MONADNOCK REGION FUTURE OUTREACH SUMMARY

Contents

I.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) is one of nine regional planning commissions (RPCs) in New Hampshire that provide technical planning assistance and coordination on 'larger than local' issues to municipalities, who voluntarily choose to become members of the commissions. One of the responsibilities of an RPC is to "prepare a coordinated plan for the development of a region, taking into account present and future needs with a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land..." (NH RSA 36:45).

Since forming in 1971, SWRPC has developed and maintained a Plan for the Region. It has also undertaken countless studies and created numerous topic-focused plans covering issues as wide-ranging as housing, transportation, economic development, broadband, and natural resources. As an advisory organization, SWRPC is not invested with the authority to establish policy or regulation; nor, is it within its mission to do so. These Plans are intended to be resources for communities and other partners in the Region to use in local decision making and planning.

 In 2012, New Hampshire's RPCs received a three-year grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities to prepare and update their individual regional plans. Each region, including SWRPC, received funding to develop its own plan. This initiative, known as, Granite State Future, emphasized a holistic and integrative approach to planning that encouraged and involved extensive public outreach and engagement.

In developing the Regional Plan for the Southwest Region, SWRPC sought the opinions, ideas and perspectives of hundreds of residents, workers, and/or visitors of the Region. Early on in the process, we recognized that those who live and work here could provide valuable insight into the needs, concerns, and changes affecting our Region's communities. We also recognized that collecting this input from a diverse array of voices and perspectives would need to involve nontraditional forms of public participation and engagement.

Equipped with this knowledge, we embarked on one of the most extensive public outreach efforts ever undertaken by SWRPC staff. These efforts were largely focused on two questions - 'What do you like best about where you live in the Region?' and 'What could be better?' They were designed to ensure that a variety of individuals, not just those who attend traditional public meetings, could be a part of the process. Instead of expecting people to come to us, we went to them. By holding small focus groups in familiar settings for participants, we were able to create safe spaces for dialogue. We limited access barriers by holding public meetings in all reaches of the Region and offering alternative ways to share feedback and information.

This document provides an overview of the variety and range of outreach activities we undertook throughout the fall of 2012 and summer of 2013. The results of these conversations and activities were recorded and analyzed by SWRPC staff, who identified the primary themes and topics that were most frequently mentioned. The sections below provide a brief summary of the key findings and themes for each type of outreach activity conducted.

II.   COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Throughout the winter and spring of 2013, SWRPC conducted 13 focus groups with young professionals, seniors, individuals with disabilities, families, college students, transitional housing and homeless populations. The purpose of these conversations is to understand the values, concerns and needs that individuals of a variety of ages, abilities and backgrounds have for their community and the Region as a whole. These conversations were held at the locations of the organization or group participating in the discussion and at times convenient for the participants. These conversations were an opportunity to engage individuals outside a traditional public meeting setting.

SWRPC also held a series of 4 regional community conversations / listening sessions that were open to the public in various geographic locations in the Region throughout May and June of 2013. Locations of these conversations included the Winchester School, Alstead Town Hall, Antrim Town Hall and the Peterborough Town House.

Both the focus groups and community conversations focused on the following three questions:

 ➢ What do you like best about where you live?
 ➢ What could be improved or make it a better place to live?
 ➢ Of the values and needs identified, what do you feel is the most important area to focus on and invest resources for the Region?

The main themes and topics that arose from these conversation related to housing in the region are listed below.

What is best about the Region?

Community
• Local control
• Strong sense of community involvement
• Friendly supportive people and community
• Civic Engagement
• Town services
• Feels safe
• Connection to and sense of history and roots; Support for historic preservation

Landscape / Character
• Quiet, peaceful atmosphere
• Solitude
• Rural atmosphere and setting
• Feeling of safety
• 'There is easy access to Boston and New York while still having solitude here'
• Scenic Beauty – 'Picture postcard town'
• Monadnock Region has unique but distinct identity
• Slow to moderate rate of change and/or growth

- 'Rural but not remote'
- Noncommercial appearance

Natural Resources
- Year round access to local food/produce and farmers markets
- The seasonal climate and weather (moderate natural hazards, seasons)
- Significant supply of land that is in conservation
- Limited light pollution
- Environmental awareness of communities
- Support for protection of natural resources (forests)
- Scenic/natural beauty (including fall foliage, lakes, mountains, forests)
- Availability of parks and green space including trails and easy access to the outdoors
- Opportunities for/easy access to outdoor recreation including hiking, ice skating, skiing, camping, fishing
- Serenity and peacefulness of the area
- Clean, pristine resources such as air and water
- Mount Monadnock (for scenic beauty, hiking)
- The wildlife
- Lakes and Rivers (for scenic beauty, recreation opportunities, clean drinking water)
- Working landscapes (forests, farms, etc.)

Recreation
- Abundant access to outdoor recreation (easy to access and affordable)
- Support for parks and trails
- Variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation (skiing (downhill and xc), hiking, biking, swimming, paddling, camping)
- A variety of fairs, festivals, concerts (art, music, other)
- Cultural activities and opportunities
- Community centers and recreation centers
- Diversity of indoor activities (bowling, bingo, karaoke)
- Local sports teams like the Swamp Bats

Economic
- Cost of Living is affordable
- No sales tax or income tax
- Tourism
- Easy to access variety of shops/restaurants
- Main Street Keene
- Things to do for all age levels in downtown
- 'Not too 'built up'' - Limited development
- Easy to access grocery store
- Support for working landscape
- Support for year round access to purchase local food
- Ability to telecommute
- Close to surrounding state service centers

Transportation
- Limited traffic, quiet streets

- Easy to access goods and services
- Walkable town centers
- Volunteer Drivers
- Public Bus Services (Friendly Bus, City Express)
- Easy access to surrounding major cities but no interstate in Region
- Availability of trails and paths

Education
- Heavy community involvement with funding for education
- 'Great place to raise children; good schools and community'
- Quality of education is good – 'even the small private schools are affordable'
- Availability of good quality education opportunities (colleges, higher education, secondary schools, including lifelong learning)

Housing
- There is housing located near services and conservation land
- There is affordable housing

What could be better about Where You Live or The Region?

COMMUNITY
- Concern for sustaining vibrant communities without diverse mix of ages, families, people
  - Need for more balanced mix of demographics within communities – 'communities are aging, younger generations are not moving to communities'
  - Need to identify ways to attract and sustain younger generations to communities
  - Need for more things to do/activities to attract younger generations
- More diversity, respect and inclusivity
  - Divide between older and younger generations in communities
  - Divide between wealthy and middle class (snob feel, pretentious)
  - Homeless population is overlooked
  - Engaged and Disengaged residents (active vs unactive)
  - Need more diverse political base
- Need to sustain and build community
  - Need for places to connect and gather with community members (social gathering spots)
  - Need for integration of older and younger generations in the community
- Increased volunteerism and civic engagement
  - Need to expand base of volunteers
  - Need broader age diversity of those involved in town
  - Need for expanding volunteer opportunities and connecting people to these opportunities
  - More opportunities for school children to become involved in the community
  - Concern that technology is distracting people from becoming more involved
- Community Services:
  - Concern that younger generations expect more in way of services than did in years past but do not want to pay for increased costs
  - Need for more quality day care centers
  - Stop negative portrayal of some communities

- o Need for service exchanges and opportunities to connect residents to volunteer services or existing services
  - o Need for better access to service centers / services especially in areas outside Keene
- Planning and Coordination:
  - o Support for local planning efforts to determine how things should be in the future
  - o Better coordination and collaboration between towns – 'Towns to work together to share services and work smarter with each other as a way to increase efficiency and reduce costs.'
  - o Increased partnerships between education institutions and communities, organizations, businesses
- Safety:
  - o Need for more public safety services and police presence on streets at night, primarily in downtown Keene by KSC and Railroad Square

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Downtowns
  - o Downtown areas are facing economic and social challenges (Winchester/Hinsdale)
  - o Focus development in existing downtowns
  - o Need for downtown reinvestment/enhancements
  - o Need more commercial business and shopping/retail in downtowns
- Job Creation
  - o Creation of more local job opportunities that are of a livable wage - 'Job opportunities are limited in the areas and not well paying as compared to the Seacoast or other areas'
  - o More jobs opportunities for a variety of skills levels, ages, abilities (youth, college students, persons with disabilities, elderly, young professionals, etc) – 'Businesses that have low skilled entry level positions because most have been lost over the past decade'
  - o 'Need better economic opportunities, not just service sector, to balance housing opportunities
  - o 'Emphasize good jobs versus just 'economic development'
  - o 'Job market for public education is tragic'
- Jobs within a reasonable commute from housing options
- Need for job readiness/skills trainings that are within the region and accessible
  - o Need to link education with jobs
  - o Connect local high schools and colleges with local businesses (intern / coop programs)
- Need to develop better systems for getting people back to work
  - o 'Access to financial assistance easier than rejoining the workforce'
  - o Make it easier for small businesses to hire employees – less restrictions
- Local Business / Industry
  - o Communities are not as vibrant as they once were – 'Production, manufacturing and farming made   the area a vibrant community 100 years ago but this not the case today'
  - o Need for business development
  - o More businesses that are open later and on weekends – 'not enough businesses are open past 5 or 6pm or 9pm– inaccessible for working individuals – no 24 hour pharmacy'
  - o Storefronts / retail spaces are empty (Colony Mill)
  - o 'Don't add business for the sake of business, add good business'
  - o Support for local businesses and market concern for big box development
  - o More businesses will add to the local tax base
  - o Need for stores that are affordable and accessible

- ▪ Many stores are not handicapped accessible
- Jobs/Housing Balance
  - o Being able to afford to live where you work ('having jobs available near where people live and near affordable housing'
  - o Need transportation for elderly accessing work / jobs outside of town
  - o Support for home based businesses
  - o Need transportation to access job options

- Tourism
  - o Better utilize the Rivers (Ashuelot and Connecticut) to promote tourism
  - o Create gateways to the region
  - o 'What is there to bring people here? If you "give people a taste", they may be encouraged to return.'
  - o 'Tourism is not as prominent as it has been historically. Not enough time for leisure'
- Infrastructure
  - o Concern over building more infrastructure and whether it is really needed
  - o Need more infrastructure to attract industry / businesses
- Services / Activities
  - o More things to do / activities for all segments of population (youth, families, young professionals, elderly, persons with disabilities etc.) that are affordable and accessible
  - o More high quality day care options like Winchester Learning Center
- Working Landscapes
  - o Protect and support for working landscapes and farms
  - o Expand local food system, CSAs and farmers markets
  - o Regional coordination of farmers markets and schedules
- Socioeconomic
  - o Issues with 'pockets of poverty'
  - o Divide between economic classes (us vs. them mentality)
  - o 'There is little room for the middle class in town. Most are either very rich or very poor.'
  - o Towns will face challenges as tax base passes away / pool of involved citizens and there are no local predecessors
  - o 'How do you adapt to the economic needs of certain populations without bruising image of town?'
  - o Younger generations cannot afford to buy land in small towns
  - o Need affordable places to eat and shop
  - o Too expensive to 'buy local' and difficult to access more affordable stores
  - o Lack of affordable/reasonably priced grocery stores in close proximity
  - o 'Young professionals and college aged youth cannot afford to live in the area'
- Property Tax structure makes it unaffordable to live in towns
  - o Need other sources of state revenue to lower property taxes.
  - o Property taxes and view taxes are too high tax structure of state will become an increasing problem, as long as property tax covers all services.
  - o Need widespread education about state's revenue problems. NH pretends we have less government by "passing the buck" to municipalities.
  - o The current tax structure is inequitable and inadequate for both the state and local economy.
  - o The tax base is deterring young families from coming to live in the area.
- Balance between need for business/jobs and protecting the rural character, community character

- Regional resilience and economic self sufficiency
- More investment of MEDC in communities outside of Keene

TRANSPORTATION
- Need for more transportation options / transportation choices that are:
    - Affordable
    - Diverse / multi modal
    - Easy to access
  - Need for more public transportation (especially bus)
    - Outside Keene (Rt 101, Rt 9, 12 and 10 corridors)
    - Flexible transportation
    - Expanded hours – nights and weekends
  - Need for more volunteer driver transportation (ARC, CVTC)
  - Need for flexible transportation options for elderly
    - Trips to medical appointments, church, pharmacy, grocery
  - Need transportation to job centers
  - Need for transportation options outside region (regional airports, Boston, Concord)
  - Better promote rideshare
- Need for more delivery services (for groceries and prescriptions)
- Need more parking in downtown areas (Keene, Peterborough, Jaffrey)
- Need better enforcement of current laws (speed limits, rights for pedestrians)
- Collocate job, housing, and service centers
  - Difficult to access goods and services (especially, affordable stores such as Market Basket and Walmart)
- Safety and Accessibility
  - Sidewalks challenging to navigate in a wheelchair or scooter
  - Pedestrian 'Walk' lights not on for long enough
  - Difficult to cross streets in wheelchair
  - Streets are not well lit at night – feels unsafe
  - Safer walking and biking opportunities (bike lanes, sidewalks, signage)
  - Vermonter Train impeded traffic flow and emergency services in N Walpole
- More environmentally friendly transportation options
  - Create opportunities to use less fuel and energy related to transportation
- Improved state and local road / infrastructure conditions
  - More resources to improve and maintain infrastructure
  - 'Flooding and roadway damage is bad when it rains'
  - Better maintenance of roadways in winter (snow clearing)
  - Repair or replace bridges in poor condition
  - Better broadband access
  - Repair and maintain sidewalks
- Bring back rail system
- Support for more walkable communities
- Better city planning to promote safe walking/biking, and multimodal infrastructure
- Trails and Paths
  - Increased trail connectivity (unite snowmobile trails; nonmotorized trails connected and expanded; connect trails to services and destinations)
  - Maintain bike trails
  - Pave bicycle trails (rail trails)
  - Bike Lanes

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- o Develop rail trails
- Less Traffic (Downtown Keene, Route 12 N)
- Regional Transportation Coordination – Towns work together to support transportation network

RECREATION
- Need more affordable, accessible activities for families
  - o Need more recreation and activities for youth to do at a variety of times/days
  - o Foster appreciation for outdoors and wildlife with youth recreation
- More concerts/music, arts and other entertainment events
- Need more cultural activities / diverse experiences for children
- 'There is nothing to do to attract younger generations'

ENVIRONMENT
- To mitigate/prevent severe flooding during rain events
- More parks near neighborhoods and housing
- Better utilizing / taking advantage of the Region's large rivers (increased public access, highlight the river as a tourism attraction) specifically the Connecticut and Ashuelot Rivers
- Continued support for land conservation and preservation of rural character
- Increased trail connectivity and access to trails that lead to destinations such as the store
- Improved public services such as trash removal to protect the environment
- Increased attention to and action around protecting water quality, both public and private drinking water and surface waters
- Support for protecting wildlife habitat
- Protect working lands and farms

HOUSING
- Need for housing that is located in reasonable distance of either walking or public transportation options to access:
  - o Work/employment
  - o Healthy food options / grocery stores
  - o Stores for shopping
  - o Family, friends, community
  - o Entertainment
  - o Parks and recreation
  - o Pharmacies and health care such as doctors / hospitals
  - o Geographic areas outside of Keene
- Need for more affordable public transportation options (including night and weekend transportation) to travel to these services listed above, throughout the region, and to access major airports.
- Need for affordable housing options near public transportation / employment centers
- Need for more affordable housing options throughout the Region. Specifically:
  - o Rental housing in Keene is very high, limited supply
  - o Limited rental options outside Keene
  - o Limited affordable housing outside of Keene area
  - o It is unaffordable for many to live and work in the area due to the full cost of housing (high housing, heating, and transportation costs)
- Physical condition / appearance of rental housing in Keene is variable
- Concern for abuse of college students by landlords in Keene

- o College students noted unsafe housing conditions, exorbitant rents, and neglectful landlords
- Lack of both temporary and longer term housing for homeless and transitional housing populations / Lack of attention drawn to this issue
- Concern for safety by elderly and college students living in downtown Keene
    - o Feel unsafe walking alone at night-Concord for proximity of downtown senior housing to bars and nightlife
    - o Not enough privacy for downtown tenants in Railroad Square Housing
    - o Little police presence in area at night
    - o Lack of street lighting in downtown
- Need to address high property taxes
    - o Concern for rising property taxes
    - o High property taxes are driving people out of towns and make it unaffordable for younger families to purchase property
    - o Inequitable tax structure at state level - concord for downshifting of costs and services onto municipalities
- Insecurity about the future
    - o Concern for the future of the County Nursing Home
    - o Concern for sustaining vibrant communities and changing demographics especially if younger families cannot afford to live/locate here
    - o Older generations expressed concern for future of needing to move from town of residence to a service center like Keene due to limited transportation options
    - o Elderly individuals expressed concern for being isolated in older age and not having access to community and services due to limited transportation options.
- Young professionals were interested in housing options that are located in close proximity to places of employments, cultural activities, and shopping/services.
- Persons with disabilities expressed interest in housing options that are located near affordable service and shopping areas, employment and public transportation options.
- Lack of regional representation on Keene Housing Authority Board.

LAND USE
- Keep rate of growth / development under control
    - o Localize growth in targeted areas
    - o Limit sprawl
    - o Encourage dense, infill development in already developed areas
- Encourage mixed use in village centers and downtown areas
- Support preservation of historic buildings and resources
- Long range planning is important
- Prevent 'Snob Zoning' and 'Exclusionary Zoning'
- Less regulation
- 'Keep land as rural using planning tools such as cluster or conservation subdivisions'
- 'Continue current use option'

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE
- Concern for improved Town water quality
- Need facilitates like municipal water and sewer
    - o Lack of sewer and water facilities in region
    - o Need resources to support infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, broadband)
- Concern over developing infrastructure if not really needed

BROADBAND
- Need better high speed internet access
    - Universal access to high speed internet
- Need better cell reception
- Internet access is important for economic development and real estate sectors
- Concern that technology is a distraction and prevents people from becoming involved
    - 'How can we balance benefits of technology while fostering community building?'

EDUCATION
- Need to link education and jobs (job trainings, apprenticeships, etc)
- Poverty and home issues impact students success at school
- Encourage civic engagement in youth
- Improved funding and support for education, especially at the state level
- Partnerships between colleges and secondary education and private industry
- 'Small schools vital for community building'
- 'More options for educating children in region'

ENERGY
- Weatherization of homes and buildings
- Need more education about energy use and conservation
- Lack of energy policy
    - Remove barriers to energy policies – group and virtual net metering should be allowed
- Explore possibility of large scale, clean and renewable energy options
- Use less fuel, drive down energy use
- Create incentives for renewable energy

III.   NH LISTENS COMMUNITIES OF PLACE

On April 2, 2013, staff from NH Listens and the University of NH Cooperative Extension partnered to facilitate one of a series of statewide community listening sessions in Keene, NH. This event was held at Heberton Hall in Keene, NH on April 2, 2013. There were 48 participants. The results of this conversation are summarized by NH Listens staff are summarized below.

Keene Community of Place Listening Session

Regional Themes
- One thing that all groups seemed to notice was that the state's population is getting older. This was attributed to various things –some mentioned a loss of young people who leave the state to look for job opportunities in other areas and others mentioned an increase in retirees moving to the state who feel that the tax structure is to their advantage.
- One suggested way to keep young people in the state is to create greater access to recreational activities.
- It was noticed that NH is slowly and steadily becoming more diverse racially and ethnically.
- Participants connected access to services and transportation. While some felt that the Monadnock region offers more essential services than other regions of the state there is still the perception that the farther away from Keene one goes, the less likely they are to find services. This is compounded by a lack of alternative transportation options. If one does not own a car it is very difficult to reach these essential services.
- Cost of housing was thought to be another barrier to young people settling in NH. High property taxes drive costs up. This also creates a squeeze for many middle-income families.
- Participants noted that the state's reliance on the property tax for revenue creates many problems. They noted that it is hard to incentivize homeowners to make improvements to their property,it prices young people out of housing, and it can squeeze the elderly out of their homes.
- In this group, there was a fair amount of agreement that we are over-reliant on a single form of tax (Keene's property taxes are the 4thhighest in the state). Groups mentioned the idea of attempting to reform the state's tax structure, although no specific recommendations were made.
- Some participants discussed expanding housing options and increasing economic growth byrepurposing buildings and encouraging mixed use of buildings. Some pointed to zoning laws as a barrier to this.
- People are pleased that the region has done work to preserve the natural beauty of the environment but concerns still persist about pollution from things like stormwater runoff.
- Climate is also an issue –Storms have become more frequent and severe in recent years. State provides limited incentive for people to create and use alternative energy.
- Infrastructure is a concern. There are many red-listed bridges and roads in dire need of repair in the region. Very little money to be able to do this and many were advocating for more support from the state in this area.
- Education is varied across the region and state. Some districts are well funded and others are not. Participants were concerned about this gap.
- One of the keys to education is to get workers trained for jobs that both do and do not require a college degree. Creating partnerships between schools and businesses is one way to accomplish this.

- Accessible and effective government. Some groups mentioned that they felt Cheshire County does not have the same kind of voice in Concord that other regions have. One suggested way to fix this is to reach out to elected officials as often as possible.
- Many groups pointed to a need for increased collaboration between local, state and federal officials.
- Sense of community is important. Need to teach younger generation how to be involved with where they live.

IV.   COMMENT CARDS

Beginning in September of 2012, SWRPC distributed 30 suggestion boxes / listening posts in locations across the Regions such as general stores, town offices, restaurants, community centers, cafes, libraries, schools, office buildings, etc. Along with these boxes were comment cards asking individuals to note what they like best about where they live, what could make it better, whether they live, work, are a visitor or seasonal resident of the region, and to share their contact information if they would like more information on the project. SWRPC staff and volunteers rotated the locations of these boxes and collected the comments shared.

In addition, staff attended 17 community events and festivals in various parts of the Region to distribute and collect these comment cards to public attending these events. The events are listed below:

-Keene Art in the Park (9/1/12; 9/2/12)
-Keene Music Festival (9/1/12; 9/2/12)
-Nelson Ice Cream Social (9/2/12)
-Keene Air Show (9/8/12)
-Dublin Craft Fair (9/8/12)
-Antrim Home and Harvest Festival (9/15/13)
-Winchester Pickle Festival (9/22/13)
-Municipal Law Lecture Series #1 (9/12/13); #2 (9/19/13); # 3 (9/26/13) in Peterborough
-Langdon Harvest Festival (9/29/13)
-Roxbury Emergency Operations Planning Meeting (9/25/13)
-Elm City Brewery Oktoberfest (9/22/12)
-Jaffrey Scarecrows on the Common (10/6/13)
-Heading for Home Business Leaders Breakfast (11/15/13)
-Fixing the Future Movie Showing at the Colonial Theatre (10/17/13)
-Stoddard Senior Lunch (2/26/13)
-Meadowood Senior Lunch in Troy (1/7/13)

Summaries of the responses received on these comment cards are listed on the pages below.

What is best about this area?

Please note: All percentages are based on a sample size of 261

A. Community Vitality - 72.4%
- 17.6%   The People/Friendliness
- 11.5%   Close Knit Community
- 10.0%   Small Towns
- 5.0%   Peaceful/Calm
- 4.2%   Safe Place to Live / Low Crime
- 3.1%   Family Oriented Atmosphere / Activities
- 2.7%   Strong Volunteer Ethic
- 2.7%   Cooperation
- 2.7%   Quiet
- 2.3%   Diversity/Inclusivity
- 1.5%   Great Place to Live
- 1.5%   It is Home
- 1.5%   Private/Remote
- 1.5%   Strong Sense of Civic Engagement
- 1.1%   Community Amenities/Services
- 0.8%   Progressive
- 0.8%   Quality of Life

B. Natural Resource Functions & Quality - 50.5%
- 10.3%   Environment/Natural Features
- 7.7%   Rural Character
- 5.7%   Lakes/Rivers
- 5.4%   Mountains
- 5.0%   Open Space
- 4.6%   Clean Air
- 4.2%   Woods/Forests
- 1.5%   Wildlife
- 1.5%   Conserved Land
- 1.1%   Outdoors Activities (Hiking Trails)
- 1.1%   Conservation Ethic
- 1.1%   Landscaping/Parks
- 0.8%   Clean Water
- 0.4%   Access to Outdoors

C. Culture/Art - 21.5%
- 9.2%   Variety of Events/Activities
- 6.5%   Arts
- 3.8%   Culture
- 2.7%   Music
- 1.9%   Retail/Shopping
- 1.5%   Restaurants
- 1.5%   Availability of Entertainment Venues

D. Recreation - 17.2%
- 6.1%   Access to Outdoor Recreation
- 3.1%   Trails
- 1.9%   Hiking
- 1.9%   Recreation
- 1.5%   Skiing
- 1.1%   Biking
- 1.1%   Parks
- 1.1%   Skateboarding
- 0.8%   Kayaking/Paddling
- 0.4%   Camping
- 0.4%   Back Country Sports

E. Traditional Settlement Patterns - 15.3%
- 6.5%   Historic Resources/Buildings
- 5.4%   Downtowns/Community Centers
- 1.1%   Traditional Village Center
- 0.4%   Mixed Uses

F. Scenic Beauty - 14.6%
- 8.00%   Beautiful
- 6.50%   Scenery/Scenic Views

G. Transportation - 7.3%
- 1.5%   Limited Traffic
- 1.5%   No Highways
- 1.1%   Walkable
- 1.1%   Bike Paths

H. Proximity to Major Cities/Service Centers - 7.3%

I. Limited Development - 6.5%

J. Economy - 6.10%
- 2.3%   Small Businesses
- 1.9%   Local Business
- 0.4%   Industry
- 0.4%   Cost of Living

K. Weather/Seasons - 6.1%
L. Education - 5.7%
M. Agriculture - 4.2%
N. Limited Government -1.9%
O. Everything - 1.9%
P. Nothing - 1.9%
Q. Medical Services - 1.1%
R. Housing - 0.4%

What could be better about this area?

Please note: All percentages are based on a sample size of 261

A. Economic Development - 19.5%
- 8.4%   More Retail Establishments
- 6.1%   More Job Opportunities
- 4.2%   More Restaurants
- 2.7%   More Industry/Business
- 2.3%   Better Wages
- 1.5%   Less Development
- 1.1%   Better Marketing of Region
- 1.1%   Balanced Development
- 0.8%   More Development
- 0.8%   More Entertainment Venues
- 0.8%   Cost of Living
- 0.8%   More Economic Development in Rural   Areas
- 0.4%   Difficult to Start a Business

B. Transportation - 24.5%
- 11.5%   Public Transportation
- 5.0%   Road Maintenance and Improvements
- 3.1%   Better Bicycle Paths/Bike Access
- 0.8%   Walking Trails
- 0.8%   Better Access to Services
- 0.8%   No Development
- 0.4%   Better East/West Highways
- 0.4%   Better Airport Access
- 0.4%   Wheelchair Accessibility

C. Recreation - 18.4%
- 5.0%   More Youth Activities
- 3.8%   More Venues for Entertainment / Recreation
- 3.1%   More Variety of Activities
- 2.7%   Build New and Improve Existing Parks
- 2.7%   More Arts / Music Activities
- 1.1%   More Fairs/Festivals
- 0.8%   More Recreation/Sports Programs
- 0.4%   Trail Maintenance/More Hiking Trails

D. Tax Structure - 10%
- 6.9%   Lower Property Taxes
- 1.5%   Adopt State Sales Tax
- 1.1%   More Equitable Tax Structure
- 1.1%   Adopt State Income Tax

E. Protection of Natural Resources - 9.6%
- 3.4%   More Conservation of Open Save
- 2.7%   Less pollution and littering
- 0.8%   More Recycling
- 0.4%   Improved Air Quality

F. Government - 7.3%
- 3.8%   Less Government Regulation
- 1.5%   Improved Cooperation /Communication b/w Gov & Private/Residential Sectors

G. Nothing - 6.5%

H. Support for Local Agriculture - 6.1%

I. Community Vitality - 5.4%
- 1.9%   More Communication /Coordination between Towns
- 1.1%   More Community Services
- 1.1%   Fewer People
- 3.0%   Increased Diversity
- 0.4%   Increased Civic Engagement

J. Housing - 4.6%
- 2.3%   More Affordable Housing
- 0.8%   More Elderly Housing
- 0.8%   Build Less Homes
- 0.4%   More Downtown Housing Choices

K. High Speed Internet Access - 3.8%

L. Education Funding - 3.4%

M. Traditional Settlement Patterns - 2.7%
- 1.1%   Historic Preservation
- 1.1%   More Compact Development in Downtown Areas
- 0.8%   Better Planning for Population Growth and Changing Demographics

N. Energy Efficiency - 2.7%
- 1.5%   Energy Efficiency Options
- 0.8%   Cheaper Oil and Gas

O. Anything - 0.8%

P. Better Hazard Mitigation Planning - 0.8%

Q. Weather - 0.4%

V.   REVIEW OF LOCAL MASTER PLAN VISION SECTIONS

In the Spring of 2013, SWRPC staff reviewed and inventoried the vision sections and/or future land use sections of municipal master plans to see how the goals of these sections compared to and supported the NH Livability Principles. Staff completed the review for the Master Plan documents that the Planning Commission had available in its library and were able to access electronically online. The following communities master plans have yet to be reviewed, Greenville, Windsor, and Troy. However, these Master Plans will be incorporated into this review. The preliminary results of this work are listed below. This information was last updated on May 20, 2013.

Traditional Settlement Patterns (Addressed in 90.6% of Plan Goals)

a)	50.0%	**Growth Management**

▪To guide growth into areas of town capable of supporting development and to discourage inappropriate development in sensitive areas.
▪Focus growth to appropriate areas in order to accommodate the need for residential, commercial and industrial development while balancing density and open space opportunities.
▪Anticipate the demands that new growth will place on refuse and sewage disposal and plan accordingly.

b)	37.5%	**To encourage and support the preservation and protection of historic sites/resources**
c)	34.4%	**Preserve the unique identity and historic development patterns**
d)	21.9%	**Promote land use activities that accommodate the needs of the residents while at the same time protect and preserve the natural, cultural, scenic, and historic resources of the town.**
e)	9.4%	**Continually monitor and update land use controls to effectively implement the Local Master Plan and manage anticipated growth.**

▪Establish a comprehensive system for the evaluation, analysis and decision-making process in dealing with land development.

Natural Resource Function & Quality (Addressed in 90.6% of Plan Goals)

a)	59.38%	**Protect, conserve, and preserve natural resources**
b)	40.6%	**Protect the quality and supply of water**
c)	31.25%	**Encourage the protection / creation of open space**
d)	21.9%	**Provide guidance for the use and care of natural resources**
e)	15.60%	**Encourage agricultural activity**
f)	9.38%	**Encourage protection and management of forest resources**
g)	3.1%	**To avoid or minimize natural hazards**
h)	3.1%	**Preserve scenic viewsheds**

Housing (Addressed in 68.8% of Plan Goals)

a)   **31.30%   Ensure that adequate, safe, and sanitary housing is available for all existing and future residents**

b)   **31.3%   Support and encourage a balanced and diverse housing stock that provides housing opportunities for a wide range of people**

c)   **6.30%   Recognize the significance of seasonal and second homes to the housing stock**

d)   **6.30%   Encourage the preservation and improvement of existing housing**

e)   **6.30%   Establish a means of maintaining a uniform and updated inventory of all types of housing in town.**

f)   **3.10%   Encourage appropriately-scaled and centrally-located retirement and affordable housing opportunities**

Economic Vitality (Addressed in 62.5% of Plan Goals)

a)   **46.9%   Promote Economic Development**
   ▪To support and encourage economic development (including commercial and industrial growth/uses) as a way to protect and enhance quality of life
   ▪Ensure that economic growth does not detract from rural character

b)   **18.8%   Balanced Local Economy**
   ▪To provide a balanced, stable local economy
   ▪Mix of Uses
   ▪Stabilized tax rate

c)   **6.3%   Economic Opportunity**
   ▪To ensure opportunity for employment and economic vitality

Community Vitality (Addressed in 59.4% of Plan Goals)

a)   **50%   Community Services**
   ▪   To provide adequate, quality community services to residents that are accessible and affordable in an efficient and cost effective/fiscally responsible manner.
   ▪   To maintain and enhance community facilities

b)   **28.10%   Sustained/Increased Civic Engagement**
   ▪   To ensure that local government is transparent, accessible, and responsive to the needs of residents
   ▪   To encourage citizen participation in town affairs through improved communication and coordination between elected officials and town boards, residents, business owners, and others in Town.

c)   **18.70%   Community Character**
   ▪To maintain, nurture, and protect community character (whether it be rural, small town, visual/aesthetic etc)
   ▪To sustain vibrant community life.

d)   **9.40%   Monitor Changing Needs**
   ▪To monitor, evaluate and plan for town's changing needs and population growth.

e)   **9.40%   Health/Welfare**
   ▪To protect public health and safety

▪To provide opportunities for all residents to be active and healthy
f)   **6.25%**   **Art & Culture**
▪To promote culture and arts
g)   **6.25%**   **Education**
h)   **3.10%**   **Regional Coordination**
▪To develop a greater Regional Connection to support residents more efficiently

Transportation (Addressed in 43.6% of Plan Goals)

a)   **21.90%**   **Ensure that the transportation system functions as safely and efficiently as possible.**

b)   **18.6%**   **Maintain/expand roads and town property in such a way that the needs of the town are met, yet do not detract from the natural beauty/rural character of the town.**

c)   **9.40%**   **Support transportation systems/networks that serve as alternatives to vehicular modes of travel.**

d)   **9.40%**   **Establish a program to review/determine need for and recommend improvements to existing infrastructure**

e)   **3.10%**   **Support multi-use trail networks that provide safe passage to local businesses, historical, cultural, and recreational resources.**

Recreation (Addressed in 15.6% of Plan Goals)

a)   **15.6%**   **Recreation Opportunity**
▪Encourage and support the provision/maintenance/use of year round recreational activities and opportunities for residents of all ages
▪Examine possibility for coordination with surrounding towns/communities to offer recreational activities, promote connectivity between trail networks

Energy Efficiency (Addressed in 9.4% of Plan Goals)

a)   **9.4%**   **Energy Efficiency**
▪Support and encourage energy conservation and efficiency

VI.   HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

During May-July 2013, the University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted a survey for New Hampshire's nine Regional Planning Commissions, as part of the *Granite State Future* and the *New Hampshire Broadband Mapping and Planning* initiatives. A survey of two thousand nine hundred and thirty-five (2,935) New Hampshire adults was conducted by telephone between May 9 and July 21, 2013. The survey questioned New Hampshire residents on their opinions on a range of issues facing communities around the State – transportation and broadband infrastructure, housing, economic development, natural resource management, energy and natural hazard mitigation. The response rate was 33% and the margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 2.2%. (See Technical Report for a more detailed description of survey methods.)

- Responses from residents of the Upper Valley & Southwest Region were largely similar to those of statewide residents. The big differences involved what type of neighborhood residents live in (more Upper Valley & Southwest residents live in rural locations away from the town center), transportation investments (less likely to favor reducing congestion on major roads) and the type of internet connection that residents have (less likely to have cable internet, more likely to have DSL).

- Residents believe that environmental protection and natural resource protection should be the top priority for investing public dollars, and a majority believes that all environmental protection measures mentioned should be high priorities for policymakers.

- Residents view energy efficiency and energy choices as the second most important priority for investing public dollars. Residents are largely in favor of all the proposed energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, except for the idea of having public charging stations made for electric vehicles.

- Residents view safe and affordable housing as the third most important priority for investing public dollars. The development of single family housing and assisted living facilities were particularly favorable to residents while development of manufactured housing and apartments were the least favorable.

- Residents say that the top activity that their community should actively encourage is promoting local agriculture (93%). Majorities want to encourage many other activities as well, including protecting historic buildings and neighborhoods (88%) and promoting safe places to walk or bike (81%).

- Residents view quality schools as the most important thing to have in their community (94%). Other important aspects of a community include having nearby job opportunities (88%), farms, farm stands and forestry (86%), small businesses and retail stores (84%), and grocery stores (80%).

- Residents view maintaining our bridges and highways to be the most important priority for transportation funding (74%). Residents were split on funding for other transportation

initiatives, with a narrow majority favoring funding for senior and special needs transportation (51%).

- The vast majority of residents (84%) have internet access at home, and almost all of them (88%) consider their internet access adequate for their uses. Almost as many (84%) would not be willing to pay any additional money in exchange for faster internet speeds.

Demographics

Sex	UV/SW	State
Male	50%	49%
Female	50%	51%
Age of Respondent		
18 to 29	18%	19%
30 to 39	16%	15%
40 to 49	19%	20%
50 to 59	19%	20%
60 to 69	17%	14%
70 or older	11%	12%
Years Lived In NH		
5 years or less	13%	9%
6 to 10 years	9%	9%
11 to 20 years	13%	21%
20 or more years	65%	61%
Employment Status		
Employed full-time	43%	48%
Employed part-time	11%	11%
Self-Employed	10%	8%
Retired and not working	21%	20%
Unemployed & looking for work	4%	4%
Not Employed & Not Looking	11%	10%
Children in Household		
No children	69%	66%
One	13%	14%
Two or more	18%	20%

Race of Respondent	UV/SW	State
White	93%	93%
Non-White	7%	7%
Household Income		
Less than $20,000	10%	10%
$20,000 to $39,999	29%	15%
$40,000 to $59,999	18%	14%
$60,000 to $90,000	20%	21%
$90,001 to $160,000	22%	26%
More than $160,000	11%	14%
Highest Level of Education		
High school or less	21%	20%
Technical school/Some college	23%	22%
College graduate	32%	35%
Postgraduate work	24%	23%
Region of Employment		
Northern NH	21%	10%
Western NH	35%	5%
Central/Lakes	5%	12%
Hillsborough County	9%	22%
Seacoast	1%	20%
Other State	16%	19%
Work At Home	13%	12%

VII.   TOPIC ORIENTED FOCUS GROUPS

Throughout the fall of 2013, Southwest Region Planning Commission staff conducted a series of eight focus groups on a variety of topics including economic development, energy, housing, natural resources, public health, transportation, water infrastructure and working landscapes. The purpose of these discussions was to identify the most significant issues facing the region around each topic and the challenges to and opportunities for addressing these issues. Over 100 individuals representing various organizations, institutions, communities, and businesses from across the region participated in these conversations. Included below is an overview of the primary themes discussed by participants at each focus group. Following this overview are brief summaries of the challenges and opportunities addressed at each focus group.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **Encourage economic diversification**
  – Encouraging diversity in the types and sizes of regional businesses and industries will help the region be less sensitive to changes in outside markets and weather economic downturns.
- **Concern for changing demographics**
  – There is concern for the impacts of the region's changing demographics, specifically an aging population and declining younger population, on the economy.
- **Increase economic competitiveness**
  – It is important to enhance the economic competitiveness of the region; specifically, to identify the region's competitive advantage and establish economic incentives that encourage business growth.
- **Importance of education**
  – Ensuring the economic viability of the region's educational institutions and promoting opportunities for experiential learning was identified as a critical component of economic development.
- **Importance of adequate infrastructure**
  – The availability of adequate infrastructure (e.g. public water/sewer, broadband, roads, etc.) is necessary to ensure the economic competitiveness and stability of the region.

ENERGY
- **Increase use of renewable energy**
  – It is important to lend support for increasing the use of renewable energy in the region and the state.
- **Increase energy efficiency of buildings**
  – There is a need improve the energy efficiency of existing and future buildings in the region.
- **Promote travel demand management**
  – Supporting travel demand management initiatives and improved land use planning would help the region to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- **Increase local energy planning and education**
  – There is a need to stimulate and encourage energy planning and awareness activities, especially at the local level. A focus should be on the importance of increasing awareness of and action around climate change issues in the region.

HOUSING

- **Limited quality housing options**
  - There is limited, good-quality housing available in the region and many rental housing options are of substandard quality.
- **Property tax structure is inequitable**
  - There are numerous factors that contribute to housing costs in the region including minimum lot sizes, available infrastructure, energy, transportation, and most significantly, property taxes.
- **Need for diverse housing options**
  - There is a need for affordable and diverse housing options available in communities that meets the needs of an aging population and encourages younger generations to move to and stay in the region.
- **Need to allow for mixed use development**
  - There is a need to work with communities to encourage mixed use development that is compatible with community character.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- **Concern for improving air quality**
  - If Cheshire County were to exceed the acceptable air quality limits imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency there would be a potential for significant economic implications.
- **Importance of water quality protection**
  - There is a need to improve protection of water quality resources at the local and regional levels and for increased outreach and action about the importance of water quality.
- **Support for land conservation efforts**
  - There is support for enhancing land conservation efforts in the region and for more strategic and targeted conservation.
- **Concern for loss of habitat**
  - There is concern for the loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity as a result of land lost to development in the region.
- **Concern for climate disruption**
  - There is concern for the impacts that climate change will have on the region's environment and natural resources.
- **Need for multi-town and regional coordination**
  - There is a need for increased coordination of communities and organizations in the region to address and plan for natural resource management and protection.

PUBLIC HEALTH

- **Need early intervention services for substance use and behavioral health issues**
  - There is concern for the high prevalence of substance use among adolescences and young adults in the region and the relationship between substance use and behavioral health issues. There is a need for resources that support simultaneous early intervention, prevention and remediation, especially for youth.
- **Concern for an aging population**

- The region's changing demographics, specifically the expected increase in population over the age of 65 and the decline of younger populations living in the region, will have health and socioeconomic implications.
- **Improved transportation options**
  - The lack of transportation options in the region is a significant barrier to access to care and promoting healthy communities.
- **Need options for urgent care**
  - With limited options for urgent care, the region has a high percentage of individuals that use the emergency room for non-emergencies which drives up the cost of health care.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Lack of funding to support transportation**
  - There are limited sources of funding to support transportation infrastructure and initiatives within the state and region.
- **Impact of changing demographics**
  - Participants noted that younger generations seem less attached to vehicle ownership than older populations. There is a concern for the future of local communities if youth are less interested in moving to these rural areas, which have relatively significant transportation expectations.
- **Importance of community transportation**
  - There is a need for increased support for and coordination of community transportation in the region.
- **Limited intercity bus transportation**
  - There is a need for more intercity / interregional transportation options to connect the region with neighboring areas and states.
- **Develop and promote multi-modal infrastructure**
  - There is a need to identify opportunities for building and promoting multi-modal infrastructure in communities.
- **Need for improved public outreach and education**
  - Participants discussed the importance of expanding and improving public outreach and education on the topic of transportation.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Lack of funding to maintain and upgrade aging infrastructure**
  - Participants expressed concern for the age of the region's water infrastructure and the costs associated with maintaining and upgrading this infrastructure over time.
- **Difficulty complying with state and federal regulations**
  - The process for navigating and complying with state and federal regulations and standards related to water infrastructure is challenging and should be improved.
- **Impact of natural features on water infrastructure**
  - For some communities, natural barriers, such as difficult terrain and beaver dams, present significant challenges to maintaining water infrastructure.

WORKING LANDSCAPES

- **Protect and encourage biodiversity**
  - It is important to work with small farmers, land owners, managers of conservation lands and others to encourage pollinator diversity and abundance.
- **Limited enforcement of regulations**
  - Although state and local governments may have adopted environmental regulations, enforcement of these rules is a significant challenge.
- **Increased support for conservation initiatives**
  - There is a need to identify opportunities to assist and enhance conservation efforts in the region.
- **Economic viability of agriculture and working landscapes**
  - Economic viability is a critical component to sustaining agriculture and working landscapes in the region.
- **Decreasing development pressures**
  - It is important to remove the pressure or threat of development on prime agricultural soils.
- **Improve regional collaboration and coordination**
  - It is important for organizations, communities and institutions to form partnerships and collaborate at the regional level.