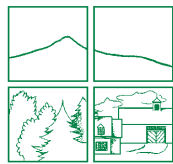


The Southwest Region at the Beginning of the 21st Century



SWRPC












Southwest Region Planning Commission
20 Central Square, 2nd Floor
Keene, New Hampshire 03431

F i r s t E d i t i o n 2 0 0 2

Guiding Change

The Southwest Region at the Beginning of the 21st Century

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Guiding Change

The Southwest Region at the Beginning of the 21st Century

Message from the Board of Directors

The purpose of community planning is to anticipate change and guide it towards a desirable future. The purpose of this Regional Plan is to help the citizens and communities of the Southwest Region understand and plan for the changes which they foresee in the first years of the 21st century.

In developing this Plan, the Commission first looked at those qualities and attributes which residents thought defined the Southwest Region, and which were considered important to preserve. This list included the physical environment, the historical and cultural richness, a strong economy, and the public spirit of citizens who have worked together for years to preserve these qualities in the Monadnock region.

The Commission then interviewed citizens involved in many different aspects of planning in their individual towns, finding out what was working well and what needed attention as they considered their town's future. They were also asked how and where a more regional approach could be helpful.

The results of these discussions have been collected and edited by a committee of the Staff and Board of Directors of the SWRPC. The resources of the Commission have provided background, and suggestions for future planning have been made for each of eleven different topics. Each chapter is complemented by an appendix of resources available in that particular subject.

The SWRPC hopes that this Regional Plan will be useful to the members of various Boards who are responsible for future planning in each of its member towns. It may also be useful to members of State government, industry, and others who are interested in the future of the Region. In particular, the Commission hopes that this Plan will serve to promote regional thinking as it becomes ever more clear that the welfare of each of our towns is tied to the welfare of the Region as a whole.

SWRPC Board of Directors 2001 – 2002

Tom Mullins, Chairman – *Greenfield*
Richard Berry, Vice-Chairman – *Keene*
Ann Sweet, Secretary – *Sullivan*
David Krisch, Treasurer – *Swanzey*

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Richard Mellor – *Rindge*
Lawrence Robinson – *Marlborough*
Reginald Simino – *Westmoreland*
Eleanor Vander Haegen – *Fitzwilliam*

Guiding Change

The Southwest Region at the Beginning of the 21st Century

SWRPC Mission Statement

To work in partnership with the communities of the Southwest Region to promote sound decision-making for the conservation and effective management of natural, cultural and economic resources.

NH RSA Chapter 36 Regional Planning Commissions

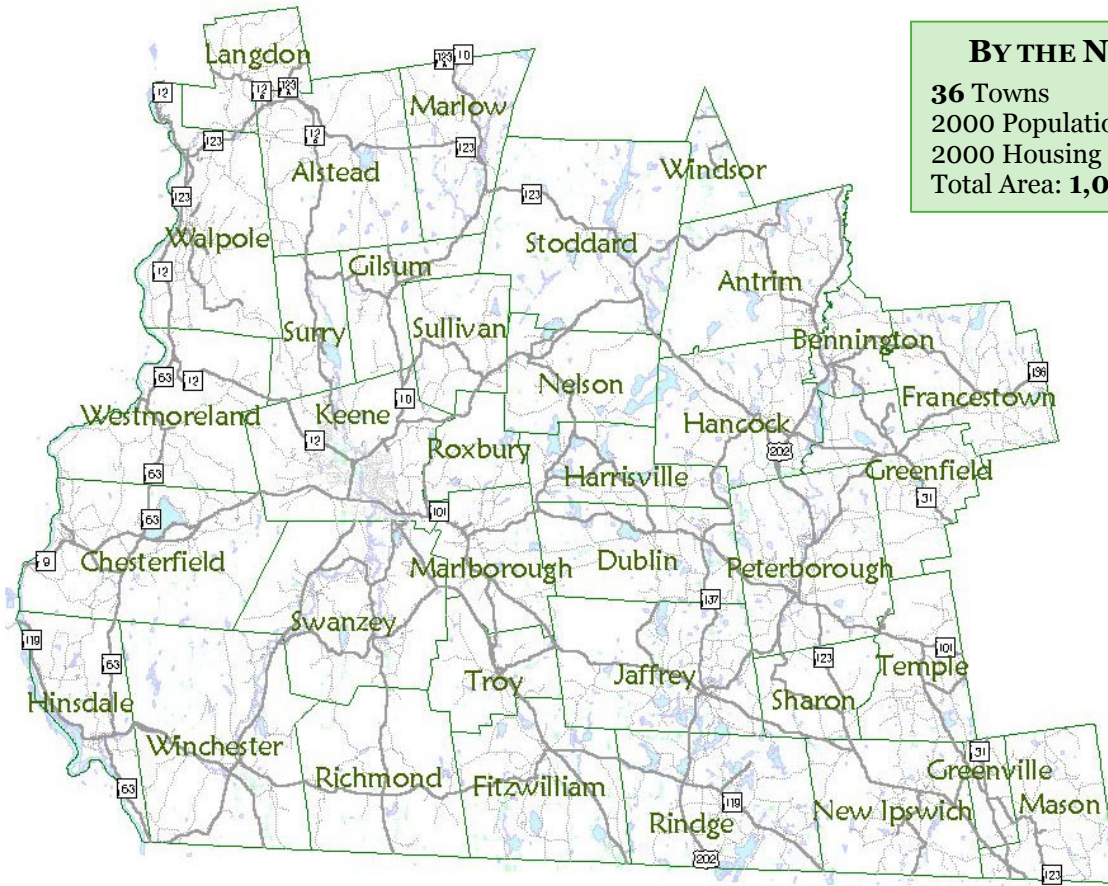
Pursuant to RSA 36:45, regional planning commissions in New Hampshire are to prepare plans for their respective regions ... "taking into account present and future needs with a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land, such as agriculture, forestry, industry, commerce, and housing; the facilitation of transportation and communication, the proper and economic location of public utilities and services; the development of adequate recreational areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds."

Acknowledgements

The Planning Commission wishes to thank the many people in town offices, non-profit organizations and other community leadership roles who contributed essential information and insight to this project.

Special thanks is also due to the members of the Guiding Change Review Committee comprised of Mary Jane Grasty, Betsey Harris and Ann Sweet along with several Planning Commission staff members.

The SWRPC Region



BY THE NUMBERS:
36 Towns
 2000 Population: **98,538**
 2000 Housing Units: **41,785**
 Total Area: **1,031 sq mi**

- ## Towns of the Southwest Region
- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Alstead | Hinsdale | Roxbury |
| Antrim | Jaffrey | Sharon |
| Bennington | Keene | Stoddard |
| Chesterfield | Langdon | Sullivan |
| Dublin | Marlborough | Surry |
| Fitzwilliam | Marlow | Swanzey |
| Francestown | Mason | Temple |
| Gilsom | Nelson | Troy |
| Greenfield | New Ipswich | Walpole |
| Greenville | Peterborough | Westmoreland |
| Hancock | Richmond | Winchester |
| Harrisville | Rindge | Windsor |

Introduction

The Southwest Region is many things: natural beauty, historic villages, Yankee tradition, good jobs, strong economy, and, perhaps most importantly, a community of capable residents. All of these things that residents enjoy and take pride in are, in part, products of change. Change has come to the Region by design and by chance, bringing good fortunes and misfortune. While residents have many different visions and hopes for the future, there seems to be consensus that protecting the good things we have and improving our community are priorities.

Planning is guiding change toward a desired future – a future that holds promise of continued improvement and assurances against loss. Effective planning requires anticipating change, understanding relationships among forces of change and our community, and finding consensus on the best course of action. The Planning Commission developed “Guiding Change” to provide information and policy guidance to all those concerned about the future of the 36 towns of the Southwest Region, especially local government.

The Commission encourages the reader to view this Plan as a work in-progress. The ideas presented herein are based on current thinking in the field of community planning and represent the impressions and understandings of the many people involved with the preparation of the Plan. It is hoped that this presentation will stimulate discussion and action, and possibly the exploration of new ways of doing community business. In short, the Planning Commission recommends that the topics discussed here be considered by each town. “Guiding Change” encourages a regional perspective in municipal work and cooperation among municipalities, and is intended to guide the Commission’s work.

The Planning Commission’s Board of Directors and staff worked together in the research (which included interviews with local officials and other experts), analysis and writing of the Plan. The Planning Commission approached the design of this Plan by first asking a series of questions:

- What are the defining characteristics of the Region?
- What features or values do we know the residents of the Region want to protect?
- What challenges or threats to those features are we aware of today?
- How can the Planning Commission assist the municipalities of the Southwest Region individually and as a whole?

Eleven topics were identified as warranting attention in community planning and municipal governance: public administration, the natural environment, land use, demographics, economic development, housing, transportation, telecommunications, historic resources, education, and recreation. Each topic is addressed with a brief summary of recent, current and expected future conditions. The Planning Commission also proposes recommendations for action by towns and the Commission regarding each of the eleven topics.

The Plan includes appendices of supporting information, including a directory of agencies and organizations that are best suited to provide further information or other assistance, in some cases as partners, to act on the challenges discussed in this Plan.

1. Public Administration

INTRODUCTION

Municipal government exists to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the people. The organization, authority, and responsibilities of local town government are prescribed by State law. Elected or appointed officials, mostly volunteers selected from among neighbors, serve in executive, legislative and judiciary roles. Public works, law enforcement, emergency services, clerical, and administrative duties are typically carried out by paid staff.

In the model of the Federal government, our town government is "of the people, by the people and for the people." Local government in New Hampshire has traditionally been a forum for community life - a meeting place, an expression of mutual interests, needs, and cooperation for the greater good of all. Wycliffe's axiom, that government for the people requires action by the people, was assumed, and the system worked.

This may be changing. Many towns are discovering that it is hard to find enough willing and capable people to fill all the volunteer and staff positions required to run the town. At the same time, populations are growing, money is short, and the requirements of administration have increased dramatically. Some towns seem to be handling these pressures well; others are floundering.

BACKGROUND

Town officials and staff identified some of the most pressing problems confronting municipal governments in the Southwest Region, and suggest some possible local or regional ways of addressing them. Their ideas were provided with the hope that organizations like the Planning Commission can continue to serve as a forum for towns to exchange their best thoughts on municipal governance. Several trends characterize the changes affecting a town's ability to continue effective self-government and carry out basic municipal administration:

- Fewer citizens are participating in town government. Attendance at town meeting is down, as is attendance at public hearings on land use and budgets. Fewer people are running for public office, or accepting appointments. The 35-40 mostly volunteer positions in town government are becoming harder to fill.
- Administrative requirements have increased. Technical expertise is required to comply with new standards on subjects like solid waste, road engineering, drinking water safety, and personnel practices.
- New residents expect more in municipal services. Older residents may be suffering from changes in housing and land values.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

These are only some of the changes which have been felt by towns in the Region. These trends are expected to continue. While these and other challenges may not be brand new problems, it is plain that they require our attention. Anticipated population growth, largely due to the immigration of families, will burden municipal government for higher levels of service and towns for higher levels of expenditure – changes which for many small towns will force local government to cross a threshold of technological and administrative sophistication. If we are not to lose the qualities which define our Region, we must find new ways to think about municipal governance.



Hinsdale Town Hall



Swanzy Town Hall

SUGGESTIONS

Elected and hired local officials suggest several general directions for change within government to cope with changes currently experienced and anticipated for the near future:

- Towns can make the job more attractive to citizens so that additional well-qualified residents will step forward to help.
- Towns should make the job easier, so volunteers who do step forward will not be overwhelmed.
- Towns should develop new ways of doing business, embracing change rather than resisting it or being defeated by it.

The following ideas may also provide relief to municipal government:

1. Within towns

- develop management plans, perhaps using new business models, for using scarce resources (people, time, and money) better;
- centralize administration of various departments, using good office personnel. Use computers for routine chores (e.g., reminders for inspections, employee physicals);
- offer incentives to recruit competent personnel, pay them competitively, and require training to current standards;
- find new ways to entice volunteers (status, community recognition);
- work with schools to develop a better understanding of town government and civic responsibility; and
- encourage citizen volunteers in projects which promote community self-respect (e.g., town newspaper, Old Home Day, town sports teams).

2. Between towns, or regionally

- join with other towns or small groups of towns to administer or share the costs of such things as: highway engineering and maintenance, code enforcement, and heavy equipment;
- standardize job descriptions/qualifications/training for staff;
- plan regionally for land and water resource conservation;
- seek volunteer help on individual special projects to promote understanding of government function among residents and recruit useful talent; and
- the Planning Commission can provide facilitation, training, networking, and information to town governments regarding public administration.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**



2. Environment

INTRODUCTION

The quality and accessibility of the Region's natural environment is an important part of how so many residents and visitors define "quality of life". Accordingly, protecting the natural environment is a priority. Concern about ecology, wildlife and the availability of basic resources, such as clean water and air, are frequent topics of public discussions about our future and the directions of our community development. Threats to environmental quality stem from forces originating within the Region and beyond. There are direct economic effects of our manipulation of the natural environment: both benefits and costs. There are also indirect, often long term and severe effects of man-made changes in the natural environment, many of which have been recognized only after years or decades following decisions and actions. Current conditions and anticipated trends warrant enhanced public action for environmental protection. Residents might agree that this is a beautiful place, and we want to keep it that way.

BACKGROUND

The Southwest Region's natural environment has been significantly changed during the past 300 years. And the rate of change and permanence of change since World War II is much greater than previously experienced. Population growth, demand for rural single-family housing, and robust consumer activity are local roots of environmental change. New homes, industry and business often displace wild plant and animal habitat and disrupt the movement and quality of water.

The NH Comparative Risk Project, completed in 1997, brought together 55 professionals, scientists and policy-makers to identify and rank environmental risks. The project report represents a substantial compendium of expert understanding of the linkage among Ecological Integrity, Economic Well-Being and Public Health as the three building blocks of "quality of life". Five of the top ten risks result from the destruction of natural land and water habitat by development, and the other five arise from pollution by common human activities, e.g. smoking, driving cars, and burning fossil fuels.

The effects of man-made change in natural systems are better understood all the time. While there is not consensus on the ultimate effect this change might bring, many see careful scrutiny of existing and planned community development patterns as key to preventing irreparable damage. Recently, local government and residents identify protection of unfragmented wild lands and water resources as priorities for public attention.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

Today the Region's landscape satisfies residents' and visitors' requirements for natural beauty, recreation and privacy. For many this landscape serves as relief from the din, dust, smog and social pressures of urban living. However, as the Region's population continues to grow, the pressures for conversion of undeveloped land will also grow. The impacts of that development reach far beyond the edges of new lawns and parking lots. Continued loss of wild land and the cumulative effects of previous development may have costly consequences. Loss of biodiversity, public and private expense of securing clean water and loss of rural and forested ambience are consequences foreseen by some today.

Statewide, about 14,000 acres of previously wild or agricultural land are developed each year for residential or commercial use. The Southwest Region represents about 10% of the State's land area, with about 10% of the State's population. Therefore, it may be reasonable to expect more than 1,400 acres of undeveloped land will be converted to developed uses in the Southwest Region each year.

SUGGESTIONS

- Local government can use two levels of public action for environmental protection:
 1. allocation of public funds for land conservation; and
 2. integration of environmental protection goals in Master Plans, public spending programs and land use regulations based on sound environmental information and responsible policy options.
- Conservation Commissions are directed by state law to play a leadership role among local boards for research, policy development, public education and land use planning regarding protection of the natural environment. A Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), a basic planning tool recommended to all Southwest Region municipalities, should be developed by each Conservation Commission. Few Southwest Region towns currently have an NRI.
- Southwest Region towns should consider the New Hampshire's Land & Community Heritage Investment Program as an excellent source of grant funds to match local funds and in-kind contributions for the acquisition of land or development rights for land protection.
- The Planning Commission and other agencies have information, technical expertise and professional expertise about the natural environment, environmental protection and community development and are readily accessible to Conservation Commissions. Conservation Commissions should take the initiative to contact these service and information providers.
- Environmental protection is truly a regional issue. Regional or multi-town meetings of Conservation Commissions can enhance each town's ability to identify and protect the natural assets.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION:
SEE APPENDIX**



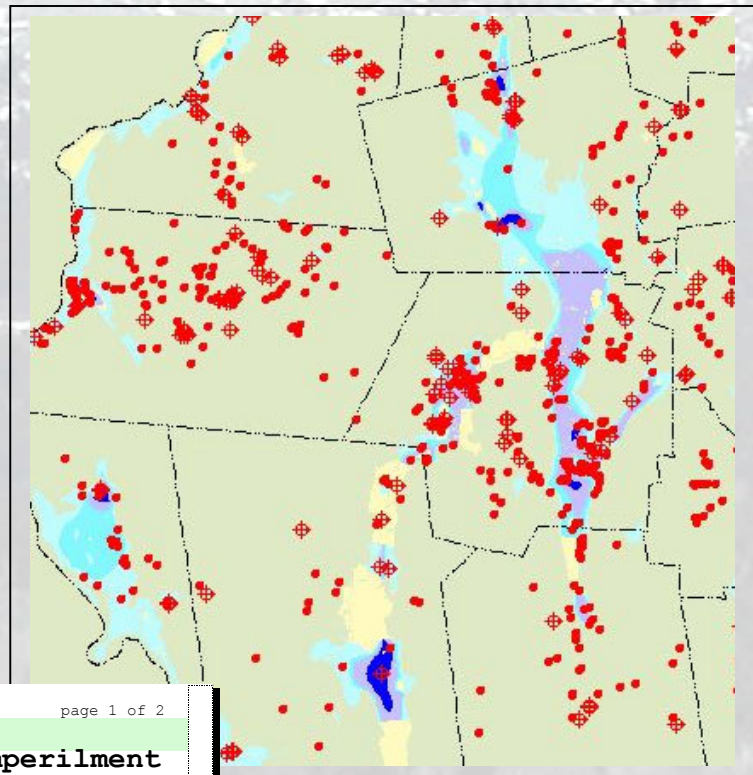
Mount Monadnock



2. Environment



Stratified Drift Aquifers & Water Wells in the Ashuelot and Connecticut River Valleys



page 1 of 2

Statistics of Loss and Imperilment

14,000 acres/year developed

Rare, threatened or endangered:

- * 289 plant species
- * 34 animal species
- * 25 plant communities

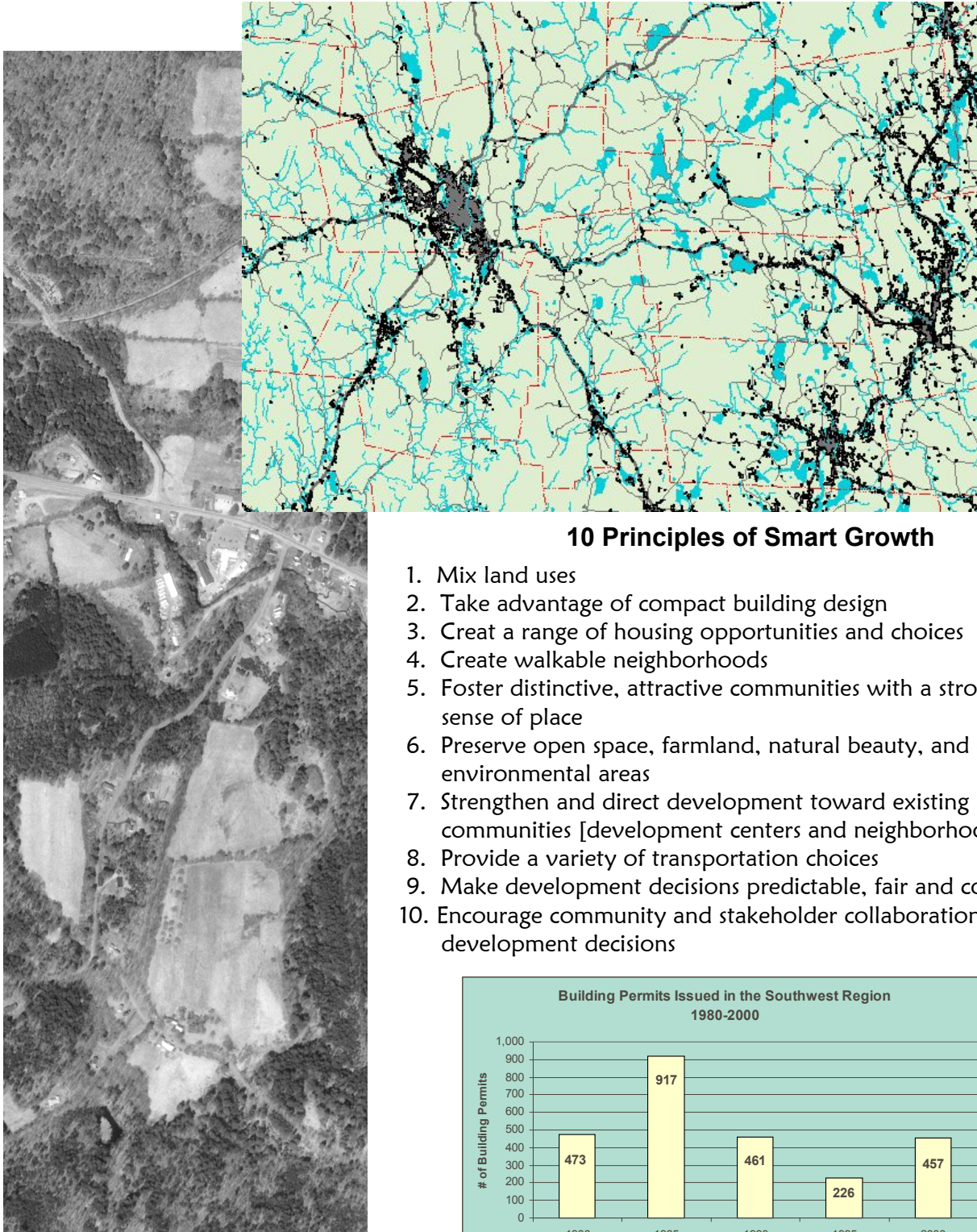
Species of concern:

- * 41 birds
- * 11 mammals
- * 11 invertebrates

Preservation of wild places is a challenge throughout the State.

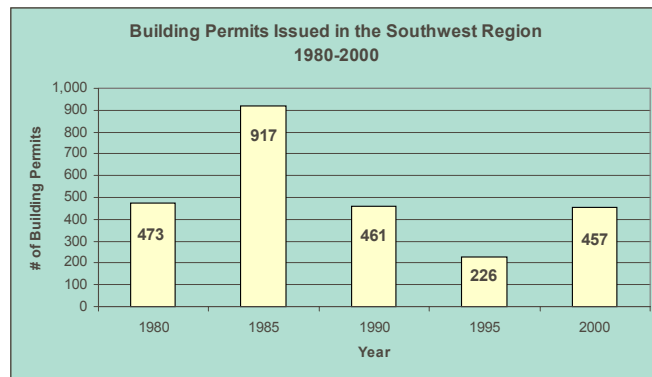
3. Land Use

Distribution of development across the center of the Southwest Region



10 Principles of Smart Growth

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities [development centers and neighborhoods]
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions



3. Land Use

INTRODUCTION

The management of land use patterns is fundamental to all other aspects of community development. Planning and managing land use at the local level can establish land use relationships within a single town and among neighboring towns that complement rather than compete with each other. The basic purpose of public land use regulation through planning, zoning and site standards is to segregate incompatible uses. The public thereby benefits in a variety of ways including protection of capital investments, protection of environmental quality, and ensuring the coordinated development of public services and infrastructure, such as roads, emergency services and schools.

BACKGROUND

Development of the Southwest Region prior to the 20th Century was largely driven by the distribution of natural resources which supported agriculture, lumber, and hydro-powered industry. The development patterns of village centers, widely dispersed farms and other rural housing established in those early years persist as the foundation for contemporary land use. Today, a greater density of residential development is dispersed throughout the Region. There is very little agriculture. A variety of manufacturing and businesses reside along highways and in downtowns. The development of highways and availability of cars have extended individuals' range for daily activity to more than 75 miles from home. The regional economy and high demand for access to "rural" living by professionals and laborers alike has created an increasingly suburban development pattern throughout much of the Region.

Many homes are owner-occupied, detached single-family homes on two or more acres dispersed along paved municipal roads and secondary state routes. Multi-family housing is limited primarily to areas with municipal water and sewer systems. Manufactured housing is found in all of the towns - on individual lots, in parks, or both. Homes in Planned Unit Developments and Cluster/Open Space Developments are a very small percentage of the Region's residential development. Traditional village centers persist today only as residential enclaves while commerce, services and employment tend to be centralized near a handful of downtown areas, such as Keene, Jaffrey and Peterborough.

Strip development is a growing concern throughout the Region. It is economically attractive for commercial developers and business owners due to low construction costs, but the visual effects and the traffic generated conflict with many residents' visions for their communities. Generalized as "sprawl", this low density roadside development pattern also challenges Main Street commercial prosperity.

The total land area of the Southwest Region is about 660,000 acres. Residential, commercial, industrial, and public/semi-public uses and roads, occupy about 10% of that total. Another 13% of the total area is protected from development by deed restrictions. The natural physical conditions found on almost 60% of the total land area pose limitations or special challenges to development either by invoking environmental regulations as with wetlands or shorelines, or by physical difficulties as with floodplains, steep slopes or rock outcroppings. This leaves about 17%, or 112,200 acres, of the Region undeveloped and suitable for development.

Most of the Region is zoned for low density residential use (one to five acre lots) with many different provisions for businesses and small industry, by Special Exception, that vary from town to town.

Dedicated commercial use districts tend to be located adjacent to major state highways. Most existing downtowns and villages are zoned for high density residential and in many cases mixed residential and commercial use. Many of the Region's larger lakes are surrounded by high-density residential and seasonal use districts. A few towns have large lot (up to 20 acres) residential districts intended to preserve economically viable timber stands and preserve the scenic qualities of forested hilltops and ridgelines. Several towns have small isolated use districts dedicated for industry.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

In the near term, the Region is expected to remain a rural/suburban area. Moderate growth is predicted over the next 20 years, with most of the growth expected to take place in the Route 202 towns and those along the border with Massachusetts. Towns with municipal water and/or sewer systems will probably attract denser residential development, but the dispersed pattern of residential development is not likely to change.

Keene will continue to serve as the regional center of commerce, industry, employment, and retail and service establishments for most of Cheshire County. Jaffrey, Peterborough and Rindge will continue to serve the same role in the Contoocook Valley. While the continuation of the traditional mixed residential and commercial uses in villages is favored, current land use standards in many towns may not support continued high-density mixed-use development in villages. Due to a combination of zoning conflicts and the economy-of-scale in today's regional economy, new commerce and housing most often arise outside traditional village centers.

SUGGESTIONS

- Towns should strive for a balanced land use pattern with appropriate provisions made for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, agricultural, and public land uses.
- Municipal zoning ordinances should direct growth away from environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, floodplains, aquifers, existing water well recharge areas, and historic resources.
- Municipal zoning should allow the continuation of mixed uses in traditional village centers.
- The Planning Commission can provide information about regional conditions, such as employment patterns and municipal tax rates, for the benefit of municipal planning.
- The Planning Commission can provide assistance in developing and implementing zoning ordinances and subdivision and site plan review regulations.
- The Planning Commission can help towns with build-out analyses to explore the potential for future development.
- The Planning Commission can convene discussions or workshops involving neighboring towns to explore opportunities and concerns regarding regional land use patterns and plans.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**



4. Historic Preservation

INTRODUCTION

Many cultural, natural and historic resources contribute to the uniqueness of the Southwest Region. The Region's rich and varied resources serve not only as links to the past, but influence our sense of place and community identity and contribute to our economic prosperity. When these resources disappear, we jeopardize much of what we value and cherish about this distinct Region.

Through the efforts of the many local historical societies, historic district commissions and concerned residents, much of the Region's rich history and tradition have been retained. Since the 1980s, towns have increasingly become aware of the need to preserve their historic vistas, structures, and elements of the landscape which define our understanding of the past. Many towns have identified their most prominent historical resources and accounted for them in their Master Plans. Others have taken on campaigns to preserve and renovate historic bridges, town halls, and dwellings. Others have engaged in the strategy of adaptive re-use, converting historic structures to new uses while retaining their historic qualities. Such examples suggest that historic preservation has become important to our citizens.

BACKGROUND

During the 1960s and 1970s, many important historic resources were forever lost to the pressures of economic development. Resources saved during this period were often the result of a concerted effort by a dedicated individual or group, rather than the result of planning. In response to continued development pressures of the 1980s, residents realized that the character of their towns, the sense of community that they feel, and the economic prosperity of the Region are all greatly affected by the preservation of their historic assets. By the 1990s, preservation activists were beginning to organize, and historic preservation was considered a worthy and legitimate cause by residents and town governments.

While considered a worthy cause, historic preservation still faces many challenges. Some of the principal challenges are identifying the most important historical resources and deciding which are deserving of special preservation, securing adequate funding sources, mobilizing dedicated volunteers, and assembling necessary procedural and guidance information.

Historic inventories can be the basis of meaningful preservation activity which can safeguard towns against loss of local history and tradition. Inventories are necessary to determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, federal preservation tax incentives, local government program benefits, grants, and technical assistance. Documenting historic resources also allows a community to protect special properties or places that may be affected by publicly funded, assisted or licensed projects, or local development. Documentation may also include oral histories, as audio recordings or transcriptions.

State level programs have recently been developed to assist with the funding of historic preservation. In 2001 the State of New Hampshire established the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program as a funding authority to provide grant funds to municipalities and other organizations to protect historic resources.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

Development pressures will continue to threaten our historic resources. The Region's strong economy coupled with a growing scarcity of housing and steady population growth creates an environment prime for redevelopment. Funding is likely to remain a critical factor in historic preservation.

The New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources is committed to identifying and developing Historic Preservation grant programs in the future. At the municipal and regional levels, heritage tourism may help avoid the loss of historic resources to the pressures of development. Given the Region's significant tourism-based economy, this trend may be expected to continue in the future.

SUGGESTIONS

- Town governments should conduct historic resource inventories and document those identified historic resources in an easily accessible digital database.
- Towns can integrate innovative preservation planning tools into local planning documents:
 - consider adaptive re-use of historic structures (i.e., for uses other than the buildings were originally designed without diminishing the historic integrity of the site or architecture) as an alternative to preservation;
 - consider use of NH Land & Community Heritage Investment Program funding;
 - consider the appropriateness of one or more Historic Districts in municipal zoning;
 - establish municipal curatorship of historic documentation; and
 - organize local and regional economic opportunities of heritage tourism.
- Towns should develop and promote educational initiatives relating to historic preservation.
- The Planning Commission can work with towns to foster increased cooperation, coordination, and communication among and between towns, historic preservation organizations, and other related organizations.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION:
SEE APPENDIX**



4. Historic Preservation

A Partial Listing of Historic Markers in the SWRPC Region

Factory Village	Bennington
Chief justice Harlan Fiske Stone	Chesterfield
First Methodist Meeting Place in New Hampshire	Chesterfield
Brigadier-General James Reed (1722-1807)	Fitzwilliam
Levi Woodbury (1789-1851)	Francestown
Soapstone	Francestown
Town Meeting House (Greenfield)	Greenfield
Hinsdale's Auto Pioneer	Hinsdale
Hannah Davis - Amos Fortune	Jaffrey
Hampshire Pottery 1871-1923	Keene
Keene Glass Industry	Keene
Uncle Sam's House	Mason
Captain Josiah Crosby (1730-1793)	Milford
Barrett House	New Ipswich
First Textile Mill	New Ipswich
Site of Wilder's Chair Factory	New Ipswich
Hosea Ballou (1771-1852)	Richmond
Second Rindge Meeting House	Rindge
Temple Glass Factory	Sharon
Toll House and Toll Gate	Sharon
Stoddard Glass	Stoddard
Stone Arch Bridge	Stoddard
Surry Mountain Gold Mine and Lily Pond	Surry
Denman Thompson (1833-1911)	Swanzey
First Connecticut River Bridge	Walpole
Park Hill Meeting House	Westmoreland

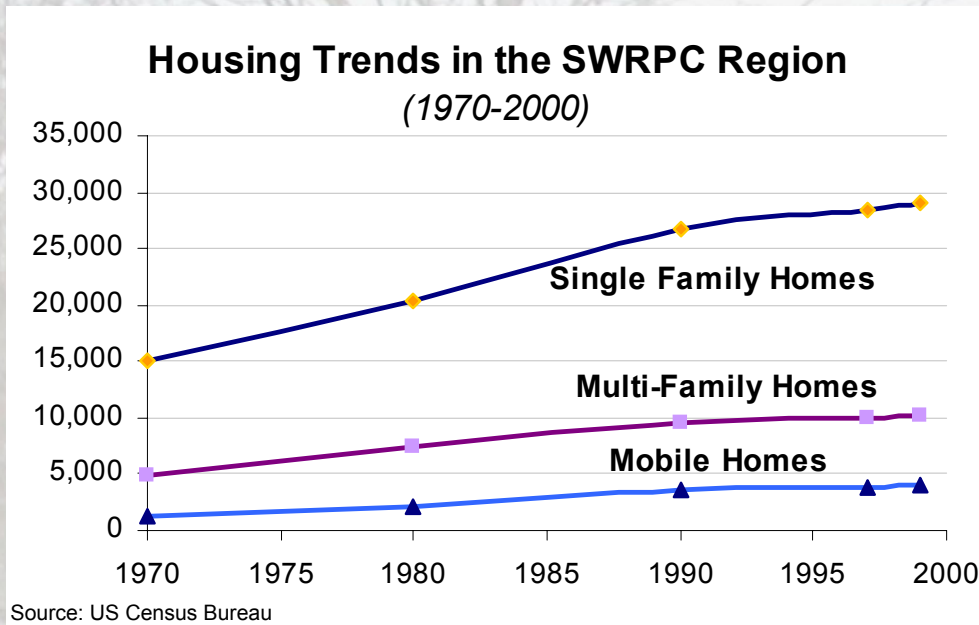
Source: NH Division of Historic Resources

Historic Covered Bridges in the SWRPC Region

Name	Constructed	Town
County Bridge	1937	Hancock/Greenfield
McDermott Bridge	1869	Langdon
Prentiss Bridge	1791	Langdon
Carleton Bridge	1789	Swanzey
Sawyers Crossing	1859	Swanzey
Slate Bridge	1862	Swanzey
West Swanzey Bridge	1832	Swanzey
Ashuelot Bridge	1864	Winchester
Coombs	1837	Winchester

Source: NH Division of Historic Resources

5. Housing



Building Permits Issued in the SWRPC Region (1980-2000)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
# of Building Permits Issued for Single-Family Homes	312	544	280	150	372
# of Building Permits Issued for Multi-Family Homes	125	271	149	24	34
# of Building Permits Issued for Mobile Homes	36	102	32	52	51
# of Building Permits Issued - Total	473	917	461	226	457

Source: NH OSP, 2001

5. Housing

INTRODUCTION

Our housing stock, that is the number, types, quality, and distribution of dwellings, is an important factor in the quality of life and the character of each town and the Region. Decent housing in a suitable living environment is essential to the well-being of all residents. While the matter of housing is largely driven by market forces, municipal government can play a role in meeting the housing needs of the Region's residents by accommodating the needs of all ages, household types and income levels. Municipal planning is strengthened when the relationships among regional demographics, employment, housing, economic stability, and quality of life is accounted for in master planning and land use regulation.

BACKGROUND

The current housing stock in the Southwest Region reflects historic development patterns. The Southwest Region's housing stock grew by 29.3% during the 1980's and 6.2% during the 1990's. Over-speculation about future demand led to a surplus of new homes built during the robust economic upturn of the late 80's. That surplus was absorbed during the 1990's and only low levels of new construction responded to new demand. Today the Southwest Region has a housing supply problem.

Employment opportunity and the quality of life available in the Region have attracted new workers, creating demand for housing. Growth in the percentage of single-adult households during the past decade also adds a new dimension to the housing market. Production of new housing, especially multi-family rental housing, has not kept pace with slow but steadily growing demand. The ongoing increase of low-paying service sector and labor jobs can force workers to spend more than 30% of their incomes on rent or mortgage, a situation which the NH Housing Finance Authority has determined creates economic hardship for one in three households. There is a strong interest in providing multi-unit elderly housing in village centers to allow residents to "age in place" - that is find freedom from the responsibility of independent living in single family housing without leaving their town of residence.

Current market conditions make buying homes more difficult and add demand in the rental market. Since 1990, new construction of rental or multi-family units is uncommon outside of Keene, Peterborough, Swanzey, Winchester, Marlborough, and Hinsdale. Smaller towns have not been able to provide public services and infrastructure to support profitable multi-family developments. Some of the Region's local zoning and subdivision standards have not favored the development of multi-family housing.

Public housing providers point to the increase in occupancy of homeless shelters as an indicator of these market problems. In Keene, for example, while the number of beds is still small by comparison to more urban areas¹, there are much longer stays than previously; people need more time to re-establish themselves in the competitive housing market.

¹ In Keene there are five family apartments, 14 single beds, and an overflow shelter housed in four buildings.



Pierce Housing, Marlborough

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

Population is expected to continue to grow, with rates in the southeast part of the Region remaining higher than elsewhere in the Region. According to population projections prepared by the NH Office of State Planning, this Region can expect to have 118,641 persons by the year 2020. The 2000 U.S. Census reports 98,538 people in the Southwest Region, occupying 41,785 housing units, or about 2.4 persons per dwelling. Applying the same occupancy rate to 2020, would require 49,434 units in the Southwest Region to house the expected population - an 18% increase from the 2000 housing supply, or 7,649 new apartments or homes over 20 years.

SUGGESTIONS

- Master Plans should include a chapter on housing that analyzes existing and future conditions regarding housing stock and demand, accounting for residents of all ages and income levels within the municipality and of the Region.
- Master Plans and zoning ordinances should be reviewed frequently to keep the housing chapter abreast of regional labor market dynamics, school district management, and public services and infrastructure.
- The Planning Commission can assist towns to plan for an appropriate range of housing opportunities, including keeping abreast with NH court law. Local regulations should accommodate one or several residential development patterns which can provide affordable housing, such as Cluster or Open Space Development, Accessory Apartments, Multi-Family, Elderly Housing, and Manufactured Homes.
- New Hampshire statutes enable municipalities to undertake growth management strategies as interim measures to manage the impacts of growth in population and commerce on public services, infrastructure and finances. The Planning Commission can help towns understand the use of this authority.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**



6. Transportation

INTRODUCTION

The ability of people and goods to move about freely with convenient access between destinations is basic to our way of life. Today in the Southwest Region, the personal passenger motor vehicle is a necessity for the movement of people back and forth between home, work, school, socializing, shopping, and recreation. Motorized freight haulers with trucks of all sizes move through the Region twenty-four hours a day to supply work places and retailers here and in neighboring states.

All of this movement takes place on roads and highways maintained by towns and the State. Perhaps no other private or public infrastructure so profoundly affects the shape and character of our downtowns, villages and countryside as do roads – both by their physical presence and by the traffic they carry. While this system has fostered unprecedented prosperity, it is also a source of undesired consequences and mounting challenges for community life.

BACKGROUND

The layout of most of the Region’s highways and roads is an accident of history. Many are simply “dirt roads that got paved”, and in some cases colonial log roads and dry-masonry stone bridges persist under modern pavement and steel. Major State highways are Main Street for thirteen of the Southwest Region’s 36 towns.

State and municipal road development has followed on the heels of land development. During the 1970’s and ‘80’s we learned that it was difficult for the public to avoid the costs of road improvements and expanded emergency services and the changes in community character that follow development. This led many towns to be less likely to grant development permits in remote areas based on limitations of municipal emergency services, snow removal and road maintenance capabilities – claiming proposed development which would be accessed by poor roads to be “scattered and premature”.

Although the Southwest Region lacks high capacity arterial highways, access to Boston, Connecticut, and even New York is still convenient enough to draw many businesses and self-employed professionals to the Region where they enjoy “the best of both worlds” characterized by direct access to the markets of major urban areas and the country living offered in the Southwest Region. Consequently, the average commute to work in the Southwest Region is 22 miles, but 25% of commutes are over 75 miles and weekly car trips for business in excess of 400 miles are not uncommon. The average single-family household in the U.S. is responsible for about 12 local trips each day. Since the 1940’s the number of miles traveled per person has grown steadily, faster than average economic growth rates, and shows no sign of slowing. However, many members of low- and moderate-income households lack reliable personal transportation to stable employment, basic services and shopping. Public transit is available in downtown Keene to address this need within the City.

The cost of improving local and State roads to safely accommodate new traffic is a common concern. Many are concerned about the public’s ability to pay for the maintenance of existing roads and bridges. Impacts of the highway and the motor vehicles that extend beyond the road (e.g., car and truck exhaust, noise, dirty stormwater runoff, etc.) are also a growing public problem.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

There are various trends underway today that are expected to come to bear on public decisions about transportation:

- increasing need for transportation services, be they volunteer, public or for-profit service, for the growing number of elderly people in our communities;
- a growing dissatisfaction with the visual effects of roads on our community character and physical effects of decades of community design to accommodate door-to-door driving;
- increasingly rigorous discussion of the costs of community and environmental impacts in transportation infrastructure choices; and
- a growing need for political will at the local and State levels to match the rates, distribution and kinds of development with highway capacity.

Some of those decisions will be strictly within the purview of municipal government and voters. Other decisions will be made by new partnerships among local, regional and state entities and perhaps new public/private coalitions. Regional transportation studies led by the Planning Commission with direct involvement by towns and State officials, will provide an objective comprehensive approach to long range planning for the infrastructure and communities it supports. These plans can be implemented through local master planning and zoning and the State's 10-Year Transportation Improvement Program.

SUGGESTIONS

- Municipal participation in regional highway transportation planning studies and development of the regional 10-Year Transportation Improvement Program is essential to effectively plan and manage our transportation system.
- Any proposal for a major four-lane highway in Southwest New Hampshire should be examined promptly and with care, taking into consideration the positive and negative impacts on the economy, the environment, and the quality of life in the Region.
- The road design and traffic management approach known as Traffic Calming can have meaningful applications in villages and neighborhoods – for both existing and planned development – creating a safer, pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Development of services, employment and retail in traditional town centers can reduce the number and length of trips in a town thereby reducing vehicle emissions and promoting pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- Public Transportation can support higher downtown development densities, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets, and enhanced mobility for all residents.
- The use of Impact Fees or Tax Increment Finance Districts can shift the cost of infrastructure improvements (both on- and off-site) toward the direct beneficiary (the developer) and relieve the public from substantial and often unanticipated expenses.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**



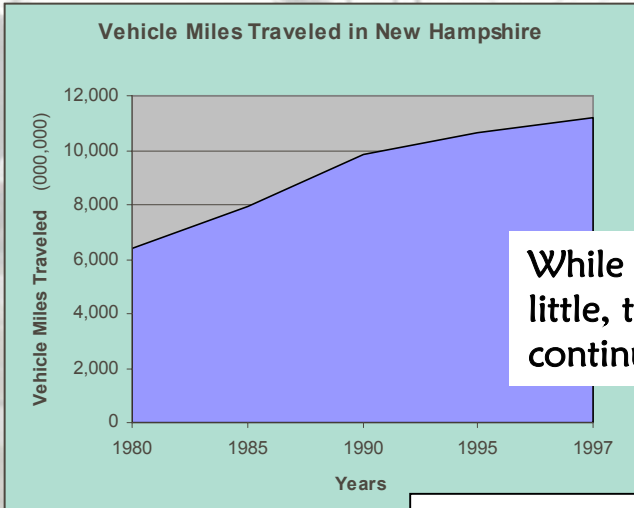
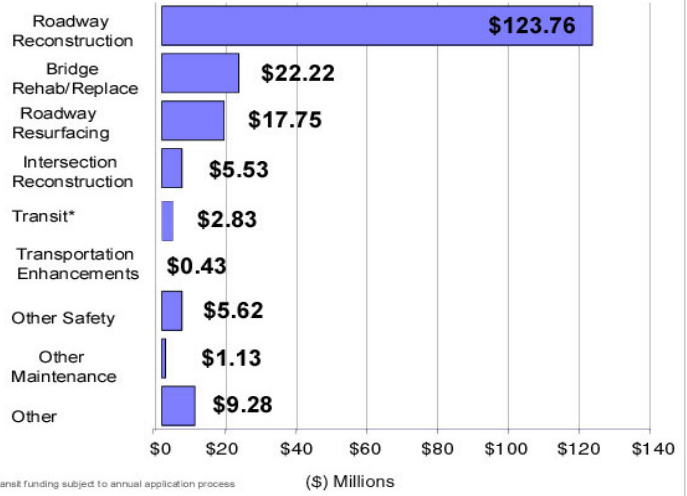
6. Transportation

State and Federal funding for Transportation improvements in the Southwest Region varies greatly from year to year, but is uniform in any 10-year period.

There is growing interest at the Municipal, State and Federal levels for improvements to accommodate safe efficient movement of people and goods that are alternatives to expanded highways – such as, transit and better pedestrian facilities.

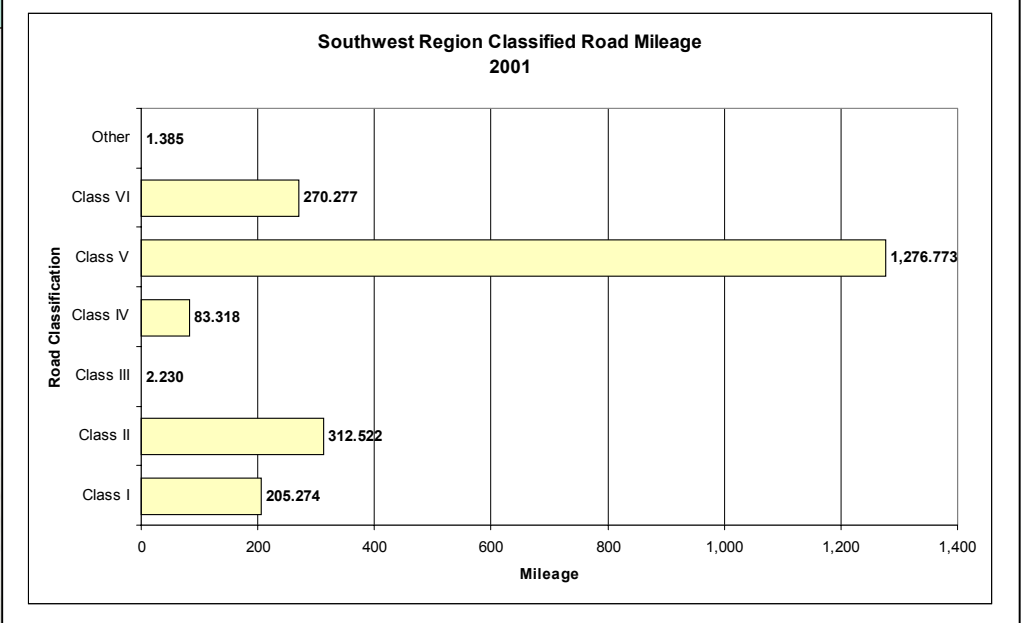
Anticipated Southwest Region TIP Spending * by Project Type, 2003- 2012

* Federal, State and Local Matching Funds



While the number of miles of highway lanes changes little, the number of miles traveled in New Hampshire continues to grow steadily.

Source: Highway Statistics Summary to 1995, and FHWA and Highway Statistics 1997

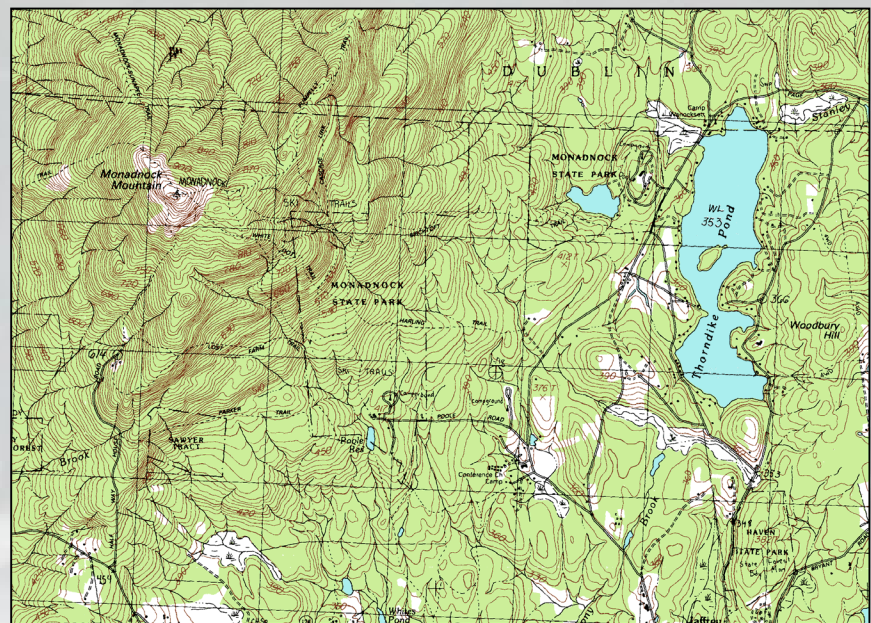


7. Recreation

There are 257 recreation facilities mapped for the Southwest Region in a Statewide GIS Data Base maintained by the NH Office of State Planning.



A topographic map can be anyone's key to outdoor recreation a stone's throw from most front doors.



7. Recreation

INTRODUCTION

Recreation is an important component of our planning for the health and welfare of our communities. Not all residents have the same interests or are able to engage in the same level of activity. But with the excellent natural resources and varied cultural opportunities of the Southwest Region, there are good choices for residents and visitors alike.

Possibilities abound for outdoor recreation in the Region. For boating, fishing and swimming there are 194 Great Ponds in the Southwest Region, all of which allow public access for boating, and many have public town beaches as well. Six State Parks and fourteen State Forests have hiking trails, boat access and picnic areas. An extensive network of trails throughout private lands provides a full range of four-season challenge levels from a Sunday afternoon family picnic to days-long trekking by hiking, horseback riding, skiing, biking, and snowmobiling. There is an exceptional series of trails along former railroad beds criss-crossing the Region. Keene, Jaffrey and Peterborough have special municipal trail systems.

Many people find their recreation in the cultural offerings of the Region: concerts, art exhibits and museums, cinemas and theater, public libraries, historical societies, lectures and symposia. As the population ages, these may become even more important.

Organized municipal programs are important not only for recreation as such, but as a way for residents of all ages to become acquainted. Studies have shown that greater community participation in activities like bowling or soccer leagues, ball teams, or in more passive recreation like church choirs or study groups, leads to greater overall health, welfare and cohesiveness within towns and the Region.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

Population growth will increase demand for all forms of recreation. The trails and camping facilities on Mount Monadnock already suffer from overuse – eroding the quality of everyone’s experience there. Towns can expect the same for town facilities. There is a steady demand for additional outdoor recreation opportunities, public access to private lands, and built public facilities, ranging from water fountains at playgrounds to additional public library space. Increased tourism activity may exacerbate the problems of overuse and demand for public access.

Some more specific areas of concern include:

- the displacement of wild places that have traditionally been available to public use (for trails, hunting and fishing, swimming or nature appreciation) by new housing and roads;
- an aging population will need different sorts of recreation and transportation to reach it;
- management of recreational facilities under increased use will require an increase in volunteer and fiscal resources; and

- much of the outdoor recreation enjoyed by residents and visitors takes place on private land with the tacit approval of landowners – a good ethic of stewardship among users is essential to this invaluable informal relationship.

SUGGESTIONS

- Communities are encouraged to consider cooperation in providing recreational programs and activities.
- Town Master Plans and Natural Resource Inventories should identify recreational possibilities such as trails, fishing streams, and flat fields for games. Towns should try to protect these areas for future needs through capital planning.
- Town-owned land can be secured and eventually converted to recreational use.
- Towns can encourage clubs and associations to “adopt” public facilities and/or be willing to make private facilities available for public use as needed.
- To accommodate all ages and challenge levels, including pedestrians and bicyclists, recreation should be a consideration when planning for residential development.

▷ FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX



Keene Country Club



8. Education

INTRODUCTION

Education encompasses a wide range of activities and institutions, including the public elementary and secondary schools, their private counterparts, public and private colleges, and technical training institutes. In addition to these, programs for adult continuing education, professional certification and workplace training operate in the Southwest Region. Post-secondary schools include Keene State College, Franklin Pierce College and Antioch New England Graduate School.

Public policy naturally tends to focus on public elementary and secondary schools, since most of the Region's children attend these schools, and they are primarily funded through local property taxes paid by area residents and businesses. New Hampshire is currently engaged in a search for alternative funding strategies for public education. Regional leaders and other stakeholders will need to be involved in shaping education-funding policy at the state level. The qualities of individual school districts also affect the location of new residents and employers. This is both a municipal and regional dynamic.

The quality of educational opportunities available to our residents and the accessibility of other resources embodied in our education institutions are basic to our quality of life.

BACKGROUND

The Region is served by public schools organized into eight different School Administrative Units (SAU's), which in some cases include towns from outside the Region - SAU's numbered 1, 24, 29, 34, 38, 47, 60, and 63. Several SAU's include single town districts and multi-town districts (e.g., SAU 38 includes the Hinsdale, Winchester and Monadnock Regional School Districts). Other configurations: Jaffrey/Rindge School District comprises only two towns while the Keene, Monadnock Regional, and Contoocook Valley Cooperative Districts include many towns.

While public attention to education is often focused on the public funding requirements of our schools and curriculum development at the school and school district levels, the design and management of our educational institutions are directly affected by many regional and national factors, such as:

- state and federal mandates;
- regional economic and demographic trends;
- societal and workplace trends (e.g., the transition to digital information management); and
- federal and private funding opportunities.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

For the near future, we expect a continuation of recent challenges for school district administrators and taxpayers regarding the ebb and flow of student numbers among districts, fiscal demands of providing safe, effective facilities and qualified personnel, and preparedness to meet yet-to-come 1) State and Federal standards regarding facilities and curriculum, and 2) demands of the future workplace regarding student competencies and skills.

SUGGESTIONS

More communication between municipalities and school districts can support coordination of funding priorities, including expanding or siting of facilities, other capital improvements projects, and public involvement. More specifically, there is a need for better, additional, or perhaps more formal communication between municipal and school administrators, regarding issues of mutual interest such as:

- school district and municipal capital planning;
- community plans including land use, transportation, public services, and public facilities; and
- demographics analysis.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**



Hinsdale Elementary School



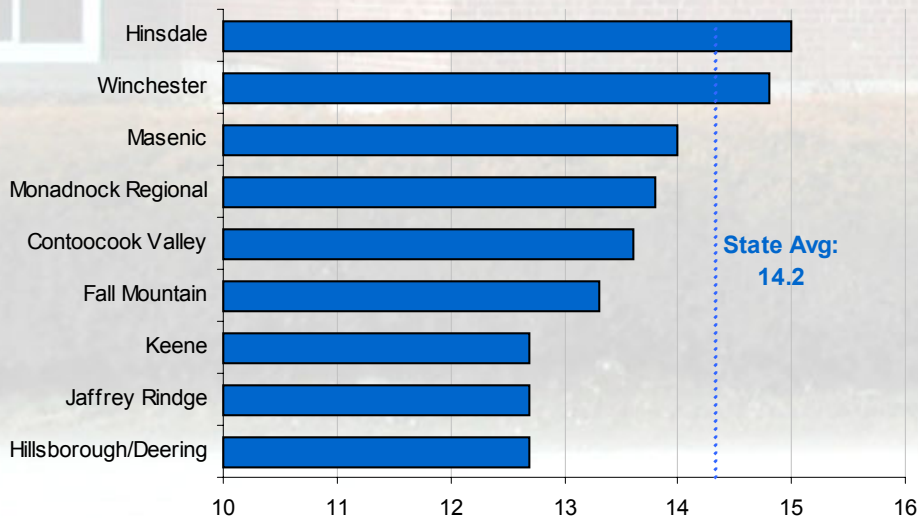
8. Education

School Enrollment by District
(as of October 1, 2000)

District (Towns)	Elementary	Middle	Jr. High	High	Total
Conval Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Fracestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, Sharon, Temple	940	1,097	0	983	3,227
Fall Mountain Acworth, Alstead, Charlestown, Langdon, Walpole	1,298	0	0	714	2,146
Hillsborough/Deering Hillsborough, Deering	509	339	0	413	1,360
Hinsdale Hinsdale	362	0	134	225	768
Jaffrey/Rindge Jaffrey, Rindge	653	420	0	486	1,696
Keene Keene, Chesterfield, Harrisville, Marlborough, Marlow, Nelson, Westmoreland	1,167	891	0	1,573	3,846
Mascenic Greenville, Mason, New Ipswich	517	487	0	414	1,445
Monadnock Regional Fitzwilliam, Gilsum, Richmond, Roxbury, Sullivan, Surry, Swanzey, Troy	1,148	0	444	811	2,596
Winchester Winchester	295	186	0	208	764

Source: NH Dept. of Education

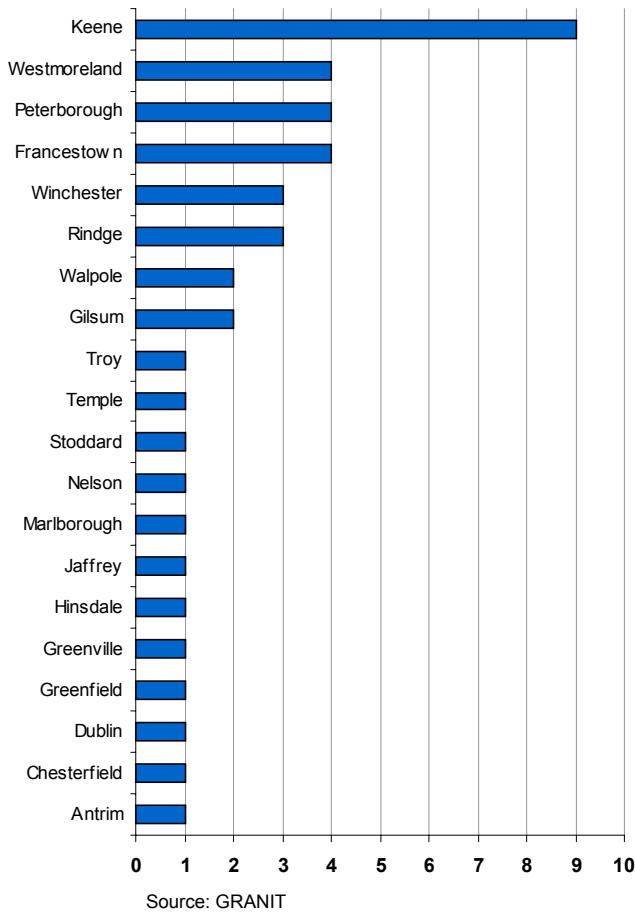
Student/Teacher Ratios



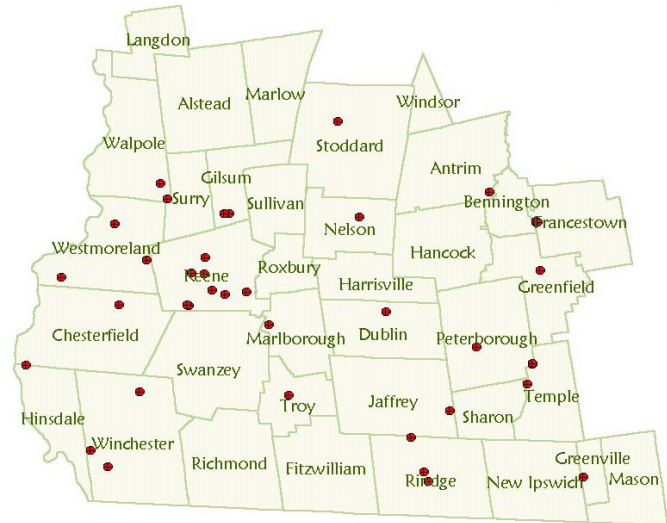
Source: NH Dept. of Education

9. Telecommunications

Number of Cell Towers by Town



Cell Towers in the SWRPC Region



MGi
MONADNOCK CONNECT INCORPORATED

Mission
"Aggregating demand for broadband and other telecommunications services for New Hampshire's Monadnock Region businesses and institutions so as to secure high-quality technology at highly competitive rates typically available only in metropolitan areas."

9. Telecommunications

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the exchange of ideas and information through many different media. Communications capabilities are central to civic order, effective governance and economic prosperity. Communications capabilities support economic development, educational opportunities and entertainment. Communications influences the decisions we make about everyday life. Electronic information technologies have brought fast and dramatic change to communications.

Communications infrastructure is largely a matter of private industry - of business arrangements between providers and clients. Bringing communications into community planning is a challenging task, but there is a need for public policy on the matter of managing communications development. Telecommunications (wireless, cable, fiber optic) rise to the forefront of the communications issues of public interest.

BACKGROUND

The availability of telecommunications technology is governed by financial constraints and depends on establishing a critical level of market demand. The Southwest Region's relatively low population density and dispersed development patterns do not attract highly competitive vendors for whom urban areas are much more profitable. Today, access to high-speed, high-capacity telecommunications service is a limitation for Southwest Region business development and residents' quality of life. Area business and industry see the need for a regional strategy to recruit even basic communications services to residents within the Region. *Monadnock Connect* is a coalition of public and private interests cooperating to bring low cost, high speed Internet access to the Region. The idea is that aggregation of many communications services users will result in lower costs offered by service providers. Ultimately, the solution to access limitations (or "holes" in service coverage) will require regional cooperation among many stakeholders, including local government and the business community.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

It is difficult to predict what the future holds for communications. Considering the recent past, we might expect rapid change to be the norm. Despite the uncertain nature of future technologies there are several aspects and possibilities within the field that warrant public consideration, particularly on a regional scale.

The impact of private communications capabilities within the Region on the behavior of private business has a profound influence on regional development patterns and the subsequent demand for housing, public infrastructure and services. A contemporary example is the effect transmission speed for internet communication has on business decisions, including recruitment of new industries, the nature of employment (i.e. telecommuting from home or satellite facilities versus commuting to centralized employment), the competitiveness of the Region's universities, and the quality of public education.

The benefits of enhanced communications that are so attractive to the private sector can likewise improve the efficiency of municipal government. There are special challenges for municipal government to capitalize on these technologies – primarily mobilizing personnel and funding to take advantage of the best available (including most cost-effective) infrastructure and human resources.

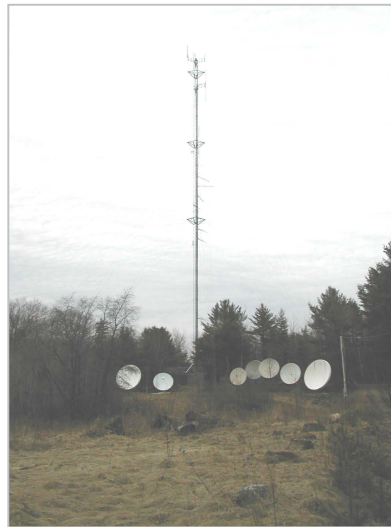
SUGGESTIONS

- Understanding the impacts of communications technology on social, economic and environmental conditions is critical for sound community planning. Communities must be able to respond to rapidly changing technologies.
- Collaboration among local governments, the business community, service providers, community groups, residents, and other interested parties can build a competitive advantage for the Region to attract communications providers. Local government and businesses need to cooperate to develop a system in the Southwest Region for improving communications. The Planning Commission can facilitate regional collaboration and provide a forum for information exchange for municipal government and private industry alike.
- The siting of communications infrastructure and the fate of abandoned facilities are aesthetic issues. These matters are best addressed through municipal zoning and site plan standards.

▷ FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX



"Stealth" Tower, Dublin



Cellular Tower and Dishes. Troy



10. Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

A town's vitality and well-being are inextricably linked to the economy in which residents participate. Local and regional economies are rarely self-determining. Rather, they are strongly influenced by larger regional and even global trends in technology, finance, regulation, politics, and consumer behavior.

Attention to economic development in municipal and regional planning is essential for a healthy stable community. Planning for economic development requires consideration of demographics, education, transportation, communications, other public and private infrastructure, and natural resources. Local economic growth can provide employment for residents, as well as property tax revenue generated by high-value business and industrial property. However, growth has public costs for services required to support new development. Regionally, labor market areas arise without regard for political boundaries, determined by access to highways and social factors, such as education. A well-educated work force is important to attract and retain high quality employment.

BACKGROUND

Since the 17th Century, the economy of the Southwest Region has changed from agriculture and forestry to village industry to regional manufacturing, high tech industry and business. The appearance of the landscape and the distribution of the Region's population have changed dramatically over time. Technology in transportation and communications have been major catalysts for regional economic trends. The arrival of the railroad opened new markets for the Region's farm, forest and manufacturing products in the 19th Century. Soon after, the railroad opened the Midwest's vast agricultural wealth, rendering New England's agricultural production insignificant. Manufacturing disappeared from many parts of the Region during the mid-1900's, often relocating to southern states, the rust belt and foreign countries. Lately, highways, high levels of personal mobility, and telecommunications are bringing new industry and employees to the Region.

Today, the Region's economy is much more than the businesses located within its towns: most workers do not work in the town they live in. Many residents travel outside the Region each day for work, many to the Merrimack Valley and eastern Massachusetts. The Region's business and industry community is very diverse, including machine tooling, high tech manufacturing and electronics, medical, publishing, insurance and warehousing/trucking. Tourism is a vital industry here in the "Currier and Ives Corner" of New Hampshire.

Economic development as a community planning concern is a complex mix of private market forces and community planning, and often a prickly subject. The benefits of local employment and commercial property tax revenues are offset by the cost of public infrastructure and services to support commercial and residential growth that often follows economic expansion. A minority of Southwest Region towns have formed municipal economic development committees to bring a higher level of attention to matters locally, and several regional economic development groups have coalesced during the past decade to shepherd local and regional economic development such as Monadnock Business Ventures, Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and Monadnock Connect.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

There are several general trends in the Region’s economic climate underway which should affect community planning. High tech employers will demand more better-educated or higher-skilled employees to enable those industries to grow in place. The numbers of “telecommuters” and home based businesses are expected to grow in step with or perhaps exceed the growth rate of the general population (about 1% per year in the coming decade). The service sector, stimulated by consumer behavior of residents and growth currently promoted in the tourism industry, is also expected to grow faster than manufacturing and business. The Region is competing with other parts of New England and the world for clean, prosperous industry and business, including tourism.

SUGGESTIONS

- Where there are municipal goals for economic expansion, consideration should be given to the related expansion of infrastructure and services, including housing, emergency services, roads, public water & sewer, schools, utilities and telecommunications. Development of many of these related elements may be best achieved through intermunicipal or regional efforts.
- Municipal economic development planning will benefit from considering a regional context and defining a viable role for local commerce in the regional economy.
- Economic expansion should target existing abandoned or under-used buildings for re-use, including brownfields properties. Re-use can protect traditional development patterns, avoid some costs of expanding roads and utilities, and avoid displacing undeveloped and agricultural areas.
- The Planning Commission can assist towns to develop a regional strategy for tourism development.
- Economic development planning at the local and regional levels should encourage diversity in the types and scale of commercial activity.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**

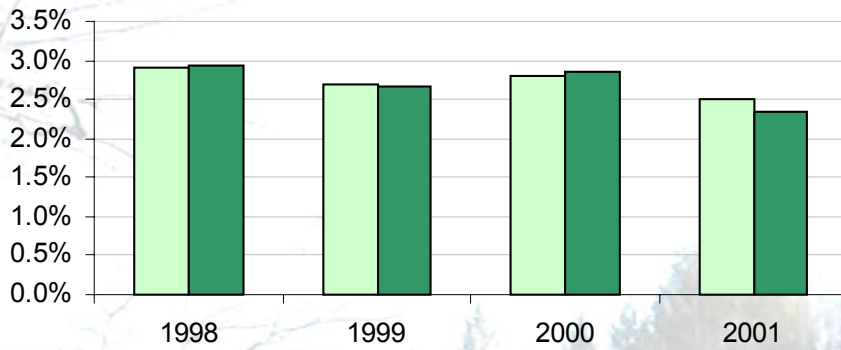


American Tissue, Winchester



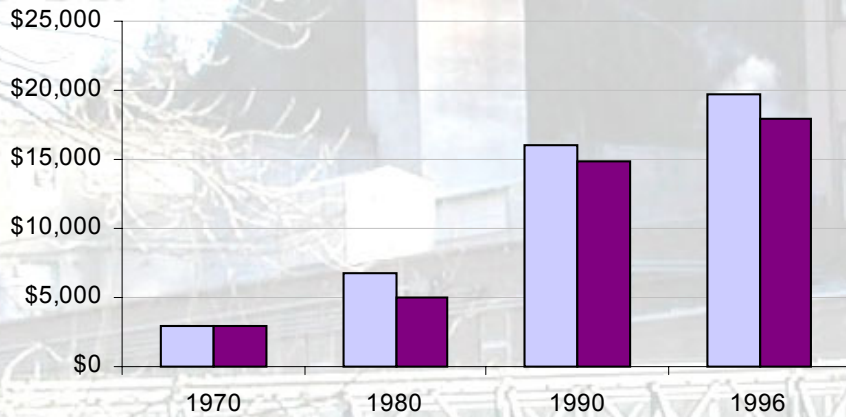
10. Economic Development

Unemployment Rates (1998-2001)*



□ New Hampshire
 ■ SWRPC Regional Average
 * NOTE: 2001 date represents 2/01 data rather than an annual average.
 Source: NH Department of Employment Security

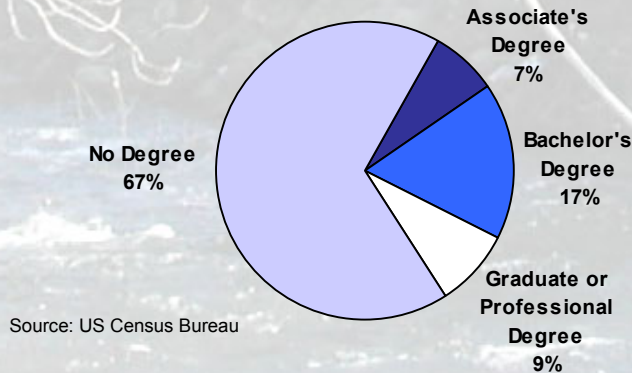
Per Capita Income (1970-1996)



□ New Hampshire
 ■ SWRPC Regional Average
 Source: US Census Bureau, NH Office of State Planning

Post-Secondary Educational Attainment of SWRPC Region Residents Age 25 and Over

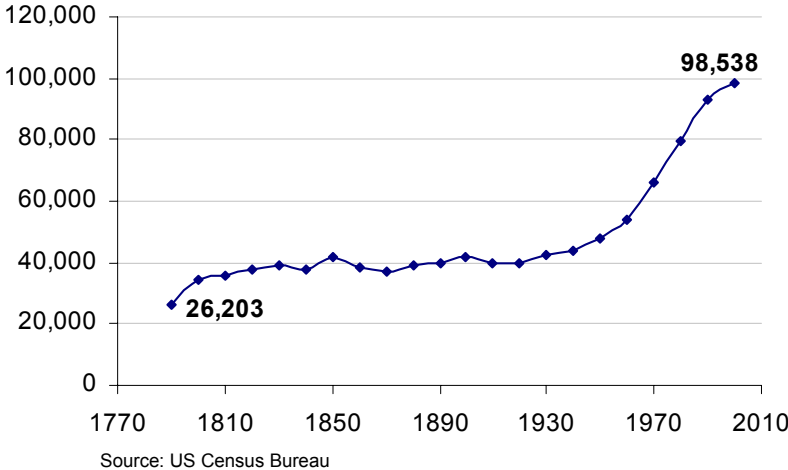
1990 Data



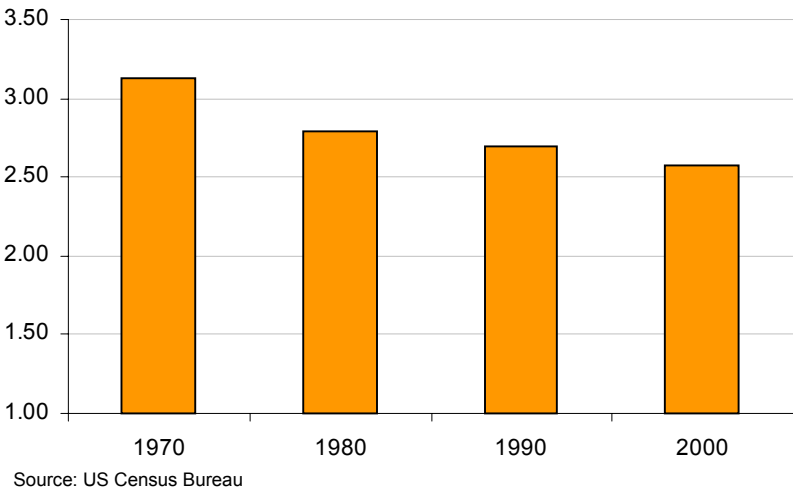
Source: US Census Bureau

11. Demographics

SWRPC Region Population Growth 1790-2000



Persons Per Household in the SWRPC Region 1970-2000



11. Demographics

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the characteristics of the population (demographics) of a town and the Region and the spatial distribution of residents on the landscape are basic elements of community planning. Not only the number of people living in our community, but also their ages, employment, commuting patterns, incomes, and education backgrounds define many issues in community development and municipal government. Demographics determine the kind and scale of public facilities required and economic activity possible for a community at the municipal and regional levels.

BACKGROUND

The population of the 36 Southwest Region towns reported by the 2000 U.S. Census is 98,538. Windsor has the smallest municipal population, with 201 persons. The City of Keene, population 22,563 is home to nearly 23% of the Region's residents. The towns of Jaffrey, Peterborough, Rindge, and Swanzey collectively account for another 24%. Of the remaining 31 towns, nine have populations of less than 1,000 persons and the average is about 2,000. Population densities range from 18 people per square mile in Stoddard to 605 per square mile in Keene.

During the 1970's and 80's New Hampshire was a destination for many thousands of people, most arriving as young families, seeking advancement in careers and quality of life. The annual growth has averaged just over 1% for the years between 1980 and 2000. For the ten-year period 1980 to 1990, the Region as a whole experienced a nearly 17% (13,231) population increase. During the decade 1990 to 2000, the Region's population increased by 6% (5,605 people). It is important to understand that these regional trends are averages for the 36 towns and that there is tremendous variation in population changes between towns, in terms of both absolute numbers and rates of change. For example, Troy has lost 8% of its 1980 population, while populations of Richmond and Windsor more than doubled.

Characteristics of the population germane to community planning include number of households, household size, distribution of residents by age, household and personal income, their trade, and where they work. Based on the 1980 and 1990 Census data, the average household size decreased during that decade here as it did nation-wide. Nonetheless, household size grew during that same decade in several Southwest Region towns. Smaller households are typical results of the slowing birth rate, higher numbers of single-parent households and an increase in independent living by young adults. These observations have direct bearing on demand for classroom space in our schools.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

The NH Office of State Planning predicts that the Southwest Region will gain about 21,000 new residents by the year 2020. This projection accounts for immigration of new residents and births, deaths and emigration among current residents. This represents an increase of just over 1,000 people per year, or a 21% increase during the upcoming 20-year period. Within this overall projection there is a great deal of variation in rates between towns, ranging from 10% for Marlborough and Walpole to

59% for Temple. The actual numbers associated with these high rates for small towns may not seem significant, but the changes may bring these towns to threshold conditions for public spending. Local governments may face substantial changes in the way they do business, including the size of the municipal budget.

For the near future, it can be expected that the majority of the population will continue to consist of those of “working ages” (30-60), but it can also be expected that the elderly population (65 and older) will make up an increasingly larger proportion of the population. Our elderly are generally healthier, wealthier, and living longer than their predecessors. This may create new demands on a range of services and social policies as this group faces particular needs in housing, health, and transportation.

If the national and statewide trend of more and smaller households continues in the Southwest Region, demand for both owner- and renter-occupied housing will continue to grow faster than the population.

SUGGESTIONS

- Towns should monitor demographic trends to be prepared for changes in demand for housing, classroom space, emergency services and, overall, continued change in the appearance and social fabric of their community. This is basic to community planning.
- Towns can prepare for more and smaller households by considering zoning standards which accommodate accessory apartments, condominiums and other higher density alternatives to the single-family home on two acres.
- Towns should prepare for the growing numbers of elderly people, accommodating their particular needs for recreation, transportation, health care, education, and housing.
- The Planning Commission is available to assist towns in understanding and using demographics analysis in community planning.

▷ **FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE APPENDIX**

