



WORKFORCE  
HOUSING COALITION  
OF THE GREATER SEACOAST

# York Hospital

## Workforce Housing Design Charrette in Berwick, Maine

Brought to you by the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast  
in partnership with Envision Berwick



October 14 & 16, 2015



BERWICK IRON & METAL  
RECYCLING

The Fund  
Of Jupiter



**SIS** The Bank  
That Listens®

Verrill Dana LLP  
Attorneys at Law



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# CHARRETTE

## INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast organized a workforce housing design charrette in the community of Berwick, Maine. The event was held over the two-day period of October 14 and 16, 2015. The process included a site walk, community dialogue session, and design workshop, culminating in a design reveal on October 16. This, the Coalition's sixth annual design charrette. This produced conceptual designs for a mixed-use development that includes workforce housing for the charrette focus areas at the Prime Tanning and Estabrook School sites in Berwick, Maine.

## WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

The Workforce Housing Coalition's charrette is an intensive planning process in which designers, property owners, municipal representatives and other stakeholders collaborate to create a conceptual vision, for the possible development, of a mixed-use development concept that includes homes affordable to people who work in the community.

A Workforce Housing Coalition design charrette is a unique opportunity to:

- Envision workforce housing developments possible under current regulations
- Suggest modifications to current regulations to better suit workforce housing development
- Test the financial feasibility of design concepts

- Provide options to decision-makers for potential development of the subject sites

The charrette process can be summarized in nine steps:

1. Identify the study area
2. Reach out to property owners and stakeholders
3. Research the study area
4. Recruit volunteer design teams
5. Walk the site with owners and stakeholders
6. Listen to needs and concerns of all stakeholders
7. Create design options by volunteer team members
8. Present designs and recommendations to all stakeholders
9. Prepare a summary publication with recommendations

Typical charrette teams include:

*Designers and Planners-*  
Architects, Landscape Architects, Engineers, Environmental Consultants, Municipal and Consulting planners  
*Financing and development professionals-*  
Developers, Construction Estimators, Bankers, and Real Estate Agents.

Charrette team members are housing professionals who volunteer their time. They contribute an average of 14 hours, plus travel time, to the Berwick charrette process. This amounted to over 335 volunteer hours of professional talent and time put into the Berwick project.

## BERWICK CHARRETTE TEAM

### Team Lead

Tom Wright, Berwick Board of Selectman Chair, Envision Berwick

### Design Lead

Sarah Hourihane, Destefano Architects

### Facilitator

Kristen Grant, Maine Sea Grant and University of Maine Cooperative Extension

### Design Team Members

Eric Beauregard, Sanford Institute for Savings  
Pat Boisvert, Envision Berwick  
Paul Boisvert, Envision Berwick  
John Chagnon, Ambit Engineering  
Scott Collard, Scott N. Collard Landscape Architecture  
Colin Dinsmore, Ambit Engineering  
Tom Emerson, Studio B-E Architecture  
Nichole Fecteau, Bean Group  
Jim Flynn, The Red Barn at Outlook Farm  
John Flynn, The Red Barn at Outlook Farm  
Valarie Giguere, Underwood Engineers  
Tom Harmon, Civil Consultants  
Tom House, THA Architects  
Jeff Hyland, Ironwood Design Group  
Chris Kehl, Kennebunk Savings  
Mike Lassel, Lassel Architects  
Ute Luxem, Profile Bank  
Rip Patten, Credere Associates  
Mark Pendergast, Salmon Falls Nursery  
Ralph Pope, Coldwell Banker  
Todd Richardson, Richardson and Associates  
Kim Rogers, GL Rogers and Company  
Gayle Sanders, Gayle Sanders Home Design  
Paul Schumacher, Southern ME Regional Planning Commission  
Jay Stevens, Civil Consultants  
John Stoll, Berwick Town Planner  
Rick Vanderburg, Weston & Sampson Engineering  
Patrick Venne, Federated Equities

### Charrette Planning Committee

Chair: Kristen Grant, Maine Sea Grant and UM Cooperative Extension  
Pat Boisvert, Envision Berwick  
Paul Boisvert, Envision Berwick  
Robin Comstock, WHC of the Greater Seacoast  
Carrie DiGeorge, Kennebunk Savings  
Nichole Fecteau, Bean Group  
Sarah Hourihane, Destefano Architects  
Tom House, THA Architects  
Ron McAllister, York Community Dialogue  
Jack Mettee, Mettee Planning Consultants  
Keith Newton, D.F. Richard  
Ralph Pope, Coldwell Banker

George Reagan, NH Housing Finance Authority  
Elizabeth Rollins, Ambit Engineering  
John Stoll, Town of Berwick  
Gayle Sanders, Gayle Sanders Home Design  
Stephanye Schuyler, Unutil  
Matt Sullivan, Strafford Cnty. Regional Planning Commission  
Frank Underwood, Envision Berwick  
Tom Wright, Berwick Board of Selectmen, Envision Berwick

### Property Owners

#### Prime Tanning site

Owner: Fund of Jupiter/Town of Berwick

#### Estabrook School Site

Owner: Town of Berwick

### Charrette Sponsors

Naming Rights:



Platinum Level:



Gold Level:



Kennebunk Savings



**BERWICK IRON & METAL  
RECYCLING**

### Summary Publication Design

Molly Martuscello

### Special Recognition

Our thanks are extended to the Town of Berwick, and to Envision Berwick for their critical role in the charrette process. Without the planning and community development work these staff and volunteers have undertaken, the 2015 charrette would not have been possible.

# Housing in Berwick

The Town of Berwick has a population of approximately 7,492 residents. Based on the "2014 Housing Facts for York County" by the Maine Housing Authority (MHA), Berwick's median annual household income in 2014 was \$66,480 and the median home purchase price in 2014 was \$179,900. MHA defines housing affordability as monthly mortgage, taxes, and insurance payments of not more than 28% of gross income. Using this definition, MHA reports that in 2014, 38.2% of households in Berwick earned annual incomes below the level needed to afford the median home price in Berwick. Real estate professionals working in Berwick also note that there is a routine shortage of rental units in town and that during spring 2015 in particular, there was a point where there were no units available.

## Maine Municipalities struggle in an affordable housing shortage

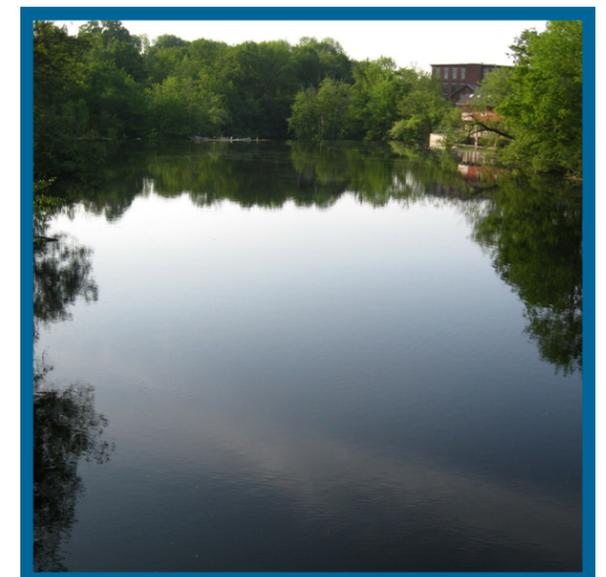
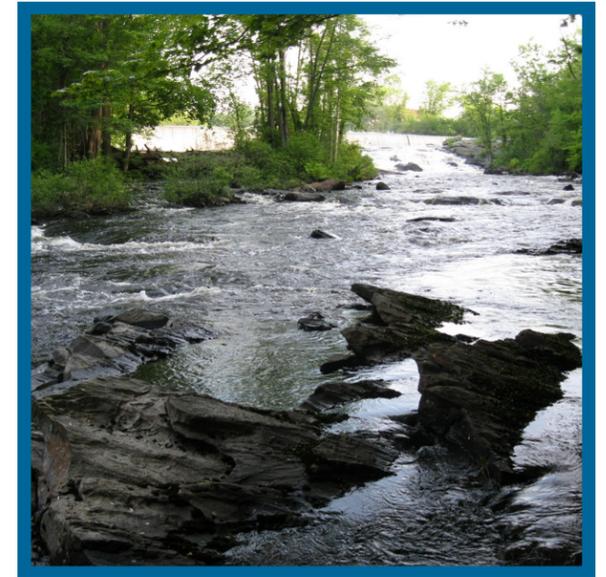
Municipalities feel the impact of the affordable housing shortage and find it difficult to deal with the problem with their inadequate resources. By working together, sharing resources and using more comprehensive measures, the State and its municipalities can more effectively address the shortage of affordable housing and the many other problems stemming from this housing shortage. (Title 30-A, §4751)

The lack of affordable housing for lower income and moderate-income households threatens the health, safety and welfare of Maine citizens.

Affordable housing solutions are possible when there is concerted action among state agencies that is coordinated with local and federal resources. Municipalities, which may make a positive or a negative impact on the cost and production of housing through local policies and regulations, need to be included in the solutions to the affordable housing crisis. (MRSA Title 30-A, §5003)

Because the problem is so wide-spread, all communities have an obligation to contribute to the solution. State policy mandates, "Any comprehensive plan... shall provide for the development of affordable housing for low-income and moderate-income households..."(MRSA Title 30-A, §4752) and that "... [each] municipality shall seek to achieve a level of 10% of new residential development... meeting the definition of affordable housing" (MRSA Title 30-A, §4326.3.G).

Housing affordability is not only a local issue, but also a regional issue. Towns may not accept a policy position that someone who can't afford to live in their community can simply live in another community. Every town is compelled by State law to participate in the solution.



# Overview of Site Location and Existing Conditions

The focus area of the Berwick charrette is in the town center, and includes the Prime Tanning site and the Estabrook School Site. An initial site walk with community stakeholders and planning committee members identified these as the focus areas and provided initial guidance for approaching the creation of the design concepts.

## **Current Zoning**

The focus area for the charrette is noted as a growth area in the Berwick comprehensive plan and public sewer and water services the entire area. All the properties identified in this focus area are located in the Town's newly expanded Village Overlay district of the Commercial/Industrial zone. Development flexibility has been increased in this district with the elimination of density and dimension requirements, and would be highly compatible with workforce housing. Due to the flexibility in this district, no variance relief would be required. The site could support as many single family and multi-family units as allowed by building code and limiting those units to the second floor or higher in buildings less than 45 feet tall. Parking requirements can also be adjusted by the Berwick Planning Board in lots located under the Village Overlay. The Berwick Downtown Vision & Implementation Report calls for a 40% green space as a result of Downtown redevelopment. The Vision Report also calls for public gathering places in this area.

## **Community Character and Context**

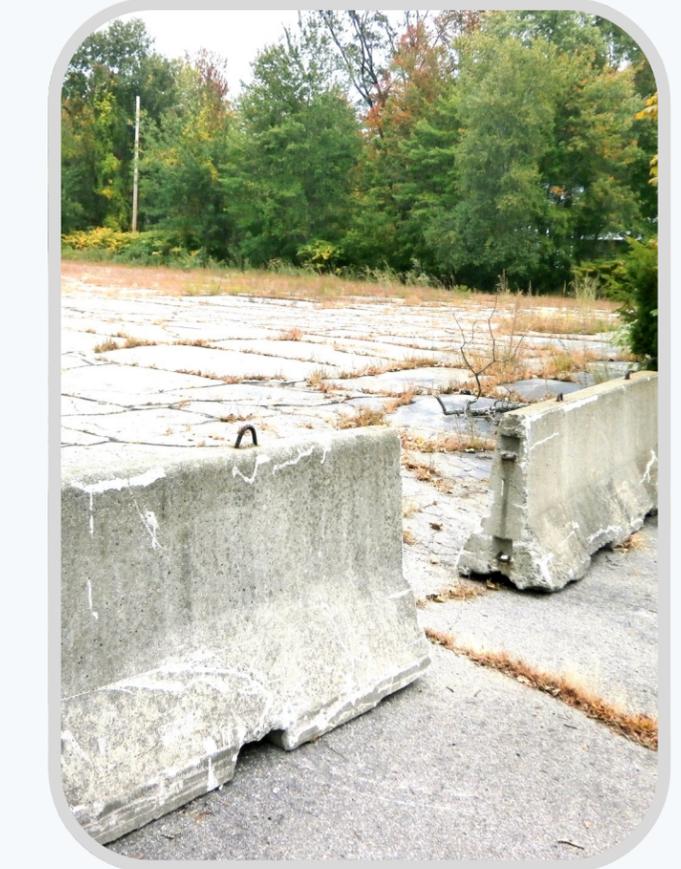
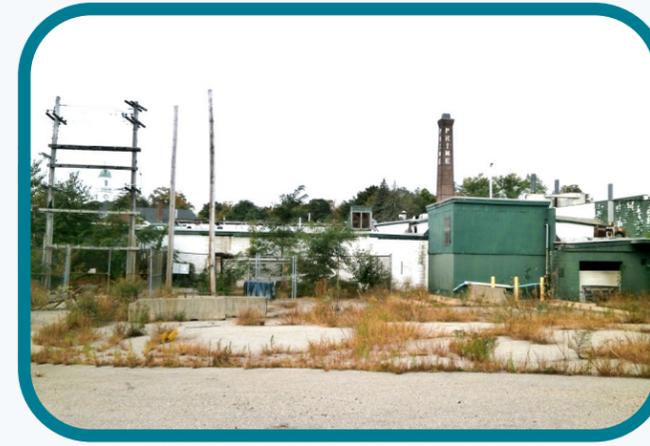
The focus area is near services, municipal offices, recreation fields, potential future job opportunities, and is well connected to the abutting residential neighborhoods. It is also close to a municipal trail connection and has nearby sidewalks linking to other neighborhoods as well as the downtown village. The focus area is also very close to two COAST Bus stops and the site has good accessibility from Sullivan, Wilson, and Logan Streets. The only notable topographic and hydrologic issues would be the steep slope on the North side of the lot near Logan St. and a small stream that runs along the Western boundary of this site which drains into the Salmon Falls River.

A recent low income housing development on a property abutting the charrette focus area was very contentious in the community. This past history suggested that it was critical to conduct extensive community outreach and clearly define the distinction between workforce and low income housing, providing images of local examples.



# Site Walk Observations October 14th 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Design team and community members were led on the walking tour by Berwick Town Planner, John Stoll. He began by describing Berwick as a small town in York County, comprising thirty-seven square miles and hosting a population of approximately 7,250 residents. He then introduced the group to the history of the first focus area, the property formerly occupied by the Prime Tanning Company. From the 1870's until the site was abandoned in 2008, the company had engaged in the processing of animal hides and the production of leather. In its glory days, Prime was the world's largest tannery, processing tens of thousands of hides every week. Today, the property is in a degraded physical and environmental state. Its iconic smokestack dominates the skyline from all directions. A small stream flows into and under the property, and empties into the Salmon Falls River which separates Berwick from the neighboring town of Somersworth, New Hampshire.



## Prime Tanning Site Location Photos



## Site Walk Observations (Continued)

Seen on the Prime site today is a hodgepodge of abandoned and derelict buildings. Declared a brownfield site by the Environmental Protection Agency, the property includes more than forty connected structures rambling over seven different adjoining parcels and comprising an area of eleven acres within Berwick's downtown. After Prime's foreclosure, the property was acquired by the Fund of Jupiter, a venture capital firm that invested more than \$4 million to obtain the property from bankruptcy court. Subsequently, the Fund and the Town entered into a partnership to develop the Prime land into a modern urban district of mixed uses.

North of the Prime site, the group also toured the charrette's second focus area - properties formerly occupied by the Town's public schools including the 25,000 square foot Estabrook School, the Durand Elementary School and what was formerly Berwick High School. This tract, owned by the town, now houses 34 low-income rental apartments as well as the Berwick Police Department along with other underused buildings. The landscape is open space connected to neighboring streets by wooded trails. Further to the North is the Berwick Public Library, another publicly owned tract of land with good connectivity through the Estabrook area to the Prime site.

The potential for developing the combined parcels of open and abandoned land has been obvious to the citizens of Berwick for a few years thanks to the citizen group *Envision Berwick*. Since its establishment in 2012, *Envision Berwick* has developed a vision for the downtown which was adopted into the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Without the dedication of *Envision Berwick*, the current workforce housing charrette likely would not have taken place. Without their efforts, \$600,000 in federal and state funds would not likely have been made available to clean-up and develop the property. The state and federal support is associated with three of the site's seven parcels. Two additional requests for funds are anticipated when the remaining four parcels are submitted for further EPA Brownfields grant funding. The work of the current Berwick charrette is best understood in the context of *Envision Berwick's* efforts over the last three years.



Estabrook Site  
Location Photos



# Community Listening Session: October 14 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Input from stakeholders is a critical element of the charrette process. Extensive outreach was conducted over six months to engage charrette area neighbors, neighborhood residents, business owners and community members in the Community Listening Session at Berwick Town Hall Auditorium.

## **Purpose: hear community members' hopes and concerns**

The listening session provides a chance for design team members to listen to ideas, hopes, issues, concerns from community members. The goal is to improve the outcome of the charrette by gathering the ideas and knowledge of stakeholders who know and care about the site itself and the surrounding area.

## **Workforce Housing= Homes affordable to people who work in Berwick**

The listening session opened with a presentation by Kristen Grant of Maine Sea Grant/University of Maine Cooperative Extension. She provided an overview of the agenda and an introduction to key terms, including the meaning of workforce housing in the current context: homes in Berwick that are affordable to people who work in the community.

## **Affordable = <30% income to housing**

George Reagan, NH Housing Finance Authority, then talked about workforce housing along the Seacoast, the households who need it and the income standards that qualify families to be accommodated in it. He made clear that household housing expenses ought not to exceed 30% of the household's annual



income. He clarified that to purchase in Berwick, a household income of \$66,489 is needed in order for the home to be affordable to the owner. For a renter, an annual income of \$42,531 would be needed. He also noted that 38.2% of households in Berwick earned annual incomes below the level needed to afford the median home price in Berwick.



## **A Maine Example: Kittery Charrette**

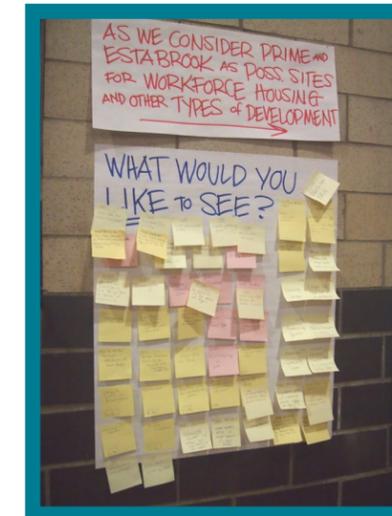
The property that was the focus on the 2011 WHC charrette is owned by the Kittery Water District on RT 1, in the neighborhood known as *Gourmet Alley* across from the York Hospital building. This use was not an ideal fit for neighborhood. This charrette resulted in 2 designs that caught the attention of a developer interested to include workforce housing. While there are environmental issues that have held up development at the site, the charrette has generated many other results. The Town Manager continues to seek alternatives and is working with Kittery Economic Development Committee. The charrette designs have been used in regional planning efforts and in the Town's Comprehensive Plan. A business owner near site who was involved in the 2011 charrette is considering workforce housing development on his own property.

## **All the work Berwick has already done**

Tom Wright, Chair of the Berwick Board of Selectmen then spoke about citizen preferences as identified in previous Envision Berwick planning efforts. A survey conducted in 2013, that generated 500 responses, revealed that citizens highly supported public commons, markets, restaurants, and small retail developments in the village center. While residential development was not a high priority, Tom suggested the advantages of including residence as a key to creating a vibrant village where people work, play, and live. As a result of this prior work, a village overlay district was drafted and approved and the charrette team will use this plan as a basis for charrette designs.

## **Looking at what's possible**

Tom then proceeded to take attendees on a virtual tour of the property earlier visited by those on the site walk. He noted that the clean up of the Prime site was only the beginning. The charrette can be considered the next step in the process of designing and implementing the community's vision of what's possible.



## **Community Input**

Kristen Grant then introduced the process that would be used to provide participants with an opportunity to contribute ideas to the charrette team to help guide their work. She explained that the group would be addressing three questions as we consider Prime and Estabrook as potential sites for workforce housing and other types of development

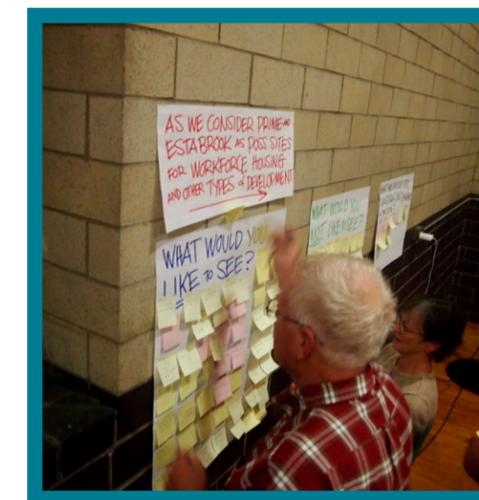
What would you LIKE to see?

What would you NOT LIKE to see?

What are the opportunities, and challenges associated with these sites?

She then described the process that would be used for the remainder of the evening. People were asked to write their ideas on post-it notes, all of which would be read to the group, explained if necessary and sorted into themes.

At 7:00 p.m., the group began to write down and post their thoughts.





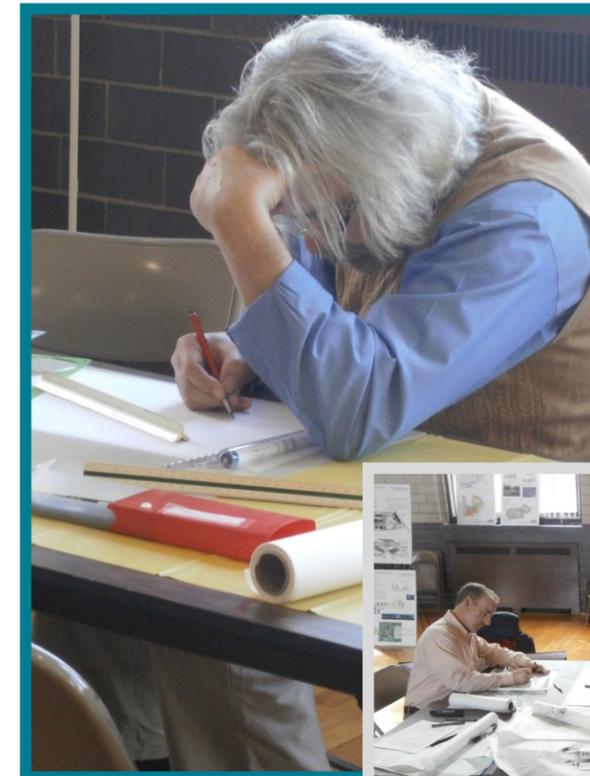
# Design Concepts

## Unifying Concept – Walkable Open Space Network

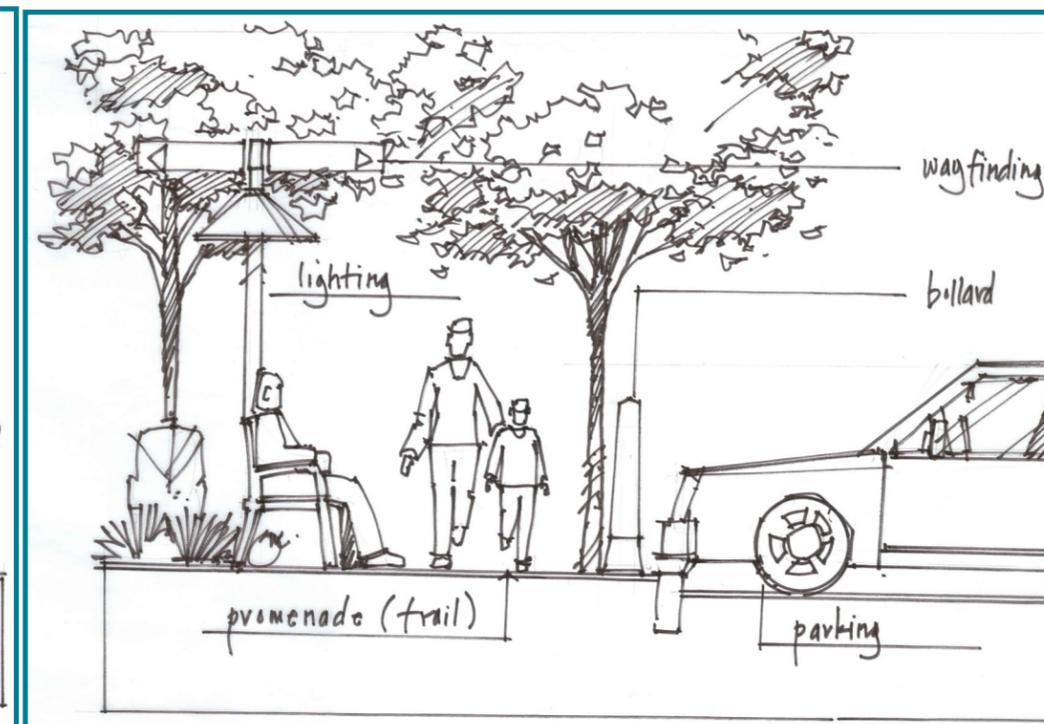
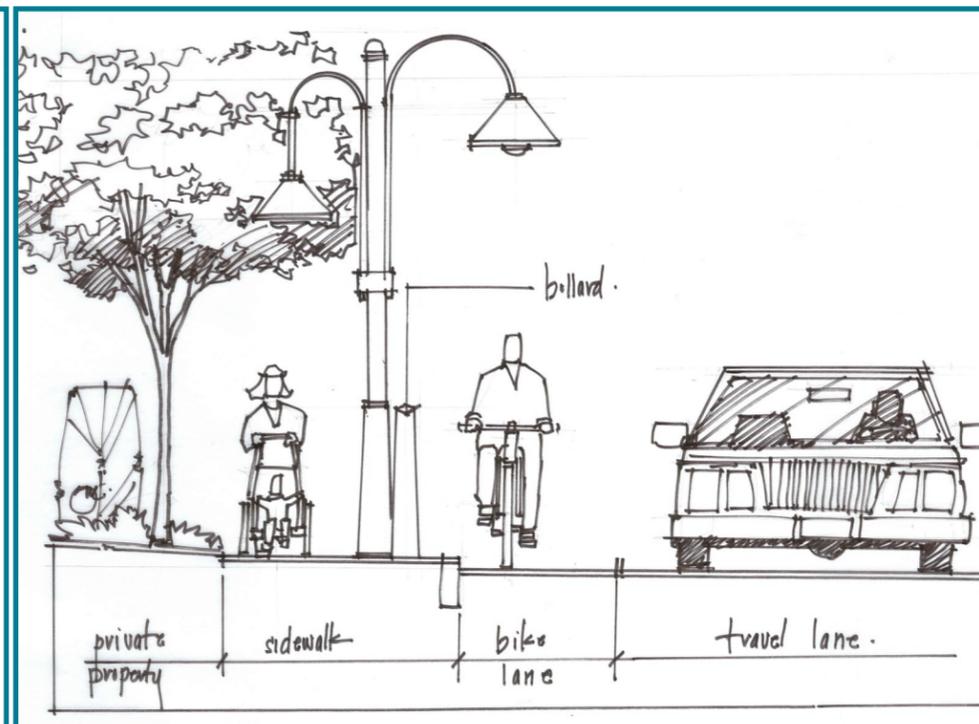
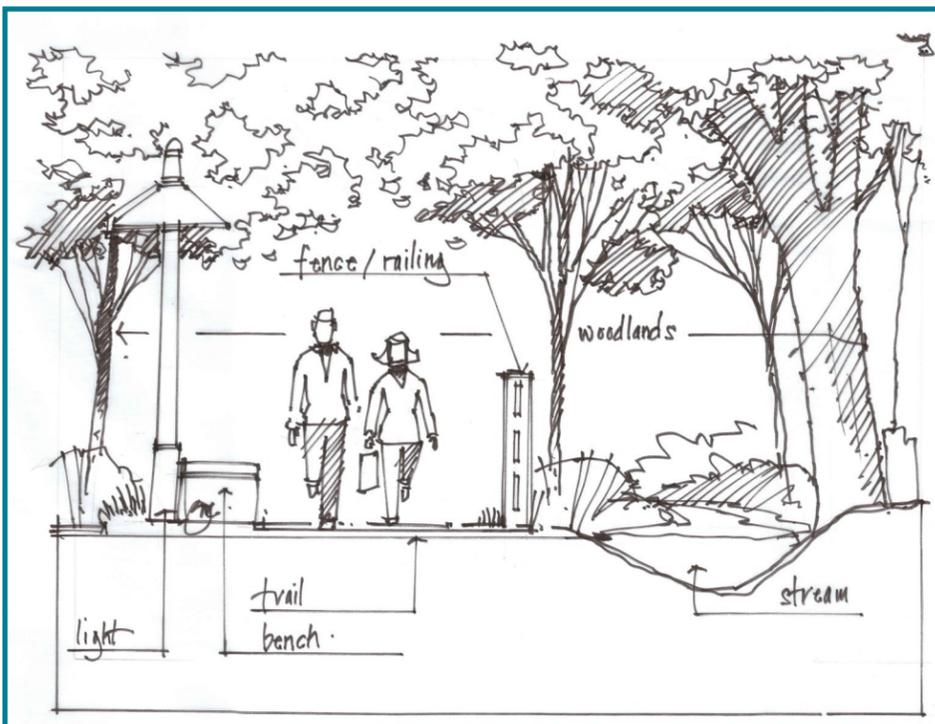
Landscape architect Scott Collard, SNC Design Presence, clarified the two design teams' common objectives and spoke about the urban to rural transect concept on which the Prime and Estabrook site designs were imagined. He described the concept as a walkable, open space network that graphically linked the library, the Estabrook site, the Town Hall, and the river. These linkages led to a discussion about trails, open spaces and walkability as community values and attractions. He presented a series of illustrations that showed how a continuum of corridors might look and function. The challenge will be to create a vibrant and functioning downtown connected to Berwick's more rural areas.

### Charrette Teams' Objectives

- ✓ Adopt a goal to create a walkable community infrastructure
- ✓ Include options that blend/integrate a variety of local and regional transportation options
- ✓ Of primary importance: pedestrian safety and comfort
- ✓ Connect people with: desired destinations, community resources, other people, nature
- ✓ Use walkable infrastructure as a means of strengthening community's visual/aesthetic quality – reflecting citizen's sense of place



← Most Rural



## Recommendations

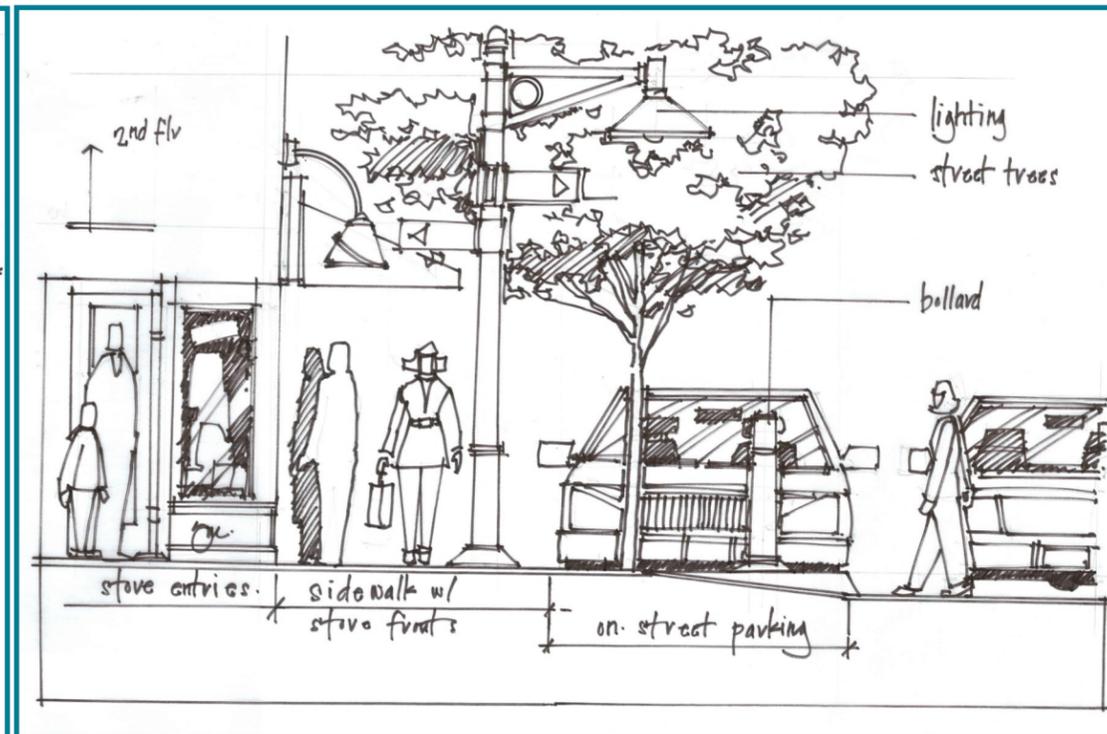
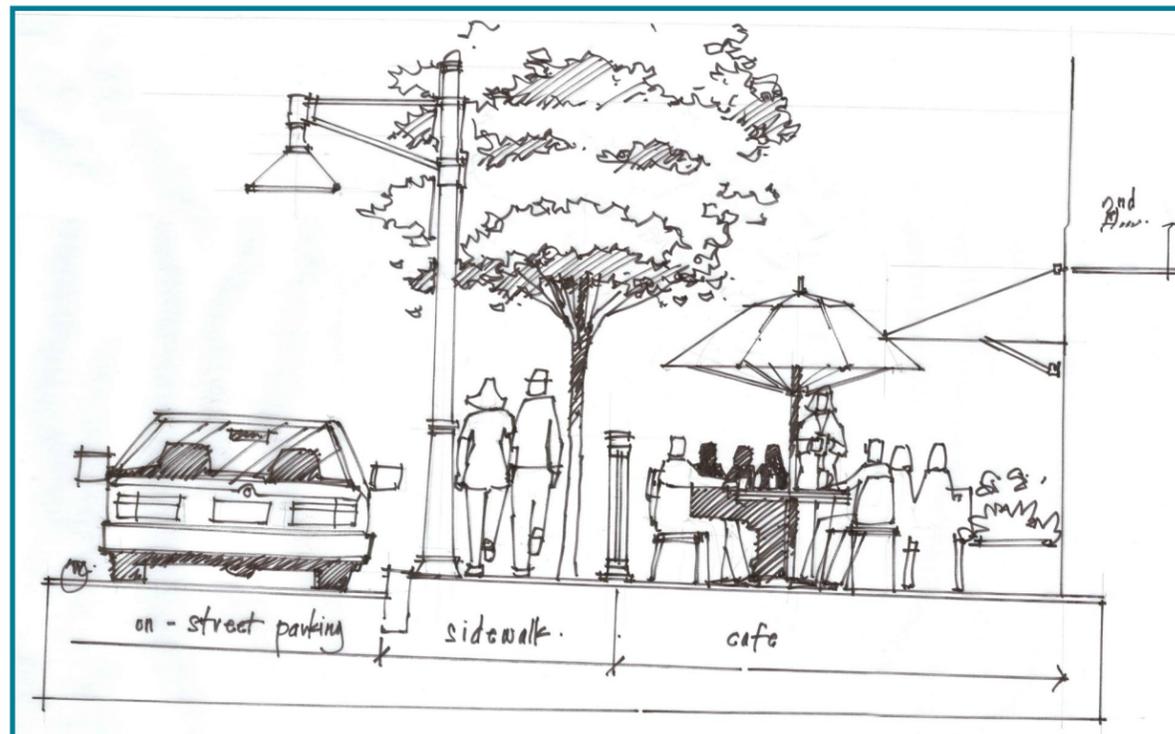
Conduct community dialogue around “building our walkable community” and use it as a means to accomplishing the following:

- ✓ Identify Berwick’s downtown existing desired locations/amenities/features.
- ✓ Identify what Berwick citizens would consider the *ideal downtown*.
- ✓ Secure access to land through which the walkable open space network would pass.
- ✓ Develop and adopt design standards for the community’s walkable open space network based on types of development proposed or existing.
- ✓ Study, develop and adopt a form-based code and streetscape design standards for the village district.
- ✓ Work with planners and developers to build a strong and safe walkable open space network with a full range of community characteristics.

# DESIGN



Most Urban



# Design Concept 1 - Prime Tanning Site

## Background Considerations

Architect Sarah Hourihane, Destefano Architects, and Gayle Sanders, Gayle Sanders Home Design, presented the group's ideas. The team worked to address community interests that had been expressed during the listening session, including creating:

- ✓ A vibrant downtown
- ✓ Pedestrian connections through town
- ✓ A brewery, small shops, restaurants, and amenities, such as small grocery store
- ✓ Green space and recreational areas
- ✓ Housing for seniors, young professionals, single parents

Existing zoning in Prime area:

- ✓ Village Overlay District that includes no residential on the first floor

Existing Site Conditions:

- ✓ Existing Prime Tanning building - salvaging a portion of space that a local brewery is interested in occupying
- ✓ Existing traffic patterns – balancing major arteries vs small streets

Neighborhood Context:

- ✓ Town Hall at one end
- ✓ Bridge/ River
- ✓ Residential pockets
- ✓ Existing commercial buildings



## Design Overview

The Prime team focused on ways to develop the 11 acres into urban blocks at a greater density than the Estabrook site. As many as ten new buildings could be accommodated. Six buildings would be mixed use space with commercial activities on the lower floors while the others would be strictly residential. Inside the property would be four one-bedroom residential buildings containing as many as three hundred apartments. This would also be very suitable for senior housing as it would have convenient access to the proposed shops. Streets inside the Prime site would be for local traffic. Total square footage would be about 280,000 square feet, enough to provide greater density without overwhelming the fabric of the Town.

The major challenge in designing mixed-use for this site is the difficulty in financing primarily workforce housing units above commercial space on the first floor, as required by zoning in the Village Overlay district. To address this, the team created a mix of building types for this property;

- ✓ ~25,000 sf brewery
- ✓ mixed-use (commercial first floor/residential above)
- ✓ and single-use residential.

This design makes use of smaller buildings that could be phased as separate projects, by separate developers. Residential units in this denser village area would be primarily studios, one bedrooms, and fewer two bedrooms. A mix of market rate and workforce housing units is recommended to improve the financial feasibility.

Another challenge related to addressing the interest of a brewery in occupying a portion of the existing tannery building. The team recommends reuse of existing space that lends itself to a light industrial use. Additionally, this approach would facilitate the timeline of the brewery moving in, versus construction of a new building. To give this warehouse-type building the human scale that would soften the transition to the residential homes on Wilson street, the team suggests adding layers and scale to the street side of the building.

The team sees the connection between Somersworth and Berwick as an opportunity for a Gateway with green space and river amenities. Entering Berwick via the Somersworth bridge, the Prime site is directly ahead and the major roads (RT 9 and Sullivan St) divert in a y-shape on either side of the site. RT 9 is a major vehicular artery, and the other being Sullivan Street. This intersection is heavily traveled and the team suggests a small roundabout might be an investment the town could consider at this location.



The team noted that the location of the Town Hall on Sullivan street, adjacent to the Prime site, suggests Sullivan St might lend itself to becoming *Main St*. The street would feature brick buildings, 3-4 stories, with commercial on the first floor, and either business or residential above. These buildings would line the sidewalk and become home to small shops, local restaurants, cafes, a pharmacy, etc. Directly across from the Town Hall would be a village green, visually connecting other areas of the site to this new Main Street and giving space for recreational activities to occur in the heart of downtown.

This design also features visual, pedestrian and vehicular connections to the Estabrook site, providing a transition to more residential and civic uses in the Estabrook area.

## Feasibility

Developer Kim Rogers, G.L. Rogers, spoke about the financial considerations involved. It can be expected that with mixed one and two bedroom units, only about 10% would have children. A one bedroom unit would be expected to rent for \$685 per month (\$8,220 per year). Under a workforce housing program, studio's would likely rent for approximately \$575 per month, two bedroom units for \$860/month and three bedroom units for \$1,040/month. Total construction and development costs for 12 studio, 30 one bedroom, 40 two bedroom, and 4 three bedroom units is estimated at \$12.33 million. This breaks down to \$195.56/SF.

If the development were entirely workforce housing and financed with one third cash equity of \$4.1 million and two thirds lender financing, the project operations would likely lose significant sums yearly. Even with market rate housing, the estimated annual loss is still significant.

This assumes the project would be not-for-profit. Raising large amounts of equity capital would be difficult. It is our estimate that residential market rental rates for Berwick are only 20-25% greater than the workforce housing rates and would not be sufficient to support unsubsidized housing.

For the commercial spaces, the challenge is to (a) construct 22,000 square feet of commercial space in six buildings with an estimated construction cost of about \$4.8 million and (b) still make the properties profitable. The cost of the reclaimed land can be expected to be reasonable, which will be help in reducing the development costs. 35% in equity is need to make this development viable. The commercial rents in Berwick are about \$18/sq. foot, generating a positive cash flow would be challenging. For a bank to lend on the commercial side of the project, the cash flow before debt payments needs to be at least 1.2 times the debt payment, which is the minimum debt service coverage ratio. Under the current conditions, the commercial space would likely operate at a loss after payments and the debt service ration would be well below a 1.2 coverage ratio.

However, there are ways to reduce debt payments, which has the effect of increasing the Coverage Ratio to incentivize commercial development. Strategies include:

- ✓ Municipal subsidies such as Tax Increment Financing districts (or TIFs) for street and utility improvements reduce costs and debt
- ✓ Reduced property taxes for several years increases cash flow for debt coverage
- ✓ Finding other ways to reduce or defer costs or decrease the size and/or cost of the debt.

Additionally, phasing would be necessary to align with the EPA Brown-fields funding sequence.

**Recommendations**

The next step would be to explore the options and identify developers who could take advantage of this opportunity. The current zoning creates a development and financing challenge in that it requires mixed use with commercial on the first floor. Berwick might consider adjusting the commercial mix in the existing overlay district. Live-and-work space is a possible alternative that provides a mix of uses that is consistent with residential scale. The commercial component will pose a challenge, so developers might seek ways to reduce commercial space. However, a more in-depth analysis of future commercial leading rates may be warranted. The realtors participating in the charrette were confident about the current commercial leasing rate, but future expectations may be difference as the economy in the Seacoast area continues to future expectations may be different as the economy in the Seacoast area continues to expand. . Parking — 1 space each 2-bed unit — could be an issue but there is plenty of room

for landscaping and planting. Zoning in too much parking can needlessly increase the costs of housing

A project of this scope could take as many as ten years to achieve but it could yield tremendous benefit. This is not just another mixed use development – Berwick is seeking to create a village with this proposal. With this in mind, the team recommends that Envision

Berwick continue its community conversation about what workforce housing is, why we need it, and how it is so important for a community to have a diversity of housing options for their residents as they move through different stages of their lives.



# Design Concept 2 - Estabrook School Site

## Background Considerations

Realtor Nicole Fecteau, the Bean Group, began the presentation speaking about the community's interests in senior housing interests in senior housing, a community center, and outdoor catering space.

Existing zoning in Prime area:

- ✓ Village Overlay District that required commercial on the first floor.

Existing Site Conditions:

- ✓ Civic buildings including the police station (Doran School), gymnasium, and Estabrook School
- ✓ A large grassy field
- ✓ Access to public trail system from Logan Street and Sullivan Street

Access/Circulation

- ✓ Vehicular access to the area is from School Street and Wilson Street
- ✓ Driveway to the Estabrook school from Logan Street
- ✓ Pedestrian access is from the Sullivan Street cut-through trail
- ✓ The Penny Pond trail (from the Library, through the Penny Pond area, over Logan Street) can also provide access.

Community Context:

- ✓ Transition area that borders both the industrial area of Prime and the residential

## Design Overview

The team identified the Prime Tanning parcel at the northeast corner of Wilson Street and Sullivan Street as a potential location for workforce housing and potentially mixed-use development. The parcel, which currently consists of an asphalt surface parking lot, would require less extensive site preparation and could be developed more easily than the main Prime Tanning site. Three identical buildings are recommended for this lot that would consist of 7-9 residential units each and could potentially include commercial space on the lower level.

The buildings in this area would be brought closer to the street. Access from the back of the units where residences are up on higher floors would be desirable. Courtyards should be considered important for these apartments to provide private space as the "transect" moves out of the urban core. The design of the three buildings would be intended to carry the architecture of the redeveloped Prime site into the Estabrook site.

One of the main challenges, is that the current zoning requires commercial on the first floor and the financing may be more difficult to include commercial space

The design includes vehicular access off Sullivan Street to a parking area located behind the buildings, so that the parking would be screened from the street views. A landscaped courtyard area would be located between the parking and the rear of the buildings.

For the remainder of the Estabrook Site, a larger public parking area is featured that could be used for special events or overflow parking for main Prime Tanning development area.

The design suggests the police station remain in its current location and for the Estabrook School building to be relocated and repurposed for a community center. The plan shows a large common area that could be a multi-use, flexible space for special events, outdoor theater, recreation, etc.

Also recommended is a senior housing facility near the north end of the Estabrook Site, in order to provide a quieter option for seniors seeking distance from the busier areas of downtown.

Lastly, the design includes a future trail connection to extend the existing trail system towards the downtown area.



### Feasibility

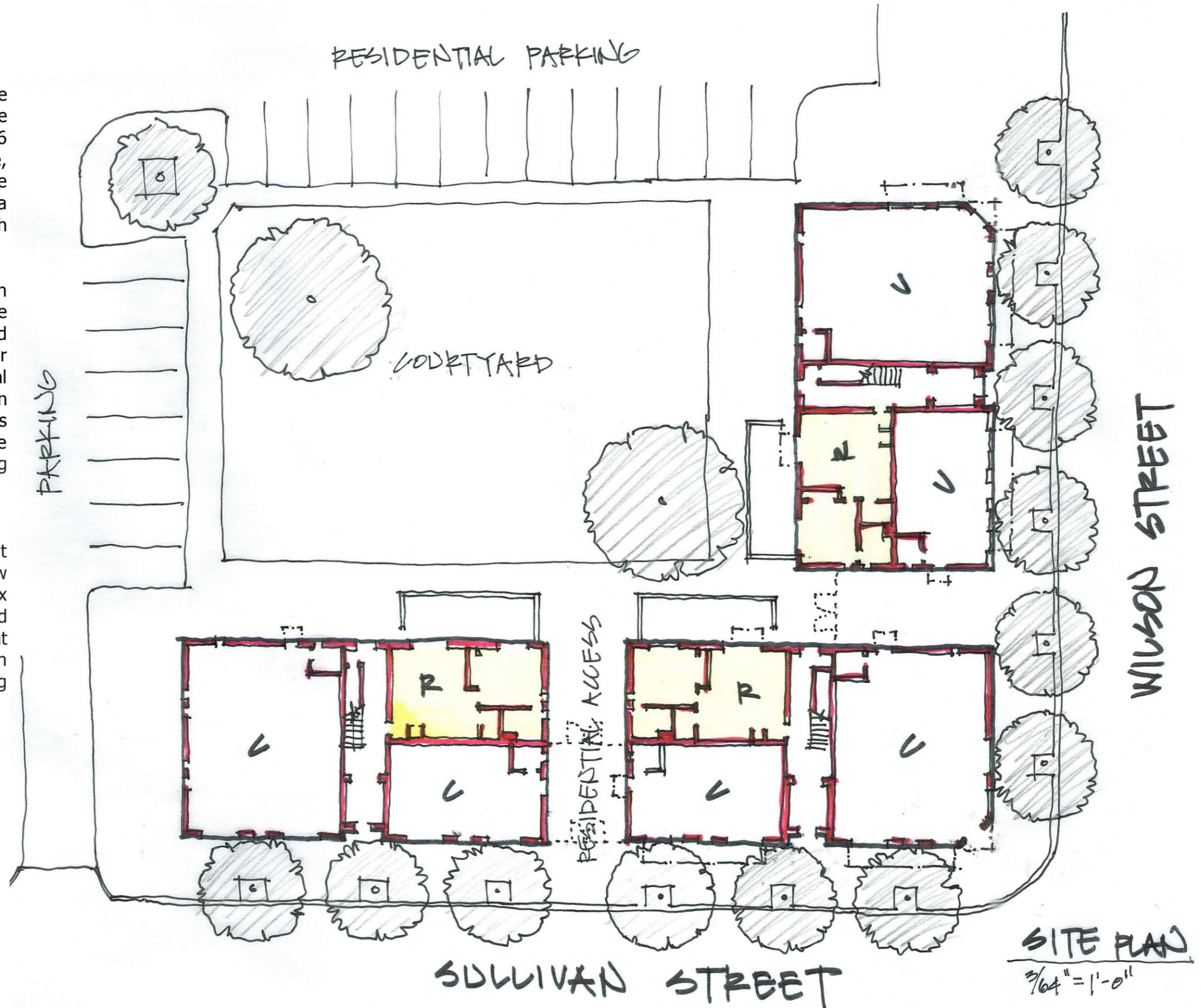
Eric Beaugard, Sanford Institute of Savings, spoke about the financial feasibility of the proposal. Construction costs for three identical buildings of 27,000 square feet would be approximately \$5.6 million. Research shows that in order to meet the 30% rule, workforce housing in Berwick should be available for sale at a price that does not exceed \$228,000 while on the rental side, the cost of a two-bedroom unit should not exceed \$927 per month — with subsidies. Market-rate rents would be \$1,200.

The challenges of providing affordability with a \$927 rent per month could be met on this site. Residential density also would create opportunities for commercial uses. It would be best to build residential units first with commercial uses to follow. Cost per foot for construction might be anticipated to be \$150 per sq. ft.. Commercial construction would be slightly higher. The team assumed \$167,000 in subsidies with the total debt amortized over a 20 year period. This is viable if there are subsidies. All units could not be at market rate given the costs of development and financing. Identical looking buildings would be less expensive to build.

### Recommendations

The first thing to do would be to change the overlay district so that commercial space is not required on the first floor of new construction. The Town also should continue to develop Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for the downtown district. This could encourage developers to come in if they are given credits. Also at this point, it would be important to encourage and support Envision Berwick whose members have been very effective at focusing attention on this site and its potential.

- ⇒ Change Village overlay district to allow for residential on first floor
- ⇒ Continue efforts with TIF
- ⇒ Continued support from Envision Berwick
- ⇒ Community outreach
- ⇒ Come up with other funding sources/incentives for other commercial needs in downtown (grocery, pharmacy, post office, day care, medical, bank, etc.)



**SURVEY RESULTS**

At the end of each part of the charrette process, we surveyed attendees and participants in an effort to gauge the overall effectiveness of our charrette program as a tool to initiate conversations about strategies for the balancing of housing types in the community.

We surveyed property owners, listening session participants, design reveal presentation attendees and our design team professionals. The survey questions we asked all participants addressed their general understanding of workforce housing, their understanding of the need for workforce housing, and their level of support for workforce housing development. The survey responses show that the charrette process is an effective method of increasing awareness of workforce housing, the need in the community, its benefits and for generating support of workforce housing development.

We also asked our design team professionals, participants and attendees open-ended questions regarding what they liked or disliked and ways to improve the charrette process.

***I better understand the connection between availability of workforce housing and quality of life in the community.***

Listening Session and Reveal Participants

**77%**

Agree

**22%**

Strongly Agree

***I better understand why workforce housing is needed.***

Listening Session and Reveal Participants

**100%**

Strongly Agree or Agree

Professional team members

**75%**

Strongly Agree

***I have increased awareness and understanding of what workforce housing is.***

**50%**

Strongly Agree

***I am interested in participating in future WHC charrettes.***

Professional team members

**100%**

Strongly Agree or Agree

***I am more inclined to support workforce housing development***

Listening Session and Reveal Participants

**89%**

Strongly Agree or Agree

**11%**

Don't Know

***I would recommend participating in a WHC charrette to a colleague.***

Professional team members

**75%**

strongly agree or agree

**Don't know**

“Well run and organized”

“Great program”

“Exciting community collaboration”

“Extend the program a 1/2 hour”

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

# WORKFORCE HOUSING

## What do you mean by workforce housing?

Workforce housing includes single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums and apartments that are affordable to low- and moderate-income households. To be affordable, monthly housing costs shouldn't demand more than 30% of gross household income. To close the widening gap between incomes and housing costs, some developers/owners utilize subsidy programs. However, subsidies are not synonymous with workforce housing.

The Workforce Housing Coalition defines workforce housing as for-sale housing which is affordable to a 4-person household earning no more than 100% of median area income or rental housing which is affordable to a 3-person household earning no more than 60% of median area income.

A healthy vibrant and thriving community with strong eco-systems is filled with all generations of the workforce. The faces of that workforce include young professionals to empty nesters, and they are often nurses and doctors, teachers and police officers, and first responders. Insuring these members of community, who provide the benefits and services we associate with a desirable place to live and work, live and give to the community as their home, will insure they are able to engage and contribute in all the ways we need for healthy social, cultural and economic systems.

## Who needs workforce housing?

The Greater Seacoast of New Hampshire and Southern Maine is one of the least affordable regions in the country. Many people cannot afford to live in the communities in which they work, so they endure long commutes: which is harmful to the environment and limits time with family and at community and volunteer activities. Some people move away, leaving employers who are unable to hire and retain the workers needed to sustain and grow their businesses.

## What does workforce housing look like?

Contemporary workforce housing is based on good design and minimal impact - small, mixed-income developments that are distributed throughout a town. Developments in suburban settings are clustered to leave areas of open space. Compared to unplanned sprawl, such land use is much more efficient and attractive.

## Workforce Housing coalition of the Greater Seacoast

With the support of our members, the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast tackles complex issues that contribute to the region's limited housing options.

We offer planners and developers advice and resources on how to meet the housing need. Through our annual design charrettes, we inspire dialogue and generate concept designs that include innovative ways to increase the local supply of workforce housing.

We envision an adequate supply of affordable, desirable housing throughout the Greater Seacoast region that provides opportunities for area workers to put down roots, creating a more diverse community that benefits us all.

Since the Coalition's inception in 2001, we have helped nearly two dozen communities in the Greater Seacoast region of New Hampshire and Southern Maine to improve their housing regulations. In turn, local developers have created over 350 new units of workforce housing.

The lack of an adequate and balanced supply of housing poses a significant threat to the region's economic health and future. Addressing this issue requires that a broad range of individuals, organizations and public officials become engaged in efforts to change attitudes towards housing development.

## What can YOU do?

Learn the facts about the area's housing situation and recognize the link between a balanced, available and accessible housing supply and balanced housing supply and the area's economic and social stability.

Participate in local planning processes and monitor local regulatory practices to ensure that they provide reasonable opportunities for appropriate housing development. Tell your local officials that you expect them to support actions, which lead to a balanced housing supply, and be prepared to support specific housing initiatives that make sense for your community.

Participate in the work of local non-profit housing development organizations or other housing providers. Communicate your concern about the lack of lack of workforce housing to state policymakers and advocate for policies and programs that support housing development.

Become a member or sponsor the Workforce Housing Coalition in your region supporting their work to stimulate the development of a range of housing options for the diverse workforce.

Support the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast and help to promote a friendlier climate for workforce housing development in the Greater Seacoast, for more information visit [www.SeacoastWHC.org](http://www.SeacoastWHC.org)



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