

Meeting of the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee

Friday, February 27, 2026 12:00 – 2:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting (Conference Rm 1A, SRPC Office & via Zoom)

In accordance with RSA 91:A, the Strategy Committee requires an in-person quorum. So long as an in-person quorum, Committee members may participate virtually. Guests may attend the meeting virtually or at the SRPC Office. All participants, both in-person and virtual, can communicate contemporaneously.

Meeting URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88023027097>

Meeting ID: 880 2302 7097

Telephone-only Access: +1 646 931 3860

These instructions have also been provided at www.strafford.org. If anybody is unable to access the meeting, please email mtaylorfetter@straffordrpcnh.gov or call 603-994-3500 (x115).

Agenda Item	Time	Notes
1) Introductions & Welcome	12:00-12:15	
2) Review and Approve January Meeting Minutes and Officer Discussion	12:15-12:20	See January Meeting Minutes included in packet
3) Finalize Themes and Goals	12:20-12:50	Final review, feedback, and approval of the Themes and Goals for the 2026-2030 CEDS
4) Break	12:50-12:55	
5) Brainstorm and Discuss Action Items	12:55-1:30	Interactive discussion of potential actions to include in the plan
6) Priority Projects Discussion	1:30-1:55	Discussion on Priority Projects
7) Next Steps	1:55-2:00	Next meeting scheduled for: March 27, 2026 12pm-2pm
8) Adjourn	2:00	

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Include a detailed description of the accommodation you will need along with your contact info. Please make your request as early as possible; allowing at least 5 days advance notice. Last minute requests will be accepted but may be impossible to fill. Please call (603) 994-3500 or email info@straffordrpcnh.gov



STRAFFORD

Regional Planning Commission

DATE: February 27, 2026
TO: Strafford EDD Strategy Committee Members
FROM: Jen Czysz, Executive Director
Natalie Gemma, Senior Regional Planner
Mike Polizzotti, Senior Economic Development Planner
RE: February 27, 2026 Strategy Committee Meeting – 2026-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)

Greetings Strategy Committee Members,

Thank you all for a productive inaugural meeting last month. For the February 27th Strategy Committee meeting, we are looking forward to working with you all on finalizing the draft Themes and Goals for the upcoming CEDs, brainstorming specific action items that support these goals, and discussing how we will solicit and rank Priority Projects that promote regional economic development.

The attachments in this meeting packet include the following:

- The draft meeting minutes for the January Strategy Committee meeting
- Updated drafted Themes and Goals for the 2026-2030 CEDs
- Action items from the 2021-2025 CEDs

The draft Themes and Goals have been updated to incorporate feedback individually received via email from Strategy Committee members and SRPC Commissioners since the last meeting. At this February meeting, we will devote some of our time to walking through these updated draft themes, incorporating any final feedback from the committee, and formally approving them. Please come prepared to share any feedback you may have on these updated draft themes and goals.

After this discussion, time on the agenda has been set aside for a preliminary discussion and brainstorm on key actions that can support these goals and themes. Located in this meeting packet are the action items from the 2021-2025 CEDs, that may provide insights into the scope of actions taken in CEDs in the past.

Additionally, we will also discuss Priority Projects solicitation, including brainstorming strategies for ranking priority projects by their projected impact on regional economic development.

Our upcoming meeting schedule beyond February for the 2026-2030 CEDs update is:

- Friday, March 27 from 12pm-2pm
- Friday, April 24 from 12pm-2pm
- Friday, May 29 from 12pm-2pm

STRAFFORD REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12, Rochester, New Hampshire 03867

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A light lunch of sandwiches and beverages will be provided for the upcoming meeting on February 27th.

Thank you for your commitment to the development of the next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Strafford region.

Meeting of the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee
Friday, January 30, 2026 12:00 – 2:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting (Conference Rm 1A, SRPC Office & via Zoom)

1. Introductions & Welcome

In person attendance: Bonnie McNair, Somersworth Chamber of Commerce; Darin Roark, MGBW Wentworth Douglas; Dennis Mcann, SEDC; Ernie Creveling, Town of Barrington; James Burdin, Dover Economic Development; Joe Friedman, Durham, Skyline realty; John Shea, Somersworth School District; John Burke, Business Bank; John Randolph, GSDNH; Karen Immel, NH BEA; Margaret Joyce, Dover Chamber of Commerce; Michele Shepard, Granite YMCA; Michelle Mears, Somersworth Planning Department; Mike Scala, City of Rochester; Robert McGann, NH Community College System; Shannon Rogers, UNH Extension; Leo Nentwig, City of Rochester; Jen Czysz, SRPC, Mike Polizzotti, SRPC

Zoom: Dave Walker, RPC; James Rather, SMPDC; Tori Jennison, Strafford County; Natalie Gemma, SRPC

2. EDD and Strategy Committee Orientation

J. Czysz provided an overview of SRPC and the Economic Development District. She stated that Strafford Regional Planning Commission is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire and one of only two that also acts as an Economic Development District (EDD). It is also the newest EDD in the state. Economic Development Districts are designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. SRPC was designated in 2015, but wasn't formally included in EDA's budget as an EDD until 2021, when we first received our full partnership planning grant.

M. Polizzotti provided an overview of SRPC's role as an Economic Development District (EDD). As an EDD, SRPC is responsible for maintaining the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), supporting special projects, offering technical assistance to communities, conducting broader economic development planning, and creating opportunities for collaboration among regional economic development stakeholders. M. Polizzotti explains how the Strategy Committee supports the development of the region's CEDS. He noted that engagement with stakeholders began in 2025, and continued feedback from Strategy Committee members today will help shape the region's five-year economic development vision.

The SRPC Commissioners, serving as the EDD's governing board, hold final authority to adopt the CEDS. The Strategy Committee contributes diverse expertise to help shape the CEDS, which serves as the region's strategic plan for economic development and



resilience. The CEDS undergoes a full update every five years, with annual mini-updates, following a cycle that begins with a Fall kickoff, development from January through May, and adoption in June.

3. Review 2021-20225 CEDS Themes and Structure

The group reviewed the nine themes that made up the 2021-2025 CEDS, and brainstormed what aspects of these continue to be priorities for the region. The group discussed housing as an economic foundation; workforce and education; demographic shifts and their impacts; community vibrancy; healthcare access and affordability; economic diversification and downtown vitality; expanding local economic development capacity; tourism and natural assets; fiscal health and property taxes; regional collaboration; and marketing regional assets for growth.

4. Break

5. Review SOAR, add Refinements and Additions

The group discussed aspirations such as strengthening civic engagement through partnerships, collaboration, and community involvement, as well as increasing awareness and promotion of regional resources and businesses, including high-quality schools and vibrant downtowns.

For the discussion on opportunities, the group highlighted the importance of expanding collaboration and improving coordination across regional efforts; developing strategies to attract younger families by promoting housing options, outdoor recreation, and nightlife; and exploring a minimal sales tax to help reduce rising property taxes and support public education, particularly by leveraging tourism revenue.

6. Next Steps

M. Polizzotti stated that following today's discussion, we will compile the feedback gathered from both activities along with input collected over the past several months. Using this information, we will develop preliminary draft themes for the CEDS.

Before the next meeting, these draft themes will be included in your meeting packet for review. At that meeting, we plan to discuss your thoughts and reactions to the proposed themes.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Megan Taylor-Fetter

Strafford Economic Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Summary of Changes to Drafted Themes

- Additional emphasis on the connections needed between businesses and educational institutions to ensure alignment between skills and needs.
- Additional language to promote strong civic engagement
- Discussions on employers supported housing opportunities.

Proposed Lenses, Themes, and Initial Draft Goals

The lenses, themes, and goals below have been developed based on extensive feedback received during SRPC's Comprehensive Plan Update workshop held in April 2025, the Strafford EDD Board of Directors meeting held in November 2025, and the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee Meeting held in January 2026.

Proposed Lenses

These lenses are overarching principles that will impact many, if not all, of the themes that follow.

- **Regional Partnerships and Collaboration:** Strengthening public and private partnerships, expanding civic engagement and community involvement, and building economic development and volunteer capacity.
- **Resiliency and Future Readiness:** Increasing the region's ability to anticipate, withstand, adapt to, and recover from disruptions such as economic shocks, environmental factors, and demographic shifts.
- **Quality of Life and Community Identity:** Preserving, leveraging, and enhancing the natural, cultural, and community attributes and quality of life factors that define our region and attract and retain families, workers, and businesses.
- **Age Friendliness:** Plan for changing demographics- including an aging population and fewer children- that will impact workforce, housing, childcare, healthcare, and business operations.

Proposed Themes and Associated Goals

1. Housing: *Expand diverse and affordable housing options that support workforce and economic growth by addressing supply constraints, encouraging adaptive reuse and redevelopment, and ensuring new development aligns with the region's natural resources.*

- Address housing supply constraints across all housing types and affordability (including tax burdens) to better attract and retain families and workers.
- Explore adaptive reuse and redevelopment opportunities.
- Balance housing development and the environment.
- Plan for development in coordination with water and sewer capacity.
- Forge strategic partnerships that explore the potential for large employers to provide housing opportunities for workers and their families.

2. Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship: *Build a resilient and innovative regional economy by supporting businesses and entrepreneurs, understanding and helping industries adapt to emerging social, environmental, and technological trends, and strengthening data-driven decision-making.*

- Monitor and help businesses and economic development stakeholders respond to emerging trends and challenges (e.g. tariffs, technological advancement, energy production and storage, shifting market conditions).
- Support businesses and entrepreneurship through resource navigation, connecting businesses/entrepreneurs to tools, technical assistance, and funding opportunities.
- Cultivate a strong business community through networking/public-private partnership opportunities.
- Continue to maintain robust data metrics to guide decision making, track economic performance, and identify opportunities for growth.
- Promote the region's specialty industries and innovation (aerospace, advanced manufacturing, etc.).
- Address property tax pressures.
- Support business attraction and retention strategies that diversify the tax based and reduce reliance on property taxes, while improving understanding of how state business taxes influence local tax pressures.

- Look into diversification of energy types to power cost effective, sustainable business operations and economic activity.
- Capitalize on the region's strong broadband infrastructure as a competitive advantage and strengthen digital literacy initiatives.

3. Workforce, Education, and Childcare: *Support a sustainable, long term talent pipeline by addressing workforce challenges and emerging trends, addressing skills gaps, and enhancing high-quality education systems.*

- Understand and identify opportunities to address workforce challenges, including attraction and retention.
- Identify and align current and emerging business needs with workforce training and education (addressing skills gaps).
- Promote, leverage, and enhance the region's high-quality education systems (K-12, technical training, and Higher Ed) to strengthen long-term talent development.
- Support the expansion of childcare affordability and availability to support workforce participation.
- Explore the promotion of employer sponsored childcare programs.

4. Healthy and Vibrant Communities: *Leverage, enhance, and protect the region's unique assets and identity that make it a place where people want to live, visit, and do business.*

- Preserve and market the region's unique natural, cultural, and recreational assets as a means to attract and retain families, workers, and businesses.
- Identify opportunities to boost downtown vibrancy and promote community pride and respect.
- Strengthen and promote strong "community feel, sense of place".
- Support healthy lifestyles and communities.
- Promote healthcare access and affordability.
- Improve connections between recreation, natural assets, and town centers.
- Improve connectivity and transportation access for all, including walkers, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers, within and between communities.
- Promote thoughtful land use planning for emerging uses, such as data centers, to protect community health, character, and quality of life.

Performance Measure	2021 Performance
Unique attendees at Board of Directors meetings.	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred.
Thirty-day public comment period prior to adoption? (yes/no)	Yes
Economic indicators in the SRPC Regional Data Snapshot were updated to include the latest available data as part of the annual CEDS update? (yes/no)	Yes – The 2021-2025 CEDS corresponds with the release of SRPC’s inaugural Regional Data Snapshot. That document includes protocols to update indicators as data sources release new data.
Total SRPC action items identified for implementing CEDS goals.	XX - See the total list below or see each chapter for actions related to individual themes.
Total number of action items completed within the five-year cycle.	N/A – discussion of implementation will begin after adoption of the CEDS.
Number of action items with significant progress towards completion, or ongoing action items that were addressed within the period covered by this update.	N/A – discussion of implementation will begin after adoption of the CEDS.



SRPC Action Plan

The following is a compiled list of all SRPC action items identified in the CEDS. SRPC will begin tracking progress towards these action items after adoption of the CEDS in 2021, and future CEDS updates will provide status updates for each action item.



Economic Growth

- Promote open communication with businesses in the region to learn about how they have been impacted by COVID-19 and provide them with targeted support.
- Convene and advocate for businesses and other organizations by conducting weekly Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders calls while promoting regional engagement.
- Network and collaborate with municipal stakeholders and agencies such as the Small Business Development Center, Center for Women and Enterprises, Chambers of Commerce, and non-profits organizations to increase capacity and technical assistance to businesses.
- Conduct research (business trends and needs) and provide data to municipalities to assist them in their decision-making.
- Engage in activities that benefit distressed communities and underserved populations, such as providing support to businesses with limited English proficiency.
- Provide technical assistance to municipalities, businesses, and non-profits in our region to support recovery efforts and lessen the economic impacts of the pandemic.
- Research and disseminate high-level information of state and federal economic relief aid

programs for businesses.

- Collaborate with partners to create workshops targeted for business in our region.
- Help municipalities with economic development projects and help them identify funding sources for implementation.



Business Operations

- Increase efficiency by helping workplaces create a more digitized system to be more resilient.
- Advocate for equal access to reliable broadband and technological upgrades.
- Help service industries move towards more sustainable models by advocating for paid sick leave and wages that do not mostly depend on tipping and service fees.
- Disseminate information and support businesses by connecting them to technical and financial assistance, information, and other general resources to help them increase their capacity.
- Promote education and advocacy on behalf of businesses and organizations.
- Encourage open dialogue and collaboration between municipalities, organizations, and other regions through Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders' meetings.
- Create a platform to support networking, peer to peer communication, and a centralized place where businesses can access information (Mighty Small: <http://mightysmall.io>).
- Assist with language barriers and help ensure minority-owned businesses have equal access to resources, support, and information.



Housing

- Facilitate housing outreach and regional discussions with stakeholders regarding the impacts of housing on the health of the economy.
- Help municipalities incorporate housing into economic development planning through discussions with representatives of the business community – e.g., through the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders weekly calls.
- Support and advocate zoning reforms to ensure communities have access to more housing at affordable prices.
- Help businesses understand the overall health and impact that housing has on workplaces.
- Update the SRPC Housing Needs Assessment.



Infrastructure

- Continue to operate the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders platform for the regular sharing of information and ideas.
- Explore opportunities to better-integrate the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders into existing networks or with key partner organizations at the state, regional, and local levels.¹⁴⁰
- Continue to work with municipalities to ensure that local hazard mitigation plans are updated regularly to improve the resilience of municipal infrastructure and encourage more resilient development patterns and techniques.
- Continue to work with SRPC's coastal municipalities to plan for the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on their communities.
- Continue to provide technical assistance to regulated MS4 communities to update their regulations or complete planning or infrastructure projects in compliance with their MS4 permits.

- Analyze our region’s broadband capabilities and plan for addressing identified weak points; specifics can include updates to the 2015 Broadband Plan, promotion of news and information related to broadband planning in New Hampshire, and direct technical assistance to municipalities seeking to improve their broadband access.
- Maintain an up-to-date Priority Project List for the purpose of supporting local infrastructure projects and advocate on behalf of priority projects to potential funders.
- Maintain an up-to-date Regional Master Plan for the purpose of providing local and regional planning data to identify infrastructure needs and potential solutions.



Mobility and Accessibility

- Increase the role of downtowns as economic hubs by making them more walkable, bikeable, and ADA accessible.
- Increase the connectivity between communities by linking them with multi-modal infrastructure that includes public transit options and safe routes for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Promote development of walkable, bikeable infrastructure in town centers, downtowns, and commercial areas.
- Decrease transportation dependency by promoting housing development that enables workers to live near their jobs and other services.
- Increase transportation options for people without vehicle access, including seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income households, to reach essential services.
- Incentivize new mixed-use, high-density development along major corridors to increase transportation efficiency and increase transit ridership.
- Increase accessibility for people with disabilities by adding ramps, railings, curb cuts and platforms so that they can reach essential and leisure services.
- Ensure last-mile freight access to town centers and important commercial destinations.
- Improve capacity of existing passenger and freight rail.
- Improve coverage of broadband internet services where gaps currently exist.



Age Friendliness

- Support and encourage transportation projects that promote an inviting and well-serviced region.
- Continue and develop the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholder collaboration to ensure we are working with economic development leaders in our communities.
- Stay involved with food security issues and research potential funding sources.
- Update our regional Housing Needs Assessment with age-friendly and equitable policies in mind.
- Share feedback from Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions (CHAT) community vitality surveys.
- Promote inclusion in AARP livable communities to our municipalities.¹⁴¹
- Share community assessments from CHAT with opportunities and concepts for age-friendliness.
- Promote outdoor recreation opportunities (POP!).



Workforce and Education

- Update our housing needs assessment, remain in contact with local agencies and organizations to maintain updated housing data.

- Maintain and promote work with our Economic Recovery Coordinator to help with business operations updates and efficiency.
- Work with the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders to explore and develop workforce pipelines.
- Work with municipalities to determine needs, gaps, and opportunities.
- Convene employers and chambers and potential employees.
- Share information.
- Research-potentially monthly or quarterly dispatches on needs, gaps etc.
- Partner with UNH and educational institutions to create relationships.



Community Vibrancy

- Promote recreation sites through projects such as the Promoting Outdoor Play project (POP!).
- Advocate for policies that support the expansion of outdoor dining and retail.
- Encourage conversation between organizations and economic development stakeholders.
- Support main street businesses by helping them gain access to financial resources and technical support to enhance their operations.
- Assist with initiatives that support affordable housing and mixed-use development to create inclusive opportunities in our communities, such as the Brownfields program.
- Leverage SRPC's Brownfields Program to increase opportunities for facility rehabilitation, development and land acquisition and maintenance to strengthen and promote vibrant communities.



Childcare

- Provide assistance to businesses around operations. Our economic recovery coordinator can help to find ways to modify operations to be more viable.
- Collect regional data on the childcare system.
- Connect providers to funding resources from state and federal opportunities.
- Promote collaboration and information sharing systems

RULES OF PROCEDURE

*Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization, and
Strafford Economic Development District*

Meeting Etiquette

Be present at the scheduled start of the meeting.

Be respectful of the views of others.

Ensure that only one person talks at a time. Raising your hand to be recognized by the chair or facilitator is good practice.

Do not interrupt others or start talking before someone finishes.

Do not engage in cross talk.

Avoid individual discussions in small groups during the meeting. When one person speaks, others should listen.

Active participation is encouraged from all members.

When speaking, participants should adhere to topics of discussion directly related to agenda items.

When speaking, individuals should be brief and concise when speaking.

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission & Metropolitan Planning Organization holds both public meetings and public hearings.

For public meetings, guests are welcome to observe, but should follow proper meeting etiquette allowing the meeting to proceed uninterrupted. Members of the public who wish to be involved and heard should use venues such as Citizen Forum, Public Hearings, Public Comment Periods, outreach events, seminars, workshops, listening sessions, etc.