

Conservation and Housing Planning Program - Specifics
Proposed by the Growth & Development Roundtable

The Growth and Development Roundtable is a broad coalition of diverse interests concerned about the manner in which our state is growing and developing and the impact that is having on our quality of life, our economy, our landscape and our ability to afford homes. The Roundtable, having been convened by the NH Charitable Foundation, has been meeting monthly since the summer of 2005 to work together to try to address these issues.

Mission Statement: The Roundtable has adopted the following mission:

Quality of life in New Hampshire is inherent in our strong and economically diverse communities and our rich natural resources. We are losing both and need to work together to encourage local land use decision-making and state level policy initiatives that results in more affordable housing opportunities and more land conservation.

Primary Strategy: *The NH Conservation and Housing Planning Program.*

The Roundtable is advocating for the creation of *The NH Conservation and Housing Planning Program*. The program would provide a state funding match for technical assistance to municipalities to assist it to effectively plan for its future housing growth needs, while preserving its quality of life, using land efficiently and identifying key areas to protect for conservation.

Participants in the Roundtable and supporters of the Proposed Planning Program include the following groups:

NH Business and Industry Association	Society for the Protection of NH Forests,
NH Municipal Association,	Audubon Society of NH,
Home Builders and Remodelers Assoc. of NH,	NH Community Loan Fund .
NH Travel Council,	NH Housing Finance Authority,
NH Public Policy Alliance for Housing,	Trust for Public Land,
Southern NH Planning Commission,	Upper Valley Housing Coalition,
Innovative Natural Resource Solutions,	Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services,
Conservation Law Foundation of New England,	Great Bridges Properties,
The Jordan Institute,	

Other Supporting Organizations:

UNH Coop. Ext.- Resource and Economics, Fannie Mae, UNH -Carsey Institute.

Program Elements:

Sequential awards for stages of process:

The program would award town's Technical Assistance for specific steps in the development and implementation of a conservation and housing Growth and Development Strategy.

Stage 1: Natural Resource and Housing Data Gathering and Analysis

Stage 2: Development of Growth and Development Strategy: Public Visioning process, drafting of this strategy and Municipal endorsement of it.

Stage 3: Amending towns master plan to be consistent with Growth and Development Strategy, and demonstrate feasibility to achieve the strategy. This would entail a rewrite of the Natural Resource and Housing Sections and amending other sections of master plan, e.g. - utilities, transportation, community facilities sections. Also revise land use section to specifically identify areas for compact residential development and areas that are priorities for conservation and open space.

Stage 4: Audit and revise zoning, subdivision and site plan regulations to be consistent with new master plan in order to implement Growth and Development Strategy. This could include the development of new articles to implement new tools, such as inclusionary zoning, TDR, Cluster development, overlays, etc..

Each stage would require that:

- a) Housing and Conservation be addressed together in an interrelated manner.
- b) Communication and education process for the town at-large, so as to communicate with and educate the town about that stage's work.
- c) Funding for future stages would require a demonstration that the previous stage was consistent with the principles of the program –such a showing would also result in a priority for new funding.

Applying for stage:

A town does not need to start at Stage 1 but wherever they may be in the process. However, it needs to demonstrate, completion with the previous stages in a manner consistent with the program principles.

Principles of the program:

Demonstration of consistency with these principles would be used to guide awards and to act as threshold criteria for Program awards

- a. Development of a comprehensive Growth and Development Strategy through which a town integrates Housing and Conservation planning.
- b. Identification of Natural Resource values and planning for its protection, as encouraged in RSA 36-A:2
- c. Identification of and planning for the full range of current and future housing needs for families of all income levels, as provided for in RSA 672:(1) (iii-e).
- d. Evaluating these conservation and housing issues on a community-wide, site-by-site and regional context.
- e. Understanding the interrelationship between natural resources and housing development in your town and the impact each has on each other.
- f. Encouragement of higher density, compact development and allowing for the infrastructure needed to support such development.
- g. Integration of the Growth and Development Strategy into the municipality's master plan and implementation into regulatory structure.
- h. Consistency with NH's Smart Growth principles as promulgated in RSA 9-B:3.
- i. Encourages community input and educates citizens about the growth and development strategy and the need to plan for future conservation and housing growth.

Technical Assistance Available:

1. Measurable End Product (clearly defined deliverables) such as:
 - i. Data maps of Housing and Conservation for the town,
 - ii. A new Growth and Development (linked conservation and housing) strategy that is based on the program principles, or
 - iii. Integration of this new strategy into the town's regulations.
2. Purpose: Technical Assistance should assist towns by promoting informed decision-making as towns address these growth and development issues in their planning. Thus, public education and conversation would be included in each stage.
3. Funding should be available to purchase the following tasks to assist the town:

Stage 1:

- a. Assist towns in mapping land use values (conservation, soils, wetlands, GIS Mapping of natural resources). These mapping products –whether electronic or in hard copy– should be available to the public, to help drive both town and individual development decisions.
- b. Assist towns in understanding housing data as it relates to their town (housing market costs, affordability of town's housing for town employees, adult children of town, and median income earners in the town; housing units needed to meet future expected growth in the town and region).
- c. Assist towns to analyze this data. Help towns understand their past growth patterns as background and to drive the town's awareness that it needs to engage in such comprehensive planning for its future quality of life and economy.

Stage 2:

Assist towns in facilitating the public process around deciding on and drafting the Growth and Development Strategy, a detailed strategy for guiding the towns growth to maximize the goals and benefits to the health and future of the town, including a plan for which areas should be conserved, and which developed, including for higher density housing and affordable housing.

Stage 3:

Assist towns in auditing Master Plan and in rewriting key sections of Master Plan, e.g. Housing and Natural Resources; revising other related sections, like transportation, utilities, community services and the land-use plan, in order to realistically achieve growth and development strategy.

Stage 4:

Assist the municipalities in implementing the new Growth and Development Strategy and Master Plan by auditing and revising its zoning, site-plan, and subdivision regulations and process to allow for realistic implementation of growth and development strategy. This may include drafting and adoption of new articles to use new tools to accomplish the plan, such as TDR, density bonuses and inclusionary zoning.

Amount of Grant Awards:

The roundtable agreed that grant awards should require a match from the municipality. However, it felt that the most difficult stages to get the town to engage/complete the process are stages 1 and 4. Thus, the match for those stages should be the less than the middle stages.

While the Roundtable did not formally agree to a specific percentage match, below is a suggestion based on the general sense of the Roundtable conversation.

Stage 1 - 90 % grant funds (10% match) up to \$9,000, (estimated total cost up to \$10,000)

Stage 2 - 50 % grant funds (50% match) up to \$7,500, (estimated total cost up to \$15,000)

Stage 3 - 50 % grant funds (50% match) up to \$7,500, (estimated total cost up to \$15,000)

Stage 4 – 75 % grant funds (25 % match) up to \$30,000. (estimated total cost up to \$40,000)

Maximum total grant award over multiple years = \$54,000 (estimated total cost up to \$80,000)

- If town decides to use more expensive for-profit/private consultants, they can. However, grant award maximums do not increase.

How do municipalities access the Technical Assistance ?

The program would be available to interested communities through a competitive application process, where selection would be based on a specific set of criteria that stresses a town's desire to integrate good growth and development practices resulting in more conservation, a diverse housing stock which includes dense and affordable housing options, and increases the community's health and social benefits. The program would serve numerous municipalities a year based on the annual funding in the state budget.

It is critical that there be flexibility in the manner in which municipalities apply for and access the technical assistance. It could include any or all of the following:

- a) Through their Regional Planning Commission (RPC),
- b) By a municipal Request For Proposals,
- c) Contracting with specifically identified trained consultants for the tasks sought,
- d) A few municipalities joining up with an RPC to hire a circuit rider to work with those towns on specified issues.

Allocation criteria/issues – Advisory Committee

Awards would be based on consistency with the above listed program principles. An advisory committee would be established to oversee distribution/ allocation of awards. The committee did identify some other issues that should be considered in developing allocation criteria:

- i. Equitable distribution (including lack of existing professional staff to accomplish these tasks).
- ii. Geographic distribution,

- iii. Accountability of grant recipient,
- iv. Towns whose plans have a great impact in protecting watersheds, biodiversity, working farmland and forests, and affordable housing supply,

Administration

The Roundtable thought that the funding could be channeled through the NH Office of Energy and Planning, or another existing state agency, which could administer the competitive process (with an advisory committee) and channel the funding for appropriate technical assistance through the Regional Planning Commissions and/or other private technical assistance providers, who would assist the municipality to achieve the goals outlined in the competitive bid process.

Administrative Costs:

Administrative cost for an existing statewide agency to administer the program would be between \$50,000 - \$100,000 per year.

- The \$100,000 figure assumes a full-time planner to oversee the program with a ½ time support person.
- The range is dependent on whether you need a full- time person to oversee the program and whether you need a planner to run the program (most roundtable participants thought a planner would be needed.)

Funding:

The Roundtable is advocating for the State to fund this program through the state budget (general fund appropriation) at about \$500,000 to \$600,000 a year. The Roundtable thought that while state appropriations are always difficult, it was important that the State accept that planning for growth needs to be a State supported function with state leadership through funding for this program. The Roundtable felt that the funding was achievable since a broad coalition of business, conservation, environment, local government, market housing, workforce housing and affordable housing interests are united to advocate together for this program. The Roundtable also plans to reach out to other of the many interested sectors who would likely join the coalition in support of its mission and this program, including, public health. This would entail an advocacy campaign targeted at the next Biennium budget process.

Other Calls for Enhanced Local Planning

The following reports call for enhanced local planning to address the concerns identified by the Roundtable:

1. NH Wildlife Action Plan, NH Fish and Department, October 2005,
2. NH's Changing Landscape 2005, a report by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests,
3. Housing Solutions for New Hampshire Handbook, NH Housing Finance Authority, October 2004,
4. Economic Impact Study – Housing New Hampshire's Workforce, Dr. Lisa Shapiro, March 2005,
5. New Hampshire Housing Needs Study, Bruce Mayberry, July 2003.
6. Achieving Smart Growth in NH, NH Office of Energy and Planning, 2003.
7. Housing for Everyone, What Business Leaders Can Do. The Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce, Kravitz and Company, September 2005.
8. NH DOT Long Range Transportation Business Plan – draft (2006).