



# **Strafford Regional Planning Commission**

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*“Planning and action for sustainable development and an improved quality of life”.*

PRESS RELEASE

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For information contact:  
Cynthia Copeland, AICP, Executive Director  
Gerry Mylroie, AICP, Senior Land Use Planner  
603 / 742-2523

## **REGIONAL PLANNERS ADOPT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT MASTER PLAN FOR QUALITY COMMUNITIES AND “LAKES TO GREAT BAY GREENWAY” CONSERVATION - URGE MUNICIPAL COOPERATION TO IMPLEMENT**

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission, the state designated agency that advises 18 communities on how to plan for development and conservation adopted a “Regional Quality Improvement Plan” to guide development and conservation efforts to the Year 2020. The Plan calls for protecting Rural and Conservation Areas including existing rural land uses and residences for working farms, forestry, wildlife habitat protection, recreation and conservation areas to protect water quality. Together the areas will form the area’s largest “Lakes to Great Bay Greenway.”

Also the Plan calls for developing Quality Communities in conjunction with existing urban and village centers within the region to accommodate the 30,000 new residents projected to move into the region. The communities are planned, mixed use, walkable urban or village areas and their adjacent neighbors. They also include business and industrial areas, quality development that reflects traditional New Hampshire development and promotes tourism, and improved public transportation.

“Adopting this Plan is a major step for the Commission and with all municipalities cooperating it

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will have the potential to maintain and significantly improve the quality of life in the region,” said Ed Jansen, Jr., Vice Chairman of the Commission and Selectman from Rollinsford.

“By establishing policies that outline an intelligent and efficient approach to development, we are providing an exceptional model for member municipalities and the rest of the state to follow,” said SRPC Commissioner and Selectman, Ron Gehl, P.E., from New Durham.

The meeting held at the Roland Roberge Community Center in Rochester on May 26, 2005, was the fifth public meeting held after over 600 mailings to officials and citizens in the region for each meeting. Also 11 Technical Working Group meetings were held to provide input for the Plan.

The Plan responded to planning board, elected official and citizen agreement that they do not want development to continue to sprawl across the landscape, or “Business as Usual”. The Plan urges municipalities within the region to cooperate together to target growth and development into existing urban and village centers and creating “Quality Centers.” “Quality Centers” are planned, mixed use, walkable urban or village areas and their adjacent neighbors, surrounded by Conservation Areas. The “Lakes to Great Bay Greenway” Conservation Area would be used for agricultural, forestry, park and recreational uses, and natural resource protection. To implement the Plan, all municipalities in the region are urged to cooperate in adopting new zoning to encourage development in the centers and limit it out side the Centers. Also municipalities are urged to adopt Inter-Municipal Agreements for planning, development and conservation programs. Implementing

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the Plan could save \$60 to \$100 million in property taxes according to SRPC planners. Also it would improve land use, water quality, natural resource protection, affordable housing, economic development and transportation. To create “Quality Centers” that are liveable and walkable in existing villages and urban centers, economic incentives are recommended. These include: increase municipal impact and service fees outside of the Quality Center, change land use zones to promote conservation, and/or adopt a local or regional transfer of development rights program.

“We hope the region’s municipalities and citizens will continue to cooperate and work together to implement the Plan,” said Cynthia Copeland, AICP, Executive Director.

Citizens who want to avoid urban sprawl, higher property taxes, poor or insufficient water, more traffic congestion, loss of conservation lands, and other regional issues should review the Quality Improvement Plan and urge its local adoption. Citizens are encouraged to not wait for a problem in their neighborhood to express their concerns or describe how things should be improved. SRPC hopes municipalities and citizens will act now to adopt the Regional Master Plan for future growth and conservation in the Strafford Region and improve our quality of life.

To enable existing villages and urban centers to evolve into “Quality Centers,” municipalities’ would need to adopt a new “Quality Planning” Strategy. The Strategy would include improved development standards while permitting an increased number of housing units per acre. This “Quality Planning” strategy, known as planned unit, mixed use, or infill development, would maximize the villages’ and urban centers’ central area and adjacent neighborhoods potential for improved development. Rochester has started this by adopting and permitting planned unit

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developments. However, it was noted this strategy would need to be targeted toward designated service areas and enable an additional mixture of uses.

Implementing the “Quality Centers” plan could have major advantages in meeting citizen goals of minimizing property taxes, creating livable walkable communities, conserving lands and rural character, providing affordable housing, and increasing social capital and economic development. Targeting development with better development standards could address citizen concerns about the cost of public services and infrastructure and the rising property taxes needed to finance these costs.

### **Public Access to Information**

Information about the Regional Master Plan Vision 2020 – Strafford Region Planning Program is posted on the SRPC website at [www.strafford.org](http://www.strafford.org) and is available at the SRPC office, via mail, or by calling SRPC.

Persons wishing to comment on regional planning issues, the vision for the region, goals and projects are welcome to send email at [srpc@strafford.org](mailto:srpc@strafford.org), call (603) 742-2523, or attend meetings of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission.

### **Additional Meetings**

Additional SRPC meetings planned as part of the Vision 2020- Strafford Region Master Plan implementation include local workshops with Planning Boards and a Regional Summit in the fall.

### **Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC)**

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SRPC's mission is to plan and take action to achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life in the region. SRPC serves as an advisor to local governments and organizations on planning, development and conservation issues. SRPC has been active in regional planning for over 30 years as one of the nine Regional Planning Commissions established by the New Hampshire legislature through RSA 36:46. SRPC is composed of eighteen communities including all thirteen municipalities in Strafford County, three communities in Rockingham County and two communities in Carroll County.

SRPC works to improve the region by coordinating local planning, balancing economic progress with environmental protection and community well-being, promoting orderly growth and efficient land use and transportation systems, and addressing issues of regional concern. SRPC's professional planning staff assists in land use, transportation, environmental and economic development planning; support services; project management; and geographic information system mapping and analysis.

Municipalities, persons or organizations may contact SRPC by calling 603/742-2523 or by e-mail at [srpc@strafford.org](mailto:srpc@strafford.org).

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