

# CHARRETTES

Plan NH conducted a charrette in Laconia on August 28 and 29, 2015. This was a double charrette – we looked at The Weirs, Lakeport and Downtown. Although much more intense, it was good to do them all at once, so that we had a holistic view, rather than silo'd, of each section of the City. Recommendations included more walkability, connectivity among the three sections, and leveraging the wonderful natural assets Laconia is blessed with.

On October 2 and 3, we went Marlow, a small town just north of Keene that really is still rural. The team focused on its picturesque village center, and developed recommendations that could help Marlow meet 21st century needs while honoring and maintaining its unique identity and sense of place.

## COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE PROGRAM

Is there an area in *your* town where you see great potential but don't know where to begin? Or, is there a need in your town for a new plan to make your town center or a special neighborhood THE place where people want to go? A Plan NH Community Design Charrette may be the assistance you need.

**What is a Plan NH COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE?** A Community Design Charrette brings together a team of *volunteer* members of Plan NH with community leaders, citizens, business owners and others related to a particular project.

("Charrette", a French word, describes a brief, concentrated time of work. We use this word because it best describes what Plan NH team members do over the two days with the communities in which we work.)

*Through an application process, if your community is selected, Plan NH addresses some variation of "What opportunities are there to make this place [this town center, this neighborhood] vibrant and healthy for all who live, work, and/or play here?"*

On a Friday and Saturday, Plan NH team members visit the target area, meet with citizens leaders and others related to the project, and talk with community members about what they want for this part of town and why. Based on what the team sees and hears, design and other recommendations are developed and presented to the community on Saturday afternoon.

Since our first charrette that "saved" the Belmont Mill in 1996, Plan NH has conducted 60 charrettes in more than 55 communities throughout the state.

### **Intentional outcomes:**

To raise awareness

- of the link between the built environment and the health and vitality of our communities
- that there are four distinct yet inextricably linked sectors of the community : social, environmental, economic and government. (thanks to Gwendolyn Hallsmith's *Key to Sustainable Cities*) and that decisions made generally affect all four.
- that while planning for growth and development is still necessary to a point, we should now be thinking about planning for *change* so that we can manage it, rather than react to it.

- that this target area plays a role for the greater community, and that the community influences and is influenced by bordering towns and the region as a whole.

For residents and leaders to discover what is happening in their community – from various viewpoints

To start to find a common vision for this target area – common to citizens as a whole, and that supports each of the four sectors as well as the Master Plan

For residents and leaders to discover assets and opportunities that will contribute to the vision

Recommendations from Plan NH to bring the vision to a reality.

**If selected, what can you expect? *More information would be provided but here is an overview for a traditional charrette:***

1. You will be notified and a checklist for preparation will be sent to you. **YOU WILL NEED TO ALLOW A MINIMUM OF 8 WEEKS TO PREPARE.**
2. The Plan NH team leader will meet with your charrette steering committee to review the project and logistics
3. The team will visit on a Friday and Saturday:
4. Gather late morning on Friday. Meet with key contact people, tour target area.
5. Meet with community/municipal leaders to gather information
6. Meet with community members at large in facilitated small group discussions (one in afternoon, one in evening) to hear their viewpoints, their comments, their visions and thoughts.
7. On Saturday, the team will meet to brainstorm their ideas for *recommendations based on what they have seen and heard*, and then make a presentation to the whole town mid-afternoon.

**Does YOUR project qualify?** Review of applications for the Community Design Charrette Program consider the described projects and are evaluated on the basis of the following key criteria:

1. Is the project important to the community as a whole? Does it support the Master Plan, or the Vision outlined in the Master Plan?
2. Is the scale of the project appropriate to the two-day time format of the Plan NH Community Design Charrette program?
3. Does the project present unique or interesting planning needs or issues that would help the community achieve the intentional outcomes listed above?
4. Does the applicant town or group have other means of obtaining the services provided by Plan NH's Charrette Program?
5. Is there support by town leaders and decision-makers? (*Note: without this, the project cannot be accepted*)

NOTE: Plan NH does not provide this service for private land-owners or developers. Our clients are municipalities or groups within a town (ie Heritage Commission, etc.). A project may include private land, but overall, the project needs to be under the jurisdiction/control of the town.

Also, Plan NH does not address single buildings – ie, a repurposing – by themselves, but would look at such a project in context of the larger neighborhood or community.

### **Financial costs**

The application process is free. Communities endorsed by Plan NH for a two-day Community Design Charrette will be asked to provide *a minimum* of \$5000.00 in contribution to Plan NH on or before the date of the event.

Larger or more complex projects may warrant alternative charrette approaches, with fees adjusted accordingly. Plan NH welcomes the opportunity to discuss such needs or possibilities with community representatives.

For any charrette, , Plan NH recommends that private sponsors be found to underwrite the contribution for the Community Charrette so that the money does not need to all be drawn from general municipal funds.

Additional costs may include, but not be limited to (complete list and guidelines available separately)

- Marketing and outreach to the community about the event for participation
- Large maps
- Bus for team to tour target area, community
- Costs associated with space for event
- Friday lunch for Plan NH team, water, snacks, supper
- Overnight lodging as applicable
- Saturday breakfast, snacks, lunch, water, coffee, etc.

**Related services offered:** Plan NH is pleased to offer *two additional services*, related to the Charrette program. These are OPTIONAL, and interest, or lack thereof, does not affect the selection of a community for the charrette program itself:

- Pre-charrette technical assistance, which may include, but not be limited to, formation of steering committee, charrette event planning (location, logistics, volunteer coordination) and marketing to community at large.
- Post-charrette technical assistance which may include, but not be limited to, forming committees, leadership development, project assessments and prioritizing, creating action plans.

Costs for each vary and are according to the needs of the town. Plan NH would be happy to work with your town to develop a strategy for either or both that is affordable and beneficial to the community.

If you are thinking about a project, take a look at the application form. It is a useful tool to help you clarify what you need and what you are looking for. And really, we can review it at any time.

Plan NH wants to work with *your* community. If you are unsure whether your project – or your community – is ready for this process, please do call us to talk about it. We can help. Call Plan NH at 603-452-7526.

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