



## **SUMMARY OF PLANNING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FROM REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS**

### **I-93 Community Technical Assistance Program**

**Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission  
Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission  
Nashua Regional Planning Commission  
Rockingham Planning Commission**

Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) are established by State law (RSA 36:45-58) for the purpose of promoting sound, coordinated planning in our regions. As advisory bodies with no regulatory mandate for regional planning, our agencies have fulfilled this purpose primarily in three ways: (1) by providing direct technical planning assistance to our member communities to help them prepare for growth and development, (2) by promoting and facilitating cooperation and communication among the municipalities to address common land and resource related problems, and (3) by developing and maintaining specialized capabilities, expertise and tools that are out of reach of individual municipalities. While the capabilities and areas of expertise for each of our agencies varies to some extent, we have a common portfolio of planning and technical assistance which can help match community planning needs with planning resources in the I-93 corridor. The following is a summary of the technical planning resources we have in common.

- **General Local Technical Planning Assistance:** RPCs provides regular, often 'in town' planning assistance for many of our communities. Services include such areas as development plan review, zoning ordinance and land use regulation preparation, planning document review and development impact analysis and review. For communities that wish it, most RPCs provide a 'circuit rider' planner service which gives them direct access to professional planning staff on a regular basis in their town halls.
- **Community Master Plan/CIP Preparation:** Work with local planning boards to prepare or update master plans and CIPs in accordance with RSA 674:2. This can include a wide range of discrete services from facilitating visioning sessions to mapping to writing master plan chapters to conducting community surveys.
- **Consensus Building and Facilitation:** The RPCs are able to build consensus among stakeholder groups on contentious issues which often stymie the implementation of improvements in the local planning process. The special role of the RPCs in their regions allows them to act as an expert and neutral participant, helping to bring competing groups to consensus.
- **Developments of Regional Impact:** The RPCs coordinate and facilitate a technical review process with the affected municipalities, as well as the developers and their planning and traffic consultants, when developments with regional impact are proposed and declared in a municipality.
- **Open Space/Conservation Planning:** Current natural resources and conservation planning efforts include regular technical assistance for Conservation Commissions, hosting quarterly regional roundtables for Conservation Commissions, developing Open Space and Conservation Plans for communities, and maintaining the regional GIS database of local conservation lands.
- **Innovative Zoning and Land Use Regulations:** One common way RPCs work with their communities is in the area of zoning and land use regulation development and implementation. This is a key area of planning that requires attention in order to improve the outcome of development in New Hampshire. In 2004 the NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions identified core principles for sustainable development in New Hampshire. Presently, the 9 regions are working together along with NHDES, NHOEP and the LGC to develop

an implementation guide for innovative zoning and land use practices which reflect those principles. After completion of the Guide, the RPCs will work with individual communities to help implement the ordinances and regulations.

- **Land Use and Zoning Research:** Each of the RPCs has land use planning staff with broad experience in both the legal issues of land use and zoning as well as best practices from New Hampshire and the rest of the country. The RPCs can research methods of addressing almost any land use issue and provide input on the best implementation approaches for the unique New Hampshire environment. The RPCs commonly assist communities in developing and implementing specialized zoning amendments dealing with such issues as resource protection, growth management, elderly housing, open space development, village districts and many others.
- **GIS Mapping and Buildout Analyses:** The RPCs have the capability to develop and maintain a wide variety of GIS maps. We assist communities with natural resource inventories, master plan maps and GIS-based buildout analyses. Several regions have completed training for the use of Community Viz, and others have developed in-house capabilities to analyze and visualize alternative development scenarios.
- **Corridor Planning and Access Management:** Under the NHDOT State Planning and Research grant program, the RPCs have developed expertise in conducting collaborative corridor planning studies which develop long term plans for transportation corridors, integrating roadway and other modal facility needs together with access management and community land use planning. These studies are commonly conducted in association with engineering consulting firms who work on the conceptual design for highway elements and other facility needs.
- **Specialized Traffic Studies:** The RPCs have developed and maintain sophisticated travel demand models. These models allow the RPCs to analyze the traffic impacts of new roadway improvements. This allows the RPCs to help communities understand the range and magnitude of potential outcomes from roadway changes. The travel demand models can also be used to analyze the impact of new land development on traffic beyond “the end of the driveway” and consider issues that might not be identified with typical methods.
- **Training and Education:** The RPCs have a long history of providing training and education to their community land use boards in both group and one-on-one settings, often collaborating with other organizations to bring specialists and broader points of view to the training sessions. Over the past year the NHARPC developed and implemented a core curriculum of planning education for new planning commission staff. Discussions are underway within the Association to broaden this in the future to include town planners and possibly land use board members.

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