

CALL FOR 2010 DESIGN CHARRETTE APPLICATIONS

TO:

- NH Boards of Selectmen or City Councils
- NH Planning Boards
- Regional Planning Commissions
- Chambers of Commerce
- Other Interested Parties

Have you been looking at an area in your town – your downtown perhaps, or a particular intersection or neighborhood – and thinking that you'd really like to "do something with it" – make it more attractive, friendly to citizens and/or visitors, a place to be proud of? A place where people would love to live, work and play; a place that invites all to gather and connect with each other; a place that reflects the uniqueness of who you are as a community.

But you are thinking that you really don't know where to start, and you really don't have the funding to undertake the project.

Plan New Hampshire is here with an opportunity for assistance.

Our design charrettes bring citizens together with our team of **volunteer** professionals (architects, engineers, preservationists, planners, real estate people and more, depending on the project) over a Friday and Saturday to explore options for a target area.

"When Franconia was awarded the Design Charrette, we really had no idea what to expect. What did we get? We got our socks knocked off!" from letter to Plan NH from Bernie Costa

After listening to municipal leaders and townspeople, our team brainstorms ideas, and by Saturday afternoon will provide visual suggestions for the project – and even general cost estimates as well as possible sources of funding.



Past charrettes have involved developing a re-use plan for an old mill in Belmont, evaluating the re-use potential for a commercial building in Franklin, as well as preparation of plans to revitalize the villages and downtown centers of Bradford, Farmington, Weare, Ossipee, Hampton, Winchester, Franconia, Lee, and other small towns (see our website for a complete list of communities we have visited).

PLAN NH is currently seeking three or four communities to be awarded a design charrette in 2010. If you think that you might be interested in having us come to your community for a weekend, please read further for more information, complete the enclosed application., and return to us **by March 17, 2010.**



WHO ARE WE?

Plan New Hampshire, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment (PLAN NH), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989.

Our purpose is to contribute to the quality of life in New Hampshire by *promoting excellence in sustainable planning, design and development of the built environment.*

We believe that the economic vitality of a community is directly related to the vitality of the community itself, and are champions of **Smart Growth**, by which towns, communities, and/or neighborhoods

- Reflect the earliest years of a town's existence with dense, compact design, while preserving the unique historic architectural character, natural resources, and the surrounding rural landscape
- Are mixed use (living units, office/commercial, locally-based retail, municipal) and multi-generational
- Include living spaces for professionals, service workers and others who work in town or nearby
- Can be lived in/worked in/visited with a minimum of use of fossil-fueled vehicles (ie are pleasant and easy for walking, biking, wheelchairs, etc.)
- Offer a variety of spaces for social and civic gatherings (parks, playgrounds, benches on the sidewalks, cafes, a public library, post office, school ...)

PLAN NH MEMBERS

Members from across the state and beyond include architects, engineers, planners, contractors, real estate, law and other professionals. The common thread linking these people is their concern with the quality of the built environment and its impact on communities, including their economic and social identities. The diversity of our members brings a variety of views and perspectives for discussions of issues that address the built environment in New Hampshire.

WHAT IS A DESIGN CHARRETTE AND WHY DOES PLAN NH DO THIS?

What is a design “charrette”?

A design charrette is simply a period of intensive work involving both professionals and local citizens as they explore potential solutions to a design issue. It has been referred to as the *graphic equivalent of a brainstorming session*. Lots of ideas are brought forth, explored by the group, and a consensus is built as to how best to move forward.

Although there is some front-end organizing, a PLAN NH charrette typically brings a team of a dozen *volunteer* professionals into a community on a Friday morning. They will visit the site in question and become familiar with it. Discussion and designing with the public begins after lunch on Friday and continues through the end of Saturday, when final recommendations are presented to the town. An actual document summarizing the work and including plans and other drawings will be delivered to the town shortly after the session concludes.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Two key criteria are that the selected projects will *benefit the public at large* (as opposed to only an individual, private land-owner), and that the *projects are of a scale that the design team can make some useful contribution to in a weekend visit*.

Examples of projects that would be considered:

- A redevelopment plan for a small downtown center,
- A plan for mixed-use development in a rural village,
- Development of a cohesive town village,
- Adaptive re-use potential (not architectural or physical) of a publicly-owned building in relation to its environment (ie neighborhood)

Or another design issue that a community is struggling to resolve.

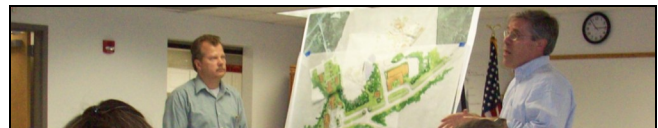
Examples of projects that likely would not be considered:

- A complete master plan
- A redevelopment plan for a large urban downtown area
- A recreation plan for an entire community



Why does PLAN NH do this?

PLAN NH believes that the quality of our built environment and the social capital people are willing to invest in helping to design that built environment contribute in a significant way to the quality of life in New Hampshire. Our goal is to assist communities with worthy projects that would not get started if there were significant expenses associated with deciding what to do, as well as to assist communities that have funding but require a clear and effective plan to begin the process. An important beginning point is to tap into a community’s resources – people willing to become involved in helping to decide how to proceed with improving their community.



How will PLAN NH select projects?

PLAN NH members will evaluate each proposal on the degree to which it demonstrates that:

- The project is important to the community
- The project presents interesting design considerations
- The project is of an appropriate scale to be completed in weekend

And most importantly, that the host community has a real interest in moving forward with resulting suggestions.

Please note that the applicant is *required* to have recommendations from town or city government officials or boards to ensure that the project is a serious one that the entire town is behind.

COSTS INVOLVED

Three to four times each year, Plan NH members **donate** two days of professional design time to a community that has been awarded a Plan NH Design Charrette, and assist it by collaboratively working through potential solutions to a defined design problem. The time commitments for each charrette equates to an average of 16 hours per person, for a team of 10-12 professionals. That's approximately \$25,000-\$30,000 (or more) of donated design time provided by PLAN NH to each community.

We do request a contribution of \$5000 to sustain PLAN NH and to cover out of pocket expenses such as supplies for the design team and layout and printing of the final report. If a project is larger or more complicated and is made by a community with resources available to initiate the design effort, a larger contribution will be requested. PLAN NH will provide suggestions to the local community on finding sponsors so that this money does not have to come entirely out of the municipal general fund.

*For more information about any of our programs,
visit our website at www.plannh.org.*

The only other municipal responsibilities relate to organization and support of the design effort. A large assembly area will be needed to do our work and to hold the public listening sessions. Some communities have found that a Friday night pot luck supper is a good way to stimulate public interest in the project. Lastly, the community has to appoint a steering committee or contact person to coordinate promotion and participation at the local level

We hope that your town will take this opportunity to apply for a project to be taken on by a Plan NH Design Charrette team.

If you have any questions about a project's qualifications or viability, please do not hesitate to call us.

*We want it to work for **you**.*

PLAN NH Charrette Program Application for 2010 Design Charrette Assistance

This proposal is hereby submitted on behalf of _____

Name of Organization Applying

Title of Officer Authorized to Sign

Signature of Officer Authorized to Sign

Mailing Address

Town or City Name and Zip

Telephone

e-mail

On separate paper, please answer each of the following questions:

- Please describe the project that you would like our design assistance with.
- Why is this project important to your community? Is this a new idea? If not, what has been done to date?
- Does your organization own or control the site? Parts of the site? Are you likely to own it? How will you implement the recommendations if you don't own the site? Do you have partners?
- Do you have any materials that would be helpful? Maps of the site? Building plans? Old photos? Tax maps of the area in question? It would be useful to get a list of what you have, and to have you submit any simple maps/photos of the area of interest/concern.
- Are there unique characteristics about this project which you would like to describe? Are there known environmental issues involved with the project?
- How would your community be a better place if this project were to move forward?

Please also provide *letters of support indicating consensus amongst the leadership and governing boards within your community*. Consistent, unified cooperation from your governing Boards (ie Planning, Zoning, Conservation, Economic Development, etc.) is critical to the success of the project, and we cannot consider projects that these governing boards do not back.

Proposals (2 copies) MUST be received IN WRITING at

PLAN NH, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment
P.O. Box 1105, Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03802
no later than March 17, 2009.

All proposals will receive a response and selected towns will be notified by end of March.

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PLAN NH
Visioning for Sustainable Communities



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Portsmouth NH 03802

