

mountains
everything

space
small
town
forest
views
rural
trails
wildlife
scenic
recreation
open
life
big
natural
land
air
north
great

people

low
nature
scenery
friendly
seasons
country
lakes
live
beauty
forests
view
good
trees



A Plan for New Hampshire's North Country

Regional Plan for the North Country Council Planning Region

Adopted
by the North Country Council Representatives
November 19, 2014

North Country Council
The Cottage at the Rocks
107 Glessner Road
Bethlehem, NH 03574
www.nccouncil.org

Front cover: Weighted responses to on-line survey question "What is best about this area?"

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- Page 110 High Tech Tapping headline <https://theplate.nationalgeographic.com>

All other photos Tara E. Bamford, Planning Coordinator, North Country Council.

“Word clouds” courtesy of www.wordle.net.

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

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Additional funding was provided by North Country Council member municipalities and counties, NH Community Development Finance Authority, and NH Office of Energy and Planning.

I. HOW THE PLAN IS ORGANIZED

The North Country Council planning region is made up of the 51 municipalities and 25 Unincorporated Places forming the northern third of New Hampshire. This document, ***A Plan for New Hampshire's North Country***, is the main body of the comprehensive plan for the region.

In its entirety, in addition to this document, the regional plan also incorporates the following set of documents developed through a variety of initiatives and funding sources:

- *North Country Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2013-2017* – Developed with the NCC CEDS Committee and updated annually pursuant to U.S. Economic Development Administration requirements for economic development districts
- *2014 North Country Region Broadband Report* – Prepared with U.S. Department of Commerce NTIA funding for the NH Broadband Mapping & Planning Program
- *2014 Coordinated Public Transit and Human Service Transportation Plan – Coos, Carroll and Northern Grafton Counties* – Funded with grants from NHDOT and USDOT Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration
- *2009 North Country Council Regional Transportation Plan* - Developed with the NCC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) with funds from NHDOT and USDOT Federal Highway Administration. The NCC Transportation Advisory Committee recommended re-adoption of the priorities, policies and recommendations contained in the 2009 plan. An update to the Regional Transportation Plan with updated data and references is scheduled for 2015.

On November 19, 2014, these five documents were adopted by the North Country Council Representatives as the plan for the development of the region pursuant to RSA 36:47. All five documents can be found at www.ncccouncil.org on the Regional Plan page.

Accompanying staff reports on the following topics are also available for download at www.ncccouncil.org:

- Housing Needs Assessment and Fair Housing Equity Assessment
- Water Infrastructure
- Natural Resources
- Climate Change
- Energy

In addition, an *Implementation Matrix* has been developed as a tool to evaluate and prioritize strategies and identify potential partners for each activity. The matrix will be updated periodically as new projects and partners are identified. A working draft of the matrix is available for download from www.nccouncil.org.

II. THE ROLE OF NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL AND THE REGIONAL PLAN

NEW HAMPSHIRE LAW

New Hampshire law enables municipalities to work together to address issues of common concern by forming regional planning commissions (RSA Chapter 36). The primary duty of the regional planning commission is to “prepare a coordinated plan for the development of a region” (RSA 36:45). “Development of a region” is not limited to land use, facilities and utilities; the enabling legislation also mentions “the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds” to promote the health, safety and welfare of the region and its inhabitants (RSA 36:45). Membership in the regional planning commission is voluntary and the regional plan is advisory.

NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL

North Country Council was formed by area municipalities in 1973. As shown on the maps on pages 5 - 11, approximately one third of the state’s geography is within the Council’s planning region, 51 municipalities in six labor market areas, as well as 25 Unincorporated Places. Over the years most federal agencies providing funds to states for some kind of infrastructure – transportation, wastewater treatment plants, affordable and senior housing, broadband – have recognized that setting priorities for expenditure of public dollars at the regional level provides a much more efficient and effective system than numerous communities all competing against one another for the same limited funding. As a group, community representatives have more than the local knowledge of specific needs; they also have the broader understanding of the highest needs within the region. In this way it is ensured that the limited resources are applied to improvements that will have a strong potential to further the region’s high priority goals, and will be part of a comprehensive plan for achieving those goals. The federal agencies providing funding for construction of these improvements have historically provided funding to North Country Council for this regional planning and prioritization process. Similarly, the federal Economic Development Administration has made additional funds available to projects identified in the North Country Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). As a federally designated economic development district since 1975, the Council has also received funding for developing and continually updating the CEDS.¹

¹ The North Country Council Economic Development District includes the entire North Country Council Planning Region along with Grafton County towns in the Lakes Region and Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region.

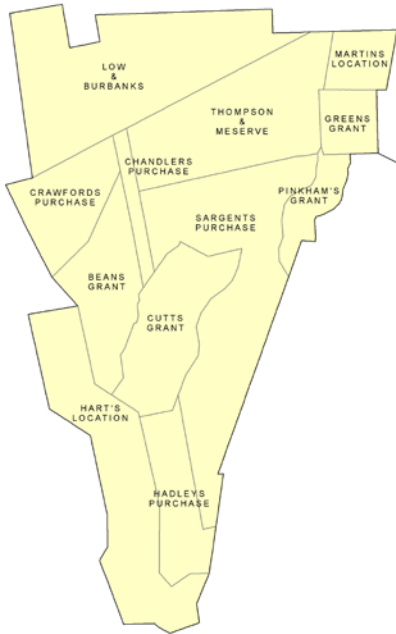
A Plan for New Hampshire's North Country is a living document that will be reviewed and revised as the region's needs, circumstances, opportunities, goals and priorities change over time.

North Country Council Planning Region

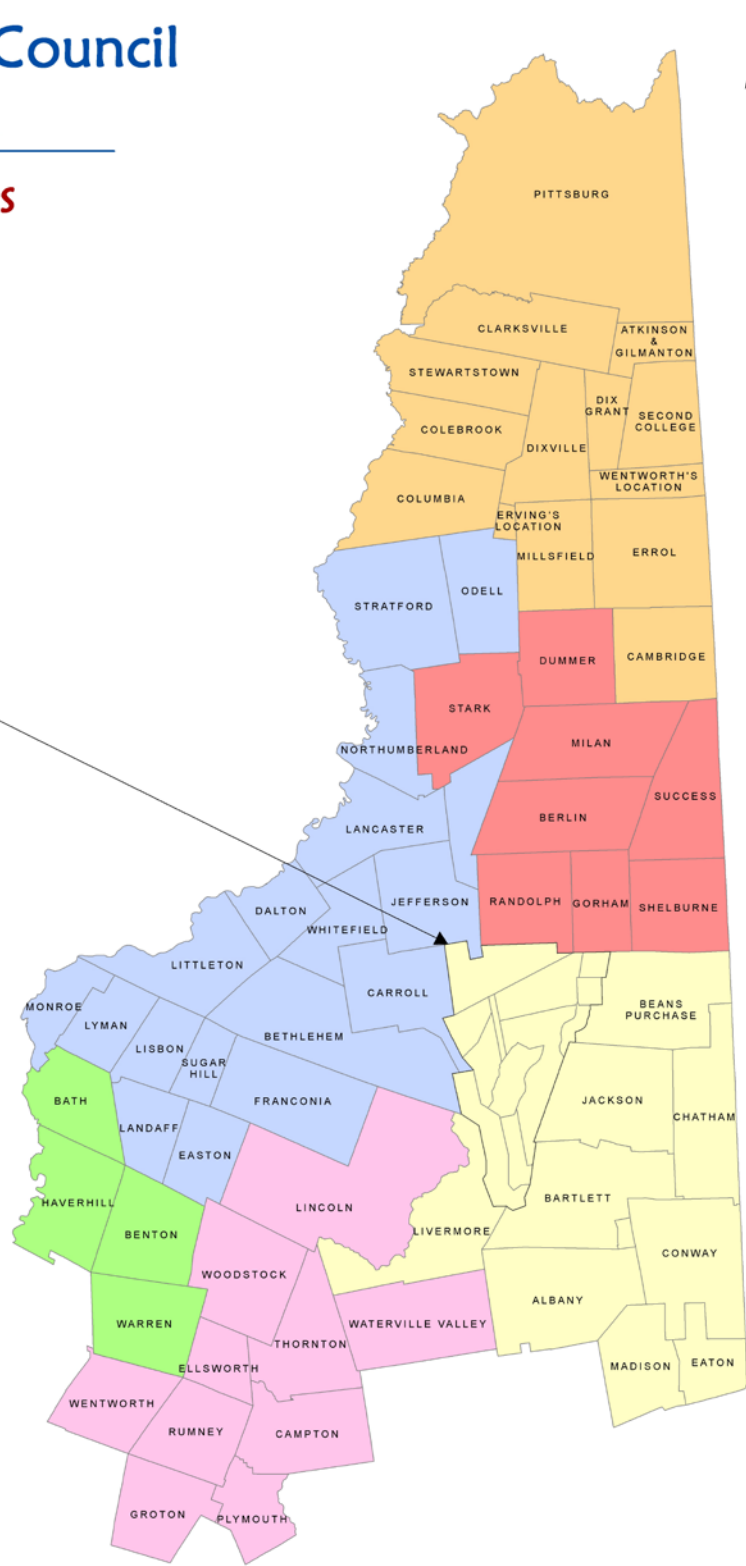
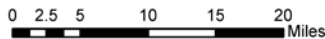
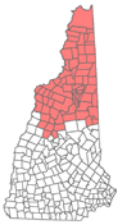
Labor Market Areas

- BERLIN
- COLEBROOK
- CONWAY
- HAVERHILL
- LITTLETON
- PLYMOUTH

INSET MAP



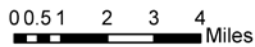
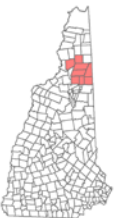
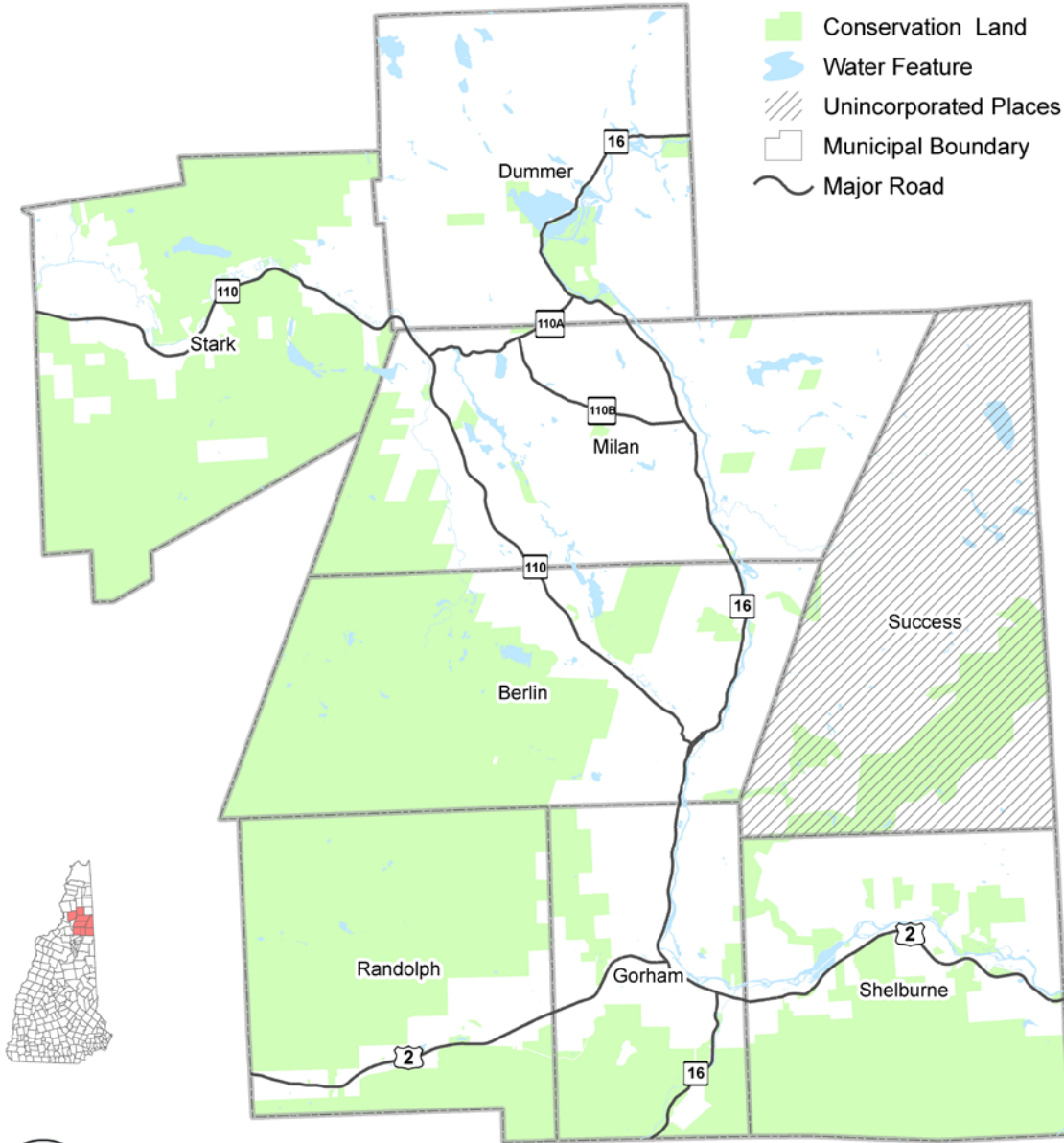
NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL
PLANNING REGION



North Country Council Planning Region



Berlin Labor Market Area








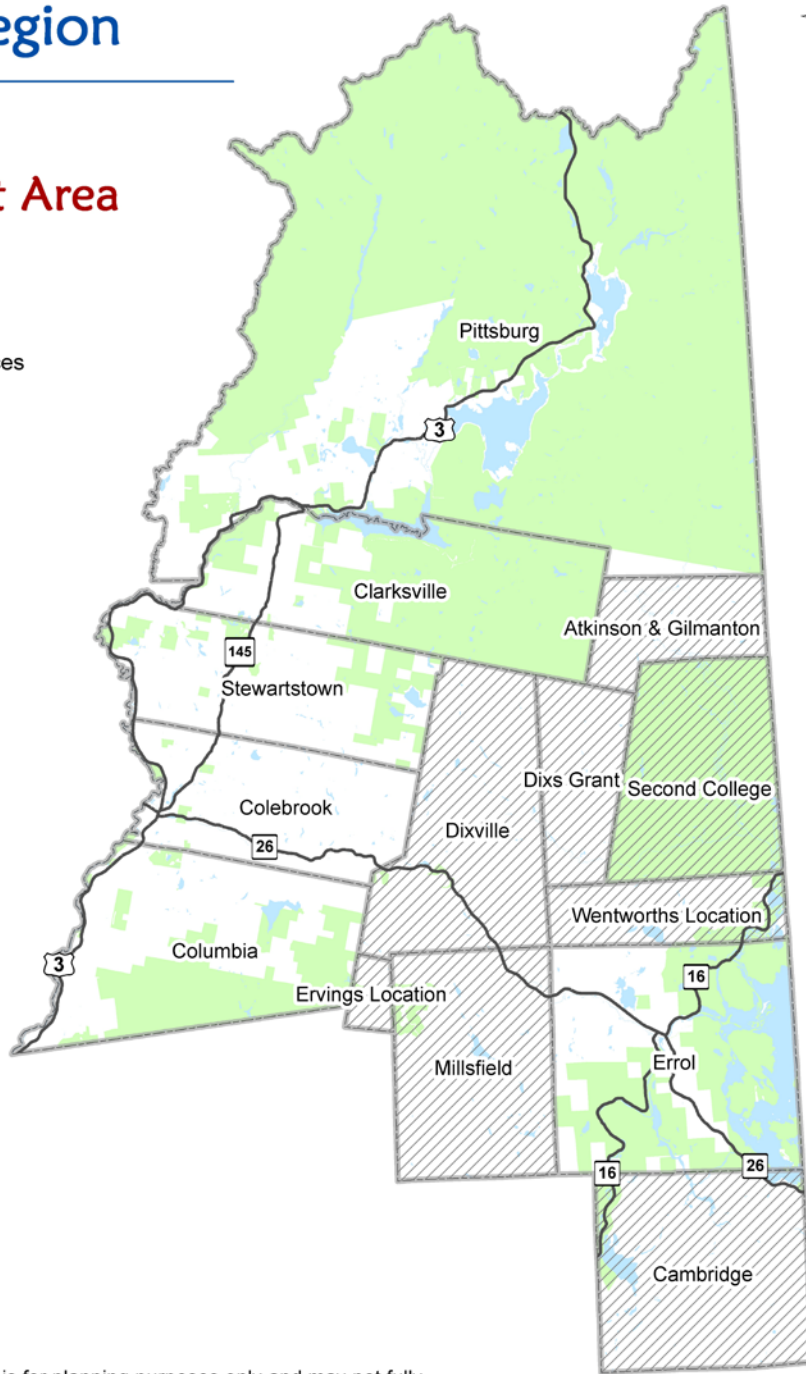
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North Country Council Planning Region

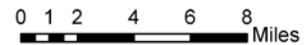


Colebrook Labor Market Area

-  Conservation Land
-  Water Feature
-  Unincorporated Places
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Major Road



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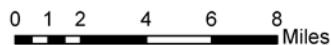
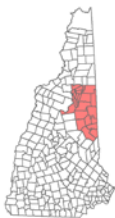
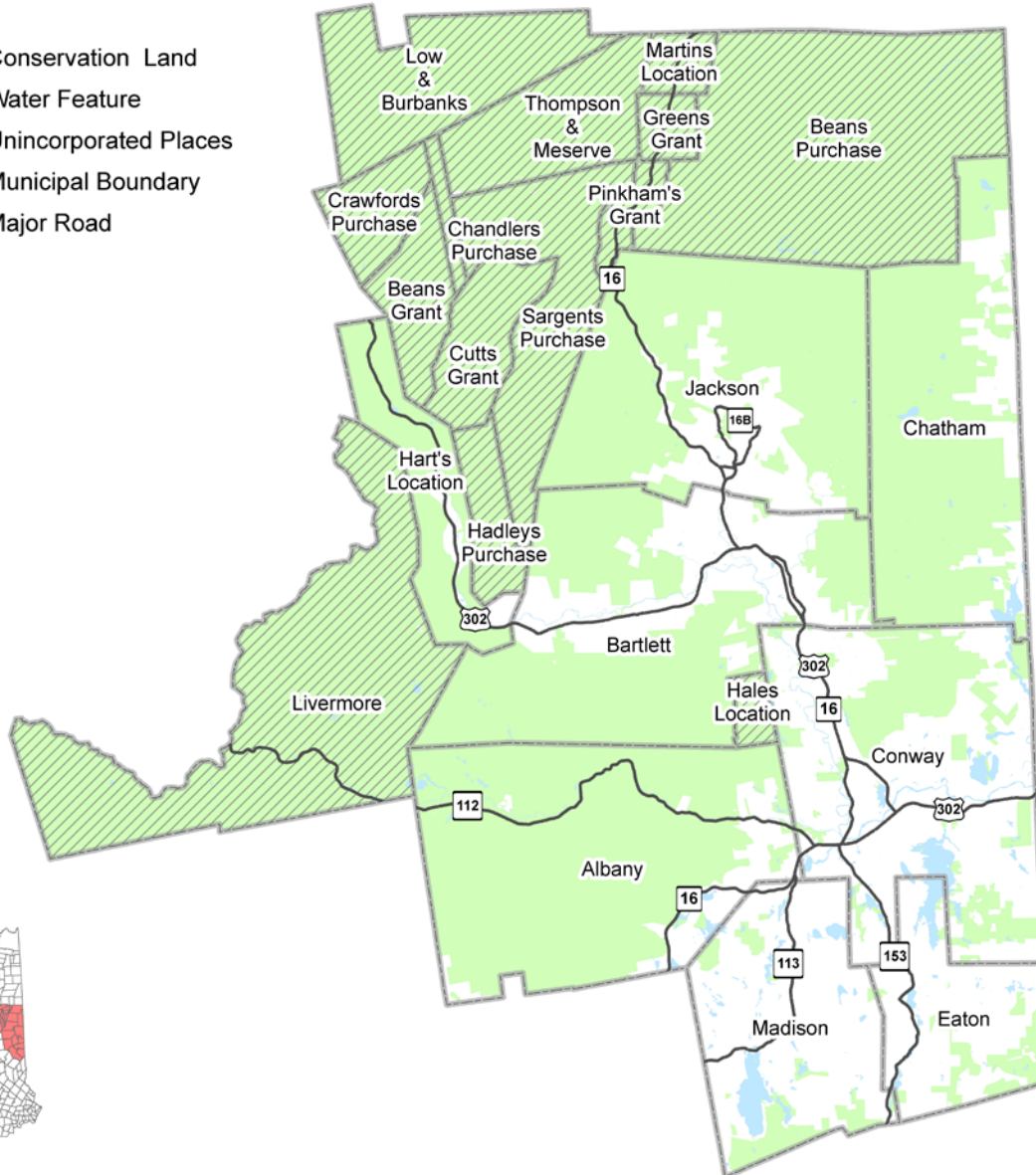


North Country Council Planning Region



Conway Labor Market Area

- Conservation Land
- Water Feature
- Unincorporated Places
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road



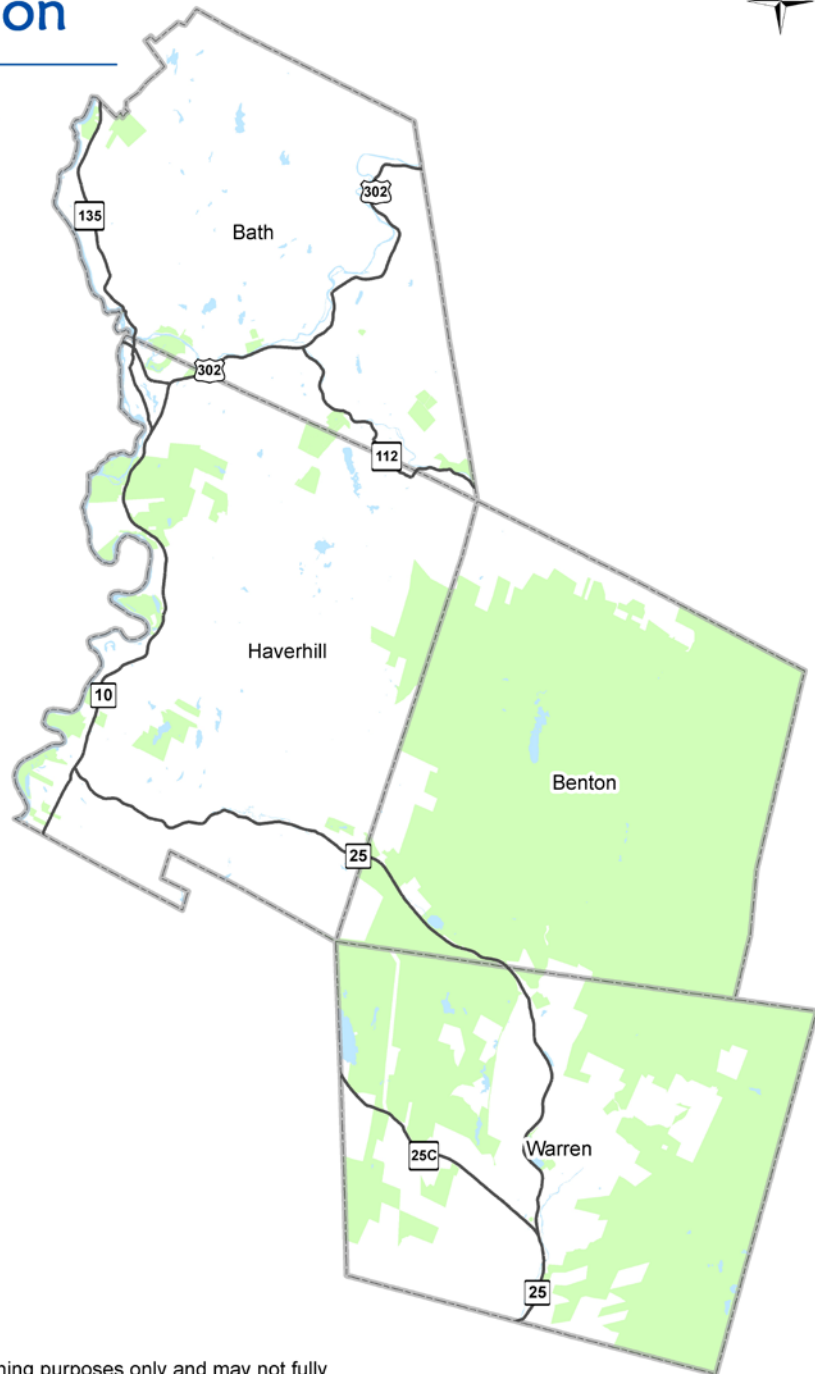
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North Country Council Planning Region

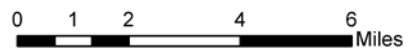


Haverhill Labor Market Area

-  Conservation Land
-  Water Feature
-  Town Boundary
-  Major Road




This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.



North Country Council Planning Region

Littleton Labor Market Area

-  Conservation Land
-  Water Feature
-  Unincorporated Places
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Major Road



This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.

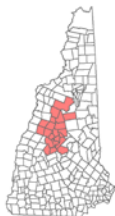


North Country Council Planning Region



Plymouth Labor Market Area

-  Conservation Land
-  Water Feature
-  Town Boundary
-  Major Road



This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.

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III. HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

PARTNERSHIPS

Funding from the Federal Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Initiative to the state's nine regional planning commissions to update their individual regional plans in concert enabled each region to benefit from state-wide partners. The depth and breadth of public engagement and data analysis informing the development of the plan would not have been possible without the assistance of the many organizations and agencies who participated. NH Housing Finance Authority, NH Center for Public Policy, and the Carsey Institute provided data and expertise to understand national and state socioeconomic trends and how they are likely to affect the North Country. NH Office of Energy and Planning partnered with the regional planning commissions on the development of population projections. UNH Cooperative Extension, UNH Survey Center and NH Listens partnered on several public engagement activities, expanding their reach and effectiveness. NH Department of Environmental Services assisted with data on water resources and related infrastructure. UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space and UNH Sustainability Institute provided a detailed report on climate change in northern New Hampshire.

HUD administered the grant for the Sustainable Communities Initiative and provided numerous resources for studying a variety of issues. At the state level, Nashua Regional Planning Commission administered the grant for the nine regions.

The region's municipalities provided the majority of match funding that enabled the North Country Council to receive the planning grant on behalf of the region, and also assisted with outreach. Additional match was provided by NH Community Development Finance Authority and NH Office of Energy and Planning.

The Sustainable Communities Initiative grant and matching funds were augmented by a grant from the Healthy New Hampshire Foundation to enable an expanded focus on the health impacts of planning strategies.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An ad hoc North Country Regional Plan Advisory Committee assisted North Country Council staff by providing input at several key stages of the development of the plan. Participants included:

Beverly Raymond
Bing Judd
Bonnie Ham
Chris Thayer
Connie McDade

Dave Auger
Jack Rose
Pamela Laflamme
Patsy Kendall
Rebecca Brown

Rob Nadler
Sharon Penney
Stanley Judge
Vicki DeLalla
William Andreas

In addition, the late Executive Councilor Raymond Burton provided valuable input as the representative of the Grafton County Commissioners on the Advisory Committee.

Together the participants brought a wealth of expertise in economic and community development, transportation, homelessness, land conservation, outdoor recreation, and other regional issues, in addition to serving as a sounding board for Council staff on the effectiveness of various approaches to public engagement in North Country communities.

MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTH COUNTRY RESIDENTS TO TELL US WHAT THEY WANT AND NEED

The funding from the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities enabled North Country Council to conduct a wide variety of activities to collect input from the public as a foundation for the regional plan. The development of the plan was driven by the belief that community-based approaches to planning tend to be more effective because they incorporate relevant knowledge and experience of those affected, while being guided by community goals and needs.

FACILITATED PUBLIC MEETINGS

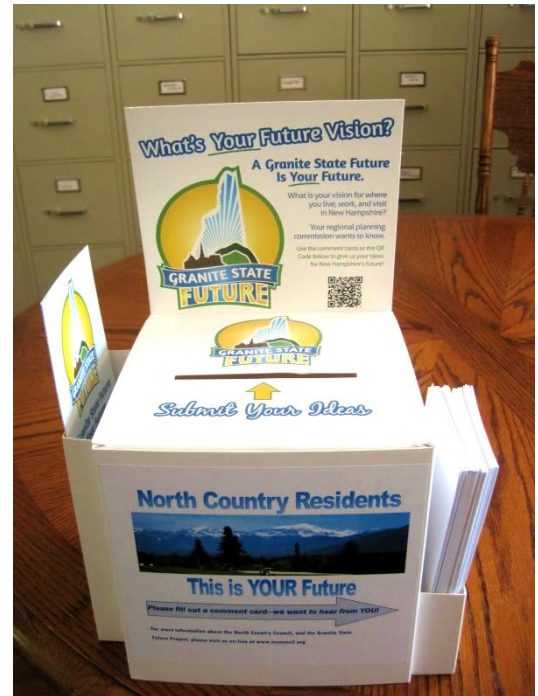
At the start of the project in fall 2012 a series of six widely-advertised public meetings were held around the region:

- Albany Town Hall -September 25
- Littleton Area Senior Center - October 25
- Colebrook Town Hall - November 27
- Plymouth Town Hall - October 16
- Haverhill Municipal Building - November 8
- Berlin City Hall - November 1

Discussion focused around two questions: what qualities of the North Country residents value most highly, and what the highest priority needs are. The results can be found on the Council's Regional Plan page at www.nccouncil.org.

LISTENING POSTS

In collaboration with the other regions, boxes containing comment cards and flyers about the project were produced and distributed around the region. Residents and visitors had the opportunity to report "what is best about this area" and "what could make it even better." Boxes were put in town offices, libraries, Laundromats. Results were entered into the on-line survey (below) to make them available to the public.



WEBSITE

In concert with the other eight regional planning commissions North Country Council utilized a website under the project name Granite State Future to advertise upcoming meetings, post meeting results, and collect input.

NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL

North Country Regional Plan Update

What you have to share about your community counts—we want to hear from you! Click on the link at the bottom of the page to provide us with your comments about locations, features, issues around the North Country. Tell us what is special, and what is needed. See what others around the region have to share.



ON-LINE SURVEY

An on-line survey tool was incorporated into the Granite State Future website to provide anyone who did not have access to a listening post, or who chose to answer the questions on-line,







ADD YOUR IDEAS

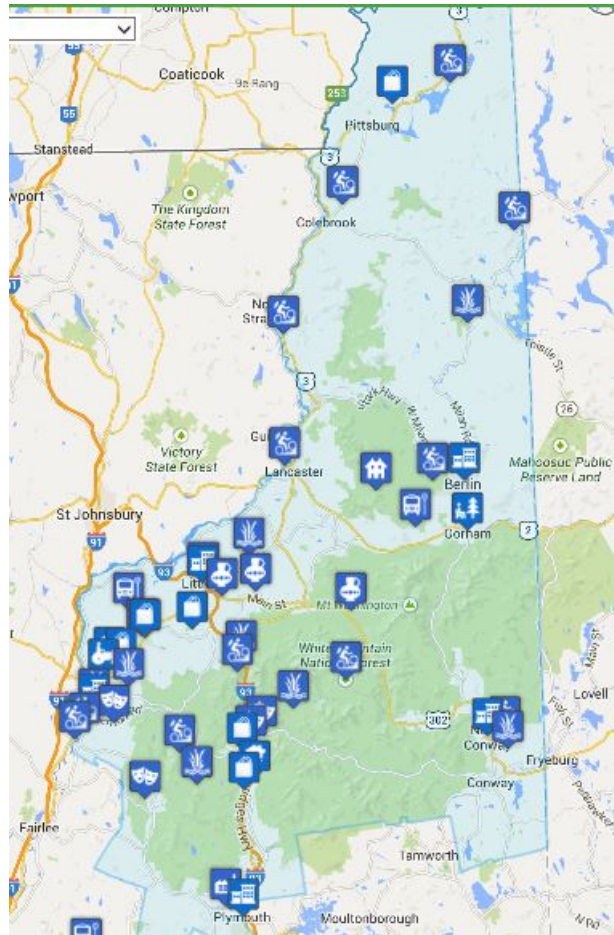
What's best about the places in New Hampshire where you live, work or visit? What could make your area even better?

another avenue to tell planners about their priorities. In addition, the QR code for the website was included in the annual report sent to each member community for the town report. One hundred seventy-two comments were provided via the listening post comment cards (above) and on-line survey.

ON-LINE FORUM

Another feature on the Granite State Future website was the On-line Forum. This tool enabled the user to pin comments in various categories to a map of the region.










- 
Wilderness Trail
Recreation
- 
Village Store in Bath
Shopping, Dining and Other Amenities
- 
Diner in Bath
Shopping, Dining and Other Amenities
- 
Rocket
Arts and Culture
- 
Alumni Hall
Arts and Culture
- 
Downtown Littleton
Downtown and Community Centers




The On-Line Forum also enabled users to add comments of a more regional nature without pinning them to the map, and “vote” the comments of others up or down. One-hundred seventeen comments were received via the On-Line Forum.





North Country Council - Online Forum © 2012 Granite


Locations
Topics

-  Energy
-  Farms, Orchards and Markets
-  Governance
-  Health and Wellness
-  Housing
-  Jobs and the Economy
-  Landscape and Natural Places
-  Local History
-  Public Places

Share your thoughts on broader regional topics


Landscape and Natural Places

3	0	The Ammonoosuc River Corridor Management Plan is now complete - Good job Ammonoosuc LAC!
		
2	0	The tourist economy can be supported by protecting the landscape and natural places that draw people to the area.
		



Add Your Comment

North Country Council | A Plan for New Hampshire's North Country

ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

North Country Council staff went on the road to directly ask residents "what is best about this area" and "what could make it even better." This provided an opportunity to ask clarifying questions and have additional discussion on issues of concern to residents. A table was staffed at the 2012 and 2013 Lancaster Fair, and visits arranged with specific locations throughout the region such as a local food shelf, and meetings of local groups such as the Grange.

UNH SURVEY CENTER

With input from North Country Council staff and the state's eight other regional planning commissions, the UNH Survey Center developed a survey covering several topics of interest. The Survey Center staff conducted the survey by telephone in each of the regions, making sure to collect enough responses to obtain a statistically significant sample for each region. Due to the size and diversity of the North Country Council Planning Region, North Country Council commissioned oversampling to ensure a statistically significant comparison among the group of communities in Coos County, those in northern Carroll County, and those in northern Grafton County. Several of the results are included in *Section V. What We Heard*. The full report can be found on the Council's Regional Plan page at www.nccouncil.org.

UNH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION & NH LISTENS

UNH Cooperative Extension staff conducted small group interviews with a number of focus groups who were identified by the regional planning commissions as having some needs and concerns that are not always conveyed through "traditional" public participation methods. These included disabled residents, those with low incomes, minorities, senior citizens, youth, homeless, recent immigrants, and veterans.

NH Listens held two Listening Sessions in the North Country for this project - in Plymouth and Berlin. These sessions followed a standard format with break-out group discussion facilitated by volunteers with the help of sample questions, followed by free flowing discussion.

The report from these sessions can be found on the Council's Regional Plan page at www.nccouncil.org.

COMMUNITY INPUT

NORTH COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES

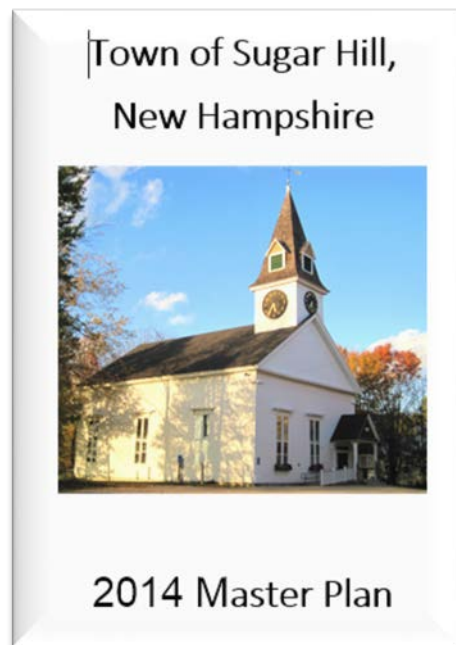
North Country Council Representatives (regional planning commissioners) held a series of meetings on a range of topics of concern, covering data and trends regarding the region's housing, transportation, economic development, energy and natural resources. Subsequent meetings focused on the input received through the public engagement process, needs, priorities and strategies. The region's experts on economic development and transportation were invited to those discussions to participate in brainstorming.

MASTER PLANS

Municipal master plans represent the community consensus on goals, priorities and needs. North Country Council staff reviewed those that were available in the Council library or on-line as one of the starting points for development of the vision statements and proposed strategies for the region.

MUNICIPAL SURVEYS

Surveys were mailed to every member of a selectboard/city council or planning board in the region to obtain information on the region's needs and priorities specific to municipalities.

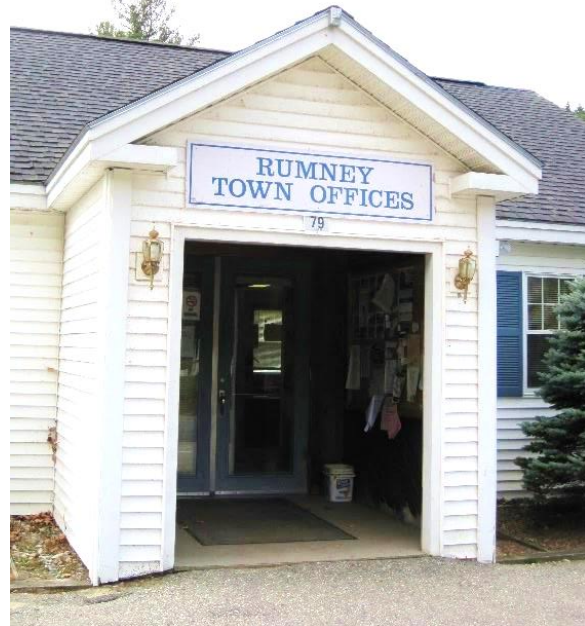


PLAN REVIEW

Each North Country Council Representative, selectboard/city council and planning board was provided a copy of the preliminary draft plan for review and comment prior to initiating the formal public hearing process. Copies of the preliminary draft were also sent to members of the Council's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee and Transportation Advisory Committee. The public was provided a copy in each library in the region, with notification via a widely distributed press release.

A series of open houses was held around the region in September 2014 to give residents the opportunity to engage in one-on-one dialog with Council staff about the preliminary draft. The open houses were held from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM at the following town offices:

- Albany, September 8
- Stratford, September 16
- Gorham, September 18
- Haverhill, September 23
- Franconia, September 29
- Rumney, September 30



Notice of the open houses was included with the preliminary draft plans, sent to the region's newspapers, posted on the Council website and sent to all of the Council's email contacts. These open houses enabled over fifty North Country residents to engage in one-on-one conversations with Council staff about issues of concern and priorities, and brainstorm about strategies for addressing North Country issues.

Following revisions in response to the public comments that were received on the preliminary draft, a public hearing was held on the final draft on November 19, 2014.

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IV. SETTING THE STAGE – CENTURIES OF CHANGE

Today’s North Country issues cannot be discussed without an understanding of the context, of how inextricably linked the region’s people, economy, and landscape are. Archeologists remind us that the human history of the region began approximately 12,000 years ago when Native Americans fished, hunted, gathered nuts and berries and grew crops, moving with the seasons along our rivers and lakeshores (NH Division of Historical Resources). In the comparatively short time since Europeans arrived in New Hampshire’s North Country, there have been many changes in land use patterns. European settlement of the region began in the mid-late 1700s with land grants from Colonial Governor Benning Wentworth and later his nephew John Wentworth to soldiers or businessmen from Massachusetts or what is now southern New Hampshire. The Native American population was by this time on the decline due to diseases carried by Europeans as well as violent conflicts with them.

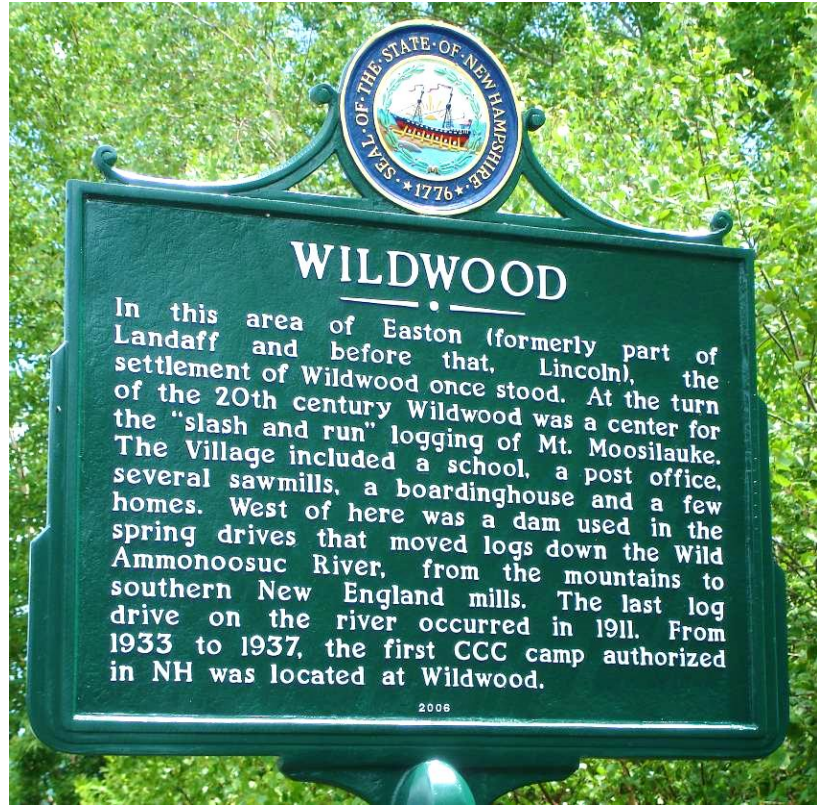
In the early years of settlement by Europeans the land was cleared for subsistence farming wherever possible. In fact, many early New England farms were on hilltops where settlers felt the farmland was better – closer to the sun, less swampy and more easily cleared. Later, as crops were moved downhill, grazing remained on the hillsides. Settlements



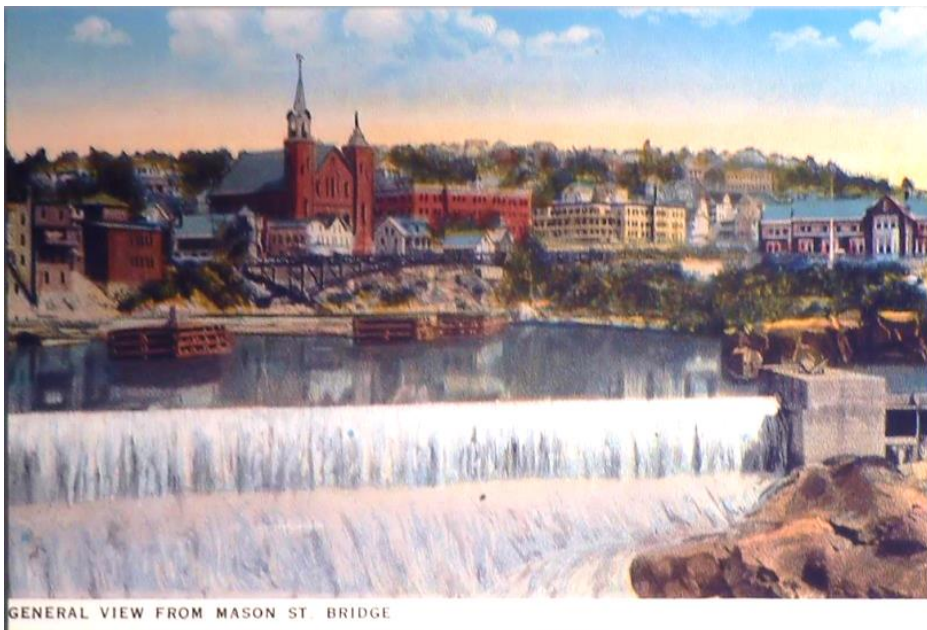
Bennington, N.H., from Mt. Agassiz.
It is this land use pattern with the population concentrated in villages surrounded by productive farm and forestland that came to be called “traditional.”

initially formed around water-powered gristmills. Roads developed where necessary to enable the farmers to bring their grain to the mills to be ground to flour. Thus began the land use pattern of denser development and transportation infrastructure close to the region’s rivers. Sawmills also grew up around this water power.

By the second half of the 1800s the region's farm population was declining as more productive, more easily tilled lands to the west were developed for the growing agriculture industry. This was also a period of rapid growth in manufacturing and commercial logging. Large tracts of forestland were sold to private companies by the state. Industrialization and growth of the railroads enabled larger-scale logging, growth of the paper and pulp mills, and other water-powered manufacturing



supporting thriving villages. Larger paper companies bought up smaller ones, and, as paper mill demand from around the Northeast increased, the harvest of pulpwood increased. Logs were transported by both rail and waterways.



Dams were built to provide a surge of water to carry the logs downstream in the spring, to provide water power for mills, and later for larger manufacturing enterprises, flood control and hydroelectric generation.

(Berlin N.H., 1906 Postcard, Wikimedia Commons)

The region's remaining agricultural industry had a role supplying southern New England's growing cities with food by rail. The region prospered with both farm and forest-related industries such as potato starch factories, dairy and sheep, sawmills, spruce oil distilleries and other wood product factories. Town centers grew up around these hydropowered industries, rail stations and commerce. The old mill sites along our brooks, and foundations and stonewalls throughout our wooded hillsides remind us of the days when many of today's quiet small towns were bustling with activity.



The railroad was also associated with the beginning of the region's tourist industry in the late 1800s. The rail brought artists, sightseers and recreationists from U.S. cities to the south and from Europe. The Grand Hotels, large destination resorts with grand views, supported communities of associated services. As fewer people worked outdoors, an increasing number of visitors began to come for recreation in the clean mountain air. Hiking trails grew in popularity. Outdoor sports became popular in the early 1900s. This tourism industry provided

jobs and brought customers for local businesses at a time when agriculture was in decline. Summer homes and camps became part of the North Country landscape. This new use for the region's forests and mountains also led to the first conflicts between visitors who came for recreation and scenic beauty, and those who were profiting from the region's natural resources without regard for sustainability. Poor logging practices led to forest fires and erosion of the thin mountain soils into the rivers and streams. Concern over this led to the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911, enabling the federal government to buy land for national forests. The White Mountain National Forest, officially established in 1918, began with the purchase of 7,000 acres in Benton in 1914. Today the White Mountain National Forest is a major influence in the region, as the major land owner in many of our communities, a source of sustainably managed forest products, a recreation resource, and an attraction for visitors.

From 1900 to 1930, Berlin grew from a population of 8,886 to 20,018 (U.S. Census, 1900, 1930). At that point, Berlin, which is the region's second largest community today, was the state's fourth largest city. The region as a whole only grew from 58,494 in 1900 to 69,004 people in 1940 (North Country Council, 1978). The manufacturing decline, which began to be felt in New Hampshire even prior to the Great Depression, and the state's slowing population growth, were felt even more strongly in the northernmost part of the state. By 2010 Berlin's population had declined to 10,051 residents, while the region as a whole had grown to 90,813 (U.S. Census, 2010).

Transportation continues to be a major determinant of the region's land use patterns today. The automobile enabled tourism to continue to grow and the number of summer home buyers to increase. The rising popularity of skiing starting in the 1930s made the region a year-round recreation destination.



The growth in tourism did not counterbalance the loss of manufacturing in the region's economy. While tourism brought welcome business to local shops and the owners of inns, eateries and other tourist services, a large share of tourism-related jobs were and still are lower-wage jobs.

Slow growth continued in the state until the 1960s when the Interstate Highway System brought an influx of those attracted to the high quality of life, tax structure, and other attributes of the state. The location of the highway continues to be a major factor in the location of growth and development today.

In recent years, manufacturing in New Hampshire's North Country has continued to decline while low-paying retail and service employment has grown. The big shift in the nature and balance of employment opportunities in the North Country has been associated with the loss of value-added forest product manufacturing jobs to other parts of the U.S. and to other countries. In 1978 forest products manufacturing represented 53% of the region's manufacturing employment; today wood products represents just about 14% of manufacturing (NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau). Shifts in the paper industry, foreign labor, energy and transportation costs have all contributed to the decline of the region's manufacturing industry. Many U.S. firms have moved their manufacturing facilities to other countries where the lack of protection for workers and the environment lowers costs. In 2009 China overtook the U.S. as the world's biggest papermaker (Mike De Sisti and John Schmid, *China's Paper Operation, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 12, 2012). The growth of tourism, and retail shopping as a vacation activity, has meant an increase in low-paying service industry jobs beyond the state and national trends.

**THE STATE'S
POPULATION GREW
BY 30% FROM 1900
TO 1950**

**AND BY 132% FROM
1950 TO 2000**

*(U.S. CENSUS 1900,
1950, 2000)*

FOREST COVER IN NEW HAMPSHIRE



SOURCE: Harvard Forest 2010 & USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory & Analysis

(NEFA, 2011, *The Economic Importance of New Hampshire's Forest-Based Economy*, www.nefainfo.org)

North Country forests have been in a constant state of change since the arrival of European settlers. First cleared for subsistence farming and later for wood products, and then growing back with the decline of that industry, the land itself has become a more important element of the region's economic base than what is growing on it. Large tracts of land have been sold by paper companies and other large landowners in recent decades. Some of this has been purchased through public-private partnerships for sustainable forestry, recreation and other traditional forest uses as well, such as the Nash Stream Forest and Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Working Forest. Some has also been purchased by investment firms. Much has been sold to out-of-state private landowners for large lot year-round, vacation, or future retirement homes. Changing ownership patterns and investment goals will require collaborative approaches to land and resource management in order for the region's forests to continue to play an important role in the region's economy.

V. WHAT WE HEARD

The number one concern of every group of residents providing input, at public meetings, community groups, and the on-line survey, was the **LACK OF GOOD PAYING JOBS IN THE REGION**. It is clear that many North Country residents are having trouble meeting basic needs because of the lack of jobs that pay a livable wage. Many people are underemployed, or having to cobble together part-time seasonal jobs to try to make ends meet. With the rising cost of housing and energy, people feel the gap is widening between wages/incomes and what is needed to meet basic needs.



MEETING BASIC NEEDS was also the most common theme for the sessions New Hampshire Listens held around the state, including Berlin and Plymouth, and for the focus group conversations UNH Cooperative Extension held with seniors, youth, and other subsets of the population who it was thought may have needs that are different from those regional planners typically hear from. Residents in both the NH Listens sessions and the focus groups shared concern for livable wage jobs with benefits, safe affordable housing, education for themselves and their children to ensure they could compete for good jobs, and transportation to connect all the needs of daily life.

NH Listens & UNH Extension

Focus Groups	Listening Sessions	Combined
Transportation Housing Jobs Access to Social Services Youth recreation	Employment and Education Keeping and Educating Youth Aging Population Transportation Housing	Transportation Housing Jobs Schools/Education Higher Education

WE KNOW OUR CUSTOMERS BY NAME

When asked what they value most about New Hampshire's North Country, in any venue or format, residents were most likely to respond that they value the **PEOPLE**, the sense of **COMMUNITY** associated with the rural atmosphere, and the **SCENIC NATURAL RESOURCES** and related **RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**.

WE FEEL SAFE

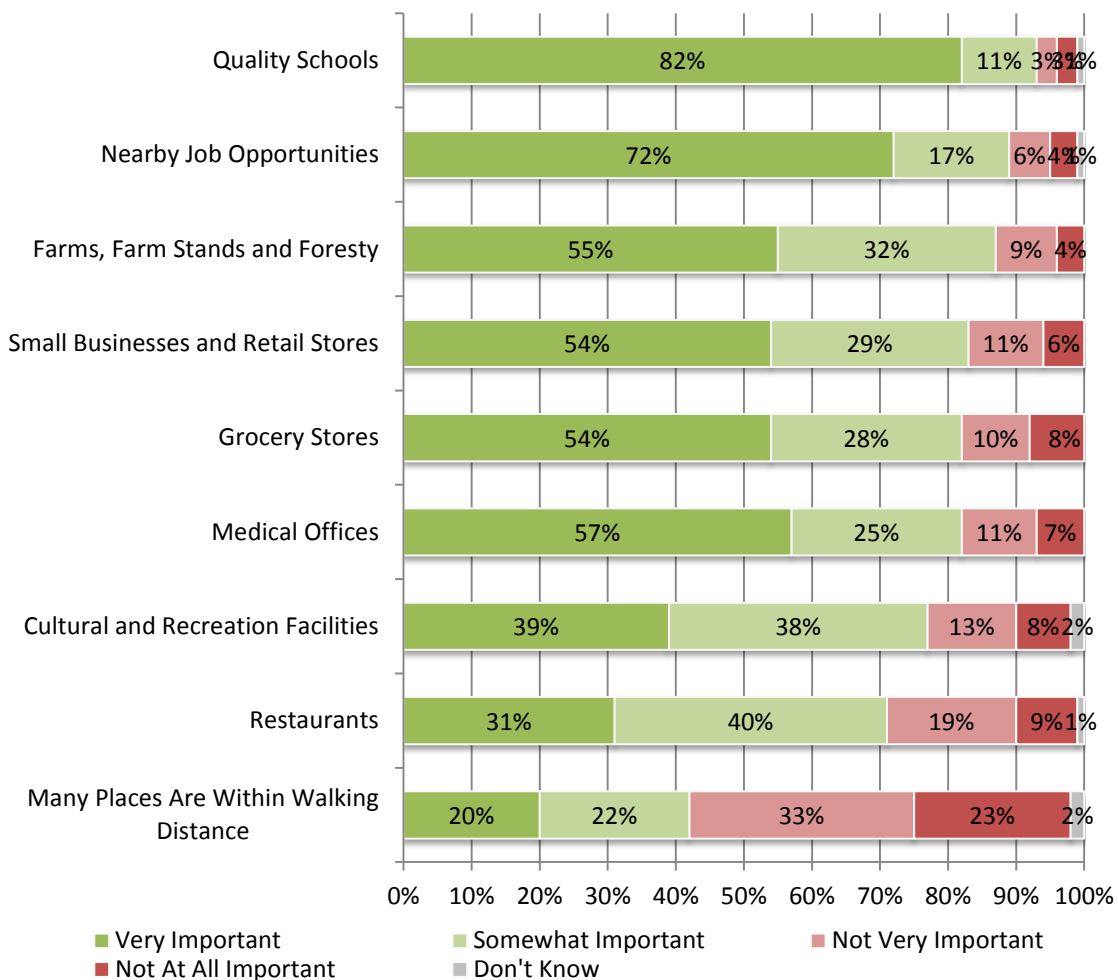


UNH SURVEY CENTER

The UNH survey enabled a more in-depth look at some of these areas, to identify priorities and learn more about what kinds of approaches residents would support.

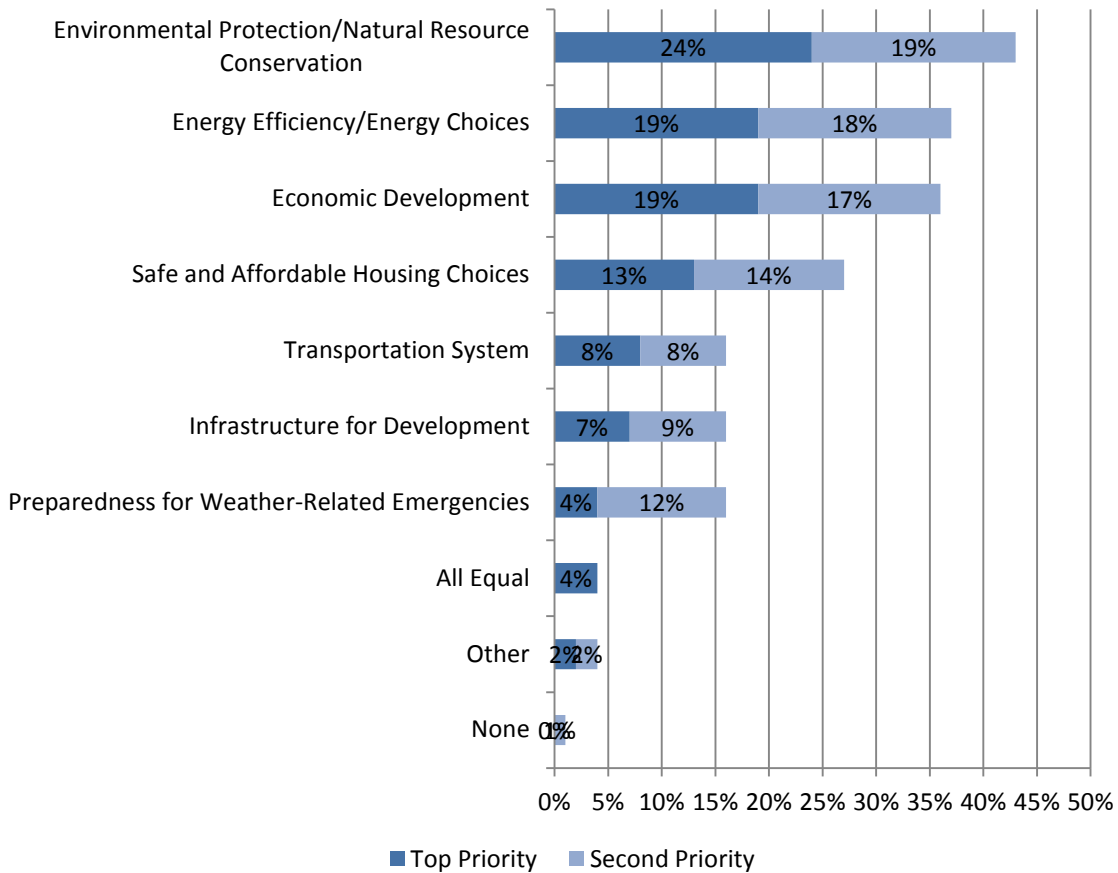
BASIC NEEDS - QUALITY SCHOOLS AND NEARBY JOB OPPORTUNITIES - RANKED THE HIGHEST among the following list of features to have in the community.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY...



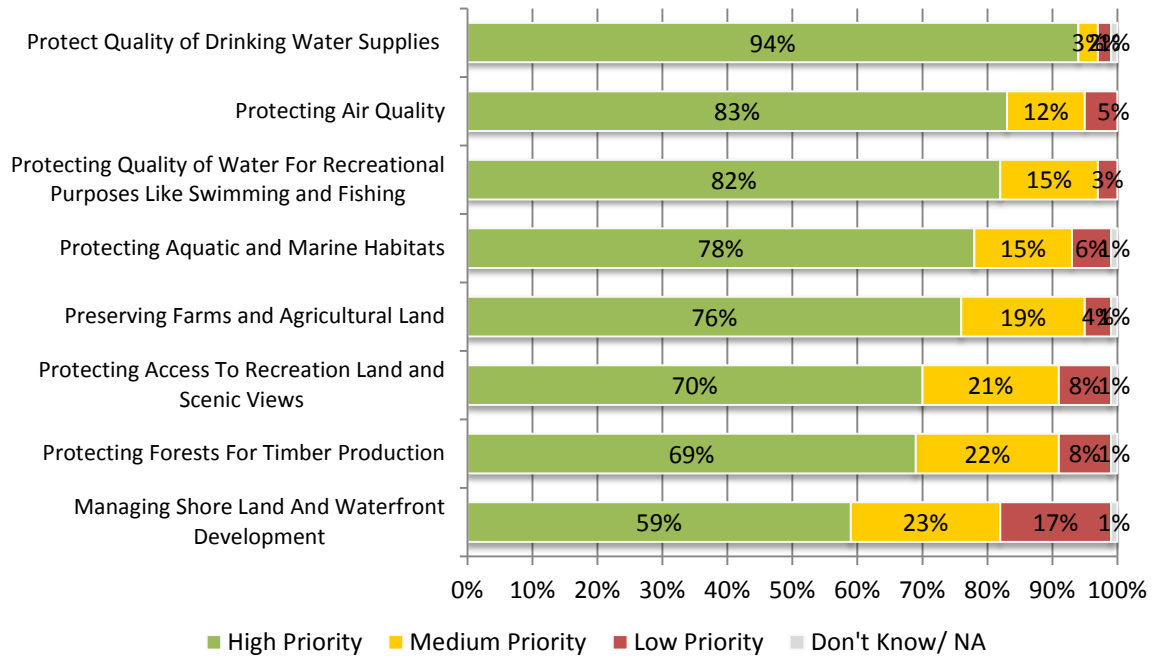
Residents' responses to questions about priorities were consistent with the answers provided through other avenues - **RESIDENTS PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON THE ENVIRONMENT.**

PRIORITIES FOR INVESTING PUBLIC DOLLARS

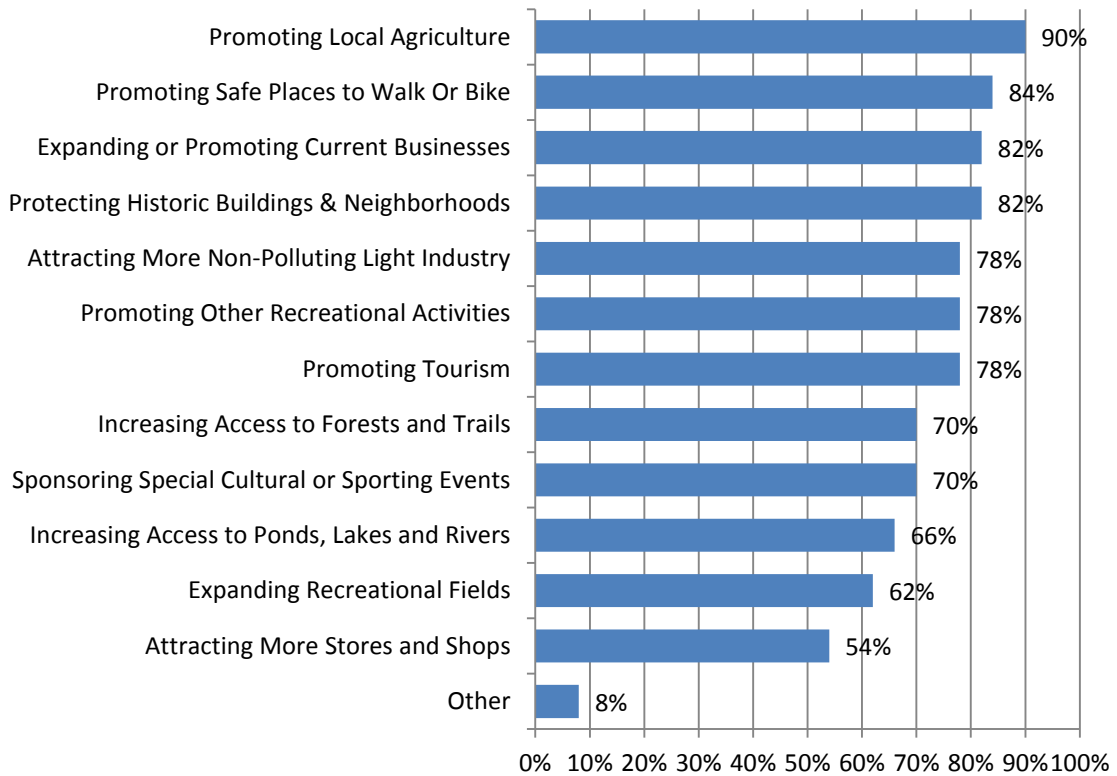


The environmental issue ranked the highest was protection of **DRINKING WATER**. Following a similar pattern, care for the environment and for the safety of what residents consume, great importance was also placed on **LOCAL AGRICULTURE**.

PRIORITY PLACED ON THESE COMMUNITY ISSUES

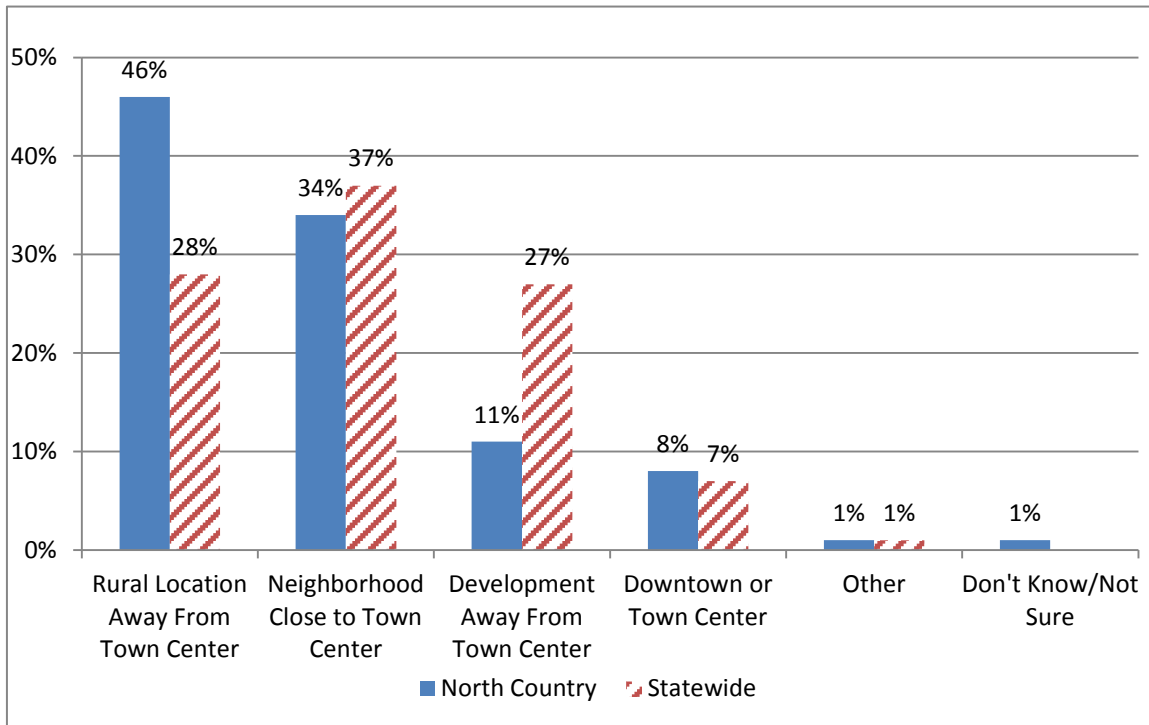


WHAT SHOULD BE ACTIVELY ENCOURAGED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



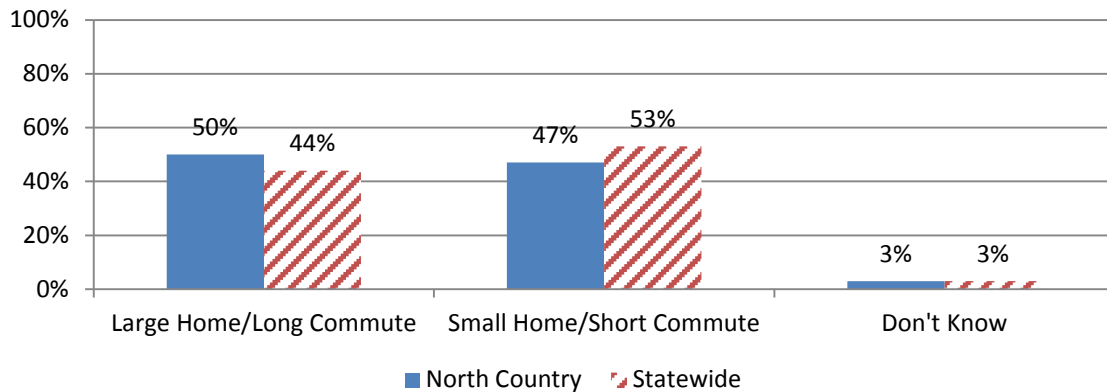
Questions were included on the survey aimed at learning about preferences for development patterns. Residents were asked what kind of neighborhood they live in now. As expected, North Country residents' answers look quite different than the statewide responses viewed as a whole. For both state-wide and North Country samples, a bit over one-third of respondents described where they live as a "neighborhood close to a town center"; however, North Country residents were much more likely to describe where they live as a "rural location" away from a town center vs. the statewide sample where people were much more likely to describe their home as a "development" away from a town center.

HOW WOULD YOU CLASSIFY THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE YOU LIVE?



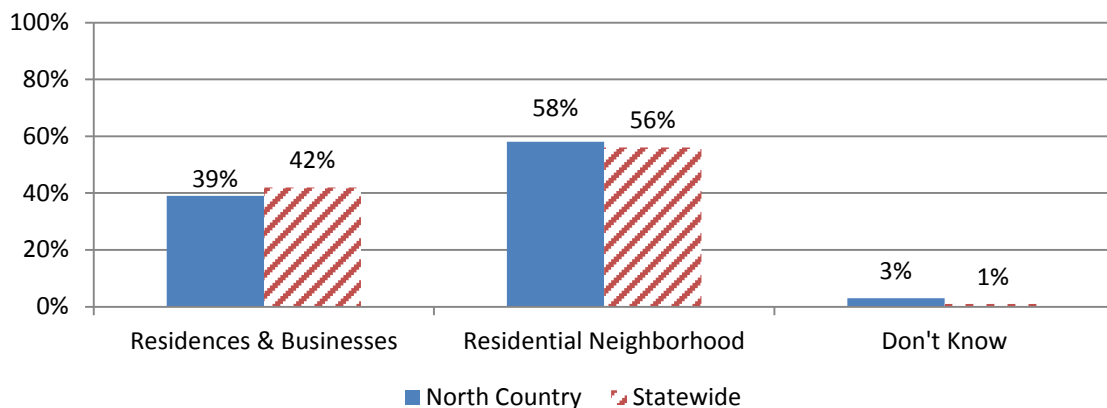
When asked what type of neighborhood they would prefer, given a choice between a large home with a long commute or a small home with a short commute, responses also differed between the North Country and the state as a whole, with a few more North Country residents reporting a higher preference for a larger home over a shorter commute.

LARGE HOME WITH LONG COMMUTE OR SMALL HOME WITH SHORT COMMUTE?



Similar results were seen when respondents were asked to choose between a mixed neighborhood with stores and a neighborhood that is residential only - North Country respondents chose a residential-only neighborhood slightly more often than statewide respondents.

MIXED NEIGHBORHOOD WITH STORES OR RESIDENTIAL ONLY?



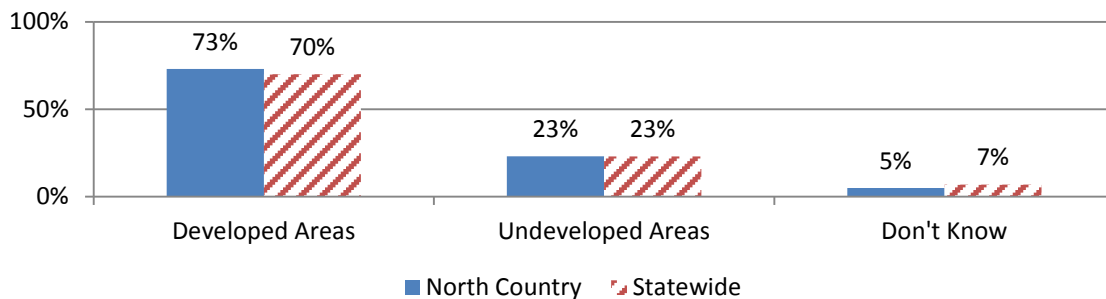
As shown in the table below cross-tabulating the responses to the previous two questions, there was a strong relationship between the responses - 73% of those who reported favoring a mix of businesses and residences also favored a small home/short commute; 68% of those who reported favoring a residential-only neighborhood also favored a large home/yard and longer commute. Thirty percent (171 of 568) of those who responded to both questions reported that they favored living in an area with the characteristics of a downtown or village - small home and yard, short

commute, mixed use with businesses, walkable - yet as shown on page 32 **ONLY 8% LIVE IN A DOWNTOWN OR TOWN CENTER NOW.**

Small home/yard & short trip to work, school, stores OR large home/yard & long trip to work, school, stores?	Neighborhood with a mix of residences and businesses & can walk to stores, schools, and services, OR a residential-only neighborhood where you needed to drive a car to get to stores, schools and services?		
	Mix of residences and businesses - walk	Residential neighborhood - drive	Total
Small home, yard, & commute	73% (171)	32%(108)	49% (278)
Large home, yard, & commute	27% (62)	68% (228)	51% (290)
Total	41% (233)	59% (336)	100%

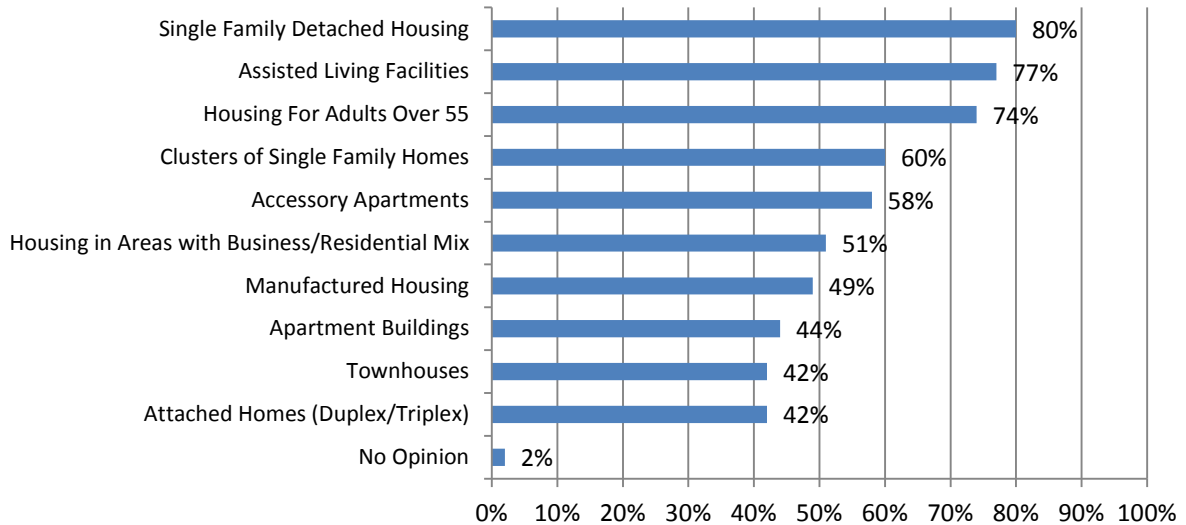
An even higher percentage of North Country residents than statewide respondents (73% vs. 70%) favored locating future development in parts of the North Country that are already developed.

WHERE SHOULD FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OCCUR IN YOUR PART OF THE STATE?



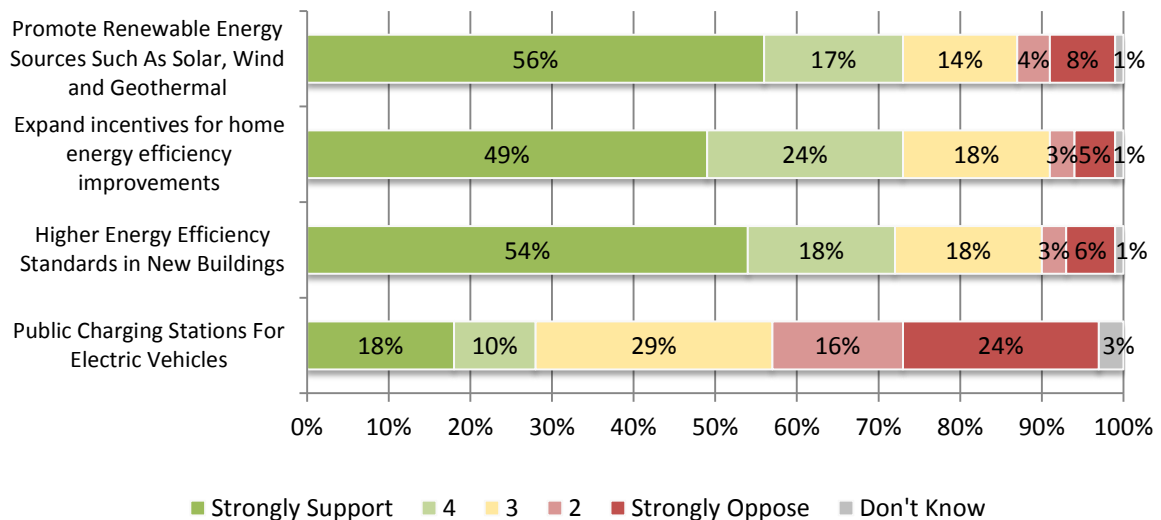
When asked about the specific types of housing that should be encouraged, a range of housing choices were chosen by the majority of respondents. Single family housing received the highest response.

WHAT KINDS OF HOUSING SHOULD YOUR TOWN ENCOURAGE?



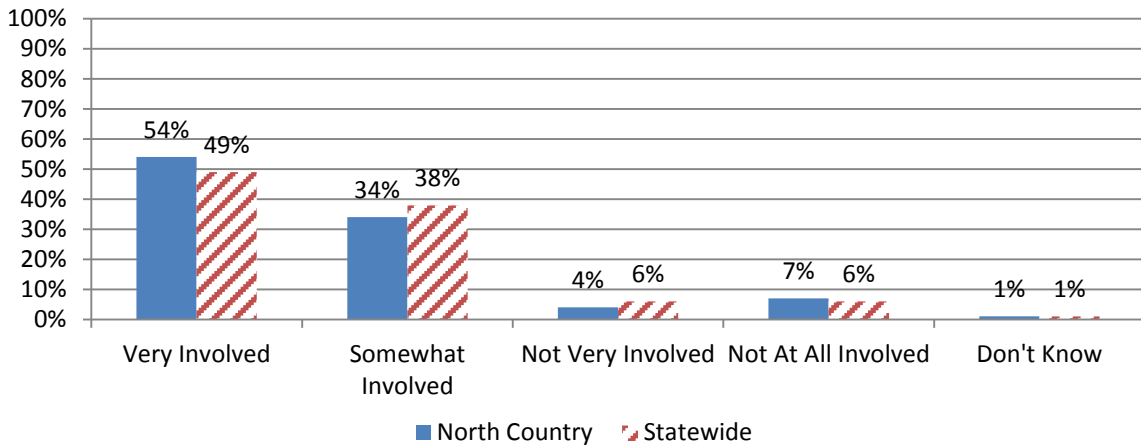
As shown on page 30, **ENERGY EFFICIENCY/ENERGY CHOICE WAS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT**. There was **STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROMOTING RENEWABLES, INCENTIVES FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND HIGHER ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS** for new buildings.

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING ENERGY POLICY CHANGES WOULD YOU SUPPORT?



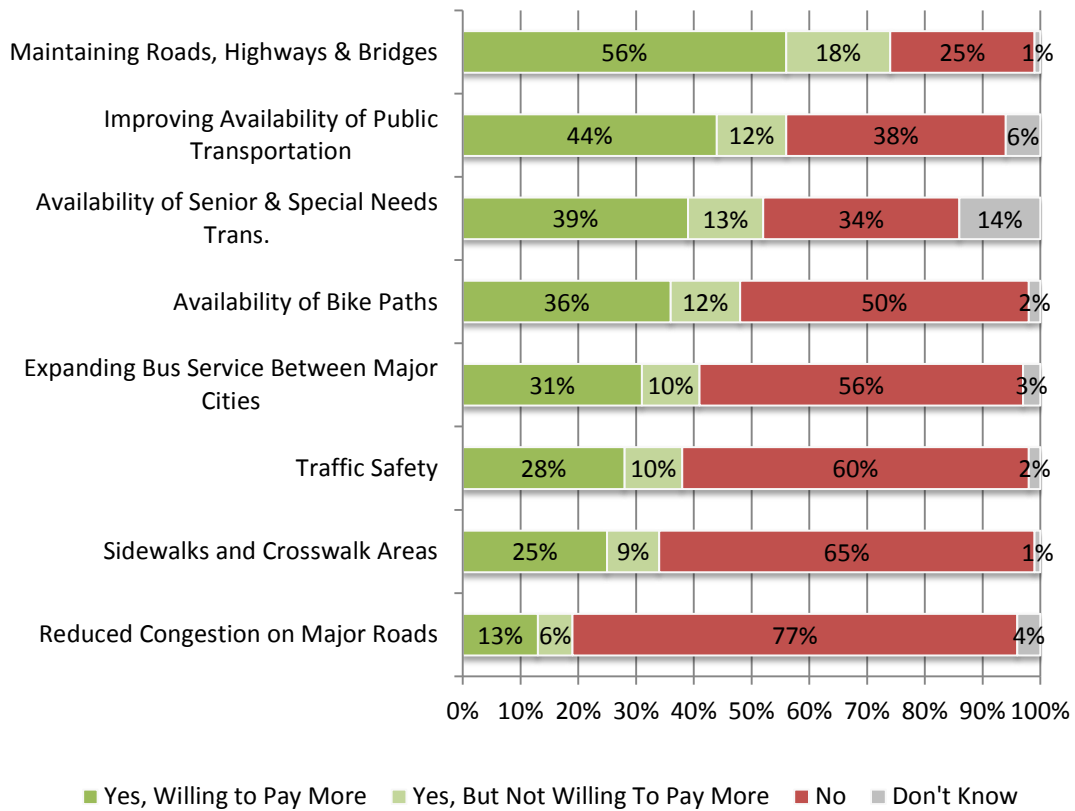
Consistent with the concern reported for the environment, and the high value placed on the region's scenic natural resources, **SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONS REGARDING RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS WAS EVEN STRONGER IN THE NORTH COUNTRY** than it was in the rest of the state.

HOW INVOLVED SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BE IN GUIDELINES FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY?



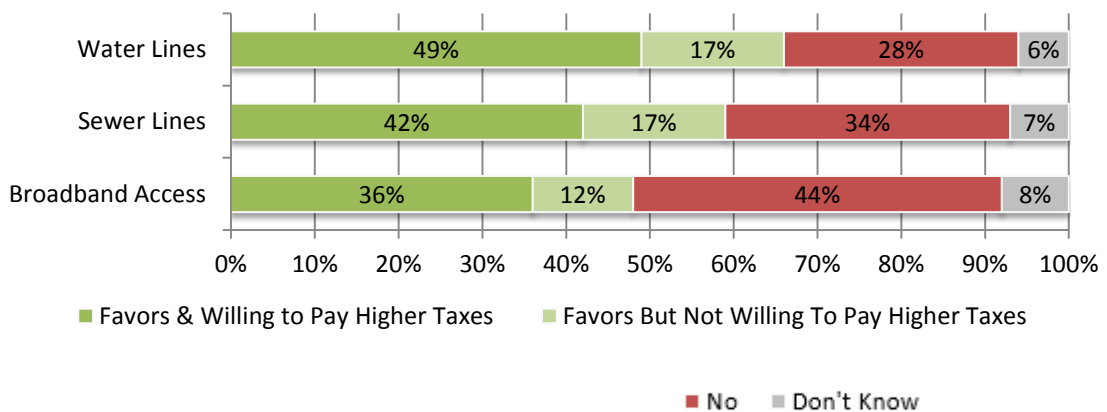
As shown on page 30, transportation was a pretty low priority for public investment for most respondents in the North Country. Drilling down a bit more into the specifics of that topic, North Country respondents reported that the highest priority for transportation spending was **MAINTAINING ROADS, HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES**. In fact, the **MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY MORE** for this additional maintenance.

SHOULD POLICY MAKERS INVEST MORE MONEY IN TRANSPORTATION?



While the majority of North Country respondents favor municipal investment in water and sewer for development, not all would be willing to pay higher taxes as a way to fund that infrastructure. North Country respondents were divided on the issue of using municipal funds to provide broadband access for development; 48% responded that they favored using municipal funds and 44% did not.

FAVOR OR OPPOSE USING MUNICIPAL FUNDS TO PROVIDE UTILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT?



MUNICIPAL SURVEY

North Country planning boards, selectboards and the Berlin City Council were each mailed a packet of surveys for each member to fill out. The survey asked a series of questions about regional and local needs and priorities, development patterns, and other community planning issues.

Municipal officials identified **EMERGENCY SERVICES, TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION** as the four areas of existing or emerging needs that can best be addressed by more than one community working together. Other areas mentioned by several respondents were social issues, recreation/trails, energy, and water resource issues.

When asked their opinions about priorities for North Country Council, the region's municipal officials ranked **PROTECTING WATER QUALITY AND IMPROVED HIGH SPEED INTERNET** as the highest priorities. Closely following were energy efficiency, attracting new businesses that pay livable wages, training and guidance for planning boards, and sharing of municipal services and purchases.



“Community” as defined by respondents to 2014 North Country Council municipal survey

VI. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The following vision statements are intended to give direction for policies, programs, partnerships, and projects throughout the North Country in the coming years. They have evolved over time with input from many sources. They should be revisited periodically and vetted with the region's residents on an ongoing basis.

**“COMMUNITY” IN THE
NORTH COUNTRY
WILL CONTINUE TO
MEAN INDEPENDENT-
MINDED PEOPLE
HELPING EACH OTHER**

The North Country landscape will continue to be defined by its working forest and farms; its patchwork of villages and community centers; and its scenic and natural resources, with room for both wildlife and outdoor recreationists. Our rural character will be sustained by high quality, natural resource-based clusters of industries including agriculture, energy, tourism, manufacturing, the arts and other industries that help to maintain our open spaces and our connections to the past.

We will be strengthened by improved educational and cultural opportunities, competitive telecommunication, transportation and entrepreneurial infrastructures, and a broad base of employment offering economic opportunity in a region fully informed about and engaged by modern technologies, training, and the needs of business.

An increased number of young people will choose to live in the region due to the increase in livable wage jobs, high quality outdoor environment, strong sense of community, housing choices, and improved measures of well-being such as health and education; they will bring new energy and new ideas.

Everyone will have access to both transportation and safe affordable housing.

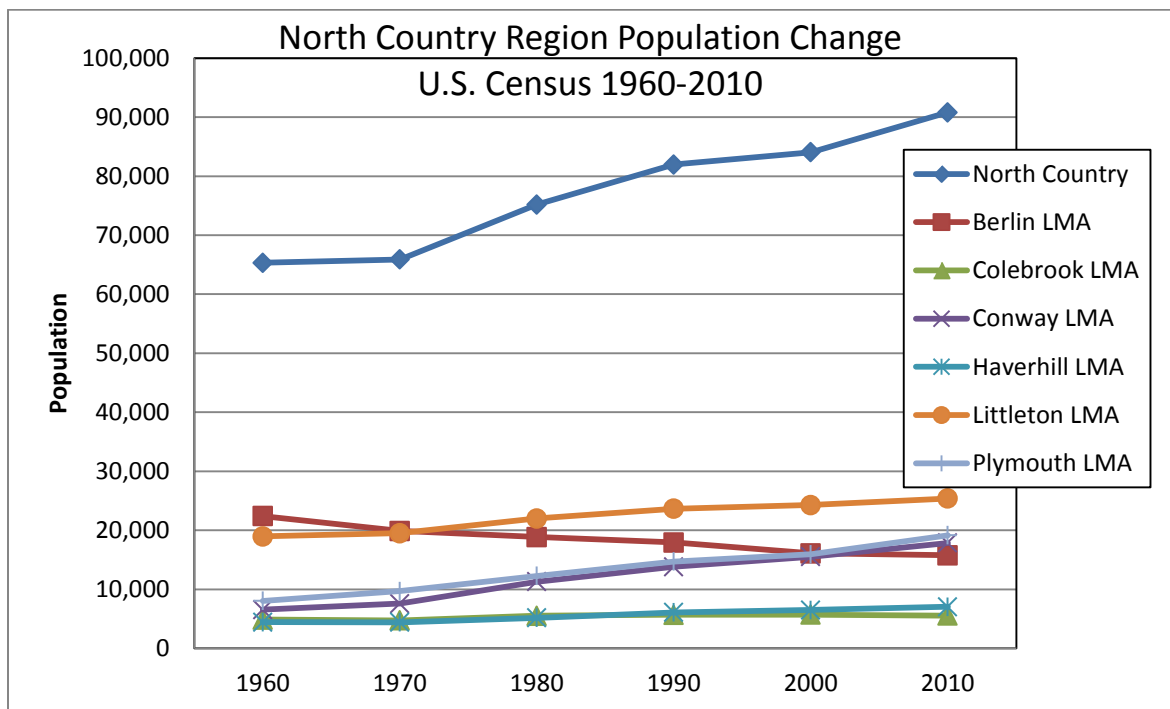
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VII. THE DATA AND WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT THE NEEDS OF THE REGION

POPULATION

As of the 2010 U.S. Census the year-round population of the North Country Council Planning Region was 90,813. The largest communities were Conway (10,115) in Carroll County and Berlin (10,051) in Coos County. Due to the large geographic area covered by the region, several smaller communities also serve the role of socioeconomic centers for the surrounding communities. These are: Plymouth (6,990), Littleton (5,928), and Haverhill (4,697), all in northern Grafton County, and Colebrook (2,301) in Coos County. The vast majority of North Country towns have fewer than 2,500 residents; many have fewer than 1,000 residents. The region also includes the state's 25 Unincorporated Places where 94 residents were counted in 2010.

The North Country Council Planning Region's population has grown substantially over the past fifty years; however, this growth has not been uniform across the region. The graph below shows the population growth for the region as a whole, along with the population change for each labor market area subset. As shown, most of the growth has been in the Littleton, Conway and Plymouth areas. The Berlin area has lost population, while Colebrook and Haverhill have remained fairly steady.



North Country Council Planning Region

2010 Population

Legend



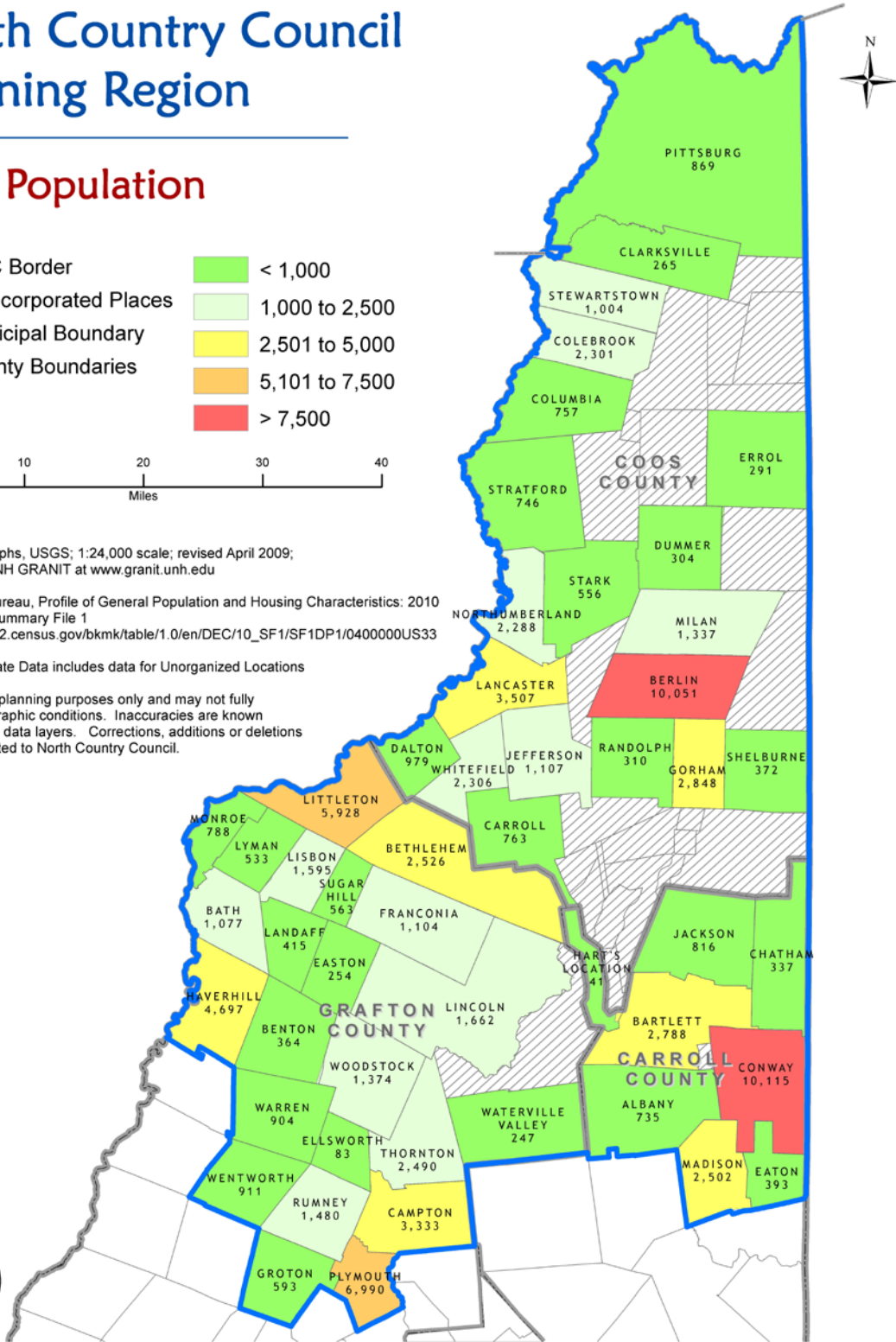
Data Sources:

Digital Line Graphs, USGS; 1:24,000 scale; revised April 2009; available from NH GRANIT at www.granit.unh.edu

U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 2010 Census Summary File 1
http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_SF1/SF1DP1/0400000US33

County and State Data includes data for Unorganized Locations



This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.

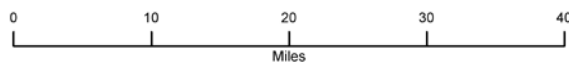


North Country Council Planning Region

Population Change 2000-2010

Legend

-  NCC Border
-  Unincorporated Places
-  Municipal Boundary
-  County Boundaries
-  No Data
-  < 0 to - 10%
-  0
-  1% to 10%
-  10% to 20%
-  > 20%



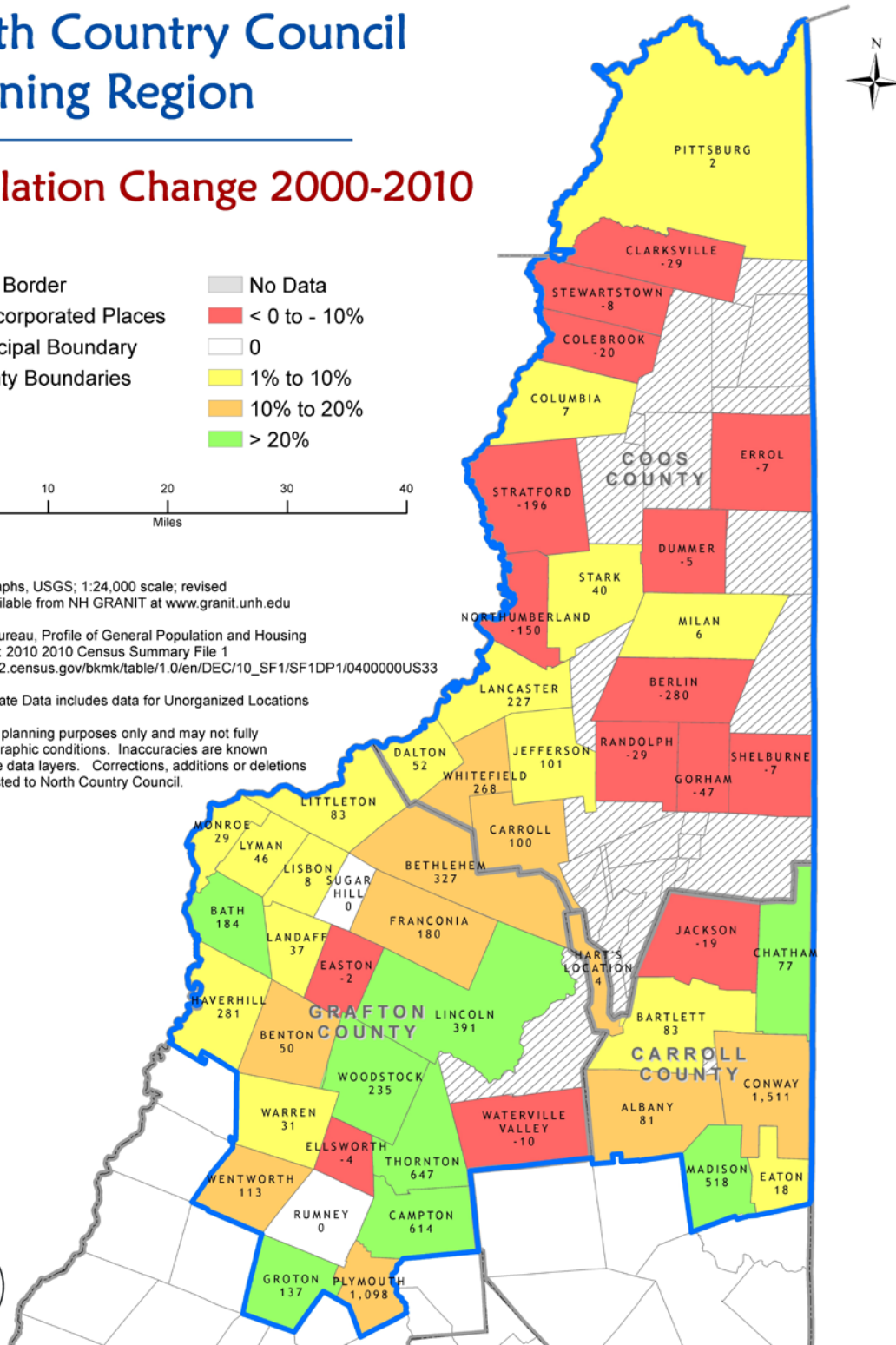
Data Sources:

Digital Line Graphs, USGS; 1:24,000 scale; revised April 2009; available from NH GRANIT at www.granit.unh.edu

U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 Census Summary File 1
http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_SF1/SF1DP1/0400000US33

County and State Data includes data for Unorganized Locations

This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.



Between 2000 and 2010 the Conway and Plymouth areas experienced the highest rates of growth, followed by the Haverhill and Littleton areas. Both the Berlin and Colebrook areas lost population in recent years.

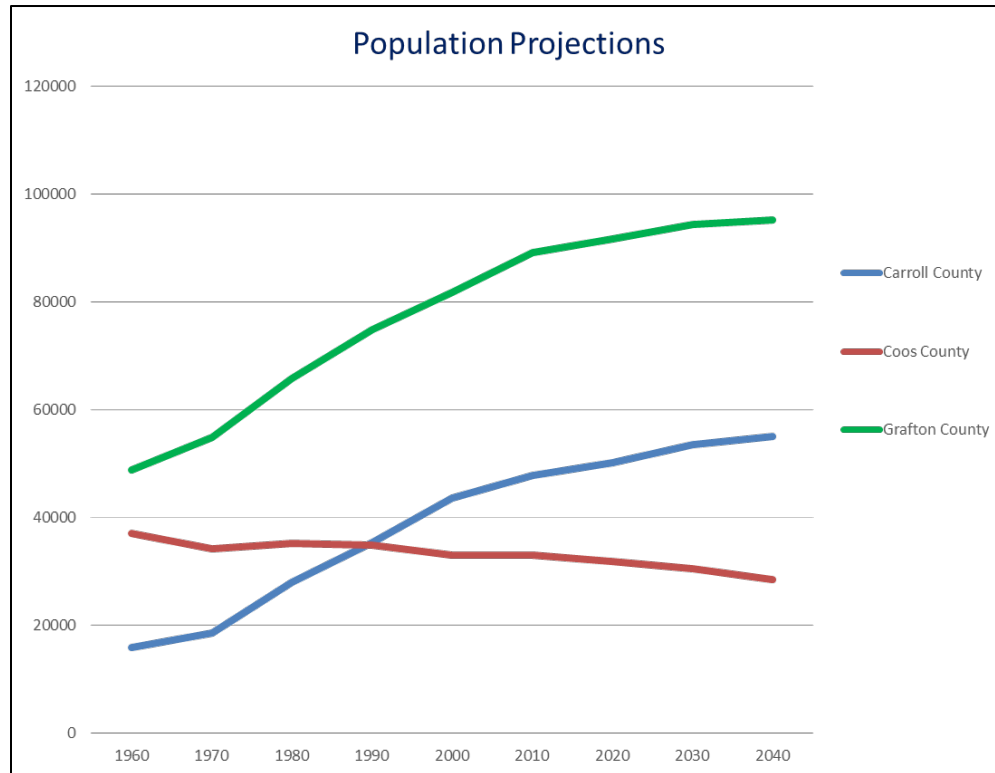
**2000 TO 2010 POPULATION CHANGE
NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL PLANNING REGION**

Labor Market Area	2000	2010	% Change
Berlin	16,102	15,778	-2%
Colebrook	5,706	5,564	-2%
Conway	15,519	17,860	+15%
Haverhill	6,496	7,042	+8%
Littleton	24,297	25,406	+5%
Plymouth	15,942	19,163	+20%
Total	84,062	90,813	+8%

(U.S. Census, 2000, 2010)

The different rates of growth in various corners of the North Country have meant differences among the make-up of the population as well. In Coos County, more than half of residents, about 62.1%, are still New Hampshire natives. In Grafton County as a whole this figure is only estimated to be 43.1%, and in Carroll County as a whole, 38.2% (American Community Survey 2008-2012 five year estimates).

Population projections for the three counties – Coos, Grafton and Carroll - show continued population loss in Coos County, and continued but slower growth in Carroll and Grafton Counties over the next several decades.²



² Population projections are performed at the county level due to the availability of demographic data. The North Country Council Planning Region includes all of Coos County, northern Grafton County, and northern Carroll County.

North Country Council Planning Region

Population Age 65 and Over

Legend

-  NCC Border
-  Unincorporated Places
-  Municipal Boundary
-  County Boundaries
-  Up to 10%
-  10% to 15%
-  15% to 20%
-  > 20%



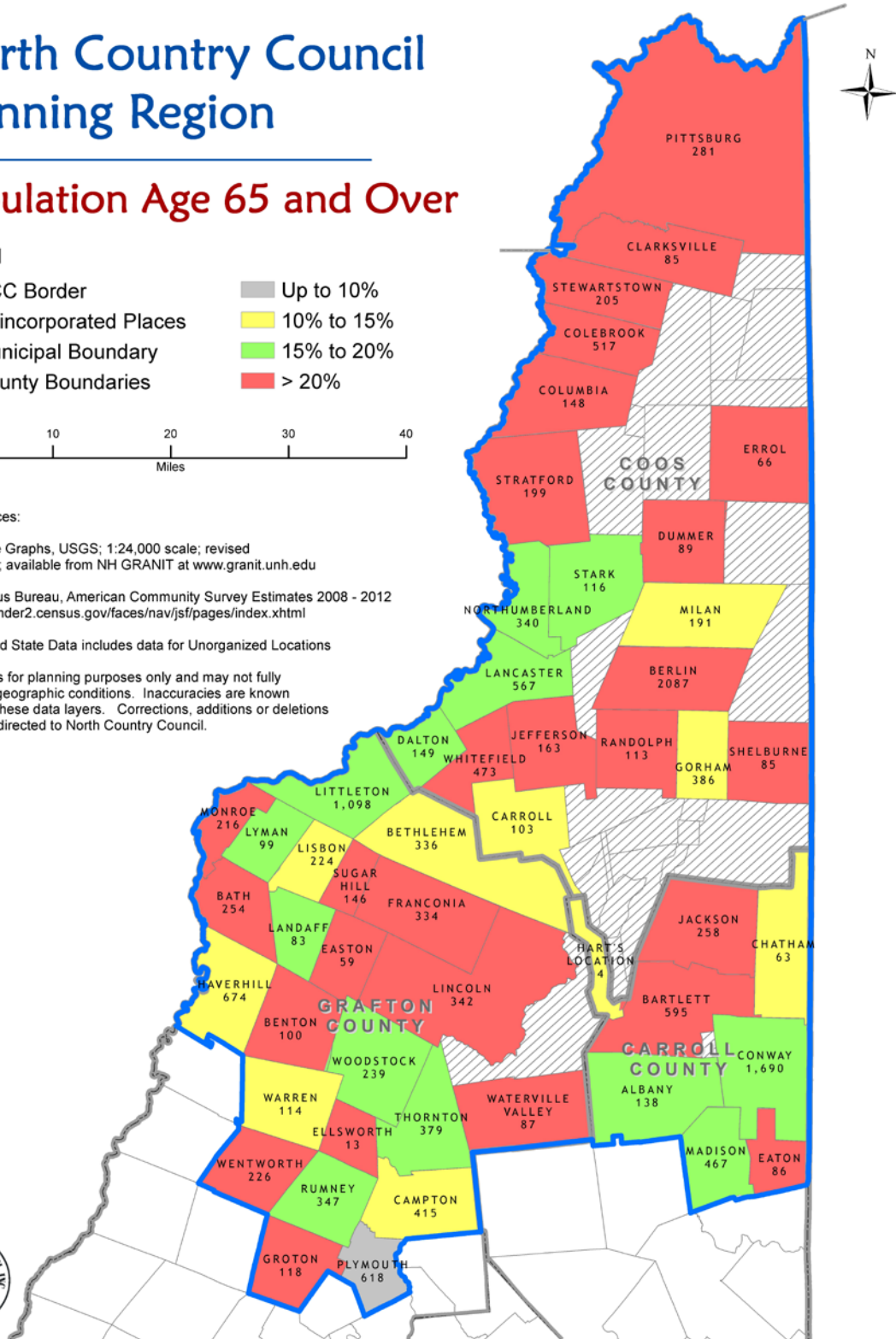
Data Sources:

Digital Line Graphs, USGS; 1:24,000 scale; revised April 2009; available from NH GRANIT at www.granit.unh.edu

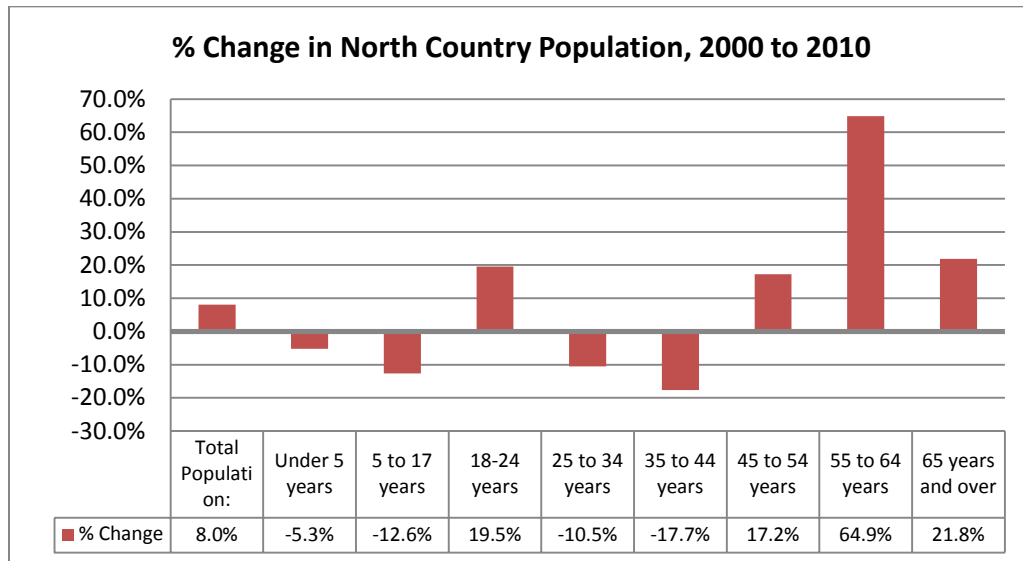
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates 2008 - 2012 <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

County and State Data includes data for Unorganized Locations

This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.

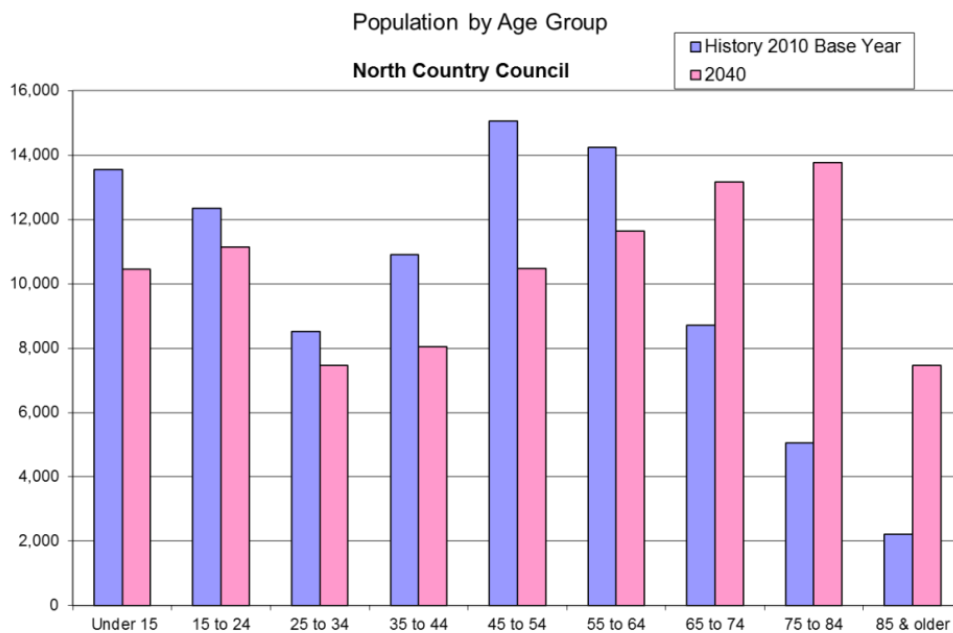


The population trends have not been uniform among age groups. As for the rest of the state, the largest increase in population by far in the North Country planning region has been in the 55-64 age group. Smaller increases were seen in the 18-24, 45-54 and 65 and over age groups. The population of children under 18 decreased, as did the population 25-44.



(U.S. Census 2000, 2010)

As shown in the table below, the shift toward the older age categories is expected to continue in the next several decades.



(NH Center for Public Policy Studies, 2013 Headship Model)

In the last decade, despite New Hampshire having the 47th lowest birth rate in the country in 2010, natural increase accounted for most of the state's population increase for the first time since the 1960s. Migration into the state was much lower than it had been in 40 years. Migrants leaving New Hampshire have not changed in numbers drastically, rather the age structure is changing. ***NEW HAMPSHIRE'S YOUNG ADULT POPULATION IS DWINDLING, NOT NECESSARILY BECAUSE MORE YOUTH ARE LEAVING THE STATE, BUT BECAUSE FEWER YOUNG PEOPLE ARE COMING INTO THE STATE.*** Currently, a large proportion of the population is aged 45 to 64 – offering New Hampshire the advantage of a large working age population compared to those too old or too young to work. However, in the next twenty years, the number of those aged 65 to 74 is set to double, which will offer some serious challenges to our communities, such as appropriate housing availability as this population ages (Johnson, K., 2012, *New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the Twenty-first Century, Reports on New England*, Number 4. Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire).

EMPLOYMENT

The table on the following page shows the average employment and weekly wages paid in the North Country planning region's industries along with the statewide average weekly wage. **The industries employing the largest numbers are shown in bold.** As shown, the average weekly wage region-wide was \$635 in 2012 compared to \$928 statewide. The five industries providing most of the region's employment are Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Government. Of these industries, the only one that pays an average weekly wage higher than the statewide average for that industry is Accommodation and Food Services; however that average weekly wage is \$352, well below the average weekly wage of \$635 for the region for all industries.

Industry	North Country Annual Average Employment		North Country Average Weekly Wage	State Average Weekly Wage
	Number	%		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	383	0.9%	\$659	\$624
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	37	0.1%	\$683	\$1,102
Utilities	190	0.5%	\$1,526	\$1,818
Construction	1860	4.4%	\$850	\$990
Manufacturing	3081	7.3%	\$752	\$1,221
Wholesale Trade	528	1.3%	\$1,026	\$1,550
Retail Trade	7715	18.4%	\$496	\$537
Transportation and Warehousing	778	1.9%	\$556	\$741
Information	403	1.0%	\$923	\$1,453
Finance and Insurance	723	1.7%	\$1,245	\$1,628
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	458	1.1%	\$593	\$863
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	659	1.6%	\$954	\$1,533
Management of Companies and Enterprises	404	1.0%	\$1,093	\$1,881
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	619	1.5%	\$626	\$821
Educational Services	438	1.0%	\$568	\$945
Health Care and Social Assistance	5942	14.1%	\$815	\$937
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1831	4.4%	\$368	\$376
Accommodation and Food Services	7192	17.1%	\$352	\$339
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1020	2.4%	\$522	\$616
Unclassified	6	0.0%	\$372	\$1,330
Government	7737	18.4%	\$719	\$868
Total	42,004	100.0%	\$635	\$928

(NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau)

There are variations between the region's labor market areas (LMAs), both in terms of the type of employment and wages. In the following table, the average weekly wage is shown for each of the region's major industries. For the purposes of this analysis, an industry is defined as a "major" industry if it provides at least 5% of the employment in any one of the region's six labor market areas. The percentage of employment each industry provides in each labor market area is also shown. Using the 2014 MIT Living Wage Calculator developed by Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier, a weekly wage of \$387 is estimated to be the Living Wage for a single person in New Hampshire (\$9.68 per hour x 40 hours). **In the following table, weekly wages which would NOT provide a Living Wage for a single person household are colored red.** All of the region's major industries provide a Living Wage for a single adult except Accommodation and Food Services and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (with the exception of the Conway LMA). A Living Wage for a household with two adults and two children is estimated to be \$806 (\$20.15 per hour x 40 hours). **Weekly wages which WOULD provide a Living Wage for a household with two adults and two children are colored green.** Here there is more variation between labor market areas. The average weekly wage in the Construction industry provides a Living Wage for a family of four in all LMAs except Littleton. Interestingly, Manufacturing on average only provides a Living Wage for a family of four in the Berlin LMA. The average Health Care and Social Assistance position provides a Living Wage for a family of four in the Haverhill, Plymouth, and Littleton LMAs.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES WITHIN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S SIX NORTHERN LABOR MARKET AREAS – SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE

Industry	Berlin		Haverhill		Plymouth		Colebrook		Conway		Littleton	
	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$
Construction	7.4%	\$898	4.9%	\$937	3.5%	\$828	5.8%	\$891	4.7%	\$814	3.2%	\$785
Manufacturing	8.3%	\$910	4.9%	\$685	9.1%	\$796	3.7%	\$679	5.7%	\$770	11.3%	\$731
Retail Trade	14.7%	\$526	19.6%	\$444	11.2%	\$463	18.0%	\$427	21.6%	\$456	19.8%	\$584
Health Care and Social Assistance	19.1%	\$767	11.9%	\$901	10.3%	\$830	16.5%	\$650	12.3%	\$723	15.6%	\$893

Industry	Berlin		Haverhill		Plymouth		Colebrook		Conway		Littleton	
	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.7%	\$379	n	n	6.2%	\$360	0.9%	\$198	4.6%	\$409	4.9%	\$343
Accommodation and Food Services	11.4%	\$307	6.0%	\$264	18.1%	\$355	10.4%	\$285	23.4%	\$355	13.4%	\$375
Government	25.0%	\$767	37.3%	\$692	22.8%	\$735	26.6%	\$593	12.4%	\$669	14.6%	\$681
Total	5840	\$696	2680	\$671	12775	\$631	1993	\$555	14175	\$593	11708	\$667

(NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, 2012)

Following statewide trends, the number of jobs in the better paying goods-producing industries has continued to decline in the North Country. As shown below, with the exception of Conway, goods producing jobs in the largest job center community in each of the region's six labor market areas represented a smaller proportion of private industry jobs in 2014 than they had in 2000. The average weekly wage for jobs in goods-producing industries in each of the six job center communities continues to be higher than that for jobs in service industry jobs.

NUMBER OF GOODS-PRODUCING JOBS AS % OF TOTAL PRIVATE INDUSTRY JOBS COMPARED TO STATEWIDE

	2000	2014
Statewide	25%	17%
Berlin	39%	15%
Colebrook	19%	15%
Conway	10%	11%
Haverhill	30%	15%
Littleton	27%	18%
Plymouth	14%	4%

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE FOR SERVICE INDUSTRY JOBS AS % OF GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRY WAGE

	2000	2014
Statewide	75%	79%
Berlin	58%	90%
Colebrook	84%	85%
Conway	74%	81%
Haverhill	85%	68%
Littleton	81%	79%
Plymouth	80%	83%

(NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 1st Quarter 2000, 1st Quarter 2014.)

In addition, average weekly wages in the North Country continue to be substantially lower than the state averages for both goods-producing jobs and service industry jobs. However, in several instances (shaded green in the following table) the differential between the average weekly wage in the North Country labor market area and the statewide figure has grown smaller.

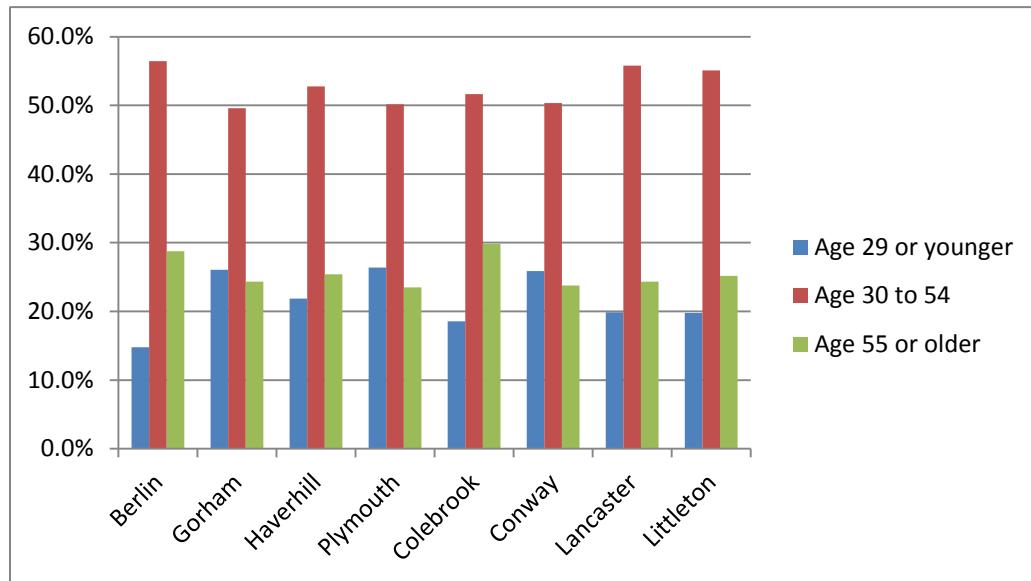
**AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES
AND SERVICE INDUSTRIES COMPARED WITH STATE AVERAGES
FOR EACH NORTH COUNTRY LABOR MARKET AREA – 2000 AND 2014**

	Average Weekly Wage: Goods Producing Industries	Average Weekly Wage as % of State Average	Average Weekly Wage: Service Industries	Average Weekly Wage as % of State Average	Average Weekly Wage: Goods Producing Industries	Average Weekly Wage as % of State Average	Avg. Weekly Wage: Service Industries	Average Weekly Wage as % of State Average
	2000				2014			
Statewide	\$832		\$620		\$1,197		\$946	
Berlin	\$729	88%	\$424	68%	\$815	68%	\$737	78%
Colebrook	\$413	50%	\$346	56%	\$659	55%	\$560	59%
Conway	\$502	60%	\$372	60%	\$687	57%	\$555	59%
Haverhill	\$525	63%	\$446	72%	\$921	77%	\$626	66%
Littleton	\$561	67%	\$454	73%	\$882	74%	\$694	73%
Plymouth	\$513	62%	\$412	66%	\$772	64%	\$638	67%

*(NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau,
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 1st Quarter 2000, 1st Quarter 2014.)*

The primary jobs associated with several North Country job center communities were examined in more detail utilizing the US Census Bureau’s *OnTheMap* web tool.³ Characteristics of both the workforce and the jobs vary across the region. As shown in the graph below, the proportion of workers age 29 or younger is lowest in Berlin (15%) while this group forms over 25% of those employed in neighboring Gorham, as well as in Plymouth and Conway. Those age 55 and over form the highest proportion of Berlin and Colebrook’s workforce, 29% and 30% respectively, and 24-25% for each of the other job centers.

**AGE OF WORKFORCE EMPLOYED
IN SELECTED NORTH COUNTRY COMMUNITIES
PRIMARY JOBS ONLY**



(U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011)

³ If someone has more than one job, the job associated with the highest earnings is considered to be the primary job.

For each industry employing 10% or more of those with primary jobs, the share of jobs in the region's largest job center communities was examined. **The industry employing the highest number is shown in bold in the following table.** As shown, there is wide variation in the type of employment throughout the region, even between pairs of communities that are in the same labor market area, such as Berlin and Gorham, and Lancaster and Littleton.

**INDUSTRIES PROVIDING 10% OR MORE OF THE PRIMARY JOBS
IN ONE OR MORE OF THE SELECTED JOB CENTER COMMUNITIES**

Industry	Berlin	Gorham	Haverhill	Plymouth	Colebrook	Conway	Lancaster	Littleton
Manufacturing	10.7%	3.4%	3.8%	1.3%	5.0%	5.2%	9.5%	14.1%
Retail Trade	6.5%	35.8%	13.1%	13.9%	20.4%	24.9%	16.0%	28.5%
Educational Services	10.7%	9.7%	17.5%	20.9%	14.3%	7.6%	7.4%	5.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	34.7%	6.1%	24.5%	24.6%	26.4%	17.8%	31.4%	19.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	3.3%	28.2%	6.9%	18.5%	5.1%	18.0%	6.5%	8.4%
Public Administration	11.5%	4.8%	10.6%	1.8%	3.8%	1.8%	5.0%	2.4%

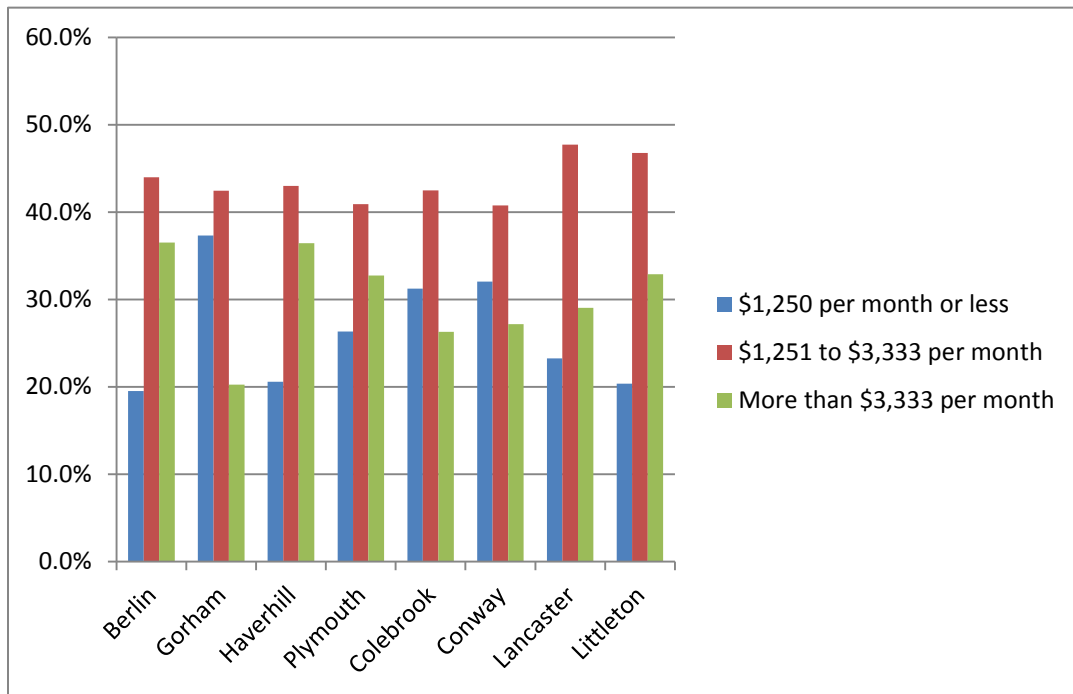
(U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011)

As shown, in Gorham and Conway, which along with Plymouth employed the highest proportion of the region's younger workers, the majority of primary jobs are in the retail sector. Retail Trade also provides the highest proportion of primary jobs in Littleton. In each of the other employment center communities examined, Health Care and Social Assistance is the dominant industry.

As shown below, Gorham and Conway, which are both associated with younger workforces and with a relatively large number of retail jobs, are also both associated with the highest percentages of primary jobs paying \$1,250 per month or less. Colebrook also has over 30% of jobs paying \$1,250 per month or less.

Of the job center communities examined, Berlin and Haverhill provide the largest percentage of primary jobs paying more than \$3,333 per month, followed by Littleton and Plymouth.

**EARNINGS OF WORKFORCE EMPLOYED
IN SELECTED NORTH COUNTRY COMMUNITIES
PRIMARY JOBS ONLY**



*(U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application,
and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics,
Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011)*

The aging population presents concerns relative to the region’s future workforce. **OVER HALF OF THE WORKFORCE IS 45 OR OLDER** in both Coos and Carroll County.

NH Employment Security Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau analyzed the potential impacts of the North Country’s aging workforce on the region’s economy utilizing the Bureau’s REMI Policy Insight model. Manufacturing jobs and jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance were chosen for the analysis. (The two other sectors with a relatively large share of workers age 55-64 are Retail and Education. Retail jobs were deemed easier to fill, and Education jobs may be expected to be reduced in number as the school age population declines.) The loss of older workers from these two better paying sectors poses concerns for further reductions in the region’s average wages if these jobs cannot be filled and are lost.

The labor market in the North Country Council region is heavily reliant on older experienced workers. These older workers are primarily employed in Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Educational Services and Manufacturing. Workers in Health Care and Social Assistance and Manufacturing are harder to replace due to the skills, knowledge and experience required for positions in these sectors. So as the older workers retire, it will be difficult to fill these positions. This study shows that if additional skilled working age population cannot be attracted to the region for jobs in these two critical sectors, the implications would be widespread in many other industries in the region. (“Economic Impact of An Older Workforce in Health Care and Social Assistance and Manufacturing in the North Country Region of New Hampshire,” DRAFT Report, NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, June 2014)

Looking ahead, based on recent trends, NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau projects slow job growth in the North Country's Service Industry jobs and virtually no growth in Goods-Producing jobs. As shown below, the industry projected to add the largest number of jobs is Health Care and Social Assistance, followed by Accommodation and Food Services and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation.

NAICS Code	Industry	Estimated	Projected	2010-2020 Change	
		2010	2020	Numeric	Percent
	Total Employment	46,410	47,591	1,181	2.5%
101000	Goods-Producing Industries	5,660	5,670	10	0.2%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	969	950	-19	-2.0%
21	Mining	35	32	-3	-8.6%
23	Construction	1,527	1,645	118	7.7%
31-33	Manufacturing	3,129	3,043	-86	-2.7%
102000	Service-Providing Industries	37,246	38,629	1,383	3.7%
22	Utilities	201	188	-13	-6.5%
42	Wholesale Trade	549	530	-19	-3.5%
44-45	Retail Trade	7,866	7,619	-247	-3.1%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	974	939	-35	-3.6%
51	Information	418	382	-36	-8.6%
52	Finance and Insurance	850	827	-23	-2.7%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	486	493	7	1.4%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	654	638	-16	-2.4%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	474	500	26	5.5%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services	564	583	19	3.4%
61	Educational Services	4,468	4,722	254	5.7%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	5,763	6,660	897	15.6%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,724	2,018	294	17.1%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	7,189	7,554	365	5.1%
81	Other Services (Except Government)	1,356	1,311	-45	-3.3%
	Government	3,710	3,665	-45	-1.2%
	Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers	3,504	3,292	-212	-6.1%
1. Does not include employment at Federal Correctional Institution, Berlin					
2. Employment for public schools and colleges is included in sector 61, <i>Educational Services</i> .					

(NHES ELMI, Long Range Projections for Planning Regions, North Country Council Region)

The location of jobs also presents challenges to the residents of this rural region. As shown below, the number of employed residents in Coos County exceeds the number of primary jobs in Coos County by over 2,700. **ALMOST ONE-THIRD (31.9%) OF COOS COUNTY’S WORKING RESIDENTS HAVE TO COMMUTE MORE THAN 50 MILES PER DAY TO WORK; THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE IS 8.4%.**

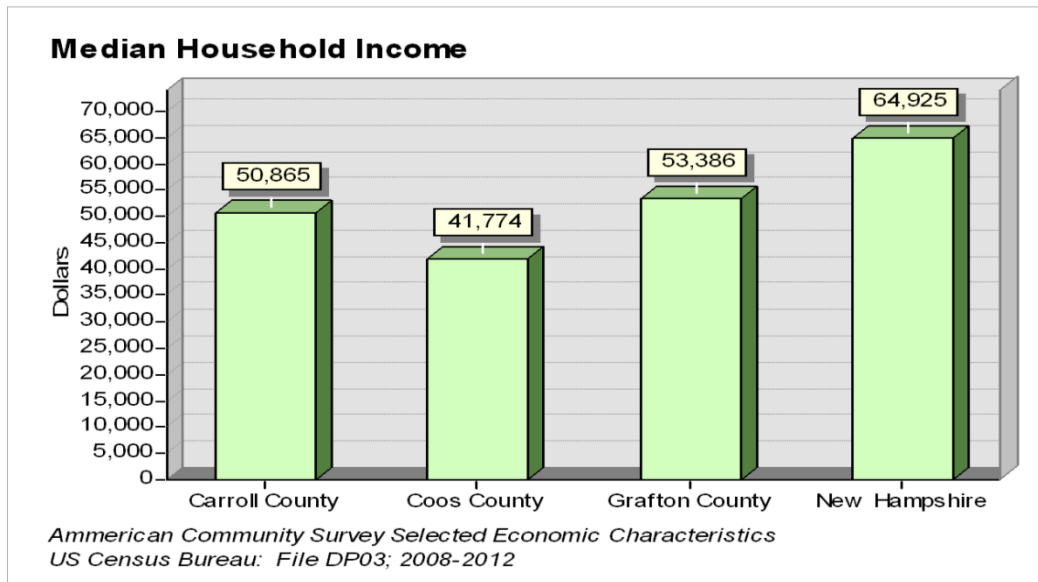
	Carroll County	Coos County	Grafton County
Number of Employed Residents	16,284	13,792	36,171
Number of Primary* Jobs	17,336	11,035	46,250
Workforce Deficit/Surplus	1,052	2,757	10,079

Note: Carroll County and Grafton County figures include the entire county, including communities outside the NCC planning region.

(U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap Application*, and *LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011*)

INCOMES


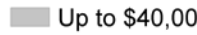

Loss of manufacturing jobs, growth in lower paying jobs in retail and accommodation, and lower wages compared to the statewide averages have translated into lower household incomes in each of the three northern New Hampshire counties.

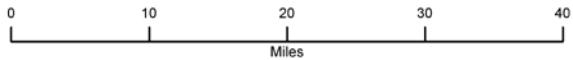


North Country Council Planning Region

Median Household Income

Legend

-  NCC Border
-  Unincorporated Places
-  Municipal Boundary
-  County Boundaries
-  Up to \$40,000
-  \$40,000 to \$50,000
-  \$50,000 to \$60,000
-  \$60,000 to \$70,000
-  > \$70,000



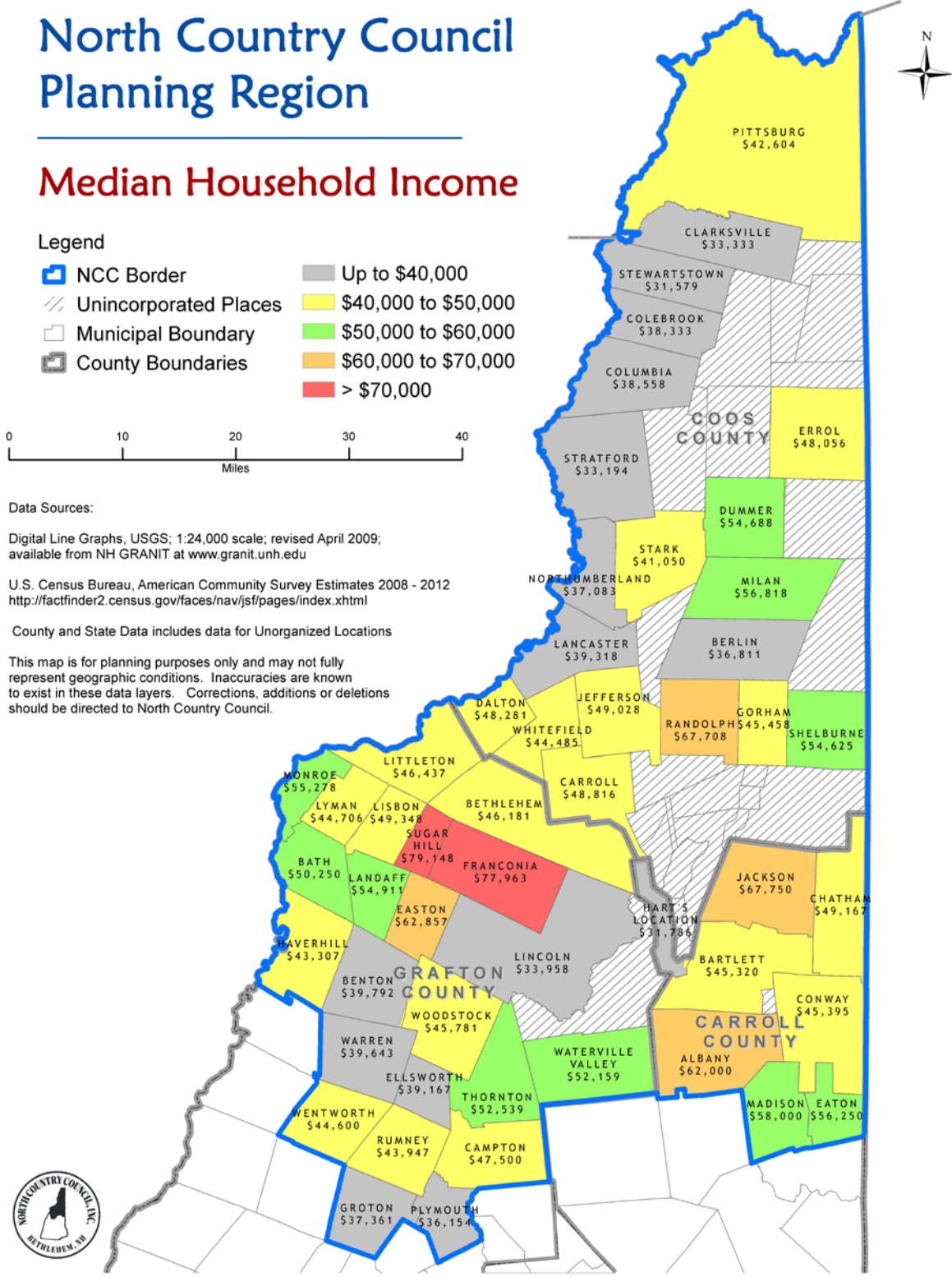
Data Sources:

Digital Line Graphs, USGS; 1:24,000 scale; revised April 2009; available from NH GRANIT at www.granit.unh.edu

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates 2008 - 2012 <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

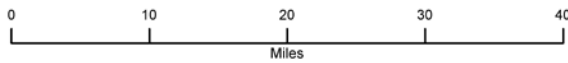
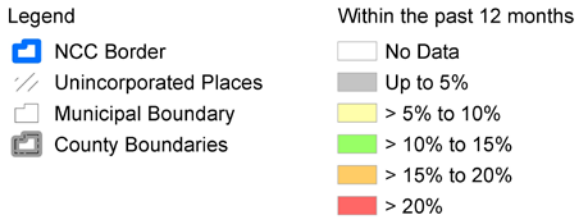
County and State Data includes data for Unorganized Locations

This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.



North Country Council Planning Region

Percent of Population Living Below Poverty Level



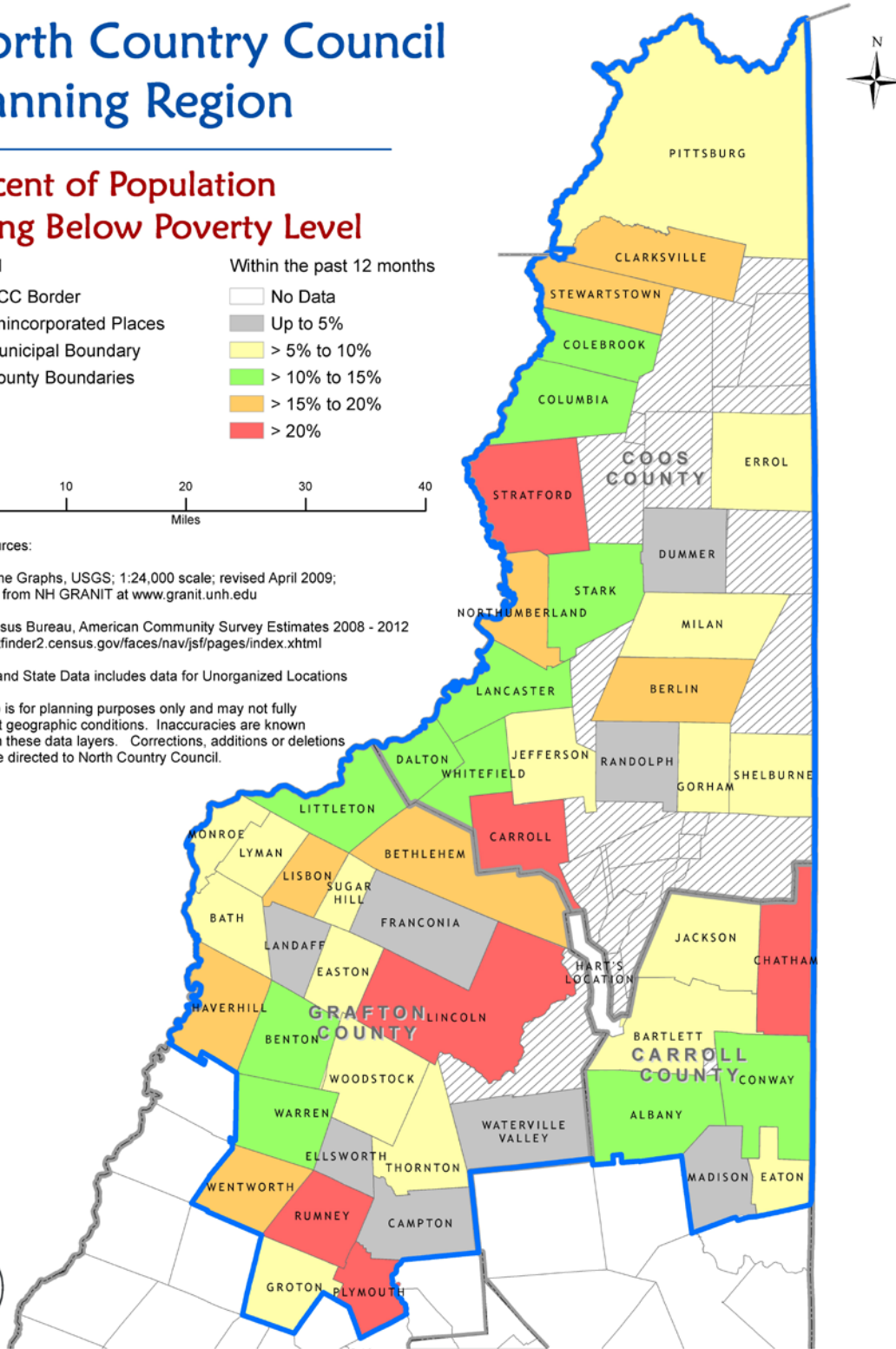
Data Sources:

Digital Line Graphs, USGS; 1:24,000 scale; revised April 2009; available from NH GRANIT at www.granit.unh.edu

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates 2008 - 2012 <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

County and State Data includes data for Unorganized Locations

This map is for planning purposes only and may not fully represent geographic conditions. Inaccuracies are known to exist in these data layers. Corrections, additions or deletions should be directed to North Country Council.



HOUSING

The overall supply of housing in the region is in balance with the current population. In the last decade, the growth of year-round housing in the region slightly exceeded the growth of population. In 2010 the vacancy rate for owned units was 3.2% and for rental units 11% (NCC, *North Country Region Housing Needs Assessment*, June 2011 Update; and 2010 U.S. Census).

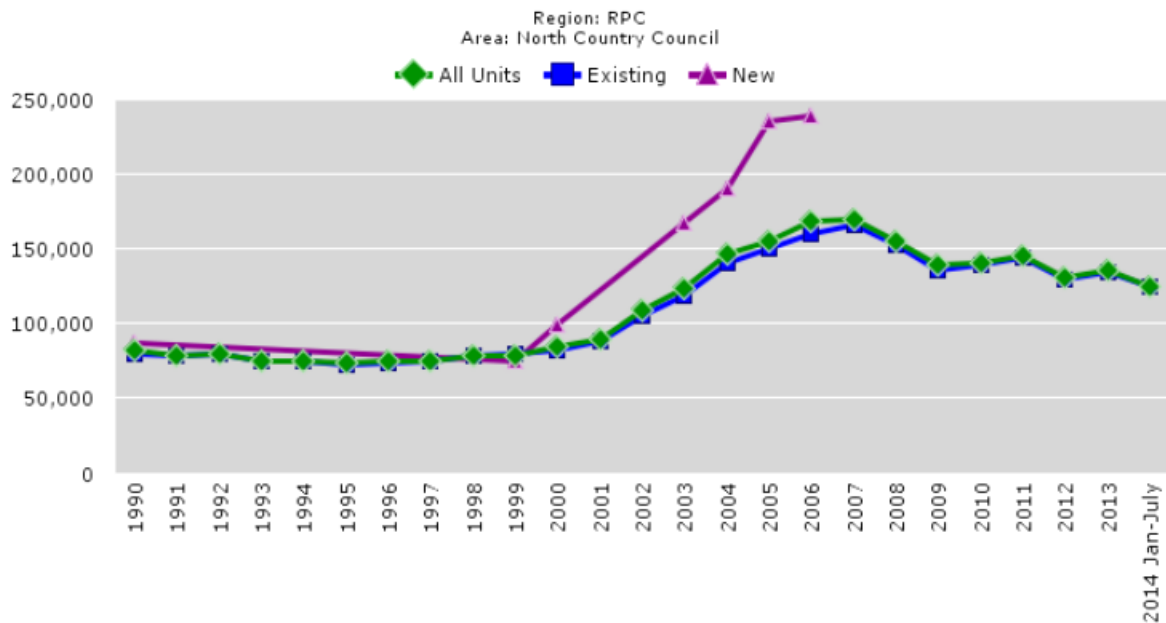
GROWTH IN YEAR-ROUND POPULATION VS. YEAR-ROUND HOUSING IN NORTH COUNTRY REGION 2000-2010

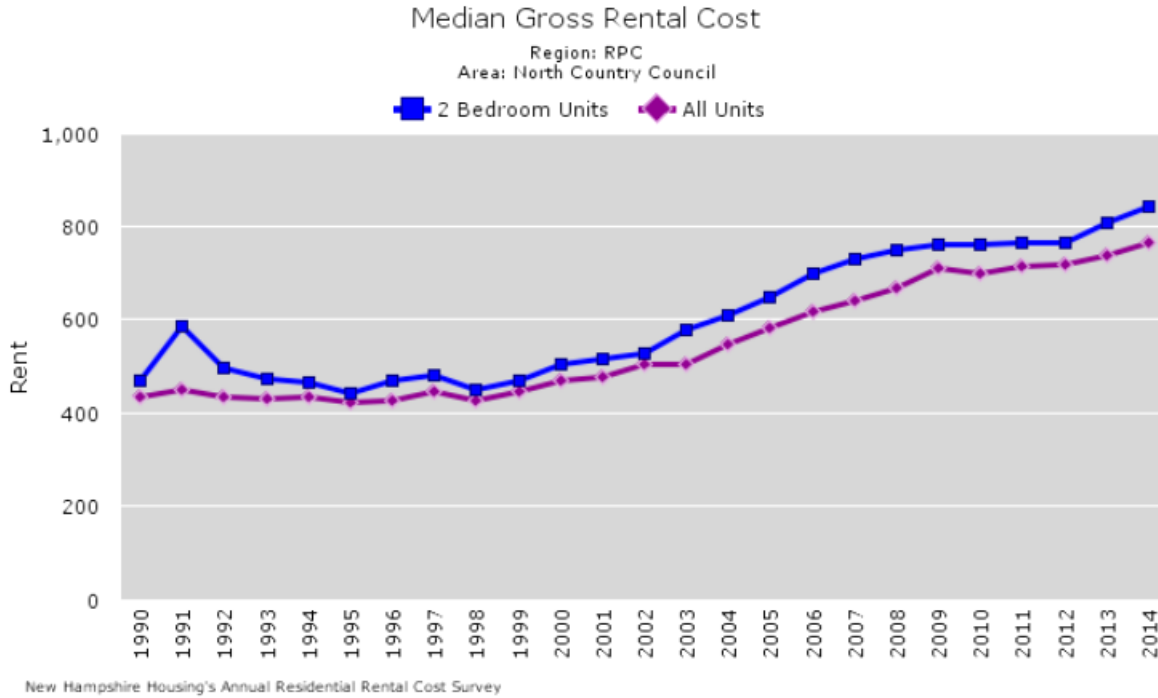
	2000	2010	% Change
Population	83,826	90,599	+8.1%
Year-Round Dwelling Units for Owner Occupancy	25,076	28,265	+12.7%
Year-Round Dwelling Units for Renter Occupancy	11,030	12,161	+10%

(U.S. Census 2000 and 2010; does not include Unincorporated Places)

As shown on the following two graphs from NH Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA), although the cost for those purchasing a home in the region as their primary residence has levelled off, rents have continued to increase. According to NHHFA, in the past ten years (2004-2014) the median monthly rent increased about 42% in Coos County, about 34% in Grafton County as a whole, and 23.4% in Carroll County as a whole.

Median Purchase Price of Primary Homes





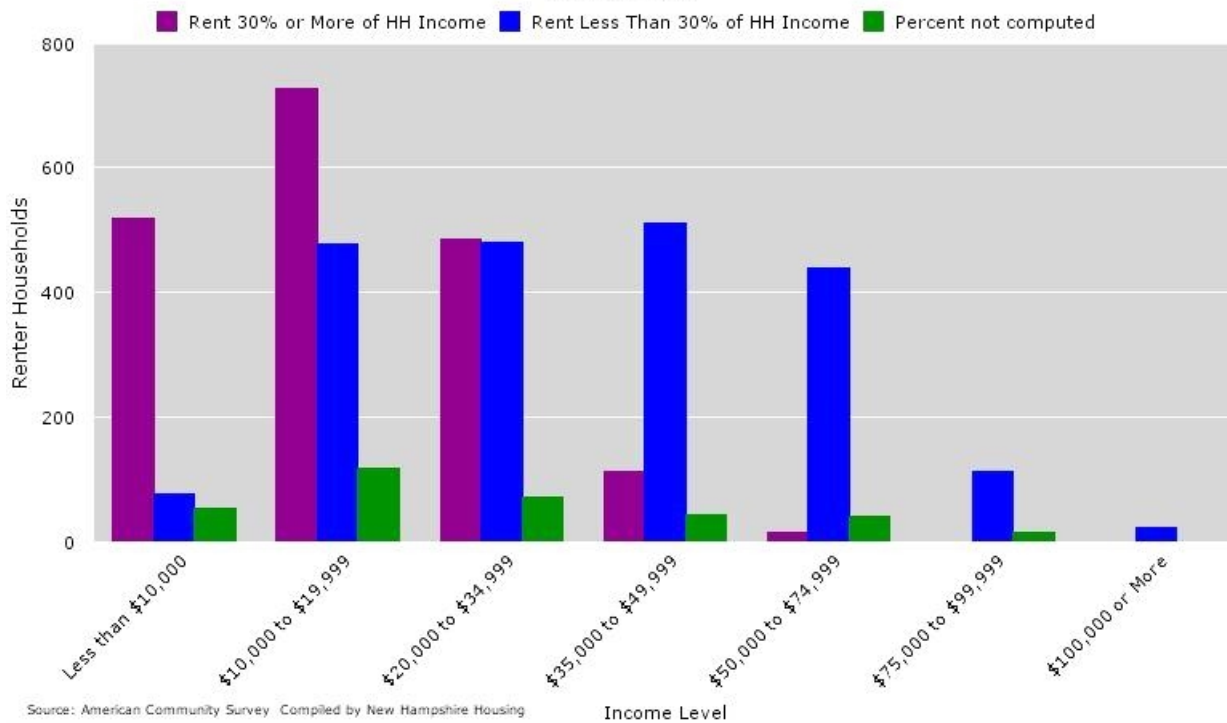
Housing costs have outpaced the incomes of many North Country residents. In the June 2011 *North Country Region Housing Needs Assessment*, it was estimated that 4,630 renter households (43% of renter households) in the North Country were paying more than 30% of their household incomes for housing. Paying more than 30% of household income for rent is considered by state and federal agencies and housing advocates to be “overpaying.”

Overpaying for rent means not enough money is left in the household for other basic necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, medical and dental care, and day care.

As shown on the following graphs from NH Housing Finance Authority, the majority of households in Coos County with incomes less than \$35,000 are considered to be overpaying for rent. In Grafton County, which also includes the Hanover-Lebanon area in the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region, a greater proportion of those households in the middle income categories were considered to be overpaying for rent.

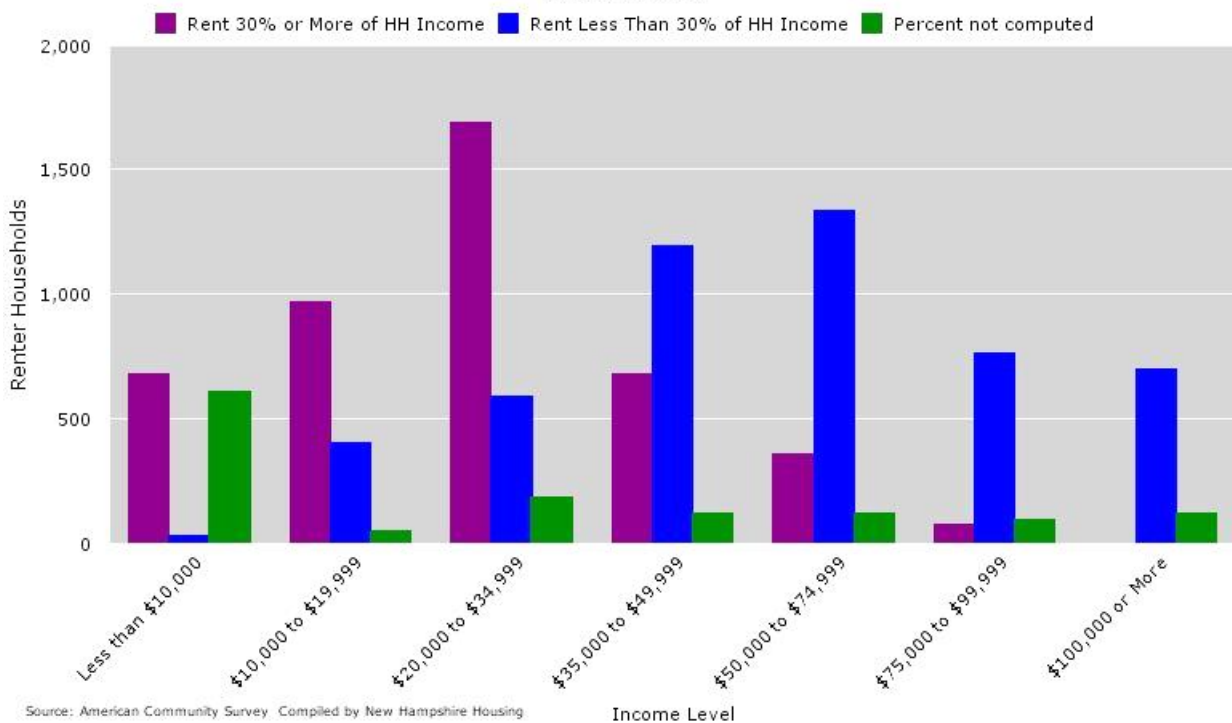
Gross Rent Overpayment at 30% of 2012 Household Income

Region: COUNTY
 Area: Coos County
 Year: 2010-2012

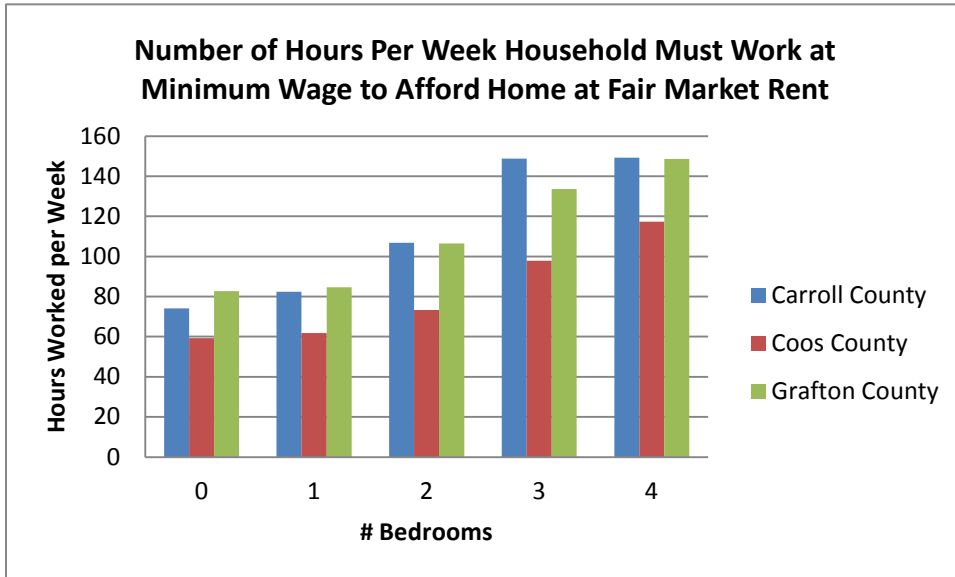


Gross Rent Overpayment at 30% of 2012 Household Income

Region: COUNTY
 Area: Grafton County
 Year: 2010-2012



In the graph below, rents are expressed in terms of the cumulative number of hours the members of a household would need to work at minimum wage in order to pay the fair market rent for the area without paying more than 30% of the household income for rent.



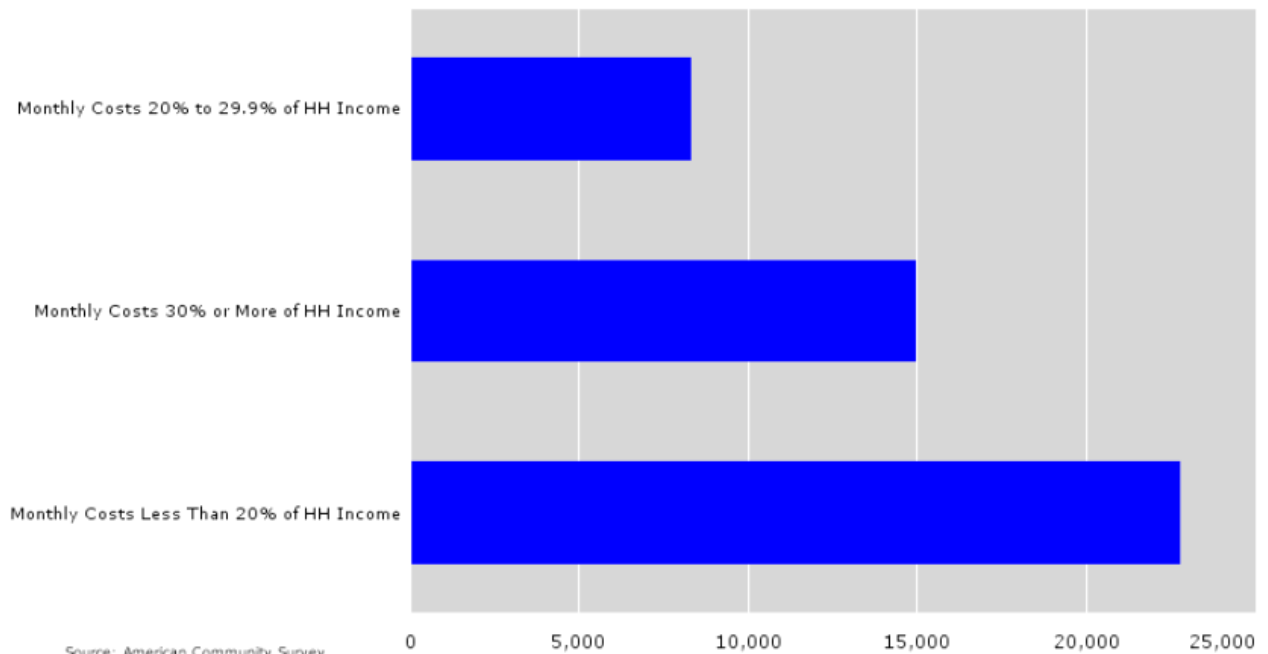
Note: 0 bedrooms is equal to a studio apartment.

(National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2013: New Hampshire)

The graphs on the following pages show that many of the region’s homeowners are also facing challenges having enough money left for food, transportation, medical care and other necessities after paying their mortgage, property taxes and other costs of home ownership.

Owner Occupied Housing by Housing Cost Burden

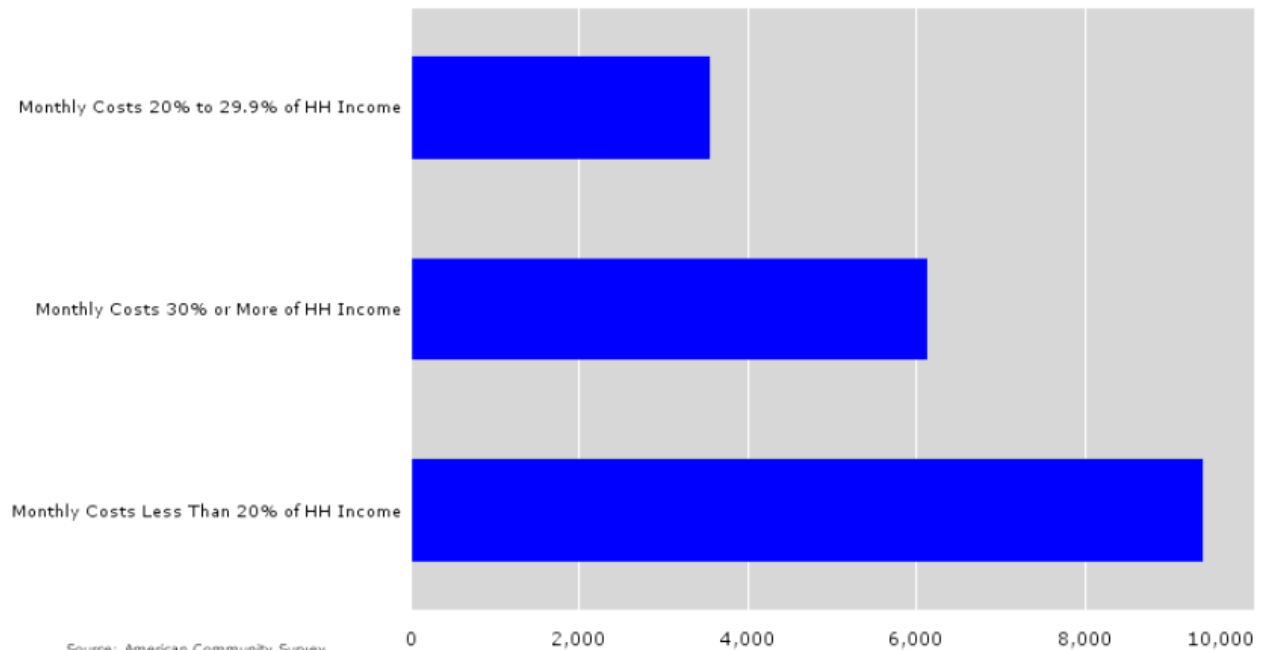
Region: COUNTY
Area: Grafton County
Year: 2010-2012



Source: American Community Survey
Compiled by New Hampshire Housing

Owner Occupied Housing by Housing Cost Burden

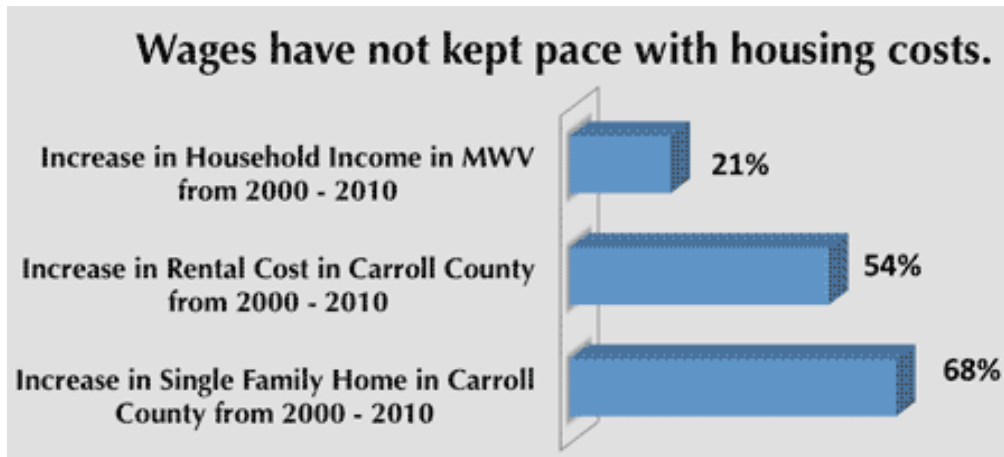
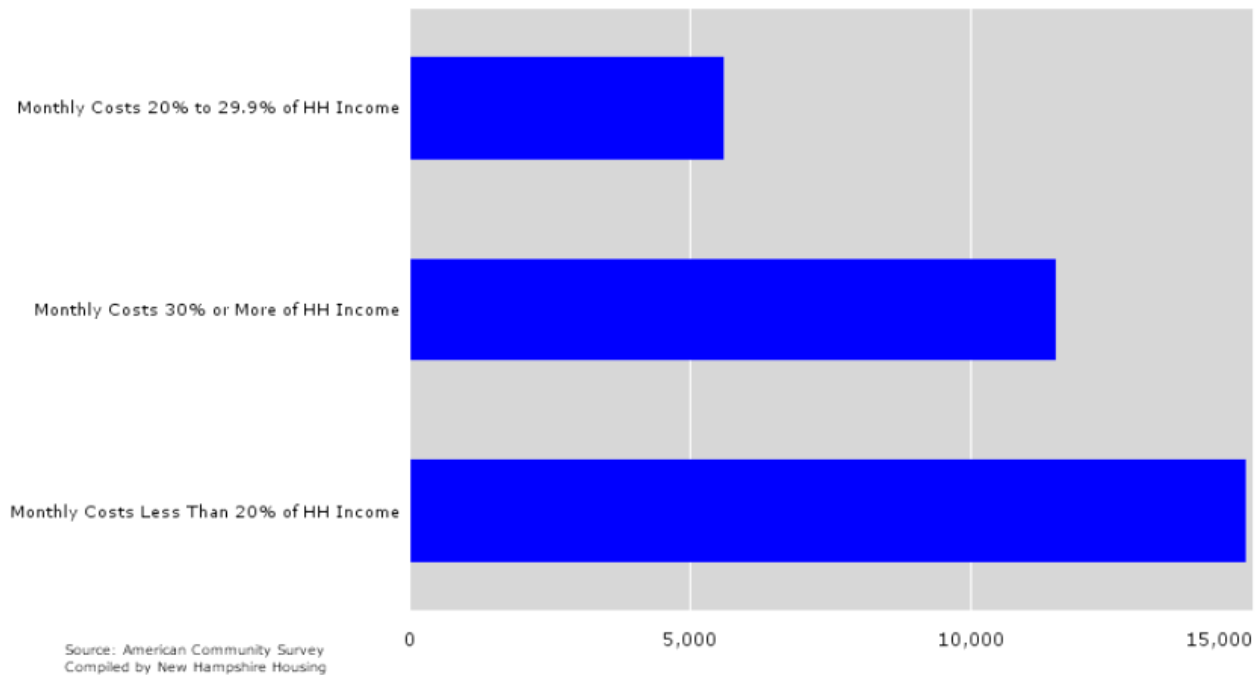
Region: COUNTY
Area: Coos County
Year: 2010-2012



Source: American Community Survey
Compiled by New Hampshire Housing

Owner Occupied Housing by Housing Cost Burden

Region: COUNTY
 Area: Carroll County
 Year: 2010-2012



(Mt. Washington Valley Housing Coalition)

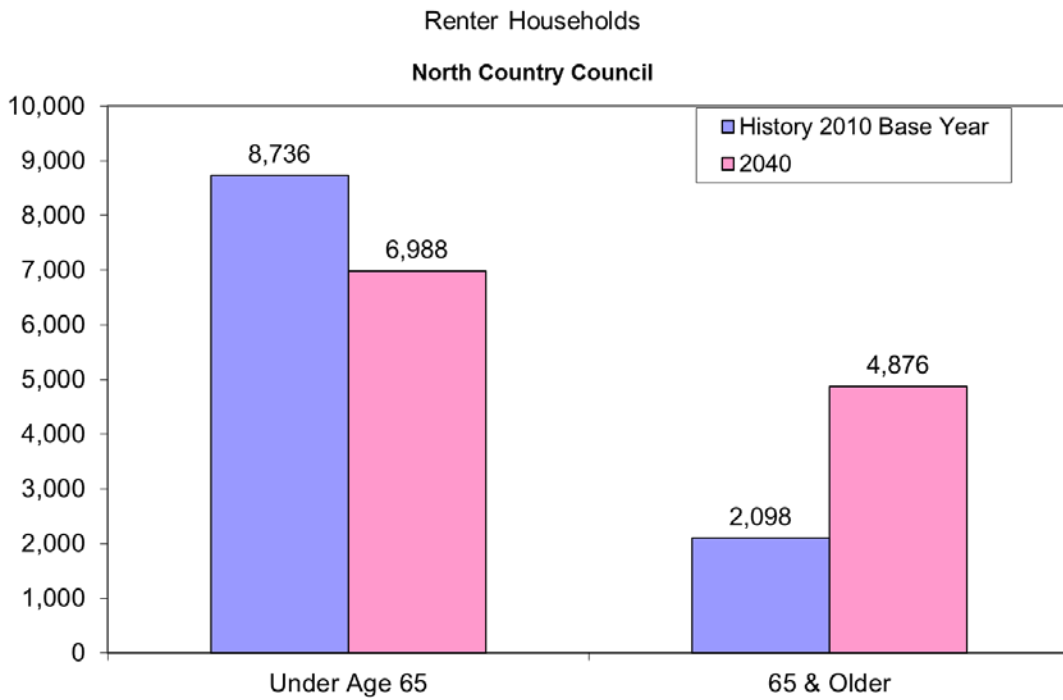
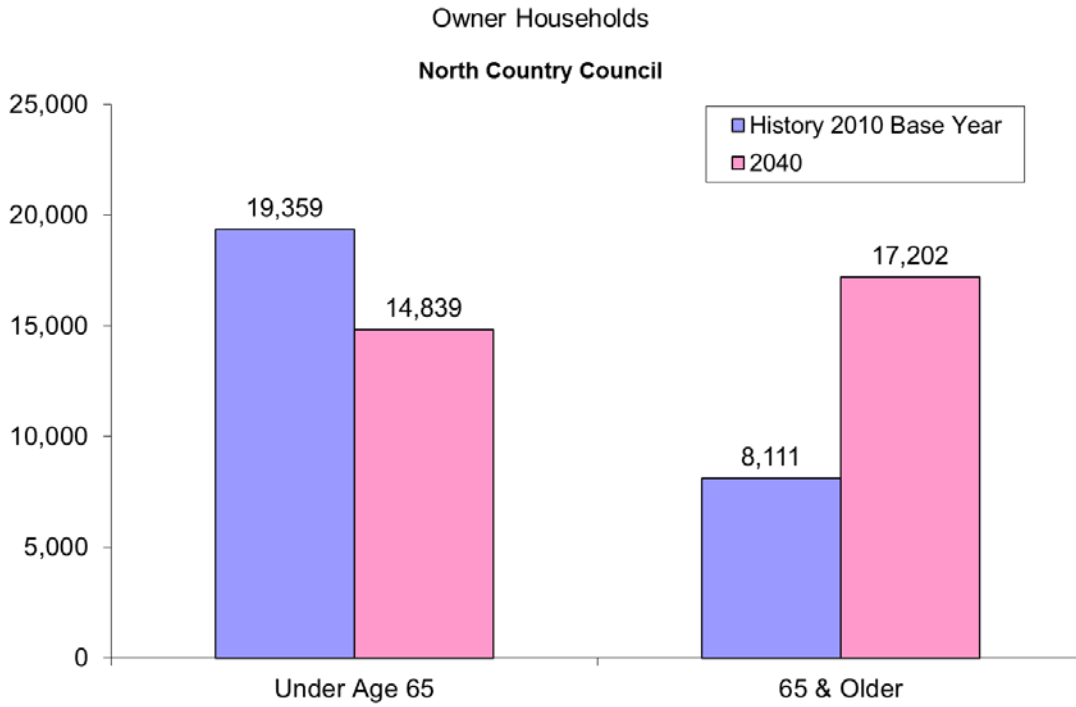
A comparison of 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census figures showed that the number of seasonal housing units in the North Country increased 20.3%, from 16,278 units to 19,590 units from 2000 to 2010 (NCC, *North Country Region Housing Needs Assessment*, June 2011 Update; and 2010 U.S. Census). The results of the *2011 North Country Housing Needs Assessment* indicated

that a large proportion of seasonal homes in an area affects the affordability of homes for residents. The three labor market area subsets of North Country planning region communities with the highest percentages of seasonal homes in 2010 (40% or more), Colebrook, Conway and Plymouth, all had 40% or more of renter households paying more than 30% of their household incomes for housing. The two labor market area subsets with more moderate proportions of seasonal homes in 2010 (17-19%), Haverhill and Littleton, had the lowest percentages of renter households overpaying for housing (29% and 39% respectively). In the Berlin Labor Market Area where only about a tenth of the homes were seasonal, an estimated 46% of renter households were overpaying in 2010; the Berlin LMA had an unemployment rate that was substantially higher than that of the rest of the North Country, underlining the importance of addressing the employment side of the housing equation.

As part of the collaborative effort to share resources in updating the plans of the state's nine regional planning commissions, NH Center for Public Policy Studies worked with NH Housing Finance Authority to look at future housing needs throughout the state. Overall housing need by county was projected for the current decade utilizing NHES Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau's employment projections along with the population projections that the regional planning commissions obtained with the Office of Energy and Planning. The projection, based on averaging employment-based and population-based results together, showed that Coos County has an adequate housing supply for the rest of this decade. Carroll County as a whole is projected to need to add approximately 155 additional homeowner units, while Grafton County as a whole is projected to need approximately an additional 343 units between 2010 and 2020 (294 owned and 49 rental).

The shifts in population toward the older age groups discussed earlier is likely to impact the type of housing needed in the future. As shown in the graphs on the following page, if current trends continue, the number of owner and renter households 65 and over can be expected to more than double within the next generation. In the case of owner households, the number older than 65 is actually expected to exceed the number younger than 65. The housing needs and preferences of younger households is also changing. People are waiting longer to start families and buy homes.

A lack of liquidity among baby-boomers may be keeping them in houses larger than they need or want. On the other end of the age spectrum, New Hampshire's young households are burdened by high levels of student debt and mediocre wage growth, which means it is more difficult to save and qualify for loans. (NH Center for Public Policy Studies, "Big Houses, Small Households: Perceptions, Preferences and Assessment," March 2014)

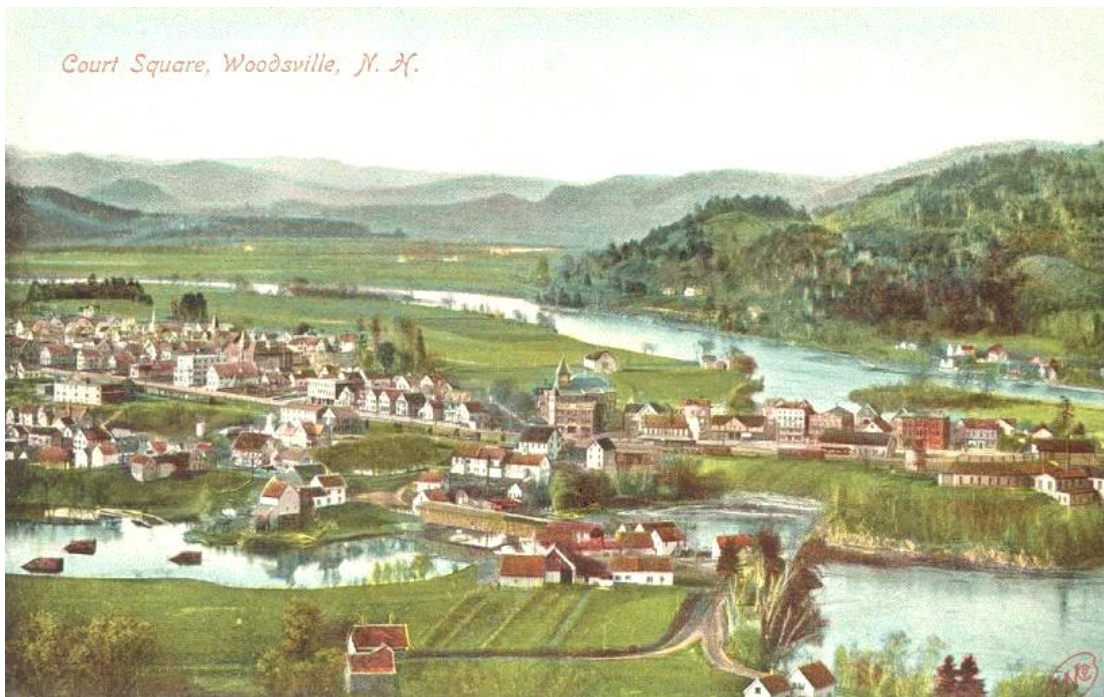


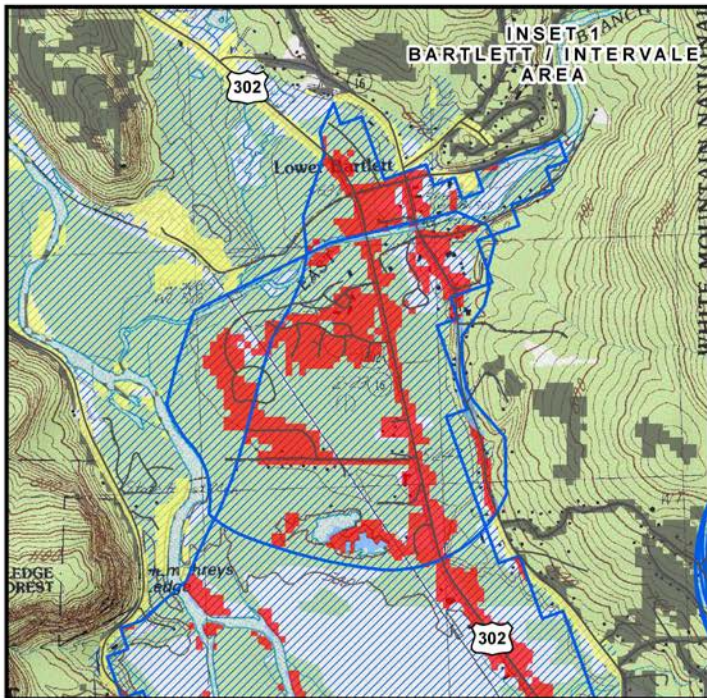
*(NH Center for Public Policy Studies, 2013 Headship Model
for North Country Council Planning Region)*

ENVIRONMENT

WATER RESOURCES

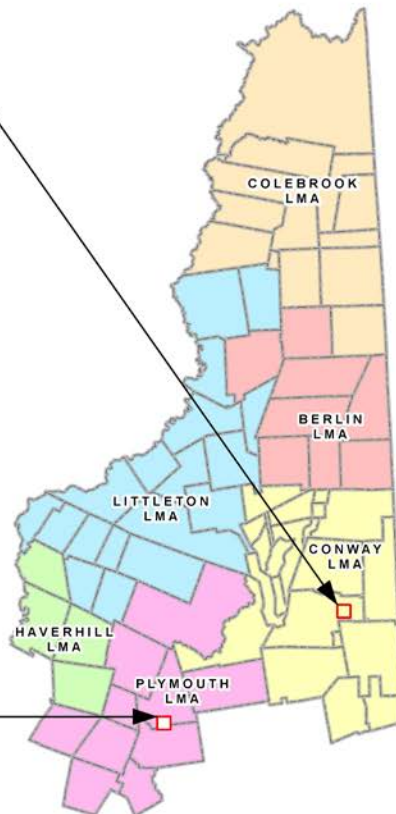
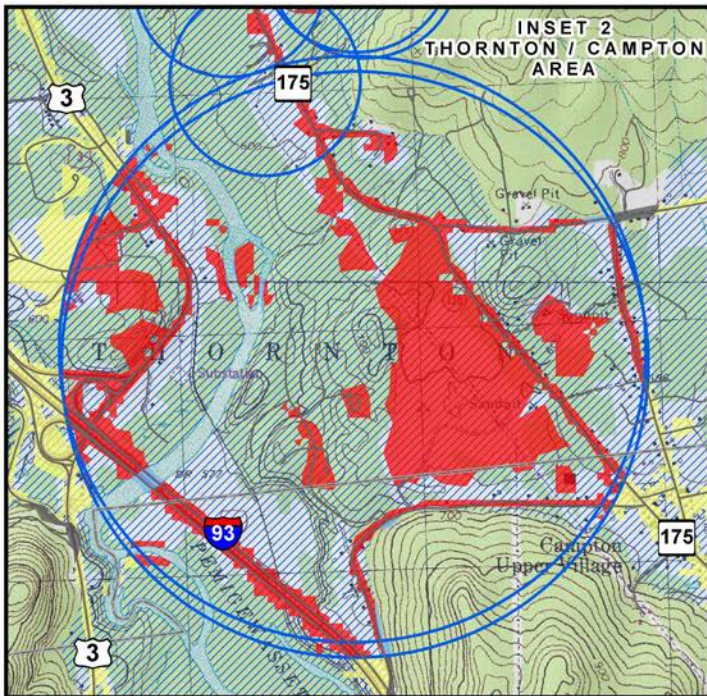
The land use development pattern of the region, with human settlement and major transportation corridors both alongside major waterways, has led to conflicts between human activity and water quality protection. Drinking water supplies are a particular area of concern. On the map on the following page, wellhead protection areas are shown along with high potential aquifers and developed areas. Two of the region's village areas are highlighted; the areas shown in red are developed areas (Landsat, 2012) within wellhead protection areas underlain by high potential aquifers. These are examples of the many situations around the region where use of best management practices is essential when handling toxic or hazardous materials. In most cases, monitoring of these activities has not taken place, nor has land been reserved for replacement or additional water supplies if needed. This is an area where investment of a small amount of time and energy can save the region's municipalities from the high costs of treatment. In addition, planning for protection of future water supplies today is likely to be far less costly than waiting until additional growth has occurred.





North Country Council Relationship of Development to Aquifers and Wellhead Protection Areas

- Development within Aquifer
- Development within Wellhead Protection Area
- Development within Aquifer and WHPA
- Development
- Aquifers
- Wellhead Protection Area
- Road Network
- Town Boundary



Loss of vegetated shoreland buffers is a case of interaction between human activities and natural systems that has gotten a lot of attention in the state legislature. Vegetated shoreland buffers have long been recognized as providing cost-effective water quality protection and amelioration of flood flows and peaks (*Buffers for Wetlands and Surface Waters - A Guidebook for New Hampshire Municipalities*, Vicki Chase, Laura Deming, and Francesca Latawiec, NHOSP and UNH Cooperative Extension, November 1995, Rev. May 1997). In turn, more moderate peaks and flows translate into better fish health and less tax money spent on erosion control and repair of washouts. The state's Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act provides only minimal protection. In addition, many find the regulations confusing, and enforcement activities inadequate. Nine North Country communities have adopted local ordinances to fill the gap (NHOEP, 2013 municipal survey).

Adding to the conflicts between human activities and riverine systems is the fact that many segments of the region's rivers were straightened for spring log drives and construction of roads, railroads and bridges, a practice that we now know leads to ongoing riverbank erosion as the rivers try to reestablish a natural meandering path.



The growth of commercial logging and manufacturing had a substantial impact on the rivers in New Hampshire's North Country. Many segments were straightened to enable spring log drives without logjams such as this one at Berlin Falls in 1872. (Wikimedia Commons, Uncredited photographer for the Brown Bulletin)

SCENIC RESOURCES

The region's scenic resources are critical elements of the local, regional and even state economy.

Studies show that scenic drives are one of

the leading activities among visitors to New Hampshire (Nichols Gilstrap, *New Hampshire's Image as a Travel Destination*, 2003). It was estimated that visitors to New Hampshire during the 2014 foliage season would spend over \$1.6 billion (Institute for New Hampshire Studies). In addition to the tourism economy, the scenic natural resources are a key component of the quality of life that many consider when making choices about where to make their homes. Some views, such as Mount Washington from certain locations, are iconic. Other local views collectively give a particular area its charm. Both types of view are shared regional assets that are an important foundation of the region's economic base. In many cases, continued contribution of these scenic resources to the region's economy depends upon the activities on private lands.

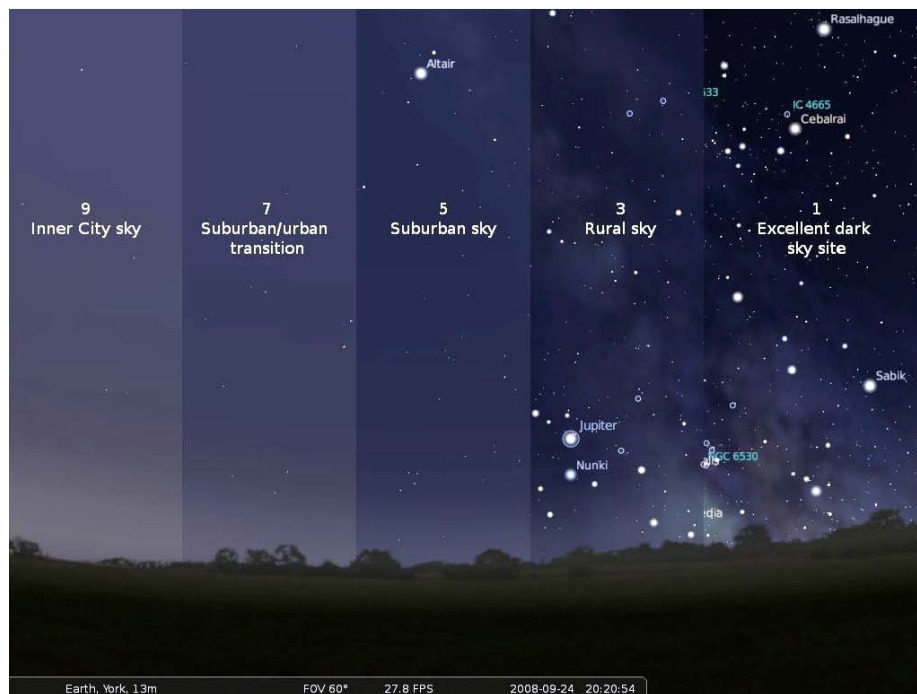
The working landscape - farm fields and surrounding forests - is associated with the rural character of the region by residents and visitors. The contribution of open fields to the value of the landscape is twofold. Studies have shown that people place a higher value on views containing variety in the landscape than they do on all one feature or less variety (National Scenic Byways Foundation, *Byways101: A Starter Toolkit for Byway Leaders*). A popular example in the North

Country is a view of a mountain with open space in the foreground and forest in the middle ground.



Some land use activities have regional impacts on scenic resources – their impacts go significantly beyond one community and have the potential to significantly degrade the value of the region’s scenic resources. North Country Council has participated in the protection of the region’s scenic resources in a number of ways. One example that has gotten a lot of attention in recent years is the proposed electrical transmission line “Northern Pass.” After surveying member communities to collect their input on the issue, the North Country Council Board of Directors voted to oppose the Northern Pass. Other activities have included participation in the Site Evaluation Commission review of proposed wind farms to ensure that scenic impacts are carefully weighed with other issues, and supporting the view show-casing work of the North Country Scenic Byways Committee.

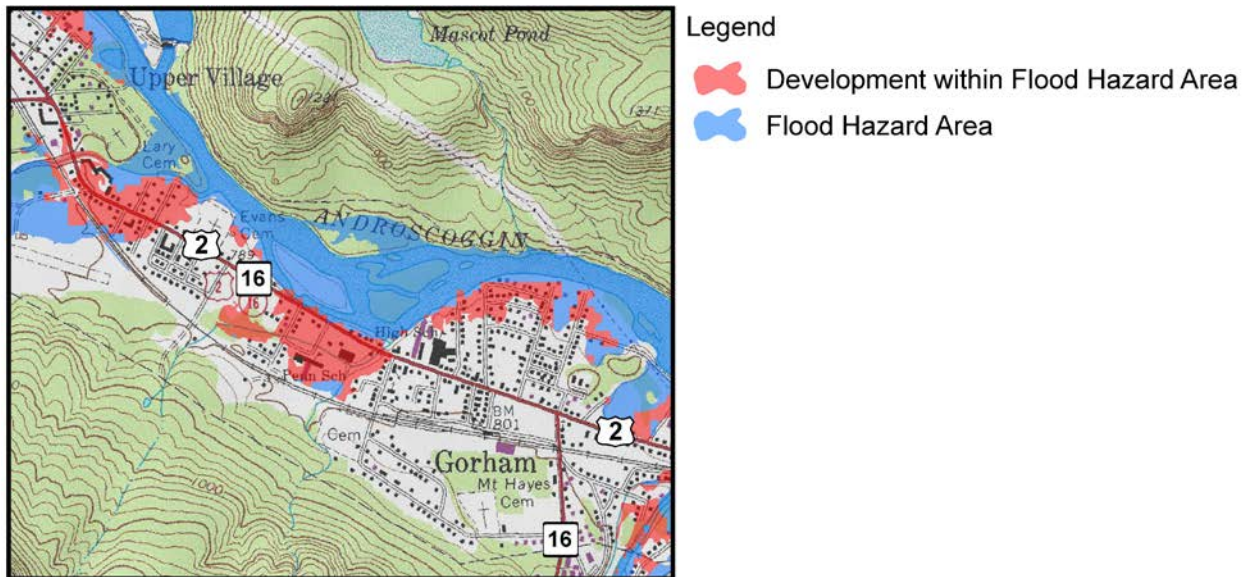
The region's dark night skies are also a contributing factor to the economic value of the region's "look and feel." Many visitors from more developed areas marvel at the number of stars they can see at night in the North Country. As concentrations of land uses with outdoor lighting have developed in certain parts of the region, the impact of those lights on the nighttime sky has become apparent. Lighting guidelines have now been developed for communities wishing to prevent additional degradation, and fixtures that limit "sky glow" are readily available for purchase.



(*Stellarium & EdouardStenger.com*)

RESILIENCY

Today's land use patterns grew from the days when the water-powered mills provided the focal point for villages; transportation corridors followed the tributary valleys to enable settlers to get their grain to the grist mill. This settlement pattern - villages and downtowns adjacent to rivers, and highways following river valleys - has posed increased conflicts between the protection of manmade infrastructure and the natural behavior of waterways as development has increased. Rivers and streams are dynamic systems, moving and changing with weather patterns and with extreme weather events. Manmade infrastructure, riverside downtowns and villages, and highways, bridges and rail lines are in fixed positions. In many of our region's villages and downtowns, such as the example from Gorham shown below, a significant amount of development has occurred in the 100-year flood hazard areas mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Most communities in the region continue to allow new homes and other structures to be built in mapped floodplains.



Development in mapped floodplains is only one of several ways in which rising water following extreme storm events poses a threat to human safety and property. FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (or DFIRMs for new digital versions) are prepared for communities to assist with participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. They are not intended to be a predictor of flooding but an indicator of some of the community's higher risk areas. Flood Insurance Rate Maps:

- DO NOT include many headwater stream areas where flash floods are a high risk
- DO NOT address localized drainage problems like ice jams
- DO NOT account for increased flood levels due to losses of flood storage upstream, e.g., due to development in the floodplain or loss of wetlands
- DO NOT take movement of the channel (fluvial erosion) itself into account
- DO NOT mean that bigger floods can't happen

All of these things can and do occur. In fact, one-third of Federal Disaster Assistance for flooding goes to damage outside of the mapped high flood risk areas (FEMA).



IS EXTREME THE NEW NORMAL? According to the *National Climate Assessment – Northeast Region Report* extreme precipitation events in the northeast have increased 75% since 1958 (U.S. Global Change Research Project, 2013). From 1953 to 1990, only 6 weather-related Disasters were declared in New Hampshire. From 1990 through 2013, the state had 19 weather-related Major Disaster Declarations not related to winter storms. Hurricanes and Tropical Storms accounted for 4 of these; 15 were other severe storms with flooding (FEMA.gov, Disaster Declarations for New Hampshire). Climate scientists tell us to expect increases in precipitation, with more rain and less snow, and more frequent severe flooding (*National Climate Assessment – Northeast Region Report*, U.S. Global Change Research Project, 2013).

MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN The extreme weather events of the past decade have reminded us of the cost of this issue to taxpayers. The flood insurance program itself made the news this year due to property owner response to rate increases aimed at recouping a \$24 billion shortfall. However FEMA costs are just the tip of the iceberg. The real cost to municipalities is undocumented. Increases in stormwater also result in a growing amount of our limited municipal budgets going into rebuilding and repairing infrastructure, armoring riverbanks and roadside ditches, cleaning out stormdrains and ditches. The material and labor costs for these activities are not generally broken out in the municipal budget. Even emergency repairs for washouts and undercut banks will generally be included in the catchall “summer road maintenance” category. In addition, other planned highway maintenance often needs to be put off to free up crews and budgets for storm event repairs, sometimes leading to additional costs associated with deferred maintenance. ***REDUCING STORMWATER RUNOFF, AND MINIMIZING THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE REGION’S RIVERS AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, MUST BE CENTRAL COMPONENTS OF THE REGION’S RESPONSE TO THE INCREASED COSTS OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS.***



Blocked culvert in North Country Region

VIII. SOME OF THE REGION'S STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The North Country Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee is comprised of experienced regional and state economic development professionals, along with others with an interest in the development of livable wage jobs in the region. The CEDS Committee identified the following as some of the key factors relative to job growth in the region. These strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats must be carefully considered as the region develops strategies for sustainably increasing wealth.

STRENGTHS

TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

Excellent highway connections to the rest of New England and Canada; short haul rail lines and state-owned corridors; Manchester – Boston Regional Airport, Portland, Maine Jetport and Boston's Logan Airport

PROXIMITY TO MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS

Strategically located 3 hours from Boston, Montreal, and Connecticut in a central location on I-93 and I-91

ENERGY ASSETS

Hydro, forest, natural gas, landfill gas, agricultural waste, wind and solar

FOREST RESOURCES

Approximately ninety-five percent forested; fiber supply has potential to support existing industry and the new energy generation that is replacing paper as the primary user

HIGHER EDUCATION

Within the region - Plymouth State University, Granite State College, White Mountains Community College; nearby Dartmouth College



QUALITY LABOR FORCE

Underemployment and unemployment

CLEAN WATER

Headwaters of Connecticut, Androscoggin, Ammonoosuc, and Saco Rivers; commercial bottling

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Low levels of crime, natural amenities, and community village atmosphere

TOURISM

Extensive natural, cultural, heritage and commercial assets (lakes, mountains, anchor resorts, theme parks, grand hotels, scenic byways, state parks, and the White Mountain National Forest); visitor expenditures generate hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity in the region



ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Rooms, restaurants, business services and retail outlets in place to capture expenditures

WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

Approximately one-third of the land area of the North Country (approximately 800,000 acres total); multiple recreation and wood resource opportunities



REGIONAL/COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Small villages and towns surrounded by the forested landscape; village centers; strong connection to the past

NEW AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Increase in micro-niche farming and direct farm opportunities; study showing excess heat from power generation could provide new indoor, year-round controlled environmental opportunities especially in proximity to mill, landfill, and biomass generation sites

GROWTH CENTERS

Six diverse job centers – Berlin/Gorham, Colebrook, Littleton/Lancaster, Plymouth, Conway, and Haverhill

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

Three RDCs – Coos Economic Development Corporation, Grafton County Economic Development Council, Mt. Washington Valley Economic Council; plus local groups



COMMUNITY BANKS

Local lending

RETIRED POPULATION

Human resources for work and volunteering

IMPROVEMENTS IN CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Active arts and entertainment scene

COOS COUNTY-WIDE ATV TRAIL SYSTEM

One of the largest year-round trail networks in the Northeast

WEAKNESSES

EXPORTED SERVICES

Little specialization in exported services beyond tourism

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT ACROSS REGION

Starkly different economic conditions, including income, housing costs, and economic opportunities; growing income disparity around the region especially in high-growth recreation areas

HIGH ENERGY COSTS

High energy costs compared to national averages; many intensive users “wheel” for energy on daily markets, others are generating on-site

TOURISM JOB QUALITY

Low average wages, benefits, and opportunities for year-round positions

OVERALL JOB QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Decline in overall employment and quality year-round jobs with benefits in Coos County; long-term decline in manufacturing without major replacement of economic diversity; wages for service and retail sector jobs have stagnated or declined

LIMITED KNOWLEDGE-BASED JOBS

High-end service and high-tech jobs 2-3% in Northern Forest counties vs. 5-6% nationally (Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative, June 2008)

TAX STRUCTURE

Local property tax burdens and limited resources essential to community and regional development

EAST-WEST HIGHWAY

Lack of efficient east-west highway connections

SECTORIAL WORK FORCE LIMITATIONS

Work force limitations and shortages in the retail trade and service; work force lacks some of the education, skills, and scale to compete globally for development opportunities

DEVELOPMENT-READY SITES

Lack of parcels and industrial buildings with sufficient road and broadband access suitable for quick and easy development

COMPREHENSIVE BROADBAND, CELL, AND WI-FI ACCESS

Access, affordability, quality, and redundancy in some areas inadequate or non-existent

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Roads, bridges, water and sewer systems in need of major investments to allow our communities to accommodate new growth and development; transportation infrastructure in need of higher investment levels to maintain accessibility; little public transportation

DOWNTOWNS FLOUNDERING

Fewer diverse offerings in downtowns and villages to attract attention and traffic

LARGE GEOGRAPHIC AREA/SMALL POPULATION

High cost of delivering both public and private services; many services and business opportunities not available

EROSION OF AGRICULTURE

Decline of small-scale family farming; threat to community culture and rural land use

SHORT-SIGHTED VIEW OF THE REGION'S WOOD RESOURCES AND LACK OF INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE LONGER ROTATIONS TO DEVELOP QUALITY AND DIVERSITY OF FOREST PRODUCTS

Short-term financial goals working against the longer natural cycles of forest regeneration and growth; resulting harvest of high volume, low value wood discourages the development of more diverse, higher value-added manufacturing



MUNICIPAL BASIS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Revenue and governance structure of New Hampshire's municipal government discourages joint ventureship and fosters community-centric decision making

VIEW OF THE NORTH COUNTRY AS INACCESSIBLE AND REMOTE

Lack of access to cell, internet and Wi-Fi signals in some areas, including downtowns and major transportation corridors, reinforces this perception

LOW PER CAPITA INCOME

Limited incomes translate to limited opportunities for education, less discretionary expenditures, and a contracting economy

CONCENTRATION OF COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH POVERTY LEVELS

On average, lower income and wage levels than the rest of the state

LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the percentage of high-school graduates was 77% for Coos County, 88% for Grafton County and 88% for Carroll County.

LACK OF REGIONAL COHESIVENESS

Fragmented telecommunications; municipalities and projects fragmented by the revenue and political structure of New Hampshire's government; White Mountains a constraint to workforce availability, regional transportation and cohesive regional strategies; limited local and regional leadership to help manage or respond to changing global and regional economic forces

LACK OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL LAND USE PLANNING POLICIES

Resulting land use patterns like sprawl with negative effects on the region's natural resource base and economy

CLIMATE

Short growing season, long winters, and often severe weather conditions

LACK OF ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Loss of papermaking jobs has exposed a North Country economy lacking diversity in its forest industry and its economy overall

IMPORTATION OF ENERGY MEANS EXPORTATION OF REGIONAL WEALTH

Region is a net energy exporter, but most of the energy used must be transmitted over the grid; transmission accounts for half of the cost of electricity

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Need equity capital for high risk new ventures and for lines of credit for established businesses struggling with overall economic decline

AGING WORKFORCE

In excess of state and national trends

ATTRACTIVENESS OF REGION TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Desire for more social, arts, and cultural opportunities

HEALTH INDICATORS

Residents of Coos County have below average health

AN IMPORT-SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM FOCUSED ON ENERGY COULD ALLOW THE REGION TO DERIVE MORE BENEFITS FROM ITS GROWING ENERGY PRODUCTION INDUSTRY INCLUDING BIOMASS, WIND, AND OTHER SOURCES

(2013-2017 NCC CEDS)

OPPORTUNITIES

ENCOURAGE LOCAL ENERGY AND HEAT PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

Local energy and heat utilizing renewable (including biomass, hydroelectricity, wind, solar) and alternative resources (including methane from solid waste) for local use to lower local energy costs, increase efficiency of natural resource use, create more traditional jobs, create more new alternative energy services and manufacturing jobs, and potentially ease transmission capacity issues



Improve building envelope in older housing stock; advances in energy efficiency building technology

SUPPORT BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

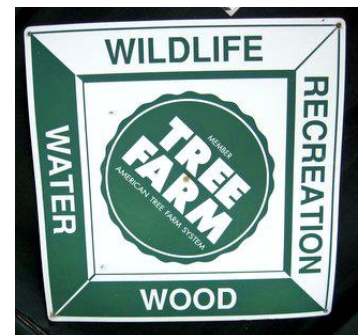
Improve broadband access and quality

PROXIMITY TO CANADA

Opportunity for greater connections to the Canadian markets, innovations, and workforce

SUPPORT LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF FOREST RESOURCES

Reward long-term ownership, wise use, and conservation of healthy well-managed forests; renew an industrial base (energy, manufacturing, construction, tourism) that utilizes the forest; public policy efforts such the Forest Legacy program and the 14 state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)



PROMOTE NEW COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Mutually reinforcing goals, such as local agriculture and development, working woodlands, and protecting cultural and natural resources important to tourism

RECRUIT GROWING RETIREE POPULATION

Could assist with shrinking labor force issues, ongoing needs for leadership, knowledge and experience, as well as need for investment

SUPPORT REGIONAL MARKETING EFFORTS

An economic mainstay; boost Coos County efforts to highlight world-class resources and qualities

COMMERCIALIZE NEW WOOD TECHNOLOGIES

Utilize new R&D through federal and university labs to diversify; create a wood products development center

BUY LOCAL AND SELL GLOBAL

Produce and purchase locally - customer service, “healthier” products, higher local economic multipliers, reduced energy consumption; export products and/or services; import substitution

SUPPORT THE REGION’S CREATIVE ECONOMY

Region has a higher percentage of health, education, artist, and self-employed occupations than the overall national economy; expected to offer job growth in the foreseeable future



EXPAND TRAINING AND JOB CREATION IN BUILDING INCLUDING “GREEN BUILDING” TRADES

Retrofitting old construction, installing alternative energy systems, meeting new building codes, building second homes - increased regional demand for old, new and newly-trained construction professionals

ENCOURAGE EXPANSION OF EMERGING HIGH TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS SECTOR

Need investments in infrastructure, supporting policies, and labor force to better compete in computer and health industries

ENCOURAGE NICHE INDUSTRIES

Services and products to serve specialized markets

SUPPORT HIGH AMENITY RESORT AREAS

Support the region's natural and cultural resources while providing important employment and regional investment

SUPPORT CLUSTER-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supplier networks need to be better developed between major manufacturing and service areas

WORKFORCE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES WITH HIGH SCHOOLS

Build on success in tying high school education into local employment needs, including internships and job shadow programs

DATA CLOUD BACK-UP SERVICES

A data storage firm recently located in the Littleton Industrial Park because it met special site requirements including secure, quality power and communications infrastructure, and distance from a major metropolitan area

RELATIVELY LOW LAND PRICES ATTRACTION

Attractive to land intensive industry including agriculture and second homes

BOOSTING INTERNATIONAL TOURISM REVENUES

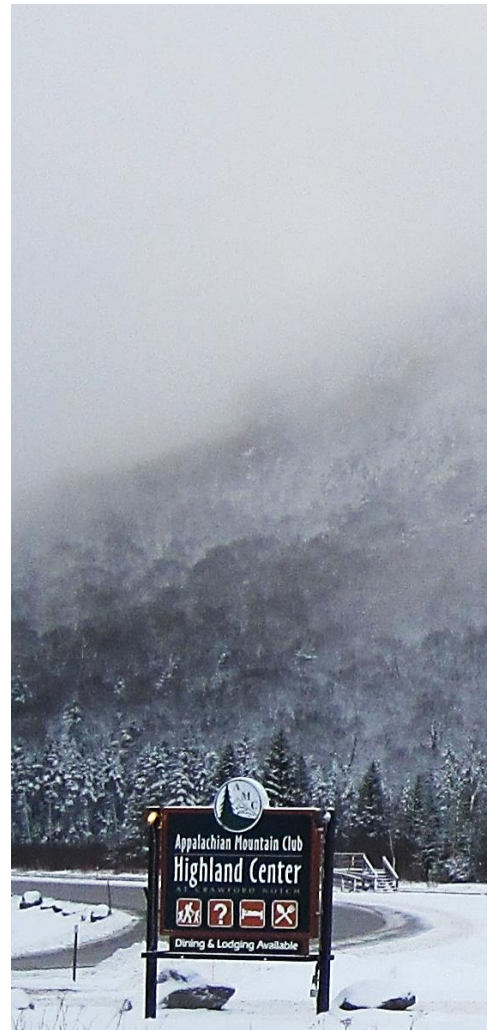
International tourists on average stay longer and spend more; exchange rates currently in their favor with a weak dollar

EXPAND SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

Business planning, counseling, financial, policy and tax credit assistance for existing small businesses and start-ups

SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Need increased markets and infrastructure; import substitution strategy as interest in fresh food and food security rises



THREATS

LABOR FORCE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO BE BOLSTERED

Shortage of service and tourism workers, skilled professional and technical workers

MIDDLE-CLASS IS SHRINKING

Lack of broad-based employment opportunities, increased cost of living, relative growth in lower paying retail and service jobs; influx of higher-income retirees

SPRAWL

Negative fiscal and economic impacts on a community, e.g., increased infrastructure costs, increased travel times, reduced attractiveness, loss of business to downtowns and local merchants

FRAGMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST LAND

Experiencing shifts of land use from open agricultural and forest lands to second-home, retail and other types of development; resulting fragmented lands can be less economical to farm and practice forestry on

LOSS OF LOCAL WATER SUPPLIES

Water is becoming a valuable commodity which can be bought and sold by large corporate interests; ecological impact is difficult to gauge

DISINCENTIVES TO LOCAL HEAT AND POWER PRODUCTION

Held back by several issues relating to back-up power affordability, local government and nonprofit capacity to manage production, and regulatory limitations on local transmission

INTERRUPTION OF REGIONAL FOOD SUPPLY

A recent New Hampshire food security study mentioned that the average supermarket is only stocked for three days before food shortages would start occurring if the supply chain were to be interrupted; as energy, transportation, and commodity costs continue to rise throughout the world, the risk to the region's access to an affordably imported food supply may grow

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF COMMUNITY BANKS

Decision-making becoming more distant

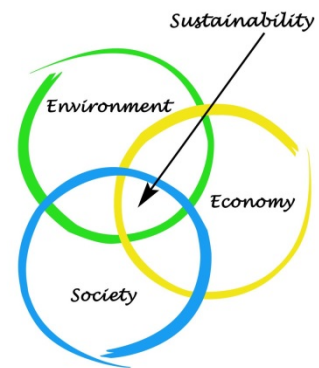
IX. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The region's people and its high-quality natural and scenic resources and associated recreation opportunities are the primary economic development capital for New Hampshire's North Country. There are several planning principles that are reflected throughout the strategies and should guide the region's leaders as they make decisions regarding implementation of the plan in the years to come. Sustainability, increased resilience, and the health and wellbeing of residents should be considered carefully in making choices among alternative approaches to implementing the plan's strategies.

SUSTAINABILITY

The term “sustainability” has been defined many ways, most commonly in planning:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



Sustainability is not a new idea. Throughout human history there are examples of simple changes toward sustainability making big changes toward success. The idea of crop rotation and returning manure to the fields dates back thousands of years. Sustainable forestry has been practiced in Europe for centuries. The results of unsustainable forestry in New Hampshire’s North Country - clearcutting on thin steep soils which led to erosion, sedimentation, wildfires, and flooding - led to passage of the Weeks Act in 1911 which enabled the federal government to purchase forestland (much of which had been sold by the state to logging companies) and manage it in a manner which ensured long term supplies of wood. The White Mountain National Forest was established in 1918.

Sustainability has a third component, that is the social component; it is much harder to define and measure. It is more about livability and the feature of the region many municipal plans refer to as “community character.” In *A Plan for New Hampshire's North Country* a strategy is considered to improve sustainability if, in addition to maintaining the ability of the economy and environment, it does not do so at the cost of quality of life for residents, does not decrease equity or the opportunities for residents to be engaged, and does not interfere with building community.

RESILIENCE

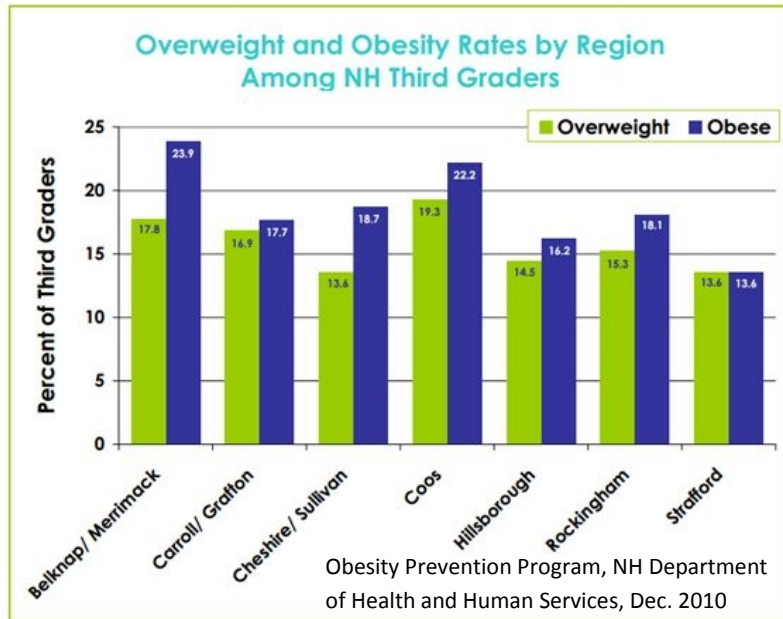
Resilience to floods and other weather-related hazards is a topic that has been getting increased attention as a result of the weather patterns of recent years. Climate scientists warn that we may see an increase in extreme weather events in the future. With most of the region's downtowns and villages in close proximity to rivers, as well as the major highways connecting them, increasing resilience - the ability to withstand a flood and get back to business - is an important goal.

Resilience is broader than just floods and other natural disasters. It is about the ability of the region to respond and adapt to change of all kinds. The lack of a diversified economy in the northern portion of the region meant devastating results for communities when changes in the forest products industry led to the closing of several large mills. A diversified economy helps increase resilience. With incomes and wages lower than state averages, the North Country Region is especially burdened by the high costs of oil and gas. Alternative power supplies, modes of transportation, and food sources will all mean increased resilience.

In addition to changes in weather patterns and the global economy, it is also expected that there will be changes in demographics that may translate to changing housing needs and tourist preferences. A broader view of resilience that looks for redundancy, alternatives and diversity will help ensure the region can respond in a positive way to anticipated as well as unexpected changes.

HEALTH

New Hampshire's enabling statute for regional planning includes the promotion of health as one of the purposes of the regional plan (RSA 36:45). Many areas that planners have historically worked in relate to health. These include: protecting water and air quality, keeping development out of the floodplain and other hazard mitigation activities, emergency preparedness, transportation to medical appointments, and safe housing. Economic development can also positively affect health when jobs increase residents' ability to buy nutritious food, access medical care and safe day care for family members. Land use patterns can influence health and fitness, for example, neighborhoods close to schools, jobs and services encourage walking. Road designs can support or be a barrier to bike commuting. Access to local food and grocery stores with affordable healthy choices can improve nutrition. Deliberate consideration of the impacts of today's decisions on the health of residents tomorrow is essential.



Diseases now seen in overweight and obese children

- **Hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, which can lead to heart disease** (Baker, 2007; Barlow, 2007; Weiss, 2004; Cabrinety, 2002; Freedman, 1999, Berensen, 1998)
- **Diabetes** (Barlow, 2007; Weiss, 2004; Pinhas-Hamiel, 1996)
- **Glucose intolerance** (Shinha, 2002)
- **Sleep-associated breathing disorders** (Baker, 2007; Barlow, 2007; Mallory, 1989)
- **Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease** (Barlow, 2007)

THE EFFECT OF HEALTH ON ECONOMIC GROWTH: THEORY AND EVIDENCE NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Healthier workers are physically and mentally more energetic and robust. They are more productive and earn higher wages. They are also less likely to be absent from work because of illness (or illness in their family).

Our main result, consistent with our theoretical argument and with the microeconomic evidence, is that health has a positive and statistically significant effect on economic growth.

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X. THE STRATEGIES

The following strategies aim to steer future change in New Hampshire's North Country in a direction closer to the region's vision for the future (*Section VI*). They are driven by the priorities and needs identified through the public engagement process (*Sections III and V*) and informed by research into data and trends from numerous sources (some key points summarized in *Section VII*). Some of this is discussed in more detail in supplemental plan components. The "SWOT" analysis conducted by the North Country Council's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, summarized in *Section VIII*, provided direction on building on the strengths and opportunities while recognizing and addressing the region's weaknesses and threats.

The strategies could be organized in a multitude of ways. They are all interrelated. Some activities will further more than one strategy and so may appear in more than one place. Many are based on applying today's common sense as the region prepares for tomorrow's challenges. Achieving meaningful changes in the areas needed by residents while protecting the features of the region valued by both residents and visitors will require changes; business as usual won't do it. Implementation of ***A Plan for New Hampshire's North Country*** will require strengthening old partnerships and building new ones. Implementation will require enhanced collaboration, not only within areas of interest, but also among groups that have never worked together before. At the same time, small changes have the potential to add up to meaningful improvements.

To help decision-makers consider the health effects of strategies, those with a clear potential for a direct positive impact on the health of North Country residents are identified by the symbol shown here.



BUILD ON OUR STRENGTHS TO INCREASE PROSPERITY

The North Country's economic development focus in the coming years will be to build upon the region's wealth of assets - partnerships, small businesses, downtowns and villages, natural and recreation resources. Building on our strengths means continuing to do the things we do well in these areas, but doing them even better.

BUILD UPON EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO RETAIN, EXPAND, AND ATTRACT BUSINESSES PROVIDING LIVABLE WAGE JOBS



New Hampshire's North Country is rich in organizations, educational institutions, and facilities all with the purpose of job creation. Some of the region's strategies for building upon these resources in the coming years are listed below.

Continue to support the Dartmouth Region Technology Center, the Enterprise Center at Plymouth, and the MWVEC Technology Village Business Center to support the needs of start-up businesses and create livable wage jobs in the region.

Support efforts to develop facilities in job center communities to provide support for small businesses and entrepreneurs. An example is the planned WREN center in Berlin which will house classes/workshops, retail space and offices.

Continue to support efforts to redevelop Groveton's Wausau Mill site to produce livable wage jobs for area residents.

Support efforts to stabilize energy costs for the Gorham Paper and Tissue Mill, to ensure continued operation.

Support efforts to utilize the Portland Natural Gas Transmission System's location in the region to create livable wage jobs and stabilize and/or lower energy costs in the region.

Ensure that projects are poised to benefit from existing, new and innovative investment programs such as New Markets Tax Credits.

INCREASE SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS

Economic development experts explain that most job growth in regions such as ours will not come from the businesses that we are able to attract from other areas, but from within through growth of our own small businesses and from entrepreneurs already living in the region or those attracted to the region's high quality of life. Some of the ways the region can work to increase support for small businesses and entrepreneurs in the coming years include:

Promote increase of training and education needed for small business owners' and entrepreneurs' success.

Continue to assist with the efforts to improve the availability of affordable broadband and cell phone service.

Identify, facilitate and enhance connections between entrepreneurs and needed business services within and outside of the region.

Compile and distribute information on services and programs available to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs in the North Country.

Provide a mechanism through which the region's businesses could identify local sources and local markets for products, e.g., supply chain mapping and database.

Ensure that zoning ordinances encourage a wide range of business opportunities.



White
Mountains
Community College

Entrepreneurship Certificate

RECOGNIZE AND FOCUS ON OUR DOWNTOWNS AS AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY



New Hampshire's North Country is home to several concentrations of activity - Berlin/Gorham, Plymouth, Conway, Littleton/ Lancaster, Woodsville, Colebrook. In addition to these downtowns, there are several other communities with large village areas or town centers. These downtowns and villages have been the subject of substantial public investment in infrastructure over the years – public roads, sidewalks and parking, street lighting, water and sewer. A recent survey by North Country Council



indicated that the majority of municipal officials in communities with a village or downtown supported continued growth in those areas. Concerns were expressed about available developable land, and in some cases, public water supply capacity and lack of a wastewater treatment plant. Investment in these areas should continue to be a high priority in the years to come.

Prioritize projects that will strengthen the ability of our downtowns and villages to provide homes and livable wage jobs for those that live there.

Support efforts of the town of Colebrook to revitalize the downtown including water and sewer, bike, pedestrian and utility improvements and district heating.

Support efforts of the town of Carroll to redevelop the town center in Twin Mtn. including associated traffic calming and water system improvements.

Continue to support Littleton’s efforts to continue to strengthen downtown development, including the River District project, River Walk and Main Street improvements.

INCREASE THE PRODUCTION OF WEALTH FROM THE REGION’S NATURAL RESOURCES

Residents clearly articulated the importance of the region’s natural resources throughout the public engagement process, and described the key role the working landscape plays in the rural character of the region. Ensuring continued productive use of the region’s natural resources will require a concerted effort by the region’s planning boards together with forest management and agriculture experts to carry out the following strategies.



FORESTS

Promote improved management of private forest lands.

Support increased landowner education on best practices and benefits of good management including increased value for landowners.

Help build on examples of good forest management to increase the culture of stewardship.

Promote land use regulations that support continued productive management of the region's forests rather than encouraging the subdivision of productive forest land into large residential lots.

Increase the development of value-added products to increase the income generated from forests locally.

Continue to develop local processing and local markets for wood residues as a fuel source to add value to the wood harvested and as an incentive to timber stand improvement.

Build upon new programs and partnerships to support investment in the forest products industry, such as Northern Forest Center participation in New markets Tax Credit program.

AGRICULTURE

Increase the potential for value-added agricultural products for export and for sales to visitors.

Assist communities with the review and amendment of local land use regulations to remove obstacles to the growth and modernization of agriculture.



Examples include lengthy site plan review requirements, limits on collaborative processing and sales, limits based on which farm property a residence is located on, sign regulations that impede seasonal marketing, definitions that preclude modernization of processing and other activities necessary for competing in today's economy.



Promote land use regulations that support continued productive use of the region's agricultural lands rather than encouraging the subdivision of productive farmland into large residential lots.



TRAILS

New Hampshire's North Country is home to world class trails – the Appalachian Trail and the hiking trail system built around it in the White Mountain National Forest, Nordic trail systems such as Jackson XC and Bretton Woods, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail and Connecticut River Paddler's Trail, and for motorized recreation enthusiasts a vast system of snow machine trails and the largest ATV network in the Northeast.

Increase the economic value of the region's wide variety of world class trail systems through coordinated planning and marketing. This would include: inventorying and mapping trail systems, accesses and associated services; bringing trail groups together to address existing and potential conflicts and carrying capacity issues, needs and opportunities; and identifying action steps to improve connectivity between trail systems and trails and services, separate users when appropriate, and expand systems where needed.



ENSURE VISITORS TO NEW HAMPSHIRE'S NORTH COUNTRY HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

We often hear that the key to a successful tourist economy in the region is making sure visitors who come to the North Country want to come back. There are many ingredients required for this. Obviously visitors need to find suitable lodging, dining, and activities. Did they find the scenic natural resources and recreation opportunities they expected? Just as important but sometimes overlooked is the human element, how the people visitors encounter make them



**feel*. Were the wait staff and cashiers helpful and friendly? Were things easy to find? Did tourist services meet expectations? Did their host recognize that they are a return visitor? Some of the ingredients for providing visitors with a welcoming and positive experience are as follows:*

Maintain and staff an adequate number of rest areas, with a priority on those at key gateways to the region.

Increase hospitality training for a wider range of service and retail jobs.

Increase coordinated marketing of tourist services within the North Country's subregions and among the various subregions.

Continue to support and steward the region's arts and culture.

Advocate for the region’s iconic and popular viewsheds when land uses such as large transmission lines like Northern Pass, or large wind farms involving potential adverse impacts, are proposed. Ensure that economic and cumulative impacts are identified and considered.

Consider siting and design approaches to reduce visibility when developing land on hillsides and ridge tops.

Manage peak traffic in areas prone to congestion through both highway improvements and provision of transportation alternatives.

Ensure that the region continues to offer a variety of activities and types of visitor experience.

Strengthen the Scenic Byways as one option for those desiring a self-guided Natural and Cultural Heritage tour.

Incorporate consideration of the needs of the growing number of senior visitors into transportation planning, visitor services and activities.

Ensure that the region’s wildlife continues to have access to key habitat areas and connectivity among them.

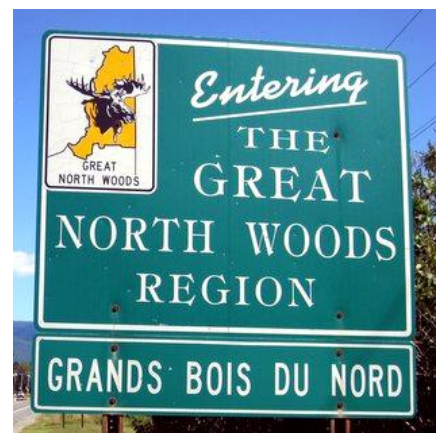
Support the work of private entities to maintain the economic vitality of the region’s major resorts, including the three remaining grand hotels - the Mountain View Grand in Whitefield, Mount Washington at Bretton Woods in Carroll, and the Balsams in Dixville Notch (closed for redevelopment) - as the tourist economy and visitor preferences change.

BUILD ON PROXIMITY TO CANADA AND OTHER NORTHERN FOREST STATES

Implement the recommendations of the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative to increase collaboration and cooperation with our neighbors.

Strengthen relationships with Canadian businesses to identify opportunities for partnerships that will bring benefits to the region.

Support strengthened hospitality toward Canadian visitors.



REDUCE THE COST OF LIVING IN THE NORTH COUNTRY

REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY USE REQUIRED

Increase the opportunity to live within walking distance of jobs and services. 

For those who do not live in walking distance of jobs and services, increase access to alternatives to single occupant vehicles such as RideShare and vanpools. Increase implementation of the state’s energy code.

Increase awareness of and participation in the state’s weatherization program.

Decrease the amount of energy used to light and heat the region’s buildings.

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY
CATALYZES
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES THAT
DRAW UPON THE
BROAD RANGE OF
AMERICANS’ SKILLS**

(CASEY J. BELL, ACEEE, 2012)

PRODUCE ENERGY LOCALLY FOR USE LOCALLY

Increase the region’s production and use of renewable energy consistent with protection of other important natural and scenic resources.

Focus on small scale generation for use by local residents, businesses and institutions.

Continue to explore district heating opportunities within the region and develop when cost effective.

Raising Electric Rates
Average Monthly Bill to Increase 12%



REDUCE SINGLE OCCUPANT VEHICLES

Reduce the number of single occupant

vehicles by providing alternatives such as carpooling and van pools through North Country Rideshare.



Support the efforts of New Hampshire's regional RideShare programs and Commute Green New Hampshire to develop a coordinated system providing ease of access to transportation alternatives.

ENSURE THAT APPROPRIATE HOUSING CHOICES ARE AVAILABLE

Eliminate exclusionary practices such as large minimum lot sizes and large setbacks in more densely settled areas where water and sewer are available.

Implement lot size averaging (also called "density-based" zoning) in rural areas to enable lot sizes meeting the minimum requirements for on-site water and septic while maintaining rural character.

Promote lenient regulations for accessory dwelling units which address only valid health and safety issues such as fire safety and wastewater capacity.

Encourage developable land with services to be zoned for multifamily and manufactured housing.

Prioritize technical assistance to communities interested in reviewing their zoning ordinances to remove obstacles to accessory dwelling units and other creative living arrangements, such as cohousing and shared housing, that can lower housing expenses.

Prioritize improvements and technical assistance that will lead to an increase in the supply of housing in and adjacent to existing downtowns.



Support the work of housing organizations such as AHEAD and the Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition.

Work with communities and owners/managers of assisted housing units to ensure they remain available and affordable.

Ensure that local regulations are supportive of adaptive reuse, e.g., of the region’s former mill buildings and schools.

KEEP PEOPLE AND PROPERTY OUT OF HARMS WAY



Continue to conduct fluvial erosion hazard assessments on the region’s major rivers to identify those areas into which the course of the rivers is likely to move.



Promote “no build” zoning for floodplains and fluvial erosion hazard areas and setbacks from all year-round streams.

Prioritize assistance to communities interested in a review of their plans and regulations to increase protection of people and property from floods and fluvial erosions and thereby reduce costs to the landowners, community and taxpayers.

IMPROVE HEALTH AND FITNESS



Bring communities, outdoor recreation, health, education, economic development organizations and local service groups together behind a region-wide program to increase participation in outdoor recreation.

Promote the region’s trails as a resource to help both residents and visitors improve health and fitness.



INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE LOCAL FOOD

Assist communities with the review and amendment of local land use regulations to remove obstacles to the growth and modernization of local agriculture.

Map undeveloped prime agricultural soils, producers, and distribution networks.

Develop a strategic plan to identify needs and opportunities, increase the amount of food produced locally, and build more connections between producers and consumers.

Promote SNAP point-of-sale devices at farmstands and farmers markets and provide information and technical assistance with the acquisition as needed.

Support the efforts of the region's organizations working to increase access to local food such as WREN and the North Country Farmers Cooperative.

INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION

Build on the many great examples throughout the region of communities sharing equipment and personnel to ensure that local property taxes are not unnecessarily paying to duplicate efforts.

TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

SCENIC RESOURCES

Scenic resources were identified as one of the qualities of the North Country valued the most by residents. This issue has been a tough one for communities; aesthetics are less clearly a public purpose than, say, water or air quality. Nonetheless, scenic resources are inarguably a key ingredient of the North Country economy, as a draw for visitors and also for businesses, professionals, entrepreneurs seeking an area with a high quality of life. Some strategies for ensuring that the region's scenic resources continue to support the region's economy in the future while recognizing the importance of private landowner interests are:



Protect the region’s iconic and popular viewsheds from undue adverse impacts associated with incompatible land uses such as large transmission lines like Northern Pass through such means as legislative restriction and participation in EIS and permit reviews.



Consider siting and design techniques to reduce the visibility of development on scenic hillsides and ridgetops.

Support the agricultural and wood products economies to ensure the continued economic productivity of the region’s working landscape.



Increase public awareness of the contribution of the working landscape to the economic value of the region’s scenery.

Discourage large lot development which leads to fragmentation of the working and scenic landscape.

Bury local powerlines as possible in conjunction with other improvements in key locations in otherwise scenic downtown and village areas.



PROTECT WATER QUALITY



Protection of the region's environment and natural resources in general, and drinking water resources in particular, was ranked one of the highest priorities by residents. The region's water resources play a crucial role in community and economic development, as well as forming a key ingredient for the tourism and recreation industries upon which the region's economy depends. Some of the strategies for protecting water quality in the North Country are:

**MAKE BEST
MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES A
WAY OF LIFE**

Address water resource issues in a manner that recognizes the importance of watershed boundaries. For example, support, strengthen and develop grass-roots watershed organizations and local river advisory committees.

Ensure that the pollution filtration functions of wetlands and vegetation shoreline buffers are maintained. Where practical, restore vegetated shoreline buffers where they have been lost.

Continue to integrate Best Management Practices into all activities with the potential to cause pollution of surface or groundwater directly or indirectly through increased stormwater runoff and/or erosion.

Continue to increase the public’s understanding of the interaction between human activities and water quality, including for example, road de-icing, agricultural, improperly maintained septic systems, underground storage tanks, and improper disposal of hazardous wastes.



INCREASE PROTECTION OF CURRENT AND FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES



Facilitate communications about water supply watersheds and aquifers that cross municipal boundaries.

Restrict activities likely to involve the use and storage of large amounts of toxic or hazardous materials from recharge areas to current and future water supplies.

Monitor existing land uses near public water supplies to ensure best management practices are followed for storage and handling of toxic or hazardous materials.

Ensure municipalities and water districts are equipped to protect water supplies from deliberate or accidental contamination of sources and reservoirs.

Develop organized programs for testing private well water quality in villages and other mixed or densely developed areas without public water supplies to ensure contamination issues are identified and addressed before becoming a health hazard.



REDUCE AND PREVENT NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

Ensure that planning and zoning officials have access to the information and technical assistance needed to update and implement local ordinances and regulations to prevent nonpoint pollution.

Increase education for local officials, engineers and landscape architects on Low Impact Development techniques that can have lower maintenance costs than traditional approaches.

Continue regional household hazardous waste collections and education for home and small business owners on safer alternatives.

Increase education of homeowners on the proper care and maintenance of septic systems.

Continue to inventory and monitor potential contamination sources such as underground storage tanks.

REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF



Ensure that the stormwater leaving the site of new development is neither increased in volume or decreased in quality as a result of that development. Limit impervious surface to that which is absolutely necessary; maximize stormwater infiltration and treatment onsite.

Incorporate improvements in stormwater management in every road, sidewalk/trail, and parking lot project.

When sites are redeveloped, strive to decrease the volume of stormwater runoff leaving the site, and to decrease the potential for pollutants to be carried by the remaining runoff.

Keep out of floodplains all materials, objects and activities which would pose a contamination threat if carried by floodwaters.

Ensure that planning and zoning officials have access to the information and technical assistance needed to update and implement local ordinances and regulations to reduce the stormwater runoff associated with new development.

Incorporate best management practices for sedimentation and erosion control into all development projects and other activities which disturb vegetation and soil.

Work with farmers and loggers to consider practical ways to decrease the amount of runoff and sedimentation entering waterways from these activities.

CONTROL THE SPREAD OF AQUATIC INVASIVES

Continue to increase education of recreationists on how to identify, report, remove and prevent the spread of aquatic invasives.



FORESTS

Improve management of private forest lands to increase value for landowners and increase the supply of forest products.

Increase landowner education on best practices and benefits of good management.

Build on examples of good forest management to increase the culture of stewardship.

INFRASTRUCTURE



Continue to improve the availability of affordable broadband and cell service.

Prioritize improvements to our existing roads, sidewalks, water supply and wastewater systems that are necessary for the continued health and safety of residents and businesses, those which will prevent additional future costs from deferred maintenance, and those which will enable increased development in existing villages and downtowns.

Promote and assist with the improvement and modernization of the region's stormwater infrastructure.

Inventory and assess the region's culverts and promote a regular program of upgrading those that are undersized or inadequately designed to handle the flow of stormwater and debris, or causing bank erosion threatening critical infrastructure. These should be prioritized according to highway classification and function, traffic volumes, and availability of alternate routes. Obstacles to aquatic organism passage should be eliminated during reconstruction.

AIR QUALITY



Strive to reduce the region's carbon emissions through energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy.

RECOGNIZE THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Like many rural areas, the North Country is full of great examples of organized groups of volunteers getting things done, helping the community and each other. The barn raisings of yesterday are an often-cited example. Today we see the same spirit of groups of people helping each other with a variety of needs of daily life, from volunteer drivers to "energy raisings."



Build upon examples around the North Country, as well as other similar rural areas, of organized efforts to facilitate people helping each other with basic needs, such as community-organized rides for nondrivers, elder care networks, and homeshare programs.



Develop a social infrastructure to address the needs of our aging population for those things not generally considered "basic needs" but just as important to physical and mental health. These include whatever activities they enjoyed throughout their lives, such as social interaction with all age groups, getting outdoors safely to enjoy nature, participating in worship, shopping, eating out, going to concerts or movies.



Support the efforts of local organizations striving to increase residents' access to basic needs. Examples include the efforts in Berlin to develop a Coop grocery store, and the work of groups such as AHEAD and the Morrison to increase the supply of residential options for the region's elderly and disabled.



Partner with educational institutions to engage younger residents in volunteer activities. This will both increase the capacity of the volunteer activity and provide "real world" education for the students.

Ensure that the value of the work of volunteers is acknowledged.

Explore opportunities to create volunteer pools among organizations conducting similar activities; exploring opportunities for additional inter-municipal cooperation.

***IT'S INDEPENDENT
PEOPLE HELPING
EACH OTHER***

Utilize the time of volunteers as efficiently as possible. This includes such things as: ensuring that meetings are productive and engage all participants, and coordinating the timing of activities of similar organizations.

GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE THE TOOLS TO SUCCEED HERE

Seek ways to reduce school administration and building maintenance and heating costs so additional funds can be directed toward teaching and learning without increasing property taxes.

Link the region’s major employers with high schools and higher education institutions to provide internships and other job training opportunities.

Continue to assist with efforts to improve the availability of affordable broadband and cell service.

Increase educational opportunities in tomorrow’s job skills and in entrepreneurial skills.

Promote and participate in civic engagement training.

Promote place-based education.

Strive to increase the supply of housing choices that are appropriate for, attractive to, and affordable by young singles and young families.

Provide opportunities for young professionals to network.

Build upon the region’s focus on diverse outdoor recreation opportunities.



DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

Facilitate the collection and sharing of examples of how rural communities successfully addressed challenges similar to those faced in New Hampshire's North Country.

INCREASE THE REGION'S RESILIENCY

Self-sufficiency is a way of life in the North Country, not only as part of daily living, but also as a means of survival at times of major storm events and other adversity. Hunting and fishing, the family garden, canning and freezing, farmers' markets, heating homes with wood stoves, and use of generators provide backup in ways that are not available in urban or suburban areas. Snowmobile and ATV trails link neighbors when downed trees and transmission wires close roads. Ham radio operators transmit emergency information when normal channels fail. The following strategies aim to build on the region's self-sufficiency to strengthen the ability of North Country communities to face common as well unforeseen challenges.

BE PREPARED FOR ECONOMIC DISRUPTION

Increase energy conservation and local energy production for local use.

Conserve additional important agricultural lands and strengthen the local food system to enable providing for a higher percentage of our food to be supplied locally if necessary.

BE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES



Ensure that the region has an adequate supply of emergency shelters equipped with generators and other necessities, located in areas accessible during floods and from more than one direction.

Ensure that the region's health care and housing facilities for the elderly and disabled are equipped with generators and an adequate supply of other basic necessities.

Identify and address needs for modernized communications equipment at emergency operations centers.

Assist communities with outreach to help residents prepare for emergencies, by posting information about local emergency shelters on town websites for example.



Assist businesses with risk assessment and preparedness planning, e.g., offsite record storage, reserve plans, communications.

Repeat the business disaster preparedness survey in 5 years to evaluate effectiveness of outreach and assistance and identify remaining needs.

MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS



Increase implementation of local hazard mitigation plans by integrating hazard planning with other local planning activities.

Keep people and property out of mapped and other known flood hazard areas.

Map erosion hazard areas (where the course of the river is likely to move) and incorporate into flood hazard mitigation activities.

Identify critical infrastructure in flood hazard and erosion hazard areas. Prioritize protection, relocation, and identification of alternatives. Protect and restore flood storage capacity upstream from villages and downtowns. This means, for example, maintaining the capacity of wetlands and floodplains to store floodwaters and, in some cases, restoring the river's access to the floodplain.

Inventory and assess the region's culverts and promote a regular program of upgrading those that are undersized or inadequately designed to handle the flow of stormwater and debris, or causing bank erosion threatening critical infrastructure. These should be prioritized according to highway classification and function, traffic volumes, and availability of alternate routes. Obstacles to aquatic organism passage should be eliminated during reconstruction.

CONSIDER CLIMATE CHANGE

Consider increased resiliency when prioritizing public investments. Some examples include crops that thrive in slightly warmer temperatures and/or are expected to be more resistant to pests associated with warmer weather, or technologies such as vacuum tubing that enables maple syrup production in warmer springs.

Maintain diversity of tree species in the region's forests.

Stay abreast of current research.



APRIL 28, 2014

High-Tech Tapping: Making Maple Syrup With Vacuums

by Mary Beth Albright

APPENDIX A. FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM

In 2009, recognizing that a strong foundation for enduring prosperity must be built with expanded housing and transportation choices, greater energy independence, and better protection for our clean air and water, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) formed the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The basis for the Partnership was the principle that we can achieve our economic, social, and environmental goals most effectively when we work on them together. The goal was to help communities become economically strong and environmentally sustainable. Through the Partnership and guided by six Livability Principles, the three agencies began coordinating investments and aligning policies to support communities that want to give Americans more housing choices, make transportation systems more efficient and reliable, reinforce existing investments, and support vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract businesses. Each agency worked to incorporate the principles into its funding programs, policies, and future legislative proposals. The Partnership began to break down the traditional silos of housing, transportation, and environmental policy to consider these issues as they exist in the real world—inextricably connected. This leads to better results for communities and uses taxpayer money more efficiently, because coordinating federal investments in infrastructure, facilities, and services meets multiple economic, environmental, and community objectives with each dollar spent.

Other agencies throughout the federal government are realizing the value of this new model of collaboration. Together or individually, HUD, DOT, and EPA are also working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, the Department of Energy, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Economic Development Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the General Services Administration, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other federal agencies on related issues.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities established six **Livability Principles** as a foundation for interagency cooperation and as a basis for the Partnership's Regional Planning Program. Recognizing that the federal Partnership's Livability Principles were closely aligned with the goals established by each regional planning commission's member communities, the state's nine regional planning commissions in concert applied for and were awarded a grant to develop new or updated comprehensive regional plans utilizing funds from the Federal

Partnership for Sustainable Communities. For North Country Council this was the first time funds were available to bring together the various program elements that had in the past each been funded by and guided by a single federal agency, and to develop a more comprehensive plan for the future of the region built upon a foundation of broad public input.

**PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES**

1. Promote more transportation choices.

Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.

Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

3. Enhance economic competitiveness.

Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.

4. Support existing communities.

Target federal funding toward existing communities—through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.

5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment.

Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.