



STRAFFORD EDD COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

UPDATE '24

Adopted: June 21, 2024

STRAFFORD
Regional Planning Commission

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STRAFFORD EDD STRATEGY COMMITTEE

The Strafford Economic Development District Strategy Committee provides advice and guidance to the Strafford EDD, the CEDS, and its priority project list. It represents the private sector, public officials, community leaders, and representatives of workforce development, higher education, and labor groups. It unites the region and provides an opportunity for collaboration, leadership, and program development. The Strategy Committee will forge strategic alliances and communicate the region’s needs and opportunities in the future.

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STRAFFORD EDD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The full body of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission as determined by RSA 36:46 also serves as the Strafford EDD Board of Directors. The Strafford EDD Board of Directors is responsible for approving the final CEDS based on input from SRPC staff, the Strategy Committee, and the general public.

Municipality	Members
Barrington	Matthew Towne, Steve Diamond
Brookfield	Vacant
Dover	Dave Landry, Lindsay Williams, Sophie Robinson
Durham	Wayne Burton, Michael Lehrman
Farmington	Bill Fisher
Lee	Katrin Kasper, Mary Woodward
Madbury	Tom Crosby, Mark Avery
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INTRODUCTION

Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire. SRPC provides technical planning assistance to its municipalities, which include the communities of Strafford County plus Brookfield and Wakefield in Carroll County and Newmarket, Northwood, and Nottingham in Rockingham County. SRPC also provides regional transportation planning and technical assistance services to these communities through its designation as the Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization (Strafford MPO).

SRPC was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the US Department of Commerce in 2015. The Strafford EDD comprises the municipalities of Strafford County plus Brookfield and Wakefield. Newmarket, Northwood, and Nottingham are part of the EDD operated by the Regional Economic Development Center in Rockingham County. In addition to promoting and providing technical assistance to economic development projects in our municipalities, the Strafford EDD is responsible for maintaining and implementing a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to establish and promote our region's economic development priorities. Furthermore, the Strafford EDD is committed to being a leader in economic development planning by providing sound metrics, data analysis, and opportunities for meaningful collaboration throughout the region.

SRPC adopted its first CEDS in 2011 and has continued to update the document on a five-year cycle. The 2021-2025 CEDS outlines a regional strategy for future economic development and prosperity based on the themes and goals developed by the Strategy Committee. This 2024 CEDS acts as our third annual update to that plan. It provides an analysis of the region's economy over the previous year (2023), updates to the priority project list, and evaluates our progress in implementing the CEDS.

SRPC staff began data collection and outreach for this update in winter 2023. As with prior CEDS updates, SRPC staff convened the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee and EDD Board of Directors throughout the process to help inform this plan.

- In September 2023, an in-person kick off meeting with EDD Board of Directors was held to prioritize CEDS goals and actions.
- In February 2024, the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders, in their role as the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee, provided input on regional economic trends seen throughout their municipalities and/or organizations over the year prior.

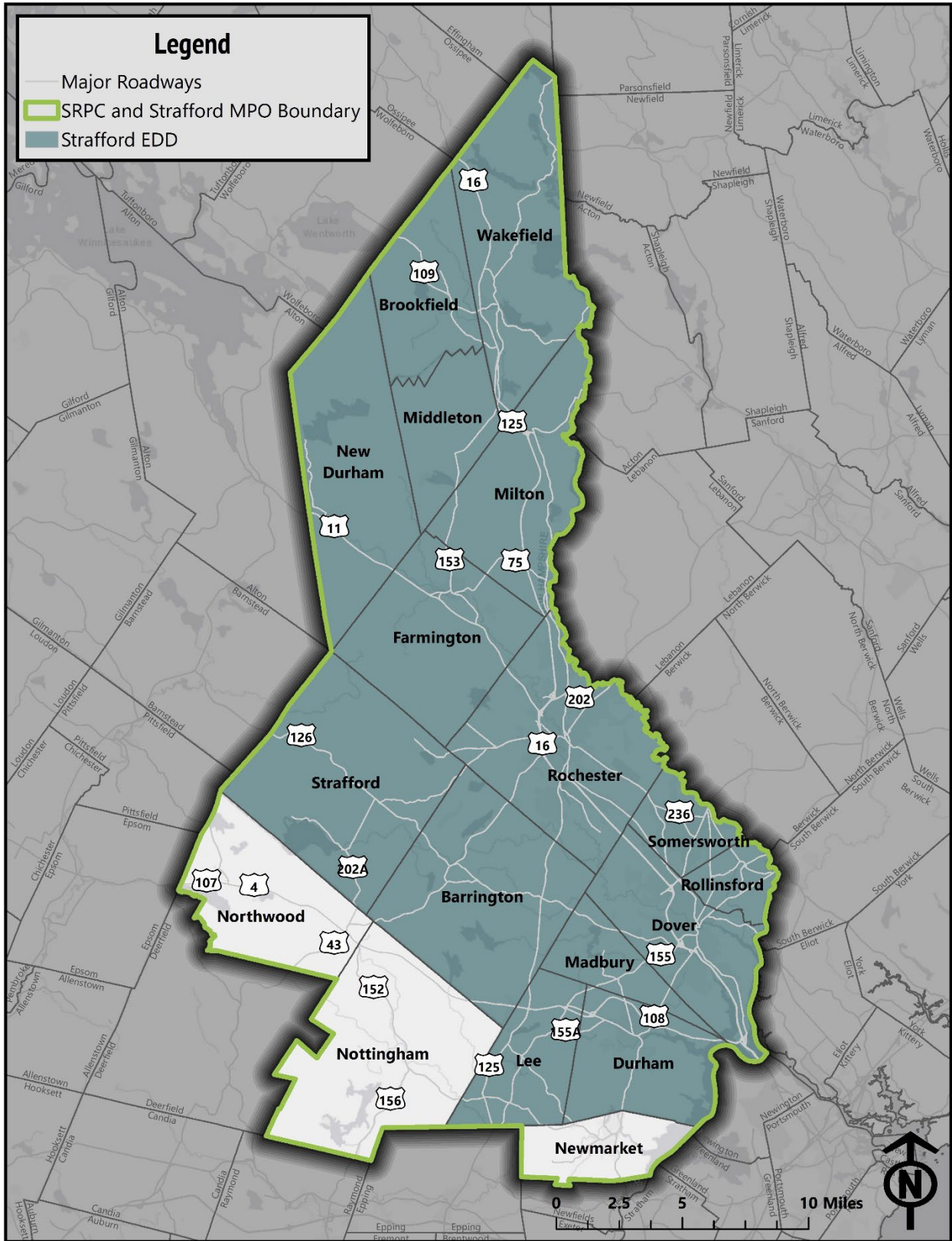
As with any planning effort, data is a key component. It must be noted that data cannot always be analyzed for the exact region of the Strafford EDD if the original source data is compiled for different geographies. When data for the Strafford EDD is not available, data for the entire SRPC region is used. If county data is available, Strafford County is used as an approximation of Strafford EDD, but data is also provided for Carroll and Rockingham Counties where possible.

SRPC Staff conducted project solicitation from February through April 2024. Notifications and project forms were sent to all municipalities in the region, as well as a variety of other public and non-profit sector partners. Those projects are included in this update.

A full draft of this plan was released for public comment on May 20th, 2024. Copies of the plan were made available to the public at the Dover, Somersworth, and Rochester public libraries and City Halls. The plan was also available on the SRPC website, and comments were solicited from the public, as well as both the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee and Strafford EDD Board of Directors during this period. The Strafford EDD Board of Directors adopted this strategy at its June 21st, 2024 meeting following the 30-day public comment and review period.



Images above: Panelists at the February 2024 Board of Directors meeting; The UNH John Olson Advanced Manufacturing Center during a tour with the Strategy Committee in August 2023; Discussion of CEDS themes at the September 2023 Board of Directors meeting; The AJ Nonwovens facility during a tour with the Strategy Committee in March 2024. Photos courtesy of SRPC staff.



STRAFFORD CEDS VISION AND THEMES

This update summarizes the progress our region is making in achieving the goals and themes established in the 2021-2025 CEDS:



Economic Growth – Promote the economic success of our region, including overall employment, business growth, and business expansion.



Business Operations – Understand how changing workplace dynamics like telework, flexible scheduling, supply chains, and industry clusters will impact our region.



Housing – Assure that our region has available, affordable, and quality housing to attract and retain a qualified workforce and for attracting new businesses.



Infrastructure – Plan and advocate for physical improvements such as water, sewer, utilities, and broadband that are resilient and responsive to our region's needs.



Mobility and Accessibility – Encourage community development that creates a high-quality experience of being in and moving around our communities for people of all ages and abilities, and for all modes of transportation.



Age Friendliness – Promote community development that is responsive to residents of all ages and abilities to allow the growing population of older residents to remain in our region as they age while also attracting and supporting younger families with school-aged children.



Workforce and Education – Understand the strengths of our region's workforce and encourage opportunities for all residents to access the education, training, or re-training that they need to pursue their careers in a dynamic job market. Promote educational environments that are sources of entrepreneurs, start-up businesses, and new intellectual property.



Community Vibrancy – Consider the strengths of our region and communities that make them attractive to businesses, residents, and visitors, including downtowns and the built environment; natural resources; tourism attractors; and local recreation and entertainment.



Childcare – Ensure that our region has an adequate supply of affordable and quality childcare to support our workforce and prepare our children for the future.

CEDS LENSES

Three overarching principles, or lenses, will be used to weigh the impacts of the actions in this CEDS update: 1) equity and environmental justice; 2) resiliency; and 3) partnership and collaboration. These lenses will impact many, if not all, of the themes addressed above.

Equity and Environmental Justice – The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, income, age, disability, or sexual orientation with respect to the region’s economic priorities and opportunities and their resulting impacts on our communities and environment.

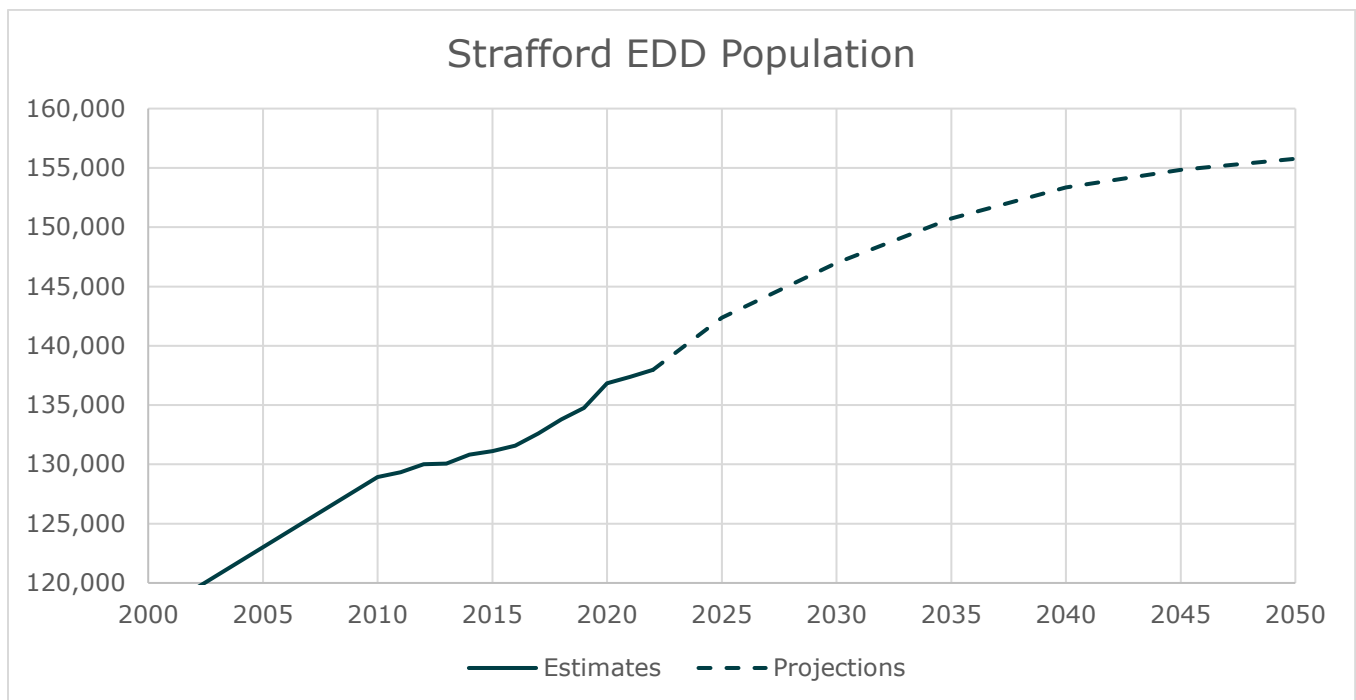
Resiliency – Prepare for economic disruptions by 1) lessening the likelihood of their occurrence, 2) mitigating the negative impacts if a disruption does occur, and 3) improving the region’s ability to recover quickly and fully from disruptions. This lens includes significant discussion of our region’s response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2024 CEDS contains a resiliency chapter that documents resiliency activities undertaken during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Partnership and Collaboration – The 15 municipalities within the Strafford EDD are economically interdependent with each other and neighboring communities in NH, ME, and MA, making forging and supporting partnerships and collaboration an indispensable part of our work.

THE REGION'S DEMOGRAPHICS

SRPC's Regional Data Snapshot contains region-wide analyses of various demographics, indicators, and performance measures that inform all of SRPC's core planning areas. First adopted in 2021, the Data Snapshot serves as a central collection of metrics related to regional planning. This approach allows for an in-depth description of each metric, while also promoting interdisciplinary data analyses and conclusions by juxtaposing a wide variety of quantitative and spatial datasets. The 2024 Data Snapshot includes approximately 200 data metrics spanning the themes of Demographics, Economic Vitality, Livability and Quality of Life, Mobility and Accessibility, and Resiliency. The full document, past issues, and community profiles can be found at <https://strafford.org/measure/data-snapshot/>.

The Strafford EDD has a total population of 136,845 residents, up approximately 6.1 percent from 2010, and the NH Office of Planning and Development projects that this number will continue to grow to just over 153,000 by 2050. Median ages for all but three SRPC municipalities have risen or held steady, and residents aged 55 and older continue to be the largest growing share of the region's population. While the region is still comparatively younger than other parts of the state and New Hampshire as a whole, this aging population has implications for many of our key themes, particularly in terms of demand for housing and an available workforce. For more detailed information and in-depth analysis of the region's demographics, please see the 2024 Regional Data Snapshot.



Source

New Hampshire Office of Planning and Development

ECONOMIC GROWTH

While economic indicators showcase a resilient economy, inflation, workforce availability, and the childcare and housing crisis continue to challenge the regional economy's health.

GOALS

Support economic growth in the region, including attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses, as well as investments and employment through regional collaboration.

CURRENT TRENDS

Economic indicators over the past year point to a positive outlook and for now, experts believe we might have avoided a potential recession in the near future. However, households and businesses have continued to feel the effects of inflation in the rising costs of goods and services. The Consumer Price Index for All Items in New England continued to rise, and in response, the Federal Reserve resumed interest rate hikes throughout 2023, though to a lesser extent than the previous year (with a total of four 0.25 percentage point hikes in the first half of the year, vs a total of 4.25 percentage points in 2022)¹. Meanwhile, wage growth has lagged the cost of basic needs, such as housing (see Income Required to Afford Mortgages or Rent vs Per Capita Income figure below). Today, the living wage in Strafford County is more than 3 times the minimum wage, and the median home price is nearly 5 times the median household income. See the 2024 Data Snapshot for more information on living wages.

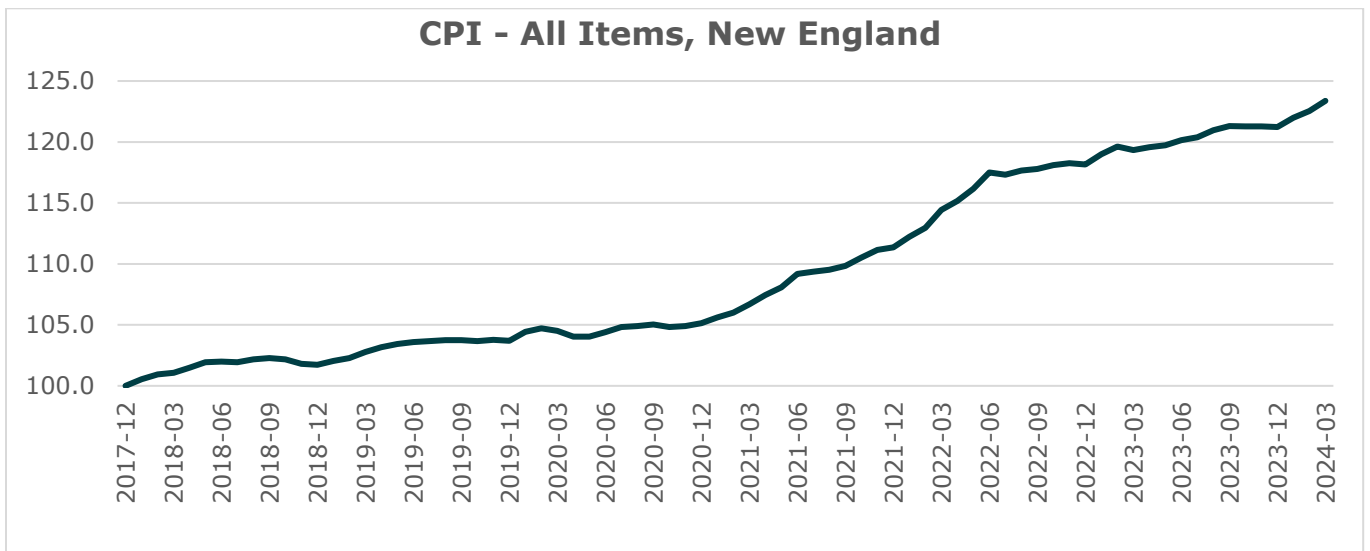
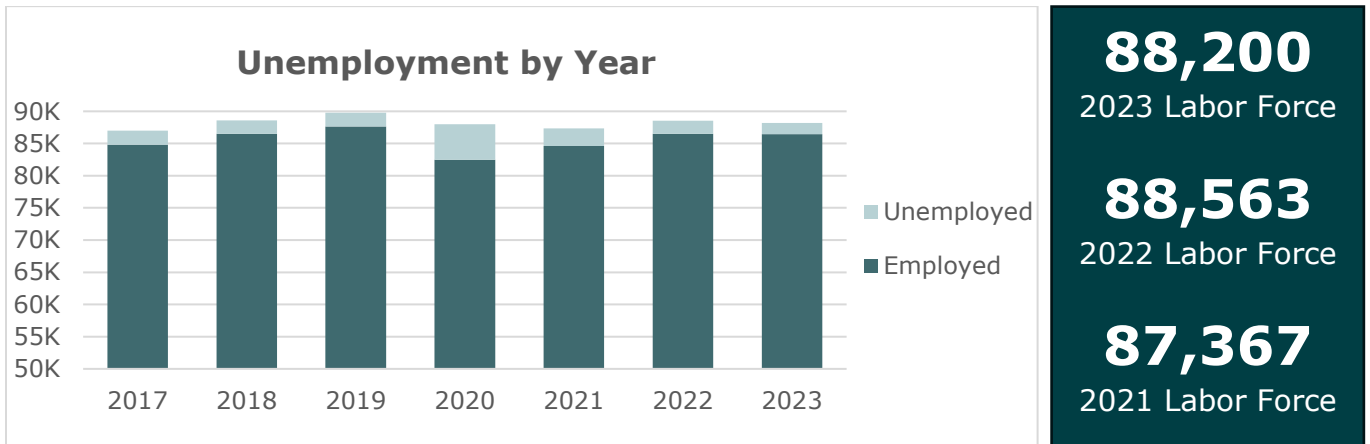
Regional unemployment continued to shrink, with the 2023 average unemployment rate at 1.98% compared to 2.3% in 2022. The labor force, while virtually recovered from the drop in 2020, is still slightly lower than the labor force participation in 2019. Historically low unemployment levels and a more limited workforce have posed challenges to the potential of our regional economy, which can be seen in underemployment and employment gaps. In 2023, the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) published a reportⁱⁱ with key economic indicators for each CEDR region in the state. Based on this report, the Seacoast CEDR region (comprised of Strafford and Rockingham counties) is experiencing a 28% underemployment rate, meaning that over a quarter of its population is overqualified for the types of jobs that are being offered by employers.¹ This indicates a mismatch between the level of education needed for available jobs and the level of education held by the population. In that same report, they also indicated that the top 3 industries projected to face the largest employment gaps over the next decade are General and Operations Managers, Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers, and Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts.

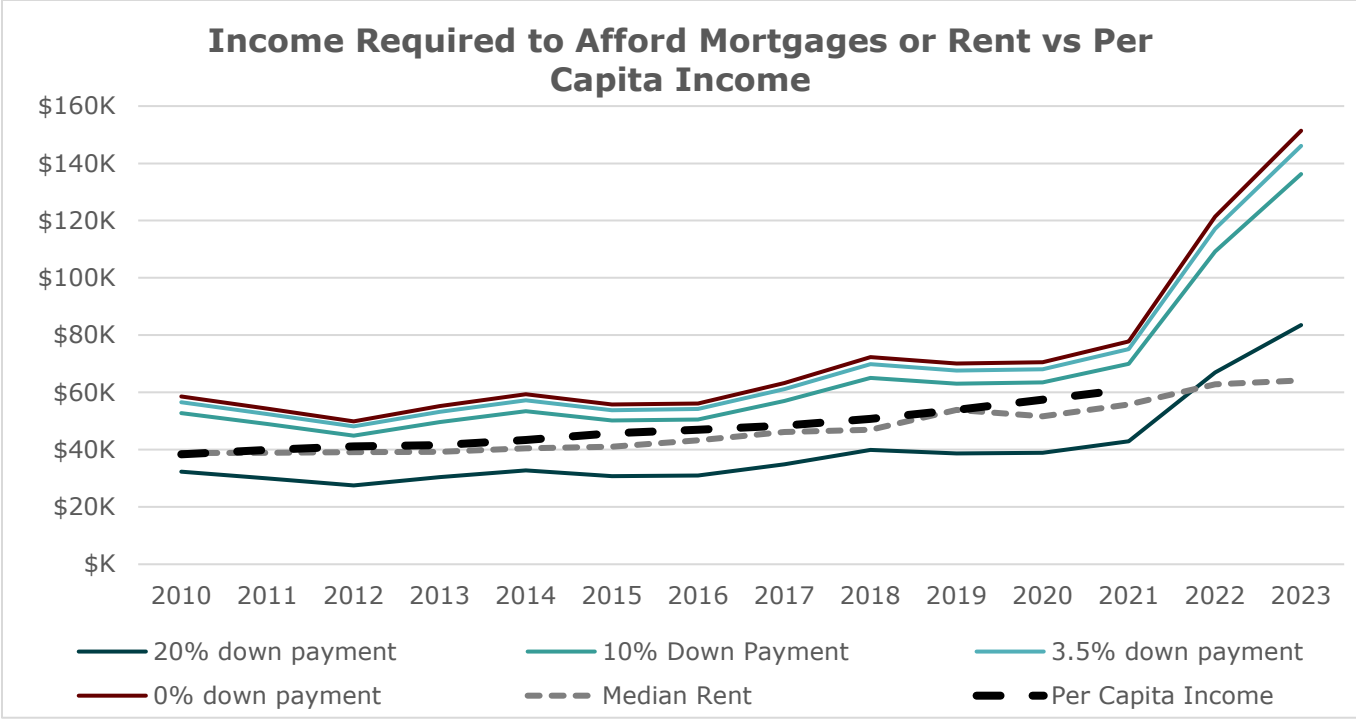
¹ Underemployment = Population at Educational Level – Jobs Requiring Educational Level. For comparison, other CEDRs region's underemployment rates are: South-Western, 23.9%; Central-Southern, 26.6%; Northern, 28.4%.

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue outreach to businesses and municipalities, while also participating in efforts to learn about their current needs and provide them with targeted support. Furthermore, SRPC will continue to convene the regional economic development stakeholders' group and advocate for economic recovery efforts and practices that support a cohesive regional economy. Partnerships with public and private organizations will also be maintained and enhanced, as these have allowed us to increase technical assistance to the businesses in our communities.

DATA





Sources
 Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Businesses continue to grapple with challenges seen in recent years, including workforce shortages and inflation. There is a noticeable gap in skills vs jobs available, which has highlighted the importance of aligning education with workforce needs. Meanwhile, business trends, including bankruptcies and vacancy rates, point to a resilient business environment.

GOALS

Support entrepreneurship and business resiliency through technical assistance, information sharing, networking and collaboration, and ongoing adaptation strategies that meet the current and evolving needs of the businesses in the region.

CURRENT TRENDS

Many businesses have continued to experience the same challenges faced in the prior year and post-Covid era, including difficulty with employee attraction and retention, childcare shortages, and inflation. Businesses are also experiencing the effects of skills gaps that result in underemployment. The Seacoast Collaborative Economic Development Region (CEDR)ⁱⁱⁱ, comprised of Strafford and Rockingham counties, is experiencing 28% underemployment (see more on skills gaps and underemployment in the Economic Growth chapter). The disconnect between jobs available and workforce skills has pushed businesses, organizations, and stakeholders to “think outside the box”, and encouraged them to look into the numerous programs available at the state and local level that promote the diversification of skills and knowledge (see also the Workforce and Education chapter).

In response to the challenges with employee attraction and retention, in 2023, the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders partnered with SoHo Creative Studios to develop an Employer Toolkit^{iv}, a resource aimed to help businesses in the Seacoast and beyond address their workforce challenges.

Other trends around regional business operations include low bankruptcy rates, a drop in industrial vacancy rates, and increasing office vacancy rates. Bankruptcy filings remained almost the same as in 2022 (37 in 2022 compared to 36 in 2023^v), which continued to be a big improvement from years prior to Covid-19 (in 2019 there were 162 filings^{vi}). Despite an increase of 150,000 square feet in total inventory, the overall industrial space in the Dover submarket (which is comprised of 15 of our region’s municipalities) continued to tighten in 2023, dropping by 0.7% year over year and ending at 3% in 2023. Dover is the only submarket in the state to experience a drop in the vacancy rate. Meanwhile, rents for industrial space increased by an average of 7.9%. In recent years, there has been an all-time high amount of industrial real estate construction in the Dover-Rochester areas, in part driven by high demand and limited availability in the Portsmouth area.

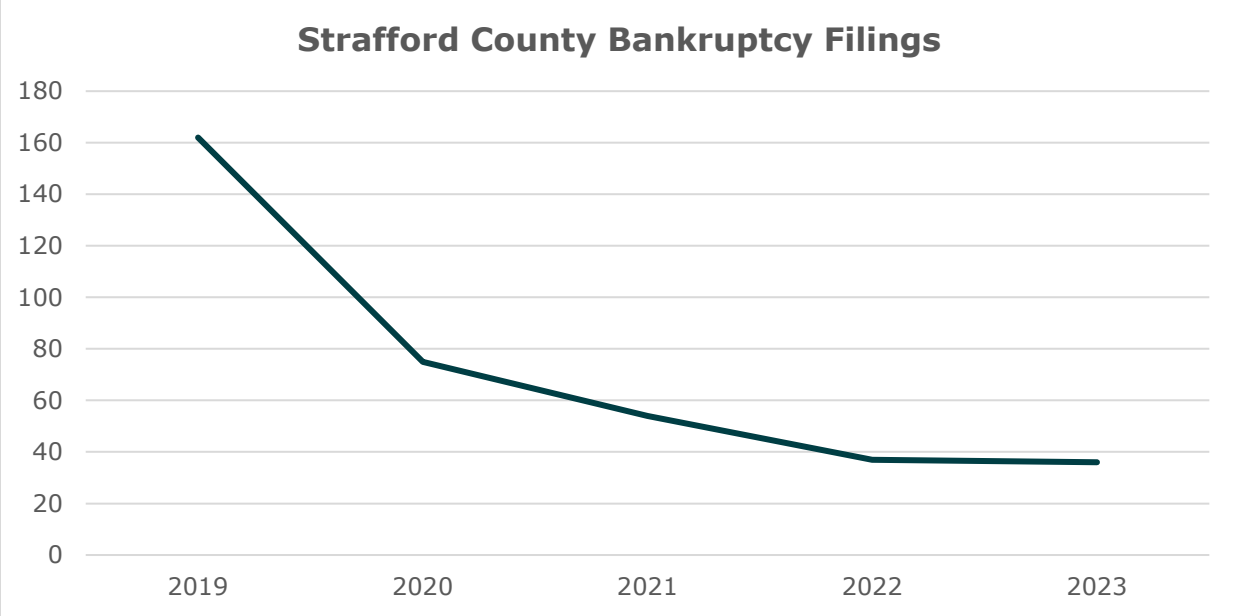
While the office market was significantly impacted by the departure of Liberty Mutual in Dover, which vacated roughly 600,000 sf (a big factor in the Dover submarket ending the year with a vacancy rate of 38.25%), there was some notable activity in the region in 2023. Of note was the sale of 100 Education Way in Dover, a 99,675 square foot office building purchased by Northeast Credit Union, who is relocating its headquarters from Portsmouth.

It is estimated that the Dover headquarters will open in early 2025 to house the majority of the company’s 400-plus employees. In Durham, 121 Technology Drive welcomed three new tenants (Brazonics Inc., Dachser Logistics, and Airtho) after sitting mostly vacant, bringing the building’s occupancy to roughly 80%.vii

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to provide direct technical assistance to small businesses and connect them to partner organizations around the state to support their operations. Furthermore, information on resources and funding opportunities will continue to be provided to over 6,000 businesses in SRPC's 18 municipalities on a quarterly basis.

DATA



Left: 121 Technology Drive, Durham
Right: 100 Education Way, Dover

Sources

Chart: United States Bankruptcy Court, District of New Hampshire (2019-2023)
Images: Colliers 2023 Market Review

HOUSING

In 2023, the region's hot housing market showed some signs of a slowdown in response to high interest rates, but sales prices continued to rise due to the lack of inventory. Similarly, rents increased, and vacancy rates continued to drop.

GOALS

Use data, partnerships, and information-sharing to help portray the current conditions and the impacts that housing has on the regional economy, in addition to exploring ways in which housing-related barriers limit business growth and expansion.

CURRENT TRENDS

Mortgage interest rates continued to rise throughout the year, peaking in October 2023 at 7.79% for a 30-year fixed rate mortgage. Since then, rates have begun to drop somewhat, and will likely continue to decline in anticipation of potential interest rate cuts signaled by the Federal Reserve in the near future, which may bring potential buyers who were on the sidelines back into the market. While in decline, rates are still more than double the average of two years ago. This has affected an already tight supply by deterring existing homeowners from selling their homes and losing their low interest rates.

Lower rates will significantly improve affordability. At the rate of 7.79%^{viii} for a 30-year mortgage seen in October 2023, the monthly payment for a \$435,000 home (median sale price in Strafford County in 2023^{ix}) with a 20% downpayment would be \$2,503, while the monthly payment for the same home just two months later, when rates dropped to 6.61%^x, would be \$2,225, representing a monthly savings of \$278. Although lower rates could lead to a somewhat more affordable housing market, the supply constraints in the region and state will continue to affect prices.

Rents have increased, though not significantly. The median rent for all-unit types in Strafford County in 2023 was \$1,613^{xi}, an increase from \$1,572 in 2022^{xii}. The vacancy rate continued to decline, dropping below 1% in 2023^{xiii}, which is far below the target vacancy rate of 5% for a balanced housing market.

Utility costs have increased drastically statewide, with the average cost increasing between 58-64% over the past year^{xiv}, mostly driven by the cost of electricity.

The lack of affordable housing continues to impact different areas and groups of people of our region, including students at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. In 2023, there were between 500 and 600 more junior, senior, and graduate students looking to stay on campus compared to figures UNH has reported in previous years, leaving upperclassmen competing with undergraduate students for on-campus housing because of the lack of affordable housing off campus. The lack of housing has also created difficulties in attracting graduate students and faculty.^{xv}

The housing circumstances in our state and region have encouraged stakeholders and organizations to work on innovative ways to provide more workforce and affordable housing to meet the demand. Examples of these efforts within our region include:

A 44-unit affordable housing development^{xvi} in Dover, which provides affordable workforce housing. This is the second cottage development of its kind, with the first one being developed in Durham (Harmony Homes)^{xvii}.



A company in Rochester, MADCO3D, is exploring the feasibility of creating a 40-unit development made up of 3D printed homes on city-owned property. With this technology, an 800 sq ft can be printed in one week or less. The company is aiming to bring this proposal to the City Council in 2024.



In Somersworth, the former National Guard site on 15 Blackwater Road has been sold by the City for the proposed development of 24 craftsman-style condominiums.



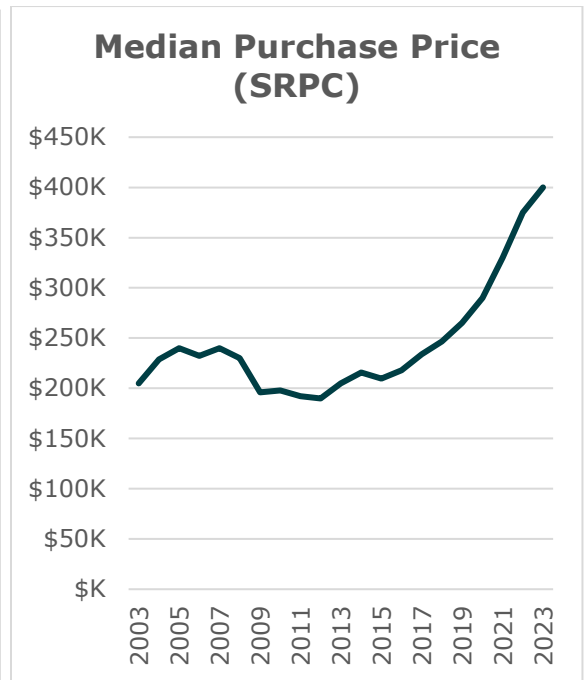
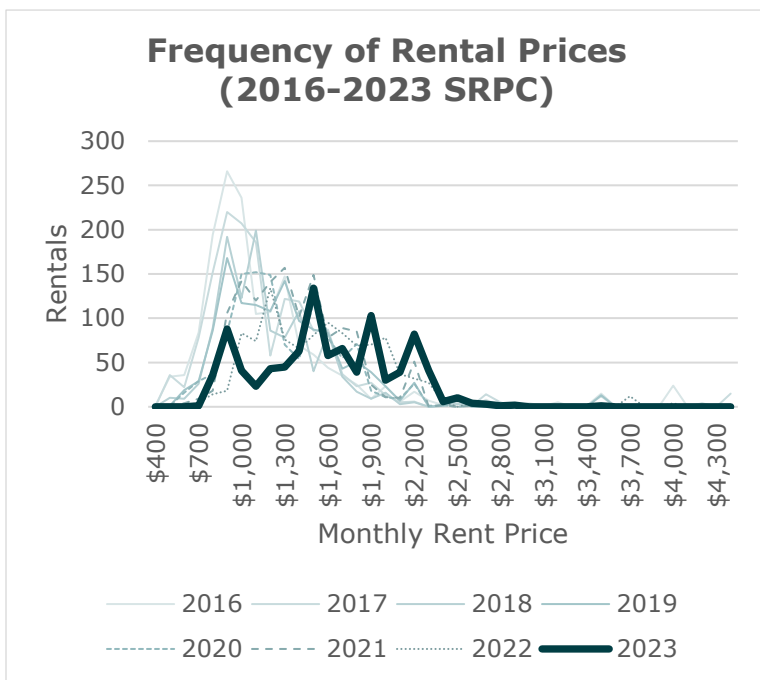
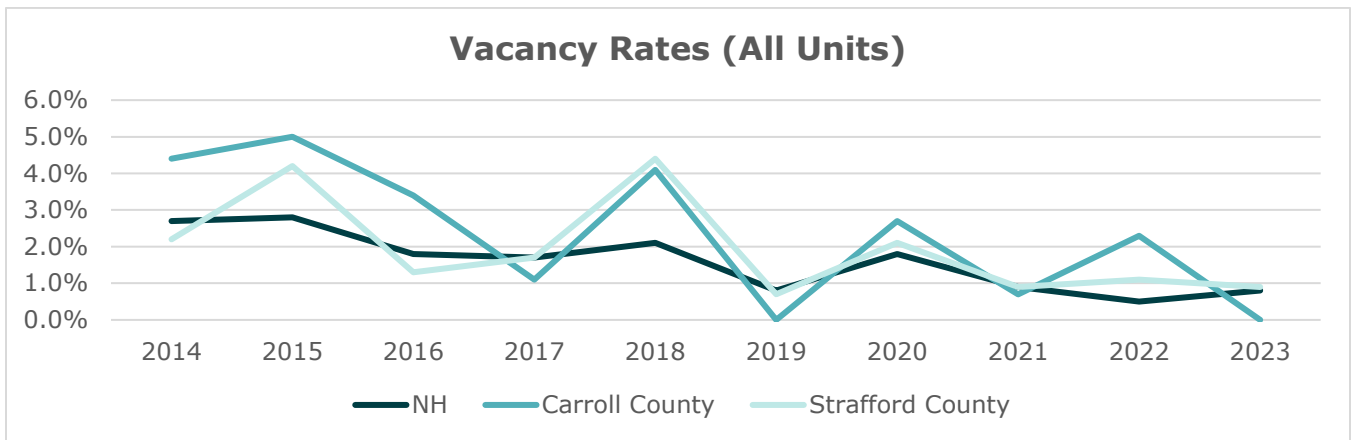
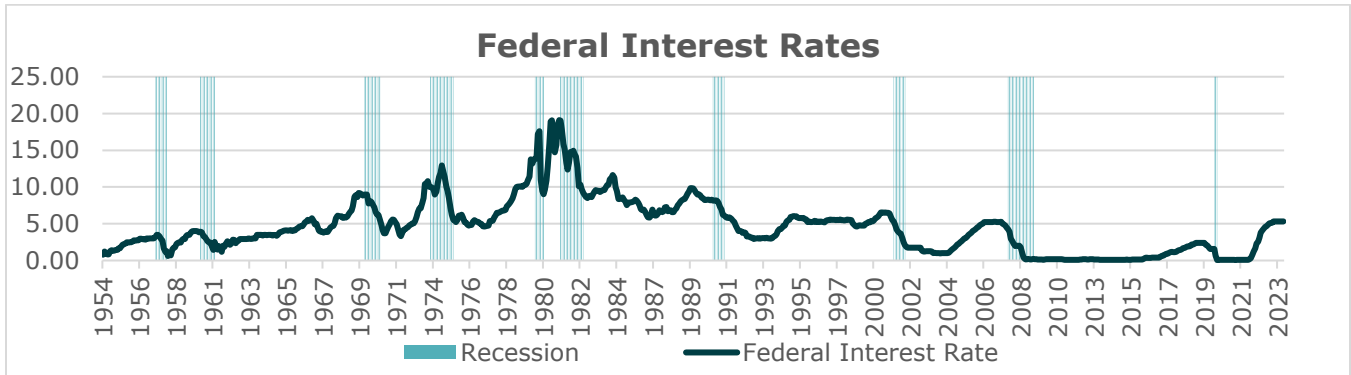
Moreover, housing continued to be a top priority for lawmakers, which prompted them to propose numerous bills for the 2024 legislative session aimed at addressing the housing shortage. While there were important housing bills that failed, including HB 1291 (allowing for the expansion of ADUs) and SB 454 (allowing for the expansion of the affordable housing fund), important wins included:

- House Bill 1400 (incentives for developers to convert office and commercial space into residential spaces, fewer parking restrictions, faster zoning law changes).
- House Bill 1065 (easier laws for sprinklers, driveways, and manufactured homes).

SRPC ACTIONS

The findings of SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, completed in March 2023, will continue to be used to facilitate regional discussions with local officials, businesses, economic development stakeholders, legislators, and partners to help with informed decision making and support the creation of affordable housing in the region through the use of innovative tools and policies.

DATA



Sources

Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
 New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law continues to ripple throughout the nation since its passing in early 2022. Projects are still underway to improve infrastructure, but challenges remain, such as inflation, rising energy and construction costs, and the continuation of supply chain disruptions. Within New Hampshire, progress has been made over the course of the last year on broadband access and digital equity.

GOALS

Improve the resilience of the region's infrastructure. Help partner organizations and municipalities to plan for their infrastructure needs and access funding for implementation.

CURRENT TRENDS

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) allotted \$1.6 billion in New Hampshire over five years for transportation, including roads and bridges, public transit, and electric vehicle charging, and at least \$100 million for broadband internet.^{xviii} Through 2023, the State has received \$228 million for clean water, \$35.4 million for clean energy, \$40.7 million for airports, \$1.8 million for ports, and \$30.5 million for resiliency to be used through Fiscal Year 2024.^{xix}

SRPC continued to promote and seek opportunities to expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. New Hampshire's Departments of Environmental Services and Transportation are collaborating to develop a joint application for the Charging & Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program (CFI). SRPC is soliciting potential locations for EV chargers from its municipalities to be included in that grant application. Also, this year, SRPC issued its Municipal Guide to EV Charging Stations,^{xx} with a "beginners guide" to types of chargers, suggestions for placement, and potential funding opportunities.

The Digital Equity Research Center and the New Hampshire Department of Business & Economic Affairs (BEA) released the state's first Digital Equity Plan^{xxi} in April 2024. This plan is key for a state like New Hampshire, with an aging population who frequently is unable to participate or outright missing from online spaces and community engagement opportunities. Many actions prescribed in the plan include not just internet access but also basic digital literacy. SRPC helped promote outreach that included a statewide survey in the fall of 2023.

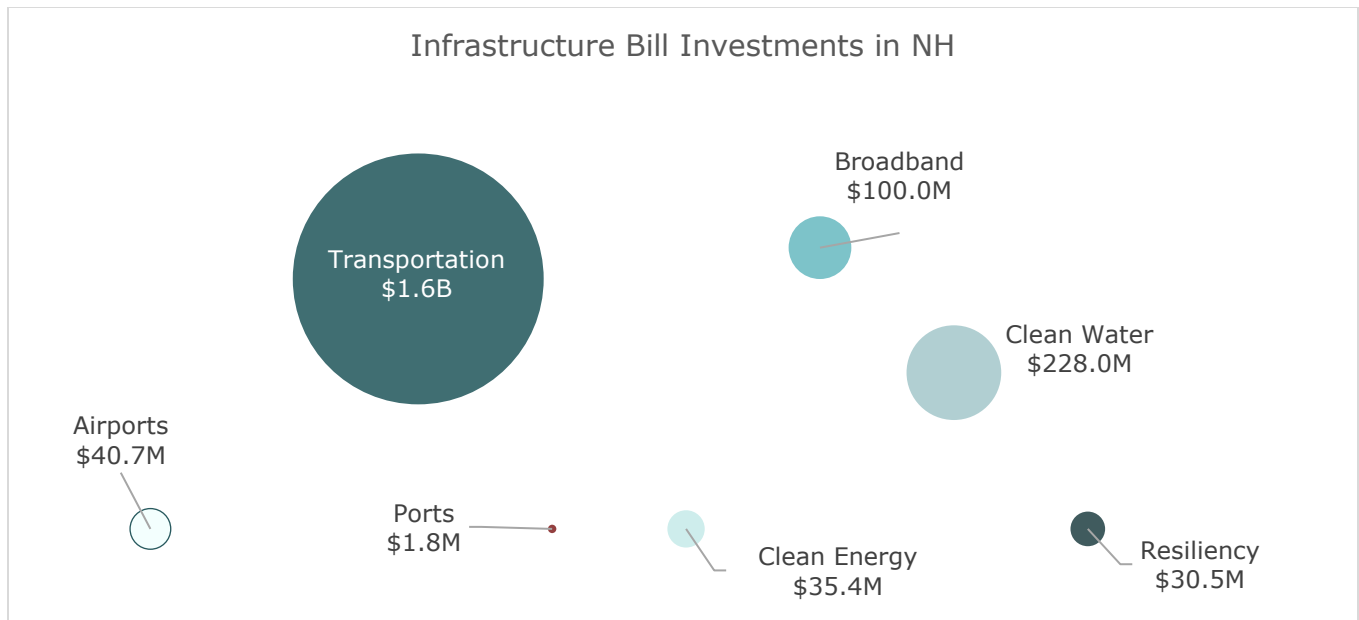
Additionally, Governor Sununu signed Executive Order 2023-07, which creates a framework for the study of the impact of an additional phone number area code for New Hampshire.^{xxii} At this time, there are no immediate plans to implement a second area code. One of the first steps included a survey issued to businesses statewide that inquired about specialized phone numbers (such as the last four digits of a number corresponding to a four-letter word) or branding related to the current "603" area code, among other topics.

Through the BIL, New Hampshire is also expected to receive \$92 million for water infrastructure including updates and improvements to ensure safe and clean water for residents^{xxiii}, improve flood prevention, upgrade the waterways systems and protect public health.^{xxiv} SRPC communities continue to pursue Local Sourcewater Protection grants.

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to influence the region’s infrastructure through our planning and advocacy for projects and our ability to connect partner organizations to funding resources. Since the adoption of the 2021-2025 Priority Project List, SRPC economic development staff have continued to support state or federal funding programs by writing letters of support and sharing knowledge and information. Furthermore, we will continue supporting projects that enhance the infrastructure resiliency of the region and expand the region’s competitiveness.

DATA



Source

BIL New Hampshire Allocation snapshot: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/New-Hampshire-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Covid-19 pandemic shed light on disparities in mobility and accessibility for people in the workforce, particularly for people with low incomes, disabilities, or other factors that impact access to essential services. The high cost of fuel and ongoing labor shortages have had lasting impacts on transportation. As a result, travel patterns have yet to return to pre-pandemic conditions, and the nature of transportation may be forever changed.

GOALS

Expand availability of alternative modes of transportation by enhancing and promoting development of active transportation networks and public transit. Improve roadway safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people in non-motorized vehicles.

CURRENT TRENDS

Commuting in New Hampshire has been significantly impacted by Covid. Remote work, meetings, and conferences are here to stay, and as a result, fewer workers may be traveling to, through, or within the region for work. This may be causing slight shifts in peak hour traffic, but it is still too soon to assess long-term impacts. For those who cannot work remotely, the high cost of housing presents challenges as many workers in the region cannot find or afford housing near their jobs and must commute long distances. Notably in the service industry, there are anecdotal reports from town staff and other partners that even with state income tax and a longer commute, it is cheaper to live in “the Berwicks” in Maine than many Strafford region communities.^{xxv}

Ridership on the region's two public transit providers, COAST and UNH Wildcat Bus, is still recovering from the pandemic. COAST is faced with a unique challenge at this time. As a region with an aging population, demand response services, also known as “paratransit,” is increasingly a pillar of the local transportation system, and ridership of this kind now exceeds pre-COVID figures. In contrast, “fixed route” service, or traditional bus routes with stops, is still only about 80% of its pre-COVID ridership, according to ridership figures COAST reports to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).^{xxvi} UNH Wildcat similarly struggles to recover pre-pandemic ridership.^{xxvii} These concerns for both agencies continues to disproportionately affect people with low incomes, disabilities, and other challenges who rely on public transit to commute or get to needed services.

The interregional transportation network provided by C&J buses and Amtrak has made a marked recovery since COVID-19. C&J Bus is now offering 6 trips per day from Dover to South Station, up from 5 last year but still not the 14 daily trips offered in 2019.^{xxviii} C&J service from Portsmouth to Logan airport is up to 10 daily trips and up to 3 trips to New York City, and Dover to Logan airport service resumed in February 2024.

Improvements to the Downeaster are in the works through the BIL and the New Hampshire Ten Year Plan.

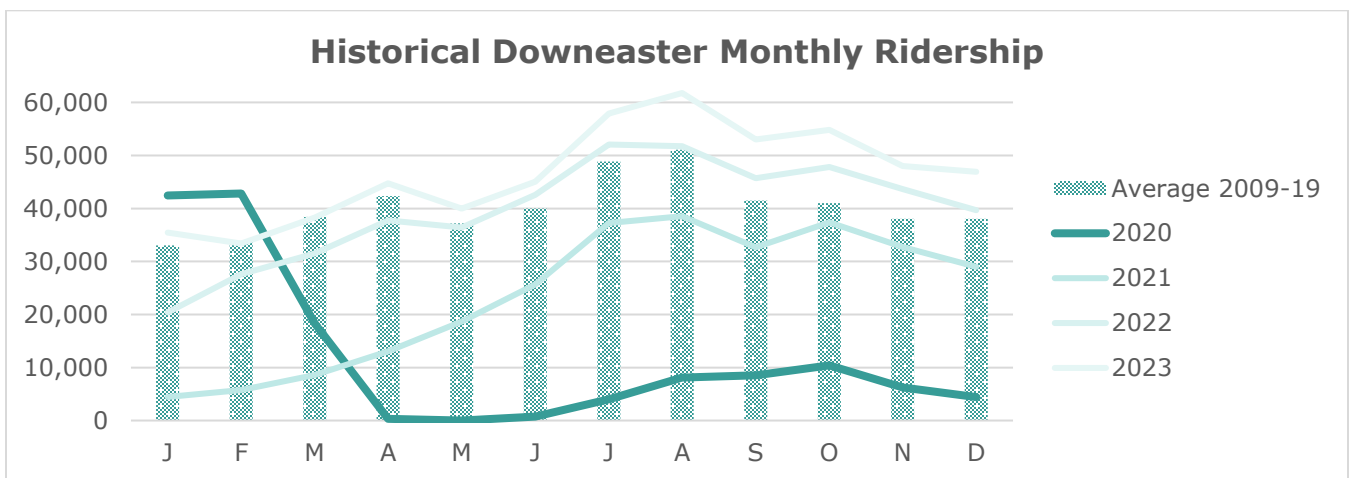
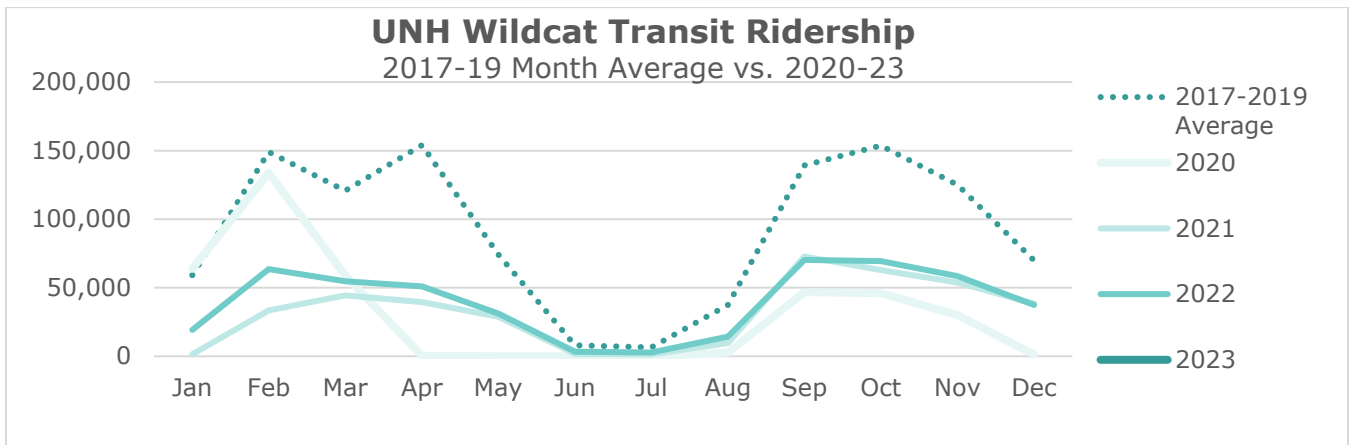
SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to study and advocate for proactive planning between transportation and the built environment. By increasing the role of downtowns as economic hubs, we can make our communities more walkable, bikeable, and ADA accessible.

In addition, SRPC works to decrease transportation dependency by advocating for the economic benefits of public transit and promoting housing development that enables workers to live near their jobs and other services. SRPC will continue to promote new mixed-use, high-density development along major corridors with existing public transit to increase transportation efficiency, such as in the Route 11 project in Farmington and Rochester and the Route 108 Complete Streets project in the Tri-Cities.

SRPC completed its first-ever Active Transportation Plan for the region. The plan, adopted in May 2024, will guide the development of non-motorized transportation facilities, and maximize the use of future investments for a safer, cleaner, and better-connected region.

DATA



Source

UNH Transportation Center staff
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority Reports & Stats: <https://www.nnepra.com/reports-stats/reports/>

AGE FRIENDLINESS

New Hampshire is the second oldest state in the US with a median age of 43.1 (second to Maine at 44.8).^{xxix} The Strafford EDD region is made up of communities from the state's oldest county (Carroll, median age 53.8) and youngest county (Strafford, median age 37.7). Therefore, the region must balance the needs of both the Baby Boomers aging in place and the young professionals that are starting careers and families.

GOALS

Encourage municipalities and businesses to create communities that are economically inviting, healthy, and accessible for residents of all ages.

CURRENT TRENDS

The Baby Boomers, one of the largest generations to ever live, are now in their 60s and 70s.^{xxx} Many are retiring or preparing to retire. This will increase the skill gap discussed in the Workforce and Education chapter, and attracting young Millennial and Gen Z workers to the region is critical. The State has shown great interest in retaining young workers and preventing further "brain drain," as in the Stay Work Play initiative that evolved from a task force of Governor Lynch in 2009.^{xxxi} Stay Work Play resumed outreach events statewide in 2024, the first since the pandemic, with Seacoast area events in February and March. While those under age 40 and those over age 65 have significant differences in how they interact with the economy, there are some commonalities in their needs for housing and transportation options, and a desire for vibrant walkable downtowns.

Baby Boomers, as they continue to age, may look to downsize from large multi-story three or more-bedroom homes that they raised their families in, to smaller single-story homes. These are often the same homes that younger adults are looking at as their entry into the housing market.

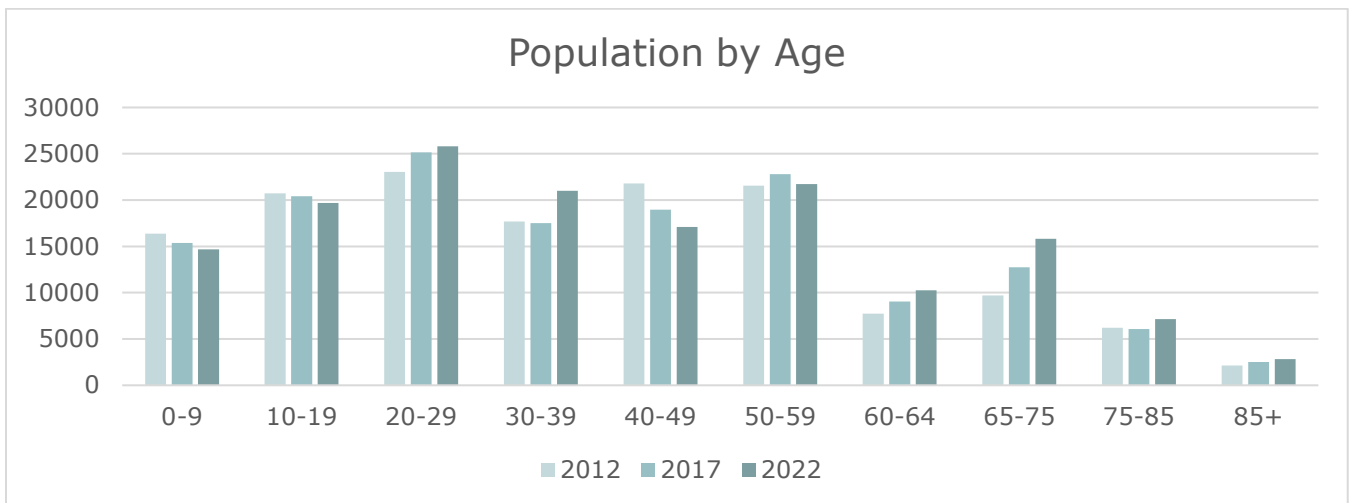
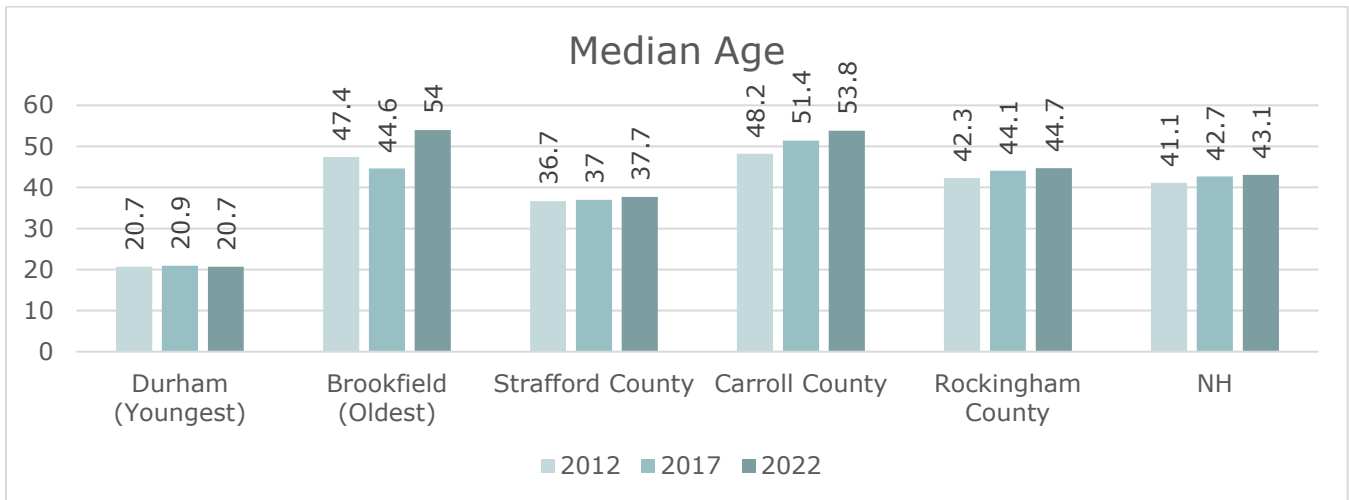
Access to transportation options is another commonality. As baby boomers age and their mobility becomes a greater concern, they may rely more on transit and demand response (or "paratransit") transportation. Younger adults may be interested in access to transit to reduce their dependency and expenses on car ownership. SRPC's ongoing transit access study funded by the Federal Transit Administration is examining the accessibility of transit with a focus on making it easier for people to get to and from bus stops to better utilize services.

Vibrant and walkable downtowns are desirable features of a community for younger generations and Baby Boomers alike.^{xxxii} The recent Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions (CHAT) project included a pilot accessibility audit of downtown Rochester with a focus on the accessibility of the sidewalks throughout downtown. The results of this audit will be applied by the city through infrastructure projects that will improve the walkability of downtown.

SRPC ACTIONS

In 2023, SRPC completed the Age-Friendly Action Plans for Newmarket, Farmington, Strafford, and Rochester as part of the CHAT project. In addition to these action plans, SRPC carried out two pilot projects related to age-friendliness as part of the CHAT Project. Age-friendly planning and considerations have also been incorporated into the Rochester Recreation Plan and Active Transportation Plan. Over the next year, SRPC will complete the above-mentioned transit accessibility study and will implement actions in the Active Transportation Plan. SRPC will continue to seek future funding to expand consideration of age-friendly planning efforts for all age groups.

DATA



Sources

US Census Bureau, ACS
SRPC Staff

WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION

While the number of workers in the region’s labor force has virtually returned to pre-pandemic levels, businesses are still struggling to fill positions with the current workforce. This is attributed in part to skills gaps, a decline in school-aged populations, and the growing number of jobs available. Current workforce needs have led to growing popularity around hands-on career-oriented education.

GOALS

Convene stakeholders in the workforce and education sectors (including but not limited to educational institutions, businesses, and economic development partners), while supporting efforts that promote workforce development, attraction, recruitment, and training.

CURRENT TRENDS

Workforce recruitment and retention continued to pose challenges for the region’s economy over the past year. The region’s labor force, while virtually recovered from Covid-19, is still slightly smaller compared to 2019 and with unemployment continuing to drop year over year, the availability of workers for employers to hire from is more limited. Similar to years prior, the number of workers over 65 in each of the region’s three counties continued to rise in 2023 – a trend seen statewide. This could in part be attributed to the Social Security Administration raising the retirement age for those born in 1960 or later.

Moreover, there is a disconnect between the number and types of jobs available and the region’s workforce, which has brought special attention to resources created to help fill labor gaps (See BEA’s CEDR Report for a list of Top Occupations with the Largest Projected Employment Gaps).^{xxxiii} One example of these resources in the region is the Tri-City Career and Technical Education program, which is comprised of three technical centers in high schools. This program provides students from Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth with career-related, hands-on, real-world learning that prepares them for employment straight out of high school or to jump start their education if they head to higher education institutions. Through this initiative, students can choose from 17 programs that range from Advanced Manufacturing to Health Science Technology.

Another valuable resource in the region is the Community College Systems of New Hampshire’s Great Bay Community College in Rochester, which provides students with affordable, accessible, and high-quality higher education. In 2023, just a few examples of how the CCSNH and its colleges have contributed to the overall health of the local and state economies include building resources to support students seeking to pursue careers in early childcare education to help address the state’s childcare crisis and enhance the region’s labor force, creating additional workforce pathways such as Registered Apprenticeships and career-focus boot camps, and working with high schools to enable students to take college-credit courses. Also of note, in 2023, GBCC formalized their partnership with another regional partner, Indonesian Community Connect, to help connect NH’s Indonesian community (concentrated in Somersworth) to educational resources and opportunities.

Meanwhile, a trend seen in the realm of education is the decline in post-high school education enrollment. Student enrollment at the University of New Hampshire’s Durham campus, for example, has been declining since 2018, a trend similar to what is seen across the state’s public colleges and universities, which dropped 13.6% from 2019 to the 2022-2023 school year.^{xxxiv} This trend, in part due to a decline of school-aged populations, will put further strain on the workforce needs, as companies depend on the many graduates who will move on to take jobs locally or within the state.

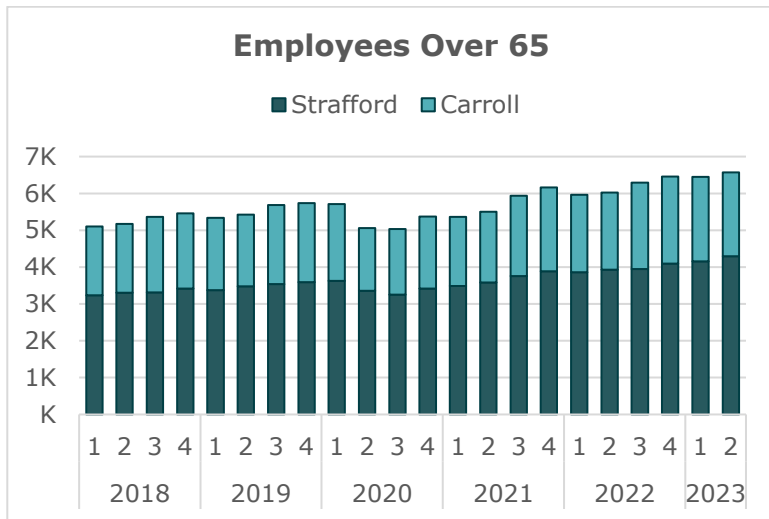
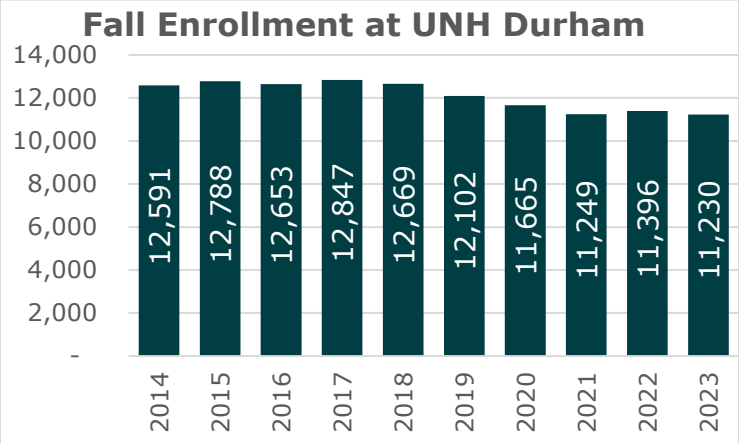
SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to act as a convener of stakeholders through its Seacoast Economy Calls to provide a positive connection between actors in the areas of workforce and education, understand the current challenges facing employers and employees, help build the skill set needed to meet the region’s demands, publicize available resources, and collaborate on actionable solutions. The Employer Toolkit^{xxxv}, completed last year and created to assist businesses in the region with workforce recruitment and development, will continue to be shared within our region and beyond.

DATA

\$3.2 million

Funds awarded by the US Department of Labor to CCSNH to expand and diversify Registered Apprenticeship Programs.



Sources

Text box: Community College System of New Hampshire’s 2023 Annual Report, <https://www.ccsnh.edu/annual-report-2023/>

Chart: UNH College Enrollment Trends

Chart: U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program, <https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/#qwi>.

Image: Tour of the Rochester Regional Technology Center

COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

Communities across the Greater Seacoast have continued to lean into drawing residents and visitors alike into their downtowns and village cores, with rising interest in the idea of “third places,” or those that are not work or home.

GOALS

Support efforts that enhance community vibrancy through initiatives that increase community diversity, encourage local businesses, support local arts, and bring foot traffic to the region’s downtowns. Advocate for actions that would expand the resiliency of downtowns and areas of cultural and historical significance and promote outdoor recreation and green spaces.

CURRENT TRENDS

One of the Community Vibrancy efforts in the region that arose from Covid-19 was the presence and popularity of outdoor dining, with some municipalities opting to expand or formalize their outdoor dining policies.^{xxxvi} This has evolved into a growing interest in the region’s downtowns and adaptability of businesses within them. SRPC has expanded its data collection capabilities to quantify the foot traffic that is brought to an area and the impact it has on the attractiveness of a locale to residents, visitors, and potential new businesses.

Throughout 2023, the region’s cities and towns continued to engage in placemaking or advocating for projects that spur this on. Examples include the Complete Streets improvements to Route 108,^{xxxvii} which aim to create a safer pedestrian environment. The Tri-Cities hope that these changes will help spur more local businesses over auto-oriented businesses.

Another example of promoting community vibrancy includes efforts from Barrington’s 2024 Town Meeting, which resulted in a vote for both the renovation of a former urgent care clinic to become the Town’s library, and for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District to make progress on creation of a “village center” at the intersection of Routes 9 and 125.^{xxxviii}

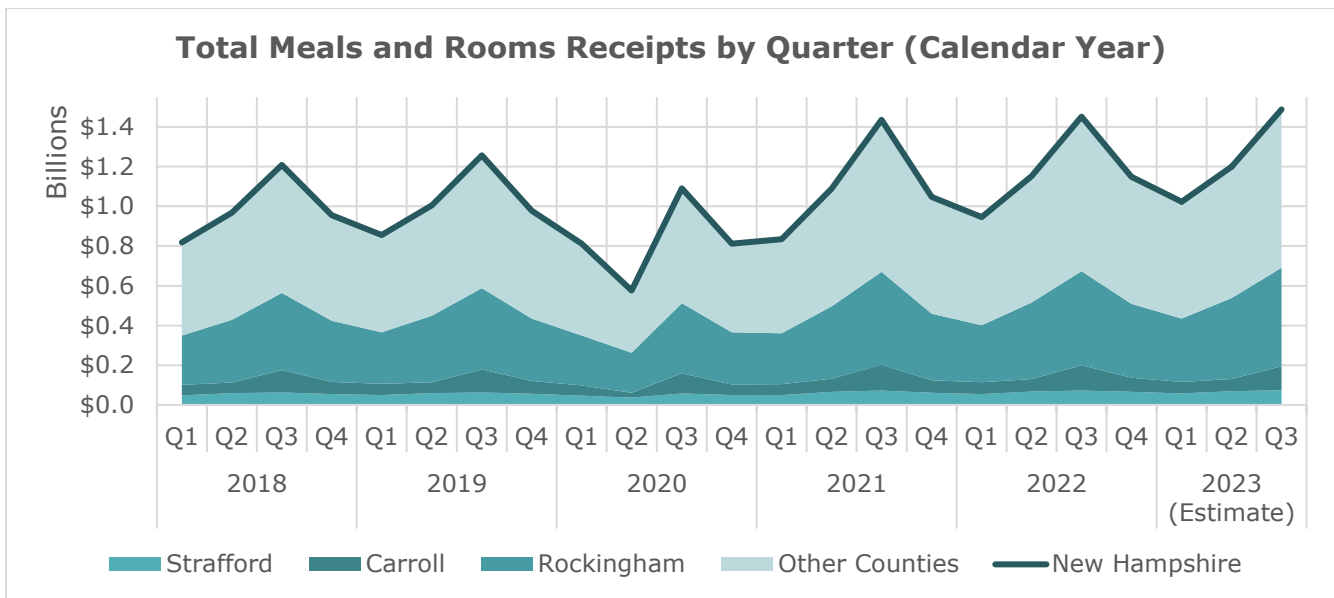
Another trend has been the encouragement of the “third place,” a space or business that is intended as a gathering place or place outside the home or work for an individual to passively or actively exist for the purposes of recreation, socialization, or to take care of weekly needs like shopping, among other activities.^{xxxix} Downtowns are included in this categorization, and with a gap in office occupancy, communities have become increasingly interested in enhancing foot traffic through their portfolio of downtown businesses and planning events or festivals. To help track foot traffic, in 2023, SRPC placed two counters on the Central Avenue bridge for Dover’s Spring Fling small business festival in early May, where it recorded over 7,400 pedestrians over the course of the weekend.

In Rollinsford, the Mills at Salmon Falls are expected to be renovated, with growing discussion about the type of development that should be planned for the two mill buildings. Despite a rather dense downtown area, Rollinsford is one of the region’s smaller towns and records a daily average of 50 pedestrians on Front Street.

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to advocate for healthy outdoor lifestyles by maintaining and updating the Promoting Outdoor Play! (POP!) recreation inventory for the most efficient user experience, with a major update planned for Summer 2024. As part of additional seasonal data collection, SRPC will continue to partner with the region’s economic development partners and other stakeholders to complete pedestrian counts in the urban cores, particularly for special events such as Free Comic Book Day in Rochester and the Spring Fling weekend in Dover.

DATA



"I know the town offices are brand new, but it'd be awesome to have a common where we could get a book from the library, sit in a park with a Calef's sandwich all on foot! Lower that carbon footprint."

- Barrington Master Plan survey respondent

Pictured is one of SRPC’s pedestrian counters. The City of Dover reports that at least one business in its downtown pursued its current location as a result of the amount of foot traffic reported here.

Sources

SRPC staff

Barrington 2024 Master Plan Survey

New Hampshire Office of Planning & Development Meals & Rooms Tax Data:

[https://www.nheconomy.com/office-of-planning-and-development/what-we-do/state-data-center-\(census-data\)/economic-data](https://www.nheconomy.com/office-of-planning-and-development/what-we-do/state-data-center-(census-data)/economic-data)

CHILDCARE

Adequate childcare services are an essential part of a healthy economy and community. Continued teacher shortages, high tuition, and limited capacity make accessing childcare difficult for families. Low wages, lack of benefits, and high rates of burnout lead to difficulty attracting new teachers. The childcare system is in crisis.

GOALS

Promote collaboration and support to this industry to help create a stronger network and provide data and partnership where needed.

CURRENT TRENDS

The childcare system includes childcare centers serving children before they reach K-12 schooling as well as before- and after-school and summer programs for older children requiring supervision. Parents of young children depend on access to childcare to be able to work, but an average of 16,500 parents were not able to work due to a lack of childcare in New Hampshire each month from Oct 2022-Oct 2023.^{xi} This is in part due to a lack of capacity at childcare centers (several factors impacting capacity were discussed in last year's CEDS). Another factor that limits access to childcare is the high cost to parents. A New Hampshire household enrolling an infant and a 4-year-old in childcare in 2022 could expect to pay \$28,340 in tuition. This household requires an income of \$404,857 to meet the US Department of Health & Human Services' definition of affordable childcare.^{xii} The median household income in Strafford County was \$83,212 in 2022, approximately 20.5% of the income needed to not be cost burdened by childcare. See the SRPC Regional Data Snapshot's pages 56, 90, and 91 to see Living Wages and data about the households with children. Expansions to the New Hampshire Child Care Scholarship program in 2023 make financial assistance more accessible by increasing the income eligibility thresholds^{xiii}, but this program alone is not enough to make childcare affordable.^{xliii}

The childcare system is in crisis as continued worker shortages and staff-to-child ratios result in childcare centers operating at lower capacity than what the building or classrooms might be able to contain. Many centers are one sick call away from having to close each day.^{xliv} These teachers are understaffed, overworked, and underpaid. Many childcare centers are unable to provide benefits to their staff, and low wages are not attractive to new workers.^{xlv} In the SRPC region there are 160 childcare workers and 300 preschool teachers.^{xlvi} They make a median salary of \$28,590 and \$30,930 respectively, up from \$23,178 and \$29,689 last year. The poverty threshold for a household of 4 was \$30,000 in 2023.^{xlvii} Prior to the pandemic, there was a small pipeline through high school tech centers to prepare new childcare workers and teachers while in high school (See the Workforce and Education chapter for more about these high school programs).^{xlviii} This is becoming less prevalent and fewer high school graduates are choosing career paths in childcare. Many childcare centers are funded predominantly through tuition, which in turn presents a high cost to families. If the teacher shortage and lowered capacity continues, this could worsen, as fewer parents will be splitting the cost of funding the childcare centers. The remaining \$30 million of federal aid since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic must be spent by

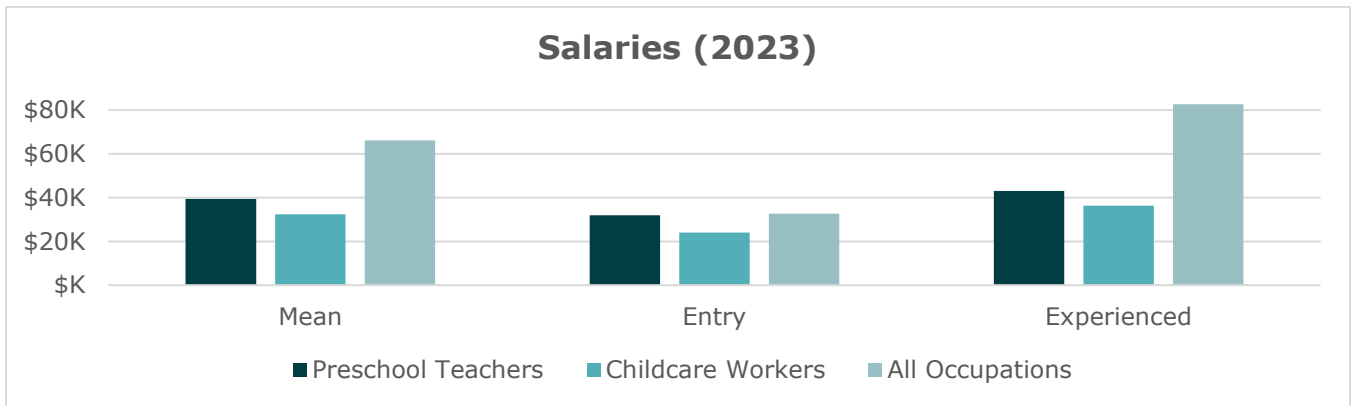
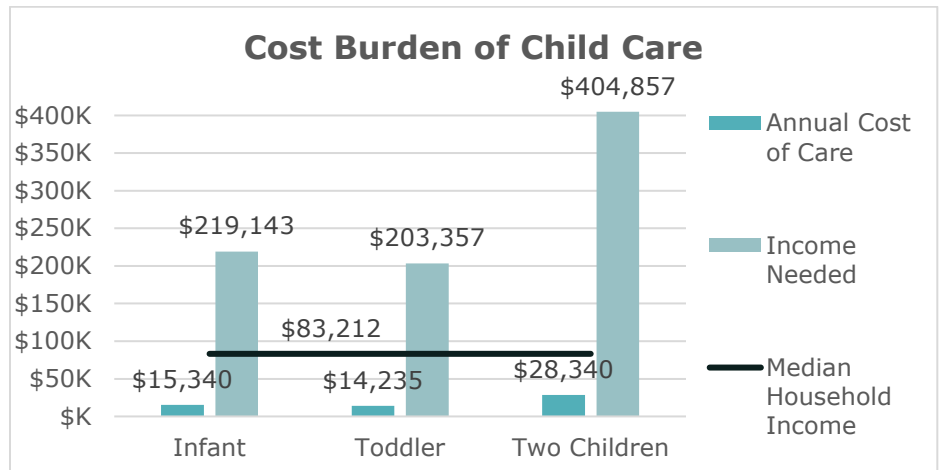
September 20, 2024. These funds are for workforce programs and other long-term investments.^{xlix}

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to leverage partnerships and promote discussions to expand knowledge on childcare and its relationship with the regional economy, help our municipalities to make connections, affect policy changes, and access funding and resources. Furthermore, we will continue to look for opportunities to expand technical assistance and data collection that can assist stakeholders around the region.

DATA

16,500
parents
were not able to work
due to a lack of
childcare



NH Childcare Scholarship Eligibility Thresholds	Family Size	\$0 Family Cost Share	\$5 Family Cost Share	7% Family Cost Share
	1	Less than \$14,580	Greater than \$14,580 and less than \$20,120	Greater than \$20,120 and less than \$55,207
	2	Less than \$19,720	Greater than \$19,720 and less than \$27,214	Greater than \$27,214 and less than \$72,193
	3	Less than \$24,860	Greater than \$24,860 and less than \$34,307	Greater than \$34,307 and less than \$89,180
	4	Less than \$30,000	Greater than \$30,000 and less than \$41,400	Greater than \$41,400 and less than \$106,167
	5	Less than \$35,140	Greater than \$35,140 and less than \$48,493	Greater than \$48,493 and less than \$123,153
	6	Less than \$40,280	Greater than \$40,280 and less than \$55,586	Greater than \$55,586 and less than \$140,140
	7	Less than \$45,420	Greater than \$45,420 and less than \$62,680	Greater than \$62,680 and less than \$143,325
	8	Less than \$50,560	Greater than \$50,560 and less than \$69,773	Greater than \$69,773 and less than \$146,510

Sources

New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute
 Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security
 NH Department of Health and Human Services, The Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration

RESILIENCY

In 2020, SPRC received a CARES Act grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated to support economic recovery and resiliency planning and to provide technical assistance to communities, businesses and other organizations impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and within SRPC's service area. As a result of this funding opportunity, SPRC was able to jumpstart and carry out recovery projects and initiatives. As our economy has almost fully recovered, SRPC's efforts are becoming more focused on building resilience to withstand future shocks to our economy and helping communities and businesses to do the same. This primarily included strengthening and creating new relationships with stakeholders, providing technical assistance to small businesses, tracking and disseminating funding opportunities, and collaborating with stakeholders to learn about ongoing challenges and identifying opportunities to address them.

Partnerships that have been created or strengthened through this work are maintained through continued outreach and engagement efforts. These efforts include continuing the business outreach emails on a quarterly basis, providing support to the business community, and continuing the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders on a monthly schedule. Partnerships created or strengthened include:

- Small Business Development Center
- Center for Women and Enterprise
- Internal Revenue Service Stakeholder Liaison Services
- NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs
- NH Office of Planning and Development
- Hampton Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- The Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
- Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Falls Chamber of Commerce
- Indonesian Community Connect
- Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen
- Strafford Economic Development Corporation
- Wentworth Economic Development Corporation
- Regional Economic Development Center
- NH State Council on the Arts
- Great Bay Community College
- Department of Education
- NH Employment Security
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast
- Seacoast Public Health Network
- Apprenticeship NH
- Innovation Studio
- NH Department of Health and Human Services
- Towns and cities within and beyond the Strafford region.

Our efforts to support a resilient economy in the Strafford Economic Development District include:

- **Municipal Record Digitization:** This program is aimed to help organizational resilience, increase efficiency for municipal staff if and when required to work remotely, and helps increase citizen access to documents online. As a result of this program, a total of 14 SRPC staff members helped digitize an average of 10,000 documents over a 9-month period in 13 communities in the SRPC region. In 2023, SRPC continued to offer the equipment to municipalities to digitize their documents. <https://strafford.org/services/municipal-record-digitization/>
- **Consultant Technical Assistance Program for Small Businesses:** Including web development, marketing and advertising, graphic design, IT services, and cybersecurity. As a result of this program, 76 businesses in 14 of SRPC's 18 communities received support across the 6 different categories, representing a total of 277.3 hours of assistance provided, a value of \$32,000 in services offered at no cost to businesses. While this program has closed, in 2023, SRPC staff continued to connect businesses to partner organizations who can help with similar requests. <https://strafford.org/services/technical-assistance-for-small-businesses/>
- **Resources for Non-English Speaking Business Owners:** SRPC continues to provide in-house assistance to Spanish-speaking business owners. <https://strafford.org/services/resources-for-non-english-speaking-business-owners/>
- **Business Outreach and Funding Opportunities:** Funding resources are disseminated quarterly to a list of all registered businesses in the SRPC geographical region via email. Emails included federal, state, and local funding opportunities and other resources help businesses. <https://strafford.org/services/covid-recovery-funding-opportunities/>
- **Direct Technical Assistance to Businesses:** Business can reach out to SRPC staff for technical assistance. Topics of assistance include but are not limited to business funding programs, business expansion and adaptation, workforce attraction and retention, translation services, and tax credit programs.
- **Creating Partnerships and Connections:** SRPC has continued to leverage resources such as the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholder Calls to introduce and connect stakeholders that can offer support to the business community and make an impact in the region's overall economy. As part of this effort, in-person meetings have been held at different locations that play an important role in the region's overall economy.

CEDS PRIORITY PROJECT LISTING

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Barrington	BAR01	Barrington's first sidewalks	\$1,253,514	Updated
Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST)	COAST01	COAST Administrative, Operations, and Maintenance (A/O/M) Facility	\$17,200,000	Updated
Dover	DOV01	Redevelopment of environmentally stressed plating plant and grounds on Broadway in downtown Dover	\$2,500,000	Updated
Dover	DOV02	Public Infrastructure Investment to Assist with Private Development	\$1,000,000	No Updates
Dover	DOV03	Public Infrastructure Investment to Assist with Pedestrian and Vehicular flow	\$17,000,000	Updated
Dover	DOV04	Community Trail connection and expansion to Knox Marsh Rd	\$800,000	Updated
Dover	DOV05	Central Avenue Reconstruction	\$3,000,000	Updated
Dover	DOV07	Downtown Waterfront Shoreline Stabilization/Riverwalk	\$700,000	Updated
Dover	DOV09	Henry Law Avenue and River Street Reconstruction	\$900,000	Updated
Dover	DOV10	Fifth/Grove Street Reconstruction	\$1,100,000	Updated
Dover	DOV11	Public Safety Fire/Police Training Structure	\$600,000	No Updates
Dover	DOV12	Liberty Mutual Site Redevelopment	\$0	Updated
Dover	DOV13	Downtown Business Incubators	\$465,000	NEW!
Dover, Great Bay Rowing	DOV14	Great Bay Rowing Community Boathouse	\$1,000,000	NEW!
Durham	DUR01	Madbury Rd Improvements	\$2,885,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR02	Fire Station Renovation and Overflow	\$520,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR03	Critical Facilities Backup Generators	\$580,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR04	66 Main Street Structured Parking	\$7,000,000	Updated
Durham	DUR05	Mixing System at Beech Hill Tank	\$275,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR06	Southern Strafford County Communications System	\$2,500,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR07	Wastewater Treatment Plant Odor Control System	\$750,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR08	Bickford-Chesley House Preservation	\$437,475	No Updates
Durham	DUR09	Durham Old Town Hall Preservation	\$366,270	No Updates

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Durham	DUR10	Oyster River Dam	\$1,462,950	No Updates
Farmington	FAR01	Sidewalk Network Expansion	\$990,160	No Updates
Farmington	FAR02	Re-Development of the Old Fire Department Lot		No Updates
Farmington	FAR03	Replacement of Red-Listed Bridges		No Updates
Farmington	FAR04	Farmington Levee		No Updates
Farmington	FAR05	Update to TIF Development and Finance Plan		No Updates
New Hampshire Farm Museum	MIL02	Mending Fences and Developing Water Solutions	\$45,000	No Updates
New Durham	NDU01	Boodey Farmstead- Cultural and Historical	\$300,000	No Updates
New Durham	NDU02	Meetinghouse Restoration- Cultural and Historical Project	\$280,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC01	Portland St Sidewalk extension	\$1,395,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC02	Route 11 Safety and Capacity Improvements	\$8,000,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC03	Union Street Parking lot	\$1,350,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC05	Round Pond Reservoir Capacity	\$8,000,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC06	Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades	\$5,000,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC08	Portland Street Bridge Rehabilitation	\$750,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC09	Lead Service Line Replacements	\$200,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC10	North Main Street/Chestnut Hill Road Connector		Updated
Rochester	ROC12	Innovation Drive Extension	\$2,500,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC13	Innovation Drive Sewer Pump Station	\$2,750,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC14	Industrial Park Truck Route Analysis	\$20,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC15	Rochester Riverwalk	\$2,000,000	Updated
NH Small Business Development Center	SBDC01	NH SBDC Inclusivity Project	\$280,000	Updated
Strafford Economic Development Corp	SEDC01	Rapid Response Flex Fund (Revolving Loan Fund)	\$2,000,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM01	Library Expansion & Accessibility Improvements	\$6,100,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM05	Main Street Complete Streets	\$7,747,751	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM07	Millennium Field & Parking Lot Improvements	\$513,000	Updated

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Somersworth	SOM08	Noble Pines (Hamilton Street) Water Tank Replacement Project	\$6,615,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM09	JA Sons Prince's Garage Brownfields Cleanup	\$726,230	Updated
Somersworth	SOM12	Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrades-	\$17,640,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM13	Water Distribution Improvements - Indigo Hill Road to Rita Street	\$1,600,000	NEW!
Somersworth	SOM14	Furbur Chapel Restoration	\$150,000	NEW!
SRPC	SRPC01	Arts and Culture Inventory and Online Guide	\$40,000	Updated
SRPC	SRPC02	Brownfields Assessment Program	\$500,000	Updated
SRPC	SRPC03	Regional Housing Needs Assessment	\$25,000	No Updates
SRPC, Somersworth, Rochester	SRPC04	Spaulding Turnpike Exit 10	\$1,914,105	No Updates
UNH	UNH03	West Edge Innovation Neighborhood	\$80,000,000	Updated
UNH	UNH04	Economic resilience through enhanced capacity to monitor future threats and mobilize resources to combat future disease outbreaks	\$20,000,000	Updated
UNH	UNH05	Expansion of UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory in support of a resilient NH coastal economy	\$3,813,000	Updated
UNH	UNH07	Building Capacity for PFAS Analysis in NH	\$900,000	Updated
UNH	UNH08	UNH-Durham South Drive Infrastructure Investment	\$4,200,000	Updated
UNH	UNH09	Blue Economy Regional Master Plan Development	\$500,000	Updated
UNH	UNH10	Cybersecurity Assessment Center and Testbed	\$3,000,000	Updated
UNH	UNH12	Building Capacity for PFAS Analysis in NH	\$890,000	Updated
UNH	UNH13	UNH Wildcat Transit Fleet Replacement	\$4,400,000	NEW!
Gafney Library/ Wakefield	WAK03	The Gafney Library Expansion Project	\$1,450,000	No Updates
Wentworth Economic Development Corp (WEDCO)	WEDCO02	Explore Moose Mountains	\$110,000	No Updates
Total Investments			\$262,989,455	

CEDS EVALUATION AND ACTION PLAN

CEDS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The following performance measures will be used to evaluate the success of future CEDS updates within this five-year cycle, as well as implementation of CEDS priorities. These performance measures were established for the 2021-2025 five-year update and are being tracked in each annual update.

Performance Measures	2023 Performance
Number of local governments explicitly invited to participate in project solicitation.	17 – all 15 Strafford EDD municipalities, plus Strafford County and the Sanbornville Water Precinct
Total number of organizations with a project included in the CEDS.	15
Number of local governments that submitted/updated priority projects.	8 member municipalities
Total local government projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS.	51
SRPC Projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS.	4
Number of other partner organizations that submitted priority projects for inclusion in the CEDS.	6
Total projects submitted by other partner organizations for inclusion in the CEDS.	14
Total projects included in the CEDS.	69
Total cost of proposed CEDS projects.	\$262,989,455
Number of CEDS priority projects fully implemented.	4
Number of Strategy Committee meetings at which CEDS planning was discussed.	2



ACTION PLAN

The following is a compiled list of all SRPC action items identified in the CEDS. Where there was significant overlap between actions these may have been combined or re-written to make each action distinct and measurable. Staff then provided a status update for each action, including identifying new actions, and separated them into sections based on their status (i.e., completed, ongoing, etc.).

Completed

1 Operate a Consultant Technical Assistance Program using CARES Act funding to provide direct assistance to businesses in our region.

Status Details:

SRPC completed a program to provide small businesses with up to nine hours of free technical assistance with pre-selected consultants in the fields of website development, marketing and advertising, graphic design, audio-visual support, cybersecurity, and IT services. The program was highly successful and concluded at the expiration of CARES Act funds in September 2022.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

2 Operate a Municipal Record Digitization Program using CARES Act funding to improve the organizational resilience of our municipalities by increasing availability of digital records.

Status Details:

SRPC purchased both normal and large-format scanners and has established a schedule to provide free staff scanning support to our municipalities in 2022 prior to expiration of CARES Act funds. After grant funds expired, SRPC retained the scanning equipment and has made it available to communities to check out on an as-needed basis.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

3 Update SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

Status Details:

All nine regional planning commissions received funding through NH BEA for the purpose of a collaborative update to all RHNA's statewide. SRPC completed and published its RHNA report in March 2023 and continues to advocate the results of the data findings to regional stakeholders and municipalities. Furthermore, findings of the RHNA have been used by municipalities to support their housing efforts. Examples of this include the Somersworth and Barrington Housing Chapter Master Plan updates.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce & Education

4

Promote recreational sites and opportunities through the Promoting Outdoor Play (POP!) project.

Status Details:

The project successfully developed, released, and promoted a digital database of recreational sites for use by our member communities and the public. The interactive web-tool and GIS data that supports it is still available and we continue working to add new sites and maintain the data as time allows. Major updates are planned for summer 2024.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

5

Increase the connectivity between communities by linking them with multi-modal infrastructure that includes public transit options and safe routes for bicycles and pedestrians.

Status Details:

SRPC adopted its first Active Transportation Plan on May 17, 2024. The plan identifies and prioritizes pedestrian and bike improvements.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Mobility and Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

Ongoing Projects

6

Continue to convene the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders (SEDS) group to encourage and facilitate information and ideas sharing.

Status Details:

The group continues to meet regularly, both virtually and in-person. Meetings occur on a monthly basis as stabilizing economic and public health conditions have required less frequent or immediate discussions by the group. In-person meetings are held at different locations that promote regional economic development, such as a manufacturing facility and the Rochester Tech Center and the John Olson Advanced Manufacturing Center at UNH.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ All

7

Maintain open communication with businesses and municipalities regarding economic development issues, best practices, or funding opportunities.

Status Details:

SRPC continues to use various electronic communications platforms to disseminate resources and funding opportunities to the businesses in our region. Examples of this include our newsletter "Bits and Pieces", social media, and quarterly email updates to registered businesses. In 2023, roughly 100 resources were disseminated to over 6,000 businesses in the region.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ All

8

Provide technical assistance to municipalities, businesses, and non-profits in our region to support recovery efforts and lessen the economic impact of the pandemic.

Status Details:

SRPC has a long history of providing direct technical assistance to our member municipalities in various capacities. While the funding for assistance through consultants has ended, which supported 76 businesses in their operations, SRPC continues to receive business inquiries and connects business owners to various partners and stakeholders at the local, regional, and state level that can assist them with their specific needs. Examples include the Center for Women and Enterprise, Small Businesses Development Center, Small Business Administration, Internal Revenue Service, Regional Economic Development Center, and more.

Relevant Themes

✓ All

9

Cultivate strong relationships with a wide variety of partner organizations to promote regional approaches to economic development and to advocate on behalf of our region.

Status Details:

Through direct outreach and the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders Calls, SRPC has fostered new connections with organizations including, but not limited to: CCA for Social Good, Early Learning NH, Innovation Studio, the Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development, and the NH Career and Technical Education Centers.

Relevant Themes

✓ All

10

Support and promote business operations, and well as business resiliency plans and their benefits to withstand business shocks as a result of economic disruptions.

Status Details:

SRPC continues to monitor and distribute relevant resources to build the resilience of our businesses. Staff will continue to gather data and track business trends and current challenges and use this information to ensure these topics are tackled during Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders meetings. Moving forward, SRPC staff will work on developing a universal business guide for small businesses that wish to grow or relocate to the region. This handbook will be available to municipalities and organizations that can develop it further and make it community specific for their use. Furthermore, staff will publish a tool that consolidates all major stakeholders at the local, regional and state level, including their role in supporting businesses and contact information.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

11 Continue collecting data on the childcare system and facilitate the conversation on current and future possible policy changes.

Status Details:

SRPC staff worked on an application to recruit interns from NYU to work on a regional childcare plan that tackles childcare challenges through the formulation of actionable solutions. While last year's application was not selected, staff will be working with NYU faculty to re-submit a new application this year.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Childcare

12 Continue to work with municipalities to ensure that local hazard mitigation plans are updated regularly to improve the resilience of municipal infrastructure and encourage more resilient development patterns and techniques.

Status Details:

SRPC worked on 7 plans (Barrington, Durham, Middleton, Milton, Northwood, Rochester, Strafford) with additional towns to be added upon finalization of the grant with Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Resiliency

13 Continue to work with SRPC's coastal municipalities to plan for the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on their communities.

Status Details:

In 2023, SRPC staff worked on a variety of projects to address climate change resilience, including:

- Revised floodplain ordinances in Rollinsford and Madbury
- Incorporated climate change into Durham's most recent Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Contributed to a NH Town & City Magazine article on the new FEMA policy guide for local hazard mitigation plans
- Received funding to develop a Waterfront Development Chapter for Newmarket's Master Plan
- Received funding to update Farmington's Drainage Study to incorporate new precipitation rates

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Resiliency

14 Maintain an up-to-date Priority Project List for the purpose of supporting local infrastructure projects and advocate on behalf of priority projects to potential funders.

Status Details:

SRPC staff conducted project solicitation for this update from February-April 2024 and has updated the priority project list.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ All

15 Leverage SRPC’s Brownfields Program to increase opportunities for facility rehabilitation, development and land acquisition and maintenance to strengthen and promote vibrant communities.

Status Details:

SRPC was awarded a \$500,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant that began in August 2023. The funds will be used to identify potential brownfield sites and conduct Phase I/II site assessments and hazardous building materials surveys to determine what actions are needed, if any, to get the sites ready for redevelopment.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

16 Consider people of all ages across all planning functions and promote opportunities for further information and resources.

Status Details:

The Communities for Healthy Aging Transition (CHAT) project contributed to our understanding of how broad issues affecting our communities may have disproportionate impacts on certain age cohorts. SRPC has completed action plans for Farmington, Newmarket, Rochester, and Strafford, as well as conducted an accessibility audit of Rochester’s downtown and produced a Master Plan implementation tool kit for Strafford.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

In Progress

17 Work with the SEDS to identify and promote best practices for small businesses to attract and retain employees, including innovative marketing and hiring practices.

Status Details:

In 2023, with funding from NH BEA, the SEDS group worked with SoHo Creative Studios to create an Employer Toolkit to help businesses on the Seacoast and beyond address their workforce challenges. SRPC will continue to promote this tool amongst our region’s businesses and provide support as necessary. Furthermore, SRPC is working on researching and collecting best practices for attracting and retaining employees in today’s workforce climate.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

18

Analyze our region’s broadband capabilities and plan for addressing identified weak points; specifics can include updates to the 2015 Broadband Plan, promotion of news and information related to broadband planning in New Hampshire, and direct technical assistance to municipalities seeking to improve their broadband access.

Status Details:

SRPC staff updated coverage maps from publicly available data as part of the 2022 SRPC Data Snapshot (no available updated data for 2023 or 2024). Staff will continue monitoring available data to provide updated analyses as data becomes available. Staff are watching NH BEA’s broadband initiatives to identify a more substantial role for SRPC in the future.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Infrastructure

19

Maintain an up-to-date Regional Master Plan for the purpose of providing local and regional planning data to identify infrastructure needs and potential solutions.

Status Details:

SRPC submitted this project for consideration in the Congressionally-Directed Spending round in 2021. The project was awarded and as of late 2023 contracting completed. SRPC will be kicking off an update to the comprehensive regional plan in July 2024 with a goal of updating the environmental resource chapters with a focus on planning for housing, economic development, infrastructure in balance with natural resource protection.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ All

20

Plan for, study, advocate relationship between transportation and the built environment.

Status Details:

Starting in July 2023, SRPC began working with Rockingham Planning Commission to analyze sidewalk networks within the fixed route public transit network for physical barriers that prevent people from accessing the bus. A goal is to identify and remove barriers to transit, increase transit ridership, and enable people with disabilities to access critical services. The project uses an analysis method called “PedestrianPedestrian Level of Traffic Stress”. As part of the project, SRPC will be working with the Cities of Dover and Portsmouth to develop model ordinance designed to improve accessibility along public transit routes. SRPC will be working with Rockingham Planning Commission on the initiative through June 30, 2025. We continue to advocate for the economic benefits of transit service, building off of the Economic Benefits of Transit study SRPC completed in 2021. Lastly, SRPC has developed its first Active Transportation Plan that was adopted in June 2024.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Mobility & Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

21

Use Communities for Healthy Aging Transition (CHAT) action plans to inform all communities of possible opportunities.

Status Details:

CHAT formally concluded at the end of 2023. Moving forward, the resources produced through that effort serve as models for other communities interested in implementing age friendly initiatives. SRPC will continue to promote these resources and help connect communities with available funding.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

22

Stay involved with food security issues and research potential funding sources.

Status Details:

SRPC continues to seek opportunities to engage in conversations around Food Systems Resilience.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

23

Create an interactive Arts and Culture web tool modeled on the highly successful POP! project.

Status Details:

SRPC is doing minor edits on an as needed basis, but very little is going to change around the data as we do not currently have the resources to build out the tool for the entire region.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

24

Increase accessibility for people with disabilities by adding ramps, railings, curb cuts, and platforms so that they can reach essential and leisure services.

Status Details:

SRPC's project to analyze sidewalks within the public transit network directly addresses this action item (see number 20 above). Staff recently collaborated with UNH Technology Transfer Center to host a peer-exchange with municipal planners and public works staff to discuss pedestrian safety infrastructure. The goal of the peer-exchange was to hear first-hand from planners and public works officials who have experience with modern traffic calming techniques and inform community leaders who are considering adopting them for the first time.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Mobility & Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

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Appendix: CEDS 2024 Update Public Comment Log

Note: The 2024 CEDS update is a high-level overview of regional economic development trends and themes that that have changed or emerged over the previous year and should be used in conjunction with the 5-year and prior annual updates. Comments are only added or addressed in the plan where there have been updates during this past year.

Comment Received	Comment	Status
Commissioners Meeting 5/17/24	No mention of 2-year colleges - they are the students who stay in NH	Added discussion on CCSNH's GBCC in Rochester in Workforce and Education chapter, pg. 27, 28.
Commissioners Meeting 5/17/24	Have a footnote explaining underemployment.	Already exists, pg. 13.
Commissioners Meeting 5/17/24	How does the Seacoast CEDRs underemployment number compare to other CEDRs regions?	Added underemployment for other regions as a footnote on pg. 13
Commissioners Meeting 5/17/24	Hospitals using travel nurses to fill employment gaps	Will be addressed in next year's update, or in the 5-year update. SRPC will look into doing additional outreach through interviews to find region specific trends and data.
Commissioners Meeting 5/17/24	No mention of availability of water, sewer, and fiber.	See RHNA for more information on this. There have been no regional updates to this data since the RHNA. At this time that discussion is the best available.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	No mention of access to sufficient nutritional resources.	Will be addressed in 5-year update; need to find better resources. What is available is not up to date.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Education should put emphasis on the technical training needed to support our entrepreneurial endeavors as well as existing enterprises.	Covered technical training to some extent in Workforce and Education and referenced BEA's list of top employment gaps. Will further explore as part of the 5-year or next annual update.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	No mention of a living wage, it should go with housing & childcare.	Added to Childcare (pg. 91) and Economic Growth chapters, and referred to 2024 Data Snapshot for complete information.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Equity and Environmental Justice is only for race, color, national origin, or income but not age, handicaps, and sexual orientation.	Added, pg. 11

Comment Received	Comment	Status
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Resiliency. With the onset of climate change there are challenges to our national/regional food distribution networks and those communities in the 'last mile' of distribution run the risk of having insufficient access to healthy food. We should be promoting local agriculture as part of that solution.	Local food sources will be a part of the Regional Plan discussion. Will also re-visit at the 5-year update.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Housing. No discussion on limitations in the construction workforce nor trends in building material costs and how that impacts the "affordability" of housing.	This has been addressed in prior yearly CEDS updates. There is not a lot of regional data on building material costs. For 5-year update, will look into adding CPI data at national and regional (Northeast) levels.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Mobility and Accessibility. If you are retired, it is definitely less expensive to live in many parts of Maine than New Hampshire. Retirees living on their investments and savings will pay a flat 5% passive income tax and that coupled with excessive reliance on property taxes and the numerous consumption (dare not say sales taxes) fees make Maine an easy choice.	State tax policy is outside of what SRPC can affect through CEDS.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Public transportation requires volume to be more economically viable. I understand that Wildcat Bus caters to students' schedules mostly and that makes it more inconvenient for non-students. Given the existing tax burdens on residents I doubt there is an appetite for expanding public funding for alternative transportation means.	Please refer to SRPC's Metropolitan Transportation Plan ("Metro Plan" or MTP) and Coordinated Public Transit & Human Service Transportation Plan ("Coordinated Transit Plan" or STP), both 2023, which have extensive discussion and local investigation on this topic.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Age Friendliness. Baby Boomers are consumers of healthcare services but there is nothing here about the travel burden to access health care, need to increase the geographic distribution of clinics, and in-home care.	Will be addressed at next year's update, or in the 5-year update.

Comment Received	Comment	Status
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Workforce and Education. Unclear what education is required to satisfy the observed workforce skills deficiencies.	Added a footnote and reference in Workforce and Education chapter to BEA's CEDRs report for a list of top occupations with largest employment gaps in the region.
Received via e-mail 5/26/24	Teacher shortages related to the childcare system being in crisis.	Addressed in the Childcare chapter.