

The ABCs of RPCs

NH Office of Strategic Initiatives
25th Annual Spring Planning & Zoning Conference

June 1, 2019



Nathan Miller, AICP
Southern NH
Planning
Commission



Tim Roache
Rockingham
Planning
Commission



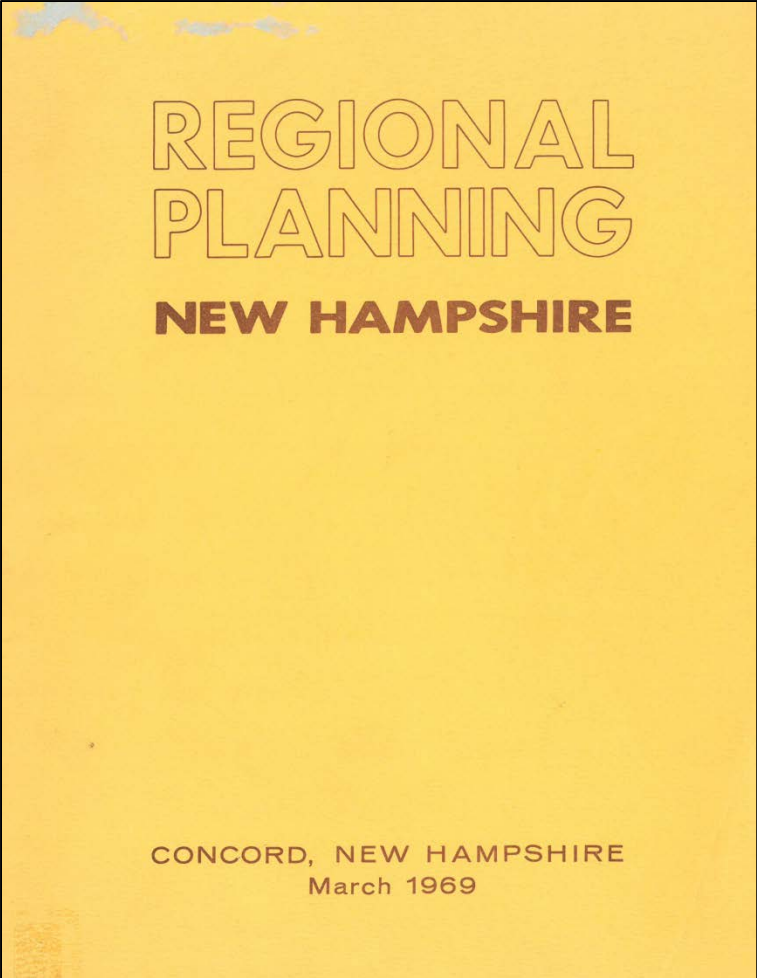
David Brooks
City of
Lebanon, New
Hampshire

Why were Regional Planning Commissions formed?

“A well-defined regional planning program will supply the various communities with the help they require in planning for the present and future needs of New Hampshire residents, aiding in the growth, development, and prosperity expected for the years ahead.”

Report of Governor John W. King's Committee on Regional Planning, March 1969.

Why were Regional Planning Commissions formed?

The image shows the front cover of a report. The title 'REGIONAL PLANNING' is in large, outlined, capital letters. Below it, 'NEW HAMPSHIRE' is in smaller, solid, capital letters. At the bottom, it says 'CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE' and 'March 1969'.

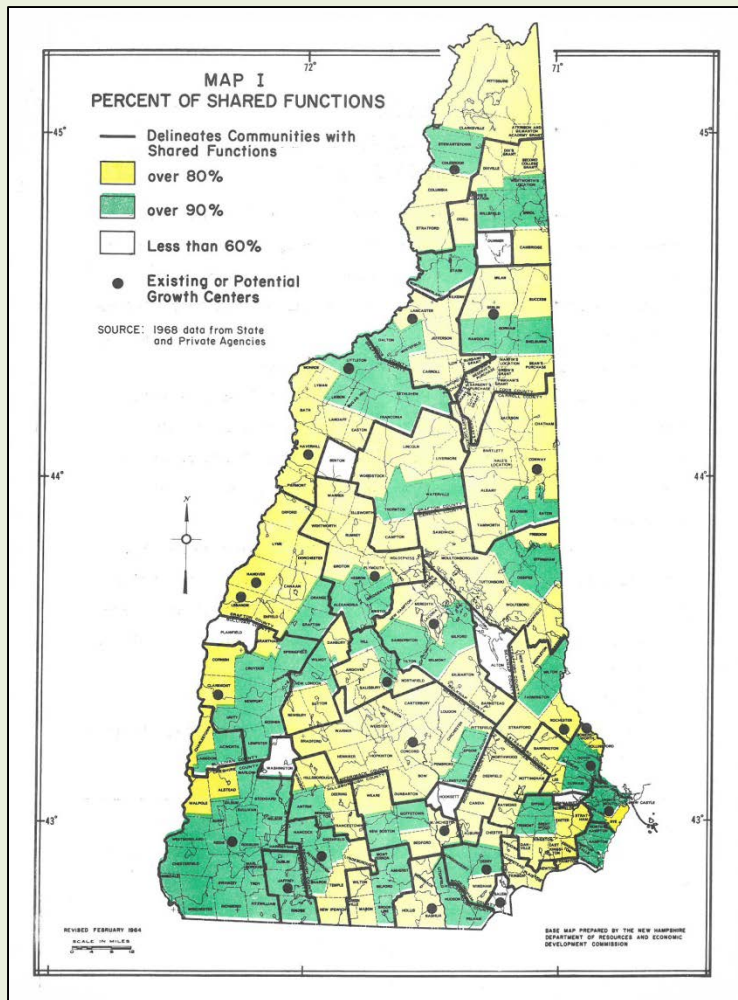
REGIONAL PLANNING NEW HAMPSHIRE

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
March 1969

The Governor's Committee on Regional Planning identified the following needs:

- Ensure that municipalities were coordinated in the access to and delivery of federal grant programs.
- Facilitate the development of regional relationships for the delivery of certain community services.
- Conduct comprehensive regional planning to support community planning.

How were RPC regions formed?

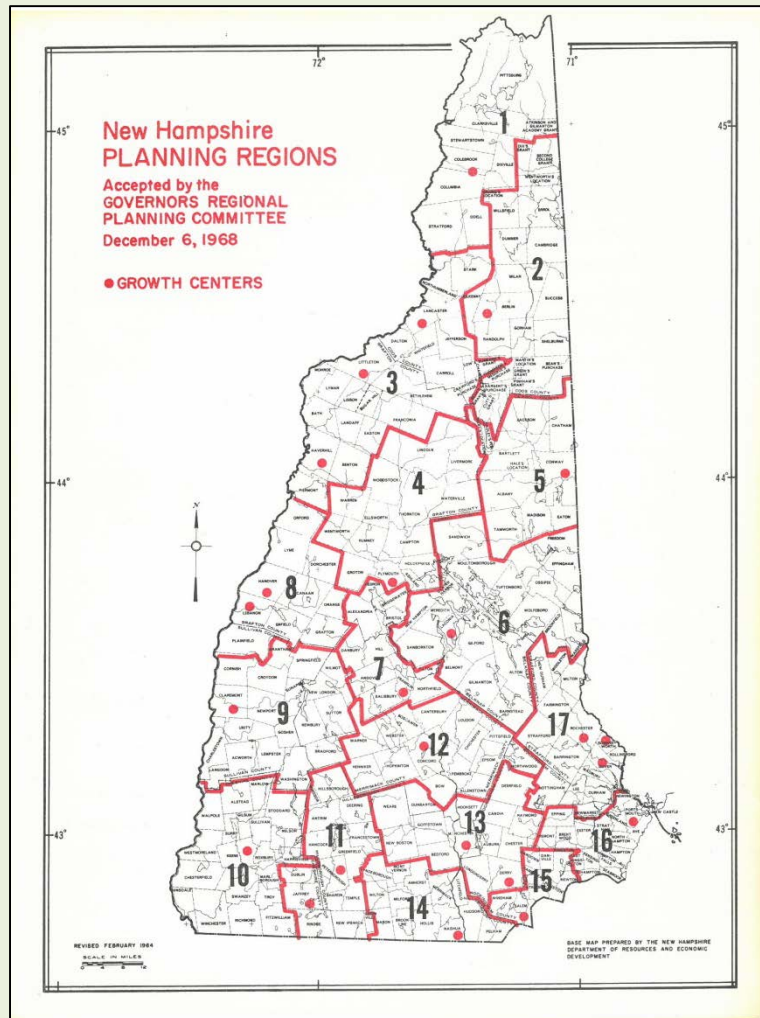


The University of New Hampshire completed a “Delineation Study” to determine regional boundaries.

The Delineation Study considered:

- Regional groupings in use at the time by State Government (e.g. tourism);
- Existing linkages and shared functions between municipalities;
- The “potential for urban activity” in municipalities; and
- The location of existing or potential regionally-significant “growth centers.”

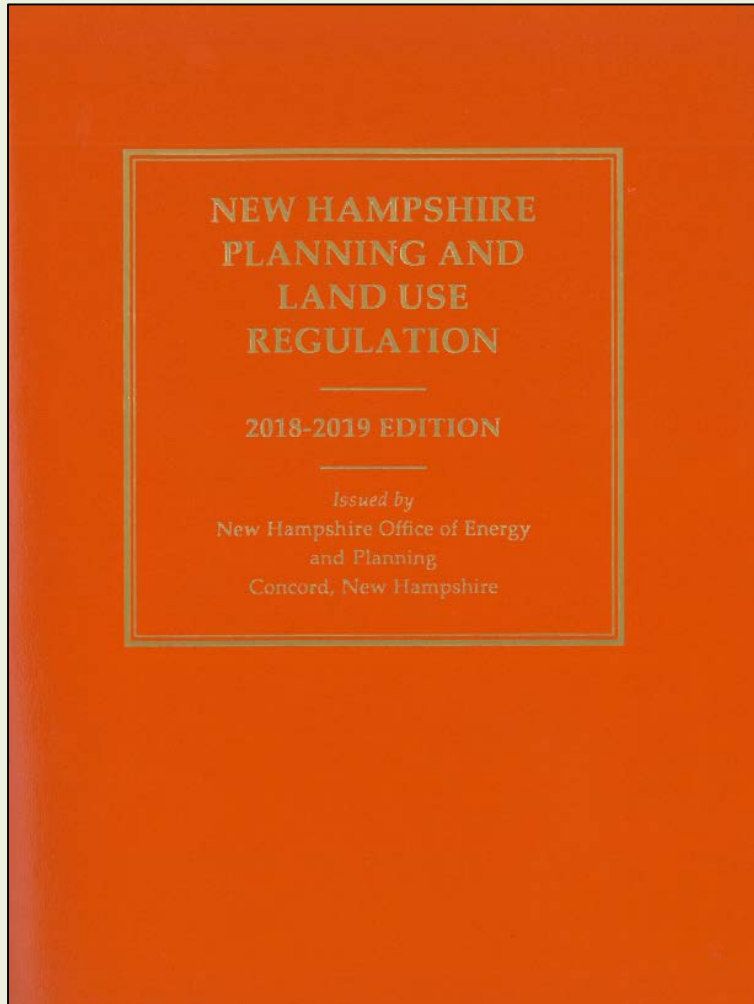
How were RPC regions formed?



Originally, 17 regions were identified. Eventually, these consolidated into the nine regions we know today.

- Regions 1-5: North Country Council
- Regions 6-7: Lakes RPC
- Regions 8-9: Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC
- Regions 10-11: Southwest RPC
- Region 12: Central NH RPC
- Region 13: Southern NH RPC
- Region 14: Nashua RPC
- Regions 15-16: Rockingham RPC
- Region 17: Strafford RPC

The Establishment of RSA Chapter 36



- In March 1969, the report of the Governor's Committee on Regional Planning was published.
- The recommendations from the report were implemented quickly, as RSA Chapter 36 went into effect on August 29, 1969.
- RSA Chapter 36, as revised over the years, continues to be the enabling legislation that establishes the powers and duties of Regional Planning Commissions.

Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions (RSA 36)

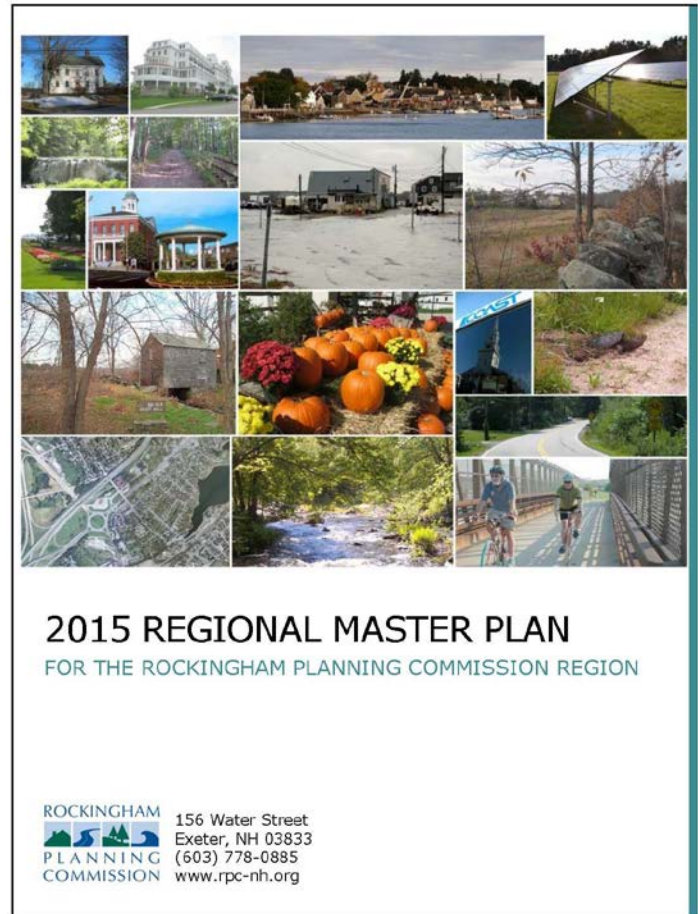
1. Provide **ADVISORY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** on local planning matters as requested by municipalities (RSA 36:47).
 - *Municipalities may ask for and take the advice of their RPC, but **jurisdiction for development decisions lies with local planning boards.***
 - *RPCs do not have regulatory jurisdiction over any aspect of the local land use planning or development review process.*



Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions (RSA 36)

2. Prepare a comprehensive **REGIONAL MASTER PLAN** (RSA 36:47).

- *The Regional Plan shall be updated every 5 years or sooner.*
- *The Regional Plan shall consider the following as it relates to the development of the region:*
 - *Land Use*
 - *Transportation*
 - *Communications*
 - *Parks and Recreation*
 - *Public Facilities*
 - *Conservation*
 - *Regulatory Recommendations*



Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions (RSA 36)

3. Prepare a **REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT** (RSA 36:47).

- *The Regional Housing Needs Assessment shall be updated every 5 years or sooner.*
- *Must include an assessment of housing needs for “persons and families of all levels of income.”*

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR HOUSING EQUITY ASSESSMENT

A PLAN FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE'S
NORTH COUNTRY

DECEMBER 2014



Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions (RSA 36)

4. Cooperate with municipalities and counties to **IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS** for the “full development, improvement, protection, and preservation of the region’s physical and historical resources” (RSA 36:53).
5. Assume the status of abutter to review and provide formal (advisory) comments on designated **DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT** (RSA 36:54-58).
 - *Designation that a development has the potential for regional impact is discretionary by a local land use board.*
 - *All nine Regional Planning Commissions provide guidelines to their local land use boards to assist in determining whether a development has a potential regional impact.*

Other Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions

6. Provide a **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM** to the NHDOT by April 1st of each odd-numbered year (RSA 228:99 and RSA 240).
- *Regional transportation project priorities form the basis of the NHDOT's Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.*
 - *RPCs also participate in the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) hearings on the Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.*

TEN YEAR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2019 - 2028

Projects Only

APPROVED BY THE NH LEGISLATURE
AND SIGNED INTO LAW BY THE GOVERNOR

PURSUANT TO
RSA 228:99 AND RSA 240 OF THE LAWS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



PROJECTS LISTED ALPHABETICALLY



PREPARED BY THE NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

July 2, 2018

Other Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions

7. Form **INTERSTATE REGIONAL PLANNING COMPACTS** through negotiation with counterparts in Maine, Massachusetts, and/or Vermont (RSA 36-B).



- *From the 1960s until the early 2000s, the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission had member communities in the State of Vermont.*

8. Serve on **STATE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS** including the Business Finance Authority (RSA 162-A), NH Rail Transit Authority (RSA 238-A), State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (RSA 239-B), and numerous others.
9. Recommend the formation of **REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICTS** to affected local legislative bodies (RSA 38-B).

Organization and Financial Structure of Regional Planning Commissions

- RPCs are **POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS** of the State of New Hampshire (RSA 36:49-a). As such, RPCs are public sector agencies with governmental functions.
 - *RPCs are not non-profit organizations, corporations, political, or lobbying organizations.*
 - *RPCs are governed by Commissioners appointed by their member municipalities.*
- RPCs have no power to tax. RPCs are financially supported by **MEMBERSHIP DUES VOLUNTARILY PAID BY MUNICIPALITIES**.
 - *Under RSA 36:49, municipalities may not vote in the affairs of the Commission unless their annual dues have been paid.*

The Federal Role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Four RPCs also serve as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) within their regions.
 - ***Nashua Regional Planning Commission***
 - ***Rockingham Planning Commission***
 - ***Southern NH Planning Commission***
 - ***Strafford Regional Planning Commission***
- As MPOs under 23 CFR 450, these four RPCs have a direct role in the programming of Federal transportation funding, including:
 - ***Developing and Maintaining a Transportation Improvement Program and a Long-Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan***



RPC Services Today

- Circuit Rider Planning Services
- Master Plan Assistance
- Assistance with Updating Local Regulations
- Capital Improvement Program Development
- Impact Fee Development
- Public Engagement and Third-party Facilitation
- GIS Mapping and Analysis
- Hazard Mitigation Planning
- MS4 Permitting Assistance
- Solid Waste Planning
- Brownfields Assessment
- CEDS and Economic Development Assistance
- Traffic Counting
- Road Surface Management Systems
- Road Safety Audits
- Transit Service Design

...and many more!

RPC Services Tomorrow

The RPC services of tomorrow will be steered by RPC Commissioners and the needs of municipalities.



- Implementing Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Projects?
- Integrating Public Health and Planning?
- Planning for Age-Friendly Communities?
- Planning for Autonomous Vehicle Deployment?
- Facilitating Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure?
- All of the above?

Regional Planning Commissions in Practice (and the Importance of Volunteer Commissioners)

But What is a Regional Planning Commission?, Really?

Regional Planning Commissions are NOT:

- ✗ Not a State Agency
- ✗ Not a 501(c)3 (Private Non-profit)
- ✗ Not a regional council of governments
- ✗ Not part of County or City Government
- ✗ Not a left wing radical movement with the goal of forcing you all to ride bicycles and eat tofu.

Regional Planning Commissions Really Are...



A RESOURCE

A staff of professional planners to facilitate regional conversations and provide technical assistance to communities for local planning needs.



A FORUM

A place for community representatives to gather and address issues that transcend municipal boundaries.



A VOICE

Carry the message of the region to Concord and Washington D.C.

More Importantly, Regional Planning Commissions are...



- You!
- The volunteers selected by the Planning Board and Appointed by the Selectmen.
- Ground up, grass roots, local control.

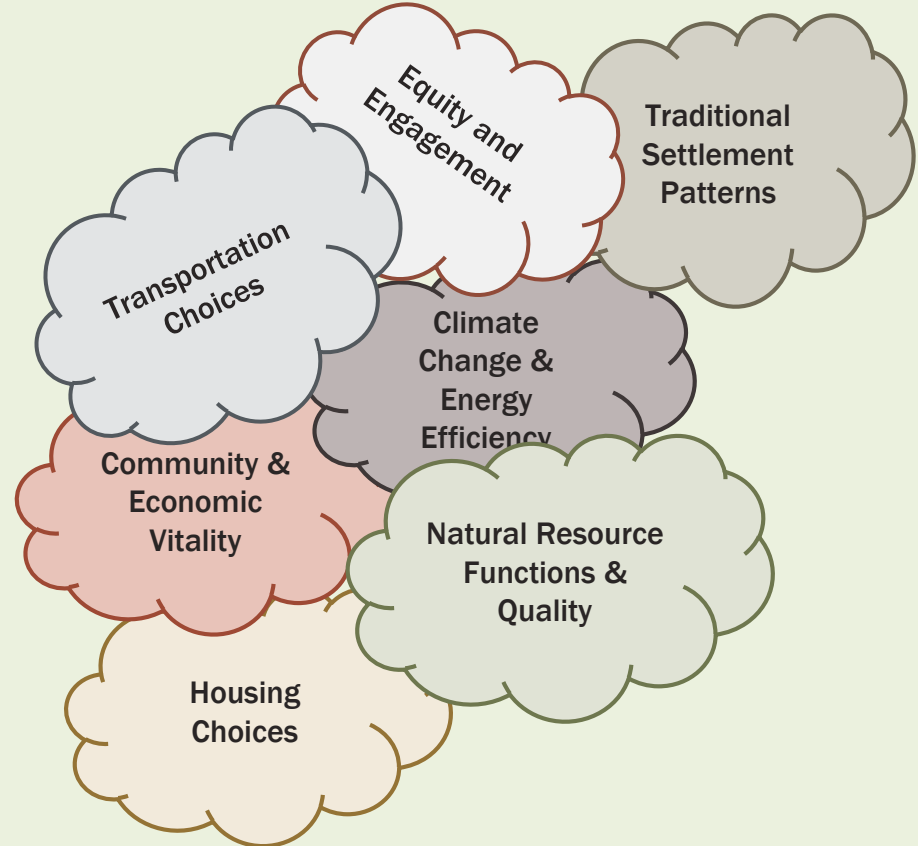
Being a Commissioner 101: An Axiom

Towns with the most active commissioners gain the most from their Regional Planning Commission.

Being a Commissioner



- Term ~ 4 years
- Advocate for the needs of your community
- Communicate the interests & needs of the region
- Act as liaison between elected officials & RPC
- Look for ways RPC can help your community
- Provide input on transportation planning issues
- Advocate for RPC policies & programs



Regional Planning Commissions in Action (and the Importance of Municipal Partnerships)

RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

- The City of Lebanon regularly engages the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) to work on issues and projects of importance to the City.



- Examples of Lebanon's partnerships with UVLSRPC include the following:

RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

ENERGY PLANNING

- UVLSRPC assisted the City in developing an Energy Efficiency Initiative through a Community Planning Grant, which resulted in various zoning amendments, adoption of renewal energy exemptions, and laying the groundwork for subsequent solar energy and streetlight conversion projects.



RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING



- UVLSRPC is currently assisting the City to assess and plan for the reuse of contaminated properties using EPA Brownfields Assessment grant funding.



- UVLSRPC provides staffing assistance to the Mascoma River Local Advisory Committee and coordinated the development of the Mascoma River Corridor Management Plan.

RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

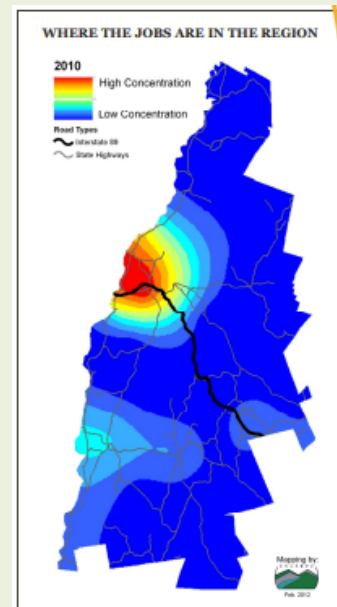
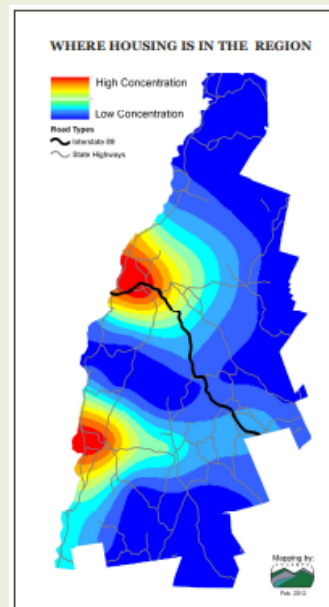
HOUSING

- UVLSRPC coordinates the development of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, which provides valuable data to the City to guide housing-related planning efforts and decision-making.

Who Needs Housing?

A Regional Assessment

Housing Availability and Affordability for all Residents is Critical to Economic Sustainability and the Quality of Community of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region.



RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



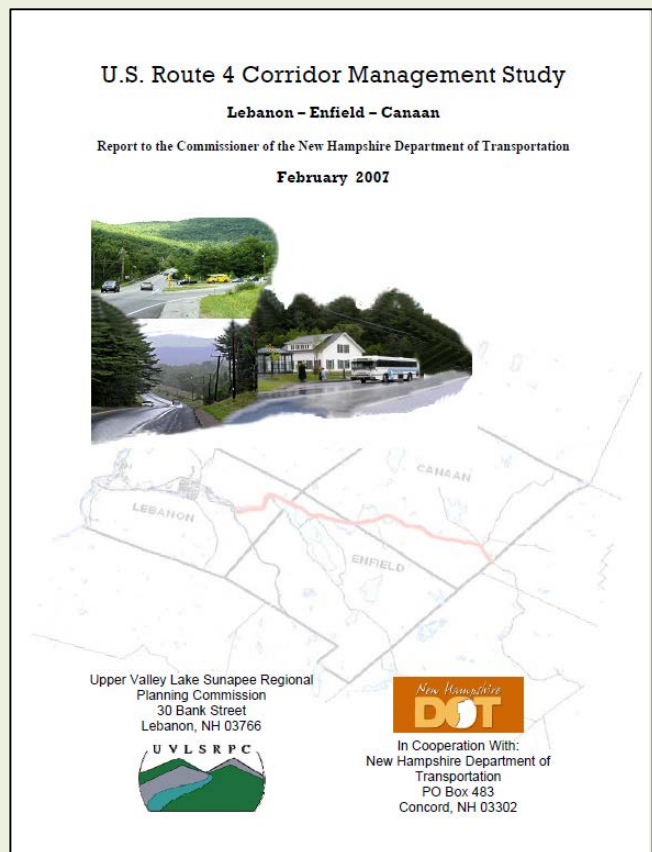
- Highways: UVLSRPC assisted the City in placing the I-89 Exit 18 improvement project on the Ten-Year Plan following a cooperative effort between NHDOT, RPC, Lebanon, and Hanover.



- Bridges: UVLSRPC coordinated with NHDOT on behalf of the City to advance the rehabilitation of the I-89 bridges over Hardy Hill Road due to structural deficiency.

RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



Special Studies:

- UVLSRPC completed a NH Route 120 Corridor Study on behalf of the City and Town of Hanover.
- UVLSRPC also completed a US Route 4 Corridor Study on behalf of the City, the Town of Enfield, and the Town of Canaan.
- UVLSRPC completed a feasibility study for transit service that would link the City of Lebanon with the City of Claremont.

RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

- Bicycle and Pedestrian:
 - UVLSRPC undertook a Road Safety Audit for pedestrian safety improvements on NH Route 10 at Sachem Village, and worked with NHDOT to secure Highway Safety Improvement Program funding to complete the project.
 - UVLSRPC prepared Safe Routes to School Travel Plans for four elementary and middle school sites using SRTS grant funds.



RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

PROJECT COORDINATION

- UVLSRPC has assisted the City in reviewing and coordinating more than 20 pending road/bridge/transit/infrastructure projects scheduled for the next 3-5 years.



RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENTS

- UVLSRPC completed a Culvert Assessment Study utilizing the SADES methodology to provide valuable information for City DPW operations, maintenance, and stormwater management planning.



RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

- UVLSRPC prepared and updated the City's last 3 Hazard Mitigation Plans, which helps to ensure that the City is eligible for FEMA funding.

City of Lebanon
New Hampshire

**HAZARD
MITIGATION
PLAN**

Update 2016



RPC Services in Action: Collaborations Between the City of Lebanon and the UVLSRPC

OTHER SERVICES

- Solid Waste:
 - UVLSRPC secures funding for and assists the City in coordinating annual household hazardous waste collections.
- GIS Assistance:
 - UVLSRPC is currently assisting the City with a build-out analysis associated with efforts to establish an Urban Services Boundary for sewer extensions.
- Municipal Planning Assistance:
 - UVLSRPC has provided circuit-rider assistance when the City was short-staffed.

Questions?



Nathan Miller, AICP
Southern NH Planning
Commission
438 Dubuque Street
Manchester, NH 03102
603-669-4664
nmiller@snhpc.org



Tim Roache
Rockingham Planning
Commission
156 Water Street
Exeter, NH 03833
603-658-0518
troache@rpc-nh.org



David Brooks
City of Lebanon, NH
51 North Park Street
City Hall, 1st Floor
Lebanon, NH 03766
603-448-1524
David.Brooks@lebanonnh.gov