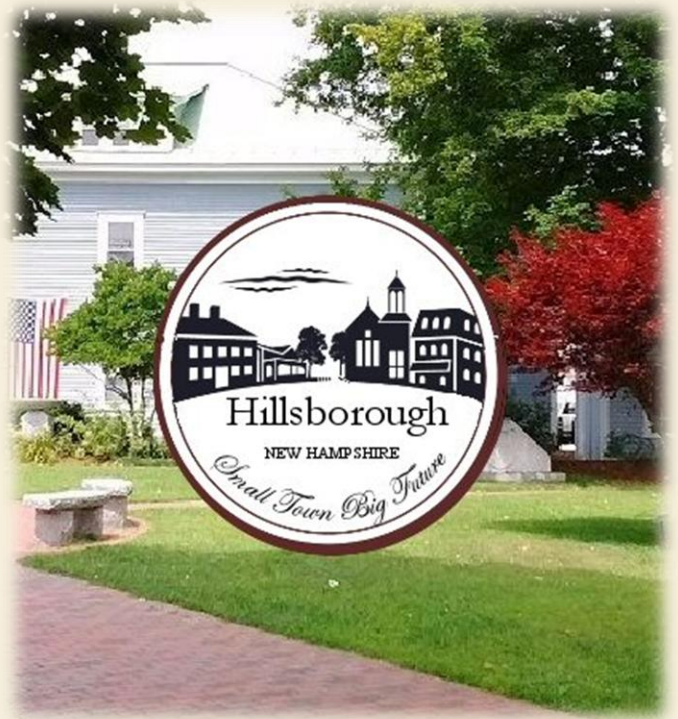


Town Of Hillsborough, New Hampshire

2025 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

| September 15, 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Economic Development Commission worked to develop this Economic Development Plan, in collaboration with the Planning Board, Select Board, and general public. It explores economic data and well as considers Hillsborough's economy in the context of that of the larger Central New Hampshire Region. It includes a survey that, in addition to the data and analysis in this plan, identified recommendations on a short, intermediate, and long-term basis.

The main finding of the Economic Development Plan is that Hillsborough has a lot of potential to capitalize on. There are opportunities to expand the workforce and build upon current successes such as the revitalization efforts of downtown and brownfields cleanup efforts. In short, Hillsborough has seen some positive economic growth, and this plan represents a plan to maintain that momentum.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANALYSIS INCLUDE:

- Hillsborough has a diverse economy for a community of its size, notably a solid economic base. Despite this there are opportunities to expand into other sectors.
- A mix of a rural quality of life coupled with an up-and-coming downtown make Hillsborough a draw.
- Hillsborough can capitalize on commuter and tourist traffic due to its location between Concord and Keene.
- Hillsborough has a younger median age that is younger than the county and state's.
- The unemployment rate in Hillsborough is less than that of the county and state, but so too is the labor force participation rate. This suggests a "hidden workforce" that, coupled with a lower median age, could make the community a draw for new businesses.
- The Town already has several economic development tools in place. These include tax incentive zones, a mixed-use gateway zone, and a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Zone.

Recommendations were developed from the analysis and input of the various boards and committees, as well as the public. These were broken into Short Term (two years or less), Intermediate Term (two to five years) and Long Term (more than five years) recommendations.

IN GENERAL, THE RECOMMENDATIONS SEEK TO:

- Capitalize and build upon existing successes.
- Bring as many tools to bear on economic development as possible.
- Address infrastructure needs.
- Allow for the expansion of existing businesses.
- Attract new businesses.

- Balance community character and development by incorporating what makes Hillsborough, “Hillsborough” into economic development.
- Communicate the uniqueness of Hillsborough to the region, state, and nation.
- Capitalize on Hillsborough’s location.
- Above all: celebrate our community and lean into shaping our economic future!

INTRODUCTION

A thriving community encompasses a robust and dynamic economy that offers the necessary jobs and services for its residents. This Economic Development Plan establishes the groundwork for reaching these objectives. Utilizing economic and demographic information, along with diverse analyses and economic forecasts from the state, the Hillsborough Economic Development Commission has crafted this plan to bolster current businesses and pinpoint opportunities for local economic growth.



A SNAPSHOT OF HILLSBOROUGH'S ECONOMY

A blend of demographic and economic data, along with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, can provide insights into a community's economy and highlight potential growth opportunities. Using a SWOT analysis, in conjunction with US Census data, economic information from the State of New Hampshire, and future economic forecasts, a profile of Hillsborough's economy was created. This profile can serve as a basis for formulating an

economic vision and recommendations to turn that vision into reality. The main points from each analysis are as follows:

LOCATION QUOTIENT ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS FOR THE COUNTY:

- Hillsborough has some strong industry clusters across several sectors that should continue to be supported by the Town. These include Agricultural, Wholesale, Retail, and Food Service, as well as Transportation/Warehousing, Manufacturing, and Information Services.
- When coupled with the County’s projected economic growth estimates, opportunities in Professional Services, Health Care, and Entertainment could be targeted to diversify the economy even more.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS:

- Like most of the Northeast, Hillsborough has an aging population, but it is notably younger than the county and state which can be attractive to businesses seeking to expand or relocate.
- Hillsborough has a larger segment of the employment-aged population that is not in the labor force. Coupled with the fact that Hillsborough residents are commuting, on average, farther to work than those in the County and State as a whole, and it suggests that there could potentially be an available workforce to support new or expanding industry.
- A potential challenge is that Hillsborough has a smaller percentage of college-educated workers than does the county or state. This could prove a challenge to efforts to expand into healthcare or professional services and attracting a greater percentage of college-educated workers will be needed.

Brownfield Site

Brownfield sites, often simply referred to as *brownfields*, are defined by the Federal Government as “... abandoned, idled or underused industrial and commercial properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.”

— Environmental Law Institute (ELI)

SWOT ANALYSIS:

- Capitalize on Hillsborough’s location, halfway between Concord and Keene. This could be enhanced by highlighting the key industries in town like manufacturing.
- The lower cost of living is another potential draw, as lower housing costs could be found in Hillsborough, as opposed to Concord or Keene (or Manchester, too).
- The quality of life is a significant draw and this can help draw workers to the community, especially those in industries that Hillsborough may seek to expand into, such as healthcare and professional services.
- Infrastructure needs, including sewer, roads, and sidewalks need to be addressed.

AN ECONOMIC VISION FOR HILLSBOROUGH

Hillsborough is well positioned to capitalize on several opportunities and recent successes. Hillsborough’s location between Concord and Keene presents a perfect opportunity to promote a walkable village, relaxed quality of life, and outdoor recreation for those traveling east and west and those looking for a great location for a business. A strong mix of existing businesses can serve to draw others to town, while a younger, solid workforce can provide a foundation for growth. Hillsborough’s economic development approach then should seek to support all of these elements.

HILLSBOROUGH’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION:

- Promote Hillsborough and its successes.
- Help existing businesses grow and expand.
- Attract new businesses.
- Support efforts that strengthen quality of life, including recreation and community building.
- Support and promote the continued revitalization of downtown.
- Find “solutions” to regional economic challenges while ensuring that we share our regional strengths. In short, promote what makes Hillsborough unique.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the most basic level, municipal economic development seeks to attract and retain businesses within the community and help them expand. Efforts to do so can involve activities that are easily quantified and those that are more difficult to quantify. For example, the approval of an RSA 79E application to delay tax increases, allowing a restaurant to expand, clearly links the activity – or tool

A Snapshot Of Hillsborough’s School District

A community’s school system is a vital part of what makes it a draw for residents, and in turn, businesses. Founded in 1954, the Hillsborough-Deering Cooperative School District remains dedicated to delivering educational services to students. The district benefits from a highly qualified teaching workforce, with sixty-six percent (66%) of its school’s educators possessing master’s Degrees, while Washington Elementary School maintains sixty percent (60%) of its teaching staff with advanced degrees. As of October 2024, the district served 1,184 students, including 269 students receiving special education services and 40% qualifying for free or reduced lunch programs. The educational environment maintains favorable conditions with a student-to-teacher ratio of 10.4:1 and average class sizes of 20 students. Following graduation, approximately 60% of district students continue their education at the post-secondary level in four communities: Hillsborough, Deering, Washington, and Windsor. This collaborative district has shown remarkable educational progress in recent years, significantly enhancing Hillsborough’s attractiveness as a preferred community for families.

Academic performance metrics reflect the Hillsborough-Deering Cooperative School District’s commitment to excellence. As of the 2023-2024 School year, the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC) dropout rate for the district was just 2.15%. In 2016, the US News and World Report ranked the high school 11th among 87 New Hampshire high schools. This recognition demonstrated the school’s acute capacity for adaptation and continuous growth, evidenced by its ranking just five years prior, when the school placed 81st out of 86 schools in the former New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) evaluations.

Community Center

During the 2018 Master Plan process, the survey and visioning session identified a community center as a priority. Support for the Community Center was also shown in the EDC survey that was distributed as part of this Plan development process (See Appendix A). From an economic development standpoint, a community center helps create a gathering place in town but also strengthens the sense of “community” which is an economic draw.

– to economic development. Other tools may be more difficult to show such linkages. An annual community event may generate foot-traffic for businesses, but it can also make a community feel like a “destination” which encourages a business to move to or stay in town to be part of the action. A comprehensive economic development strategy then seeks to capitalize on both types of tools.

Economic development tools for a community can take a variety of forms. They often include tax incentives, marketing, zoning changes, and events. In New Hampshire, the primary tax incentives include RSA 79E, the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, which allows for a community to delay the increase in taxes that may result from expanding a business, and the RSA 162N Economic Revitalization Zone Tax Credit which allows for relief on state business taxes for moving to or expanding within a participating community. Hillsborough has

enacted both. A final tax credit option is RSA 72:81 which allows for property tax exemptions for commercial or industrial uses, or both.

Marketing can take the form of promoting the town specifically or collaborating with developers and real estate agents to highlight available properties within the community. This, along with tax incentives, are a common economic development tool used by communities.

Zoning changes involve assessing, or “auditing” the zoning to determine whether or not the current regulatory framework allows for the development of growing segments of the economy. This tool can be used in concert with a Location Quotient (LQ) analysis which determines what the most significant business are in the local economy. Additionally, the state projects industry growth into the short term and this can also be used to assess the economic feasibility of the zoning ordinance. It is also important to understand how the zoning impacts housing, as a lack of housing can hamper economic development. Lastly, zoning that impacts quality of life should also be assessed such as recreation and open space.

Community events are most effective when they create buzz and get people to come to town to participate. These can be indoor, such as craft fairs or outdoor like a road race or seasonal event. Events that generate foot traffic, expose outsiders to the community, and overall, make a community a fun place to live can create a ripple effect in retaining or attracting businesses. Finally, events can create opportunities between local businesses which can strengthen their ties with the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HILLSBOROUGH INCLUDE:

- Actively promote the use of the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive (RSA 79E), Commercial/Industrial Tax Exemption (RSA 72:81) and North Branch Gateway Zone Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Plan: The challenge in promoting the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive, Commercial/Industrial Tax Exemption and North Branch Gateway Zone TIF stems from communicating their existence and how they are used. As part of an economic development website, Hillsborough can promote them with maps, provide contacts, and application materials. Fact sheets can also help to clearly convey these tools and how they are used.
- Address sewer capacity issues related to infiltration: Continue to promote coordination between the Town and the Hillsborough Water and Sewer Commission to address sewer capacity/infiltration issues.
- Develop and promote the use of Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs): The Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) program allows municipalities to establish certain zones in a community where a business can then seek a credit on its New Hampshire Business Profits Tax. To establish a zone or zones, the Town may apply to the program (administered by the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA).”) following a process outlined in NH RSA 162-N:8. The ERZ program currently has \$825,000 available per year for tax credits throughout the State of New Hampshire. To be eligible for the program, a designated zone must meet one of the following requirements:
 - (a) Unused or underutilized industrial parks; or
 - (b) Vacant land or structures previously used for industrial, commercial, or retail purposes but currently not so used due to demolition, age, relocation of the former occupant’s operations, obsolescence, deterioration, brownfields, or cessation of operation resulting from unfavorable economic conditions either generally or in a specific economics sector.
- Continue to assess/clean up Hillsborough’s brownfields sites: Assessment and cleanup have been underway for many years at the Woods Woolen Mill and Associated Electric sites. The Woods Woolen Mill site is most appropriate for a trail head/park use, while the Associated Electric parcel’s location on Main Street offers an opportunity for redevelopment in a key location.
- Form and support the Hillsborough Trails Committee: Many communities with successful trail systems have a Trails Committee that is dedicated to developing, maintaining, and promoting the trails in their community. In a time where a lack of volunteerism can be an issue, trails can bring new enthusiasm and bring some new people active in the community. A Trails Committee would likely consist primarily of local volunteers but would also be most effective if it is provided support and involvement from various boards and committees such as the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Economic Development

Commission. *CNHRPC staff are available to support the Trails Committee. Potential tasks to be undertaken by the Trails Committee could include:*

- Map existing trails, formal “official” trails and informal trails and paths
 - Map public lands where trail building is likely to be permissible
 - Identify connections between disconnected trail systems
 - Identify routes and methods to connect trails to people and destinations
 - Communicate with private landowners over permissions for public trails on private property
 - Assist the town in raising private and public funds for the purpose of trail development
 - Look for how trails can serve economic development purposes
 - Develop a vision for a trail system in Hillsborough.
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- *EV Charger Planning:* Support future grant applications and public/private partnerships to provide Level 1 and Level 2 EV chargers in strategic locations near the Central Business District.
 - *Henniker Street Improvements Long-Term Planning:* Henniker Street improvements are proposed for inclusion in the 2027-2036 NHDOT Ten-Year Plan. The project was the highest ranked project in the most recent regional Transportation Improvement Program. Henniker Street has antiquated storm drainage, a lack of sidewalk in most places, sidewalks in poor condition where they exist, no curbing, unsafe pedestrian crossings, and a lack of ADA compliance all need to be addressed to meet present and future needs. The proposed project would reconstruct the roadway to improve access management, upgrade storm water drainage, construct sidewalks, improve pedestrian crossings, and upgrade to ADA compliance.
 - *Downtown Parking Availability and Signage Analysis:* Continue to review previously completed parking utilization studies and signage plans to address concerns related to available parking to the Central Business District. Improving signage will enable the Town to provide better clarity on where the parking is located.
 - *Establish Economic Development Website Linked to Town Website:* Most municipal websites are geared towards local residents locating various services. An Economic Development website that promotes the Town in a way that is more of a marketing effort. Recreation, schools, housing, permitting, as well as economic and demographic data can help in that regard. Reviewing the website with an eye toward finding these elements of information in “one or two clicks” can help market the community. The website can also be used to highlight available Commercial/Industrial sites in partnership with property owners.
 - *The Establishment of Additional Gateway Zones:* The 2018 Master Plan has suggested two additional areas for Gateway Zones similar to the North Branch Gateway that was adopted in 2025. One potential gateway is along West Main Street to the west of Second New Hampshire Turnpike and south of Sulphur Hill Road. The other location is between Henniker

Street and the Contoocook River. These locations could provide a similar mix of development to that of the North Branch Gateway and address housing as well as economic needs.

- *Signage Directing Travelers to Downtown Businesses:* People traveling through the region often exit Routes 9/202 west of downtown and do not realize how close the restaurants, shops, and other services are from that exit. Signage directing them to additional businesses could help increase the amount of traffic in the village.

DEMOGRAPHIC, WORKFORCE, AND ECONOMIC DATA

A solid data picture is the foundation for a solid economic development plan. Understanding the demographics, workforce, and what the economic base consists of is the first step to developing a solid economic development plan. Demographics influences the makeup of the workforce, and the workforce supports the industries represented in the economic data.

KEY DATA TAKEAWAYS FOR HILLSBOROUGH:

For Hillsborough, there are several trends in the population and economic data that are of note from an economic development standpoint. These include:

- Population growth is slowing, though growth is expected to continue.
- While the Town's median age is close to 40, it is notably less than the county and state.
- Hillsborough has a smaller percentage of college graduates than the county and state.
- The Town has a smaller percentage of eligible residents participating in the labor force than the county and state.
- Hillsborough residents are commuting farther to work than the county as a whole or the state.
- The major industries in Hillsborough are similar to those of the county and state overall. The state does have a higher percentage of the workforce participating in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation than the town or county.
- The change in the number of businesses over time mirrors the variability of the county and state.
- Median income is somewhat similar to that of the state, though less than that of the county.
- The poverty rate in Hillsborough is similar to the county, and both are less than the state.

LOCATION QUOTIENT ANALYSIS

Identifying the industries that are vital to a community is a useful economic development tool. With this information, a community could ensure they are pursuing policies that strengthen these industries, and to pursue policies that attract businesses that support them, creating strong “industry clusters.” Finally, when compared to county and state industry projections, additional growth industries can be targeted for recruitment to the community.

A location quotient (LQ) is a primary tool for determining what industries are important to a community. It does so by comparing the share of a particular industry of a smaller geography to that of a larger one. For example, the share of retail for a hypothetical town could be compared to the share of retail for the county. This analysis will create a statistic – the LQ. An LQ closer to 0 means the industry in question is of equal importance or greater importance to the larger geography. The closer to 1 or more than 1 means that the industry in question is more important to the smaller geography. So, for example, in the example above resulted in an LQ of say, 0.3, the county’s economy is more dependent on retail than the town. For example, an LQ of 1.1 would mean the town depended on retail more than the county. Calculating an LQ is somewhat simple. The formula is: an LQ = (industry employment of smaller geography divided by the overall employment numbers) divided by (industry employment of larger geography divided by its overall employment numbers).

For Hillsborough, LQs were generated in comparison to Hillsborough County. The data was derived from the 2023 five-year Census ACS survey. It is important to note that often times the margin of error on the survey for certain industries in smaller geographies like Hillsborough can be higher than for larger geographies. That said, it can still be used to give a sense of what the importance of various industries are to the Town. Key findings for the LQ analysis were:

Excluding governmental jobs, the following industries in Hillsborough exceeded the threshold of 1, meaning they were more important to the Town than the County:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining (LQ of 21.3 – somewhat skewed due to geographic size, but still more important to the Town than the County)
- Wholesale Trade (LQ of 2.49)
- Retail Trade (LQ of 1.49)
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services (LQ of 1.39, likely driven by restaurants)

A second tier of industries that are close to the threshold of 1 and are also important to Hillsborough include:

- Transportation and warehousing, and utilities (LQ of 0.96)
- Manufacturing (LQ of 0.87)
- Information (LQ of 0.88)

The Educational services, and health care and social assistance industry sector shows as a high LQ (0.97) but this is likely due to the school system which is listed as one of the larger employers in Town.

The industries that are more important to the County than the Town represent potential areas for target recruitment to expand. Of note is that these industries, while closer to the 0 threshold, are not that far from 1, suggesting these industries already have a presence in Town. These include:

- Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing.
- Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management

The overall takeaway with Hillsborough's LQs is that there are several private sector industry clusters that the Town's economy has relied upon. There are also other industries that the Town could expand into to further diversify the economy.

LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY (2020-2030)

INDUSTRY	TOWN 2023 NUMBER	TOWN 2023 PERCENTAGE	COUNTY 2023 NUMBER	COUNTY 2023 PERCENTAGE	TOWN LQ
Base Industry: Total, All Industries	2,985	----	246,233	----	----
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	106	3.6%	411	0.2%	21.3
Construction	152	5.1%	19,926	8.1%	0.63
Manufacturing	351	11.8%	33,112	13.4%	0.87
Wholesale Trade	151	5.1%	4,995	2.0%	2.49
Retail Trade	489	16.4%	27,087	11.0%	1.49
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	134	4.5%	11,551	4.7%	0.96
Information	48	1.6%	4,490	1.8%	0.88
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate/ Rental/Leasing	123	4.1%	18,181	7.4%	0.56
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	284	9.5%	37,562	15.3%	0.62
Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	672	22.5%	57,195	23.2%	0.97
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	275	9.2%	16,278	6.6%	1.39
Other Services, Except Public Administration	87	2.9%	9,282	3.8%	0.77
Public Administration	113	3.8%	6,163	2.5%	1.51

Location quotient (LQ): ratio of analysis-industry employment in the analysis area to base-industry employment in the analysis area divided by the ratio of analysis-industry employment in the base area to base-industry employment in the base area. An LQ of 1 would indicate the employment concentration in the county or region is roughly the same as that of the state. An LQ below .80 indicates that the industry is less important locally while an LQ above 1.20 indicates more local importance.

COUNTY EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS BY INDUSTRY

The New Hampshire Labor Market Information Bureau produces economic projections by industry at the county and state level on a periodic basis. In looking at the projections, Hillsborough can assess what industries are expected to grow in an effort to attract a portion of the growth to Town. In looking at the projections, the following seem to be poised to grow significantly by 2030:

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. When compared to the LQs for Hillsborough, the following seem to be growth opportunities: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Health Care and Social Assistance. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation are already a significant sector for Hillsborough, and these projections suggest that the Town should continue to support this industry.



LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY 2020 TO 2030

NAICS CODE	INDUSTRY	2020 EST.	2030 PROJ.	NUMERIC CHANGE (2020- 2030)	% CHANGE (2020-2030)
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (INCL. SELF-EMPLOYED)		208,108	227,062	18,954	9.10%
101	Goods-Producing Industries	34,140	35,783	1,643	4.80%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	595	697	102	17.10%
21	Mining	61	58	-3	-4.90%
23	Construction	8,076	8,929	853	10.60%
31	Manufacturing	25,408	26,099	691	2.70%
102	Service Providing Industries	162,502	179,872	17,370	10.70%
22	Utilities	294	323	29	9.90%
42	Wholesale Trade	6,900	7,036	136	2.00%
44	Retail Trade	25,931	24,907	-1,024	-3.90%
48	Transportation & Warehousing	6,236	6,945	709	11.40%
51	Information	5,720	6,020	300	5.20%
52	Finance & Insurance	10,212	11,219	1,007	9.90%
53	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	2,182	2,399	217	9.90%
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	12,520	15,173	2,653	21.20%
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	3,025	2,899	-126	-4.20%
56	Administrative & Waste Management Services	10,839	11,919	1,080	10.00%
61	Educational Services	16,830	18,243	1,413	8.40%
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	28,985	34,099	5,114	17.60%
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	2,467	3,585	1,118	45.30%
72	Accommodation & Food Svcs.	12,756	15,895	3,139	24.60%
81	Other (Except Government)	8,502	10,004	1,502	17.70%
N/A	Government	9,103	9,206	103	1.10%
N/A	Self-employed Workers	11,466	11,407	-59	-0.50%

Source: NH Labor Market Information Bureau, 2023

STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITY, THREAT (SWOT) ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is a tool for evaluating Hillsborough’s economy by assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities available, and potential threats. Consider the following questions for the analysis:

- **STRENGTHS** | What strengths does Hillsborough have (draws/destinations, quality of life, infrastructure, education system, unique geography, sense of community, location, existing businesses, and organizations, etc.) and how will these strengths evolve moving forward?
- **WEAKNESSES** | What are the challenges (infrastructure, municipal funding, location, organizations/businesses needed as draws, quality of life draws, etc.) or needs in Town that may impact Hillsborough’s ability to attract or retain businesses?
- **OPPORTUNITIES** | How can Hillsborough capitalize on its strengths and how does it differentiate itself from the region and the state? What can the Town do to increase business attractiveness? Which key features and/or qualities specific to the town of Hillsborough can be highlighted to encourage businesses to establish themselves, and stick around?
- **THREATS** | Are there external factors (controllable and uncontrollable) that could potentially impede Hillsborough from retaining or attracting businesses (national/global economy, state funding, weather, etc.)?

With this information, Hillsborough can compare their results to that of the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Hillsborough can then look to develop strategies that: 1) ensure that the Town’s Strengths and Opportunities align with the region’s, and 2) how Hillsborough has “solutions” to the region’s Weaknesses and Threats. Finally, a SWOT can also inform the Economic Vision of the Town as well as understand how Hillsborough aligns with various industries and sectors of the economy.

HILLSBOROUGH SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Town’s Beauty And Rural Character, Natural Resources, And Historic Character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Located at a midpoint between Keene and Concord on a key arterial (US 202/NH 9). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hillsborough’s assets include a wide variety of conservation lands and numerous hiking trails, as well as the Contoocook River |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong Sense Of Local Engagement, People/Community Spirit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hillsborough is seen as a more affordable option for housing and commercial development ➤ Hillsborough has a walkable, compact downtown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Current redevelopment efforts in the Downtown area could lead to additional investment |

COMMUNITY WEAKNESSES/THREATS

- Empty Storefronts And Run-Down Buildings, Which Can Have A Negative Effect On Aesthetics And Investment
- Concerns About Protection Of Rural Character In The Face Of Development
- Changing Demographics And An Aging Workforce
- Issues with parking, notably confusion parking in Central Business District
- Inadequate sidewalks
- Tax burden for residents
- Sewer capacity challenges
- Limited dining and retail options
- Poor cell phone coverage and internet access in places
- The need to travel outside of Hillsborough for some basic shopping, dining, and entertainment

OPPORTUNITIES

- Investing In Downtown Beautification, Supporting Small Businesses, Improving Core Infrastructure, And Enhancing Access To The Contoocook River To Better Utilize Its Recreational Potential
- Establish A Community-Oriented Space For Events, Programs, And Social Engagement
- Use Available Economic Development And Land Use Regulation Tools Offer An Opportunity To Promote Appropriate And Sustainable Growth, Such As The Recently Approved North Branch Gateway Zone Tax Increment Finance (Tif) Plan And Accompanying Zoning Changes.
- Grow vocational training opportunities in the trades, as well as expanding training opportunities in tech and healthcare
- Expand local trail networks to leverage recreational tourism, enhance quality of life, and promote community wellness. The Hillsborough Riverwalk is an example of these efforts
- Study options for public transportation, such as a demand-response service or extension of existing bus services from other municipalities to support local mobility and economic connectivity
- Prioritize thoughtful, mixed-use developments along US 202/NH 9 that incorporate housing, retail, and office space while preserving the town's desired aesthetic character

CNHRPC REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ➤ Well-Educated Population | ➤ Good highway access | ➤ Business friendly environment |
| ➤ Relatively Low Business Costs (Real Estate, Wage Rates) | ➤ Strong presence of businesses in health, finance, & trade | ➤ High percentage of self-employed & work at home |
| ➤ Proximity Of Natural Resources/Outdoor Activities | ➤ More relaxed quality of life | ➤ Quality local schools (Grades K-12) |
| ➤ Centrally Located To Amenities & Urban Centers | ➤ Clean air/water | ➤ Many colleges/universities |
| ➤ Legislation Establishing Accessory Dwelling Unit Guidelines | ➤ Low unemployment | ➤ Communities with varied densities |

REGIONAL WEAKNESSES/THREATS

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ➤ Lack Of Labor Availability | ➤ Inconsistent broadband/telecommunications coverage | ➤ No major research university |
| ➤ Limited Public Transit, Including Commuter Rail | ➤ Limited public water/sewer | ➤ Workforce age and skills not always aligned |
| ➤ High Housing Costs & Lack Of Diversity | ➤ Opioid/drug epidemic and stigma | ➤ Low wages and high cost of living |
| ➤ Limited Tax Incentives | ➤ Lack of inter-municipal cooperation | ➤ High reliance on property taxes |
| ➤ Slow Pace Of Government Change | ➤ High price of utilities | ➤ Meeting aging population needs |
| ➤ High Student Debt | ➤ Differing needs in urban, suburban, and rural communities | |

OPPORTUNITIES

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ➤ Stronger partnerships between universities, local schools, businesses, governments, & industries | ➤ Coordinated marketing (towns, firms, brokers) | ➤ Regional branding, including an eye towards tourism |
| ➤ Available pre-approved sites inventory and fast- | ➤ Entrepreneur relations including incubator start-ups | ➤ Efficient access to development information – one stop shop website |
| | ➤ Improve housing diversity | |
| | ➤ Utilize synergies among seniors/young adults | |

OPPORTUNITIES (CONT.)

track planning board approval process	➤ Maintain quality of life by balancing natural resources/recreation needs with economic development	➤ Strengthening focus on transition of military to civilian careers
➤ More outreach to refugees and immigrants – under-utilized workforce	➤ Identify, engage, and reengage local champions for economic development projects	➤ High School training for trades
➤ Target industries to community strengths/assets		➤ Small business expansion
		➤ Support for local farms/local food sources

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The recommendations represent a wide range of tasks and tools that Hillsborough can use to make the economic vision a reality. Given this broad-based approach, some activities will be completed sooner than others. As such, the implementation plan seeks to break the recommendations down into short, intermediate, and long-term timelines. The list of recommendations can be found on pages six through eight of this Plan.

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

The Economic Development Commission was asked to prioritize the list of recommendations into Short (two years or less), Intermediate (between two and five years), and Long-Term (more than five years) Goals. The purpose of such a ranking is to guide funding prioritization and plan a timeline for action. The table below depicts the ranking.

HILLSBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

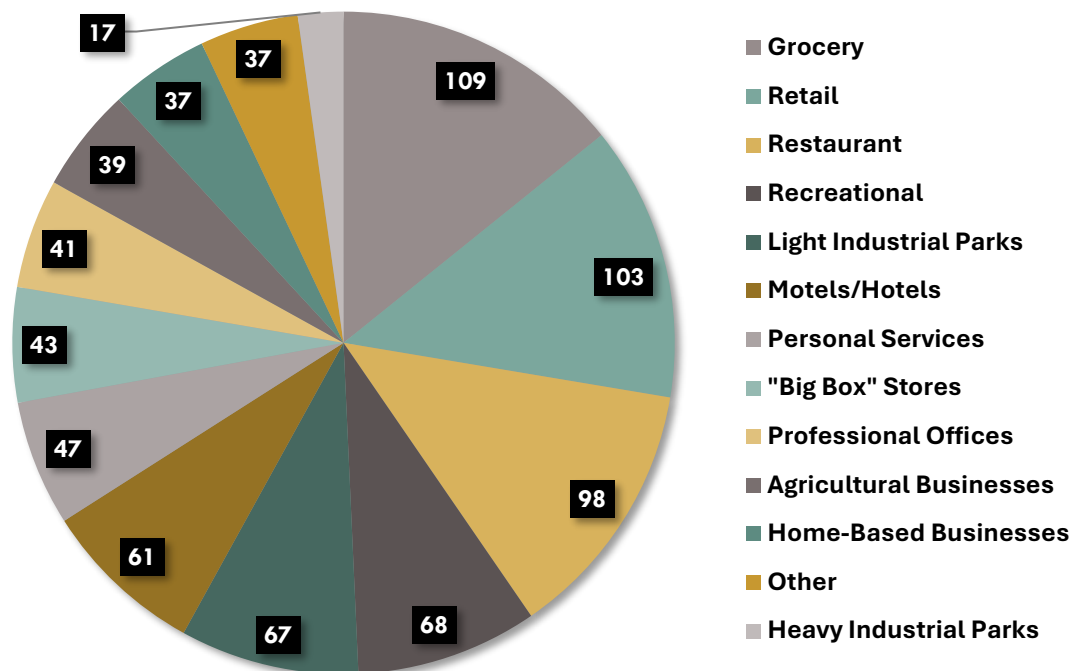
RECOMMENDATIONS	SHORT-TERM (≤2 Years)	INTERMEDIATE-TERM (2-5 YEARS)	LONG-TERM (>5 YEARS)
Actively Promote the use of the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive (RSA 79e), Commercial/Industrial Tax Exemption (RSA 72:81) and North Branch Gateway Zone Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Plan	X		
Address Sewer Capacity Issues Related To Infiltration	X	X	
Develop and promote the use of Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs)	X		
Continue To Assess/Clean Up Hillsborough's Brownfields Sites	X	X	
Form and support the Hillsborough Trails Committee	X		
EV Charger Planning		X	
Henniker Street Improvements Long-Term Planning			X
Downtown Parking Availability And Signage Analysis	X		
Establish Economic Development Website Linked To Town Website	X		
Establish Additional Gateway Zones	X	X	
Signage Directing Travelers To Downtown Businesses	X		

APPENDIX A: HILLSBOROUGH EDC SURVEY

OVERVIEW

In the Fall of 2024, the Hillsborough Economic Development Commission (EDC) took a significant step by creating and distributing a comprehensive community EDC Survey. The primary goal of this initiative was to gather in-depth insights into the economic and entrepreneurial challenges, needs, and future goals of the Town of Hillsborough. During the survey's active period, it garnered a total of 180 responses from residents. This survey, consisting of 16 thoughtfully crafted questions, provides essential information about how the residents of Hillsborough perceive the future of business and related development within their community. Key takeaways from the EDC Survey results are summarized below.

➤ Q.1 | Which of the Following commercial enterprises would you like to see within Hillsborough?*

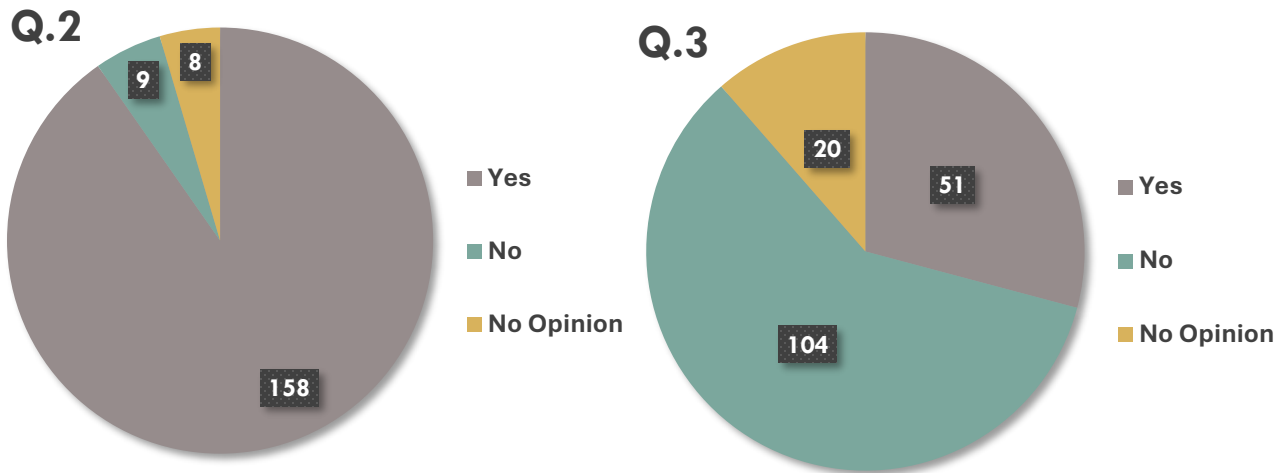


▣ *Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.

The **commercial enterprises** most sought after by respondents were grocery stores (62%), retail (58%), and restaurants (55%). Additionally, numerous respondents indicated that Hillsborough would benefit from an urgent or walk-in healthcare facility as well as a fitness center. Heavy Industrial Parks received the least support for commercial development, with only 10% in favor.

➤ **Q.2 & Q.3** | Should Hillsborough promote rehabilitation of vacant/dilapidated buildings?*

Should Hillsborough promote infill development*?

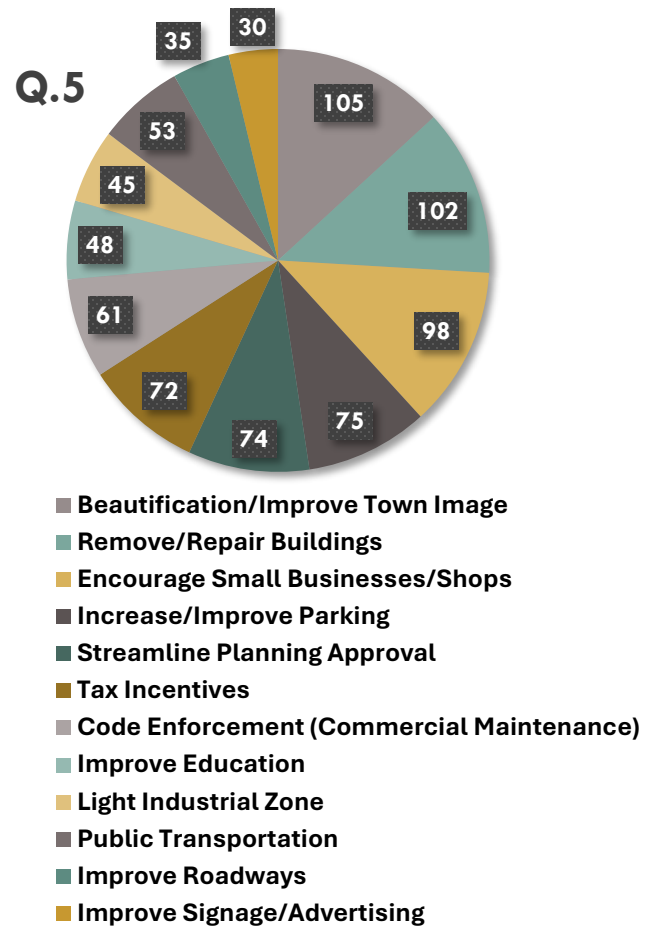
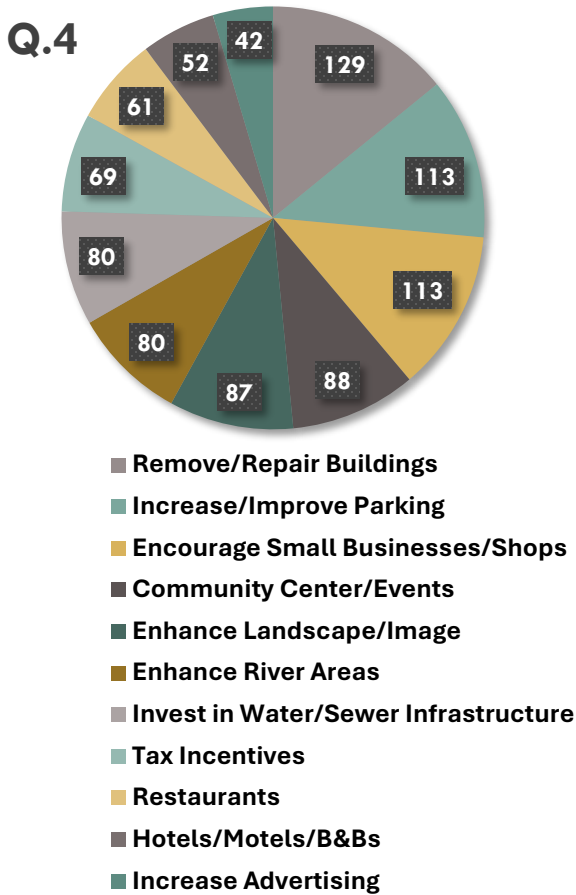


■ *Infill development enhances density in a village by constructing new buildings in gaps between existing ones. It may also require buildings to be closer to the sidewalk instead of off set (set back) by a minimum distance.

■ *Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses..

The strategy of **rehabilitating vacant or dilapidated buildings** received overwhelming support, with 90% of respondents in favor of it. On the other hand, only 30% of those surveyed showed support for the idea of **promoting infill development** within the town. This stark contrast highlights a clear preference among the community for revitalizing existing structures over pursuing new developments in underutilized areas.

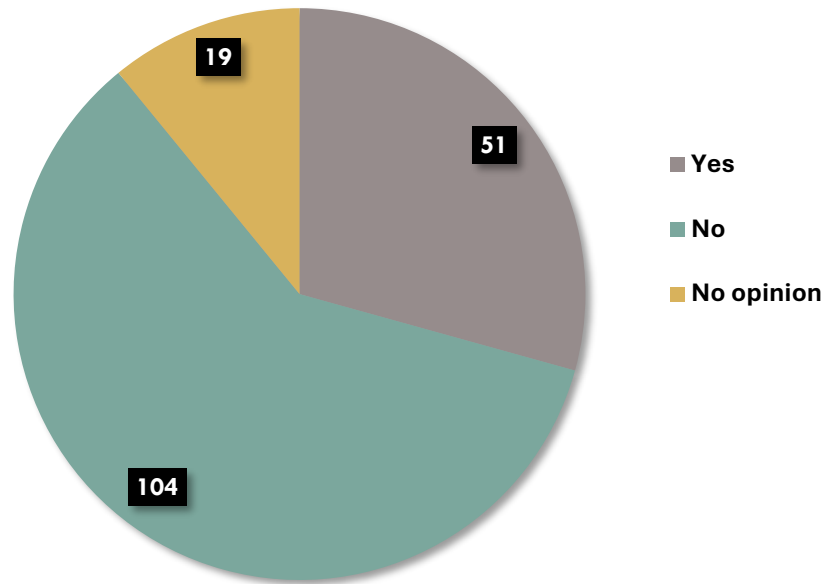
- **Q.4 & Q.5** | What should the Town do to encourage revitalization or growth in the Central Business District/Downtown? *What should the Town do to encourage revitalization or growth in the Commercial District?*



▣ *Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.

Key strategies for promoting **revitalization in the Central Business District/Downtown** involved the removal and repair of existing structures (73%), enhancement of parking facilities (64%), and support for small businesses and retail outlets (64%). Participants emphasized similar leading strategies in the **Commercial District**, with the addition of a new primary focus on enhancing the Town's image, landscaping, and sidewalks.

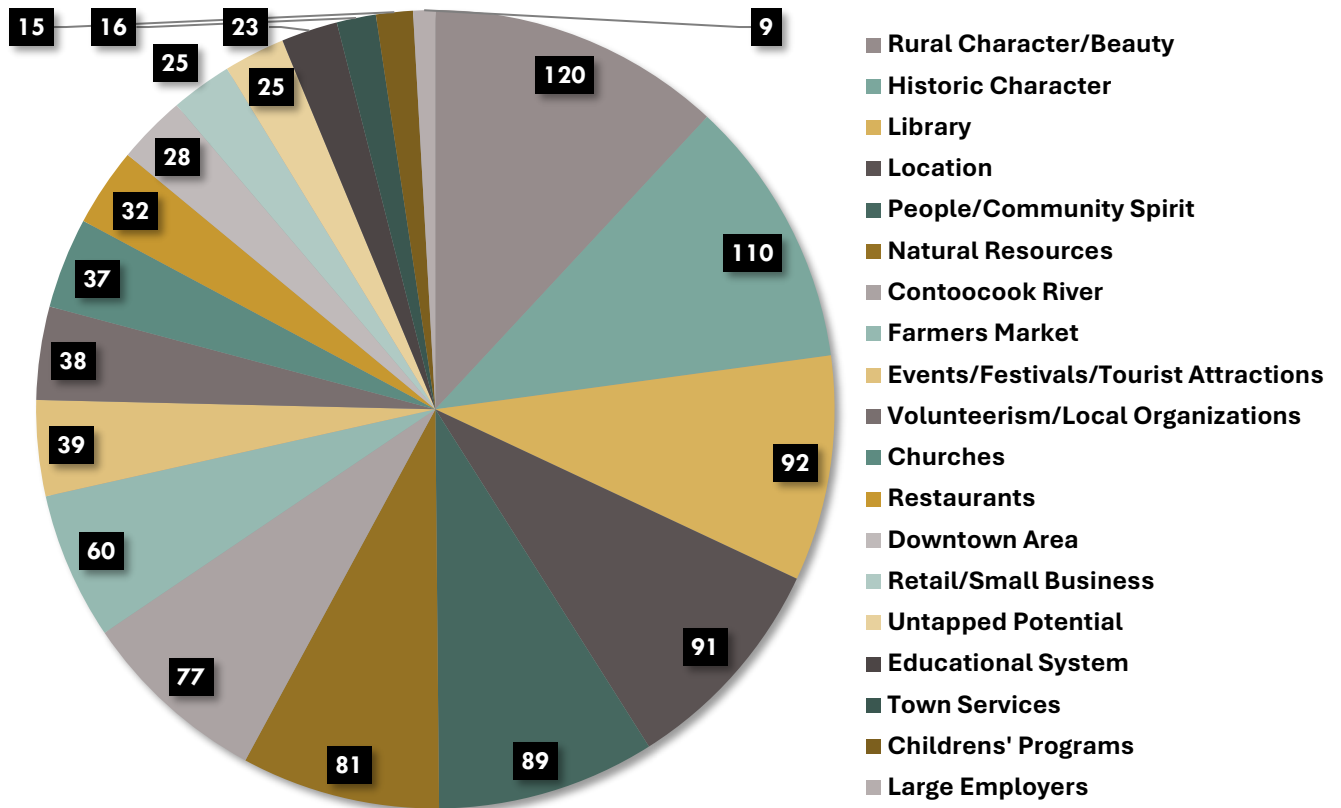
➤ **Q.6** | Do you feel that the parking is adequate in the Central Square area?*



▣ *Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.

A considerable number of survey participants, accounting for 60%, expressed the opinion that there is a lack of **adequate parking facilities in the Central Square area**. Moreover, many respondents provided additional comments highlighting that the Post Office and Fire Station should not be considered appropriate parking locations, as they serve specific functions that do not align with parking needs. In addition, several individuals noted the importance of enhancing signage in the area to better guide drivers and improve the overall parking experience.

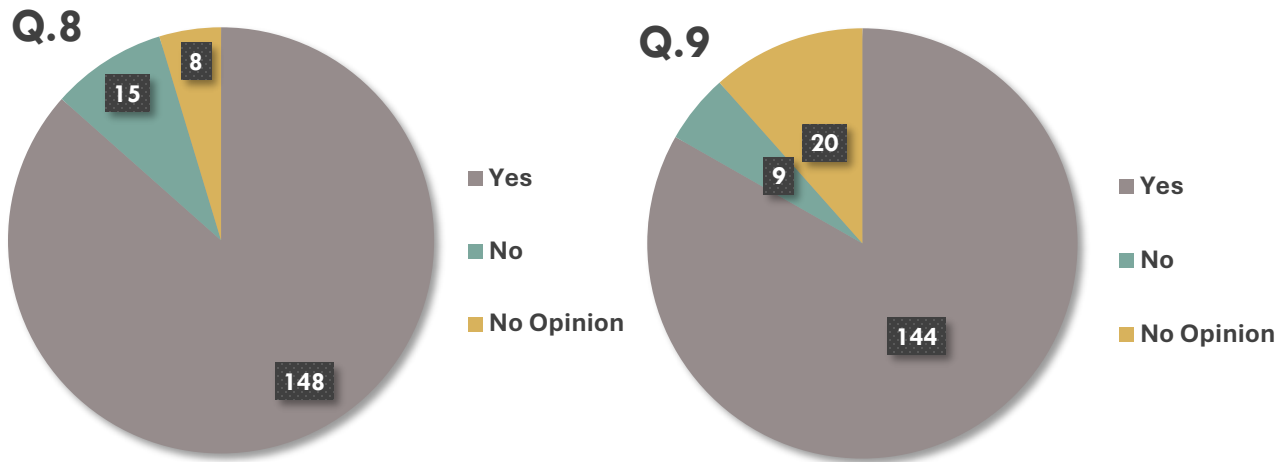
➤ Q.7 | What do you see as Hillsborough's strengths?*



▣ *Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.

Participants emphasized a wide range of **strengths for Hillsborough**, with more than half mentioning the Town's rural charm and attractiveness, historical significance, library, and appealing location. Additionally, many recommended the creation of more recreational trails and community areas to leverage the Town's untapped potential.

➤ **Q.8 & Q.9** | Do you support efforts to develop a nonprofit, regional community center? *
Would you support the development of a trails committee to foster the development of additional trails in Hillsborough?*

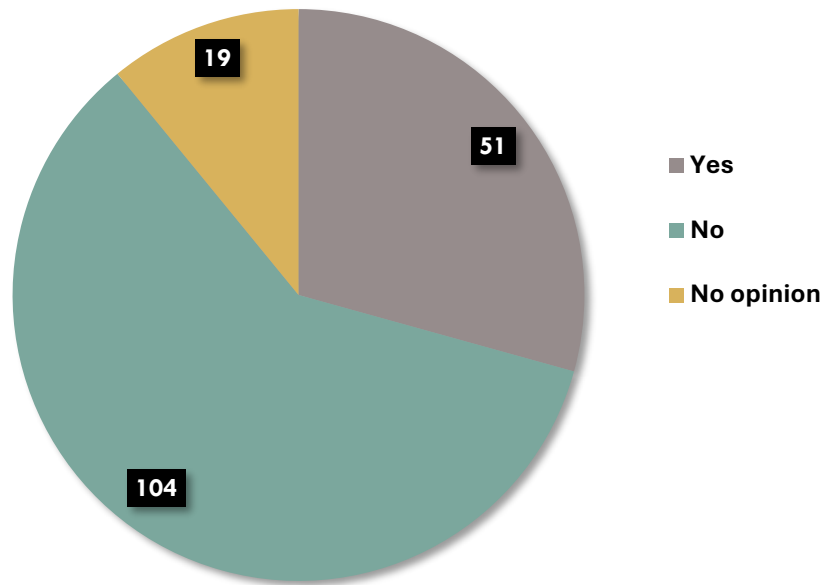


▣ **Hillsborough Community Center, Inc. is a nonprofit entity separate from the town that is raising funds to build a regional community building. The project aims to improve health, well-being, education, and cultural opportunities of patrons by offering multi-generational programs to address the needs of more than 48,000 people in the region. More information can be found at: <https://hccnh.org/>*

▣ **Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.*

A substantial majority of residents, accounting for 84%, are in favor of creating a **non-profit regional community center** in Town. This indicates a strong community interest in having a dedicated space for various activities and services. Furthermore, there is also considerable backing, with 81% of the population supporting the **formation of a Trails committee**. This committee would focus on encouraging the development of additional trails, enhancing outdoor recreational opportunities for the community.

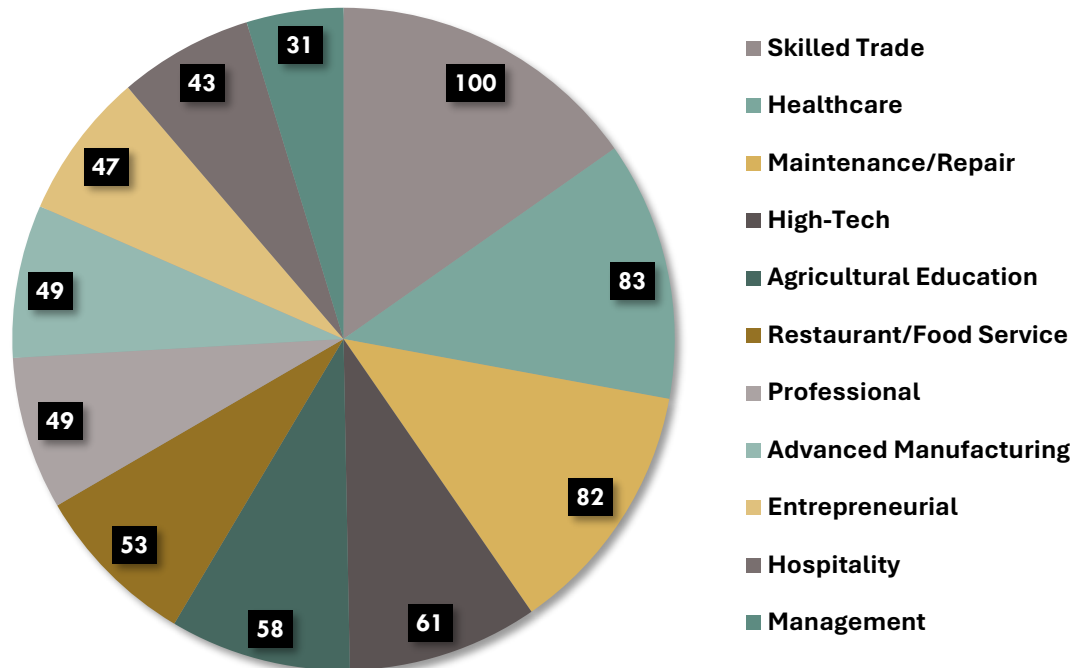
➤ **Q.10 | Is cell Coverage adequate in Hillsborough?***



▣ **Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.*

65% of those surveyed feel that cell coverage in Hillsborough is sufficient; however, areas like Emerald Lake, Route 202, and East Washington Road were noted as spots with inconsistent connectivity.

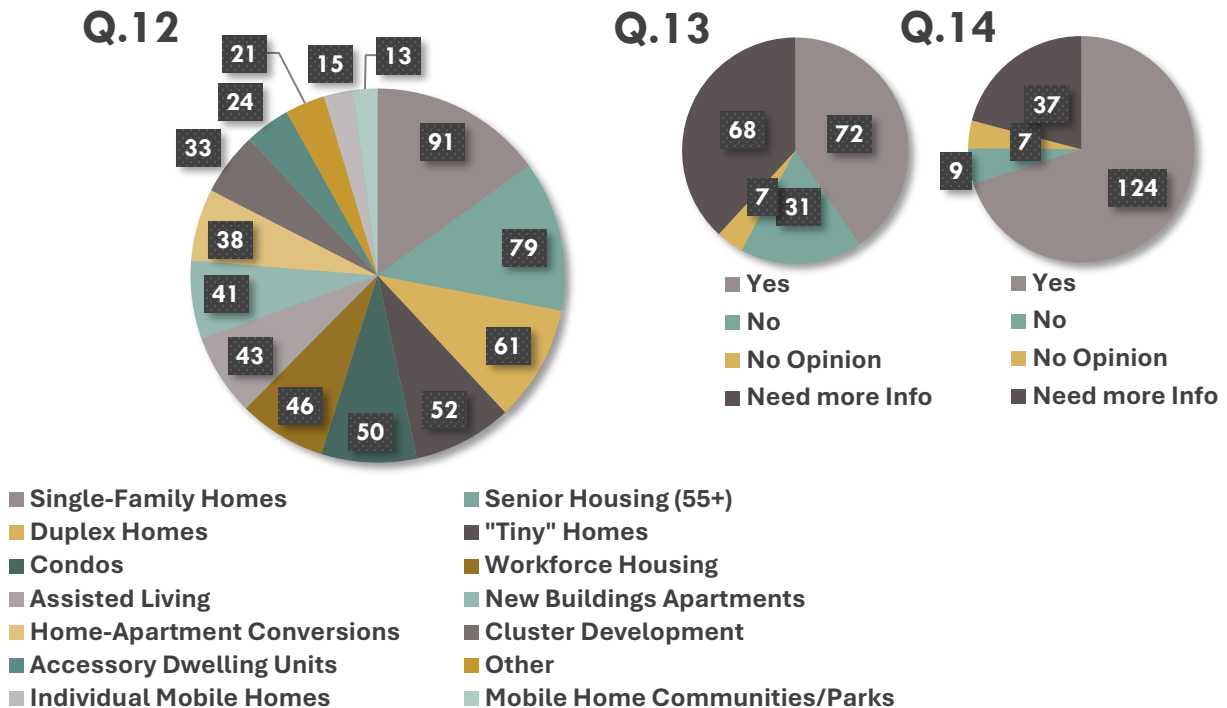
- **Q.11 |** Could training or internships help strengthen or expand the following industries in Hillsborough? *



▣ *Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.

When evaluating **training or internship opportunities** aimed at bolstering or diversifying industries in Hillsborough, participants predominantly pointed out sectors like the trades (including carpentry and plumbing) (69%), health care (57%), and maintenance and repair (57%) as possessing significant potential.

- **Q.12-15** | If you feel that HOUSING should play a role in the development around the US 202/NH 9 intersection, what types of housing would you prefer?* Would you support the encouragement of a mix of higher density housing and a mix of commercial/retail/housing development around the US 202/NH 9 intersection? * Should appearance, including architecture standards, landscaping requirements, and site layout be part of any mixed-use development at the intersections of US 202/NH 9?*



▣ **Workforce Housing is defined by state legislation as being approximately one-third of the income of an individual earning the average salary in the county. In Hillsborough, this equates to one-third of \$96,921 in 2024 (according to the US Census).*

▣ **Numeric data displayed above represents individual number of received responses.*

In relation to the **US 202/NH 9 area**, participants were surveyed regarding their preferred housing types, their support for mixed-use development, and the significance of aesthetics in such developments. The majority showed a preference for single-family homes (56%), senior housing (55+) (48%), and duplexes (37%). A considerable number supported the idea of promoting a combination of higher density housing along with commercial, retail, and residential developments in the area (40%), although many indicated they required more information before making a decision (38%). Nonetheless, a significant portion of respondents (70%) felt that aesthetics, which encompasses architectural standards, landscaping requirements, and site layout, should be integral to any mixed-use development in that location. Additional feedback frequently highlighted the necessity for enhanced infrastructure, such as sidewalks and utilities. Some individuals voiced concerns about potential population growth or expressed a desire to prevent any increase in tax obligations.

➤ **Q.16** | What is your vision of Hillsborough 15 years from now (open question)?

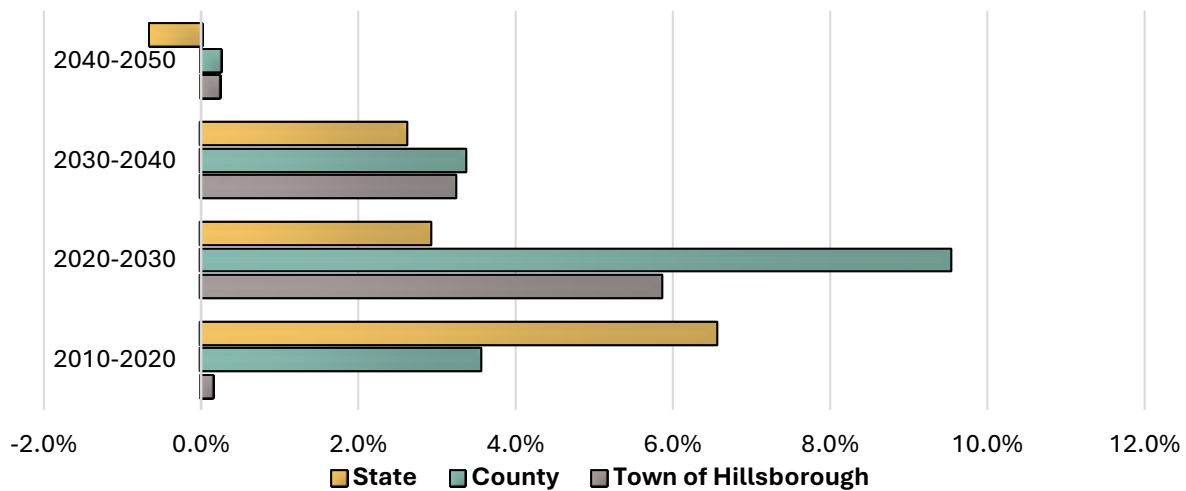
When asked about their vision for Hillsborough in the next 15 years, participants provided a diverse range of responses. A common theme among many was the desire for a vibrant downtown area bustling with small businesses. They envision well-maintained infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike paths, and ample parking facilities, which would enhance accessibility and convenience for residents and visitors alike. Additionally, there is a strong interest in expanding recreational and community spaces to foster social interaction and outdoor activities. Importantly, many respondents expressed a deep commitment to preserving Hillsborough's rural charm and historical character, while also supporting managed growth and development that aligns with the community's values.

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA

POPULATION	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Town Of Hillsborough	4,928	6,011	6,020	6,373	6,579	6,594
County	380,841	401,057	415,305	454,896	470,211	471,369
State	1,235,786	1,316,759	1,355,244	1,473,286	1,511,770	1,501,909

Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data; Nh Department Of Business And Economic Affairs Population Projections 2020-2050

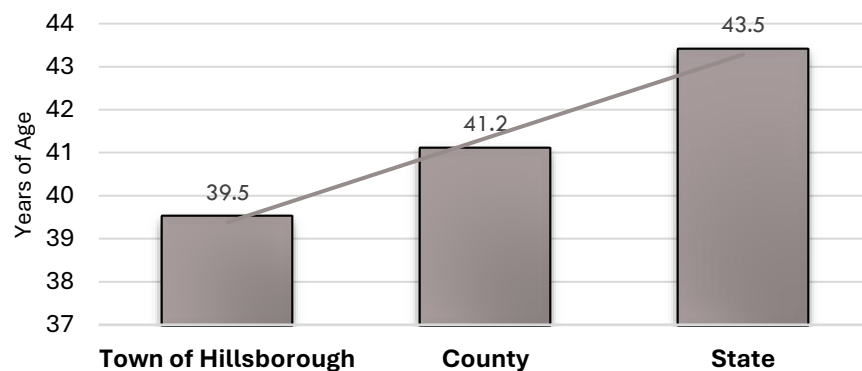
POPULATION (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Since 2010, Population growth percentage in Hillsborough has been less than that of the state. It is projected to continue in this manner in the future, beginning to decline by 2040.

MEDIAN AGE (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Hillsborough has a younger average age than that of both the county and state.

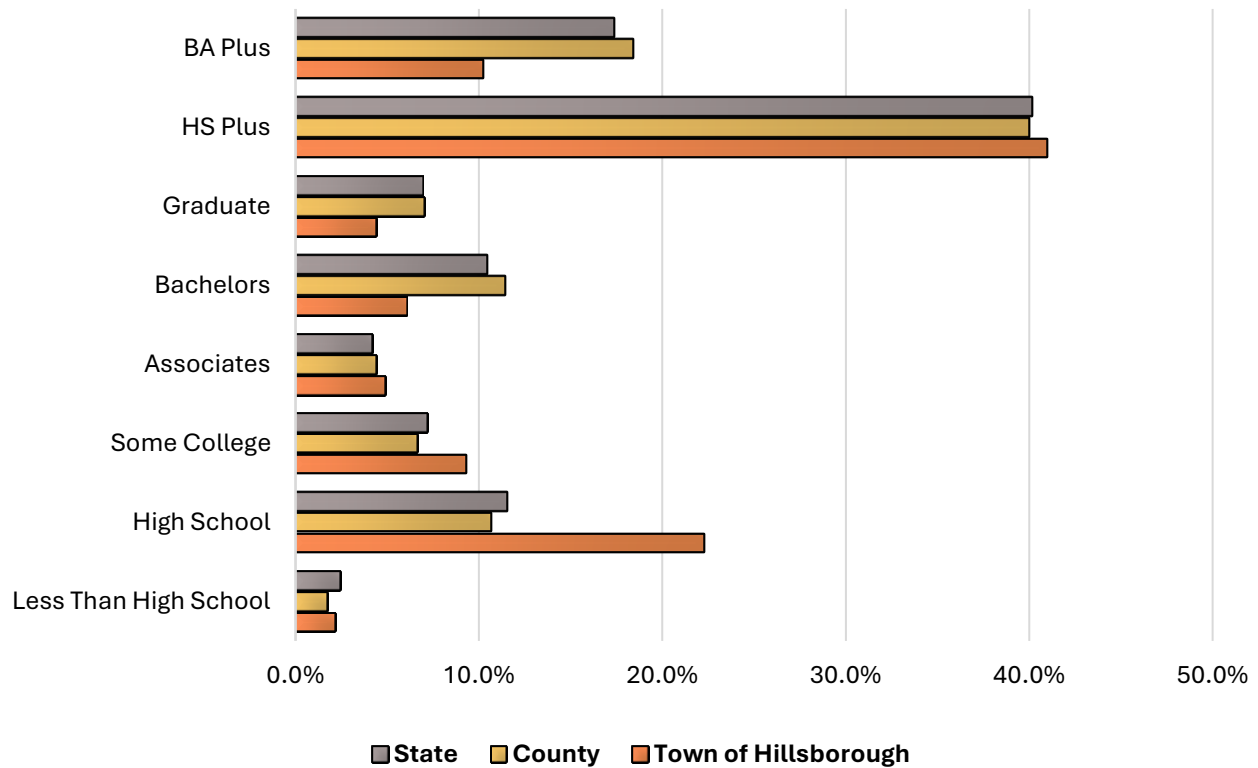
AGE DISTRIBUTION (ACS 2023)

POPULATION	UNDER 14	15-19	20-64	65+
Town Of Hillsborough	18.2%	5.3%	62.5%	14%
County	15.8%	6.2%	60.8%	17.2%
State	14.5%	6%	58.8%	20.7%

Source: US Census ACS Data

The largest cohort in Hillsborough is that of the 20–64-year-old cohort, with the 15-19 cohort being the smallest. This echoes that of the state and county.

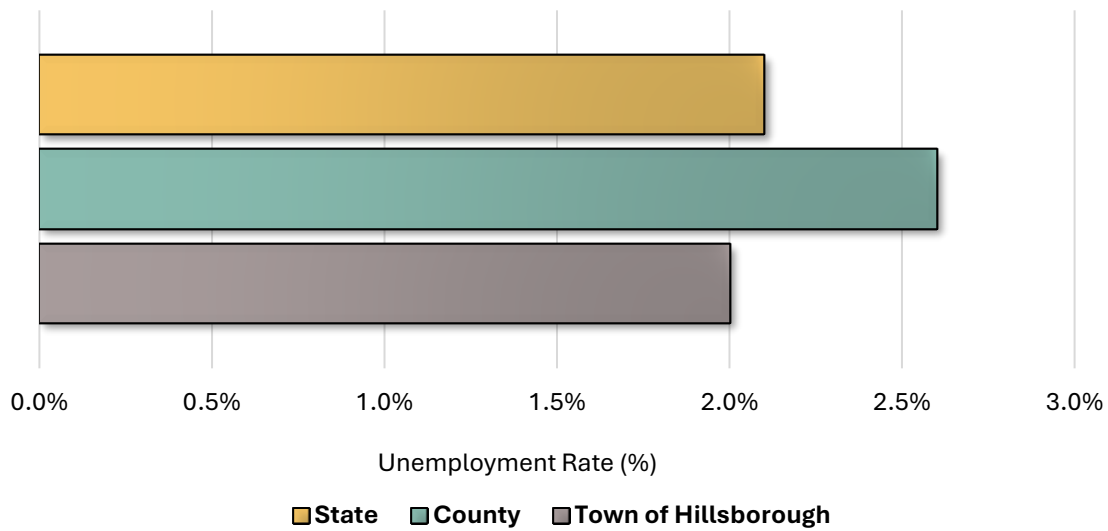
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Hillsborough's workforce is predominantly high school graduates.

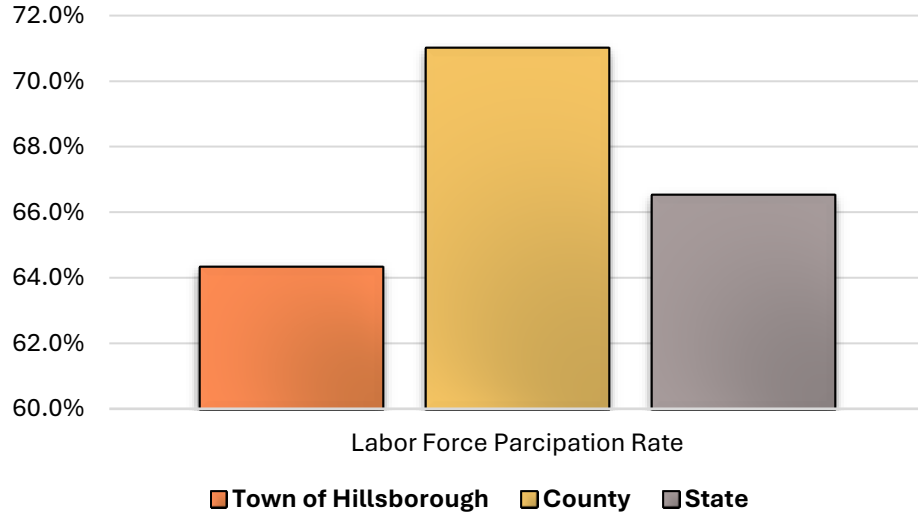
UNEMPLOYMENT & LABOR STATISTICS (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

The Town's unemployment rate is less than both the state and county.

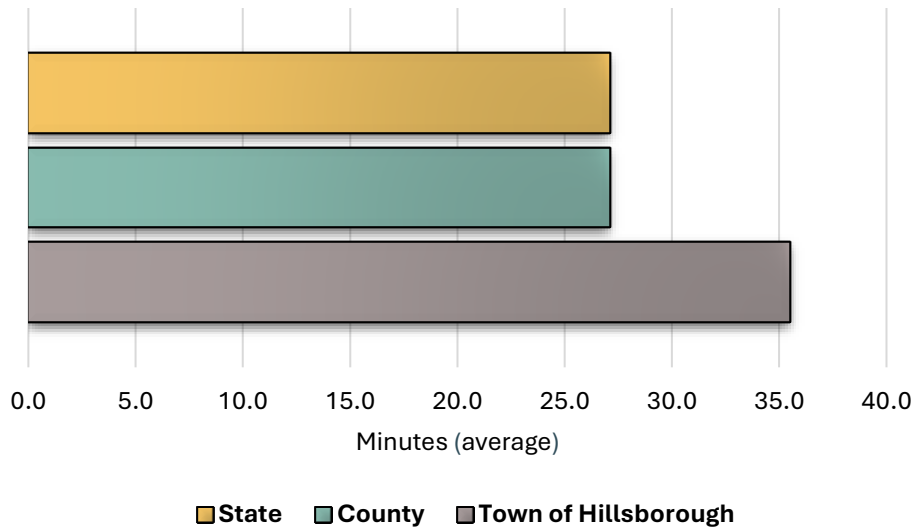
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

The labor force participation rate is greater in both the county and state.

COMMUTE TIMES (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Average commute times in Hillsborough exceed that of the state and county.

COMMUTE DESTINATIONS (ACS 2023)

WORK COMMUTE DESTINATION 2023	% OF COMMUTERS
Working in civil division of residence	35.30%
Worked outside of civil division of residence	64.70%
Working in county of residence	65.40%
Working outside of county of residence	34.60%

Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Commuters in Hillsborough primarily commute out of the town for employment, though most stay in the county.

ROUTE 9 TRAFFIC COUNTS (CNHRPC TRAFFIC COUNTS)

	2013 Counts	2022 Counts
Route 9 Over Beard Brook	7,962	4,960
Route 9, East of 202 Interchange	10,721	9,403

Source: Central NH Regional Planning Commission Traffic Count Data

INDUSTRY IN HILLSBOROUGH (ACS 2023)

INDUSTRY	HILLSBOROUGH 2023*	HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY 2023*	STATE (NH) 2023*	STATE (NH) PROJECTIONS 2032*
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting, mining	106	411	2,411	2,543
Construction	152	19,926	7,354	7,577
Manufacturing	351	33,112	16,817	17,156
Wholesale trade	151	4,995	4,408	4,616
Retail trade	489	27,087	23,953	23,628
Transportation and warehousing, utilities	134	11,551	4,277	4,479
Information	48	4,490	1,628	1,697
Finance, insurance, real estate, leasing	123	18,181	5,167	5,272
Professional, scientific, administrative, management, waste	284	37,562	13,611	14,982
Education, health care, social assistance	672	57,195	45,110	47,491
Arts, entertainment, recreation, hospitality, food services	275	16,278	21,620	23,510
Other, except public administration	87	9,282	5,725	5,851
Public administration	113	6,163	10,484	10,959
TOTALS	2,985	246,233	162,565	169,761

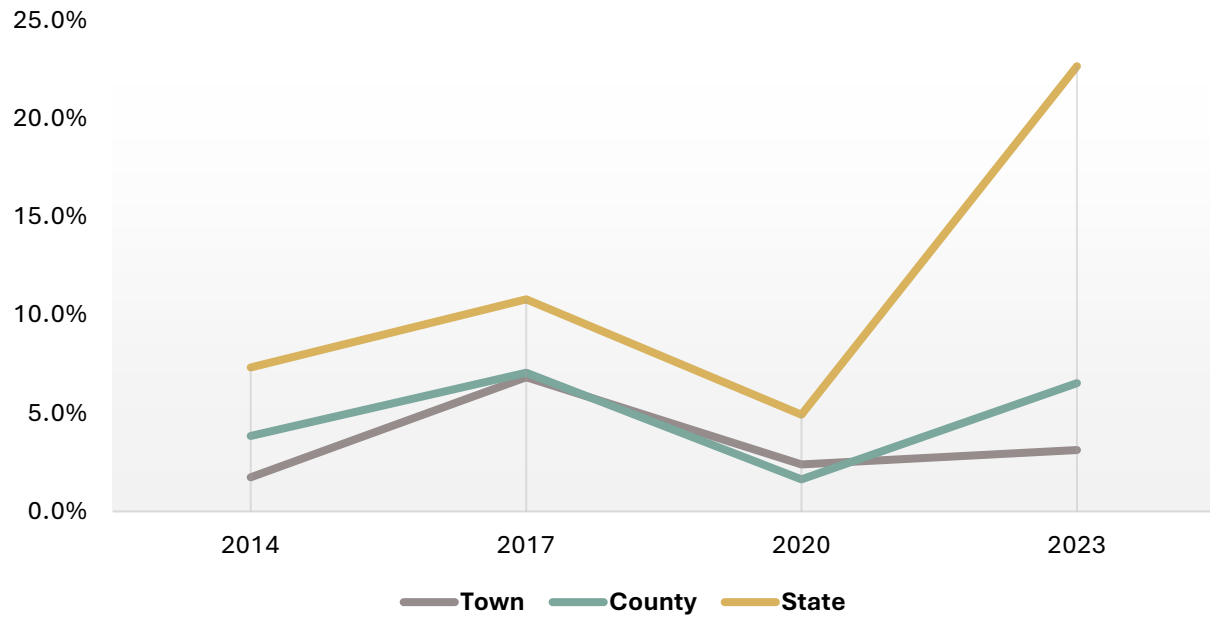
Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data and NH Labor Market Bureau Industry Projections 2022 to 2032

The top three industries in Hillsborough, in order, are: education, health care, and social assistance; retail trade; and manufacturing. In the county, they are the same. In the state, they are education, health care, and social assistance; retail trade; and arts, entertainment, recreation, hospitality, and food services. The top three projected growth industries are the top three industries in the state.

CHANGES IN NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS (ACS 2023)

GEOGRAPHY	2011	2014	2017	2020	2023
Town Of Hillsborough	115	117	125	128	132
County	11,094	11,328	11,354	11,267	11,651
State	44,113	45,649	47,352	48,912	56,809

Source: NH Employment Security, Economic Labor Market Bureau 2023 data



Source: NH Employment Security, Economic Labor Market Bureau 2023 data

Hillsborough has experienced moderate increases and decreases in the number of employers similar to that of the county, though less than that of the state.

LARGEST BUSINESSES (ACS 2023)

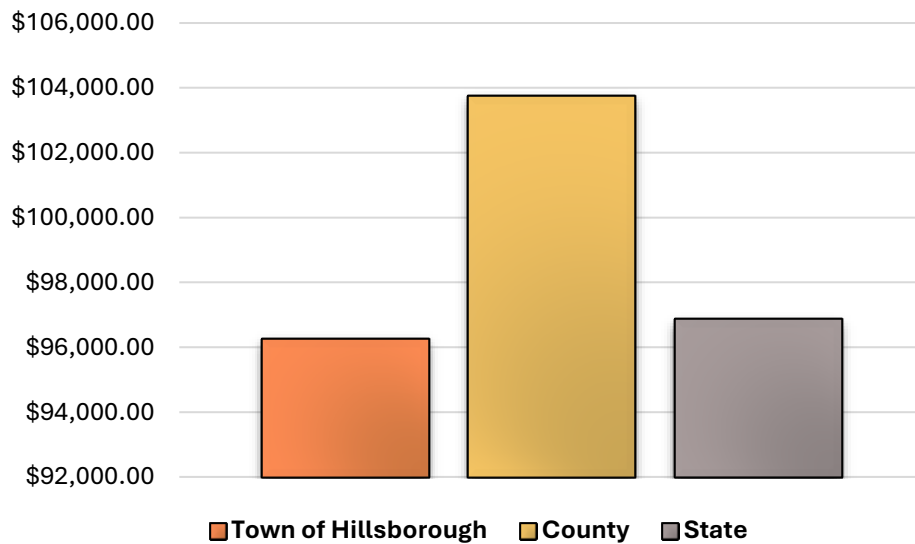
LARGEST BUSINESSES IN HILLSBOROUGH IN
2023 (SELF-REPORTED)

PRODUCT/SERVICE

Osram-Sylvania	Automotive lighting
Hillsboro-Deering School District	Education
Town Of Hillsborough	Municipal services
Tractor Supply Co.	Rural retail store
Shaw's Supermarket	Supermarket
McDonald's	Restaurant
Tooky Mills	Restaurant
High Tide	Seasonal restaurant
Rite Aid	Pharmacy

Source: NH Employment Security, Economic Labor Market Bureau 2023 data

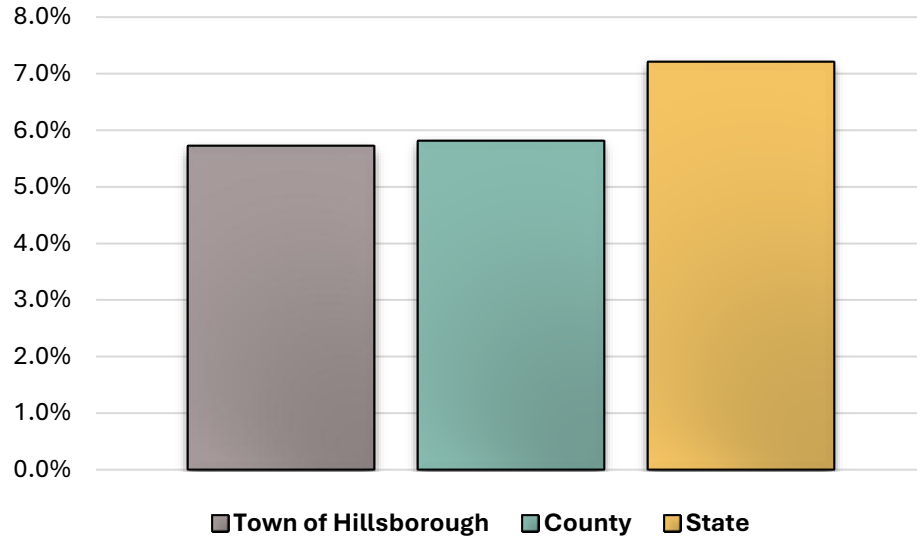
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

The Town is somewhat similar to in income to the state, while both are less than the county.

POVERTY RATE (ACS 2023)



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Hillsborough's poverty rate is similar to the county average, but less than the state's.

POVERTY AMONG FAMILIES (ACS 2023)

POVERTY RATE FOR FAMILIES	ALL FAMILIES	MARRIED COUPLE FAMILIES	SINGLE MOTHERS
With Related Children Of Householder Under 5 Years	2.60%	0%	0%
With Related Children Of Householder 5 To 17 Years	3.50%	0%	36.40%

Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

The poverty rate for families is high for single mothers in Hillsborough.