



OVERALL VISION STATEMENT:

A region that builds on what we already have - supporting growth and prosperity while at the same time conserving our heritage, natural resources, and sense of community. The Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) is committed to supporting the uniqueness of this region and the quality of life that is both a strength and competitive advantage.

As the region moves forward, it is:

- V** ----- ***a vibrant region → where commercial growth for key industries is thriving, there is a broad range of employment opportunities and a diverse supply of housing stock, all while maintaining the region’s unique characteristics and quality of life.***
- I** ----- ***an efficient region → with its land use development, transportation, energy usage and fiscal expenditures.***
- S** ----- ***an accessible region → with a balanced, sustainable and diverse transportation system that integrates transportation and land use to improve mobility and job accessibility.***
- I** ----- ***a united region → where there is a collaborative spirit and regional cooperation on planning issues.***
- O** ----- ***a balanced region → where the environment/open space/farmland and traditional settlement patterns are balanced successfully with residential and economic development.***
- N** ----- ***a connected region → where all residents feel connected to neighborhoods, activity centers and recreation areas.***

WHY A VISION?

It always starts with a vision. This Regional Plan is a visible statement of where the Central NH Region is now, where it should be in the future and what is required to get there. Regional plans are most successful when they represent a vision that brings together the concerns of different interest groups, resulting in recommendations that create solid community support. “Good” master plans also need to have built-in flexibility and have involved the community and other stakeholders from the outset, thus giving the plan a legitimate base, and a better chance to see the full vision implemented successfully. CNHRPC is also committed to a plan that contains recommendations that people can easily visualize and that tie ideas and projects to realistic goals and expectations.

The vision statement and its relationship to the major themes, guiding principles and action/implementation items define the framework for this Regional Plan. A regional vision should allow all of the stakeholders to work together on regional challenges and project implementation. This Plan has simple and realistic principles that: 1) educate the audience about local and regional issues; 2) identify regional activities/initiatives that support and enhance local planning; 3) provide the rationale and framework for future work; 4) outline the role of regional planning in planning and land use; and 5) can be used as a guide for decision-making about specific projects/activities.

A positive outcome of preparing this Regional Plan is the creation and continuation of a base of active community involvement and support. Building community interest, participation, and consensus as part of the regional master planning process involves sharing the concerns/challenges that the region and its communities are facing and suggests ways to move forward in concert with the vision for the region.

HOW DID THE VISION GET CREATED?

The vision statement has its roots in the extensive community input received throughout the outreach phase of the project.

In addition to gathering input from individuals around the region, CNHRPC staff conducted a review of local master plan vision, goals and priorities of the twenty municipalities in the region. Traditional settlement patterns, housing choices, transportation, natural resource functions and quality, community and economic vitality, hazard mitigation, and energy efficiency are all topics that are discussed thoroughly in the Regional Plan and reflect the themes in many of the region’s master plans.

Input was collected through a variety of methods. Beginning in the fall of 2012, CNHRPC distributed suggestion boxes in locations across the region such as general stores, town offices, restaurants, community centers, libraries, schools, and office buildings. Comment cards were included asking individuals to note what they like best about where they live, what could make it better, and whether they live, work, or are a visitor of the region. Over 300 individuals submitted comment cards. Responses were collected in a database and analyzed for themes such as community vitality, economic development, housing, transportation, environment and natural resources, and recreation.

CNHRPC staff attended community events and led neighborhood discussions with various groups around the region to hear about what people value about their community and what they would like to see improved. Over the course of 2012 and 2013, CNHRPC staff conducted over 20 outreach events and discussions ranging from hosting a community input table at local farmer’s markets to in-depth discussion with seniors at a senior center. Outreach included an interactive visual preference survey

(picture survey) where participants could indicate their preference in choices for use of land, recreation, housing, transportation, and business. Striving for demographically representative engagement, CNHRPC reached out to engage groups that represent different perspectives in the community. Some of these groups may not traditionally participate in regional planning efforts for reasons of place, economic status, age, education levels, mobility limitations, or cultural and ethnic differences. CNHRPC staff met with seniors, elementary and high school students, Chambers of Commerce, refugees and English language learners, community mental health clients, and many others.

In the fall of 2013, residents were invited to attend three sub-regional public outreach sessions to discuss strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing the Central NH Region. CNHRPC staff presented information on demographics, housing, land use, economic activity, transportation, recreation and natural resources to prompt discussion about local and regional strengths and opportunities.

Common themes emerged from a close examination of the extensive public outreach efforts. Appreciation of community and access to natural resources were repeated, valued strengths of the region. A strong appreciation for the region's quality of life and its value in attracting/retaining residents and businesses was another theme. Many people appreciate their downtown centers, the region's scenic landscape, recreation, local culture, historic resources, and good schools. The region itself is often described as being central to many desired amenities.

Similarly, the community outreach highlighted shared concerns across the region. Identified concerns include balancing economic opportunity while protecting community character, as well as growing businesses for shopping and keeping activity in downtowns. Transportation improvements related to options in public transportation, or alternatives to the single-occupancy vehicle, as well as pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure are other common themes. There is a concern about the deteriorating state of the transportation system and the need for maintaining efficient and safe infrastructure for accessibility around the region.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Using the public input and also the array of data available to build a profile of the region all contributed to the final vision. A review of the master plans in the region was a key source of data on vision/goals. This statement is also heavily influenced by the Telling the Regional Story Chapter. As the "story" unfolds from the present day to the future, four themes are developed that function as the framework for the guiding principles and the implementation/action items. These four themes of Connect, Sustain, Invest and Partner and are discussed in detail in the Regional Story Chapter. They support and frame the guiding principles. By examining the characteristics of the region in concert with the public input, CNHRPC developed a series of guiding principles that characterize the vision. An important note on the use of these principles is that no one principle will achieve the vision as they all need to work in combination to get to a desired outcome. However, starting with one or at best two principles to implement is often the first step on the path to achieving the vision.

The following chart describes the process in more graphic form and highlights the four themes and principles that were developed. These principles are also used to build the implementation/action items under each heading (see Implementation Chapter). As stated earlier, the themes are developed in the Regional Story Chapter and help frame the guiding principles; each guiding principle is cross-walked with

a major applicable theme (shown with a red checkmark ✓) and secondary ones in a lighter color (✓) to emphasize their connection with the story of the region.

Themes from the Regional Story				GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Connect	Sustain	Invest	Partner	
✓	✓		✓	COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
				Strengthen community-based partnerships.
				Promote and support the development of and planning for municipal services to best utilize local and regional resources to serve current and future residents.
				Strengthen opportunities for community members to gather and interact to support a sense of community.
				Support communications across municipal borders in response to weather hazards.
✓	✓	✓	✓	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
				Encourage economic development that is a “good fit” for the region and fosters a prosperous quality of life that provides opportunity and supports the needs of the region.
				Connect communities to a global economy with expanded and faster broadband and telecommunications.
				“Grow our own” by focusing on retention, expansion, and fostering a climate of investment and economic opportunity in the region.
				Position and protect the quality of life as an asset of the region that can attract and retain employees, employers, and visitors.
				Promote and develop new and existing businesses.
				Strengthen the regional identity as a good place for business, residents, and tourism.
				Support and strengthen key regional industry clusters.
✓	✓	✓	✓	HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES
				Support efforts to expand housing opportunities that are affordable in developed areas that can accommodate changing housing needs.
				Support a housing supply that addresses the housing needs of the region, including the younger workforce population and those wishing to age in place.
				Look for opportunities to facilitate the development of housing that addresses that addresses other identified limitations such as transportation access, housing costs for renters and disabled populations.

Themes from the Regional Story				GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Connect	Sustain	Invest	Partner	
✓	✓	✓	✓	HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES (Cont.)
				Work collaboratively to broaden the understanding of the links between housing and economic growth.
✓	✓	✓	✓	TRANSPORTATION CHOICES
				Develop and enhance the ability of municipalities to conduct effective local transportation planning.
				Promote, enhance, and maintain safety for the traveling public, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.
				Improve and maintain municipal and regional capacity to fund transportation systems improvements.
				Assist in the development of a safe, efficient, accessible and coordinated multi-modal transportation system that provides for cost-effective movement of people and goods
				Promote economic development, tourism, and energy efficiency through the transportation planning process.
	✓	✓		EFFICIENT COMMUNITIES
				Support local efforts to foster mixed-use development and densities that encourage walking and reduced auto trips.
				Assist efforts to reinvigorate town centers and rural villages to maintain the character of the region's communities, utilize existing infrastructure, and preserve open space.
				Encourage the adoption of energy efficiency approaches to building and site planning to promote efficient use of resources and reduce pollution.
✓	✓		✓	NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION
				Support municipal efforts and promote inter-municipal cooperation on conservation, protection, and sound management of natural resources and historic sites.
				Facilitate effective stewardship of conservation acquisitions and recreational areas.
				Foster development of local food systems.
				Encourage the management of growth that protects farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and important ecosystems.

Themes from the Regional Story				GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Connect	Sustain	Invest	Partner	
✓	✓		✓	NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION (Cont.)
				Support more recreation opportunities close to home for all to meet the changing needs of the region’s residents to promote active, healthy lifestyle, especially among youth and the older demographic.
				Support local efforts to conserve open space to preserve the region’s natural heritage and environmental health.
				Promote inter-municipal cooperation on protective strategies for river corridors and water recharge areas including wetlands.
				Plan for, coordinate, and support the management and protection of the region’s water resources, recharge systems, and wetlands.
	✓		✓	WATER RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
				Plan for, coordinate, and support the management and protection of the region’s water resources, recharge areas, and wetlands.
				Promote inter-municipal cooperation on strategies for river corridors and water recharge areas including wetlands.
				Support expansion of water and sewer services where appropriate.
✓	✓		✓	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES
				Encourage efficient communities that are adaptive, responsive and resilient to multi-hazard challenges.
				Encourage sharing of emergency facilities and equipment across municipal borders for regional responsiveness and to provide more resources for individual communities.
				Encourage proactive planning to mitigate the loss of life, property, infrastructure and natural resources from extreme weather events and other disasters.
✓		✓	✓	REGIONAL COOPERATION
				Maintain and share best practices information on local and regional planning topics.
				Assist with identifying grant opportunities for local and cooperative projects.
				Facilitate cooperation of local governments across municipal boundaries on issues common to local government.
				Promote the individuality and diversity of communities in the region while serving as a regional resource.

Themes from the Regional Story				GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Connect	Sustain	Invest	Partner	
✓		✓	✓	REGIONAL COOPERATION (Cont.)
				Promote efficient expenditures of public funds for the benefit of the region.
✓	✓		✓	PUBLIC ENGAEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM
				Ensure that local and regional data contained in this Plan are readily available to local communities.
				Assist towns with fostering volunteer participation in town, community groups.
				Promote a sense of regional community and identity.
				Support efforts to recruit volunteers at the local level.

HOW DOES THE REGIONAL PLAN FIT WITH OTHER PLANS?

The philosophy behind both a regional master plan and local master plans is that they need to work together to support the work of land use planning in the region. The local master plans inform the regional plan and communities can incorporate/use the document's content as needed. There is also another layer of planning and that is the state development plan, mandated by RSA 9-A. According to this statute, there is a framework built for consistency between all three plans – the local plan, the regional plan and the state development plan. Each plan should consult the overall vision and goals/principles from the other plans in an attempt to achieve overall consistency in the planning framework. While there is not a current State Development Plan, there are guiding principles in RSA 9-B (State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy) that can be used for guidance.

CHAPTER VISION STATEMENTS:

The Regional Plan's topics/chapters are woven together and need to work together with common themes and complementary vision statements. Aspects of the regional story, the public outreach, the region's local master plans, and the data collected all feed into not only the overall vision statement but the individual chapter visions as well. Each chapter also addresses opportunities and challenges as we prepare to move forward. These connections are described in more detail below and help to place each chapter into context with the overall plan.

Economic Development

“The region has a diverse and thriving economy that takes advantage of the region's strong natural and cultural assets and builds on existing businesses while encouraging entrepreneurial opportunities and innovation.”

Every chapter is linked to Economic Development in some way. Housing, demographics and transportation are strongly linked. Transportation connects goods to market, but also gets customers and employees to places of businesses. Travel time can be a crucial piece to choosing to locate a business in a particular location. Housing and demographics are tied to the workforce and customer base - a critical mass of both is needed for a successful business. Other chapters, such as natural resources, water infrastructure and energy efficiency play a role, albeit more secondary. Water infrastructure is key as it is needed for any business location. Protecting both well water, aquifers and municipal water systems is an economic development activity, among the other benefits of such resources. Natural resources are key in two ways: 1) they define our “character” which serves as a quality of life draw for all segments of the population, including employers, workers and customers; and, 2) many sectors of our economy are based upon outdoor recreation. Energy efficiency can provide: 1) cost efficiency for business owners; and, 2) it also presents opportunities for new industries and economic expansion. Finally, hazards can also play a negative role in economic development. Major disasters will, at least, temporarily disrupt a local economy. Additionally, if recovery takes too long it can result in permanent damage to a local economy.

Housing

“Traditional settlement patterns are maintained while there are sufficient housing options that meet a range of needs from single adults, young families to older residents.”

The Housing Chapter’s connections to other Chapters are similar to the economic development ties, though in a slightly different manner. Economics, demographics and transportation networks can drive housing needs geographically, and in turn, housing can then drive economics and transportation - it is a “push/pull” relationship among the three areas. As businesses expand they create employment opportunities which draw people to certain areas; as more people settle in an area, transportation networks expand and businesses develop to serve their needs. Transportation also plays a role in how far people must travel to amenities, services and entertainment - all key to deciding where one wants to live. Water Infrastructure, natural resources and energy efficiency all play a role as well. Water infrastructure is needed to support housing development - any permanent structure will need water. Natural resources are directly related to our quality of life which not only serves as a draw for where someone lives, but also our economy. Energy efficiency is key in that: 1) it can help keep people’s homes warm in the winter and cool in the summer; and, 2) if done right, it can help keep the cost of living down. Finally, hazards, as in economic development, can have a negative impact on housing. In the short term, power outages and minor damage can create temporary problems for both quality of life and cost of living. More intermediate problems can exacerbate those situations. Major hazards have the potential to destroy communities, displace residents and strap state, town and personal budgets.

Natural Resources

“There is a sustainable balance between development and the protection of the region’s natural resources and working landscapes. Residents enjoy a high quality of life with easy access to a connected system of recreational

opportunities, clean water and a healthy ecosystem that supports diverse habitats.”

The Natural Resources Chapter is closely connected to all the Plan’s Chapters. Our working landscapes, open space and recreational lands, and water resources are among the most valued aspects of the quality of life in the region. As the region plans for future development, water infrastructure needs and resource management decisions, the protection of natural resources needs to continue to be an important consideration. Safe, efficient and well-managed water and sewer infrastructures support economic development, protect our citizens and maintain a healthy ecosystem. From economic growth to quality of life for residents, protecting natural resources and providing access to forests, rivers, lakes, fields and other natural qualities is central to the region.

Transportation

“A balanced, sustainable and diverse transportation system that is operated and maintained to ensure residents have safe, reliable choices for travel needs.”

Transportation is an essential component of all Plan Chapters. Economic Development, Housing, Natural Resources and Energy Efficiency are all supported by a safe, efficient and accessible multimodal transportation system connecting rural and urban communities. A well-maintained highway and non-motorized networks, along with enhanced transit options, help to provide mobility that promotes coordinated land use and sustainable economic development, while reducing transportation impacts on the region’s environmental, cultural, and natural resources.

Weather Hazards

“Communities are well informed and have adequate resources to plan for and respond to weather hazard events at the local and regional levels.”

Weather hazards have profound connections to all other Regional Plan Chapters. The effects of weather and climate on the natural and built environments are often unpredictable and extreme, costing communities and taxpayers thousands of dollars yearly. Flooding, high winds, and snow storms in the Central NH Region can impair transportation and utility infrastructure, damage roofs, destroy healthy woodlands, and force people to stay in place, often foregoing their employment or shopping. Water infrastructure can be inundated so public health could be in question without treatment. Invasive species will move to newer, more suitable habitat land and water which can push out the native species as the weather changes their original habitat.

Energy

“Energy consciousness is a factor in development decisions that reduce energy consumption, improve energy efficiency and encourage renewable energy. The region’s communities have sufficient funding and resources to pursue local and cooperative energy projects.”

Planning efforts that are sensitive to energy issues can encourage settlement patterns that reduce transportation infrastructure, conserve energy and promote open space protection. Energy issues are often beyond the influence of local decisions yet the planning process and the work of volunteer boards play an important role in energy efficiency.

Energy is part of the planning and land use landscape and is closely linked to the Housing, Transportation, Environment, and Economic Chapters of this plan. Energy Efficiency is as much a part of the region’s resources as our rivers, natural habitats, open space, wildlife, agriculture and forestry. Efficient use and management of our energy resources can lead to an improved quality of life for the region’s residents and a future where resources are used in a sustainable manner.