitat, flood storage, and recreational opportunities. The river and its tributaries support diverse aquatic and riparian ecosystems while serving as an important source of public water for thousands of residents as the primary water source for Pennichuck Water Works. In addition, the river is a focal point for boating, fishing, and kayaking.

Ongoing conservation, water quality improvements and watershed management initiatives continue to enhance the river's ecological health. Despite these improvements, the Merrimack River faces challenges from stormwater runoff, nutrient loading, emerging contaminants such as PFAS, and the increasing impacts of climate change, making watershed protection and sustainable land use planning essential to preserving this vital regional resource. Advocacy groups for the Merrimack River, ranging from the Merrimack River Watershed Council to the Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee.

Nashua River

Though located mostly in Massachusetts, the Nashua River is one of the defining features of the City of Nashua. The river extends approximately 37 miles from its formation at the confluence of the North Nashua and South Nashua rivers in Lancaster, Massachusetts, to its confluence with the Merrimack River in Nashua. The river drains a watershed of

more than 500 square miles and flows through a mix of forests, wetlands, agricultural lands, and developed communities. Historically, the Nashua River supported the water-powered mills of the Nashua Manufacturing Company that fueled the city's growth, but by the mid-20th century it had become heavily polluted. Extensive cleanup efforts beginning in the 1960s transformed the river into one of New England's notable environmental restoration success stories.



Fishing on the Nashua River

Today, the Nashua River supports a wide variety of fish and wildlife, including bass, pickerel, herons, osprey, bald eagles, and river otters. It also provides valuable flood storage, groundwater recharge, and water quality benefits through its extensive wetlands and riparian corridors. The river is widely used for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, birdwatching, and other

recreational activities, contributing significantly to the area's ecological health, scenic character, and quality of life.

Souhegan River



Wildcat Falls on the Souhegan River in Merrimack

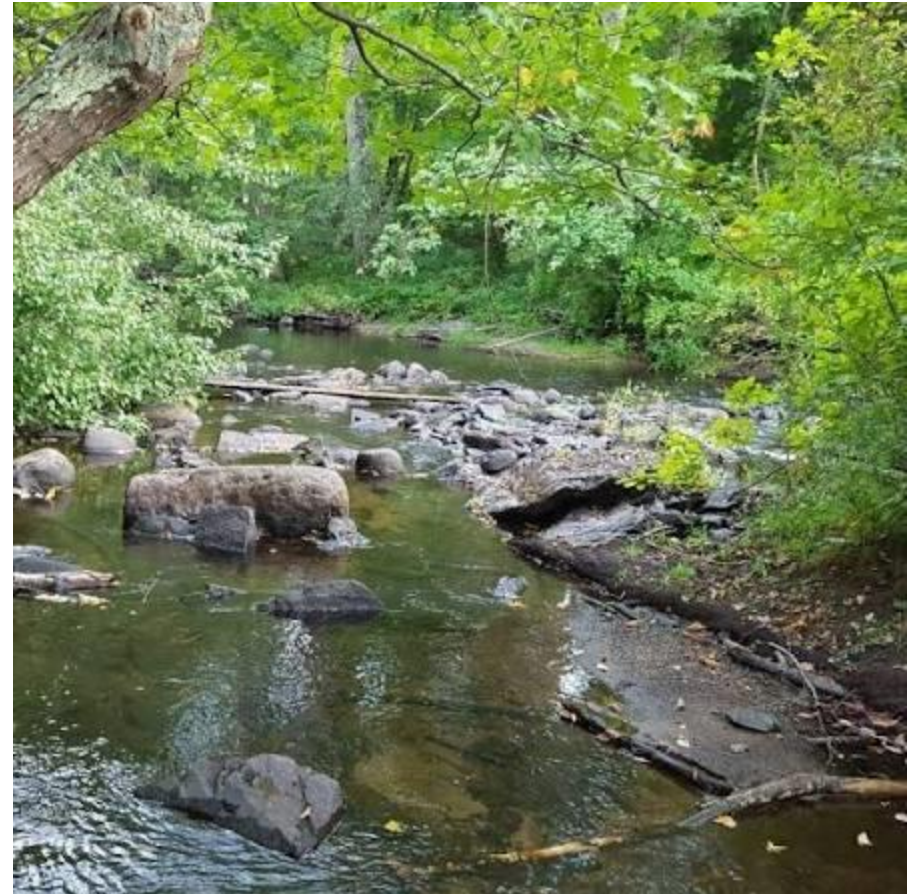
The Souhegan River is one of the largest tributaries to the Merrimack River, according to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. The river is surrounded by large areas of protected, undeveloped land due to a conservation priority from communities such as Merrimack, Amherst, Milford, and Wilton. The Souhegan River Corridor is a host to a variety of birds, moose, black bear, turtles, snakes, frogs, fish, and the occasional bald eagle. The Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee (SorLAC) is a principal contributor to protecting these natural resources.

Most recently, the NRPC helped to update the SorLAC wildlife corridor management plan, which helped to label key areas of protection.

Nissitissit River

The Nissitissit River is one of southern New Hampshire's most significant cold-water rivers, flowing approximately 15 miles from its headwaters at Potanipo Pond in Brookline through Pepperell, Massachusetts, before joining the Nashua River. The river drains a largely forested and rural watershed, providing high-quality habitat for a diverse array of fish, wildlife, and aquatic species. It's cold, clean waters support native brook trout and other sensitive species, while the surrounding wetlands, floodplains, and riparian forests provide habitat for waterfowl, turtles, amphibians, and mammals such as beaver and river otter.

Portions of the Nissitissit corridor are protected through conservation lands managed by the Nissitissit Land Trust, State agencies, and towns, helping to preserve water quality and natural habitat. The Nissitissit River is also a popular destination for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, and wildlife observation, offering residents and visitors opportunities for outdoor recreation in a largely undeveloped setting. Because of its exceptional ecological value and relatively intact watershed, the river is considered an important natural resource within the Nashua River Basin and plays a vital role in maintaining regional biodiversity and water quality in southern New Hampshire and northern Massachusetts.



Nissitissit River – Hollis (Nissitissit Land Trust)

Pennichuck Brook

The Pennichuck Brook system is a major drinking water supply for the City of Nashua and parts of Merrimack. It is comprised of a highly managed watershed that links a chain of ponds, streams, and impoundments across Nashua, Merrimack, Amherst, Hollis, and Milford. The system begins at Silver Lake

in Hollis and flows northeast through a series of controlled reservoirs—including Pennichuck Pond, Bowers Pond, Harris Pond, and Supply Pond—before ultimately discharging to the Merrimack River. This interconnected surface-water network, together with its surrounding watershed lands, is carefully protected due to its water supply value. The watershed is actively managed under State drinking water protection rules, with strict controls on development and land use to preserve water quality and reduce contamination risks.

Beyond its function as a water source, the Pennichuck system also supports significant wetland and floodplain ecosystems that help naturally filter water, regulate streamflow, and buffer storm events, making it both an essential infrastructure system and a key environmental resource in southern New Hampshire.

Wetlands

Wetlands are defined in State law and NHDES administrative rules as areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support vegetation or aquatic life adapted to saturated soil conditions. Wetlands include a variety of environments such as marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, wet meadows, and forested wetlands. Wetlands perform many important functions such as aquifer recharge, flood control, erosion control, water purification, nursery areas, and wildlife habitat. Additionally, a number of endangered and threatened plant species are only found in wetlands. Once thought of as wastelands and areas to be filled, the important role that wetlands play in the

hydrologic and ecologic health of an area is now widely recognized and all NRPC communities have adopted ordinances and regulations to protect them. Wetlands, together with appropriately sized upland buffers, need to be protected from encroaching development and filling so that they may continue to perform their hydrologic and ecologic functions.



Expansive Wetland area in Monson Village, Hollis/Milford

An estimated 25,000–29,000 acres of the NRPC Region are made up of wetlands, accounting for 11–13% of the region’s total land area. Some of the most significant wetland systems include wetlands associated with Pennichuck Brook and the water supply ponds in Nashua, Merrimack, Amherst and Hollis Salmon Brook in Nashua, Beaver Brook in Pelham and

Musquash Pond in Hudson. Extensive wetlands systems are also associated with the Merrimack, Nashua, Nissitissit and Souhegan Rivers.

The Beaver Brook system in Pelham is one of the one of the town's most ecologically significant drainage systems occurring continuously along the brook's floodplain and tributary network (including Golden Brook connections downstream and headwater swales upstream). These wetland concentrations encompass a variety of habitats including forested wetlands, beaver-created pond/wetland complexes continuous riparian wetlands along the Brook, seasonal floodplain wetlands, and connections to larger regional wetland networks. The system functions as a major wildlife corridor and an important flood storage system during storm events.

Another key resource is the Salmon Brook wetland system in Nashua, one of the city's most significant natural resource areas. The wetlands system is centered on the broad floodplain where Salmon Brook meets Hassell's Brook before flowing into the Merrimack River. The wetland expanse covers more than 100 acres and is designated as a Prime Wetland under New Hampshire RSA 482-A, reflecting its high ecological value and regulatory protection. The system is a diverse mosaic of emergent marsh, shrub wetlands, and forested floodplain wetlands, shaped by seasonal flooding, beaver activity, and restricted drainage conditions that create permanently saturated soils and shallow ponded areas.

Ecologically, it supports a wide range of wildlife including waterfowl, amphibians, songbirds, and aquatic species, while also functioning as an important hydrologic buffer for the city. The wetland system plays a critical role in reducing downstream flooding along the Merrimack River, filtering urban stormwater runoff, improving water quality, and maintaining habitat connectivity within the broader Merrimack River watershed, making it one of Nashua's most valuable remaining open space and ecological assets.



Salmon Brook in Nashua

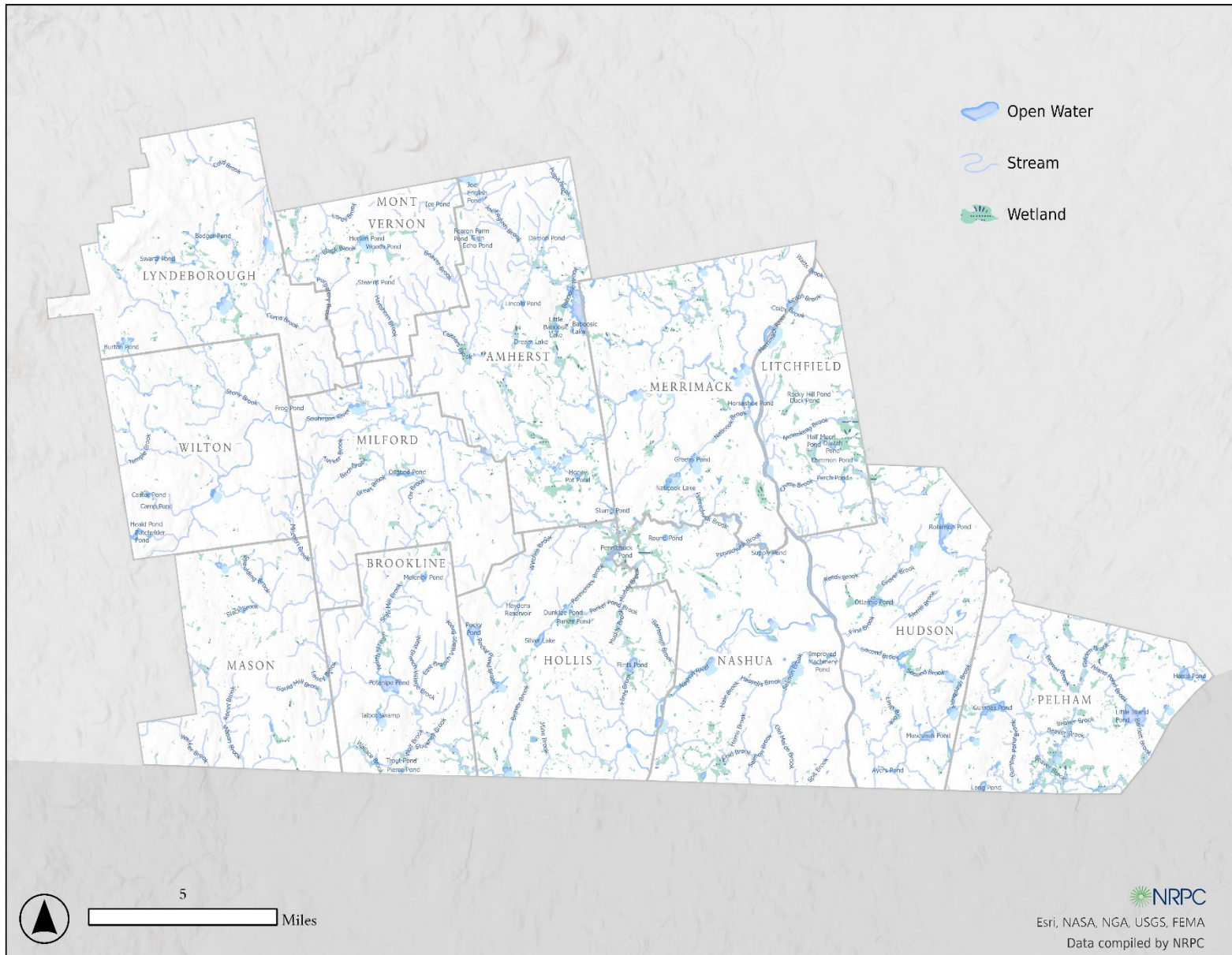


Table 1: Summary of NRPC Region Wetland Ordinance Provisions

Town	Wetland District Definition	Wetland Buffers/setbacks
Amherst	Poorly and very poorly drained soils, water bodies.	Septic tanks and leachfields: 75 feet No structure within 50 feet.
Brookline	Poorly and very poorly drained soils, water bodies.	All wetlands: 50 feet Septic tanks and leachfields: 75 feet except raid and very permeability-125 feet No new structures within 25 feet.
Hollis	Poorly and very poorly drained soils, water bodies.	Septic tanks and leachfields: 100 feet No new structures within 100 feet.
Hudson	3-fold definition: wetland soils (very poorly and poorly drained), wetland vegetation, wetland hydrology.	No new structures or parking lots within 25 feet. Septic tanks and leachfields: 25 – 75 feet depending on soils.
Lyndeborough	Poorly and very poorly drained soils, water bodies.	No buffers
Litchfield	3-fold definition: wetland soils (very poorly and poorly drained), wetland vegetation, wetland hydrology	Septic tanks and leachfields: 100 feet No new structures within 75 feet. Basin marshes, bogs, fens, and vernal pools: 200 feet
Merrimack	Poorly and very poorly drained soils, water bodies.	Septic tanks and leachfields: 75 feet No new structures within 40 feet.
Milford	3-fold definition: wetland soils (very poorly and poorly drained), wetland vegetation, wetland hydrology.	All wetlands: 25 feet Designated streams and wetlands: 50 feet No new structures within 50 feet.
Mont Vernon	Poorly and very poorly drained soils, water bodies	All wetlands except vernal pools: 25 feet
Nashua	3-fold definition: wetland soils (very poorly and poorly drained), wetland vegetation, wetland hydrology.	75 on prime 40 on critical
Pelham	Wetland soils and vegetation.	Septic and leachfields: 25 – 75 feet depending on soils.
Wilton	3-fold definition: wetland soils (very poorly and poorly drained), wetland vegetation, wetland hydrology.	No buffers

Source: NRPC survey of local wetland ordinances, 2021.

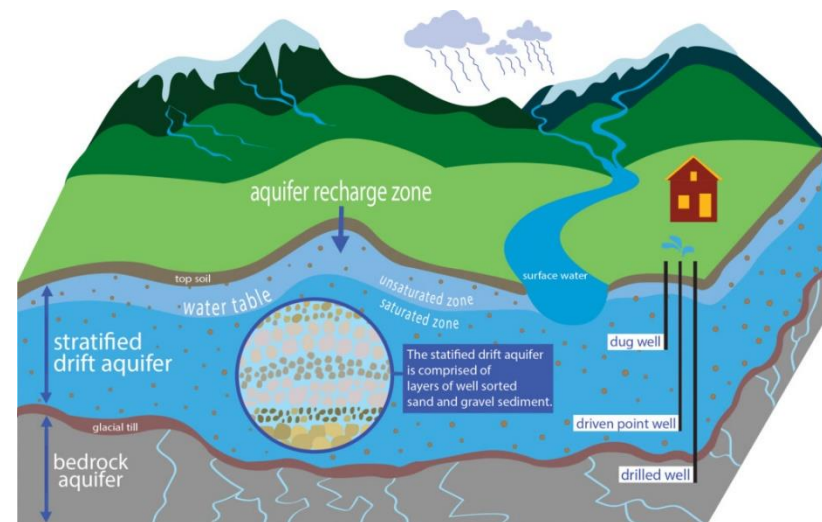
Groundwater

Groundwater, the water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock, serves as the primary water source for more than 60% of New Hampshire residents. Planning practices for protecting groundwater should focus on creating aquifer recharge zones, conserving land around aquifers, establishing aquifer overlays within a community, monitoring water quality, and limiting potential hazardous uses in the area. It is essential to establish solid practices to protect groundwater resources and to guarantee the future of clean water. The Nashua-area groundwater system is dominated by a combination of high-yield stratified-drift aquifers in river valleys and lower-yield bedrock aquifers in uplands, and together they form the foundation of water supply for Merrimack, Amherst, Hollis, Milford, Wilton, Pelham, and Litchfield. Map 2 depicts the most productive stratified drift aquifers in the region.

In general, the most productive aquifers in the region are the stratified-drift aquifers, which consist of sand and gravel deposited by glacial meltwater in valleys including the Merrimack River, Souhegan River, and smaller tributary systems like Beaver Brook, Pennichuck Brook, and the Nissitissit/Upper Nashua basin. These aquifers are typically thickest and most productive in Merrimack, Litchfield, Hudson, Nashua, and Amherst, where saturated sand-and-gravel deposits can exceed 100 feet in thickness and support municipal well fields. USGS studies show that roughly 40% of the NRPC region is underlain by stratified drift, and these

deposits provide most of the region's municipal groundwater supply.

As can be seen on Map 2, stratified drift aquifers are closely associated with the region's rivers and larger brooks, especially Pennick Brook, the Souhegan River, the Nissitissit River in Brookline and Beaver Brook in Pelham. It should also be noted that there is a strong correlation between these highly productive aquifers and the region's most extensive wetlands systems which also are associated with larger rivers and streams.

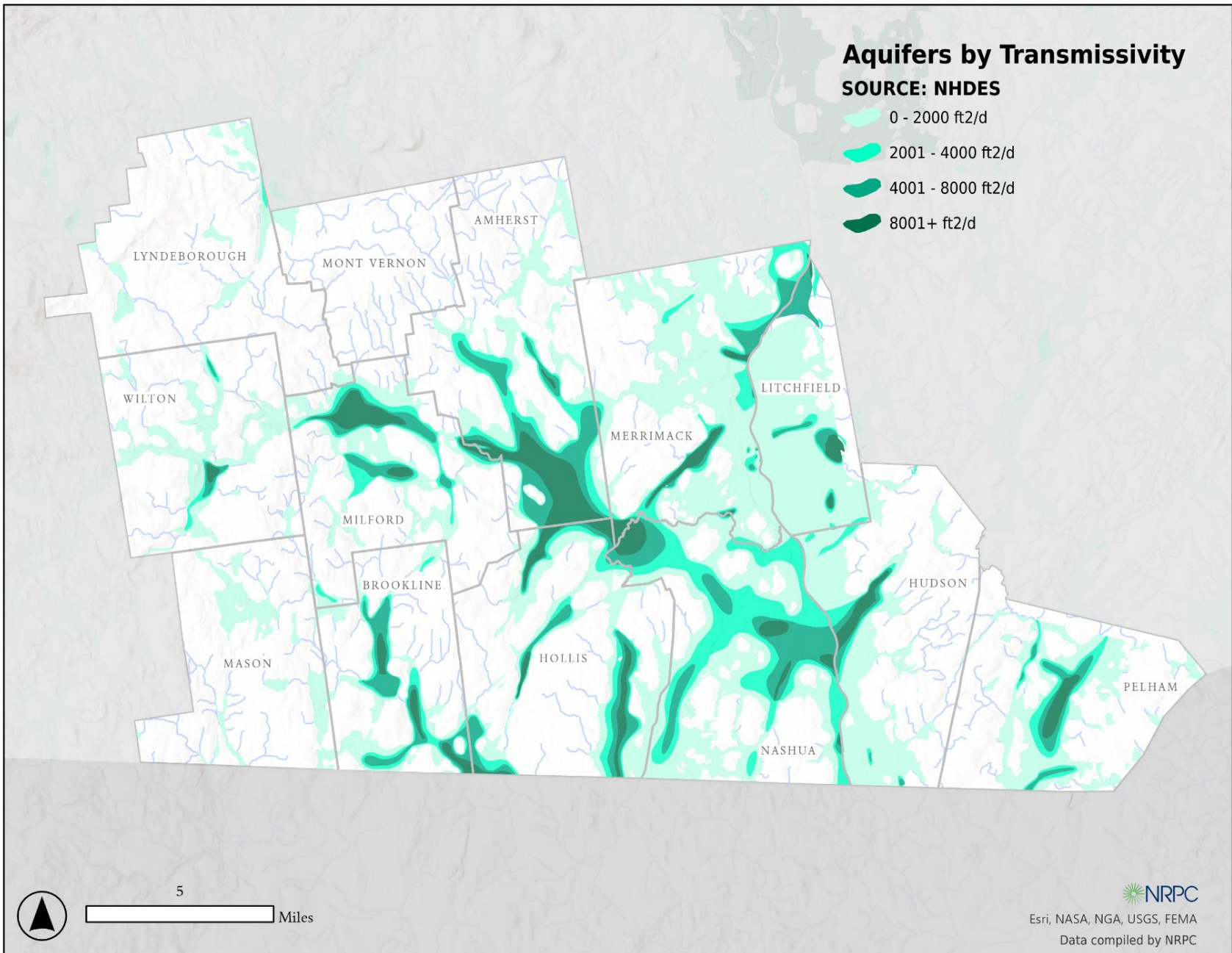


Source: Green Mountain Conservation Group

Aquifers by Transmissivity

SOURCE: NHDES

- 0 - 2000 ft²/d
- 2001 - 4000 ft²/d
- 4001 - 8000 ft²/d
- 8001+ ft²/d



Water Resources and Potential Contaminant Sources

There are several key issues affecting water resources in the region including contaminants from stormwater water run-off, chemical and petroleum contamination, increased nutrient loading and increasing demand. Increased amount of impervious surfaces, which reduces the natural infiltration of stormwater and the recharge of groundwater resources. Stormwater contains many sources of contaminants, which are piped or flow over impervious surfaces and drain directly into surface waters without natural soil filtration. Chemicals in runoff can also lead to long term pollution of groundwater.

Continued growth in the NRPC Region has also fueled more pressure on current water resources, especially groundwater in some communities such as Brookline and Pelham. Specific potential threats to water resources are described below.

Nutrient Loading

A significant issue facing all water resources within the region is the increase in nutrient load that is frequently seen amongst lakes and ponds. While nutrients are typically deemed as a positive factor in nature, in this case, they are not. They refer for the most part to nitrogen and phosphorous levels within the water source, which can help to cultivate large amounts of algae and aquatic plants. These in turn can cause the oxygen levels of the water to deplete, which is extremely detrimental to all forms of the ecosystem. Additionally, increased aquatic foliage can start to block the sunlight needed by lower-level aquatic organisms and block passages for animals on top of the impaired water body. According to the Nashua River

Watershed Association, nutrient pollution is primarily caused by fertilizer run-off from yards, farms, wastewater treatment plants, and heavily paved areas. Another key element adding to nutrient load is high levels of chloride from salting the roads in the wintertime through stormwater runoff. To combat this, New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food has released a series of best management practices for agricultural facilities relating to composting, fertilizer, manure, and chemical usage. Communities need to focus on preventing runoff into their water bodies to better protect their water resources and aquatic wildlife.

Underground Storage Tanks

Leaks in improperly equipped underground storage tanks (USTs) are difficult to detect and may go unnoticed for a long time. Small leaks of only a few gallons can contaminate millions of gallons of ground water. New Hampshire regulates underground storage tanks through the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) under RSA 146-C and associated administrative rules. The program requires registration of regulated tanks, corrosion-resistant construction, spill and overfill protection, leak detection systems, periodic inspections, and prompt reporting and cleanup of releases. Tank owners are responsible for maintaining compliance throughout the operational life of the facility and for conducting environmental site assessments during tank closure. These regulations are intended to protect New Hampshire's groundwater resources, which supply drinking water to the majority of the State's residents.

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a group of synthetic chemicals that have been used for decades to manufacture household and commercial products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. PFAS have been used in many consumer products, including non-stick cookware, stain-resistant furniture and carpets, waterproof clothing, microwave popcorn bags, fast food wrappers, pizza boxes, shampoo, and dental floss. They have also been used in certain firefighting foams and various industrial processes. The widespread use of these chemicals has led to their appearance in drinking water sources in NH. Recent examples include the widespread contamination of public and private drinking water supplies in Merrimack, Litchfield and Bedford resulting from emissions from the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics facility in Merrimack that came to light in 2016, as well as the Coakley Landfill and former Pease Air Force Base superfund sites in the Seacoast area. Concern for long term public health prompted legislation enabling the State to set Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) in 2020. These MCL's apply to public water systems and not to private wells, however the NHDES strongly recommends periodic testing of private wells for PFAS among other substances.

In response to contamination found in wells in Litchfield and Merrimack as part of the Southern New Hampshire investigation into the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water, hundreds of homes in both towns were connected to the Pennichuck public water and Merrimack Village District systems. NHDES required that

Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, Inc. fund the waterline connections to address groundwater contamination, providing clean drinking water to affected properties. Affected property owners were given the option to decommission their wells or retain them for non-consumptive use following connection to public water. Property owners that received a point-of-use (POU) treatment system and have been connected to public water have the option of keeping the system at their own expense or having it removed.

Household Hazardous Waste

Household Hazardous Wastes (HHW) come from everyday products used in the home, yard, or garden. By definition, they are corrosive, flammable, toxic, or reactive. Examples include paints, adhesives, solvents, pool chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, drain openers and auto chemicals. Disposal in the trash, down the sink, into storm drains, or in the woods poses a threat to water quality and may kill fish and wildlife if the chemicals are released into the environment. Household toxins may also injure human and animal health through exposure due to careless storage and handling. NRPC coordinates household hazardous waste collections for 11 communities in the Nashua Region Solid Waste Management District, including Litchfield. In 2024, the HHW Collection program removed 125,474 pounds of hazardous materials from the waste stream that could have otherwise impacted our environment. Six collection events are scheduled each year between April and November that allow residents to

dispose of these products properly. Collection dates and other information can be found on the [NRPC website](#).



HHW Collection event

Junkyards

Since 1965, all municipalities in New Hampshire have had the responsibility to license junkyards at the local level. This responsibility is contained in RSA Chapter 236 sections 111 through 129. It applies to all municipalities, whether or not there is a local zoning ordinance. The obligation to license is broad. The landowner does not need to be involved in a commercial operation or even intend to sell the material. If the material is a motor vehicle or auto parts, an accumulation

amounting to two or more vehicles is enough to require a license. Under State statute, it no longer matters whether the vehicles are registered; they become “junk” if they are no longer intended for operation on the highways. The legislature has provided a range of remedial options for use in these cases. In most instances, assistance should be sought from the municipal attorney before commencing a court proceeding. Fines and penalties may be assessed through the court system pursuant to RSA Chapter 236 Sections 127-129.

- Improve the licensing checklist to include the review of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit, especially the facility’s Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.
- Enforce licensing requirements of all junkyard facilities.
- Conduct a site walk prior to license renewal to make further recommendations for the protection of natural resources.
- Update and increase the fines for violations.

In the NRPC regions, junkyards, also known as salvage or scrap yards, have had a major impact on groundwater. In 1985, Well #6, a groundwater supply well owned by the Merrimack Village District (the well is located in Amherst) was removed from service after volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were detected in the groundwater. Investigations identified the former Merrimack Industrial Metals (MIM) facility, a salvage yard that operated from 1963 to 1999, as the primary source of the contamination plume. Placed into service in 1981, Well

#6 was capable of producing more than 1,000 gallons of water per minute making it the system's most productive well.

The five-acre MIM site was found to contain contaminated soil and groundwater impacted by chlorinated solvents, lead, PCBs, and later PFAS. EPA removal actions addressed contaminated surface soils, but groundwater contamination continues to limit bringing Well #6 back into service.



Portion of the discontinued pump & treat system at the MIM site

Though active groundwater treatment through a “pump and treat” system has ended, subsequent evaluations by the Merrimack Village District concluded that persistent groundwater contamination make reuse of the well impractical highlighting the long-term effects that such operations can

have on drinking water resources. The site has recently been included in NRPC's Brownfields program

Arsenic and Radon/Uranium

Southern New Hampshire is a growing region that has been identified as having higher than average concentrations of arsenic and radionuclides in drinking water from groundwater sources. This conclusion is based on the analysis of public bedrock wells as required by the Safe Water Drinking Water Act. According to the USGS, high levels in ground water are probably derived from natural geologic origins. However, in some areas, arsenic may originate from past human activity such as the use of arsenical pesticides. The quality of water obtained from private wells in New Hampshire is not regulated. Private wells are often not tested unless homeowners are made aware of the need to do so, or if testing is a condition prior to granting an occupancy permit. Fractured bedrock aquifers have the highest risk for arsenic contamination. The State of New Hampshire is aggressively promoting the testing of private wells. It is recommended that residents have their wells tested, and that information concerning arsenic and radon be added to the town website.

Stormwater Runoff/MS4

The development of land for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes necessarily increases the amount of impervious surface area within any given site due to the construction of buildings, roads, driveways, parking lots, and other improvements. Impervious surfaces reduce the natural infiltration of stormwater into the ground, reducing recharge

of groundwater resources. This is particularly true where stormwater is discharged into a storm drainage system that exports stormwater off of a site and out of a watershed. Development can also reduce groundwater recharge through increased evaporation resulting from land clearing. Where increased imperviousness results in direct stormwater discharges into streams and rivers, the result is often alteration of the natural flow of the stream, causing erosion and sedimentation, loss of aquatic wildlife habitat and increased flood hazards.

Because the region contains significant areas that are defined as “urbanized” by the US Census, portions of several communities including Amherst, Nashua, Merrimack, Milford, Hudson, Litchfield, Pelham and Wilton are subject to federal MS4 stormwater management regulations under the EPA Clean Water Act (CWA) and requires a permit for discharges to the environment. A municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) includes stormwater collection, conveyance, and outfall structures within the town. These structures include (but are not limited to) catch basins, drain manholes, culverts, stormwater basins, retention ponds, and swales.

Local drainage systems, whether natural or constructed, are important features that generally carry stormwater runoff away from developed areas to undeveloped areas, waterbodies, and wetlands. Although these drainage systems help to manage stormwater in our built environment, they are also a primary source of untreated pollutants in receiving waters including pathogens such as virus and bacteria;

phosphorous; nitrates; heavy metals, oil, MBTE, pesticides, herbicides, and many other pollutants. These untreated pollutants in stormwater runoff are defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “nonpoint source pollution,” meaning that the source of the pollution is not directly attributable to a single spatial point or polluter.

Stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, and lawns pick up and carry contaminants as it moves across the ground surface before entering into local drainage systems. Non-point source pollution and urban runoff in particular, is now acknowledged as being the most serious threat facing surface and groundwater resources in New Hampshire.

The Lower Merrimack Valley Stormwater Coalition (LMVSC) is a regional partnership of NRPC communities and other municipalities that collaborate with NHDES and the UNH Cooperative Extension to help communities meet M24 requirements. Formed to promote cost-effective regional cooperation, the coalition provides technical assistance, education, and outreach materials that help member communities comply with stormwater regulations while reducing pollution entering local rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.

The coalition also shares best management practices, coordinates public awareness campaigns, and supports municipalities in implementing programs that address pollutants such as sediment, nutrients, bacteria, road salt, and other contaminants carried by stormwater runoff. Through its collaborative approach, the LMVSC enables communities

across southern New Hampshire to improve water quality, protect drinking water resources, and reduce the cost of meeting increasingly complex environmental regulations.

Buffer Widths/Riparian Buffers/Streamside Forests

The following discussion on buffer widths is adapted from the publication “*Riparian Buffers for the Connecticut River Watershed*” prepared by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions of New Hampshire and Vermont in 2000. The Commission is made up of Federal, State, and private organizations. There is no single generic buffer which will keep water clean, stabilize banks, protect fish and wildlife, and satisfy human demands on the land. The minimum acceptable width is one that provides acceptable levels of all needed benefits at an acceptable cost, typically 50' from the top of the bank. Each foot of additional width increases the effectiveness of the buffer. Buffers are useful for the following purposes:

- *To Stabilize Eroding Banks.* Good erosion control on smaller streams may require no more than shrubs and trees or a managed grass buffer. If there is active bank erosion, or on larger streams, more than 50' may be necessary. Severe bank erosion on larger streams requires engineering to stabilize and protect the bank – effective engineered solutions can be accomplished with selective vegetative cover.
- *To Filter Sediment and Attached Contaminants from Runoff.*
For slopes less than 15%, most sediment settling occurs

within a 35' wide buffer of grass. Greater width is needed on steeper slopes, for shrubs and trees, or where sediment loads are particularly high.

- *To Filter Dissolved Nutrients and Pesticides from Runoff.*
A width up to 100' or more may be necessary on steeper slopes and less permeable soils to allow runoff to soak in sufficiently, and for vegetation and microbes to work on nutrients and pesticides. Most pollutants are removed within 100', although in clay soils, may require up to 500'.

Shoreland Protection Act

The Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act was enacted into law in 1991. Significant amendments were passed in 2008. The Act establishes minimum standards for the subdivision, use and development of shoreland areas adjacent to the State's public waters. Public waters are all waterbodies with a surface area of ten or more acres, all fourth order or higher watercourses, estuaries, and coastal waters. The reference line for these ponds is the natural mean high-water level. No fertilizer, except limestone can be used within 25 and 250 feet of the reference line. Only low phosphate, slow-release nitrogen fertilizer, or limestone may be used beyond the twenty-five feet of the reference line. Where existing, a natural woodland buffer must be maintained within 150 feet of the reference line and tree cutting is limited to 50% of the basal area of trees, and maximum of 50% of the total number of saplings in a 20-year period.

Wildlife



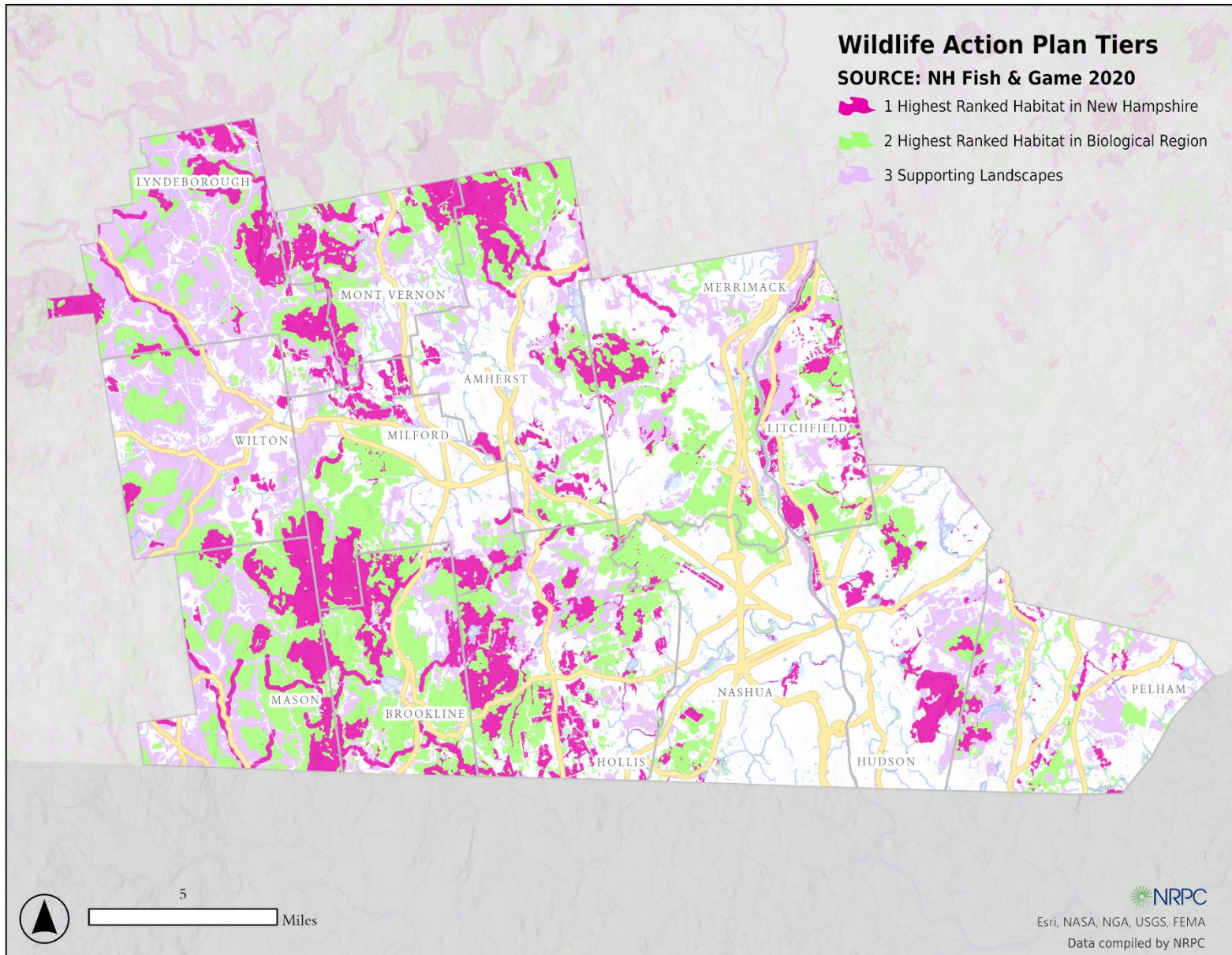
Maintenance of quality habitats is important to the survival of all species. Change is inevitable; however, some species are less able to adapt to changes in habitat than others. The fields, forests, streams, and wetlands provide habitats for a diversity of wildlife and plant species. Map 3 depicts the priority wildlife habitats identified in the 2020 New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan within the NRPC region. The mapped areas are categorized into three tiers: Tier 1 habitats, representing the highest-ranked wildlife habitats in New Hampshire; Tier 2 habitats representing the highest-ranked habitats within the region's biological landscape; and Tier 3 habitats (which

function as supporting landscapes that help maintain habitat connectivity and ecological integrity.

The tiers of habitat quality listed below, and shown on Map IV-3 are based on an intensive Statewide analysis:

- **Tier 1** rating was given to areas that contain the highest condition habitat in the State (shown in dark pink).
- **Tier 2** areas contain the highest condition rank in the biological region (defined by eco-region for terrestrial habitats, and watershed for wetland and aquatic habitats) (green).
- **Tier 3 includes** supporting landscapes such as watersheds containing top-ranked stream networks and lakes, large forest blocks, or specific animal, plant, and natural community occurrences of special note (light purple).

The map demonstrates that significant wildlife habitat resources are distributed throughout the entire region, although the largest and most contiguous habitat blocks are concentrated in the less developed western and northern communities, including Mason, Wilton, Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, Brookline, and large portions of Hollis and Amherst. These areas contain extensive forests, wetlands, streams, and undeveloped lands that provide critical habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species. Many of the highest-ranked Tier 1 habitats are clustered in these rural communities, reflecting their importance for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health.



In contrast, more urbanized communities such as Nashua, Merrimack and western Hudson contain few large habitat blocks due to the extent of residential, commercial, and industrial development. However, important wildlife habitats remain along river corridors, wetlands, conservation lands, and undeveloped open spaces within these communities as well. The map also highlights the importance of habitat connectivity, with Tier 3 supporting landscapes creating ecological linkages between larger habitat areas and allowing wildlife movement throughout the region.

Overall, Map 3 illustrates that the Nashua region contains a substantial network of high-value wildlife habitats that extend across municipal boundaries. These resources play a critical role in protecting biodiversity, maintaining water quality, supporting climate resilience, and preserving the region's natural character. The distribution of these habitat tiers underscores the importance of coordinated land use planning, conservation efforts, and habitat protection strategies to ensure that future growth and development occur while maintaining the ecological systems that support both wildlife and human communities.

Greenfield development continues to be the main threat to wildlife and habitats. Urban and suburban development threatens wildlife by destroying the habitats that they call home. Implementing cluster development regulations, supporting zoning overlay districts, conservation easements, and land acquisition of large adjacent tracts of land can all help to protect natural resources.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

The NRPC region contains a diverse array of rare plants, wildlife, natural communities, and ecosystems that contribute significantly to New Hampshire's biological diversity. The New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) has documented 234 occurrences of rare species and exemplary natural communities within the region, providing an important inventory of the area's most sensitive ecological resources. These data can be used by municipalities, State agencies, conservation organizations, and developers to identify environmentally significant areas and to guide land use decisions to minimize impacts to rare and imperiled species.

Rare plant species comprise the largest share of documented Natural Heritage occurrences, representing approximately 37 percent of all records (86 occurrences). Reptiles account for another 26 percent (60 occurrences), reflecting the importance of the region's extensive wetlands, vernal pools, river corridors, and rocky upland habitats. Birds (23 occurrences), fish (15), terrestrial natural communities (14), wetland ecological systems (11), wetland natural communities (11), amphibians (7), insects (4), mammals (2), and freshwater mussels (1) make up the remaining documented resources. Together, these records demonstrate that the region supports a wide range of habitats capable of sustaining many of New Hampshire's rarest species.



North American Wood Turtle

Natural Heritage resources occur throughout the region but are concentrated in communities with extensive forests, wetlands, large conservation lands, and relatively undeveloped landscapes. Merrimack contains the largest number of documented occurrences (42), followed by Pelham (40), Hollis (27), Nashua (25), Amherst (21), and Hudson (21). Litchfield, Brookline, Milford, Mason, Mont Vernon, Lyndeborough, and Wilton also contain important rare species and natural communities. While differences among communities partly reflect the amount of biological survey work that has been conducted, they also highlight the ecological importance of major river corridors, floodplains,

wetlands, and large contiguous forest blocks found throughout the region.



Lady's Slipper

Many of these biological resources receive legal protection under New Hampshire's endangered species program. The NHB database identifies 82 State-listed Endangered species, 66 Threatened species, and 45 Species of Special Concern within the NRPC region. Additional occurrences represent rare natural communities or species that are monitored because of

their limited distribution or ecological significance. Each occurrence is assigned both a Global Rank (G-rank) and a State Rank (S-rank), which indicate the rarity and conservation status of the species or natural community worldwide and within New Hampshire. These rankings help prioritize conservation efforts and inform environmental reviews for proposed development projects.

The Natural Heritage inventory represents one of the region's most valuable conservation planning tools. By identifying locations of rare species and exemplary natural communities, the database helps municipalities incorporate environmental considerations into master plans, zoning ordinances, conservation priorities, and development review processes. Protecting these resources not only conserves biodiversity but also helps maintain healthy forests, wetlands, rivers, groundwater recharge areas, wildlife corridors, and ecosystem services that contribute to the environmental quality and resilience of the Nashua region.

Forest Resources

Forested landscapes are fundamental to preserving wildlife habitat, protecting surface and groundwater, maintaining the rural character of the region and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation. Forested landscapes also perform many ecosystem services for local residents such as carbon reduction through storage and purification, soil stabilization and aquifer recharge areas. Additionally, forests deliver a vital

economic role in production of paper products, renewable fuel sources and food such as fruit and maple syrup.



Cutter Merriam Land Town Forest in Pelham

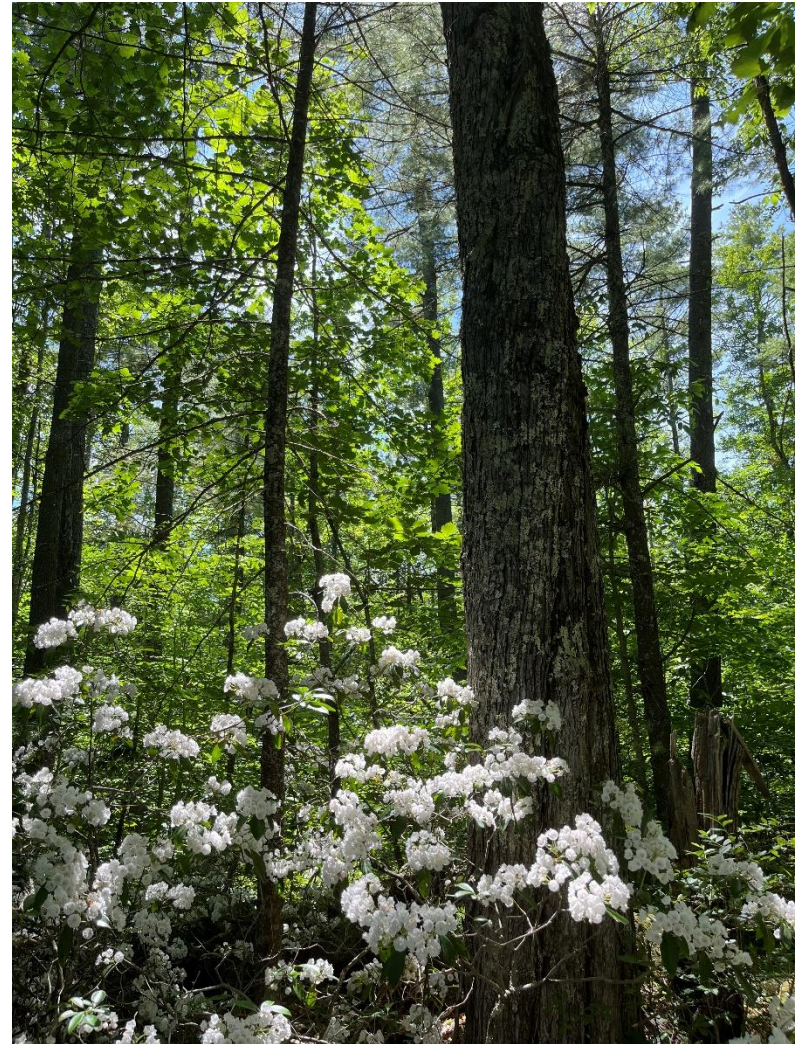
According to The Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), “New Hampshire remains the second-most forested State in the nation following Maine, but forest cover has been steadily diminishing since the early 1980s. This loss, which totals about 17,500 acres per year, is largely driven by land development. Land development creates forest

fragments, isolating species into small patches and reducing ecosystem services. Patch to patch migration is feasible for mobile species such as birds or larger mammals however patch migration significantly reduces mobility for smaller species such as small mammals and reptiles. Multiple threats exist to wildlife and forests such as invasive species, development and climate change.

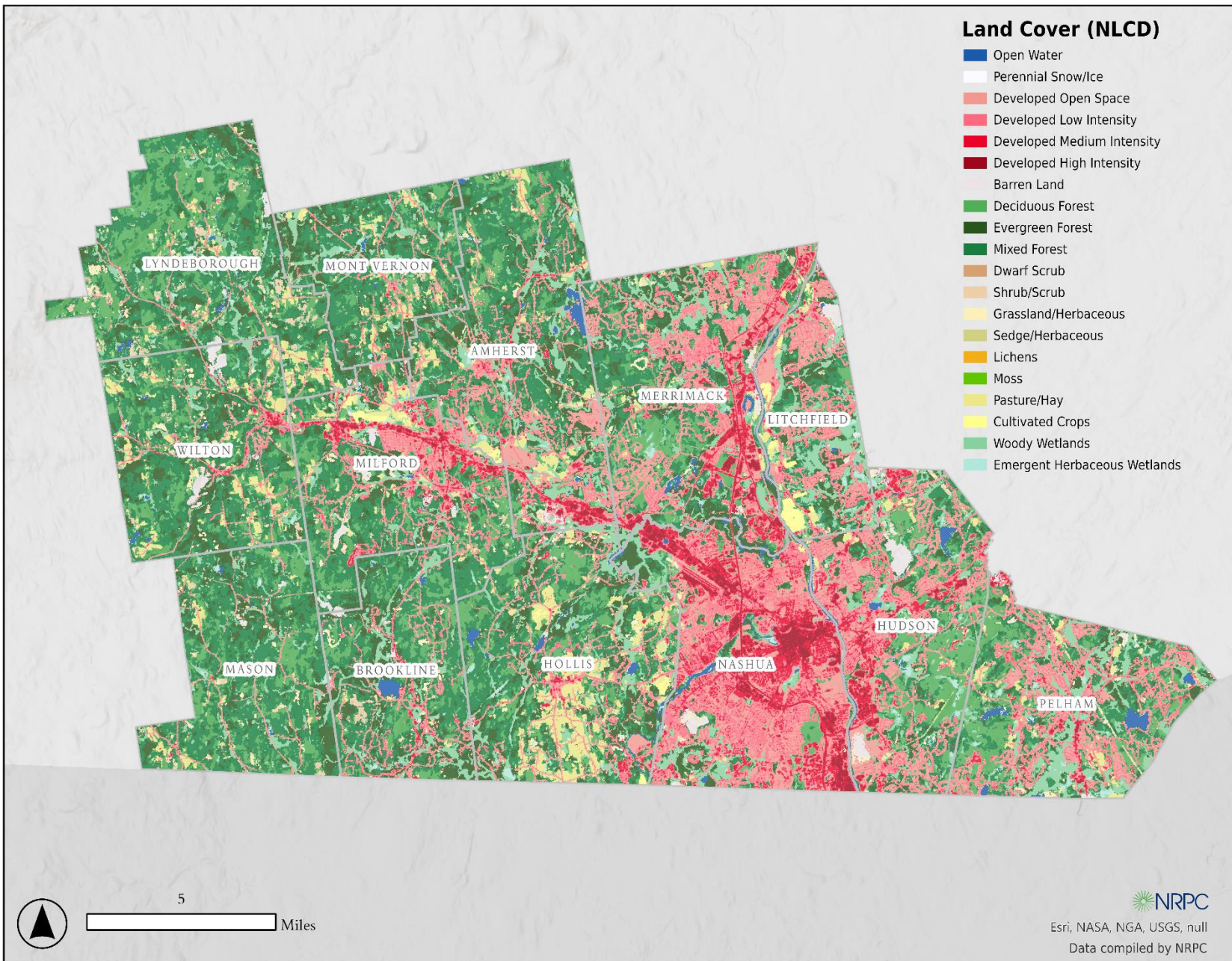
Map IV-4 depicts significant forest habitat area in the Nashua Region. According to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), intact forest blocks greater than 500 acres in size, regardless of land ownership pattern, provide important water quality, wildlife habitat, as well as remote recreational opportunities, as well as the threshold for long-term economic forest management. Forest blocks greater than 500 acres account for two-thirds of the land cover in New Hampshire and are currently about 40% conserved. Forest blocks greater than 5,000 acres represent an important threshold of ecological significance in terms of maintaining the structure, function, and processes of local and regional ecosystems. However, there are few if any forest blocks of this size within the region, though portions of very large forest tracts likely extend into the region in our western most towns.

Map 4 demonstrates that the deciduous and evergreen forest types in the region include Northern-Hardwood-Conifer, Appalachian Oak-Pine and Hemlock-Hardwood-Pine forest covers. Floodplain forests exist in spots along the Souhegan,

Nashua and Merrimack Rivers and other water bodies throughout the region.



Archibald Conservation Land in Mont Vernon



Forest Management

An important strategy to help maintain the health of both private and publicly owned forest land is the development of forest management plans. The Town of Pelham has numerous designated town forests totaling approximately 2,161 acres that are scattered throughout the community. All town forests are managed by the Pelham Forestry Committee. Each site has a Forest Management Plan prepared by a professional forester. In addition, Pelham has adopted a Climate Adaptation Forest Management Plan and conducts regular resiliency assessments of its sites.

The forestry program in Pelham adheres to principals of sustainability. In addition to facilitating sustainable timber harvesting, the goal of each plan is to promote forest health, protect sensitive areas and improve wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. Areas with numerous vernal pools and wetlands that do have outflows are left alone. Buffers of trees are left to maintain shade and to allow transient wetland species to be able to complete their life cycles during seasonal pooling of winter runoff. Sites are also monitored for invasive species and for damage from storms and wildfires.

Invasive Species

Invasive species have had a significant impact to wildlife and natural habitats within the NRPC region. The rapid spread of invasive species is often due to a lack of natural defenses against nonnative species and may be exacerbated by increased warming of the region due to changing weather

patterns. These invasives can outcompete the native species, changing the ecosystem, food chain, and natural environment. Long-term effects of invasives can be reduced levels of wildlife, the eradication of endangered and threatened species, compromised water quality, and health issues.

Exotic weeds such as milfoil have plagued New Hampshire water bodies for the past couple of decades, and the NRPC region is no exception. The fishing industry has been impacted with invasive species disrupting the natural food chain, such as and the Asian clam. With the introduction of invasive insects such as the Asian long-horned beetle, forests within the region have been impacted as well.

Invasive Plant Species

The New Hampshire Comprehensive Invasive Plant Species List (January 2023) provides a Statewide inventory of non-native plant species that pose or have the potential to pose ecological and economic threats to New Hampshire. Developed jointly by the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food (NHDAMF) and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), the table identifies terrestrial and aquatic invasive plants and classifies each species into one of three categories: Prohibited (P), Watch (W), or Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR). The list includes each plant's scientific and common name, identifies whether it falls under terrestrial or aquatic regulatory jurisdiction, and indicates whether it is considered an EDRR species requiring immediate management if discovered.

The table serves as both a regulatory and educational resource. Prohibited species are regulated under State law because they have demonstrated significant invasive impacts and may not be imported, sold, propagated, or intentionally distributed in New Hampshire. Watch List species are not currently regulated but are monitored because they exhibit characteristics that could allow them to become invasive over time. Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) species receive special attention because they are either absent from New Hampshire or only minimally established, making rapid eradication possible before widespread establishment occurs.

The list includes many well-known invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed, oriental bittersweet, glossy buckthorn, purple loosestrife, burning bush, Norway maple, autumn olive, multiflora rose, giant hogweed, Eurasian water-milfoil, hydrilla, water chestnut, and Japanese barberry, all of which threaten native habitats by displacing native vegetation, degrading wildlife habitat, reducing biodiversity, and altering ecosystem functions.

Overall, the table provides landowners, municipalities, conservation organizations, and natural resource managers with an important reference for identifying invasive plant species, prioritizing management efforts, and preventing the introduction and spread of invasive plants throughout New Hampshire. By distinguishing between regulated species, species requiring monitoring, and those needing rapid response, the list supports Statewide efforts to protect

forests, wetlands, lakes, rivers, agricultural lands, and other natural ecosystems



Japanese Knotweed

Invasive Insects

Southern New Hampshire has become the primary entry point and most heavily affected region of the State for several invasive forest insects. The area's warmer climate, extensive transportation corridors, urban forests, and movement of nursery stock and firewood have contributed to the spread of these pests. Invasive insects threaten millions of trees in forests, parks, neighborhoods, and riparian corridors, reducing forest health, wildlife habitat, water quality, and the many ecological and economic benefits that healthy forests provide.

Municipalities and private landowners also face increasing costs associated with monitoring, treating, and removing hazardous trees.

The most damaging invasive insect in the region is the emerald ash borer, which attacks and kills all native ash tree species, often within a few years of infestation. Hemlock woolly adelgid has also become well established throughout much of southern New Hampshire, feeding on eastern hemlock trees and causing widespread decline and mortality if left untreated. Other invasive forest pests affecting the region include elongate hemlock scale, winter moth, spongy moth, and balsam woolly adelgid. While the spotted lanternfly has not become established in New Hampshire, State officials continue to monitor its arrival due to potential impacts on vineyards, orchards, and ornamental trees.



Emerald Ash Borer - Source: University of Maryland Extension

The loss of ash and hemlock trees can significantly alter southern New Hampshire's landscapes and ecosystems. Ash trees are important components of floodplain forests and wetlands, while eastern hemlocks provide year-round shade that helps maintain cool stream temperatures essential for brook trout and other aquatic species. Their decline also increases erosion, changes wildlife habitat, and reduces the scenic character of forests and conservation lands. As climate change produces milder winters, many invasive insects are expected to survive and spread more rapidly, increasing pressure on the region's forests.

The New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, and the NHBugs program work together to monitor invasive insect populations, educate landowners, and encourage early detection and reporting. Public outreach, limiting the transport of firewood, protecting high-value trees through targeted treatments, and maintaining diverse forests are among the most effective strategies for slowing the spread and reducing the long-term impacts of invasive forest insects in southern New Hampshire.

Effective management of invasive insects in southern New Hampshire relies on early detection, integrated pest management (IPM), and coordinated efforts among landowners, municipalities, State agencies, and the public. Once an invasive insect becomes widely established, complete eradication is usually not possible. Instead, management

focuses on slowing its spread, protecting high-value trees, and reducing ecological and economic impacts.

The most effective strategy for managing invasive insects is preventing their introduction and detecting new infestations early. Residents and landowners can help by inspecting trees for signs of infestation, reporting suspected invasive insects to the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands or the NHBugs program, and avoiding the transport of untreated firewood, which is a common pathway for spreading forest pests.

In some area, biological control has become an important management tool for several invasive insects. Carefully selected natural enemies, such as parasitic wasps that target emerald ash borer or predatory beetles that feed on hemlock woolly adelgid, have been released in portions of New Hampshire to reduce pest populations over the long term. While biological controls rarely eliminate invasive insects, they can help slow population growth and lessen damage to forests.

Chemical treatments may be appropriate for protecting valuable landscape trees, historic trees, or trees in parks and public spaces. Systemic insecticides can effectively protect individual ash trees from emerald ash borer and hemlock trees from hemlock woolly adelgid when applied by trained professionals. However, chemical treatments are generally not practical or economically feasible for large, forested areas.

Forest management practices can also improve resilience to invasive insects. Maintaining diverse forests with a variety of

native tree species reduces the risk of widespread losses when a single species is attacked. Removing heavily infested or hazardous trees, replanting with a diversity of native species, and promoting healthy growing conditions help forests recover and become less vulnerable to future pest outbreaks.

Public education and regional cooperation remain essential. Municipal tree inventories, monitoring programs, outreach to landowners, and coordinated responses among communities can improve early detection and prioritize management efforts. As climate change contributes to the expansion of several invasive insect species, continued monitoring and adaptive management will be increasingly important for protecting the forests and urban tree canopy of southern New Hampshire.

These management practices are most successful when combined as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach, which emphasizes prevention, monitoring, biological controls, targeted chemical treatments, and sound forest management while minimizing impacts on non-target species and the environment.

[Cyanobacteria](#)

Cyanobacteria are frequently found in lakes and ponds throughout the region. It is a type of algae that is completely natural according to NHDES, however, when it grows in large amounts, it can cause ecological and human health concerns. These cyanobacteria blooms will produce cyanotoxins, which can be detrimental to wildlife and people. It has become common for beaches in the region to be closed for days at a

time due to cyanobacteria warnings. NHDES suggests a handful of strategies to help mitigate cyanobacteria blooms: develop policies and practices to reduce, control, and prevent the nutrient inputs that cause cyanobacteria blooms, advance education/outreach efforts, enhance monitoring, and identify best practices for public drinking water supplies. For more information on how to handle cyanobacteria blooms, visit New Hampshire's Cyanobacteria Plan: A Statewide Strategy.

Land Conservation

Conservation of land, especially forested lands and farmland, is essential for protecting a wide range of natural resources including surface water, groundwater and wildlife habitat as well as providing for outdoor recreational opportunities, access to local produce and retaining rural character. Land conservation can be accomplished through can be accomplished through land acquisition, the acquisition of conservation easements, through cluster or open space developments and other similar methods as well as through partnerships with conservation-minded private landowners.

Land acquisition for permanent protection is the most effective means of land conservation, through it can come at a high cost. Given the cost, a proactive land acquisition strategy should be developed with a priority placed on acquiring land adjacent to existing protected lands to expand wildlife habitats and outdoor recreational opportunities, as well as lands abutting or encompassing important water resources, priority wildlife habits and corridors, and where possible, active

farmland. This can be done through outright purchasing tracts of land in fee or by pursuing conservation easements, which are voluntary legal agreements to restrict the development of an area while remaining in private ownership. Land can be acquired by a municipality through its conservation commission or through private nonprofit organizations such as the Beaver Brook Association or Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Cluster development, also known as open space development or conservation subdivision design, is a land use planning technique that concentrates homes on a portion of a property while permanently preserving the remaining land as open space, farmland, wetlands, forests, or other natural resources. Rather than spreading houses evenly across a parcel using conventional large-lot subdivisions, cluster developments typically allow the same overall residential density while reducing the amount of land disturbed by roads, driveways, and utility infrastructure. The preserved open space can provide wildlife habitat, protect water resources, maintain scenic landscapes, support agriculture and forestry, and create recreational opportunities for residents. By reducing the length of roads and utility lines, cluster developments can also lower infrastructure construction and long-term municipal maintenance costs.

In New Hampshire, cluster development is authorized under State law (RSA 674:21) as an innovative land use control and has been adopted by most municipalities in the region. Requirements vary by municipality but typically include

standards for the amount and configuration of preserved open space, protection of environmentally sensitive resources, pedestrian connections, and long-term stewardship through conservation easements or homeowners' associations. When carefully designed, cluster developments can help accommodate population growth while preserving the rural character, natural resources, and ecological functions that are central to the region's quality of life.

The conserved land map and accompanying table illustrate the extent and distribution of protected open space throughout the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region. Collectively, the region contains approximately 48,000 acres of conserved land, representing a substantial commitment to protecting natural resources, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, water supplies, and recreational opportunities. The map shows that conserved lands are widely distributed across all thirteen communities, with particularly large concentrations in the western and northern portions of the region, including Wilton, Lyndeborough, Mason, Mont Vernon, Hollis, and Brookline. These areas contain extensive forests, wetlands, and rural landscapes that have been protected through municipal conservation efforts and partnerships with land trusts and other conservation organizations.

The table highlights significant variation in the percentage of conserved land among communities. Hollis has the highest proportion of protected land, with 7,035 acres conserved, representing 34 percent of its total land area. Mont Vernon

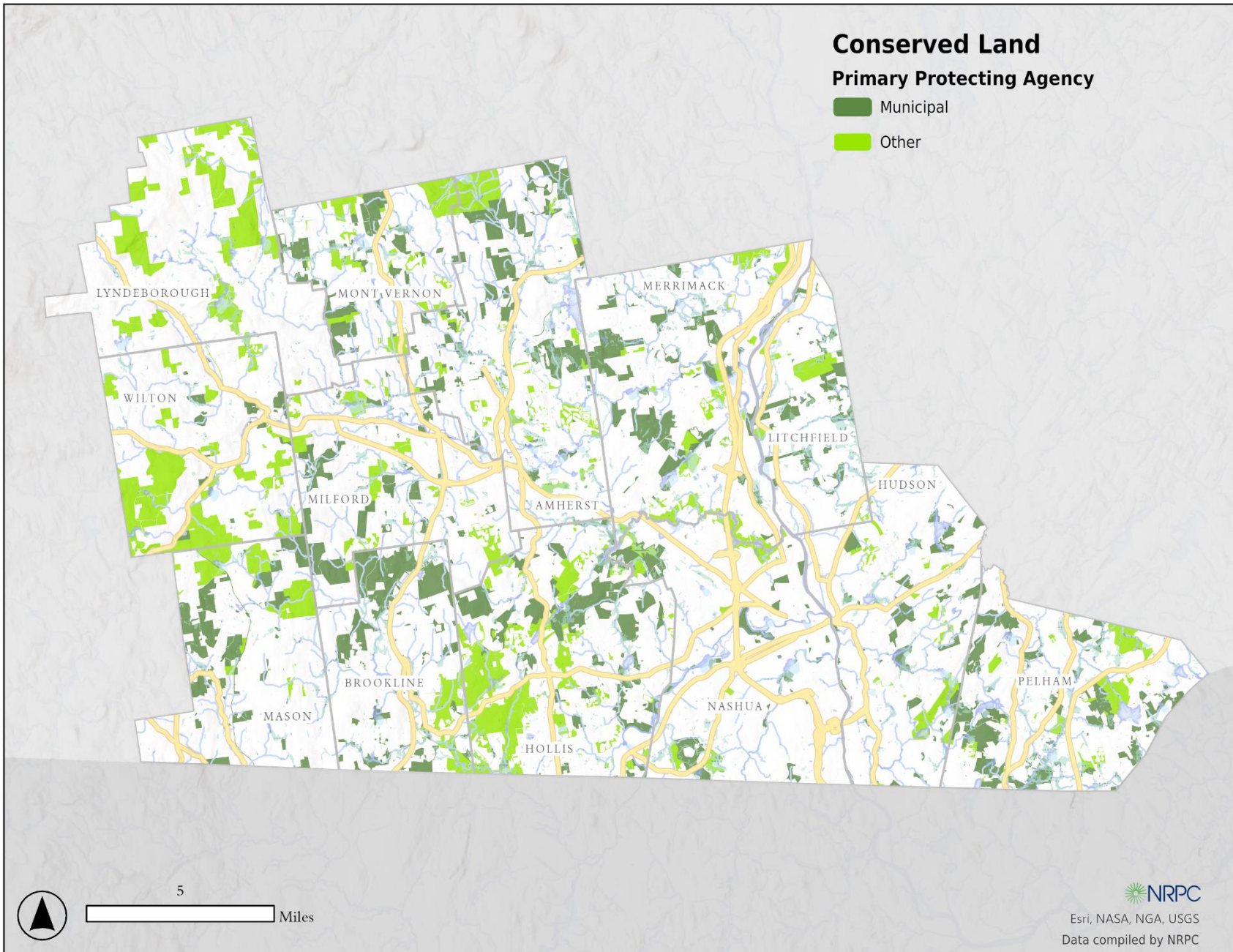
(30%), Brookline (28%), Wilton (26%), Mason (24%), and Pelham (23%) also have substantial portions of their land base under conservation. Amherst contains the largest acreage of conserved land after Hollis, with 4,803 acres protected, accounting for 22 percent of the community's land area. In contrast, the more urbanized communities of Nashua and Hudson have the lowest percentages of conserved land at 10 percent and 12 percent respectively, reflecting greater levels of residential, commercial, and industrial development. Merrimack, Milford, Litchfield, and Lyndeborough fall near the regional average, with between 16 and 20 percent of their land area protected.

Overall, the map and table demonstrate that land conservation plays an important role in maintaining the Nashua region's environmental quality and community character. The concentration of protected lands in the region's rural communities helps preserve working forests, agricultural resources, scenic landscapes, and wildlife corridors, while conservation efforts in more developed communities provide valuable recreational opportunities and protect critical natural resources. Together, these conserved lands contribute significantly to the region's quality of life and support long-term goals related to sustainable growth, climate resilience, and natural resource protection.

Conserved Land

Primary Protecting Agency

- Municipal
- Other



Town	Total Conserved Land (acres)	Total Land Area BEA (acres)	Percentage of Conserved Land by Community
Amherst	4803	22,025	22%
Brookline	3565	12,924	28%
Hollis	7035	20,688	34%
Hudson	2190	18,779	12%
Litchfield	1539	9,783	16%
Lyndeborough	3839	19,369	20%
Mason	3620	15,352	24%
Merrimack	3984	21,412	19%
Milford	3062	16,298	19%
Mont Vernon	3245	10,820	30%
Nashua	1959	20,304	10%
Pelham	3967	17,151	23%
Wilton	4256	16,447	26%

Future planning practices should look to connect large adjacent tracts of conserved or open space land, specifically utilizing regional communication to ensure the best results. Additionally, planning tools such as infill development and redevelopment of large, existing houses can help to increase the amount of available housing in the area, while continuing to protect land. Increasing the total area under conservation to 25% may be a reasonable goal.

Conservation Highlights

The following projects highlight community success stories where local grassroot organizations, municipalities, conservation commissions, and residents were able to work together to achieve environmental protection goals. Each case study showcases how widespread cooperation, combining funding opportunities, preserving water resources, and agricultural resources contribute to a successful conservation project. Each of these projects combines large tracts of conserved land to benefit both wildlife and the community.

Beaver Brook

Beaver Brook Association is an important land conservation success story in the NRPC region that showcases how effective land management practices can lead to lasting and meaningful environmental protection. Beaver Brook protects over 2,200 acres of land and maintains around 35 miles of public trails. The Association also provides year-round environmental education classes for a wide range of ages. The Associations lands help to sustain wildlife, open space, farmland and important historic sites while promoting educational resources and strategies.



Cellar Hole at a former farm site on Beaver Brook land in Hollis

Additionally, these lands highlight the importance of regional collaboration, as they stretch over the towns of Hollis, Brookline, and Milford.

Durocher Farm

An excellent example of how to blend conserving land with protecting active agriculture, while allowing landowners to gain value from their land, is the Durocher Land Acquisition Project, which was recently undertaken in Litchfield. In 2025, the Litchfield Conservation Commission partnered with the Durocher Family to preserve the bulk of their 65-acre property. The property is located on both sides of 3A and extends to the Merrimack River. The land consists of a mix of active farmland and woodland. To meet the goals of all parties, the property was subdivided to create a 2.6-acre lot to accommodate an existing historic residence on the west side of 3A together with another 2-acre parcel on the east side of 3A, both of which were retained by the family. Two conservation parcels consisting of 20 acres and 40-acres, were created to be acquired by the Conservation Commission.

Funding for acquisition came from a \$225,000 State grant through the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and a \$360,000 Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund Grant that was possible because the property is located near Pennichuck Water Works' water intake on the Merrimack River. The balance of the funding came from the Conservation Commission's Conservation Fund. The fields on the west side of 3A are currently farmed by the local McQuesten Farm and the land on the west side of 3A is farmed by Alvirne High School in Hudson through its Continuing Technical Education (CTE) agricultural program.

The Conservation Commission plans to continue making the land available for agricultural use.

This successful initiative happened because there was a family motivated to preserve the bulk of their property, grant funding was available, funds were available from the Commission's Conservation, and there were third parties who had both the interest and ability to farm the land. Though such intersections of interest and opportunity do not present themselves often, preservation of the Durocher farm can serve as a model for future farmland conservation efforts.



View of Durocher Farm in Litchfield

Mason Forest Conservation Project

The most recent case study, the Mason Forest Conservation Project was finalized in December 2025. Through a

combination of work with the Piscataquog Land Conservancy land trust and with local Mason residents, they were able to conserve 141 acres of forest land on the Mason and Massachusetts border. This project was funded through a Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) Grant for roughly \$300,000 and negotiations with the owners, the forested property is now in conservation. Most importantly, this project connects separate conserved tracts of land with a trail from the newly acquired 141-acre Mason Parcel to the 3,000 Townsend State Forest in Massachusetts. This project is another example of how regional cooperation and communication can lead to effective conservation and environmental outcomes.

Sullivan Farm

In 2019, the Forest Society, a non-profit land trust and forest organization, with the help of the City of Nashua, was able to acquire a conservation easement on the 52-acre Sullivan Farm. The farm was the last remaining farm in Nashua, according to the Forest Society, and it provides high priority historical and environmental value to the city. Utilizing funds from the City of Nashua and a series of grants, the Forest Society was able to put together an appealing \$1.4 million package to conserve the entire property. The lands acquired range from agricultural lands, forests, and wetlands, all of which require restoration efforts to help recultivate wildlife activity. Sullivan Farm is a key example of how local organizations can work together with their community in order to protect high value environmental projects.

Environmental Goals and Implementation Strategies

The Environmental Goals and Implementation Strategies presented in this chapter emphasize protecting the region's natural resources while accommodating future growth through sustainable planning, regional cooperation, and conservation. The plan recognizes that clean water, healthy forests, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and open space are fundamental to the region's quality of life, economic vitality, and climate resilience. It is also recognized that increasing development pressure, climate change, invasive species, aging infrastructure, and limited funding present significant long-term challenges.

This chapter establishes several overarching environmental goals:

- Protect and improve the quality of both surface water and groundwater through watershed protection, aquifer conservation, stormwater management, and pollution prevention.
- Preserve wetlands, floodplains, forests, wildlife habitat, and ecological corridors that provide essential ecosystem services, including flood storage, water filtration, carbon storage, and biodiversity.
- Protect rare, threatened, and endangered species by incorporating Natural Heritage data into local planning and development decisions.

- Expand permanently protected open space and farmland while maintaining the rural character of the region.
- Increase community resilience to climate change, flooding, invasive species, and emerging environmental threats such as PFAS contamination and cyanobacteria blooms.
- Promote regional collaboration among municipalities, conservation organizations, and State agencies to address environmental issues more efficiently and cost-effectively.

To achieve these goals, a broad set of implementation strategies are recommended. Water resource protection remains a primary focus through stronger watershed planning, protection of river corridors, groundwater recharge areas, and aquifers, along with expanded use of stormwater best management practices and continued participation in regional initiatives such as the Lower Merrimack Valley Stormwater Coalition. The plan also encourages continued household hazardous waste collection, protection of drinking water supplies, monitoring of contaminants such as PFAS, and stronger regulation of potential pollution sources including underground storage tanks and junkyards.

In addition, an emphasis is placed on conserving larger, connected landscapes through strategic land acquisition, conservation easements, and partnerships with private nonprofit conservation groups. Municipalities are encouraged to prioritize properties that protect drinking water supplies,

wetlands, wildlife corridors, forests, and productive farmland while expanding recreational opportunities. Cluster (open space) development is identified as one of the region's most effective land use tools because it accommodates residential growth while permanently preserving significant natural resources and reducing infrastructure costs. Redevelopment and infill development are also encouraged to reduce pressure on undeveloped lands.

Protecting biodiversity is another key implementation strategy. The plan recommends maintaining large forest blocks, preserving wildlife corridors, incorporating habitat information into local planning and zoning, and supporting conservation of rare species identified by the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau. Communities are encouraged to strengthen wetland protections, maintain riparian buffer zones along streams and rivers, and preserve connected habitat networks that allow wildlife movement across municipal boundaries.

The plan also emphasizes proactive management of invasive plants, invasive insects, and emerging environmental threats. Recommended actions include public education, early detection and reporting, integrated pest management, biological controls where appropriate, restrictions on transporting invasive species, and continued monitoring of forest health. Similarly, reducing nutrient pollution and road salt impacts, improving cyanobacteria management, and expanding public outreach are identified as important

strategies for protecting lakes, ponds, and drinking water resources.

Finally, it should be stressed that successful environmental protection depends on sustained regional cooperation, adequate funding, public education, and partnerships among municipalities, nonprofit organizations, State agencies, and residents. The conservation success stories highlighted throughout the chapter—including Beaver Brook, Durocher Farm, the Mason Forest Conservation Project, and Sullivan Farm—demonstrate how coordinated planning, grant funding, and local commitment can permanently protect important natural resources while preserving the environmental quality and character of the NRPC region for future generations.



NRPC Regional Plan - Transportation

The NRPC Region benefits from a well-connected highway system that links our communities to a wide range of economic and quality of life opportunities in northern and western New Hampshire, the Seacoast region, and the Boston area. The Region, however, also faces many transportation challenges. Infrastructure maintenance needs have strained resources at all levels of government. State and federal revenues, which fund the largest share of transportation spending by far, have remained essentially flat though infrastructure improvement costs have increased dramatically since the 2020-2023 Pandemic. As a result, several of the region's projects that are included in the state's [Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan](#) (Ten Year Plan or TYP), are proposed to be delayed or eliminated and few if any new projects are likely to be added over the next few years.



Pelham Center © Seth Dewey Photography

Funding for transit is also constrained and transit options, particularly outside of Nashua, are extremely limited. No fixed-route transit service operating within the region extends beyond the boundaries of the City of Nashua with the exception of a Nashua Transit System (NTS) extension to Walmart in Amherst. The closest station on the [MBTA Commuter Rail system](#), which serves approximately 122,000 daily passenger trips on an average weekday, terminates just 13 miles from the Nashua City line. However, the Region has no direct rail links to Boston even though slightly more than a quarter of Region's residents commute to Massachusetts for work. That said, many people in the Region continue to actively pursue a rail connection to Boston. The Region does enjoy fixed route bus service to Boston via Boston Express and the Manchester Transit Authority runs a regular route between downtown Nashua and Manchester with a stop at the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport. Further, on-demand service for elderly people and individuals with disabilities is provided in most of the Region's communities by the [Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative \(SVTC\)](#) and by NTS under contract, though gaps in service remain. Investments in Bicycle and Pedestrian improvements have grown markedly in the Region in recent years. In the past two project solicitation cycles for the Ten Year Plan, Bike/Ped projects outnumbered road and bridge improvement projects and applications for federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program funds for Bike/Ped projects have been robust. The Region currently benefits from a number of

multipurpose paths, trails, sidewalks in many areas and limited sections of bike lanes however, there is no integrated pedestrian and bicycle network across communities. Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should continue to be a priority, especially improvements designed to provide access to people of all abilities, safety improvements, and projects that enhance connectivity between existing bicycle and pedestrian networks.



It is also essential that the Region's transportation system adapts to changing demographics and economic and social conditions. The Region's population is aging with the fastest growth occurring in people age 65 and older. A greater emphasis will need to be placed on the transportation needs of seniors including improved demand/response transit and ridesharing, as well as investments in ADA compliant and all-

persons accessible transportation infrastructure, improved street lighting, large font signage and ensuring that lane markings and fog lines are clearly visible. Other trends affecting transportation include the dramatic increase in telecommuting which has led to a decline in traffic volumes despite a growing population. In addition, people are increasingly interested in health and wellness which increases demand for opportunities to walk, hike and bike. Given funding constraints, changing demographics and changes in the way we live, we need to emphasize maintenance and improvements to the existing street and highway network, investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and improvements to transit with a particular emphasis on the needs of older adults.

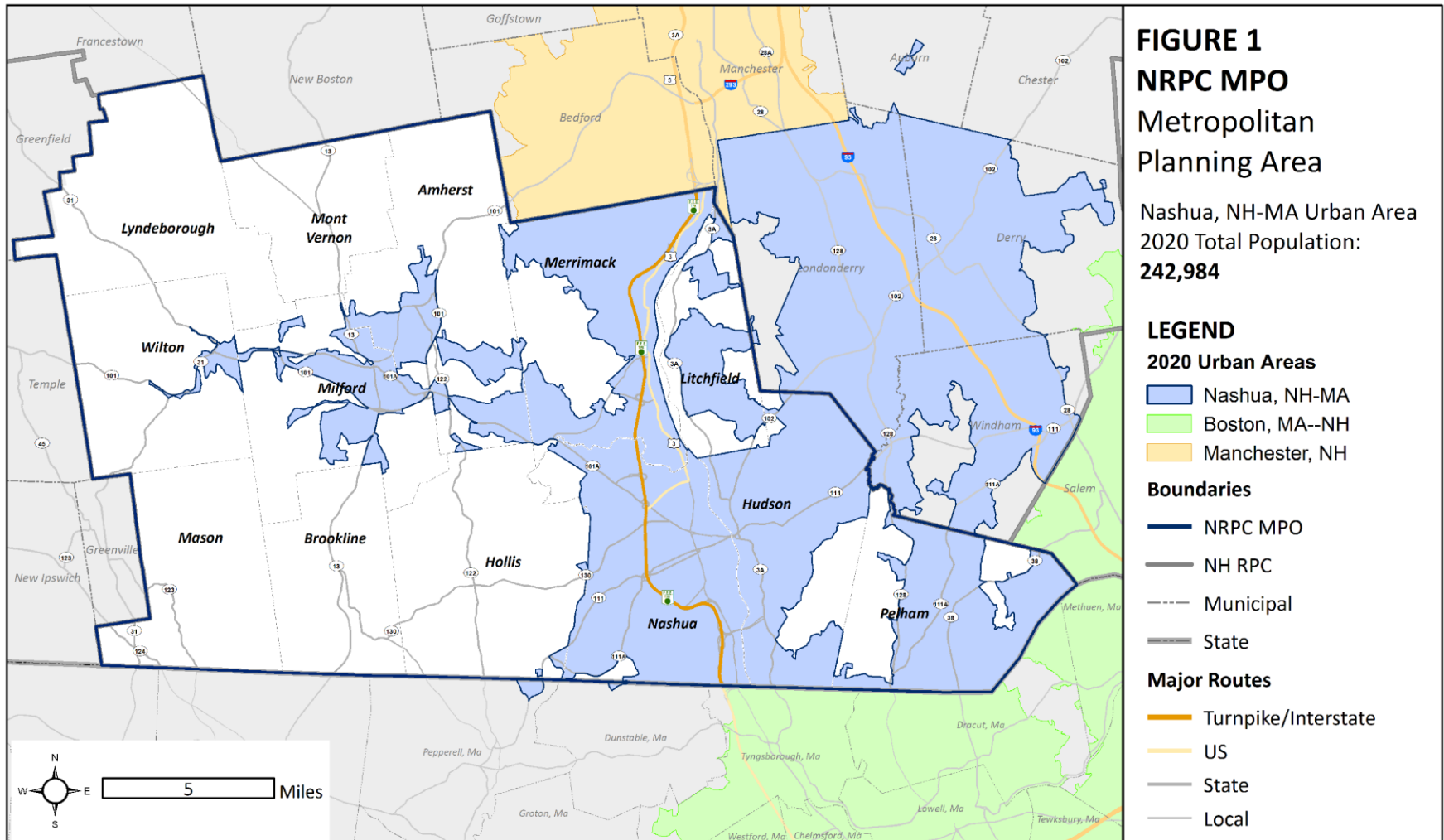


As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) under federal law, NRPC is required to have a [Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#), (MTP) which serves as the region's long range transportation plan. NRPC is designated as an MPO because the region includes "urbanized" areas with more than 50,000 residents, as defined by the US Census. The Region's urbanized areas, known as the [Nashua, NH Urbanized Area \(UZA\)](#), is shown on Map 1 on the following page. The MTP, adopted in December of 2023, informs the transportation component of this plan. Components of that plan are highlighted in this section along with relevant updates where appropriate. The following vision statement was adopted as part of the 2023 MTP:

Vision: An integrated, cost effective, multimodal transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people and goods throughout the region in an equitable and environmentally responsible manner to support economic prosperity and the highest possible quality of life for all users.

To help realize this vision, several goals and objectives were adopted as part of the MTP which have been adapted for the Regional Plan. Key goals and objectives are summarized on the following pages.

Map 1 – NRPC Urbanized Area with Major Transportation Routes



Highway Network

The NRPC Region is served by approximately 1,900 miles of roads. Though the NRPC Region is not served by an Interstate highway, New Hampshire's FE Everett Turnpike traverses Nashua and Merrimack providing vital links to Route 3 in Massachusetts (to Boston) and north to I-293 and I-93. With an average daily traffic (AADT) count of 112,603 near the NH-MA border and an AADT of 48,039 vehicles (2025) at the northern edge of the region, it is also the region's most heavily traveled roadway. Current and previous traffic count information for all the roads and highways detailed below are available on [NRPC's Traffic Count Viewer](#). A description of the region's principal highways is provided on the following pages.

North-South Routes

FE Everett Turnpike

As noted above, the FE Everett Turnpike is the primary north/south arterial in the region. The Turnpike runs from the Massachusetts (MA) state line northward, through Nashua and Merrimack, and exits the region at the Merrimack/Bedford border. It connects the Boston area with the Nashua region and provides access to the central and northern areas of NH. The region is served by 11 interchanges including exits 1 through 8 in Nashua and Exits 10 through 12 in Merrimack. Exit 12, however, is only a partial interchange that lacks northbound on and southbound off ramps. Until recently, all three interchanges in Merrimack had ramp tolls. After several years of advocacy, the last ramp tolls were removed in 2022.



FE Everett Turnpike

The most recent interchange on the Turnpike, Exit 13, opened in 2011 just south of the Bedford mainline tolls. Exit 13 provides greatly improved access to the Boston-Manchester Regional Airport. In addition, it provided a much faster way for Litchfield residents to access the Turnpike. The Turnpike is a limited access median-divided highway, and the number of travel lanes varies from 3 in each direction from the MA state line northward to approximately Exit 11 in Merrimack where it currently narrows to 2 lanes in each direction creating a pinch point that results in severe congestion in peak hours. A [widening project](#) is currently underway. The NHDOT has a stationary traffic counter on the Turnpike at about the Bedford

Town line. Recorded traffic volumes on the Turnpike peaked at 49,623 ADT in 2019 before dropping by 23% to 38,067 ADT during the Pandemic in 2020. Though volumes have steadily increased since 2020, volumes have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. The highest recent traffic volumes recorded in 2025 are on a Friday at 58,965 with the lowest volumes recorded on Sunday at 44,808. High Friday traffic volumes are likely the result of people heading to vacation destinations and second homes to the north.

[Daniel Webster Highway/Main St/Concord St \(US 3\)](#)

The Daniel Webster Highway (DW Highway), also known as Main Street in downtown Nashua and Concord St north of downtown to the Merrimack line, is the region's primary north/south route aside from the FE Everett Turnpike. The



portion of DW Highway beginning at the Henri Burque Highway and extending northward to the Bedford town line is also known as US3. Within the NRPC Region, the corridor extends from the Massachusetts line in south Nashua, through Merrimack to the Bedford Town line. DW Highway in South Nashua provides access to the region's largest concentration of commercial uses, including the Pheasant Lane Mall, in addition to a large concentration of multi-family residences and office uses. Further north, the corridor serves as the principal spine for Nashua's downtown. DW Highway in Merrimack is also an important commercial/ industrial corridor that provides access to some of the region's largest employers in addition to housing and retail development.

[NH 3A](#)

NH 3A serves as the major north/south route in the NRPC Region east of the Merrimack River. In the NRPC Region, 3A runs from the Tyngsborough, MA line in south Hudson where it becomes River Road and then Lowell Road, through central Hudson where it becomes Derry Street and Webster Street, and into Litchfield where it is known as Charles Bancroft Highway. Lowell Road in south Hudson is a major commercial/industrial corridor that serves several shopping centers, including a Walmart, Sam's Club, a major industrial park (the Sagamore Business Park), and a 1.4 million sq. ft. Target distribution center (currently under construction). The Sagamore Bridge intersects Lowell Road between the Sagamore Business Park and the Target site, providing direct access to the FE Everett Turnpike. In Litchfield, 3A is largely

rural/residential with limited commercial uses. 3A continues the entire length of Litchfield into Manchester where it is known as Brown Avenue.

NH 13



A heavily congested intersection on Lowell Road in Hudson

NH 13 provides a north/south corridor from the MA state line in Brookline through Milford and Mont Vernon. It provides an important economic connection to MA as well as a link between Milford and the rural areas to the north and west.

East-West Routes

NH 101

NH 101 is part of the National Highway System and is a primary east/west corridor in southern NH, connecting the NRPC Region to Keene and the Monadnock Region to the west

and the Seacoast to the east. NH 101 enters the western part of the region at the Wilton/Temple line where it continues across Wilton into Milford, connecting to the limited access 101 Bypass. The 101 Bypass circumvents downtown Milford before intersecting NH 101A and then continuing north through Amherst and into Bedford where it connects to the FE Everett Turnpike. Average daily traffic on 101 in 2025 was 6,929 vehicle per day at the Wilton/Temple line. NH 101 has experienced a high number of crashes making it a safety priority for the region.

NH 101A

NH 101A is part of the National Highway System (NHS) and is a primary east/west corridor west of the Merrimack River. It extends east from Milford to downtown Nashua where it terminates at the intersection of Main Street, providing access to the downtown business district, south Nashua, and MA via the Daniel Webster Highway. Until the 1970s, NH 101A was a two-lane rural highway, but as the communities west of Nashua grew, so did traffic volumes. In the mid-70s, the road was widened to 5-lanes from the Nashua/Merrimack town line westerly to just over the Amherst town line. Between 1987 and 1990, the rest of the roadway was widened to its

intersection with the NH 101 Bypass in Milford. 101A is a heavily used commercial corridor. In addition to serving as a commuter corridor, it provides access to several large shopping centers, big box stores and large office, apartment, and condominium complexes. As a result, the corridor suffers from heavy congestion during periods of peak demand, though various [safety and capacity improvements](#) are underway.

NH 111

NH 111 is an east/west arterial roadway that traverses through the communities of Hollis, Nashua, and Hudson. It extends from the Massachusetts border in the southeastern corner of Hollis, through Nashua where it connects to the FE Everett Turnpike at Exit 5. 111 continues east of the Turnpike through downtown Nashua, over the Merrimack River and into Hudson before existing the region at the Hudson-Windham town line and eventually connecting with I-93 via Exit 3 in Windham. Route 111 is a critical transportation corridor, providing commuters with access to the FE Everett Turnpike and downtown Nashua. The corridor also accommodates retail and commercial services along portions of its route and provides direct access to Nashua High South, the Four Hills Landfill and Public Works Department and Nashua's Police Station. The roadway crosses over the Merrimack River into Hudson via Taylor Falls Bridge where it intersects NH 3A and NH 102. This segment, rated as severely congested, represents a major regional traffic choke point as it is the only river crossing for several miles in either direction.



NH 130 in Brookline Village

NH 130

NH 130 extends westerly from downtown Nashua (Broad Street) to an interchange at FE Everett Turnpike Exit 6, continuing west through Hollis and into Brookline where it intersects with NH13. NH 130 provides important east- west connections between the towns of Brookline, Hollis, and Mason to the west with the Turnpike and downtown Nashua to the east.

Crossing the Merrimack River

There are only two crossings of the Merrimack River within the Region. The northernmost crossing, between downtown Nashua and Hudson Center, is comprised of two one-way bridges: The Taylor Falls Bridge crosses the river in the easterly direction and the Veterans Memorial Bridge crosses in the westerly direction. Both bridges carry two lanes of traffic and are consistently plagued by serious intersection capacity problems on both sides of the Merrimack River. The traffic volume on the Taylor Falls Bridge at the Nashua-Hudson town line was 31,417 vehicles per day in 2025, down from a high of 32,687 vehicles per day in 2019. Despite the slight decline in traffic volumes, the Taylor Falls and Veterans Memorial Bridges and associated connecting streets remain one of the most congested areas in the region.

The Sagamore Bridge is the second and southernmost crossing of the Merrimack River in the region. The bridge was expanded as part of the Circumferential Highway project and connects the Everett Turnpike and Daniel Webster Highway with NH 3A in Hudson. It is a high-capacity bridge with 3 lanes of traffic in each direction. The bridge is a major commuting route for residents east of the Merrimack River seeking to access the Turnpike. Adjacent to the Sagamore Bridge is the only dedicated bicycle pedestrian crossing of the Merrimack River in the region. The average daily traffic on the bridge at the Nashua-Hudson town line was 44,268 vehicles per day in 2025, a decline from 46,771 vehicles per day in 2019.

In November 2011, the Manchester Airport Access Road opened. This road provides another crossing of the Merrimack River just north of our region. While the primary purpose of the road is to provide direct access to Manchester-Boston Airport from the FE Everett Turnpike, it also improves access to Litchfield.



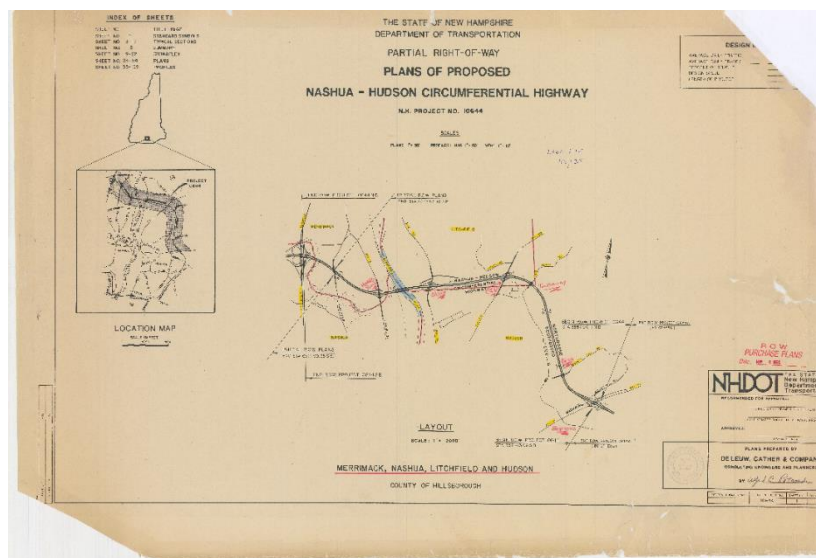
Taylor Falls Bridge

Table 1 - Stationary NHDOT Traffic Counter Data - 2019 through 2025

	2019	2020	% Change 2019- 2020	2021	% Change 2020- 2021	2022	% Change 2021- 2022	2023	% Change 2022- 2023	2024	% Change 2023- 2024	2025	% Change 2024- 2025	% Change 2019- 2025
NH 101@ Wilton/ Temple Line	7,538	6,315	-16.2%	6,948	10.0%	6,845	-1.5%	6,922	1.1%	6,878	-0.6%	6,929	0.7%	-8.1%
NH101A @ Milford /Amherst Line	31,121	26,266	-15.6%	29,129	10.9%	29,682	1.9%	30,365	2.2%	28,546	-6.0%	29,097	1.9%	-6.5%
DW Hwy Merr. @ Hilton Dr.	15,553	13,234	-14.9%	14,598	10.3%	14,946	2.4%	15,036	0.6%	15,115	0.5%	15,384	1.8%	-1.1%
Taylor Falls Bridge	32,687	27,588	-15.6%	31,551	14.4%	32,150	1.9%	32,889	2.2%	28,572	-13.1%	31,417	10.0%	-3.9%
Sagamore Bridge	46,771	39,475	-15.6%	43,778	10.9%	44,610	1.9%	45,636	2.2%	44,542	-2.4%	44,268	-0.6%	-5.4%
FEE Tpke - Bedford Tolls	49,623	38,067	-23.3%	42,679	12.1%	44,288	3.8%	45,907	3.5%	47,164	2.7%	48,039	1.9%	-3.2%
FEE Tpke @ Exit 5	125,544	100,357	-20.1%	110,055	9.7%	114,282	3.8%	118,864	3.9%	118,364	-0.4%	112,603	-4.9%	-10.3%

Circumferential Highway

The Circumferential Highway was conceived of in the late 1950s/early 1960s as a four lane divided highway intended to ease traffic flow on the FE Everett Turnpike by diverting traffic around central Nashua through Hudson, Litchfield, and Merrimack. In the 1980s the New Hampshire Department of Transportation formally advanced plans for the corridor which would have run from FE Everett Turnpike Exit 2 in South Nashua, across the Merrimack River on a new Sagamore Bridge where it would loop around central Hudson into southern Litchfield with interchanges at NH 3A, NH 111 and NH 102 in Hudson and 3A in Litchfield. The Highway would have then crossed the Merrimack River into southern



Cover Sheet from a 1990 Circumferential Highway ROW Plan

Merrimack, connected to DW Highway, and then reconnected with the Turnpike at a new Exit 9. This northerly crossing would have provided the region with a third bridge over the Merrimack, thereby enhancing east-west travel and helping to alleviate congestion at the Taylor Falls/Veterans Memorial Bridge.

The project, however, faced persistent opposition due to environmental impacts and the US EPA ultimately vetoed the southern section in Hudson based on wetland and wildlife impacts. Further, demand for the project lessened with the widening of the Turnpike in Nashua in the mid-1990s. Despite periods of renewed study and a push by Hudson officials to revive the southerly section as a two-lane controlled access highway known as Hudson Boulevard, the initiative lacked sufficient public support, and a viable funding source was not identified.

Though most of the Circumferential Highway was never built, the initial connection to the Turnpike, the Sagamore Bridge, was completed and hundreds of acres of right-of-way were acquired. In 2025, NHDOT initiated the process to formally abandon the project and dissolve the remaining highway layout and right-of-way. After decades of planning, design and debate, the remaining right-of-way will be declared surplus and sold off for redevelopment or conservation.

Safety

In 2025, NRPC collaborated with New Hampshire's other three MPOs to develop a Safe Streets For All Action Plan (SS4A). As stated in the plan:

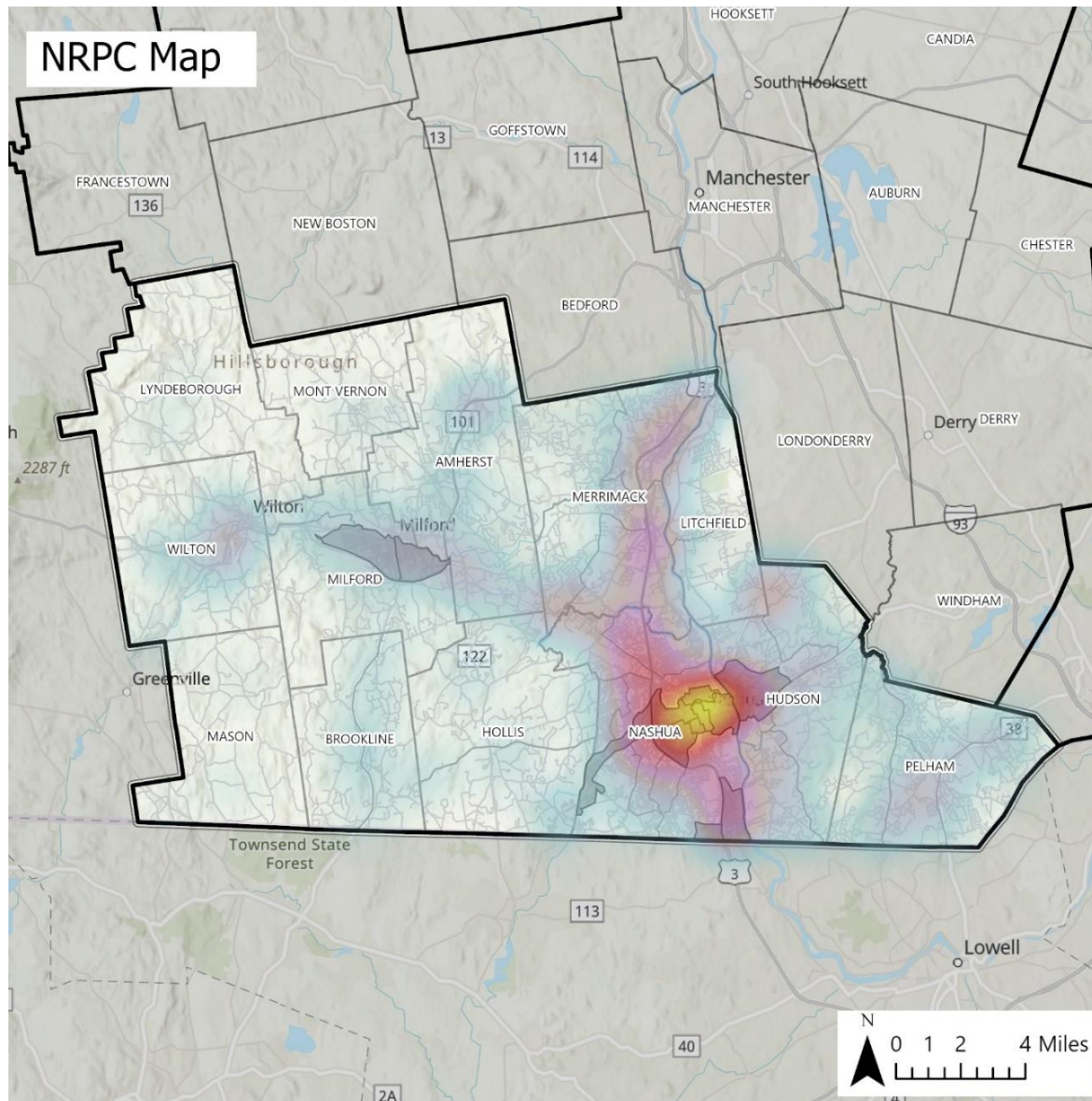
“A Safety Action Plan is a detailed, data-driven roadmap that outlines specific measures and strategies to enhance transportation safety, reduce crash frequency and severity, and ultimately achieve zero fatalities and serious injuries. It includes a comprehensive analysis of crash data, identification of high-risk locations and behaviors, and targeted interventions. Developed through collaboration with stakeholders such as transportation agencies, law enforcement, public health organizations, and community members, the plan outlines projects, policies, and ongoing communication efforts to foster a shared understanding and responsibility for safety.”

The SS4A plan included a crash analysis for the 2018 to 2022 period. Over that five year-period, the region experienced a total of 52 fatal crashes and an additional 19,044 serious injury, minor injury, possible injury, no apparent injury, and unknown injury crashes. In addition to loss of life, trauma and often life-altering disabilities that result from serious crashes, crashes also cause economic injury and often serious travel delays which impact economic productivity and quality of life. The SS4A plan emphasizes a Safe System Approach. As noted in the plan: “The Safe System Approach is a holistic and comprehensive strategy for road safety that aims to reduce

the risk of severe injuries and fatalities from road traffic crashes. It is based on the understanding that while human error is inevitable, road traffic fatalities and serious injuries are not. It works by building and reinforcing multiple layers of protection to both prevent crashes from happening in the first place and minimize the harm caused to those involved when crashes do occur.”



Safe System Approach Illustration



The SS4A plan identified several “hot spots” in the region where there are relatively large concentrations of fatal, serious, and minor injury crashes (in orange) and “cold spots” (in blue) where lower concentrations exist. The highest concentrations of fatal, serious, and minor crashes are in Nashua and Hudson. Smaller concentrations are shown in Merrimack and Litchfield, as well as Pelham, Wilton, and Amherst

The SS4A plan also identified 50 High Injury Networks (HIN) with the region. The table on the following page depicts the top 20 HIN road segments in the region in rank order. Note that the analysis did not include the FE Everett Turnpike.

Table 2 - NRPC Region High Injury Road Network (HIN): Top 20 HIN Road Segments in Rank Order

Town/City	Road Segment	Fatal Crashes	Serious Injury Crashes	Minor Injury Crashes	Total Crashes
NASHUA	E Hollis St (NH 111)	0	5	27	32
NASHUA	Kinsley St	1	4	37	42
NASHUA	Main St	0	4	36	40
LITCHFIELD	Derry Rd (NH 102)	1	2	7	10
NASHUA	W Hollis St (NH 111)	1	5	22	28
NASHUA	Daniel Webster Hwy (US 3)	2	5	37	44
HUDSON	Dracut Rd	0	3	14	17
HUDSON	Old Derry Rd	0	3	4	7
HUDSON	Derry Rd (NH 102)	0	4	13	17
WILTON	Gibbons Hwy (NH 101)	1	6	12	19
NASHUA	Concord St (US 3)	1	2	21	24
AMHERST	Route 101	2	6	9	17
NASHUA	Broad St (NH 130)	0	3	25	28
PELHAM	Bridge St	0	5	38	43
NASHUA	Amherst St (NH 101A)	2	4	124	130
MERRIMACK	Continental Blvd	0	3	13	16
HUDSON	Wason Rd	1	2	8	11
MERRIMACK	Daniel Webster Hwy (US 3)	0	6	34	40
AMHERST	Route 101A	1	2	16	19
BROOKLINE	Route 13	1	4	7	12

Planned Highway Improvements

FE Everett Turnpike Improvements

F.E.E. Turnpike Widening



F.E.E. Turnpike Open Road Tolling (Bedford-Merrimack)

During the 1990's the F.E.E. Turnpike was widened in Nashua to a minimum of three lanes in each direction from the Massachusetts state line to Exit 7 at NH 101A, with the most travelled segment between Exits 5 and 6 having five lanes per direction. The remaining phases of this project will widen the 2-lane segments between Exit 8 (Nashua) Exits 10, 11, 12 (Merrimack) to I-293 in Bedford. The project will also address bridges within the widening segments that have not been substantively improved since their construction during the 1950's. This project is currently under construction and will be ongoing through FY2034.

F.E.E. Turnpike ITS Deployment (Nashua to Concord)

The NHDOT will be implementing All Electronic Open Road Tolling at the Bedford toll plaza, which will remove toll barriers and install new electronic systems that will allow tolls to be collected while vehicles maintain highway speeds. The system is now in place at the Hooksett and Hampton toll plazas. This project will have a substantial impact on congestion and will improve the safety of toll collection on the turnpike. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2026.

The NHDOT has programmed the implementation of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) on the Everett Turnpike. The project entails the design, planning and installation of dynamic message signs, closed-circuit video cameras, roadway detectors, and wireless communications linking the ITS components to NHDOT's Transportation Management Center. These systems streamline incident response and management, improve safety in work zones, facilitate greater fuel efficiency for drivers, and create "smart roads" that could potentially guide future autonomous vehicles. Safety will be enhanced by increased awareness of work zones and improved emergency response time.

FEE Turnpike Exit 5 Reconfiguration

The project addresses traffic and safety related issues for southbound traffic exiting the turnpike at exit 5E onto the overhead West Hollis Street on-ramp to travel to the east toward downtown. This traffic competes with eastbound traffic from West Hollis and Main Dunstable Road. All eastbound traffic converges at a very short weave section on

West Hollis Street between the turnpike southbound off ramp and the turnpike northbound on ramp and is further exacerbated by the conflict between turnpike off-ramp traffic to West Hollis Street and northbound turnpike on-ramp traffic. The 500-ft. weave section along West Hollis Street is too short for the conflicting traffic movements. Queues back up on the ramp during peak periods to the southbound turnpike collector-distributor roadway segment.

The proposed project would realign the Exit 5E southbound off ramp with the traffic signal at the junction of Main Dunstable Road and the turnpike southbound on ramp. This approach would eliminate the exit from the southbound turnpike traffic onto West Hollis Street. Traffic would exit the turnpike onto Main Dunstable Road and turn right onto West Hollis Street from Main Dunstable Road where two right turn lanes exist. This project (Project #42594) was included in the FY2025-2024 S TYP but was removed from the draft FY2027-2036 TYP during the legislative process.

NH 101 Corridor Improvements (Wilton/Milford/Amherst)

NH 101 corridor improvements have been programmed into the TYP based on findings of The New Hampshire Route 101 Corridor Plan (September 2002). The stated purpose of the plan was to improve safety and preserve the capacity of the roadway as land use patterns change along the corridor. The recommended plan was designed to result in a better-operating, more visually appealing arterial, as well as reduced traffic diversion to local streets. The project has evolved to

include two projects (Project #13692D and #13692E) that will provide safety improvements along the corridor at a smaller scale than was originally envisioned. Project #13692D (safety improvements on the Milford Bypass) was completed in FY2025. Project #13692E (safety improvements in Amherst) is scheduled for construction in FY 2034.

NH 101A Widening (Nashua, Merrimack)

The NH 101A Corridor Master Plan and Improvements Program (December 2002), proposed various capacity improvements to reduce congestion, increase speeds to efficient levels, and decrease vehicle miles by reducing the diversion of traffic to parallel routes.

TIP Project #10136A in Nashua would widen NH 101A to three travel lanes per direction from Somerset Parkway and to Celina Avenue. The project will include pedestrian, bike, and transit improvements. Right of Way acquisition is scheduled for FY2030, 31, & 32 in the draft FY2027-36 TYP. Construction is not included in the draft TYP pending identification of a funding source.

In Merrimack there are three NH 101A travel lanes westbound from Continental Boulevard to Boston Post Road and two lanes eastbound. Improvements to the Continental Boulevard intersection with 101A will include a second lane for right turns from Continental Boulevard onto westbound 101A and a new right turn lane from 101A westbound onto Continental Boulevard. Non-motorized travel will also be enhanced with sidewalks, bike lanes, and a signalized crosswalk across 101A at the Continental Boulevard intersection. Traffic calming measures have been implemented with the reconfiguration of

Boston Post Road and Craftsman Lane, and a public right-of-way through the parking lot at the Merrimack Valley Baptist Church has been discontinued. This project is expected to be completed in 2026.

US 3 D.W. Hwy./Wire Rd. (Merrimack)

Wire Road intersects Daniel Webster Highway (US 3) at a significantly skewed angle which impacts sight distance of traffic approaching from the north on DW Highway. TIP Project #29174 will realign the intersection and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. This project has been combined with the bridge replacement over Baboosic Brook (BR. # 118/135) project and is scheduled for constructions in FY2026.

NH 13 Improvements (Brookline)

NH 13/South Main Street Realignment

Ten Year Plan Project #43768 in the draft FY2027-36 TYP entails the realignment of NH 13 and South Main Street to a configuration yet to be determined. The project is intended to address safety, as right-turning vehicles from northbound NH 13 to South Main Street can take the obtuse angle at a high speed, posing a hazard particularly to vehicles exiting the business directly across the highway. The project is scheduled for construction in FY2027

NH 13/Old Milford Road

TIP Project #40662 will provide safety improvements to the NH 13 Old Milford Road intersection. The improvements may include a dedicated southbound left turn lane onto Old Milford Road. Motorists report difficulty turning southbound

from NH 13 onto Old Milford Road, which provides access to a large residential section of the town. Vehicles moving southbound on NH 13 use the southbound shoulder to pass vehicles queued to turn left which motorists report as unsafe. Although congestion reduction is not a priority, as the intersection operates at Level Of Service B, minor queuing on Old Milford Road would be lessened by improving gaps in the major approach volumes. This project is scheduled for preliminary engineering in FY2027, but the construction phase has been removed from the TIP and TYP pending identification of a funding source.

NH 13/Ruonalla Road

This project will realign the skewed intersection of Ruonalla Road and NH 13. The project is included in the FY2027-36 TYP and scheduled for construction in FY2032.

NH122 Improvements (Amherst)

NH122/Merrimack Road

Project #44227 in the FY2027-2036 TYP will complete a longstanding improvement project that has been deferred for many years at the intersection of NH 122 and Merrimack Road by addressing established flaws in the intersection. The scope of this project includes a modern roundabout along with bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements. Preliminary Engineering is scheduled for FY2032, and Construction is scheduled for FY2036.

Bridge & Canal Complete St.'s Improvements, Nashua

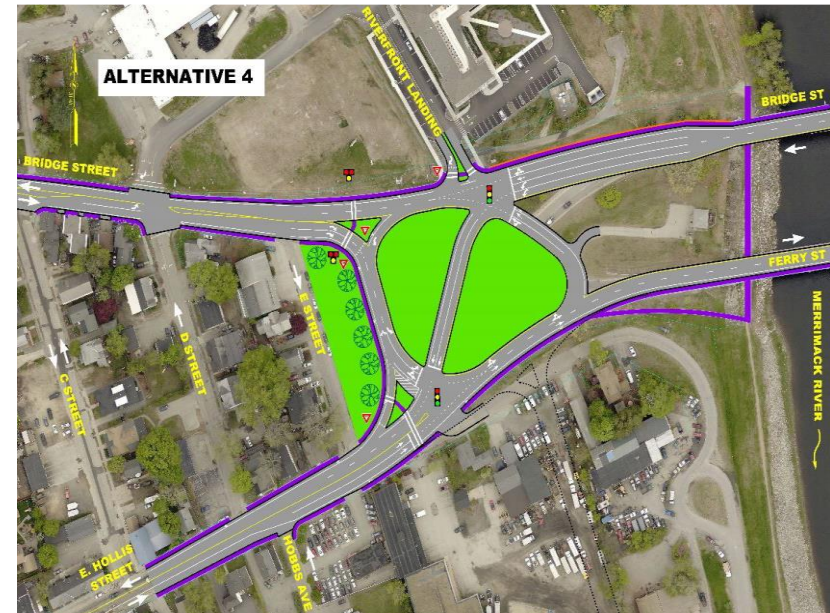
The project begins on Canal Street at Railroad Square near Main Street and continues east over the Canal Street bridge, where the street continues as Bridge Street, toward the Taylor Falls/Veterans Memorial bridges over the Merrimack River. The proposed improvements include pavement replacement, adjustments to curbs and reconstruction of sidewalks and curb ramps. New pavement markings will re-assign the street's use in terms of travelled way, parking, and bike lanes. Drainage problems will also be addressed.

NH 111 Improvements

NH 111 - East Hollis St and Bridge Street Intersection Reconfiguration (Nashua)

As mentioned above, the Taylor Falls Bridge Area has historically been in the top tier of highly congested areas in the Nashua region. Limited Merrimack River crossings in the region focus a great deal of east-west traffic to this area and the junction of Bridge Street and East Hollis Street on the Nashua side results in significant delay for drivers eastbound from Bridge Street to Ferry Street and westbound from Bridge Street to East Hollis Street. An improvement project was added to the TYP, and a study was conducted to select a preferred improvement alternative. The project is intended to address traffic congestion, queues, lack of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, safety concerns, improving access to Crown Street and new development and to provide a more welcoming gateway into Nashua. Several alternatives

were considered, with the preferred alternative shown in the figure below.



NH 111 East Hollis Street Intersection Improvements – Main Street to C Street (Nashua)

East Hollis Street serves as a downtown arterial that services regional east-west traffic, linking the FE Everett Turnpike and the Nashua core area with Hudson and points east. The roadway is utilized locally to access residential and commercial locations. Vehicular traffic is impeded by several factors including inconsistent cross-section, poor pavement conditions, inconsistent pavement markings/signage and inadequate shoulders and sidewalks in many locations.

Pedestrian and bicyclist safety are a primary concern of the improvement program.

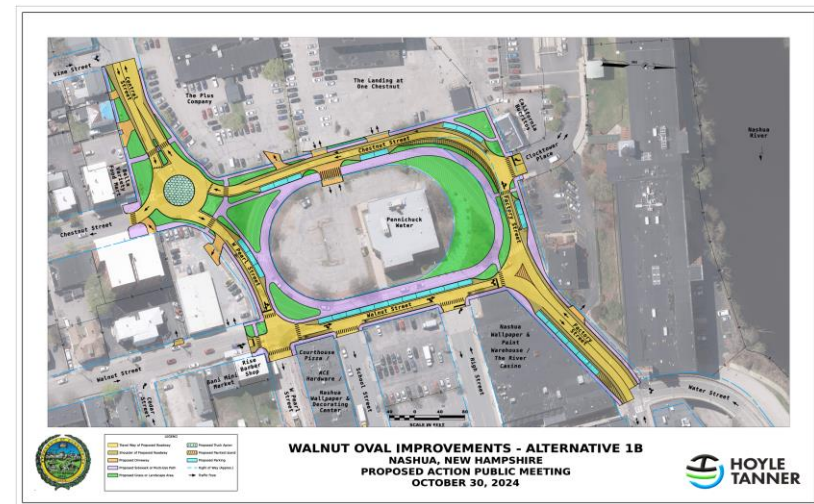
The project currently proposes eleven-foot travel lanes to provide adequate width without encouraging excessive operating speeds. Options for using either wide shoulders for bicycle use or narrow shoulders coupled with wider sidewalk/bikeways will be considered. Streetscape improvements include consistent lighting and landscaping. The project evolved from the 2004 East Hollis Area Study which included an in-depth public outreach effort. TYP Project #40660 is scheduled for Preliminary Engineering in FY 2032 and Construction in FY 2035 in the draft FY 2027-36 TYP.

NH 111 - West Hollis Street Improvements

The City of Nashua has proposed improvements to a 2.9-mile corridor along West Hollis Street from Riverside Street to the Hollis Town Line. This critical corridor provides access to the FE Everett Turnpike and downtown Nashua from Hollis and Pepperell, MA, while providing access to the Four Hills Landfill and DPW facilities, the Police Station, NTS garage, Nashua High South, a recreation complex including a branch YMCA, the Conway Ice Arena and Stellos stadium as well as several residential developments and various commercial and other civic uses. The project would include intersection, access, traffic signalization, sidewalk, and bicycle infrastructure improvements along with additional crosswalks and speed mitigation measures. Funding has not yet been secured.

NH 111 - West Gateway Improvements (Nashua)

This project entails the reconfiguration of the West Gateway of downtown Nashua, including the Walnut Street Oval and one-way street pair of Factory and West Pearl Streets to improve traffic flow, reduce speeds and improve pedestrian access. The reconfiguration would transform the oval into a city block configuration. Improving pedestrian access and safety is a major objective. The oval width and continuous fast speed operation create a physical and psychological barrier between the downtown and the Millyard. TIP Project #41586 provides funding for the intersection improvement component of this project and construction is scheduled for FY2027.



Transit

Bus Service

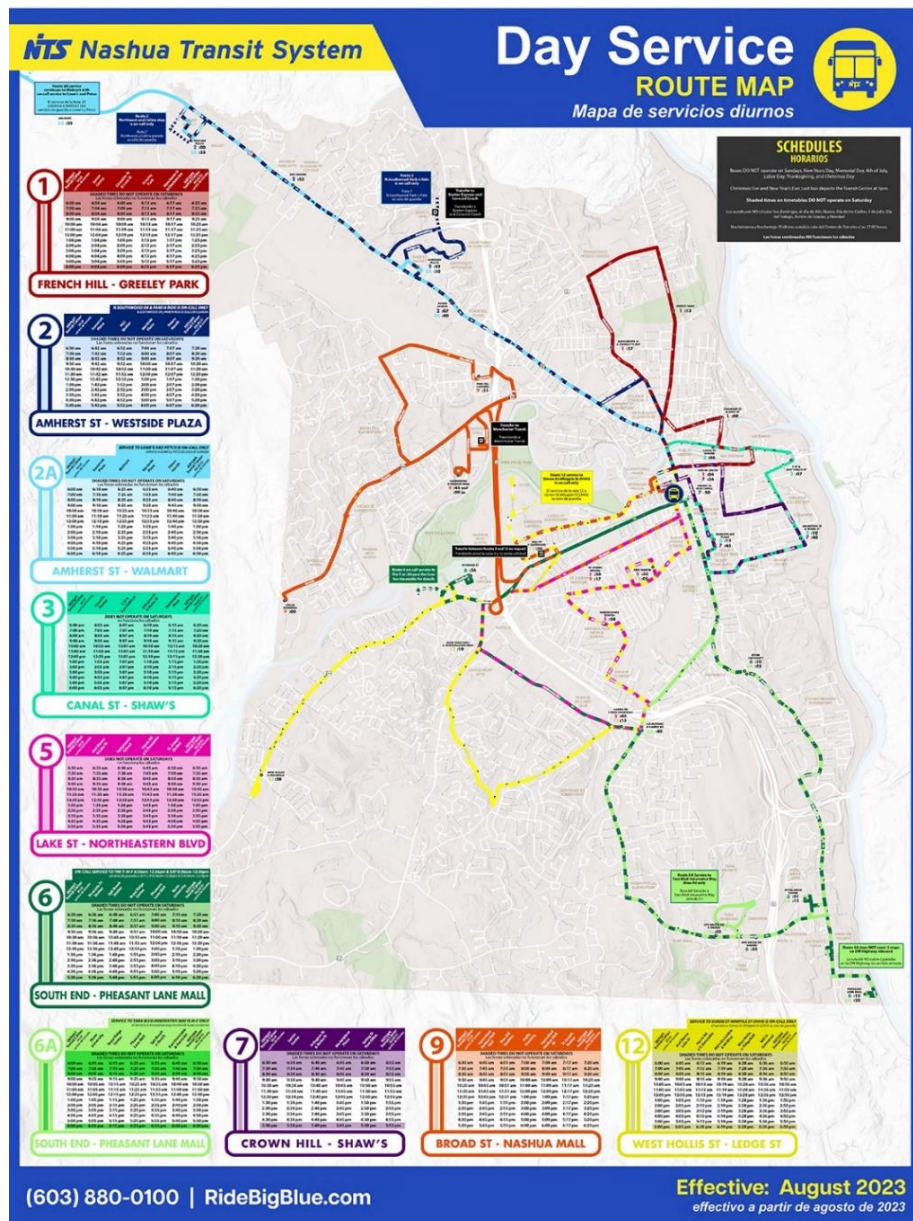


Fixed-route transit service in the region is limited to the Nashua Transit System (NTS) which provides bus service throughout the City of Nashua along with service to the Walmart in Amherst. Notably, NTS is one of the few transit operators in the state to provide nighttime service. No other fixed-route transit service is currently provided in the Region's other twelve communities.

Fixed-route inter-city bus service to Boston is provided by [Boston Express](#) which offers daily service between the FE Everett Turnpike Park & Ride facility at Exit 8 in Nashua, South Station in Boston, and Boston-Logan International Airport. There is also a stop at the Park & Ride in Tyngsborough right over the NH/MA border which is used by many residents of

the region. Boston's South Station, located in the city's Financial District, provides direct access to one of New England's largest employment centers as well as providing connections to Amtrak passenger rail service to New York City, Washington, DC, and other destinations along the Northeast Corridor, as well as connections to the MBTA's Redline subway, the Silver Line Rapid Transit Bus service, Commuter Rail lines, and several inter-city bus services. Boston Express is the only transit operator that offers seven-day-a-week service including evenings. In addition, the Manchester Transit Authority (MTA) provides fixed-route intercity bus service between the Nashua Transit Center in downtown Nashua, the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport and downtown Manchester.





In addition to fixed-route service in Nashua, NTS provides on-demand service on a contractual basis to the towns of Hudson and Merrimack providing older individuals and people with disabilities access to critical destinations such as medical appointments. The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) provides similar services, also under a contract with NTS, for senior and disabled residents of Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Milford, Mont Vernon, and Wilton. Pelham offers limited service, mainly for medical appointments and grocery shopping at no cost for all senior residents of the town through its Hobbs Center Bus. Though volunteer ride programs do help fill some gaps, until recently, little to no service has been available to residents of Litchfield, Mason, or Lyndeborough.

In 2024, a collaboration between NRPC, the [NRPC Foundation](#) and The Greater Nashua Regional Coordination Council for Community Transportation (RCC7) established the [Greater Nashua Community Rides Pilot Program](#). This innovative program combines funding from multiple sources to fill gaps in transportation services for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income riders. These include wheelchair-accessible rides, rides to destinations outside the region including medical appointments at Dartmouth-Hitchcock (Lebanon, NH) or Boston as well as evening and weekend services within the region. The Rides can offer expanded services by covering the cost for taxis and other private ride services. The program also provides free public transit bus passes.

Passenger Rail

Despite its proximity to Boston, the NRPC Region has no passenger rail service, though many commuters drive to the Gallagher Terminal in Lowell to access MBTA commuter rail service into Boston's North Station. Efforts to extend commuter service to Nashua and Manchester as part of what is known as the [New Hampshire Capitol Corridor](#) initiative have continued on and off for several years. The Capitol Corridor project would extend an existing commuter rail line running from Boston's North Station to Gallagher Terminal in Lowell, MA, further north into New Hampshire to connect Nashua, Manchester, and the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport to Boston.



Illustration of a possible South Nashua Commuter Rail Station

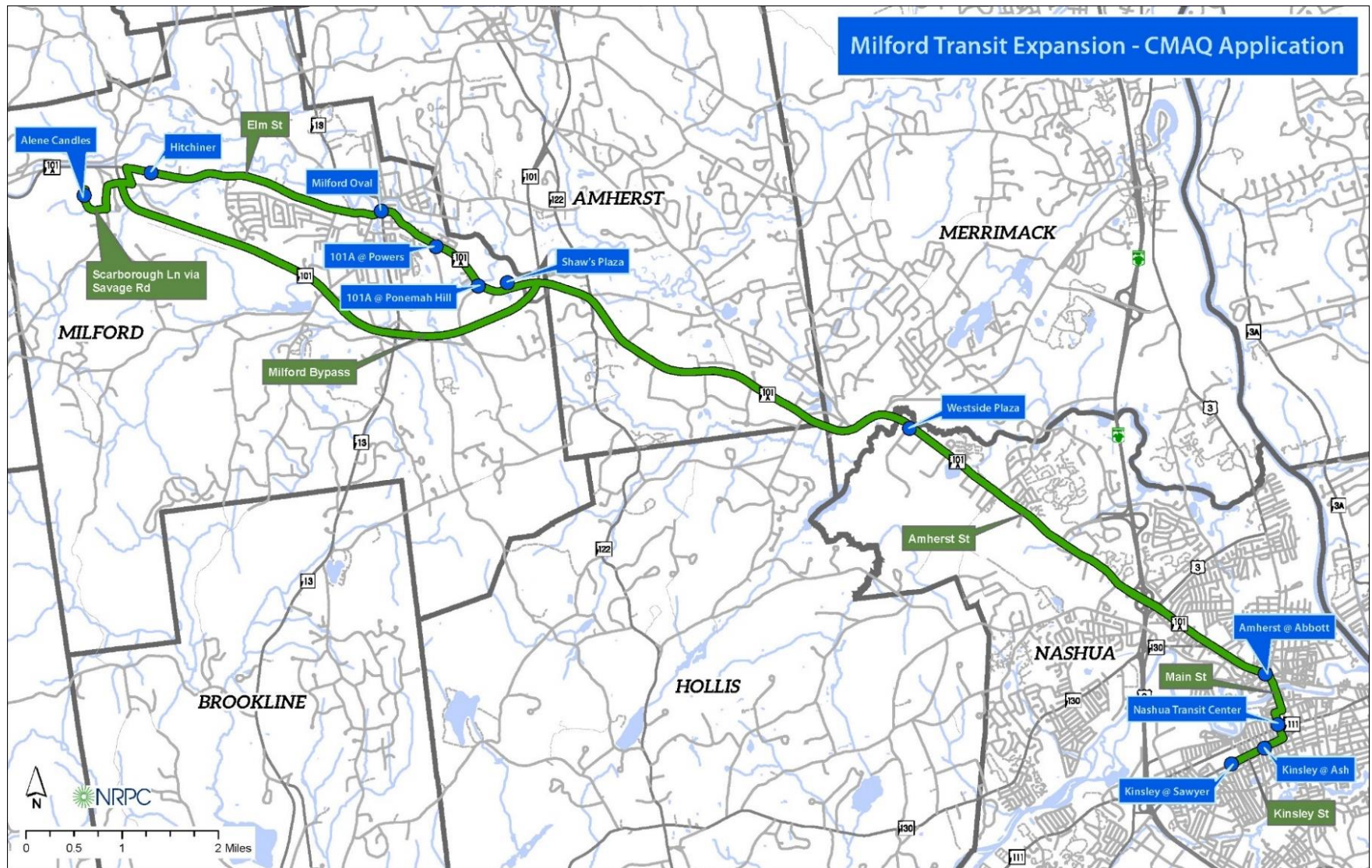
Transit Improvements

Currently, approximately 58 percent of residents in the Nashua Region do not have access to fixed-route transit, which, with the exception of a stop at Walmart in Amherst, does not extend beyond Nashua's boundaries. The three most promising candidates for extended transit service in the region are Hudson, Merrimack, and Milford. Hudson has been previously identified by NRPC's Transit Plan for the Nashua Region as having the highest overall need for transit service. Various Transit Studies have identified the following potential transit routes:

- NH 101A between Nashua and Milford - fixed route service between downtown Nashua and Milford including service to major employers. The project would address the need for fixed route bus service providing transportation for transit dependent populations living in Nashua, who are seeking manufacturing employment opportunities in Milford as well as Milford residents seeking access to employment, education, medical and shopping destinations both in-town, along NH 101A and in the City of Nashua. In 2023, NRPC successfully applied for CMAQ funds to support a pilot NTS service to Milford, however the project was pulled from the draft Ten Year Plan during the GACIT approval process. A map of the proposed route is shown on the following page.
- Continental Boulevard and Daniel Webster Highway, Merrimack – Some of the region's largest employers, including BAE Systems, Fidelity Investments, and the

Merrimack Premium Outlets, are situated in industrially zoned areas in southeastern Merrimack. These locations are all within approximately two miles of existing NTS Route 1 along Manchester and Concord Streets. Given the concentration of multi-family developments along the length of the DW Highway corridor in Merrimack, a route extending further north may be feasible.

- NH 3A in Hudson - The extension of NTS Routes 6 and 6A into Hudson would serve several major destinations, including the Sagamore Business Park, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, and the future 1.4 million square foot Target Distribution Center. It would also serve densely populated neighborhoods surrounding Hudson's town center and multi-family residential developments along the Lowell Road corridor.
- Nashua Shuttle to Lowell Gallagher Transit Terminal – the implementation of passenger rail service is still uncertain. In the meantime, it may prove beneficial to initiate a Nashua to the Lowell Gallagher Transit Terminal shuttle as an interim service. A shuttle service is somewhat less convenient than a passenger rail extension to Nashua, as the shuttle would travel highways with a degree of congestion to reach Lowell Terminal, as opposed to boarding a train in south Nashua. Initial analysis indicates that most if not all of the operating cost of the service could be covered by passenger fares.



- Nashua Shuttle to Alewife MBTA Station – A direct shuttle from Nashua to Alewife could provide a more convenient path for commuters who travel to MBTA Red Line stations in Cambridge and Mass General in Boston than passenger rail service to Boston via Lowell since it avoids the need to transfer to the Green Line at North Station followed by another transfer to the Red Line at Park Street Station for a back-tracking trip to the final destination. There may also be potential reverse commuter ridership.
- Nashua Shuttle to University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Because a large number of UML faculty and students live in the Nashua area, a shuttle service is likely to be successful, though it may require subsidy to keep fares affordable. Charging a moderate fare reduces the ridership potential to a level that would not support the service.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Mobility

Pedestrian infrastructure in the region is well developed in most downtown and village center areas, but it is limited in most rural and suburban areas. According to the *2023 New Hampshire Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*, there are 67 miles of paved sidewalks in the NRPC region. There are also 30 miles of trails, 167 miles of state roads with paved shoulders, but only ½ mile of dedicated bike lanes. To fill existing gaps in the Region’s sidewalk network, an additional 36 miles of sidewalk is recommended in the state plan. Multi-modal paths are found along rail trails in Amherst, Brookline, Mason,

Merrimack, Milford, Nashua, and along Albuquerque Avenue in Litchfield. Dedicated bike lanes along roads are limited to sections of recently improved highways and are not sufficiently developed to form a comprehensive network.



Heritage Rail Trail in Nashua. The trail is located between heavily trafficked West Hollis and Kinsley Streets in one of Nashua’s most densely populated areas. As such, the trail functions as an alternative transportation corridor in addition to a recreational trail.

A priority of the NRPC is to encourage a shift from motorized to non-motorized travel for short trips wherever possible. Shifting trips from driving to walking and biking reduces congestion, lowers emissions, and improves air quality, and improves physical and mental health and overall well-being. Walking and biking also provide enhanced opportunities to experience the outdoors, to meet neighbors, and increase connectiveness to our communities.



Typical Sidewalk in a Residential Area with grass panel

To encourage increased walking and biking in our communities it is essential that safe accommodations are available along streets and roads or on appropriately designed multi-use paths. It is also essential that these accommodations are designed to accommodate all users including people with wheelchairs and other mobility devices and people with

NRPC Regional Plan 2026 – Transportation

strollers. Pedestrian accommodations also must include signalized or unsignalized crosswalks at intersections and at mid-block locations as needed. What forms these accommodations take varies according to the nature of the roadway.

On rural roads with moderate levels of traffic and speed,



The photo above is a picture of a section of Commonwealth Avenue in South Boston showing a protected bike lane at an intersection separated by a street buffer together with a sidewalk buffer.

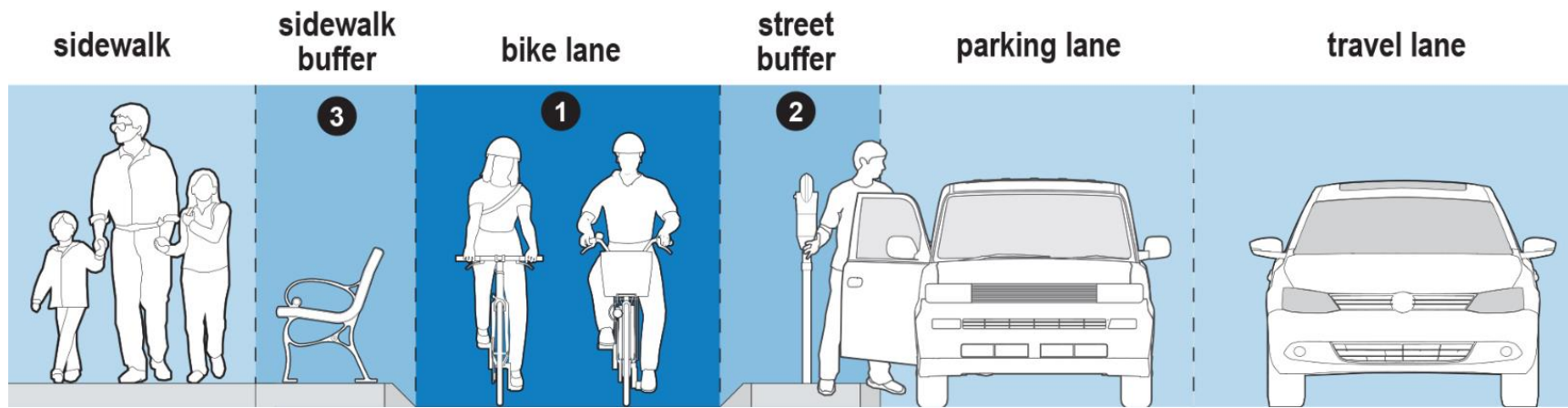
paved shoulders may suffice. On residential urban and suburban streets, bicycles can generally share the road with automobiles and a four- to five-foot-wide sidewalk for pedestrians, ideally separated from the road by a grass to landscaped panel, is generally sufficient. This is especially true in areas with on-street parking. Parked cars provide an

excellent barrier between travel lanes and sidewalks and greatly increase a sense of safety for pedestrians. In downtown areas and business districts, wider sidewalks are required and on busier roads, a higher degree of separation is needed between bicycles, pedestrians, and motorized vehicles. Some examples of interventions appropriate under various conditions are provided on the following pages, including examples from within the NRPC Region.

The figure below, provided by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), illustrates a preferred condition for a major downtown street such as Main Street in Nashua. On the far left it shows sidewalks of sufficient width to accommodate multiple users together with a buffer area for benches, street trees, trash cans, and other similar items. A bike lane, at least five feet in width separated by a street buffer is provided due to higher traffic volumes and congestion. The street buffer can also be

used for parking meters and traffic signage. Additional buffering is provided by a parking lane.

On the following page, a portion of the multi-use path along Albuquerque Avenue in Litchfield is depicted. Albuquerque Avenue is a limited access two-lane road that serves as Litchfield's principal arterial, linking several neighborhoods with parks, schools, and the Town Hall complex. Note the wide separation and grade difference between the path and travel lanes. Due to the design speed of Albuquerque Avenue and its rural/suburban setting, a separated side path is the most appropriate accommodation for bicycles and pedestrians in this area. Its typical width of only 8 feet, however, is the minimal acceptable for a multi-use path. Generally, a width of at least 10 feet is preferred.





Above left is an unsignalized crosswalk on Manchester Street in Nashua. The crosswalk uses color and texture to make the crosswalks more visible to motorists. The use of stamped pavement also creates rumble effects that can help reduce speed. Note the use of ramp curbs for accessibility.

In addition to sidewalks paths and trails, supporting bicyclists and pedestrians, providing amenities such as bike racks, benches, trash receptacles and ideally access to drinking water and restrooms where possible. The image above to the right depicts a sheltered bike rack in Cambridge, MA. Protecting bikes from rain is helpful. On the lower left is an image of an age-friendly bench installed in Boston. Age-friendly benches have raised armrests on the ends and center of the bench as well as raised seats and backs for easy support. These features provide better back support while sitting and make it easier for people to sit and get back up. Benches should also be

made of temperature-resistant materials. Benches without backs, though they can be ornamental, should not be installed where the primary purpose is to provide seating.



Above is a covered bike rack in Cambridge, MA. To the right is a senior-friendly bench in Boston.



Bicycle & Pedestrian Count Data

Biking and walking have many advantages but just as traffic counts, turning count movements and travel speeds are necessary for planning road improvements. Usage data for biking and walking is necessary to target infrastructure investments, plan for future biking and walking growth, and design bike-ped infrastructure improvements. Currently, NRPC deploys several portable automatic counters throughout the region to develop and track baseline data. NRPC continues to



Installing a bike/ped counter in Milford

conduct a robust bicycle and pedestrian counting program. NRPC traffic count locations and data can be viewed [here](#). In addition to deploying counters, NRPC also uses GPS to map trails throughout the region.



Bike/ped counter at Palmer Bartell Forest Trailhead

Notable Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Projects

Amherst: Baboosic Greenway

The primary purpose of the Baboosic Greenway is to create a regional off-road trail network to enhance safety and increase mobility for nonmotorized transportation. The initiative, broken up into several individual projects, utilizes abandoned B&M Railroad property as well as Town owned property to provide a future continuous non-motorized path over six miles in length running north to south in Amherst.

Hudson: NH 3A and NH 102 Non-Motorized Improvements

The Town of Hudson has included eliminating gaps in non-motorized infrastructure along sections of NH 3A (Lowell Road), and NH 102 (Derry Road). The project on NH 102 would continue the pedestrian/bike lane from Towhee Dr. to Megan Dr. and from Phillips Dr. to the Hudson Mall. On NH 3A sidewalks would be continued from Birch St. to Pelham Rd. The projects have been in the MTP for a number of years; however, the Town has not moved toward implementation through a Transportation Alternatives Program application. The Board of Selectmen affirmed the projects as future goals, and it is recommended that the Town pursue TAP funding for one or more segments in the next application round.

Merrimack: Town Center Sidewalks

The Town of Merrimack has received federal TAP grant funds to construct 3,600 linear feet of sidewalk from the Souhegan River (Chamberlain Br.) to Merrimack 360 Plaza on DW Highway. The project connects a number of Town facilities and commercial establishments with the town center. Construction

is anticipated to be completed in 2032. Merrimack has also been approved for funding to continue an existing sidewalk on the south side of Baboosic Lake Road in the Town Center area from DW Highway to O'Gara Drive with construction scheduled to be complete in 2036.

Milford: Pedestrian Linkages

Rehabilitation of the historic Swing Bridge in downtown Milford would maintain an important nonmotorized network serving recreational programs. Construction is scheduled for completion in 2028. In addition, a 200 ft. pedestrian bridge over the Souhegan River together with a 3000 ft. path/trail is planned for construction in 2037. This project would create direct pedestrian linkages to the Souhegan River, existing trail systems, the elementary school, parks, a recreational center, and the downtown center. Several additional sidewalk improvements are also planned around the downtown area.

Nashua Heritage Rail Trail East

The Heritage Rail Trail East project will extend the existing Heritage Rail Trail West from its terminus at Main Street in downtown Nashua and continue the multi-use path to the East Hollis Street/Denton Street intersection, roughly doubling the length of the heavily used bicycle and pedestrian corridor. Unlike many multi-use paths and trails that are used mainly for recreational purposes, the Nashua Heritage Rail serves as an important pedestrian corridor through some of the region's most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods with relatively low levels of automobile ownership. The project is scheduled for construction in 2027.



Nashua Riverwalk

In 2025, Nashua completed most of the western section of the long-planned Nashua Riverwalk in its downtown and historic Millyard areas. Key elements included two new pedestrian bridges to connect Main Street to an existing path on the north side of the Nashua River and a connection between Bicentennial Park on Main Street and a revamped *Le Parc De Notre Renaissance Francaise* on the south side of the river. In 2024, a wheelchair accessible ramp was built to connect the existing path on the north side of the river to the historic Cotton Transfer Bridge which forms the western end of the

Riverwalk loop. Completing the eastern portion of the Riverwalk will require connecting an existing cantilevered walkway on the north shore of the river adjacent to the Peddler's Daughter restaurant and Jackson Falls Condominiums to a new pedestrian bridge at the eastern terminus of the project and a new pedestrian walkway on the south bank of the River between Main Street and an existing unimproved path near the Library. When completed, the 2.8-mile loop will connect hundreds of apartments and condominiums with restaurants, shops, offices, the Public Library, and parks in the heart of downtown Nashua.

Main Street Reconstruction/Streetscaping Project (Imagine Main Street)

The Main Street reconstruction and streetscaping project (Imagine Main Street) is essentially a complete streets project that would reconfigure approximately 1.5 miles of Nashua's Main Street in a way that prioritizes the reduction of speed and minimized motorized vehicle-pedestrian conflict along the corridor by re-orienting the street towards the non-motorized-user. The project is based on recommendations from the 2021 *Imagine Nashua Plan* master plan. The project would include reducing the width of travel lanes (road diet), reducing four through lanes to two with a center turn lane and center median for loading/unloading of trucks, creation of protected bikes lanes, reconfigured parking areas, expanded sidewalks for pedestrian mobility and outdoor dining space, and designated transit bus boarding and alighting areas. Multiple funding alternatives are currently being pursued.

Air Travel

The NRPC Region is served by a variety of air travel options that provide residents and businesses with reasonably convenient access to destinations throughout the United States and around the world. Although the region does not have a commercial passenger airport, travelers benefit from the proximity of several airports offering a range of commercial, general aviation, and charter services.

Manchester–Boston Regional Airport

The primary commercial airport serving the region is Manchester–Boston Regional Airport (MHT). MHT offers nonstop and connecting flights through several major airlines, providing a convenient alternative to Boston-Logan for domestic flights, though nonstop flights are limited. Its relatively small size, easy highway access, lower parking costs, and shorter security lines make it the preferred airport for many southern New Hampshire residents. A previously noted, Manchester Transit Authority provides bus service between Nashua and Manchester Airport further improves accessibility for travelers without personal vehicles.

Since opening its modern terminal in 1994, MHT has experienced significant changes in passenger activity and airline service that reflect broader trends in the U.S. airline industry. Passenger traffic at MHT grew rapidly during the late 1990s and early 2000s, reaching a record of more than 4.3 million passengers in 2005. Much of this growth was driven by the expansion of low-cost carriers, particularly Southwest

Airlines, which transformed MHT into one of New England's busiest regional airports. During this period, airlines including US Airways, Delta, United, Northwest, Continental, AirTran, and US Airways Express offered numerous nonstop destinations throughout the eastern United States and Canada. Following the 2008 recession, rising fuel prices, airline mergers, and increased consolidation of service at major hub airports led to a steady decline in passenger activity. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted passenger volumes, although traffic has steadily recovered in recent years. Today, MHT is served primarily by Southwest, American and United Airlines, providing nonstop service to major hub airports such as Baltimore/Washington, Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Washington National, and Charlotte, along with popular leisure destinations including Orlando and other Florida markets.

In 2025, the airport handled more than 1.38 million passengers—an increase of nearly 9 percent over 2024 and its strongest annual passenger total since before the pandemic, although still well below its mid-2000s peak. Airline service continues to evolve in response to changing travel demand. In 2024, JetBlue entered the Manchester market with service to Florida destinations, but the airline announced in 2026 that it would discontinue all service from MHT as part of a nationwide network restructuring. Despite these changes, airport officials continue to pursue additional airlines and new nonstop destinations while emphasizing MHT's advantages of convenience, competitive parking costs, and efficient passenger processing. The airport also remains a major cargo

facility, handling record freight volumes for Amazon Air, FedEx, and UPS, making it one of New England's leading air cargo hubs.

Boston Logan International Airport

Boston Logan International Airport (BOS) is New England's largest commercial airport, the region's principal international gateway and often the preferred alternative for domestic flights as well. Logan offers service from more than 40 airlines to hundreds of destinations serving more than 40 million passengers annually. Logan continues to expand its role as a major international gateway, serving more than 100 nonstop domestic and international destinations. The airport's airline network has also evolved considerably over the past two decades. JetBlue is Logan's largest airline together with Delta, American, United, Southwest, Alaska, Frontier, and several international carriers including British Airways, Lufthansa, Air France, Emirates, Aer Lingus, and Japan Airlines. Boston Express provides convenient bus service with several trips per day to Logan from the Exit 8 Park & Ride.

Nashua Municipal Airport (Boire Field)

General aviation also plays an important role in the region's transportation system. Nashua Municipal Airport (Boire Field) is operated by the Nashua Airport Authority. Boire Field supports corporate aviation, business travel, charter flights, flight training, aircraft maintenance, and recreational flying. With nearly 300 based aircraft and approximately 75,000 annual aircraft operations, Boire Field is one of New England's

busiest municipal airports and serves as an important economic asset for the region's business community.



Freight Railroads

There are 2 freight railroad lines operating in the NRPC Region:

New Hampshire Main Line

The New Hampshire Main Line is 39 miles long and runs in our region through Nashua and Merrimack. CSX acquired the line from Pan AM Railways in 2022. The line is maintained to FRA Class 3 from Nashua to Manchester, Class 2 between Manchester and Bow, and Class 1 between Bow and Concord. According to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the maximum allowable operating speeds are 10 mph on Class 1, 25 mph on Class 2, and 40 mph for Class 3 freight trains. There are 11 bridges and 23 grade crossings along the line. CSX, operating from the Massachusetts state line to Bow, delivers unit coal trains and local freight to Nashua, Merrimack, Manchester, and Concord.

Hillsborough Line

The Hillsborough Branch from Nashua to Wilton is 12 miles long and is also owned and operated by CSX after the 2022 acquisition from Pan AM Railways. This section of the branch, known as the Hillsboro Running Track, passes over 8 bridges and 36 grade crossings and is categorized as FRA *Excepted*, which means that no passenger trains are permitted to operate along the line and there are limitations on hazardous material that can be transported over the line. According to the FRA, the maximum allowable operating speed on Excepted Track is 10 mph for freight trains.



[The Hillsborough Branch in Milford](#)

The Milford-Bennington railroad operates freight service along the Hillsborough Branch between the Granite State Concrete batching facility in west Milford and the Granite State Concrete quarry in Wilton. After years of disinvestment, CSX has begun

replacing rails, ties and ballast on the branch line and is now providing scheduled freight service. Shippers on the Hillsboro branch include Granite State Concrete of Milford, Harrows Chemicals of Nashua, Hendrix Wire & Cable of Milford, and Granite State Concrete.

Transportation Trends and Technology

Today, companies all over the world are developing technologies that are transforming the ways people travel and in turn will affect land use patterns, productivity levels, and human behavior. While many of these emerging technologies are promising to improve transportation for future generations, the actual impact they will have on our individual lives and on our communities is difficult to foresee at this point. Popular topics among the planning field regarding future mobility are geared toward curbside management, shared mobility, and mobility as a service. These topics further explore how communities might manage shared public spaces, like public streets, varying transportation modes, and the future of mobility options.

Despite the uncertainty and ambiguity of future transportation trends, the NRPC recognizes the need to plan for and integrate emerging technologies into our future transportation system. The following are a few of the emerging technologies that are gaining traction in the future of transportation. Many seek to improve efficiency, productivity, safety, equity, and sustainability efforts.

Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicles (EVs) have become part of the modern mainstream transportation landscape and are anticipated to become increasingly common and widespread. As newer consumer models become more efficient and affordable, EV technology is spreading to commercial truck, bus, and utility vehicle fleets. The term EV, as defined by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), “refers to a vehicle propelled solely by an electric motor with a battery as the motor's energy storage device.” The NHDES website notes that “there are presently two forms of EV:

- "Battery Electric Vehicle or BEV," which uses an electric motor to propel the vehicle, powered by battery packs that are recharged directly from a source of electricity (Nissan Leaf, e.g.).
- "Plug-In Electric Hybrid Vehicle or PHEV," which can be driven by an electric motor and internal combustion engine (Ford C-Max Energi, e.g.) or can be driven only by its electric motor with an internal combustion engine and generator to recharge the battery (Chevy Volt, e.g.).

An EV uses an external electricity source to recharge the battery by connecting it to an electrical supply through a connector system that is designed specifically for this purpose (plugging in)."

There are three types or levels of EV charging stations:

- Level 1 chargers use a 120 V AC plug and can be plugged into a standard outlet. These chargers typically deliver two

to five miles of range per hour of charging and are most often used at home.

- Level 2 chargers use a 240 V (for residential) or 208 V (for commercial) plug, usually installed by a professional electrician. Level 2 EV chargers deliver 10 to 60 miles of range per hour of charging and can fully charge an electric car battery in as little as two hours. Level 2 chargers can be installed at home and are ideal options for public facilities, parking lots, and businesses where drivers tend to spend an hour or more
- Level 3 or DC Fast Chargers can offer 60 to 100 miles of range for an electric car in just 20 minutes of charging. They are typically used in commercial and industrial applications and require highly specialized, high-power equipment to install and maintain.

The primary drivers behind the growth of EVs are the reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that can be realized when the electricity used is obtained from cleaner burning fuels such as natural gas or more importantly, renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, or hydro power. Given the potential benefits of EV adoption, state, federal and local governments together with environmental advocacy organizations and private industry are actively encouraging and incentivizing the deployment of EVs. According to US Department of Energy [Station Count Data](#), there are currently 289 public EV charging locations in New Hampshire with 781 individual charging ports compared to a total of 98 public charging locations with 181 charging ports in 2016. Continued

growth of the EV sector, however, is dependent on the development of a reliable network of conveniently located EV charging infrastructure at private homes, public facilities, and commercial settings such as shopping centers, office buildings, and other sites where vehicle owners are likely to remain for one or more hours. At the local government level, ideal sites include town halls, police and fire stations, schools, public works garages, and other publicly owned facilities. Communities can take proactive steps to encourage local infrastructure development to ensure that they are *EV ready*. To become EV ready, communities should consider creating



Level 2 Charging Station in Derry

plans to deploy strategically placed EV charging stations at both public and private commercial sites. The plans should consider key regulatory areas such as zoning, site plan regulations, parking requirements, and the creation of opportunities for both the public and private sector charging station development.

ITS technologies

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies enable various technological mediums to communicate information to and between roadway users and transportation infrastructure. This includes vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-roadside wireless communications (connected vehicle technology). These efforts provide real-time information for roadway users and traffic operations alike. ITS aims to improve traffic safety, relieve traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, increase energy efficiency, among other objectives. ITS technology currently exists in several forms including changeable message roadway signing and advanced traffic signal systems.

Adaptive Traffic Control Systems

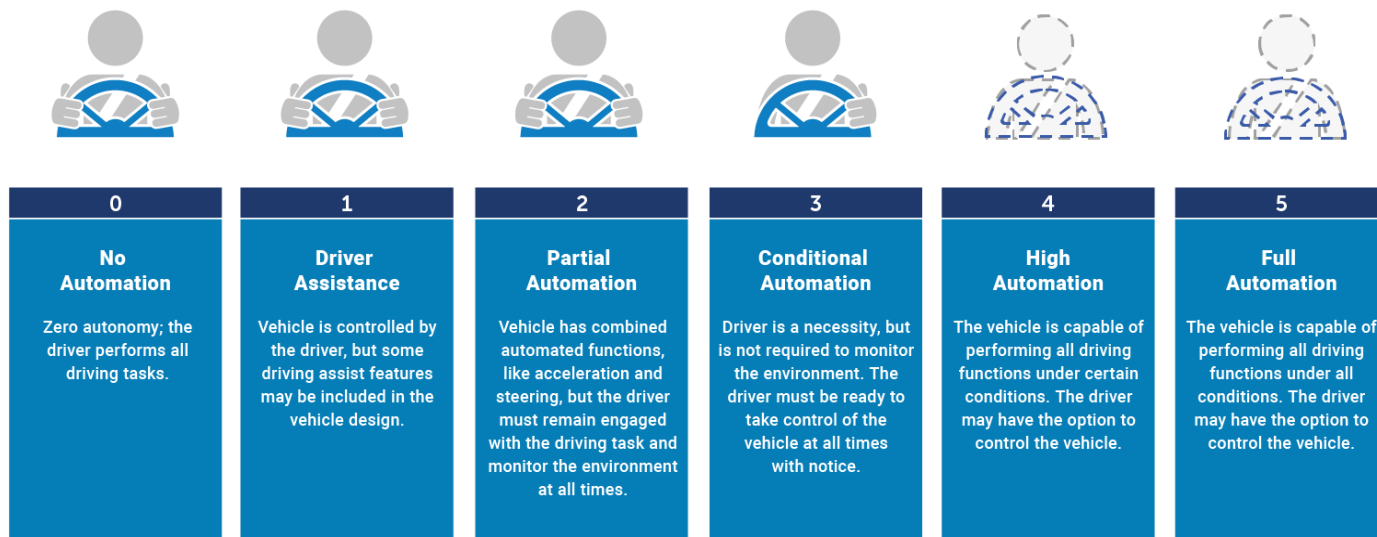
Poor traffic signal timing contributes to traffic congestion and delays. Most conventional signals use pre-programmed, daily signal timing schedules. Adaptive and linked signal control technology adjusts the timing of red, yellow, and green lights to accommodate changing traffic patterns and ease traffic congestion. The main benefits of adaptive signal control technology over conventional signal systems are that it can:



- Continuously distribute green light time equitably for all traffic movements.
- Improve travel time reliability by progressively moving vehicles through green lights.
- Reduce congestion by creating smoother flow.
- Prolong the effectiveness of traffic signal timing.

Connected/Autonomous Vehicles

Automated vehicles are vehicles that use devices and technology to take over a portion or potentially all the decision making related to the driving task (aka Autonomous Vehicles, Self-Driving Vehicles, Driverless Cars, or Robotic Cars). The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has adopted the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), six levels of automation definition as illustrated in the figure below.



Source: Society of Automotive Engineers' (SAE) 6 Levels of Automation

Potential CAV Safety Benefits

Driver behavior and driver error are believed to be contributing factors in more than 90% of crashes nationwide. CAVs mitigate human error issues and are expected to substantially reduce crashes. By eliminating human error, transportation planners would be able to focus better on safety improvement resources in areas with true infrastructure deficiencies.

Potential CAV Capacity Benefits

- FHWA research suggests that, in the long-term, CAVs could safely travel at closer headways (platoon), which could increase traditional volume/capacity ratios.
- CAVs could utilize real-time traffic data that allows for efficient optimization across the entire transportation network. FHWA research suggests that, in the long-term, CAVs could safely travel at closer headways (platoon) which could increase traditional volume/capacity ratios.
- CAVs could utilize real-time traffic data that allows for efficient optimization across the entire transportation

network. Due to the prevalence of Zero Occupant Vehicle (ZOV) circulation and dead-head trips, VMT, VHT, and delay are likely to increase when CAVs begin to gain market share. Reductions in delay are only likely to be realized when CAV technology is fully integrated and ubiquitous (e.g., close to 100% utilization).

Potential CAV Special Mobility Benefits

- CAVs could facilitate independent living by improving mobility for elderly, disabled, and visually impaired populations.
- The need for human assistance and accessible vehicles will still exist.
- Deploying CAV technology is expected to be more cost effective than demand response human service transportation, particularly in rural areas.

Potential CAV Environmental Benefits

- Vehicles will accelerate and decelerate more efficiently aerodynamic drafting (platooning) resulting in improved traffic flow dynamics.
- Fewer unnecessary stops.
- Many CAVs are likely to be Zero Emission Vehicles.
- May reduce the need to consume land with large parking areas.

Potential Environmental Drawbacks

- Zero-occupant Vehicles will increase VMT and VHT (in the medium-term)

- Convenience of CAVs could increase the proliferation of suburban sprawl land use patterns.
- Faster driving speeds

It should also be noted that the current car ownership model will likely change as fully automated vehicles become more widely available. Though the extent of such changes is unknown at this time, the high cost of fully automated vehicles coupled with likely early adoption of the technology by ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft, suggest that shared autonomous vehicle models, whether through ride-hailing or subscription-based services, may come to dominate the automobile market.

E-Commerce

Commercial and personal deliveries are on the rise with the overwhelming growth of e-commerce; a trend that escalated dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2023. Consumer behavior is changing the way goods are delivered and purchased, affecting brick-and-mortar stores and consumer travel patterns. Box trucks from companies such as Amazon, UPS and FedEx have become a daily part of the rhythm of residential and commercial areas with most households now receiving multiple deliveries per week. Several companies are also exploring various forms of automated last-mile package deliveries including the use of autonomous vehicles and drones. Regardless of the delivery method, transportation for the growing deliveries spurred by e-commerce will require innovative strategies to keep up with consumer demands.

Curbside Management



Curb space availability and management are becoming more important with the growth of online shopping and associated deliveries, ride-share services like Uber and Lyft, as well as rideshare programs for e-bikes, and e-scooters. Planning for the rise in rideshare services and e-commerce related deliveries is an increasingly important factor for the design and layout of commercial sites, multi-family developments and for public streets and sidewalks, especially in downtown areas and urban neighborhoods.

Shared Mobility

Shared mobility today ranges from e-bikes and e-scooters to rideshare services like Uber and Lyft. Shared mobility allows people the flexibility of travelling without personal ownership

of a vehicle, whether at home or while traveling to new places. These shared mobility services are sometimes contentious topics with the use of public right-of-way and how to manage those spaces. Some of these transport modes may be a trend for today, it is uncertain how sustainable they will be in the years to come.

Electric Bicycles

Electric bicycles (e-bikes) have become an increasingly popular form of transportation and recreation. Equipped with an electric motor that assists the rider while pedaling, e-bikes make cycling easier by reducing the effort required to travel longer distances, climb hills, or ride into headwinds. They provide an affordable and energy-efficient alternative to driving for commuting, errands, and recreational trips while producing no direct emissions. There are three primary classes of electric bicycles (e-bikes):

- Class 1: Provides electric assistance only when the rider is pedaling (pedal-assist), with assistance stopping at 20 mph. These are the most widely accepted on shared-use paths and recreational trails because they operate much like conventional bicycles.
- Class 2: Equipped with a throttle that can propel the bicycle without pedaling, although the motor assistance is also limited to 20 mph. These are popular with riders who need occasional assistance without pedaling.
- Class 3: Provides pedal-assist only, but assistance continues up to 28 mph. Class 3 e-bikes are commonly used by commuters traveling longer distances on roads and bike lanes. Because of their higher speeds, some

jurisdictions restrict their use on multi-use paths and certain trails.



As communities continue to expand bicycle and multi-use trail networks, e-bikes are helping make active transportation accessible to a wider range of people, including older adults and individuals with physical limitations. At the same time, their growing popularity has raised discussions about appropriate regulations, trail access, rider safety, and the need for infrastructure that can accommodate a mix of pedestrians, traditional bicycles, and electric bicycles.

The rapid growth of e-bike use has created several challenges for communities and transportation agencies. The higher speeds of some e-bikes can increase the potential for conflicts with pedestrians, runners, and traditional cyclists on shared-use paths. Questions about where different classes of e-bikes should be allowed—particularly on natural surface trails, rail

trails, and conservation lands—have prompted many municipalities and park managers to update their regulations.

As e-bike adoption continues to increase, balancing accessibility, mobility, and safety will remain an important consideration in transportation and recreation planning. When integrated into a well-connected transportation system, e-bikes can help reduce traffic congestion, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage healthier, more sustainable travel choices.



E-Bikes from the Rideable Nashua Bike Share program parked in downtown Nashua.

Electric Scooters

Though less common than e-bikes, electric scooters (e-scooters) are an increasingly popular form of micromobility, providing a convenient option for short trips and recreational travel. Powered by rechargeable electric motors, e-scooters can help reduce traffic congestion, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and expand transportation choices, particularly in downtowns and in mixed-use developments. Nashua previously had a shared e-scooter program that was discontinued, however privately owned e-scooters have become more common in the region. Their growing use has prompted discussions about roadway safety, where they should operate, and how they interact with pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles. As communities continue to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure through investments in multi-use trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes, e-scooters are expected to become a more viable transportation option. Their successful integration into the region's transportation system, however, will depend on clear regulations and public education.

Linked Communication & Automation

Advances in communication and automation technology result in new mobility options, ranging from automated and connected transport, electric vehicles, ridesharing, and micro-mobility, to flying cars and space travel. These changes may be disruptive and transformative, with impacts to safety, vehicle ownership, travel capacity, vehicle miles traveled, land-use, transportation design, future investment demands, supply

chain logistics, economy, and the workforce. Global Positioning System (GPS) is a critical component in the growth of micro-transit services and ridesharing applications like Uber and Lyft. Micro-transit is an app-driven demand response, zonal-based transit service currently used in fixed route first-and-last mile solutions and where fixed route transit service may not be viable. New and emerging technologies have already had an impact on the region's transportation system. For example:

- Smartphone technology has enabled Uber, Lyft, and other ridesharing applications' operating model.
- NTS riders can now get real-time service alerts on their smartphones.
- Adaptive and linked traffic signal technology has improved traffic flow and operation in and around the NRPC Region.
- GPS technologies are now universal in cars, trucks, and mobile devices which, in addition to standard navigation, enable drivers to adjust to detours and other unexpected conditions in real time.

These technologies are changing so rapidly that it is challenging to predict their impact over a 10-year planning horizon. NRPC recognizes the impacts of emerging technology on the transportation system and will include planning studies, collaboration efforts, research, and other activities in their Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to help local decisionmakers integrate emerging technologies into their planning, and budget decisions.

Transportation Goals & Implementation Strategies

Safety

Emphasize a safe system approach to project development that minimizes the risk of injury or fatality to pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable road users including encouraging project planning and design that is responsive to the ways people actually use the transportation system including recognition of the likelihood of human error. Eliminate deaths and serious injuries from crashes by 2050.

Mobility

Emphasize a Complete Streets approach to project planning and design that accommodates the needs of all foreseeable users including bicyclists and pedestrians based on street classification, traffic volumes, design speed, and land use. In addition, deployment of intelligent transportation systems and emerging technologies in all aspects of transportation planning including connected and automated vehicles, advanced air mobility, and other emerging technologies should be pursued. Expand the region's network of multi-use paths, bike paths, and trails in addition to sidewalks and bike lanes to encourage active, healthy lifestyles.

System Preservation & Sustainability

Prioritize maintaining road pavements, bridges, sidewalks, signage, and other transportation infrastructure in a good state of repair and emphasize improving the resiliency of the

transportation system by mitigating potential impacts from floods and other climate related impacts.

Transit & Community Transportation

Promote improvements to public transportation within the City of Nashua as well as the extension of transit service to urbanized areas outside of Nashua where feasible, with an emphasis on expanding access to employment centers, housing, major shopping destinations, educational opportunities, and other services. Encourage expansion of paratransit and other on-demand transportation services, including collaborations with private ride hailing services, to fill gaps in community transportation and paratransit networks.

Quality of Life & Economic Vitality

Reduce congestion by eliminating traffic bottlenecks, coordinating traffic signal timing, improving key intersections, and encouraging alternative transportation modes including transit and bike/ped alternatives where feasible. Prioritize access improvements to major employment centers, shopping, and recreational destinations within and outside of the region including connections to the interstate highway system, inter-city bus transit, and passenger rail.

NRPC Regional Plan - Community Facilities

Community facilities are public buildings and sites such as municipal offices, police and fire stations, parks, and schools. The term also applies to semi-public facilities which are privately owned or controlled, usually by a nonprofit organization, but are open and accessible to the general public, often with certain restrictions or conditions of use. Examples can include private schools, YMCAs and other membership clubs, or publicly accessible trails on land owned by a private conservation organization such as Beaver Brook.



Mason Center © Seth Dewey Photography

Community facilities play a vital role in the general welfare and quality of life for the population. Not only are such facilities essential to the function of a municipality, but the availability of municipal facilities and the services influences where prospective residents, businesses, and industries decide to locate. Community facilities are a broad category. This chapter highlights subset of key community facilities and functions including schools, utilities, parks & recreation, and other facilities in each of the region's 13 communities.

Water and Sewer

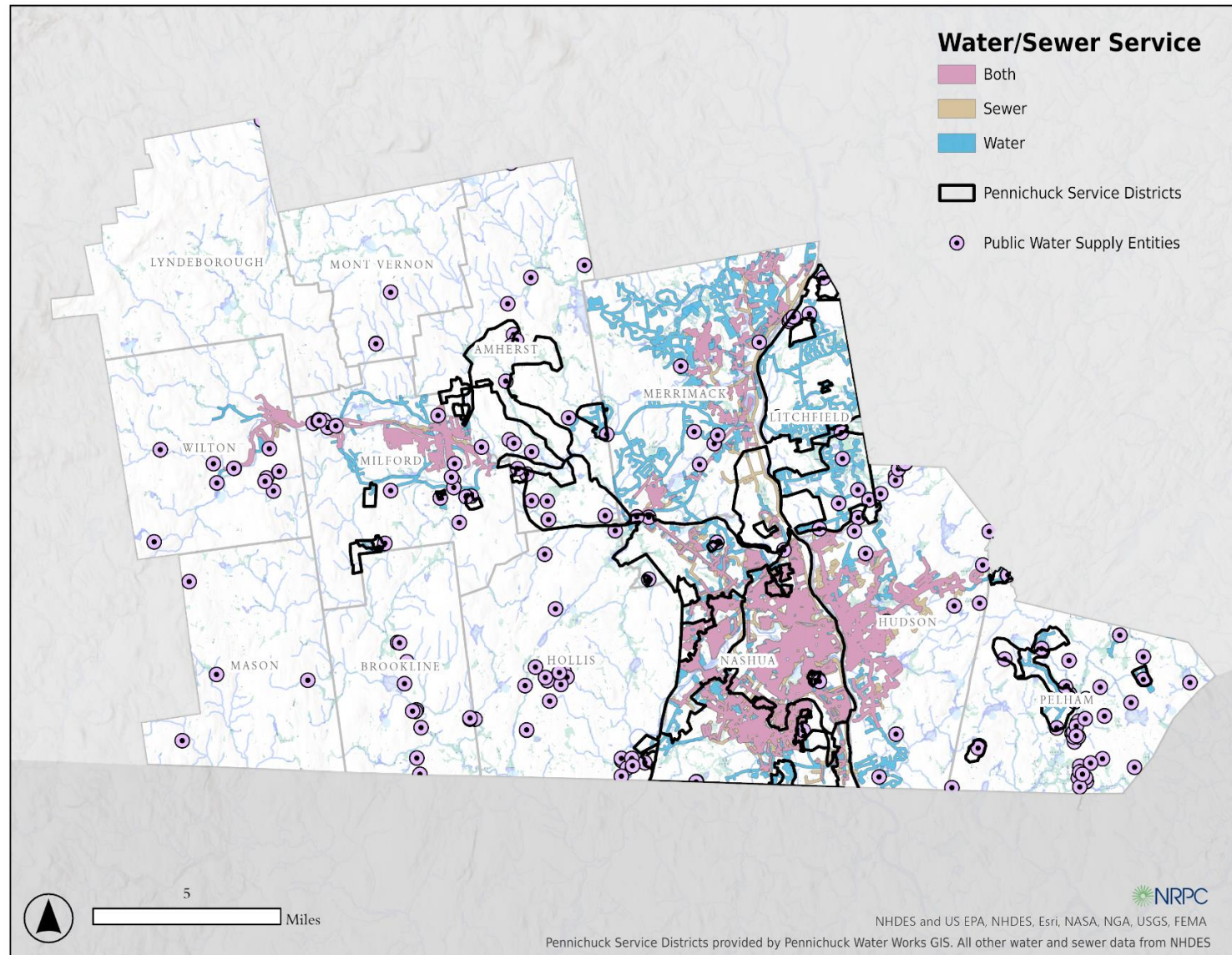
The availability of public water and sewer is a major determinant of how land is used and the overall density of development. This is especially true for residential development densities and certain types of commercial and industrial uses. For these reasons, public water and sewer availability are a central to the Regional Plan. Map 1 illustrates the distribution of public water and sewer infrastructure across the NRPC region. Areas shaded in pink are served by both public water and sewer systems, blue areas have public water service only, and tan areas have sewer service only. The map also identifies public water supply entities and the service districts operated by Pennichuck Water Works, one of the region's primary water providers, together with the Merrimack Village District and the Town of Hudson. The purple circle represents community water supply systems which are typically community wells that serve a single development. Together, these systems form the backbone of

the region's developed areas and strongly influence patterns of residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

The most extensive public water and sewer service areas are concentrated in the region's urban and suburban communities, particularly Nashua, Hudson, Merrimack, and downtown Wilton. Nashua contains the largest continuous area served by both utilities, reflecting its role as the region's largest population, employment, and commercial center. Significant service areas also extend along major transportation corridors including the Everett Turnpike, DW Highway, Route 3A, and Route 101A, supporting higher-density development and economic activity throughout the region.

Public water service extends beyond areas with sewer availability, particularly in Merrimack, Litchfield, Amherst, and portions of Hudson and Pelham, where community water systems serve residential neighborhoods and business districts that continue to rely on individual septic systems. Sewer-only service areas are relatively limited and generally occur where wastewater infrastructure has been extended to address localized development or environmental needs. Mason, Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, Brookline, much of Wilton, and most of Hollis remain largely outside public utility service areas. Development in these areas depends on private wells and on-site septic systems, contributing to lower-density development patterns and helping preserve their rural character.

Map 1 - Water/Sewer Service in the NRPC Region



Overall, the map demonstrates the strong relationship between utility infrastructure and land development patterns in the Nashua region. Areas served by public water and sewer systems generally support the highest population densities, employment concentrations, and commercial activity, while areas without utility service are more rural and less intensively developed. As the region continues to grow, the availability of water and sewer infrastructure will remain a defining consideration for economic development, housing, environmental protection, and long-range land use planning.

Public Water Supply

Pennichuck Water Works

Pennichuck Water Works is the largest water utility in New Hampshire serving the City of Nashua, parts of Merrimack and several surrounding communities in southern New Hampshire either directly or through various subsidiaries. Founded in 1852, the company provides drinking water to tens of thousands of residents and businesses through an extensive network of reservoirs, treatment facilities, pumping stations, and distribution mains. Historically an investor-owned utility, the City of Nashua became Pennichuck's only shareholder following a lengthy acquisition process that concluded in 2012, ensuring local control of a critical public resource. Pennichuck draws its water supply from the Merrimack River and from the Pennichuck Brook watershed system which includes Pennichuck Pond, Supply Pond, Bowers Pond, and associated reservoirs and groundwater sources in Nashua, Merrimack, Hollis, and Amherst.



A portion of the Pennichuck water supply system

The Merrimack Village District

The Merrimack Village District (MVD) is an independent municipal water utility established under New Hampshire RSA 52 to provide public water service to the Town of Merrimack. MVD is governed by an elected five-member Board of Commissioners that is separate from the governance of the town. MVD serves more than 7,500 residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal accounts, supplying water to over 87 percent of Merrimack. The district operates an extensive water system that includes approximately 176 miles of water mains, six groundwater wells, three water storage tanks, numerous pumping facilities, and advanced water treatment infrastructure.

Milford Water Utilities

Milford Water Utilities is a town-owned water and wastewater utility governed by the Milford Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners. The system serves residents, businesses, and industries throughout Milford and relies on a combination of local groundwater and surface water resources within the Souhegan River watershed. The utility maintains water treatment, storage, distribution, and wastewater collection infrastructure that supports the community's residential neighborhoods, downtown business district, and industrial areas. Continued infrastructure investments help ensure reliable service and regulatory compliance while accommodating future growth.

The Hudson Water Utility

The Hudson Water Utility is a municipally owned public water system that provides drinking water service to a significant portion of the Town of Hudson. Operated by the Hudson Water Utility Committee, the system relies primarily on groundwater sources and distributes water through an extensive network of water mains, storage facilities, and pumping stations. Public water service has played a vital role in supporting Hudson's residential growth, commercial development, and industrial expansion, particularly along Route 3A and Route 111 corridors. A notable feature of the Hudson system is its interconnections with neighboring water suppliers, including Pennichuck Water Works, which provide additional reliability and emergency supply capacity for the community.

Wilton Water Works

Wilton Water Works is a municipally owned public water system governed by the Wilton Water Commission. The utility primarily serves downtown Wilton and surrounding developed areas, as well as the Pine Valley neighborhood in Milford. Most of the remainder of the town relies on private wells. The system's water supply originates from local groundwater resources and provides an important service to Wilton's historic downtown, residential neighborhoods, and businesses.

Increased Demand for Public Water

Since the 2014 Regional Plan, there has been a significant increase in the demand for public water. In 2016, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, PFAS for short, were discovered in high concentrations in hundreds of wells surrounding the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics manufacturing plant in Merrimack. PFAS are synthetic chemicals used to make products resistant to water and grease, recently being referred to as “forever chemicals” because they do not break down easily in the environment or the human body and can cause an increased risk of cancer.

PFAS from Saint Gobain contaminated both public and private wells in the towns of Merrimack and Litchfield. In 2016, testing identified elevated levels of PFOA, a type of PFAS, in several Merrimack Village District (MVD) wells. Subsequent investigations traced the contamination to air emissions and operations at the Saint-Gobain manufacturing facility on

Daniel Webster Highway. Two MVD wells were initially taken offline, and PFAS was later detected in additional district wells. The contamination affected the public water system serving thousands of Merrimack residents and businesses, creating concerns about long-term drinking water safety. MVD had to increase monitoring and adjust operations to maintain water quality standards including major investments in water treatment infrastructure. The district installed multiple granular activated carbon (GAC) treatment systems to remove PFAS from contaminated wells. These facilities represented millions of dollars in capital improvements and ongoing operating costs. While Saint-Gobain has funded much of the treatment and mitigation under settlements and regulatory agreements, the district still faced years of planning, engineering, and operational challenges.

In addition to the impact to MVD and its customers, the contamination extended to hundreds of private wells in Merrimack, Litchfield, and Bedford. In Litchfield, approximately 360 homes were connected to the Pennichuck Water Works system. Property owners that received a point-of-use (POU) treatment system and have been connected to public water have the option of keeping the system at their own expense or having it removed. This is an ongoing issue with additional water hookups potentially needed in the future. In 2022, Saint-Gobain entered a [consent decree](#) to permanently provide clean drinking water by means of home filtration systems or public water connections for approximately 1,000 properties.



View of the former Saint Gobain Plant in Merrimack

In some portions of the region, most notably in parts of Brookline and Pelham, groundwater supplies are running low due in part to increased demand. As a result, both towns have enhanced requirements for residential development on private wells. Maintaining a sufficient supply of safe, affordable water is essential for the health and wellbeing of the region's residents and necessary to support its continued prosperity and growth. Protection of our surface and groundwater resources, therefore, must be one of the region's highest priorities.

Public Sewer Infrastructure

Public wastewater collection and treatment systems are concentrated in the more urbanized communities of the Nashua Region, providing critical infrastructure for residential development, commercial activity, industrial operations, environmental protection, and public health. The City of Nashua operates the region's largest wastewater system, serving most of the city through an extensive network of sewer mains, pump stations, and the Nashua Wastewater Treatment Facility, which discharges treated effluent to the Merrimack River. Nashua's system also receives wastewater from portions of neighboring communities through intermunicipal agreements.



Image of the Nashua Wastewater Treatment Facility

The Town of Hudson operates a municipal sewer system that serves much of the developed southern and eastern portions of the community. Hudson's wastewater is conveyed to and treated by the City of Nashua under a long-standing regional partnership, providing an efficient and cost-effective approach to wastewater management while supporting residential and commercial growth.

The Town of Merrimack maintains an extensive municipal sewer system serving the majority of the community's developed areas including major residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and industrial districts. Wastewater is treated at Merrimack's wastewater treatment facility located along the Merrimack River. The system has been expanded over time to accommodate growth and protect local groundwater and surface water resources.

The Town of Milford operates a municipal wastewater collection and treatment system that serves the downtown area, surrounding neighborhoods, and industrial and commercial properties. The Milford Wastewater Treatment Facility discharges treated effluent to the Souhegan River and plays a vital role in protecting water quality within the watershed. Continued investments in collection system upgrades and treatment plant improvements support economic development and regulatory compliance.

Wilton maintains a smaller municipal sewer system focused primarily on the downtown village area and adjacent developed neighborhoods. Wastewater is treated at the Wilton Wastewater Treatment Facility, which serves as an

important component of the town's infrastructure while helping preserve water quality in the Souhegan River watershed.

Though public sewer is available in portions of just five NRPC communities, these systems combined serve approximately 175,000 of the region's 212,000 residents and thousands of businesses. Outside of these communities, most residents and businesses in Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Mason, Lyndeborough, Mont Vernon, and many rural portions of Wilton rely on private septic systems for wastewater disposal. As a result, the availability of public sewer infrastructure remains an important factor influencing development patterns, growth management, environmental protection, and economic development throughout the NRPC Region. Regional coordination among municipalities continues to be important for addressing aging infrastructure, regulatory requirements, watershed protection, climate resilience, and future growth needs.

Abundant Recreation

The NRPC region offers an abundance of recreational opportunities for its residents and visitors across its 13 communities, with many diverse options that appeal to a wide range of interests and ages. The region features an extensive network of parks, conservation lands, trails, rivers, and community recreation facilities that support activities in all seasons. Popular outdoor pursuits include hiking, walking, trail running, and cycling on local trail systems and rail trails such as

the Nashua River Rail Trail, as well as paddling, fishing, and wildlife viewing along rivers and ponds throughout the area. Land devoted to recreation comprises 3,133 acres or only 1.4% of the region's total land area, however, the region also benefits from 37,380 acres of permanently protected open space (16.9% of the region's total land area), much of which is open to passive recreational uses such as hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.



Playground in Hudson's Benson Park

Large public parks like Benson Park in Hudson, Wasserman Park in Merrimack, and Mine Falls Park and Greeley Park in Nashua provide additional amenities including multi-use trails, sports fields, playgrounds, and spaces for community events and cultural programming. All towns in the region also maintain athletic fields, playgrounds, and facilities for sports

such as baseball, soccer, tennis, and disc golf, while conservation lands and rural landscapes offer opportunities for birdwatching, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other nature-based recreation. Several communities including Amherst, Brookline, Hudson and Merrimack support public beaches at local lakes and ponds. Nashua provides three public swimming pools.

The NRPC Region enjoys several golf courses, many of which also offer racket sports and outdoor pools. Public golfing opportunities are available at Overlook Golf Club in Hollis, Souhegan Woods Golf Club in Amherst, and Passaconaway Country Club in Litchfield. The area also includes smaller facilities such as Whip Poor Will Golf Club in Hudson, providing additional recreational options for residents. Notable private facilities include the Nashua Country Club and Sky Meadow Country Club, also in Nashua.



In addition to outdoor recreational offerings, the region also enjoys indoor facilities such as the Conway Ice Arena in Nashua, the Cyclones Arena in Hudson, three YMCAs and the Hampshire Hills Athletic Club in Milford.



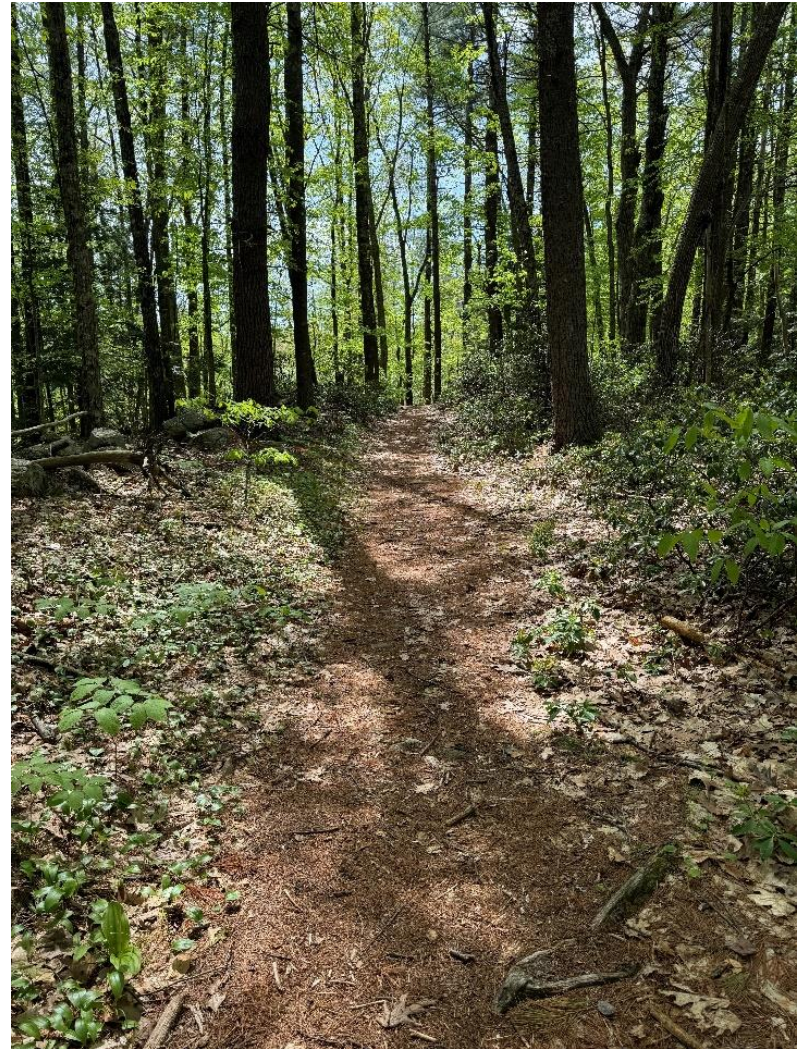
Together, these resources create a diverse and accessible recreational system that supports healthy indoor and outdoor activity, environmental protection, and community engagement throughout the region. In addition, the region's recreation offerings are also central in attracting and maintaining our workforce and supporting tourism and the outdoor economy.

Trail Navigation

The NRPC Region has an expansive network of recreational trails. NRPC maintains an online [Trail Atlas](#) for the general public's use to navigate all the public trails that the region has to offer. To date, static pdf maps or mobile navigation are available through this resource for all 13 of the NRPC communities, covering hundreds of miles of trails.



Image of the All-Persons ADA Accessible trail in Pelham

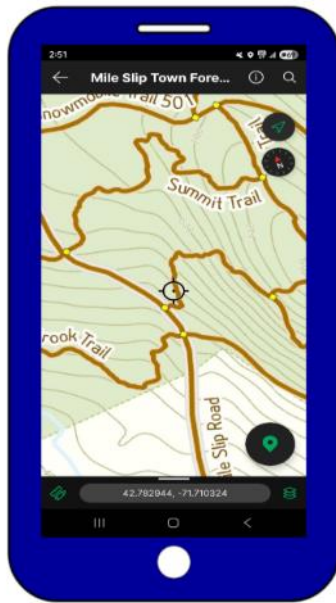


An unpaved trail on Beaver Brook Association property in Hollis

Figure 1

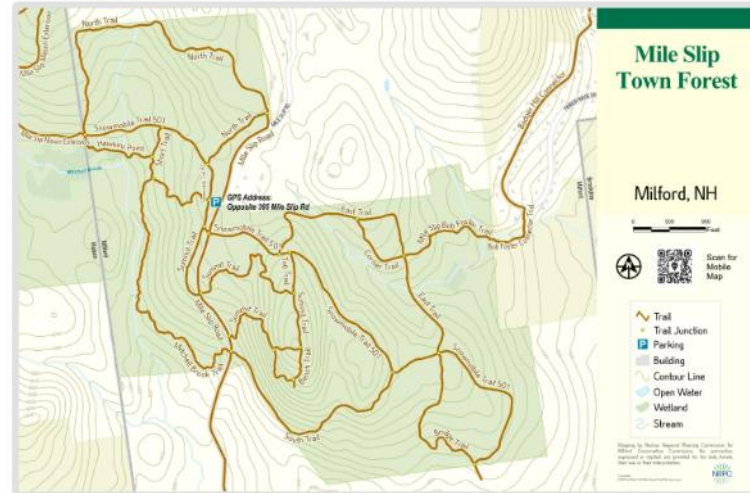
Trail Atlas

NRPC's Trail Atlas provides maps for the major open properties with public trails throughout the region. For mobile users who wish to use the maps as a navigation aid, download the Avenza app and access the maps through the NRPC Avenza Storefront. Prefer a paper map? NRPC also offers all maps available for free pdf download.



[Navigate on the Avenza app](#)

OR



[Download and print a map](#)

Aging Municipal Buildings

The NRPC region has a long history from colonial settlement through the Industrial Revolution. Because of this, many public buildings in NRPC communities are old, with many structures dating back well over a century and some dating back to the 1700s. While the region is rich in history and has much architectural heritage to be preserved, there are challenges that come with older infrastructure and buildings.

Many NRPC municipalities have older, historic buildings to house their town offices, libraries, schools, and public safety departments. In addition to their age, some of these civic buildings are also conversions of historic residential homes and were not intended for public use. Where many of these buildings date back to the 18th or 19th centuries, they were not designed to accommodate modern building/safety codes, accessibility standards (including ADA compliance), energy efficiency, or contemporary technology infrastructure. As communities have continued to grow, space concerns have also arisen whether its housing staff, accommodating larger public meetings, storing records, or housing modern equipment/vehicles. Older buildings also have unique hazards like lead paint, asbestos, or issues with structural integrity for modern uses.

However, the region's historic New England architecture is a defining feature of many communities and preserving historical character is a top priority. From a planning perspective, municipalities need to balance historic

preservation goals with fiscal constraints, as rehabilitation costs often exceed those of new construction, yet demolition can generate strong public opposition. Limited site footprints in traditional village centers further complicate expansion, parking, and accessibility improvements.

In 2025, the discovery of toxic mold discovered in a crawlspace beneath Mont Vernon Town Hall forced the immediate closure of the building and delayed plans to restore the historic 18th-century meeting house. Recently, Brookline's Town Hall (the historic Daniels Academy Building) has been closed due to severe structural defects, including failing roof trusses and inadequate floor joists. Town offices have been relocated to the Brookline Business Center at 55 Route 13 until a permanent solution can be identified.



Brookline's historic Daniels Academy Building

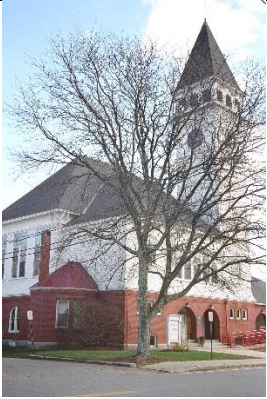


December 2025 – Mont Vernon temporary town hall, two shipping containers placed in the town hall parking lot to relocated staff while hazardous mold is remediated.



Wilkins Elementary School, Amherst - scaffolding to address structural hazard in gymnasium.

Table 1
Date Current Town Hall Buildings Were Constructed

Amherst	1825	
Brookline	1914	
Hollis	1886	

Hudson	1965	
Litchfield	1998	
Lyndeborough	1889	

Mason	1774	
Merrimack	1835	

Milford	1870	
Mont Vernon	1781	

Nashua	1938	
Pelham	Late 1980s	

Wilton	1885	
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Whether the region's historic town halls can be preserved for their original purposes, reimagined into new uses or where no other alternative exists, demolished, touches on the essential character of each community and impacts how residents engage with their towns. Communities such as Pelham and Litchfield chose to replace their old town halls with new facilities within a municipal complex on new sites. Litchfield's old town hall is maintained by the Historic Society and functions as a local museum. Pelham's old town hall is now a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post building and is used for veterans' meetings, ceremonies, and community events.

The town of Merrimack elected to keep its historic 1872 town hall and develop a municipal complex around it. The complex includes municipal offices, public meeting facilities, and has evolved over time to accommodate the needs of Merrimack's growing population and expanding municipal operations.

The 1872 building has been renovated several times, including major improvements in 2004 and 2010. The eastern wing was

added in 1980 to provide additional office space for town government and a lower level police station which was later converted to additional town office space when the Police relocated to a former office building in the early 1990s. Together, the two connected buildings contain approximately 15,000 square feet of municipal offices housing the Town Manager, Town Council, Town Clerk, Assessing, Finance, Community Development, Public Works administration, and other departments. In 2010, the Merrimack District Court relocated to a new adjacent building, allowing the Town Hall to create a modern public meeting room equipped for televised and recorded meetings.

Though not a historic building, the Town of Hudson is also facing the need to address deficiencies in its town hall facility. In recent years, Hudson officials have been evaluating the future of the Town Hall building due to space limitations and accessibility concerns. The town established a Town Hall Advisory Committee to examine options that include renovating the existing building, repurposing it, or

constructing a new municipal facility to better serve residents and town staff.



Pelham's historic town hall is preserved as a VFW Hall

Town halls and municipal office facilities are often both literally and figuratively at the heart of the region's communities. Effective planning around municipal facility needs therefore requires careful stakeholder engagement to evaluate creative renovation and expansion alternatives, potential development of new facilities and adaptive reuse strategies to ensure that municipal facilities remain functional, inclusive, and financially sustainable community assets.



Mont Vernon's Town Hall was closed in 2025 due to toxic mold

Libraries



The Hollis Social Library

Every community in the NRPC region has a public library. Though the role of local Libraries is changing, they remain important community institutions that provide educational, cultural, and recreational resources for residents of all ages. As society has become more digitally oriented, libraries are evolving from traditional book-lending institutions into multifaceted community and technology centers. While books remain an important part of library collections, libraries increasingly provide digital resources such as e-books, audiobooks, streaming media, online databases, and remote access to research materials. Most libraries also offer public

Wi-Fi, computer workstations, technology training, and assistance with digital literacy, and programming for both adults and children.

In addition to expanding digital collections, libraries are adapting their physical spaces to support community needs. Some are adding makerspaces and collaborative work areas, and most provide meeting rooms and spaces for educational programming. Libraries also serve as hubs for workforce development by offering job-search assistance, computer classes, and access to online learning platforms. These changes have transformed libraries from primarily repositories of books into dynamic centers for learning, innovation, and community engagement.

The largest library in the region is the Nashua Public Library, which has served the city since 1867 and welcomes more than 187,000 visitors annually. The library offers extensive collections, technology resources, genealogy and local history materials, children's programming, computer classes, and community meeting rooms. In 2025, the Nashua Library completed a comprehensive feasibility study that examined four options: renovating the existing building, constructing an addition, replacing the building entirely, or relocating the library. After reviewing the study, the Library Board of Trustees voted to move forward with an addition and renovation plan for the current facility.

The proposed project would modernize the 54-year-old building and address major deficiencies in its mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, and accessibility systems.

The expansion would also create new public spaces and allow for amenities that modern libraries increasingly provide, such as collaborative work areas, makerspaces, and improved community gathering spaces.

In 2026, the project entered the design and construction-planning phase. The City of Nashua and the Library Trustees are assembling a project team and have begun procuring design and construction management services. However, construction funding has not yet been secured. The city's Capital Improvement Program currently includes approximately \$76 million for the library renovation and expansion project, with expenditures potentially extending into the early 2030s. In addition to the building expansion, the library's outdoor plaza is being redeveloped into a more accessible public space with improved landscaping, seating, lighting, performance infrastructure, and play areas. Construction on the plaza project is expected to begin in 2026.

The current Hudson library, Rodgers Memorial Library, was built in 2009. The 19,661-square-foot facility was made possible by a \$4 million donation from brothers Alvin and G. Philip Rodgers, who funded the construction in memory of their parents, George H. and Ella Rodgers. The Rodgers Memorial Library replaced the historic Hills Memorial Library, which had served Hudson since 1909. The Hills Memorial Library remains a town-owned facility and is used for School Board and other community meetings.

For many years, Mont Vernon's Daland Memorial Library was housed in a small historic building on Main Street that had

limited space for collections, programs, and accessibility. After decades of discussion and planning, Mont Vernon completed construction of a new library facility on Lilac Lane. The new building opened in February 2026 and provides significantly more space for library services, community programs, and future growth. The project was the culmination of nearly 40 years of community debate and fundraising efforts.

The new facility has become an important community asset, offering modern library amenities while maintaining the small-town character of Mont Vernon. The expanded building provides improved accessibility, meeting space, and room for expanded collections and programming for residents of all ages.

Other notable libraries serving the region include the Merrimack Public Library in Merrimack, the Hollis Social Library in Hollis, the Wadleigh Memorial Library in Milford, and the historic Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library in Wilton. Together, these libraries provide access to lifelong learning opportunities, cultural programs, digital resources, and community gathering spaces that enhance the quality of life throughout the region.

Schools

In the NRPC Region, along with much of the state of New Hampshire, school enrollment has been declining since the early 2000s. This is largely due to demographic shifts including an aging population and lower birth rates which result in fewer school-aged children. Since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020,

the region has also seen an increase in homeschooling and enrollment in charter schools and private schools. These trends have sparked challenging conversations around funding, space needs, education offerings, and staffing.

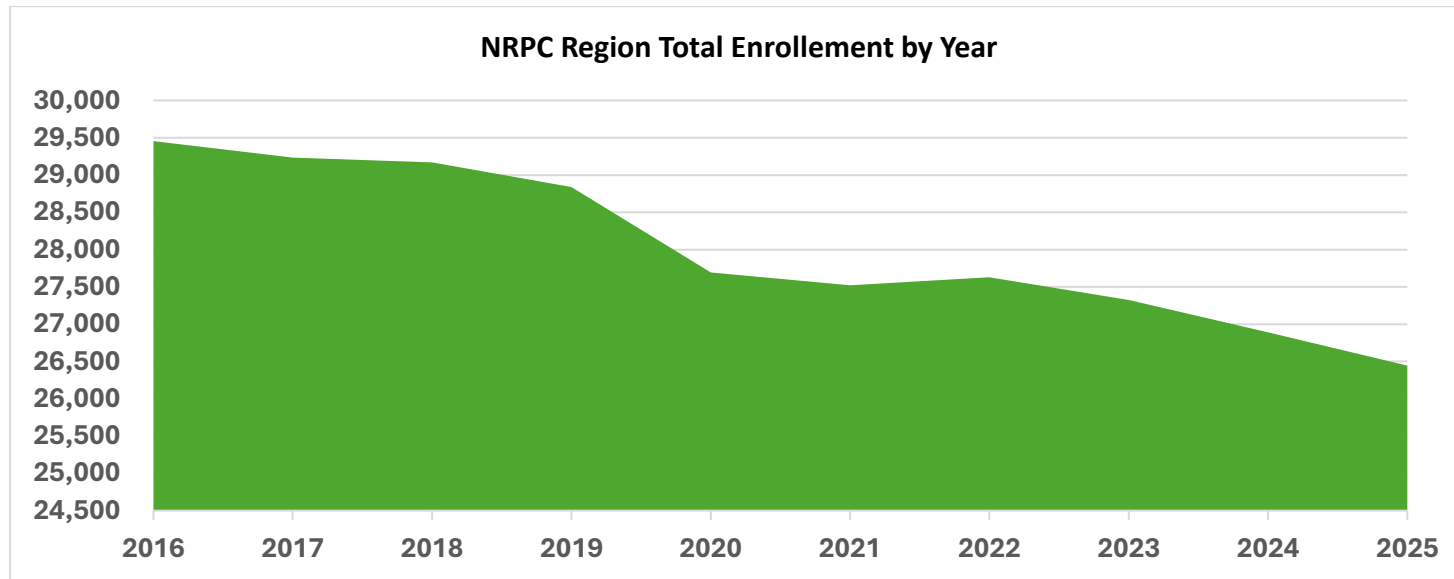
According to the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHED), the state has seen over a 20% decline in public school enrollments since 2002, with an average decline of about 2,200 students per year.

Table 2
New Public School Enrollment by Municipality (All Grades)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Amherst	47	-19	-16	11	-65	69	35	-12	-29	-29
Brookline	4	-32	43	6	5	14	-38	-17	-22	-20
Hollis	32	-6	17	-23	-31	5	39	10	-20	-10
Hudson	-111	-96	-75	-125	-81	-35	32	-29	-91	-42
Litchfield	-38	-42	-1	3	-68	-8	-4	-40	-58	-22
Lyndeborough	2	-13	0	-2	0	-4	11	-9	4	14
Mason	7	-11	-10	6	-1	9	0	-7	12	5
Merrimack	-66	74	-10	58	-185	22	-49	7	-70	-54
Milford	-73	-7	-39	-15	-119	7	-11	-86	-22	-71
Mont Vernon	-32	7	-21	-3	1	-17	20	27	6	-1
Nashua	-151	-29	69	-184	-613	-130	29	-98	-80	-151
Pelham	-23	-32	-39	-67	-15	-88	49	-37	-42	-60
Wilton	-9	-16	18	3	27	-15	-6	-14	-18	-6
NRPC TOTAL	-411	-222	-64	-332	-1145	-171	107	-305	-430	-447

Source: NH Department of Education Annual Enrollment Data

Figure 2



Source: NH Department of Education Annual Enrollment Data

Table 2 on the previous page presents annual changes in public school enrollment across the NRPC region from 2016 through 2025. Figure 2, above, illustrates changes in total enrollment over the same period. The data indicate a persistent long-term decline in student enrollment throughout the region, reflecting broader demographic trends including an aging population, declining birth rates, and slower growth among young families. Over the ten-year period, the region experienced enrollment losses in nine of the ten years shown, with only 2022 recording a net increase. The largest decline occurred in 2020, when enrollment fell by 1,145 students, while the region lost an additional 447 students in 2025.

Overall, the trend points to a sustained reduction in school-age population across much of the region.

The largest enrollment declines occurred in the region's more populous communities. Nashua experienced the most significant losses, with declines of 613 students in 2020, 130 in 2021, and 151 in 2025. Hudson, Merrimack, Milford, and Pelham also recorded substantial enrollment decreases during much of the period. Merrimack showed considerable year-to-year fluctuation, but still experienced significant losses in 2020 (-185) and 2025 (-54). Milford consistently recorded declining enrollment, including losses of 119 students in 2020 and 71 students in 2025.



The Brian S. McCarthy Middle School in Nashua, pictured above, is one of the few new public schools built in the region in recent years.

Several smaller communities experienced more modest changes. Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Lyndeborough, Mason, Mont Vernon, and Wilton generally saw smaller annual fluctuations, with occasional enrollment gains offsetting losses in other years. Amherst recorded notable increases in 2021 and 2022, while Hollis experienced gains in 2022 and 2023. Lyndeborough and Mason were among the few communities to post enrollment increases in 2024 and 2025, although these gains were relatively small in absolute terms. The temporary regional increase of 107 students in 2022 appears to be an anomaly within an otherwise downward trend. Most communities returned to declining enrollment in subsequent years, suggesting that the increase was likely related to short-

term demographic or post-pandemic factors rather than a sustained reversal of long-term patterns.

In addition to changing demographics, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on school enrollments across New Hampshire and the Nashua Region as is evidenced by the large drops in 2020 which suggest that the pandemic accelerated enrollment declines. The NRPC region's public schools lost 1,145 students in 2020, by far the largest decline during the ten-year period.

Several factors contributed to these changes. During the 2020-2021 school year, many families delayed kindergarten enrollment, opted for homeschooling, or enrolled children in private schools due to concerns about remote learning and health risks. New Hampshire, like much of the country, saw a noticeable increase in homeschooling and alternative education options during the pandemic. Some families also relocated during the pandemic, while others consolidated households or changed schooling arrangements.

In addition, the transition to remote and hybrid learning caused some students to temporarily leave traditional public schools. While some students returned in subsequent years, many districts did not fully recover to pre-pandemic enrollment levels.

The region experienced a partial rebound in 2022 (+107 students), likely reflecting students returning to public schools after pandemic disruptions. However, enrollment resumed its

downward trajectory afterward, with losses of 305 students in 2023, 430 in 2024, and 447 in 2025.

This suggests that while COVID-19 caused an immediate and dramatic enrollment shock, much of the region's enrollment decline is also tied to longer-term demographic trends. The pandemic appears to have accelerated an enrollment decline that was already underway rather than creating it entirely. These trends have important implications for future school capacity, staffing, facility planning, and educational funding across the region.

While traditional public schools are experiencing declining enrollment, other schools are gaining. Charter school enrollment in the Nashua area has increased since 2020 and appears to have captured a portion of the students leaving traditional public schools. A charter school in New Hampshire is a public school that operates independently of local school districts under a charter approved by the state. Charter schools are publicly funded and tuition-free for students, but they have greater flexibility in curriculum, teaching methods, scheduling, and governance than traditional public schools.

In New Hampshire, charter schools are authorized by the New Hampshire State Board of Education and overseen by the New Hampshire Department of Education. They must meet performance goals outlined in their charter and are subject to periodic review and renewal. Unlike private schools, charter schools must be open to all eligible students and unlike traditional public schools, they are not operated by a local

school district and may draw students from multiple communities.

The largest charter school in the region is the Academy for Science and Design (ASD) in Nashua, which serves grades 5–12. Recent enrollment data indicate approximately 675 students making it one of the largest charter schools in New Hampshire. Other charter schools serving the Nashua area include MicroSociety Academy Charter School with approximately 300 students enrolled in grades K–8 and Gate City Charter School for the Arts, located in Merrimack with approximately 160 students enrolled in grades K–8. Taken together, these three charter schools currently enroll roughly 1,100 students from Nashua and surrounding communities.

More broadly, charter school enrollment has been growing statewide. New Hampshire Department of Education data indicate that public charter school enrollment increased by approximately 44% statewide since 2019, reflecting growing demand for alternative public education options. Table 4 depicts charter school enrollment in the region from 2016 to 2025. Home school enrollment data is provided in Table 3.

In addition to charter schools, Private school enrollment in the Nashua area and throughout New Hampshire has generally increased since 2020, even as public school enrollment has continued to decline. A recent analysis of New Hampshire private schools found that enrollment in Christian schools increased by about 30% between 2021 and 2025, while enrollment in other private schools increased by about 5% over the same period. During the first year of the pandemic,

New Hampshire Catholic schools reported a surge in enrollment, adding nearly 500 new students statewide as many families sought in-person educational options. Growth of New Hampshire's Education Freedom Account (school voucher) program beginning in 2021 is likely another contributing factor.

For the Nashua area specifically, the region continues to support a substantial private school sector, including schools such as Bishop Guertin High School, Nashua Christian Academy, St. Christopher School, High Mowing, and World Academy. The number of private schools in Nashua has remained stable or increased slightly since 2020, suggesting continued demand for private education options.

The largest Catholic school in the region is Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua which serves grades 9–12. Current enrollment is approximately 750 students, according to school and athletic association records. At the elementary and middle school level, Saint Christopher School, and Saint Christopher Academy - Upper Campus serve students from Pre-K through Grade 8. The schools have continued to actively recruit students and remain one of the largest Catholic elementary and middle school programs in southern New Hampshire. Other parochial schools in the region include Presentation of Mary Academy located on Lowell Road in Hudson which serves students from preschool through eighth grade and St. Francis of Assisi School in Litchfield serves students from preschool through Grade 6.



Another prominent private school is High Mowing School in Wilton. Founded in 1942, it is the oldest Waldorf high school in the United States and the nation's only Waldorf boarding school. Located on a rural campus of more than 250 acres, the school serves students from early childhood through Grade 12 and emphasizes a holistic educational philosophy that integrates academics, arts, music, handcrafts, outdoor education, and community life. The World Academy in Nashua is a nonsectarian private school located on Spit Brook Road in Nashua. The school serves children from preschool through eighth grade and is known for its progressive educational philosophy that emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and individualized learning with an enrollment of approximately 500 students. Table 5 depicts private school enrollment in the region from 2016 to 2025.

Table 3

Home School Enrollment 2016 – 2025*										
SAU	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Amherst	55	7	15	77	11	72	38	18	11	11
Amherst-Souhegan	26	3	4	26	4	9	3	10	5	9
Brookline	20	0	4	4	2	25	17	5	10	12
Hollis	15	0	7	8	9	35	33	15	8	7
Hollis-Brookline	52	0	11	10	4	31	18	15	12	12
Hudson	160	0	26	24	42	60	52	12	35	42
Litchfield	27	5	9	6	9	16	10	5	5	14
Mason	11	16	24	20	3	11	4	4	7	4
Merrimack	85	27	16	18	20	61	48	19	29	36
Milford	79	19	19	19	18	62	42	39	45	43
Mont Vernon	7	3	1	33	6	16	12	4	4	8
Nashua	241	54	73	68	121	190	175	152	161	135
Pelham	11	24	32	33		209	23	9	16	14
Wilton-Lyndeborough	7	1	7	8	6	11	12	6	9	16
NRPC Total	796	159	248	354	255	808	487	313	357	363

* Data reflects where notifications are filed

Table 4
Charter School Enrollment 2016 - 2025

School	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Academy for Science and Design	521	525	520	532	535	541	532	543	640	672
Gate City Charter School For the Arts	156	174	154	163	164	140	155	151	143	160
MicroSociety Academy		150	192	214	230	241	248	297	306	304
NRPC Total	677	849	866	909	929	922	935	991	1,089	1,136

Table 5
Private School Enrollment 2019 - 2025

School	City/Town	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
2nd Nature Academy	Nashua	93	119	111	113	124	138	140	130	121	141
Bishop Guertin High School	Nashua	743	775	789	804	793	780	775	801	771	757
Christian Bible Church Academy	Nashua	13	15	12	9	11	24	27	26	28	28
Clearway High School	Nashua	0	51	62	53	54	53	42	35	38	44
Country Village Montessori School	Amherst	35	19	30	16	16	12	21	29	26	29
Crossroads Christian School	Pelham					79	87	131	158	196	205
Evergreen Elementary	Hudson										6
High Mowing School	Wilton	108	110	107	269	300	273	325	321	354	341
Hollis Montessori School	Hollis	118	117	119	125	125	84	116	125	120	122
Nashua Children's Home	Nashua	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0
Presentation of Mary Academy	Hudson	508	497	482	474	447	447	475	445	444	438
South Merrimack Christian Academy	Merrimack	284	304	254	273	157	178	220	244	265	279
St. Christopher Academy	Nashua	352	344	300	283	326	476	513	472	473	473
St. Francis Of Assisi School	Litchfield	114	131	137	125	126	176	212	217	201	199
Tabernacle Christian School	Litchfield	96	91	95	94	71	51	36	42	39	49
The Harkness House	Nashua							0	0	9	8
World Academy	Nashua	345	339	367	385	400	392	417	431	424	433
NRPC Total		1,902	2,007	1,966	2,136	2,106	2,094	2,272	2,314	2,363	2,390

Source for Tables 2, 3 & 4: NH Department of Education Annual Enrollment Data

Higher Education

Rivier University

Rivier University, the region's only four-year college, is a private Catholic university located on a 68-acre campus in Nashua. Founded in 1933 by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary in Hudson, the institution relocated to its present Nashua campus in 1941. In 1991, Rivier became a fully coeducational college when it admitted its first male undergraduate students. Since becoming coed, Rivier has significantly expanded its academic offerings. In 2012, the institution changed its name from Rivier College to Rivier University to reflect its broader academic mission and growing range of graduate and professional programs.

Currently, Rivier serves more than 2,500 undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and professional studies students and offers more than 60 academic programs with particular strengths in nursing, education, business, computer science, counseling, and the health sciences.

In recent years, Rivier University has undertaken significant campus improvements, investing in new academic, residential, and athletic facilities to support enrollment growth and expand high-demand academic programs. The centerpiece of the expansion has been Rivier Village, a new apartment-style residential complex developed between 2023 and 2026 that includes four residence halls designed to accommodate growing enrollment while providing upper-level students with a more independent living experience.

Academic facilities have also received substantial upgrades. In 2020, the university opened the 36,000-square-foot Science and Innovation Center, which houses modern biology, chemistry, biotechnology, and computer science laboratories, collaborative classrooms, and research spaces. In 2022, Rivier completed Sylvia Trottier Hall, home to the Nursing Simulation and Clinical Education Center. The facility features advanced patient simulation laboratories that replicate hospital and clinical environments, allowing nursing students to gain hands-on experience using sophisticated medical simulation technology before entering clinical practice. The building also includes renovated space for business and homeland security programs, including cybersecurity laboratories.



Nashua Community College



Nashua Community College (NCC) is a public two-year college located on Amherst Street in Nashua, that has served the region since 1970. The college is part of the Community College System of New Hampshire, designed to provide affordable, career-focused education through more than 50 associate degree and certificate programs in fields including advanced manufacturing, business, engineering technology, health sciences, information technology, public safety, and transportation. NCC currently enrolls approximately 1,400 students each year, with many attending part-time while balancing work and family responsibilities. The college also serves more than 1,200 local high school students annually through its Early College program, allowing students to earn college credits before graduation. Strong partnerships with

regional employers, school districts, and four-year colleges help prepare graduates for immediate employment or transfer to bachelor's degree programs. Through workforce training, continuing education, and customized business training, Nashua Community College plays a vital role in supporting the economic development and workforce needs of the region while providing accessible educational opportunities.

Recent improvements at NCC have focused on expanding workforce training programs and modernizing instructional facilities to meet regional employer needs. The college's most significant recent addition is its Enhanced Air Traffic Control (E-CTI) program, launched in 2025 in partnership with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The program features a state-of-the-art Air Traffic Control Tower Simulator that replicates the operations of a real airport control tower, making NCC one of only a limited number of colleges nationwide approved to provide this advanced training. In 2025, the college also introduced a new Collision Repair Technician Certificate program, expanding its nationally recognized automotive technology offerings with modern equipment and industry-standard repair laboratories. NCC also continues to invest in advanced manufacturing, robotics, engineering technology, healthcare, and aviation laboratories while expanding partnerships with regional employers to provide apprenticeships, internships, and customized workforce training.

Solid Waste

Eleven of the region's communities are members of the Nashua Region Solid Waste Management District (NRSWMD) which also includes the town of Windham which is outside of the NRPC Region. These communities operate their own transfer stations or trash collection programs but jointly participate in a Household Hazardous Waste collection program that organizes six collection events each year.

Four Hills Landfill

The Four Hills Landfill in Nashua is by far the largest solid waste facility in the region and the only remaining landfill. It is operated by the Nashua Solid Waste Department and serves as both a landfill and the site of the city's recycling center. The facility handles a wide range of materials, including household trash, construction and demolition debris, yard waste, bulky items, and recyclables. It also includes special drop-off areas for items like electronics, appliances, and hazardous household materials such as batteries. Nashua is the only community in the region that offers curbside pickup for trash and comingled recyclables as well as yard waste.

Nashua is focused on extending the life of the landfill through recycling, yard waste composting and ongoing expansion and upgrades. The landfill has been the focus of long-term planning efforts to increase capacity and is expected to remain in service for many years as the city manages its growing waste and recycling needs.

Souhegan Regional Landfill District (SRLD)

Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, and Mont Vernon are all members of the Souhegan Regional Landfill District (SRLD) as well as the NRSWMD. The towns cooperate to reduce costs and improve efficiency for trash disposal and recycling; however, residents bring household waste and recyclables to their local town transfer stations, where materials are sorted, separated, and then hauled to regional facilities for final processing or disposal. The SRLD oversees long-term planning, budgeting, and contracts for waste hauling and recycling markets to ensure the system is both economical and environmentally responsible.

The towns of Litchfield, Merrimack, Milford, and Pelham operate their own transfer stations where residents bring their household trash and recyclables. Hudson manages solid waste through a town-operated transfer station system combined with contracted curbside waste pickup and recycling services. Residents can bring leaf and yard waste, cardboard, and metal items to the Transfer Station. The town contracts with a private hauler to provide curbside residential pickup for MSW and single-stream recycling which are taken directly to a remote facility for processing and/or disposal. All five towns are also members of the NRSWMD.

The towns of Lyndeborough, Mason and Wilton utilize the Wilton Recycling Center is located on NH 101 which is also

open to residents of the towns of Greenville and Temple and Wilton.

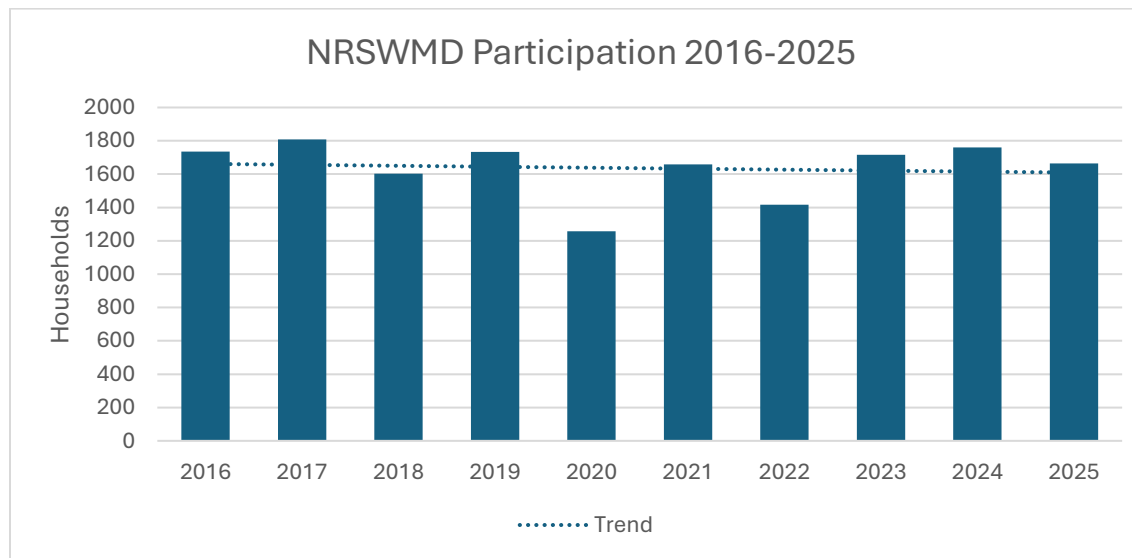
Household Hazardous Waste

The primary function of the NRSWMD is to operate a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program with the goal of removing household waste products from the waste stream that could pose a threat to public health and safety. Generally, HHW includes products that are corrosive, flammable, toxic, or reactive including oil-based paints and stains, insecticide, pool chemicals, and other similar items. Events typically take

place in Nashua, Milford, and Pelham. Participation rates have varied over the years, with a high of 1,808 households in 2017 to a low of 1,258 households in 2020.

In 2025, a total of 1,665 households participated in the HHW collections a total of 75,443 pounds of hazardous waste was removed from the waste stream for proper disposal. Lyndeborough, Wilton, and Mason participate in the Household Hazardous Waste collection hosted once per year by the Wilton Recycling Center.

Figure 3



Public Safety

All communities in the region are served by municipal police and fire departments while also participating in extensive mutual-aid agreements that allow neighboring communities to assist one another during major emergencies.

Municipal police departments vary widely in size from the Nashua Police Department with approximately 182 sworn police officers, to the Mason Police Department which relies primarily on part-time officers. Local departments are responsible for law enforcement, crime prevention, traffic safety, emergency response, and community policing programs. Regional cooperation among departments allows for coordinated responses to major incidents, investigations, and public safety emergencies. Community-oriented policing remains a central focus throughout the region, emphasizing partnerships between law enforcement agencies and residents to reduce crime and improve neighborhood safety.

Fire protection and emergency medical response are provided by a combination of career and volunteer fire departments. Nashua Fire Rescue is the largest fire department in the region, operating six fire stations, a dispatch center, and a training facility staffed by approximately 176 career personnel. The department responds to more than 52,000 calls annually and serves as the regional hazardous materials response team for the Souhegan Valley. Nashua Fire Rescue also maintains specialized capabilities including airport crash-fire-rescue services and a dive rescue team.

Emergency medical services are delivered through a combination of municipal first responders, fire department emergency medical personnel, and ambulance providers. In Nashua, American Medical Response (AMR) provides advanced life support ambulance service while fire department personnel frequently provide initial medical care before ambulance arrival. Residents also benefit from two major hospitals, Southern New Hampshire Medical Center and St. Joseph Hospital, which provide emergency and specialized medical care for the region.

The region's emergency preparedness system extends beyond traditional public safety services. The Greater Nashua Public Health Network coordinates emergency planning and response efforts among healthcare providers, emergency responders, municipalities, and community organizations. These partnerships help communities prepare for natural disasters, public health emergencies, severe weather events, hazardous materials incidents, and other large-scale emergencies.

A key strength of emergency services in the Nashua region is its strong mutual-aid system. Fire, police, EMS, and public health agencies routinely work together across municipal boundaries, allowing communities to share personnel, equipment, and specialized resources during major incidents. This regional approach helps ensure that residents throughout Greater Nashua receive effective emergency services while allowing communities to efficiently manage public safety resources.

Other Municipal Facilities

All communities in the region have Public Works Departments that maintain municipal streets and roads, staff solid waste facilities, and provide other essential services. Several communities have recently undertaken or proposed new or expanded DPW facilities. In 2023, Nashua opened a new 25,000-square-foot Public Works Administration Building at the Four Hills Landfill site. The facility serves as the headquarters for the City's Division of Public Works housing administrative, engineering, parks, and recreation functions. The building was constructed as part of a long-term effort to modernize and consolidate public works operations and replace aging municipal facilities. Plans are under way to relocate the highway garage to the site as well.

One of the region's smaller communities, Brookline, also recently modernized its municipal infrastructure through the development of a new Department of Public Works facility on North Mason Road. The facility provides space for highway and public works operations, equipment storage, vehicle maintenance, and materials management, replacing older and less efficient facilities. Together with the town's newer Public Safety Complex, the DPW facility represents a significant investment in municipal services and the long-term maintenance of community infrastructure.

Community Facilities Goals & Implementation Strategies

Effective Capital Improvement Planning

- Review and update Capital Improvement Plans annually to identify and fund larger expenditures like major facility improvements and equipment purchases.
- To support long-term budgeting efforts, create an inventory for community facilities and track condition capacity.
- Prioritize a “state of good repair” over expansion.
- Coordinate regional grant applications.
- Encourage regionalization and/or shared Community facilities and services with neighboring communities where possible.

Water & Sewer

Maintaining a sufficient supply of safe drinking water, whether from private wells or public water supply systems, is essential for the health and wellbeing of the region's residents and necessary to support its continued prosperity and growth. To enhance protection of our surface and groundwater resources, therefore, it is essential. Toward these ends, consideration should be given to the following:

- Review local aquifer or groundwater protection regulations and wellhead protection regulations to ensure that they are up to date and address current

best practices, emerging threats such as PFAS, and changing land use patterns. Adopt new ordinances and regulations or amend existing requirements as needed.

- Consider requiring that new developments to be serviced by wells demonstrate the adequacy of groundwater resources prior to approval, especially where low water levels are known.
- Review local stormwater management regulations and ordinances, road standards, parking requirements, and other related regulations to ensure compliance with MS4 requirements best practices and implement consistent policies where appropriate including in portions of the community outside urbanized areas.
- Explore funding opportunities to enhance and expand public water supply and sewer systems including state and federal grants and exponential use of betterment districts and Tax Increment Finance Districts.

Municipal Buildings

The region's town and city halls are often one of a community's most defining features. Many are historic landmarks and in communities such as Litchfield and Pelham that have moved town offices to newer facilities, the old town hall buildings remain and are used for other community purposes. How best to preserve the region's aging municipal buildings while also providing public offices and meeting spaces is a challenge that requires meaningful community engagement. Outside of local property taxes, there are few funding

opportunities though some, such as LCHIP are available to help preserve historic structures.

Recreation

To accommodate the recreational needs of the additional 24,400 residents projected to be added to the region by 2050 additional land for active recreation such as ballfields will be needed to avoid overuse of existing facilities. Adding recreation land and facilities is also essential for maintaining the region's quality of life as a key economic development strategy and to advance public health. In addition, increasing protected open space can help meet recreational needs by increasing opportunities to expand trail systems while also helping to protect critical natural resources including public water supplies.

Expansion of recreational opportunities can be accomplished through fee acquisition, set asides in open space or conservation subdivisions, through nonprofit organizations such as YMCAs and other membership clubs, and through for-profit commercial recreational facilities. Increasing conservation lands can be funded through land use change tax revenues and through grants from New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), NH Moose Plate Program, Land and Water Conservation funds, and other grant programs as well as through open space developments or conservation subdivisions. In addition, the region should:

- Prioritize acquisition of parkland and open space that abuts existing protected lands within the community and in adjacent communities.
- Link multi-use trails across municipalities where possible.
- Implement park and recreational improvements designed for universal accessibility wherever possible and identify accessibility gaps in existing facilities for improvement.

Schools

Declining school enrollments, particularly against the backdrop of aging facilities, escalating costs, and changing demands on public education is a daunting challenge. Schools are a defining part of community and issues related to education are often emotionally charged. If public school enrollments continue to decline, some schools will inevitably need to be closed, and student populations will consolidate. How best to address the facility needs of the region's public schools will require collaboration between various stake-holders within every community and between communities including the possibility of new or expanded cooperative or regional school districts.

Solid Waste

As discussed above, the region includes multiple solid waste districts that cooperate on Household Hazardous Waste Disposal, Recycling, and other related issues. All communities except for Nashua rely on commercial landfill operations or

incinerators outside of the region while Nashua has the benefit of operating its own landfill. Landfill capacity in all facilities is finite and the cost of hauling waste to remote facilities is considerable. Reducing the volume of municipal solid waste, therefore, is imperative. Possible initiatives to reduce the volume of waste including the following:

- Increase food waste composting. In 2019, the EPA estimated that Americans generated about 66 million tons of wasted food from residential, commercial, and institutional sources which accounts for between 21 and 24% of all municipal solid waste in the US.
- Increase textile recycling. Textiles, including clothing, footwear, towels, sheets, and other fabric products account for approximately 6–7% of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream by weight.
- Expand Styrofoam recycling. Though Styrofoam is light, it is bulky and therefore takes up considerable space in landfills and in trucks transporting solid waste. Styrofoam recycling opportunities in New Hampshire are limited but expanding. In Gilford and Exeter, foam densifiers have been installed that compress Styrofoam into dense blocks that can be manufactured into new products such as building insulation. In recent years, communities in the region such as Nashua have held Styrofoam drives which help to divert some of the waste. Longer term, consideration should be given to the acquisition of one or more densifiers to serve the region on a year round basis.

NRPC Regional Plan - Housing

Introduction

NRPC's [Regional Housing Needs Assessment](#), adopted by the NRPC Commission in March of 2023, serves as the housing component of the 2026 NRPC Regional Plan. This chapter provides updated housing related data where available, assesses progress in housing development since 2023 and highlights notable policies and strategies that help address the broad spectrum of housing needs in the region. The key findings of this chapter draw directly from the 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment and highlight successful strategies to help promote alternative, affordable, and abundant housing.



Downtown Milford © Seth Dewey Photography

Regional Housing Needs Assessment Summary



The 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) was developed as part of a statewide coordinated effort to update the RHNAs for all nine New Hampshire Regional Planning Commissions with assistance from the New Hampshire Department of Business Affairs (BEA), the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA), the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA), and other partners. The RHNA provides a vast array of housing data together with tools for municipalities, residents, and developers to advance the region's housing related goals. The following is a brief summary of the findings from the RHNA.

As noted in the RHNA, the demand for housing in the NRPC region “[] has far outstripped supply over the past several years resulting in significant increases in housing costs for both owners and renters. Indeed, the lack of available housing, especially rental units, is challenging the ability of many people to find housing at all.” Though the rental housing vacancy rate has improved since 2023, it remains at historic lows, particularly for studio apartments and for 3- and 4-bedroom units. The home-buying market has eased somewhat since 2023 as well, but the inventory of homes available for sale remains low and sales prices are at historic highs. Interest rates have likewise increased markedly, pushing homeownership further out of reach for many households.



For the housing market to return to a healthy balance, a significant increase in the availability of housing units for all kinds of households will be necessary. The RHNA provides a wide array of housing alternatives that can be developed to help address the Region's housing needs as well as potential planning and zoning initiatives that can be implemented to help meet community goals.

Another key aspect of the RHNA is a detailed discussion of housing needs for specific populations including low-income families and individuals, seniors, people with disabilities, families in crisis and people struggling with homelessness. Existing housing options and services for each of these populations are provided. Importantly, the RHNA also includes detailed data on population, households, and housing for each community and the NRPC Region as a whole.

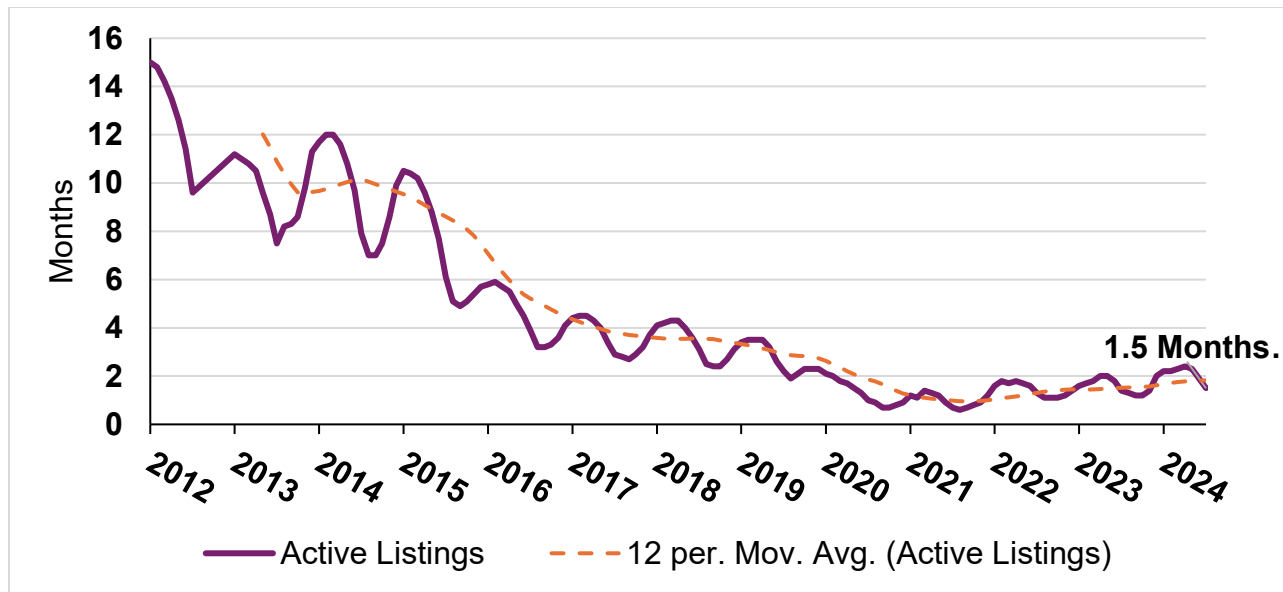
Housing Market & Rental Data

In order to understand the full picture of housing for the Nashua Region, it is important to evaluate the most recent housing and rental trends in the area. In the real estate market, the absorption rate measures how quickly homes are sold in a market during a specific period. It is calculated by dividing the total number of available properties by the number of properties sold per month. If you flip the formula, it will tell you the number of months it takes to sell off the current inventory. The chart below shows that it would take 1.5 months to sell all active listings in 2024, indicating a strong sellers' market. A balanced inventory would be 6 months.

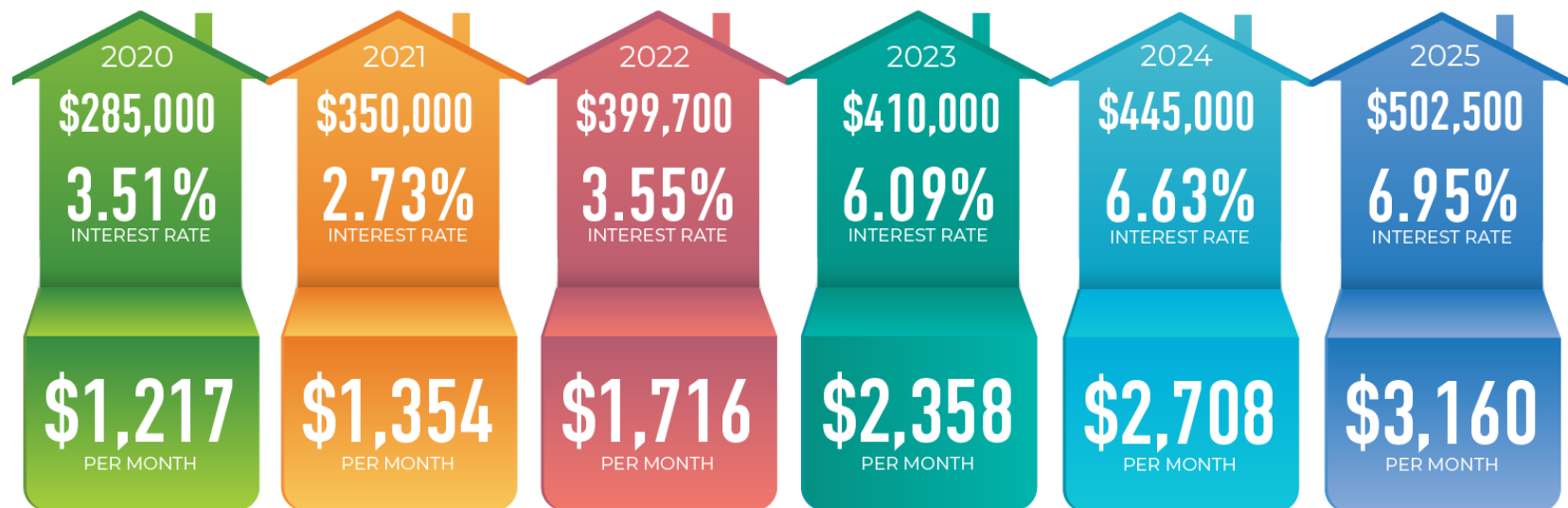
More than 6 months would indicate a strong buyers' market. The median purchase price has increased steadily with a sharper increase from 2020 to 2025. The NRPC Median purchase price in 2025 of \$502,500 is significantly higher than the statewide median purchase price. According to the 2023 RHNA, with the sales price of homes approaching \$500,000, only 10% of this housing is available to median income buyers.

Mortgage interest rates have risen sharply from 2020 to 2025. This, coupled with the rise of median home values, has made purchasing power for potential home buyers go down. In other words, buyers are paying more for housing per month for less "house." In addition, the Region has an ample stock of older housing stock. This can be problematic because older houses can be harder to maintain and less energy efficient. However, the Region's historic homes are also an essential part of community character. The highest percentage of older home are in the towns of Wilton and Lyndeborough at 53.3% and 36.3% of their housing built before the 1960s, respectively.

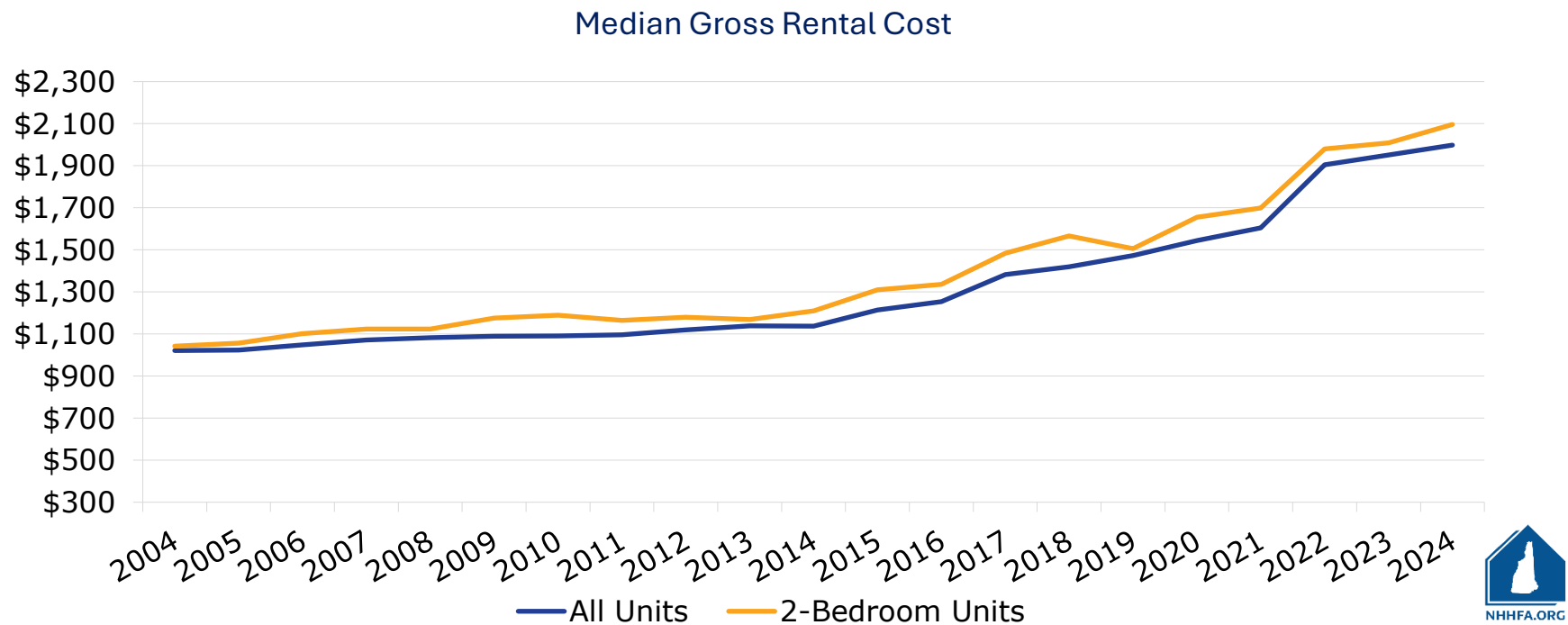
Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the housing market was flooded with people looking to purchase their first home or to relocate. However, due to the rapidly increasing interest rates coupled with homebuyer fatigue from an increasingly competitive housing market, real estate sales have been decreasing even as prices remain high. Some of this can be contributed to current homeowners who were able to refinance their homes during the historic inflation rate lows of 2021 and 2022. Today's high rates provide many current homeowners with little to no incentive to sell.



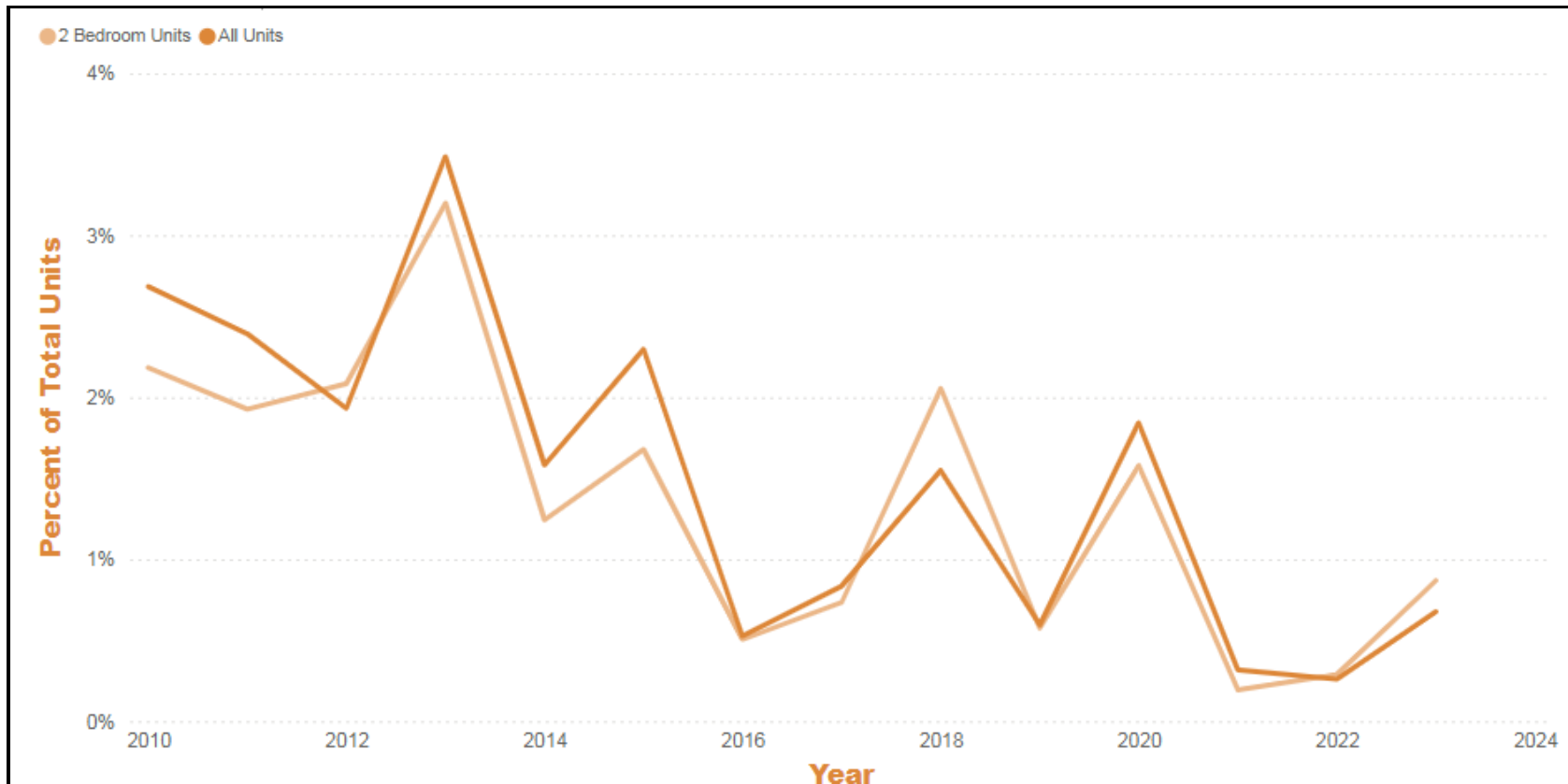
Data Source: The Warren Group data analyzed by New Hampshire Housing



Rental rates have continued to rise though at a lesser rate than prices for owner-occupied homes as the supply of available rental units has increased. As seen in the graph from New Hampshire Housing, the overall median rent for the Nashua Region is \$1,951 for all units and \$2,008 for two-bedroom units. The median income in the region, according to five-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) is \$126,804. This means that a renter-household at the median income would pay only 19% of their annual income for a median rent two-bedroom unit and a household earning 60% of the median income (the threshold for renter household workforce housing) would pay just over 26%. Since households are considered cost-burden when paying 30% or more of their income on housing, household income is generally sufficient to support the current rental market. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that a significant portion of renters in the region are struggling to afford housing costs.

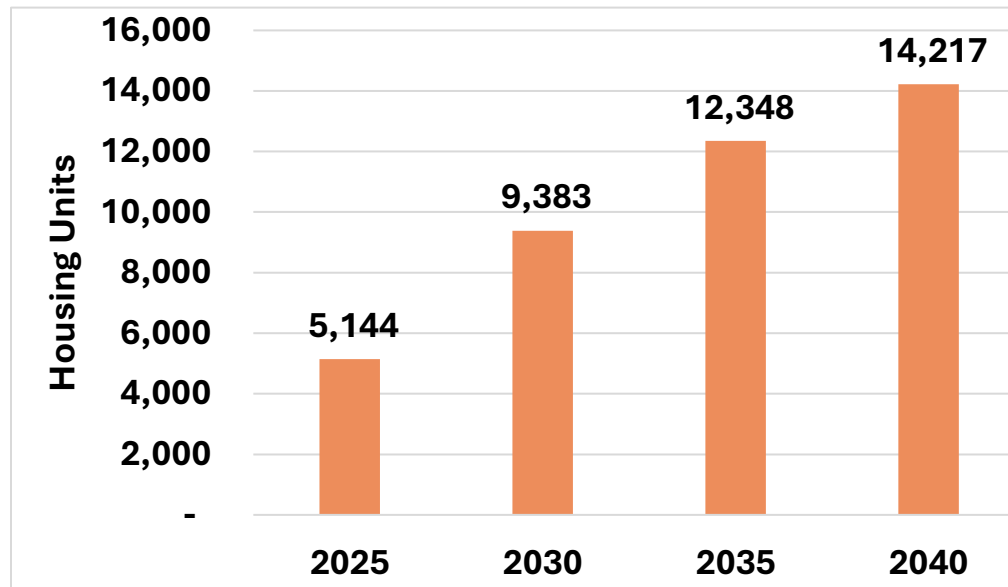


Vacancy Rates 2010 - 2024



As can be seen in the chart above, rental housing vacancy rates have begun to rise as more rental housing enters the market though they remain at historic lows. Rising vacancy rates and moderating rents are positive signs for the Region's housing market. That said, according to surveys conducted as a part of the RHNA, 85% of survey respondents indicated that they prefer homeownership. With homeownership increasingly out of reach due to the cumulative impact of low inventory, high sales prices, and high interest rates, creating more homeownership opportunities is the greatest housing challenge facing the Region.

How Much Housing does the NRPC Region Need?



In 2022, the state's nine Regional Planning Commissions in collaboration with the CDFA, NHHFA and BEA, worked with the firm Root Policy Research to prepare a common methodology for developing housing development targets for each community and region in the state. This is known as the Fair Share Housing Production Model. The targets generated through this effort are designed to help communities plan effectively for the amount of housing they need to accommodate their anticipated share of overall growth and are a central component of the RHNA. As can be seen in the charts to the left, almost 9,400 additional units need to be built between 2020 and 2030 in the Region.

Based on estimated population growth:

- Over 9,000 additional units between 2020 and 2030
- About 14,000 new units between 2020 and 2040
- To meet production needs, building permit activity must increase by 60% over the next decade



Housing Needs Projections by Municipality from 2023 RHNA

The Housing Needs projections developed in the 2023 RHNA remain the guidepost for measuring progress in reaching the housing production goals for the state and for each of New Hampshire's nine Regional Planning Commissions. The targets were developed with the support of the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA), who engaged the nationally known firm Root Policy Research, to prepare a common methodology for developing a Fair Share Housing Distribution for every community in every region of the state. A Fair Share Housing Production Model was created to assist New Hampshire's Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and municipalities determine the housing production needed to meet current and future demand.

As noted in their final report (NRPC RHNA Appendix A) "The output from the model is the number of housing units that are needed to accommodate population growth and support employment growth and move New Hampshire's housing market toward a more stable and functioning state. Housing unit targets are provided for five-year increments in 2025, 2030, 2035, and 2040. Stabilization of the housing market is achieved through adding production to achieve a 5% rental vacancy and a 2% ownership vacancy rate. This stabilization

factor is averaged throughout the 2020 to 2040 period to best reflect the cyclical nature of housing development (v. front-loading the units needed as of 2022). The model presents *cumulative* housing production targets for 2025, 2030, 2035, and 2040. For example, 2025 housing production targets represent projected need to accommodate demand between 2020 and 2025; similarly, 2040 housing production targets represent need to accommodate demand between 2020 and 2040 (v. need between 2035 and 2040)."

These housing production targets in the table on the following pages are presented for all owners, and for owners below and above 100% the area median income (AMI) for a 4-person household; and for all renters and renters below and above 60% AMI for a 3-person household.¹ The AMI is the regional AMI for the NRPC region developed for use in this model is based on the AMIs published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The methodology developed by Root Policy Research that resulted in the table on the following page does not break out the current municipal fair share of regional need for workforce housing and therefore shouldn't be relied on for current compliance with the state's Workforce Housing Law, RSA 674:58 – 61.

¹ AMI is the median income for households. This statistical measure — literally the income of the household in the exact middle of all households when distributed

from lowest to highest — is a better measure than the average, which can be skewed by very low or very high incomes.

Town	2025	Renters Below 60% AMI	Renters Above 60% AMI	Owners Below 100% AMI	Owners Above 100% AMI	2030	Renters Below 60% AMI	Renters Above 60% AMI	Owners Below 100% AMI	Owners Above 100% AMI
Amherst	274	30	59	64	120	499	55	109	117	218
Brookline	119	13	26	27	53	217	23	49	49	96
Hollis	192	16	46	47	83	351	30	86	85	150
Hudson	600	71	125	167	237	1,095	130	230	304	431
Litchfield	197	20	44	57	76	358	37	81	103	138
Lyndeborough	42	3	11	13	15	76	5	20	24	27
Mason	35	2	9	11	13	64	5	16	20	23
Merrimack	628	69	136	181	242	1,146	126	251	330	439
Milford	391	46	82	122	142	713	84	151	221	257
Mont Vernon	60	6	14	17	24	110	10	26	30	43
Nashua	2,272	244	496	722	810	4,145	449	914	1,310	1,472
Pelham	239	38	40	80	81	435	70	74	145	146
Wilton	95	14	17	32	32	174	25	32	59	58
NRPC Total	5,143	570	1,107	1,540	1,926	9,383	1,047	2,039	2,796	3,500

Town	2035	Renters Below 60% AMI	Renters Above 60% AMI	Owners Below 100% AMI	Owners Above 100% AMI	2040	Renters Below 60% AMI	Renters Above 60% AMI	Owners Below 100% AMI	Owners Above 100% AMI
Amherst	657	74	145	152	285	756	87	170	174	326
Brookline	287	31	65	64	126	330	37	76	73	144
Hollis	462	40	114	111	196	532	48	133	127	223
Hudson	1,441	174	306	397	563	1,659	206	357	454	642
Litchfield	472	49	108	135	180	543	58	126	154	205
Lyndeborough	100	7	27	31	35	115	8	31	36	40
Mason	84	6	22	26	30	97	7	26	30	34
Merrimack	1,507	169	334	431	573	1,736	201	390	493	652
Milford	938	113	201	289	335	1,080	133	234	331	381
Mont Vernon	145	14	35	40	57	167	16	41	45	65
Nashua	5,451	604	1,215	1,714	1,918	6,272	714	1,417	1,960	2,181
Pelham	575	94	99	190	192	666	111	116	218	221
Wilton	229	34	43	77	76	264	40	49	88	86
NRPC Total	12,347	1,409	2,713	3,659	4,566	14,217	1,667	3,167	4,182	5,200

It is important to stress that the housing production targets shown in the table below are intended to address the total number of housing units needed if the region and its communities were to add a sufficient number of housing units to reach optimal vacancy levels as well as accommodating new households formed by natural increase, changes in household composition, and through projected migration. NRPC Municipalities are encouraged to use these targets as guidance in developing local master plans and in developing and administering their local zoning ordinances and land use regulations.

RHNA Implementation

Building Permit Activity 2020 to 2025

To measure progress in meeting housing production goals, the New Hampshire Department of Business & Economic Affairs (BEA) conducts an annual residential building permit survey of all communities in the state. The number of permits issued in each municipality in the Region for the 2020 to 2025 period is shown below together with the housing production targets for each community for 2025 and 2030. During the 2020 to 2025 period, a total of 4,134 residential permits were issued. To meet 2025 housing production targets, however, over 1,000 additional permits were needed. To meet 2030 targets, permits for an additional 5,249 units are needed for an average of 1,050 residential building permits issued per year. Given that the average number of permits issued per year during the 2020 to 2025 period was 827, the region will fail to

meet its production goals by 1,115 units unless developed activity increases. By 2035, a total of 12,347 additional housing units are needed.

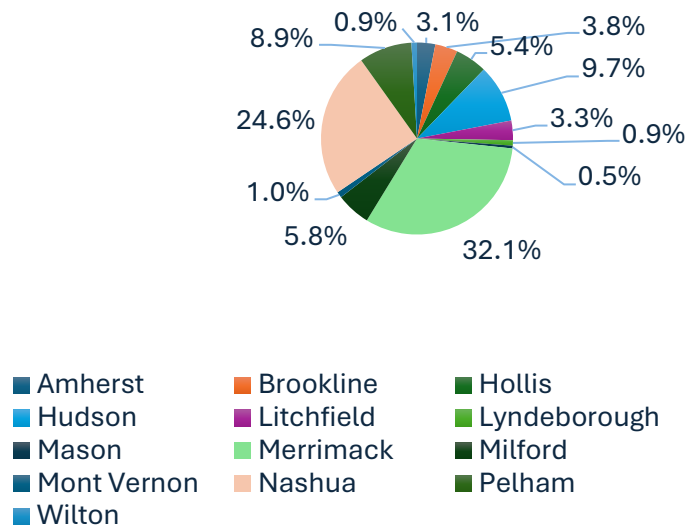
In the years from 2020 through 2024, the largest number of building permits issued by far, 1,431, were issued in 2021. Since 2021, new residential building permits issued have fallen to between 589 and 791 per year. The clear spike in building permits in 2021 may be attributed to the surge in demand brought on by the pandemic. Regardless of the reason, 2021 appears to be outlier.

Town by town, the Town of Merrimack has issued more residential building permits since 2020 than any other community in the region. Merrimack has exceeded its target housing production beyond 2030. Though Merrimack accounts for only 12% of the region's population, the town issued 32.1% of the total number residential units permitted during the period. Nashua issued the second largest number of residential building permits though permit activity in Nashua remains below target. The fewest residential building permits issued, 19, were issued in Mason, the region's smallest town by population and one of its most rural communities.

Though Merrimack issued a disproportionately large number of building permits during the period, the town has extensive areas of developable land with public water, sewer and highway access and is home to some of the region's largest employers such as Fidelity Investments, BAE Systems, Connection (formerly PC Connection), and the now closed, Anheuser Busch brewery.

Municipality Name	Total Permits Issued 2020-2025	Additional Units Needed by 2025	Additional Units Needed by 2030	Average Issued per year 2020-2025	Average Needed per year by 2030
Amherst	127	147	372	25	74
Brookline	157	0	60	31	12
Hollis	222	0	129	44	26
Hudson	403	197	692	81	138
Litchfield	136	61	222	27	44
Lyndeborough	38	4	38	8	8
Mason	19	16	45	4	9
Merrimack	1,327	0	0	265	0
Milford	239	152	474	48	95
Mont Vernon	41	19	69	8	14
Nashua	1,017	1,255	3,128	203	626
Pelham	369	0	66	74	13
Wilton	39	56	135	8	27
Total	4,134	1,010	5,249	827	1,050

Total Permits % By Town 2020-2025

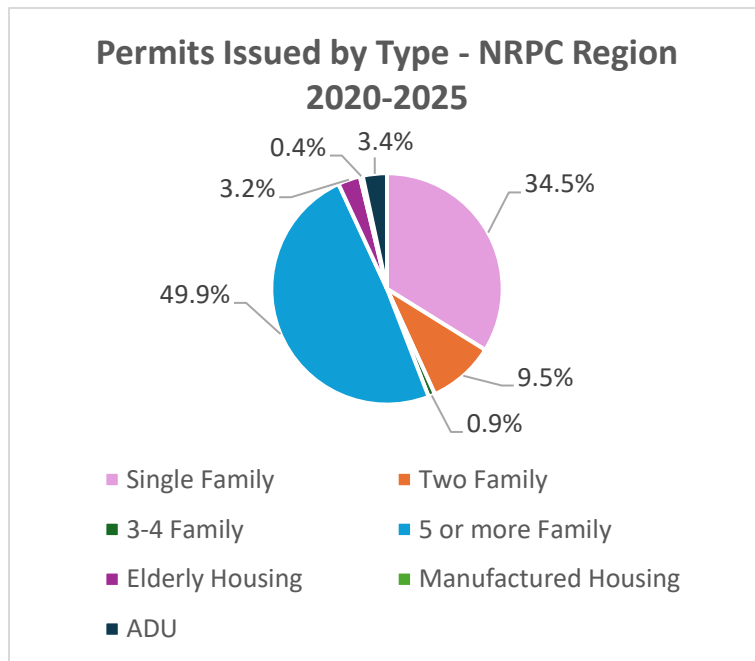
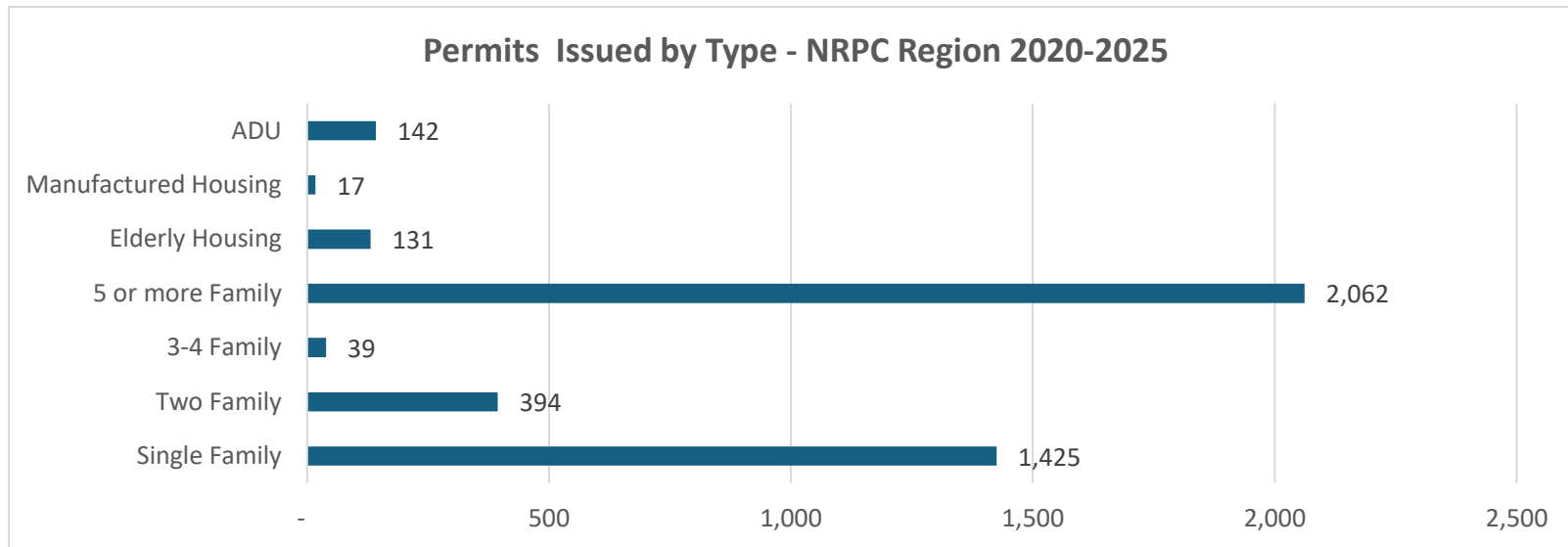


Nashua also has public water and sewer in almost all areas of the city, good highway access, and major employers including BAE Systems and two regional hospitals, however, the city has less vacant developable land. Most new housing units developed in Nashua since 2020 have involved either redevelopment of formerly developed sites or conversion of commercial buildings to residential use. Communities such as Mason have no public water or sewer, no access to major highways and no major employers. Other communities that have met or exceeded their 2025 targets include Brookline, Hollis, and Pelham. It is notable that these communities also

lack public water and sewer, have no direct access to major highways and no major employers. While proximity to critical infrastructure and employment is an important factor in determining where development takes place, and the housing market is influenced by pull factors such as school district quality and community character, it is also clear that local land use regulations play a central role in how much housing is built, where it is built and the type of housing that is developed.



Above is recently constructed single-family home in Hollis.



A recently constructed duplex in an established Nashua neighborhood.



Newly constructed Townhouse Units in Litchfield

The RHNA housing targets are intended to serve as a guide for policy makers and communities by establishing thresholds to achieve in support of a healthy housing market including targets for workforce housing development for both owners and renters. However, they do not dictate the means of meeting these goals. The RHNA provides a detailed overview of alternative housing solutions that can help communities provide the housing the region needs while maintaining local character and overall development priorities. Some of the ways in which the Region's communities are making progress

Newly constructed townhouse units in Litchfield

in meeting housing goals since adoption of the RHNA in 2023 are described on the following pages.

Housing Opportunity Program

The Housing Opportunity Program is a grant created by InvestNH to provide funding to municipalities to analyze and update their land use regulations to help increase housing development opportunities. In 2023, the communities of Brookline, Hudson, Milford, Nashua, and Wilton were awarded the first round of grants.

The communities of Brookline, Milford, Nashua, and Wilton were also awarded for a second round of grants in 2024. With these grants, the communities were able to conduct important outreach and engagement with their communities relating to housing development generally, affordable housing and alternative zoning techniques. With the feedback generated from these efforts, the communities gained valuable insight into how to make their land use regulations more accessible to various housing strategies designed to fit their needs and all four communities moved forward with proposed amendments to their local use ordinances and regulations.

The Town of Brookline was able to draft an ordinance for their Village District, which would combine residential uses with small retail and commercial business along Main Street in their town. The goal of this was to help promote jobs within the Town, create more affordable housing, and to foster a town center to hopefully encourage economic growth. Additionally, Brookline was able to update their Manufactured Housing Ordinance, creating regulations that support reasonable

housing opportunities while preserving open space. The town was able to update their Vision, Land Use, and Housing chapters through the HOP grant, giving them a steady platform of long-term planning for their community.

The town of Wilton was able to create a series of comprehensive zoning amendments that will help to make the town more accessible to developers and future residents. The town was able to conduct valuable resident feedback through surveys related to economic development, vision, and land use. Utilizing this information, the town drafted an adaptive reuse overlay district to help encourage residential and commercial development in a historic mill district adjacent to their downtown, with the added goal of helping to add vitality to their main street. Additional updates were made to their Housing, Land Use, and Vision chapters of the Master Plan to help Wilton realize their long-term plans more comprehensively.

The Town of Milford was able to conduct a regulation audit which helped them to pinpoint where they needed to make changes in their ordinances. Additionally, they were able to conduct a housing needs assessment and a fiscal impact analysis and development of strategic housing solutions to help bolster the assessment. The Town was able to list a variety of housing solutions, whether through zoning techniques or type of development, to help improve housing affordability in their community.

The HOP grant helped the City of Nashua initiate a complete overhaul of the City's Land Use Code. The City was able to

undertake a comprehensive assessment of all of their land use regulations and propose improvements to align them more closely with the City's recent Master Plan update known as Imagine Nashua.

The Region's HOP grant experience provides a series of examples of how different communities can work to achieve their housing goals through alternative planning strategies. This includes addressing downtown districts, regulation audits, affordable housing incentives, cluster developments, and focused master planning. Each community, from Wilton to Nashua, serves as a case study for implementing zoning changes in order to try to cultivate more housing.

Implementation Examples Around the Region

Since adoption of the RHNA in 2023, many communities in the region have made significant strides toward increasing overall housing production as well as adding to the diversity of housing type available. This section highlights some of the progress that has been made both on the regulatory and development fronts.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are becoming increasingly popular across New Hampshire communities. An ADU is a complete dwelling unit with permanent, separate cooking and bathing facilities, commonly referred to as an "in-law apartment" or "garage apartment" according to New Hampshire Housing. The 2025 legislative session provided a new update to New Hampshire ADU laws, requiring that both

attached and detached accessory dwelling units be permitted by right in all zoning districts that permit single-family dwellings. In 2026, all NRPC communities that did not already allow detached ADUs by right, amended their ordinances to comply with the 2025 amended ADU law or are in the process of doing so. In Lyndeborough, a petition warrant article was passed to allow up to two detached ADUs per on any lot of five acres or more provided that their total area does not exceed 2,000 square feet. ADU maximum size requirements vary widely ranging from the statutory minimum of 750 square feet to 2,000 square feet.

ADUs open the door to a form of alternative housing that can help meet the region's housing needs. Frequently, ADUs are built to accommodate different generations within the same family. Most communities require that either the ADU or the principal dwelling unit be owner-occupied but either unit can also be rented to anyone. Because ADUs can be used as rental housing, they can provide housing for a wide variety of individuals including property owners looking to downsize, seniors, adult children, or caregivers. Importantly, ADUs can help to address multiple housing needs without changing the fundamental character of existing neighborhoods. Between 2020 and 2025, NRPC's research shows permits were issued for 113 ADUs. However, since the state does not request building permit data for ADUs, some communities do not track them separately, so the total is likely higher.



Housing for Low-Income People & Families

Monahan Manor



Monahan Manor is a transformative public housing redevelopment consisting of the demolition of the obsolete

48-unit Bronstein Apartments project and replacement with 216 units of new mixed-income apartments on a 4-acre site near downtown Nashua. Completed in 2023, the project was developed as a partnership with the Nashua Housing & Redevelopment Authority and a private developer. Monahan Manor includes affordable units at various income-tiers, a few market rate units, and a Head Start learning center for young children.

249 Main Street

Neighborworks Southern New Hampshire, a nonprofit housing developer, completed construction of a 45 unit multi-family development on Main Street in downtown Nashua in 2024. The project consists of 18 one-bedroom and 27 two-bedroom units. 34 of the units are reserved for families at 60% or less of median household income and 11 are for households at 80% or less of the median household income.

Jackson Square

Jackson Square is a 24-unit multifamily affordable housing development on Bridge Street in Nashua Consisting of twelve one-bedroom units and twelve two-bedroom units. The project was a recipient of the Invest NH grant for affordable housing. Jackson Square broke ground in May 2023 and was completed in May 2024.

Brookline Woods

Brookline Woods, a mix of affordable multi-family workforce and elderly housing was recently approved in Brookline.

Currently, 30 Workforce Housing Units and 10 additional market rate units are under construction. An additional phase of 58 units of Housing for Older Persons is planned but has not yet broken ground.

Maynard Homes Redevelopment



The Maynard Homes Redevelopment is a two-phase redevelopment project using the same public/private partnership that developed Monahan Manor. The project will replace 110 units of existing public housing built in 1948 with approximately 274 units of mixed-income housing across approximately 14 acres. The redevelopment will include one to four bedroom-units at 30%, 60%, and 100% of the area median income. The buildings will be accessible and energy efficient, with additional community space, a fitness center, and daycare. The site will have additional parking, new playgrounds, outdoor common areas, and a community garden. Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

Regulatory Initiatives

Brookline Village District

As an outcome of its HOP planning process, the Town of Brookline adopted the Brookline Village District to encourage mixed-use development in its historic village center. Single and two-family dwellings and the conversion of existing residential buildings into up to three units is allowed provided that the square footage of the structure is not increased. The minimum lot size is one acre. Several commercial uses are allowed including a range of personal and professional services, day care centers and restaurants. The district is also intended to address Brookline's economic development goals by increasing opportunities for commercial development. It should also be noted that Brookline has a Workforce Housing Ordinance that allows three and four unit multifamily dwellings and a Housing for Older Persons Ordinance with incentives for senior housing.

Litchfield Mixed Use Village Overlay District

In March of 2025, Litchfield voters approved the creation of a Mixed-Use Village Development (MUVD) alternative as a conditional use in the town's Northern Commercial District. The MUVD allows a variety of housing types to be developed at densities of up to four units per acre (Litchfield has no public sewer.) The ordinance also requires at least 100 square feet of commercial uses per unit to ensure a balance of uses. After passage, the ordinance stimulated immediate interest and two MUVDs are currently planned. The Town previously adopted a Multi-Family Overlay District that permits densities

of up to 2.5 units per acre in both the northern and southern sections of town. Two large multi-family townhouse developments are currently underway, one at each end of town, and the overall rate of development in Litchfield has increased dramatically in recent years.

Wilton Downtown Industrial Adaptive Reuse Overlay District



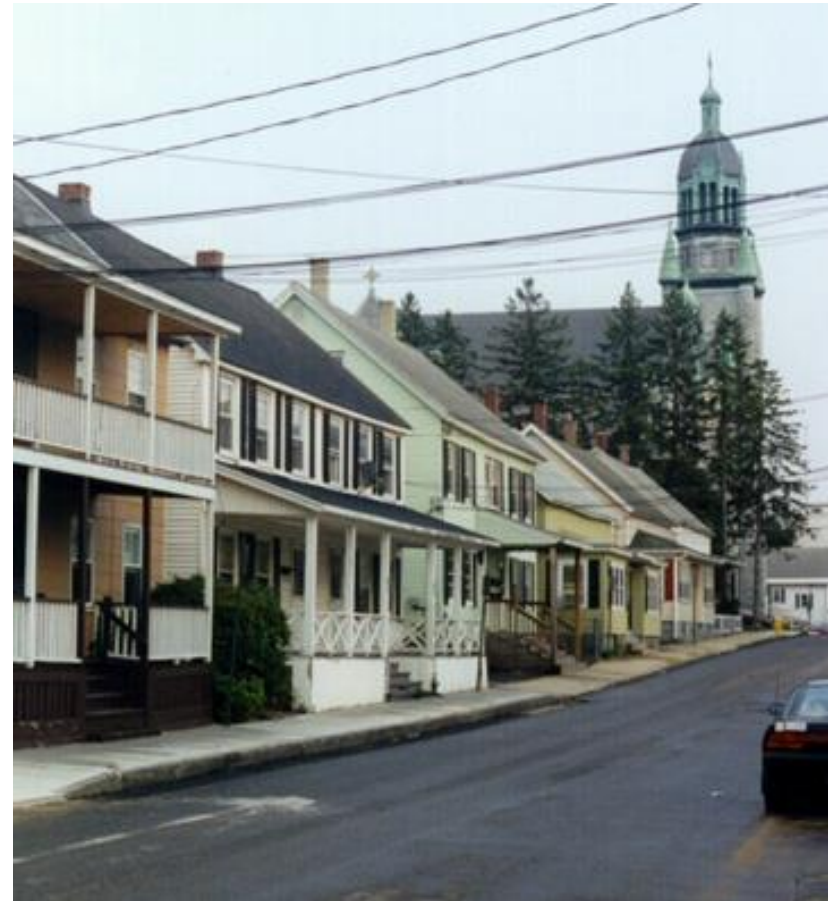
Historic Colony-Abbott Worsted Mill in Wilton's Adaptive Reuse Overlay District

At the March 2026 Town Meeting, Wilton adopted an innovative new overlay zoning district designed to allow redevelopment of former industrial mill buildings and sites in its downtown area into multi-family housing and mixed-use multi-family/commercial uses. Residential densities of up to 24 units per acre are allowed for one bedroom units and 12 units

per acre for two-bedroom units. Average square footage of all units in a multi-family building cannot exceed 1200 square feet. Downtown Wilton is served by both public water and sewer. In addition to the potential to expand the overall number and diversity of housing units in the town, adaptive reuse development could also strengthen downtown Wilton by adding hundreds of new residents to support local shops, restaurants, and services. In 2024, Wilton amended its ordinance to create a Downtown Residential Overlay District, reducing its lot size requirement from one-half acre to one-third acre per dwelling unit when served by both Town water and sewer.

Re-Code Nashua

The City of Nashua is undertaking a comprehensive overhaul of its land use regulations including its Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Review Regulations and Subdivision Regulations. Dubbed [re-Code Nashua](#), The draft regulations include numerous housing related provisions. Among the most notable are proposed changes to minimum lot size and dimensional requirements in the City's more developed neighborhoods so that they reflect existing development densities and housing types. These changes will encourage more infill development on what are now nonconforming vacant lots, provide opportunities for small-scale subdivision of larger lots and allow the addition of new units in existing structures. The draft ordinance also contains multiple overlay zones intended to incentivize transit oriented development, environmentally sustainable projects, and inclusionary housing. Adoption of the new land use code is anticipated in mid to late 2026.



French Hill Neighborhood in Nashua

Housing Goals & Implementation Strategies

The housing market and demographic data highlighted in this chapter demonstrate that the demand for housing in the

region exceeds supply and as a result, the region has experienced significant increases in housing costs for both owners and renters. The lack of available housing, and homeownership housing in particular, is acute and vacancy rates remain at historic lows. For the housing market to return to a healthy balance and accommodate projected population growth, an additional 9,383 units of housing will be required by 2030 (from the base year of 2020) including over 1,000 units of affordable rental housing and 2,000 units of affordable ownership housing. These numbers are daunting and would require a 60% increase in the number of permits issued over the preceding decade. It is also important to note that under current market conditions, the development of rental housing affordable to low-income households will require subsidy.

While the need for additional housing in the region is acute, it is also important to emphasize that housing development cannot occur in a vacuum. As noted in the Regional Plan's Economic Development Chapter, the dramatic increase in remote work, especially in relatively high-paying jobs, indicates that people have more choice than ever in choosing where to live. Preserving the characteristics of our communities that make them desirable is therefore essential to the region's economic vitality. It is also clear that people place high value on protecting our natural resources, preserving farmland and seek access to outdoor recreational opportunities. Further, as discussed in the Plan's Transportation Chapter, there is no funding for significant capacity improvements to the region's road system beyond

what is currently programed and there is no funding for expanding the capacity of public sewer as noted in the Community Facilities Chapter. Advocating for more housing everywhere of all types, therefore, is not the answer.

To address the regions' housing needs, communities should emphasize a targeted approach that balances natural resource conservation, protecting community character and the availability of necessary infrastructure. Residential development activity at higher densities should be limited in truly rural areas, priority wildlife habitats, water supply protection areas and in other sensitive lands. Conversely, higher density residential development, including mixed-use and multi-family housing should be encouraged in commercial areas, in and around traditional downtowns and town centers, on brownfield sites and especially, in areas with access to public water and sewer near major transportation corridors.

Local land use regulations also need to be flexible to adapt to changing demographics in the region including an aging population, the need to attract younger workers and the trend toward smaller households. The strategies outlined below are intended to serve as guidelines and will not necessarily apply to every community.

Encourage Higher density development in and around historic downtowns and town centers

The region's traditional downtown and town center areas have been historically developed at higher densities than is typical elsewhere in these communities. With appropriate design controls, allowing opportunities for new housing to be

developed in and adjacent to downtown and town center areas including infill development, mixed commercial/residential uses, and the conversion of larger homes to multiple units can provide for increased housing development and a greater diversity of housing types while protecting community character. The addition of new housing in existing downtown and town center areas can also help to strengthen these districts by increasing demand for area shops, restaurants and services. Wilton's Adaptive Reuse Overlay District and Brookline's Village District are recent examples.



Brookline Village

Encourage higher density development in existing commercial areas.

Commercial districts such as those found along Daniel Webster Highway or NH 101A are often ideal locations for higher-

density and multi-family housing. In communities that currently allow multi-family in commercial districts such as Hudson, Litchfield, Merrimack and Nashua, apartment and condominium development are commonly found adjacent to retail and office developments. Locating multi-family housing in commercial areas also helps support retail, restaurant and services uses with minimal impact on established lower-density residential and rural areas. Though many of these areas do have access to public water and sewer, Litchfield's Multi-Family Housing Overlay District and Mixed Use Village Development ordinance are examples from a community that has no public sewer.



A former bank converted to apartments in downtown Nashua

Welcome Alternative Housing Types



Manufactured Home in Nashua

Traditional Single-family, duplex, and multi-family housing meets the needs of most families and individuals, but not all. For some who are seeking homeownership opportunities, but can't afford a conventional single-family home, manufactured housing can be a viable alternative. Today's manufactured homes are often indistinguishable from conventionally built ranch homes, yet placement of manufactured housing is severely restricted almost everywhere in the region. As noted previously, only 17 building permits were issued in the region for manufactured homes between 2020 and 2025 and several of these were for replacement units. Communities should consider allowing manufactured housing in most if not all areas that allow conventional single-family homes.



Tiny on Wheels display model in Lyndeborough

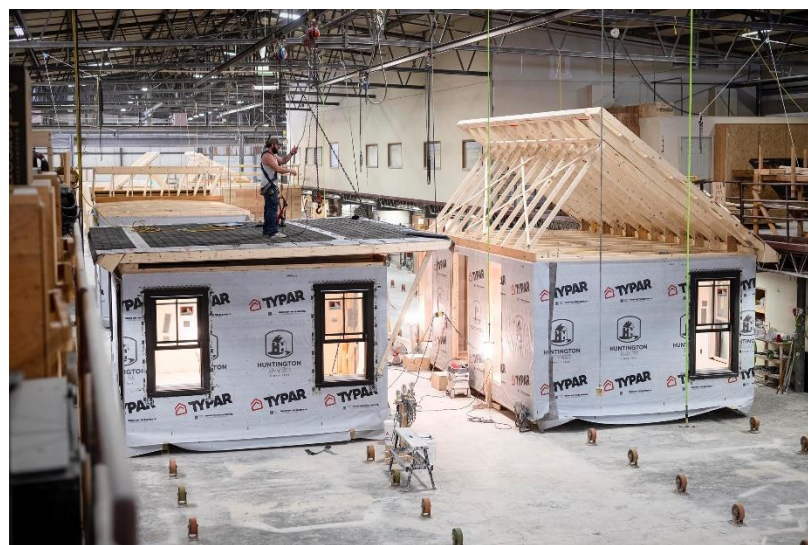
Tiny homes are an alternative form of housing that is gaining attention nationally. These homes, typically under 500 square feet, feature many of amenities of the average home within a much smaller space. They tend to have elaborate, innovative design plans to help maximize space and have efficient electric and heating capabilities for a greener thumb print. Tiny home developments can occur on smaller individual plots of land, in tiny home developments or can be used as detached ADUs. One of the leaders of the Tiny Home movement in New Hampshire is developer Michael Danis who's business is located in Lyndeborough. He provided his take on affordable housing generally and highlighted how tiny homes can be a great solution for residents looking to downsize, or first-time home buyers.



Example of a small “cottage court” home



“Given the high prices of single-family homes in New Hampshire, we are dedicated to providing affordable solutions for those that want to maintain financial freedom while accomplishing home ownership. Tiny houses will definitely be a part of the solution to the housing market crisis in the future and Tiny Houses of NH is proud to play a role in that solution.”



Modular Home components under construction