



STRAFFORD EDD

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

YEARS
2026-
2030

Adopted: [date]

STRAFFORD
Regional Planning Commission

NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND HEARING

2026-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC), in its role as an Economic Development District (EDD), is soliciting comments on adoption of the 2026-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS contains an analysis of the region's economy and identifies goals, strategies, and priority projects for implementation over the next five years. Adoption of a new CEDS requires public input as part of state and federal regulations. SRPC is soliciting comments for the draft CEDS from **Friday, May 8, 2026 to Sunday, June 7, 2026**. A public hearing will be held by the Strafford EDD Board of Directors at **9am on Friday, June 19, 2026** to consider the adoption of the 2026-2030 CEDS.

The public hearing can be attended in person or electronically. Attend in person at the address below, or electronically via Microsoft Teams:

Online Access:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/26158346669748?p=4xytesfYGFhcig30qO>

Meeting ID: 261 583 466 697 48

Passcode: fH7Va7Ph

Copies of the proposed CEDS will be available for review at the Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth public libraries and city halls, as well as the Strafford Regional Planning Commission office and website. Copies can be sent to interested parties upon request. Information about joining the meeting is at the Strafford Regional Planning Commission website (www.straffordrpcnh.gov). If you encounter any issues accessing the meeting, please call (603) 994-3500 x115 or email mtaylorfetter@straffordrpcnh.gov.

Comments can be sent via mail or email to:

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This document is a draft to solicit public comments. Final document layout and formatting of tables, charts, and maps are not complete in this draft.

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Acknowledgements

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission thanks our Strategy Committee and Board of Directors members, partners from across the public, private, and non-profit sectors for their support and involvement through the process of developing this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Strafford Region. We appreciate your time, expertise, and contributions. We would also like to thank the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for their support, and Katherine Trapani of the U.S. EDA Philadelphia Regional Office for their advice and technical guidance. The following people contributed to this report:

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Natalie Gemma	Senior Regional Planner
Michael Polizzotti	Senior Economic Development Planner
Rachel Dewey	Senior Data Analyst

Strafford EDD Strategy Committee

The Strategy Committee provides guidance to the Strafford EDD in the development of the CEDS. It represents diverse perspectives from the Strafford Region including local municipalities, public transportation, chambers of commerce, public and private financing, healthcare, housing, social services, education and technical training, planning, and state and federal economic development perspectives. In addition to providing technical input to the CEDS document and its Priority Project list, the Strategy Committee contributes perspectives on the strengths, opportunities, constraints; provides input on economic trends; and provides an opportunity for collaboration, leadership, and program development. Additionally, the Committee strengthens coordination among local, regional, and sector-based partners; and communicates regional needs and opportunities to other stakeholders.

Voting Members	Entity Representing
Betsey Andrews Parker	Community Action Partnership of Strafford County
Bonnie McNair (Chair)	Somersworth Community Chamber of Commerce
Darin Roark	Mass General Brigham Wentworth-Douglas Hospital
Dennis McCann	Strafford Economic Development Corporation
Elizabeth Chilton	University of New Hampshire
Ernie Creveling	Town of Barrington, Planning
Giff Burnap	Butternut Farm
James Burdin (Vice Chair)	City of Dover, Office of Business Development
Joe Friendman	Town of Durham
John Burcke	Business Bank
John Randolph	GSD Communities
John Shea	School Administrative Unit (SAU) 56
Lee Netwig	City of Rochester, Economic Development
Maggie Randolph	GSD Communities
Margaret Joyce	Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce
Michael Scala	City of Rochester, Economic Development
Michele Sheppard	Granite YMCA
Michelle Mears	City of Somersworth, Planning and Community Dev.
Robert McGann	Great Bay Community College
Shannon Rogers	UNH Extension, Community and Economic Dev.
Tory Jennison	Strafford County

Non-voting Members	Entity Representing
Amy Basset	U.S. Small Business Administration
David Walker	Rockingham Planning Commission
James Rather	Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission
Jen Kimball	Regional Economic Development Center
Karen Immel	NH Division of Business and Economic Affairs
Rad Nichols	Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST)

Strafford EDD Board of Directors

The full body of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission as determined by RSA 36:46 also serves as the Strafford EDD Board of Directors. The Strafford EDD Board of Directors is responsible for approving the final CEDS based on input from SRPC staff, the Strategy Committee, and the public.

Name	Municipality
Matthew Towne	Barrington
Steve Diamond	Barrington
Chris Kinville	Brookfield
Marshall Goldberg	Brookfield
Kean McDermott	Dover
Krista Gingue	Dover
Lindsey Williams	Dover
Steve Brown*	Dover
Michael Lehrman	Durham
Paul Rasmussen	Durham
Curtis Register	Durham
Vacant	Farmington
Vacant	Farmington
Katrin Kasper	Lee
Vacant	Lee
Mark Avery	Madbury
Tom Falk	Madbury
John Mullen	Middleton
Kate Buzzard	Middleton
John Nute	Milton
Leslie Howlett	Milton
Vacant	New Durham

Name	Municipality
Vacant	New Durham
Sarah Wrightsman	Newmarket
Vacant	Newmarket
Donald Manter	Northwood
Vacant	Northwood
Glenn Griswold	Nottingham
Vacant	Nottingham
Barb Holstein	Rochester
Joe Boudreau	Rochester
Kevin Sullivan	Rochester
Rick Healey	Rochester
Vacant	Rollinsford
Vacant	Rollinsford
Mark Richardson	Somersworth
Michael Bobinsky	Somersworth
Vacant	Somersworth
Donald Coker	Strafford
Vacant	Strafford
George Maglaras	Strafford County
Steve Stancel*	Wakefield
Vacant	Wakefield

*Liaison to the Strategy Committee

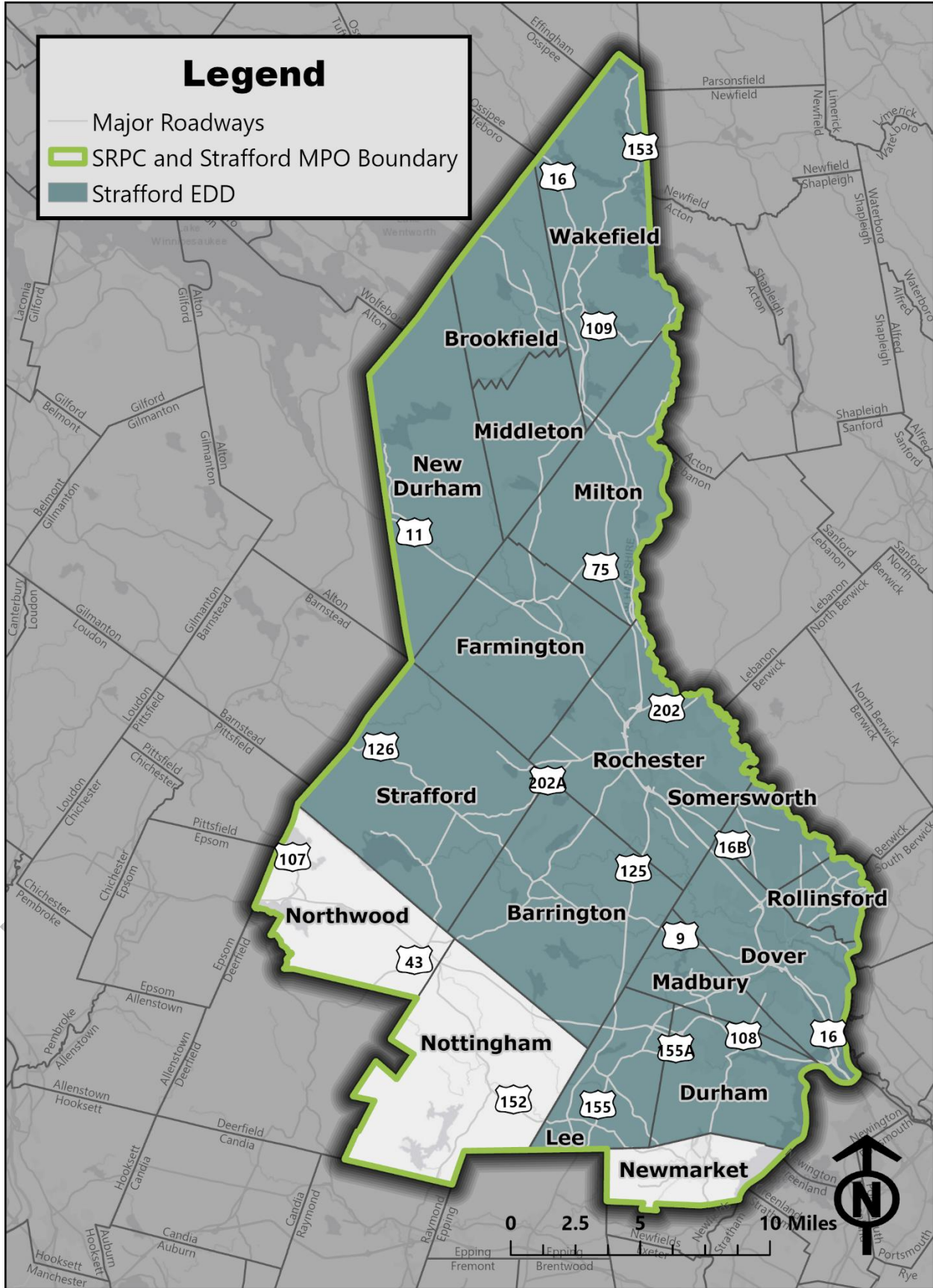
Introduction

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire. SRPC provides technical planning assistance to its municipalities, which include the communities of Strafford County plus Brookfield and Wakefield in Carroll County and Newmarket, Northwood, and Nottingham in Rockingham County. SRPC also provides regional transportation planning and technical assistance services to these communities through its designation as the Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization (Strafford MPO).

In 2015, SRPC was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The Strafford EDD comprises the municipalities of Strafford County plus Brookfield and Wakefield in Carroll County. Newmarket, Northwood, and Nottingham are part of the EDD operated by the Regional Economic Development Center (REDC) in Rockingham County.

SRPC is committed to being a leader in economic development planning by providing sound metrics, data analysis, and opportunities for meaningful collaboration throughout the region. In addition to promoting and providing technical assistance to economic development projects in our municipalities, the SRPC is responsible for maintaining and implementing a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to establish and promote the Strafford EDDs economic development priorities.

The public comment period for the CEDS will run from May 8, 2026 through June 7, 2026. The vote for adoption will be held at the June 19, 2026 Board of Directors meeting.



The CEDS and Economic Development

The CEDS includes analyses of the Strafford EDD's unique advantages and opportunities that impact economic development. The CEDS is completely updated on a five-year cycle, with smaller updates adopted yearly. The 2026-2030 CEDS outlines a regional strategy for prosperity in the Strafford Region for the next five years.

Economic development extends beyond metrics such as employment, job growth, and business start-ups. The U.S. Economic Development Administration defines economic development as "...conditions that promote economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, firms, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, lower transaction costs, and responsibly produce and trade valuable goods and services".¹ It is a comprehensive topic that considers human and social development factors such as educational attainment, affordability, mobility, and other metrics that all impact overall quality of life.

Economic development includes efforts that not only promote economic growth but also support the economic and social well-being of the individuals and families that make up an economy. Throughout this document, emphasis is placed on the comprehensive nature of economic development. The CEDS is a resource to promote economic development, in its whole definition, as a publication that identifies strategies for economic growth, prosperity, and quality of life improvements for all throughout the Strafford Region.

To help inform this plan, SRPC staff has gathered feedback from local stakeholders and the public, and has convened the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee and EDD Board of Directors throughout the entire process. The 2026-2030 CEDS outlines a regional strategy for future economic development and prosperity. The CEDS includes the following:

- An overview of the region's demographics and economy,
- Summaries of gathered feedback throughout the CEDS development process,

¹ <https://www.eda.gov/performance/key-definitions>

- The strategic direction for the region, including the Vision, Lenses, Themes, Goals, and Objectives to support regional economic development,
- A list of current Priority Projects that are aligned with the region's economic development goals,
- A preliminary Action Plan to support the region's economic development, and
- CEDS Performance Measures

Data Disclaimer

It is important to note that data cannot always be analyzed for the exact SRPC or Strafford EDD region if the original source data is compiled for different geographies. When data for the Strafford EDD is not available, data for the entire SRPC region is used. If county data is available, Strafford County is used as an approximation of Strafford EDD, but data is also provided for Carroll and Rockingham Counties where possible. When regional sources are limited, state or national data is used as needed.

SRPC conducts region-wide analysis of over 160 data metrics each year for a variety of projects and plans, including the CEDS. This analysis, called the Regional Data Snapshot, covers demographics, economic vitality, livability and quality of life, mobility and accessibility, and resiliency. It is updated every year, with additional metrics added as they are developed.

The 2026 Data Snapshot contains many of the metrics discussed in this document, will be referenced throughout the CEDS, and can be found at <https://straffordrpcnh.gov/measure/data-snapshot/>.

Regional Overview

Situated in southeastern New Hampshire, the Strafford Region is bordered by Maine to the northeast, Rockingham County to the south, the Lakes Region to the north and northwest, and the outer reaches of the Concord and Manchester metropolitan areas to the west. Its location offers convenient access to major destinations: Boston and Portland are roughly within fifty miles, while Lake Winnepesaukee, the White Mountains, Portsmouth, and New Hampshire's 13 miles of coastline are all easily accessible.

The region is well connected to economic centers through major corridors such as Interstate 95, Interstate 93, and NH State Route 101. The Amtrak Downeaster (with stations in Dover and Durham) and the C&J bus link the region to Boston, New York, and beyond. The region is also served by two of the largest public transportation systems in the state by ridership: The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) and the University of New Hampshire's Wildcat Transit.

The area is home to abundant natural resources, including numerous lakes, rivers, conservation areas, family-owned farms, and scenic landscapes, alongside vibrant community centers, active arts and cultural scenes, and rich agricultural heritage. Furthermore, it has a thriving economy with a longstanding tradition in manufacturing and higher education. It is home to the University of New Hampshire (UNH), and to numerous career and technical education facilities, including the Dover Regional Career Technical Center, the Somersworth Career Technical Center, and the R.W. Creteau Career Technology Center in Rochester.

The Strafford Region's identity is rooted in its industrial history. Many of the region's traditional New England mill buildings were constructed during the Industrial Revolution, and the region's urban communities became export hubs for textiles, shoes, ice, and agricultural products during the peak of the railroad era. This traditional mill-town development remains visible today in

communities such as Dover, Rochester, Somersworth, and Newmarket, all built along the Cocheco, Lamprey, Salmon Falls, and Oyster rivers.^{2, 3, 4}

Demographic Trends

With a population of 136,845 in 2020 - a 6.1% increase since 2010 and projected to grow another 7.4% by 2030 - the Strafford EDD is one of the fastest-growing areas in the state, with much of the population concentrating in the tri-cities (Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth) (**Figure 1**). Between 2014 and 2024, growth has occurred in nearly every community - with the exception of Farmington and Milton, both of which saw marginal declines. The median age is rising in 14 of the region's 18 municipalities, with the largest increase in Brookfield (+11.4 years) and the largest decrease in Barrington (-4.7 years). The number of children under 10 is declining regionwide, while adults in their 30s and those over 55 are increasing. From 2014 to 2024, there has been a 1.3-year rise in median age in Strafford County.⁵ Despite these shifts, Strafford County remains the state's youngest county, supported by the roughly 8,500 UNH students and younger individuals and families attracted to the region who impact the median age.

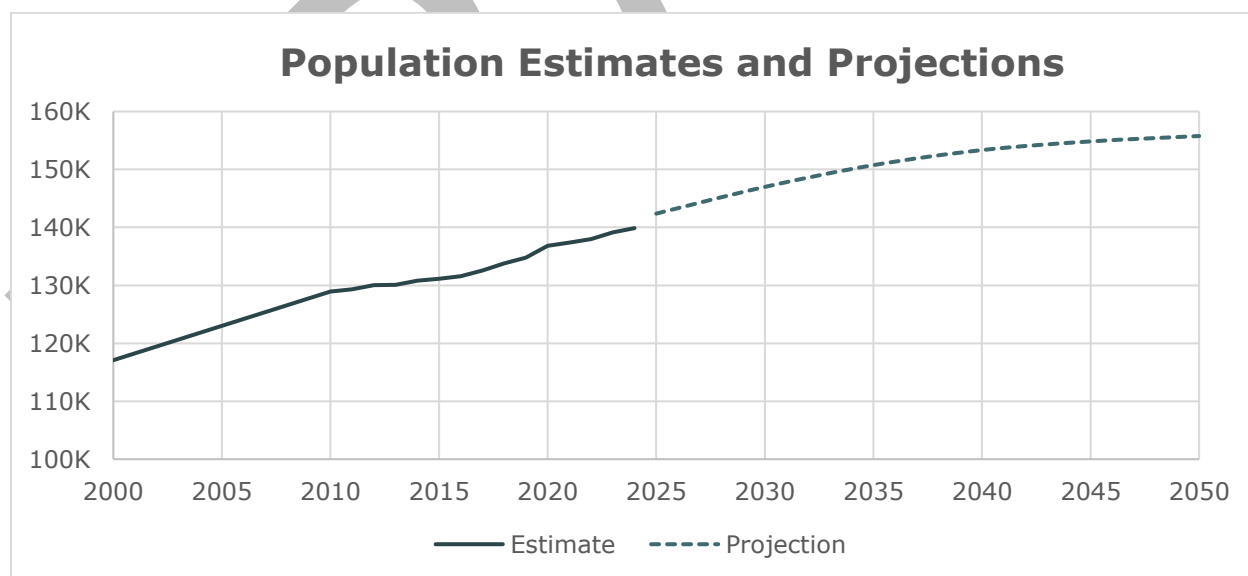


Figure 1: Population Estimates and Projections. Source: NHOPD. Year: 2000 - 2050. Strafford EDD.

² <https://www.dover.nh.gov/about-dover/dover-facts-and-history>

³ <https://www.rochesternh.org/history-of-rochester>

⁴ <https://www.somersworthnh.gov/somersworth-public-library/pages/brief-history-somersworth>

⁵ US Census Bureau ACS, 2014-2024. Granularity: Counties, Municipalities, Census Tracts.

Employment and Industry Trends

Employment projections through 2045 (

Figure 2) show job growth in all 18 municipalities. The region is largely comprised of service producing industries. In 2025, the largest employment sectors were Educational Services (8,718 jobs) and Retail Trade (7,338 jobs), followed by Manufacturing (5,548) and Social Services (5,212), which together represent a significant portion of the regional job base. Other significant sectors include Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (4,569), Business, Legal, and Personal Services (4,351), Hotel and Lodging (4,161), and Wholesale Trade (3,034). According to New Hampshire Employment Security, some of the largest employers in the Strafford Region (those with 500-999 employees) include Frisbie Memorial Hospital (Rochester), Lowes Home Improvement (Rochester), Strafford County (Dover), Albany International Corp (Rochester), and Community Partners Behavioral Health (Dover).⁶ Other notable employers include the University of New Hampshire (Durham), Wentworth Douglass Hospital (Dover), Safran Aerospace Composites (Rochester), and the Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth school districts.

⁶<https://www2.nhes.nh.gov/GraniteStats/SessionServlet?page=Employers.jsp&SID=10&county=000017&countyName=Strafford%20County>

Industry (NAICS Sector)	2015	2025	2035	2045
Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing (11)	136	133	129	126
Business, Legal, & Personal (54, 55, 56)	3,844	4,351	4,931	5,595
Communications (51)	997	963	932	906
Construction (23)	1,703	1,836	1,985	2,143
Eating & Drinking Establishments (72)	364	404	431	462
Educational Services (6)	8,331	8,718	9,124	9,551
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate (52, 53)	4,298	4,569	4,861	5,170
Government (92)	2,218	2,314	2,416	2,524
Health Services (62)	2,923	3,351	3,851	4,424
Hotels & Lodging (72)	4,122	4,161	4,446	4,748
Manufacturing (31)	5,498	5,548	5,606	5,667
Mining (21)	32	33	33	37
Non-Classifiable (99)	3,046	3,270	3,516	3,776
Retail Trade (44)	6,952	7,338	7,743	8,174
Service (general) (71)	642	710	782	864
Social Services (62)	4,527	5,212	5,988	6,881
Transportation (48)	1,216	1,237	1,260	1,285
Utilities (22)	72	72	71	71
Wholesale Trade (42, 81)	2,832	3,034	3,249	3,478
Total (SRPC)	53,753	57,254	61,354	65,882

Figure 2: Employment Projections by Industry. Source: NHES. Year: 2015.SRPC.

Unemployment in the region is low, and the labor force has been increasing slowly over the last few years. The 2025 regional unemployment rate of 2.63% indicates recovery from pandemic-related disruptions, though some municipalities continue to experience slightly higher unemployment rates. **(Figure 3)**. In 2024, the region had an employed civilian labor force of about 89,000 people and fewer than 55,000 local jobs. The most recent data available (2023) indicates that roughly 35% the labor force is made up of individuals both working and living in the region, 19% that are employed in the region but live outside the region, and 46% that live in the region and are employed outside.⁷ Common work destinations of residents include Nashua,

⁷ US Census Bureau LEHD. Year: 2023. Granularity: SRPC.

Manchester, Concord, Portsmouth, Newington, and Exeter (**Figure 4**), and common home locations of workers include Rochester, Somersworth, Dover, Barrington, Farmington, Durham, and Newmarket (**Figure 5**).

Together, the Strafford Region’s unique location, high quality of life, and strong education and employment opportunities create a wide range of opportunities within a compact area, attracting businesses and residents from varying backgrounds and supporting vibrant, resilient communities.

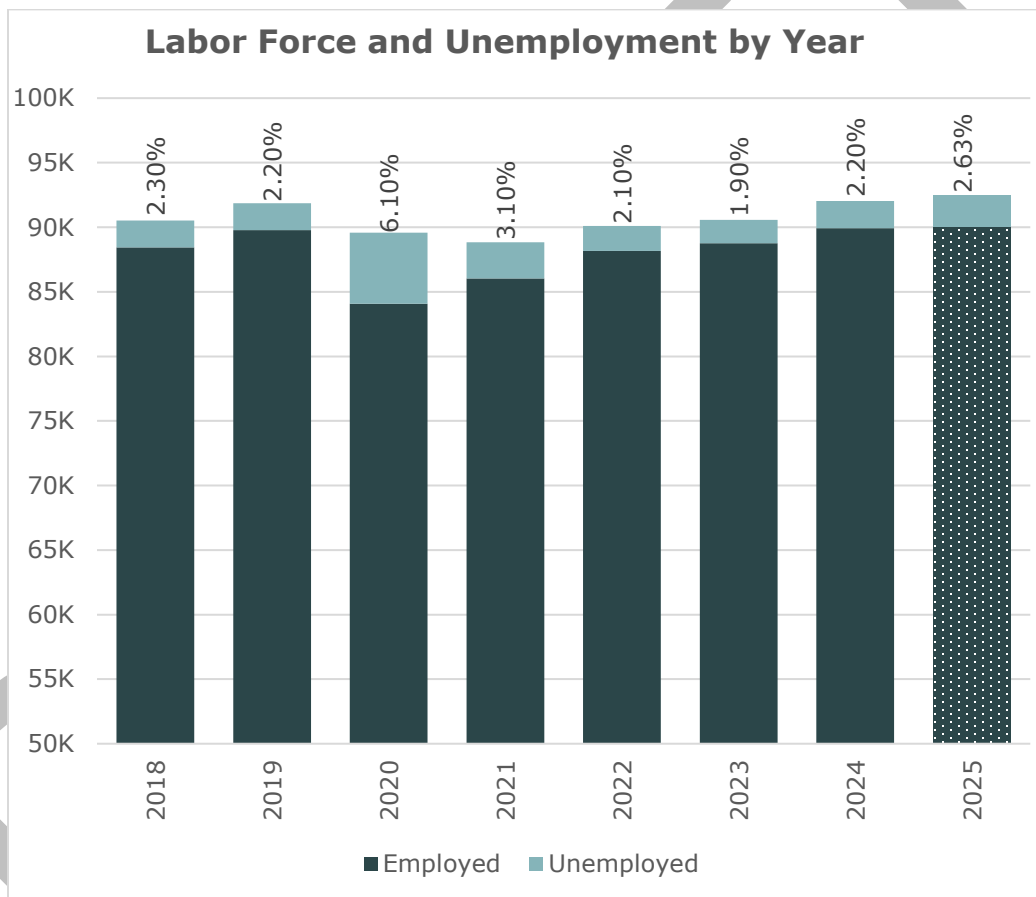


Figure 3: Labor Force and Unemployment. Source: NHES. Year: 2017 - 2025. SRPC.

Work Locations of SRPC Residents

(Number of SRPC residents who work in ____)

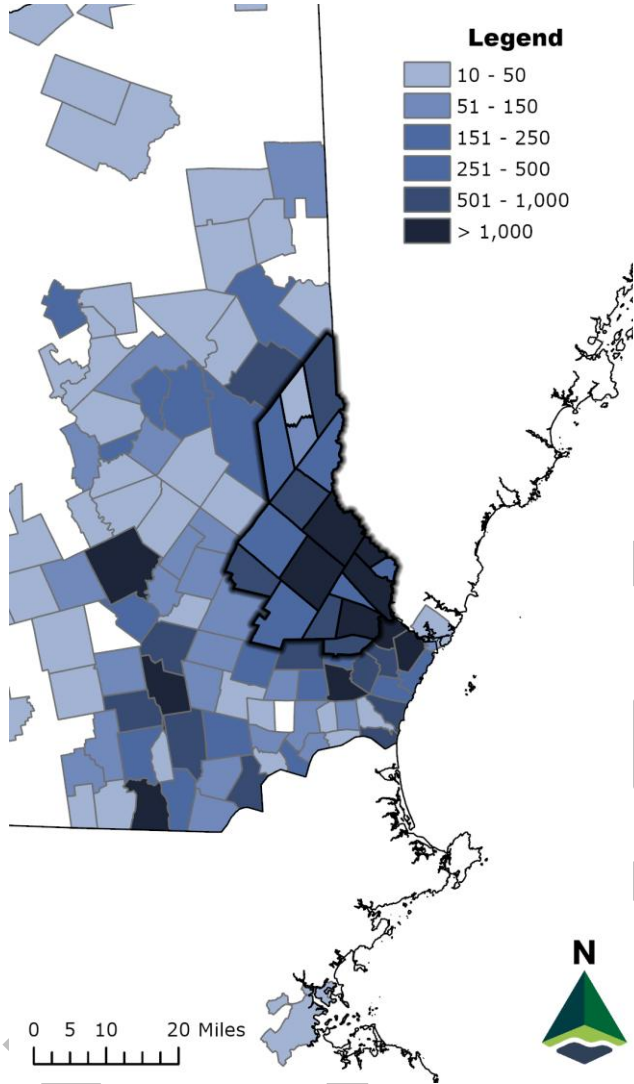


Figure 4: Work Location of SRPC Residents. Source: US Census Bureau LEHD. Year: 2023. SRPC.

Home Locations of Employees

(Number of SRPC employees who live in ____)

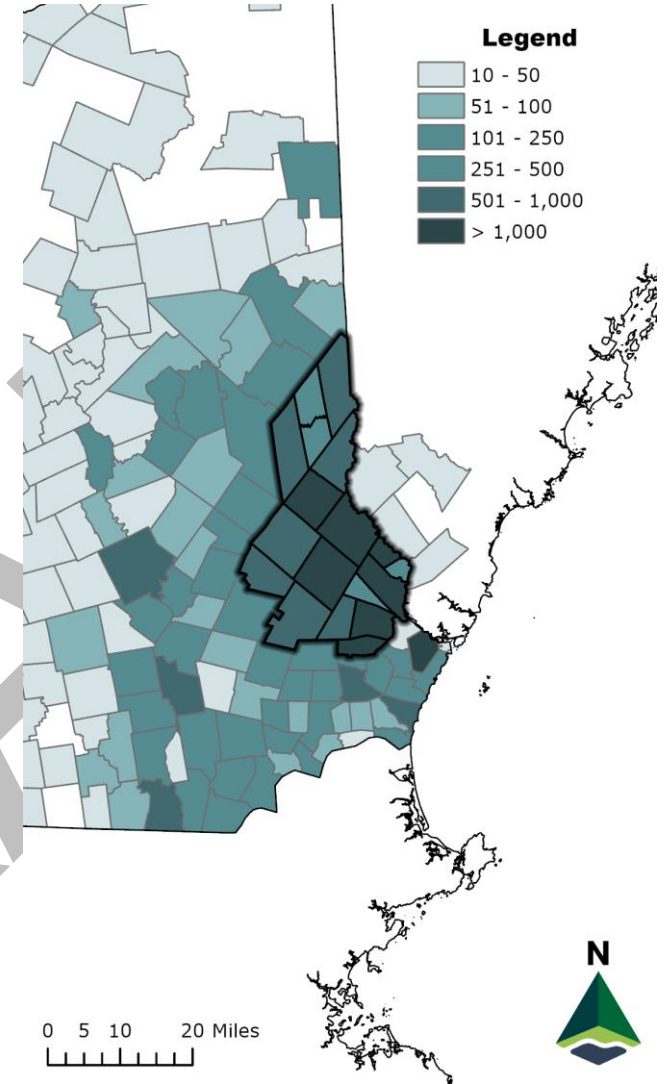


Figure 5: Home Location of Employees. Source: US Census Bureau LEHD. Year: 2023. SRPC.

Existing Economic Development Expansion Areas

Within the Strafford EDD, there are two key existing programs with established areas that can help promote economic development. Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs) are a state-level program designed to stimulate economic development, revitalization, and growth in an area through business tax credits for employers who improve infrastructure and create or expand employment in a zone. Municipalities can request an ERZ be established through a formal application process with the NH Division of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), so long as certain criteria for the area are met. Areas must include vacant or underutilized commercial or industrial areas.⁸ In the Strafford EDD, there are currently ERZs in Barrington, Dover, Durham, Farmington, Milton, Rochester, and Somersworth.⁹

Opportunity Zones (OZs) represent a federal program to incentivize private investment into census tracts that have been identified as eligible. Tracts were selected based on certain income and poverty metrics.¹⁰ Currently, the Strafford EDD is home to five Opportunity Zones. The current OZs will expire at the end of 2028. Designations for new zones will begin in 2026, which will identify areas for this program to continue through 2036.¹¹

The location of current ERZs and OZs in the Strafford Region is shown in **Figure 6**.

⁸ <https://www.nheconomy.com/grow/business-loans/revitalization-zone>

⁹ [November-2025-Community-Listing.pdf](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/businesses/opportunity-zone>

¹¹ <https://www.hud.gov/opportunity-zones>

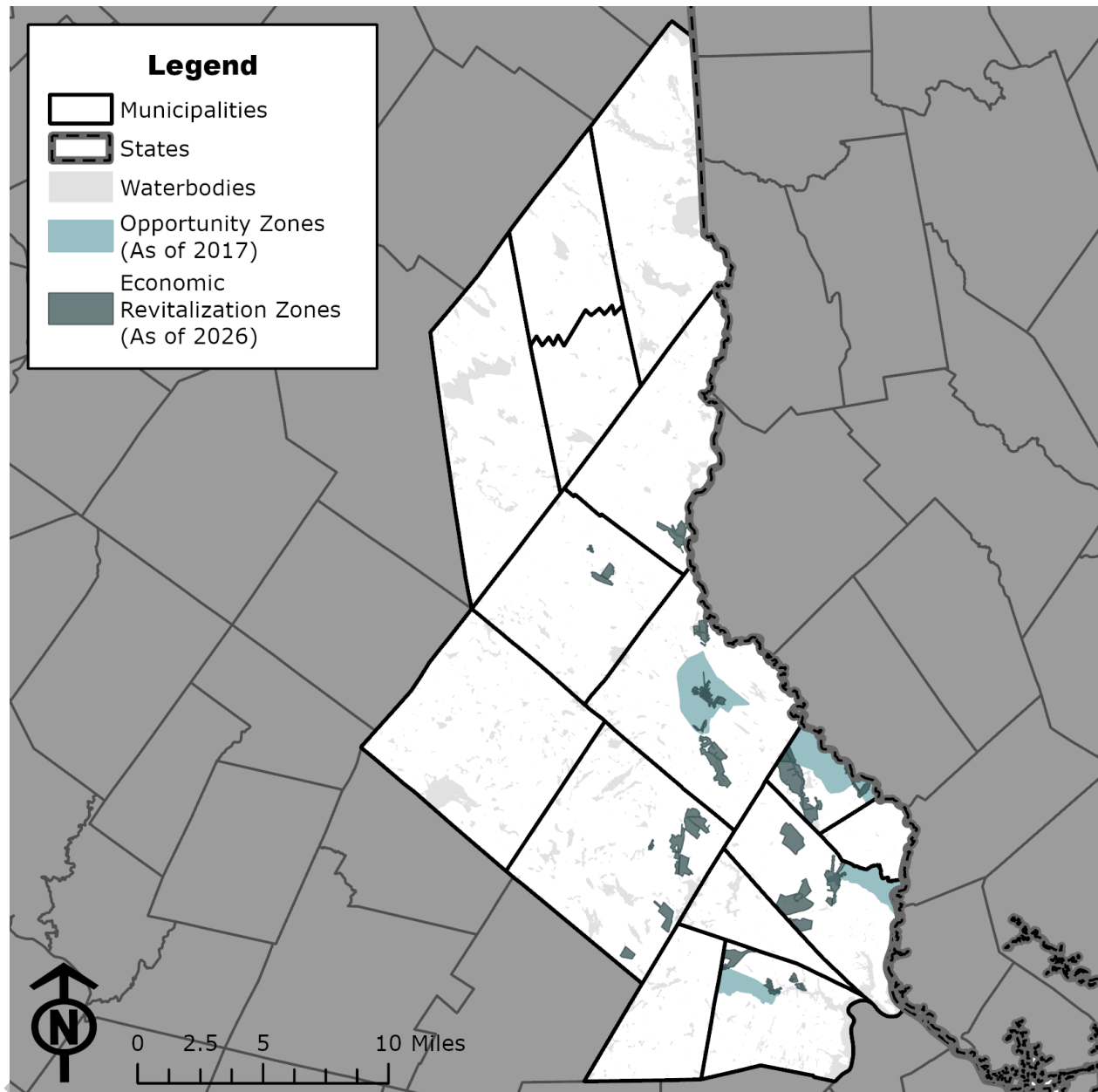


Figure 6: ERZs and OZs. Source: BEA, HUD. Year: 2026. Strafford EDD.

Economic Development Capacity

Capacity for economic development can be represented as an index generated through the analysis of a region’s unique collection of strengths, organizations, infrastructure, and other resources and conditions present. In partnership with the U.S. EDA, the Argonne National Laboratory has developed methodology

to estimate a region’s economic development capacity through the analysis of 53 metrics representing several different thematic areas including:¹²

- Human Capital – quality of life in the area, educational attainment, home ownership, income equality, per capita income, and the composition of the workforce in the region.
- Financial – the health of local government finances and the availability of public sector capital funds to the private sector.
- Industry – employment clusters, industry diversity, business start and closure rates, and presence of advanced industries.
- Infrastructure – physical and environmental factors that impact quality of life and economic development, including energy supply, broadband, land and water quality, transportation, and access to amenities.
- Institutions and Partnerships – the presence and strength of both public and private entities that support collaborative efforts for economic development, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

The analysis is conducted at the county level, and Strafford County is used as an approximation of Strafford EDD. Each of the five areas capacity areas above are represented as a value between zero, representing capacity that is well below the national average, to one, representing capacity that is well above the national average.

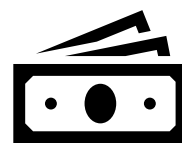
The most recent analysis of the 53 metrics that make up these five capacity areas for Strafford County are below.



Human Capital

Value: **0.83**

Capacity: **Elevated**



Financial

Value: **0.59**

Capacity: **Moderate**

¹²

<https://disgeoportal.egs.anl.gov/portal/sharing/rest/content/items/48023bcfa55f4593a928dff3a7c2d1be/data>



Industry

Value: **0.79**

Capacity: **High**



Infrastructure

Value: **0.77**

Capacity: **Elevated**



Partnerships and Institutions

Value: **0.60**

Capacity: **Moderate**

Strafford County's combination of metrics across these areas results in elevated or high values for Human Capital, Infrastructure, and Industry, indicating that quality of life, transportation networks, digital connections, natural resources, industry, and economic resilience are all strong compared to the national average. Additionally, values in the Financial and Partnerships and Institutions categories indicate capacity in line with the national average for access to business financing, local government fiscal health, and public and private entities that work to promote economic development. These indices indicate that Strafford County may have above average capacity for economic development in the region given its strong levels of community capital, infrastructure, and industry.¹³

Distressed Areas in the Region

While the Strafford Region experiences strong employment and wages overall, there are areas of the region where economic distress is present. The Strafford EDD encompasses 15 municipalities that are further divided into 31 Census tracts. Census tracts are small statistical subdivisions that represent roughly equivalent populations of 1,200 to 8,000 with an optimum size of 4,000.¹⁴ The U.S. EDA defines areas experiencing economic distress as tracts that have an unemployment rate at least one percentage point greater than the national average, or a per capita income that is 80 percent or less than the national average. These comparisons are measured utilizing the latest 5-Year American Community Survey and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.¹⁵

¹³ <https://disgeoportal.egs.anl.gov/EDCI/>

¹⁴ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12074>

In the Strafford EDD, there are six tracts currently identified by Stats America, a tool created by the Indiana Business Research Center at Indiana University, as economically distressed (**Figure 7**).¹⁶ Previous data indicated seven tracts in the region that were identified as economically distressed. While economic conditions in this previously identified tract (Census Tract 843.01) may have improved significantly, the current estimates for unemployment have a notably large margin of error.

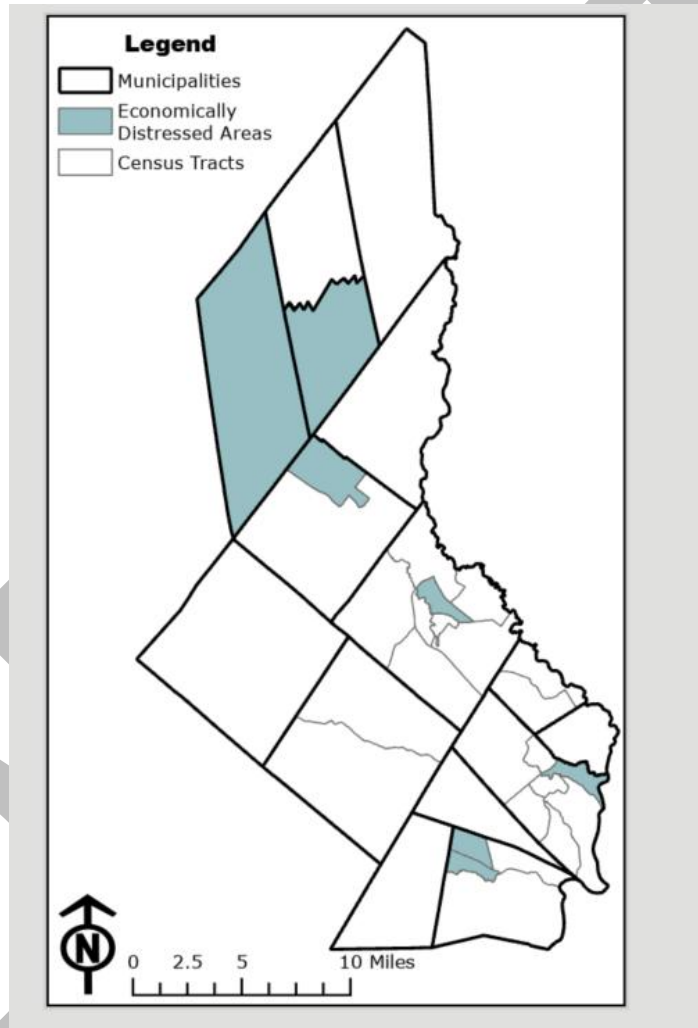


Figure 7: Economically Distressed Census Tracts. Source: Stats America. Year: 2026. Strafford EDD.

¹⁶ <https://www.statsamerica.org/distress/>

Economic Partners and Initiatives

The Strafford EDD leverages several key partnerships within our region and beyond to promote economic development efforts. Our key partner organization within the region is the Strafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC). SEDC is one of New Hampshire's regional economic development corporations, whose role includes providing public financing opportunities and technical assistance for new and existing businesses. SEDC provides opportunities for business creation and expansion by leveraging resources from the U.S. Small Business Administration, U.S. Treasury, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. EDA, and the New Hampshire Health and Education Finance Authority. SEDC also works with businesses and non-profits to secure private funding through banks, credit unions, charitable sources, individuals, and foundations. Additionally, SEDC's efforts to promote economic development in the region helped support the federal designation of the Strafford EDD.¹⁷

The Strafford EDD's partnership with SEDC was formalized in February 2025 through a memorandum of understanding, which reinforces our collaborations, communication, and information sharing to strengthen collective economic development efforts across the region.

In addition to this partnership with SEDC, the Strafford EDD also partners with the Regional Economic Development Center, based in Raymond, NH, and the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, based in Saco, Maine, to lead the Tri-Region Economic Development Stakeholders (TREDS) group.

¹⁷ <https://www.sedcnh.org/about-us>

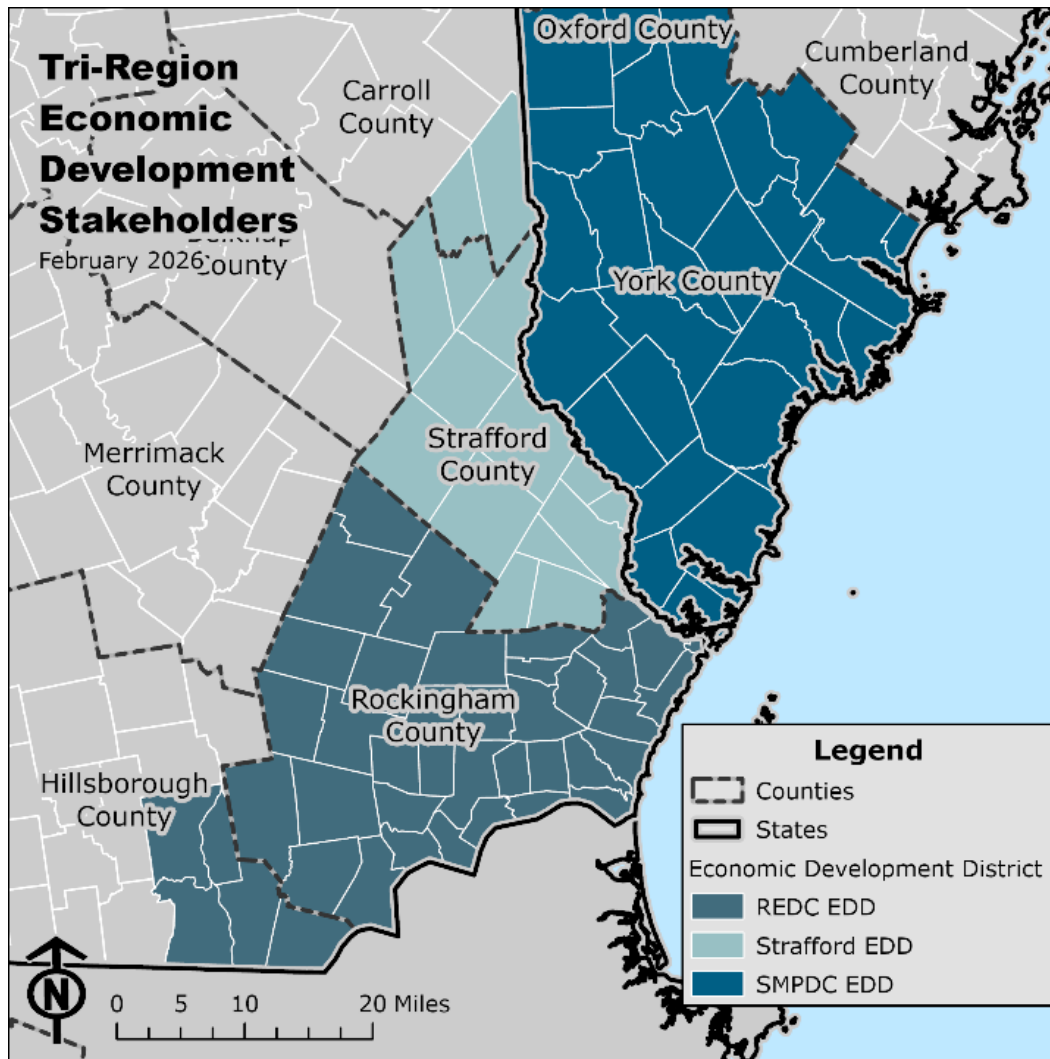


Figure 8: Tri-Region Economic Development Stakeholders Map. Year: 2026. Source: SRPC.

TREDS is a collective entity of economic development stakeholders from across southeastern New Hampshire and far-southwestern Maine, covering a geographic area that spans three bordering EDDs (**Figure 8**). Communities across these three EDDs represent a broader regional economy, and convening stakeholders from this larger geographic region provides shared economic opportunities and increased collaboration.

Attendees represent a variety of local, regional, and statewide perspectives who meet once a month to collaborate, share information and resources, and work together to promote the economic vitality of our communities and region. TREDS members include municipal economic development managers, chamber of commerce directors, staff from planning commissions and partner organizations, representatives from state agencies and organizations, and

representatives from other organizations that play a key role in economic development. TREDs members convene to advance conversations about key issues affecting economic development across the region, including housing, workforce, business operations, child care, and more.¹⁸

Shaping the CEDS

The 2026-2030 CEDS is shaped through robust engagement and analysis of the region's strengths, opportunities, and challenges. In April 2025, SRPC convened regional partners and stakeholders for a multidisciplinary workshop that covered land use, transportation, and economic development topics. At this workshop, feedback was provided on what the region's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results related to economic development are through an interactive Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) activity. Participants also provided input general input on the capacity and constraints of the region for economic development.¹⁹

SRPC also conducted a region-wide public survey that gathered feedback on various topics, including the region's economy and economic development which was distributed throughout 2025. Alongside these survey efforts, SRPC also participated in seven events around the region, and led conversations with eight municipal planning board from late-2025 through early 2026 to gather feedback on land use, transportation, and economic development topics.²⁰

The Strafford EDD Board of Director gathered in November 2025 to provide detailed feedback on the region's economic development strengths and constraints.²¹ Lastly, SRPC convened the Strategy Committee monthly, from January through May 2026 to review feedback gathered, participate in a second SOAR activity, and develop the regional economic development vision.

¹⁸ <https://straffordrpcnh.gov/collaborations/tri-region-economic-development-stakeholders/>

¹⁹ <https://www.eda.gov/resources/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/content/swot-analysis>

²⁰ <https://straffordrpcnh.gov/projects/forward-thinking/>

²¹

https://straffordrpcnh.gov/uploads/documents/governance/meetings/commission_20251121_meetingminutes.pdf

Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results

The strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOAR) activities conducted with regional stakeholders in April 2025, and with the Strategy Committee in January and February 2026, resulted in rich information that identified the present opportunities and strengths of the region, along with necessary future needs to strengthen the region’s economy. Below is a summary of feedback gathered via the SOAR activities:

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality of life. • Strong sense of community and safety. • Accountable local governance • Access to high-quality educational opportunities. • Skilled workforce. • Strong economy with a variety of business sizes and specialties. • Strategic location with proximity to nearby cities and amenities. • Robust transportation corridors (highways, rail, and bus service). • Built environment in many cities/towns (including water and sewer utilities). 	<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support for public and alternative transportation. • Improved connectivity between communities. • Better connected trail networks. • Increased housing and commercial supply, variety, and affordability. • Improved access and affordability of child care and healthcare. • More collaborative small business and entrepreneurship support. • Better regional promotion and attraction of people to the region. • Increased stewardship of natural resources for outdoor recreation, promotion of healthy lifestyles.
<p><u>Aspirations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster collaboration and information sharing channels between towns and with residents and businesses. • Ensure housing and childcare meets demand, and workforce development is aligned with regional needs. • Invest in infrastructure improvements. • Improve marketing of the region’s assets. • Economic development staff in smaller communities to drive initiatives locally and regionally. • Strengthen links between recreational areas and community centers to encourage stewardship, economic growth, and overall community vitality. 	<p><u>Results:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy changes that support housing development, childcare, business, and vibrancy. • Robust local capacity for economic development. • Expanded availability of high-quality data to guide planning, investments, and decisions across the region. • Increased engagement in public meetings and strengthened participation in municipal and regional governance. • Increased availability of affordable child care and housing. • Strong education-career pathways. • Stewarded recreational and natural areas, with strong links to town centers that drive commerce and attract residents and visitors.

CEDS Vision, Priority Areas, and Goals

Through analysis of relevant data metrics, projections and feedback gathered, the Strategy Committee worked with SRPC staff to develop a comprehensive vision for the Strafford Region.

Vision Statement:

The Strafford Region will be a thriving, welcoming, and resilient place where vibrant communities, diverse housing choices, strong local businesses, robust education systems and training pathways, and a skilled workforce support opportunity and well-being for all residents. Through spirited collaboration, innovation, and stewardship and promotion of our natural and cultural resources, the region will build a prosperous and adaptable economy for generations to come.

The Strategy Committee and SRPC staff identified four themes for the 2026-2030 CEDS that collectively support the vision for the region. Along with the identification of these themes, goal statements were developed for each of these themes which support region's economic development vision.

Theme 1: Housing

Goal Statement: Diverse and affordable housing options that support workforce needs and economic growth while leveraging the region's readiness for development and investments, and existing built assets.

Theme 2: Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship

Goal Statement: A resilient and innovative regional economy which supports businesses, non-profits, and entrepreneurs; where these groups and industries can quickly adapt and be prepared for emerging social, environmental, and technological trends, and can engage in data-driven decision making.

Theme 3: Workforce, Education, and Child Care

Goal Statement: A strong and supported workforce with access to affordable child care; alongside a sustainable and robust education and talent pipeline that addresses existing workforce challenges through proactive planning and partnerships to identify emerging trends, skills gaps, and the region's education systems.

Theme 4: Healthy and Vibrant Communities

Goal Statement: A region that continues to prioritize leveraging, enhancing, and protecting its built infrastructure and local and regional assets that make it a desirable place where people want to live, visit, and do business now and in the future.

Additionally, four lenses were identified and selected as overarching principles that will impact many, if not all, of the themes above. These lenses represent important considerations for the region's economic development.

Regional Partnerships and Collaboration

Strengthening public and private partnerships, expanding civic engagement and community involvement, and building economic development and volunteer capacity.

Resiliency and Future Readiness

Increasing the region's ability to anticipate, withstand, adapt to, and recover from disruptions such as economic shocks, environmental factors, and demographic shifts.

Quality of Life and Community Identity

Preserving, leveraging, and enhancing the natural, cultural, and community attributes and quality of life factors that define our region and attract and retain families, workers, and businesses.

Age Friendliness

Plan for changing demographics - including an aging population and fewer children - that will impact workforce, housing, child care, healthcare, and business operations.

The following four sections of the CEDS are centered on the four thematic areas and each discuss relevant data, trends, and research highlighting conditions and practices in these areas, along with specific objectives identified by the Strategy Committee as critical to supporting the region's economic development vision.

Housing

The region's economic wellbeing is closely tied to the availability and affordability of housing, which directly shapes workforce mobility, business competitiveness, and household spending. Diverse and affordable housing options support vibrant, stable communities that attract workers and families, influence whether employees can live near jobs, impact households' ability to build wealth, and affect whether businesses can grow or locate in the region.

Supply

In recent years, the region has faced persistently limited housing supply, which has contributed to rising costs and constrained labor availability. Limited residential construction, a relatively high share of seasonal homes, and local zoning and regulatory barriers have collectively impacted housing inventory, and if left unchanged, may hinder the region's ability to accommodate future workforce needs. SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, which estimates the number of housing units needed to meet projected population and employment demand, estimates that the region needs 9,520 new units over a 20-year projection horizon (2020 to 2040).²²

In reviewing the past two decades (2000-2022), residential building permits issued across SRPC communities peaked in the early 2000s, declined sharply during the late 2000s economic downturn, then slowly rebounded. However, permitting has not returned to early 2000s levels. Over the same period, the region's population increased steadily despite relatively slow housing production, further constraining the housing market (**Figure 9**).

Much of the post-recession recovery has been driven by housing construction largely concentrated in the region's urban centers. From 2020 to 2022, Rochester and Dover accounted for the largest shares of both multifamily and single-family residential permits in the region. During this period, Rochester issued permits for 327 multifamily units and 214 single-family units, while Dover issued permits for 216 multifamily units and 209 single-family units.²³

²² https://strafford.org/uploads/documents/plans/rpc/rhna_2023.pdf

²³ NHOPD, 2020 - 2022.

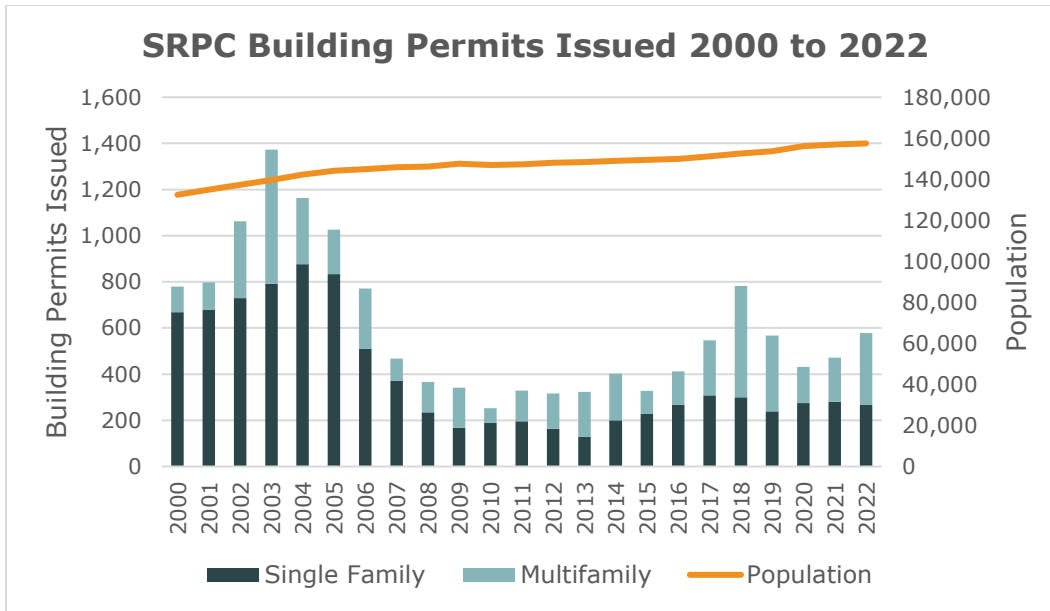


Figure 9: Building Permits Issued. Source: NHOPD. Year: 2000-2021. SRPC.

The region’s abundant natural assets and proximity to recreational and lakefront amenities also contribute to housing supply challenges, as 10.34% of its housing stock consists of vacant units, many of which are used as seasonal homes (**Figure 10**). In 2024, just over half of all vacant housing units in the Strafford Region were classified as seasonal (58.22%), with the highest concentrations located in the northern and western communities. In Wakefield, the SRPC municipality with the largest number of vacant units, 47% of all housing units were vacant in 2024.²⁴

²⁴ “Vacant” homes are recorded as such when owners are at a different permanent address on Census Day (April 1st).

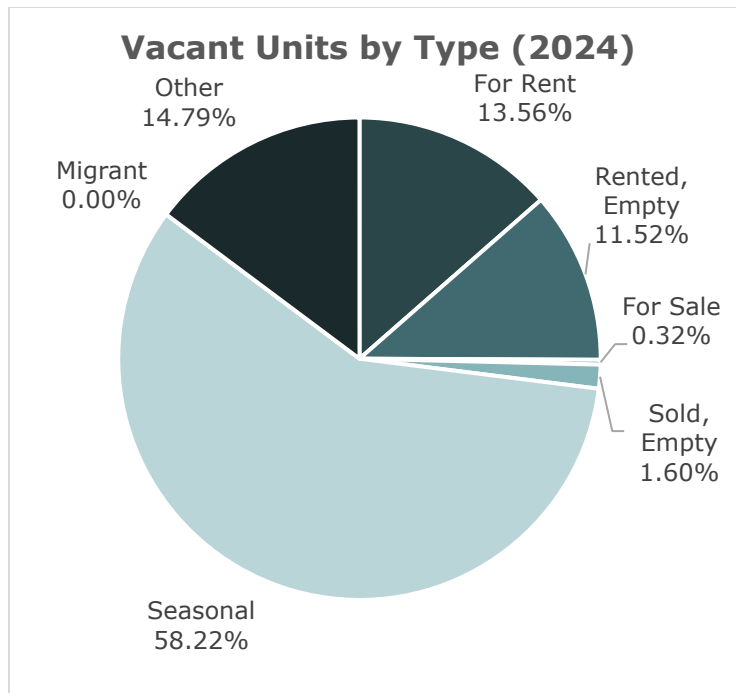


Figure 10: Vacant Units by Type. Source: US Census Bureau ACS, 2014-2024. SRPC.

From 2019 to 2024, the region’s overall number of vacant units declined slightly, likely reflecting increased demand for year-round residences associated with remote and hybrid work. Looking ahead, demographics shifts toward an aging population reaching retirement age may lead to additional seasonal homes being converted to year-round use. While this transition could help alleviate housing supply pressures elsewhere, it may also require municipalities to plan for infrastructure upgrades and expanded services to support year-round occupancy.

Other demographic trends, including smaller household sizes, are also intensifying pressure on the region’s existing housing stock. US Census Bureau ACS data (2014-2024) shows that two-person households account for 39% of all households in the region, while single-person households make up 28%. Meanwhile, the number of households with children and the average household size are declining across most SRPC communities (**Figure 11**). Together, these factors underscore the need for more diverse housing types that can accommodate the region’s evolving needs.

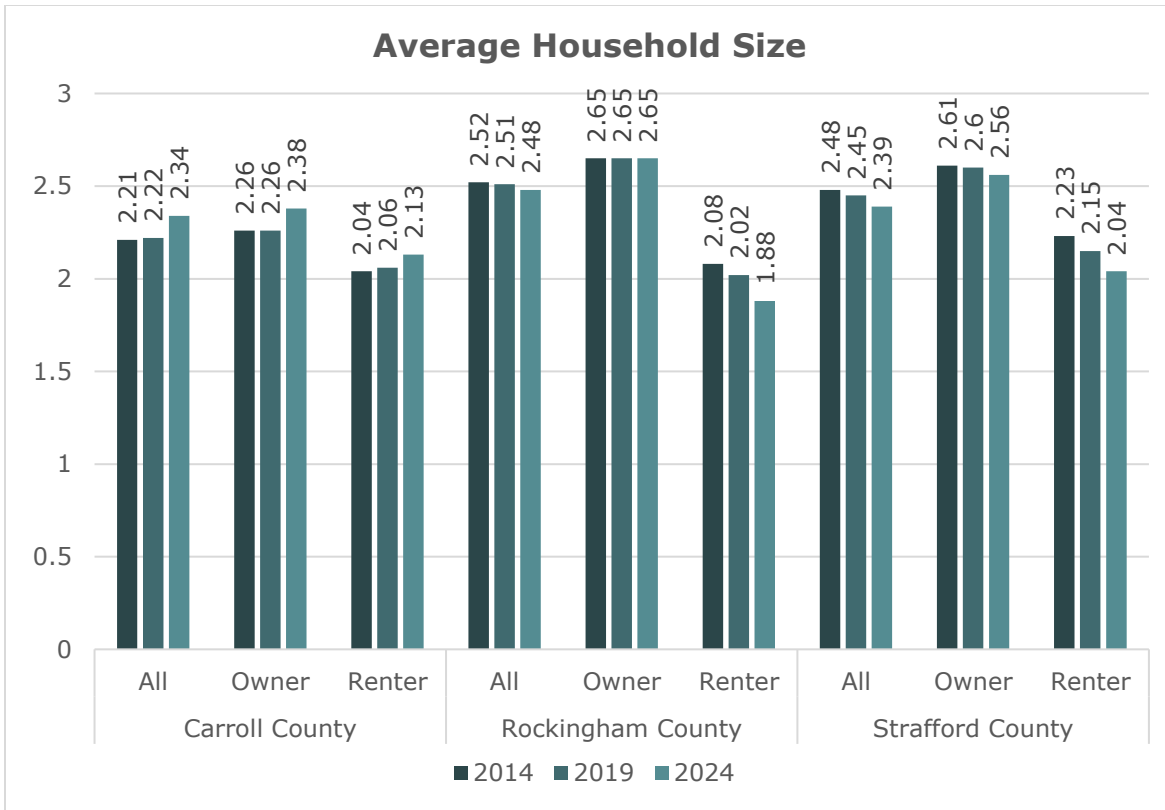


Figure 11: Average Household Size. Source: US Census Bureau ACS, 2014-2024. Strafford, Carrol, Rockingham counties.

Cost and Affordability

Beyond limited inventory, factors including monetary policy, rising construction and labor costs, increased taxes and insurance premiums, and regulatory barriers have all influenced housing affordability and had direct implications on regional economic growth.

Compared to last year, the number of homes for sale in Strafford County has remained relatively stable but is still significantly lower than the pre-Covid-19 years.²⁵ Additionally, beginning around 2020, final sales prices for single-family homes exceeded the asking price, but since 2025, this pattern has declined, likely reflecting the impact of higher interest rates and monthly mortgage payments (**Figure 12**). Meanwhile, the number of days that a single-family home spends on the market in Strafford County, while somewhat higher than during the pandemic years, remains relatively steady.²⁶

²⁵ NHRealtors, Monthly Home Sales in Strafford County, 2006-2026.

²⁶ NHRealtors, Single Family Homes Median Days on Market in Strafford County, 2006-2026

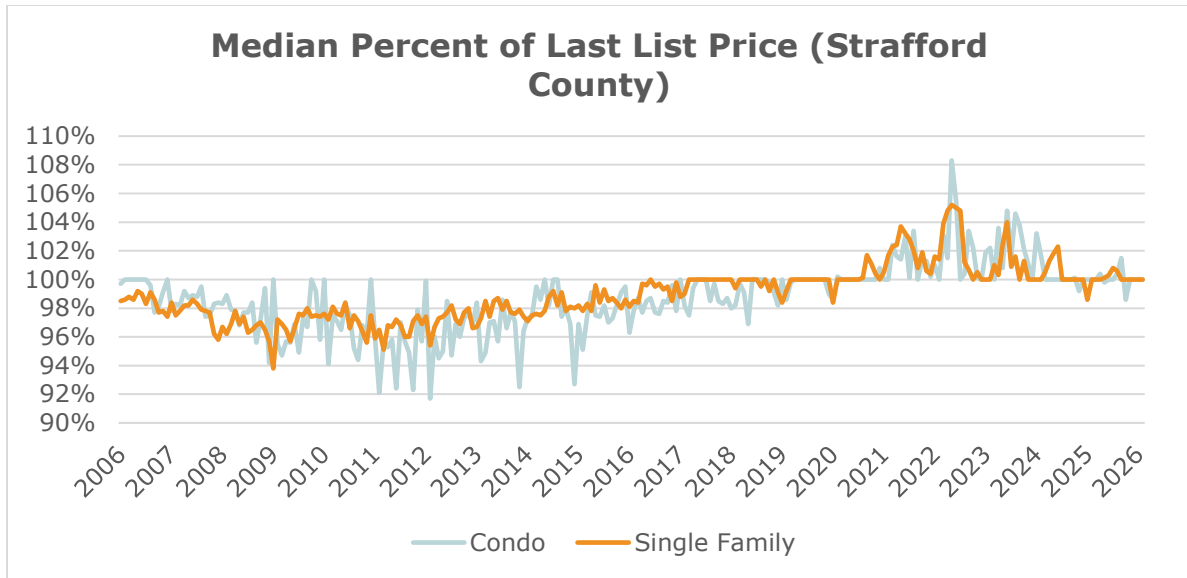


Figure 12: Median Percent of List Price. Source: NHRealtors. Year: 2006-2026. Strafford County.

The median sales price in Strafford County has continued to grow (**Figure 13**). Combined with higher interest rates that have impacted monthly mortgage payments, starting in 2022 and through 2024 (the most current available data), and despite rents also continuing to increase²⁷, it has been less costly to rent than to buy a home, even for those with 20% down-payments (**Figure 14**). Meanwhile, incomes have increased at a much slower pace. From 2019 to 2024, the median household income in Strafford County increased 21.4% (**Figure 15**), while the median sales price in Strafford County increased 73.4% during that same period.

²⁷ Zillow Observed Rent Index. Year: 2023-2026. Granularity: Select Cities and Counties.

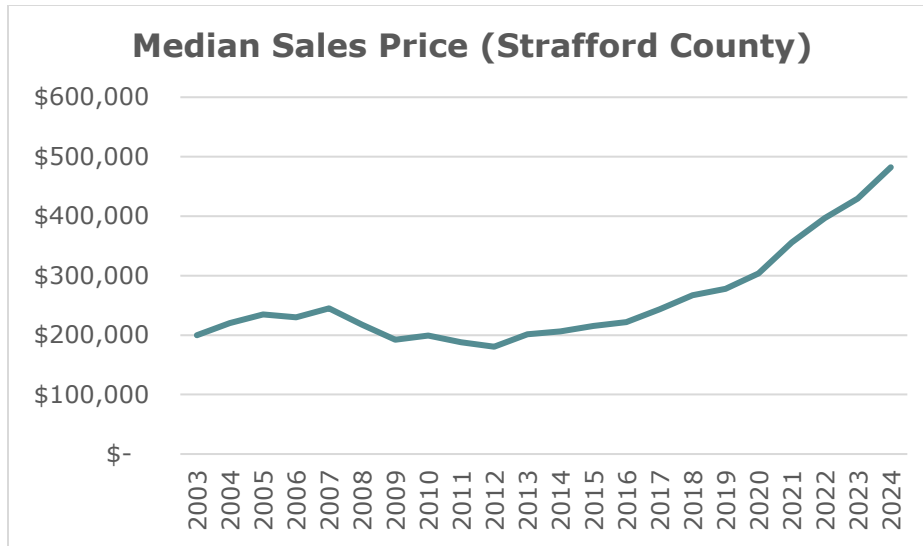


Figure 13: Median Sales Price. Source: NHHFA. Year: 2003-2024. Strafford County.

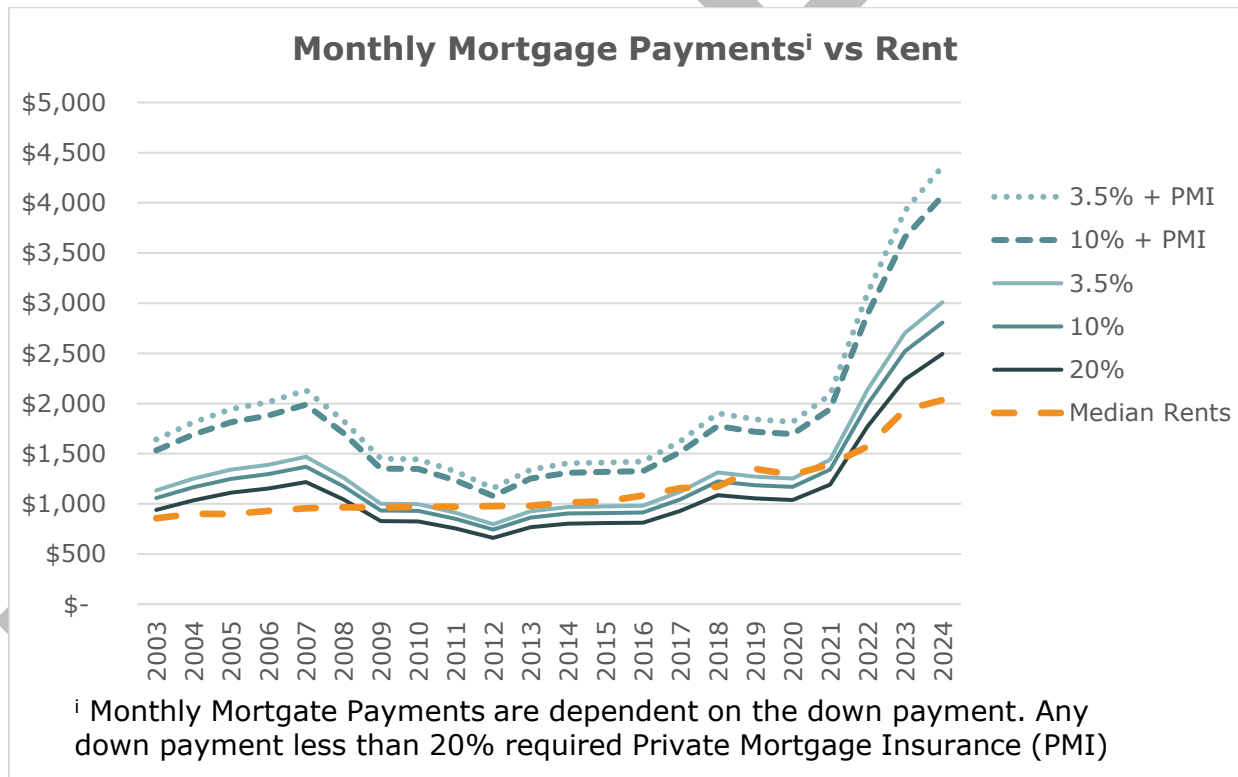


Figure 14: Mortgage Payments vs. Rent. Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED), NHHFA. Year: 2003-2024. Strafford County.

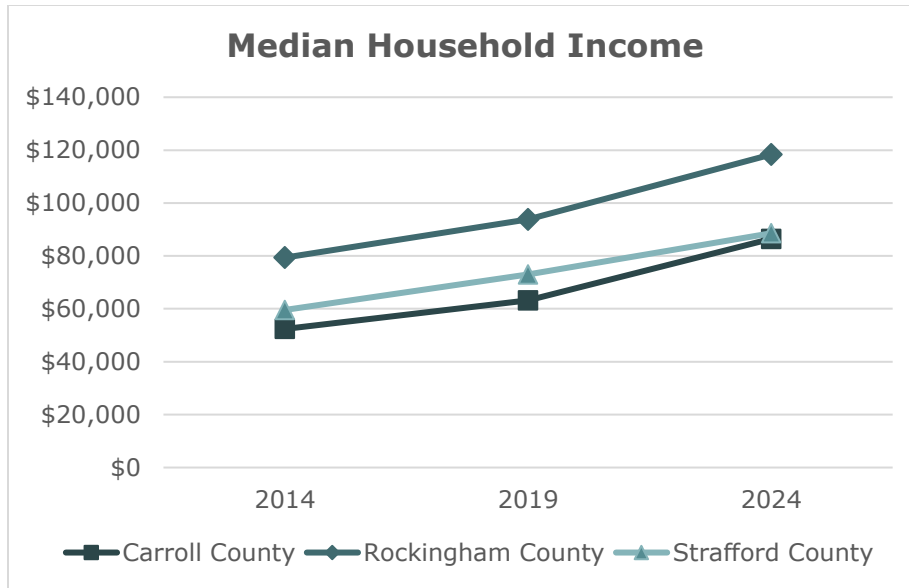


Figure 15: Median Household Income. Source: US Census Bureau ACS, 2014-2024. Strafford, Carroll, and Rockingham counties.

As of March 2026, the average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage stood at 6.38%, more than double the 3.18% average recorded in early April 2021 during the Strafford EDD’s last 5-year CEDS.²⁸ For a \$500,000 home with a 10% down payment, this increase translates into an additional \$868 per month in interest costs alone, significantly affecting housing affordability for those looking to buy in today’s market.

Additionally, the rapid increase in the cost of goods and services has contributed to higher housing development costs and reduced affordability, with current global conflicts expected to further exacerbate this. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for building materials and supplies increased by approximately 28% between April 2021 and early 2026.²⁹

Furthermore, the rise in other housing related expenses, such as insurance premiums and taxes, is placing additional pressure on households. While municipal tax rates in the Strafford Region have been declining since 2010, total valuations have increased, a reflection of rapidly increasing property values (**Figure 16**). As a result, high property taxes are adding financial strain on homeowners, including those who have paid off their mortgages,

²⁸ FRED, 30-Year Fixed Rate Mortgage Average in the United States, Week of 03-26-2026.

²⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, April 2021 and February 2026.

particularly older adults living on fixed incomes. This underscores the importance of expanding the housing stock, as increasing supply can help moderate property value growth while also contributing to a more resilient economic landscape that attracts new businesses and supports the expansion of existing ones. In a state with no sales or income taxes, that ability to draw in new employers and enable existing ones to grow is crucial for diversifying the tax base, strengthening fiscal stability, and lessening the burden on individual households.³⁰

Municipality	2010	2020	2025
Barrington	19.57	22.77	19.56
Brookfield	23.75	24.85	19.68
Dover	14.2	17.18	13.15
Durham	20.24	22.92	15.64
Farmington	27.28	27.73	18.87
Lee	25.42	31.86	27.61
Madbury	23.99	25.25	17.94
Middleton	22.57	22.16	14.76
Milton	16.92	28.27	15.79
New Durham	22	25.46	19.42
Newmarket	21.19	16.88	14.14
Northwood	24.56	17.77	11.91
Nottingham	19.92	18.76	13.2
Rochester	20.53	24.68	17.9
Rollinsford	23.89	24.61	15.3
Somersworth	19.76	25.65	20.96
Strafford	27.32	27.85	19.27
Wakefield	11.69	12.38	8.71

Figure 16: Property Tax Rates. Source: NH Department of Revenue and the Municipalities. Year: 2010, 2020, 2025. SPRC.

These conditions have made the expansion of diverse and affordable housing that provides more opportunities for families, renters, and an aging population - while still prioritizing environmental and natural asset protection - a top priority for advancing economic development in the region. While broader

³⁰ A 2026 NHFPI study (*Property Taxes in New Hampshire: How They Work and How They Compare*) shows that about 61% of local government revenue comes from property taxes, the highest share nationwide, placing greater reliance on local property taxes to fund public services.

factors such as monetary policy and the rising cost of goods and services remain outside of local control, there are meaningful steps that can be taken at the municipal and regional levels that can have a direct impact on housing supply and affordability.

SRPC has supported communities in this work and will continue to do so through a range of strategies, including conducting municipal zoning audits to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to housing development; supporting thoughtful and intentional planning to help communities balance housing needs with environmental and natural resource protection; and assisting with master plan updates can help communities establish a clear vision and actionable steps as it relates to housing goals. Furthermore, bringing leaders from different sectors of the economy together will help address the multiple layers of housing supply and affordability, while maintaining current and reliable data to help communities better understand housing needs, land availability, and infrastructure capacity will help support informed decision making.

Goal Statement

Diverse and affordable housing options that support workforce needs and economic growth while leveraging the region's readiness for development and investments, and existing built assets.

Objectives and Strategic Direction

- Address housing supply constraints across all housing types.
- Address affordability challenges, including property tax burdens, to better attract and retain the workforce.
- Promote adaptive reuse and redevelopment opportunities.
- Ensure development balances needs for housing and protection of the environment and natural assets.
- Plan for development in coordination with water and sewer capacity and investments.

Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship

A resilient and innovative economy is essential to the long-term prosperity of the region. Businesses, entrepreneurs, and non-profits form the backbone of the local and regional economy, and their ability to adapt to shifting social, environmental, and technological changes will influence the region's competitiveness. Understanding emerging trends is therefore critical to strengthening the business ecosystem, supporting innovation, and cultivating an environment where enterprises of all sizes can thrive.

The region's economic landscape is influenced by regional, national and global trends as well as emerging challenges. Global trade dynamics, technological advancements such as artificial intelligence, and geopolitical conflicts all affect local business operations. These shifts are occurring alongside broader economic pressures that impact business operations, including the rising cost of goods and services. As seen in the Northeast Consumer Price Index, inflation has increased drastically in recent years (**Figure 17**), while wages have not kept pace.

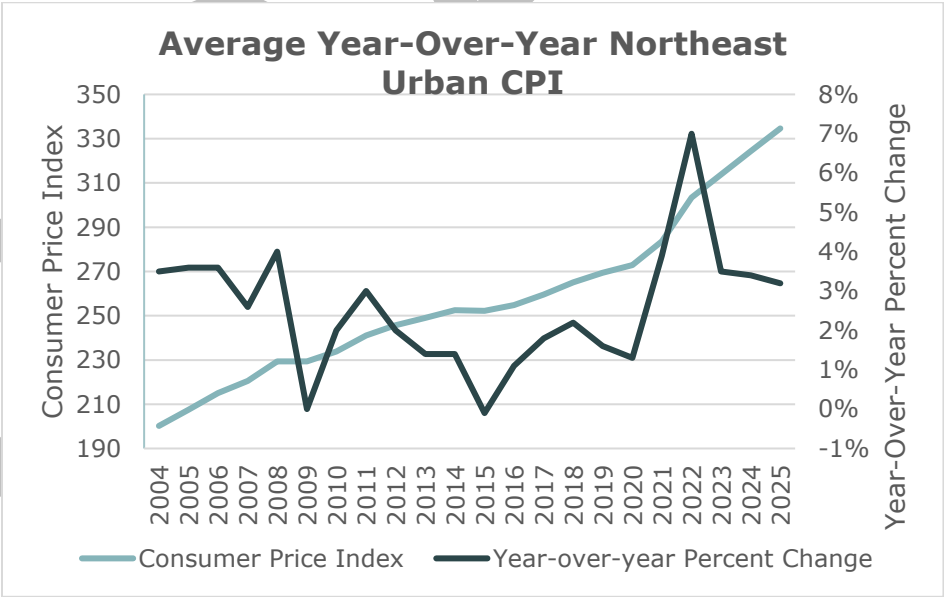


Figure 17: Northeast Urban CPI. Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Year: 2004-2025. Northeast Urban Labor Market Region.

In addition, higher interest rates have further affected borrowing costs for businesses and constrained household spending (**Figure 18**). Household debt

patterns reflect some of these pressures. Across New Hampshire, credit card, mortgage, student loan, and auto loan debt have all risen over the past decade - an indication that many households and businesses are facing higher costs, relying more on credit, or both (**Figure 19**).

Moreover, global conflicts occurring at the time of this CEDS update have impacted fuel availability, which is expected to increase transportation costs, disrupt global supply chains, and subsequently affect the cost of goods and services. These impacts extend into key industries - for example, semiconductor manufacturing and medical services such as MRI imaging are dependent on helium, and roughly a third of the global supply of liquified natural gas production is now impacted by international geopolitical conflict. Fertilizer supplies may also be impacted, creating potential downstream effects on agricultural production. Together, this illustrates how broader global events can have ripple effects on our regional economy, business operations, and household costs.

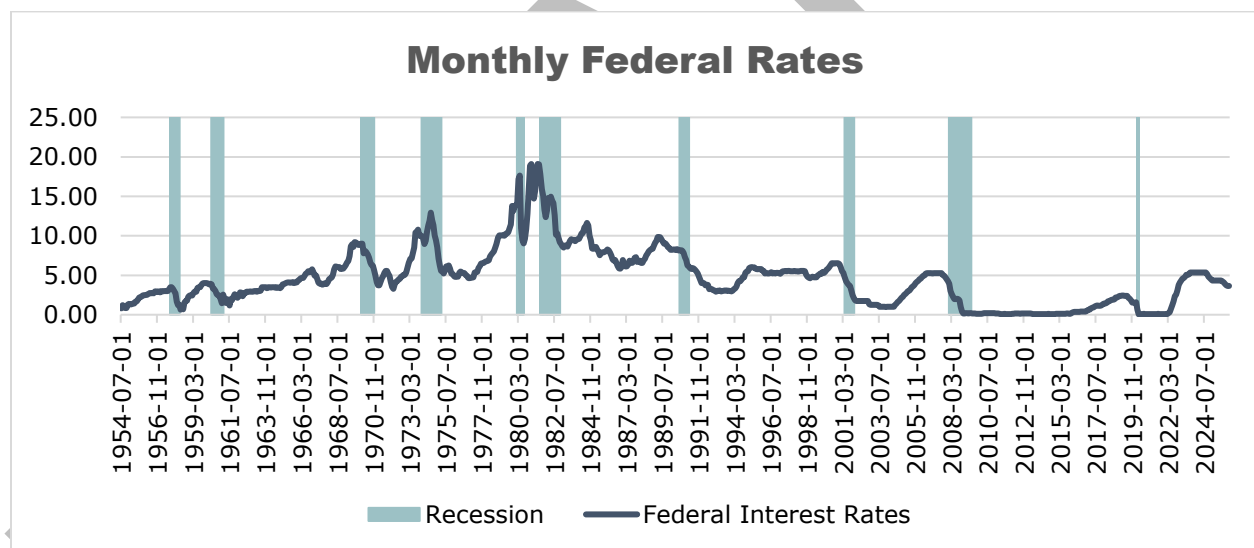


Figure 18: Federal Interest Rates. Source: FRED Economic Data. Year: 1954-2025. United States.

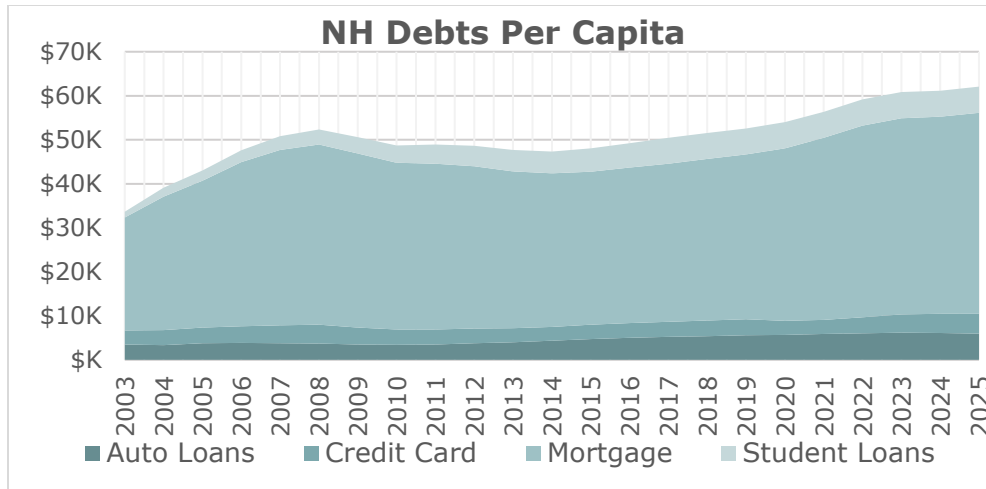


Figure 19: Debts Per Capita. Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Year: 2003-2025. NH.

Furthermore, demographic shifts are adding another layer of complexity. The region’s aging population means fewer young workers entering the labor force, as well as more business owners approaching retirement. For small enterprises, this highlights the importance of succession planning to ensure long-term business stability.

These trends are reflected in the number of Small Business Administration (SBA) 7(a) business loans disbursed in Strafford County from federal fiscal years (FY) 2020 through 2025. The number of loans increased significantly in 2025 compared to previous years, then dropped drastically as seen in the data available through mid-FY 2026 (**Figure 20**). The rapid rise may indicate higher interest rates pushing businesses towards SBA-backed loans (often sought by those who may not qualify for traditional lending) or may indicate the need for more working capital as businesses face higher operating costs. It may also reflect the region’s demographic shifts, where individuals may be seeking financing for business acquisitions as current owners near retirement age.

The sharp decline in FY 2026 year-to-date may, in part, be tied to recent changes in the SBA 7(a) loan program³¹, with higher interest rates and less favorable loan conditions leading to suppressed demand, or it may be an indication that business confidence has weakened.

³¹ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12549>

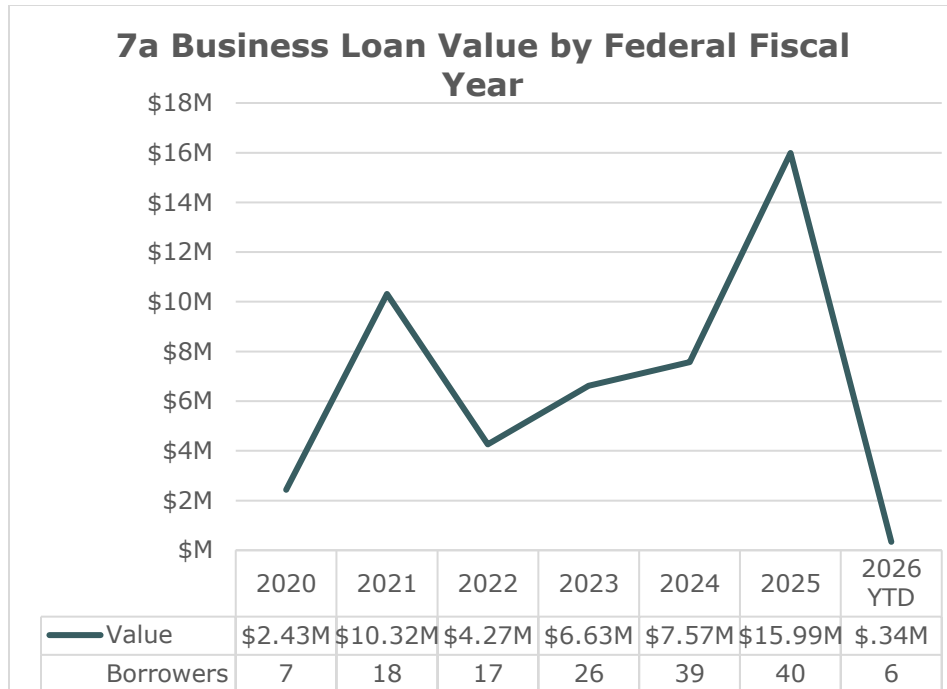


Figure 20: 7a Business Loans. Source: SBA 7(a) & 504 FOIA Report, as of December 31, 2025. Year: FY 2020 - Mid-FY 2026. SRPC.

Given this context, and with innovation being a defining feature of the region’s economic identity, it is essential to prioritize work that positions the region as a hub for technological advancement. Specialty industries such as aerospace and advanced manufacturing are key strengths, as reflected in the region’s employment data which shows strong job concentrations in industries such as Educational Services and Manufacturing.

These industries contribute to a diverse economic base with high-quality employment opportunities, making it a regional priority to support innovation and promote these assets to help attract talent and investment while reinforcing the region’s unique identity and quality of life. This requires strengthening partnerships, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and supporting the establishment of accessible spaces that foster creativity, such as makerspaces and incubators.

Other regional assets that offer a competitive advantage for business attraction, expansion, and innovation - and are essential for long term resiliency - include strong public-private partnerships, a culture of collaboration, robust infrastructure availability (including reliable broadband access), and the availability of statewide economic development tools such as

Opportunity Zones, Economic Revitalization Zones, and Central Business Improvement Districts.

As the region works to strengthen and support business operations, entrepreneurship, and innovation, it is also essential to advance conversations around energy diversification and resilience. With energy costs directly affecting business operations (particularly in an environment of high inflation and borrowing costs), exploring the diversification of energy sources and expanding access to renewable technologies can help reduce operating expenses, improve resilience, and protect the region's environmental assets, which are central to its unique identity. Moving forward, a core priority for the region is to continue to closely track emerging trends and maintain updated data on economic indicators, while improving access to relevant resources that help businesses and entrepreneurs start, grow, and adapt. This will help communities and businesses maintain competitiveness, strengthen resiliency, identify gaps and areas of opportunity, and support informed decision-making.

TREDS

The Tri-Region Economic Development Stakeholders (TREDS) is a collaborative group of economic development partners from southeastern New Hampshire and southwestern Maine, expanding on the former Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders initiative. Formed through a partnership among the three neighboring Economic Development Districts, TREDS meets monthly to share information, coordinate initiatives, and strengthen economic opportunities around key issues such as housing, workforce, business operations, child care, and more.

Learn more by visiting: <https://straffordrpcnh.gov/collaborations/tri-region-economic-development-stakeholders/>

BIGS Newsletters

SRPC staff researches and distributes a wide range of resources to support small businesses, including funding opportunities, partner engagement opportunities, and tools to strengthen business operations and capacity. These resources are shared quarterly with businesses in the SRPC region through an email newsletter. In 2025, each newsletter reached more than 5,000 business contacts.

Learn more by visiting <https://straffordrpcnh.gov/service/s/technical-assistance-for-small-businesses/>

Additionally, by coordinating economic development partners and stakeholders, including through efforts such as the Tri-Region Economic Development Stakeholders (TREDS) group, the region can improve efficiency and create opportunities for shared problem-solving and collective action. Moreover, enhancing resource navigation through research and distribution of funding opportunities and small business tools will further ensure that businesses and entrepreneurs receive the support they need, particularly those who face barriers or lack sufficient capacity to navigate resources to support their operations and respond to economic challenges.

Together, these efforts support business attraction, retention, and expansion, all cornerstones of economic development in the Strafford region. In doing so, this will lead to a more diverse tax base, reduce dependence on property taxes, cultivate an economy that is comprised of industries that complement regional strengths and opportunities, and create high quality jobs with competitive wages.

Goal Statement

A resilient and innovative regional economy which supports businesses, non-profits, and entrepreneurs; where these groups and industries can quickly adapt and be prepared for emerging social, environmental, and technological trends, and can engage in data-driven decision making.

Objectives and Strategic Direction

- Monitor and assist businesses and economic development stakeholders respond to emerging trends and challenges, including tariffs, technological advancement, energy production and storage, and shifting market conditions.
- Support businesses and entrepreneurship through resource navigation, connecting businesses and entrepreneurs to relevant tools, technical assistance, and funding opportunities.
- Cultivate a strong business community through networking and public-private partnership opportunities.
- Maintain robust data metrics to guide decision making, track economic performance, and identify opportunities for growth.
- Promote the region's specialty industries and innovation, tourism, including aerospace and advanced manufacturing.

- Support business attraction and retention strategies that diversify the tax base, while improving understanding of how state business taxes influence local tax pressures.
- Analyze research on the diversification of energy types to power cost effective, sustainable business operations and economic activity.
- Promote the region’s strong broadband infrastructure as a competitive advantage and strengthen digital literacy initiatives.

DRAFT

Workforce, Education, and Child Care

The Strafford Region is characterized by low unemployment, a labor force of nearly 89,000 people that has largely rebounded from pandemic-era disruptions, and strong education and technical training opportunities that position it as a competitive place to establish and expand businesses. However, it is experiencing demographic and economic shifts that, if unchanged, can lead to a tightening labor pipeline - driven by factors such as declining youth populations, a rise in older workforce populations, limited workforce housing supply, and a lack of affordable child care. Additionally, shifting labor trends and the emergence of new technologies are reshaping regional skills and training needs.

As industries look to adapt to emerging changes, training and education programs will need to adjust accordingly to meet current and future workforce needs and ensure the region remains competitive.

Despite the challenges, the region benefits from significant educational and training assets, including the University of New Hampshire and three career and technical education centers in Dover, Somersworth, and Rochester. Together, these institutions play a critical role in strengthening the labor force and providing employer and industry aligned training. The region also benefits from a demonstrated willingness among partners to collaborate on solutions to workforce challenges, including strengthening child care access and affordability.

Workforce and Education Trends and Implications

Education system trends provide early insights into future labor capacity. The region is experiencing a shrinking K-12 population, which could lead to a reduced number of young workers entering the labor force, signaling future challenges for the regional talent pipeline. Mirroring broader regional and statewide population trends, including the decline in residents under 18 and lower birth rates across New Hampshire, public school enrollment across the region has also been decreasing (**Figure 21**). Beyond demographic shifts, policy changes such as the introduction of Education Freedom Accounts in

2021 that allow public funds to be used for alternative education options³² may also be contributing to the decline in public school enrollment.

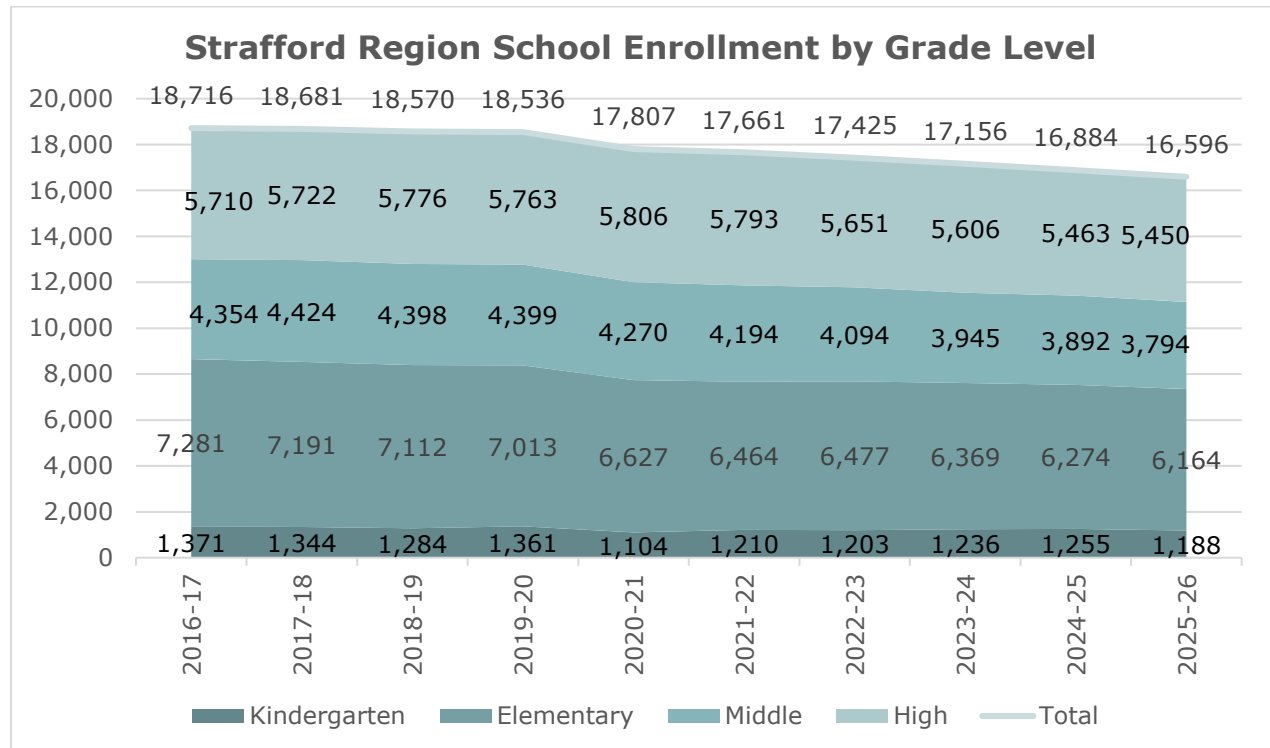


Figure 21: School Enrollment. Source: NHDOE. Year: 2016-2025. SRPC.

Beyond K-12 trends, the region’s current educational profile for adults also shapes its workforce capacity. The current distribution of educational attainment among adults over 25 reflects a workforce that is almost evenly split between post-secondary degree holders and those without post-secondary degrees. Data shows that just over half (51%) of the population in the region over the age of 25 hold an associate’s degree or higher, while the remaining population includes 5% with no high school diploma, 26% with a high school diploma or GED, and 18% with some college but no degree (Figure 22).

These education patterns can help inform the region’s position for projected industry growth. Employment projections through 2035 show that the three industries expected to experience the largest job growth in the region are social services; business, legal, and personal services; and health services.

³² <https://www.education.nh.gov/pathways-education/education-freedom-accounts>

Additional areas of notable growth include educational services and retail trade (

Figure 2). These projections indicate that workforce skill requirements may continue to evolve, presenting an opportunity to expand accessible, employer-aligned training and education programs that meet current and future industry demands.

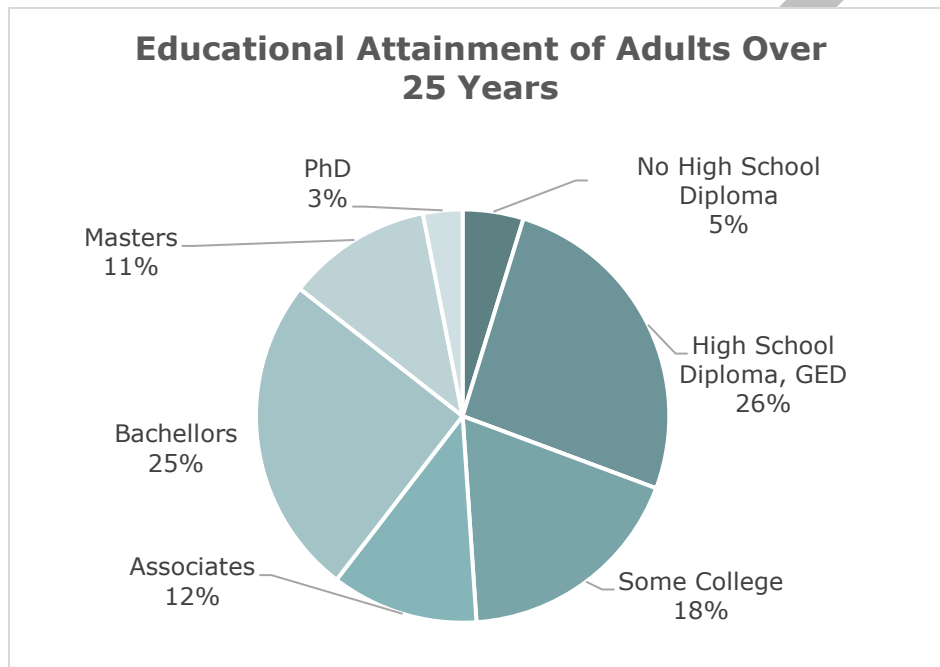


Figure 22: Educational Attainment of Adults Over 25. Source: US Census Bureau ACS, 2014-2024. SRPC.

In Strafford, Carroll, and Rockingham Counties, the percent of workforce over the age of 65 is increasing, a trend that is also seen statewide. While this may in part be influenced by the increase in retirement age populations (the Social Security Administration has raised the retirement age to 67 for those born in 1960 or after), it may also reflect broader economic pressures. The sharp increase in essential living expenses, including property taxes, insurance, and healthcare costs, may be prompting some older adults to remain in the workforce longer. While the older workforce may be filling current gaps in labor demand, it also underscores the importance of training younger populations to fulfill future needs - particularly in technical, trades, and other skill-intensive fields where older workers make up a large share of the labor force.

At the same time, beyond demographic shifts, technological change is also reshaping the expertise required across industries. Our society is entering the

early stages of rapidly emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, which will contribute to reshaping the workforce and redefining what emerging professional skills are valuable.

Ensuring that the region's education and training systems can respond to these shifts, while also supporting a resilient economic landscape that meets the needs of the labor force, will be essential to maintaining a competitive and adaptable regional economy. To advance this work, SRPC staff continues to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders across educational institutions, employers, and workforce, housing, and child care organizations to better understand current and emerging workforce and industry needs and work collaboratively towards solutions. Future efforts may include expanding training pathways that support upskilling and reskilling, as well as supporting initiatives that increase access to affordable child care and housing. SRPC will continue to provide partners and municipalities with timely and extensive research and data to assist them in tracking emerging trends and making informed decisions that support long-term workforce resilience.

Child Care

One of the most significant factors influencing workforce participation is access to safe, affordable, and high-quality child care. Persistent gaps in child care availability and affordability constrain labor force growth and limit businesses' ability to attract and retain employees, making reliable and accessible child care essential for workforce participation and economic growth in the Strafford Region.

As of 2025, the SRPC region had 76 operational child care programs with licensed capacity to provide for 4,638 children. However, based on analysis conducted as part of the Regional Child Care Project done in collaboration with New York University (NYU) graduate students, it is estimated that the demand for child care in the SRPC region is approximately 5,579 children, indicating a mismatch with supply and demand.³³ It is important to note that the number of slots might be even less than what the data shows, as high turnover rates and persistent staffing shortages constrain facilities from operating at full capacity.

³³ UNH Carsey School of Public Policy, 2025.

The challenges are multi-layered. Providers face high operating costs driven by staffing and operational requirements, low wages and intensive labor make it difficult to recruit and retain qualified educators, and there are high costs associated with maintaining or expanding facilities. According to New Hampshire Employment Security, the median salary for child care workers in Strafford County in 2024 was \$32,048, or \$15.40 an hour. Regulatory barriers, such as restrictive zoning and complex licensing processes, can slow or discourage the creation of new child care slots, particularly for home-based providers. At the same time, families face high child care costs. In Strafford County, the cost of child care for one child was \$16,453 in 2025.³⁴ This impacts household spending, limits what providers can charge, and reduces financial stability.

To address these challenges, SRPC partnered with graduate students from the New York University (NYU) Wagner School of Public Policy through the University's Capstone Program to advance several key initiatives in academic years 2024-2025 (Phase 1) and 2025-2026 (Phase 2). During Phase 1, students conducted research and collected data, engaged in stakeholder outreach, brainstormed best practices, and compiled resources to support families, businesses, and child care providers. During Phase 2, the team worked with various partners including UNH, the NH Office of Planning and Development (OPD), the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA), and the Strafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) to identify gaps in regional child care supply and demand, develop a model child care zoning ordinance to serve as a guide for municipalities, evaluate support resources for providers, and start a financing resource guide to improve child care providers' access to capital.³⁵ Together, these strategies aim to increase child care availability and affordability to support regional workforce participation and long-term economic resiliency.

Goal Statement

A strong and supported workforce with access to affordable child care; alongside a sustainable and robust education and talent pipeline that addresses existing workforce challenges through proactive planning and

³⁴ MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025, Strafford County

³⁵ <https://straffordrpcnh.gov/projects/regional-childcare/>

partnerships to identify emerging trends, skills gaps, and the region's education systems.

Objectives and Strategic Direction

- Build understanding and identify opportunities to address workforce challenges, including attraction and retention.
- Identify current and emerging business needs with workforce training and education to address skills gaps.
- Promote, leverage, and enhance the region's high-quality education systems, including kindergarten through 12th grade, technical and vocational training, and higher education to strengthen long-term talent development.
- Support the expansion of child care affordability and availability to enhance workforce participation.

Healthy and Vibrant Communities

A regional economy is resilient if the smaller, local economies of the communities in that region are themselves strong. The communities of the Strafford Region represent a diverse mix of historic downtowns, mills, rural towns, village centers, working agriculture lands, and significant natural and cultural resources. Each community in the region has a unique mix of characteristics that add to the Region's identity and strengths. By leveraging and stewarding these aspects that give Strafford communities a high quality of life, the region will continue to remain attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors. Fostering the identity, stewarding the resources, promoting the connectivity, and thoughtfully planning for future needs are critical to strengthening the economic competitiveness and well-being of the region's people and businesses.

Downtowns and Built Assets

The Strafford Region is home to three cities with established public and private infrastructure that support the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. Numerous other communities in the region have well-established infrastructure in the forms of sidewalks, water and sewer, various transportation options, public recreation opportunities, and more. Places with existing built infrastructure are better equipped to support economic growth in the region, through infill development or redevelopment of areas that are already supported by infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer, and other built assets.

The variety of downtown and village centers across the Strafford EDD offer unique draws to the region. Strengthening local economies, Main Streets, and other areas of local commerce can provide opportunities for increased local business ventures, fortifying community identity and pride. Additionally, robust public spaces, including downtown and village centers, offer vital intergenerational gathering spaces for community members, as well as a hub for connections to neighborhoods, natural and cultural resources, and other communities.

Natural and Cultural Resources

The region is home to several important natural resources, including lakes and rivers, the Great Bay estuary, forested lands, and agricultural areas that are important for tourism and recreation, employment, and the ecology and

environment that strengthen the region’s quality of life. These natural assets are not only an attraction, but also provide vital drinking water resources to many of the communities that make up the Strafford EDD.

Land Use	Acres (2010)	Acres (2022)	Change
Agriculture	12,787	12,462	-325
Commercial, Services, Institutional	2,221	2,496	274
Forest Land	224,063	202,846	-21,217
Industrial	1,693	1,947	255
Industrial and Commercial Complexes	2,456	2,627	171
Mixed Developed Uses	56	110	55
Other Natural or Barren Land	3,439	11,874	8,435
Outdoor and Other Urban Built-Up Land	2,068	2,318	250
Residential	39,446	44,501	5,055
Transitional Natural Lands	4,275	7,752	3,477
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	5,654	6,425	771
Vacant Land	3,558	4,062	504
Water	18,448	19,490	1,041
Wetlands	27,728	29,428	1,699
Total	347,893	348,337	444

Figure 23: Land Uses. Source: SRPC. Year: 2010 and 2022. Strafford EDD.

Changes in the region’s land uses are represented by increased development for housing and business, increased areas of certain natural resource protection, and decreased forested land (**Figure 23**).

Building and Strengthening Community

The combination of natural, recreational, and built spaces throughout the region offers many amenities. Through continued placemaking efforts, which are locally led initiatives that strengthen local identity and “sense of place”, communities throughout the region can better identify their unique assets and capacity for growth. Strong and vibrant communities have established identities, supportive business environments, local trust, and robust connectivity. Places that emphasize these aspects are likely to have higher levels of social capital and civic engagement.³⁶

³⁶ <https://extension.unh.edu/resource/ten-components-vibrant-communities>

Social capital is not an easily measurable metric but is apparent when present. Social capital represents social connections and trust present in a place, the spoken and unspoken shared values, and the networks of support participated in by community members. The result is stronger communities and networks that can quickly respond to economic shocks. High levels of local trust and an environment that fosters social connections in communities can strengthen local commerce, innovation, and economic growth.³⁷

SRPC's master planning, natural resource inventories, transportation design improvements, adaptive reuse and redevelopment, and data analysis efforts aim to support the creation and stewardship and healthy and vibrant communities. Continuing to leverage and steward the resources that make the Strafford Region a livable and economically competitive place, while also thoughtfully planning for future needs and growth, will help ensure the region is economically resilient.

Goal Statement

A region that continues to prioritize leveraging, enhancing, and protecting its built infrastructure and local and regional assets that make it a desirable place where people want to live, visit, and do business now and in the future.

Objectives and Strategic Direction

- Preserve and market the region's unique natural, cultural, and recreational assets as a means to attract and retain families, workers, and businesses.
- Identify opportunities to boost community vibrancy and promote community pride and respect.
- Strengthen and promote strong community feel and sense of place to drive the local economy.
- Support healthy lifestyles and promote communities that are accessible via all forms of transportation.
- Promote healthcare access and affordability.
- Improve connections between recreation, natural assets, and town centers.

³⁷ <https://archive.strongtowns.org/journal/2021/5/13/how-social-capital-helps-build-strong-local-economies>

- Promote improved connectivity and transportation access for all, including walkers, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers, within and between communities.
- Promote thoughtful land use planning for emerging uses, such as data centers, to protect community health, character, and quality of life.

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Resiliency

Resiliency in economic development is defined by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as the ability to withstand and quickly recover from major shocks and disruptions. This includes planning for potential disruptions, building preparedness, and the ability to be responsive and nimble to initiatives and efforts to react to challenges.³⁸

The CEDS represents a collective vision for economic development, with specific goals and a strategic direction for strengthening the region. SRPC leverages our resources to support regional strengths, identify opportunities for economic development, and provide capacity for action and implementation. Throughout the process of developing the 2026-2030 CEDS, the Strategy Committee and SRPC staff produced the vision, themes, lenses, goals, and objectives in a manner founded on the importance of economic resilience, preparedness, and adaptability.

SRPC also leverages our partnerships with local municipalities, state and federal organizations, local and regional economic development partners and stakeholders, and the public to ensure that our initiatives build regional capacity, provide resources, strengthen collaborative efforts, identify our regional opportunities, and promote the Strafford Region's strengths.

³⁸<https://www.eda.gov/resources/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/content/economic-resilience>

Preliminary Action Plan

The Strategy Committee and SRPC staff worked to identify actions that can be implemented by SRPC to support the region’s economic development vision and goals. Below is a preliminary list of actions that were developed and ranked by SRPC staff and the Strategy Committee to include in this CEDS. Over the next year, SRPC staff will continue to work with the Strategy Committee to develop a more comprehensive action and implementation plan that will be included in the first One-Year Update to this CEDS, which will be completed in mid-2027. The list below will be used to support SRPC actions over the next year, and as the foundation of a more robust plan to be included in the 2027 One-Year Update of this CEDS.

Preliminary Action Item	Priority	Impact	Theme
Convene the Tri-Region Economic Development Stakeholder (TREDS) group, at least quarterly, to encourage and facilitate information and ideas sharing.	High	Medium	All
Establish and maintain a regional partner database and engagement plan, updated annually, including municipalities, chambers, nonprofits, and state agencies.	Medium	Medium	All
Provide direct technical assistance to at least 4 Strafford EDD municipalities per year on economic development, zoning, or infrastructure planning.	High	High	All
Develop complete metrics to track progress on CEDS actions by 2027.	High	Medium	All
Maintain an up-to-date Priority Project List for the purpose of supporting local projects with economic development impact and advocating on behalf of priority projects to potential funders.	Medium	Medium	All
Update a Regional Master Plan every 10 years, as required by State statute, for the purpose of providing local and regional planning assistance to identify regional needs and potential solutions.	High	High	All
Regularly update the CEDS and Data Snapshot, on a yearly basis, to provide relevant economic, demographic, and housing data to communities and stakeholders, and key indicators, trends, and analyses.	High	High	All

Preliminary Action Item	Priority	Impact	Theme
Provide information on funding, training, and other opportunities to businesses via newsletters sent out on a quarterly basis.	Low	Low	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Support the development and implementation of the UNH Extension Business Resiliency Academy.	Medium	Medium	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Develop a business resilience toolkit in partnership with other regional and local economic development stakeholders updated biennially.	Medium	Low	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Lead regional initiatives to develop strategies and resources that promote the region's business environment, opportunities, and competitiveness.	Low	Medium	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Support regional initiatives and planning related to energy diversification and energy resilience for businesses and economic infrastructure.	Low	Medium	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Research, develop resources, and promote tools for economic development, including Central Business Service Districts and Opportunity Zones 2.0.	High	High	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Partner with municipalities and support applications for incentives that promote business and job growth, including Economic Development Zones.	High	High	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Assist municipalities with updating their Economic Development Master Plan chapters.	High	Medium	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Maintain and expand partnerships with local and regional economic development partners, including chambers of commerce, the Strafford Economic Development Corporation, neighboring economic development districts, NH Business and Economic Affairs, and other stakeholders through regular communications.	High	High	Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
Partner with interested Strafford EDD municipalities to ensure local hazard mitigation plans are updated regularly to improve the resilience of municipal infrastructure and encourage more resilient development patterns and techniques.	Medium	High	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Support the development of interconnected trail systems in partnership with other regional stakeholders and municipalities.	Medium	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities

Preliminary Action Item	Priority	Impact	Theme
Leverage SRPC's Brownfields Program to increase opportunities for facility rehabilitation, development, and land acquisition and maintenance to strengthen and promote vibrant communities.	High	High	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Support the implementation of recommendations in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan to improve connectivity in communities.	Medium	High	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Promote the findings of the Pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress study and provide technical assistance to municipalities seeking to improve walkability and community vibrancy.	Medium	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Regularly engage with partners to share the Communities for Healthy Aging Transition (CHAT) action plans and develop strategies to provide technical assistance to communities.	Medium	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Update and promote the Arts and Culture mapping tool.	Low	Low	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Partner with interested communities to conduct sidewalk and accessibility audits to identify areas for infrastructure improvements for accessible, multimodal transportation in communities.	Medium	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Support regional initiatives and partnerships that promote recreation, tourism, and cultural assets as drivers of economic vitality and quality of life by promoting existing resources.	Low	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Provide zoning and planning support to interested municipalities that promote mixed-use development and efficient land use.	High	High	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Develop and implement transportation priorities that provide opportunities and solutions for all ages, abilities, and modalities in partnership with the Strafford Metropolitan Organization.	High	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Support research and resources that analyze healthcare access, workforce, and needs to improve healthcare access by 2030.	Low	Medium	Healthy and Vibrant Communities
Provide technical assistance to municipalities with updating zoning ordinances, land use regulations, and Master Plans to support diverse housing types, including ADUs, mixed-use development, and adaptive reuse.	High	High	Housing

Preliminary Action Item	Priority	Impact	Theme
Map potential priority areas for development based on access to infrastructure and other factors to support housing, economic development, and community revitalization.	High	High	Housing
Update the Regional Housing Needs Assessment as required by New Hampshire Statute.	Medium	Low	Housing
Partner with municipalities and developers to support the creation of preapproved ADU plans.	Medium	High	Housing
Develop and distribute model ordinances and best practices toolkits related to housing development.	High	High	Housing
Track building permits, approved multifamily, mixed use, and subdivision permits to identify trends and any potential barriers.	High	High	Housing
Develop resources and promote local policy tools to support housing development, including policies such as 79-E and TIF districts.	Medium	Low	Housing
Seek out and assist communities exploring regional partnerships for infrastructure upgrades of expansions (e.g. water and sewer infrastructure).	Medium	Medium	Housing
Complete the RHNA Implementation project and promote it as a tool for municipalities looking for guidance on balancing housing production needs with environmental protection.	High	Medium	Housing
Identify and promote funding or financing opportunities for workforce (RSA 674:58-61) and affordable (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) housing projects on an ongoing basis.	High	High	Housing
Partner with housing organizations to develop and share resources that promote expansions to affordable and accessible housing.	Low	Medium	Housing
Promote conservation-oriented development practices through case studies and municipal guidance.	Medium	Low	Housing

Preliminary Action Item	Priority	Impact	Theme
Facilitate and strengthen formal partnerships with K-12 education providers, community colleges, and universities, and convene workforce development partners and employers to strengthen alignment between training programs and industry workforce needs.	Medium	High	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
Support zoning updates to bring 100% of SRPC municipalities into compliance with State statutes to reduce barriers to childcare facilities.	High	Low	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
Track data and conduct continued research regarding the childcare system, including innovative partnerships, which increase child care slots and increase the pay of child care workers.	Medium	Medium	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
Develop resources and strategies to retain graduates by 2030.	Low	Medium	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
Track data and conduct continued research on the impacts of elder care on workforce participation by 2030.	Medium	High	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
Promote deliverables from the 2026 NYU Childcare Project amongst municipal staff, land use boards, and current and prospective childcare providers to promote opportunities for expanded childcare affordability and access in the region.	High	Medium	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
Develop a current and updated Employer Toolkit to help businesses in the region address workforce challenges.	Low	Medium	Workforce, Education, and Childcare
In partnership with local and regional stakeholders, education providers, and industry leaders, research and promote strengthened educational pathways, vocational training opportunities, and higher education pathways, that will support workforce and business needs.	Medium	Medium	Workforce, Education, and Childcare

Priority Projects List

The CEDS Priority Project List consists of implementation projects that are in alignment with regional goals and priorities of the Strafford EDD’s CEDS. Projects can be submitted by SRPC, Strafford EDD municipalities, and strategic public and non-profit sector partners. Adding a project to the CEDS Priority Project List is a threshold requirement for some EDA funding programs. For non-EDA state and federal programs, including a project can increase its competitiveness.

Project Title	Current Phase	Estimated Total Project Cost	Municipality or Organization
NEW! Pedestrian Tunnels - Barrington Town Center	Determining Feasibility	\$2,500,000	Barrington
NEW! Barrington's First Sidewalks	Conceptual		Barrington
COAST Administrative, Operations, and Maintenance (A/O/M) Facility	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$20,704,814	COAST
Littleworth/Crosby Road Public Infrastructure	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$1,000,000	Dover
Downtown Public Infrastructure Investment and Realignment	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$17,000,000	Dover
Community Trail connection and expansion to Knox Marsh Rd	Funding/Implementation	\$800,000	Dover
Liberty Mutual Site Redevelopment	Funding/Implementation		Dover
NEW! Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment of Underutilized Properties	Conceptual	\$2,500,000	Dover
Critical Facilities Backup Generators	Funding/Implementation	\$580,000	Durham
Downtown Durham Catalyst Project: Mixed-Use Redevelopment and Public Parking at 66 Main Street	Funding/Implementation	\$10,000,000	Durham
Downtown Commercial Core Wayfinding Signage	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$135,000	Durham
Durham Old Town Hall Preservation	Funding/Implementation	\$366,270	Durham
Oyster River Dam	Funding/Implementation	\$4,089,256	Durham
Funding for an Innovative Housing Fund	Conceptual	\$2,000,000	Durham
Supporting Local Childcare Fund	Conceptual		Durham
Main Street Program Staff	Conceptual	\$500,000	Durham
Crommet Creek Bridge	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$2,500,000	Durham
Main Street Bridge Over Railroad	Engineering/Cost Estimates		Durham

Project Title	Current Phase	Estimated Total Project Cost	Municipality or Organization
Complete Streets for Main Street (Downtown)	Conceptual		Durham
Sidewalk Network Expansion	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$841,460	Farmington
Re-Development of the Old Fire Department Lot	Funding/Implementation		Farmington
Replacement of Red-Listed Bridges	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$2,257,723	Farmington
Farmington Levee	Funding/Implementation	\$658,500	Farmington
Update to TIF Development and Finance Plan	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$8,700	Farmington
Charles Street Transitional Housing Expansion	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$400,000	Hope on Haven Hill
Milton Sewer Utility Interconnect with Rochester	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$5,000,000	Milton
Upgrade/expand Milton Wastewater Treatment Plant	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$10,000,000	Milton
Zechariah Boodey Farmstead-Cultural and Historical	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$900,000	New Durham
Portland St Sidewalk extension	Funding/Implementation	\$1,395,000	Rochester
Round Pond Reservoir Capacity	Funding/Implementation	\$8,000,000	Rochester
Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades	Funding/Implementation	\$5,000,000	Rochester
Portland Street Bridge Rehabilitation	Funding/Implementation	\$750,000	Rochester
North Main Street/Chestnut Hill Road Connector	Determining Feasibility		Rochester
Innovation Drive Sewer Pump Station	Conceptual	\$2,750,000	Rochester
Rochester Riverwalk	Funding/Implementation	\$2,000,000	Rochester
JA Sons Prince's Garage Brownfields Cleanup	Funding/Implementation	\$1,311,500	Somersworth
Noble Pines (Hamilton Street) Water Tank Replacement Project	Funding/Implementation	\$6,615,000	Somersworth
Millennium Field & Parking Lot Improvements	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$672,750	Somersworth
Main Street Complete Streets	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$8,135,000	Somersworth
Library Expansion & Accessibility Improvements	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$7,300,000	Somersworth
Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrades-	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$20,713,000	Somersworth
Water Distribution Improvements - Indigo Hill Road to Rita Street	Funding/Implementation	\$1,680,500	Somersworth
Noble Pines Park Playground Replacement	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$830,000	Somersworth

Project Title	Current Phase	Estimated Total Project Cost	Municipality or Organization
West High Street Sidewalk & Curbing - Cemetery Road to High Street	Determining Feasibility	\$1,481,000	Somersworth
Washington Street Road Reconstruction - Main Street to High Street	Determining Feasibility	\$1,942,750	Somersworth
NEW! Riverwalk Expansion Feasibility Study	Determining Feasibility	\$50,000	Somersworth
NEW! Noble Pines Trail Improvements	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$100,000	Somersworth
NEW! Lead Service Line Inventory Exploration	Funding/Implementation	\$3,163,860	Somersworth
NEW! Development of Rocky Hill Wellfield for Supplemental Water Supply	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$6,134,000	Somersworth
NEW! High Street - Blackwater Road to Franklin Street Complete Streets	Conceptual	\$3,987,500	Somersworth
NEW! Blackwater Road/High Street/Indigo Hill Road Intersection Reconstruction Complete Streets	Funding/Implementation	\$238,700	Somersworth
Hill Library Expansion/Relocation Study	Determining Feasibility	\$90,000	Strafford
NEW! The New Strafford Library A&E preliminary design	Engineering/Cost Estimates	\$600,000	Strafford
Comprehensive Regional Growth Revolving Loan Fund	Funding/Implementation	\$10,500,000	Strafford Economic Development Corp
Regional Housing Needs Assessment Implementation	Funding/Implementation	\$25,000	SRPC
Brownfields Assessment Program	Funding/Implementation		SRPC
Arts and Culture Inventory and Online Guide - Continual Updates	Conceptual	\$40,000	SRPC
The Edge Innovation Neighborhood	Funding/Implementation	\$740,000,000	University of New Hampshire
Expansion of UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory in support of a resilient NH coastal economy	Funding/Implementation	\$3,813,000	University of New Hampshire
Building Capacity for PFAS Analysis in NH	Funding/Implementation	\$890,000	University of New Hampshire
UNH Wildcat Transit Fleet Replacement	Funding/Implementation	\$7,500,000	University of New Hampshire

Performance Measures

The following measures will be used to evaluate the performance of future CEDS updates within this five-year cycle, as well as implementation of CEDS priorities. These performance measures were established for the 2026-2030 five-year update and therefore will begin tracking implementation efforts after the adoption of this CEDS in 2026.

Priority Projects

Performance Measure	2026 Performance
Number of local governments explicitly invited to participate in project solicitation	17 – all 15 Strafford EDD municipalities, plus Strafford County and the Sanbornville Water Precinct
Number of local governments and organizations to submit priority projects	14
Municipal projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS	50
Other partner organizations invited to submit projects for inclusion in the CEDS	4
Total projects submitted by other partner organizations for inclusion in the CEDS	8
SRPC projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS	3
Total projects included in the CEDS	61
Total cost of proposed CEDS projects	\$941,815,283
Number of CEDS priority projects to receive outside funding	N/A – all CEDS projects were solicited or updated in 2026 as part of the five-year update and are therefore in progress
Total value of outside funds received for implementing CEDS projects	N/A – all CEDS projects were solicited or updated in 2026 as part of the five-year update and are therefore in progress
Number of CEDS priority projects to be fully implemented	N/A – all CEDS projects were solicited or updated in 2026 as part of the five-year update and are therefore in progress

Outreach

Performance Measure	2026 Performance
Number of Strategy Committee meetings at which CEDS planning and implementation was discussed	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred
Total attendees at Strategy Committee meetings	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred
Unique attendees at Strategy Committee meetings	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred

Performance Measure	2026 Performance
Number of Board of Directors meetings at which CEDS planning and implementation was discussed	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred
Total attendees at Board of Directors meetings	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred
Unique attendees at Board of Directors meetings	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred
Thirty-day public comment period prior to adoption?	Yes

Action

Performance Measure	2026 Performance
Economic indicators in the SRPC Regional Data Snapshot updated to include the latest available data as part of the annual CEDS update?	Yes – The 2026-2030 CEDS corresponds with the release of SRPC’s 2026 Regional Data Snapshot.
Total preliminary SRPC action items identified for implementing CEDS goals	48
Additional action items developed	N/A – further discussion of additional implementation actions will begin after adoption of the CEDS
Total number of action items completed within the five-year cycle	N/A – further discussion of implementation will begin after adoption of the CEDS
Number of action items with significant progress towards completion, or ongoing action items that were addressed within the period covered by this update	N/A – further discussion of implementation will begin after adoption of the CEDS