

Introduction

The Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) is a regional planning commission established by its member municipalities under the enabling authority of New Hampshire RSA 36. Its planning region consists of 26 communities located in the southeastern corner of New Hampshire, including the Massachusetts border communities from Salem to Seabrook, the coastal communities from Seabrook to Portsmouth and the communities to the west of Epping, Fremont, Sandown, and Hampstead.

The RPC's purpose is threefold: to assist communities with their individual planning needs, to develop regional plans to guide and coordinate development in the region, and to help communities work together to address common problems.

The 2015 RPC Regional Master Plan is the expression of this second purpose. It has been prepared in accordance with RSA 36:47, the state statute which governs the development and adoption of such plans. The Plan is an advisory document with no mandate or regulatory effect. Its purpose is to provide useful and timely information, analysis and guidance to communities in the RPC region that they may use to help develop or update their individual master plans. It is also intended to ensure that those communities are aware of various issues and conditions in the broader region that may affect their future development, and to facilitate the coordination of planning and development in the region.



Regional Planning Commissions and the RPC

New Hampshire's Regional Planning Commissions were formally established by the NH Legislature state enabling law in 1969 through the enactment of RSA 36. That statute specifies that regional planning commissions are advisory bodies voluntarily formed by the member communities in their planning regions. The purpose of the RPC's is to provide technical planning assistance to communities in development of local plans, to foster regional cooperation among communities, and to carry out regional planning in areas such as transportation, land use, water resources, housing, economic development and emergency management. Specifically, the statute calls upon the regional planning commissions "to prepare a coordinated plan for the development of a region taking into account present and future needs with a view toward facilitating the most appropriate use of land the facilitation of transportation and communication the proper and economic location of public utilities and services; the development of adequate recreational areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds." (RSA 36:45).

Rockingham Planning Commission

The Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) was formally established from the merger in 1981 of two smaller regional planning commissions, the Southeast Region RPC and the Southern Rockingham RPC, which had each been formed in the mid 1970s. Like all regional planning commissions, the RPC is governed and controlled by a Board of Commissioners comprised exclusively of representatives appointed by each of the 26 member communities. Communities may either appoint or elect their representatives to their regional planning commission. RPC Commissioners, who are unpaid volunteers, are nominated by their community's Planning Board and appointed by their Board of Selectmen or City Council. They are accountable to the community they represent.

The 26 communities in the RPC region include:

Atkinson, Brentwood, Danville, East Kingston, Epping, Exeter, Fremont, Greenland, Hampstead, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Kensington, Kingston, New Castle, Newfields, Newington, Newton, North Hampton, Plaistow, Portsmouth, Rye, Salem, Sandown, Seabrook, South Hampton, and Stratham.

The planning districts for regional planning commissions are established (and revised as needed) by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning. Regional planning commissions are funded by member communities through local dues, and from grants and contracts from federal and state agencies. The Commission's member communities pay local dues voluntarily.¹

About the Regional Master Plan

Purpose and Uses

The Regional Master Plan provides a useful technical reference with recommendations and planning policies that communities can use in their own planning. It serves as a guide from which communities in the region can examine ways to collaborate with each other in areas like infrastructure development, service agreements and resource protection. It is up to each community to decide whether and how to use the plan. Municipalities are encouraged to participate in the development and updates to the Regional Master Plan to ensure the plan reflects common interests, perspectives and priorities of the region.

Organization of the Document

The Regional Master Plan is organized in a similar manner as many local master plans and is designed to be consistent with the framework provided in RSA 36:47 and RSA 9-A. It includes a Regional Overview section which describes the planning region, summarizes the current issues and challenges that are of concern, and establishes an overall vision and set of goals for the Plan. The remainder of the document is divided into topical chapters that cover key areas of interest including land use, transportation, housing, natural resources, historic resources, economic development, natural hazards, energy and climate change. Each chapter follows a standard organization as well, which includes an

RPC's Mission Statement

The Rockingham Planning Commission is a voluntary local public organization created and sustained by its member communities and their appointed representatives. Its purpose is to foster sound planning, wise use and careful stewardship of the region's natural and man-made resources. This is accomplished, first, by providing professional planning assistance and advice to member communities concerning local and regional planning and second, by actively promoting and facilitating cooperation and coordination among the communities. To fulfill the first aspect of this mission, the Commission will endeavor to maintain professional expertise and support in the following areas: municipal and regional land use planning, natural resources and conservation, regional transportation planning, coastal resources management, economic development and geographic information systems development. To fulfill the second aspect of the mission the Commission will rely upon the efforts of the appointment commissioners to facilitate

More About the RPC

The Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire established by RSA-36. The Commission's region consists of twenty-six communities within Rockingham County. The RPC is not affiliated with Rockingham County.

Operating as a non-profit local government organization, the Commission serves in an advisory role to local governments in order to promote coordinated planning, orderly growth, efficient land use, transportation access, and environmental protection.

The Commission is a voluntary organization and although functioning as a political subdivision of the state, it has no regulatory or enforcement powers. Its primary function is to inform, advise and recommend action to be taken by local governments functioning within their own authority.

¹ Twenty five of the 26 communities in RPC's planning district are participating, dues-paying members of the RPC. Throughout the preparation of this plan, the Town of Salem was not a member and did not actively participate in Plan's development.

introduction, goals, existing conditions and trends, issues and challenges, recommendations and implementation, as maps and appendices.

The major sections of this plan include:

Introduction

Regional Vision and Goal

Regional Overview

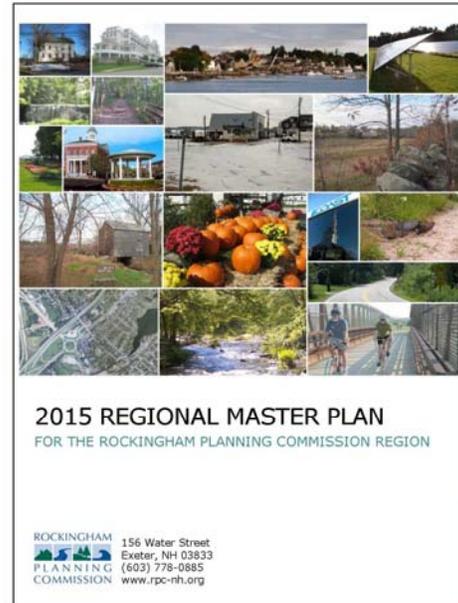
Topic Chapters

- o Land Use
- o Transportation
- o Economic Development
- o Housing
- o Natural Resources
- o Natural Hazards
- o Historic Resources
- o Energy
- o Climate Change

Scenario Planning

Implementation Plan

Appendices



Future Updates to the Plan

The specific New Hampshire statute governing the development of regional plans (RSA 36:47:III) implies that, while development plans prepared under the statute are not mandatory, where they exist they must be renewed every five years or sooner if desired. Revisions to local master plans are recommended only every five to ten years (RSA 674:3). The intention of the RPC is to maintain a 5-year update cycle, but to update the components of the plan sequentially, updating about approximately two chapters per year after the plan's adoption. Each update to the plan, whether wholly or in sections will be subject to the prescribed to public review and comment process.

Acknowledgements

Funding for the development of this plan was provided by the communities of the region as well as through the Sustainable Communities Initiative, a joint program of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Department of Transportation and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The sustainable communities initiative supported a competitive grant from the nine New Hampshire regional planning commissions in 2012 to simultaneously update or develop new individual regional plans. This project, known as the Granite State Future, involved the collaboration of the nine RPCs together with state agencies including the Office of Energy and Planning, Department of Environmental Services, Department of Transportation, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Agriculture, Housing Finance Authority, Department of Employment Security, and the University of New Hampshire. The purpose of this large collaboration was to share data and information about conditions, issues, trends and opportunities around the state, and, from the individual regional plans, identify goals policies that are common across the state.

The development of the 2015 RPC Regional Master Plan is the result by many hours of review, advice and counsel provided by the RPC Commissioners, the RPC Regional Master Plan Committee and interested citizens. This assistance took place during the course of many meetings and the review of draft documents; their dedication and input was essential to the development of this plan and their efforts are greatly appreciated.