



**Working as the
Regional Planning
Commission and
MPO for the
Southern New
Hampshire Region**

Regional Comprehensive Plan 2010

for the
Southern NH Planning
Commission Region



SNHPC

Regional Comprehensive Plan 2010

for the
Southern NH Planning
Commission Region



Prepared by the
Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission



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Executive Summary

Formally organized in August 1966, the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) region consists of 13 communities; Auburn, Bedford, Candia, Chester, Deerfield, Derry, Goffstown, Hooksett, Londonderry, Manchester, New Boston, Raymond and Weare. This 490-square-mile region encompasses portions of Merrimack, Hillsborough and Rockingham counties.

Working under the provisions of RSA, Chapter 36; the SNHPC strives to provide services including, but not limited to, increasing communication; promote intergovernmental cooperation and coordination between planning boards and local officials; promote coordinated development of the region; prepare and adopt regional plans, including policies and strategies for the region; and assistance with transportation. The SNHPC also helps communities handle situations that are beyond municipal boundaries. The Commission encourages each town to think regionally, but act locally, allowing improvements and positive changes to affect the greater good of the whole region.

The emphasis and focus of this plan has been on sustainability. For use in the plan, “sustainability” refers to providing for the needs of current and future generations by promoting fiscally sound and socially responsible long term decision-making that will enhance the ecology, economy, empowerment, efficiency and health of the region. These five areas represent the five legs of sustainability as identified by the American Public Works Association Center for Sustainability.

Guiding this update has been an active Advisory Committee chaired by Karen McGinley, planning commissioner from the Town of Bedford. Dave Danielson has also provided invaluable support as Vice-Chair.

This update is important as it includes the new 2010 Census data for the region and each municipality. In addition, the plan includes for the first time -- a sustainability vision statement and principles for the region; indicators and targets for each goal; and identified programs and actions.

We believe the plan will be helpful as a guide for all the municipalities in the region as planning boards begin to update their master plans in the coming years. The plan is also helpful in guiding future programs and studies of the planning commission.

Some of the key findings of the plan include:

- The region is now home to a total of 261,262 residents – slightly less than the 263,389 residents estimated by the OEP for the region in 2009;
- The region is projected to add more than 41,000 residents over the next 20 years;

- All of the region's municipalities experienced a growth in population, except for the towns of Candia and Derry which actually showed slightly less residents in 2010 than 2000;
- Despite current economic downturn, the region is consuming land at a steady and constant rate – in 1995, approximately 38 percent of the region was developed. By 2009, the total number of developed acres increased to 44 percent;
- At this rate, we estimate that 50 percent of the region will be developed by 2015;
- By far the largest user of land is residential which increased by 18.7 percent between 2000 and 2009;
- By far the smallest use of land is industrial which is continuing to experience a steady decline since 1995. Between 2000 and 2009, the region lost 11.5 percent of industrial developed lands;
- By far the fastest growing user of land is commercial development which experienced a 141.1 percent increase between 2000 and 2009;

In terms of key issues, some of the most pressing needs include:

- Implementing energy conservation and developing sustainable and inexpensive sources of energy, including alternative fuels;
- Despite falling property values and rising personal incomes, the SNHPC region is still not keeping pace with the rising cost of home ownership and as a result, affordable housing remains a critical need;
- Despite positive healthy and livability indicators and an improving economy, the SNHPC region still lacks good paying jobs and the region's municipalities continue to be hard hit with lower tax revenues and financial resources to pay for current and future needs;
- While the region continues to lose farmland, the popularity of local agricultural production and sales is increasing with buy and eat locally raised food programs and community service agricultural;
- Historic preservation continues to be an important quality of life need, but fewer and fewer communities have the resources and means to put into practice many of the preservation tools permitted by state statute;
- Protecting open space and the natural environment also continues to be viewed as an economic development and quality of life issue. Greater acceptance of the need to balance growth and development and find ways to grow the local tax base remains at the forefront of many planning decisions;

- Through active emergency management planning and funding, municipalities in the region have been able to take significant steps forward in protecting the public and preparing and addressing natural disasters;
- Paying for necessary capital facilities and local improvements, including transportation and education will continue to be a serious issue for the region – not only for sustaining the region’s economic growth, but ensuring the region’s quality of life. Greater cooperation, sharing of resources and alternative forms of taxes and other sources of revenues may be able to help address this issue in the future;
- This also holds true with respect to public utilities, including water and sewer improvements, solid waste collection, septage disposal, and stormwater which is now the leading source of pollution within the region.
- All in all, while improvements are being made, there is still much to do.

With continued efforts by our region in preserving our past while sustaining our present, the SNHPC region will always be a desirable place for future generation’s to live, work, and play.