



CEDS

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

UPDATE 2025

Adopted: June 20, 2025

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.

Member	Entity Representing
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James Burdin	City of Dover
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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	Chris Kinville, Marshall Goldberg
Dover	Lindsay Williams, Sophie Robinson, Steve Brown
Durham	Michael Lehrman, Paul Rasmussen
Farmington	Vacant
Lee	Katrin Kasper, Mary Woodward
Madbury	Tom Falk, Mark Avery
Middleton	John Mullen, Kate Buzzard
Milton	John Nute, Leslie Howlett
New Durham	Vacant
Newmarket	Sarah Wrightsman, Peter Nelson
Northwood	Donald Manter
Nottingham	Glenn Griswold
Rochester	Barb Holstein, Kevin Sullivan, Joe Boudreau, Rick Healey
Rollinsford	Vacant
Somersworth	Chris Horton, Mark Richardson, Michael Bobinsky
Strafford	Donald Coker
Wakefield	Steve Stancel

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).

In 2015, SRPC was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the US Department of Commerce. 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 outlined a regional strategy for future economic development and prosperity based on the themes and goals developed by the Strategy Committee. This 2025 CEDS acts as our final annual update to that plan. It provides an analysis of the region's economy over the previous year (2024), updates to the priority project list, and evaluates our progress in implementing the CEDS.

SRPC staff began data collection and outreach for this update at the start of 2025. SRPC staff convened the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee and EDD Board of Directors throughout the process to help inform this plan.

- In February 2025, an in-person kick off meeting with EDD Board of Directors was held to share economic trends and data analysis findings in order to gather input to guide the annual update.
- In February 2025, 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.

It is important to note 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.

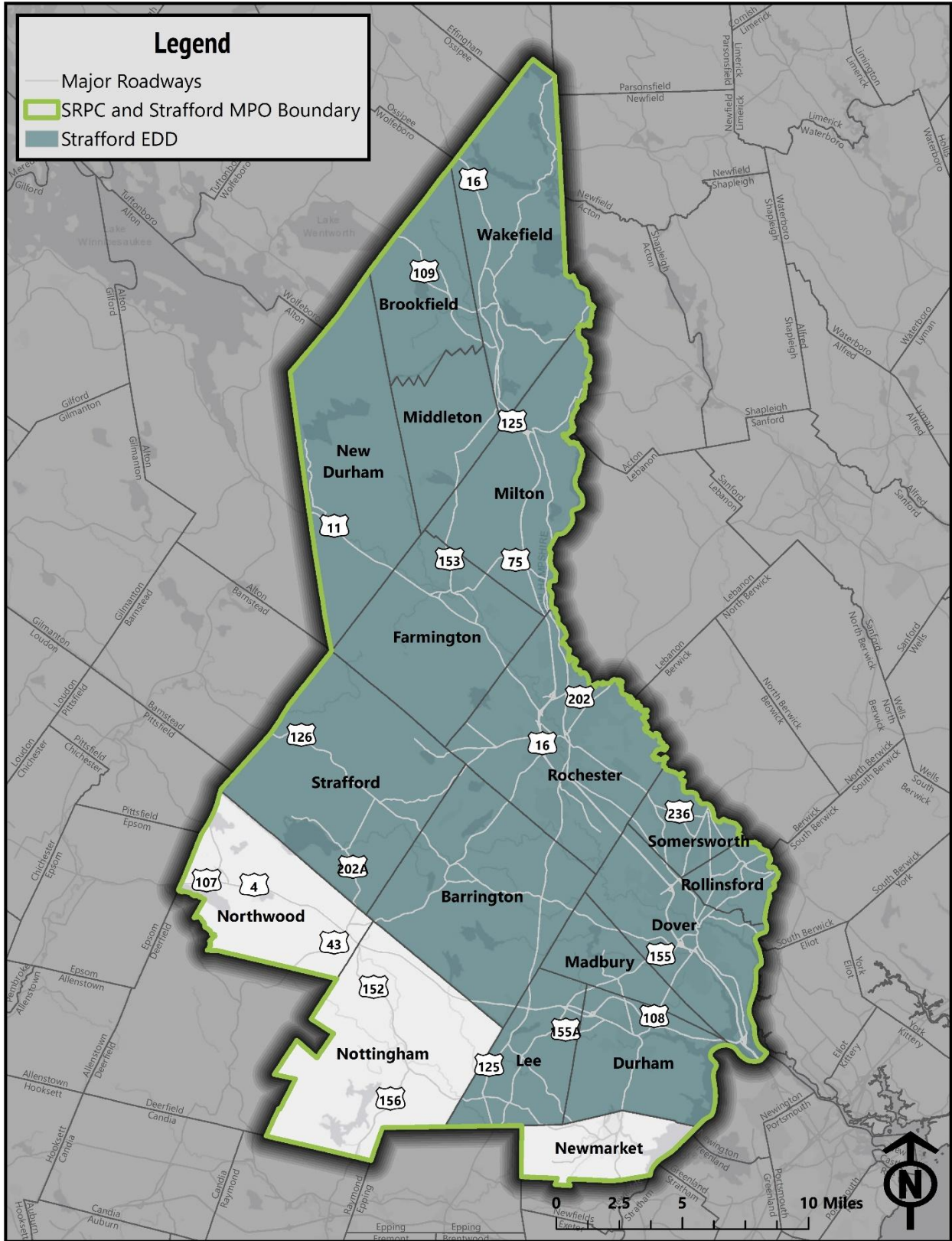
SRPC Staff conducted project solicitation from February through April 2025. Notifications and project forms were sent to all municipalities in the region, as well as a variety of other public and non-profit sector partners. Those projects are included in this update.

A full draft of this plan was released for public comment on May 9, 2025. 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 9, 2025 meeting following the 30-day public comment and review period.



Top left image: Attendees at the Hill Library Charrette, facilitated by SRPC staff in October 2024; top right image: Prep Partners business presentation and tour with the Strategy Committee in August 2024; bottom left image: SRPC and NYU Childcare presentation to Strategy Committee and Board of Directors in April 2025; bottom right image: Meeting in Barrington highlight municipal technical assistance in Barrington in February 2025. 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

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

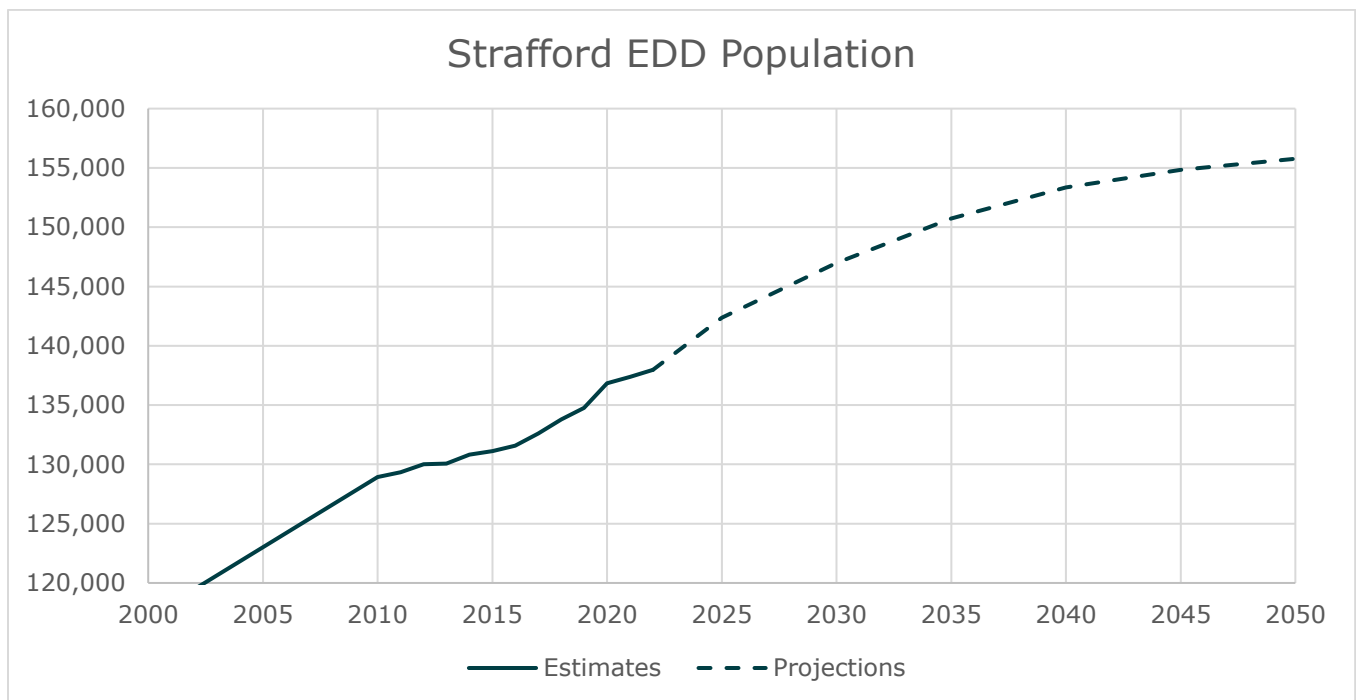
Resiliency – Prepare for economic disruptions by 1) lessening the likelihood of their occurrence, 2) mitigating the negative impacts if a disruption does occur, and 3) improving the region’s ability to recover quickly and fully from disruptions. This lens includes significant discussion of our region’s 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 2025 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 139,158 residents, up approximately 7.9 percent from 2010, and the NH Office of Planning and Development projects that this number will continue to grow to over 155,000 by 2050. Median ages for many SRPC municipalities have risen or held steady. The most significant changes are increases of 6.3 in Brookfield and a decrease of 7.3 in Northwood. 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 2025 Regional Data Snapshot.



Source

New Hampshire Office of Planning and Development

ECONOMIC GROWTH

In 2024, while wages have gone up, affordability for residents and businesses remained a challenge as the cost of goods and services has continued to increase (though at a slower pace than years prior). Economic indicators such as unemployment remain resilient, and the labor force is slowly growing but continues to lag pre-pandemic levels across the region as a whole.

GOALS



Support regional economic growth through information and resource sharing, and partnerships and collaboration that provide targeted assistance to businesses and municipalities.

CURRENT TRENDS

Similar to the broader economic landscape of the state and nation, the cost of goods and services has continued to increase, though at a slower pace than in the immediate years prior. From December 2023 to December 2024, the Northeast¹ All-Items Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased 3.5 percent, mostly due to the increase to the shelter index. During this period, the highest increases were seen in the category of housing energy costs. While the 3.5 percent increase is higher than the target inflation rate, it is significantly lower compared to years prior, particularly compared to 2022. While the year-over-year percent change has varied, CPI has only increased over time.

In an effort to stabilize the labor market and support economic growth, and in response to changing economic conditions (where similar to the national landscape, the labor market began to ease, inflation slowed somewhat but remains higher than the target, and unemployment increased slightly but remained low), the Federal Reserve cut interest rates three times throughout 2024 (September -.50%, November -.25%, and December -.25%), after four 0.25 percentage point hikes in 2023.ⁱ However, these cuts were smaller than the hikes seen in years prior, therefore continuing to put a strain on affordability.

According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, which estimates the cost of living in an area and determines the necessary living wage based on costs including food, childcare, medical, housing, transportation, and other expenses, the income required in Strafford County in 2024 before taxes for 1 adult with no children was \$54,307. It is important to note that this increases significantly as the number of people in a household goes up. For example, the required income for a 3-person household (2 working adults and 1 child) is \$106,224.ⁱⁱ

The median household income in Strafford County has continued to increase over timeⁱⁱⁱ. It is important to note that there continues to be a large income disparity when looking at renter vs. owner incomes. For example, the 2023 median household income for owners in Strafford County was \$114,593 vs. \$54,447 for renters.^{iv} The Survey of Consumer Expectations, conducted monthly by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, asks

¹ Northeast Region in this instance refers to Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

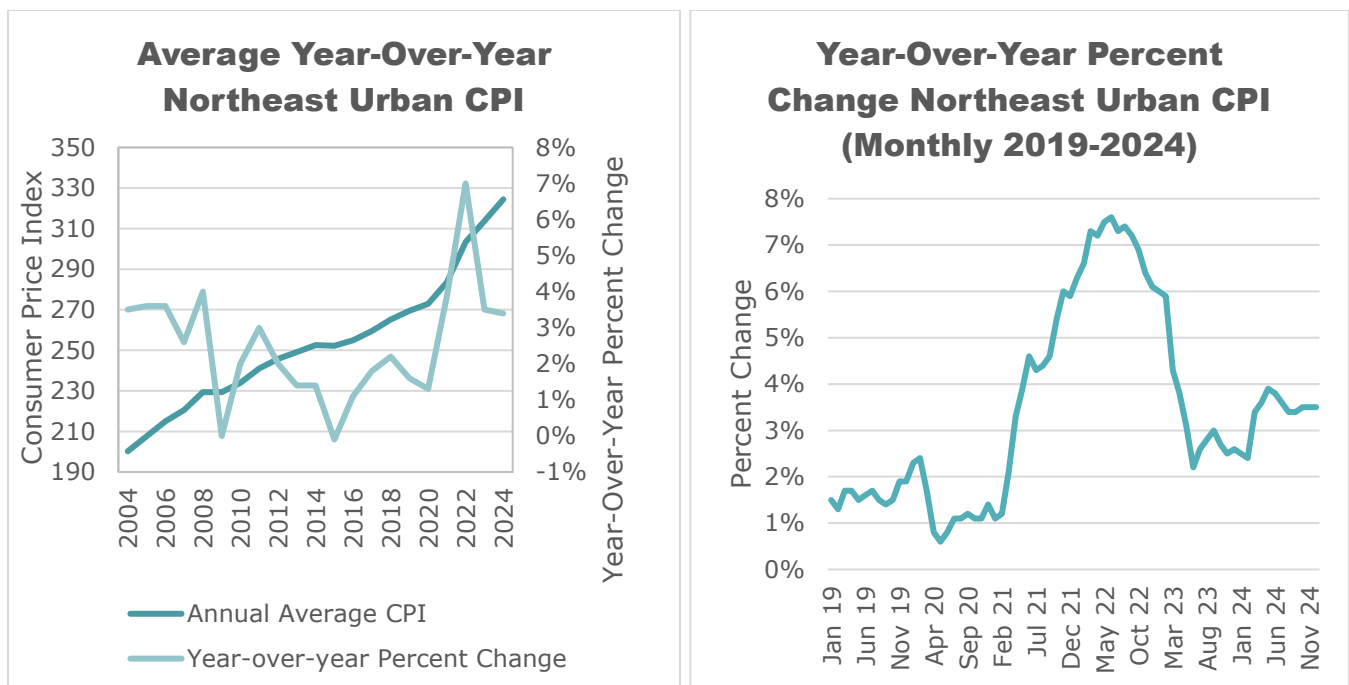
participants to reflect on their household’s current monthly household spending, and to compare it to one year ago. Results from this show that the Northeast region has experienced more volatility than the US in the last few years. Nationally, households with income under \$50,000/year saw sharper and more frequent increases, while households earning over \$100,000/year have experienced less impactful increases in monthly spending.

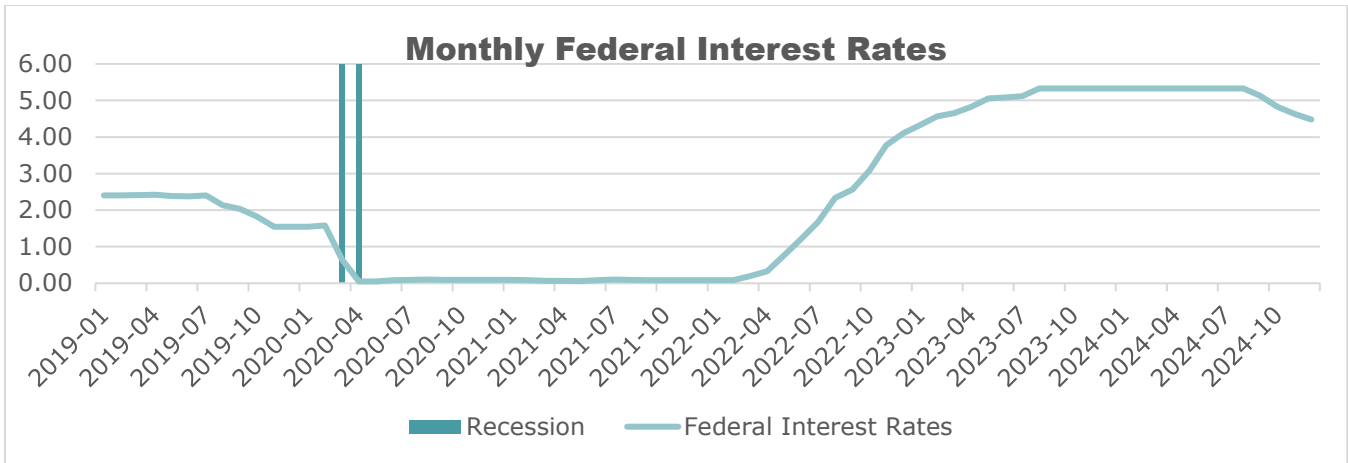
Unemployment in the SRPC planning region remained virtually unchanged, with an average unemployment rate of 2% in both 2023 and 2024.^v Meanwhile, labor force participation in the SRPC planning region continued to increase (1.24 percent increase from 2023 to 2024, from 87,069 people to 88,152 people) but still lags pre-pandemic levels (89,54 in 2019).^{vi} As the region continues to struggle with the lack of available and affordable childcare, this is a likely constraint for caregivers to be able to re-enter the workforce.

SRPC ACTIONS

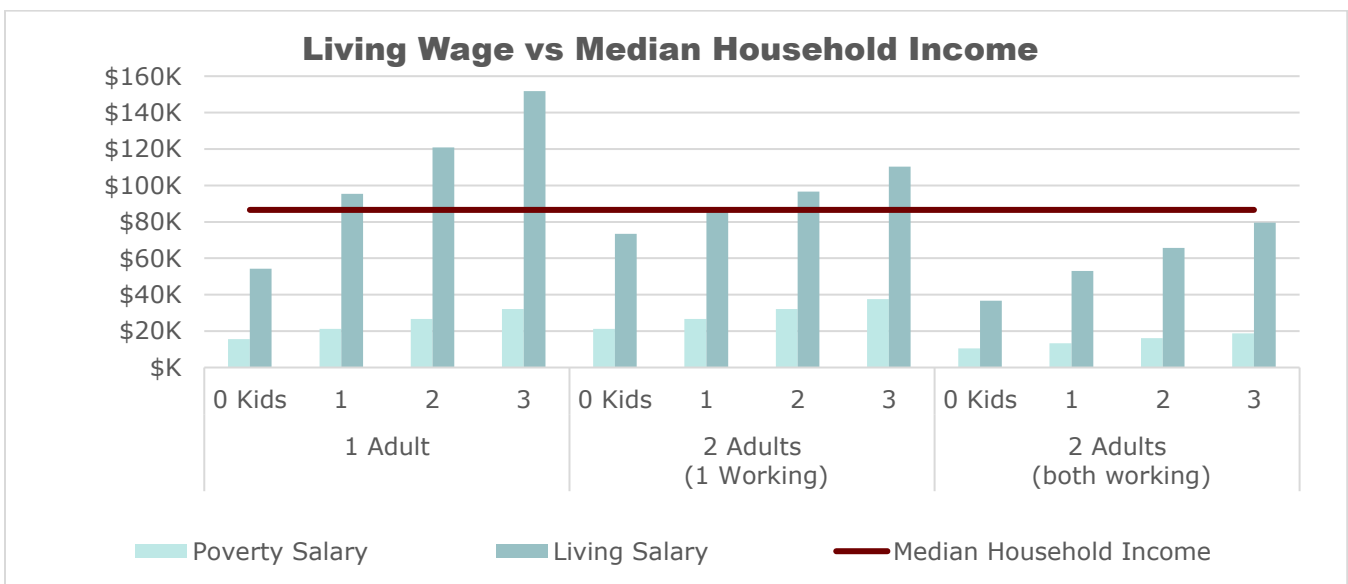
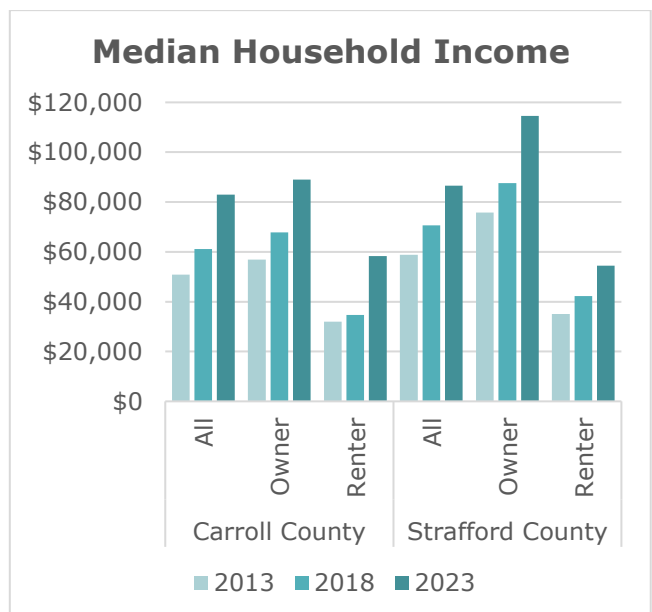
SRPC will continue tracking and sharing data with businesses and municipalities, while also engaging in efforts to learn about their current needs and provide them with targeted support. Furthermore, SRPC will continue to convene the regional economic development stakeholders’ group and advocate for 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.

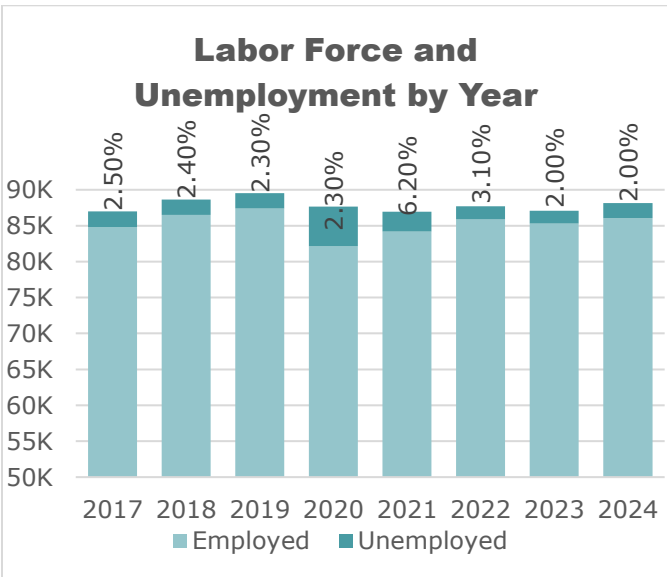
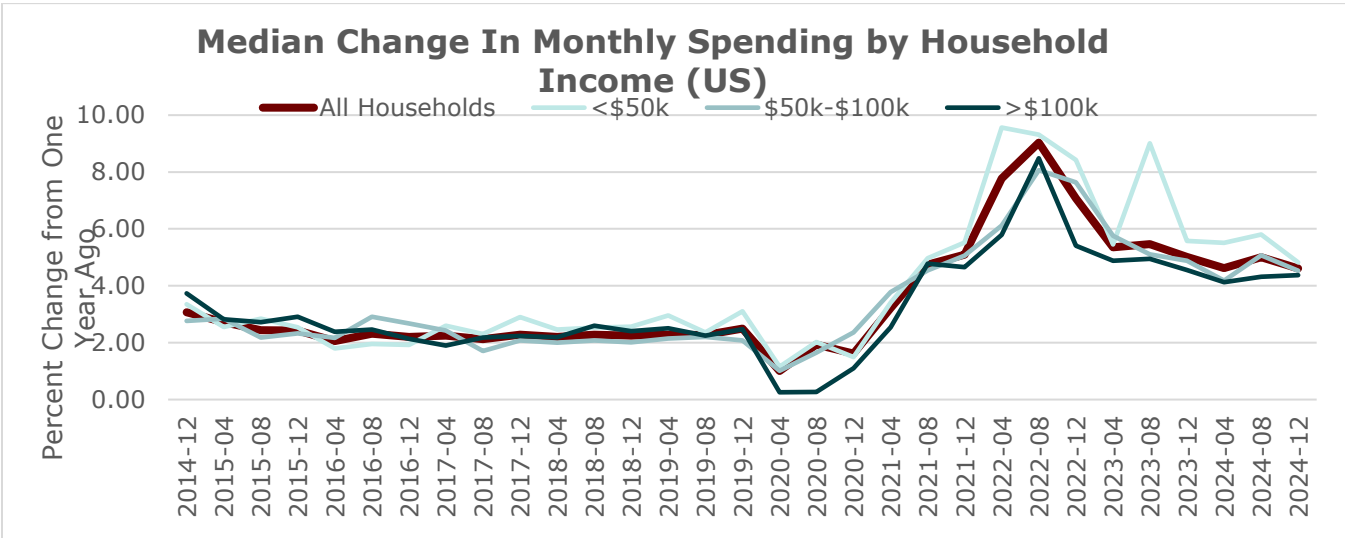
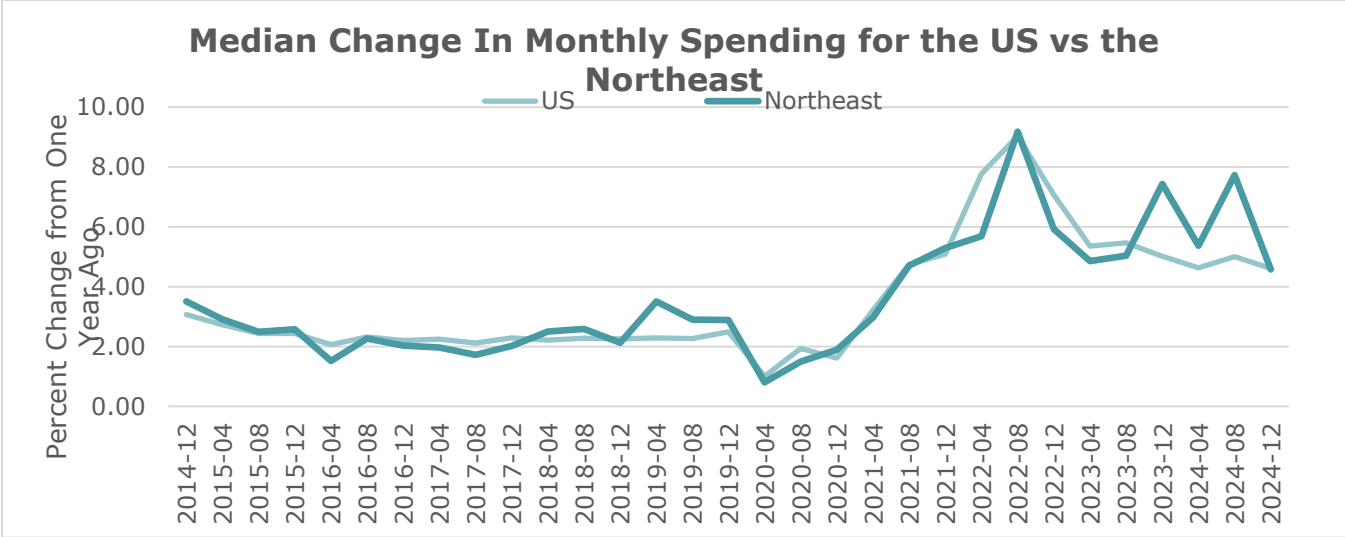
DATA





Household Type		Required Pre-Tax Income
1 Adult	0 Children	\$54,307
	1 Child	\$95,427
	2 Children	\$120,917
	3 Children	\$151,725
2 Adults (One working)	0 Children	\$73,373
	1 Child	\$87,950
	2 Children	\$96,674
	3 Children	\$110,391
2 Adults (Both working)	0 Children	\$73,373
	1 Child	\$106,224
	2 Children	\$131,430
	3 Children	\$159,052





Sources

Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED), Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2004-2024

MIT Living Wage Calculator, Required Income for Strafford County Residents, 2024

American Community Survey (ACS) Table S1901 Five-Year Estimates 2013-2023

Survey of Consumer Expectations, © 2013-25 Federal Reserve Bank of New York (FRBNY)

Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Business bankruptcies have increased some, though remain much lower than pre-pandemic levels. Challenges faced by businesses included workforce attraction and retention and the rising cost of goods and services. Real estate market data shows strong demand for industrial and retail space, but extremely high vacancy rates in office space reflect major changes in the way businesses are operating.

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

In 2024, there was an increase in the number of bankruptcies compared to 2023 in Strafford County. In 2023, there was a total of 36 bankruptcy filings^{vii} across all chapters including chapters 7, 13, 11, and 12; and in 2024, this increased to 74 filings.^{viii} However, chapter 11, the type of bankruptcy most commonly used by businesses, only increased from 0 to 1 bankruptcy. The other bankruptcy chapter that pertains to businesses is chapter 7, which is the most common type of personal bankruptcy filing but can also be used by businesses, increased from 26 filings in 2023 to 53 filings in 2024. While there was an increase from 2023 to 2024, this is still lower than the total number of bankruptcies seen in the year prior to Covid-19, which was 162 in 2019.

When looking at commercial market data, the Dover submarket as defined by Colliers, which is comprised of 12 of municipalities that are all in the SRPC region², has continued to see extremely high office vacancy rates as a result of a few large companies vacating large spaces in 2023 due to consolidation and cost cutting measures, one of them being Liberty Mutual in Dover. In 2024, according to the Colliers Q3 2024 Commercial Market Update, the office vacancy rate in the Dover submarket ended Q3 at 37.3%, almost the same as in 2023 (38.25%). As a result, rents began to decline, falling by 3.5% year-over-year (Q3 2023 – Q3 2024). High office vacancies are likely to remain due to companies maintaining remote work flexibilities, a trend that SRPC will continue to track in the future.

Industrial vacancies, on the flip side, continued to remain extremely constrained due to a high demand from light manufacturing and e-commerce businesses, which are types of businesses that seek warehouse and distribution spaces for their operations. This high demand for industrial space resulted in astonishing increases in rents, which went up almost 70% from 2019 to 2024 in the Dover submarket. Lastly, the retail sector remained strong

² Dover Submarket (Colliers) includes Barrington, Dover, Durham, Farmington, Lee, Madbury, Milton, Newmarket, Nottingham, Rochester, Rollinsford, Somersworth

in 2024, with a 3.8% vacancy rate in Q3 2024, showing a continued high demand for physical retail spaces for businesses.

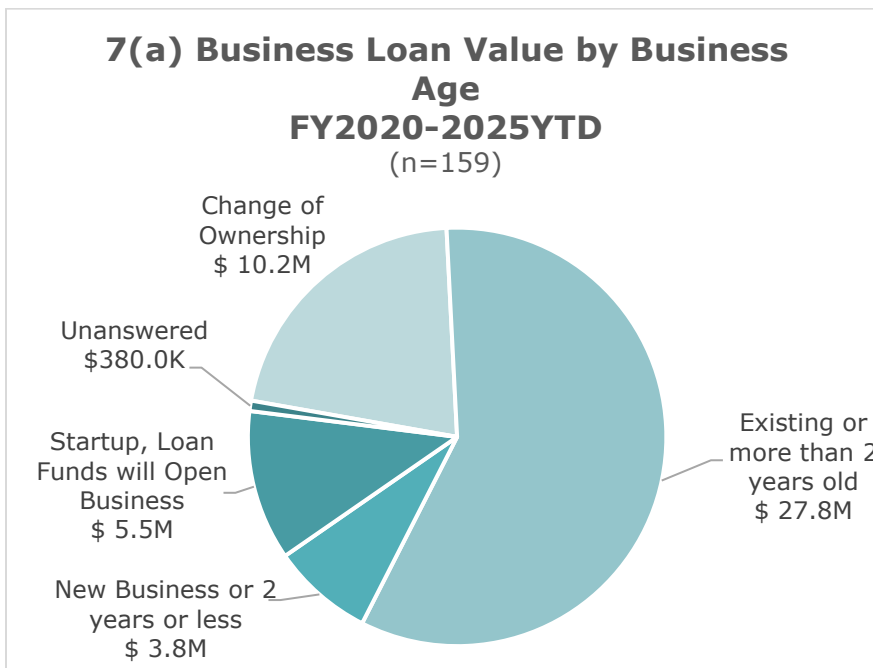
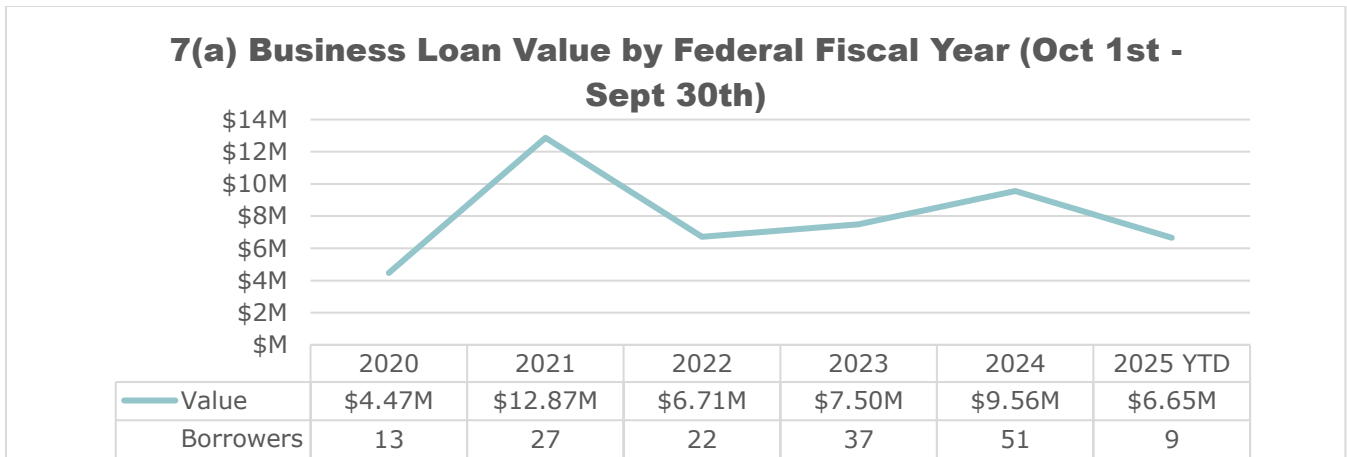
Loan data from the NH Small Business Administration (SBA) shows that in recent years, the number of 7(a) loans disbursed, which is SBA's largest loan program, has been higher than other periods (aside from the pandemic years). According to the Small Business Administration, this could be due to a reduction in fees, a large number of businesses opening or expanding, or as a result of the end of pandemic-related funding. However, it is important to note that there have been recent changes in federal guidelines, such as an increase in fees, that will likely result in a slowdown in the number of loans disbursed.

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to share data with economic development partners, and technical assistance to small businesses, and connect them to partner organizations around the region and state that can 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

Bankruptcy Filings³ in Strafford County					
Year	Chapter 7	Chapter 13	Chapter 11	Chapter 12	Total Bankruptcies
2019	116	44	1	1	162
2023	26	10	0	0	36
2024	39	16	1	0	56



³ Bankruptcy Filing “Chapters” are broken out by who is eligible. Chapter 7 is the most common type of personal bankruptcy, can also be used by businesses. Chapter 13 is used only by individuals. Chapter 11 is most commonly used by businesses. Chapter 12 is used by family farmers and fishermen.

HOUSING

For both buyers and renters, the cost of housing continued to rise in our region during 2024, and property tax burdens resulting from higher housing values have been putting more pressure on affordability. However, there was some relief seen through lower utility bills over the past year. Furthermore, despite challenges that have emerged as a result of increased development in some areas, there is still momentum around increasing housing supply to address affordability.

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

Despite mortgage interest rates being higher than during the pandemic and the immediately following post pandemic years, which has slowed real estate sales and prices in other major markets around the country, the lack of housing supply in the region, coupled with its high desirability, resulted in continued high demand and rising prices in our region in 2024. The number of closed sales in Strafford County in 2024 was 7.4% higher than in 2023 (1,035 vs. 964) and median sales prices increased by 11.5% (\$435,000 to \$485,000)⁴. Meanwhile, the average number of days properties spent on the market increased only slightly, from 21 days to 22 days, and there were 5.7% more listings in 2024 than in 2023 (1,208 vs. 1,143).^{ix} The sustained rise in property values has resulted in significantly higher property tax bills for many, despite many municipalities lowering their property tax rates, further impacting affordability in the region and state. In general, municipal tax rates have been decreasing in the region since 2010, but the total valuation is increasing, an indication of higher property values.^x

For renters, prices also continued to increase. The median rent in Strafford County increased by 10.7% for 2-bedroom units, from \$1,613 in 2023^{xi} to \$1,785 in 2024^{xii} (including utilities). According to the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority's 2024 Residential Rental Cost Survey Report, the income needed to afford rent for a median 2-bedroom unit in 2024 was \$71,400, which was 124% of the actual estimated 2024 median renter household income. While rental prices have gone up, utility costs declined by almost 18% from 2023 to 2024. In 2023, the average monthly utility costs for a 2-bedroom unit in Strafford County was \$356^{xiii}, which dropped to \$292 in 2024^{xiv}, mostly due to a decline in the cost of electricity. However, according to the Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, in December 2024, average residential electricity prices in the state ranked eight highest in the nation.^{xv} Furthermore, energy bills are expected to increase as a result of a raise in Canadian tariffs, making the cost of energy an increasing burden for many households.

⁴ Median sales price refers to asking price, not final sale price.

Over the past year, various communities in the region have taken steps to help increase housing supply and affordability, many of which received support from SRPC. With the assistance of the State’s Housing Opportunity Planning Grants^{xvi}, the City of Somersworth, Town of Barrington, and Town of Newmarket updated their Master Plan housing chapters to meet each communities’ current wants and needs. The Cities of Somersworth and Dover conducted Land Use and Zoning Audits to ensure their regulations aligned with their goals and visions. SRPC’s Housing Navigator assisted the Towns of Farmington and New Durham accomplished several housing-related tasks and increase awareness of the need for housing. Farmington following a corridor audit of Route 11, implemented several zoning changes, and amended a TIF district.

Moreover, in 2024, the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) designated 18 communities statewide as Housing Champions, recognizing their efforts to tackle the state’s housing challenges by taking actions to increase housing availability and affordability. Four communities in the SRPC region applied for and received this designation, including Dover, Farmington, Rochester, and Somersworth. Having this designation makes communities eligible to apply for legislature-approved state funding (\$5 million available) that helps advance their housing goals, including the Housing Infrastructure Municipal Grant, the Housing Production Municipal Grant, and the Housing Infrastructure Municipal Grant.

Other notable housing activity in the region in FY 2025 included the addition of new affordable housing units. With the backing of state and federal funds, NH Housing Finance Authority’s Multifamily Housing Division supported 26 projects across the state in FY 2024, three of which were in the SRPC region, accounting for 151 units in the region under commitment and/or under construction, and 364 completed units (see NHHFA’s Housing FY2024 Annual Report). These projects included:

Multifamily Housing: Commitments and Under Construction (SRPC Region)					
Development Name	Location	Developer	Units	Occupancy	Type
Gafney Home	Rochester	Community Action Partnership of Strafford County	21	Age-Restricted	Adaptive Reuse
McIntosh West Apartments	Dover	McIntosh Dover, LLC	78	General Occupancy	New Construction
The Rapids on Cocheco	Rochester	Elm Grove Companies	52	General Occupancy	New Construction

Source

NHHFA FY 2024 Annual Report

Multifamily Housing: Completed Developments (SRPC Region)					
Development Name	Location	Developer	Units	Occupancy	Type
Apple Ridge Phase III	Rochester	McIntosh Development LLC	34	General Occupancy	New Construction
Champlin Place	Rochester	Easterseals NH	65	Age-Restricted	New Construction
Country Brook Apartments	Rochester	Elm Grove Companies	96	General Occupancy	Acquisition/Rehab
Somersworth RAD	Somersworth	Somersworth Housing Authority	169	General Occupancy	Recapitalization/Rehab

Despite increased activity in housing development, there have been new obstacles that developers, municipal leaders, and other stakeholders have had to navigate. Feedback from our communities has led to the understanding that much of the housing being built is comprised of expensive new homes. This has highlighted the importance of incorporating housing affordability mechanisms into municipal ordinances, such as the adoption of deed-restricted programs that promote the creation of housing that aligns with the set estimated affordable purchase price calculated based on HUD’s Area Median Income for the region (a value that is updated yearly by NHHFA). Such a proposal could increase the construction of housing that is actually affordable, while helping lower costs for developers through various incentives. Additionally, the outreach components of the HOP grants discussed above produced recommendations for streamlining development of adaptive reuse projects and “missing middle” housing within the local review and permitting process.

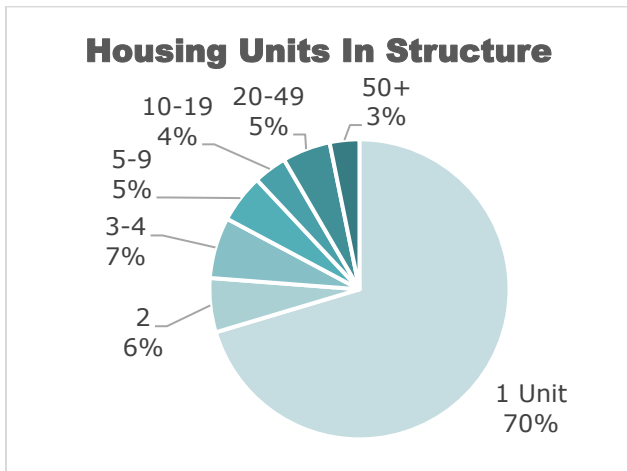
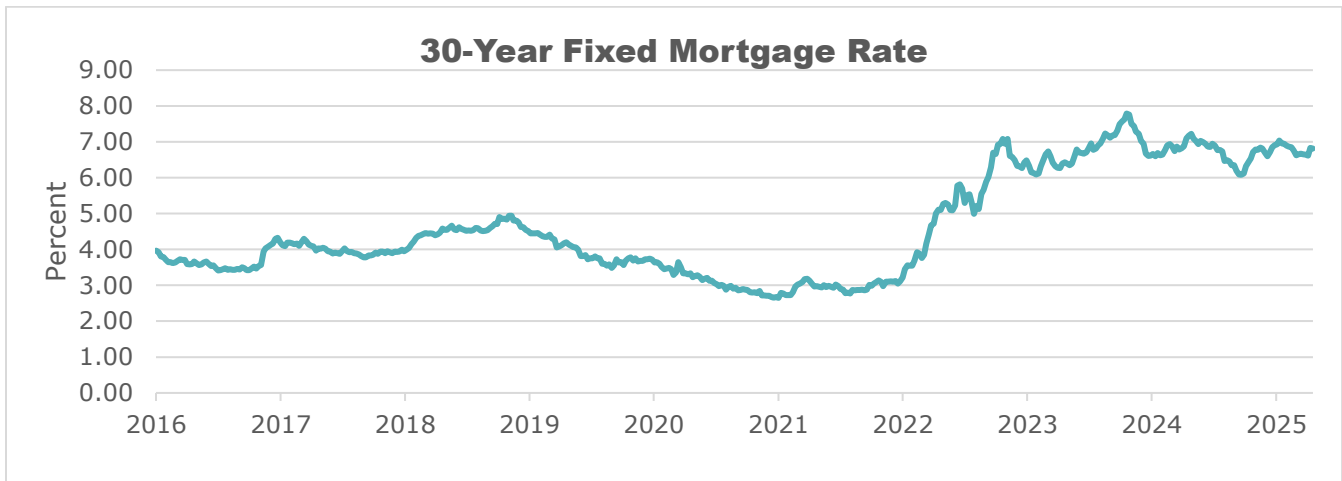
Another learning curve that has come from efforts to increase development has been navigating fire and building codes and new state legislation, which has highlighted the importance of providing the right resources and guidance to help developers (especially smaller, less established developers) understand these local and state guidelines, allowing for faster processing times while still ensuring safety.

For a more detailed discussion and data on the types of housing inventory in the region, including age of homes, type (condo vs. single family), and more, please visit SRPC’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment, last updated in 2023, and SRPC’s 2025 Regional Data Snapshot.

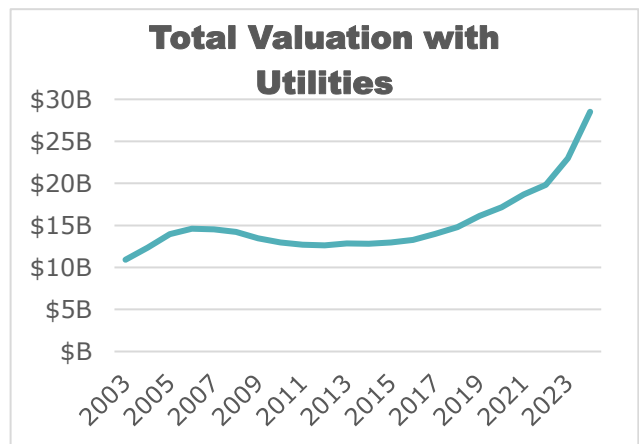
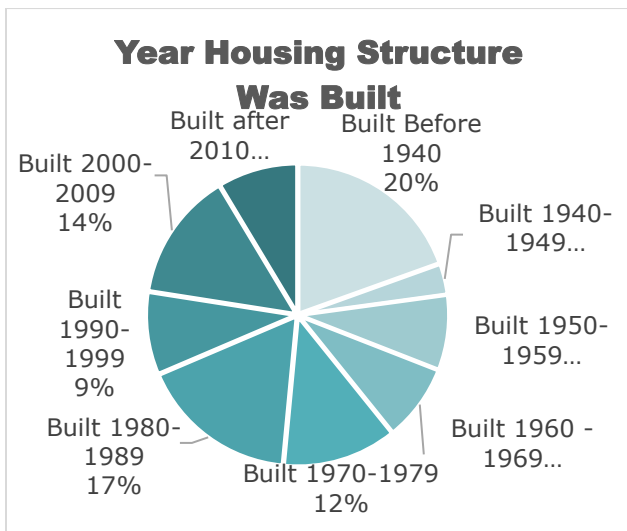
SRPC ACTIONS

The findings of SRPC’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment, completed in 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. SRPC will continue to support our communities by assisting with projects that promote intentional planning and housing development.

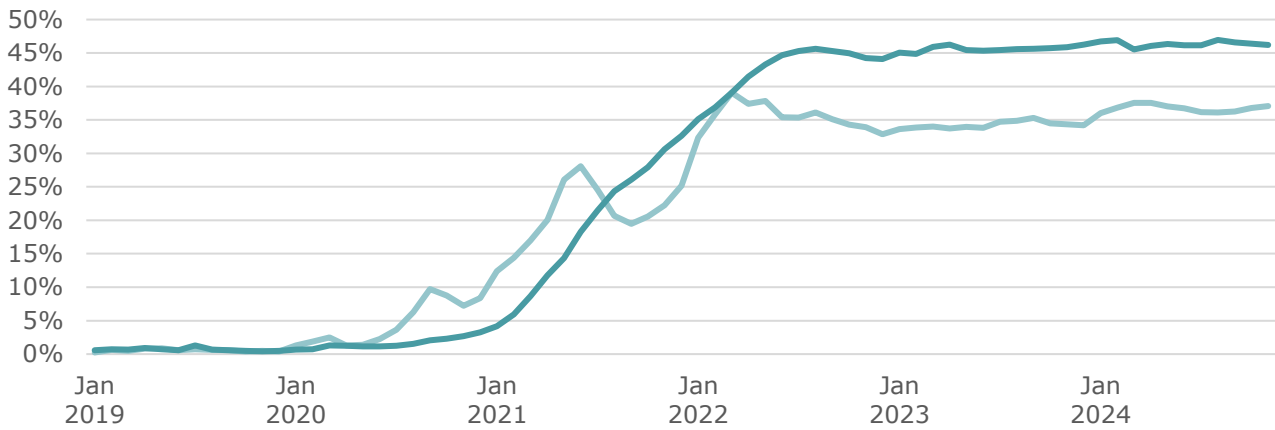
DATA



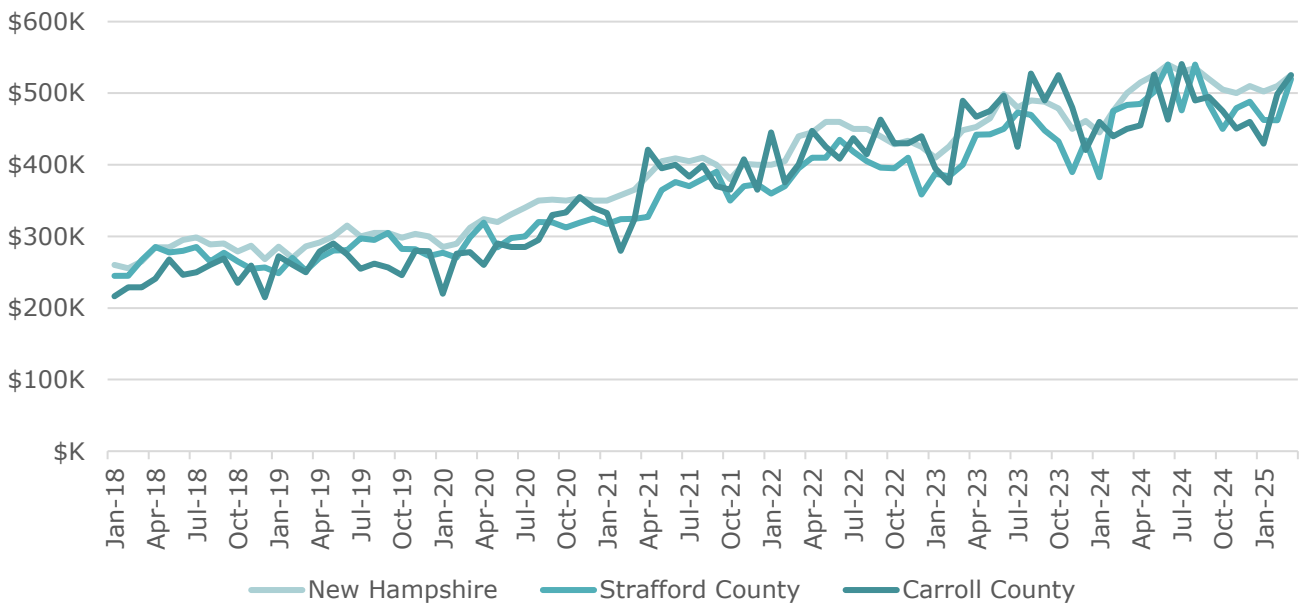
Municipality	2010	2020	2024
Barrington	\$19.57	\$22.77	\$17.59
Dover	\$23.75	\$24.85	\$11.16
Brookfield	\$14.20	\$17.18	\$18.17
Farmington	\$20.24	\$22.92	\$20.33
Durham	\$27.28	\$27.73	\$14.88
Lee	\$25.42	\$31.86	\$25.77
Madbury	\$23.99	\$25.25	\$29.19
Milton	\$22.57	\$22.16	\$15.54
Middleton	\$16.92	\$28.27	\$13.95
New Durham	\$21.19	\$16.88	\$17.20
Rollinsford	\$20.53	\$24.68	\$14.85
Rochester	\$23.89	\$24.61	\$16.41
Strafford	\$19.76	\$25.65	\$18.70
Somersworth	\$27.32	\$27.85	\$19.76
Wakefield	\$11.69	\$12.38	\$7.52



Percent Change Since December 2018 in PPI for Materials and Components for Construction



Median Sales Price for Single Family Homes



Sources

Freddie Mac, 30-Year Fixed Rate Mortgage Average in the United States, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis FRED

ACS Tables B25034, 2013-2023

Municipal Tax Rates, New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration; Municipalities. Year: 2010-2024

Producer Price Index, St. Louis Federal Reserve

New Hampshire Association of Realtors, Jan. 2018-Jan. 2025

INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout 2024, infrastructure improvements and changes have been dynamic, encompassing traditional infrastructure foci like investments into transportation networks and broadband, and also extending to key capacity building and digital literacy efforts. Projects are continuously underway in the region and state as a whole to improve infrastructure, which will promote economic vitality and vibrancy in the district.

GOALS



Continue to provide technical assistance and promote collaborations, efforts, and investments that will improve the resilience and strength of the region's infrastructure which will promote economic growth and opportunity.

CURRENT TRENDS

In the Strafford region in 2024, key investments and the implementation of several priority projects have resulted in improvements for roads, bridges, sewer and water, and other critical components of infrastructure. Other investments in the region supported in 2024 support safety, transportation links, and other physical improvement. Sections of sidewalks on Route 11 in Rochester have funding obligated for key safety and transportation improvements which will increase access for pedestrians, and improve safety for vehicles, freight, and commerce that utilize that route. As of April 2025, Rochester's NH11 project was programmed with \$4,262,664 (Construction is scheduled for 2026). Additionally, Dover has received multiple federal grants to continue development of the city's Community Trail. The trail improves connectivity in the community, and Dover continues to invest in this key piece of infrastructure for transportation and recreational uses. The most recent expansion of the community trail from Bellamy Rd to Knox Marsh Rd was \$572,385^{xvii}

Physical improvements to expand capacity for electric vehicle charging have continued in the region. Investments in chargers have been led by municipalities, private property owners, and investors responding to demand from consumers. Public chargers are present in areas like the Lilac Shopping Center in Rochester, private businesses like the Stone Church in Newmarket, and municipal parking lots in Dover and Durham. Technical assistance for the development of chargers is available from SRPC and agencies like Clean Energy NH, who employs regional "Energy Circuit Riders". Investments in electrical vehicle charging are expanding to meet the needs of consumers and drivers who live in and visit the region, contributing to economic growth to support the region and state as a whole. Key analyses show that vehicle charging expansion will be critical to meet consumer demands and preferences while supporting the regional and statewide economy.^{xviii}

For broadband, the Strafford region, and the state as a whole, has a robust physical network of broadband connections, thanks to years of investment to extend connections to communities throughout the state. The state's first Digital Equity Plan, adopted in 2024, highlights the largest areas of digital literacy skills needs, which are critical to ensure the safety of children, older adults, and individuals who require additional support and education to access online tools. Skill-building and best practices to access online tools that limit potential for scams or safety hazards online will ensure that residents in the region can

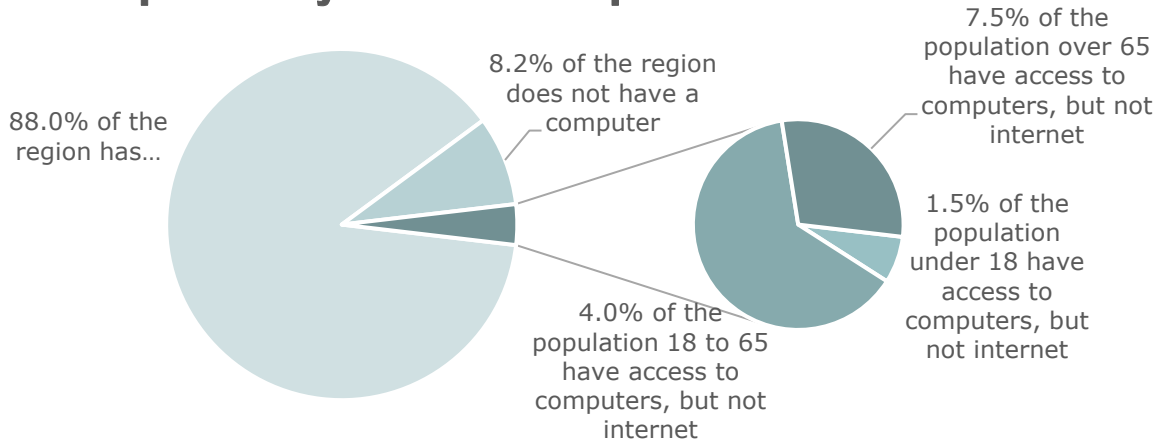
access resources, gain educational and employment opportunities, and participate fully in the digital world of today.^{xix}

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue promoting the needs of our communities and region, ensuring that planning processes take into account the need for continued improvements and investments into the region's infrastructure. Utilizing our regional connections, priority projects list, and offerings for technical assistance, we will work and advocate for continued investments and assist to seek out funding for projects that support the resiliency of our region's infrastructure, and programming that will ensure Granite Staters in the Strafford region are able to fully participate in the economy through both physical and digital connections.

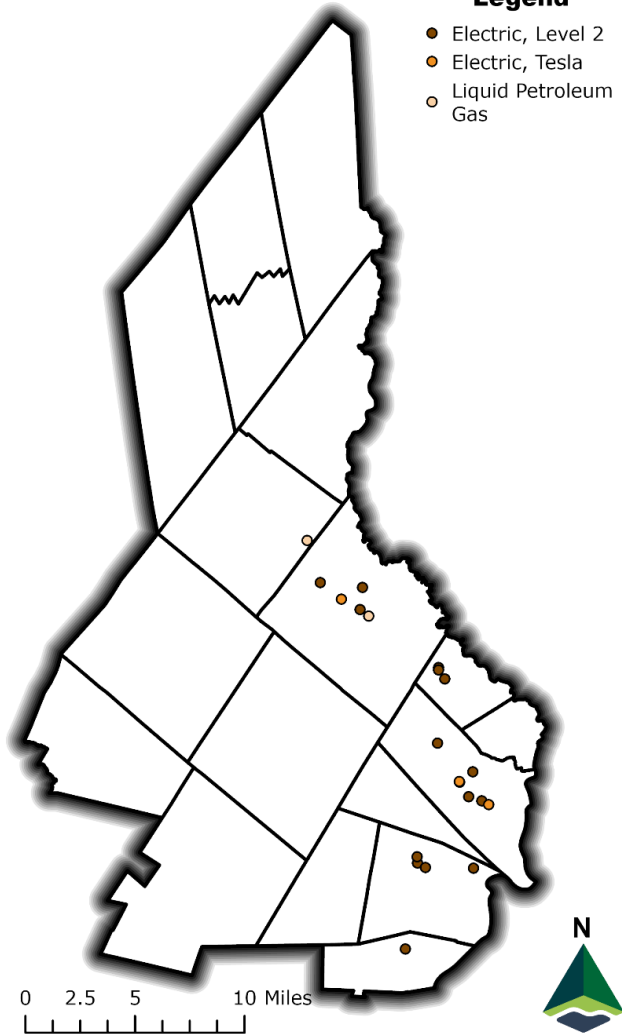
DATA

Population By Access to Computers and Internet



Legend

- Electric, Level 2
- Electric, Tesla
- Liquid Petroleum Gas



Municipality	Electric Station	Liquified Petroleum Gas
Dover	7	0
Durham	5	0
Farmington	0	1
Newmarket	1	0
Rochester	4	1
Somersworth	5	0

Sources

American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates Table B28005, US Census Bureau, 2023

Alternative Fuels Data Center, US Department of Energy, 2025

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 continued to be impacted by Covid-19. 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 do not 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^{xx}. Notably in the service industry, there are anecdotal reports from town staff and other partners that, even with Maine state income tax and a longer commute, it costs less to live in neighboring communities in Maine than in many of the Strafford EDD communities.^{xxi}

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 by no less than 110%. "Fixed route" service, or traditional bus routes with stops, ridership returned to as high as 98% of pre-pandemic ridership in 2024.^{xxii} UNH Wildcat ridership improved somewhat during the spring 2024 semester but still generally hovers around 60% of pre-pandemic ridership.^{xxiii} These concerns for both agencies continues to affect people with low incomes, disabilities, and other challenges who rely on public transit to commute or get to needed services.

The intercity transportation network has improved for C&J Bus and the Amtrak Downeaster. C&J previously offered 14 daily trips from Dover to Boston's South Station and currently offers 4 to 6 trips.^{xxiv} However, C&J service from Dover to Logan airport, is nearly hourly from 2am to 9pm and this service recently resumed in February 2024. Dover to New York City service is offered twice a day.

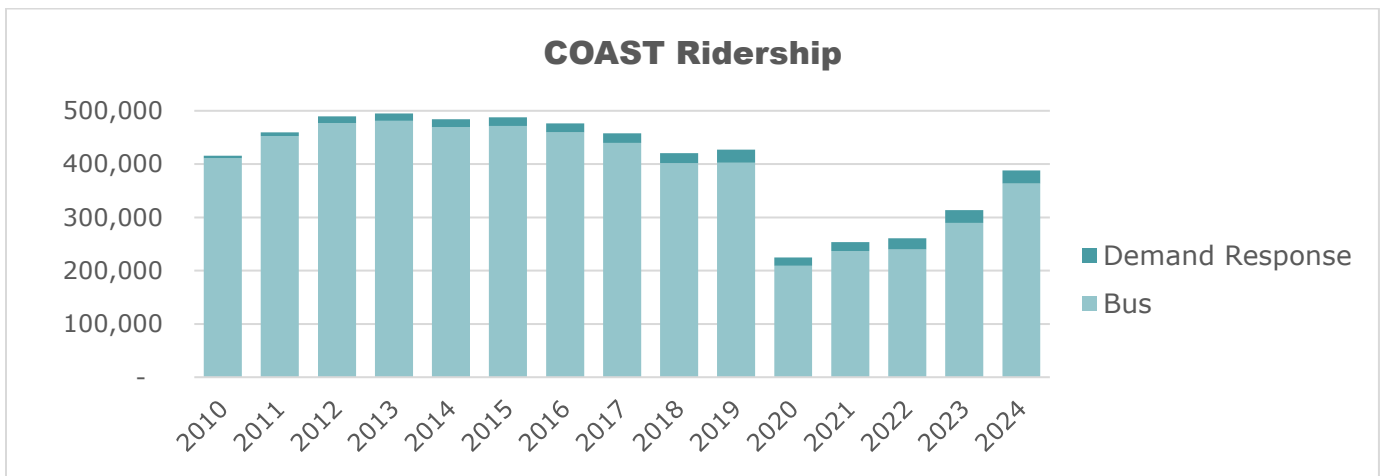
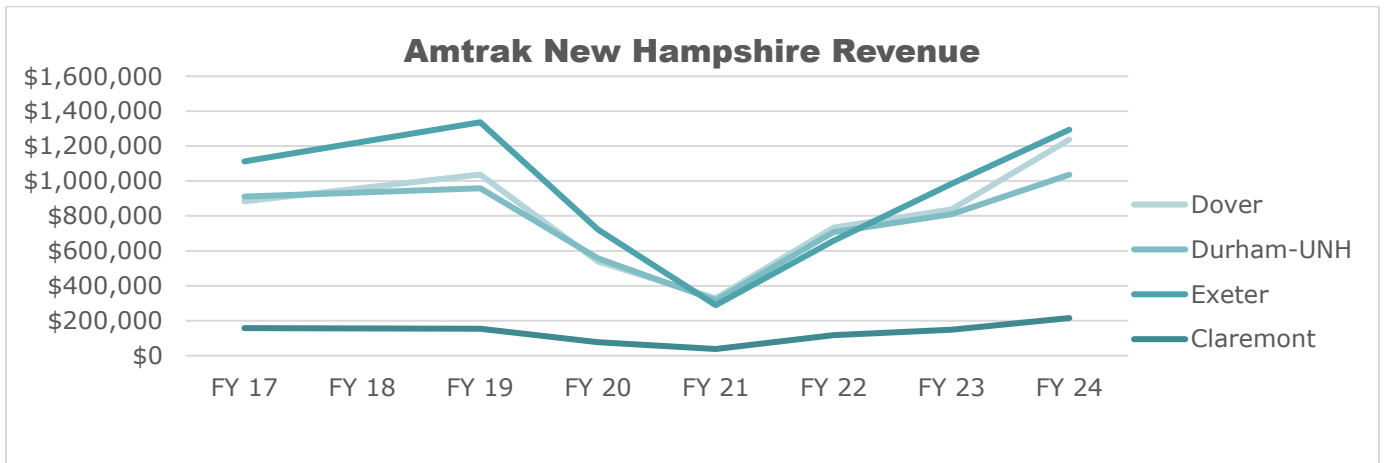
The Amtrak Downeaster's ridership usually peaks in the summer tourist season, having reached a high of over 60,000 monthly riders in August 2019. Monthly ridership was nearly 58,000 riders in July 2024. Improvements to the Downeaster are planned through the

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the New Hampshire Ten Year Plan, including replaced rail ties.^{xxv}

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 pedestrian and bike friendly 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, higher-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.

DATA



Sources

Amtrak via the Great American Stations Project, 2017-2024

Federal Transit Administration National Transit Database, 2010-2024

AGE FRIENDLINESS

With a median age of 43, New Hampshire continues the trend of being the second oldest state in the nation. The median age in the three counties that make up the Strafford Region continued to range broadly, from Strafford County at 38 years old (also the state's youngest county), to Rockingham and Carroll Counties at 44 and 54 years old respectively. This large range in median ages across the region highlights that efforts to address the needs of residents must be inclusive to support those aging in place, starting new families, and just entering the workforce.^{xxvi}

GOALS



SRPC will engage with municipalities to develop plans and implement actions that will support investments to create welcoming, inclusive, and accessible communities for residents of all ages.

CURRENT TRENDS

Demographic trends and projections indicate that New Hampshire's median age may continue to rise into the future.^{xxvii} The median age in the Strafford region varied greatly based on municipality and county. Communities like Durham and Dover had significantly lower median ages than statewide or in Strafford County, while other communities in the region like Brookfield had a notably older median age.^{xxviii} This broad range of ages throughout the region seems to indicate a broad range of needs for different populations, however, many of these needs such as improving accessibility, affordability, and inclusiveness will support all residents.

Improving housing options and affordability supports older and younger residents alike. Efforts throughout 2024 in several communities throughout the region have aimed at streamlining and improving zoning in ways that allow for smaller and more affordable residences to be built, and allow for opportunities to create multigenerational housing.^{xxix} Smaller and more affordable housing options may not only be cheaper to purchase or rent, but they may also better meet the needs of young adults, those starting families, and older residents who are interested in downsizing to more affordable housing or more accessible housing. SRPC supported zoning audits and housing research in several communities like Dover, Somersworth, and New Durham in 2024 aimed at expanding opportunities for more inclusive, affordable, and accessible housing for residents of all ages.^{xxx}

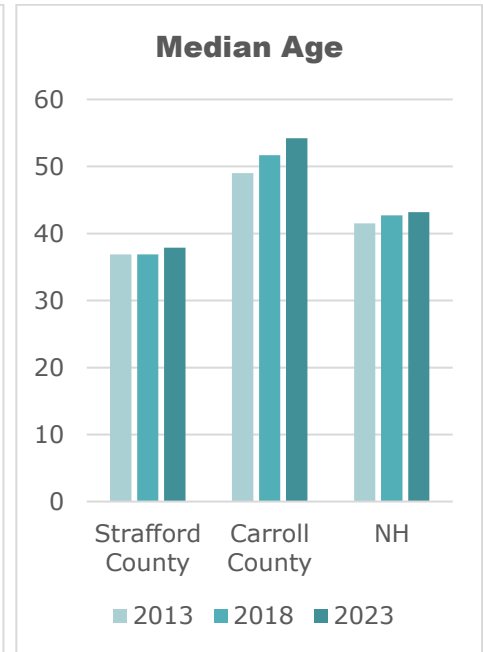
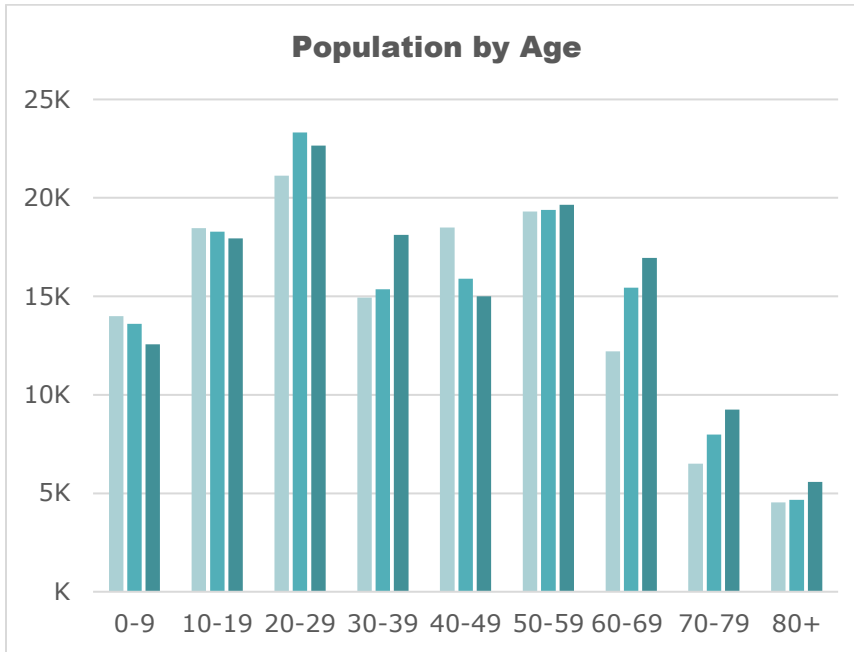
Transportation, walkability, and accessibility are common opportunities to improve age friendliness in the region. Mobility and the challenges surrounding the ability to get around one's community and region are faced by individuals across all age ranges. Ensuring older or disabled individuals can still move around and engage in their communities, through paratransit connections, alongside others who may want more walkable, rollable, and less car dependent connections through accessible sidewalks and transit, will improve overall vibrancy and connectivity in communities. In alignment with this, many communities throughout the region are developing or conducting initiatives that ensure connectivity links are available to all ages and abilities.^{xxxi} In 2024, SRPC began a critical project to measure pedestrian levels of traffic stress along all roads and sidewalks in the Strafford region

(known as the Pedestrian Level Traffic Stress, or PLTS). This project will inventory whether sidewalks are present and their condition, whether safety and physical buffers between pedestrians and the roadway exist, and will measure street crossings and their safety.

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to partner with communities and provide assistance on projects that improve the accessibility, affordability, and inclusiveness of communities for all ages through projects like sidewalk and accessibility audits, recreation and transportation planning, housing research, and general age friendliness planning. SRPC will continue work on the Pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress study and share information with municipalities to improve connectivity and accessibility throughout the region.

DATA



Municipality	Median Age (2023)	Life Expectancy (2015)	Under 18 (% 2023)	Over 65 (% 2023)
Barrington	38.7	83.9	23.1%	14.4%
Brookfield	51.5	83	13.0%	30.9%
Dover	37.6	75.5 - 80.9	16.7%	17.2%
Durham	20.7	83.6	10.6%	8.8%
Farmington	45.9	76.5	19.8%	15.5%
Lee	42.6	81.2	24.8%	23.3%
Madbury	38.5	81.2	28.6%	13.8%
Middleton	41	82.9	21.8%	17.7%
Milton	45.7	83.9	19.6%	15.8%
New Durham	43.7	82.9	17.3%	18.9%
Rochester	43.4	75.6 - 79.3	18.5%	18.8%
Rollinsford	41.3	82.1	14.2%	20.6%
Somersworth	38.2	78.1 - 79.1	19.0%	15.1%
Stafford	47.8	81.2	17.7%	22.1%
Wakefield	51.4	83	15.3%	18.0%

Sources

ACS Five-Year Estimates Tables B01001 & B01002

Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP), Center for Disease Control, 2015

WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION

Workforce constraints throughout the region have continued to lessen since the largest nadir in employment experienced in recent times as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and employment gains in 2024 have been modest overall. Despite this, several unique and conflicting challenges continue to be present, including underemployment likely faced by some, alongside increased competition between employers for a limited number of workers. Continued declines in the population of school-aged residents and plateauing enrollment at higher education institutions have resulted in innovative efforts being required to retain and expand the workforce.

GOALS



Support workforce development efforts through the establishment and maintaining of key relationships through convenings that bring together stakeholders across the education; business; workforce, community, and economic development spaces.

CURRENT TRENDS

Throughout the region in 2024, workforce and education constraints improved in some regards, and continued to pose challenges for the region's economic growth in other ways.^{xxxii} Unemployment during the year in the region, and state, remained very low, highlighting the continued demand for workers. The state's median age has risen slightly, as has the number of workers over the age of 65 across the region's three counties, indicating that employees are staying in the workforce longer and fewer younger individuals are entering the workforce as a result of demographic shifts felt across the state.^{xxxiii} These increasing numbers of workers over the age of 65 combined with low levels of unemployment are likely to indicate significant workforce constraints present, and a potential workforce cliff that may be looming on the horizon.

Labor underutilization, which is only measured on the state-level, indicates that similar to the year prior, there continues to be a disconnect between the skills and availability that workers have, and the needs of employers. An estimated 5.6% of the labor force was considered "underemployed" during second quarter of 2024 through first quarter of 2025, meaning that they are either unemployed, a discouraged worker (someone who wants to work, but is not employed and has not searched for a job in four or more weeks), or worked part-time when they wanted to be full-time.^{xxxiv}

Demographic shifts in the region and state have resulted in fewer school-aged children in New Hampshire. K-12 enrollment has continued to decline across the region in 2024, resulting in fewer young adults moving on to higher education, technical training, or entering the workforce.^{xxxv} Gaps between the number and types of jobs available in the region and the skills that individuals possess may be addressed with several key resources in the region. Both the flagship campus of the University of New Hampshire, located in Durham, and a campus of Great Bay Community College are both located within the Strafford EDD. While these are significant assets to have, a more limited number of individuals graduating from high school puts further constraints on the future workforce.

However, declining enrollment at the Durham campus of the University of New Hampshire has tapered, and held steady from 2023, stabilizing the trend of declining enrollment experienced from 2018 to 2023.^{xxxvi}

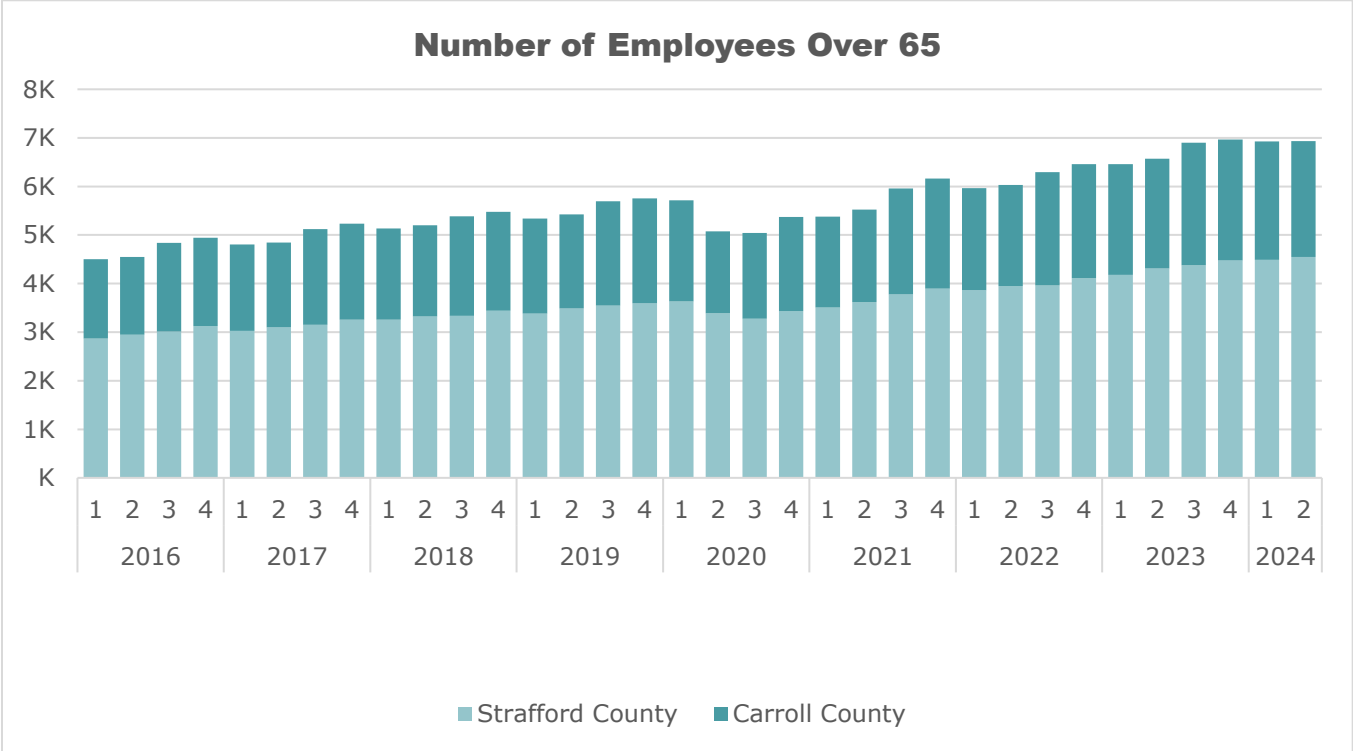
Enrollment at Great Bay Community College has held steady and improved slightly in 2024 compared to 2023. The community college, which has a campus in Rochester, provides educational opportunities across a variety of professional and technical fields that are affordable and accessible to develop technical skills.^{xxxvii} Vocational training opportunities are offered throughout the region, like through the Tri-City Career and Technical Education program, catering to students from Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth.

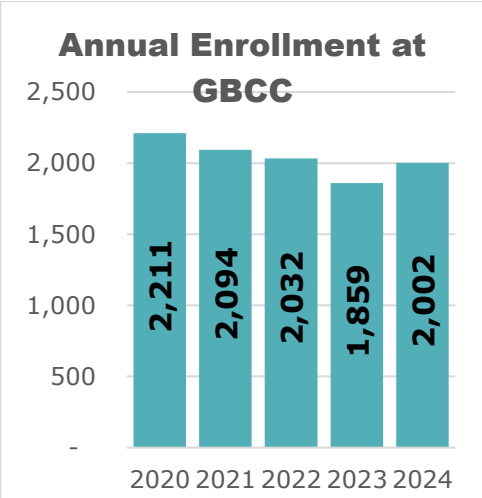
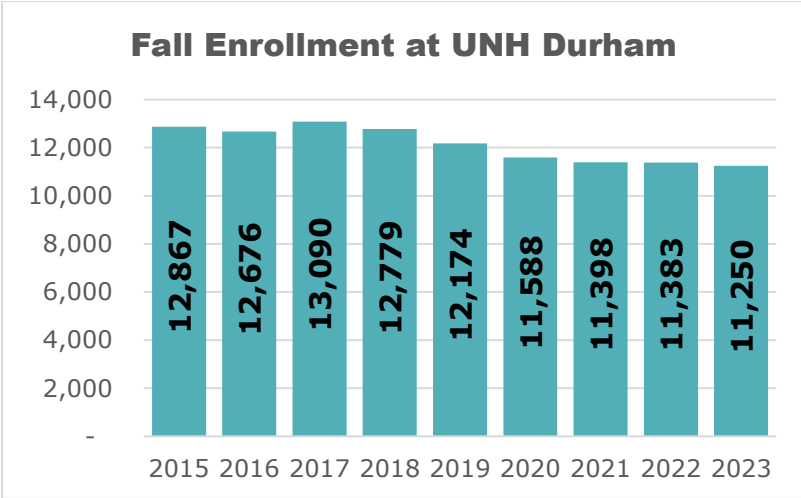
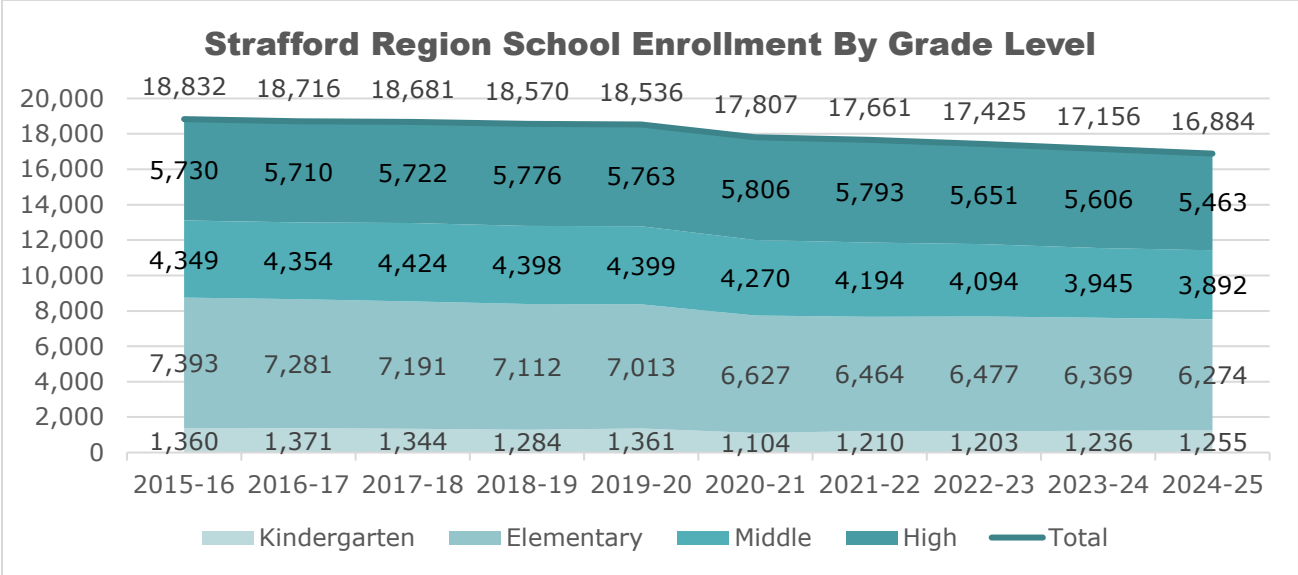
Despite these critical opportunities and stabilization of enrollment at the Durham campus of the University of New Hampshire, the intersections of demographic shifts, an aging workforce and population overall, and conditions like limited affordable housing and a lack of childcare accessibility – the workforce in the region is likely to continue to face constraints without collaborative efforts across sectors.^{xxxviii}

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to bring together experts and stakeholders from across the region, and act as a convenor for the sharing of ideas and practices, and development of relationships. Through the fostering of environments for collaboration and information sharing, a better understanding of challenges and trends will lead to efforts and initiatives to better assist businesses and individuals in the region, and ensure that the workforce is robust and needs are met.

DATA





Sources

- Quarterly Workforce Indicators, New Hampshire Employment Security, 2016-2024
- Fall Enrollment, New Hampshire Department of Education, 2015-2024
- Fall Enrollment, University of New Hampshire, 2015-2023
- Annual Reports, Community College System of New Hampshire, 2020-2024

COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

In 2024, individuals living, working, and visiting the area explored key recreation assets and visited and supported downtowns and other built assets through the region. People are excited to explore their communities and participate and engage in their communities, supporting social capital and the local and regional economy.

GOALS



Foster efforts that highlight vibrant places, support businesses, and bring people to places, while offering expertise and assistance to support the development of initiatives that will expand the resilience of downtowns, promote stewardship and pride in natural and built areas, and highlight cultural and historical assets.

CURRENT TRENDS

Community vibrancy can be measured through several metrics and lenses, but ultimately, people in places act as the driving factor behind a place being considered vibrant. Placemaking efforts, ensuring areas are welcoming and engaging, and leveraging of built and natural assets are key actions being taken throughout the region to create environments where people want to linger, recreate, or patronize local businesses.^{xxxix}

In 2024, SRPC partnered with local groups and municipalities to support and measure efforts that promoted bringing people to downtown areas. Several key events, including Spring Fling in Dover and Free Comic Book Day in Rochester brought several thousand people into each respective city's downtown. Measurements from SRPC pedestrian counters found that there were 5,264 crossings of the Central Avenue bridge in Dover (the main downtown corridor) during the Spring Fling event. In downtown Newmarket, the Lamprey River footbridge sees over 370 crossings over a typical weekend.^{xi}

In addition to downtown areas, recreational areas were also measured. Blue Job State Forest in Strafford and Farmington sees over 85 users on a typical warm-weather weekday, and Stonehouse Forest in Barrington sees no less than 3,000 visitors in a month.^{xli} These highlight that individuals are keen to engage with and experience their communities through planned events and the availability of recreation assets and places, and efforts to expand offerings like these will improve community vibrancy by bringing people together into these spaces.

Another metric to measure the impact of people in places is through reported receipts of the Meals and Rooms tax. New Hampshire does not collect traditional sales tax on goods and services but does collect taxes on certain short-term lodging and prepared foods. When individuals patronize an area like a downtown core, they are likely to also patronize local businesses and spend money on food. In 2024, Meals and Rooms tax receipts continued to hold steady in the Strafford region and overall grew statewide, indicating that residents and visitors to the area are supporting businesses and spending at these types of establishments.^{xlii}

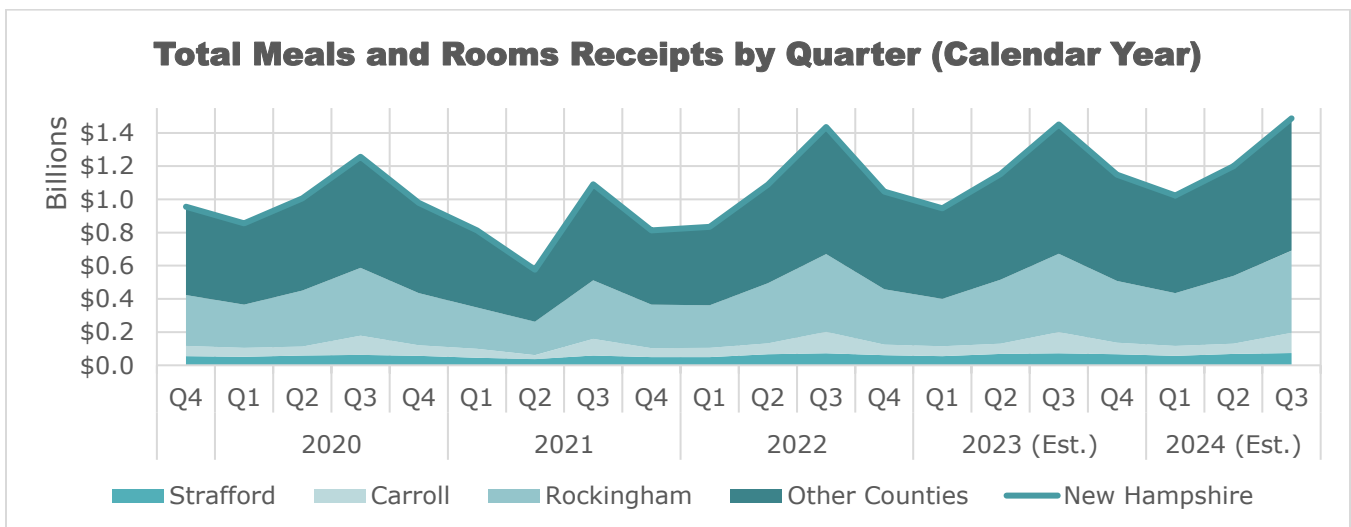
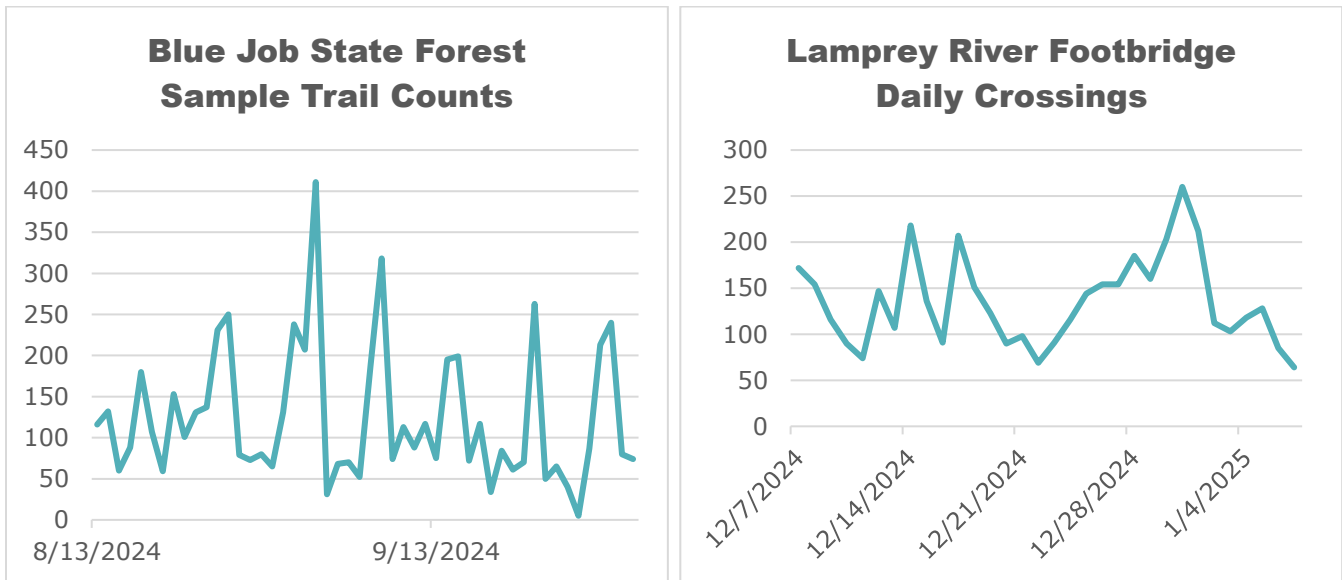
Communities throughout the Strafford region are making keen efforts to revitalize and support their downtowns and leverage natural and recreational assets. Several Priority

Projects added, underway, or completed in 2024 include preservation and restoration of historical and cultural assets for public use, developing downtown transportation networks that link to natural areas, and investing in public services.

SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to leverage recent work in measuring outdoor recreation assets to promote utilization of these places, along with continued work to collect key data on public places and events that will support planning and highlight value of increased foot-traffic in places like downtown centers and recreation spaces.

DATA



Sources

SRPC Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts

New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration

CHILDCARE

The current childcare landscape, defined by lack of affordable and available care, continues to be one of the region's major challenges to economic growth. It has continued to pull parents out of the labor force, resulting in hidden costs for businesses and lost revenues for local and state governments. Meanwhile, unsustainably low salaries for childcare workers result in high staff turnover rates and the inability to attract sufficient staff, which leads to childcare centers having to operate below capacity, worsening the issue of childcare availability.

GOALS



Promote and support regional collaboration and information sharing to help tackle the challenges of the childcare industry while helping create a stronger network.

CURRENT TRENDS

The childcare landscape in the region and state continued to be a major economic burden in 2024. The issue is all encompassing, where low wages and intensive labor have resulted in childcare centers operating under capacity and with high staff turnover rates, while families facing high childcare costs continue to have to leave the labor force to care for a child or children, and businesses are impacted by those having to leave the workforce (or reduce their hours) to care for children who are not in childcare or school.

According to a study by the NH Fiscal Policy Institute (NHFPI)^{xliii}, over the past few years, including 2024, childcare facilities were constrained from operating at full capacity due to shortages of childcare professionals, where it showed that childcare facilities might've only been operating at 85% of their fully licensed capacity as of September 2024. The intensive labor and low wages are likely contributors to high turnover rates and barriers to attracting early childcare education workers. According to the New Hampshire Employment Security, Annual Census of Employment & Wages, the median salary for childcare workers in Strafford County in 2024 was \$32,048, or \$15.40 an hour.

Furthermore, in today's current landscape where employers are already having a hard time attracting and retaining workers, the lack of affordable childcare has forced parents to have to reduce their hours, leave the workforce entirely, or turn down career advancement opportunities. The same NHFPI study did an analysis that showed that NH businesses could be losing an estimated \$56 million a year as a result of the childcare shortages in the state disrupting parents' ability to work.

The cost of childcare continues to be a burden for many families in NH and in the region, making it more feasible in many cases for parents to leave the workforce to care for a child or children due to the cost and availability constraints. In 2024, an average of 17,300 NH residents reported being out of the labor force each month as a result of needing to care for a child or children (not including parents who had to reduce hours due to lack of childcare).^{xliiv} The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines affordable childcare as childcare that costs no more than 7% of a household's median income. In 2023,

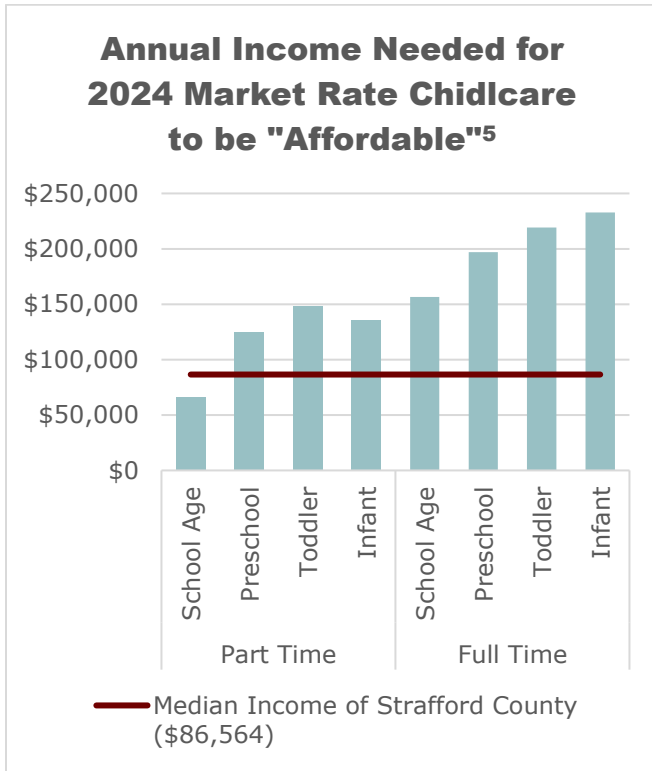
the estimated cost of childcare for one toddler in New Hampshire was \$16,007 a year^{xlv}, which accounted for 16.7% of the State's 2023 median household income of \$95,627 (US Census Bureau, 2023 5-year estimates).

At the state level, one major development for the childcare industry in 2024 was the passing of HB 1567, which now requires that municipalities allow for home-based childcare. In our region, a 2024 development to support childcare has been a partnership between the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Policy and SRPC, where a team of graduate students spent two semesters working on a project aimed at helping to address regional childcare challenges that have impacted economic growth.^{xlvi} In addition to providing best practices, recommendations, and resources that can help support the childcare industry in our region and beyond, an important part of this project also involves a review of the zoning regulations of all SRPC municipalities to see which ones are in compliance with the newly adopted HB 1567, and helps determine what steps need be taken in municipalities that aren't in compliance so that they can be.

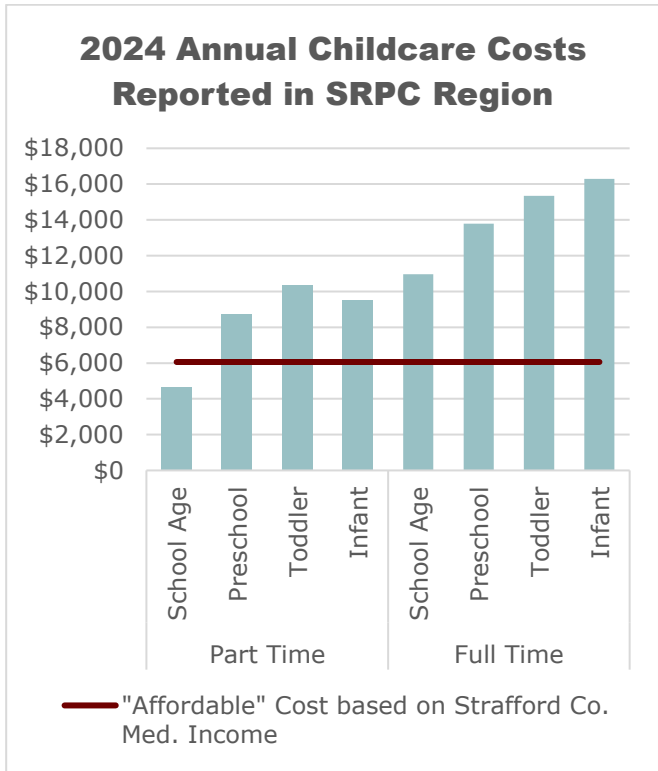
SRPC ACTIONS

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 promote funding and resources. Furthermore, SRPC will seek opportunities to implement the findings of the 2025 SRPC-NYU Regional Childcare Solutions project.

DATA



5



Sources

New Hampshire Employment Security, Annual Census of Employment & Wages, Strafford County, 2023-2024

ACS Table S1901 Five-Year Estimates 2013-2023

State of New Hampshire Child Care Market Rate Study and Narrow Cost Analysis

⁵ "Affordable" childcare is defined by US DHHS as 7% of the household income.

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. SRPC continues 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 2024, 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	BAR1	Barrington's first sidewalks	\$1,253,514	No Updates
Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST)	COAST1	COAST Administrative, Operations, and Maintenance (A/O/M) Facility	\$17,300,000	Updated
Dover	DOV1	Redevelopment of environmentally stressed plating plant and grounds on Broadway in downtown Dover	\$2,500,000	Updated
Dover	DOV2	Public Infrastructure Investment to Assist with Private Development	\$1,000,000	No Updates
Dover	DOV3	Public Infrastructure Investment to Assist with Pedestrian and Vehicular flow	\$17,000,000	Updated
Dover	DOV4	Community Trail connection and expansion to Knox Marsh Rd	\$800,000	Updated
Dover	DOV5	Central Avenue Reconstruction	\$3,000,000	No Updates
Dover	DOV7	Downtown Waterfront Shoreline Stabilization/Riverwalk	\$700,000	Updated
Dover	DOV9	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	Updated
Dover	DOV12	Liberty Mutual Site Redevelopment	\$0	Updated
Dover	DOV13	Downtown Business Incubators	\$465,000	Updated
Durham	DUR1	Madbury Rd Improvements	\$2,885,000	Updated
Durham	DUR2	Fire Station Renovation and Overflow	\$520,000	Updated
Durham	DUR3	Critical Facilities Backup Generators	\$580,000	Updated
Durham	DUR4	66 Main Street Structured Parking	\$7,000,000	Updated
Durham	DUR5	Mixing System at Beech Hill Tank	\$275,000	Updated
Durham	DUR6	Southern Strafford County Communications System	\$2,500,000	Project Completed Since Last Spring
Durham	DUR7	Wastewater Treatment Plant Odor Control System	\$750,000	Project Completed Since Last Spring
Durham	DUR8	Bickford-Chesley House Preservation	\$437,475	Project Completed Since Last Spring

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Durham	DUR9	Durham Old Town Hall Preservation	\$366,270	Updated
Durham	DUR10	Oyster River Dam	\$1,462,950	Updated
Durham		Funding for an Innovative Housing Fund	\$2,000,000	New Project
Durham		Main Street Program Staff	\$500,000	New Project
Durham		Crommett Creek Bridge	\$2,500,000	New Project
Farmington	FAR2	Re-Development of the Old Fire Department Lot		Updated
Farmington	FAR3	Replacement of Red-Listed Bridges		Updated
Farmington	FAR4	Farmington Levee	\$658,500	Updated
Farmington	FAR5	Update to TIF Development and Finance Plan		Updated
Gafney Library, Inc.	WAK3	The Gafney Library Expansion Project	\$150,000	Updated
Hope on Haven Hill	HOH1	The Center for Hope and Wellness Center at Hope on Haven Hill	\$3,200,000	Project Completed Since Last Spring
Hope on Haven Hill	HOH2	Charles Street Transitional Housing Expansion	\$400,000	NEW!
Milton		Milton Sewer Utility Interconnect with Rochester	\$5,000,000	NEW!
Milton		Upgrade/expand Milton Wastewater Treatment Plant	\$10,000,000	NEW!
New Durham	NDU1	Boodey Farmstead- Cultural and Historical	\$900,000	Updated
New Durham	NDU2	Meetinghouse Restoration- Cultural and Historical Project	\$280,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC1	Portland St Sidewalk extension	\$1,395,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC2	Route 11 Safety and Capacity Improvements	\$8,000,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC3	Union Street Parking lot	\$1,350,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC5	Round Pond Reservoir Capacity	\$8,000,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC8	Portland Street Bridge Rehabilitation	\$750,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC9	Lead Service Line Replacements	\$200,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC10	North Main Street/Chestnut Hill Road Connector		No Updates
Rochester	ROC12	Innovation Drive Extension	\$2,500,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC13	Innovation Drive Sewer Pump Station	\$2,750,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC14	Industrial Park Truck Route Analysis	\$20,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC15	Rochester Riverwalk	\$2,000,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM9	JA Sons Prince's Garage Brownfields Cleanup	\$1,157,000	No Updates

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Somersworth	SOM8	Noble Pines (Hamilton Street) Water Tank Replacement Project	\$6,615,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM7	Millennium Field & Parking Lot Improvements	\$513,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM5	Main Street Complete Streets	\$7,747,751	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM1	Library Expansion & Accessibility Improvements	\$6,100,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM12	Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrades-	\$17,640,000	No Updates
Somersworth		Water Distribution Improvements - Indigo Hill Road to Rita Street	\$1,600,000	No Updates
Somersworth		Furber Chapel Restoration	\$150,000	Updated
Somersworth		Noble Pines Park Playground Replacement	\$650,000	NEW!
Somersworth		West High Street Sidewalk & Curbing - Cemetery Road to High Street	\$1,481,000	NEW!
Somersworth		Washington Street Road Reconstruction - Main Street to High Street	\$1,942,530	NEW!
Strafford (Town of)		Hill Library Expansion/Relocation Study	\$75,000	NEW!
Strafford County	STRCO1	Strafford County P25 Radio System	\$3,400,000	Project Completed Since Last Spring
Strafford Economic Development Corp		Comprehensive Regional Growth Revolving Loan Fund	\$10,750,000	NEW!
SRPC	SRPC3	Regional Housing Needs Assessment Implementation	\$25,000	Updated
SRPC	SRPC2	Brownfields Assessment Program	\$500,000	Updated
SRPC	SRPC1	Arts and Culture Inventory and Online Guide	\$40,000	Updated
SRPC, Somersworth, Rochester	SRPC4	Spaulding Turnpike Exit 10	\$1,914,105	Updated
University of New Hampshire	UNH3	The Edge Innovation Neighborhood	\$80,000,000	Updated
University of New Hampshire	UNH4	Economic resilience through enhanced capacity to monitor future threats and mobilize resources to combat future disease outbreaks	\$20,000,000	Project Completed Since Last Spring
University of New Hampshire	UNH5	Expansion of UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory in support of a resilient NH coastal economy	\$3,813,000	Updated

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
University of New Hampshire	UNH7	Building Capacity for PFAS Analysis in NH	\$900,000	Updated
University of New Hampshire	UNH9	Blue Economy Regional Master Plan Development	\$500,000	Updated
University of New Hampshire		UNH Wildcat Transit Fleet Replacement	\$5,000,000	Updated
University of New Hampshire		North Underpass	\$9,500,000	NEW!
University of New Hampshire		Center for Digital Access and Workforce Development	\$500,000	NEW!
Wentworth Economic Development Corp., Inc. (WEDCO)	WEDCO2	Explore Moose Mountains	\$110,000	Updated
		Total Investments	\$298,572,095	

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	2024 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.	17
Number of local governments that submitted/updated priority projects.	9 member municipalities
Total local government projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS.	56
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.	15
Total projects included in the CEDS.	75
Total cost of proposed CEDS projects.	\$298,572,095
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 RHNAs 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 regional businesses including Prep Partners in Rochester, NH.

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, weekly "Bits and Pieces" emails, social media, and quarterly email updates to registered businesses.

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 Strafford Economic Development Corporation, Center for Women and Enterprise, Small Businesses Development Center, Small Business Administration, 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: Strafford Economic Development Corporation, Community Development Finance Authority, NH Bureau of Economic Affairs, 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 provide technical assistance on the development of business guides for small businesses that wish to grow or relocate to the region. 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. In 2024, the application was accepted by a group of graduate students, to conduct research on current childcare conditions, publish findings, and develop a series of recommendations for the region to address the challenges with childcare availability and access. The research was completed as of Spring 2025.

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 11 hazard mitigation plans including the municipalities of Nottingham, Madbury, Farmington, and Newmarket in 2024.

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Resiliency

13

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

Status Details:

In 2024, SRPC staff worked on a variety of projects to address flood and natural hazard resilience, including:

- Incorporated climate change as a standalone section in all hazard mitigation updates
- Completed two Natural Resource Inventories, for the City of Dover and the Town of Lee, that provide detailed information crucial to decision-making processes that build the community's adaptive capacity and strengthen resilience in the face of the impacts of climate change
- Conducted a review of coastal communities' municipal documents and in-person interviews to gather data associated with climate adaptation and/or resilience projects
- Provided funding to Moreno Forestry to ensure the inclusion of climate change impacts and forest resilience recommendations into the Doe Farm Forest Management Plan.
- In collaboration with Elizabeth Durfee of EF Design and Planning, SRPC completed a Riverfront Master Plan for the Town of Newmarket that outlines a long-term vision of climate resiliency

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 2025 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. Throughout 2024, these funds are being used to identify potential brownfield sites and conduct Phase I/II site assessments and hazardous building materials surveys in Farmington, Somersworth, Rochester 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. SRPC will continue to work on age friendly planning throughout the region.

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. In 2024 and beyond, SRPC will continue to promote this tool amongst our region's businesses and provide support as

Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

necessary. Furthermore, SRPC is working on researching and collecting best practices for attracting and retaining employees in today's workforce climate.



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 working with local organizations and groups to aid in the implementation of 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 kicked off an update to the comprehensive regional plan in January 2025 with a goal of updating the land use and environmental resource chapters with a focus on planning for housing, economic development, and 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 “Pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress.” As part of the project, SRPC is working with the Cities of Dover and Portsmouth to develop model ordinance designed to improve accessibility along public transit routes. This project will wrap up 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. In the spring of 2025, SRPC applied for funds through the American Association of Retired People (AARP) to conduct a sidewalk assessment in Milton. This project will replicate a sidewalk assessment done with the City of Rochester through the CHAT project.

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 incorporating minor edits on an as needed basis, but without more robust resources, more comprehensive updates continue to be limited.

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 collaborated with UNH Technology Transfer Center throughout the Summer and Fall of 2024 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 2025 Public Comment Log

Note: The 2025 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. (please note, some of the below comments have had no updates).

Comment Received	Comment	Status
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	No mention of standard deviations when discussing Median Household Income.	Data limitations and analysis methodology do not allow this at the regional level.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	Needed discussions about collaborations with vocational training centers in the region and highlighting relevant partnerships and policies.	Will be addressed in the 5-year update.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	Better integration into how childcare access and affordability challenges impact the workforce.	Language reflects this in the childcare section.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	Including discussions about Childcare as a part of the public school system	Will potentially be addressed in the 5-year update after analysis of scope within the CEDS.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	Action items need to be less general and more definitive and trackable moving forward	Will be addressed in the 5-year update.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	There should be some type of organization or point system for highlighting the impact of priority projects on the overall economic well-being of the region	Will be addressed in the 5-year update.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	Incorporation of people, businesses, and other stories into the CEDS.	Will be addressed in the 5-year update.
Commission Meeting 5/16/25	Provide high-level recommendations for implementation and actions.	Will be addressed in the 5-year update.
Strategy Committee Meeting 5/20/25	Uncertainty about table of NH Housing Finance Authority data regarding multifamily housing units committed & under construction and completed in FY2024	Language clarified in the housing section