

Forward Thinking

Summary of Local Master Plan Reviews

Staff Review of Master Plans

SRPC staff reviewed all master plans of the region’s 18 municipalities and have provided high-level summaries of the local visions for Land Use/Environment, Housing, Transportation, and Economic Development. The oldest master plan in the region is that of Rollinsford, last updated in 2011, although individual chapters of some master plans in our region are even older. Almost half of SRPC communities conducted whole or partial master plan updates in 2025. These communities were Brookfield, Dover, Lee, Madbury, Newmarket, Northwood, Nottingham, and Somersworth.

Community	Most Recent Update Year	Most Recent Update Type	Community	Most Recent Update Year	Most Recent Update Type
Lee (pending)	2026	Full	Rochester	2024	Partial
Dover (pending)	2026	Partial	Durham	2023	Partial
Brookfield	2025	Full	Strafford	2023	Full
Madbury	2025	Partial	Middleton	2022	Full
Newmarket	2025	Full	Farmington	2021	Full
Northwood	2025	Partial	Milton	2017	Partial
Nottingham	2025	Partial	New Durham	2017	Full
Somersworth	2025	Partial	Wakefield	2014	Partial
Barrington	2024	Partial	Rollinsford	2011	Partial

Common Themes Across Local Master Plans

Environment, Land Use, and Housing

Over time, there is an increased consideration for **striking a “balance” of conservation with development** in SRPC communities within the 18 master plans. Some housing, land use, natural resources, or other related chapters originating in the late 1990s and 2000s have discussion and recommendations pertaining to “development” generally, using tone or phrasing such as “*over-development*” for emphasis. This evolves, with master plans beginning to recommend **mixed-income, mixed-density, and mixed-use approaches** that are intended to mitigate sprawl in the late 2000s and 2010s. Here, there is more descriptiveness that specifies *housing, commerce, business*, and types of development. In the 2020s, master plans have begun to place emphasis **on recreation as part of conservation and open space** conversations. When the community describes greenspace in the context of how they are able to recreate within them, more **nuance** appears, rather than calls for blanket protections and recommendations to pause building permits, for example. This is particularly evident in the communities that express desire for mixed-use town centers. This appears to be done to mitigate the impact of sprawling commercial development and not only low-density residential development.

Transportation

Transportation chapters of the region's master plans have evolved to call for multi-modal approaches over time. Older transportation chapters of the 1990s and 2000s are rather slim, with recommendations pertaining to safe routes to school and particular "problem" intersections and corridors. Starting with early 2010s plans, there is greater emphasis on **traffic data**, in contrast to more broad previous statements regarding tourism. From here, there is increasing discussion regarding the **demographic makeup of the region**, with focus on the UNH populations who are often **without vehicles and the increase in older adults who rely on paratransit or volunteer driver programs**. More recently, there is detailed discussion or recommendations regarding access to **Amtrak** in Dover, Durham, and Exeter, and intercity bus service from **C&J**. Some transportation chapters attempt to evaluate who may have relocated to the region during and after the pandemic, with implications for **remote working and the viability of living without a vehicle here**.

Economic Development

Some master plans of the region forego an economic development chapter. Over time, economic development planning and programming has taken on a truly unique form for each of the 18 communities. Some communities discuss economic development in the context of the built form, such as an aversion to strip development, as one example. The SRPC communities with greater influences from **tourism** often discuss **local business**, with a preference for identifying them as "small" businesses for emphasis, taking on an almost protective tone in some plans. Often, the larger of the communities or those which have undergone a more recent master plan update, discuss implications for demand on **municipal services** and regional influences **beyond town and city borders**, such as **housing, workforces, and healthcare**.