

10-2014

Workforce Housing Design Charrette in York, Maine

Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast

Maine Community Foundation

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WORKFORCE
HOUSING COALITION
— OF THE GREATER SEACOAST —
Opening Doors to Vibrant Communities

The Maine Community Foundation
Workforce Housing Design Charrette in York, Maine
Hosted by the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast

October 15 & 17, 2014



York Housing



Town of York Maine





WORKFORCE
HOUSING COALITION
— OF THE GREATER SEACOAST —

Opening Doors to Vibrant Communities

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INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast organized a workforce housing design charrette in the community of York, Maine. The event was held over a two-day period, October 15 and 17, 2014. The process included a site walk, community dialogue session, and design workshop, culminating in a design reveal on October 17, 2014. This, the Coalition’s fifth annual design charrette, produced conceptual designs for the development of workforce housing opportunities on the subject sites located in the U.S. Route 1 and Vacation Drive vicinity of York, Maine.

WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

A charrette is an intensive planning session where property owners, community residents, designers, and other professionals collaborate to create a vision for development. Charrettes often take place in multiple sessions in which the group divides into sub-groups. Each sub-group then presents its work as material for further dialogue. Such charrettes serve as a way of quickly generating multiple design concepts while integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse collection of people.



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 unpaid volunteers, who contributed an average of 14 hours, plus travel time, to the York charrette process. This amounted to over 335 volunteer hours of professional talent and time put into the York project.

CHARRETTE DESIGN TEAM

Design Team Lead

Kristen Grant, Maine Sea Grant/University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Sarah Hourihane, DeStefano Architects, WHC Board of Directors

Design Team Members

Jeff Clifford, Altus Engineering
Scott Collard, Scott N. Collard Landscape Architecture
Carrie DiGeorge, Kennebunk Savings Bank
Paul Fowler, adaptDesign
Todd Frederick, Town of York Planning Board
Greg Gosselin, Gosselin Realty Group
Peter J.L. Griem, Summit Engineering
Dick Johnson, Pine Brook Consulting
Chris Kehl, Kennebunk Savings Bank
Ron McAllister, York resident
Fiona McQuaide, York Housing
Patricia Martine, York Housing
Jaime Paolini, York Harbor Builders
Damien Pisano, Bangor Savings
Ralph Pope, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, WHC Board of Directors
Kim Rogers, GL Rogers & Co., WHC Board of Directors
Gayle Sanders, Gayle Sanders Home Design L.L.C, WHC Board of Directors
Dylan Smith, Town of York
Peter Smith, Town of York Planning Board
Rick Vandenberg, Weston & Sampson
Adam Wagner, DeStefano Architects

Event Planning Team

Ashlee Iber Amenti, WHC Executive Director
Stephanye Schulyer, Unitil
Leakana Sok, WHC Intern

Summary Publication Design

Patricia Prescott, Consultant

PROPERTY OWNERS

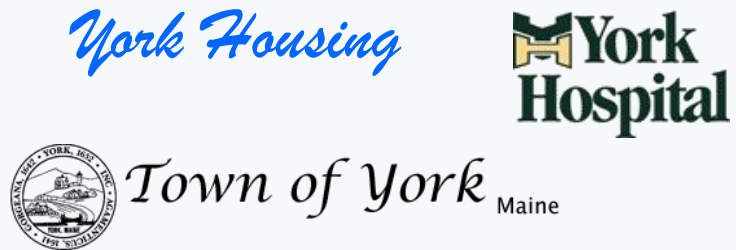
Sylvie Arsenault
Robert Fleischmann
Mark Robertson, TY Mark Enterprises
William Theriault

CHARRETTE SPONSORS

Platinum Level:



Gold Level:



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Thank you to the Town of York, including Stephen Burns, Town Manager and Dylan Smith, Town Planner.

Also, thank you to the York Housing, particularly Patricia Martine, Executive Director and Fiona McQuaide, Assistant Director, Leasing Operations.

Additionally, we thank the local businesses who provided in kind technical and printing support, meeting space and refreshments for event attendees and volunteers - Kittery Community Center, Maine Sea Grant/University of Maine Cooperative Extension, T.H.A. Architects, L.L.C. and York Housing.

HOUSING IN YORK

York’s home prices and affordability

The Maine State Housing Authority’s publication “2013 Housing Facts for York County” reports that the Town of York has an affordability index of .63 ¹, with a median home price of \$345,000, median income of \$59,962.

A household income needed to afford the median home price is \$94,757, and home price affordable to median income households is \$218,315. As you can see that's a huge gap between home prices and what is affordable to the median income family. This is a gap of \$126,685.

The only Southern Maine communities that are less affordable than the Town of York are Ogunquit and Kennebunkport.

Additionally, 76.4% of households or 4,179 out of 5,470 would be unable to afford the median home. The hourly rate that corresponds to the \$94,757 income needed to afford a median home is \$45.56/hour.

Rental affordability is listed only by county not town in the report. York County lands on the index at the .85 mark ². This is compared to .90 for the Maine average (This means York County is less affordable than Maine as a whole). The average 2 bedroom rent in York County is \$1,008 per month. The median income for households that rent in York County is \$34,314, whereas an income of \$40,335 would be needed to afford the average 2 bedroom home in York County. Rents of \$858 per month would be affordable to a family at the median income.

In York County, 57% of households are unable to afford the average 2 bedroom rent. This is 12,457 out of a total of 21,861 renter households. The average 2 bedroom rent with utilities is \$1,008. Household income needed to afford the average 2 bedroom rent is \$40,335 or \$19.39 per hour.

York County population has risen 21.1% between 1990 -2013 and the number of households has increased 33.3%.

York’s high rate of single-family homes

In comparison, the composition of York’s housing stock is significantly different than that of neighboring towns, the County and the State. On the whole, York has a higher-than-average rate of traditionally built single-family homes, and has lower-than-average manufactured housing, duplex, multi-family and other units. ³

There is a severe lack of affordable housing, not only in York or in the Seacoast Region, but throughout the State of Maine, and in neighboring states as well. The State of Maine has acknowledged, in state law, the existence of a statewide affordable housing problem. Consider the purpose statement for the State’s Affordable Housing Program:

Various parts of the State are experiencing severe shortages of affordable housing. The affordable housing shortage is also contributing to an increasing class of working poor people and creating severe hardships for a significant number of the State’s citizens.

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 which 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 house holds...”(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).

It is not legal for the Town to take or accept a policy position that someone who can’t afford to live in York can simply live in another community. Every town is compelled by State law to participate in the solution. Furthermore, the neighboring towns aren’t affordable either.

Despite new construction in York, demand for workforce housing is still not met

The patterns of new construction seen in York are not likely to improve the rental situation. The predominant type of new housing built in York are large, single-family detached units. During the 1990s, the total number of manufactured homes declined from 305 to 255. The Town’s manufactured housing standards are more restrictive than the State standards. Few multi-family units are being built. Few small homes or apartments are being built, and in fact the Town’s minimum floor area standards prevent creation of small units such as studio apartments.

1. The Homeownership Affordability Index is the ratio of Home Price Affordable at Median Income to Median Home Price. An index of less than 1 means the area is generally unaffordable - e.g., a household earning area median income could not cover the payment on a median priced home (30 year mortgage, taxes and insurance) using no more than 28% of gross income.
2. The Rental affordability index is the ratio of 2 bedroom rent affordable at the Median Renter Income to the Average 2 bedroom rent. An index of less than 1 means that the area is generally unaffordable– e.g., a renter household earning area median renter income could not cover the cost of an average 2 bedroom apartment.
3. York Comprehensive Plan, Housing Chapter - Inventory & Analysis.





SITE LOCATION & DETAILS

The charrette focus area is located on U.S. Route 1 in York Maine approximately two miles north of the Kittery Outlets in Kittery Maine and approximately two miles south of the intersection of U.S. Route 1 and U.S. Route 1A in York Maine.

The subject sites include five properties under private ownership. They are located at 3 & 4 Vacation Drive, 22 U.S. Route 1 and 26 U.S. Route 1. The five lots comprise a total area of 16.69 acres and significant frontage on U.S. Route 1.

The Vacation Drive properties are owned by Mr. Robert Fleischmann of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. 4 Vacation Drive is 8.47 acres of vacant land valued at \$130,100 and 3 Vacation Drive is 2.04 acres of vacant land valued at \$94,600 according to the Town of York. The property has 60-foot wide frontage on U.S. Route 1 for the driveway and the property also comes with a 60-foot right of way which could provide an egress option. The state of Maine dug the large pond on backside of the property. The topsoil on the property was removed when it was a nursery but Mr. Fleischmann has spent over two years clearing the land and then nurturing fertile soil. Beautiful lupines thrive all over the property. There is also a large pile of loam on the back section of the property.

The property located at 22 U.S. Route 1 is owned by Mr. William Theriault. The property consists of 2.09 acres, valued at \$94,900 on which stands a one-story Ranch style residential building (about 800 square feet) valued at \$92,300 for a total value of \$187,200.

The site located at 26 U.S. Route 1 is owned by TY Mark Enterprises (Owned by Mark Robertson) consists of 2.01 acres of land valued at \$210,100, and a commercially used building valued at \$182,800 for a total value of \$392,900. Mr. Robertson owns and operates Hidden Treasures Antiques at the location.

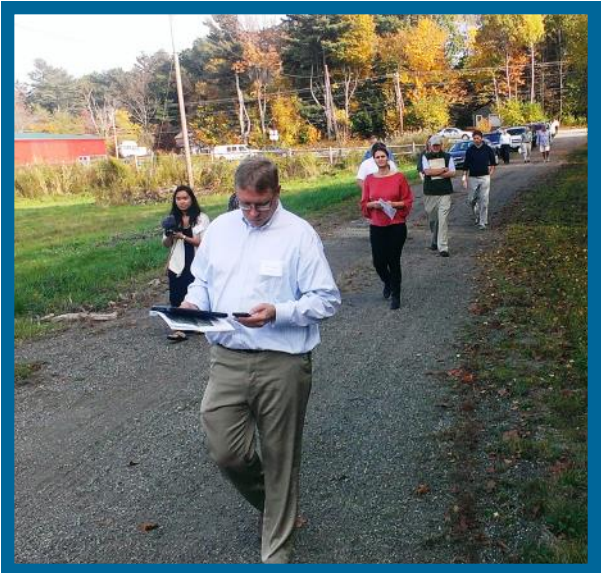
Ms. Sylvia Arsenault is the owner of the 3 Parsons Lane, Kittery, Maine. The property consists of 2.08 acres of land, valued at \$81,700 and a one-story Ranch style residential home valued at \$156,800, totaling a land and improvements value of \$238,500.



SITE WALK

The Design Team gathered at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 15 at York Housing’s Baldwin Center. After comments by Ashlee Iber Amenti, WHC Executive Director, the group departed for a site walk of the properties which are the focus of the study. Approximately thirty people assembled at U.S. Route 1 and Vacation Drive near the Kittery/York town line. The properties, fairly secluded and level, are accessed by a gravel road connecting with U.S. Route 1.

The group consisted of housing professionals — real estate agents, bankers, builders and developers, engineers, architects and landscape architects — as well as some town officials, property owners and interested citizens. The WHC Executive Director introduced Robert Fleischmann, owner of twelve of the approximately eighteen acres of land under consideration between Creation Lane (York) and Parsons Lane (Kittery). The land includes a spring-fed pond estimated to be approximately three acres in size where it was noted that no wetland determination has been made.



SITE WALK OBSERVATIONS (cont'd)

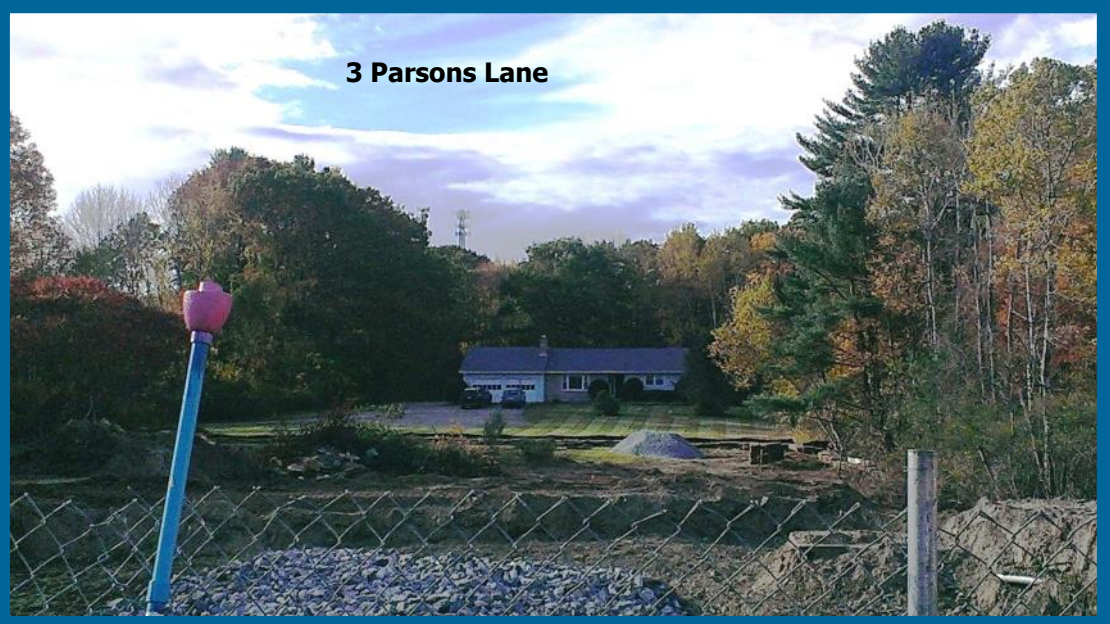
Robert Fleischmann, owner of the two Vacation Drive parcels, has owned the property since 2001. Previously the property had served as a resource for a landscaping and gardening supply business. Mark Robertson, owner of the adjacent parcel, 26 U.S. Route 1, was also in attendance. A third owner and the only owner living on the property, William Theriault, was not present. The Theriault lot contains a ranch style house and two outbuildings. The entire area is separated from Interstate 95 by a buffer of two additional wooded lots.

There is electricity service to the Theriault home but no town water or sewer service at present; the house currently has well and septic systems. A water line from the Town of Kittery is being extended to within 218 feet of the property from a mixed-use development of 22 units adjacent currently under construction. Sewer service from Kittery is also being extended to the 22 unit development, likely making these services available for future potential development at the charrette study area.

According to James Gambrill, York Housing board member, the property is not located in the designated growth area, therefore density standards would prohibit affordable housing according to the Town’s existing zoning ordinance. Consequently, the property would have to be developed as mixed-use within which, according to Dylan Smith, Planner for the Town of York, the minimum 1-acre lot standard (section 5.4.12) would not apply. Alternatively, an exemption to the zoning standards would have to be petitioned or changes would have to be made to those standards.

Realtor Greg Gosselin, Gosselin Realty Group, talked about another development in the vicinity of Mount Agamenticus which is being planned for 40 units of new housing of which 6-8 homes will be designated as workforce housing. Such a plan might be relevant to the property on Vacation Drive.

The site visit ended at approximately 4:00 p.m.



COMMUNITY DIALOGUE SESSION

Input from stakeholders is a key ingredient of the charrette process. Charrette subject site property owners, neighbors, neighborhood residents, business owners and community members were invited to a Community Dialogue Session on Wednesday, October 15 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at York Housing’s Baldwin Center.

Purpose: hear community members' hopes and concerns

The purpose of a public session is to give charrette team members and property owners an opportunity to hear community members’ hopes and concerns about potential future development of the subject sites.

Workforce Housing = homes affordable to people who work in York

The dialogue opened with a presentation by Kristen Grant of Maine Sea Grant/University of Maine Cooperative Extension. She gave the group a definition review of crucial terms, addressing the question of the meaning of workforce housing in the current context — homes in York which are affordable to people who work in York.

Affordable = <30% household income to housing

Ashlee Iber Amenti, WHC Executive Director, spoke about the purpose and history of the Workforce Housing Coalition and gave recognition awards to key supporters: the Maine Community Foundation, York Housing, Kennebunk Savings Bank, the Town of York, and York Hospital. She then went on to define workforce housing as housing that comprises no more

than 30% of household income (including utilities) and distinguished between owner and renter workforce housing. She showed photos of examples of workforce housing in the Seacoast and images of recent developments that are either re-used historic buildings (e.g., in Kennebunk), new construction or renovated housing (e.g., the Carriage House Apartments of York Housing).

Ashlee reviewed median income and housing data for York to illustrate the fact that many people were being excluded from affordable housing in the Town. Addressing the question of the market for such housing she identified entry-level workers — teachers, nurses, firefighters, artists and craftspeople, hospitality workers, etc. She concluded by describing the charrette process.

Previous Maine charrettes in Kittery and Wells

Kristen returned to talk about previous workforce housing efforts — including a 2011 charrette process focused on a site in Kittery (across from the York Hospital facility on U.S. Route 1) for which two conceptual designs were developed and are currently being referenced by a potential developer. She also summarized a 2013 effort in Wells which focused on two potential sites and resulted in a recommendation for the Town to consider the development of an overlay zone – which is under discussion by the Planning Board. She explained that no development proposal is intended to result for the WHC charrette. The work is intended as an opportunity to engage stakeholders in a conversation about workforce housing – what it is, who needs it, etc. The results of the charrette are considered strictly conceptual; an effort to explore what is feasible and to raise awareness within the community.

Sarah Hourihane, of Destefano Architects and a WHC board member, then presented a virtual tour of the Vacation Drive property and described the demographics of York. She stated that the population of York (according to the 2010 Census) was 12,529 residents. There was some discussion about how large the summer population might be, compared to the number of year-round residents. Greg Gosselin, Gosselin Realty Group, said the seasonal population could be as high as 55,000 or more people.

Choosing a site: Land availability and owner receptivity

Kristen Grant described the process by which this particular site came to be considered. Kristen responded describing the process by which she and Greg Gosselin ended up focused on the property. She said that they had considered several large “hubs” along the U.S. Route 1 corridor. Then sent inquiry letters to the owners of those lots, to which Mr. Fleischmann responded.

Greg Gosselin referred to the area as a commercial dead zone, meaning that so many commercial ventures had failed in this corridor. There were questions from the audience about potential problems with traffic flow and the difficulty of making a left turn from Creation Lane. Others expressed their concerns about the impact of workforce housing on property values as well as on the importance of connectivity within the site.

Ted Little, York resident, suggested the importance of a book by demographer Peter Francese that he suggested anyone interested in workforce housing should read.

Patricia Martine, York Housing’s Executive Director, noted that workforce housing often looks like the kind

2 — 3 bedroom housing that was common thirty plus years ago. It is an alternative to McMansion developments that have become common in the Seacoast.

Looking at what’s possible

Ashlee Iber Amenti explained that the charrette will look at development opportunities at the site from two perspectives: 1) What is possible under existing conditions? and 2) What would be possible under changed conditions?

Community input: What would you LIKE to see? What would you NOT LIKE to see?

Kristen Grant then introduced the process that would be used to provide participants with an opportunity to contribute ideas to the charrette design team to help guide their work. She explained that the group would be addressing three questions:

As we consider this as a potential site for workforce housing and other types of development,

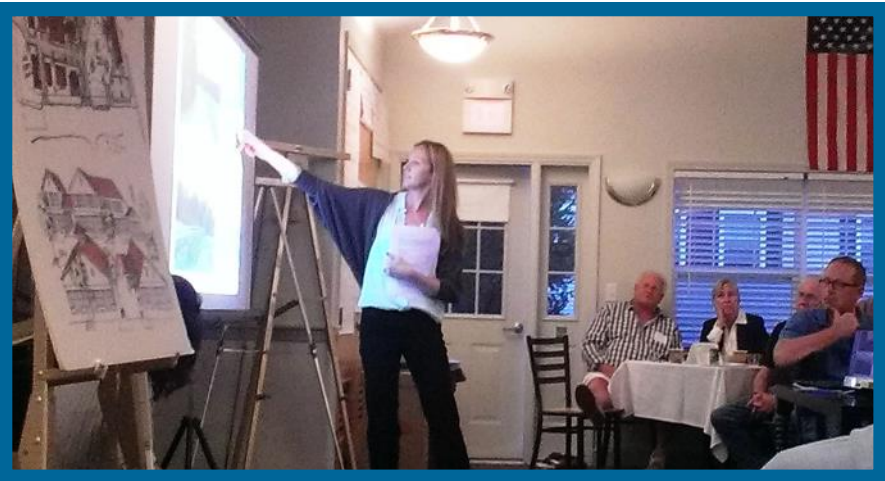
What would you LIKE to see?

What would you NOT LIKE to see?

What are the opportunities, and challenges associated with this site?

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 6:30 p.m., the group began to write down and post their thoughts.



[illegible]

Members of the public were invited to attend the Reveal and Presentation of Findings from 4:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. that day (October 17).

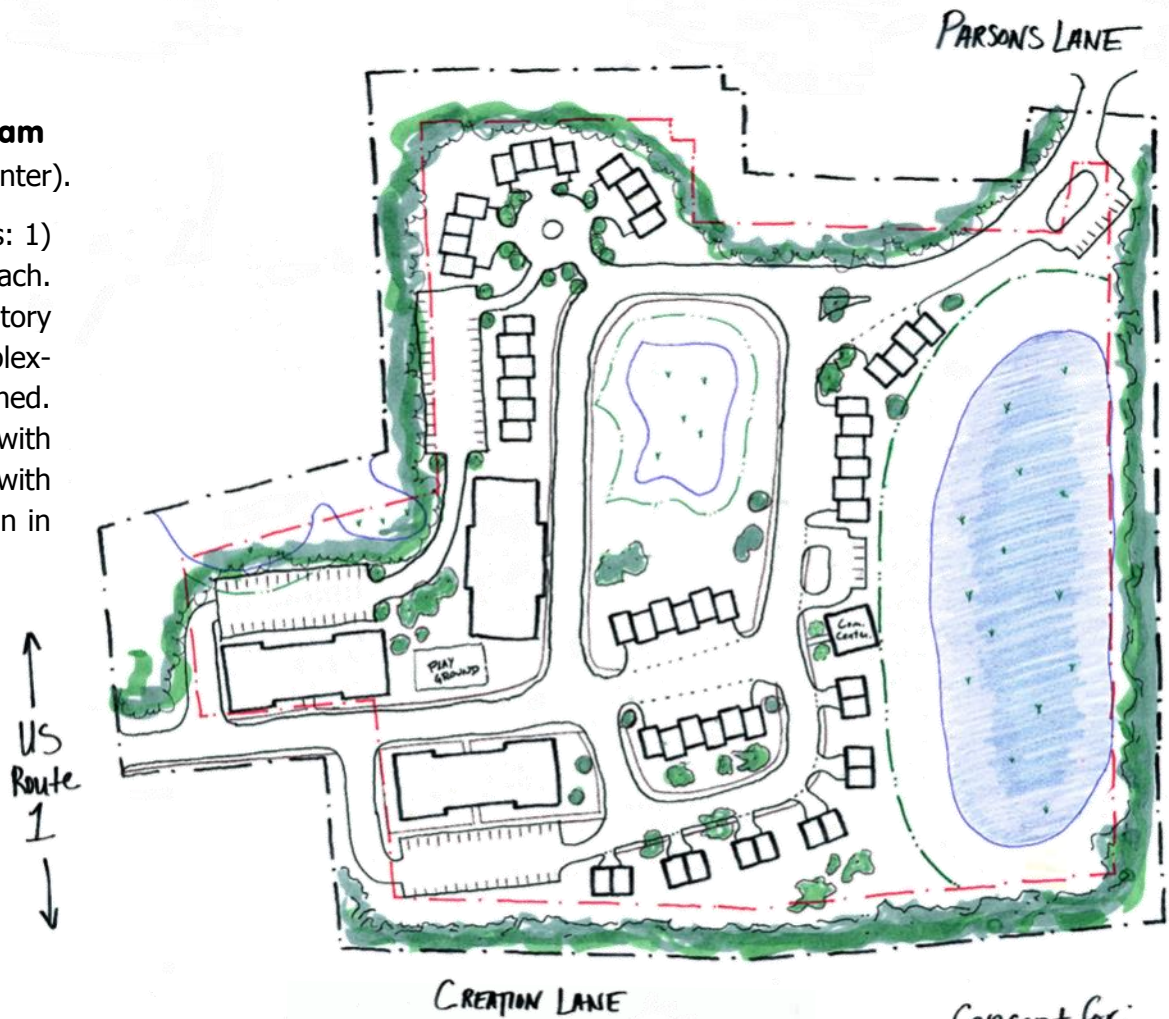
CONCEPT DESIGN #1:

Extended Workforce Housing Overlay District Team
(Adam Wagner of Destefano Architects, Principal Presenter).

This group’s design is premised on three building types: 1) 24 apartment units divided among three buildings each. These would be closest to U.S. Route 1, 2) two-story townhouse units of six units in each and 3) some duplexes. The center area could be left more or less untouched. The main property would be connected at the rear with Parsons Lane. The design retains the existing pond with walking trails around the water and perhaps a fountain in the pond and a playground.

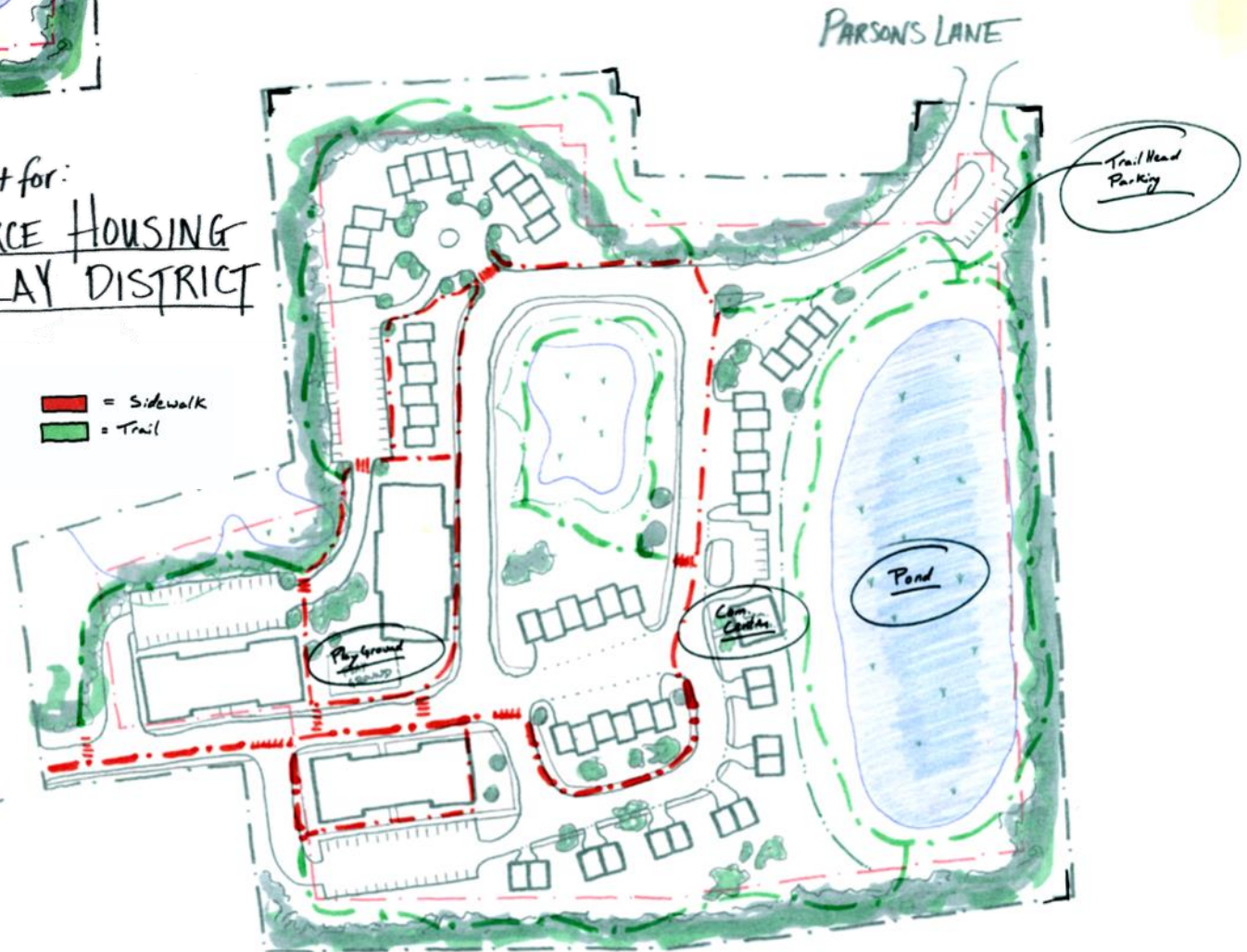
The group did some preliminary cost estimates. Their assumptions are \$1.2 million for land acquisitions which figures out to be \$10,000 per unit for 120 units. Two-thirds of these would be rental units and the remainder owner occupied. The group knows that site costs need to be kept to a minimum. Construction costs were assumed to be \$110 per square foot. Town of York impact fees will add \$2,500 per unit for schools and water service.

This group’s developing design envisions minimum property setbacks of 50 feet from interior streets and 80 feet from U.S. Route 1. There would be a 50 foot buffer off the pond and 25 feet off other wetlands on the site. Wetlands delineation would have to be determined. The design retains the existing pond with walking trails around the water and perhaps a fountain in the pond.



Concept for:
WORKFORCE HOUSING
OVERLAY DISTRICT

Red line = Sidewalk
Green line = Trail



CONCEPT DESIGN #2:

Gateway Village Team

(Gayle Sanders of Gayle Sanders Home Design L.L.C, Principal Presenter).

This design focuses on creating a gateway to welcome visitors to York. The proposal includes a roundabout on U.S. Route 1 at the entrance to the property with a wide boulevard into the property from the front approaching the pond and associated green spaces. There would be commercial space at the front of the property which might include an emergency care clinic and offices, perhaps a coffee shop and market. The group imagines a tower landmark at the entrance and assumes another access to/from Parsons Lane.

The housing on site would include apartments (for rental) as well as townhouses (for purchase). There would be a green buffer zone and walking paths through the property. The pond might be half filled in but the rest of that area would be maintained as open space perhaps featuring a gazebo. There will have to be a storm water plan that would keep water out of neighborhood. The housing is clustered into neighborhood pods and would feature six homes of 1,000 square feet (2-3 bedrooms). There would be covered parking behind the buildings and some form of community center in the work village.



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, community forum participants, design reveal presentation attendees and our volunteer design team members. 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 volunteers, participants and attendees open-ended questions regarding what they liked or disliked and ways to improve the charrette process.



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.

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 an adequate 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 adequate 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, visit www.seacoastwhc.org for more information.

Support the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast and help to promote a friendlier climate for workforce housing development in the Greater Seacoast, visit www.seacoastwhc.org for more information.



Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast

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President, G.L. Rogers & Company, Inc.

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Principal, T.H.A. Architects L.L.C.

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Coldwell Banker - Peggy Carter Team

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Sarah Hourihane
Architectural Designer,
Destefano Architects, P.L.L.C.

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Owner, Gayle Sanders Home Design L.L.C.

Matthew Sullivan
Regional Planner, Strafford Regional Planning Commission

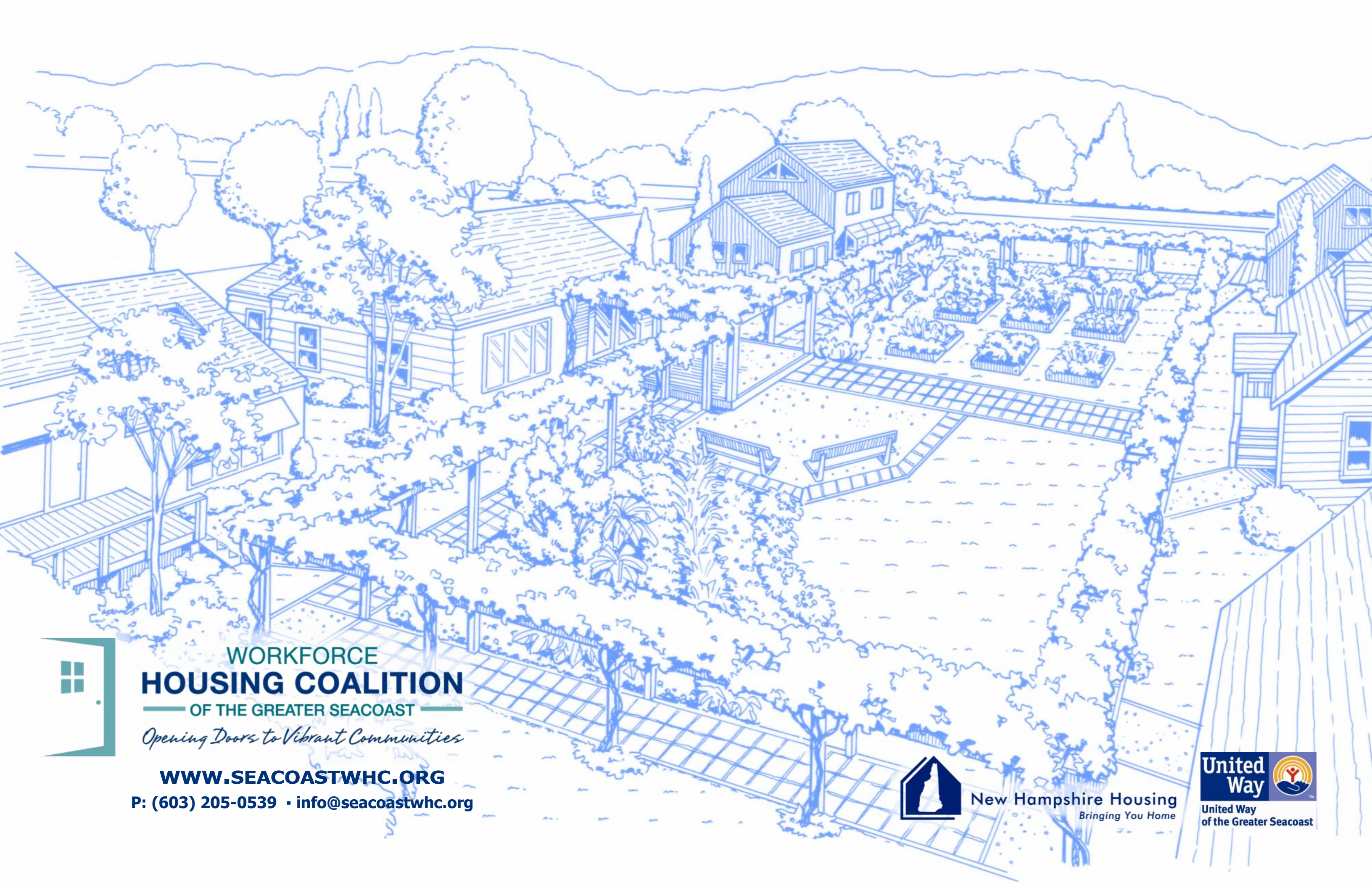
Staff

Ashlee Iber Amenti, Executive Director

Charrette Committee Co-chairs

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

Thomas House, T.H.A. Architects, L.L.C.



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New Hampshire Housing
Bringing You Home

