



WORKING TOGETHER TOWARD HOUSING CHOICE

2023 NNECAPA Conference



November 2023

Planning & Zoning Grants Overview

- Part of Governor Sununu's \$100 million InvestNH initiative
- Objective: Increase housing supply by changing local land use regulations
- Two grant programs
 - Community Housing Navigator Grants
 - Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grants
- Focus on community engagement

Community Housing Navigator Program

- Municipal grants to hire staff to coordinate regulatory change and to conduct community engagement activities
- Fundamental purpose of Navigator is to serve as a community organizer – community engagement is a central activity
- Navigators must work on housing needs assessments, MP housing chapter updates, regulatory audits, and/or regulatory development.

Community Housing Navigator Program

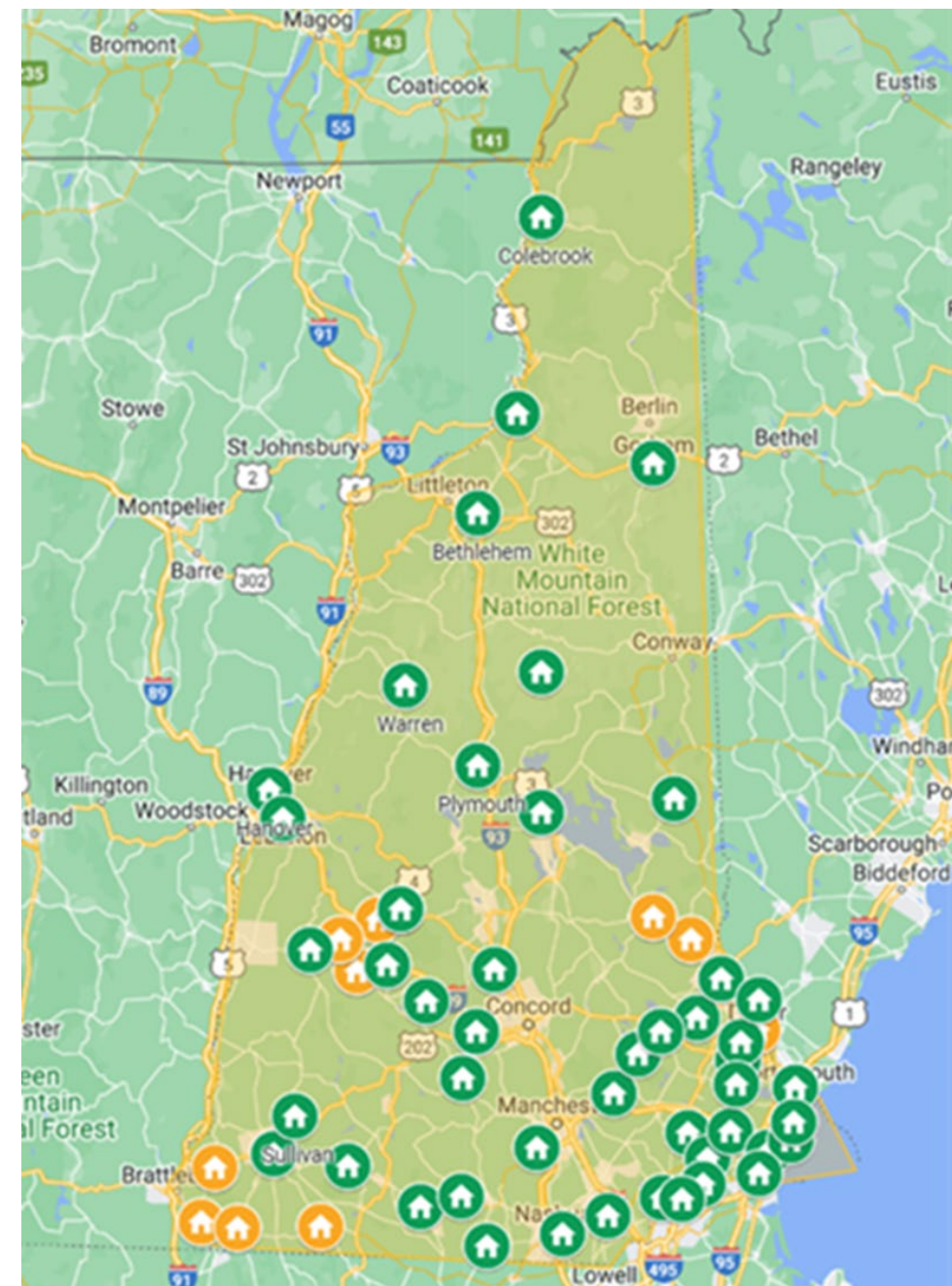
- Awards made in October 2022
- 5 Community Housing Navigators Grants – full time planning staff devoted to housing!
- 11 communities
 - Dover
 - Portsmouth
 - New Durham, Farmington (coordinated by SRPC)
 - Winchester, Chesterfield, Hinsdale, Fitzwilliam (SWRPC)
 - Newbury, New London, Wilmot (UVLSRPC)

Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grants

- Grants to municipalities to hire consultants to work on three phases of regulatory change
 - Needs analysis and planning
 - *Housing and demographic data, housing markets, affordability*
 - *Master plan sections related to housing*
 - Regulatory audits
 - *ID regulatory barriers to housing development, recommend changes*
 - *Cross-reference local regulations for conflicts regarding housing*
 - Regulatory development
 - *Create or amend regulations to promote housing development*
 - *Inclusionary zoning, development standards, tax incentives*

THE GOOD NEWS?

- We're out of money!
- 58 HOP grants awarded to communities across the state
- 63 municipalities served – over a quarter of NH communities!



- Community engagement is a focus
- Housing Academy, created by UNH Cooperative Extension, offered training for all grantees
- Trainings took place in person and virtually with online resources
- Planning future engagement, community visits, and trainings
- We allowed stipends for volunteers participating on behalf of a town

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- Administered by Plan NH and NH Housing
- Steering committee also includes:
 - UNH Cooperative Extension
 - NH Office of Planning & Development
 - NH Community Development Finance Authority
 - NH Municipal Association



TODAY'S PANEL

- John Christ, Planning Board Chair, Town of Plymouth
- Ryan O'Connor, Town Planner, Town of Conway
- Judi Barret, Founder & Managing Director, Barrett Planning Group LLC
- George Reagan, Director, Community Engagement, New Hampshire Housing
- Sarah Wrightsman, Manager, Community Engagement and Education, New Hampshire Housing

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Working Together Toward Housing Choice

A Perspective from the Plymouth Planning Board and HOP Steering Committee



NNECAPA 2023

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The Planning Board and Housing Choice

My Background

- from cultural history, human geography, and urban studies
- to the practical applications of thinking about space and place

The Perils of Wearing our Housing Hat

- housing issues become uniquely personal and deeply contested
- impacts on our everyday lives, personal finances, and who gets to join our communities



Shall

Binding Legal Frameworks

Aught
Moral Imperative

Want
The Good Life

Town Meeting Politics

- Passing Zoning Amendments

Diversity of Voices & Agendas

- Property Rights and/or Human Rights
- Always arrive with an agenda!

Information Access

- Zoning Complexity & the Public
- Housing Terminology & Misunderstanding
- Misconceptions & Disinformation

Harmonizing the Imperatives to Act

- Shall, Aught, and Want

Shall

Binding Legal Frameworks

Building Harmony

Aught

Moral Imperative

Want

The Good Life

Shall: Binding Legal Frameworks at all levels

- Zoning Ordinance, RSAs, Fair Housing

Aught: Moral Imperative

- Affordable housing across incomes
- Sustainable infrastructure
- Inclusion and diversity
- Public voices and agency

Want: Community Goals & the Good Life

- Walkable mixed-use community?
- A sense of place and belonging?
- Strip development, R1, & cul-de-sacs?
- Exclusion of demographic groups?

Housing Opportunity and Choice versus:

- concern for tax increases
- non-profit sector growth & responsibilities
 - perceived parking shortages
 - the place of student residents
- already strained infrastructure & services
- focus on single-family detached housing
- perceived dangers of multifamily housing
- existing property interests and rental units
 - change



Building Harmony between the Shalls, Aughts, and Wants

- Recognizing the diverse conceptions of community and preferences for built form, even as they differ from our own, so all needs can be met with a mixture of housing solutions.
- Encouraging inclusive economic development that opens possibilities for the creation of affordable housing for our workforce and for all of our residents so as to:
 - foster meaningful places and vibrant communities without inflating the tax burden (want);
 - abide by applicable laws (e.g. Workforce Housing RSA) by overcoming cost barriers with a variety of housing choices (shall);
 - promote accessible, sustainable, and welcoming communities that can meet the needs of all (aught).





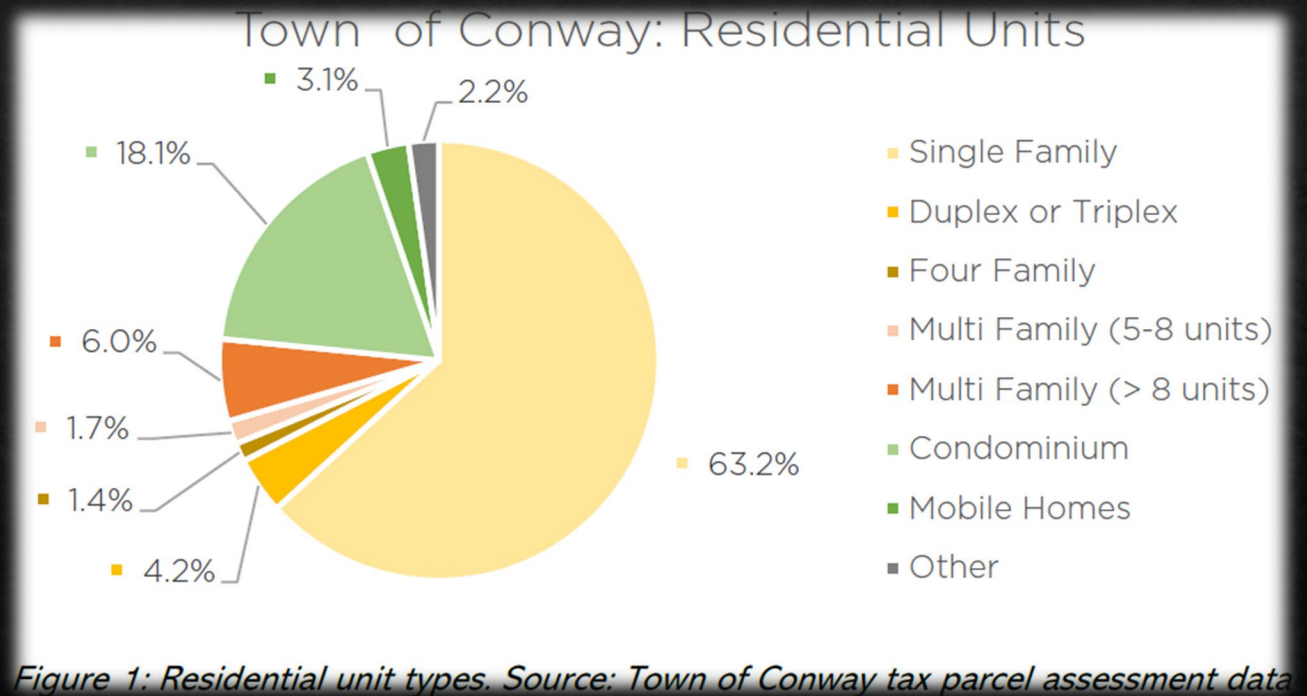
Conway, NH

HOP Grant Update

Ryan O'Connor

Housing in Conway, NH

- Population of approximately 10K full-time residence
- Limited diversity in housing stock
- Widening housing affordability gap





Challenges

- ◆ Housing Availability & Cost

- ◆ Conway thrives on hospitality

- ◆ Our population more than doubles during peak vacation periods

- ◆ The average hospitality worker is traveling 50 miles to Conway

- ◆ Land & Construction Cost

- ◆ Not a unique concern but supplying adequate housing for builders is something we may be able to support to potentially lower construction cost.

- ◆ Aging Housing Stock

- ◆ The cost of conversion to multifamily

- ◆ Our Conversations & Language around Housing

Successes

- ◆ Engagement & Partnerships
- ◆ Public Participation
- ◆ Focusing on the needs of small businesses
- ◆ Experience with our current Affordable Housing Ordinance





Lessons

- ◆ Balance
 - ◆ Commercial Development
 - ◆ Environmental Restrictions
 - ◆ The Diversity of Housing Stock
- ◆ Use what works
 - ◆ Community is regional



Housing Hopes

- ◆ Empower the community
 - ◆ Develop tools for small scale development
 - ◆ Engage regionally
- ◆ Public / Private Partnerships
- ◆ Ensure we also encouraging small businesses and supporting a place where the community can be supported and afford to live

Using the HOP Program to get to “yes” with housing.

Northern New England Chapter, American Planning Association



Touching the third rail of planning



Why do people join a local housing committee?

- A. Because they support the creation of affordable housing in their town.
- B. Because they oppose the creation of affordable housing in their town.
- C. Because they don't want more housing of *any* kind [or people, cars, kids on bikes, big floppy dogs, or Amazon deliveries] in their town.
- D. All of the above.



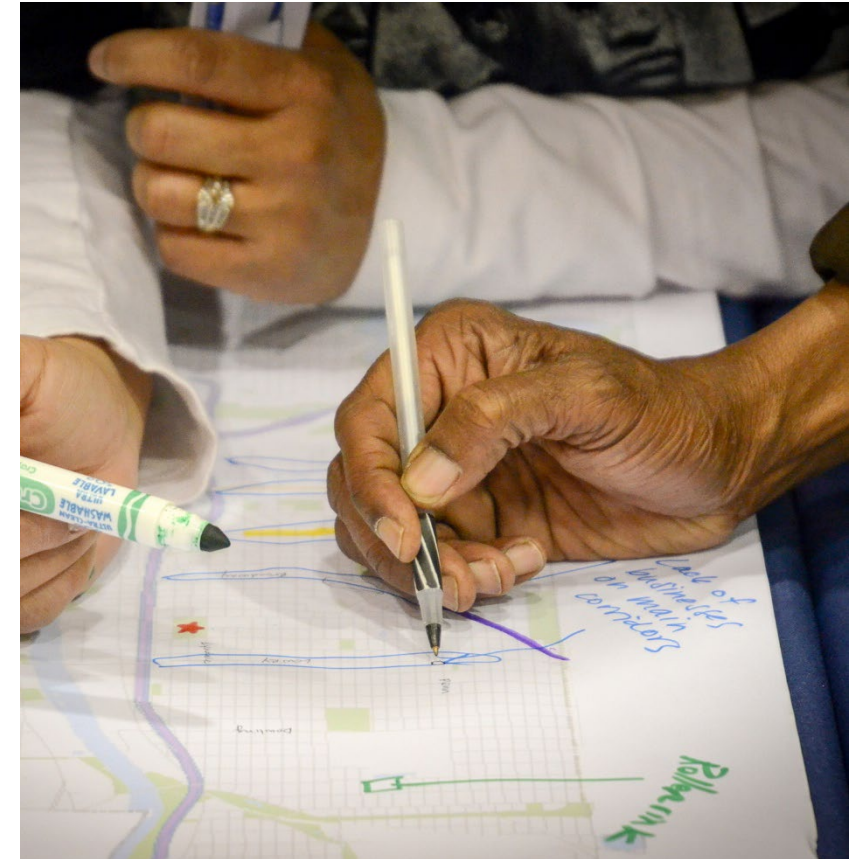
Housing: the third rail of planning

- Finding, recruiting, engaging, training, and keeping effective advocates takes time, resources, patience, consistency
- Opposition runs deep
- Sometimes difficult to separate legitimate concerns from chronic naysaying
- Sometimes difficult to accept the kinds of compromises required to get anything done
- Information helps supporters but may not persuade opponents.
- Personal housing stories *can* change the conversation
- Don't expect people to like you ...



Consultant's observations

- Under HOP, working in five communities
 - Needs Analysis & Planning (2)
 - Regulatory Audit (4)
 - Regulatory Development/Reform (4)
- Every community needs a Needs Analysis & Planning ...
- Housing Academy gets an A+
- NH housing training is superior to all others we've seen. Local capacity to use that training varies considerably.
- Consultant's job differs by community size, staff capacity, volunteer experience, local housing committee membership and member motivations, strength of advocacy, relationships with community leaders.





Community engagement is not about getting people to show up at your meeting ...

Questions we think about



Having a passionate corps of housing advocates matters! But, where is this community's City or Town Manager? Mayor or Selectboard? Planning Board? Economic Development Commission?



What does this town's Master Plan say about where to encourage mixed uses and higher-density housing? Has that plan been implemented? Does it support and has it produced workforce housing?

Is there a path with a heart for housing here?

- What is this community's housing history?
- How do people talk about housing here? Or housing affordability? Multifamily housing? Or about people who work here?
- Does this community have people who will speak at public hearings, town meeting, or town or city council hearings about the need for workforce housing?
- Inclusionary zoning ... does it exist here, and what has it produced?
- Where does this community encourage a mix of different types of housing? (Does it encourage a mix at all?)
- Does this community allow multifamily units at a realistic density in downtown neighborhoods? Village centers?



Some observations about regulatory barriers

- Regulatory reform can't fix everything, but ...
- Zoning requirements to protect environmental resources often go far beyond what is actually needed to protect them ... why?
- When 70% of the lots in a downtown neighborhood are nonconforming ...
- Parking requirements: yikes! Does New Hampshire have larger pickup trucks (with or without trailer hitches) than the rest of the United States?
- Cap on units in multifamily dwellings. Is it about town character, or regulating who can live in the community?
- Manufactured housing: **Berlin gets an A+**

