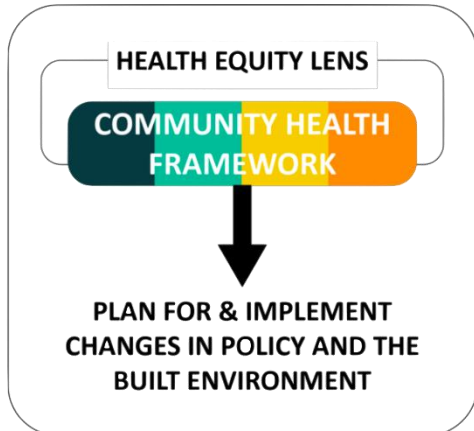


CH 11: HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE & LIVABLE REGION

Planning and public health are interrelated in many ways. Sustainable communities look to many components that determine good health, such as active transportation, cultural and recreational opportunities, safe and affordable housing, quality education, availability of public health programs and services, access to healthy food, and more. The concept of “health” is often associated with issues surrounding physical health. This chapter cannot cover all these issues comprehensively and points to specific elements of the regional plan to view these more in-depth.

Introduction and Background



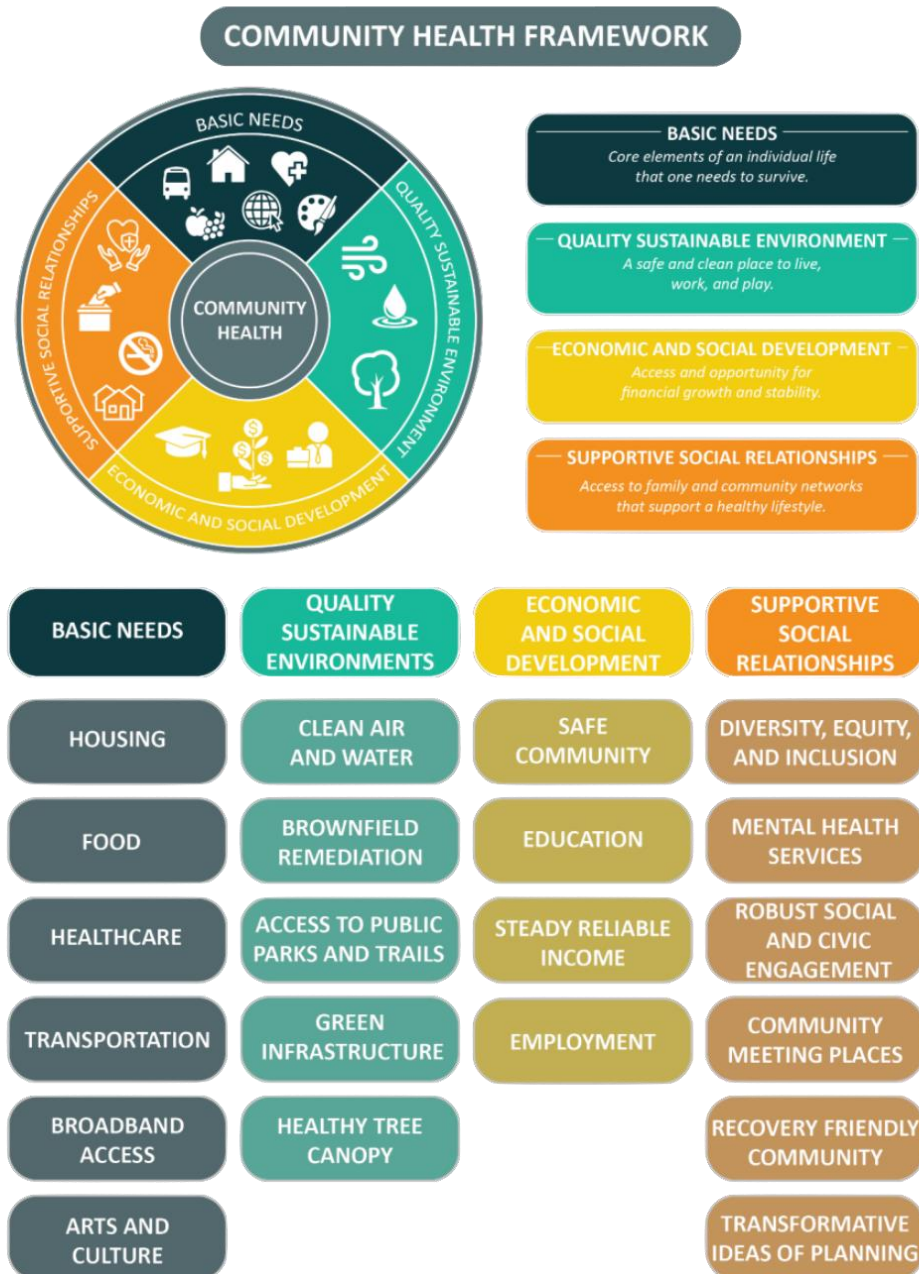
According to the [Vermont Department of Health](#), health equity is based on the understanding that depending on the socioeconomic disadvantage, historical injustice, and other systemic inequalities that are associated with race, gender, ethnicity, social position, sexual orientation, and disability, a person may not have equal access to elements of community health that help them live a healthy life. Therefore, community health equity aims to attain the highest level of health for all people in our region. Removing obstacles to health is imperative to the success of these individuals and their communities.

Improving the built environment in ways that promote active living, healthy eating, social and mental health, and safe environmental conditions, among others, benefits the health of an entire community. It is therefore imperative that our Region prioritizes planning for health in all policies and emphasizes health as a priority for a community’s overall success.

As a regional commission, our role is to view all projects through a health equity lens and work with our health and equity partners to achieve healthy vibrant communities. Through policies and project implementation centered around the Community Health Framework, the Region can be a healthier and more equitable place for all.

Community Health Framework

The community health framework is based around the four key elements of public health that create the success of a community. For this chapter, we will use the framework (below) to guide the rest of the health equity discussion.



BASIC NEEDS

Basic Needs

Basic needs are the core elements of an individual life that one needs to survive. Basic needs are outlined in this chapter as housing, food, healthcare, transportation, broadband, and arts and culture.



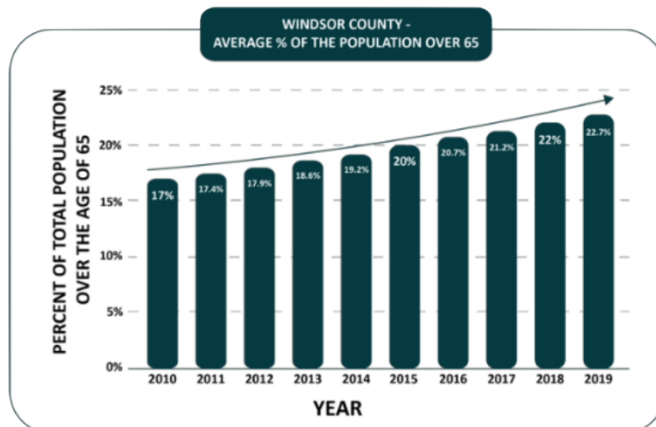
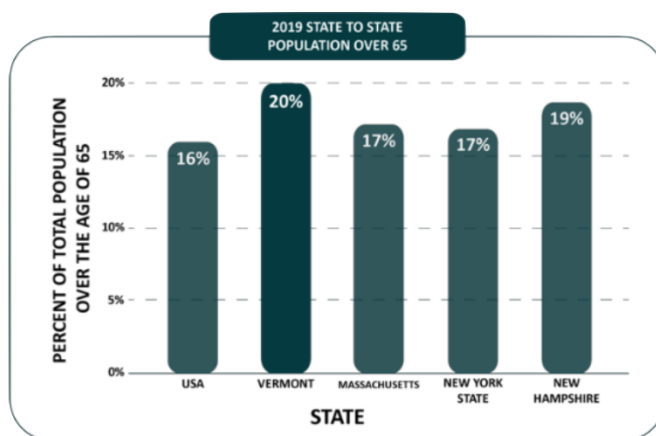
Health - Basic Needs Goals

The Region's residents have expanded connections to health services - Expanded connections to health services improve the health and wellness of residents in the MARC Region. Connections to health services are expanded through improved multi-modal transportation access, location of new health facilities and other innovative approaches resulting in more convenient access to health services.

1. Help the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board achieve their goals through outreach, education, and community engagement.
2. Support efforts to diversify housing stock through zoning review.
3. Help increase food security and reduce hunger in the Region by completing a Regional food systems analysis, promoting local food production, and removing distance and transportation barriers to healthy and affordable food.
4. Promote multi-modal transportation programs and designs that encourage safer pedestrian and bike movement.
5. Encourage ride-sharing programs for food access, appointments, and Regional recreation.
6. Use Health Impact Assessments to anticipate the impacts of new development on community health.

Housing

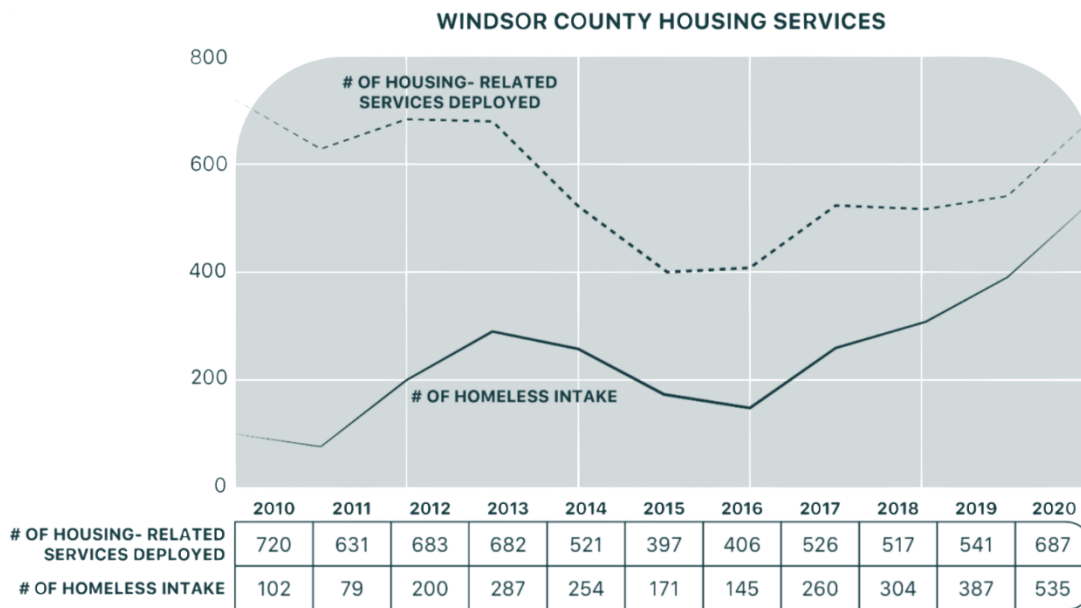
According to the CDC, access to safe and affordable housing has a significant and lasting effect on a person’s physical and mental health. With the population of the State of Vermont and the Region growing increasingly older, this is especially important. With an increasingly aging housing stock, the State and the Region run the risk of asbestos, mold, and lead exposure in the home. Exposure to lead can cause anemia, weakness, and kidney and brain damage. Exposure can be even more damaging to children and can lead to permanent developmental problems. Asbestos exposure is tied to different types of cancers and complications in a person’s lungs. Health hazards are found at a much higher rate in the lower-income housing stock.



The Region is facing unprecedented challenges to housing affordability, especially for renters and low-income community members. Housing affordability is tied to health because often if a person is spending over 30% of their income on rent or a mortgage, they will struggle with the other costs of living that are imperative to a person’s health and well-being. A person who struggles with housing costs can struggle with affording healthy and fresh food, medical care, and other basic needs. People who struggle with housing affordability are also more likely to have stress-related conditions.

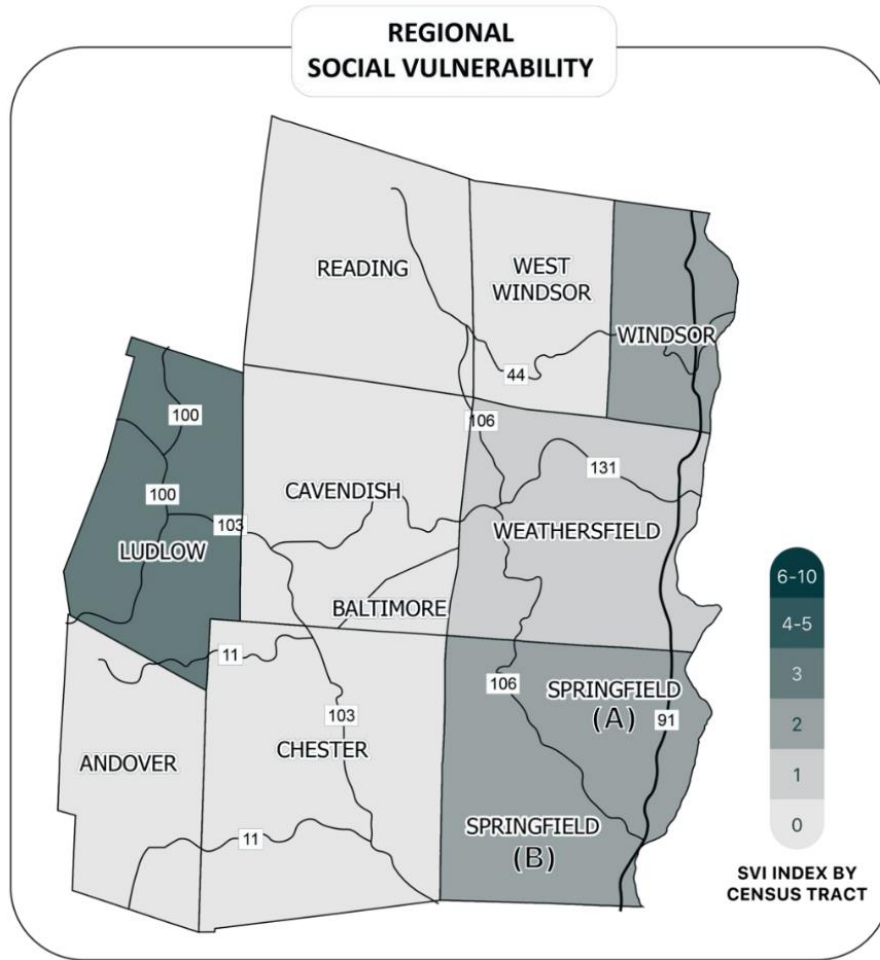
Homelessness is traditionally defined as a person or persons living without a permanent place to live. People may live out of a vehicle, with friends or family, on the streets, or in a shelter. People who struggle with chronic homelessness suffer

from illness at a higher rate than the rest of the U.S. population. People experiencing homelessness on average have a lifespan that is 12 years shorter than that of the rest of the U.S. population. It is also worth noting that people experience homelessness at the same or similar rate in rural areas as they do in urban areas. People who have a disability, neurodivergence, are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, have mental health issues, or are a person of color are more likely to become homeless.



Vermont’s Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) is a measure that explores community level social determinants of health. The SVI mapping and data tool can be used to identify areas within the Region that are disproportionately vulnerable to better improve public health planning, collaboration with local stakeholders, and engaging with people in the Region who need social services. Social vulnerabilities are “flagged” when a census tract is in the 90th percentile and above in a category of social vulnerability. The categories of social vulnerabilities are housing and transportation, demographic, and socioeconomic. In our Region, Springfield, Weathersfield, Ludlow, and Windsor all have SVI flags. While all socio-economic vulnerabilities play a hand in housing issues, the areas that are specifically flagged for risk in the housing and transportation fields are Weathersfield, Ludlow, and the northern part of Springfield above Route 106. Weathersfield is in the 98th percentile for the percent of mobile homes in the state; Ludlow is in the 93rd percentile for the number of large apartment buildings; and northern Springfield is in the 90th percentile for the number of people living in group quarters in the state.

MARC can support housing issues by supporting partners and data on lead and asbestos exposure, continuing to support zoning changes that allow for workforce housing and a dense urban center, and work on projects to increase safety and housing security for all individuals in the Region.



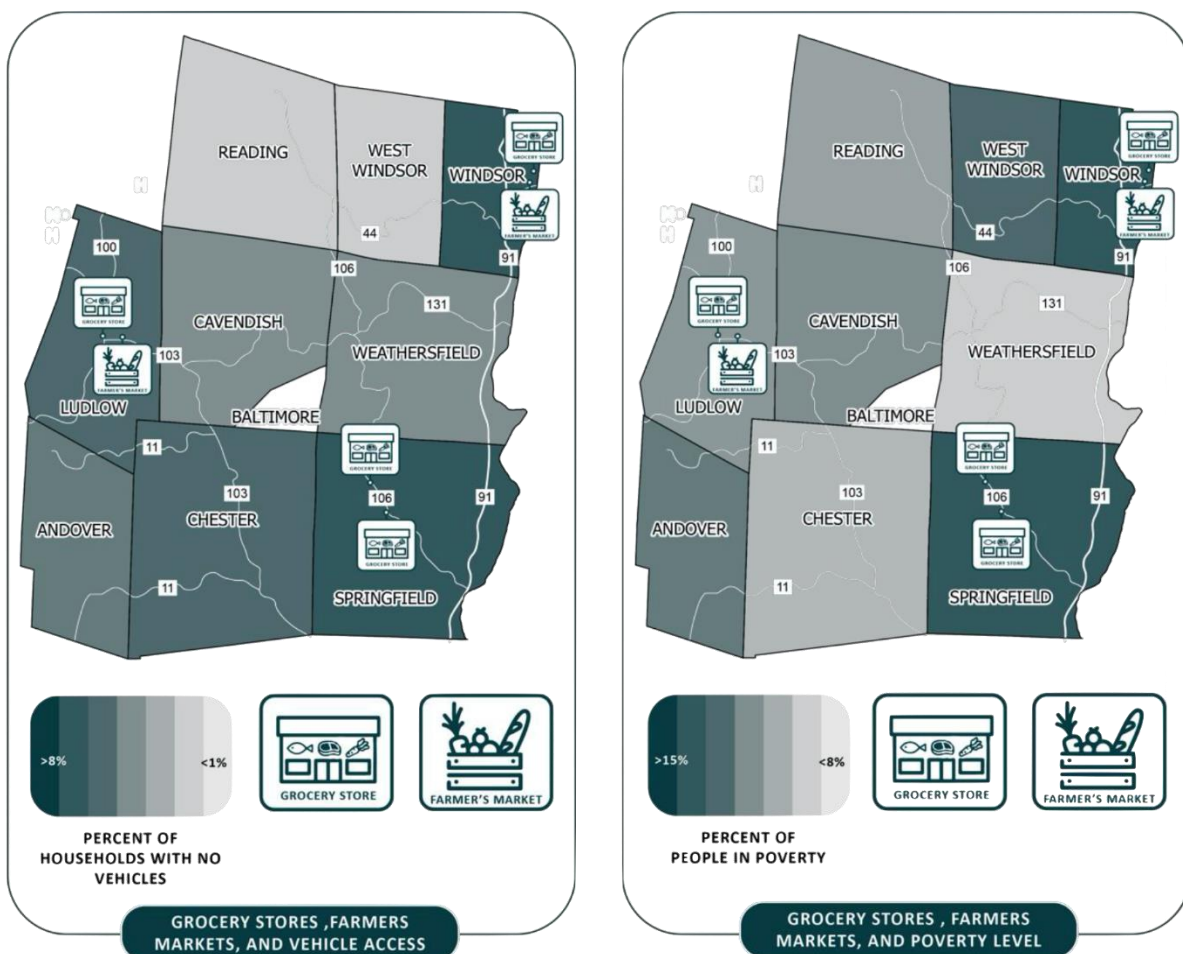
HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION VULNERABILITY

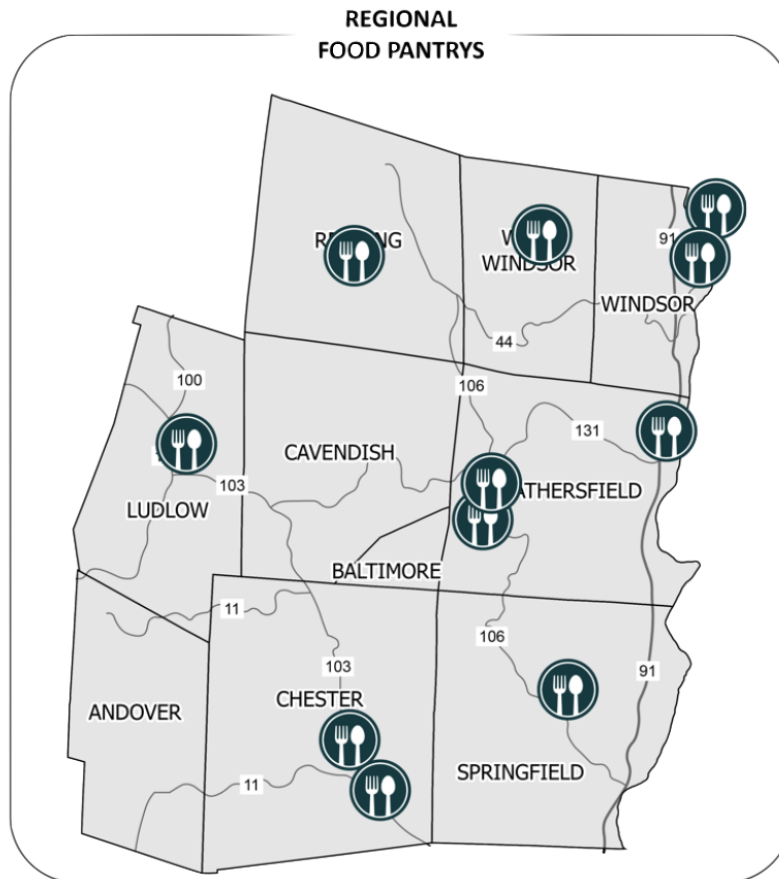
CENSUS TRACT	POPULATION ESTIMATE	LARGE APARTMENT BUILDING	MOBILE HOME %	CROWDING	NO VEHICLE	GROUP QUARTERS	HOUSING FLAG	DEMO-GRAPHIC FLAG	SOCIO-ECONOMIC FLAG
READING & WEST WINDSOR	2,949	63.0%	40.8%	22.8%	18.5%	13.3%			
WINDSOR	3,527	88.6%	53.8%	59.2%	85.3%	89.7%		1	1
WEATHERSFIELD	2,816	45.1%	98.4%	77.7%	52.2%	36.4%	1		
CAVENDISH & BALTIMORE	1,904	12.5%	47.8%	71.7%	38.6%	62.5%			
LUDLOW	1,946	93.5%	31.5%	63.6%	64.7%	75.5%	1	1	1
ANDOVER & CHESTER	4,136	59.2%	44.6%	65.2%	54.9%	47.3%			
SPRINGFIELD (B)	5,043	74.5%	29.9%	40.2%	86.4%	72.8%		2	
SPRINGFIELD (A)	4,278	77.7%	36.4%	10.3%	84.8%	90.2%	1	1	

Food

Physical access to healthy food options is vital to a person’s ability to create and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The same data that ties food access to health also suggests that a positive change in the local food environment can change a person’s diet for the better. Households living in rural areas are more likely to struggle with food security, and experience unique barriers to healthy food access.

1. **Rural food access definition** – Rural food access differs from urban or suburban food access in that households living in rural places are more likely to travel further to gather groceries. While there are limited studies done in our region, there are a number of farmer’s markets and grocery stores that run during the summer months, some of which, run all year to provide fresh food. According to the 2019 USDA Economic Research Service, 13% of the Windsor County population lives more than 10 miles from a supermarket, and Ludlow, Weathersfield, and parts of Springfield have an increased vulnerability around access to a personal vehicle or adequate and reliable public transportation.





NAME	TOWN
CHESTER/ANDOVER FAMILY CENTER	CHESTER
BLACK RIVER GOOD NEIGHBOR	LUDLOW
GOOD NEIGHBOR FOOD SHELF	READING
SPRINGFIELD FAMILY CENTER	SPRINGFIELD
READING FOOD SHELF	WEATHERSFIELD
PERKINSVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH	WEATHERSFIELD
WEATHERSFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH	WEATHERSFIELD
ASCUTNEY UNION CHURCH	WINDSOR
SAINT FRANCIS ASSISI	WINDSOR
WEST WINDSOR FOOD SHELF	WEST WINDSOR

- Food Security** – Food security is defined by the USDA as a household’s access to enough food with nutritious value. Households struggling with food security do not necessarily struggle all the time. [In 2019, 74,520 \(or 11.9%\) people in Vermont struggled with food security.](#) In 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this number jumped drastically, with around 25% of Vermonters experiencing a lack of food security. A household struggling with this may have to decide between other basic needs like housing or medical bills, and nutritionally adequate foods. The negative health effects of hunger and a lack of proper nutrition is the highest and most prevalent amongst children. When

children are hungry, there can be serious health effects as well as social effects. As a result of these health implications, there is an increasing strain on the governmental healthcare system and a reduction of general productivity.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an elevated number of households experiencing food insecurity and hunger within the region. There has also been an increase in the number of places for community members and families to receive free or reduced-price meals and groceries.

To promote food security in the Region, MARC can continue to work with local food security partners to collect data, disperse information, and look for areas in need of services or food infrastructure.

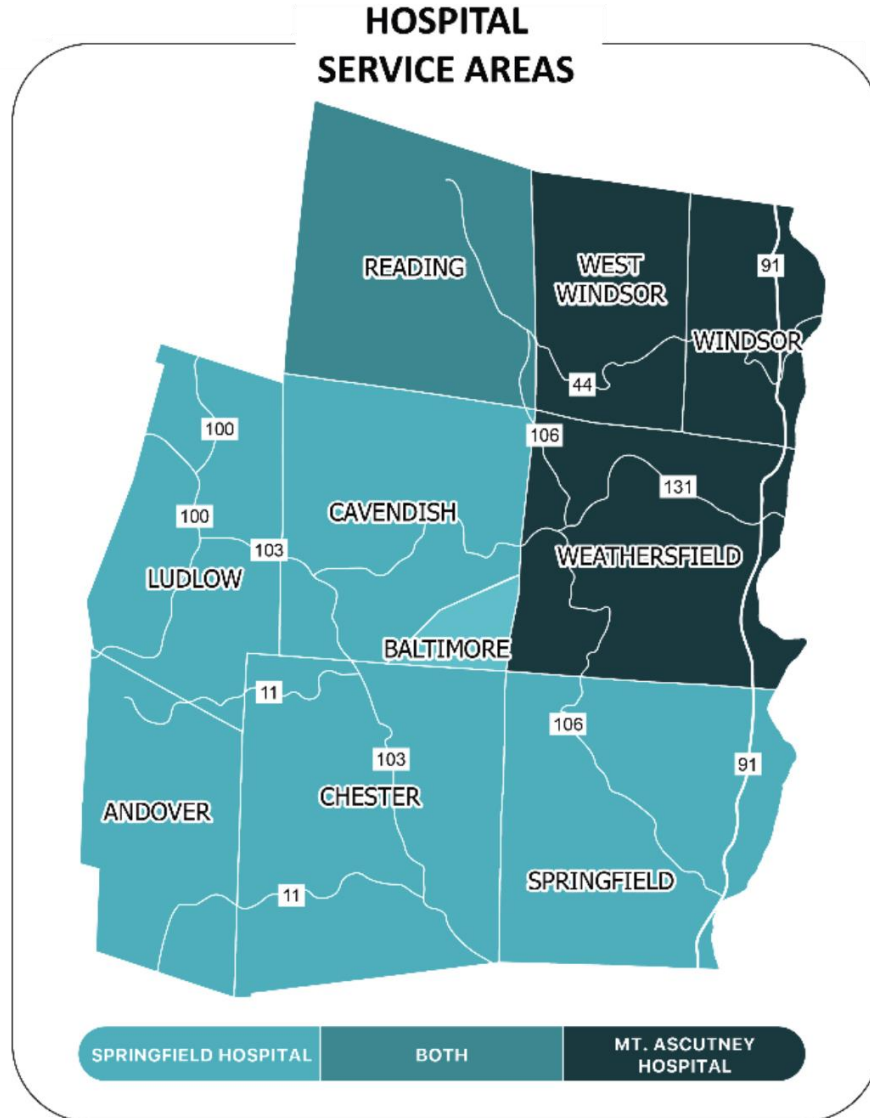
Healthcare

Having access to healthcare has been shown to prevent premature death, increase the overall quality of a person's life, and detect and prevent illness and disease. About 5% of Windsor County is uninsured. People who lack healthcare may lack it because they are unable or ineligible to receive affordable insurance through their work or through government services. With an aging population and increasing healthcare costs, seniors have less money to spend in other areas. Healthcare costs are also one of the number one contributing factors to bankruptcy in the United States.

There are many different types of Healthcare Facilities that each uniquely help contribute to a Region's overall health.

Healthcare typologies are listed below:

- **Primary Care**
- **Specialty Care**- Dentists, eyecare, special needs services
- **(2) Emergency Care (Hospitals)** – Springfield Hospital and Mount Ascutney Hospital
- **Urgent Care**
- **Long-term Care (Nursing Facilities)**- There is an increase in the number of people in need of affordable long-term care facilities, as the population in Vermont grows older. More information can be found in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter.
- **Hospice Care**
- **Mental Healthcare**
- **Substance Misuse Rehabilitation**



Local Need / Local Solutions

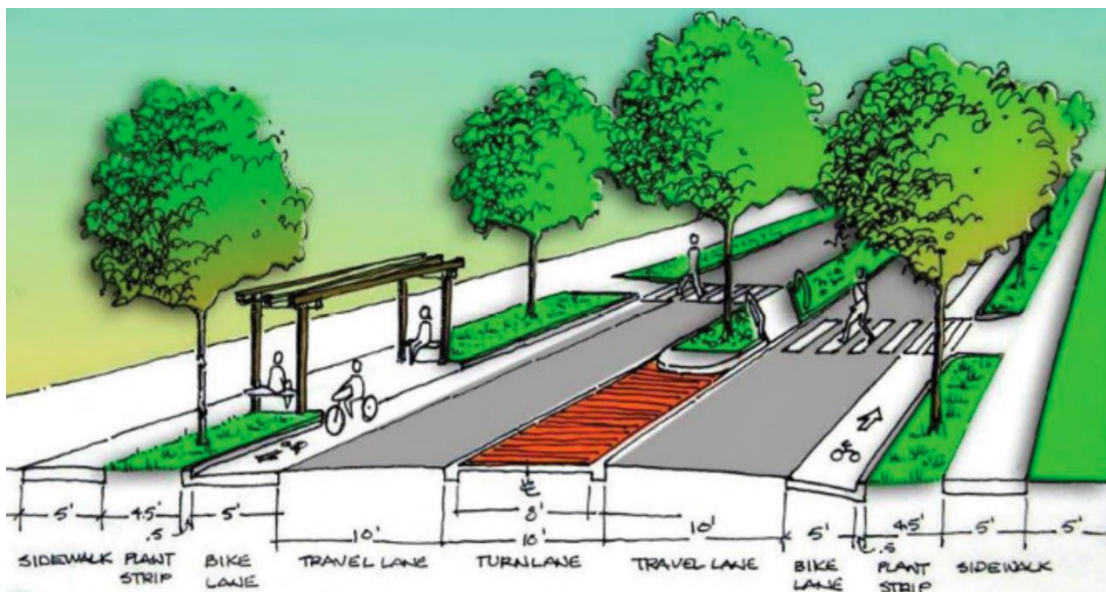
According to both the [2019 Springfield Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment](#) (CHNA) and the [2021 Mt. Ascutney Hospital CHNA](#), the top priority items for our Region is a lack of dental care facilities, and substance use disorder treatment facilities, mental health providers, and affordable healthcare. In the Mt. Ascutney service area, issues of child abuse and neglect, and other socio-economic conditions like food access were brought up as high priority needs for their area.

MARC can support healthcare efforts through continued partnership with our Region’s hospitals and care facilities, advocating for health policies in Town Plans, and provide support, education, and outreach on service availability throughout the Region.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been moving into the Region from larger cities like Boston and New York City. With an influx of new residents, there could also be a strain on the healthcare system capacity.

Transportation

The relationship between transportation and community health is directly correlated. Reliable transportation services are fundamental to a healthy community. Improvements in transportation infrastructure can be an element that positively impacts individual and community health. Transportation access in the region is heavily car dependent, with most people relying on their personal vehicles to access groceries, doctors' appointments, etc. But transportation infrastructure is more than just being able to access a car.



According to [Smart Growth America](#), sidewalks and bike lanes that make people feel safe can increase active transportation, especially for people who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility. Not only does having sidewalks and safe bike lanes encourage exercise, but they can also reduce vehicle-pedestrian crashes. Programs like [Complete Streets](#) (see image above for an example) use sidewalk and bikeway design to connect people to parks, public transportation, schools and other destinations to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage active transportation for all users.

Access to trails and public parks has been proven to improve a person's physical and mental health, with ties to reducing risks for cardiovascular diseases, and other health issues. See Map 5 for regional recreation opportunities.

Access to public transportation in the Region is important, especially for people who either do not have access to a personal vehicle and/or have a physical disability that limit their ability to drive to a doctor's appointments, get groceries or accomplish other basic tasks. As stated in Volume 2: Regional Transportation Plan, the Elders and Disabilities program helps people travel to medical appoints, obtain food, and take personal care trips within the Region. Creative solutions like ride-sharing programs, and pick-up drop-off programs are important to get people to appointments, to grocery shop, and to recreate.

In March of 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, the State of Vermont enacted a law that made Vermonters able to conduct medical appointments online. Whether telehealth is here to stay, only time will tell.

Broadband Access

As discussed in the Utilities and Facilities chapter, access to sufficient broadband is becoming more and more critical to the success of a community. Not only is reliable broadband vital for those running businesses, or working from home, but broadband access is also vital for people in need of telehealth services, civil engagement, and supporting social relationships. Access to direct care may not always be possible and can be subsidized with telehealth services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, disparities were highlighted between people who had access to fast and reliable service and those who did not. Moving forward, broadband access will be important for maintaining medical records, doing follow-up appointments, ordering prescriptions, etc. People over the age of 65 are less likely to have reliable broadband in their homes, even though people over the age of 65 are more likely to need health services. With the Region hosting an increasingly aging population, it is important to assess which demographic of people lacks access to reliable broadband and why. Over the past decade, and highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, access to fast, reliable, and affordable broadband services is an essential element to everyday life.

Arts and Culture

Access to arts and culture have been proven, according to the World Health Organization, to contribute to childhood development, can help those dealing with mental health problems express themselves and alleviate depression and anxiety, and improve memory and cognitive function for aging population. Community and educational art programs are important pillars for

people of all ages and income levels and can lead to an overall happier and healthier community. It is especially important for marginalized groups to have equitable access to community-based activities and programming. Schools and libraries in the Region facilitate some programs, but within the Region, there is limited opportunity for community-based arts and cultural expression.

QUALITY SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS

Quality Sustainable Environments

Quality sustainable environments are a safe place to live, work and play. Quality sustainable environments are outlined in this chapter as they pertain to clean air and water, brownfield remediation, green infrastructure, a healthy tree canopy, access to public parks and trails, noise pollution, and the built environment.



Health - Quality Sustainable Environments Goals

1. Create a built and natural environment that supports healthy and active choices, including a deliberate focus on the built environment's influence on physical activity, mobility choices, access to food and the natural environment throughout the Region.
2. Help eradicate housing contaminants through supporting state and local partners with data, marketing, and program support and creation.
3. Support goals and policies stated in the Natural Resources Chapter.

Clean Air and Water

It is important to conserve the resource of clean air and water for economic, aesthetic, and environmental purposes. Being in areas of clean air and water supports healthy brain function and

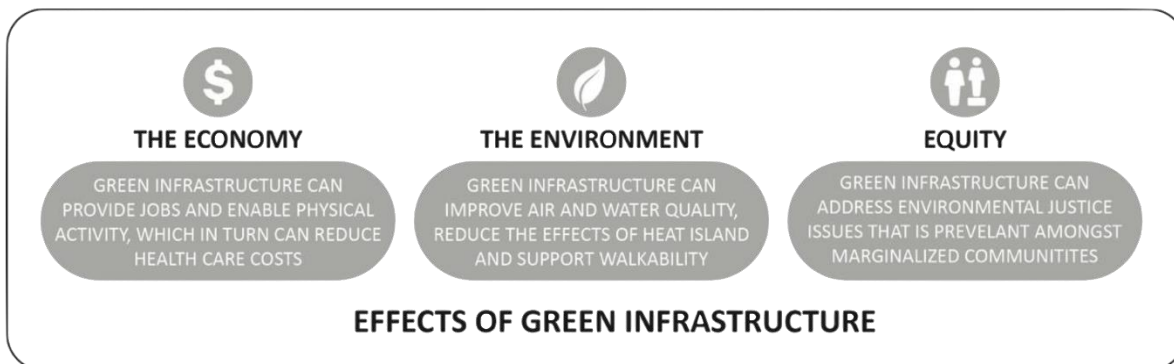
development. Pollution in water can lead to stomach or liver illness, respiratory issues, and even neurological effects depending on the toxins. Air pollution can cause asthma or exacerbate asthma or other lung issues. More information on water quality issues can be found in the Natural Resources Chapter.

Brownfields

While brownfields are discussed in the Economic Development Chapter, they have a significant impact on community health due to contamination from former industrial or commercial land uses. Brownfield contamination poses environmental health risks.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is natural and semi-natural landscape elements that have a variety of ecological benefits, such as clean water and air, carbon sequestration, flood control, and climate change mitigation. Green infrastructure can help with clean air, stormwater management, and public health. Not only does green infrastructure reduce physical risks posed by climate change, but green infrastructure improvements and exposure to natural elements are also tied to mental health improvements.



Healthy Tree Canopy

While there appears to be no shortage of trees in our Region, a tree canopy is important, even in town and village centers. Tree canopy has been linked to promoting physical activity like biking or walking and stress reduction. Tree canopy is also important in town and village centers because street trees can be used as a traffic calming measure to slow down vehicular traffic, making downtown centers safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. The [Vermont Urban and Community Forestry](#) organization helps communities with analysis, education, and funding to create and improve current tree canopies. In our region, Chester, Springfield, and Windsor, are all active in this program.

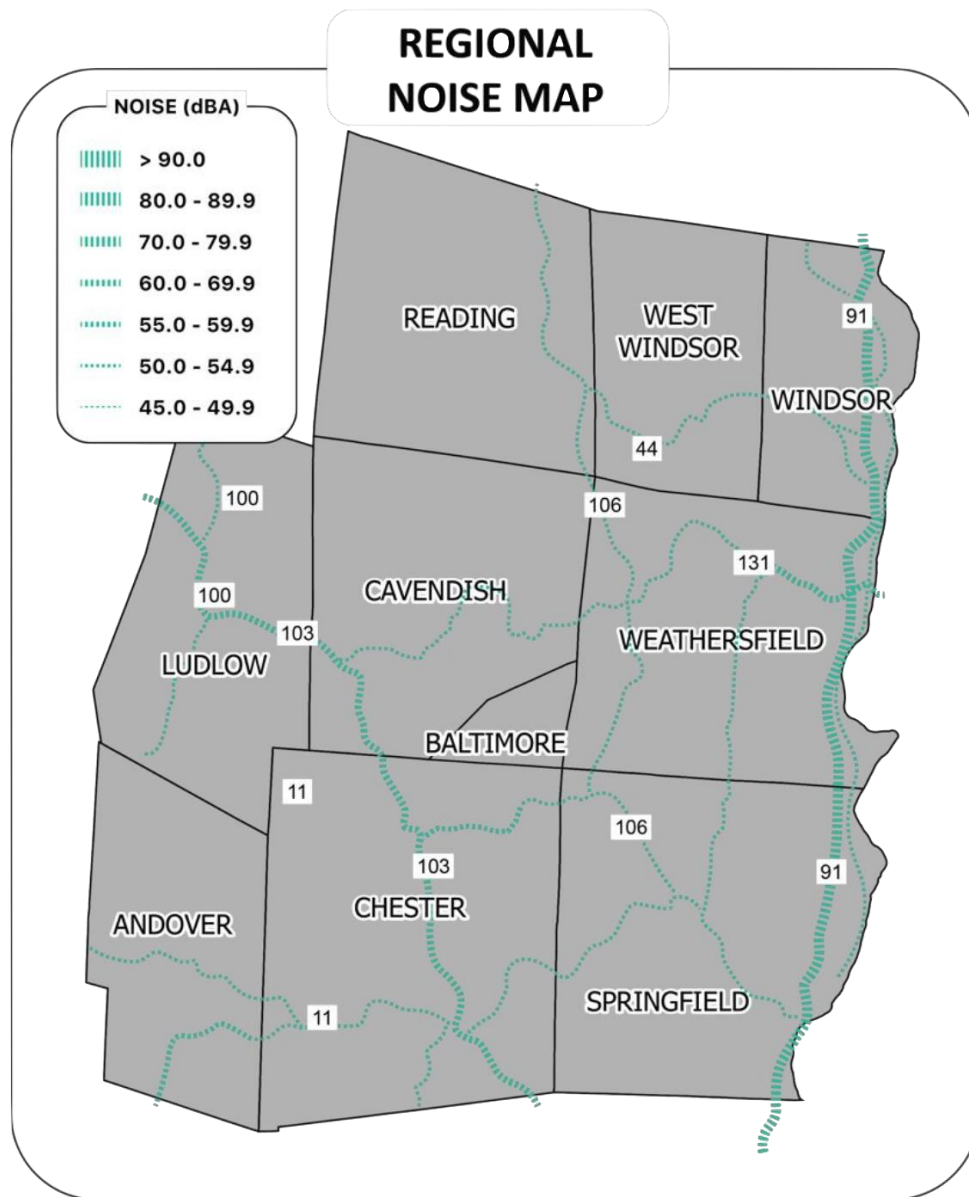
Access to Public Parks/Trails

As discussed in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter (Chapter 4), access to parks and trails can be a great way, especially in Vermont, to boost the local economy and provide jobs to residents. Proximity to public parks and trails can encourage exercise for community members and improve psychological and social health. Having places for children to recreate and play is critical for their cognitive development. Low-income communities, communities of color, and other marginalized groups tend to live in areas that lack clean air and water, a healthy tree canopy, and sufficient access to public parks and trails. It is important for the sake of overall community health to ensure that these communities are at the forefront of planning services around quality and sustainable environments.

Noise Pollution

Noise pollution is consistent exposure to high sound levels that may lead to unfavorable physiological and psychological effects. The science of noise pollution is relatively new but important. Noise pollution can cause noise-induced hearing loss and cardiovascular diseases (like ischemic heart disease and hypertension). Noise pollution studies have also correlated the effects of amplified sound levels on mental health, diabetes, cognitive function, and other injuries. According to the Center for Disease Control, "hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition in the United States and is twice as prevalent as diabetes or cancer." People who experience hearing loss are more likely to have lower employment rates and workplace productivity, and incur higher healthcare costs. Adults who are hearing impaired are also more likely to have a lower income, be unemployed, or underemployed as compared to adults who are not hearing impaired. In our Region, one of the largest sources of noise pollution is in relation to major highways.

[The National Transportation Noise map](#) shows noise levels (decibels) across the United States, while the Regional Noise Map below indicates areas along major roadways in our Region that may struggle with noise pollution.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for community greenspaces was heightened because it allowed for people to socialize and exercise without risking exposure.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Economic and Social Development

Economic and social development is access and opportunity for financial growth and stability. Economic and social development are outlined in this chapter as they pertain to safe communities free of crime and violence, steady and reliable income, education, and employment.



Health - Economic and Social Development Goals

1. The Region is a safe place full of economic, educational, and employment opportunity for all current and future residents.
2. Support economic development projects, ideas, and goals that build equity within the Region.

Safe Communities

Living in a community that not only is safe but has a strong sense of community trust is important for community health and wellbeing. While it is traditionally understood that more violent crimes happen in urban areas as opposed to rural areas, crime in urban areas has decreased significantly in the last 30 years, while violent crimes in rural areas have gone up. Crime rates in the Region are relatively low.

In addition, the Region has local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Fire Stations that are intended to serve the community 24/7 in dire circumstances. Reliable EMS personnel are important to public health because they are the intersection between the public during medical emergencies and traumatic injuries. Fire Stations can save lives by preventing and extinguishing fires. Fire Service personnel often provide fire safety education and materials in local schools. Since these services heavily rely on volunteer support, it is important that they are prioritized during the planning process. More information can be found in the Emergency Management Chapter.

As discussed previously, as well as in the Transportation Chapter, another aspect to community safety is having adequate infrastructure that protects pedestrians and cyclists. Lack of sidewalks,

crosswalks, bike path infrastructure, and lack of connected pedestrian and bicycle routes all contribute to the actual and perceived dangers of walking and bicycling. This kind of infrastructure is imperative near schools, and for people with physical disabilities who may need extra time or space.

Led by the State of Vermont in Partnership with Local Motion, schools have an opportunity to participate in the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS). According to VTrans, “walking and biking to school helps students develop independence, improves academic performance, helps reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and helps create a stronger community.” While none of the schools in our Region are currently enrolled in SRTS, there are plenty of opportunities to improve walking and biking infrastructure through SRTS grants near schools.

Steady and Reliable Income

The relationship between income and health outcomes is directly correlated. Those living in higher wage households with steady and reliable income are more likely to have access to healthier living and working environments as well as healthcare in general and higher quality healthcare with better benefits. Households living below the federal poverty level have a lower life expectancy than that of people with higher incomes. Black and brown communities are more likely to face discrimination and have a harder time finding steady and reliable income. Socioeconomic demographics of the region can be found in the Regional Profile Chapter.

Education



Access to education is important because not only does obtaining higher levels of education help with economic security and therefore steady job retention and health benefits but being healthy can also help people (especially school-aged children) concentrate and do better in school. Socio-economic predispositions can determine a person’s access to healthy food, regular doctor’s visits, etc. It is therefore important to address the spectrum of health issues from early education to higher education as well as the socio-economic circumstances that may inhibit a person from leading a healthy

lifestyle. Education opportunities span from pre-k and childcare education to after-school

programs, to technology and trade schooling opportunities for the region. Providing healthy food options, mental health resources, substance misuse education, and health education throughout all hierarchies of education is vital for a person to live a healthy lifestyle. In addition, targeting socio-economic factors that may lead to health inequities are also important.

Employment

Having access to a consistent job and safe working conditions is essential for a person's ability to maintain their health. Steady employment helps a person maintain a healthy living situation, get adequate childcare, and provide nutritious food. There is also a correlation between income level and health disparities. The higher the household income level is, the more likely they are to live in safer neighborhoods that are closer to healthy food options, more walkable, and with recreation spots nearby. Studies show that an employer can save \$6 for every \$1 they spend on workplace health and wellness programs. These programs reduce sick leave, health plan costs, workers compensation, and disabilities costs by around 25%. On the other hand, unemployment can have adverse effects on a person's health. A person or household dealing with unemployment or chronic unemployment is more likely to have poor health and develop a stress-related illness. Unemployment can also cause poor mental health and has been tied to an increase in anxiety and depression. When a person faces unemployment, they are also less likely to have health insurance, which can lead to a lack of preventative care and delays in care for chronic health conditions. They may also be less able to afford prescription drugs for their chronic conditions.

Recovery Friendly Workforce

The Recovery Friendly Workforce connects employers, workers, and job seekers with resources and supports to create better outcomes for everyone. Recovery partners offer workshops for employers who want to become "Recovery Friendly". These sessions build capacity for empathy and understanding of substance use disorder as a treatable disease. Employers learn valuable tools to support their current workers seeking recovery, such as connection to recovery coaching, the science of addiction, and referral to state & local initiatives.

Recovery Coaches host educational and support groups, and/or confidential 1:1 meeting with employees and job seekers. They help workers connect with the resources and support they need to find and maintain recovery, and to select a workplace that will be a good fit for them. In 2022, recovery friendly workforce initiatives in the Region are sponsored by Regional Partners like the Springfield Regional Development Corporation, Turning Point of Springfield, and is a method of education and awareness that is valuable for Regional businesses and partners.

SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Supportive Social Relationships

Supportive social relationships are defined as access to family and community networks that support a healthy lifestyle. This concept is based on the understanding that an entire community is accountable for public health. Engaged people benefit from strong social networks with friends, family, and coworkers. They are involved in the civic life of their communities, and are empowered to help create and promote belonging, inclusion, and meaningful connection. Planners play a role in helping communities create and sustain healthy environments and infrastructure, while also providing a platform for public engagement, participation, and collaboration.



Health - Supportive Social Relationships

1. Create connections and support efforts of non-traditional regional partners that promote supportive social relationships, like for example recovery partnerships, Regional food resources, etc.
2. Support the building and expansion of Regional community assets.
3. Use the Healthy Communities page on MARC's website as a health landing page to guide community members and partners to agencies that can help them.
4. Point people within the Region to supportive services via mapping, marketing, and other avenues.
5. Introduce DEI internally into MARC's policies and procedures, and provide consultation to towns.

Socially cohesive and supportive relationships, families, homes, and neighborhoods

Building a socially cohesive community given the rural nature of the Region can be a challenge. Social cohesion can be found in community meeting places, places to go like a movie theater, bowling alley, or park, library or after school program. In families where parents or guardians are ill-equipped to handle bringing up a child, community resources can help. Given the expanding nature and influence of the digital world, community can be tied through online meetings and

activities. In marginalized groups, online community groups can make up for a lack of local diversity.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training focuses on educating people on implicit biases, and structures of inequity in workplaces, societal structures etc. The purpose of DEI training is to enhance people's knowledge of other groups by both building awareness about biases and skills for interaction. In planning, DEI training can be used to understand the history of policies and procedures that have excluded certain groups. For example, in the 1930's, the federal government began redlining real estate in "risky" neighborhoods for federal loans based on racial and ethnic demographics. This practice was a perfectly legal form of segregation and disenfranchisement, the remnants of which can still be seen today. Education around how policy affects marginalized groups can help reduce and prevent further harm to these marginalized groups.

Mental Health Services

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), mental health includes services around emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Mental health is important for a person's overall health, the risks of poor mental health being an increased risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Being a part of a marginalized socio-economic group increases the likelihood of poor mental health outcomes. For example, members of the LGBTQ+ youth community in Vermont are four times more likely to commit suicide than non-LGBTQ+ youth. Public health interventions and services are important ways to address these issues by creating an understanding and supportive community free of bias and discrimination. Mental health, mental illness, and mental disability are issues that are slowly gaining the attention they need. Land use planning can play a supporting role in meeting the needs of people with these special needs.

[School Districts in the Region address mental health for students by having:](#)

1. School Social Workers
2. Behavioral Interventionist Programs
3. Behavioral Specialists
4. Board Certified Behavior Analysts
5. Student Assistance Program Counselors
6. Autism Services

[In 2017, the State of Vermont](#) implemented a text crisis line that offers 24/7 support. In 2019, of the young people who used this support service, 19% were under 13, and 81% were ages 14-17. 91% of respondents identified as female, 9% male, and 3% transgender. 61% of respondents identified as being members of the LGBTQ+ community.

For the rest of the population, mental health services were listed in both the 2019 Springfield Hospital CHNA, and the 2021 Mount Ascutney Hospital CHNA as a top priority item. With the onset of COVID-19, according to the Mount Ascutney CHNA, people in the hospital service area are experiencing heightened anxiety.

Robust Social and Civic Engagement

Civic engagement ranges from everything from planning, to access to local government processes, access to voting, in both political and non-political realms to protect public values and/or make changes in the community. Traditionally, the role of a planner is in the role of community engagement, partnership with stakeholders. With a movement for more virtual engagement tools, there is an opportunity for community participation outside of the traditional meetings. Trying a multi-faceted and non-traditional approach to community engagement can aim to reach more marginalized communities.

Recovery Friendly Communities/Substance Use Disorder Prevention

The goal for a recovery friendly community is for the community's programs and policies to make it easier for its members with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) to achieve and maintain recovery. This can be accomplished through:

1. Access to treatment facilities
2. Programming drug/ alcohol-free entertainment
3. Discouraging & educating around stigma
4. Recovery-friendly housing
5. Recovery-friendly workplaces
6. Healthy community relationships and environment

MARC can support these efforts through our partnership with the [Green Peak Alliance](#) to provide Regional informational services on recovery programs and efforts, collaborating on creative solutions, and supporting Regional partnerships and community assets that help reduce substance use harm in the Region.

Transformative Ideas of Planning

Planning for public health is a newer concept that pivots on the idea that internal and external structures of our society do not work without one another. As stated throughout the chapter, a lot of the places and people that need improvements in the public health realm have been systematically marginalized by society through policy, infrastructure, and planning. While

planning for change and supporting existing programs are important, for equitable change, we must also plan with and for communities and people who typically get left out. This may mean for example supporting indigenous people through a structure that is atypical for the RPC or participating in internal education on the history and issues of racial injustice, and generational poverty in the Region. Planning for public health cannot and will not happen without the input of marginalized communities.

State/Regional Health Resources

While this chapter addresses the aspects of community health and data overviews, [Mount Ascutney Hospital and Health Center](#) along with [Springfield Hospital](#) have created Community Health Needs Assessments, that are updated regularly. This chapter is intended to complement the work of these assessments.

Health and Equity Vocabulary

Community Health Framework-

1. Basic Needs- Core elements of an individual life that one needs to survive
2. Quality Sustainable Environment- A safe place the live, work, and play
3. Economic Social Development- Access and opportunity for financial growth and stability
4. Supportive Social Relationships- Access to a family and/or community networks that support a healthy lifestyle

Discrimination - is the unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.

Diversity - The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.

Emergency Care (Hospitals) - Emergency services are defined as covered inpatient and outpatient services that are needed to evaluate or stabilize an emergency medical condition. ([Source: George Washington University Department of Public Health](#))

Equity (vs. Equality) - The term “equity” refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and adjust imbalances.

Health Disparities - are statistical differences in health that occur between groups of people. These could be from any cause.



Health Equity - exists when all people have a fair and just opportunity to be healthy – especially those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage, historical injustice, and other avoidable systemic inequalities that are often associated with social categories of race, gender, ethnicity, social position, sexual orientation and disability.

Health Inequities - exist when avoidable inequalities lead to an uneven distribution of the resources and opportunities for health, and are differences in health that are avoidable, unfair or stemming from injustice. The concept of health inequities focuses on conditions that create health, and emphasizes the systemic distribution of opportunity, wealth and power.

Hospice Care- Medical care to help someone with a terminal illness live as well as possible for as long as possible, increasing quality of life. ([Source: Hospice Foundation](#))

Inclusion- The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other marginalized groups.

Long-term Care (Nursing Facilities)- Long-term care involves a variety of services designed to meet a person's health or personal care needs during a short or long period of time. These services help people live as independently and safely as possible when they can no longer perform everyday activities on their own. (Source: [National Institute on Aging](#))

Mental Healthcare- services devoted to the treatment of mental illnesses and the improvement of mental health in people with mental disorders or problems. (Source: [Collins Dictionary](#))

Power - having the potential to shape our lives and the world around us.

Prejudice - is an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought or reason. (Source: [Healthy Vermont](#))

Primary Care - Primary health care ensures people receive quality comprehensive care - ranging from promotion and prevention to treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care - as close as feasible to people's everyday environment. (Source: [World Health Organization](#))

Social Determinants of Health - are the conditions in which people live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks. These include social, economic, and physical conditions, as well as patterns of social engagement and sense of security and wellbeing.

Specialty Care- Specialty care means advanced medically necessary care and treatment of specific physical, mental, or behavioral health conditions or those health conditions which may manifest ages or subpopulations, that are provided by a specialist, preferably in coordination with a primary care professional. (Source: [Law Insider](#))

Stigma – preconceived views or bias against those who struggle with substance misuse or chronic poverty, for example – is a major barrier to equitable treatment in society and in healthcare systems. Greater awareness of the structural underpinnings of poverty and of how addiction functions as a disease leads to more empathy, understanding, and solutions for those in need of support.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) - is a complex condition in which there is uncontrolled use of a substance despite harmful consequences.

Substance Misuse Rehabilitation- Substance misuse disorder rehabilitation treatment can be used to help a person recover from addictions, injuries, and even physical or mental illnesses. (Source: [Rehabs](#))

Urgent Care- An urgent care center is a walk-in clinic focused on the delivery of medical care for minor illnesses and injuries. Urgent care facilities are important because they can lessen the burden that falls on emergency rooms when urgent care facilities don't exist. (Source: [ACEP](#))

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/books/housing/cha02.htm>

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ADM_State_Health_Improvement_Plan_2019-2023.pdf

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/about-us/our-vision-mission/health-equity>